## Tolstoy's Lessons: Pedagogy as Salvation<sup>1</sup>

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Thou shall not try to tempt me vainly By means of frog of thy device. As teacher I take rather strangely All works conceived in days of vice.

Lev Tolstoy, Letter to I. P. Borisov and A. A. Fet<sup>2</sup>

And if you're not willing, then I will use force.

Johann von Goethe, "The Erlking"

This essay will address not the lessons of Lev Tolstoy the author but of Lev Tolstoy the teacher—that is, not the moral messages embedded in the renowned novels and stories that Tolstoy wrote, but the pedagogical activities connected to the school for peasant children that Tolstoy founded and ran on his rural familial estate, Iasnaia Poliana, between 1859 and 1862. Polemics about pedagogy were being waged in government circles and intellectual journals throughout the 1850s and 1860s, and with particular intensity on the eve of and immediately following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Questions of whether and how members of the peasantry should be educated gave rise to much debate during this time. Having announced his abandonment of a literary

career, fleeing the intellectual superficiality and corruption of city life to Iasnaia Poliana, Tolstoy provided his answers to those questions by establishing the school, along with a journal of pedagogy, both named after the estate. To be sure, the school and journal gave Tolstoy what literature could not—an opportunity to creatively realize ideas useful to the common people. But arguably they do more. I will argue in this essay that they disclose not only the young Tolstoy's public policy views but also his private concerns, not only his social beliefs but his psychological conflicts, not only his philosophical convictions but his spiritual struggles. Ultimately, I will suggest, Tolstoy undertook his pedagogical activities as a means to achieve salvation for himself.

In 1860, Tolstoy set forth the social and cultural reasons for which he had founded his school: "In the matter of Russia's progress," he wrote to an influential acquaintance in government affairs,

it seems to me that however useful may be telegraphs, roads, steamers, guns, culture (with all its charity foundations, theaters, Academies of the Arts, and so forth)—all of this is premature and to no purpose until such time . . . as it will be evident that, in Russia, of all potential students only one percent of the population goes to school. . . . Popular education is a vital need for the Russian people. There is *no such* education. It has not yet begun and will never begin as long as the government is in charge of it. . . . In order for popular education to take place it must be placed into the hands of society. . . . For *me* this issue has been decided. In a half year my school begot three others just like it nearby, and they have had equal success everywhere.<sup>3</sup>

Tolstoy did not envision just any member of society educating the peasants. On the contrary, he was convinced that the upper classes, which claimed cultural leadership of Russia, posed a serious danger to healthier, wiser, and more moral peasants, especially peasant children, who had no need for the technological innovations or aesthetic refinements extolled by the upper classes. He had even less use for professional educators and government-sponsored educational programs with which he had become disenchanted during his "pedagogical travels" of 1860-1861, when he toured Europe, visiting various educational institutions.

But even before those travels Tolstoy had rejected the traditional understanding of the task of pedagogy. Real pedagogy, he declared, did not entail merely writing and fulfilling lesson plans but seeking "to learn the general paths

of education and its rules" on the basis of direct experimentation, through trial and error. In other words, the task of Tolstoy's school was to discover a *practical philosophy* of pedagogy. So strongly did he perceive the need for a system of public education that he declared, "whether it is permitted or not, even if I am all by myself, I will found a *secret society of public education*." This society was never formally established, but the readership of the pedagogical journal Tolstoy founded and published functioned as one in some ways.

This journal, *Iasnaia Poliana* [Ясная Поляна], was, in its own way, Tolstoy's equivalent of Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* [Дневник писателя, 1873-76, 1877, 1881]. The first issue of the journal (together with a literary appendix, in which literary works for peasants and the best compositions of the schoolchildren were printed) came out in January of 1862. The ostensible task of this journal, which Tolstoy declared to be nonliterary and nonpolitical, was to describe and explain the school he had founded. In fact, under the pretext of discussing pedagogical questions, Tolstoy boldly and provocatively articulated many of his most radical ideas—the very ideas that, with variations here and there, eventually became major tenets of his philosophy and were crystallized in his later fictional and non-fictional works.

