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Speaking Tips # 49

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Give the audience your humanity

Is it not a contradiction that those who admit their own weaknesses show strength and are most respect inspiring? Why is that so?

The reason could be that a person who mixes bringing out his/her personal qualities with a portion of self irony and humbleness is considered honest and realistic. We easily find that person trustworthy.

On the other hand we have difficulties accepting all the superlatives about themselves which a person comes out with. Nobody believes that there are perfect people, if perfectionism can be defined at all. What happens? Well, this being so, we become sceptical and when we become sceptical, we lose confidence in that person.

In order to inspire others with confidence it helps if we have self confidence, but that is not automatic. First let's see what confidence inspiring self confidence is. Self confidence which appears strong at other people's expense, i. e. admiring oneself and despising others, is absolutely not confidence inspiring. That rather, very rightly, makes others look down on us. If, however, our self confidence is such that we value rather than overvalue ourselves and value rather than undervalue others, then we reach an ideal relationship with others, for example our audience.

When we speak in public it is of utmost importance to make the listeners accept what we say. If we are not already well known and enjoy an image of being a trustworthy person (for example a Nobel Prize winner) we have to create that image on site. We have to start somewhere. They say that the more famous and respected you are, the more can you afford to be humble, self ironic and humoristic, without risking to lose one's status. Certainly, and yet it is not entirely true. Anybody can bring out those qualities and should do that. To bombard an audience with facts and expect to be respected for one's knowledge, which is perhaps only understood by a third, inspires boredom and not confidence. A laughable little spontaneous pleasantry here and there, an unexpected personal comment, an apt gesture, a short story about a personal failure, simple quotes and metaphors are all ingredients which inspire confidence and trust for the facts which, after all, may have to be presented.

By doing so we give the audience our humanity and show that we are in full control. That is what the listeners trust. That is confidence inspiring self confidence.

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