

the tolstoyan episode in american social thought

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Throughout a long and creative life Leo Tolstoy trod unstintingly the path of systematic philosophical inquiry. By examining every contending system and by subjecting every body of thought to intense scrutiny, he was able at last to integrate his ideas into a very personal doctrine called *tolstovstvo* in Russian and referred to in these pages as Tolstoyism. Between Tolstoy's literary debut in 1852 and the late 1880's, when he first became known in America, Tolstoy's philosophical evolution took him through a welter of often contradictory beliefs. Taken as a stadial development, his works form a logical progression toward an ideal, but if they are to be viewed all at once, then their overall design is obscured. In nineteenth-century Russia the observant reader was able to plot the course by which Tolstoy's tireless mind moved successively from one idea to another. Thus the perceptive critic Mikhailovsky was able to predict with some accuracy the future direction of Tolstoy's literary efforts after reading Part Seven of *Anna Karenina*, wherein is described the shattering revelation that transformed Tolstoy's life and work. The author of *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace* came to be disowned by the man who wrote *Confession* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. The American readership, however, received the young Tolstoy with the old. Whereas in 1885 only a single translation of *The Cossacks* was available to the American reader, by 1890 there were 34 titles in print, and a twenty-volume set of Tolstoy's collected works would soon appear.¹ By reading only two of these works one might encounter both a defender of Orthodoxy and an apostate, an aristocrat and a *muzhik*, a pacifist and a militant nationalist, an advocate of family happiness and a preacher of celibacy and sexual continence, an objective observer of human behavior and an apostle. The simultaneous consumption of the old Tolstoy with the new sometimes brought on a form of philosophical indigestion characterized by a confused misapplication of the Russian's words. Thus William Jennings Bryan, in his

fundamentalist *preambula fidei* cites as an authority the same Tolstoy who spoke against the doctrines of resurrection, afterlife and the divinity of Christ.² But even when the underlying message was misconstrued or ignored, Tolstoy's stylistic mastery and lively imagination, apparent even in translation, suffused his works with the aura of conviction and authority, and by the late 1880's Stephen Crane and William Dean Howells were proclaiming Tolstoy the world's greatest writer.

More than anyone else Howells was responsible for bringing to the attention of the American reading public the artistic qualities that, apart from all other aspects of Tolstoy's fiction, place him among the great creative writers of all time. Thomas Sergeant Perry introduced Howells to the Russian's writings while Howells was recovering from a nervous breakdown. Perry, who in general was not attracted to tendentious writers, much preferred Turgenev to Tolstoy, and Howells, having read only *The Cossacks* and the first parts of *Anna Karenina*, also rated Tolstoy a notch below the less strident Turgenev.³ Only after finishing *Anna Karenina* and then going on to *My Religion* and the powerful *What Is To Be Done?* did Howells conclude that Tolstoy was without peer as a writer. While under the influence of Tolstoy Howells rewrote *The Minister's Charge*, which elicited such violent criticism when it was serialized in *Harper's Magazine* in 1886, that Howells had to warn his father against being too upset by the attacks on the younger Howells in the popular press.⁴ The following year Howells writes that he and his wife "no longer care for the world's life, and would like to be settled somewhere very humbly and simply, where we could be socially identified with the principles of progress and sympathy for the struggling masses."⁵ In the following year Howells wrote the novel *Annie Kilburn*, in which a wealthy young woman is converted to the cause of the toiling masses by a socially conscious Unitarian minister.

Howells' enthusiasm for Tolstoy seldom wavered. His reverence for the Russian artist and moralist would persist to the end. In 1898 he writes of Tolstoy that "His writings and his life have meant more to me than any other man's. . . . It has been his mission to give men a bad conscience, to alarm them and distress them in the opinions and conventions in which they rested so comfortably."⁶ Tolstoy's example of not following the dictates of his class may have pricked Howells' conscience, for he was almost alone among prominent American writers in condemning the death sentence given the anarchists in the explosive atmosphere surrounding the Haymarket riot. For that matter Howells' story "Editha" is one of the few anti-war stories written in the wake of the Spanish-American War.⁷

Howells recommended Tolstoy's works to his friend, the Unitarian minister Edward Everett Hale, and Hale formed among students of Harvard University and his own parishioners a Tolstoi Club, an asso-

ciation for social work which would eventually become the Hale House for settlement work.⁸ Magazine articles by George Kennan and Isabel Hapgood also did much to popularize the Russian sage.⁹ Articles by and about Tolstoy began to appear frequently in American journals, and until 1917, when American war hysteria rendered its doctrines irrelevant, if not invidious, Tolstoyism was more than merely an incidental presence in American thought. The Tolstoyan episode is now largely forgotten, but its exhumation may shed light on contending currents of thought in the early years of the twentieth century.

