The judgments that the narodniki made concerning Tolstoy and his work closely resemble those of the aesthetic critics. For example, the critic A. Ia. Piatkovsky (1840–1904), a moderate narodnik, expressed opinions about Tolstoy that were quite similar to those of P. V. Annenkov, a liberal aesthete. The position of many a narodnik was in fact aesthetic, that is, largely comprised of formal considerations regarding works of art; but it accommodated greater consideration of social issues. Reviews of Tolstoy’s work by the writer V. G. Korolenko (1853–1921) represent this stance. His views are worthy of particular note because they probably inspired some of V. I. Lenin’s opinions about Tolstoy. Korolenko likened the sober clarity of Tolstoy’s work to a great mirror that reflects a beautiful sunny reality, with a limitless capacity to reflect every little detail. This he contrasted with the “fantastic whirlwind of modernism,” which distorted reality and reflected nonexistent phantoms. Korolenko compared Tolstoy to Dostoevsky, Zola, and Ibsen, and found Tolstoy’s art superior to all: the “distortions” of Dostoevsky, the “narrow rationalism” of Zola, and the “bloodless symbolism” of Ibsen. Korolenko declared that he felt that Tolstoy was a true Russian sage, one who portrayed all of Russia as his hero. And despite the complexities of his vision, he avoided confusion. Korolenko, however, was much less impressed with Tolstoy’s ideas, which he described as “stillborn offspring” of Tolstoy’s creative instinct. This
was an organic notion, common in the writings of Apollon Grigor'ev, who used to refer to products of conscious creativity as stillborn. Korolenko went on to define Tolstoy's philosophy as an obsession with the idea of harmonious simplicity. He accused Tolstoy of philosophical inconsistency; Tolstoy stacked evidence, according to Korolenko, to confirm a posteriori his a priori assumptions. Tolstoy's religious stories, Korolenko said, which were static reconstructions of simplistic biblical subjects, exemplified his method. Korolenko furthermore dismissed Tolstoy's religious stories and stories for the people as unsatisfactory folklore, inferior to everything else Tolstoy created. The columnist A. M. Skabichevsky (1838-1910), who wrote under the pseudonym "average reader" (zauriadnyi chitatel'), singled out Tolstoy's one-sided analysis as the cause of tensions in Tolstoy's dual nature as an artist and a thinker. Following also in substance the argument developed by Mikhailovsky (see below), Skabichevsky saw in the inability of the child-protagonist of *Childhood* to relate to the adult world around him a portent of the woes of Tolstoy's alienated heroes. Skabichevsky somewhat arbitrarily compared Tolstoy and Gogol as pursuing erratic courses, vacillating between an urge to create and an urge to preach and to proselytize, with the latter ultimately dominating and stifling the former. Least concerned with the artistic and formal aspects of Tolstoy's work was the critique of *Anna Karenina* by the radical narodnik P. N. Tkachev (1844-86). He asserted, among other things, that Apollon Grigor'ev was correct in warning of the one-sided excesses of Tolstoy's analysis: analysis had undone all that was sound in Tolstoy's position and finally led him into the sterile world of extreme and bigoted Christianity. Thus, in addition to general agreement with the aesthetic critics, at least some of the narodniki displayed a certain affinity with the organic thinking of Apollon Grigor'ev.

Mikhailovsky

The leading spokesman of the liberal narodniki, Nikolai K. Mikhailovsky (1842-1904), was the strongest voice in Russian literary criticism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Over a period of thirty years, Mikhailovsky wrote a great deal about Tolstoy. His long thematic article in three parts, "The Right and Left Hands [dextra and sinistra] of Leo Tolstoy," was followed by "Something on Morality—About Count L. N. Tolstoy," "A. N.
Mikhailovsky used his somewhat elusive initial hypothesis about a conflict innate in Tolstoy's nature as an artist and thinker to explain the paradoxes in Tolstoy's inconsistencies.

Mikhailovsky was a sociologist and critic who wrote brilliant polemic articles. His standing and importance as a literary critic is greatly diminished today, yet he was in vogue with his contemporaries, influenced many subsequent critics, and impresses some scholars as authoritative even today. Indirectly, through his influence on Plekhanov, Gorky, and Lenin, Mikhailovsky inspired the official Soviet position on Tolstoy, with its dismissal of Tolstoy's moral and religious teachings as arrant reactionary nonsense but its praise for the realism and social significance of his creative work. The ambivalence of the Soviet position echoes Mikhailovsky's ambivalent view of Tolstoy. Mikhailovsky recognized the greatness of Tolstoy's intuitive creative talent; at the same time he attacked any of Tolstoy's ideas that he thought were generated by Tolstoy's intuitive genius in conflict with, or apart from, his rational intellect. Such ideas, Mikhailovsky believed, were extremely archaic, damaged Tolstoy's creative work, and ruined his nonfiction.

Mikhailovsky was thus well within the traditions of nineteenth-century Russian criticism. In his essays he often would neglect the objective sociological aspect of the work he discussed, to concentrate on subjective psychological aspects and matters related to the author himself. In his analyses of the author's actions and motives he used the so-called subjective method that he developed in his sociological studies and that he adapted to use in literary criticism. In his critiques he examined the author's character and attitude closely, as the prime factors in the genesis of his work, and attempted to focus on a character trait that would explain everything about him. In Tolstoy he found this feature to be a dual personality.
Mikhailovsky both admired and detested Tolstoy as an arrogant aristocrat who used people and did not care for them. He interpreted everything about Tolstoy in the light of an inner controversy between Tolstoy's rational and irrational drives. He saw Tolstoy as a talented writer who wrote to compensate for his personal weaknesses, and who was constantly misled into unreality and fantasy, presumably because he was unable to overcome his preoccupations and write about life objectively. Mikhailovsky's attempts to present these paradoxical aspects of Tolstoy's character as a result of a split archaic/modern personality were not entirely successful. He failed to find convincing causes of Tolstoy's behavior, nor did he present an objective study of the nature, genesis, and meaning of Tolstoy's work. His sophisticated ideas about Tolstoy, however, are a most interesting study of Tolstoy's character and its reflections in Tolstoy's work.

Mikhailovsky examined the dual nature of Tolstoy in "The Right and Left Hands of Leo Tolstoy" (1875), where he also concerned himself with Tolstoy's pedagogical writings. He claimed to have discovered a profound disunion between the progressive and traditional sides of Tolstoy's personality that was the result of an incongruous combination between a civilized and a savage mind:

There are within Count Tolstoy two persons who have very little in common. One of them ("dextra") is bold, resolute, craves activity, takes nothing on faith, and is ready to submit any fact, no matter how thoroughly it may be sanctified by tradition or any other authority, to the most rigorous examination; should the fact fail to withstand query by reason and conscience, Count Tolstoy sweeps it aside like the worthless trash it appears to be even if backed by mountains of usage. The other ("sinistra") is timid, afraid of responsibility, or at least it strongly dislikes those who dare to act on their own, sees in facts some kind of a mysterious and irresistible might and power that must not and cannot be resisted by either deed, word, or thought. [7:197–98]

On the one hand, Mikhailovsky said, Tolstoy was an arrogant, self-righteous, aggressive aristocrat and a typical Russian intellectual. On the other, he was an artless, intuitive, creative genius. Not only did the two personalities disagree, but sometimes they acted as though one were not even aware of the other's existence. They were also unequal in size and texture. The intellect was small and intense. The intuition was vast and subdued. In action they appeared uncoordinated. Tolstoy's writings were filled with alternat-
ing artistic and intellectual passages, vigorously promoting sharply conflicting messages. Mikhailovskv implied a periodic failure of the connection between the two sides of Tolstoy's brain. As a result, Tolstoy was literally functioning as a man whose right hand did not know what his left hand was doing. The gist of Mikhailovskv's argument was that Tolstoy was, not consistently, but occasionally a very poor thinker. And it was those occasions that aroused Mikhailovskv's interest as a critic and amateur psychologist. Mikhailovskv speculated that both sides of Tolstoy's personality filtered the contents of his unconscious inspiration through to his conscious mind. There was no conflict so long as the tendencies of the conscious mind and the unconscious archaic personality did not diverge too greatly. Should tensions arise, however, the two sides, cooperative until then, confronted the conscious ego in personified form and behaved like systems split off from the basic personality, that is, as though they were two altogether different persons. The best way to see this was to compare the styles and ideas in Tolstoy's fiction and nonfiction.

The general public, Mikhailovskv guessed, knew Tolstoy as "a great writer and a poor thinker" only through his fiction, in which, of course, his rational side necessarily yielded control to his creative, irrational side. However, one gained an entirely different impression of his style and mode of thinking from his pedagogical tracts, which few read because, compared to his fiction, they were insignificant. But from these tracts Tolstoy emerged as a man of a different caliber: a vigorous but mediocre intellect, a self-willed, original, and truculent thinker, and an able, if clumsy, writer. His ideas were progressive, but his language was blunt, awkward, resourceful, and aggressively individualistic. Thus it bore little or no resemblance to the accomplished style but conservative ideas of his fiction, which was accounted for by his other side. It was remarkable how little there was in common between the two personalities. As an illustration Mikhailovskv cited the story "Polikushka" (1862), in which Tolstoy had dramatized the disastrous effects of clumsy interference by civilized man in the affairs of the common folk. This fictional story contained in a nutshell all the basic elements of Tolstoy's former preoccupation with such questions. Predictably, its theme was that man should not interfere in the lives of others. This theme conflicted, however, with the message on the same subject put forth by Tolstoy in his nonfictional stories and didactic
tracts. Tolstoy took a very different stand in “A Walk in the Woods,” a sketch written about the same time (1862) and published in Tolstoy’s own journal, *Iasnaya Poliana* [The clear glade]. The sketch was noteworthy as an expression of Tolstoy’s progressive rational position because it was unusually well written, suggesting to Mikhailovsky that it was produced with the cooperation of his artistic, intuitive side, whereas its message obviously came from Tolstoy’s rational side. Its style made it stand out from the usual clumsy form of the pedagogical journal. Mikhailovsky considered it a rare example of optimum cooperation by both sides of Tolstoy’s personality at once, when things were as they should be: the message was produced by Tolstoy’s reason, and the form was supplied by his intuition. The idea of the sketch ran counter to the glorification of family and its absolute authority over the child, a traditional view that supplied practically all of Tolstoy’s fiction, however. Here family upbringing was not necessarily a desirable circumstance in the life of a child if it perpetuated bestial customs. It was therefore the duty of civilized man to interfere: to arouse the consciousness of young peasants and stimulate their thinking, so that they would want to arrive at a higher stage of enlightenment than their primitive elders. Mikhailovsky noted the lucidity and conciseness of narrative, which he compared favorably with the best in Tolstoy’s fiction. He noted also that, compared to “Polikushka,” the sketch was a success, inasmuch as its point was clear, its form perfect, and it left the reader with a definitive and lasting impression. Mikhailovsky concluded that Tolstoy would obviously be better off, as both an artist and a thinker, if he let his rational side maintain control.

