

# The 48 Laws of Power

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# Introduction

- History was made in the court of the Kings
- Courtesans had to influence
- Without offending or being overt about it
- Velvet gloves & sweet smiles vs. coercion & treachery
- Basically a never ending game
- Today the world is like one big Kings court

# Introduction

- The feeling of no power is unbearable
- “Any an who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great many who are not good” Niccolo Machiavelli
- Most social interactions are deceptive
  - Be many people, hide many people
- Deception is everywhere in nature
  - Colours, size, sound, etc
- If deception is a weapon, patience is a shield
- Judge all not by their intentions but the result of their actions

# Introduction

- Beware the person to who games are considered bad - worst manipulators
  1. They play their weakness & lack of power as a moral virtue (Law 22)
  2. A non player demands equality when what it means is distributing rewards from those who deserve it
  3. Pretend to be perfectly honest – that would offend many people
  4. Portray naiveté to protect them from seeming to want power – like children (Law 21)

# Introduction

- Most important is to master your emotion
- Emotions cloud reason
- Anger is most destructive
- Love is also potentially destructive
- Distance yourself from the present & think objectively about the past & future
- From the past, learn – not grudges & hurt

# Introduction

- Half the mastery comes from what you do not allow yourself to be dragged into
- Judge everything by what it costs you
  - Your goals may not be worth the price
  - Opportunities are many & you have limited energy
- Master player is master psychologist
- Never trust anyone completely
- Always study everyone you deal with
- Finally, always take the indirect route to power

# 1. NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER

- Always make those above you feel comfortable in their sense of superiority. In your desire to please or impress them do not go too far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the opposite - inspire fear and insecurity. Make them appear more brilliant than they are - and you will attain the heights of power.

# 1. NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER

## ■ Reversal

- Don't worry about not upsetting everyone you meet
- If the star is falling, do not worry about outshining him
- If the star is falling, let nature take its course
  - Outshining a feeble master appears spiteful
- Everyone falls someday
  - If you play right you will outshine them

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

- 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.

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

### ■ Reversal

- For dirty work
- Scapegoat – fall of the favourite
  - Lose a friend forever so do not use close ones
- If both people understand the dangers it can be good to work together

### 3. CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS

- Keep people off balance and in the dark by never revealing the purpose behind your actions. Without a clue as to 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.

# 3. CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS

## ■ Reversal

- Will not work if you have a deceptive reputation
- Need to own up as a repented rogue
- As you get older, it is harder to hide

## 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're 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.

# 4. ALWAYS SAY LESS THAN NECESSARY

## ■ Reversal

- Sometimes silence causes other meanings & suspicions
- Imitate the court jester to seem harmless
- Smoke screens for other deceptions

## 5. SO MUCH DEPENDS ON REPUTATION GUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE

- 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.

# 5. SO MUCH DEPENDS ON REPUTATION GUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE

- Reversal
  - There is none

## 6. COURT ATTENTION AT ALL COSTS

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

## 6. COURT ATTENTION AT ALL COSTS

### ■ Reversal

- Do not let the air of mystery to be a reputation for deceit
- Do not outshine the master
- Appearing greedy for attention signals insecurity, which drives away power

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- Let people above you take the short term credit
- If your talent is not good it will seem like pushing people out of the limelight

## 8. MAKE OTHER PEOPLE COME TO YOU USE BAIT IF NECESSARY

- 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

# 8. MAKE OTHER PEOPLE COME TO YOU USE BAIT IF NECESSARY

## ■ Reversal

- Surprise the enemy with an attack
- If time is against you
- If the enemy is weaker

## 9. WIN THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS, NEVER THROUGH ARGUMENT

- 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.

# 9. WIN THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS, NEVER THROUGH ARGUMENT

- Reversal
  - Covering up deception or a lie

## 10. INFECTION: AVOID THE UNHAPPY AND UNLUCKY

- 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.

