Pessimism, Religion, and the Individual in History: The Meaning of Life According to Lev Tolstoy and Émile Zola

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PESSIMISM, RELIGION, AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY:
THE MEANING OF LIFE ACCORDING TO LEV TOLSTOY AND ÉMILE ZOLA

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To my parents,

Francis Miller Pfost and Mary Jane Channell Pfost,

whose love and support made this effort possible
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract v

INTRODUCTION 1

PART ONE: LEV TOLSTOY AND THE SPIRITUAL APPROACH

INTRODUCTION 2
1. EARLY IMPRESSIONS AND WRITINGS TO 1851 3
2. THE MILITARY PERIOD 1851-1856 17
3. DEATHS, FOREIGN TRIPS, AND MARRIAGE: THE PRELUDE TO WAR AND PEACE 1856-1863 49
4. WAR AND PEACE 1863-1869/1873 61
5. THE ARZAMAS HORROR AND ANNA KARENINA 1869-1879 72
6. A CONFESSION 1879-1882 83
7. RELIGIOUS WRITING, LATER FICTION, AND AN UNFINISHED MADMAN 1882-1910 91
8. THE UNFINISHED MADMAN’S QUEST: NOT A CONCLUSION, JUST AN ENDING 146

PART TWO: ÉMILE ZOLA AND THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

INTRODUCTION 150
1. YOUTH, CAREER, AND WORKS BEFORE THE ROUGON-MACQUART 1840-1868 151
2. THE ROUGON-MACQUART NOVELS 1868-1893 174
3. THE LAST NOVELS, DREYFUS, AND A PREMATURE END 1893-1902 185

CONCLUSION 190

APPENDIX - TOLSTOY TRANSLATIONS 191
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON L. N. TOLSTOY 201
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ÉMILE ZOLA 210
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 218
ABSTRACT

Two great contemporary writers of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Lev Tolstoy of Russia and Émile Zola of France, were haunted by the same problem, the individual's relation to God and the universe and the purpose of his relatively short life in it. Although Tolstoy and Zola took different approaches to this problem in their literary work, both were profoundly affected by pessimism and lack of faith in institutional religion in their life-long search for answers to humanity's greatest question and to the seeming hopelessness of the individual to affect history or even his own fate.

Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910), after a self-admitted privileged existence full of hedonism and nihilism, at the age of fifty came to the conclusion that the purpose of an individual's life was to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is, to struggle to achieve the highest state of personal and individual morality, love, and faith within one's capability to do so, whatever the desperate circumstances of history or one's own existence. Tolstoy's entire creative work, from his earliest philosophical writings to his last, from Childhood to The Cause of It All, was dedicated to the didacticism of this spiritual premise, and like the main characters in his works, Tolstoy came to understand that the meaning of human life is based on Christ's message of selfless love, which alone comes from God and distinguishes the individual immortal soul from each mortal, animal person who inhabits this earth.

Émile Zola (1840-1902), in the era of Charles Darwin, scientific discovery, and exploration of the earth environment, took a scientific, naturalistic, and deterministic approach to the same problem. A youthful life dominated by crushing poverty and grief led the main focus of Zola's creative work, the twenty-novel saga of the Rougon-Macquart (1871-1893), to deal in mostly pessimistic and graphic terms with the hopeless lives and fates of individuals of the lower classes of the French Second Empire (1851-1870) and its fall. His last two series of novels, the Trois villes [Three Cities] (1894-1898) and the Quatre Évangiles [Four Gospels] (1899-1902), have a more optimistic, sometimes utopian outlook as they treat the moral and religious problems of ordinary people in the latter nineteenth and future twentieth centuries as well as the conflict between science and religion. In the latter part of his life, especially with the advent of the Dreyfus Affair in 1894, Zola became more concerned with the moral progress of individuals, especially as examples and leaders for the spiritual and social development of humanity. For Émile Zola reason guided by science and the continual discovery of natural truths was to provide the way to the meaning of life based on the true Christian teaching of pure, or selfless love.
INTRODUCTION

Two great contemporary writers of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Lev Tolstoy of Russia and Émile Zola of France, were haunted by the same problem, the individual's relation to God and the universe and the purpose of his relatively short life in it. Although Tolstoy and Zola took different approaches to this problem in their literary work, both were profoundly affected by pessimism and lack of faith in institutional religion in their life-long search for answers to humanity's greatest question and to the seeming hopelessness of the individual to affect history or even his own fate. How these two great writers and thinkers of yesteryear approached the fundamental question of the meaning of human life and what they discovered present an instructive guide for people of any age, of any epoch, of any era, of any time.
INTRODUCTION

Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910), after a self-admitted privileged existence full of hedonism and nihilism, at the age of fifty came to the conclusion that the purpose of an individual’s life was to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and to achieve the highest state of personal and individual morality, love, and faith within one’s capability to do so, whatever the desperate circumstances of history or one’s own existence. Tolstoy’s entire creative work, from his earliest philosophical writings to his last, from Childhood to The Cause of It All, was dedicated to the didacticism of this spiritual premise, that of the individual struggling, sometimes gallantly, sometimes not, for the high standard of personal Christian morality despite crippling pessimism and doubt, a poor environment, great calamities, or unjust societal exigencies. Like the main characters in his works, Tolstoy came to understand that the meaning of human life is based on Christ’s message of selfless love, which alone comes from God and distinguishes the individual immortal soul from each mortal, animal person who inhabits this earth. This enlightenment came about as the result of his own quest to discover the purpose of human existence, a struggle which began in earnest very early in the life of one of the world’s greatest writers.
CHAPTER ONE
EARLY IMPRESSIONS AND WRITINGS TO 1851

In his earliest memories of his life, it is significant that Lev Nikolaevich remembers a struggle. In his First Reminiscences Tolstoy records:

"Here are my first reminiscences, which I am not able to arrange in order, not knowing what came before and what after. Of some of them I don't even know whether they happened in a dream or in reality. Here they are: I am bound, I would like to free my arms and I cannot do it. I scream and cry, and my cries are unpleasant to myself, but I cannot stop. Somebody bends down over me, I do not remember who. All is in a half light, but I remember that there are two people, and my cries affect them. They are disturbed by my cries, but they do not unbind me as I wish, and I cry still louder. They think that this is necessary (that is, that I should be bound), but I know it is not necessary, and I want to prove it to them, and I am overcome with cries, distasteful to myself but unrestrainable. I feel the injustice and the cruelty, not of people, for they pity me, but of fate, and I feel sorry for myself. I do not know and never will find out what it was, whether I was swathed as a baby at the breast and tried to get my arm free, or whether I was swathed when I was more than a year old, so that I would not scratch myself, or whether, as it happens in dreams, that I gathered many impressions into this one memory. But it is certain that this was the first and most powerful impression of life. It is not my cries that I remember, nor my suffering, but the complexity and contrast of the impression. I would like freedom, it interferes with no one else, and they torture me. They are sorry for me, and they bind me, and I who need everything, I am weak, while they are strong."1

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1Lev Tolstoy, L. N. Tolstoy: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii [L. N. Tolstoy: Complete Collection of Works], 91 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1928-1964), vol. 23, pp. 469-470. This authoritative work was begun under the general editorship of V. G. Chertkov, Tolstoy’s long-time secretary and friend. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. This excerpt is from a text called Moya zhizn [My Life], also known as Pervye vospominaniya [First Reminiscences], which was included in Pavel I Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), pp. 35-36. Tolstoy himself assisted and, to some extent, edited this work by his friend Biryukov (also known as Paul Birukoff). It includes many quotes and citations from Tolstoy’s works, letters, and diaries, including the full texts of his First Reminiscences, published in 1879 and which are quoted here, and his later Reminiscences, written in 1905 specifically as a contribution to Biryukov’s biography of him. See Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, pp. xi-xix.
Here Tolstoy’s struggle is not only for the freedom to exist in the unknown world into which he was born, but also for some acknowledgement of his right to exist and of his right to some freedom of movement from those much more powerful than he. It is the essence of the problem and the purpose of human existence. In a later paragraph Tolstoy describes the difficulties which human beings have to understand this problem, which represents the inconceivable:

"... It is strange and horrible to think that from my birth until the age of three or four years, during the time when I was fed from the breast, when I was weaned, when I began to crawl, to walk, to speak, however much I look for them in my memory, I can find no other impressions except these two. When did I originate? When did I begin to live? And why am I happy to imagine myself at that time, when it was horrible for me, as it is still horrible to many, to imagine myself then when I again enter that state of death from which there will be no recollections that can be expressed in words? Was I not alive during those first years when I learned to look, to listen, to understand, and to speak, when I slept, took the breast and kissed it, and laughed, and made my mother happy? I lived, and lived blissfully! Did I not then acquire all that by which I now live, and acquired so much and so quickly, that in all the rest of my life I have not acquired a hundredth part of it? From a five-year-old child to my present self there is only one step. From a new-born infant to a five-year-old child, there is an awesome distance. From the embryo to the infant an unfathomable distance. But from non-existence to the embryo, the distance is not only unfathomable, but inconceivable. Not only are space and time and causation the essence of forms of thought, and not only is the essence of life outside these forms, but all of our life is a greater and greater subjection of oneself to these forms, and then again liberation from them."²

Certainly Tolstoy wrote the quoted parts of his First Reminiscences (1879) and Reminiscences (1905) when he was much older than when he had these impressions in his very early life. He stated as much when he said that his earliest impressions could have been from a later dream. But there is no doubt that at a very early age Lev Nikolaevich was concerned with the purpose not only of his own life, but also with the purposes of the lives of other people on this earth.

As a child of the age of five, Tolstoy together with his eleven-year-old brother Nikolai began to contemplate the secret of human happiness. Lev had always been impressed with Nikolai’s ability to tell stories, and when the older Tolstoy brother told his younger sibling “that he possessed a secret by means of which ... all men would become happy: there would be no more disease, no trouble, no one would be angry with anybody, all would love one another, and all would become ant-brothers,”³ the younger Tolstoy became so enthralled by the quest for this secret that it would

² L. N. Tolstoy, Polnoe sobranye sochinenii (hereafter Pss v 91t), vol. 23, pp. 470-471. See also Biryukov, pp. 36-37.

³ Aylmer Maude, The Life of Tolstoy, 2 vols. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987), Volume I, pp. 17-19. The term ant-brothers referred to a childish corruption of the Moravian Brothers, a religious sect for which the Russian name is similar to the Russian word for “ant,” or “muravéy.” Tolstoy believed that his brother Nikolai had been reading and hearing about the Masons and the Moravian Brothers and had combined stories of their rituals and their striving for the happiness of mankind with his own imagination to form his invented concepts of the Ant Brotherhood and the Secret Green Stick. In his stories Nikolai also included the legend of the Fanfaronov Mountain, a secret place where members of the Ant Brotherhood would be taken if they fulfilled all the requirements of their secret society. But no one ever went to this undetermined location. See L. N. Tolstoy, Vospominaniya [Reminiscences], pp. 426-428, in Volume XIV of Sobranie sochinenii v dvadtsati-dukh tomakh [Collection of Works in Twenty-two Volumes] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1978-1985). The Ant Brotherhood and Green Stick legends are still highlighted in permanent monuments on the Tolstoy estate in Yasnaya Polyana.
last his entire life. The Ant-Brotherhood of the Tolstoy children thus became a childhood game whose secret was revealed to all of them, but older brother Nikolai related further that he had himself written the secret of human happiness on a green stick which he had buried by the road at the edge of a certain ravine on the Tolstoy estate. Even in his seventies Tolstoy still reflected on the Legend of the Green Stick and the Ant Brotherhood, writing, “And as I believed then, that there is that green stick on which is written what will destroy all the evil in people and give them eternal happiness, so I still believe now that that is the truth, and that it will be revealed to people and give them what it promises.” Further Tolstoy directed that his own burial site be in the same place as that where the Green Stick was buried, “on the road at the edge of the ravine of the Old Zakaz, in that place I ask that, in memory of Nikolenka, since they have to hide my corpse somewhere, they bury me there.”

But the young Tolstoy’s belief in human happiness was also tinged with doubt and pessimism. Sometime between 1839 and 1841 he wrote the following in French in a student composition:

“Le passé est ce qui fut. Le futur est ce qui sera, et le présent est ce qui n’est pas. -- C’est pour cela que la vie de l’homme ne consiste que dans le futur et le passé, et c’est pour la même raison que le bonheur que nous voulons posséder n’est qu’une chimère de même que le présent.
Léon Tolstoi.”

[The past is what was. The future is what will be, and the present is what is not. -- That is why the life of man consists of only the future and the past, and it’s for the same reason that the happiness which we want to have is only a phantom the same as the present.
Lev Tolstoy.]

There is further evidence of Tolstoy’s deep thoughts as a young man about the purpose of mankind on earth, the role of the individual, and the limitations on the capability of the individual to act within his society and his environment. The young Lev Nikolaevich had not only a fluent knowledge of the French language, but he also read voluminously in French literature. Sometime during his student days in the 1840’s, perhaps while he was in Kazan, he wrote some notes on the second chapter (“Du mérite personnel” [Of Personal Merit] ) of the main work, Les Caractères ou les mœurs de ce siècle [The Characters or the Customs of This Century], of the 17th century French philosopher and moralist, Jean de La Bruyère (1645-1696).
In this composition Tolstoy shows himself to be optimistic about the capability of any person to do good to others and to contribute to the general well-being of mankind, no matter what his position in society, his fortune, or his inevitable doubts about his life and his fate after death. The only things necessary are the will to do good, an empathy toward others, and the confidence or courage to go ahead, characteristics which Tolstoy calls “the three principal elements of the soul” which make up the genius of an individual. Interestingly Tolstoy’s disagreement with La Bruyère stems from his belief that genius or character will always make a name for a person, while La Bruyère thinks that it is not always recognized.

Tolstoy’s optimism about recognition and fame may have much to do with youthful enthusiasm, inexperience, and his own privileged social position as a prominent member of Russian gentry, especially in contrast to the perceived pessimism of La Bruyère, who was writing about morals, habits, and customs in his seventeenth century French society ruled by Louis XIV. Lev Nikolaevich’s optimistic humanism is undeniable, but his somewhat later analysis of the Discourses of the 18th century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1772), including the Discours sur les sciences et les arts [Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts] (1750) and the Discours sur l’origin et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes [Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of the Inequality Among Men] (1755) shows that he understood and thought about the unequal conditions of different individuals and different societies (Appendix A.2).

Tolstoy always had an affinity for Rousseau. In discussing French literature with Professor Paul Boyer in the spring of 1901, he said:

“People have been unjust to Rousseau, the greatness of his thought was not recognized, and he was calumniated. I have read the whole of Rousseau, all twenty volumes, including the dictionary of music. I admired him with more than enthusiasm, I worshipped him. At fifteen I wore on my neck, instead of the usual cross, a medallion with his portrait. With some of his pages I am so familiar that I feel as if I had written them myself...”

Despite Tolstoy’s worship of Rousseau and his belief in the French philosopher’s concept of the superiority of a simplified, back-to-nature lifestyle for mankind and his warning against the dangers presented to morality by the pernicious influence of civilization, Lev Nikolaevich was certainly not above criticizing his hero when he thought he had erred. In his commentary on Rousseau’s Discourses, Tolstoy takes him to task first for his belief that sciences are harmful to public morality, then makes his logical case for the advancement of arts and sciences, or education, as the means by which mankind can escape ignorance and attain more freedom and thereby the capability to more good as well as evil. As Tolstoy explains, assuming that a person is born with no specific tendency toward good or evil, education becomes the key to the moral advancement of the individual and his society. Only if it is assumed that all individuals are born with the tendency toward evil can Rousseau’s injunction against sciences be valid. As Tolstoy points out, surely Rousseau cannot believe in such a utopia of evil.

Further Tolstoy questions the reliance of philosophers on history, which he calls a purposeless and useless science. History is useful only if the philosophy behind it is understood, so that mankind might benefit from finding the answers to the most important questions of life. These questions concern morality and the relationships among religion, good and evil, citizenship, and the advancement of arts and sciences. Tolstoy thus believed that the study of history solely for the purpose of knowing facts has no purpose. From his commentary on the Discourses of his

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'Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, p. 199.'
favorite philosopher, which was probably written before his twentieth birthday, it is clear that Tolstoy came to be convinced early in his life that, history, or any other art or science, has value only for its didactic capability, its capability to aid mankind in finding the true philosophy of life, the secret of human happiness written on the legendary green stick of his childhood.

The importance of the later parts of his commentary on the “First Part” and the “Second Part” of Rousseau’s First Discourse centers on Tolstoy’s agreement with Rousseau’s concept of the earlier simpler society being the best model for mankind’s moral progress, “because although the nature of man was not better, but people found their security in the ease of penetrating each other, and this advantage, the price of which we feel today, saved them from a great number of vices.” Tolstoy’s disagreement with Rousseau concerned the 18th century French philosopher’s assertion that the influence of the arts and sciences, or civilization in other words, led to more guile, secrecy, ruse, and deceit among human beings, thus making the ease of penetration to each other’s true self and true feelings more difficult. Vice and evil were more easily promoted under such conditions. Tolstoy agreed with Rousseau’s basic premise here, but he disagreed that the study, influence, or advancement of arts and sciences was the reason for the growth of vice and evil in society. He also refuted Rousseau’s historical evidence, emphasizing the importance of the arts and sciences to the military defense of society and the survival of nations.

The rest of Tolstoy’s commentary on the “Second Part” of Rousseau’s First Discourse, and the end of this composition, relates to his agreement with Rousseau’s concept of the danger of luxury to the moral progress of mankind, except for one curiously isolated statement of belief that, “for the most part, the welfare of individuals is in inverse relation to the welfare of the Government.” But then he returns to his theme without further comment on this interesting declaration, adding the insight that luxury is relative and often in the eye of the beholder. Tolstoy does certainly agree with Rousseau that luxury leads to vice, but he does not agree that the arts and sciences necessarily generate luxury. He closes his commentary with the unfortunate observation that women are more subject to the evil influence of luxury and idleness than men, that they are weaker in character than men, and that is why they are dependent on men for “the satisfaction of the necessities of life.” This belief, which Tolstoy was to refute later, at least to an arguable extent, certainly had to contribute to the ill health, social and personal problems, and pessimism which permeated his life at this time.

Lev Nikolaevich continued to be consumed not only with the role and purpose of the individual’s existence, but also with defining the capability of the individual to effect his role and achieve the purpose of his life. In the second variant of an untitled excerpt also written about 1847, the young Tolstoy mused about his aspirations and understanding what were the limits of individual capability:

“As long as I can remember, I always found in myself some sort of aspiration which was not satisfied, but I understood the satisfaction, although unclearly.

I recognized that I was limited in everything, -- and at the same time I understood unlimitedness, and I even found it in myself. --

In order to accommodate this contradiction, I established rules by which the appearance of the unlimited in the limited was determined. But in the establishment of these rules, first of all I had to experience evil in order to know how to avoid it. Not finding satisfaction in this way, I found out that the aspiration which I had found in myself originated from the union of the limited with the unlimited -- and since I am the unlimited, then it was necessary to know in what way I, as the unlimited, must accommodate the limited, and in order to know that, it was necessary to know what is limited and what is unlimited.

[Here the author added in the margins of his text the following]

I summarize the history of my cognition until the time that its course became too simple and the same for everyone.

The aspiration which I found in myself was the aspiration to well-being and to happiness, which
I didn’t understand any differently than its appearance, and even in its appearance, it didn’t satisfy.

Limitation is not a concept, but a consciousness. I understand limitation and unlimitation, but I am limitation and unlimitation. --

Not finding many of the existing rules to be satisfactory, I rejected them fully, and then accepted as correct only those that I established. (?) --

Activity is not a concept, but a consciousness. --

The reason for this is that activity is a contradiction, because if one of these two origins did not exist, I could not imagine activity. -

From this conclusion comes the fact that, if there were no limitation, there would also be no activity, consequently the first consciousness is the consciousness of limitation.

[End of marginal text]

I rejected all, that is, all the concepts which I believed to be true, and I began to look for that beginning which would be directly clear to me, that is, which would not have originated from another concept. -- It came to be that, the more indirect the concept, the more unclear it was for me. For example the concept of a tree is more unclear to me than the concept of the smell or the type of the tree.

I had two concepts which did not require any proof and which were as irreplaceable as they were unconditional. I expressed these concepts in this way: I am limited and I am active. Having these positive concepts in differing degrees, I can imagine the infinitely small degree of both of these concepts, which we call negative, that is, unlimitation and unactivity.

Combining these concepts I get four constituent concepts: 1) limited activity, -- activity very understandable and that which I find in myself, -- 2) unlimited activity, this concept cannot be since one is opposed to the other: activity cannot be unlimited, 3) limited unactivity -- a concept which cannot be, that is, is nothing, 4) unlimited unactivity. --

This particular untitled composition certainly has a brainstorming, or unfinished thought quality to it. Nevertheless it is important for understanding the depth of the young Tolstoy’s thought concerning the capability of the individual person for independent action or activity and if there are the limitations on this capability. Tolstoy’s conclusion, not only that he considers himself to be capable of limited activity, but also that the three other possible constituent concepts are not possible or have no meaning, shows that he is aware of limitations on the individual’s capability to do good or evil. Yet Tolstoy is also aware of an unlimited, or infinite quality to himself which he cannot define. He can call it only an aspiration to well-being and to happiness, but this aspiration is never satisfied. In fact, in the first variant of this composition, Lev Nicolaevich defined this aspiration somewhat differently in the first four lines:

"From the time that I remember my life, I always found in myself some sort of power of truth, some sort of aspiration, which was not satisfied. Everywhere there are contradictions, one is destruction.

The longer I lived, the more unbearable it became for me.

[1 undecipherable word] It was impossible to stop. I began to develop rules for myself on some subjects, and I found value in them, but soon their unsuitability appeared. I developed others, -- the same thing. -- Finally in analyzing the rules, I found correlations, and I understood that all can be brought forth from one origin and developed from one source. But how to find this source? Can it possibly be found from individual events? I tried, but I failed.

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8Pss v 91t, vol. 1, pp. 226-228. My translation of the second variant of this untitled composition presents it in its entirety. Tolstoy’s organization and punctuation have been retained. The first variant of this text, which is much shorter than the second variant, appears on p. 226. P. 651 of the index volume places the two variants of this composition in the year 1847.
[Here in the margins the author wrote: I start the history of my consciousness from the moment when I proceeded the same as others. --]

From the very first I threw out all prejudices, not finding anything satisfactory in them.

Not progressing any farther along this road, I took another. I began to analyze the subjects for which I developed the rules, that is, generally all of them. I found activity in myself, for which reason I am me and not me. [Note by author: Skepticism is me.] I recognized reasons in myself, one unclear, consciousness, and the other clear, feelings. Now I began to analyze [2 undecipherable words] uselessly. One last method remained -- to analyze the two reasons.

I am not limited by the unions that are not me, but I am limited by consciousness itself. -- The union of the conscious me with the feeling me (to comprehend that which is felt).

I am of two parts.

I am only of one spirit.\(^{10}\)

In the rest of the text of the first variant, Tolstoy describes the great difficulties he has had in trying to establish rules or guidelines for satisfying his aspiration for truth. He found that he possessed the capability for activity, but he could not make a distinction between consciousness and feelings and to what degree he was limited in the union of these two constituent parts of himself which affect his capability for activity. He believed that he was definitely limited by consciousness. Finally he felt that he had these two parts, but only one spirit.

The first variant emphasizes more the possibility not only for contradictions in his aspirations for truth, but also for destruction. This darker view was changed in the second variant to emphasize the limitations on the individual's capability for activity, whether good or evil. But the first variant in general, and the opening part particularly, reflect a much more pessimistic version of Tolstoy's view of his aspirations for his life at this time. The unfinished and brainstorming nature of these two untitled excerpts, both of which are rife with unclear portions, difficult syntax, and obvious searches for the appropriate word and the appropriate thought and concept, nevertheless reflect quite clearly the young Lev Nikolaevich's preoccupation with self-analysis, especially as it related to limitations on the individual capability for good or evil.

Another composition, probably written in the same year, was more complete and substantial on the role of philosophy in helping an individual to direct his activity toward satisfying his aspirations. Tolstoy's composition "On the Aim of Philosophy" (Appendix A.3) is another in this series of brainstorming, unfinished, and unpolished pieces which he probably wrote about 1847, the year he left Kazan University to return to his estate at Yasnaya Polyana. The unfinished and irregular quality of these early philosophical tracts reflects not only the youth of the writer, who was no older than his early twenties when he wrote them, but also the relentlessness of his effort to utilize all of the capabilities of his mind and soul to search for answers to the profound philosophical questions of human life. The most impressive feature of Tolstoy's philosophical development at this time is certainly not the clarity and organization of his thought, but it is the fact he remained so consumed by his quest for answers to these questions. His passion to find and follow a true philosophy of life had not been diluted since he announced its inception at the age of five with the quest for the secret of the Green Stick. Previous examples of his writing have shown that, despite his sometimes imprecise, uneven, and wandering thought, he did find some important concepts to anchor his faith and his developing life philosophy. In the excerpt titled "On the Aim of Philosophy," Tolstoy sets forth a number of his fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the nature and purpose of human life.

\(^{10}\)Pss v 91t, vol. 1, p. 226. The first variant is presented in its entirety. Tolstoy's organization and punctuation, including the brackets and parentheses, are retained in my translation except where noted.
First, in the part he labels as “a),” after briefly defining philosophy as the science of life, Lev Nikolaevich states his basic belief that every human being possesses a consciousness of life which he aspires or strives to preserve and strengthen. He does this by being active in acquiring memories to facilitate his happiness or well-being. But then he cautions that this aspiration or striving must be an inward-driven effort to educate the individual toward his self-improvement, not merely an effort to accumulate pleasant circumstantial memories of the outside world. Philosophy shows him the direction of his education. Without it he would be mindless. Then Tolstoy declares that if every individual aspired to his own self-improvement instead of searching outside himself for his gratification, social progress would be made, and the disorder and conflict caused by individuals searching for their happiness or gratification in the outside world would be avoided. The result would be the perfection of the Christian Golden Rule, which Tolstoy paraphrases as, “everyone will do for another what he wishes, in order that the other does it for him.”

Then Lev Nikolaevich further defines philosophy as the knowledge of how to direct the natural aspiration to well-being which is a part of every person, so that it can be limited or controlled through the will. In this way the capability of a person to do good can be improved. Then Tolstoy notes that the study of psychology and mathematics as well as the laws of nature can aid the individual in his quest for a moral life.

In the next paragraph, listed by Tolstoy as “b),” Lev Nikolaevich notes that by means of analysis one can proceed from the simpler concepts to the most complex and abstract. But ultimately one arrives at the concept which cannot be further determined. This is the consciousness of the self, the I or me.

The following section, “c),” contains some of Tolstoy’s fundamental beliefs about existence. He states, “Everything that exists cannot stop existing without a good enough reason for it, and everything that didn’t exist cannot begin to exist without a reason. The soul exists, consequently it cannot stop existing without a reason, but what constitutes the essence of the soul?” Here Tolstoy states what he knows as a result of his reason and experience in his earthly existence, then by means of logic and analysis he attempts to expand this knowledge to answer his question about the nature of the soul. He returns to this methodology to define what is the consciousness of self, that is of I or me, by stating again what he knows to be true from his earthly experience and reason. He notes that consciousness exists only to differing degrees in memory, but that memory depends on the body. If the body is injured, memory can be affected or even destroyed. Death of the body must completely destroy consciousness and memory, he reasons, and thus the self is destroyed. Then Tolstoy indicates that future life for the self of this existence is thus impossible, and that all such hypotheses are nonsense. Does this mean that Tolstoy does not believe in the immortal soul of an individual? Here he seems to suggest that he does not.

The next section, a part titled “d) Method,” begins with the declaration that the aim of philosophy is that a person’s sole aspiration must be to educate himself, for only in this way can he know himself and what is real. The methodology for accomplishing this is founded in several rules, which Tolstoy lists. First is that all physical necessities must be subject to the will and capable of repetition. In other words a person must have total control of himself. Tolstoy reminds himself to remember all his good thoughts, to write them down, and to repeat them every evening. Mathematics must be studied. Then he must develop his capability for reasoning by following two rules: to analyze thoroughly all concepts and to reduce them to their basic meanings; and to be able to recognize those which are fundamental and essential for knowing the self. Lev Nikolaevich then reminds that new thoughts must always be studied and their analysis noted. Mathematics and debate are the exercises useful for following these rules.

In following this methodology Tolstoy cautions that one should never forget the aim of philosophy and never deviate from the truths which one finds. The capability of the will must be improved, and its primacy must be secured.
The final short paragraph of the section on methodology is appropriately devoted to an exhortation to clarity in the expression of thoughts. A sentence should not be written without reference to what was written before and what will come after it. Suggested exercises for this recommendation are determinations or reasoning and poetry.

The last section of his tract "On the Aim of Philosophy," titled simply "e)," contains two more of Tolstoy's basic definitions or determinations for understanding life. The first is that Lev Nikolaevich finds two fundamental parts or origins in everything. These two parts are polar opposites of each other, such that their combination yields a zero. These parts or origins have an infinite quantity of degrees and thus an infinitely small movement. Further Tolstoy ends his mathematical model of the universe with the definition that an infinitely small movement of both polar opposite parts or origins can be possible only in their unification, which produces unlimited inactivity.

Before Tolstoy proposes his second definition for understanding life in this section, he makes the statement that, although rational truth has not been found, it can be felt in advance. Thus he believes that human beings have a consciousness of truth even if they do not know or understand it. Like the rest of his rules or definitions for understanding life, the second one proposed in this section also is aimed at guiding human beings to finding this rational truth. Here he divides his rules for life into two parts, the physical and the intellectual, with the engine of both being the will. Then he abruptly ends his tract, seemingly in the process of listing physical activities, with a repeated caution not to allow the aim of all human activity to be forgotten or left out of any generally accepted rules for life. This aim of all activity is the avoidance of the opportunity to do evil. The fact that this maxim is couched in negative terms, rather than positive ones such as "take every opportunity to do good," probably has much to do with Tolstoy's personal struggle at this time with bad habits which were greatly affecting not only the economic status of this privileged member of the Russian gentry, but also his physical and mental health.11

Human desire, the significance of the human will, and the reason for human existence are the subjects of another untitled excerpt written at about this time (Appendix A.4). This composition, which was also written about 1847, again follows in this series of the young Tolstoy's raw, brainstorming philosophical exercises on fundamental questions of human life. It could be titled "I desire, therefore I am" as his answer to the question of existence on the model of the fourth part of 17th century French philosopher René Descartes' work, Discours de la méthode, where the famous phrase, "Cogito, ergo sum" [Je pense, donc je suis - I think, therefore I am], is found.12 In his early philosophical writings so far, despite their lack of clarity in some parts, Lev Nikolaevich

11These problems, which are central to an understanding of Tolstoy’s philosophical development, are described in more detail later in excerpts from his diaries.

12Tolstoy himself mentioned as much in an unpublished continuation to his semi-autobiographical work, Youth. This continuation, written in 1856-1857, was called “The Second Half of Youth.” See L. N. Tolstoy, Pss v 91t, vol. II, pp. 343-346 and notes, p. 401. On p. 344 Lev Nikolaevich writes, "...I remember that the basis of the new philosophy was that a person comprises a body, feelings, reason, and will, but that the essence of the soul of a person is the will, and not the mind, and that Descartes, whom I did not read then, stated ‘cogito, ergo sum’ [I think, therefore I am] in error, for he thought because he wanted to think, and consequently he should have said, ‘volo, ergo sum’ [I desire, therefore I am].

In the same work (p. 345) Tolstoy wrote about Rousseau, “…Rousseau’s argument about the moral superiority of the primitive condition over the civilized also struck me extraordinarily in the heart…”
has proved himself to be a devoted disciple and follower of the 17th and 18th century French philosophes and their cult of reason. This work is certainly evidence of Tolstoy's effort to discover the truth about human existence by separating it from false concepts through reasoned examination.

As Tolstoy mentioned before in previous writings of this period, his unquenchable search for the truth of his existence became more unbearable as his life went on. In this composition he comes to the conclusion that his existence is no illusion because his desire to know the truth is constant. His desire exists, therefore he does. Truth exists because the one undeniable, constant, and never-changing feature of his existence is the search for it. Further he concludes that if the outside world did not exist, then he would not exist since his body makes up a part of the outside world. In addition Lev Nikolaevich considers that he would not exist in the spiritual sense, evidenced by his desire, if his body did not exist. This is a reiteration of Tolstoy's earlier stated belief in part "c)" of "On the Aim of Philosophy" that suggests that he does not believe in an immortal spirit or soul of an individual. But then in this untitled excerpt, he concedes that there is a type of desire which is infinitely independent and thusly immortal. This seemingly contradictory conclusion is indicative of two things. First it demonstrates the incomplete and unpolished nature of these writings, a sign of a quest or search in progress. Second, and more importantly, it shows that Tolstoy really believes that there are at least two parts which comprise the spirit of an individual, one of which does not perish with the death of that individual's body and the physical loss of his connection with the outside world as we know it.

He then divides desire, which is the definition of the human spirit, into two parts: personal or physical necessities and the unlimited will. The desire which stems from personal or physical necessities is limited and dependent on the body's connection to the outside world. This part of the human spirit dies with the body, since it can only exist in connection with it and the physically living environment. The other part of desire, or the human spirit, is characterized by unlimited will. This part of the human spirit is independent of the body and of time. It is also self-determinate, self-satisfying, and immortal. Tolstoy further concludes that this desire, this part of the human spirit is dominant in the human being.

Lev Nikolaevich doesn't state it in so many words as clearly as he might have, but he indicates then that this immortal, self-satisfying, and self-determinate part of the human spirit is more properly characterized as potentially dominant over the desire which is dependent on the physical necessities of the body. As human beings are a union of these two parts or origins of desire, of the human spirit, the results of their union, in the known fashion in which they appear to us, show a struggle. The unlimited will, the immortal, independent, self-determinate, and self-satisfying part of the human spirit does not always show itself to us as a “satisfied manifestation, but rather as a struggling one.” In essence what Tolstoy has discovered is that the immortal, hence essential, part of the human spirit does not always represent the desire or the spirit which motivates human beings in their earthly environment.

It is then an easy stretch to the conclusion that the immortal and timeless part of the human spirit or soul possesses only the power to dominate, but this does not assure its domination over that part of the human spirit which is connected to the earthly environment. It is also an easy conclusion to make that the immortal and timeless part of the human spirit is that which is connected to God because these qualities are superior to those that are characteristic of the earthly environment. Indeed they are qualities which are associated with a Supreme Being. Tolstoy reminds us, as he reminds himself in this early effort in his writing career, that even such an impressive connection as that does not guarantee domination over earthly desires, only the

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13 See for example the first four lines of the text of the first variant of the untitled composition presented on p. 11.
potential for it. This has important implications for his beliefs on the struggle of each individual to do good and to conquer evil during his earthly life.

It may be that Lev Nikolaevich was thinking about the development of these two parts of the human spirit, the physical will and the immortal will, within himself on 9 April 1847. He wrote in his diary under that date:

“9 April (6 o’clock in the morning). I am completely satisfied with myself for yesterday. I am beginning to acquire the physical will, but the mental will is still very weak. Patience and application, and I am sure that I will achieve everything that I want.”

In his late teenage years Tolstoy remained fascinated with the idea of finding the truth which would destroy the evil in people and give them eternal happiness. In 1847, after deciding to withdraw from Kazan University to return to his estate at Yasnaya Polyana for reasons of ill health and the domestic circumstances concerning the final division of his parents’ estates between himself and his siblings, Tolstoy mused on the meaning of his life, writing in his diary:

“17 April. I have not behaved all this time as I wished to behave. The reason has been, first, my return home from the clinic; and secondly the company with which I have begun to associate more often. From this I concluded that with every change of situation I need to think very fundamentally what external circumstances will influence me in the new situation, and how this influence can be eliminated. If my return home from the clinic could have such an influence over me, what kind of influence will my transition from the life of a student to the life of a landowner have?

Changes in my way of life must take place. But these changes must not be the product of external circumstances, but of the soul. Here I am presented with the question: what is the purpose of a person’s life? Whatever the point of departure for my reasoning, whatever I take as its source, I always come to the same conclusion: the purpose of a person’s life is the facilitation in every possible way of the all-round development of everything that exists. If I begin to reflect as I look at nature, I see that everything in it is constantly developing, and that each of its constituent parts unconsciously facilitates the development of the other parts; and man, since he is likewise a part of nature, though one endowed with consciousness, must also, like the other parts - but by consciously utilizing the capabilities of his soul - strive for the development of everything that exists. If I start to reflect as I look at history, I see that the whole human race has constantly striven to achieve this purpose. If I start to reflect rationally, i.e., if I consider only the capabilities of a person’s soul, I find in the soul of each person this same unconscious striving, which is the unavoidable requirement of his soul. If I start to reflect as I look at the history of philosophy, I will find that people everywhere have always come to the same conclusion, that the purpose of a person’s life is the all-round development of mankind. If I start to reflect as I look at theology, I will find that almost all peoples recognize a perfect existence, and that to strive to attain it is recognized to be the purpose of the lives of all people. And so it seems that I can unmistakably...

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2Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, p. 88. Tolstoy’s letter of resignation to the Rector of Kazan University is reproduced here. Tolstoy’s excuse of his ill health refers to his contraction of venereal disease and his dissolute lifestyle.
take as the purpose of my life the conscious striving for the all-round development of everything that exists.

I would be the unhappiest of people if I could not find a purpose for my life - a purpose both general and useful - useful because my immortal soul when fully mature will pass naturally into a higher existence and one that is appropriate to it. So now my whole life will be a constant and active striving to achieve this single purpose..."16

In his commentary to this excerpt from Tolstoy's diary, Boris Eikhenbaum wrote in his work, Molodoy Tolstoy [The Young Tolstoy]:

"The very syntax of this reasoning, these repetitions 'if I begin' and 'if I start,' the very turns of speech and the general style -- all of this is typical of eighteenth century philosophical constructions and may sooner be attributed to Karamzin than to Tolstoy, a man of the second half of the nineteenth century, behind whom stood Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and our romantics with Stankevich at the head. It is exactly as if Tolstoy had no ties with the preceding generation, exactly as if he had resolutely turned away from his fathers and returned to his grandfathers.

Of course, it can be doubted whether these sketches of an eighteen- year-old youth, recently arrived in the province [of Kazan] from the village [of Yasnaya Polyanaya], had any serious symptomatic significance for the future Tolstoy, but from what followed it will be evident that his inclination toward the eighteenth century was an organic and natural phenomenon. English and French literature of this era comprised his principal and favorite reading matter, while German romantic literature, so popular in Russia from the twenties to the forties, did not interest Tolstoy. Rousseau and Sterne, the spiritual leaders of the era of Karamzin and Zhukovsky, turned out to be his favorite writers. He was even no stranger to the sentimental tradition. Such was the style of his letters to [his aunt] T. A. Yergolskaya, whom he wrote in 1852 [12 January]: 'You know what is perhaps my only good quality - it is sensitivity.' Traces of this tradition can be observed in Childhood as well..."17

As Eikhenbaum and Tolstoy himself have recognized, sentimentalism and sentiment or sensitivity exerted a great influence on Lev Nikolaevich in both his personal life and in his literary works. But it is not just the eighteenth century in French and Russian literature which has influenced Tolstoy. Descartes and La Bruyère, whose works were cited and commented on earlier by the young Tolstoy, belong to the seventeenth century. Many other philosophers who wielded great influence on Lev Nikolaevich, such as Plato and Buddha, were even more ancient and sometimes non-European, including the one who exerted the most influence of all, Jesus of Nazareth. It would be more correct to say that Tolstoy was less influenced philosophically and intellectually by the romantic trends of the contemporary literature of his youth than most others of his world, although this was a staged development, which was not fully accomplished until after

16L. N. Tolstoy, Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 30-31. See also L. N. Tolstoy, Ss v 22t, Volume XXI (Dnevniki [Diaries] 1847-1894), pp. 13-14. The rest of Tolstoy's diary of 17 April 1847 contains eleven subjects to study and intellectual tasks to accomplish within the next two years in Yasnaya Polyanaya. These tasks included one frequently engaged in by Lev Nikolaevich, writing personal rules of conduct to observe in his life.

his military service in the Caucasus and then in the Crimean War in 1854-1855. Typically of Lev Nikolaevich, and most especially of his youth, his intellect and his writings were far ahead of his personal behavior in this regard.

During this next period of his life, from 1847 to 1851, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy spent his time at his estate in Yasnaya Polyana, in Moscow, and in St Petersburg, where he studied for his examinations in law with a view to becoming a government official. He also toyed with the idea of entering military service. Despite his spiritual ruminations on what he should do to live purposefully in accord with God and man, Tolstoy's life, according to his diary and letters, was still marked with the fecklessness and irresolution of youth.\(^\text{18}\) He was often not able to control himself, then he would recover and despair of what his life was becoming. For example his diary of 29 December 1850 reveals:

"29. [December] I'm living a completely animal existence, although not completely dissolute. I've abandoned nearly all my occupations and am in very low spirits..."\(^\text{19}\)

In effect the immediate causes of his dissatisfaction with his life were his inability to control his gambling habits, which had left him with severe debt problems, and his unquenchable passion for Gypsy women, which precluded equilibrium in his domestic life.\(^\text{20}\) It wasn't that Tolstoy didn't know the answer to his problems, for he stated as much in his diary on 28 February 1851:

"28 February I've wasted a lot of time. At first I was attracted by worldly pleasures, but then I felt empty in my soul again; and I've grown tired of my occupations, that is, occupations which had my own personality as their object. For a long time I was tormented by the fact that I had no soulful thought or feeling to determine the whole direction of my life - I took everything just as it came, but now it seems I have found a soulful idea and a permanent goal - the development of the will - a goal towards which I've been striving for a long time, but which I only now recognized, not simply as an idea, but as one which is close to my soul..."\(^\text{21}\)

It was also about this time that Lev Nikolaevich, just as he was deep in thought about the

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\(^{18}\)Biryukov, pp. 108-115. Biryukov reproduces letters, including those to his brother Sergey and to his beloved aunt Tatiana Yergolskaya, as well as entries from Tolstoy’s diary to show his mood. It should be noted that Tolstoy neglected his diary from June 1847 until June 1850, perhaps a mark of his distraction. See also R. P. Christian, editor and translator, Tolstoy’s Diaries, Volume I (1847-1894) (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), pp. 11-18, and Tolstoy’s Letters, Volume I (1828-1879) (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978), pp. 4-8. Christian does not include Tolstoy’s letters to his aunt during this period. Those can be found in L. N. Tolstoy, Сs v 22т, Volume XVIII, pp. 309-319.

\(^{19}\)Pss v 91т, vol. 46, p. 43.

\(^{20}\)Aylmer Maude, The Life of Tolstoy, Volume I, pp. 55-56. See also Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, pp. 114-115.

\(^{21}\)Pss v 91т, vol. 46, pp. 45-46. The rest of this diary entry contains a program of activities for the next day as well as highlighted admonishments to himself not to smoke and to remember that accomplishing what he proposes to himself “comprises all the happiness of my life and vice versa.”
resolution of his personal behavioral problems, also pondered the aim or purpose of his potential writing career. Sometime in 1851 he wrote the following manuscript:

“Why People Write.

1) Why do people write? Some in order to obtain money, some for fame, and some for something else; some even say, in order to teach people virtue. Why do people read, why do they give money and praise for books? People want to be happy; this is the basic reason of all actions. The only way to be happy is virtue, consequently it is prudent to read and give money and praise only to those books which teach virtue. Which books are these? The dogmatic ones, which are based on the origins of reason, and the speculative ones, -- others don’t pass a sound analysis.

But surely aren’t books useful which serve as an example as they elegantly depict virtue? Almost all agree that virtue is understood as the subordination of passions to reason. Even the poets and the novelists, the historians and the naturalists, they all influence people to unreasonable acts by the development of passions in order to influence people to reasonable deeds by the development of reason. They will say that the natural sciences are necessary for the comforts of private life. But surely the comforts of private life facilitate the development of virtue? Not even a little; on the contrary they subordinate us to passions even more. --

Of course everything has its utility. It’s been proven that the existence of a flea which bites him is useful for a person, but this is an objective usefulness, which it is better to call a necessary influence, and a subjective usefulness. It is about this that I was speaking. --”

This composition shows that Tolstoy has found the answers to two important questions in his life at this time. The first is that he is aware that his personal struggle with his behavioral problems is rooted in his inability to control his passions. Further he has established that the subordination of passions to reason is the definition of virtue, and the struggle to be virtuous is the path to true happiness for an individual in his earthly life. This is the vital struggle in which he is now consciously engaged. The second is that he thinks that the aim of his writing should also be virtue, that is to teach people virtue through his works. Thus Lev Nikolaevich has decided that his writing must be as didactic to others as his reason is to himself.

\[22\]Pss. v 91t, vol. 1, p. 246. This composition is presented in its entirety. Tolstoy’s organization and punctuation are retained in my translation. See editors’ notes on p. 340 of vol. 1 which place this manuscript of Tolstoy’s writing in 1851.
CHAPTER TWO
THE MILITARY PERIOD 1851-1856

In April 1851 the arrival in Yasnaya Polyana of his beloved brother Nikolai, the gifted story-teller of his childhood and now an army officer stationed in the Caucasus, changed Lev Nikolaevich's life plans in an unalterable way and allowed him what he thought would be a means to escape his spiritual conundrum. For the optimism of Tolstoy's childhood, centered as it was in his belief that the purpose and happiness of human existence was the facilitation of the development of everything that exists in the universe, was heavily tempered with the pessimism of his youth and early adulthood. This pessimism had its roots in Lev Nikolaevich's lack of control over his gambling addiction and his womanizing. Tolstoy's decision to accompany his brother back to his military unit in the Caucasus was born out of the romanticism which attracted many a young Russian to the southern frontiers of the Russian Empire, a romanticism fostered by two of the most popular writers of the time, Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov (1814-1841) and Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1797-1837). It was this romantic belief, that he would conquer all his bad habits and tendencies, and thusly his pessimism, in the adventures which the Caucasus would offer, that led him to avidly return with big brother Nikolai to Starogladovsk and Goryachevodsk in the far southern steppe, where they arrived near the end of May 1851.23

In his first months at the southern frontier of the Russian Empire, Tolstoy had both positive and negative impressions, not only of his experiences in the Caucasus, but also reflecting on his life. Excerpts from his diaries and letters show that the same problems which bedeviled him earlier continued to plague him. On 2 June 1851 he wrote in his diary:

"2 June    O My God, my God, what sad, depressing days! And why am I so sad? No, not so much sad as sick from the consciousness of sadness, without knowing what I'm sad about. I used to think it was because of inactivity, of idleness. No, it's not because of idleness, but because of the situation that I can't do anything about. The main thing is that I can't find anything like the sadness I'm experiencing anywhere at all - neither in descriptions, not even in my own imagination. I imagine that it's possible to be sad about a loss of some sort, a parting, a hope that was deceived. I understand that it's possible to be disillusioned: to hate everything, to be disappointed so often in one's expectations that there's nothing left to look forward to. I understand when one's soul conceals love for all that is beautiful, for mankind, for nature, and when one is ready to express it all and ask for sympathy, one finds nothing but coldness and ridicule and secret malice against people - from this sadness can result. I understand the sadness of a man whose lot is hard and who is oppressed by a heavy, venomous feeling of envy.

23Biryukov, p. 120, and Maude, p. 55. Both of Tolstoy’s personal biographers highlight his fervent desire for change in his life at this time, sometimes for entirely frivolous purposes. Maude mentions two immediate reasons for Tolstoy’s departure south with his brother Nikolai: (1) his desire to economize by living frugally with his brother’s military unit and allow his estate to pay off his gambling debts and give him an allowance; and (2) his consuming interest in women from the Caucasus region.
All this I understand, and in one aspect there is some good in all such sadness. But the sadness which I feel is something which I cannot understand or imagine to myself. I have nothing to regret, almost nothing to wish for, no reason to be angry at fate. I understand how wonderfully I could live by my imagination. My imagination paints nothing for me - there is no dream. There is also a certain gloomy delight in despising people, but I cannot do that; I don't even think about them. Sometimes it seems that a certain individual has a kind and simple soul. Then I think, no, it's better not to try to find out, why make mistakes? I'm not disillusioned either - everything amuses me, but the trouble is that I turned to the serious things in life too early, turned to them when I was not yet mature enough for them, but I could feel and understand; so I have no strong faith in friendship, love, or beauty, and I have become disillusioned about the important things in life; but in trivial matters I am still a child.

Now I think that as I remember all the unpleasant minutes of my life which are the only ones which come into my head when I am sad, - no, there are too few pleasures and too many desires, and a person is too apt to imagine happiness to himself, and fate too often strikes us painfully for no reason and touches us too painfully in tender areas for us to love life; and then there is something especially sweet and great about indifference to life, and I rejoice in this feeling. How strong I seem to be to myself in the face of all this, with the firm conviction that there is nothing to look forward to except death; and yet I now think with pleasure of the fact that I have ordered a saddle on which to ride in my Circassian coat, and that I will run after Cossack women and come to despair because my left moustache is worse than my right, and I will spend two hours in front of the mirror correcting it. But I can't write either, judging by this - it's stupid.

Later Tolstoy noted in his diary:

“11 June 1851. The Caucasus. Stary Yurt, the camp. Night time. I've already been here for about five days, and I'm already possessed by long-forgotten laziness. I've given up my diary completely. Nature, on which I relied most of all when planning to come to the Caucasus, has not so far produced anything to attract me. The high spirits which I thought would break out in me here also haven't shown themselves.

The night is clear, a fresh breeze is blowing through the tent, and the light from the burning candle is flickering. I can hear the distant barking of dogs in the village and the calling of the sentries. There is the smell of damp oak and the plane tree wattling of which the hut is made. I am sitting on a drum in the hut which is connected to a tent on either side, one covered, where Knoring (an unpleasant officer) is sleeping, the other open and completely dark except for a patch of light falling on the end of my brother's bed. In front of me is the brightly lit side of the hut on which a pistol, sabres, a dagger, and some underpants are hanging. It's quiet. I can hear the wind blowing, an insect flying past and circling around the fire, and a soldier sobbing and moaning.
Then the next day he added in his diary the following:

"[12 June] 11 June  Got up late - Nikolenka woke me up coming back from hunting.  I am searching for some sort of a frame of mind, a view of things, a way of life which I am not able to discover nor define.  I would like more order in my mental activity, more activity itself, and at the same time more freedom and less restraint.  Yesterday I hardly slept at all.  After writing my diary, I began to pray to God.  It's impossible to express the sweetness of the feeling I experienced at prayer.  I recited the prayers I usually do: Our Father, the Mother of God, the Trinity, the Doors of Mercy, an invocation to my guardian angel - and then I remained at prayer.  If a prayer is defined as a petition or a thanksgiving, then I wasn't praying.  I longed for something exalted and good, but what it was exactly I can't express, although I was clearly aware of what I desired.  I wanted to become one with the all-encompassing Being.  I asked Him to forgive my sins; but no, I didn't ask for that, for I felt that if It had given me this blessed moment, it had already forgiven me.  I asked, and at the same time I felt that I had nothing to ask for, and that I couldn't and didn't know how to ask.  I gave thanks, yes, but not in words or thoughts.  In one feeling alone I combined everything, both supposition and thanksgiving.  The feeling of fear completely disappeared.  Not one of the feelings of faith, hope, or love could I single out from my general feeling.  No, the feeling I experienced yesterday was the love of God.  It is an exalted love which combines in itself all that is good, and it rejects all that is bad.

How horrible it was for me to look at all the petty, vicious side of life.  I was unable to conceive how it could have attracted me.  As with a pure heart I asked God to receive me into His bosom, I was not aware of the flesh.  I was one with the spirit.  But no!  The flesh, the petty side of life again seized me, and before an hour had passed, I almost consciously heard the voice of vice, vanity, and the empty side of life.  I knew where this voice came from.  I knew it would destroy my blissful state.  I struggled against it and succumbed to it.  I went to sleep dreaming of fame and women; but it's not my fault, I couldn't help it.

Everlasting bliss is impossible here.  Suffering is necessary.  Why?  I don't know.  Yet how can I say I don't know?  How could I think that the ways of Providence could be known?  Providence is the source of reason, and reason tries to comprehend it...The mind gets lost in these bottomless depths of great wisdom, while feeling is afraid to offend It.  I thank It for the moment of bliss which revealed to me my insignificance and my greatness.  I want to pray, but I don't know how.  I want to comprehend, but I am not able.  I surrender myself to Thy will!  Why have I written all this?  How commonplace, feeble, and even meaningless is this expression of my feelings, and yet they were so exalted!!..."

Tolstoy continued to express his dissatisfied personal state of malaise as well as his weak will the next day:

"13 June  I continue to be lazy, although I'm satisfied with myself, except for my sensuality.  Several times when the officers were talking about cards in my presence, I wanted to show them nearby..."

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26 Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 61-63.
Then on 22 June 1851 he wrote to his aunt Tatiana Yergolskaya again from Stary Yurt, the Chechen settlement near Grozny, in a somewhat more optimistic vein:

"...I arrived in Starogladovskaya toward the end of May, safe and sound, but a little sad. I've seen up close the sort of life that Nikolai is leading, and I've met the officers who make up his group. The sort of life is not as attractive as it appeared to me at first, since the countryside that I was expecting to find really beautiful isn't that way at all. As the stanitsa is situated on low ground, there's no view, and then the quarters are bad, just like everything that makes for comfortable living. As for the officers, they are, as you can imagine, uneducated people, but for all that a fine lot, and above all, they are very fond of Nikolai...I will admit to you that many things shocked me about this group in the beginning, but I got used to them anyway without establishing any relationships with these gentlemen. I found a happy medium in which there is neither pride nor familiarity, and for the rest I had only to follow the example of Nikolai...Not long ago they discovered hot mineral waters of various qualities that are said to be very beneficial for all catarrhal illnesses, wounds, and above all for illnesses...It's even been said that these waters are of higher quality than those of Piatigorsk. Nikolai left within a week of his arrival and I followed him, so that we've been here almost three weeks now, and where we are living in a tent, but as the weather is fine, and I'm getting slightly used to this life, I'm quite happy. There are magnificent views here. First of all the place where the springs are - there is an enormous mountain of stones, one above the other, of which some are detached and form grottoes of a kind, while others remain suspended at a great height, totally cut off by torrents of hot water which fall noisily in several places, and especially in the morning, cover all the upper part of the mountain with a white vapor that rises continuously from this boiling water. The water is so hot you can hard-boil an egg in three minutes. In the middle of this ravine, on the main torrent, are three mills, one above the other. These mills are built here in a very particular and picturesque way. All day long Tatar women come continually to wash their clothes above and below these mills. I must tell you that they do their washing with their feet. It's like an ant hill in constant motion. The women are, for the most part, beautiful, and well-formed. The costume of the oriental women is graceful despite their poverty. The picturesque groups these women form, together with the savage beauty of the place, make a really wonderful sight. Very often I spend hours admiring this scenery. Then again the view from the top of the mountain is even more beautiful and quite different...I'm very happy to be at the waters, for I'm benefiting from them...I've rarely felt as well as I do now, and in spite of the great heat, I'm being very active..."

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27Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 64.

28Tolstoy wrote all his letters to his favorite aunt Tatiana Yergolskaya in French, a language in which she communicated better than in Russian. Tolstoy himself communicated excellently in French. He also understood English well and was able to edit and correct English translations of his work. Later he taught himself other languages, including the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, as his interest in biblical research grew.

29Pss v 91t, vol. 59, pp. 102-107. As noted on p. 107, Tolstoy incorrectly describes the local Chechen population of Stary Yurt as Tatars, which was the general Russian custom in reference to the various Muslim populations of the Caucasus.
Later diaries and letters of Tolstoy to January 1852, when he formally entered military service in Tiflis as a cadet, show that his geographical relocation to the romantic Caucasus as a volunteer with his brother's military unit did not increase his capability to control his bad habits of drinking, gambling, and womanizing as he had hoped. In fact these personal problems grew worse, and his pessimism about his lack of moral self-improvement increased. From his diary Lev Nikolaevich further described his moral quandary:

“3 July  This is what I wrote on 13 June, and I wasted all that time since, because on the very same day I got carried away and lost 200 rubles of my own, 150 of Nikolenka’s, and 500 I borrowed, a total of 850. Now I’m restraining myself and I’m thinking about what I’m doing. Rode over to Chervlennaya, got drunk and slept with a woman; it’s all very stupid and troubles me a great deal. I still haven’t spent more than two months very well - in such a way that I could be satisfied with myself. Wanted a woman again yesterday. Luckily she refused. How disgusting! But I’m writing it down to punish myself.

Took part in a raid. Acted badly again: acted without thinking and was afraid of Baryatinsky. However I’m so weak and so depraved, and hardly ever do what is sensible, that I’m bound to succumb to the influence of every Baryatinsky. 30

4 July  ...I’ve been reading Horace. 31 My brother was right when he said this character is just like me. The main features are nobleness of character, exalted ideas, love of fame, - and a complete incapability for any work. This incapability stems from lack of habit, and the lack of habit from upbringing and vanity. Dzhedzhanov called me. He has wenches. I refused and left without any desire and without disgust, in a word, without any feeling. I’m satisfied with that. I walked around, went to see Pyatkin. Some officer was saying that he knows what kind of things I want to show the ladies, and he only suggested that, taking into account his own small size, that in spite of his smaller dimensions, that he can show them the same. 32

25 August  Yesterday I had a Cossack girl at my place. I hardly slept all night...I didn’t overcome my character... 33

4 September ...On the 28th I was twenty-three. I have been counting a lot on this age, but unfortunately I remain just the same. In a few days I have not been able to correct all of the things I disapprove of. Abrupt changes are impossible. I have had women and turned out to be weak on many occasions. - in simple relations with people, in danger, and in card games - and I’m still just as possessed by false shame. I lied a lot. I went to Groznaya, God knows why, and didn’t see Baryatinsky. Lost more than I had in my pocket, and when I got back, I let a whole day go by without asking Alekseev for money, as I meant to. -- I’ve been very, very lazy; and now I can’t collect my thoughts and I write, and writing doesn't appeal to me. 34

29 November  Tiflis ...I observe in myself a tendency to destruction which expressed itself in my youth in the ruin of everything that I touched. It expresses itself now in the destruction of Vanyushka’s peace and quiet and in the squandering of money for no reason or pleasure. For

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30Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 64-65. Baryatinsky was the commander of the Caucasian Army, later Governor-General of the Caucasus.

311841 novel by George Sand (Aurore Dupin 1804-1876), French romantic writer.


33Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 87.

34Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 87-88. The emphasis in italics is Tolstoy’s.
example I often ask Vanyushka for a pipe, not because I want to smoke, but because I like to see him on the move, and I love to squander money. Today I caught my imagination at work; it was painting itself the picture that I had a lot of money, and that I was losing it gambling and squandering it, and this gave it great pleasure. I don’t like what can be acquired in exchange for money, but I like having it and then not having it - the process of destruction. I’ll be careful in the future. This tendency has already done me a lot of harm....”

His formal entry into military service as an artillery officer in the 20th Artillery Brigade, which did not officially occur until March 1852 because of bureaucratic delay in resigning from the civil service in Tula, and the beginning of his literary career seem to have brought about some improvement in Tolstoy’s moral behavior, at least according to his diary entries and letters in 1852:

“2 January  When I looked for happiness, I fell into vice; but when I understood that in this life it is enough only not to be unhappy, then there were fewer vicious temptations in my path - and I am convinced that it is possible to be virtuous and also not unhappy.

When I looked for pleasure, it evaded me, and I would fall into a depressing condition of boredom - a condition from which one can pass into any other condition, good or bad, but more likely the latter. Now when I only try to avoid boredom, I find pleasure in everything...”

5 February  (Nikolayevka - I’m travelling with the detachment) I am indifferent to life, in which I have experienced too little happiness to love it, and so I’m not afraid of death. I’m not afraid of suffering either, but I am afraid that I will be unable to endure suffering and death well. I am not completely calm, and I notice this because I pass from one state of mind and one view of many questions to another. It’s strange that the view of war which I had as a child - bravado - is the most comforting for me. In much I am returning to a child’s view of things....”

28 February  With the detachment (near Teplikichu) Never in real life did I justify for myself the expectations of my imagination.

I wanted fate to put me in difficult situations for which the powers of the soul and virtue were needed. My imagination loved to present me with these situations, and an inner feeling told me that I had enough strength and virtue for them. My self-love and confidence in the power of my soul have grown by not encountering rebuttals. On those occasions when I might have justified my confidence but didn’t, I excused because the difficulties which faced me were much too few, and I hadn’t used all the powers of my soul.

I was proud, but my pride was supported not by actual deeds, but by the firm hope that I would be capable of anything. Because of this my outward pride did not have confidence, firmness, and constancy, and I would pass from extreme arrogance into excessive modesty.

My condition in time of danger opened my eyes. I loved to imagine myself as completely cold-blooded and calm in danger. But I wasn’t so in actions on the 17th and 18th. I didn’t have the excuse which I normally used, that the danger wasn’t as great as I had imagined. It was a unique opportunity to show the full power of my soul. But I was weak, and therefore I was dissatisfied with myself.

Only now do I understand that confidence in future actions is deceptive, and that you can rely

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“Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 238. This is a section of diary pages separate from the general order of the main body of Tolstoy’s diary.

“Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 240-241. This diary entry is located in the same separate section as the previous one.

“Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 90-91.
on yourself only to the extent of something you have already experienced; that such confidence destroys that very power, and that no occasion should be considered too insignificant to apply all of your powers to it.

In a word, never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

However simple this rule is, and however often I have heard it, I have only now come to understand and recognize the truth of it....

20 March Starogladkovskaya ...As far as I have been able to get to know myself, it seems to me that three evil passions predominate in me: gambling, sensuality, and vanity. I have been convinced for a long time that virtue, even to its highest degree, is the absence of evil passions. So if I actually destroyed in myself even some of the dominating passions, I can safely say that I became better....Consequently, once having acquired the habit [of gambling], it might easily be revived, and so, although I don’t feel the urge to gamble, I must always avoid any opportunity to play, which I am doing without feeling any kind of privation.

Sensuality has a completely contrary basis: the more you hold back, the stronger is the desire....Since this inclination is a natural one, and one which I find a bad thing to satisfy only because of the unnatural position I am in (a bachelor of twenty-three), nothing will help to rescue me from temptation except the strength of will and prayer to God. I had a woman at the end of September and again in Tiflis four months ago.

Vanity is not an understandable passion...But for the person possessed by it, it is worse than all the other passions. It poisons the entire existence.

I have suffered a lot from this passion. It has spoiled the best years of my life and deprived me forever of all the freshness, boldness, cheerfulness, and enterprise of youth.

...I can’t say that this passion has been completely eliminated, because I often miss the delights which it brought me, but at least I have understood life without it, and I have acquired the habit of keeping it at a distance....

29 March ...For some time repentance for wasting the best years of my life has begun to strongly torture me. And this from the time that I began to feel that I would do something better. It would be interesting to describe the course of my moral development; but neither words nor even thought is sufficient for this. ...'I’m tormented by the pettiness of my life - I feel that it's because I'm petty myself; but anyway I have the strength to despise both myself and my life. There’s something in me that forces me to believe that I wasn’t born to be the same as other people. But what does this come from? Is there discord or an absence of harmony in my abilities, or do I really stand superior to ordinary people somehow? I am old - the time for development has passed or is passing. But I’m still tormented by the thirst...not for fame - I don’t want fame and I despise it - but to have a big influence on people’s happiness and usefulness...

I feared vanity so much and I despise it so that I don’t hope that satisfying it brought me any kind of pleasure. But I need to rely on it, because otherwise, what will be left, what can you move from? Love, friendship! Involuntarily I used these feelings as passions, the deceit of youthful imagination. Can they really bring me happiness? But maybe I was only unhappy. This hope alone supports the desire to live and grow old. If happiness were possible, and a useful reality, and I experience them, at least I will be in a condition to use them. God be merciful.

1 April ...Read The Contemporary, in which all is very bad. It’s strange that bad books show me my failings more than good books. Good ones make me lose hope. Wrote a chapter On Prayer, slow going. ... Wrote and wrote, and finally began to notice that my discourse on prayer has pretensions to logicality and depth of thought; but it isn’t consistent. Decided to finish it
somehow before getting up, and now I burned half of it. - I won’t put it in the story, but I’ll keep it as a souvenir...^41

25 May ...Why are all people - not only those whom I don’t like or respect or who are on a different inclination from me, but all people without exception - noticeably ill at ease with me? I must be an unbearable, difficult person...^42

7 June ...Feel proud, I don’t know what about. But I’m satisfied with myself morally. I’ve still got a rash, and I’m sure it’s venereal disease, the mercury or the gold, despite the fact that the doctor says it’s nettle rash...^43

19 October Simplicity is the main condition of moral beauty...^44

26 November ...After dinner I began to write well and got a letter from Nekrasov. They’re giving me 50 silver rubles a sheet, and I want to write some stories about the Caucasus without delay...^45

In a letter to his aunt, Tatiana Yergolskaya, from Starogladovskaya on 29 October 1852, he writes, summing up his changed character:

“...All that has happened to me, and that appeared to be unfortunate for me, has been for my own good. I hope God will not abandon me, and that it will continue to be so in the future. The 18 months that I have spent in the Caucasus have made me less bad. I will try to make good use of the 2 years that I have left to spend here to become better, worthy of you, and of the happiness that I promise myself with you. My health is good,...Tell the latter [Valeryan] that I still haven’t received the 60 silver rubles that were mentioned to me; that I beg him to send 300 silver rubles to me as soon as possible (a sum which will be enough for me, I hope, until the next harvest); that I’m perfectly happy with his arrangements; that I thank him for his efforts, and that I beg him to continue doing what he has begun so well!...^46

Tolstoy’s optimistic outlook in regards to his character, as expressed in this letter to his aunt, is a far cry from the intense pessimism and depression of his arrival in the Caucasus with his brother

^1Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 105. The story referred to by Tolstoy is undoubtedly Childhood, the twelfth chapter of which contains a description of the evening prayer of Grisha the pilgrim.

^2Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 118.

^3Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 123.

^4Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 145-146.

^5Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 150. N.A. Nekrasov (1821-1877), the editor of Sovremennik(The Contemporary), a literary journal in St. Petersburg, first published Tolstoy’s Childhood, The Raid, Boyhood, Youth, Sevastopol Stories, and other works.

^6Pss v 91t, vol. 59, pp. 208-209. This letter was written in French, as were all of Tolstoy’s letters to his favorite aunt, Tatiana Aleksandrovna Yergolskaya.
Nikolai in late May and early June of 1851. The eighteen months of his experiences so far as a volunteer and regular military officer in the Caucasus, as difficult as they had been, seemed to be having the desired effect on his character which Tolstoy had wished for. Now he at least judges himself to be “less bad.” In addition the foundations of many of the basic beliefs of his philosophy of life, including those of his religion, seem to have already taken form as evidenced by his early writings. He has certainly put a lot of his philosophical thoughts on paper, but at the same time he has also begun his fictional works such as Childhood and the first of his military stories, which was to be eventually called The Raid. Military life in the Caucasus was having a salutary effect on Tolstoy’s literary efforts as well as on his personal behavior, and he was conscious of the development of both trends.

In the excerpt cited above from his diary of 1 April 1852, Lev Nikolaevich mentioned a piece he had written which he had decided not to include in the work he was writing at the time, probably Childhood. He had titled it On Prayer, and decided that he would not destroy it, but rather he would keep it, just as he kept many of his early philosophical works which were not published. On Prayer presents Tolstoy’s evaluation of the religious and philosophical feelings of contemporary Russian youth, especially gentry youth, of which he was a representative member.47

This particular composition is useful as an example of a milestone which Tolstoy uses to show how far he has come in his philosophical and religious development as well as in the amelioration of his personal behavior problems. This milestone or signpost is a description of the class environment from whence he comes. It shows that Lev Nikolaevich is well aware of the nihilism and skepticism prevalent in the generation of Russian gentry of which he is a part. It is a long way from where he considers himself to be now, not just in terms of physical geography, but also of his psychic geography. He can now look back from his current vantage point to judge his progress. Whether in fact Tolstoy can truly escape his own well-entrenched nihilistic and skeptical tendencies as well as he can describe those of his generation in “On Prayer” is still as much at issue as are his struggles with his personal behavioral problems. Clearly at this time he believes that he has made progress.

