

LAW #1: NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER

JUDGMENT: Always make those above you feel comfortably superior. In your desire to please and impress them, do not go too far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the opposite—inspire fear and insecurity. Make your masters appear more brilliant than they are and you will attain the heights of power.

1. TRANSGRESSION: Fouquet

Such is the fate, in some form or other, of all those who unbalance the master's sense of self, poke holes in his vanity, or make him doubt his preeminence

2. OBSERVANCE: Galileo

The producer of a great work wants to feel he is more than just the provider of the financing. He wants to appear creative and powerful, and also more important than the work produced in his name. Instead of insecurity you must give him glory. He did not outshine the master, he made the master outshine all others.

3. KEYS TO POWER: Astorre Manfredi

When it comes to power, outshining the master is perhaps the worst mistake of all. If you cannot help being charming and superior, you must learn to avoid such monsters of vanity. Either that, or find a way to mute your good qualities when in the company of a Cesare Borgia. Never take your position for granted and never let any favors you receive go to your head. It is not a weakness to disguise your strengths if in the end they lead to power. By letting others outshine you, you remain in control, instead of being a victim of their insecurity. This will all come in handy the day you decide to rise above your inferior status.

4. REVERSAL: You cannot worry about upsetting every person you come across, but you must be selectively cruel. If your superior is a falling star, there is nothing to fear from outshining him. Do not be merciful—your master had no such scruples in his own cold-blooded climb to the top. Gauge his strength. If he is weak, discreetly hasten his downfall: Outdo, outcharm, outsmart him at key moments

LAW #2: NEVER PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN FRIENDS, LEARN HOW TO USE ENEMIES

JUDGMENT: Be wary of friends they will betray you more quickly, for they are easily aroused to envy. They also become spoiled and tyrannical. But hire a former enemy and he will be more loyal than a friend, because he has more to prove. In fact, you have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.

1. TRANSGRESSION: Basilus

Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies.

2. OBSERVANCE: Emperor Sung

Instead of relying on friends, Sung used his enemies, one after the other, transforming them into far more reliable subjects. While a friend expects more and more favors, and seethes with jealousy, these former enemies expected nothing and got everything
Lincoln- “do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?”

3. KEYS TO POWER: Men are more ready to repay an injury than a benefit, because gratitude is a burden and revenge a pleasure. Whenever you can, bury the hatchet with an enemy, and make a point of putting him in your service. Without enemies around us, we grow lazy. An enemy at our heels sharpens our wits, keeping us focused and alert. It is sometimes better, then, to use enemies as enemies rather than transforming them into friends or allies.
4. First, be certain that in the long run you will emerge victorious. Never pick a fight with someone you are not sure you can defeat. Second, if you have no apparent enemies, you must sometimes set up a convenient target, even turning a friend into an enemy. Third, use such enemies to define your cause more clearly to the public, even framing it as a struggle of good against evil.
5. Never let the presence of enemies upset or distress you—you are far better off with a declared opponent or two than not knowing where your real enemies lie. The man of power welcomes conflict, using enemies to enhance his reputation as a surefooted fighter who can be relied upon in times of uncertainty.
6. Image: The Jaws of Ingratitude. Knowing what would happen if you put a finger in the mouth of a lion, you would stay clear of it. With friends you will have no such caution, and if you hire them, they will eat you alive with ingratitude.
7. Authority: Know how to use enemies for your own profit. You must learn to grab a sword not by its blade, which would cut you, but by the handle, which allows you to defend yourself. The wise man profits more from his enemies, than a fool from his friends.
8. REVERSAL: Although it is generally best not to mix work with friendship, there are times when a friend can be used to greater effect than an enemy. generally preferable to have other people do it for him; friends often do this the best, since their affection for him makes them willing to take chances

LAW #3: CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS

JUDGMENT Keep people off-balance and in the dark by never revealing the purpose behind your actions. If they have no clue what you are up to, they cannot prepare a defense. Guide them far enough down the wrong path, envelop them in enough smoke, and by the time they realize your intentions, it will be too late

PART I: USE DECOYED OBJECTS OF DESIRE AND RED HERRINGS TO THROW PEOPLE OFF THE SCENT

Do not give them the chance to sense what you are up to: Throw them off the scent by dragging red herrings across the path. Use false sincerity, send ambiguous signals, set up misleading objects of desire. Unable to distinguish the genuine from the false, they cannot pick out your real goal.

1. TRANSGRESSION: Ninon

Everything in seduction, however, depends on suggestion. You cannot announce your intentions or reveal them directly in words. Instead you must throw your targets off the scent. To surrender to your guidance they must be appropriately confused. You have to scramble your signals—appear interested in another man or woman (the decoy), then hint at being interested in the target, then feign indifference, on and on. Such patterns not only confuse, they excite. *Let your greatest cunning lie in covering up what looks like cunning*

2. OBSERVANCE: Bismarck

The answer was to throw people off the scent by supporting a cause he detested, saying things he would laugh at if said by another. No one suspected what he was up to in this case. Had he announced his real intentions, arguing that it was better to wait now and fight later, he would not have won the argument. By being completely insincere and sending misleading signals, however, he deceived everyone, concealed his purpose, and attained everything he wanted. Such is the power of hiding your intentions.

3. KEYS TO POWER: It takes effort to control your tongue and monitor what you reveal. If you yearn for power, quickly lay honesty aside, and train yourself in the art of concealing your intentions. Hide your intentions not by closing up (with the risk of appearing secretive, and making people suspicious) but by talking endlessly about your desires and goals—just not your real ones. You appear friendly, open, and trusting; you conceal your intentions; and you send your rivals on time-consuming wild-goose chases. The best deceivers do everything they can to cloak their roguish qualities. They cultivate an air of honesty in one area to disguise their dishonesty in others. Honesty is merely another decoy in their arsenal of weapons

PART II: USE SMOKE SCREENS TO DISGUISE YOUR ACTIONS

Deception is always the best strategy, but the best deceptions require a screen of smoke to distract people attention from your real purpose. The bland exterior—like the unreadable poker face—is often the perfect smoke screen, hiding your intentions behind the comfortable and familiar. If you lead the sucker down a familiar path, he won't catch on when you lead him into a trap.

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Weil

He had to conceal his intentions and switch attention, create a smoke screen—in this case the sale of the lodge. Learn from the Yellow Kid: The familiar, inconspicuous front is the perfect smoke screen. Approach your mark with an idea that seems ordinary enough—a business deal,

financial intrigue. The sucker's mind is distracted, his suspicions allayed. That is when you gently guide him onto the second path, the slippery slope down which he slides helplessly into your trap.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Selassei

Like a chess player, he had predicted Balcha's moves, and had checkmated him. The paranoid and wary are often the easiest to deceive. Win their trust in one area and you have a smoke screen that blinds their view in another, letting you creep up and level them with a devastating blow. A helpful or apparently honest gesture, or one that implies the other person's superiority—these are perfect diversionary devices. Creep like a mouse but have the jaws of a lion.

3. KEYS TO POWER: If you believe that deceivers are colorful folk who mislead with elaborate lies and tall tales, you are greatly mistaken. The best deceivers utilize a bland and inconspicuous front that calls no attention to themselves. People can only focus on one thing at a time. It is really too difficult for them to imagine that the bland and harmless person they are dealing with is simultaneously setting up something else. The grayer and more uniform the smoke in your smoke screen, the better it conceals your intentions. The simplest form of smoke screen is facial expression. Behind a bland, unreadable exterior, all sorts of mayhem can be planned, without detection. This is a weapon that the most powerful men in history have learned to perfect. Instead practice a bland behavior that minimizes readable patterns, frustrates and confuses opponents, permits greater concentration." You simply blend in with those around you. The better you blend, the less suspicious you become. Blending in is the perfect smoke screen for spying. It takes patience and humility to dull your brilliant colors, to put on the mask of the inconspicuous. Do not despair at having to wear such a bland mask—it is often your unreadability that draws people to you and makes you appear a person of power.

With a sheepskin on his back, a fox can pass right into the chicken coop.

4. Conceal your purpose and hide your progress; do not disclose the extent of your designs until they cannot be opposed, until the combat is over. Win the victory before you declare the war.
5. REVERSAL: No smoke screen, red herring, false sincerity, or any other diversionary device will succeed in concealing your intentions if you already have an established reputation for deception. And as you get older and achieve success, it often becomes increasingly difficult to disguise your cunning. Everyone knows you practice deception; persist in playing naive. The colorful smoke screen should be used cautiously, then, and only when the occasion is right.

LAW #4: ALWAYS SAY LESS THAN NECESSARY

JUDGMENT When you are trying to impress people with words, the more you say, the more common you appear, and the less in control. Even if you are saying something banal, it will seem original if you make it vague, open-ended, and sphinxlike. Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less. The more you say, the more likely you are to say something foolish.

1. TRANSGRESSION: Coriolanus

The moment he appeared before the Roman citizens, however, and spoke his mind, all that grandeur and mystery vanished. a person who cannot control his words shows that he cannot control himself, and is unworthy of respect. But the human tongue is a beast that few can master. It strains constantly to break out of its cage, and if it is not tamed, it will run wild and cause you grief. Power cannot accrue to those who squander their treasure of words.

2. OBSERVANCE: Louis XIV

It is even more damaging for a minister to say foolish things than to do them.

3. KEYS TO POWER: Power is in many ways a game of appearances, and when you say less than necessary, you inevitably appear greater and more powerful than you are. When you carefully control what you reveal, they cannot pierce your intentions or your meaning. Once the words are out, you cannot take them back. Keep them under control. Be particularly careful with sarcasm: The momentary satisfaction you gain with your biting words will be outweighed by the price you pay.

4. REVERSAL: Silence can arouse suspicion and even insecurity. By talking more, and making yourself appear weaker and less intelligent than your mark, you can practice deception with greater ease.

LAW #5: SO MUCH DEPENDS ON REPUTATION—GUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE

JUDGMENT Reputation is the cornerstone of power. Through reputation alone you can intimidate and win; once it slips, however, you are vulnerable, and will be attacked on all sides. Make your reputation unassailable. Always be alert to potential attacks and thwart them before they happen. Meanwhile, learn to destroy your enemies by opening holes in their own reputations. Then stand aside and let public opinion hang them.

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Chuko Liang

Such is the power of reputation. It can put a vast army on the defensive, even force them into retreat, without a single arrow being fired.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Barnum

He sowed doubts about the museum's stability and solvency. Doubt is a powerful weapon: Once you let it out of the bag with insidious rumors, your opponents are in a horrible dilemma. Once you have a solid base of respect, ridiculing your opponent both puts him on the defensive and draws more attention to you, enhancing your own reputation. Outright slander and insult are too strong at this point; they are ugly, and may hurt you more than help you. But gentle barbs and mockery suggest that you have a strong enough sense of your own worth to enjoy a good laugh at your rival's expense. It is easier to cope with a bad conscience than with a bad reputation.

3. **KEYS TO POWER:** In the beginning, you must work to establish a reputation for one outstanding quality, whether generosity or honesty or cunning. This quality sets you apart and gets other people to talk about you. A solid reputation increases your presence and exaggerates your strengths without your having to spend much energy. It can also create an aura around you that will instill respect, even fear. Your reputation inevitably precedes you, and if it inspires respect, a lot of your work is done for you before you arrive on the scene, or utter a single word. Never go too far in attacks like these, for that will draw more attention to your own vengefulness than to the person you are slandering.
4. **REVERSAL:** Not caring what others think of you, you gain a reputation for insolence and arrogance, but that can be a valuable image in itself. Be the master of your fate, and also of your reputation.

LAW #6: COURT ATTENTION AT ALL COST

JUDGMENT Everything is judged by its appearance; what is unseen counts for nothing. Never let yourself get lost in the crowd, then, or buried in oblivion. Stand out. Be conspicuous, at all cost. Make yourself a magnet of attention by appearing larger, more colorful, more mysterious than the bland and timid masses.

PART I: SURROUND YOUR NAME WITH THE SENSATIONAL AND SCANDALOUS

Draw attention to yourself by creating an unforgettable, even controversial image. Court scandal. Do anything to make yourself seem larger than life and shine more brightly than those around you. Make no distinction between kinds of attention—notoriety of any sort will bring you power. Better to be slandered and attacked than ignored.

1. **OBSERVANCE:** Barnum
“A name without fame is like fire without flame. There is nothing like attracting notice at any cost.” Once people’s eyes are on you, you have a special legitimacy. To create a crowd you have to do something different and odd. Any kind of curiosity will serve the purpose, for crowds are magnetically attracted by the unusual and inexplicable. And once you have their attention, never let it go.
2. **KEYS TO POWER:** Society craves larger-than-life figures, people who stand above the general mediocrity. People feel superior to the person whose actions they can predict. If you show them who is in control by playing against their expectations, you both gain their respect and tighten your hold on their fleeting attention.

PART II: CREATE AN AIR OF MYSTERY

In a world growing increasingly banal and familiar, what seems enigmatic instantly draws attention. Never make it too clear what you are doing or about to do. Do not show all your cards. An air of mystery heightens your presence; it also creates anticipation—everyone will be watching you to see what happens next. Use mystery to beguile, seduce, even frighten.

1. OBSERVANCE: Mata Hari

The mystery she created lay not just in her dancing, or her costumes, or the stories she would tell, or her endless lies about her origins; it lay in an atmosphere enveloping everything she did. There was nothing you could say for sure about her—she was always changing, always surprising her audience with new costumes, new dances, new stories. This air of mystery left the public always wanting to know more, always wondering about her next move. People are enthralled by mystery; because it invites constant interpretation, they never tire of it. The mysterious cannot be grasped. And what cannot be seized and consumed creates power.

2. KEYS TO POWER: power of the mysterious: It invites layers of interpretation, excites our imagination, seduces us into believing that it conceals something marvelous. Mysterious people put others in a kind of inferior position—that of trying to figure them out. To degrees that they can control, they also elicit the fear surrounding anything uncertain or unknown. Do something that cannot be easily explained or interpreted. The mysterious makes your forces seem larger, your power more terrifying.

3. REVERSAL: Do not let your air of mystery be slowly transformed into a reputation for deceit. Recognize when it goes too far, and pull back. Never appear overly greedy for attention, then, for it signals insecurity, and insecurity drives power away.

LAW #7: GET OTHERS TO DO THE WORK FOR YOU, BUT ALWAYS TAKE THE CREDIT

JUDGMENT Use the wisdom, knowledge, and legwork of other people to further your own cause. Not only will such assistance save you valuable time and energy, it will give you a godlike aura of efficiency and speed. In the end your helpers will be forgotten and you will be remembered. Never do yourself what others can do for you.

1. TRANSGRESSION AND OBSERVANCE: Tesla

Never do what others can do for you. The tortoise let others do the work for him while he got the credit.

First, the credit for an invention or creation is as important, if not more important, than the invention itself. You must secure the credit for yourself and keep others from stealing it away. To accomplish this you must always be vigilant and ruthless, keeping your creation quiet until you can be sure there are no vultures circling overhead. Second, learn to take advantage of other people's work to further your own cause. Time is precious and life is short. If you try to do it all

on your own, you run yourself ragged, waste energy, and burn yourself out. It is far better to conserve your forces, pounce on the work others have done, and find a way to make it your own.

2. **KEYS TO POWER:** Do not be naive. Better to protect yourself and join the game. Once you have established a power base, become a vulture yourself, and save yourself a lot of time and energy. Learn to get others to do the work for you while you take the credit, and you appear to be of godlike strength and power. Find people with the skills and creativity you lack. Either hire them, while putting your own name on top of theirs, or find a way to take their work and make it your own. Their creativity thus becomes yours, and you seem a genius to the world.
3. **REVERSAL:** If your power is not firmly enough established, you will seem to be pushing people out of the limelight. To be a brilliant exploiter of talent your position must be unshakable, or you will be accused of deception. Be sure you know when letting other people share the credit serves your purpose.

LAW #8: MAKE OTHER PEOPLE COME TO YOU—USE BAIT IF NECESSARY

JUDGMENT When you force the other person to act, you are the one in control. It is always better to make your opponent come to you, abandoning his own plans in the process. Lure him with fabulous gains—then attack. You hold the cards.

1. **OBSERVANCE:** Napoleon
When I have laid bait for deer, I don't shoot at the first doe that comes to sniff, but wait until the whole herd has gathered round.
2. **KEYS TO POWER:** The essence of power is the ability to keep the initiative, to get others to react to your moves, to keep your opponent and those around you on the defensive. You yourself must learn to master your emotions, and never to be influenced by anger; meanwhile, however, you must play on people's natural tendency to react angrily when pushed and baited. Everything depends on the sweetness of your bait. If your trap is attractive enough, the turbulence of your enemies' emotions and desires will blind them to reality. The greedier they become, the more they can be led around. If you can get other people to dig their own graves, why sweat yourself?
When you are making people come to you, it is sometimes better to let them know you are forcing their hand. The person who makes others come to him appears powerful, and demands respect.
3. **REVERSAL:** Instead of making others come to you, you go to them, force the issue, take the lead. Fast attack can be an awesome weapon, for it forces the other person to react without the time to think or plan.

LAW #9: WIN THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS, NEVER THROUGH ARGUMENT

JUDGMENT Any momentary triumph you think you have gained through argument is really a Pyrrhic victory: The resentment and ill will you stir up is stronger and lasts longer than any momentary change of opinion. It is much more powerful to get others to agree with you through your actions, without saying a word. Demonstrate, do not explicate.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Mucianus

Learn to demonstrate the correctness of your ideas indirectly.

2. **OBSERVANCE:** Michelangelo

To offend such a man by arguing would not only gain Michelangelo nothing, it would put future commissions in jeopardy. Michelangelo was too clever to argue. His solution was to change Soderini's perspective (literally bringing him closer to the nose) without making him realize that this was the cause of his misperception. Such is the double power of winning through actions rather than argument: No one is offended, and your point is proven.

3. **KEYS TO POWER:** In the realm of power you must learn to judge your moves by their long-term effects on other people. The problem in trying to prove a point or gain a victory through argument is that in the end you can never be certain how it affects the people you're arguing with: They may appear to agree with you politely, but inside they may resent you. Or perhaps something you said inadvertently even offended them—words have that insidious ability to be interpreted according to the other person's mood and insecurities.

4. When aiming for power, or trying to conserve it, always look for the indirect route. And also choose your battles carefully. If it does not matter in the long run whether the other person agrees with you—or if time and their own experience will make them understand what you mean—then it is best not even to bother with a demonstration. Save your energy and walk away.

5. **REVERSAL:** To distract and cover your tracks when you are practicing deception or are caught in a lie. Draw the other person into an argument to distract them from your deceptive move. When caught in a lie, the more emotional and certain you appear, the less likely it seems that you are lying.

LAW #10: INFECTION: AVOID THE UNHAPPY AND UNLUCKY

JUDGMENT You can die from someone else's misery—emotional states are as infectious as diseases. You may feel you are helping the drowning man but you are only precipitating your own disaster. The unfortunate sometimes draw misfortune on themselves; they will also draw it on you. Associate with the happy and fortunate instead.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Lola Montez

In large-scale strategy when the enemy is agitated and shows an inclination to rush, do not mind in the least. Make a show of complete calmness, and the enemy will be taken by this and will become relaxed. You infect their spirit. You can infect them with a carefree, drunklike spirit, with

boredom, or even weakness. Do not consort with fools, especially those who consider themselves wise. And be not self-satisfied with your own ignorance. When you suspect you are in the presence of an infector, don't argue, don't try to help, don't pass the person on to your friends, or you will become enmeshed. Flee the infector's presence or suffer the consequences.

2. **KEYS TO POWER:** humans are extremely susceptible to the moods, emotions, and even the ways of thinking of those with whom they spend their time. In the game of power, the people you associate with are critical. The risk of associating with infectors is that you will waste valuable time and energy trying to free yourself. Through a kind of guilt by association, you will also suffer in the eyes of others. Never underestimate the dangers of infection.

Never associate with those who share your defects—they will reinforce everything that holds you back. Only create associations with positive affinities. Make this a rule of life and you will benefit more than from all the therapy in the world.

Recognize the fortunate so that you may choose their company, and the unfortunate so that you may avoid them. Never open your door to the least of misfortunes, for, if you do, many others will follow in its train.... Do not die of another's misery.

3. **REVERSAL:** there is only power and good fortune to be obtained by associating with the fortunate.

LAW #11: LEARN TO KEEP PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON YOU

JUDGMENT To maintain your independence you must always be needed and wanted. The more you are relied on, the more freedom you have. Make people depend on you for their happiness and prosperity and you have nothing to fear. Never teach them enough so that they can do without you.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Count of Carmagnola

They were replaceable. Nothing was lost by killing them. Such is the fate (to a less violent degree, one hopes) of those who do not make others dependent on them. Sooner or later someone comes along who can do the job as well as they can—someone younger, fresher, less expensive, less threatening. Be the only one who can do what you do, and make the fate of those who hire you so entwined with yours that they cannot possibly get rid of you.

2. **OBSERVANCE:** Otto von Bismarck

Joining forces with the powerful can be foolish: They will swallow you up. If you are ambitious, it is much wiser to seek out weak rulers or masters with whom you can create a relationship of dependency. You become their strength, their intelligence, their spine. What power you hold! If they got rid of you the whole edifice would collapse. Necessity rules the world. People rarely act unless compelled to. If you create no need for yourself, then you will be done away with at first opportunity. If, on the other hand, you understand the Laws of Power and make others depend on you for their welfare, if you can counteract their weakness with your own "iron and blood,"

3. **KEYS TO POWER:** The ultimate power is the power to get people to do as you wish. When you can do this without having to force people or hurt them, when they willingly grant you what you desire, then your power is untouchable. The best way to achieve this position is to create a relationship of dependence. Foremost among them is to possess a talent and creative skill that simply cannot be replaced. To make others dependent on you, one route to take is the secret intelligence tactic. By knowing other people's secrets, by holding information that they wouldn't want broadcast, you seal your fate with theirs. You are untouchable, it is better to be feared than loved. Fear you can control; love, never
4. **REVERSAL:** The weakness of making others depend on you is that you are in some measure dependent on them. No such independence comes without a price. You are forced to isolate yourself. Monopolies often turn inward and destroy themselves from the internal pressure.

LAW #12: USE SELECTIVE HONESTY AND GENEROSITY TO DISARM YOUR VICTIM

JUDGMENT One sincere and honest move will cover over dozens of dishonest ones. Openhearted gestures of honesty and generosity bring down the guard of even the most suspicious people. Once your selective honesty opens a hole in their armor, you can deceive and manipulate them at will. A timely gift—a Trojan horse—will serve the same purpose.

1. **OBSERVANCE:** Al Capone
The con artist's job is to bring those defenses down. One sure way to do this is through an act of apparent sincerity and honesty.
2. **KEYS TO POWER:** The essence of deception is distraction. Distracting the people you want to deceive gives you the time and space to do something they won't notice. An act of kindness, generosity, or honesty is often the most powerful form of distraction because it disarms other people's suspicions. Learn to give before you take.
A single act of honesty is often not enough. What is required is a reputation for honesty, built on a series of acts—but these can be quite inconsequential. Once this reputation is established, as with first impressions, it is hard to shake. A gift brings out the child in us, instantly lowering our defenses.
3. **REVERSAL:** When you have a history of deceit behind you, no amount of honesty, generosity, or kindness will fool people. Overt deceptiveness will sometimes cover your tracks, even making you admired for the honesty of your dishonesty

LAW #13: WHEN ASKING FOR HELP, APPEAL TO PEOPLE'S SELF INTEREST, NEVER TO THEIR MERCY OR GRATITUDE

JUDGMENT If you need to turn to an ally for help, do not bother to remind him of your past assistance and good deeds. He will find a way to ignore you. Instead, uncover something in your request, or in your

alliance with him, that will benefit him, and emphasize it out of all proportion. He will respond enthusiastically when he sees something to be gained for himself

1. TRANSGRESSION: Castruccio Castracani

Instead Stefano brought up the past, and debts that carried no obligation. Not only is a man not obliged to be grateful, gratitude is often a terrible burden that he gladly discards.

2. OBSERVANCE: Corcyra

What the Corinthian ambassador did not realize was that his references to Corinth's past generosity to Athens only irritated the Athenians, subtly asking them to feel guilty and putting them under obligation. The Athenians couldn't care less about past favors and friendly feelings. When people choose between talk about the past and talk about the future, a pragmatic person will always opt for the future and forget the past. It is always best to speak pragmatically to a pragmatic person. And in the end, most people are in fact pragmatic—they will rarely act against their own self-interest.

3. KEYS TO POWER: There is an art to asking for help, an art that depends on your ability to understand the person you are dealing with, and to not confuse your needs with theirs. What they do not realize is that even the most powerful person is locked inside needs of his own, and that if you make no appeal to his self-interest, he merely sees you as desperate or, at best, a waste of time. Every person you deal with is like another culture, an alien land with a past that has nothing to do with yours. Yet you can bypass the differences between you and him by appealing to his self-interest. Do not be subtle: You have valuable knowledge to share, you will fill his coffers with gold, you will make him live longer and happier. This is a language that all of us speak and understand. A key step in the process is to understand the other person's psychology. Is he vain? Is he concerned about his reputation or his social standing? Does he have enemies you could help him vanquish? Is he simply motivated by money and power?

Ch'u-Ts'ai chose to appeal to the only emotion that would work on such a man: greed.

Self-interest is the lever that will move people. Once you make them see how you can in some way meet their needs or advance their cause, their resistance to your requests for help will magically fall away. At each step on the way to acquiring power, you must train yourself to think your way inside the other person's mind, to see their needs and interests, to get rid of the screen of your own feelings that obscure the truth. Master this art and there will be no limits to what you can accomplish.

The shortest and best way to make your fortune is to let people see clearly that it is in their interests to promote yours.

4. REVERSAL: Some people will see an appeal to their self-interest as ugly and ignoble. They actually prefer to be able to exercise charity, mercy, and justice, which are their ways of feeling superior to you: When you beg them for help, you emphasize their power and position. They are

strong enough to need nothing from you except the chance to feel superior. You must distinguish the differences among powerful people and figure out what makes them tick. When they ooze greed, do not appeal to their charity. When they want to look charitable and noble, do not appeal to their greed.

LAW #14: POSE AS A FRIEND, WORK AS A SPY

JUDGMENT Knowing about your rival is critical. Use spies to gather valuable information that will keep you a step ahead. Better still: Play the spy yourself. In polite social encounters, learn to probe. Ask indirect questions to get people to reveal their weaknesses and intentions. There is no occasion that is not an opportunity for artful spying.

1. **OBSERVANCE:** Duveen and Mellon

power of artful spying: It makes you seem all-powerful, clairvoyant. Your knowledge of your mark can also make you seem charming, so well can you anticipate his desires. No one sees the source of your power, and what they cannot see they cannot fight

2. **KEYS TO POWER:** In the realm of power, your goal is a degree of control over future events. The trick is to find a way to probe them, to find out their secrets and hidden intentions, without letting them know what you are up to. It is far better to be the spy yourself, to pose as a friend while secretly gathering information. Emphasize friendly chatter, not valuable information. Your search for gems of information cannot be too obvious, or your probing questions will reveal more about yourself and your intentions than about the information you hope to find.

By pretending to bare your heart to another person, in other words, you make them more likely to reveal their own secrets. Give them a false confession and they will give you a real one.

Suggested vehemently contradicting people you're in conversation with as a way of irritating them, stirring them up so that they lose some of the control over their words. In their emotional reaction they will reveal all kinds of truths about themselves, truths you can later use against them

3. **REVERSAL:** Information is critical to power, but just as you spy on other people, you must be prepared for them to spy on you. By planting the information of your choice, you control the game. By feeding people wrong information, then, you gain a potent advantage. While spying gives you a third eye, disinformation puts out one of your enemy's eyes.

LAW #15: CRUSH YOUR ENEMY TOTALLY

JUDGMENT All great leaders since Moses have known that a feared enemy must be crushed completely. (Sometimes they have learned this the hard way.) If one ember is left alight, no matter how dimly it smolders, a fire will eventually break out. More is lost through stopping halfway than through total annihilation: The enemy will recover, and will seek revenge. Crush him, not only in body but in spirit.

1. TRANSGRESSION: Liu Pang

This is the fate that faces all of us when we sympathize with our enemies, when pity, or the hope of reconciliation, makes us pull back from doing away with them. Power cannot be dealt with this way. It must be exterminated, crushed, and denied the chance to return to haunt us.

Reconciliation is out of the question. Only one side can win, and it must win totally.

Those who seek to achieve things should show no mercy. Kautilya

2. OBSERVANCE: Wu Chao

In Wu's gradual but remarkable rise to the top, she was never naive. She knew that any hesitation, any momentary weakness, would spell her end. If, every time she got rid of a rival a new one appeared. She had to crush them all or be killed herself.

3. KEYS TO POWER: Have no mercy. Crush your enemies as totally as they would crush you.

Ultimately the only peace and security you can hope for from your enemies is their disappearance.

Allow your enemies no options. Annihilate them and their territory is yours to carve. The goal of power is to control your enemies completely, to make them obey your will. You cannot afford to go halfway.

Negotiation is the insidious viper that will eat away at your victory, so give your enemies nothing to negotiate, no hope, no room to maneuver. They are crushed and that is that.

Realize this: In your struggle for power you will stir up rivalries and create enemies. There will be people you cannot win over, who will remain your enemies no matter what. But whatever wound you inflicted on them, deliberately or not, do not take their hatred personally. Just recognize that there is no possibility of peace between you, especially as long as you stay in power. If you let them stick around, they will seek revenge, as certainly as night follows day. To wait for them to show their cards is just silly; as Empress Wu understood, by then it will be too late. Time makes the venom grow stronger

4. REVERSAL: It is almost always wiser to crush your enemy. If they plot revenge years later, do not let your guard down, but simply crush them again.

LAW #16: USE ABSENCE TO INCREASE RESPECT AND HONOR

JUDGMENT Too much circulation makes the price go down: The more you are seen and heard from, the more common you appear. If you are already established in a group, temporary withdrawal from it will make you more talked about, even more admired. You must learn when to leave. Create value through scarcity

1. TRANSGRESSION AND OBSERVANCE: Guillaume

Giving no reason for your absence excites even more: The other person assumes he or she is at fault. While you are away, the lover's imagination takes flight, and a stimulated imagination

cannot help but make love grow stronger. Absence diminishes minor passions and inflames great ones, as the wind douses a candle and fans a fire.

2. OBSERVANCE: Deioces

By serving so many clients, he had become too noticeable, too available, and had lost the respect he had earlier enjoyed. People were taking his services for granted. The only way to regain the veneration and power he wanted was to withdraw completely, and let the Medes taste what life was like without him. As he expected, they came begging for him to rule.

3. KEYS TO POWER: A strong presence will draw power and attention to you—you shine more brightly than those around you. The more you are seen and heard from, the more your value degrades. You become a habit. At the right moment you must learn to withdraw yourself before they unconsciously push you away.

The moment you allow yourself to be treated like anyone else, it is too late—you are swallowed and digested. To prevent this you need to starve the other person of your presence. Force their respect by threatening them with the possibility that they will lose you for good; create a pattern of presence and absence

By completely withdrawing for a while, you create a kind of death before death. And when you come back, it will be as if you had come back from the dead—an air of resurrection will cling to you, and people will be relieved at your return.

Extend the law of scarcity to your own skills. Make what you are offering the world rare and hard to find, and you instantly increase its value. Make yourself too available and the aura of power you have created around yourself will wear away. Turn the game around: Make yourself less accessible and you increase the value of your presence.

4. REVERSAL: The need to withdraw only comes after you have established your presence; leave too early and you do not increase your respect, you are simply forgotten. When you are first entering onto the world's stage, create an image that is recognizable, reproducible, and is seen everywhere. Until that status is attained, absence is dangerous—instead of fanning the flames, it will extinguish them. Only what is seen, appreciated, and loved will be missed in its absence.

LAW #17: KEEP OTHERS IN SUSPENDED TERROR: CULTIVATE AN AIR OF UNPREDICTABILITY

JUDGMENT Humans are creatures of habit with an insatiable need to see familiarity in other people's actions. Your predictability gives them a sense of control. Turn the tables: Be deliberately unpredictable. Behavior that seems to have no consistency or purpose will keep them off-balance, and they will wear themselves out trying to explain your moves. Taken to an extreme, this strategy can intimidate and terrorize.

1. OBSERVANCE: Bobby Fischer

First, because to win you have to be supremely patient and farseeing; and second, because the game is built on patterns, whole sequences of moves that have been played before and will be played again, with slight alterations, in any one match. Your opponent analyzes the patterns you are playing and uses them to try to foresee your moves. Allowing him nothing predictable to base his strategy on gives you a big advantage. In chess as in life, when people cannot figure out what you are doing, they are kept in a state of terror—waiting, uncertain, confused.

2. KEYS TO POWER: A person of power instills a kind of fear by deliberately unsettling those around him to keep the initiative on his side. You sometimes need to strike without warning, to make others tremble when they least expect it. “The best calculation is the absence of calculation. Once you have attained a certain level of recognition, others generally figure that when you do something, it’s for an intelligent reason. So it’s really foolish to plot out your movements too carefully in advance. You’re better off acting capriciously.”
3. REVERSAL: Unpredictability can work against you sometimes, especially if you are in a subordinate position. There are times when it is better to let people feel comfortable and settled around you than to disturb them. Too much unpredictability will be seen as a sign of indecisiveness, or even of some more serious psychic problem. Patterns are powerful, and you can terrify people by disrupting them. Such power should only be used judiciously.

LAW #18: DO NOT BUILD FORTRESSES TO PROTECT YOURSELF- ISOLATION IS DANGEROUS

JUDGMENT The world is dangerous and enemies are everywhere—everyone has to protect themselves. A fortress seems the safest. But isolation exposes you to more dangers than it protects you from—it cuts you off from valuable information, it makes you conspicuous and an easy target. Better to circulate among people, find allies, mingle. You are shielded from your enemies by the crowd.

1. TRANSGRESSION: Ch’in Shih Huang Ti
What isolation brings: Retreat into a fortress and you lose contact with the sources of your power. You lose your ear for what is happening around you, as well as a sense of proportion. Instead of being safer, you cut yourself off from the kind of knowledge on which your life depends. Never enclose yourself so far from the streets that you cannot hear what is happening around you, including the plots against you.
2. OBSERVANCE: Louis XIV
served a crucial function: The king could keep an eye and an ear on everyone and everything around him.
3. KEYS TO POWER: All activity should revolve around you, and you should be aware of everything happening on the street, and of anyone who might be hatching plots against you. Cicero mingled everywhere, knew everyone, and had such a vast network of connections that an enemy here could easily be counterbalanced by an ally there. This law pertains to kings and queens, and to those of

the highest power: The moment you lose contact with your people, seeking security in isolation, rebellion is brewing. Never imagine yourself so elevated that you can afford to cut yourself off from even the lowest echelons. By retreating to a fortress, you make yourself an easy target for your plotting subjects, who view your isolation as an insult and a reason for rebellion.

4. REVERSAL: As a temporary recourse, then, isolation can help you to gain perspective. The danger is, however, that this kind of isolation will sire all kinds of strange and perverted ideas. You may gain perspective on the larger picture, but you lose a sense of your own smallness and limitations.

LAW #19: KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH- DO NOT OFFEND THE WRONG PERSON

JUDGMENT: There are many different kinds of people in the world, and you can never assume that everyone will react to your strategies in the same way. Deceive or outmaneuver some people and they will spend the rest of their lives seeking revenge. They are wolves in lambs' clothing. Choose your victims and opponents carefully, then never offend or deceive the wrong person.

1. Transgression I: Muhammad

Never assume that the person you are dealing with is weaker or less important than you are. Some men are slow to take offense, which may make you misjudge the thickness of their skin, and fail to worry about insulting them. But should you offend their honor and their pride, they will overwhelm you with a violence that seems sudden and extreme given their slowness to anger. If you want to turn people down, it is best to do so politely and respectfully, even if you feel their request is impudent or their offer ridiculous. Never reject them with an insult until you know them better; you may be dealing with a Genghis Khan

2. Transgression II: Norfleet

All people have insecurities, and often the best way to deceive a sucker is to play upon his insecurities. But in the realm of power, everything is a question of degree, and the person who is decidedly more insecure than the average mortal presents great dangers. If you practice deception or trickery of any sort, study your mark well. Some people's insecurity and ego fragility cannot tolerate the slightest offense.

3. Transgression III: Ch'ung-erh

You can never be sure who you are dealing with. A man who is of little importance and means today can be a person of power tomorrow. We forget a lot in our lives, but we rarely forget an insult. There is nothing to be gained by insulting a person unnecessarily. Swallow the impulse to offend, even if the other person seems weak. The satisfaction is meager compared to the danger that someday he or she will be in a position to hurt you.

4. Transgression IV: Henry Ford

Ford was the unassuming plainman type who just isn't worth the bother. He was the incarnation of those literal-minded folk who do not possess enough imagination to be deceived.

5. **KEYS TO POWER:** Study people's weaknesses, the chinks in their armor, their areas of both pride and insecurity. Know their ins and outs before you even decide whether or not to deal with them. First, in judging and measuring your opponent, never rely on your instincts. You will make the greatest mistakes of all if you rely on such inexact indicators. Nothing can substitute for gathering concrete knowledge. Study and spy on your opponent for however long it takes; this will pay off in the long run.
Second, never trust appearances. Anyone with a serpent's heart can use a show of kindness to cloak it; a person who is blustery on the outside is often really a coward. Learn to see through appearances and their contradictions. Never trust the version that people give of themselves—it is utterly unreliable.
6. **REVERSAL:** Learn to tell the lions from the lambs or pay the price.

LAW #20: DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE

JUDGMENT It is the fool who always rushes to take sides. Do not commit to any side or cause but yourself. By maintaining your independence, you become the master of others- playing people against one another, making them pursue you.

PART I: DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE, BUT BE COURTED BY ALL

If you allow people to feel they possess you to any degree, you lose all power over them. By not committing your affections, they will only try harder to win you over. Stay aloof and you gain the power that comes from their attention and frustrated desire. Play the Virgin Queen: Give them hope but never satisfaction.

1. **OBSERVANCE:** Queen Elizabeth I
Elizabeth knew that marriage can often lead to a female ruler's undoing: By marrying and committing to an alliance with one party or nation, the queen becomes embroiled in conflicts that are not of her choosing, conflicts which may eventually overwhelm her or lead her into a futile war. As the center of attention, she was in control. Keeping her independence above all, Elizabeth protected her power and made herself an object of worship.
2. **KEYS TO POWER:** Refusing to commit to a person or group is one of these. When you hold yourself back, you incur not anger but a kind of respect. As your reputation for independence grows, more and more people will come to desire you, wanting to be the one who gets you to commit. Desire is like a virus: If we see that someone is desired by other people, we tend to find this person desirable too. Encourage the attention, stimulate their interest, but do not commit at any cost.
Alcibiades tactic: Put yourself in the middle between competing powers. Lure one side with the promise of your help; the other side, always wanting to outdo its enemy, will pursue you as well.

As each side vies for your attention, you will immediately seem a person of great influence and desirability. More power will accrue to you than if you had rashly committed to one side. To perfect this tactic you need to keep yourself inwardly free from emotional entanglements, and to view all those around you as pawns in your rise to the top.

People who rush to the support of others tend to gain little respect in the process, for their help is so easily obtained, while those who stand back find themselves besieged with supplicants. Their aloofness is powerful, and everyone wants them on their side.

When you want to seduce a woman, Stendhal advises, court her sister first. Stay aloof and people will come to you.

PART II: DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE-STAY ABOVE THE FRAY

Do not let people drag you into their petty fights and squabbles. Seem interested and supportive, but find a way to remain neutral; let others do the fighting while you stand back, watch and wait. When the fighting parties are good and tired they will be ripe for the picking. You can make it a practice, in fact, to stir up quarrels between other people, and then offer to mediate, gaining power as the go-between.

The weak benefit by the quarrels of the mighty.

1. OBSERVANCE: Isabella d'Este

Once you took the side of any of the forces in the field, you were doomed. The powerful would take you over, the weak would wear you down. Any new alliance would lead to a new enemy, and as this cycle stirred up more conflict, other forces would be dragged in, until you could no longer extricate yourself. Eventually you would collapse from exhaustion.

The source of Isabella's power was her clever ability to seem interested in the affairs and interests of each side, while actually committing to no one but herself and her kingdom. Once you step into a fight that is not of your own choosing, you lose all initiative. The combatants' interests become your interests; you become their tool. Learn to control yourself, to restrain your natural tendency to take sides and join the fight. Be friendly and charming to each of the combatants, then step back as they collide. With every battle they grow weaker, while you grow stronger with every battle you avoid.

2. KEYS TO POWER: To succeed in the game of power, you have to master your emotions. But even if you succeed in gaining such self-control, you can never control the temperamental dispositions of those around you.

Most people operate in a whirlpool of emotions, constantly reacting, churning up squabbles and conflicts. Your self-control and autonomy will only bother and infuriate them. They will try to draw you into the whirlpool, begging you to take sides in their endless battles, or to make peace for them.

On the other hand, you cannot completely stand aside, for that would cause needless offense. To play the game properly, you must seem interested in other people's problems, even sometimes appear to take their side. But while you make outward gestures of support, you must maintain your inner energy and sanity by keeping your emotions disengaged. No matter how hard people try to pull you in, never let your interest in their affairs and petty squabbles go beyond the surface. Give them gifts, listen with a sympathetic look, even occasionally play the charmer—but inwardly keep both the friendly kings and the perfidious Borgias at arm's length.

Your moves stay matters of your own choosing, not defensive reactions to the push-and-pull of those around you.

Slowness to pick up your weapons can be a weapon itself, especially if you let other people exhaust themselves fighting, then take advantage of their exhaustion.

Time to position yourself to take advantage of the situation once one side starts to lose. You can also take the game a step further, by promising your support to both sides in a conflict while maneuvering so that the one to come out ahead in the struggle is you.

Preserving your autonomy gives you options when people come to blows— you can play the mediator, broker the peace, while really securing your own interests. You can pledge support to one side and the other may have to court you with a higher bid or you can appear to take both sides, then play the antagonists against each other.

Oftentimes when a conflict breaks out, you are tempted to side with the stronger party, or the one that offers you apparent advantages in an alliance. This is risky business. First, it is often difficult to foresee which side will prevail in the long run. But even if you guess right and ally yourself with the stronger party, you may find yourself swallowed up and lost, or conveniently forgotten, when they become victors. Side with the weaker, on the other hand, and you are doomed. But play a waiting game and you cannot lose.