# 10. INFECTION: AVOID THE UNHAPPY AND UNLUCKY

- Reversal
  - There is none

# 11. LEARN TO KEEP PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON YOU

- 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.

# 11. LEARN TO KEEP PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON YOU

## ■ Reversal

- Making others dependent on you makes you in some measure dependent on them

## 12. USE SELECTIVE HONESTY AND GENEROSITY TO DISARM YOUR VICTIM

- One sincere and honest move will cover over dozens of dishonest ones. Open-hearted 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.

# 12. USE SELECTIVE HONESTY AND GENEROSITY TO DISARM YOUR VICTIM

- Reversal
  - With a history of deceit, no honesty will work

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- Some people prefer giving charity
- Some people give to feel power

# 14. POSE AS A FRIEND, WORK AS A SPY

- 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.

# 14. POSE AS A FRIEND, WORK AS A SPY

## ■ Reversal

- Since others will spy on you, give out protective false information
- Truth is so precious that she should always be tended by a bodyguard of lies – Winston Churchill

## 15. CRUSH YOUR ENEMY TOTALLY

- 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.

# 15. CRUSH YOUR ENEMY TOTALLY

## ■ Reversal

- Should be rarely ignored
- It possible let them crush themselves
- Cornered in war makes people fight harder
- Giving escape routes uses their energy
- Any bit left will come back for you later

## 16. USE ABSENCE TO INCREASE RESPECT AND HONOR

- 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.

# 16. USE ABSENCE TO INCREASE RESPECT AND HONOR

## ■ Reversal

- In the beginning make yourself omnipresent
- Useful only if you have established presence
- Leave too early and you will be forgotten

## 17. KEEP OTHERS IN SUSPENSE: CULTIVATE AN AIR OF UNPREDICTABILITY

- 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.

# 17. KEEP OTHERS IN SUSPENSE: CULTIVATE AN AIR OF UNPREDICTABILITY

## ■ Reversal

- May not work as a subordinate
- Predictability can be favourable by putting others at ease
- Predictability is a good setup for doing a rare unpredictable thing
- When you need a smoke screen

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- In thought, isolation blocks society noise and lets you see the big picture
- However, beware to come back to society

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

- 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.

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

- Reversal
  - There is none

## 20. DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE

- 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.

## 20. DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE

### ■ Reversal

- Taken too it will go against you
- Play with too many factions and they will gang up against you
- Sometimes a stand is needed to show strength
- If you do not commit the opportunity for you may be closed

## 21. **PLAY A SUCKER TO CATCH A SUCKER - SEEM DUMBER THAN YOUR MARK**

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- At the start of the climb to the top it does not pay to look stupid
- Be an expert to cover deception

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- If the enemy will not relent, then martyrdom may be the option
- When power deserts you, it is better to ignore the reversal

## 23. CONCENTRATE YOUR FORCES

- 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.

# 23. CONCENTRATE YOUR FORCES

## ■ Reversal

- Dispersion is often good for the weaker side
  - guerrilla warfare
- If your only source of power goes...
- In the art world it is sometimes better to experiment

## 24. PLAY THE PERFECT COURTIER

- 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.

# 24. PLAY THE PERFECT COURTIER

- Reversal
  - There is none
    - However never get a trick or deception caught

## 25. RE-CREATE YOURSELF

- 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.

# 25. RE-CREATE YOURSELF

- Reversal
  - There is none
    - However do not overact or be too dramatic

## 26. **KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN**

- 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 unwitting pawns and screens to disguise your involvement.

## 26. KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN

### ■ Reversal

- If powerful enough, sometimes you can take the blame
- If you want to show power, sometimes do not disguise an attack

## 27. PLAY ON PEOPLE'S NEED TO BELIEVE TO CREATE A CULTLIKE FOLLOWING

- 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.

