

48 Laws of Power

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- Group 4: The Classified

48 Laws of Power

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LAW 1

NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER

Always make those above you feel comfortably superior. In your desire to please or impress them, do not go

too far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the oppositeinspire fear and insecurity. Make

your masters appear more brilliant than they are and you will attain the heights of power.

LAW 2

NEVER PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN FRIENDS, LEARN HOW TO USE ENEMIES

Be wary of friendsthey 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.

LAW 3

CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS

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.

LAW 4

ALWAYS SAY LESS THAN NECESSARY

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.

LAW 5

SO MUCH DEPENDS ON REPUTATIONGUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

For several centuries after the fall of the Han Dynasty (a.D. 222), Chinese history followed the same pattern of violent and bloody coups, one after the other. Army men would plot to kill a weak emperor, then would replace him on the Dragon Throne with a strong general. The general would start a new dynasty and crown himself emperor; to ensure his own survival he would kill off his fellow generals. A few years later, however, the pattern would resume: New generals would rise up and assassinate him or his sons in their turn. To be emperor of China was to be alone, surrounded by a pack of enemies in the least powerful, least secure position in the realm.

In A.D. 959, General Chao K'uang-yin became Emperor Sung. He knew the odds, the probability that within a year or two he would be murdered; how could he break the pattern? Soon after becoming emperor, Sung ordered a banquet to celebrate the new dynasty, and invited the most powerful commanders in the army. After they had drunk much wine, he

is repaying a kindness.

African folk affair

dismissed the guards and everybody else except the generals, who now feared he would murder them in one fell swoop. Instead, he addressed them: "The whole day is spent in fear, and I am unhappy both at the table and in my bed. For which one of you does not dream of ascending the throne I do not doubt your allegiance, but if by some chance your subordinates, seeking wealth and position, were to force the emperor's yellow robe upon you in turn, how could you refuse it?" Drunk and fearing for their lives, the generals proclaimed their innocence and their loyalty. But Sung had other ideas: "The best way to pass one's days is in peaceful enjoyment of riches and honor. If you are willing to give up your commands, I am ready to provide you with fine estates and beautiful dwellings where you may take your pleasure with singers and girls as your companions."

The astonished generals realized that instead of a life of anxiety and struggle Sung was offering them riches and security. The next day, all of the generals tendered their resignations, and they retired as nobles to the estates that Sung bestowed on them.

In one stroke, Sung turned a pack of "friendly" wolves, who would likely have betrayed him, into a group of docile lambs, far from all power.

Over the next few years Sung continued his campaign to secure his rule. In A.D. 971, King Liu of the Southern Han finally surrendered to him after years of rebellion. To Liu's astonishment, Sung gave him a rank in the imperial court and invited him to the palace to seal their newfound friendship with wine. As King

1554-1618

everyone would argue some more: How should the issues be phrased What would appeal to Louis, what would annoy him At what time of day should the representatives approach him, and in what part of the Versailles palace What expression should they have on their faces

Finally, after all this was settled, the fateful moment would finally arrive. The two men would approach Louis always a delicate matter and when they finally had his ear, they would talk about the issue at hand, spelling out the options in detail.

Louis would listen in silence, a most enigmatic look on his face. Finally, when each had finished his presentation and had asked for the king's opinion, he would look at them both and say, "I shall see." Then he would walk away.

The ministers and courtiers would never hear another word on this subject from the king they would simply see the result, weeks later, when he would come to a decision and act. He would never bother to consult them on the matter again.

Interpretation

Louis XIV was a man of very few words. His most famous remark is "L'etat, c'est moi" (I am the state); nothing could be more pithy yet more eloquent. His infamous "I shall see" was one of several extremely short phrases that he would apply to all manner of requests.

Louis was not always this way; as a young man he was known for talking at length, delighting in his own eloquence. His later taciturnity was self-imposed, an act, a mask he used to keep everybody below him off-balance. No one knew exactly where he stood, or could predict his reactions. No one could try to deceive him by saying what they thought he wanted to hear, because no one knew what he wanted to hear. As they talked on and on to the silent Louis, they revealed more and more about themselves, information he would later use against them to great effect.

In the end, Louis's silence kept those around him terrified and under his thumb. It was one of the foundations of his power. As Saint-Simon wrote, "No one knew as well as he how to sell his words, his smile, even his glances. Everything in him was valuable because he created differences, and his majesty was enhanced by the sparseness of his words."