Every moment wasted on the affairs of others subtracts from your strength. In the end, maintaining your independence and self-reliance will gain you more respect and place you in a position of power from which you can choose to help others on your own initiative.

3. REVERSAL: If you play too many parties against one another, they will see through the maneuver and will gang up on you. If you keep your growing number of suitors waiting too long, you will inspire not desire but distrust. People will start to lose interest. Eventually you may find it worthwhile to commit to one side- if only for appearances sake, to prove you are capable of attachment. Key will be to maintain your inner independence- to keep yourself from getting emotionally involved.

LAW #21: PLAY A SUCKER TO CATCH A SUCKER- SEEM DUMBER THAN YOUR MARK

JUDGMENT No one likes feeling stupider than the next person. The trick, then, is to make your victims

feel smart—and not just smart, but smarter than you are. Once convinced of this, they will never suspect that you may have ulterior motives.

1. **KEYS TO POWER:** Subliminally reassure people that they are more intelligent than you are, or even that you are a bit of a moron, and you can run rings around them. The feeling of intellectual superiority you give them will disarm their suspicion-muscles.

The easier they think it is to prey on you, the more easily you can turn the tables. This trick is also useful if you are ambitious yet find yourself low in the hierarchy: Appearing less intelligent than you are, even a bit of a fool, is the perfect disguise. Look like a harmless pig and no one will believe you harbor dangerous ambitions. They may even promote you since you seem so likable, and subservient.

Always make people believe they are smarter and more sophisticated than you are. They will keep you around because you make them feel better about themselves, and the longer you are around, the more opportunities you will have to deceive them.

The best way to be well received by all is to clothe yourself in the skin of the dumbest of brutes.

2. **REVERSAL:** it is important to be able to play the professor when necessary and never impose such an attitude for its own sake.

LAW #22: USE THE SURRENDER TACTIC: TRANSFORM WEAKNESS INTO POWER

JUDGMENT When you are weaker, never fight for honor's sake; choose surrender instead. Surrender gives you time to recover, time to torment and irritate your conqueror, time to wait for his power to wane. Do not give him the satisfaction of fighting and defeating you—surrender first. By turning the other cheek you infuriate and unsettle him. Make surrender a tool of power.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Athenians

When you are weaker, there is nothing to be gained by fighting a useless fight. No one comes to help the weak—by doing so they would only put themselves in jeopardy. The weak are alone and must submit. Fighting gives you nothing to gain but martyrdom, and in the process a lot of people who do not believe in your cause will die. Weakness is no sin, and can even become a strength if you learn how to play it right.

Lulling the enemy into complacency, it gives you time to recoup, time to undermine, time for revenge. Never sacrifice that time in exchange for honor in a battle that you cannot win.

2. **OBSERVANCE:** Brecht

People trying to make a show of their authority are easily deceived by the surrender tactic. Your outward sign of submission makes them feel important; satisfied that you respect them, they become easier targets for a later counterattack, or for the kind of indirect ridicule used by Brecht. Measuring your power over time, never sacrifice long-term maneuverability for the short-lived glories of martyrdom.

3. **KEYS TO POWER:** Inwardly you stay firm, but outwardly you bend. Deprived of a reason to get angry, your opponents will often be bewildered instead. And they are unlikely to react with more violence, which would demand a reaction from you. Instead you are allowed the time and space to plot the countermoves that will bring them down.

If you surrender instead, you have an opportunity to coil around your enemy and strike with your fangs from close up.

Use surrender to gain access to your enemy. Learn his ways, insinuate yourself with him slowly, outwardly conform to his customs, but inwardly maintain your own culture. Eventually you will emerge victorious, for while he considers you weak and inferior, and takes no precautions against you, you are using the time to catch up and surpass him.

4. **REVERSAL:** It is precisely to avoid martyrdom that one surrenders, but there are times when the enemy will not relent, and martyrdom seems the only way out. Furthermore, if you are willing to die, others may gain power and inspiration from your example. But For every famous martyr there are thousands more who have inspired neither a religion nor a rebellion

LAW #23: CONCENTRATE YOUR FORCES

JUDGMENT: Conserve your forces and energies by keeping them concentrated at their strongest point. You gain more by finding a rich mine and mining it deeper, than by flitting from one shallow mine to another. Intensity defeats extensity every time. When looking for sources of power to elevate you, find the one key patron, the fat cow who will give you milk for a long time to come.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Wu Tzu-hsui

Drunk with success and sick with ambition, such empires expand to grotesque proportions and meet a ruin that is total. “If you are not in danger,” says Sun-tzu, “do not fight.” It is almost a physical law: What is bloated beyond its proportions inevitably collapses. The mind must not wander from goal to goal, or be distracted by success from its sense of purpose and proportion. What is concentrated, coherent, and connected to its past has power. What is dissipated, divided, and distended rots and falls to the ground. The bigger it bloats, the harder it falls.

2. **OBSERVANCE:** Rothschild

Concentration was the foundation of the Rothschilds’ power, wealth, and stability. There is no higher and simpler law of strategy than that of keeping one’s forces concentrated

3. **KEYS TO POWER:** The solution is a form of retreat inside ourselves, to the past, to more concentrated forms of thought and action. Single-mindedness of purpose, total concentration on the goal, and the use of these qualities against people less focused, people in a state of distraction—such an arrow will find its mark every time and overwhelm the enemy. Concentrate on a single goal, a single task, and beat it into submission. The fool flits from one person to another, believing that he will survive by spreading himself out. Much energy is saved,

and more power is attained, by affixing yourself to a single, appropriate source of power. In the end, the single patron appreciates your loyalty and becomes dependent on your services; in the long run the master serves the slave. Perfection resides in quality, not quantity.

4. REVERSAL: Sometimes dispersion is the proper tactical move. The more patrons and masters you serve the less risk you run if one of them falls from power. Being too single-minded in purpose can make you an intolerable bore

LAW #24: PLAY THE PERFECT COURTIER

JUDGMENT The perfect courtier thrives in a world where everything revolves around power and political dexterity. He has mastered the art of indirection; he flatters, yields to superiors, and asserts power over others in the most oblique and graceful manner. Learn and apply the laws of courtiership and there will be no limit to how far you can rise in the court.

LAWS OF COURT POLITICS :

1. Avoid Ostentation: In trumpeting your own achievements, and always talk less about yourself than about other people.
2. Practice Nonchalance: It is better for them to marvel at how gracefully you have achieved your accomplishment than to wonder why it took so much work.
3. Be Frugal with Flattery: Learn to flatter indirectly—by downplaying your own contribution
4. Arrange to Be Noticed: Pay attention to your physical appearance, then, and find a way to create a distinctive—a subtly distinctive—style and image.
5. Alter Your Style and Language According to the Person You Are Dealing With: The idea that talking and acting the same way with everyone, no matter what their rank, makes you somehow a paragon of civilization—is a terrible mistake. You must change your style and your way of speaking to suit each person. Never assume that your criteria of behavior and judgment are universal.
6. Never Be the Bearer of Bad News: Bring only good news and your approach will gladden your master.
7. Never Affect Friendliness and Intimacy with Your Master: Never approach him in an easy, friendly way, or act as if you are on the best of terms
8. Never Criticize Those Above You Directly: You must learn, however, to couch your advice and criticism as indirectly and as politely as possible. Err on the side of subtlety and gentleness.
9. Be Frugal in Asking Those Above You for Favors: Ask for favors as rarely as possible, and know when to stop. Do not ask for favors on another person's behalf, least of all a friend's
10. Never Joke About Appearances or Taste: avoid any kind of joke about appearance or taste, two highly sensitive areas

11. Do Not Be the Court Cynic: The ability to express wonder and amazement, and seem like you mean it, is a rare and dying talent, but one still greatly valued.
12. Be Self-observant: Master Your Emotions. As an actor in a great play, you must learn to cry and laugh on command and when it is appropriate. You must be able both to disguise your anger and frustration and to fake your contentment and agreement. You must be the master of your own face.
13. Fit the Spirit of the Times: Your spirit and way of thinking must keep up with the times, even if the times offend your sensibilities.
14. Be a Source of Pleasure: charm and the promise of delight will draw us like moths to a flame. Make yourself the flame and you will rise to the top

SCENES OF COURT LIFE: Exemplary Deeds and Fatal Mistake

1. Scene I: Alexander
In court, honesty is a fool's game. Never be so self-absorbed as to believe that the master is interested in your criticisms of him, no matter how accurate they are
2. Scene II: Chinese
Identify no one person as the source of criticism, make the advice as impersonal as possible, but let the emperor know the gravity of the situation
3. Scene III: Jules Mansart
Never imagine that skill and talent are all that matter. In court the courtier's art is more important than his talent; never spend so much time on your studies that you neglect your social skills. And the greatest skill of all is the ability to make the master look more talented than those around him.
4. Scene IV: Jean-Baptiste Isabey
It is often very difficult to satisfy the master, but to satisfy two masters in one stroke takes the genius of a great courtier
5. Scene V: Beau Brummell
Never joke about a person's plumpness, even indirectly and particularly when he is your master. The poorhouses of history are filled with people who have made such jokes at their master's expense.
6. Scene VI: Pope Urban VIII
In matters of taste you can never be too obsequious with your master. Taste is one of the ego's prickliest parts; never impugn or question the master's taste
7. Scene VII: Chao
Do not overstep your bounds. Do what you are assigned to do, to the best of your abilities, and never do more. Fulfilling a task that has not been asked of you just makes people suspicious.
8. Scene VIII: Filippo

Make your master a gift of your talents and you will rise above other courtiers. Use him as a stepping stone, a way of displaying your talent and eventually buying your freedom from enslavement.

9. Scene IX: Alfonso

Never ask for too much, then, and know when to stop. Better to win favors by deserving them, so that they are bestowed without your asking.

10. Scene X: painter Turner

Your equals and subordinates play integral parts also. A court is a vast stew of resentments, fears, and powerful envy. You have to placate everyone who might someday harm you, deflecting their resentment and envy and diverting their hostility onto other people.

11. Scene XI: Churchill

It is unwise to insult or offend the taste of people of power, even if they are below or equal to you. Put in the sheep. It is always beneficial to play the obliging courtier, even when you are not serving a master.

THE DELICATE GAME OF COURTiership: A Warning:

Never risk being caught in your maneuvers; never let people see your devices. If that happens you instantly pass in people's perceptions from a courtier of great manners to a loathsome rogue. It is a delicate game you play; apply the utmost attention to covering your tracks, and never let your master unmask you

LAW #25: RE-CREATE YOURSELF

JUDGMENT Do not accept the roles that society foists on you. Re-create yourself by forging a new identity, one that commands attention and never bores the audience. Be the master of your own image rather than letting others define it for you. Incorporate dramatic devices into your public gestures and actions— your power will be enhanced and your character will seem larger than life.

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Julius Caesar

You must learn to enlarge your actions through dramatic techniques such as surprise, suspense, the creation of sympathy, and symbolic identification. Also like him, you must be constantly aware of your audience—of what will please them and what will bore them. You must arrange to place yourself at the center, to command attention, and never to be upstaged at any cost.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Dudevant/George Sand

The world wants to assign you a role in life. And once you accept that role you are doomed. Your power is limited to the tiny amount allotted to the role you have selected or have been forced to assume. Forge a new identity, one of your own making, one that has had no boundaries assigned to it by an envious and resentful world. It makes you responsible for your own creation.

3. **KEYS TO POWER:** The Promethean task of the powerful is to take control of the process, to stop allowing others that ability to limit and mold them. Remake yourself into a character of power. Working on yourself like clay should be one of your greatest and most pleasurable life tasks. It makes you in essence an artist—an artist creating yourself.
The first step in the process of self-creation is self-consciousness—being aware of yourself as an actor and taking control of your appearance and emotions. People who wear their hearts on their sleeves out in society are tiresome and embarrassing. Learn self-control. Adopt the plasticity of the actor, who can mold his or her face to the emotion required.
The second step in the process of self-creation is a variation: creation of a memorable character, one that compels attention, that stands out above the other players on the stage.
The key to keeping the audience on the edge of their seats is letting events unfold slowly, then speeding them up at the right moment, according to a pattern and tempo that you control. It is less what you do that matters, clearly, than how you do it—your gracefulness and imposing stillness on the social stage count for more than overdoing your part and moving around too much.
Learn to play many roles, to be whatever the moment requires. Adapt your mask to the situation—be protean in the faces you wear.
4. **REVERSAL:** no reversal to this critical law. Bad acting only creates embarrassment.

LAW #26 KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN

JUDGMENT You must seem a paragon of civility and efficiency: Your hands are never soiled by mistakes and nasty deeds. Maintain such a spotless appearance by using others as scapegoats and cat's-paws to disguise your involvement.

PART I: CONCEAL YOUR MISTAKES- HAVE A SCAPEGOAT AROUND TO TAKE THE BLAME

Our good name and reputation depend more on what we conceal than on what we reveal. Everyone makes mistakes, but those who are truly clever manage to hide them, and to make sure someone else is blamed. A convenient scapegoat should always be kept around for such moments.

1. **OBSERVANCE LAW I: Ts'ao Ts'ao**
People of power, however, are undone not by the mistakes they make, but by the way they deal with them. Excuses and apologies are much too blunt tools for this delicate operation; the powerful avoid them. By apologizing you open up all sorts of doubts about your competence, your intentions, any other mistakes you may not have confessed. Excuses satisfy no one and apologies make everyone uncomfortable. The mistake does not vanish with an apology; it deepens and festers. Better to cut it off instantly, distract attention from yourself, and focus attention on a

convenient scapegoat before people have time to ponder your responsibility or your possible incompetence.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Cesare Borgia

The scapegoat in this case had been planned from the beginning. With this second kind of scapegoat it is wise to separate yourself from the hatchet man at some point, either leaving him dangling in the wind or, like Cesare, even making yourself the one to bring him to justice. Not only are you free of involvement in the problem, you can appear as the one who cleaned it up.

3. KEYS TO POWER: since power depends on appearances, and those in power must seem never to make mistakes, the use of scapegoats is as popular as ever.

4. REVERSAL: Be careful, however, not to create a martyr. It is important that you remain the victim, the poor leader betrayed by the incompetence of those around you.

PART II: MAKE USE OF THE CAT'S-PAW

If there is something unpleasant or unpopular that needs to be done, it is far too risky for you to do the work yourself. You need a cat's-paw—someone who does the dirty, dangerous work for you. The cat's-paw grabs what you need, hurts whom you need hurt, and keeps people from noticing that you are the one responsible. Let someone else be the executioner, or the bearer of bad news, while you bring only joy and glad tidings.

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Cleopatra

Legend has it that Cleopatra succeeded through her seductive charms, but in reality her power came from an ability to get people to do her bidding without realizing they were being manipulated.

A queen must never dirty her hands with ugly tasks, nor can a king appear in public with blood on his face. Yet power cannot survive without the constant squashing of enemies—there will always be dirty little tasks that have to be done to keep you on the throne.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Mao

If you are temporarily weakened and need time to recover, it will often serve you well to use those around you both as a screen to hide your intentions and as a cat's paw to do your work for you.

Look for a powerful third party who shares an enemy with you (if for different reasons), then take advantage of their superior power to deal blows which would have cost you much more energy, since you are weaker.

Always search out the overly aggressive as potential cat's-paws—they are often more than willing to get into a fight, and you can choose just the right fight for your purposes.

3. OBSERVANCE LAW III: Kuriyama Daizen

Granting of a favor is never simple: If it is done with fuss and obviousness, its receiver feels burdened by an obligation. Never impose your favors. Search out ways to make yourself the

cat's-paw, indirectly extricating your friends from distress without imposing yourself or making them feel obligated to you.

One should not be too straightforward. Go and see the forest. The straight trees are cut down, the crooked ones are left standing. Kautilya

4. KEYS TO POWER: The truly powerful, on the other hand, seem never to be in a hurry or overburdened. While others work their fingers to the bone, they take their leisure. They know how to find the right people to put in the effort while they save their energy and keep their hands out of the fire.

Truly powerful people keep their hands clean. Only good things surround them, and the only announcements they make are of glorious achievements.

The key to planning such a strategy is the ability to think far ahead, to imagine ways in which other people can be baited into doing the job for you. This strategy works to disguise your goal, shrouding it in mystery, like the strange enemy boats appearing dimly in the mist.

If you disguise your intentions, it is much easier to guide them into moves that accomplish exactly what you want done, but prefer not to do yourself. This may require planning several moves in advance.

Use an associate or subordinate to hook you up with your primary target. The cat's-paw establishes your credibility and shields you from the unsavory appearance of being too pushy in your courtship. The easiest and most effective way to use a cat's-paw is often to plant information with him that he will then spread to your primary target. False or planted information is a powerful tool, especially if spread by a dupe whom no one suspects. You will find it very easy to play innocent and disguise yourself as the source.

If you can make your assistance subtle and gracious rather than boastful and burdensome, your recompense will be that much the more satisfying and powerful.

5. REVERSAL: The cat's-paw and the scapegoat must be used with extreme caution and delicacy. If you have to use a cat's-paw or a scapegoat in an action of great consequence, be very careful: Too much can go wrong. It is often wiser to use such dupes in more innocent endeavors, where mistakes or miscalculations will cause no serious harm.

LAW #27: PLAY ON PEOPLE'S NEED TO BELIEVE TO CREATE A CULT LIKE FOLLOWING

JUDGMENT People have an overwhelming desire to believe in something. Become the focal point of such desire by offering them a cause, a new faith to follow. Keep your words vague but full of promise; emphasize enthusiasm over rationality and clear thinking. Give your new disciples rituals to perform, ask them to make sacrifices on your behalf. In the absence of organized religion and grand causes, your new belief system will bring you untold power.

SCIENCE OF CHARLATANISM, OR HOW TO CREATE A CULT IN FIVE EASY STEPS

1. As humans, we have a desperate need to believe in something, anything. Dangle in front of us some new cause, elixir, get rich-quick scheme, or the latest technological trend or art movement and we leap from the water as one to take the bait. The chronicles of the new trends and cults that have made a mass following for themselves could fill a library. Always in a rush to believe in something, we will manufacture saints and faiths out of nothing. Make yourself the object of worship. Make people form a cult around you.
2. Step 1: Keep It Vague; Keep It Simple:
Your initial speeches, conversations, and interviews must include two elements: on the one hand the promise of something great and transformative, and on the other a total vagueness. Instead of the complicated explanations of real life, return to the primitive solutions of our ancestors, to good old country remedies, to mysterious panaceas.
3. Step 2: Emphasize the Visual and the Sensual over the Intellectual.
Once people have begun to gather around you, two dangers will present themselves: boredom and skepticism. You need to amuse the bored, then, and ward off the cynics. You can fool too many of the people too much of the time. Surround yourself with luxury, dazzle your followers with visual splendor, fill their eyes with spectacle. Appeal to all the senses: Use incense for scent, soothing music for hearing, colorful charts and graphs for the eye.
4. Step 3: Borrow the Forms of Organized Religion to Structure the Group
Create rituals for your followers; organize them into a hierarchy, ranking them in grades of sanctity, and giving them names and titles that resound with religious overtones; ask them for sacrifices that will fill your coffers and increase your power.
5. Step 4: Disguise Your Source of Income
You must never be seen as hungry for money and the power it brings. By surrounding yourself with luxury you become living proof of the soundness of your belief system. Never reveal that your wealth actually comes from your followers' pocket
6. Step 5: Set Up an Us-Versus-Them Dynamic
To keep your followers united, you must now do what all religions and belief systems have done: create an us-versus-them dynamic. First, make sure your followers believe they are part of an exclusive club, unified by a bond of common goals. Then, to strengthen this bond, manufacture the notion of a devious enemy out to ruin you. If you have no enemies, invent one. Given a straw man to react against, your followers will tighten and cohere. They have your cause to believe in and infidels to destroy.
7. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Borri
The grander the vision, and the more sacrifices he asked for, the more appealing and believable his story seemed to become. People are not interested in the truth about change. They do not

want to hear that it has come from hard work, or from anything as banal as exhaustion, boredom, or depression; they are dying to believe in something romantic, otherworldly. They want to hear of angels and out-of-body experiences. Indulge them. Hint at the mystical source of some personal change, wrap it in ethereal colors, and a cultlike following will form around you. Adapt to people's needs: The messiah must mirror the desires of his followers. And always aim high. The bigger and bolder your illusion, the better.

8. **OBSERVANCE LAW II: Mountain Doctor (Schüppach)**

First, you must find a way to engage people's will, to make their belief in your powers strong enough that they imagine all sorts of benefits. Their belief will have a self-fulfilling quality, but you must make sure that it is you, rather than their own will, who is seen as the agent of transformation. Find the belief, cause, or fantasy that will make them believe with a passion and they will imagine the rest, worshipping you as healer, prophet, genius, whatever you like.

9. **OBSERVANCE LAW III: Mesmer**

Our tendency to doubt, the distance that allows us to reason, is broken down when we join a group. The warmth and infectiousness of the group overwhelm the skeptical individual. This is the power you gain by creating a cult. You gain untold power by working on people's unrealized desire for a kind of promiscuous and pagan unity.

The most effective cults mix religion with science. Take the latest technological trend or fad and blend it with a noble cause, a mystical faith, a new form of healing. Become the magnet, the invisible force that attracts people's imaginations and holds them together. Once they have clustered around you, no power can wrest them away.

10. **REVERSAL:** If at any moment the group sees through you, you will find yourself facing not one deceived soul but an angry crowd that will tear you to pieces as avidly as it once followed you. Use spies, be on top of everything, and keep your bags packed. Often prefer to deal with people one by one. Isolating them from their normal milieu can have the same effect as putting them in a group it makes them more prone to suggestion and intimidation.