Later in 1852 Lev Nikolaevich wrote in a short, but more positive fashion exactly where he saw himself in terms of his religious faith. It was his profession of faith. From his diary of 14 November 1852:

“...composed a short formulation of my belief: I believe in a single, inconceivable, good God, in the immortality of the soul, and in eternal retribution for our acts; I don’t understand the secrets of the trinity and the birth of the son of God, but I respect and do not reject the faith of my fathers.”48

From this pungent statement of his religious faith, it is clear that Tolstoy, now a twenty-four year old artillery officer at the dawn of his literary fame, believes in the teachings of the Christian faith, but he has difficulty accepting certain principles such as the meaning of God as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the miracle of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Although he now respects and does not reject his heritage of the Orthodox Christian faith, he was hardly a regular worshipper. In fact, since the age of fourteen, Lev Nikolaevich had discarded, if not rejected, the Orthodox Christian faith. In a letter to Countess Aleksandra Andreyevna Tolstaya (1817-1904), a

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47See Appendix A.5.

48Ps v 91t, vol. 46, p. 149. Interestingly this diary entry is missing from the Ps v 22t, vol. XXI, edition of 1978-1985. The emphasis in italics is Tolstoy’s.
relative (daughter of his grandfather’s brother) with long-term close connections to the Imperial Court at St. Petersburg and with whom he corresponded often from 1857, especially about religion, he wrote at the end of April-3 May 1859:

"...As a child I believed passionately, sentimentally and without deliberation; then when I was fourteen years old, I began to think about life in general and ran into a religion which didn’t suit my theories, and of course, I considered it a service to destroy it. Without it I lived very peacefully for about ten years. Everything revealed itself to me clearly and logically, and it separated itself out, and there was no place for religion. Then there came a time when everything had been revealed, and there were no longer any mysteries in life, but life itself began to lose its meaning. At that time I was alone and unhappy, living in the Caucasus. I began to think in a way that people have the power to think only once in their lives. I have my notes from that time, and re-reading them now, I can’t understand how a person could attain such a degree of intellectual exaltation as I did then. It was both an agonizing and a good time. Never, either before or since, did I attain such heights of thought, nor look into the beyond, as I did at that time, which lasted two years. And all that I discovered then will always remain my conviction. I can’t do otherwise. From two years of mental activity, I discovered an old and simple thing, but it is something I know in a way that no one else does -- I discovered that there is immortality, that there is love, and that you have to live for others in order to be happy for all eternity. These discoveries amazed me by their similarity to the Christian religion, but instead of discovering them for myself, I began to look for them in the Gospels, but I found little. I didn’t find God, or the Redeemer, or the sacraments, nothing; and I searched with all, all, all the powers of my soul, and I cried, and I tormented myself, and I wanted nothing but the truth. For God’s sake, don’t think you can even understand a little bit from my words all the power and concentration of my quest at the time. It’s one of those mysteries of the soul that are in all of us, but I can say that rarely did I ever meet in other people such a passion for the truth as was in me at that time. And so I remained with my religion, and it has been good to live with it...

3 May...The fact is that I love and respect religion, and I consider that without it a person can be neither good nor happy; that I would like to have a religion more than anything else in the world; that I feel that without it my heart shrivels up with every passing year; that I still have hope, and that for brief periods I almost believe; but I don’t have a religion and I don’t believe. Furthermore with me it isn’t religion that makes life, but life that makes religion. When I lead a good life, I’m closer to it, and it seems to me that I am quite ready to enter this happy world; but when I lead a bad life, it seems to me that there’s no need for it. Just now, in the country, I am so repulsed by myself, and my heart feels so arid that it’s repulsive and horrible, the need for religion is telling. God willing, it will come. You laugh at nature and the nightingales. For me nature is the conductor of religion. Each soul has its own path, and this path is unknown, and it is only felt in the depth of the soul..."

In Part I of A Confession (1882), Tolstoy also described his feelings toward religion during this period of his life, starting with his early childhood, and then acknowledged his doubts about his faith as he reached manhood:

"I was baptized and brought up in the Orthodox Christian faith. I was taught it from childhood and during the whole of my boyhood and youth. But when I left the second course at the university at the age of eighteen, I no longer believed any of the things I had been taught. Judging by certain memories, I never seriously believed, but I had faith in what I was taught and in what was professed by the grown-up people around me, but that faith was very shaky...

The religious doctrine taught me from childhood disappeared in me as in others, but with only..."
this difference, that since I began to read and think a lot very early on, my rejection of the doctrine became a conscious one at a very early age. From the time I was sixteen, I stopped saying my prayers and stopped going to church or fasting on my own volition. I stopped believing what had been taught to me in childhood, but I believed in something. What it was I believed in, I was not able to say in any way. Whether I believed in God, or rather I did not reject God, but what kind of God, I couldn’t say. Neither did I reject Christ and his teaching, but what his teaching was, I again could not have said.\textsuperscript{50}

Then with the perspective of his fifty-four years at the time he wrote \textit{A Confession}, Lev Nikolaevich described what he did believe in as a young man:

“Remembering that time, I now see clearly that my faith -- that which, apart from animal instincts, gave impulse to my life -- my only true faith at that time was a belief in perfecting myself. But of what this perfecting consisted and what its object was, I could not have said... The start of it all was certainly moral perfection, but that was soon replaced by perfection in general, that is, by the desire to be better, not in my own eyes or in those of God, but by the desire to be better in the eyes of other people. And very soon this striving to be better in the eyes of other people was replaced by a desire to be more powerful than other people, that is, to be more famous, more important, and richer than the others.”\textsuperscript{51}

As he mentioned before in his diary in 1852, vanity always seemed to interfere with his quest for truth, the moral life, and God. In addition church dogma and rituals would always be subject to his relentless analysis and search, foreshadowing Tolstoy’s later open conflict with the Orthodox Church.

Although it was not published until 1854, Tolstoy was writing \textit{Boyhood}, the second part of his fictional, but semi-autobiographical, three-part trilogy of growing up at this time. This sequel to \textit{Childhood} is particularly appropriate to an understanding of the development of Lev Nikolaevich’s philosophical thought, not just on religion, but also on his belief in what he mentioned as his “only true faith” at this point in his life, his desire for self-perfection as the way to happiness and truth in this life, as quoted above in the excerpt from Part I of \textit{A Confession}. Chapter 19 of \textit{Boyhood} is a short analysis and critique of his own thought and philosophical development in which Tolstoy describes the dangers of solopcism and reduction to absurdity to which he is subject. He speaks through the main character of his trilogy, Nikolai Irtenyev, but the entire short chapter is a soliloquy:

“...For one year, during which time I led a solitary, inward-oriented life, concentrated on myself, all the abstract questions concerning man’s purpose, the future life, the immortality of the soul had already presented themselves to me; and my weak childish intellect with all the ardor of inexperience attempted to clarify these problems, the proposition of which constitutes the highest level human intelligence can reach, but the resolution of which is beyond it.

It seems to me that the development of the human mind in each separate individual proceeds along the very same route by which it has developed during whole generations; that the thoughts which served as the basis for different philosophical theories constitute inseparable parts of the mind; but that each person was more or less clearly conscious of them well before he knew of the

\textsuperscript{50}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 1-3. 

\textsuperscript{51}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 4.
existence of the philosophical theories."

Thus Tolstoy would state the problem of the question of human existence which he considered his entire life. Then unfortunately vanity would interfere with young Nikolai Irtenyev’s (Lev Nikolaevich) reasoning --

“These thoughts presented themselves to my mind with such clarity and effect that I even tried to apply them to life, imagining that I was the first to discover such great and useful truths.”

-- before he would return to his reason, first on the virtue of suffering to gain happiness in life --

"Once the thought occurred to me that happiness did not depend on external causes, but on our attitude to those causes; that a man who became accustomed to suffering cannot be unhappy -- and so, to train myself to the task, I held Tatsiachev’s lexicon out at arm’s length for five minutes at a time despite the horrible pain, or I would go into the storeroom and lash my bare back with a rope so severely that tears involuntarily appeared in my eyes."

-- and then on fatalism and the belief that happiness can be enjoyed only in the fleeting moments of life --

"Another time, suddenly remembering that death awaited me at any hour, at any minute, I decided -- not understanding why people had not realized it before -- that one can only be happy by enjoying the present and not thinking about the future, and under the influence of this idea for about three days, I stopped doing my lessons and only spent my time lying on my bed, enjoying the reading of some novel and eating doughnuts topped with honey, which I bought with the last of the money I possessed."

This tendency to fatalism was a sustained feature of Tolstoy’s character in his younger years given his difficulties with indulgences in gambling and women. Nikolai Irtenyev, his alter ego, then begins to consider the meaning and importance of symmetry in human existence and the universal plan of nature, before he contemplates the concept of infinity and mankind’s inability to comprehend it because of the finiteness of human memory.

"At another time, standing before the blackboard and drawing various figures on it with chalk, I was suddenly struck by the thought: ‘Why does symmetry please the eye? What is symmetry?’ -- ‘It is an innate feeling,’ I answered myself. ‘What is it based on? Can there be symmetry in everything in life? On the contrary this is life’ -- and I drew an oval figure on the board. ‘When life ends, the soul passes into eternity; here is eternity’ -- and I drew a line from one side of the oval figure right to the edge of the board. ‘Why is there not the same type of line on the other side? And yes, at the same time, what kind of eternity can be on only one side? We surely existed before this life, although we have lost the memory of it.’"

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Then Irtenyev-Tolstoy, pleased with the progress of his thoughts on these fundamental concepts of human existence, began to write it all down. Such a surge of thoughts came into his head that he felt compelled to get up and walk around the room. When he came to the window, he saw a horse hitched up to a cart. Immediately his thoughts were concentrated on reincarnation.

"Into what animal or man would that horse's soul pass when it died? Just then Volodya, as he passed through the room, smiled when he saw that I was absorbed in such deep thought, and that smile was enough to make me feel that all that I had been thinking about was the most awful nonsense."

It was, however, Lev Nikolaevich's tendency toward skepticism and reduction to absurdity in his reasoning which brought him, or Nikolai Irtenyev, to a self-described "condition close to insanity."

"But not one of all the philosophical theories attracted me as much as skepticism, which at one time brought me to a condition close to insanity. I imagined that except for myself, nobody and nothing existed in the whole world, that objects were not real objects, but images which appeared only when I directed my attention to them, and that as soon as I stopped thinking about them, these images immediately vanished. In short I came to the same conclusion as Schelling, that objects do not exist, only my relation to them exists. There were moments when I became so deranged by this continual idea that I would sometimes quickly glance around in the opposite direction, hoping to catch the void (the néant) where I did not exist by surprise."

Tolstoy's skepticism and the reduction to absurdity in his reasoning also brought him such profound feelings of humility and powerlessness that it produced a pessimistic hopelessness which robbed him of the truth of fundamental convictions which gave him happiness in his life. Nikolai Irtenyev described it this way:

"What a pitiful, trivial spring of moral activity is the mind of man! My feeble intellect could not penetrate the impenetrable, and in that unsustainable effort, I lost one by one the convictions which, for the sake of happiness in my life, I should never have dared to disturb.

From all this weary moral struggle I got nothing except a nimbleness of mind, which weakened my will-power, and a habit of perpetual moral analysis, which destroyed spontaneity of feeling and clarity of reason.

Abstract thoughts are generated as a consequence of a person's capability to consciously comprehend the state of his soul at a given moment and transfer that comprehension to his memory. My inclination to abstract reflection to such an unnatural degree developed my conscious being so that frequently, thinking about the simplest things, I would fall into the vicious circle of the analysis of my thoughts, completely losing sight of the question that had occupied my mind at the beginning, and instead I began thinking about what I was thinking about. Asking myself: 'What am I thinking about?' I would answer: 'I am thinking about what I am thinking about. And now what am I thinking about? I am thinking that I am thinking about what I am thinking about.' And so on. I was losing my mind."

Vanity was the veneer which Tolstoy-Irtenyev used to cover his deep feelings of pessimism, powerlessness, and loss of hope. But even his vanity could not be maintained, and it easily showed its falsity.

"However the philosophical discoveries which I made especially flattered my vanity: I often
imagined myself a great man discovering new truths for the benefit of humanity, and I looked upon the rest of the mortals with a proud consciousness of my own worth; but strangely enough, when I encountered these mortals, I felt shy before each one, and the higher I placed myself in my own estimation, the less capable I was, not only of displaying any consciousness of my own worth before others, but I could not even get used to not blushing before every word and movement of my own, however simple."

Although this excerpt from Boyhood describes the difficulties which the fictional Nikolai Irtenyev had in forming his philosophic guidelines to search for truth, happiness, and God in this earthly life, it is of course Lev Nikolaevich speaking for himself, not only of the time of his boyhood, but also of the time he was writing this novel, that is, during his military service in the Caucasus and in the Danube basin. Tolstoy shows that he is aware of his limitations as a mortal human being, and that despite his intelligence and relentless pursuit of the truth, all of his philosophical theories, including those about his constant moral self-perfection, are still subject to the perpetual human sins of arrogance, skepticism, nihilism, and error. Tolstoy’s writing about this time in his life, when he was changing his attitudes about his religious faith and becoming more aware of his own human frailties and solipsistic tendencies, demonstrate the salutary effect of his military service on the development of his philosophic thought as well as on his personal behavior. Tolstoy was becoming less pessimistic about overcoming his personal behavioral problems at the same time that he was becoming less pessimistic about the value of religious faith. The modification of his thought to include the possibility that religion might have value in his life and that the veil of pessimism which covered his hopes of improving his personal behavior might be lifted coincided with his military service experience in the Caucasus, in the Danube region, and in the Crimea in the years 1851-1855.

It was also in November of 1852 that he had his first literary work, Childhood, published. He also finished his short story, The Raid, which was first called A Letter From the Caucasus, then A Description of War, in December. These developments, as well as his military and other experiences in the Caucasus, certainly helped to alleviate his pessimism about his moral self-improvement somewhat by the end of 1852. But despite the fact that his early writings show that his philosophical foundations had been laid by this time, of course his life-long quest for perfection of both philosophy and behavior had only just begun, and there was much refinement to accomplish.

The Raid presaged Tolstoy’s new ideas about the purpose of human existence and the role of the individual in history. But the theme of this short story was itself predicted in his diary entry of 12 June 1851, when he broached the subject of bravery after spending most of the diary entry describing his personal state of malaise and weak will (see above):

“...Three things have struck me. (1) The conversations of the officers about bravery. When they start talking about someone. ‘Is he brave?’ They say: ‘Yes indeed, everyone is brave.’ Ideas of this sort about bravery can be explained like this. Bravery is that condition of the soul in which the spiritual powers act in the same way with everyone no matter what the circumstances might be. Or it is an intensification of activity which makes one lose the awareness of danger. Or there are two kinds of bravery: moral and physical. Moral bravery is the kind which stems from an awareness of duty, or generally from moral inclinations, but not from the awareness of danger. Physical bravery is the kind which arises from physical necessity without making one lose the awareness of danger, as well as the kind which does make one lose that awareness. Examples of the first are men who voluntarily sacrifice their lives in order to save their country or another person. (2) An officer who is serving for profit. (3) The Russian soldiers in the Turkish campaign who threw themselves at the enemy only in order to get a drink. Here on our side there is only the
Note that of these three only Childhood (1852) was published before The Raid appeared in 1853. Boyhood wasn’t published until 1854, and Youth not until 1857. All of these works and Tolstoy’s other stories until 1858 were first published in the leading Russian literary periodical, The Contemporary (Sovremennik), which appeared monthly in St. Petersburg. It was founded in 1836 by Aleksandr Pushkin and P. A. Pletnev, then passed to I. I. Panaev and the poet N. A. Nekrasov in 1847. Turgenev, Ostrovsky, Goncharov, A. K. Tolstoy, Sologub, and Grigoriev were other Russian literary luminaries whose work appeared in the famous periodical. In 1858 the radical turn of the journal under Nekrasov, N. G. Chernyshevsky, and N. A. Dobrolyubov resulted in the loss of the most famous literary contributors, including Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy.

By 1852 Tolstoy’s military experiences in the Caucasus had helped to sufficiently focus his vision of a true individual philosophy of life. In his story The Raid Lev Nikolaevich departed from the sensitive, but self-centered, description and analysis of growing up which was characteristic of his early three fictional, but semi-autobiographical works, Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth. In this, the first of his military stories of the Caucasus and the Crimea, all of which could be termed semi-autobiographical as well, he first described the types and characteristics of individuals whom he admired. As he mentioned in his diary cited above, Tolstoy started with the concept of bravery as he heard and observed with his officer and soldier comrades. But he began his story with his interest in the human phenomenon of war, which had first been aroused by his reading of works by the French author, Stendhal (Henri Beyle, 1783-1842). The Raid: A Volunteer’s Story [in Russian, Nabeg: rasskaz volontëra] begins with Tolstoy as the narrator, a volunteer with a Russian detachment in the Caucasus, who muses on war and killing.

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Biryukov, pp. 199-200. In the same spring 1901 interview with Professor Paul Boyer of Paris cited earlier, in which Tolstoy described the great influence of Rousseau on his life, he also spoke of Stendhal. “As to Stendhal, I will speak of him only as the author of Chartreuse de Parme and Rouge et Noir. These are two great inimitable works of art. I am, more than anyone else, indebted for much to Stendhal. He taught me to understand war. Read once more Chartreuse de Parme, his account of the Battle of Waterloo. Who before him had so described war -- i.e., as it is in reality? Do you remember Fabrice [del Dongo] crossing the battlefield and ‘understanding nothing’ and how the Hussars threw him with ease over the back of his horse, his splendid general’s horse? Subsequently my brother, who had served in the Caucasus before me, confirmed the faithfulness of Stendhal’s descriptions. He enjoyed war very much, but he did not belong to those who believe in the Bridge of Arcole [heroic, but unsuccessful 1796 assault led by Napoleon, which is overly celebrated by French painters]. He used to say to me, ‘All that is embellishment, and in war there is no embellishment.’ Soon afterward in the Crimea, I easily verified all this with my own eyes. I repeat, all I know about war I learned first of all from Stendhal.” This interview was printed in Le Temps of 28 August 1901.

Tolstoy’s works were subject to censorship by the Tsarist censor. His military stories were especially affected by this censorship, which sometimes seems to have been wittingly or unwittingly continued by the editors and publishers of all Russian editions of his works including the new 2000 edition of his complete works now in progress. All English translations of his works,
except for those by Louise and Aylmer Maude, have also seemingly been based on the authoritative Pss v 91t (Moscow: Khudozhhestvennaya literatura, 1928-1964) edition. This Soviet edition ironically, perhaps intentionally, continued the Tsarist censorship of Tolstoy’s works. The Raid: A Volunteer’s Story is the prime example, for nearly all of the philosophic commentary by characters in the work, including that by the volunteer, Tolstoy’s alter ego, which was originally deleted by the Tsarist censor, remained deleted in the canonic text of this work (Pss v 91t, vol. 3, pp. 15-39), although the deleted sections were included in a section of manuscript variants (vol. 3, pp. 218-240). See vol. 3, pp. 298-303, for “The History of the Publication of The Raid,” with editors’ (N. M. Mendelson) version of the struggle by Tolstoy and Sofya Andreevna (Behrs) Tolstaya (1844-1919, Tolstoy’s widow, who copied his works for publication) to see the original version of The Raid published and the editors’ unconvincing reasons for not publishing the true version of this work. This was one of the reasons for the mutual antipathy between Sofya Andreevna and V. G. Chertkov (1854-1936), Tolstoy’s secretary and the general editor of the Pss v 91t until his death in 1936. See for example her diary entries in 1910 in S. A. Tolstaya, Dnevnikii [Diaries], edited by S. A. Rozanova, N. I. Azarova, et al (Moscow: Khudozhhestvennaya literatura, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 119-226 and 299-333, and in the English edition, The Diaries of Sofia Tolstoy (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), translated by Cathy Porter, pp. 495-586 and 652-683.

This continued censorship has affected every edition of Tolstoy’s works except for the Maude English translations. The Maudes (Aylmer 1858-1938) were close English friends of Tolstoy who frequently stayed at his estate. Both Aylmer and Louise Maude were long-time residents of Moscow, he being the director of the Russian Carpet Company and she the daughter of another British businessman there. Their English translations are the most authoritative, and in the case of The Raid: A Volunteer’s Story, their English translation is the only true version of this work by Tolstoy in any language, including Russian. For Tolstoy’s unqualified approval of the Maudes’ translations of his military stories (which did not include The Raid in the edition mentioned), see Lev Nikolaevich’s letter to Aylmer Maude of 23 December 1901, in R. F. Christian, ed., Tolstoy’s Letters, Volume II: 1880-1910, p. 607, and Pss v 91t, vol. 73, pp. 172-173. “...I think I already wrote and told you how particularly much I liked your edition of the first volume. Everything is first-class, the edition, the notes, and most important the translation, and even more important the conscientiousness with which it has all been done...”

For Lev Nikolaevich’s reaction to the censorship of The Raid, see Maude, The Life of Tolstoy, vol. I, p. 86, and Birukoff, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, p. 156, which quote Tolstoy’s letter to his brother Sergey of May 1853 (Pss v 91t, vol. 59, p. 236, dated as first half of June 1853): “...Childhood was spoiled, and The Raid simply ruined by the censor. All that was good in it has been struck out or mutilated...” See also Pss v 91t, vol. 59, pp. 221-222 and R. F. Christian, ed., Tolstoy’s Letters, Volume I: 1828-1879, for Tolstoy’s letter to his editor, N. A. Nekrasov, of 26 December 1852 in which he instructs Nekrasov not to publish The Raid with any changes, omissions, or additions. Nekrasov published it anyway in the censored form. See as well Tolstoy’s diary entry of 28 April 1853 (Tolstoy, Ss v 22t, vol. XXI, p. 86 and note, p. 528; also Pss v 91t, vol. 46, p. 160), in which he describes how he “received the book [No. 3, 1853 issue of The Contemporary] with my story [The Raid] presented in the most pitiful condition. It upset me....”

These letters and quotations, except for the 23 December 1901 letter to Maude, are reproduced in “The History of the Publication of The Raid” in vol. 3 of the Pss v 91t, but their clear demonstration of Tolstoy’s intent seems to have been lost on the editors of the Pss v 91t, who plead repetition, subjectivity (especially on the part of S. A. Tolstaya), Tolstoy’s tacit acceptance of the censorship to gain publication, and (referring to his diary entries of 7 July and 1 December 1852) his desire to eliminate the satire in the work. The first three reasons do not adequately explain the far-reaching effects of Tsarist and Soviet censorship, and the last reason was accomplished by Tolstoy before he submitted the work to Nekrasov (See the 1 December and 3 December 1852 diary entries and his letter to Nekrasov of 26 December 1852). A
more likely reason for the Soviet-period editors’ preference of a tsarist-censored version as the canon is the elimination or dilution of the openly anti-war views, the realistic and unflattering portraits of some Russian military personages, and the vivid descriptions of Russian army practices in occupied territory.

In volume 2 of the new edition of Tolstoy’s complete works, L. N. Tolstoi: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v sta tomakh [L. N. Tolstoy: Complete Works in 100 Volumes] (Moscow: Nauka, 2000 - ), which was published in 2002, the editors have again utilized the censored version of The Raid published in Pss v 91t as the canon. They have not yet published the fragments and manuscript variants of The Raid, which were contained in the 1928-1964 edition, which include the censored parts of the Maude-Tolstaya version. In the commentary section of the new edition on The Raid, N. I. Burnasheva on p. 281 notes difficulties with the censorship of Tolstoy’s five military stories, especially with Sevastopol in May 1855 and Sevastopol in August 1855. But she asserts that the versions of Sevastopol in the Month of December 1854, The Wood-Felling, and The Raid are “the most authoritative” as they are based on the versions of these stories published in 1856 in St. Petersburg, when tsarist censorship was presumably less severe under Alexander II. She states, “These texts could be considered final, that is, as an expression of the last creative will of the author, inasmuch as in the future, during his lifetime, the writer did not return to work on the earlier stories.” It should be kept in mind, however, that the 1856 collection of Tolstoy’s five military stories, including The Raid, was published by the Military Education Institutions’ Publishers of the Imperial General Staff (p. 300), and that Tolstoy friend and biographer P. I. Biryukov (Birukoff) noted that “the beginning [of The Raid], where the judgements about war are presented, suffered most of all from the censor” (quoted on p. 298 of vol. 2, from Biryukov’s History of L. N. Tolstoy’s Works: Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth, the Cossacks, the Raid, The Sevastopol Stories in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art - RGALI). A more realistic reason for Tolstoy’s acquiescence in the publication of his military stories still in censored versions is the fact that he probably did not believe that they could be published otherwise.

For a critical view of the Maude translation and version of The Raid, see Dufﬁeld White, “An Evolutionary Study of Tolstoy’s First Story, The Raid” in Tolstoy Studies Journal IV (1991), pp. 43-72. White criticizes the Maude version of The Raid as based on a 1911 edition of the story, which he terms “is not the definitive version of The Raid,” it being re-created by Sofya Tolstaya utilizing the 1856 published edition “with bracketed interpolations from earlier manuscript fragments.” White’s conclusion mostly concerns the artistic merits of the story, but it loses validity on some important points. With no extant version of the original story sent to Nekrasov by Tolstoy in late December 1852, there is only the historical record of Tolstoy’s diary entries, letters, the published editions, and the extant manuscript drafts and fragments together with the testimony of those who interacted closely with Tolstoy to consider in trying to decide what was Tolstoy’s original story. Neither Sofya Tolstaya nor Aylmer Maude were with Lev Nikolaevich when he originally wrote The Raid, but both were his closest associates throughout his literary career with the exceptions of the afore-mentioned P. I. Biryukov, N. N. Gusev, who was his personal secretary in his later years, and V. G. Chertkov, who as general editor of the Pss v 91t, certainly had to consider Soviet censorship in what was going to be published as the canon of Tolstoy’s works (or have it considered for him). The manuscript drafts and fragments were all written by Tolstoy, but there is no way to know what Tolstoy had included in the original story since they are undated, although the general chronological order of the three drafts can be established as the editors show. The Maude English translation of The Raid, which first appeared in 1935 (curiously the same year as vol. 3 of the Pss v 91t and its canonic version of The Raid), includes in brackets what Maude calls those portions of Tolstoy’s original story of The Raid which were suppressed by the censor. These bracketed portions contain wholly or partially Fragments Numbers 7, 8, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, and 22 of what the editors of Pss v 91t call the third draft in the section of vol. 3, pp. 218-240, titled “Variants of Hand-Written Drafts of The Raid.” The best sources for the original story
“War always interested me: not war in the sense of manoeuvres devised by great generals -- my imagination refused to follow such immense movements, I did not understand them -- but the reality of war, the actual killing. I was more interested to know in what way and under the influence of what feeling one soldier kills another than to know how the armies were arranged at Austerlitz and Borodino...”

Later in this soliloquy, after discarding continual anger as the motive for one person killing another in war, and then proposing self-preservation and duty as possible reasons, the narrator turns to thoughts of courage or bravery.

“What is courage -- that quality respected in all ages and among all nations? Why is this good quality -- contrary to all others -- sometimes met with in vicious men? Can it be that to endure danger calmly is merely a physical capacity and that people respect it in the same way that they do a man's tall stature or robust frame? Can a horse be called brave, which fearing the whip throws itself down a steep place where it will be smashed to pieces; or child who fearing to be punished runs into a forest where it will lose itself; or a woman who for fear of shame kills her baby and has to endure penal prosecution; or a man who from vanity resolves to kill a fellow

remain the historical record and the decisions of those who had the best access to the author and his manuscripts, that being his wife Sofya, who copied his work for publication, and his documented close friends and approved translators, Louise and Aylmer Maude. On p. 294 of vol. 2 of the new edition of Tolstoy’s Complete Works in 100 Volumes is an interesting anecdote from D. P. Makovitskiy, who was Tolstoy’s personal physician and resident at Yasnaya Polyana from 1904-1910, in Literaturnoe nasledstvo of a 1910 conversation among Lev Nikolaevich, Sergey Lvovich (his eldest son), and Sofya Andreevna about restoring the censored portions of The Raid. From his recorded statements it is clear that Tolstoy wanted to restore the censored portions of The Raid, but he was preoccupied with other matters. Finally Lev Nikolaevich told his wife and son to do what they wanted to do. A footnote on the same page marks this conversation as the genesis of the 1911 version of The Raid.

While White's article may have merit as artistic criticism of Tolstoy in his writing of The Raid, his final point that the Maude/Tolstaya 1911 version distorts the story of The Raid by disturbing “the balance that the final version [presumably the canonic version of the Pas v 91t] creates between juxtaposed narrative perspectives” may be true, but it doesn’t mean that Tolstoy didn’t write it that way. White uses this criticism to invalidate the Maude/Tolstaya 1911 version as not being, or being only an amalgam of, Tolstoy’s original story of The Raid, but it should be remembered that such philosophical apostrophes and digressions in the middle of stories are a quintessential characteristic of Lev Nikolaevich. Tolstoy was nothing if not didactic, and often heavy-handedly so. This feature of the Maude/Tolstaya 1911 version, far from invalidating it as the definitive version of The Raid, actually does the opposite.

17This citation, and the one which follows it, are from the introductory paragraphs of the Maude translation of the Maude/Tolstaya 1911 version of The Raid. These paragraphs, part of the original text censored by the tsarist authority, are not included in the canonic version of The Raid as presented in Pas v 91t or in the new 2000 edition of Tolstoy’s Pas. They are included in Fragment 7 of the third draft of The Raid as listed in Pas v 91t, vol. 3, pp. 228-229. See previous note.
creature and exposes himself to the danger of being killed?

In every danger there is a choice. Does it not depend on whether the choice is prompted by a noble feeling or a base one whether it is called courage or cowardice? These were the questions and the doubts that occupied my mind and to decide which, I intended to avail myself of the first opportunity to go into action...

The narrator then encounters Captain Khlopov, who tells him that the battalion is to move out tomorrow with two days’ rations, but that the mission could actually last much longer than that. The narrator is keen to accompany the battalion on the mission, but the combat-experienced captain does his best to dissuade him, saying that he would be better off reading Mikhaylovsky-Danilevsky's Description of War, which describes how battles are fought, rather than seeing how people are killed. The captain further relates how a previous volunteer had been killed. The narrator’s response is to ask whether the volunteer had been brave. The captain replies that he didn’t know, but that the volunteer always rode in the front and that he never avoided the firing. The narrator comments that the volunteer must have been brave, but Captain Khlopov replies, “No. Bravery does not mean pushing oneself in where it is not requested.”

The discussion between the narrator-volunteer and Captain Khlopov then turns to what the captain believes is the definition of bravery. His reply of “He who does what he ought to do is brave” is recalled by the narrator as very similar to Plato’s definition, that bravery is the knowledge of what should be feared and what should not be feared. The captain then suggests that the narrator have a talk with a cadet in the battalion who is fond of philosophizing.

Captain Khlopov, who was probably based on the real-life Captain Khilkovsky mentioned in Tolstoy’s letters and diaries of the time, is the type of soldier and the type of individual whom Tolstoy admired most. He has been wounded four times, but he never mentions this. He serves not for glory, but out of a sense of simple duty and the extra pay he receives for his service in a dangerous area which he sends home to his mother and sister. Captain Khlopov lives economically and does not have many bad habits. “...He had one of those simple, calm Russian faces which are easy and pleasant to look straight in the eyes...” He is the model of the existential hero, who can be found in all walks of life, that Lev Nikolaevich first discovered in the Caucasus although he certainly had been thinking about such an individual for a while, at least since the early writing of his Kazan University days on The Characters of La Bruyère, where he contemplated individual merit and the useful life. Captain Khlopov is the antecedent of a host of such meritorious characters, whom Tolstoy first found in the military, to be included in his works. In War and Peace he presages Captain Tushin at Schön Grabern as well as Prince Andrei and General Kutuzov, all of whom were equally heroic only because they saw their duty and they did it without regard to fame or fortune.

While Captain Khlopov is the most admirable figure in The Raid, his character is contrasted with two other figures, both military officers, who represent different and less admirable types of bravery. Lieutenant Rosenkranz is a young dare-devil who is the model of the romantic hero of such novels as Lermontov’s A Hero of Our Time and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky’s Mullah-Nur, which were immensely popular at the time. The trouble with their bravery is that it is superfluous or gratuitous, based on acts of daring which are entirely unnecessary or even counterproductive.

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58 Pss v 91t, vol. 3, p. 16.

59 Pss v 91t, vol. 3, p. 16.

60 Pss v 91t, vol. 3, pp. 18-19.
Lieutenant Rosenkranz is a self-described descendant of the original Varangian (Viking) founders of the Russian state despite his German-Saxon name, Kaspar Lavrentyevich Rosenkranz, and of whom Tolstoy asks in another censored part of the story in Part VI, "What higher power has brought him from his fatherland and set him down in this distant region? Why should this Saxon, Kaspar Lavrentich, involve himself in our bloody quarrel with unpeaceful neighbors?" Lieutenant Rosenkranz is a capable soldier whose overestimation of his own capabilities and knowledge of the Chechens is motivated by his desire to appear the hero and the dandy in the eyes of his compatriots. He associates closely with the Russian army's Chechen scouts, but he is a soldier of fortune with a love for battle and killing on any excuse to hide his fear. He is Tolstoy's gratuitous duellist, his Pechorin of A Hero of Our Time, the superfluous romantic hero also described so exquisitely by Lermontov in his 1832 poem The Sail (Parus), the last line of which is "But he, the rebel, begs for a storm as if in storms there were peace."

The third model of bravery in The Raid is the young and inexperienced Ensign Alanin. He is one month out of the cadet corps, but is very eager to see his first combat action. In fact he is so eager that, on his own authority, he leads a totally unnecessary and unadvisable charge of his unit into a wooded area where the Chechens lie in wait. As a result his unit takes casualties, and he is mortally wounded. As he lay dying, the young Ensign Alanin admitted to Captain Khlopov that he was sorry he had disobeyed him. Despite the ensign's violation of his orders, the tenderly sympathetic captain told Alanin to say rather that it was God's will. In the censored description of his last gesture, the young ensign willed his effects to be sold to pay his gambling debts.

The entire story of The Raid concerns the unnecessity of the whole military operation with the gratuitous daring and arrogance of the Russian soldiers, and especially the officers, mixed in. The ever observant and sensitive Lev Nikolaevich accurately portrays the reasons behind the propensity of human beings to engage in such activity so contrary to the natural environment. In a censored portion of Part VI, he summarizes at the beginning of a soliloquy:

"War! What an incomprehensible phenomenon! When one's reason asks: 'Is it just, is it necessary?' an inner voice always replies, 'No.' Only the persistence of this unnatural occurrence makes it seem natural, and a feeling of self-preservation makes it seem just."

The esprit de corps engendered by men to justify their engagement in otherwise immoral activities is facilitated by such ignorance, dare-devilism, dandyism, avarice, and the removal of all common human qualities from those who are the target of the violence. Tolstoy contrasts these descriptions of immoral and unnatural human actions for trivial reasons with the majesty and serenity of the nature of the Caucasus. The mortality, finiteness, and sometimes destruction of human activity is seen against the immortality, infinity, and renewing power of nature. The personage of Captain Khlopov symbolizes mankind's only hope for redemption and unification with the natural world as God intended. He is the only character who understands the role and destiny of mankind in the universe and demonstrates it in his personal activity. Captain Khlopov facilitates God and nature, while the others act against them.

While the theme and tenor of The Raid is anti-war, it would be a mistake to consider that Tolstoy intended the work not to be patriotic. Lev Nikolaevich certainly believed in military service for the defense of his country, and Captain Khlopov is the model of such service. In Part X, where the

\[61\text{Pss v 91t, vol. 3, p. 235. This is from Fragment 16 of the third draft or revision.}\]

\[62\text{This citation from the Maude/Tolstaya 1911 version again is not a part of the canonic version of The Raid, but it is included in Fragment 16 of the third draft in Pss v 91t, vol. 3, p. 234.}\]

36
The narrator/volunteer describes the captain’s bravery and competence under fire, he also says:

“The Frenchman at Waterloo who said, ‘La garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas’ [The Guard dies, but it does not surrender], and other, particularly French, heroes who made memorable declarations were brave, and really uttered remarkable words, but between their courage and the courage of the captain there was this difference, that even if a great saying had in any circumstance stirred in the soul of my hero, I am sure that he would not have said it; first because by making a great declaration he would have been afraid to spoil a great deed, and secondly because when a man feels within himself the capacity to perform a great deed, no talk of any kind is needed. That, I think, is a peculiar and a lofty characteristic of Russian courage, and that being so, how can a Russian heart help aching when our young Russian warriors are heard to utter trite French phrases intended to imitate antiquated French chivalry?”

The themes of quiet, calm, and unnoticed personal and individual courage, bravery, and selflessness are reprised in the military setting in Tolstoy’s The Wood-Felling and in the three Sevastopol Sketches, all of which were published by 1856, the year of his separation from military service. The Wood-Felling (1855), like The Raid, takes place in the Caucasus, but this story lacks the overwhelming anti-war tenor of its predecessor. It describes the simple, but dangerous military support operation of felling trees in order to decrease the cover for Chechen raids on a Russian military detachment which is encamped in the Terek territory. In the course of the work, the Chechens attack, firing on an artillery platoon which has been temporarily assigned to this duty. The story is narrated by a cadet, who is temporarily commanding the platoon in the absence of an officer. He describes the soldiers in his unit in detail, especially in psychological terms, and how they react to the attack and to the death of one of their number, who becomes the only casualty of the operation as the unlucky bulls-eye of unseen snipers firing from cover. Tolstoy praises the simple modest courage of the Russian soldier, whose bravery is so quiet and unassuming that it is often unnoticed and always taken for granted. From Part XIII:

“Always and everywhere, but especially in the Caucasus, I have noticed the peculiar tact of our soldiers in time of danger in minimizing or avoiding anything that might have a bad effect on the morale of comrades. A Russian soldier’s morale is not based on an easily inflammable enthusiasm which cools quickly, like the courage of southern nations. It is as difficult to inflame him as it is to depress him. He does not need effects, speeches, war-cries, songs, and drums. On the contrary he needs quiet, order, and an absence of any affectation. In a Russian, a real Russian soldier you will never observe any bragging, swagger, or desire to befog or excite himself in time of danger. On the contrary modesty, simplicity, and a capacity for seeing in danger something else other than the danger are the distinctive features of his character.”

Then the cadet gives examples of the courage of Russian soldiers, including one with a loaded bomb which seems somewhat dubious:

“I have seen a soldier wounded in the leg, who in the first moment thought only of the hole in

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63*Pss v 91t*, vol. 3, p. 37. Note that this particularly patriotic part of The Raid was not censored, nor was it left out of the canonic version.

64*Pss v 91t*, vol. 3, pp. 70-71.
his new sheepskin coat, and a rider who, crawling from underneath a horse that was killed under him, began unbuckling the girths to save the saddle. Who does not remember the incident at the siege of Gergebel when the fuse of a loaded bomb caught fire in the laboratory and a munitions sergeant ordered two soldiers to take the bomb and run to throw it into the ditch, and how the soldiers did not run to the nearest spot by the colonel’s tent, which stood over the ditch, but carried it farther on so as not to wake the gentlemen asleep in the tent, and both were blown to pieces? I remember also how, in the expedition of 1852, one of the young soldiers while in action said he thought the platoon would never get out of there, and how the whole platoon angrily attacked him for such evil words which they did not even want to repeat."  

The cadet/narrator of The Wood-Felling then returns to the present time as he sums up the psychological effect of the sniper’s kill on his unit:

“And now, when the thought of Velenchuk [the soldier killed by the sniper’s bullet] must have been in the soul of each one, and when the Tartars might sneak up at any second and fire at us, everyone listened to Chikin’s lively story, and no one referred either to the day’s action, or to the present danger, or to the wounded man, just as if it had happened God knows how long ago or had never happened at all.”

In the three Sevastopol Sketches (or Stories) Lev Nikolaevich also concentrates on this theme as he describes the siege of Sevastopol in the Crimean War in the years 1854-1855. In the first of these, Sevastopol in December 1854, there are no main characters, but a series of vignettes which describe the siege in its third month. Sevastopol is a vibrant place despite the conditions, impossible for the enemy to take, where Tolstoy lauds simplicity and obstinacy as the chief characteristics of the strength of the individual Russian. His depiction of Sevastopol, founded in the courageous and patriotic spirit of the defenders, is summarized near the end of the work as:

“So now you have seen the defenders of Sevastopol at the very place where they are defending it, and somehow you return with a tranquil heightened spirit, paying no attention to the bullets and bombs continuing to whistle all along the way to the ruined theater. The principal thought you have brought away with you is the encouraging conviction of the impossibility of the fall of Sevastopol, and not only of the fall of Sevastopol, but also of any shaking of the strength of the Russian people; and you see this impossibility not in all those traverses, breastworks, cleverly interlaced trenches, mines, cannons, one after another, of which you could understand nothing, but you see it in the eyes, in the words, in the actions, that which is called the spirit of the defenders of Sevastopol. What they do they do simply and forcefully, with so little effort that you are convinced that they could do it a hundred times as much…."

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67 Pss v 91t, vol. 4, p. 16.

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Then he describes their motivation:

“You understand that the feeling which motivates them is not that feeling of pettiness, or vanity, or forgetfulness which you yourself have experienced, but some other more powerful feeling, which has made them able to live so quietly under the bombs, exposed to a hundred chances of death besides the one all people are subject to, and this amid conditions of constant work, lack of sleep, and dirt. People could not accept such terrible conditions of life for the sake of a cross, or a promotion, or because of a threat: there must be some other, higher motivating reason.”

In the second story, Sevastopol in May 1855, Tolstoy returns to the usage of main characters to illustrate his theme of quiet, modest, and selfless courage. Here the personages of Cavalry-Captain Praskukhin and Lieutenant-Captain Mikhaylov represent the positive images of the truly brave Russian soldiers doing their duty in a selfless manner so that a markedly less vibrant Sevastopol might have a chance to survive the siege, now in its eighth month. Praskukhin is
killed and Mikhaylov wounded by the same bomb, while the vain and ambitious, but personable Adjutants Kalugin and Prince Galtsin and Cadet Baron Pest luckily survive to tell exaggerated self-promoting tales of their own bravery.

The ending of Sevastopol in May 1855 is a striking description of the horrible results of an assault on the bastions of Sevastopol with the flowery valley below covered with corpses which workmen are removing during a truce. Russian and French soldiers are freely and sociably mingling during the truce period while observing the gruesome sight. Tolstoy is bewildered by the catastrophic spectacle of the two combatting sides, both of which profess the Christian faith, engaging in such profane activity against God, nature, and "the one great law of love and self-sacrifice," especially as the truce ends, when "The white flags are lowered, the instruments of death and suffering are whistling again, honorable and innocent blood is flowing again, and moans and curses are heard." How two peoples can associate so easily in friendship in one moment and assault each other so readily in the next causes Tolstoy to be overcome by deep meditation on "those evil truths that unconsciously thaw out in the soul of each person and should not be spoken of so as not to make them harmful, as the sediment in a bottle must not be shaken for fear of spoiling the wine."69

Tolstoy then rhetorically asks, "Where is the evil that should be avoided, and where is the good that should be imitated in this tale? Who is the villain and who is the hero of the story? All are good and all are bad." He then declares that none of his main characters with either their exemplary faults or their exemplary virtues can be either the villain or the hero of the tale. "The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all its beauty, who has always been, is, and will be beautiful, -- is Truth."70 Here Lev Nikolaevich is not making a statement of the moral equivalence of his characters. Clearly Praskukhin and Mikhaylov are morally superior to Kalugin, Prince Galtsin, and Cadet Baron Pest in Tolstoy's eyes. But sometimes in the larger scheme of historical occurrences, such as the Crimean War of 1854-1855, individual moral weaknesses or individual moral strengths will not make a difference in the outcome of those large events. This ending of Sevastopol in May 1855 presages Tolstoy's struggle with his anti-historicist theme of War and Peace (1869), part of which is that the moral standing or moral improvement of individuals has no necessary connection to a beneficial outcome of large events for a particular society or for mankind in general.71

Sevastopol in August 1855 is the third and longest story in the Sevastopol Sketches series. It concerns the successful French attack on the Malakhov Bastion and the quickly ensuing series of events which produced the evacuation of Sevastopol by the Russian forces and its fall in the eleventh month of the siege. Tolstoy centers this story on the Kozeltsov brothers, Mikhail and Volodya, who meet in Sevastopol just before its fall and who are killed while defending the Malakhov Bastion. Both brothers represent the type of unassuming, modest hero whose exemplary courage was instrumental in the defense of Sevastopol for so long against the far superior English and French forces. The elder Kozeltsov, Mikhail, is a combat-experienced lieutenant of artillery who, after recovering sufficiently from wounds suffered already in the siege,
returns to Sevastopol to rejoin his unit on the Malakhov Bastion. His younger brother, Volodya, has just graduated from cadet school and is unsure of himself, but eager to prove his courage and patriotism under fire.

The Kozeltsovs of Sevastopol in August 1855 and Praskukhin, Mikhaylov, and the minor character Infantry Lieutenant-Colonel Simon Nefërdov of Sevastopol in May 1855 symbolize the quiet and unassuming, courageous individual whom Tolstoy idolized in his military stories. These are individuals who see their duty and do it out of selfless love for others. But their deeds and often their deaths are rarely recognized for their true, enduring value to society. As Lev Nikolaevich says at the end of Part XV in Sevastopol in May 1855, the morning after a heavy French attack on Sevastopol is successfully repulsed:

“On the boulevard was Lieutenant Zobov talking very loudly, and Captain Obzhogov, the artillery captain who didn’t curry favor with anyone, was there too in a dishevelled condition, and also the cadet who was happily in love, and all the same people as yesterday, with all the same motives of lies, vanity, and frivolousness as always. Only Praskukhin, Nefërdov, and a few more were missing, and hardly anyone now remembered or thought of them, although there had not yet been time for their bodies to be washed, laid out, and buried in the ground.”

When he first came to the Caucasus with his brother Nikolai, and then joined the Russian army in 1851, Tolstoy was looking to improve himself for sure, but he was also searching for heroes, exemplary individuals of courage whose lives could serve as models for a young person to follow. He found his theme in military life, bravery, and he found individuals in the military to serve as his models. He used these examples from his real life in his fictional work. Captain Khlopov of The Raid, the common Russian soldier of The Wood-Felling and Sevastopol in December 1854, Praskukhin and Mikhaylov of Sevastopol in May 1855, and the Kozeltsov brothers of Sevastopol in August 1855 are his literary heroes, main characters in his works drawn from his own real life experiences. These military heroes, all of whom show modest, quiet courage and selfless love for others, are intended by Tolstoy to be didactic in nature, just like his works in general. They are the kind of people who are truly exemplary and meritorious, but who are usually taken for granted and not remembered despite their vital contributions to society. Without them and their love any semblance of a valuable human civilization would cease to exist, and eventually the sun would cease to come up in the morning for humankind. Tolstoy shows that their modesty and quiet hides them only from the noisy vanity always prevalent in our pretentious human society, but it does not detract from their value. As Jesus Christ warned against demonstrations of piety and good works in public in the Sermon on the Mount, He also indicated that all true charitable contributions are anonymous.

Tolstoy spent almost three years in the Caucasus, first as a volunteer, then the last two years as a cadet attached to an artillery brigade stationed in the Cossack village of Starogladkovskaya in the north Caucasus. He took part in several expeditions against the Chechens, who were led by

Pss v 91t, vol. 4, p. 55.

Matthew 6: 1-24. See also Luke 18: 9-14, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.
the famous warrior Shamil. He narrowly escaped death or capture on at least one occasion. Lev Nikolaevich finally received his commission as an ensign in February 1854, and he was transferred to the Danube, arriving in Bucharest in March 1854. There he served mostly as a staff officer in ill health, and had two medical operations. Tolstoy was transferred to the Crimea at his request after British and French forces landed there in September 1854. He reached the besieged Sevastopol in November 1854, spending most of the siege at Belbek, on the outskirts of the town, and at Simferopol except for a period in April and May 1855, when he commanded a battery in Sevastopol’s Fourth Bastion. He evacuated Sevastopol with the Russian forces in September 1855, and was sent as a courier to St. Petersburg with artillery officer reports from the siege, after which he was attached to a rocket battery in the capital city area. For the rest of 1855, and until his resignation and discharge from the army as a lieutenant in December 1856, Tolstoy remained in Russia.

In his diaries and letters during the years 1853-1856, Lev Nikolaevich wrote of his continuing struggles against his bad habits, still primarily gambling, womanizing, and his desire for fame. Despite his earlier feelings of progress in his behavior and his growing literary success, it is clear from his personal writing in this period that he was still pessimistic and even depressed over his inability to follow his own advice and rules for improvement in his personal behavior. He also had religious doubts as well. Some examples illustrate his feelings and thoughts:

1853  ‘8 July  Got up late. Began to write, but it’s not going anywhere. I’m too dissatisfied with my aimless, disorderly life. Read Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard, and as always when I read it, it creates in me lots of sensible and noble thoughts. Yes, my chief misfortune is my great intellect. Slept after dinner, played a little with the boys, and acted very badly in not only not stopping them, but giving them a chance to abuse Yepishka.

I can’t prove to myself the existence of God; I can’t find even one sensible piece of evidence,

“Tolstoy in fact was charged with writing an official report on the last bombardment and taking of Sevastopol by the Chief of Staff of Artillery of the Crimean Army, General N. A. Kryzhanovskiy. See Pss v 91t, vol. 4, pp. 299-306, for the text of the report, called by the editors “Report on the Last Bombardment and the Seizure of Sevastopol by the Allied Forces,” and notes on pp. 417-418.

“See Maude, The Life of Tolstoy, pp. 61-171, and Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, pp. 119-233.

“Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard is from Livre IV of his work, Émile ou De l’Education (1762). In it he develops his thought on faith, imagining a vicar from Savoy who is standing on the crest of a hill over the Po River and admiring the beauty of the Alps. This humble man of the church, follower of natural religion which is independent of rites and dogma and based on reason, addresses himself to a young convert and shows him that the beauty of nature creates religious emotion. Belief in God is inscribed in the heart of a person in this way. It’s only necessary for him to hear the voice of his conscience, his divine instinct, the infallible judge of good and evil. In this conception God is the principle of universal harmony, and it is a person’s interior sentiment, his conscience, a kind of instinct of the soul, which guides him in distinguishing between good and evil in conformance with the natural order of things.
and I find that the concept is unnecessary. It's easier and simpler to understand the eternal existence of the whole world with its incomprehensibly beautiful order than [it is to understand] a being who created it. The desire of a person's body and soul for happiness is the only way to an understanding of the mysteries of life. When the desire of the soul comes into conflict with the desire of the body, the former should gain ascendancy, since the soul is immortal just as the happiness which it obtains. The attainment of happiness is the soul's course of development. The defects of the soul present themselves as flawed noble aspirations. Vanity is the desire to be satisfied with oneself. Greed is the desire to do more good. I don't understand the necessity of God's existence, but I believe in Him, and I ask Him to help me understand Him.  

26 October  In the old days I used to think that after I had adopted a rule to be thorough and careful in my occupations, I could follow it; then these often repeated and never completely observed rules began to convince me that they were useless; but now I'm convinced that these fits, which continually weaken and then come on again, constitute the normal condition of periodic attention to oneself...  

1854 7 July  I have no modesty! That's my great defect. What am I? One of four sons of a retired lieutenant-colonel, left without parents at seven years of age [actually almost nine] in the care of women and strangers, having received neither a worldly nor an academic education and becoming independent at the age of seventeen, without a large fortune, without any social position, and above all without any principles; a man who mismanaged his affairs to the last degree, who spent the best years of his life without purpose or pleasure, and who finally banished himself to the Caucasus to run away from his debts and above all his habits, and from there, after seizing onto some connections which had existed between his father and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, transferred to the army of the Danube at the age of twenty-six as an ensign, almost without means except for his pay (because what means he has he must use to pay his outstanding debts), without patrons, without the ability to live in society, without knowledge of the service, without practical capabilities -- but with an enormous self-love! Yes, this is my social position. Let us see what kind of personality I have.  I am homely, awkward, unclean, and socially uneducated. I am irritable, boring to other people, immodest, intolerant (intolérant) and bashful like a child. I am almost an ignoramus. What I know, I have somehow learned myself irregularly, in pieces, unsystematically, and thus very little. I am intemperate, irresolute, inconstant, stupidly vain, and impetuous like all people who lack character. I am not brave. I am not punctual in life, and so lazy that idleness has become for me an almost insuperable habit. I am intelligent, but my intellect has never yet been thoroughly tested on anything. I have neither a practical mind, nor a social mind, nor a business mind. I am honest, that is, I love goodness, and I have made a habit of loving it; and when I deviate from it, I am dissatisfied with myself, and I return to it with pleasure; but there are things which I love more than goodness -- fame. I am so ambitious, and this feeling has been so little satisfied, that often I am afraid that between fame and virtue, I might choose the former if I had to choose between them.  

Yes, I am not modest; that is, I am proud of myself, but I am modest and shy in public.  

20 November  When will I finally cease  
To spend my life without purpose or passion,
And to feel a deep wound in my heart
And know no means of healing it.

Who inflicted this wound, only God knows,
But tormenting me from birth are
The bitter guarantee of future nothingness,
Oppressive grief and doubts.

Simferopol."\(^{80}\)

1855  “6, 7, 8 February  Played cards again and lost another 200 silver rubles. I can’t promise myself to stop. I’d like to win everything back, but instead I could get horribly involved. I want to win back the whole 2,000. It’s impossible, but nothing could be easier than to lose another 400, and then what? It’s horribly bad, not to mention the loss of health and time. Tomorrow I’ll suggest playing with Odakhovskiy, and it will be the last time... \(^{81}\)

2, 3, 4 March  ...I took communion today. Yesterday a conversation about divinity and faith inspired me to a very great, grand idea, and I feel capable of devoting my life to its realization. This idea is the founding of a new religion which corresponds to the development of mankind -- the religion of Christ, but purged of faith and mysticism, a practical religion which does not promise future bliss, but gives bliss on earth. I understand that only generations of people consciously working toward this goal can bring this idea to fulfillment. One generation will pass this idea on to the next, and some day fanaticism or reason will bring it into being. Consciously working toward the union of mankind with religion, this is the basis of the idea which I hope will absorb me. \(^{82}\)

10 October  I have been in a lazy, apathetic, non-starting, unsatisfactory position for a long time now. I won another 130 rubles at cards. I bought a horse and bridle for 150. What nonsense! My career is literature -- to write and to write! Starting tomorrow either I work all my life or I give up everything - rules, religion, decency - everything. -- \(^{83}\)

1856  “21 March  ...Activity, sincerity, contentment with the present, and finding love. My main mistake in life has been to allow the mind to take the place of feeling, and to let my flexible mind make what my conscience called bad into what it called good. So love, which is found in the soul, does not find satisfaction in a confrontation with the person who inspires it. -- Self-love destroys it. Modesty is the main condition for mutual love. -- \(^{84}\)

8 May  ...Spent the evening at Obolensky’s with Aksakov, I. Kireyevsky, and other Slavophiles. It’s noticeable that they are looking for an enemy which doesn’t exist. Their view is too narrow, and it doesn’t strike any nerves to find any reaction. There’s no need for it. Their aim, like that of any intellectually active group of people brought together in discussions and polemics, has changed significantly, broadened, and become based on serious truths such as family life, the commune, and Orthodoxy. But they lose them by the malice with which they express their views,

\(^{80}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 30-31.

\(^{81}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 47, p. 36.

\(^{82}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 37-38.

\(^{83}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 47, p. 64.

\(^{84}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 47, p. 68.
as though expecting them to be rejected. More calmness and Würde [dignity] would be better. That is especially so with regard to Orthodoxy. First because, while recognizing the justice of their opinion about the importance of the whole element plays in national life, one cannot help also recognizing, from a higher point of view, the monstrosity of its expression and its historical bankruptcy, and secondly because the censor squeezes the mouths of their opponents...  

14 May ...Found Meshchersky, Skaryatin, and Makarov halfway through dinner at Donon’s [restaurant on the Moika in St. Petersburg]. We went to Pavlovsk [Emperor Paul’s palace south of St. Petersburg]. Disgusting. Wenches, stupid music, wenches, an artificial nightingale, wenches, heat, cigarette smoke, wenches, vodka, cheese, frenzied shrieks, wenches, wenches, wenches!  

Everyone is trying to pretend that they are enjoying themselves, and that they like the wenches, but without success. In the train I was infuriated by drunken, boisterous German civilians who want to booze it up like officers. --  

15 May ...Three wenches, not bad. Felt jaded...  

Never let opportunities for enjoyment pass by and never look for them. -- I make myself a rule for all time never to enter an inn nor a brothel.  

4 June  Got up at 5, and went out walking with, I admit, horribly erotic thoughts. Read Pushkin’s first poems. Then I went through my old notebooks -- incomprehensible, but endearing nonsense...and I went to see the peasants. They don’t want freedom.  

27 July  ...Argued irritably with Masha [his sister] at dinner. The aunties stood up for her. She [one of his aunts not named] said that Turgenev says that it’s impossible to argue with me. Do I really have an bad disposition? I have to control myself, and the cause of it all is pride -- Valeriya was right...  

27 November  Got up at 10. Received a stupid letter from Valeriya. She’s fooling herself, and I see right through it -- that’s what’s irritating. ...Music, Kaloshin, Annenkov, I wandered around with sensual aims, a drunken wenche on the Nevsky, to the bath-house, wrote a cold letter to Valka. --  

15 December  Was awakened by Aleksandra Nikolaevna. I ----ed her, and she got

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"Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 69-70.

"Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 71-72. Tolstoy’s use of tenses is preserved in my translation.

"Pss v 91t, vol. 47, p. 72.

"Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 78-79. The notebooks presumably refer to many of the notes and essays from his student days, many of which have been translated and presented previously in this work.

"Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 87-88. Valeriya Arsenyeva was a romantic interest of Tolstoy’s at the time, but he decided not to marry her.

"Pss v 91t, vol. 47, p. 102. Nevsky Prospekt is the main street of St. Petersburg. Valka is Valeriya, a shortening of her name in a way to indicate irritation with her.
In one non-military story written and published during the years of his military period, Notes of a Billiard-Marker (1853-1856), Tolstoy also expressed the profound pessimism of his struggle against his personal vices. In this work he utilized his personal experiences and feelings in the creation of an alternative early end to the life of the gentry character Nekhlyudov, who became his alter ego in a series of works ranging from Boyhood (1854) and Youth (1855-1857) to Resurrection (1899). In the story told by a billiard-marker or scorer working in a gentleman’s club, Nekhlyudov, a young member of the country gentry who has recently moved to St. Petersburg, not so gradually succumbs to the lure of social vices in the capital city, especially gambling at cards and on his games at the billiard table. He loses vast amounts and has to mortgage and sell his entire estate, thereby ruining his heritage as well as the lives of the one thousand peasants living on it. The dishonor to his name and loss of his credit cause him to commit suicide by shooting himself in the billiard room when he can arrange to be alone there. He leaves a note explaining the reasons for his ultimate action, and the feelings expressed there certainly come from Lev Nikolaevich’s own soul as he looked at his own addictions:

“God gave me everything that a man could desire: wealth, a name, intelligence, noble aspirations. I wanted to indulge myself, and I trampled in the dirt all that was good in me. I am not dishonored, not unhappy, I did not do any kind of crime. But I did worse: I killed my feelings, my reason, my youth. I am entangled in a dirty net from which I cannot disengage myself and to which I cannot get accustomed. I continually fall and fall. I feel my descent and I cannot stop myself. It would have been easier if I had been dishonored, unhappy, or a criminal. Then there would be some kind of consoling, gloomy greatness in my despair. If I had been dishonored, I could have raised myself above the concepts of honor of our society and despised it. If I had been unhappy, I could grumble about it. If I had committed a crime, I could alone for it by repentance or punishment. But I am simply low, nasty, I know it, and I cannot raise myself up. And what has ruined me? Was there within me some kind of strong passion which would excuse me? No.

A seven, an ace, champagne, the yellow in the middle pocket, chalk, violet and rainbow-colored notes, cigarettes, women for sale, here are my memories!

... Where are those bright thoughts about life, about eternity, about God which had filled up my soul with such clarity and power? Where is the aimless power of love which had warmed my heart with such special warmth? Where is the hope for development, the sympathy with all that is excellent, the love for family, for neighbors, for work, for fame? Where is the sense of duty?

...I needed money to satisfy my vices and my vanity, and I ruined a thousand families entrusted to me by God, and I did it shamelessly, I who understood so well these sacred obligations.

And how good and happy I could be if I had gone along that road which my fresh intellect and

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91 Tolstoy originally wrote Notes of a Billiard-Marker in four days, 13-16 September 1853, beginning in a terribly depressed mood (Pss v 91t, vol. 46, pp. 174-175). The story was published in censored form by Nekrasov in The Contemporary in January 1855, and after the succession of Alexander II in February 1855, it appeared in uncensored form in a collection of literary works of various authors published by Davydov in St. Petersburg in May 1856. See Pss v 91t, vol. 3, pp. 317-323.
my childlike true feeling had discovered for me as I entered life. More than once I had tried to get out of the dirty rut in which my life was moving, to get to that bright road. I told myself, I will use all the willpower I have, but I could not. When I was alone, I felt awkward and terrible about myself. When I was with others, I unwillingly forgot my convictions, and I no longer heard the inner voice, and I again fell away.

Finally I reached the frightening conclusion that I could not rise up, and I stopped thinking about this and tried to forget myself. But hopeless remorse troubled me even more forcefully. Then the thought of suicide, which seems terrible to others, but is comforting to me, came to me for the first time.

But also in relation to this I was low and base. Only yesterday’s stupid incident with the hussar gave me enough willpower to carry out my intention. Nothing honorable remained within me, only vanity, and out of vanity I am doing the only good action of my life.

Previously I thought that the nearness of death would uplift my soul. I was wrong. In a quarter of an hour, I will be no more. But my outlook has not changed at all. I still see the same way, hear the same way. There is still that same strange inconsistency, vacillation, and laxity of thought which is so contrary to that solidity and clarity which a person can imagine, God knows why. Thoughts about what will happen after death, and what will be said tomorrow at Aunt Rtishcheva’s about my death occupy my mind with equal force.

What an incomprehensible creation is man!”

Such an exceedingly pessimistic outlook on life as a result of his addictive vices and personal irresolution led Tolstoy to write the pitiful end of his Nekhlyudov character by suicide in Notes of a Billiard-Marker. But just as Lev Nikolaevich was later able to resurrect himself from the grave of his hopeless sin and self-doubt, so was Nekhlyudov soon resurrected, and Notes of a Billiard-Marker is left to represent the alternative road to certain oblivion for both Tolstoy and his alter ego if they fail to find the meaning of life. A clue to the search is provided in the story by Petrushka, the humble billiard-marker, who prefaces the reading of Nekhlyudov’s suicide note by saying:

“And why such a sinful thing happened to him, that he destroyed his own soul, only God knows. He only left this paper behind, which I can’t understand at all.

What these gentlemen won’t do!.. That’s it, gentlemen... One word - gentlemen.”

By the end of 1856, Tolstoy, as Boris Eikhenbaum has observed, very much resembled Stendhal despite their different personalities. Both were interested in reason, analysis, and the psychology of their characters in contrast to the “affected, emphatic style of the romantics” of their eras. Both Tolstoy and Stendhal, as military veterans who had seen destruction and death up close, rejected the notion of war as a romantic epic, pointing out “the small, bad, egotistical, vain, and greedy elements which exist in war side-by-side with bravery and heroism.” As Stendhal was interested in writing a treatise on logic which would serve as a model for the conduct of princes, Tolstoy was now already deep into didacticism in his own writing. Both wrote diaries full of rules and formulas for their own behavior. They were constantly engaged in contemplation and
displayed the “same combination of passion and rationality, the same contradictoriness...”

But both Stendhal and Tolstoy were also egotists who continually violated the standards of behavior which they had established for themselves. This contradictoriness and conflict between philosophy and behavior produced a pessimism of spirit which Stendhal glossed over by contending that his maniacal egocentrism was intended only for the sensitive souls of the elite, “the happy few” of the dedication of his La Chartreuse de Parme (1839). For Tolstoy this pessimism of spirit led him to closer adherence to Rousseau’s philosophy, to the natural religion and humility which would bring the individual into harmony with God and the universe. At the end of 1856, Lev Nikolaevich was well on his way there, as the main characters in his military stories show, but the conflict and contradiction between his personal behavior and his maturing philosophy prevented his arrival for some years yet.

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Boris Eikhenbaum, Molodoy Tolstoy, pp. 97-100. Eikhenbaum quotes the French critic Alphonse Sèché on Stendhal for “He has no overall views, no general impression. It is this which allowed him to give such truthful, such striking, and such new battle descriptions. He was the first to point out the small, bad, egotistical, vain, and greedy elements which exist in war side-by-side with bravery and heroism. After him war ceased to be an épopée. Along with tragic horror, along with theatrical heroism, if it can be expressed like that, he sees simple-hearted heroism and even something comical in things, people, and situations.” Eikhenbaum also notes that, except for truthfulness, Sèché’s observations on Stendhal also apply to Tolstoy.
CHAPTER THREE

DEATHS, FOREIGN TRIPS, AND MARRIAGE:

THE PRELUDE TO WAR AND PEACE 1856-1863

The years 1856 to 1863 produced important changes in Lev Nikolaevich’s life which had profound effects on the development of his beliefs and his behavior. By the beginning of 1857, Tolstoy had established himself firmly in the literary and social circles of St. Petersburg. He was a well-known writer whose reputation had developed to such an extent that his contributions were an essential ingredient for the success of publishers and literary journals such as The Contemporary. But there was still a great chasm between his ideals, some of which were expressed in new works such as A Landowner’s Morning (1856/7) and Family Happiness (1859), and the reality of Russian society and his own behavior.

A Landowner’s Morning as a story is the result of an unfinished novel, The Novel of a Russian Landowner, which Tolstoy had planned since at least October 1852. 66 In it Prince Nekhlyudov, the young idealistic landowner and Tolstoy’s alter ego, yearns to find his life fulfillment as a member of the country gentry, especially with the aim of improving the life of the serfs on his estate. In Chapter XVIII he decides that his purpose in life is to find true happiness independent of chance through love and self-denial, inasmuch as love and doing good are the only truth and the only happiness possible in the world. But at the end he imagines how happy he might be to be Ilya, the handsome son of a virtuous serf on his estate, whose dream is to travel to distant towns in Russia (Kiev, Romen, Odessa) and Turkey (Tsargrad - Constantinople). The entire story is centered on the ideals of Prince Nekhlyudov, which are tinged by disappointment as he comes face to face with the reality of the serfs and their lives and beliefs. The storyline presages the difficulties encountered in Tolstoy’s own real life efforts to emancipate the serfs on his own estate.