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

Cardinal de Retz, 1613-1679

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. Your silence will make other people uncomfortable. Humans are machines of

credit for yourself and keep others from stealing it away, or from piggybacking on your hard work. 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.

Everybody steals in commerce and industry.

I've stolen a lot myself.

But I know how to steal.

Thomas Edison, 1847-1931

KEYS TO POWER

A hen who had lost her sight, and was accustomed to scratching up till continued to scratch away most diligently. Of what use was sighted hen who spared her tender feet never moved from her side,

The world of power has the dynamics of the jungle: There are those who live by hunting and killing, and there are also vast numbers of creatures (hyenas, vultures) who live off the hunting of others. These latter, less imaginative types are often incapable of doing the work that is essential for the creation of power. They understand early on, though, that if they wait the earth in search of long enough, they can always find another animal to do the work for them. /Ç" although Mind, Do not be naive: At this very moment, while you are slaving away on some project, there are vultures circling above trying to figure out a way to survive and even thrive off your creativity. It is useless to complain about this, it to the industrious or to wear yourself ragged with bitterness, as Tesla did. Better to protect fool Another sharp 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.

Of the two poles of this game, one can be illustrated by the example of and enjoyed, without the explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa. Balboa had an obsessionthe dis- scratching, the fruit of covery of El Dorado, a legendary city of vast riches.

Early in the sixteenth century, after countless hardships and brushes often as the blind hen scratched up a barlcu-

TABLKs,

GOTTIOL.D LI-SSIMi.

1729-1781

with death, he found evidence of a great and wealthy empire to the south

Louis XI (1423-1483), the great Spider King of France, had a weakness for astrology. He kept a court astrologer whom he admired, until one day the man predicted that a lady of the court would die within eight days. When the prophecy came true, Louis was terrified, thinking that either the man had murdered the woman to prove his accuracy or that he was so versed in his science that his powers threatened Louis himself. In either case he had to be killed.

One evening Louis summoned the astrologer to his room, high in the castle. Before the man arrived, the king told his servants that when he gave

An extravagant young Vine, vainly ambitious of independence, and fond of rambling at large, despised the alliance of a stately elm that grew near, and courted her embraces. Having risen to some small height without any kind of support, she shot forth her flimsy branches to a very uncommon and superfluous length; calling on her neighbour to take notice how little she wanted his assistance. "Poor infatuated shrub, " replied the elm, "how inconsistent is thy conduct! Wouldst thou be truly independent, thou shouldst carefully apply those juices to the enlargement of thy stem, which thou lavishest in vain upon unnecessary foliage. I shortly shall behold thee grovelling on the ground; yet countenanced. indeed, by many of the human race, who, intoxicated with vanity, have despised economy; and who, to support for a moment their empty boast of independence, have exhausted the very source of it in frivolous expenses. "

FABLES,

Robert Dodsley,

1703-1764

the signal they were to pick the astrologer up, carry him to the window, and hurl him to the ground, hundreds of feet below.

The astrologer soon arrived, but before giving the signal, Louis decided to ask him one last question: "You claim to understand astrology and to know the fate of others, so tell me what your fate will be and how long you have to live."

"I shall die just three days before Your Majesty," the astrologer replied. The king's signal was never given. The man's life was spared. The Spider King not only protected his astrologer for as long as he was alive, he lavished him with gifts and had him tended by the finest court doctors.

The astrologer survived Louis by several years, disproving his power of prophecy but proving his mastery of power.

This is the model: Make others dependent on you. To get rid of you might spell disaster, even death, and your master dares not tempt fate by finding out. There are many ways to obtain such a position. Foremost among them is to possess a talent and creative skill that simply cannot be replaced.

been on the scene moments earlier, and whose jealous nature was known by all. This was precisely Wu's plan. Shortly thereafter, the empress was charged with murder and executed. Wu Chao was crowned empress in her place. Her new husband, addicted to his life of pleasure, gladly gave up the reins of government to Wu Chao, who was from then on known as Empress Wu.

Although now in a position of great power, Wu hardly felt secure. There were enemies everywhere; she could not let down her guard for one moment. Indeed, when she was forty-one, she began to fear that her beautiful young niece was becoming the emperor's favorite. She poisoned the woman with a clay mixed into her food. In 675 her own son, touted as the

heir apparent, was poisoned as well. The next-eldest son illegitimate, but now the crown prince was exiled a little later on trumped-up charges. And when the emperor died, in 683, Wu managed to have the son after that declared unfit for the throne. All this meant that it was her youngest, most ineffectual son who finally became emperor. In this way she continued to rule.

