

# “Russia’s First Modern Man”: Tolstoy, Kant, and Russian Religious Thought

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Medzhibovskaya, Inessa. *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time: A Biography of a Long Conversion, 1845-1887*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, 2008. Xliii+ 405 pages. Cloth. 978-0739125335. Paper. 978-0739140758.

## Tolstoy, Reasonable Autonomy, and Kantian Self-Determination

Inessa Medzhibovskaya begins and ends her important, challenging study with the assertion that Tolstoy was Russia’s first modern man (xxxv, 352). This is an intriguing claim; Tolstoy is more often thought of as an Old Testament prophet (Shestov 69; Франк, “Памяти” 447; Франк, “Мыслитель,” 462, 464; Бердяев). She sees Tolstoy’s modernity in the “special autonomy” of his spiritual development, in the individual and self-directed nature of his religious evolution, in “his progress *into* faith” (x, xv). His conversion was a modern one in that it was achieved through *self-determination*, through human agency and autonomy, rather than through miraculous divine intervention (as with, e.g., St. Paul and St. Augustine).<sup>1</sup> It was process more than event—“a gigantic philosophical and religious project, the search for a new outlook rather than a crisis-begotten tragic moment” (xv).<sup>2</sup> Tolstoy’s was a long conversion because it was an autobiographical one, that is, one achieved by the subject working on himself from within to arrive at faith, rather than one brought about externally and coercively through revelation or unmerited grace, least of all

through the Grand Inquisitor’s instruments of “miracle, mystery, and authority.” Tolstoy’s conversion was, in short, a matter of conscience. “In this,” Medzhibovskaya writes, “he was Russia’s first modern man, the first defender of the autonomous freedom of conscience, its first consistent and courageous point of contact, its open practice and forum” (352).

The autonomy of Tolstoy’s religious consciousness consisted in its reasonableness. Tolstoy thought that religious truths are universal ones that are known through inner experience and reason, moral or practical reason in particular, without need of revelation or, least of all, of church dogma or authority. One of the most eloquent expositions of his reasonable religion is his 1902 essay “What is Religion and of What Does Its Essence Consist?” Though it falls outside Medzhibovskaya’s chronological limits, it is worth reviewing as an admirably clear and concise account of Tolstoy’s mature views. In it he defines religion as our consciousness of and relationship to the infinite, which conscious relationship is established by reason. As a result, genuine faith is never irrational or contrary to reason (89, 98, 104).

If these are Tolstoy’s epistemological premises, then his ethical and ontological conclusions directly follow: “Complete unity with the highest and most perfect reason and, thereby, perfect well-being is the ideal towards which humanity strives” (104, trans. slightly modified). Such unity is natural to humanity, since there is a divine element in every person, “which he can diminish or increase

through his way of living” (119). Religious truths are clear and universal, “the metaphysical essence of which is that the spirit of God is in man, and the practical law of which is that man must behave towards others as he would wish others to behave towards him” (122). Tolstoy concludes with Proverbs 20:27: “The soul of man is the lamp of God” (128). Our task is to cause the divine light in us to burn ever more brightly until we fuse with it.

With exhaustive research and deep learning, Medzhibovskaya meticulously traces Tolstoy’s long path to this conception of religion. In view of the priority that he gave to individual autonomy and reason, it is not surprising that he came to feel a strong affinity for the author of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.<sup>3</sup> Throughout her study Medzhibovskaya emphasizes Kant’s importance in the development of Tolstoy’s thought. She dates his engagement with the founder of modern idealism much earlier than previous accounts, which generally place it at 1869, based on a letter Tolstoy wrote to A. A. Fet late that August.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, she writes, “A dog-eared French translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1835) from his library must have accompanied Tolstoy everywhere in his youth” and been closely studied by him, based on Tolstoy’s underlining and the book’s wear (36). Kant’s central problem in the first critique is how to reconcile freedom (and thus the possibility of morality), necessity, and reason. Tolstoy’s preoccupation with this problem is one of Medzhibovskaya’s main themes. She argues that his resolution of it after *War and Peace* was essentially Kantian and spurred his “progress into faith.”

As that progress continued, Tolstoy turned increasingly and more explicitly to Kant. He read the *Critique of Practical Reason* in 1887 with “joyous rapture,” regarding it as a “temple” of wisdom (Jahn 62).<sup>5</sup> As the second epigraph for the book he wrote that year, *On Life*, he chose Kant’s famous lines (in the conclusion to the second critique) expressing “wonder and awe” for “the starry heavens above me and the moral law within

me.” Medzhibovskaya regards *On Life* as the culmination of Tolstoy’s conversion (and thus as the natural endpoint for her study). The core concept in this work is “reasonable consciousness” (разумное сознание), according to which the task of life is perfectibility and union with the divine through the “greater and greater attainment of what is good by means of submission to reason” (*On Life* 63). By this stage Tolstoy had embraced Kant’s “moral religion,” which held morality to be the foundation of religious faith, both in the sense that morality entails a theistic metaphysics and that faith emerges through moral consciousness. Tolstoy’s own path to faith was through his discovery of the true nature of morality, well before his professed enthusiasm for the German philosopher. Kant then confirmed his own ideas and validated his own experiences. This, at any rate, appears to be the methodological justification for Medzhibovskaya’s Kantian interpretation of Tolstoy’s long conversion. I believe it is sound. (Jahn (67) anticipates this approach in his judgment that “the ideas of Kant which Tolstoy came to value so highly were nearly all thoughts which he had previously worked out for himself.”)

Since Kant’s conception of morality and religion is essential to Tolstoy’s thought (and perhaps even more to Medzhibovskaya’s interpretation of it), it may be helpful to recall the main direction of his argument.

Kant’s three most important works on morality and religion are *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793). Morality, according to Kant, is the capacity for self-determination according to consciousness of “ought” (the moral law or categorical imperative). The moral law, he says, is simply a “fact of reason” that cannot be further explained (Kant, *Practical Reason* 31); the freedom to act on it is a metaphysical postulate that follows as a necessary condition of morality. It is clear that self-determination, autonomy, morality, and practical

reason are all closely related (indeed virtually analytic) concepts in Kant's philosophy. They tend to explicate each other and to elucidate what it means to be able to act according to duty or conscience. Kant thought that morality led unfailingly to a theistic metaphysics, and from it he drew the metaphysical "postulates" of immortality and the existence of God, in addition to freedom. Tolstoy also thought that our capacity for morality and pursuit of moral perfection entailed a higher divine reality to which we are connected and called. For both thinkers, morality—understood, again, as self-determination and perfectibility according to the ideals of reason—was the foundation of everything. For Tolstoy, as we shall see, it is central to the meaning of "*razumenie*" (разумение, "reason") which Medzhibovskaya identifies as his great discovery of 1879 and as the pivotal point of his conversion (201–202). The term defies adequate translation but suggests self-determination by divine logos/reason (*разум*) through inner consciousness of it, through making it one's own (or through realizing it has been one's own all along).

