

Using philosophical principles for the moral metaphysics to determine if men can ...

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In determining whether we should conclude that human beings should not be able to drive their own cars, both John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant's thoughts allow for discussion of important issues to consider in this scenario. Mill's descriptions of happiness, pleasure and pain provide interesting arguments on either side of the decision. Kant's categorical imperative and view of humanity as an end in itself also provide interesting arguments for both viewpoints. Though both philosophers never analyzed the specific topic of autonomous vehicles, their ideas can be applied in order to determine how they would discuss the different facets of the topic.

In Utilitarianism, Mill's Greatest Happiness Principle " holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong in proportion as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By ' happiness' is meant pleasure and the absence of pain; by ' unhappiness' is meant pain and the lack of pleasure" (Mill 5). In applying the Principle to the autonomous vehicle proposition, Mill's ideas explain that whatever action, either driving or using an autonomous vehicle, should be chosen based on whichever promotes the most happiness and lack of pain. This question is difficult to answer, however. If cars drive themselves, less accidents would happen due to the elimination of human error. Thus, less pain and death would result from this option. Those who dislike driving or do not know how to drive would have increased pleasure in being able to relax and not have to take responsibility for driving the vehicle, especially if there are other people in the car who could die if a wrong decision is made. On the contrary, Mill's ideas would also have to take into account those who derive pleasure from driving cars and would thus be frustrated and pained when the ability is taken away from

them, perhaps arguing that their rights to make decisions and take on responsibilities are being denied.

According to Mill, these people who do want to maintain the right to drive their car would not be happy because “ Human beings have higher faculties than the animal appetites, and once they become conscious of them they don’t regard anything as happiness that doesn’t include their gratification” (Mill 5). This means that those who want to drive would not be happy to lose the ability to exercise a faculty such as driving; happiness and the feeling of being a person comes from human ability to exercise high faculties. Mill goes on to explain that “ some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others” (Mill 6). In applying this concept to people who take pleasure in the ability to drive, the pleasure that is of higher preference to them might be retainment of the ability to drive, over the pleasure of feeling safe and not having the responsibility of their life and others’ lives at their hands. Since they are allowed their right to drive and engage in their high faculties, “ their dignity is so essential to their happiness that they couldn’t want, for more than a moment, anything that conflicts with it” (Mill 6-7). At the same time, others will prefer the pleasure of not having so much responsibility and risk of death, injury, and pain over retainment of the ability to drive. Mill does state though, that there is a difference between happiness and contentment, which means he may label those people who value the safety as being content, yet perhaps a high faculty to them is enacting laws they feel would benefit the entirety of society. Clearly, it is still

difficult to come to a definite conclusion about the law with Mill's way of thinking.

Mill has a teleological understanding of ethics that focuses on the end results of actions. However, his ideas would not help answer the question of whether the absence of pain and death from requiring autonomous vehicles, or the pleasure people derive from having the freedom and faculty to drive is the better option. He does say, however, that a person would prefer to maintain their dignity and suffer as a result, meaning Mill's view could be to allow people to have the freedom to drive. At the same time, this certainly would not hold true for those people that do not like driving, as their "dignity" may very well lie in their right to have the utmost feeling of safety, which still leaves the overall question of autonomous vehicles unanswered. If autonomous vehicles are required, people who derive happiness from the faculty of driving are neglected, while if people are allowed to continue driving, those who dislike driving and/or prefer a higher degree of safety are denied their preferred pleasure; even if they choose to be driven by autonomous vehicles, other people allowed to drive could still endanger them.

If Mill knew that this matter had to be settled somehow, his question, "What can decide whether a particular pleasure is worth purchasing at the cost of a particular pain, if not the feelings and judgment of those who are experienced?" (Mill 8) denotes who he feels should make the ultimate decision. In this case, Mill would rephrase to inquire whether the particular pleasure of retaining the ability to drive is worth the pain of holding the

responsibility of people's lives and the possible death and injury that results from poor judgment when driving. He would leave this question, and thus the verdict of the situation, to be judged to someone who is experienced, meaning someone who enjoys having the ability to drive, yet has experienced some pain as a result, such as the death of a family member in a driving accident. Only someone who has experienced both the pleasure and pain that can come with driving would be able to make this decision, Mill would argue, yet this still leaves us with no definitive conclusions because even those who are "experienced" could have opposing verdicts.

Would civilization be better off if no one was allowed to drive? According to Kant's categorical imperative in *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, most likely. He explains that you should do a particular action if and only if you would have everyone else, regardless of who they are, follow your example. To put Kant's categorical imperative to action, one could examine the results of what would happen if everyone were to act in a certain way, in this case, to drive. Though driving is positive for certain people, such as those who find enjoyment in doing it or appreciate the responsibility it affords them, overall, driving presents many dangers to society. In the status quo, everyone with the ability to drive after passing the necessary requirements is allowed to. In Kant's way of thinking, this is a problem because all people also have the capacity to make poor decisions such as drunk and/or distracted driving, racing, speeding, and so on, perhaps because they do not think of the consequences of what would happen if they and everyone else were to act this way. At the very least, they may simply not care, or just make horrible mistakes. Though someone may view their

ability to drive as a positive, the negative of everyone else being able to drive and possibly do so irresponsibly is worse for the world than it is better for the individual being able to drive, thus failing the categorical imperative examination. From this idea, Kant would probably be in support of requiring autonomous vehicles.

On the other hand, Kant's idea of humanity being an end in itself means that, similar to Mill's idea of high faculty, we must foster our capacities, like driving. In this sense, he could also be seen as a supporter of humans retaining the right to drive, especially for those who find enjoyment in the task. However, this view also requires that the human race work towards having the most happiness possible for the ideal "Kingdom of Ends", doing so by taking the welfare of others into consideration, "But this, after all, would harmonize only negatively and not positively with humanity as an end in itself, if everyone does not also strive, as much as he can, to further the ends of others" (Kant 37). In that sense, welfare for others' ends in my interpretation would be to ensure that they are as safe as possible. In the realm of autonomous vehicles, this would mean that in the "Kingdom of Ends" if some people wanted the ability to drive, they would be unselfish and accept the requirement of autonomous vehicles because they are safer for all of humanity, furthering its ends, particularly in terms of survival.

The issue with Mill and Kant is that their ideas about humans essentially group all humans together and are thus idealistic. In controversial topics such as restricting humans from driving, many people share different ways of thinking, so that is why it is so difficult to make a final decision. One

person may believe that the best good for society and themselves is to avoid the death and pain that driving causes by requiring autonomous vehicles. Meanwhile, another person may value their freedom to drive, placing the happiness they derive from it above the fact that it is inevitably more dangerous for society. So, neither philosopher's work directly answers how people would decide as a whole or majority what to make law, because neither directly measures which side is better than the other.