

Roundtable Discussion

Donna Tussing Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought 1847-1880*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Caryl Emerson, Princeton University:

Orwin's wonderfully dense, difficult book accomplishes a small miracle in Tolstoy studies: it returns a writer who strove all to be pellucidly, tediously, unsubtly and thus irrefutably *clear*, back to the messy daily drawing board, before any polemical synthesis has been achieved. "My aim," she writes, "is to present Tolstoy's work as he may have understood it himself." This is no small task, for Orwin as author and for us as readers. The nineteenth century was a time of literacy in philosophy and abstract systems that beggars our own; completely at home herself on that terrain, Orwin starts right in with metaphysical idealism as if it were Everyman's routine diet. Remarkably, she succeeds in bringing it all very much down to earth--thus bearing out her epigram from Tolstoy's 1856 Diary, about the beneficial effects of sensuousness on even the most arid idealism: "If you hold firmly to the earth, it stretches out the soul."

The book is organized chronologically, recalling Eikhenbaum's great Tolstoy Project: The Fifties, The Sixties, The Seventies. But whereas that magisterial post-Formalist scholar stuffed his chronology with a thick description of *things* -- pedagogical textbooks, gardening, horses -- Orwin sticks pretty faithfully to ideas, which require more skillful crafting if they are to take on the necessary weight and forward movement. Of the many intriguing paradoxes she explores, for me the most productive is her attempt to rethink the "divided Tolstoy" hypothesis (hedgehog/fox, seer of the flesh/ seer of the soul, etc.) via the prism first provided by that troublesome gadfly and astute literary critic, Nikolai Chernyshevsky: Tolstoy's master of the "dialectic of the soul." For in these famous binary oppositions by Isaiah Berlin and Merezhkovsky there is much insight but probably too little motion; their model, like all structuralisms, tends toward stasis, and this does Tolstoy's life a disservice.

Orwin demonstrates how Tolstoy's constant search for "an antidote to the destructiveness of analysis" led him through various idealisms, of which the most durable was the "metaphysical," predicated on the assumption that there *was* a whole, and that this whole was within. To study metaphysics is to study oneself. Thus could an extreme individualism coexist with pretensions to universal significance on grounds other than simple monologism (Bakhtin's trivial route) or simple egoism (the untutored reader's reaction to Tolstoy in an irritated, preached-at moment). And thus also could the dialectic be loosened and personalized. Despite the grinding distastefulness of Tolstoy as moralist and the sense we often have from him that to be ethically correct was to be just like

Tolstoy, this in fact is not quite right: as Tolstoy saw it, synthesis was not a question of ascent toward platonic essences, even less a question of brute matter in eternal conflict; synthesis was that new idea or thing which came about within us *in the presence of an ideal*. As with Tolstoy's "infection theory of art," the communication of like emotions is a rigid requirement, yes, but every organism is infected in its own way.

Two big ideas organize Orwin's book. The first is Tolstoyan psychology, endlessly surprising and resistant of paraphrase, and second is the nature/civilization distinction, weighted differently in each decade. Memory and analysis are her crucial strategies, for they serve to create an organic and evolving whole around one's own unrepeatable, sensuous self. (Tolstoy's intimacy with a group of "philosophically-oriented hedonists" in the 1850s, which goaded him toward a specifically *theoretical* justification of sensuality, was crucial in the formation of worldviews that were soon to triumph in the novels.) But the rub comes precisely in this tension between analysis and synthesis. A Cartesian at heart and a merciless splitter of things, Tolstoy discovered the striving self through the process of analysis; unlike Rousseau and Hobbes, however, he insisted upon synthesis to provide life with its moral meaning, to him indispensable. Orwin's subsequent readings of Tolstoy's literary production all come out of this analysis/synthesis bottleneck, whose often intolerable pressure Tolstoy siphoned off and put to work in ingenious ways.

The tension most often surfaces, according to Orwin, as a conflict between civilization and nature. In this struggle, however, nature in the prelapsarian Rousseauian sense by no means always has the upper hand -- since Tolstoy came to believe that morality becomes concrete and authoritative only in human history. The culmination of this conflict comes in Chapter Five, on *War and Peace*. Orwin argues that Tolstoy's primary impulse in this huge work is to unite man and nature, and, as part of that project, to make human history a part of natural process. This thesis is of immense consequence. Mimicking classical epic, Tolstoy can redeem selfishness and "living for oneself" as both "reasonable" and natural (as a bonus, Orwin's thesis also works to redeem the maddeningly indulged, often ridiculous but indestructable and ultimately victorious Pierre Bezukhov, whom Orwin makes whole with a phrase: "the most perfectly Goethean side of *War and Peace*"). In a nicely complementary move, Tolstoy can make Nature herself into a moral force: and one happy result of this development is that he can "accept was a natural without providing a humanly comprehensible justification for it." Such capacious flexibility would be cast off, of course, in the later and more didactic decades of Tolstoy's life.

