On the Boundary Between Loneliness and Solitude: An Existential Experience of War

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Abstract: The article investigates the existential boundary between loneliness and solitude in wartime, conceptualised as a limit situation in the sense proposed by Karl Jaspers. Drawing on the works of Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, and Søren Kierkegaard, the article interprets war not merely as a political or historical event but as a radical transformation of the structures of everyday existence. The study defines the distinctions between isolation, loneliness, and solitude, arguing that they represent distinct ontological modes of being. If isolation means externally imposed alienation, then loneliness characterises the breakdown of internally meaningful relationships, and solitude emerges as a reflective and potentially regenerative form of being alone. The analysis demonstrates that war intensifies inauthentic modes of existence and produces existential loneliness by destroying the conditions of ontological belonging. Solitude serves as a practice of confronting oneself, enabling individuals to restore their inner harmony and form authentic connections with others. It acts as the starting point for developing existential resilience.

Keywords: limit situations, loneliness, das Man, solitude, solitude as existential resilience, war.

Introduction

The limit situations in which human beings find themselves intensify their inner experiences, among which the feeling of aloneness is particularly pronounced. The phenomenon of modern loneliness has shifted from isolated, marginal social groups to the everyday experience of most people, manifesting itself in all its complexity (Berkowitz 2024). Scientists explain this trend by the acceleration of information and technological progress, the global COVID-19 pandemic and a series of military conflicts that have erupted around the world. W. Deresiewicz (2009) notes that modern human beings exist only in constant connection with others, and therefore, true loneliness is gradually disappearing from their lives. However, technologies that facilitate the constant presence of others (often illusory due to its virtual nature) deprive people not only of privacy and inner focus but also of the very ability to be alone with themselves.

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war is among the key drivers of loneliness. This feeling arises from forced displacement from war zones, the disruption of social stability, and the severing of ties with one's home. Loneliness intensifies against the backdrop of family separations, when men and other members of the family leave their homes to defend their homeland, leaving behind an atmosphere

of emptiness, uncertainty, and anxiety (Jaworski et al. 2025, 7). An additional factor exacerbating feelings of loneliness is the irreversible loss of family members and close friends with whom one has shared a life. All these factors create a persistent sense of lost unity and contribute to feelings of loneliness, ultimately confronting the individual with a limit situation.

The German philosopher K. Jaspers used the term 'situation' to describe a person's environment and the way in which they realise their own existence. Deprived of the opportunity to choose, a person is inevitably bound by the circumstances of external reality, from which there is no way out, since existential situations determine a person's self-awareness and the possibility of becoming oneself. Unlike a temporary situation, a limit situation defines the very essence of human existence, revealing its fundamental nature and potential for development. It cannot be overcome or escaped, as new horizons appear immediately after the previous one has been comprehended (Bornemark 2006, 65-66). A person can become aware of a limit situation only through directly experiencing the boundary, whether by crossing it or remaining at it, and this constitutes a moment of existential insight and the formation of a space for spiritual development (Jaspers [1923] 1970, 179). In Karl Jaspers' philosophical conception of limit situations, the emphasis is on realising that the limit is not the end of existence. The liminality of circumstances transforms from an obstacle into a stimulus for openness to existence, overcoming one's own limitations, breaking free from self-enclosure, and seeking opportunities to know the Other, thereby expanding one's ability to comprehend the world from a broader perspective (Bornemark 2006, 69). The limit situation radically changes one's entire perception of one's previous life, which loses its coordinates of certainty and begins to appear illusory, far from real existence. The world, which until recently seemed so reliable in its sensory reality, turns out to be a mirage that had concealed the reality of existence behind its illusion, and now only points to something beyond sensory experience. In a limit situation, a person is left alone. In this loneliness, they transcend the objects of everyday existence and uncover the truths of their existence (Shevchuk et al. 2023, 34).

Global crises, such as wars, intensify the experience of limit situations, transforming them into a constitutive element of everyday life. Events that previously appeared as turning points in human existence have become a familiar backdrop to life, intensifying the internal tension and drama of human existence. An analysis of the intertwining of the concepts of war and the limit situation reveals the paradoxical nature of the situation of war as a form of everyday reality, where the circumstances of the crisis simultaneously destroy the established order of everyday life and establish a fundamentally new form of existence, dominated by the tension of extremes and danger. It deprives a person of a sense of everyday stability, plunging them into a state of constant exception, where concern for survival becomes the primary vector of existence. At the same time, the duration of this state gradually negates its exceptional nature – the

extraordinary becomes the ordinary, and the experience of extremity becomes woven into the fabric of everyday life. Over time, war becomes a distinct form of existence, where the line between normality and the extraordinary becomes increasingly blurred (Shevchuk et al. 2023, 33). Such a permanent condition of existential liminality transforms from an exceptional event into a dynamic process (*der lebendige Prozeß*), where a person tests the stability of their internal moral and value structure as the foundation of their selfhood and, as K. Jaspers notes, forms a shell (*Gehäuse*) within which a person is able to live (Bornemark 2006, 75).

