

TOLSTOI'S OWN MASTER AND SLAVE DIALECTIC: "KHOZIAIN I RABOTNIK" AS A REWRITING OF A HEGELIAN NARRATIVE

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Tolstoi hated Hegel with a passion. He repeatedly pronounced Hegel a weak thinker and the widespread popularity of Hegelianism incomprehensible. But Tolstoi's disdain, similar to his creative dislike of Shakespeare, concealed a life-long engagement with this thinker that provided him with analytical frameworks and helped him refine his own worldview. In all likelihood, the young Tolstoi became familiar with Hegel's philosophy while at Kazan University (1843–1847), in the thick of the "Hegelian Forties" (Orwin 15).¹ As Tolstoi later recalled in his treatise "What Then Should We Do?" ("Tak chto zhe nam delat'," 1882–1884), during his youth, "Hegelianism was the basis of everything: it was in the air [...]. A man unacquainted with Hegel had no right to speak: he who wished to know the truth studied Hegel. Everything rested on him."² Tolstoi did not partake of this cult. As he wrote his friend Nikolai Strakhov in 1872, his "fate with Hegel" was to read and reread him "without understanding a single word."³ In the same letter, praising Strakhov's recent book *The World as a Whole* (*Mir kak tseloe; cherty iz nauki o prirode*), Tolstoi

*I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Caryl Emerson, for encouraging me to write this article and for her generous commentary, without which the article would not have reached its current form. I would also like to thank Irene Delic for her kind support throughout the publication process.

1. On the details of this possible encounter, see Medzhibovskaya 28, 39.

2. Translated by Aylmer Maude. Original text reads: «Гегельянство было основой всего: оно носилось в воздухе, выражаясь в газетных и журнальных статьях, в повестях, в трактатах, в искусстве, в проповедях, в разговорах. Человек, не знавший Гегеля, не имел права говорить: кто хотел познать истину, изучал Гегеля. Все опиралось на него» (316). Dmitrii Chizhevskii uses this quote in his book *Gegel' v Rossii* (*Hegel in Russia*) to show the extent of Hegel's popularity (217).

3. Tolstoi granted that Hegel's ideas might be splendid, but that he couldn't make any sense out of them. «На 380 странице выписка из Гегеля, которая, может быть, прекрасна, но в кот[орой] я не понимаю, прочтя несколько раз, ни единого слова. Эта моя судьба с Гегелем и на 451 стр., «чистая мысль эфирна» и т. д. до точки. Я ничего не понимаю» (348). Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine.

found only one fault with it, namely its use of Hegel: “there are only two spots on this sun [the book], and all of it is Hegel.”⁴ Tolstoi could not understand how Strakhov’s thought could be combined with Hegelian “muddle” (*sumbur*). More casual evidence for this judgment is abundant; in her diary, Sof’ia Andreevna noted that Tolstoi considered Hegelian thought “just a bunch of empty phrases” (I: 495; 597), and in his memoirs, Boris Chicherin recalled how Tolstoi compared Hegel’s philosophy to a “Chinese charter” (*kitaiskaia gramota*), the Russian equivalent of “it’s Greek to me” (217). With his typical outspokenness, in a 1909 article on Gogol, Tolstoi called Hegel’s teachings “incredibly stupid” (“*do neveroiatnosti glupoe uchenie*”) (328).⁵

Although Tolstoi claimed that he could not understand Hegel, he confidently took it upon himself to expose the falsity of his philosophy and to explain the reasons for its mistaken popularity. In *War and Peace* (1869), he presents lengthy arguments against Hegel’s philosophy of history.⁶ In his polemical writings he compares it to a “false Christianity” (*izhekhristianstvo*) that appealed to the rich and idle, justifying their way of life. (In making this charge, Tolstoi had in mind Hegel’s phrase—widely misinterpreted, both then and now—from *The Philosophy of Right* that “all that exists is rational.”) In the early 1860s Tolstoi is already doing battle with the Hegelian idea of history as inevitable progress, engaging in polemics with the critic Evgenii Markov in his essay “Progress and the Definition of Education” (published in *Russkii vestnik* (*Russian Messenger*) in 1862). In *A Confession* (1883), Tolstoi sharply rejects Hegel’s notions of progress, although without naming the philosopher.⁷ By the time of the publication of “What Then Should We Do?” (1886), Tolstoi declared Hegel’s philosophy so obviously wrong that it did not even need to be refuted. He insisted that Hegel had been forgotten without leaving a trace, “as if he had never existed” (316).⁸ But Tolstoi himself could neither forget him, nor let him go. In *Resurrection* (*Voskresenie*, 1899), he makes sure that the negative character Selenin reads Hegel to justify his corrupt worldview.