For example, on the subject of education Tolstoy maintained the following: all pedagogical doctrines and methods are rooted in deceit or vanity; all modern educational institutions from the village school to the university are based on compulsion and lies, and therefore the entire system of education must be changed, starting with its keystone, the parochial school; the only criterion for true education should be the natural development of children, which gives birth to a free system that does not require force to maintain; the ideal education, as Rousseau correctly stated, can be found not ahead of us but behind us, and for this reason children—especially peasant children and especially boys (here Tolstoy is Russifying Rousseau)—are closer to an innocent and happy state of human existence than educated adults because they are healthier, wiser, and more moral; adults—especially aristocratic adults—that is, already-corrupted human beings around fourteen years or older should not educate children on the basis of their own views and experience because they will corrupt the children.

But Tolstoy also held forth on such subjects as social and technological progress—which, he said, the upper classes glorify, often with religious enthusiasm—claiming that it was *not needed by the peasants* (at least not now), and in

fact constituted dangerous ideological fetishism. By contrast, he insisted, everything essential in the world has always been as it is now, and therefore will always be the same. He also took up the subject of art, declaring it no less than abominable to inflict aristocratic, intellectual, narrow, and arbitrary aesthetic values on healthy peasants, to whom a Beethoven quartet is unpleasant noise, the best verses of Pushkin are an assortment of sounds, and the *Venus de Milo* is just a naked girl; they would develop for themselves appropriate—that is, is natural—aesthetic sensibilities.<sup>7</sup>

Tolstoy himself actively thrust his journal into the public arena by announcing it in well-known publications and making a polemical call for powerful journalists to enter the discussions about education, among other activities.<sup>8</sup>

In 1861 Tolstoy described the school he had founded at Iasnaia Poliana in a programmatic article entitled "The Iasnaia Poliana School in November and December" ["Ясно-полянская школа за ноябрь и декабрь месяцы"] (evoking one of his Crimean war chronicles, "Sevastopol in December" ["Севастополь в декабре месяце"]). Tolstoy reported that the school

resides in a two-story stone building. Two rooms are occupied by the school, another by the lab, and two by the teachers' offices. On the porch under an awning hangs a little bell with a string tied to the clapper, on the porch below there are parallel bars and a rack [of weights]. On the porch above there is a bench. The staircase and porch are covered in snowy or muddy footprints; on the porch hangs a schedule. The instructional day is organized as follows: around eight in the morning, a teacher who lives at the school, an administrator of the school and a lover of outward order, sends one of the boys, who almost always sleeps in [the teacher's] lodgings, to ring the bell.<sup>9</sup>

Tolstoy goes on to say that lessons start at eight in the morning, continue until noon, and then resume from three until five in the afternoon, although the children often stay until late at night "because you can't chase them out of the school—they ask for more." Sometimes, Tolstoy noted, lessons take place in the fields, in the garden, or in the nearby forest. In the evenings, there are readings of literary works and discussions of moral themes. On occasion Tolstoy would play the piano for the students.

In the school, boys and girls from five to fifteen years of age studied together. The students were divided into two classes that were in turn divided into two groups according to age and level of education. Instruction was

provided at no cost. The main courses offered were reading, writing, grammar, religious history and theology, Russian history, mathematics, basic natural sciences, land-surveying (geodesy), drawing, draftsmanship, and singing. Lessons in manual labor and gymnastics were considered especially important. The school had its own library, a small museum, a laboratory, a workshop, and athletic grounds.<sup>11</sup>

Tolstoy recruited a group of young teachers to staff the school. By the beginning of 1861 there were twelve teachers, mostly former students who shared Tolstoy's pedagogical ideas and, in Tolstoy's opinion, would be cured through contact with morally healthy peasant children of the delusions inherent in the Western socialism favored by radical university students at the time. <sup>12</sup> Although he chose the teachers himself, Tolstoy was often dissatisfied with them: "The teachers are bad. Alexandr Ivanovich is stupid. Alexandr Pavlovich is morally unwell. Ivan Ilyich is the most reliable of all. Every teacher has some kind of nasty secret. At best it's women [ежели это бабы, то хорошо]."<sup>13</sup>