In the realities of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the liminality of circumstances, having exhausted the possibilities of everyday liminal experience, has moved into the realm of extreme existential tension. In his prescient article *A Third World War?* (2004), Timothy Snyder views the Russian-Ukrainian war as a critical point in global history – a defining moment at the radical boundary between being and non-being, at which the future of humanity may be determined. The author argues that the current war has a profound potential to escalate into a global conflict, potentially leading to World War III, if the world fails to recognise its true significance. Snyder emphasises that Russia's aggression is directed not only against Ukraine but also against the global ideas of freedom, truth, and humanity. Therefore, every state that delays in providing assistance effectively becomes complicit in perpetuating the threat. In this context, Ukraine is not merely the object of aggression, but a 'tipping point of world existence' where the fate of the democratic world is being decided. The extremity of this situation lies in the fact that, for the first time since World War II, humanity finds itself on the brink of self-destruction and, simultaneously, on the verge of spiritual rebirth, having come to realise its responsibility for the established world order (Snyder 2024).

The preceding analysis suggests that the current Russian-Ukrainian war, reactualising Karl Jaspers' classic concept of a limit situation, has radically transcended the framework of the limit situation, plunging humanity into an increasingly perilous realm beyond the limits of existence. The extreme nature of reality lies in the fact that now not only personal horizons of self-realisation are at stake, but also the fate of the existing world order, where the prospect of World War III casts a shadow over any vision of a bright future. In this historical shadow, where humanity balances between self-destruction and spiritual rebirth, human beings find themselves in a state of extreme vulnerability to circumstances that offer neither escape nor the illusion of a safe tomorrow. The modern reality of war, with its external challenges, has developed into an internal upheaval that is destroying the deepest foundations of human presence in the world. On this fertile ground, the phenomenon of loneliness in all its manifestations has taken centre stage as the growing existential state of a person left alone with the magnitude of the threats, in search of new forms of inner support and ways of being in a world that is rapidly losing its certainty.

I. The *Grenze* between Loneliness and Solitude

To examine the factors that give rise to different states of loneliness in the situation of war and the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon, it is first necessary to clarify the meanings of the terms 'isolation,' 'loneliness,' and 'solitude.' Each of these terms denotes a distinct human experience, ranging from the physical absence of others to an internal rift between the inner and outer worlds, or a conscious immersion in a dimension of inner spiritual concentration.

Distinguishing the nature of the constellation of phenomena surrounding loneliness as an existential of Being will make it possible to identify the circumstances under which war transforms a person's inner world, widening the gap between the Self and the World. A characterisation of these concepts will provide a basis for overcoming states of loneliness, identifying pathways of inner transformation, and finding sources of value-based support within the conditions of a limit war reality.

The problem of distinguishing between the concepts of 'isolation,' 'loneliness' and 'solitude' has long been a subject of philosophical inquiry, and as H. Arendt aptly put it in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: "Loneliness is not solitude. Solitude requires being alone whereas loneliness shows itself most sharply in company with others." (Arendt [1951] 1973, 476) It would be reasonable to assume that solitude, insofar as it involves withdrawing from others, might be understood as tending towards isolation. However, such identification is flawed, since isolation is predominantly externally imposed; it is forcibly imposed on a person and is designed to separate not merely individuals but entire communities, destroying the foundations of human solidarity. In the context of researching the origins of totalitarian rule, H. Arendt emphasises the political context of the phenomenon of isolation, which creates a situation where a person is deprived of full functioning, as there is no potential for uniting with Others in possible collective political action. The destruction of this capacity pushes the individual beyond the boundaries of the political sphere, depriving them of the ability to influence shared reality, since political power necessarily arises from collective action (Arendt [1951] 1973, 475). H. Arendt emphasises that isolation is the most fertile ground for totalitarian terror; isolation may precede terror, but a totalitarian regime forcibly intensifies it. Tyranny seeks first and foremost to sever ties between people, because control through fear is only possible in an environment of isolated individuals. At the same time, the phenomenon of isolation conceals an existential paradox: this state preserves the individual's capacity for reflection, creativity, and inner life – something that is fundamentally precluded by the experience of loneliness (Arendt [1951] 1973, 475).

In her reflections, H. Arendt argues that solitude implies being alone. The main difference from isolation is that in solitude, I am alone of my own free will, in relation to Myself, and therefore as a kind of two-in-one (Arendt [1951] 1973, 476). And if the process of isolation involves external coercion that separates the individual from others, then the state of solitude is chosen by the person

independently. Exploring the differences between solitude and loneliness, A. Rokach says that there are specific forms of mental activity, such as dreaming, fantasising, reflecting, revisiting memories, or planning a future trip, that require a person to be alone and do not require the presence of others and are not equated with the state of loneliness. Such solitude has a positive effect on the emotional and cognitive state of the individual. For those who practise solitude, it opens up a horizon of self-knowledge and a space for creativity, allowing them to focus, calm their inner impulses, reflect, meditate, write, or create something new. Solitude provides individuals with the ability to restore their inner resources, renew their strength, and restructure fragments of their own self (Rokach 2025). This researcher's assertions are consistent with S. Kierkegaard's idea that only in solitude can a person form the foundations of their own selfhood, choosing specific options from an infinite meta-space of possibilities (Kierkegaard [1849] 1941, 44). It is solitude that opens access to the possibility of self-creation. Time spent fruitfully alone promotes deep self-understanding, inner renewal, increased creativity, and spiritual uplift (Rokach 2025). By immersing themselves in a state of solitary freedom, independence, and tranquillity, people open their inner world to a variety of experiences, thoughts, and emotions (Svendsen 2017, 89-90).

