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Redefining Heroism: A Tapestry Woven with Napoleon Bonaparte, Mikhail Kutuzov, Andrew Bolkonsky, Nicholas Rostov, Feodor Dolokhov, Captain Tushin, Pierre Bezukhov and Platon Karataev in War and Peace

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In his monumental work, "War and Peace," Leo Tolstoy boldly confronts the traditional depiction of heroism in the context of war. He meticulously deconstructs the archetype of the flawless leader, replacing it with a diverse ensemble of characters who redefine heroism through their actions, motivations, and in some instances, their pursuit of a meaningful life. This essay delves into Tolstoy's innovative portrayal of heroism through an array of characters, both historical figures like Napoleon Bonaparte and Mikhail Kutuzov, and fictional personas such as Prince Andrew Bolkonsky, Nicholas Rostov, Feodor Dolokhov, Captain Tushin, Pierre Buzukhov, and Platon Karataev. Tolstoy invites readers to perceive heroism not as grandiose acts or military prowess, but as the quiet strength, resilience, and moral compass exhibited by unsung heroes. The essay explores this theme through a diverse cast of characters, from unassuming soldiers like Captain Tushin to self-serving figures like Dolokhov, and disillusioned idealists like Pierre and Andrei. Contrary to the image of the glory-seeking conqueror, Tolstoy portrays heroism as the right way of being, embodied by ordinary people. The essay argues that true heroes prioritize duty, empathy, and a commitment to a greater purpose. The analysis extends beyond the battlefield, underscoring the heroism of resilience and compassion embodied by the peaceful survivor Platon Karataev. Lastly, the essay scrutinizes the complexities of heroism, acknowledging the imperfections of some heroes and the power of collective action. By dismantling the myth of the infallible leader, "War and Peace" urges us to recognize the various forms heroism can take and to celebrate the unsung heroes who shape our world. This essay encapsulates the essence of Tolstoy's view of individual character and ethical and religio-philosophical views of individuals by providing a comprehensive overview of its key arguments and themes.

Keywords: *Leo Tolstoy (the author), Heroism (central concept), Redefinition (how Tolstoy challenges traditional views), Ordinary Individuals (focus on non-traditional heroes), Quiet Strength (inner fortitude over outward displays), Resilience (ability to bounce back from adversity), Empathy (capacity to understand and share feelings), Moral Compass (strong sense of right and wrong), Duty (fulfilling obligations), Greater Purpose (contributing to something larger than oneself), Deconstructing the Myth (breaking down the idea of the infallible leader), UnsungHeroes (those who deserve recognition but are often overlooked), Flaws of Heroes (heroes are not perfect), Collective Action (heroism emerging from a group), War and Peace (the specific literary work analyzed).*

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Thesis Statement

In War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy deconstructs the traditional concept of heroism associated with war. He presents a complex tapestry of characters, from soldiers like Tushin to historical figures like Napoleon, to redefine heroism as the quiet strength, resilience, empathy, and moral compass displayed by ordinary individuals, challenging us to look beyond the battlefield and celebrate the unsung heroes who shape our world.

The Warrior Hero Ideal

In the realm of Western philosophy, the concept of a warrior hero is often intertwined with the philosophical discourse on ethics, morality, and the nature of the self. One such figure that stands out is the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates.

Socrates, often considered the father of Western philosophy, was a warrior in both the literal and metaphorical sense. He served as a hoplite, i.e. heavily armed foot soldier in the Athenian military during the Peloponnesian War, demonstrating physical courage on the battlefield[1]. However, it is his intellectual and moral courage that truly characterizes him as a warrior hero in Western philosophy.[2]

Socrates was a relentless seeker of truth, challenging the conventional wisdom of his time. He engaged in rigorous intellectual battles, using his method of questioning (the Socratic method) to dissect and analyze the beliefs and values of his contemporaries. His philosophical inquiries often led to discomfort and annoyance among the Athenian elites, yet he never backed down from his pursuit of wisdom.[3]

His moral courage was most evident in his trial and subsequent execution. Accused of impiety and corrupting the youth, Socrates had the option to escape or to compromise his principles for a lesser sentence. Yet, he chose to stay and face his death, believing it was better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. This act of defiance, of choosing to die rather than renounce his philosophical beliefs, solidifies Socrates' status as a warrior hero in Western philosophy.

Socrates embodies the warrior hero not through physical prowess or martial skill but through his unwavering commitment to truth and justice. His life serves as a testament to the power of philosophical inquiry and the courage required to challenge societal norms. In this way, Socrates exemplifies the warrior spirit in the intellectual and moral arenas, making him a true warrior hero in the annals of Western philosophy.

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[1]Bob Carruthers. (2013). *War in Ancient Greece*. Pen & Sword Military, p.113

[2]Levi, A. W. (1956). The Idea of Socrates: The Philosophic Hero in the Nineteenth Century. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *17*(1), 89–108. https://doi.org/10.2307/2707687

[3]Kateb, G. (1998). Socratic Integrity. Nomos, 40, 77–112. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24219955

But the idea of the military hero has long captivated the Western mind. From classical antiquity, we remember Achilles, the undefeated warrior; and the world conquerors .[4]

From the European Middle Ages, we remember the ideal of chivalry, the strong and fearless fighter who is the defender of the weak.[5]

By Leo Tolstoy's time, the example of Napoleon - the self-made man who became master of Europe supposedly through his own ability and audacity - had captured the European imagination.[6]

Tolstoy had seen enough of military life to understand the reality behind these images. He served as an artillery officer in Chechnya and then in the siege of Sebastopol during the Crimean War. He greatly admired the courage of the common soldiers, while seeing how badly they were treated, and he came to see the hollowness of the idea of the individual hero.[7]

Napoleon's Delusions of Grandeur

Napoleon Bonaparte continues to fascinate scholars and inspire debate. Whether he's a hero or a villain is a complex question, and current literature reflects this ambiguity. In this paper, we will explore Tolstoy's portrayal of a spectrum of heroes, ranging from the selfless to the selfish, and everything in between. We will argue that these characters, including Napoleon, are not merely one-dimensional figures, but rather complex individuals who embody varying degrees of heroism.

