

Philosophical Breakthroughs in Sun Tzu's The Art of War Considering from Peircean Pragmatism

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Abstract

The Art of War by Sun Tzu is one of the most well-received Chinese classics on a global scale, and its effect extends far beyond war. Its wisdom has been adapted to different professions in the contemporary world. Present inquiry into its philosophical ideas focuses mostly on dialectical materialism. This paper finds that the treatise is replete with Peircean pragmatic spirit, which accounts for its ongoing fame and wide applicability. It also illustrates that Peircean pragmatism and semiotic are closely related, and that Pragmatism is a subset of Peirce's logic semiotic, which the Chinese academia has disregarded for a long time.

Key words: semiotic; pragmatism; effect-oriented; semiosis

Introduction

As the oldest existing book on military, The Art of War's eternal value lies not only in its outstanding strategies and tactics on how to direct troops and win a war, but also in the applicability of its military thought into other fields, its underlying philosophical thinking behind those aphorisms having a tremendous impact on Chinese for thousands of years and playing a crucial role in shaping Chinese mode of thought as well as Chinese culture. Unfortunately modern scholars are either accustomed to downplay the significance of Sun Tzu in establishing the way of thinking of Chinese people, as evidenced by the fact that the most influential philosophical historian like Youlan Feng, Shi Hu, and Dainian Zhang's account of the history of Chinese philosophy rarely put Sun Tzu among the list of philosophers in the pre-Qin era, a list that includes great thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tzu, and even the less influential ones but not Sun Tzu. Applying Marxism to explain the antitheses in The Art of War and concluding that dialectics constitute the intellectual underpinning of the treatise, especially after the establishment of New China, is another direction in the study of Sun Tzu's philosophical thought.

There are still some scholars studying Sun Tzu in a different direction. Zhehong Li holds that Sun Tzu is the progenitor of Lao Tzu and Han Fei: "this is an important developmental line of ancient Chinese thought; Lao Tzu's philosophy is based on the combination of (Sun Tzu's) military thinking and his observation and comprehension of the history of human society, which directly evolved into Han Fei's Legalism on how to apply tactics on the battlefield" (1984/2008: 76). Another Chinese scholar Ling Li writes that "The Art of War is rich in philosophical thinking... especially from the aspect of its profound insight into Behaviorism (2006:35)".

The objective of this study is to explain two issues about Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*: why is Sun Tzu's war theory applicable to so many other subjects, and why is this small ancient book so popular with current readers of diverse cultures? Inquiring into the hidden philosophical reasoning, it becomes apparent that the classic displays certain universal human natures, which explains its enduring popularity. This paper argues that the broad applicability and popularity of this book are a result of its pragmatic ethos, which places practical effects, reason, and self-control at the center of every action, particularly in a conflict or competition.

Peircean Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that holds that the significance of a thing is determined by its practical effect. Pragmatists are individuals who believe that any ideology is true if it works properly, that the meaning of a notion lies in its practical effects, and that impractical ideas should be rejected. This philosophical movement prospered in the first half of the 20th century due to the efforts of famous pragmatists, including C. S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. While almost half a century has passed, its revival around the turn of the 21st century has been attributed to the efforts of so-called neo-pragmatists like Richard Rorty. "It could become the dominant philosophical approach of 21st century" (Houser, 2011).

The most widely recognized contribution that Peirce made in philosophy is his account of pragmatism or pragmaticism (he renamed the term in 1905 for not approving of the direction William James and others were taking but from 1907 on, he returned to the former). But the publicizing of the term owes to William James despite the fact of his acknowledgement of Peirce as the father of it. Rorty even states Peirce's "contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James" (1982, 161). But more scholars like Susan Haack, Cheryl Misak, Nathan Houser, believe that "it is Peirce who sets pragmatism off on the right foot." (Margolis, 2006: 7).

In "How to Make Our Mind Clear" (1877) Peirce proposed three grades of clarity, the third grade of which makes the maxim of his pragmatism the early phase. He wrote:

It appears, then, that the rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object. (EP 1. 132).

in the later phase, Peirce's pragmatic theory is more grounded on his logic, as he wrote,

The word *pragmatism* was invented to express a certain maxim of logic... The method prescribed in the maxim is to trace out in the imagination the conceivable practical consequences, — that is, the consequences for deliberate, self-controlled conduct, — of the affirmation or denial of the concept (CP 8. 191) .

