Many critics have complained that Tolstoy's works were structurally ambiguous, but none more than the aesthetic critics, as they were called, who were interested in literary works primarily as works of art. They were understandably dismayed by Tolstoy's radical approach to questions of form, and displayed a classicist's intolerance of the interference with traditional genres that they found in his works. They objected to Tolstoy's experimental stories as unfinished episodic sketches. Some aesthetic critics complained that Tolstoy was burdening the reader, quite unnecessarily, with his own problems in experimenting with form. Many compared Tolstoy with Pushkin, Gogol, and Turgenev, all of whom, they maintained, were more able to deal with form. Several of these critics seriously questioned the feasibility of the unwieldy format of *War and Peace*, which seemed too loosely assembled. The multiplanar construction had forced the plot into a glacial pace of development and made the novel extremely difficult to analyze. Reviewers protested Tolstoy's introducing characters without acquainting the reader with their previous history. Some of them praised the absence, and others objected to the presence, of ideological bias in Tolstoy's work. Almost to a man, the aesthetic critics complained about excesses in Tolstoy's technique of intensive analysis, which many thought to be an intolerable, unnecessary intrusion into the private lives of his characters. All this did not, however, prevent the
critics from praising highly the artistic merits of Tolstoy's works. In general, they admired the simplicity and authenticity of his style, and they found his handling of war scenes particularly effective. Representative of their position is the careful review of Tolstoy's early works by the writer-critic A. V. Druzhinin (1824–64), a moderate liberal and a follower of Sainte-Beuve, who disliked Tolstoy's analysis but liked his impartiality toward his characters, his freedom from topical issues, the unusual and original features of his work, and his steady pursuit of artistic excellence. Impulsively Druzhinin declared Tolstoy, along with Turgenev and Pisemsky, to be the newest representatives of pure art, thereby galling his ideological opponent Chernyshevsky. In another instance, the highly respected writer-critic V. P. Botkin (1811–69) praised The Cossacks as a most articulate work of verbal art, but at the same time criticized Tolstoy for an obvious lack of artistic control (nevryderzhannost') and a tendency to promote the dated ideas of J. J. Rousseau, for which the main character Olenin became something of a mouthpiece (nezhizennyi). The critic P. V. Annenkov (1812–87), who held liberal ideas of both the Westernizing and Slavophile sorts, also objected to undue tendentiousness in Tolstoy's works. He even compared Tolstoy to the satirist N. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826–89), saying that both had the tendency to saturate their works with their own obsessive ideas. The key to Tolstoy's works and the people in them was the search for authenticity, naturalness, and truth, Annenkov said, a search that sometimes became frenetic. In The Cossacks not only Olenin but everybody—Marianka, Luke, Daddy Eroshka, and even the wild pigs—searched for eternal verities alongside him. However, unlike Botkin, Annenkov found Olenin as a character well conceived and executed. He compared Olenin to Pushkin's Eugene Onegin as a superfluous man. He even sought to establish similarities between Goncharov's Il'ia Oblomov (Oblomov) and Pierre Bezukhov of War and Peace, who had indolence and obesity in common. Otherwise Annenkov admitted that he was at a loss to assess this formidable new piece of Russian literature. He found it too rich in content and too diffuse in form and manner to permit any reliable immediate judgment.

Although most of the aesthetes were eager to praise Tolstoy's articulate art, each added some complaint to temper his praise, so as to indicate that there was something about it one could not quite accept and be comfortable with. The columnist E. Edelson (1824–
68) described Tolstoy's narrative as unaffected, truthful, charming, and lively, but found the manner of narrative disjointed (бессвязная) and whimsical (причудливая). He admired, however, Tolstoy's apparent ability to depict and instantly characterize "virtually anybody." S. S. Dudyshkin (1820–68), an aesthete with Slavophile leanings, thought that Tolstoy was "testing the strength of character" of his protagonists by putting them in dangerous situations (the war stories). He deplored the "poor structure" of Tolstoy's stories, but praised their realism.