Solitude primarily characterises the positive dimension of being alone, when a person immerses themselves in their own inner depths. In contrast, loneliness characterises the negative and existentially painful dimension of being alone, which is associated with a rupture in the individual's connection with the world of Others (Bian 2021, 621). The traditional association of loneliness with the absence of others, which focuses solely on the absence of social contact, blurs the boundaries between loneliness and social isolation (Motta 2023, 1144). And if solitude is characterised by voluntary and controlled self-directed withdrawal from others, which does not cause distress over the absence of emotional human connection (Gheaus 2022, 7), then a feeling of loneliness can arise even when a person is surrounded by their peers; at a concert or lecture, surrounded by other listeners, a person becomes alienated from those around them, remaining alone with the meanings conveyed by the words they hear (Svendsen 2017, 17). The experience of loneliness does not automatically disappear simply because one is engaged in high levels of social activity. The suffering caused by loneliness sometimes accompanies a person even in the company of close friends with whom they have established close emotional bonds (Soyarslan 2025, 2) and, as A. Gheaus notes: "Company, as such, is not an absolute safeguard against loneliness, and the company of those with whom one doesn't have any emotional connection may in fact aggravate it. More than the mere company of others is needed to alleviate loneliness." (2022, 11-12)

D. Enns suggests that the experience of loneliness belongs to those states that can be described only by someone who has experienced their unfolding from within. Loneliness constitutes a deeply personal dimension of human existence, and therefore, it can only be understood from a first-person perspective. It is no

coincidence that the experience of loneliness reaches its greatest depth through a process of reflection after the experience has passed its peak (2022, 5). A similar idea can be found in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which considers the possibility of one Dasein representing or substituting for another within the structure of everyday being-in-the-world: one Dasein can temporarily take the place of another Dasein in the space of everyday affairs, professional tasks, or specific social roles. Such mutual substitution is a characteristic feature of co-being and an essential condition for participation in the world of human communities. However, this possibility of representation is fundamentally impossible in the face of the finitude of Dasein (death), which is an essential feature of its integrity: "No one can take the other's dying away from him." (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 284)

The experience of encountering the unknown is analogous to the experience of loneliness in the sphere of human cognition. At the same time, Dasein's affirmation of itself in being-in-the-world is realised through interaction and communion with other Dasein. According to H. Arendt, human identity is confirmed entirely by other people. The saving grace of community lies in the ability to integrate fragmented aspects of the self into a coherent whole, opening a path from the self towards the external world from a state of unity and clarity (Arendt [1951] 1973, 476). Ultimately, loneliness can be overcome through authentic co-being, while the finitude of Dasein is an irreversible fact.

A fundamental distinction between the concepts of isolation, loneliness, and solitude enables us to understand better how the circumstances of war deepen the divide between individuals and Others, while simultaneously opening the way for inner focus and self-creation. Isolation is an external and forced state that destroys social ties and deprives the individual of the ability to act collectively, creating fertile ground for cultural and political manipulation and increasing individual vulnerability to it. Loneliness, unlike isolation, reflects an internal rupture between the self and the surrounding world, manifesting itself in an existential experience that can arise even in the midst of loved ones and cannot be overcome by the mere physical presence of others. At the same time, solitude manifests itself as a conscious way of being alone, which opens up the possibility of self-realisation, inner renewal, and spiritual growth. It is precisely the state of temporary solitude that can become the inner space in which the existential loneliness of superficial social interaction is overcome, allowing a person to rest from the realities of the outside world within themselves (Svendsen 2017, 114).

II. War as a Catalyst for Loneliness

The issue of war has long been the focus of researchers, and although interpretations of this phenomenon vary considerably, their conclusions converge on a common point: war cannot be equated with the inevitable fate of the universe; its occurrence is a direct consequence of human decisions and actions. In his book *Philosophy of War* (2002), Donald A. Moseley notes that the phenomenon of war

should not be viewed as either a natural or a metaphysical event; rather, it is most often a human-made consequence of ideas and conscious choices that provide the basis for its emergence. The public affirmation of such ideas can take the form of tacit consent, guided by traditions or internal collective conventions, or it can be ratified outside of human choice, through indirect acceptance and justification by external factors (Moseley 2002, 91-92).

War exposes the consequences of an inauthentic mode of being-in-the-world. In the terminology developed by M. Heidegger in his work *Being and Time*, this means that individual Dasein is immersed in the everyday regime of impersonal They (*das Man*), which allows the generalized Other to shape the way Dasein presents itself in the external world and is defined within various spheres of social activity, subordinating Dasein to the authority of anonymous social norms, dissolving the Self into anonymity (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 163-164). It is in this distorted state of existence, when the vector of being is directed according to the principle of 'it is customary,' that war crosses the line between potentiality and reality, becoming a consequence of cultural and political dogmas formed by man himself, yet the human being is no longer an autonomous subject within the collective, but an integral part of the dominant *das Man*.

