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The joy of receiving

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In RJ Hollingdale's translation of Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, he opens the first chapter with the words, looking at the sun, Zarathustra says, "Great star, what would your happiness be, if you had not those for whom you shine."

Many of us consider ourselves generous when we shower our gifts on others. Yet, not for one moment do we feel thankful to the one who receives what we give. Giving is fine, yet receiving is even more dignified, for the receiver demonstrates humility by accepting gracefully.

Where would a leader be able to demonstrate his leadership skills if he did not have followers?

Being able to receive, to me, is thus a fine art, a humbling act that reveals a lack of feeling superior or arrogant. Those of us who give can sometimes be lulled into a feeling of power, for we establish ascendancy, yet it really is the one who receives that commands the premium.

Think about it — if the intended recipient refuses our offering, the giver will simply have to take back what he is giving. Leaders, likewise, must feel thankful that they have someone to receive their commands, and thus be grateful that people are willing to follow them. As people who have been taught to give, from our earliest years, let us now, even if briefly, focus on the receiver, and in no way devalue him, for without him, our giving is meaningless; just as those who preach would serve no purpose if they did not have followers to hear them.

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