Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian universities were flooded with rude young men of odd backgrounds who were eager to apply themselves to important issues. They were called the raznochintsy. Most came from the lower strata of the archaic Russian society and had been economically underprivileged. Many had a clerical background, which may have encouraged them to consider themselves the new intellectual elite. It is not inconceivable that, belonging to the priestly class, they felt, perhaps unconsciously, called upon to provide the new generation of intellectual leaders of society. They were critical of the performance of the old leaders and impatient with what the government was doing to improve the economic conditions of the Russian people: they accused the government of catering only to the needs of the ruling class. They thus stood in natural opposition to the Slavophiles, most of whom belonged to the old nobility and whose goals the radicals attacked as dated, utopian, and naïve.

These rude young men, although they were dubbed radicals and nihilists, actually subscribed to a fairly moderate doctrine of political liberalism that included most of the current ideals of humanists. The major radicals, such as Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, called themselves materialists, however, to indicate that they felt no need for speculative philosophy, having found answers to the principal questions of life in the scientific discoveries of the Darwinian
era. They rejected metaphysics entirely, but for all their utilitarianism they were idealists with unlimited faith in science and the power of reason. They wanted magic formulas for the rapid solution of social ills, and believed that science could provide these. They actually were romantics of science, with little actual or precise knowledge of it. They were fascinated with the progress of Russia that they thought would follow from the spread of their ideas. So, eager to civilize backward old Russia, they practically ignored formal sophistication in art and pressed for the rapid growth of a new literature representing their theories. They granted considerable freedom to writers who were struggling to express these in literature, declaring questions of artistic form to be largely matters of taste. Dobroliubov, for example, asserted that a writer may give nothing to art and yet be a remarkable person "for us simply through the direction and meaning of his works." So, their requirement of artists and writers was that they pursue useful ideas, and that these ideas be made clear and unequivocal. The emphasis on direction and meaning (i.e., sequentiality) instead of artistic qualities signifies the tendency among the progressives to escape the circular, paradoxical mode of traditional (symbolic) thinking by learning to think logically, like civilized people. The reason that so few radical critics wrote about Tolstoy, and that their work on him is, on the whole, negligible, is that they could not see any of their ideas reflected in his work.

The comments of radical critics on Tolstoy are fairly numerous, but most are undistinguished, characterized by a petty, uninspired, argumentative approach, by hostility and sarcasm. Tolstoy was blamed for aristocratic elitism, for ignoring important issues in his work. Except for Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, few prominent radicals ever wrote more than a few lines about Tolstoy, because they either died too soon (V. G. Belinsky [1811-48]) or were not interested enough (Dobroliubov). A. I. Herzen's (1812-70) comments appear limited to one published letter in which he alludes to prince Andrei Bolkonsky of *War and Peace* in rather romantic terms, describing him as a nobleman made of the stuff from which folk heroes are made and a potential Decembrist. Another prominent radical (who actually launched Tolstoy on his career by publishing several of his early works), the civic poet and chief editor of the *Contemporary* N. A. Nekrasov (1821-78), published a few paragraphs in the *Contemporary* in which he commented on the quality
and potential of Tolstoy's work. He praised Tolstoy's unusual gift of narrative as likely to change a few generic traditions, such as the traditional manner of depicting war, but urged Tolstoy to turn his talent to important issues. He named Tolstoy, along with Turgenev for his recently published *Sportsman's Sketches*, as a pioneer of a new realistic genre. He declared himself impressed with a quality of "controlled power" that he found "evenly distributed and spilling over everywhere" in Tolstoy's stories. But he objected to Tolstoy's faulty style and carelessness in structuring his stories, which made some of them come out as sketches rather than finished works of literary art. Nekrasov's comments were thus considerably more formal than was customary for other radical critics and commentators who would confine themselves to discussion of issues, a practice that prevented them from making any statement at all about Tolstoy if they could not find enough issues to discuss. And it is clear that Tolstoy's novel technique of intensive analysis was not sufficiently utilitarian to compensate most radical critics for the absence in his works of what they valued most in a work of literature—civic issues. Therefore they tended to dismiss, condemn, or ignore Tolstoy as an irrelevant and unimportant writer.

**CHERNYSHEVSKY**

The author of the *Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality* (1855) and the epoch-making novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky (1828–89) was one of the three leading Russian radicals who pioneered the socially minded, utilitarian criticism (the other two were Belinsky and Dobroliubov). For the most part he wrote on issues only peripherally related to literature, and literary criticism constitutes only a minor part of his output. And yet his influence in literary matters was, in the 1850s, almost as great as that of Belinsky a decade earlier, and he determined in many respects the views and attitudes of others in the field. The great weight and authority of his opinion encouraged them to pay close attention to everything he wrote; and he persuaded other critics to follow him. Chernyshevsky's contribution to criticism of Tolstoy is not large. Apart from a few casual remarks here and there, his criticism of Tolstoy's fiction is confined to two articles written within a few weeks. These articles, however, had a significant influence on the appreciation of Tolstoy's work and more or less set the tone of subsequent criticism about Tolstoy. One of these articles dealt with
Childhood, Boyhood, and the war stories; the other is a review of Youth, "A Landowner's Morning," and a few others. As a literary analysis the former is more important. It represents the first authoritative attempt by a leading critic to assess Tolstoy as a writer and to define his new technique of pervasive analysis into the psychological frame of mind of his characters. Although it had been acclaimed as keen, psychologically astute, and artistically effective, the method defied understanding by more conventional minds, and thus it was frequently attacked as either pointless, meaningless, or excessive. Chernyshevsky's groundbreaking article, however, stands at the head of a considerable body of research into the question of the artistic and psychological effectiveness of Tolstoy's inner monologue, relative to similar techniques employed by other writers. Subsequent Soviet scholars have drawn parallels between, and compared the methods of, Tolstoy and Chekhov, Dostoevsky and Pushkin, Lermontov, Flaubert, Stendhal, and Joyce. In the 1930's Driagin and Vitenson debated about "psychologism as a valid literary method"; Anan'ev and I. V. Strakhov made thorough scientific studies of the inner monologue as a source for psychological investigations. They analyzed its structure or examined its technique as a means of studying dreams and the unconscious.

Chernyshevsky's articles probably helped Tolstoy cope with an adverse critical climate that developed against him in the 1850s following an initially favorable reaction. In 1852, when Tolstoy's first published work, "The Story of My Childhood," appeared in the leading radical journal, the Contemporary, he was greeted as a fresh new talent of whom bigger and better things were expected immediately. Press reviews noted a pleasing lack of artificiality, an entertaining narrative manner, and psychological skill. However, by 1854 Tolstoy was being criticized for disparity between form and content. Reproaches developed into accusations, charges of immoderate use of analysis on the one hand, irrelevance on the other. Failure on Tolstoy's part to introduce topical material was sometimes interpreted as gross triviality, or as a lack of ideas, thought, content, or orientation. It appears that Chernyshevsky wrote his articles to stem the tide of adverse criticism that was beginning to well up against Tolstoy among the civic critics. Chernyshevsky delivered several well-aimed blows at the more unreasonable accusations, with arguments designed to de-
fend Tolstoy on grounds of common sense as well as those of artistic integrity. When writing about childhood, Chernyshevsky said, one wrote about children who are not expected to care about civic questions. He himself, however, rarely missed an opportunity to encourage Tolstoy to take a stand on civic issues whenever this was thematically appropriate. In his review of "A Landowner's Morning," Chernyshevsky praised Tolstoy for the realistic depiction of peasants as part of their natural environment, without undue sentimentality and without trying to hide the peasants' basic faults. He interpreted this as a sign of Tolstoy's changing, widening outlook. Chernyshevsky apparently assumed that there was enough room for such questions also within the design of Youth, and was disappointed not to find them adequately treated there. In a letter to the editor of the Contemporary, Nekrasov, he referred to Youth as "decidedly weaker than Childhood and Boyhood, though perhaps a piece not altogether bad." He must have had his second thoughts about it, however, for a month later he irately condemned it privately in a letter to Turgenev as "a rotten product of the pure art school" headed by his ideological opponent, Druzhinin. Yet, in the meantime he was lavishly praising Tolstoy for his growing interest in civic issues in an article designed for public consumption. This fact suggests, if anything, a certain protective bias, which I will deal with later in this chapter.