The writer-critic N. D. Akhsharumov (1819–93), prolific author of lightweight adventure stories, drew some conclusions from a comparison of Tolstoy's narrative manner with that of Sir Walter Scott. He found the form of Tolstoy's works puzzling and the combination of artistic and philosophical passages disagreeable. And he complained that some of Tolstoy's characters were less than thoroughly alive. The poet-impressionist and critic S. A. Andreevsky (1847–1919) claimed that Tolstoy's art was just too tendentious. In The Kreutzer-Sonata, he pointed out, Tolstoy "confidently demanded" that mankind be allowed to die out. Andreevsky found the ceaseless soul-searching of Tolstoyan characters tiresome and overdone, their search for truth confusing and depressing. He also complained about excessive naturalism and undue exposure of the inner lives of characters, whom Tolstoy was endowing with "luminous insides" (светящиеся внутренности). Andreevsky thought it was altogether unnecessary for Tolstoy to dwell on the inner lives of animals. Moreover, Andreevsky remonstrated that Tolstoy was a thoroughly unpoetic writer; he refused to create ideal female characters in the manner of Pushkin and Turgenev, and his Natasha Rostov and Kitty Shcherbatsky were mere females. The critic and popular novelist Vsevolod S. Solov'ev (1849–1903) made some rather interesting comments about the role of repetitions in Tolstoy's style, but explained his ideas only briefly. He found serious fault with persistent patterns of repetitions, the effect of which, he said, was to trivialize and overstress the effect of familiarity. Besides, he said, Tolstoy was guilty of repeating "bits of business"—descriptive detail and incidents he had used in his previous works—to create an image or illustrate a point. As a result, the reader could not help but feel that he had read it all somewhere before. Another, and perhaps even more pernicious, effect he found was that of banality, particularly in Anna Karenina, whose subject and often details were quite trivial.
to begin with. Nonetheless, Solov'ev rated *Anna Karenina* as a tremendous artistic achievement. Tolstoy's artistic ability was so great that he was able to endow even a trivial incident with a deeper meaning; a sensitive reader could enjoy his art regardless of the banality of its subject.\textsuperscript{10}

Well-known poets and writers, too, tried their hand at writing critiques of Tolstoy's work. The poet Ia. P. Polonsky (1819–98) was commissioned by Dostoevsky to write a casual critique of *The Cossacks*.\textsuperscript{11} Polonsky praised Tolstoy's art but objected to his extensive analysis, episodic structure, and saturation of the narrative with detail. He surmised that Tolstoy was unable to produce a protagonist with a strong character, a problem he shared with Turgenev. Polonsky rated Olenin with Onegin as an obsolete type. The young generation, he said, no longer looked up to such Byronic characters as models of behavior; they wanted men of action, men of strong will. The well-known poet A. A. Fet [Shen­shin] (1820–92) wrote, but did not publish, an essay on *Anna Karenina*.\textsuperscript{12} Apparently, it was written in defense of Tolstoy's moral and artistic position in the controversy with the editor of the *Russian Messenger*, M. N. Katkov (1818–87), a conservative Russian nationalist and Slavophile, about the refusal of the latter to publish the final (eighth) part of *Anna Karenina* without cutting out certain passages he considered unpatriotic. Tolstoy finally resolved the conflict by publishing the eighth part of the novel as a separate publication. Apart from that unpublished essay, Fet's casual comments about Tolstoy's work in personal letters agree with those of Turgenev. Fet praised *The Cossacks* as an artistic masterpiece but condemned “Pilikushka,” a short story that appeared at the same time (1862), as a sordid piece of fiction on a lowly subject. The student of national lore N. S. Leskov (1831–95), a writer who was a Russian nationalist as well as a proponent of the “art for art's sake” doctrine and had long admired Tolstoy, wrote a series of short articles in the influential daily the *Stock Exchange News*,\textsuperscript{13} where he defended Tolstoy's positions against spirited assaults by retired generals who accused Tolstoy of distorting historical facts in *War and Peace*. Leskov maintained that Tolstoy was never a naturalist or historian, not even a realist in the strict sense of the word, but the poet of a higher spiritual reality, knowledge of which enabled him to see into the past and future. Much later Leskov wrote a polemic analysis of “The Death of Ivan Ilych” where, aside from a few
vicious jabs at Dostoevsky as a fashionable prophet and a popular saint, he tried to interpret the illness and death of Ivan Ilych as a record of the man's gradual rise or "resurrection" to this state of higher consciousness. In *War and Peace*, Leskov claimed, Prince Andrei Bolkonsky underwent essentially the same process of gradual awakening from the "sleep" of ordinary life into another existence, a higher spiritual state. According to Leskov, this subject was crucial to Tolstoy's religious and philosophical views and was discussed and reiterated in all of his artistic works. Another writer of some renown, Mark Landau (1889–1957), who wrote popular historic fiction under the anagrammatic pseudonym Aldanov, attempted a lengthy (unfinished) comparative study of the aesthetic systems of Tolstoy and his follower and admirer, the French writer Romain Rolland. In this impressionistic study, Aldanov treated Tolstoy and his art as a mysterious phenomenon and tried to explain its controversial nature as a result of tensions built up by the excessive moral demands Tolstoy always made upon himself.

Writer-critics of Tolstoy thus tended to be speculative and were quite often less than certain of their ground. By and large, critics interested in the aesthetic nature of literature scrutinized most of all the form of Tolstoy's works. They questioned the validity of Tolstoy's theories, complained about his tendency to experiment with form and content, and criticized his introduction of novel and controversial ideas in both areas. Aesthetic critics generally thought of such experimentation as extraneous or harmful to the artistic purpose. They found the essential artistry in Tolstoy's works to be perfect and merely spoiled by such experimentation. A variant of this complaint was voiced by the organic writer-critic Dostoevsky (see chap. 3), who also believed Tolstoy's ideas and moral ideals to be worthless; he was a great admirer of Tolstoy's art so long as it remained pure, i.e., uncontaminated by Tolstoy's controversial ideas. An outstanding example of this attitude among the aesthetic critics is the writer Turgenev, who was a great admirer of Tolstoy, yet extremely intolerant of Tolstoy's ideas. Turgenev's fiction, somewhat uncharacteristically, reflects his involvement with current social issues. His controversial novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862) deals with the ideology of Russian nihilists and current problems of the generation gap. His other novels were written around some current issue, so that all his novels were to a great degree topical and controversial. In this sense he was a writer who was invariably
embroiled in current issues. But as a literary critic he stood aloof from these. His point of view is therefore quite representative of the aesthetic point of view.

