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# Dialectics of War as a Natural Phenomenon: Existential Perspective

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### **Abstract**

*Due to natural processes of movements of opposites that interact with one another in equal forces, the universe is naturally considered an arena of conflicts. As the law of the universe continues to maintain everything in motion, each matter in the ecosystem strives to protect itself in given existential struggles within necessary conflicts. Therefore, the fundamental law of nature is the protection of life (self-preservation) which is often realized through self-defence. It then explains why humans engage themselves in conflicts; not necessarily to bring peace but to survive and maintain themselves in existence. Hence, war is motivated by the innate drive for self-defence and maintenance of self in existence guided by a natural instinct for survival. From conception to death, humans continue to struggle for survival and that entails overcoming conflicts and adversities of life. Thus, war can be considered as having a genetic foundation. This is evidenced in the works of evolutionary theorists. The Darwinian ethological theory tenaciously holds that humans, just like other organisms, struggle to survive, but this is influenced by natural selection which favours the stronger species against the weaker ones. While the stronger ones pass on their inheritable genes to the next generation for maintenance of their species in existence, the weaker ones die off. Hence, the survival of the fittest. This position was very much supported by the Malthusian theory of over-population alert against the limited human resources which demonstrates the constant fight for food in order to survive. The Nietzschean Superman, Marxian class struggle, Heraclitan notion of change, and so on, all cling to the idea that the universe is a violent arena. Consequently, the protection of life has an important moral value. By implication, self-defence is right and justified even if it involves war. Therefore, it is ethical to push through; to defeat the adversary.*

**Keywords:** war; dialectics; violence; natural phenomenon; human existence; conflict; peace

## I. Introduction

Throughout human history, conflicts vis-à-vis war have been a perennial issue between individuals, groups, clans, towns, societies, nations, and so on. This is attributed to the nature of the universe as an arena of conflict through natural processes of movements of opposites in an existential struggle to be. The ethics of war is the desire and striving to succeed; to win which presumably is inscribed in human genes. It is also guided by the law of the universe which continues to maintain everything in motion with consequent conflicts and struggle for survival.

The International Humanitarian Law (IHL) defines war as “a phenomenon of organized collective violence that affects either the relations between two or more societies or the power relations within a society.”<sup>1</sup> Dialectics here refer to the existence of contradictory processes of movement of opposites of given relations in the world which gives rationale to the opposing conflicts of life events that characterize human existence. It expresses the idea that change is constant and can be brought about by either creative or destructive forces in the process of motion. Therefore, dialectics of war tend to explain that war and peace are alternate phenomena in life. The idea of war calls to consciousness the concept of peace and vice-versa. In other words, one implies the other.

This paper then focuses on the processes that bring about war and its justification from natural causes both at individual and collective levels. Hence, it investigates the dialectics of war as a natural phenomenon from an existential perspective. It aims to illustrate that human existence is characterized by conflicts and strife due to the conflictual nature of the opposing elements that constitute the universe in which human beings live. In effect, the world is considered as a product of violence. This is explained by some scientific findings exemplified in the Big Bang theory, which supports the violent process of the origin of the world through a cosmic explosion from a once compact, dense, and hot universe.

The Big Bang theory is a cosmological theory holding that the observable universe approximately originated 13.8 billion years ago from the violent explosion of a very small agglomeration of materials of extremely high density and

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1 Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, *The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law*, ed. Laura Brav (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

temperature [...]. Early in the history of the universe, matter began to condense and with time, gravitation attraction pulled materials together to form galaxies.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, violence which can also be referred to as conflict or war in this work, is regarded as an essential and natural aspect of the universe vis-à-vis human existence. Heraclitus, who teaches that change is the essence of life, recognizes that human beings come into the world and pass out of it necessarily through strife.

Every combatant naturally gears towards success and aims to win. This motivation to win is actually the ethics of war – to succeed by defeating the adversary. One of the major principles of daring to engage in war, including the so-conceived just war, is that the greater chance of success is achievable.

The strategies that succeed in war, whether conventional or unconventional are based on timeless psychology and great military failures have much to teach us about human stupidity, and the limits of force in any arena. The strategic ideal in war – being supremely rational and emotionally balanced, striving to win with minimum bloodshed and loss of resources – has infinite application and relevance to our daily battles.<sup>3</sup>

Following defeat, the conqueror legislates, enforces, and interprets the law.

