The Slavophiles were more conscious of form than the radicals. In fact, they were thoroughly preoccupied with questions of form in art and literature and with various customs and rituals of Russian religious and communal life that, to them, represented the essence of Russian culture. The Slavophiles were understandably critical of the West and its practical, materialistic, rationalistic culture, which appeared to them soulless and undesirable for Russia. The more conservative Slavophiles, especially those who were inclined to think along conventional lines, venerated old Russian folklore and culture; and many Slavophiles belonged to the provincial gentry and were notably bigoted in their manners and outlook. They often carried their fondness for old Russia and its customs to ridiculous lengths, earning for themselves the unflattering sobriquet *kvas* ("bread-beer") patriots. The less conventional thinkers among the Slavophiles, who preferred to be known as "organic" critics, were more progressive. They thought of Russia in terms of her future rather than her past. They did not want to be identified with the narrowly provincial, frequently philistine point of view of the other Slavophiles who, they believed, deserved the ridicule they received from other critics. Both variants of the Slavophile movement were primarily mystically inclined Russian nationalists and romantics, and their views on art and literature corresponded as a rule. They thought of poetic inspiration as a divine experience, a form of
madness, and regarded poetic creativity as a phenomenon that could not be fully understood or become conscious and therefore should not be analyzed. They scorned the narrow rationalism and “pedestrian” analytical methods of the radicals.

The Slavophiles tended to be critical of Tolstoy’s early work, which seemed to them vacuous, ambiguous, and inconclusive. They found even his war stories, for all their obvious patriotism, curiously lacking an identifiable spirit or mood of Russia, a failure they attributed to a lack of a spirit of narodnost’. Some Slavophile critics, such as Boris Almazov, complained about the sketchiness of Tolstoy’s stories; the titular head of the Slavophile movement, Konstantin S. Aksakov (1817–60), claimed that persistent analytical patterns in Tolstoy’s narrative created phantom images that stuck in the reader’s memory “like a bone in his throat,” 2 interfering with the enjoyment of the story. Aksakov formulated the aesthetic views of many Slavophiles when he insisted that Tolstoy curb his enthusiasm for further incisive analysis and pay more attention to artistic synthesis, which in his stories was, as yet, notably thin. This point was picked up and pursued by the originator of the organic theory, the poet-critic Apollon A. Grigor’ev (1822–64), who was close to the Slavophiles but resisted identification with them. His critiques of Tolstoy’s work will be discussed later in this chapter.

The traditionalists among the Slavophiles were even more explicit about their preference for Tolstoy the artist and their rejection of him as a thinker and philosopher. The writer-critic V. G. Avseenko3 (1842–1913) and the poet-critic N. F. Shcherbina4 (1821–69), both fairly influential in Slavophile circles, praised the accomplished simplicity of Tolstoy’s narrative and the vividness of his characterizations. They regretted, however, his irreverent attempts to philosophize and moralize about subjects in which he held no authority. The authoress-critic Evgeniia Tur (nom de plume of Elizabeth, Countess Salias de Tournemir [1815–92]) also praised the vividness and simplicity of Tolstoy’s narrative, but at the same time complained bitterly of the cynicism of the author and his tendency “to rhapsodize savagery, murder, and mayhem” in The Cossacks.5 The chief editor of the ultraconservative journal the Citizen, Prince Vladimir P. Meshchersky (1839–1914), objected to Tolstoy’s “indecent” methods of psychological investigation.6 Another highborn Slavophile, Prince P. A. Viazemsky,7 concurred with the opinions of a string of irate generals who published angry
pamphlets and articles attacking Tolstoy's war. Viazemsky challenged both the facts and theories of War and Peace, but found great artistic merits in the book. The poet-critic V. P. Burenin (1841–1926) and his employer, the famous writer-editor-publisher A. S. Suvorin (1834–1912), expressed similar views. Both had followed Tolstoy's career since the publication of War and Peace, and had published many articles about Tolstoy. Both accepted Tolstoy's art without reservations but expressed serious misgivings about Tolstoy's ideas. Extremists among the conservative faction of Russian society produced numerous pamphlets, books, and articles attacking Tolstoy's religious views.

As a rule, though, the Slavophiles were less intolerant of Tolstoy's alien ideas and aspirations than were the radicals. Several among them appraised Tolstoy in a manner that was quite close to the formal approach employed by the aesthetic critics, and discussed in great detail the specific artistic features and the merits of Tolstoy's work. Among them are the scholarly folklorist Orest F. Miller (1833–89), the very original M. S. Gromeka (1852–83), Iu. N. Govorukha-Otrok (1851–96), Vasilii V. Rozanov (1856–1919), and Konstantin Leont'ev (1831–91). Miller, who was close to the pochvenniki, i.e., the organic group of critics, and an ardent admirer of Dostoevsky, held a view of Tolstoy that was comparable to that of Turgenev (see chap. 4). He thought Tolstoy did not display in War and Peace the qualities of intellectual discipline because he lacked formal education. Miller rejected Tolstoy's views on history and philosophy as unscholarly and insubstantial. He also complained about lack of artistic unity in Tolstoy's work, in which several story lines were too loosely knit together (na zhivuiu nitku). Miller agreed with N. N. Strakhov's assessment of Anna Karenina as a brilliant work on a trivial theme but further charged that it was ideologically pointless and had an ambiguous moral message, criticisms also made by Dostoevsky (see below). Miller stressed, though, that artistically Anna Karenina was a work of genius. The teacher-turned-critic M. S. Gromeka wrote a brilliant book-length critique of Anna Karenina that created quite a stir when it became known that Tolstoy himself approved of Gromeka's position, remarking that Gromeka had said in so many words "what I had tried to express in pictures." The book underwent several editions and earned its author general recognition as a major critical talent for his remarkably astute analysis of the underlying psychological motives of the
author and characters of *Anna Karenina*. For one reason or another, Gromeka's book is completely ignored today. Gromeka supplied sensitive analyses of Stiva Oblonsky, Karenin, and Vronsky, all of whom he described as basically quite ordinary, decent, average people, very successfully drawn. Gromeka claimed that Dolly Oblonsky was the real heroine of the book—a female Karataev, i.e., a representative of Tolstoy's philosophy of life. He defined Levin's philosophy of life as a ceaseless quest for life's truth, and Levin himself as healthy because he was a perenniably "unfinished" person. But, he said, as a characterization Anna herself was a failure. She was meant to be a realistic portrayal of a woman of the world; instead, she became a distorted personality, for Tolstoy had inadvertently, by modeling her on himself, endowed her with traits that could not exist in real life: she was a female rationalist, an unnatural combination of male and female characteristics. Gromeka was thus also fairly close to the analysis of these characters by Strakhov (see below). Of interest is Gromeka's analysis of the main conflict in the book, which, he said, was missed by the other critics: *Anna Karenina* was deeply imbued with rationalism, but Tolstoy was advocating an antirationalistic point of view. This created an irrational and fascinating tension between the material and the author's own attitude, and left dissatisfied those critics who were unable to see the deeper organic unity of the book. Gromeka echoed Strakhov's argument even in claiming that Tolstoy's short story "What People Live By" provided the answers to the questions raised and left unanswered by the novel: the solution to life's problems was to turn away from rationalism. Many of Gromeka's judgments (as well as those of Iu. N. Govorukha-Otrok) were shared by Strakhov, whereas others were similar to those of Merezhkovsky (see chap. 6). Merezhkovsky also agreed with the paradoxical Rozanov, who wrote extensive rambling critical studies of Gogol and Dostoevsky but only brief, casual and perfunctory critiques of Tolstoy. Because of his importance to Russian literature his critiques of Tolstoy deserve to be mentioned. Rozanov saw *War and Peace* as a breakthrough in the quest for indigenous Russian forms of literature begun by Pushkin, the importance of whose pioneering work of exploration was not perceived or noted by his contemporaries or, for that matter, anyone but the organic critics, who were alone in their understanding of the history and destinies of the Russian people. Rozanov referred to the theme of
War and Peace as a quest for inner harmony. He accused Tolstoy of contradicting himself in The Kreutzer-Sonata. The rest of Rozanov's whimsical opinions, particularly those he shared with Merezhkovsky, seem paradoxical, implausible, and insubstantial. He cites, for example, the absence of religious mysticism in Tolstoy's works as proof of Tolstoy's innate irreligiosity; referring to D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky's assessment of Tolstoy's talent as Shakespearean in scope and nature, Rozanov quipped that in matters of religious Tolstoy was Shakespeare who had moved into the house of Gogol's philistine female character Korobochka (Mrs. Littlebox). On the whole, Rozanov's comments on Tolstoy deserve only brief consideration.

Konstantin Leont'ev's remarkable study Analysis, Style, and Atmosphere, although also highly subjective, deserves more respect. It may easily have served as the source of inspiration for some of Merezhkovsky's more remarkable ideas. Leont'ev compared War and Peace, Anna Karenina, and several stories by Tolstoy and reached some notable conclusions. He discovered objectionable anachronisms in the essence or atmosphere (veianie) of War and Peace, which, he claimed, Tolstoy had simply transferred back in time from his own period in history. The pace of life in War and Peace, he said, was too fast for the more leisurely generation described there. The famous Tolstoyan character Platon Karataev, who is generally assumed to represent the essence of the Russian people in Tolstoy's view, was, in Leont'ev's view, simply a nostalgic projection of stale Slavophile sentiment of the 1860s. The moral and mental disposition and keen self-awareness of Pierre Bezukhov and Andrei Bolkonsky belonged to the restless, nervous generation of that decade. Echoing Turgenev's comments in private letters, Leont'ev suggested that Tolstoy did not know enough to move far enough back in time to avoid such discrepancies. Leont'ev thus assessed Tolstoy's evolution as a creative artist in terms of a struggle for increased self-discipline. He looked at Tolstoy's style and methods of analysis, and concluded that both aspects of Tolstoy's art were slowly evolving toward simplicity and restraint. Complexities of style and awkward sound effects, still quite evident in War and Peace, had given way in Anna Karenina to a more restrained narrative that depended on intrinsic qualities of meaning, rather than sound and syntax. The pithy, folksy turns of phrase that created such a wooden, garish effect in Tolstoy's early stories about
the people ("Polikushka"), yielded to the perfectly simple, transparent language of his later stories for the people ("What People Live By"). Still, however, Tolstoy returned to overrefined psychological analysis whenever he neared the subject of death, as though he could rarely resist the temptation to peek beyond the grave. Leont'ev lavishly praised the restraint with which the death of Prince Andrei was depicted in *War and Peace*, but objected to the descriptions of many other deaths in Tolstoy's works, including those of Ivan Ilych and Anna Karenina. He found these descriptions overloaded with pure speculation. Leont'ev also objected to the excessive ornamentation of Anna's dreams; the black bag in the dreams of Anna Karenina and Ivan Ilych seemed ridiculous and indecent: a persistent, meaningless, and unaesthetic nightmare, a residual "physiologic excess" of early naturalism (*natural'naia shkola*) in Russian literature.

So, the Slavophiles' complaints focused mainly on what they called inartistic, rational, analytical elements in Tolstoy's work, which predominated over artistic synthesis. They objected to this rationalism, his attempts to explain what had not been explained in life and had traditionally remained mysterious—the hidden workings of nature, of history, and of destiny. The Slavophiles felt that Tolstoy was out of line in meddling with things that were not meant for man to know or understand. They even felt that in using his special methods of analysis Tolstoy interfered with nature. His probing and philosophizing spoiled what would otherwise be perfect works of literary art. But they were willing to forgive Tolstoy for the excesses of his analysis and welcomed the rest of his work because they regarded it as worthy representations of Russia: they saw that in the long run he had imbued enough of it with the spirit of Russian *narodnost*' and thought of him as an important national writer. They were enough aware of the intrinsic merits of his works to excuse extrinsic defects of his curiously self-analytic art.

**THE ORGANIC CRITICS**

The organic critics were interested in psychology. But even though they referred to themselves as psychological realists, they were philosophic idealists. They argued for the autonomy of the literary experience, but actually used literature to promote their belief that ideas had primary reality and a substance that is independent of matter. They studied Tolstoy's work with the aim of
understanding its moral core. Their own theoretical assumptions, however, were never clearly formulated, and their content was obscure and esoteric to begin with; many problems sprang from following their organic theory and method. They tried to probe the meaning of the universe and tried to discover its secrets, but avoided formulas as being oversimplifications of reality and scorned rational analysis. They preferred synthesis, the inspired approach. The paradox is characteristic of their writings. They felt that synthesis does more justice to the unknowable than clarity can do, for uniformity of meaning robs the mystery of its darkness and sets it up as something that is known. The organicists felt that is a usurpation, and that it leads the human intellect into hubris by pretending that it, the intellect, has got hold of the transcendent mystery by a cognitive act and has grasped it. The paradox therefore reflects a higher level of intellect and, by not forcibly representing the unknowable as known, gives a more faithful picture of the real state of affairs. It was this approach that made their theory most difficult to follow and understand even in Russia, where many of its premises were known and even popular with some other critics. A satisfactory definition of the organic theory has not yet emerged. The principle of definition implies a formulatable essence, and it is impossible to reduce the organic principle to a reliable formula. The greatly varying organic statements have so far failed to coalesce so that they demonstrate a clear design. The best one can do is offer a hypothesis. Since the theory is relevant to almost everything the organic critics said about Tolstoy, and familiarity with it cannot be assumed, I am prefacing my analysis of their work on Tolstoy by a new hypothesis about the nature of the organic theory of life, literature, and aesthetics, the theory in which works of literature parallel living organisms and must serve a moral purpose.

The organicists saw life not as a product of organized matter but as an external force that enters the material world for some arcane purpose. Their ideas about it were thus radically different from the usual understanding of the nature of life. Their theory, which is an irrational, open-ended dialectic system, seems to be based on two assumptions whence all of its conclusions are derived. (1) Objectively, it explains the universe in terms of an everlasting conflict between incompatible opposites such as form (matter) and formlessness (energy). The conflict is sometimes temporarily resolved in an
unstable conjunction, which enables an incommensurate, unknowable, "wholly other" third element—life—to manifest itself. (2) Subjectively, the theory seems to assume that form, a basic intellectual concept, artificially limits perception by the definitions it imposes. Life, which is formless and not definable, therefore seems insubstantial, because the normal intellect, which operates by placing limits on concepts, cannot grasp the indefinite and so perceive the essence of life. Perception can proceed only from a compromise between lifeless form and formless life, whereby life is framed by a body and inhabits what amounts to a limiting form. The intellect prefers form to substance, formula to meaning, the container to the contained, the part of the whole. Life, however, vaguely discloses itself within intuitive perception such as inspiration, whereas its essence cannot be perceived by the intellect at all. And so, reason, which by its very nature is opposed to intuition, tends to ignore life as the least adequately defined part and prefers to deal with its container—the animal form. Reason, being analytical, is thus always at odds with life. The result is a strange paradox: human reason, which is the sine qua non of consciousness, is "anti-life" because it seeks to define, and life will not supply this understanding. The Russian organicists, who equated morality with life and immorality with death (see Dostoevsky's symbolic story "Bobok" [1877]), asserted that this conflict between life and reason has a double meaning. On the one hand, it promises an increase in consciousness, a superior, even artistic, awareness; on the other, it endangers life, the moral point of view. Consciousness of a limited existence in the physical world increases as it is fed by deadly logic, and conscience, which is rooted in imagination and a sense of a limitless metaphysical existence, becomes enfeebled. The theory thus suggests a rising conflict between conscience (moral awareness) and consciousness (intellectual awareness) from a change in thinking patterns.

GRIGOR'EV

The organic theory was developed and promulgated by the poet and critic Apollon A. Grigor'ev (1822–64), whose views anticipate those of Henri Bergson. Grigor'ev imagined life to be a great current (veianie), a mysterious creative-destructive energy that gushes forth through matter and makes it come alive by impregnating it. He saw organic growth as a synthesis of matter and energy,
in which rigid known material and fluid unknown energy elements of knowable empirical reality (elements he alternately describes as "static" and "dynamic," "body" and "soul") come together to form a permeable substance, the living tissue. This substance, figuratively, provides an opening into the fourth dimension—the realm outside empirical experience—an opening through which the unknowable third substance, the transcendent wind (veianie) of life, inspiration, may pass. Grigor'ev held that life is commonly corrupted or stopped by faults in this opening, impurities in the filter that result from undue stress or imbalance between its two elements. The stops are revealed to us in rigid matter, violent manifestations of chaotic energy, or living beings in whom life is impeded or warped through confinement to a faulty frame. People thus suffer physical or mental disease; they disintegrate into madness or death. Grigor'ev further identified static form with a creative feminine material, and dynamic formlessness with a destructive masculine spiritual principle, asserting that the predominance of one or the other element in nature accounts not only for the presence of the sexes, but also for two basic types of animal and man: the domesticated, indolent, conservative and defensive victim, and the aggressive, wild, dynamic predator. The encounter of the two principles would be akin to sex, inasmuch as it would express the creative-destructive impulse and the potential for renewed life, and the victim's form would be violated in the process. Assimilation of old forms and the formation of new ones, through conflict, assault, destruction, absorption, and remaking, were seen by Grigor'ev as an organic and essential part of life.

Grigor'ev found literature to be a reflection of this process, and subject to the same mysterious laws. Creative writing seemed a violent, often destructive process of conflict and experimentation in which intellectual opposites—facts and ideas, known and unknown ingredients—are fused in a work of art. His argument proceeded from the commonplace of speculative (idealistic) philosophy, which recognizes three kinds of data: (1) known, (2) unknown but knowable, i.e. accessible to rational understanding, and (3) unknowable, i.e., remaining forever beyond the limits of human understanding. Grigor'ev held that old facts and ideas were the known, and new facts and ideas the unknown but knowable, materials of literature (i.e., they could become new knowledge). Inspiration, however, belonged to the realm of the unknowable. It was life
itself; it could be experienced but never rationally understood. Inspiration (life) impregnated the poet’s mind, for example, only if it contained a sufficiently seasoned, harmonious blend of the poet’s own ideas and experiences. During the process, the poet teeters on the verge of insanity (mental death) from the strain involved in putting together facts and ideas. The theory suggests a vital moral role for literature, as a balanced composition resulting from such creative effort would reflect the success of the synthesis; although it would be limited by its form and thus never perfect, such a work of art nevertheless has the capacity to inspire others and cause healthy growth in their minds. On the other hand, works with too few original ideas and many already familiar (commonplace) ingredients exercise a stifling effect.

The organic critics are worthy of note for their investigation of “intellectual limitation” (Roland Barthes calls it “bourgeois consciousness” in *Writing Degree Zero*), moral and mental philistinism, and its attendant phenomenon, bourgeois art. Grigor’ev explained this phenomenon as a result of eccentricity—overloading with known ingredients—facts—to the detriment of fresh, original ideas, or, conversely, overloading the work with half-formed conventional ideas. Grigor’ev claimed that imbalance between the two empirically knowable ingredients—facts and ideas—caused the departure of the unknowable ingredient—inspiration—stifling life in the composition, thus causing its decomposition. According to the theory, an excess of one element in the work would trigger and release, by a kind of induction, excesses of the other in the mind of the reader. Conventional literature on familiar or banal subjects spurred people to antisocial behavior. At the other extreme, abstract art represented a gloomy, lifeless dynamism; intellectual energy unburdened by knowledge of concrete reality manifested patterns of restless, uninspired thought, a sterile refinement of conventional ideas, and weird abstractions. It had a depressing effect and produced a yearning for static, banal experience. Both forms of art were intellectually sterile, and their sensationalism or sentimentalism appealed to the philistine.

