

The Tao of Strategy

Week 2: Introduction to Sunzi's Bingfa

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Part I

Prologue

Strategic Quotes: Objectives, Strategy, Feedback, Action

What do you want to achieve or avoid?

The answers to this question are objectives.

How will you go about achieving your desired results?

The answer to this you can call strategy.

William E Rothschild

However beautiful the strategy,
you should occasionally look at the results.

Winston Churchill

Never mistake motion for action.

Ernest Hemingway

Domains of Strategy



- War
- Politics
- Medicine
- Business
- Education
- Parenting
- Therapy
- Sports
- Games

Related Constructs



Eisenhower just before D-Day

- Command
- Management
- Leadership
- Creativity
- Problem Solving
- Planning
- Decision Making
- Wisdom

Part II

Historical Context

Shang Dynasty



Shang Dynasty (1700–1027 BCE)



Shang oracle bones

Western Zhou Dynasty



Western Zhou (1027–771 BCE)



Western Zhou Vase

Eastern Zhou: Spring and Autumn Period



Eastern Zhou (770–476 BCE)



Bronze tiger tally

Eastern Zhou: Warring States Period



Warring States (475–221 BCE)



Warring States armor

Eastern Zhou: Warring States Period



Two-headed earth spirit
(bronze)



Warring States chariot

Qin Shi Huang



Qin Shi Huang
King of Qin (247–221 BCE)
Emperor of China (221–210 BCE)

始皇帝

“First Emperor”
(Small Seal Script)

The First and Last Emperors



Would be assassins
(from *Hero*)



The Forbidden Palace
(from *The Last Emperor*)

The First Emperor's Achievements



Terra cotta army

- Unified China
- Replaced Feudal system with an Imperial system
- First Emperor of China
- Promoted Legalism (variant of Confucianism)
- Built the Forbidden Palace
- Started the Great Wall
- Built a magnificent tomb (terra cotta army)

Qin Dynasty

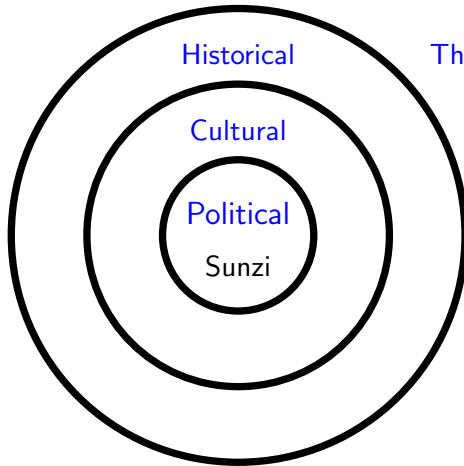


Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE)



Qin soldiers

Sunzi: Multiple Contexts



The Great Transformation

Taoist Philosophy

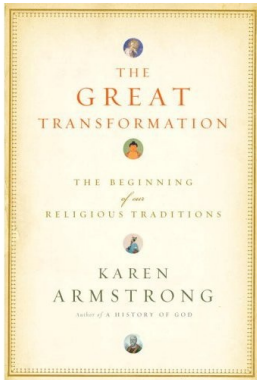
Warring States Period

The First Axial Age

... we can find inspiration in the period ... called the Axial Age because it was pivotal to the spiritual development of humanity. From about 900 to 200 BCE, in four distinct regions, the great world traditions that have continued to nourish humanity came into being: Confucianism and Daoism in China; Hinduism and Buddhism in India; monotheism in Israel; and philosophical rationalism in Greece ... During this period of intense creativity, spiritual and philosophical geniuses pioneered an entirely new kind of human experience ... The Axial Age was one of the most seminal periods of intellectual, psychological, philosophical, and religious change in recorded history; there would be nothing comparable until the Great Western Transformation, which created our own scientific and technological modernity.

Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation*

The Great Transformation (800–300 BCE)



Karen Armstrong's
The Great Transformation

- Buddhism
- Confucianism
- Daoism
- Classical Greeks
- Hinduism
- Judaism

The School of Athens



Raphael's *School of Athens*

Sunzi's *Bing Fa*

孫子兵法

Chinese characters
Romanized as *bing fa*



Bingfa on bamboo strips

Bīng (strategy)



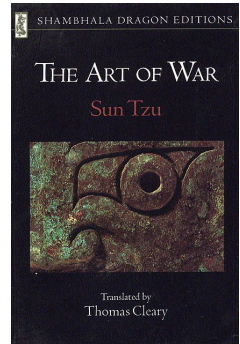
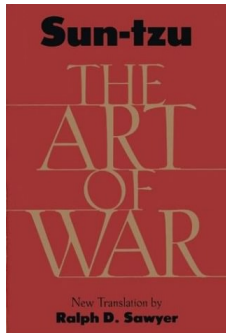
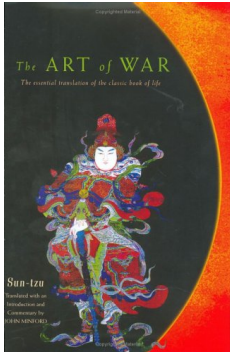
This is the Chinese word *bīng*, which means “soldiers, a force, an army, weapons, arms, military, warlike”. It is a picture of two hands holding a battle axe. It is the first of the characters in the title for Sunzi’s *Bing Fa*. Sunzi’s text is traditionally translated as *The Art of War*, and this character is the “war” in that title. Deng Ming-Dao interprets *bīng* as “strategy”.

Fá (means)



This is the Chinese compound word *fá*, which means “means, laws, rules, model, arts”. On the left is the sign for “water”, the rest of the word combines the signs for “deer” with the verb “go”. A herd of deer followed its leader to escape from danger. The leader would jump across ravines and even over water to escape (water symbolized danger to the ancient Chinese). The other deer would see the leader’s techniques for escape — his *fá* — and therefore find safety. “To go through life well is to have means at one’s disposal — to have means is to know the laws of life.”

Numerous Translations



Part III

The Five Fundamentals

A Grave Affair

Master Sun said:

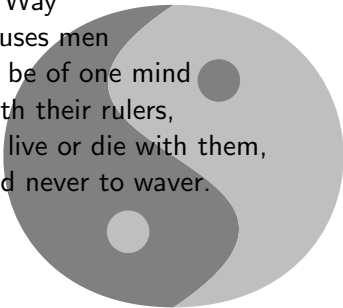
War is
A grave affair of state;
It is a place
Of life and death,
A road
To survival and extinction,
A matter
To be pondered carefully.

The Five Fundamentals

There are Five Fundamentals
For this deliberation,
For the making of comparisons
And the assessing of conditions:
The Way,
Heaven,
Earth,
Command,
Discipline.

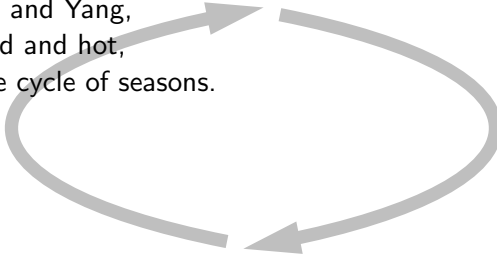
The Way

The Way
Causes men
To be of one mind
With their rulers,
To live or die with them,
And never to waver.



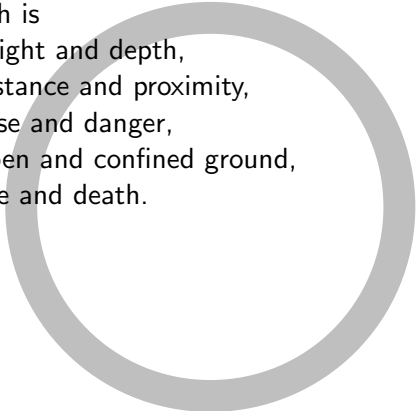
Heaven

Heaven is
Yin and Yang,
Cold and hot,
The cycle of seasons.



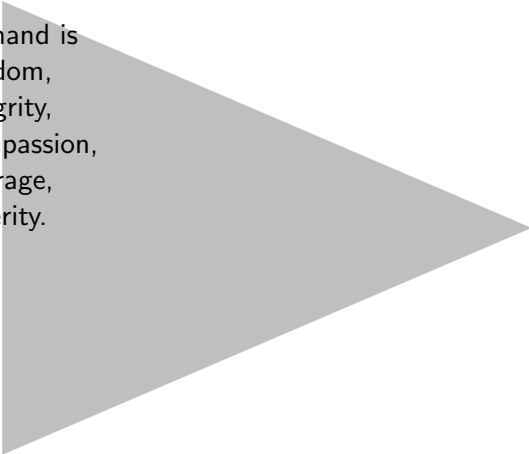
Earth

Earth is
Height and depth,
Distance and proximity,
Ease and danger,
Open and confined ground,
Life and death.