LAW #28: ENTER ACTION WITH BOLDNESS

JUDGMENT If you are unsure of a course of action, do not attempt it. Your doubts and hesitations will infect your execution. Timidity is dangerous: Better to enter with boldness. Any mistakes you commit through audacity are easily corrected with more audacity. Everyone admires the bold; no one honors the timid.

BOLDNESS AND HESITATION: Hesitation puts obstacles in your path, boldness eliminates them.

1. **The Bolder the Lie the Better:** When putting together a con or entering any kind of negotiation, go further than you planned. Ask for the moon and you will be surprised how often you get it

2. Lions Circle the Hesitant Prey: If, in a first encounter, you demonstrate your willingness to compromise, back down, and retreat, you bring out the lion even in people who are not necessarily bloodthirsty.
3. Boldness Strikes Fear; Fear Creates Authority. The bold move makes you seem larger and more powerful than you are. If it comes suddenly, with the stealth and swiftness of a snake, it inspires that much more fear.
4. Going Halfway with Half a Heart Digs the Deeper Grave. If you enter an action with less than total confidence, you set up obstacles in your own path. Retreating from the hunter, the timid hare scurries more easily into his snares.
5. Hesitation Creates Gaps, Boldness Obliterates Them: Your timidity infects people with awkward energy, elicits embarrassment. The swiftness of the move and the energy of the action leave others no space to doubt and worry. In seduction, hesitation is fatal—it makes your victim conscious of your intentions. The bold move crowns seduction with triumph: It leaves no time for reflection.
6. Audacity Separates You from the Herd: The timid fade into the wallpaper, the bold draw attention, and what draws attention draws power.

OBSERVANCE

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Monsieur P.
Largeness of scale deceives the human eye. It distracts and awes us, and is so self-evident that we cannot imagine there is any illusion or deception afoot. Arm yourself with bigness and boldness—stretch your deceptions as far as they will go and then go further.
2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Ivan IV
The world is full of boyars—men who despise you, fear your ambition, and jealously guard their shrinking realms of power. You need to establish your authority and gain respect, but the moment the boyars sense your growing boldness, they will act to thwart you. Lay low, showing neither ambition nor discontent. The sudden bold move, without discussion or warning, obliterates these toeholds, and builds your authority. You terrify doubters and despisers and gain the confidence of the many who admire and glorify those who act boldly.
3. OBSERVANCE LAW III: Pietro Aretino (Elephant)
When you are as small and obscure as David was, you must find a Goliath to attack. The larger the target, the more attention you gain. The bolder the attack, the more you stand out from the crowd, and the more admiration you earn. Society is full of those who think daring thoughts but lack the guts to print and publicize them. Voice what the public feels—the expression of shared feelings is always powerful. Search out the most prominent target possible and sling your boldest shot. The world will enjoy the spectacle, and will honor the underdog—you, that is—with glory and power.

4. **KEYS TO POWER:** Most of us are timid. We want to avoid tension and conflict and we want to be liked by all. We may contemplate a bold action but we rarely bring it to life. We are terrified of the consequences, of what others might think of us, of the hostility we will stir up if we dare go beyond our usual place.

Boldness directs attention outward and keeps the illusion alive. It never induces awkwardness or embarrassment. And so we admire the bold, and prefer to be around them, because their self-confidence infects us and draws us outside our own realm of inwardness and reflection.

If boldness is not natural, neither is timidity. It is an acquired habit, picked up out of a desire to avoid conflict. If timidity has taken hold of you, then, root it out. Your fears of the consequences of a bold action are way out of proportion to reality, and in fact the consequences of timidity are worse. Your value is lowered and you create a self-fulfilling cycle of doubt and disaster.

Remember: The problems created by an audacious move can be disguised, even remedied, by more and greater audacity

5. **REVERSAL:** Since boldness is a learned response, it is also one that you learn to control and utilize at will. To go through life armed only with audacity would be tiring and also fatal. You would offend too many people, as is proven by those who cannot control their boldness.

Timidity has no place in the realm of power; you will often benefit, however, by being able to feign it. At that point, of course, it is no longer timidity but an offensive weapon: You are luring people in with your show of shyness, all the better to pounce on them boldly later.

LAW #29: PLAN ALL THE WAY TO THE END

JUDGMENT The ending is everything. Plan all the way to it, taking into account all the possible consequences, obstacles, and twists of fortune that might reverse your hard work and give the glory to others. By planning to the end you will not be overwhelmed by circumstances and you will know when to stop. Gently guide fortune and help determine the future by thinking far ahead.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Balboa

Balboa had a dream of glory and wealth, and a vague plan to reach it. Yet his bold deeds, and his discovery of the Pacific, are largely forgotten, for he committed what in the world of power is the ultimate sin: He went part way, leaving the door open for others to take over. A real man of power would have had the prudence to see the dangers in the distance—the rivals who would want to share in the conquests, the vultures that would hover once they heard the word “gold.”

What good is it to have the greatest dream in the world if others reap the benefits and the glory? Never lose your head over a vague, open-ended dream —plan to the end.

2. **OBSERVANCE:** Bismarck

He who asks fortune-tellers the future unwittingly forfeits an inner intimation of coming events that is a thousand times more exact than anything they may say

Most men never know when to come off the attack: They form no concrete idea of their goal.

Once they achieve victory they only hunger for more. To stop to aim for a goal and then keep to it seems almost inhuman, in fact; yet nothing is more critical to the maintenance of power. The person who goes too far in his triumphs creates a reaction that inevitably leads to a decline. The only solution is to plan for the long run. Foresee the future with as much clarity

3. KEYS TO POWER: able to look beyond the present and plan several steps ahead, seemed to defy fate, to approximate the gods in their ability to determine the future.

those among us who think further ahead and patiently bring their plans to fruition seem to have a godlike power. It is the power of being able to overcome the natural human tendency to react to things as they happen, and instead to train oneself to step back, imagining the larger things taking shape beyond one's immediate vision.

The ending is everything. It is the end of the action that determines who gets the glory, the money, the prize. Your conclusion must be crystal clear, and you must keep it constantly in mind. You must also figure out how to ward off the vultures circling overhead, trying to live off the carcass of your creation. And you must anticipate the many possible crises that will tempt you to improvise.

When you see several steps ahead, and plan your moves all the way to the end, you will no longer be tempted by emotion or by the desire to improvise. Your clarity will rid you of the anxiety and vagueness that are the primary reasons why so many fail to conclude their actions successfully. You see the ending and you tolerate no deviation.

4. REVERSAL: Most people, however, lose less from overplanning and rigidity than from vagueness and a tendency to improvise constantly in the face of circumstance. Only having a clear objective and a far-reaching plan allows you that freedom.

LAW #30: MAKE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SEEM EFFORTLESS

JUDGMENT Your actions must seem natural and executed with ease. All the toil and practice that go into them, and also all the clever tricks, must be concealed. When you act, act effortlessly, as if you could do much more. Avoid the temptation of revealing how hard you work—it only raises questions. Teach no one your tricks or they will be used against you.

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Rikyu (Tea)

Nature created such things by its own laws and processes, but men had to create their effects through labor and contrivance.

You will often have to use tricks and ingenuity to create your effects—the cushions in the snow, the men rowing all night—but your audience must never suspect the work or the thinking that has gone into them. Nature does not reveal its tricks, and what imitates nature by appearing effortless approximates nature's power.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Houdini (escape artist)

Keep the extent of your abilities unknown. As a person of power, you must research and practice endlessly before appearing in public, onstage or anywhere else. Never expose the sweat and labor behind your poise. Some think such exposure will demonstrate their diligence and honesty, but it actually just makes them look weaker—as if anyone who practiced and worked at it could do what they had done, or as if they weren't really up to the job. Keep your effort and your tricks to yourself and you seem to have the grace and ease of a god. One never sees the source of a god's power revealed; one only sees its effects.

3. KEYS TO POWER: Humanity's first notions of power came from primitive encounters with nature the flash of lightning in the sky, a sudden flood, the speed and ferocity of a wild animal. These forces required no thinking, no planning they awed us by their sudden appearance, their gracefulness, and their power over life and death.

We all admire the achievement of some unusual feat, but if it is accomplished naturally and gracefully, our admiration increases tenfold “whereas ... to labor at what one is doing and ... to make bones over it, shows an extreme lack of grace and causes everything, whatever its worth, to be discounted.”

The more mystery surrounds your actions, the more awesome your power seems. You appear to be the only one who can do what you do and the appearance of having an exclusive gift is immensely powerful. Finally, because you achieve your accomplishments with grace and ease, people believe that you could always do more if you tried harder. This elicits not only admiration but a touch of fear. Your powers are untapped no one can fathom their limits.

4. REVERSAL: There are also times when revealing the inner workings of your projects can prove worthwhile. As long as the partial disclosure of tricks and techniques is carefully planned, rather than the result of an uncontrollable need to blab, it is the ultimate in cleverness. It gives the audience the illusion of being superior and involved, even while much of what you do remains concealed from them.

LAW #31: CONTROL THE OPTIONS: GET OTHERS TO PLAY WITH THE CARDS YOU DEAL

JUDGMENT The best deceptions are the ones that seem to give the other person a choice: Your victims feel they are in control, but are actually your puppets. Give people options that come out in your favor whichever one they choose. Force them to make choices between the lesser of two evils, both of which serve your purpose. Put them on the horns of a dilemma: They are gored wherever they turn.

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Ivan IV (Ivan The Terrible)

The main weakness of a show of force is that it stirs up resentment and eventually leads to a response that eats at your authority. Withdrawal and disappearance are classic ways of controlling the options. You give people a sense of how things will fall apart without you, and you

offer them a “choice”: I stay away and you suffer the consequences, or I return under circumstances that I dictate. In this method of controlling people’s options, they choose the option that gives you power because the alternative is just too unpleasant. You force their hand, but indirectly: They seem to have a choice. Whenever people feel they have a choice, they walk into your trap that much more easily

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Ninon (courtesan)

The life of the courtesan entailed the possibility of a power that was denied a married woman, but it also had obvious perils. Such is the power of giving people a choice, or rather the illusion of one, for they are playing with cards you have dealt them. Ninon created a situation in which every option redounded to her favor. From the payeurs she received the money she needed to run her salon. And from the martyrs she gained the ultimate in power: She could surround herself with a bevy of admirers, a harem from which to choose her lovers.

3. KEYS TO POWER:

Words like “freedom,” “options,” and “choice” evoke a power of possibility far beyond the reality of the benefits they entail. We “choose” to believe that the game is fair, and that we have our freedom. We prefer not to think too much about the depth of our liberty to choose. This unwillingness to probe the smallness of our choices stems from the fact that too much freedom creates a kind of anxiety. The phrase “unlimited options” sounds infinitely promising, but unlimited options would actually paralyze us and cloud our ability to choose. Our limited range of choices comforts us

This supplies the clever and cunning with enormous opportunities for deception. For people who are choosing between alternatives find it hard to believe they are being manipulated or deceived; they cannot see that you are allowing them a small amount of free will in exchange for a much more powerful imposition of your own will. Setting up a narrow range of choices, then, should always be a part of your deceptions. There is a saying: If you can get the bird to walk into the cage on its own, it will sing that much more prettily.

a) Force the Resister: Push them to “choose” what you want them to do by appearing to advocate the opposite.

b) Alter the Playing Field: In this tactic your opponents know their hand is being forced, but it doesn’t matter. The technique is effective against those who resist at all costs.

c) Shrinking Options: A variation on this technique is to raise the price every time the buyer hesitates and another day goes by. This is an excellent negotiating ploy to use on the chronically indecisive, who will fall for the idea that they are getting a better deal today than if they wait till tomorrow.

d) Weak Man on the Precipice: The weak are the easiest to maneuver by controlling their options. This tactic is similar to “Color the Choices,” but with the weak you have to be more aggressive.

Work on their emotions—use fear and terror to propel them into action. Try reason and they will always find a way to procrastinate.

e) Brothers in Crime: You attract your victims to some criminal scheme, creating a bond of blood and guilt between you. They participate in your deception, commit a crime. It is often wise to implicate in your deceptions the very person who can do you the most harm if you fail. Their involvement can be subtle—even a hint of their involvement will narrow their options and buy their silence.

f) Horns of a Dilemma: The lawyer leads the witnesses to decide between two possible explanations of an event, both of which poke a hole in their story. They have to answer the lawyer's questions, but whatever they say they hurt themselves. The key to this move is to strike quickly: Deny the victim the time to think of an escape. As they wriggle between the horns of the dilemma, they dig their own grave.

Understand: In your struggles with your rivals, it will often be necessary for you to hurt them. And if you are clearly the agent of their punishment, expect a counterattack—expect revenge. If, however, they seem to themselves to be the agents of their own misfortune, they will submit quietly

It is always good to allow your victims their choice of poison, and to cloak your involvement in providing it to them as far as possible.

4. REVERSAL: Controlling the options has one main purpose: to disguise yourself as the agent of power and punishment. The tactic works best, then, for those whose power is fragile, and who cannot operate too openly without incurring suspicion, resentment, and anger.

It is rarely wise to be seen as exerting power directly and forcefully, no matter how secure or strong you are. It is usually more elegant and more effective to give people the illusion of choice. By limiting other people's options you sometimes limit your own. There are situations in which it is to your advantage to allow your rivals a large degree of freedom: As you watch them operate, you give yourself rich opportunities to spy, gather information, and plan your deceptions.

LAW #32: PLAY TO PEOPLE'S FANTASIES

JUDGMENT The truth is often avoided because it is ugly and unpleasant. Never appeal to truth and reality unless you are prepared for the anger that comes from disenchantment. Life is so harsh and distressing that people who can manufacture romance or conjure up fantasy are like oases in the desert: Everyone flocks to them. There is great power in tapping into the fantasies of the masses.

1. OBSERVANCE: Bragadino (Alchemy-Venice)

Once he had created an aura like this, no one noticed his simple deceptions. Such is the power of the fantasies that take root in us, especially in times of scarcity and decline. People rarely believe

that their problems arise from their own misdeeds and stupidity. Someone or something out there is to blame the other, the world, the gods and so salvation comes from the outside as well.

To gain power, you must be a source of pleasure for those around you—and pleasure comes from playing to people's fantasies. Never promise a gradual improvement through hard work; rather, promise the moon, the great and sudden transformation, the pot of gold.

2. KEYS TO POWER: Fantasy can never operate alone. It requires the backdrop of the humdrum and the mundane.
 - a) Never be distracted by people's glamorous portraits of themselves and their lives; search and dig for what really imprisons them. Once you find that, you have the magical key that will put great power in your hands.
 - b) *The Reality: Change is slow and gradual. It requires hard work, a bit of luck, a fair amount of self-sacrifice, and a lot of patience.*
The Fantasy: A sudden transformation will bring a total change in one's fortunes, bypassing work, luck, self-sacrifice, and time in one fantastic stroke.
 - c) Promise a great and total change from poor to rich, sickness to health, misery to ecstasy and you will have followers.
 - d) *The Reality: The social realm has hard-set codes and boundaries. We understand these limits and know that we have to move within the same familiar circles, day in and day out. The Fantasy: We can enter a totally new world with different codes and the promise of adventure.*
 - e) *The Reality: Society is fragmented and full of conflict. The Fantasy: People can come together in a mystical union of souls.*
 - f) *The Reality: Death. The dead cannot be brought back, the past cannot be changed. The Fantasy: A sudden reversal of this intolerable fact.*
 - g) The key to fantasy is distance. The distant has allure and promise, seems simple and problem free. What you are offering, then, should be ungraspable. Never let it become oppressively familiar; it is the mirage in the distance, withdrawing as the sucker approaches. Never be too direct in describing the fantasy keep it vague. As a forger of fantasies, let your victim come close enough to see and be tempted, but keep him far away enough that he stays dreaming and desiring.
3. REVERSAL: Fantasy usually contains an element of play the public half realizes it is being duped, but it keeps the dream alive anyway, relishing the entertainment and the temporary diversion from the everyday that you are providing. So keep it light never come too close to the place where you are actually expected to produce results. That place may prove extremely hazardous. Never make the mistake of imagining that fantasy is always fantastical. It certainly contrasts with reality, but reality itself is sometimes so theatrical and stylized that fantasy becomes a desire for simple things.

Should you play with such a fantasy, you too must carefully cultivate distance and not allow your “common” persona to become too familiar or it will not project as fantasy

LAW #33: DISCOVER EACH MAN’S THUMBSCREW

JUDGMENT Everyone has a weakness, a gap in the castle wall. That weakness is usually an insecurity, an uncontrollable emotion or need; it can also be a small secret pleasure. Either way, once found, it is a thumbscrew you can turn to your advantage.

FINDING THE THUMBSCREW: A Strategic Plan of Action

Some people wear their weaknesses openly, others disguise them. Those who disguise them are often the ones most effectively undone through that one chink in their armor.

1. **Pay Attention to Gestures and Unconscious Signals:** “No mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore.” Start by always seeming interested—the appearance of a sympathetic ear will spur anyone to talk. A clever trick, is to appear to open up to the other person, to share a secret with them. It can be completely made up, or it can be real but of no great importance to you—the important thing is that it should seem to come from the heart. This will usually elicit a response that is not only as frank as yours but more genuine—a response that reveals a weakness.
Train your eye for details—how someone tips a waiter, what delights a person, the hidden messages in clothes. Find people’s idols, the things they worship and will do anything to get—perhaps you can be the supplier of their fantasies. Since we all try to hide our weaknesses, there is little to be learned from our conscious behavior. What oozes out in the little things outside our conscious control is what you want to know.
2. **Find the Helpless Child:** Most weaknesses begin in childhood, before the self builds up compensatory defenses. Perhaps the child was pampered or indulged in a particular area, or perhaps a certain emotional need went unfulfilled; as he or she grows older, the indulgence or the deficiency may be buried but never disappears. Knowing about a childhood need gives you a powerful key to a person’s weakness.
3. **Look for Contrasts:** An overt trait often conceals its opposite. People who thump their chests are often big cowards or shy are dying for attention. By probing beyond appearances, you will often find people’s weaknesses in the opposite of the qualities they reveal to you.
4. **Find the Weak Link:** Sometimes in your search for weaknesses it is not what but who that matters. When a group under attack closes ranks to resist an outsider—there is always a weak link in the chain. Find the one person who will bend under pressure.
5. **Fill the Void:** The two main emotional voids to fill are insecurity and unhappiness. people least able to disguise their weaknesses. The ability to fill their emotional voids is a great source of power, and an indefinitely prolongable one.

6. Feed on Uncontrollable Emotions. The uncontrollable emotion can be a paranoid fear—a fear disproportionate to the situation—or any base motive such as lust, greed, vanity, or hatred. People in the grip of these emotions often cannot control themselves, and you can do the controlling for them.

OBSERVANCES OF LAW

1. OBSERVANCE LAW I: Richelieu

Richelieu saw everything as a military campaign, and no strategic move was more important to him than discovering his enemy's weaknesses and applying pressure to them.

When entering the court, find the weak link. The person in control is often not the king or queen; it is someone behind the scenes—the favorite, the husband or wife, even the court fool. This person may have more weaknesses than the king himself, because his power depends on all kinds of capricious factors outside his control. Finally, when dealing with helpless children who cannot make decisions, play on their weakness and push them into bold ventures. They will have to depend on you even more, for you will become the adult figure whom they rely on to get them out of scrapes and to safety.

2. OBSERVANCE LAW II: Count Victor Lustwig

When searching for suckers, always look for the dissatisfied, the unhappy, the insecure. Such people are riddled with weaknesses and have needs that you can fill. Their neediness is the groove in which you place your thumbnail and turn them at will.

3. OBSERVANCE LAW III: Catherine

Sway that a mistress has over a man of power. Always look for passions and obsessions that cannot be controlled. The stronger the passion, the more vulnerable the person. This may seem surprising, for passionate people look strong. In fact, however, they are simply filling the stage with their theatricality, distracting people from how weak and helpless they really are. A man's need to conquer women actually reveals a tremendous helplessness that has made suckers out of them for thousands of years. Look at the part of a person that is most visible—their greed, their lust, their intense fear. These are the emotions they cannot conceal, and over which they have the least control. And what people cannot control, you can control for them.

4. OBSERVANCE LAW IV: Duveen

Duveen instantly understood Arabella Huntington and what made her tick: She wanted to feel important, at home in society. Intensely insecure about her lower-class background, she needed confirmation of her new social status. People's need for validation and recognition, their need to feel important, is the best kind of weakness to exploit. First, it is almost universal; second, exploiting it is so very easy. All you have to do is find ways to make people feel better about their taste, their social standing, their intelligence. Once the fish are hooked, you can reel them in again and again, for years—you are filling a positive role, giving them what they cannot get on

their own. They may never suspect that you are turning them like a thumbscrew, and if they do they may not care, because you are making them feel better about themselves, and that is worth any price.

5. OBSERVANCE LAW V: Bismarck

Timidity is a potent weakness to exploit. Timid souls often yearn to be their opposite—to be Napoleons. Yet they lack the inner strength. You, in essence, can become their Napoleon, pushing them into bold actions that serve your needs while also making them dependent on you.

Remember: Look to the opposites and never take appearances at face value.

