Modern ethical dilemmas:
Applying praxeology to the programming of self-driving cars

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Resumo: "In a hypothetical traffic accident, a self-driving car would have to either run over (and kill) three pedestrians or deviate while risking the passenger's life. Whereas the car is not capable of taking the decision by its own, it must be programmed according to certain ethical standards.

This paper aims to contribute to the philosophical debate on the applicability of this technology and how would be competition between the various possible ethical criteria of the program in the market, if one would have a clear advantage, which would tend to dominate under certain conditions. Moreover, whether this possible market outcome is itself ethically superior or inferior to a state imposition of a criterion.

In order to do that, I start the paper presenting the before-mentioned technology and how praxeology theory could help answer some moral dilemmas. It also addresses Peter-Paul Verbeek's Theory of Technological Mediation; Jean-François Bonnefon, Iyad Rahwan, Azim Shariff's social dilemma of autonomous vehicles. Further Joshua Green's psychological research about the moral and inconsistent patterns of responses at preference are used the basis for the method of moral reflection; these are associated with three moral dilemmas, including 1) the hypothetical traffic accident; 2) the bearer of the responsibility of deciding which solution should be programmed; and 3) the ethics of opting for a self-driving car which prioritizes the passenger's safety at any cost.

This path allows me to discuss whether a consistent calculation of the utility is possible even when properly modelled through Utilitarian standards; the demand inhibitor character of the utilitarian logic based on the reduced safety for passengers; and the new dilemma derived from the understanding of social utility as the sum of all individual utilities: while being a pedestrian, individuals tend to opt for solutions that protect pedestrians but, as consumers of the new technology, they would maximize utility by protecting passengers. Whereas not all pedestrians would also be passengers, individuals with both profiles would find it relatively hard to maximize their own utilities, therefore compromising the social utility's calculation."

Palavras-Chave: