

LAW 43

WORK ON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OTHERS

JUDGMENT

Coercion creates a reaction that will eventually work against you. You must seduce others into wanting to move in your direction. A person you have seduced becomes your loyal pawn. And the way to seduce others is to operate on their individual psychologies and weaknesses. Soften up the resistant by working on their emotions, playing on what they hold dear and what they fear. Ignore the hearts and minds of others and they will grow to hate you.

CYRUS'S RUSE

Thinking of the means by which he could most effectively persuade the Persians to revolt, [Cyrus's] deliberations led him to adopt the following plan, which he found best suited to his purpose. He wrote on a roll of parchment that Astyages had appointed him to command the Persian army; then he summoned an assembly of the Persians, opened the roll in their presence and read out what he had written. "And now, he added, I have an order for you: every man is to appear on parade with a billhook..." The order was obeyed. All the men assembled with their billhooks, and Cyrus's next command was that before the day was out they should clear a certain piece of rough land full of thorn-bushes, about eighteen or twenty furlongs square. This too was done, whereupon Cyrus issued the further order that they should present themselves again on the following day, after having taken a bath. Meanwhile, Cyrus collected and slaughtered all his father's goats, sheep, and oxen in preparation for entertaining the whole Persian army at a banquet, together with the best wine and bread he could procure. The next day the guests assembled, and were told to sit down on the grass and enjoy themselves. After the meal Cyrus asked them which they preferred

—yesterday’s work or today’s amusement; and they replied that it was indeed a far cry from the previous day’s misery to their present pleasures. This was the answer which Cyrus wanted; he seized upon it at once and proceeded to lay bare what he had in mind. “Men of Persia,” he said, “listen to me: obey my orders, and you will be able to enjoy a thousand pleasures as good as this without ever turning your hands to menial labor; but, if you disobey, yesterday’s task will be the pattern of innumerable others you will be forced to perform. Take my advice and win your freedom. I am the man destined to undertake your liberation, and it is my belief that you are a match for the Medes in war as in everything else. It is the truth I tell you. Do not delay, but fling off the yoke of Astyages at once.”

The Persians had long resented their subjection to the Medes. At last they had found a leader, and welcomed with enthusiasm the prospect of liberty.... On the present occasion the Persians under Cyrus rose against the Medes and from then onwards were masters of Asia.

THE HISTORIES, HERODOTUS, FIFTH CENTURY B.C..

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Near the end of the reign of Louis XV, all of France seemed desperate for change. When the king's grandson and chosen successor, the future Louis XVI, married the fifteen-year-old daughter of the empress of Austria, the French caught a glimpse of the future that seemed hopeful. The young bride, Marie-Antoinette, was beautiful and full of life. She instantly changed the mood of the court, which was rank with Louis XV's debaucheries; even the common people, who had yet to see her, talked excitedly of Marie-Antoinette. The French had grown disgusted with the series of mistresses who had dominated Louis XV, and they looked forward to serving their new queen. In 1773, when Marie-Antoinette publicly rode through the streets of Paris for the first time, applauding crowds swarmed around her carriage. "How fortunate," she wrote her mother, "to be in a position in which one can gain widespread affection at so little cost."

In 1774 Louis XV died and Louis XVI took the throne. As soon as Marie-Antoinette became queen she abandoned herself to the pleasures she loved the most—ordering and wearing the most expensive gowns and jewelry in the realm; sporting the most elaborate hair in history, her sculpted coiffures rising as much as three feet above her head; and throwing a constant succession of masked balls and fêtes. All of these whims she paid for on credit, never concerning herself with the cost or who paid the bills.

Marie-Antoinette's greatest pleasure was the creation and designing of a private Garden of Eden at the Petit Trianon, a château on the grounds of Versailles with its own woods. The gardens at the Petit Trianon were to be as "natural" as possible, including moss applied by hand to the trees and rocks. To heighten the pastoral effect, the queen employed peasant milkmaids to milk the finest-looking cows in the realm; launderers and cheese-makers in special peasant outfits she helped design; shepherds to tend sheep with silk ribbons around their necks. When she inspected the barns, she would watch her milkmaids squeezing milk into porcelain vases made at the royal ceramic works. To pass the time, Marie-Antoinette would gather flowers in the woods around the Petit Trianon, or watch her "good

peasants” doing their “chores.” The place became a separate world, its community limited to her chosen favorites.

