

LAW 44

DISARM AND INFURIATE WITH THE MIRROR EFFECT

JUDGMENT

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.

MIRROR EFFECTS: Preliminary Typology

Mirrors have the power to disturb us. Gazing at our reflection in the mirror, we most often see what we want to see—the image of ourselves with which we are most comfortable. We tend not to look too closely, ignoring the wrinkles and blemishes. But if we do look hard at the reflected image, we sometimes feel that we are seeing ourselves as others see us, as a person among other people, an object rather than a subject. That feeling makes us shudder—we see ourselves, but from the outside, minus the thoughts, spirit, and soul that fill our consciousness. We are a thing.

In using Mirror Effects we symbolically re-create this disturbing power by mirroring the actions of other people, mimicking their movements to unsettle and infuriate them. Made to feel mocked, cloned, objectlike, an image without a soul, they get angry. Or do the same thing slightly differently and they might feel disarmed—you have perfectly reflected their wishes and desires. This is the narcissistic power of mirrors. In either case, the Mirror Effect unsettles your targets, whether angering or entrancing them, and in that instant you have the power to manipulate or seduce them. The Effect contains great power because it operates on the most primitive emotions.

There are four main Mirror Effects in the realm of power:

The Neutralizing Effect. In ancient Greek mythology, the Gorgon Medusa had serpents for hair, protruding tongue, massive teeth, and a face so ugly that anyone who gazed at her was turned into stone, out of fright. But the hero Perseus managed to slay Medusa by polishing his bronze shield into a mirror, then using the reflection in the mirror to guide him as he crept up and cut off her head without looking at her directly. If the shield in this instance was a mirror, the mirror also was a kind of shield: Medusa could not see Perseus, she saw only her own reflected actions, and behind this screen the hero stole up and destroyed her.

This is the essence of the Neutralizing Effect: Do what your enemies do, following their actions as best you can, and they cannot see what you are up to—they are blinded by your mirror. Their strategy for dealing with you

depends on your reacting to them in a way characteristic of you; neutralize it by playing a game of mimicry with them. The tactic has a mocking, even infuriating effect. Most of us remember the childhood experience of someone teasing us by repeating our words exactly—after a while, usually not long, we wanted to punch them in the face. Working more subtly as an adult, you can still unsettle your opponents this way; shielding your own strategy with the mirror, you lay invisible traps, or push your opponents into the trap they planned for you.

This powerful technique has been used in military strategy since the days of Sun-tzu; in our own time it often appears in political campaigning. It is also useful for disguising those situations in which you have no particular strategy yourself. This is the Warrior's Mirror.

THE MERCHANT AND HIS FRIEND

A certain merchant once had a great desire to make a long journey. Now in regard that he was not very wealthy, "It is requisite," said he to himself, "that before my departure I should leave some part of my estate in the city, to the end that if I meet with ill luck in my travels, I may have wherewithal to keep me at my return." To this purpose he delivered a great number of bars of iron, which were a principal part of his wealth, in trust to one of his friends, desiring him to keep them during his absence; and then, taking his leave, away he went. Some time after, having had but ill luck in his travels, he returned home; and the first thing he did was to go to his friend, and demand his iron: but his friend, who owed several sums of money, having sold the iron to pay his own debts, made him this answer: "Truly, friend," said he, "I put your iron into a room that was close locked, imagining it would have been there as secure as my own gold; but an accident has happened which no one could have suspected, for there was a rat in the room which ate it all up." The merchant, pretending ignorance, replied, "It is a terrible misfortune to me indeed; but I know of old that rats love iron extremely; I have suffered by them many times before in the same manner, and therefore can the better bear my present affliction." This answer extremely pleased the friend, who was glad to hear the merchant so well inclined to believe that a rat had eaten his iron; and to remove all suspicions, desired him to dine with him the next day. The merchant promised he would, but in the meantime he met in the middle of the city one

of his friend's children; the child he carried home, and locked up in a room. The next day he went to his friend, who seemed to be in great affliction, which he asked him the cause of, as if he had been perfectly ignorant of what had happened. "O, my dear friend," answered the other, "I beg you to excuse me, if you do not see me so cheerful as otherwise I would be; I have lost one of my children; I have had him cried by sound of trumpet, but I know not what is become of him." "O!" replied the merchant, "I am grieved to hear this; for yesterday in the evening, as I parted from hence, I saw an owl in the air with a child in his claws; but whether it were yours I cannot tell." "Why, you most foolish and absurd creature!" replied the friend, "are you not ashamed to tell such an egregious lie? An owl, that weighs at most not above two or three pounds, can he carry a boy that weighs above fifty?" "Why," replied the merchant, "do you make such a wonder at that? As if in a country where one rat can eat a hundred tons' weight of iron, it were such a wonder for an owl to carry a child that weighs not over fifty pounds in all!" The friend, upon this, found that the merchant was no such fool as he took him to be, begged his pardon for the cheat which he designed to have put upon him, restored him the value of his iron, and so had his son again.

