New Directions in Tolstoi Scholarship

William Nickell

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Reaction

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Tolstoi's recognition that the work of a writer might become the coin of other realms is in sympathy with trends in contemporary criticism to read with extra-literary purpose. When he dismissed fiction for its own sake and embraced social, political, and philosophical projects, positing these as more authentic, he anticipated modes of reading that would come to the fore in the 20th century. There is relatively little scholarly work to show for this affinity, however. This is in part due to the relative lack of interest in this work in comparison to the classic fiction, but there are also historical reasons, most notably the strong Soviet bias against Tolstoi's political and religious thinking. In early post-Soviet Russia, there was renewed interest in these latter categories, leading to the republication of many long-ignored works and, more often than not, renewal of the debates that marked their original appearance. Both in Russia and abroad, the work has been placed (or remained resting) on the same religious and political scales upon which it was first weighed: Tolstoi—heretic or saint? etc.[1] However relevant the questions may still be, others are equally intriguing: How does Tolstoi figure in the advent of the modern subject as a political, spiritual, public, and private entity? How does he participate in the changing of the structures and dynamics of institutional authority? How does his effort to revive Christian ethics by wresting the moral subject from the authority of the Church relate to a much broader secularization of culture? How can his rejection of aristocratic art and privilege be read into a larger narrative of emerging capitalism and modernity?[2]

Both of the preceding pieces provide insight into these questions and are thus welcome additions to the field of Tolstoi studies. They also touch upon another issue that awaits further research. Tolstoi explored new capacities

[1] See, for instance, the anthologies *L. N. Tolstoi: Pro et contra* (St. Petersburg: Russkii khristianskii gumanitarnyi institut, 2000); and *Dukhovnaia tragediia L'va Tolstogo* (Moscow: Otchii dom, 1995).

[2] As Pål Kolstø shows, Tolstoi often does this by assimilating and transforming the traditions upon which those institutions were based. This is logical, because his essential project is to revive moral values by stripping away the cultural layers that have obscured their validity and limited their effectiveness in practice.

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for the writer to wield moral authority in the mass media and to create vast rhetorical industries. Entering these domains brought changes to the conventional role of the author, leading to one more akin to the scriptor described by Barthes. Tolstoi's renunciation of copyright is characteristic of this process. So too are works such as *Put´ zhizni* (The Pathway of Life) and *Na kazhdyi den´* (For Every Day), in which the anthological format suggests that the presented wisdom is not that of the author but an inheritance belonging to the reader. (The author is only reminding the reader of this possession.) The compiler himself is likewise supposed to claim this inheritance not as a landlord but as an equal subject of its authority.[3] This heritage is the dominion of the "great author" in its collective, rather than singular sense, but it becomes attached specifically to Tolstoi. In 1900, Chekhov wrote of his anxiety over the potential death of Tolstoi, who was fulfilling the charge of literature for all writers, long after he had ceased to focus on *belles letters*.[4] When Nicholas II, in contrast, acknowledged Tolstoi's 1910 death by recognizing only his early literary achievements, he once again demonstrated the fateful alienation of the monarchy from the revolutionary changes that were taking place in Russian society. Literature had long been a dynamic cultural force, but Tolstoi's later work played an integral role in the vast democratization of this process. New media and new readership created new potentials for literature, and Tolstoi explored these more vigorously than any of his contemporaries. In the process he experimented with new modes of authorship, and this aspect of his work should be further explored.[5]

[3] Tolstoi extends this gesture to his sources, which are most often not cited, ostensibly because of the unsystematic way they have been collected and translated. This plagiarism/ventriloquism is itself deserving of study; Tolstoi is assimilating all this wisdom into his own authorial voice, while subjecting his sources to the same role of "dead author" that he has assumed. The closing line of his preface captures this duplicity: "The best of these unsigned sayings belong not to me but to the foremost sages of the world" (45: 17). The technique is not unlike that of "sampling" in contemporary music. All references to Tolstoi's work are to L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (iubileinoe izdanie*), 90 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1930–72). Later references are given in-text as (volume: page).

[4] See Chekhov's letter to M. O. Menshikov of 28 January 1900 (A. P. Chekhov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Moscow: Nauka, 1979], 9: 29–30). Blok and Gor´kii wrote in a similar vein.