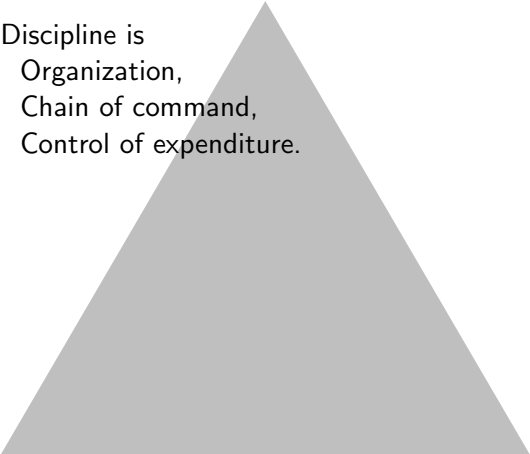
Command

Command is
Wisdom,
Integrity,
Compassion,
Courage,
Severity.



Discipline

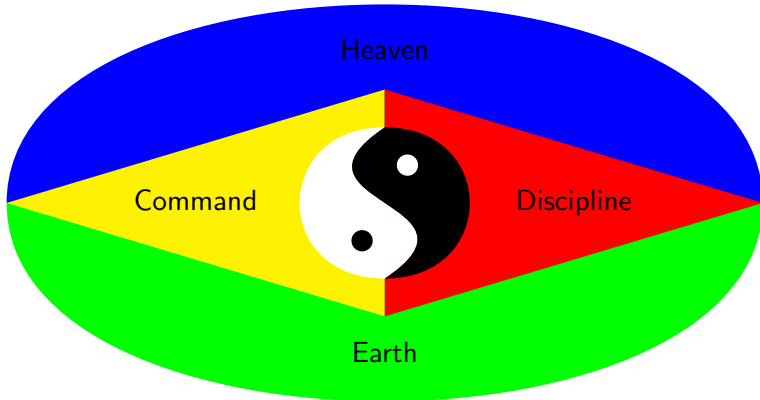
Discipline is
Organization,
Chain of command,
Control of expenditure.



Winning and Losing

Of these Five Fundamentals,
He who grasps them
Wins;
He who fails to grasp them
Loses.

The Eye of the Sun



The Way

- Stephen M. R. Covey. *The speed of trust: The one thing that changes everything*. Free Press, New York, 2006
- Anthon Klapwijk and Paul A. M. Van Lange. Promoting cooperation and trust in 'noisy' situations: The power of generosity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(1):83–103, 2009
- Jonathan Shay. Trust: Touchstone for a practical military ethos. In Donald Vandergriff, editor, *Spirit, blood, and treasure: The American cost of battle in the 21st century*, pages 3–20. Presidio Press, Novato, CA, 2001

Heaven

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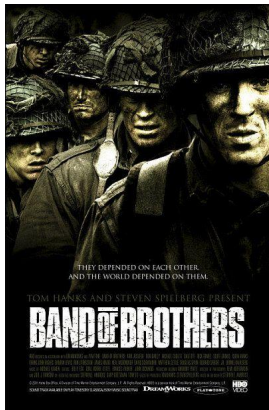
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Command

- Evan H. Offstein and Ronald L. Dufresne. Building strong ethics and promoting positive character development: The influence of HRM at the United States Military Academy at West Point. *Human Resource Management*, 46(1):95–114, 2007
- Edgar F. Puryear. *American generalship: Character is everything: The art of command*. Presidio Press, New York, 2001
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Band of Brothers, Episode 1: Leadership Situations



- “Sobel Hates Us” (Running up Currahee)
- “Ambush” (Tactical training in North Carolina)
- “Sobel’s Late” (Cutting the farmer’s fence)
- “Court Martial”
- “Shootin’ Craps” (Teaching the new Lieutenant)
- “Good Luck” (Just before boarding the C-47)