FABLES, PILPAY, INDIA, FOURTH CENTURY

A reverse version of the Neutralizing Effect is the Shadow: You shadow your opponents' every move without their seeing you. Use the Shadow to gather information that will neutralize their strategy later on, when you will be able to thwart their every move. The Shadow is effective because to follow the movements of others is to gain valuable insights into their habits and routines. The Shadow is the preeminent device for detectives and spies.

The Narcissus Effect. Gazing at an image in the waters of a pond, the Greek youth Narcissus fell in love with it. And when he found out that the image was his own reflection, and that he therefore could not consummate his love, he despaired and drowned himself. All of us have a similar problem: We are profoundly in love with ourselves, but since this love excludes a love object outside ourselves, it remains continuously unsatisfied and unfulfilled. The Narcissus Effect plays on this universal narcissism: You look deep into the souls of other people; fathom their inmost desires, their values, their tastes, their spirit; and you reflect it back to them, making

yourself into a kind of mirror image. Your ability to reflect their psyche gives you great power over them; they may even feel a tinge of love.

This is simply the ability to mimic another person not physically, but psychologically, and it is immensely powerful because it plays upon the unsatisfied self-love of a child. Normally, people bombard us with their experiences, their tastes. They hardly ever make the effort to see things through our eyes. This is annoying, but it also creates great opportunity: If you can show you understand another person by reflecting their inmost feelings, they will be entranced and disarmed, all the more so because it happens so rarely. No one can resist this feeling of being harmoniously reflected in the outside world, even though you might well be manufacturing it for their benefit, and for deceptive purposes of your own.

The Narcissus Effect works wonders in both social life and business; it gives us both the Seducer's and the Courtier's Mirror.

The Moral Effect The power of verbal argument is extremely limited, and often accomplishes the opposite of what is intended. As Gracián remarks, "The truth is generally seen, rarely heard." The Moral Effect is a perfect way to demonstrate your ideas through action. Quite simply, you teach others a lesson by giving them a taste of their own medicine.

In the Moral Effect, you mirror what other people have done to you, and do so in a way that makes them realize you are doing to them exactly what they did to you. You make them *feel* that their behavior has been unpleasant, as opposed to hearing you complain and whine about it, which only gets their defenses up. And as they feel the result of their actions mirrored back at them, they realize in the profoundest sense how they hurt or punish others with their unsocial behavior. You objectify the qualities you want them to feel ashamed of and create a mirror in which they can gaze at their follies and learn a lesson about themselves. This technique is often used by educators, psychologists, and anyone who has to deal with unpleasant and unconscious behavior. This is the Teacher's Mirror. Whether or not there is actually anything wrong with the way people have treated you, however, it can often be to your advantage to reflect it back to them in a way that makes them feel guilty about it.

The Hallucinatory Effect. Mirrors are tremendously deceptive, for they create a sense that you are looking at the real world. Actually, though, you are only staring at a piece of glass, which, as everyone knows, cannot show the world exactly as it is: Everything in a mirror is reversed. When Alice goes through the looking glass in Lewis Carroll's book, she enters a world that is back-to-front, and more than just visually.

The Hallucinatory Effect comes from creating a perfect copy of an object, a place, a person. This copy acts as a kind of dummy—people take it for the real thing, because it has the physical appearance of the real thing. This is the preeminent technique of con artists, who strategically mimic the real world to deceive you. It also has applications in any arena that requires camouflage. This is the Deceiver's Mirror.

OBSERVANCES OF MIRROR EFFECTS

Observance I

In February of 1815, the emperor Napoleon escaped from the island of Elba, where he had been imprisoned by the allied forces of Europe, and returned to Paris in a march that stirred the French nation, rallying troops and citizens of all classes to his side and chasing his successor, King Louis XVIII, off the throne. By March, however, having reestablished himself in power, he had to face the fact that France's situation had gravely changed. The country was devastated, he had no allies among the other European nations, and his most loyal and important ministers had deserted him or left the country. Only one man remained from the old regime—Joseph Fouché, his former minister of police.

Napoleon had relied on Fouché to do his dirty work throughout his previous reign, but he had never been able to figure his minister out. He kept a corps of agents to spy on all of his ministers, so that he would always have an edge on them, but no one had gotten anything on Fouché. If suspected of some misdeed, the minister would not get angry or take the accusation personally—he would submit, nod, smile, and change colors chameleonlike, adapting to the requirements of the moment. At first this had seemed somewhat pleasant and charming, but after a while it frustrated Napoleon, who felt outdone by this slippery man. At one time or another he had fired all of his most important ministers, including Talleyrand, but he never touched Fouché. And so, in 1815, back in power and in need of help, he felt he had no choice but to reappoint Fouché as his minister of police.

When you have come to grips and are striving together with the enemy, and you realize that you cannot advance, you “soak in” and become one with the enemy. You can win by applying a suitable technique while you are mutually entangled. ... You can win often decisively with the advantage of knowing how to “soak” into the enemy, whereas, were you to draw apart, you would lose the chance to win.