Tolstoy dubbed the school's overarching principles the "Criteria of Freedom." These criteria comprised:

- voluntary attendance (and, as Tolstoy noted, everyone attended);
- the freedom to come and go at will if a lesson is uninteresting (and no one misses a lesson);
- the absence of textbooks and homework; one brings only oneself to school as a result of "one's receptive nature and the confidence that the day at school today will be as joyous as it was yesterday" 15;
- a variable schedule, depending on the interests of the students;
- the repudiation of corporal punishment and coercive disciplinary measures (no one ever breaks the rules);
- freedom of expression on the part of students and teachers, and in general *unconstrained* conversations between teachers (first and foremost Tolstoy himself) and students, about all things of interest to children, are greatly valued.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, according to Tolstoy, the school was governed by simplicity, unity, love, and collaboration.<sup>17</sup> It was, again according to the plans of its founder, not only an educational institution, but in its own way a glade of happiness and

freedom in the gloomy forest of pedagogical establishments in Russia and the West, establishments with which Tolstoy had become disenchanted during his "pedagogical travels" of 1860-1861.<sup>18</sup>

Tolstoy's school and the pedagogical principles behind it engendered opposition from a wide array of liberals and conservatives, as well as professional educators, and even some parents. Objections ranged from the philosophical—members of the upper classes have no right to educate children—to the political—Tolstoy was "endeavoring to overturn the entire system of public education in Russia and the whole world," running a veritable "school of depravity"—to the personal—Tolstoy was not a trained educator, Tolstoy was too idealistic, Tolstoy knew nothing about peasant children.<sup>19</sup>

But, undaunted by opposition, Tolstoy persevered, inspired in part by an ideal vision of the school of the future that "perhaps will not be a school as we understand it—with chalkboards, benches, podia for teachers or professors. Perhaps it will be a gallery, a theater, a library, a museum. . . ."<sup>20</sup> This ideal might not be realized any time soon, Tolstoy acknowledged:

Only a hundred years from now the concepts that I perhaps unclearly, awkwardly, unpersuasively, am trying to articulate may become commonplace; only a hundred years from now all established institutions—academies, gymnasia, universities—may become obsolete; then freely forming institutions will be founded on the principle of freedom of a generation of learners.<sup>21</sup>

Tolstoy conceived of the school at Iasnaia Poliana as a prototype of that school of the future.

Ironically, this prototype, designed to embody the "criteria of freedom," was ruled over by Tolstoy like an autocrat. Not only did he choose the students, determine the curriculum, and select who would teach it, he wielded exceptional emotional influence over his students. Like Goethe's Erlking ["Der Erlkönig," 1782], he could produce strong anxieties in his students. In contrast to Goethe's character, however, he could also inspire their love. Accordingly, Tolstoy's diaries and journal of pedagogical activities record multiple instances in which the children displayed the warmest of feelings toward him, looked at him with loving eyes, placed their hands on his, and so forth. Tolstoy attempted to explain his unquestionable spiritual leadership and absolute control over

every aspect of the school by claiming that it was better for him to influence the children and young teachers than for corrupt society to do so.

