BUSINESS, SOCIETY & ETHICS

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The Domain of Ethics

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the reading:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?

2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- Rachels, J., & Rachels, S. (2012). What Is Morality? In *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (7th ed., pp. 9–13). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- *Optional:* TED-Ed. (2015, December 8). The Ethical Dilemma of Self-Driving Cars - Patrick Lin [online video]. Y. Du (Dir.). *TED-Ed Originals*. Retrieved August 14, 2016, from http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-ethical-dilemma-of-self-driving-cars-patrick-lin.

Questions

1. According to Rachels and Rachels, what does moral philosophy seek to better understand? (Hint: they quote Socrates on this matter.)

2. What do Rachels and Rachels believe about the role of reason and impartiality in morality?

3. Putting all this together, what do Rachels and Rachels mean by the "minimum conception of morality"?

4. Google, Uber, and other tech companies are developing self-driving cars. This requires the companies to decide how their vehicles should respond in situations where there is no choice but to harm someone. For instance, what if a self-driving car is going over a bridge when suddenly it is about to crash into a school bus full of children. Should the self-driving car be programmed to automatically swerve off the bridge, likely killing the car's driver but saving those children on the bus? (For more details, see the optional video from TED-Ed.) How might the minimum conception of morality advise these companies?