A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS, MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, JAPAN, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Several weeks into his new reign, Napoleon's spies told him they believed Fouché was in secret contact with ministers of foreign countries, including Metternich of Austria. Afraid that his most valuable minister was betraying him to his enemies, Napoleon had to find out the truth before it was too late. He could not confront Fouché directly—in person the man was as slippery as an eel. He needed hard proof.

This seemed to come in April, when the emperor's private police captured a Viennese gentleman who had come to Paris to pass information on to Fouché. Ordering the man brought before him, Napoleon threatened to shoot him then and there unless he confessed; the man broke down and admitted he had given Fouché a letter from Metternich, written in invisible ink, arranging for a secret meeting of special agents in Basel. Napoleon accordingly ordered one of his own agents to infiltrate this meeting. If Fouché was indeed planning to betray him, he would finally be caught red-handed and would hang.

Napoleon waited impatiently for the agent's return, but to his bewilderment the agent showed up days later reporting that he had heard nothing that would implicate Fouché in a conspiracy. In fact it seemed that the other agents present suspected Fouché of double-crossing *them*, as if he were working for Napoleon all along. Napoleon did not believe this for an instant—Fouché had somehow outwitted him again.

The following morning Fouché visited Napoleon, and remarked, "By the way, sire, I never told you that I had a letter from Metternich a few days ago; my mind was so full of things of greater moment. Besides, his emissary omitted to give me the powder needed to make the writing legible.... Here at length is the letter." Sure that Fouché was toying with him, Napoleon exploded, "You are a traitor, Fouché! I ought to have you hanged." He continued to harangue Fouché, but could not fire him without proof. Fouché only expressed amazement at the emperor's words, but inwardly he smiled, for all along he had been playing a mirroring game.

Interpretation

Fouché had known for years that Napoleon kept on top of those around him by spying on them day and night. The minister had survived this game by having his own spies spy on Napoleon's spies, thus neutralizing any action Napoleon might take against him. In the case of the meeting in Basel, he even turned the tables: Knowing about Napoleon's double agent, he set it up so that it would appear as if Fouché were a loyal double agent too.

Fouché gained power and flourished in a period of great tumult by mirroring those around him. During the French Revolution he was a radical Jacobin; after the Terror he became a moderate republican; and under Napoleon he became a committed imperialist whom Napoleon ennobled and made the duke of Otranto. If Napoleon took up the weapon of digging up dirt on people, Fouché made sure he had the dirt on Napoleon, as well as on everyone else. This also allowed him to predict the emperor's plans and desires, so that he could echo his boss's sentiments before he had even uttered them. Shielding his actions with a mirror strategy, Fouché could also plot offensive moves without being caught in the act.

THE FOX AND THE STORK

One day Mr. Fox decided to fork out And invite old Mrs. Stork out. The dinner wasn't elaborate—Being habitually mean, He didn't go in for haute cuisine—In fact it consisted of a shallow plate of thin gruel. Within a minute our joker had lapped his plate clean; Meanwhile his guest, fishing away with her beak, got not a morsel in it. To pay him back for this cruel practical joke, the stork invited the fox to dinner the following week. "I should be delighted," He replied; "When it comes to friends I never stand upon pride." Punctually on the day he ran to his hostess's house and at once began praising everything: "What taste! What chic! And the food—done just to a turn!" Then sat down with a hearty appetite (Foxes are always ready to eat) And savored the delicious smell of meat. It was minced meat and served—to serve him right!—In a long-necked, narrow-mouthed urn. The stork, easily stooping, enjoyed her fill With her long bill; His snout, though, being the wrong shape and size, he had to return to his den

empty-bellied, tail dragging, ears drooping, as red in the face as a fox who's been caught by a hen.

SELECTED FABLES, JEAN DE LA FONTAINE, 1621-1695

This is the power of mirroring those around you. First, you give people the feeling that you share their thoughts and goals. Second, if they suspect you have ulterior motives, the mirror shields you from them, preventing them from figuring out your strategy. Eventually this will infuriate and unsettle them. By playing the double, you steal their thunder, suck away their initiative, make them feel helpless. You also gain the ability to choose when and how to unsettle them—another avenue to power. And the mirror saves you mental energy: simply echoing the moves of others gives you the space you need to develop a strategy of your own.

Observance II

Early on in his career, the ambitious statesman and general Alcibiades of Athens (450-404 B.C.) fashioned a formidable weapon that became the source of his power. In every encounter with others, he would sense their moods and tastes, then carefully tailor his words and actions to mirror their inmost desires. He would seduce them with the idea that their values were superior to everyone else's, and that his goal was to model himself on them or help them realize their dreams. Few could resist his charm.

The first man to fall under his spell was the philosopher Socrates. Alcibiades represented the opposite of the Socratic ideal of simplicity and uprightness: He lived lavishly and was completely unprincipled. Whenever he met Socrates, however, he mirrored the older man's sobriety, eating simply, accompanying Socrates on long walks, and talking only of philosophy and virtue. Socrates was not completely fooled—he was not unaware of Alcibiades' other life. But that only made him vulnerable to a logic that flattered him: Only in my presence, he felt, does this man submit to a virtuous influence; only I have such power over him. This feeling intoxicated Socrates, who became Alcibiades' fervent admirer and supporter, one day even risking his own life to rescue the young man in battle.

