



THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ESSENCE OF WAR IN LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 24 th July 2025 Accepted: 20 th August 2025	This article examines the theme of war from both philosophical and literary perspectives. It presents the views of philosophers and writers who have either condemned or justified war throughout history. The study reveals both the negative and positive aspects of war, an immortal theme that has persisted from ancient times to modern literature.
Keywords War, literature, philosophy, interpretation, writer, philosopher	

INTRODUCTION. War is one of the immortal themes of world literature. In war, the true nature of every human being is revealed — whether one is a patriot or a traitor, cowardly or brave, capable of heroism in decisive moments, or inclined to flee. From ancient times, war has attracted the attention of philosophers and writers alike. It is studied by various disciplines such as military science, political science, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, theology, and law, each examining war from its own perspective. Yet none provides a complete and unified understanding of it, since war is an extremely complex phenomenon with vague boundaries.

Some philosophers saw a higher meaning in war. Hegel regarded war as an essential means to preserve the moral health of nations, preventing them from decay and disunity. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: "War and courage have done more great things than love of the neighbor." The French philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon considered war "a divine phenomenon, just, noble, moral, sacred — a special form of divine revelation." [1]

MATERIALS AND METHODS. Supporters of the psychological approach, however, argue that the source of war lies within human psychology. Sigmund Freud believed that humans possess a self-destructive drive he called the "death instinct." This instinct compels individuals to channel their aggression outward to ensure their own survival. According to Freud, the death instinct stimulates aggression, which in turn triggers wars. In his letter to Albert Einstein, "Is War Inevitable?" Freud wrote that human beings naturally experience conflicts of interest that they tend to resolve through violence. The ultimate goal of violence, he believed, is "to compel the opponent to renounce his demands or opposition." Such outcomes, he argued, satisfy humanity's instinctive need for destruction.

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes identified three main causes of war in human nature: competition, mistrust, and the desire for glory. The first leads people to attack for gain, the second for safety, and the third for reputation. The Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza supplemented Hobbes's teaching by claiming that peace is not merely the absence of war, but a virtue that arises from strength of spirit. John Locke, another English philosopher, justified war for the sake of public welfare, arguing that "people have a legitimate right to resist their king." The German philosopher Immanuel Kant made a significant contribution to military-philosophical thought. He was one of the first to analyze war from a moral standpoint, yet he also acknowledged that war is not an absolute evil. Kant believed that war could contribute to the migration of peoples and sometimes manifest as an act of self-defense; if carried out for a nation's common and noble aims, it might be justified. [2] However, Kant also insisted on the need to abolish and prohibit wars due to their tragedy and suffering. In his treatise "Toward Perpetual Peace," he examined the problems of international relations and asserted that "no peace treaty is valid if it contains the secret intention of waging war again." He optimistically believed that humanity, through moral progress, would eventually reach a state of peace and harmony.

DISCUSSION. The image of war has been widely portrayed by writers (Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy), sociologists (Pitirim Sorokin), economists (Ivan Bloch), and philosophers (Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Solovyov, Evgeny Trubetskoy). Solovyov sought to understand war in terms of the struggle between good and evil. While he regarded war as evil, he acknowledged that in certain contexts — such as defending peace or restoring justice — it could be justified as a "just war." He noted that war had historically contributed to human civilization: Greek culture, Christianity, and many scientific and moral ideas spread through conflict.



According to Solovyov, the moral foundation of religion should become the spiritual foundation for overcoming war itself. [3]

The oldest work in Western literature, Homer's "Iliad," is devoted to the theme of war, describing the semi-legendary adventures of heroes in the Trojan War. The Roman poet Virgil also explored the subject in his epic "Aeneid." Seneca called war "a glorified form of savagery," while Thucydides described it as "a teacher of violence." Ancient and medieval authors often relied on myths and legends, but their successors turned to documents and personal experiences. Leo Tolstoy, after the Napoleonic War, created his monumental epic "War and Peace," drawing on eyewitness accounts and historical studies. The writing process took about six years, during which Tolstoy rewrote some scenes up to twenty times to achieve precision and emotional depth. Some writers preferred not to focus on historical detail but on the inner essence of war. Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez used this approach in "One Hundred Years of Solitude," portraying the Buendía family across generations amid civil wars in Colombia. For Márquez, as for many writers, war serves primarily as a force shaping the psychology and behavior of his characters. [4]

RESULTS. In general, there is a striking unity among the opinions of world writers about war. The French writer Voltaire stated, "War turns men born to live as brothers into wild beasts." Leo Tolstoy saw war as leading inevitably to mass poverty and moral decay. Erich Maria Remarque asserted that "the dead alone know what war really is." Antoine de Saint-Exupéry compared war to a fever, while Bernard Shaw likened it to a wolf. George Orwell believed that "the quickest way to end a war is to lose it." Indian thinker Jawaharlal Nehru viewed war as "the denial of truth and humanity." In contrast, Aristotle claimed that "the goal of war is peace." The French writer Paul Reboux even justified the use of the atomic bomb, calling it a necessary means to eliminate surplus population — a viewpoint in which war becomes an inevitable stage in human progress. The Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky called war "the greatest blasphemy." Maxim Gorky emphasized its inhumanity: "I see war as pure barbarism — people killing others who have done them no harm." For those who have personally endured war, the perception is often softer, yet they still reject the monstrous cruelty that claimed millions of lives in the twentieth century.

Uzbek writers also expressed their reflections on war. Abdulla Qahhor wrote: "War not only devastates a

country but also destroys its people spiritually, extinguishing their spirit of protest against oppression." O'tkir Hoshimov stated: "In tales — war. In epics — war. In books — war. In films — war." He emphasized that war leaves no victors, for those who kill can never be happy. "Wars are often conceived by short-sighted politicians and waged by generals, but the innocent always suffer — the soldier, the father, the mother, the child." Tog'ay Murod observed that "great works are often created during times of famine, imprisonment, and war." [6]

Why does the theme of war never leave philosophy and literature? Because works about war reveal the true nature of humankind — who we are when tested by suffering and conflict. The destinies of heroes forged in hardship remain eternally relevant. Every armed conflict leaves a bloody mark on history and art, stripping war of false heroism and exposing its devastating truth. Art and literature thus preserve historical memory, shaping new generations who will never allow such horrors to return.

In conclusion, war occupies a vital place in art and literature, for only creators can instill in new generations a hatred of bloodshed and a love of humanity. The power of literature lies in its ability to preserve true historical memory and to teach humanity not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

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