

所託非人

suo3 tuo1 fei1 ren2

The first fatal accident involving a self-driving car was recently disclosed by carmaker Tesla Motors.

The accident occurred on May 7 in Williston, Florida. The driver, Joshua Brown, 40, of Ohio put his car into autopilot mode, which was supposed to control the car safely during highway driving.

However, the car crashed full speed into an 18-wheel truck that was crossing the highway, killing the driver. It was believed the car's sensors failed to distinguish the large white truck from the bright sky.

The driver, who had been enthusiastic about self-driving cars, had placed his complete trust on the vehicle. Sadly, it was a case of “所託非人” (*suo3 tuo1 fei1 ren2*).

“所” (*suo3*) is “that which,” “託” (*tuo1*) “to trust,” “to entrust,” “非” (*fei1*) “not,” “wrong,” “improper,” “人” (*ren2*) is “a person,” “people.” Literally, “所託非人” is “that which is trusted is the wrong person.” The idiom means “trusting in the wrong person,”

Idiom by Lon Yan

“entrusting something to an improper person.”

Though the vehicle is not a person, the idiom is applicable figuratively. The victim had entrusted his life to it, and it was clearly a trust that had been placed wrongly.

The idiom is most often used in respect of a real person. When someone being given a job botched it, we would say “所託非人” (*suo3 tuo1 fei1 ren2*).

For example, the proposed One Belt, One Road scholarship has not been well received, and a lawmaker blamed it on the government entrusting the job of promoting it to the Secretary for Education Eddie Ng Hak-kim who is unpopular with the people, saying that it “所託非人” (*suo3 tuo1 fei1 ren2*).

Terms containing the character “非” (*fei1*) include:

非常 (*fei1 chang2*) – unusual; extraordinary

非法 (*fei1 fa3*) – illegal

非禮 (*fei1 li3*) – to molest sexually

非洲 (*fei1 zhou1*) – Africa