Chapters Six and Seven, on Schopenhauer and *Anna Karenina*, document Tolstoy's shift from a celebration of life to moral instruction extracted out of it. Again, Orwin finds a perfect focus in "the nature of nature." Gone in the 1870s are the Rousseauist assumptions about the natural goodness of man; at issue now are moral freedom and its corollary, personal responsibility. Peasants are virtuous only through tradition, not by nature (nature brings happiness, but not necessarily faith or goodness); children, too, require moral instruction and proper chastisement. Leisure no longer has the magical idyllic quality that it had in *War and Peace*; time is tied down to childbearing or in thrall

to restless and passionate will. The universe has become mysterious, its chance events less accessible.

Apply these Schopenhauerian precepts to *Anna Karenina*, and that novel becomes less a question of Tolstoy "falling in love with his heroine" and more a matter of moral choices not taken, of Anna possessing an "excess of vitality" that becomes sinister because not constrained by inner or outer law. Where *War and Peace* could be an epic, *Anna Karenina* can only be tragic drama. And under this generic rubric, which recalls George Steiner's classic juxtaposition now played out within a single novelist, Orwin has very interesting things to say about the *resistance* of some of the novel's major heroes -- all significantly Tolstoy surrogates -- precisely to drama: a genre too erotic, uncertain, and altogether too directed toward the body as a three-dimensional good in its own right, rather than toward the more translucent spirit.

Orwin is especially helpful in realigning Tolstoy with European thinkers precious to him and yet too often blurred for us. The permanence of Rousseau in Tolstoy's hierarchy of values is again demonstrated and made freshly complex. A productive contrast is drawn between the wholeness characteristic of Hegelian thinking (with its faith in the integrity of historical time -- closed, rounded, abstract, predetermined and therefore to Tolstoy distressing) and the wholeness of nature as Goethe understood it (just as integrated, perhaps, but more spatial, tolerant of nonsynthesized contradiction, intuitive, marked by the freedom to spread out and choose -- and thus to Tolstoy more congenial). Inevitably at times the reader of Orwin's book will wander over this wide territory with too rudimentary maps. Vaguely abstract subtitles like "A Maturing Philosophy of Nature," "Nature, Reason, and the Feelings," "Reason, Morality and Nature in the Human Soul," "Nature after Schopenhauer," offer only the most general directions. The several chapters on specific works (*The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*) are packed with local literary insights, but they function -- they are designed to function -- largely as illustrations of achieved plateaus in a philosophical struggle.

What the book does *not* do, and I believe this to be a mark of its special excellence, is what most studies by literary scholars inevitably do: take Tolstoy's literary masterpieces as starting points and then work selectively backwards, to opportunistic, easily assimilated slices of philosophy. Literature is not the starting point but the illustrative *end* point for Orwin, and we are invited to witness the confused, often contradictory development of Tolstoy's restless "bol'shoi um" (his "Big brain," in Orwin's rendering) as a literary imagination gestates within it. Throughout, there is almost none of that easily-achieved "anecdotal relief," which Tolstoy would have eschewed and which is so tempting to harvest out of Tolstoy's overdocumented life.

Andrew Wachtel, Northwestern University:

Donna Orwin concludes her thought-provoking book, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880*, with the observation that Tolstoy's notebooks during the period he produced

his greatest literary work are sparse compared to those that date from the decades that follow. She explains this by saying: "Before 1880 he had done his thinking through his art, while afterward his art in his own mind, or at least in his public pronouncements, became but an instrument of his thought." (218) That this observation is true seems fairly clear, but precisely the fact that it is true makes what Orwin has done in her book problematic.

The great strength of this study is that Orwin, following to some extent in the footsteps of Eikhenbaum, has tried to flesh out the philosophical underpinnings of Tolstoy's early period. She parts company from Eikhenbaum, however, in focusing on the central philosophical ideas with which Tolstoy wrestled rather than providing a catalogue of all the social, philosophical, literary, and scientific trends that were "in the air" and that might have influenced Tolstoy. Even more important, she avoids the mistake of too many intellectual historians--she does not first provide her own brilliant interpretation of Rousseau or Goethe or Schopenhauer and then assume Tolstoy held it. Instead, she tries conscientiously to discern just which aspects of that thought became relevant for his understanding of the world.