Chernyshevsky's style leaves much to be desired. He is verbose and tends to belabor the point. When ready to deliver a major critical opinion he stalls, patronizes the reader, meanders, repeats himself, and delivers a circuitous argument—as though he were reluctant to part with his precious piece of information. Nevertheless, he sometimes delivers a succinct and memorable pronouncement and, on the whole, evinces remarkable insight into the work and acumen in predicting Tolstoy's future development as a writer.

In the first article Chernyshevsky evidently tried to improve Tolstoy's sagging prestige with the other critics. He forthrightly pointed out the virtues he found in Tolstoy, both as a man and an artist, and invited his readers to become aware of these features. Chernyshevsky claimed that Tolstoy had two outstanding characteristics: (1) a quality of "moral wholesomeness," and (2) an unusual sagacity and sensitivity in regard to the secret working of the human psyche. The latter, Chernyshevsky presumed, must have come from an abiding interest in following the twists and turns of
what he chose to describe "for lack of a better term" as "dialectic of the soul [mind]"—an only partly verbalized inner debate by means of incompletely formed and undifferentiated thought-feelings, expressed and communicated with the novel device Chernyshevsky termed an inner monologue. He then proceeded to explain the device as a technique and a means of revealing the genesis of feeling and consciousness.

Chernyshevsky claimed that the uniqueness of Tolstoy's new method lay in his ability to depict the stream of consciousness. Tolstoy, he said, had developed a radically new technique that departed from the usual method of dissecting feeling. Chernyshevsky granted that psychological analysis as such did not originate with Tolstoy, that outstanding writers—for example, Lermontov—knew how to convey the flow of thoughts with fair success; but Lermontov's method, Chernyshevsky said, quoting a few lines, had limitations. When he, or another of these writers, wanted to analyze a feeling, he would break it down into a series of component sensations, producing thereby something that was, in substance, an "anatomical chart" of emotion. Transitions of feelings were depicted with a series of individual pictures, catching moments of dramatic change. All such techniques dealt with action and conflict, that is, with the results rather than the essence of the psychic process: "One poet is interested above all in the delineation of characters; another, in the influence of social factors and life conflicts on characters; a third, in the connection between emotions and actions; a fourth, in an investigation of passion; but Count Tolstoy is interested primarily in the psychic process per se, its forms and laws, the dialectic of the mind, to give it a definite name." Chernyshevsky asserted that these older techniques explained neither the changes in nor the growth of emotion. Analysis, the principle of separation by differentiation as such, excluded the understanding of growth as an organic change. The mechanical device of putting fragmented parts into a series produced only a semblance of growth. There was no coherence or principle of causality in a mere sequence, Chernyshevsky said; that one feeling followed another accounted for nothing and showed only change inducing change. Tolstoy's new method was thus infinitely more modern and sophisticated, in that it went to the core of the process, rather than describe its periphery. It replaced all such old-
fashioned static systems with a new, dynamic differential approach, since Tolstoy dealt with the very nature of change within the psyche. He reproduced, Chernyshevsky wrote, the infinitesimal value differences between consecutive thoughts and feelings. By noting incremental differences that accrued in the same thought, he focused attention on the continuous, fluxional changes in the psychic process, its laws, its logic, its own peculiar dialectic: the subliminal evolutions and convolutions of thoughts and feelings as they are conceived, gestate, and grow within the womb of the psyche. Tolstoy depicted their mutations with sequences of freely developing patterns of thought associations that occurred on the boundary between fact and fancy with kaleidoscopic ease and variety:

Tolstoy's attention is turned above all to the way in which one complex of thought-feelings derives from another. He is interested in observing how an emotion, arisen spontaneously from a given situation or impression, undergoes an influence from memories, succumbs so that it combines with similar thoughts supplied by the imagination, merges into other thought-feelings, returns again to its point of departure and wanders on and on along the entire chain of recollections; how a primary sensation becomes a thought-feeling by the process of augmentation: it generates thoughts that carry it on and on, collecting on the way and fusing with dreams, past experiences, anticipations of the future, and reflections about the present. [Pp. 54-55]

He is a great master of portraying the elusive manifestations of inner life that succeed one another with extraordinary rapidity and inexhaustible variety. There are painters who are celebrated for their special skill in catching the flickering reflection of a ray of sunshine on swiftly rolling waves, the trembling of sunlight on rustling leaves, its play on shifting shapes of clouds. One says of such painters that they know how to capture the life of nature. Count Tolstoy does something similar with regard to the most mysterious movements of psychic life. Of all the remarkable Russian writers, he is the only master of this art. [P. 58]

With this technique, Chernyshevsky went on, Tolstoy managed to reach into the deepest recesses of the human psyche, even probe the mind of a man moments before his death; and such inner monologue was very different from the monologues of characters like Hamlet, who simply split in two and argued with himself. Hamlet's soliloquies, by comparison, were really more like dialogues,
and belonged, generically, with other dialogues that represent dramatizations of split personality, as do the dialogues between Dr. Faustus and Mephistophiles, or Marquis de Posa and Don Carlos.

It should be clear, Chernyshevsky argued, that one had here something very unusual, a skill quite without parallel in all literature, not to speak of contemporary literature—a special quirk of talent that was unique and original. And unless one appreciated this feat, he really should not try to assess Tolstoy as a writer. Although other writers might possess a greater skill with words, or brilliance of style, these accomplishments were superficial when compared with the understanding and profound implications produced by such intensive analysis. Since no one else could achieve it, Tolstoy deserved special credit and consideration.

Chernyshevsky went on to say that it may have been this skill that retarded Tolstoy's developing awareness of important social issues and his proficiency in writing about them. This skill was not acquired by Tolstoy without much hard work, by a process that was likely to have distracted his attention from observing others while he was busy concentrating on himself. Yet, this was just the point of the important difference: although one could learn to describe the results of emotion from observing others, this kind of in-depth analysis and familiarity with the inner life and workings of the psyche could only be acquired through relentless observation of one's self. Nevertheless, once acquired, this skill enabled Tolstoy to discern character, motivation, and play of emotions, conflicts of passion, and such happenings as they occurred within his characters with a facility unmatched by anyone else.

The other virtue of Tolstoy's art that Chernyshevsky proclaimed to have substantive importance was its wholesomeness. He had apparent difficulty in describing what he meant, but evidently considered it significant enough to warrant a lengthy roundabout explanation of its exact nature. He began as he did in explaining the nature of the inner monologue—by defining first what it was not. It was not, he said, some kind of purism—a purity of moral sentiment acquired or reconstructed after many years of suffering and clarification of consciousness by adversity—but the unsullied pristine wholesomeness of youth. "Some people," he said, "acquire moral purity by growth and experience, a cruel and protracted process of self-denial and suffering that clarifies one's mind and conscience by reflection. They become pure as a result of many tests, after a long
struggle with numerous temptations, perhaps after a series of falls. This is hardly the case with Count Tolstoy. His moral fiber had not been restored to him through arduous effort in years of reflection and experience. It is the unsullied, pristine wholesomeness of youth, preserved intact in all its youthful spontaneity and freshness" (p. 60). To Chernyshevsky this quality of tenderness provided Tolstoy’s stories with an inimitable graceful charm and compensated for the deficiencies in some of Tolstoy’s unsuccessful experimental pieces. This quality had an invigorating, regenerative, healing effect, he said, compared to that of communing directly with nature. Works such as Childhood and Boyhood could not have been conceived, let alone executed, without this element. “The Notes of a Billiard Marker” Chernyshevsky decried as a “shocking tale of utter human degradation” that would have lost a major part of its shock value without the implied contrast between the author’s wholesome values and the protagonist’s thoroughly depraved outlook on life. The gist of Chernyshevsky’s somewhat maudlin and involved argument was that critics should indeed take note that they were dealing with the first steps in literature of an apparently very great talent: a fresh, inexperienced, and vulnerable young man who so far has delivered only a small token of the rich rewards his pen promised for the future. They should give serious consideration to the possibility that this unusually wholesome young man of rather unique gifts might turn out to be the future hope of Russian letters. They should therefore leave him alone for the time being to experiment with new and unconventional writing techniques, and try not to debauch him with harsh criticism that would only drive him onto the safe and unimaginative path of mediocrity and sterile aestheticism.