Grigor’ev conceived of philistinism, the bourgeois spirit (meshchanstvo), as significant because it was ubiquitous and was an intellectual, rather than cultural, phenomenon. It derived from the tendency of reason to limit itself, deal with known quantities, and so become conventional, prejudiced, and myopic. It could appear
on all levels of culture. In essence it meant deliberate limitation of experience: acceptance of the part for the whole, finding it sufficient for the purposes of understanding, and rejecting the rest. In this intellectual parochialism one was satisfied with a rational, materialistic explanation of the mysteries of the universe—or with the opposite, pure mysticism. Either tendency, if unchecked, led to a rejection of everything unknown and acceptance of only apparently new variations on customary experiences and ideas. Since this state of mind favored rejection, Grigor'ev called it negativism (otritsanie). A philistine artist was often an accomplished craftsman who would paint or write on trivial matters in a beautiful, highly refined style. His work would be characterized by a kind of glossy sleekness and plumpness, a smoothness of form. His life, intellectual and otherwise, however, was restless, the condition of a person who has nightmares of being stifled and seeks to awaken to a higher state of consciousness. He suffered from chronic mental imbalance because of his lack of new ideas. Because he could not inspire, he attempted to shock. The stimulation or surprise he could effect was often mistaken for, but was not, growth, Grigor'ev said; it was only a negative, i.e., an illusory effect. Philistine literature always was and would be imbalanced, whether in a static or a dynamic sense; therefore it could never stimulate growth. Nor could it restore balance to the life of the individual. Only a harmonious blend between static facts and dynamic ideas produced the conditions necessary for inspiration, which was the only means of creating a living work that could inspire others.

Grigor'ev's brilliant, "savage" mind (in Claude Lévi-Strauss's sense of the word) had difficulty in showing logically the development of his abstractions, and he preferred to demonstrate them with concrete examples. He asserted that Pushkin was the ideal Russian poet because of his unsurpassed ability to sustain the precarious but vital balance between known and unknown ingredients in art. Similarly, he repeated ad nauseam that the playwright A. N. Ostrovsky (1823–86), although only a mediocre talent, nevertheless promoted the same healthy balance in his plays. Their works, Grigor'ev found, have the great benefit of stimulating moral growth in Russia's people and writers. Grigor'ev named the highly renowned Russian writer Ivan A. Goncharov (1812–91) as an example of a bourgeois writer—an intellectual philistine of powerful talent who was too fond of the known (static) patterns of experi-
ence. He compared him with the famous poet Lermontov, who, he said, was a snob with a puerile fascination for conventional violence and stale romantic conventions borrowed from Europe. Both Goncharov and Lermontov were rationalists—highly self-conscious artists who lacked original ideas and dealt in idées reçues, which made them intellectual retainers and moral philistines no matter how excellent their verbal skills. Thus, Grigor'ev explained, their art was lopsided. It was slick and precious, heavy with conventional elements and, consequently, somewhat banal. Each of them possessed an enormous talent but, lacking ideas, they devoted their talents almost exclusively to the refinement of form.

But the most interesting phenomenon of the opposite, dynamic kind that Grigor'ev found in Russian literature was the fascinating case of Gogol—the man of weird, half-formed ideas—the strange philistine genius of the dynamic extreme. Gogol was a mystic trickster, an antirationalist who hated book learning. He did not know Russia, so he populated her with his own ideas, practically reinvented her in his own image, and with startling results. According to Grigor'ev, Gogol, whose thinking (as opposed to his artistic intuition) tended to be negative, was responsible for spawning a new trend of negativism in Russian literature, a destructive and sterile trend related to Russian nihilism. In Gogol, Lermontov, and Goncharov, furthermore, death or developing insanity followed an intermittent sterility and lack of ideas, caused by lack of inspiration. This sad condition was not alleviated by their great talents, which they never lost; but talent could not substitute for inspiration, Grigor'ev said, despite the common belief.

Grigor'ev wrote his two articles on Tolstoy, both titled "Contemporary phenomena in our literature overlooked by our critics," primarily as polemic thrusts at his opponents, the radical critics. He wanted to suggest that they were failing to see life: failing in their responsibility as critics to discover, trace, and stimulate the significant phenomena of contemporary life reflected in literature. His second purpose was to assess Tolstoy as a writer, discuss what good Tolstoy's work could do in stimulating life in Russia, and compare his work with that of other writers. Grigor'ev was the first to discover and discuss Tolstoy's "creative tensions," which he described as a psychological conflict between Tolstoy's unconscious artistic and conscious analytical qualities: a conflict, as he saw it, between an unholy tendency to "cleave, discern, and rift his way
into the secret of things,” and a reciprocating unconscious urge to make whole, create, and synthesize. Tolstoy’s potential as a future intellectual leader of the nation was beyond question, Grigor’ev said. Tolstoy had great talent and thought as a national writer should; he shared with other writers the prevailing mood of morbid negativism that, to Grigor’ev, was a valid spirit of the times, meant to rid Russian life and culture of an excess of alien customs. Grigor’ev, moreover, offered an imaginative hypothesis explaining the development of Tolstoy’s talent. Tolstoy, interested in the major topics of the age, did not yield to self-deception or self-promotion; he was neither morbidly self-conscious, enamored of foreign ideals, nor ready to embrace trivial conventional ideals (ideal’chiki). Yet, unlike Pushkin, who was born a perfectly balanced person, Tolstoy was handicaped by an overly analytical turn of mind. This caused his initially one-sided development and temporarily immobilized him as a creative writer by robbing him of inspiration. Analysis, Grigor’ev claimed, caused a host of concomitant problems. Tolstoy almost became a nihilist by way of turning into a youthful skeptic because he felt he could not trust the ideal element in life and had to rely on facts. He saw the concrete, static element in life as the only reliable reality and thus became a one-sided materialist. The logical consequence of this was that he had to make the meek type his only real hero. Furthermore, he was preoccupied with death because he had pushed his analysis past the outer limits of known life into abstractions. His current creative impasse was the result of lack of inspiration, an inevitable disorientation in the wake of excessive preoccupation with analyzing ephemeral phenomena. Critics should have investigated the nature of Tolstoy’s analysis, Grigor’ev said, and since they had not, he offered to explain his rather esoteric conclusions.

To show some of the underlying causes of Tolstoy’s malaise, Grigor’ev employed biographical analysis. He claimed that Tolstoy’s personal circumstances were forcing him to assume an unduly analytical, defensive posture. The combination of an innately analytical mind, an aristocratic background, and a foreign education had seriously alienated Tolstoy from his roots—the Russian people—and made him restless and dissatisfied with himself. He was determined to reestablish his roots in Russian life to ameliorate his restlessness. Suspicious from childhood about the true value of his sterile, highly artificial circumstance, he found out
early that he could explore his situation by analytical probing. His choice of analysis as a means of attacking his problem required no explanation. However, his analysis was combined with an inherent trait: a ruthless perfectionist's desire for unqualified truth, which finite reason could never hope to obtain. The combination of the two traits constituted a move in the wrong direction. Analysis, Grigor'ev said, was the correct tool for removing sham; but constructive endeavor required synthesis—something Tolstoy was reluctant to employ. Thus Tolstoy was straying from an originally sound creative direction, as one-sided analysis caused a failure to know life through skepticism and rejection of the ideal element in life. As a result, Tolstoy found himself leaning toward abstract art.

Grigor'ev speculated on the reasons analysis had such an effect. Tolstoy, he said, mistrusted anything that could not be analyzed. He came to mistrust the motives behind every lofty sentiment, because in his milieu it was frequently suggested by baser motives. He dug for such motives in order to discover the real forces behind people's actions. Although he sometimes encountered phenomena that seemed genuine and resisted differentiation (such as real goodness of the heart), he continued his suspicious treatment of lofty motives—all that was unusual and complex, yet resisted dismemberment by analysis. He was encapsuled in a small aristocratic world of artificial values, and here he saw himself as an arbiter of absolute morality and sometimes applied his individual judgment too zealously. He painted, like a beacon in the maze of confusing experiences, the slightly contrived, but lovingly drawn, conventional ideal—an icon of his dead mother, whom he never knew—and, thus oriented, proceeded ruthlessly to analyze his own soul. Because he possessed an unusually sophisticated technique of analysis, Tolstoy was soon reaching into a psychological void where he found himself chasing shadows and creating abstractions.

Grigor'ev found in Tolstoy's analysis features of abstract art—a tendency toward narrow intellectual concentration and an unswerving effort that literally did transcend the real world. His analysis became a rampaging monster of a process of progressive division, a one-way deductive method that could not stop and went right past infinitesimal into imaginary detail. Tolstoy's analysis, he found, was more specific and accurate, less biased and arbitrary than the analysis of others. But it was also more abstract and grimly intense, and it indicated a disturbing degree of contempt for the
integrity of the analyzed object. Tolstoy showed no respect for the deepest integral recesses of the human soul, places that were so vulnerable that they were better left untouched by analysis. The stress of conventional morality made his soul writhe and contort, practically forcing it into a face-saving twist. The twisting occasioned a renewed round of suspicion, pressure, persecution, and punishment, his ego always emerging the victor. It was a vicious circle that made him finally abandon autobiographical analysis in the middle of *Youth* (the novel was never finished). He made there some faint moves to inflate himself. He exaggerated the size of his vices to make them appear more sinister and formidable than they really were. He extended his analysis to the point of boring some readers. Unintentionally, the distension served a creative purpose: it underscored the contrast between the real and the artificial imaginary world he was creating for himself and showed that his unreal world lacked substance. He then extended his search for clues to truth into a wider area and broke out of his self-contained little universe; but he could no longer change his approach, and he continued his analytical practices as before. By then the infinite reality of the universe had shrunk for him to a finite concept—the mere equivalent of truth and simplicity. The attitude manifested itself in a compensatory tendency to mistake size for greatness and was expressed with grandiloquent language. Occasionally, Tolstoy still met with some unusual phenomenon that would resist his frantic efforts to analyze it; and the fact of its being nondifferentiable, yet not simple, and thus possessed of genuinely live quality, would stun Tolstoy for a spell into unconscious creativity. But when he regained control, he went on as before to seek out and destroy falsity, artifice, and other strictly negative values, i.e., he indulged in negativism.

Grigor’ev tried to show how this trend toward egocentricity had brought Tolstoy close to intellectual philistinism. Initially intended as a mere device to reach the truth, analysis, once it got past objective reality (the world of objects), became in Tolstoy’s hands an instrument of ego-expansion as he began to use it to explore his own inner world. The process was accompanied by distortion, manifestations of which could be noticed in his stories, such as a shrinking outside world. Analysis, indeed, showed signs of evolving its own rudimentary ego by becoming an end in itself. The development, Grigor’ev granted, was very complex. A number of threads
ran through Tolstoy's analytical stories that suggested to Grigor'ev a telescopic inversion in Tolstoy's view of the real outer and ideal inner worlds. As truth was becoming identified in Tolstoy's mind with simplicity (which is a further limitation of the concept), analysis was showing signs of unlimited expansion into complexity: (1) endless progressive differentiation reaching into imaginative detail, (2) gradual and all-pervasive intensification, and (3) exaggeration and distortion. This morbid tendency toward a mad analytical hyperactivity in Tolstoy's brain was apparently being held in check, though with increasing difficulty, by an innate sense of proportion that Tolstoy evidently still had and that Grigor'ev thought was a sign of genuine artistic talent, but that nevertheless was threatened by an incipient move toward intellectual philistinism that needed to be checked.

Because Tolstoy's analysis, Grigor'ev said, was furnished with a huge talent, it sometimes achieved great penetration and amazing verisimilitude. But eventually it would lead Tolstoy into the philistine realm of abstract art and toward vicious and endless refinement of sterile ideas. Eventually it would escape his control, produce mere conjecture, and destroy virtually all lofty stirrings within Tolstoy's soul, as, Grigor'ev said, had indeed occurred in several stories written in the late 1850s—stories in which analysis had found nothing to do besides wholesale destruction of ideals, after which it diffused into generalities and petered out in a kind of Ausklang in a minor key—a sad and lofty pagan lament about lost ideals that Tolstoy had made for himself and then deprived of meaning by analyzing them. Tolstoy's search for new ideals while he refused to admit the reality of the dynamic element as a real factor in life proved sterile and disappointing, and the search was brought to a grinding halt amidst confusion and despair. His most recent stories were all characterized by a depressing mood of hopelessness, a result of negativism. Tolstoy felt obliged to revere only that which he knew, but commonplace ideals were limited, and most such ideals were not very impressive. On other ideals, Grigor'ev charged, Tolstoy wasted his analysis. Meek characters and antiheroes could not replace the dynamic hero, yet Tolstoy failed to create dynamic characters and to affirm their heroic natures; his further explorations discovered only a void. Tolstoy made one more desperate attempt at finding a limited (i.e., philistine) solution to all sorts of existential problems by trying to define
the meaning of life in terms of conventional domesticity in *Family Happiness*, where he vainly tried to simplify the problem. The attempt left him dissatisfied artistically, and he lapsed into a mood of somber resignation and apathy in 1860. Depressed and bewildered by his enormous creative problems, he simply did not know where to turn. The mood of apathy, Grigor'ev said, was quite understandable, but it was not final. A genuine creative talent like Tolstoy's could not remain repressed for long.

Having outlined what he believed to be Tolstoy's special problems of creativity, Grigor'ev proceeded to show that there was not too much danger that Tolstoy's talent would be stifled by intellectual philistinism. Grigor'ev demonstrated the innate vitality of Tolstoy's talent by showing that it was developing not only toward abstraction but also in the direction of synthesis, organic integration, and a balanced and imaginative treatment of both the static and the dynamic elements in life. The movement was evident in his works so far, which showed a normal pattern of growth from purely experimental analytical studies, to crude attempts at lifelike development of, for the most part, preconceived notions, to integrated artistic creations that successfully embodied the results of previous creative experiments built upon observation and experience:

Tolstoy's activity, as it has been shaping up so far, can actually be divided into three categories: (1) purely analytical works such as *Childhood* and *Boyhood* and *Youth*; (2) artistic sketches that attest to an extraordinary power and originality of talent but still have only the character of studies, a character that is purely formal, superficial, such as "The Snowstorm," and "The Two Hussars"; and (3) results of analysis, more or less successful and accomplished, where the artist already tries to create real, live types, to embody in images that which he had obtained previously by means of analysis. These stories are either mere attempts, amazing though they may be, but still rather bare, dogmatic pieces such as "The Notes of a Billiard Marker," "The Raid," "Albert," "Lucerne," "Three Deaths," or else they are already perfectly organic, live creations, such as the war stories and "Family Happiness." It goes without saying that such categorization is true with regard only to the most general character of these works. The organic element, the element of artistic creativity, is present, and present to an astounding degree, in works that have a completely analytical character; conversely, elements of analysis, and the boldest analysis, enter also into the artistic sketches. This is so because Tolstoy's activity as a whole is an alive, organic creativity. And I am making this arbitrary division only as a
To suggest that Tolstoy's struggles in the evolution of his basic narrator compared with those of other great writers such as Pushkin, Grigor'ev outlined the formidable problems involved in creating a character who would be thoroughly alive and not just an abstraction. The task, Grigor'ev said, was arduous and the process complex. A character had to be put together from typical human ingredients but in a combination that would be unique. The concept—the ideal image itself, which so far loomed only in the back of the artist's imagination—was elusive. It had to be captured and dressed in flesh and blood. Such bringing together of the real and ideal ingredients in a live individual character was a process fraught with irrational tensions. The artist had to proceed slowly, cautiously testing his ground. He had to feel his way toward the actual character, groping in the dark for suitable artistic detail while avoiding the pitfalls of stereotyping; he had to struggle with the natural resistance of the component parts to integration. The search for the right detail sometimes produced a mutant: an image that wobbled, doubled, or split. The pressure of the creative effort threatened to throw the author and the product off balance and impede the coming together of its body and soul. Sometimes an image would keep dogging the writer, and he would respond by alternating between the variants:

In the case of any artist, if he is truly an artist, analysis can never be bare: it is invariably clothed in poetic images; sometimes it even fastens onto a single image which then doggedly pursues the artist for the duration of his entire creative life and changes in accordance with its different phases. Sometimes this image, this moral ideal of the artist himself, doubles, as, say, with Pushkin, into Onegin and Lensky, with Lermontov into Arbenin and Zvezdich, and into Pechorin and Grushnitsky. The doubling of the image is of course, always a sign of forward movement in the artist himself who has assumed a critical attitude toward the image that pursues him: and as for results, this splitting is incomparably more productive than, say, the gloomy, intense one-sidedness that could really become legitimized perhaps only once, in the person of Lord Byron. . . .

In any case, whether we look for it in the works of most objective or the works of most subjective artists, we can always eventually find the main image that pursues them. And the broader the basic nature of the artist, the broader will be also his ideal, his favorite image, and
the more true to the national type; but that the moral life of the artist is always embodied in a certain mutating and often doubling image—this is not subject to any doubt whatever.

Tolstoy, too, has this image that keeps dogging him, to which his analysis is fastened, that person in whose name he tells *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, and who in *A Family Happiness* merely changes sex and becomes a woman. The image splits, but it splits only superficially—appearing in "The Notes of a Billiard Marker" and "Lucerne" as Prince Nekhliudov. . . .

In all these stages the struggle is worth a most detailed study. . . . But what is everywhere especially astonishing is the constant inconsistency of the soul that is alive and unique—her stubborn and unruly recalcitrance toward the type to which she is becoming attached, while she displays an intellectually quite consistent attitude—a consistent understanding of the need to absorb the type on the intellectual level. Clearly, then, the type must contain something that the soul finds irresistibly attractive, yet that at the same time has something that she feels she must constantly betray and that therefore must be definitely against her grain. [Pp. 514, 537]

Here, as elsewhere, Grigor'ev said, Tolstoy's most durable characteristic was his tendency to transgress and overstep the bounds. For instance, his basic narrator, although well within the broad category of the meek type, was far more complex. He was a full-fledged individual, an organic personality, somewhat lacerated in psyche, but in any case not a foil, a mere variant, as the characters of other writers tended to be. This meant that Tolstoy had moved a step ahead of them:

In splitting, this image . . . represents only the extreme limits of the analysis that distinguishes the hero of *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* from other contemporary heroes. . . . He and Nekhliudov are not at all like Onegin and Lensky, who are, actually, aspects of Pushkin the lyric poet and Pushkin the epic narrator Belkin; nor are they the same as Arbenin and Zvezdich, who fuse into Pechorin, and not at all the same as Pechorin and Grushnitsky, that is, the ideal and its parody. Nekhliudov is the outer limit of an encompassing psychic process, and more than that—he is the living consequence of that very special circumstance of a so-called aristocratic microcosm to which he is confined like to a shell, and from which the hero of *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* is evidently trying to struggle free. . . . In any event, the psychic process does not result in a split but merely reaches its outer limits. [P. 514]

When Tolstoy created characters of the meek type, Grigor'ev said, he again went to extremes of individualization, even though
his work on such characters remained well within the overall pattern of behavior for the meek type as he appears in the works of other major national writers. This type, first introduced by Pushkin in his character Belkin, had since become something of a fixture in Russian letters. Lermontov, Turgenev, Pisemsky, Goncharov, and Tolstoy all took their turns at him. Literature, Grigor’ev wanted to remind his readers, always developed vivid symbols for the most significant issues that continued, for whatever reason, to concern the nation. The meek character as a literary type thus came into being as a bewildered reaction to the massive cultural upheavals in the preceding epoch, essentially as an artistic means of expressing the frustration of the average Russian in the face of the abuses perpetrated on his land and customs by the elegant foreign aggressor who came to plant his own culture. This situation, becoming intolerable to the indigenous population, needed to be expressed and symbolized in literature to release frustrations. It was also necessary, however, to produce a model character who could deal with the situation. In this sense, Grigor’ev said, the meek type was never meant to become a stock character in Russian literature who represented a permanent variant of the Russian type. He was not meant to develop into the organic personality that Tolstoy created in his works. His significance was merely as a foil to the native Russian predator that Russian writers were developing, who could match the foreign devil with his tricks. But here again Tolstoy went further than the others. By making his meek character come fully alive, he made him assume the functions of both types. And he discarded the predator altogether, thus inadvertently foiling, perhaps, his own literary task.