Tolstoi actually treats Hegel very much like he dealt with the Gospels: not

4. « Два только пятна я нашел в этом солнце, и всё это Гегель» (348).

5. Irina Paperno referred to some of these statements in her presentation, “Hegel to Russia and Back,” Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia, NYU, April 12-13, 2013 and quotes them in her most recent book “*Who, What Am I?*”: *Tolstoy Struggles to Narrate the Self*.

6. For pioneering studies of Hegel’s influence on Tolstoi’s philosophy of history in *War and Peace* see Rubinshtein, Skaftymov and Berlin. For brief discussions of these works by Rubinshtein, Skaftymov and Berlin, see McLean and Orwin.

7. See chapter III of *A Confession*, where Tolstoi criticizes “faith in progress” as a “general superstition” of the time. Tolstoi most probably has Hegel in mind here. He ends the previous chapter by quoting Hegel’s remark from *The Philosophy of Right*: “всё, что существует, то разумно.” (112)

8. “...прошло 40 лет, и от него ничего не осталось, об нем нет и помину, как будто его никогда не было” (Tak chto zhe nam delat’? 316).

as something to be ignored or discarded, but as material to be re-written, cleansed, and corrected. Tolstoy's story "Master and Worker" ("Khoziain i rabotnik," 1895), generally recognized as one of his best late creations, presents precisely such a "corrective" re-writing of Hegel. It reveals Tolstoy as a far subtler reader of Hegel than one might expect in view of his negativity toward the philosopher, or perhaps than Tolstoy would have admitted. In the process of adapting Hegel's narrative to his own moral agenda Tolstoy reverses many of its trajectories, favors different heroes, and exalts other values.

The parallels between Tolstoy's "Master and Worker" and Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic are astonishingly close.⁹ They extend to details of the plot and specific character traits. However, when carefully considered, these correspondences reveal substantial disagreements between Tolstoy and Hegel on almost every major philosophical topic: truth and consciousness, identity and self-consciousness, time and development, subjectivity and agency, inter-subjectivity and human relatedness, animality and desire, life and death. Focusing on these similarities and differences I hope not only to demonstrate Tolstoy's appropriation of the Hegelian narrative but also to convey his own different message. Tolstoy's "loudly trumpeted dislike of Hegel" (Orwin 15) is brought out the more strongly the more he seems to follow his "incomprehensible" *bête noir*.

Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic: a brief summary

The section in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806; henceforth *PhS*) that contains the Master-Slave dialectic, entitled in full "The Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" ("Selbstständigkeit und Unselbstständigkeit des Selbstbewußtseins; Herrschaft und Knechtschaft"), opens with the notion of recognition. This chapter presents the first inter-subjective encounter dealt with in the book; here one self-consciousness meets another self-consciousness. Hegel explains the necessity of this doubling of self-consciousness in the very first sentence: "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (*PhS* 111).¹⁰ For Hegel, self-consciousness is socially constructed. Thus life as presented in

9. In her "Who, What Am I?" Paperno considers the essay "What Then Should We Do?" and the story "Master and Worker" as two examples of Tolstoy's "revision of Hegel's master-and-slave paradigm" (117). As Paperno's main focus is Tolstoy's non-fictional works, "What Then Should We Do?" receives more extensive treatment than the story. According to Paperno, Tolstoy's answer to Hegel's "Master and Slave" dialectic is to take responsibility for the other by consuming "less of the labor of others," "thus removing himself from the relationship with the other" (113) in order to achieve self-sufficiency (113, 122). Paperno briefly discusses "Master and Worker," reading it as a "resacralized" Hegelian anthropology, "returning it to its source in Christian theology" (123). I address her reading later in this essay.

10. All English citations from *PhS* are from A. V. Miller's translation.

The Phenomenology is a constant battle for recognition, of which the life-and-death struggle between the lord and the bondsman is the prime example.¹¹

When, in search of self-certainty, one self-consciousness faces another self-consciousness, it sees the other as “its own self,” and does not recognize either itself or the other as essentially independent beings. Each self-consciousness feels the need to overcome and supersede the other in order to prove its independence and assure itself of its own essentiality. Although these identical self-consciousnesses at first “recognize themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another,” they quickly split up into two extremes, opposed to each other (112, Hegel’s emphasis). Staking their very existences in a life-and-death struggle, the two self-consciousnesses assume the roles of lord and bondsman. The bondsman recognizes the lord as an independent consciousness “whose essential nature is to be for itself,” while the lord recognizes the bondsman only as a dependent, as “merely *immediate* consciousness” (115, Hegel’s emphasis). In other words, it is a consciousness that exists “in a form of *thinghood*,” “whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another” (115, Hegel’s emphasis).