Chernyshevsky’s attitude indicates, then, a primary concern with protecting Tolstoy, rather than with writing a critical assessment of his work. The impression is unmistakable from the casual, almost offhand manner in which Chernyshevsky coins the now-famous phrase “inner monologue”\(^{38}\) and almost immediately moves on to the issue of Tolstoy’s unusually acute psychological perspicacity that appears to have been, for him, more substantive; he then goes on to discuss the relatively trivial matter of Tolstoy’s youthful vulnerability to critical attack. He urgently encouraged Tolstoy to broaden his outlook; was willing to risk his own reputation in promising splendid works from Tolstoy in the future; worried about
damage to this still innocent, yet psychologically astute, young talent; and hinted at his potential for future intellectual leadership on a national scale: all this suggests more than just a touching concern for a young writer’s career or even the future of Russian literature. It evinces the familiar, chronic preoccupation of many leading Russian critics and intellectuals with the historic goals of Russia and the mystic concept of a search for a new national sage: a writer of national stature. Furthermore, Chernyshevsky’s anxiety for Tolstoy’s safety was rooted in another durable peculiarity of the Russian cultural and sociopolitical scene: literature, long before the days of the Soviets, was viewed as an important tool, not only for spreading enlightenment and raising the general level of culture, but for giving direction to the minds of the people as well, and there was a concomitant chronic mistrust of writers as mere men entrusted with such awesome powers by critics who regarded themselves as guardians of the public intellectual domain. Zealous application of these principles often resulted in aggressive or bilious treatment of writers suspected of having erred from the straight and narrow path of optimum public utility. Sensing the developing tide of critical opprobrium toward Tolstoy because of his apparent disinterest in social issues, Chernyshevsky wrote his review.

He was only moderately successful. By the early 1860s the tide had reached sweeping proportions and threatened to curtail Tolstoy’s productivity. Many prominent critics had ceased to pay attention to Tolstoy other than to zero in on his pedagogical experiments, of which Chernyshevsky disapproved. Neither Dobroliubov nor M. A. Antonovich (1835–1918) ever deigned to write a single article about Tolstoy. In 1863 the *Contemporary* published a caustic review of *The Cossacks* written by a staff member. *The Cossacks* was described there as “a demonstrative departure on the part of the author from current issues, titled ‘a Caucasus story’ because it takes place in conveniently remote Caucasus.” Tolstoy himself was described as a minor talent of the old school, a glib, superficial observer who, like all writers of the old school, lacked the capacity to change with the times; he was advised to leave the solution of universal problems to bigger talents. Thus, the radicals of the 1860s were prepared to dismiss Tolstoy. A notable exception among them was young Pisarev, who took up the cause of Tolstoy as a valuable writer unduly neglected by his fellow critics.
PISAREV

The nihilist leader of radical Russian raznochintsy, Dmitry I. Pisarev (1840–68), wrote three reviews of Tolstoy’s fiction, two of them major. This was more than anyone else provided in the same period and would make him a major contributor to the criticism of Tolstoy, were it not for the somewhat curious fact that, despite his enormous influence upon the minds of the young generation of the 1860s, as a literary critic he has had little actual influence. Other critics preferred the staid leadership of Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, despite the fact that Pisarev had borrowed the position of the one and the method of the other.

Pisarev is unpopular with other critics because of his controversial position on aesthetics: he advocated its destruction. His philosophic, aesthetic, and ideological positions appear to have been far from stable. A figure of considerable controversy from the start, he allied himself with groups and individuals whose views he only partially shared. He doggedly preached an aesthetic theory he himself failed to practice. The phenomenon of Pisarev, the maverick critic, has always interested researchers. Many have tried to unravel the issues and conflicts surrounding this remarkable young man who, for almost a decade, held sway over the intellectual climate of his country without gaining adherents among any of the important people.

His position on aesthetics cost Pisarev the support of the materialist camp. In the Soviet Union even today, although Pisarev is praised for his civic “pathos” and his groundbreaking contributions to the popularization of science and education, his critical methods remain unpopular. Labeled quaint and unworkable, they are kept out of sight, tucked away somewhere on the back shelves of the laboratory of Soviet history. The attitude is exemplified by scant Soviet research into Pisarev’s work on Tolstoy. Plotkin and Sorokin barely mention his Tolstoy critiques. Karaban is hardly more thorough, though he draws some parallels between Pisarev’s and Tolstoy’s views on art, both highly dubious from his point of view. Medynsky and Beliaev both briefly discuss Pisarev’s ideas about Tolstoy’s pedagogical activities, but take no interest in his critiques of Tolstoy’s fiction. Poznansky takes issue with “attempts by Western scholars to represent Pisarev as a popularizer of Tolstoy’s pedagogical views.” Not one of these Soviet scholars has devoted more than a few pages to Pisarev’s work on Tolstoy. The
Soviets, always attuned to a writer's intentions, are only now beginning to appreciate Pisarev's message. They continue to dislike everything he said in connection with form. Jameson's remark that in Russia preoccupation with questions of interpretation ultimately produced formalism, a method the Soviets abhor, suggest at least one of the underlying reasons. The Soviets dislike Pisarev's non-normative aesthetics because it permits too much "individualism," i.e., freedom of experimentation with form and, ultimately, freedom of thought.

Understanding Pisarev's somewhat peculiar aesthetic views is crucial to the understanding of his critical methods, which otherwise appear whimsical and inconsistent. Yet the underlying reasons are intellectually sound.

Pisarev borrowed from Chernyshevsky the premise that art was only a reflection of reality and, though occasionally superior to reality in appearance, was always inferior to it in substance. He carries this premise to its ultimate, and doubtful, conclusion that art would ultimately disappear from life unless it sustained a useful function. Such a function would be to carry the message of reality in the form of ideas. Otherwise art would eventually be replaced by science as a more accurate reflection of things and would be relegated to life's periphery along with games and other idle pastimes.

Apparently without realizing it, Pisarev believed in the primary reality of ideas. He thought of art and the appreciation of beauty as an experience, and aesthetics as an attempt to regulate aesthetic experience by defining beauty as an idea in abstracto. For Pisarev only ideas were permanent. Beauty, on the other hand, was a sensation, i.e., an experience, and art a refinement of sensory experience. Like all sensory experiences, it was subjective, fleeting, and unstable, and existed only while it was felt. To assign it permanent status on a par with ideas was in effect to say that it continued to exist after it had gone. Experiences for Pisarev were not only fleeting and subjective but difficult to share and to repeat. Nothing good could come of attempts to regulate them. Such attempts would only result in the imposition of the tastes of some upon others. Pisarev therefore proposed to do away with all such systems of normative aesthetics and to replace them with individual aesthetic judgment. Everyone should be granted the innocuous pleasure of choosing his own aesthetic experiences, creative or otherwise, according to his own taste. Artists, then, should not be inter-
fered with. However, if they aspired to greatness, they should use their art to convey ideas, and the greatness of an artist depended entirely on the importance of the ideas his art promoted. Hence Pisarev's preference for verbal art as best equipped to accommodate complex ideas.

Pisarev's views on the role of the literary critic followed from his insistence on great ideas. The critic, according to Pisarev, was not to flatter the author's ego, but was to educe and convey the author's message, if there was any. His job was to clear the underbrush away so that another may walk more easily through the forest of ideas. This the critic could do by stressing latent elements of "significant reality" in the author's work, passages that expressed an important idea. Form could be criticized, provided, of course, that the critic knew that he was expressing subjective judgment that was binding on no one else. Otherwise he should refrain from such judgment altogether. For obvious reasons Pisarev scorned trivial information, form without content, beauty without a message, and aesthetic pleasure for its own sake. His interest remained fixed on the nature of the relation of art to reality, which in his treatment became the relation of the intellectual to sensory experience. His idea of reality also seems to have differed considerably from the conventional view.