TURGENEV

The novelist Ivan S. Turgenev (1818-83) left a number of important critical judgments of Tolstoy and his work. The most valuable appear in Turgenev’s correspondence, which was the genre most congenial to him as a critic, as the Soviet scholar L. N. Nazarova has pointed out. Turgenev’s letters contain succinct critical comments on *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, the Sebastopol stories, “Albert,” “Lucerne,” “A Landowner’s Morning,” *Family Happiness*, “Polikushka,” and *The Cossacks*; they mention *Anna Karenina* and *My Confession* briefly, in disapprobation; they provide, most of all, a commentary on *War and Peace*. The critiques of Tolstoy’s work that Turgenev wrote for publication are less subjective, less specific, and far less significant. Written much later, they were usually meant to introduce translations of Tolstoy’s works to the European reader. They are significant primarily because they provide a concise assessment of Tolstoy as a writer and assign *War and Peace* its proper place in world literature.

Turgenev rarely censured a fellow writer in print. Brilliant and erudite, he had the potential of becoming a first-rate critic but preferred to avoid the unpleasantness and petty polemics of Russian journalism. Instead he thought of himself as a propagandist of Russian culture abroad; for years he was the leading exponent of Russian talent in Western Europe. In his introductions of Russian artists and writers he stressed what they had in common with their European counterparts, providing a basis for appreciation of their uniquely Russian characteristics. I shall treat Turgenev as a commentator on Tolstoy chronologically but in two parts: (1) as a self-appointed tutor, and (2) as a critic of Tolstoy.

*Turgenev as Tutor to Tolstoy the Man*

Turgenev assumed considerable responsibility for the destiny of Russian literature. He saw himself as the leading figure of its transitional period and apparently felt that it was his special privilege to groom a successor. His letters indicate that he recognized Tolstoy’s potential early. “This is a dependable talent,” he wrote to Nekrasov on 28 October 1852, not long after Tolstoy’s first story, *Childhood*,
came out. "This is a first-rate talent," he said to E. Ia. Kolbasin in a letter of 29 October 1854; "I firmly hope that he will surprise us all yet. This man will go far, and leave behind a deep trace," he wrote to Polonsky on 17 February 1857.

Turgenev, indeed, slated Tolstoy for the leading role in the next period of Russian literature. "Poetic and rich natures like Tolstoy," he wrote to V. P. Botkin on 3 January 1857, "will express fully and clearly what I only hinted about." His letter of 1 November 1854 to Dr. I. F. Minitsky represents Turgenev's earnest conviction quite well. The letter refers to a relatively well known incident in 1845 when the famous Belinsky administered a stern rebuke to Nekrasov for his rash and precipitate choice of Dostoevsky (whom Turgenev disliked) as a spiritual successor to Gogol. "You will find there," Turgenev wrote, "a new story by the author of Childhood, Tolstoy, next to whom all our attempts look like just so much nonsense. There he is, at long last, the real successor to Gogol, and one who does not resemble Gogol in the least, which is, of course, just as it should be." In this last remark Turgenev apparently referred to the same factual anecdote: Nekrasov's acclaim of "a new Gogol" was based on Dostoevsky's first novelette, Poor Folk, which bears a strong resemblance to Gogol's novelette The Overcoat and is, in some ways, a direct parody of that brilliant and famous story. Compared to it, Tolstoy's early work, Childhood, was much more original. It bore no resemblance to anything Gogol had ever written—a fact that, to Turgenev, was evidence of Tolstoy's originality and independence as a writer and made him much more fit to become the leading Russian writer of the future.

Turgenev's subsequent friction with Tolstoy was perhaps indirectly a result of his efforts to make Tolstoy behave in accord with the commission bestowed upon him by his older colleague. Worried about the chronic dearth of promising talents, Turgenev became inordinately concerned about Tolstoy's well-being. "Your sister," he wrote to Tolstoy on 3 October 1855,

must have told you what a high opinion I have of your talent and how much I expect of you—lately I have been thinking about you especially often. I shudder to think where you are right now. Although in a way I am glad that you are getting all those new firsthand impressions and experiences, there is a limit to everything, and one must not tempt fate—she is glad enough as it is to harm us at every step. It would be so good if you could get away from the
Crimea—you have proved enough that you are not a coward, and a military career is really not for you. Your destiny is to be a writer, an artist of the thought and word, I dare speak to you like this because in your last letter which I received today you hint at the possibility of a leave—and on top of that I simply love Russian literature too much not to want you to be outside the range of all kinds of stupid and undiscriminating bullets. If you really could come, at least for a time, to the Tula province [the region of Tolstoy's residence, not far from Turgenev's]—I would make it a special point to come here from Saint Petersburg to get acquainted with you personally. I know this cannot be a very great inducement to you but, really—for yourself, for literature—do come. I repeat once again—your weapon is the pen, not the sword, and the Muses not only do not tolerate vanity but they are jealous mistresses. . . . I have so much to tell you about yourself, about your work.