Her achievement seems particularly impressive to me in her discussion of Tolstoy's debt to Rousseau. This is, after all, an old chestnut, and one is shocked to realize that even with the existence of whole books on the subject, one's appreciation for exactly which aspects of Rousseau Tolstoy assimilated and how he did so have remained unclear. Orwin lays out the connections elegantly and convincingly: thus, for example, her detailed treatment of the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" and its effects on Tolstoy's view of nature and morality seems to me right on the mark. One could say the same of her treatment of the concepts "Vernunft" and "Verstand" in Goethe. This latter observation even pays direct dividends in understanding *War and Peace*, for it allows Orwin to decode something that had always been a mystery to me: why Natasha describes Pierre as "blue and red and square."

Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to Orwin's method, and the relative paucity of moments like the one just described--when a philosophical concept properly understood makes sense out of a novelistic moment that had previously been incomprehensible--is perhaps the major one. What I wish to say is that although the book is supposed to be about Tolstoy's art and thought, for my taste there is too much thought and not enough art here. More provocatively, I would say that the reader of Orwin's book comes away from it with the feeling that Tolstoy was basically a philosopher who wrote novels, rather than a novelist for whom philosophical and moral problems were interesting only insofar as they served his novelistic purposes. Or to put it another way, one might say that Orwin often trusts Tolstoy's own thought too much to analyze the novels that Tolstoy actually produced.

Toward the beginning of her study, Orwin makes the seemingly modest claim that she will try "to present Tolstoy's work as he may have understood it himself." (5) In the context of contemporary literary criticism this goal is, perhaps, somewhat old fashioned, but it is nevertheless a worthy one. The problem is that it is not entirely clear what it means to appreciate an author's work as he may have understood it himself. For Orwin,

understanding of the work comes from a full explication of the philosophical conceptions that underpin it. But despite all her quotations from Tolstoy's letters and diaries, it is clear that Tolstoy never understood his work the way Orwin does: he would never have been able nor would he have wanted to lay out the philosophical implications of his fiction as they are laid out here. Indeed, Tolstoy insisted a number of times (most notably in his article "A Few Words about the Book *War and Peace*" and in his letter of April 23, 1876 to Strakhov about *Anna Karenina*) that his own novels could not be analyzed in terms of separate components but rather that they could only be appreciated as wholes, in the full interaction of form and content. Thus, in excerpting out the philosophical content (and seeing it as a coherent whole) we risk viewing works of fiction as primarily vehicles for the explication of philosophical ideas--and we thereby risk turning the novels into something for less complicated than they actually are.

This criticism is not meant to imply that Orwin's readings of individual works are mechanical or dry. Indeed, one might say that her judicious readings of *The Cossacks*, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* get right to each novel's essence, at least to its philosophical essence. What they miss, however, is all of what is nonessential (philosophically speaking) to each novel. We fail to recognize in them those aspects of Tolstoy's writing (from his stylistic quirks to his unexpected plot constructions, from his overabundant "prosaics" to his intricate rhythmical repetitions, let alone the latent potentials in his novels that he could not and did not understand in any way) that have made him a novelist whom people want to read and reread. In short, a feeling for purely novelistic pleasure is absent from Orwin's readings, with the unfortunate result that the reader of her book might be forgiven for thinking that reading Tolstoy is more like reading Strakhov than Turgenev.

Still, this book makes essential reading for anyone who would attempt to understand Tolstoy's relationship to European thought in his pre-crisis period. In explicating these subtle and complicated relationships, Orwin has done a great service. And while I have criticized her book for not capturing everything that is important for an understanding of Tolstoy's novels, I am fully aware that no book could possibly do so. After all, as Tolstoy put it, "If I wanted to say in words all that I had in mind to express by my novel, I should have to write the same novel which I wrote all over again." Since we cannot simply rewrite and reproduce Tolstoy's novels, we are inevitably reduced to engaging only a fraction of his abundant universe. The fraction that Orwin has chosen is not my favorite one, but it is unquestionably worthy of the serious consideration it receives here.

Gary R. Jahn, University of Minnesota:

Donna Tussing Orwin's *Tolstoy's Art and Thought: 1847-1880* is a monument to its author's well-known thoroughness, breadth, and precision. Its eight chapters present a fully contextualized account of the development of Tolstoy's thought in the 1850's,

1860's, and 1870's, and of the literary and non-literary expression of that thought over that period.