Pisarev's critiques were consistent with his concepts of criticism. By no means personally indifferent to matters of form, he deliberately refrained from passing judgment and, instead, concentrated on the "real life elements" contained in the work. He treated the work itself as more or less an equivalent of reality or its reflection, and the characters in it as though they lived in real life. With this approach he apparently tried to implement the promotion of "art as a tool of realism," a goal he claimed to have indefatigably pursued all his life. The method agrees with Dubroliubov's concept of "realistic criticism" (real'naia kritika), which defines criticism as disclosing reality within the literary work, purged of the author's subjective notions. Complications arise because Pisarev's method also reflects his own development, which was, his assertions to the contrary, a subjective development, a movement away from an objective and toward a subjective contact with reality. Pisarev, in a word, was a modern, psychologically inclined man who tended to reflect external reality inward, instead of projecting himself upon external reality.
In the beginning, however, Pisarev was strongly influenced by Dobroliubov and adhered closely to his principles. His early critiques show a relatively objective, form-conscious approach. At this stage Pisarev interpreted even the author's technique itself as part of objective reality if it had an influence on or enhanced the author's message. But after the 1861 change in his outlook, he abandoned this approach almost completely to discuss the message without regard to technique employed. In the last four years of his life, he gradually intensified his involvement in the process; no longer content with merely explicating the author's message, he would pick out from it only those elements that were in accord with his own message and treat them, not as art, but as elements of a neutral, objective reality that supported his ideas. Dissatisfied with being only a critic, Pisarev, a born educator, wanted to be a writer and teacher himself—a sage. For this purpose he ruthlessly cannibalized the works of the writers he discussed to broadcast his own message and illustrate it with pertinent passages. He arranged the material with little regard for its original context and purpose. At bottom, however, Pisarev's technique was not an unsuccessful application of Dobroliubov's method into an expression of Pisarev's message, so that we see a progressive adulteration of Dobroliubov's practical, materialistic, sociological approach to criticism, his objective method, by Pisarev's subjective ideas and method, which were influenced by philosophic idealism, until in the end both method and message became almost purely Pisarev's. The three reviews of Tolstoy's work that Pisarev wrote illustrate this development. Written at about four- to five-year intervals, they span practically Pisarev's entire career and accurately reflect the evolution of his confused and confusing method.

Considering Pisarev's tender age (nineteen) at the time, his first critique, a review of Tolstoy's short story "Three Deaths," is a remarkable example of a formal analysis. In accordance with Dobroliubov's system, he gave his readers a profile of Tolstoy as a writer and traced the influence of his personality and character in his work:

On reading these stories it is easy to get a fair idea of the direction in which the author's talent grows. One sees his personal peculiarities and the objects upon which he likes to focus his special attention in the course of his creativity. Tolstoy, we note, is a born psychologist. It should not be difficult to realize this once you remember what are
the most prominent features of his work, features that, even on the most cursory reading, strike the reader's attention, startle him, and leave an indelible impression on his mind. Among such features are nature scenes that he manages to suffuse with life. They are marked by freshness and concreteness. He has an ability to draw characters who seem taken straight out of life. A bold overall design and a vital quality of the main idea that underlies the work as a whole—such features are common to more or less all our better writers. . . . But in addition to these general characteristics, Tolstoy reveals his own distinctive qualities. No one can further extend analysis, no one can look as deep inside the soul of man as he does, no one pursues with such dogged persistence, with such implacable logic and to the last consequences the secret motives, the most fleeting and, apparently, inconsequential movements within the psyche. He shows how a thought develops and is gradually formed in the mind, what metamorphoses it undergoes, how feeling wells up in the breast, how fancy is engaged and carries the subject from the real world into a world of fantasy, and how, in the midst of vigorous dreaming, reality intrudes, rudely and concretely. . . . these are the motifs that Tolstoy develops with special fondness and brilliant success. ["Tri smerti" (Three deaths), Sochineniia, 1:213–14]

It is at once obvious that Pisarev was familiar with Chernyshevsky's review of Childhood, Boyhood, and the war stories. His analysis is almost a restatement of its points, including the emphasis given to Tolstoy's unique gift of profound analysis. Pisarev, however, went further, and claimed that this gift was responsible for the choice of the subject matter: "This direction Tolstoy's talent took clearly influenced the choice of subject in the story that we will now discuss with our readers. The author set himself the task of depicting the feelings of a dying person, his attitude toward the things among which he lived and which, in surviving him, form a startling contrast with their natural calm and indifference, to his anxiety—the psychic turmoil that is going on inside his soul" (Sochineniia, 1:215). Pisarev speculated that, apparently, Tolstoy's analytical skill had reached a new level of artistic maturity and psychological insight and, consequently, needed a suitable subject: hence a study on the metaphysical subject of death. Pisarev explained how, by the skillful use of contrasts and changing points of view, the author added cohesion to the sketchy story and enhanced its message: "Tolstoy's story consists of three separate sketches barely connected with one another except by the nature of the theme; there is no connecting story line. The author merely depicted three incidents, three deaths, that occurred under different conditions and in different
circumstances and, having pointed up these differences in most vivid colors, proceeded to show us what all these incidents had in common in terms of commonplace phenomena that accompany the destruction of any living organism" (Sochineniia, 1:215).

Pisarev said that character analysis itself, that is, the depth of analysis given, became a device to underscore the contrast between the protagonists. One of the protagonists, the dying lady, was described completely from within: "This is a scene that is quite remarkable by the power with which it is expressed, thanks to analysis that is at once profound and psychologically true. It guides our readers through the evolution of a whole series of connected feelings and thoughts: from the beginning one is made aware of the juxtaposition between life and the destruction of life; then we see the hostility of the dying lady toward anything that is alive and well, anything that may cause her to dwell on the hopelessness of her situation and draw conclusions that are disconcerting to her" (Sochineniia, 1:217). Between each pair of episodes, Pisarev said, the author changed his approach. The second episode, of the coachman who was dying of the same disease, contained very little subjective description. Here the protagonist was treated entirely as a thing, from the outside, with almost no analysis and, instead, external descriptions. In the third sketch the point of view changed once more, this time to an altogether lower plane, dramatized by the fact that now it was the hand of man that expressed the role of fate to the dying tree. Pisarev pointed out that these changes in approach were deliberate. They effectively signaled the withdrawal by one step at a time from the seat of consciousness, the inner man, and a descent to a lower level of consciousness. The fear of death was strongest where the level of awareness was highest: in the self-conscious, alienated, educated lady. The crude, uncouth coachman, much more integrated with nature, lived with less awareness and, consequently, was much less conscious of death. In the third episode, with the descent to the plant level, awareness of death was practically absent. The death struggle, so prominent in the other two episodes involving human consciousness, was almost entirely subdued. The reader was even tempted to wonder if it were not occurring entirely in the author's own imagination. Yet all three sketches sustained the same startling contrast between life and death, existing side by side, seemingly unaware of each other. And, Pisarev said, there was a suggestion of a possible metaphysical
significance in the total uninvolvement of life with death, which is the case in rude nature.

Clearly under Dobroliubov’s influence, Pisarev treated the development of character in the human protagonists in “Three Deaths” as determined by outside circumstances that inexorably molded the patterns of their thoughts and actions. In discussing their differences in behavior, he put the blame squarely on the environment. The meekness and submissiveness of the coachman, which Pisarev saw as the result of a stunted personality development, he pointedly contrasted with the petulant rebelliousness of the lady. However, he said, these were not the controlling factors of their behavior, but were themselves born of the abnormal conditions of their lives. In detailed expositions Pisarev followed step by step the external conditions surrounding each character, drawing parallels and contrasting individual situations. He concluded that the coachman’s exhaustion from the hardships of his existence had robbed him of his humanity: he was the victim, and society was guilty of a crime:

There is no analysis here, not because it would have been too difficult for the author to produce, but because there is nothing to analyze. Look into the soul of the sick coachman depicted by Tolstoy; you will not find among his feelings any strength or impetuosity, or complexity and variety of emotions. You will be appalled to find how downtrodden he appears, how meek and unresponsive. It is a form of docility that at times seems brutish—a docility developed in endless days of monotonous labor, familiar and commonplace suffering every day, and a colorless, perpetually gray, prosaic life-style. This docility expresses itself in the whole personality of the sick coachman: his words and movements, and all his dealings with his environment and the surrounding people. [Sochinenia, 1:217]

Pisarev analyzed the effect on the coachman of the meanness of those around him, a callousness produced by brutal lives, as opposed to the consideration shown the ailing lady:

These forms are determined by the environment in which the action takes place. In the first sketch those who are well show their consideration, express their concern, and merely stop short of changing their own manner and activity for her sake; and yet, this already seems to the sick lady to be offensive indifference, a scoffing at her predicament. Here, on the contrary, the healthy ones grumble at the sick man, begrudge him his very presence, and try to extract from him some advantage for themselves, making his illness and death the subject of various commercial calculations of their own, about which
they naively consult the sick man himself, never considering, not even wanting to understand, that such conversations may indeed be painful and upsetting to the already strained imagination of the poor wretch. And yet the sick man silently suffers it all and asks for forbearance. [Sochineniia, 1:221]