Mikhailovsky saw the conflict between Tolstoy’s reason and intuition as the rule rather than the exception. He described the conflict in this way: when reason interfered with the irrational aspect of the creative process, confusion resulted, followed frequently by sudden vehemence in the promotion of wrong ideas. When intuition interfered with conscious logical reasoning, the result was sudden irrationality, a regression to primitive thinking patterns which produced what would be, for Tolstoy, rather unexpected inanities: “In this respect he can sink (philosophically speaking) so low as to produce the following phrase: ‘not incidentally, but deliberately has nature surrounded the rural man with rural conditions, and the urban man with urban conditions.’ . . . I cannot simply note this
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startling phenomenon and then pass by it without further comment. I stop before it in a condition of profound bewilderment and ask myself: how could a man of the intellectual stature of Count Tolstoy pronounce such a platitude?” (DS, p. 135). Mikhailovsky suggested that when bogged in this state, Tolstoy behaved like a primitive who is not only the passive victim of his emotions but also singularly incapable of rational judgment whenever he experiences what he imagines to be meaningful coincidences. Usually an adroit, able thinker, Tolstoy would suddenly find himself unable to collect his thoughts or to draw obvious logical inferences from commonplace coincidences that, for him, acquired ominous significance. At issue was another autobiographical sketch where Tolstoy described how, after a gambling loss, he prayed for financial help and promptly received a money letter the following morning:

... The story about the gambling loss in the Caucasus can serve as an illustration of such an attitude to facts. The count is so rattled, so crushed by the fact of circumstantial coincidence between occurrences that have no causal connection at all, that he does not even try to lift a single critical finger of thought against it. A fifteen-year-old could figure out the time necessary for the arrival of a letter from Chechna to Tiflis, but Count Tolstoy, an intellectual giant of sorts, is unable to figure it out. This case is really extraordinary in its obvious and perplexing incongruity. ... I ask myself, how can a man of such a powerful, penetrating, and, so-to-speak, pitilessly truthful intellect as Count Tolstoy appears to have in almost all of his artistic and many of his theoretical works, how can such a man write such obvious absurdities? ... At that time I was ashamed to dwell on the gambling loss episode, ashamed for the count, and yet his argumentation about this episode is quite typical of him; and so highly characteristic of forms of this type I just could not and would not ignore them and hide from the reader. I summarized these truly amazing turns of thought in Count Tolstoy's "left hand," which, as if obeying the instructions of the Gospels, does not know what his "right hand" is doing. [7:197–98]

Mikhailovsky found massive evidence of acute antagonism between Tolstoy's reason and intuition spread through a major portion of his works. War and Peace produced vivid examples of the seesaw pattern of such mutual interferences during the creative process. Most of War and Peace was clearly the result of straightforward creative inspiration, Mikhailovsky said, but many passages just as clearly were the product of Tolstoy's intellect. The tensions of creativity, however, had caused the overall effect to be a series of
weird conflicts of form and message that jolted the reader and
defied understanding without reference to the basic conflict within
Tolstoy that could also be explained, Mikhailovsky suggested, as a
conflict between Tolstoy's conscious and unconscious self. Sizable
portions of the novel, inspired by his spontaneous love of pleasure
and creature comfort, evidently came into being without notice and
interference from Tolstoy's puritanical intellect. But the merry tid­
ings of these passages, and those extolling the aristocratic family
ideal, were challenged in other passages that were inspired by
Tolstoy's awakened intellect. Elsewhere mutual interference was
even more apparent.

Mikhailovsky, who in 1868 had suggested that at least some of
the “mystic” pages of War and Peace clearly revealed the author as
an archaic thinker “frightened of the present, enamored of the
past, and toying with the idea of embracing Islam,” came to be­
lieve that whenever Tolstoy's wit and intuition joined forces under
creative tension, strange conflicts ensued: a series of willful, con­
tradictory statements about history and philosophy that should
never have been allowed to become part of the novel in the first
place. They were forcibly inserted by Tolstoy's intellect over the
objections of his artistic sense. Those passages were meant to offset
Tolstoy's implicit resentment of Napoleon and other self-willed
historic figures who dared inject themselves into the course of  his­
tory, by indicating that such interference with historic events was,
after all, not only desirable but necessary. Yet despite such drastic
oscillations in point of view, Tolstoy's basic personality did not
change:

In this whirlwind of changing moods and views Tolstoy nevertheless
remains Tolstoy; all of the quick changes that occur in him constitute
a fast rotation around one and the same axis, the opposite ends of
which I tried to place in his right and left hands. . . .

Changed were, according to circumstances, only the theoretical
views that illuminated those muscular twitches for Count Tolstoy
himself. And these changes, generally, can be reduced to an increase
in the activity of now the right hand, now the left hand of the count,
although both of them are known to move, at least occasionally, at
the same time. [PS, 1:261, 264]

Mikhailovsky suggested that Tolstoy's erratic behavior was perhaps
caused by the pressure of civilized thinking on the savage side of his
mind. Such thinking had created for Tolstoy a complex set of in­
terrelated problems that brought about an unusually acute state of
self-consciousness and an aroused conscience. Tolstoy had two reasons for taking an unusual interest in the peasant even without wishing to be a soothsayer to the Russian people. First, aware of his, by modern standards, unfair privileges, Tolstoy wanted to give back to the peasant all that he owed him. However, he did not care to part with his privileges. The dilemma caused a traumatic conflict of consciousness that forced him onto an erratic course as he searched, under pressure of guilt feelings, for ways to resolve the dilemma quickly, and in a way that would benefit the peasant without depriving the giver. He found that he could best discharge his debt as a creative writer, rather than a social reformer. Tolstoy felt no obligation to write only for the privileged classes, in which role he would remain as remote as ever from the common folk; he wanted to benefit the people as their teacher and sage, who would explain to them the ways and means of becoming modern and civilized, without being at the same time corrupted by civilization, as had happened to him. Hence, Mikhailovsky said, Tolstoy's recurrent vain attempts to write for the common folk in a simple manner. He failed because he did not know what he was doing. He could not be a spiritual leader of the common people. He could not even be a good writer of folklore because he was too civilized and too complex, and when he tried to simplify issues, he ruined the quality of his work.

Mikhailovsky found Tolstoy's stories for the people dismal failures. Even as they represented an experiment in a new genre and a venture into the realm of primitive didactic art, the stories seemed incredibly bad. Above all, they were quite remote from actuality. They were designed to reach a much larger and less sophisticated audience and explain to them the advantages of Tolstoy's latest outlook, and, accordingly, Tolstoy had suddenly abandoned his celebrated realism as unsuitable and moved into the realm of blatant superstition. Mikhailovsky listed some of the superstitious elements Tolstoy employed in telling his stories for the common folk:

To begin with, let us discuss the miraculous element that is blatant in the bulk of Count Tolstoy's stories for the people. In the story "What People Live By" the protagonist is an angel. In "Candle" a wax candle does not go out despite wind and concussion. In "Two Old Men" one of the old men miraculously appears to the other in a vision and "with arms spread out like a priest at the altar"; on top of that, "golden bees form a crown around his head, buzzing but not stinging him." In the story "Where Love Is, There Is God" apparitions figure.
In the story "Three Old Men" the old men walk on water. On the other hand, in one of the "texts to explain popular religious prints" ("The Fiend's Stuff Is Attractive, but God's Stuff Is Solid") the devil is on the loose, and in the "Tale of Ivan the Fool" several devils play a most unusually virulent role and parade all over the place in full devils' uniform with tails, cloven hoofs, etc.