With each new whim, the cost of maintaining the Petit Trianon soared. Meanwhile, France itself was deteriorating: There was famine and widespread discontent. Even socially insulated courtiers seethed with resentment—the queen treated them like children. Only her favorites mattered, and these were becoming fewer and fewer. But Marie-Antoinette did not concern herself with this. Not once throughout her reign did she read a minister’s report. Not once did she tour the provinces and rally the people to her side. Not once did she mingle among the Parisians, or receive a delegation from them. She did none of these things because as queen she felt the people owed her their affection, and she was not required to love them in return.

In 1784 the queen became embroiled in a scandal. As part of an elaborate swindle, the most expensive diamond necklace in Europe had been purchased under her name, and during the swindlers’ trial her lavish lifestyle became public: People heard about the money she spent on jewels and dresses and masked dances. They gave her the nickname “Madame Deficit,” and from then on she became the focus of the people’s growing resentment. When she appeared in her box at the opera the audience greeted her with hisses. Even the court turned against her. For while she had been running up her huge expenditures, the country was headed for ruin.

Five years later, in 1789, an unprecedented event took place: the beginning of the French Revolution. The queen did not worry—let the people have their little rebellion, she seemed to think; it would soon quiet down and she would be able to resume her life of pleasure. That year the people marched on Versailles, forcing the royal family to quit the palace and take residence in Paris. This was a triumph for the rebels, but it offered the queen an opportunity to heal the wounds she had opened and establish contact with the people. The queen, however, had not learned her lesson: Not once would she leave the palace during her stay in Paris. Her subjects could rot in hell for all she cared.

In 1792 the royal couple was moved from the palace to a prison, as the revolution officially declared the end of the monarchy. The following year Louis XVI was tried, found guilty, and guillotined. As Marie-Antoinette awaited the same fate, hardly a soul came to her defense—not one of her former friends in the court, not one of Europe’s other monarchs (who, as

members of their own countries' royal families, had all the reason in the world to show that revolution did not pay), not even her own family in Austria, including her brother, who now sat on the throne. She had become the world's pariah. In October of 1793, she finally knelt at the guillotine, unrepentant and defiant to the bitter end.

Interpretation

From early on, Marie-Antoinette acquired the most dangerous of attitudes: As a young princess in Austria she was endlessly flattered and cajoled. As the future queen of the French court she was the center of everyone's attention. She never learned to charm or please other people, to become attuned to their individual psychologies. She never had to work to get her way, to use calculation or cunning or the arts of persuasion. And like everyone who is indulged from an early age, she evolved into a monster of insensitivity.

Marie-Antoinette became the focus of an entire country's dissatisfaction because it is so infuriating to meet with a person who makes no effort to seduce you or attempt to persuade you, even if only for the purpose of deception. And do not imagine that she represents a bygone era, or that she is even rare. Her type is today more common than ever. Such types live in their own bubble—they seem to feel they are born kings and queens, and that attention is owed them. They do not consider anyone else's nature, but bulldoze over people with the self-righteous arrogance of a Marie-Antoinette. Pampered and indulged as children, as adults they still believe that everything must come to them; convinced of their own charm, they make no effort to charm, seduce, or gently persuade.

In the realm of power, such attitudes are disastrous. At all times you must attend to those around you, gauging their particular psychology, tailoring your words to what you know will entice and seduce them. This requires energy and art. The higher your station, the greater the need to remain attuned to the hearts and minds of those below you, creating a base of support to maintain you at the pinnacle. Without that base, your power will teeter, and at the slightest change of fortune those below will gladly assist in your fall from grace.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In A.D. 225, Chuko Liang, master strategist and chief minister to the ruler of Shu in ancient China, confronted a dangerous situation. The kingdom of Wei had mounted an all-out attack on Shu from the north. More dangerous still, Wei had formed an alliance with the barbarous states to the south of Shu, led by King Menghuo. Chuko Liang had to deal with this second menace from the south before he could hope to fend off Wei in the north.