[5] The bibliography to the recent *Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy* contains no reference to work on these topics, with perhaps the exception of Bunin's *Osvobozhdenie Tolstogo*. Scholarship in this area is scarce and scattered. Some can be found in the recent volumes of *Tolstovskii ezhegodnik* (Tula: Vlasta); the collection *Tolstoi i sovremennyi mir* (Tula: TGPU, 1998); and Vitalii Remizov's *L. N. Tolstoi: Dialogi vo vremeni* (Tula: TGPU, 1998). Amy Mandelker addresses some of these issues in "Tolstoy's Eucharistic Aesthetics," in *Tolstoy and the Concept of Brotherhood,* ed. Andrew Donskov and John Woodworth (Ottawa: Legas, 1996).

The two pieces upon which I have been asked to comment here relate to this more expansive view of literature. Both concern aspects of Tolstoi's work that gain considerable dimension over this later span of his career, but which have not been given a great deal of focused attention because they are not counted among his central ideas or concerns. It is clear, however, that Tolstoi thought a great deal about terrorism and monasticism, and Inessa Medzhibovskaya and Pål Kolstø do a wonderful job of tracing the development of this thinking and organizing it into coherent categories. In my brief response I add a few more texts and ideas to the discussion but primarily underscore the general tendencies I see at work in Tolstoi's writing on these topics. Though the monastic elder and the revolutionary terrorist would appear to be quite contradictory figures, they find themselves in similar territory in Tolstoi's thinking, as I wish to show here.[6]

The significance of Tolstoi's visits to Optina has been contested for over a hundred years. Pål Kolstø has taken up this debate from a more centered and nuanced position than many of his predecessors, recognizing that Tolstoi is clearly drawn to the very institutions of the Church of which he is so critical in his writing.[7] Kolstø describes this ambivalence very persuasively; my comments here largely support and amplify his argument regarding Tolstoi's attitude toward the *starets* and *strannik* traditions, while modifying them somewhat. I focus my remarks on an alternative reading of *Father Sergii*, which I find to be critical in sorting out Tolstoi's view of the institution of monasticism, and on a few salient features that I feel should be added to the discussion.

Tolstoi began thinking about the work that became *Father Sergii* in early 1890. References to the story appear in his letters, diaries, and notebooks in early February, the same month in which he visited Optina for the second time.[8] At this same time he was receiving an onslaught of letters regarding *The Kreutzer Sonata* and was working on an afterword to clarify his views on sexuality. In connection to the latter project he was actively exploring alternative models of sexual relations, including work by early American "sexologists" like Alice Stockham and Eliza Burnz. While *Father Sergii* is clearly a work on monasticism, it is likewise directly concerned with sexuality. Kasatskii's confrontation with spiritual pride takes place on the territory

[6] Monastic tradition and the question of violence are issues upon which Tolstoi is often working simultaneously. See his letter to V. P. Zolotarev of 14 March 1891, for example (65: 268).

[7] One challenge in reading this material is sorting out these biases in the source materials. Kolstø does a wonderful job of drawing the Tolstoians and Orthodox into contrast, but at times he takes both sides at their word, which is not always equally measured and reliable. (This applies to both groups.)

[8] At this time, Tolstoi travels to Shamordino Convent to visit his sister; learning that she is at Optina, he travels there the next day.

of the sexualized body, even when it is cloaked in the protective cassock or secluded in an isolated cave. Furtive glances, overheard conversations, and intimations of sexual awareness circumvent these monastic strictures throughout the text. Monastic life in this text reflects Tolstoi's concern with sexual desire and the desire to control that impulse by withdrawal from society.

Kasatskii's dominant character trait, ambition, develops in conflict with physical desire. He strives for perfection in everything; and he does so with a keen sensitivity to his station in life, wanting to ascend the social ladder through his superior ability and diligence. His devotion to Emperor Alexander is an extension of this ambition, as is his betrothal to Countess Korotkova, a debutante of the highest circles of the Petersburg aristocracy. When Kasatskii learns that his fiancée has had an affair with the emperor, his injury is felt at two levels—Mary has betrayed his affection but also his aspiration to marry above his station. He now understands why his pursuit of her suddenly took wing: his fiancée has been engaged to him to cover her dalliance with the tsar. It is not the brilliant match he had imagined. Kasatskii's revenge is to prove himself morally superior to both paramours and the society they represent by entering a monastery, rejecting the earthly realm of the tsar, and espousing the chastity that his fiancée has lacked. This motivation is critical to the story that Tolstoi wishes to tell: *Father Sergii* is the story of the conflict between profound pride and genuine spiritual motivation.[9] Monastic virtue, and particularly as it is based in the notion of sexual integrity, will only stimulate Kasatskii's pride.[10]