What attracted Americans to Tolstoyism? Before attempting to answer that question, we must isolate its component elements. These may be summarized as non-resistant pacifism, agrarian communism, rational and non-trinitarian Christianity, chastity, vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol. Sentiment in favor of these ideals was already strong in certain American circles, and it seems likely that Tolstoy merely happened to enunciate them within the framework of a general theory of morality and ethics. In fact, the first American converts to Tolstoyism were probably unaware of a significant American substratum in Tolstoyism. A biographer of Howells touches upon this issue, in comparing the influence exerted upon Howells by Tolstoy with that of Howells' Owenite father: "When he discovered Tolstoi with something like the shock of a conversion experience, he liked to think that he had come upon something startlingly new. But a detailed analysis of the two experiences would show that everything essential to Howells in Tolstoi he might have learned from his father at Hamilton, Eureka Mills, and Jefferson, Ohio."¹⁰

When Tolstoy's moral crisis led him to cast himself adrift from caste, kin and faith, from the whole body of prejudices that accompanied his first fifty years, he was able to derive solace from the discovery that many of the convictions to which he was drawn had been articulated earlier by American transcendentalists and abolitionists, as well as by the Unitarians, the Quakers and the Shakers. Late in life, in enumerating those Americans to whom he owed most, he would name William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Adin Ballou, Henry David Thoreau, William Ellery Channing, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell and Walt Whitman.¹¹ Taken as a group, these men stand preeminently for non-resistance, deviance from traditional Christianity, distrust of governments, disrespect for statutory law and egalitarianism, all of which infused Tolstoy's own beliefs. We must add to this list the name of Henry George, whose *Progress and Poverty* served as the cornerstone of Tolstoy's economic program and whose loyal disciple Tolstoy became.¹² George's single-tax proposal figures prominently in Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection* (1900), a strongly worded *tendenzroman* in which the author attacks the state, criminal justice, private ownership of property and sex. Tolstoy's radical approach to

questions of human sexuality and the family, as presented in his *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), was buttressed by his discovery of the Shaker communities in America. But of all Tolstoyan tenets the doctrine of non-resistance to evil had by far the widest appeal. Outside Russia the best-known converts to this doctrine were Romain Rolland and Mohandas Gandhi. Among Tolstoy's disciples and friendly spirits in America, the most influential was William Jennings Bryan.

Tolstoy was initially drawn to Bryan by the latter's association with agrarian democracy and anti-expansionist agitation following the Spanish-American War. In an open letter to Swedish intellectuals written in 1899, Tolstoy commends Bryan's opposition to imperialism.¹³ Jeremiah Curtin, an American diplomat and historian, met Tolstoy in June, 1900, and found that of all his countrymen Tolstoy was most interested in learning more about Bryan.¹⁴ Simultaneously, Bryan seems to have taken an interest in Tolstoy. During a tour of Europe in 1903, Bryan informed Henry White, an American diplomat residing in London, that one of the principal objectives of his trip was a meeting with Tolstoy, whose works, Bryan admitted, he had not yet read, but of whom he had read much in American journals and newspapers.¹⁵ Bryan would later write that his object in seeking out the Russian writer was "to see the man and ascertain if I could learn from personal contact the secret of the tremendous influence he exerted on the thought of the world."¹⁶ One might also speculate that Bryan was attempting through association with Tolstoy to challenge the frequent characterizations of him as a bumpkin, and to neutralize the political advantage of Theodore Roosevelt's literary reputation.

Prior to his departure for Europe Bryan had asked James Creelman, a *New York Herald* reporter acquainted with Tolstoy, to request permission for a visit by Bryan to Tolstoy's country estate at Yasnaya Polyana.¹⁷ Tolstoy readily gave his consent and Bryan arrived there in December, 1903, following a stopover in St. Petersburg, where he was received by the tsar.

During Bryan's two-day visit Tolstoy wished to impress upon Bryan, whom he later characterized as "intelligent and religious," the necessity for each individual to engage in manual labor and to seek the simple, communal life of the *muzhik*.¹⁸ In addition he sought to convert Bryan, who had raised a regiment in the war against Spain, to his belief in non-resistance. Soon after the visit Tolstoy wrote of their discussion about non-resistance in the preface to a biography of his beloved William Lloyd Garrison.

A few days ago I read in one of the leading magazines the opinion of an intelligent and clever writer that my recognition of the principle of non-resistance is a sad and partly comical error, which, taking into consideration my old age, and some of my deserts, one may pass with condescending silence. Just such an attitude toward this question I met in my conversation with the remarkably

clever and progressive American, Bryan. He, also with apparent intention to show me my error in a gentle and respectful manner, asked me how I should explain my queer attitude as to non-resistance, and, as usual, brought forth the seemingly uncontradictable argument about the murderer, who before my eyes kills or outrages a child. I told him that I uphold non-resistance, because, having lived seventy-five years I have never except in conversations, met that fantastic murderer who before my eyes wanted to kill or outrage a child, but I have constantly seen not one, but a million murderers outraging children and women and adults, old men and old women, and all working people, in the name of the permitted right of violence over their equals. When I said this my kind interlocutor, with his peculiar quickness of perception, did not give me a chance to finish, but began to laugh and found my argument satisfactory.¹⁹

Soon after Bryan's visit Tolstoy wrote him in order to "wish with all my heart success in your endeavor to destroy the trusts and to help the working people to enjoy the fruits of their labor."²⁰ The two men engaged in a cordial correspondence until Tolstoy's death in 1910. On returning to America Bryan hung a portrait of Tolstoy in his study and began to extol the Russian's deeds and words on the pages of *The Commoner*, his weekly newspaper, and in speeches on the Chatauqua circuit. Tolstoy's correspondence shows that a number of Bryan's followers made pilgrimages to Yasnaya Polyana during this period.²¹ Late in life Bryan would list the works of Tolstoy behind only the Bible and the speeches of Thomas Jefferson in his ranking of the books that exerted the greatest influence on his life and thought.²² Eventually Tolstoy's advocacy of non-resistance acted to reinforce Bryan's own nativistic pacifism. During the early years of this century he became convinced that non-resistance could serve as the basis for American foreign policy. In 1909 he states:

I suppose that the most significant example in all the world today of one who lives as he preaches this doctrine of love is the case of Tolstoy. He is not only a believer in the doctrine of love, but he is a believer in the doctrine of non-resistance, and there he stands proclaiming to the world that he believes that love is a better protection than force; that he thinks a man will suffer less by refusing to use violence than if he used it . . . The power that is about him, the power that is over him, and the power that is in him is proof against violence. I believe it would be true of a nation. I believe that this nation could stand before the world today and tell the world that it did not believe in war, that it did not believe that it was the right way to settle disputes, that it had no disputes that it was not willing to submit to the judgment of the world.²³

Following the election of Woodrow Wilson as president in 1912, Colonel House, with truly remarkable lack of astuteness, suggested to Wilson that Bryan, on the basis of his association with Tolstoy, be named ambassador to St. Petersburg.²⁴ Instead, Wilson chose Bryan as

his Secretary of State. Thus the newborn administration would have in charge of its foreign policy "a pacifist committed, with remarkably few reservations, to non-violence in dealings between nations."²⁵ Despite occasional lapses into gunboat diplomacy, Bryan's strivings for peace seem to have been genuine and unprecedented in the history of American foreign policy. From the standpoint of the pacifist, Bryan's actions up to the moment he resigned from office rather than agree to the wording of Wilson's bellicose letter over the Lusitania incident, constitute an exemplary chapter in American diplomacy. Not since John Bright of Rochdale had the advocates of peace been represented in the circles of power by such an ardent and determined spokesman. We cannot know the extent to which Bryan's advocacy of peace at any price, his arbitration treaties, and his efforts to keep the United States out of the war in Europe, are attributable to the influence of Tolstoy. Merle Curti, in a study devoted to Bryan's search for peace, maintains that Bryan's association with Tolstoy "quickened and confirmed his faith in love as an effective alternative to force."²⁶ Another biographer goes farther, asserting that "Bryan's cooling-off treaties, his resignation as Secretary of State, his opposition to war, and his demand for disarmament can be traced in large part to the reinforcement of his own ideas by those of Tolstoy."²⁷

Two years before his death Tolstoy, an anarchist so opposed to any sort of governing bodies that he refused to serve on juries, took the extraordinary step of publicly endorsing Bryan during the presidential campaign of 1908. In a letter to a Philadelphia newspaperman he wrote:

Dear Mr. Ryerson Jennings

In answer to your letter of 24 August I can sincerely say that I wish Mr. Bryan success in his candidature to the Presidency of the United States. From my own standpoint, repudiating as it does all coercive government, I naturally cannot acquiesce with the position of President of the Republic, but since such functions still exist, it is obviously best that they should be occupied by individuals worthy of confidence.

Mr. Bryan I greatly respect and sympathise with and know that the basis of his activity is kindred to mine in his sympathy with the interests of the working masses, his antimilitarism, and his recognition of the fallacies produced by capitalism.

I do not know, but hope Mr. Bryan will stand for land reform according to the Single Tax system of Henry George, which I regard as being at the present time, of the most insistent necessity, and which every progressive reformer should place to the fore.

Yours faithfully,
Leo Tolstoy²⁸

While Tolstoy's endorsement of Bryan did little to reduce the size of Taft's plurality, it drew a spirited response from the sitting President of the United States. While still in office Theodore Roosevelt wrote the article "Leo Tolstoy," which appeared in *The Outlook* soon after

he left office in 1909.²⁹ Roosevelt's highly critical article was by no means his first commentary on the Russian writer, to whom there are many references in Roosevelt's personal correspondence. Inasmuch as his remarks about Tolstoy and his adherents shed light on Roosevelt's attitudes toward pacifism, anarchism and anti-capitalism, they are worth considering in some detail.

Roosevelt's first reference to Tolstoy appears in a letter to his sister on April 12, 1886. In praising *Anna Karenina*, which he read in French translation, he asks: "Do you notice how he never comments on the actions of his personages? He relates what they thought or did without any remark whatever as to whether it was good or bad, as Thucydides wrote history."³⁰ Two months later Roosevelt's enthusiasm is dampened by a reading of *La Guerre et La Paix*, in which "the criticisms of the commanders, especially of Napoleon, and of wars in general, are absurd."³¹ In addition he finds the work "immoral." In a letter dated September 29, 1897, Roosevelt makes reference to "Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Verlaine, Tolstoi and the decadents generally."³² This most curious and inappropriate taxonomy leads us to believe that Roosevelt had read Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, in which Tolstoy is lumped together with Ibsen and the Symbolists to form a tendency in art that Nordau found to be dangerously retrograde.³³ Roosevelt again pins the label of decadence on Tolstoy in a letter dated August 10, 1899, when he contrasts the Russian with his favorite writer of fiction.