The Athenians considered Alcibiades their greatest orator, for he had an uncanny ability to tune in to his audience's aspirations, and mirror their desires. He made his greatest speeches in support of the invasion of Sicily, which he thought would bring great wealth to Athens and limitless glory to himself. The speeches gave expression to young Athenians' thirst to conquer lands for themselves, rather than living off the victories of their ancestors. But he also tailored his words to reflect older men's nostalgia for the glory years when Athens led the Greeks against Persia, and then went on to create an empire. All Athens now dreamed of conquering Sicily; Alcibiades' plan was approved, and he was made the expedition's commander.

THE PURLOINED LETTER

When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.

EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1809-1849

While Alcibiades was leading the invasion of Sicily, however, certain Athenians fabricated charges against him of profaning sacred statues. He knew his enemies would have him executed if he returned home, so at the last minute he deserted the Athenian fleet and defected to Athens's bitter enemy, Sparta. The Spartans welcomed this great man to their side, but they knew his reputation and were wary of him. Alcibiades loved luxury; the Spartans were a warrior people who worshipped austerity, and they were afraid he would corrupt their youth. But much to their relief, the Alcibiades who arrived in Sparta was not at all what they expected: He wore his hair untrimmed (as they did), took cold baths, ate coarse bread and black broth, and wore simple clothes. To the Spartans this signified that he had come to see their way of life as superior to the Athenian; greater than they were, he had chosen to be a Spartan rather than being born one, and should thus be honored above all others. They fell under his spell and gave him great powers. Unfortunately Alcibiades rarely knew how to rein in his charm—he managed to seduce the king of Sparta's wife and make her pregnant. When this became public he once more had to flee for his life.

This time Alcibiades defected to Persia, where he suddenly went from Spartan simplicity to embracing the lavish Persian lifestyle down to the last detail. It was of course immensely flattering to the Persians to see a Greek of Alcibiades' stature prefer their culture over his own, and they showered him with honors, land, and power. Once seduced by the mirror, they failed to notice that behind this shield Alcibiades was playing a double game, secretly helping the Athenians in their war with Sparta and thus re-ingratiating himself with the city to which he desperately wanted to return, and which welcomed him back with open arms in 408 B.C.

Interpretation

Early in his political career, Alcibiades made a discovery that changed his whole approach to power: He had a colorful and forceful personality, but when he argued his ideas strongly with other people he would win over a few while at the same time alienating many more. The secret to gaining ascendancy over large numbers, he came to believe, was not to impose his colors but to absorb the colors of those around him, like a chameleon. Once people fell for the trick, the deceptions he went on to practice would be invisible to them.

Understand: Everyone is wrapped up in their own narcissistic shell. When you try to impose your own ego on them, a wall goes up, resistance is increased. By mirroring them, however, you seduce them into a kind of narcissistic rapture: They are gazing at a double of their own soul. This double is actually manufactured in its entirety by you. Once you have used the mirror to seduce them, you have great power over them.

It is worth noting, however, the dangers in the promiscuous use of the mirror. In Alcibiades' presence people felt larger, as if their egos had been doubled. But once he left, they felt empty and diminished, and when they saw him mirroring completely different people as totally as he had mirrored them, they felt not just diminished but betrayed. Alcibiades' overuse of the Mirror Effect made whole peoples feel used, so that he constantly had to flee from one place to another. Indeed Alcibiades so angered the Spartans that they finally had him murdered. He had gone too far. The Seducer's Mirror must be used with caution and discrimination.

LORENZO DE' MEDICI SEDUCES THE POPE

Lorenzo [de' Medici] lost no opportunity of increasing the respect which Pope Innocent now felt for him and of gaining his friendship, if possible his affection. He took the trouble to discover the Pope's tastes and indulged them accordingly. He sent him... casks of his favourite wine.... He sent him courteous, flattering letters in which he assured him, when the Pope was ill, that he felt his sufferings as though they were his own, in which he encouraged him with such fortifying statements as "a Pope is what he wills

to be,” and in which, as though incidentally, he included his views on the proper course of papal policies. Innocent was gratified by Lorenzo’s attentions and convinced by his arguments.... So completely, indeed, did he come to share his opinions that, as the disgruntled Ferrarese ambassador put it, “the Pope sleeps with the eyes of the Magnificent Lorenzo.”

THE HOUSE OF MEDICI: ITS RISE AND FALL, CHRISTOPHER HIBBERT, 1980

Observance III

In 1652 the recently widowed Baroness Mancini moved her family from Rome to Paris, where she could count on the influence and protection of her brother Cardinal Mazarin, the French prime minister. Of the baroness's five daughters, four dazzled the court with their beauty and high spirits. These infamously charming nieces of Cardinal Mazarin became known as the Mazarinettes, and soon found themselves invited to all the most important court functions.