This is a book about the evolution of Tolstoy's world view; his literary legacy of the period (*The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*) is heavily involved in Orwin's account, and is considered mainly as a vehicle for the expression of Tolstoy's world view. Tolstoy is presented here as a thinker who valued his art above all as a means for the effective communication of his beliefs.

Dr. Orwin's approach both derives from and corroborates the notion that Tolstoy's salient characteristic as artist and thinker, and as a man, was his dividedness. His quest was consequently always for wholeness and integration. She sees Tolstoy's primary concern as the attempt to reconcile self and other, body and spirit, appetite and morality, nature and culture. She locates her work firmly in the context of other recent books on Tolstoy, notably those of Professors Morson and Gustafson. She is sometimes in agreement with these, sometimes not, but she sees them as concerned with the same sort of questions which have motivated her own research. Like them, she tends to take Tolstoy at his word: literary art is a form of communication in which the successful transference of the author's view of reality to the reader is of primary importance. As she herself explains it, she intends to "clarify the original meaning" of great texts by Tolstoy.

The "great art" of Part One of her book ("The 1850's") appears to be the story "Lucerne," but that, I think, is mainly because her sense of precision prevents her from ascribing *The Cossacks* (actually published only in 1863) to this period. She notes, however, that *The Cossacks* was in significant part written in the 1850's, and, as Orwin says, the novel "makes the case for a natural morality as far as Tolstoy had developed it in the fifties" (85). The apotheosis of the sixties is, of course, *War and Peace* and, of the seventies, *Anna Karenina*. In what follows, I would like to reflect on Dr. Orwin's analysis of these works and on the approach which she has adopted toward their study.

A great strength of this book is the wealth of contextualizing detail that Orwin provides in her first three chapters. She suggests that Tolstoy was, if not the intellectual product of his age, at least a product of the creative tension, both attraction and repulsion, between his own ideas and those of his mentors from the past and of his contemporaries. Orwin begins by describing the general climate of the times; she offers a clear portrait of the intellectual rift between the "right Belinskians" (Botkin, especially) and the left (especially Chernyshevskii). She uses this portrait as the backdrop to her exploration of Tolstoy's own intellectual genesis. I think that she has rightly identified the tension between the desire for an ideal and the feeling for the real as the driving force behind Tolstoy's intellectual development, and she relates this aspect of Tolstoy's thinking very successfully to the general preoccupation with the integration of the ideal with the real which characterized the 1840's and 1850's.

Concerning Tolstoy's predecessors, I was particularly impressed by Orwin's discussion of the relationship between Tolstoy and Rousseau, especially the crucial role apparently played in the development of Tolstoy's attitude to Rousseau by the Savoyard Vicar's *Profession of Faith*. Whether this work was a direct or an equivocating statement of Rousseau's beliefs, Orwin's main point is clear: Tolstoy regarded the Savoyard Vicar

as Rousseau, and it was *this* Rousseau whom Tolstoy followed in attempting to find a basis for morality in Rousseau's conception of human personality and human motives.

Just as important as the attempt to render the particular relationship between Tolstoy and Rousseau more precisely than heretofore is the considerable attention which Orwin devotes to the relationship between Tolstoy and other thinkers. Much attention has been given, not only by Orwin, to the connection between Tolstoy and Schopenhauer. By his own admission Tolstoy's interest in Schopenhauer was intense, but short-lived. The connection is undoubtedly crucial to a full appreciation of *War and Peace*, as both Harry Walsh and Sigrid McLaughlin have shown. Still, I found more helpful the discussion of Tolstoy's interest in the ideas of Kant and Goethe. Finally, there is a whole subset of information here pertaining to the relationship between Tolstoy and N.N. Strakhov. Orwin has set the standard for further examination and description of the significance of Strakhov for Tolstoy. Her portrait of Strakhov as a friendly and modest facilitator of Tolstoy's ideas rings completely true.

And yet there is, it seems to me, a down side to the wealth of valuable contextualization in the first three chapters of the book and passim in the remainder. The approach taken by Orwin may convey the impression that the development of Tolstoy's ideas was more linear and orderly than it may, in fact, have been. Such a thorough establishment of the relevant intellectual context carries with it considerable inertial force. The impression may be conveyed that Tolstoy is best understood as a sort of more literary copy of his friend Strakhov, that is, as a person interested in ideas and the discussion of ideas as such. It is salutary to remember that Tolstoy was wont to wax ironically at the expense of professional thinkers (one thinks of the famous trio of Wurst, Knaust, and Pripasov, mentioned in Book I of *Anna Karenina*), and that he evidently saw his own task as being, even if kindred, a much different one. To be fair, Orwin herself points this out, and more than once. Even so, while going through this material, I found myself occasionally reminded of the intense effort Prince Andrei expended in order to maintain the integrity of that "strange airy structure . . . of slender needles or splinters" that he sensed to be hovering in the air just above his death-bed. Tolstoy was always glad, I believe, to find a familiar thought in the writings or opinions of those who formed the intellectual context amidst which he lived, but one should be wary of imagining that his own development can be seen or explained as more or less completely consistent with or produced by that context. Such a view makes Tolstoy seem both more tame and more original than he was. It leads to the conclusion that, because some mentor or contemporary solved a particular philosophical problem in a particular way, Tolstoy may be seen as having solved it in the same or a similar way.