"self-control action" "ration" and "reason" being the keywords in the explication of the concept of "action is interpretant". He proposed that being rational means self-criticizing, self-controlling and self-controlled (CP 7.77). his pragmatic principle holds that conduct shall be guided by reflexion people shall control their actions.

Relation between Peircean Semiotic and His Pragmatism

Life modifies the universe to meet its needs and accomplishes this by means of sign action. There is a growing phenomenon among contemporary scholars, especially in China, that studying Peircean philosophy without referring to his semiotic and vice versa. Such is the case that scholars in philosophy are blind to his semiotic theory and most semiotic studies neglect his philosophical thinking. Through a life-time's hardworking, Peirce formulated his independent architectonic of thinking, his logic, semiotic, inquiry theory, pragmatism are all integral and interconnected parts of his systemic interpretation of the world. Without probing into his semiotic, no way can we fully grasp the essence of his pragmatism, especially his later mature explication. There are still several Chinese scholars who notice this drawback, Ruina Hu and Shuhui Wang points out that it is of great significance to study the characteristic of Peirce's semiotic to obtain a panoramic view of his philosophical system (2007). Deping Lu (2016) recognized the dual correlation but held that Peirce's semiotic theory grounds on his pragmatism. From the view of author of this paper it is more appropriate to say that Peirce's pragmatism, especially the later version is built on his semiotic. Hongbing Yu (2019) proved that semiosis, or sign action, is a key term both in Peirce's semiotic and pragmatism. Western scholars (Fisch, 1986; Houser, 2011; Pape, 2017) held that it is in the context of his semiotic theory that Peirce succeeded in putting his later pragmatism into his architectonic of philosophy.

Pragmatism as a subdiscipline of semiotic

Peirce's pragmatism is more relevant to his semiotic by the fact that it's a partition of his triad. Namely, speculative grammar as the first branch, speculative critic as the second branch, and speculative rhetoric as the third, which three makes up his semiotic or logic concerns.

In consequence of every representamen being thus connected with three things, the ground, the object, and the interpretant, the science of semiotic has three branches... The third, in imitation of Kant's fashion of preserving old associations of words in finding nomenclature for new conceptions, I call pure rhetoric. Its task is to ascertain the laws by which in every scientific intelligence one sign gives birth to another, and especially one thought brings forth another. (CP 2.229)

the third branch he termed as "speculative rhetoric", mainly dealing with the relations of signs to their users, whose focal points fall into the scope of pragmatism. For Peirce's final exposition on pragmatism, the famous manuscript 318 (EP 2.398-433), Houser (2011) commented that Peirce "unites pragmatism with his semiotic in an attempt to explain his pragmatism and to produce a proof of its adequacy for explicating meaning".

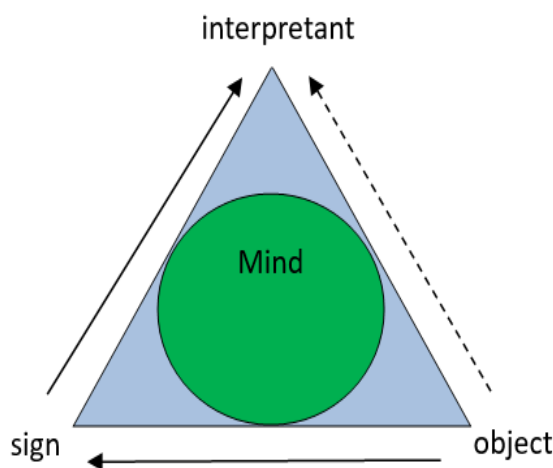
Pragmatism in Semiotic framework

As Yu (2014) proposed, semiosis (or semeiosis) is not only a key term in modern semiotics, but also plays a dominant role in his pragmatic theory. Triad is Peirce core value; his sign refers to something that stands for something else and is understood by someone or has a meaning for someone. The three elements of semiosis are the sign itself, the object that it represents and the meaning, representamen (his early term) or interpretant as commonly known, Peirce (MS [R] 640:7-8) defined as:

A Sign [...] is anything which represents something else, its Object, to any mind that can Interpret it so. More explicitly, the Sign is something that appears, in place of its Object, which does not appear for itself, (at least, not in the respect in which the Sign appears;) so that

the Sign [...] is, as it were, the species, or appearance, virtually or figuratively speaking, emanating from the Object, and capable of producing upon an intelligent being an effect that will [...] be called the Interpretant of the Sign, and effect which is recognized as due, in some sense[,] to the Object; and it is in producing the Interpretant so that it is referred to the Object, that the Sign fulfills the function its fitness for which constitutes it a “Sign.”