## II. The universe as an arena of dialectics of conflicts

Everything in the universe is in constant motion both at micro and at macro levels of existence. Lawhead acknowledges that “nature is a busy drama of restless, changing entities.”<sup>4</sup> Heraclitus, the known philosopher of change, also explains that everything is in flux and changes constantly. So do cosmological studies which also establish that nothing is static but in constant motion. Again, it is observed that this cosmic motion is not always necessarily

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<sup>2</sup> Eliza Richardson, “Essentials of Oceanography,” *Libretexts*, [https://geo.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Oceanography/Essentials\\_of\\_Oceanography\\_\(Richardson\)](https://geo.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Oceanography/Essentials_of_Oceanography_(Richardson)).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Greene, *The 33 Strategies of War* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006), xvii.

<sup>4</sup> William Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 79.

smooth and peaceful. It often involves conflictual movements of opposites as the world is made of opposite entities; namely, male and female, hot and cold, positive and negative, big and small, old and young, black and white, and so on. In his *Fragments*, Heraclitus further asserts that all things come into existence through opposing conflicts. So he states, “we must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being through strife necessarily.”<sup>5</sup>

On grounds of complementarity, it is believed that opposites often attract themselves but, in most cases, they repel and even conflict themselves. Therefore, conflict is considered natural to entities in the universe because they share a common space and tend, as they move around it, to interact. Part of the interaction has been noted to include necessary conflicts with one another. The cosmological Big Bang theory, which presupposes the existence of matter and anti-matter, reveals at the micro-level that the universe is a violent sphere. Consequently, conflicts persist. Therefore, the universe is an arena of conflicts.

War connotes conflicts between groups, states, nations, and so on, expressed in the use of armed forces and various weapons. However, there are different types of wars in addition to the use of legal weapons. For example, economic, chemical, ideological, biological and even psychological warfare. In effect, war is constant and endless. The supposed peace accord, agreement, settlement, and so on, when critically analyzed are often seen as giving space for further wars. War and peace are dynamics of life (partners).

From history accounts, it is obvious that the First World War (also known as the Great War), an international conflict between most European countries that occurred from 1914 to 1918<sup>6</sup> which led to the fall of some great imperial dynasties and seriously affected Europe in general, was indeed a fertile ground for a more devastating war – the second World War (between 1939 to 1945) which involved more countries than in the former and even lasted about two years more than the former.

The war was in many respects a continuation of the disputes left unsettled in World War I. The 40,000,000 to 50,000,000 deaths incurred in World War II make it the bloodiest conflict, as well as the largest war, in history.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Heraclitus, *Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary*, trans. Thomas More (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), DK B80.

<sup>6</sup> Dennis E. Showalter and John Graham Royde-Smith, “World War I,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas A. Hughes and John Graham Royde-Smith, “World War II,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 31, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II>.

Besides, there are, so to speak, other mini wars occurring in between, in addition to those in Africa and other parts of the world. Each of the wars laid foundation for further onslaught. The Russian Empire emerged as a result of wars, including the emergence of the Soviet Union. Even Britain was the result of Roman conquest. The United States of America was the fruit of wars. The development of many nations like Japan, China, Germany, and so on, was as a result of a succession of wars. All these buttress the thesis that war is endless and it intermingles with peace. If care is not taken, all the mini wars going on in various parts of the world today may be preparatory grounds for a Third World War and it may be more ravaging.

Simple logic teaches that ‘force begets force in order to strike a balance.’ This is firmly corroborated by Newton’s third law of motion and universal gravitation (action-reaction law) which states that “action and reaction are equal and opposite if the equilibrium must be maintained.”<sup>8</sup> It goes to explain that during the interaction between two bodies, they apply to each other forces that are equal both in magnitude and in opposite direction.

### III. From universal to particular. The genetic basis of conflicts

Scientific discoveries have extensively revealed that there is an innate biological urge in living beings to redress what they perceive to go against them in self-defence and in possessing their possessions. Many psychological studies associate aggressive behaviours with the beings’ inner urge to survive and naturally preserve their species in existence.<sup>9</sup>

For an understanding of conflict, hostility and violence, many have looked to the inner person [...] by nature, by instinct, by heredity, we aggress on our fellows [...] our conflict is phylogenetic in origin and violence is part of our nature.<sup>10</sup>

As Emerson asserts, “nature has made up her mind that what cannot defend itself shall not be defended.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Morte and Neil W. Chittenden (New York: Daniel Adee, 1848), Book 1, Law III, 120.