As Chuko Liang prepared to march south against the barbarians, a wise man in his camp offered him advice. It would be impossible, this man said, to pacify the region by force. Liang would probably beat Menghuo, but as soon as he headed north again to deal with Wei, Menghuo would reinvade. "It is better to win hearts," said the wise man, "than cities; better to battle with hearts than with weapons. I hope you will succeed in winning the hearts of these people." "You read my thoughts," responded Chuko Liang.

THE GENTLE ART OF PERSUASION

The north wind and the sun were disputing which was the stronger, and agreed to acknowledge as the victor whichever of them could strip a traveler of his clothing. The wind tried first. But its violent gusts only made the man hold his clothes tightly around him, and when it blew harder still the cold made him so uncomfortable that he put on an extra wrap. Eventually the wind got tired of it and handed him over to the sun. The sun shone first with a moderate warmth, which made the man take off his topcoat. Then it blazed fiercely, till, unable to stand the heat, he stripped and went off to bathe in a nearby river. Persuasion is more effective than force.

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

As Liang expected, Menghuo launched a powerful attack. But Liang laid a trap and managed to capture a large part of Menghuo's army, including the king himself. Instead of punishing or executing his prisoners, however, he separated the soldiers from their king, had their shackles removed, regaled them with food and wine, and then addressed them. "You are all

upright men,” he said. “I believe you all have parents, wives, and children waiting for you at home. They are doubtless shedding bitter tears at your fate. I am going to release you, so that you can return home to your loved ones and comfort them.” The men thanked Liang with tears in their eyes; then he sent for Menghuo. “If I release you,” asked Liang, “what will you do?” “I will pull my army together again,” answered the king, “and lead it against you to a decisive battle. But if you capture me a second time, I will bow to your superiority.” Not only did Liang order Menghuo released, he gave him a gift of a horse and saddle. When angry lieutenants wondered why he did this, Liang told them, “I can capture that man as easily as I can take something out of my pocket. I am trying to win his heart. When I do, peace will come of itself here in the south.”

As Menghuo had said he would, he attacked again. But his own officers, whom Liang had treated so well, rebelled against him, captured him, and turned him over to Liang, who asked him again the same question as before. Menghuo replied that he had not been beaten fairly, but merely betrayed by his own officers; he would fight again, but if captured a third time he would bow to Liang’s superiority.

Over the following months Liang outwitted Menghuo again and again, capturing him a third, a fourth, and a fifth time. On each occasion Menghuo’s troops grew more dissatisfied. Liang had treated them with respect; they had lost their heart for fighting. But every time Chuko Liang asked Menghuo to yield, the great king would come up with another excuse: You tricked me, I lost through bad luck, on and on. If you capture me again, he would promise, I swear I will not betray you. And so Liang would let him go.

When he captured Menghuo for the sixth time, he asked the king the same question again. “If you capture me a seventh time,” the king replied, “I shall give you my loyalty and never rebel again.” “Very well,” said Liang. “But if I capture you again, I will not release you.”

Now Menghuo and his soldiers fled to a far corner of their kingdom, the region of Wuge. Defeated so many times, Menghuo had only one hope left: He would ask the help of King Wutugu of Wuge, who had an immense and ferocious army. Wutugu’s warriors wore an armor of tightly woven vines soaked in oil, then dried to an impenetrable hardness. With Menghuo at his side, Wutugu marched this mighty army against Liang, and this time the great strategist seemed frightened, leading his men in a hurried retreat. But

he was merely leading Wutugu into a trap: He cornered the king's men in a narrow valley, then lit fires set all around them. When the fires reached the soldiers Wutugu's whole army burst into flame—the oil in their armor, of course, being highly flammable. All of them perished.

Liang had managed to separate Menghuo and his entourage from the carnage in the valley, and the king found himself a captive for the seventh time. After this slaughter Liang could not bear to face his prisoner again. He sent a messenger to the captured king: "He has commissioned me to release you. Mobilize another army against him, if you can, and try once more to defeat him." Sobbing, the king fell to the ground, crawled to Liang on his hands and knees, and prostrated himself at his feet. "Oh great minister," cried Menghuo, "yours is the majesty of Heaven. We men of the south will never again offer resistance to your rule." "Do you now yield?" asked Liang. "I, my sons, and my grandsons are deeply moved by Your Honor's boundless, life-giving mercy. How could we not yield?"