From the definition, sign is the medium between object and interpretant, which determines interpretant, and determined by object, but these two determinations are different: sign determines interpretant in a direct way, while object does not. Object and its sign are not directly connected; this determination is realized by the existence of interpretant (see graph 1). In other words, the mediate role of sign is, fundamentally, it refers to its object on the one hand and determines in certain ways its interpretant on the other. Houser (2011) said “The factor I have in mind is the dual reference in every sign and, therefore, in every concept of intellectual purport”.



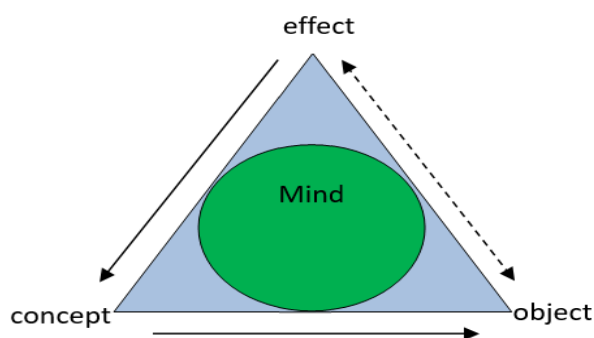
Graph 1 (Here the dashed line with arrow between object and onterpretant means that they are not directly corelated, they are related by means of onterpretant, and the full line with arrow between sign and its onterpretant means direct determination, while the full line between sign and its object means representation)

Peirce’s semiotic, or theory of signs, served as the theoretical base for his pragmatism, or properly speaking, semiotic offers proof for his pragmatic thinking. The above triadic relation is adopted in a revised form in his later explication of pragmatism. To be specific, in pragmatic theory, the medium changed from sign into a more abstract “concept” (its variants include belief or conception) while the interpretant was changed into effect (meaning, practical consequence or action). Here, concept or its variant is a type of his sign typology as the case that pragmatism, or speculative rhetoric, is third branch of his semiotic.

Pragmatism looks upon a concept as a mental sign, or medium between the object to which it is moulded and the “meaning,” or effect which the object is enabled by Pragmatism looks upon a concept as a mental sign, or medium between the object to which it is moulded and the “meaning,” or effect which the object is enabled by the concept to produce; and in all general inquiries about signs nothing is of more lively importance than maintaining a clear and sharp distinction between the object, or professed cause of the sign, and the meaning, or

intended effect of it. (MS [R] 320:5-7)

It is the dual reference of concept, belief, conception, or other terms, which are mental signs of intellectual significance, that mediate between reality and its effect. This third branch differs from the other two in that pragmatic theory explains how a notion, belief, or in other name, is an accurate mirror of the independent external reality, namely the effect of holding it, the action it guides, or the practical outcome it produces. The pragmatic relationship between an object (independent outer world, reality, or truth), the mental sign (belief, conception, concept, or thought), and its meaning (the would-be effect, action, act, or consequence holding to it) entails that the veracity of a concept or belief is judged based on its consequence. In colloquial language, a concept is true under conditions if it leads to a successful action or result, whereas it is false if it does not. Thus, for Peirce, the search for the truth of the comprehensible external world is the interplay between the three in a way that the object tests the concept by means of its effect. This relationship is depicted in Graph 2.



Graph 2

(Starting at the apex of the triangle, the effect of a concept determines if it is an accurate representation of the object, while the object, or the reality of the world, can determine the effect of that concept, and through the effects of many concepts, the subject inquires about the object.)