Family Happiness is another semi-autobiographical story in which the Tolstoy substitute protagonist, Sergei Mikhailych, finds romantic love, then finally enduring love and real happiness in gentry family life. The idealized story is told from the point of view of Masha, a young noblewoman who falls in love with Sergei Mikhailych, who is twenty years her senior. The story point of view is, of course, Tolstoy’s, and it closely resembles his own affair with Valeriya Arsenyeva in 1856-1857. In Family Happiness, despite his paternalistic and patronizing attitude, the worldly wise Sergei Mikhailych is successful in educating his younger wife to finally understand

66Tolstoy outlined his plans for this novel in his diary entry of 19 October 1852, when he was in the army in the Caucasus. Disappointment was to play a central role in the life of the hero, the young gentry landowner. See Psst v 91c, vol. 46, pp. 145-146.
the meaning of enduring love and the real happiness that comes from living for others. In real life Tolstoy's relations with women presented him with problems he could not solve, and his failed relationship with Valeriya Arsenyeva, adulterous relationship with the peasant Aksinya Bazykina (which produced a son, Timofei), and his continual inability to control his womanizing until later in his life (with his marriage to the tough-minded Sofya Andreevna Behrs in 1862) demonstrated the lie of the idealism he expressed in Family Happiness. Lev Nikolaevich was well aware of the contradiction and his hypocrisy. He was so ashamed of the work that he tried to have it destroyed before it was published. In a letter to his friend and critic V. P. Botkin of 3 May 1859, he wrote:

"...What have I done with my Family Happiness. Only here and now at a distance I have come to my senses, and reading the corrections of the second part which you sent me, I recognize what shameless -- this disgusting work is, a blemish not only as an author, but also as a man. You tricked me into handing it over, and now you can be a confidant of my shame and remorse! Now I am finished as a writer and as a man! That's for sure. What's more, the first part is even worse. ...if you sympathize with my grief, persuade Katkov not to publish this second part and take the money back from me...I'm keeping my word and I corrected the proofs with a disgust which I cannot describe to you. In everything there is not a single living word. -- And the ugliness of the language, -- which flows out of the ugliness of the thought, is unimaginable. If it is already impossible to take this cup from me, then be a friend and look over the proofs and cross out, correct everything you can. I can't. I would want to cross everything out. -- If you are successful in saving me from the greater shame of publishing the second part, then burn it and the manuscript after you get it from Katkov. I was right to want to publish it under a pseudonym. -- I can return the 350 rubles in a week. The end of the story hasn't been sent to me and there's no need to send it. It's torture to see, read, and be reminded of this. --"97

Two other new works published during this period immediately before Tolstoy became consumed with writing War and Peace reveal his maturing philosophy and more experienced outlook. Two Hussars, published for the first time in May 1856, is the tale of two cavalry officers of two generations, the father, Count Fyodor Ivanych Turbin, and his son, also Count Turbin, who visit the same town twenty years apart. The father Count Turbin is the classic romantic rogue of the early nineteenth century. He is a selfish, but charming scoundrel who romances a local gentrywoman, Anna Fyodorovna, before leaving her in the lurch. He is a duellist who is finally killed in a duel, but he is fondly remembered by many for his loyalty, generosity, bravery, daring, and principled sense of honor. Sometimes guilty of bad judgement and foolhardiness on the spur of the moment, he was, however, empathetic and capable of love, making him a flawed, but true Tolstoyan hero. The son Count Turbin, on his visit to the town, is invited to stay at the home of the same Anna Fyodorovna, who remembers his father with great fondness. He at first impresses not only Anna Fyodorovna, but also her daughter Lisa, who yearns to find love with a cultured gentleman, perhaps a dashing cavalry officer. But this Count Turbin is not his father's type of selfish, but lovable rogue. His materialistic arrogance and lack of empathy for others shows too obviously, and he not only fails in an embarrassing attempt to seduce Lisa, but also alienates a comrade in the process. His brief appearance in town clearly shows his lack of those qualities which endeared his father not only to the townfolk, but also to his comrades twenty years before. The son Count Turbin is not brave and not loyal. He has no principled sense of honor and is not capable of loving others. For Tolstoy Count Turbin the son can be seen as a first embodiment of his view of the newly developing class of radical intelligentsia in Russia. This view would take

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97Pss v 91t, vol. 60, pp. 296-297. Botkin disliked Family Happiness at first, but when he read the proofs of the second part, he changed his mind, considering it "excellent in all respects," that it had "great internal dramatic interest;" it was a "superior psychological study;" and that it contained "deeply reproduced depictions of nature." See commentary on p. 297.
greater literary form in *War and Peace* and in later works on government.

Lev Nikolaevich began the novel which was to become *The Cossacks* in the Caucasus in 1852, but it wasn’t finished until published in 1863. Considered by many to be representative of his finest literary art, *The Cossacks* also symbolizes his maturing Rousseauist philosophy. Subtitled “A Tale of 1852,” the novel concerns a young nobleman named Olenin, very similar to Tolstoy in real life, who journeys from Moscow to the exotic land of the Caucasus to seek the fame, fortune, and romance which has eluded him in Russian society. Olenin is attracted by the freedom of the Cossack life on the frontier, a simple life lived in close proximity to the marvelous nature of the region and in accord with its natural laws and order. True to Rousseauist philosophy, he believes that he will find in such a primitive civilization the best opportunity for the pursuit of happiness through love for others and a selfless existence. But his romantic ideal of a Cossack life cannot be realized. He has great difficulty in accepting the ways of the simpler, amoral Cossack civilization despite the aid of Uncle Eroshka, an old hunter whom he regards as a wise man. Maryanka, the Cossack not-quite-beauty with whom he has fallen in love, rejects him as a non-Cossack who could never accept her way of life. In fact in many instances in the novel, including his departure at the end, Maryanka, Uncle Eroshka, and the other Cossacks show their real indifference to Olenin despite outward signs of appreciation. In *The Cossacks* Tolstoy has shown that there are limits to the search for real happiness in human existence in the simple, back-to-nature way of life advocated by Rousseau. This doesn’t mean that Tolstoy has ceased to believe in Rousseau’s philosophy, but merely that different civilizations with different normatives of social and moral behavior can complicate the effort every individual should undertake toward a simpler and more humble existence. Throughout his life Tolstoy was to maintain that such an existence is still essential for true human happiness, but there is wisdom in the words of the Cossack song recalled by Uncle Eroshka near the end of the novel:

“It is very hard, dear brother,
In a foreign land to live.”

Another short story, *Three Deaths*, published in 1859, illustrates in almost the same outline form the ideas which he sketched out in a letter to Countess Aleksandra Andreevna Tolstaya in May 1858. In a very simplified way Tolstoy contrasts the deaths of: a gentry lady whose last days are accompanied by religious doubts, worldly worries, and the close attention of servants, a doctor, and a priest; a poor peasant who before his quiet, almost unnoticed death gives up his excellent boots to a young and probably unappreciative peasant driver; and a tree which is cut down in its beautiful natural forest setting by the young peasant driver to form a cross over the grave of the poor peasant. It is clear that the ideas of simplicity and naturalness, love, and living for others are absent in the gentry lady’s death scenario. There is as well a perceptible contempt for the efforts of science, represented by the doctor, and established religion, represented by the priest, to help in resolving the vital questions of human existence. By contrast the important Tolstoyan elements of love, living for others, and the inherent superiority of natural simplicity are present in the poor peasant’s death. In the death of the tree, the superiority and beauty of nature are seen, but anthropomorphic questions arise in its description such as “The tree, shuddering in its whole body, bent down and quickly rose again, vibrating with fear on its roots.” Some of Lev Nikolaevich’s basic philosophic ideas about death and the purpose of life are present in this short story, but they are laid out only in a sketchy form which needed to be filled in with more of the writer’s art to clarify and distinguish them.

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98 *Pss v 91t*, vol. 60, pp. 264-266. Aleksandra Andreevna had read a draft of the story, and she had made comments to Tolstoy from her Orthodox Christian perspective as she frequently did from her residence at the Imperial Court.
In this period of his life, there were three deaths which were much more important in crystallizing Tolstoy's thought about death and the purpose of human existence. The first of these was the death of his brother Dmitri in February 1856. Ironically at the time, the death of his elder brother by one year seemed to have the least effect on Lev Nikolaevich as he shamefully remembered it later (1903-1906):

“At that time I was particularly odious. I had arrived in Oryol from St. Petersburg, where I was moving up in society, and I was full of vanity. I was sorry about Mitenka, but not much. I turned around in Oryol and left, and he died a few days later.

I really think that what troubled me most in his death was that it prevented me from taking part in an event which was then being organized at court, and to which I had been invited.”

His cavalier attitude toward the death of a close relation like his brother Dmitri showed that Lev Nikolaevich preferred not to confront himself at this time with the reality and meaning of death, the transition of life on earth, or the purpose of human existence as he had often written and thought about previously. Instead he chose an easier and more comfortable route, immersing himself in the secular life of an up-and-coming popular writer, which is what he had always dreamed about.

For a young Russian count moving up in St. Petersburg society, a grand tour of western Europe was always in season. From 10 February to 11 August 1857 Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy took his first visit there to places like Paris, Versailles, and Dijon in France; Geneva, Clares (near Montreux), Gessenay, Interlaken, Grindelwald, Bern, and a host of smaller towns in Switzerland during an extensive hiking tour there; Torino and Genoa in northern Italy; back to Switzerland to Luzern, Sarnen, Beckenreid, Rigi-Kulm, and thence to Friedrichshafen, Stuttgart, Baden-Baden, Eisenach, Dresden, Berlin, and Stettin in Germany before boarding a steamship back to St. Petersburg. He spent time with other Russians in western Europe, including his relations and also with Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, the famous writer of Russian country gentry life, who resided for much of his later life in Bougival on the Seine not far from Paris.

One result of his first tour of western Europe, or more precisely, his stay in the Swiss town of Luzern (Lucerne) was his short story From the Notes of Prince D. Nekhlyudov: Lucerne, which he wrote and first had published in the same year as his visit, 1857. Lucerne is the story of an incident which Tolstoy/Nekhlyudov experienced while strolling in the town near the famous Schweitzerhof hotel. A poor itinerant Tyrolean singer with a pleasant voice was entertaining the

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99Birukoff (Biryukov), Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, vol. I, p. 216. See also Maude, The Life of Tolstoy, vol. I, p. 148. The quotation is also found in Tolstoy's Reminiscences (Ps v 22t, vol. XIV, p. 425). Tolstoy's diary entries of this time are also simply matter-of-fact in relation to the death of Dmitri: "2 February. [Petersburg] I'm in Petersburg. My brother Dmitri died, I found out about it today. From tomorrow I want to spend my days so that it would be pleasant to remember them. ..." (Pss v 91t, vol. 47, p. 65).

100This event is recorded in Tolstoy’s diary of 7 July 1857 (Pss v 91t, vol. 47, pp. 140-141). After Lev Nikolaevich relates the facts of the incident, he notes the following, which reveals his still consuming search for meaning in his life and his belief in an immortal human soul:

"The night is miraculous. What do I want, what do I passionately desire? I don’t know, only not the blessings of this world. And how can you not believe in the immortality of the soul when you feel in your soul such immeasurable greatness! I looked out the window. It’s dark with broken clouds and light. I
The incident causes the Russian gentry traveller and narrator to ponder the mendacity of so-called civilized people toward art, their cruelty and lack of compassion for those less fortunate, and the true measure of the progress of a supposedly humane civilization which the incident reveals. Tolstoy/Nekhlyudov continues with his observation that the simple feeling of human sympathy has been replaced with vanity, ambition, and greed even in the most developed of the free and democratic societies, even on the individual level. Then he reminds himself that there is hardly any person who is able to judge the good and evil acts of others, and that the Universal Spirit inspires each human being with a craving for what ought to be, but that so-called civilization often stifles that primitive and instinctive voice of God within us. He concludes that only his own vanity allows him to believe that he himself could be separate from the law of the universe any more than anyone else. The short story Lucerne, as well as others such as Boyhood, Youth, A Landowner’s Morning, and the Caucasian military tale, Meeting a Moscow Acquaintance in the Detachment (1856), form the foundation for the later transformational development of the Tolstoy alter ego, Prince Dmitri Ivanich Nekhlyudov, in his search for the meaning of life in Lev Nikolaevich’s third great novel, Resurrection (1899).

It was also during his first tour of western Europe, while he was visiting Paris in April of 1857, when a second death of importance to Tolstoy and the development of his philosophy of life occurred. On 6 April he rose early, feeling sick after a late night of socializing. Despite his condition he decided to observe a public execution, an experience which made a lasting impression on him. In his diary he wrote:

“I got up sick at seven o’clock and went to see an execution. A fat, white, healthy neck and chest. He kissed the Gospel, and then - death, what senselessness! A strong and lasting impression and not in vain. I am not a political person. Morality and art. I know, I love, and I can do. ... The guillotine did not allow me to sleep for a long time and made me look around.”

Later on the same day he continued a letter he had begun the day before to his friend V. P. Botkin in which he revealed further lasting impressions, including how he viewed government, politics, politicians, and their relationship with laws of religion and morality:

could die happily now. My God! My God! What am I? And where am I going? And where am I?"
"...I had the stupidity and brutality to go see an execution this morning. Besides this the weather has been disgusting for the past two weeks and I've been very unhealthy, I was in a bad nervous state, and this spectacle made such an impression on me that I won't get over it for a long time. I saw a lot of horrible things in war and in the Caucasus, but even if they had torn a man to pieces in front of me, it would not have been as disgusting as this clever and elegant machine by means of which they killed a strong, vigorous, and healthy man in one instant. It's not a question of reasoned will in war, but one of human feelings of passion, while in this case it is refined, calculated calmness and convenience in murder, and there is nothing majestic about it. It's the insolent and impertinent desire to carry out justice and the law of God. Justice is determined by lawyers, each of whom stands on honor, religion, and truth, and says contradictory things. With the very same formalities they killed the king, and Chénier [French poet who initially welcomed the French Revolution, but was guillotined in its excesses], and the republicans, and the aristocrats, and (I forget his name) the gentleman two years ago whom they admitted was innocent of the murder for which they killed him. And the disgusting crowd, the father who was impressing his daughter with what kind of ingenious and convenient mechanism it was which had done the job, and so on. The law of mankind is trash! The truth is that the government is a conspiracy not only for exploitation, but mainly for the corruption of the citizens. But still governments exist even in such an imperfect state. -- And from this system they cannot pass into socialism. So what should people do who think as I do? There are other people, Napoleon III [1801-1873, the French emperor and cousin of Napoleon I] for example, to whom, because they are smarter or more stupid than I am, everything seems clear in this mess, and they believe that in these lies there can be more evil or less evil, and they act accordingly. And excellent, it's true that such people are necessary. But I see in all these disgusting lies only abomination, and the evil I don't want to and I can't analyze where it is more and where it is less. I understand moral laws, the laws of morality and religion, which are not binding on anyone, but lead people forward with promises of a harmonious future, and I feel the laws of art, which always give happiness; but the political laws are such a horrible lie for me that I cannot see in them neither better nor worse. This I felt, understood, and recognized today. And this recognition lifts the burden of the memory for me at least a little bit. In recent days there have been a series of arrests here, a conspiracy to assassinate Napoleon in the theater has been uncovered, they will kill again in a few days, but it's already sure that from today I will not only never go to watch this, but I will never serve any government anywhere. ... It's true what Turgenev wrote, that poetry in this nation il n'y a pas. There's only one poetry here - political, and it always was unattractive to me, especially now. In general I like the French life and the French people, but I haven't met a single sensible person either from high society or the people."

Despite the fact that later on that same day in his diary Tolstoy called his letter to Botkin "stupid," it is clear that in that letter he wrote what he felt to be true, lasting impressions of death in a public execution which clarified for him the differences between morality, religion, politics, and government, and what would forever be his relationship with these concepts and the people who professed them. In two later writings he said as much. In Part III of A Confession, which he wrote in 1879, he said:

"...So, for instance during my stay in Paris, the sight of an execution revealed to me the
shakiness of my superstitious belief in progress. When I saw how the head separated from the body, and then one, then the other thumped into the box, I understood - not with my reason, but with my whole being - that no theories of the reasonability of present progress can justify this act, and that if all the people in the world, from the creation of the world, according to whatever theories, had found it to be necessary, - I know that it was not necessary, that it was bad, and that therefore the judge of what is good and necessary is not what people say and do, nor is it progress, but it is I and my heart..."  

Then near the end of chapter II of What Then Must We Do?, his essay on the unjust economic disparities in society which he finished in 1886, he referred to the experience again:

“Thirty years ago in Paris I saw how they cut off the head of a man by the guillotine in the presence of a thousand spectators. I knew that this man was a horrible evil-doer. I knew all those arguments which people have written for so many centuries in order to justify that kind of action. I knew that they did it purposely and conscientiously. But in that moment when the head and body separated and fell into the basket, I gasped and I understood not with my mind, not with my heart, but with all my being that all the arguments which I had heard about the death penalty were evil nonsense, and that however many people were gathered together to commit murder, whatever they called it, murder is the worst sin in the world, and that this sin was committed in front of me. With my presence and non-interference I approved this sin and took part in it. ...”

Tolstoy then goes on to compare his tacit approval of the execution by his presence with his tacit approval of economic injustice in society by the fact that he, as a person of wealth and privilege, is witness to poverty and need, and if he does nothing about it, he is a direct participant in the continual commission of a crime. The publication of this essay in western Europe brought Tolstoy much praise, including some from a French contemporary who was also interested in the lives of the poor and downtrodden in society, Emile Zola.

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104 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 8.


106 In a forward to a collection of panegyric essays in honor of Tolstoy (Hommage à Tolstoï, Paris, 1901), Zola wrote: “I was most of all interested by those pages where he remained that powerful analyst, that same deep psychologist that he was in War and Peace and Anna Karenina. I mean the description of his visits to the Moscow shelters, his excited and ghastly adventures into the thick of the appalling poverty of the big city. Here there are astonishing pictures worthy of a great artist.” In his praise Zola was also referring to the content of Then What Must We Do? Zola had disagreements with Tolstoy’s religious and moral views as will be seen in the next chapter, but he valued his “goodness and his hatred of war.”

Because of tsarist censorship, the full text of Then What Must We Do? was ironically not published in Russia until 1937 in vol. 25 of Pss v 91t. The 1930s of course were the zenith of the Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union.
Lev Nikolaevich made a longer, more extensive trip to western Europe three years later, from 27 June 1860 to 24 April 1861. The purpose of this excursion with some of his family members was to study educational systems and teaching methods in schools. He first went to Stettin, Berlin, and Leipzig before Kissingen, Soden, and Frankfurt in Germany. He left Germany for Geneva, Switzerland, and then farther south to the Mediterranean coast of France where he passed through Marseille before arriving at Hyères on 6 September 1860 with more family members, including his brother Nikolai, who was ill with tuberculosis, and his sister Masha and her children. In November 1860 he left Hyères for Geneva, where he parted from his sister and her children, then commenced a tour of Italy, passing through Nice, Florence, Livorno, Naples, and Rome before returning to Hyères and Marseille, where he visited schools. By the first of February 1861, he was in Paris, where he saw Turgenev again. By the middle of March, he was in London where he met with A. I. Herzen, the Russian revolutionary thinker and writer. In London he also visited the House of Commons, and he attended a lecture by Charles Dickens.

While he was visiting London, two events happened which caused him to begin his return to Russia. On 3 March 1861, Tsar Alexander II emancipated the serfs of Russia. Tolstoy also learned that he had been appointed an Arbiter of the Peace in Tula district. This was an officer who settled disputes between former serfs and their former landowners. Lev Nikolaevich left London for Brussels in Belgium, where he made the acquaintance of P. J. Proudhon, a utopian socialist philosopher and author of What Is Property? Tolstoy left Belgium and went to Germany, passing through Frankfurt and Eisenach before arriving in Weimar on the last day of March 1861. Here he also observed schools, as he did in Jena and Dresden, before he went again to Berlin on 21 April from where he left for Russia, arriving in St. Petersburg on 25 April 1861. Tolstoy never left Russia again.

Despite the tours and the meetings with famous philosophers, thinkers, and educators during his second trip to western Europe, the event which easily affected Tolstoy most was the third death of importance to Lev Nikolaevich during the 1856 to 1863 period, the death of his brother, Nikolai, in Hyères on 1 October 1861. Nikolai, the inventor of the Legend of the Green Stick and with whom Tolstoy had served in the Caucasus, had the closest relationship with and the most influence on Lev Nikolaevich of any of his siblings. The effect of his death was profound, and it caused Tolstoy to re-examine himself and to doubt all that he believed. In his diary not quite one month later, Lev Nikolaevich wrote:

"13/25 October. Hyères. Soon it will be a month since Nikolenka died. This event has horribly ripped me away from life. Again the question: why? Already I'm not far from leaving for there. Where? Nowhere. ... The death of Nikolenka is the strongest impression of my life. ..."**107**

Then a few days after that Tolstoy wrote to his friend, the poet A. A. Fet:

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**107**See v. 91t, vol. 48, pp. 29-30. The two dates written by Tolstoy in the text of his diary note indicate the date by both the old style or Julian Russian calendar, which was used in Russia at the time, and the new style or Gregorian calendar used in western Europe.
"17/29 October. Hyères. I think you already know what has happened. On 20 September our style he died, literally in my arms. Nothing in life has made such an impression on me. He was telling the truth, there's nothing worse than death. And if it's good to think, however, that it's the end of everything, then there's also nothing worse than life. Why bustle about or try if, of everything that was N. N. Tolstoy, there is nothing left of him? He didn't say that he felt the approach of death, but I know that he followed it step-by-step, and he surely knew what still remained. Several minutes before death he dozed off and suddenly awoke, and with horror he whispered: 'What is that?' - He had seen it - this absorption of the self into nothingness. And if he already didn't find anything to hold on to, then what will I find? Even less. And then it's true that neither I nor anyone else would struggle with it down to the last minute like he did.

...One thing, nature, remained for him to the end. The night before [he died] he came into his bedroom to [sleep], and from weakness he fell onto the bed by the open window. I came in. He says with tears in his eyes, 'How I have enjoyed this whole last hour.' From earth you are taken, and to earth you will return. One vague hope remains that there in nature, of which you will be a part in the earth, something will remain and will be found. - All who knew and saw his last minutes say: 'How surprisingly quiet and peacefully he died,' but I know how horribly agonizing it was, because not a single feeling escaped me. ... What's the point of everything, when tomorrow begin the torments of death with all the abomination of wileness, lies, and self-deceit, and they end with destruction, with nothingness for the self. - It's an amusing trick. Be useful, be good, be happy while you live, people like us have told each other for centuries, and happiness, and virtue, and usefulness are the truth. But the truth that I have seen in my thirty-two years is that that position into which someone has placed us is the most horrible deceit and evil-doing for which we (liberals) would not have found words if a person had delivered another person into this position. Praise Allah, God, Brahma. What a benefactor. 'Take life as it comes.' 'Not God, but you yourselves have put yourselves into this position.' How so! I do take life as it is, as the most banal, disgusting, and false condition. And that proof that it was not I who brought myself here is that for centuries we have tried to believe that it was very good, but as soon as a person reaches the highest level of development, he ceases being stupid, and it becomes clear to him that everything is nonsense and deception, and that the truth, which he however loves more than anything, that this truth is horrible. So, as you see it well and clearly, you wake up and say with horror, as he [my brother] did: 'What is that?' But it seems that as long as there is the desire to eat, you eat, ... and while there is the unconscious, stupid desire to know and speak the truth, you try to find it out and speak it. It's the one thing from the world of morality that is left to me, and higher than that I cannot go. It's one thing I will do, only not in the form of your art. Art is a lie, and already I cannot love a beautiful lie. I'll spend the winter here for the reason that it makes no difference where I live. ..."¹⁰⁸

This long letter was followed later by two other diary entries which further revealed the deep spiritual crisis brought on by his brother Nikolai's death:

"[31 October/12 November] 12 November. A boy of thirteen has died in agony from tuberculosis. Why? The only explanation is given by faith in the justice of a future life. If there is none, then there is no justice, and justice is not necessary, and the need for justice is a superstition. "¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Pss v 91t, vol. 60, pp. 357-358.

¹⁰⁹Pss v 91t, vol. 48, p. 30.
"[1/13 November] 13 November. - Justice comprises the essential demand of a person on another person. A person seeks the same relationship in his relation to the world. Without a future life there is none. Purposefulness! The naturalists will say that it is the only immutable law of nature. It's not there in the manifestations of a person's soul - in love, in poetry, in the best manifestations. It's not there. All those things existed and died, often without being expressed. - Nature long ago overstepped its goal, giving a person the need for poetry and love, if its only law is purposefulness. - 110

Then again twenty-one years later in Part III of A Confession, Tolstoy referred to his brother Nikolai's death:

"...Another instance of the realization of the inadequacy for life of the superstition of progress was the death of my brother. A good, intelligent, serious person, he got sick as a young man, suffered more than a year, and died in agony, never understanding why he lived, and even less why he was dying. No theories could answer any of these questions neither for me, nor for him during the time of his slow and agonizing death.
..." 111

Although in A Confession Lev Nikolaevich described Nikolai's death in terms of the failure of mankind's superstitious belief in progress to explain the cruel injustices of human life, it is clear from the contemporary references to it above that this death of a good person close to him caused him to doubt his faith and his beliefs so carefully and painstakingly formed over his then thirty-two years of life. Even though Tolstoy had always been so pessimistic about his capability to follow his beliefs, he had never really doubted the truth of them because he believed that he was a supremely intelligent and talented person with all the advantages human society had to offer, yet he was generously outfitted with the affective safety valve of being humbly conscious of his own fallibility, and he had analysed and refined his beliefs so well and so much that they had to be true. It was only his own human failings which caused him to suffer the consequences of his conduct, not the truthfulness of his beliefs. But now he saw that it was not his conduct or his sins or his dear brother Nikolai's conduct or his sins which caused the pain of his brother's death. It was something else. Good people with good life values could suffer unjustly too. Tolstoy's belief system with his values could logically explain why bad people with bad values, good people with bad values, or bad people with good values could suffer in life or cause others to suffer. But this experience meant that there was no justice. And if there is no justice, there is no order in the universe, and without order in the universe, no one or nothing is in charge, religion is a meaningless and empty exercise, and there is no God.

So the difficult and unsettling questions raised by Nikolai's death certainly had their effect on Tolstoy. As P. I. Biryukov, his close friend and biographer, has said, Lev Nikolaevich now acknowledged that he was crushed by the experience and helpless before the power of it, so

110 Pss v 91t, vol. 48, p. 31.

111 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 8.
much so that the idea of death never left him for the rest of his life. But like many before him who found that their fundamental religious and philosophical beliefs failed them at the time of the death of a close relation, he turned from the vital issue he could not confront and immersed himself in other activities. For Lev Nikolaevich these other activities were: educational theory and the founding of a school for peasants at Yasnaya Polyana; his work for one year as an arbiter of the peace between peasants and landowners; his literary career, which included the completion of The Cossacks (1863) and the writing of his two most famous works, War and Peace (1869) and Anna Karenina (1877-1878); and certainly not least, his marriage to Sofya Andreevna Behrs in September of 1862 and subsequent sustaining family life. As Tolstoy later described it in Part III of A Confession, despite the importance, even the vital and sustaining importance, of these activities, they still helped to distract him from his search for the meaning of life and the purpose of human existence:

"...in essence I continued to live, professing faith only in progress. ‘Everything is developing, and I am developing; but the reason why I am developing together with everything, this will be seen.’ That would have been the way I would have formulated my faith at that time.

... After I returned from there [western Europe], I got married. The new conditions of a happy family life had already completely distracted me from any search for the general meaning of life. At this time my whole life was concentrated on my family, my wife, my children, and for these reasons in concerns about improving our means of living. My striving for [self]perfection, which already had been superceded by a striving for perfection in general, for progress, was now replaced by a direct striving for the best conditions possible for me and my family."

For the next fifteen years Tolstoy was occupied with these vital and sustaining pursuits, which, as he said, “distracted” him from his search for the general meaning of life. They certainly distracted him in one way, the way he describes it in A Confession, but they also proved to be essential elements in his search as well. Without his sustaining family life, his successful literary

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112Biryukov, Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Work, Volume I: Childhood and Early Manhood, p. 289.

113Tolstoy’s estate and the school he established for the peasants were raided and searched for two days (6-8 July 1862) by the local and district police and gendarmerie. Nothing subversive was found, although Lev Nikolaevich’s house and papers were rummaged. Tolstoy complained to his relative at court, Countess Aleksandra Tolstaya, in a letter of 22-23 July 1862 (Pss v 91t, vol. 60, pp. 428-431) and even to Tsar Alexander II in a letter of 22 August 1862 (Pss v 91t, vol. 60, pp. 440-442). The raid was justified on the basis of a report from an agent of the tsar’s Third Section that undocumented university students and teachers were living on the estate and engaging in possible illegal political activity, including printing presses. In response the Chief of the Gendarmerie, Prince Dolgorukov, wrote a letter on the tsar’s behalf to the Governor of Tula Province instructing that Count Tolstoy was to suffer no repercussions from the raid, and that Tolstoy was to be told that the gendarmerie would carefully carry out their assigned tasks in the future (see pp. 430-431 and p. 442).

114Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 8-10.
Indeed Tolstoy's diary entry of 6 October 1863, his last for that year, is the last one until 27 February 1874 (his only diary entry for that entire year) which shows dissatisfaction with himself and worry about death and the meaning of life on earth. But it also marks this period of his life: "All that happened, and it's all untrue. I'm happy with her [Sonya], but I'm horribly dissatisfied with myself. I'm staggering, staggering under the mountain of death, and I hardly feel in myself the strength to come to a stop. But I don't want death, I want and I love immortality. There's no point in choosing. The choice was made a long time ago. Literature - art, pedagogy, and family. Inconsistency, shyness, laziness, weakness. Those are my enemies. - " (Pss v 91t, vol. 49, p. 57)

One of the most telling characteristics of this period 1861-1878 and beyond is Tolstoy's gradual disuse, spotty noting, and practical abandonment of his diary until 1888 (with the exceptions of the years 1881 and 1884), an indication of the truth of his statement in A Confession about the replacement of his striving for self-perfection, then for perfection in general, by his desire to improve the conditions of his family. Much of his self-centeredness and solipsism have been replaced by concern and love for his wife and children as well as the peasants on his estate. The condition and status of his self-perfection efforts and failures in personal behavior no longer trouble him as much as the well-being of others close to him. In his Reminiscences (1903-1906) he also said of the years 1862-1880:

"...then a third eighteen-year period from marriage to my spiritual birth, which, from a worldly point of view, could be called moral since in these eighteen years I lived a correct, honorable family life, not indulging in any kind of vices condemned by public opinion, but all interests were limited to egotistical cares about the family, about increasing our well-being, and about obtaining literary success, and to pleasures of all kinds."116

Indeed Lev Nikolaevich's spiritual and material well-being have been improved and facilitated by his marriage and family life on his estate to such an extent that he was able to, first of all, concentrate on and complete the six-year task of writing his greatest work, War and Peace.

115Indeed Tolstoy’s diary entry of 6 October 1863, his last for that year, is the last one until 27 February 1874 (his only diary entry for that entire year) which shows dissatisfaction with himself and worry about death and the meaning of life on earth. But it also marks this period of his life: "All that happened, and it’s all untrue. I’m happy with her [Sonya], but I’m horribly dissatisfied with myself. I’m staggering, staggering under the mountain of death, and I hardly feel in myself the strength to come to a stop. But I don’t want death, I want and I love immortality. There’s no point in choosing. The choice was made a long time ago. Literature - art, pedagogy, and family. Inconsistency, shyness, laziness, weakness. Those are my enemies. - “ (Pss v 91t, vol. 49, p. 57)

CHAPTER FOUR
WAR AND PEACE 1863-1869/1873

Originally Lev Nikolaevich had been interested in writing a historical novel about the Decembrist Revolt of 1825, an event which had its roots in the eventual successful Russian defense against the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. Russian officers, who had taken part in the defeat of the French in 1812-1814 and the occupation of Paris, had been greatly influenced by the democratic ideals of the American and French revolutions. They led a short-lived and disastrous rebellion against Tsar Nicholas I. But after writing three chapters of his unfinished work, The Decembrists, Tolstoy decided to change to the story of an earlier time with 1805, and he wrote the first chapters of what eventually became War and Peace.117 These chapters, describing the domestic life of the Rostovs, the Bolkonskys, and the Petersburg nobility, became serialized in the journal Russkiy vestnik in early 1865. Then by March 1865 Lev Nikolaevich became interested in telling the story of the relations between Russian Tsar Alexander I and the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, and what some saw as a family chronicle with a background of war soon became a historical novel of national epic proportions.118 1805 continued to be published in serial form, and in April 1866 the battle scenes of Schöngraben (Austria, 16 November 1805) and Austerlitz appeared.119 In May 1866 Tolstoy also had sketched out his plans to expand his novel to include the French retreat from Moscow in 1812 and to rename it All's Well That Ends Well.120 By March 1867 Tolstoy had decided on the title of War and Peace for his work, which was now to be published in four volumes.121 The fourth volume appeared in 1868, and a fifth and sixth volume were added in

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117 See the four drafts of an introduction to War and Peace in Pss v 91t, vol. 13, pp. 53-57.

118 See Tolstoy’s diary entry of 19 March 1865 (Pss v 91t, vol. 48, pp. 60-61).

119 See Tolstoy’s letter to M. N. Katkov, the editor of Russkiy vestnik, 3 January 1865 (Pss v 91t, vol. 61, pp. 66-67) and his letter to his brother Sergei of 29 September 1865 (Pss v 91t, vol. 61, pp. 106-107). See as well the chronology of events in Pss v 91t, vol. 48, p. 384.

120 See Tolstoy’s letter to his friend A. A. Fet, 10-20 May 1866 (Pss v 91t, vol. 61, pp. 137-141). This is the only recorded mention of this title for War and Peace.

121 Tolstoy first referred to his novel War and Peace by that title in a letter to M. N. Lavrov, an employee of Katkov’s publishing house, of 24-25 March 1867 (Pss v 91t, vol. 61, pp. 163-165). The novel was actually first referred to as War and Peace by Lev Nikolaevich’s sister-in-law, Yelizaveta Behrs, in a
In 1873 Lev Nikolaevich revised his work by reducing it to four volumes and eliminating some military, historical, and philosophic parts. He moved others, including the first four chapters of the First Epilogue and the entire Second Epilogue, to an appendix entitled “Articles On the Campaign of 1812.” In this 1873 or third edition, which was heavily influenced by the Slavophile journalist and critic N. N. Strakhov, Tolstoy also retranslated the parts of the novel which were written in French into Russian. But in 1886, through the active participation of Sofya Andreevna, the original text of 1863-1869 was restored in two new editions, the fifth and sixth, with some corrections from the 1873 edition, including the elimination of French text, in the new sixth edition. It remained in four volumes, however, and these editions are generally recognized as the canonic texts.

In War and Peace Tolstoy presents more complex examples of the characters which show the moral traits which he considered essential to living a meaningful life on earth as God intended for human beings to do whatever their circumstances. The characters in his earlier military stories, such as Captain Khlopov of The Raid or Cavalry-Captain Praskukhin, Lieutenant-Captain Mikhaylov, or the Kozeltsov brothers of the Sevastopol Stories already had shown the uncomplicated and simple bravery, selflessness, faithfulness, modesty, and love which Tolstoy revered as the true meaning of human existence. Although other characters of his works had shown these same virtues in non-military situations as well, in War and Peace war was again to be used as the environment for finding the meaning of life.

Lev Nikolaevich’s interest in portraying the historical relations between Russian Tsar Alexander I and the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, which eventually led to the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812, gradually became the Russian national epic story which is War and Peace. Historical figures were thus as important to Tolstoy’s great novel as his fictional characters, and certainly in expressing his moral theme of the quest for the meaning of life, he utilized them in War and Peace. Napoleon Bonaparte, the dominant historical figure of this era, is portrayed by Tolstoy as an arrogant, but efficient dictator who has no regard for humanity in his quest for personal glory. In the Second Epilogue he is said to be described by modern history as a man of genius who “conquered everybody everywhere,” and “he killed many people because he was a great genius.” Tolstoy also says here that modern history considers that because Napoleon was so cunning and so wise in killing great numbers of people, everyone obeyed him and rendered him homage. At the beginning of the novel (Book One, Chapter One), Anna Pavlovna Scherer, maid-of-honor at the Court in St.Petersburg, in July 1805 at her soirée, describes Napoleon as nothing less than the Anti-Christ. But there are some Russians in the French-speaking nobility who idolize the French Emperor, including Pierre Bezukhov, who considers him a great man. Even Prince Andrei, who is soon to join the battle against Napoleon in Austria,

letter to him of 9 March 1867 (Pss v 91t, vol. 61, note on p. 141).


Quotations and excerpts from War and Peace are based on the canonic text as printed in the Ss v 22t, but for clarity to the English reader, the book (chast’) and chapter divisions listed are those of the Norton second edition based on the Oxford Centenary translation by Louise and Aylmer Maude.

123Ss v 22t, vol. VII, pp. 311-312.
respects the heroism in the Napoleonic legend at Arcola and at Jaffa. Of course the views of Prince Andrei and Pierre change over the course of the novel, and Tolstoy critically juxtaposes modern history’s view of Napoleon with that of the Russian historical figure who truly represents Lev Nikolaevich's maturing philosophy on the meaning and purpose of human life on earth, Mikhail Illarionovich Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1745-1813).

General, later Field Marshal Kutuzov is a true hero for Tolstoy. Despite the fact that he is seen by foreigners, posterity, and history as weak and dissolute, and Napoleon is seen, even by Russian historians, as a great man, Tolstoy calls Kutuzov a truly great man, one "of those rare and always solitary individuals who, comprehending the will of Providence, subordinate their personal will to it. The hatred and contempt of the crowd punish such people for their clear vision of the higher laws."¹⁴ (Book Fifteen, Chapter Two) He is portrayed as simple, naive, and wise with no hypocrisy or affectation, believing in the impossibility of an individual controlling events. Kutuzov is a symbol of most Russians, the simple peasantry and gentry who are patriotic and represent the historical spirit of the nation responding to a historical crisis, the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812. Tolstoy considers Kutuzov a hero because he is patient and cautious - when in doubt, do not act. In actual fact Kutuzov was much more, a master strategist who was cognizant of the only plan which could save Russia - the use of time, distance, and partisan warfare to fashion a strategic defense to destroy Napoleon’s supply lines and bleed him until victory, even to the point of surrendering Moscow.¹⁵ Borodino, the famous battle forced on Kutuzov by the tsar, thus represented only sound, fury, and needless slaughter, while the real key to victory was the less known battle of Maloyaroslavets southwest of Moscow, which forced Napoleon and the Grande Armée back along the same destroyed route he came in on, now in the midst of winter. The previously retired old general, who was overweight and had only one good eye and no good legs, did not cut the dashing romantic figure which one would associate with the savior of Russia. But without him, history would have been vastly different for Russia and the world in the earlier nineteenth century. Sometimes despite the large currents of the accumulated human deeds of history, an individual's actions can affect more than just the individual's fate.

Interestingly Lev Nikolaevich seems to agree that Kutuzov was a unique individual whose guidance, talent, and wisdom were fortunately allowed by Alexander I to benefit Russia at precisely the right time in history. In Book Thirteen, Chapter One while analyzing Kutuzov's merit and strategy after the battle of Borodino, the Russian abandonment of Moscow, the beginning of the French retreat, and the battle of Maloyaroslavets, Tolstoy states that Kutuzov's merit did not lie in "any strategic maneuver of genius, as they call it, but in the fact that he alone understood the significance of what had happened."¹⁶ Among other perspicacious decisions, Kutuzov also


¹⁵Russian military historians of the Soviet period, such as E. V. Tarle, L. G. Beskrovnyi, and P. A. Zhilin, give Kutuzov much more credit as a master strategist for his success in countering the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 than did Russian military historians of the tsarist period or Western military historians before World War II. Perhaps it had to do with the fact that the same strategy resulted in victory for the Soviet Union against the Nazi invasion of 1941. See for example: P. A. Zhilin, Kutuzov: Zhizn i polkovodcheskaya deyatelnost [Kutuzov: His Life and Command Activity] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978); L. G. Beskrovnyi, Ocherki voennoy istoriografii Rossii [Sketches of the Military Historiography of Russia] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Akademii nauk, 1962); and E. V. Tarle, Nashestvie Napoleona na Rossiyu [The Napoleonic Invasion of Russia] (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1943).

¹⁶Ss v 22t, vol. VII, p. 77.
alone employed all his powers to restrain the Russian army from useless engagements.\textsuperscript{127} In other words Kutuzov was indeed a strategic genius who employed the correct strategy to defeat Napoleon at the least cost to the Russian nation, despite much criticism and lack of understanding from the masses of people and modern historians who form the large currents of history which the individual cannot control. Perhaps this is an inconsistency in Tolstoy’s view of history, but there is no doubt that Kutuzov was Tolstoy’s kind of humble, loving, and self-sacrificing hero who was always aware of the truly important meaning of human life, the individual’s relationship to God by means of love. Kutuzov even died in the proper Tolstoyan way. When the Napoleonic French enemy had been chased out of Russia and the danger to the nation was past, then Mikhail Illarionovich, the symbol of the Russian nation and the people’s war who was always in ill-health, died. Tsar Alexander I, who never really trusted Kutuzov, was going to replace him for the offensive in the west anyway (Book Fifteen, Chapter Four). In spite of Tolstoy’s criticism of history, the historical facts of Kutuzov’s life greatly supported Tolstoy’s moral theme of the meaning of life, and he did not have to embellish much in his account of the old general in \textit{War and Peace}. 

While General Kutuzov may have symbolized the Russian nation and the Russian people’s war against the Napoleonic invader, it was the fictional Platon Karataev who was “the personification of everything Russian, kindly, and round”\textsuperscript{128} in \textit{War and Peace}. Introduced in Book Twelve, Chapter Three he joins Pierre Bezukhov at a particularly low point after Pierre has been saved from execution, but only after witnessing the execution of other Russian prisoners. Karataev is a peasant who was impressed into service as a soldier in the Russian army, and later he was arrested by the French as a possible suspected incendiary or fire-setter in Moscow. He is of small stature and very round, with many useful skills including shoemaking and clothes-making. But he is also kindly and humble, a person who provides great comfort to Pierre, advising him to do as he does, take life as it comes, appreciate it for what it is, and concentrate on the good.

Although Tolstoy describes Karataev as a person who “could do everything, not very well, but also not badly,” for Pierre he was much more, “an unfathomable, round, eternal personification of the spirit of simplicity and truth.”\textsuperscript{129} Platon Karataev was a person who believed that his life had no meaning separate from the incomprehensible whole universe of which he was always conscious. From him Pierre hears the story later published by Tolstoy in longer form as \textit{God Sees the Truth, But Waits} (1872) in which an old merchant, falsely accused of murder and sent to prison, learns who the real murderer is and forgives him for his false witness, but dies before the tsar’s pardon and compensation decree arrives to free him. As such a good person who suffers in innocence, he receives God’s ultimate forgiveness - death, not just as a release from unjust suffering, but also as reunification with God (Book Fourteen, Chapter Three).\textsuperscript{130} Karataev tells Pierre this story

\textsuperscript{127}Ss v 22t, vol. VII, p. 77. 
\textsuperscript{128}Ss v 22t, vol. VII, p. 54. 
\textsuperscript{129}Ss v 22t, vol. VII, pp. 55-56. 
\textsuperscript{130}In a note in chapter XVI of his treatise \textit{What Is Art?} (1898), Tolstoy ranked his stories \textit{God Sees the Truth, But Waits} and \textit{Prisoner in the Caucasus}, also published in 1872, as his best art. See also \textit{Pss v 91t}, vol. 30, p. 163. \textit{Prisoner in the Caucasus} is a romantic tale of a Russian captured by the Tartars who finally escapes with the aid of a young Tartar girl. It has elements of Tolstoy’s own experience of near capture by the Tartars while he was serving in the Caucasus.
before he sits under a birch tree, unable to continue to march with the rest of the Russian prisoners in the French retreat. Pierre cannot face what he knows will happen to Karataev, as two French soldiers kill the person from whom Pierre Bezukhov learns the meaning of life, its definition, and its description as a living globe.

In *War and Peace* Pierre Bezukhov is the Tolstoy-like character who is on a quest to find the meaning of human existence and God. He is intelligent, sensitive, likeable, and socially awkward, but Pierre is also a lazy member of the Russian gentry, the illegitimate son of a rich count who is too easily influenced by vanity and seduced by mysticism. The Masonic ritual and search for meaning in the numerologic prophecy drawn from the Revelation of St. John the Divine in the Bible hold special attraction for him and what he believes is his destiny (Book Nine, Chapter Nineteen and Book Eleven, Chapter Fourteen). Pierre’s simplicity and emotional directness set him apart from most of the St. Petersburg nobility, but his passion and sometimes irrationality also get him into trouble with a bad choice for his first marriage to the shallow and cold Hélène Kuragina and his obsessive belief that he is predestined to assassinate Napoleon, which leads to his capture by the French. Pierre is saved from the firing-squad by the notoriously cruel French General Davout, but he is forced to watch as other Russian prisoners are killed before his eyes. His thoughts are very similar to those of Tolstoy when he witnessed the execution by guillotine in Paris in 1857. The experience of witnessing the execution and the roles of people in it cause the sensitive Pierre to lose faith in God, in the meaning of life, and in the belief that there is order and justice in the universe (Book Twelve, Chapter Three).

As stated above, it is Platon Karataev and his “most vivid and precious memory which remained in Pierre’s soul forever”¹³¹ which restore Pierre’s faith in God and life. He is able to continue his search for the meaning of life and to survive by finding peace and inner harmony, even in death and privation, by what he learned from Karataev (Book Thirteen, Chapter Three and Book Fourteen, Chapter Three). Near the end of the novel, in Book Fifteen, Chapter Five, Pierre has learned that his search for the meaning of human existence is in reality a search for God. God is everywhere, but it is necessary to accept that God is unknowable, unfathomable, incomprehensible. Further Pierre learns that love is the essence of life, both earthly and eternal, and it is the vital and only connection to God. In learning these essential lessons Pierre Bezukhov acquires an increased sympathy, empathy, and interest in people which lead to better judgements about them. The peculiarity of individuals, even those with negative characteristics, becomes interesting to him. In this way Pierre learns unconditional love. In the First Epilogue it is recorded that Pierre marries Natasha Rostova, a spiritual soulmate, and they have a generally happy life together with their four children. In addition Nikolenka, the young son of the valiant Prince Andrei, has become fond of Pierre and his ideas on political liberalism.

It should also be noted that the deaths of Petya Rostov, the youngest Rostov son who is killed in the partisan fighting during the French withdrawal from Moscow, and of Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, the emotionally detached, but courageous warrior also play a great part in the search for God and the meaning of life, not just for Pierre Bezukhov, but also for other characters. In Book Twelve, Chapter Four Natasha Rostova and Princess Mary, the sister of Prince Andrei, grieve at the deathbed of the prince, where they and he learn the meaning of life, love, and God through the experience of his death. In one of the most, if not the most, extraordinarily beautiful and meaningful death scenes in all of literature, Lev Nikolaevich writes:

> *Prince Andrei not only knew that he would die, but he felt that he was dying and that he was already half dead. He was conscious of being separated from everything earthly and a joyous and strange lightness of being. Without haste or anxiety he awaited what was coming for him. That formidable, eternal, distant, and unknown thing - the presence of which he had not stopped feeling*

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¹³¹*Ss v 22t*, vol. VII, p. 54.
in the course of his entire life - was now near to him and, by the strange lightness of being he experienced, it was almost comprehensible and palpable.

Previously he had feared the end. He had twice experienced that horrible, tormenting feeling of the fear of death, of the end, and now he no longer understood it.

The first time he had experienced this feeling was when the shell had spun like a top in front of him, and he looked at the fallow field, the bushes, and the sky, and he knew that death stood before him. When he regained consciousness after being wounded, and instantly in his soul this flower of eternal, unbounded love had unfolded itself as if freed from the bondage of the life that had restrained it, this life upon which it did not depend, he no longer feared death and stopped thinking about it.”

Later as Prince Andrei was falling asleep a few days before he died, he became aware of the meaning of life, death, and God:

“Love hinders death. Love is life. All, everything that I understand, I understand only because I love. Everything is, everything exists, only because I love. Everything is connected by it alone. Love is God, and to die means that I, a particle of love, return to the general and eternal source.”

Then in a dream Prince Andrei experiences the metaphor of death as the fear that something unhuman, death, was just behind a door breaking in, and he was making his best efforts, though they were weak and clumsy, in a vain attempt to keep death from coming in:

“Once again it pushed from outside. His last superhuman efforts were in vain, and both halves of the door noiselessly came open. It entered, and it was death, and Prince Andrei died.

But at the instant he died, Prince Andrei remembered that he was asleep, and in the same moment that he died, after making an effort, he awoke.

‘Yes, it was death. I died - and I woke up. Yes, death is an awakening!’ And all at once light came into his soul, and the veil that had until then concealed the unknown was lifted from his spiritual vision. He felt as if the power that had previously been confined within him had been liberated, and that strange lightness never left him again.”

The discovery of the death of the young Petya Rostov in Book Fifteen, Chapter One eventually had a similar illuminating and sublime effect on Natasha Rostova and Princess Mary, although it nearly killed the Countess Natalya Rostova, the mother of Petya and Natasha. The countess was active and full of life at the age of fifty, but one month after the news of Petya’s death had reached her, she had become a listless old woman who no longer took any interest in life. But Natasha was restored to life by the same horrible event which almost put her mother down. Lev

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133 Ss v 22t, vol. VII, p. 69.

134 Ss v 22t, vol. VII, p. 70.
Nikolaevich describes it in this way:

“A spiritual wound produced by the tearing of the spiritual body is exactly the same as a physical wound and, as strange as it may seem, just as a deep wound heals by its edges coming together, spiritual wounds just like physical ones are healed only by the force of life pushing out from within.

Natasha’s wound healed in that way. She thought that her life was over, but her love for her mother unexpectedly showed her that the essence of life – love – was still alive within her. Love awoke and so did life.”

Princess Mary and Natasha Rostova had been brought close together by the death of Prince Andrei, who was the brother of Princess Mary and the love of Natasha Rostova. The new tragedy of Petya’s death brought them still closer together and strengthened their relationship, just as Natasha was restored to life by her concern and love for her mother in her hour of need with the death of Petya. The restorative power of love, the essence of life and the vital connection between God and human beings in their earthly existence, is shown vividly in *War and Peace*.

In this way, with the writing of *War and Peace* and the development of these main characters, Tolstoy has come to the culmination of his quest for the meaning of life, his search for God, and his desire to understand death, not just so that he might not fear the end of earthly life in himself and in others, but also to understand how to live the limited earthly life in a meaningful way. That is, he has finally defined and described these most important elements for the first time. *War and Peace* he has more completely explained, described, and developed his philosophy of life, a process which began with the solipsistic philosophical tracts of his adolescence and continued with his military stories and other tales of the Caucasus, travel, and Russian country life.

But it was not to be only characters in the difficult environment of war which would show the development of Lev Nikolaevich’s philosophy of life in his longest work yet. In *War and Peace* a cogent philosophy of history and its relationship to the individual would be sketched out in a manner similar to Tolstoy’s digressions on war and bravery in *The Raid*. He introduces his philosophy of history in Book Nine, Chapter One, when he begins to relate the start of the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812 and to consider why millions of individuals would engage in a campaign to kill millions of other individuals, all renouncing not only their Christian faith, but also their human feelings. Tolstoy vehemently disagrees with the methodology and the science of his contemporary historians who list the causes of the war as various policy decisions and actions by rulers and generals of the countries involved, for he considers that the so-called great men of history, such as the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and the Russian Tsar Alexander I, are merely labels for the large currents of history made by the mass interactions of great numbers of people and events. After all it was not Napoleon or Alexander who engaged in actual combat, rather it was millions of individuals in arms who held the real power and did the killing and destroying. These millions of individuals consented to carry out the will of the weak, and in effect powerless, individuals at the top for an infinite number of diverse and complex causes.

Tolstoy believed that while a person lives consciously for himself and uses his freedom on the individual level to attain his own personal goals, believing that he can do or not do a particular action, as soon as he has done an action, his deed becomes irrevocable and thus has a predestined significance in history. The individual then becomes an unconscious instrument in the attainment of the historical and universal aims of society as the results of his deeds coincide in time with those of others. In this way important historical currents of history are created.

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*Sv v 22t*, vol. VII, pp. 188-189.
Thus there are two sides to the life of every person. His individual life is more free and its interests more abstract, but his social life, his elemental hive or swarm life in which he interacts with others, inevitably requires that he obey laws and follow certain paths established for him. In addition the higher a social position a person occupies, the more people he is connected with and the more power he supposedly has, the more evident is the predestination and inevitability of his actions. Society requires more of a person higher in the social hierarchy, and such an individual is less free than a lower-ranking person as well as being dependent on more people. Thus Tolstoy further wrote in Book Nine, Chapter One that “A tsar [or king] is history’s slave,” considering that rulers and generals were weak because they not only had no free will, but they really had no power either as they could perform no actions except those required of them by society.

Lev Nikolaevich’s philosophy of history and the individual in it is explained or restated in more detail in the Second Epilogue (or Second Part of the Epilogue). He first reiterates that the currents of history have the names of sovereigns and so-called “great men,” but these “great men” are merely names which are subject to the will of the currents of history, which are made up of multitudes of individual decisions and actions. Then Tolstoy asks, what is the force which really moves history, nations, and peoples?

Historians have failed to answer this question as they all have their biases and contradictions. Tolstoy then names as an example the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789, which produced the power of the Napoleonic Empire, which in turn suppressed the ideals and spirit of the French Revolution. Historians of culture also fail to answer this question, as intellectual activity, philosophy, and great books or ideas also do not control or produce history. Again Lev Nikolaevich cites the example of the French Revolution and its cruel murders, excesses, and injustice. Did these crimes against humanity result from its professed doctrine of the equality of man? Or in general do wars result from the preaching of love of fellow man? These contradictions show that intellectuals and their ideas cannot possibly control history or humanity. There is still some other unrecognized power.

Tolstoy then calls this power the collective will of people, which is transferred to their chosen rulers by expressed or tacit consent. It is a power which is not well understood, but then he attempts to describe or define its properties. For example in war the commanders of the armed forces actually have the least effect in actions and results on the battlefield, for they are far fewer in number than the lower-ranking soldiers who make nearly all of the effort in combat actions. Thus again great commanders are really only names or labels for actions taken by masses of people nominally subordinate to them.

The movement of nations is also caused by the actions of all of the people, not by those in elite leadership positions. Tolstoy then repeats the axiom that those who take the largest direct active share in events, the masses of people at the lower levels of society, take on the least responsibility for those events, while those who take the least direct active share in events, those few at the elite level of society, take on most of the responsibility for those events. Then these events are named in history for those at the top who actually took little or no part in them.

Tolstoy then asserts that the problem of the individual free will in history has always been unresolved. If the will of every person were truly free, history would be only a series of disconnected events. By contrast, if there were a single law which governed the actions of individuals, then free will could not exist. So the true situation of the individual free will in history must lie somewhere in between the two extremes. In order to find what the actual status of individual free will is, Tolstoy begins by describing what he knows about individual free will.

\[136^\text{Ss v 22t, vol. VI, p. 10.}\]
As he wrote in his early writings, Lev Nikolaevich continued to believe and wrote in the Second Epilogue of War and Peace that a person’s consciousness of his free will or his volition is the only way a person has to be conscious of himself as a human being, that is, it is the identification of his existence (I think, I choose, I make decisions, therefore I exist). Thus a person must have a belief in free will in order to live. Indeed the very act of living is a search for freedom. Freedom is life. But the freedom a person has is balanced by the necessities and inevitabilities of his life. The more influence necessity or inevitability has on a person’s life, the less free he is, and conversely the less influence necessity or inevitability has on a person’s life, the more free he is.

Further there are some other truths about individual free will and history. Time definitely has an effect, for the farther back we consider events in history, the less free and arbitrary those events seem as we increase our knowledge about them and put them into the perspective of other events and other knowledge. Tolstoy states that in fact the more we know, the less free we feel. An individual’s very conception of free will depends on his knowledge, sometimes to the extent that some would deny that individual free will actually exists. But for Tolstoy individual belief in free will, even an illusory belief, is necessary for life. The force of life in a person is freedom.

Lev Nikolaevich then further declares that for individual human beings, neither complete freedom (or free will) nor complete inevitability exists. For an individual his reason expresses the inevitability in his life, and his consciousness expresses the essence of his freedom. In the life of a person, free will is balanced by inevitability, and consciousness is balanced by the laws of reason. Thus in history free will can be described as the unknown remainder of what we know about the laws of human life.

According to Tolstoy the purpose of history should not be to simply narrate episodes in the lives of individuals. Rather it should seek out laws common to all the inseparably interconnected and infinitesimal elements of free will so that human beings can be educated to know what these laws are. Lev Nikolaevich then cautions that the laws of inevitability (or necessity) could be used against religion with its conception of the soul and good versus evil, but he reiterates that neither the law of inevitability nor the law of free will or independence is absolute.

Tolstoy concludes the Second Epilogue with reiterations of his two most important points. First individuals are not conscious of their dependence on necessities and the inevitabilities of their lives. They have the illusion of a great deal of free will, which is necessary for life, but they need to renounce the feeling of total free will (of which they are conscious, but which in reality does not exist) and recognize the dependence of which they are not conscious. Secondly the study of history must be directed to helping human beings understand the laws of dependence of which they are not conscious. Then they can make better decisions in their limited spheres of free will.

In 1868 Tolstoy wrote what amounted to an afterword to War and Peace in an article first published in Russkiy arkhiv (Number 3) and titled, “Some Words About War and Peace.” This article clarified some points and replied to some criticism of his novel, but it mostly restated Tolstoy’s views on history, great men in history, and individual free will, especially as presented in Book Nine, Chapter One and the Second Epilogue. But it also refined his theories and beliefs on history and individual free will with three new points. First in relation to “the great men of history”

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138Pss v 91t, vol. 16, pp. 7-16.
argument, Lev Nikolaevich states his axiom that the less connected our activity is with others, the more free it is, and conversely the more connected our activity is with others, the less free it is. Thus great men are the least free and the most dependent on the activities of others. This axiom would later supply the basis for Tolstoy views on pacifism, non-resistance to evil by force, and the virtue of sometimes doing nothing as the best course of action. Secondly Tolstoy added his own military experience and that of others to his view that the orders of commanders in battle were almost never carried out, and that most military battlefield descriptions and reports were after-the-fact false embellishments of what really happened. Since historical accounts were generally based on such reports, the study and science of history were also false. Finally Tolstoy makes the claim that laws of predetermination guide history, but psychologically persons who commit actions under great compulsion must imagine retrospective reflections to prove their illusions of freedom to themselves.

Despite Lev Nikolaevich’s introduction of predetermination or predestination into his argument on the individual in history, it is clear that he continued to believe that the individual still had considerable latitude for free will choices in his earthly life. Indeed the inherent and explicit didacticism in his philosophy as expressed in his literary production demonstrates this if it demonstrates anything. But, as many teachers do, Tolstoy frequently utilized exaggeration and repetition to make his points. So it is with his introduction of predetermination, a concept which would normally preclude any role for human free will in the creation of history. The test of this in War and Peace, as it had been in earlier works and will be in later writings, is Tolstoy’s continued utilization of heroic model characters to show the right way to live a moral life as God would intend for human beings to do. In War and Peace these are again the simple, honest, unaffected individuals, whether they are gentry or peasants, who give their loyalty and their love for their fellow humans. They are the true heroic representatives of the Russian nation or of any nation, the only ones who can turn the tide against evil on an individual and on a collective basis. These are people like General Kutuzov, Captain Tushin, the peasant soldier Platon Karataev, and the noble Rostovs. Eventually Pierre Bezukhov, who overcame vanity and mystical beliefs in predetermination, and Prince Andrei, who overcame his nihilistic tendencies, learn to become this type of salt-of-the-earth person without whom humankind would not survive, for it is only through them, those who love and give their devotion, that humanity’s vital link to God is preserved.

The English word predetermination is a closer definition of the Russian word “predopredelenie,” which was used by Tolstoy in his article “Some Words About War and Peace” (Pss v 91t, vol. 16, p. 16).

R. F. Christian also makes this point among other good ones, explaining that Tolstoy was revolting against the tradition of historical writing. See pages 162-164 of R. F. Christian, Tolstoy: A Critical Introduction (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

It is the thesis of Professor V. Ya. Linkov of Moscow State University that Tolstoy’s purpose for writing War and Peace was to show positive heroic characters as role models who find truth, happiness, and fulfillment in life, thus breaking with his world contemporaries who wanted to utilize literature to solve social problems, and breaking with the tradition of Russian literature in the nineteenth century, which portrayed heroic characters as always unhappy, disappointed persons who were incapable of loving or valuing life. Primary examples in Russian literature would be Pushkin’s Onegin, Lermontov’s Pechorin, Goncharov’s Oblomov, and Turgenev’s Rudin. See V. Ya. Linkov’s excellent Voyna i mir L. Tolstogo [L. Tolstoy’s War and Peace] (Moscow: Moscow University Press, 1998), pp. 16-18.
In writing *War and Peace* Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy accomplished much more than just a great work of art. His completion of the novel also allowed him to complete the answers to philosophical questions for which he had been searching all his life. He had found the meaning and purpose of human life and its vital link to God, that is, to love. He had developed his philosophy of life and a philosophy of the individual in history which provided the approaches to understand and accomplish this vital and simple, but exceedingly difficult mission for human beings in this earthly life. Further he had defined and come to terms with death, the transition of life on earth which is so difficult for human beings to understand and negotiate. Tolstoy had done all this in the great work of literary art which is *War and Peace* in his usual didactic and repetitive fashion, but also in his uniquely skillful, universally sensitive and empathetic manner. A great deal of the credit for his accomplishment of *War and Peace*, the culmination, but not the end of his philosophic quest for the meaning of life, must go to Sofya Andreevna and his stable family life at this time.\(^{142}\) It was, as Lev Nikolaevich wrote of the period 1863-1868, “five years of uninterrupted and exclusive work during the best conditions of life.”\(^{143}\) Unburdened by the pessimism brought on by his earlier behavioral problems with drinking, gambling, and women, Tolstoy was able to produce his best art and the essence of his philosophic thought.

\(^{142}\)The Tolstoys’ fourth child, Lev, was born on 20 May 1869.

\(^{143}\)This quotation is from the first line of “Some Words About War and Peace,” *Pss v 91t*, vol. 16, p. 7.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE ARZAMAS HORROR AND ANNA KARENINA 1869-1879

By the time he was finishing up the Epilogues to War and Peace in the latter part of 1869, Lev Nikolaevich had become greatly interested in the philosophy of Artur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), especially his thoughts on the Will to Life of each individual as confirmation of his identity in his experience of earthly existence as well as the German philosopher’s pessimism in regard to the individual’s capability to control his inherent selfishness. Schopenhauer’s pessimistic influence, as opposed to, for example, the more positive outlook of Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar, can be seen in Tolstoy’s “freedom versus necessity or inevitability” argument of individual existence and in his negative views on history and science as expressed in the Second Epilogue. But Schopenhauer’s pessimism on the individual’s inability to make his life meaningful by controlling his selfishness and effectively loving others coincided with Tolstoy’s life-long doubts about his own lack of control over his personal behavior and his vanity. Reading Schopenhauer’s confirmation of his own pessimistic feelings and beliefs led to Tolstoy’s exclamations in a 30 August 1869 letter to his friend A. A. Fet that:

“Do you know what this summer has been for me? -- Unrelenting rapture over Schopenhauer and a series of spiritual delights which I never have experienced. ... I don’t know if I will change my opinion sometime, but right now I am sure that Schopenhauer is the most brilliant of people.”

Lev Nikolaevich was to later modify his enthusiasm for Schopenhauer’s views, but there is no doubt that pessimism over the individual’s (or his own) capability to overcome obstacles of necessity or inevitability to find meaning and love in earthly life had a tremendous effect on Tolstoy. A key illustration of this was soon to follow Tolstoy’s letter to Fet praising Schopenhauer in an event known in his life as the Arzamas Horror. The day after writing the letter, Tolstoy left Yasnaya Polyana to travel to the province of Penza to look at an estate he was interested in buying. As he described it to Sofya Andreevna in a letter dated 4 September 1869 from the town of Saransk:

“...For two days now I have been tormented with anxiety. The night of the third day [of the trip], I spent the night in Arzamas, and something unusual happened to me. It was two o’clock at night, and I was terribly tired, wanted to go to sleep, and wasn’t sick in any way. But suddenly I was

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144See note 76.

145Pass v 91t, vol. 61, pp. 219-220.
seized by despair, fear, and horror such that I had never before experienced. I'll tell you the
details of this feeling later, but I never experienced a similar agonizing feeling before, and may
God grant that no one else experience it. I jumped up and ordered the horses to be harnessed.
While they were being harnessed, I fell asleep, and I woke up well. Yesterday during the trip this
feeling returned to a much less degree, but I was prepared for it and didn't succumb, moreover it
was weaker. Today I feel well and happy, as much as I can away from the family. --

... Goodbye, darling. One good thing is that there are no thoughts at all about the novel [War and
Peace] or philosophy.}\footnote{Pss v 91t, vol. 83, pp. 167-168.}

Lev Nikolaevich later described the horror in more detail in his Notes of a Madman, an unfinished
story which he began at least by 1884.

The idea for a novel about "a married woman of higher society, but who lost herself" first came
to Lev Nikolaevich in February 1870, while he was writing a draft of his unfinished novel on the
period of Peter I (Peter the Great).\footnote{See Tolstoy's letters to N. N. Strakhov, one unsent of 25 March 1873,
and one of 11 May 1873 in Pss v 91t, vol. 62, pp. 16-18 and pp. 24-26.} But he spent the years 1870-1873: writing his Azbuka (1872)
and Novaya Azbuka (1875), primers for elementary school children, the first of which included the
stories God Sees the Truth, But Waits and A Captive of the Caucasus; revising War and Peace
for the second edition (1873); and working on the Peter the Great historical novel until March of
1873, when he began to write the first draft of Anna Karenina.\footnote{The idea for a novel about "a married woman of higher society, but who lost herself" first came
to Lev Nikolaevich in February 1870, while he was writing a draft of his unfinished novel on the
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stories God Sees the Truth, But Waits and A Captive of the Caucasus; revising War and Peace
for the second edition (1873); and working on the Peter the Great historical novel until March of
1873, when he began to write the first draft of Anna Karenina. The first seven parts were
published in the journal Russkiy vestnik from 1875 to 1877. The eighth part, or the Epilogue, was
published separately in 1877 because of a disagreement with M. N. Katkov, the editor, over its
content concerning unpatriotic commentary on Russian volunteers for Serbia and the Russian-
Turkish War of 1877-1878. All eight parts of Anna Karenina were published for the first time
together in three volumes in 1878.}

Despite Tolstoy's comment in March of 1877 that the fundamental idea of Anna Karenina is the
family as the fundamental idea of War and Peace was the people,\footnote{These characterizations of War and Peace and Anna Karenina by Tolstoy
were recorded by Sofya Andreevna in her diary in the entry of 3 March 1877 in the section entitled "Notes on Remarks Made by L. N. Tolstoy on His Writing." See S. A. Tolstaya, Dnevni\ki, vol. I, p. 502.} it is clear that Anna Karenina
was much more than just a novel based on the family or the story of a married woman of Russian
nobility who carried on an adulterous relationship and committed suicide as a result of her inability
to reconcile her ideals of love and the social convention of St. Petersburg. Anna Karenina, despite its title, includes parallel stories not only of Anna Arkadyevna Karenina (Oblonskaya) with her husband Aleksei Aleksandrovich Karenin, her paramour Aleksei Kirillovich Vronsky, and their family relations, but also that of Konstantin Dmitrich Levin with his wife Kitty (Yekaterina Aleksandrovna Shcherbatskaya) and his family relations. In addition there is, of course, a strong philosophic element to the novel centered on both the character of Anna and that of Levin, who closely represents Tolstoy, not only in name, attitudes, and life experiences, but also as a seeker of God and the meaning of life.

Anna Arkadyevna Karenina is also a seeker of truth, love, and a meaningful life, but she insists upon seeking the ideals within her soul within the social framework of St. Petersburg society, of which she was a grande dame as the intelligent, literate, beautiful, and thoroughly admirable wife of one of its high-ranking members. Her husband, the high-ranking government bureaucrat Aleksei Aleksandrovich Karenin, is a man to whom little has meaning except duty and appearance. They had met when Karenin was a provincial governor, and a situation was contrived by Anna's aunt, a rich provincial lady, to put Karenin "into such a position that he was obliged either to propose or to leave town." Such a deceitful beginning to their relationship could only portend more of the same. As Dolly (Darya Aleksandrovna) Oblonskaya, Anna's sister-in-law married to her faithless and self-centered brother Stiva (Stepan) Arkadyich Oblonsky, observed early in the novel (Part One, Chapter XIX), there seemed to be "something false in the kind of family life which the Karenins led."[151]

Anna begins an extra-marital affair with the handsome and wealthy cavalry officer Vronsky, and the two fall in love. Their liaison results in a daughter who is also named Anna. Vronsky is an enigmatic character who does care for Anna throughout their relationship, but he seems to have an unexplained darker side to his personality which can result in destruction for those close to him, whether he cares about them or not. His courting and rejection of Kitty Shcherbatskaya in Part One, which had difficult consequences for both Kitty and Levin, and his bad horsemanship in a horse race in Part Two, which resulted in the death of his favorite mount, Frou-Frou, are symbolic of a character who seems to trail death and destruction in his wake even when he is doing good works. Anna leaves her husband and their son Seryozha to go to Italy with Vronsky at the end of Part Four, and there the two are temporarily happy as they leave their social opprobrium in the distance, but still unresolved (Part Five, Chapters VII-XIII). Somewhat more than three months later, their exotic foreign location having lost its novelty and their exhilaration spent (more for Vronsky than for Anna), they decide to return to Russia to live on Vronsky's estate.