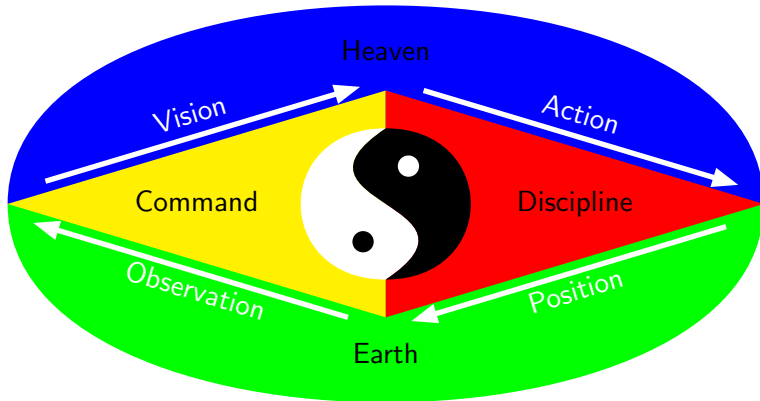
Discipline

- Angela L. Duckworth and Martin E. P. Seligman. Self-discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. *Psychological Science*, 16 (12):939–944, December 2005
- Malcolm Gladwell. *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*. Little, Brown, New York, 2000
- Steve W. J. Kozlowski and Daniel R. Ilgen. Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 7(3):77–124, 2006

Part IV

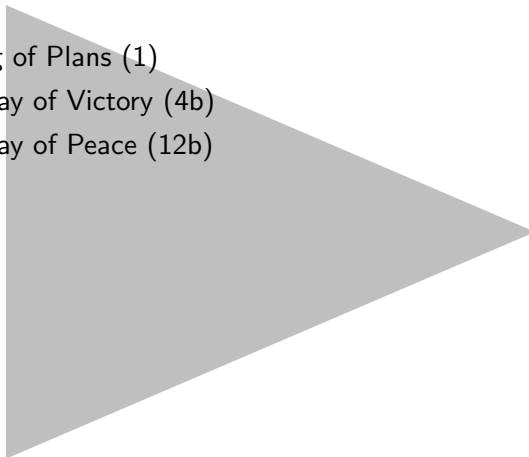
The Cycle of Command

The Cycle of Command & The Four Skills

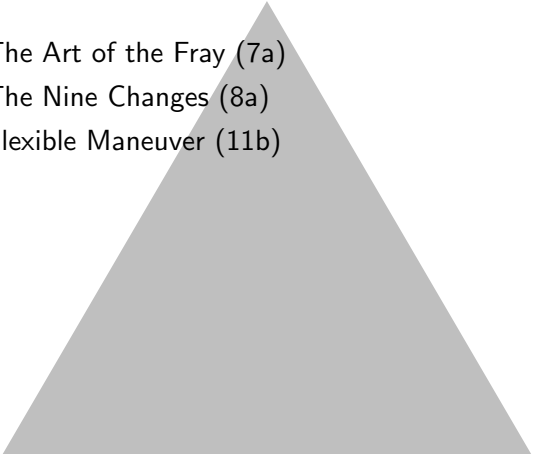


Vision

- Making of Plans (1)
- The Way of Victory (4b)
- The Way of Peace (12b)

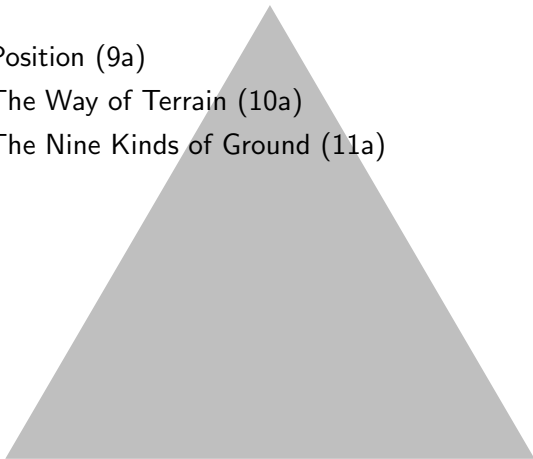


Action

- 
- The Art of the Fray (7a)
 - The Nine Changes (8a)
 - Flexible Maneuver (11b)