Self-determination or autonomy is the quintessentially modern concept. Terry Pinkard has recently written of Kant's philosophy: "it inserted a new idea into the vocabulary in terms of which modern Germans and Europeans spoke about their lives: self-determination. After Kant, nothing would be the same again" (15). To this Medzhibovskaya would no doubt add, "and modern Russians, too, beginning with Tolstoy." Tolstoy himself believed, according to Aylmer Maude, that "Kant's work is indispensable for us who live after him" (*On Life* 14). For both Kant and Tolstoy, self-determination was not only the essence of morality but also the condition of salvation. As Kant wrote in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, "there is absolutely no salvation for human beings except in the innermost adoption of genuine moral principles in their disposition," which adoption he also held to be the

basis of true conversion (121). Though Tolstoy seems not to have read this work until the last years of his life, Medzhibovskaya suggests that its emphasis on what she calls the "human task in the cause of salvation" captures his basic approach (36). He, like Kant, understood salvation as an internal process of self-determination and moral perfectibility, not as something bestowed externally by unmerited grace.

### **Tolstoy and Orthodoxy**

Medzhibovskaya argues that Tolstoy's Kantian modernity was largely at odds with Russian Orthodox religious culture. In the modern West, she writes, "conversion was increasingly becoming a matter of individual conscience and personal choice," but the growth of this type of religious consciousness in Russia was much slower (3). Eastern Orthodoxy, even outside its Russian branch, erected doctrinal barriers to the independent struggle for faith and to personally-guided conversions. Its rejection of the *filioque*, for example, "had far-reaching consequences, disqualifying individual imitations of Christ and all identifications with his human and divine person" (5). These are controversial claims. She is on much solid ground in emphasizing the political constraints on "self-directed conversion in the age of Tolstoy," impediments that date back to the early modern period of Russian history. With Peter the Great's establishment of the Holy Synod, "the state assumed the role of guardian of the religious conscience of its subjects" (7), a role which in some respects it has never abandoned, except for brief intervals. Hence the importance of Tolstoy's struggle for freedom of conscience in Russia.

Medzhibovskaya tends to distance Tolstoy from mainstream Orthodox theology. (Tolstoy distanced himself specifically from Russian Orthodox theology; in particular, see his *Critique of Dogmatic Theology* (Исследование догматического богословия), written between 1880 and 1883.) This emphasis marks an important difference with

Richard Gustafson, whose book *Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger* is one of the two major studies that, as she notes in her acknowledgments, “motivated” her own (the other being Donna Tussing Orwin’s *Tolstoy’s Art and Thought, 1847–1880*). Gustafson tries to place Tolstoy within the traditions of Orthodox theology rather than against them. His aim was to write “an original reconstruction of Tolstoy’s theology seen in the light of Eastern Christian thought rather than under the influence of those Western thinkers many believe are formative” (xiv). This reconstruction involves a Tolstoyan “theology of consciousness” and “theology of perfection,” both directed toward an ideal of salvation as *theosis* or deification (transformation in and union with God). Gustafson emphasizes that salvation, as Tolstoy understood it, was premised on human autonomy and agency and that it was to be achieved through work and self-perfection. “Tolstoy’s theology of perfection is a theology of work,” he writes (434).

Clearly Medzhibovskaya and Gustafson share the thesis that Tolstoy’s thought was a type of religious humanism (though they do not use that term) in its insistence on autonomous human participation in salvation. Where they differ is over Tolstoy’s sources. For Gustafson, Tolstoy’s “model of salvation is the Eastern Christian idea of deification, and he shares the belief in human collaboration in the task of salvation” (457). At another point he writes that Tolstoy, in relying on inner experience for his basic philosophical insights, “is a characteristic Eastern Christian theologian” (90). He wants to leave no doubt about his own position: “From the Western point of view, Tolstoy seems to bring the enlightened conception of the perfectibility of man and the modern idea of progress into his theological world-view. . . . But Tolstoy’s understanding [of life as infinite perfection and perpetual progress] . . . is really an ancient Eastern Christian conception,” similar to Gregory of Nyssa’s (109).

Medzhibovskaya’s approach is indeed much closer to “the Western point of view”—and to Donna Orwin’s masterful study of Tolstoy’s modern philosophical sources such as Rousseau, Schopenhauer, and Kant (on which study see below). Gustafson is surely right, however, about the potential humanism of Eastern Christian theology, apart from the question of the extent to which Tolstoy developed it, and this is one of the reasons for his book’s importance and influence. Pål Kolstø has suggested that Gustafson’s study might be read as a structural analysis of the similarities between Tolstoy’s thought and Orthodox theology (Kolstø, “Leo Tolstoy” 159). Kolstø remarks that his own research, showing how Tolstoy drew on the apophatic tradition in Orthodox theology, can be understood as an empirical corroboration of Gustafson’s thesis. More recently, Kolstø has argued that Tolstoy can be placed within the *starchestvo* form of Orthodox piety and spirituality (“Elder”).<sup>6</sup>

There is no question that other Russian religious thinkers drew on Eastern patristic sources and developed them in a humanistic direction. The outstanding example is Vladimir Solov’ev, as Gustafson himself has shown in a seminal essay on the philosopher (“Soloviev’s Doctrine of Salvation”). Solov’ev was another Russian “modern man” by Medzhibovskaya’s criteria of autonomy and self-determination—for which principles he, too, owed a great debt to Kant (Poole, “Vladimir Solov’ev”). Their common religious humanism may account for Gustafson’s inclination, evident at points throughout his landmark study, to read Tolstoy through Solov’ev. But as a whole they were very different thinkers, a difference that Gustafson’s approach tends to minimize and that Medzhibovskaya’s can better appreciate.