6. REVERSAL: You may stir up an action you cannot control. In your games of power you always look several steps ahead and plan accordingly. But when you play on their vulnerabilities, the areas over which they have least control, you can unleash emotions that will upset your plans. Push timid people into bold action and they may go too far; answer their need for attention or recognition and they may need more than you want to give them. The helpless, childish element you are playing on can turn against you.

The more emotional the weakness, the greater the potential danger. Know the limits to this game, then, and never get carried away by your control over your victims. You are after power, not the thrill of control

LAW #34: BE ROYAL IN YOUR OWN FASHION: ACT LIKE A KING TO BE TREATED LIKE ONE

JUDGMENT The way you carry yourself will often determine how you are treated: In the long run, appearing vulgar or common will make people disrespect you. For a king respects himself and inspires the same sentiment in others. By acting regally and confident of your powers, you make yourself seem destined to wear a crown.

1. TRANSGRESSION

Never lose your self-respect, nor be too familiar with yourself when you are alone. Let your integrity itself be your own standard of rectitude, and be more indebted to the severity of your own judgment of yourself than to all external precepts. Desist from unseemly conduct, rather out of respect for your own virtue than for the strictures of external authority. Come to hold yourself in awe, and you will have no need of Seneca's imaginary tittor.

Leaders who try to dissolve that distance through a false chumminess gradually lose the ability to inspire loyalty, fear, or love. Instead they elicit contempt. Like Louis-Philippe, they are too uninspiring even to be worth the guillotine—the best they can do is simply vanish in the night, as if they were never there.

2. OBSERVANCE

By asking for the moon, he had instantly raised his own status, for the king assumed that unless a man who set such a high price on himself were mad, which Columbus did not appear to be, he must somehow be worth it.

But in one area he was a genius: He knew how to sell himself. Columbus had an amazing power to charm the nobility, and it all came from the way he carried himself. He projected a sense of confidence that was completely out of proportion to his means. Nor was his confidence the aggressive, ugly self-promotion of an upstart—it was a quiet and calm self assurance. In fact it was the same confidence usually shown by the nobility themselves. The powerful in the old-style aristocracies felt no need to prove or assert themselves; being noble, they knew they always deserved more, and asked for it.

Understand: It is within your power to set your own price. How you carry yourself reflects what you think of yourself. If you ask for little, shuffle your feet and lower your head, people will assume this reflects your character. But this behavior is not you—it is only how you have chosen to present yourself to other people. You can just as easily present the Columbus front: buoyancy, confidence, and the feeling that you were born to wear a crown.

KEYS TO POWER

1. The Strategy of the Crown is based on a simple chain of cause and effect: If we believe we are destined for great things, our belief will radiate outward, just as a crown creates an aura around a king. This outward radiance will infect the people around us, who will think we must have reasons to feel so confident. People who wear crowns seem to feel no inner sense of the limits to what they can ask for or what they can accomplish. This too radiates outward. Limits and boundaries disappear. Use the Strategy of the Crown and you will be surprised how often it bears fruit.
2. Be overcome by your self-belief. Even while you know you are practicing a kind of deception on yourself, act like a king. You are likely to be treated as one. The crown may separate you from other people, but it is up to you to make that separation real: You have to act differently, demonstrating your distance from those around you. One way to emphasize your difference is to always act with dignity, no matter the circumstance.
3. Regal bearing should not be confused with arrogance. Arrogance may seem the king's entitlement, but in fact it betrays insecurity. It is the very opposite of a royal demeanor.
4. Dignity, in fact, is invariably the mask to assume under difficult circumstances: It is as if nothing can affect you, and you have all the time in the world to respond. This is an extremely powerful pose.
5. First, the Columbus Strategy: Always make a bold demand. Set your price high and do not waver. Second, in a dignified way, go after the highest person in the building. This immediately puts you on the same plane as the chief executive you are attacking. It is the David and Goliath Strategy:

By choosing a great opponent, you create the appearance of greatness. Third, give a gift of some sort to those above you. This is the strategy of those who have a patron: By giving your patron a gift, you are essentially saying that the two of you are equal.

6. Remember: It is up to you to set your own price. Ask for less and that is just what you will get. Ask for more, however, and you send a signal that you are worth a king's ransom. Even those who turn you down respect you for your confidence, and that respect will eventually pay off in ways you cannot imagine.

REVERSAL

1. Never make the mistake of thinking that you elevate yourself by humiliating people.
2. Understand: You are radiating confidence, not arrogance or disdain.
3. It is true that you can sometimes find some power through affecting a kind of earthy vulgarity, which will prove amusing by its extreme-ness. But to the extent that you win this game by going beyond the limits, separating yourself from other people by appearing even more vulgar than they are, the game is dangerous: There will always be people more vulgar than you, and you will easily be replaced the following season by someone younger and worse.

LAW #35: MASTER THE ART OF TIMING

JUDGMENT Never seem to be in a hurry-hurrying betrays a lack of control over yourself, and over time. Always seem patient, as if you know that everything will come to you eventually. Become a detective of the right moment; sniff out the spirit of the times, the trends that will carry you to power. Learn to stand back when the time is not yet ripe, and to strike fiercely when it has reached fruition.

OBSERVANCE: Fouché

1. First, it is critical to recognize the spirit of the times. You must always work with the times, anticipate twists and turns, and never miss the boat. Sometimes the spirit of the times is obscure: Recognize it not by what is loudest and most obvious in it, but by what lies hidden and dormant
2. Second, recognizing the prevailing winds does not necessarily mean running with them. Any potent social movement creates a powerful reaction, and it is wise to anticipate what that reaction will be
3. Rather than ride the cresting wave of the moment, wait for the tide's ebb to carry you back to power. Upon occasion bet on the reaction that is brewing, and place yourself in the vanguard of it.
4. Without patience as your sword and shield, your timing will fail and you will inevitably find yourself a loser. When the times were against Fouché, he did not struggle, get emotional, or strike out rashly
5. Whenever he found himself in the weaker position, he played for time, which he knew would always be his ally if he was patient. Recognize the moment, then, to hide in the grass or slither under a rock, as well as the moment to bare your fangs and attack.

KEYS TO POWER:

1. Time is an artificial concept that we ourselves have created to make the limitlessness of eternity and the universe more bearable, more human.
2. First there is long time: the drawn out, years-long kind of time that must be managed with patience and gentle guidance. Our handling of long time should be mostly defensive—this is the art of not reacting impulsively, of waiting for opportunity. Next there is forced time: the short-term time that we can manipulate as an offensive weapon, upsetting the timing of our opponents. Finally there is end time, when a plan must be executed with speed and force. We have waited, found the moment, and must not hesitate.
3. Long Time: When you force the pace out of fear and impatience, you create a nest of problems that require fixing, and you end up taking much longer than if you had taken your time. Sometimes not acting in the face of danger is your best move—you wait, you deliberately slow down. As time passes it will eventually present opportunities you had not imagined. Waiting involves controlling not only your own emotions but those of your colleagues, who, mistaking action for power, may try to push you into making rash moves. In your rivals, on the other hand, you can encourage this same mistake: If you let them rush headlong into trouble while you stand back and wait, you will soon find ripe moments to intervene and pick up the pieces. will give you a perspective on the times you live in, letting you take a certain distance and putting you in a less emotionally charged position to see the shapes of things to come. Hurriers will often mistake surface phenomena for a real trend, seeing only what they want to see. How much better to see what is really happening, even if it is unpleasant or makes your task harder.
4. Forced Time. The trick in forcing time is to upset the timing of others—to make them hurry, to make them wait, to make them abandon their own pace, to distort their perception of time. By upsetting the timing of your opponent while you stay patient, you open up time for yourself, which is half the game. Making people wait is a powerful way of forcing time, as long as they do not figure out what you are up to. You control the clock, they linger in limbo —and rapidly come unglued, opening up opportunities for you to strike. The deadline, then, is a powerful tool. Close off the vistas of indecision and force people to make up their damn minds or get to the point never let them make you play on their excruciating terms. Never give them time. Creating suspense brings time to a terrifying pause. Going slower also makes what you are doing more interesting—the audience yields to your pace, becomes entranced. It is a state in which time whizzes delightfully by. You must practice such illusions, which share in the hypnotist's power to alter perceptions of time.
5. End Time: You can play the game with the utmost artistry—waiting patiently for the right moment to act, putting your competitors off their form by messing with their timing—but it won't mean a thing unless you know how to finish. Do not be one of those people who look like

paragons of patience but are actually just afraid to bring things to a close: Patience is worthless unless combined with a willingness to fall ruthlessly on your opponent at the right moment. You can wait as long as necessary for the conclusion to come, but when it comes it must come quickly. Use speed to paralyze your opponent, cover up any mistakes you might make, and impress people with your aura of authority and finality. With the patience of a snake charmer, you draw the snake out with calm and steady rhythms. Your mastery of timing can really only be judged by how you work with end time—how you quickly change the pace and bring things to a swift and definitive conclusion.

REVERSAL: There is no power to be gained in letting go of the reins and adapting to whatever time brings. To some degree you must guide time or you will be its merciless victim. There is accordingly no reversal to this law

LAW #36: DISDAIN THINGS YOU CANNOT HAVE: IGNORING THEM IS THE BEST REVENGE

JUDGMENT By acknowledging a petty problem you give it existence and credibility. The more attention you pay an enemy, the stronger you make him; and a small mistake is often made worse and more visible when you try to fix it. It is sometimes best to leave things alone. If there is something you want but cannot have, show contempt for it. The less interest you reveal, the more superior you seem.

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Pancho Villa (Mexican rebel)

Wasn't he wise to say they were unripe Rather than whine and gripe?

Remember: You choose to let things bother you. You can just as easily choose not to notice the irritating offender, to consider the matter trivial and unworthy of your interest. That is the powerful move. What you do not react to cannot drag you down in a futile engagement. Your pride is not involved. The best lesson you can teach an irritating gnat is to consign it to oblivion by ignoring it. If it is impossible to ignore (Pancho Villa had in fact killed American citizens), then conspire in secret to do away with it, but never inadvertently draw attention to the bothersome insect that will go away or die on its own. If you waste time and energy in such entanglements, it is your own fault. Learn to play the card of disdain and turn your back on what cannot harm you in the long run

OBSERVANCE: King Henry VIII (Wives)

1. When you pay attention to a person, the two of you become partners of sorts, each moving in step to the actions and reactions of the other. In the process you lose your initiative. By acknowledging other people, even if only to fight with them, you open yourself to their influence. Played a devastating power game—total disdain. By ignoring people you cancel them out. This unsettles and infuriates them—but since they have no dealings with you, there is nothing they can do.
2. *And in this view it is advisable to let everyone of your acquaintance—whether man or woman—feel now and then that you could very well dispense with their company. This will consolidate friendship. Nay, with*

most people there will be no harm in occasionally mixing a grain of disdain with your treatment of them; that will make them value your friendship all the more. To disregard is to win regard. But if we really think very highly of a person, we should conceal it from him like a crime.

3. Playing the card of contempt is immensely powerful, for it lets you determine the conditions of the conflict. The war is waged on your terms. This is the ultimate power pose: You are the king, and you ignore what offends you. Watch how this tactic infuriates people—half of what they do is to get your attention, and when you withhold it from them, they flounder in frustration.

KEYS TO POWER

1. Desire often creates paradoxical effects: The more you want something, the more you chase after it, the more it eludes you. The more interest you show, the more you repel the object of your desire. This is because your interest is too strong—it makes people awkward, even fearful. Uncontrollable desire makes you seem weak, unworthy, pathetic.
2. You need to turn your back on what you want, show your contempt and disdain. This is the kind of powerful response that will drive your targets crazy. They will respond with a desire of their own, which is simply to have an effect on you—perhaps to possess you, perhaps to hurt you. If they want to possess you, you have successfully completed the first step of seduction. If they want to hurt you, you have unsettled them and made them play by your rules.
3. If choosing to ignore enhances your power, it follows that the opposite approach—commitment and engagement—often weakens you. By paying undue attention to a puny enemy, you look puny, and the longer it takes you to crush such an enemy, the larger the enemy seems.
4. Instead of inadvertently focusing attention on a problem, making it seem worse by publicizing how much concern and anxiety it is causing you, it is often far wiser to play the contemptuous aristocrat, not deigning to acknowledge the problem's existence. There are several ways to execute this strategy.
 - a) First there is the sour-grapes approach. If there is something you want but that you realize you cannot have, the worst thing you can do is draw attention to your disappointment by complaining about it. An infinitely more powerful tactic is to act as if it never really interested you in the first place. Crying “sour grapes” is sometimes seen as a reflection of the weak; it is actually the tactic of the powerful.
 - b) Second, when you are attacked by an inferior, deflect people's attention by making it clear that the attack has not even registered. Look away, or answer sweetly, showing how little the attack concerns you. Similarly, when you yourself have committed a blunder, the best response is often to make less of your mistake by treating it lightly.
 - c) Among equals this tactic might backfire: Your indifference could make you seem callous. But with a master, if you act quickly and without great fuss, it can work to great effect: You bypass his angry response, save him the time and energy he would waste by brooding over it, and allow him

the opportunity to display his own lack of pettiness publicly. If we make excuses and denials when we are caught in a mistake or a deception, we stir the waters and make the situation worse. It is often wiser to play things the opposite way.

5. The powerful responses to niggling, petty annoyances and irritations are contempt and disdain. Never show that something has affected you, or that you are offended—that only shows you have acknowledged a problem. Contempt is a dish that is best served cold and without affectation. There is no revenge like oblivion, for it is the entombment of the unworthy in the dust of their own nothingness.

REVERSAL

1. You must play the card of contempt with care and delicacy. Most small troubles will vanish on their own if you leave them be; but some will grow and fester unless you attend to them. Ignore a person of inferior stature and the next time you look he has become a serious rival, and your contempt has made him vengeful as well.
2. Develop the skill of sensing problems when they are still small and taking care of them before they become intractable. Learn to distinguish between the potentially disastrous and the mildly irritating, the nuisance that will quietly go away on its own. In either case, though, never completely take your eye off it. As long as it is alive it can smolder and spark into life.

LAW #37: CREATE COMPELLING SPECTACLES

JUDGMENT Striking imagery and grand symbolic gestures create the aura of power— everyone responds to them. Stage spectacles for those around you, then, full of arresting visuals and radiant symbols that heighten your presence. Dazzled by appearances, no one will notice what you are really doing.

1. **OBSERVANCE LAW I: Dr. Weisleder (Moon Doctor)**

Recognized that people do not always want words, or rational explanations, or demonstrations of the powers of science; they want an immediate appeal to their emotions. Give them that and they will do the rest. Your search for power depends on shortcuts. You must always circumvent people's suspicions, their perverse desire to resist your will. Images are an extremely effective shortcut: Bypassing the head, the seat of doubt and resistance, they aim straight for the heart.

2. **OBSERVANCE LAW II: Diane Mistress (Goddess)**

You too can play with images like these, weaving visual clues into an encompassing gestalt, as Diane did with her colors and her insignia. Establish a trademark like these to set yourself apart. Then take the game further: Find an image or symbol from the past that will neatly fit your situation, and put it on your shoulders like a cape. It will make you seem larger than life

KEYS TO POWER:

1. Using words to plead your case is risky business: Words are dangerous instruments, and often go astray. The visual, on the other hand, short-circuits the labyrinth of words. It strikes with an

emotional power and immediacy that leave no gaps for reflection and doubt. Like music, it leaps right over rational, reasonable thoughts.

2. Words put you on the defensive. If you have to explain yourself your power is already in question. The image, on the other hand, imposes itself as a given. It discourages questions, creates forceful associations, resists unintended interpretations, communicates instantly, and forges bonds that transcend social differences. Words stir up arguments and divisions; images bring people together. They are the quintessential instruments of power.
3. The abstract concept—purity, patriotism, courage, love—is full of emotional and powerful associations.
4. The first step in using symbols and images is to understand the primacy of sight among the senses. It has been argued, sight and the other senses—taste, touch, and so on—operated on a relatively equal plane. However, the visual has come to dominate the others, and is the sense we most depend on and trust. *“The truth is generally seen, rarely heard.”*
5. Never neglect the way you arrange things visually. Factors like color, for example, have enormous symbolic resonance. The visual contains great emotional power.
6. A fusion of images and symbols that have not been seen together before, but that through their association clearly demonstrate your new idea, message, religion.
7. The idea is to give yourself an aura, a stature that your normal banal appearance simply will not create. Use the power of symbols as a way to rally, animate, and unite your troops or team.
8. The best way to use images and symbols is to organize them into a grand spectacle that awes people and distracts them from unpleasant realities. This is easy to do: People love what is grand, spectacular, and larger than life. Appeal to their emotions and they will flock to your spectacle in hordes. The visual is the easiest route to their hearts.
9. *The people are always impressed by the superficial appearance of things.... The [prince] should, at fitting times of the year, keep the people occupied and distracted with festivities and spectacles.*

REVERSAL: No power is made available by ignoring images and symbols. There is no possible reversal to this law

LAW #38: THINK AS YOU LIKE BUT BEHAVE LIKE OTHERS

JUDGMENT If you make a show of going against the times, flaunting your unconventional ideas and unorthodox ways, people will think that you only want attention and that you look down upon them. They will find a way to punish you for making them feel inferior. It is far safer to blend in and nurture the common touch. Share your originality only with tolerant friends and those who are sure to appreciate your uniqueness. **THINK WITH THE FEW AND SPEAK WITH THE MANY**

1. **TRANSGRESSION:** Pausanias (Spartians)

People who flaunt their infatuation with a different culture are expressing a disdain and contempt for their own. They are using the outward appearance of the exotic to separate themselves from the common folk who unquestioningly follow the local customs and laws, and to express their sense of superiority. Cultures have norms that reflect centuries of shared beliefs and ideals. Do not expect to scoff at such things with impunity. You will be punished somehow, even if just through isolation—a position of real powerlessness.

Flaunting your pleasure in alien ways of thinking and acting will reveal a different motive—to demonstrate your superiority over your fellows.

2. **OBSERVANCE: Campanella(Atheism)**

You pretend to disagree with dangerous ideas, but in the course of your disagreement you give those ideas expression and exposure. You seem to conform to the prevailing orthodoxy, but those who know will understand the irony involved. You are protected. It is inevitable in society that certain values and customs lose contact with their original motives and become oppressive. And there will always be those who rebel against such oppression, harboring ideas far ahead of their time.

However, there is no point in making a display of your dangerous ideas if they only bring you suffering and persecution. Martyrdom serves no purpose—better to live on in an oppressive world, even to thrive in it. Meanwhile find a way to express your ideas subtly for those who understand you. Laying your pearls before swine will only bring you trouble.

KEYS TO POWER

1. From an early age we learn to conceal our thoughts, telling the prickly and insecure what we know they want to hear, watching carefully lest we offend them. For most of us this is natural—there are ideas and values that most people accept, and it is pointless to argue. We believe what we want to, then, but on the outside we wear a mask.
2. Wise and clever people learn early on that they can display conventional behavior and mouth conventional ideas without having to believe in them. The power these people gain from blending in is that of being left alone to have the thoughts they want to have, and to express them to the people they want to express them to, without suffering isolation or ostracism. Once they have established themselves in a position of power, they can try to convince a wider circle of the correctness of their ideas
3. Make a show of blending in, even going so far as to be the most zealous advocate of the prevailing orthodoxy. If you stick to conventional appearances in public few will believe you think differently in private.
4. Do not be so foolish as to imagine that in our own time the old orthodoxies are gone. Not only do people of power avoid the offenses of Pausanias and Salk, they also learn to play the clever fox and

feign the common touch. This has been the ploy of con artists and politicians throughout the centuries.

5. The logical extension of this practice is the invaluable ability to be all things to all people. When you go into society, leave behind your own ideas and values, and put on the mask that is most appropriate for the group in which you find yourself.
6. People will swallow the bait because it flatters them to believe that you share their ideas. They will not take you as a hypocrite if you are careful—for how can they accuse you of hypocrisy if you do not let them know exactly what you stand for? Nor will they see you as lacking in values. Of course you have values—the values you share with them, while in their company.

REVERSAL: The only time it is worth standing out is when you already stand out—when you have achieved an unshakable position of power, and can display your difference from others as a sign of the distance between you.

LAW #39: STIR UP WATERS TO CATCH FISH

JUDGMENT Anger and emotion are strategically counterproductive. You must always stay calm and objective. But if you can make your enemies angry while staying calm yourself, you gain a decided advantage. Put your enemies off-balance: Find the chink in their vanity through which you can rattle them and you hold the strings.

TRANSGRESSION: Talleyrand and Napoleon (Anger)

1. This is the problem with the angry response. At first it may strike fear and terror, but only in some, and as the days pass and the storm clears, other responses emerge—embarrassment and uneasiness about the shouter's capacity for going out of control, and resentment of what has been said. Losing your temper, you always make unfair and exaggerated accusations.
2. To show your frustration is to show that you have lost your power to shape events; it is the helpless action of the child who resorts to a hysterical fit to get his way. The powerful never reveal this kind of weakness.
3. No tirades, no childish fits, no embarrassing after-effects—just a quiet and definitive severing of ties. Tantrums neither intimidate nor inspire loyalty. They only create doubts and uneasiness about your power. Exposing your weakness, these stormy eruptions often herald a fall.
4. *If possible, no animosity should be felt for anyone.... To speak angrily to a person, to show your hatred by what you say or by the way you look, is an unnecessary proceeding-dangerous, foolish, ridiculous, and vulgar. Anger or hatred should never be shown otherwise than in what you do; and feelings will be all the more effective in action. in so far as you avoid the exhibition of them in any other way.*

OBSERVANCE: Selassie and Gugsä (War Tribe)

When the waters are still, your opponents have the time and space to plot actions that they will initiate and control. So stir the waters, force the fish to the surface, get them to act before they are ready, steal the

initiative. The best way to do this is to play on uncontrollable emotions—pride, vanity, love, hate. Once the water is stirred up, the little fish cannot help but rise to the bait. The angrier they become, the less control they have, and finally they are caught in the whirlpool you have made, and they drown.