Over the next five years there were innumerable palace coups. All of them failed, and all of the conspirators were executed. By 688 there was no one left to challenge Wu. She proclaimed herself a divine descendant of Buddha, and in 690 her wishes were finally granted: She was named Holy and Divine "Emperor" of China.

Wu became emperor because there was literally nobody left from the previous T'ang dynasty. And so she ruled unchallenged, for over a decade of relative peace. In 705, at the age of eighty, she was forced to abdicate.

Interpretation

All who knew Empress Wu remarked on her energy and intelligence. At the time, there was no glory available for an ambitious woman beyond a few years in the imperial harem, then a lifetime walled up in a convent. 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, the solution was simple: She had to crush them all or be killed herself. Other emperors before her had followed the same path to the top, but Wu who, as a woman, had next to no chance to gain power had to be more ruthless still.

Empress Wu's forty-year reign was one of the longest in Chinese history. Although the story of her bloody rise to power is well known, in China she is considered one of the period's most able and effective rulers.

A priest asked the dying Spanish statesman and general Ramon Maria Narvez

(1800-1868), "Does your Excellency forgive all your enemies " "I do not

when you find such a tempting victim. But this man is a lot harder

to deceive than you imagine. Falling for a ruse often takes intelligence and imagination a sense of the possible rewards. The blunt man will not take the bait because he does not recognize it. He is quite unaware. The danger with this man is not that he will harm you or seek revenge, but merely that he will waste your time, energy, resources, and even your sanity in trying to deceive him. Have a test ready for a mark a joke, a story. If his reaction is utterly literal, this is the type you are dealing with. Continue at your own risk.

TRANSGRESSIONS OF THE LAW

Transgression I

In the early part of the thirteenth century, Muhammad, the shah of Khwarezm, managed after many wars to forge a huge empire, extending west to present-day Turkey and south to Afghanistan. The empire's center was the great Asian capital of Samarkand. The shah had a powerful, well-trained army, and could mobilize 200,000 warriors within days.

In 1219 Muhammad received an embassy from a new tribal leader to the east, Genghis Khan. The embassy included all sorts of gifts to the great Muhammad, representing the finest goods from Khan's small but growing Mongol empire. Genghis Khan wanted to reopen the Silk Route to Europe, and offered to share it with Muhammad, while promising peace between the two empires.

Muhammad did not know this upstart from the east, who, it seemed to him, was extremely arrogant to try to talk as an equal to one so clearly his superior. He ignored Khan's offer. Khan tried again: This time he sent a caravan of a hundred camels filled with the rarest articles he had plundered from China. Before the caravan reached Muhammad, however, Inalchik, the governor of a region bordering on Samarkand, seized it for himself, and executed its leaders.

Genghis Khan was sure that this was a mistake that Inalchik had acted without Muhammad's approval. He sent yet another mission to Muhammad, reiterating his offer and asking that the governor be punished. This time Muhammad himself had one of the ambassadors beheaded, and sent the other two back with shaved heads a horrifying insult in the Mongol code of honor. Khan sent a message to the shah: "You have chosen war. What will happen will happen, and what it is to be we know not; only God knows." Mobilizing his forces, in 1220 he attacked Inalchik's province, where he seized the capital, captured the governor, and ordered him executed by having molten silver poured into his eyes and ears.

Over the next year, Khan led a series of guerrilla-like campaigns against the shah's much larger army. His method was totally novel for the time his soldiers

surrender and become an ally rather than suffer devastation and defeat.

"You know as well as we do," the delegates said, "that the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel, and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept." When the Melians responded that this denied the notion of fair play, the Athenians said that those in power determined what was fair and what was not. The Melians argued that their authority belonged to the gods, not to mortals. "Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men," replied a member of the Athenian delegation, "lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can."

The Melians would not budge. Sparta, they insisted, would come to their defense. The Athenians countered that the Spartans were a conservative, practical people, and would not help Melos because they had nothing to gain and a lot to lose by doing so.