### **Tolstoy and Bakhtin**

If Gustafson and Orwin are recent critics who inspired Medzhibovskaya, an earlier critic who also looms large in her study shaped it in a different

way. Already in the second paragraph of her book's preface she writes that Mikhail Bakhtin "has adversely influenced thinking about Tolstoy's spirituality" (ix). Part of her task, as she conceives it, is to rehabilitate Tolstoy after Bakhtin's branding of him as (in her words) a "deaf, monologic, self-ogling despot." Bakhtin's essential criticism of Tolstoy is that he failed to realize that a person cannot complete or "finalize" himself without another's help (without, that is, the other's outside nourishing perspective on me that is inaccessible to me as the subject of self-consciousness); Tolstoy always kept "looking back upon himself" (*samoogliadka*) rather than turning to another for his or her unique gracious perspective. In Medzhibovskaya's adept formulation of this criticism:

According to Bakhtin and his dialogic scheme of personal "unfinalizability," genuine change and salvation occur when one submits one's inferior capacity and need for self-discovery to the rescuing powers of another party. . . . [R]evelation, goodness, and grace—those powers that do enact and sustain conversion—are available only through a gift of coexistence and co-creating with God through another. However, one cannot talk or listen to God directly since that would be to lapse into so-called monologic consciousness and the selfishness of a life that closes in on itself, completing the vicious "I-for-myself" existence that the "non-dialogic" Tolstoy allegedly suffered all his life. (xxx–xxxi)

She argues that Bakhtin's dialogism misses the extent to which conversion is really about a single actor (the subject of the religious change), that recent theorists of conversion are thus right to "reject Bakhtin," and that Tolstoy's location of the dynamics of faith in *one* individual "is his greatest contribution to our modern understanding of religious experience." In a resounding statement of her thesis, she continues, "Tolstoy's seeking subject

obeys only his conscience, the silent voice of God that he learns how to hear, moment by moment, and then addresses this word in a new type of literary-religious dialogue to the community of readers. This makes Tolstoy the true protean modern man and Russia's first truly modern man" (xxxv).

Bakhtin's hostility to Tolstoy is well known, but Medzhibovskaya's juxtaposition of the two thinkers is too stark. There is, after all, an essential area of agreement between them. For the other side of Bakhtin's concept of "unfinalizability" is autonomy or self-determination, understood not in the impossible sense that I could fully determine (or "finalize") myself but in the Kantian sense of infinite perfectibility according to an ideal that (by its very nature) constantly outpaces and spurs me forward, beyond my present state. "The real center of gravity of my own self-determination is located solely in the future," Bakhtin wrote. No matter how much I achieve, "the center of gravity of my self-determination will continue to shift forward, into the future, and I shall rely for support on myself as someone yet-to-be" (Bakhtin 127; Poole, "Apophatic" 165–167).

What Bakhtin stresses as my lack of self-sufficiency (the fact that as a subject I cannot coincide with myself or with my ideals) both drives my process of self-determination and also, at another level, needs me to open myself to others and to their enriching outside perspectives. Leaving aside the question of whether Bakhtin is right in claiming that Tolstoy's imagination is not dialogic at the level of "I-for-another" and "another-for-me," both writers share the foundational Kantian sense of self-determination as "unfinalizability" or infinite perfectibility at the level of "I-for-myself." It may even be that Bakhtin came to a fuller appreciation of this sense through Tolstoy. In his 1930 preface to Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*, he summarized Tolstoy's religious teaching as follows: "People, sent into the world by the will of God, the master of life, must . . . do the will of their master.

This will is expressed in the commandments which forbid any violence against one's neighbors. Man may act only on himself, on his inner 'I' (seeking the kingdom of God which is *within* us) and all these things will be yours as well" (Shukman 145).<sup>7</sup> In Ann Shukman's judgment, here "Bakhtin was using Tolstoy's thesis to present his own personal position" (146). Caryl Emerson has also stressed their common ground, shared by Solov'ev as well. "The point of convergence," she writes, "is their understanding of the creative ideal. Not surprisingly for thinkers well versed in philosophies of religion, Tolstoi, Solov'ev, and Bakhtin perceive the highest human relation to be the positing of an ideal" (Emerson, "Solov'ev" 669).<sup>8</sup>

### Early Searches

The "positing of an ideal" preoccupied Tolstoy from early adulthood. In 1847, before his departure from the University of Kazan (where he spent a year in the Faculty of Oriental Languages and two in the Faculty of Law, without graduating), Tolstoy wrote the following diary entry: "What is the final goal of human life? I would be the most unhappy among human beings were I not to find the goal of my life—the goal common to all and useful; useful because the immortal soul, having developed, would be naturally transported into the Supreme Being, commensurate with it. For now, my life in its entirety will be an active and perpetual striving toward this one, single goal" (Medzhibovskaya 46). (Gustafson (*Leo Tolstoy* 4–5) also quotes this passage (at greater length), calling it Tolstoy's "first confession of faith," the "first articulation of his identity as a striving soul," and "the foundation for his doctrine of person, his doctrine of work, and his doctrine of God.") In the first chapter of *A Confession*, Tolstoy says that between the ages of sixteen and eighteen he lost his childhood faith in Orthodox Christianity, though not in God altogether ("but what kind of God I could not have said").<sup>9</sup> His "only real faith" at this time was a

general belief in perfection and in the need to work toward it (*Confession* 21). Medzhibovskaya refers to "the seriousness and complexity of Tolstoy's quest for religious truth" (44) even in these early years (the late 1840s and early 1850s), which are the subject of her second chapter, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Nonbeliever." The early forms of this quest were the "religion of progress," which Tolstoy shared with other "advanced and learned Europeans" (as he put it in *A Confession* (26)) and more specifically the "religion of pure art." Medzhibovskaya provides the rich cultural context of these developments in her third chapter, "Superfluity and the Religion of Writing (1851–1863)."

Tolstoy's belief in progress was severely shaken in 1857 when he witnessed a guillotining in Paris and even more so when his brother Nikolai died three years later (*Confession* 26; Medzhibovskaya 67, 71–72). Further disillusionment with the religion of progress ensued as a result of his reading and corresponding with Herzen in 1861. He feared that Herzen was putting the religion of progress in place of what he called the "enormous hopes for immortality, eternal self-perfection, and historical laws" (Medzhibovskaya 72). The polemic against Herzen indeed launched Tolstoy on an "all-out war against progress as it contradicted the religious attitude toward history." In a hint at the need for a liberal critique of Tolstoy, Medzhibovskaya notes that "this was a contradictory campaign, for progress and democracy alone could ensure religious and personal freedom" (73). She writes of Tolstoy's "new religious striving" and "growing seriousness about faith" in the early 1860s, on the eve of his conception of *War and Peace*.

### Reason and Necessity, Consciousness and Freedom

Medzhibovskaya devotes her next two chapters to *War and Peace* (the first to the main body of the novel, the second to the epilogues). Her understanding of the novel's "belief system" is essential to the structure of her argument about the

nature and process of Tolstoy's subsequent conversion. She focuses on Tolstoy's treatment of the problem of freedom and necessity. The first epigraph to chapter four is a quotation from the novel's second epilogue: "Reason expresses the laws of necessity. Consciousness expresses the essence of freedom." These lines capture the sharp disjunction that Tolstoy introduces, at this stage of his thinking, between reason (as the source of law) and inner freedom. Strongly influenced by Schopenhauer, his tendency is to think that reason and necessity (or rational necessity) govern the external world, and to separate them from our inner world of the immediate consciousness of freedom, the nature of which freedom is primordial, pure, primary—and indeterminate. (Medzhibovskaya deals in detail with Schopenhauer, building on Eikhenbaum's account of his influence on Tolstoy's writing of the epilogues to *War and Peace* (Eikhenbaum, *Seventies* 79–85)).