Comparing other characteristics of Tolstoy with salient features of the Russian national character in order to establish Tolstoy’s qualifications as a national writer, Grigor’ev claimed that, to some degree, the tendency to overdo things was organic to the Russian national character. The Russians always overshot the bounds in whatever they undertook. This was evident, for instance, in the peculiar fierceness of negativism, a current trend in Russian literature represented by the radical critics, and typical of the current literary trend of naturalism, to which he referred as bare (stark) realism. Negativism, he said, was just another aspect of the same visceral reaction of the natives to outlandish conditions that had prevailed in Russia for decades, having been triggered by the sud-
den massive cultural invasion of the Petrine epoch. It was an instinctive extreme reaction, one that gave vent to the intense dislike of fancy foreign innovations, and expressed a yearning for older, more stable conditions that would presumably resume if one could eliminate the fancy frills from life. For in a crisis one bent down to the ground to draw strength from Mother Earth, as national folk heroes did, according to ballads, in times of trouble. Coupled with a national penchant for overdoing things, negativism in Russia took on extreme, sometimes even bizarre and violent, forms. Tolstoy was thus well within the broader scope of the times as well as the Russian national character.

Tolstoy was potentially a national writer of importance, Grigor'ev said, and he seemed to be moving toward a more organic, better-balanced approach to art. In a number of his stories he even displayed an unconscious admiration for the aggressor-hero whom he consciously tried to exclude from his works. The weakling hero of his *Youth*, indeed, was a better man than Lermontov's Pechorin, the snob who patterned his life on outlandish notions and was thus a traitor to the cause and culture of his native land (*A Hero of Our Times*). Unlike other heroes of Russian fiction who were of gentle birth, Tolstoy's protagonist was progressive and went along with the times. He broke the artificial bounds of the high society to which he belonged in search of less restricted ideals for his life. Tolstoy, Grigor'ev said, could not help searching for more liberal ideals, and therein lay his value for Russia as a future writer. Even against excesses he moved as a poet, not as an analyst, unlike other, mediocre writers on the current scene:

Tolstoy is a poet, just as Turgenev is a poet. Even if he denies the validity of any “lofty” feelings in the soul, this still does not lead him to the philistine prosaism of Pisemsky or the bureaucratic practicality of Goncharov. Least of all does his analysis lead him toward utilitarianism. His answer to utilitarianism is “Lucerne,” where he laments the highly perishable world of art, passion, history in a little yarn that unexpectedly startled everybody when it appeared because it was so out of joint with the spirit of the times. But there was nothing to be startled about. What did the critics want from Tolstoy? . . . First and foremost he is a poet. He castigates “lofty” feelings in the human soul only when they are forced, strenuously uplifted, where, in a word, the frog is being blown up to the size of an ox. And it is only occasionally that he really indulges in excesses, such as in preferring the profound grief of the old nana [*Childhood*] to the no less profound grief of the old countess, or in the depiction of a Caucasian hero who is
really a hero, and a hero no less than the meek captain Khlopov, only he is a hero of his own epoch, the epoch of Marlinsky. [P. 540]

Most of Tolstoy's creative problems could be traced to a dearth of spontaneity in his approach, Grigor'ev explained; there was an important difference between an inborn critical faculty and an acquired, deliberate variety, which was a product of intellectual training and required constant conscious control. Grigor'ev therefore concluded that Tolstoy's main problem was character instability. Tolstoy was a congenitally inconstant individual whose creative and critical faculties continuously threatened to fall out of joint by becoming overly intense, creating a condition of imbalance that blocked inspiration. Unlike Pushkin, who was a naturally balanced genius and could go wherever he wanted because nothing ever seriously interfered with his mental stability, Tolstoy constantly had to battle various tendencies to excess. His growth as an artist was therefore impeded, if not stopped and deflected. A restless and dynamic rationalist, he tried to steady himself by an excessive attachment to the physical world of forms, and to discard or deny the validity of all manifestations of the dynamic element in life—energy. Yet forms, the epitome of the world of appearances, never satisfied him. He was always trying to "get under them" (podkapyval-sia). His trouble was that he could never relax enough to lapse into unconscious or semiconscious creativity—the only truly organic, productive kind. His rational consciousness interfered with his irrational unconscious creativity causing tensions and confusion.

Grigor'ev found one example of artistic error due to the interference of intellect (consciousness) in the creative effort in Tolstoy's penchant for applying the realistic standards of his own essentially prosaic, metonymic period to the more metaphoric heroes of the past romantic period. He found another example in Tolstoy's grossly preferential treatment of the feelings of simple people. "Artificial" people could have feelings just as genuine as those of simple people, Grigor'ev said; their feelings merely reflected the dead forms and manners of the past. Tolstoy was castigating the correct things, but going about it in the wrong way. His very fierceness limited his creative perception. Instead of the hatred with which he treated sham and artificiality, he should have used Pushkin's benign, good-humored approach of gentle irony. Once Tolstoy learned how to relax and practice a more organic, less self-conscious creativity, however, he would begin to produce great
works, Grigor’ev predicted. *A Family Happiness* displayed a remarkable, almost feminine sensitivity and deserved a separate essay. Tolstoy’s present creative lull was merely an arrest at the other end of the pendulum. It resulted from the despair of an earnest seeker after truth and artistic fulfillment when he confronted personal imperfections that seemed, but were not, insurmountable; the lull was due to a temporary lack of inspiration caused by inner tensions. Tolstoy, however, knew that he could find fulfillment in life only through creativity.

To his everlasting credit Tolstoy did not, Grigor’ev pointed out, turn to gimmickry when pressed for inspiration. His half-hearted attempt to arrive at a simplified solution to life’s problems in *A Family Happiness* was in no way philistine. His current creative silence was simply a matter of building up creative energy; Tolstoy needed only to return to an organic, semi-conscious creativity. And soon enough, Grigor’ev said, Tolstoy would come out with greater works than ever. Two years later, after Tolstoy’s first full-length novel, *The Cossacks*, and his short story “Polikushka” appeared, Grigor’ev casually noted in another article that he “was right about Tolstoy: the artist in him had finally triumphed over the analyst.”

This unusual, unorthodox critique with its plausible conclusion, which was borne out by subsequent developments, establishes Grigor’ev’s competence as a critic of Tolstoy. His critiques also demonstrate his ties with the civic critics, despite his substantial differences with them. He shared their historicism and, like them, thought that ideas ripened in time and thus belonged to definite periods in history. Like Chernyshevsky and Pisarev he believed that the significance of literature lay in its content, not its form, and he judged a writer by the value of his ideas. Like Chernyshevsky he was more concerned that a gifted writer continue to write than that he review current results of his work, and he thought of criticism as a means to advise, control, and direct him. Sensing in Tolstoy an unusual capacity to express a “new word,” he was ready to assist him. He went further than Chernyshevsky and tried to show Tolstoy what he could do to correct his faults. His critiques demonstrate an unusually astute ability to penetrate into the workings of a creative mind and an ability to discern significant psychological factors. A more serious question, however, is whether his method is adaptable to general use. Grigor’ev offered no principles but rather personal impressions about matters involving the nature of the
literary work, thus revealing the limitations of his organic method, at the center of which remained a void left by a lack of traditional methodology that no discourse about the author and the work can fill. Grigor'ev was hardly a success as a critic and thinker. He was attacked from all sides (most notably by those whom he called philistines) for his inability to formulate his esoteric views. They were ridiculed and dismissed as incomprehensible nonsense, the ravings of an extremely abstract, confused, or demented thinker, and habitually identified by disingenuous opponents as a fixation on the soil (pochva), a bookish peasant theory. Such attacks gave rise to the contemptuous appellation pochvennik, which, by implication, suggested an overly sentimental attachment to the Russian soil. The term descended to his friends and colleagues Strakhov and Dostoevsky, who were inspired by his views and tried to promote them, each in accordance with his own peculiar talent. The essence of the organic theory remained obscure to everyone outside the inner circle of its enthusiasts, even though it may be said that Dostoevsky was the practitioner of the organic method and Strakhov its theoretician.

**STRAKHOV**

Nikolai N. Strakhov (1828–96) was the ablest and most disciplined theorist of the organic method of literary criticism. He was also its most effective proponent. In Rozanov’s opinion he contributed more to the popularization of Grigor’ev’s theories than anyone else. He was a respected author, editor, scholar, philosopher, book reviewer, and literary critic, and a leading interpreter of Tolstoy. He was also Tolstoy’s longtime friend and admirer and wrote ten articles about him and his works.

Strakhov tried to lay a solid foundation for the study of literature according to Grigor’ev’s principles. He approached literature as a philosopher who was primarily concerned with man. He thought of the material aspects of the world as subordinate to the spirit that created the forms of organic life. An organism, for Strakhov, was an actual, rather than a substantial, category, an ingredient in a process in which the spiritual principle acted by “educing itself” and taking possession of matter. But his main concern was with man himself. Man was, for him, the hierarchical crown of nature, its focus and its living center. Acting upon man, nature displayed its hidden essence. Man’s erratic, self-contradictory behavior was
The key to the world's enigma and mystery. The mystery extended beyond the limits of the world, to the absolute. It was therefore futile and wrong to interpret man's conduct rationally. Interpreted rationally, man's destiny led to his dissipation in physical nature. His life was then deprived of meaning, toward which nature moved in man's development. The meaning of human life could be probed with the aid of a literature that rose from the depths of national life and reflected reality in more than rational aspects.

Strakhov's critical views and methods for the study of literature reflect these ideas and are characterized by thorough historicism. In agreement with the precepts of the organic theory, he insisted that to provide healthy control and guide the nation toward spiritual development, literature needed to have a firm basis in national, regional, even local reality. The writer had to be thoroughly familiar with the locale and customs of the region about which he wrote. Strakhov's evaluation of Russian writers also considered the quality of their ideas and their ability to reflect and to contribute to the evolution of the nation's spiritual and historic goals. He judged writers harshly if they failed to make a contribution. Strakhov thought of Gogol, for example, as a writer who failed to see heroic qualities in Russian life. Nikolai E. Saltykov-Shchedrin was a writer of the grotesque, a jester who amused without edifying the public (p. 351). Turgenev lacked a firm ideology, did not know where he was going, and therefore could not be a good critic (pp. 299-306). Strakhov based his opinions of critics on the same principles. He thought that Grigor'ev was the best, if not the only, Russian critic of merit, the founder of Russian criticism. Belinsky was an "enlightener" who had strayed into determinism. A critic, Strakhov said, had to be thoroughly familiar with the background of the work he reviewed. He should not argue with the author needlessly, nor judge him precipitately. His task was to reveal the essence of the work, to understand its soul, to feel its charm, to know its message and its power as an organic and unmediated whole. He would then find the criteria by which to judge it.

Like other Russian civic critics, Strakhov believed that the Russian people and writers needed current models to emulate in life and art. He was enthusiastic about the form and content of *War and Peace*, which he believed served such a purpose. He was concerned with the need to evolve original forms for Russian literature. Euro-
pean forms had served as models for Russian writers too long. These forms were geared to a foreign reality far too complex and rigidly dominated by tradition. That tradition was structured around older, more sophisticated forms of life that had no true counterpart in Russia. For instance, it was difficult to write a typical romance about Russia. Ever since Pushkin, moreover, Russian writers had been struggling to evolve new forms to escape the pressure of foreign molds. Pushkin’s novelette A Captain’s Daughter was an early example of this generic research. It was pursued further by Sergei T. Aksakov (1791–1859) in A Family Chronicle (1856), but War and Peace was the first real breakthrough: a complete prototype, a self-contained work of fiction without too many of the direct referential roots in specific historic reality that characterize nonfiction. War and Peace was not a romance, although it did have a strong romantic interest, Strakhov said. Nor was it a historical novel, since it did not romanticize historical figures. It was a realistic novel written in an open, unpretentious manner that, Strakhov claimed, was peculiarly well suited for writing about the Russian scene, which was relatively unprepossessing—a land poor in spectacular features that discouraged romanticization. Stakhov labeled this Russian genre the family chronicle. He tried to imply a natural formal connection between the genre and the Russian scene. He pointed out that the genre benefited from having few formal restrictions. It had a broad scope and many characters who, if not exactly ideal Russian types, could still be considered attractive models of conduct. It emphasized not so much the unique and individual as the typical familial, tribal characteristics of the people. Its casual, rambling narrative included a great deal of concrete detail without the need to tie it in with an elaborate plot; it sustained simple unpretentious manner, almost like a folk tale, without any of the intricate plot structure found in European romances. The narrative was not studded with incident, adventure, or suspense. Its unpoetic form emphasized content by drawing less attention to itself:

There is in Russian literature a classical work with which War and Peace has more in common than with any other work. That work is Pushkin’s A Captain’s Daughter. [P. 221]

And so, guided by comparison, we have found, at last, a name for the genre to which War and Peace belongs. This is not a romance, and not a historical novel, nor is it even a historical chronicle; it is a family
chronicle. And if we add that what we immediately have in mind is a work of literary art, our definition will be complete. [P. 223]

Strakhov made some effort to suggest that this was a uniquely Russian genre—a factor that would endow it with the characteristics of folk art, an expression of the anti-individualistic Russian mentality and tribal national character:

This is a most original, almost unique genre not found in other literatures. It is a concept that has intrigued Pushkin for a long time, until he finally worked it out to his satisfaction. The two most salient characteristics of this genre, its distinguishing features, are suggested by its name. First of all, it is a chronicle, that is, a simple straightforward narrative without any twists of the plot or involved adventures, and even without a superficial formal unity and cohesion. This form is evidently simpler than a romance, it is nearer actuality, the truth: it wants to be taken for a true story, not just a simple likelihood, a piece of fiction. Second, this is a true story about the life of a family, and not about the adventures of a single protagonist upon whom the entire attention of the reader must focus but about events that are important in one way or another to the whole clan. It is as though the author were equally concerned about all members of the clan whose chronicle he writes, and who are equally heroes as far as he is concerned. And so, the focus of attention, the center of gravity in the book is invariably on the relationships between the members of the clan, their intimate family relationships, and not elsewhere. [P. 223]

Yet, Strakhov said, Tolstoy did not neglect formal considerations. On the contrary, in War and Peace his craftsmanship had reached new levels of artistic maturity. He was able to recreate reality to the smallest detail. And he was equally at home in the depiction of outer reality and the inner world of his heroes, which he conveyed in clear and simple language, thus making it understandable to any reader:

In War and Peace the author's talent is in his complete command. He applies calmly and deliberately the results of what he had obtained in many years of arduous practice. What firmness of hand! What freedom and confidence! What clarity and sharpness of line! It seems as though nothing were too difficult for him; wherever he directs his eye, be it Napoleon's tent, or the upstairs section of the Rostov home—everything reveals itself to him in the smallest detail as though he had the power to see into anything at will—that which is, and that which was. Nothing can stop him; difficult scenes where conflicting emotions struggle within the soul, elusive, barely perceptible feelings he catches as though offhand, and then deliberately
puts on the final touches, draws the last line. He has not only de­
picted for us to see, with the most amazing truthfulness and atten­
tion to detail, say, the unconscious heroic actions performed by Cap­
tain Tushin; he also looked inside the good captain's soul, listened to
and recorded the words that he was whispering to himself without
being aware of what he was doing. [P. 260]

Tolstoy's narrative, Strakhov said, was panoramic but not static.
For all the vividness and pictorial quality of his descriptions, he was
no painter of murals or icons. He achieved his greatest effects with
an ingenious and accomplished realistic technique that avoided di­
rect intrusion by the author. The reader made contact with every­
thing that went on through the senses of the participating charac­
ters. With this technique Tolstoy achieved the impression of tre­
mendous verisimilitude.

Strakhov was most impressed with Tolstoy's psychological skills
and praised the realism and effectiveness of Tolstoy's psychological
descriptions, especially those related to man's eternal concerns:
"The creativity of our artist attains its highest power wherever he
touches upon the everlasting interests of the human soul. Prince
Andrei gave up his interest in mundane affairs on the field of battle
by Borodino where he was mortally wounded. From then on he
had only personal matters to take care of—his meeting with
Natasha and death. The depiction of that meeting and the growing
understanding and inner lucidity achieved by Prince Andrei before
his death is a superb artistic accomplishment, a genuine revelation
of the mysteries of the human heart, staggering in its profundity"
(p. 275). Stakhov therefore defined Tolstoy as primarily a psycho­
logical realist. This factor had, for Strakhov, considerable impor­
tance. Since he was primarily concerned with man, he saw Tolstoy's
epic as a novel about mankind, its failures and its greatness. Tolstoy
had sufficiently perfected his technique of psychological analysis to
achieve undistorted penetration deep inside his characters and to
permit the development of character. Strakhov particularly ad­
mired Tolstoy's skill in revealing and juxtaposing individual and
familial characteristics to bring out the individuality of each charac­
ter:

Count L. N. Tolstoy . . . had made a reputation for himself in his
previous works as an amazing master in the skill of analyzing all
kinds of psychological changes and conditions. This analysis, which
was at that time pursued with a certain impassioned bias, sometimes
became picayune, acquired a tense, incorrect slant. In the new work all these excesses have been eliminated. . . . The artist's powers found their limits and settled within their shores. His whole attention is now focused on the human soul. . . . Nothing distracts the author, and with him the reader, from peering intently into the inner world of individual characters. [P. 195]

The human psyche is depicted in *War and Peace* with a realism unmatched in our literature. . . . We see, for instance, how Count Tolstoy's characters grow. [P. 205]

The individual psychology of Count Tolstoy's characters is so clearly framed by individuality that we can trace the *family traits* of people who are related to each other by blood, . . . to the point where some of the shadings can only be felt, but could be no longer differentiated by words. For some reason one feels, say, that even Vera is a genuine Rostov, whereas Sonia has a soul of a different root. . . . Characteristic traits, national psychological features, are captured and presented with consistent subtlety. . . . Individual psychological features emerge most vividly and with not a trace of exaggeration. [P. 206]

Strakhov was careful not to violate the spirit of the organic theory, which, on the whole, had only negative things to say about analysis. He tried to extol the virtues of Tolstoy's analysis as against the shortcomings of ordinary analysis. He said that Tolstoy's analysis actually served the purposes of synthesis. It was directed at the essential, living features of people and was, as such, selective in the sense that it aimed at uncovering the spiritual substance and rejected the overlay of vain and shallow interests pursued by the majority:

Count Tolstoy's analysis is wholly directed toward ferreting out the genuinely alive manifestations of the human psyche. It is not just a poetic device that randomly dissects every living phenomenon it encounters and indiscriminately incorporates it in art. . . . His analysis is a discriminating tool that cuts deliberately to pieces—yes, but in order to find the living parts and throw away the dead ones! [P. 154]

The poet teaches the reader how to become aware of the ideal, poetic qualities hidden in reality. Poetry is concealed from us by deep layers of triviality, pettiness, filth, and senseless vanity in our commonplace pursuits. We are totally unaware of it because of our own impenetrable indifference, somnolent indolence, and egotism. The poet directs our attention onto all this, so that we see it by the light of his analytical genius that he sheds upon all that *muck in which human life is bogged*, and lets us know how to find even in the darkest corners the
spark of divine fire. . . . This is no Gogol who throws the blinding light of his lofty ideal upon the sordid, hopelessly banal essence of the common man; our artist knows how to discern, in all that awful banality that the world sees, the essential human dignity that still resides in every man. [P. 202]

Committed as he was to notions about the universality of conflict upon which life is based and to the corresponding division of living things into victims and predators, Strakhov had less praise for Tolstoy's other selective practices, such as the preferential treatment accorded in the novel to the meek hero. He heeded Grigor'ev's concern with harmony and the balanced development of the national psyche, and in Grigor'ev's opinion Russians tend toward extremes of sloth, negativism, and stagnation. Strakhov himself deplored the nationwide movement among Russian writers toward a cynicism about personal dynamism and aggressive behavior, while favoring such defensive virtues as patience and fortitude in adversity. He reminded his readers that Grigor'ev always called the lopsidedly skeptical attitude negativism, and ascribed it to the cultural shock experienced by Russia in the post-Petrine period of its history. The shock had forced the Russians into a defensive posture of rejection toward all things foreign, including sophistication and personal dynamism. Strakhov said that for a long time this intrinsically wrong, cynical, philistine attitude had hindered the evolution of a genuinely dynamic positive hero in Russian fiction, but Tolstoy was evidently able to overcome the effects of Gogolian negativism and write about the positive side of Russian reality. Strakhov repeatedly emphasized the importance of War and Peace as a national epic that offered the people standards of uplifting personal conduct. He emphasized the moral value for Russia of new national prototypes of heroic behavior developed by Tolstoy, speaking of them as though they were a valuable tribal hoard, a national treasure:

Purely Russian heroism, the essence of purely Russian heroic behavior in every possible sphere of life—this is what Count Tolstoy gave us, this is the main achievement of War and Peace. If we look back on our literature in the past, we should see more clearly what a tremendous favor the artist has done us. . . .

