MASTERS OR
S L A V E S ?

INTRO

- In this study we will look at the impact on God's image in us of delegating moral decision making to machines - like vehicles or lethal weapons.

THE RISE OF THE MACHINE

- Robot vacuum cleaners and lawn mowers are able to navigate themselves around your house or lawn, offering the prospect of automating chores that once had to be done by people. They still have limited capabilities and are unlikely to do much damage.
- What about autonomous weapons without a human in the loop or self-drive vehicles that take over the driving, even in life threatening situations?
- Should we hand over moral agency to a machine?

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

- We are moral agents who act according to a set of moral principles.
- If we allow an artefact like and autonomous weapon or a self-drive vehicle to act on our behalf, we have handed over moral agency to the artefact.
- Military drones with a human in the loop, often thousands of miles away, have been in use for some time. Creates an unreal detachment for the drone operator.
- Now there is the possibility of humans being 'out of the loop' with systems automatically acquiring targets based on image recognition.
- Some see AI based automation as the future of warfare with no human soldiers.
- A worldwide coalition of activists is seeking to have such weapons banned.
- Major world powers are vying for dominance in AI – Vladimir Putin has stated that whoever becomes the leader in AI will rule the world.
- There are similar moral dilemmas with self-drive vehicles but there is a long way to go before the road infrastructure is in place.
- Most argue that self-drive vehicles are justified because there would be less accidents – yet we don't have real data to back this up.

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

- The life-or-death decisions that we make are complex. Some sacrifice their own lives – a practical outworking of John 15:12-13.
- MIT's Moral Machine experiments involving the public illustrate the complexity of these decisions.
- Utilitarian ethics (the greater good of humanity) might use the data from experiments like MIT's.
- Who decides what is the greater good?
- If we use data like MIT, the decision is biased towards the majority view.

MIT Moral Machine Experiment – Imagine there is a barrier on the left and right that would risk death to the occupants if the driver avoided the people on the crossing what should the vehicle driver do? Hit the older people ahead or swerve into the pushchair and children?
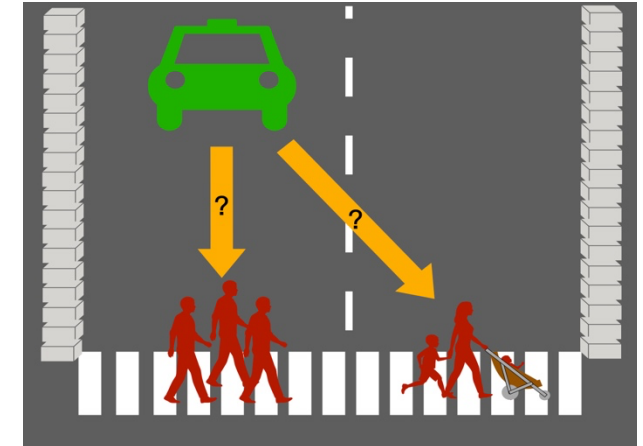
- The bible teaches that we are moral agents, accountable to God, even though our decisions may be flawed.
- If we step into a self-drive vehicle, we have made the moral choice to accept the decisions that it will make on our behalf – we are still accountable to God.
- The law has not yet caught up with how to assign liability.
- Being made in God's image means that we have a moral nature – the freedom to act, to choose right or wrong according to our conscience.

Next Study – Leisure or Dignity
Now do the bible study for unit 6.

Read Genesis 3:22, Genesis 18:25, Psalm 145:17

How does these verses support the idea that God is a moral being?

....
....

Why does God have moral obligation?

....
....

List some of God's moral attributes.

....
....

Read Ezekiel 18:20, Matthew 12:36-37

How do these passages show that we are accountable to God for our actions and decisions?

....
....

Read Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15, Eph. 5:1, Job 19:4

What does it mean to say that humans are moral beings (agents)?

....
....

What are the implications of assigning moral agency to an artefact – for example, a self-drive vehicle?