One implication of this approach is "the elusive status of God," who, while elusive, "is most closely associated with everything that happens out of necessity" (95). God, like the reason and necessity with which he is identified, is external to the subject. Another implication of Tolstoy's approach is to absolve human beings of what happens in history, for he places history in the realm of external divine necessity. The result is what Medzhibovskaya calls "a catastrophic moral error" (126). In the absolute value he attaches to the immediate consciousness of freedom, "Tolstoy does not proceed to investigate the correlation between freedom and moral law" (116). In *War and Peace*, she concludes, "The nature of the law as well as the true nature of freedom remained undisclosed. God was still an unknown factor, and the moral individuality of man at times looked too dubious" (131).

Her interpretation of the novel and its place in Tolstoy's development draws on a rich critical tradition. Isaiah Berlin, in his famous essay on

Tolstoy's philosophy of history, "The Hedgehog and the Fox," also took up the theme of freedom and necessity. According to Berlin, Tolstoy the artist (or fox) captures the irreducible pluralism, multiplicity, and thick texture of life from within consciousness and immanent experience, while Tolstoy the thinker (or hedgehog) strives for a monistic, unifying theory of life from an Archimedean, transcendent vantage point outside it. The artist's realism depicts life, indeed virtually recreates it, by immediately grasping it as (in Berlin's gloss) "a spontaneous activity involving consciousness of free will" (32). By contrast, the thinker's "idealism"—in the pejorative sense of a system of abstract ideas not immediately related to life—relies on a certain reified conception of necessity (one version of which Berlin (44) calls an "ideal historical science"), which Tolstoy uses (mainly as a type of overlay in the epilogues) to impose form on the free content of his artistic realism.

We can extend Berlin to anticipate the approach that Tolstoy will take in the course of his conversion: the unifying principle (reason) will be discovered within consciousness (the end result being "reasonable consciousness") rather than being imposed on it as an external form. At least initially this was a crucial move toward an authentic idealism, an idealism that would proceed from analysis of consciousness, like the artist's realism, and could readily combine with it. Subsequently, however, as Berlin would surely have argued, Tolstoy goes too far. His realism had issued from consciousness as immanent experience of life; by *On Life*, his new concept of consciousness has expanded everywhere and become an over-extended idealism, one tending toward a monistic spiritualism or panpsychism (the view that all reality is spirit or mind). Tolstoy calls his new conception "life," but it has lost much of the artist's realism and pluralism—or so Berlin would have concluded. Let us see how more recent scholars have handled the problem.

The general dynamic of Tolstoy's development from the exquisite realism of *War and Peace* to the resolute idealism of *On Life* is laid out by Donna Tussing Orwin in her book *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847–1880*, which has left its mark on all subsequent Tolstoy scholarship, including Medzhibovskaya's. Orwin argues that through the 1860s Tolstoy's unifying framework was nature, which he conceived to be reasonable and good in itself. At this stage, he seems to have retreated somewhat from his earlier (and later) position, now maintaining that the ideal is something that human beings should not so much posit, as recognize as present in nature, ready to be emulated. In 1862 he wrote, "Our ideal is behind, not ahead of us." It is in nature, "which continually displays that truth, beauty and goodness which we seek and desire."<sup>10</sup> This view of nature reflected his contemporaneous rejection of the idea of social and historical progress. Tolstoy had come to believe that the only proper aim of progress was individual self-perfection, a belief that he would hold dear the rest of his life.<sup>11</sup> *War and Peace* was conceived, Orwin writes, within the framework of natural goodness ("the harmonious universe of living reason") and as a continuation of his attack on progress and history (85, 100–101).

In the 1870s Tolstoy gradually shifted his emphasis from "reasonable nature" to what Orwin calls "reasonable freedom" (153), or to what is otherwise called self-determination, i.e., the human capacity to determine the will in accordance with the ideals of reason. This new conception, which will culminate in the "reasonable consciousness" of *On Life*, was made possible by the relocation (or interiorization) of reason from nature to man (Orwin, chapter six). The shift also made possible a new understanding of morality. "Man would be moral not because he was natural," Orwin writes, "but because he was rational and free" (162). Tolstoy arrived at these new ideas under the continuing but differently exercised influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy, as Orwin (drawing on

McLaughlin) also nicely shows (150–170), but he later recognized their original and most powerful formulation to be in Kant, whose philosophy he will come to embrace as his own. By *On Life*, Orwin argues, "reason has moved from outside to inside the human subject and become the basis of human individuality as the later Tolstoy defined and defended it" (194). She emphasizes Tolstoy's identification with Kant at this stage (192–195), remarking that Tolstoy recognized the German philosopher as his "soul mate" (213). His philosophical mentors along the long path to this recognition included not only Schopenhauer but also (earlier and more importantly) Rousseau, whose doctrine of conscience in "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" (in *Emile*) profoundly moved both Kant and Tolstoy (Orwin 39–49). The final result was what Orwin calls the "Christian Kantianism" of Tolstoy's old age—the culmination of his "lifelong effort to secure dignity for the human individual" (214, 217). She does not specifically indicate that Kant formulated the modern idea of human dignity in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, deriving it from autonomy or self-determination: "Autonomy," Kant writes, "is[...] the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature" (103). Orwin notes that Nikolai Strakhov, as early as 1869, identified the importance that the theme of human dignity had for Tolstoy (6). Her detailed attention to Strakhov is another one of her book's strengths, as of Medzhibovskaya's.

### Conversion and Confession

Medzhibovskaya's distinctive contribution is not only to follow in much more detail than ever before (over several chapters of her book) this process of the interiorization of reason, the process of the self-discovery of reason from within consciousness where it can give direction to freedom, making possible self-determination and true morality. Her contribution—and it is a major one—is also to show that this process is itself Tolstoy's long

conversion, the way he comes to faith and discovers God from within. Given her understanding of the conversion, the "Arzamas terror" could not have been more than a "fleeting episode" in the process (137).<sup>12</sup> Tolstoy himself wrote in 1876 that "sudden conversions rarely or never happen, but . . . one can pass through work and suffering. . . . [T]he story of grace descending on man in the English Club or at a shareholders' meeting has always seemed to me not only stupid but immoral" (Medzhibovskaya 169). In *A Confession*, he agrees with Kant that the existence of God cannot be proven (63)<sup>13</sup>—proof would be too easy and would make genuine faith impossible. (External knowledge of God, whether obtained through miracles, revelation, or theoretical proofs, would make inner faith superfluous, and would also seem to preclude true self-determination.) As Medzhibovskaya puts it, his search will instead "employ Kant's practical use of transcendental theology" (i.e., Kant's moral theology) (172).