The task of our whole literature after Gogol consisted mainly in finding prototypes of Russian heroism, to compensate for that negative attitude toward life Gogol adopted, to understand the Russian reality in a wider, more correct sense, so that our national ideal could
no longer flee from us, an ideal without which no nation can survive any more than a body can live without a soul. To find this national ideal of ethical behavior long arduous efforts were needed; the work of search was carried, consciously and unconsciously, by all our artists.

The first to solve the task, however, was Count Tolstoy. He was the first to overcome all such difficulties. He struggled with, and conquered in his own soul, the tendency toward nihilism and, having freed himself from it, began to create images that incorporate the positive sides of Russian life. He was the first to show us the incredible beauty of that ideal which until then only the perfectly harmonious soul of Pushkin was able to see, a soul always open to every great experience. In War and Peace we have again found our precious national ideal, and now no one can take it away from us. [Pp. 282-83]

Nevertheless, Strakhov believed that a balanced view of reality must presuppose the opposite or compensating value in everything. So, he assumed that it was a residue of negativism that was still hindering Tolstoy in his efforts to create positive dynamic heroes. It seemed as though the entire epic was aimed at proving the dynamic hero negative and insubstantial, while giving credit exclusively to the meek, passive type:

War and Peace—this huge, colorful epos—what is it if not an apotheosis of the meek Russian type. [P. 248]

It seems as though the entire story of War and Peace is designed to prove the superiority of passive heroism over one that is active and that everywhere in the novel turns out to be not only vanquished but even ridiculous, not only powerless but harmful. . . .

According to the meaning of the whole story, the predatory type here is deprived of any constructive function. And yet, speaking generally, it can hardly be denied that bold, resolute people would have at least some effect upon the overall course of events. [Pp. 284-85]

Strakhov surmised somewhat regretfully that it was apparently up to another writer to develop an active Russian hero. Tolstoy, at least, did show the moral superiority of the proverbial Russian virtues of patience and long-suffering forbearance over naked aggression. He had proved that the Russian people who were willing to accept the innate limitation on the human frame could, in turn, grow freely in spiritual stature. Western man, symbolized by Napoleon, had chosen the opposite course: he had accepted the limitations of his spiritual makeup by emphasizing his rational nature. As a con-
sequence, he was driven to extend and aggrandize himself with material things, including territory, and further dissipated his spiritual substance. The war of 1812 had demonstrated the superiority of the Russian national ideal—that of "simplicity, goodness, and truth"—over the international Western ideal of aggression and expansion.

Strakhov treated the war of 1812 and its reflection in War and Peace as a holy war where the weapons were moral virtues and the great issue the struggle between them. Accordingly, War and Peace was not only a great national epic but a morality piece. It was meant to expose the false virtues of intelligence, external distinction, accomplishment, and perfection of form subscribed to by the West as empty of substance and valuable only insofar as they served a true, simple, and good purpose. Appearances, no matter how impressive, were otherwise of little or no consequence. In this instance, Strakhov pointed out, Tolstoy functioned as an international sage who took it upon himself to teach not only Russia but the West standards of personal and national integrity:

The artist set himself the task of depicting true greatness as he understands it, and juxtaposing it to false greatness, which he rejects. This task was executed not only in juxtaposing Kutuzov and Napoleon but also in depicting in great detail this epic struggle as it was carried by the entire nation, the pattern of thoughts and feelings of every soldier, the moral outlook and the whole way of life of the Russian people, the daily events of their lives, their way in which to love, to suffer, and to die. The artist showed as clearly as possible that which the Russians as a tribe believe to be the essence of human dignity, how their ideal of greatness lives even in feeble souls and never leaves the strong even in times of error and moral degradation. This ideal consists, according to the formula given by the author himself, in simplicity, goodness, and truth. It was simplicity, goodness, and truth that conquered in 1812 the power that did not respect simplicity, a power that was full of pride, evil, and deception. This is the meaning of War and Peace.

In other words, the artist gave us a new, Russian formula of heroic life, a formula that fits Kutuzov but would never fit Napoleon. [P. 281]

According to this scale of values, Napoleon, a man of tremendous resourcefulness, heroic stature, and superb intelligence, was shown as slightly insane—a man bereft of true human excellence and dignity—and his mind and conscience were really confused and lost because he served an evil purpose: "In Napoleon, this
superhero, the author sees merely a man who has sunk so low morally that he has lost all true human dignity—a man afflicted with a benighted mind and conscience" (p. 214). On the other hand, Tolstoy showed the peasant antihero Platon Karataev as inadequate intellectually and devoid of status, but morally great. Symbolizing Russia and the West, Karataev and Napoleon stood, like David and Goliath, at the opposite poles of the scale of ethical conduct for man. To supply the need of a military antagonist for Napoleon, which Karataev could not fill, Kutuzov was made his military surrogate. Thus simplicity and humility, and not heroic stature, were shown to be the essence of man; humanity rather than individuality mattered. It is easy to see Strakhov's criticism as an attempt to correlate War and Peace with the organic notion of life as a great current of a mysterious creative energy that gushes forth through matter and impregnates it. Strakhov used its theme to demonstrate that the physical nature of human beings was incidental to their lives and had little or no intrinsic value. People had value as carriers or, rather, conduits of the spirit of life. He claimed that Tolstoy had shown in War and Peace that individuals were chosen by the zeitgeist, the ineffable spiritual substance of the universe acting in history, to fulfill important, specific tasks. The spirit of the times chose certain individuals based on their particular characteristics, but the significance of individuality was limited. Strakhov compared individuation of spirit to a jet opening that determined the shape and performance of the spiritual substance that passed through it. Individuals, he claimed, were easily replaced by others with the same characteristics; and attempts by individuals to act purely on the basis of their own wishes and desires produced a hideously bloated ego and a ridiculously inept or sinister performance, exemplified by Napoleon's antics.

Tolstoy, Strakhov said, marshaled great quantities of evidence in support of this view of human nature. Vast numbers of people appear in the novel. Whole families, members of various tribes, ethnic minorities, people in all walks of life were depicted in meticulous detail. Strakhov pointed out that many were shown to be morally and intellectually inferior:

Russia in 1812 is depicted as a sweeping panorama with vast numbers of people. [P. 212]

The picture is far from pretty. Not only is it without adornment, but it includes all the harsh shadows and faults—all the ugly, crippled,
pathetic aspects of society with which it was then afflicted in the areas of intellectual life, morality, and government. [P. 202]

The stage is teeming with scoundrels, thieves, libertines, cardshar­pers; the coarse and savage ways of ordinary folk are clearly shown. [P. 191].

Tolstoy made no attempt to idealize individual Russians or their leaders. Kutuzov was highly individualized, with many specific traits. Yet Tolstoy made a special point of describing him as a “shell,” formed by, and now empty of, bad personal habits: “This is especially obvious in the case of Kutuzov, who is depicted as weak with age, a lazy old man of deplorable moral habits who has kept, in the words of the author, ‘only the old habits of lust but was devoid of any of the lustful passions themselves’” (p. 197). As an individual he was obviously not worth very much. It seemed as though Tolstoy were deliberately punishing or denigrating those individuals who rashly allowed themselves to project their immodest desires. Natasha's willfulness brought her serious trouble, leading her onto a path of conduct morally reprehensible enough to discourage many readers from idealizing her. Tolstoy seemed bent on showing that people by themselves were incapable of sustained superior moral effort: “In depicting the human soul in its affectivity, inconstancy—emotional dependence . . . , he seems to denigrate it, rob it of its integrity—its permanent substantiality and meaning. The spiritual indigence, paltriness, vanity of human wants and desires—this is, apparently, what the artist is trying to depict” (p. 208). Yet each human being, if he remained flexible, could achieve some fulfillment. Anyone could become a true hero, given the right conditions, if he opened himself to the spirit and accepted the message of life itself. However, those who attempted to form their own heroism and serve their own vanity could only retain the vain and empty form of heroism, Strakhov said:

Prince Andrei and his father are truly heroic figures in the sphere of national interests. . . . Bilbin calls Andrei a hero twice, without a trace of mockery. And Bilbin is absolutely right. [P. 199]

Ct. Tolstoy revealed to us that Prince Andrei is subject to bouts of terrifying vanity and ambition. . . . “I am afraid of him,” says Natasha. [P. 200]

The elder Bolkonsky fascinates strangers by his grand appearance. . . . In a similar manner, Prince Andrei overwhelms everyone with a
feeling of involuntary respect for him, plays in society an almost regal role. [P. 201]

In conditions where actual heroism was not required, such inflexible archetypal forms of heroism as embodied in Nikolai Bolkonsky present an incongruous, pathetic, and sometimes frightening spectacle: "Remember how Russia's national interests become for this grand old man a matter of his personal concern. . . . He eagerly follows world affairs from his estate of Bald Hills. . . . But when the actual invasion comes and Napoleon advances as far as Vitebsk, the senile old man becomes thoroughly confused: at first he even refuses to understand what his son's letter says: he will not accept the thought that will destroy him. . . . And then he dies. The full realization of the extent of the national disaster was more fatal to him than a bullet" (p. 200). Nikolai Bolkonsky's inflexible behavior showered suffering on his daughter and distorted his own character:

We are mortified by the dreadful picture of the relationship between the elder Bolkonsky and his daughter. . . . It seems impossible to forgive the old man for the suffering his daughter has to endure from him. . . . With consummate skill, the author has depicted for us one of the worst and most pathetic human frailties—one that is impervious to assault by either mind or will—and one that deserves our most sincere pity. Actually the old man is dissolved in boundless devotion to his daughter—he literally cannot live without her; but this love has become perverted in his heart into a desire to inflict pain upon himself and his love object. He is, as it were, constantly tugging at the inseparable bond that links him to his daughter, and in so doing, finds morbid pleasure in feeling bound to her. [P. 210]

Prince Andrei, like his father, had chosen the road of ambition (doroga chesti). Mindful of his father's admonition before the start of the campaign, he fell like a hero but without any real need to do so. Like Napoleon, another inhuman hero, whose first consideration was what history would say about him, Prince Andrei seemed more concerned about the people's opinion of his courage as he stood facing the exploding cannonball than with his life in the service to his land. Rigidity and incompetence marked the circumstances of the deaths of both princes Bolkonsky. Such corruption of character, Strakhov pointed out, affected various people, as the distinct parallel between old Prince Bolkonsky and the janitor Ferapontov suggested. Both men were cruel to women around them; both
chose ineffective ways of dealing with the national crisis, for neither was attuned to the real circumstances of history. Effective heroes, Strakhov explained, are typified by a common trait—an ability to act unselfishly; they can completely disengage their will and act in a depersonalized manner. Kutuzov and Bagration were great military leaders who were commonplace individuals with many flaws—one decrepit, the other conventional—and each seemed curiously impersonal in action:

Bagration and Kutuzov, whenever they begin to function as national heroes, lose everything personal about them; expressions such as bravery, restraint, or calm are hardly applicable to them—they are not really being brave, restrained, tense, or calm. Simply and naturally they do their job as though they were disembodied spirits, lucid and dispassionate, able only to know and be guided unerringly by the purest motives of duty and honor. They look straight in the face of destiny. They do all they can, otherwise submitting to the course of events and their own human frailty.

In substance, though, they are simple people; and the artist has shown with an astonishing skill how, in varying degrees and measure, in the heart of each one of them is kindled, dims, then brightens again, the spark of bravery that is innate in every man. [P. 198]

Strakhov explained that a hero became filled with the spirit of the moment, for which he merely acted as a focusing device. This, moreover, was the gist of Tolstoy's military theory:

At the core of Tolstoy's military theory, which has generated such a heated controversy, is the idea that every soldier is not merely a piece of military hardware but that his performance depends mainly on his morale—and that ultimately everything depends on this morale or spirit of the soldiers. Therefore the military leaders themselves must stand in spirit at all times above their entire army, must have the moral strength to bear its whole fate. Kutuzov appears to us as though he were tied by invisible threads to the heart of every soldier. It is as though Kutuzov were able to gather upon himself their entire inspiration. The fate of the battle is actually decided at the sound of his words. "You don't understand a thing. The enemy has lost." At this moment Kutuzov obviously stands vastly above all those Wohlzogens and Barclays; at this moment he is in tune with Russia. [Pp. 203–4]

Emperors and military leaders are truly great only if and when they can learn to function as such quasi nuclei in which heroism tends to concentrate. To understand heroism, to be able to empathize with it and believe in it, this is what makes men such as Bagration and
Kutuzov great. Inability to understand heroism, disregard of, or even contempt for it constitute the wretchedness and the smallness of men like Barclay-de-Tolly and Speransky. [P. 198]

Strakhov went on to explain that Tolstoy's theory questioned the significance of the role of the individual in history, since his effectiveness and performance depended on whether or not he was in tune with the spirit of the movement. Hence Tolstoy could challenge the effectiveness of Napoleon's orders, other than those given on the spur of the moment, and debunk the conventional idea of heroism. Yet, Strakhov said, the theory was only part of a much larger idea consistently reiterated throughout the book: the assumption that no one could control life—the spirit that directs large-scale events. It was this spirit of life, and not any human leader, no matter how famous or charismatic, who imbued and united many men, who then acted out its own (not the leader's) dictates, regardless of individual purposes or characteristics. Strakhov doubted if the idea could be adequately expressed in rational philosophical terms. In any case, he said, its cause would have been better served if it were outlined in a separate pamphlet, outside the chronicle, where this idea was better and more fully expressed in artistic images:

First of all, let us frankly admit that one thing interferes with the other. Count Tolstoy's philosophical discourses are, in and of themselves, extremely good. If he were to publish them as a separate pamphlet, one would be hard put to deny that he is an excellent thinker, and his book would have been one of those rare books wholly deserving of the name philosophical. But next to the chronicle of War and Peace, in juxtaposition with its vibrantly alive imagery, these discourses seem weak, of little interest, and hardly doing justice to the size and scope of the subject. In this respect Count Tolstoy has committed a serious error of artistic judgment: his chronicle obviously overwhelms his philosophy, and his philosophy interferes with his chronicle. [P. 288]

It is boring and strange to read these excellent but perfectly dry arguments after having been exposed to the living people and images of the chronicle. And what is wrong artistically will invariably be wrong in other respects too. And this is exactly what happened here.

... The fault lies not in any error of the thought itself but in its incompleteness. It is obvious that the author's entire discourse does not even begin to do justice to the meaning of the epic struggle depicted in the chronicle, and what were the forces behind it...
And so, one should not look for the main idea of War and Peace in the philosophical formulations of Count Tolstoy. One should look for it in the chronicle itself. [Pp. 295-97]

Strakhov claimed that throughout War and Peace the subtle message was that the essence of man was spiritual, and that human dignity was independent of rank and position:

What constitutes human dignity? How is one to understand the meaning of the life of all those men, from the strongest and the most brilliant, down to the weakest and most insignificant ones, so that one does not overlook its most salient ingredient, the human soul?

To this formulation we have found a hint of an answer in the words of the author himself: . . . "each one of us is, if not more, in any case no less of a man than great Napoleon himself." [P. 208]

This notion was artistically embodied in the ideal character without a personality, Platon Karataev. Karataev was meant as a contrast to Napoleon, a man in whom personality, willful individuality, and personal achievement had reached the highest expression. Napoleon had great external dignity, whereas Karataev had only inner dignity. According to Strakhov, these two men, who were so utterly unlike each other, symbolized the virtues held highest in Russia and the West. The clash between these two ideologies, one of which recognized internal spiritual, and the other external material, achievement, was acted out metaphysically on the moral battlefield of the reader's mind. A reader who recognized only external marks of distinction would see nothing in Karataev. Apart from his message of goodness, Karataev was insignificant, a selfless man. He was physically unattractive and intellectually inferior. But he projected a moral superiority and a commanding presence through the spirit of his goodness. He was a synthesis of all that was sublime and significant in the Russian character: the ability to act as an "opening" through which the message of life could be expressed. Strakhov found supporting overt symbolism in Karataev: his "roundness," which Tolstoy insisted was the central and mysterious trait of his character, suggested the function of a perfectly round opening through which the message of life flowed undistorted and unimpeded. Tolstoy's theory of freedom, according to Strakhov, meant moral freedom, in substance, a freedom, independent of causality and external material commitments: "Freedom and related issues belong to an area that lies outside the boundaries of ordinary cognition, ordinary devices, and conclusions of reason.
and experiment. Ordinary knowledge is nothing but a search for necessity and is therefore equivalent to a denial of freedom. Consequently, we have two areas to which thought can be applied: one, which is thoroughly rooted in reason and leads inevitably to fatalism; and another, which has its sources somewhere other than in the realm of reason and which embraces questions of freedom" (p. 292). Karataev's freedom was therefore essentially a freedom that was outside the ordinary causality of determinism. He was a man inwardly totally free, whereas Napoleon, for all his power, was still a slave of external forms, inwardly blocked, and unable to receive spiritual enlightenment. He was the prince of this world. As such he took on the features of the Prince of Darkness. Karataev, an otherworldly figure of goodness, simplicity, and truth, was the messenger of hope for Pierre, the confused Russian intellectual searching for the meaning of life, trapped in naïve admiration for the false glory of European forms. Strakhov saw special significance in Karataev's lamblike sacrificial death: like Christ, he died so that his gospel could live on in Pierre.