A staff member of the journal sought to illustrate the extent of Tolstoy's influence with an anecdote. Late one night Tolstoy, surrounded by children and teachers, was playing Schubert's ballad version of Goethe's poem "The Erlking." In the poem, a gray demon-king attracts a child's soul with enchanting words about his wealth and his daughter's beauty, and then forcibly seizes the soul. Reaching the finale, Tolstoy, "himself swept up by the power of the images depicted, struck the piano keys with all the strength in his muscular hands, the music ended with a heart-rending chord, and the final words of the ballad—'the dead child lay in his arms'—groaned in the nighttime hush." His audience was shaken. Then Tolstoy, like an experienced performer, sharply altered the emotional mood: he began a Mendelssohn-like lyrical melody. The frightened children, not knowing what he would play next, asked him not to play "Leshii" [a forest spirit in Russian folklore who "exhausted [a] child to the point of death"], preferring instead a romance or "The Cherub Song." Tolstoy played on until the evening was over, at which point "students, teachers, and the Iasnaia Poliana peasant children, full of 'sweet sounds and prayers,' dispersed." This scene demonstrates the vast power of Tolstoy to manipulate the emotions of the students at Iasnaia Poliana.<sup>22</sup> In essence, Tolstoy reigned as the absolute authority in his "free" realm.23

Here I should stipulate that, at least for many of the students, Tolstoy's authority was imperceptible or pleasant, even arguably beneficial. Some student essays preserved in the archives of the Tolstoy museum portray the unconstrained familial atmosphere that flourished under Tolstoy's paternalistic control.<sup>24</sup> In fact, in the article "The Iasnaia Poliana School in November and December" Tolstoy describes his relationship with the school's students not as one of parent and children but as one of equals taking nighttime walks while discussing abstract subjects like the nature of evil and the uses and abuses of art.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, despite his insistence on his superior judgment in pedagogical matters large and small, Tolstoy at times represented students as his superiors, at least in creative potential. In an article entitled "Who Teaches Whom to Write, Do Peasant Children Teach Us or Do We Teach Peasant Children?"

["Кому у кого учиться писать, крестьянским ребятам у нас или нам у крестьянских ребят"], which appeared in the September 1862 issue of Iasnaia Poliana and became one of the most well-known and provocative articles the journal was to publish, Tolstoy depicts his experience of this superiority.26 The putative subject of the pedagogical article is methods of teaching composition to peasant children. In it Tolstoy recommends assigning as themes for student compositions folk proverbs expressing the ethical wisdom of peasants that children instinctively recognize. He also recommends promoting as compositional models not the artistic works of professional writers but the compositions of the students themselves, for "children's compositions are more just, more elegant, and more moral than the compositions of adults."27 He argues that educated people in general "should not teach reading and writing, especially poetic writing, at all to children and especially peasant children," and he reports that, as soon as he gave his peasant students free rein in their compositions, they wrote "such poetic works as have never existed before in Russian literature."28

Tolstoy then describes the germination of true artistic creation in the hearts of two peasant boys, Fedka and Semka, who had only recently learned to read and write.<sup>29</sup> These two boys, in creating together with him a story derived from a Russian proverb, surpassed him in everything: in their choice of details, their sense of proportion, their instinctive perception of the whole, and the truthfulness and beauty of their descriptions. At the same time each of the boys had his own strikingly pronounced authorial method.

According to Tolstoy, the story they composed was unprecedentedly good (better than anything Goethe could write!), but, alas, the paper manuscript of this story was inadvertently used by the other children for fireworks. Tolstoy was distraught, but Fedka and Semka calmed him: they would sit down and write it again. They worked all night in Tolstoy's house. Tolstoy, enchanted, watched as the spirit of the peasants' (childish) collective consciousness gave birth to true art. The next morning the story was again finished—in a version as good as, if not better than, the first.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Tolstoy found, art was blossoming in the pure souls of peasant children, art that was not only qualitatively superior to his own but that could seemingly endure forever. (From here one can find a direct path to Tolstoy's later tract *What is Art?* [*Ymo makoe uckyccmbo?*, 1897].)