*A Confession* recounts (and reconstructs) Tolstoy's search for the meaning of life and his finding it in faith, which always gives "an infinite meaning to the finite existence of man" (54). The basis for faith in the infinite meaning of life is life itself, once life is understood as this very search. Tolstoy's circular or analytic approach is that 1) the search for meaning is intrinsic to conscious human life because the search takes place according to an infinite ideal that is constitutive of self-consciousness; 2) the search (i.e., self-conscious human life) is itself grounds for faith that life does, in fact, have infinite meaning. Essentially, his argument is that the search entails its ontological or metaphysical ground (God). In Medzhibovskaya's succinct formulation, Tolstoy's "epistemology of faith amounts to no less than 'I search, struggle, and grieve; therefore God exists'" (169). In Tolstoy's own words, "I live truly only when I am conscious of Him and seek Him. [...] To know God and to live are one and the same thing. God is life." There follows a famous Tolstoyan precept:

"Live in search of God and there will be no life without God!" (65).

It is clear that the same ideal that spurs my search for the meaning of life (and that, according to Tolstoy, does give it meaning, in God) is also the ideal that makes possible my self-determination and striving for self-perfection. In the next paragraph Tolstoy writes: "I returned to the idea that the single most important aim of my life is to improve myself," that is, to live according to the will of God.

I returned to the conviction that I could find the manifestation of this will in something that had been hidden from me for a long time, in what humanity had worked out long ago for its own guidance. In other words I returned to a belief in God, in moral perfection. (*Confession* 65)

It is worth emphasizing that Tolstoy could now "find the manifestation" of God in his own self-conscious striving for moral perfection, or in what he calls "life." Previously God had been a mere concept—"A concept of God is not God," I told myself—rather than the inevitable content of life itself.

### *Razumenie*

As he was working on *A Confession*, Tolstoy made his great discovery of 1879, "*razumenie*," which Medzhibovskaya interprets as the key to understanding his conversion. He uses this term to define the full meaning of divine logos or divine reason, *razum* (разум). The *-enie* (-ение) ending, she explains, implies human comprehension and appropriation of divine logos. With the term, Tolstoy tries to convey (as she puts it) how "man's freedom (or consciousness) and God's reason discover each other in an intimate and mutually comprehensible relationship" (Medzhibovskaya 201). *Razumenie* is, in short, the inner recognition or interiorization of divine reason. "Thus by 1878–1879 Tolstoy finally overcame the long-standing

contradiction of the philosophical epilogues of 1869.” In contrast to the former separation of reason and consciousness, *razumenie* “harmonizes the life of divine reason and human freedom” (202).

Among other things, the concept is essential to Tolstoy’s (“low”) Christology. According to him, Christ was not born into but achieved *razumenie*; in this way he made himself a son of God. Christ’s *razumenie*, his becoming a son of God, was his conversion, and Tolstoy clearly sees it as a model by which any person can convert and become a child of God (206–207). He could be iconoclastic in denouncing the church’s high Christology, calling its teaching that Christ is God incarnate, the second person of the Trinity, “blasphemy, lies, and stupidity” (202).

Tolstoy wished to stress that *razumenie*, though it translates “logos,” is a human possibility and task, not an exclusive divine designation. It announced, Medzhibovskaya writes, “the change of his religion toward the definition of godliness through the free act of agreeing with the law” (201–202). This terse statement captures precisely how *razumenie* accomplishes conversion and bestows faith: the realization that I am the one who actively fulfills the moral law (internally given through reason or *razum*) is simultaneously the inner revelation of the divine, for there is something “godly” in self-determination. Kant held this godly element to consist in the idea that when I act morally (rationally and autonomously), I act as every rational being, *including God*, would act, that is, according to a “maxim” or principle that I would wish to be a universal law. Indeed Kant refers to “the will’s own enactment of universal law,” not just to its following or fulfilling the law:

The will is therefore not merely subject to the law, but is so subject that it must be considered as also *making the law* for itself and precisely on this account as first of all subject to the law (of

which it can regard itself as the author). (*Groundwork* 98–99)

In making universal law, my will coincides with God’s will, and I autonomously do God’s will (*Religion* 134–138). This deep sense of autonomy, which is the basis for Kant’s moral or rational theology, appears to be what Tolstoy meant by “*razumenie*”—the inner recognition and ever greater realization of divine reason through human self-determination. As he wrote, “[T]he consciousness of my life, the consciousness of my freedom, is God” (Medzhibovskaya 201).

### Tolstoy and the Russian Religious Revival

Tolstoy’s discovery of *razumenie* was a momentous moment in the religious culture of his time, but it was not the only such moment. Medzhibovskaya refers to “the great revival of Russian religious thought” by the time Tolstoy wrote *A Confession*, which work was, she says, “a response to previous and current developments in Russian religious thought and culture” (218). Among the main figures in this revival, she gives close attention to Dostoevsky, and also takes into account the two greatest philosophers of nineteenth-century Russia, Boris Chicherin and Vladimir Solov’ev. Chicherin sent Tolstoy two copies of his 1879 book *Science and Religion* (Наука и религия), hoping in vain for a response from his old friend (264).<sup>14</sup> It is not clear whether Tolstoy read the book at the time (he made a few negative remarks about it many years later), but it is a very powerful exposition of Tolstoy’s main concerns in the midst of his own conversion: reason, freedom, morality, and religious consciousness.<sup>15</sup>

Tolstoy and Solov’ev were also initially on friendly terms; the young philosopher stayed with the famous writer in May 1875 (Medzhibovskaya 142). Tolstoy read Solov’ev’s 1874 master’s dissertation *The Crisis of Western Philosophy (Against the Positivists)* and was impressed, remarking, “One more man has joined that small

regiment of Russians who allow themselves to think their own mind” (Kostalevsky 11).

Three years later Tolstoy attended one of the twelve *Lectures on Godmanhood* that Solov’ev delivered in early 1878 (Medzhibovskaya 189–190); this was the occasion of the famous “non-meeting” of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, as Kostalevsky characterizes it (64). Tolstoy was also then reading serial installments of Solov’ev’s *Critique of Abstract Principles*, defended as the philosopher’s doctoral dissertation in 1880. He turned sharply critical of Solov’ev’s ideas, calling them “rubbish” (Medzhibovskaya 190). The subsequent intellectual and personal animosity between the two thinkers is well known.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, *razumenie* and Godmanhood (богочеловечество)—the latter being the center of Solov’ev’s philosophy—share a common humanistic emphasis on the necessity of the autonomous human realization of our divine potential. For both thinkers (as for Chicherin), autonomy entailed freedom of conscience, which they equally and tirelessly championed. Medzhibovskaya sees this as a large part of the broader cultural significance of *A Confession*. In it, she writes, Tolstoy “drew the attention of the whole nation to the precedent he set for wrestling with the oppressive state and its ideology for freedom of conscience” (250).

