

Ethics of Leadership

The Limits of an Individualistic Ethic

As you read the material for the 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 readings:

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 to these issues in the next class meeting.

Reading

- Gary Yukl, "Power and Influence Tactics" (PDF on webpage).
- Bowen McCoy, "The Parable of the Sadhu", pp. xvi–xviii.

Background

Power and influence are undeniably important aspects of being a leader, so any serious discussion of leadership must begin with them. Indeed, the ethics of leadership ultimately boils down to how a leader obtains, uses, and maintains their power and influence. The first reading is from Gary Yukl's classic textbook on *Leadership in Organizations*. In this chapter, he argues how authority, power, and influence are vital components of leadership. He also provides a discussion on how influence works and the different sources of power. The second reading is a famous case study from Bowen McCoy about one of his trips to the Himalayas. This is an illuminating case allowing us to apply Yukl's concepts in a situation where a breakdown in decisive leadership reveals the limits of an **individual ethic** ("what *I* ought to do") and the need for a **group ethic** ("what *we* ought to do"). Indeed, it raises an interesting question: can there be a group ethic without leaders?

Questions

1. Yukl claims that "influence is the essence of leadership" (p. 185). What does he mean by influence? (Hint: he never clearly defines it, but his examples make it clear what he means.) Why does he believe this? Do you agree? That is, can a person possess influence and *not* be a leader? What are the three types of processes governing influence?
2. How does Yukl distinguish between authority, power, and influence? How do these three interact within each of the seven sources of power. For instance, with reward power, (a) what is the authority, (b) what is the power, and (c) how do these translate into the processes governing influence? (While this is the most interesting part of Yukl's chapter, he is not always explicit about this connection. So you will need to look carefully at his discussion and examples to answer this.)
3. In "The Parable of the Sadhu", who has the power and influence here? Who is the leader of the group? Are you satisfied with the actions of the characters in this story? If you had been in McCoy's position, what would you have done? What should a person do in such circumstances?