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[150] In her Dnevniky ("Various Notes for Future Reference", subtitled "Why Anna Karenina and what suggested the idea of a similar suicide?"), vol. I, pp. 508-509 and note p. 602, Sofya Andreevna notes that the ideas for the name Anna and her suicide under a train originated from the story of Anna Stepanovna Pirogova, the former mistress of Tolstoy's neighbor, A. N. Bibikov, who killed herself under a train at Yasenki, the nearest railway station to Yasnaya Polyana, after Bibikov fell in love with the German governess whom he had hired for his son. Tolstoy attended the post mortem, and "It had the most terrible effect on him." The Pirogova suicide occurred on 4 January 1872 as reported in the Tulskie gubernskie vedomosti, a Tula provincial newspaper, of 8 January 1872. It should be noted that the name Anna for the heroine of the novel only appeared in the fourth draft. See Pas v 91t, vol. 20, pp. 1-86, 644-676.

[151] Part V, Chapter XXI (Ss v 22t, vol. IX, p. 84).

[152] Ss v 22t, vol. VIII, p. 78.
in the country outside St. Petersburg.

Anna does not wish to choose between her son and her lover, and she vacillates, as does Karenin, about a divorce. In a conversation with Dolly (Part Six, Chapter XXIV), Anna explains her situation:

"Only these two beings do I love, and one excludes the other. I cannot unite them, but this is the one thing that I need. But if I can't have this, then nothing matters. Nothing, nothing matters. And it will end somehow, so I can't, I don't like to talk about it. So don't reproach me, don't condemn me for anything. You in all your purity cannot understand all that I'm suffering."\(^\text{153}\)

Anna is suffering, but it is suffering which she can endure as long as she can be sure of Vronsky's love and support. To his credit Vronsky seems to become more reliable as the novel nears the end of Part Seven. But it is Anna's doubts about the only true and validating part of her life, Vronsky's love (Part Seven, Chapters XXX, XXI), which leads her to commit suicide by throwing herself under a moving train. Shortly before she had summed up her life thusly:

"Yes, on what did I stop? At the point at which I cannot imagine a situation in which life would not be torment, and that we are all created in order to suffer, and that we all know this and we all invent ways of deceiving ourselves. But when you see the truth, what is there to do?"\(^\text{154}\)

The life of Anna Karenina had been lived based on materialism, vanity, and false social values. Although she had known the truth, she craved the approval of society, which she was able to obtain only in a loveless marriage based on deceit. The true love she experienced with Vronsky could be obtained only in a socially unacceptable way, thus her quanitary, torment, and destruction. But even that love with Vronsky was tainted with the omens of death and destruction for her, hints by Tolstoy of where God is not to be found, and where human happiness and spiritual fulfillment do not exist. The description of her death at the end of Part Seven is another of Lev Nikolaevich's gems which says much in a few words:

"...And the candle, by the light of which she had been reading the book filled with anxieties, deceptions, grief, and evil, flared up with a light brighter than ever before, lit up for her all that had previously been in the dark, flickered, began to grow dim, and went out forever."\(^\text{155}\)

In contrast to the capital city socialite Anna Karenina, the country gentry member Konstantin Dmitrich Levin learned to seek God, the meaning of life, and the fulfillment of the "holy of holies" of his soul without reliance on materialistic and vain social convention as he realized that society could not fulfill his need for God and a meaningful life although he was inhibited by its constraints. Instead of Anna's contrived entrance into society by a marriage of social and material

\(^\text{153}\)Ss v 22t, vol. IX, pp. 227-228.

\(^\text{154}\)Ss v 22t, vol. IX, p. 316.

\(^\text{155}\)Part Seven, Chapter XXXI (Ss v 22t, vol. IX, p. 364).
convenience in which love had no part, Levin, a country aristocrat, but also an independent and individual thinker full of doubts about himself, God, and the society he lived in, awkwardly had to endure social convention in order to marry the woman he loved, Kitty Shcherbatskaya, who represents the real-life Sofya Andreevna Behrs. He suffered as well, for not only were Kitty’s parents split in their opinion of him, but Kitty was in love with another, the handsome and dashing Vronsky. Her rejection of him caused Levin feelings of shame and more self-doubt, but they were real feelings based on truth and reality, and not on the falsity of a marriage of convenience. (Part One, Chapters XIII-XV, XXIV)

Tolstoy indeed fleshed out the character of Levin much like himself. Levin loves the close-to-nature style of life in the country. He enjoys physical labor and works with the peasants on his estate, but he has trouble understanding them despite his admiration of their spirituality and all his attempts at close relations. He mistrusts politics and the government bureaucracy, trying and then quitting the local self-government organization, the zemstvo. His brother Nikolai, is modelled on Tolstoy’s real-life brother, Dmitri, with his pessimism and his dissolute lifestyle. In addition Levin has a half-brother, Sergei Ivanovich Koznyshëv, an intellectual of some repute who is also critical of government bureaucracy, but he wonders why Levin did not stay in the zemstvo to make it better. In sum Konstantin Dmitrich Levin is a wise, but humble and empathetic person who worries about death and living a meaningful life. He is also too idealistic in his view of the countryside and towards Kitty, whom he has put on a pedestal, even to the extent of assuming he will be a bachelor forever after she rejects his marriage proposal.

At a dinner with the Oblonskys in the beginning of Part IV, Kitty and Levin talk to each other for the first time since Kitty rejected his proposal and was in turn rejected by Vronsky. It is evident now to the both of them that they are in love, as it has been evident to the reader from the outset that they were meant for each other. In Chapter XIII Levin proposes to Kitty again, and she accepts, leading Levin to a state of delirious happiness. Then, like Tolstoy in real-life, Levin lets Kitty read his journals which show his agnosticism and his womanizing. Kitty is shocked, especially about the womanizing, but she forgives Levin, and he values even more his undeserved happiness.

In Part V before the wedding (Chapter I), Levin goes to a priest for a required communion and confesses all his doubts, including the existence of God. The priest shows kindness and understanding toward him, and Levin “was left with a vague feeling that what the good and kind old man had said to him was not as stupid as it had seemed to him at first, and that there was something there which had to be clarified.”156 Levin’s doubts carry over even more into his belief that he is unworthy of marriage to Kitty, but she assures him that she loves and understands him, and this comforts Levin. They are finally married, and both are overcome with emotion.

Levin and Kitty’s adjustment to married life is not without arguments, and Levin is still in the habit of putting his wife on a pedestal. In Part V, Chapters XVI-XX, when his brother Nikolai is near death, Levin does not want Kitty to go with him to see his brother in order to shelter her, not just from the pain of the death of a close relative, but also to keep her from association with Nikolai’s wife, a former prostitute. Kitty is not to be deterred, however, and she turns out to be more empathetic, less self-centered, and much more adept at caring for Nikolai than Levin. Levin recognizes this, and he feels even more unworthy of her. He also tries, but fails to persuade his half-brother, Sergei Ivanovich Koznyshëv, to come to see Nikolai before his death. Koznyshëv

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156*Ss v 22t*, vol. IX, p. 12.
 sends a letter of reconciliation instead. Levin’s feelings on the death of his brother are another expression of Tolstoy’s continuing preoccupation with death and his fear of it combined with his now mature view of the meaning of life and the renewing and sustaining power of love:

“The sight of his brother and the nearness of death renewed in Levin’s soul that feeling of horror at the inscrutability, closeness, and inevitability of death which had gripped him on that autumn evening when his brother came to see him. This feeling was even stronger now than it was before. He felt himself even less able than before to understand the meaning of death, and its inevitability seemed even more horrible to him. But now, thanks to the nearness of his wife, this feeling did not drive him to despair. In spite of death, he felt the necessity of living and loving. He felt that love saved him from despair, and that this love had become even stronger and purer under the threat of despair.”

Then in another instance of what George R. Clay has called Tolstoy’s phoenix design as part of God’s integrative plan, or those situations in his works in which death brings forth resurrection and new life and opposites, such as life and death, are indivisible, Lev Nikolaevich immediately concludes the scene and chapter (Part V, Chapter XX) with the following:

“Hardly had one mystery, that of death, been accomplished before his eyes and remained inscrutable, when there appeared another, just as inscrutable, which called to love and life. The doctor confirmed their suppositions about Kitty. Her illness was pregnancy.”

In Part VI guests at a dinner at Vronsky’s country estate discuss the zemstvo and Levin’s retirement from it. Vronsky, who was elected a justice of the peace, believes it is a noble’s duty to
serve, and he and others indirectly criticize the absent Levin, who is defended by Dolly (Chapter XXII). Later at the nobility elections Levin, who has much more experience with the system than Vronsky, is cynical about the results, while Vronsky is delighted with his participation and new-found popularity (Chapters XXX-XXXI). Levin’s attitude of skepticism toward government is undoubtedly drawn from Tolstoy’s experience in the early 1860’s with his peasant school and the police raid on his estate as well as with his own service as a justice (or arbiter) of the peace.

Part VII begins with Kitty and Levin moving to Moscow to await the birth of their first child. Levin is uncomfortable in the city, but he enjoys the men’s club and its gambling as well as discussions with university professors. In a rather short episode, Konstantin Dmitrich Levin, accompanied by Stiva Oblonsky, Anna’s brother, meets Anna Arkadyevna Karenina at Vronsky’s country estate for the first and only time in the novel (Chapters IX-X). It is clear from the start that the two protagonists have a natural admiration and understanding of each other. Among other subjects they agree on the merit of a return to realism with more natural and correct figures in French literature by Émile Zola and Alphonse Daudet. Anna indicates that love is the most important thing, and that there is no more or less in it. Both Anna and Levin see the search for truth in each other, with Anna saying that she had defended him against others’ charges that he was a bad citizen, and Levin seeing that his previous harsh judgement about her was in error. He now believed that she was completely justified in her position, but he feared that Vronsky did not fully understand her.

Anna had wanted Kitty to understand and sympathize with her situation, but Kitty was much too jealous of her husband’s admiration for Anna, and they argued over his visit to see her. Kitty goes into labor, and Levin is so terribly frightened that he appeals to God for mercy, pardon, and help (Chapter XIII). The fact that he considered himself an unbeliever did not prevent him from consciously and repeatedly appealing to God, as he thought, “To whom could he appeal, if not to the one in whose hands he felt himself, his soul, and his love to be?” Levin thought that Kitty would die, equating her situation to the death of his brother Nikolai one year before. But their son Dmitri is born, leaving Levin with many questions about the meaning of life which he could not get used to for a long time. In Chapter XXVIII of Part VII, Kitty meets with Anna, at first reluctantly, but then after conversing with her for a while, she has sympathy for her and her situation. Thus both Levin and Kitty, after meeting with Anna, change their former opinions of her and now are sympathetic, with Levin being the most empathetic.

At the beginning of Part VIII, after Anna’s suicide, Vronsky is heartbroken, feels he has nothing to live for, and so he volunteers for service in Serbia against the Turks. Levin’s half-brother, Koznyshëv, who is disappointed in the reception of a book he has written, and Katavasov, another intellectual, are also going to Serbia as part of a Russian public wave of support for Serbian independence and pan-Slavism. Before leaving for the Balkans, Koznyshëv and Katavasov visit Levin and Kitty at their country estate, where Kitty is worried about Levin and his lack of religious faith as well as his preoccupation with philosophy, especially since their marriage and the birth of Dmitri (Mitya). The death of his brother Nikolai had concentrated Levin’s thoughts on the meaning of life like nothing else before, and even though he had prayed fervently during Kitty’s labor and had rejoiced at the birth of his first child, he had now reverted to his former spiritual condition of unbelief, but he had doubts about that as well. All of those people whom he knew well who lived good lives were believers in God, and although he had been convinced from his days as a university student that religion had outlived its usefulness, he now asked himself the question, “If I do not believe in Christianity, what is it that I believe in?” Vanity also played a large role in Levin’s moral and philosophic quandary, and Tolstoy excellently described Levin’s spiritual condition (and undoubtedly his own) at the end of Chapter VIII:

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textit{Sv v 22t, vol. IX, p. 299.}}}\]
“He could not admit that he had known the truth then [at the time of Kitty’s labor and the birth of his son], and now he was mistaken, because as soon as he began to think calmly about this, everything fell apart into pieces. He also could not admit that he had made a mistake then because he treasured the mood of his soul at that time, and by admitting that it was a result of weakness, he would be defiling those moments. He was in a tormented state of discord with himself, and he strained all the powers of his soul to get out of it.”

Levin read all the noted philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, but all failed his comparisons with real life. Schopenhauer had made some sense to him when he replaced his word will with the word love, but still in the face of real life conditions, Schopenhauer also failed to satisfy Levin. Equally unsatisfactory was Koznyshëv’s suggestion that he look at the Slavophile A. S. Khomyakov (1804-1860) and his theological views of the community united by love, the Orthodox Christian church. This also failed Levin’s philosophic tests, as he had read other Christian church histories by Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox writers, each of whom repudiated the others as infallible interpretations of Christian teaching.

But it was suffering, death, and eternal oblivion which really scared Levin, knowing that his was only a temporal existence with no seeming purpose. In the infinity of time, matter, and space, what is the purpose of his small, limited existence? Without knowing what was the purpose of his life, it would be impossible to live. It seemed as if some evil power had seized upon him with this distressing situation with no answer, and although Levin had his health and a happy family life, he had thought about suicide several times as the only way out, the only way to free himself from this evil power and his confounding dilemma.

Despite his despair Levin did not commit suicide. Further it seemed to him that when he was not totally preoccupied with these questions, when he concentrated on the needs of his family life and the agricultural work on his estate, “when he did not think, but just lived,” not only a sense of purpose came to him, but also “...he continually felt in his soul the presence of an infallible judge deciding which of two possible actions was better and which was worse, and as soon as he acted in a way that he should not have, he felt it immediately.” He began to learn from the examples of the peasants who lived on his estate, especially Fyodor, who advised him to live not for his own needs, but for God, however incomprehensible, and his own soul.

Then in a scene (Chapter XII) in which Levin walks along a country road before lying down in the woods on uncut grass under the shade of aspen trees, he contemplates all that he has learned or has been revealed to him. Konstantin Dmitrich decides that he will always have doubts about his life, but the one thing about which there is no doubt is the miracle which he had not seen around him. This miracle, which is not explained by reason, is what the peasant Fyodor had said to him, that there are people living in this world who do live for God and goodness, for the love that unites themselves and God. Everyone must fulfill certain needs in order to live, but those who have seen the Light, the Truth, know that this is the meaning of life, to live for doing good, for the love which is the only way to unite with God. In this there is no cause and effect, no consequences or rewards. The simple truth is that one must live for God, love, and goodness, and the redemption of one’s own soul, or one’s life has no meaning. Unfortunately vanity, stupidity, and dishonesty in the mind often get in the way of this truth. Before Levin realized the truth, he remembered that he had been happy only when he simply lived his life in accordance

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162Ss v 22t, vol. IX, p. 385.

163Ss v 22t, vol. IX, p. 389. This quotation occurs near the end of Chapter X.
with this truth like the peasants, without thinking or reasoning about the meaning of his life, suffering, and death. He had thus lived well at times, but thought badly because he had been unconscious of the spiritual truth which he had tried to find by reason. But this spiritual truth cannot be discovered by reason. As Tolstoy writes Levin’s thoughts at the close of Chapter XII:

“Where did I get this from [the spiritual truth]? Was it by reason that I arrived at this, that it is necessary to love your neighbor and not crush him? They told me this as a child, and I happily believed it, because they told me what was in my soul. And who discovered it? Not reason. Reason discovered the struggle for existence and the law which requires that I crush everyone who hinders the satisfaction of my desires. This is the conclusion of reason. But reason cannot discover loving others, because this is not reasonable.”

In Chapter XIII, while he is still on the grass in the woods, Levin ruminates further on the fact that, as far as knowing the spiritual truth about the meaning of life, children and peasants know it as well or better than the philosophers who try to arrive at it sometimes by questionable or convoluted intellectual processes. The best ones at least return to where the children and peasants have already been, but never left. Levin himself realizes that he will have failures in spirit despite the fact that he has been given the education and blessings of Christianity, which has told him the truth. He will be like a child full of vanity and selfishness, ready to rebel, forget, and destroy his blessings, but in a time of crisis, he will always come back to a realization of the spiritual truth that he knows.

Then Levin considered the church and whether he could believe all that the church professes. He still had difficulty accepting many parts of church dogma and teachings, such as the story of creation, the devil, and Jesus Christ as the Savior. But despite his misgivings he could see none of these teachings of the church interfering with what he considered to be the essential part of his faith, belief in God and in goodness and love as the way to unification with God. This was the meaning of life and the essence of Christian teaching. At the end of Chapter XIII, on the grass in the woods under the aspen trees, Levin came to the realization that he had faith in God, that he was a believer.

Later Levin engages in a discussion about the Russian volunteers going to the war for Serbian independence against Turkey (Chapters XV-XVI), which later became the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878. It is revealed that not only is Vronsky going, but he is taking a squadron of men with him at his own expense. Koznyshëv and Katavasov are very much for what they regard as the righteous Slavic cause, the struggle of brother Slavic Orthodox Christians against their Muslim oppressors. Levin is opposed to the war, and he doubts that the eighty million Russian people as a whole support such a private military effort. He thinks that his half-brother Sergei Ivanich Koznyshëv and Katavasov are motivated by intellectual pride, thinking that a few hundred volunteers or even thousands could really be representative of all the Russian people. In addition Levin is opposed to war in general as he finds that vengeance and murder are incompatible with the true meaning of life, striving for the love and goodness that unites humankind with God.

An incident in which Kitty and his son Dmitri are unsheltered during a thunderstorm causes Levin to worry greatly and to realize that he loves his son and family very much (Chapters XVII-XVIII). It is an event such as this which jolts Levin from excessive philosophic rumination and doubt about God, religion, and the meaning of life, and it helps him to focus on living life and doing what is necessary to facilitate life and love in a meaningful way. Yet while wondering further about whether the Christian church alone can reveal the truth of God to humankind, Levin decides that the possibility that there are many points of reference for the revelation of the truth of God, such

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as Judaism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, does not make the Christian one any less valid. Moreover he reminds himself that faith in God is not attained by reasoning, intellect, or wit. Near the end of Chapter XIX, the last in the novel, Levin wants to tell Kitty of this new-found feeling in his soul, but decides against it as he concludes that faith is really private and “inexpressible in words.” The last paragraph of the novel is instructive, not only as the expression of the new spiritual condition of Konstantin Dmitrich Levin, but also that of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy at this time in his life:

“I will still get angry with Ivan the coachman in the same way, I will still argue in the same way, and I will express my thoughts at the wrong moment, and there will be a wall as well between the holy of holies of my soul and others, even with my wife, and I will blame her in the same way for my own fears, and I will be repentant of it. In the same way I will not understand by reason why I pray, and I will pray, but my life now, my whole life, independently of anything that may happen to me, every minute of it, is not only not meaningless, as it was before, but it possesses the undoubted sense of goodness which I have the power to put into it!”

Anna Karenina ends with Levin’s religious regeneration in Part VIII, and not with Anna’s suicide under the train at the end of Part VII. Despite its title in point of fact the novel has two climaxes, which are Anna’s suicide and Levin’s discovery of his faith in God, which actually occurs at the end of Chapter XIII, six chapters before the end of Part VIII and the end of the novel. True to his didactic literary soul, Tolstoy provides both positive and negative main examples of how to live a meaningful life not only in the society of his day, where the action of the novel takes place, but also in any society of any era, for the questions he addresses are both universal and eternal.

Although both Anna and Levin are seekers of truth and meaning in life and both suffer for it, Levin, the alter ego of Tolstoy and the positive example, rejects life lived only to satisfy one’s own desires. Anna is the negative example, a life not lived in commitment to something higher than oneself. They both are convinced that love is the most important element of life, but the love Anna is interested in is mixed with vanity, materialism, and the satisfaction of her own desires. Levin knows that love has nothing to do with the satisfaction of one’s own desires, vanity, materialism, or social acceptance. It is defined by the selfless service to others of one’s own life, for only in this way is life on earth itself facilitated and maintained. Only in this way is the individual soul reunited with God. Levin thought of committing suicide too, but he was saved by the miracle of faith, for at least he knew what he was looking for, and he knew where to look. From the beginning Anna had the wrong idea, and she was destroyed.

There are other negative examples of life lived wrongly as well. Sergei Ivanich Koznyshëv, Levin’s famous intellectual half-brother, fails to gain the literary fame he desired and tries to mask his disappointment in an abstract public cause tinged with dubious moral foundations. His intellect seems to get in the way of real relationships with human beings, and he is an unhappy person. Faith in God is not attained by reason, Tolstoy reminds his readers and himself. For Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky life loses meaning when Anna kills herself. He tries suicide himself, but fails. Then he tries suicide another way, by deciding to fight in a gratuitous war. He wrongly believes he has nothing to lose, and so the thought of losing his life is easier to accept when nothing in life has any value. Both Koznyshëv and Vronsky utilize involvement in the abstract public causes of Slavic nationalism and the defense of the Orthodox Christian faith to avoid difficult and painful self-examination and to deter their own individual quests for meaning in life.

Lev Nikolaevich tells us in Anna Karenina what Levin discovered, that the meaning of life lies in the goodness one puts into it. He also shows us that even if we know what the true meanings of love and goodness are, our selfish desires can prevent us from living life through them, and we
will be destroyed as a result. The good part is that we all have the capability and the freedom within ourselves, within the “holy of holies” of our souls, to find what we are looking for no matter what world, society, or family we live in. Even in the midst of relentless pessimism and doubt, like Levin we can find the miracle of faith.
CHAPTER SIX
A CONFESSION 1879-1882

If War and Peace and Anna Karenina can be seen containing portrayals of two Tolstoy-like protagonists, Pierre Bezukhov and Konstantin Levin, who discover faith in God and the meaning of life, then his writing of A Confession (1879-1882) marks Lev Nikolaevich’s own undisguised and publicly announced affirmation of what he has already pronounced in his literature, his personal discovery of faith in God and the meaning of life. Because of its criticism of the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist government, A Confession was banned in Russia, and although it circulated clandestinely throughout all of the country in a printed form, it was first published in Geneva, Switzerland in 1884.\(^{166}\)

Lev Nikolaevich’s A Confession is a largely autobiographical work, and parts of it have already been cited in connection with previous events and works of his life. As an inquiry into the meaning of life and the relation of finite human beings to the unknown and incomprehensible infinite, it was written at a time in which belief in materialism and scientific progress, like that evidenced in Charles Darwin’s works such as Origin of the Species (1859) and The Descent of Man (1871-1874), was prominent among the world’s intelligentsia. This seeming counter-historical untimeliness and its challenges to the doctrine and traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian and non-Christian faiths assured that it would receive an unwelcome reception from adherents of the two leading currents of philosophic thought in Russia and in the world at the time. Criticism also flowed toward Lev Nikolaevich from those close to him, such as his wife, Sofya Andreevna, and his close friend and relation at the tsarist court, the Countess Aleksandra Aleksandrovna Tolstaya, for his rejection of the native Orthodox Church and for his apparent abandonment of his literary art.

In A Confession Tolstoy summarizes the spiritual and philosophical progression of his life and work at the age of fifty-plus in his quest to find the answer to the question that he has sought all his life, “What is the meaning of life?” In the first three chapters he describes the search he has made and the life he has lived, including the success he has achieved in his literary art and the general happiness of his family life. Lev Nikolaevich relates that he had some moments of doubt, but like most educated people of his era, he continued to believe in the general progress of humanity and of himself as an individual:

“‘Everything is evolving, and I am evolving, and the reason why I am evolving along with everyone else will be evident.’ In this way I would have formulated my faith at the time.”\(^{167}\)

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\(^{166}\text{Pass v 91t, vol. } 23, \text{ p. } 522. \text{ A Confession could be bought illegally for three rubles in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other cities. The major supply for St. Petersburg was located in the apartment of the father-in-law of the Ministry of Internal Affairs officer who directed the gendarme unit there.}\n
\(^{167}\text{Pass v 91t, vol. } 23, \text{ pp. } 8-9.\)
Then he begins to tell of the uncomfortable feelings, such as those occasioned by the Arzamas Horror in 1869, which he has had now for a number of years. These uncomfortable feelings concern his fear of approaching death, and more profoundly, his inability to answer his own often-posed question about the purpose and utility of his life.

The reality of death and the apparent meaninglessness of his life led Tolstoy to thoughts of suicide. Life perhaps was just a joke, and despite all his efforts at doing good, achieving literary fame, and maintaining a happy family life, all the things that he had desired, he was still left with a hollowness in his soul. In Chapter Four he asks, “What is the purpose of life when all of it will be annihilated in the end?” He relates the story of an Eastern fable, an allegory of human life, in which the hopeless situation of a person’s life is portrayed such that, regardless of the decisions made or not made, regardless of the moments of sweetness in human life, destruction is always assured. The joys of life are a delusion, and art and poetry are no real comfort with the realization of the obliteration of human beings, their works, and the memory of them. Tolstoy admits that he is too terrified to enjoy the happy moments while he waits for the eventual abyss of death:

“The horror of the darkness was too great, and I wanted to save myself as soon as possible from it with a rope or a bullet. And it is that feeling, which was more powerful than anything else, which drew me toward suicide.”

In Chapter Five he tells of his fruitless search for answers through philosophy, science, and knowledge. Through these modes of inquiry the problems and environment of human life were described and understood, but not answered. When Tolstoy was younger, he tried to find the law which governed the universe, a law which he believed existed. But as he grew older, he became sure that there was no such law to be discovered, that what he had taken for such a law, the law of perpetual development, that everything in the infinity of time and space is developing, improving, becoming more complex, and differentiating, really says nothing at all. The experimental sciences were useful in describing the environment in which human beings found themselves, and there were always better ways to be found to do that, but they could not offer answers to life’s basic questions. The semi-sciences, or the juridical, social, and historical sciences, also provided no help. They gave the appearance of considering the important questions, but they were, like the others, vague and without precision, full of contradictions and filled with stupidities. Metaphysics and abstract philosophy attempted to answer the basic questions of human life, but they always provided the same answer - “The essence of life exists, and I am that essence” - or they restated the question in more complicated form.

In Chapter Six Lev Nikolaevich states that the answer of science to his question of the meaning of his life could be summed up thusly:

“You are that which you call your life, you are a temporary, random meshing of particles. The mutual action and interchange of these particles produces in you that which you call your life. This meshing will last for some time, and then the mutual action of these particles will cease, and that which you call your life will cease, as will all your questions.”

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168 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 15.

169 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 21-22.
Of course the fact that science says that a person’s life is but an inscrutable part of an inscrutable whole provides no answer to the meaning of life, but then the major philosophers such as Socrates, Solomon, Schopenhauer, and Buddha all essentially say the same, that all in life is vanity and vexation of the spirit, and when free of the limitations of the body, there is no memory, and thus the soul is better off in death than in this evil life. For Schopenhauer the transition to nothingness was the only thing sacred in life, while Buddha believed that it was impossible to live in the suffering of life.

Since the pursuit of knowledge yielded no answers for Tolstoy about the meaning of life, he decided to observe his fellow human beings to see if they had any answers. In Chapter Seven he noted that among the educated gentry, people who were similar to Tolstoy in background, there were four approaches to this question. The first was that of simple ignorance, people who didn’t pay attention, but they certainly would near the end if they had the chance. The second approach was that of epicureanism, those who know life is hopeless, but they are determined to enjoy it as much as possible and seek escape through concentration on life’s joys. Lev Nikolaevich believed that most of the people in his acquaintance followed this method. The third was that of taking action, the energetic and strong method of realizing that life was evil, and action should be taken to destroy it. These people favored suicide, and Tolstoy favored this method for a long time. The fourth approach was that of weakness, clinging to life while hoping for the best, hoping for salvation, but knowing that life is futile. Lev Nikolaevich believed that he belonged in this category along with Solomon and Schopenhauer.

Still Tolstoy did not do what his reason told him he should do – commit suicide. He had thought about it a long time, but the feeling that something was wrong with his reasoning always had stopped him from taking the final action suggested in his favored energetic third approach. If his reason rejected life, then something seemed to be inherently wrong with his reason, for reason and will were not possible without life. But the observation which changed his perspective was that his four approaches to the question of the meaning of life concerned only his own educated gentry circle, and that the masses of simple, poor, and uneducated folk did not commit suicide despite their vastly more difficult lives. Tolstoy had been brought up by the labor and care of the simple and poor peasants on his estate, yet they evidently did not share his conclusion that life was senseless and not worth living.

The fact that Lev Nikolaevich did not commit suicide, as his reason told him he should do, made him aware of another force at work in his soul. In Chapter Eight he calls this force a consciousness of life, and this new awareness in himself, together with his observation of the genuine life-affirming attitudes of the humble peasants around him, led him to conclude that his intellectual vanity was preventing him from seeing the obvious. Previously he had discounted the beliefs of the peasants as superstitious, uneducated, and ignorant, neatly fitting them into his first category of approaches to the meaning of human life. But now he decided that they really did not fit into any of the categories, and moreover they were not avoiding the basic question of human existence. Could it be that it was rational knowledge, such as that promoted by the educated elite, which was rejecting the true meaning of human life? For the masses of simple, uneducated, poor folk around him, Tolstoy realized that the meaning of life was found in irrational knowledge, and this irrational knowledge was faith:

“Rational knowledge, according to the learned and the wise, rejects the meaning of life, but the great masses of people, all humanity, recognize this meaning in irrational knowledge. And this irrational knowledge is faith, the very same thing which I could not but cast aside. This is God one and three, the creation in six days, devils and angels and all that which I could not accept unless I lost my mind.

My position was terrible. I knew that I would find nothing by way of rational knowledge except a rejection of life, but in faith there was nothing except a rejection of reason, which was even more
impossible than a rejection of life. According to rational knowledge life is evil, and people know it, 
and the decision not to live rests with people, but they lived and live, and I myself lived, although I 
already had known for a long time that life was meaningless and evil. According to faith, in order 
to understand the meaning of life, I must renounce reason, the very thing for which meaning is 
necessary.”

Tolstoy finally resolved this quandary by concluding in Chapter Nine that his reasoning was 
faulty because it asked for an explanation of the infinite, God and the universe, by the finite, 
human beings and their reason, and the finite by the infinite. Reason itself could only provide 
identities for definitions and explanations, such as x=x, 0=0, a-a=0, 3+3=6=3+3, and the like. 
Further the answers given by faith are irrational, but they provide a relationship between the finite 
and the infinite, which reason cannot do. Questions such as “How should human beings live?” 
are answered by “According to God’s law.” “Is there anything real to become of life?” “Eternal 
torment or eternal damnation.” “What is the meaning of life that is not destroyed by death?” 
“Unity with God and the infinite.”

Faith thus provides not only the answers to the basic and most important questions of human 
life, but it also facilitates the possibility of life. Lev Nikolaevich concluded that life and faith always 
exist together and never separately, and the essential aspects of that faith are always the same 
everywhere. Further in Chapter Nine he explains:

“Whatever the answers and to whomever they are given by whatever faith, any answer of faith 
provides the meaning of the infinite to the finite existence of human beings, a meaning which is 
not destroyed by suffering, privation, or death. This means that only in faith can the meaning and 
possibility of life be found. And I realized that faith in its most essential meaning is not only the 
‘revelation of things unseen,’ and so on, not the revelation (this is only a description of one of the 
signs of faith), not only the relationship of man to God (it is necessary to define faith and then 
God, and not through God define faith), not only an agreement with what a person has been told, 
as most often faith is understood to be, but faith is the knowledge of the meaning of human life, 
the consequence of which is that a person does not kill himself, but lives. Faith is the force of life. 
If a person lives, then he must believe in something. If he didn’t believe that it was necessary to 
live for something, then he would not live. If he does not see and does not understand the illusion 
of the finite, he will believe in the finite. If he understands the illusion of the finite, he must believe 
in the infinite. It is impossible to live without faith.”

Then Tolstoy declares that despite the intellectual vanity of himself and some other of his favorite 
philosophers, the most profound wisdom of humankind is given by faith, as it is handed down 
through the ages by unseen humanity. It is faith alone which can answer the question of the 
meaning of life.

While he has emphasized the importance of faith to human life, beginning in Chapter Ten 
Tolstoy shows that the practice of the members of some religions obscures faith. He first 
criticizes his own native Orthodox Christian Church and evangelical New Christians, who do not 
seem to profess faith according to the meaning of life. The lives of these adherents were just like 
that of Lev Nikolaevich himself, except that he did not believe that they followed their own

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170 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 33.
171 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 35.
principles of faith. Their only concept of life was living while they lived and increasing their materialistic desires. In fact they lived as badly as non-believers. In contrast the poor, simple, uneducated people had faith and lives superior to those pseudo-believers. They were happier despite their lack of material wealth, and they accepted suffering and death peacefully as a part of life. Tolstoy concluded that the life of the rich and learned in Russia had no meaning.

Then in Chapter Eleven Tolstoy asked himself why it had taken him so long to understand the truth about the meaning of life. He concludes that he had been blinded by his epicurean attitude toward life, and that he had spent too much time distracted by the attractive pursuit of satisfying his own desires. Although his reason could tell him quite correctly that his own life was evil, his mistake was that he tried to extend his own feelings to humanity in general:

"...I understood that my question about what my life is, and the answer: evil, was completely correct. It was incorrect only in that I applied the answer, which related only to me, to life in general. I had asked myself what was my life, and I received the answer: evil and meaningless. And my life, a life of indulgence in lust, was exactly meaningless and evil, but the answer, 'an evil and meaningless life,' related only to my life, and not to the lives of people in general. I understood that truth, which I found later in the Gospels, that people loved the dark more than the light because their deeds were evil. For every person who does evil deeds hates the light, and he does not go to the light so that his deeds will not be exposed. I understood that in order to understand the meaning of life, first of all it is necessary that life not be meaningless and evil, and only then utilize reason for the purpose of understanding it. I understood why I had walked around such an evident truth for such a long time, and that if one thinks and speaks about the life of humanity, it is necessary to think and speak about the life of humanity, and not about the lives of several of the parasites of life. The truth was always the truth, like 2x2=4, but I was not admitting it, because by acknowledging that 2x2=4, I would have had to admit that I was a bad person. And for me to feel like a good person was more important and more obligatory than 2x2=4. I began to love good people, began to detest myself, and I acknowledged the truth. Now everything became clear to me.

What if an executioner who has spent all his life torturing and cutting off heads, or a hopeless drunkard, or a madman, who had lived his life in a dark room, then became disgusted with his room, but he imagined that he would die if he went out of it, what if they asked themselves, "What is life?" Obviously they could not receive any other answer to the question "What is life?" than the one that life is the greatest evil. And the answer of the madman would be completely correct, but for himself alone. What if I am such a madman? What if all of us rich, learned people are such madmen?

And I understood that we all are indeed such madmen. I especially was surely such a madman. ...

Tolstoy was to later return to this theme of madman in his posthumously published Notes of a Madman (1912), a short work in length, but with a gestation period of many years. But his conclusion that he was a parasite and a madman, and that his life had been evil and meaningless, was then contrasted in Chapter Eleven of A Confession with the life of the peasants, who never would complain to their lord about their lot in life. They did the will of their master, participated in the order and structure of their environment, and thus did they learn and understand more and more about it. The wise, rich, and educated, on the other hand, eat the Master's food without doing what He asks. They spend their time debating whether they should do even the most simple tasks, deciding that the Master is stupid, perhaps that He does not exist, and that they are the only wise and intelligent ones. Such people, like Tolstoy himself, feel in their souls that their lives serve no purpose, and that they must save themselves from themselves.

\footnote{Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 41-42.}
In contrasting his parasitic and probably mad life to the genuine life of simple, poor folk, Lev Nikolaevich continued his search for God. In Chapter Twelve he relates how this quest has its moments of faith and its moments of doubt, with his reason denying faith and the existence of God in the same way that the philosophers Kant and Schopenhauer decided that they could not prove the existence of God. His impulses to suicide were still active, and the gradual and imperceptible moment of faith and the realization of God did not arrive until he:

"...remembered all the hundreds of times when death and rebirth took place within me. I remembered that I only lived at those times when I believed in God. As it was then, it is now, I told myself. If I know about God, I live. If I forget, if I don't believe in Him, I die. But what are these rebirths and deaths? Surely I do not live when I lose faith in the existence of God. Surely I would have killed myself long ago if I hadn't had a dim hope of finding Him. Surely I live, truly live, only when I am conscious of Him and search for Him. Then what is it I am still looking for?" cried a voice within me. There He is. He, the One without whom it is impossible to live. To know God and to live are one and the same. God is life.

'Live searching for God and then there will be no life without God.' And everything was illuminated within me and around me stronger than ever before, and this light has never left me since.

And I was saved from suicide. When and how this turnaround was accomplished in me, I could not say. As gradually and as imperceptibly as the force of life was destroyed within me, and I arrived at the impossibility of living, at the stopping of life, at the necessity for suicide, just as gradually and imperceptibly in the same way did this force of life return to me. And strangely that force of life which returned to me was not a new one, but the oldest one, that same one which had attracted me in the first periods of my life. I returned to everything of my earliest periods, of my childhood, and of my youth. I returned to faith in that will which produced me and wanted something from me. I returned to the idea that the main and only goal of my life is to be better, that is to live in accordance with this will. I returned to the idea that I can find the expression of this will in that which all humanity had worked out for its own guidance in the expanse of time and distance which was hidden from me. That is, I returned to belief in God, in moral perfection, and in the tradition which passed on the meaning of life. Only the difference was that then all this was accepted unconsciously, while now I knew that I could not live without it.\(^\text{173}\)

But while Tolstoy was sure that he had now consciously and irrevocably found his faith in God in the same force of life which had been unconsciously present in the earliest periods of his life, he also now believed that the conditions of luxury in which he and other members of the gentry class lived in Russia deprived them of the possibility of understanding the true meaning of life. He himself had only found his faith in God and the meaning of life through the examples of the faith of the simple, uneducated, poor folk of Russia, especially those of the peasants on his estate. In Chapter Thirteen Lev Nikolaevich confesses further that their example led him to conclude that the meaning of life could be summed up in this fashion:

"Every person comes into this world by the will of God. And God has created people so that every person can destroy his soul or save it. The mission of a person in life is to save his soul. In order to save his soul, it is necessary to live a godly life, and to live a godly life, it is necessary to renounce all the comforts of life, to work, to be humble, to endure, and to be merciful."\(^\text{174}\)
This was the legacy which had been passed down through generations of religious teaching in the world, and in Russia this was the legacy of the Orthodox Christian Church, Tolstoy's own native faith. But along with the meaning of life based in the faith of the people, there was much about the practice of the Orthodox Christian Church which Lev Nikolaevich could not comprehend or accept, including the sacraments, the church services, the fasts, the ceremonies, bowing before icons and relics. Although Tolstoy had found these practices and rituals objectionable or inexplicable, and he could not see how they related to faith in God or the meaning of life, like the people he had performed them. He went to church and participated because of his belief in the church principle of unity through love, a collective state of being which would reveal the truth, bring people closer to God, and produce an infallible church doctrine. He had believed that one person could not attain religious truth, and he wanted to be a part of the godly body of believers of his native faith, the faith of his parents, relatives, and ancestors. "In participating in the rituals of the church," Tolstoy admits at the end of Chapter Thirteen, "I had humbled my reason and subordinated myself to that tradition possessed by all humanity."\textsuperscript{175}

Yet Lev Nikolaevich could not bring himself to believe in the miracles performed by Jesus Christ, he confesses in Chapter Fourteen. He tried to believe in the miracles as parables with moral instructions which revealed the meaning of life. But especially when he was in the company of learned believers, his doubts, dissatisfaction, and exasperation arose. But still he adhered to the Orthodox Church, and at the beginning of Chapter Fifteen, Tolstoy admits that he condescendingly envied the peasants for their illiteracy and lack of education, as they seemed to be able to accept church doctrine on faith, that very doctrine which Lev Nikolaevich's reason told him was false and had nothing to do with the meaning of life. Finally Tolstoy confesses that because of his questions about the true meaning of life and "the church's resolution of these questions contrary to the very foundations of that faith by which I lived, I was finally forced to renounce the possibility of communion with Orthodox Christianity."\textsuperscript{176}

Tolstoy's renunciation of his native Orthodox Christian Church occurred for two reasons. The first was its attitude toward other Christian churches, that its church doctrine was infallible, and that the other Christian churches were based on heretical doctrine. Other Christian churches, such as the Catholic church and the Protestant churches, suffered as much as the Orthodox church from this false belief in the infallibility of their doctrines and traditions. Lev Nikolaevich believed in the unity of faith found in love, and he considered if this is true, then the attitude of truth kept by one sect of Christianity only is a lie. Further if any Christian church believes it is the sole keeper of Christian faith, then it cannot know or hold the truth. The spiritual authorities of each church, in trying to preserve their own doctrine and traditions, are making a fundamental error of faith by believing themselves superior to those they consider heretics. This false belief leads to efforts at religious purity, which lead to a false faith away from the only path to God, which is through love.

The second reason for Tolstoy's renunciation of the Orthodox Christian Church, which he presents near the end of Chapter Fifteen, was its support for war and capital punishment. Lev Nikolaevich was horrified that church leaders could sanction the killing of fellow human beings in the name of Christian faith for any reason. He was convinced that any such sanction violated the basic principle of Christian faith and the only connection between God and human being, that of love.

In a very short Chapter Sixteen Tolstoy begins to conclude A Confession declaring that all

\textsuperscript{175}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{176}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 53.
religious teaching is not a lie, but there is much mixed in with the truth, even in the faith of the peasants, which is false and misleading. This is less apparent in the faith of the peasants than it is in the faith of members of the church hierarchy because the church leaders are more educated and more cognizant of the differences. An extensive examination of both holy church tradition and holy church writing is necessary to separate the truth from the the falsehood.

Lev Nikolaevich doesn’t want to and doesn’t believe he can understand everything. But he does want to understand as much as he can up to the limits of that which is inevitably inexplicable, the infinite which is beyond the capability of finite human beings to understand. He sums up his quest for faith in God and the meaning of life in this way:

“And so I turned to the study of that same theology which I had sometime ago cast aside with contempt as unnecessary. Then it had seemed to me to be a lot of unnecessary nonsense, as then I was surrounded from every angle by the phenomena of life which all seemed clear and full of meaning. Now I would be glad to cast aside that which does not enter in to a healthy head, but I have nowhere to turn. The only knowledge of the meaning of life which has been revealed to me is based on this religious teaching or at least it is inseparably connected with it. However wild it may seem to me and my old sound mind, it is the one hope of salvation. It has to be carefully and attentively examined in order to understand it, even if not to understand it like I understand a proposition of science. I am not looking for this, and I can’t look for this, knowing the special character of the knowledge of faith. I will not look for the explanation of everything. I know that the explanation of everything, like the beginning of everything, must be hidden in infinity. But I want to understand in such a way so that I might be brought up to the inevitably unexplainable. I want everything that is inexplicable to be so, not because the demands of my mind are not correct (they are correct, and outside of them I cannot understand anything), but because I see the limits of my mind. I want to understand in such a way that everything that is unexplainable presents itself to me as being necessarily so, rather than as being something that I am obliged to believe.”

At the end of Chapter Sixteen, the last chapter of A Confession, Tolstoy added the date of the year that he presumably finished writing it, 1879. Three years later he added a postscript to what he had written in 1879. In it he related another parable, which he believed expressed in a concise form what he had written in the previous sixteen chapters. Lev Nikolaevich told of a dream he had had, a dream of being awake in a bed suspended in a vast and limitless abyss. Despite the fact that he could not see exactly how or by what means he was supported in this unfathomable void, his spirit was tranquil because he had knowledge from an unknown source that what was supporting him was secure. And he fell asleep, completing his allegory of faith.

\[177\] Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 56-57.
CHAPTER SEVEN
RELIGIOUS WRITING, LATER FICTION, AND AN UNFINISHED MADMAN
1882-1910

With the completion of *A Confession* in 1882, Tolstoy had fully laid out his definitions of faith and the meaning of life and how he had found them. But his quest was not yet complete, more doubt was inevitable as his sound and relentless, but finite and limited mind struggled to comprehend the infinite in the last twenty-eight years of his life just as it had in the first fifty-four. As he announced in the last chapter of *A Confession*, he was to begin his necessary extensive examination of holy scriptures, especially the Gospels, both in their original languages and in his own translation with extensive notes, with his *Short Summary of the Gospels* (1881-1883) and his critical analysis of Orthodox Christian dogma with his *Research of Dogmatic Theology* in 1879-1884. In addition to his views on faith, religion, and his philosophy of life and how to live it were to be further refined, he was to write more than a few tracts on moral problems of his day, and he was to complete more works of fiction, including short stories and his last novel, *Resurrection* (1899).

Lev Nikolaevich’s belief in the unity of faith through love, a belief which he felt was in conflict with the Orthodox Christian Church’s doctrine of infallibility despite their ostensible espousal of and reliance on the concept, led to his renunciation of communion with his native faith, as expressed in *A Confession*. At about the same time as he was finishing *A Confession*, he also began writing *What People Live By* (1881-1885), a short story based on an ancient folk tale, which expresses the meaning and importance of the unity of faith through love for humanity. He originally wrote the story for a children’s magazine published by his wife’s brother, but he also republished it with corrections for *Posrednik* [Intermediary], a publishing house which he founded with V. G. Chertkov and P. I. Biryukov, among others, in 1885. The purpose of the publishing house was to provide literature at low cost to poor folk in rural areas as well as to perhaps evade more stringent censorship in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

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178 Pss v 91t, vol. 24, pp. 1001-1005. *Short Summary of the Gospels* was a reworked version of his *Unification and Translation of the Four Gospels* (1880-1881). Before 1905-1906, when they finally were published in Russia, they appeared in various foreign editions in English, French, and Russian. Like most of Tolstoy’s works banned in Russia, they circulated there in illegal formats. See the writing and publication history, pp. 973-1007.

179 Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 538-547. *Research of Dogmatic Theology*, also published as *Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*, was first published in two parts in Geneva, Switzerland in 1891 and 1896. It was published in Russia four times from 1908-1913 in censored editions.

What People Live By is the story of the Archangel Mikhaila [Michael] who is banished to earth for disobeying God until he discovers three truths about people living there: what exists in people, what is not given to people, and what people live by. He is befriended and taken in by a desperately poor shoemaker, Semyon, and his wife Matryona, who share with him all that they have. From their kindness he learns that it is love that exists in people, the first truth. Living and working as the shoemaker’s assistant, the Archangel Mikhaila learns the second truth one year later from a rich and demanding customer, who has given him specific instructions and the best materials to make a long-lasting pair of boots. But the wealthy man was destined to die suddenly that evening, revealing that what is not given to people is to know their own needs. It took another five years for Mikhaila to learn the third and final truth from a formerly poor peasant woman who had taken in two orphan girls as babies six years ago. The girls were strangers to her, yet she raised and loved them as her own. Mikhaila recognized the girls through the story told by the good woman, for he had been banished from heaven by God for not taking the soul of their mother as ordained because she had pleaded that her husband was dead, and that her children could not live without a father or mother. The love of the good woman for the children that were not her own revealed to Mikhaila the living God, and then he knew what people lived by.

At the end of the story of What People Live By, before he re-ascends to heaven as he is forgiven by God for his disobedience, the Archangel Mikhaila sums up what he has learned in his exile on earth. The summation also provides the meaning and importance of Tolstoy’s belief in the unity of faith through love, and it shows why Lev Nikolaevich could never accept any doctrine of infallibility on the part of any religion, including any Christian church:

“ ‘I have learned that any person lives not by care for himself, but by love. It was not given to the mother to know what her children needed for life. It was not given to the rich man to know what he needed for himself. And neither is it given to any person to know whether he will need boots for his body or slippers for his corpse when evening comes.

I remained alive when I was a man not by what I myself deliberated, but by the fact that there was love in a person passing by, and in his wife, and they had pity on me and loved me. The orphans remained alive not because of what was considered for them, but because there was love in the heart of a strange woman, and she had pity on them and loved them. And all people live not by what they consider for themselves, but by the fact that love exists in people.

I knew before that God gave life to people and wanted them to live. Now I understood yet another thing.

I understood that God does not want people to live apart, and therefore He did not reveal to them what each one needs to know for himself, but He wanted them to live united, and so He revealed to each of them what is necessary for all the others.

I have now understood that it only seems that people live by caring for themselves, but that they really live by love alone. He who has love is in God, and God is in him because God is love.’”

In January 1884 Tolstoy completed In What Is My Faith?, also known as What I Believe. In this work he first announced some basic parts of his Christian beliefs, which comprised further additions and refinements to his fundamental beliefs in the meaning of life, with love as its purpose and the unique pathway for human beings to reunification with God. Two of the most important additions were his disbelief in personal resurrection and immortality, which he asserted had never been preached by Jesus Christ, and his uncompromising doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force, which he learned from Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.

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181 Pss v 91t, vol. 25, pp. 24-25.
In Chapter VIII of *In What Is My Faith?* Lev Nikolaevich explains that the only real life a person can have on this earth and after is that which cannot be secured by wealth, property, or other measures of personal achievement, fame, and concerns. All these inevitably are conquered by death (“Death, death, death awaits you every second. Our life always passes in the presence of death.”\(^\text{182}\)). The only path to that real life which endures forever, both on this earth and afterward, is to merge one’s personal life with that of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. A personal life, that is, a life lived only for oneself, is a deception, a lie, and totally meaningless. A personal life denies the obligation which we have incurred to those who lived before us, those now living, and those who will live after us. They are all those who comprise the unity of faith in God through love and service to others, all of whom are represented by the Son of Man. A life lived for oneself is against the will of God, violates humanity’s unity of faith in love, and it ends in destruction:

“The will of the Father of life is not the life of the individual person, but that of the unified Son of Man living in people, and thus a person preserves his life only when he looks upon it as a loan, as a talent given to him by the Father for the service of the life of all, as he lives not for himself, but for the Son of Man.”\(^\text{183}\)

Tolstoy then quotes his translation of the Gospel of Matthew 25:31-46 in which Christ states that those who have not lived the personal life, but have indeed lived the life of the Son of Man, that is, a selfless life lived in love and service to others, these people have eternal life. Then he says:

“Only this kind of eternal life does Christ teach in all the Gospels and, as strange as it is to say about Christ, who personally resurrected and promised resurrection to all, never did Christ assert a single word about personal resurrection or the immortality of the personality beyond the grave, and to the restoration of the dead in the Kingdom of the Messiah, which the Pharisees established, he gave a meaning which excluded the notion of a personal resurrection.”\(^\text{184}\)

Later in Chapter VIII Tolstoy declares that there is no immortality of the personal soul since this is incompatible with the renunciation of personal life, and eternal life does not exist for individuals as themselves, but only as a part of the present, past, and future of the common whole of humanity unified in love as the Son of Man. A person’s soul is therefore as mortal as his earthly life with a characteristic of immortality only insofar as his earthly personal life facilitates the development of the generations of humanity through selfless love, service, and faith in God.

Soon after reiterating this belief that individual souls have a possible immortality only as a part of the eternal body of humanity, Lev Nikolaevich begins to hedge and retreat somewhat on the question of an immortal soul and everlasting life for individuals when he contemplates other sayings of Christ and the Gospel of John, perhaps including John 3:16:

“But let’s say that the words of Christ about the day of judgement and the end of the age and other words from the Gospel of John mean the promise of life beyond the grave for the souls of dead people, even so it is beyond doubt that his teaching about the light of life and about the

\(^{182}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 388.

\(^{183}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 390.

\(^{184}\) Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 391.
kingdom of God also has a meaning which is understandable to his audience and to us now, that the only true life is the life of the Son of Man according to the will of the Father. It is thus easier to stipulate that the teaching about true life according to the will of the Father of life includes the conception of immortality and life beyond the grave.\textsuperscript{185}

But after allowing for the possibility that an immortal individual soul could be part of the teaching of Jesus Christ, Tolstoy then rejects it in the next two paragraphs as being incompatible with the principle of renunciation of a personal life in favor of an earthly life of selfless love to the whole of humanity, the Son of Man. This principle he regarded as a fundamental part of the teaching of Jesus Christ. At the same time he also took issue with the concept of heaven and hell in the afterlife:

"Maybe it is more justified to suppose that, after this worldly life lived for the fulfillment of his personal will, an eternal personal life in paradise with all possible joys awaits a person in any case. Maybe it is more justified, but to think that it is so, and to try to believe that for good deeds I will be rewarded with everlasting grace and for bad deeds with eternal torment, to think in that way does not contribute to an understanding of the teaching of Christ. On the contrary thinking in that way removes from the teaching of Christ the most important part of its foundation.

The whole teaching of Christ is that his disciples, having understood the illusion of a personal life, would renounce it and transform it into a life of all humanity, into a life of the Son of Man. The very teaching about the immortality of the personal soul not only does not call for the rejection of its personal life, but it reinforces this personality forever."\textsuperscript{186}

While Lev Nikolaevich was certainly correct in his insistent belief that the renunciation of a personal earthly life for one of love and service to humanity was a fundamental part of the teaching of Jesus Christ, it is also probable that he was heavily influenced by two of the currents of philosophical thought which he had criticized thoroughly, Slavophilism and Orthodox Christianity. Both of these closely related philosophies have the sublimation of the individual to the body of believers, the collective feeling of belonging [\textit{sobornost'}, as A. S. Khomyakov called it], as a central tenet. In addition the Slavophiles also idolized the values of the Russian peasantry and the traditional Russian peasant commune, the \textit{obschchina} or the \textit{mir}, as the model for the harmonious social organization of the country, just as Tolstoy had looked to the peasants to discover the true meaning of life and to find his own faith in God.

The second important addition to Tolstoy’s Christian beliefs and philosophy of life announced in \textit{In What Is My Faith?} was based on the first and just as uncompromising. This was his doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force. Derived from Christ’s Sermon On the Mount, it promotes a doctrine of Christian anarchy which is so extensive that an individual following it could not seemingly participate in society in its most elemental forms. Despite the admonition of Christ under questioning by the Pharisees to “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, Luke 20:19-26), Lev Nikolaevich seems to say that we should not give any recognition to government.

In Chapter XII Tolstoy stipulates exactly what he means by non-resistance to evil by force, a belief which is founded in the renunciation of personal wealth, property, honor, and rights in favor of devoting one’s earthly life to humbly working for others and the good of all:

\textsuperscript{185}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 398.

\textsuperscript{186}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, p. 398.
"Christ has shown me that...which deprives me of my welfare is the resistance to evil by violence done to other people. I cannot help but believe that this is evil for me and for others, and so I cannot consciously do it, and I cannot, as I did previously, justify this evil by the fact that it is necessary for the defense of myself and other people or for the defense of my property or that of other people. Nor can I now, at the first reminder that I am doing violence, not renounce it and not stop it.

Not only do I know this, but I know the temptation which lured me to this evil. I know now that this temptation consists of the delusion that my life can be secured by defending myself and my property from other people. ...I now believe that my welfare and that of other people is possible only when each will labor not for himself, but for others, and will not only not withhold his labor from another, but will give it to each of those who needs it. This belief has changed my evaluation of what is good and what is evil, what is lofty and what is low. All that formerly seemed good and lofty to me - riches, all kinds of property, honor, recognition of personal worthiness, rights - all that has now become evil and low. All that which had seemed evil and low to me - work for others, poverty, humility, the renunciation of all property and all rights - has become good and lofty in my eyes. If in a moment of forgetfulness, I now could be carried away by violence in defense of myself or others or in defense of my property or that of others, then I could not quietly and consciously serve this temptation which destroys me and people. I cannot acquire property. I cannot employ any kind of violence against any person, with the exception of a child, and then only to save him from an impending danger. I cannot participate in any kind of governmental activity which has as its objective the protection of people or their property by violence. I cannot be a judge or a participant in a court, nor an official nor a participant in a government office. I cannot cooperate so that others might take part in courts or government offices."187

Tolstoy then further extends his belief in non-resistance to evil by force or violence from not participating in or cooperating with domestic government activities to the question of patriotism and international relations:

"Christ showed me that...which deprives me of my welfare is the division which we make between our own and foreign nations. I cannot help but believe in this, and therefore if in a moment of forgetfulness, feelings of enmity toward a person of another nation could arise in me, then I could not help but acknowledge this feeling to be false in a quiet moment, and I cannot justify myself, as I did before, by claiming the superiority of my nation over others by reason of the delusions, brutality, or barbarity of the other nation. I could not, at the first reminder of this, but try to be more friendly toward a person of another nation than to a compatriot.

But not only do I know now that my separation from other nations is an evil which destroys my welfare, I also know that temptation which led me to this evil, and I cannot now, as I did before, consciously and quietly serve it. I know that this temptation consists of the delusion that my welfare is connected only with the welfare of people of my nation and not with the welfare of all the people of the world. I now know that my unity with other people cannot be violated by the line of a frontier or by government instructions about my belonging to this or that nation. I now know that all people everywhere are equal and brothers. Remembering all that evil which I did, experienced, and witnessed as a consequence of the enmity of nations, now it's clear to me that the reason for it all was the gross deceit called patriotism and love of country. Remembering my education, I see now that the feelings of hate toward other nations, the feelings of the separation of myself from them were never in me, but all these evil feelings were artificially instilled in me by a mindless education. ...If I could now in a moment of forgetfulness cooperate more with a Russian than with a foreigner, or desire success for the Russian government or nation, then I could not now in a quiet moment serve that temptation which destroys me and people. I cannot

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acknowledge any governments or nations, and I cannot participate in any quarrels between
nations and governments either by conversations, by writings, or even more by service to any
government. I cannot take part in all those affairs which are based on the differences of
governments - not in customs or the collection of taxes, not in the preparation of ammunition or
weapons, not in any kind of activity for armament, not in military service, nor even more in war
itself against other nations, and I cannot cooperate with people so that they can do it.  

Lev Nikolaevich’s ideal of non-resistance to evil by force or violence as applied to international
relations would certainly be subject to criticism that it is naive, and if any state, nation, or
community were to follow this Christian doctrine as he stated it, the result would likely be its total
destruction, much as the examples of ethnic and religious holocausts throughout world history
would bear witness. But Tolstoy has an answer to such criticism, and his answer is quite similar
to what he would say about the perceived naïveté of any person literally following this Christian
doctrine. Further in Chapter XII he continues:

" ‘Enemies will come: Germans, Turks, savages, and if you will not fight, they will slaughter
you.’ It is not true. If there were a society of Christians who did no evil to anybody and gave all
the surpluses of their labor to other people, no enemies - neither Germans, nor Turks, nor
savages - would begin to kill or torture such people. They would take for themselves all that was
given in any case by these people, for whom there were no differences between a Russian, a
German, a Turk, or a savage. Even if Christians find themselves in a non-Christian society which
is defending itself in a war, and a Christian is called to take part in the war, then that is an
opportunity for the Christian to help people who do not know the truth. A Christian only knows the
truth in order to witness it before those who do not know it. He cannot witness in any other way
than by a deed. His deed is the renunciation of war and the doing of good to people without
regard as to whether they are so-called enemies or his own people.

‘But if not enemies, then his own evil people will attack the family of the Christian, and if he will
not defend himself, then they will pillage, torture, and kill him and those dear to him.’ It is again
not true. If all the members of the family are Christians, and they therefore devote their lives to
the service of others, then such an insane person will not be found who would deprive such
people of food or who would kill those who serve him. ..."

The possibility of a more or less tyrannical government also does not deter Lev Nikolaevich from
his belief in non-resistance to evil by force or violence. The business of the life of a Christian is
not deterable, and because a Christian knows the truth, he is not naive about the possible
consequences:

" ‘But the government cannot allow a member of society to refuse to acknowledge the
foundations of governmental order or to shirk the fulfillment of the obligations of all citizens. The
government requires an oath, participation in court, and military service from a Christian, and for
a refusal he will be subject to punishment - exile, imprisonment, even execution.’ And again in the
same way this requirement of the government will only be a call for the Christian to fulfill the
business of his life. For the Christian the government’s requirement is the requirement of people
who do not know the truth. And therefore a Christian, who does know it, cannot help but bear
witness to it before people who do not know it. The violence, imprisonment, or execution to which
this Christian is subjected as a consequence gives him the opportunity to bear witness not by
words, but by deeds. Any kind of violence: war, robbery, or execution takes place not as a result

\[188\] Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 460-461.

\[189\] Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 462-463.
of the irrational forces of nature, but they are produced by deluded people who are deprived of the knowledge of the truth. And therefore the greater the evil these people do to a Christian, the farther they are from the truth, the more unhappy they are, and the more they need a knowledge of the truth. A Christian cannot give the knowledge of the truth to people other than by refraining from that delusion in which the people who do him evil are living, that is by rendering good for evil. And in this alone is the entire business of the Christian’s life and its whole meaning, which is not destroyed by death.”  

The answer to the problem of a tyrannical government is likewise not a violent revolution. Continuing in Chapter XII, Tolstoy describes it scientifically, like a problem of physics:

“People bound together by deceit are formed into a kind of cohesive, solid mass. The cohesion of this mass is the evil of the world. All the reasonable activity of humanity is directed toward the destruction of this cohesion of deceit.

All revolutions are in essence violent attempts to break up this mass. It seems to people that if they break up this mass, then it will cease to be a mass, and they strike at it. But by trying to break it up, they only forge it together.

But however much they forge it together, the cohesion of the particles is not destroyed until the internal force is not linked to the particles of the mass, and they are forced to separate from it.

The strength of the cohesion of the people is a lie, a fraud. The power which frees each particle of human cohesion is the truth. The truth itself is only passed to people through deeds of truth.

Only deeds of truth, which bring light into the consciousness of each person, destroy the cohesion of deceit and tear people away, one after another, from the mass, which is bound together by the cohesion of deceit.”

The renunciation of a personal life, that is, the dedication of one’s life and the fruits of one’s labor for the love and good of humanity, and the non-resistance to evil by force or violence were the two most important parts of bearing witness to, or demonstrating, one’s Christian faith, according to Tolstoy. These were the “deeds of truth” which every Christian must do during his earthly life, not just to show everyone his Christian faith, but also to ensure the destruction of the “cohesion of deceit” which is the evil of the world. Lev Nikolaevich believed that the real Christian church is made up only of such people of faith who do the “deeds of truth.” Any other church is dead. Near the end of In What Is My Faith? he says:

“The church formed by those who thought of uniting people into one by the fact that they affirmed by incantations that they possessed the truth, [this church] has died long ago. But the church which is made up of people who are united into one, not by promises or by anointings, but by deeds of truth and goodness - this church has always lived and will live. ... The people of this church know that their life is a blessing if they do not violate the unity of the Son of Man, and that this blessing is destroyed only by the non-fulfillment of the commandments of Christ. Thus the people of this church cannot fail to fulfill these commandments or to teach others to fulfill them.

There may be now few or many such people, but that is the church which nothing can

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overcome, and it is the one to whom all people will be united.

Fear not little flock, for your Father is well disposed to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)\textsuperscript{192}

Tolstoy's views of his Christian faith as expressed in In What Is My Faith?, especially those regarding the immortality of the individual soul, were modified somewhat by his essay On Life, which he finished in 1887.\textsuperscript{193} This work, as important as it is for identifying Lev Nikolaevich's thoughts and beliefs on this key element of religious faith, was subjected to more than the usual misunderstanding of what he meant caused by the interference or outright banning of the work in Russia by the tsarist and synodal censors. It first appeared in English in New York in 1888, but the translation of this philosophically complex essay left much to be desired, and a better rendering of it appeared in Paris in 1889 from a French translation by Sofya Andreevna. In 1891 it was first published in Russian in Geneva by M. Epipidin, who had published other banned works by Tolstoy, but this edition originated from a rough manuscript which was uncorrected by Lev Nikolaevich. It was not published in a complete form in Russian until the 1913 Russian edition of Tolstoy's works edited by his friend and biographer, P. I. Biryukov. In 1916-1917 an unfinished, simplified summary of On Life, which had been corrected and approved by the author, was published in Russia by Chertkov under the title On True Life.\textsuperscript{194}

On Life was originally entitled On Life and Death before Tolstoy changed the title of his essay surely because its focus is life, both earthly and immortal, and death does not really exist,\textsuperscript{195} as Lev Nikolaevich says in Chapter 28, for those who accept the truth that their earthly physical consciousness, which ends with death of the body, is not the totality of their "self," which is more than the successive consciousnesses which make up the physical earthly existence of which we all are cognizant in terms of time and space. Indeed the totality of the "self" is more than all the consciousnesses which existed in the past before we were born, the successive consciousnesses of our present earthly life, and the consciousnesses which will exist in the future after we die, if such a concept of a line of space and time as we know it were adequate to describe what makes up the totality of the consciousnesses of the "self." The "self" is defined by Tolstoy at the end of the same chapter (and elsewhere) as "my special relationship with the world, which did not begin

\textsuperscript{192}Pss v 91t, vol. 23, pp. 464-465.

\textsuperscript{193}All of Tolstoy's sparse, but pithy and very philosophical diary notes for 1886 (25 May, 26 May, 19 June, 28 August, 18 October) and 1887 (3 February) were dedicated to the basic themes and thoughts found in On Life. See Pss v 91t, vol. 49, pp. 126-131.


\textsuperscript{195}Tolstoy said as much in a letter to Chertkov on 4 August 1887, the day after he finished the last manuscript revision of the essay (which was not the last corrected version of On Life), which he dated 3 August 1887. He changed the title of On Life and Death to simply On Life on 4 August 1887 as he sent it to be printed. See Pss v 91t, vol. 86, pp. 70-72, for the text of the letter to Chertkov, and see also Sofya Andreevna's diary entry of 4 August 1887 in Dnevnikii, vol. I, p. 123 and note p. 545, which confirms the reason for his decision. See as well Pss v 91t, vol. 26, p. 767.
From Pascal’s Pensées: “L’homme n’est qu’un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c’est un roseau pensant. ... Ainsi, toute notre dignité consiste dans la pensée. C’est de là qu’il faut nous relever, non de l’espace et de la durée. Travaillons donc à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale. [Man is but a reed, the weakest of nature, but he’s a thinking reed. ... Thus, our whole dignity consists of thought. It’s from there that we must raise ourselves, and not from space and time. So let us work to think rightly: this is the principle of morality.]

From Kant’s Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (Beschluss): “Zwei Dinge erfüllen mir das Gemüth... Das erste fängt von dem Platz an, den ich in der äussern Sinnenwelt einnehme, und erweitert die Verknüpfung, darin ich stehe ins unabsehlich Grosse... Das zweite fängt von meinem unsichtbaren Selbst, meiner Persönlichkeit an, und stellt mich in einer Welt dar, die wahre Unendlichkeit hat, aber nur dem Verstande spürbar ist, und mit welcher ich mich, nicht wie dort in bloss zufälliger, sondern allgemeiner und nothwendiger Verknüpfung erkenne. [Two things fill my consciousness... The first begins from the place I occupy in external nature and widens the connection where I stand into infinite space... The second begins from my unseen self, my personality, and places me in a world which has true infinity, but which is perceptible only to understanding, and with which I know that I am connected, not simply accidentally as in the first case, but completely and inevitably.]
true life, for he will never understand his observable, physical and mortal animal life. As he says at the end of Chapter 13:

"However much a person may study the visible and tangible life observed by him in himself and others, a life which is being accomplished without his efforts, this life will always remain a mystery to him. He will never understand from these observations this life which is incomprehensible to him, and his observations on this mysterious life, which is always hidden from him in the infinity of space and time, will in no way illuminate his true life, which is revealed to him in his consciousness and which consists of the subordination of his animal personality, which is completely distinct from all others and is very well known to him, to the law of reason, which is also completely distinct and very well known to him. [This subordination] is for the accomplishment of a good which pertains especially to him and is very well known to him as well."\(^{198}\)

But what is this "good," this "service without which the existence of the world is inconceivable" as Tolstoy says in Chapter 18?\(^{198}\) Lev Nikolaevich tells us in Chapter 22 as he defines his terms:

"All people from their earliest years of childhood know that, except for the good of the animal personality, there is one other, the best good of life, which is not only independent of the gratification of the lusts of the animal personality, but to the contrary, the greater the renunciation of the welfare of the animal personality, the greater it becomes.