KEYS TO POWER

1. Angry people usually end up looking ridiculous, for their response seems out of proportion to what occasioned it. They have taken things too seriously, exaggerating the hurt or insult that has been done to them. They are so sensitive to slight that it becomes comical how much they take personally. More comical still is their belief that their outbursts signify power. The truth is the opposite: Petulance is not power, it is a sign of helplessness.
2. People may temporarily be cowed by your tantrums, but in the end they lose respect for you. They also realize they can easily undermine a person with so little self-control.
3. The answer, however, is not to repress our angry or emotional responses. For repression drains us of energy and pushes us into strange behavior. Instead we have to change our perspective: We have to realize that nothing in the social realm, and in the game of power, is personal.
4. Everyone is caught up in a chain of events that long predates the present moment. Our anger also has roots in the many interactions with others, the accumulated disappointments and heartaches that we have suffered.
5. Instead of seeing it as a personal grudge, look at the emotional outburst as a disguised power move, an attempt to control or punish you cloaked in the form of hurt feelings and anger. This shift of perspective will let you play the game of power with more clarity and energy. Instead of overreacting, and becoming ensnared in people's emotions, you will turn their loss of control to your advantage: You keep your head while they are losing theirs.
6. Anger only cuts off our options, and the powerful cannot thrive without options. Once you train yourself not to take matters personally, and to control your emotional responses, you will have placed yourself in a position of tremendous power: Now you can play with the emotional responses of other people. Stir the insecure into action by impugning their manhood, and by dangling the prospect of an easy victory before their faces
7. Reveal an apparent weakness to lure your opponent into action. Then you can beat him with ease. With the arrogant too you can appear weaker than you are, taunting them into a rash action.
8. Nothing is as infuriating as a man who keeps his cool while others are losing theirs. If it will work to your advantage to unsettle people, affect the aristocratic, bored pose, neither mocking nor triumphant but simply indifferent. This will light their fuse. When they embarrass themselves with a temper tantrum, you will have gained several victories, one of these being that in the face of their childishness you have maintained your dignity and composure.
9. *If your opponent is of a hot temper, try to irritate him. If he is arrogant, try to encourage his egotism.... One who is skilled at making the enemy move does so by creating a situation according to which the enemy*

will act; he entices the enemy with something he is certain to take. He keeps the enemy on the move by holding out bait and then attacks him with picked troops.

REVERSAL

1. When playing with people's emotions you have to be careful. Study the enemy beforehand: Some fish are best left at the bottom of the pond.
2. You can bait the powerful and get them to commit and divide their forces as Sun Pin did, but test the waters first. Find the gap in their strength. If there is no gap—if they are impossibly strong—you have nothing to gain and everything to lose by provoking them. Choose carefully whom you bait, and never stir up the sharks
3. Finally there are times when a well-timed burst of anger can do you good, but your anger must be manufactured and under your control. Then you can determine exactly how and on whom it will fall. Never stir up reactions that will work against you in the long run. And use your thunder-bolts rarely, to make them the more intimidating and meaningful. Whether purposefully staged or not, if your outbursts come too often, they will lose their power

LAW #40: DESPISE THE FREE LUNCH

JUDGMENT What is offered for free is dangerous—it usually involves either a trick or a hidden obligation. What has worth is worth paying for. By paying your own way you stay clear of gratitude, guilt, and deceit. It is also often wise to pay the full price—there is no cutting corners with excellence. Be lavish with your money and keep it circulating, for generosity is a sign and a magnet for power.

MONEY AND POWER

1. In the realm of power, everything must be judged by its cost, and everything has a price. What is offered for free or at bargain rates often comes with a psychological price tag—complicated feelings of obligation, compromises with quality, the insecurity those compromises bring, on and on. The powerful learn early to protect their most valuable resources: independence and room to maneuver. By paying the full price, they keep themselves free of dangerous entanglements and worries.
2. Being open and flexible with money also teaches the value of strategic generosity, a variation on the old trick of “giving when you are about to take.” By giving the appropriate gift, you put the recipient under obligation. Generosity softens people up—to be deceived. By gaining a reputation for liberality, you win people's admiration while distracting them from your power plays. By strategically spreading your wealth, you charm the other courtiers, creating pleasure and making valuable allies.
3. For everyone able to play with money, thousands more are locked in a selfdestructive refusal to use money creatively and strategically. These types represent the opposite pole to the powerful,

and you must learn to recognize them—either to avoid their poisonous natures or to turn their inflexibility to your advantage:

4. Greedy Fish: The greedy fish take the human side out of money. Cold and ruthless, they see only the lifeless balance sheet; viewing others solely as either pawns or obstructions in their pursuit of wealth, they trample on people's sentiments and alienate valuable allies. No one wants to work with the greedy fish, and over the years they end up isolated, which often proves their undoing. Either avoid them before they exploit you or play on their greed to your gain.
5. Bargain Demon: Powerful people judge everything by what it costs, not just in money but in time, dignity, and peace of mind. Wasting valuable time digging for bargains, they worry endlessly about what they could have gotten elsewhere for a little less. Unless you resist them they will infect you with the insecure feeling that you should have looked harder to find a cheaper price. Don't argue with them or try to change them. Just mentally add up the cost, in time and inner peace if not in hidden financial expense, of the irrational pursuit of a bargain.
6. Sadist: Financial sadists play vicious power games with money as a way of asserting their power. They might hire you to work for them, they meddle in every aspect of the job, haggling and giving you ulcers. Sadists seem to think that paying for something gives them the right to torture and abuse the seller. If you are unlucky enough to get involved with this type, accepting a financial loss may be better in the long run than getting entangled in their destructive power games.
7. Indiscriminate Giver: Generosity has a definite function in power: It attracts people, softens them up, makes allies out of them. But it has to be used strategically, with a definite end in mind. Indiscriminate Givers, on the other hand, are generous because they want to be loved and admired by all. Any involvement with this type you will often feel burdened by their insatiable emotional needs.

TRANSGRESSIONS

1. Transgression I: Spanish Empire (El Dorado: gold empire)
"Nothing is more costly than something given free of charge."
Power requires self-discipline. The prospect of wealth, particularly easy, sudden wealth, plays havoc with the emotions. The suddenly rich believe that more is always possible. The free lunch, the money that will fall into your lap, is just around the corner.
The greedy neglect everything power really depends on: self-control, the goodwill of others, and so on. Understand: With one exception—death—no lasting change in fortune comes quickly. Sudden wealth rarely lasts, for it is built on nothing solid. Never let lust for money lure you out of the protective and enduring fortress of real power. Make power your goal and money will find its way to you. Leave El Dorado for suckers and fools.
2. Transgression II: Duchess of Marlborough (Cheap Lady and Palace)

The powerful must have grandeur of spirit—they can never reveal any pettiness. And money is the most visible arena in which to display either grandeur or pettiness. Best spend freely, then, and create a reputation for generosity, which in the end will pay great dividends. Never let financial details blind you to the bigger picture of how people perceive you. Their resentment will cost you in the long run. Your money will buy their submission better than your displays of power.

OBSERVANCES

1. Observance I: Aretino (son of a lowly shoemaker and artist)

First, that it has to circulate to bring power. What money should buy is not lifeless objects but power over people. By keeping money in constant circulation, Aretino bought an ever-expanding circle of influence that in the end more than compensated him for his expenses.

Second, Aretino understood the key property of the gift. To give a gift is to imply that you and the recipient are equals at the very least, or that you are the recipient's superior. A gift also involves an indebtedness or obligation; when friends, for instance, offer you something for free, you can be sure they expect something in return, and that to get it they are making you feel indebted. (The mechanism may or may not be entirely conscious on their part, but this is how it works.)

instead of being indebted to the powerful, he made the powerful indebted to him

Money may determine power relationships, but those relationships need not depend on the amount of money you have; they also depend on the way you use it. Powerful people give freely, buying influence rather than things. If you accept the inferior position because you have no fortune yet, you may find yourself in it forever. Play the trick that Aretino played on Italy's aristocracy: Imagine yourself an equal. Play the lord, give freely, open your doors, circulate your money, and create the facade of power through an alchemy that transforms money into influence.

2. Observance II: Rothschild (Jew and German in French Society)

Strategic generosity is always a great weapon in building a support base, particularly for the outsider. The base of its power was not money but its ability to spend, and its confidence in a superiority that would restore to it all that the potlatch had destroyed.

To secure his fortune he had to "waste" it. That is strategic generosity in a nutshell—the ability to be flexible with your wealth, putting it to work, not to buy objects, but to win people's hearts.

3. Observance III: Lorenzo (Large Wealth then became Patron)

There is no better use of strategic generosity than that of distracting attention from an unsavory reality and wrapping oneself in the mantle of art or religion.

4. Observance IV: Louis (Favor)

He would use his vast wealth to soften the soil. First he would ignore his victim, making the man anxious. Then the man would suddenly find that his son had been given a well-paid post, or that funds had been spent liberally in his home region, or that he had been given a painting he had long coveted. Presents would flow from Louis's hands. Finally, weeks or months later, Louis

would ask for the favor he had needed all along. A man who had once vowed to do anything to stop the king would find he had lost the desire to fight

To succeed best, the gift should come out of the blue. It should be remarkable for the fact that a gift like it has never been given before, or for being preceded by a cold shoulder from the giver. The more often you give to particular people, the blunter this weapon becomes. If they don't take your gifts for granted, becoming monsters of ingratitude, they will resent what appears to be charity. The sudden, unexpected, one-time gift will not spoil your children; it will keep them under your thumb.

5. Observance V: antique dealer Fushimiya

First, an essential aspect of money: That it is humans who have created it and humans who instill it with meaning and value. Second, with objects as with money, what the courtier most values are the sentiments and emotions embedded in them—these are what make them worth having. The lesson is simple: The more your gifts and your acts of generosity play with sentiment, the more powerful they are. The object or concept that plays with a charged emotion or hits a chord of sentiment has more power than the money you squander on an expensive yet lifeless present.

6. Observance VI: Akimo

When you insist on paying less, you may save your five ryo, but the insult you cause and the cheap impression you create will cost you in reputation, which is the thing the powerful prize above all. Learn to pay the full price—it will save you a lot in the end.

7. Observance VII: Masamune (gift: horse)

Money gives its possessor the ability to give pleasure to others. The more you can do this, the more you attract admiration. When you make a horse come out of a gourd, you give the ultimate demonstration of your power.

The great man who is a miser is a great fool, and a man in high places can have no vice so harmful as avarice. A miserly man can conquer neither lands nor lordships, for he does not have a plentiful supply of friends with whom he may work his will. Whoever wants to have friends must not love his possessions but must acquire friends by means of fair gifts

REVERSAL

1. Offers great opportunities for swindling and deception if you apply it from the other side.

Dangling the lure of a free lunch is the con artist's stock in trade.

2. Bait your deceptions with the possibility of easy money. People are essentially lazy, and want wealth to fall in their lap rather than to work for it. For a small sum, sell them advice on how to make millions (P. T. Barnum did this later in life), and that small sum will become a fortune when multiplied by thousands of suckers.

3. Lure people in with the prospect of easy money and you have the room to work still more deceptions on them, since greed is powerful enough to blind your victims to anything. And as the Yellow Kid said, half the fun is teaching a moral lesson: Greed does not pay.

LAW #41: AVOID STEPPING INTO A GREAT MAN'S SHOES

JUDGMENT What happens first always appears better and more original than what comes after. If you succeed a great man or have a famous parent, you will have to accomplish double their achievements to outshine them. Do not get lost in their shadow, or stuck in a past not of your own making: Establish your own name and identity by changing course. Slay the overbearing father, disparage his legacy, and gain power by shining in your own way.

TRANSGRESSION: Louis XV (failure successor of great sun king)

1. Louis XV had only one way out of the trap awaiting the son or successor of a man like the Sun King: to psychologically begin from nothing, to denigrate the past and his inheritance, and to move in a totally new direction, creating his own world.
2. Assuming you have the choice, it would be better to avoid the situation altogether, to place yourself where there is a vacuum of power, where you can be the one to bring order out of chaos without having to compete with another star in the sky. Power depends on appearing larger than other people, and when you are lost in the shadow of the father, the king, the great predecessor, you cannot possibly project such a presence.

OBSERVANCE : Alexander The Great (success successor of great King Philip)

1. Alexander represents an extremely uncommon type in history: the son of a famous and successful man who manages to surpass the father in glory and power. The son will never step out of his father's shadow unless he adopts the ruthless strategy of Alexander: disparage the past, create your own kingdom, put the father in the shadows instead of letting him do the same to you
2. If you cannot materially start from ground zero—it would be foolish to renounce an inheritance—you can at least begin from ground zero psychologically, by throwing off the weight of the past and charting a new direction. Alexander instinctively recognized that privileges of birth are impediments to power. Be merciless with the past, then—not only with your father and his father but with your own earlier achievements. Only the weak rest on their laurels and dote on past triumphs; in the game of power there is never time to rest.

KEYS TO POWER

1. The past prevents the young hero from creating his own world—he must do as his father did, even after that father is dead or powerless. The hero must bow and scrape before his predecessor and yield to tradition and precedent. What had success in the past must be carried over to the present, even though circumstances have greatly changed. The past also weighs the hero down with an inheritance that he is terrified of losing, making him timid and cautious.

2. Power depends on the ability to fill a void, to occupy a field that has been cleared of the dead weight of the past. Perhaps the simplest way to escape the shadow of the past is simply to belittle it, playing on the timeless antagonism between the generations, stirring up the young against the old.
3. Never let yourself be seen as following your predecessor's path. If you do you will never surpass him. You must physically demonstrate your difference, by establishing a style and symbolism that sets you apart.
4. The problem with the overbearing predecessor is that he fills the vistas before you with symbols of the past. You have no room to create your own name. To deal with this situation you need to hunt out the vacuums—those areas in culture that have been left vacant and in which you can become the first and principal figure to shine.
5. Most people are afraid to break so boldly with tradition, but they secretly admire those who can break up the old forms and reinvigorate the culture. This is why there is so much power to be gained from entering vacuums and voids.
6. There is a kind of stubborn stupidity that recurs throughout history, and is a strong impediment to power: The superstitious belief that if the person before you succeeded by doing A, B, and C, you can re-create their success by doing the same thing. This cookie-cutter approach will seduce the uncreative, for it is easy, and appeals to their timidity and their laziness.
7. Any time a problem comes up, I'll make the decision at once—immediately.” Adopt this ruthless strategy toward the past: Burn all the books, and train yourself to react to circumstances as they happen.
8. You are your own father. Do not let yourself spend years creating yourself only to let your guard down and allow the ghost of the past—father, habit, history—to sneak back in. When our power is secure we have no need to act. This is a serious danger, especially for those who achieve success and power at an early age.
9. Pablo Picasso could deal with success, but only by constantly changing the style of his painting, often breaking completely with what had made him successful before. How often our early triumphs turn us into a kind of caricature of ourselves. Powerful people recognize these traps, they struggle constantly to re-create themselves. The father must not be allowed to return; he must be slain at every step of the way.
10. Beware of stepping into a great man's shoes—you will have to accomplish twice as much to surpass him. Those who follow are taken for imitators. No matter how much they sweat, they will never shed that burden. It is an uncommon skill to find a new path for excellence, a modern route to celebrity. There are many roads to singularity, not all of them well traveled. The newest ones can be arduous, but they are often shortcuts to greatness.

REVERSAL

1. The shadow of a great predecessor could be used to advantage if it is chosen as a trick, a tactic that can be discarded once it has brought you power. The past often has elements worth appropriating, qualities that would be foolish to reject out of a need to distinguish yourself.
2. Making a display of doing things differently from your predecessor can make you seem childish and in fact out of control, unless your actions have a logic of their own.
3. If you have the kind of intelligence and instinct that will point you in the right direction, playing the rebel will not be dangerous.
4. But if you are mediocre, as Joseph II was in comparison to his mother, you are better off learning from your predecessor's knowledge and experience, which are based on something real.
5. Finally, it is often wise to keep an eye on the young, your future rivals in power. Just as you try to rid yourself of your father, they will soon play the same trick on you, denigrating everything you have accomplished. Just as you rise by rebelling against the past, keep an eye on those rising from below, and never give them the chance to do the same to you.

LAW #42: STRIKE THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL SCATTER

JUDGMENT Trouble can often be traced to a single strong individual —the stirrer, the arrogant underling, the poisoner of goodwill. If you allow such people room to operate, others will succumb to their influence. Do not wait for the troubles they cause to multiply, do not try to negotiate with them—they are irredeemable. Neutralize their influence by isolating or banishing them. Strike at the source of the trouble and the sheep will scatter

OBSERVANCES LAW I: Athens (Ostraka)

1. The solution was quick and effective: Get rid of them. Within any group, trouble can most often be traced to a single source, the unhappy, chronically dissatisfied one who will always stir up dissension and infect the group with his or her ill ease.
2. Before you know what hit you the dissatisfaction spreads. Act before it becomes impossible to disentangle one strand of misery from another, or to see how the whole thing started. First, recognize troublemakers by their overbearing presence, or by their complaining nature.
3. Once you spot them do not try to reform them or appease them—that will only make things worse. Do not attack them, whether directly or indirectly, for they are poisonous in nature and will work underground to destroy you.
4. Do as the Athenians did: Banish them before it is too late. Separate them from the group before they become the eye of a whirlpool. Do not give them time to stir up anxieties and sow discontent; do not give them room to move. Let one person suffer so that the rest can live in peace.

OBSERVANCES LAW II: Dante (Whites, Blacks, Boniface and Rome)

1. Played the oldest card in the book—threatening with one hand while holding out the olive branch with the other. Understood one of the principal precepts in the game of power: One resolute person, one disobedient spirit, can turn a flock of sheep into a den of lions. So he isolated the troublemaker. Without the backbone of the city to keep them together, the sheep quickly scattered.
2. Learn the lesson: Do not waste your time lashing out in all directions at what seems to be a many-headed enemy. Find the one head that matters—the person with willpower, or smarts, or, most important of all, charisma. Whatever it costs you, lure this person away, for once he is absent his powers will lose their effect. His isolation can be physical (banishment or absence from the court), political (narrowing his base of support), or psychological (alienating him from the group through slander and insinuation). Cancer begins with a single cell; excise it before it spreads beyond cure.

KEYS TO POWER

1. In every group, power is concentrated in the hands of one or two people, for this is one area in which human nature will never change: People will congregate around a single strong personality like planets orbiting a sun.
2. To labor under the illusion that this kind of power center no longer exists is to make endless mistakes, waste energy and time, and never hit the target. Powerful people never waste time. Outwardly they may play along with the game—pretending that power is shared among many—but inwardly they keep their eyes on the inevitable few in the group who hold the cards. These are the ones they work on. When troubles arise, they look for the underlying cause, the single strong character who started the stirring and whose isolation or banishment will settle the waters again.
3. Once you recognize who the stirrer is, pointing it out to other people will accomplish a great deal. Understanding who controls the group dynamic is a critical realization. Remember: Stirrers thrive by hiding in the group, disguising their actions among the reactions of others. Render their actions visible and they lose their power to upset.
4. A key element in games of strategy is isolating the enemy's power. In chess you try to corner the king. In the Chinese game of go you try to isolate the enemy's forces in small pockets, rendering them immobile and ineffectual. It is often better to isolate your enemies than to destroy them—you seem less brutal. The result, though, is the same, for in the game of power, isolation spells death. The most effective form of isolation is somehow to separate your victims from their power base.
5. Presence and appearance have great import in the game of power. To seduce, particularly in the beginning stages, you need to be constantly present, or create the feeling that you are; if you are often out of sight, the charm will wear off.

6. First, your absence from the court spells danger for you, and you should never leave the scene in a time of turmoil, for your absence can both symbolize and induce a loss of power; second, and on the other hand, luring your enemies away from the court at critical moments is a great ploy.
7. Isolation has other strategic uses. When trying to seduce people, it is often wise to isolate them from their usual social context. Once isolated they are vulnerable to you, and your presence becomes magnified.
8. Here they feel weak, and succumb to deception more easily. Isolation, then, can prove a powerful way of bringing people under your spell to seduce or swindle them.
9. You will often find powerful people who have alienated themselves from the group. Perhaps their power has gone to their heads, and they consider themselves superior; perhaps they have lost the knack of communicating with ordinary folk. Remember: This makes them vulnerable. Powerful though they be, people like this can be turned to use.
10. Rasputin strategy can bring you great power: Always search out people who hold high positions yet who find themselves isolated on the board. They are like apples falling into your lap, easily seduced, and able to catapult you into power yourself.
11. Vast empires fell into their hands. With the leader gone the center of gravity is gone; there is nothing to revolve around and everything falls apart. Aim at the leaders, bring them down, and look for the endless opportunities in the confusion that will ensue.
12. *If you draw a bow, draw the strongest. If you use an arrow, use the longest. To shoot a rider, first shoot his horse. To catch a gang of bandits, first capture its leader. Just as a country has its border, so the killing of men has its limits. If the enemy's attack can be stopped [with a blow to the head], why have any more dead and wounded than necessary?*

REVERSAL

1. "Any harm you do to a man should be done in such a way that you need not fear his revenge," If you act to isolate your enemy, make sure he lacks the means to repay the favor. Apply it from a position of superiority, so that you have nothing to fear from his resentment.
2. And so you may often find it better to keep people on your side, where you can watch them, than to risk creating an angry enemy. Keeping them close, you can secretly whittle away at their support base, so that when the time comes to cut them loose they will fall fast and hard without knowing what hit them.