One daughter, Marie Mancini, did not share this good fortune, for she lacked the beauty and grace of her sisters—who, along with her mother and even Cardinal Mazarin, eventually came to dislike her, for they felt she spoiled the family image. They tried to persuade her to enter a convent, where she would be less of an embarrassment, but she refused. Instead she applied herself to her studies, learning Latin and Greek, perfecting her French, and practicing her musical skills. On the rare occasions when the family would let her attend court affairs, she trained herself to be an artful listener, sizing people up for their weaknesses and hidden desires. And when she finally met the future King Louis XIV, in 1657 (Louis was seventeen years old, Marie eighteen), she decided that to spite her family and uncle, she would find a way to make this young man fall in love with her.

This was a seemingly impossible task for such a plain-looking girl, but Marie studied the future king closely. She noticed that her sisters' frivolity did not please him, and she sensed that he loathed the scheming and petty politicking that went on all around him. She saw that he had a romantic nature—he read adventure novels, insisted on marching at the head of his armies, and had high ideals and a passion for glory. The court did not feed these fantasies of his; it was a banal, superficial world that bored him.

The key to Louis's heart, Marie saw, would be to construct a mirror reflecting his fantasies and his youthful yearnings for glory and romance. To begin with she immersed herself in the romantic novels, poems, and plays that she knew the young king read voraciously. When Louis began to engage her in conversation, to his delight she would talk of the things that stirred his soul—not this fashion or that piece of gossip, but rather courtly

love, the deeds of great knights, the nobility of past kings and heroes. She fed his thirst for glory by creating an image of an august, superior king whom he could aspire to become. She stirred his imagination.

As the future Sun King spent more and more time in Marie's presence, it eventually became clear that he had fallen in love with the least likely young woman of the court. To the horror of her sisters and mother, he showered Marie Mancini with attention. He brought her along on his military campaigns, and made a show of stationing her where she could watch as he marched into battle. He even promised Marie that he would marry her and make her queen.

Wittgenstein had an extraordinary gift for divining the thoughts of the person with whom he was engaged in discussion. While the other struggled to put his thought into words, Wittgenstein would perceive what it was and state it for him. This power of his, which sometimes seemed uncanny, was made possible, I am sure, by his own prolonged and continuous researches.

LUDWIG WITTEGENSTEIN: A MEMOIR. NORMAN MALCOLM, 1958

The doctor should be opaque to his patients, and like a mirror, should show them nothing but what is shown to him.

SIGMUND FREUD, 1856-1939

Mazarin, however, would never allow the king to marry his niece, a woman who could bring France no diplomatic or royal alliances. Louis had to marry a princess of Spain or Austria. In 1658 Louis succumbed to the pressure and agreed to break off the first romantic involvement of his life. He did so with much regret, and at the end of his life he acknowledged that he never loved anyone as much as Marie Mancini.

Interpretation

Marie Mancini played the seducer's game to perfection. First, she took a step back, to study her prey. Seduction often fails to get past the first step because it is too aggressive; the first move must always be a retreat. By studying the king from a distance Marie saw what distinguished him from others—his high ideals, romantic nature, and snobbish disdain for petty politics. Marie's next step was to make a mirror for these hidden yearnings on Louis's part, letting him glimpse what he himself could be—a godlike king!

This mirror had several functions: Satisfying Louis's ego by giving him a double to look at, it also focused on him so exclusively as to give him the feeling that Marie existed for him alone. Surrounded by a pack of scheming courtiers who only had their own self-interest at heart, he could not fail to be touched by this devotional focus. Finally Marie's mirror set up an ideal for him to live up to: the noble knight of the medieval court. To a soul both romantic and ambitious, nothing could be more intoxicating than to have someone hold up an idealized reflection of him. In effect it was Marie Mancini who created the image of the Sun King—indeed Louis later admitted the enormous part she had played in fashioning his radiant self-image.

This is the power of the Seducer's Mirror: By doubling the tastes and ideals of the target, it shows your attention to his or her psychology, an attention more charming than any aggressive pursuit. Find out what sets the other person apart, then hold up the mirror that will reflect it and bring it out of them. Feed their fantasies of power and greatness by reflecting their ideals, and they will succumb.

Observance IV

In 1538, with the death of his mother, Helena, the eight-year-old future czar Ivan IV (or Ivan the Terrible) of Russia became an orphan. For the next five years he watched as the princely class, the boyars, terrorized the country. Now and then, to mock the young Ivan, they would make him wear a crown and scepter and place him on the throne. When the little boy's feet dangled over the edge of the chair, they would laugh and lift him off it, handing him from man to man in the air, making him feel his helplessness compared to them.

When Ivan was thirteen, he boldly murdered the boyar leader and ascended to the throne. For the next few decades he struggled to subdue the boyars' power, but they continued to defy him. By 1575 his efforts to transform Russia and defeat its enemies had exhausted him. Meanwhile, his subjects were complaining bitterly about his endless wars, his secret police, the unvanquished and oppressive boyars. His own ministers began to question his moves. Finally he had had enough. In 1564 he had temporarily abandoned the throne, forcing his subjects to call him back to power. Now he took the strategy a step further, and abdicated.