Thus Turgenev began to press for a close friendship, even at one time (1854-56) cultivating a sentimental attachment for Tolstoy's married sister; and he found Tolstoy personally deficient. Turgenev was not impressed with Tolstoy's intelligence. He thought Tolstoy mentally disorganized. "I have always suspected you of muddle-headedness (if you will forgive the expression)," he wrote to Tolstoy on 25 September 1856. Turgenev thought that Tolstoy's education was grossly inadequate, and looked upon Tolstoy as a self-willed and eccentric boor. "He is a berserk troglodyte . . . .," Turgenev wrote to Tolstoy's sister Mary and her husband on 20 December 1855, "and has committed many atrocities since his arrival here." "I almost quarreled with Tolstoy for good," he wrote to Botkin on 8 February 1856, "because of what he dared say about Georges Sand. . . . He said so many stupid and banal things that they cannot even be recounted. . . . He went really far this time, . . . outraged everybody and presented himself in a most unfavorable light."

Yet Turgenev was acutely aware that this impossible fellow, this "savage," was possessed of a unique and wondrous earthy talent. So, it was imperative to civilize him. "Tolstoy's essay about Sebastopol is a miracle!" he gushed in a letter to I. I. Panaev of 10 July 1855. "Whenever he touches the ground," he explained in a letter to P. V. Annenkov on 25 April 1868, "he, like Antaeus, regains all his powers." Turgenev wanted to see this talent used efficiently, uncomplicated by Tolstoy's tendencies to esoteric theorizing. He praised Tolstoy so as to bolster his creative urge, mocked his reluctance to commit himself to a full-time literary career, egged him on
to increased productivity, and jealously guarded him against various “savage” influences. “I see that you have become lately very close friends with Druzhinin and are under his influence,” he wrote tartly to Tolstoy on 20 December 1856. “I fear lest Slavophilism, into whose hands he seems to have fallen, should spoil his beautiful and poetic talent, depriving him of independence of outlook,” he wrote to Borisov on 27 March 1870, “as it has already spoiled Kokhanovskaia and others. The artist who loses his capacity to see black and white—left and right—already stands at the brink of destruction.” And on 7 December 1857 he wrote the following admonition to Tolstoy:

I most fervently hope that the current civic trend in literature will leave you unaffected. . . . Follow your own path—and write, but of course no moral and political sermons like "Lucerne." Botkin has praised to me very highly the beginning of your novel about the Caucasus. You write that you are very glad not to have followed my advice and become only a writer of fiction. I do not want to argue the point—perhaps you are right. Only I, sinful man that I am and prone to error, no matter how hard I rack my brains over it, for the life of me I cannot imagine what else it is that you might be if not a fiction writer: an army officer, perhaps? a landed gentleman? a philosopher? the founder of a new religion? a government official? a businessman?—be so good as to help me out of my difficulty . . .

I am joking, of course, but seriously—I really would so much like to see you go ahead full speed at last, with all sails set.

Turgenev, who thought of Tolstoy as a relatively pure product of savage ignorance and Muscovite bigotry, tried to prevent Tolstoy from injecting any messages of homespun philosophy in his work (he called it mudrit—playing the wise man), in other words, from behaving like a prophet, until Tolstoy had improved his education and become civilized. Turgenev was eager to help with advice; but he resented Tolstoy's attempts to deviate from what he thought was the path for Tolstoy to follow. Turgenev's letters sound a stubborn refrain that Tolstoy should calm down, settle down, establish his mental bearings. “If you won't stray from the road—(and, apparently, there is no reason to assume that)—you will go very far,” he wrote to Tolstoy on 28 November 1856. “I wish you health, an active life—and freedom, spiritual freedom.” “When you calm down at last, when the ferment in you will quiet down . . .” he wrote on 25 September 1856, “it might bring you that mentally settled attitude which you need so badly,” he continued on 20 December
1856. “There is obviously some change going on in you,” he went on, on 15 January 1857, “—and a very good change at that (forgive me, please, if I seem to be patting you on the head but I am a full ten years older than you and, besides, beginning to feel more and more like an old tutor and a blabbermouth); you are growing calmer, more lucid and, what is perhaps most important, you are freeing yourself from your own views and prejudices. . . . May God let it come to pass that your outlook should widen every day.” “I see from his letters,” Turgenev confided to Druzhinin a few days later on 25 January 1857, “that he is undergoing a most beneficial change, and rejoice in it ‘like an old nanny.’” These letters indicate a curious fact: for all his thoroughly enlightened European background and education, Turgenev could not resist assuming the role of spiritual leader any more than his colleagues Chernyshevsky, a radical, and Dostoevsky, a Slavophile, could. He could not forgo tutoring a promising younger writer in the intricacies of leading the Russian people toward his own views. Turgenev’s efforts to influence Tolstoy continued to the end of Turgenev’s life when, on his deathbed, he fired at Tolstoy his famous last letter with the ambiguous and memorable phrase that caught the fancy of critics, urging Tolstoy to come down to earth and return once again to writing about the Russian land.