All of this fantastic paraphernalia is called forth from the realm of nonbeing solely for the purpose of serving as accessories to illustrate certain moral premises. Arbiters of pure aesthetics are, naturally, thoroughly displeased about all this. [6:381]

Mikhailovsky speculated that Tolstoy was attempting to adapt his style to the tastes and thinking habits of the common folk, who must have appeared to him as a pagan subculture among the Russians, or else he believed them to be subhuman simpletons who did not have the mental capacity to understand realism. Mikhailovsky doubted the wisdom of this line of reasoning. Even if one were to accept the dubious premise that by so doing one gained acceptance into the hearts and minds of the naïve and ignorant, it was still a question whether rank paganism was a sound premise for teaching Christian morality. Stylistically the stories were inconsistent. Lurid folklore alternated with vivid Tolstoyan realism:

One may well ask whether superstition and prejudice are indeed a sound enough basis to build a dialogue with the people. I will say nothing against the form of the pure fairy tale, which Tolstoy uses, for example, in the "Tale of Ivan the Fool and His Two Brothers." There the entire narrative is uniformly fantastic as it is in real fairy tales and would not mislead anybody. But it is quite another matter when we are told a true story or, at least, something that has every appearance of a true story, and in a manner that can only be achieved by Tolstoy, so that people appear before us as though they were real flesh and blood, and then, in the midst of this thoroughly realistic picture, you are suddenly hit by an icy draft of spectral wind. [6:384]

All this, Mikhailovsky said, did not make it any easier for the naïve and ignorant to get the point of the story. And often it was obscured still further by the complete dependence of the moral premise on support from fantastic elements in some of the plots. Some stories even inadvertently produced an opposite impression from that presumably intended by the author:

The man responsible for the miracle with the candle, the good peasant Mikheich, utters the good wish that there be "peace on earth and good will among men." This wish, however, does not come true.
What does come true, though, and with truly remarkable zeal and efficiency, is the evil wish of another peasant who said [of the wicked estate manager] “let his belly burst and his guts spill out!” It seems to me that all this lends itself to a very different interpretation from the one supplied by Count Tolstoy, to wit, that real strength is not in goodness but in wickedness. Good rose to the occasion by performing a real miracle, yet nothing much happened, whereas evil only said a word and that word was realized promptly and with amazing accuracy. [6:385-86]

In most stories Tolstoy simply spread confusion, prejudice, and superstition, Mikhailovsky charged. He catered to the people’s crassest prejudices but attacked some of their sound ideals and aspirations. Mikhailovsky found the proscription against force to combat naked aggression simply grotesque. The story of Ivan the Fool, he found, indicted the nonresistance theory better than any essay:

When discussing nonresistance to evil theoretically all these details could be covered up, wrapped up in some pious commonplace. . . . An artistic image, however, is quite another thing. There you can see with your own eyes that the foreign invasion is incomplete, and you understand immediately why it is incomplete. For example, it would scarcely do to introduce the following artistic detail: the “Tarakan”—soldiers practice massive rape upon girl “fools” who, to Count Tolstoy’s delight, do not resist such evil; meanwhile the boy “fools” just look on and keep repeating with a jolly mien: “Why don’t you stay with us here for good, beloved friends!” To concoct such a dreadful lie about human life and feelings would be impossible not only for Tolstoy but even for a most dismally mediocre talent. [6:401]

The theory was hereby shown to be simply unrealistic. Tolstoy’s childlike appeals to decency were unlikely to move the hearts of those who had no conscience. Meanwhile, by extolling the comforts and advantages of worry-free servitude, Tolstoy was unwittingly aiding the sinister establishment conspiracy to keep the common folk content with perpetual bondage. Mikhailovsky suggested that Tolstoy cease all such experiments in folklore and return to doing what he could do best: write for the sophisticated minority. He noted that Tolstoy also tried to discharge his obligation to the peasants by teaching their children, but was faced with a dilemma of how and what to teach; he seemed to believe that his own corruption prevented him from knowing. His intensive research into methods of teaching, moreover, did not provide him with answers.
Mikhailovsky's second explanation of Tolstoy's involvement with the peasant was that he was not a well-balanced person and needed the peasant to guide him to a more harmonious state. Tolstoy saw the peasant as a potentially superior human being who needed assistance to develop his full individuality, help which Tolstoy thought he could provide. In return, he wanted the peasant's inner harmony. Tolstoy did treat his peasants fairly, Mikhailovsky noted, unlike some Russian reformers who idolized them or treated them condescendingly; Tolstoy's peasants resembled animals: intuitive, uncouth, and often immoral. But, like children and savages, they possessed an inner harmony that their corrupt masters in polite society could only dream about, and that Tolstoy envied and admired because he himself had lost it in becoming excessively civilized. His fascination with the peasant derived from his naïve hope that if he gave the peasant a measure of his inordinate rationality and developed some of the peasant's intuitive qualities himself, it would be a fair trade that might restore or improve his own inner balance. Mikhailovsky doubted if the procedure would really benefit Tolstoy. The intuitive side of his own personality was already in ascendance. The inner harmony he wanted should come through a compensatory strengthening of his rational abilities and an increased ability to relate to the outside world. Tolstoy was too busy coping with his own problems to be able to help others cope with theirs.

Mikhailovsky thought of Tolstoy as an artist whose limited intellect was bravely attempting to keep up with, and sort out, the vast quantities of undigested, undifferentiated impressions his intuitive genius poured forth. Throughout his life Tolstoy had heroically searched for truth and fought various deceptions, often changing his position completely when he discovered its errors; he was never discouraged and continued always to search: this zeal for truth was the one constant in an otherwise mercurial artistic personality. Tolstoy did not understand himself, was often unable to determine the truth, and was at times afraid of life, often mistaking it for death. Generally speaking, he was like a child or a blind man who demanded answers that no one, least of all he himself, could supply. Mikhailovsky saw in this an indication of Tolstoy's need to develop further his floundering intellect and to discard some of his puerile prejudices and superstitions.
Tolstoy, then, was mistaken in claiming that the hero of his stories was truth. His obsession with the concept of a personal death—his existential memento mori—directly contradicted his powerful interest in the art of living. His real hero, Mikhailovsky held, was not truth but life, and the villain, of course, death. No other writer had ever devoted so much space to descriptions of death or dwelled so lovingly on the details of dying. Indeed, Tolstoy often exaggerated the horrors of death; it was for him an unnatural thing, and it scarred the souls of those who witnessed it. Tolstoy, moreover, was a crusader who found in death a personal adversary. He was an artist who loved life but was thrilled by death, and scorning obvious designations, he sometimes confused the two, as he did truth and falsehood. His tract “On Life” was actually a tract on death; he tried to prove that one should not be afraid of death, but failed. Tolstoy’s experiments with physical labor were also attempts to strengthen and lengthen life. Behind all this Mikhailovsky found an insane desire to achieve immortality while still alive. Occasionally, however, Tolstoy would settle on a compromise: he would try to reduce the fear of death by poisoning the love of life. This was his Buddhist theory of reducing interest in life until one no longer cared about death. Mikhailovsky found such a line of reasoning intellectually unsound.

Because Tolstoy was so often unable to judge the truth, he had honed his sensory perceptions to extraordinary sharpness; but the skill, Mikhailovsky said, was ineffectual because truth was for Tolstoy a subjective matter. It was difficult for him to differentiate subjective and objective truth because his preoccupation with the self overshadowed everything else. He thought of himself as the vessel of absolute truth, whereas external truth was only relative. He was also wont to think of others as extensions of himself and to see them as sharing his own problems. Thus Tolstoy’s reform schemes were always designed to solve the world’s problems for himself, as though the two were equivalent:

Count Tolstoy saw many horrors in Moscow slums and asylums for the poor and became convinced that these horrors do not lend themselves too easily to correction with any of the so-called foolish methods he has recommended. But, after being horrified, he very quickly found a new method for eliminating poverty, human degradation, and misery. Having decided that one “cannot live like that,”
that is, live surrounded by the beggars, starvelings, drunken derelicts, and prostitutes who lived in the Liapin asylum, Count Tolstoy quickly left for the country and, in his own words, "thus solved for himself the terrible question that faces the entire world." . . . He told us himself of his own great good fortune. "Tis sure, he adds, that "very soon" many many others will follow his example, eventually everybody, and so, everybody will be as fortunate as he is. [PS, 1:264]

This penchant for merging a subjective with an objective need Mikhailovsky found very typical of Tolstoy, and caused by immaturity. Tolstoy's archaic intuitive mind never clearly defined the boundary between himself and the surrounding universe. When dominated by his intuitive ideas, he always tried to serve both simultaneously in the kind of mystique of mutual participation. His search for religion was one of such efforts. And the harsh moral code he promulgated was aimed chiefly against his own unconquerable fondness for the pleasures of the flesh. His writing, which was to benefit the people, was first and foremost an effort to sort out in his mind the formidable problems of identity with which he was struggling. His marvelously concrete style was an effective artistic medium, but its primary purpose was to help him see things and relationships more clearly, to establish his bearings inside his own bewildered mind.

Tolstoy's creative writing was subjective in nature, Mikhailovsky emphasized. Although his pedagogical tracts were relatively free of subjectivity, his fiction invariably dealt with some profound personal problem of confronting reality, thinly disguised to seem fictional. Certain elements of Tolstoy's inner drama were repeated in his fiction more often than others, but all of his works represented one or another and were thus autobiographical records. His Confession was a case in point. It gave no evidence of the remorse one would expect in a voluntary confession; Tolstoy's attitude was not at all like that of a repentant sinner. The Confession and his many articles on similar subjects were dramatic rituals whereby he periodically recounted his success in shedding a current batch of vices, pointed with pride to his latest achievement in self-control, expounded the advantages of leading a virtuous life, and breezily requested others to follow suit. In general, Mikhailovsky saw considerable similarity between Tolstoy and the famed biologist I. I. Mechnikov (1845–1916), in that each preached a variety of Epicu-
ean hygiene. Tolstoy’s writing functioned as a tool for bringing reality under his control. Although his works were noted for their naturalness and truthful depiction of life, his art was far from neutral and impartial, and it always advanced a highly subjective, personal point of view. Tolstoy expressed admiration for nature and horror of artifice, he condemned anyone who tried to control reality, yet this was the very thing he himself did: in his fiction Tolstoy fought with himself to control his impulses; and in his nonfiction he fought society as if it were a parent.

Mikhailovsky interpreted Tolstoy’s development as an individual as a drawn-out process of weaning himself from society in order to become independent of it. Most of his fiction dealt with this problem. From Olenin to Levin, his heroes struggled to sever their ties with society. They repudiated its values as artificial and evil and tried to replace them with new ones acquired from the peasant, which they declared to be genuine and true. Tolstoy’s struggle was made more difficult because of his fondness for the values he had resolved to discard. There was a correlation between the intensity of his castigations of the corrupt ways of society and his obvious relish for the cozy atmosphere of its “ladies’ boudoirs.” The vehemence of Tolstoy’s attacks on various social conventions reflected his attachment to them, and, by contrast, his treatment of the peasants’ faults was relatively mild and objective. Tolstoy applied a double standard in extolling the ideal of the family; he judged common and aristocratic families quite differently.