Tolstoi objected to the idea that virtue could be achieved by any kind of physical separation from temptation. *Father Sergii* traces the potential danger in this step, which is made repeatedly in the text: Kasatskii retreats to a monastery near the capital, then to a more remote cloister and a secluded cave. It is taken a step further during the attempted seduction by Makovkina, in which the abject possibility of physical contact is averted by Kasatskii cutting a finger from his hand with an axe. Celibacy in seclusion is not necessarily spiritual chastity, and self-mutilation will likewise fail to eliminate Kasatskii's sensuality. The counterfeit nature of such action is highlighted by the reappearance of the axe after the second seduction scene, when Sergii seizes it with the intention of murdering the merchant's daughter. In Tolstoi's early plan for the story, Sergii follows through on this plan, while in the final draft he is saved from this sin by his *keleinik*, who assumes that he intends to chop wood and offers to do the chore for him. Again the monastic setting

[9] In February 1891, Tolstoi writes Chertkov that the main idea of *Father Sergii* is not the struggle with the flesh but the struggle with earthly glory (*slavoi liudskoi*) (87: 71).

[10] In 1893, he writes: "As soon as a man emancipates himself from the sins of the flesh, he immediately steps back and falls into the worse pit of human glory" (52: 82).

provides physical intervention where spiritual fortitude is lacking.[11] Killing the young girl with the axe, furthermore, would have accomplished the same thing as had cutting off his finger—physically removing the sinful object but leading him in the opposite direction of spiritual chastity. Even though he is saved from this action in the final version, in his conscience he is a murderer (as he subsequently refers to himself), for he was prepared to commit this act. This is the danger of monasticism—that it systematically prevents one from committing acts that are still spiritually latent and honors this as spiritual achievement.

Cutting off his finger creates an industry of worship and pilgrimage to Sergii, and even motivates a faith among his followers that is capable of healing, but the subject of that veneration is himself still troubled by desires of the flesh. Makovkina's conversion and the subsequent works of Sergii as an elder may be positive results of this action, but they bring Sergii no closer to salvation. He is still filled with deep pride. In his notes regarding the Makovkina scene in August 1890, Tolstoi writes: "The fall in the monastery. Pride. In seclusion"; "She left, but he doesn't see the exploit in himself, but instead only shame that he didn't yield to her" (51: 71–72, 160). Kasatskii resists Makovkina so defiantly because she challenges his pride in attempting to demonstrate her sexual power over him. He has taken monastic vows out of similar pride, and the preservation of his chastity continues to demonstrate his own form of sexual superiority. The two represent alternative forms of sexual cunning, in the sense that both play subtle and knowing games with their desire. (The merchant's daughter, by contrast, seduces Sergii through her naïveté.)

Ultimately Kasatskii's monastic experience has been frustrated throughout by this same "knowing," by this cunning approach to spirituality. When he leaves the monastery, symbolically cutting off his hair and donning peasant clothes, his "anti-tonsure" has been contemplated for some time. He has sensed his growing spiritual weakness as an elder, even as he has failed to understand it completely. He will comprehend it only outside the monastery, and will learn this lesson from Pashenka, who teaches without knowing that she is teaching at all. The revered elder must confess to and learn from one who has achieved the monastic goal of humility in everyday life (and who does not even attend church). Though their interview imitates the model of the elder and novice, the perceived roles are overtly reversed (reminding us of another of Tolstoi's works on pedagogy, "Who Teaches Whom to Write, We the Peasant Children or the Peasant Children Us?").[12] This reversal is

[11] Monastic seclusion here would have enabled this crime, while social interaction tempers his resolve; at the same time, someone else doing his work prevents him from committing sin. This typifies the moral atmosphere of the monastery for Tolstoi.

[12] Pashenka *is* engaged in teaching, in fact, but it is not moral instruction. She gives music lessons, and this seems to be the kind of teaching that Sergii is doing in the story's last

underscored by Pashenka's request that Sergii instead teach her, to which he replies that it is *he* who has nothing to offer. Moreover, the instruction is unconscious, as Pashenka merely describes her life, and Sergii *sees* that it is good. He has at last acquired the humility necessary to learn the lesson of Pashenka's life: "I thought I was living for God but lived for men, and she thinks she is living for men but lives for God."[13] She prays mechanically, she admits, but adds the "only thing is that I know how bad I am." By contrast, Kasatskii's sincere desire to be good has been "soiled and overgrown by desire for human praise" (31: 43–44).

