

## BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWED BY FRANK E. RITTER

### **BOYD: THE FIGHTER PILOT WHO CHANGED THE ART OF WAR. BY ROBERT CORAM.**

*PUBLISHED BY BACK BAY BOOKS/LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY, 2002. ISBN 0-316-79688-3*

Boyd is famous (so the book says), as the person who invented or first described the OODA cycle, that of observe, orient, decide, act. I first heard of this in the mid-80's, a bit after he worked on it. At the time, the phrase was unattributed. The basis of this cycle is that you want to act faster than your opponent can follow or understand, and to keep him off-balance. That is, act within their decision cycle by having your cycle faster. The book notes that Clauswitz also spoke to this, but Boyd talked about maximizing one cycle length and minimizing the other. I spoke with a local Navy pilot. He had heard of Boyd and was of the opinion that Boyd's fame was well deserved. A web search will turn up several web sites that report on this work and a site that applies his approach to business. I think his work has implications for human factors in general.

Boyd is also put forward as being a famously good fighter pilot. Part of this is due to his understanding of flight dynamics, and upon the repeated retelling, part of has to be attributed, I think, to the fact that he knew part of his plane's envelope that no-one else would dare take it there.

There were a few other things of interest in this book. He was first rejected for flight training because of low aptitude (!). This might give us pause when preparing examinations and believing in them too strongly.

His paper titled "Aerial attack study" was, the book claimed, the first complete study of aerial fighter

acrobatics, or the equivalent of it. It is probably the first good study based on the physics of speed, power, and potential energy. (Boyd had done an engineering degree in the middle of his flight career, and he appears to have been well ready to study the physics of flight.)

There are references to the role of expertise (p. 157) and the role of displays for explaining things to captains and generals through the use of good displays.

As an appendix to the book, there is a short paper called "Destruction and creation". It has interesting thoughts in it that can be mapped onto Piaget's processes of accommodation (thought and structure creation based on the environment) and assimilation (mapping the environment back onto those structures).

The book is cheesy in more than one spot, and too long at 462 pages. It does provide additional sources, and it helped me get inside the head of fighter pilots. I don't know if Robert Coram intended this, but I was left with the feeling that Boyd was a scientist, or applied scientist, trying as best he could to understand and study a very applied, very complex area, that of adversarial flight.

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## BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT: STOIC WARRIORS

### **STOIC WARRIORS BY NANCY SHERMAN**

*PUBLISHED BY OXFORD University Press, July 2005, ISBN: 0195152166*

In *Stoic Warriors: The Ancient Philosophy Behind the Military Mind*, Georgetown University Philosophy Professor Nancy Sherman presents us with a compelling and insightful journey into the minds of men and women in combat.

The age-old philosophy known as Stoicism guides the actions of many in the military. Soldier and seamen alike learn early in their training "to suck it up," to endure, to put aside their feelings and get on with the mission. Sherman delves into this ancient philosophy and examines how it affects the lives of armed forces world wide.

*Stoic Warriors* proves insightful as America's War on Terror escalates and the body count rises to staggering level. In addition, the ongoing scandals at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram leave many wondering, how far is too far? Sherman goes

deep into the minds of those in the military and looks at how this ideology shapes their lives and actions.

*Stoic Warriors* is a must read for military and civilian readers alike who seek to gain a greater understanding of the mental challenges facing our country's men and women during wartime, and what the American government needs to do to ensure a their mental and physical health while on the frontlines and once they come home.

*Nancy Sherman is a Distinguished Professor at Georgetown University in the Department of Philosophy. She received her doctorate from Harvard University. After teaching at Johns Hopkins University, Yale University and Georgetown University, she went on to become the inaugural holder of the Distinguished Chair in Ethics at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis. She is the author of three books and numerous articles.*