To take his place Ivan elevated a general of his, Simeon Bekbulatovich, to the throne. But although Simeon had recently converted to Christianity, he was by birth a Tartar, and his enthronement was an insult to Ivan's subjects, since Russians looked down on the Tartars as inferiors and infidels. Yet Ivan ordered that all Russians, including the boyars, pledge obedience to their new ruler. And while Simeon moved into the Kremlin, Ivan lived in a humble house on Moscow's outskirts, from which he would sometimes visit the palace, bow before the throne, sit among the other boyars, and humbly petition Simeon for favors.

Over time it became clear that Simeon was a kind of king's double. He dressed like Ivan, and acted like Ivan, but he had no real power, since no one would really obey him. The boyars at the court who were old enough to remember taunting Ivan when he was a boy, by placing him on the throne, saw the connection: They had made Ivan feel like a weak pretender, so now he mirrored them by placing a weak pretender of his own on the throne.

For two long years Ivan held the mirror of Simeon up to the Russian people. The mirror said: Your whining and disobedience have made me a czar with no real power, so I will reflect back to you a czar with no real power. You have treated me disrespectfully, so I will do the same to you, making Russia the laughingstock of the world. In 1577, in the name of the Russian people, the chastised boyars once again begged Ivan to return to the throne, which he did. He lived as czar until his death, in 1584, and the conspiracies, complaining, and second-guessing disappeared along with Simeon.

Interpretation

In 1564, after threatening to abdicate, Ivan had been granted absolute powers. But these powers had slowly been chipped away as every sector of society—the boyars, the church, the government—vied for more control. Foreign wars had exhausted the country, internal bickering had increased, and Ivan's attempts to respond had been met with scorn. Russia had turned into a kind of boisterous classroom in which the pupils laughed openly at the teacher. If he raised his voice or complained, he only met more resistance. He had to teach them a lesson, give them a taste of their own medicine. Simeon Bekbulatovich was the mirror he used to do so.

After two years in which the throne had been an object of ridicule and disgust, the Russian people learned their lesson. They wanted their czar back, conceding to him all the dignity and respect that the position should always have commanded. For the rest of his reign, Russia and Ivan got along fine.

Understand: People are locked in their own experiences. When you whine about some insensitivity on their part, they may seem to understand, but inwardly they are untouched and even more resistant. The goal of power is always to lower people's resistance to you. For this you need tricks, and one trick is to teach them a lesson.

Instead of haranguing people verbally, then, create a kind of mirror of their behavior. In doing so you leave them two choices: They can ignore you, or they can start to think about themselves. And even if they ignore you, you will have planted a seed in their unconscious that will eventually take root. When you mirror their behavior, incidentally, do not be afraid to add a touch of caricature and exaggeration, as Ivan did by enthroning a Tartar—it is the little spice in the soup that will open their eyes and make them see the ridiculousness in their own actions.

Observance V

Dr. Milton H. Erickson, a pioneer in strategic psychotherapy, would often educate his patients powerfully but indirectly by creating a kind of mirror effect. Constructing an analogy to make patients see the truth on their own, he would bypass their resistance to change. When Dr. Erickson treated married couples complaining of sexual problems, for instance, he often found that psychotherapy's tradition of direct confrontation and problem-airing only heightened the spouses' resistance and sharpened their differences. Instead, he would draw a husband and wife out on other topics, often banal ones, trying to find an analogy for the sexual conflict.

In one couple's first session, the pair were discussing their eating habits, especially at dinner. The wife preferred the leisurely approach—a drink before the meal, some appetizers, and then a small main course, all at a slow, civilized pace. This frustrated the husband—he wanted to get dinner over quickly and to dig right into the main course, the bigger the better. As the conversation continued, the couple began to catch glimpses of an analogy to their problems in bed. The moment they made this connection, however, Dr. Erickson would change the subject, carefully avoiding a discussion of the real problem.

The couple thought Erickson was just getting to know them and would deal with the problem directly the next time he saw them. But at the end of this first session, Dr. Erickson directed them to arrange a dinner a few nights away that would combine each person's desire: The wife would get the slow meal, including time spent bonding, and the husband would get the big dishes he wanted to eat. Without realizing they were acting under the doctor's gentle guidance, the couple would walk into a mirror of their problem, and in the mirror they would solve their problems themselves, ending the evening just as the doctor had hoped—by mirroring the improved dinner dynamics in bed.