# 27. PLAY ON PEOPLE'S NEED TO BELIEVE TO CREATE A CULTLIKE FOLLOWING

## ■ Reversal

- If you dupe a crowd and they find out, it is harder to escape – deal one to one

## 28. ENTER ACTION WITH BOLDNESS

- 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.

# 28. ENTER ACTION WITH BOLDNESS

## ■ Reversal

- Although timidity has not place in power, use it as a weapon to draw people closer
- Over audacity may become cruelty resulting in failure

## 29. PLAN ALL THE WAY TO THE END

- 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.

# 29. PLAN ALL THE WAY TO THE END

- Reversal
  - There is none
  - However never have rigidity

## 30. MAKE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SEEM EFFORTLESS

- 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.

# 30. MAKE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SEEM EFFORTLESS

- Reversal
  - Partial revelation to show capability

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- In the short term, wait and listen to others for their strategy and input

## 32. PLAY TO PEOPLE'S FANTASIES

- 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.

## 32. PLAY TO PEOPLE'S FANTASIES

- Reversal
  - Not when you cannot fulfill promises

## 33. DISCOVER EACH MAN'S THUMBSCREW

- 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.

# 33. DISCOVER EACH MAN'S THUMBSCREW

## ■ Reversal

- Certain emotional people may behave in a way unpredictable or that goes against you

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- Never loom too high so as to be a target
- Never elevate yourself by humiliating others

## 35. MASTER THE ART OF TIMING

- 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.

# 35. MASTER THE ART OF TIMING

- Reversal
  - There is none

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- Beware the people that will grow and do the same to you

## 37. CREATE COMPELLING SPECTACLES

- 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.

# 37. CREATE COMPELLING SPECTACLES

- Reversal
  - There is none

## 38. THINK AS YOU LIKE BUT BEHAVE LIKE OTHERS

- 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.

# 38. THINK AS YOU LIKE BUT BEHAVE LIKE OTHERS

- Reversal
  - Stand out when you already stand out

## 39. STIR UP WATERS TO CATCH FISH

- 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.

# 39. STIR UP WATERS TO CATCH FISH

- Reversal
  - Never stir up waters that can be used against you
  - Never stir too often as it loses power

## 40. DESPISE THE FREE LUNCH

- 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.

# 40. DESPISE THE FREE LUNCH

- Reversal
  - When offering a free lunch for bait

# 41. AVOID STEPPING INTO A GREAT MAN'S SHOES

- 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.

# 41. AVOID STEPPING INTO A GREAT MAN'S SHOES

## ■ Reversal

- When using a great man's shadow to ride to the top
- Use the great man's methods if they are wise and accepted
- Beware of others below you stepping into your shoes

## 42. STRIKE THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL SCATTER

- Trouble can often be traced to a single strong individual - the stirrer, the arrogant underling, the poisoner of good will. 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.

# 42. STRIKE THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL SCATTER

## ■ Reversal

- Beware if they can return to do you harm
  - Keep them close to disarm them

## 43. WORK ON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OTHERS

- 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.

# 43. WORK ON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OTHERS

- Reversal
  - There is none

## 44. DISARM AND INFURIATE WITH THE MIRROR EFFECT

- 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.

# 44. DISARM AND INFURIATE WITH THE MIRROR EFFECT

## ■ Reversal

- When you cannot mirror to the right level
- Where you get wrongly associated with the people left behind

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- An unacceptable past that has been removed
  - However do not leave a void as it creates terror
- Arts, fashion & technology
  - However the past is more stable

## 46. NEVER APPEAR TOO PERFECT

- 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.

# 46. NEVER APPEAR TOO PERFECT

- Reversal
  - When you want to trap your enemies in envy

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

- 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.

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

## ■ Reversal

- When you need to completely destroy the enemy
  - However do not create more enemies
- Buyers remorse is unnecessary

## 48. ASSUME FORMLESSNESS

- 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.

# 48. ASSUME FORMLESSNESS

- Reversal
  - Concentrate power when it is needed