The two great fiction writers of today with a serious purpose are Tolstoi and Kipling, and each stands as typical for something in his own race and nationality. Which do you think the most healthy product for a nation, the author of the *Kreutzer Sonata* and *My Religion*, or the author of the "Recessional" and the *Mulvaney Stories*? There are parts of the Tolstoi I do like and there are parts of Kipling I do not. But after all it is the Slav, not the Englishman, who shows decadence.³⁴

Roosevelt reacts in a defensive, almost personal way to the ideas embodied in *Kreutzer Sonata* and *My Religion*. On September 1, 1904, he writes that he has always regarded the two works as supplementary to one another.³⁵ On March 15, 1906, he writes to Upton Sinclair: "His (Tolstoy's) *Kreutzer Sonata* could only have been written by a man of diseased moral nature, a man in whose person the devotee and debauchee alternately obtain sway, as they sometimes do in successive generations of decadent families or in whole communities of unhealthy social conditions."³⁶ The elements in these works that caused Roosevelt to react so strongly are almost certainly the pacifism pervading *My Religion* and the plea for sexual abstinence in *Kreutzer Sonata*, a work whose message ran counter to Roosevelt's very definite views on racial vigor and social degeneration. In *My Religion* (often translated with greater fidelity to the Russian as *What I Believe*) Tolstoy inveighs against organized re-

ligion, the doctrines of redemption and resurrection, the belief in heaven or hell, and the sacraments of ritualistic Christianity. Much of the work is devoted to justifying Tolstoy's belief in non-resistance.

Roosevelt correctly perceived that *Kreutzer Sonata* put forward a "fantastic theory of race annihilation by abstention from marriage."³⁷ Whereas Tolstoy was perfectly willing to let the human race go the way of the dinosaur, Roosevelt feared anything that would lead to a decline in the birthrate of the English-speaking peoples. He was apprehensive lest such a decline in population signal the presence of "a certain softness of fibre in civilized nations, which, if it were to prove progressive, might mean the development of a cultured and refined people quite unable to hold its own in those conflicts through which alone any great race can ultimately march to victory."³⁸ Roosevelt was not alone in his belief that non-resistance and its attendant evils represented a threat to the vision of a heroic America in its imperial ascendancy. A similar attitude toward Tolstoyism can be seen in the writings of Senator Albert Beveridge, a loyal supporter of Roosevelt in Progressive-Republican politics.

Beveridge made a tour of Russia in 1901 and recapitulated his observations in his book *The Russian Advance*. In the chapter entitled "Three Russians of World Fame" Beveridge contrasts the views of three men whom he deems representative of the more important tendencies in Russian thought of the day. They are Sergey Witte, the Minister of Finance; Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the Procurator of the Russian Orthodox Holy Synod; and Tolstoy. In Beveridge's estimation Tolstoy comes off the worst; he is found to be even less acceptable than the arch-reactionary Pobedonostsev. Tolstoy is dismissed as a "splendid dreamer of an ideal reign of peace and brotherhood over all the earth."³⁹ Like his friend Roosevelt, who during the negotiations for the Treaty of Portsmouth would express sympathy for practical men of affairs like Witte who are saddled with hysterical reformers such as Tolstoy, Beveridge sees as the hope of Russia the then Minister of Finance, described as the "incarnation of the practical, the personification of the business and commercial spirit of Russia, the business-man of the empire, the first modern up-to-date financier and administrator Russia has yet produced."⁴⁰ That Beveridge would be drawn to Witte and repelled by Tolstoy is not surprising. The two statesmen shared the belief that their respective nations should, nay must, expand into Asia. Admitting that notions such as self-government and non-interference constitute distinctive features of American political thought, Beveridge nevertheless singles out adaptability as *the* American characteristic. "We ought," he writes, "to adapt ourselves, and will, to the world's geography, and to our trade as influenced by that."⁴¹

William Jennings Bryan liked to contrast the achievements of what he called "American civilization" with the shortcomings of "Anglo-

Saxon civilization.”⁴² Hence he was not constrained to view the world through the prism of an English-language *Sprachbund*. Beveridge, on the other hand, was like Roosevelt in that he felt keenly the attraction of the historical ties binding America to Britain. He seems even to have discerned the roots of American imperialism in the genetic composition of his Anglo-Saxon ancestors, for he is quoted as having said: “When you run up against the instinct of the American people for national power, expansion, and wealth, you are running up against a great natural human ocean current, resistance to which is perfect folly. Please remember that we are at bottom English, or to go still deeper, Teutonic.”⁴³ Thus Beveridge could not have more accurately represented what Howells in *Dr. Breen's Practice* called “the optimistic fatalism which is the real religion of our orientalizing West.”

Having come away from their respective meetings with Tolstoy with almost diametrically opposite impressions, Bryan and Beveridge would continue to be at variance with one another on a number of political issues. In 1907 the two men participated in an extended debate in the pages of *Reader Magazine*, with Bryan defending anti-imperialism and the Jeffersonian approach to government, while Beveridge espoused expansionism and Hamiltonian nationalism. Fittingly, Beveridge was chosen by the Republicans in 1908 to follow Bryan about the country and speak for the candidacy of Taft.

The principles implicit in Tolstoyism were found to be pernicious by yet another close associate of Roosevelt, Herbert Croly. In his book *The Promise of American Life*, which was to serve as something of a Bull-Moose bible, Croly consigns Tolstoyism to that “group of principles which has made for American national distraction,” in contrast to the expansionist and Hamiltonian principles “which have made for American national fulfillment.”⁴⁴ Croly places what he calls “Tolstoyan democracy” at an even lower level than the otherwise odious Jeffersonian democracy.