The message here is explicit: virtue is found not in heroic acts of spiritual conquest (*podvig*) but in putting one's hands to work. The axe is a key figure, for it is the means of achieving renown but also potentially the instrument of either murder or rehabilitation. When Sergii gives up the axe to his *keleinik*, we can understand that the danger is that he is not himself chopping wood.[14] Pashenka, by contrast, has not been able to make her planned pilgrimage to visit Sergii because she has made herself necessary in everyday labors and cannot easily get away. The leisure of constant prayer and moral vigilance is ultimately dangerous. In his notes on the 1890 trip, Tolstoi describes monks as "saints nurtured by slavery," who appear to live in self-denial but are compromised by the temptations of an idle life (51: 23–25). Later that year he adds: "The Church, teaching to know and not do, taught to not fulfill the moral—it atrophied" (51: 157). Monks who do not engage in menial labor become the ecclesiastical equivalent to the landlord living off the labor of others, leading a "sybaritic" lifestyle, as Tolstoi often referred to it.

Kolstø connects Tolstoi's views on monasticism to his relations with his own followers, and here again the background to the writing of *Father Sergii* proves of interest. Simultaneous to his work on the text, Tolstoi was corresponding with and receiving visits from a number of his followers, some of whom were organizing "Tolstoian" communities.[15] This phenomenon disturbed Tolstoi, and his response to it has significant parallels to his thinking

paragraph. From the beginning, in Tolstoi's conception, the story concerned a hagiography and a music teacher.

[13] This is finally a conversion experience, indicated by the narrator's reversion to naming the character Kasatskii, as opposed to Sergii, during the course of his "confession."

[14] Notes from Tolstoi's diary at the time seem, perhaps even subconsciously, to make this connection: "I am praying but am not in the spirit. But at least I am praying, thank God. I went to chop wood." This same diary entry (10 August 1890) contains notes on *Father Sergii* (51: 74). Similarly, on 4 September 1890 he notes: "Need to show that the *tserkovniki* are not Christians. Went to chop wood" (51: 86).

[15] Tolstoi is often writing of both in the same pages of his diary. Here, for instance, is a passage from 8 June 1890: "Annenkova is here, and Pastukhov arrived with a letter from Dol′ner. I need to write him. They also have not been doing anything.… Began *Father Sergii* and thought about it. The whole interest is in the psychological stages through which he passes" (51: 47).

on monasticism. When the Tolstoian I. B. Fainerman visited Tolstoi in March 1890, he wrote that what Fainerman said of the communes was good, but that the communes themselves were not so. He often warned of the danger of committing to a lifestyle for which one might not be prepared and which might thus, as with Sergii, lead to dramatic but unstable results. Likewise he was concerned that communal life might encourage spiritual pride. On 10 April 1890, he remarked in his diary on the founder of one of these communes: "Alekhin is not managing well. It's all for personal glory" (*vse slava liudskaia*).[16] Manifestation of virtue can become an end in itself, against which Tolstoi repeatedly warned in his advice to his followers. In March 1891, he writes to Fainerman that it is a mistake in such enterprises to raise "to the rank of a principle that which cannot be a principle." The only legitimate foundational principle for an ethical life is love, and this produces a number of other secondary moral precepts, such as nonviolence. The practical result of this understanding "in all probability … will be agricultural work, handicraft, or even factory work, work at any rate of a kind for which there are the fewest competitors and least reward" (65: 201).

Kolstø's reading of *Father Sergii* also raises the question of Tolstoi's attitude toward *strannichestvo*, or religious pilgrimage and wandering. While Sergii lives as a *strannik* for a time after leaving the monastery, this wandering is another rite of passage toward the more sustainable lifestyle represented by Pashenka. This period of Sergii's life ends when he is arrested for vagrancy and sent to Siberia. He who has worked so hard to distinguish himself from others is arrested for having no identification and is now satisfied to identify himself as a "servant of God." The timing of the arrest, occurring in the ninth month of his wondering, suggests that it represents a moral rebirth. In Siberia, Sergii finally settles into the most worthy sort of Tolstoian life, engaged in simple labors such as teaching the children and tending to the sick, both tasks which Pashenka has fulfilled. Sergii had been a teacher and healer in the monastery but is now performing these tasks more menially and, for Tolstoi, more meaningfully. He is not trying to set himself apart from or living off the labor of others but is living in their midst and in their service.[17]