This feeling, which resolves all the contradictions of human life and gives the greatest good to people, is known by all. This feeling is love.

Life is the activity of the animal personality subordinated to the law of reason. Reason is that law to which a person's animal personality must be subordinated for his own good. Love is the only reasonable activity of a person."\(^{200}\)

This love is totally unconnected to the welfare of the animal personality, and it is often misunderstood by people who do not understand life as "an accidental mood which is as independent of his will as are all the others through which a person must pass during his lifetime."\(^{200}^1\) It is also not a preference for some conditions of the welfare of the animal personality over other conditions, such as when a person says that he loves his wife, members of his family, or his friends, all of whom are connected to his personal welfare. While this kind of love has a selfless aspect, the fact that it is connected to his personal welfare identifies it as not being totally selfless love, just as love of science, art, or one's native or preferred country are only temporary preferences for certain conditions of animal life over others. In fact Tolstoy says further in Chapter 23 that real love is an activity for the present only, as it has no future or past. Its demands present themselves constantly, simultaneously, and without any order. True love is

\(^{198}\)Ss v 22t, vol. XVII, p. 54.


\(^{200}\)Ss v 22t, vol. XVII, pp. 77-78.

\(^{201}\)Ss v 22t, vol. XVII, p. 79.
totally selfless, and it is possible only when the welfare of the animal personality is completely renounced. However much religious and scientific superstitions may assure people of some future golden age in which everyone will have their needs fulfilled, the reasonable person knows that the immutable law of human existence in the infinity of time and space is that of a struggle of animal personalities, of all against the individual, of each individual against all, and of each person against every other person. As Tolstoy states in the title of Chapter 25, “Love is the complete and only activity of true life.” It is the only answer to the inevitable death, failure, and incomprehensibility of the life of the animal personality. It represents the two greatest commandments of Jesus Christ as expressed in Luke 10:25-28, when a lawyer asked Jesus what to do to inherit eternal life, and Jesus asked him in return what the law was. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself,” responded the lawyer. Jesus then replied to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.”

In Chapter 28 Tolstoy identifies “the something immaterial and invisible which recognizes the matter which flows through it as its own body” as consciousness.\(^\text{202}\) This consciousness is not constant, and it changes, sometimes in disconnected fashion. The series of infinite successive consciousnesses, which did not begin and will not end with this earthly life, are united by the “self,” which is illustrated by Lev Nikolaevich as a simple child’s utterances, “I like this, I don’t like that.” The capability which a person has of loving one thing and not loving another was brought into this world already formed, even though it can be developed during earthly life. It is independent of time and space, and is identified further by Tolstoy as a person’s “special relationship to the world.”

Life is continuous and eternal movement and transition. In Chapter 30 Lev Nikolaevich asserts that the “self” of an individual, if it remains in the same relation to the world with the same degree of love with which it entered earthly life, can cause a person to feel the cessation of life, or the presence of death. But a person who knows himself not by his reflection, the existence of his animal personality in space and time, but by the true life of the growth of his loving relationship to the world, to this person the disappearance of the shadow of spatial and temporal conditions is only an indication of the presence of a greater degree of light. In the same way, as Tolstoy explains in Chapter 31, the lives of those who have died continue even in this world despite their physical disappearance from it. Whether they died yesterday or thousands of years ago, the vital forces of individuals act upon and influence those who exist in this temporal and spatial plane in direct relation to the growth of their loving relationship to the world.

Further, as Tolstoy observes in Chapter 33, whether a person has lived a longer or shorter time in the conditions of earthly existence which are visible to us makes no difference to the growth of the development of his true life, which is his loving relationship to the world. Why some people pass quickly and others slowly through this life is a question which cannot be answered because we do not know anything about the foundation or the conditions of life which another has brought into the world, nor do we know about the movement of life which has taken place within them, nor about the hindrances to the movement of life that may exist in a person, nor about other conditions of life in other existences of a person. Even in this life Lev Nikolaevich notes, we cannot tell whether a person is accomplishing the work of his true life or not. We can only know that about ourselves. Indeed the course of true life cannot be broken by a change in its manifestation. A person dies only because the good of his true life cannot increase further in this world, not because he was struck by lightning, he had cancer, he was murdered by a pistol shot, or he had a bomb thrown at him. These are not abnormal conditions of physical life, but natural ones. In reality physical life, especially of long duration, is unnatural from a material point of view in the deadly conditions of our world. If we are alive in the true sense of life, it is not because we

\(^{202}\text{Ss v 22t, vol. XVII, p. 98.}\)
are taking care of ourselves in the physical and material sense, but because we are doing the work of real life. Tolstoy then closes Chapter 33 by summing up his view on the path of true life:

"But for the welfare of my true life, it is necessary to know above all to what I should subordinate here and now my animal personality in order to achieve the welfare of life. And reason shows me this, it opens for me that unique path in this life along which I do not see the end of my welfare.

It shows without doubt that this life did not begin with birth, but it has been and always is. It shows that the welfare of this life grows and increases here, reaching those limits which cannot contain it any longer, and only then departs from all the conditions which were hindering its growth as it passes into another existence.

Reason places a person on that unique route of life, which like a widening cone-shaped tunnel enclosed on all sides by its walls, it reveals to him in the distance the undoubted infinity of life and its welfare." 203

In the last two chapters of On Life, 34 and 35, Lev Nikolaevich discusses the role of suffering and pain in life. He asserts that they are unavoidable and unexplainable, and that no matter what an individual does, suffering and pain will always be conditions and consequences of his life. Indeed they are often necessary and enable life to progress. Some suffering and pain are direct and indirect results of human errors and sin on an individual's part and on the part of others, and reason can lead to changes in human behavior to alleviate suffering caused by them. But, as Tolstoy notes, the greater part of human suffering comes as a result of causes which are hidden in space and time, such as illnesses, disease, natural disasters, and accidents. Suffering and pain from these causes are more difficult for human beings to accept, especially when they happen to people whose loving relationship to the world is very large and growing. In fact, when bad or unfortunate events of any cause happen to good people, it is difficult for human beings to accept.

Lev Nikolaevich argues that for those whose life is dedicated solely to the welfare of their own individual animal personality, despair, exasperation, and fear of death are unceasing in the human earthly life of suffering and pain, seemingly for no reason. In fact reason would indicate that an early death is the only answer to such a hopeless and painful life. But for those who have recognized that the past and future welfare of their whole life is indissolubly linked to the welfare of other people and other beings, suffering in this life, however inexplicable and unjustified, evokes the very activities which make up the movement of true life, which are consciousness of sin, liberation from illusions, and subordination to the law of reason.

These activities lead to more knowledge of the truth, and the greater the knowledge of the truth, the more good a person obtains, and the more loving his relationship to the world becomes. Tolstoy believed that a person who acknowledges the connection between his sins and sufferings and those of the world frees himself from the torture of suffering. His loving relationship to the world thus increases, and the more love a person feels, the less the torments of suffering he endures. In fact a reasoned life totally involved in love excludes any possibility of suffering, for the torment of suffering is only the pain that people experience when they try to break the chain of love which connects them with their ancestors, their contemporaries, and their descendants, and which unites an individual person’s life with the life of the world.

Finally Tolstoy observes that physical suffering is a necessary condition of the lives and the

203Ss v 22t, vol. XVII, pp. 118-119.
welfare of people. It preserves animal individuality as with a child, and until the reasonable consciousness of a person has been developed, it is not agonizing. But once the reasonable consciousness of an individual is fully operational, also a condition necessary for living a true life of love, pain becomes a means of subordinating the animal personality to reason, and it becomes less tormenting in direct proportion to the development of reasonable consciousness. If there were no pain, the animal personality of an individual would not be aware of its transgression of the laws of life, and if the reasonable consciousness of a person experienced no suffering, that person would not know the truth or recognize the laws of his eternal being. Lev Nikolaevich concludes Chapter 35 with this summation of his belief:

"Whether he wishes it or not, either by reasonable consciousness or by the suffering which results from his delusions about the meaning of his life, a person is driven onto the one true route of life, where neither obstacles nor evil exist, but only one thing, a welfare which is forever growing, which nothing can destroy, and which never began and can never end."204

In the Conclusion and three short appendices to On Life, Tolstoy restates his basic beliefs about the meaning of life. He finishes the Conclusion with the quotation from Matthew 11:28-30 ["Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am meek and mild in heart, and you will find peace for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."] and with his definition that "The life of an individual is a striving for good, and what he strives for is given to him, which is a life which cannot be death, and a good which cannot be evil."205 In Appendix I Lev Nikolaevich acknowledges that without knowing one’s own life, one can never know the welfare and lives of other beings, and in Appendix II he warns again against the false science of the age which perverts the concept of life by supposing that it is studying life, when in reality it is only studying and describing life’s phenomena. In Appendix II he also declares again that the meaning of life, the striving of a person for good, is to be found in a person’s reasonable or rational consciousness, and nowhere else, for it is “written in uneraseable characters in the soul of a person.”206 Tolstoy believed that the essence of all religious doctrines is nothing more than this definition of life and a warning against the delusions of the animal personality or the personal life. But he cautions in Appendix III that “a person always understands everything through reason and not through faith.”207 So if a person is considering rejecting his own religion for another one, he should do so only on the basis of reason, not on the basis of faith. For it is only in the reasonable consciousness of an individual that the route to true life can be found.

In On Life it is clear that Lev Nikolaevich believes in the immortality of the “self” [ya in Russian] of an individual and of his reasonable consciousness. It is the animal personality of a person which perishes with the end of earthly life, and belief in it and its needs causes needless despair, exasperation, and fear of death. Reasonable consciousness shows the path to love and the loving relationship to the world which reunifies the “self” to God and assures its immortality.

204Sa v 22t, vol. XVII, p. 130.


Although the word “soul” is used only four times in the text of On Life, and quite peripherally at that, it is clear that soul is also synonymous with “self,” if for no other reason than the fact that the meaning of life, which is described earlier in Appendix II and elsewhere as found in a person’s immortal reasonable consciousness, is “written in unerasable characters in the soul of a person.” Obviously a soul cannot be mortal if it contains immortal characteristics, such as the “unerasable” meaning of life and the immortal reasonable consciousness. Whether Tolstoy uses “self,” “soul,” or “special relationship to the world” to describe the immortal part of an individual, his meaning and message in On Life are unmistakable.

While Tolstoy’s philosophy of life had fully matured with the completion of On Life in 1887, his many other essays, mostly on particular subjects and events, and the other fiction works which he wrote in the last twenty-eight years of his life also reflected this mature philosophy as well as the didactic purpose of his literature. The Death of Ivan Ilyich (1886), a short novel written during the years 1881-1886, is regarded as one of his best works from an artistic point of view. It was Lev Nikolaevich’s first major work of fiction since Anna Karenina in 1878, and its publication without much trouble from the censor signaled the return of his literary art to the public at large.

The idea for The Death of Ivan Ilyich originated with the death in 1881 of a Tula district court prosecutor, Ivan Ilyich Mechnikov, with whom Tolstoy was personally acquainted. Before his death Mechnikov talked about the fruitlessness of the life he had led, and his thoughts were passed to Tolstoy via the widow and Tolstoy’s daughter Tatiana (Kuzminskaya). The story of the death of Tolstoy’s fictional jurist, Ivan Ilyich Golovin, is certainly a study in the realism of a physically horrible death from probably cancer, but the death is made more horrible from a spiritual point of view with Golovin’s gradual feeling that his “all very nice, but not very good” life lived in accordance with all the nice and proper Russian gentry societal normatives and blessed with that society’s rewards was in fact a life wasted.

All of Ivan Ilyich’s interest in life had been focused on his work and the power which the honorable position of jurist wielded in society. It was that which had sustained him until his sickness and the unmistakable feeling of his approaching death brought him to the terrible despair and fear of a painful departure from this good and pleasant life into oblivion. In Chapter 6, in scenes reminiscent of that in War and Peace where Prince Andrei dreams of death (it) coming through a door which he could not hold closed against it, Ivan Ilyich cannot free himself of visions of death (it) staring him in the face despite his efforts to erect screens against it. The difference is that Prince Andrei’s dream of death occurs a few days before he dies, after he has come to terms with the meaning of life, while Ivan Ilyich’s visions of death occur before he is bedridden at home, at least several weeks before his death, and long before he finally comes to terms with the meaning of life. In this way death appears to Prince Andrei as merely an opening to a not-to-be-feared natural transition, while for Ivan Ilyich death appears as a haunting and frightful vision of future annihilation.

As terrifying as his affliction and grim prospects were to Ivan Ilyich, except for his servant Gerasim and his young son Vasya, those around him treated his approaching death like a “casual

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208 In a letter of 17 October 1889 to V. V. Mainov, a geographer, man of letters, and expert in Esperanto, Tolstoy declared that he considered In What Is My Faith? and On Life as his two most important works. See Pss v 91t, vol. 64, p. 317.

unpleasantness." In Chapter 9 Ivan Ilyich is crying and lamenting not only his endless physical pain, but especially his state of helplessness and loneliness, which is alleviated only by the love and empathy demonstrated by the devotion of Gerasim and Vasya. He feels the absence, abandonment, and cruelty of God and of people. In a conversation with "the voice of his soul," he first has the feeling that he might have lived wrongly, but he explains that he wants not to suffer, but to live as before, "well and pleasantly." At the end of the conversation, after asking why all the suffering and for what purpose, Ivan Ilyich decides that something is wrong, but he still can't accept that he has lived his life in vain, and he rejects the idea that he has not lived his life as he should have.

Four weeks later his suffering is worse, but it is the spiritual suffering which torments Ivan Ilyich most of all. In Chapter 11, three days before his death, the "dreadful truth which had come to him in the night" is confirmed in his mind as he observes his wife, his daughter, his doctor, his servant, all those around him except for Gerasim and Vasya. He sees himself and his life in them, and he knows that "all of it was a huge, horrible deception which is covering over life and death." At the end of the short novel, in Chapter 12 Ivan Ilyich sees that his suffering is also causing those around him to suffer, including his wife for the first time. He feels love and sympathy for them, asks their forgiveness for his wasted life, and realizes that dying is what he ought to do. The fear of death evaporates, and despite the continuing physical agony, Ivan Ilyich sees the light of God. He then realizes that his selfless love and sympathy for others as well as the final confession in his soul that he had lived wrongly are his salvation.

At about the same time in the same year that he finished writing The Death of Ivan Ilyich, Tolstoy also completed How Much Land Does A Man Need? (1886), a parable of death in which the hard-working and efficient peasant Pakhom is done in by his own greed for land, needing only the space to bury his body to answer the question in the title. Although The Death of Ivan Ilyich is written much more darkly and with a much grimmer realism than How Much Land Does A Man Need?, it is also much more hopeful in its message that whatever the obstacles, it is never too late to save your wasted life through the only way to reunion with God and salvation, the acknowledgement of life wrongly lived and devotion to selfless love and service to others. This now mature theme of the meaning of life in Lev Nikolaevich’s literature was still to be repeated in further works of fiction and essays, but its presentation in The Death of Ivan Ilyich stands out like a small beam of starlight in the black void of space.

In the year 1886 Tolstoy also completed his essay on the problems of poverty in society, What...
Then Must We Do? (1882-1886). He began this tract when, as a volunteer census taker in the Moscow census of 1882, he was appalled at the conditions he witnessed in the Moscow slums. Lev Nikolaevich begins his essay with very naturalistic descriptions of the life of the poor which he found there before he launches into his remedies, the abolition of the concepts of money and private property, which allow the exploitation of the labor of the poor by the rich, as well as a return to a system of communal subsistence farming. He decides that people, himself included, should consume as little of the product of the labor of others as possible. They should take care of their own needs by themselves and then dedicate their lives to the love and service of others. He decries the so-called advancements of modern civilization and advocates a passive resistance to government in consonance with his belief in non-resistance to evil by force, the doctrine of Christian anarchy which he had previously enunciated in In What Is My Faith? In Chapter 39, the next-to-last chapter near the end of the essay, Tolstoy made his all-too-true prediction of what would happen if Russian society did not right the injustices of poverty within it:

“A workers' revolution with the horrors of destruction and murders not only threatens us, but we have already been living on it for about thirty years, and only while we have postponed its explosion somehow by various tricks of time. Such is the situation in Europe, and such is the situation for us, and even worse for us because there are no safety valves. The classes which oppress the people, except for the tsar, do not have any justification now in the eyes of our people. They maintain everything in their position by force, cleverness, and opportunism, that is, craftiness, but the hate in the worst representatives of the people and the contempt for us in the best grows with every year.”

In the mid and late 1880’s Lev Nikolaevich also returned to writing drama, a genre which he had tested earlier in the 1860’s with plays based on social and political satire, A Contaminated Family (1864) and The Nihilist (1866). Now he decided to write plays with moral themes designed for a people's theater. He produced a comedy The First Distiller (1886), based on his short story The Imp and the Crust (1886), which promoted the virtue of temperance and the corruption of peasants by the excessive consumption of liquor. During the same year he also finished his best known play, The Power of Darkness (1886), a very grim tragedy of peasant society based on an actual case of Tula Province in which the evil of a crime of murder continues to produce evil and even more horrible murder in its wake. Despite the repulsive dark actions of main characters, including the murder of a child described in a stark naturalistic manner, Tolstoy shows their
human aspects in deft realistic portraits with a final message of moral atonement for evil and God’s forgiveness and mercy. The subtitle of the work, Once a Claw Is Caught, the Whole Bird Is Lost, suggests the moral of the story that evil, once unleashed by the immoral or criminal actions of people, cannot be controlled as it destroys all it touches and reproduces evil forever unless the chain is broken by forgiveness and love. Despite the initial approval of Alexander III, the play was banned by the fickle tsar until 1895, when his successor Nicholas II allowed its opening. The Power of Darkness became a great success in France after its first performance in Paris in 1888 with the support of Emile Zola.

The grimness of The Power of Darkness and indeed the seriousness and sometimes pessimism of Lev Nikolaevich’s search for the meaning of life should not be allowed to conceal his wit and sense of humor. This is nowhere more apparent than in the contrast between The Power of Darkness and the comedy he wrote not long after, The Fruits of Enlightenment (1889-1890). This play, a farce which satirized Russian gentry society of the city and the popularity of spiritualism at the time, featured a long cast of characters based on family, friends, peasants, and other recognizable real people. It also presented the real-life issues of the peasants’ need for land and the fecklessness of Russian high society, intellectuals, and of course pseudo-scientists, one of Tolstoy’s favorite targets for criticism. The Fruits of Enlightenment was first presented, with the active participation of Lev Nikolaevich’s family and friends, at Yasnya Polyana on 30 December 1889, during a winter when the Tolstoys remained at their country estate rather than return to their house in the Khamovniki section of Moscow as was their custom.

Tolstoy’s ever more fervent concentration on religion and the true meaning of life after 1880 led to increased efforts on his part to change his lifestyle in accordance with his beliefs. He had ceased to drink alcohol, stopped smoking, and had become a vegetarian in addition to his regular habit of physical labor, preferably outdoors. These healthful changes to his life were reflected in essays he wrote such as Why Do People Stupefy Themselves? (1890), which preached against the evils of drinking, smoking, and taking drugs, and The First Step (1892), which extolled the benefits of vegetarianism while it decried the evils of gluttony as well as the unnecessary and cruel killing of animals for food and its morally deleterious effects on people. Other earnest efforts, especially those concerned with divesting himself of property and wealth as he had preached in What Then Must We Do? led to strenuous discord within his family, especially with Sofya Andreevna, when they produced, as they often did, obstacles to solving the practical economic problems of managing an estate responsible for the livelihood of Lev Nikolaevich’s large family and others dependent on his literary and estate income.

In 1891 Tolstoy resolved the conflict between his beliefs and the practical necessity of supporting his family in the future by a compromise. He renounced the copyrights to all of his works published after 1880, making them public domain, except for The Death of Ivan Ilyich (1886), which he had previously given to his wife, Sofya Andreevna. The copyrights to all of his works published before 1881 were also assigned to his wife. In addition he divided all of the

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218 Sa v 22t, vol. XI, pp. 492-495.

219 Sa v 22t, vol. XI, p. 495.

220 Pas v 91t, vol. 66, pp. 47-48. Tolstoy’s letter of 16 September 1891 to the editors of Russkiye vedomosti and Novoe vremya announced his renunciation of copyrights to his post-1880 works. It was published in those newspapers on 19 September 1891. The exception for The Death of Ivan Ilyich was not listed in this letter.
money and property which he owned, including his home at Yasnaya Polyana, his house in Moscow, other estates at Nikolskoye, Ovsyannikovo, Grinyovka, and his lands in Samara among his family. Lev Nikolaevich had been increasingly worried and sometimes depressed by his failure to make his personal life conform to his religious beliefs, and his accumulated wealth was a source of embarrassment and frustration for him. He had been accused of hypocrisy and phariseism in journal articles, and was hurt by being called “the Yasnaya Polyana Tartuffe” in critical letters. In a diary note of 11 February 1891, he described his struggle and the condition of his soul:

“... I am a pharisee, but not in the way that they criticize me. In that I am innocent. And this teaches me. But in the way that I, thinking and affirming that I live before God for the sake of good, because good is good, I really live by worldly fame to such a degree that I have clogged up my soul with worldly fame so much that I cannot reach God. I read newspapers and journals looking for my name. I listen to a conversation, and I wait when it is about me. I have so clogged up my soul that I cannot dig through to God, to a life of good for the sake of good. But I have to. Every day I say that now I don’t want to live for the sake of personal desires, for worldly fame here, but I want to live for the sake of love always and everywhere. But I live for my desires now and for fame here.

I will cleanse my soul. Once I have cleansed and dug down to the core, I will feel the possibility of living for the sake of good, without worldly fame. Help me, Father. ...”

Later in the same year, as the compromise with his wife and family on the disposition of his wealth was close to being realized, Tolstoy had the following thoughts and feelings in a diary note dated 14 July 1891:

“...a conversation with my wife, everything on the same subject, about the renunciation of the copyrights on my works. Again the same failure to understand me: ‘I’m obliged for the sake of the children...’ She doesn’t understand, and the children don’t understand, as they spend money, that every ruble expended by them and acquired through the books is suffering and shame to me. But shame aside, why weaken that effect that the preaching of the truth might have? Evidently it has to be like that. And the truth will do its job without me.”

As Tolstoy’s mature religious beliefs and his efforts to conform to them were a source of continual friction between the famous author and his wife and family, who had to confront the more practical and earthly concerns which he disdained, so too were his anarchic concepts of Christian conscience sources of conflict between him and the Russian government, or indeed any government. In 1893 Tolstoy completed the magisterial work The Kingdom Of God Is Within You, which serves as his detailed treatise on the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force and the concept of Christian anarchy as they specifically apply to the individual believer in Christianity and his relationship to governments of all types. Lev Nikolaevich worked on this long essay during the years 1890-1893, when he was also occupied with the cause of famine relief in Russia. He had

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221Pss v 91t, vol. 51, pp. 114-115. This is from a diary note of 25 December 1890.

222Pss v 91t, vol. 52, p. 7.

223Pss v 91t, vol. 52, p. 44.
originally intended to write a preface to the translation of A Catechism of Non-resistance by Adin Ballou, an American follower of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and advocate of Tolstoy's concept of non-resistance to evil by force, but his effort quickly turned into a much larger work.\textsuperscript{224}

The Kingdom of God Is Within You was, of course, forbidden by the tsarist censor in Russia, who described it as "the most dangerous book of all those that ever had to be banned,"\textsuperscript{225} and its appearance led to the start of increased persecution of Lev Nikolaevich and especially his associates. The first Russian and German editions thus appeared in Berlin and Stuttgart respectively in early 1894. Two English editions also came out in London in early 1894, but it was not until 1911 that an almost complete edition was allowed to be published in Russia by Sofya Andreevna. A complete edition of The Kingdom of God Is Within You did not appear in Russia until 1957 in volume 28 of Tolstoy's Complete Collection of Works (Pss).\textsuperscript{226}

In the Kingdom of God Is Within You, the title of which comes from the Biblical verse in the Gospel of Luke (17:20-21), Tolstoy takes his theme from the teaching of Christ that moral progress in the world is possible only on the level of the individual. Setting aside Christ's injunction to the Pharisees on rendering to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's, Lev Nikolaevich contends that governments are essentially immoral in that they exist only for the advantage of the rich and powerful, and they persecute the masses through the use of force in wars, an unjust system of forced justice, and the collection of taxes. Passive civil disobedience and the formation of a public opinion are the only answers for effectively changing the government, but only by living according to their individual Christian consciences can people truly exert influence. The freedom of all could be achieved only by each liberating himself individually by living a life of love and selfless service according to the teaching of Jesus Christ. Tolstoy's timeless Christian themes of salvation and moral progress only on the individual level and non-violent resistance to evil in The Kingdom of God Is Within You were, as he anticipated, received with doubts as to their practicality. In a world always obsessed with greater social and economic progress led by political organizations in which individuals are enjoined to surrender their great individual moral potential for the supposed security of group social, political, and military organization inevitably based on the lowest common denominators among them, Tolstoy knew he was going against the grain of most political, social, and even scientific thought, just as Christ knew some nineteen hundred years before.\textsuperscript{227}

Lev Nikolaevich was convinced that the answer to a better life for people on earth was not be found in seeking changes in government or organization. In Chapter 9 he notes that although living according to the Christian conception of life is the only way life can truly be improved, many

\textsuperscript{224}Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 333.

\textsuperscript{225}Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 366. This information was relayed to Tolstoy in a letter by N. N. Strakhov of 29 October 1893 as the censor banned even a French translation of the essay.

\textsuperscript{226}Pss v 91t, vol. 28, pp. 367-373.

\textsuperscript{227}The ideas expressed in The Kingdom of God Is Within You certainly seemed to be lost in the cataclysmic history of the twentieth century which followed Tolstoy. But they did take root even in some political movements. M. K. Ghandi was greatly influenced by Tolstoy's ideas in the work (Ghandi, An Autobiography (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 137-138), and he and Lev Nikolaevich maintained a correspondence in 1909-1910 before Tolstoy's death (Pss v 91t: vol. 80, pp. 110-112; vol. 81, p. 248; vol. 82, pp.140-141, 264).
people consider this way too slow, and so they look for the government to provide the improved conditions of material life which they desire. These efforts never lead to real improvement because more reliance on and obedience to the government only increases the suffering and evil under which people must live. As Tolstoy reminds us in Chapter 10, “The wicked always dominate the good, and they always coerce them.” Revolution is also an unacceptable method of improving the human condition because all revolutions are violent, and not only do they not change government oppression, they sometimes increase it.

Indeed in Chapter 2 Lev Nikolaevich criticized the religious and the secular, the conservative and the radical elements in his country for their reliance on force to battle one another for control of the Russian government. The anti-Christian views of all these sides could only lead to destruction. But he also blamed the “fashionable” and “freethinking” foreign critics for their condescending attitudes toward Christianity and the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force, especially their view that such philosophy was impractical in and inconsistent with the progressive industrial democracies of western Europe. Tolstoy believed as Christ taught, that the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force is necessary because mankind cannot agree on what is evil.

In addition Tolstoy held in Chapter 4 that positivism, socialism, communism or any doctrine based on the universal brotherhood of mankind were similarly useless for improving the human condition. Such supposedly scientific social theories and doctrines could not evoke the sentiment of people, and the universal brotherhood of mankind might only be brought about as a consequence of love and service to God on the part of individuals extending to include everything which exists. These ideas of social and governmental organization could have no connection with Christianity since Christian teaching was concerned only with saving the individual human soul, not with the salvation of humanity or a particular group. Only within the individual human soul is found the potential for true selfless love and the vital link to God. The kingdom of God is located within a person, not outside.

Also in Chapter 4 Lev Nikolaevich repeated his denunciations of the vain theories of life, that of the primacy of the individual or animal personality and that of the primacy of the civilized pagan social group. The divine theory is the only path to the true meaning of life. It is that of those who recognize that the eternal source of life is God, and that the individual serves God only through love and selflessness which is not based on personal or group welfare. Tolstoy defended himself against critics who contended that he was preaching the unattainable, the moral perfection of the individual. He countered this by saying that every improvement in the moral condition of an individual is important progress, regardless of the level of highness or lowness. It is the struggle toward unattainable perfection within every human soul which gives life meaning.

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228 Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 192.

229 See Chapter 8, Pss v 91t, vol. 28, pp. 155-156.

230 Pss v 91t, vol. 28, pp. 25-39. See especially p. 37 where Tolstoy complains that critics accuse him of ignorance of the history of all the failed attempts to apply the principles of the Sermon On the Mount to life and of failing to appreciate the full significance of the high level of culture of European humanity “with its Krupp cannons, smokeless powder, colonization of Africa, rule of Ireland, parliament, journalism, strikes, constitution, and Eiffel Tower.”

231 Pss v 91t, vol. 28, pp. 81-86.
“...and Christ gave his teaching, knowing that absolute perfection can never be attained, but that striving for complete, infinite perfection will continually increase the welfare of people, and in this way this blessedness can be increased to infinity.”  

But he also cautioned against religion confusing the ideal of moral perfection with the establishment of rules for it. Dire consequences could result, even for Christianity.

“Christian teaching seems to exclude the possibility of life only when people accept the indication of an ideal as the establishment of a rule. Only then do those demands which were introduced by the teaching of Christ present themselves as destructive of life. For to the contrary these requirements are the only ones which make true life possible. Without these standards true life would be impossible.”

Indeed Tolstoy believed that Christian churches often pervert the teaching of Christ in order to maintain their power over the masses because they are dependent on them for economic support. In Chapter 3 he considered that, although there was probably no other Christian church as closely allied with as despotic a regime as the Russian Orthodox Church was with the Russian tsarist government, the other Christian churches, whether they were Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or any other, still followed the same false path as the Russian church. As he declared previously in works such as In What Is My Faith? and On Life, he reiterated that these churches demand the adherence of their followers to dogma, superstitions, and traditions which deviate from the real message of Christ. The misunderstanding of Christ’s teaching which results from these false practices produces a life-destroying contradiction for individual believers in Christianity between nominally accepting Christ’s teaching, yet making no effort to change one’s life in accord with its principles.

Near the end of Chapter 10, Lev Nikolaevich relates the parable of a psychiatrist with his patients from an insane asylum whom he has convinced to take a walk with him in a nearby town. The farther they walked in town, the more frightened the patients became, huddling closer and closer to their doctor until he finally agreed to their fervent pleas to take them back to the known and familiar surroundings of the asylum. Such is the way most nominal Christians react to the true message of Christ, preferring the known and familiar, yet irrational, empty, and meaningless life they are leading instead of a commitment to the selfless love and service to God which alone offers them the real freedom of the Kingdom of God. As Tolstoy says at the end of Chapter 11 to those who want assurance that the Kingdom of God will come about:

“All that we can know is what we who comprise humanity must do and what we must not do so that the Kingdom of God comes about. But this we all know. And each person only needs to

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232 Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 77.

233 Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 78.


235 Pss v 91t, vol. 28, pp. 86-105 (Chapter 5).
begin to do what we must do, and to cease doing that which we must not do, as each of us only needs to live with all that light which is within us to bring about right away that promised Kingdom of God for which the heart of every person yearns."^{236}

In the concluding Chapter 12 of The Kingdom of God Is Within You, Tolstoy takes up the discussion of individual free will in the currents of history, one very similar to that which he had begun in War and Peace. He does not change his original view, which he established in the novel and its epilogues, that a person is caught up in currents of history which he cannot control, but importantly his freedom is in inverse relation to his position in society. He is not nearly as free as he thinks he is, but he needs the illusion of much freedom to negotiate his life in society and in the world, doing as much good as he is able to do. To this Lev Nikolaevich adds that whatever a person’s position in life, however oppressive or influential the burdens he must bear, whether those burdens are due or not due to decisions or choices he has made, the first and most important task is to recognize the truth:

"The freedom of a person is not that he can commit arbitrary acts independently of the progress of life and the influences already acting on him, but it is that he can make of himself a free and happy participant in the eternal and limitless work of God or the life of the world if he recognizes the truth which is revealed to him and confesses it. Or he can make himself its slave and be violently and excruciatingly dragged where he does not want to go if he does not recognize this truth."^{237}

That truth is to live as a person is intended to live, which is according to the law and will of God, to spend one’s life in love and selfless service to others and to the world as a creature called out of unconsciousness by God. The duty to God comes before all the other duties, but Lev Nikolaevich concedes that the influences and burdens on a person may be too oppressive. An individual may not have the moral strength to resist placing considerations of family, relatives, subordinates, superiors, or even more base personal interests ahead of those of God. But he reminds us that:

"There is one thing, and only one thing in which you are free and all-powerful. It is that which is given to you in life, as all the rest are beyond your power. This is to recognize the truth and to profess it."^{238}

This is the one thing which makes the difference between a life wasted and a life fulfilled. For anyone, regardless of their station in life, this is the real and true borderline, the frontier which it is never too early and never too late to cross during earthly life. Tolstoy closed his essay with his short definition of the meaning of life sandwiched between two Biblical verses from the New Testament about the Kingdom of God:

"‘Seek the kingdom of God and His truth, and all the rest will accrue to you.’ [Matthew 6:33]"

^{236}Pss v 9lt, vol. 28, p. 220.

^{237}Pss v 9lt, vol. 28, p. 281.

^{238}Pss v 9lt, vol. 28, p. 292.
The only meaning of the life of a person is to serve the world in cooperation with the establishment of the kingdom of God. This service can only be accomplished by the recognition of the truth and its profession by each individual person.

‘The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. Neither will they say: Here it is! or There it is! For behold the kingdom of God is within you.’ [Luke 17:20-21]

If Tolstoy’s views of the evils of governmental and societal organization and his remedy of Christian anarchy as expressed in The Kingdom of God Is Within You were to be criticized, undoubtedly the most valid point of reproach would be that he generalizes his home case of Russian tsarist despotism to all governments of the world. Although Lev Nikolaevich was certainly one of the most well-read and well-informed persons of his era, at the time he wrote The Kingdom of God Is Within You, he had not been out of Russia for thirty-two years, and he was not ever to leave again. He could thus be properly cited for being out-of-touch and failing to give enough credit to the progress and development of democracy in western Europe and America. But like many other criticisms of his philosophy in this long, but cogent essay, Tolstoy anticipated such an argument. In Chapter 7 he declared that the only differences between a despotic government like that in Russia and constitutional monarchies and republics like those in west Europe and America are that under despotism authority is concentrated in a small number of oppressors and their violence is cruder, while in the western democracies the authority is divided among a great number of oppressors and their violence is less crude. But the principle of weakening the oppressed to the advantage of the oppressors to the furthest extreme is always the same.

Also in May 1893 Tolstoy read about a speech Emile Zola had made at the banquet of the General Association of Students in Paris in which Zola had recommended faith in science and work as an alternative to the mysticism of the religious tendencies of some young people. Soon after Lev Nikolaevich received copies of Zola’s speech and a reply to Zola in the newspaper Le Gaulois by the French novelist and dramatist Alexandre Dumas (fils, 1824-1895), illegitimate son of the famous romance novelist and author of La Dame aux Camélias (1852) and Le Demi-Monde (1855), among other works. Tolstoy wrote a response to the two articles, a short essay which

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Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 293.

Pss v 91t, vol. 28, p. 135.


Dumas-fils as a popular writer of novels and plays featured moral themes in his works, which largely concerned social problems and especially love and marriage. Such was his most famous work, La Dame aux Camélias, which is known in English as Camille. Giuseppe Verdi based his opera La Traviata (1853) on the play. Other famous Dumas-fils works include the play, Le Fils naturel [The Natural Son] (1858), and the semi-autobiographical novel, L’Affaire Clémenceau (1867). Although Dumas-fils was a realist, not a naturalist, his works had much in common thematically with Zola’s naturalism. Of course his belief in the moral didactic purpose of literature gave Dumas-fils very much in common with Tolstoy.
he called Non-acting (1893), and he incorporated the texts of Zola's speech and the Dumas-fils reply into it. Non-acting was published in Russia in September 1893 after some skirmishes with the censor, and a French translation was published in Paris in La Revue des revues the next month. Tolstoy was very unhappy with the translation, and so he rewrote the entire article himself in French with the title Le Non-agir (1893).243

What interested Lev Nikolaevich in Zola's speech and the Dumas-fils response he called "very interesting letters about the spirit of the time, about how it will end and what to do," and it resulted in him saying that Dumas-fils "sees the way out of all these contradictions into which we have been caught up," but that Zola is "very stupid."244 They concerned the very crux of his philosophy of the meaning of life. He began by criticizing Zola for his faith in scientific progress and the routine of work to solve the problems of mankind. Tolstoy reminded that the Chinese philosopher Lao-tse advised people to follow the way of the tao, a word meaning variously reason, way, and virtue, in order to live a happy life. But to reach the tao, people had to practice non-acting, that is, not doing unnecessary things, for Lao-tse believed that the problems of humanity arose from doing unnecessary things rather than from neglecting to do necessary things.

In his speech Zola preached against the younger generation returning to religious beliefs, reaching toward an ideal, or dreaming of eternity. He was "convinced that the only faith which can save us is the belief in accomplished effort."245 Tolstoy questioned what effort, what work, what science are we to have faith in, as he considered that religion is generally regarded as the science of the past, and science is the religion of the present. The greater part of religion is the superstition of the past, and the greater part of science is the superstition of today, so it is dangerous for a person to dedicate his life to either one. Thus work or effort on behalf of either religion or science was not necessarily either a vice or a virtue. In fact Tolstoy believed that Zola, in his speech to the students, was presenting work to them as a moral anesthetic, much like tobacco and wine are used to stupefy people and blind them to the disorder and emptiness of their lives.

In contrast Dumas-fils' reply to Zola greatly impressed Lev Nikolaevich. In his letter to Le Gaulois, Dumas-fils began by asserting that each generation believes that it has new ideas and new passions which no one has ever had or thought of before, and that they will change the world. In fact this is only an attack of growing fever which will change as age and experience change the new generation. The true necessity for life is hope, as much as or even more than knowledge. As much freedom as possible, especially in the area of philosophy, is also necessary to enable people to seek a happier condition. People fear death and uncertainty, but they always seek hope and an ideal. Dumas-fils admitted that others may dispute these truths, for all have a right to freely seek truth. But people are in the wrong when they use force, which is cruel, but most of all it is useless, it prevents true solutions to problems, and it represents the worst faults of civilization.

Dumas-fils thus considered that Zola's advice to the students was not sufficient. He believed that people must have an ideal to believe in and to strive for, for the human soul is not satisfied with merely work for the daily bread or earthly material achievements. He concluded by saying

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244 Pss v 91t, vol. 66, pp. 350-352. This is from a letter to his son Lyova and daughter Masha of 10 June 1893.

245 Pss v 91t, vol. 29, pp. 181-182.
optimistically that he was convinced that, despite many setbacks, mankind was forming a spiritual
movement with an irresistible desire toward brotherhood and love.

Lev Nikolaevich then commented that Zola fails where Dumas-fils succeeds. Humanity cannot
be led by an external self-acting force such as science or religion, which works in the established
order of things, to accomplish beneficial change. Dumas-fils knows change is possible only when
people realize that they must do it themselves through love. Tolstoy calls Dumas-fils prophetic,
but then he wonders what has prevented humanity from seeing the answer before. The
command to love God and your neighbor was given by Moses three thousand years ago, and the
message has been repeated. Christian principles, including selfless love, are a well-known
secret. But still mankind continues to march toward the abyss of self-destruction. Tolstoy then
says that the reason is that humanity can neither decide to follow the law of love in life nor to
abandon the idea. People do as Zola advises, they concentrate on work and routine, and they
don’t pause to think about the purpose of life.

Tolstoy then reminds that Jesus said that repentance, which means a change in the conception
of life, is necessary for each person. This means that people must cease the pursuit of personal,
familial, or national welfare because this can only be obtained at the expense of others. They
must live individual lives of selfless love and service to God, thus establishing the Kingdom of God
within. People must think of this ideal, which Zola considers supernatural, church dogma, or the
unexplained, but the ideal has none of those characteristics. This ideal, even though it doesn’t
exist in our lives, is natural and explainable, for it is the only thing which we know truly and with
complete certainty. The Christian ideal is the only thing which makes sense of our lives, the only
way we know anything at all. It is when we do not accept its guidance that we increase our
difficulties, problems, and woes in life.

Lev Nikolaevich then declares that this Christian ideal is in our conscience. But people often live
like wild beasts because the organization of their life does not correspond to their conscience, and
this organization exists because the constant routine of their life dulls their perception and gives
them no time to think. In addition the general acceptance of Christian principles now does not
provide any excuse to explain away oppression. Only a mind-numbing and conscience-dulling
routine of work allows people to accept the oppression of others, and this is precisely what Zola
was advocating to the younger generation. To counter this Tolstoy believed that people must do
as Jesus Christ and Lao-tse counseled, that is, to stop what they are doing and think about the
results of what they are creating in their lives. After this non-acting, they could put into practice
what their Christian conscience demanded, and not do anything else. Then the change foretold
by Alexandre Dumas-fils and others could come about sooner rather than later. Tolstoy closed
his essay Non-acting in a fashion similar to the way he closed The Kingdom of God Is Within You,
with Matthew 6:33, “Seek the Kingdom of God and His truth, and all the rest will accrue to you.”

Evidence of Tolstoy’s pessimism and doubts, even to the point of terror, over his ability to live a
meaningful life recurred in his Notes of a Madman, which he probably began in 1884, although it
was published for the first time in 1912, two years after his death in 1910. In Notes of a

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246 Pss v 91t, vol. 29, p. 201. It should be noted that Tolstoy’s essay in
French, Le Non-agir, did not include the texts of Zola’s speech to the students
and the Dumas-fils reply as did his essay in Russian, Nedelanie [Non-acting].
Otherwise the two versions of the same essay differed only somewhat in
arrangement. For the text of Non-acting in Russian, see Pss v 91t, vol. 29, pp.
173-201. For the text of Le Non-agir, see Pss v 91t, vol. 90, pp. 22-44.

Madman, which was based on his own experience of the Arzamas Horror in 1869, the feelings of terror experienced by the narrator, a member of Russian country gentry, occur not just for one night in a hotel in Arzamas and during the following day's trip, but they continue for another night in a hotel in Moscow and even later on after the narrator returns home. These feelings of terror are described as "red, white, and square," "something tearing within that could not be torn apart," and "tormentingly, tormentingly dry and malignant, I didn't feel a drop of goodness in myself, but only a regular, quiet malice toward myself and toward that which had created me." They are explained by Tolstoy as the fear of death after living a meaningless, incomprehensible life, a lack of faith and belief in God, and angry demands for answers from a god who is supposed to exist and to care, but instead abandons his good and valuable creations to evil, obscurity, torment, despair, deafening neglect, complete and utter annihilation. Notes of a Madman, short and unfinished as it is, is Tolstoy's pessimism run supreme. But its ending is subtle, perhaps not really unfinished. The "madness" of the gentry narrator begins as his mood changes, fear of death fades away, the tearing apart within him subsides, and a light illuminates him as he becomes concerned about the beggars at the church door and gives them all the money he had. Love again is the meaning and purpose of life, the vital link between earthly beings and heavenly God.

A clue as to what Lev Nikolaevich had in mind for Notes of a Madman is that he referred to this work as "Notes of an Unmadman" in diary references to it in March and April of 1884. He began his references on 30 March 1884 with another account of a horror of sleeplessness filled with grief and doubts which was alleviated with prayer. Tolstoy was thus writing his short story and describing his own experiences of horror by this time, but his references to it as "Notes of an Unmadman" leave no doubt that the madman who experienced the horrors had found the answer and relief he had been searching for, and he was no longer mad except in the eyes of society because he was now giving away his money to the poor. What Tolstoy was writing about in Notes of a Madman/Unmadman was not only reflected in his own experiences of horror caused by doubts about the meaning of life, but also in his and the Madman's solution. At this time in his life Lev Nikolaevich was causing some consternation with his wife and family with his renunciation of his copyrights on much of his work (eventually that published after 1880 with the exception of The Death of Ivan Ilyich) and his attempts to rid himself of his worldly wealth. By early 1887 there is evidence that at least a draft of Notes of a Madman existed as Tolstoy referred to it in a letter to his secretary, V. G. Chertkov.

At the end of the year 1896 and the beginning of 1897, Lev Nikolaevich was still thinking about his Notes of a Madman and his continuing doubts and pessimism. He said as much in a diary note of 26 December 1896:

"I'm still not writing anything, but it's as if I'm coming back to life by thoughts. The devil has still not left me. Today I thought about Notes of a Madman. Most important: I understood my filiality..."
to God -- brotherhood and the relationship to the whole world have changed."\textsuperscript{251}

Then on 5 January 1897 he explained a bit more about what he wanted to do in Notes of a Madman:

"...(For Notes of a Madman or for the drama: Despair because of the madness and calamitousness of life. Salvation from this despair in the recognition of God and one's filiality to Him. The recognition of filiality is the recognition of brotherhood. The recognition of the brotherhood of people and the brutal, atrocious, unbrotherly way of life justified by people -- inevitably leads to the recognition of oneself or the whole world as mad.

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So for Tolstoy and the madman of Notes of a Madman, the real madness is a life lived without love for fellow human beings and without the recognition that the filiality of humankind to God is recognized only in love. Further "the unbrotherly way of life justified by people" can lead society to call mad those who are making their lives meaningful by showing love to their fellows in ways such as that which rescued the Madman from his horror, giving his money away to the poor. Lev Nikolaevich's art in Notes of a Madman, a short story created and written in the span of the years 1869-1897 or perhaps longer, again was telling his life.

Lev Nikolaevich returned to his favorite theme of spiritual awakening, the discovery of the meaning of life, and spiritual redemption again in his short story Master and Man (1894-1895).\textsuperscript{253} Although not as naturalistic, this story has much in common with The Death of Ivan Ilyich in that a rich merchant and landowner, Vasily Andreyich Brekhunov, who has lived a life of greed, selfishness, and fraud, faces death from exposure in a snowstorm, yet at the end he finally sees the light of God as he dies while saving the life of his good servant Nikita. Again Tolstoy reminds that death is not to be feared, nor is it necessarily a bad thing. But it is never too early, as with the good peasant Nikita and his long and sometimes suffering life of love and faith, and it is never too late, as with the rich swindler Brekhunov at death's door, to discover the meaning of life and be spiritually redeemed.

A more complicated redemption of life which featured many more aspects of his mature philosophy was created by Tolstoy in his third great novel, Resurrection (1899). He wrote this work, which underwent two unfinished versions and six finished versions as well as many variants during its long period of gestation, in the years 1889-1899.\textsuperscript{254} Finally Lev Nikolaevich's desire to

\textsuperscript{251}Pss v 91t, vol. 53, p. 128.

\textsuperscript{252}Pss v 91t, vol. 53, p. 129.

\textsuperscript{253}Master and Man was published without too much trouble from the censor in three places in March 1895: in the literary journal Northern Herald, in vol. 14 of Sofya Andreevna's Works of Count L. N. Tolstoy, and by Posrednik in a popular edition, which was corrected by Tolstoy one additional time. The Posrednik version is the authoritative one used in Pss v 91t. See Pss v 91t, vol. 29, pp. 375-378.

\textsuperscript{254}Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, pp. 461-463. In their commentary to Resurrection in 1983, L. N. Kuzina and K. I. Tyunkin emphasize that the many variants of parts of the novel contain stages and layers which are impossible to

117
submit the novel for publication so that he could donate its proceeds to finance the emigration to Canada of the Doukhobors, a religious minority being persecuted in Russia, caused him to call a halt to his revisions and declare the work finished.\textsuperscript{255} Resurrection suffered much from censorial deletions in its original 1899 Russian edition, which was first published serially in the journal Niva. At the same time, however, it was published uncensored in English and in Russian in Great Britain by Chertkov and later in many editions of many variants in other languages such as German and French. In 1918 it was first published in an uncensored Russian edition in Russia, but later corrections by Tolstoy did not appear in Russia until volumes 32-33 of the Pss in 1935. Even this authoritative edition did not contain all the variants, which were still being published in 1955.\textsuperscript{256} The best English edition is that published first in 1916 by Louise Maude of the 1899 original uncensored edition, later corrected by Tolstoy, with the Maude translation specifically authorized by him.\textsuperscript{257}

The basic story of Resurrection is recorded by Lev Nikolaevich in his diaries and letters as being suggested by his friend, a lawyer named A. F. Koni in 1887.\textsuperscript{258} But the same story of the seduction of a poor, but virtuous young girl at the hands of a selfish nobleman, her fall into prostitution, prison, and eventual redemption also contains autobiographical elements. P. I. Biryukov, Tolstoy’s close friend and biographer, records that Lev Nikolaevich admitted to him that among the incidents that tormented him about his earlier life before he was married were his affair

\textsuperscript{255}Pss v 91t, vol. 53, pp. 203, 210-211, 232. This is from his diary entries of 17 July 1898, 2 November 1898, and 18 December 1899 respectively. See also E. Ye. Zaydenshnur, Ye. S. Serebrovskaya, and V. A. Zhdanov, Opisanie rukopisey khudozhestvennykh proizvedeniy L. N. Tolstogo [Description of the Manuscripts of the Artistic Works of L. N. Tolstoy] (Moscow: Akademiya nauk, 1955), p. 370. Tolstoy’s decision to donate the proceeds of Resurrection to the Doukhobors was the second exception to his renunciation of control of all copyrights to his works after 1880. The first was that of The Death of Ivan Ilyich, which he gave to Sofya Andreevna.

\textsuperscript{256}E. Ye. Zaydenshnur et al, Opisanie rukopisey khudozhestvennykh proizvedeniy L. N. Tolstogo, pp. 370-424.

\textsuperscript{257}See Aylmer Maude, The Life of Tolstoy, Volume II, pp. 397-402, 421-422, 442-444. Maude reprints some of Tolstoy’s letters to him in the 1898-1906 period, and he details the difficulties encountered with Chertkov and with providing for all of the proceeds for the translation of Resurrection to go to the Doukhobor fund.

\textsuperscript{258}See for example Tolstoy’s letter to Koni of 15-31 May 1888 (Pss v 91t, vol. 64, pp. 172-173) about the story of Rosaliya On[n]i, and his diary notes of 6, 17, 27, 31 December 1889 (Pss v 91t, vol. 50, pp. 189, 193-196) concerning his writing of the “Koni story,” which is how he first referred to Resurrection. See also his letter dated June 1887 to his close friend and biographer P. I. Biryukov (Pss v 91t, vol. 64, pp. 55-56). See as well L. D. Opulskaya, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy: Materiali k biografii s 1886 po 1892 god (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), pp. 102-103, and the commentary by L. N. Ruzina and K. I. Tyunkin in Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, pp. 461-463, which cite Koni’s memoirs. See also N. K. Gudziy’s 1935 article on the history of the writing and publishing of Resurrection in Pss v 91t, vol. 33, especially pp. 329-334.
with a peasant girl from the village [presumably Aksinya Bazykina and his illegitimate son] and "the crime which I perpetrated with Gasha, the maid who lived in my aunt's house. She was innocent, I seduced her, they drove her out of the house, and she was ruined." This was confirmed in a different way by Sofya Andreevna, who wrote in her diary of 13 September 1898:

"...And I am tormented by the fact that L. N., an old man of seventy, describes the fornication scenes between the chambermaid and the officer with a special gusto, like a gastronome relishing tasty food. I know that L. N. in this scene is describing his own liaison with his sister's chambermaid in Pirogovo, for he told me about that himself in detail. Later I saw this Gasha, now already an old woman of almost seventy, as he himself pointed her out to me to my deep despair and disgust. I am tormented too that Nekhlyudov the hero is described as being transformed from a downfall to a state of grace, and I see Lev Nikolaevich himself in it, and this is the way he essentially sees himself too - but although he describes all these transformations very well in his books, he never achieves them in his life. While he was describing and telling people about these beautiful feelings of his, he was deeply moved by his own words, yet he went on as he always had, loving sweet food, and his bicycle, and horse-riding, and carnal love..."

In fact Sofya Andreevna was not only repelled by the story of Resurrection and its autobiographical relation to Lev Nikolaevich, but also by her husband’s support for the Doukhobor cause. In the same diary note of 13 September 1898, she wrote that in a conversation with Tolstoy, she told him:

"I cannot find sympathy in my heart for people who refuse military service, and by this force the poorest peasants to become soldiers in their place, and then moreover they demand millions of rubles to move them out of Russia...

I helped the cause of the starving in 1891, 1892, and also now - and I sympathized with them, worked myself for them, and gave them money. And now, if one is going to help someone with money, it should be only for our own humble peasants who are dying of hunger, and not for those arrogant revolutionaries, the Dukhobors."

Sofya Andreevna was always able to provide another perspective on the life of Lev Nikolaevich as she knew it, but despite the great autobiographical elements in Resurrection and the influence

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of Koni's story on the novel, the intrigue of a virtuous heroine born in needy circumstances and forced to overcome societal injustices and evils was not unique to Resurrection. It was a popular theme from at least the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, and Tolstoy certainly was aware, at least four years into the writing of the novel, that the story was also similar to that of Marguerite Gautier, the heroine of La Dame aux Camélias (1852), the famous novel and play by Alexander Dumas-fils, whose 1893 reply to Emile Zola had inspired Tolstoy's Non-acting, and to that of Violetta Valéry of Verdi's opera, La Traviata, which was based on the Dumas-fils works. In fact Lev Nikolaevich utilized the play itself in Resurrection as background for a decisive meeting between his hero Nekhlyudov and the coquettish, but scheming and deceitful Mariette, wife of a general and prominent member of Petersburg society (Part II, Chapter XXVIII).

Tolstoy's heroine in Resurrection, Katerina Mikhaylovna Maslova (also known as Katyusha, Lyubov, and Lyubka) is the victim of the self-centered Prince Dmitri Ivanich Nekhlyudov, the easily recognized alter ego of Lev Nikolaevich to which Sofya Andreevna was referring above in her commentary on her husband's life and his third great novel. Maslova, a servant in his aunts' house, was seduced and then forgotten by Nekhlyudov, and the baby which resulted from their relationship did not survive, as was the case with many illegitimate offspring of peasants at the time (nearly including Maslova herself as an infant - Part I, Chapter II). Her treatment by Nekhlyudov led Maslova to want to kill herself, as she considered Dmitri Ivanich the best of all the people that she knew, yet he had failed her. From then on Katerina Mikhaylovna ceased to believe in God and goodness, and in order to forget the evil of the world in which all persons lived only for themselves, she began to smoke and drink and have love affairs with men indiscriminately (Part I, Chapter XXXVII). Later she found that she could prove at least that she had some worth and power as an individual person and human being by using people, especially men, as they had used her (Part I, Chapters XLIII- XLIV).

It is this world of destructive people and the curative powers of nature or God which Lev Nikolaevich describes in his opening scene in Resurrection. In this way he sets the theme for the novel before the main characters Nekhlyudov and Maslova are introduced.

"No matter how people, some one hundred thousand gathered together in one small place, tried to disfigure that land on which they were huddled together, no matter how they paved the earth with stones so that nothing would grow on it, no matter how they scraped up every bit of protruding grass, no matter how they smoked it up with coal and oil, no matter how many trees they cut down, nor the fact that they had chased out all the animals and birds, - spring was still spring, even in the town.

The sun was warm, the grass revived and grew green everywhere where they had not scraped it away, not only on the medians of the boulevards, but also between the slabs of the paving stones, and the birch trees, the poplars, and the cherry trees were unfurling their gummy and fragrant leaves. The linden trees were filling up with their buds bursting out. The jackdaws,
sparrows, and pigeons were already happily preparing their nests for spring, and the flies buzzed along the walls heated by the sun. Glad were the plants, and the birds, and the insects, and the children. But the people - the big, grown-up people - did not cease deceiving and tormenting themselves and one another. The people considered that it was not this spring morning which was sacred and important, not this beauty of God’s world given for the good of all beings, a beauty conducive to peace, harmony, and love, but what was sacred and important to them was whatever they themselves had devised which would give them power over others.\textsuperscript{263}

Resurrection of life happens despite the destructive ways of human beings, and the means for the resurrection of Prince Nekhlyudov is his reacquaintance with a life which he had helped to bring down, that of Katyusha Maslova. It is not just by chance that Maslova, who had become a prostitute largely as a result of her rejection by Nekhlyudov, was known as Lyubov, also the Russian word for love. For Nekhlyudov she truly represents love (Part I, Chapter XV), and the prince discovers this and the meaning of life in a series of revelations in the three parts of the novel, a series which begins with him recognizing and remembering her as a defendant in a murder case which he has to consider as a member of the jury in a St. Petersburg court.

Dmitri Ivanovich Nekhlyudov is a high-born member of the Russian gentry who is rich, arrogant, and privileged, but also an intellectual. He had been leading an irresolute, empty, and meaningless life when he met Maslova, and this rule of his animal self only increased with his three-year service in the military, which he spent mostly in St. Petersburg. His recognition of Maslova in court begins the process of the raising of the spiritual man within him as he remembers and reconiders his relationship with her (Part I, Chapters XIV-XXII). Tolstoy describes the struggle between the animal self and the spiritual self within Nekhlyudov as he sat in the jury box deciding what to do:

“So Nekhlyudov also already felt the whole repulsiveness of what he had done, and he also felt the powerful hand of the Master, but he did not as yet understand the significance of what he had done, and he did not recognize the Master’s hand. He did not at all want to believe that what was before him was the consequence of his deed. But the invisible and pitiless hand held him fast, and he already knew ahead of time that he could not escape.”\textsuperscript{264}

The trial ends with Maslova being unintentionally found guilty by the jury on an overlooked technicality despite their feeling that she was not guilty of murder. Nekhlyudov decides to finance the appeal of her case as he finds his current relationships with the wealthy Korchagin family of St. Petersburg, including his likely marriage to their daughter Missy, increasingly repulsive and unpleasant because of the falsity of their values. Nekhlyudov is depressed, not just because his mother had died three months before, but also because he now realizes that indeed Maslova was the love of his life which he had rejected, and his life had now become disgusting to him. He prays for the complete cleansing of his soul, and vows to marry Katyusha Maslova if necessary as well as to dispose of his landed wealth so that he could begin a new and virtuous life (Part I, Chapter XXVIII).

This first revelation and awakening is followed by his acknowledgement that he must right the wrongs which he has committed in his life to make himself a worthy human being. He changes his philosophy of life, now coming to the conclusion that it is immoral to hold landed property and

\textsuperscript{263}Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, pp. 7-8.

\textsuperscript{264}Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, p. 83.
servants (Part I, Chapter XXXIII). He reflects on the causes of crime, the lack of social services, and the absurdity of the justice system. He confesses his former relationship with Maslova to the prosecutor and refuses further service on the jury, declaring that judging others is immoral and useless (Part I, Chapter XXXV). He tries in vain to visit Maslova, and significantly begins to write his diary after a two-year lapse. His first notation reveals his new belief that a diary “is not childishness, but a conversation with oneself, with that true, divine self which lives in every person.”

He ends his note with his resolution to see Maslova, confess and repent his sin to her, even if by marriage, and then he expresses the peace and joy which is in his soul as a result of his revelation (Part I, Chapter XXXVI).

Nekhlyudov, because he is a wealthy member of the gentry, is able to exert influence, especially by paying bribes, to gain access to the prison. His first visit, led through the prison church, begins with a description of the church service in Tolstoy’s satiric tone. He decries the blasphemy and mockery of the real meaning of Christ’s teaching in the ceremony and liturgy of the service as well as the earthly conveniences received by the priests and parishioners, including Maslova and the prisoners, for participating in it (Part I, Chapters XXXIX-XL). The conditions of the visiting rooms of the prison leave Nekhlyudov morally outraged and nauseated as he feels powerless, depressed, and alienated from the world (Part I, Chapter XL). He meets Maslova, but she doesn’t recognize him at first as the memories of Nekhlyudov have been repressed because of the pain of the experience. Nekhlyudov realizes Maslova has changed horrifically into a prostitute who is a proud user of people, but he vows to change her soul and return her to love (Part I, Chapters XLII-XLIV). Here Tolstoy as the narrator describes Maslova’s philosophy as circles of people who justify their lifestyles, however immoral, by associating together in rites of mutual confirmation, the total reverse of Lev Nikolaevich’s conviction that humble introspection, self-examination, and one-to-one communication with God form the only way to a meaningful and godly life on earth (Part I, Chapter XLIV). This philosophy does not apply to Maslova alone as Nekhlyudov later hears the prison warden justify his duties, including the supervision of a prisoner flogging, as the heavy burden which a lesser man in his place would only make worse for the prisoners (Part I, Chapter XLVII).

A second visit to Maslova, who is only willing to see Nekhlyudov because of his potential to be of use to her, results in her refusal to marry him. She honestly and explicitly explains the differences between them, then tells Nekhlyudov he is disgusting to her, and that he only wants to save himself in the life to come through her (Part I, Chapter XLVIII). This revelation of the honest feeling of Maslova toward Nekhlyudov brings home to him for the first time the enormity of his sin. He no longer has the sense of self-admiration which he had before, even as he tried to right the wrong he had done. He also was filled with horror as he now had no confidence in his ability to rescue either Maslova’s life and soul or his own from perdition. The torment in Nekhlyudov’s soul

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265 Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, p. 135.

266 In a letter to I. I. Gorbunov-Posadov and Ye. I. Popov of 23 March 1892 (Pss v 91t, vol. 66, pp. 181-184), Tolstoy tells of a story he has found in the Prologi (a collection of stories of saints, sermons, and tales of medieval Russian church calendar format, the oldest of which dates from the 12th century) in which a monk takes in and cares for a poor homeless person who, after a few weeks in which his disposition has grown increasingly dark despite the monk’s care, tells the monk that he hates him and does not want to see his face again. He then says that he sees that the monk cares for him not out of love, but because the monk desires to save himself through him. It is easier for him to be on the street corner than to accept the monk’s care. Tolstoy then says:

“That is the same way I feel the relationship of the people to us, and it must be so, that we also want to save ourselves through them, instead of not simply loving them, or loving them little.”

is then contrasted by the natural beauty of winter and a note passed to him from Vera Bogodukhovskaya, a revolutionist now imprisoned, but whom Nekhlyudov had befriended years ago and remembered as a person pure in the spirit of God and faith, true to the literal meaning of her name (Part I, Chapter XLIX). Both the description of nature in winter, as a reminder of the constant presence of God, and the memories of Bogodukhovskaya and his help to her provide Nekhlyudov with what he needed at a critical time. This was solace for his soul at the lowest point of his self-confidence and also an answer for his spirit in the form of a direction to guide his future actions to save his soul and make the world better.

The concluding chapters of Part I begin Nekhlyudov’s efforts to help not only Maslova, but also other worthy prisoners, innocent victims of the inefficiency of government, whose plight causes him moral outrage and nausea as he learns more about the true state of Russia’s system of justice, the conditions of the prisons, and the vast inequality in Russian society through the stories of individual experiences. In the process Nekhlyudov has further revelations which define the meaning of life for him.

Through the influence of the vice governor Maslennikov, a former military comrade of Nekhlyudov, he is allowed continued access to the cells of the prison. He meets the peasant Menshov and his mother who are unjustly accused of arson and live in terrible conditions (Part I, Chapter LII). In places where corporal punishment and torture take place, Nekhlyudov is nauseated that an icon of Christ is hung, mocking His true meaning, in another instance of Tolstoy’s satiric irony toward the Orthodox Church for its support of immoral and unChristian practices of the tsarist government (Part I, Chapter LIV). When he finally meets Vera Bogodukhovskaya, he has sympathy for her, not because she was not guilty of revolutionary activity as a non-violent propagandist for the People’s Will, a terrorist group, but because she was confused and ready to give her life for nothing. She remained as Nekhlyudov had remembered her, a selfless advocate of those less fortunate, as she asked for help for others who were falsely accused. He also meets another revolutionary supporter, Marya Pavlovna, the daughter of a general who was imprisoned for shooting a gendarme on the false testimony she gave to save a comrade. Nekhlyudov is impressed by the altruism, faith, selfless love, and inner goodness of these two women revolutionaries, but he believes they have been confused into supporting a violent, nihilistic cause (Part I, Chapters LIV-LV). He has greater sympathy toward the totally innocent peasant Menshov and his mother, and he is especially concerned that Menshov now distrusts God because of what he has suffered unjustly at the hands of those who seemingly act in His name (Part I, Chapter LVI).

Nekhlyudov undertakes the appeals of Menshov and others, first by engaging lawyers, but not least by paying his conventional and meaningless respects to Maslennikov and his wife at their large soirée, as he knows these socially-approved actions and efforts are necessary for the success of his missions, which are helping the victims of the tsarist justice system, paying his debt to Maslova, and saving his own life and soul in the process. In the eyes of his high society friends and social equals, Nekhlyudov is the quaint prince with the social conscience who gets attention for his causes in ways which are socially acceptable and non-threatening, and thereby he is able to use his influence to help the unfortunates caught up in the inefficient justice system, such as 130 people unjustly imprisoned for overdue passports, and to get Maslova an advantageous job in the prison hospital (Part I, Chapter LVIII). At the same time Nekhlyudov is spiritually conflicted because the socially acceptable methods which he must use to gain his good ends, such as paying respect to and curryng favor with those who are the cause of the misfortune of so many others in Russian society, are immoral and repulsive to him. In addition Maslova still refuses to marry him despite his efforts, saying she would rather hang herself, but Nekhlyudov vows to follow her to wherever she is exiled. He believes she is changing some bad habits, such as drinking, further convincing him that love is invincible (Part I, Chapter LIX).

The concluding chapter of Part One, Chapter LIX, begins with Lev Nikolaevich’s basic
philosophy of human beings, his “People are like rivers” principle:

“One of the most common and widespread superstitions is that each person has his own special defining qualities, that a person is good, evil, intelligent, stupid, energetic, apathetic, and so on. People are not like that. We can say about a person that he is more often good than evil, more often intelligent than stupid, more energetic than apathetic, and vice versa. But it would not be the truth if we were to say about one person that he is good or intelligent, and about another that he is evil or stupid. But we always classify people like that. And this is false. People are like rivers. The water is the same in all and everywhere, but each river is narrow here, more rapid there, here it is wide, there it is slower, here clear, there cold, here murky, there warm. So it is with people. Each person carries within himself the embryos of every human quality, sometimes showing one, sometimes another, and often looking completely unlike himself while still remaining the same person. With some people these changes are especially sharp, and Nekhlyudov was just such a person. These changes occurred in him for physical and spiritual reasons, and such a change took place in him now.

The feeling of triumph and the happiness of renewal which he had experienced after the trial and after the first meeting with Katyusha had passed completely, and it had been replaced with fear and even revulsion toward her after the last meeting. He had decided not to leave her and not to change his decision to marry her if she only wished it. But it was difficult for him, and it made him suffer.”

At the end of Part One, Nekhlyudov has spiritually arrived at the point where he is aware of both the enormity of the sins of his past life and the path he must follow to save his own life, that of Katyusha Maslova, and those of other worthy human beings he meets along the way. He is conflicted because of the compromises he must make in his new beliefs to achieve his good ends, and he suffers not only because of this, but also because he does not always meet with the success he expects in his efforts to do good. His relationship with Maslova is the primary case in point, but other trials and other revelations are to come in the next two parts of the novel. His tasks are made even more difficult and complex as explained in the “People are like rivers” commentary because of the continual shifts and changes in the human qualities of both himself and others. For Nekhlyudov these shifts and changes now occurred for at least one good reason. As Lev Nikolaevich observed in his diary at the time he was writing Resurrection: “...For Resurrection. It was impossible to remember and think about his sin and be satisfied with himself. For him it was necessary to be satisfied with himself in order to live, and for that reason he didn’t think, he forgot.” Tolstoy’s illustration of the difficulty of achieving one’s spiritual potential even when the way toward it is revealed could have been an adequate end to Resurrection, but like life itself the novel is a serial which Lev Nikolaevich corrected and revised many times.

