

Principles of Machiavellianism

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1) Preamble:

Historically machiavellianism has been an art studied and practiced only by elites as a means of maintaining their positions of power. In our own day and age *The 48 Laws of Power* has done much to wake the masses up to this reality.

What follows are a list of principles to keep in mind when mastering machiavellianism. The words 'cunning' and 'machiavellianism' will be used interchangeably.

2) Cunning is Morally Neutral:

Many conflate cunning with evil, but this is foolish. Cunning can be used for good or for evil, or for purposes that are inconsequential.

A psychiatrist who persuades a suicidal patient to step down from the ledge is using cunning for good. A con man who persuades poor people to hand him their life savings is using cunning for evil.

Being unskilled with machiavellianism doesn't make you good; it just makes you incompetent.

3) Conceal Your Cunning:

People foolishly conflating cunning with evil has some practical consequences. If people perceive that you are cunning; that you read body language, vocal tonality, and personalities accurately, and put conscious effort into charming people, they will view you as evil. At best they will distrust you, at worst they will both dislike and distrust you.

As such you must be cunning, while at the same time appear to be just as naïve as the average person.

Never out-loud give an in depth analysis of a social situation, or someone's personality. It causes people to perceive that you are cunning and evil, rather than impressive. This may sound obvious, yet many otherwise intelligent men shoot themselves in the foot by doing this, thinking it will cause people to view them as competent.

The game is to be sold, not to be told. If you practice cunning you will succeed, if you talk about cunning you will fail.

Use manipulative tactics to charm and persuade people, but *never* talk about the tactics you use; doing so causes people to view you as a monster.

Use manipulative tactics to seduce women, but *never* talk about the psychology surrounding seduction with women; doing so causes the women too dumb to understand what you're saying to think you are weird, while the minority of women who are smart enough to understand what you're saying view you as evil.

4) Variance of Skill:

Cunning exists on a spectrum. Every human on the planet is cunning to some degree, in the sense that every person can read body language, vocal tonality, charm, persuade, and use manipulative tactics to some degree.

This does not qualify everyone for the title of 'Machiavellian', in the same way that everyone being able to run from one side of a field to another does not make everyone an elite sprinter.

The cunning of the average man is executed with only subconscious awareness, and the cunning of the average woman is executed with semi-conscious awareness.

A 'Machiavellian' is someone who regularly makes conscious calculations regarding social interactions and relationships, and who executes manipulative tactics with careful planning beforehand, conscious effort in the moment, and thorough analysis afterwards of what went well and what went badly.

In terms of skill you may notice that the average woman is more cunning than the average man; women are on average better at reading body language and vocal tonality, charming people, persuading people, lying, and detecting when someone else is lying.

The reason women evolved to have greater cunning than men (on average) is rather straightforward; in our hunter-gatherer tribe past, men could acquire and

maintain power through sheer brute force. Women did not have this option, since most women were hopelessly outmatched against most men in terms of the ability to win a fist fight. As such, women had to develop an alternative way of acquiring and maintaining power; cunning provided this.

Averages aside, *variance* of cunning is far greater among men than among women, to the point that among the most cunning people on the planet almost all of them are men, and among the least cunning people almost all of them are men.

The least cunning people are autists; they are hopelessly incapable of reading social cues or manipulating people. Most autists are men.

The most cunning people are dark triad men (psychopaths, narcissists), and neurotypical men who have dedicated time to training themselves in the art of cunning (they spend time reading *The 48 Laws*, a publication such as this, and practicing in the real world).

If you are a Machiavellian (and if you took the time to read a piece like this, you probably are), you are likely to make the mistake of assuming everyone else is just as cunning as you are. This could be considered *solipsistic cold reading*; assuming everyone else is just as X as you are.

Know this; when you read people's body language and personalities with razor sharp accuracy, most people cannot do the same. If you encounter someone who *can* do the same, they are an outlier.