For contrast Pisarev dwelled upon the petty incidents that had a jarring effect upon the lady's overwrought nerves. Her desire to live and to protect herself from the unavoidable menace of death drove her frantic. Her condition was further aggravated by the vexing indifference of those around her who were unable to understand the nature of her anxieties. Pisarev explained that in such a situation even the best elements of a person's character may impel defiance and conflict with others. He refused, therefore, to judge the characters' conduct by conventional standards of moral behavior. Instead, he found society responsible, and for the suffering of the characters he blamed a lack of civilized standards and education:

Just as in the first sketch one would be hard put to blame the sick lady for her tantrums even though she tends to demand the impossible, so in the second sketch we must not blame the other coachmen for being rude to their comrade: the lady is under stress because of her disease, which compels her to forget everything that is not related to her condition; but they are insufficiently mentally developed to know how to put themselves in place of the sick man... Such individuals can be found in any underdeveloped society where what is respected is not the human individual but incidentals—external trappings such as physical strength, wealth, health, etc. These features of undeveloped societies that are responsible for the stunting of human growth have been brought to the fore in the second sketch. [Sochineniia, 1:221]

Pisarev's second article, "Blunders of Immature Thought" (1864), indicates a notable change in his attitude, as attention is directed away from the environment and toward the individual's inner life. Pisarev discusses environmental influences in generalities, but examines psychological effects upon the individual in much greater detail than before. The conflict between dreams and reality, only briefly touched upon in the previous article, now becomes a major issue. Pisarev also forgoes comment on the author's skill. He boldly announces the following: "In my article the reader will, of course, find neither praise nor criticism of the author. He will only find an analysis of those live phenomena that were the subject of the author's creative thought" ("Promakhi" [Blunders],
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Sochineniia, 4:199). The elements of reality that had come to be of interest to Pisarev were poor or faulty education and its adverse effects upon the individual. Pisarev declared Tolstoy's collected works, recently published by Stellovsky (1864), to be an excellent source, a veritable thesaurus of unexplored thoughts and observations on timely, important issues, overlooked by critics. Pisarev picked Tolstoy's trilogy, Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth, to zero in on its protagonists Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as societal rejects—living embodiments and victims of the educational deficiencies of their day. No longer interested in how the author created his characters, Pisarev treated them as people—average, educated Russians, typical of their generation, who failed to achieve their full human potential. Using Turgenev's fictional characters Rudin (Rudin, 1856) and Bazarov (Fathers and Sons, 1862), he described Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as falling somewhere between two generations as between two chairs, which were represented by these famous literary types, one of whom, Rudin (the man of the 1840s) was an inveterate talker, and the other, Bazarov (the man of the 1860s), a man of action: "The Irten'evs and the Nekhliudovs must be placed, both in terms of age and character, somewhere in the middle between the Rudins on the one hand and the Bazarovs on the other. The Rudins are pure talkers who do not even have an inkling that there could be any other activity except an activity of the tongue. The Bazarovs are pure men of action, who permit action of the tongue only in case it contributes to the task at hand. And the Irten'evs and the Nekhliudovs are neither here nor there—neither fish nor fowl" (Sochineniia, 4:201). Pisarev depicted both Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as rotten fruits of a system of enlightenment that had failed in the essential task of combining theoretical with practical knowledge. Neither young man knew how to apply his schooling to practical uses. To show the real causes of their failure, Pisarev chased them through a number of Tolstoy's stories in which they appeared, from Childhood to "Lucerne," castigating them mercilessly for deficiencies of mind and character. He declared both to be severe cases of acute mental atrophy, afflicted with what he termed a "rabid fear of ratiocination [mysleboiazn']." Both, Pisarev said, evoked in him nothing but a keen sense of pity, mingled with disgust. Their condition, he claimed, was caused by a vicious type of upbringing perpetrated upon children of their class, an upbringing that had become one prolonged meaningless indoctrination—a
monotonous ritual that led the young straight into the path of “narcotic” dreams: “The entire scientific education they are given, beginning with their ABCs right up to the master’s thesis, turns out to be for these youths just one long, tiresome ritual that must be fulfilled out of sheer respect for the establishment and its habits. . . . The education commonly administered to our children leads them nowhere, except by the most direct and reliable route into the dead end of narcotic dreams” (Sochineniia, 4:211–12). These dreams caused dismal social and personal failures, Pisarev explained, as they resulted in ignorance, prejudice, hypocrisy, self-indulgence, incompetence, emotional instability, and a thorough lack of character:

Knowledge plays no part in their life. They are definitely not concerned with intelligence. They seek to acquire only virtue. And yet at the same time they are imbued through and through with the banalities of their society, and hamstrung on all sides by all kinds of genteel social games, worldly connections, and prejudices. [Sochineniia, 4:223]

They can discourse about the ineffable beauteousness of a moral ideal and at the same time, without moving from the spot, transgress against the rudiments of common decency in the most despicable, beastly manner—this is a fact that speaks for itself most eloquently. [Sochineniia, 4:225]

They grab at everything, always wanting to make an immediate and overwhelming impression, and yet they do not know the first thing about anything, and are incapable of doing anything right. [Sochineniia, 4:203]

All these aberrations Pisarev traced to a bad habit acquired in early schooling of playing games of “let’s pretend” in order to escape the pressures and boredom of a rigid educational regimen. Eventually the boys grew up into ignorant, useless young men who were taught unneeded skills: they became impractical dreamers addicted to fanciful pursuits, likely to conduct strange experiments upon themselves or their environment; or they took up pochvennichestvo, the pipe dream of a rapprochement between men of the soil and the upper classes via moral self-improvement.

Pisarev made a special point of the difference between dreams that held real possibilities and daydreams that could never become or be made real. He declared indulgence in the latter to be a harmful waste of mental energy and tried to demonstrate that sensory titillation that did not lead to an increase in knowledge was detri-
mental to the mental health of the individual. The “moral self-improvement” practiced by Irten'ev and Nekhliudov he found to be mere self-indulgence. The shabbiness of such efforts was revealed each time Nekhliudov lost his temper and thrashed a serf. And this was followed by a strange display of sympathy for the beater, rather than the beaten, the logic and artlessness of which Pisarev found hard to accept: “Irten'ev begins to sympathize not with the serf boy who got thrashed but with the thrasher. Before we know it, he will walk up to his precious Dmitry, take him by the hand and say, tearfully: ‘Oh, my gentle friend! Oh, my sick sky-blue dove! Perhaps you have injured your tender little hand against the filthy noggin of this ignorant and rude blockhead?’” (Sochineniia, 4:225). The compact whereby Irten'ev and Nekhliudov share every stray thought that occurs to them struck Pisarev as a distasteful example of twisted moral antics that sprang from ignorance and an ingrained aversion to work, education, and discipline. Indulgence in such practices was like drug addiction and left the nervous system perpetually unhinged.

Pisarev's main theme, in fact, was the failure of the individual whose character was warped by a vain education to confront reality. To avoid it he tended to develop substitutes, Pisarev said, some of them marked by artistic inventiveness, but all, ultimately, only games: infantile ploys, dictated by fear of the harsh realities of life, without value or relation to the real world outside. Pisarev scornfully referred to Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as

these flabby little people with a mind so feeble and underdeveloped that they cannot sustain a conversation on the same subject for more than three or four hours, after which time they completely lose sight of the main thread. These pitiful little creatures dare, too, to discuss the highest existential questions such as the meaning of life, morality, and general philosophy. They are like tiny little five-year-olds who blab about how they will become hussars or royal cuirassiers! You must spend some time going to school first, dear tots! Then perhaps you will become smart enough to join the hussars. Until then, though, you may play with dolls, or else dream about truffles and poulards. [Sochineniia, 4:232]

The young men's friendship, then, was a hothouse affair that would not stand up to a test because it was based on idleness and lack of responsibility. Pisarev suggested hard and responsible work as a cure-all. Addressing himself to a whole generation of Irten'evs and Nekhliudovs, he exhorted them to abandon their harebrained
projects and go to work: “Nekhliudov must first transform himself into a working man, try out the capacities of his mind and character in a successful application to the task with which the vast majority of mankind is charged, namely, to support his person with his own two hands” (Sochineniia, 4:238). With this experience he promised them a complete change in their outlook on life: “The whole meaning of things, the entire world order that includes inanimate matter and all the living things in it, changes completely in the eyes of a man when he begins to feel and becomes aware of the fact that he himself is a worker, that within himself, his head and his hands, there is an absolutely adequate guarantee of his own existence” (Sochineniia, 4:237). Quite clearly Pisarev no longer released the individual from responsibility for his failure, but held that a man was in charge of his own destiny and had to overcome the deficiencies in his environment and within himself. According to this new critical position, experience could be altered from within, indeed, everything depended on the attitude of the individual. Hence, Pisarev held, any individual who fails to confront reality is as guilty as the system that formed him.