Strakhov, who believed that the modern intellectual tended toward moral philistinism, used War and Peace to blast what he thought was the modern European notion of progress and many Europeans' narrow rationalism and skepticism about the reality of spirit. He interpreted the Russian nation's messianic role as that of a tribe still open to the dictates of spirit, whereas Europeans, particularly detribalized European intellectuals, had deliberately and permanently closed themselves off from receiving any messages of the spirit. Choosing the French literary scholar and author of Le roman russe (1886), E. Melchior de Vogüé (1848–1910), as the spokesman of enlightened Europeanism, Strakhov argued that the European mind, limited by abstract rationalism to the point of being unaware of concrete mysticism, dismissed all higher aspirations of the human psyche as if they were undifferentiable expressions of mental disease:

This page is the most enlightening in the whole essay; it shows very well not only our critic's profound understanding of the meaning of War and Peace but also the limits at which his understanding stops.

... In the opinion of the critic, all the rest is a disease; the whole meaning of War and Peace is reduced to an unfortunate psychological aberration that is so serious that it cannot even be understood by those who enjoy perfect psychological health. This aberration ex-
tends, on the one hand, to the delusions of demented anarchists and, on the other, to the diseased mentality of senseless fakirs. . . . And the most perplexing, most inexplicable phenomenon of all is, to him, Platon Karataev. [P. 377]

Strakhov charged modern man with exclusive rationalism, pagan aestheticism, and a hedonism that would exclude from works of art anything that went beyond the area of aesthetic enjoyment. Modern man's hyperconscious, shallow, and unstable ego, Strakhov asserted, is ruled by the pleasure principle. He is wary of moral principles because guilt causes pain. He cannot absorb and tolerate the shock of guilt and prefers aesthetic issues. Therefore he concentrates on the political rather than the theological order of things. The basis of modern Europeans' errors, Strakhov said, was the same as that of Russian nihilists—irreligiosity—although Europeans completely misinterpreted nihilism, calling anyone who rejected their cultural conventions a nihilist. But, Strakhov said, the essence of Russian nihilism was a refusal to believe in the substantial reality of spirit—a psychological aberration he traced back to the European Enlightenment. European rationalists failed to understand Russian nihilists because they were so similar. The only difference was that European rationalists upheld the intellectual conventions of the West, and Russian nihilists did not accept these:

The critic who did such a good job of defining the overall formula of Tolstoy's development, and sees so clearly the connection between the various phases of this development, accepts and would like to keep for himself only the pure art of our writer. The mainspring of this art, the thought that inspired it, he calls nihilism, and the solution to all the doubts and problems mysticism—two words that, for the critic, carry an obvious tone of censure, although less extreme than for many others. The so-called nihilism and the so-called mysticism of Tolstoy the critic rejects as some kind of disease or deformity. He would prefer, like so many other readers, that Tolstoy would confine himself to writing fiction for entertainment only.

A strange and impossible demand! A serious and profound thought impregnates all of Tolstoy's works, and to pull it out of them, to extract from them this core, is impossible. [Pp. 372-73]

He correctly assumes that the main carriers of this thought are Levin and Pierre, men whom he calls nihilists in the same incorrect sense in which he uses this word. [P. 374]

Strakhov felt that Russia's search for the meaning of life was being dismissed by Europe as mere imitation: retracing the West's
erratic searches for the religious and aesthetic values of the past. He charged that modern Europeans really preferred paganism to Christianity as more congenial to them. He hinted at a parallel between de Vogüé’s opinion of Karataev as a mental defective and the labeling of early Christians as cretins by sophisticated ancient Romans. Strakhov saw such intellectual arrogance as simply a limitation, a form of naïveté and moral immaturity: the conceit of a morally inferior elitist in his superior education. Yet Europe’s perennial search for novel religious and aesthetic experiences, Strakhov claimed, its latent hostility to the deeper, moral meaning of Christianity, and its restless pursuit of originality and fashionable novelty revealed that modern Europe’s spiritual culture was shallow, morally bankrupt, and halted at an intellectual impasse. The European mind had become defective and was running in circles:

These are questions important beyond all measure! We are looking for a religion, Europe is looking for it too; we feel this deep-seated want in us and wait for something to come from somewhere and satisfy this painful lack of something in us,... for we know full well that man cannot live the way we do now.

How could such an incredible predicament arise? ... We who are looking for religion... want neither pantheism, Buddhism, Christianity, nor mysticism. We yearn for what we no longer can tell, contrary to the rule of ignoti nulla cupidio. Evidently the condition of our minds is far worse than we assumed. In our heads there is a screw loose somewhere that cannot be tightened but keeps turning in the same spot. [P. 384]

Strakhov ascribed this peculiarity of the otherwise superlative modern European mind to a misguided determination to get by in life without religion. By contrast, he saw War and Peace as a product of Russia’s search for spiritual fulfillment. In one sense the book was an allegory that told a new variant of the story of Christ, a variant Strakhov said, that was summed up in F. I. Tiutchev’s (1803–73) poem that expressed the feelings of Slavophiles about Russia and the West. The homeless Christian peasant soldier Platon Karataev could be seen as Christ disguised as everyman, or rather, one of the many possible guises and forms the spirit of goodness assumed. The novel also accounted for the aftermath of the story of Christ: the story of Peter/Pierre, the intelligent average Russian, pure of heart, at war with himself, who found peace and fulfillment by listening to the message of Karataev and became his
convert and first apostle. In this context his gallicized name took on added significance. These small, usually well-hidden symbolic details that appeared throughout the book showed that Tolstoy's religious conversion was not a sudden turnabout, Strakhov said, but a new stage in a lifelong search for the meaning of life, which, like Pierre, Tolstoy could discover only by going among the Russian people. This search had been pursued vicariously through all of Tolstoy's characters who suffered from an inner conflict. His early stories were permeated by a mood of somber restless inquiry, a sense of emptiness and alienation from a lack of meaningful experience:

If one delves into the details of these skillfully written stories, one discovers that they describe with an astonishing vividness a profound emptiness of the soul. [P. 154]

An empty, meaningless environment gave these young men nothing to go upon. [P. 167]

Strakhov saw this quest for the meaning of life and personal fulfillment as Russian, not simply Tolstoy's personal problem. The disquiet and agitation in the minds of these wellborn young people came from a lack of humility that was the result of Western European influences and education. Tolstoyan heroes suffered from an aggravated form of the same psychic discord that plagued the famous literary prototype of the alienated hero in Russian fiction—the superfluous man. Such seekers of truth were critical of their environment, repudiated their background, and sought answers in a simple life. They were uprooted idealists, educated in an artificial environment, who were unable to correlate their ridiculously high aspirations with their vacuous surroundings because these surroundings had no longer any connection with their natural roots in the life of the common people.

Anyone can tell that this is an old story. Olenin is just like Onegin. . . . But the psychological anxiety that was responsible for Onegin's depression assumes here more aggravating forms, which is to say that the symptoms of the disease have become much more apparent. [P. 157]

Count Tolstoy's heroes are invariably protestants, that is to say, they begin life by repudiating their own class where they soon realize that they cannot find any meaningful experience. Then they immediately plunge into the mainstream of life, filled with very noble but completely vague aspirations. . . . They have no specific goals, . . . they
are completely up in the air. . . . And soon they notice to their complete bewilderment that they have really nothing to live for. . . . They are dead serious about all this. Even amusing things that happen to them do not amuse them. They are in anguish and in no mood to laugh. . . .

This is the center, the point of view. Small wonder that under such psychological circumstances these people find themselves developing an attitude of great respect for anything that smacks of real life and genuine experience. . . . These are the sources of Count Tolstoy's as well as many of our other writers' sensitive approach toward the common people. They sense that the common people have direct access to the so-called immediate life. . . . The common people seem to know what their life is all about. . . . It is this attitude that allowed Count Tolstoy to depict with such sensitivity the character of the nanny Natal'ia Savishna in Childhood. The same attitude also guided him in depicting scenes from the life of cossacks and Circassians. [P. 155]

Strakhov pursued further the idea of the uprootedness of modern man, particularly the modern intellectual, who had lost all connections to his origins in nature. The moderns recognized that there was an important element missing in their lives; but they were unable to change because they were unwilling to retreat from the rationalistic point of view that gave them a false sense of security. For all that, such people suffered frequent bouts of despair. They made unreasonable, exorbitant demands upon themselves and their environment and were disillusioned by the discrepancy between what they saw and what they wanted.

They present life as well as themselves with enormous demands; in the soul of everyone of them continuously stirs the question that bothered Nikolai Irten'ev: "Why is it that everything is so clear and beautiful in my soul, yet comes out so ugly on paper and is, generally, in real life?" [P. 165]

They literally wander around the world, carrying their ideal around with them, looking for the ideal aspects of life. . . .

In the light of their ideal they appear to themselves empty and devoid of life. . . .

In their quest for the ideal aspects of life, a goal they are willing to pursue to the ends of the earth, Count Tolstoy's heroes often plunge into deepest despair. [Pp. 168-69]

Strakhov attempted a psychological explanation for the predicament of these modern sons of old Russian nobility who were overtaken by the changing times and social systems. These were unhappy, miserable young people, Strakhov said. They lacked the
capacity for discerning the ideal element in life for which they were searching and in which they found life lacking, and they regressed psychologically, yearning for a return to their childhood, which now appeared to them as the only bright spot in their bleak lives. They were ready to reject life without having really lived. Without guidance, and without external standards by which to form practical judgments (because old standards were no longer acceptable), they ended up alienated from the external world and life, and trapped within themselves. Their neurosis developed into a profound inner split.

Count Tolstoy shows us how the process of such an inner split can come about with utmost clarity. It is not that these young people are unduly depressed by the ugliness of their surroundings, or that their surroundings put undue pressure upon them, so that they would want to put up a struggle to escape it. That would be an entirely different matter.

Because of this vacuum, this absence of environmental stimuli, in which these young people spend their childhoods and boyhoods, they develop extraordinary yearnings that are as strong as they are vague. This is their problem—a problem that other, less gifted young men escape. These unusual young men are looking at an ideal so strong that in its light the commonplace world of comme il faut disappears without a trace; the ideal barely deigns to compete with such a paltry world. So, these young people turn inward, become introverted, cut off from reality. Their youthful urges, the psychic energy behind them, have nothing to attach themselves to in the shape of concrete demands and desires and turn sour. There is a dearth of guidance, examples, forms, words, and outlines that could help a strong, sweeping ideal form into something like a concrete organism. The soul, therefore, fails to grow up; there appears a crop of neurotic sufferers, people who do not know what to do with themselves, people who are constantly looking in others and in themselves for the ideal side of life, are pained by its absence, and sometimes reach the point of losing faith in it altogether. [P. 162]

According to the tenets of the organic theory, this peculiarly disturbed frame of mind, which characterized the narodnik movement, was a sign of psychic imbalance. The impact of formal education disturbed the natural harmony between people’s bodies and minds, causing a split in their souls. The unconscious part of the personality became alienated from the ego and incapable of growth. If such a disturbance affected large numbers of people, a general state of puerility and moral chaos was the result. Such conditions were depicted in Anna Karenina, a novel that Strakhov thought topical
and described as a "long prelude" to Tolstoy's religious short story "What People Live By," in which the disturbance, the conflict, and the search for acceptable moral ideals were finally resolved: Tolstoy suggested that people should return to religion as a solution to their psychological problems.

If Strakhov's treatment of War and Peace was, by his own admission, diffuse (p. 299), his analysis of Anna Karenina was compact. The review, as usual, fell short of coming to the point, but the entire argument was developed in the space of only a few pages. According to Strakhov, Anna Karenina was a study in psychic distress from lack of religious beliefs. He clarified the function of the novel's biblical epigraph, "Vengeance is mine; I shall repay": the theme of the novel was not the punishment of someone by an outer deity for sins against conventional morality, but the destruction from within of anyone who ignored the reality of his own unconsciously spiritual nature and failed to live by its dictates. Anyone who tried to face the bewildering complexities of everyday existence guided only by his own judgment went mad from uncertainty and destroyed himself unless he accepted the limitations of his consciousness and sought spiritual guidance from within. This was the message of Anna Karenina, framed, as it were, by the different results of the same spiritual crisis in the lives of Anna and Levin. Worldly wisdom was almost of no use here. And worldly judgment was invariably wrong. There were no culprits, only people who erred, and then sought—or did not seek—spiritual guidance in order to cope with the problems of living. Ultimately, no one was guilty of anything but crime against himself: the crime of ignoring or willfully overruling the spiritual voice of his or her inner self: the voice of conscience.

Strakhov dealt only briefly and perfunctorily with the artistry of the novel, which he seemed to regard as eccentric and faulty in the following ways. The known, static element in it was too dominant, and the narrative was weighed down too heavily with known, concrete detail. The story was told twice on the metaphysical level, but the connection between the twin variants of the dual story line on the realistic level was too weak; the novel thus became lopsided and threatened to fall apart at the seams, as it were. There were other elements Strakhov did not like because they reminded him of philistine art. Strakhov was displeased about overrefinement of form. Tolstoy seemed unduly concerned with craftsmanship, and
parts of the book exhibited a slick, precious style. The subject matter, moreover, was commonplace, almost banal; there was not enough of the unconventional ideal element in it, and the novel was pervaded by a sense of hopelessness, of unrelieved gloom that characterizes so much of abstract, intellectualized art. For contrast, there was only mysticism, the pious, iconic world of peasants, abstracted into a static paradisiacal place, a remote, self-contained region bathed in a somewhat unearthly, steady light. Structurally, it was disconnected from the novel. Thus the link between the real concrete and the ideal abstract elements of the novel was not organic but mechanical. And the known, static element predominated. Strakhov felt that these were indications of threatened death by stifling from stagnation, an incipient separation of base elements due to disharmony that led to loss of inspiration. And, indeed, the author seemed intermittedly disgusted with his product.\footnote{Anna Karenina was Tolstoy’s most cerebral, conscious brainchild so far. Furthermore, it made a somewhat unhealthy impression, although not quite one of outright insanity like much of Dostoevsky’s work that characteristically suffered from a chronic excess of dynamism, the ideal element. Part of the gloom was, of course, experiential, that is, a reflection of the conditions of life. It might well be described as the general neurosis of the times.}

Strakhov drew attention to the absence of external motivation in Tolstoy’s latest novel, a feature that made it resemble Dostoevsky’s latest work. Together with Turgenev’s Virgin Soil and Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov, Anna Karenina revealed a significant new trend: a universal anxiety pattern\footnote{in the Russian society of the 1870s, a latent mood of self-destructiveness, confusion, and despair that signified an agony of reorientation. With their old beliefs discredited, people went to pieces. Bewildered by the complexities of modern life, they did not understand what was happening to them. People from all walks of life were reexamining their souls, questioning the meaning of their existence, hoping for escape from the surrounding ethical morass. For Strakhov the neurosis had a purpose. It was an attempt to compensate for the one-sided attitude toward life that characterized modern man, and a voice, as it were, drawing attention to a side of personality that had been neglected and repressed. Anna Karenina depicted a state of mind that was out of harmony with itself. In a society based on the modern outlook of narrow rationalism, men developed only their conscious minds and repressed their instinctive natures. Most unfortunately,} in the Russian society of the 1870s, a latent mood of self-destructiveness, confusion, and despair that signified an agony of reorientation. With their old beliefs discredited, people went to pieces. Bewildered by the complexities of modern life, they did not understand what was happening to them. People from all walks of life were reexamining their souls, questioning the meaning of their existence, hoping for escape from the surrounding ethical morass. For Strakhov the neurosis had a purpose. It was an attempt to compensate for the one-sided attitude toward life that characterized modern man, and a voice, as it were, drawing attention to a side of personality that had been neglected and repressed. Anna Karenina depicted a state of mind that was out of harmony with itself. In a society based on the modern outlook of narrow rationalism, men developed only their conscious minds and repressed their instinctive natures. Most unfortunately,
Strakhov said, women were following, and it was they, of course, who paid an especially heavy price for their conscious development if they allowed it to be dominated by rationalism. It was the task of literature, Strakhov emphasized, to encourage understanding of this very serious problem, to offer models of conduct, and to suggest solutions; and whereas Turgenev's novel *Virgin Soil* failed to suggest anything of value, both *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Anna Karenina* recommended religion as a way of dealing with the current moral and spiritual crisis. In *Anna Karenina* the issue was given a broad, universal significance. In this novel Tolstoy was again serving the people as a sage: by introducing standards of morality, he was pointing out the way they could help themselves in order to achieve peace of mind in a new and bewildering world of rapid changes and crumbling values:

Such is the ostensible meaning of *Anna Karenina*. The measure of modern man is taken at considerable depth. The issue is universal and relates to the life of all men and women, not just the modern type and the modern sphere of interests. . . . All this is going on amidst conditions of complete external security and physical well-being. The novel really depicts our modernity as it is; to our chagrin (or is it perhaps to our good fortune?) eternal questions in Russia are asked by ordinary people who lead ordinary lives. They are confused and in a state of shock. Their conscience is disturbed. This condition affects multitudes of all kinds of people, only, of course, among the educated classes. A landowner doubts his right to own the land; a government official no longer believes in what he is doing and assumes that his work cannot possibly be worth his salary; a well-to-do, educated man envies the peasant; a father renounces his right to enjoy his own life and wants to devote it entirely to his children; another man in the prime of life and the head of a young family finds no meaning in life and is plagued by thoughts of suicide. These and similar features attest to the fact that the firm foundations of this society have crumbled, that the ground is shaking under the feet of these people. Levin found his salvation in religious thoughts, but Anna, who belonged to the fancy world of high society, in spite of all her torture, never saw the light for one minute, did not even know where to turn to look for salvation. This total absence of any seriousness in the outlook of the so-called educated people, the lack of that element which is usually regarded as morality, is depicted with consummate skill in scenes from the life of the beau monde. But the novel as a whole depicts the pervasive psychological chaos that is dominant everywhere in all classes except the lowest. [P. 362]

It is obvious that we are undergoing a certain inner convulsion that, to judge by what has been described above, must have a profound significance and depth. Everyone is affected by this moral upheaval,
which he feels in his own heart as a profound uneasiness. But the feeling is as yet far from reaching real consciousness, genuine understanding; it is very difficult, almost impossible, to reconcile awareness of such things with what is today regarded as education and enlightenment. [P. 365]

The novel, Strakhov said, was an attempt to show that there were other important drives in human nature besides those of sexuality and self-assertion, and that the cultural or spiritual impulse is in the second half of life more important than the other two, when it influences men and women as powerfully as did sexuality and aggression. For many people, Strakhov claimed, a crisis arrives in the prime of life when suddenly they need to understand those aspects of themselves that, in the pursuit of their various juvenile goals such as social success, pleasure, and vanity, they have ruthlessly repressed. Psychic health and stability were as dependent on the proper expression of the spiritual element as on the others, apart from intellect and other drives; yet many people could not conceive of this, Strakhov said, preferring to cling to the values of youth and even to pursue them in an exaggerated fashion.

The author of Anna Karenina, Strakhov said, had gone to some pains to imply that neither Anna's nor Levin's predicament was in any way unique or even unusual. Both Anna and Levin were, strictly speaking, average people, afflicted with thoughts and problems of average individuals, suggesting that they stood for the two most basic variants of Homo sapiens, a thinking woman and a thinking man. They were similar enough in their circumstances but different in attitude. Ordinary and extraordinary elements, in both the objective and subjective senses, were intertwined in their lives in a proportion that could be considered normal for average people. Anna was a conventionally romantic heroine, and her views were almost too conventional. Levin was an ordinary and externally uninteresting male of commonplace appearance, but his views tended to be uncommon and romantic; his circumstances, however, were almost ridiculously common and banal. Each story involved thoroughly conventional, standard types of experience:

One reads how Karenina fell in love with Vronsky, entered into an affair with him, left her husband but, living with Vronsky, eventually became so distraught with passion that she threw herself under a train. On the second plane, which is somewhat broader in scope and has slightly more substance, we have the story of the country dweller Levin; we are told how he made his declaration of love, proposed
marriage, followed the ritual prescribed for marriage in the Orthodox church, was married, how his son was born and, eventually, began to recognize his father and mother. The author's greatest originality is revealed in the way he treats these thoroughly commonplace events. He endows them with such startling clarity and depth that they come alive in a most astonishingly meaningful and interesting fashion. [P. 357]

Thus Tolstoy's achievement lay in his ability to imbue these thoroughly banal events with a meaning that went beyond ordinary experience and stimulated a special consciousness of them. The novel revealed the process of growing awareness within the characters who were shown, in the beginning, to be leading comfortable, routine lives in a dreamy state of consciousness that was static, akin to restless sleep and a desire for a dream experience—an adventure. They were suffering from an excess of psychic energy. The indications were that they were vaguely missing something important in their lives and were looking for fulfillment.