[16] A note in Tolstoi's diary from 1891 attests to the significance of this shift from the public eye to the eye of God: Sergii learns "what it means to rely on God only when he is completely lost in the eyes of people." Indifference to the judgment of other people is critical. Personal glory troubles the spirit, while "submission to the will of God brings peace" (52: 39). Later that year, he writes that it is necessary for Sergii "to fall into the deceptive circle in which humility turns out to be pride; he felt that inescapability of his pride, and only after his fall and shame would he feel that he has escaped that circle and is truly humbled" (52: 57–58).

[17] A scene that Kolstø examines closely likewise equates wandering to a life free of work. Sergii is seen walking with a group of pilgrims who "according to Russian superstition, instead of working travel from place to place" (31: 45).

At the end of the story he has achieved an Alesha Gorshok–like quietude, its morality indicated by its unnarratability.[18]

The *strannik* subsists by charity and thus lives off the labor of others for the sake of his/her own soul. This is not in keeping with the lesson learned from Pashenka, to "live for others." Tolstoi makes this distinction clear in his work on pilgrimage, *Dva starika* (Two Elders). Of the two old men who set forth on a pilgrimage, it is Elisha, the one who does not complete the journey but instead stops to help a village survive a famine, who ultimately reaches his spiritual destination. His traveling companion, while in the Holy Land, has visions of Elisha, always ahead of and above him. If spirituality is to be found in a physical place, it is in the village rather than in the shrine.[19] If there is a practice that leads to spiritual enlightenment, it is found not in monastic rites but in everyday labor. (Upon his return, Elisha returns to his work keeping bees.) This same idea can be related to Tolstoi's own experience as a wanderer. The 1881 notebook Tolstoi kept during his journey to Optina is mostly a record of the villages, households, and peasants he observes along the way; and one feels that the trip itself, legendarily undertaken on foot, is as much of interest as the destination (49: 138–47).[20] Similarly, his notes on his 1890 visit to Optina end with the following comment: "Spent the night in a hut. Syphilitic, it seems, but beautiful" (51: 24).

In each of the forms of practice that Kolstø explores the key element is self-consciousness. Tolstoi is drawn to them as forms of folk belief and finds value in that which has not been institutionalized in the official Church. The original moment of faith, when some purchase on virtue might be gained, is lost to the secondary moment of self-awareness. Only those who do not experience the latter are spared.[21] Institutions are built of self-awareness; and this self-consciousness, as monastic practice itself has long recognized, is treacherous. Although the elders guiding Kasatskii reprove him for his pride, the monastery ultimately provides asylum for that pride.[22] If it is a place where one finds conditions that support virtuous life, and even individuals who

[18] Even as a *strannik* Sergii draws attention to himself, as represented by the scene with the travelers.

[19] Elisha leaves the village without even telling anyone his name. His action is thus appropriately "selfless."

[20] S. P. Arbuzov's memoir is similar in this respect, paying more attention to the everyday scenes encountered during the journey. See his "Iz knigi 'Vospominaniia byvshego slugi grafa L. N. Tolstogo,'" in *L. N. Tolstoi v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), 1: 293–315.

[21] Even the practice of faith that is least susceptible to this awareness, *iurodstvo*, does not escape this danger, in Tolstoi's view. His diary of 1890 includes the following note: "Holy-foolishness is dangerous. Only in rare moments do you achieve the ideal, and the remainder of the time you lose the restraining influence of personal glory" (51: 157).

[22] In August 1890, Tolstoi is making notes on *Father Sergii* in his notebook near passages like this: "The Church is an institution for the concealing of Christianity."

succeed in practicing that lifestyle, it is not in and of itself a "holy place." For Tolstoi there is no physical sanctity, no physical presence of grace, no miraculous manifestation, but instead a way of life that can, and should be, practiced everywhere.

