

# Facets of Cunning

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## 1) Preamble:

What follows is a list of competencies any aspiring machiavellian must master. They are basic and necessary, not advanced or supplementary. All are tools to be used or withheld depending on your own discretion.

With any skill it's impossible to learn and memorize how to deal with every possible situation, and Machiavellianism (Cunning) is no exception. What you can do is master the basics and train your intuition such that you can effectively figure out any situation that may arise.

## 2) Facets of Cunning:

### 2A) Analytical Mind

You must be able to read body language and vocal tonality accurately and be able to understand the covert subtext behind any overtly spoken words. As Illimitable Man said, "Communication is multi-layered; you should always understand what is being said, what is truly meant and what may possibly be implied."

Cold reading is the ability to make accurate deductions regarding an individual's psychological makeup from nothing more than looking at them. Warm reading is cold reading but with time being spent interacting with the person, listening to how they talk, and observing their actions.

It is inevitable that the deductions you make about a person's psychological makeup will be more accurate after spending enough time with them to do warm reading than if you were to only do a cold read, but nonetheless both warm reading and cold reading are capabilities you must master to have any hope of navigating the game of power effectively.

The specific deductions that should be made from specific clues is culturally dependent and changes from one time and place to another.

In modern America, a man wearing a 'MAGA' hat indicates he is politically Rightwing, while a woman having blue hair indicates she is politically Leftwing.

Such deductions are so easy that even the least cunning among us could figure them out; to master the 'Analytical Mind' facet of cunning you must get to the point of being able to make deductions that are accurate, consequential, and not obvious to most people.

Cold reading is easier in modern America than in most societies in the sense that our time and place is one where you can know virtually everything about a person's worldview and political preferences with very little information about them.

If they work in academia or journalism, they are probably leftwing and think Donald Trump is Satan. If they are in the military or work in finance, they are probably rightwing and think cutting taxes will magically create an economic utopia. In most societies, making accurate and thorough deductions about a person's worldview from such little information as their job title is difficult or impossible.

The 'Analytical Mind' facet of cunning must be distinguished from having a high IQ. To have a high IQ is to be capable of comprehending complexity, whether expressed verbally or mathematically. The 'Analytical Mind' facet of cunning is the ability to read body language, vocal tonality, personalities, and social situations accurately.

Autistic men often have sky high IQs and are incredibly good at manipulating mathematical and verbal abstractions (they can do calculus in their sleep), but are hopelessly incapable of reading body language or vocal tonality; they are entirely separate sets of abilities.

Meanwhile, there are many women with only average or even below average IQs who could never learn calculus but who can quickly analyze people's body language and vocal tonality with razor sharp accuracy.

## **2B) Charm**

Charm is the ability to make people view you positively; to make them like and trust you. When people like you, it makes them more inclined to help you and more hesitant to harm you. Conversely when people dislike you it makes them less inclined to help you and more willing to harm you.

Charm is arguably the most important facet of cunning for the modern world. For most of the venues you face in modern society, particularly those where the stakes are high, your ability to charm people will be a make or break factor.

Job Interviews? Charm the hiring manager and get a job. Fail to charm the hiring manager and be unemployed.

Office Politics? Charm your superiors and you will be promoted. Fail to charm your superiors and you will be fired or kept around but never ascend.

Sales/Marketing? Charm your clients and they will buy from you. Many people will buy a product for no real reason other than because they like the salesmen representing it.

There is no surefire strategy for charming people, since what charms one person may offend another. Indeed, being reasonably good at cold reading is a basic requirement for being good at charm; you must be able to cold read people's personalities, and present yourself in a way that will charm their specific personality.

When attempting to charm, always take the sensibilities and biases of the specific target (person) at hand into account.

## **2C) Persuasion**

Persuasion, the ability to make people perceive that you are credible, what you are saying is true, and the ability to change people's opinions, is often a make or break factor.

Charm and Persuasion are not the same thing, but they do correlate positively in the sense that if you can charm someone the probability of them being persuaded by what you say dramatically increases; if people like you, they are inclined to think that what you say is true, and if they dislike you they are inclined to think that what you say is false.