Mental ferment (brozhenie), Strakhov said, employing another standard organic term, was a sure sign of a potentially superior nature that was capable of growth. It indicated the presence of the leaven of discontent: a critical faculty—an instrument of growth—and a desire for improvement. The reasons for the discontent of Karenina and Levin were not apparent, as both led comfortable lives. Their anxieties arose from within; both were vaguely dissatisfied with the course of their mental and emotional development and, unable to determine the impediment, turned to romantic adventure for stimulating experience. Anna's fell outside, Levin's well within socially acceptable experience. The surprising result in each case was a harrowing spiritual crisis from which one of them did and the other did not recover. The matter of social approval as such had almost nothing to do with this result.

Real growth must be preceded by a genuine expansion of consciousness by an irruption of previously unconscious contents, Strakhov said, continuing his organic argument. The settled contents (the soil) of consciousness were disturbed and new ideas as the seeds of growth were implanted in the life of each protagonist by the sudden injection of romance. The romance itself, though an alarming experience, was not the seed but only the tool of growth. It stimulated awareness by removing the cobwebs from their humdrum existence. It brought other surprises—and seeds of thought—such as an unexpected and alarming consciousness of
the basic impermanence of a way of life that is based only in mate-
rial comfort, without any ideal element in it. In stimulating this
awareness, coincidences played a significant part. From the begin-
ning, the course of these fairly parallel lives and series of experi-
ences was shown to be at the mercy of circumstance. Aroused to
greater awareness of the precarious nature of individual happiness
that depended on social approval or purely material success and
circumstance, both Anna and Levin began to search for a more
enduring perspective. It is this search that started the crisis.
Strakhov tried to explain:

What is a person to do who [through superior awareness] has be-
come a victim of such severe alienation from his environment? He
can fall back upon himself, his personal life. But personal life is
always at the mercy of circumstance. When Levin's brother Nikolai
fell mortally ill, when his wife was in labor, when the lightning struck
the tree under which his infant son was [supposed to be] sleeping,
and in a thousand other petty incidents, in his very joys and succe-
ses, Levin felt that he was at the mercy of coincidences, that the very
thread of his own life could be torn as easily as though it were a
cobweb. This is the source of his despair. If my own life and its
enjoyment is the only goal in life, then this goal is so insignificant, so
fraught with uncertainty, so brittle, so obviously unattainable, that it
can only suggest despair, can only depress a person, rather than
inspire him. And at this point Levin's thoughts turn toward religion.
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Frustration in his inability to find such a detachment drove Levin to
the verge of suicide. From this intent he was saved by a coincidence
and his attention to a casual remark. Anna, on the other hand, was
impelled to commit suicide by a similar coincidence: the casual
revelation of a trivial bit of information. The circumstances were
obviously similar. What was the difference? Strakhov claimed that
by stressing the haphazard nature of individual experience Tolstoy
implied that the effects of experience upon the individual were
more important than the experiences themselves. These effects
depended upon his attitude. His attitude influenced the choices he
made in response to random incidents. So, it was an error to as-
sume that one was ever completely at the mercy of any situation.
Levin searched for and found something higher than individual
happiness. Anna had no such higher aspirations; selfish passion
remained for her the highest level of psychic experience. As it
began to burn itself out she too was consumed, because she let
herself be consumed—first by remorse and self-pity, and then by a morbid projection of her own increasing self-hatred into a hatred of the entire world.

To show why Anna did commit suicide and Levin did not, Strakhov examined the causes of significant variations in individuals' responses to comparable chance experiences. He suggested that perhaps one reason why an incidental, innocuous piece of trivial information induced Anna to reject life was the relatively abstract quality of her decisions. Anna was a city dweller, the product of an artificial form of life in which she was used to exercise control over her environment. As a result she had developed a closed mind. Her decisions arose from within. Because there was seldom need to adapt to unforeseen situations, her conscious choices were conventional and uninspired. When calm, she was vain, and her judgment was arbitrary; above all, her mind was not trained to respond to the unexpected. When she was not calm, the shock of surprise drove her to morbid contemplation and a drastic, compulsive response. At the time of her decision to do away with herself her anguish was already deep. The bewildering series of events and Vronsky's apparent growing indifference and desire to stay away from her made her hate herself and feel that she was losing control over her destiny. The hint of yet another complication was just too much: it drove her to complete despair and to rejection of life as not worth living under the circumstances. There was no point in looking for a rational explanation of her disgust with herself and utter bewilderment. Anna was deranged. She had submitted to a destructive, sterile passion that drove her to end the arrangement that held her body and soul together as too painful to endure. Her suicide, Strakhov concluded, was the result of a cerebral, abstract, arbitrary choice. Those who lost their spiritual substance and relied only on their reason knew only how to destroy life. Strakhov extended the same reasoning to other characters in the novel. Karenin, like Anna, had occasional "bouts of openness" during which he became transfigured. These bouts occurred in proximity to events like birth and death that constituted openings into eternity. But Vronsky, the perfect specimen of a modern, rational, civilized being, was finished—he remained closed at all times. Like a true spiritual cynic—a nihilist—he was only negatively affected by unconscious experience, which made him act compulsively, by triggering restlessness and morbid reflection. He found himself experiencing a
series of irrational depressions from which he tried to extricate himself by destructive acts: the killing of the horse Frou-Frou; an attempted suicide after the reconciliation at Anna's bedside; and finally, after Anna's suicide, a grand but empty self-sacrifice in a war that did not concern him.

Levin's attitude represented the contrary. If Anna's experiences were the results of her thoughts, his thoughts were the result of his experience. His anguish also was closer to real life. He was a country dweller, used to the influence of nature, to which he was conditioned to respond resourcefully and without questioning. He questioned the validity of his judgments and looked for answers outside himself. His response, Strakhov said, was spontaneous and unpremeditated. His virtue was that he was quite literally open-minded, in the sense that he was not a finished man and prevailed because of his intellectually unfinished, growing state. The peasant's remark was a casually uttered truism. But Levin was ready for it. It was enough to start him on a new train of thought. With this juxtaposition, the thematic center of the novel was conclusively established. The epigraph implied unmistakably that the whole of Anna's story must be seen as a tragic inability on her part to accept spiritual guidance. The key concept of the novel was, then, the distinction between the open mind of a seeker after truth whose humility and readiness to be guided is one of the proofs of his spiritual stature and the closed mind of a person whose inability to love unselfishly, or to grasp the validity and urgency of her other needs, destroys her life. The upshot of Strakhov's argument was that religion was also an instinct, and one of the most important ones man possesses. Refusal to give it proper recognition had a devastating effect upon the psychic health and stability of the individual.

It would be a mistake to dismiss Strakhov's emphasis on religion as simply an expression of a conventional religious position favoring escape from reality or childish illusion. Strakhov's approach was more practical than an indulgence in conventional mythology. He treated the psyche as the ligamentum spiritus et corporis and believed religion to be one of its natural functions. Conventional religion, if properly understood and practiced, Strakhov argued, could be of incalculable benefit to man. It could direct great natural energies of the psyche toward redemption of the whole individual. Strakhov repeatedly emphasized that man needs religious guidance to help steer spontaneous religious experience
within himself that otherwise takes destructive forms of expression. He needs to feel that the frightening images that sometimes well up from the unconscious correspond to something known and uncontroversial like the forms that religion gives to them. If this does not happen, a split develops in his nature. He may remain outwardly calm and civilized, but inwardly he is confused, a fearful savage, ruled by a plethora of archaic gods thinly disguised by civilization. Certain factors projected by primitive man as spirits, demons, and gods, Strakhov said, are rationalized by modern man as laws, ideals, art, and other externalizations of specific urges. But he is affected by them the same way. It was this dynamism of the natural religious function of the psyche that made it both futile and dangerous to dismiss it as superfluous or to explain it away as old superstition. It was psychologically speaking, as alive as ever. Indeed, rationalism itself, Strakhov said, was a religion—a narrow, one-sided, and therefore inferior religious form that served little or no useful psychological purpose. It did not account for deeper psychological experiences, those that were, for example, manifest in irrational drives and reprehensible behavior.

Strakhov argued that so long as a rationalist failed to recognize not just the significance but even the existence of certain forces within himself, he was the victim of those forces to the extent of his ignorance of them. It was in this sense that conventional religion could benefit him, by giving as yet undifferentiated thought-feelings and archaic psychological experiences a conventional outlet through the familiar religious imagery. Religion gave names and form to those powerful and dangerous forces that frequently rule the individual against his will and without his awareness of their existence. Yet these will become wholesome influences if given recognition and attention. Strakhov suggested that many a nervous depression could be cured if the sufferer could find his way back to the church, where he belonged, or experience a conversion. The solution Tolstoy had shown could not be imposed, Strakhov said, but must arise from within; even so, rational man could and should be urged toward religious experience, as the incident with Levin and the peasant illustrated. For this purpose Tolstoy's novel was remarkable. The reader was shown how respect for the religious function, even when expressed in clumsy manner and religious platitudes, could guide a man toward a deeper intellectual and emotional comprehension of his own nature. In bringing back the Christ-image as a symbol of life within the conscious mind, the
novel helped integrate alogical thinking in images with imageless logic and showed the way toward a realization of the whole man.

Strakhov's essays on Tolstoy are psychologically acute. As studies in motivation they are remarkably advanced for his day. He actually demonstrated, however incompletely, how Tolstoy's works supplied illustrations to the major problems of modern man: his struggle in coming to terms with his unconscious without the mysticism and mythology of the past. Strakhov's findings were, however, inadequately formulated. for all such subtle and felicitous insights, his critiques were, on the whole, too vague. To nineteenth-century readers not geared to recognize the indistinct nature and controversial problems of psychological experience, they seemed to contribute little to the understanding of the essential qualities of Tolstoy's work. Strakhov's nationalistic harangues further diminished respect for his intellectual integrity. But it was the obscure quality of the organic principle and method, primarily, that prevented its adherents from gaining the confidence of the reading public. The organic theory was attacked by the positivists and the rationalists as an extreme form of mysticism. Yet some of its ideas have found entry into the thoughts of other critics. Although its influence was never acknowledged, it anticipated the critical methods of Merezhkovsky, Rozanov, and Aikhenvald, to name a few, in a tradition that was long hindered by sociological criticism but gathered strength in the twentieth century. In some respects it was also the forerunner of modern psychological criticism.

DOSTOEVSKY

Fedor M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was an organic critic in the sense that he believed that a writer was a product of his country, region, and personal life. In his view ideas were "living ideas" when they were creative and not arbitrary and abstract. As a critic he was most often concerned with the historical content of literature and with the personal history of the author himself. One can even go so far as to say that his entire critical position rests on views about literature as a revelation of personality and historical reality. However, it was also considerably influenced by the nature of his aesthetic views.

Dostoevsky's mind was keenly attuned to current reality, which he regarded as the "raw nerve" of history. An essential feature of his
The creative method was to implant elements of current reality in the soil of decaying literary forms of the past, which Dostoevsky extracted from the works of writers who had established or subscribed to literary traditions. The principle behind his critical concepts appears to have been the same. At the onset of his career as a critic and journalist he announced that he intended to promote the growth of the form and content of current Russian literature through continuous renovation of extant forms and ideas. He said he wanted Russian literature to develop models of conduct and serve as a vehicle for the moral and intellectual improvement of the nation and, ultimately, mankind. His methods as a critic were developed in polemic debates with other critics. He regarded polemics as a vital form of intellectual growth, a necessary function of the innately dialectical nature of the mind's imaginative function, which he opposed to logic.

Dialectics and creative ambiguity dominate Dostoevsky's critical writings. His critical method was at times symbolic; he thought of writers and critics as sages and, consequently, found the Delphic or cryptic mode of ambiguous expression both suitable and useful. Imagery, metaphor stylistic incongruity, catachresis, oxymoron, innuendo, were integral to his craft. In the Diary of a Writer he interspersed discursive narrative entries with creative sketches, sometimes artistically accomplished, which usually developed a critical comment or dramatized a statement of principle. This informal method enabled Dostoevsky to criticize sub rosa the work of other writers—errant sages, as he saw them, who had stumbled onto a mistaken course of intellectual leadership. Conscious of his own position as a national sage, Dostoevsky wrote a critique whenever he detected error; he considered it his obligation as a critic to correct the errant writer. In some of his critical remarks he appears almost as a censor. Nowhere is this tendency to exert control over another writer's ideas more evident than in his criticism of Tolstoy. Significantly, he sought to encourage Tolstoy to do what a sage should do and what Tolstoy was trying to do all his life: make his creative work into a vehicle of moral persuasion. The implied assumption, however, was that the ideas should be Dostoevsky's, not Tolstoy's.

Dostoevsky filled his novels with references to, and sometimes extensive comments about, Tolstoy's works. His attitude toward Tolstoy, whom he admired as an artist, was ambivalent. He was at
odds with Tolstoy on moral and philosophical grounds, and disputed with him more than with any other writer. Some think that Dostoevsky's entire career was a running debate with Tolstoy over various moral and creative issues. K. Mochulsky, for instance, seems to think that *The Raw Youth* was meant to show, in detail, how unrelated to current Russian reality was Tolstoy's idea of Russian family, which corresponded to stable, orderly tradition of tribal living in the past. Dostoevsky, who saw manifestations of the organic principle in everything, regarded the disintegration of the traditional family under pressure of change as one of a number of ominous changes in the fabric of Russian life. The patriarchal family structure was being supplanted by a fatherless, disorderly, disintegrating family unit (*sluchainoe semeistvo*). European civilization was destroying Russian family life. The issue, which Fridlender finds central to Dostoevsky's entire work, meshes with Dostoevsky's conception of past Russian literature as tribal—a "literature of the landed gentry," which he now regarded as finished. He viewed both family life and literature as integral to old Russia, which was a tribal society. These patterns were now dead and irrelevant to current reality, which was in the process of evolving its own new patterns of "civilized" life that were—for Russia—as yet nowhere near settling into any well-defined forms. Dostoevsky used as evidence the stable, "fossilized" forms of life that no longer had any living counterpart in current Russian life and yet were blithely depicted with utmost clarity in works such as *War and Peace*. Clarity and high definition, in Dostoevsky's view, were characteristics of the past and of death: relics of past forms of life, like the bottoms of long undisturbed wells. In the present, however, as in the modern family and literature, all was disturbance and muddled turbulence. The issue of the Russian family that was disintegrating through the corrupting influences of European civilization and, more specifically, rationalism, was pursued further by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* and was one of his favorite subjects in the *Diary of a Writer*, where in a number of instances it is discussed in connection with Tolstoy's novels.

Tolstoy's novels, it seems, struck Dostoevsky as nostalgic works of modern folklore: formally highly structured Homeric poems about an idealized past.

Really never has the Russian family been more tottering, demoralized, unsorted, and unformed than now. Now, where do you think you can find such *Childhoods* and *Boyhoods* that could be
poeticized in such a crisp, charming fashion as was done, for exam-
ple, in the depiction of his epoch and his family by Count Leo
Tolstoy, or in *War and Peace*, by him also? All those epic poems of his
strike us today as pictures of hardly more than historical interest about the
long-distant past. Oh, I do not in the least want to suggest that these
pictures were all that wonderful; I do not at all want them to be
repeated in our time, and am talking about something else alto-
tgether. I am only talking about their character, their highly
polished, “finished” formal poetic characteristics, their crispness and
high definition—qualities thanks to which the epoch could be pic-
tured as clearly and as effectively as in the two poems by Count
Tolstoy. Today we do not have anything like this, there is no clarity,
no definition. The modern Russian family is beginning to look more
and more like an accidental affair. And that it is precisely—an acci-
dental family—there is in a nutshell the definition of the modern
Russian family! Its old image is gone unexpectedly, has somehow
disappeared all of a sudden, and its new image.

Among other things, this passage suggests Dostoevsky’s pique at
Strakhov, with whom he was no longer on good terms, whose opin-
ion of the families in *War and Peace*—that they represented still the
ideal of typical Russian family life—Dostoevsky rejected. In con-
trast to the child depicted by Tolstoy in *Childhood* and *Boyhood*,
Dostoevsky said, the modern Russian child had become society’s
unloved reject (*vyshvyrok iz obschestva*). Tolstoy’s emotionally secure
child only toyed with thoughts of suicide when he felt unjustly
punished or rejected. The modern, unstable child felt unwanted
and rejected all the time and sometimes actually committed suicide
by drowning, freezing to death, or jumping out of a window. This
bizarre pattern of child behavior was part of an entirely new, un-
precedented apocalyptic reality that rose from the ruins of the
finished patterns of the past and needed to be put into fictional
perspective with new and altered literary techniques. Dostoevsky
assigned Tolstoy the role of the bard of the passing epoch, which
was about to disappear in events to come, in a serious upheaval, as
he envisioned it, an apocalyptic convulsion, perhaps even a revolu-
tion in Russia, a kind of societal rebirth into new forms that could
not be predicted but that would be radically different from the old
forms of social order and family structure, which were being
blithely depicted by Tolstoy as though they were still a reflection of
current Russian reality:

The crux of the matter is that some of these shades were unques-
tionably there before—but one finds these days features of an en-
tirely new reality, altogether different from the becalmed milieu in
which the old, established and rigidly structured Moscow families of
the landed nobility of the mid-upper circles live and whose history is
being recorded for us by Count Leo Tolstoy, apparently just at the time
when the old Russian aristocracy, which thrived on the obsolete
foundations of a society based on manorial estates, is undergoing
some kind of a new, still unknown but radical fracture, at the very
least some kind of an enormous regeneration into wholly new, as yet
undetermined, almost entirely unknown forms of a kingdom come.

Anna Karenina was Tolstoy’s only work to be reviewed by Dos-
toevsky; this review represents perhaps Dostoevsky’s most substan-
tial work of criticism. The review appeared in parts, spread over a
period of months, in the Diary of a Writer for 1877. Two aspects of
the novel were singled out for discussion. One was a timeless moral
or spiritual issue, the other was current and quite topical, even
political. In the main, the review focused on Tolstoy’s ideological
aberrations, and Tolstoy was advised to mend his ways. Dostoevsky
insisted that his intent was not to criticize a colleague, but to
discourage him from promoting harmful retrograde ideas. Dos-
toevsky was disappointed in Anna Karenina because it failed to mea-
sure up to his standards for the announcement of Russia’s new
message to Europe. Anna Karenina was artistically mature and pow-
erful enough to convince Europeans of Russia’s intellectual matur-
ity, to challenge Europe’s old conception of Russia as a backward
and barbaric land, and to carry to Europe Russia’s newest message
of moral and spiritual regeneration. Instead, he found, Anna
Karenina carried hardly more than Europe’s old, cruel, essentially
immoral tradition of an archaic religion of vengeful justice.