The assimilation of monastic practices into Tolstoi's life reflects this distinction. We see both an inclination toward these practices and an aversion to their institutionalization; thus he rejects programmatic communal living even according to his own guiding moral precepts and does not embrace the canonical role of elder, even as he dispenses advice. Even as they fail, however, these institutions are places where like-minded people can be found, people with authentic desire to lead virtuous lives.[23] In this sense, they serve Tolstoi as "hostels" in his spiritual wandering, including his last journey in 1910, when he visited Optina and Shamordino. As his sister reported at the time, Tolstoi considered living in the vicinity of Optina but would not have submitted to the monastery's regimen. He also discussed the possibility of traveling to join one of the Tolstoian communities, either in the Caucasus or in Bulgaria, but never reached this destination. We can suppose that he would have done so with keen sensitivity to the dangers of adopting this "model" way of life. The most likely scenario, and the one which Tolstoi repeated most often, was that he would find a peasant hut in which to live, and he did not know where. Not knowing where, having no sense of a right place, versus knowing *what kind* of place it should be, becomes the essential distinction: not the institution, but the practice; not the elder, but the wisdom.

As Inessa Medzhibovskaya demonstrates, Tolstoi wrote early and often on the topic of terrorism, in a number of different guises and from a number of different points of view. We think first of Dostoevskii on this count, but by 1910 Tolstoi had dealt with the topic more extensively and systematically. Medzhibovskaya examines this work according to the time periods and genres into which it falls and finds not only that Tolstoi's thinking evolves over time, but also that a "paradoxical set of views" appears, particularly in the area of fiction. The different voices that she identifies are characteristic of Tolstoi's work in general. Here we can think of three categories: the programmatic statements found in his published essays and philosophical works; the much more varied ruminations in his private papers; and his fiction, in which he often worked deliberately to obscure his philosophical position.

It is difficult to find any ambiguity or moral relativism in works of the first category. The sections on violence and punishment in *Put′ zhizni* (1910), for instance, provide a thorough outline of Tolstoi's later principles

[23] Tolstoi encounters Konstantin Leont′ev during one of his visits, for instance, and has a rewarding conversation. Leont′ev is planning to secretly take monastic vows at the time—resonating with the figure of Sergii and with Tolstoi's own visitations toward the end of his life.

in this categorical language. Here there is no equivocation: "Men who call themselves Christians simply do not recognize the commandment of nonresistance as binding, they teach that it is not binding, and that there are cases when it must be transgressed, and yet they dare not say that they deny this simple and clear commandment, which is inseparably bound up with the entire teaching of Christ, the doctrine of meekness, humility, the obedient bearing of the cross, self-denial, and love of the enemy, a commandment without which the entire teaching of Christ becomes empty words" (45: 224).[24] If we are to identify one principle that organizes Tolstoi's work on violence, it is the idea that nonviolence is a binding moral law that must be applied universally—to both state and individual. Individual murder cannot be distinguished from state-sanctioned acts such as capital punishment and war; on the contrary, Tolstoi holds the state more accountable for its actions because they are carried out in careful premeditation and executed according to laws and practices developed over long years of deliberation.

This idea is developed in a number of Tolstoi's works that are not addressed in Medzhibovskaya's study, including *Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas* (The Kingdom of God Is Within You) and "*Ne ubii*" ("Thou Shalt Not Kill"). The latter was written in response to the 1900 assassination of King Umberto I of Italy by the anarchist Bresci. (It was originally titled "Ubiistvo Gumberta" [Umberto's Murder].) Here the distinction between regicide and other forms of violence sanctioned by the state (including the ritual execution of deposed rulers) is viewed as the utmost hypocrisy. By contrast, the actions of revolutionaries who carry out political assassinations as a form of revenge for state-sanctioned violence are comparatively "understandable" (34: 202).[25] The Umberto assassination was particularly evocative of this line of reasoning, as the king was hated for his repressive policies and, in particular, for his role in the Bava-Beccaris massacre. Tolstoi repeatedly argues that terror is provoked by, and even somewhat reasonably motivated by, violence perpetrated by the state. The Mosaic voice of *Ne ubii*—"Thou shalt not kill"—echoes that of many of these works. To stop the cycle of violence that is perpetuated in acts of terror requires universal observation of the most essential moral principles. Tolstoi's famous appeal to Alexander III to grant clemency to his father's assassins is based clearly on this principle. The strangely varied locutions in this letter point to the oddity of making this request to the son of the victim, but the principle is clear. This is a striking act of "defamiliarization," but in asking the son to forgive the murderer of his father Tolstoi arrives at the heart of his argument that there can be no exceptions to these fundamental moral laws, and that this should hold first and foremost in the realm of the

[24] As translated by Archibald Wolfe in Leo Tolstoy, *The Pathway of Life* (New York: International Book Publishing Co., 1919), 230.