LAW #43: WORK ON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OTHERS

JUDGMENT Coercion creates a reaction that will eventually work against you. You must seduce others into wanting to move in your direction. A person you have seduced becomes your loyal pawn. And the way to seduce others is to operate on their individual psychologies and weaknesses. Soften up the

resistant by working on their emotions, playing on what they hold dear and what they fear. Ignore the hearts and minds of others and they will grow to hate you.

TRANSGRESSION: Marie-Antoinette (French Revolution: guillotine)

1. She never learned to charm or please other people, to become attuned to their individual psychologies. She never had to work to get her way, to use calculation or cunning or the arts of persuasion. And like everyone who is indulged from an early age, she evolved into a monster of insensitivity.
2. In the realm of power, such attitudes are disastrous. At all times you must attend to those around you, gauging their particular psychology, tailoring your words to what you know will entice and seduce them. This requires energy and art. The higher your station, the greater the need to remain attuned to the hearts and minds of those below you, creating a base of support to maintain you at the pinnacle. Without that base, your power will teeter, and at the slightest change of fortune those below will gladly assist in your fall from grace.

OBSERVANCE: Liang and Menghuo

1. *"It is better to win hearts," than cities; better to battle with hearts than with weapons. I hope you will succeed in winning the hearts of these people."*
2. *Persuasion is more effective than force.*
3. *The men who have changed the universe have never gotten there by working on leaders, but rather by moving the masses. Working on leaders is the method of intrigue and only leads to secondary results. Working on the masses, however, is the stroke of genius that changes the face of the world.*
4. Liang had two options: Try to defeat the barbarians in the south with one crushing blow, or patiently and slowly win them to his side over time.
5. Most people more powerful than their enemy grab the first option and never consider the second, but the truly powerful think far ahead: The first option may be quick and easy, but over time it brews ugly emotions in the hearts of the vanquished. Their resentment turns to hatred; such animosity keeps you on edge—you spend your energy protecting what you have gained, growing paranoid and defensive. The second option, though more difficult, not only brings you peace of mind, it converts a potential enemy into a pillar of support.
6. In all your encounters, take a step back—take the time to calculate and attune yourself to your targets' emotional makeup and psychological weaknesses. Force will only strengthen their resistance. With most people the heart is the key: They are like children, ruled by their emotions. To soften them up, alternate harshness with mercy. Play on their basic fears, and also their loves—freedom, family, etc. Once you break them down, you will have a lifelong friend and fiercely loyal ally.

KEYS TO POWER

1. In the game of power, you are surrounded by people who have absolutely no reason to help you unless it is in their interest to do so. And if you have nothing to offer their self-interest, you are likely to make them hostile, for they will see in you just one more competitor, one more waster of their time. Those that overcome this prevailing coldness are the ones who find the key that unlocks the stranger's heart and mind, seducing him into their corner, if necessary softening him up for a punch.
2. When they meet someone new, rather than stepping back and probing to see what makes this person unique, they talk about themselves, eager to impose their own willpower and prejudices. They argue, boast, and make a show of their power. They may not know it but they are secretly creating an enemy, a resister, because there is no more infuriating feeling than having your individuality ignored, your own psychology unacknowledged. It makes you feel lifeless and resentful.
3. The key to persuasion is softening people up and breaking them down, gently. Seduce them with a two-pronged approach: Work on their emotions and play on their intellectual weaknesses. Be alert to both what separates them from everyone else (their individual psychology) and what they share with everyone else (their basic emotional responses). Aim at the primary emotions—love, hate, jealousy. Once you move their emotions you have reduced their control, making them more vulnerable to persuasion.
4. Educated and well-read himself, in his speeches he used visceral metaphors, voicing the public's deepest anxieties and encouraging them to vent their frustrations in public meetings. Rather than arguing the practical aspects of a particular program, he would describe how it would affect them on the most primitive, down-to-earth level. Do not believe that this approach works only with the illiterate and unschooled—it works on one and all. All of us are mortal and face the same dreadful fate, and all of us share the desire for attachment and belonging. Stir up these emotions and you captivate our hearts.
5. The best way to do this is with a dramatic jolt, Play on contrasts like this: Push people to despair, then give them relief. If they expect pain and you give them pleasure, you win their hearts. Creating pleasure of any kind, in fact, will usually bring you success, as will allaying fears and providing or promising security.
6. Symbolic gestures are often enough to win sympathy and goodwill. A gesture of self-sacrifice, for example—a show that you suffer as those around you do—will make people identify with you, even if your suffering is symbolic or minor and theirs is real. When you enter a group, make a gesture of goodwill; soften the group up for the harsher actions that will follow later.
7. A committed, psychologically motivated soldier would fight harder and more creatively than a puppet. Instead of manipulating lifeless pawns, make those on your side convinced and excited by the cause you have enlisted them in; this will not only make your work easier but it will also give

you more leeway to deceive them later on. And to accomplish this you need to deal with their individual psychologies. Never clumsily assume that the tactic that worked on one person will necessarily work on another.

8. To find the key that will motivate them, first get them to open up. The more they talk, the more they reveal about their likes and dislikes—the handles and levers to move them with. The quickest way to secure people's minds is by demonstrating, as simply as possible, how an action will benefit them. Self-interest is the strongest motive of all: A great cause may capture minds, but once the first flush of excitement is over, interest will flag
9. The people who are best at appealing to people's minds are often artists, intellectuals, and those of a more poetic nature. This is because ideas are most easily communicated through metaphors and imagery. It is always good policy, then, to have in your pocket at least one artist or intellectual who can appeal concretely to people's minds
10. Learn to play the numbers game. The wider your support base the stronger your power. Understanding that one alienated, disaffected soul can spark a blaze of discontent, Louis XIV made sure to endear himself to the lowest members of his staff. You too must constantly win over more allies on all levels—a time will inevitably come when you will need them.

REVERSAL: no possible reversal to this Law.

LAW #44: DISARM AND INFURIATE WITH THE MIRROR EFFECT

JUDGMENT The mirror reflects reality, but it is also the perfect tool for deception: When you mirror your enemies, doing exactly as they do, they cannot figure out your strategy. The Mirror Effect mocks and humiliates them, making them overreact. By holding up a mirror to their psyches, you seduce them with the illusion that you share their values; by holding up a mirror to their actions, you teach them a lesson. Few can resist the power of the Mirror Effect.

MIRROR EFFECTS: Preliminary Typology

In using Mirror Effects we symbolically re-create this disturbing power by mirroring the actions of other people, mimicking their movements to unsettle and infuriate them. Made to feel mocked, cloned, objectlike, an image without a soul, they get angry. Or do the same thing slightly differently and they might feel disarmed—you have perfectly reflected their wishes and desires. This is the narcissistic power of mirrors. 4 Mirror Effects in the realm of power:

1. **Neutralizing Effect:** Do what your enemies do, following their actions as best you can, and they cannot see what you are up to—they are blinded by your mirror. Their strategy for dealing with you depends on your reacting to them in a way characteristic of you; neutralize it by playing a game of mimicry with them. Working more subtly as an adult, you can still unsettle your opponents this way; shielding your own strategy with the mirror, you lay invisible traps, or push your opponents into the trap they planned for you. A reverse version of the Neutralizing Effect is

the Shadow: You shadow your opponents' every move without their seeing you. Use the Shadow to gather information that will neutralize their strategy later on, when you will be able to thwart their every move. Preeminent device for detectives and spies.

2. Narcissus Effect: You look deep into the souls of other people; fathom their inmost desires, their values, their tastes, their spirit; and you reflect it back to them, making yourself into a kind of mirror image. Your ability to reflect their psyche gives you great power over them; they may even feel a tinge of love. It is immensely powerful because it plays upon the unsatisfied self-love of a child.
3. Moral Effect: The power of verbal argument is extremely limited, and often accomplishes the opposite of what is intended. *"The truth is generally seen, rarely heard."* You teach others a lesson by giving them a taste of their own medicine. In the Moral Effect, you mirror what other people have done to you, and do so in a way that makes them realize you are doing to them exactly what they did to you. You make them feel that their behavior has been unpleasant, as opposed to hearing you complain and whine about it, which only gets their defenses up. You objectify the qualities you want them to feel ashamed of and create a mirror in which they can gaze at their follies and learn a lesson about themselves. This technique is often used by educators, psychologists. Teacher's Mirror. Whether or not there is actually anything wrong with the way people have treated you, however, it can often be to your advantage to reflect it back to them in a way that makes them feel guilty about it.
4. Hallucinatory Effect: comes from creating a perfect copy of an object, a place, a person. This copy acts as a kind of dummy—people take it for the real thing, because it has the physical appearance of the real thing. This is the preeminent technique of con artists, who strategically mimic the real world to deceive you. Deceiver's Mirror.

Observance I: Napoleon and Fouché

1. *When you have come to grips and are striving together with the enemy, and you realize that you cannot advance, you "soak in" and become one with the enemy. You can win by applying a suitable technique while you are mutually entangled. ... You can win often decisively with the advantage of knowing how to "soak" into the enemy, whereas, were you to draw apart, you would lose the chance to win.*
2. First, you give people the feeling that you share their thoughts and goals. Second, if they suspect you have ulterior motives, the mirror shields you from them, preventing them from figuring out your strategy. Eventually this will infuriate and unsettle them. By playing the double, you steal their thunder, suck away their initiative, make them feel helpless. You also gain the ability to choose when and how to unsettle them—another avenue to power. And the mirror saves you mental energy: simply echoing the moves of others gives you the space you need to develop a strategy of your own.

Observance II: Alcibiades of Athens and Spartans

1. *When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.*
2. The secret to gaining ascendancy over large numbers, he came to believe, was not to impose his colors but to absorb the colors of those around him, like a chameleon. Once people fell for the trick, the deceptions he went on to practice would be invisible to them.
3. Everyone is wrapped up in their own narcissistic shell. When you try to impose your own ego on them, a wall goes up, resistance is increased. By mirroring them, however, you seduce them into a kind of narcissistic rapture: They are gazing at a double of their own soul. This double is actually manufactured in its entirety by you. Once you have used the mirror to seduce them, you have great power over them.

Observance III: Marie Mancini and King Louis

1. First, she took a step back, to study her prey. Seduction often fails to get past the first step because it is too aggressive; the first move must always be a retreat. By studying the king from a distance Marie saw what distinguished him from others—his high ideals, romantic nature, and snobbish disdain for petty politics. Marie's next step was to make a mirror for these hidden yearnings on Louis's part, letting him glimpse what he himself could be—a godlike king!
2. By doubling the tastes and ideals of the target, it shows your attention to his or her psychology, an attention more charming than any aggressive pursuit. Find out what sets the other person apart, then hold up the mirror that will reflect it and bring it out of them. Feed their fantasies of power and greatness by reflecting their ideals, and they will succumb

Observance IV: Ivan IV and Russia

1. People are locked in their own experiences. When you whine about some insensitivity on their part, they may seem to understand, but inwardly they are untouched and even more resistant. The goal of power is always to lower people's resistance to you. For this you need tricks, and one trick is to teach them a lesson.
2. Instead of haranguing people verbally, then, create a kind of mirror of their behavior. In doing so you leave them two choices: They can ignore you, or they can start to think about themselves. And even if they ignore you, you will have planted a seed in their unconscious that will eventually take root. When you mirror their behavior, incidentally, do not be afraid to add a touch of caricature and exaggeration, as Ivan did by enthroning a Tartar—it is the little spice in the soup that will open their eyes and make them see the ridiculousness in their own actions.

Observance V: Dr. Milton H. Erickson and Couples

1. Communication depends on metaphors and symbols, which are the basis of language itself. A metaphor is a kind of mirror to the concrete and real, which it often expresses more clearly and

deeply than a literal description does. When you are dealing with the intractable willpower of other people, direct communication often only heightens their resistance.

2. This happens most clearly when you complain about people's behavior, particularly in sensitive areas such as their lovemaking. You will effect a far more lasting change if symbolic mirror of the situation, and guide the other through it. Talking in parables is often the best way to teach a lesson, for it allows people to realize the truth on their own.
3. When dealing with people who are lost in the reflections of fantasy worlds, never try to push them into reality by shattering their mirrors. Instead, enter their world and operate inside it, under their rules, gently guiding them out of the hall of mirrors they have entered.

Observance VI: Japanese tea master Takeno Sho-o

1. If mirroring a person's desires meant falling into a ditch, so be it.
2. Learn to manipulate the Courtier's Mirror, for it will bring you great power. Study people's eyes, follow their gestures—surer barometers of pain and pleasure than any spoken word. Notice and remember the details—the clothing, the choice of friends, the daily habits, the tossed-out remarks—that reveal hidden and rarely indulged desires. Soak it all in, find out what lies under the surface, then make yourself the mirror of their unspoken selves
3. The wordless communication, the indirect compliment, contains the most power. No one can resist the enchantment of the Courtier's Mirror.

Observance VII: Yellow Kid weil (con artist)

1. The mirroring of reality offers immense deceptive powers. The right uniform, the perfect accent, the proper props—the deception cannot be deciphered because it is enmeshed in a simulation of reality. People have an intense desire and need to believe, and their first instinct is to trust a well-constructed facade, to mistake it for reality.
2. We habitually accept appearances, and this is a credulity you can use.
3. Study the world's surfaces and learn to mirror them in your habits, your manner, your clothes. Like a carnivorous plant, to unsuspecting insects you will look like all the other plants in the field.
4. *The task of a military operation is to accord deceptively with the intentions of the enemy ... get to what they want first, subtly anticipate them. Maintain discipline and adapt to the enemy.... Thus, at first you are like a maiden, so the enemy opens his door; then you are like a rabbit on the loose, so the enemy cannot keep you out.*

A WARNING: BEWARE OF MIRRORED SITUATIONS

1. Mirrors contain great power but also dangerous reefs, including the mirrored situation—a situation that seems to reflect or closely resemble a previous one, mostly in style and surface appearance.

2. In a mirrored situation you have little or no control over the reflections and recollections that will be connected to you, and any situation beyond your control is dangerous. Even if the person or event has positive associations, you will suffer from not being able to live up to them, since the past generally appears greater than the present. If you ever notice people associating you with some past event or person, do everything you can to separate yourself from that memory and to shatter the reflection

LAW #45: PREACH THE NEED FOR CHANGE, BUT NEVER REFORM TOO MUCH AT ONCE

JUDGMENT Everyone understands the need for change in the abstract, but on the day-to-day level people are creatures of habit. Too much innovation is traumatic, and will lead to revolt. If you are new to a position of power, or an outsider trying to build a power base, make a show of respecting the old way of doing things. If change is necessary, make it feel like a gentle improvement on the past.

TRANSGRESSION: King Henry VIII (Married King) and Thomas Cromwell (minister)

1. Like a billiard ball hit too hard against the cushion, his reforms had reactions and caroms he did not envision and could not control.
2. The man who initiates strong reforms often becomes the scapegoat for any kind of dissatisfaction. And eventually the reaction to his reforms may consume him, for change is upsetting to the human animal, even when it is for the good. Because the world is and always has been full of insecurity and threat, we latch on to familiar faces and create habits and rituals to make the world more comfortable. Change can be pleasant and even sometimes desirable in the abstract, but too much of it creates an anxiety that will stir and boil beneath the surface and then eventually erupt.
3. Never underestimate the hidden conservatism of those around you. It is powerful and entrenched. Never let the seductive charm of an idea cloud your reason: Just as you cannot make people see the world your way, you cannot wrench them into the future with painful changes. They will rebel. If reform is necessary, anticipate the reaction against it and find ways to disguise the change and sweeten the poison.

OBSERVANCE: Chinese Communist (Mao Tse-tung- Chuko Liang)

1. Instead of struggling against the past, he turned it to his advantage. Radical change had to be cloaked in the comfortable clothes of the past.
2. The past is powerful. What has happened before seems greater; habit and history give any act weight. Use this to your advantage. When you destroy the familiar you create a void or vacuum; people fear the chaos that will flood in to fill it. You must avoid stirring up such fears at all cost. Borrow the weight and legitimacy from the past, however remote, to create a comforting and familiar presence. This will give your actions romantic associations, add to your presence, and cloak the nature of the changes you are attempting.

3. *It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things.*

KEYS TO POWER

1. Human psychology contains many dualities, one of them being that even while people understand the need for change, knowing how important it is for institutions and individuals to be occasionally renewed, they are also irritated and upset by changes that affect them personally. They know that change is necessary, and that novelty provides relief from boredom, but deep inside they cling to the past. Change in the abstract, or superficial change, they desire, but a change that upsets core habits and routines is deeply disturbing to them.
2. No revolution has gone without a powerful later reaction against it, for in the long run the void it creates proves too unsettling to the human animal, who unconsciously associates such voids with death and chaos. The opportunity for change and renewal seduces people to the side of the revolution, but once their enthusiasm fades, which it will, they are left with a certain emptiness. Yearning for the past, they create an opening for it to creep back in.
3. The prophet who preaches and brings change can only survive by taking up arms: When the masses inevitably yearn for the past, he must be ready to use force. But the armed prophet cannot last long unless he quickly creates a new set of values and rituals to replace the old ones, and to soothe the anxieties of those who dread change. It is far easier, and less bloody, to play a kind of con game. Preach change as much as you like, and even enact your reforms, but give them the comforting appearance of older events and traditions.
4. The fact that the past is dead and buried gives you the freedom to reinterpret it. To support your cause, tinker with the facts. The past is a text in which you can safely insert your own lines.
5. Another strategy to disguise change is to make a loud and public display of support for the values of the past. Seem to be a zealot for tradition and few will notice how unconventional you really are.
6. The answer to this innate conservatism is to play the courtier's game. So pay lip service to tradition. Identify the elements in your revolution that can be made to seem to build on the past. Say the right things, make a show of conformity, and meanwhile let your theories do their radical work. Play with appearances and respect past protocol. This is true in every arena—science being no exception.
7. If their reform is too far ahead of its time, few will understand it, and it will stir up anxiety and be hopelessly misinterpreted. The changes you make must seem less innovative than they are.
8. If you work in a tumultuous time, there is power to be gained by preaching a return to the past, to comfort, tradition, and ritual. During a period of stagnation, on the other hand, play the card of reform and revolution—but beware of what you stir up. Those who finish a revolution are rarely

those who start it. You will not succeed at this dangerous game unless you are willing to forestall the inevitable reaction against it by playing with appearances and building on the past.

9. *For the great majority of mankind are satisfied with appearances, as though they were realities.*

REVERSAL

1. The past is a corpse to be used as you see fit. If what happened in the recent past was painful and harsh, it is self-destructive to associate yourself with it. Pay attention to the times.
2. If you make a bold change from the past, you must avoid at all costs the appearance of a void or vacuum, or you will create terror. Even an ugly recent history will seem preferable to an empty space. Fill that space immediately with new rituals and forms. Soothing and growing familiar, these will secure your position among the masses.
3. Finally, the arts, fashion, and technology would seem to be areas in which power would come from creating a radical rupture with the past and appearing cutting edge. Indeed, such a strategy can bring great power, but it has many dangers. It is inevitable that your innovations will be outdone by someone else. You have little control—someone younger and fresher moves in a sudden new direction, making your bold innovation of yesterday seem tiresome and tame today.
4. You are forever playing catch-up; your power is tenuous and short-lived. You want a power built on something more solid. Using the past, tinkering with tradition, playing with convention to subvert it will give your creations something more than a momentary appeal. Periods of dizzying change disguise the fact that a yearning for the past will inevitably creep back in. In the end, using the past for your own purposes will bring you more power than trying to cut it out completely—a futile and self-destructive endeavor.

LAW #46: NEVER APPEAR TOO PERFECT

JUDGMENT: Appearing better than others is always dangerous, but most dangerous of all is to appear to have no faults or weaknesses. Envy creates silent enemies. It is smart to occasionally display defects, and admit to harmless vices, in order to deflect envy and appear more human and approachable. Only gods and the dead can seem perfect with impunity.

TRANSGRESSION: Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell (murder)

1. Once envy eats away at someone, everything you do only makes it grow, and day by day it festers inside him. Eventually he will attack. It takes great talent and skill to conceal one's talent and skill
2. Only a minority can succeed at the game of life, and that minority inevitably arouses the envy of those around them. Once success happens your way, however, the people to fear the most are those in your own circle, the friends and acquaintances you have left behind. Feelings of inferiority gnaw at them; the thought of your success only heightens their feelings of stagnation. Envy, which the philosopher Kierkegaard calls "unhappy admiration," takes hold. You may not see it but you will feel it someday— unless, that is, you learn strategies of deflection, little sacrifices

to the gods of success. Either dampen your brilliance occasionally, purposefully revealing a defect, weakness, or anxiety, or attributing your success to luck; or simply find yourself new friends.

Never underestimate the power of envy.