Dostoevsky criticized the message of Anna Karenina within the
context of his extensive discussions in the Diary of a Writer of the
elitism of Western nations and the basis of their aggressive aristoc-
tratic traditions in pagan aestheticism and Mosaic law. Dostoevsky
claimed that, for all its technological and artistic leadership, it was
Europe, not Russia, that was morally backward and barbaric. The
argument must be viewed in the light of a much larger issue of
absorbing interest to Dostoevsky: the struggle of Russian Ortho-
doxy against the pagan and Judeo-Christian elements of Roman
Catholicism. For Dostoevsky the Church of Rome still subscribed to
the spirit of the cruel laws of vengeance in the old Jewish Bible,
which were buttressed by the bloodthirsty traditions of Europe’s
own pagan past. Ostensibly challenging those laws, Anna Karenina
was actually endorsing them, first by making them appear immutable, and then by adding its own cruel message of total indifference to the struggle for freedom of the Balkan Slavs. The broader argument, with Dostoevsky as the champion of Orthodoxy, was conducted in the pages of the *Diary of a Writer* on two planes. One was essentially moral and timeless and concerned the issue of justice versus grace; the other was political, Pan-Slavist, and dealt with international issues here and now. The argument on both planes substantially repeated the eleventh-century message of the first native-born Kiev Metropolitan Hilarion's "Sermon on Law and Grace," and was thus hardly a new word. Rather, this factor testified to the stubborn durability of Russia's tribal claim to spiritual world leadership. To Dostoevsky, with his eschatological leanings, the issue seemed to have become urgent.

Dostoevsky inferred that the appeal of *Anna Karenina* was based on its gory and traditional detail. *Anna Karenina* had romance, aristocratic tradition, blood, sex, and vengeance all fused together. People loved their past, Dostoevsky asserted, especially if it was tough, glorious, bloody, and painful. They took pride in such a past, and tended to sanctify the traditions associated with it. A book that reflected these traditions was sure to have appeal. *Anna Karenina* was also likely to pander to European tastes in Russia and abroad, because it was saturated with these traditional subjects of European belles lettres. Those who clung to the attractive, "frozen" forms of European culture were delighted with the book and saw in it an event of unheard-of literary significance:

> Recently I happened to meet in the street one of our writers whom I dearly love. . . . He is one of the prominent members of that revered group of five or six of our fiction writers who are, for some reason or other, usually referred to as our "Pleiade." . . . I love to meet with this nice man and dearly beloved novelist and love to prove to him, among other things, that I do not believe, and, no, never want to believe that he is outdated. . . . He right away started to talk about *Anna Karenina.* . . . "this is an unheard of thing, an outstanding piece. Which one of our writers can produce anything to compare? And in Europe—out there—who can come up with anything like it? Have they ever produced, in all those literatures of theirs, in recent years, and long before that, a work that could even come close?" [P. 315]

Actually, Dostoevsky observed, the novel as an artistic whole had little else to recommend itself. *Anna Karenina* was an excellent old-
fashioned novel of manners. Its moral message was weak, ambiva­
lent, and substantially oriented toward the past. The book had its
powerful moments, such as the reconciliation at Anna's bedside,
her death, and an unexpectedly stringent topical message of omi­
nous portent. As for the rest, it was Tolstoy's usual array of exclu­
sive aristocratic subjects warmed over. Nevertheless, Dostoevsky did
find in Anna Karenina truths of universal importance:

Actually about this whole novel I am going to say no more than half a
word, and even that in the form of a most necessary foreword. I
began to read it, like everybody else, a very long time ago. At first I
liked it very much; later, although I still liked the details so that I
could hardly tear myself from them, on the whole I began to like it
less. I could not help feeling all the time that I had read it somewhere
before, in fact, in childhood and boyhood by the same Count Tolstoy
and in War and Peace by him also, and that there the stuff was even
 fresher. The same old story of a family of the Russian nobility but, of
course, the plot is different. Characters, like Vronsky, for instance
(one of the heroes of the novel), who cannot even talk among them­
selves except about horses—were, of course, curious, just to get to
know the type, but awfully tiresome and clannish. One would think,
for example, that the love of this "stallion in uniform," as he was
dubbed by one of my acquaintances, could only be described with
proper irony. So, when the author began to introduce me to the
inner world of his hero seriously, without irony, I even became a
little bored. And then, all my preconceptions were suddenly dis­
pelled. I came upon the death scene of the heroine (later she again
recovered)—and I understood everything about the substantial part
of the author's designs. In the midst of this trivial and brazen life
there appeared the great and eternal truth of real life that im­
mediately flooded everything with light. These trivial, insignificant
and false people suddenly became genuine and truthful, worthy of
the name of man. . . . Hatred and falsehood began to speak in
words of forgiveness and love. Instead of stupid conventions of the
beau monde, there was only love of one's fellow man. Everybody
forgave and acquitted everybody. Clannishness and exclusiveness
suddenly disappeared and became unthinkable, and these
cardboard characters suddenly began to look like real people! . . . It
was more than necessary to remind the Russian reader of this eternal
truth: many among us have begun to forget all about it. With this
reminder the author has performed a good deed, aside from having
performed it as an outstanding artist.

But afterward the romance began to drag on again. [Pp. 74–75]

Dostoevsky thought the reconciliation scene important enough to
discuss it twice and at length. In the first discussion he related the
scene to the epigraph at the beginning of the novel, and in the
second discussion, to Anna’s suicide, to show that together they constituted a damning indictment of Europe’s entire body of legalistic morality that was based on the principle of retribution. Each time he emphasized the moral message. The scene, he said, was an example of Tolstoy’s genius at his best. He explained the meaning as follows:

And that man should not perish in despair because he cannot understand his paths and destinies and is so easily swayed to acquiesce in the mysterious inevitability and fatal ubiquity of evil, he is indeed shown a way out. This one possibility is brilliantly outlined by the author in the brilliant scene in the penultimate part of the novel, in the scene where the heroine lies mortally ill, when culprits suddenly are transfigured into superior beings, brothers who have forgiven one another everything, beings who by mutual exculpation have cleansed themselves of all falsehood, guilt, and culpability, and thereby immediately acquitted themselves, with full awareness that they deserve now to be free of guilt. But later, at the end of the novel, in the gloomy and dreadful picture of growing despair that is traced step by step, in the depiction of that irresistible state when evil takes possession of one’s innermost being, puts fetters on every move, paralyzes all strength to resist, every thought, every urge to fight the darkness that is descending upon the soul, until the soul suddenly, knowingly, lovingly, and with lustful vengeance reverses itself and accepts this darkness as light—in that picture there is such a profound lesson for human judges, for those who are accustomed to hold in their hands the measure and the scales, that they are bound to exclaim in fear and confusion: “No, I see now that vengeance is not always mine, and it is not always I who shall repay!” [Pp. 320–21]

Dostoevsky emphasized that in the reconciliation scene at Anna’s bedside Tolstoy had shown how ordinary people could lift themselves onto a higher plane of reality, above their usual bondage to evil, which they expressed in petty and vicious judgments. Tolstoy’s special achievement was in showing clearly and convincingly that such a reality actually existed, and was not just a mawkish figment of someone’s overheated imagination (konvul’sionerstvo):

The reader could see that this true life actually does exist, and that it is very real and inevitable, and that one must believe in it, and that our ordinary life and all our worries, from the most trivial and despicable ones, to those that we consider often the loftiest—that all this is, more often than not, nothing but the most fantastic vanity that falls and disappears without even defending itself if confronted with the true life. The important thing is that the author managed to point out that this moment exists, although it seldom appears in all
its radiant fullness. . . . This moment was uncovered and pointed out to us in all its glory and awesome reality. The poet demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that this is all actually true, need not be taken on faith, that it exists not only as an ideal, but inevitably, necessarily, and for all to see. [P. 75]

According to Dostoevsky, Anna's suicide dramatized the drastic error of stopping life by destroying its vessel, the human individual. Such judgment, which was reserved for God alone, meant interference with an unknowable quantity:

In Anna Karenina a certain view of human guilt and criminality is expressed. Human beings are depicted in abnormal circumstances. Evil existed before them. Caught in a whirlpool of falsehoods, they transgress and perish inevitably. . . . This vastly complex idea is executed with formidable psychological analysis of the human soul, reaching enormous depth and power of artistic portrayal and unparalleled realism. What is made clear and plausible to the point of obviousness is that evil is rooted in mankind deeper than any socialists, clumsy healers of social ills, will concede; that no form of social organization can dispose of evil; that the human soul is what it is, that abnormality and sin issue from its own fiber, and, finally, that the laws of human consciousness are as yet so utterly unknown, so totally unexplored by science, so undefined, and so mysterious that, for the time being at least, there are not, and cannot be, any healers or final judges of human problems other than He who says “Vengeance is mine; I shall repay.” He alone knows the whole enigma of the world and the final destiny of man. Meanwhile, man cannot undertake to pass final judgment on anything, in his arrogant belief in his infallibility; the time and the season have not yet come for that. The human judge must realize of his own accord that he can scarcely think of himself as the final judge, that he is a sinner himself, that the measure and the scales in his hands are an absurdity. [Pp. 318–20]

Thus Dostoevsky addressed himself first to the evils of judgment in general, and judgment by the standards of European society in particular. At the time of her suicide, Anna was upset and in no condition to comprehend anything, let alone the worth of her own life. Yet she succumbed to the temptation to judge herself rationally and dispassionately. Her analytical mind promptly condemned her guilty body, and allowed her pent-up emotions to destroy it in a spirit of vengeful sadism. Dostoevsky interpreted this fatal turn of events as evidence that strict judgment in the spirit of the Old Testament was always wrong; it led only to cruelty and the corruption of the soul. Anna's fate was a general warning never to judge
anyone by the letter of the law. Dostoevsky then expounded the dangers of dispassionate judgment:

How, then, is this problem solved in Europe? All over Europe it is handled in a twofold manner. One solution is as follows: the law has been laid down, framed, formulated, developed and refined for thousands of years. Evil and good are defined, weighed, their measurements are taken and degrees defined historically by the sages of mankind in tireless efforts to fathom the human soul as well as by precise scientific research into the extent of the unifying power of communal living. This elaborate code must be obeyed blindly. Those who do not—those who violate it—are made to pay for their transgressions with their liberty, property, life, pay for it dearly, by the letter of the law, and without mercy. “I know,” says their civilization, “that this is all very blind and inhuman and really impossible, because one cannot work out the final formula to the human problem while mankind is still only halfway down the road of its evolution; nevertheless, since there is no other way, one must stick to that which is written and stick to it verbatim and without humanitarian considerations. Or else the consequences may be even worse...”

The other solution is the opposite: “Since society is still organized abnormally, individuals cannot be called to account for its abuses and consequences. Therefore a criminal is not responsible for his actions, and for the time being there can be no such thing as a crime. In order to do away with crimes and human guilt, the abnormal nature of society and its structure must first be dealt with... One hopes that science will provide all the necessary answers.” So, this, then, is the second solution: one expects the coming of the future anthill; in the meantime, the world is being flooded with blood. Other than these two, the Western European world does not seem to have any solutions to the problem of human guilt and culpability. [Pp. 318-19]

Against this Dostoevsky argued that judgment without compassion was wrong whatever the content. He insisted on compassionate involvement. Evil was rooted deeper in reality than law or social reform. Therefore the compassionate response was the only logical one, Dostoevsky said, for once treating Tolstoy as the spokesman of the Russian point of view: “In the Russian author's approach to human delinquency and culpability one can clearly see that no anthill, and no success of 'the fourth estate,' no elimination of poverty, and no organization of fair labor practices will save mankind from abnormality and, consequently, from guilt and criminality. ... [Consequently] the human judge ... must ... submit to the laws of the still insolvable mystery and resort to the only feasible
solution—compassion and love" (p. 320). Dostoevsky explained why law and social reform were helpless against evil. Evil, which grew in the hearts of men, could not be eradicated other than by way of strenuous effort at moral regeneration from within. Each man had to lift himself up above the reality of evil. For this he needed moral support, not justice, and all possible compassion. Dostoevsky was vexed that in *Anna Karenina* this important message was buried under another message of a conflicting spirit. He blamed the author for this failure.

Dostoevsky developed his second argument on the basis of the first: it expounded the fallaciousness of any judgment without compassion, concentrating on the issues of the Balkan war, which Tolstoy had declared to be of no concern for the Russian people. Dostoevsky thought that this callous notion paralleled the immoral indifference of imperialistic Western nations toward the exalted cause of national liberation, and attacked Tolstoy on grounds that his position was morally insupportable. The attack was the least convincing part of his argument, not only because of its narrow range, but because it was misdirected. To refute Tolstoy's message, Dostoevsky assaulted the character of the author. His ad hominem argument was designed to prove Tolstoy wrong by proving him morally and mentally incompetent.

Just as analytic, dispassionate judgment could ruin the lives of individuals, Dostoevsky said, so, too, it could corrupt relations and understanding on the social and political level. *Anna Karenina* promoted an attitude of remoteness and detachment from the issues of the Balkan war and branded those who became involved in it morally and intellectually inferior (Dostoevsky's expression for it was the obscure Russian slang word *striutskie*). Tolstoy's indifference toward the oppressed Slavic brethren directly contradicted his appeal for compassion for Anna and indicated confusion in the mind of the author. Yet, this second message, Dostoevsky warned, was dangerously effective. It was likely to be heeded, first, since it came from a recognized moral authority and a teacher of the people and, second, because it was consistent with, and organically interwoven into, the artistic substance of the novel. The author from this perspective was a great sage gone mad who was leading his readers astray. Surveying the idea of great writers as teachers of the people, Dostoevsky exclaimed in half-feigned horror: "People like the author of *Anna Karenina* are teachers of society—our teachers—and we are merely their pupils. But what are they teaching us?" (p.
Dostoevsky intimated that Tolstoy may have poisoned the wells of his compassion by his own strenuous efforts (potugi) to achieve moral regeneration for himself, suffered a relapse, and now inadvertently promulgated his own sinister preoccupation with a vengeance. A vicious message of political propaganda of such stringency was entirely alien to Tolstoy's nature as an artist, indicating that a reversal, or perhaps even a drastic personality change, had occurred:

It has been a while since I met with anything like this—and in so high a concentration—in pure fiction. In the work of a writer who is an artist in the highest degree, and a fiction writer primarily, I read three or four pages of really vicious polemics on highly topical issues of the day—everything that is really important in our current Russian political and social discussions, gathered, so to speak, into one spot. . . . I am speaking of several pages in Anna Karenina by Count Leo Tolstoy, in the January issue of the Russian Messenger. . . . To my amazement, I encountered in the sixth part of the novel a scene that corresponds to really topical news of the day and, what is most significant, was not inserted deliberately or tendentiously, but arose spontaneously out of the very fabric of the artistic side of the novel. Nevertheless, I repeat, to me all this was quite unexpected, and even left me puzzled and somewhat surprised: I did not expect such viciousness in a fictional discussion of topical issues. [Pp. 73–76]

Tolstoy's sinister message, Dostoevsky claimed, basely sought to ruin the character of the Russian people by depriving them of their natural love and compassion for all peoples. Tolstoy was trying to beguile Russians into feeling no longer like Russians but like Europeans. Suggesting that galloping insanity was going to consume the great but aberrant sage, Dostoevsky lamented the loss of such an illustrious author to the Russian cause:

Now that I have expressed my feelings, perhaps it will be better understood why I was so affected by the falling away of such an author, his decision to segregate himself from the Russian common and great cause, and the paradoxical untruth that he slanderously slings at the Russian people in that wretched eighth part of his [novel] published by him separately. He simply robs the Russian people of their most precious possession, takes away from them the main meaning of their life. . . . The fact that such an author writes in such a way is very sad. [P. 322]

This is not what I expected from such an author! [P. 309]

Dostoevsky's attack upon Tolstoy was personal, underhanded, and vicious. He tried to show that Tolstoy was restless and erratic, did not know right from wrong, had a rigid (paranoid) one-track
mind (*priamolineinyi um*), and lacked the human dimension required for moral leadership. Character instability and moral inferiority were common among members of aristocratic elites, Dostoevsky claimed, and were caused by ego inflation and alienation from the people. Tolstoy's efforts to regain contact with the people by posturing in imitation of superficial aspects of the peasants' life were ridiculous. Dostoevsky dismissed Tolstoy's rustication, along with the trend fashionable among the *narodniki* to "become simple" and "go among the people," as a childish exercise in futility. He even composed an artful little homily on this subject:

If you want to join everybody in common work—go ahead and do it, but there, too, don't do as some dreamers do, who right away go for the wheelbarrow as though saying: "See this?—I'm not a master, I want to work like a peasant." A wheelbarrow, too, is but another uniform.

No, but if you really want to make a useful contribution as a man of knowledge, then go to a university and leave yourself the means for that. Important is not the giving away of the estate, and not the putting on a peasant's garb: all that is mere letter and formality. . . . All these efforts to "become simple" are nothing but a silly mummery that is rude to the people and demeaning to you. You are much too "complex" to go back to simplicity, and, besides, your education will never let you really become a peasant. Better that you should raise the peasant to the level of your own sophistication. [P. 90]

Dostoevsky identified Tolstoy's corrupted morality with what he thought to be the awful predicament of civilized Western man. Like other adherents of the organic theory and principle, Dostoevsky believed that civilized societies that retained the archaic habit of tribal societies of regarding themselves as special people—superior to the rest of mankind—were likely to develop civilized savagery called moral philistinism, and they became morally degenerate. Exclusiveness led to arrested moral growth; moral deterioration and spiritual decay tended to be abetted by material abundance. These were demonstrated in emphasis upon superficial aspects of life, demands for personal comfort, willfulness, intellectual autonomy, exploitation of one's fellow man, and moral cannibalism (*sdiranie kozh* [skinning people alive]).

Dostoevsky regarded any member of the Russian hereditary or intellectual aristocracy who chose the aesthetically rewarding but spiritually desolate regions of Western Europe's "glorious cultural cemetery" as lost to Russia. The author and the characters of *Anna Karenina* were such intellec-
tual aliens. The author had employed his talent to promote only himself. His whole novel was filled with aristocratic dilettantes engaged in sinister or vacuous pursuits. Nearly all of them were projections of the author, no one more so than Levin, whose involvement with the people was nothing but supercilious dalliance (*prazdnoshataistvo*).

Dostoevsky explained Tolstoy’s ideas as rationalizations of his emotional drives. He thought of Tolstoy as frustrated and anxiety ridden because of confinement to a small, self-contained, personal universe. Tolstoy was trying to break out of it by projecting himself into his fictional characters, so far without much visible success. In Dostoevsky’s view, Anna and Stiva Oblonsky were externalizations of Tolstoy’s negative qualities. Anna represented their grand, Stiva their petty aspects. Levin was Tolstoy’s good side: impetuous, childish, and presumably pure of heart. Continuous debates between these various externalizations supplied Dostoevsky with clues as to what the author himself was really like. The absence of dialogue between Anna and Levin, for example, suggested that Tolstoy’s grand self-image was altogether imaginary, whereas the persistent petty bickerings between Levin and Stiva, sometimes characterized by acrimony and always by dilettantism, indicated that on a smaller scale Tolstoy’s character was more solid.