Pisarev’s last review of Tolstoy’s work, “The Old Gentry” (1868), written shortly before his death (a probable suicide by drowning when he was having difficulty finding an outlet for his articles and ideas), reveals an even greater independence and a shift of position still further toward subjective interpretation. Pisarev was bent here on expounding his own message, which had little or nothing to do with the message of War and Peace. The article is characterized by indifference to the source and its artistic form. War and Peace is treated as “a textbook on the pathology of the Russian society and mores.” The author is dismissed with a pat on the back: his talent has enabled him to create characters who have come alive in reality and thus may act independently, becoming valid subjects for sociological discussion and comment. In this article Pisarev was no longer concerned with environmental issues or influences such as education, upbringing, or any other matter of this sort. He was interested in the reasons mankind was falling short of his ideal of man as a “thinking realist,” an Aristotelian type at once practical and soaringly intellectual. Apparently Pisarev wanted to pinpoint the probable causes of the failure on a universal scale. He picked from War and Peace three characters whom he cryptically labeled “the worst,” and who, he implied, represented three prototypes or
extremes of the genus man. He promised to deal with the other characters when the fourth volume of War and Peace came out.\textsuperscript{71}

Pisarev arranged his argument as a formal proposition conducted on three levels with a dialectical configuration of characters. One of the characters selected was very artificial. Another was very much a natural man, almost animalistic. The third appeared to be a synthesis of the other two.

Pisarev recounted in detail incidents that revealed the character of the first individual, Boris Drubetskoy, as a narrow rationalist. Boris, who thought in abstractions, was a cool, capable, ambitious individual who moved in one direction only—upward. He was a social climber, as Pisarev put it “a high-society Molchalin [a reference to a character in A. S. Griboedov's famous play Woe from Wit (1829)],” and a past master of the game of social diplomacy. His success, Pisarev said, was assured. His path was smooth but entirely unrelated to the real world.

As Boris’s foil Pisarev chose Nikolai Rostov, in whom he stressed the features of the Tolstoyan “natural man,” the “noble savage.” Pisarev, however, spoke of him in unflattering terms. Rostov’s life was a Dionysiac frenzy that drowned out the occasional stirring of his apparently feeble mind. Among other faults, Rostov had a penchant for gross exaggeration. Each time he became emotional he embarked upon a roller coaster tour of manic-depressive experiences. Every time he had to engage his brain he was plunged in despair because he found his mental system already blocked by some emotional monkey wrench. His feelings were always ahead of his thoughts. As a result, his mind functioned at minimum capacity. It had lost its flexibility through disuse. It operated with but a few intellectual standards, which were rigid, grossly oversimplified, and useful in only a few situations. Any confrontation with reality that required thinking sent Rostov to drink and violence as a means of drowning out the pain of unfamiliar movement inside his head. In the end he retired to a life in the country to avoid the complexities of civilization.

The third character, Vasilii Denisov, Pisarev presented in less detail but in greater psychological depth. He was, Pisarev suggested, an apparently successful synthesis of the other two: equipped with a good mind, he was sensitive, observant, and possessed of plain common sense. A little rigid in dealing with abstractions, he was quite flexible in practical things. Together, then, the
three characters formed, in Pisarev's treatment, a dialectical triad of basic prototypes of man: one rational, one emotional, and one combining the features of the other two.

To dramatize the dialectical nature of the configuration, Pisarev developed it with a series of neatly balanced rhetorical oppositions. The rational Boris Drubetskoy would, under optimum circumstances, make a fine scientist, Pisarev said. The intuitive Rostov, given favorable development, could become a good artist, perhaps even a poet. Drubetskoy dealt practically with his man-made, artificial environment; Rostov functioned impractically in his, or any other, environment. Drubetskoy felt alienated from his surroundings, however, whereas Nikolai was emotionally keenly attuned to his. Drubetskoy's social goals were exclusive; Rostov's were inclusive and conventional, and he expressed a desire to function within the group. Drubetskoy hoped to escape regimental duty and become an aide; Rostov dreamed of seeing some action soon, hoping to cover himself and his comrades-in-arms with undying glory. Drubetskoy was an astute, discriminating flatterer of people. Rostov indiscriminately adored men of distinction; his ideals proliferated or, as Pisarev put it, "grew like mushrooms." With this juxtaposition Pisarev opposed the characteristics of detachment, rational analysis, ambition, circumspection, aloofness, self-control, and efficiency to those of impulsiveness, irrationality, total involvement, religious fervor, empathy, absolute loyalty, mental simplicity, a kind of utter "animal" seriousness, savage violence and inefficiency.

In juxtaposing the two patterns, Pisarev suggested the desirability of a mutually beneficial meeting of minds between civilization and savagery, a meeting from which both sides could learn. Yet neither side, he pointed out, seemed either able or willing to become so engaged. Pisarev scornfully attributed this failure to recalcitrance. Using a subtle interplay of contrasts and similarities, he explained that the protagonists were respectively unwilling or unable to think practically, as a "thinking realist" would. The nature of the failure was twofold. Rostov failed to use his intellect, i.e., to engage in the thinking process itself. Boris Drubetskoy, on the other hand, failed to apply his talent for abstract reasoning to real problems. These failures, of course, were equally fatal. Pisarev suggested an essential difference between the world of nature, which, he held, was real, and the unreal, artificial world of court
etiquette, as in the following passage, where he described the meeting of each protagonist with the emperor, a figure of power in the "unreal" world, noting how the mental capabilities of Boris Drubetskoy increase, whereas Nikolai Rostov's decrease even further during the meeting: "The excitement that takes hold of Rostov when he sees the emperor and approaches him robs him of his ability to reason and judge his situation. . . . Boris, too, is seized by an extraordinary excitement when he approaches the person of the czar, yet the nature of his excitement is entirely different from that which is experienced by the simpleminded Rostov. Boris is excited because he is aware of being at the source of power, rewards, honors" ("Staroe barstvo" [The old gentry], Sochineniia, 6:436). At once describing and interpreting, Pisarev related Drubetskoy's success to the basic amorality of the excessively rational unreal world: "The frenetic greed that grips Boris on such occasions only increases his concentration, efficiency, and general attention to detail. He carries two errands to the czar to the complete satisfaction of all concerned" (Sochineniia, 6:436). To Pisarev there were flaws and moral implications in Drubetskoy's thinking: his mind was divorced from reality, his thinking too formal and abstract. Therefore he could discriminate, but he could not make correct value judgments. He had no feelings, only sensations. He was a cheat and a hypocrite who used his mother and exploited his friends. Yet, if ever he became embroiled in a real emotion he would become confused and would not know how to extricate himself. Drubetskoy's incompetence in dealing with real emotion was revealed, according to Pisarev, in Drubetskoy's abortive affair with Natasha, who inadvertently inspired amorous feelings for which he had no corresponding rational plans. Dazed by the experience and ruled by dreams, he procrastinated shamelessly and finally had to be eased by the old countess into a prudent flight from the scene of his embarrassment. In a real crisis with more serious implications he would be lost, unable to adjust, perhaps even broken: "A real and unexpected catastrophe may occur that will suddenly and thoroughly ruin a career that began so brilliantly and proceeded so well; such a catastrophe can hit even the most careful and circumspect of men. What it cannot be expected to do is to redirect the man's resources onto a new and more useful task, or open up new areas of application; after such a catastrophe the man is usually squashed and stunted; a brilliant, charming, successful officer
turns more often than not into a pitiful hypochondriac, a shabby beggar, or simply a lush” (Sochineniia, 6:429). Rostov's problems, Pisarev wrote, occurred on lower, less sophisticated levels of existence. Like a child he refused to confront what he did not like: “Instead of looking at those things that would upset him, rob him of his infantile illusions, Rostov pusillanimously squeezes his eyes shut and with dogged, cowardly persistence chases away those thoughts that take a too uncomfortable turn for him. And, not content only to close his own eyes, he tries with fanatical fervor to place others in the same condition” (Sochineniia, 6:446). With his mind arrested, Nikolai Rostov's future was sure to be a matter of creeping rot: “By the time he is twenty, the contents of his whole life are already wrapped up and delivered for him. From now on all he can do is, first, gradually grow in coarseness and stupidity, and, eventually, grow decrepit and disintegrate” (Sochineniia, 6:448). Yet, Pisarev sardonically remarked, superficial observers can always be counted upon to find him a charming, vigorous, youthful specimen of mankind.