<sup>9</sup> Harvey Starr, “Understanding Conflict and War: Vol. 4, *War, Power, Peace*. By R. J. Rummel,” *American Political Science Review* 74, no. 4 (1980): 1144-1145.

<sup>10</sup> Rudolph J. Rummel, *Understanding Conflict and War: The Conflict Helix* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1976), Part VII.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph W. Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 7. *Society and Solitude*, University of Michigan Library, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/emerson/4957107.0007.001/1:14?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

In particular, man is a struggling being. His intra-uterine and extra-uterine lives demonstrate significantly that human life is naturally a struggle. Struggle which implies conflict and by extension war characterizes human life and development from conception till death. The intricacies of human development, as divulged by the science of human life and the genetics of human development, expose that the competitive struggle (sperm race or sperm struggle), which begins at the early processes of development towards fertilization, continues to actualize conception through the entire uterine formation (zygotic, embryonic and fetal stages) in elevated complex form and even after parturition and throughout the lifespan. It is a 'Genetic Race of Survival of the Fittest (GRSF)' within the dialectics of life and death.

What is most interesting is that, about three hundred million sperms can be deposited in the vagina and only one (or two or more in the case of non-identical twins – dizygotic or trizygotic twins, and so on) wins the long difficult race through mucus and acidic fluid down to the fallopian tube.<sup>12</sup>

These elucidate the assertion that human life is one through conflicts and strife. The population theory of Malthus that unveils the competitive conflictual state of organisms due to limited natural resources also gives credence to the genetic origin of conflict and the innate drive of the organisms to survive.<sup>13</sup>

In human society, populations bred beyond their mean, leaving survivors and losers in the efforts to exist. Immediately, Darwin saw that the variation he observed in wild population would produce some individuals that were slightly better equipped to thrive and reproduce under the particular conditions at a time. Those individuals would tend to leave more offspring than their fellows, and over many generations their traits would come to dominate the population.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Purissima Egbekpalu, *The Reality of Human Existence: Coping with Existential Conditions, Sufferings and Pains of Life* (Awka: Vicgraceat Printing and Publishing, 2021), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. James Mallet, *The Struggle for Existence: Why the Mismatch of Basic Theory in Ecology and Evolution?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> *Evolution Library, Darwin and Malthus*, WGBH Educational Foundation and Clear Blue Sky Productions, Inc., 2001, [https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/02/5/l\\_025\\_01.html](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/02/5/l_025_01.html).

Again, a critical analysis of Darwinian ethological theory justifies conflicts vis-à-vis war as an innate drive towards survival. Following Malthusian prediction of possible overpopulation against the meagre natural resources, the Darwinian natural selection purports that there exists a fated competitive condition among living organisms over the limited natural resources towards the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life<sup>15</sup> that characterize their existence as Survival of the Fittest (SF). “There must be a ‘struggle for existence,’ for many of those born fail to reach maturity.”<sup>16</sup> In this way,

man like every other animal advanced to his present high condition through a struggle for existence consequent on his rapid multiplication; and if he is to advance still higher, it is to be feared that he must remain subject to a severe struggle.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from the evolutionary force and the underlying struggle for maintenance of species in existence, Marx presented us with the dialectics of materialism as the consequence of ceaseless conflicts and wars in human history and development. His dialectics of materialism, which endorses a materialistic understanding of history based on materialistic view of reality and economic laws of motion, structures human society and its evolutionary progressions in reactions to chains of conflicts between the classes.

A good insight into and analysis of Marxian dialectic materialism gives a suitable and clear picture of the natural tendency to conflictual existential approach to life. Marx insistently unveils that conflicts lead to different stages of human life in the society and accounts for the development of human history. His *Communist Manifesto* begins by acknowledging and justifying that human history is fundamentally marked with struggles. According to him,

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild and master [...] in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another,

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<sup>15</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, Volume 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 531.