The lord’s consciousness is thus mediated by the consciousness of the bondsman; the lord’s very identity relies on the bondsman’s submission and recognition of him as the “lord.” Having postulated and fought for independence, the lord paradoxically ends up in absolute dependency on the bondsman, however, a dependency he does not even recognize. The master thinks he owns both the bondsman and his work, and the latter does nothing to dissuade him, maintaining the unequal relation. In the act of executing complete control over another human being, the master thinks his position is supreme and that he owns the world around him. He fails to recognize the surrounding world, his own dependency on other people, even his own body and those facts of life that are beyond one’s control, above all, death. In denial about his own mortality and other unpalatable truths, the master diminishes his survival capacity. He is the slave of his desires, which, uncontrolled, lead him to an untimely death. The bondsman, on the other hand, learns, in the process of accepting his dependence and of working on his environment, how to gain ever more control over his life, thus progressing into the stoic freedom described in the next chapter of Hegel’s treatise. Having become the master of himself, it is the bondsman, and not the master, who carries Hegelian progress forward.

The bondsman, Hegel tells us, has experienced “the fear of death, the absolute Lord” and “in that experience has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fiber of its [the bondsman’s consciousness’s] being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations.” Thus the bondsman

11. This battle for recognition is replayed throughout the book, confirming that Hegel sees the “Master and Slave” dialectic as the fundamental structure of human relations, where mutual recognition is aspired to, but never fully realized.

knows the fluidity and transience of life, i.e., he recognizes human mortality. Hegel adds that by working and changing his environment, the bondsman himself actualizes this "melting away" of everything stable: "Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it" (117).

While "the fear of the lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom," writes Hegel, "consciousness is not therein aware that it is a being-for-self." The bondsman comes to this realization of independence through his work. The lord does not find satisfaction in the uncontrolled pursuit of his desires, however, as the ever-recurrent momentary satisfaction of desire proves to be "fleeting" and "lacks the side of objectivity and permanence." "Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off"; working on external objects, the bondsman simultaneously works on himself attaining self-mastery (118). Recognizing the objective existence and independence of the external world as well as his competence to shape its matter/material, the bondsman comes to recognize his autonomy. "Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own" (119). Hegel adds that "having a 'mind of one's own' is self-will, a freedom which is still enmeshed in servitude" (119). The lord never experiences the absolute fear that the bondsman once did, and he does not work on the external world. Therefore he does not develop the self-will and concomitant independence that characterize the bondsman, living in illusory safety and self-destructive comfort.

As a result, the lord does not experience the dialectic that the bondsman is forced to go through and does not progress on Hegel's ladder toward Absolute Knowledge. By trying to supersede the other, he "proceeds to supersede its own self, for this other is itself" (111). The bondsman proves to be more resilient. Compelled to acknowledge dependency on another human being, the bondsman at the same time recognizes his dependency on an even higher power, be it God, fate, or death. Due to his position of dependence, which is the position truer to the essential human condition, he learns to hold his desires in check and, through work, becomes the master of himself. Not the lord but the bondsman, who at first appeared to be in such slavish dependence, ultimately proves to be the real lord and stands to obtain whatever freedom is possible in a Hegelian world. As is clear even from this paraphrase, Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic is saturated with social and moral values precious to Tolstoi, especially in his post-*Confession* period when he often turns to the struggle with desire and the beneficial effect of labor in that struggle. Hegel, of course, goes on to outline the dialectics that, in his view, move history, and that rely on some sort of interaction of the master and the slave mentality on both a personal and supra-personal level, leading to change and progress, but this aspect lies beyond the parallels of Hegel's and Tolstoi's texts discussed

here. Tolstoi's story, as it were, takes a slice out of Hegel's ever-shifting master and slave relationship, focusing on one segment of time, one slice of self-consciousness and history. And as I make plain in my conclusion, the late Tolstoi's vision of history differs markedly from Hegel's as it denies the need for "progress" in a world where there are no masters and no slaves.

Tolstoi's Version of Hegel's Master and Slave Dialectic

The very title of Tolstoi's "Master and Worker" ("Khoziain i rabotnik") echoes Hegel's pairing of "Master and Slave" (the word for 'slave' in Russian, *rab*, is contained in the word 'worker', *rabotnik*), while also indicating that activity which, according to Hegel, liberates the slave—work. Translated into German as "Herr und Knecht," Tolstoi's title conspicuously recalls Hegel's formulation in its original language, which Tolstoi knew fluently.¹² But the grammatical difference between Hegel's more conceptual opposition of "Herrschaft und Knechtschaft" and Tolstoi's wholly personified protagonists "Khoziain i rabotnik"/"Herr und Knecht" also marks a difference of genre: Tolstoi turns Hegel's abstract philosophical narrative into a cautionary literary tale, populated by concrete human beings. Hegel's philosophical treatise is dramatized and fictionalized in Tolstoi's story.