A brief review of the literature reveals that numerous scholars have delved into Napoleon's rise to power within the context of the French Revolution, often portraying him as a hero of the revolution. Works such as Philip G. Dwyer's "Napoleon Bonaparte as Hero and Saviour: Image, Rhetoric, and Behaviour in the Construction of a Legend"[8] provide an interesting examination of how the media depicted Napoleon in three primary ways: as a victorious general, a virtuous republican, and a peace bringer.

These images collectively constructed a 'hero-savior' myth, which was instrumental in Napoleon's ascension to power in 1799. However, these images conflicted with

[4]Ball, R. (1967). ACHILLES: TRAGIC HERO. *The Classical Outlook*, *44*(5), 53–56. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43929347 Odysseus, the survivor who overcomes all odds; (Stanford, W. B. (1982). Astute Hero and Ingenious Poet: Odysseus and Homer. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, *12*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.2307/3507394) and Alexander the Great (Burn, A. R. (1965). The Generalship of Alexander. Greece & Rome, 12(2), 140–154. http://www.jstor.org/stable/642311) and Julius Caesar COURSEN, H. R. (1962). The Fall and Decline of Julius Caesar. Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 4(2), 241–251. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40753597).

[5]Paris, W. A. (1988). "Heroic Struggle": A Medieval and Modern Dilemma. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *27*(2), 143–153. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505966)

[6]Rosenshield, G. (2018). TOLSTOI, NAPOLEON, AND HERO-WORSHIP: THE PATHS OF PIERRE BEZUKHOV AND ANDREI BOLKONSKII. *The Slavic and East European Journal*, *62*(2), 359–381. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45408481

[7]Before They Were Titans. Essays on the early works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Edited with an Introduction by Elizabeth Cherish Allen, Boston 2015, p.153-211; "Tolstoy," by Rosemund Bartlett, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, NY, 2011, 454.

[8]French History, Volume 18, Issue 4, December 2004, 379–403.

his quasi-monarchical public persona outside France. Dwyer's article explores the origins and evolution of Napoleonic propaganda, shedding light on the dissonance between his promotion within France and his conduct abroad. The author discusses how the hero-savior myth was utilized to legitimize Napoleon's rule during the Consulate and Empire periods, adding a powerful dimension to our understanding of his reign.

Napoleon's military brilliance is another facet of the hero narrative. Hegelian interpretations, as exemplified in https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/articles/napoleon-hegelian-hero/, argue that he was a 'man of action' embodying the spirit of the times. In Hegel's philosophy of history, Napoleon is seen as the 'soul of the world'. Hegel views Napoleon's actions as a realization of the 'Absolute', a concept he explores in his work 'The Phenomenology of Mind'. From Hegel's perspective, Napoleon is a philosophical hero.

In Thomas Carlyle's work "On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History," he presents a series of lectures discussing various types of heroes, including divinities, prophets, poets, priests, men of letters, and rulers. When it comes to Napoleon, Carlyle categorizes him as a "Hero as King," which is the title of his sixth lecture.

Carlyle views Napoleon Bonaparte as a quintessential example of a hero in the realm of political leadership and modern revolutionism. He investigates the mysterious qualities that elevate humans like Napoleon to cultural significance, suggesting that such individuals possess divine inspiration and unpredictable heroic qualities. Carlyle's portrayal of Napoleon is complex; he recognizes Napoleon's military genius and his role in shaping European history, while also acknowledging the controversies and the ultimate fall associated with his rule.

Carlyle's examination of Napoleon and other figures is part of his broader argument about the importance of heroic leadership. He believed that heroes have a profound impact on history, not just through their actions, but also through their spirit and ideas, which can inspire others and lead to significant cultural and societal changes[9].

The paper "Heroic Power in Thomas Carlyle and Leo Tolstoy" by Ilia Stambler explores the contrasting views of Carlyle and Tolstoy on the concept of heroic power. Carlyle, in his work "On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History," argues for the significant role of heroes, attributing to them a high degree of control over social and political events. Conversely, Tolstoy, in "War and Peace," challenges the existence of such heroic influence, suggesting that individual leaders have limited personal mastery and face substantial constraints. Ilia Stambler delves into the intellectual and political debates that arose in Europe following the Napoleonic Wars, which highlighted the role of the individual in history. Stambler presents Carlyle's and Tolstoy's models as coherent yet contradictory, reflecting a polarized view of power and mastery and the sense of individual insecurity during historical upheavals.[10]

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[9]Thomas Carlyle. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. University of California Press, 1993. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=295064&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[10]Stambler, I. (2006). Heroic Power in Thomas Carlyle and Leo Tolstoy The European Legacy, 11(7), 737–751. https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1080/10848770601023073

However, Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' challenges this one-dimensional hero image. Tolstoy shows that heroism is not just about power and self-aggrandizement. Tolstoy uses Napoleon as an example of how history is shaped by impersonal forces, not by the actions of "great men."

Elizabeth Duquette tells how the West was fascinated by Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite not fully conquering Europe, he had a profound influence on the 19th century. His life, achievements, and failures were a constant topic of discussion among both major and minor European thinkers, leading to a wide range of opinions. She wrote (p.636): "The circulation of Napoleon across the century - the ceaseless repetition of his life, achievements, failings, and example - created an alternative Napoleonic empire, distinct from its political antecedent and more formative for the century's culture. Because opinion varied widely - for Hegel, he was a "world-soul," "astride a horse, [who] reaches out over the world and masters it" (p.114), while Tolstoy thought he was "predestined by Providence for the sad, unfree role of executioner of the peoples" (p.817) - his empire's archive comprises much contradictory material.[11]

Catherine Gallagher's essay, "What Would Napoleon Do? Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters," examines the distinctions between historical, fictional, and counterfactual characters, using Napoleon Bonaparte as a case study. The essay illuminates how varying contexts and perspectives, including those of Hegel, Tolstoy, and Louis Geoffroy-Chateau, can yield diverse, even contradictory, portrayals of Napoleon. Gallagher's work underscores the growing prevalence of counterfactual characters in contemporary narrative genres and highlights the importance of understanding these distinctions in our interpretation of historical figures.[12]

The following quote from Irene Collins provides a fascinating insight into Leo Tolstoy's perception of Napoleon, as depicted in his epic novel "War and Peace". She writes: "Tolstoy despised Napoleon, not because he was a Frenchman (there is more hatred of the Germans than of the French in War and Peace), but because he seemed to be a petty-minded individual, vain enough to believe that armies marched because he commanded them to do so, that victories were won because he devised them, and that the fate of nations could be changed by his decree"(p.45).[13] Napoleon's belief that he can command armies and devise victories speaks to an inflated sense of self-importance and egoism. Tolstoy criticizes this as a petty and vain understanding of one's role in the world.