Ironically, another of Roosevelt's friends was to become, in Roosevelt's words, “the leader of the Tolstoy cult in America.” Ernest Howard Crosby succeeded to Roosevelt's seat in the New York state legislature in 1889. Two years later he was nominated by Benjamin Harrison to serve as a judge on the international court at Alexandria. Crosby served only four years of the lifetime appointment, for in 1893 he came upon a copy of Tolstoy's essay “On Life.” Profoundly moved by the philosophy he found in that work, Crosby resigned his position on the international court and travelled to Russia, where he visited Tolstoy before returning to the United States. Tolstoy and Crosby corresponded regularly thereafter until the latter's death in 1907. In America Crosby began actively to propagate the Tolstoyan doctrine of non-resistance, attempted without much success to resurrect interest in George's single-tax, wrote prolifically in prose and verse against the imperialist tide in American

politics, and generally inveighed against what he considered to be the oppressive and arrogant nature of courts and governments.⁴⁵ In 1889, Roosevelt had recommended Crosby to Henry Cabot Lodge as a “first-rate fellow.”⁴⁶ By 1901 we find Roosevelt complaining in a letter to Lodge about “Tolstoy and the feeble apostles of Tolstoy, like Ernest Howard Crosby and William Dean Howells, who unite in petitions for the pardon of anarchists.”⁴⁷ For his part Crosby bitterly satirizes the military exploits of T.R. and the jingoistic enthusiasm for the Spanish-American War in his novel *Captain Jinks, Hero* (1902). But Roosevelt was to have the last word, for in his article on Tolstoy in *The Outlook* he attempts to characterize the lunatic fringe for whom Tolstoyism has appeal by mentioning without name a certain misguided Tolstoyan who had written poems in praise of the Mahdi. The reference is to the then deceased Crosby, who held British imperialism in as low regard as the American variety.

When Crosby died in 1907, the prominent social worker Jane Addams was one of the sponsors of a memorial service for Crosby at the Cooper Union in New York. She was joined as sponsor by a number of important figures in reform and anti-imperialist circles, including William Jennings Bryan, Samuel Gompers, Clarence Darrow, William James, William Dean Howells, Booker T. Washington and Henry George, Jr.⁴⁸ Addams first became acquainted with Tolstoy’s ideas when she read *My Religion* in the 1880’s. In 1893 she happened to read Tolstoy’s *What Must Be Done?*, in which Tolstoy firmly rejects charity as a means of improving the lot of the poor. Reading Tolstoy’s criticism of charity in Chicago during the depression winter of 1893-1894, Addams’ faith in her own work was so undermined that she felt compelled to visit Tolstoy in order to understand better his line of reasoning. During her visit to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy subjected her to what amounted to an interrogation, in the course of which he criticized her for dressing extravagantly, for wasting her time in fruitless settlement work and for being an absentee landowner. Later she would write that Tolstoy’s stand placed settlement houses in the “ugly light of compromise and inefficiency—at least so it seemed to me—and perhaps that accounts for a certain defensive attitude I found in myself.”⁴⁹ In spite of their differences she became a lifelong disciple of Tolstoy and set about reading everything of Tolstoy’s that had been translated into English, French, or German. She also divested herself, according to Henry George’s formula, of rent property inherited from her father’s estate, just as Tolstoy had convinced his own daughter to do.

Tolstoy’s most enduring influence on Jane Addams lay in the area of non-resistance and pacifism. Her most ambitious work on the subject of war and peace is her *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1909), about which Theodore Roosevelt, who was then cultivating her support, wrote: “Miss Jane Addams, in her recent book, shows lamentably by her own utterance

the effects of belief in the socialism which bases itself upon Tolstoi (himself a sexual degenerate, whose *Kreutzer Sonata* is a fit supplement to his *My Religion*, for erotic perversion very frequently goes hand in hand with a wild and fantastic mysticism)."⁵⁰ Addams believed that war was evil not only in and of itself, but also for the evil social consequences that accompany war and that could be seen in the cities of America. In 1899 she told an anti-imperialism meeting that "Simple people who read of carnage and bloodshed easily receive its suggestions. Habits of self-control which have been slowly and imperfectly acquired quickly break down under the stress . . . The human instinct which keeps in abeyance the tendency to cruelty . . . gives way, and the barbaric instinct asserts itself."⁵¹ Despite America's recent experiences in the war against Spain, Addams believed that warfare was diminishing in frequency and intensity, and that peace rather than war had become the normative pattern of behavior. She told another meeting of pacifists in 1899 that she discerned a "rising tide of moral feeling which is slowly engulfing all pride of conquest and making war impossible."⁵²

Tolstoy believed that cities were places where "men in their hundreds of thousands disfigured the land on which they swarmed, paved the ground with stones so that no green thing could grow, filled the air with fumes of coal and gas, lopped back all the trees, and drove away every animal and bird," and where "men never ceased to cheat and harass their fellows and themselves."⁵³ In contrast to Tolstoy's phobia of cities Addams held that the higher sensibilities resulting in peace are most likely to be found in the poorer quarters of a cosmopolitan city, especially among unassimilated immigrants. She believed that "emotional pity and kindness are always found in greatest degree among the unsuccessful."⁵⁴ The poor immigrants surrounding Hull House were most susceptible to pacifism not only because of their wretchedness, but also because they had, by the very act of emigration, sundered their ties with modes of thought immemorally maintained in their homelands, thereby rendering them more receptive to what Addams calls, quoting Tolstoy, "the enlightened consciousness of mankind now awaiting for manifestation."⁵⁵ She placed her hopes for lasting peace on "a sturdy, a virile and an unprecedented internationalism which is fast becoming too real, too profound, too widespread, ever to lend itself to warfare."⁵⁶ Rejecting appeals for peace based on pity or economics, she calls for a new approach, capable of matching the ferment found in the multinational urban centers of America. She voices agreement with William James, who held that pacifists must "discover in the social realm the moral equivalent for war—something heroic that will appeal to men as universally as war has done, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual natures as war has proved itself to be compatible."⁵⁷ Addams discerns the promise of a suitably dynamic substitute for war in Tolstoy's ideals, in which non-resistance is combined with the advocacy of urgent, far-reaching reforms.