The full realization of *razumenie* and of Godmanhood would be the kingdom of God, as Tolstoy and Solov’ev both stressed of their respective concepts, but they took very different approaches to this ideal. For Tolstoy, “the kingdom of God is within you,” that is, it was wholly a matter of individual moral self-perfection, with little appreciation of the necessary “external” contexts of this process. For Solov’ev, it was a social and historical project—and a liberal one in its high estimation of the value of law and the state, which value was justified precisely by the individual person striving to realize her divine potential. In Solov’ev’s liberal conception of it, the kingdom of God was to be achieved through progress—

individual, social, historical, even ecological. He had a much more developed theology of “logos and its life in the world,” as Medzhibovskaya entitles one of her chapters, intending the phrase to apply to Tolstoy, of course. She suggests that Solov’ev’s project of transforming the world into what it ought to be “must have caught Tolstoy’s eye” (267). Tolstoy, she implies, even may not have been completely oblivious to the role of law in such a project:

Among the postreform jurists and theorists of moral responsibility, Tolstoy befriended a small minority who did not merely debunk or criticize the existing legal structure, but investigated the ethical foundations of law and insisted on moral privacy and the integrity of trial. This is how, in 1885, Tolstoy made friends with Nikolai Grot.

That year Grot had written an essay, “On Moral Responsibility and Juridical Imputation,” which he sent to Tolstoy (by way of self-introduction) with the dedication, “to the deeply respected author of *A Confession*.”

Medzhibovskaya indicates that Tolstoy strongly approved of the essay, which she characterizes (with some exaggeration) as “one of the earliest exemplars of the moral tradition of legal thought in Russia” (275–276). By these associations, she may have wished to modify at the margins the traditional picture of Tolstoy’s anarchism and legal nihilism. Nonetheless, there remains an unbridgeable gulf between Solov’ev’s liberal project of building the kingdom of God on earth and Tolstoy’s anarchistic approach, and it is here that Solov’ev strikes me as far more the modern man—despite their common Kantian conception of human autonomy and its role in salvation.<sup>17</sup>

### **Logos and Love, Light and Life**

In 1887 Grot began chairing the Moscow Psychological Society, the most important center of the growth of Russian philosophy in this period. Its

development of Russian idealism was strongly influenced by Kant.<sup>18</sup> Tolstoy enjoyed a close friendship with Grot and was himself associated with the Psychological Society, elected to honorary membership in 1894 (Poole, *Moscow* 26–35).

These factors very likely helped to shape his writing of *The Death of Ivan Ilich* (1886) and they certainly were influential in the case of *On Life* (Medzhibovskaya 288, 306, 333–335). Medzhibovskaya devotes the penultimate chapter of her book to a very interesting reading of Tolstoy's most famous novella, exploring in particular the complex Kantian undercurrents that she has discovered in it. She interprets Ivan Ilich's death in terms of Kant's moral teleology: In the few hours before his death he finds his purpose (*telos*), thus realizing, as she puts it, "the spiritual energy that a morally motivated human being possesses (*vis locomotiva*)." As she notes, the phrase *vis locomotiva* occurs in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which phrase she astutely connects to the train-image in chapter twelve of the novella. One of Ivan Ilich's last words is пропусти (*propusti*, "stay out of my way" or "let me pass"), a still enigmatic slip of the tongue, she admits (he meant to say "прости" (*prosti*, forgive) the narrator tells us). "His final purpose," she writes, "is found in striving and embarking on a self-directed spiritual flight" (319, 323). And instead of death there was light, as the narrator states at the end.

Tolstoy read a synopsis of *On Life* at a meeting of the Psychological Society in March 1887. Grot gave him editorial assistance in preparing the book, which was completed at the end of 1887 and was published in Paris in March 1889, in a French translation done by Tolstoy's wife. The first full Russian edition appeared in 1891 in Switzerland, its publication banned in Russia (Scanlan 53).

In the last chapter of her book, Medzhibovskaya presents *On Life* as "the crown of conversion." In his treatise Tolstoy "finally embraced Kant's moral law," reinforced by St. John's commandment to love one another (John

13:34, the third epigraph to the book) (340). Bringing to culmination her main theme, she writes that in *War and Peace*, "[d]eity decides of its volition whether man should move or how and when he should move. In *On Life* . . . Tolstoy says the opposite. Man determines his own movement" (341). The movement is toward the divine light of reasonable consciousness, which is logos, love, and life (chapters twenty-two through twenty-six in *On Life*). This is the point where Tolstoy's thought is perhaps most Christian, for, beginning with the Gospel of St. John, the concept of God as both logos and love has been central to Christian thought.

The movement takes place through submitting our "animal personality," as Tolstoy calls it, to reason or the moral law (love), which submission is the "instrument" for the realization of the reasonable consciousness in us (*On Life* chapters sixteen, twenty-one and twenty-two). Interestingly, "the predisposition to the *animality* of the human being" is an important part of Kant's philosophical anthropology, in which it plays a role not unlike Tolstoy's "animal personality" (Kant, *Religion* 74–76).

Concluding the central argument of the remarkable accomplishment that is her book, Medzhibovskaya writes:

*On Life* resolved Tolstoy's remaining contradictions about life in the world and immortality. Life no longer remains tragically caught between the law of reason (necessity) and the indefinite 'x' of consciousness, or freedom. . . . In *On Life*, finally, the two are operating and cooperating, as they should in the practice of complete turns in true conversion. (347)

### Paradoxes and Conclusions

In fact, contradictions remain, precisely on the issue of "life in the world and immortality." Vasili Zenkovsky, who greatly admired Tolstoy, wrote of him: "An individualist to the marrow of his

bones[...] he was at the same time Russia's most forceful and brilliant exponent of philosophic impersonalism" (*History* I: 386–387).<sup>19</sup> The great paradox of Tolstoy's religious thought, to state it more precisely, is that his modern defense of individual autonomy and self-determination serves a metaphysical impersonalism in which personality or personhood is seen as a limitation of divine unity. For him, therefore, the ultimate end or purpose of individual self-determination is the overcoming of personhood (denigrated as "animal personality") in the divine unity of all. Individual self-determination, which takes place according to logos (recognized by conscience as the moral law), paradoxically culminates in the loss of self and personhood in logos or "life." (S. L. Frank saw Tolstoy's conversion as the result of intense self-struggle and self-overcoming (самоопределение) (Франк, "Памяти" 448). It may not be too fanciful to see Tolstoy's metaphysical impersonalism as the philosophical corollary of his psychological struggle against himself, a type of binary opposition to his powerful ego and self-will.)