Scholars such as Ahearn, S. T. (2005) explore Tolstoy's use of metaphor to illustrate the dissonance between Napoleon's self-image and reality. Napoleon believes himself to be in control of events, but Tolstoy suggests that history unfolds according to forces beyond his grasp. Ahearn writes (p.631), "Leo Tolstoy employs some striking mathematical metaphors to illustrate his theory of history and to

[11]Duquette, E. (2015). The Man of the World. American Literary History, 27(4), 635–664. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43817723

[12]Gallagher, C. (2011). What Would Napoleon Do? Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters. *New Literary History*, *42*(2), 315–336. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23012546.

[13]COLLINS, I. (1986). VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF NAPOLEON'S MOSCOW CAMPAIGN. History, 71(231), 39–53. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24412016;

explain the naivety and arrogance of placing the responsibility of history's direction on the shoulders of the leaders of armies and nations." [14]

Jeff Love states, "Napoleon seeks to impose his will on events by grasping the patterns they follow such that will and intellect may become one, a combination which for our tradition is associated with the deity: the deity has only to think something to create it, to make it happen." [15]

Let's look more closely at Tolstoy's own words. In War and Peace Tolstoy's Napoleon serves as a cautionary tale, embodying the distorted concept of heroism fueled by ego and ambition. He is portrayed as a self-absorbed manipulator, driven by a thirst for power and a desperate desire to be etched in history as a great conqueror. His decisions are often impulsive, fueled by a delusion of control, and his victories are more a product of chance than strategic brilliance. Napoleon's ultimate downfall highlights the emptiness of heroism built solely on personal glory. Far from being a celebrated conqueror, Napoleon emerges as a self-absorbed figure, ultimately exposed as a pawn in the grand scheme of history. Through his portrayal of Napoleon, Tolstoy dismantles the myth of the "great man," suggesting that true significance lies not in individual ambition, but in the complex interplay of forces beyond human control.

In each scene in which Napoleon appears - the conversation with wounded Russian officers (p. 306-307)[16], the interview with the envoy General Balashev (p. 661-669)[17], his reception of a picture of his son on the eve of the Battle of Borodino (p. 832-836)[18] and the many other scenes - neither he nor members of his entourage say a single thing to each other that is meaningful. Everything is for effect.

During preparations for the invasion of Russia, a Polish cavalry officer tries to impress Napoleon by taking his men across a river at a dangerous point where Napoleon happens to be, rather finding a safe river ford. Forty Poles drown, and the rest of them don't even make it across the river. Napoleon cares nothing for what they did, but he gives their leader a medal anyway. (p. 651)[19]

Not one order given at the Battle of Borodino is carried out as ordered. (p. 838)[20]. However, Tolstoy notes, Napoleon "carried out his role of appearing to command calmly, and with dignity," and Tolstoy admits that the ability to play this role is an essential part of command. (p. 841)[21]

Napoleon looks on the dead and wounded on the battlefield and for a moment is shaken. But when an adjutant says Russians are still holding on, Napoleon says,

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[14]Ahearn, S. T. (2005). Tolstoy's Integration Metaphor from War and Peace. The American Mathematical Monthly, 112(7), 631–638. https://doi.org/10.2307/30037547

[15]Love, Jeff. "The Great Man in War and Peace in Rick McPeak & Donna Tussing Orwin eds *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in War and Peace*, edited by Rick Cornell University Press, 2012. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pensu/detail.action?docID=3138366 85-97.

[16]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983.

[17]Ibid

[18]Ibid

[19]Ibid

[20]Ibid

[21]Ibid

"Let them have more." (p. 873)[22]. He consoles himself with the fact that the number of dead Russians and also of dead allied troops exceeds the number of dead Frenchmen.

After the battle, he makes what Tolstoy says are the worst possible choices. He could have wintered in Moscow, he could have attacked St. Petersburg or Nizhni Novgorod, or he could have withdrawn by a more northerly or southerly route. Instead, he remains in Moscow until October, allows his soldiers to loot the city, and then allows them to carry their loot on the retreat, and chooses to retreat along the worst possible route - the route by which they came in. Tolstoy writes that if Napoleon had intended the destruction of his army, he would not have acted differently. (p. 1070)[23]

He issues many decrees, but they are not carried out. Tolstoy says Napoleon was no more in control of his retreating army than the figurehead of a ship is in control of a ship. (p. 1072 - 1077)[24]

From the outset, Napoleon is presented as a man obsessed with self-image. Tolstoy emphasizes his posturing and theatrical pronouncements, highlighting the gulf between his perceived grandeur and the reality of his actions. We see Napoleon constantly preening and manipulating his public image, more concerned with appearing a great strategist than with the human cost of his campaigns. His pronouncements about his "destiny" ring hollow when contrasted with the chaotic nature of war and the randomness of events on the battlefield.

Tolstoy further undermines Napoleon's heroic stature by stripping him of agency. He portrays the French emperor as a puppet manipulated by historical forces beyond his comprehension. Napoleon believes himself to be a master strategist, dictating the course of events. However, Tolstoy emphasizes the unpredictable nature of war and the role of chance. Battles are depicted as chaotic and brutal, with outcomes determined by factors outside of Napoleon's control. This emphasis on chance and uncontrollable forces serves to diminish Napoleon's perceived brilliance and control.