Sun Tzu's Breakthrough of His Time: Pragmatic Spirit

The first manifestation of Sun Tzu's pragmatic spirit is his rejection of the conventional understanding of 天(Pinyin as Tian, usually translated as the heavens). His comprehension of it is unique within his time period. In Yin and Zhou dynasties before Sun Tzu, Tian was the determinant of human destiny and the highest deity, an anthropomorphic god with a desire to control the world. More than that, in more than two thousand years of Chinese dynastic history, emperors referred to themselves as “Son of Tian”, which signified the legitimacy of their authority, comparable to the "Divine Rights of Kings" in the western medieval era. “Tian is the source of human power on earth” (Zhuoyun Xu, 2003, p.314). *Zuo Zhuan*, which also has a significant impact on Chinese culture, asserts that the most significant events for a state are offering sacrifices and going to war. In ancient China, fighting wars and committing sacrifices to Tian and ancestors were common knowledge. In addition, there are vast records such as “disobeying Tian would result in calamity” “Blasphemy would result in the loss of happiness” “the survival of the country rests on Tian” “Tian never deceives anyone, and he never alters his mind”, etc. People’s understanding of “Tian” was it determined human affairs, the so-called belief that Tian’s decree is unbreakable. In other words, “Tian” was perceived in a strange and even superstitious light.

“Tian” as a sign in *The Art of War* is neither the determinant of human fate nor the highest god as commonly treated in ancient China, whose interpretants are mainly as follows:

Firstly, it means climate, as he defines, “Tian refers to climate, which involves Yin and Yang, heat and frost, and the rotation of seasons” (2017:1), from which we can see Sun Tzu’s notion of “Tian” is a natural sign that may impact the outcome of the battle, which deserves attention for the commanders. There is also a necessity to make it clear that Sun Tzu’s concept of Yin-yang, which mainly denotes natural conditions and geographical factors for military marching or camping, as he explains “in general, an army prefers high ground and dislikes the low, prizes Yang (the sunny side) and shuns Yin (the shady side)” (ibid. 88). A geographic understanding of Yin-yang is where the sun beams first of a place called Yang, while the shady part of it called Yin, for example, in China¹, the southern side of a mountain where the sun shines and the northern bank of a river the first is called Yang, and the opposite part is commonly defined as Yin; the second interpretation of “Tian” is the heavens, as in this sentence in *The Art of War*, “those who expertise in attacking, he strikes from the highest reaches of the heavens”(45); thirdly, it is an adjective which means natural, “natural wells, natural box natural canyons, natural dense cover, natural quagmires, natural traps, and natural crevasses” (91); fourthly, it means weather as in “There are appropriate times to light fires in an attack (when Tian (the weather) is dry and hot)” (103). lastly, the world (天下, Pinyin as Tian Xia, which means lands under the heaven, but in ancient China, it mostly refers to the lands, divinely appointed to the Chinese sovereign). A conclusion can be safely arrived that Sun Tzu’s Tian is the objective natural surroundings but not a deified god, similar to the term umwelt in biosemiotics. Under certain conditions, “Tian” is changeable and can influence sign actions on a battlefield. Actually, Tian, together with terrain are the key factors affecting sign behaviors. favorable Tian and terrain that bring positive effect on the battle. Moreover, in modern biosemiotic sense, Tian and terrain are the umwelt that makes the premise of all sign actions, which is analyzable and capturable for an advantageous position. Therefore, sometimes one can manipulate the enemy on the ground of a contention of positive Tian and terrain for the desired effects.

From the above analysis Sun Tzu vehemently opposes the concept of gaining assistance and support from ghosts, gods, astrology, and other supernatural beliefs. On the other hand, he places a strong emphasis on gaining trust and faith in humanity, viewing man as the manipulator of sign action and his fate. He adds, “foreknowledge cannot be had from ghosts and spirits, educed by comparison with past events, or verified by astrological calculations. It must come from people-people who know the enemy's situation” (Ames’s translation 2003, 123). Sun Tzu entertains the idea of “using spies” or even sacrificing spies when necessary to achieve ultimate triumph, which is an easier and inexpensive approach to achieve the effects he desires. As a matter of fact, after conducting an in-depth analysis of *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu is incredibly concerned with achieving the greatest triumph at the lowest possible cost. He always calculates the war's losses and expenses. In other words, Sun Tzu always seeks to win a battle for the least amount of money and lives sacrificed. To achieve this objective, he places his trust in the battle's decision-makers, who are principally the king and generals. Sun Tzu wishes rulers possess Dao and the generals were those who understand battle. Prior to going to war, the most crucial thing for them to do is calculations— “the five vital factors and seven plans” at the top