Tolstoy would make non-resistance aggressive. He would carry over into the reservoirs of moral influence all the strength which is now spent in coercion and resistance. It is an experiment which in its fullness has never been tried in human history, and it is worthy of a genius. As moral influence has ever a larger place in individual relationships and as physical force becomes daily more restricted in area, so Tolstoy would 'speed up' the process in collective relationships and reset the whole of international life upon the basis of good will and intelligent understanding.⁵⁸

While she maintained her reverence for Tolstoy throughout her life, Addams nevertheless deviates in certain ways from the typical American Tolstoyan. Her role as apologist and advocate for the modern city sets her apart from Tolstoy's belief in the communal *obshchina* as the proper vehicle of human progress. Also, like Roosevelt, Beveridge and Croly, she tends to be critical of the Jeffersonian tendency in American political thought, and echoes Josiah Royce's criticism of "that eighteenth-century conception of essentially unprogressive human nature in all the empty dignity of its 'inborn rights.'"⁵⁹ Her often pragmatic and operationalist posture is revealed in her criticism of the pacifism espoused by Jefferson and other "idealists of the eighteenth century."

While these men were strongly under the influence of peace ideals which were earnestly advocated, both in France and in America, even in the midst of their revolutionary periods, and while they read the burning poets and philosophers of their remarkable century, their idealism, after all, was largely founded upon theories concerning 'the natural man,' a creature of their sympathetic imagination.⁶⁰

This pragmatic aspect of Addams' thought (as well as Roosevelt's advocacy of the franchise for women) undoubtedly contributed to her decision to campaign for the Progressive Party ticket in 1912.

Jane Addams' fellow Chicagoan Clarence Darrow also came under the sway of Tolstoy's ideas during the last years of the nineteenth century. Darrow, whose parents were abolitionists, established himself as something of a radical on his arrival in Chicago by joining the local Single-Tax Club. He seems to have been profoundly moved by his discovery of Tolstoy, and during the next twenty years established himself as something of an authority on the Russian writer by giving lectures about him all over the country. Describing such a lecture an observer writes:

I first saw Clarence Darrow when he lectured at a Sunday-afternoon meeting of the Chicago Single-Tax Club in Handle Hall on Randolph Street. . . His subject was Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*. He was in entire accord with the philosophy of the novel and its sympathy for the oppressed and outcast. . . He read a passage from the novel with deep feeling and emotion. This talk made a strong impression on me and, I believe, on the audience.⁶¹

On another occasion Darrow is described as having "held twenty-four

hundred people in thralldom just telling stories about Tolstoy.”⁶² When he fell into disrepute in certain circles following the McNamara case in 1911, Darrow was heartened by an invitation to lecture on Tolstoy at a literary club in San Francisco.⁶³ Kellogg Durland, a New York settlement worker, once “sat with a hundred Socialists, Anarchists and political outcasts for hours while Darrow told the story of Waslowa (Maslova) as drawn in *Resurrection*.”⁶⁴ This novel had great appeal to Darrow because of the condemnation of retribitional justice contained in it, and because its attacks upon church and state coincided with Darrow’s own anarchistic and agnostic views. Tolstoy’s anti-capitalist convictions were also in consonance with Darrow’s stance. The former’s *What Must Be Done?*, in which the author reflects upon his experiences in the slums and workers’ hovels of Moscow, was held in high regard by Darrow, who wrote:

In Tolstoy’s great work, *What To Do*, he has carefully and thoroughly discussed the pressing problems of capital and labor and the meaning of human life. Although most of the so-called reformers who have closely identified themselves with any particular school of radical thought are inclined to criticize this book as not clearly based on scientific grounds, still I believe that as the years go by and the various schools and sects shall come and go, the world will more and more regard this book as one of the most profound and searching works on social science that the century has produced. The future will rank Tolstoy by this work, and long after he has passed away, all men in whom conscience yet remains will be startled and aroused by the searching questions which this book asks of their inmost life.⁶⁵

In 1903 Darrow wrote *Resist Not Evil*, in which he supports Tolstoy’s call for non-violent resistance to evil. As a dutiful disciple Darrow speaks out against governments, armies and judicial punishment of criminals, but he diverges from the master in a significant way. Tolstoy’s idealization of the peasant and his belief that the path to human perfection lay through the identification and emulation of the primitive virtues reposing within the simple peasant, led him to abjure any and all natural laws other than those he identified with primitive co-operativism, labor in the interest of one’s fellows, non-resistance to evil and chastity. In general he was embarrassed and ashamed for “natural” behavior, and asked his fellow humans to aspire to a degree of abnegation tantamount to mortal sainthood. Darrow, on the other hand, recognizes that human perfectibility must be expressed within the dimensions of what he considers primordial and immutable laws of human development, as when he writes:

Natural laws rule the world. It is a mistake to believe that the conduct of man is outside of natural law. The laws of being that move all the sentient world rule him. His first impulse is to preserve his life, and his next to preserve the species. Nature planted these instincts so deeply in his being that no civilization can root

them up. To destroy these instincts would be to destroy the human race.⁶⁶

The extinction of the human race is, of course, the logical consequence of Tolstoy's shakerism. Far from acknowledging a need to submit to such questionable natural laws as the instinct for species preservation, Tolstoy was quite willing to allow the human race to, as he put it, go the way of the dinosaur. Thus while Darrow approximates the position of Tolstoy in his anarchism, his disdain for retributive jurisprudence and his anti-militarism, he departs radically from the Tolstoyan position on the question of obedience to human instincts. This naturalistic aspect of Darrow's thought, which eventually would lead him to accept La Mettrie's hypothesis that man is a machine, indicates that Darrow's Tolstoyism was characterized more by sincerity than understanding. That non-resistance was not entirely in keeping with Darrow's personality was pointed out by the American Marxist Arthur Lewis in a celebrated debate with Darrow over the relative merits of Tolstoyism and Marxism.