Tolstoy's own artistic sensibilities informed what I would call the mystical conclusion of the article on teaching composition to peasant students. Having observed the creative efforts of the boys, he felt that he had found the philosopher's stone of art:

I cannot convey the feeling of restlessness, joy, fear, and almost remorse that I experienced in the course of that night. I felt that from this day onward a new world of delight and misery—the world of art—had opened up for [Fedka]; it seemed to me that I had glimpsed what no one ever has the right to see—the germination of the mysterious flower of poetry. It was both frightening and joyful for me, as for a treasure hunter. . . . I was joyful because, suddenly, completely unexpectedly, the philosopher's stone for which I had searched in vain for two years was revealed to me—the art of teaching the expression of thoughts. I was frightened because this art evoked new demands, a whole world of desires, incompatible with the environment in which the students lived, as it seemed to me at first. It was impossible to be mistaken. This was no accident, but conscious creation.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, this *revelation* aroused in him a certain holy terror, tinged with a strange feeling of shame:

It vaguely seemed to me that I was unlawfully peering through a glass hive at the work of bees, hidden to the gaze of mortals; it seemed that I had corrupted the pure, pristine soul of a peasant child. I vaguely felt in myself remorse at some sacrilege. I thought of children whom idle and lecherous old men force to act out erotic scenes to fuel their tired, worn-out imaginations, and at the same time I was as elated as someone who has seen something he has never seen before should be.<sup>32</sup>

I would suggest that Tolstoy's strange confession here contains the key to his pedagogical outlook at this time. Joy and shame for Tolstoy-the-pedagogue are intertwined with his unique religious feeling. Tolstoy's exaltation of the peasant boys' creative activity points not only to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his worship of natural man—the obvious reference—but also directly to Tolstoy's religious views, specifically to his interpretation of Christ's homily about the kingdom of heaven as rendered in the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 18:

1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

- 2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,
- 3. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- 5. And whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
- 6. But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

This lesson of Christ about the danger of offending the little children, who are greater than all others in the kingdom of heaven, is incorporated by Tolstoy into his pedagogical theories on the relationship the upper classes should have with the lower, the connections between the world of adults and the world of children, and his own pedagogical practices while teaching the Iasnaia Poliana students. It seems to me that Tolstoy is articulating his awareness of what he deems the frightful ethical responsibility assumed by teachers. The better the teacher, Tolstoy suggests, the more strongly and tortuously he must feel this responsibility. This is not Christian pedagogy (that is, teaching in accordance with Christian principles), but rather a socially-colored "pedagogical Christianity" centered on children of lower social classes.<sup>33</sup> Thus, he maintains, the kingdom of heaven, the source of salvation, may be discovered in the soul of a peasant boy, where the culturally corrupt adult Tolstoy looks, hoping to "humble himself" enough to enter that kingdom, and fearing that he no longer can. Moreover, he was afraid that he might—because of his corruptness as an adult and member of the upper classes—destroy the potential source of salvation and, consequently, doom himself. 34

I would note that for Tolstoy pedagogy and Christianity were intricately interwoven, a connection that was manifested in a number of ways. For example, he devoted a great deal of his time to reading the Bible to the students, and numerous Christian allusions appear in his articles and letters during his three "pedagogical years." In "The Iasnaia Poliana School in November and December," discussing some boys who go to school united by

a single aim—to learn—Tolstoy unexpectedly recalls more words of Christ from the passage where the "little children" are mentioned: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Tolstoy often referred to pedagogy as a new religion, comparing his school to a church and monastery. And in a letter commenting on his experiment in education at Iasnaia Poliana, Tolstoy remarked, with a symbolic allusion to Christ's disciples, that, of his twelve teachers, one had turned out unworthy (it was a follower of socialism that Tolstoy did not like). Most tellingly, Tolstoy wrote to his relative and confidente Aleksandra Tolstoy in August of 1862, "You know what the school was for me since I opened it. It was my entire life, my monastery, the church in which I was saved and am being saved from all of the anxieties, doubts, and temptations of life." \*\*

Many years later, Tolstoy included an entire section on the religious and moral value of the child, beginning with the above-mentioned verses about the little children from the Gospel of Matthew, in his didactic "Circle of Reading" ["Круг чтения," 1904], a collection of wise sayings for every day of the year. After these verses Tolstoy cites two more verses from Matthew: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do."<sup>39</sup> Then follows commentary from Tolstoy himself:

Why are children morally higher than the majority of people? Because their reason is not perverted by deception, nor temptation, nor sin. Nothing lies before them on the path to perfection. Meanwhile before adults lie sin, temptation, and deception.<sup>40</sup>

Pedagogical activities for Tolstoy represented an intermediate realm between sin and innocence, enabling the penitent to return to a lost paradise, the doors of which have been locked. For him, Iasnaia Poliana was distinguished from traditional schools as Law in the Old Testament is distinguished from Freedom in the New Testament, offering a path to salvation for its creator, although that path is narrow and its edges are steep. Thus I conclude that Tolstoy engaged in his pedagogical activities in pursuit of his own personal salvation, aside from the salvation of his students or his country.