<sup>16</sup> Robert J. Berry, “Maker of Heaven and Earth,” in *Creation and Evolution*, ed. Derek Burke, 76-115 (Oxford: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 88.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1871), 403.

carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending class [...] we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank [...]. The modern bourgeois that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old one. Our epoch possesses this distinctive feature.<sup>18</sup>

The *Manifesto* also ends with a revolutionary assertion as he declares,

A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French radicals and German police-spies [...] let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a whole world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!<sup>19</sup>

The Marxian theory of class struggle and historical evolution suggests that war is the game of life as it seems to corroborate the Darwinian notion of natural selection and biological evolution in supporting the idea that life is characterized by constant struggle for survival of the fittest based on the material needs. So does the Nietzschean theory of 'will-to-power' which purports that an ideal man is one who ruthlessly seeks power, creates his own values, and legislates for himself. In the understanding of the German existentialist, such a man is a superman; an authentic individual. In his *Genealogy of Morals*, he assumes that human beings have the innate drive to conquer (will-to-power). He therefore advances the transvaluation of moral values whereby the slave morality (SM) is replaced with Master Morality (MM) arguing that the latter belongs to the attributes of superman who has liberated himself from divine commands and legislates his moral laws for himself. So he avows,

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<sup>18</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works: The Communist Manifesto*, Volume 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 35-36.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 63.

against war, it can be said: it makes the victor stupid, the defeated malicious. In favour of war: through producing these two effects it barbarizes and therefore makes more natural; it is the winter of hibernation time of culture, mankind emerges from stronger for good and evil.<sup>20</sup>

Again, this position portrays struggles and wars inherent in human existence. Validating Darwinian, Marxian, and Nietzschean positions, the biological and evolutionary theorist Krishnananda states,

the will to power achieves its purpose only by striving and suffering and an inevitable loss on the part of the weak [...]. The law that directs all activities is the law of power, the urge to excel all others in strength. This urge is universally present.<sup>21</sup>

Along this line of thought he adds,

Life is meaningful only on account of struggle. War is good; peace is stagnation which is not worth desiring. War strengthens the race, peace weakens it. There is no universal truth, no unity, no oneness. All is difference, inequality, strife. Courage and strength are the greatest virtues, pity and compassion are bad for they contradict the will to power. Self-denial and asceticism, peace and happiness, non-resistance and equality are all oppositions to the primary instinct in life, the will to power. Life is struggle for existence. The test of a man is energy and ability. The desire of the superman is to face danger, to encounter strife in order to be supreme being himself.<sup>22</sup>

Hobbes refers to this as “war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*).”<sup>23</sup> According to him,

<sup>20</sup> William H. F. Altman, *Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche: The Philosopher of the Second Reich* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Swami Krishnananda, *The Philosophy of Life* (Bangalore: Divine Life Society, 1992), 439-440.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Hobbes, “De cive,” in *Man and Citizen: De homine and De cive*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 101.

the state of men without civil society (which state we may properly call the state of nature) is nothing else but a mere war of all against all; and in that war all men have equal right unto all things.<sup>24</sup>

The above-mentioned “equal right unto all things” may be well understood as equal access to all resources of human life which implies competitive approach and struggles to life that characterize man as a selfish and an egoistic being. This situation propels man in all his activities and keeps him in constant struggle with others. Hobbes, then submits that the competitive spirit, which underlies the struggle for survival of the fittest, puts the human society in utter chaos and to overcome it the presence of a supreme power is needed. These positions further justify the genetic origin of conflicts and its endless nature.

#### IV. Human existence as dialectics of war and peace

We earlier hinted that war and peace are natural dynamics of life. Aristotle argues that “all things are ruled according to nature.”<sup>25</sup> With his systematic study of the development of human history, Hegel observes the conflictual nature of human existence when he notes that “man exists only in so far as he is opposed.”<sup>26</sup> Following this assertion, Greene declares that “life is endless battle and conflict.”<sup>27</sup> Heraclitus purports that everything in the universe is in flux which implies violence. He also affirms that everything comes into being and passes away through strife. In his words, “we must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being through strife necessarily.”<sup>28</sup> Elucidating the Heraclitan position, Etim and Akpabio delineate that,

what constitutes the world is conflict, which should not be necessarily viewed and taken as negative but as the very condition that engender change and progress, even when it momentarily seems to be quite the opposite.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 186.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 30-1253a 1.

<sup>26</sup> Frances Berenson, “Hegel on Others and the Self,” *Philosophy* 57, no. 219 (1982): 77-90.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Greene, *The 33 Strategies of War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 3.