In her discussion of *The Cossacks*, for example, Orwin wants to assert that Tolstoy has here solved the problem of nature and morality in the same way as his right-Belinskian friends of the fifties. This is the problem of deriving a basis for moral action from the presumed self-centeredness of humankind in the Rousseauian "natural" state: whence comes the nobility of the noble savage? In dealing with this question Orwin uses her knowledge of Rousseau as Savoyard Vicar and of Goethe's "reason behind everything that lives" and of Turgenev's "Hamlet and Don Quixote" ("*Gamlet i Don Kikhot*") to good

effect. She shows that love of others emerges, in these works, in a natural sort of way from love of self, but only with the facilitation of one or another "civilizing" influence to precipitate it.

However, that it *can* be shown that this was a solution of the time and that Tolstoy was aware of this solution is not a demonstration that it is so in *The Cossacks*. (See Anthony Anemone's article in this issue of *Tolstoy Studies Journal* for a problematicization of this resolution of the Rousseauian subtext in *The Cossacks*.) Orwin's assertion that a synthesis of morality and nature is achieved by Tolstoy in that novel depends upon the portrait which she draws of Olenin in the stag's lair, the deep awareness of himself which he experiences there, and the conclusions which he draws about how he ought to live on the basis of this experience. Orwin notes that most critics view Olenin's decision to pursue a policy of self-abnegation in the aftermath of his experience in the stag's lair as "one-sided" and "intellectual." Despite this, she seems to assert that Olenin has, in the heart of nature and with the mediation of his memories of childhood, discovered a synthesis of nature and morality, a balance between the love of self (which is, to Tolstoy, THE self-evident human motive) and the love of others (which seemed to Tolstoy to be the essence of morality).

It seems to me, however, that this picture of Olenin as inwardly harmonious, as possessing a "secret" which he has remembered in the stag's lair, simply does not accord with the facts of the narrative. It seems to me that the text authorizes rather the conclusion that the moral significance which Olenin's reason superimposes on his powerful experience only serves to obscure it, so to say, decorating it with ornaments which are not in the same style. His gift of a horse to Lukashka is evidently an attempt to recreate the feeling of "oneness" or "wholeness" which the stag's lair had offered him, and it is after all a *reasonable* attempt. But neither for Olenin nor for anyone else does his generosity succeed in recreating the much desired feeling of oneness. In fact, it only produces suspicion and disappointment. Something similar may be said of Olenin's intense feelings for Marianka, and his simultaneous hopes of educating her, i.e., changing her from the person who has inspired him with love so that she would more closely resemble those admittedly undesirable women whom he has left behind in Moscow. Because she has concluded that Tolstoy has solved the problem of nature and morality as described above, Orwin makes the point that Olenin leaves the Cossack village at the end of the novel because the *cossacks* are unable to accept *him*. It seems to me, however, that the problem resides in *Olenin himself*. His sense of being unable to belong is part of *his* personal baggage, as in Moscow at the beginning of the novel, so also again at the end.

In her discussion of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Orwin's attention remains primarily focussed on questions of morality and on Tolstoy's attempt to discover a basis for morality in the world which he describes. She offers a very well reasoned theory in this connection which culminates in the assertion that "man would be moral not because her was natural, but because he was rational and free"(162). Her idea is that Tolstoy's thought carries him steadily away from "nature" and toward "culture," because nature, without the mediation of culture, is incapable of supplying any kind of moral context to human life (thus the shortcomings of the Cossacks, referred to above). Unquestionably,

Tolstoy was always deeply interested in questions of morality and right conduct, and Orwin's approach is certainly a proper one. She understands Tolstoy's moral progress in the context of his developing acquaintance with the writings of other thinkers, in the sixties and seventies particularly with the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Kant.