Lewis insightfully pointed out that there were in fact two Darrows. One was the "Oriental poet and dreamer," who wrote *Resist Not Evil*. The other Darrow is the author of "The Open Shop" and "an American citizen, ready at all times to help the laboring class resist any and all forms of evil that the ruling class may try to heap upon it."⁶⁷ Lewis dismisses non-resistance and Tolstoyism in general as an "integral part of the intellectual baggage of the dreamy, credulous and uncritical East."⁶⁸ America, Lewis maintains, is of all Western countries the most removed from the "soporific influences and submit-to-evil attitude of the Oriental," and Tolstoyism has "no present and no past in this country."⁶⁹ In rebuttal Darrow seeks to counter Lewis' Marxist arguments for the class struggle with his own hypothesis that the human race is evolving towards the general acceptance of non-violence. "Evolution," Darrow asserts, "will not be complete until war and strife and competition are banished, and co-operation and love, and fellowship shall take its place."⁷⁰

Darrow's pacifism collapsed with the German invasion of Belgium. He came out in favor of American entry into the war and even engaged in vicious attacks on American pacifists, whom he accused of consciously supporting the Kaiser. He now rejected non-resistance because, in his new view, the doctrine runs counter to the natural instincts of man. Furthermore, "the theory of non-resistance is a religious doctrine, and as such can have no present relation to science, philosophy, or life."⁷¹ Darrow comments on his change of heart in the preface to a reprint of *Resist Not Evil* published twenty years after the original printing of the work in 1903:

I still admire Tolstoy and class him as one of the greatest and highest type of literary artists that the world has ever known.

However, my scientific studies have convinced me that man can never reach a state of non-resistance. His structure is fixed . . . and under sufficient inducement the primal emotions will sweep away all the inhibitions and restraints that culture has woven around him. This was fully demonstrated in the great war.⁷²

Despite his change of heart on the question of non-violence, Darrow asserts in this preface that the ideas contained in *Resist Not Evil* are still largely valid.

Darrow also began to diverge from Tolstoy on the question of criminality. While Tolstoy, speaking through the character Prince Nekhlyudov in chapter thirty of *Resurrection*, classifies all so-called criminals into five categories of essentially innocent victims, he does so on the basis of his belief in the essential goodness of man. The later Darrow, on the other hand, seems less indebted to Tolstoy than to John Broadus Watson and his congeners within objectivist psychology, as when he writes:

It seems to me to be clear that there is really no such thing as crime, as the word is generally understood. Every activity of man should come under the head of 'behavior.' In studying crime we are merely investigating a certain kind of human behavior. Man acts in response to outside stimuli. How he acts depends on the nature, strength, and inherent character of the machine and the habits, customs, inhibitions and experiences that environment gives him. Man is in no sense the maker of himself and has no more power than any other machine to escape the law of cause and effect. He does as he must. Therefore, there is no such thing as moral responsibility in the sense in which this expression is ordinarily used.⁷³

Thus the deterministic element in Darrow's thought came to be the dominant factor in his social ethics, ultimately replacing all but the most persistent vestiges of his earlier allegiance to Tolstoyism. Darrow's determinism was out of step not only with the Tolstoyism it coexisted with and then replaced, but also with the reform tradition in American thought that influenced Tolstoy and later drew nourishment from him. An analyst of this tradition writes:

The central fact in the romantic reorientation of American theology was the rejection of determinism. Salvation, however variously defined, lay open to everyone. Sin was voluntary: men were not helpless and depraved by nature but free agents and potential powers for good. Sin could be reduced to the selfish preferences of individuals, and social evils, in turn, to collective sins which, once acknowledged, could be rooted out.⁷⁴

These benefits fit in nicely with the views of a William Jennings Bryan, but could scarcely be farther away from a Darrow. It seems ironic that when Darrow was locked in literally mortal combat with Bryan at the Scopes trial, the radical Darwinism of the former and the unyielding religious fundamentalism of the latter effectively concealed the fact that

both disputants had at one time submitted themselves to the teachings of the Russian moralist. What in fact had drawn them and their fellow Tolstoyans to the views of the Russian?

It is interesting that most of those Tolstoyans mentioned in this study were initially drawn to Tolstoy through the reading of his non-fiction rather than by reading his novels or stories. They seem not so much converted to Tolstoyism as reinforced in their views by it.

At one time or another all of the American Tolstoyans shared a common belief in pacifism or non-resistance, and to this aspect of their Tolstoyan persuasion they devoted the preponderance of their energies. And yet all save Bryan were first attracted to this doctrine in the unusually peaceful period between 1885 and 1895, a fact that makes it seem likely that Tolstoy's American disciples were attracted as much by his call for moral perfectionism and self-sacrifice as by his extension of the doctrine of non-resistance to international politics.