The devastating impact of the French invasion on Russia further exposes the hollowness of Napoleon's heroism. Tolstoy portrays the war not as a glorious conquest, but as a brutal and senseless act of violence. The suffering of ordinary people stands in stark contrast to Napoleon's self-aggrandizement. We see the destruction of Moscow, the hardships endured by soldiers, and the devastation inflicted upon civilians. Through these scenes, Tolstoy emphasizes the human cost of Napoleon's ambition, effectively dismantling any notion of him as a heroic figure.

By the novel's conclusion, Napoleon is a diminished figure, stripped of his aura of invincibility. His retreat from Moscow is a humiliating defeat, exposing the emptiness of his grand pronouncements. Tolstoy's portrayal of Napoleon serves as a powerful critique of hero worship and the "great man" theory of history. True significance, the novel suggests, lies not in individual ambition or self-promotion, but in the complex interplay of forces that shape human events.

[22]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[23]Ibid
[24]Ibid

Mikhail Kutuzov, the Servant Leader

Leo Tolstoy's portrayal of General Kutuzov in "War and Peace" aligns remarkably well with Robert K. Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership[25].

General Kutuzov, the commander of the Russian forces against Napoleon, is depicted as a humble and spiritual leader. He is not the archetypal image of military leadership, being old, fat, and one-eyed. Yet, he is a brilliant strategist and a practiced philosopher of human nature. Rick McPeak (p.111) writes: "Yet, in conjunction with this malevolent prophecy, Kutuzov extends personal and professional kindness to Prince Andrei. The venerable Commander-in-Chief, realizing that his subordinate has bonded with his infantry troops in a way no staff officer can, allows Prince Andrei to refuse duty on Kutuzov's own staff and lead his regiment into combat.[26] Kutuzov also comforts Prince Andrei, who is mourning the recent death of his father, by declaring "I'm like a father to you… If you need anything, come straight to me" (p.743–744)" [27]

Kutuzov is motivated by personal belief rather than the desire for acceptance. He is more realistic and wary about the state of things. He hesitates to declare a Russian victory at Borodino despite the obvious advantages of doing so. Such awareness of the mysteries of existence wins Kutuzov our—and Tolstoy's—approval.

Robert K. Greenleaf's Servant Leadership is a non-traditional leadership philosophy that places the primary emphasis on the well-being of those being served. The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The servant-leader shares power puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

When we juxtapose these two perspectives, we can see that Kutuzov embodies many of the principles of servant leadership. Like a servant leader, Kutuzov is humble, putting the needs of his soldiers and his country before his own. He is not driven by ego or personal ambition but by a deep sense of duty and service. His strategic brilliance is not used for personal glory but for the benefit of all. His humility and spirituality, contrasted with Napoleon's vanity and self-absorption, further underscore his alignment with the principles of servant leadership.

Ani Kokobobo (p.221) writes, "In a long coat on an immensely fat body, with a somewhat rounded back, an uncovered white head, a blinded white eye in a puffy face, Kutuzov entered the circle with his dipping, swaying gait, and stopped behind the priest. He crossed himself with a habitual gesture, touched the ground with his hand, and, sighing deeply, bowed his gray head (764). With his 'immensely fat body', Kutuzov dips and sways and is pulled down by gravity… Unlike Napoleon, who likes to present himself as seamless underneath his blue uniform, which he uses to

[25]Greenleaf RK, Senge PM, Covey SR, Spears LC. *Servant Leadership : A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Vol Twenty-fifth anniversary edition. Paulist Press; 2002. Accessed June 13, 2024. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/login.aspx?Direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=587729&site=ehost-live&scope=site

[26]McPeak, Rick & Donna Tussing Orwin, eds. Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in War and Peace. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2012.

[27]Rick McPeak, Benevolence on the Battlefield, in Cooke Brett ed. Critical Insights War and Peace, Salem Press, 2014;101-118.

cover his overweight parts, Kutuzov is not interested in hiding his weight. …As Andrei notes before Borodino, Kutuzov is the right person to lead the Russian army because there is no personal ego driving him." [28]

Tolstoy's Kutuzov and Greenleaf's servant leader share a common ethos of service, humility, and a focus on the well-being of others. They both challenge traditional notions of leadership, offering a model that is more compassionate, ethical, and ultimately, more effective. This comparison not only sheds light on the depth of Tolstoy's characterization but also underscores the timeless relevance of servant leadership.

As depicted by Tolstoy, Kutuzov is in stark contrast to Napoleon. He is the antithesis of the traditional war hero - an unassuming, aging man with a shrewd understanding of human nature and the limitations of command. He doesn't rely on elaborate strategies or seek personal glory.

He largely ignores proposed plans and sometimes falls asleep during councils of war. (p. 274-275)[29]. Instead, he trusts his experience, the resilience of his troops, and "time and patience" to defeat Napoleon. (p. 798)[30]. Kutuzov's heroism lies in his pragmatic wisdom, his ability to inspire loyalty and his complete lack of personal ambition.

While Napoleon has absolute authority, Kutuzov is subject to the authority of Tsar Alexander. While Napoleon's entourage consists of sycophants and hero-worshipers, Kutuzov is surrounded by critics and back-biters who don't respect him.

We first meet Kutuzov as a commander in the field in 1805, in retreat with Austrian allies after Napoleon has taken Vienna. He has no plan, but neither surrenders nor offers battle and keeps his army in the field (p. 174-175)[31]. When finally forced to stand and fight, his army is saved by the steadfastness of an artillery captain whose identity he probably never learns. (p. 197-206)[32]

He knows the Battle of Austerlitz is probably un-winnable. He tells Tsar Alexander so and is ignored, but does his best anyway. (p. 268)[33].

Andrew Bolkonsky, reporting for duty in 1812 when Napoleon invades, sees that Kutuzov is no ordinary commander. "It was evident that Kutuzov despised intellect and learning, and even the patriotic feeling shown by [Vasily] Denisov; but he despised them not because of his own intellect, feelings or knowledge – he did not try to display any of these – but because of something else," Tolstoy wrote. "He despised them because of his old age and experience of life." (p. 795-796)[34].