Finally the Melians began to talk of honor and the principle of resisting brute force. "Do not be led astray by a false sense of honor," said the Athenians. "Honor often brings men to ruin when they are faced with an obvious danger that somehow affects their pride. There is nothing disgraceful in giving way to the greatest city in Hellas when she is offering you such reasonable terms." The debate ended. The Melians discussed the issue among themselves, and decided to trust in the aid of the Spartans, the will of the gods, and the lightness of their cause. They politely declined the Athenians' offer.

A few days later the Athenians invaded Melos. The Melians fought nobly, even without the Spartans, who did not come to their rescue. It took several attempts before the Athenians could surround and besiege their main city, but the Melians finally surrendered. The Athenians wasted no time; they put to death all the men of military age that they could capture, they sold the women and children as slaves, and they repopulated the island with their own colonists. Only a handful of Melians survived.

Interpretation

The Athenians were one of the most eminently practical people in history, and they made the most practical argument they could with the Melians: 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. Had the Melians surrendered in the first place, they would have been

a soul what had happened; if he became the laughingstock of Paris, there would be hell to pay.

It took months for Napoleon to be able to trust Talleyrand again, and he never totally forgave him his humiliation.

Interpretation

Courtiers are like magicians: They deceptively play with appearances, only letting those around them see what they want them to see. With so much deception and manipulation afoot, it is essential to keep people from seeing your tricks and glimpsing your sleight of hand.

Talleyrand was normally the Grand Wizard of Courtiership, and but for Napoleon's aide, he probably would have gotten away completely with both pleasing his master and having a joke at the general's expense. But courtiership is a subtle art, and overlooked traps and inadvertent mistakes can ruin your best tricks. 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.

padded. Take hold of the cat
and use its paw to pluck
things out of the fire, to claw
your enemy, to play with the
mouse before devouring it.
Sometimes you hurt the
cat, but most often it
doesn't feel a thing.

Authority: Do everything pleasant yourself, everything unpleasant through third parties. By adopting the first course you win favor, by taking the second you deflect ill will. Important affairs often require rewards and punishments. Let only the good come from you and the evil from others. (Baltasar Gracian, 1601-1658)

REVERSAL

The cat's-paw and the scapegoat must be used with extreme caution and delicacy. They are like screens that hide your own involvement in dirty work from the public; if at any moment the screen is lifted and you are seen as the manipulator, the puppet master, the whole dynamic turns around your hand will be seen everywhere, and you will be blamed for misfortunes you may have had nothing to do with. Once the truth is revealed, events will snowball beyond your control.

In 1572, Queen Catherine de' Medicis of France conspired to do away with Gaspard de Coligny, an admiral in the French navy and a leading member of the Huguenot (French Protestant) community. Coligny was close to Catherine's son, Charles IX, and she feared his growing influence on the young king. So she arranged for a member of the Guise family, one of the most powerful royal clans in France, to assassinate him.

Secretly, however, Catherine had another plan: She wanted the Huguenots to blame the Guises for killing one of their leaders, and to take revenge. With one blow, she would erase or injure two threatening rivals, Coligny and the Guise family. Yet both plans went awry. The assassin missed his target, only wounding Coligny; knowing Catherine as his enemy, he strongly suspected it was she who had set up the attack on him, and he told the king so. Eventually the failed assassination and the arguments that ensued from it set off a chain of events that led to a bloody civil war between Catholics and Protestants, culminating in the horrifying Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve, in which thousands of Protestants were killed.

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

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.

Image: The Lion and the Hare. The lion creates no gaps in his way his movements are too swift, his jaws too quick and powerful. The timid hare will do anything to escape danger, but in its haste to retreat and flee, it backs into traps, hops smack into its enemies' jaws.

Authority: I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force; and it can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by the bold rather than by those who proceed coldly. And therefore, like a woman, she is always a friend to the young, because they are less cautious, fiercer, and master her with greater audacity. (Niccolo Machiavelli, 1469-1527)

REVERSAL

Boldness should never be the strategy behind all of your actions. It is a tactical instrument, to be used at the right moment. Plan and think ahead, and make the final element the bold move that will bring you success. In other words, 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. One such person was Lola Montez; her audacity brought her triumphs and led to her seduction of the king of Bavaria. But since she could never rein in her boldness, it also led to her downfall in Bavaria, in England, wherever she turned. It crossed the border between boldness and the appearance of cruelty, even insanity. Ivan the Terrible suffered the same fate: When the power of boldness brought him success, he stuck to it, to the point where it became a lifelong pattern of violence and sadism. He lost the ability to tell when boldness was appropriate and when it was not.