Mikhailovsky discovered curious parallels between the prophetic activities of Tolstoy and other Russian writers who, as raznochintsy, belonged to a different milieu. Tolstoy seemed concerned about signs of disintegration of the Russian family unit, a phenomenon that seemed to accompany the change of Russia from a tribal to a civilized society: but unlike Dostoevsky, who saw in it a significant portent of things to come, Tolstoy was only interested in preserving the status quo. For Mikhailovsky, a prominent raznochimets himself, the issue was, more or less, whether Tolstoy was justified in wanting to preserve a part of society that could not be saved without the preservation of its corrupt and dissolve tribal ways (DS, pp. 136–37). In the fiction, Mikhailovsky claimed, the principle of the family alone sustained the rickety tribal structure of high society. But the double standard that Tolstoy unconsciously observed suggested
that his natural intuition, which favored the status quo, resented the reforming tendencies of his intellect. Its interference was spontaneous, akin to the principle of conservatism in nature:

His right hand removes every obstacle he meets on his way, be it the despotism of family, society, this or that environment, or this or that prejudice. But Count Tolstoy also has his left hand. It induces him, on the contrary, to leave obstacles alone, to preserve the inviolability of established prejudicial practices and environments on the basis of that strange logic that “not incidentally but deliberately has nature surrounded the rural man with rural conditions, and the urban man with urban conditions.” All you have to do is extend this remarkable aphorism, which you have every right to do, and you may confidently assert that not incidentally but deliberately has nature surrounded the Karenins, Vronskys, and Oblonskys with those surroundings with which they are surrounded; that not incidentally but deliberately has nature surrounded the beggar with beggarly conditions, and the ignoramus with conditions of ignorance. And you will be able to justify every kind of obscurity and every kind of filth. . . . So, the point of departure for the contradictions within Tolstoy is the point where his thoughts begin to double. And after a while you may see the right hand of Count Tolstoy rise again and energetically sweep aside the mess that his left hand has made. [DS, p. 173]

According to Mikhailovsky, Tolstoy’s works could be divided into two kinds—those that satisfied Tolstoy, and those that did not—and his judgment depended on which side of his nature was in ascendance during the creative process. In the first he succeeded in mastering a moral problem; in the second he failed, was sidetracked, and, in time, came to regard the effort as bad art. In the latter category, The Cossacks and Anna Karenina also recorded personality crises that resulted from a deadlock in the contest between the two sides of his nature. Both works dealt with the dilemma of civilized man longing for a return to Arcadia, yet knowing full well that for him such a return was impossible, and wistfully contemplating the naïve life of simple people. Both works dealt with the poison of skepticism. In both the contradictions and irrationality of Tolstoy’s dual nature were obvious: a rebellious dislike of routines, but a yen for designing and following routines; a fascination with the routines and cycles of nature and a yearning to merge with them and abandon one’s individuality, but yet a desire to assert one’s individuality. After twenty years Levin continued the same. Mikhailovsky considered such repetitions evidence that Tolstoy’s ideas were caught in a vicious circle, due to the irreconcil-
able differences between the demands of his intellect and his unconscious urges. In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy's inner drama, however, had reached the proportions of a crisis. The issues had come close to the surface and the conflict was quite apparent: the novel itself was made up of two incompatible stories without any visible connection, representing the animal and intellectual sides of Tolstoy's personality. Tolstoy was dissatisfied not just with the form but with the content of the book. He wrote it during a period of change in his life, when he was struggling to free himself from his old habits and embrace an entire set of new beliefs. In large part, the book still reflected the old Tolstoy, at home in the frivolous world of ladies' boudoirs and bestial pleasures involving characters such as the centaur-like Vronsky. In dwelling on the fine psychological detail of Anna's and Vronsky's relationship, Tolstoy must have experienced a sense of futility. He wanted to abandon a project that imperiled his own moral progress and pleased only a narrow circle of high society. He was ready to make a clean sweep and introduce the new world of Konstantin Levin and his ideas about helping the peasant and leading a simple, virtuous life. Tolstoy must have been thoroughly vexed at being unable to do so right away, and his vexation sometimes reached the intensity of wanting to kill Anna and the story that he hated. All this, Mikhailovsky found, was externalized in the somber mood of the novel and Anna's suicide. Yet when Tolstoy did finally break with society he did so, to Mikhailovsky's regret, not as a mature and enlightened individual, but as a bigot who had relinquished his intellect. Mikhailovsky found Levin's smug acquiescence in the status quo and a solution to the world's problems "just for himself" typical of this kind of aberrant Tolstoyan thinking. It stemmed from a wrong interpretation of the peasant's virtue as "minding his own business," which, so far as Tolstoy was concerned, was only potential, not actual: Tolstoy had nothing to gain from acquiring the peasant's bigotry and obscurity *instead* of his inner harmony, although the latter, Mikhailovsky believed, was an appropriate condition for Tolstoy to desire.

Mikhailovsky was, on the whole, sympathetic toward Tolstoy's ideas about the peasant, which he interpreted in the light of his own ideas about the layman (*profan*). His layman (who resembles Montaigne's *homme suffisant*) was the last vestige of harmonious individuality in a homogenized civilized society and, as an indi-
vidual, superior to the one-sidedly sophisticated intellectual whose place in society Mikhailovsky likened to the narrow function of a toe (palets ot nogi). Intellectuals were the victims of organized society; they were seduced into surrendering their personal integrity and allowing their talents to be exploited in the service of society's frequently sinister suprapersonal goals. Some, Mikhailovsky said, attempted to reestablish their lost identities with various useless and wasteful esoteric projects, which he labeled homunculi, recalling an incident in J. W. Goethe's Faust II in which an alchemist labors to create an artificial man. Mikhailovsky regarded Platon Karataev in War and Peace, however, as an artificial human being, put together from abstract notions, and interpreted him as a sign of Tolstoy's growing corruption through fame. Mikhailovsky warned Tolstoy not to develop his intuitive artistry to the detriment of his intellect in order to accommodate the popular notion of him as a great writer and poor thinker.

By and large, though, Mikhailovsky assessed Tolstoy's chances of avoiding corruption pessimistically. Citing the parallel instances of Gogol's and Dostoevsky's attempts to become great tribal sages, he predicted for Tolstoy a development from a great writer into a bad prophet:

Let us return to the concept of a great teacher. Count Tolstoy is obviously not in any great danger of succumbing to the uncommendable role of a fashionable prophet displayed in the salons of high society—he knows them too well not to know how to behave himself there. Nor is he threatened, one hopes, by many other things that Gogol and Dostoevsky picked up, who started out in humility and by inviting others to be humble with them, but ended up sanctimonious hypocrites and self-appointed spokesmen of God. Unfortunately, one must nevertheless look in that area [of mysticism, savage or tribal mentality] for the common bracket that would include all three. Count Tolstoy is akin to Gogol and Dostoevsky, not as a purveyor of a certain doctrine, but as a psychological type—a type woven of contradictions, of humility and arrogance, who talks about the great crane in the sky but is satisfied with a pitiful chickadee in hand; extends his theoretical embrace to all of mankind just so that he can admire himself all the more for it. [6:379]

Tolstoy, Mikhailovsky said, wanted to be a prophet but could not be a good one if he did not have control over his mind. Tolstoy's predicament was made worse by the fact that, in addition to fame and talent, he was endowed with fortune and position. This made it difficult for others to follow in his steps. So, rather than serve as a
national ideal, he was propelled to the status of a national idol—a leader who could only be admired, not followed. Mikhailovsky cited the example of Pisarev, another extremely self-centered Russian leader remote from reality, who developed a following of unthinking devotees and was idolized and eventually ruined by them.

In the 1880s and 1890s Mikhailovsky pointed to signs of acute disharmony and character erosion in Tolstoy. Tolstoy was claiming to have become a new man, but, according to Mikhailovsky, he was merely permitting his intuition to assume a dominant role in his life. He acted without thinking, like an imbecile or a fool-in-Christ. But his humility was a pretense and his meekness a sham. In his stories for the people he was expressing cynical contempt for life and was spreading confusion and gutter morality:

But what an extraordinary and astonishing jumble all this is! What an outrageous contempt for life... What a cold, argumentative attitude toward human feelings and deeds! I don't understand this. He must have picked up his teachings in the gutter... And why is he scoffing at Spencer who, even if in different ways, is also demanding noninterference and nonresistance to evil... He is simply contemptuous of life with all of its complex forms. He has built for himself "a little cell under a fir tree" where everybody is allowed to journey to pay him homage, and whence he is casting disdainful glances at the whole of God's world: slaves and freedmen, masters and men—what trifles! Nothing makes any difference, nothing else matters so long as everybody comes to listen to the wise old man in the little cell under the fir tree... They may have had a mother killed, a brother tortured to death but he... he just continues to sit in his cell under the fir tree! [6:399]

His advice to his followers, Mikhailovsky observed, was not likely to lead him into any promised land of spiritual regeneration, but onto the sterile plateau of his own complacency. Mikhailovsky compared Tolstoy to an upside-down torch, producing soot instead of light. He claimed that at the root of Tolstoy's corruption was insincerity: a preference for the decoration instead of the real thing, unwillingness to undergo change, and a desire to defeat reality.

Mikhailovsky was inclined to regard both "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" and "Master and Man" as doomsday stories wherein Tolstoy, for once, tried to bring religion to the sophisticated minority. Both stories were artistically successful because they were written in Tolstoy's realistic manner, since he aimed them at the educated reader. In both stories he failed miserably, however, each time he tried to convey his witless message of intuitive mysticism. Neither
story was as good as Tolstoy's best work. In "The Death of Ivan Ilych" Tolstoy resorted to gratuitous naturalism:

The "Death of Ivan Ilych" is, no doubt, an excellent story, but to suggest that it is some kind of a Koh-i-noor among the diamonds of Russian literature, among which there are indeed some by Tolstoy, one must be in a state of befuddlement, a state in which one may find himself after he has knocked himself out genuflecting. To narrow the field down to comparisons only between Tolstoy's own works, and taking from among them only descriptions of death with flashbacks into the former life of the dying person; remembering the deaths of the lady, the coachman, and the tree in "Three Deaths," the death of old Bezukhov, the Bolkonskys, senior and junior, Karataev in War and Peace, the death of the master and the horse in "Kholstomer," remembering all this, any unprejudiced person has to admit that even within these bounds "The Death of Ivan Ilych" is not first, either in artistic beauty or in power and clarity of thought or, last but not least, in terms of fearless realism of description, although Ivan Ilych does perform there some unmentionable functions.