5) Levels of Difficulty:

Different venues and situations pose different levels of difficulty in terms of how skilled a machiavellian must be to attain victory. A person who is cunning enough to succeed with an easy task or in an easy venue is not necessarily skilled enough to succeed in a hard venue.

Being a teenage boy who convinces a teenage girl to show up for a date counts as easy (assuming the boy in question is not ugly). Selling a piece of software to a corporation for \$100k counts as being a task of medium difficulty. Being the CEO of a software startup who persuades venture capitalists to hand over millions of dollars of capital for the sake of expanding the business counts as hard.

Even the CEO's task counts as nothing in terms of difficulty, compared to what is involved with winning a war.

6) Everyone At The Top Is Cunning:

Every person who has ever maintained a position of power has an above average level of cunning. If ever you meet a powerful person who appears to have an average level of cunning, or who appears to be brazenly naïve, they are wearing a mask.

Power may be attained with zero cunning (in rare cases where a person simply gets lucky), but it is *never* successfully maintained without at least an above average level of cunning.

When dealing with average people (the masses) who are only subconsciously or semi-consciously cunning, it is possible to effectively manipulate them with very little effort and calculation. However, when dealing with powerful people, they are all consciously cunning; to manipulate them effectively involves real difficulty.

The higher you go up a macro dominance hierarchy (euphemistically called 'society') the more cunning and competent the people you deal with will be.

Manipulating investment bankers is far harder than manipulating school teachers, just as manipulating noblemen is far harder than manipulating peasants.

7) Psychology vs Machiavellianism:

Mathematics is theoretical and evergreen; it never changes. The laws of mathematics haven't changed since the dawn of time and they never will. Engineering on the other hand is not theoretical; it is practical. It's also ephemeral; engineering changes all the time as technology changes. Mathematics is the theoretical topic that fuels engineering progress.

The relationship between psychology and machiavellianism is analogous to the relationship between mathematics and engineering. Psychology is theoretical and evergreen; human psychology hasn't changed in thousands of years, and it won't change in your lifetime. Machiavellianism is the application of psychology to the real world; strategies and tactics being used to execute the real world manipulation of other human beings.

As a machiavellian the venues you face will change, the specific individuals you must deal with will change, and the strategies and tactics you use must change as you adapt to the new venues and individuals you face. The one thing that stays the same is basic human psychology.

8) Mastery:

Machiavellianism is a topic of infinite complexity; you cannot possibly get to the point where you know everything. However you can get to the point where you have mastered the venues and strategies that will be most relevant to your life.

As a general guideline, keep the strategies and tactics you use as simple as possible. As the complexity of your strategies and tactics increases linearly, the probability of something going wrong increases exponentially.

Mastery will require far more than simply reading; practice and experience in the real world are required. 10% of your time should be spent reading books on psychology and strategy, and 90% of your time should be spent interacting with people in the real world.

For the sake of practice you ought to start in low stakes venues (think highschool). Failure in such a venue will mean nothing, at least for the long term.

Eventually you will be in high stakes venues (say Office Politics) whether you want to or not. In such venues success means getting rich and failure means poverty. Good luck; you will need it.

9) Prioritization:

You don't have 10,000 hours to spend on mastering machiavellianism and as such you must prioritize the facets of cunning and venues where cunning might be applied that are most relevant to your life.

For most Americans in the early 21st century, the most important facets of cunning will be *Charm* and developing an *Analytical Mind*. If you can read people's psychologies and social situations accurately, and make people view you as likeable and trustworthy, you will excel. Botch either of these, and you will almost certainly fail.

The most important venues for early 21st century Americans are *Office Politics*, *Job Interviews*, and *Sales/Marketing*. Why? Because these are the venues where money can be made or lost. Succeed in these venues and you will be rich, fail in these venues and you will be poor.

From books on psychology and machiavellianism, you will find 10,000 different strategies and tactics. They will have a pareto distribution of usefulness; 9,900 of them will have no application to your life. 90 will have some application to your life. 10 will be directly relevant to your life, and you will use them every day until you die.