OBSERVANCE: Cosimo

1. The palace was a symbol of Cosimo's strategy—all simplicity on the outside, all elegance and opulence within. *for he knew how extraordinary things that are seen and appear every hour make men much more envied than those that are done in deed and are covered over with decency.*
2. "Envy is a weed that should not be watered."
3. This does not mean that greatness should be suffocated, or that only the mediocre should survive; only that a game of appearances must be played. The insidious envy of the masses can actually be deflected quite easily: Appear as one of them in style and values. Make alliances with those below you, and elevate them to positions of power to secure their support in times of need. Never flaunt your wealth, and carefully conceal the degree to which it has bought influence. Make a display of deferring to others, as if they were more powerful than you. Cosimo de' Medici perfected this game; he was a consummate con artist of appearances. No one could gauge the extent of his power—his modest exterior hid the truth.
4. Never be so foolish as to believe that you are stirring up admiration by flaunting the qualities that raise you above others. By making others aware of their inferior position, you are only stirring up "unhappy admiration," or envy, which will gnaw away at them until they undermine you in ways you cannot foresee. The fool dares the gods of envy by flaunting his victories. The master of power understands that the appearance of superiority over others is inconsequential next to the reality of it.

KEYS TO POWER

1. The human animal has a hard time dealing with feelings of inferiority. In the face of superior skill, talent, or power, we are often disturbed and ill at ease; this is because most of us have an inflated sense of ourselves, and when we meet people who surpass us they make it clear to us that we are in fact mediocre, or at least not as brilliant as we had thought. This disturbance in our self-image cannot last long without stirring up ugly emotions. At first we feel envy: If only we had the quality or skill of the superior person, we would be happy. But envy brings us neither comfort nor any closer to equality. Nor can we admit to feeling it, for it is frowned upon socially—to show envy is to admit to feeling inferior.
2. There are several strategies for dealing with the insidious, destructive emotion of envy. First, accept the fact that there will be people who will surpass you in some way, and also the fact that you may envy them. But make that feeling a way of pushing yourself to equal or surpass them someday. Let envy turn inward and it poisons the soul; expel it outward and it can move you to greater heights.

3. Second, understand that as you gain power, those below you will feel envious of you. They may not show it but it is inevitable. Do not naively accept the facade they show you—read between the lines of their criticisms, their little sarcastic remarks, the signs of backstabbing, the excessive praise that is preparing you for a fall, the resentful look in the eye. Half the problem with envy comes when we do not recognize it until it is too late.
4. Finally, expect that when people envy you they will work against you insidiously. They will put obstacles in your path that you will not foresee, or that you cannot trace to their source. It is hard to defend yourself against this kind of attack. And by the time you realize that envy is at the root of a person's feelings about you, it is often too late: Your excuses, your false humility, your defensive actions, only exacerbate the problem. Since it is far easier to avoid creating envy in the first place than to get rid of it once it is there, you should strategize to forestall it before it grows. It is often your own actions that stir up envy, your own unawareness. By becoming conscious of those actions and qualities that create envy, you can take the teeth out of it before it nibbles you to death.
5. Money others can attain; power as well. But superior intelligence, good looks, charm—these are qualities no one can acquire. The naturally perfect have to work the most to disguise their brilliance, displaying a defect or two to deflect envy before it takes root. It is a common and naive mistake to think you are charming people with your natural talents when in fact they are coming to hate you.
6. A great danger in the realm of power is the sudden improvement in fortune—an unexpected promotion, a victory or success that seems to come out of nowhere. This is sure to stir up envy among your former peers.
7. Subtly emphasize how lucky you have been, to make your happiness seem more attainable to other people, and the need for envy less acute. But be careful not to affect a false modesty that people can easily see through. This will only make them more envious. The act has to be good; your humility, and your openness to those you have left behind, have to seem genuine. Any hint of insincerity will only make your new status more oppressive.
8. Despite your elevated position, it will do you no good to alienate your former peers. Power requires a wide and solid support base, which envy can silently destroy. Political power of any kind creates envy, and one of the best ways to deflect it before it takes root is to seem unambitious.
9. People cannot envy the power that they themselves have given a person who does not seem to desire it.
10. Disguise your power as a kind of self-sacrifice rather than a source of happiness and you make it seem less enviable. Emphasize your troubles and you turn a potential danger (envy) into a source

of moral support (pity). A similar ploy is to hint that your good fortune will benefit those around you.

11. To deflect envy, Gracian recommends that the powerful display a weakness, a minor social indiscretion, a harmless vice. Give those who envy you something to feed on, distracting them from your more important sins. Remember: It is the reality that matters. You may have to play games with appearances, but in the end you will have what counts: true power.
12. Excessive praise is an almost sure sign that the person praising you envies you; they are either setting you up for a fall—it will be impossible for you to live up to their praise—or they are sharpening their blades behind your back. At the same time, those who are hypercritical of you, or who slander you publicly, probably envy you as well. Recognize their behavior as disguised envy and you keep out of the trap of mutual mud-slinging, or of taking their criticisms to heart. Win your revenge by ignoring their measly presence.
13. Do not try to help or do favors for those who envy you; they will think you are condescending to them. Once envy reveals itself for what it is, the only solution is often to flee the presence of the enviers, leaving them to stew in a hell of their own creation.
14. Finally, be aware that some environments are more conducive to envy than others. The effects of envy are more serious among colleagues and peers, where there is a veneer of equality. *“Envy is the tax which all distinction must pay.”*
15. Upon occasion, reveal a harmless defect in your character. For the envious accuse the most perfect of sinning by having no sins.

REVERSAL

1. The reason for being careful with the envious is that they are so indirect, and will find innumerable ways to undermine you. But treading carefully around them will often only make their envy worse. They sense that you are being cautious, and it registers as yet another sign of your superiority. That is why you must act before envy takes root.
2. Once envy is there, however, whether through your fault or not, it is sometimes best to affect the opposite approach: Display the utmost disdain for those who envy you. Instead of hiding your perfection, make it obvious. Make every new triumph an opportunity to make the envious squirm. Your good fortune and power become their living hell. If you attain a position of unimpeachable power, their envy will have no effect on you, and you will have the best revenge of all: They are trapped in envy while you are free in your power

LAW #47: DO NOT GO PAST THE MARK YOU AIMED FOR; IN VICTORY, LEARN WHEN TO STOP

JUDGMENT The moment of victory is often the moment of greatest peril. In the heat of victory, arrogance and overconfidence can push you past the goal you had aimed for, and by going too far, you

make more enemies than you defeat. Do not allow success to go to your head. There is no substitute for strategy and careful planning. Set a goal, and when you reach it, stop.

TRANSGRESSION: Cyrus and Queen Tomyris

1. There is nothing more intoxicating than victory, and nothing more dangerous.
2. Instead of recognizing each situation as different, he thought each new war would bring the same result as the one before as long as he used the methods he knew: ruthless force and cunning.
3. In the realm of power, you must be guided by reason. To let a momentary thrill or an emotional victory influence or guide your moves will prove fatal. When you attain success, step back. Be cautious. When you gain victory, understand the part played by the particular circumstances of a situation, and never simply repeat the same actions again and again. History is littered with the ruins of victorious empires and the corpses of leaders who could not learn to stop and consolidate their gains.

OBSERVANCE: King Louis XV and Mistress Madame de Pompadour

1. *Mistakes are always made when people get to the easy places.*
2. Success plays strange tricks on the mind. It makes you feel invulnerable, while also making you more hostile and emotional when people challenge your power. It makes you less able to adapt to circumstance. You come to believe your character is more responsible for your success than your strategizing and planning. Like Madame de Pompadour, you need to realize that your moment of triumph is also a moment when you have to rely on cunning and strategy all the more, consolidating your power base, recognizing the role of luck and circumstance in your success, and remaining vigilant against changes in your good fortune. It is the moment of victory when you need to play the courtier's game and pay more attention than ever to the laws of power.
3. *The greatest danger occurs at the moment of victory.*

KEYS TO POWER

1. Power has its own rhythms and patterns. Those who succeed at the game are the ones who control the patterns and vary them at will, keeping people off balance while they set the tempo. The essence of strategy is controlling what comes next, and the elation of victory can upset your ability to control what comes next in two ways. First, you owe your success to a pattern that you are apt to try to repeat. You will try to keep moving in the same direction without stopping to see whether this is still the direction that is best for you. Second, success tends to go to your head and make you emotional. Feeling invulnerable, you make aggressive moves that ultimately undo the victory you have gained.
2. The powerful vary their rhythms and patterns, change course, adapt to circumstance, and learn to improvise. Rather than letting their dancing feet impel them forward, they step back and look where they are going. It is as if their bloodstream bore a kind of antidote to the intoxication of victory, letting them control their emotions and come to a kind of mental halt when they have

attained success. They steady themselves, give themselves the space to reflect on what has happened, examine the role of circumstance and luck in their success. As they say in riding school, you have to be able to control yourself before you can control the horse.

3. Luck and circumstance always play a role in power. This is inevitable, and actually makes the game more interesting. But despite what you may think, good luck is more dangerous than bad luck. Bad luck teaches valuable lessons about patience, timing, and the need to be prepared for the worst; good luck deludes you into the opposite lesson, making you think your brilliance will carry you through. Your fortune will inevitably turn, and when it does you will be completely unprepared
4. The good luck that elevates you or seals your success brings the moment for you to open your eyes: The wheel of fortune will hurtle you down as easily as up. If you prepare for the fall, it is less likely to ruin you when it happens.
5. People who have a run of success can catch a kind of fever, and even when they themselves try to stay calm, the people below them often pressure them to go past their mark and into dangerous waters. You have to have a strategy for dealing with these people. Simply preaching moderation will make you look weak and small-minded; seeming to fail to follow up on a victory can lessen your power.
6. The rhythm of power often requires an alternation of force and cunning. Too much force creates a counter reaction; too much cunning, no matter how cunning it is, becomes predictable.
7. When you are victorious, then, lie low, and lull the enemy into inaction. These changes of rhythm are immensely powerful.
8. People who go past the mark are often motivated by a desire to please a master by proving their dedication. But an excess of effort exposes you to the risk of making the master suspicious of you.
9. Another moment when a small success can spoil the chances for a larger one may come if a master or superior grants you a favor: It is a dangerous mistake to ask for more. You will seem insecure—perhaps you feel you did not deserve this favor, and have to grab as much as you can when you have the chance, which may not come again. The proper response is to accept the favor graciously and withdraw. Any subsequent favors you should earn without having to ask for them.
10. Finally, the moment when you stop has great dramatic import. What comes last sticks in the mind as a kind of exclamation point. There is no better time to stop and walk away than after a victory. Keep going and you risk lessening the effect, even ending up defeated. As lawyers say of cross-examination, “Always stop with a victory.”
11. *Princes and republics should content themselves with victory, for when they aim at more, they generally lose. The use of insulting language toward an enemy arises from the insolence of victory, or from the false hope of victory, which latter misleads men as often in their actions as in their words; for when this false*

hope takes possession of the mind, it makes men go beyond the mark, and causes them to sacrifice a certain good for an uncertain better.

REVERSAL

1. Either destroy a man or leave him alone entirely. Inflicting half punishment or mild injury will only create an enemy whose bitterness will grow with time, and who will take revenge. When you beat an enemy, then, make your victory complete. Crush him into non-existence. In the moment of victory, you do not restrain yourself from crushing the enemy you have defeated, but rather from needlessly advancing against others. Be merciless with your enemy, but do not create new enemies by overreaching.
2. There are some who become more cautious than ever after a victory, which they see as just giving them more possessions to worry about and protect. Your caution after victory should never make you hesitate, or lose momentum, but rather act as a safeguard against rash action. On the other hand, momentum as a phenomenon is greatly overrated. You create your own successes, and if they follow one upon the other, it is your own doing. Belief in momentum will only make you emotional, less prone to act strategically, and more apt to repeat the same methods. Leave momentum for those who have nothing better to rely upon.

LAW #48: ASSUME FORMLESSNESS

JUDGMENT By taking a shape, by having a visible plan, you open yourself to attack. Instead of taking a form for your enemy to grasp, keep yourself adaptable and on the move. Accept the fact that nothing is certain and no law is fixed. The best way to protect yourself is to be as fluid and formless as water; never bet on stability or lasting order. Everything changes. In martial arts, it is important that strategy be unfathomable, that form be concealed, and that movements be unexpected, so that preparedness against them be impossible. What enables a good general to win without fail is always having unfathomable wisdom and a *modus operandi* that leaves no tracks. Only the formless cannot be affected. Sages hide in unfathomability, so their feelings cannot be observed; they operate in formlessness, so their lines cannot be crossed.

TRANSGRESSION: Athenians and Spartans

1. In the evolution of species, protective armor has almost always spelled disaster. Although there are a few exceptions, the shell most often becomes a dead end for the animal encased in it; it slows the creature down, making it hard for it to forage for food and making it a target for fast-moving predators. Animals that take to the sea or sky, and that move swiftly and unpredictably, are infinitely more powerful and secure.
2. Money flows everywhere it has the opportunity to go; it cannot be controlled, or made to fit a prescribed pattern. It is inherently chaotic

3. This is the way the world works, whether for animals, cultures, or individuals. In the face of the world's harshness and danger, organisms of any kind develop protection—a coat of armor, a rigid system, a comforting ritual. For the short term it may work, but for the long term it spells disaster. People weighed down by a system and inflexible ways of doing things cannot move fast, cannot sense or adapt to change. They lumber around more and more slowly until they go the way of the brontosaurus. Learn to move fast and adapt or you will be eaten.
4. The best way to avoid this fate is to assume formlessness. No predator alive can attack what it cannot see.

OBSERVANCE: Communists (Control China Now) and Nationalists

1. The two board games that best approximate the strategies of war are chess and the Asian game of go
2. Be like a vapor. Do not give your opponents anything solid to attack; watch as they exhaust themselves pursuing you, trying to cope with your elusiveness. Only formlessness allows you to truly surprise your enemies —by the time they figure out where you are and what you are up to, it is too late.
3. *When you want to fight us, we don't let you and you can't find us. But when we want to fight you, we make sure that you can't get away and we hit you squarely ... and wipe you out.... The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue.*

KEYS TO POWER

1. The human animal is distinguished by its constant creation of forms. Rarely expressing its emotions directly, it gives them form through language, or through socially acceptable rituals. We cannot communicate our emotions without a form.
2. The forms that we create, however, change constantly—in fashion, in style, in all those human phenomena representing the mood of the moment. We are constantly altering the forms we have inherited from previous generations, and these changes are signs of life and vitality. Indeed, the things that don't change, the forms that rigidify, come to look to us like death, and we destroy them. The young show this most clearly: Uncomfortable with the forms that society imposes upon them, having no set identity, they play with their own characters, trying on a variety of masks and poses to express themselves. This is the vitality that drives the motor of form, creating constant changes in style.
3. The powerful are often people who in their youth have shown immense creativity in expressing something new through a new form. Society grants them power because it hungers for and rewards this sort of newness. The problem comes later, when they often grow conservative and possessive. They no longer dream of creating new forms; their identities are set, their habits congeal, and their rigidity makes them easy targets. Everyone knows their next move. Instead of demanding respect they elicit boredom: Get off the stage! we say, let someone else, someone

younger, entertain us. When locked in the past, the powerful look comical—they are overripe fruit, waiting to fall from the tree.

4. Power can only thrive if it is flexible in its forms. To be formless is not to be amorphous; everything has a form—it is impossible to avoid. The formlessness of power is more like that of water, or mercury, taking the form of whatever is around it. Changing constantly, it is never predictable. The powerful are constantly creating form, and their power comes from the rapidity with which they can change. Their formlessness is in the eye of the enemy who cannot see what they are up to and so has nothing solid to attack. This is the premier pose of power: ungraspable, as elusive and swift as the god Mercury, who could take any form he pleased and used this ability to wreak havoc on Mount Olympus.
5. Human creations evolve toward abstraction, toward being more mental and less material.
6. Strategy began in the manipulation of armies on land, positioning them in ordered formations; on land, strategy is relatively two dimensional, and controlled by topography. But all the great powers have eventually taken to the sea, for commerce and colonization. And to protect their trading lanes they have had to learn how to fight at sea. Maritime warfare requires tremendous creativity and abstract thinking, since the lines are constantly shifting. Naval captains distinguish themselves by their ability to adapt to the literal fluidity of the terrain and to confuse the enemy with an abstract, hard to-anticipate form. They are operating in a third dimension: the mind.
7. *“Most wars were wars of contact.... Ours should be a war of detachment,” “We were to contain the enemy by the silent threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing ourselves till we attacked.”*
8. This is the ultimate form of strategy. The war of engagement has become far too dangerous and costly; indirection and elusiveness yield far better results at a much lower cost. The main cost, in fact, is mental—the thinking it takes to align your forces in scattered patterns, and to undermine the minds and psychology of your opponents. And nothing will infuriate and disorient them more than formlessness. In a world where wars of detachment are the order of the day, formlessness is crucial.
9. The first psychological requirement of formlessness is to train yourself to take nothing personally. Never show any defensiveness. When you act defensive, you show your emotions, revealing a clear form. Your opponents will realize they have hit a nerve, an Achilles’ heel. And they will hit it again and again. So train yourself to take nothing personally. Never let anyone get your back up. Be like a slippery ball that cannot be held: Let no one know what gets to you, or where your weaknesses lie. Make your face a formless mask and you will infuriate and disorient your scheming colleagues and opponents.
10. Attaching themselves to the past, they revealed their embrace of a form. Throughout history, the formless style of ruling has been most adeptly practiced by the queen who reigns alone. A queen

is in a radically different position from a king; because she is a woman, her subjects and courtiers are likely to doubt her ability to rule, her strength of character

11. Either by nature or by experience, then, queens tend to adopt a flexible style of governing that in the end often proves more powerful than the more direct, male form.
12. *“One must govern in such a way that one’s people think they themselves want to do what one commands them to do,”*
13. This feminine, formless style of ruling may have emerged as a way of prospering under difficult circumstances, but it has proved immensely seductive to those who have served under it. Being fluid, it is relatively easy for its subjects to obey, for they feel less coerced, less bent to their ruler’s ideology
14. Without committing to one side, it allows the ruler to play one enemy off another. Rigid rulers may seem strong, but with time their inflexibility wears on the nerves, and their subjects find ways to push them from the stage. Flexible, formless rulers will be much criticized, but they will endure, and people will eventually come to identify with them, since they are as their subjects are—changing with the wind, open to circumstance.
15. When you find yourself in conflict with someone stronger and more rigid, allow them a momentary victory. Seem to bow to their superiority. Then, by being formless and adaptable, slowly insinuate yourself into their soul. This way you will catch them off guard, for rigid people are always ready to ward off direct blows but are helpless against the subtle and insinuating. To succeed at such a strategy you must play the chameleon—conform on the surface, while breaking down your enemy from the inside.
16. That is the power of formlessness— it gives the aggressor nothing to react against, nothing to hit. In evolution, largeness is often the first step toward extinction. What is immense and bloated has no mobility, but must constantly feed itself. The unintelligent are often seduced into believing that size connotes power, the bigger the better
17. King Xerxes of Persia: The story is emblematic of all those who sacrifice mobility for size: The flexible and fleet of foot will almost always win, for they have more strategic options. The more gigantic the enemy, the easier it is to induce collapse.
18. The need for formlessness becomes greater the older we get, as we grow more likely to become set in our ways and assume too rigid a form. We become predictable, always the first sign of decrepitude. And predictability makes us appear comical. Although ridicule and disdain might seem mild forms of attack, they are actually potent weapons, and will eventually erode a foundation of power. An enemy who does not respect you will grow bold, and boldness makes even the smallest animal dangerous.
19. As you get older, you must rely even less on the past. Be vigilant lest the form your character has taken makes you seem a relic. It is not a matter of mimicking the fashions of youth—that is

equally worthy of laughter. Rather your mind must constantly adapt to each circumstance, even the inevitable change that the time has come to move over and let those of younger age prepare for their ascendancy. Rigidity will only make you look uncannily like a cadaver.

20. Never forget, though, that formlessness is a strategic pose. It gives you room to create tactical surprises; as your enemies struggle to guess your next move, they reveal their own strategy, putting them at a decided disadvantage. It keeps the initiative on your side, putting your enemies in the position of never acting, constantly reacting. It foils their spying and intelligence.
21. Formlessness is a tool. Never confuse it with a go-with-the-flow style, or with a religious resignation to the twists of fortune. You use formlessness, not because it creates inner harmony and peace, but because it will increase your power
22. Finally, learning to adapt to each new circumstance means seeing events through your own eyes, and often ignoring the advice that people constantly peddle your way. It means that ultimately you must throw out the laws that others preach, and the books they write to tell you what to do, and the sage advice of the elder. "The laws that govern circumstances are abolished by new circumstances," Napoleon wrote, which means that it is up to you to gauge each new situation. Rely too much on other people's ideas and you end up taking a form not of your own making. Too much respect for other people's wisdom will make you depreciate your own. Be brutal with the past, especially your own, and have no respect for the philosophies that are foisted on you from outside.
23. *A military force has no constant formation, water has no constant shape: The ability to gain victory by changing and adapting according to the opponent is called genius.*

REVERSAL

1. Using space to disperse and create an abstract pattern should not mean forsaking the concentration of your power when it is valuable to you. Formlessness makes your enemies hunt all over for you, scattering their own forces, mental as well as physical. When you finally engage them, though, hit them with a powerful, concentrated blow.
2. When you play with formlessness, keep on top of the process, and keep your long-term strategy in mind. When you assume a form and go on the attack, use concentration, speed, and power
3. *"When we fight you, we make sure you can't get away."*