....
....

Read John 15:12-13

How might the principle of this passage work out if we were driving or flying an aeroplane?

....
....
....

Reflection

What are the areas in which it's OK to give AI/robots control and to make decisions - what rules/decisions would be acceptable?

....
....

Should rules be programmed into a machine making it a moral agent?

....
....

What are the dangers of programming ethical rules into an AI to give it moral agency?

....
....

Where might we not want AI to make decisions and why?

....
....

What are the dangers in crowd sourcing the rules, e.g. collecting decisions that people make in an accident scenario in an autonomous vehicle?

....
....

How else could these rules be programmed/decided upon?

....
....

Where should responsibility lie in an accident caused by a self-drive vehicle?

....
....

The aim of this study is for the group or individual to understand what the bible teaches about God being a moral agent and also human moral agency. In the light of this, the study will explore how this might work out in the use of self-drive vehicles. Autonomous Weapons are not covered in the interests of time.

Read Genesis 3:22, Genesis 18:25, Psalm 145:17

How does these verses support the idea that God is a moral being?
- He knows right and wrong, he always does what's right (acts righteously Gen. 18:25, Ps. 145:17)

Why does God have moral obligation?
- He knows right from wrong (Gen. 3:22) and he must act according to his will, to 'do right'. God is free to choose but he always chooses what is right and in accordance with his will.

List some of God's moral attributes.
- Righteous, holy, reasoning, intelligent, truthful, faithful, just, merciful, etc.

Read Ezekiel 18:20, Matthew 12:36-37

How do these passages show that we are accountable to God for our actions and decisions?
- Our actions, righteousness or wickedness, cannot be passed to another, it is 'upon himself'.
- We will give account of the day of judgement – coupled with Ezekiel, the implication is not just our words but actions too.

Read Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15, Eph. 5:1, Job 19:4

What does it mean to say that humans are moral beings (agents)?
- We are commanded to be Holy in the same way that God is holy (Mt. 5:48) – to be imitators of him (Eph. 5.1), we of course cannot be holy (or imitate) to the same degree because God is infinite and we are finite beings.
- We are made after his likeness, in his image so we bear some of his attributes. After the fall we became aware of right AND wrong but are pre disposed to do wrong (in bondage to sin).
- Christ's work on the cross sets us free from bondage to sin, so that we can become imitators of Christ.

Read Ezekiel 18:20,

To whom are we responsible for our decisions and actions in life?
- God tells us directly that we are responsible to God for our deeds, right and wrong.

What are the implications of assigning moral agency to an artefact – for example, a self-drive vehicle?
- We duck out of tacking responsibility for our decisions and actions, yet we are still accountable to God. In other words we have let something else make moral decisions without necessarily knowing what they are.

Read John 15:12-13

How might the principle of this passage work out if we were driving or flying an aeroplane?
- We might choose to sacrifice ourselves rather than injure of kill someone else. There are numerous stories of how people, like pilots, have done this in the past.

Reflection

Pick some of the questions below to help the group reflect on how what you have learnt in the study might work out. There will no doubt be different views on whether self-drive vehicles should be allowed or not, so tread sensitively. The aim is to help individuals think beyond, 'they will be safer', and to think what God's view might be - how the use of such artefacts might diminish our image bearing. You could get individuals to think through, at home, the moral dilemmas posed in the MIT experiment or 'The Trolley Problem' (see case studies on the website).

What are the areas in which it's OK to give AI/robots control and to make decisions - what sort of rules/decisions would be acceptable?
Should rules be programmed into a machine making it a moral agent?
What are the dangers of programming ethical rules into an AI to give it moral agency?
Where might we not want AI to make decisions and why?
What are the dangers in crowd sourcing the rules, e.g. collecting decisions that people make in an accident scenario in an autonomous vehicle?
How else could these rules be programmed/decided upon?
Where should responsibility lie in an accident caused by a self-drive vehicle?