Generally speaking persuasion is a laborious and risky activity. Most people rarely if ever change their mind once their initial opinion has been formed, and if you attempt to change a person's mind they are likely to be offended that you have expressed disagreement with the opinion they currently hold. Most people are ego invested in their opinions and beliefs; if you express any disagreement with them, they take it as a personal insult.

As such, in most situations you're best bet is to simply smile and nod; maintain the pretense that you agree with their opinion, even if you don't. It is unwise to make enemies unnecessarily.

Persuasion is laborious not in the sense of being energy intensive, but in the sense that it takes time; most people who do change their opinion take a long time to do so, and your time would be better spent elsewhere. Only attempt to persuade someone if the matter is important enough such that it is worth the time and the risk, *and* you are convinced you have a reasonable chance of successfully persuading them.

When persuading someone do so as *gently and politely* as possible. To be harsh or blunt when correcting someone or changing their opinion is generally ineffective; it offends their ego, and causes them to instinctively reject everything you say.

It is usually ineffective to directly state that you think their current opinion is wrong. Instead, start by appearing to agree with their opinion then gently express how you think their opinion might be *slightly* wrong.

Directly expressing disagreement causes the other person to view you as an adversary who should not be trusted, and whose words should be rejected. By appearing to agree with their current opinion (at least as a starting point), you cause the target to view you as an ally, someone who should be listened to.

It is often the case that changing someone's opinion totally is impossible, but partially changing their opinion is doable.

If a person insists that  $2+2 = 8$ , it may be impossible to convince them that  $2+2 = 4$ , but doable to convince them that  $2+2 = 7$

A moderate step in the right direction (to 7) is often sufficient for the purposes at hand; getting them to the perfect destination (4) is usually unnecessary.

## **2D) Mask Wearing, PowerTalk**

There are those who will say you should 'just be yourself'. This is terrible advice. Far better advice is this: *wear the mask that the day and the moment require*.

What charms one person may offend another, and vice versa; for the sake of charming people, mask wearing will be necessary.

The probability that who you actually are (your natural personality without wearing a mask) will be considered charming by everyone is practically zero.

If you know a person who everyone considers likeable, be skeptical of them; the probability they naturally have a personality that everyone finds likeable is low. The probability they are a competent machiavellian executer who can effectively wear a mask is very high.

'StraightTalk' is saying what you actually think. 'PowerTalk' is *not* saying what you actually think, but rather saying what will be most tactically effective for the situation you are in.

Those who use PowerTalk filter their speech, self censor, and outright say things they don't believe are true, all for the sake of tactical expediency. Needless to say, for the sake of succeeding in the game of power your default mode of speech should be PowerTalk.

For the sake of charming people or at minimum not outright offending them, you will need to maintain the pretense that you like them and think positively of them, even if in reality you despise them.

For the sake of not being ostracized (or even worse imprisoned or executed), you will need to outwardly express opinions that are politically correct for the time and place you live in, even if they are opinions you don't actually agree with (see Law 38).

If your real opinion is that IQ is a legitimate measurement of intelligence, and in the time and place you live it is politically correct to say that IQ isn't real and every person is equally smart, you need to outwardly express the opinion that everyone is equally smart, or simply say nothing.

The minimum applications of PowerTalk you will need to be able to execute effectively are as follows: maintain the pretense that you like every person you encounter (Law 43), and pay lip service to whatever is politically correct in the time and place where you live (Law 38).

Regarding Law 43, you must maintain the pretense that you like every person you encounter for the sake of charming as many people as possible, or at minimum not offending them. It is in your best interest to have as many allies as possible and as few enemies as possible.

Regarding Law 38 (Think As You Like, But Behave Like Others), if you live in 1950 Russia pay lip service to the notion that Communism is a good idea and Stalin is a good leader. If you live in 2020 Saudi Arabia, pay lip service to the idea that there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his profit. If you live in 2020 America, pay lip service to the notion that gender is a social construct.

Apply Law 38 effectively or you will suffer ostracism, and possibly imprisonment or execution.

For almost every situation you face, saying what you actually think (StraightTalk) will be tactically counterproductive, while regulating your speech (PowerTalk) will be tactically effective.

