

UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE LIGHT OF SUN TZU'S THE ART OF WAR

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Philosophy

by
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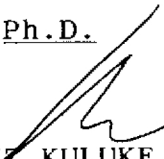
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This Thesis entitled "UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LIGHT OF SUN TZU'S THE ART OF WAR" prepared and submitted by FRANCO C. PAGARAN, JR. in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

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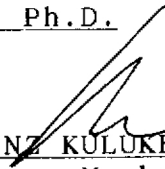
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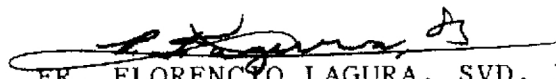

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THESIS ABSTRACT

The study establishes the relevance of Sun Tzu's The Art of War in understanding contemporary interpersonal relationships. Sun Tzu's prescribed strategies contained in The Art of War would be of help in promoting harmonious interpersonal relations. It ought to be noted that the necessary techniques enumerated in The Art of War are primarily designed to enhance interpersonal relations without actually engaging in actual confrontation.

The strategies enumerated in The Art of War can be categorized into three general strategies. The first is positioning which covers the steps to be considered before engaging in actual confrontation. The second is confrontation which can be availed of only when conflict in interpersonal relations cannot be remedied. This focuses on how to confront opponents in the actual controversy. The third stresses on the significance of preparation in times of peace.

Positioning is the most important strategy in restoring harmonious interpersonal relations. It entails a complete analysis of the conflict including the strengths and weaknesses of one's position. To arrive at a complete calculation needs the employment of tactical paradox which means the ability to project to the opponent a contradictory view of one's position. Such ability to calculate must be coupled with careful evaluation of the costs well in advance and the ability to act promptly in the settlement

of interpersonal problems. Formulation of a realistic plan is the climax of positioning which would enhance harmonious interpersonal relations. This includes the ability to direct and position one's opponent for defeat and the significance of creating illusions to discover weaknesses and strengths and build areas of confidence.

Whenever possible, victory should be achieved through positioning. Only if an opponent threatens with actual confrontation or refuses deliberately to acquiesce without being forced into submission should one resort to actual confrontation. Interpersonal confrontation requires the ability to maneuver oneself for advantage. Such strategy considers the importance of spontaneity, the flexibility amidst the ever growing confrontation. The determination not only of the opponent's strengths, and plans of attack but also the evaluation and consideration of one's position which must be motivated by the virtue of discipline. Emphasis must be directed to the fact that interpersonal confrontation requires rationality and self-control and stresses on vital necessity of the situation and one's own capabilities.

To avoid interpersonal conflict, preparation in times of peace should be considered. The utilization of intelligence-gathering techniques is necessary to curb costly mistakes and human suffering. Sun Tzu underscores the importance of knowledge as the key to the settlement of interpersonal controversy. A total grasp of the situation,

is paramount to settle amicably and peacefully any interpersonal conflict.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the foregoing strategies are not meant to proceed to open confrontation which is inevitably destructive but must be viewed only as a tactic of last resort. The strategies are primarily designed to promote and restore harmony in interpersonal relations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
TITLE PAGE	i
APPROVAL SHEET	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
THESIS ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER	
I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE	1
Introduction	1
Rationale of the Study	1
Theoretical Background of the Study	3
Review of Related Studies	5
The Problem	7
Statement of the Problem	7
Significance of the Study	8
Research Methodology	8
Definition of Terms	9
II. THE MAN AND HIS TIME	11
Historical Background	11
Sun Tzu	15
The Art of War.	17
III. SUN TZU'S CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE	19
Knowledge	22
Virtues	24
IV. SUN TZU'S STRATEGIES APPLIED TO CONTEMPORARY INTER PERSONAL RELATIONS	32

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Positioning	34
Confrontation	49
Preparation	60
V. CONCLUSION	63
Summary	63
Evaluation	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY	76

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

Introduction

Rationale of the Study. Man is continually relating with his fellow men. His interaction with the latter provides an opportunity to define himself. He finds his meaning in the matrix of interpersonal relations. Thus, man is deeply rooted in such a relation. At the time of his existence, he develops an intimate relation with his parents and slowly interacts with his fellow men. As he unfolds himself, he establishes a network of interpersonal relationships which help him realize his human potentialities.

Consequently, it is normal in human life that one seeks the help of other people for various reasons; doctors to care for his medical problems, carpenters to build a shelter, teachers to enlighten him, jeepney drivers to transport him, friends to comfort and support him at times. Essentially, one needs others and depends on them. One owes his existence as person to other people just as the latter in turn owe their existence as persons to him.¹ Thus, to be a person is to exist only as an appeal and a response to other persons.

This relationship with other persons makes man truly a person. He realizes his dreams and aspirations by being

1. Michael D. Moga, What Makes Man Truly Human? (Manila: St. Pauls, 1995), p. 85.

with others. He pursues his goals in the context of the dynamics within the framework of his relationship with his fellow men. Therefore, to go no further just to be himself and no other would be to imprison oneself forever in one's poverty and ignorance. He is himself but open to others. The person is not wholly a person if alone. He is not being itself, but he is within being and sharing in being. It is not a dreamy feeling or a lazy repose but a vigorous commitment toward the fulfillment of himself.²

Man is not only satisfied in forming interpersonal relationships. He is so concerned also in attaining order and harmony. Man longs for harmonious interpersonal relations. He endeavors as much as possible to build interpersonal relations that would promote harmony and order in the society. However, no matter how man aspires for such dream, inevitably, there are times that such interpersonal relations will be shaken. There are occasions which would ruin. Instead of establishing smooth and harmonious interpersonal relations he is actually impairing it. His lack of knowledge perhaps would be a factor that destroys his interpersonal relations.

The main objective of this study is to present a perspective of understanding contemporary interpersonal relations. The study focuses on the present network of interpersonal relations. This perspective deviates from the

2. Austin Fagothey, Right and Reason (Saint Louis: C.V. Mosby Company, 1972), p. 165.