Tolstoy's individualism is Kantian, his impersonalism is not. In Kant, individual self-determination requires a combination of finite and infinite elements: the finite determines itself according to the infinite. This combination is distinctive of Kantian idealism, and it is the condition of perfectibility in the true sense of the word (i.e., the finite itself becoming ever more perfect in its approximation to the infinite). Kant himself was perfectly consistent in his idealism. He argued that since human beings cannot achieve perfection in this life—our will cannot fully coincide with the moral law in a state he calls "holiness"—our process of perfectibility must continue in another life, which is his proof of personal immortality (*Critique* 128–129).<sup>20</sup>

Perfectibility has a rather different meaning for Tolstoy. It is not so much that the finite element (the animal personality) becomes ever more perfect through its own process of growth toward the

infinite, but rather that it strives, through submission to reason, for an increasingly more perfect assimilation, union, and identity with reasonable consciousness, until all that remains is divine logos or God. As Gustafson aptly expresses it:

The part rejoins the whole and, dispersed throughout, the 'I' finally reaches the 'non-I' and lives in everything, in a loving seizure of the All. In the loss of self man achieves salvation through deification. (*Leo Tolstoy* 455)

As has often been remarked, Tolstoy's religious thought bears a resemblance to the Eastern sacred traditions. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Svetaketu learns from his father: "That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and you, Svetaketu, are it."

Tolstoy's conception of reasonable consciousness is a supra-personal one, so it is not at all clear whether the divine unity preserves any sense of the personal identity of human beings. (At one point Medzhibovskaya recognizes this, and she herself puts it quite paradoxically: reasonable consciousness is "the identification of one's own unique supra-personal relationship with life" (334).) If Tolstoy did defend personal immortality, it must have been on some basis other than a Kantian conception of perfectibility.<sup>21</sup> This is an odd feature of Tolstoy's thought, in view of his otherwise Kantian approach to individual self-determination.

In his 1910 essay "The Problem of Immortality in L. N. Tolstoy" ("Проблема бессмертия у Л.Н. Толстого"), Zenkovsky tries to explain the peculiarities of the writer's position.<sup>22</sup> He recalls that Tolstoy, in his spiritualistic and pantheistic metaphysics, sharply distinguishes between the personality and reasonable consciousness. The latter is nothing less than God in man, while "personality is a transient form of the manifestation of God" (46). With this sharp distinction,

Tolstoy does not at all resolve his own moral problem—to connect the finite with the infinite—because for him immortality belongs not to what longs and yearns for it, not to the finite and limited, not to the person, but to what is *immortal by its very nature*. (Зеньковский 53)

(Zenkovsky does not refer to Kant in his essay, but he critiques Tolstoy from a distinctively Kantian position.)

With Tolstoy's approach, according to Zenkovsky, immortality cannot be a human task. His solution to the problem is not to link the finite with the infinite, but merely to affirm that, apart from the finite, "the infinite *is* in us." He cannot resolve the question that arises in the moral experience of being a person: "What am *I* to do so that *my* action has indestructible and rational meaning?" "The only moral action that can be recognized as 'rational,'" Zenkovsky continues,

is that which makes *my* effort, the effort of my personality, possible and necessary. The immortality that Tolstoy taught—in his inclination to pantheism—is essentially unachievable because, even without our striving toward it, it already *is*, was, and always will be inherent to the infinite that is in us. It is not the personality that saves, according to Tolstoy, it is rather necessary to be saved *from* it. (Зеньковский 54)<sup>23</sup>

In these last words, it may well be that Tolstoy's failure to follow the logic of Kantian self-determination through to its end (personal immortality) caused Zenkovsky to miss the great extent to which he did in fact follow it. But the historian of Russian philosophy has a clear understanding that that logic leads to a metaphysical conception of personhood and to what he calls "philosophical pluralism," not to Tolstoy's impersonalism (Зеньковский 49).

Tolstoy's whole life was devoted to the search for the meaning of life. By the time of his death in 1910, Russia's great religious philosophers, beginning with Solov'ev, had already produced or were on the verge of producing a rich theological corpus that advanced not an impersonalistic metaphysics of the divine unity of all (всеединство) but a Trinitarian, pluralistic one, proceeding from the mystery of three (and by implication many) persons in one. Like Tolstoy, they understood that by its very nature human life is a matter of self-determination and perfectibility. Unlike Tolstoy, however, they concluded that the meaning of life, therefore, had to rest on some form of personal immortality, perhaps one in which divine life is itself a process that is enriched by our participation in it, that preserves our identity as persons, that remembers our past efforts, and that sustains us in our new ones toward infinite perfectibility. Solov'ev and his successors came to a profounder appreciation of that through the life-long search of Russia's "first modern man."

#### Notes

I am grateful to Michael Denner, Caryl Emerson, Gary Hamburg, and Gary Jahn for their assistance with this essay.

1. The major Russian religious philosophers S. N. Bulgakov and especially S. L. Frank also stressed that Tolstoy came to faith through individual self-determination (Булгаков 16; Франк, "Нравственное" 438 and "Интеллигенция" 443–444). In 1910 Frank stressed that Tolstoy's conversion was a particularly intense form of self-determination, a type of self-struggle and self-overcoming (самопреодоление), a term he uses three times in the space of one page of an essay that he published that year ("Памяти" 448). He refers here to William James's notion that Tolstoy was one of those people who, in their spiritual natures, are "twice-born" (James, lecture eight).

2. There is agreement among scholars at least on the complexity of Tolstoy's conversion. According to

Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, "In sum, one may say that whereas this crisis was only a stage in the gradual evolution of Tolstoy's ideas, it did mark a real turning-point" (328). Gustafson counters the received opinion that there were two Tolstoys, "the pre-conversion artist and the post-conversion religious thinker and prophet," having found no evidence for a radical shift before and after *A Confession* (published in 1882) (*Leo Tolstoy* xiv). Hamburg writes that the conversion was "both an event and a process," with a long process of spiritual seeking leading to the conversion event in 1878-1879, and then another long process, lasting the rest of Tolstoy's life, to work out the implications of his conversion ("Tolstoy's Spirituality" 141-142).

3. Apparently he did not read this work until 1905. It only confirmed his attitude toward Kant, moving him to write "Kant is very close to me" and "I am intensely in awe of him" (Jahn 63).

4. In the letter Tolstoy expresses his ecstasy over Schopenhauer, whom he had read that summer and whom he pronounced to be the greatest genius of all, and indicates that he has also read through Kant (PSS 61: 219). The letter is quoted by Orwin (150) and by Eikhbaum (*Seventies* 79). Eikhbaum adds that according to Boris Chicherin (writing in his memoirs), Tolstoy in these years "had no notion of philosophy."