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268Pss v 91t, vol. 53, p. 209. This is from a diary entry of 3 August 1898, when Tolstoy was at Pirogovo, the estate of his brother Sergei Nikolaevich.

269In addition to the versions, corrections, and revisions described above, Tolstoy often thought about further adventures for Nekhlyudov. See especially his diary notes of 17 and 18 July 1904 (Pss v 91t, vol. 55, pp. 65-68).
Part Two begins with Nekhlyudov's efforts to divest himself of his landed property by eventually giving it away to the peasants who live on his estates. He finds this is much more difficult to accomplish than he thought as there is much mistrust on the part of the peasants as they cannot believe that he intends to give them the land. In addition he still needs income from his estates to pay for his support of Maslova and the other prisoners. In the process of setting up a system of rent paid by the peasants to be used as communal capital set aside entirely for them, he finds out about the birth of the child he had with Katuysha Maslova and its eventual death from malnourishment, a tragedy typical of illegitimate peasant births. His new closer contacts with the peasants, while difficult, have given Nekhlyudov a better understanding of the conditions of their lives. They are much worse off than the merchant and town class, which together with the gentry, continually cheats and swindles the poor peasants, who make up the overwhelming majority of Russia’s population. Nekhlyudov considers that how to give to charity is not an easy question, and giving land to the peasants is no less difficult because of their enmity toward the upper classes (Part II, Chapters I-X). The appearance of a rainstorm in Chapter VIII leads him to yet another revelation about the meaning of life, with new horizons and direction for his soul despite his difficulties:

"'Yes, yes,' he thought. 'The work which is accomplished by our life, the whole work, the entire meaning of this work is not understood by me, and it cannot be understood by me. What were my aunts for? Why did Nikolenka Irtenyev die, but I still live? What was Katuysha for? And my madness? What was this war for? And my entire subsequent wayward life? To understand all this, to understand the whole work of the Master, is not in my power. But to do His will, which is written in my conscience, this is in my power, and this I know without any doubt. And when I do it, I surely am at peace."

"'Yes, to feel myself not as the master, but as a servant,' he thought, and he was happy with this thought."

In Chapter XI Nekhlyudov returns to his pursuit of the prisoners' legal appeals, but he becomes convinced that the law system is extremely corrupt despite his ability to hire the best lawyers. He gets a lesson in practicality when he engages in a discussion about the stupidity of peasants building mansions for the rich when his cab driver disagrees with him, telling Nekhlyudov that the peasants get bread for their labor. But he is convinced that the injustice of land distribution leads the landless peasants to flock to the towns for work, and so land reform is vital (Part II, Chapter XII). Nekhlyudov visits Maslova working in the prison hospital, and he notices that she is changing for the better, but she still vows not to let him use her spiritually as he had physically. For the first time Nekhlyudov promises to accompany Maslova to Siberia if her appeals are not successful (Part II, Chapter XIII).

The next twenty chapters of Part Two (XIV-XXXIII) concern Nekhlyudov's efforts on behalf of Maslova and the other prisoners in the appeals of their cases in the tsarist judicial system. The prince uses all of his considerable influence with his highly-placed friends in St. Petersburg and elsewhere as well as his financial resources to help the prisoners. The irony of his efforts to use his social connections to achieve his good ends led Nekhlyudov to hate the tsarist society which oppressed millions to benefit a small minority. But he was dependent on his high place in that society for the success of his efforts, and this continued to cause him spiritual distress. Like the Orthodox ritual the passion of the English evangelist Kiesewetter also disgusts him as it impresses others of Russian high society (Part II, Chapter XVII). Tolstoy's portrayals of the generals and other high officials with whom the prince must ingratiate himself show their typical venality, bad education, incompetence, and lack of conscience. The only exceptions to bad
education and incompetence are the lawyers Fanarin and Selenin, but they still manifest the other
two bad characteristics. Selenin, whom Nekhlyudov knew growing up, was especially
disappointing as he had sold his idealism and good conscience for the material rewards of
society. Maslova’s appeal is rejected in a tie vote by the Senate appeal court, and Nekhlyudov is
saddened not only by the result, but also by Fanarin and Selenin’s stories of unpunished
corruption at high levels of the courts. Selenin will appeal Maslova’s case to the tsar, and one of
the innocent political prisoners, Lydia Shustova, is released, so Nekhlyudov’s efforts are not totally
in vain (Part II, Chapter XXIV).

Indeed one of the tsar’s aides, Bogatyrev, is a military comrade of the prince, and he remains a
good person, unspoiled by his high social position. But he must deal with Toporov, the manager
of the Holy Synod, to handle the appeal of a persecuted religious sectarian group who is
supported by Nekhlyudov. Toporov, a thinly veiled portrait of the real-life Pobedonostsev, believes
in nothing but power. He is convinced that the common people prefer ignorance, but they need
something to believe in like the Orthodox Church and superstitions so that they can be more
easily controlled. In the end Toporov fears the bad publicity of persecuting the sectarian group, so
he revokes their order to exile, restores their homes, and reunites their families. Nekhlyudov,
through his friend Bogatyrev, is again successful in a case similar to Tolstoy’s defense of the
Dukhobors, but he is struck by the fact that the government does not care if it hurts innocent
people as long as the truly dangerous ones are eliminated (Part II, Chapter XXVII).

Prince Dmitri Ivanovich Nekhlyudov is not left completely untouched by his continued close
associations with St. Petersburg high society. He is attracted to Mariette, the wife of General
Cheryansky, who is so sympathetic to the prince and his causes that he has doubts about his
decisions to follow Maslova into exile and give up his wealth. The feeling lasts until Nekhlyudov
meets Mariette, who is unexpectedly with her husband and others, at a performance of the play by
Alexandre Dumas-fils, La Dame aux Camélias, which is about a Maslova-like heroine. Mariette
had wanted to use the play to encourage the prince to fall in love with her, but Nekhlyudov was
reminded of the falsity of Petersburg society, and he realized that Mariette lied about sharing his
concerns. In his walk home along Nevsky Prospekt, the main street of the capital, he saw clearly
that Mariette was worse than a prostitute, that she was a symbol of selfish animalism clothed in
poetry and art. Indeed the glamor and luxury of high society hid all the old and familiar human
crimes, but they went unpunished (Part II, Chapter XXVIII).

After resisting the temptation by Mariette, Nekhlyudov is resigned to going to Siberia with
Maslova. He still has mixed feelings toward her, especially when Maslova unjustly loses her job in
the prison hospital because she resisted the advances of a medical assistant, and Nekhlyudov
cannot bring himself to believe her story. But he knows that his love for her will not change in any
case, and this feeling gives him joy. There is a new warden placed in charge of the prison who is
more severe, and the prince’s concern for Maslova and the other prisoners leads him to ponder
the reform of criminal law in Russia while remembering the belief of the American writer, Henry
David Thoreau (1817-1862), that under an unjust government, the only decent place for just
people is in prison. Nekhlyudov believes that science has no answers to the problem of crime,
and that punishment is accepted as axiomatic to the problem of free will gone bad. He comes to
the anarchic conclusion that no one is responsible for crime, but that society is guilty because it
creates the conditions of inequality which produce crime (Part II, Chapters XXIX-XXX).

Nekhlyudov’s actions to help the prisoners, to marry Maslova, and to give his land to the
peasants have become the talk of the town, and in discussions within his own family, especially
with his older sister, Natalya Ivanovna Rogozhinskaya, and her husband, these efforts have
caused great consternation. In arguments about law and justice, the prince’s philosophical beliefs
that the law exists to preserve the interests of the upper class and that the political prisoners have
morally superior beliefs are opposed by the Rogozhinskys, who believe that the political prisoners
and the criminals are alike and that the justice system is intended to protect society by removing
the criminals from it. In addition the Rogozhinskys are against Nekhlyudov’s marriage to Maslova and opposed to his planned land giveaway. Despite their disagreements the prince hopes he has not offended his sister and her husband as he believes he will not see them again (Part II, Chapters XXXI-XXXIII).

As the procession of prisoners to Siberia begins, prisoners die en route to the railway station. The guards are unconcerned, and Nekhlyudov mulls the contrast between the world of wealth and privilege, symbolized by the Korchagins’ arrival at the train station, and the world of the unprivileged, which is the one of poverty and injustice in which most Russians lived. Despite their lot in society, the prince admires the gallant way unprivileged people persevere toward the true meaning of life, which is love for their fellow persons. By contrast he notes that there is a veneer of elegance which covers the moral poverty of the privileged minority. His sister comes unexpectedly to see Nekhlyudov off, and he tells her that Maslova refuses to marry him, but he will follow her to Siberia anyway to lighten her fate. In true-to-life Tolstoy fashion Nekhlyudov is saddened by the fact that money matters have come between family members, and he decides to give part of his estate to his sister Natalya’s children. He is sadder still that his sister’s face brightened at the mention of what her children would inherit (Part II, Chapters XXXIV-XXXIX).

In the last three chapters of Part Two, Nekhlyudov begins by observing that all the responsible officials consider themselves guiltless in the deaths of the prisoners during transport, but this violates the fundamental law of human life. He explains this law by saying that “If it can be admitted even for an hour, or even in some kind of one-time, exceptional instance, that there is a more important feeling than love for fellow persons, then there is no crime committed against people which cannot be justified.”

Nature again interrupts the prince’s thoughts as a rainstorm cools off the hot July day. The pitiless prison transport officials are compared to an area of paved-over earth where life-giving water cannot get through (Part II, Chapter XL). Nekhlyudov is travelling in a third class rail car with Taras Biryukov, who is following his prisoner wife Theodosia to exile. He offers some humble workmen space in his compartment while observing the extravagance of the Korchagins in first class. Their “vrai grand monde” is a false one, with the real world being that of the workmen, a new and unknown, but excellent and beautiful one which the prince was now discovering.

Part Three begins as the convoy of prisoners reach Perm, a distance of about 1100 kilometers from Moscow, and Nekhlyudov had arranged for Maslova to travel with the political prisoners to protect her from assaults, while Taras had himself arrested so that he could travel with his wife to protect her. The third and last part of the novel concentrates on Prince Nekhlyudov’s relations with the political prisoners, who are treated better than the regular criminal convicts. He finds there is a high level of morality among them with many of their actions done for moral reasons, like walking with the convicts during marches instead of riding in carts as they could have done. Prince Dmitri Ivanich Nekhlyudov, like his creator Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, finds he has much in common with the political prisoners as they are kindred spirits in their desire for revolutionary change in Russia. The main difference is that Nekhlyudov/Tolstoy want non-violent change, so that society will not be destroyed in the effort to save it. All of Tolstoy’s portraits of the political prisoners are drawn with the distinction as to whether they are violent or non-violent advocates of change, a key indicator as to whether they are respectively immoral or moral characters, although he shows that some are confused or tortured emotionally into supporting or committing violence that they really do not believe in.

Early on there is an incident which illustrates the good moral character of some of the political prisoners, especially those closest to Maslova, when the death of a prisoner’s wife leads a cruel guard to separate a young daughter from her father. Marya Pavlovna Shchetinina, the general’s
daughter who took responsibility for a shooting which she did not do to save a comrade, agrees to care for the child out of love and also to avoid a mutiny among the political prisoners. Although she is from a wealthy family, she lives like a simple working person. Marya Pavlovna is educated and physically attractive, but she is not a coquette and even fears love. Her life is completely based on serving others, and she is Maslova’s closest friend. For Neklyudov/ Tolstoy she is the ideal female model of a revolutionary. She is supported by Vladimir Ivanovich Simonson, another moral revolutionary, who is an intellectual and a vegetarian. Simonson loves Maslova, but only in a platonic way as he believes in celibacy for himself. He is a Narodnik, believing in educating the common people, who always acted according to his own reason. His father is a government official, but he is openly defiant of government authority and against all killing. Simonson believes that service to others is the purpose of life, and thus he represents Tolstoy’s philosophy as a life-sustaining person, the ideal male model of a revolutionary. The difference between Simonson and Neklyudov in their relations with Katyusha Maslova is that Simonson loves Maslova as she is now, while Neklyudov loves her from the past and from his generosity (Part III, Chapters I-IV).

By the time the prisoner convoy arrived in Tomsk, Neklyudov had noticed improvements in Maslova’s appearance and attitude. He attributed these changes for the better to her association with the political prisoners, most of whom were of high moral character and courageous in the face of their unjust treatment by the tsarist authorities. Of course some of them believed in using any means to attain their just ends, just as the military did, and Neklyudov retained his strong antipathy toward those violent revolutionaries. In addition to those previously mentioned, the prince especially liked Anatoly Petrovich Kryltsov, the son of a rich landowner who became a revolutionary only after being unjustly imprisoned and there becoming acquainted with very young prisoners who were hanged for minor revolutionary activity. Like Simonson Kryltsov began as a Narodnik, then after being released from prison, he joined the People’s Will, where he headed a Disorganizing Group, whose object was terrorism. Kryltsov was originally condemned to death, but his sentence was changed to life at hard labor, a slower and more agonizing death sentence. The story of Kryltsov explained a lot to Neklyudov about why good persons became violent revolutionaries (Part III, Chapters V-VI). Before he met political prisoners such as Vera Bogodukhovskaya, Marya Pavlovna, Simonson, and Kryltsov, Neklyudov hated any group that advocated revolution, especially those like People’s Will, who had assassinated Tsar Alexander II, the emancipator of the serfs, in 1881. But the examples of the political prisoners and the story of Kryltsov’s experience showed the prince yet again that the tsarist authorities habitually took anti-revolutionary actions without regard to collateral damage, and that they had no compunction about annihilating the innocent in the process as long as the guilty were destroyed. This type of tyrannical government and its unjust justice system made no distinction between the guilty and the innocent, thus producing unnecessary victims and unnecessarily making violent revolutionaries out of otherwise good people like Kryltsov.

Prince Neklyudov also meets other political prisoners in Siberia such as the peasant Nabatov, the factory worker Markel Kondratyev, and the celebrated revolutionary Novodvorov. Nabatov is a talented individual who had decided during his school years that instead of going to the university, he would remain in a large village to educate his fellow peasants. His efforts in teaching and organizing a peasant cooperative led to two short prison terms in different places until he escaped from exile three times to be sentenced and re-sentenced to increasingly distant places. He was now headed to Yakutsk in eastern Siberia, but in spite of his history, he was a generally happy and energetic person. Nabatov believed in a revolution where people had land, and there were no officials or gentry. But he also firmly believed that a revolution should break down only the inner walls of society and not alter the fundamental structure of life. Nabatov thus represents the Tolstoyan peasant ideal, as he is not interested in knowing the origin of the world, that is science, but only in how to live a better life. In addition his simple religious faith leads him to believe that a person does not perish at death, but merely changes his form of life.

In contrast to the positive revolutionary models of Nabatov and others, Markel Kondratyev and
his mentor Novodvorov are markedly negative figures. Kondratyev as a factory worker was jealous of the privileged class, and he not only wanted the freedom a revolution would supposedly bring, but he especially desired revenge on the gentry. He had a thirst for knowledge which was satisified by a revolutionist teacher who came to his factory. He was exiled to Vologda with his teacher, and there he met Novodvorov and became a fervent socialist. Kondratyev later led a strike which destroyed a factory and killed the factory director, crimes for which he was further exiled to Siberia. An ascetic by nature, he ridiculed religion and had a general contempt for women except for his first revolutionary teacher at the factory, who was a woman. Markel Kondratyev worshipped Novodvorov and accepted his views on all subjects as much as he disliked Nekhlyudov because of his gentry class origin.

Novodvorov was the only political prisoner whom Nekhlyudov despised, and the feeling was mutual. The celebrated revolutionary was ambitious and power-hungry, an intellectually gifted, but arrogant person who never doubted anything, never admitted to any mistake, believing that all should be clear and simple. He was convinced that the masses were beasts who worshipped only power, while the educated elite and the revolutionaries knew better how to wield power to control the masses. His supreme self-assurance and powers of oratory were often mistaken for wisdom by the young and inexperienced, and so Novodvorov, as an excellent recruiter for the organization, became a leader of the People’s Will although his personality and beliefs repelled many of the revolutionary persuasion, including Kryltsov and Nabatov (Part III, Chapters VII-XV).

As Nekhlyudov occupied himself with the philosophy of revolution in Russia and the reform of criminal law and the justice system, he was also brought back to his much more personal crusade of saving Maslova and his own soul by Simonson, who tells the prince directly that he loves Katyusha, however platonically, and wants to marry her “to alleviate her position...and her fate,” and “...so that this suffering soul [Maslova] might find rest.” Nekhlyudov is happy for both, but selfishly feels slighted as well, and he tells Simonson that it is up to Maslova. In discussions with Marya Pavlovna, Maslova’s best friend, the prince discovers that Maslova loves him, but that she is of such moral character that she will never consent to marry him because the past is too painful to remember, and she does not want to ruin his life. Nekhlyudov then confronts Maslova directly with Simonson’s desire, but she gives no answer except to say that she does not want to ruin Simonson’s life (Part III, Chapters XVI-XVII).

This unsettled spectre of a merry-go-round of self-sacrifice is interrupted by the news of the suicide of the poet and dreamer Neverov, another political prisoner, in the lunatic asylum in Kazan. The news prompts thoughts about how to bring the revolution into effect. Kryltsov wants to kill the gentry in retaliation for the punishment of the revolutionaries, but Nekhlyudov argues that the noble class are human beings despite their crimes. Nabatov, ever the practical peasant, doesn’t believe it is possible to kill all the gentry, and some will be left to continue the breed. Afterward the prince reflects not so much on a revolution, or on Maslova, as on the prison conditions and why the tsarist criminal justice system is as bad as it is.

“Often during these three months he had asked himself, ‘Am I mad that I see what others don’t see, or are the madmen those who do what I see?’ But the people (and there were so many of them) did what so astonished and so horrified him with such a quiet confidence that what they did was not only necessary, but that it was important and useful work. So it was difficult to accept that all these people were mad. He could not believe that he himself was mad because he was conscious of the clarity of his thoughts, and so he constantly found himself in a state of

\[^{272}Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, p. 416.\]
The evils of exile, prisons, and punishment all seemed designed to find the best way of depraving the most people and to reduce the social and Christian morality of ordinary people to the law of the jungle. It seemed reasonable to Nekhlyudov that if lawful vengeance were the goal of the system, it was unsuccessful as it instilled vice in the people and made them seek vengeance on the government instead of correcting their behavior. But the government officials did not care for justice or for reforming the system because their selfish livelihoods were organically connected to it, and all the evil was justified “as an inevitable consequence of the inconceivable delusion that people can punish others.”

Before resuming the journey farther into Siberia, Nekhlyudov gets a note from Marya Pavlovna that Kryltsov’s health has worsened, and that she will marry him if need be to be able to stay with him and take care of him. Her offer of self-sacrifice does not prevent her and Kryltsov from joking about the strange situation with Nekhlyudov, Maslova, and Simonson, but it is a joke which seems lost on the prince. When the prisoners’ convoy approaches a large village and mounts a raft to cross a river, the prince and his coach-driver discuss God with an old man dressed in raggedy clothes, “a wanderer going nowhere.” The old man, who represents many fundamental Tolstoyan beliefs, explains that he has no faith in institutional religion, that all faiths are blind to the truth. He believes that the spirit of God is in each individual, and so he believes only in himself. As to a future life after death, he says that he believes that he always was, or always existed, and that he always will be. He has no name except “Man,” and he travels where God may lead him, accepting no money for work, only bread. No one really understands him, and everyone seems to want to persecute him (Part III, Chapters XX-XXI).

Arriving in this unnamed larger village in eastern Siberia, Nekhlyudov installs himself in a relatively comfortable hotel for the first time in two months. He goes to see the district governor, an otherwise unnamed general who is wise and tactful, but he has become an alcoholic because of the conflict between his duties and his liberal beliefs. The general is eager to meet with the prince to hear news of St. Petersburg and Moscow, and he invites him to his home where he meets an English traveler, who is also interested in visiting prisons in Siberia. At the same time Nekhlyudov receives official notification from Selenin of the decision of the tsar’s petition committee to grant a mitigation of Maslova’s sentence from life at hard labor in eastern Siberia to simple exile in less remote western Siberia. Meanwhile the prince feels comfortable in the environment of the general’s home with his family, the unnamed English visitor, and other guests, but he is still reminded of the conditions of the prisoners while also wondering what Katyusha Maslova will decide. With permission from the general, Nekhlyudov and the English visitor set out for the prison (Part III, Chapters XXII-XXIV).

The prince serves as interpreter as he and the English visitor inspect the prison. Maslova receives the news of her sentence mitigation, but she decides to accompany Simonson to remote exile. Nekhlyudov, who suddenly felt the need for a family life, now feels ashamed that he has

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275Sa v 22t, vol. XIII, p. 432.
lost her, but she does not say that she loves Simonson when he asks her directly, she only advises him to live, saying that he has suffered enough helping her. The prince believes that Maslova wants to set him free even if she suffers as a result. Nekhlyudov and the English visitor continue their tour of the prison by visiting the cells, where they are appalled that disease is rampant and people are treated like wild beasts. The Englishman is also an evangelist, and he gives out copies of the New Testament to prisoners, while telling them that Christ loved them and died for them as Nekhlyudov translates. The prince feels weary of his life and hopeless (Part III, Chapters XXV-XXVI).

In the area of the prison where the political exiles were kept, Nekhlyudov is surprised to find the same raggedy old man he had met on the raft. He had been sent there because he had no passport. When questioned by the Englishman about the prison and justice system, the strange old man first asked Nekhlyudov if he were one of the Antichrist army, then he answered the Englishman with the same views already expressed by Nekhlyudov, summing it up by saying cryptically, "Tell him to take off the seal of the Antichrist, then there will be no thieves or murderers with him." After this repeat encounter with the "wanderer going nowhere," who is also a prophetic character reminiscent of the figure of Christ persecuted by the Grand Inquisitor in Ivan’s parable (Book V, Chapter 5) in Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov (1880), Nekhlyudov passes by the mortuary where he discovers the corpse of his friend Kryltsov. There the prince contemplates death and life in a scene which recalls again those in other works of Tolstoy and those of his own life, such as the death of his brother Nikolai:

“The small, pointed little beard turned upward, the firm and beautiful nose, the high white forehead, the thin wavy hair. He recognized the familiar features and did not believe his eyes. Yesterday he saw this face excited, embittered, and suffering. Now it was quiet, motionless, and frighteningly beautiful.

Yes, it was Kryltsov, or at least that trace which was left of his material existence.

‘Why had he suffered? Why did he live? Did he understand this now?’ thought Nekhlyudov, and it seemed to him that there was no answer to this, that there wasn’t anything except death, and he became ill.” (Part III, Chapter XXVII)

In the last chapter (XXVIII) of Part Three, the end of the novel, Nekhlyudov is sad and ashamed that he was not needed by Maslova, but it was not this which really troubled him, it was the evils of the justice and prison systems. He again asked himself the question which had occurred to him before, the same one which Lev Nikolaevich had asked himself more than once in real life, especially as he had gotten older, "Am I the one who is mad, or are the mad ones those who consider themselves reasonable people, and yet they still do all this evil?" As Nekhlyudov pondered this question relating again to the meaning of life, his eyes found a New Testament which the English evangelist had given him as a souvenir. As he picked it up, he remembered the old saying about the answer to everything being in there. He happened to open the New Testament to the Book of Matthew, Chapter 18, and began thinking about the verses he read. The first few verses about humbling yourself like a child to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and to know peace and joy were comprehensible to him, but the next verses he did not understand except to know that God did not intend that people should do evil to his children, and especially

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277Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, p. 452.

278Ss v 22t, vol. XIII, p. 453.
those who act in His name should not do evil. Although God did not intend that his believers should perish, yet many victims of the tsarist justice system do. Certainly this was confirmation to Nekhlyudov that his quest for prison reform was truly God's work.

But the next verses, Matthew 18:21-33, brought home to him that everything in the meaning of life was encompassed in the commandment to forgive, and to forgive without limit, as you are forgiven by God. This commandment, which at first seemed to him to be very strange and impractical, was confirmed by his life experience, and now it had become a true certainty. It was impossible for people to correct evil while they themselves were evil. None are without guilt, so none can punish or reform others. Therefore a system which is made up of such people is inherently corruptive. Society and order exist not because of the corrupt justice system, but only because people pity and love each other in spite of the depravity in the world.

Further Nekhlyudov, and Tolstoy by proxy, saw that Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount offered not abstract or exaggerated requirements which were incapable of being fulfilled by people, but simple, clear, and practical commandments which would bring the promised heaven on earth if they were observed. He organized them into five basic laws as found in Matthew, Chapter 5: (1) Do not kill or quarrel; (2) Do not commit adultery; (3) Do not bind yourself by taking oaths; (4) Do not take revenge, but forgive without limit, and refuse service to no one; (5) Love your enemies, and help and serve them.

At the end of Resurrection, Prince Dmitri Ivanovich Nekhlyudov finds the freedom and peace which he sought after much weariness and suffering. What he discovered in his quest for the meaning of life was something that he had long known, but that he had never fully realized or believed. The only reasonable meaning of life is to fulfill the commandments as given in the Sermon on the Mount. Life was not given for the sole purpose of enjoyment, but it was to be lived for the purpose of love. Nekhlyudov, Katyusha Maslova, and others in the novel discover this truth, and they are resurrected from lives already quite dead. Tolstoy closed Resurrection in the same way he closed his essay The Kingdom of God Is Within You, with Matthew 6:33, "Seek the Kingdom of God and His truth, and all the rest will accrue to you." Then he noted that the trouble in the world stemmed from people first seeking "all the rest."

Resurrection represents a compilation of Lev Nikolaevich's mature views on the basic questions of life and society produced in a novel which is more intellectual, less artistic, and less realistic than War and Peace or Anna Karenina. But Resurrection as a novel did for Tolstoy what his essays did for him. His return to the longer fictional form of literary art, celebrated as it was at the time, brought his religious and philosophical views into focus together with the current events of his era. He showed that although his views came from a misused, nearly nineteen-hundred-year-old philosophy, they still had topical and practical application to his time and to the future, not only of Russia, but of the world.

Tolstoy wrote three more plays in the last ten years of his life, but all of them were not published until 1911, the year after his death. The plot of The Live Corpse, completed in 1900, originated from an actual case of faked suicide which a husband arranged in order to allow his wife to marry her true love. In the midst of the struggle between the spiritual and the animal aspects of his character, it is the absurdity of the divorce law which ruins the lives of all, resulting in the husband committing suicide for real in court once his deception is discovered. The Cause of It All (in Russian, Ot ney vse kachestva) was finished at the end of July 1910, some months before his death.

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279Pss v 91t, vol. 34, pp. 533-543; Ss v 22t, vol. XI, p. 498.
It is a comedic morality play of peasant life in which good deeds and kindness triumph over evil, even evil in the guise of a revolutionary passing through a village who, in another of Tolstoy’s prescient views of Russia’s future, uses Marxist jargon to justify common crime. Although he thought about it from at least 1890 and worked on it in the years 1896-1905 (?), Lev Nikolaevich never finished the autobiographical play And Light Shines Through the Darkness. It is his account, told from a surprisingly balanced perspective, of his struggle to live his life in accordance with his Christian principles and anarchic social views in the face of conflict with the practical concerns of his family, friends, and others.

Certainly And Light Shines Through the Darkness was of great importance to Lev Nikolaevich. In late 1894 he told Oscar Blumenthal, a visiting German theater director, that the play was to contain “his personal experiences, his struggle, his faith, his sufferings, everything that was close to his heart,” but when Blumenthal expressed his wish that Tolstoy write the play soon, Lev Nikolaevich replied, “I want this more passionately than anyone. But believe me, I’ll die before I finish writing it.” Tolstoy’s prediction turned out to be technically accurate, as he completed four acts of the play, but left a fifth act in notes only.

The first act takes place in a village at the wealthy home of the Saryntsevs, Nikolai Ivanovich, and his wife Marya Ivanovna, who certainly represent Lev Nikolaevich and his wife Sofya Andreevna. In a frank and revealing first scene before the entrance of Nikolai Ivanovich, Marya Ivanovna and her sister, Aleksandra Ivanovna Kokhovtseva, and her husband Pyotr Semyonovich very critically discuss the religious and philosophical beliefs of Nikolai Ivanovich.

“PYOTR SEMYONOVICH. ...If he rejects the church, then for what purpose are the Gospels?
MARYA IVANOVNA. So that you have to live by the Gospels, by the Sermon on the Mount, give everything away.
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. Always the extremes.
PYOTR SEMYONOVICH. Yes, well, how can you live if you give everything away?
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. Well, wherever did he find in the Sermon on the Mount that you have to shake hands with the servants? There it says, ‘Blessed are the meek,’ but there is nothing about shaking hands.
MARYA IVANOVNA. Yes, it seems he gets carried away like he always has gotten carried away, like the times he became fascinated with music, or hunting, or the schools. But that doesn’t make it any easier for me.
PYOTR SEMYONOVICH. So why has he gone to town?
MARYA IVANOVNA. He didn’t tell me, but I know that he went about our trees being cut down. The peasants cut some trees out of our forest.

... 

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. He’ll forgive them, and tomorrow they’ll cut down trees in the park.

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281 Ps v 91t, vol. 31, pp. 291-300. And Light Shines Through the Darkness was first published in uncensored form in Berlin in 1912. It did not appear in Russia without censorial deletions until 1919.

282 Ps v 91t, vol. 31, p. 291. The quotation is from Blumenthal’s reminiscences of Tolstoy, Meeting With Lev Tolstoy (Moscow: Zlatotsvet, 1911), p. 70.
MARYA IVANOVNA. Yes, that’s the way it starts. They cut down all the apple trees, they’ll trample down all the green fields, but he forgives everything.
PYOTR SEMYONOVICH. Amazing.

MARYA IVANOVNA. It seems to be a heavy burden, but I’ll endure everything, and I hope that it will pass, just like the previous fascinations passed.”

Such proxy criticism of Tolstoy’s own views and behavior by those close to him are typical of the entire play.

Later in the first act (Scene 15) a young priest, Vasily Nikanorovich, who is disposed toward some of the views of Nikolai Ivanovich discusses religion and Christianity with him. The young priest’s defense of the Orthodox Church as the keeper of the truth of Christ’s teaching is contradicted by Nikolai Ivanovich who states that any religion must stand the test of reason, which is God’s holy gift to humanity. In addition the teaching of Christ was intended to unite people in love, not divide them over questions of tradition, liturgy, or whether Christ was divine, or resurrected, or if he performed miracles. The young priest countered that the teaching of Christ was based on his divinity and resurrection, but Nikolai Ivanovich refuted that by saying that Christ’s teaching was universal and included all beliefs within itself. It was not intended to be the exclusive property of any sect who claimed it possessed the definite truth. Indeed any religion or sect proclaiming this was guilty of the worst crime in the world. The young priest replied that Nikolai Ivanovich was rationalizing the teaching of Christ.

Then in Scene 17 of the first act, Nikolai Ivanovich Saryntsev argues with his sister-in-law, Aleksandra Ivanovna, about the meaning of life and how it affects his family:

“NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Surely it’s the truth that we all can die at any minute and go out either into nothing or to God, who requires from us lives lived according to His will?
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. So?
NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Of course, and my own, but that I do everything that my conscience tells me. The main thing to understand is that my life does not belong to me, and yours doesn’t belong to you, but to God who sent us and who requires from us that we do His will. And His will...
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. And you will convince Masha of this?
NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Certainly.
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. And she will stop educating her children as required, and throw them away...Never.
NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Not only will she understand, but you will understand that there is nothing else to do.
ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA. Never!”

This argument is continued directly with his wife in Scene 19 of Act One, when Nikolai Ivanovich and Marya Ivanovna talk about their son Stepa, who has decided to join the army. Of course this

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283Pss v 91t, vol. 31, p. 119.

284Pss v 91t, vol. 31, pp. 133-134.
is very much against the wishes of his father, who also doesn't want to give his son any money as this is contrary to his beliefs. Nikolai Ivanovich considers that the money is not his since it was obtained through the labor of others, but as the manager of the estate, he must distribute it as his conscience dictates. He certainly cannot give away the value of the labor of peasants to support the army through his son. In order to resolve the quandary, Nikolai Ivanovich asks his wife to take over the estate so that he will not be responsible for making decisions against his conscience, but Marya Ivanovna is reluctant.

When Act II begins, it is one week later, still in the village. Nikolai Ivanovich has decided to resolve the conflict between his family's desires and his beliefs by giving away his land to the peasants who live on it, but he will keep a small part of the estate to support the family. In Scene 10 after the second curtain, Marya Ivanovna explains her husband’s beliefs and their problems to Father Gerasim, an older and higher-ranking priest, who agrees to talk to him. Nikolai Ivanovich and Father Gerasim, in Scene 12 after the second curtain, argue the same issues of Christianity and the Orthodox Church which Nikolai Ivanovich and the young priest, Vasily Nikanorovich, pursued in the first act. These include Nikolai Ivanovich’s criticisms that the church has ignored the true meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, that it blesses government violence against people, and that it considers itself to be an infallible interpreter of Christ's teaching. The difference is that Father Gerasim is not in the least disposed to Nikolai Ivanovich’s views or to his criticism of the church. Indeed he accuses him of possessing an arrogant mind, and he warns him that he is severely delusioned, and if he doesn’t change his views, he will ruin himself.

Vasily Nikanorovich, who witnessed the argument between Nikolai Ivanovich and Father Gerasim, became more impressed with Nikolai Ivanovich’s views as did Boris, the son of Princess Cheremshanova, much to the chagrin of his mother (Act II, Scene 13). Act Three shifts the scene to Moscow, where Boris, the son of Princess Cheremshanova, refuses his loyalty oath and military service. A priest and military officers argue with him to no avail, and he is sent to a military hospital. Obviously influenced by Nikolai Ivanovich, Boris explains that he cannot serve a government which employs violence against its subjects. For the General-Adjutant and his staff as well as for the military doctors, it is obviously a question of the young prince’s sanity, but Nikolai Ivanovich knows it is always society which labels as crazy those who seriously want to follow Christ. It is also revealed that that Vasily Nikanorovich has been called before the bishop to answer for his support of Nikolai Ivanovich’s views on Christianity. His wife has left with their son, and the young Orthodox priest is afraid that he will be sent to the remote monastery in the Solovetskie Islands. Nikolai Ivanovich visits Boris in the hospital accompanied by his daughter Lyuba, who is engaged to the young prince, but Princess Cheremshanova also arrives and blames Nikolai Ivanovich for Boris’ plight, saying that he and Boris have invented some kind of Christianity which is not really Christianity at all, but the study of the devil which forces everyone to suffer. Nikolai Ivanovich promises to support Boris with all that he has, but Boris suffers for his faith and prays to God for help.

Act Four takes place in Moscow one year later. Lyuba Saryntseva has decided to marry

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Aleksey Mikhailovich Starkovskiy, a worldly and refined military officer who is disliked by her father, instead of Boris Cheremshanov, who is now in bad health and still imprisoned in the insane asylum because he refused his military service. Marya Ivanovna blames her husband Nikolai Ivanovich for Boris’ nightmarish situation, calling the both of them fanatics because of their radical and anarchic views of Christianity. In scene 9 of the first suite of scenes in Act Four, Lyuba tells Starkovskiy that she couldn’t tolerate Boris’ decision and the suffering it has caused. She says she wants to live, but her profession of love for Starkovskiy is tinged with doubt and feelings of guilt for leaving Boris.

Then in Scene 3 of the second suite of scenes in Act Four, Nikolai Ivanovich and Marya Ivanovna Saryntsev again argue the effect of his religious views on her and the family:

*MARYA IVANOVNA. ...You’re a Christian, you want to do good, you say that you love people, so why do you punish that woman who has given you her whole life?*

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. So how am I punishing? And I love, but...

MARYA IVANOVNA. How are you not punishing, when you keep me away, you leave. What will everyone say? One of two things, either I am a stupid woman or you’re a crazy man.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Let them think I’ve lost my mind, but I cannot live like that.

MARYA IVANOVNA. ...The most important thing is that now you don’t love me. You love the whole world and that drunk Aleksandr Petrovich, and I love you anyway. I can’t live without you.

But why, why? (She cries.)

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. You certainly don’t want to understand my life, my spiritual life.

MARYA IVANOVNA. I want to understand, but I can’t understand. I see that your Christianity has made it so that you have begun to hate your family, and me. And for what, I don’t know.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Others understand.

MARYA IVANOVNA. Who? Aleksandr Petrovich, who gets money out of you.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. And him, and others, and Tonya, and Vasily Nikanorovich. But it doesn’t matter to me. Even if no one understood, it wouldn’t change a thing.

MARYA IVANOVNA. Vasily Nikanorovich repented and has again returned to the parish. And Tonya is now dancing and flirting with Stepa.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. That’s too bad, but it doesn’t mean that white can be black, and it can’t change my life. Masha! You don’t need me. Let me go. I tried to participate in your life, to bring to it what was for me all of life. But it’s impossible. It turns out only that I’m torturing you, and torturing myself. Not only am I torturing myself, I’m also ruining all that I do. Every person, like Aleksandr Petrovich, has the right to tell me that I’m a deceiver, that I don’t do as I say, that I preach the poverty of the Gospels, but I myself live in luxury on the pretext that I gave everything to my wife.

MARYA IVANOVNA. And so you’re ashamed in front of people. Can you really not be above that?

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. It’s not that I’m ashamed, but that it’s shameful that I’m ruining the work of God.

... So how should I be?

MARYA IVANOVNA. Do what you preach: tolerate, love. What’s difficult for you? Only tolerate us, don’t deprive us of you. So what tortures you about that?”

In Scene 5 of the second suite of scenes in Act Four, the direct and confrontational dialogue between husband and wife continues on the same subject:

*NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. ...Life here is completely depraved. This word angers you, but I can’t...*
call a life which is entirely based on robbery anything else, because the money that you live on, it's money from the land, which you steal from the people. Besides that, I see that this life has corrupted the children - 'Woe to him who seduces one of the least of these' - and I see with my own eyes how they destroy and are themselves corrupted. I can't see how grown people, like slaves, are forced into tailcoats to serve us. Every dinner is suffering for me.

MARYA IVANOVNA. Well, surely it all has always been like that. Surely it's like that with everyone everywhere and in foreign countries.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. I haven't been able to do it since that time when I learned that we were all brothers, and already I can't see this and not suffer.

...I see a child die from hunger, a boy become an alcoholic...and then I come home, and a servant in a white tie is opening the door for me, and I see how my son, a little boy, demands that this servant bring him some water, and I see this army of servants working for us. Then I go to see Boris, a man who is defending truth with his life, and I see how they are purposefully driving an honest, strong, and resolute person like him to insanity and death...And then I come home and I find out that that one daughter of our family who understood not me, but the truth, that she has rejected her fiancé to whom she had promised love, and rejected the truth, and she's marrying a lackey, a liar...

MARYA IVANOVNA. How Christian that is.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. Yes, that's nasty, I'm guilty, but I only wanted you to see my side. I'm only saying that she has rejected the truth.

MARYA IVANOVNA. You say rejected the truth, but others, the majority, say she rejected delusion. Even Vasily Nikanorovich thought that he had deluded himself, and now he has returned to the church.

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH (Gets angry). Well, it's all the same. I only ask you to understand me. I see a child die from hunger, a boy become an alcoholic...and then I come home, and a servant in a white tie is opening the door for me, and I see how my son, a little boy, demands that this servant bring him some water, and I see this army of servants working for us. Then I go to see Boris, a man who is defending truth with his life, and I see how they are purposefully driving an honest, strong, and resolute person like him to insanity and death...And then I come home and I find out that that one daughter of our family who understood not me, but the truth, that she has rejected her fiancé to whom she had promised love, and rejected the truth, and she's marrying a lackey, a liar...

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NIKOLAI IVANOVICH (Gets angry). Well, it's all the same. I only ask you to understand me. But I still consider the truth to be the truth. So it's hurtful to me. And here I come home, I see the decorations, the ball, and the spending of hundreds of rubles when people are dying of hunger. I can't live like that. Forgive me, I've worn myself out. Let me go. Goodbye.

MARYA IVANOVNA. If you leave, I'm leaving with you...My God, my God, what, what torture. Why? For what? (She cries)

NIKOLAI IVANOVICH. ...I won't go. I'm staying, all right. (He takes his clothes off)

MARYA IVANOVNA (She embraces him). We don't have much time left to live. Let's not spoil it after twenty-eight years. Well I won't give parties, but don't punish me.\(^\)\(^\text{287}\)

Despite the harsh criticism, strong words, and continued disagreement on important religious and philosophical matters, the strong bond of love between Nikolai Ivanovich and Marya Ivanovna as spouses and parents has caused both of them to remember who and what they have been to each other and to their children for quite a long time. It can thus be truly said again that love conquers all. This is not inconsistent with the beliefs of either Nikolai Ivanovich or Marya Ivanovna, which is undoubtedly exactly what Tolstoy wanted to demonstrate in this last scene of confrontation between the two most important characters in the play. Selfless love comes from God, and it is always the perfect solution to every problem or question of life.

But the vexation of Nikolai Ivanovich over his inability to live a truly Christian life according to his beliefs will not cease, nor will Marya Ivanovna's difficulties in balancing the spiritual needs of her husband with the practical necessities of her family stop, nor will the suffering of other good people like Boris Cheremshanov and Vasily Nikanorovich end just because Nikolai Ivanovich and Marya Ivanovna have realized that selfless love is the answer to the problems of their relationship. Life in the universe is unfortunately more complicated than simply knowing the true answer to all

\(^\text{287}\)Pss v 91t, vol. 31, pp. 179-180.
its questions, as great as that knowledge is. Human imperfections always distort the application of this knowledge, and this produces pessimism even in the best of people, as Nikolai Ivanovich shows in his prayers in Scenes 7 and 9 of the second suite of scenes in Act Four:

“SCENE VII
NIKOLAI IVANOVICH (alone). ...It’s obvious that You don’t want me to be your worker in this, your work. You want me to be humiliated, so that everyone can point their fingers at me and say, he doesn’t do as he says. Well, let it happen. You know better what You need. Humility, madness. Yes, if only to be raised up to Him.
... 

SCENE IX
NIKOLAI IVANOVICH (alone). Yes, yes, only to remember that life is only to be in service to You. To remember that if You send a test, it is only because You consider me capable of withstanding it, that it is within my powers. Otherwise it would not be a test.... Father, help, help me to do not my will, but yours.”

As Act Four nears its end, Princess Cheremshanova arrives on the scene and announces that Boris has been put into a disciplinary battalion. Nikolai Ivanovich tells her that she and Boris have his complete sympathy and support, but the princess, who has always blamed Saryntsev for destroying Boris’ life, is in no mood to be appreciative now. She mocks Nikolai Ivanovich as a paragon of Christian mercy, a pharisee who has ruined her son, and who now gives parties to celebrate his daughter marrying another man. Nikolai Ivanovich replies that it is God who has put Boris and her through this test, not him, and that God knows how sorry he is about Boris. Unfortunately Nikolai Ivanovich then, in a classic case of the wrong person giving advice, suggests to the princess that she not oppose the will of God and bear her burden humbly. This deeply angers the princess, of course, and she demands that Saryntsev do whatever is necessary to save her son. He promises to do whatever she wants, but she leaves the scene with a veiled threat to him. Act Four ends three short scenes later with another prayer by Nikolai Ivanovich in which he laments what has happened and again doubts himself:

“NIKOLAI IVANOVICH (alone). Vasily Nikanorovich returned, I ruined Boris. Lyuba is getting married. Can it be that I am deluded, deluded in that I believe in You? No. Father, help me.”

In the notes which he left for the fifth act of And Light Shines Through the Darkness, Tolstoy begins with Boris Cheremshanov reading the Gospels before he is sent to the punishment cell to be flogged. His mother’s efforts to save him are not successful. Nikolai Ivanovich repeats the doubts he expressed in his last three prayer scenes, and he is very depressed because of Boris’ fate and Vasily Nikanorovich’s return to Orthodoxy. So Nikolai Ivanovich believes he is weak and undeserving of being called by God to do His work. As he becomes resigned to this conclusion, he obtains peace in his soul. Princess Cheremshanova bursts onto the scene and kills Nikolai Ivanovich, but as others rush in, he tells them he did it himself by accident, and he writes a request to the tsar for forgiveness. Vasily Nikanorovich enters accompanied by Doukhobors. As Nikolai Ivanovich dies, he is happy in the thoughts that the deceit of the Orthodox Church has


289Pss v 91t, vol. 31, p. 183.
been undermined, and that his life had meaning.²⁹⁰

With the writing of his drama And Light Shines Through the Darkness, Tolstoy achieved what few writers or philosophers ever accomplish. He effectively criticized his own beliefs and philosophy, even to the point of making his own proxy character, Nikolai Ivanovich Saryntsev, seem sometimes cold and fanatical, two characteristics which could never be justly applied to Lev Nikolaevich in real life. Undoubtedly not many philosophers or thinkers have been willing to attempt what may seem as such a foolhardy exercise because it would obviously serve to weaken their arguments and give support to critics and nay-sayers. But Lev Nikolaevich was not interested in such vain intellectual zero-sum games, and his astounding self-criticism in this play was not a result of madness. It was born of his great empathetic nature and his belief in continual moral self-examination as the path of a true Christian life. It was also the result of his discovery that the meaning of life and the link between God and humanity is selfless love, and selfless love has no zero-sum, no winner or loser. But it is the only thing which facilitates life.

Nikolai Ivanovich’s prayers in And Light Shines Through the Darkness reveal Tolstoy’s real-life self-doubt and his concern that his fervent Christian beliefs might have left him deluded or even mad, as not only the character of Father Gerasim, but also those of the Saryntsev family, including Nikolai Ivanovich’s wife Marya Ivanovna, suggest in the play. Does real-life practice of Christianity as taught by Christ in the Sermon On the Mount necessarily lead to madness in the practical world? It certainly will not prevent suffering, problems, and conflict, even with those who are the closest and dearest, as Lev Nikolaevich showed in the play and in his life. But selfless love, which is at the foundation of Christ’s teaching, remains the meaning of life, the ultimate answer to all questions, and the ultimate solution to all problems because it is the only link to God for human beings. Indeed as Tolstoy shows in And Light Shines Through the Darkness, the world itself exists only to the extent that it flourishes in people.

Lev Nikolaevich completed many other compositions, both artistic and polemical, in the last years of his life, but they all shared the characteristic didacticism of Tolstoy’s work and art. For example his short (and unfinished) novel, The False Coupon (written 1902-1904, published uncensored in Berlin and censored in Russia in 1911), is similar to other works, such as his play The Power of Darkness, which concern the power of evil to reproduce evil if it is not stopped, absorbed, and neutralized by the power of good operating through nonresistance to evil.²⁹¹ In The False Coupon the petty crime of two schoolboys forging a banknote begins a geometric progression of increasing evil including a peasant who, while seeking justice for the theft of his horses, instead becomes a wanton serial murderer. He is spiritually redeemed by the vision of one of his victims, a good woman who pitied him and whose practice of true Christianity had served to inspire others. He surrenders to the authorities, and in turn transforms himself into an example of selfless love and doing good which helps to redeem other evildoers. Other individual human sketches, from peasant to tsar, are intertwined with the main story to further reflect the message that every person’s actions for good or evil replicate the same effect in others.

²⁹⁰Pss v 91t, vol. 31, p. 184.

are all composed on the themes of Russian militarism, chauvinism, and tsarist conquest and suppression of other nationalities in its empire at the time of Nicholas I (1825-1855), a period which greatly coincides with Tolstoy's own military service from 1851 to 1856. The short story After the Ball expresses the stark contrast between a young student's romantic thoughts of the beautiful daughter of an army colonel at a high-society ball and his horror at recognizing her father commanding the brutal execution by gauntlet of an accused Tatar deserter. Hadji Murat is a short historical novel with Rousseauist overtones of the struggle of the noble Chechen chief, symbolized in nature by the diehard purple thistle, against the tyrannies of both Nicholas I and the Chechen rebel Shamil. What For? is a historically-based story of a Polish couple, Josif Migursky and his wife Albina, and their exile in Siberia for participating in the Polish insurrection against the Russian Empire in 1830-1831. It is told from a Polish point of view with a strong denunciation of Nicholas I at the end.

To these stories featuring Tolstoy's condemnation of Russian chauvinism and tsarist government violence against other nationalities at the time of Nicholas I should be added his unfinished chronicle, The Posthumous Notes of the Hermit Fyodor Kuzmich (written 1905, published uncensored in Berlin in 1912 and in Russia in 1918). This is Lev Nikolaevich's version of the legend of the hermit Fyodor Kuzmich, who was possibly the abdicated Tsar Alexander I despite his reported death in 1825. In it the repentant Alexander issues an apologia for his life not lived according to God's will as he continues his search for the true meaning of life and the redemption of his soul. Alexander/Fyodor Kuzmich also reveals how he accomplished the deception of his death, and he begins the story of his life in a diary form. Although Tolstoy left Fyodor Kuzmich unfinished, his story of the repentant tsar and savior of Russia makes clear that the redemption of the life and soul of each human being is an individual affair no matter what

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229Ss v 22t, vol. XIV, pp. 494-500. Circle of Reading is a collection of inspirational and philosophical notes and works of wisdom selected by Tolstoy from his own compositions and those of others (originally compiled in Thoughts of Wise People), some of which he translated. He frequently read or had read to him selections from Circle of Reading in his last days (See for example Biryukov, Biografiya L. N. Tolstogo, Book II, pp. 633-650). Near the end of 1908, Tolstoy finished the basic work on a similar, but simplified calendar of related reading called For Each Day, some of which was published in 1909. Lev Nikolaevich also completed another shorter edition of the Circle of Reading anthology, called The Way of Life, one month before his death. It was published in censored editions of thirty small brochures and eleven small volumes in 1911 by Posrednik, while Circle of Reading was published in censored editions in Russia from 1905 to 1913. Finally in 1915 The Way of Life was published uncensored in Russia in volume 45 of the limited edition Pss, and Circle of Reading followed in 1917 in volume 42 (Pss v 91t, vol. 42, pp. 557-582). See Pss v 91t, vol. 45, pp. 521-527 and 544-561 for the history of the writing and publication of this series of works, which Tolstoy regarded as his most important. Note that Circle of Reading and related series were not available to the general public in Russia, as Tolstoy had intended, until after the demise of the Soviet regime.

230Tolstoy changed the title of this short story from But You Say, then Father and Daughter, before finally deciding on After the Ball in the last manuscript dated 20 August 1903. See Pss v 91t, vol. 34, pp. 550-553.

231Pss v 91t, vol. 36, pp. 584-589; Ss v 22t, vol. XIV, pp. 506-507. All four of these stories also include scenes of executions by gauntlet, a practice Tolstoy found particularly horrible and repugnant, just as he did all forms of capital punishment, which he believed was immoral and against the law of God.
one's station in this earthly life. In reference to the philosophy previously expressed in *War and Peace*, in Fyodor Kuzmich Tolstoy also begins to show how and why it is more difficult for the wealthy and powerful, "the great people of history" such as Alexander, to escape living a lost life than it is for those who are materially poorer and socially less fortunate.

In addition to his stories with anti-tsarist government themes, in his last years Lev Nikolaevich also wrote those which featured criticism of Russia's intellectuals and revolutionaries. *Berries*, written in the space of two days (10-11 June) in 1905 and published as part of *Circle of Reading* in 1906, is a short story in the "slice of life" style of Tolstoy's friend, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904). In it the lives of the landowners and gentry, like Nikolai Semyonich and the dinner guests at his dacha, are shown to be so different from those of their servants or the peasants of a neighboring village that their values are mutually incomprehensible. Whether they are liberals, social democrats, revolutionaries, conservatives, or Slavophils, intellectuals have nothing in common with the peasants, and none are really concerned with them at all.

*Divine and Human* (1903-1906) was originally created as a chapter of *Resurrection* before Tolstoy rewrote it as a separate story in his diary entry of 30 December 1903, which was later revised and also published as part of *Circle of Reading* in 1906. It provides excellent portraits of revolutionaries, with the first being the most exemplary. This is Svetlogub, a young, idealistic university graduate of noble birth who has difficult rapport with the peasants he is supposed to educate. He is condemned to death by hanging for hiding explosives in his apartment at the request of a group of radical terrorists led by Mezhenetskiy. Some time before his execution, Svetlogub begins to read the New Testament, copies of which were given to all the prisoners by the wife of the provincial governor-general. He finds there the meaning of life and the redemption of his soul which enable him to face his death bravely as well as to serve as an example to other prisoners, including an old man who is an Old Believer. After witnessing the bravery of Svetlogub, the old man finds truth in his example, and he searches for others who believe as Svetlogub did. He questions Mezhenetskiy, the revolutionary terrorist who is also imprisoned, but the aged Old Believer discovers that he believes in killing and overthrowing the government by violence, actions which Svetlogub had come to disavow.

Mezhenetskiy survives in prison for seven years by means of a rigid mental regime which he had developed, but he never becomes spiritually redeemed with God. After the prisoners are transferred to Siberia, Mezhenetskiy meets a group of recently arrived younger revolutionaries who believe in the education of peasants to become proletarian factory workers as the basis for the revolution, but they have no regard for the terrorist violence of earlier revolutionaries like Mezhenetskiy. Meanwhile both Mezhenetskiy and the young proletarian revolutionaries see the aged Old Believer as a madman, who often says incomprehensible things about the coming of Christ.

At the end of the story, the aged Old Believer dies while seeing a vision of Christ redeeming the world and saving it from evil, while a severely depressed Mezhenetskiy hangs himself in his cell to escape the "absurd horror" of his circumstances. *Divine and Human* is thus a study in the contrasts of the three lives and their deaths: those of Svetlogub and the aged Old Believer, who

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297Tolstoy at one time in November 1905 wanted to change the title of *Divine and Human* to *Three More Deaths*. See Pss v 91t: vol. 42, pp. 648-649, 662; vol. 89, pp. 27-28 (letter to A. K. and V. G. Chertkov of 10 November
earnestly seek the truth and are spiritually redeemed; and the disciplined, but fanatical life and suicide of Mezhenetskiy, who realizes the futility of his long-time efforts toward violent revolution as well as the folly of making a revolution through educating the peasants to become proletarian factory workers.

Although Tolstoy himself was never arrested by the tsarist authorities for his anti-regime writing, in addition to the heavy censorship and sometimes prohibition of his works in Russia, some of his associates and disciples, such as V. G. Chertkov, P. I. Biryukov, N. N. Gusev (his secretary), and I. I. Gorbunov-Posadov (his editor at Posrednik) were harassed and persecuted. Chertkov and Biryukov, who had been exiled out of Russia for ten and eight years respectively before Nicholas II’s amnesties in 1904-1905, were again pursued in 1909. Chertkov was exiled away from Tolstoy (out of Tula Province) in Russia, and Biryukov had his residences searched and some property confiscated. In addition Gusev and Gorbunov-Posadov were imprisoned in 1909, then exiled for two years and one year respectively.

The renewed persecution of Tolstoy’s associates, and those mentioned did not by any means comprise a complete list, was certainly facilitated by a more secure atmosphere for Stolypin’s government after the 1905 revolution and the attempts at liberal reforms which followed it. But the hollowness of the reforms and the increasing use of capital punishment, especially the execution by hanging of twelve peasants in Kherson in May 1908, led to Lev Nikolaevich’s moral outrage expressed in I Cannot Be Silent, The Law of Violence and the Law of Love, and The Death Penalty and Christianity, all of which were written in 1908, and all of which criticized the government and revolutionaries severely for their anti-Christian violence and counterviolence. The Death Penalty and Christianity was written in rapid response to a newspaper article by Stolypin’s journalist brother which attempted to justify the government’s use of the death penalty on Christian grounds. In I Cannot Be Silent Tolstoy asked that he himself be put to death along with the peasants as there was no greater government outlaw than he, and the luxury of his wealth and his social status served as tacit support for government policy. But of course Nicholas II and Stolypin were not going to make a martyr of the most famous Russian in the world at the time, especially when they had so many other lesser known associates to persecute.

In The Law of Violence and the Law of Love Lev Nikolaevich restated his belief in the law of love as God’s supreme law for humanity with its commandment to resist evil by love, but not by force or violence, as expressed in Christ’s Sermon On the Mount (Matthew 5:38-48). In this treatise Tolstoy explained again from historical perspectives why this essential Christian belief had relevance for the individual’s relations with any state or government, however liberal or tyrannical. Love in Christian anarchy as a goal also had supreme relevance for non-Christians as well, for this was God’s universal supreme law. In his Letter to a Hindoo (1908-1909), which Lev Nikolaevich revised from Chertkov’s translation into English of his Russian original, he emphasized the supremacy of God’s law of love with quotations from Krishna, declaring that it is

1905).  

298 The Death Penalty and Christianity was begun 22 December 1908 and finished 2 January 1909 with an addendum dated 18 January 1909 (Pss v 91t, vol. 38, pp. 494-497). These writings were first published in uncensored form only abroad, but they circulated illegally in Russia until after the February Revolution of 1917, when they were published in full (Pss v 91t, vol. 37, pp. 425-427, 436-438).

299 In addition to his close family relationship to the tsarist court, Tolstoy had also served in the Crimean War with Stolypin’s father.
not 30 thousand English who have enslaved 200 million Indians, but it is the Indians who have enslaved themselves. If they are to free themselves, it cannot be done by violence, but must be done by the power of love. Tolstoy’s letter was written in response to a request from the editor of the Free Hindustan newspaper, and his answer found its way to an already devoted follower of Lev Nikolaevich named Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948). Gandhi printed it in his journal Indian Opinion in January 1910 and maintained a correspondence (1909-1910) with “that great teacher” which lasted until Tolstoy’s death.\footnote{Gandhi’s introduction to Tolstoy’s Letter to a Hindoo, in which he calls himself “a humble follower of that great teacher whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides,” is contained in volume 20 (Recollections and Essays) of Louise and Aylmer Maude’s translations, The Works of Leo Tolstoy (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1928-1937), pp. 413-415. See also Pss v 91t, vol. 37, pp. 444-446, as well as vol. 80 (pp. 110-112), vol. 81 (pp. 247-248), and vol. 82 (pp. 137-141) for three letters to Gandhi. Gandhi had a more positive view of government than Tolstoy, and he advocated non-violent resistance to evil and non-violence as a means for political change. He first became impressed with Lev Nikolaevich’s ideas when he read The Kingdom of God Is Within You, which “overwhelmed me.” See Gandhi, An Autobiography: My Experiments With Truth (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 114-115.}

In reality Tolstoy’s lack of faith in government or in human organization in general did not stem so much from his belief in anarchy as a remedy for human problems as it did from his total emphasis on the individual struggle for salvation of the soul and reunification with God through a life of selfless love. As he wrote in his Letter to a Revolutionary (composed in 1909, published in 1911), any kind of revolution through violence would be useless, benefit only a ruling class, and certainly lead to more destruction.\footnote{Pss v 91t, vol. 38, pp. 263-267, 567. Tolstoy wrote Letter to a Revolutionary on 26-29 January 1909 in response to a letter from the revolutionary M. S. Vrutsevich in which he rejected Lev Nikolaevich’s call for non-resistance to evil by violence.} In the last composition he wrote before his death, On Socialism (composed September-October 1910, published 1936), Lev Nikolaevich reiterated that socialism or any other theory of government, however well-intentioned or scientific, led people away from the true meaning of life, as it was just as much superstition as institutional religion had become.\footnote{Pss v 91t, vol. 38, pp. 426-432, 592-593. Tolstoy wrote On Socialism in response to a letter from the Czech young socialist party newspaper Mladé Proudy requesting his participation in a book of articles on socialism and people’s economics. Lev Nikolaevich was initially dissatisfied with this article, thinking it was mostly repetition, but he later became more interested in it. On 31 October 1910, the day his final illness began, he requested it, but it was not found in his desk at Yasnaya Polyana until after his death. See his diary note of 30 October 1910 (Pss v 91t, vol. 58, p. 125 and notes pp. 573-574) and letter to Chertkov of 31 October 1910 (vol. 89, pp. 234-236).} Human government and organization are made up of sinful people of varying degrees, but they are always based on the least common denominator among them. Thus the most wicked will always rule and fail the rest in a fateful comparison to what would be achieved on earth if everyone lived life according to the universal Christian philosophy of Jesus Christ, whose principles of the meaning of life applied to all, Christian and non-Christian alike. All other religious, social, or governmental doctrine or belief was worthless and a hindrance to an understanding of the real meaning of life.

In the last year of his life, Lev Nikolaevich wrote a letter in response to a worker from Baku who had asked Tolstoy about God and His relation to the human soul. Lev Nikolaevich’s reply...
provides a succinct summary of his basic beliefs about the meaning of life in the same manner in which he wrote his son Andrey more than fourteen years before when he declared, "A person has been given an immortal soul by God, and for the guidance of this soul - reason." In the letter dated 22 January 1910 to Pyotr Melnikov from Baku, Tolstoy began by saying that Melnikov's main problem was his reliance on the infallibility of everything in the scriptures. Along with a lot that is wise and just in holy books of all religions is a lot that is false and stupid, especially anything which deviates from God's fundamental law of loving your neighbor. Lev Nikolaevich continued:

"You are interested primarily in two questions, as I understand it: God - what is God? - and the soul. How can God relate to people and what kind of life can there be for the soul after death?

To the first question, what is God and how does he relate to people, a lot has been told in the Bible about how He created the world and how He relates to people, rewarding them with paradise and punishing them with hell. All that is trash, and you well need to forget it and put it out of your head. God is the beginning of everything without Whom there would be nothing, and a part of Whom we feel within ourselves as our life, and Who manifests Himself in us by love (only from this do we say that God is love). All that discussion about how He created the world and mankind, and how He will punish and torment people, again I repeat, you have to forget completely about it in order to understand the meaning of your life.

That is everything that we know and can know about God.

About the soul we only know that what we call our life is of divine origin, without which nothing would exist for us, and that such a thing animates the body, but it has nothing of the flesh about it, and so it cannot die with the body.

You also ask, like many other people, if the soul is immortal, and will it live after the death of the body?

In order for you to understand my answer to your question, I ask you to pay special attention to what I will write now:

For the human body, and only for the body, does time exist, that is, hours, days, months, and years pass, and only for the human body do material and bodily things exist, that is, what can be seen and felt with the hands, what is large or small, hard or soft, tough or flimsy. For the soul there is no time. It is always in the human body by itself. Just as I said 'I' about myself seventy years ago, so do I feel the same 'I' about myself now. For the soul there is nothing material: wherever I have been, whatever happened to me, my soul or my 'I' is again everywhere one and the same, and everywhere it is not material. So for the body only does time exist, that is, the question of what was and what will be, and place exists where it can be located, and material exists from which it can be made, but for the soul there is neither time, nor place, nor material. And therefore we cannot ask what will happen to the soul and where it will be after death because the words will be denote time, and the word where denotes place, and there can be neither time nor place for the soul after the death of the body.

It is obvious how superficial and wrong are discussions about a future life and about heaven and hell because, if the soul is going to live after death and is going to live somewhere, then it must have also lived somewhere before birth, but no one speaks about that.

\[\text{Pss v. 91e, vol. 68, p. 217. This is from Tolstoy’s letter of 16 (?) October 1895 to his son Andrey about his life, including his drinking problem, and his marriage plans.}\]
My opinion is that the soul in us cannot die because only our body dies, but what becomes of the soul and where it will be, we don’t know and can’t know, although we know that it can’t die. About rewards and punishments I think that our life here passes well, quiet, and happy only when we live according to the law of love for one another. And it passes fearfully, badly, and disastrously when we deviate from this law. So our life is constructed here in such a way that in this life (and we are aware of no other), we already receive reward and punishment for our deeds.”[^304]

[^304]: Pss v 91t, vol. 81, pp. 60-62.
CHAPTER EIGHT
THE UNFINISHED MADMAN’S QUEST: NOT A CONCLUSION, JUST AN ENDING

The earthly life of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy ended on 7 November (old style, 20 November new style) 1910 in the stationmaster’s house at the wayside railway station of Astapovo (now called Lev Tolstoy) in Ryazan province, about 100 miles southeast of Tula. He had left home, accompanied by his doctor and friend, Dushan Makovitskiy, on 28 October (old style) for various reasons, including: to finally change the circumstances of his life according to his beliefs; to seek relief of the stress brought on by the deteriorating relationship with Sofya Andreevna and her struggle with Chertkov for control of his diaries and manuscripts; to visit his sister Masha [Mariya Nikolaevna (1830-1912)] at the Shamardino convent; to visit the monastery at Optina Pustyn (where he and Makovitskiy were joined by his daughter Aleksandra); and a desire not to die at home as he felt the close approach of the end of his life. Lev Nikolaevich, Aleksandra Lvovna, and Makovitskiy were on their way south to Novocherkassk on the Don River to see his relatives, the Denisenkos, for help in finding a new place to live, either in Bulgaria, if Tolstoy could get a passport, or in the Caucasus, if he could not. But Tolstoy became ill, and they stopped in Astapovo. By the time he died, a crowd of people, including Sofya Andreevna and other family and friends as well as doctors, had come there to see to his well-being. His funeral in Yasnaya Polyana, the first public non-Orthodox service in Russia, was attended by thousands despite deliberate attempts by the government not to facilitate travel to his rural estate.

The most famous and beloved Russian of them all, the empathetic and tireless, but never fanatical, writer and advocate of the true Christian universal philosophy of selfless love, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy was buried very simply in the Zaseka woods of his estate on the edge of a small ravine, about two-thirds of a mile from his house. It was the spot where his brother Nikolai many years ago had hidden the green stick with the secret to human happiness written on it. Even today, despite the revolutions, invasions, and holocausts which have ravaged Russia since, Tolstoy’s grave, estate, houses, and monuments are reverently maintained in their natural state, as if he had just left for a moment. It is an indication that his reputation and the philosophy that he believed in are as perennial as the grass struggling to break through the asphalt of human vanity, as he described so eloquently in the beginning of Resurrection.

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After Tolstoy’s mid-life conversion to Christianity, he never wavered from his belief that, while man lives consciously for himself, he is an unconscious instrument in the attainment of the

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305 Biryukov, Biografiya L. N. Tolstogo, Book II, pp. 619-633. Biryukov’s account includes Tolstoy’s diary notes and letters, as well as testimony from others, including the notes of Aleksandra Lvovna.
historical and universal aims of society. He believed that the individual's deeds done are irrevocable, and that their results coincide in time with those of others. In this way important historical currents are created. Thus so-called great men are merely labels for the large currents of history made by the mass interactions of great numbers of people and events.306

Tolstoy's belief in historical determinism, or the process of nature itself determining the lives of human beings, led to an inner conflict between his own expressions of free will, guided by both his genius and his selfishness, and his insistence that the individual is hopelessly caught up in large currents of history which he cannot affect. The result of this conflict was a sometimes severe despondency on the part of perhaps the world's greatest writer ever, a despondency which remained with him to the end of his days.

Tolstoy's inner conflict can be seen as a reflection of himself in many of his works, but it was brought to fruition in War and Peace, his magnum opus, which he finished in 1869. In it, and especially in his portrayals of characters such as the Russian General Kutuzov, Tsar Alexander I, Napoleon Bonaparte, Prince Andrei, and Tolstoy's alter ego, Pierre Bezukhov, not only does Tolstoy reveal his conflicted beliefs, but he also shows his realistic and sensitive soul, his greatest attribute. It is also one which contributes to his severe despondency, which even Tolstoy's genius could not overcome or prevent him from becoming like his own Father Sergius (written 1890-1898, published 1911), a compelling story of a Russian prince who nominally rejects his personal glory in the mundane world, becomes a monk and lives in hermetic isolation until he is sought out by a willful temptress intent on forcing the prince to break his vows. Because he is so fearful that he will succumb to her, he cuts off his finger to deflect the passion which he cannot control. Just as Tolstoy does in his own life, Father Sergius has difficulty learning that spiritual vanity is just as damaging to the soul as the secular kind.307

In his pessimism Tolstoy deprecates the potential of the individual to achieve moral progress and to affect the behavior of others and perhaps even the course of history. Was Lev Nikolaevich too envious of the historical fame of Napoleon in War and Peace? Perhaps. But certainly his envy of the perfection of Christ’s teaching and his belief that it came from God, although he did not recognize Christ as the Son of God or any kind of deity, also facilitated his pessimism that any common person could attain such moral heights, especially in the mundane world of temptation in which we live, a world where the most evil and the most ruthless persons will always persecute and rule the good. As Tolstoy shows in his late-life treatise, The Law of Violence and the Law of Love, the law of violence governs human organization, which ensures that the least common

306See Book Nine, Chapter 1 ("The year 1812. Rulers and generals are ‘history’s slaves.’") and the Second Epilogue of the Aylmer and Louise Maude translation of Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace, edited by George Gibian (New York: Norton, 1996). See as well L. N. Tolstoy, Ss v 22t, Volume VI, pp.10-12 (third volume of Vovna i mir [War and Peace], chast’ pervaya [first part]) and Volume VII, pp. 309-355 (fourth volume of War and Peace, second part of the epilogue). War and Peace contains a total of fifteen parts or books and two epilogues (or two parts of the epilogue).