Ivan Ilych was a rather sinister weakling who led a bleak, colorless existence and in the end made a feeble move toward love of others. The ending itself, Mikhailovsky found, was weak. The arbitrary, thoroughly unmotivated denouement was awkward and embarrassing (8:63-64). Mikhailovsky found that, from the moral tag in "The Death of Ivan Ilych," the contribution of Tolstoy's intellect to the process of creating "Master and Man" almost ten years later (1895) shifted to the elements of the plot. Here the protagonist Brekhunov, a corrupt but notably more adroit and resourceful character, was forced to perform an act of charity. The decline in Tolstoy's rational control over the story Mikhailovsky saw to be balanced by a commensurate increase in its irrational religious element. The story was dull and the plot too simple. As a story it came close to Tolstoy's tales for the people and was less successful than Gustave Flaubert's uniformly fantastic legend of "St. Julien l'Hospitalier," from which Tolstoy seemed to have borrowed some elements. Brekhunov, by contrast, was let off relatively easily; St. Julien devoted years to charitable works before he was finally allowed "to see the light," whereas Brekhunov's meager one good deed was hardly even a matter of choice. "Master and Man" advanced a second issue of questionable merit: the absurd notion that by reducing the will to live one could diminish fear of death. This idea was adumbrated by the passive, instinctive Nikita, a servile creature, barely concerned about prospects of passing from the hands
of his earthly master into those of his heavenly master, who seemed the superstitious, domestic version of Platon Karataev. Nikita was rewarded for his submissiveness. The moral of the story was that it was better to be a man than a master, but Mikhailovsky doubted that it would convince any real masters or men.

Mikhailovsky assessed *The Kreutzer-Sonata* (1889) as a spontaneous editorial outburst within a work of fiction, prompted by an urge to preach. The story showed the confusion that reigned in Tolstoy's mind about matters of form and content. It also showed the ineffectiveness of his art: the public stoutly ignored his moral message, but was persuaded to test the magic of the Beethoven piece in question, whose popularity had skyrocketed. The story illustrated the arbitrariness of Tolstoy's views, and the gross exaggerations and distortions they contained. The protagonist-narrator Pozdnyshev was a powerful artistic creation, but his views were a typical Tolstoyan mixture of truth and nonsense. Mikhailovsky lamented the potential for sophistry inherent in the writer's craft:

This custom of peremptorily deciding important questions about human psychology without giving much thought to any substantiation is practiced by fiction writers particularly. It could be called fictional psychology. A fiction writer of pretty meager talents, after he has acquired enough proficiency, can tie together any two psychological elements, with every appearance of verisimilitude but actually quite arbitrarily, by establishing between them a chain of intermediary links. An innocent convict who has achieved serenity and an innocent convict whose manhood has been destroyed can both be made equally plausible by means of fictional psychology, which requires merely that no two adjacent pieces of psychological detail should clash too obviously. No great skill is required for this, and yet it often passes for profound knowledge of the human heart and fine psychological analysis, so that, eventually, the fiction writer himself begins to believe in his own profound knowledge of the human heart. [6:736]

Artistic persuasion by means of images had structural advantages over logical efforts, and could easily be misused by unconscionable writers of even mediocre talent. Pozdnyshev's monologue was an example of this powerful persuasion in the hands of a great, but confused, writer. Pozdnyshev, whom Mikhailovsky partially identified with Tolstoy, was a corrupt man whose perceptions were colored by his own depravity:

So far as Pozdnyshev is concerned, we may presume that, apart from the artistic merits of his narrative, . . . he understands the real cause of his troubles only too well. . . .
He is a libertine, a genuine libertine, that is to say, not so much a man who leads a depraved life as one who has put his whole soul into corruption. . . . His mind is so thoroughly fascinated by these seductive practices that he cannot even imagine any other state of affairs. . . . He imagines that music hypnotizes people and leaves them powerless in the hands of the musician. How, says he, can *The Kreutzer Sonata* be performed in a drawing room full of ladies who wear open dresses? . . . He himself is unable to resist temptation, so he imagines everybody else to be in the same predicament. Pozdnyshev is extraordinarily scornful of education for women. . . . According to him, "any kind of upbringing for women is designed solely as an aid in capturing men. Some charm with music and looks, . . . others with erudition. . . ." You'd think anyone could understand that knowledge, education, are in themselves attractive enough to serve as their own purpose even without any utilitarian considerations. . . . But Pozdnyshev cannot grasp even such a relatively simple thing; his profligate soul sees everywhere only its own reflection. [6:768]

Mikhailovsky argued that, being a libertine, Pozdnyshev was an unusual character; and that therefore his experiences were hardly typical of mankind as a whole. Pozdnyshev had a thoroughly distorted view of the world. Like Tolstoy, Pozdnyshev could not distinguish objective from subjective truth, and he projected his own problems onto others. As a consequence, he demanded universal sexual restraint because he himself had been scorched by his experience with sex.

If Pozdnyshev were not a genuine, thoroughgoing libertine, he would have been able to place his lamentable experience within certain limits. . . . Fortunately, or not, Pozdnyshev is not only a libertine but also an inconsistent fellow. He generalizes his bitter personal experience to the point where he sees a reflection of his own depraved soul everywhere and, deeply offended by such a picture of universal corruption, is willing even to put an end to mankind. . . . Having burnt himself on his own milk, he is blowing on other people's water, and what water—a whole ocean! The project is thoroughly insane, and Pozdnyshev himself ought to realize that it is only just empty talk. [6:770]

During the 1890s Tolstoy seemed to suffer what Mikhailovsky described as a general decline in his powers of reason. Mikhailovsky dismissed *What Is Art?* (1898) as another awkward and unsuccessful attempt to teach. He found the treatise confused and contradictory, its logic arbitrary and erratic, and its ideas exclusive and subjective. He praised the neatness of Tolstoy's definition of the
essential element in art as a matter of emotional stimulation with symbols, but found the method of proof arrogant, inaccurate, and inconsistent. Mikhailovsky flatly disagreed with Tolstoy that good art must be edifying or moral. Tolstoy disapproved of Pushkin and Beethoven, not because they were inferior to composers of popular ballads, but because at the time he felt no affinity for them and they did not serve his aim of producing contemporary folklore. Thus Tolstoy twisted the issue of popular art to suit his own dogmatic approach. It simply was not true, furthermore, that the common people looked for religious emotion in art. They sought pleasure in art just as anyone else did. The reason the tastes of the common people and the upper classes were so dissimilar was that their particular interests were worlds apart.

For Mikhailovsky *Resurrection* (1901) signified a rallying point in Tolstoy's career: a major confrontation with society and a return to realism after years of experimenting with fantastic notions. It also reflected a *narodnik* theme, and was the latest of Tolstoy's gallant efforts to rescue the peasant tribe (symbolically represented by Maslova) through fiction. This effort came forth in a heroic framework that was superficially quite grim and naturalistic, yet underneath had a fantastic, nearly folkloric structure. The novel vindicated many of Tolstoy's achievements, even though it reiterated some of his old prejudices about sex, the common folk, and the upper classes. Specifically, it represented a view that corresponded to his changed beliefs. This attitude, Mikhailovsky found, conflicted with many of Tolstoy's artistic practices and created considerable, sometimes even artistically fruitful, tension. The plot, at times diffuse and veering off into preoccupation, was well organized around two protagonists, a master and a peasant, who struggled to regain their lost integrity against a background of indifferent, unthinking multitudes. "Resurrection," which for Tolstoy apparently meant psychological individuation, for Mikhailovsky simply meant success in asserting oneself as an individual against society's pressure to conform.

Mikhailovsky noted that Tolstoy had generously borrowed from his past. Several elements of the novel recalled designs in Tolstoy's previous works. But it revealed an important difference in the handling of characters and a decline in artistic control, all suggesting a continuing struggle between Tolstoy's rational and irrational impulses. Like *War and Peace*, *Resurrection* contained a multitude of
characters, some of whom were very vivid even though they were only part of the background crowd. Mikhailovsky interpreted this as surrender of artistic control: a fortuitous display of a brilliant technique of quick characterization, which Tolstoy did not need in this novel. Unlike *War and Peace*, *Resurrection* could not accommodate highly individualized secondary characters within its much more conventional design. The design called for secondary characters to serve only as a background for the psychological drama of *Resurrection*. The real conflict was the struggle of the protagonists to regain their lost individuality by freeing themselves of the ingrained habit of thinking as everyone else thought. For Mikhailovsky this was the crux of the existential issue of the book. In principle, Tolstoy divided his people in *Resurrection* into those who lived by the light of their own thoughts and those who let themselves be guided by the thoughts of others. The difference was crucial and determined their chances of salvation: it meant the only chance to possess, or regain, one’s individuality or soul.

Mikhailovsky approved of Tolstoy’s new rational method of approaching this question, which he had formerly dealt with only in mystical or emotional terms. Mikhailovsky noted with satisfaction that Tolstoy’s incisive analysis was used here for a good purpose. Extrinsic differences among members of the background crowd were highlighted to underscore their intrinsic similarity, their willingness to conform to the standards of their society:

The background people in *Resurrection* vary widely in terms of their social position, education, intelligence, views, convictions, characters, personalities, etc.; and yet they all have, or at least the vast majority of them have, one thing in common: an inner calm. It is not that they always are happy and content with what they have; they are visited by boredom, minor and major failure, and resentful feelings, but nevertheless they all live without an inner conflict in the shade of rules whose validity they do not question and which firmly and precisely guide them on the path of life. . . .