Turgenev as Critic of Tolstoy the Artist

From the beginning Turgenev assumed that Tolstoy’s work suffered from a variety of savage features such as an extravagant use of descriptive detail. “I liked very much Tolstoy’s facile and brisk little tale ‘The Raid,’” he wrote to Annenkov on 21 April 1853, “if only one could throw out two or three pages of excessive descriptions of nature.” Turgenev believed that Tolstoy showed great skill in drawing characters, and his descriptions indicated an astonishing power of talent; but the material was undigested and much of it was unnecessary. “After you left,” he wrote to Fet on 25 January 1864, “I sat down to read Tolstoy’s ‘Polikushka’ and was amazed at the sheer power of this truly great talent. Only far too much material is wasted, and it really wasn’t necessary to drown the little boy. The story is just too gruesome this way. But there are pages that are truly astonishing! Chills wander up and down the spine, right through to the backbone, and ours, as you and I know, is pretty thick-skinned and coarse. A master, a real master!” However,
Turgenev objected more vigorously to the intruding bias against civilization. Such bias had spoiled the short story "Lucerne" and adversely affected the fragment "A Landowner's Morning." This is what Turgenev said about it in his letter of 25 January 1857 to the writer-critic Druzhinin:

I have read his [Tolstoy's] "Landowner's Morning," which I liked extraordinarily well because of its sincerity and almost complete lack of bias; I say "almost" because in the way he set himself his task there lies buried (perhaps unbeknownst to himself) a certain prejudice. The principal moral impression from the story (and I am not speaking of the artistic one) is the feeling that so long as serfdom exists, there can be no real meeting of the two sides no matter how unselfish or honest the attempt may be—and this impression is good and true; but there is another one, an outrunner,—namely that, on the whole, to enlighten the peasant, to improve his lot leads nowhere—and this impression leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. But the skill in language, narrative, characterization is great.

Turgenev believed that Tolstoy was determined to resist civilization at every step. He thought that Tolstoy's short story "Three Deaths" was an attempt to present civilization as a corrupting and unnecessary influence. He conveyed this impression to Tolstoy. "To tell you what I think," he wrote on 11 February 1859, "'Three Deaths' has made here, on the whole, a favorable impression—but people find the ending odd, don't quite understand its connection to the preceding deaths, and those who do, don't like it." Turgenev felt that "Albert" and The Cossacks were spoiled by a psychological predisposition for showing the effects of civilization in excessive self-analysis.27 "I was delighted by The Cossacks," he wrote to Fet on 7 April 1863, "and so was Botkin. Only the character of Olenin spoils the splendid overall impression. To juxtapose civilization and the primeval untouched nature there was no need to bring out again this self-absorbed, tiresome, morbid creature. Why is it that Tolstoy will not get rid of this persistent nightmare of his!"

The Cossacks, which, as Gershenzon has pointed out, came into being under the influence of Turgenev's own Sportsman's Sketches,28 was Tolstoy's only major work to meet Turgenev's standards as a work of literature with correct proportions of poetic and realistic elements. Turgenev thoroughly approved of its overall tenor. "A few days ago," he wrote on 17 June 1864 to Borisov, "I reread Tolstoy's novel The Cossacks and was again transported with delight. This is indeed an astonishing piece that has immense power."
"Mme Viardot and I are reading Tolstoy's *The Cossacks,*" he wrote again to Borisov on 21 March 1866, "and I am enjoying myself to excess: what genuine poetry and beauty!" He never changed his opinion of the novel as a near-perfect work of literary art. If anything, with time, his opinion of *The Cossacks* tended to improve. Eventually, he came to regard it as Tolstoy's masterpiece. "The more I reread this novelette," he wrote on 16 March 1874 to Fet, "the more I become convinced that it is the chef d'oeuvre of Tolstoy, as well as of the entire Russian narrative fiction." Neither *War and Peace* nor *Anna Karenina* fared nearly so well in Turgenev's estimation.

Turgenev's immediate condemnation of the early parts of *War and Peace* reflected the standards by which he judged a literary work. At first he found scarcely a redeeming feature in the book and railed bitterly about its "glaring faults." "I managed to read," he wrote to Borisov on 28 March 1865, the beginning of Tolstoy's novel [*War and Peace*]. To my genuine dismay I must confess that this novel strikes me as being positively bad, boring, and unsuccessful. Tolstoy left his bailiwick and all his shortcomings are immediately exposed. . . . How meager is all this on the broad canvas of a historical novel! And he puts this wretched product above *The Cossacks!* So much the worse for him if he really means it. And how cold it all is and dry—how obvious the author's lack of imagination and spontaneity—how tiresome the attempts to show off and impress the reader with feats of sheer memory for petty, incidental, and unnecessary things. . . . Oh, no, this is really too much; this is the way to fall, even with his talent. This is very painful to me, and I should like to be mistaken.