In the context of the levelling of personal identity and its subsequent dissolution into an impersonal community, H. Arendt's ideas offer a clearer understanding of the mechanism through which Dasein, immersed in the mode of being of *das Man*, transforms war into an established form of collective action. By compelling masses of lonely individuals to submit to externally imposed ideas, the system subjugates them to the internal tyranny of ideological logic, erodes the social bonds between them, deprives them of the space for free thinking, and drives them to submit to the logic of the totalitarian machine (Arendt [1951] 1973, 473). In this state, a person is deprived of the ability to distinguish between truth and fiction, which leads to the destruction of their relationships with society, their neighbours, and reality itself. As a result, the individual loses "the capacity of both experience and thought." (Arendt [1951] 1973, 474) On this basis, a person develops a persistent experience of "not belonging to the world at all." (Arendt [1951] 1973, 475) This experience intensifies the "negative emotional state arising from a discrepancy between one's desired and actual experience of social connection, which is influenced by social expectations," (World Health Organization 2025, 11) or in other words, a feeling of existential loneliness.

Loneliness, as a phenomenon intensified by periods of social crisis, arises at the intersection of the inner self's desire to understand its relationship with the external world (Bian 2021, 621). When a subject finds themselves in real-life situations with experiences and consciousness that are radically different from the consciousness of Others, an emotional dissonance arises that destroys a person's ability to contribute their own perspective to the shared world (Arendt [1951] 1973, 475). This seemingly insignificant discrepancy generates a conflict between the individual and the outside world, undermining the individual's

capacity for meaningful cooperation with others, not so much to achieve a common goal but rather to ensure the survival of the social group (Bian 2021, 622). This state of affairs highlights the need for an intersubjective world of Others, "with whom one would like to connect and flourish, to be recognised as a person and as a part of a community." (Tirkkonen and Tietjen 2025, 944)

A detailed analysis of the nature of the conflict between internal and external consciousness as a prerequisite for personality formation demonstrates that loneliness arises at the point where individual desires, experiences, and emotional burden clash with the rhythm of surrounding reality ('a temporal mismatch or a spatial incongruity') (Motta 2023, 1149). In today's world, where human consciousness has become a space for public discourse involving competing perspectives, the subject often finds itself unable to negotiate the tension between its own uniqueness and the ambiguity of the external environment. As a result of the imbalance between personal experiences and external expectations, the sense of a division between the Self and Others, which is the essential basis of loneliness, is reinforced (Bian 2021, 624). The conditions of extreme existential crises deepen this particular paradox of loneliness: the Self remains open to the external world, exposing itself together with its emotional and experiential baggage, while Others, as an impersonal and generalised form, look at the Self as a wall of mirrors. They pass by, the Self meets their gaze, yet They see only reflections of the generalized images of *das Man* (Enns 2022, 3).

In his work *Being and Time*, M. Heidegger characterises Dasein as an entity open to the external world, striving in its endeavours to reveal its existential potential "terms of the 'world' of its concern" (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 315) through the possibilities that Dasein has defined for itself as the horizon of existential engagement. However, wartime conditions readily constrain this openness by imposing external demands, as mass society, political circumstances, and collective expectations impose specific roles and modes of activity on the subject. In such circumstances, Dasein shifts its focus from personal priorities to the prescriptions of *das Man*, thereby replacing the inner voice of selfhood with propagandistic interpretations of 'what to do' and 'who to be.' (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 315) In wartime, Dasein, under the pressure of collective thinking (Arendt [1951] 1973, 473), is increasingly absorbed by the noise and publicity of the ambiguous information space and, as a result, loses the ability to listen to itself and is increasingly guided by the voice from the outside, the call of the They (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 315). The chaos of war radicalises the silence of Dasein, while at the same time intensifying the noise of the flow of information, which dictates predetermined patterns of behaviour, social roles, and modes of activity. The individual, whose inner call does not correspond to the stereotypical expectations of *das Man*, falls into the trap of existential schism. W. Deresiewicz (2009) states that the continuous flow of mediated virtual, conditional, or simulated social connections and information data keeps us in constant communication with the 'electronic hive' of *das Man*. At the same time, such

relationships are increasingly losing their essential content, while their primary purpose, mutual understanding, is turning into visibility, an attempt to transform the self into an image that is socially meaningful. External visibility raises social status and self-esteem, becoming a surrogate for human closeness (Deresiewicz 2009). In this way, the modern world of hybrid wars has transformed the organic character of alienation into a state of loneliness of the self, where inner self-identity is forced to hide under the cover of social role masks.