While this is a helpful and productive manner of approaching Tolstoy (I certainly benefitted a great deal from reflecting on these texts from Orwin's point of view), I would suggest that she assigns to questions of morality a *larger* significance, *earlier* in Tolstoy's career than they may have had in fact. We are dealing here, of course, with what is really a matter of scholarly emphasis; I would only like to say that Orwin's consistent attention to morality, and the impression that this creates of a Tolstoy primarily, almost exclusively, concerned with ethical questions (as opposed to other sorts of intellectual concerns) or with thought (as opposed to art) is not fully consonant with the features of the texts she discusses.

The quotation which I mentioned just now contains all the operative concepts ("natural," "free," "rational," "moral") required for a sound approach to the thought of Tolstoy as expressed in his literary work. Orwin's concern is primarily with the moral dimension, and the other concepts are introduced as contributory to the development of Tolstoy's moral position. In my opinion, the central importance which Orwin assigns to moral questions can be much more successfully urged at a later stage in Tolstoy's career than the period which is the subject of her study. For example, as I suggested earlier, I would tend to regard *The Cossacks* as concerned only in a minor way with questions of morality. Olenin's attempt to draw moral conclusions from his experience, to make it serve as a guide for right conduct, results only in the experience itself being obscured. Tolstoy affirmed that reason had a dampening effect on the power and freshness of immediate experience, and this is certainly borne out by the aftermath of Olenin's moment of epiphany in the stag's lair.

The primary thrust of *The Cossacks* (again, in the context of an explication of Tolstoy's thought) is not moral, but ontological: the nature of the human being and the disjunction between the individual and the group context of which s/he is a part. Olenin is actuated by the desire to find an environment of which he can feel himself to be a part. He leaves the city at the beginning of the novel because of his sense of isolation and alienation there. In the stag's lair he experiences a profound sense of the interconnectedness of things, but his attempt to reason from this experience leads only to a diminution of its strength. In the terms developed later in *War and Peace*, the "consciousness" of the experience resists his attempts to grasp it by "reason."

In *The Cossacks* the polarity of consciousness and reason is reflected in the tension between the Cossacks as a group and Olenin as an individual; the disappointing (for Olenin) conclusion of the novel seems to be that the individual, as an individual, cannot join or blend into the group; it is interesting that this fate is shared also by Uncle Eroshka, who lives by himself, apart from the other Cossacks. In *War and Peace* Tolstoy pursues this theme from the point of view of the individual's freedom to assert him/herself with respect to the group, where "group" is assigned the dimensions of the historical mass. The central question in *War and Peace* is not whether Napoleon is good or evil, but

whether or not he, as an individual, has the ability imputed to him of determining or controlling the action of the mass. Tolstoy seems to arrive at the conclusion that it is nonsense to think that an individual can control the actions of the mass, but quite sensible to think that one's own immediate actions are free and subject to one's own control. In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy pursues the latter part of this idea: to what extent, in fact, can one indulge the freedom of one's immediate actions. Once again, the question of morality is ambiguous--Anna is (at least in her own mind) both guilty and not guilty--the main concern is to establish the extent to which an individual, like Anna or Levin, can assert her/himself, even within the context of the immediate surroundings of family and personal life. The answer, as reflected in Levin's retreat into his soul's "holy of holies" and Anna's self-destruction seems to be, not very far.

I agree with Orwin that the motive which drives Tolstoy to be dissatisfied with his thought at every stage of its development is that it does not yet succeed in addressing his moral concerns in a fully adequate manner; that is, there is a moral uneasiness in Tolstoy which causes him to think again and yet again about the conclusions which he reaches at the various stages of his career. And yet I would also like to remember that his reflections seem no to have been oriented directly to the solving of moral questions. Later in life Tolstoy, following Kant, declared that "religion" was no more than an individual person's answers to the three primary human questions: Who am I?, What else is there besides me?, and What is the proper relation between me and everything else that is? My only complaint about Orwin's book is that in foregrounding so completely the last of these questions she has obscured what seems to me to be the fact that in the works before 1880 Tolstoy was much more directly concerned with the first two questions.

Orwin's book rightly establishes the quest for happiness as a central concern of Tolstoy. She portrays this happiness as moral satisfaction of contentment. I would agree that the Tolstoy before 1880 understood happiness to have moral implications or a moral context, but I think the works of that earlier period are much more concerned with the *possibility* or the *location* of happiness than with its moral overtones.