Liang honored Menghuo with a great banquet, reestablished him on the throne, restored his conquered lands to his rule, then returned north with his army, leaving no occupying force. Liang never came back—he had no need to: Menghuo had become his most devoted and unshakable ally.

The men who have changed the universe have never gotten there by working on leaders, but rather by moving the masses. Working on leaders is the method of intrigue and only leads to secondary results. Working on the masses, however, is the stroke of genius that changes the face of the world.
NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, 1769-1821

LIFE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

This long and painful pursuit of Darius—for in eleven days he marched 33 hundred furlongs—harassed his soldiers so that most of them were ready to give it up, chiefly for want of water. While they were in this distress, it happened that some Macedonians who had fetched water in skins upon their mules from a river they had found out came about noon to the place where Alexander was, and seeing him almost choked with thirst, presently filled a helmet and offered it him.... Then he took the helmet into his hands, and looking round about, when he saw all those who were near him stretching their heads out and looking earnestly after the drink, he returned it again with thanks without tasting a drop of it. "For," said he, "if I alone

should drink, the rest will be out of heart.” The soldiers no sooner took notice of his temperance and magnanimity upon this occasion, but they one and all cried out to him to lead them forward boldly, and began whipping on their horses. For whilst they had such a king they said they defied both weariness and thirst, and looked upon themselves to be little less than immortal.

THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, PLUTARCH, C. A.D. 46-120

Interpretation

Chuko Liang had two options: Try to defeat the barbarians in the south with one crushing blow, or patiently and slowly win them to his side over time. Most people more powerful than their enemy grab the first option and never consider the second, but the truly powerful think far ahead: The first option may be quick and easy, but over time it brews ugly emotions in the hearts of the vanquished. Their resentment turns to hatred; such animosity keeps you on edge—you spend your energy protecting what you have gained, growing paranoid and defensive. The second option, though more difficult, not only brings you peace of mind, it converts a potential enemy into a pillar of support.

In all your encounters, take a step back—take the time to calculate and attune yourself to your targets' emotional makeup and psychological weaknesses. Force will only strengthen their resistance. With most people the heart is the key: They are like children, ruled by their emotions. To soften them up, alternate harshness with mercy. Play on their basic fears, and also their loves—freedom, family, etc. Once you break them down, you will have a lifelong friend and fiercely loyal ally.

*Governments saw men only in mass; but our men, being irregulars, were
not
formations, but individuals.... Our kingdoms lay in each man's mind.*
Seven Pillars of Wisdom, T. E. Lawrence, 1888-1935

KEYS TO POWER

In the game of power, you are surrounded by people who have absolutely no reason to help you unless it is in their interest to do so. And if you have nothing to offer their self-interest, you are likely to make them hostile, for they will see in you just one more competitor, one more waster of their time. Those that overcome this prevailing coldness are the ones who find the key that unlocks the stranger's heart and mind, seducing him into their corner, if necessary softening him up for a punch. But most people never learn this side of the game. When they meet someone new, rather than stepping back and probing to see what makes this person unique, they talk about themselves, eager to impose their own willpower and prejudices. They argue, boast, and make a show of their power. They may not know it but they are secretly creating an enemy, a resister, because there is no more infuriating feeling than having your individuality ignored, your own psychology unacknowledged. It makes you feel lifeless and resentful.

Remember: The key to persuasion is softening people up and breaking them down, gently. Seduce them with a two-pronged approach: Work on their emotions and play on their intellectual weaknesses. Be alert to both what separates them from everyone else (their individual psychology) and what they share with everyone else (their basic emotional responses). Aim at the primary emotions—love, hate, jealousy. Once you move their emotions you have reduced their control, making them more vulnerable to persuasion.