In *The Lonely Crowd*, D. Riesman traces processes of the dissolution of the individual within the crowd, which can be compared to Heidegger's conception of *das Man*, revealing the concept of 'other-directed' people, for whom the measure of their own sense of self is the signals from Others received from the external world (Riesman et al. 1950, 26). Mass society, having developed template models of behaviour, imposes them on each member of the community through mechanisms of social regulation and cultural and informational propaganda. In the work of M. MacMillan, we find the idea that even in peacetime, preparation for war necessitates the state exercising significant control over society, which is especially relevant in today's conditions (MacMillan 2024, 26-27). In the context of modern hybrid wars, such mechanisms deliberately impose standards of thinking and patterns of behaviour on individuals, forming a structure of mass consciousness that is less resistant to manipulation. In this situation, the subject, who is constantly forced to compare themselves with established and widespread patterns, loses their internal gyroscope (Riesman et al. 1950, 16) and, realising their inconsistency with social expectations, sinks into a state of loneliness. In wartime, when the flow of information warfare is aimed at splitting the social fabric (Dov Bachmann et al. 2023, 860), loneliness becomes a tool for controlling the crowd and, as H. Arendt argues, an individual's alienation from their own self facilitates their absorption into the logic of the crowd, particularly at a time when contradictions within society are portrayed as the product of deep natural, social, and psychological forces that lie beyond individual control and, beyond the power of reason (Arendt [1951] 1973, 312).

In empirical studies of the factors underlying the feelings of loneliness, conducted by Dr. Valeria Motta, we encounter episodes describing intense moments of rupture between the subject and their familiar (stable) environment (Motta 2023, 1148). In turn, Izak Tait argues that the presence of a place that Self can call home, along with a stable position in space and time, provides the individual with the foundation necessary for the formation of a personal view and for gaining access to oneself (Tait 2024, 81-82). M. Heidegger's ontological ideas suggest that the authentic mode of *Being-in* (*In-Sein*) brings peace and self-assurance to Dasein when it is oriented towards the state of *Being-at-home* (*das Zuhause*) as a possible refuge from the publicness of *das Man*, which in turn figures as the main source of anxiety (*Angst*) for Dasein (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 233-234). Cultural, linguistic, or emotional barriers that arise when leaving (voluntarily or under duress) the space of Being-at-home complicate one's ability

to communicate with Others, undermine physical, social, and narrative self-expression, thereby reducing the level of social identity of the Self (Jaspers [1923] 1970). Loneliness arises from the inability to establish a connection between the inner self and the outside world, to integrate into the social structure (Motta 2023, 1149). Studying the phenomenon of loneliness in times of war, B. Skwarek and I. Lozynska write:

> "Ukrainians are increasingly experiencing anxiety and fears, including the fear of loneliness. Its emergence is due to the fact that a considerable number of people are no longer able to remain physically close to their relatives and loved ones. In the challenging present-day conditions, the problem of loneliness is becoming particularly acute. The increase in the number of people experiencing loneliness is directly associated with migration. There are about 5 million internal migrants in Ukraine. According to UN data, as of December 2022, 7.8 million people, mostly women and children, fled their country in search of refuge abroad." (2023, 71)

Continuing to explore the concept of 'ontological dwelling' in times of military crisis, it is worth noting that in M. Heidegger, the concept of *Being-at-home* is developed in parallel with the mode of everyday *Being-with* (*Mitsein*), an existential that offers an alternative to the generality of They. Unlike the impersonal generalised *das Man*, authentic *Being-with* manifests itself in everyday *Being-with-one-another*, where each Other is encountered as a particular I rather than as an interchangeable member of the They. The particular Self, in conditions of the dominance of *das Man*, can counteract the dominance of *das Man* through its presence and re-establishing of *Being-in*, which corresponds to the level of the mode of *Being-at-home* (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 163-164). S. Kierkegaard conceived the Self as an ontological experience of relationality to the Other – one that "turns the Self beyond the physical and the psychical, as a spiritual being in a specific relationality: an embodied form of life becoming aware of its own interconnected existence." (Konderak and Toscano 2025, 182) Dr. Valeria Motta notes that every person has an inherent need for their experiences and emotions to be recognised by Others, and even the simple act of listening contributes to a sense of connection. Rejection or denial of an individual's experiential baggage leads to social uncertainty and loss of identity. The experience of human loneliness is rooted in the way we live together, interact, and understand one another (Motta 2023, 1150-1151). The poems of Ukrainian military poet Maksym Kryvtsov lyrically express the need for *Being-with-one-another*, even after the irretrievable loss of that very Other (a close friend) and his projection in consciousness as present in the world of reality:

> "I went to my friend's house / hey, hi / how are you / what's new / how are you feeling / how are things?
>
> He was buried in mid-October…
>
> I forgot to bring my headphones / so I wouldn't turn it up too loud / so as not to disturb others / I turned on the music / that we listened to / on our way back the

> liberated tree belts/ wet and alive / last autumn / I talk / to him / and to Him / and to them / to myself / in the end.
>
> I went to my friend's house / hey, hi / how are you / what's new / how are you feeling / I'll be back / don't worry / for sure."[1]

In the context of the origins and development of loneliness, war is a direct consequence of the inauthentic existence of human beings, who are absorbed by the impersonal logic of the They, where individuality is replaced by externally imposed roles and meanings. This way of existence promotes mass consciousness, while social pressure and hybrid forms of information warfare deepen the feeling of loneliness and destroy the inner integrity of Dasein. The loss of ontological space and interpersonal connection intensifies the experience of alienation, making a person more controllable. War conditions exacerbate these processes, revealing the need to find ways to restore the ruptured connection between the Self and the world of Others.