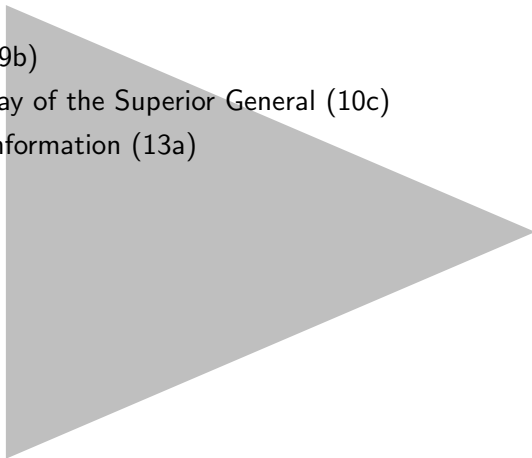
Position

- Position (9a)
- The Way of Terrain (10a)
- The Nine Kinds of Ground (11a)



Observation

- Signs (9b)
- The Way of the Superior General (10c)
- Prior Information (13a)



Vision

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- C. F. Kurtz and D. J. Snowden. The new dynamics of strategy: Sense-making in a complex and complicated world. *IBM Systems Journal*, 42(3):462–483, 2003
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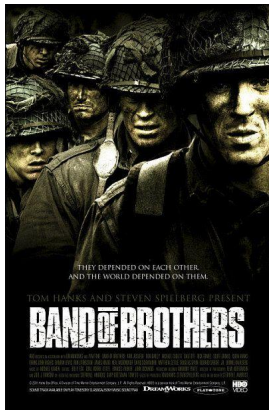
Action

- Heinz von Foerster and Karl H. Müller. Action without utility: An immodest proposal for the cognitive foundations of behavior. *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, 10(3–4):27–50, 2003
- Esther Thelen and Linda B. Smith. *A dynamic systems approach to the development of cognition and action*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1995
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Position

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- François Jullien and Janet Lloyd (trans.). *The propensity of things: Toward a history of efficacy in China*. Zone Books, New York, 1999
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Band of Brothers, Episode 1: Leadership Situations



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Observation

- Harry Heft. *Ecological Psychology in Context: James Gibson, Roger Barker, and the Legacy of William James*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, 2005
- Edward S. Reed. *The Necessity of Experience*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1996a
- Edward S. Reed. *Encountering the World: Toward an Ecological Psychology*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 1996b

The Five Steps

In War,
There are Five Steps:

Measurement,
Estimation,
Calculation,
Comparison,
Victory.

The Five Steps

Earth determines
Measurement;
Measurement determines
Estimation;
Estimation determines
Calculation;
Calculation determines
Comparison;
Comparison determines
Victory.

Potential Energy (*shi*)

A victorious army
Is like a pound weight
In the scale against
A grain;

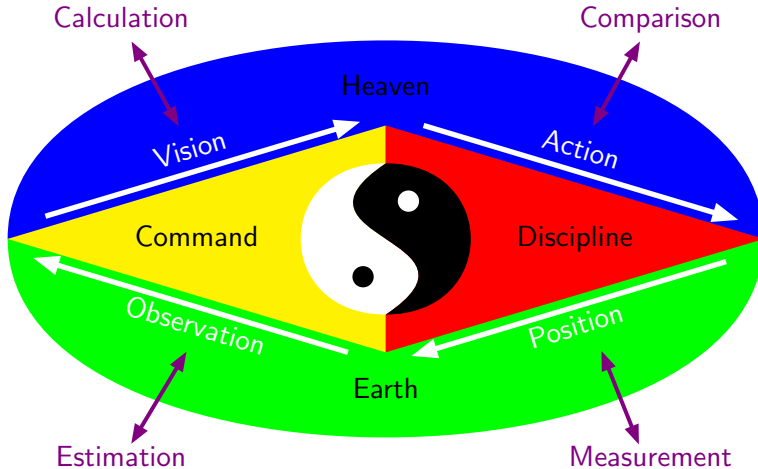
A defeated army
Is like a grain
In the scale against
A pound weight.

Potential Energy (*shi*)

A victorious army
Is like
Pent-up water
Crashing
A thousand fathoms
Into a gorge.

This is all
A matter of
Forms and
Dispositions.

The Cycle of Command & The Five Steps



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