<sup>28</sup> DK B80.

<sup>29</sup> Francis Etim and Maurice Kufre-Abasi Akpabio, “Hegelian Dialectics: Implications for Violence and Peace in Nigeria,” *Open Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 5 (2018): 530-548.

Explicating Heraclitan view further, Stumpf too posits,

The conflict of opposites is not a calamity but the permanent condition of all things. If we could visualize the whole process of change, we should know, says Heraclitus that “war is common and justice is strife and all things happen by strife and necessity.” From this perspective, he (Heraclitus) says, “what is in opposition is in concert and from what differs comes the most beautiful harmony.” Even death is no longer a calamity, for, “after death things await men which they do not expect or imagine.”<sup>30</sup>

Advancing this position, Greene affirms that “there is something in war that drives so deeply into you that death ceases to be the enemy, merely another participant in a game you don’t wish to end.”<sup>31</sup> He further remarks that what confronts us in the real world is war. According to him,

This war exists on several levels [...]. On the surface everything seems peaceful enough, but just below it, it is every man and woman for him – or herself, this dynamic infecting even families and relationships. The culture may deny this reality and promote a gentler picture, but we know it and feel it, in our battle scars. It is not that we and our colleagues are ignoble creatures who fail to live up to ideals of peace and selflessness, but that we cannot help the way we are. We have aggressive impulses that are impossible to ignore or repress [...]. Many psychologists and sociologists have argued that it is through conflicts that problems are often solved and real differences reconciled. Our successes can be traced to how well or how badly we deal with the inevitable conflicts that confront us in society [...]. War is not some separate realm divorced from the rest of the society. It is an eminently human arena full of the best and the worst of our nature.<sup>32</sup>

Following the understanding that the universe is in constant motion through which matters move and conflict with one another in equal

<sup>30</sup> Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Philosophy, History and Problems* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> Greene, 95.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, xv-xvii.

forces, Dostoyevsky asserts that “without war human beings stagnate in comfort and affluence and lose the capacity for great thoughts and feelings, they become cynical and subside into barbarism.”<sup>33</sup> Along the same line of thought, Schopenhauer counsels,

In this world, where the game is played with loaded dice, a man must have a temper of iron, with armour proof to the blows of fate, and weapons to make his way against men. Life is one long battle; we have to fight at every step; and Voltaire very lightly says that if we succeed, it is at the point of the sword, and that we die with weapon in our hand. It is a cowardly soul that shrinks or grows faint and despondent as soon as the storm begins to gather or even when the first cloud appears on the horizon. Our motto should be No Surrender; and far from yielding to the ills of life, let us take fresh courage from misfortune. Our whole life would not be worth such a cowardly trembling and shrinking of the heart. Therefore, let us face life courageously and show a firm front to every ill.<sup>34</sup>

At this juncture, it becomes obvious that struggle and strife characterize human life. The innate urge to survive in the materialistic world of development always ignites interests that are in diametrical oppositions with one another that no policy can claim to resolve. In most cases, the interest of one group constrains that of another. The group that already possesses the power strives to maintain it and keep the other in a constant powerless state. The resultant effect is continuous conflicts at various grades.

#### V. The dialectics of war from religious perspective

It is natural to cogitate that religions should champion peace and not be identified with any form of violence. Is it not, in fact, surprising that Christ himself, who is attributed as the Prince of Peace and who in the Beatitudes encourages the peacemakers, says,

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace but war [...] to set a man at var-

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Counsels and Maxims from the Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (Harrisburg: George Allen and Unwin, 2020), 53.

iance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in-law against her mother-in-law; your worst enemies will be the members of your own family.<sup>35</sup>

Earlier in the same holy book, he tells the disciples, “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.”<sup>36</sup> This acknowledges the fact that the world is full of existential challenges. Admonishing them further, he declares, “woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.”<sup>37</sup> Again he energized them saying, “blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the son of man.”<sup>38</sup>

