

The University of Western Ontario
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Philosophy 154E (001)

Some selections from Sun Tzu's *Art of War* (the Denma Translation)

From Chp. 2 - Doing Battle

Sun Tzu Said:

In sum, the method of employing the military -

With one thousand fast chariots, one thousand leather-covered chariots and one hundred thousand troops to be provisioned over one thousand *li* - then expenses of outer and inner, stipends of foreign advisers, materials for glue and lacquer, and contributions for chariots and armor are one thousand gold pieces a day. Only after this are one hundred thousand soldiers raised.

...

Thus in the military one has heard of foolish speed but has not observed skillful prolonging. And there has never been a military prolonging that has brought advantage to the state.

And the one who does not thoroughly know the harm from employing the military cannot thoroughly know the advantage from employing the military.

From Chp. 3 - Strategy of Attack

Sun Tzu said:

In sum, the method of employing the military -

Taking a state whole is superior. Destroying it is inferior to this.

Taking an army whole is superior. Destroying it is inferior to this.

Taking a battalion whole is superior. Destroying it is inferior to this.

Taking a company whole is superior. Destroying it is inferior to this.

Taking a squad whole is superior. Destroying it is inferior to this.

Therefore, one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the most skillful. Subduing the other's military without battle is the most skillful.

And so the superior military cuts down strategy. Its inferior cuts down alliances. Its inferior cuts down the military. The worst attacks walled cities.

...

And so one skilled at employing the military subdues the other's military but does not do battle, uproots the other's walled city but does not attack, destroys the other's state but does not prolong. One must take it whole when contending for all-under-heaven. Thus the military is not blunted and advantage can be whole. This is the method of the strategy of attack.

...

And so knowing victory is fivefold -

Knowing when one can and cannot do battle is victory. Knowing the use of the many and the few is victory.

Superior and inferior desiring the same is victory. Being prepared and awaiting the unprepared is victory. The general being capable and ruler not interfering is victory. These five are a Tao of knowing victory.

And so in the military -

Knowing the other and knowing oneself, in one hundred battles no danger. Not knowing the other and knowing oneself, one victory for one loss. Not knowing the other and not knowing oneself, in every battle certain defeat.

From Chp. 4 - Form

Sun Tzu said:

Of old the skilled first made themselves invincible to await the enemy's vincibility.
Invincibility lies in oneself. Vincibility lies in the enemy.
Thus the skilled can make themselves invincible. They cannot cause the enemy's vincibility.
Thus it is said, "Victory can be known. It cannot be made."

...

In seeing victory, not going beyond what everyone knows is not skilled. Victory in battle that all-under-heaven calls skilled is not skilled. Thus lifting an autumn hair does not mean great strength. Seeing the sun and the moon does not mean a clear eye. Hearing thunder does not mean a keen ear. So-called skill is to be victorious over the easily defeated. Thus the battles of the skilled are without extraordinary victory, without reputation for wisdom and without merit for courage.

...

One skilled at battle takes a stand in the ground of no defeat and so does not lose the enemy's defeat. Therefore, the victorious military is first victorious and after that does battle. The defeated military first does battle and after that seeks victory.

And so one who is skilled cultivates Tao and preserves method. Thus one can be the measure of victory and defeat.

From Chp. 6 - The Solid and Empty

The ultimate in giving form to the military is to arrive at formlessness. When one is formless, deep spies cannot catch a glimpse and the wise cannot strategize.

Rely on form to being about victory over the multitude, and the multitude cannot understand. The elite all know the form by which I am victorious, but no one knows how I determine the form of victory. Do not repeat the means of victory, but respond to form from the inexhaustible.

Now the form of the military is like water. Water in its movement avoids the high and hastens to the low. The military in its victory avoids the solid and strikes the empty.

Thus water determines its movement in accordance with the earth. The military determines victory in accordance with the enemy. The military is without fixed shih and without lasting form.

To be able to transform with the enemy is what is meant by "spiritlike."

Of the Five Phases, none is the lasting victor. Of the four seasons, none has constant rank. The sun shines short and long. The moon dies and lives.

Spiritlike essentials.

From Chp. 10 -Forms of the Earth

And so when according to the Tao of battle there is certain victory and the ruler says do not do battle, one can certainly do battle.

When according to the Tao of battle there is no victory and the ruler says one must do battle, one can not do battle.

And so he advances yet does not seek fame. He retreats yet does not avoid blame. He seeks only to preserve the people, and his advantage accords with that of the ruler. He is the treasure of the state.

He looks upon the troops as his children. Thus they can venture into deep river valleys with him. He looks upon the troops as his beloved sons. Thus they can die together with him.

He is generous yet unable to lead. He is loving yet unable to give orders. He is chaotic and unable to bring order. They are like spoiled children. They cannot be employed.

Knowing my troops can strike, yet not knowing the enemy cannot be struck. This is half the victory.
Knowing the enemy can be struck, yet not knowing my soldiers cannot strike. This is half the victory.

Knowing the enemy can be struck, knowing my soldiers can strike, yet not knowing that the form of the earth cannot be used to do battle. This is half of victory.

...

And so it is said -

Know the other and know oneself, then victory is not in danger. Know earth and know heaven, then victory can be complete.

From Chp. 12 - Attack by Fire

Now battle for victory, attack and attain it. But if one does not follow up on the achievement, it is inauspicious. One's fate is "wealth flowing away."

Thus it is said -

The enlightened ruler contemplates it. The good general follows up on it.

If it is not advantageous, do not act. If it is not attainable, do not employ troops. If it is not in danger, do not do battle.

The ruler cannot raise an army on account of wrath. The general cannot do battle on account of rancor.

If it accords with advantage, then employ troops. If it does not, then stop.

Wrath can return to joy. Rancor can return to delight. An extinguished state cannot return to existence. The dead cannot return to life. Thus the enlightened sovereign is careful about this. The good general is cautious about this.

These are a Tao of securing the state and keeping the army whole.

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