¹ China is in the northern hemisphere, and north of the Tropic of Cancer, the sun is most direct to the Tropic of Cancer, so in China, the sun is in the south of the sky.

of the list. Sun Tzu asserts from the outset that war determines life and death. Considering the potential consequences, decision-makers, the king, and generals, who conduct battles, and command the troops, must approach war with extreme caution, maintaining a clear, rational, and responsible mind at all times. On the basis of a computation of “five important factors and seven plans”, they will be fully prepared for battle. Sun Tzu is without a doubt among the earliest thinkers who did not attribute the success or failure of a war to god’s will, but rather studied semiosis on a battlefield from the effects of every sign act, which is a central value of modern pragmatism. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that Sun Tzu is a pioneer of pragmatism in China.

Effect-oriented Concept of Knowing and Acting

A deliberate focus on “knowing” is required to achieve the desired effect in one’s sign behavior. Before taking action, Sun Tzu places a heavy focus on the ability to amass a wealth of signs and evaluate them critically. He believes that “knowing” ought to be the basis for action and the premise of the effect of sign action on the battlefield. Knowing the opponent and knowing oneself, avoiding the enemy’s primary force and striking at his weak areas is the foundation and essence of Sun Tzu’s entire military philosophy and war theory. In a sense, Sun Tzu’s concept of knowing and acting is the source of all of his strategies and tactics, and this is his method for developing effective military action.

Semiosis on a battlefield is complicated, which involves sign subjects such as Tian, terrain, rulers, generals, soldiers, and the enemy, however, Sun Tzu believes a careful and thorough study of prewar signs can help recognize and understand the general laws governing sign actions on a battlefield. This is what he means when he asserts, “victory can be predicted” (113). Decision-makers shall have a strong thirst and capacity to gather useful and positive signs. The ruler is responsible for understanding the Dao (way) of his people, and generals is responsible for mastering the “Dao of victory”, as he puts it:

Therefore, there are five elements to consider when determining which side will win: The side that has a better understanding of when to fight and when not to fight will come out on top. The victorious side will be the one that has a better understanding of how to deal with both numerical advantage and numerical inferiority in the deployment of troops. The side that manages to get its bosses and its subordinates to work together toward a common goal will emerge victorious. The winner of the battle will be the faction that is able to field a fully prepared army against another that does not. The side that ends up victorious is the one whose commander is able to accomplish their job without interference from the monarch. (3)

In other words, king and his generals must timely grasp the situation, deploy their forces sensibly, and be completely equipped for war in order to achieve victory. He needs to be able to unite his guys as if they were a single person with a single thought, thereby enhancing their coordination and collaboration. Additionally, he must be mindful of the positive and bad signs of both oneself and his opponent. Sun Tzu stands by the general’s side when he is in conflict with his king regarding military deployments. He states it abundantly clear that if a king “doesn’t know” about the military and nonetheless recklessly intervenes in the military action, his will be “sowing disorder in and tossing away the triumph” (22). At this moment, the effects of sign action outweigh the rigid political disciplines and personal gains (disobey a king can bring terrible result). Sun Tzu further warns if a king

...orders an advance when the army is not in a position to do so, or to order a retreat

when the army is not in a position to retire, which is “hobbling the army”. To interfere in the administration of the army while being ignorant of its internal affairs will confuse officers and soldiers alike. To interfere in military assignments while being ignorant of exigencies will lose him the confidence of his men. (24)

When this occurs, Sun Tzu recommends that the ruler refrain from interfering with actual military movements. The reason for this is, firstly, to let the professionals do their jobs; in ancient China, rulers and generals played different roles; a king stayed behind high walls while his generals went into battle and fought for him; therefore, most rulers or kings were not as skilled as their generals. Sun Tzu’s advice does not imply that the ruler or king should be unconcerned about war; in fact, he requires the king to understand both political and military strategies. How then could he engage in “calculation and evaluation” and “attacking the enemy’s plans”? Machiavelli echoes, “a prince, therefore, ought to have no object, thought, or profession but war, its methods, and its discipline; that is the only art expected of one who governs” (1976: 247). It should come as no surprise that the majority of the burden falls on the generals.