The basis of happiness is the ability to be able to address one's competing desires for selfness and separateness on one hand and belonging and blending on the other. Very soon the question devolves onto a question about the possibility of freedom--where and how can the individual remain free while at the same time retaining membership in the group. In *Anna Karenina* the sphere of freedom is shown to be located only within the individual, this completing a steadily narrowing identification of the place and manner in which freedom is possible. *The Cossacks* shows us the difficulty of the relationship of the individual with the group. *War and Peace* illustrates that if the group is considered in its mass or historical dimensions, then the individual, as individual, disappears within it; but if we consider the group to be the immediate social and personal context of the individual, then it appears that the individual's intentions and choices are under his/her control and that there is a certain latitude for the free manifestation of action. *Anna Karenina* looks more closely at this latter conclusion, and it is discovered that neither Anna nor Levin are free to live their personal/family lives as they would. As in *War and Peace*, the question is not so much whether Anna's actions are right or wrong as whether she has the ability,

the freedom, to indulge her desires. To take the morality of Anna's behavior as the central concern of the novel is to agree with M.S. Gromeka's conception of the novel as illustrative of the idea that immorality will be certainly and inevitably punished. We shouldn't forget, of course, that Tolstoy declared that Gromeka was quite right in this understanding of the novel; on the other hand, it is difficult to see how this can be the main point of a novel in which so much of the same sort of "immorality" of which Anna is guilty goes quite unpunished.

In Levin's case the only real freedom appears in the end to be located within his own inner world. The individual at this point becomes a model of the world; the outer person belongs to the surrounding mass or totality of experience, the inner person is incorporated within this mass but capable of retaining at least the freedom to regard what is passing in the outer person with independent eyes. Even here Tolstoy has reached the point only of appropriately *locating* the moral feelings; Levin declares that he has found the power to invest his life with "goodness," but as yet he is unable consistently to *be* good.

This conception of an inner and outer person is arrived at by Tolstoy only after long years of reflection, the chronicle of which is kept in the books which Orwin has considered. For many readers, of course, Tolstoy's reasoning towards the beginnings of a code of morality from the experience of Levin was not more successful than Olenin's from his experience in the stag's lair. In any case, the history surrounding it is one in which the morality comes at the end; the desire for morality is present throughout this history--it may even be true that the desire motivates this history. But the history itself is a history of Tolstoy's concern primarily with questions of self and other, individual and group, reason and consciousness, freedom and necessity; it has a moral dimension and a moral import, but it is not, in itself, a search for morality.

Still, none of this is intended to detract from the quality and the competence of Donna Orwin's fine book. She has produced an original, coherent, and supremely well-informed account of Tolstoy's intellectual development up to the late 1870's. Her book will long be read and appreciated.

Donna Orwin Replies:

I would like to begin by thanking Caryl Emerson, Gary R. Jahn and Andrew Wachtel for their comments. I would also like to thank Amy Mandelker and the *Tolstoy Studies Journal* for giving me this opportunity to engage in a dialogue with my fellow *tolstovedy*.

Caryl Emerson has put me in the position, embarrassing for a critic, of having very little to say about her reflections. Where she summarized my arguments, she is right; where she ponders their consequences, I learn from her. It is a writer's greatest (and rarest) pleasure to have been understood so well.

Andrew Wachtel is disturbed by my philosophical approach to Tolstoy's art. Both

Wachtel and Gary Jahn fear that I make Tolstoy seem less like himself and more like Strakhov, in Jahn's words, "more tame and more original" (as a thinker) than he was. I agree that this is a danger of my book, because of my emphasis on philosophy and literary history rather than on the psychology of the writer or on issues of genre or style. Another related problem with my approach noted by Wachtel is that by untangling the various philosophical strands in Tolstoy's thought, I might make his thought seem more "linear" than it is. I take Wachtel to mean by this that Tolstoy's books cannot be reduced to a series of philosophic statements about them. I agree, and, as my readers have noted, I have tried as much as possible to show the role philosophy plays in Tolstoy's art by presenting it as culminating in the art rather than the other way around. Jahn observes that the first three chapters of my book contain more literary history and philosophy than the later ones. I wanted to build up a context within which I could accomplish my main task of textual interpretation.

Despite my emphasis on thought, I do not see Tolstoy as primarily an original thinker. I would place him rather among those poets who both push thoughts to their extremes and bring them to life. If one wanted to study Tolstoy strictly as a poet, one could concentrate on how he rendered his thoughts and feelings, or on what we might call his rhetoric, the way he convinced his readers that he was telling the truth. But this is not to say that poets always rank below philosophers by merely giving form to their thoughts. In the nineteenth century poets like Tolstoy consciously corrected philosophers who took a narrowly rationalistic view of life. Too often this stance has been understood as simply anti-philosophic. Tolstoy himself, for instance, opposed "linear" thought, because he believed that each thought or series of thoughts existed in simultaneous relation to others in what he characterized spatially as a circle or ball. Art was better suited to express the true nature of things than logic, which expressed things sequentially. True philosophy was therefore the product of a literary imagination which saw things in their interconnectedness, and, at least in the period I cover in my book, Tolstoy believed that the greatest poets -- Goethe, for instance -- practised philosophy.