However, our experiences teach us that there are so many and constant religious wars around the world that even clog the wheels of development in the societies at both individual and general levels. In fact, all religions engage in one form of violence or the other. The question remains – why are there religious wars despite all? The book of Job clearly states that “the life of man upon earth is a warfare.”<sup>39</sup> We have already established the thesis that war is a natural phenomenon to a man’s life with the major feature of self-preservation. This explains why virtually all religions engage in various wars in order to defend their religious positions. Throughout history, religions engage in fights based on their beliefs. African traditional religion has the major focus of maintaining the African culture in relation to their ancestors through rituals. Anything that stands in the way of this is confronted in a radical way. So is the case with so many other religions of the world. All these emphasize the point that justice is brought about through war. In other words, life is an existential struggle between opposite forces. “Opposites are necessary for life, but they are unified in a system of balanced exchanges. The world itself consists of a law-like interchange of elements, symbolized by fire.”<sup>40</sup>

## VI. Summary of finding

Human beings are by nature violent and are ever combat-ready. This is based on what may be considered as ‘the will to live’ (*conatus*). It is a very strong emotional instinct for survival and persistence in life,

<sup>35</sup> Mathew, 10, 34-36.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., and 10:16.

<sup>37</sup> Luke, 6:26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 6:22.

<sup>39</sup> Job, 7:1.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel W. Graham, “Heraclitus,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/heraclit/>.

Capable of arousing distinctive bodily changes, movements and behaviors, emotions are generally considered as survival mechanisms that motivate responsive behaviors to maintain existence. This responsive behaviours connote goal-oriented movements.<sup>41</sup>

According to Aristotle, life has a force which is the *capacity* of a living thing to engage in the activities that are characteristic of its natural kind.<sup>42</sup> Force and resilience which are involved in war can be seen as conative features of man's persistence in existence. With regard to self-preservation in existence, he endorses that man has the natural inclination to actualize his potentialities through strong efforts of the will towards the right, and at the same time to create new potentialities to sustain his life. Through the activities of the soul (virtuous acts), man propels himself in a distinctive way towards objects of his desire for survival and flourishing.<sup>43</sup>

Dispositions to war are found to be existential. First, the scientific theories of the origin of the world, especially the Big Bang position, bear laudable evidence of the violent origin of the universe as well as subsequent and consequent conflictual motions of matters therein, including human beings. Second, struggle vis-à-vis conflict is genetically embedded in human nature and the continuous transfer of genes to generations.

Two major motivations, among others, that guide all human actions are self-defence (individually and collectively as species) and maintenance of self in existence. These inform why human beings struggle to succeed in life, in other words, to win the battle. These natural events justify the engagements of human beings in war. On this note, ethics raises the issue of 'just war.' Being violent in nature, man's attitude to war is shaped by ethics and laws regarding war, that is, moral and legal regulations on how war should be fought. This is classified into *jus ad bellum* (right conduct on going to war), *jus in bello* (right conduct while in war), and *jus post bellum* (right conduct after war). These too are based on human nature and the fundamental right to self-defence. They stipulate the norms governing the use of armed forces regarding war for the greater justice for all involved. Hence, the concept of 'just war.' In Aristotelian understanding,

<sup>41</sup> Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu, "Aristotelian Concept of Happiness (Eudaimonia) and Its Conative Role: A Critical Evaluation," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 75-86.

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle, *De anima*, 412b 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> Egbekpalu, "Aristotelian Concept," 75-86.

For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with the arms of intelligence and with moral qualities which he may use for the worst ends [...]. But justice is the bond of men in states, and the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.<sup>44</sup>

In law, there has been a debate over the possibility of sustaining certain ethics in war. The international laws, rules and conventions regulating war exist, though in some cases, some superior forces violate them. Laws are made by the ruling class who often does not keep them. Instead, they are enforced on the weaker counterparts. This perceived injustice advances war too.

## VII. Conclusion

War is a natural phenomenon with genetic basis. Again, the natural processes of opposite movements of matter in the universe bring about natural conflicts among them, hence, beings including man will continue to experience war until an equilibrium is attained. But this equilibrium has a conceptual problem due to the assertions of the astronomers and astrophysicists that the universe continues to expand. Thus, attaining the equilibrium becomes a bit difficult. In addition, studies also reveal that there are other universes (multiverse) for which getting to the equilibrium proves somewhat difficult. Along this line of thought, any form of peace experienced is temporal. Hence, war continues. Given that war is with humanity from birth, those who want to survive must be intellectually, economically, technologically and militarily strong.

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<sup>44</sup> Anselm H. Amadio and Anthony J. P. Kenny, "Aristotle," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 2, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>.

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