

# Parable of the sadhu

Sociology, Ethics



Ethical Decisions Tough decisions are scary to most people. Therefore, we have guidelines or theories to help us make these decisions. The most effective managers are ideally those that simply don't crack under pressure and are "action-oriented people." Sometimes, people do not dedicate any of their time to the decision in front of them, and make decisions based on their situation. This is one of the many issues that arise in The Parable of the Sadhu. Buzz McCoy went on an adventurous six-month sabbatical program with his friend, Stephen, and when they were hiking in Nepal, they came across a serious ethical dilemma.

As him, Stephen, and a few other hikers were hiking up the treacherous Himalayan mountains, they came across a sadhu. Stephen had been showing symptoms of altitude sickness and they had decided to rest for a bit, when one of their fellow hikers found this man. The sadhu was barely clothed, and was consequently suffering from hypothermia. The man who found the sickly sadhu grew irritated, as he wanted to continue on because he "[did] what he [could do]." He left soon afterward, leaving the sadhu in the hands of Buzz, Stephen and a few other hikers.

We are all less likely to take charge of a situation if there are people around us. We simply assume that someone else will take full responsibility and get our wheels turning. They had all given him clothing and tried to warm him up a bit, but none had stepped up and taken full responsibility. Buzz then also gave in, as he grew afraid of the "heights to come," and "without a great deal of thought," continued on. Looking back on this moment, Buzz regrets how he handled the situation. In all actuality, he never handled it at all; he never even gave it a thought.

With all the adrenaline and the possible ecstasy that awaited his arrival at the peak, he never thought of the consequences of this decision. Buzz states, " I felt and continue to feel guilt about the sadhu. " If he had thought it through, he probably wouldn't be carrying this burdensome regret. He later goes on to mention, however, that the situation he was in is parallel to a corporate situation, wherein people need to make split-second decisions (no matter the consequence). This is not an ethical method in any way, shape or form. Buzz was not thinking about the " best option" or the " decision that would make for the greater good. " He was focused on himself, and reaching the peak of that mountain. Buzz never thought that this decision would haunt him for the rest of his life. In applying the universalization test to McCoy's decision, I am left with a serious question: what if everyone were to act as McCoy did. What if, when faced with a challenge, or an annoyance, or simply something unexpected, everyone were to simply give up?

What if everyone in the world were to walk away saying, " oh, I gave him some clothes... therefore I did all I could do. " Just because they aren't personally responsible for the sadhu, doesn't mean that they shouldn't care. They needed to be responsible human beings, like Stephen. What if we lived in a world where everyone was out for his/her own gain? Although it may seem like it, there are still glimmers of hope once in a while, and we, as inhibitors, must fight for them. If everyone was out for their own personal gain, nothing would be accomplished.

Ethical guidelines, such as the universal test, are definitely more relatable and easier to apply. The theories, on the other hand, are much more malleable and subjective. There was really only one answer when I asked

myself, “ what if this were the behavior of everyone on this planet? ” Though, when I asked myself, “ what would have been the best outcome for everyone? ” the lines got a little blurry. One final thought: a valuable piece of information is the sadhu’s intentions.

If he had gone to the mountain to die in the first place, then taking him down and saving him would be completely against his own intentions. The story states that he was an elderly man with hardly any clothes and no food; thus, he could have wanted to go in peace, on his own terms. Here in lies the problem: we never are given all of the information necessary to make an educated informed decision. This is why we have ethics, or guides for us to follow in situations that we seem to be blindly coming to decisions. They can help us come to ethical decisions for the situations before us.