

abandoning patronymics and going immediately to first names or even diminutives. So it seems that Countess Tolstaya will go down in history as “Sonya.”

Notes

1. The “Special Limited Edition” of this text contained endnotes and a “bibliographical survey” omitted in the “trade edition,” which unfortunately was the one acquired by many libraries.

2. I am puzzled, however, by how little use was made of the writings of Tolstoy’s daughter Aleksandra L’vovna. Her *Отец* (1953) is listed in the bibliography, but *Дочь* (1979) is not mentioned. Her *Проблески во тьме* is cited several times and listed in the bibliography, but with a slight spelling error (*в тьме* instead of *во тьме*), which aroused in me some suspicion, perhaps unjustified, about Bartlett’s Russian. Bartlett also does not mention the very thoughtful and moving, if flawed, Russian one-volume biography by Aleksei Zverev and Vladimir Tunimanov (Зверев и Туниманов).

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Moulin, Dan. *Leo Tolstoy*. Continuum Library of Educational Thought. Vol. 19. London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. Hardcover. ISBN: 1441156577.

Almost all the meager attention Tolstoy’s writings on education get is directed at *Yasnaya Polyana*. In those articles—available in English incompletely, but most completely in Leo Wiener’s translations in *On Education*—we get to experience Tolstoy’s impressions of his very happy and engaged pedagogical experiment. Those articles inspired me in the early 1980s as I set out teaching Freshman English courses; they buoyed me when I sat through tedious or backward meetings on teaching; they gave me confidence that I was, in spite of ignoring supervisors and handbooks, doing something right and as impossible to master as art. *Yasnaya Polyana* showed me that teaching required continuous engagement, adjustment and energy:

Walk into the room! It is almost dark behind the frozen windows; the best pupils are jammed toward the teacher by the rest of the children, and, turning up their little heads, are looking straight into the teacher's mouth. The independent manorial girl is always sitting with a careworn face on the high table, and, it seems, is swallowing every word; the poorer pupils, the small fry, sit farther away: they listen attentively, even austere; they behave just like the big boys, but, in spite of their attention, we know that they will not tell a thing, even though they may remember some. (Tolstoy, *On Education* 242)

I was flabbergasted when the University of Chicago Press let *On Education* go out of print and I urged an editor to have his press republish it. To my surprise the editor wanted to translate the articles himself and have me write an introduction and describe my ideas for using Tolstoy's fiction as the bases for writing assignments. However much enjoyment I got from presenting those assignments on "God Sees the Truth, but Waits" and *Hadji Murad*, among others, we should have stuck with simply reprinting Wiener's translations, as his served as the essence of most of the editor's translations anyway. Wiener's is still the edition I use.

I so wanted to read Dan Moulin's reference book for Continuum's "Library of Educational Thought" because I wanted to learn something I didn't know about Tolstoy as a teacher; I have picked up a few details and been pleasantly reminded of seven or eight more I had forgotten. Unfortunately, I can't imagine anyone wanting to read Tolstoy's glorious *Yasnaya Polyana* articles after reading this diligent but uninspired study.

Moulin blocks his book-length term paper into three sections: "An Intellectual Biography of Leo Tolstoy," "A Critical Exposition of Tolstoy's Educational Thought," and "The Legacy of an Overlooked Educator." Lacking Russian, Moulin is

dogged in reviewing all the English-language editions and commentary. His first discovery is that the *Yasnaya Polyana* articles are the ones we all know about and that some of us think of as supreme descriptions of the dynamic relationships between students and a teacher; Moulin's reaction to that discovery is befuddlement that Tolstoy's later simplistic thoughts about education are not given much weight:

It is important to note that Tolstoy's essays in the journal, although assertively written, do not constitute a definitive statement of Tolstoy's view of education. [...] Despite this acknowledgment of the lack of conclusive answers, and his greater concern with spiritual education in his later writings, Tolstoy never fully repudiates the views expressed in his earlier pedagogical articles. Rather he develops the themes and arguments found in them, as an examination of his other statements on education, written as late as 1909, confirm. (69)

But in *A Confession* he does in fact repudiate his great experiment:

For a year I busied myself with arbitration work, the schools, and the magazine; and I became so worn out—as a result especially of my mental confusion—and so hard was my struggle as Arbiter, so obscure the results of my activity in the schools, so repulsive my shuffling in the magazine (which always amounted to one and the same thing: a desire to teach everybody and to hide the fact that I did not know what to teach) that I fell ill, mentally rather than physically, threw up everything, and went away to the Bashkirs in the steppes, to breathe fresh air, drink kumiss, and live a merely animal life. (Tolstoy, *Confession* 14)

And so what? Moulin doesn't seem to understand that Tolstoy repudiated everything marvelous he ever wrote! We don't have to take an artist seriously when he renounces the work of art

he's finished with. We know for sure, rather, that for months or years he was completely immersed in that project. Taking Tolstoy's later thoughts about education at the same level of seriousness, when he was not immersed in it, when his primary goal was to simplify and pacify, is accepting the same mistake theorists and policy-makers make. It's very easy to say anything you want about teaching if you are not thinking about a particular classroom and particular students, just as it's very easy to say anything you want about love and madness if you are not writing about a passionate and intelligent woman named Anna Karenina. Tolstoy is always intelligent but he's not wise about education when he's not got actual people in mind.