This unequivocal belief in the rules distinguishes not only the people who are as highly placed as General Kriegsmuth and Count Charsky, and Count Tolstoy does not always stress it with a touch of irony. . . . In Simonson, for instance, he values it very highly, and for the following reason: “all people live and act partly according to their own thoughts, partly according to the thoughts of other people. The ratio in which people live according to their own thoughts relative to the amount of time they spend living in agreement with the thoughts of others constitutes one of the main differences between them.” *PS*, 1:273
The social being, Mikhailovsky said, did what was expected of him, never had a completely original thought, and never broke the rules. It was easy to conform and difficult not to, so that everyone tried to adapt himself quickly to what was socially expected. Yet the worth of an individual from Tolstoy's point of view corresponded to his determination to assert himself, resist the pressure of disapproval by others, and do what he thought was right, no matter what the consequences of his actions. Even criminals and political offenders did not, according to Tolstoy, change and become individuals when they were caught and punished. They merely continued in a different branch of society, prison, where they adjusted quickly to the new rules. From then on they behaved in the same pattern as regular members of society.

Mikhailovsky defended Tolstoy's representation of the judiciary. The novel conveyed his prejudices, of course, but Tolstoy had simply demonstrated that the judges served the status quo:

Voices have been heard in the press, accusing Count Tolstoy of wanton denigration of institutions, such as trials by jury, and slandering the entire judicial system... . . . That Count Tolstoy has something against any attempt to judge is, of course, well known... . . . Nevertheless, the author of Resurrection is innocent of actually slandering judicial personnel... . . . Would this be the only way he could slander them if he really wanted to? No, he merely pictures them from their gray, unglamorous, everyday side, with weaknesses such as laziness, a mechanistic attitude toward the performance of their duties, etc., which are characteristic of everybody and not only judges, prosecuting attorneys, and senators. [PS, 1:274]

Mikhailovsky offered a subtle psychological analysis of the motives of each protagonist in choosing a path of nonconformity. The stimulus that wrenched each from his routine life was a violent emotional experience: for Nekhliudov it was seeing Maslova in court; for Maslova it was the trial and conviction. After this, however, their paths showed no intrinsic similarity. Nekhliudov had always been a nonconformist at heart:

The upheaval caused in Nekhliudov's soul by the coincidence of meeting Katia in court... . is by no means as unexpected and sudden as may appear at first glance. This voice of reason and heart, under whose influence he commits a series of actions that appear strange from the point of view of his milieu, was part of his nature from the earliest youth. For example, that summer when he first saw Katia in the country when she was still living with his aunts, he "was experiencing that exalted state when for the first time in his life a young
man becomes aware, not just because someone told him so, but on his own, of
the entire beauty and significance of life. . . . He was one of those people
for whom a sacrifice in the name of some moral demand means the highest
spiritual delight.” [PS, 1:274–75]

Nekhliudov had merely been sidetracked into corruption by the
ease with which he could indulge in pleasure. Before, and even
after, the shock, he struggled with his own peculiar concerns. He
actually looked forward to Siberia as a way of shocking some of his
friends, a detail that Mikhailovsky found quite autobiographical:

In the very beginning of the novel he finds his love affair with the
wife of the marshal of the nobility, Maria Vasilievna, as well as his
equivocal relationship with Missy Korchagin, a burden, and he con­
templates various ways to end it all in good conscience. The Maslova
trial puts the final break on his dealings with that milieu which
played such a part in corrupting him. . . . The break is not all that
complete, though. He commits a series of acts that are, from the
point of view of everybody, quite incongruous: he declares publicly
that he feels his guilt before Katia, that he wants to marry that
prostitute, . . . wants to give his lands away to his peasants, . . . is
going to Siberia. . . . Yet during these outbursts of heroism there
awakens in him more than once that other man who is “like every­
body.” . . . He meets Mariette Czervianski, who arouses his sensu­
osness, . . . and begins to doubt whether he is, after all, doing the
right thing going off like that to Siberia, and giving away his land. . . .
In the theater, . . . “as he was looking at Mariette, he enjoyed looking
at her, although he knew that she was a liar.” He overtook in the
street a prostitute who smiled at him in that certain fashion, just like
the girl in the theater, and he promptly “experienced that same
feeling of attraction and revulsion.” [PS, 1:276–77]

The case of Maslova was different. She came from an environment
of poverty and crime, and her character reflected the different
standards of morality and mentality that Tolstoy applied to com­
mon people. She was an instinctive type, an animal, and a conform­
ist to begin with. She was displaced from a comfortable niche by
Nekhludov’s interference in her affairs, but quickly found a new
place in the underworld of pimps and prostitutes. She was ignor­
ant, humble, prejudiced, superstitious, confused, without morals;
and for her, prison was not a different environment but a different
branch of the same subculture. Her “resurrection” was therefore
more difficult.

Mikhailovsky noted Tolstoy’s indifference to Maslova’s careless
morality while he condemned it in women of Nekhludov’s class.
Tolstoy’s discussions of her chances of rehabilitation as Nekhludov’s wife ignored Maslova’s past history as a prostitute. This double standard resulted from Tolstoy’s ideas about moral and intellectual inadequacy in common people, whose unself-conscious disposition he related to a lack of individuality. To him their indiscretions did not matter; they were gregarious animals with only the intuitive features of their character as yet in evidence, not fully developed as thinking people. They needed assistance in developing their intellect, help that he could provide. The background characters in the novel were also treated according to this double standard and were forgiven trespasses that would be found intolerable in more individualized characters. But the significant difference Mikhailovsky saw was that Tolstoy made no effort to save them and seemed quite willing to let them rot in their subhuman predicament. The preferential treatment of Maslova underscored Tolstoy’s concern for the peasants as the people chosen to receive his prophecy, as against an Olympian indifference toward the fate of others. This attitude Mikhailovsky found in a religious message lurking beneath the overt religious passages of the book. The rescue of the country girl Maslova was symbolic of the effort to save the peasant, a role that fused in Tolstoy’s inconstantly lucid mind with that of Christ as a savior of souls. And, consciously or not, he was bringing familiar religious motifs to the support of this idea. He organized his hero’s struggle as an effort to redeem a soul, and furnished the assistance of the nonconformist intellectual Simonson, who was, at least in name, a little like Saint Peter, and Maria Pavlovna, who was a little like the Virgin Mary. Both had Pauline moral standards. Thus, Mikhailovsky concluded that Tolstoy in this new novel was reopening his old battle of wit against intuition, this time as a war in which God’s forces of individualism must wrest souls from the devil of animalism and materialist conformity. Some of its shots were fired at Dostoevsky.

Mikhailovsky hinted that, in name and character, Maslova was Tolstoy’s response to Sonia Marmeladov of Crime and Punishment and, more generally, to Dostoevsky’s treatment of the insulted and injured. Resurrection, he found, was a covertly polemic work, inspired by Crime and Punishment and directed against Dostoevsky’s ideas about morality and religion. Tolstoy even tackled one of Dostoevsky’s favorite subjects, a laceration of the psyche, something he had never handled before.
There were, Mikhailovsky noted, distinct similarities in plot between the two novels: prostitution under pressure of economic necessity; murder of an unattractive victim, punishment in court, and atonement in Siberia; an innocent self-sacrificing party willing and able to share the hardships of a Siberian sojourn in order to achieve the moral regeneration of a redeemable sinner. Tolstoy had sufficiently reshuffled facts and relationships to arrive at a more believable, down-to-earth plot situation, which was underscored by the choice of the more ordinary name Maslova as a takeoff and improvement upon Sonia Marmeladov's bland, marshmallowy, sentimental image of utter selflessness (the contrast is subtly suggested by a play on words: the name Maslova resembles the Russian maslo ["butter"] and represents the more substantial, realistic, perhaps more wholesome character; the name Marmeladov brings to mind marmelad ["jam"], a sweeter, more sugary, somewhat unreal person). The differences between the two characters underscored differences in point of view between the two writers.

Tolstoy had shown with Sonia of War and Peace that he despised self-denial as a practice that led to a withering of individuality, Mikhailovsky said. Mikhailovsky rejected Lev Shestov's argument that Sonia was a villain coequal with Napoleon because she, too, interfered with the lives of other people. Sonia's main fault was her selflessness. Her meddling was benign and irrelevant. War and Peace had other characters who never interfered with anyone or anything and were smoothly integrated with their environment, and yet the author disliked them just as much because they lacked character. The central issue was thus not interference, but its effects upon the individuals concerned. Mikhailovsky had no doubts about Tolstoy's position on interference: it was harmful when it tampered with the formation of character and good if it merely disrupted artificial rules and routines. This was just as obvious from the situations in Anna Karenina, where Dolly Oblonsky was made to suffer agonies for her selflessness while her philandering husband Stiva was rewarded for discreetly breaking rules of social decorum with a minimum of intrusion into the lives of others:

I believe that this, as well as many other things that Mr. Shestov says in his book, is just too arbitrary and rectilinear. Let us remember, for instance, Dolly, who indeed can hardly be said to break any rules, and yet is punished quite unmercifully, whereas her husband
The real issue was, as always with Tolstoy, whether or not one fulfilled one’s obligation to oneself by developing a strong character.