Like Wachtel, I think that stylistic and historical approaches to Tolstoy's work are valid and indeed essential; and I also think it is valid to search out the elements of Tolstoy's fiction that are particularly attractive to the modern sensibility. That includes Wachtel's "latent potentials in his [Tolstoy's] novels that he could not and did not understand in any way" -- so long as they can be grounded in the text. It is not fair, however, for Wachtel simply to oppose these potentials to "philosophic content" and assimilate them to "purely novelistic pleasure." The fact is that they themselves, when drawn out of the text, are ideas as much in need of elaboration and justification as those of the nineteenth century. They only seem more natural because they are the ideas by which we live. Like other contemporary critics who are interested in philosophy -- Richard Gustafson and Gary Saul Morson are important recent American examples -- I have studied what was of importance to me and my time. In my case, I was attracted to Tolstoy's non-reductionist defense of the individual; I wanted to understand the philosophical explanation for the anti-rationalism that makes Tolstoy's fiction so attractive to us; and I was curious about the Tolstoyan argument especially in *War and Peace* for

what we cannot justify today, namely the coincidence of morality and personal happiness. Of course my love of the text came first. In this respect I think that it is I, and not Tolstoy, who resembles Strakhov, and intellectual who served as an interpreter to the public of the writing he loved.

It is true that Tolstoy resisted analysis of his work, even when he agreed with it. As Wachtel points out, however, all analysis is by its very nature one-sided. In Tolstoyan terms, it artificially separates a part from the whole. I believe that I have proved that Tolstoy himself cared about ideas and believed that his works had philosophic significance. The fact that criticism today tends to focus on other aspects of his writing only makes it more important that Tolstoy's thought be emphasized in relation to his art. I should say also that it is important to distinguish between my goals and Tolstoy's. Tolstoy wanted his books to seem perfectly true, simply natural. I wanted to expose the effort of thought that was required to achieve that effect.

Jahn believes that I have presented Tolstoy before 1880 as more concerned with morality than he in fact was. I would suggest that Jahn and I are closer here than he realizes. In an excellent formulation, he writes that "there is a moral uneasiness in Tolstoy which causes him to think again and yet again about the conclusions which he reaches at the various stages of his career." My point about the pre-crisis Tolstoy is that his main preoccupation is the achievement of happiness, but that he holds that human beings must believe that they are good in order to enjoy happiness. This is very different from saying, as Tolstoy usually did later, that to be good is to be happy. What kept the pre-crisis Tolstoy from being this moralistic was his determination to make morality fit the facts of human nature rather than the other way around.

Jahn is right to concentrate on *The Cossacks* as Tolstoy's least moralizing book. I do not think, however, that Olenin feels "alienated" or "isolated" in Moscow. He does go to the Caucasus to "find an environment of which he can feel himself a part," but that is because he is so free. Full of youthful energy, he wants to spend it on something. He himself has been loved but has never really reciprocated. Amongst the cossacks he falls in love (with Marianka) and he finds the same self-love (in Eroshka and especially in Lukashka) that he feels. He could have joined the cossacks if he had proven himself by participating fully in the raiding party, but he does not. In an excellent example of morality getting in the way of happiness, Olenin cannot bring himself to kill the way Lukashka does, and so he cannot replace Lukashka in Marianka's affections.

Jahn describes very well Olenin's overly self-conscious courtship of Marianka and his attempt at self-sacrifice in his gift of a horse to Lukashka. It is true that Olenin does not get things right here; but I still see the presence of self-sacrifice and even of reason in the stag's lair itself. That is where Tolstoy took issue with those "right-Belinskian" friends of his, who loved *The Cossacks* but considered Olenin a pill. The problem posed and not solved in the novel is that of reconciling Olenin's equally natural self-love with his love of others.

Jahn's observations about *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* are also very stimulating and for the most part I agree with him. I cannot agree, however, that Tolstoy's earlier concerns were more ontological than moral. I see him rather as fitting

into the Russian tradition of carrying ontology only as far as ethics required. As proof of this, all the examples discussed by Jahn in fact concern Kant's third, ethical question on the proper relation between the individual and others.