In dealing with more severe problems, such as the schizophrenic's mirror fantasy world of his or her own construction, Dr. Erickson would always try to enter the mirror and work within it. He once treated a hospital inmate who believed he was Jesus Christ—draping sheets around his body, talking in vague parables, and bombarding staff and patients with endless Christian

proselytizing. No therapy or drugs seemed to work, until one day Dr. Erickson went up to the young man and said, "I understand you have had experience as a carpenter." Being Christ, the patient had to say that he had had such experience, and Erickson immediately put him to work building bookcases and other useful items, allowing him to wear his Jesus garb. Over the next weeks, as the patient worked on these projects, his mind became less occupied with Jesus fantasies and more focused on his labor. As the carpentry work took precedence, a psychic shift took effect: The religious fantasies remained, but faded comfortably into the background, allowing the man to function in society.

Interpretation

Communication depends on metaphors and symbols, which are the basis of language itself. A metaphor is a kind of mirror to the concrete and real, which it often expresses more clearly and deeply than a literal description does. When you are dealing with the intractable willpower of other people, direct communication often only heightens their resistance.

This happens most clearly when you complain about people's behavior, particularly in sensitive areas such as their lovemaking. You will effect a far more lasting change if, like Dr. Erickson, you construct an analogy, a symbolic mirror of the situation, and guide the other through it. As Christ himself understood, talking in parables is often the best way to teach a lesson, for it allows people to realize the truth on their own.

When dealing with people who are lost in the reflections of fantasy worlds (including a host of people who do not live in mental hospitals), never try to push them into reality by shattering their mirrors. Instead, enter their world and operate inside it, under their rules, gently guiding them out of the hall of mirrors they have entered.

Observance VI

The great sixteenth-century Japanese tea master Takeno Sho-o once passed by a house and noticed a young man watering flowers near his front gate. Two things caught Sho-o's attention—first, the graceful way the man performed his task; and, second, the stunningly beautiful rose of Sharon blossoms that bloomed in the garden. He stopped and introduced himself to the man, whose name was Sen no Rikyu. Sho-o wanted to stay, but he had a prior engagement and had to hurry off. Before he left, however, Rikyu invited him to take tea with him the following morning. Sho-o happily accepted.

When Sho-o opened the garden gate the next day, he was horrified to see that not a single flower remained. More than anything else, he had come to see the rose of Sharon blossoms that he had not had the time to appreciate the day before; now, disappointed, he started to leave, but at the gate he stopped himself, and decided to enter Sen no Rikyu's tea room. Immediately inside, he stopped in his tracks and gazed in astonishment: Before him a vase hung from the ceiling, and in the vase stood a single rose of Sharon blossom, the most beautiful in the garden. Somehow Sen no Rikyu had read his guest's thoughts, and, with this one eloquent gesture, had demonstrated that this day guest and host would be in perfect harmony.

Sen no Rikyu went on to become the most famous tea master of all, and his trademark was this uncanny ability to harmonize himself with his guests' thoughts and to think one step ahead, enchanting them by adapting to their taste.

One day Rikyu was invited to tea by Yamashina Hechigwan, an admirer of the tea ceremony but also a man with a vivid sense of humor. When Rikyu arrived at Hechigwan's home, he found the garden gate shut, so he opened it to look for the host. On the other side of the gate he saw that someone had first dug a ditch, then carefully covered it over with canvas and earth. Realizing that Hechigwan had planned a practical joke, he obligingly walked right into the ditch, muddying his clothes in the process.

Apparently horrified, Hechigwan came running out, and hurried Rikyu to a bath that for some inexplicable reason stood already prepared. After bathing, Rikyu joined Hechigwan in the tea ceremony, which both enjoyed

immensely, sharing a laugh about the accident. Later Sen no Rikyu explained to a friend that he had heard about Hechigwan's practical joke beforehand, "But since it should always be one's aim to conform to the wishes of one's host, I fell into the hole knowingly and thus assured the success of the meeting. Tea is by no means mere obsequiousness, but there is no tea where the host and guest are not in harmony with one another." Hechigwan's vision of the dignified Sen no Rikyu at the bottom of a ditch had pleased him endlessly, but Rikyu had gained a pleasure of his own in complying with his host's wish and watching him amuse himself in this way.

Interpretation

Sen no Rikyu was no magician or seer—he watched those around him acutely, plumbing the subtle gestures that revealed a hidden desire, then producing that desire’s image. Although Sho-o never spoke of being enchanted by the rose of Sharon blossoms, Rikyu read it in his eyes. If mirroring a person’s desires meant falling into a ditch, so be it. Rikyu’s power resided in his skillful use of the Courtier’s Mirror, which gave him the appearance of an unusual ability to see into other people.

Learn to manipulate the Courtier’s Mirror, for it will bring you great power. Study people’s eyes, follow their gestures—surer barometers of pain and pleasure than any spoken word. Notice and remember the details—the clothing, the choice of friends, the daily habits, the tossed-out remarks—that reveal hidden and rarely indulged desires. Soak it all in, find out what lies under the surface, then make yourself the mirror of their unspoken selves. That is the key to this power: The other person has not asked for your consideration, has not mentioned his pleasure in the rose of Sharon, and when you reflect it back to him his pleasure is heightened because it is unasked for. Remember: The wordless communication, the indirect compliment, contains the most power. No one can resist the enchantment of the Courtier’s Mirror.