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[28]Ani Kokobobo Tumbling Napoleon and Fat Kutuzov, in Cooke Brett ed. Critical Insights War and Peace, Salem Press, 2014;210-224.
[29]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[30]Ibid
[31]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[32]Ibid
[33]Ibid
[34]Ibid

Kutuzov tells Bolkonsky that time and patience are the keys to victory. He says, "It is not difficult to capture a fortress, but it is difficult to win a campaign. For that, not storming and attacking, but *time* and *patience* are wanted." (p. 798)[35]

Andrew reflects, "He will not bring in any plans of his own. He will not devise or undertake anything, but he will hear everything, remember everything, and put everything in its place. He will not hinder anything useful or allow anything harmful. He understands that there is something stronger and more important than his own will – the inevitable course of events, and he can see them and grasp their significance, and seeing that significance, refrain from meddling and renounce his personal wish directed to something else." (p. 799)[36]

He had no grand plan to lure Napoleon into the depths of Russia. (p. 732, 733)[37]. When he fights the Battle of Borodino, he hopes to win. The day after the battle, he hopes to finish off the French army. (p. 882-884)[38]. But when he sees that this is impossible, he lets Napoleon occupy Moscow rather than sacrifice his army. Again, he neither surrenders nor tries to fight a hopeless battle but relies on time and patience to find a way. (p. 884-886)[39]

He is not afraid to fight, but his priority is to preserve his troops, who are starving, barefoot, and in rags, rather than to sacrifice their lives when the battle is useless. He does not allow himself to be limited by the so-called rules of war, because he does not think of war as a game.

When Napoleon evacuates Russia, he does not try to trap him or block his way, although he is unable to restrain his troops from giving battle. (p. 1100, 1178)[40] He resigns his command once Napoleon's army has left Russian soil because his mission has been accomplished. (p. 1178)[41]

Andrew Bolkonsky: What Price Glory?

Prince Andrew Bolkonsky seeks military glory and fame because of a lack of purpose and meaning in his personal life. He scoffs at his friend Pierre Bezukhov's idea that people should fight for their convictions. If that were so, he says, there would be no war. Pierre asks him why he is going to war. He replies, "What for? I don't know. I must. … I'm going because the life I lead here does not suit me." (p. 25)[42]

He is a capable and intelligent officer, valued by General Kutuzov. But prior to the Battle of Austerlitz, he admits to himself that his motivation is the desire for glory. He thinks, "…if … I want glory, want to be known to men, want to be loved by them, it is not my fault that I want it and want nothing but that and live only for that. Yes, for that alone! … Death, wounds, the loss of family – I fear nothing. And precious

[35]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[36]Ibid
[37]Ibid
[38]Ibid
[39]Ibid
[40]Ibid
[41]Ibid
[42]Ibid

and dear as many people are to me: father, sister, wife – those dearest to me – yet dreadful and unnatural as it seems, I would give them all at once for a moment of glory, of triumph over men, of love from men whom I don't know and shall never know, for the love of these men here." (p. 276-277)[43]

The next day, he performs a heroic deed, inspiring soldiers by carrying a regimental flag into the face of the enemy. (p.193)[44] He is wounded and nearly killed. (p. 294)[45].

His near-death experience makes him feel that, from a cosmic point of view, the quest for fame by military heroism is meaningless. (p. 294, 307)[46] He retires from active service. He says he will never serve in the army again, even if Napoleon invades Russia and overruns Bald Hills, his family estate. (p. 403)[47]

But when Napoleon actually invades, he rejoins the army. This time his motive is hatred of the enemy, who has invaded his nation, destroyed his family estate, and indirectly caused the death of his father. (p. 830)[48]

This time he goes into battle without illusions and without any desire for individual glory. Like Kutuzov, his desire is to destroy the enemy by all means necessary, also without regard for the rules of war. As he sees it, the outcomes of battles and wars are decided by the courage and determination of the troops, not the tactics and strategy of the leaders. (p. 828-829)[49]

Once again, he is wounded, this time fatally. (p. 868)[50] Dying, he loses all fear of death. (p. 870)[51] His worst enemy, Anatole Kuragin, is on a hospital bed next to him, and he feels compassion for him (p. 872)[52] He is overwhelmed by a feeling of love of life and humanity, but Tolstoy gives no indication he regrets military service.

The Education of Nicholas Rostov

Nicholas Rostov is a more typical Russian officer. When he enlists, he has illusions about military life, such as that brave soldiers never feel fear. (p. 152)[53]. He experiences battle and realizes he actually could be killed. "Can they be running to me?" he thinks. "And why? To kill me? *Me*, whom everybody is so fond of?" He is wounded and survives. (p. 195)[54].

[43]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[44]Ibid
[45]Ibid
[46]Ibid
[47]Ibid
[48]Ibid
[49]Ibid
[50]Ibid
[51]Ibid
[52]Ibid
[53]Ibid
[54]Ibid

He soon comes to understand the reality of military life. He comes to realize, not only that soldiers give false accounts of their exploits in battle, but that it is impossible to give a truthful account, because of the power of the illusion of glory.

He comes to see the arbitrariness of so-called military justice. An officer steals a purse of gold from one of his comrades, and he tries to get it back. He is told to apologize to the thief, which he refuses to do. (p. 136 - 138)[55]

His friend Vasily Denisov is unjustly punished for seizing needed provisions of hungry troops without authorization. (p. 421-425)[56]. The Tsar refuses to accept his petition on behalf of Denisov (p. 436 - 437)[57]

At the same time, Nicholas feels welcome in his regiment. He feels it is his home. He feels he understands his comrades and is understood by them. He feels he will be taken care of. This is at a time when the regiment has lost half its men due to hunger and disease. In spite of this, the regiment has high morale. (p. 417 - 421)[58]

A review of the troops by the Tsar Alexander gives Nicholas a feeling of unity and meaning. Tolstoy wrote, "Every general and every soldier was conscious of his own insignificance, aware of being but a drop in that vast ocean of men, and yet at the same time was conscious of his strength as part of that enormous whole. … Rostov … experienced the same feeling as every other man in that army: a feeling of self-forgetfulness, a proud consciousness of might and a passionate attraction to him who was the cause of triumph." (p. 255-256)[59]. Nicholas feels he would die of happiness if Alexander addressed him, but later gets stage fright when he has a chance to actually encounter the Tsar. (p. 301)[60]

When the Tsar and Napoleon make a treaty, he feels betrayed. But he tells himself it is not for him to judge. He reflects, "We are not diplomatic officials, we are soldiers and nothing more. Command us to die—then we die. … If we once were to begin criticizing and reasoning about everything, nothing would be left holy to us. In that way, we would be saying there is no God, nothing." (p. 441)[61].