Effect-oriented Formulation of Tactics

In order to win the conflict, Sun Tzu makes tactical breakthroughs. His abandonment of the conventional military ritual and morals before him is also reflective of his pragmatic nature. In the conflicts of the Spring and Autumn Period, military ritual and related morality played a significant role, which even determined the entire process of combat on the battlefield. Duke Xiang of Song declined to assault the Chu army while they were crossing a river, and he also refused to attack them when they were not in combat formation, indicating that war ritual was prevalent at the period. The remains of an earlier military classic, *The Methods of Sima*, indicate that in antiquity, people did not follow enemy soldiers who fled more than 100 yards. At that time, there was consensus that covenants and envoys should be protected and respected; neither attacking a state in national mourning nor taking advantage of a natural disaster; children should not be killed, and the elderly should not be captured as such; not mobilizing the army in either winter or summer; and not mobilizing the army in the middle of the night (Shawn, 2013: 231). They denounced the annexation of a state without the consent of its people. Confucian scholars such as Mencius and Xun Zi, who were considerably later than Sun Tzu, adhered to the practice of not trampling growing crops when marching and not imprisoning surrendering soldiers (Ames: 139).

On the contrary, Sun Tzu proposed “warfare is Dao of deception”, which is a pragmatic reform of the military practice. In terms of waging a war, Sun Tzu clearly proposed “attacking a large state” and “increasing our own strength in the process of defeating the army”, which is a denial of the past “raising armored troops to chastise the unrighteous, the army will reach the offending state and assemble with the Son of Heaven to apply the punishment of rectification” (231). On the purpose of war, Sun Tzu advocated “taking their cities” and “crushing their state”, which is the opposite of “When they had executed the guilty, the king, together with the feudal lords, corrected and rectified the government and customs of the state” (231). In terms of tactics, Sun Tzu repeatedly emphasized “A most important consideration in war is speed. With speed, you can exploit whatever is beyond the enemy’s reach; you can take the routes he least expects, and you can attack him before he’s prepared” (the author’s translation, Chapter 11), which is in contrast to “the infantry will not run and the chariots will not gallop” (240); in terms of logistical support and enforcement of battlefield discipline, Sun Tzu advocated “takes what he needs from the court and avails himself of the enemy’s grain, so his provisions suffice” “Plunder

the enemy's most fertile fields, and your army will have ample provision" (8).

Following the development trend of this era and the purpose of "benefiting oneself from the defeated enemy", Sun Tzu puts forward a deceitful use of troops. Sun Tzu's cunning use of troops is not only a summary of the experience and lessons of his predecessors, but also adapts to the needs of the actual struggle, reflecting the pragmatic need of his time.

In order to achieve the desired effect, Sun Tzu emphasizes the necessity of deception in tactics. "Warfare is Dao of deception" "troops rely on deception to gain ground" a combination of "surprise (奇, Pinyin as Qi) and straightforward (正, Pinyin as Zheng) operations" and "wresting advantages from the conditions at hand" are his most important tactic thoughts. According to him, on an ever-changing battlefield, one cannot be bound by "the ruler's orders" but must take flexible contingency measures to tackle the changing situation, "change deployment in response to infinitely changing circumstances" and "win due to changes in the enemy" (the author's translation, chapter 6). Specifically, first, in terms of battle deployment, one must take his position first on the battleground to await the enemy and understand the change of the nine-terrain. Second, in the aspect of combat command, one must "weigh the pros and cons before moving into action"(11), not being far-fetched, not stubborn, not rigid.

If your forces are more numerous than theirs by a factor of ten, you should encircle the enemy's position; otherwise, you should launch an assault. If your forces are two to one stronger than theirs, then you can employ some of your forces to distract some of the enemy. (18)

The commander shall be good at surprise attack, as Sun Tzu says "attack when you are not prepared, and surprise when you are not prepared" (2). The key to success is to be good at creating and using favorable situations, so that one can win smartly and easily. Third, in the Dao of life and death, one must be good at creating illusions to confuse the enemy.