Stiva, however, was for Dostoevsky a self-satisfied moral idiot and Levin a moral monster with a chronically inflamed conscience. Levin’s nature was hopelessly split; he was confused, aggressive, and in a state of continuous psychic turmoil. The feeble stirrings of Tolstoy’s better nature, represented by Levin, were always frustrated by the smug logic of his baser nature, represented by Stiva. Levin’s intellectual position was further weakened by his inability to make up his mind whether he was European or Russian. The issues themselves were petty and ephemeral (*ideal’neishaia drebeden’*). In a mock-serious offer to lend them greater dignity and scope, Dostoevsky offered to rewrite some of the conversations between Levin and Stiva as conversations about law and divine grace in terms of Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, with Stiva playing the part of the devil in the shape of a generalized poor man, whose savior Levin fancied himself to be:

Now Levin, a Russian heart, confuses the pure Russian and only possible solution of the issue with its European formulation. He
confuses the Christian solution with a historic "right." Let us imagine, for the sake of clarity, the following picture:

Levin stands, deep in thought, after the nocturnal conversation with Stiva at the hunt, and painfully, like an honest soul, wants to solve the question that has him thoroughly confused and which, therefore, must have given him trouble before.

—Yes, he muses, agonizing over the decision—yes, to be honest about it, how can we, as Veslovsky put it just now, “eat, drink, hunt and do nothing, while the poor man is always, always at work?” Yes, Stiva is right, I must divide my estate among the poor and go work for them.

The “poor man” stands beside Levin and says:

—Yes, of course you must, you are morally obligated to divide your estate among us, the poor people, and then go to work for us.

Levin emerges completely in the right, and “the poor man” completely in the wrong, of course, if we judge the whole thing from, so to speak, a transcendent point of view. [Pp. 84-85]

Dostoevsky suggested that Tolstoy/Levin would be deluding himself if he imagined himself to be addressing the masses of Russia’s poor. Actually, he was talking only to himself, in the shape of his alter ego Stiva. He lacked the stature to be a spiritual leader.

The review contained numerous diatribes against Levin, whom Dostoevsky believed to be the spokesman of Tolstoy. Dostoevsky accused Levin of addressing issues beyond his moral capability. Dostoevsky was, for example, particularly irked by Levin’s repeated assertions that he was “the people,” and tried to disprove such a contention by showing it as wishful and puerile:

Levin like to refer to himself as “the people” but he is a master, a young gentleman of the mid-upper circles of Moscow nobility, whose history Count Tolstoy has mostly been writing. Although the peasant didn’t really say anything particularly new to Levin, he nevertheless nudged him toward an idea, and it was this idea that stirred his faith. That alone ought to have been enough to make Levin realize that he isn’t quite yet people and that he therefore mustn’t refer to himself constantly as “I am myself of the people.” However, I’ll come back to that later. I only want to say that those like Levin, no matter how long they may rub elbows with, or live next to, the people, will never completely merge with them, more than that—on many points they may never even understand the people at all. Mere conceit or an act of will, especially such a fanciful one, is not enough. It is not enough just to say so and expect to become immediately one with the people. [P. 327]

The people, Dostoevsky said, were more mature and had higher ideals than Levin. Levin could not understand these ideals because
of his self-absorption, and because these ideals had their source in the people's mature faith in God.\textsuperscript{53} His own erratic pursuit of religion was narcissistic and essentially destructive. Bored, restless, and irresponsible, Levin was like a child who would introduce senseless but exciting complications to life. He naively assumed that the rest of mankind was as childish as he, a comparison that could hardly stand as a universal rule, Dostoevsky said, but was valid in respect to Levin's attitude toward universal questions. Levin, he maintained, was simple, but not pure of heart. He was merely a puerile idealist whose background led him to fervent beliefs that had no basis in, or relation to, reality. Dostoevsky envisioned Russia of his day almost as though it was Kievan Russia, about to be invaded by alien hordes. He suggested that this sickly idealism was another one of the ominous signs of the times; the arrival on the scene of this naive yet dogmatic breed of fanatical revolutionaries, ill trained and ill prepared to lead, who did not know what they were doing and heralded the destruction of Russia because of their incompetence. And yet her old leaders were being replaced by history because they had become morally corrupt:

These are multitudes ... of people of a new root ... who absolutely \textit{must have the truth}, only the truth, without any conventional lies.... This is the new Russia of the future, of honest people who want nothing but the truth.... People of that feature convulsively, almost morbidly, strive to get answers to their questions.... Oh, they are also quite intolerant.... I only want to herald at the top of my voice that they are driven by genuine feeling.... Among them are aristocrats and proletarians, clerics and agnostics, rich men and poor, learned men and ignoramuses, old men and young girls, Slavophiles and Westernizers. As to convictions the discord among them is unimaginable, but the striving toward honesty and truth is unshakable and inviolable.... I particularly want to augur, for all to hear, that they are already here, right next door to the frightful corruption [of the old establishment], that I see and sense the coming of these people who are taking over, and to whom the future of Russia belongs. [Pp. 82–83]

Dostoevsky, who repeatedly lamented in the \textit{Diary of a Writer} the lack of competent new leadership, admitted that there were parallels between the character of Levin and this new breed of people, as there were between Stiva and the corrupt old aristocracy that was about to give up its ghost as well as the control of the Russian society. In this sense Tolstoy had successfully represented the
major conflict of the times and his protagonists as the major types of the times: the new heroes and the old villains of modern Russia. They symbolized to a considerable extent the confrontation between old and new society: "The artist who juxtaposed this moribund cynic Stiva with his new man Levin juxtaposed, as it were, this hopelessly debauched, terribly numerous old Russian Establishment that has practically signed its own death warrant with this society of the New Truth, who cannot stand, not even for one moment, to feel guilty in their hearts, and who will give anything just to tear from the heart this intolerable feeling of guilt" (p. 83). All the same, Dostoevsky said, Tolstoy hardly deserved to be called a great prophet, because he was writing almost exclusively about himself. Dostoevsky insinuated that even if Tolstoy/Levin was one of these new fervid truth-seekers, the good seed of moral rebirth was stifled in his heart by the seductive influence of his own aristocratic background. Desire for salvation was not enough. The break had to be clean, and the renewal complete. And like the rich man of the Gospels, Tolstoy was much too fond of the old values to give them up. In his heart Levin was inextricably tied to Stiva. It was only in the realm of imaginative fiction that Tolstoy succeeded in juxtaposing the two. In real life they were of one piece. This was so because they both believed in the outworn forms of society and faith, one cynically and the other fervidly. Tolstoy created such types, not because he was himself attuned to history, but because he cared more about his own ideas than the truth. He was more interested in being proven right than in finding truth.

To argue this contention Dostoevsky went so far as to charge Tolstoy with lack of artistic integrity. Secondary characters in *Anna Karenina*, he said, were deliberately introduced to magnify the personality of Levin/Tolstoy. An outstanding example of such artifice and violation of artistic truth was Koznyshev, Levin's half-brother, who appeared only to serve as Levin's foil:

Sergei Ivanovich was depicted in this comic fashion rather skillfully already earlier in the novel; but in the eighth part it becomes altogether clear that he was conceived in the first place only in order to serve at the end of the novel as a pedestal for Levin's triumph. But as a character he is most successful.

However, one of the least successful characters is the old prince. He, too, sits right there, holding forth on the Eastern question. He is a thorough failure in the entire novel, not only with regard to the Eastern question. [P. 329]
Dostoevsky asserted that characters in *Anna Karenina* were made ridiculous, plot was twisted, scenes were set up, and evidence was unfairly stacked simply in order that Levin could prevail in the novel's arguments. In these disputes Levin revealed his aggressive personality and his disturbed condition. He was abusive and lashed out indiscriminately at innocent Russian war volunteers. Levin was assisted in this unsavory practice by an older version of Stiva, their father-in-law Prince Shcherbatsky, whom Dostoevsky took to be Tolstoy's idea of an enlightened old man: a refurbished version of an eighteenth-century *moraliste*, a cantankerous old cynic with a banal sense of humor:

He is one of those virtuous characters in the novel, designed to be a model of positive beauty of character—without, of course, sinning against realism. He has his weaknesses; one might even go so far as to say that he is even a wee bit funny but, of course, in a most respectable, dignified manner. He is the Mr. Goodheart and the Mr. Reasonable of the book but, of course, not like the Mr. Reasonable of Fonvizin's [play *The Young Hopeful*, 1783] who, once he gets started, lets loose a steady stream of nothing but common sense, uttering, like a trained donkey, naught but truisms. No, no, here we have humor and, generally, the human sides. But the really pathetic thing about this elderly gentleman is that he was designed as a wit. As a graduate of the school of life, and father of numerous although settled progeny, in his declining years he watches everything around him with the quiet smile of a wise old man, a smile, however, far from all that mild and benign. He advises, certainly, but beware of the playfulness of his wit: it cuts to the quick.

But, lo and behold, a surprise occurred: our Mr. Reasonable, who was designed as a wit, turns out to be, and heaven only knows why, not just short on wit, but, worse luck still, positively banal. Of course he tries, and very hard, all through the novel to say something intelligent, but that intention is as far as he ever gets, really nothing, nothing at all witty comes out. The reader finally, out of the goodness of his heart or embarrassment, is anxious to give him credit for all those constipated efforts at expressing wit as though it actually were wit; but what is much more serious is that this self-same person in the eighth, separately published part of the novel is again designated to express things that are—let us face it—once again hardly witty (in this sense the old prince stays firmly in character), but, on the contrary, things cynical and slanderous concerning part of our society and our people. Instead of a Mr. Goodheart, suddenly we have a cynical aristocrat—a superannuated member of an exclusive club who runs down our people and denies that there is any good to them. These are the rumblings of a clubman's senile irritation, an old man's bile. [Pp. 329–30]
Dostoevsky claimed that old Prince Shcherbatsky looked upon the Balkan war of liberation as a revolt. He was a retrograde, a pro-Western imperialist and, as a member of the international aristocratic elite, a firm supporter of any established regime. His superior stance was based on the dim notion that all freedom was rebellion, that freedom and aggressive irresponsibility were the same, and that all freedom fighters were highwaymen.

One can readily see that this philosophy did not sit well with Dostoevsky, for whom, as Berdiaev has shown, freedom was a dynamic force that realized each man's potential abilities. For Dostoevsky the Balkan war was more than a symbol of national liberation and a political issue. He approved of the Balkan fight for freedom and passionately affirmed the right of Russian volunteers to participate in it: their compassionate involvement in this war was a sign of mature morality. His real concern, however, was metaphysical and, as usual, he dared not express it in so many words for fear of being branded a mystic: Tolstoy was unwittingly aiding Antichrist in his fight against God. A denial of the right to compassion was tantamount to stifling man's most precious characteristic.

Dostoevsky's critical position is too unconventional to allow meaningful comparisons with other critics. Evidently he took his own function as a prophet quite seriously: his dire predictions of the coming changes in the social structure of Russia, perhaps even a revolution, and his keen sense of historic reality imply that he did. In any case, it is clear that he wrote his critique of *Anna Karenina* with a primary concern with its effect, and its author's, on the "raw nerve" of history, particularly Russian history. Dostoevsky was convinced that his function as a guide to other writers and critics far exceeded in importance his function as a literary critic. In conscious intent, then, his attack upon Tolstoy was not directed against him as a man and artist but as an erring sage.

But because they did not espouse the same ideals, it seems, Dostoevsky conceived a personal antipathy for Tolstoy. While the outside world resounded with praise for his humanity, Dostoevsky as a critic of Tolstoy was cruel and tyrannical. In contrast to the highly impersonal character of his public attitude, his private sentiments were extremely personal and oversensitive, motivated by secret prejudices—a readiness, for instance, to misconstrue views that
were in opposition to his own as having ulterior motivation. He constantly made negative assumptions about Tolstoy in order to invalidate Tolstoy's arguments in advance—in defense, naturally, of his own touchiness. His sensitivity made him acrimonious and aggressive; his insinuations multiplied. His personal remarks sting with resentment and, it seems, envy. Magnanimous as he was in sacrificing his own failing health in the service of his country's intellectual goals, Dostoevsky's feelings are revealed as petty, crotchety, and conservative. Anything that did not fit into his formula was seen through a veil of unconscious hatred and was condemned accordingly. These suppressed feelings had a markedly deleterious effect on his thinking, which would otherwise have been almost beyond reproach. His moral formula, which otherwise might claim general recognition, underwent a characteristic alteration as a result of his unacknowledged bias. Dostoevsky became rigidly dogmatic. Truth was no longer allowed to speak for itself; it was identified strictly with his views and treated like a sensitive darling whom Tolstoy had wronged. For that Tolstoy was demolished with personal invective, and no argument was too gross to be used against him. Dostoevsky's truth had to be trotted out, until eventually it dawns on the reader that it was not so much a matter of truth as a personal defense of its begetter.

The viciousness of the attack and the recklessly biased assessment of Tolstoy's psychological condition raises perhaps some questions about Dostoevsky's competence as a psychologist and a judge of character. But apart from that, Dostoevsky's study raises many interesting questions about the nature of Tolstoy's work, some aspects of which have never before been discussed with much thoroughness. Undeniably, there is a good deal of truth in Dostoevsky's view of Tolstoy as marking the end of the period of Russian literature that dealt with the life and the landed gentry, i.e., an elitist literature. Nevertheless, one cannot agree with Dostoevsky that the vices he claims to have discovered in Tolstoy are present in *Anna Karenina* to such an extreme degree. What Dostoevsky saw as efforts by Tolstoy to aggrandize himself were really the consequences of Tolstoy's peculiar self-analytic art. Some expressions to which Dostoevsky objected, such as Levin's (or Tolstoy's) claims to being "one of the people" or denials that a generalized feeling of compassion could ever exist (other than as a psychologically morbid condi-
tion), were rhetorical phrases calculated to reinforce the message. They were not different in kind from Dostoevsky's own tendentiousness.

Dostoevsky's criticism of Tolstoy's moral position is also disputable. Dostoevsky did not view Tolstoy's work as a whole. His extravagant strictures in the face of his immense admiration for Tolstoy's artistry reflect his own exaggerated concern for literature as a carrier of ideas. It is clear, then, that what Dostoevsky saw as Tolstoy's misconceptions indicate some of Dostoevsky's own rhetorical limitations. He himself was unable to tone down his writing. His own manner was often close to true sublimity, but often also to extravagance and bombast. In his own works such a style was often effective, but in his critical writings the same features often failed to convince.

Dostoevsky and Tolstoy represented diametrically opposed and antagonistic styles in nineteenth-century Russian literature, which, at the time, were discussed in terms of being the epic and lyrical, objective and subjective, descriptive and psychological. The Soviets now believe, and to some extent justifiably, that the clash between them was a literary reflection of the struggle for supremacy between the entrenched forces of Russia's hereditary aristocracy and the rising forces of a new and vigorous intellectual aristocracy of men of odd backgrounds, the raznochintsy. Form was inextricably intertwined with content in this intensely ideological conflict. Many Soviet scholars have examined Dostoevsky's novels in the same harsh political spirit, and in focusing on only certain aspects of his work they have exaggerated their importance. Dostoevsky charged Tolstoy with ideological bias, but the same charge can be made against him.

Psychological alienation is an important theme today. In this sense we can point to the pioneering work done by the Russian organicists in investigating this condition of modern man long before it became generally recognized. They met the positivism of the civic critics head on, and their criticism of the aesthetic movement was directed at the moral obtuseness and its falsity to a full reality. Grigor’ev, Strakhov, and Dostoevsky were all profoundly hostile to everything that grows out of a nakedly logical process, and they believed in the extralogical plenitude of immediate awareness. Their view of the world and of man presupposes an inclusiveness of art, forbids a partial view of reality, and implies an artist speak-
ing as a whole man. Here, of course, morality enters into the organic scheme and literary standards, and the religious theme did serve as an effective vehicle for their statement. For just as in life one responds at various levels, ranging from animal to spiritual, so art, in their view, must reach hierarchically toward a religious peak. And at the summit of their preferences is the identification with Christ achieved through recognition of the whole man. The renewal of modern man, they felt, was to be based in Christianity, because any renewal not based in the best moral tradition of the past is ephemeral; and the dominant that grows from historical roots acts like a living being within the ego-bound modern man.

But modern man's struggle with his own nature, which was for Tolstoy a choice between right and wrong, was not so simple for the organicists. The conflict between a weakened conscience and increased self-consciousness signified, in their view, an alarming confrontation between the abstract inner man and the concrete outer man, his outward expression as an individual. Indeed, the split between the modern conscious ego and the archaic and unconscious self denotes rejection of the inner self by the outer self. For the organicists this is the essence of nihilism: a sinister attempt by reason, which is identified with ego-consciousness, to achieve autonomy by overwhelming the inner moral man. The outcome would be a peculiarly lucid (Luciferian) state in which a hypocritical ego knowingly usurps the place of a weakened conscience that looked back on an earlier "mythical" time when the ego still felt absolutely dependent on a higher and mightier nonego. The subsequent disappearance of guilt and strengthening of criticism would be felt as progress, enlightenment, indeed as redemption, although a one-sided and limited being has replaced the whole man. The organicists felt that the decay of the conscious dominant would be followed by an irruption of moral chaos on the individual. The nihilist's ego is first inflated and then reduced to the "ugliest man," a clever "gorilla" who, once he has had an education, begins to think of himself as a superman. This theme is frequent in the writings of the Russian organicists. It is elaborated by Dostoevsky in conversations between nihilists. In The Possessed Kirilov and Stavrogin argue about the difference between God-man (inner man) and Man-god (outer man), in connection with the evolution of man from ape, and his further development from man to god in Kirilov's view, but back to ape in Stavrogin's view. The issue is
dramatized in Kirilov's suicide: before shooting himself he "goes ape" and bites the finger of another nihilist, Peter Verkhovensky. Conversations of this kind also occur between Stavrogin and Verkhovensky, whom Stavrogin calls "his ape" (the reference is, of course, an organic renewal of the medieval idea that the devil is the ape of God). Verkhovensky is intellectually superior to his father, Stepan, who is handicapped by moral considerations. A similar notion can be found in W. H. Auden's modern semidrama The Sea and the Mirror, which is an updated version of Shakespeare's Tempest. In Auden's work Caliban has achieved status; he is a modern intellectual who surpasses Prospero in both insight and sophistication. A useful comparison may be drawn from the treatment of this important theme in different literary traditions.

The Russian organicists were interested in a phenomenon that also interests modern students of human nature (see above, pp. 12-13) who see significant changes in modern man's moral attitudes, apparently induced by changes in patterns of thought. The organicists saw the irreligiosity of modern man as the result of a change from symbolic to logical thinking, which makes him believe only in a limited physical existence in time and, in turn, induces him to pursue social progress and the limits of space. Traditional man, on the other hand, believes in an unlimited metaphysical existence, abhors change, is not interested in social progress, and pursues moral progress and the limits of time (eschatology). This pattern changes with advances in civilization, when interest in eschatology slowly fades and is replaced by an interest in scientific goals. One may surmise, then, that morality is the illogical product of traditional (symbolic) thinking, and immorality the fruit of progressive (logical) thought. The Russian organicists applied this idea to the puzzle of the so-called criminal mind. Grigor'ev summed it up in the notion of bourgeois mentality as "moral philistinism" (moral'noe lakeistvo), which Dostoevsky immortalized in the character of the "lackey" Smerdiakov (The Brothers Karamazov), who, after he became proficient in logic, concluded that there can be no God and, if there is no God, "all is permitted" (vse pozvoleno).

Anyone brought up on the conventions of modern criticism invariably reads the organic critics with a sense of discomfort. Their content is massively moral and dogmatically expressed. Furthermore, our ingrained empirical bias is better attuned to the scientism of formal criticism, which attempts to draw precise con-
elusions. But the organic critics dared do what others were not able to do: liberate criticism from procedural limitations. Their critiques have a kind of historical and critical multiple import that is always unfinished. Therefore the differences in their practices from what we consider to be good criticism today arise from no clumsiness on their part, nor from a primitive quality in their writing, but from different assumptions about reality.