5. Medzhibovskaya had the "unforgettable privilege" of inspecting Tolstoy's copy of Kant's second critique and found that he had enthusiastically embellished it (340, 355n18).

6. Judging by Hamburg, "Tolstoy's Spirituality," the Russian writer drew on, was influenced by, and can be fruitfully compared to a very broad range of religious and philosophical sources, so that the suggestion that Orthodoxy was primary involves a certain risk of reducing Tolstoy's complexity. Concluding his essay, Hamburg remarks that V. V. Rozanov's characterization of Tolstoy as an "enormous religious phenomenon" was a "tacit recognition of the difficulty of classifying a strange, complicated, willful figure whose idiosyncratic religious vision, twisting toward

the vaulted heavens like the branches of a mighty oak, even today, astonishes" (156).

7. In summarizing Tolstoy's thesis, Bakhtin must have drawn here not only on *Resurrection* but also on Tolstoy's tract *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, which teaches that the condition of the realization of the kingdom of God (and of the end of violence) is inner striving according to the ideal ("that every man carries within his soul") of absolute, infinite perfection (*Kingdom* 50-52, 97-100).

8. For a more recent, beautifully formulated defense of the thesis that the philosophical power of Russian literature consists in its positing of ideals, see Emerson, "On Persons as Open-Ended Ends-in-Themselves." Bakhtin stressed, of course, that it is important to be not only "open-ended" (as a self-determining, unfinalizable subject) but also "open to others" (as a non-self-sufficient subject).

9. In a letter to his aunt A. A. Tolstaia in 1859 he wrote that he lost his faith at age fourteen (1842). Then, "from two years of mental work" (between 1852 and 1854, while he was in the Caucasus),

I discovered a simple old thing, but one which I know as no one else knows it; I discovered that there is immortality, that there is love, and that one must live for another in order to be eternally happy. These discoveries amazed me by their resemblance to the Christian religion and instead of uncovering them myself I began to search for them in the Gospels, but I found little. I found neither God, nor the Saviour, nor the *mysterics*, nothing; and I searched with all, all, all the strength of my soul, and I wept, and I tortured myself, and I wanted nothing but the truth... [R]arely have I met in people such a passion for the truth as there was in me at that time. Thus it has remained with my religion, and I have lived well with it. (qtd. in Orwin 40)

Orwin situates this "*profession de foi*," as Tolstoy himself called it, in the context of his reading then of Plato and Rousseau. Medzhibovskaya refers briefly to this letter (70).

10. Quoted by Orwin (81) from Tolstoy's article, "Who Should Be Teaching Whom to Write: Should We Be Teaching the Peasant Lads, or They Us?"

11. Aileen Kelly distinguishes between his two opposing conceptions of self-perfection:

His aesthetic intuition led him to see his goal as self-fulfillment, the harmonious development of all his capacities, guided only by an instinctive sense of the life force that united him with all living beings. But his intellect presented the process of self-perfection to him as one of self-mastery and self-denial . . . in the name of norms and prescriptions advanced by reason and the conscious moral will. (82)

12. In early September 1869 Tolstoy, at a hotel in the provincial town of Arzamas, had a terrifying experience of the meaninglessness of life.

13. However, Tolstoy does accept a basic version of the cosmological proof: "If I exist then there must be a cause, and a cause of the cause. And the cause of everything is that which we call God."

14. For detailed accounts of their difficult friendship, see Eikhenbaum, *Sixties* 12–22, and Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin* 205–210. The friendship began in the winter of 1856–1857. By the spring of 1861 Tolstoy had serious differences with Chicherin, who "never guessed the depths of Tolstoy's ideological hostility," allowing the one-sided friendship to formally continue (Hamburg 209).

15. In the second edition (1901), see especially chapter 9 ("The Moral World"), 103–134, the clarity and force of which would convert anyone. According to Eikhenbaum, in 1858 Tolstoy read with interest Chicherin's essay "Промышленность и государство в Англии" republished as chapter 2 of his book *Очерки Англии и Франции* (1858). In this essay Chicherin writes that although liberalism assumes distinctive forms among different peoples, "it brings with it everywhere certain general features: it affirms the freedom of human conscience and the free development

of science, art, and industry" (Eikhenbaum, *Sixties* 16–19; quotation at 18).

16. Walicki puts them at opposite poles of Russian religious thought (*History* 335). Solov'ev's last work, *Three Conversations on War, Progress and the End of World History, with a Short Story of the Anti-Christ* (1899), is a merciless polemic against Tolstoyanism, as represented by the extremely negative character of the Prince. For a compelling reading of this work, see Valliere 205–223. Pål Kolstø has recently argued that Solov'ev casts the prince, and by implication Tolstoy, as the servant of the devil ("Demonized" 318–321).

17. The stark contrast, really almost a case of diametrical opposition, between Tolstoy's "consistent legal nihilism" (82) and Solov'ev's liberalism is brought out very clearly in Walicki's classic account in *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* (73, 79–82, 165–212).

18. See my own article, "The Neo-Idealist Reception of Kant in the Moscow Psychological Society," to which Medzhibovskaya generously refers.

19. Tolstoy's metaphysical impersonalism reveals the enduring influence on him of Schopenhauer (Walicki, *History* 331–334).

20. Scanlan indicates that there is a "curious contrast" between Kant and Tolstoy on this point, with Tolstoy maintaining that perfectibility ceases at death, even if the self survives it (58).

21. Scanlan argues that Tolstoy's speculations in *On Life* (chs. twenty-eight and twenty-nine) about the individual's indestructible "special relation to the world" or "character" constitute such a basis, but these speculations are (in Scanlan's words) "highly fanciful" (56–58). Moreover, Tolstoy writes that people are to establish a "new, higher relationship" to the world through reason and love; these new relationships to life seem supra-personal (chapters thirty and thirty-one). In *What I Believe* (1884) (chapter eight), Tolstoy writes at length and unambiguously against the idea of personal immortality, including the following lines:

I can no longer doubt that my personal life perishes, but the life of the whole world according to the will

of the Father does not perish, and only merging with it gives me the possibility of salvation. But this so little in comparison with exalted religious beliefs in a personal future! Though it is little, it is correct. (PSS 23: 400)

22. In his *A History of Russian Philosophy*, he states that Tolstoy "has no doctrine of individual immortality" (I: 395). Orwin concurs (212), as does Emerson (*Cambridge* 129). Maude, who understood Tolstoy's spiritual side as well as anyone, offers the following good overall assessment of his views of the afterlife: "He refrained from assertions as to the kind of existence that will succeed the death of our bodies. [. . .] For whatever the future may have in store, we shall best prepare for it by helping to establish the Kingdom of God on earth" (2: 40).

23. More precisely, it is the personality that saves, but through its own destruction.

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