307Tolstoy makes this point precisely in his diary entries of 17 July 1898, as he shows his own internal struggle when he was in the midst of writing both Father Sergius and Resurrection: "...How difficult it is to really live only for God! You think you’re living for God, but as soon as life jolts you, refuses you that vital support which held you up, you feel that there’s no power in God, and you fall...There is no solace neither for him who lives among people for worldly reasons, nor for him who lives by himself for a spiritual reason. There is peace of mind only when a person lives among people to serve God." (Pss v 91t, vol. 53, pp. 203-204)
Tolstoy’s lack of faith in government to solve vital human problems applied to Western democratic governments as well. See The Kingdom of God Is Within You above. As he referred to him in Resurrection and noted in a diary entry of 14 April 1903 (Pss v 91t, vol. 54, p. 168), Lev Nikolaevich read and admired Henry David Thoreau, who had written in the first paragraph of Civil Disobedience (1849), “I heartily accept the motto, - ’That government is best which governs least;’...” The famous motto is that of the literary and political monthly journal, The United States Magazine and Democratic Review (1837-1856, 1857-1859).

In War and Peace Tolstoy told stories of all kinds of individuals in the context of the great historical event which was the Napoleonic Invasion of Russia. The contrasts between good and bad generals, common people and nobility, the snobs, cynics, aristocrats, and the indulgent, simple, earnest, cowardly, brave, vain, and selfish people are all woven into the fabric of human history and described by Tolstoy in his famous novel. But his spiritual crisis is reflected in the character of the sensitive and sometimes despondent Pierre Bezukhov, who says in a discussion with Prince Andrei on a ferry raft in the Bald Hills (Book Five, Chapter Ten): “If there is a God and future life, there is truth and good, and a person’s highest happiness is striving to attain them. We must live, we must love, and we must believe... that we live not only today on this bit of earth, but that we have lived and will live forever, there, in the Whole’ and he pointed to the sky.” Later in his life Lev Nikolaevich was to become more optimistic about the potential of the individual to affect the behavior of others by his good works of selfless love, which Tolstoy believed is the only way God works in the world of humans and is the only connection to God available to human beings. Among other works his novel Resurrection and his short story Divine and Human demonstrated this belief as well as the truth of the reverse, that evil works motivated by selfish love produce evil in a fearful geometric progression. But ever mindful of Christ’s dictum and Tolstoy’s writing that The Kingdom of God Is Within You, despite the inevitable pessimism, we must take the advice of Voltaire’s hero Candide at the end of the novel Candide ou l’optimisme [Candide or Optimism] (1758-1761): “Il faut cultiver notre jardin [We must cultivate our garden].” Make the world better because of what you do, however small and seemingly insignificant, for although there is less freedom than we think, in reality the scale of our efforts is relative, and small can be much greater than we know. Even the best and most powerful human organization cannot

308 Tolstoy’s lack of faith in government to solve vital human problems applied to Western democratic governments as well. See The Kingdom of God Is Within You above. As he referred to him in Resurrection and noted in a diary entry of 14 April 1903 (Pss v 91t, vol. 54, p. 168), Lev Nikolaevich had read and admired Henry David Thoreau, who had written in the first paragraph of Civil Disobedience (1849), “I heartily accept the motto, - ’That government is best which governs least;’...” The famous motto is that of the literary and political monthly journal, The United States Magazine and Democratic Review (1837-1856, 1857-1859).

309Pss v 91t, vol. 37, p. 185.

310F. M. Dostoevsky’s proof of the existence of God in The Brothers Karamazov is the existence of good and evil. Although The Brothers Karamazov (1880) was written after War and Peace (1869/1873), Tolstoy read and appreciated it, especially the parts featuring The Grand Inquisitor and Father Zosima’s farewell. He also had his criticism: “Much is good, but it’s so disjointed.” See his diary note of 19 October 1910 (Pss v 91t, vol. 58, p. 121).

match the power of God, which can only be demonstrated on earth through the selfless love of an individual person. Tolstoy’s lifetime quest only reaffirmed what he had known instinctively all along, that the real and only vital struggle in human life is inside each person.

In his later years Lev Nikolaevich thought much about the fact that many thought that he had become mad because of his insistence on living according to his fundamental Christian beliefs. His many references to madness in his later diary entries, letters, and writings, and the long gestation of his short work, Notes of a Madman, bear witness. But as his play, And Light Shines Through the Darkness, reveals in a far more intimate way than one would think of a great writer of timeless renown, Tolstoy was willing to compromise his convictions, but always and only for the sake of his highest belief, the fundamental law of God, selfless love for others and concern for their welfare, even if he thought them wrong. For he knew that we are all such unfinished madmen of firm conviction, but selfless love is the meaning of life and its sole (soul) support.
PART TWO
ÉMILE ZOLA AND THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

Émile Zola (1840-1902), in the era of Charles Darwin, scientific discovery, and exploration of the earth environment, took a scientific, naturalistic, and deterministic approach to the problem of the meaning of life. An early life of poverty and doubt about religion following the untimely death of his father, an accomplished scientist and engineer, led a young and idealistic Zola to abandon his consuming interest in romantic poetry and take up writing more remunerative prose and literary criticism. The main focus of Zola’s creative work, the twenty-novel saga of the Rougon-Macquart (1871-1893), deals in mostly pessimistic and graphic terms with the terrible problems and lives of individuals of the lower classes of the French Second Empire (1851-1870) and its fall.\textsuperscript{312} They were hopelessly condemned by heredity, environment, and history to living their lives in deplorable conditions which led inexorably to unenviable fates. His last two series of novels, the Trois villes [Three Cities] (1894-1898) and the QuatreÉvangiles [Four Gospels] (1899-1902), have a more optimistic, sometimes utopian outlook as they treat the moral and religious problems of ordinary people in the latter nineteenth and future twentieth centuries as well as the conflict between science and religion. In the later part of his life, especially with the advent of the Dreyfus Affair in 1894, Zola became more concerned with the moral progress of individuals, especially as examples and leaders for the spiritual and social development of humanity. He, like Tolstoy, was very skeptical of the ability of organized and institutional religion to help the individual or humanity in the vital quest for moral and social progress. For Émile Zola reason guided by science and the continual discovery of natural truths was to provide the way to the meaning of life based on the true Christian teaching of pure, or selfless love.

\textsuperscript{312}Three novels of the series exceed the 1851-1870 period of the Second Empire. L’Oeuvre [The Masterpiece] (1886) takes place between 1862-1874. La Débâcle (1892), the story of the French defeat at Sedan in the Franco-Prussian War, its consequences, and the Paris Commune, includes only the years 1870-1871. The epilogue novel, Le Docteur Pascal (1893), concerns 1872-1874, after the fall of the Second Empire.
CHAPTER ONE
YOUTH, CAREER, AND WORKS BEFORE THE ROUGON-MACQUART
1840-1868

It was in Paris that Émile Zola was born on 2 April 1840, the only child of François Zola (Francesco Zolla), an accomplished Italian engineer from a Venetian family with a long tradition of military service, and Émilie Aubert, whose family of modest means had moved to Paris from Dourdan, a small town about 27 miles southwest of the capital city in the Île-de-France. In 1843 the family moved to Aix-en-Provence, where François Zola's design and plan for a municipal water system with dams and a canal had been accepted. But Zola’s father died unexpectedly of pleurisy in 1847 while supervising the construction of the project, and the family lost their comfortable economic circumstances and potential wealth in a swindle. The highly respected François Zola was later memorialized in Aix with the canal (1871) and a boulevard (1868) in his name, and his example and influence remained with his son despite his leaving Émile only the memories of childhood. In 1898, in the first of a series of newspaper articles published in L’Aurore to defend his family’s reputation from attacks in the Dreyfus Affair, Zola noted that his father was “a hero of energy and work” whose “life was good, generous, and great.” After the tragic loss of his father and his family wealth, Zola and his mother remained in Aix, and the young Émile was later granted a scholarship by the city to study at the Collège Bourbon, which is now the Lycée d’Aix.

Zola studied at the Collège Bourbon in Aix during the years 1852-1858, during which time he made the acquaintance of two of the best friends of his life, Jean-Baptistin Baille (1841-1918), the son of an innkeeper who later became an astronomer and optical scientist, and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), the son of a rich banker who later became a famous Post-Impressionist painter. Zola was an excellent student who became more interested in the natural sciences than in letters, but the three friends also were greatly attracted to romantic poetry, especially that of Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), Victor Hugo (1802-1885), and Alfred de Musset (1810-1857).

In 1858 Zola moved with his mother and grandfather (his grandmother Aubert, who had lived with them in Aix, died in November 1857) again to Paris, where he enrolled at the Lycée Saint-Louis, again on scholarship. But he greatly missed his friends, the natural environment, and his life in Aix-en-Provence, especially as the family had to move six times during the years 1858-1862 to cheaper and cheaper lodging. Moreover the Lycée Saint-Louis in Paris was much more competitive than the Collège Bourbon in Aix, and Zola found himself ranked academically at the

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All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

314Zola, Oeuvres complètes (hereafter abbreviated Oc), vol. 12, pp. 328, 372-373. Zola’s affirmation of the great influence of the romantic poets on him, especially Hugo, Lamartine, and De Musset, are contained in a series of articles which he wrote (at Ivan Turgenev’s request) for the Russian journal Vestnik Evropy [Messager de l’Europe] from 1875 to 1880. The two cited, “Alfred de Musset” and “Les Poètes contemporains” are included in Zola’s collection, Documents littéraires, published in 1881.
bottom of the top third of the students in his class. His academic and career dreams finally burst for good when he failed the baccalaureate examination twice (the first time failing just the oral part, but the second time, after returning to Provence for a long stay, he also failed the written test), and Zola had to return to Paris to eventually take a menial job in the Docks administration. He was thoroughly disgusted with himself for failing to live up to his father’s legacy, but he hoped to redeem himself through his literary talent, of which he was always very confident.

Much of Zola’s early writing was concentrated on poetry, influenced no doubt by his attraction to the romantic poets, and on 17 February 1859, his poetic paean to his father’s legacy, “Le Canal Zola,” was published in the newspaper La Provence. In this poem, which is replete with romantic apostrophes to nature, he extolls the work of the man who harnesses nature to make water flow to parched areas, who changes the immense chaos of a tormented land, a land which God had abandoned, so that the richness which the mountains contain will be poured out to the thirsty region:

“He wants to probe the rocks one by one,
And, the new Moses, touches it with his finger
To make an immense fountain gush forth,
He wants to carpet Provence with a fresh lawn;
He wants it!... His project will be created by his voice,
Nature... And this man will pass by to create!...

...Glory, glory to this man, to this inspired man,
Whose vast genius
Made the wave gush forth, and by which the sky is taken hold of
Before the finished work!

Glory to him, glory, glory! - Oh! How should I stop?
It’s a holy ministry
Which has dictated to me the songs I have just sung;
This man... was my father.”

Émile Zola’s hero worship of his father provided him with the example of courage and vision necessary to continue to attempt a literary career despite the setbacks he and his family had endured and the poverty of their material circumstances. The years 1858-1862 were ones of persistent challenge to Zola’s spirit and psyche, and he had to deal with doubts about God, his faith, religion, death, and the pessimism of a life with seemingly insurmountable obstacles to his dreams. His letters from Paris to his friends Baille and Cézanne in Provence during this period show his often worried, pessimistic, and even desperate moods as he suffered. But they also reveal a stubborn persistence of optimistic spirit which was certainly driven more by his dreams than by the logic of his intellect, and which was surely facilitated more by his individual faith in God, love, and truth than by the scorn with which he already regarded the social and religious institutions of his era.

Near the end of 1859, Zola wrote to Baille, describing the main protagonist of a fairy tale which he had written and sent to La Provence, saying that the fairy “is a god for the lovers, and that

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315Zola, Oc, vol. 15, pp. 863-866. Although many of the manuscripts of his early works have been lost, the hand-written fragments of this poem were preserved by Zola’s family.
neither hell, nor the people, nor the priests with their bad doctrine can destroy a pure love." It was evidence of the strong influence of the romantic poets and of the social historian of the love ideal, Jules Michelet (1798-1874), on him. The letter was also an early indication of the young Zola's feelings toward the society and the church of his birth, whose institutions he considered to be in direct conflict with his ideals of God and true love.

Zola's letters in 1860 and 1861 further reveal in an intimate way the profound pessimism and sadness of his life as well as his anger and frustration at the obstacles put in his way. But he also begins to chart the spiritual course of his soul. In 1860 he writes how sad he is, how sad Paris is (16 January 1860 to Cézanne); how there is no happiness in Paris, how he feels beaten and unintelligent (9 February 1860 to Cézanne); how bad and short life is (25 March 1860 to Cézanne); that one has to live well ‘while waiting for the great sleep’ (13 June 1860 to Cézanne); that he isn’t sure if liberty is more than just a word (24 June 1860 to Baille); and that “my future is very somber” (25 June 1860 to Cézanne). In 1861 he changes his tone somewhat, especially when he obtains a low-paying job working in the administration of the Docks, as he describes his laziness and malaise, the “spleen” of the era, but he still has great doubts about himself, a fear of the future, and bad health as he suffers because of his poverty. He stops writing letters after July, probably because he no longer can afford it and because Baille has moved to Paris, until early in 1862 when he is employed by Hachette Publishers as a clerk. He is still suffering, but he is more hopeful, as he says in a letter to Cézanne of 20 January 1862, just before he begins at Hachette:

“However don’t think that I am completely brutalized. I am quite sick, but not dead yet. The spirit keeps watch and responds wonderfully. I believe that I have even grown in my suffering. I

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217 Zola wrote much about Michelet, author of L’Amour (1858) and La Femme (1859) among other works of social philosophy and philosophical history, in letters to Baille and Cézanne in this period. See especially that to Baille of 14 January 1860, where he writes that “it is false to claim that love is dead, that our time is nothing but materialism. A great and beautiful task, a task which Michelet has undertaken, a task which I sometimes dare to envisage, is to make man return to woman. One would finish perhaps by opening his eyes. Life is short. This would be a way to beautify it. The world is on the path of progress, this would be a way to get there quicker. And don’t go to believe that it would be the poet who speaks. Even exaggeration doesn’t matter. Michelet makes a god of woman of whom man is a humble adorer. To great evils, great remedies are necessary. And if they did half of what he asks, in my opinion the world would go on perfectly.” (Zola, Correspondance, vol. I, pp. 129-130)


219 See Zola’s letters in Correspondance, vol. I, of 20 February 1861 to Baille (pp. 268-271), 1 March 1861 to Baille (pp. 271-274), 17 March 1861 to Baille (pp. 274-279), 10 June 1861 to Baille (pp. 292-298), 18 July 1861 to Baille (pp. 304-311).
see, I hear better. New senses which I lacked to judge certain things have come to me. I will know how to paint better, it seems to me, certain details of life than I would have a year ago. In a word my horizon has expanded, and if I can write one day, my touch will be firmer because I will write what I have already felt. Hope! ..."  

So Émile Zola’s pessimism and desperation in the 1858-1862 period not only did not prevent him from developing his philosophy of the meaning of life, they undoubtedly enhanced his capability to accomplish this vital mission. His vie de Bohème and poverty-stricken lifestyle allowed him closer contact with the lives of the poor of Paris, an experience which would prove to be essential in his later true-to-life depictions of characters in the Rougon-Macquart novels and other works. Although these years were difficult ones, the experience did not cause Zola to become unhappy. He had the freedom to see human life in its fundamental, unadorned, or natural state, that is, one that is subject to the laws of nature. Even though he was revolted by its injustices and social inequities, and despite his own personal suffering, he was driven by his desperation to succeed, to develop his message and to deliver it.

In a letter of 2 June 1860 to Baille, Zola describes the “devouring activity” of his century of transition in the sciences, in commerce, and in the arts, but he notes that the situation in the political domain is much worse with “the peoples rising, the empires tending toward unity.” As for religion, “everything is shaken up, for the new world which is going to surge forth, a young and vivacious religion is required.” In such a time of rapid change, it is the job of the poet to interrogate the future, to break from those who would cling to the past, and to establish his dreams and his visions for humanity.

Then in a letter of 15 June 1860 to Baille, Zola outlines “a small poem which has been rolling around in my head for more than three years” which he calls “La Chaîne des êtres [The Chain of Beings].” In it he plans an evolutionary history of humanity which is based on the fact that “God’s creation has only been perfected since the first beings created, these zoophytes, these unformed beings who barely lived, up to man, his last creation. One will be able to imagine that this creature is not the last word of the Creator, and that after the extinction of the human race, new beings which are more and more perfect will inhabit this world.” This attempt to understand the evolution of humanity and the conditioning of man by his environment was certainly heavily influenced by Michelet and his “resurrection-history,” the seventeen-volume Histoire de France (1833-1853), which shared Zola’s goal of finding the truth about human life.

The young Zola also looked inward to examine himself as an individual. In a letter to Baille dated 25 July 1860, he expressed his feelings about his character, his philosophy of life, and

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321Zola, Correspondance, vol. I, pp. 168-174. Zola was also responding to criticism from his friends that he was not facing reality in his desire to earn his living as a poet.

322Zola, Correspondance, vol. I, pp. 179-184, especially pp. 182-183. Zola only completed eight lines of the first (“La Naissance du monde” [The Birth of the World]) of three planned parts of this work, which he later called La Genèse [Genesis]. See Zola, Oc, vol. 15, p. 937. Some of Zola’s manuscripts of this period were lost, and only a list of titles remains. One of these, which is listed as L’Oeuvre de Dieu [The Creation of God], may have been this work.
religion:

"It's that if I am harsh and carried away by theory, I am also gentle and conciliatory in practice. I love all that is weak and small, all that suffers. I love the animals because they can't express by voice their sufferings, their needs. I love man as a poor wounded being, and if I get carried away in considering that he is the author of his wounds, nevertheless I find some tears to pity him. I turn inward, I see my egotism, my pride, my folly, and I pardon the faults of others. I never had this religious sensibility of the vain shams of religion. However I try hard to follow the precepts of Jesus Christ, these moral and sublime maxims. I am voluptuous, wicked, whatever, but I firmly think that I am not completely bad. I desire the good, I search for truth, and among all my wanderings, I am persuaded that God will count my weak efforts for a lot."  

Then in a long letter to Baille of 10 August 1860, Zola wrote in more detail about what he saw as the purpose of his life, the didactic mission of the poet or artist, and his religious views, which share Michelet's condemnation of institutional or established religion, especially catholicism. He began with his conception of the modern poet:

"Make no mistake about it, the artist is a soldier. He does combat in the name of God for all there is that is great. He's not like he was before, a vain dreamer, letting himself go to his fantasy, singing for the sake of singing and worrying very little about the echoes which awaken his lyre. In our times of materialism, in our century where commerce absorbs everyone, where the sciences so sane and so great already have made man arrogant and make him forget the Supreme Scientist, the poet has a holy mission: at any time, in any place, to show the soul to those who think of nothing but the body and to show God to those whose faith has been taken away by science. ...It's not only a question of making beautiful verses, these verses have to be a sublime lesson of virtue."

Further the poet or artist is "truly an archpriest" who "sustains the weak and encourages the strong, and especially he shows us a God over us, and he gives us the hope of heaven with an immortal soul." Indeed it is the poet who must represent the true clergy of God. It is he who must bring the Gospel and the eternal message of God, which features love, liberty, and virtue, to all humanity.

In fact Zola noted that all people had the same religious concepts of God and heaven, of good and evil, and of morality. Jews, Catholics, and Protestants had the same foundation to their religious beliefs, the Bible. But it was the institutional clergy, those who insisted on serving as the sole intermediaries between God and a person, those who derived their livelihood from the support of the lay believers, those who acted as the only interpreters of God's word and law, it was this sacerdotal class which prevented not only the unity of all humanity under God, but it was they who also hindered the vital communication between the individual person and God. Zola described the priests of the institutional church as saying in effect to lay believers:

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“The Lord listens only to me, I am infallible, and when I speak, it is heaven itself which is speaking. You have no reason to be virtuous, to believe in God, or to believe in the soul if you do not bend yourselves under my law. If you do not perform the practices which I impose on you, you will no less go to hell. I have all power over you, me the Minister of the All-Powerful. I can deal with politics like religion and repress thought and liberty with the cross in my hand. And if you move, if you revolt, I will excommunicate you from paradise as well as from all the saints.”

In spite of the spiritual crimes of the institutional clergy, Zola believed that humanity would nevertheless believe in God and keep the true faith. As each religious sect had its own profession of faith, Zola offered his at the age of twenty in the midst of material poverty, still in the same letter to Baille:

“I believe in an all-powerful, good, and just God. I believe that this God created me, that he directs me down here, and that he waits for me in heaven. My soul is immortal, and giving me free will, the Master has reserved to himself the right of penalties and recompenses. I must do all that is good, avoid all that is evil, and especially count on the the justice and the bounty of my Judge.’ Now I do not know if I am Jewish Catholic, Jewish Protestant, or Mohammedan, I know that I am a creature of God, and that is enough for me.”

Then he dealt with the question of the divinity of Jesus Christ and how he regarded Him. For Zola this was again a question which had been distorted and made difficult for humanity by religious leaders:

“If I were asked if I recognized Jesus Christ as God, I admit I would hesitate to reply. For me Jesus is more of a sublime legislator, a divine moralist. If he is not God, he is one of his dispatched saints. Because if I guess, I lose right away the clear idea which I have of the Most-High. I well recognize that with his power, the Creator can do anything, even double himself, come to earth, and remain in the heavens. But here the priests and the commentators in a crowd are sniping at Jesus on the cross, some declare him infamous, a scoundrel, while others declare him God, and they all give the opposite sense to his words. I am wavering, my human reason no longer is enough. I have to reject everything or incline myself stupidly before a Christ of convention and submit in his name to practices instituted by men. Reason, the chaplain of the lycée Saint-Louis often told me, reason is sufficient in religious matters, but I am not of his opinion. Faith was invented for women and for children. Thus I want to consider Christ only as the prophet of the prophets, as a man marked by the finger of God, as the real infallible priest truly speaking in his name. In any case, if he is really the son of God - note that he was given this title before Pilate and before Herod, you could accept him just as well in the quality of creature of God - if he is the son of God, then I say I adore him in his father.”


In fact Zola says since the concept of the divinity of Christ has been misused, its acceptance is not necessary to the Christian faith.

"It's not that I take pleasure in denying his divinity. If Christian means disciple of Christ, I proudly take this name. His precepts are mine, his God is mine. It's that this divinity seems useless to me, it's that it has been expoited in my nightmares, by the priests and commentators, and it's that I have no need to love and venerate him. He is no less glorious for me in heaven, he has no less accomplished his sublime mission. I pray to him like a saint, as the arm of the Lord on earth, as his revealer. Isn't this enough, and are my words blasphemous? Moreover I am just as ignorant in theology as in any other science. Perhaps if I studied, I would take back these opinions, perhaps I would also deny more forcefully. Doubt and science are brother and sister. It doesn't matter, I resume and I conclude that I adore the God whom Christ has revealed to us."  

Zola would express more faith that science would help to civilize mankind and inspire poets in a letter to Baille of 18 July 1861:

"Science is being built every day, and the relations among men are less and less barbarous. ...

...Look: astronomy counts and measures the stars, natural history explored the human body, searched the earth, and classified each one of its productions. Physics and chemistry have taught us, the former the phenomena which the body produces or undergoes, the latter the composition and the properties of the body. The exact sciences are the measure of all the other branches of knowledge. Furthermore justice and religion are purifying themselves, liberty is being enlarged, and mankind is marching toward a general fusion from which undoubtedly a single free nation will be born according to the spirit of God. This what the century offers you, draw from it with both hands full. Be great with this material."  

Such an optimistic and deterministic belief in the progress of mankind despite his own poverty did not prevent the young Zola from many excursions into doubt and skepticism. He was reading a lot of the works of the sixteenth century philosopher Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592) during the first half of 1861, and he especially liked Montaigne's skeptical regard, his unencumbered reasoning, his critical wit, and certainly his criticism of classical education. As
he said of Montaigne:

“He’s an old friend. I lived with him for two winters with his book as a whole library. You would not believe what charm there is in only frequenting one sole intelligence for two years. Montaigne does art for the sake of art, morality for the sake of morality. He doesn’t look to persuade anyone, he’s a simple curious person let loose in the fields of observation and philosophy. ... His philosophic conclusions are those of an honest man who desires to live in peace with himself. He has recognized our nothingness and is not angered by it. He has recognized the antipathy which exists between our reason and the truth, and he has tried moreover to reconcile the interests of God with our own. ... As one sees him, Montaigne is not the man of the extreme decisions, a pure question of temperament. He lives comfortably in the doubt, and there he finds a moral health. He displays himself there with complacency, making miracles of equilibrium there with love. Never does the abyss over which he finds himself suspended ever tear out of his heart a cry of fright. He has a soul so constructed that faith or its negation would be suffering for him, and that he finds himself at ease only in an eternal balance between these two opposing points.”

It was probably at this time that he wrote the poem entitled Religion and its variant, which he called Doute [Doubt].

Both Religion and Doute pose questions about the meaning of human life to a seemingly nonresponsive God, to a quiet heaven, to an unanswering nature, and to the silent stars. Zola begins both Religion and Doute similarly with his entreaty to the Supreme Being and a description of his spiritual condition:

“Is it a crime, tell me, supreme Intelligence, To want to penetrate your holy Providence; To question your children and your Heaven about you; To break in to see you with your host at your altar; Anxious at my twenty years, at the threshold of my career; To shed a tear at the human misery; And, as a leaf abandoned by the winds of the morning; To twirl, looking for my principle and my end? You see, I am weak and naked. The hurricane frightens me. It takes away my wavering reason as it passes. O God, my hands climb toward you in the midst of the danger,

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332Zola, Oc, vol. 10, pp. 108-109. This is from his article “Les Moralistes français,” a review of a book by Prévost-Paradol, originally published in the 23 January 1865 edition of the Lyon journal Le Salut public de Lyon, then republished as part of his collection of articles called Mes Haines (1866).

333Some manuscripts of Religion and Doute have been lost, and the surviving ones are not dated. A complete and signed manuscript of Doute was held in private hands and finally published for the first time in 1964 (Cahiers naturalistes 1964:26, pp. 45-49). See Zola, Oc, vol. 15, p. 934.
And, not being able to pray, I dare to interrogate you.\textsuperscript{334}

Then in both poems Zola describes how, because of the perceived lack of response to its entreaties, mankind feels hopelessness and desperation in the face of the obscurity and the infinity of the abyss which confronts it. The reaction of humanity is considerable doubt about its existence, its beliefs, and its faith in God. The Doute variant differs from Religion in two main aspects. It contains an epigraph from Montaigne at the beginning, “O cuider! combien tu nous empesches. Montaigne.” [O belief! How much you hinder us.], and it concludes with a condemnation of doubt rather than the more hopeful definition of the meaning of life with which Zola ended Religion. Zola wrote the last six lines of Doute as:

“I shiver suddenly, the unknown frightens me,
As if, all at once, on a collapsing tower,
The demon of vertigo taking me by the hair,
Was agitating me, terrified at the gaping abyss.
May the doubt which lives in me, in the blood of my veins,
Be damned, o bastard of human wisdom!”\textsuperscript{335}

The last five stanzas, which are all quatrains, of Religion better reveal Émile Zola’s deeper spirituality and his complete feelings about the meaning of human existence at this stage of his young life. Poetic expressions of human doubt, anxiety, and pessimism about life and God fill many lines of both Doute and Religion, but he finishes Religion in this fashion, with the words of God to human beings:

“’What does it matter that your God is a son of chaos,
Or that he gave birth to matter asleep!
What does it matter this mixture of good and of evil
Where the infinite Wisdom seems to wander off!

What does it matter the humans and their infirmity,
The Heaven and its greatness unfathomable and quiet!
What does it matter the frightening and gloomy obscurity,
When reason contemplates the anxious soul in you!

What does it matter the unknown! What matters the nothingness!
If love is the law of all nature,
If it burns in your heart like a consuming fire,
It is only to love that the creature was born.

So love, love then, there is the secret word!
The flow succeeds the flow; the nest of the swallow
Sees each spring open up in the down

\textsuperscript{334}Zola, \textit{Oc}, vol. 15, pp. 921-922, 934. This is the first stanza of Religion. Eight lines of the first stanza of Doute are the same, including the first four.

\textsuperscript{335}Zola, \textit{Oc}, vol. 15, p. 936.
Zola's letters to Baille and Cézanne in the years 1858-1862, and especially his 1861 poems Religion and Doute, show that his religious views were firmly anti-clerical and anti-institutional by the time he was twenty years old. He could not accept the Catholic views of the divinity of Christ or other church practices of his native faith, and he believed that Catholicism and other established Christian churches not only did not facilitate an understanding of the meaning of human life, they were in fact hindrances to the establishment of the necessary close relationship and understanding between the individual and God. Further, although Zola was consumed with pessimism and doubt about his own faith and belief in God and his knowledge of the meaning of human existence, he maintained an inner optimism that he would find what he was looking for. Despite the fact that he suffered much in both a spiritual and a material sense at this time, he was always able to take refuge in his utopian visions of the magic power of love, which he had identified as the meaning of life.

As a young man living a vie de Bohème in Paris, although he was very impoverished, it is also quite understandable that Émile Zola, the self-styled romantic poet, wrote his first longer literary works with romantic love as his theme. His three long poems, Rodolpho (1859), L'Aérienne (1861), and Paolo (1860), which comprise what he called L'Amoureuse Comédie, are representative. The three poems feature the idealism of romantic love between man and woman with erotic metaphor, but as Zola noted, they also respectively form a scale of passion from the sensuality, brutality, and doubt of God in Rodolpho, through the combat of the body and the soul in L'Aérienne, to "passion ideal and angelic," the "victory of the angel" in Paolo, "the pure hymn of love disengaged from the earth and losing itself in the breast of God." For in Paolo Zola's twenty-year-old hero adores his phantom-like lover, the sixteen-year-old Marie, like the holy Madonna which she is in reality. He begs her to help him overcome his doubt of everything as their romantic liaison is melded and transformed into a union of immortal agape love between Paolo's soul and God with Marie, the Virgin Mary, as his guide. As Zola said in a 25 June 1860 letter to Cézanne about Paolo, his purpose in the poem was to "exalt platonic love and to make it more attractive than charnel love; then to show that, in this century of doubt, pure love can serve

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336Zola, Oc, vol. 15, pp. 924-925.

337Zola, Oc, vol. 15, pp. 933-934. Only fragments of the complete texts of these poems exist, and they were published in their most complete form in the Oc (vol. 15, pp. 879-913). Only Paolo contains the nearly complete text.

338Zola, Correspondance, vol. I, p. 302. This is from a letter to Baille dated end of June-beginning of July 1861. Zola calls the three poems "Trois Amours" [Three Loves] and establishes their hierarchy.
as faith, giving to the lover the belief of a god, of an immortal soul."

At about the same time as he wrote *L’Amoureuse Comédie*, Zola completed a drama, *Perrette* (1860), which he subtitled *A proverb in one act, in verse.* This drama-poem is his version of Jean de La Fontaine’s (1621-1695) fable, *La Laitière et le Pot au lait* [The Milkmaid and the Pot of Milk]. In it the heroine Perrette, an incorrigible dreamer, comes back to the family vineyard after spending three years in Paris. She cannot adapt to life back on the farm as she passes the time with her cousin Jeannette telling and retelling romantic stories with herself as the heroine. Perrette is engaged to Colin, a handsome young farmer, but she ignores him as she turns her attention to letters which she receives which she imagines have come from an unknown handsome young blond nobleman. The letters were in fact written to her by an educated man at Colin’s behest. Colin had wanted to impress Perrette, but now that she has forgotten him and decided to put off their marriage, he notices Jeannette, who has no illusions about the difference between dreams and reality. Colin decides to marry Jeannette, and Perrette, even after discovering the true author of the letters and receiving sage advice from André, the wise old vagabond, continues to lose herself in dreams as she worries only about how foolish she will be perceived.

With *Perrette* Zola has written a warning to himself about his own ongoing personal tug-of-war between his dreams and the reality of his existence. The misery of the 1858-1862 years of his life seemingly forced him to seek refuge in those dreams as a way to keep safe his inner optimism that his life would get better if he could only survive these hard times. In this he was successful, and despite the fact that the totality of his writing in this period shows that he was influenced more by his dreams than by the power of his reason, that was most important.

The exception to the primacy of Zola’s dreams as the main influence on his writing in this period is, of course, the development of his views on religious philosophy and the meaning of life. Certainly not a dreamer on the evils of institutional religion, Émile Zola at the age of twenty was far ahead of Lev Tolstoy at the same age in the development of his thought in this area of the meaning of life. In fact Tolstoy did not come to similar conclusions until he was in his fifties. As his letters to Baille and Cézanne and his poems *Religion* and *Doute* show, Zola’s philosophic views were already mature and firm on the hindrances and evils posed by institutional religion to the development of a close relationship between the individual human soul and God. Undoubtedly the causes of such a rapid maturity in his philosophic thought were the misery of his lifestyle, his close observations of the people with whom he shared it, the power of his intellect and literary talent, and certainly not least, his empathy.

In March 1862 the misery of Émile Zola’s life abated when he obtained employment as a shipping clerk at Hachette publishers at a salary of 100 francs per month. Indeed it was a scientist friend of his father, a professor of medicine named Boudet, who came to his rescue with a recommendation to Louis Hachette, the founder of the company and the epitome of the educated, liberal entrepreneur, the very symbol of economic and social progress in Second Empire France and architect Baron Georges Haussmann’s (1809-1891) Paris renaissance. By May Zola had impressed Hachette so much with his work, his writing, and his proposals for new

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339 Zola, *Correspondance*, vol. I, pp. 194-195. A copy of *Paolo* was also included with the letter to Cézanne.

340 *Perrette* was never published or played, much like *L’Amoureuse Comédie* and most of Zola’s early poetic works, which were not published completely until the fifteen-volume Oc of the Cercle du Livre Précieux edited by Henri Mitterand came out in 1966-1970. See Oc, vol. 15, pp. 17, 45, 933-934.
literary publications that he doubled Zola's salary and promoted him to director of publicity for the company. This position, which he held until he resigned in January 1866, was to serve Zola well as it placed him into contact with writers, critics, and publishers of the Paris literary world. He was able to write and promote his own work as well as that of others as he learned social skills far from the ideals of the romantic poet he had hoped to become, but those which were nonetheless essential for survival as a literary professional. He wrote to Antony Valabrège, a young writer from Aix, on 24 September 1865:

“I will be able to supply you with some good information. I will communicate to you my experience, and we will attack the bull by the horns. If you knew, my poor friend, how little talent counts for in success, you would put down your pen and paper there, and you would begin to study literary life, the thousand little dirty tricks which open doors, the art of using the credit of others, and the cruelty necessary to pass over the bodies of some dear colleagues. Come on, I tell you, I know a lot, and I am totally at your service.”  

During the 1862-1866 period when he was at Hachette, Émile Zola the poverty-stricken, largely ignored romantic poet became Émile Zola the economically better off and published prose writer. He still was not well off in a material sense, but his spirit soared as he came into contact with le tout Paris intellectuel et artistique, including those suffering from censorship and public opprobrium, like his friends Paul Cézanne, Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Édouard Manet (1832-1883), Claude Monet (1840-1926), and others of the Salon des refusés. Hachette publishing house itself at this time was a bastion of anti-clerical, republican liberalism with a mission of improving the development of public education. Zola, a natural workaholic, was now not only able to fearlessly, that is, without threat of economic extinction, write and publish reviews, articles, and critical essays in journals and newspapers, but he was also finally empowered to commence his literary career with the writing and publication of his first works such as the collection of short stories he called Contes à Ninon, which appeared in December 1864.

Eight stories and an introduction, À Ninon, written to the narrator's lady love of his dreams, comprise Contes à Ninon. The romantic dreams of Zola are certainly present in La Fée amoureuse and Simplice, tales which extoll pure love, and in Soeur-des-Pauvres [Sister of the Poor], an often overlooked gem of a story, where a magic coin provides the joy of alleviating poverty in a touching lesson of the wise use of wealth. Soeur-des-Pauvres, whose title is also the name of the ten-year-old, big-eyed, poverty-stricken heroine, serves as an antecedent to more than a few later Zola heroes, mostly female, who represent the selfless love necessary to facilitate true human happiness and well-being. Les Voleurs et l'âne [The Robbers and the Donkey] is a comedic fable of romance with realistic contemporary Parisian portraits. Le Carnet de danse [The Dance Card], which satirizes coquettish vanity, and Le Sang [Blood], which expresses the horror of the abyss of violence and war, both contain the element of the fantastic. Celle qui m'aime [The One (f) Who Loves Me] is a lesson in anti-romantic realism at a street fair.

The longest story in the collection is Aventures du grand Sidoine et du petit Médéric, a satire of the policies of Napoléon III and the Second Empire as well as of romantic utopianism. Written in the manner of Voltaire’s (1694-1778) Micromégas and Candide and Rabelais’s (1494-1553) Pantagruel and Gargantua, it is the story of a giant and a dwarf, representing the body and the


342 Zola, Oc, vol. 9, p. 199.
The novel is based on the young Zola’s amorous experiences with a “fille à parties” named Berthe in the winter of 1860-1861. See his letter to Baille of 10 (?) February 1861 and notes (Correspondance, vol. I, pp. 261-268), including #9 of the 5 February 1861 letter to Cézanne on p. 261.
works in us, that we are preparing the earth and the being of tomorrow, that we are a childbirth, and that in the last day we will be present, along with the entire universe, at the completion of the work.”

Zola believed that this evolutionary progress of humanity as part of God’s universe would be led by science rather than by adherence to outmoded religious tradition and doctrine. Benefiting from his association at Hachette with other authors of the positivist persuasion, such as Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) and Émile Littré (1801-1881), who believed in the deterministic influence of the era and the environment on the individual as well as in the precision of the scientific method, Zola had faith that scientific progress would point the way to truth about the meaning of life, even and especially to God and religious truth. In another article in the Mes Haines collection, “La Littérature et la gymnastique,” in which he nominally reviewed the book La Santé de l’esprit et du corps par la gymnastique [Health of the Mind and Body by Gymnastics] by Eugène Paz, Zola described this view as he characterized his era:

“Study our contemporary literature, you will see in it all the effects of the neurosis which agitates our century. It is the direct product of our anxieties, of our bitter investigations, of our panics, of this general malaise which our blind societies are undergoing in the face of an unknown future. You can all feel that we are not in that solemn age where tragedy pronounces its verses in a peace that is a little heavy, where all of literature marches royally without revolt, without a cry of pain. We are in the age of railroads and breathless comedies, where laughing is often nothing more than a grimace of anguish, in the age of the electric telegraph and extreme works of art with an exact and sad reality. Humanity is seized by vertigo and is sliding on the steep slope of science. It has taken a bite of the apple, and it wants to know everything. What is killing us, what is making us thin, it’s that we are becoming scientists, it’s that the social and sacred problems are going to be resolved one of these days. We are going to see God, we are going to see the truth, and you can imagine what impatience has seized us, what feverish haste we are taking to live and to die. We would like to advance time, we economize our sweat, we break our bodies by the tension in our mind. Our whole century is there. At the exit of monarchic and dogmatic peace, when the world and humanity were put into question, the time has arrived when the problem has been put on new foundations which are more just and true. After the equation was posed and several unknowns were found, there was ecstasy and crazy joy. They believed that they were undoubtedly on the path of the truth, and they hurried en masse demolishing, pushing, and crying, making new discoveries at every step, whipped more and more by the desire to move forward, to go to the infinite and to the absolute. If I were to hazard a comparison, I would say that our societies are like a pack launched against a wild beast. We feel the truth which runs before us, and we run.”

Zola’s view of the positivist evolution of humanity also had, like Tolstoy, no regard for the arrogance of the so-called great men of history. In another article of the Mes Haines collection,

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346Zola, Oc, vol. 10, p. 100.

347This review was first published in Le Salut public de Lyon on 5 October 1865. See the bibliographic notes in Zola, Oc, vol. 10, pp. 173, 182.

348Zola, Oc, vol. 10, pp. 56-57.
Histoire de Jules César, he wrote a review of the book by an unnamed author, but who was obvious to all as Napoléon III. Indeed the article was so daring that it was refused publication when Zola wrote it in 1865, as it was not only a pronouncement of his views on the individual in history, but also a personal indictment of the French Emperor and his Second Empire regime. Zola took issue with the assumption of the author of Histoire de Jules César that the great men of history, those such as Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon Bonaparte, had been sent by God to lead people or nations on missions charged or assigned to them by Providence. Nations were to follow these messiahs and make progress according to the will of God, or they would blindly ignore these holy calls at their peril, just as, the author noted, the Jewish nation had crucified Jesus Christ. These great men of history could not, therefore, be seen or judged as mere individual mortals, but as the holy agents or angels of God on earth. Émile Zola could not abide by such abstractions. He replied that such beliefs:

"...tranquilly place Caesar at the side of Jesus, the cruel soldier next to the sweet conqueror of souls. I do not believe in these messengers from heaven who come to earth to accomplish their mission of blood. If God sometimes were sending us his sons, I like to think that these providential creatures would all resemble Christ, and they would do works of peace and of truth, and they would come at the hour prescribed to renew hope, to give us a new philosophy, and to impress upon the world a firmer and straighter moral direction. The conquerors, on the contrary, are nothing but a supreme crisis in the maladies of the societies. There is a violent amputation, and the wounded person dies from it. One cannot come from heaven with a sword in the hand. Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon are definitely from the human family. There’s nothing celestial about them because God would not know to manifest himself vainly, and moreover, if they had not existed, humanity would be neither happier nor more unfortunate today because of it. These are men who have grown because of will and because of a fixed idea. They dominate their ages because they knew how to use the forces that events were putting into their hands. They are worth less by themselves than by the hour of their birth. Transport their personalities to another epoch, and you will see what they would have been. Here Providence must take the name of Fate."

Tolstoy could not have stated the case better, although he gave the great men of history less credit than Zola, calling them merely labels for large currents of history or events. For Zola the great men of history were more personally responsible for chaos, tragedy, disaster, and calamity in human history because they took advantage of the currents of history and events or even made them worse for selfish reasons.

"Even more the reigns of these soldiers have always preceded public misfortune and troubles. The Empire succeeded Caesar, anarchy and the division of French soil succeeded Charlemagne, the Restauration and two Republics succeeded Napoleon. It was these great captains themselves who prevented 'the prompt and fruitful application of good.' If they had been allowed to act, they would have perhaps pacified the world by depopulating it. But they were made to disappear, and each time societies began to painfully breathe again, recovering themselves little by little from the terrible jolt. ... They are a stop to the march of humanity, by their despotic instincts which do not permit them to remain simple guides, and which lead them to become all-

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349 See bibliographic note on p. 179 of Zola, Oc, vol. 10.

Zola admits that Julius Caesar had an abundant genius for leadership, strategy, politics, and vision. He agrees with Napoleon III that these talents are admirable, but the fact that a person possesses them does not make that person a messiah, especially if that person uses them to act more in his own self-interest than in the interest of his fellow-citizens or other people. The presence of genius is no indication of the presence of God, especially if that genius is accompanied by personal ambition.

“I recognize that Caesar was clever and cunning. He singularly understood his time, and he employed all of his genius to profit from the stupidity of others. I admit and I share your [speaking to the author] admiration. Disengaged from the mission which you give him, Caesar becomes more real, more human. He remains what he really is, a man of genius, a great captain, and a great administrator. But all my faith, all my beliefs refuse to see in him a Messiah who was to regenerate Rome, a necessary master for the liberty and peace of the world.”

Zola thus would share Tolstoy’s view of history, which Lev Nikolaevich was formulating at about this same time (1865-1866) as he was writing War and Peace. But Zola placed more emphasis on the personal culpability of the great men of history for the damage which accrued to people as a result of great historical currents or events than Tolstoy because he believed that these great men of history were responsible for utilizing them not for the benefit of others, but for personal aggrandizement. As men of genius and talent at unique places and times in history, they could have acted for the benefit of others, but they chose personal ambition first. For Zola and Tolstoy Providence or God acts only for reasons of selfless love, not love of self. The difference in their philosophy of the great men of history lies in Tolstoy’s belief that kings, emperors, and tsars are not history’s makers, they are history’s slaves. They are merely labels for history as they have less free will because of their higher position in the hierarchy of society than those lower on the social scale. Perhaps because of his history of poverty and the economic powerlessness he had felt in his life, Zola could not appreciate the validity of this concept of free will as much as Tolstoy, who as a person of high noble birth and wealth in Russian society, never had to worry economically about his own frequent sins of profligacy.

By the time Émile Zola resigned from his position at Hachette to become a full-time writer in January of 1866, he had already developed much of his philosophy of the meaning of life as well as the direction of the next phase of his artistic work. He had met and was living with the young woman who would become his wife, Éléonore Alexandrine Meley. Also called Gabrielle, she was an illegitimate child of humble birth who, like Zola, was independent and had suffered much from economic deprivation in Paris of the Second Empire. Both Zola and Gabrielle-Alexandrine were well acquainted with the realism of poverty in the lower classes of French society and the misery of lives which, as Zola said of the popular artist and illustrationist Gustav Doré, “without doubt he ignores this life of suffering and of doubt, a life which makes you love the naked and living reality
with a love which is profound." This profound love of the naked and living reality of life had already begun in Zola's literary *œuvre* with the writing of the previously mentioned semi-autobiographical novel *La Confession de Claude*, which featured the desanctification of his idealistic dream of romantic redemption as well as the bitter reality of the myth of enduring romance. This firm indication of Zola's movement from romantic poetry to realistic prose was also reinforced by his review of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's (1822-1896, 1830-1870 respectively) grimly realistic novel *Germinie Lacerteux*, published as part of *Mes Haines*, in which he signaled the future of his own work.

"Here I said it and I would not know how to say it again too much, I feel the unique curiosity of the observer. I do not experience any strange preoccupation with the truth of the narrative, with the perfect deduction of the feelings, with the vigorous and lively art which is going to make me in its reality one of the cases of human life, the history of a soul lost in the middle of the struggles and the despair of this world. I do not believe I have the power to demand more than a work which is true and energetically created."

In fact Zola wanted to make the comfortable bourgeois world of the upper class aware of the reality and the misery of the world of the simple worker. But even more he wanted both worlds to see that the truth about the meaning of life and the struggle between vice and virtue was the same for both of them despite the inequality of their environments and the differences in their social conventions. In comparing the world of Gustav Flaubert's (1821-1880) elegant and refined fallen woman *Madame Bovary* with the Goncourts' sinful humble domestic *Germinie Lacerteux* he said:

"In a word there are two different worlds there: a bourgeois world obeying certain conventions, measuring carefully the temper of its passions; and a working world, less cultivated, more cynical, active and speaking. In our hypocritical times one can depict the one, but you wouldn't know how to deal with the other. Ask why, while making the observation that fundamentally the vices are exactly the same. You will not know what to say. It pleases us to be agreeably excited, and even those of us who pretend to love the truth only love a certain truth, the one which does not keep us from sleeping or trouble our digestion."

Zola's search for the truth of the naked and living reality of a life of suffering and doubt during the years 1866-1868 was to lead through many reviews and articles of literary, artistic, and later...
even political criticism, further attempts at drama, and some novels and short stories before reaching a culmination point in the novels Thérèse Raquin (1867) and Madeleine Ferat (1868). He was now living totally by his pen, but he found himself less well off by 1867 because of government suppression of the journal L’Événement, one of his main sources of income, and loss of publication rights at Le Salut public de Lyon, his other main source of income. So he continued to seek publication at other journals, and thus he wrote many of his works for regular serial publication. Zola’s novel Le Voeu d’une morte [A Dead Woman’s Wish] (1866), his short story Les quatre journées de Jean Gourdon (1866-1867), and the novel Les Mystères de Marseille (1867-1868) were typical of this period, when he had his new realist philosophy increasingly in mind.\footnote{Le Voeu d’une morte was first published in L’Événement 11-26 September 1866. See Zola, Oc, vol. 1, p. 216. Les Mystères de Marseille was first published in Le Messager de Provence from March to October 1867, then published in various versions in various journals to 1873. See Zola, Oc, vol. 1, pp. 507-508.}

Le Voeu d’une morte is written very similarly to La Confession de Claude, with a dominant theme of self-sacrifice for the purpose of the selfless love of another. But in contrast to the failure of idealistic romance in Zola’s first novel, self-sacrifice for the good of others succeeds in Le Voeu d’une morte as a legacy to be treasured in a Christ-like way that Tolstoy would love later in his own novel Resurrection. In it the effect of the life of selfless love and the deathbed wish of Blanche de Rionne, an unhappily married woman of means, for her charge, the orphan Daniel Raimbault, sets the example for him to follow, but not before he questions God and life, “Heaven doesn’t even spare the souls worthy of it. What kind of a frightening world do we live in?”\footnote{Zola, Oc, vol. 1, p. 133.} He fulfills his promise as he watches over Blanche’s daughter Jeanne, especially in her ill-advised and ill-fated marriage to the unscrupulous Lorin. Then Daniel sacrifices his own romantic love and dreams for a life with Jeanne so that she might find her own happiness with Daniel’s friend Georges, who is incidentally a scientist, just like his partner Daniel.

Another narrative of note written by Zola during this period is Les quatre journées de Jean Gourdon (1866-1867), which recounts the life story of a peasant living in the Durance Valley of Provence.\footnote{Les quatre journées de Jean Gourdon was first published in L’Illustration from December 1866 to February 1867. It was later incorporated into the Nouveaux Contes à Ninon (1874) collection. See Zola, Oc, vol. 9, p. 501. In 1875 Zola wrote a story of the flood of the Garonne River of that year called L’Inondation. It was narrated by a peasant survivor, the only one of his family, and Zola adapted much of the story from “Hiver,” the last part of Les quatre journées de Jean Gourdon.} It is told in four parts, with each part representing a significant narrative of events which occur during one day of each of the four seasons. For the spring it is the first meeting between Jean and Babet, the love of his life. For summer the day recounted is one of Sergeant Jean Gourdon wounded on a horrific battlefield of a futile and useless war. On an autumn day occur both the birth of his son Jacques and the death of his beloved Uncle Lazare, a parish priest who teaches Jean about the cyclization and renaissance of human life on earth.

“Yes, you are in the autumn of it, you worked and you harvest. Man, my child, was created in the image of the land. And like the communal mother, we are eternal. The green leaves are born each year from the dry leaves. I, I am reborn in you, and you, you will be reborn in your children. I tell you this so that old age doesn’t frighten you, so that you know to die in peace, like
this greenery dies, and then it will grow anew from its own seeds in the next spring."

Finally the winter day brings the flood of the River Durance, symbol of a nature which is
impenetrable and indifferent to humankind, as it now causes the destruction of his home, wealth,
and the deaths of his beloved wife Babet and son Jacques just as it had previously provided all
the happiness and prosperity of his life. Only Jean and his small daughter Marie survive to
contemplate the unfathomable and unbreakable bonding of the joys and the sorrows which make
up human life.

Les quatre journées de Jean Gourdon, which is of short-story length, but with the scope of a
novel, is thus a work which features the realism of the uncertainty of human life with its cycles
of serenity and pain. It introduces many of the same themes as the later Rougon-Macquart novels,
but without particular emphasis on physiology, heredity, or history. But the most revealing aspect
of this short story of a novel is the doubt about the immortality of the human soul which is implicit
in the above declaration of Uncle Lazare, the curé. He tells Jean of his immortality only in terms
of the physical renaissance of human beings in the world as part of nature, as part of the universe.
Man was created in the image of the land, he says, not in the image of God, as one would expect
a parish priest to say. In this account of close-to-nature Provençal peasant life, unlike Rousseau
or Tolstoy, who would undoubtedly portray Jean as learning to be closer to God despite the
tragedy through the clearer awareness and sensitivity of his immortal soul, Zola depicts him
learning only that he is an eternal part of an inscrutable, emotionless natural world through his
genealogy, a genealogy whose potential has now been half-destroyed by the flood.

Called “a contemporary historical novel” by Zola, Les Mystères de Marseille is a long-running,
three-part, romantic adventure novel featuring the struggle between the royalists and the
republicans for control in Provence in the 1840s. The heroes are of course the good republicans,
represented by Philippe Cayol and his brother Marius, who must negotiate the wicked and venal
society of the royalists, represented by the evil and rich deputy M. de Cazalis and a host of other
nefarious characters such as money-lenders, bankers, and lecherous priests, in order to bring
about the triumph of love and good over evil as well as to secure the future for the virtuous in the
republic to come. The intrigue begins as Philippe and Blanche de Cazalis, niece of the powerful
deputy, elope with the aid of Marius and his eventual love, Fine, the flower-seller. Zola’s negative
personages in Les Mystères de Marseille presage many of those of the later Rougon-Macquart
novels, and he introduces the contemporary context of a corrupt society with the oblivious
revolutionary forces and other large currents of history which will figure in his more famous series
of reality novels. The bittersweet epilogue of the novel reveals pessimism about the future as
well, as the “only sadness” of M. Martelly, a shipowner who provided vital help to the republican
heroes, “is to see that liberty is a plant which grows badly in France."
Les Mystères de Marseille also includes two primary clerical characters, the virtuous abbot Chastanier and the immoral abbot Donadéi, who are introduced for the first time in a Zola novel. Although Donadéi is foiled by Marius in the attempted kidnapping of a young girl in a key episode, Chastanier eventually dies of cholera as a result of his work with the diseased and the destitute, “a victim of his ardent charity,” and perhaps another signal of a deeply fearful belief on the part of Zola that the world is hopelessly unjust.

Further evidence of Zola’s distance from the soul and spirituality at this time was the writing and publication of Thérèse Raquin, his first famous novel, which like Les quatre journées de Jean Gourdon, assumes a rather meaningless world of pain in which human beings are helplessly caught. Thérèse Raquin was adapted from a short story called Un mariage d’amour, which Zola had written for the 24 December 1866 edition of Le Figaro, before the novel was serialized under the same title in L’Artiste in 1867. In it the elderly Madame Raquin, the proprietor of a small notions shop in Paris, marries her niece Thérèse off to her sickly son Camille. Thérèse is seduced by Laurent, a sometime artist, and the two lovers conspire to murder Camille by throwing him off a boat on the Seine. Camille’s body finally is discovered, later Thérèse and Laurent get married with Madame Raquin’s approval, but they are haunted by remorse for their crime, and their passion for each other progressively dissipates. A now paralysed Madame Raquin learns the truth about Camille’s death, and the guilty lovers end up committing suicide as Madame Raquin watches vengefully.

In a famous preface to the second edition of the novel (1868), the title of which was changed to Thérèse Raquin in the first edition as a volume in November 1867, Zola described his purpose in writing such a grim, pessimistic, and hopeless piece.

“In Thérèse Raquin I wanted to study the temperaments and not the characters. There is the whole book. I chose the personages completely dominated by their nerves and by their blood, deprived of free will, carried along to each action of their life by the fatality of their flesh. Thérèse and Laurent are human beasts, nothing more. In these beasts I tried to follow step-by-step the silent working of the passions, the compulsion of the instincts, and the mental breakdowns which occurred as a result of a nervous crisis. The loves of my two heros are the satisfaction of a need, and the murder that they commit is a consequence of their adultery, a consequence that they accept like wolves accept the murder of sheep. Finally what I was obliged to call their remorse consists of a simple organic disorder, a rebellion of the nervous system about to breakdown. The soul is completely absent, I freely admit, since I wanted it that way.

I hope that one begins to understand that my goal before anything else was a scientific goal. When my two personages, Thérèse and Laurent, were created, it suited me to pose for myself certain problems for resolution. In this way I tried to explain the strange union which can be produced between two different temperaments, and I showed the profound troubles of a sanguine nature in contact with a nervous nature. When you read the novel carefully, you’ll see that each chapter is the study of a curious case of physiology. In a word I had but one desire: being given a powerful man and an unsatisfied woman, to search for the beast in them, to see nothing but the beast, to throw them into a violent drama, and to scrupulously note the sensations and the actions of these beings. I have simply done on two living bodies the analytical work which surgeons do on cadavers.”

\[363\] Zola, Oc, vol. 1, p. 500.

\[364\] Zola, Oc, vol. 1, pp. 513-514.

\[365\] Zola, Oc, vol. 1, pp. 519-520.
In effect Zola states that he wrote *Thérèse Raquin* as an amoral scientist, the observer of a story of human beasts where there is no free will and no consideration of the soul of a human being. The fact that the human animals Laurent and Thérèse are haunted by relentless feelings of remorse, a remorse which is enhanced by Laurent’s hallucinations and the symbolic appearances of Camille’s cat François, definitely implies a conscience on their parts however it may be hidden in Zola’s physiological disguise as a “simple organic disorder.” But the author insists that the world of his first famous novel is that of a human animal kingdom where the ruler would be the physically strongest and the fittest as well as the most cunning. Apparently leaving aside the great argument which would immediately arise as to whether such a narrowly-focused work reveals any real truth about human life except the power of fear and horror, Zola likely cries crocodile tears, seemingly irritated that he was forced to write a preface to the second edition in response to critics who had accused him of writing putrid literature, a putrid literature which had now made him famous and put more coins into his pocket. In the arrogant conclusion to his preface, he writes that “The group of naturalist writers to which I have the honor to belong have enough courage and activity to produce strong works which will serve as their defense” despite the lack of understanding on the part of those critics who seem to need someone “to light a lantern for them even in the daylight.”

The importance of the preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin* is that Émile Zola has officially decided the direction of his literary work for the foreseeable future. He will look at human life like a scientist and analyze it scientifically in its unadorned reality, in its natural state, to discover its mysteries, and for the first time he labels himself and the group of writers who write in this manner as naturalists. The earlier romantic poet and prose-writer of great empathy, the searcher for moral truth and closeness to God in a frightening world, the Zola who could write *Soeur-des-Pauvres* and *Le Voeu d’une morte*, who could criticize the morals of Julius Caesar and by extension Napoléon III, and who could write idealistic characters in *Les Mystères de Marseille*, this Zola will yield to Zola the scientific and amoral observer, the writer of so-called putrid literature, but one who is definitely more famous for it and eager to join in the polemic to keep himself in the public eye. Perhaps Zola had been so deeply frightened by his earlier poverty, by the prospect of a hopeless world of meaningless pain in his search for the meaning of life, that he decided to mortgage his soul, that is to shelve his search for the truth, in order to forget his fright in a quest for the earthly comfort of vanity and potential wealth. Science and the scientific method can be comforting in its reassurance of accuracy, but as Tolstoy would remind us, it is only descriptive of that which is known, telling us nothing of how to live life, as the earlier poor poet Zola had vowed to do only eight years before in his 10 August 1860 “poet as archpriest” letter to his Aix-de-Provence boyhood friend, Jean-Baptistin Baille.

Nevertheless in 1868 Zola proceeded to reprise the material from *Madeleine*, a short play he wrote in 1865, to produce *Madeleine Férat*, another scientifically inspired novel. It was first

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367 Madeleine, the heroine of the play *Madeleine*, was indeed a femme fatale, but one with more positive aspects to her character than Madeleine Férat. In 1865 Zola also wrote the drama *La Laide* ([The Ugly One (f)]), which unlike the tragedy *Madeleine*, had a spiritual theme emphasizing the beauty of a woman’s soul being of greater importance than her physical attractiveness. Also unlike *Madeleine* (*Oc*, vol. 15, text pp. 79-114, notes pp. 115-117), which was successfully brought to the stage in 1889, much later than it was originally written, *La Laide* was never played or published until the *Oc* edition in 1969 (*Oc*, vol. 15, text pp. 47-74, notes pp. 75-77).
serialized in L’Événement illustré under the title La Honte [Shame] in September-October 1868 before being published in a volume, which he dedicated to his friend Édouard Manet, in December of that year, but not without trouble from the censor over its alleged immoral theme. The intrigue of Madeleine Férat was based on some dubious ideas of Michelet and the fantastic human biological theories of Dr. Prosper Lucas’s Traité de l’hérédité naturelle (2 vols., 1847-1850). A theory of impregnation proposed by Michelet and with reservations by Lucas held that a woman always bears the mark of her first lover both biologically and spiritually, ensuring that any child conceived by her, even with another man, will carry traits of the first lover. In Madeleine Férat, the heroine Madeleine is a physically attractive girl of lower class, much like Laurence of La Confession de Claude. Madeleine is separated from her first lover Jacques, who is the friend and colleague of Guillaume de Viargue, the illegitimate son of an aristocrat with an old, Bible-thumping Calvinist nanny/servant named Geneviève. Jacques later disappears as a result of a shipwreck in Indochina and is thought to be dead. Madeleine, who knew of the relationship between Jacques and Guillaume, moves in with Guillaume after the death of his father, but does not reveal her prior relationship with Jacques. Madeleine and Guillaume marry and have several years of happiness with their child Lucie. Jacques suddenly turns up, and Madeleine admits their prior union to Guillaume, who is devastated, believing that he sees Jacques’s characteristics in his daughter. A more and more unhappy Guillaume pushes Lucie away, and Madeleine, who is chastized by a demented Geneviève, seeks solace in a new relationship with Jacques. The novel ends with Lucie dying of a sudden illness, and Madeleine poisons herself, while Guillaume goes mad and dances around her prostrate corpse.

The heroine of the novel, Madeleine, a man-eating dominant woman of imposing physical characteristics, is a precursor of similar Zola tragic heroines of the Rougon-Macquart series such as Renée Béraud du Châtel of La Curée (1872) and of course Nana (Anna Coupeau) of L’Assommoir [The Gin Mill - The Bludgeon] (1877) and Nana (1880). But a single focus on the femme fatale heroine was not Zola’s main purpose in writing Madeleine Férat. Under censorship pressure from the procurator-general, he refused to change a single word of the novel and defended himself and the work against charges of immorality in an article published in the newspaper La Tribune of 29 November 1868:

"...the several lines which they would like me to remove contain the entire thesis of the book. I took this thesis from Michelet and from Doctor Lucas. I dramatized it in an austere and convincing way. I cannot agree that I could have transgressed good morals by writing a medical study the goal of which is, according to me, of high human morality. The study tends to accept the connections of marriage as eternal, in the physiological point of view. Religion and morality say to the man, ‘You will live with a single woman,’ and science comes to him in its turn and says, ‘Your first spouse will be your eternal spouse.’ I have simply put this scientific theory into action. I believe that I have written a useful, honest book."369

Thus science will ratify the morality of religion and verify the truth of faith. The writing of Thérèse Raquin and Madeleine Férat signaled Émile Zola’s commitment to this theme as well as his devotion to depicting the naked and living reality of life, the new “naturalist” course of his literary work which was to bring him lasting fame. The trouble with his intentions was that scientific theory was indeed just theory, and the ideas and theorizing of Michelet and Lucas in the field of human biology rambled to the dubious, the improbable, and the fantastic. However he
might like to characterize his long-sought, but new-found fame as a result of the realistic, naturalistic, and scientific basis of his recent literature, the truth was most likely that he had achieved renown because he was a talented writer of shocking horror stories about indecent society and taboo subject matter. His titillating putrid literature and public battles with the procurator general had given him what his spiritual romantic poetry and literary criticism could not - large audiences and a large forum. By 1868 the spiritual Zola, who was looking for the meaning of life in pure love, had progressively yielded to the naturalistic, scientific Zola, who was examining the cadavers of human social ills, but the former Zola did not go away.
CHAPTER TWO
THE ROUGON-MACQUART NOVELS 1868-1893

In the winter of the years 1868-1869, Émile Zola put together his ideas for a series of novels reflecting the natural and social history of a family of Second Empire France into a plan. He was heavily influenced by Honoré de Balzac's (1799-1850) La Comédie humaine, the title Balzac adopted in 1841 for his works which covered the period 1789-1850, with references to a more distant past. But Zola did not want to copy Balzac's history of the morals and customs of a society, a society based on religion and royalty, which was depicted through the portrayal of 3000 characters. In the manuscript of his preliminary Rougon-Macquart notes, in a section entitled "Différences entre Balzac et moi" [Differences Between Balzac and Me], he wrote:

"I don't want to paint the contemporary society, but only one family, while showing the effect of heredity modified by environments. If I accept a historical setting, it's only in order to have an environment which reacts; in the same way the profession and the place of residence are environments. My big affair is to be purely naturalist, purely physiologist. Instead of having principles (royalty, catholicism), I'll have laws (heredity, innateness). I don't want to have a decision on the affairs of people, like Balzac, or to be a politician, a philosopher, a moralist. I will content myself to being a scientist, to say what is while looking for intimate reasons. No other conclusion otherwise. A simple exposé of the facts of a family while showing the interior mechanism which makes it act. I even accept the exception."371

370 The manuscripts of Zola's general preparatory notes for the Rougon-Macquart novels are not dated, and it is also difficult to arrange them chronologically. They are available in microform at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), site Richelieu (58, rue de Richelieu, Paris IIe), Manuscrits occidentaux, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises (Naf) 10345, 10303, 10294. These and other manuscripts and drawings of Zola for the Rougon-Macquart series are also published in facsimile in the three volumes of Les manuscrits et les dessins de Zola: Notes préparatoires et dessins des Rougon-Macquart [The Manuscripts and Drawings of Zola: Preparatory Notes and Drawings of the Rougon-Macquart], édition établie et commentée par Olivier Lumbroso et Henri Mitterand (Paris: Textuel, 2002).

There are three sources for establishing the winter of 1868-1869 as the date of their writing. Two are later letters of Zola: one of 6 January 1878 to Yves Guyot, the editor of Le Bien public (Paris), which serialized Une page d'amour in 1877-1878 (Zola, Correspondance, vol. III, pp. 156-158); and the other, a 28 August 1894 letter to Lucien Cuénot (1866-1951), a famous biologist, in which Zola wrote, "It was in 1868 that I built the whole plan of my Rougon-Macquart, while relying on the work of Doctor Lucas: L'Hérédité naturelle. I took the whole scientific framework of my work from this publication." (Zola, Correspondance, vol. VIII, pp. 154-155) The third source is a 14 December 1868 entry in the Journal of the Goncourts. See notice in Zola, OE, vol. 2, pp. 276-279, but note that the letter to Cuénot is misdated as 1896.

371 BnF Naf Manuscrit (Ms) 10345, folios 14-15.
Although Zola did not want his series of novels to contain a philosophy or a moral in the manner of Balzac or Tolstoy, he did believe that a philosophic tendency was necessary to unify the ten novels he had planned. But he did not want that philosophic tendency to extend to the point of fatalism, which to Zola meant that he would take philosophic or moral positions, perhaps like a priest. He concluded that materialism could serve as a unifying philosophy. In his “Notes générales sur la nature de l’oeuvre” [General Notes On the Nature of the Work], he wrote:

“Before anything else to take a philosophic tendency, not to display it, but to give a unity to my books. The best would perhaps be materialism, I mean the belief in forces where I will never have to explain myself. The word force does not compromise. But further use of the word fatality cannot be done as it would be ridiculous in ten volumes. Fatalism is an old tool. Moreover don’t write as a philosopher or a moralist. Study people as simple powers and demonstrate the clashes.”

But again Zola was still looking for the truth of the meaning of human life. He simply believed that it was to be found in objective scientific analysis of the human condition, not in any sort of moral philosophy or religion where human beings were bound to be more fallible as they were less scientifically objective. As he observed in his “Notes générales sur la marche de l’oeuvre” [General Notes On the Progression of the Work]:

“I study the ambitions and the appetites of a family thrown across the modern world, making superhuman efforts, not arriving because of its own nature and influences, touching success to fall down, finishing by producing truly moral monstrities (the priest, the murderer, the artist). The moment is trouble. It’s the trouble of the moment which I paint. It is absolutely necessary to note this here: I do not deny the grandeur of the effort of the modern élan, I do not deny that we are able to go more or less to liberty, to justice. Only my belief is that people will always be people, good or bad animals depending on the circumstances. If my characters do not arrive to the good, it’s that we are debuting in perfectability. Modern people are much more fallible as they are more nervous and more impatient. It’s because of that that they are more interesting to study. ...