Such dramatization is not entirely alien to Hegel's own work. His *Phenomenology of Spirit* is exceptionally literary for a piece of abstract philosophical writing. It has a forward-moving plot (based on the trajectory of the dialectic), a narrator, and recognizable characters such as the "lord" and his "bondsmen." In his narrative approach, Hegel maintains a distance between what he calls the observing phenomenological consciousness (the perspectives of Hegel, the narrator, the reader) and the natural consciousness that undergoes the experience being described (the "characters" Hegel calls "shapes of consciousness"). This literariness has allowed Josiah Royce and subsequent commentators to treat *The Phenomenology* as a *Bildungsroman*, and, more recently, Irina Paperno to see in the Master and Slave dialectic a "parable" (107). This indwelling literariness supports the kind of rewriting that Tolstoi performs in his "translation" of a philosophical text into a piece of literature.¹³

12. Hegel's "Herrschaft und Knechtschaft" is traditionally translated into Russian as "Gospodstvo i rabstvo" ("Lordship and Slavery") and into English as "Master and Slave" or "Lordship and Bondage." The term "khoziain" in Tolstoi's story ("master," "owner") is more secular than the term he might have chosen, namely "gospodin" ("lord"), which has the word "God" ("Gospod") as its root, presumably because he wants to emphasize the difference between a lord and the Lord. It might, however, simply be Tolstoi's translation of "Herr" as he uses the word "khoziain" in the story to refer to the landowner as well as to God, just as Hegel uses "Herr."

13. For other examples of rewriting Hegel's philosophy into literature see Edward Kanterian's chapter "Hegel's Tale in Romania" in *Hegel's Thought in Europe* 49–71.

Tolstoi's Story

Tolstoi's master and slave are Vasily Andreevich Brekhunov, a merchant and church elder, and his worker Nikita. Their characteristics, discussed below, are strikingly similar to those of Hegel's master and slave. Brekhunov is victimized by his desires and practically inept in all practical matters while thinking himself superior to others, while his driver Nikita is obedient although aware that he is the more capable of the two. The two set out on a journey with the master planning to purchase a grove, but they get lost in a blizzard. They accidentally end up in the house of an acquaintance of Brekhunov's in a village and are invited to spend the night. Brekhunov insists that they press on, however, driven by the need to "clinch a good deal," i.e., by greed. As the snowstorm becomes more powerful, they are forced to spend the night outside in their snowbound sledge, having lost sight of the road. Frightened for his life, Brekhunov takes the horse Mukhorty and tries to escape, abandoning Nikita. The horse brings him back to the sledge, however, and when Nikita announces that he is freezing to death, Brekhunov suddenly decides to lie down on top of him, saving Nikita's life but dying himself. He dies with a profound feeling that he is Nikita and that Nikita is he himself. This sudden and unexpected act of self-sacrifice and spiritual transformation while identifying with Nikita concludes Brekhunov's journey of education.

Comparisons

In a broad sense, the narratives of both Hegel and Tolstoi are *Bildungsgeschichten* (*narratives of education*), stories of personality formation or education. Both pursue the task of describing a singular, but mistaken and lost, self-consciousness, which, through a dialectical—but also religious—transformation, learns the lesson of finding broader horizons. To be able to demonstrate the mistakes of non-recognition of the Other and the value of the learning process, both Hegel and Tolstoi find it necessary to set this singular self-consciousness in opposition to an Other. What this narrative method reveals is that the mistakes committed lie in failures of human relatedness: in Hegel's case, in the master's lack of recognition of the other, in Tolstoi's, in the master's lack of love for the other. These notions are, in fact, close, since in Hegel's early Christian writings the notion of recognition is originally called "love."¹⁴ Failing to recognize human relatedness, the isolation of the master's consciousness leads to a failure to learn and, as a result, remains trapped; it must be placed in an extraordinary situation of interaction with another, an Other, if it is to achieve the "education" it needs. This happens to Tolstoi's Brekhunov whereas in Hegel it is the "slave" who is the one to initiate the learning process and is the one better able to learn vital lessons.

14. See Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*. Stephen Crites asserts that even though love is not invoked in Hegel's exposition of the development of the self, it is an obvious (and implied?) requirement for mutual recognition. See Crites 346.