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.

they first came into go back to square one. Faced with this option, the patients would usually “choose” to avoid the relapse which, of course, was what Erickson really wanted.

This is a good technique to use on children and other willful people who enjoy doing the opposite of what you ask them to: Push them to “choose” what you want them to do by appearing to advocate the opposite.

Alter the Playing Field. In the 1860s, John D. Rockefeller set out to create an oil monopoly. If he tried to buy up the smaller oil companies they would figure out what he was doing and fight back. Instead, he began secretly buying up the railway companies that transported the oil. When he then attempted to take over a particular company, and met with resistance, he reminded them of their dependence on the rails. Refusing them shipping, or simply raising their fees, could ruin their business. Rockefeller altered the playing field so that the only options the small oil producers had were the ones he gave them.

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.

The Shrinking Options. The late-nineteenth-century art dealer Ambroise Vollard perfected this technique.

Customers would come to Vollard's shop to see some Cezannes. He would show three paintings, neglect to mention a price, and pretend to doze off. The visitors would have to leave without deciding. They would usually come back the next day to see the paintings again, but this time Vollard would pull out less interesting works, pretending he thought they were the same ones. The baffled customers would look at the new offerings, leave to think them over, and return yet again. Once again the same thing would happen: Vollard would show paintings of lesser quality still. Finally the buyers would realize they had better grab what he was showing them, because tomorrow they would have to settle for something worse, perhaps at even higher prices.

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.

The Weak Man on the Precipice. The weak are the easiest to maneuver by controlling their options. Cardinal de Retz, the great seventeenth-century provocateur, served as an unofficial assistant to the Duke of Orleans, who was notoriously indecisive. It was a constant struggle to convince the duke to take action; he would hem and haw, weigh the options, and wait till the last moment, giving everyone around him an ulcer. But Retz discovered a way to handle him: He would describe all sorts of dangers, exaggerating them as much as possible,

profoundly wrong, however, in predicting a change in the dynamics of power.

The bourgeois king's hat and umbrella amused the French at first, but soon grew irritating. People knew that Louis-Philippe was not really like them at all that the hat and umbrella were essentially a kind of trick to encourage them in the fantasy that the country had suddenly grown more equal. Actually, though, the divisions of wealth had never been greater. The French expected their ruler to be a bit of a showman, to have some presence. Even a radical like Robespierre, who had briefly come to power during the French Revolution fifty years earlier, had understood this, and certainly Napoleon, who had turned the revolutionary republic into an imperial regime, had known it in his bones. Indeed as soon as Louis-Philippe fled the stage, the French revealed their true desire: They elected Napoleon's grand-nephew president. He was a virtual unknown, but they hoped he would re-create the great general's powerful aura, erasing the awkward memory of the "bourgeois king."

Powerful people may be tempted to affect a common-man aura, trying to create the illusion that they and their subjects or underlings are basically the same. But the people whom this false gesture is intended to impress will quickly see through it. They understand that they are not being given more power that it only appears as if they shared in the powerful person's fate. The only kind of common touch that works is the kind affected by Franklin Roosevelt, a style that said the president shared values and goals with the common people even while he remained a patrician at heart. He never pretended to erase his distance from the crowd.

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.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

When Christopher Columbus was trying to find funding for his legendary voyages, many around him believed he came from the Italian aristocracy. This view was passed into history through a biography written after the explorer's death by his son, which describes him as a descendant of a Count

Colombo of the Casade of Cuccaro in Montferrat. Colombo in turn was said to be descended from the legendary Roman general Colonius, and two of his first cousins were supposedly direct descendants of an emperor of Constantinople. An illustrious background indeed. But it was nothing more than illustrious fantasy, for Columbus was actually the son of Domenico Colombo, a humble weaver who had opened a wine shop when Christopher was a young man, and

but it moves away from
him. He quickens his
pace; it does the same.
At last he takes to
running; but the
quicker he goes, the
quicker runs the
shadow also, utterly
refusing to give itself
up, just as if it had been
a treasure. But see! our
eccentric friend
suddenly turns round,
and walks away from
it. And presently he
looks behind him; now
the shadow runs
after him.

Ladies fair, I have
often observed ... that
Fortune treats us in a
similar way. One man
tries with all his might
to seize the goddess,
and only loses his time
and his trouble.

Another seems, to all
appearance, to be
running out of her
sight; but, no: she
herself takes a pleasure
in pursuing him.