When Chuko Liang wanted to dissuade an important general of a rival kingdom from entering into an alliance with Ts'ao Ts'ao, Liang's dreaded enemy, he did not detail Ts'ao Ts'ao's cruelty, or attack him on moral grounds. Instead Liang suggested that Ts'ao Ts'ao was really after the general's beautiful young wife. This hit the general in the gut, and won him over. Mao Tse-tung similarly always appealed to popular emotions, and spoke in the simplest terms. Educated and well-read himself, in his speeches he used visceral metaphors, voicing the public's deepest anxieties and encouraging them to vent their frustrations in public meetings. Rather than arguing the practical aspects of a particular program, he would

describe how it would affect them on the most primitive, down-to-earth level. Do not believe that this approach works only with the illiterate and unschooled—it works on one and all. All of us are mortal and face the same dreadful fate, and all of us share the desire for attachment and belonging. Stir up these emotions and you captivate our hearts.

The best way to do this is with a dramatic jolt, of the kind that Chuko Liang created when he fed and released prisoners who expected only the worst from him. Shaking them to the core, he softened their hearts. Play on contrasts like this: Push people to despair, then give them relief. If they expect pain and you give them pleasure, you win their hearts. Creating pleasure of any kind, in fact, will usually bring you success, as will allaying fears and providing or promising security.

Symbolic gestures are often enough to win sympathy and goodwill. A gesture of self-sacrifice, for example—a show that you suffer as those around you do—will make people identify with you, even if your suffering is symbolic or minor and theirs is real. When you enter a group, make a gesture of goodwill; soften the group up for the harsher actions that will follow later.

When T. E. Lawrence was fighting the Turks in the deserts of the Middle East during World War I, he had an epiphany: It seemed to him that conventional warfare had lost its value. The old-fashioned soldier was lost in the enormous armies of the time, in which he was ordered about like a lifeless pawn. Lawrence wanted to turn this around. For him, every soldier's mind was a kingdom he had to conquer. A committed, psychologically motivated soldier would fight harder and more creatively than a puppet.

Lawrence's perception is still more true in the world today, where so many of us feel alienated, anonymous, and suspicious of authority, all of which makes overt power plays and force even more counterproductive and dangerous. Instead of manipulating lifeless pawns, make those on your side convinced and excited by the cause you have enlisted them in; this will not only make your work easier but it will also give you more leeway to deceive them later on. And to accomplish this you need to deal with their individual psychologies. Never clumsily assume that the tactic that worked on one person will necessarily work on another. To find the key that will motivate them, first get them to open up. The more they talk, the more they reveal about their likes and dislikes—the handles and levers to move them with.

The quickest way to secure people's minds is by demonstrating, as simply as possible, how an action will benefit them. Self-interest is the strongest motive of all: A great cause may capture minds, but once the first flush of excitement is over, interest will flag—unless there is something to be gained. Self-interest is the solid foundation. The causes that work best use a noble veneer to cover a blatant appeal to self-interest; the cause seduces but the self-interest secures the deal.

The people who are best at appealing to people's minds are often artists, intellectuals, and those of a more poetic nature. This is because ideas are most easily communicated through metaphors and imagery. It is always good policy, then, to have in your pocket at least one artist or intellectual who can appeal concretely to people's minds. Kings have always kept a stable of writers in their barn: Frederick the Great had his Voltaire (until they quarreled and separated), Napoleon won over Goethe. Conversely, Napoleon III's alienation of writers such as Victor Hugo, whom he exiled from France, contributed to his growing unpopularity and eventual downfall. It is dangerous, then, to alienate those who have powers of expression, and useful to pacify and exploit them.

Finally, learn to play the numbers game. The wider your support base the stronger your power. Understanding that one alienated, disaffected soul can spark a blaze of discontent, Louis XIV made sure to endear himself to the lowest members of his staff. You too must constantly win over more allies on all levels—a time will inevitably come when you will need them.

Image:
The Keyhole.
People build
walls to keep you
out; never force
your way in—you
will find only more
walls within walls.
There are doors in
these walls, doors to
the heart and mind, and
they have tiny key
holes. Peer through the
keyhole, find the key

that opens the door,
and you have access
to their will with
no ugly signs
of forced
entry.

Authority: The difficulties in the way of persuasion lie in my knowing the heart of the persuaded in order thereby to fit my wording into it... For this reason, whoever attempts persuasion before the throne, must carefully observe 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.