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Essay on AI Ethics

With the recent rise of A.I. in automated driving, the author Patrick Lin, gives some ethical dilemmas that autonomous driving cars can face. The author states that there aren’t right nor wrong answers, but instead talks about different scenarios that can come up in autonomous driving. What is the best decision or what are the thought philosophies of such scenarios in the philosophic world are some topics and questions that the author addresses in his paper.

The reason why ethics matter in autonomous driving is that the decisions the driving algorithm will make has a direct impact on the drivers’ and others lives. Interestingly enough there are many factors that come into the decision making process. Take for example of a deer darting into traffic in front of your car. If true automation, not much human interference, is in practice with this particular car, incoming traffic, size of vehicle, size of animal, speed of car, type of road, and much more all play a critical role in the decision process. Some topics that were talked about was potential damage, which may be a priority to one algorithm. However, the paper suggests that values and weights of certain actions and objects are not intrinsic to or discoverable by science or engineering. These values that will soon play a role in the algorithm should be decided and greed ideally by humans.

Another situation that the paper mentions was the trolley, or train, problem. The situation is that if the car is left untouched the car will collide with five pedestrians, while if an action is taken only one person will be hurt. This is where two types of people come out with their differing opinions. The two types of people are consequentialist vs non-consequentialists. Some people argue that it is wrong to take an action because not taking an action was going to happen anyways and taking an action is partaking in taking someone’s life. This opinion is from the non-consequentialists who appeal to a moral distinction between killing and letting people die. On the contrary the consequentialist will argue one life is less than five lives so taking the action is the “correct” choice. In the world of ethics and morality different people have different opinions based on their person viewpoints and values.

Through this paper, I personally learned that there is no right or wrong choice. There are different opinions and their viewpoint and thoughts matter just as much as my personal thought process. Then I came to question that if there are differing opinions and everyone’s opinion is valuable, is there truly a right way to implement ethics into A.I. in particular autonomous driving? There has to be a way to implement a general algorithm in making ethical decisions and hard times. However, a solution that I thought of while reading this paper was that as of today without autonomous driving, if a person is met with some of the scenarios today they will act upon their experiences and their beliefs. Couldn’t there possibly be a way implement the drivers ethical morals and decisions to the algorithm so that the algorithm will know what the owner of the car would do in such situations.

Regardless, while reading I’ve also noticed that simply driving in the road doesn’t mean that autonomous driving is ready. Insurance, morals, ethics, traffic controls, and much more play a significant role in the completion of autonomous driving. I’ve definitely felt that much more work and research is needed to perfect autonomous driving and to rely on it for everyday use.