When Napoleon invades, Nicholas goes bravely into battle. He has learned to steel himself so as not to be influenced by fear. He nearly kills and then captures a young Frenchman. He is given a medal but feels vaguely ashamed without knowing why. He comes to realize it was because he hesitated to land the killing blow because he recognized the humanity of his enemy. He is unable to decide whether this is a weakness. (p. 698 - 699)[62]

Even though Russia has been invaded, Nicholas is happy. His regiment is filled up to its full complement, which means the war will continue and he has a good chance of being promoted to a regimental command. As for the outcome, that is the responsibility of Kutuzov and the Tsar. (p. 1008)[63]

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[55]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[56]Ibid
[57]Ibid
[58]Ibid
[59]Ibid
[60]Ibid
[61]Ibid
[62]Ibid
[63]Ibid

Feodor Dolokhov: The Egoistic Hero

Feodor Dolokhov embodies another kind of heroism. As an officer and trooper, he is insolent and arrogant. (p. 116 - 117)[64] He has a strong sense of pride and a desire to distinguish himself. He carries out dangerous missions successfully. He seeks advancement and the admiration of his superiors and his peers, but he has no respect for his comrades-in-arms or supposed friends. The only people for whom he feels affection are his mother and crippled sister. Dolokhov's heroism is a performance, a pursuit of self-interest, and an expression of ego that fails to cultivate lasting respect or inspire true loyalty.

We first encounter him prior to the Battle of Austerlitz, having been degraded to the ranks for some offense, in a military parade. A friend offers to give him whatever he may need. He replies he will *take* whatever he needs. (p. 123)[65] He calls attention to himself and tells Kutuzov of his desire to distinguish himself. Kutuzov is unimpressed. (p. 119)[66]

In private life, he casually humiliates Pierre Bezukhov, leading to a nearly fatal duel. (p. 320 - 322)[67] He lures his supposedly close friend, Nicholas Rostov, into a card game, in which Nicholas suffers a ruinous loss. (p. 355 -357)[68] He abets Anatole Kuragin's attempt to seduce and ruin Natasha Rostova. (p. 620 - 624)[69]. It is implied that he has a grudge against the Rostovs because Sonya rejected him in favor of Nicholas. (p. 350)[70]

Napoleon's invasion of Russia finds Dolokhov once again degraded to the ranks and trying to ingratiate himself with Kutuzov. (p. 820)[71] He also tries to reconcile with Pierre – whether sincerely or not is unclear. (p. 821)[72]

During Napoleon's retreat, Dolokhov and Vasily Denisov are in command of guerrilla bands who harass the retreating French troops. Dolokhov, but not Denisov, executes all French prisoners.

Fifteen-year-old Petra Rostov, Nicholas' younger brother, turns up. He has joined the army as a cadet against his family's wishes and is delivering a message. (p. 1110 - 1111)[73] He is inspired by dreams of glory and risks his life unnecessarily. He delivers a message ordering Dolokhov and Denisov to rejoin the main forces. The two commanders decide to attack on their own instead, and allow Petra to join them in return for him pretending the message was not delivered on time.

The night before the attack, Dolokhov takes Petra with him on a dangerous mission behind French lines in French uniform, highly dangerous to both of them. They get back safely, due to Dolokhov's steely courage. During the attack the

[64]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[65] Ibid
[66]Ibid
[67]Ibid
[68]Ibid
[69]Ibid
[70]Ibid
[71]Ibid
[72]Ibid
[73]Ibid

following morning, Denisov tells Petra to hold back, but he doesn't and is killed, another victim of the dream of glory. Dolokhov says he is "done for" twice, in a tone "as if the utterance of these words afforded him pleasure." (p. 1128 - 1130)[74].

Ayn Rand might have approved of some aspects of Feodor Dolokhov. Rand might approve of his independence and strength. She wrote: "Independence is the recognition of the fact that yours is the responsibility of judgment and nothing can help you escape it—that no substitute can do your thinking, as no pinch-hitter can live your life—that the vilest form of self-abasement and self-destruction is the subordination of your mind to the mind of another, the acceptance of an authority over your brain, the acceptance of his assertions as facts, his say-so as truth, his edicts as middle-man between your consciousness and your existence."[75]

Dolokhov's unwavering sense of pride and honor and his willingness to take risks showcase a strength and independence that aligns with Rand's ideal.

Dolokhov's skills as a soldier demonstrate a level of competence Rand admires in her heroes who achieve their goals through reason and ability. Her hero Howard Roark says: "No. I hate incompetence. I think it's probably the only thing I do hate. But it didn't make me want to rule people. Nor to teach them anything. It made me want to do my own work in my own way and let myself be torn to pieces if necessary. (p.470) …Just weakness and cowardice. It's so easy to run to others. It's so hard to stand on one's own record. You can fake virtue for an audience. You can't fake it in your own eyes. Your ego is the strictest judge. They run from it. They spend their lives running. It's easier to donate a few thousand to charity and think oneself noble than to base self-respect on personal standards of personal achievement. It's simple to seek substitutes for competence—such easy substitutes: love, charm, kindness, charity. But there is no substitute for competence." (p.539).[76]

But she would reject Dolokhov's destructiveness (605) "The first right on earth is the right of the ego. Man's first duty is to himself. His moral law is never to place his prime goal within the persons of others. His moral obligation is to do what he wishes, provided his wish does not depend primarily upon other men. This includes the whole sphere of his creative faculty, his thinking, and his work. But it does not include the sphere of the gangster, the altruist, and the dictator. .. A man thinks and works alone. A man cannot rob, exploit, or rule--alone. Robbery, exploitation, and ruling presuppose victims. They imply dependence. They are the province of the second-hander"[77] Dolokhov's actions, particularly his vengeful pursuit of the Rostovs, are driven by a destructive force that goes against Rand's emphasis on creation and achieving happiness through life-affirming actions. Dolokhov's manipulative tactics, such as his gambling scheme to take advantage of Nicholas Rostov, contradict Rand's vision of a hero who achieves success through their own merit and honest actions. By examining Dolokhov's character through the lens of these quotes from

[74]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983

[75]Ayn Rand For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand, New York, Random House, [1961], p.128

[76]THE FOUNTAINHEAD by Ayn Rand. Copyright (c) 1943 The Bobbs-Merrill Company Copyright (c) renewed 1971 by Ayn Rand. New York, New York 10022.