Inevitably the doctrine underwent change as it was adapted to the traditions and institutions of America, as well as to the needs of the various spokesmen propagating them. Nevertheless certain distinct patterns in their convictions may be noted. For instance, all who derived at least part of their pacifist beliefs from Tolstoy (and indirectly from the American abolitionists and non-resistants) tended to espouse an evolutionary conception of peace. Darrow, Addams and Bryan all maintained that war was becoming less and less an expected or normal activity. Furthermore, Darrow, Addams, Crosby and Bryan all believed that a significant part of criminal behavior in the United States and elsewhere was attributable to the breakdown of social morality through militarism and incitement to war.

It is also noteworthy that the stance of the American Tolstoyans bore more than a superficial resemblance to certain prominent tenets of what might be called the Jeffersonian tradition in American political thought. Addams, it is true, was critical of that tradition and even supported Roosevelt in 1912. Bryan, on the other hand, placed Jefferson with Tolstoy in the loftiest position in his personal pantheon. Roosevelt, Beveridge and Croly, all of whom self-consciously represented the Hamiltonian tradition in American polity, disparaged both Tolstoyism and Jeffersonian democracy as impractical and unnatural doctrines in direct conflict with their own vision of America's destiny. Without unduly stretching the point, it can be shown that the American Tolstoyans represented an internationalist point of view, as opposed to the more narrowly nationalist and Anglo-Saxon stance of the Hamiltonians. Just as Jefferson drew inspiration from Continental thinkers and supported the French Revolution, so did the American Tolstoyans view themselves as part of a world community. In this respect they are successors to the abolitionists, who placed on the masthead of *The Liberator* the device: "Our country is the World. Our countrymen are Mankind." As noted

earlier, Bryan was highly critical of British imperialism and extolled the virtues of "American civilization" as against the less praiseworthy "Anglo-Saxon civilization." Darrow and Crosby both gave their sympathies to the Boers in their struggle with Great Britain. Darrow also spoke out against England on the issue of Irish independence. Jane Addams saw the best hope for America in the immigrants who brought their various cultures and traditions into the cosmopolitan centers of America. Predictably Theodore Roosevelt deplored the continued existence in America of "hyphenated-Americans" and insisted that immigrants must above all else learn the English language. While courting Addams' support he privately opposed her ideals, saying "A flabby cosmopolitanism, especially if it expresses itself through a flabby pacifism, is not only silly, but degrading. It represents national emasculation."⁷⁵

The Jeffersonian distrust of powerful governments was not too distant from the Tolstoyan distrust of any government. Tolstoy wrote to Ernest Crosby in 1894 that "If the new tsar were to ask me for advice, I would tell him to use his unlimited power to eliminate private ownership of land in Russia and to introduce the single-tax system and then to divest himself of his power and give the people the freedom to rule themselves."⁷⁶ Crosby shared with Tolstoy a worshipful attitude toward William Lloyd Garrison, who spurned governments, and Henry David Thoreau, who went so far as to secede from his own country by filing with the local town clerk the words: "Know all men by these presents that I, Henry David Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined." Crosby's abhorrence of coercive statecraft led him even to defend the right of the Confederacy to secede from the Union. In *Resist Not Evil* Darrow asserts his belief that all government "rests on violence and force," and maintains that "nature, unaided by man's laws, can evolve social order."⁷⁷ Jane Addams was a participant in the Anarchists' Sunday schools in Chicago even before her conversion to Tolstoyism.⁷⁸ In general the American Tolstoyans exhibit a pronounced preference to obey higher or natural laws and to disregard offending statutory laws, however long these may have been ingrained in Anglo-American jurisprudence.

All the Tolstoyans rejected capitalism. Some, like Bryan, favored pre-capitalist forms of economic relations, such as yeoman agrarianism, even though by 1910, the year in which Tolstoy died, less than one third of Americans were engaged in agriculture.⁷⁹ Others sought to supercede capitalism with democratic socialism, voluntaristic anarchism or Henry George's single-tax system of land ownership. It is significant that all except Darrow, whose career is marked by a steady drift toward radical materialism, specifically rejected Marxism with its extreme anti-idealism.

By the end of World War I Tolstoyism exerted no significant influence on American thought, even though the esteem for Tolstoy as a belletrist continued to rise. Although the doctrine had had a certain

undeniable appeal for Americans like Howells, Bryan, Darrow, Addams and Crosby, it never amounted to a vital force in American social thought. Its failure is partly owing to the fact that the Americans who embraced its tenets were by and large successful personalities and failed thinkers, and partly because of the prevailing pragmatist disposition to shy away from the utopian substratum underlying Tolstoyan beliefs. As early as 1887 George Kennan pointed out Tolstoy's "disposition to seek desirable ends by inadequate and impracticable methods." Tolstoy and his philosophy were thought to be entirely too exotic and demanding to take hold in American soil. Even Howells, who rarely could find fault with Tolstoy, accused him of calling for "a hopeless reversion to innocence through individual renunciation of society instead of pressing forward to the social redemption which the very ecstasy of error must help to effect."⁸⁰

Eventually one feature associated with Tolstoy, that of socially aggressive non-violence, would be reintroduced to America by Tolstoy's disciple-once-removed, Martin Luther King, but the doctrine as a whole could not survive America's experience in the first total war and her reaction to the totalitarian ideologies that grew out of the post-war miasma. Before World War I some Americans could still dream of a paradise of peace, amity and plenty. After that war Americans were more likely to be fearful lest one of the new dystopian forms of paradise be imposed upon them.

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footnotes

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