Effect-oriented military management

In terms of military management, Sun Tzu proposes "guides the legions as effortlessly as if guiding a person by the hand" (15). In order to achieve the desired effect, Sun Tzu placed a significant emphasis on the use of "regulations" to make people abide and direct the armed forces. The primary focus of Sun Tzu's decrees is the organizational concept, the appointment and distribution of duties among officials, and the control of the supply and demand for military property. How do we ensure that rules and regulations are executed effectively? First and foremost, it is essential to educate the populace and govern the military in accordance with rules and regulations during times of peace, so that the populace, generals of all ranks, and troops adhere to the laws and regulations as a matter of habit during times of war. Second, according to the ordinances, both rewards and punishments must be administered reasonably, and the king or commander must never betray his word. Thirdly, it is essential to utilize both carrots and sticks to motivate the military to freely obey and uphold the law. According to Sun Tzu, being extremely harsh will cause soldiers to lack "devotion to the leader," and "if they do not comply, they are impossible to use." In contrast, "if the commander is too lax in management, soldiers will disobey his orders; if he is overly lenient with his men and imposes few punishments, they will breach the regulations and be so undisciplined that it is impossible to bring them under control" (86). According to Sun Tzu, the commander is responsible for

"six failures" in administration. The inability of the general to strictly enforce the law is the primary reason of these failures. These six failures, according to him, "are the commander's primary duty and must be thoroughly probed." Chen Hao (Yan, 1999:211) annotates the six as follows: "without calculation of the enemy's and one's own army numbers, without proper rewards and punishments, without sufficient training, without rations and fighting a battle out of anger, without regulations, and without selecting courageous and determined warriors." Zhang Yu (Yan, 1999:212) elaborates on this concept by stating, "If the commander is weak and not sufficiently rigorous, then he lacks a strong and commanding personality."

Morale Management with an Emphasis on Effects

Sun Tzu is concerned with the impact of a soldier's psychological adjustment on his battlefield performance. According to his perspective, battle is not only a test of might and resourcefulness, but also a mental contest between the combatants. Consequently, the psychological states of the monarch, the generals, and the soldiers are also crucial in influencing the battle's outcome. "A king shall not deploy his troops in anger, nor shall a commander spark a fight in the heat of the moment" (115). Thus, it is the responsibility of the monarch and his generals to retain composure and master the art of self-control. Specifically, the leader must be "cool but inscrutable, disciplined and self-governed" (98) in order to avoid the "five hazards" and have a level head; otherwise, there is a risk that they may "lose heart," which could result in the risk of being beaten by the enemy. Sun Tzu had a direct influence on Lao Tzu, who wrote in Tao De Ching, chapter 68, "those who are skilled in combat are never warlike; a skilled warrior is never incensed by his foe, and an unconquerable commander never faces his foe directly" (88). A good general is therefore a ruthlessly courageous soldier who is not easily angered. Regarding the general's psychological adaptability, Sun Tzu and Lao Tzu are congruent. Second, generals must be able to boost soldiers' morale, reduce their strain, bolster their team spirit, and adapt to an ever-changing environment. When actual combat is in progress, he must be proficient in displaying deceptive forms and creating positive momentum, as well as in psychological warfare. Sun Tzu emphasizes the importance of generals in harnessing psychological advantages and overcoming psychological disadvantages for an army. He goes so far as to recommend that the commander "blindfold his commanders and soldiers so they never know what he's thinking." He also advises the commander to "make changes to his plans and methods so that no one else is aware of them; move his camp and travel in circuitous paths so that no one can track his movements" and "Compel people to perform their duties, but never reveal the true objective" (89). He proposes "motivate soldiers with rewards, but never discuss the sacrifices they will make" (67) to achieve the effect that "drives the soldiers hither and thither, like a shepherd herding his sheep, but not knowing where they are going" (69), "plunges them into danger" and "show the troops that survival depends upon their willingness to die" (73) to realize the effect that "drives the soldiers hither and thither, (79). Therefore, from Sun Tzu's perspective, the ruler and the generals should not only improve their psychological capital and optimize their psychological states, but they should also employ a variety of methods to have their subordinates eliminate psychological barriers and interference, and unite when facing the enemy. This will provide a psychological guarantee that the attack will be effectively repelled.

Sun Tzu focuses tactically on the surprise attack, managementally on the laws, and psychologically on the morale, emphasizing the effect and flexible response. Taking into

account the psychological adjustment of the soldiers, he focuses on practical results, which was a major advance at the time, and his ideas might be considered one of the origins of Chinese pragmatism.