Pisarev indicated the Denisov, too, was a failure in a real crisis. Although a more successfully integrated character, he nevertheless failed the test of adversity. When trouble struck, he too became unable to cope. Accustomed to vegetating, drifting through life instead of directing its course, he did not have the vitality to meet a crisis and fight for his rights. He was not resourceful. He allowed his career to be ruined by a mechanical, unfeeling bureaucracy. Therefore he, too, was slated for removal from life's mainstream and would be relegated to the idle life of childish games.

Thus each of Pisarev's three chosen characters failed when confronted with real problems because he would not use reason. The failure, Pisarev claimed, was due to lack of either heart, mind, or will. Not one of the prototypes fulfilled Pisarev's idea of a thinking realist, a man of courage and knowledge who understands reality and strives to change it fearlessly and resourcefully, using all his faculties. In refusing to face reality, Pisarev said, and deal with it on its terms, the individual declined to grow up and thus failed the test of living. Regardless of its intrinsic merits, this message is purely Pisarev's; it has little to do with Tolstoy's moral, social, or didactic intent in War and Peace.

Pisarev's intellectual bias and his tendency to ignore the author's ideas in the works he reviewed is evident in his choice of characters
for discussion in "The Old Gentry." From among the many characters in War and Peace he chose neither the most interesting, the most successful, nor even the most important ones, but those most appropriate for his own plans. They also happen to be characters who correspond closely to the types of people he usually discussed in his articles, particularly in reviews of Tolstoy's works. There is continuity among the characters selected from "Three Deaths," "Blunders," and "The Old Gentry," and, finally, the material is selected and arranged so as to be a restatement of Pisarev's views. Character lineage can be traced on both the social as well as the psychological levels. The common factor of artificiality is obvious between the dying lady of the "Three Deaths" and socially successful Boris Drubetskoy of "The Old Gentry." Nikolai Rostov is easily recognizable as the spiritual brother of the crude coachman of the "Three Deaths," the unthinking natural man. Vasilii Denisov's kinship with the tree, the last protagonist of the "Three Deaths," is also discernible, although on a more metaphorical level: his martial appearance notwithstanding, Denisov is the alert but will-less, heroic but concessive prototype, organically integrated with his environment. In him the struggle for survival is subdued. His career is suddenly undercut, "chopped off," as it were, in the midst of a steady growth, as if by an axe. What influence Tolstoy's three characters in "Three Deaths" may have had on Pisarev's later interpretation cannot be known. But an affinity is clearly there, and a discernible parallel in intent: each trio of characters is slated for destruction, physically and by design by the author in the story "Three Deaths"; spiritually and by conjecture by Pisarev in "The Old Gentry," where he suggests his own reasons why such an outcome is inevitable.

The development of Pisarev's ethical and psychological theories can also be traced through the articles. Correspondences are clearer between "Blunders" and "The Old Gentry," only because in the "Three Deaths" he did not make psychology and ethics an issue for detailed discussion, however. When Pisarev indicates that not one of the characters he chose from "The Old Gentry" succeeds when confronted by reality, Drubetskoy, in Pisarev's treatment, becomes an advanced and modified variant of Nekliudov; Rostov resembles Irten'ev. The characters are merely seen as older and more corrupt. Pisarev as a judge of ethics, moreover, has become more severe. In "Blunders" he berated Irten'ev and Nekliudov
for shirking their studies in favor of dreaming “like children” of joining the military. In “The Old Gentry” Drubetskoy and Rostov are in the military, yet Pisarev makes a point of bringing up the detail that Drubetskoy has seduced Rostov away from the university to lead a life of action and excitement in the military, i.e., he exercised a corrupting influence upon him. It is as though Pisarev wished the reader to note that features that were innocuous “in embryo” in the earlier characters have grown to be harmful in more mature stages. In this lineage of prototypes, Nekhliudov’s penchant for keeping a moral ledger becomes in Drubetskoy a more pragmatic and corrupt morality, as he obeys only social standards, finding feelings that contribute to success laudable, those that distract from it objectionable. Nekhliudov’s bland platonic affair with Liubov Iakovlevna becomes Drubetskoy’s pointedly more sinister, practical scheme to marry the rich spinster Julie Karagin. In “Blunders” Pisarev depicted Nekhliudov as becoming confused whenever he had to deal with problems of the real world; in “The Old Gentry” he shows Drubetskoy as capable in the world of formalities and meaningless games but seriously lacking the judgment to deal with problems of the real world. In each article Pisarev takes note of the same kinds of incidents, and the same basic details attract his attention and comment, whether or not these played a significant part in Tolstoy’s scheme of things. His indignant observation on Irten’ev’s concern for friend Nekhliudov (see above, p. 57) after his rude contact with the serf’s head is recalled in Pisarev’s sardonic description of Nikolai Rostov’s fanatical devotion to Emperor Alexander I and his savage desire to protect his idol from rude contact with a soldier, lying before him mortally wounded in the head. Pisarev dwells pointedly on the class prejudice displayed by the aristocratic participants in both incidents and their essentially hypocritical desire to drown out unpleasantness with genteel conversation. One need only compare the two articles to see similarities:

The soulless Pharisee remains true to form in the smallest detail. His conscience, too, in true Pharisee fashion goes to sleep very fast during soothing, pleasant conversation. [“Blunders,” Sochineniia, 4:232]

When the emperor hears the groan of the dying soldier he says, “Hush, hush! Can it not be softer, more gently?!” apparently suffering, so Count Tolstoy is telling us, even more intensely than the dying soldier. Tears fill the emperor’s eyes as he remarks, turning to
The resemblance raises some interesting questions. It is well known that Tolstoy occasionally repeats "bits of business" from his previous works in order to illustrate a subtle point he needs to make. Possibly Tolstoy invented this pattern of genteel hypocrisy in *Youth* and used it later in *War and Peace* with more subtle development. The seemingly clumsy, ambiguous phrase of the emperor allows two interpretations because of its construction. The Russian original is even more ambiguous and allows interpretation in either extreme: it can mean, on the one hand, "I can't stand this awful sound! It gets on my nerves. Please, can't you be more quiet!" or "Gently, gently, please be gentle with this poor man!" Both readings are within the meaning of the phrase. From the glamorous and notoriously devious Alexander I the phrase seems clearly a subtle and sardonic comment on the cynicism and moral turpitude of aristocrats; however, it suggests a callous indifference to the sufferings of common men, who are regarded as things or animals, and not human beings. This "moral inferiority" of aristocrats is masked by feigned concern and fine manners while the true interests of the speakers are concealed, just as the phrasing conceals the meaning of their words. From what is known about Tolstoy it is not difficult to imagine that he may, indeed, have had something like this in mind. But Pisarev's comment makes the duplicity more obvious, thus changing the sociological aspect of the book. Tolstoy's position as an artist is altered. He becomes a civic writer. However, by dwelling on the moral implications of the characters' actions in the book, Pisarev stresses not the social issues as such, but the inner psychological states of the characters involved: he is interested in the subjective development of the individual.

In Pisarev's weltanschauung, man is what man does, although sometimes Pisarev creates the impression that he does not quite know the difference between being and knowing. The position has nothing to do with elitist tendencies, as some think, that is, with romantic individualism, exaltation of genius, or the pursuit of the extraordinary man. The contrary is more the case. Pisarev's dogged, persistent efforts to find readers and to urge them to attend to mental rather than moral exercise, to thought rather than feeling, show that he was not an elitist but thought of himself as the intellec-
tual leader of the people (a kind of intellectual democrat) and, in
the spirit of a Prometheus, tried to arouse the sluggish mind of
every man.