At the end of 1862 Tolstoy closed the school and abandoned teaching. Why? Tolstoy himself and his biographers suggest various reasons: he was

offended by government authorities, who carried out a search of the premises in his absence and consequently "slandered" him in the eyes of the peasants; old students grew up and new ones were not added; the journal attracted too few subscribers (Tolstoy had hoped for two hundred) and spent too much (accruing a debt of three thousand rubles); he had gotten married; his passion had cooled; he had overcome his literary crisis; and so forth. In a letter written in the autumn of 1863 Tolstoy declared that his views of life, peasants, and society had entirely changed and that he now looked with astonishment at his enthusiastic pedagogical activity, "as souls look from above on their discarded bodies" 1:

I love children and pedagogy, but it is difficult for me to understand myself as I was a year ago. Children come to me in the evenings and bring with them recollections about the teacher that I was and will no longer be. I am now a writer with all the strength of my soul, and I write and think like I have never written and thought before. I am a happy and calm husband and father, and I have no secrets from anyone and no wishes other than that everything should go on as it did before. <sup>42</sup>

However, Tolstoy professed himself glad to have "attended that school," treating the Iasnaia Poliana experiment as a school of life.

All of these reasons undoubtedly played a role in his decision to leave the realm of pedagogy. But even if these were not the reasons, the outcome of the experiment would have been the same. I would explain Tolstoy's departure from pedagogy as part of the quest that would shape his life, the quest for personal, as well as national, salvation. Tolstoy created his school like a work of religious art in which he sought his own salvation, and moved away from the creation when it was finished. Yet he remained unsaved. His new religious-artistic project became *War and Peace* [*Boйна и мир*, 1869], the vast novel about past Russian aristocracy (which included in its historical orbit his own family), the exposure of whose falsehood and hypocrisy, rampant among Russia's military and political leaders, would enable both Russia and Tolstoy to save themselves, or so he hoped.

In a sense, Tolstoy's life and works may be viewed as explorations of a series of *scenarios of salvation*, which featured a variety of contents, but always followed more or less the same form. He went from one to another, never satisfied. Yet each new scenario, including the school at Iasnaia Poliana, astonishes

us by its brilliant, innovative potential as a path to salvation, issuing from Tolstoy's indomitable, militant, searching, suffering, shameful, rejoicing, and eternally youthful spirit.

## **Endnotes**

- 1 I am indebted to James M. Tonn for translating an earlier version of this essay from Russian into English.
- 2 The letter is dated February 15, 1860. The original reads: "Не искушай меня без нужды, / Лягушкой выдумки твоей. / Мне как учителю уж чужды / Все сочиненья прежних дней" (60:322; the translation is mine).
- 3 60:328-330 (italics mine). Quotations of Tolstoy are from the 90 volume edition of his *Complete Collected Works* [Полное собрание сочинений], cited by volume and page number. All translations are mine. Schools modeled on Tolstoy's, built with his assistance, began appearing in neighboring villages. They anticipated in some ways the Tolstoyan movement of the 1880s to the 1900s, centered on Iasnaia Poliana, that regarded "civilized" society as misguidedly believing itself to be making progress when it was actually heading toward self-destruction.
- 4 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 60:330-31.
- 5 The use of the name of his estate—the village of Iasnaia Poliana in Tula Province—as the title of the journal was a matter of principle for Tolstoy: the truth about education (and, for that matter, life) could not be discovered in large cities, not in Petersburg and Moscow institutions and journals, but in the countryside, and especially in Tolstoy's native countryside. The epithet "clear" ["ясная"] was also possibly intended as a subtle jab at the misguided, obscure, or false philosophizing of contemporary theorists of pedagogy, whose ideas, divorced from practice, were, according to Tolstoy, ruining the most important activity of the era (though one of Tolstoy's more acrimonious critics noted that Tolstoy's school turned out not "clear" but "heavily clouded.") (E-g-m-t [Chumakov], Педагогические парадоксы, 174).
- 6 These ideas are formulated in the following articles by Tolstoy: "О народом образовании" (8:4-25)," Ясно-полянская школа за ноябрь и декабрь месяцы" (8:23-75, 8:110-125), "Воспитание и образование" (8:211-246), "Прогресс и определение образования" (8:325-355). Оп Tolstoy's pedagogical theories, see Cohen; Murphy; *Mossman*; and Pinch.