Turgenev's early impression of *War and Peace,* then, was that it was the product of a savage mind: a good memory for trivia, a pedestrian imagination, and morbid preoccupation with naturalistic detail. Later Turgenev modified his stand to allow some praise for the descriptions of nature and people in *War and Peace,* but he continued to disapprove of its history and psychology. As early as 26 February 1868 he admitted to Annenkov that he thought there were "things in the novel that no one in the whole of Europe could have written except Tolstoy, and which have aroused in me the chills and fevers of ecstasy." "The death of the old prince," he continued on 25 April 1868, "Alpatych, the uprising in the village, all this is astonishing." "Tolstoy's novel," he wrote 6 March 1868 to Polonsky, "is a marvelous thing: but the weakest thing about it is precisely
what the public is so excited about: the historical side and psychology. His history is a trick, he flabbergasts with fine detail; his psychology is nothing but a whimsical, monotonous fuss about the same emotions over and over again. But everything about the daily life, the descriptive part, the military scenes—all that is first-rate stuff."

For Turgenev, Tolstoy was not only an archaic thinker but an anti-intellectual, who tried to lock his readers into a rigid formulaic state of mind by means of repetitive indoctrination. He was unusually disturbed by Tolstoy's attempts to squeeze human behavior into a formula. If this happens, he contended, man will lose his intellect and revert to an animal state. He complained about Tolstoy's system, according to which intelligent, educated women were made out to be shrews and hypocrites, good women were fools, and decent people were invariably eccentric, boorish, or simpleminded. "It was disconcerting to me," he lamented to Borisov on 27 March 1870, "to see the reflection of the system even in the images Tolstoy draws. Why is it that all his good women are not just plain females—but fools? And why does he try so hard to convince the reader that if a woman is intelligent and cultured, she must also be a phrasemonger and a liar? . . . And why is it that every one of his decent people, too, is some sort of blockhead, and slightly touched in the head?" Tolstoy's heroines, especially Natasha Rostov, did not appeal to Turgenev. "And what sort of young ladies are they!" he exclaimed in a letter to Borisov of 28 March 1865, "every one of them some sort of scrofulous, affected brat." "Natasha," he confided to Annenkov on 25 April 1868, "seems to come out pretty weak, and tends toward the type of (excusez du mot) shitty [zasrannykh] little girls so beloved by Tolstoy." Moreover, Turgenev complained that Tolstoy's psychological method was just a bag of tricks. Details that were later to be praised by Merezhkovsky were described by Turgenev as capricious. Tolstoy's psychology, he said, was old and tiresome. "And how tortuous," he complained to Annenkov on 26 February 1868, "are those deliberate, stubborn repetitions of one and the same feature—the fluff on the upper lip of Princess Bolkonsky . . . trivial details, capriciously selected by the author and raised to salient characteristics. In a way this is charlatantry!" On 10 March 1868 he remonstrated to Borisov that "on the other hand there is all that
profusion of the same old psychological fuss (‘what am I thinking? What are they thinking of me? Do I like it or do I hate it? etc.’) that seems to be a positive monomania of Tolstoy’s.”

Apparently Turgenev made no meaningful distinction between the psychological methods of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, both of which he considered physiological. They were associated in his mind with filth and mental onanism. “The first part of Crime and Punishment,” he wrote to Fet on 6 April 1866, “is excellent; the second part smells again of fetid self-poking. The second part of The Year 1805 [War and Peace] is also weak: all those trivial little details, cleverly put together.” “All those little things,” Turgenev fretted to Borisov on 28 March 1865, “cleverly noticed and pretentiously presented, little psychological observations that, under the pretext of ‘truth’ he plucks out from under the armpits and other dark places of his protagonists.” Turgenev linked the technique to Dostoevsky’s, who had inundated Crime and Punishment with filth and saturated it with the foul smells of a hospital cloaca. “In the second part of Crime and Punishment,” Turgenev wrote to Annenkov on 6 April 1866, “the dam burst that you spoke about, a lot of stuff got spilled, and the air is once more filled with those pungent sour and fetid smells of the hospital atmosphere. Neither did I like the newest installment of Tolstoy’s The Year 1805. A great deal of trivia, and a kind of whimsical manneredness in the presentation of individual features—and then of course there are those perennial repetitions over and over again of that same old inner fuss: what am I, a coward or not a coward? etc. A strange historical novel!” Turgenev was convinced that Tolstoy’s fondness for familiar and concrete features was the morbid fascination of a savage with trivial vacillations of his own psyche and contained the only psychology Tolstoy knew or cared to know. “It’s that old trick of his,” Turgenev complained to Annenkov on 26 February 1868, “to convey oscillations, vibrations of one and the same feeling or position, all those things that he so pitilessly stuffs into the mouths and consciousnesses of every one of his heroes. . . . One is so thoroughly fed up with all those quasi-fine reflexias and reflections and observations upon one’s own feelings! It is as though Tolstoy didn’t know of any other psychology, or else would deliberately ignore it.” As a result, Turgenev felt, Tolstoy’s characters failed to develop properly. They merely moved forward every once in a while in little jumps. “About Tolstoy’s so-called psychology,” Turgenev
went on, “one could also be moved to say a thing or two: there is no real development in any of his characters (which, by the way, you noticed extremely well).” “There is no real development of characters,” he repeated himself in a letter to Borisov of 10 March 1868; “they just advance every once in a while in little leaps.”