Both Hegel's and Tolstói's "parables" (Paperno) progress through an opposition of two archetypal characters: Master and Slave in one case, and the master Brekhunov and his worker Nikita in the other. In both narratives the oppositions are dissolved while the positions are reversed; in both plot reversals, labor and the fear of death play crucial roles. However, in contrast to the Hegelian narrative, which focuses on the educational process of the slave at this stage of the dialectics, Tolstói's "Master and Worker" presents the educational process of the dying master. The worker Nikita has already learned his lessons—he does, for example, from the very beginning, not fear death.

"Master and Worker," Business and Labor, Denial and Love

How does Tolstói present these issues in fictional terms? In his story, Brekhunov, the master, obsessed with acquiring goods and wealth, is immediately contrasted with his servant Nikita, who is identified not only as "a worker" (*rabotnik*) but also more explicitly as "not a master" (*nekhoziaín*) (298). Tolstói's choice of the word "*rabotnik*" ("worker") instead of "*rab*" ("slave") is meaningful¹⁵: in Hegel, the slave survives precisely because of the work he provides for his master, which teaches him self-control. In other words, it is not the dependence on another that preserves the slave, but his humble labor. Tolstói too celebrates manual labor as the path of salvation but presupposes that the master can be saved only when he renounces all false markers of superiority. Becoming like his worker, he learns to become just a man. "Master and Worker" is traditionally translated into English euphonicallly as "Master and Man," and this is not a misleading alteration. For Tolstói, to be a man, a full human being, is to be a worker (including the spiritual work of the renunciation of the self). "All life is work," Tolstói wrote in his diary in 1889: "Remember that you are a laborer in God's enterprise" (Tolstói's diary from April 14, 1889. Qtd Paperno 121). If in Hegel the slave, having attained self-mastery through work, emerges as the genuine master and the new master of another dialectical phase, in Tolstói the master is forced to realize that he is not a master but a man, and, as such, a "slave" ("servant") in God's "enterprise"—a "*rab bozhii*," like everyone else.¹⁶

In his Master and Slave dialectic, Hegel too offers a hymn of praise to work; labor is the factor that holds desire in check, leading to self-mastery and eventually to the kind of self-consciousness that, dialectically, will make the slave a master. While "the fear of the lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom," writes Hegel, "consciousness is not therein aware that it is a being-for-

15. And would also have been historically incorrect, since slavery/serfdom had been abolished in 1861.

16. In other words, Tolstói—who was a 'master' in his life—focuses on undoing the Hegelian dialectics by abolishing the very opposition between master and slave in whatever form it may take. While Hegel envisions a change of roles in which labor makes the slave a master, Tolstói sees all men as servants of but one master—God.

self" (*PhS* 118). The fear of the lord, of the "Absolute Lord" in the Master and Slave dialectic, is fear of death, which drives the slave into servitude, seeking protection from the master at the price of bondage. Fear of death is not sufficient for the emergence of an independent self-consciousness, however; the slave comes to this realization of independence only through his work. Work, we recall, "is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off"; working on external objects, the bondsman simultaneously works on himself and attains self-mastery as well as knowledge of material reality (118). Hegel's master, who does not work and lacks discipline, is—ironically—enslaved by his uncontrolled desires. So is Tolstoi's.

Brekhunov is a man who thinks he has knowledge of reality and believes that he "works" when making business deals, but his work is pseudo-work. In reality, he is driven by an unbridled desire for acquisition. His fatal journey begins with his impatient desire to buy a grove which he has learned will be sold for a cheap price. Like the Hegelian master, Brekhunov thinks he is in control; he does not even want to take Nikita along for the journey, confident that he can cope with the sledge and the horse himself, but he will soon find out that he cannot. One reason why this is so is his need for immediate gratification, a need that enslaves him: he must have his vodka and his smoking and hence the stop at the inn when Nikita must take care of the carriage and the horse Mukhorty. He also has psychological needs that demand immediate satisfaction, such as having an audience for his tales of exploits. Like the Hegelian master, Brekhunov unconsciously treats others as instruments for the satisfaction of his desires, whether material or psychological. For Hegel, "it is the master and not the slave who has the most 'immediate' relationship to his natural existence" (Stern 84). The master follows his bodily instincts, while the slave mediates and sublates them.

