

The Philosophy Of War In Tolstoy's War And Peace

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Abstract: This article explores the compositional structure and stylistic originality of War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy, with particular attention to the depiction of war as a philosophical and moral phenomenon. The study investigates how Tolstoy's narrative technique, realism, and polyphonic structure intertwine historical authenticity with moral reflection. The analysis highlights the author's rejection of conventional epic heroism in favor of a psychological and spiritual examination of human nature. The theme of war is interpreted as both a historical necessity and a moral trial, revealing Tolstoy's vision of history as a manifestation of collective human will rather than individual ambition.

Keywords: Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace, composition, authorial style, realism, war theme, philosophy of history, moral consciousness, polyphony.

Introduction: Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace (1863–1869) stands as one of the most monumental achievements of world literature. Beyond its vast narrative scale and historical scope, the novel is a philosophical meditation on the nature of history, human freedom, and moral responsibility. Tolstoy's unique compositional approach combines historical reconstruction with psychological depth, resulting in a work that transcends the boundaries of traditional epic fiction.

The author's portrayal of the Napoleonic Wars is not confined to military events; it encompasses the entire spiritual experience of humanity confronted by violence, loss, and the search for meaning. Tolstoy questions the very essence of heroism and leadership, challenging the deterministic view of history that attributes social transformation to great individuals. Instead, he asserts that history is shaped by the collective movement of the people — their beliefs, fears, and moral choices.

The composition of War and Peace defies the traditional framework of the novel. Tolstoy deliberately blends multiple genres — historical chronicle, philosophical essay, domestic realism, and lyrical meditation — into a unified narrative system. The novel's structure is cyclical rather than linear: it alternates between scenes of war and peace, between the outer world of historical events and the inner world

of personal consciousness.

This dual composition serves to emphasize the dialectical relationship between history and human experience. The narrative moves fluidly between the macrocosm of collective struggle and the microcosm of individual moral awakening. Each character's story mirrors a broader historical rhythm — Pierre's spiritual search parallels the moral chaos of the war, while Natasha's emotional evolution embodies the restoration of faith and humanity after devastation.

Tolstoy's compositional mastery lies in his ability to transform historical material into a living moral texture. His use of multiple narrative perspectives, epistolary fragments, and authorial commentary creates a polyphonic structure that invites readers to engage with the philosophical questions of existence rather than merely follow a plot.

Tolstoy's authorial style in War and Peace is characterized by simplicity, psychological precision, and moral intensity. His prose avoids ornamentation but achieves depth through rhythm, repetition, and vivid observation. The author's technique of "spiritual realism" allows him to portray not only external actions but also the inner motion of thought and emotion.

One of the distinctive features of Tolstoy's style is his ability to render psychological processes through minute details of gesture and perception. His characters are not static symbols; they are living

organisms in a constant process of moral discovery. The language of the narrative shifts between the concrete and the contemplative, between social dialogue and philosophical monologue, reflecting the complexity of human consciousness.

Tolstoy's style also reveals his moral worldview. The clarity of his prose mirrors his belief in truth as simplicity and in art as a moral instrument. His famous "poetics of sincerity" transforms artistic depiction into an ethical act — the act of understanding and compassion toward humanity.

The representation of war in *War and Peace* goes far beyond the battlefield. Tolstoy perceives war as a moral catastrophe, a manifestation of collective delusion and human blindness. For him, war is not an expression of heroism but an exposure of human weakness and the illusion of control.

The battles of Austerlitz and Borodino illustrate Tolstoy's anti-militaristic stance. Instead of glorifying generals and commanders, he presents them as victims of circumstance and vanity. Napoleon, in Tolstoy's depiction, becomes the embodiment of historical absurdity — a man enslaved by the illusion of his own greatness. In contrast, Kutuzov symbolizes wisdom rooted in humility and alignment with the people's will.

Tolstoy's philosophical view of war is inseparable from his concept of history. He denies the existence of "great men" as the creators of events, asserting that history is governed by moral necessity and the cumulative actions of countless individuals. War, in this sense, becomes a test of the human spirit — a confrontation between egoism and conscience, chaos and harmony, destruction and creation.

Ultimately, Tolstoy transforms the theme of war into a meditation on life itself. In the midst of devastation, he discovers the endurance of love, the sanctity of peace, and the eternal rhythm of moral rebirth.

War and Peace is not merely a historical novel; it is a spiritual encyclopedia of humanity. Through its complex composition, moral clarity, and profound psychological depth, Tolstoy redefines the function of literature as a means of ethical reflection. The theme of war becomes a mirror in which the true nature of man is revealed — his capacity for cruelty, but also his potential for compassion and renewal.

Tolstoy's artistic genius lies in transforming the chaos of history into moral order and turning personal suffering into universal understanding. The novel continues to speak to modern readers as a timeless reminder that peace is not the absence of war but the triumph of conscience, empathy, and truth.

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