Moulin's thesis, however, is that Tolstoy on education is all of a piece, that his *Yasnaya Polyana* writings, so excited and unfixed, so alert and so striving for answers, become *refined* decades later into fables and wisdom nuggets:

In *A Calendar of Wisdom* we can see the merging of the genres of educational writing, religious essays and literature that becomes the apogee of Tolstoy's life work. [...] We can also make another comparison with Tolstoy's experiments with pedagogy in the 1860s, after which he concluded that proverbs can provoke a suitable genesis for creative writing in the classroom. In *A Calendar of Wisdom*, Tolstoy has worked in reverse: narrative is stripped bare; readers are to slowly digest five or six pure, powerful and unadulterated moral truths per day, on which they can then build the narratives of their own lives in reflection. (131)

If Moulin prefers *A Calendar of Wisdom* to *Yasnaya Polyana*, and sees the late work as comparatively essential, what can I do except weep in despair? I also suppose some people prefer "The Three Hermits" to *Hadji Murad*. Moulin discusses with complete fascination (his, not mine) the simplistic "The Restoration of Hell" (1903), wherein Beelzebub exults over the Church's and

education's perversion of Christianity; Moulin (not Beelzebub) remarks: "It draws upon views long held by Tolstoy concerning education, its related forms of knowledge and the undesirability of state or Church control of a national education system" (117). That is, Tolstoy, tired of being ignored, turns a spitball into a fable. Moulin seems most personally engaged when he turns for a moment to Wittgenstein:

In one of his restless periodic breaks from philosophy, Wittgenstein visited Russia with the Tolstoyan desire of becoming a farm laborer—only to give up the idea when the Soviet authorities would only allow him to become a professor. In another Tolstoyan episode [...] Wittgenstein attempted elementary school teaching in the Austrian countryside. [...] Yet in the classroom [...] Wittgenstein displayed some undesirable attributes. He was strict, often violent, and would spend a disproportionate amount of time teaching mathematics—hitting children if they gave incorrect answers. (159)

(Perhaps Wittgenstein was channeling Nikolai Andreevich Bolkonsky's hamfisted geometry lesson with Marya?)

Moulin has learned about Tolstoy's disparate remarks about education but not about Tolstoy. This leads him to prefer, because comprehensible and digestible, Tolstoy's later pronouncements, most of which indeed have a religious basis. (Moulin rightly and fairly takes to task the edition I put together for leaving out the great and delightful "Sacred History" section from "The School at Yasnaya Polyana." I regretted and regret its absence.) Besides Tolstoy's customarily marvelous and evocative fictional descriptions of people striving to educate themselves that continue all the way from *Childhood* to "Filipok" in the *Azbuka* and through his version of "Where Love Is, There God Is Also" to "Alysoha the Pot," Tolstoy doesn't really have much interesting to say about education.

Tolstoy's image of Jesus as the ultimate teacher is no more interesting than an anybody's Sunday sermon. In the preface to *The Teaching of Jesus*, Tolstoy writes:

Last year I formed a class of village children, from ten to thirteen years of age. Wishing to impart Christ's teaching to them in a way they would understand, and that would have an influence on their lives, I told them, in my own words, those parts of the four Gospels which seem to me the most understandable, most suitable for children, and at the same time most necessary for moral guidance in life. The longer I worked at this, the more clearly I saw—from the way the children repeated what I told them, and from their questions—what it was that they grasped most easily, and by what they were most attracted. Guided by that, I composed this booklet; and I think its perusal, chapter by chapter, with such explanations of the need of applying the eternal truths of this teaching to life, as the reading evokes, cannot but be beneficial to children, who, according to Christ's words, are especially receptive to the teaching about the Kingdom of God. (*Teaching* vii)

Moulin explains:

Thus in 'The Teaching of Jesus,' the long combination [sic: Moulin seems to mean *culmination*] of Tolstoy's experiments in education, religion and storytelling come to their resolution, reflecting Tolstoy's view of the child in the story. (135)

I object: preaching is *not* education.

Only the vital Tolstoy could have written the *Yasnaya Polyana* articles; only Tolstoy could describe such a moment as this, from the nighttime walk after school:

We began to talk about robbers in the Caucasus. They recalled a story of the Caucasus I had told them long ago, and I told them again

about abreks, about Cossacks, about Khadzhi-Murat. Semka was strutting ahead of us, stepping broadly in his big boots, and evenly swaying his strong back. Pronka tried to walk by my side, but Fedka pushed him off the path, and Pronka, who apparently always submitted to such treatment on account of his poverty, rushed up to my side only during the most interesting passages, though sinking knee-deep in the snow. (*On Education* 249)

Now *that's* why we focus on *Yasnaya Polyana*. The difference between Tolstoy in the whirlwind of his physical and intellectual powers turning his super-attention to immediate circumstances, and Tolstoy on the verge of his last journey making weary pronouncements about children's moral development, et cetera, et cetera, is only the difference between life and death.

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Nickell, William. *The Death of Tolstoy: Russia on the Eve, Astapovo Station, 1910*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2010. 232 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 0801448344.

It was a family fight that went public, a reality show, a prime-time soap-opera. It was the vegetarian, pacifist, Christian guru and literary genius, Lev Tolstoy, who yearned for simplicity and inner peace, ending his life as a modern media