So two elements: (1) the purely human element, the physiological element, the scientific study of a family with the sequence and the fatalities of descendence; (2) the effect of the modern moment on this family, its breakdown because of the fevers of the epoch, social action, and the physique of the environments.

It’s to say that this family born in another time, in another environment, would not comport itself in the same fashion. I said that there was an élan toward liberty and justice. I believe that this élan will take a long time to come about, while at the same time admitting that it can lead to a better place. But I believe more in a constant march toward the truth. It’s only from that knowledge of the truth that a better social state will be born.

It’s well understood that I’m putting aside discussion of the political state, the best way to govern people, religiously and politically. I don’t want to establish or defend a policy or a religion. My study is a simple bit of analysis of the world such as it is. I am purely observing. It’s a study of man placed in a social environment, without a sermon. If my novel must have a result, it will be this one here: to tell the human truth, to dismantle our machine, to show its secret forces through heredity, and to make known the effect of the environment. Then legislators and moralists are

372BnF Naf Ms 10345, folio 12.
free to take my work, to derive from it the consequences, and to wonder about bandaging the wounds which I show. Thus the doctors, P. Lucas, will be able to speak about crossbreeding families, etc."373

Much of the rest of Zola’s general preparatory notes for the Rougon-Macquart novels feature extensive notation on the scientific study and theories of heredity, physiology, and psychology, especially those of Prosper Lucas’s Héredité naturelle and Charles Letourneau’s Physiologie des passions (1868), Ulysse Trélat’s La Folie lucide (1861), Jacques-Joseph Moreau (de Tours)’s La Psychologie morbide (1859), and Bénédict-Auguste Morel’s Traité des dégénérescences (1857).374 There are also his outline and plans for a ten-novel series, including summaries of proposed chapters of the first novel, La Fortune des Rougon, which he submitted to his publisher Albert Lacroix in 1869.375 Zola noted that the Rougon-Macquart series would be based on two ideas:

"(1) To study the questions of blood and environment in one family. To follow step-by-step the secret work which gives to children of the same father different characters and passions as a consequence of cross-breeding and particular ways of living. In a word to search to the very core of the human drama, in these depths of life where the great virtues and the great crimes are developed, and to search in a methodical way, following along the path of new physiological discoveries. (2) To study the whole Second Empire, from the coup d’État up to the present. To incarnate the contemporary society in types, the scoundrels and the heroes. To paint thus a whole social age, in the facts and in the feelings, and to paint this age in the thousand details of the customs and of the events."376

The influence of Zola’s philosophy of the meaning of life is clear in his notes, despite his denials of writing according to any kind of philosophy except the purposefully ill-defined materialism. He is a philosopher with a philosophy to promote which is unfortunately based on erudite, but flawed scientific theories.377 Zola has put his literary and philosophic hopes to establish laws instead of principles into the scientific method, which can be just as wrong and misleading, and which can

373BnF Naf Ms 10345, folios 3-5.

374See for example BnF Naf Ms 10345, folios 27-34, 57-115; Ms 10294, folios 127-141.

375BnF Naf Ms 10303, folios 74-77 and 37-63, respectively.

376BnF Naf Ms 10303, folio 74.

377Real scientific progress in the fields of heredity and genetics in the nineteenth century lay in the 1865 plant hybridization work of the Austrian monk Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) and his idea of the particulate inheritance of genes. It was largely unknown until it was rediscovered in 1901, with its importance not acknowledged until the work of Ronald Fisher in 1918. The rest of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first have featured revolutionary work in heredity and genetics, including discoveries in the study of DNA and genomics.
serve humankind just as ineffectively as he believes religion and philosophy, Catholicism and royalty, have done in the era of the Second Empire. Scientists as well as priests can lead humanity astray. Zola believes scientists have more dedication to the search for truth, and he has more faith in them undoubtedly because of the example of his father and his personal life experience. But science cannot pretend to answer the question of the meaning of life, even if Zola believes that religion and philosophy have done it badly. There are indications that he has always understood this, such as his acceptance of the exception in his notes on “Différences entre Balzac et moi,” and in his underlined references to “perfectability,” “a better place,” “truth,” and “the human truth,” in his “Notes générales sur la marche de l’oeuvre.” Even when he denies it, such references are an unmistakeable signal that the Rougon-Macquart series of novels will not be able to avoid philosophic questions of the meaning of life despite Zola’s avowal of their “observe, describe, and discover” objective scientific naturalism.

La Fortune des Rougon (1871), the first novel of the series, was to provide the origins of the Rougon-Macquart family in the small, fictional Provençal town of Plassans in the Var. The events of the novel are coincident with Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte’s coup d’état and the birth of the Second Empire in December 1851, but in the second chapter Zola sets the beginnings of the Rougon-Macquart family with a grandparent ancestor, Adélaïde Fouque, “tante Dide,” last remaining member of a family line which ran out several years before the French Revolution of 1789 and the carrier of an insanity defect. She had married an unrefined peasant named Rougon, who died fifteen months after the marriage, leaving her with a year-old child, Pierre. Tante Dide then took a lover named Macquart, a drunken smuggler with whom she had two more children, Antoine and Ursule, whom she raised with Pierre. When Macquart was killed by a customs officer, her nervous crises turned into bouts of hysteria, and she retired into a quiet grief in Macquart’s shack after her farm was taken over by her son Pierre.

Pierre becomes the head of the ambitious Rougon side of the family, and after marrying Félicité Puech, is the father of five: three sons - Eugène (who serves the cause of the coup d’état in Paris), Aristide (a journalist), and Pascal (a doctor); and two daughters - Sidonie (a business negotiator who becomes a church treasurer) and Marthe (who marries her Macquart cousin, François Mouret). The other branch of the family, the illegitimate Macquart, is led by Antoine, who marries Fine (Joséphine) Gavaudan, and is the father of three children - daughters Lisa (manager of a Paris pork butcher shop and mother of Pauline Quenu) and Gervaise (laundress, mother of the illegitimate Lantier sons and the legitimate Anna Coupeau), and son Jean (a peasant and soldier). Antoine’s sister Ursule marries a worker in a hatmaking shop named Mouret, and she has three children who form the Mouret side of the family - sons François (who marries his cousin, Marthe Rougon) and Silvère, and daughter Hélène (who marries Grandjean and Rambaud).

La Fortune des Rougon begins with the orphan Miette Chantegreil and Silvère Mouret, two young lovers who join a group of republican partisans in the countryside around Plassans. The Rougons support the royalists, and the Macquarts the republicans, but both families put their self-interests ahead of any cause. The republican insurgents take over the city hall of Plassans, which they leave in the hands of the inept Antoine Macquart. Miette is killed when the insurgents

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378 Plassans was heavily based on the geographical characteristics of Aix-en-Provence. See map and Zola’s drawing on p. 283 of Oc, vol. 2.

379 Zola described Adélaïde and her neurosis, “While becoming a woman, Adélaïde had remained the strange tall girl who seemed like a savage at age fifteen... but there was in her a lack of equilibrium between the blood and the nerves, a sort of breakdown of the brain and the heart, which made her live outside of ordinary life, differently than everyone else.” (Zola, Oc, vol. 2, p. 54)
encounter troops in the countryside, and Pierre Rougon boldly retakes the city hall. He and Félicité successfully connive to bribe Antoine Macquart, his half-brother, into a betrayal of his allies by leading them into a trap to retake city hall. Some republican workers are killed in the doomed assault, but Pierre and Félicité achieve the political power they desire. They also succeed in exiling Antoine Macquart from Plassans, and his nephew Silvère is murdered by a gendarme in full view of tante Dide, who curses her children as a family of wolves and lets herself be locked up in the insane asylum of Tulettes.

The mark of Cain is thus put upon the Rougon-Macquart family as they collaborate in one way or another to extinguish the life of their own Silvère, who represents the best of human potential to Zola, "an energetic child of seventeen, the beautiful and ardent figure of all the enthusiasm of youth, [who] is the very soul of the Republic, and the soul of love and liberty." The pessimistic fate of the Rougon-Macquart is further presaged in the twenty-novel series by the reappearance twice more of the flawed ancestor of the clan, tante Dide, as she refuses to die. In La Conquête de Plassans [The Conquest of Plassans] (1874), a continuation of La Fortune des Rougon in Plassans, she remains seated looking straight ahead in the Tulettes asylum, where she has not moved in twelve years. Then in the last novel of the series, Le Docteur Pascal (1893), tante Dide is still living at the age of 104. Later in Chapter IX, when she is visited in Tulettes by her great-great grandson, Charles Saccard (Rougon), he dies of a nasal hemorrhage in front of her. The spectacle of his death awakens the memory of the murder of her lover Macquart and the image of the murder of her grandson Silvère, and she dies the next day at the age of 105.

Although Zola wrote La Fortune des Rougon in 1869, its serialization had not begun in Le Siècle, a left moderate daily journal, until June of 1870, when it was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War. Zola, who was not subject to military service because he was the sole support of his widowed mother, moved with his family, now officially including Alexandrine, whom he had married in May 1870, to Marseille. There he began a newspaper, La Marseillaise, which folded a few months later. He sought and finally received a job as the secretary to a government minister in Bordeaux, where the emergency French Government of National Defense was located. After the war ended in January 1871, he served as parliamentary correspondent for the National Assembly, which in March moved to Versailles, where Zola was arrested and held for a time in the Orangerie as a suspected supporter of the radical Paris Commune (March-May 1871). The bloody suppression and then repression of the Communards horrified him, and he wrote vividly of the terror, death, and destruction in articles in Le Sémaphore de Marseille and La Cloche.

Zola's experience proved essential in writing La Débâcle (1892), the nineteenth and penultimate Rougon-Macquart novel, which reveals a surprisingly balanced view of France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the resultant suppression of the Paris Commune revolt as a bloodbath which was necessary for the regeneration of the country. Indeed it was symbolized when Jean Macquart, the veteran peasant soldier re-enlisted to defend France, unknowingly killed his best friend and savior, Sedan comrade-in-arms and brother of his love Henriette, the bourgeois intellectual Maurice Levasseur at the barricades of the Commune. Jean is overcome by grief at his deathbed as Maurice explains that he and the radicals of the Commune were wrong:

"It was the healthy part of France, the reasonable and solid peasant part, the part which had stayed closest to the land, which was cutting out the crazy part, the part spoiled and made worse..."
by the Empire, the part broken down by dreams and pleasures. And so it had been necessary for France to cut into her own flesh and tear out the whole being, without knowing too much of what she was doing. But the bloodbath was necessary, and one of French blood, the abominable holocaust, the living sacrifice in the middle of the purifying fire. Now Calvary had been climbed to the most terrifying of agonies, the crucified nation was atoning for her sins and was going to be reborn.”

It was individuals such as Jean Macquart, the not-too-intelligent son of the lazy and envious Antoine Macquart and Fine Gavaudan, a simple, but earnest peasant soldier and not a scientist, who also could serve the cause of humanity and nature by his selfless, hopeful, and serious work despite the suffering, sacrifices, and disasters he encountered in La Fortune des Rougon, La Terre [The Land] (1887), and La Débâcle. For Zola the humble, but calm, clear-headed, and sustaining life of the peasantry produced by living close to nature’s perennial vagaries also could facilitate the renaissance of humankind, although he did not concentrate on the individual soul’s internal pathway to God in the manner of Rousseau and Tolstoy, who also extolled the virtues of the simple life of the peasants. An educated scientist such as Pascal Rougon, so unlike the rest of his family as a modest and selfless doctor, student of heredity, and chronicler of the Rougon-Macquart, would always be a Zola hero as a facilitator and guide of humanity’s search for truth and a symbol of humanity’s renaissance, even if he made errors or suffered losses, as in La Fortune des Rougon, La Faute de l’abbé Mouret [The Sin of the Abbot Mouret] (1875), and Le Docteur Pascal. But also the simplest and most grief-stricken, yet honest and hard-working people like Jean Macquart would, as Zola wrote in the last lines of La Débâcle, in “the certain rejuvenation of nature eternal, of humanity eternal, the promise of renewal to those who hope and work, ...march to the future, to the grand and rough task of rebuilding an entirely new France.”

Indeed Émile Zola intended that his novel La Débâcle serve as a lesson to the people of France. In an undated letter to Victor Simond, the director of the daily Le Radical, which serialized La Débâcle from 18 October 1892 to 25 May 1893, Zola wrote what he said were a few lines of preface:

“The people will judge it, and it will be for them, I hope, a useful lesson. They will find there what it really contains: the true history of our disasters; the causes which have rendered France, after so many victories, miserably beaten; the frightful necessity of this bloodbath from which we have emerged regenerated and grown up.

Misfortune to the peoples who have fallen asleep in vanity and apathy! Power is theirs who work and who dare to look the truth in the face.”

Hard-working scientists and simple peasants and soldiers could lead the way on the search for truth and a better future for humankind, but in the Rougon-Macquart series Zola showed that

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\(^{382}\) Zola, Oc, vol. 6, pp. 1117-1118.

\(^{383}\) Zola, Oc, vol. 6, pp. 1121-1122.

\(^{384}\) Zola, Correspondance, vol. VII, p. 331. The letter is presumed to have been written before 18 October 1892, when La Débâcle began its serialization in Le Radical. The daily had been publishing various works of Zola in serial format since 1889.
there were others who could do the job as well. Goujet, the Paris Goutte-d'Or neighborhood blacksmith and redemptive lover of the doomed Gervaise (Macquart) Coupeau in L'Assommoir (1877), is another such hero. He is an excellent, even ideal worker, whose manner is sober and moderate in stark contrast to Gervaise and most of those around her. Yet Goujet loves her truly and selflessly, and despite Gervaise's rejection of him and her calculated exploitation of his good will, he always acts with her best interest at heart. Some of Zola's heroes were female characters who, despite the pessimism, suffering, and injustice of their oppressive environments, served as examples of the kind of selfless love and sacrifice which Zola believed was necessary not only for the evolutionary moral progress of humanity, but also for its very survival in an immoral world based on vanity, selfishness, and apathetic delusion. Perhaps even more than their male scientist, peasant, worker, and soldier counterparts, they are able to bandage the wounds of human suffering and lead humanity to true happiness and welfare like their pre-Rougon-Macquart antecedents Soeur-des-Pauvres and Queen Primevère.

Such exceptions to the generally depressing Rougon-Macquart family of wolves include the young and virtuous, poor orphan from Normandy, Denise Baudu of Au Bonheur des Dames [Ladies' Paradise] (1883). She goes to Paris with her two siblings to work in her uncle's boutique, but eventually gains employment as a salesgirl in the large department store Bonheur de Dames, which is owned by the young widower Octave Mouret, the son of François Mouret and Marthe Rougon. Octave is the cynical, selfish, "profit at any cost, life is a zero-sum game" Don Juan of Pot-Bouille (1882), who contrived to impress and marry the owner of Bonheur des Dames, Caroline Hédouin, before inheriting the store from her after she died in a construction accident on the premises. Octave and his department store represent the survival of the fittest in the Darwinian jungle struggle of Paris commerce with the old-fashioned boutique shopkeepers, such as Denise's uncle. But the wise and virtuous, empathetic Cinderella figure of Denise causes Octave to truly fall in love with her ever more desperately as she continually refuses to become his mistress or that of anyone else. Long conversations between Octave and Denise were not just about romance, however, as Denise farsightedly sees the economic and social advantages of the Fourieresque (Charles Fourier 1772-1837, utopian social theorist) model which Octave's Bonheur des Dames also presents, that is, lower prices and greater selection of goods for all consumers combined with employment and pension security for the workers in an economic "phalanstery" or cooperative.\footnote{\[385\]Zola. Oc, vol. 4, pp. 981-982. The Fourier phalanastère [phalanstery] is mentioned five separate times in the novel. As explained in his work, Le Nouveau monde industriel [The New Industrial World] (1829), the phalanstery would consist of 1620 members of various professions and skills in a complex organization designated to serve as the basic unit of a harmonious society.}

Au Bonheur des Dames is easily one of Zola's most optimistic works as it has a happy ending with Denise finally declaring that she does indeed love and will marry Octave, after she becomes convinced that he understands that true love is not a commodity to be bought, sold, or traded like the merchandise of Bonheur des Dames. The mighty owner of the store, Octave Mouret, the former exploiter and shady opportunist, has been transformed by love for the virtuous Denise Baudu, a lowly shopgirl, but also a saintly virgin mother figure of selfless love, who is in reality much more powerful than he. Denise and Octave serve as examples of Zola's "people of action" who will facilitate the economic, social, and moral progression which will move French society forward. They are the Rougon-Macquart antecedents of Luc Froment and his family in the second novel of the Quatre Évangiles, Travail [Work] (1901).

Another prime example of a life of selfless love and sacrifice for others is Pauline Quenu, the heroine of Zola's autobiographical Rougon-Macquart novel, La Joie de vivre [The Joy of Living]
In 1879 Zola wrote a short story which featured his fear of death and the fear of being buried alive, a topic of prime interest at the time. The catalytic protagonist of the tale, who is able to escape his tomb, but still lose consciousness for three weeks, tries to return to his former life, but finds that his wife has moved on. La Mort d’Olivier Bécaille was first published in Russia in Vestnik Evropy in March 1879 before Zola made it part of the Naïs Micoulin collection (1884).

Zola published La Faute de l’abbé Mouret as well as many articles, stories, and letters in Vestnik Evropy from January 1875 to December 1880 courtesy of his friendship with the Russian novelist Ivan S. Turgenev (1818-1883), who resided many years in France and was a friend and member of Zola’s circle.

Pauline Quenu, the heroine of the novel, is a ten-year-old orphan, the daughter of Lisa Macquart and the pork butcher Quenu of Le Ventre de Paris [The Underbelly of Paris] (1873), who has a decent-sized inheritance when she is brought to the house of her cousins, the Chanteau, who live in the small, isolated port of Bonneville in Normandy. As the years pass, her guardians, especially Madame Chanteau, and the poor of the town take advantage of Pauline’s good will and generosity, and soon her protective nest egg is depleted. Lazare, the pessimistic and erratic Chanteau son with whom Pauline has fallen in love, finishes off the rest of Pauline’s money in ill-
conceived industrial enterprises before he decides to have an affair with Louise, another heiress. Pauline falls ill, but selflessly decides that it is better for Lazare to marry Louise. Pauline’s optimism and view of selfless love and sacrifice as the meaning of life cannot convince Lazare, who is obsessed with death and Schopenhauer’s negative views of human life, progress, and science. Lazare and Louise move to Paris, where they fail to find happiness. Lazare returns to Bonneville, but there is no longer any possibility of a relationship with Pauline. A suffering Louise gives birth to a weak infant which Pauline raises to health, as she again shows the indomitable courage and valor of her selfless character in the face of a world full of adversity and pain, and one in which selfish and untrustworthy people continue to disappoint her. Near the end of the novel, Zola describes Pauline thusly: “And it was she, in effect, the renouncement [of Schopenhauer], who was the love of others, goodness dispersed over bad humanity.” Pauline Quenu of La Joie de vivre represents the person which Émile Zola himself wanted to be, one who could maintain the joy of living despite the failure of his hopes, in contrast to Lazare Chanteau, the pessimistic and nihilist person haunted by death which Zola feared he was in reality.

Madame Caroline Hamelin of the eighteenth Rougon-Macquart novel, L’Argent [Money] (1891), is another of the optimistic life-and-love-renewing figures who expresses Zola’s philosophy of life. L’Argent is the story of the Paris stock market and the high financial world of banking, but it is based on the real-life crash of the Union Générale bank in 1882. It is also the continuation of La Curée [The Kill] (1872), with its main protagonist Aristide Saccard (Rougon), who has made a fortune in Paris real estate speculation in the earlier novel, now founding the new Universal Bank to finance the exploitation of the Near East. Madame Caroline, who has left her abusive husband, a rich brewer, follows her brother Georges, an engineer and fervent Catholic with missionary designs on Jerusalem, to Egypt and Lebanon, where they live for nine years working on economic development projects. When they return to Paris, Georges becomes Aristide’s partner, and Madame Caroline becomes an assistant to Aristide and then his mistress. Although she admires Aristide’s energetic and daring entrepreneurship, and she protects him from blackmail over the existence of Victor, his institutionalized violent son, Madame Caroline has great misgivings over his financial swindles and machinations.

After it has stunning success, Aristide’s Universal Bank fails in a financial scandal which is provoked by Gundermann, the Jewish owner of a competing bank, who receives inside information from the Baroness Sandorff, a risky investor and lover of Aristide. Aristide and Georges are arrested and condemned to prison for fraudulent activities as they and their investors are ruined, but they are able to exile themselves in Belgium and Italy respectively through a quirk in the appeals law. Despite her setbacks Madame Caroline counters Aristide’s antisemitic arguments for his downfall, and she recognizes the need for financial speculation in the achievement of economic opportunity. As she prepares to join her brother in Italy, where they will no doubt work on other plans for economic development in the Near East, she thinks about Aristide’s plan for a new project of land reclamation in Holland. Although she had touched the bottom of despair, and she knew that life was unjust and ignoble, just like nature, she believes that it must be accepted however abominable it may be, for only in it is the force of eternal hope. Madame Caroline looked at money in the same way. It had the power to destroy and to poison everything, but it also provided the necessary sustenance for the great works which facilitated human existence. With her invincible hope she maintains her optimistic beliefs in the evolutionary moral progress of human life toward an unknown goal.

“My God! Over all the mud that has been stirred up, over all the victims that have been obliterated, from all this abominable suffering which it has cost humanity to take each step forward, is there not an obscure and distant goal, something superior, good, just, and definitive, toward which we are proceeding without knowing it, something which swells up our hearts with the

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391 Zola, Oc, vol. 4, p. 1322.
Zola's positive, life-affirming characters in his Rougon-Macquart series were placed in a world ruled by his Darwinian vision of the individuals and the industrial revolution society in which they lived. In the biological as well as in the social and political order of things, he saw a ferocious struggle for life. After writing La Curée, the second Rougon-Macquart novel about the corrupt high society of Paris and the ruthlessly exploitative world of high finance in the Second Empire, one of the first images that he uses in the third novel, Le Ventre de Paris, is that of the mad contests of the Fat and the Lean, the poor and the rich, the idealists and the worldly. This novel of the petite bourgeoisie set in and around the belly of the society, the central food market of Paris at Les Halles, ends with the exclamation of the painter, Claude Lantier, the spokesman for the novelist, "What scoundrels are these honorable people!"

France of the Second Empire is a society full of tensions in all directions and at all levels, and Zola described some of these "worlds apart" inhabited by members of the Rougon-Macquart family. In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon (1876) he depicts those of the top echelon of government and its environment of continual intrigues. L'Assommoir describes the other end of society, that of the recently arrived worker population of Paris, people whose social rejection drives them to alcoholism, the drug addiction of the time. The world of the prostitutes is the subject of Nana with its main protagonist, Anna (Nana) Coupeau. A world of murderers is the focus of La Bête humaine [The Human Beast] (1890) with its main character, Jacques Lantier, a railroad mechanic. Priests, an obsessive interest of Zola, are featured in La Conquête de Plassans, La Faute de l'abbé Mouret, Une page d'amour [One Page of Love] (1878), Pot-Bouille, La Terre, Le Rêve [The Dream] (1888), and other novels. Artists are the autobiographical focus of L'Oeuvre [The Masterpiece] (1886), and scientists are represented by Pascal Rougon in Le Docteur Pascal.

Zola's epic Germinal (1885) also provides another good example of worlds apart, but those set to an inevitable cataclysm, as it features the story of coal miners against the capital or the big money of rich investors. From the beginning of this novel, you hear the first winds of a terrible hurricane, and so debuts the theme, "It has to blow!" Another ominous image appeared in La Débâcle to characterize the Second Empire in the form of gangrene which takes over the body of its society, condemning it to defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 and to the social amputation of the Paris Commune which followed. Such apocalyptic bloodbaths may be inevitable and necessary for the renaissance of humankind, but they will be the work of the untamable force of nature which is the people, as a fearful hero and revolt leader Étienne Lantier observed in Germinal, "this enormous mass of people, blind and irresistible, passing like a force of nature, sweeping up everything, outside of the rules and the theories."393 For just as he had no faith in priests, Zola had no faith in revolutionaries or their ideologies.394 His portrayal of Souvarine, the travelling Russian anarchist, nihilist, and disciple of Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), is totally negative. As the flawed Étienne Lantier represents the positive regenerative force of the

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392 Zola, Oc, vol. 6, p. 658.

393 Zola, Oc, vol. 5, p. 347.

The resemblance of Clotilde to Jeanne and the relationship to Zola’s real life was intentional. See Zola, Oc, vol. 6, p. 1402, for a photo of the handwritten dedication, dated 20 June 1893, of a volume of Le Docteur Pascal to Jeanne, “my Clotilde.”

However in true tragic and flawed, pessimistic Rougon-Macquart fashion, Félicité Rougon, Pascal’s mother, in a fit of vanity to “protect” the family name, burns her dead son’s notebooks on heredity and the Rougon-Macquart genealogical history except for the annotated family tree. As Clotilde sadly remembers her last days with Pascal, her lover and mentor, she examines the burned fragments of his papers and recalls the doubts about the meaning of human life, truth, and God which she shared with him, the same doubts expressed earlier by Zola in his youthful poems of 1861, Religion and Doute. Before Le Docteur Pascal closes hopefully with a scene of Clotilde nursing her infant son, inexplicable feelings cause her to feel Pascal’s presence and to remember “How good and happy he was, and how his passion for life had given him such a love of others.” She also recalls what he called his “crédo [creed],” the one with which Pascal Rougon, the doctor, scientist, student of heredity, and Rougon-Macquart family chronicler, expressed Zola’s philosophic conclusion to the Rougon-Macquart series in the second chapter of this last novel. It was that the hope for humanity lay in the search for truth by the progress of reason through science.

“... I believe that the future of humanity is in the progress of reason through science. I believe that the pursuit of the truth through science is the divine ideal that man must propose to himself. I believe that everything is an illusion and vanity, outside of the treasure of truths slowly acquired and which will never be lost evermore. I believe that the sum of these truths, continually augmented, will finish by giving to man an incalculable power, and serenity, if not happiness... Yes, I believe in the final triumph of life.”

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395Zola, Oc, vol. 6, p. 1395.

396Zola, Oc, vol. 6, p. 1190.
CHAPTER THREE
THE LAST NOVELS, DREYFUS, AND A PREMATURE END 1893-1902

After the completion of the twenty Rougon-Macquart novels in 1893, Émile Zola was at the height of his fame. He had gained wealth from his writing, and he was well received in literary and artistic circles, although he was denied admission to the French Academy because he had made envious enemies there. He was made a Chevalier [Knight], then Officier [Officer], de la Légion d'honneur. But he was always controversial because of his subject matter and works which many considered pornographic. In 1888 his publisher in England, Henry Vizetelly, had been heavily fined for producing translations of Nana, Pot-Bouille, and La Terre. In 1894, during a trip to Italy to do research for his next series of novels, the Trois Villes, Zola and his wife were well received by the King and Queen of Italy, by his paternal ancestral city of Venice, and by other notables, but he was denied an audience with the Pope in Rome.

Zola's renown did not relieve his pessimism. In 1893-1894 he wrote Lazare [Lazarus], a one-act libretto for which he intended that his friend Alfred Bruneau write the music. Lazare is the story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, but with an important difference. Instead of being grateful to the Savior for his return to earthly life, Lazarus begs Christ to resume death, again with sentiments similar to those which Zola had written years before in his youthful poems Religion and Doute.

"It was so good, o Jesus, this great black sleep, this great sleep without a dream. Never had I known the sweetness of absolute repose...

Live again? O no, o no! Did I not pay my frightful debt to life with suffering? I was born without knowing why, I lived without knowing how, and now you would have me pay double, you would condemn me to begin again my time of pain on this grief-filled earth!"

Once Lazarus convinces his sorrowful family that he would be happier to return to death, and that they should not feel grief and sadness because of it, Christ grants his request in the spirit of love, mercy, and understanding.

Although Zola believed that neither religion nor politics was capable of providing a solution to the problems of humanity, in his last six novels he abandoned the overriding pessimism of his famous Rougon-Macquart series. Like the Rougon-Macquart novels, however, the last six works comprise a history of one family, the Froment, but unlike the vast majority of the Rougon-Macquart characters, they represent positive heroes making discoveries and accomplishing deeds which will benefit mankind and build a bright future for it on earth. The Trois villes [Three Cities], which are Lourdes (1894), Rome (1896), and Paris (1898), concern the destiny of one man, Pierre Froment, while those of his sons Mathieu [Matthew], Luc [Luke], and Marc [Mark] are recounted respectively in the Quatre Évangiles [Four Gospels]: Fécundité [Fecundity] (1899), Travail [Work] (1901), and Vérité [Truth] (1902-1903). The fourth gospel was to be the story of

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Zola, Oc, vol. 15, p. 543. Grief at Zola’s death in 1902 caused Bruneau to remember Lazare and to finally write the musical composition for it. But it was never played until 1957 on French radio.

Zola, Oc, vol. 15, pp. 537-539.
Jean [John] Froment and titled *Justice*, but it remained only in Zola's notes.

In Lourdes the abbot Pierre Froment is introduced as a Zola-like figure, the son of a chemist who is killed in a laboratory explosion. To please his pious mother he had entered the priesthood, but his reason was giving him doubts about his religion, and yet he was also tormented by a desire to believe. He goes on a pilgrimage to Lourdes to re-consolidate his vacillating faith in a place renowned for its miracle cures, but his effort is in vain. Pierre accompanies Marie de Guersaint, a romantic interest of his youth and a victim of paraplegic hysteria, who is cured during the visit. Although he has great sympathy for the afflicted who pay spiritually and materially for the journey to Lourdes, he does not see much benefit for them in the pilgrimage except for hope and the occasional relief of a case of hysteria. Pierre returns more convinced than ever that he has to work for the improvement of life and society in this world without the promises of compensation in the hereafter. Overwhelmed in the course of his visits to areas where the working class lives and where the asylums for the poor are located, he becomes convinced of the inability of charity alone to combat the consequences of unemployment and misery. He dreams of a return to a primitive Christianity, to the religion of justice and truth, which it was before being taken over by the wealthy and the powerful, and of a church taking into its hands the irresistible democratic movement so that nations might avoid the looming social catastrophe.

Froment goes to the ancient and glorious, but physically and spiritually crumbling city of Rome in order to appear before the conservative and ideological church hierarchy to defend the book *La Rome nouvelle* [The New Rome], which he had written on his ideas of a return to the primitive Christianity of Jesus Christ, where charity, selfless love, and humility are paramount. But after witnessing the political machinations of the Roman society and the church, a secret audience with a hoped-for-reformist Pope Leo XIII convinces Froment through the power of his office to renounce his book. Pierre then completely loses his faith and decides to quit the clergy in order to establish a place where the construction of tomorrow's society can be accomplished.

That place is Paris, the "initiating, civilizing, and liberating" city which will bring to the world "the religion of science, justice, and the new faith which the democracies were waiting for." Zola's *Paris* reflects the contemporary (1892-1894) political crises and scandals of the French republican capital under the threat of anarchist bombs. In it Pierre's despairing older brother with revolutionary and anarchist tendencies, the chemist Guillaume, has invented a powerful explosive which Pierre prevents him from using in the cause of violent social change and wanton destruction. He hopes that it can be a force for progress in the service of humanity, but it is stolen and used by anarchists in their indiscriminate bombings. Pierre is saved from the despair of having lost his faith by the love of Marie Couturier, an orphan in the care of his brother, whom he marries and with whom he has a first child, Jean. Besides love the only thing which he can be sure of in this world of misery, compromise, and mud, a world made more sad by anarchistic terrorism, is the value of science, which "alone is revolutionary," and which alone, "in spite of bad political events and the vain agitation of sectarians and the ambitious, works for the humanity of tomorrow, to prepare its truth, justice, and peace!" as Bertheroy, the great chemist, declares near the end of *Paris*.

Zola has not really resigned himself to any of the different socialist doctrines which were prevalent at the time. Rather he has seized upon the philosophy of Pascal, that one has to accept the truths that science provides, and in this acceptance there is a certain peace. He remains confident in the great natural law of progress, the march-of-time process which he called the "élan
toward liberty and justice” and the “constant march toward the truth” in his **Rougon-Macquart** “Notes générales sur la marche de l’oeuvre.” Anything which limits this necessary evolution is ill-fated. Revolution, far from hurrying this process, encumbers it in the manner of retrograde spirits. The church is also such a retrograde spirit as it has failed to take care of its own and ease human misery. Near the end of the last chapter (XVI) of *Rome*, Froment says, “Charity has never done anything but make misery last longer. Justice will cure it perhaps. As it was from justice that the poor became hungry, only an act of justice can sweep the old world in order to reconstruct the new one.”

Zola had just finished his *Trois villes* when the Dreyfus Affair interrupted his life. Never a person to shrink from taking a public position on controversial issues, he had already written and published three articles on the Dreyfus case, including the first one of 25 November 1897 in *Le Figaro*, which closed with the famous “Truth is on the march, and nothing will stop it.” After Major Esterhazy, the real spy for Germany who had committed the crimes for which Dreyfus was blamed, was acquitted in a mock trial and Dreyfus was not exonerated, Zola decided to write a provocative open letter to Félix Faure, the President of the Republic, which was published in *L’Aurore* on 13 January 1898. The famous “J’accuse!” letter denounced the antisemitic machinations behind the entire process by which French Army Captain Alfred Dreyfus was falsely accused of espionage and treason, tried, degraded, and imprisoned for life on Devil’s Island off the coast of Guiana despite valid evidence not only to the contrary, but which also pointed to the real criminal and to those who were covering up their ineptitude and prejudice. In his “J’accuse” letter Zola invited a libel case against himself by naming names and providing damning details as he was supported by some prominent *prodreyfusards* such as Georges Clemenceau, the future premier, and Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, the vice-president of the French Senate. Part of his letter declared:

“It’s a crime to poison the young and the humble, to exasperate the passions of reaction and intolerance while hiding behind hateful antisemitism, by which the great liberal France of the rights of man will die if it is not cured of it. It’s a crime to exploit patriotism for acts of hate, and finally it’s a crime to make the saber a modern god when all of human science is at work on the next project of truth and of justice.”

The result of “J’accuse!” was much world-wide support for Zola, but French society was divided on the antisemitic question, and the Catholic Church was silent while some of its official faithful were writing anti-Jewish tracts on Zionist conspiracies. In February 1898 Émile Zola was tried for libel solely on his statement that Major Esterhazy had been acquitted by order. He was found guilty and condemned to one year’s imprisonment with a fine of 3000 francs, and his *Légion d’honneur* was later suspended. In order to keep his case and his cause before the public, Zola left France for exile in England. Eleven months later, in June 1899, he returned to France after the legal process of exonerating Dreyfus was moving forward. It was not until March of 1901 that his criminal and civil legal problems were resolved. The final exoneration and restoration of Alfred Dreyfus did not come about until 1906.

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In exile in England Zola also began his literary excursion into utopia with the first of his *Quatre Évangiles* novels, *Fecondité*. It is the story of Mathieu and Marianne Froment, symbols of the productive power of life with their large family and vast agricultural domain. They succeed, sometimes at the expense of more selfish or sterile couples, in a positive, life-affirming way quite unlike *La Fortune des Rougon*, even to the point of establishing a colony in Africa.

In his second *Évangile*, *Travail*, which was inspired by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772-1837), Zola builds the ideal city, one of the little colonies dreamed of in this period. A foundation named *La Crècherie* [*The Nursery*], created by Luc Froment, another of the four sons of Pierre and Marie Froment, is based on the association of capital, work, and intelligence as it relies on the reorganization of work brought to its noble best. The generosity and socialism of Luc, a Christ-like figure who suffers the antipathy and jealousy of the inhabitants of a nearby town as well as the abandonment of some of his supporters, eventually succeed in transforming social relations and liberating the workers in association with the science of the engineer Jourdan and the virtues of modern education. The rest is accomplished by virtue of the example, and other cities are created, all in the novel *Travail*, Zola's positive and utopian answer to his more pessimistic *Germinal*.

The third *Évangile*, *Vérité*, reprises the Dreyfus Affair in the environment of the French education system. In it the teacher Marc Froment risks his career and his marriage in order to come to the aid of a Jewish educator named Simon, who has been falsely accused, tried, and found guilty of raping and murdering his nephew, a Catholic school pupil. Like Zola in the Dreyfus case, Marc faces the power of antisemitism and the prejudices and ideological blindness of religious congregations. Marc is eventually successful in his long struggle to prove the innocence of Simon and the guilt of the monk Gorgias while standing for the complete liberation of the French school system and the country itself from the intellectual and spiritual feudalism of the Catholic Church.

The planned fourth *Évangile*, to be called *Justice*, was to feature Jean, the remaining and oldest Froment son. In his notes Zola looked toward battles on an international scale with intellectual, commercial, and industrial fronts rather than military ones. The future was to be anti-war, with Jean as a virtuous anti-war military officer advocating a federation of nations in which France was to play a leading part, "to one day give the world Justice, as it had already given it Liberty." 405

Émile Zola died unexpectedly on the night of 28-29 September 1902 as he was asphyxiated in an unusual way in his Paris residence at 21 bis rue de Bruxelles, between the Place Blanche and the Place de Clichy. He and his wife Alexandrine had just left his beloved estate at Médan, on the winding Seine not quite 18 miles northwest of the center of Paris, to spend the fall and winter in the city as was their custom. His chimney had been deliberately stopped up, most likely by a member of the ultra-nationalist, anti-Dreyfus *Ligue des Patriotes* [*League of Patriots*]. 406 Alexandrine, who had slept in the same bed as Zola, was rendered unconscious, but she survived. Thus Émile Zola, the conscience of France and one of its greatest writers and perspicacious thinkers, much too prematurely did as his virtuous character Luc had done at the

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end of his novel *Travail*, "he entered into the torrent of universal love, of eternal life." In this essential belief of the meaning of life, Zola and Tolstoy were one.

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407 Zola, Oc, vol. 8, p. 969.
Zola's pessimism and despondency are thus different from those of Tolstoy. Zola believed that science would lead the way to utopia and mankind’s salvation, while Tolstoy had no such illusions, either about science or about the collective salvation of humanity. Both rejected organized religion as an answer to the problems of humankind, believing that it had been as corrupted as any other part of society. But both had similar views, influenced by the Christianity which they did not reject, on what the individual should do to make the world better - make the individual better first by acts of selfless love for others, and by consequence society will become better. This message was explicit in Tolstoy’s works and in his life as he concentrated on the salvation of the individual soul and its reunification with God through selfless love, while it was implicit in Zola’s life and in his works as he looked to the collective salvation of humanity through individual heroic lives of contribution to the common good. For Zola, just as for Tolstoy, heroism, contribution to the common good, and an individual life well-lived are defined as nothing less than selfless love, which alone facilitates human life and assures the immortality of the individual soul. Although his last novels were criticized for their utopianism, and Zola is still wrongly regarded by some as an advocate of socialism and even Marxism, his message to posterity is best shown by his stance near the turn of the century in the Dreyfus Affair, in which he fought fearlessly and selflessly against injustice and risked everything he had for a cause he believed in, the cause of one man against the prejudices of France’s greatest institutions. Selfless love has no better example.

Both Tolstoy and Zola arrived at the same destination in their soulful quests, but by different routes, which were often the result of their different environments and life experiences. But the message they carried is one which is ancient, yet timeless, and often forgotten in the tumult of real world catastrophes or in the perennial intellectual pseudo-struggles over the latest in trendy philosophy or meaningless concept creation. Selfless love is the meaning of life which Christ taught in the Sermon On the Mount. Lev Tolstoy repeated it and illustrated it unmistakeably in his works, and Émile Zola reminded us of it with graphic distinction in his oeuvre. While it could be argued that Zola might have been more hopeful about the scientific zeitgeist and the “isms” of his time, while Tolstoy was always hostile to any deviation from the essential message of Christ, there is no doubt that both were equally dedicated, not only to teaching the message, but also to living it. Despite their human foibles Lev Tolstoy and Émile Zola were two of the most empathetic writers in history whose most fervent wish was that their work and their lives serve those who were suffering with life.
A.1. “Notes sur le second chapitre des <<Caractères>> de la Bruyère. -

Labruyère dit: ‘Qui est ce qui en mourant et en laissant après lui un monde qui ne se sent pas de sa perte et où tant de gens se trouvent pour le remplacer, ne sera pas convaincu de son inutilité.’ Cette idée est une parabole. Elle est exagérée et même j’ose dire qu’elle n’est pas juste. -- Chaque homme sans même concevoir son utilité sans le désir d’être utile -- l’est néanmoins. Mais si un homme ressent la nécessité d’être utile, et s’il tend vers ce but, il réussit toujours et contribue nécessairement au bien-être public. Sans doute l’homme en mourant doit ressentir la petitesse, même la nullité du bien qu’il a fait vis-à-vis [de] toute la masse de bien qui a été faite. De bien de gens il n’y a que le nom qui vaille quelque chose...

Cette idée est tout à fait juste. -- En effet, en lisant l’ouvrage d’un homme qui n’a que de l’esprit et du style, nous nous faisons une idée de cet homme infiniment au dessus de ce qu’il vaut et nous ne lui supposons pas les défauts qu’il a. Labruyère dit qu’il a existé et qu’il existera toujours des génies qui ne se feront point de renommée. Je ne suis pas de son avis, peut-être cette différence d’opinions vient-elle de ce que je conçois le génie autrement que les autres. J’appelle génie la réunion des trois principaux éléments de l’âme tous au plus haut degré de la force et du développement, c’est-à-dire, un grand esprit et beaucoup de sentiments avec une ferme volonté. Je ne suis pas d’avis d’appeler génies les génies des arts; je les appelle talents. Ainsi donc si nous prenons le génie comme je le comprends, son esprit lui fera concevoir sa supériorité, ses sentiments lui feront vouloir du bien aux autres, et sa volonté le fera réussir dans ses plans.

-- Par conséquent il se fera une renommée.

‘L’amour-propre ne nous laisse pas admirer les perfecions d’un autre.’ Cette idée est tout à fait juste.

‘La modestie est au mérite ce que les ombres sont aux figures d’un tableau: elle lui donne de la force et du relief.’ En effet rien ne fait tant apprécier le mérite que la modestie. Chaque homme a plus ou moins de l’esprit de l’originalité ou de contradiction, et quand on vous voit amoindrir votre mérite, on a envie de l’agrandir aux yeux d’autrui. -- Les hommes qui se croyent du mérite en voulant imiter la simplicité sont semblables à des hommes de taille médiocre qui se baissent aux portes...

Les hommes libres (célibataires) ont plus de facilité à s’élever que les hommes mariés. Ces derniers restent le plus souvent dans la position dans laquelle ils ont été.
Puisqu’ordinairement un homme marié est regardé comme ayant passé la principale part de sa vie. —

[Notes On the Second Chapter of The Characters of La Bruyère.-]

La Bruyère says: ‘Who is it who, when he dies and leaves after him a world which does not feel his loss, and where so many people are available to replace him, will not be convinced of his uselessness?’ This idea is a parable. It is exaggerated, and I dare say that it is not just. -- Every man without even conceiving his usefulness, without the desire of being useful, -- is useful nevertheless. But if a man feels the necessity of being useful, and if he tends toward this goal, he always succeeds and necessarily contributes to the public well-being. Undoubtedly the man when dying must feel the smallness, even the nullity of the good which he has done, vis-à-vis the entire mass of good which has been done. For many people only the name is of some value...[blank lines]

This idea is completely just. -- In effect while reading the work of a man who has only wit and style, we get an idea of this man infinitely above what he is worth, and we do not attribute to him the faults which he has. La Bruyère says that there existed and will always exist geniuses who do not make any name for themselves. I do not agree with him, and perhaps this difference of opinions comes from the fact that I conceive genius differently than others do. I call genius the reunion of the three principal elements of the soul, all of which are at the highest degree of force and development, that is, a great mind and many sentiments with a firm will. I am not of the opinion to call geniuses the geniuses of the arts. I call them talents. So if we take the genius as I comprehend him, his mind will make him conceive of his superiority, his sentiments will make him wish good to others, and his will will make him succeed in his plans.

-- Consequently he will make himself a name.

‘Self-love does not allow us to admire the perfections of another.’ This idea is completely just. ‘Modesty relates to merit the way shadows do to figures on a work of art. It gives it force and makes it stand out.’ In effect nothing makes us appreciate merit more than modesty. Each man has more or less a spirit of originality or of contradiction, and when people see you dismissing your merit, it has the effect of enlarging it in the eyes of others. --

Men who believe themselves to be of merit and who wish to imitate simplicity are like those men of medium height who lower themselves to pass through doors...

Free men (bachelors) have better facility to raise themselves up than married men. The latter stay most often in the position in which they were. Since ordinarily a married man is viewed as having passed the principal part of his life. --\[408\]

A.2.

“Philosophical Notes On Discourses of J. J. Rousseau.
First Discourse.

Would the reconstruction of sciences and the arts facilitate the improvement of morals? --
It is known that Rousseau proved the harmful influence of sciences on morals. --

\[408\]L.N. Tolstoy, Pss v 91t, vol. 1, pp. 218-220, and notes on p. 338. Quotations from La Bruyère, upon which Tolstoy is commenting, are enclosed in single quotation marks. The Notes On the Second Chapter of ‘The Characters’ of La Bruyère are presented and translated in their entirety. This composition is listed as completed in the year 1847 in the index volume, vol. 91.
The first objection which I make to Rousseau will be the question -- does he agree that a person who makes use of freedom is able to do more good and evil than a person who is deprived of it, and that people in general who have broken the bonds of ignorance are able to do more good and evil than people whose ignorance limits their freedom? I am sure that any reasonable person agrees that the less developed the capabilities of a person are, the more limited is his freedom and vice versa. Consequently, in order to decide this question, it is necessary to first decide the questions which, through this reasoning, present themselves in our argument. Does a person have tendencies at birth? And if he does have them, are these tendencies equally directed toward good and evil, or does one of them predominate? --

It is clear that, in order to decide the question posed by Rousseau from the fundamental beginnings of reason, first of all it is necessary to decide these three questions (Note by Tolstoy I will try to decide which of these propositions is true elsewhere). If a person does not have tendencies he is born with, then it is clear that good and evil depends on education. If good and evil depends on education, then it is clear that science in general and philosophy specifically, which Rousseau attacks so, are not only not useless, but even necessary, and not just for Socratic types, but for everyone. -- If those tendencies toward good and evil are equally powerful in the soul of a person, then the less freedom a person will have, the less will be his good and bad influence and vice versa. Consequently if this proposition is true, then the arts and sciences cannot produce any difference in the relationship between good and evil. -- If the source of good predominates in the soul of a person, then the source of good will be developed with the development of the arts and letters and vice versa. If the very source of evil predominates in the soul of a person, then only in that instance will Rousseau’s thought be true. And I am sure that with all his eloquence and with all his skill of persuasion, the great citizen of Geneva would not decide to prove such a utopia, the whole absurdity of which I hope to prove later. -- Here the thought comes to me that, all the philosophical questions, the resolution of which so many have worked on, and on which so many (useless) books have been written, all I say, can be brought to very simple origins....The leaves of a tree amuse us more than the roots. One of the main mistakes made by the greater body of thinkers is this one, that having recognized their inability to resolve the important questions from the origins of reason, they want to resolve the philosophical questions historically, forgetting that History is one of the most backward sciences, and it is a science which has lost its purpose. -- Its hottest partisans will never find a proper purpose for it. -- History is a secondary science. -- It can be said that it doesn’t prove anything. The mistake is exactly that they study it like an independent science. They don’t study it for philosophy, the only reason studying it is necessary, but they study it just for itself. -- For this reason History does not reveal to us what and when was the relationship between arts and sciences and good morals, between good and evil, religion and citizenship, but it will tell us, and untruthfully, where the Huns came from, where they lived, and who was the founder of their power and so on.

First Part.

Rousseau, considering the very first influence of arts and sciences, says: ‘And people began to feel the main advantage of the influence of the Muses which made them more capable of living together, inspiring them with the desire to please each other with works which were worthy of their mutual approval.’ -- All that we do, we do only for ourself. But when we find ourselves in the society of people, then everything that we might do for ourselves is advantageous only when our works please others, and we receive their approval. Consequently every person who strives separately for his own individual benefit facilitates living together. And since not all people find their individual benefit in works of arts and sciences, then it can’t be suggested that the capability for living together flows from certain works of arts and sciences. Again Rousseau: ‘While government and laws are concerned with the inviolability and welfare of people, the sciences and the arts, not as despotic, but more powerful, perhaps, cover the iron chains with which they are burdened with garlands of flowers, and they suppress the feeling of freedom, forcing them to love slavery and making them what they call educated nations.’ --

Here we find an obvious contradiction in the words of the very writer with the thought which he
defends. ‘Necessity produced autocracy, and arts and sciences consolidated it.’ From these words it is clear that the author himself agrees at least that arts and sciences supported autocracy, and if they hadn’t supported it, it would have been destroyed, and so many doers of good works would be destroyed with it! How many involuntary vices would mankind fall into! -- It must be admitted that sciences had their own stupid influence on morals, and it also must be admitted that they saved mankind from a great pile of ashes. -- Further Rousseau says that morals were better before, ‘because although the nature of man was not better, but people found their security in the ease of penetrating each other, and this advantage, the price of which we feel today, saved them from a great number of vices.’ Since it seems to me that I already proved that the secrecy which reigns among us does not stem from the influence of certain arts and sciences, then I do not consider it necessary to refute this completely true thought, which is separate from the first part of the argument.

Most of the opponents of this discourse attacked this argument, saying that if evil were not secret, it would be more infectious. I will say that, true, under the cover of secrecy, evil is not infectious, but then neither is good. Moreover, if good and evil were to operate openly, anyone would agree that good would find more imitators. -- The historical evidence follows. I already stated my opinion about this evidence, and the objections of Gauthier and the Polish King affirm my opinion ‘that History in the current sense is too unknown for us to rely on it to resolve philosophical questions.’ -- They both very fundamentally refute historically the historical evidence of Rousseau.

I will indicate only those places where the author obviously contradicts himself. In the midst of one of the main piles of ash into which the sciences have brought us, is the disorder of military discipline and the softness and general absence of military qualities. But why do people who do good works need military qualities, I ask? -- They answer me: for the defense of the fatherland. -- The same History, on which the author relies so much, shows that nations are defended when arts and sciences are known, and that they fought when they did not know them. --

Second Part.

Full of historical evidence which doesn’t prove anything.

Addressing the scientists, he says: ‘Answer me, those of you who inspired us with so much great knowledge, if you had not taught us any of that, would we be less numerous, worse guided, less dangerous, less fruitful, or more depraved?’--

From these words it is evident that the author accepts the welfare of private persons and that of mankind as identical. Moreover, for the most part the welfare of individuals is in inverse relation to the welfare of the Government. -- Further the author talks about the harmful influence of luxury. -- ‘With money one can have anything except citizens and good morals.’ -- (The thought is completely true and excellently expressed.) -- Here I discern, what is luxury? Where does it come from, and what are its consequences? -- The word luxury is completely conditional. When all people went without clothes, the first person who put on the skin of some animal was a luxurious person. In our time the person who forces thousands of people to work several years for his own satisfaction is considered only as fulfilling the necessities of life. --

The source of pride is the satisfaction of necessities. -- Time increased necessities. With the increase in necessities came an increase in the difficulty for each person to satisfy all of his own necessities. With the increase in this difficulty appeared the thought about the division of labor. -- Some were more occupied with satisfying necessities, to others it was less important. -- This is one of the reasons for the inequality of people. -- Some, who were not occupied with the satisfaction of the main necessity of people, began to feel independent of others. It was this dependence, used for evil purposes, which produced luxury. -- I call that person luxurious who uses the common good, in contrast to one who brings it to the society. -- The consequence of luxury is clear, that it will be the pride of the powerful and the envy of the weak, exactly those two vices which serve as the sources of the greater part of the pile of ashes. -- And so, if luxury is one of the greatest piles of ashes, from this however, it does not follow that the sciences generated it. Or that only the science of government comprises one of the main necessities of a person. If the
arts and sciences support those in power, as Rousseau says, then they facilitated the development of luxury, but they did not generate it. --

Further it is impossible not to notice the mistakes which the author makes when he speaks about the influence of one field on another. He says that the advantageous influence of women is good, and that all the evil which stems from this influence depends only on the incorrect education of women. -- The only thing good for man in society is that which is good and in its natural state. But the closer we see man to his natural state, the less we notice this pernicious influence of women, the source of which is luxury and idleness. -- The weak nature of the capabilities of women put them into a dependence on men for the satisfaction of the necessities of life, and in the fulfillment of their role (birth and education of children), the former completely depend on the latter. -- The unmitigated consequence of luxury is idleness, and the unmitigated consequence of idleness is vice, for together with all the aspirations of the human soul is found the desire to bring all these urges into fulfillment. --

A.3.

"ON THE AIM OF PHILOSOPHY"

a)

A person strives, that is a person is active. -- Where is this activity directed? How to make this activity free? -- This is the aim of philosophy in its true sense. In other words philosophy is the science of life.

In order to more exactly define the same science, it is necessary to define the aspiration which gives us the concept of it. --

The aspiration which is found in every being and in a person is the consciousness of life and the aspiration to preserve and strengthen it. --

By strengthening life I mean the aspiration of a person to have more memories, or what we call happiness or well-being. -- In order to satisfy this aspiration for happiness, a person must not try to find happiness in the outside world, that is to look for it in pleasant circumstantial memories of the outside world, but in the education of himself, so that any memory acts upon me the way that I want. -- Otherwise a person will seem like a mindless individual who wants to pull a house over himself instead of climbing to enter it. -- And so the aim of philosophy is to show how a person must educate himself. -- But a person is not alone. He lives in society, consequently philosophy must determine the relationships of a person to other people. -- If each one aspired to his own good, searching for it outside himself, the interests of individual persons would meet each other, and from there would result disorder. But if each person would aspire to his own self-improvement, then order will not be violated in any way, so that everyone will do for another what he wishes, in order that the other does it for him. --

In order to know philosophy, that is, the knowledge of how to direct the natural aspiration to well-being which is lodged in each person, it is necessary to form and comprehend that capability by which a person can limit that natural aspiration, that is, the will, then all capabilities of a person for the achievement of good. -- (Psychology)

The very method for knowing speculative philosophy consists of the study of psychology and the laws of nature, in the development of intellectual capabilities (Mathematics), in exercises for the ease of the expression of thoughts, namely [?] in definitions. --

The very method for the study of practical philosophy consists of the analysis of all questions
which are encountered in the life of an individual, in the exact fulfillment of the rules of morality, in
following the laws of nature. --

b) The definition of definition

The definition of a concept is the substitution of a defined concept by the simplest concepts
which constitute it. This action is called analysis. -- By means of the analysis of whatever
concept, one can proceed from the most complex to the most abstract, that is, to that which
cannot be defined. -- This type of concept is called consciousness. What is consciousness?
Consciousness is the concept of the very self -- in other words, me or I.

c) On reasoning relative to future life

Everything that exists cannot stop existing without a good enough reason for it, and everything
that didn’t exist cannot begin to exist without a reason. The soul exists, consequently it cannot
stop existing without a reason, but what constitutes the essence of the soul?

The consciousness of I... -- What is consciousness? The notion of I existing in different
degrees of activity or movement.

What kind of capability does I existing in differing degrees of movement present? Memory.
We see that memory completely depends on the body, so that injury to one part of a person
destroys that capability, and consequently death must completely destroy it. And so only one
consciousness of I remains by which a person exists on this earth. What about Hypotheses
concerning the closest definition of a future life, these hypotheses always will be nonsense. --

d) Method

The aim of philosophy states that the only aspiration of a person must be to educate himself. -
- In order to educate himself, it is necessary first of all to know what is I, -- and what education is
real. For this a method is necessary, namely: 1) all physical necessities to be subject to the will,
2) the capability of reproduction to be subject to the will and to develop according to the following
rules: to remember any nice thought which you find during the whole week and then to note it, and
to repeat all the thoughts every evening. -- Exercises: to study Mathematics. -- 3) reason or the
capability to make conclusions to be subject to the will and develop [translator’s note: according
to] the following rules. 1) to define every concept, that is, in the place of one crowded concept put
in two of the largest and most meaningful also, then define these two concepts, finally proceed to
those concepts which can not have definitions, but which we recognize because they have no
other essence except the necessary signs of the I. -- 2) Acquire new thoughts in whatever way,
and to follow along the path of the thoughts, noting the number and name of the methods of
thinking. -- Exercises - Mathematics and debate.

In all of this don’t allow the true aim of philosophy to escape attention and to occupy oneself
with the knowledge of only those truths which are necessary for this goal, not missing even one
thought of which you are convinced of its truth, so that you can put it into words. 4) The capability
of the will; which development will consist of customary power over all capabilities and in activity. -

Under the concept of the method of philosophy, generally the capability of expression of
thoughts must also be understood. Rules for this will be the following. 1) don’t write a sentence
on paper until you find its full relationship to what came before and what comes after.

Exercises: definitions and poetry.

e)

Finding two basic parts or origins in anything, I conclude that in everything there are two basic
origins, which I understand because they are completely opposed to each other, but if they were
combined, the result would be zero. The very concept of negation proceeds from the fact that
each of these origins acts infinitely differently. -- that is, they have an infinite quantity of degrees, consequently I can imagine an infinitely small degree of movement, which is negation. In its very essence an infinitely small movement of both origins can be only in unification (unlimited inactivity).

Not yet finding rational truth, we can feel it in advance, and for this reason I want to determine the rules for life. -- They can be divided into two parts: into the physical and the intellectual, and the engine of both of them is the will. -- 1) eating, drinking, sleeping, [editors' note: unreadable three-letter word here] -- only it's necessary not to allow the aim of all activity to escape attention, or to leave it out of the generally accepted rules. This is to avoid the opportunity to do evil."410

A.4. [untitled]

"1) If a person did not desire, then a person would not exist. The reason for all activity is desire. Desire is the power of activity, but since the reason for activity is two-fold, that is, it either proceeds from desire or from the very activity, then desire is also two-fold: direct and indirect. Activity is the consequence and the reason for desire. When it is the reason [for desire], then what is the reason for activity? The reason for activity is the outside world.

I desire to know the truth. I desire to know what I am, why I am aware of memory? But maybe there is no truth, there is no me, there are no memories. Maybe it's all delusion. But then why do I reason? Why do I want to know the truth, why do I want not to be deceived? So I can reject everything, everything except for the fact that I desire, and if I did not desire, I would not reject, and consequently only one thing would be true, the fact that I desire, and consequently I need [?]. What is the reason for desire? (If desire exists, then its reason also exists.) The reason for desire is activity, the reason for activity is the aspiration to independence, to satisfaction, that is everything which has influence on me, or everything that exists, and desire itself. Consequently the reason I desire is the existence of everything (so that if everything did not exist, then neither would I or my desire) and my desire. So desire is the reason and the consequence. From this it is obvious that desire acts differently: it determines itself and acts indirectly, or it acts according to memories, so that their activity is completely opposite.

Axiom. What does not have a reason is independent.

Axiom. 1) Everything that exists has a reason which exists, if only the reason will not be a consequence, and the consequence will not be a reason.

Analyzing the capability of desire, I find: a) desire is an inner activity, the reason for which is something not unlike memories, and the reason for the memories is everything existing. From this analysis I see that desire has a reason, and that desire does not have this reason in and of itself, but in the outside world, which exists because it is the reason for existing. It is necessary to note that together with the action of memories, desire also acts on me.

From all of this I conclude that everything outside, even my body, exists, and that the reason for my existence, that is, desire, is the outside world. So if the outside world did not exist, a part of which makes up my body, then I would not exist in the spiritual sense, that is, the desire. But since desire is only part of the spirit which exists in me, then the spirit dies with the body.

2) But further analyzing the reasons for desire, I find that its reason is also desire itself; consequently desire has no reason, and above this it is itself what it aspires to, that is, independence. And since that [other] desire is not independent neither of the body, nor of time,
consequently [this] desire is independent, infinite, and it is self-determinate, self-satisfying, and immortal.

And so a person consists of two different activities or capabilities of desire, one of which is limited and dependent and stems from the body and constitutes all that we call the personal necessities, while the second activity is the capability of desire or of unlimited will, self-determinate and self-satisfying.

Now we analyze the relationship of these two origins in their essence and in their appearances. These capabilities must either be of equal power or one of them must dominate. They can not be of equal strength because one of them cannot be separate, but it is a necessary consequence of something which was existing previously, while the other is itself the reason and consequence of its existence, and despite the different types of its manifestations, it does not change its essence. The latter must be forever dominant. 2) In reality (I already proved reality) the necessities dominate the will, not only often, but for the most part. The height of perfection which a person can attain is the complete domination of the will, which is never possible to accomplish, but which is the aim of constant achievement.

In this way a person consists of two opposite activities. We will analyze the first, that is, the necessary activity. Its origin and the reason for it lies in, as we have seen, everything that exists, and the closest origin is found in the person himself. The person by means of physical feelings senses objects (the sensation is not an activity, but a suffering); the sensations themselves change into physical activity; this activity is the lowest [level], and it is found in all animals and even in most parts of plants, 2) the sensations change also into the capability of receptivity (which we call memory and impression). I do not differentiate these two capabilities, for I do not understand the capability of reproduction without the capability of restraint. On the other hand the capability of reproduction acts on the lowest capability, and this is a second-degree activity which some animals have.

Everything that they call feelings or passions belongs to this activity. The capability of reproduction changes into the capability of conclusion, which acts on both lower capabilities and necessarily participates in its capability of reproduction. This activity is the highest of the necessary activities of a person. It is exactly that which we call reason, and it is found in most animals.

In this way [we analyze] physical, sensual, and mental activities, all of which depend on each other and which act on each other. It came to be that the aspiration of mankind to independence is not satisfied, for all of this activity is weak.

Now we will analyze free activity.

The will is not limited, it satisfies itself. It is expressed in the following fashion: I desire to desire. But why is it expressed that way and not otherwise? The essence of the will is independent, but the expression, direction, or form must depend on something, specifically it depends on another desire, on necessity, that is, on the body. Consequently, although it is unlimited, it is expressed in a known form. The will cannot act on sensations, for the reason for them lies outside its sphere, that is outside the person. It acts on receptivity in such a way that it reproduces those objects which it wants, and not those which appear. This capability acts on the capability of conclusion, which with this action on it by the will, concludes what it wants, and it is done by reason. The highest necessary activity gives direction to the will.

Now comes the question of how the condition of necessary proceeds to change to free by the means of the will. The will accepts the conclusion of the highest necessary capability, and in accordance with this conclusion, it acts on the body. Free sensations, transferring from the capability of receptivity, transfer more objects there, and more clearly, the capability of receptivity changes into the capability of conclusion. The latter will be higher than the first conclusion, but this cannot satisfy the will. The will accepts and, acting on its impression, that is, forcing it to accept these things rather than those things, makes a third conclusion, which would be higher than the first or the second conclusion. The third conclusion, not satisfactorily acting on the will, which acts on the same conclusion, specifically forcing it to conclude one thing and not the other. A fourth-degree conclusion proceeds, a free conclusion or not, of reasoned will, which alone only determines itself and finds in itself that same thing which I accepted as an axiom at the beginning,
that is, I desire.

Now we will analyze: what will these innate conceptions, intuitions of a person be if not a conception of space, of line, of point, of size, of quantity? The essence of the whole person comprises only his unlimited will and the reason for it, finding in it everything else, not having in itself its origin, rather having it alongside, or specifically not in the spiritual, but in the physical, for it has physical reasons. What we call intuition is nothing more than the necessary conclusion, the reason for which is found in sensations, the reason for which is found in the world, but since we don't see the reasons for the world, consequently it [intuition] doesn't exist.

At the beginning I said that I find in myself the origin of two activities; but what am I? ... I am the union of two activities. An activity is an unsatisfied aspiration or a struggle. It's impossible to call the first an activity, rather it's a movement, for an activity suggests an aspiration, but here we don't see an aspiration, rather only a movement or part of an activity, albeit infinite. The second origin I understand as unlimited, but as an activity I can not imagine it as anything different than appearing in a known fashion, but not as a satisfied manifestation, rather as a struggling one. 411


Only middle-aged people, those with families, and those who have no constant connections with the worldly youth of this century can not know that the great part of this youth does not believe in anything, and it is surprised that I divide it into groups; but excluding these honorable personnages, all agree with me that lack of faith has deeply sunk its roots into the contemporary young generation of the upper class, and it has spread to such an extent that it is horrible to think of the sympathy which awaits our fatherland; and even justifiably -- that the upper class leads the lower classes along its path of education. --

There are three foundations of lack of faith: mentality, vanity, and weakness; according to these divisions there are three types of unbelievers: mental ones, vain ones, and weak ones. -- To the first group belong people who are gifted with a great mind and a lot of energy. They feel that irresistible requirement to subject everything to the unforgiving laws of reason, and they can not fail to refute the laws of religion which are based on faith and revelation. -- Why do they grant the possibility of thought to refuting these laws? Why must they pass through the tortuous condition of doubt and ignorance? These are questions which mankind is not given to answer. -- All that one can say is that they are less guilty than they are unhappy. -- They involuntarily, more than involuntarily, see with horror how their bulwark is destroyed; but that unknown irresistible force leads them to destruction. -- Unbelievers of this type exist always and everywhere; and for the most part, with age, when energy and the requirement for reflection are diminished, they return to religion with repentance. -- To the third group belong all those who, by imitation, surrender to the opinion of the majority because of the weakness of the mind or the will. They cease following the rules of the Christian religion, and finally they completely believe in it. -- The

411 Pss. v. 91t, vol. 1, pp. 233-236. See also p. 651 of vol. 91 (index), which places this composition in the year 1847. My translation presents this untitled excerpt in its entirety. In the notes by the editors on p. 339 of vol. 1, they mention the difficulties in comprehending this text because of abbreviations of words, half-words, unclear corrections, and blank spaces or lacunae where words clearly should be. This obviously made it difficult to render a comprehensible text in Russian, which was further evidenced by the editors’ use of question marks in the text in brackets. A difficult manuscript in Russian also makes the task of a comprehensible translation into English problematic, especially given the unpolished and incomplete nature of the composition in general. Despite these obstacles, however, the meaning and trend of Tolstoy’s thoughts in it are in evidence.
The number of unbelievers of all types is so large that they comprise the majority of the younger generation. -- Where a young boy resists public opinion, -- he has fear in his soul, and he feels that he is acting stupidly, -- and he would gladly cross himself, but they would look at him, and he would be threatened by the most proximate danger -- the danger which more powerfully than anything else acts on his young soul -- being made fun of by the stupid opinion of those people to whom he looks as models, and with whom he cannot fail to be in constant contact.

All the guilt of these people stems from youth, vanity, and weakness. -- Take away their fate in the group of virtuous people, they would be virtuous, -- and they fall into the group of unbelievers and become exactly like them. --

To the second group belong those who, attracted by reasoning and philosophical theories (which novels have made available to all), apply the Christian beliefs, which have been inculcated into them since childhood, to pantheistic ideas or to intricate suggestions of witty writers or those of their own invention. -- Each of these establishes his own religion, which has no consistency nor foundation, but it is created by their own passions and weaknesses. They believe what they please, they deny that which is difficult for them, and they sacrifice their former beliefs in order to amuse their petty narcissism, -- they flash a poetic or witty invention before themselves and before others, and on the ruins of religion they build a temple to their vanity and weaknesses. --

Looking at the more or less flexibility of the means...

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412 "Pers v 91t", vol. 1, pp. 247-248. Tolstoy's organization and punctuation are retained in my translation, which presents the composition in its entirety. The last half of this manuscript was burned by Tolstoy according to his diary entry of 1 April 1852. This diary entry is cited by the editors of this volume in their notes on p. 340 of vol. 1. They also conclude that this composition was originally written to be included in Childhood.
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