III. Solitude and 'Controlled' Loneliness

Loneliness manifests itself when a person is surrounded by other people with whom they are unable to establish an open communication or against whose indifference or hostility they are defenceless. Solitude, by contrast, has a fundamentally different character: a person is alone with themselves, outside the presence of others, entering into dialogue with their own self (Arendt [1951] 1973, 476). The history of spiritual traditions shows that the experience of voluntary isolation from the outside world often becomes a decisive stage in the formation of a person as an individual. Moses climbed Mount Sinai to find the essence of his calling in solitude; Siddhartha Gautama meditated under the Bodhi tree (the Tree of Enlightenment) before attaining enlightenment. According to Nietzsche, Zarathustra went into the mountains to become himself before returning to people and offering humanity a new vision of Being. Similar motives can be traced in Jesus Christ's forty-day stay in the desert, in the practices of Taoist sages, for whom withdrawal from the world is a prerequisite for knowing the Tao, and in the Stoics, for whom inner self-sufficiency is a condition of freedom. These illustrative examples demonstrate that solitude is a deliberate act of concentrated introspection, allowing for the possibility of inner awakening, re-evaluation, and self-discovery.

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[1] "Зайшов до друга додому / ей привіт / ти як там / що нового / як настрій / справи? Його поховали в середині жовтня … .
Забувся взяти навушники / тому не голосно / щоб не сполохати інших / увімкнув музику / яку ми слухали / повертаючись із звільнених посадок / мокрими та живими / минулої осені / я розмовляю / і з ним /і з Ним / і з ними / із собою / врешті решт.
Зайшов до друга додому / ей привіт / ти як там / що нового / як настрій / я повернусь / не бійся / обов'язково." (Kryvtsov 2025, 388-390)

Any process of thinking or creative activity entails a temporary, and in some cases prolonged, need to be alone and engage in dialogue with their inner self, while remaining connected to the world of Others, who remain present within the self and with whom an ongoing dialogue is maintained (Arendt [1951] 1973, 476). H. Arendt develops Karl Jaspers' argument that an authentic dialogue with Others can arise only from a self-capable of being alone with itself; otherwise, the self becomes absorbed by the Other, and the possibility of communication is lost (Jaspers [1932] 1956, 61). In summary, meaningful contact with Others can be established when the inseparable connection of the 'two-in-one' is maintained, enabling the two aspects of the self to constitute an integrated whole (Arendt [1951] 1973, 476). In external communication, Others can then affirm and sustain the integrity of the Self's internal structure.

Self-identity and positioning oneself in the world of external interaction through the prism of the significance of one's own self stands in tension with the concept of intersubjectivity, which, in essence, assumes that individuality is both innate and transformed through social interaction, and even a person's primary experience of the world is, in a sense, imposed, "as we do not first experience ourselves in isolation and then encounter others." (Motta 2023, 1144) E. Husserl conceptualises such an encounter with Others as a multi-level process of empathy in which self-understanding changes through the realisation that the self can be known by the Other just as the Other discovers the self. This is a mechanism of mediated internal experience, where the self perceives itself through the gaze of the Other and at the same time opens up the possibility for the Other to perceive itself through the self's perspective, thereby developing a form of self-knowledge 'from the outside.' (Motta 2023, 1145)

In experiencing self-perception through the Other, the self develops its social dimension and personal narratives, determines its place within the human community and its modes of interaction with others and, according to W. Deresiewicz, functions, partially or entirely, through "a process of deep imitation." (2009) A. Rokach and S. Boulazreg, referring to D. Winnicott, argue that the formation of personality based on intersubjectivity contributes to the development of a 'false self,' since a person, in the role of a social empath, "desperately tries to fulfil the wishes of everyone around them." (Rokach and Boulazreg 2023, 119) Meanwhile, during periods of solitude, a person has the opportunity to analyse and rethink their own desires, goals, and aspirations with greater attention to their own priorities and personal needs. This makes it possible to place socially imposed dogmas and expectations into the background and thereby take a step away from the false self toward the true self, from the socially constructed sphere of external expectations to the private sphere of the self.

A somewhat paradoxical approach to overcoming loneliness, which involves being alone without requiring interaction with others, is proposed by A. Gheaus. The researcher notes that the ability to spend time in solitude, to be with

oneself without experiencing loneliness, and, moreover, to derive pleasure from it, serves as a protective factor against loneliness in its conventional sense. Given that feelings of loneliness significantly undermine not only a person's health but also their overall well-being, solitude can contribute to their flourishing, and the inability to regard time spent alone as a positive opportunity can significantly increase the risks of experiencing loneliness. Fostering and supporting a person's capacity for authentic solitude can contribute to creating conditions that mitigate the most severe forms of chronic loneliness (Gheaus 2022, 2). The researcher proposes the concept of 'happy solitude,' (Soyarslan 2025, 5) a state in which the subject, while maintaining an inner connection with the self, is able to enjoy being alone. Happy solitude involves emotional self-awareness – a set of skills and abilities that enable one to recognise one's own thoughts, feelings, and needs, establish connections between them, and simultaneously support oneself emotionally without prolonged reliance on others (Gheaus 2022, 6).