Limited by his view of Tolstoy as a savage, Turgenev failed to see any merit or poetic substance in his historical descriptions. He suspected skulduggery—schemes to hide ignorance by pulling the wool over the eyes of civilized readers. He dismissed the historical passages of War and Peace as cheap tricks and false pretentions, designed to fool a gullible public, something he himself had tried to depict in his novels as a deplorable habit of ignorant but pretentious Russians when trying to hold their own among civilized peoples. “The historical supplement with which the readers are so delighted,” he claimed on 26 February 1868 in a letter to Annenkov, “is a puppet show and charlatanry. Like Voroshilov in Smoke, who shows off by citing ‘the latest word of science’ on a given subject (without having any idea about the first or second—something which, by the way, the conscientious Germans would never even imagine), so does Tolstoy flabbergast the reader with the tip of the shoe of Alexander I, the laughter of Speransky, compelling one to think that he must know all about those things if he even knows such details—but these details are all he knows. A trick, that is all, but the public fell for it.” In Turgenev’s opinion, genuine historical background had failed to materialize in those descriptions. Like any savage, Tolstoy was unable to think in perspective. “How is it that Tolstoy still has not wearied of all those interminable discussions about whether ‘I am a coward or not’—all that battle pathology?” Turgenev wanted to know in a letter to Fet on 6 April 1866, “Where are the features of the epoch, the historical colors? The figure of Denisov is briskly drawn—and it would have been fine as a piece of embroidery on a background—but where is the background?”

Similarly, Turgenev could brook no philosophizing from Tolstoy. He was extremely intolerant of Tolstoy’s attempts to flavor his work with moral or philosophical message. Turgenev regarded both not only as of doubtful value but also as offensive, like a “bad smell” that had contaminated Tolstoy’s otherwise artistically superb book. He regarded Tolstoy’s teachings as harmful nonsense concocted by an ignoramus, a product of childish gall and rank prej-
udice that deprived Tolstoy of his intellectual and artistic objectivity. 29 "You could not possibly have a higher opinion of him than I," he wrote to Fet on 28 August 1871, "... if only to a talent like this were added an educated and serene intellect, i.e., a mind grown wise with experience—there would be no limit to what one might expect from him! I firmly believe that we will yet live to see the moment when he will be the first to laugh good-humoredly at the quasi-philosophical nonsense that he infused like a bad smell into his truly great novel." "It is very bad," Turgenev said in his 25 April 1868 letter to Annenkov, "when a self-educated man, and especially one with Tolstoy's predilections, takes to philosophizing. He will invariably straddle some stick, dream up a monolithic system that, apparently, resolves everything very neatly, such as, for example, historical fatalism, and off he goes on a binge, scribbling away!" "I am in the process of reading the fifth part of War and Peace," Turgenev wrote to Borisov on 5 June 1869, "and am by turns vexed and delighted. How depressing it is to see such a great talent handicapped by a lack of free outlook, genuine artistic freedom." Turgenev thought of Tolstoy's forays into philosophy as symptoms of a disease, 30 an artistic deformity, an intellectual rampage, or a nonsensical paradox. "I received the fourth volume of Tolstoy," he wrote to Annenkov on 25 April 1868. "Much of it is beautiful, but there is also much that is ugly and deformed." "I greatly fear," he wrote to Borisov on 20 April 1868, "that he has again taken a plunge into philosophy and, as it always happens to him then, will take the bit between his teeth and go off like a crazy runaway horse, hitting and kicking indiscriminately." "Judging by the latest news that is coming in," he wrote again to Borisov on 24 March 1869, "our eccentric genius is still off and running with the bit between his teeth. How can anyone, out of sheer resentment of philosophy and phrases, get so hung up in philosophy and phrase himself! What is as obvious to every peasant as the usefulness of bread—namely, the usefulness of the mind, the reason—that, you see, must be eradicated! What awful nonsense! Why, oh, why did such stuff and nonsense have to enter the head of the most gifted writer in all of Europe today. And yet I relish in advance all those delightful tidbits with which this fifth volume is likely to be filled." Turgenev found himself unable to reconcile these two aspects of Tolstoy's work. He deplored the wasted opportunities for Russian and world literature, and never tired of pointing to the unfortunate consequences of Tolstoy's "aberration." Yet he was realist
enough not to be dogmatic about it. Time, and the overwhelming success of *War and Peace*, eventually induced him to change his mind about the book sufficiently to recommend it almost without reservations to Western European readers.