In the office? Use PowerTalk; you are playing the game of Office Politics; success means promotion and failure means firing.

With a client? Use PowerTalk. You are doing sales work; success means more money, failure means less money.

With family members? Use PowerTalk; you are playing the game of Family Politics; success means access to your family's resources, failure means ostracism.

Whenever you hear a powerful person speak in public (and even in private), they are using PowerTalk; none of them are saying what they actually think.

You may notice that women use PowerTalk more instinctively than men do (at least, women pay lip service to whatever is politically correct for the society they live in more instinctively than men do), and autistic men seem to be almost entirely incapable of PowerTalk; autists are hopelessly driven to say what they actually think (StraightTalk) the consequences be damned.

When using PowerTalk there is a paradox. You must monitor every word that comes out of your mouth; everything you say must be carefully calculated. At the same time, if it appears that you are calculating what you're saying, people perceive you as awkward at best and dishonest at worst.

Your words must be inwardly calculated, while on the outside seem to flow naturally, with an ease that makes people perceive you are saying what you actually think.

This sounds like an impossible task. It will be if you speak a million sentences a day. However, if you speak only 100 sentences a day it's very doable. Limit how much you talk, and regulating everything you say becomes a practical endeavor.

You don't have to closely monitor yourself all the time in every environment. Just in the venues where the stakes are high enough to matter (there is a significant amount of money to be made or lost).

## **2E) Intimidation (Bullying)**

Intimidation is a tactic that can be used for the sake of getting cooperation and in some cases should be.

Beware, intimidation is a high risk high reward tactic. The high reward is that you might get cooperation. On the other hand, there is the risk that you won't get cooperation and instead make an enemy. Indeed, intimidation could very well win the target's cooperation, but still cause them to dislike you, thereby getting you an enemy.

Unlike intimidation, charm is a low risk high reward tactic. With charm, the worst case scenario is nothing happens. The best case scenario is that you win the target's cooperation *and* win an ally since they like you.

It is in your best interest to have as many allies as possible and as few enemies as possible, and as such you should use charm as often as possible and intimidation as rarely as possible, if ever.

Your use of intimidation should be calculated, not impulsive.

If you use intimidation because you have consciously calculated that it is the most effective tactic for the situation you face, and the potential reward make the downside risk worth it, then so be it. If you are using intimidation because feelings of anger have biased you into it, you are a fool.

Only use intimidation if the following conditions have been met:

- You tried using charm and it failed (or you simply lack the time to attempt to use charm)
- The matter at hand is important enough (getting the target's cooperation is important enough) such that the downside risk of getting a new enemy is a risk worth taking
- You wield power over the target and they know it, or at least they can be made to perceive that you wield power over them (attempting to use intimidation on someone who wields more power over you than you do over them, and who knows it, would be tactical suicide; your attempt at intimidation would annoy them and they'd use their power to wreck you)

When executing intimidation, your execution must be perfect. Appearing to be low on agreeableness and high on neuroticism will result in failure; high neuroticism causes people to view you as a whiney child, rather than someone worthy of fear or respect.

Instead, you must appear to be low on both agreeableness *and* low on neuroticism; this causes people to perceive you as a cold blooded killer; someone who inspires fear.

Frank Underwood exhibits low agreeableness and low neuroticism, Will Conway exhibits low agreeableness and high neuroticism (both are fictional characters from House of Cards).

Intimidation is a high risk high reward tactic you should keep in your back pocket, with the hope that you never have to use it. Charm on the other hand is a low risk high reward tactic that you should use all day every day.

### **3) Gender Disparities:**

You will find that for each facet of cunning previously detailed, women on average do better than men. The average woman is far better than the average man at reading body language, charming, persuading, and deceiving.

Intimidation is the exception; men tend to do better with executing intimidation than women because men rank lower on both agreeableness and neuroticism; low agreeableness and neuroticism makes men more psychologically comfortable with direct, overt, and intense conflict.

#### **4) Relevant Reading:**

['Machiavellian Social Competencies'](#) (Illimitable Man)

[The 48 Laws of Power](#) (Robert Greene)

[The Definitive Book of Body Language](#) (Pease)