In contrast to loneliness, which arises from the absence of emotional connection with Others, happy solitude entails the possibility of maintaining inner peace during periods when the Other is absent for a long time. Being alone in the absence of a co-participant in *Being-with-one-another* is not accompanied by feelings of loss or rupture. Solitude, as interpreted by A. Gheaus, becomes a space where the subject is able to temporarily suspend, while producing potentially lasting effects, their inner dependence on social reciprocity in interaction with the Other, reorganise their connection with their own Self, and restore their capacity for emotional self-sufficiency. The concept of happy solitude refers to a state in which "solitude is not merely being alone, but being so without minding it, ...and being, all things considered, at peace without an emotional connection to another person who is [emotionally] present [but physically absent]." (Gheaus 2022, 7) Soyarslan similarly characterises this state as involving "objective self-awareness of keeping oneself company and choosing to do so, rather than self-directed attention." (Soyarslan 2025, 6)

The proposed concept essentially implies enjoying the experience of solitude, regardless of its duration. Being alone and not feeling lonely, according to the researcher, presupposes the ability to keep oneself company, to engage in an internal dialogue in which the subject is exclusively in the presence of "a second self in the silence of mental solitude." (Deresiewicz 2009) This way of overcoming loneliness largely depends on the degree of self-knowledge: the deeper one's connection with the self, the more solitude becomes a resource that prevents loneliness. Conversely, solitude can become the unbearable pain of being alone with oneself and a growing desire for any external connection, which in most cases will not satisfy the self's need to overcome loneliness. The essence of solitude, according to A. Gheaus, is that the ability to be oneself and enjoy it is the key to forming a person's existential resilience (Shevchuk et al. 2023) in modern limit situations.

As a further development of the concept of 'happy solitude' as being in one's own company, developed by A. Gheaus, it is advisable to refer to K. Bian's understanding of solitude. In his approach, the central feature of solitude is reflectivity (Bian 2021, 626) – the inward activity of consciousness directed toward personal experience, which gives meaning to solitude, thereby distinguishing it from isolation and alienation. For the researcher, the true essence of solitude lies in the fact that the process of separation from the outside world is accompanied by an internal act of gathering fragmented parts of oneself into a whole, turning towards the origins of subjective will (formed from birth to the present), and developing the capacity to distance oneself from external influences. From this perspective, solitude opens up the possibility of strengthening a sovereign consciousness that is not subordinated to the pressures of social expectations and is capable of demonstrating its autonomy in communication with the outside world (Bian 2021, 627).

The interpretation of solitude proposed by K. Bian is conceived as a reflective process based on the ability of subjective consciousness to organise the experience of interaction with the external environment internally. Based on J. Perry's theory of self-knowledge, the researcher develops the idea of an internal 'buffer' of personality, a dynamic repository in which experiences of previous interactions with others are accumulated, sorted, and redefined. Over time, this buffer provides the opportunity for the gradual formation of self-knowledge: comparing past and present impressions enables the subject to gain distance from external conflicts and assert the correctness or incorrectness of their own decisions (Bian 2021, 628).

This conception of reflectiveness in solitude contradicts the structure of irreversible conflict inherent in the state of loneliness. While loneliness arises from an imbalance between the inner and outer worlds – a mismatch between expectations and the experience of interaction – solitude serves as a space for temporarily suspending this interaction, creating an opportunity for the inward activity of consciousness to analyse causes and seek ways to restore balance. This form of solitude, withdrawn from the continuous flow of external stimuli, provides conditions for self-reflection, which transforms the negative experience of conflict into an opportunity for its constructive resolution. In this way, reflection, supported by the self-buffering mechanism, provides a pathway through which the subject can move beyond the 'vicious circle' of loneliness, redirecting tension into the development of self-knowledge and harmony between inner aspirations and the realities of the outside world. Bian's concept of self-immersion can be further understood through Heidegger's concept of existential understanding (*Verstehen*), through which Dasein opens up its possibilities beyond its existing boundaries and actualises its potential within the external world of possibilities, thereby determining the organisation of its *Being-in-the-world* (Heidegger [1927] 2001, 184-185).

Human sociality is an integral feature of modern life, particularly during times of crisis, while the ability to be alone has become a valued dimension of social life (Deresiewicz 2009). In the space of solitude, a person organises their inner experience of existence, in relation to which the outside world serves as a backdrop of objects, allowing them to hear the inner voice, "for the still, small voice speaks only in silence." (Deresiewicz 2009) By distancing themselves from Others while maintaining their connection with reality, people reorient their ways of interacting with it, redirecting external relationships into the space of transcendental communication. According to S. Soyarslan, to overcome loneliness, a person can establish connections not only with others in their external relationships but also experience a sense of belonging to a social community or a sense of spiritual unity with the universe or God (Soyarslan 2025, 7). It is impossible to hear God when there is hustle and bustle around, regardless of social status or rank. Being part of society is the norm for a person, but "the solitary encounter with God is the egregious act that refreshes that norm." (Deresiewicz 2009) As S. Kierkegaard notes, deep awareness of oneself occurs through the 'measure' of God, and it is solitude that allows one to arrive at one's ultimate self through endless challenges, by which one sees one's imperfections and sinfulness (Kierkegaard [1849] 1941, 129). At the same time, when we accept loneliness and immerse ourselves in the silence of external realities, our inner self oriented towards the divine. Through God, we can find other lonely selves (Enns 2022, 35), communication with whom will make the oppressive pain of loneliness impossible. "Solitude is a problem to the extent that it lacks a relationship with God" and by retreating into solitude to heal emotional wounds, a person returns to the path of God (Svendsen 2017, 92).