[77]THE FOUNTAINHEAD by Ayn Rand. Copyright (c) 1943 The Bobbs-Merrill Company Copyright (c) renewed 1971 by Ayn Rand. New York, New York 10022.

her works, we can see how he embodies some of the traits Rand values because he is for himself, he asks nothing from others and he stands by and allows others to suffer the consequences of their decisions, but he ultimately falls short due to his destructive tendencies and manipulative behavior.

Captain Tushin and Other Unsung Heroes

Captain Tushin, an artillery officer, represents the often-overlooked heroism of ordinary soldiers. In 1805, during the retreat from Vienna, his battery alone held back the French and allowed the Russian army to escape in good order.

An infantry general and a cavalry colonel retreat, leaving Tushin without support. But Tushin himself fails to receive the order to retreat and is left to face the enemy alone.

In the face of enemy fire and overwhelming chaos, he displays calmness and unwavering determination. His focus is on fulfilling his duty and ensuring the safety of his men. He takes the advice of his sergeants. He inspires loyalty not through fear, but through his genuine concern and steady leadership. (p. 197-200)[78]

It was Captain Tushin who saved the day, while the general and colonel nearly caused a disaster. But they nearly steal the credit due to Tushin because the boastful pair more nearly fit the image of macho warriors. Only Prince Andrew's intervention saves him from a reprimand for losing a cannon. (p. 206)[79] It never occurs to Tushin that he might be a hero. He embodies the quiet courage and selflessness that Tolstoy identifies as true heroism. (p. 203-206)[80]

Two generals, Dimitry Dokhturov and Priotr Konovnitsyn, also represent Tolstoy's ideal of servant leadership. They are brave and always at the forefront of the action. They follow orders without hesitation or complaint and never call attention to themselves. Consequently, they are virtually unknown to history. They are, in Tolstoy's words, "unnoticed cogwheels, which, without clatter or noise, constitute the most essential part of the machine." (p. 1094)[81]

Then there is the peasant soldier, Tihon Shtcherbatov, recruited into a guerrilla band that harasses Napoleon's retreating troops. Like Dokhturov and Konovnitsyn, he is always at the forefront of the action and never claims any special credit. Tolstoy wrote, "When anything particularly disagreeable or revolting had to be done—to put one's shoulder to a wagon stuck in the mud, to drag a horse out of a bog by the tail, to flay a horse, to creep into the midst of the French, to walk fifty versts in a day—everyone laughed and asked Tihon to do it. … Tihon was the bravest and most useful man of the lot. No one discovered so many opportunities for attack, no one captured or killed so many Frenchmen. And consequently, he was the favorite

[78]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[79]Ibid
[80]Ibid
[81]Ibid

subject of all the gibes of the Cossacks and the hussars, and readily fell in with the position." (p. 1113)[82]

A counterexample is an anecdote told to Nicholas Rostov, about a general who personally attacked the enemy, along with his two sons, in order to inspire the troops. Nicholas' reaction is scorn for a man who would risk his sons' lives for a pointless gesture. (p. 690-691)[83]

Pierre Bezukhov and Platon Karataev

Pierre Bezukhov is a civilian who is fascinated by war. He comes to visit the Russian army and his friend Andrew Bolkonsky and view the battle of Borodino as a spectator. When he sees the battlefield from afar, with men marching and cannons giving off puffs of smoke, it seems picturesque. He falls in with an artillery company, where he is treated as a mascot.

A bombardment begins. An artilleryman who asked Pierre why he wasn't afraid is killed himself. A Frenchman has his head blown off in front of Pierre. The once picturesque landscape is covered with the dead and maimed. Pierre wonders why such horrors are allowed to continue. (p. 849 - 855)[84]

He looks for glory and meaning in life by staying behind in Moscow in 1812 to assassinate Napoleon, whom he had come to regard as literally the Anti-Christ. As Tolstoy points out, he is temperamentally incapable of doing so. In Tolstoy's words, he "was tortured – as those are who obstinately undertake a task that is impossible for them not because of its difficulty but because of its incompatibility with their natures – by the fear of weakening at the decisive moment and so losing his self-esteem." (p. 983)[85]

Instead, he impulsively intervenes to protect a woman from abuse by French soldiers and is taken prisoner. (p. 994 - 996)[86] Forced to accompany the French on their death march out of Russia, he endures hardships equivalent to the hardships of the ordinary soldier. He meets the wise peasant conscript soldier, Platon Karataev, and learns from him how to live from day to day, taking things as they come, enduring hardship without complaint, and appreciating life itself as a blessing.

Tolstoy wrote that Pierre "had learned … that there is nothing in the world that is terrible. He had learned that just as there is no condition in which a man can be happy and perfectly free, so too there was no position in which he need be unhappy and not free. He had learned that suffering and freedom have their limits and that those limits are very near together; that the person in a bed of roses with one crumpled petal, suffered as keenly as he now, sleeping on the bare, damp earth, with one side getting chilled while the other was warming; and that when he had put on tight dancing shoes, he suffered just as he did now, when with bare feet that were

[82]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[83]Ibid
[84]Ibid
[85]Ibid
[86]Ibid

covered with sores – his footgear having long since fallen to pieces. He discovered that when he had married his wife —of his own free will, as it had seemed to him – he had been no more free than now when they locked him up for the night in a stable…" (p. 1132)[87]

Tolstoy goes on, "After the second day's march, Pierre, having examined his blisters by the camp-fire, thought it would be impossible to walk on them; but when everybody got up, he went along, limping, and later on, when he had warmed up, he walked without feeling the pain, though at night his feet were more terrible to look at than before. But he did not look at them and thought of other things." (p. 1133)[88]

Platon Karataev shows Pierre by example how to live in adversity. He is courageous, resourceful, and cheerful despite danger and hardship. He never complains and is never downhearted. (p. 1034-1040, 1132-1134)[89]

He makes no plans, has no expectations, and is never disappointed. He has the kind of impartial love for everyone and everything that Andrew achieved only when he was on the brink of death. He shows how to be grateful for life itself when things are at their worst.