In the introductions to the French translations of "The Two Hussars" and *War and Peace* written much later, Turgenev stressed the originality of Tolstoy's creative method as against the methods of Sir Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas père. Turgenev referred to *War and Peace* as one of the truly remarkable books of our time, a work that had captured as no other the spirit of Russia and its epoch. Time had also reconciled Turgenev to some features of Tolstoy’s psychological method. In his preface to A. Badin's essay on *War and Peace*, he praised Tolstoy's remarkable powers of psychological analysis and ability to create types. Such comments are in startling contrast, however, to the intemperance of Turgenev's comments in private.

Turgenev, however, did not like *Anna Karenina* and never learned to appreciate the book. He thought of it as thoroughly ruined by a philosophy "at once infantile, arrogant, and mystic," containing the outlook of an ignorant Slavophile savage. In this instance Turgenev rejected the possibility of artistic accomplishment in a book by an ignoramus with obviously wrong ideas. He granted only that its descriptions of savage pursuits had excellence. His comments about the novel reflect his rancor and vexation over Tolstoy's refusal to give up his prejudices, for which Turgenev blamed the Slavophiles. "I do not like *Anna Karenina*," he wrote to Polonsky on 13 May 1875, "although there are some truly splendid pages in it (the races, mowing, and the hunt); but the rest is sour, smells of Muscovy, incense, the old maid, Slavdom, landed squirearchy, etc." He found in *Anna Karenina* the result of Muscovite backwardness and rank prejudice. "I have yet to read the latest installment of *Anna Karenina*," he wrote to Iu. P. Vrevskaia on 22 March 1876, "but I am sorry to say that I can see which way the whole novel is headed. No matter how great Tolstoy's talent is, he won't be able to scramble out of that Muscovite morass into which he waded. Orthodoxy, the nobility, Slavophilism, gossip, the old town, Katkov, Antonina Bludov, ignorance, arrogance, patrician habits, army esprit de corps, resentment of outsiders, sour cabbage soup, and lack of soap. In a word—chaos. And in this chaos must perish an extraordinarily gifted man, but that is the way it always works in good old Russia." Turgenev was convinced to the end that
chronic confusion prevailed in Tolstoy's mind and produced an unhealthy state of gloomy, life-denying nihilism. Of this he found evidence in Tolstoy's *Confession*\(^36\) (not published until 1884 after Turgenev's death but circulated in manuscript since 1882). "I got a few days ago," Turgenev wrote to the writer D. V. Grigorovich on 31 October 1882, "through the good offices of a very nice Moscow lady that confession of Tolstoy's that was denied publication by the censors. I read it with the greatest of interest. This is a piece remarkable through its sincerity, truthfulness, and power of conviction. Yet it is based on faulty premises throughout—and ultimately leads to a gloomy denial of all vitality in human life. . . . This, too, is a nihilism of sorts. By the way, I am surprised that Tolstoy, who, among other things, denies art, nevertheless surrounds himself with artists." Turgenev remained forever on the alert for signs of Tolstoy's renewed concern with message\(^37\).

One cannot, of course, judge casual epistolary comments as one would published commentary that presumably issued from greater reflection. However, the subsequent change of his first impressions to agree with public opinion does not dispel the suspicion that Turgenev first reacted out of personal animosity, if not poor taste.\(^38\) Since Turgenev was a man of considerable intellectual honesty and critical integrity, his private comments suggest that he was less intent on an objective judgment of the merits of Tolstoy's work than on promoting his own ideas. But in attacking Tolstoy's competence as a historian, philosopher, and psychologist, Turgenev was not motivated by narrow prejudice, but by the humanitarian ideals of his day and, above all, an earnest desire to prepare Tolstoy for enlightened leadership in teaching the Russian people (who indeed needed such leadership) to adjust to European progress and in guiding them along the thorny path of acquiring more culture. Turgenev's rancor and frustration, seeing Tolstoy neglect this task, may have mellowed in time from the realization of another of his goals, as Tolstoy became a writer of European stature.

However, on the whole it must be said that the aesthetic critics subscribed to the vicious cliché of the times—the consensus that Tolstoy's art was great, but his ideas were worthless or weak. To the aesthetic critics Tolstoy's intellectual abilities were limited in regard to both the form and substance of his works. It was only his intuitive, creative aspect that they thought deserved full and unstinting admiration as a talent of truly miraculous proportions. The *narod*—
niki, on the other hand, thought that there was already too much of the intuitive element in Tolstoy's works and wanted him to increase the degree of his conscious participation in them. So, although their position is very similar to that of the aesthetic critics, it has a slight but significant shift in emphasis: without wanting Tolstoy to be any less of an artist, the narodniki wanted him to be more of a thinker.