In a crisis situation such as war, solitude becomes a healing alternative to loneliness, as it can provide a person with space for the inward activity of consciousness, rethinking personal experiences, and restoring the monolithicity of the self. Solitude, unlike loneliness, can be understood as an active process of self-reflection that enhances the autonomy of the subject and their ability to engage with reality. The concepts of 'happy solitude' by A. Gheaus and reflective solitude by K. Bian demonstrate that the ability to be with oneself, to keep oneself company, and to organise one's experience within the inner space of the self is a key condition for overcoming existential imbalance in limit situations. The path of solitude leads to the strengthening of selfhood and the ability to interact with Others for the benefit of the wider community. The more a person learns to appreciate moments of solitude and enjoy being in this state, the more they are protected from the influence of life circumstances where loneliness prevails (Soyarslan 2025, 16).

Conclusion

The Russian-Ukrainian war, as another instance of historical recurrence, constitutes a limit situation in the Jaspersian sense, while its consequences extend

far beyond the individual existential horizon. It has become the very factor that has pulled people out of the comfort of their familiar, everyday lives and confronted them face-to-face with questions of being, non-being, meaning, and self-identity. In the limit situation, like a house of cards, all the guarantees of a measured everyday life collapsed: a change of home, the loss of familiar social surroundings, ruined plans for the future. War has shifted from a state of exception to a condition of 'normality,' becoming a permanent background of existence marked by uncertainty, anxiety, loss, and despair. It is in this existential flow of 'limit normality' that the phenomenon of existential loneliness – a profound sense of a gulf between the individual and the world, which has changed from uniqueness to mass uniformity – has manifested itself particularly clearly. Forced migration, separation from family, the physical loss of loved ones, and a pervasive sense of the loss of 'home' as a source of ontological security have become defining features of wartime existential liminality.

The three principal modes of being alone in wartime, which are related yet critically distinct, are isolation, loneliness, and solitude. It is this triad that provided the conceptual framework for examining the possibility of an individual's internal transformation under conditions of extreme existential challenge. Isolation is an external, mostly forced factor–physical separation, an imposed break in social ties, which opens the possibility of manipulation not only by an individual but also by a social group. Loneliness, unlike isolation, is an internally and psychologically unbearable experience. In essence, it manifests itself as a discrepancy between the desired and actual level of emotional connection, a feeling of being unnoticed or rejected, which can arise even in a crowd or within a family. War obsessively and systematically produces this form of loneliness, thereby replacing the basis for authentic mutual communication. In contrast to this state, conscious solitude is precisely the constructive mode of voluntary alienation that can overcome loneliness. Solitude is not an escape from others, but a return to oneself, opening up space for reflection, creativity, and the restoration of inner integrity.

War acts as a powerful catalyst for painful, destructive loneliness through several mechanisms. Thanks to the philosophical concepts of the masses developed by M. Heidegger and H. Arendt, it becomes clear how, in a state of crisis, personal Dasein is absorbed by the faceless *das Man* – the anonymous authority of social norms, propaganda, and collective expectations. This is a direct path to the loss of authenticity: the inner voice falls silent behind the mask of imposed roles, and the 'ontological home' (*Being-at-home*) – that fundamental space of the known and familiar world that gave a sense of peace and belonging, of being needed and understood – is wholly destroyed. Hybrid information flows increase alienation, polarising individuals around competing ideological positions and replacing open dialogue between individuals with the monologue of ideological systems. Loneliness, as a faithful companion of war, is the ontological crisis that

destroys the possibility of communication on behalf of the self-identical I with other unique personalities of the outside world.

It is precisely in times of terrible war that the practice of solitude can become a lifeline out of existential loneliness. The concepts of 'happy solitude' by A. Gheaus and 'reflective buffer' by K. Bian demonstrate that the ability to actively engage in dialogue with oneself is the key to recovery and transformation of past experiences into existential resilience, a stronghold of stability in 'times of trouble.' This is an internal process in which a person learns to be their own company, to organise their inner chaos, to reinterpret traumatic experiences, and to process the emotional burden. In essence, the proposed state of solitude is far from synonymous with isolation; rather, it is a means of mental and spiritual hygiene that helps one find an internal source of support to counteract the pressure of marginal existence. It reconfigures the inner space where the self can regain its strength and, with it, the ability to interact constructively with others. In the long run, solitude may also open up opportunities for transcendent experience – a connection with something greater than one's own separate existence (community, idea, and spiritual dimension) – and ultimately overcome oppressive loneliness.

While the conditions of war systematically generate loneliness, disrupting both external and internal connections, the conscious cultivation of solitude is not merely a means of personal survival but a form of existential resistance to the circumstances created by war. It is a path to restoring the authentic self, which, in turn, is the only solid foundation for building a real, rather than imaginary, community under conditions of existential liminality.

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