Pisarev's audacious ideas anticipate modern existentialism inas
much as he was concerned with the struggle of the individual
against society, which he saw not from society's but from the indi
vidual's point of view. In this sense he is a prominent forerunner of
the narodniki movement. And it is in this sense also that his position
(as well as Sartre's) involves the greatest, and perhaps insurmount-
able, problems for the Soviets: nonconformism and philosophic
idealism. It is on this point also that he is closest to Tolstoy. Pisarev
displayed considerable affinity with Tolstoy's views, and their
thoughts seem to have developed along similar or even parallel
lines. Pisarev picked out long before anyone else some of the typical
Tolstoyan subjects that later came to be the hallmark of Tolstoy's
religious and philosophic views, but which Pisarev discerned as
simply natural to Tolstoy's intuitive mode of thinking and already
integral in Tolstoy's early work. Moreover, there is a remarkable
similarity between Pisarev's experience as a literary and art critic
who offended rather than persuaded with his notorious "Destruc-
tion of Aesthetics" and Tolstoy's attempt at defining the essence of
art and aesthetics in his redoubtable treatise What Is Art? (1898),
which cost him his reputation as an authority on art. These failures
may well have resulted from mistaken choices in persuasive
method, indicating that each man's real talent lay with the creative,
rather than the critical, approach to art.

There are corollary deficiencies in Pisarev's impetuous method
that may also have damaged his effectiveness as a persuader, for
instance, his penchant for sophisticated reasoning. He did not hesi
tate to bend facts to suit his argument. In addition, he affected a
clever manner, annoying postures, and verbal tricks. A man of
education and considerable sensitivity to language and form, he
deliberately adopted a crude and coarse approach. He thought of
all this as an effective means of getting attention, an artful deceit of
little importance like art and illusion in general, which he consid-
ered expendable, counterfeit values, redeemable through use for a
worthy purpose or cause. He had a Machiavellian lack of respect
for the integrity of method, and used wile and artifice to convey
something of real value, in his view: his own ideas. Evidence is
strong that Pisarev's method was essentially a subterfuge, a Trojan
horse, devised in an attempt to win over the materialist camp as an insider. An apostle of mind over matter and a Platonian idealist at heart, Pisarev posed as a materialist and employed arguments tailored to suit materialistic thinking, although he himself remained unconvinced by it, not necessarily moved by any such convictions.

Materialists do not trust Pisarev. A major cause of his alienation from the materialist camp was that he denied even the feasibility of any system of normative aesthetics on grounds that beauty had only an ephemeral substance and thus no objective existence. Oddly enough, it was here that Pisarev and his materialist friends came to a parting of the ways. For all of Chernyshevsky's claims about variety in aesthetic experience and tastes in beauty, the materialists still claimed that objective beauty existed outside of man. But Pisarev said no, it existed only in the eyes of the beholder. The disagreement was basic and the reason for it fundamental: it was a matter of which was to be granted the status of primary reality, ideas or things. And this was a matter in which no materialist was prepared to accommodate Pisarev. A brilliant idealist fox, Pisarev assumed the airs of a crude materialist hog, artfully conniving to draw attention to his own ideas. To increase his influence he adopted the position and method of two prominent materialists—Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov. But it was to no avail. Soviet critics who may have seen through some of Pisarev's cunning refer to his "radical rhetoric" as "little more than a leftist phrase to cover for rightist deeds." Such a censure of Pisarev's intentions is apparently motivated by the following misunderstanding.

Pisarev was a rationalist, that is to say, his reasoning proceeded from conscious judgments. However, it was based not merely on objective but also on subjective data. The predominance of the latter, however, as a result of a disposition that existed from early youth, gave his arguments a corresponding bias. They were always oriented toward subjective considerations. This does not necessarily imply illogic, since his bias lay in premises and the predominance of the subjective factor prior to all conclusions and judgments. The superior value of the subjective idea as compared with the objective fact appeared to him self-evident from the beginning. It was not a question of assigning this value but, as I have said, of a natural disposition existing before all rational valuation. The chain of reasoning that led to the subjective factor seemed to Pisarev
somewhat more reasonable than the one that led to objective fact. The difference, though slight and practically unnoticeable to Pisarev, built up in the end to unbridgeable discrepancies that, to the Soviets, are the more irritating, the less they are aware of the minimal shift of standpoint occasioned by the psychological premise. A capital error that regularly creeps into their attempts to demonstrate the fallacies of Pisarev’s thinking is that instead of recognizing the difference in his premise, they try to demonstrate fallacy in Pisarev’s conclusions. Recognition of this error is a difficult matter for adherents of a thoroughly rationalistic system, which dialectical materialism undoubtedly is, since logic such as Pisarev’s undermines the apparently absolute validity of its own principles and delivers it over to its antithesis—philosophical idealism, which for a Soviet theoretician amounts to a catastrophe.

It was thus Pisarev’s methods, not his ideas, that were somewhat perverse and inconsistent. Ultimately, he became trapped by his own machinations. To avoid showing his ideas in a manner that would allow their idealistic background to be seen, he tried to reveal as little as possible, and thus limited his effectiveness as a critic. The deleterious effect of such practices is illustrated by Pisarev’s failure in his last Tolstoy critique, “The Old Gentry,” to reveal his intentions and acquaint the reader with his point of view. His method demands an unusual perspicacity of the reader, if he is to see the significance of it all; otherwise the review seems merely a mildly entertaining description of two characters, Boris Drubetskoy and Nikolai Rostov, whom Pisarev evidently disliked, with the reasons for his distaste not evident. By contrast, neither Chernyshevsky nor Dobroliubov ever left their readers in the dark about their opinions. It was thus the undervaluation of his own principle that made Pisarev defensive and forced on him the psychology of the underdog. It seemed to him that the others who were apparently able, without qualms, to conform to the general style were his opponents, against whom he must defend himself. He did not see that his chief error lay in not depending on the subjective factor with the same trust and devotion with which they relied on the object. His undervaluation of his own principle made his leanings toward secrecy unavoidable, and because of this he deserves the censure of the Soviets.

Pisarev’s cautious, cagey methods and his convoluted ideas about the form and content of reality, works of literature, and art
exemplify much that is strange and inexplicable in the tortuous evolution of Russian radical thought toward narodnichestvo, which, in the 1870s and 1880s, became a rather curious blend of positivism and ethical idealism. The narodniki were hopelessly confused about the nature of their ideological position, haunted by unsuccessful attempts to embrace ideas while rejecting philosophical idealism. Subsequently the whole thing was declared by the Soviets to have been a mistake, an aberration, and a dismal failure: a dead end, utopian branch of socialism. In the areas of both form and content, Pisarev's stumbling errors indicate the difficulties inherent in attempts to dilute a strictly materialistic method of dialectical interpretation of reality with a subjective view of man in society and romantic Promethean notions about the heroic individual struggling against social conformism. His aesthetic views are shared to a surprising degree, although this is not officially recognized, by the prominent old-style Marxist theoretician Plekhanov (see chap. 7), who was also convinced that without great ideas even great art would be reduced to insignificance. But Plekhanov, a more mature thinker, managed to avoid the pitfalls and the confusion inherent in attempts to add touches of dualism to materialism, which is, in the Soviet view, a strictly monistic philosophic system. Such an approach could cause a virtual split in the system and lead to various aberrations and dangerous proliferations of impure materialistic thought such as, on the one hand, dismissal of form as of no consequence to the work of art (Plekhanov, Pisarev) and, ultimately, admission of universals ante rem; or on the other, the trend toward dismissal of content as of no consequence to the critic and literary scholar—the deeply embarrassing thing that happened to Soviet Marxism in the event of Russian formalism. One way or the other, the ideological dangers inherent in all this have long been recognized by astute Soviet Marxist theoreticians, as is evident from the coolness with which the ideas of Plekhanov, Pisarev, and many other formerly prominent socialist thinkers with leftist or rightist idealist leanings are viewed in the Soviet Union today.

The antimaterialistic dialectical approach to art and reality was, on the whole, put forward better and more consistently by the so-called organic branch of Slavophiles (Grigor'ev, Strakhov, Dostoevsky), who will be discussed in the following chapter. They too were afflicted with a tiresome reluctance to come to the point and reveal their positions, because they were afraid to expose to ridicule
their precariously romantic philosophic positions based in objective idealism. But they were less confused about the nature of their stance, or about the need to keep the ideas and methods of their presentation separate, than was Pisarev. Also, as the case of the writer-editor Dostoevsky shows, they were aware of the need to keep apart the functions of critic and creative writer—something that neither Pisarev nor, for that matter, Tolstoy ever really learned to appreciate.