FABLES,

Ivan Kriloff, 1768-1844

His speech in defense of Fala was one of the most popular he ever gave. In this case, the weak party involved was the president's dog and the attack backfired in the long run, it only made the president more sympathetic, since many people will naturally side with the "underdog," just as the American public came to sympathize with the wily but outnumbered Pan-cho Villa.

steal the initiative. The best way to do this is to play on uncontrollable emotionspride, 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.

A sovereign should never launch an army out of anger, a leader should never start a war out of wrath.

Sun-tzu, fourth century B. c.

KEYS TO POWER

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. 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.

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.

Everyone is caught up in a chain of events that long predates the present moment. Our anger often stems from problems in our childhood, from the problems of our parents which stem from their own childhood, on and on. Our anger also has roots in the many interactions with others, the accumulated disappointments and heartaches that we have suffered. An individual will often appear as the instigator of our anger but it is much more complicated, goes far beyond what that individual did to us. If a person explodes with anger at you (and it seems out of proportion to what you did to them), you must remind yourself that it is not exclusively directed at you do not be so vain. The cause is much larger, goes way back in time, involves dozens of prior hurts, and is actually not worth the bother to understand. 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 peo-

DITCH HIGH PRIEST

Kin'yo, an officer of the second rank, had a brother called the High Priest Ryogaku, an extremely bad-tempered man. Next to his monastery grew a large

his son; having drunk too much wine, however, the king stumbled. Alexander pointed at his father and jeered, "Men of Macedonia,

see there the man who is preparing to pass from Europe to Asia. He cannot pass from one table to another without falling."

When Alexander was eighteen, a disgruntled courtier murdered Philip. As word of the regicide spread through Greece, city after city rose up in rebellion against their Macedonian rulers. Philip's advisers counseled Alexander, now the king, to proceed cautiously, to do as Philip had done and conquer through cunning. But Alexander would do things his way: He marched to the furthest reaches of the kingdom, suppressed the rebellious towns, and reunited the empire with brutal efficiency.

As a young rebel grows older, his struggle against the father often wanes, and he gradually comes to resemble the very man he had wanted to defy. But Alexander's loathing of his father did not end with Philip's death. Once he had consolidated Greece, he set his eyes on Persia, the prize that had eluded his father, who had dreamed of conquering Asia. If he defeated the Persians, Alexander would finally surpass Philip in glory and fame.

Alexander crossed into Asia with an army of 35,000 to face a Persian force numbering over a million. Before engaging the Persians in battle he passed through the town of Gordium. Here, in the town's main temple, there stood an ancient chariot tied with cords made of the rind of the cornel tree. Legend had it that any man who could undo these cords the Gordian knot would rule the world. Many had tried to untie the enormous and intricate knot, but none had succeeded. Alexander, seeing he could not possibly untie the knot with his bare hands, took out his sword and with one slash cut it in half. This symbolic gesture showed the world that he would not do as others, but would blaze his own path.

Against astounding odds, Alexander conquered the Persians. Most expected him to stop there it was a great triumph, enough to secure his fame for eternity. But Alexander had the same relationship to his own deeds as he had to his father: His conquest of Persia represented the past, and he wanted never to rest on past triumphs, or to allow the past to outshine the present. He moved on to India, extending his empire beyond all known limits. Only his disgruntled and weary soldiers prevented him from going farther.

Interpretation

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 reason this type is uncommon is simple: The father most often manages to amass his fortune, his kingdom, because he begins with little or nothing. A desperate urge impels him to succeed he has nothing to lose by

the sovereign's feelings of love and hate, his secret wishes and fears, before he can conquer his heart. (Han-fei-tzu, Chinese philosopher, third century B.C.)

REVERSAL

There is no possible reversal to this Law.

grow unmanageable and psychotic.
Placate it by supporting its rituals. If
change is necessary, deceive the cat by
keeping the smell of the past alive;
place objects familiar to it in
strategic locations.

REVERSAL

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. When Napoleon came to power, the French Revolution was fresh in everyone's minds. If the court that he established had borne any resemblance to the lavish court of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, his courtiers would have spent all their time worrying about their own necks. Instead, Napoleon established a court remarkable for its sobriety and lack of ostentation. It was the court of a man who valued work and military virtues. This new form seemed appropriate and reassuring.

In other words, pay attention to the times. But understand: 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.

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. 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.