Observance VII

Yellow Kid Weil, con artist extraordinaire, used the Deceiver's Mirror in his most brilliant cons. Most audacious of all was his re-creation of a bank in Muncie, Indiana. When Weil read one day that the Merchants Bank in Muncie had moved, he saw an opportunity he could not pass up.

Weil rented out the original Merchants building, which still contained bank furniture, complete with teller windows. He bought money bags, stenciled a bank's invented name on them, filled them with steel washers, and arrayed them impressively behind the teller windows, along with bundles of boodle—real bills hiding newspaper cut to size. For his bank's staff and customers Weil hired gamblers, bookies, girls from local bawdy houses, and other assorted confederates. He even had a local thug pose as a bank dick.

Claiming to be the broker for a certificate investment the bank was offering, Weil would fish the waters and hook the proper wealthy sucker. He would bring this man to the bank and ask to see the president. An "officer" of the bank would tell them that they had to wait, which only heightened the realism of the con—one always has to wait to see the bank president. And as they waited the bank would bustle with banklike activity, as call girls and bookies in disguise floated in and out, making deposits and withdrawals and tipping their hats to the phony bank dick. Lulled by this perfect copy of reality, the sucker would deposit \$50,000 into the fake bank without a worry in the world.

Over the years Weil did the same thing with a deserted yacht club, an abandoned brokerage office, a relocated real estate office, and a completely realistic gambling club.

Interpretation

The mirroring of reality offers immense deceptive powers. The right uniform, the perfect accent, the proper props—the deception cannot be deciphered because it is enmeshed in a simulation of reality. People have an intense desire and need to believe, and their first instinct is to trust a well-constructed facade, to mistake it for reality. After all, we cannot go around doubting the reality of everything we see—that would be too exhausting. We habitually accept appearances, and this is a credulity you can use.

In this particular game it is the first moment that counts the most. If your suckers' suspicions are not raised by their first glance at the mirror's reflection, they will stay suppressed. Once they enter your hall of mirrors, they will be unable to distinguish the real from the fake, and it will become easier and easier to deceive them. Remember: Study the world's surfaces and learn to mirror them in your habits, your manner, your clothes. Like a carnivorous plant, to unsuspecting insects you will look like all the other plants in the field.

Authority: The task of a military operation is to accord deceptively with the intentions of the enemy ... get to what they want first, subtly anticipate them. Maintain discipline and adapt to the enemy.... Thus, at first you are like a maiden, so the enemy opens his door; then you are like a rabbit on the loose, so the enemy cannot keep you out. (Sun-tzu, fourth century B.C.)

Image: The

Shield of Perseus. It is polished into a reflecting mirror. Medusa cannot see you, only her own hideousness reflected back at her. Behind such a mirror you can deceive, mock, and infuriate. With one blow you sever Medusa's unsuspecting head.

A WARNING: BEWARE OF MIRRORED SITUATIONS

Mirrors contain great power but also dangerous reefs, including the mirrored situation—a situation that seems to reflect or closely resemble a previous one, mostly in style and surface appearance. You can often back into such a situation without fully understanding it, while those around you understand it quite well, and compare it and you to whatever happened before. Most often you suffer by the comparison, seeming either weaker than the previous occupant of your position or else tainted by any unpleasant associations that person has left behind.

In 1864 the composer Richard Wagner moved to Munich at the behest of Ludwig II, known variously as the Swan King or the Mad King of Bavaria. Ludwig was Wagner's biggest fan and most generous patron. The strength of his support turned Wagner's head—once established in Munich under the king's protection, he would be able to say and do whatever he wanted.

Wagner moved into a lavish house, which the king eventually bought for him. This house was but a stone's throw from the former home of Lola Montez, the notorious courtesan who had plunged Ludwig II's grandfather into a crisis that had forced him to abdicate. Warned that he could be infected by this association, Wagner only scoffed—"I am no Lola Montez," he said. Soon enough, however, the citizens of Munich began to resent the favors and money showered on Wagner, and dubbed him "the second Lola," or "Lolotte." He unconsciously began to tread in Lola's footsteps—spending money extravagantly, meddling in matters beyond music, even dabbling in politics and advising the king on cabinet appointments. Meanwhile Ludwig's affection for Wagner seemed intense and undignified for a king—just like his grandfather's love for Lola Montez.

Eventually Ludwig's ministers wrote him a letter: "Your Majesty now stands at a fateful parting of the ways: you have to choose between the love and respect of your faithful people and the 'friendship' of Richard Wagner." In December of 1865, Ludwig politely asked his friend to leave and never return. Wagner had inadvertently placed himself in Lola Montez's reflection. Once there, everything he did reminded the stolid Bavarians of that dread woman, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Avoid such association-effects like the plague. In a mirrored situation you have little or no control over the reflections and recollections that will be connected to you, and any situation beyond your control is dangerous. Even if the person or event has positive associations, you will suffer from not being able to live up to them, since the past generally appears greater than the present. If you ever notice people associating you with some past event or person, do everything you can to separate yourself from that memory and to shatter the reflection.