Compared to Sonia Marmeladov, Mikhailovsky said, Maslova’s superiority as an individual was revealed through her willful selfishness. For example, her reasons for refusing to marry Nekhliudov were self-serving. Critics who thought those reasons were noble and self-denying were being naive. Maslova was an animal who had been herded into her trade by a sinister conspiracy of encouragement from everybody. She had just endured a frightening process of adjustment to a new fate. She was at last beginning to look forward to a new security in a new corral, in a well-defined function within her old walk of life. She was in no mood to experiment with the untried job of being an individual’s wife:

When preparing to trek to Siberia, Katia did not forget that even out there she would be a needed and important person because, you see, guards and prisoners alike were seeking her favors. . . . This is one of the motives for Katia’s rejection of Nekhliudov’s offer to marry her. It would seem that the overwhelmingly glamorous status of Nekhliudov’s wife would appeal to her vanity, and apparently it did. But on the other hand, out there, in that unknown world of new relationships, she might lose what she already had, her familiar status of one who is desired by and accessible to everyone, and with the sense of shame she might once have had long since dispelled, she was afraid to part with that familiar outlook she shared with everyone. . . . She even treats Nekhliudov for a while like all women of her profession treat all men: she smiles at him as though to give him the “come on,” solicits money from him. [PS, 1:278]

This attitude contrasted sharply with Sonia Marmeladov’s high-flown sentimental plans for devoting her life to Raskolnikov’s spiritual regeneration in Siberia.
Mikhailovsky found certain elements in the formation of Maslova's character intriguing—developments that reflected the chronic struggle between Tolstoy's primly virtuous reason and bawdy intuition, his high-minded Logos and his low-minded Eros, what Mikhailovsky chose to call his right and left hands. Previously Tolstoy had never tried to change his peasants because, until recently, he had thought of them as perfect sui generis natural beings whose morality should not be interfered with. Maslova was a new and a somewhat clumsy intellectual experiment designed to demonstrate the growth of consciousness in natural man, under guidance from other, intellectually full-fledged human beings. Tolstoy had not resorted to conventional devices, Mikhailovsky noted, but he did not quite know how to create her as a convincing type, and she was an abstraction, his second homunculus after Karataev, but a much more dextrous, cerebral creation. The intuitive side of her nature was characterized spontaneously, formed by Tolstoy's ever-creative subconscious, which, of course, included his relish of sex. So, she was presented first as an attractive, pert peasant girl, sensuous and amoral. But later she had to be remodeled for her "resurrection" into someone with a prim conscience and a capacity for conscious growth; Tolstoy showed her as having been seduced by Nekhludov from a state of pristine innocence. As her new self-consciousness began to form, it first took shape as an outraged conscience, a mirror image of Nekhludov's guilt: once again Tolstoy was projecting his own problems onto others. Because he was inexperienced in the depiction of psychological hurt (obida), a feeling with which he was not familiar from his own experience, he depicted the expression of this feeling consciously—with the help of his rational side, clumsily, but effectively, in the intellectual style familiar from his didactic tracts.

I said that this [fear of change] was only one of the reasons that motivated Katia to refuse Nekhludov's proposal [of marriage]. Indeed, there are several of them, those motivations. They continuously shift and overlap, sometimes blending into such a contradictory imbroglio that Katia least of all can make out what it is all about. I especially want the reader to pay attention to her emotional distress and her resentful awareness of Nekhludov's guilt before her. She had already thoroughly forgotten that dismal episode in her youth that laid the foundations for her subsequent sad career, washed it from the slate of her memory with wine and gaudy parties. . . . Her rude, caustic remarks, in her talks with Nekhludov, appear
emblazoned upon the general texture of *Resurrection* all the more startlingly because Count Tolstoy has very seldom touched upon such psychological motifs before. We have many times read in his works how he depicts the labored, oppressive workings of an aroused conscience; he has also told us much of this that directly concerns himself, so that in the character of Nekhliudov we do not get anything particularly new, psychologically speaking. But the impelling forces in feeling legitimately hurt as the result of a psychological laceration, rightful wrath, indignant righteous feelings of revenge, have hardly ever been explored by him before. . . . Because these feelings are so crude and undifferentiated, it seems incongruous and implausible that they should be motivated by morality, i.e., a higher source. [PS, 1:278]

Mikhailovsky commented only briefly on the actual techniques of Maslova's resurrection, which he found unconvincing, oversimplified, and marred by prejudice. Her rehabilitation as an individual was the result of collective effort. The political prisoners acted as a herd, creating an impression of nonconformist rebellion against society. There was little chance in this atmosphere for Maslova to grow into a satisfactory individual and develop habits of independent thinking. She came immediately under the tutelage of others and was influenced by their thoughts. The leaders of the group, Maria Pavlovna and Simonson, were the bland, angel-like creations of an old man's sentimental fancy and bias against sex:

It is worth mentioning that the two political prisoners who had the most influence upon Katia's rebirth, Maria Pavlovna and Simonson, are, one might say, practically sexless beings. Both of them have an attitude of utter disdain toward any kind of carnal, physical love, the same kind of disdain Count Tolstoy feels toward it in *The Kreutzer-Sonata* and, of course, in *Resurrection*. He paints the early love between Katia and Nekhliudov, which is free from physical contact, in the brightest colors of which his rich palette is capable and, conversely, paints in the gloomiest colors a love that is physical in nature, a design for which the theme of *Resurrection*, of course, accords ample justification. [PS, 1:279-80]

Mikhailovsky believed these to be Tolstoy's attempts to implant religious fantasies in his otherwise realistic work, to camouflage them so cunningly that they were almost unrecognizable in the garb of stark naturalism.

Thus Mikhailovsky's intentions in his criticism of Tolstoy were similar to those of other critics: to guide and groom Tolstoy to be a more satisfactory sage, a better intellectual leader of the Russian
people. For thirty years he bombarded Tolstoy with essays and articles, exhorting and cajoling, trying to make Tolstoy see things his way, suggesting that Tolstoy write on matters Mikhailovsky wanted him to write about, rather than those of Tolstoy's own choice. For that, he felt, he had to free Tolstoy from mysticism and obscurity, which in Mikhailovsky's mind were interchangeable with the ignorance and prejudice he had been fighting in print all his life. Mikhailovsky in the process had acquired considerable psychological skills. His prodigious powers of observation and discrimination, however, as well as his ample critical acumen, have been challenged ever since his rash pronouncements on Dostoevsky, whom he obviously did not like and did not want to understand. His critiques of Tolstoy demonstrate that he was not always conscious in his criticism of his own prejudices. His method was polemical, and in this sense, as well as in other respects, he had some things in common with the civic critics. But he had even more in common with individualist critics such as Herzen, Pisarev, Grigor'ev, Dostoevsky, and Strakhov, with whom he shared a variety of common approaches and expressions. His views tend to glorify the individual who fights encroachment by society upon his identity and inalienable rights. As such, these views are Western, modern, and intrinsically anticommunist, a fact that should explain Mikhailovsky's unpopularity with the Soviets. Therefore attempts to class his criticism as a forerunner of Soviet party criticism must be dismissed as incorrect.

Unlike Mikhailovsky's deliberately blunt and insensitive assessment of Dostoevsky as merely "a cruel talent," his opinions about Tolstoy reveal considerable subtlety of discernment and an impressive grasp of the nature of Tolstoy's work and positions, except for their metaphysical core, which Mikhailovsky refused to consider and therefore dismissed as fatuous.

Mikhailovsky's point of view, though psychological, was almost exclusively rationalistic. He assessed Tolstoy as an irrational type of person, one whose actions are not based on rational judgment but on sheer intensity of perception. According to Mikhailovsky, Tolstoy's perceptions were directed simply and solely to events as they happen, almost no selection being made by judgment. In this respect Tolstoy had a real advantage over logical people, since objective events both conform to law and are accidental. This contradiction, according to Mikhailovsky, never bothered Tolstoy. In-
sofar as objective events conform to law, Tolstoy accepted them as rational; insofar as they were accidental, they were not rational. Conversely, if an event conformed to law, for Tolstoy it was merely presenting an aspect accessible to reason, whereas if it presented an aspect for which he could find no law, he called it accidental. Thus Tolstoy could postulate universal lawfulness as a postulate of reason that in no sense contradicted his intuitive judgments. Since such an opinion was in no way based on the principle of reason and its axioms, Tolstoy seemed to have a very irrational nature. Yet, even though Tolstoy subordinated judgment to perception, Mikhailovsky was nevertheless quite reluctant to regard him as unreasonable. He preferred to think of Tolstoy as in the highest degree empirical. Tolstoy based himself exclusively on experience—so exclusively that, as a rule, his judgment could not keep pace with experience. But his judgment was nonetheless present: evidently it was intuitive, appearing arbitrarily, and very often quite unexpectedly, as striking judgments and acts of choice; or his judgment would take the form of apparent sophistries, cold-hearted criticisms, or a seemingly calculated choice of persons and situations. These judgments had a rather undiscerning and even primitive characters. Tolstoy could on occasion be astonishingly naive, as well as brusque, arrogant, and even ruthless. Mikhailovsky therefore thought of Tolstoy's character as rationalistic and calculating in the worst sense. But he extended this judgment only to Tolstoy's unconscious attitude, which was, he thought, entirely oriented by perception and, because of its irrational nature, quite unintelligible. Indeed, to Mikhailovsky Tolstoy's judgments seemed a hodgepodge of accidental opinions that hardly deserved serious consideration. Tolstoy had, apparently, an equally scornful attitude toward his critic: he considered Mikhailovsky beneath notice, a man only half alive, whose sole aim was to fasten the fetters of reason on everything living and strangle it with judgments.

From Mikhailovsky's standpoint, then, Tolstoy was an inferior kind of rationalist, whenever he allowed his rational judgment to be influenced by his irrational opinions. For what happened to him then was no longer accidental; instead, the accidents that befell him were the result of rational judgments and rational intentions based in irrationality, and these were the things that Tolstoy stumbled over. To Mikhailovsky's rational mind this was something almost unthinkable, but its unthinkable merely equaled the astonish-
ment of Tolstoy when he came up against someone who put ra­tional ideas above actual and living happenings. To Tolstoy such an approach seemed scarcely credible. Thus there could be no meet­ing of their minds and no agreement between them.