Experience-based Spirit

Sun Tzu is not proficient in metaphysical reasoning. He never departs from the reality. The majority of his military theories are founded on the analysis of real difficulties and the synthesis of practical experience. From beginning to end, *The Art of War* is imbued with a spirit of truth-seeking based on facts. This spirit reflects in the understanding of the changeability and tychism of semiosis on the battlefield.

Sun Tzu holds the principle of seeking truth from facts. To prepare for a war, he thinks that “an army varies its method of gaining victory according to the enemy’s formation”(35), in preparing a war, first of all, the commander shall “calculate the plan of the enemy”, “provoke the enemy”, “show the enemy a false 形” (form, pinyin as Xing, means military deployment here) and “prod and jab him” (77) to reveal his true form. Meanwhile, he shall “know the intentions of the rulers of the neighboring states”(90). Second, on the basis of knowing the enemy, he shall prepare for the enemy in a targeted manner, “first to make themselves invincible, and so they waited for the moment when their enemies could be defeated” (33), be prepared for the unexpected, and hold this in mind that “do not count on the enemy not coming, depend instead on your side being prepared to confront him, do not count on the enemy not attacking. depend instead on your side having an unassailable position” (80). Caution that “to be prepared everywhere is to be strong nowhere” (82). If one takes the enemy lightly and does not prepare for the enemy, he is bound to be captured. Lao Tzu echoed, “There’s no greater calamity than dishonoring an enemy. Dishonor an enemy and you’ll lose those treasures of mine” (103). Underestimating the enemy and not preparing for the enemy will pay a heavy price. Third, to adapt to your enemy, on the basis of a thorough understanding of the enemy and effective defense, it is necessary to look for attacking points and assaulting chances, and adopt flexible tactics according to the situation of both the enemy and oneself. Certain terrain shall be put into consideration, “Should your enemy occupy the defile first, filling it with his men, never go after him. However, if he fails to fill the space within the pass, go after him” (35). Finally, “move” the enemy. That is, attacking their weak points while avoiding their strong ones. Here choosing certain tactic are important, but the principle is always the same: “So when you can, feign incapacity, and when deploying troops, appear to have no such plans. When close, seem to them to be far away, and when far away, seem near” (25). Sun Tzu’s tactic that showing the opponent something that he is sure to follow is good at stimulating the enemy psychologically, and “If he is angry, rile him. If he is unassuming, feed his arrogance. If he is rested, tire him out. If his troops are like family, drive a wedge between them” (25). Sun Tzu's strategy is to mobilize and pressure the opponent by profit factors and luring them with an irresistible bait. According to Sun Tzu, “It is advantageous for the enemy if he can come of his own accord, and detrimental if you prevent him from reaching on time” (44). In other words, based on real-life encounters with the enemy, one is able to confront and overcome him.

Sun Tzu makes a principle that “wresting advantages from the conditions at hand and controlling contingencies” (25), that is, the size of benefits, gains and losses, shall be the top concern. How to reduce losses? Sun Tzu’s solution is to win the battle at the fastest speed and avoid long-time confrontation. In the Spring and Autumn Period when Sun Tzu lived, the vassal

states were relatively small, with limited financial, material and human resources, and generally could not withstand protracted wars, and this principle is still applicable in today's world as war is too heavy a burden for any country to sustain for longtime. Therefore, Sun Tzu proposes: "in joining battle, seek the quick victory. If battle is protracted, your weapons will be blunted and your troops demoralized" (75).

In other words, the prolonged use of troops to combat will drain financial resources, dampen morale, result in the depletion of national strength, exhaust the army and the people, and create dangerous opportunities for neighboring states or other enemies to exploit the situation. Therefore, the commander must choose quite victory over prolonged conflicts.

Conclusion

To sum up, Sun Tzu's concept mainly arises from the reality and tries to teach people how to face challenges and dilemma. From Zhou Gong and Confucius to the various schools of thoughts, all thinkers of insight put forward their philosophical thoughts for the purpose of governing the country and saving the world and the people from suffering, rather than putting forward metaphysical theories. Sun Tzu is no exception. He is committed to realizing the strategic goal of "defeating the enemy without fighting", pursuing the practical benefits of "safeguarding the country and the whole army" and "self-protection and total victory". He highlights the role of people, adaptation to Tian and terrain. rationality and stick to the practical benefits is his pragmatic spirit. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that Sun Tzu is a pioneer of pragmatism in China.

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