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Period 2

The Effectiveness of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

“By fighting you never get enough, but by yielding you get more than you expected.” These words come from an old proverb referenced in Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. The book contains a wealth of advice to be used to better oneself in a variety of social contexts. However, the majority of people still do not heed his words. There are a number of probable causes, the first simply being the lack of awareness of Carnegie’s guidelines. Another problem lies in the nature of humanity itself. Much of Carnegie’s message is lost through a lack of persistent effort by the reader to create tangible change in oneself. Thus, the book becomes a piece for recreational reading for many people.

One year ago, I found myself volunteering at my local hospital with a friend of mine. We were assigned the task of handling the post at Outpatient Registration while the security guard, who normally does the job, was busy. The work itself was not particularly difficult, as the majority of what we did involved signing patients and visitors in and then sending them on their way. Of course, the job was not meant to be so simple. Soon enough, a clearly distressed woman came to our desk and demanded the location of a patient who was recently admitted to the hospital. We were not capable of answering such a question, and guided the woman to the desk of a more experienced hospital employee. However, the woman soon returned with a furious look on her face. She exploded in a fit of rage, complaining about how we were wasting her time and how we should have known what to do in such a situation. Amidst the confusion, my friend decided to defend herself by hurling a number of devastating truths in return. An argument ensued and I, in my relative inexperience, could only watch. Soon enough, the security guard came back to aid the woman and the conflict was forced to a close.

My friend was certainly not wrong. The best that we could have done was send the woman to someone else. However, the situation could have been handled in a better fashion. After reading Carnegie’s book, I realized that I could have proactively emphasized with the woman, especially given the morbid circumstances of a hospital. I could have prevented the argument by stopping my friend from lashing out in defense. Perhaps if the argument never occurred, the woman might have retracted her anger. Alas, nothing can be done about the situation now. One can only speculate.

The most evident problem in that situation was the lack of awareness of Carnegie’s advice. At the time the argument was going on, I had not read *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. I had heard its name mentioned before, but I had no knowledge of its content. Since I did not know about what Carnegie had said, there was no possible way for me to use his advice. The same reasoning likely relates to why most people do not use Carnegie’s guidelines. Even though his book is a bestseller, and has been for several years, it is nearly impossible to issue a copy of any book to an entire population. Therefore, there will always be people who have had no contact with the book. Furthermore, if one does not have contact with the book, one cannot utilize its advice.

Of course even people who read Carnegie’s work may not fully take in what he has to say. The reason for this lies in the nature of human beings. Carnegie himself states that in order to get the most out of the book, one must develop “a deep, driving desire to learn, a vigorous determination to increase your ability to deal with people.” However, that simple requirement necessitates a lot more effort than it seems. It is much easier to just read past that line as if it was no more important than any other line. Thus, the book becomes just another piece for recreational reading, rather than one that can fundamentally change one’s life.

Within my own experience, I have found it difficult to consistently utilize Carnegie’s advice in every situation. Through forgetfulness and a lack of motivation, I have fallen into the trap of failing to reflect on Carnegie’s advice from time to time. As a result, my ability to use his advice has suffered. Thus, being able to constantly put effort towards using Carnegie’s advice is necessary to use it properly.

All in all, Carnegie’s book can be used to revolutionize how one deals with other people. However, it is limited by both its distribution and the amount of effort that is required to make a significant change. As a result, the book cannot change the life of every single human being. Nonetheless, the more people that heed Carnegie’s words, the better the world will become.

\*I have neither given nor received help on this essay, except from my teacher.