- 7 Tolstoy believed the most important pedagogical task was to give a generation of peasant children an opportunity to develop—or at least not to prevent from developing—an understanding of art and of the world that "that is just as new in form as it is in content" (8:116).
- 8 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 8:496-504. For the epigraph to his journal Tolstoy chose a line from Goethe's *Faust*: "You believe that you push, but in reality it is you who are being pushed" ["Glaubst zu schieben und wirst geschoben"]. Tolstoy's epigraph was intended for those contemporary theorists and practitioners of pedagogy who arrogantly believed that they knew how and what to teach to peasant children even while ignoring the "secret laws" of the pedagogical process, which could only be discovered during the practice of teaching those children.

Mephistopheles says these words to Faust during the mad, hellish dance they attend on Walpurgis Night. The choice of a Mephistophelean quotation as an epigraph might have been inspired by Goethe's devil's biting satire of contemporary educational institutions (first and foremost the university) in *Faust*. In the beginning of the tragedy Mephistopheles, donning Faust's professorial gown, gives murderous "lessons" to a beginning student (later he re-encounters this student, who has by then received his baccalaureate degree, and continues to ridicule "dead" pedagogy).

- 9 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 8:30.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 I would note that Tolstoy did not care what happened to his students once they left the school; hence we know almost nothing about them as adults (see 8:623-25).
- 12 However, in the spring of 1862, in Tolstoy's absence, teachers at Iasnaia Poliana were placed under arrest for two days for unconfirmed suspicions of anti-government activity, namely, the establishment of a secret press.
- 13 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 8:602.
- 14 Ibid., 8:25.
- 15 Ibid., 8:30.
- 16 The resemblance of the Iasnaia Poliana pedagogical experiment to a utopian commune was evident to Tolstoy's contemporaries. According to the memoirs of a German writer and acquaintance, Tolstoy would boast that on the doors of his school hung a sign saying "Enter and exit freely."

According to other memoirs, in one of the classrooms hung another favored slogan: "Do what you want!" Tolstoy's biographers have suggested that the first sign was a polemical response to the inscription on the doors to Dante's hell ("Abandon all hope, ye who enter here" ["Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'intrate"]; Tolstoy thought of all modern systems of education as a "hell"). The second was undoubtedly a quotation from the famous pedagogical (anti-scholastic) utopia of the French humanist François Rabelais. These very words ["fais ce que tu voudras"] were the rule in Brother Jean's joyful Abbey of Theleme, the inhabitants of which freely expressed their individual wills, enjoyed society, the arts, reading, played sports, and were most happy and virtuous because they were free. It is notable that Tolstoy reread Rabelais's novel in the month when he decided to begin his "new profession" as an educator.

