

ABSTRACT

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To flourish and grow in a many-sided, uncertain and ever-changing world that surrounds us suggests that we have to make intuitive within ourselves those many practices we need to meet the exigencies of that world. The contents, hence the five sections that comprise this *Discourse*, unfold observations and ideas that contribute toward achieving or thwarting such an aim or purpose. Specifically:

- *Patterns of Conflict* represents a compendium of idea and actions for winning and losing in a highly competitive world;
- *Organic Design for Command and Control* surfaces the implicit arrangements that permit cooperation in complex, competitive, fast moving situations;
- *The Strategic Game of ? and ?* emphasizes the mental twists and turns we undertake to surface appropriate schemes or designs for realizing our aims or purposes;
- “Destruction and Creation” lays out in abstract but graphic fashion the ways by which we evolve mental concepts to comprehend and cope with our environment;
- “Revelation” makes visible the metaphorical message that flows from this *Discourse*.

[Editors’ note: Boyd added *Conceptual Spiral* in 1992 and *The Essence of Winning and Losing* in 1996.] As one proceeds from *Patterns* through *Organic Design*, *Strategic Game*, and “Destruction and Creation” to “Revelation” he or she will notice that the discussion goes from the more concrete and obvious to the more abstract. In this sense, one will notice the rise away from many particular actions and ideas to fewer and more general concepts to account for these many actions and ideas. In this context, *Patterns* emphasizes historical readings, primarily military, as the backdrop for its discussion, while the final four sections draw away from the historical framework and increasingly emphasize theory spread over a scientific backdrop as the medium for discussion.

Yet, the theme that weaves its way through this *Discourse on Winning and Losing* is not so much contained within each of the five sections, per se, that make up the *Discourse*; rather, it is the kind of thinking that both lies behind and makes up its very essence. For the interested, a careful examination will reveal that the increasingly abstract discussion surfaces a process of reaching across many perspectives; pulling each and every one apart (analysis), all the while intuitively looking for those parts of the disassembled perspectives which naturally interconnect with one another to form a higher-order, more general elaboration (synthesis) of what is taking place. As a result, the process not only creates the *Discourse* but it also represents the key to evolve the tactics, strategies, goals, unifying themes, etc., that permit us to actively shape and adapt to the unfolding world we are a part of, live in, and feed upon.

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