[25] While the action is intelligible, it is not fruitful; in *Put' zhizni* Tolstoi likens this sort of reaction to that of a child striking the floor in anger after falling.

principled actions of the state. If we are to adopt the language of Agamben, Tolstoi's arguments here are simple: there is to be no "state of exception."

Medzhibovskaya's attention to Tolstoi's diary entry of 31 December 1894 is especially illuminating in this regard. Here Tolstoi describes a set of coordinates of moral action, on which the *a* quadrant signifies action that is directed toward the well-being of others *and* self-improvement. This quadrant is the most difficult to occupy, but in Tolstoi's view represents the only morally viable space. One is always a moral being in this scheme, which obviates the notion that ends might justify immoral means. There is no distinction between actions of the state, in which murder and torture are justified, and those of private life. What is missing in this scheme, but clearly present elsewhere, is the place of God as an ultimate authority to which all action is accountable. (This is the underlying principle in *Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas*.) The state executioner has no exemption from this authority. Tolstoi is working to eliminate "bare life," the possibility that any individual might be beneath these fundamental laws, and to do so means to likewise argue that no one, king or assassin, can be above the law. His writing, while varied in its representation of acts of terror and their perpetrators, is very consistent in this regard. It demonstrates legalistic consistency in applying this moral, rather than state, law.[26] Capital punishment will end when all executioners act in the *a* quadrant—when they take personal responsibility for their actions and refuse to "murder" condemned criminals. Terrorists must likewise recognize that nonviolence is the only means for achieving their ends. Tolstoi's *bios* is a kingdom "of God" within each individual. The moral state is governed by God and is indivisible by national or geographic boundaries or by categories of citizenship.

The ambivalence that intrigues Medzhibovskaya in Tolstoi's depiction of terror is centered in his attitude toward individuals, rather than their actions. The imprisoned Natal′ia Armfeld is "honest, joyous, gifted, and kind." She and her like are provoked to take violent action only because they are denied the right to speak freely of their desire for a better life. Individuals are not irredeemably guilty and are thus never deserving of capital punishment, in Tolstoi's view. It is not given to humans to make this final judgment. The "terribly beautiful" face of Kryl′tsov after his execution in *Resurrection,* and the beheaded Hadji Murad, can thus be admired as one might any other victim of a crime. Hadji Murad is a beautiful "thistle" fighting for its life; and this insistence, this will to live, is an object of sublime beauty. Often state law exercises its authority over that life in direct subversion of higher moral law, to which Tolstoi believes all share an intuition. Here aesthetic admiration of

[26] The terrorist confronts the discrepancy between the laws of the state and the fundamental laws of life. Victims of state violence are driven to change (or become) the state. The danger, in Tolstoi's view, is that moral subjectivity eliminates the justification for enforcement of moral principles, as others may not subscribe to them.

life itself may transcend moral judgment of the victim, regardless of the laws that may have been broken by the criminal.

This is the same admiration that Lukashka demonstrates for his Chechen victim in *Kazaki* (The Cossacks): "He too was a man!" If the primordial force of animal violence contemplated in "O nasilii" (On Violence) is subjected to that of the state, it is only by destruction of the sacred element of life itself. Although Tolstoi would continue to refer to a negative animal impulse motivating violence and sexual excess (i.e., sex), he would also admire the animal "will to life" that glimmers in Anna's eyes, even as it leads her beyond the bounds of social law. This same animal joy and will to live is experienced by Olenin in the stag's lair in *Kazaki*, only to be frustrated in his misguided attempts to direct it toward the good of others, leading ultimately to untoward action that unsettles the society he wishes to join. This is the fate of Tolstoi's terrorists, who have spent their time in this lair, in which life is reconceived in its essence, and have emerged with the same will for change. The hero of his late fragment "Hieromonakh Iliodor" (The Hieromonk Iliodor) is in this place as he endures the monastery services, and he emerges with a similar will to act anew. He will become a revolutionary martyr through this sincere desire for a better life and a better world. Does Tolstoi believe that Iliodor will find what he seeks by leaving the Church for the Revolution? No, perhaps, but he does believe in that desire to move toward the good, and the underlying will that motivates it. Those who move in this way belong to his church, and his revolution, even when they do not live by his rules or ideals.

University of California at Santa Cruz
Cowell College ASC
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064 USA
bnickell@ucsc.edu