- 17 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 8:31-40.
- 18 See Eikhenbaum, part 1, 371-392; part 2, 37-55.
- 19 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 8:556.
- 20 Ibid., 8:246.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 In this case, Tolstoy marshals the power of music, which he would, many years later, depict as subversive in "The Kreutzer Sonata" ["Крейцерова соната," 1889].
- 23 On the eve of his turn to pedagogy, Tolstoy is said to have lamented that he was as "unloved" as the hero of his short novel *The Cossacks* [*Ka3aκu*, 1863]. In this light, Iasnaia Poliana can be viewed as a place where he created and cultivated children's love (and even adoration) for himself.
- 24 One student, Vaska Morozov (whom Tolstoy said he held in higher regard than Goethe) recorded the informality that characterized the relationship between Tolstoy and his students. He reports that, one day, to the delight of the children, Tolstoy returned home after his year-long voyage around Europe and went to freshen up: "Lev Nikolaevich came out [undressed] with two brushes, combing his hair. We just gasped when we saw how old he was, and I couldn't help but say: 'Lev Nikolaevich! How old you look!' Lev Nikolaevich said: 'Yes, the sand is already pouring out of my ass' ['уж из жопы песок сыпется']. Then Lev Nikolaevich got dressed and we went to exercise" (171).

- 25 I think that Tolstoy is here polemicizing not only with Nikolai Chernyshevsky, as Eikhenbaum claims (part 2, 100-103), but also with Turgenev's well-known story "Bezhin Meadow" ["Бежин луг," 1852], a classic depiction of peasant children in Russian literature. This story features an enlightened but obviously superior gentleman [барин] who eavesdrops on the conversations of serf boys about evil forces and is touched by their poetry. Tolstoy the teacher converses with children as with equals.
- 26 Tolstoi, ΠCC, Chertkov edition, 8:301-324. In this article Tolstoy puts forth a rare—for him positive—even enthusiastic appraisal of someone else's work. (Of course, we should not forget that he himself prompted this work, participated in its creation, and published it in his journal.)
- 27 Ibid., 8:323.
- 28 Ibid. For a structural analysis of the compositions of Tolstoy's schoolchildren, see Thomas Winner.
- 29 Fedka is the pseudonym Tolstoy gave to Vaska Morozov. Fedka and his comrade Semka ("a morally and physically healthy lad of about twelve years, nicknamed Vavilo" (8:624)), appear in a few of Tolstoy's articles and in his diaries they—especially the former—are mentioned repeatedly. As Eikhenbaum notes, Fedka and Semka in some way personify for Tolstoy two major tendencies of his own work (115).
- 30 I am deliberately avoiding the question of what the contents of this story actually were, since they have no bearing on Tolstoy's reaction to the story. It seems that, for him, it would have been better if this story, resurrected phoenix-like from the ashes, had not been preserved at all but had existed only in his "pale" paraphrase, like a simulacrum of some higher creation. In fact, in his account, the boys' story is like a myth engendered from peasant nature itself; it is some mystical type of folklore, wholly undermining the concept of literature as an individual or professional performance.
- 31 Tolstoi, *IICC*, Chertkov edition, 8:305.
- 32 Ibid., 8:307. Scholars of Tolstoy have long been abashed by the strange sexual (pedophilic) metaphor used by Tolstoy in his description of his pedagogic triumph/defeat: he indirectly compares himself with depraved old men who spy on children. Eikhenbaum explains that the use of sexual terminology, which "attaches to the entire experiment an especially

- profound and somewhat sinister meaning," reflects a "historical trauma of the era," which is revealed in Tolstoy's letters of the 1860s, in which he refers to the composition of stories as "an obscene business."
- 33 Tolstoy began planning to develop his own version of Christianity in the early 1850s.
- 34 It is interesting to note the parallel to Gogol, also the creator of a religious and pedagogical utopia (but not a school). In general, it reminds us that the idea of personal salvation of the artist through useful activity far from the petty world is Romantic in origin.
- 35 Matthew 18:20; 8:34.
- 36 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 60:436.
- 37 Ibid., 8:503.
- 38 Ibid., 8:496 (italics mine).
- 39 Matthew 11:25-26.
- 40 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 43:72.
- 41 Tiutchev, *Лирика*, 1:174.
- 42 Tolstoi,  $\Pi CC$ , Chertkov edition, 61:24.

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