



# GIVERS and takers

There are only two types of people in the world

BY LEONARD CARR



**IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THERE ARE ONLY TWO** types of people in the world: those who make gross simplistic generalisations and those who don't. There is, however, one particular generalisation that proves unfailingly to be true. There are only two types of people in the world.

On the one hand, there are those people who want to make a meaningful contribution and build the world. They are people who place in their hierarchy of personal values, service of the greater good above their own self-interest. This could mean doing whatever it takes to create peace in a relationship, sparing no effort or expense to secure the well-being of their family (and anyone else in society whom they are able to support or uplift) in whatever way possible. Being a person who wishes to contribute and add value to the world entails being motivated both to give of our personal or material resources and to make sacrifices in order to ensure that others get what they need.

On the other hand, there are people who believe their own interests are always paramount to everyone and everything else. They sometimes even manage to convince themselves and others that their personal interests and the greater good are one and the same thing. Many people in this group are good marketers. They are adept at appearing like givers, when in fact they manage to take – even when they appear to be giving. This is because their driving concern in life is always making sure that, in whatever they do, the end result always benefits them in some way.

The question that such people ask in every relationship or circumstance is: "What's in it for me?" If that's someone's starting point in life, then he will always need to make sure that everything goes his way. These are people who believe winning in every situation defines who they are, and losing makes them feel weak, like a failure. People with this view have to make sure they and anyone who

they believe represents them, like their children, for example, have to always win in all circumstances.

Ensuring one's personal interests always prevail requires significant expertise in manipulating people and situations so everything pans out to one's own advantage. Such an approach also demands the person puts the ends before the means. Since nobody has everything, no one can play fair, be honest about their value, worthiness or ability, and still win consistently.

Guaranteeing one always wins means not only concealing any shortcomings. It also requires making sure one is never exposed or outshone, by managing perceptions so other people always look flawed. It's only through exposing the flaws of others that one can keep them down, in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, so they never prove to be real competition or pose any significant threat.

A strategy that such a person might adopt would be to call into question the

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reputation of another person, casting aspersions on her actions or intentions, undermining her credibility and neutralising her in advance, lest she try to use the same strategy in return. A person could add strength to this approach by taking another's ideas or work and passing it off as his own before that person can do so. This is why people who are in the world to take and maximise personal benefit cannot avoid being destructive, even when they are ostensibly building something or trying to achieve something that is for the good.

As demonstrated in these examples, people who are competitive or self-serving set themselves apart and in opposition to the world. By treating others as though they are competitors for scarce resources, they render them a threat. This, in turn, makes the people around this person feel threatened. These people, in turn, might treat the other person in kind, becoming competitive or defensive, until the entire dynamic becomes a vicious circle.

Those threatened may also respond by siding with the one who looks like the potential winner. They would perceive this as aligning with the safety of the stronger team and simultaneously avoiding falling victim to the same treatment. This is one reason why people identify and support the bully and turn their backs on the victim. This is also a reason that people become ingratiating sycophants. Another possible response for people faced with the threat of being disempowered or disenfranchised through being run down is to protect themselves by doing the same thing back to the person posing the threat.

People who are out for themselves, despite protestations to the contrary, cannot build a community. One reason for this is that their fundamental approach of being out for themselves sets them at odds with

others. This approach, when others are drawn into it, often becomes a more elaborate strategy of divide and conquer – factionalise the world into those who are with you, the rest being part of the enemy. This happens in families or classrooms where a parent or teacher favours and sponsors a particular child or group at the expense of the others.

By their approach, takers fragment social groups and cause division between people. Social cohesion and a sense of community depend on exchange and trade of material and emotional resources. In order for people to feel free and safe to interact with each other they need to have a sense of trust. Competition creates distrust and the need to protect one's resources by hiding or withholding them. Through the resulting mistrust, the fabric of society is eroded and, with it, the ability of the society to innovate, collaborate and to ultimately thrive.

Giving achieves the exact opposite. Givers know they can only gain and never lose by giving. They understand that the world is a closed ecology of love, goodness, material and emotional resources. What we take for the exclusive benefit of ourselves and our own makes the world a little poorer for everyone. The more we give and invest in the well-being of others, the more we contribute to the quality and richness of the very world of which we are a part. The love, kindness, integrity, compassion, and mercy that we put into the world actually make our world richer in those qualities. When we take care of the needs of others, especially those closest to us, we give them a sense

of living in an abundant world. That knowledge inspires and frees them to reciprocate by putting more of their goodness and talents into the world.

The most powerful tool for building the world happens to be possessed by everyone and costs nothing monetarily to use: the tongue. When used well, the power of speech can become the greatest force for creating goodness in the world. There is no limit to the power of words in time and space. Anything said can last indefinitely and spread until it has reached every corner of the globe. The tongue therefore has the power to foster harmony, collaboration and peace. It is through speech that we establish, maintain, deepen and grow relationships. In building relationships, we foster unity, and in so doing, strengthen the fabric of the society, creating security and support for all those in that society. Through the power of speech we can boost someone's confidence and alert them to their talents and potential for contribution. The spoken word has the power to heal. It is with words that we can enhance and build someone's reputation. It is with the tongue that we share knowledge, give business ideas, leads or advice. In short, through words we can potentially enrich someone emotionally, spiritually, and physically beyond any material wealth that we could give them. It goes without saying the opposite of all of the above is true. Using the tongue to undermine, take and score advantage at the expense of others is the single most destructive force in the world.

If we wish to be a force for good in the world, we need, for the sake of ourselves and those in our sphere of influence, to make sure we foster and maintain the mentality, attitude and approach of a giver. There is no more powerful way to give than to use the power of speech and to choose our words with the greatest integrity and wisdom. ■■

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