In Tolstoi's story, the word "*khotet'* (to want/to desire) mainly characterizes Brekhunov; when applied to Nikita the word "*khotet'*" is mostly negated. Nikita has desires, of course, but through service and necessity he has learned to control them. In the very beginning of the story, we learn that Nikita was the only one of all of Brekhunov's laborers who was not drunk during the Saint Nicholas Day festivities. Nikita was not drunk because he had forsworn alcohol after an unfortunate incident involving drink. Abstention had remained a constant struggle for him, however. Twice a year he had gone on "a drinking bout" (*zapival*) and become "rowdy and quarrelsome" ("buen i pridirchiv"), even violent (Katz 196). After the last such loss of control, he resolved to stop drinking. Nikita is tempted to drink again when, in the middle of their journey, the blizzard compels them to stop at the village inn where they were offered shelter, but Brekhunov pressed on. While Nikita battles with his craving for liquor, Brekhunov soon becomes tipsy and aroused to misguided bravery due to his vodka consumption. This is the only instance when Nikita is said to "passionately want" something. After a spirited inner

struggle, however, he crosses himself before the icons and overcomes his desire—demonstrating that he understands there is a Master above his master. The servant here has an advantage over his master—long accustomed to fulfilling other people’s desires, he can subordinate his own to their commands and his own common sense, as well as to his religious faith. His self-control also stems from a sense of obligation, such as providing for creatures even “lower” than himself, ontologically and socially, such as the horse Mukhorty. Nikita, who sees his horse and all domestic animals as God’s creatures and therefore as equal to himself, is invariably more attuned to his natural surroundings than is his master.

Tolstoi presents an interesting scenario of man’s relation to the animal kingdom—instead of opposing animal and human natures he presents two types of “animalities”: one bad, the other good. Bad animality is more often found in people like Brekhunov than in animals, at least in domesticated ones. Bad animality, which means being guided by one’s unmediated desires, marks a bondage that must be stripped away in order to reach the core of universal morality. Good animality is a part of that core of moral validity. Bad animality implies voracious appetites and uncontrolled pursuit of pleasure. It is close to the animality implied by the unmediated “relationship to his natural existence” of Hegel’s master. Only occasionally present in Nikita, this kind of animality defines Brekhunov in Tolstoi’s story and is also linked to the realm of wild animals, to which Brekhunov “belongs.” He is described as having “hawk eyes” and “long wolfish teeth”; each image is mentioned twice in the text. Nikita, on the other hand, consistently displays more of the good animality, which, according to Tolstoi, potentially everyone possesses. This is the domain of domesticated animals, animals trained to perform useful labor, of which Mukhorty is the prime example. Again and again, Mukhorty knows the way through the snowstorm better than either Nikita or Brekhunov does. Nikita, who loves domestic animals and communicates intimately with them, even takes on some of their traits; he is more like Mukhorty than Brekhunov. In contrast to Brekhunov’s “hawk eyes,” Nikita has “legs that waddle like a goose’s” (“gusem shagaiushchikh nog”) (299) and he is also directly compared to a horse. The domesticated animals, the Hegelian slave, and the Tolstian worker, have all become strong while learning to bend their will to serving others. They are attuned to the laws of nature, recognizing that nature and its creator are the true Masters of all creatures. Workers, both human and animal, are humble: they have learned to control their desires, learned from their lives in dependency, and from the disciplined service that has given them empirical knowledge of their surroundings.

Final Labor

Brekhunov, as already stated, resembles Hegel’s master, but unlike him, Brekhunov is capable of learning and discovering his inner core, and his

learning curve will follow that of Hegel's slave. In Tolstoi, whose late narratives reflect his personal quest for the "right life" ("What Must I Do?"), it is the master who is shown how to live, or at least how to die, the worker already having both forms of knowledge.

When both Brekhunov and Nikita are in danger of freezing to death, Brekhunov experiences a seemingly sudden revelation, which is made manifest in a complete reversal of his behavior that points to an epiphany. Sudden as this epiphany and reversal of behavior may seem, there are several stages in his transformation, however. As Ginzburg has pointed out: "Brekhunov passes from impulses that are openly and cruelly egoistical (his attempt to save himself after abandoning the freezing companion), to self-affirming consciousness of his own strength (he can do anything, including save another human being), and thence to tender feelings about himself—to an ethical state that is completely new to him, but that still retains traces of egoism" (352). The remaining traces of egoism include Brekhunov's pride over his selflessness and his passionate desire in the midst of freezing to death to tell someone about his noble action and admirable feelings. But there is a new state of spiritual awareness too and, although still using the language of his business deals (he speaks of his act as "business" (*delo*)), Brekhunov sacrifices his own body to serve and save another. His reward is the tears of "unexpected joy." Perhaps he remembers the icon-type *Nechaiannaia radost'*—at least his author seems to do so—that reconcile him with his imminent physical extinction. As Ginzburg summarizes, "Starting from self-affirmation in an action that is deserving of general astonishment and approbation and that strengthens his sense of his own significance, Vasilii Andreevich is drawn ever deeper into the sphere of love" (352). This self-sacrificial active love completes Brekhunov's "education."