He follows the hard teachings of Jesus. He loves his enemies (or rather does not recognize enemies), has no permanent possessions, shares what little he has, and does not condemn others' behavior. Pierre is the only one among his companions who recognizes his qualities.

Tolstoy does not tell us whether Karataev was ever on a battlefield or how he came to be a prisoner, but it is impossible to imagine that he would kill to avoid being killed. A Karataev and a Dolokhov would be incomprehensible to each other.

Beyond the Battlefield: Tolstoy's Redefined Heroism

By weaving together, the stories of these characters, Tolstoy deconstructs the traditional concept of heroism. He emphasizes that true heroes are not defined by grand gestures, military victories, or a thirst for glory. They are the individuals who display quiet courage, empathy, a commitment to a greater purpose, and the will to do what is right. They are the soldiers who fulfill their duty with unwavering resolve, the leaders who inspire through compassion and wisdom, and the individuals who strive to make a positive impact on the world around them. War and Peace compels us to look beyond the battlefield and celebrate the unsung heroes who face adversity with strength, resilience, and a commitment to doing what is right.

This redefined heroism extends even to the civilian population. When the Rostov family prepares to flee Moscow, Natasha Rostova tells them to leave behind their furniture and valuables and transport the wounded to safety. This sheltered young woman then takes responsibility for caring for the wounded. Characters like Natasha Rostova, who displays remarkable emotional strength and selflessness in the face of personal loss, and the Rostov family as a whole, who sacrifice their possessions to

[87]Leo Tolstoy War and Peace. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Gifford, Oxford University Press,1983
[88]Ibid
[89]Ibid

help those displaced by the war, exemplify the heroism of resilience and compassion that thrives even amidst the chaos.

The Flawed Hero and the Moral Compass

Tolstoy further blurs the lines of heroism by presenting characters with both admirable and flawed qualities. Pierre Bezukhov, despite his journey of self-discovery, remains a somewhat naive figure prone to impulsive decisions. Similarly, Andrew Bolkonsky's transformation is gradual and marked by moments of bitterness. However, their willingness to learn, grow, and act with moral integrity ultimately defines their heroism in Tolstoy's eyes.

The Absence of Heroes: The Power of the Collective

In some instances, Tolstoy suggests that heroism may not be embodied by a single individual, but rather emerges from the collective spirit. The soldiers on the battlefield, despite experiencing fear and facing unimaginable hardship, find strength in their shared experience and unwavering loyalty to their country. Their collective determination to defend their country and resist the enemy is a powerful form of heroism. Even though they are ravaged by hunger and disease, they are brave and loyal. Tolstoy shows the horror and senselessness of war in granular detail. But he also shows his pride in the courage and patriotism of what he always calls "our" troops.

Conclusion: A Tapestry of Heroism

In our inquiry into the thematic underpinnings of heroism, as depicted within Leo Tolstoy's seminal work, War and Peace, we embarked upon a multifaceted journey, traversing the challenging narratives of a diverse ensemble cast. Through a careful examination of the lives and deeds of pivotal figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Mikhail Kutuzov, Andrew Bolkonsky, Nicholas Rostov, Feodor Dolokhov, Captain Tushin, Pierre Bezukhov, and Platon Karataev, we have undertaken a deconstruction of the traditional conception of heroism.

Tolstoy, in his masterful narrative, transcends the conventional portrayal of heroes as mere victors on the battlefield. Instead, he threads together a rich tapestry of heroism that extends beyond the realms of glory and conquest. Through his meticulous characterizations and profound philosophical and ethical reflections, Tolstoy invites us to discern heroism in its myriad forms—be it the strategic acumen of a military commander, the moral integrity of an idealist, or the simple acts of compassion exhibited by everyday individuals amidst the chaos of war.

Our scholarly discourse has not been confined solely to Tolstoy's great novel; rather, it has been enriched by a comprehensive survey of pertinent literature, augmenting our understanding of the profound philosophical, social, and ethical currents that underpin Tolstoy's exploration of heroism. Through this interdisciplinary

approach, we have illuminated the symbiotic relationship between Tolstoy's philosophical and ethical musings and the complex realities of human existence.

Central to Tolstoy's thesis is the assertion that true heroism transcends the ephemeral glories of warfare, finding its apotheosis in the quiet fortitude and unwavering compassion of ordinary individuals confronting extraordinary challenges. As we peel back the layers of Tolstoy's narrative, we are confronted with a profound existential inquiry—one that impels us to reevaluate our preconceived notions of heroism and to embrace a more expansive and inclusive understanding thereof.

War and Peace, in its profound meditation on the nature of heroism, serves as a clarion call for a paradigm shift—a recalibration of our collective consciousness towards a more holistic appreciation of human virtue. Through Tolstoy's magnum opus, we are beckoned to recognize heroism not as the exclusive domain of the valorous few, but as an intrinsic facet of the human condition—an indomitable spirit that perseveres in the face of adversity, and a beacon of hope that illuminates the darkest recesses of the human soul.

In conclusion, Tolstoy's War and Peace stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature to transcend temporal boundaries and illuminate the universal truths that bind humanity together. Through its complex portrayal of heroism, Tolstoy beckons us to embark upon a transformative journey—one that leads us from the narrow confines of conventional wisdom to the boundless expanses of human empathy and understanding. As we bid adieu to the hallowed halls of Tolstoy's literary universe, let us carry forth the torch of enlightenment—fueled by the indomitable spirit of heroism that beats within each and every one of us.

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