Mikhailovsky's major weakness as a literary critic was that he almost entirely ignored the artistic element in art and had, in fact, no discernible aesthetic position. Therefore, his essays largely miss their mark as literary critiques because they fail to discuss the in­trinsic qualities of a literary work.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Tolstoy's growing fame induced a number of literary and other scholars to write about him and either to disprove or to support with evidence the more extreme assertions about Tolstoy as a phenomenon of Rus­sian life. This was the time when scientific objectivism was enjoying a vogue in Russia, and Emile Zola's scientific theories about the "experimental novel" had produced some spirited literary polemics. Scholarly critics attempted to correlate Tolstoy's person­ality and environment and develop a theory of the formation of his peculiar personality within his environment, presenting Tolstoy's art as logical synthesis of these elements. The classical philologist, linguist, and editor of the journal the Messenger of Europe, D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky (1853–1920), who was the scholarly dean of the Russian literary world during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, published in the Northern Messenger between 1894 and 1897 a series of articles on Tolstoy. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, whose views on literature were largely expressed in Zola's method, divided writers, according to the predominance of either ethos or pathos in their work, into objective and subjective writers, denying literary greatness to the latter on the grounds that, by strongly coloring their output by individual temperament, they made it too personal, individual, and unrepresentative of mankind as a whole. He advanced a theory according to which Tolstoy's talent, like that of Shakespeare, was analytic and nonlyrical. Tolstoy reflected what he saw completely, like a mirror, in images of high definition. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky contrasted this type of talent to that of artist-experimenters such as Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov, whose art was more subjective and lyrical, and relatively low in definition and imagery. Instead of imagery, they relied on rhythmic repetition of meaning and sound, that to which Bakhtin later referred as "symphonic construction." Objective writers thus
could be divided into two subgroups: writers-observers and writer-experimenters. The first created fully developed characters whom they presented with a wealth of concrete detail, fixing them and their environment so well in space and time that their work became something of a chronicle of the times. The writer-experimenter, on the other hand, unlike the writer-observer, reproduced only select aspects of reality. He introduced new ideas that, as an experimenter, he undertook to demonstrate and verify as hypotheses. He started by observing some phenomenon, eliminated some elements, and strengthened others in order to illuminate his concept of, say, one aspect of human nature that tends to be obscured by others in the real world. In concentrating on a single trait of character, he brought it into clear focus and magnified it by examining it in isolation, fixing it in the reader's mind. As a result, this aspect became increasingly clear and distinct, until its meaning dominated the rest. By bringing it into sharp focus, the writer-experimenter revealed what was indistinct in life itself. He introduced in this way one item after another, until its significance as part of the environmental influence was brought to its full term. He thus enhanced reality, as it were, making his protagonists inhabit a controlled, imagined environment. A recognition of the new idea followed when the will of the protagonist modified his surroundings or established a stable balance.¹⁶

Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky examined Tolstoy's unusual capacity for creating images of extraordinary clarity and plasticity. He made a detailed study of Platon Karataev in War and Peace as a character composed entirely of ideas—abstract, general notions about mankind—yet who as a character was very much alive. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky could not offer a rational explanation for this achievement, which seemed to fly in the face of every theory about literature. He suggested that Tolstoy was not only a writer-observer but at the same time a writer-experimenter.

Unlike Shakespeare's protean abilities, Tolstoy's talent was narrowly analytical; Tolstoy had a poorly developed capacity for artistic synthesis, Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky asserted. So, despite the seemingly broad sweep and scope of his art (a compensatory tendency in the artist), his art was "one-sidedly exclusive," i.e., experimental, penetrating, and intensive, rather than extensive, balanced, and inclusive. This could be seen in the relative simplicity of Tolstoyan concepts, which were powerful but limited to a small number of
ideas or phenomena. At the same time, it seemed to be this factor that endowed the Tolstoyan images and concepts with their universality.\textsuperscript{17} Repeating what Strakhov said about \textit{War and Peace} (see pp. 99–100), Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky claimed that Tolstoy had selectively brought into relief in his works “all that was stupid and vile in human existence and to which we have become accustomed so that we no longer even perceive it in all its ugliness . . . the mass of vulgarity, stupidity, intellectual and moral darkness that emanates from us and around us.”\textsuperscript{18} Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky went on to demonstrate that the entire body of Tolstoy’s work written since \textit{Anna Karenina} was a brilliant application of the experimental method in literature. “The Death of Ivan Ilych” and \textit{The Kreutzer-Sonata} were both brilliant examples of such writing, which showed that it could be used tendentiously.\textsuperscript{19}

The sociologist and literary scholar R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik (1878–1946) also wrote an interesting study of Tolstoy. He had his own explanation of the analytical nature of Tolstoy’s art. Ivanov-Razumnik saw the history of Russian literature as a means of tracing the history of the Russian intelligentsia and recording how it influenced the Russian idea.\textsuperscript{20} He spoke of Russian intellectuals as spiritual leaders of the people who, confronted with unforeseen difficulties of leadership, ran out of steam and broke up in confusion into many factions simply because they were unable to lead, being no longer sure what to do. In terms reminiscent of the terminology of organic criticism, Ivanov-Razumnik described Tolstoy as standing at the pinnacle of a trend in Russian literature begun by A. S. Pushkin that, after \textit{Anna Karenina}, was becoming stale or “philistine.” Using without acknowledgment this\textsuperscript{21} and other parts of Apollon Grigor’ev’s much-abused statements about certain writers, Ivanov-Razumnik declared both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to be the decadent products of critical narodnichestvo. Both writers, he said, were confused in their intellectual positions. Instead of leading the people toward the future, both were, so to speak, “bobbing about atop the swell” (\textit{mertvaia zyb’}) in the aftermath of the stormy controversy and essentially irreconcilable conflict between individualism and anti-individualism—civilization and tribalism—in Russian society and national consciousness. Symbolic of this still largely unresolved conflict was the continuing specter of the superfluous man in Russian literature, a character who had no place in a tribal society or a society that was seriously contemplating
a return to tribalism. It was in response to this conflict that Tolstoy's art was so analytical and individualistic, Ivanov-Razumnik claimed. Instead of painting pretty pictures of a future utopia, Tolstoy's art reflected the grim reality of Russian life, which was not concerned with some abstract ideal of future model citizens for whom the critics were clamoring in the press on the assumption that they were needed to help the people adjust to modern times. Tolstoy created characters who already existed in life and Russian society—intense, alienated characters, individualists who were full of doubts and restlessness, always unhappy, always searching for the truth, ready and willing to go anywhere to find it. These were not types at all but actual people taken from life. For proof Ivanov-Razumnik pointed to Tolstoy's characters, all of whom he found to be individuals. Tolstoy had not created a single type. His characters were men and women who were torn between a tendency toward self-reliance, resourcefulness, and enterprise—qualities that were inspired in them by Western influences and education—and an opposite tendency to give these up and revert to communal, archaic patterns of life. The conflict was aggravated by their Russian character, with its natural tendency toward indolence and mysticism, away from action and self-consciousness. The Russian was basically still community oriented, not individualistic. Individualism in a Russian, moreover, was a sign of morbidity, a sign that he had lost his roots. The destruction of the archaic lifestyle of old tribal Russia after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 had upset many people, causing them to develop morbid psychological tensions whose full effects could not yet be foreseen. In the last part of the nineteenth century some of these effects were becoming apparent in the odd reluctance to part with certain residual tribal patterns in Russian life, such as shared land ownership in the villages. The controversy between Westernizers and Slavophiles tended to fasten onto such subjects, as well as on the pros and cons of a closed village community life (mir). Another such indication was the tendency developed by many intellectuals, particularly among the narodniki, for "going among the people" in search of guidance, truth, and inspiration: to submit themselves to an ingenuous life style (oprostit'sia) and rid themselves of a complex alien culture that made them feel uncomfortable. Those were the questions with which Tolstoyan characters were struggling—problems that reflected the realities of Russian life. The feeling of superflu-
ousness in Russian intellectuals was a lingering symptom of a deep-seated malaise inside the Russian soul: loss of élan vital from an excess of self-consciousness. Such characters were, certainly, negative types. They should not be imitated by anyone. Yet they were true to life, true representatives of the times, Ivanov-Razumnik said. They were average Russians who were trapped in the problems of modernity.

Thus, the tendency among narodniki critics was to de-emphasize, or even to refuse to discuss, the merits of Tolstoy’s art, which they deemed to be unconscious and already perfect, and instead to emphasize the still inadequate, in their opinion, intellectual content of his works. Two elements, then, can be said to characterize the position of the narodniki on Tolstoy: (1) a rational approach to his art and message; and (2) an avoidance of critical discussion of his art. They also avoided any discussion of the typical, instinctive, “animal” features of his characters, while giving much attention and emphasis to their willful, rational, individual aspects. The rationalism of the narodniki, in part, led them to avoid any discussion of Tolstoy’s mysticism, which they considered an unfortunate ancillary of his art, to confine discussion to intelligible issues, and to reject or to ignore the rest as merely fanciful. Instead of aesthetics and mysticism, the narodniki treated psychology; they sought a sense of moral responsibility for the common man, who needed to be raised to a level of intellectual performance where he, too, could become an individual. The narodniki wanted to rescue the mass of people from their animal-like existence in filth and ignorance. Some narodniki, along with Mikhailovsky, ascribed this impulse of the Russian intellectual, if he were a nobleman, to a lacerated conscience.

All these subjects were, at one time or another, raised by narodniki critics when discussing Tolstoy’s works. However, their emphasis on individual psychological problems created for the narodniki most of their problems with the Marxists. Because these problems have not been resolved, they have spelled the ruin of the movement’s reputation. Narodnichество was an apparently unsuccessful attempt to improve upon the thorough materialism of the early radicals’ concern for merely the physiological and social welfare of the mass of people, and to temper it with concern for their psychological welfare. The narodniki subscribed to romantic notions about individualism and the dignity of man that included a number of
fanciful Promethean ideas, however; and these ideas were not acceptable to Marxists, who regarded them as contaminated by too much philosophic idealism. The results of this evidently aberrant trend within the evolution of Russian national consciousness and civilization can be discerned in the ideas of the famed but now unpopular Marxist theoretician Plekhanov (see chap. 7).

Many other scholarly, intellectual, and pseudointellectual studies of Tolstoy, his work, and its meaning for the Russian society and people were published in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. Some were comparative studies of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Others were studies of Tolstoy's message: his philosophy, religion, and ethical views. A favorite method was to compare his performance as a sage to that of other famous Russian and Western prophets. Several comparative studies were also made between the philosophies of Tolstoy and Friedrich Nietzsche.