Becoming like Hegel's bondsman, he learns, through the fear of death and through the servitude of self-sacrifice that he is not who he previously thought he was. He thought he was a master, but learned that he was a man; he thought he was a skillful businessman, but proved a real "worker" making dying his crowning labor; he thought his own needs overrode all others' but offered the ultimate sacrifice, becoming almost an *imitator Christi*. Brekhunov understood that his death was approaching but he was not disturbed because "it seemed to him that he was Nikita and Nikita was he, and that his life was not in himself but in Nikita. [...] 'If Nikita is alive, I am alive too!' he told himself triumphantly" (339).¹⁷ Brekhunov, who at the beginning of the story was limited to the solipsistic world of Hegel's lord, now attains a new level of

17. «Он понимает, что это смерть, и несколько не огорчается и этим. И он вспоминает, что Никита лежит под ним и что он угрелся и жив, и ему кажется, что он—Никита, а Никита—он, и что жизнь его не в нем самом, а в Никите. Он напрягает слух и слышит дыханье, даже слабый храп Никиты. «Жив, Никита, значит, жив и я»,—с торжеством говорит он себе» (339).

consciousness, in which he recognizes that others are not extensions of himself but independent beings who at the same time, together with him, are parts of a universal harmony and unity of being.

Brekhunov is thus at first like Hegel's Master, but he ends up being redeemed as a slave of God, i.e., as a Man. In order to understand himself and what he must do, he must encounter a situation that differs from his established patterns, breaking those, (Tolstoi still practices *ostranenie*), if he is to rediscover himself and learn the lesson that Tolstoi has prepared for him. Nikita likewise acts in ways that differ from Hegel's bondsman. In Hegel, the bondsman accepts his servitude because of his fear of death but then through work obtains a mind of his own. Nikita too accepts his servitude, but *not* because he fears death. Unlike Hegel's slave, whose fear of death initially drives him into servitude, Tolstoi's laborer, "true to his naïve peasant faith, is free from the fear of death," writes Paperno (119). As Robert Louis Jackson also notes, Tolstoi's ideal peasants, such as Gerasim from *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, have "the right attitude toward death; an attitude rooted in a total engagement with life; an attitude that views death as neither welcome nor unwelcome, but as a simple fact of life and nature" (119). Nikita is another emblematic example of such an attitude, which fully acknowledges and accepts death. Indifferent to death as well as not clinging to life, Nikita seems outside the Hegelian Master and Slave paradigm.

Dialectically transformed into "another" Nikita in an act of total identification with his Other at the end of the story, Brekhunov learns that Nikita is as essential as he is. Moreover, it is only through this realization that Brekhunov himself can feel truly essential. This is not his previous self-aggrandizing claim to individual importance, but a humble recognition that all living creatures are equal. Such knowledge allows him to not only overcome his fear of death but also welcome it as a meaningful part of a larger pattern. When his departing consciousness is hovering over his body, thinking of himself in the third person, he cannot understand "why that man, called Vasily Brekhunov, had occupied himself with the things that he had occupied himself with" (339).¹⁸ "Well, he did not know," he explains this to his new self. "He did not know, but now I know. With no mistakes now. Now I know!" (339).¹⁹

What Brekhunov knows is the very thing that Tolstoi himself was struggling to know during the final three decades of his life: freedom from the constraints of embodied, individual life. "It is only through staking one's life that freedom is won," writes Hegel (*PhS* 113–14). Commenting on this passage, Robert Stern explains: "For Hegel, it appears, a creature that shows it has knowingly and willingly risked its destruction as a living thing thereby differ-

18. «ему трудно понять, зачем этот человек, которого звали Василием Брехуновым, занимался всем тем, чем он занимался» (339).

19. Брехунова.— Не знал, так теперь знаю. Теперь уж без ошибки. *Теперь знаю*» (339).

entiates itself from mere animal life, and shows itself to be human" (79). In his sacrificial act, Brekhunov proves his humanity and, in dying, feels himself freed of his "bad" animality.

Tolstoi's and Hegel's notions of freedom are different, however. The freedom of which Hegel speaks is the freedom the bondsman attains in Stoicism (the next chapter of *The Phenomenology*), in the mastering of his desires. Brekhunov finds in death a liberation from his attachment to material goods and from the conventions of the social order, as well as from his need for admiration and respect—in fact, from himself. This last kenotic-religious aspect is more important than deliverance from mundane burdens and deceptions. This kind of religious illumination is not necessary to Nikita. Being virtually indistinguishable from the natural and material world, he knows what his master has to learn. Nikita's intuitive de-individualization is the ultimate salvation of the "master," acquired in a learning process Nikita does not need.

Tolstoi and Hegel on Consciousness and Truth: a Balance Sheet

"Tolstoy's response to Hegel, then, is to suggest Christian self-abnegation for the sake of the other or to advocate merging with the other rather than struggling for dominance: not a struggle for survival to the death, but self-abnegation to the death," writes Irina Paperno (119).²⁰ As she demonstrates in her incisive analysis of Tolstoi's diaries and the treatise "What Then Should We Do?," the Master and Slave dialectic had long been on Tolstoi's mind before he turned it into a piece of fiction (122). For Tolstoi, a wealthy landowner, preoccupied with the emancipation and education of the peasantry, the Master and Slave dialectic inevitably had personal resonance. Tolstoi's story incorporates several experiences from his own life, from fear of death experienced in near-freezing incidents and getting lost during his frequent wandering to his struggle with the vanity that was his desire to be admired for his selflessness. Perhaps Brekhunov's last moments reflect Tolstoi's own dreams about the ideal ending to his own life.²¹ He wanted to die like Brekhunov—in an act of supreme self-sacrifice that included the renunciation of pride, the most difficult of all sacrifices in his case. As Richard Gustafson

20. Paperno's inclusion of "Master and Worker," a parable and work of fiction, into a discussion of Tolstoi's "self writings" is telling; it rests both on the underlying autobiographical nature of the story as well as on the personal significance that Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic had for Tolstoi.

21. Tolstoi's early story "The Snowstorm" (1856) was based on his experience of getting lost in a blizzard in 1854. In 1869, Tolstoi set out on a journey to purchase land. On his way to Penza Province, he had a transformative experience, his "Arzamas terror," which found expression in his "Notes of a Madman," begun in 1884—although Tolstoi fictionalized the details. It has also been suggested that Tolstoi conceived the story after getting lost in a blizzard near Riazan' while involved in famine relief work in the winter of 1892–1893. According to Pavel Biriukov, Tolstoi was saved by one of his helpers (Paperno 119).

puts it, “*Master and Man* may well be Tolstoy’s most disguised piece of autopsychological fiction” (201).

“In his ‘*Master and Man*’ Tolstoy shifted the issue of self and other from the socioeconomic into the religious domain. He resacralized Hegel’s anthropology, returning it to its source in Christian theology,” writes Paperno (123). Paperno sees this resacralization and return to Christian theology in Tolstoy’s substitution of “God and man” for “master and slave.” It should be noted, however, that this substitution is already inherent in the Master and Slave dialectic. It occurs in *The Phenomenology*, in the section immediately following the Master-Slave narrative. That subsequent section concludes with a characterization of consciousness as “unhappy consciousness,” which reiterates the master-slave relation but in different terms, namely in relation to God. As Paul Redding points out, Hegel’s “unhappy consciousness” is “a form of religious consciousness,” which mirrors the master and slave dialectic but replaces the embodied master with “an absolute master who is radically removed from the sensuous world” (127). The “unhappy consciousness,” “the dominance of the immutable over the mutable, of the infinite God over finite human being, is a further form of the master-slave relation,” writes Tom Rockmore (76). “Hegel interprets a number of forms of religious life as attempts to overcome this unbridgeable duality and achieve unity with God,” adds Redding. The “unbridgeable duality” is the underlying structure of the master-slave dialectic, repeated variously throughout *The Phenomenology*. For Hegel, the split is unbridgeable and neither mutual recognition nor “unity with God” can ever be achieved. Yet wisdom is gained in the recognition of these very attempts, in experience and striving; it is this recognition that constitutes the core of Hegelian progress and moves the World Spirit forward.

Tolstoy also re-sacralizes the ostensibly profane, class-driven model of the lord and the slave. And here his differences from Hegel are of the utmost significance. For Tolstoy, “unity with God” is the ultimate goal. It cannot be achieved without merging with the other in self-abnegation. Brekhunov’s self-sacrifice marks his acknowledgement of death and simultaneously his acceptance of God. In the text he hears the divine call and follows God’s will. By having Brekhunov accept the “God and man” relation, a relation that Nikita has acknowledged intuitively all along, Tolstoy places Brekhunov and Nikita in an equal position before the higher entity. Tolstoy begins with difference and dissolves it into sameness. Hegel begins with sameness and evolves it into difference.

The truth that Brekhunov’s dying consciousness recognizes is that social roles are surface phenomena and that outside their social roles human beings are essentially the same. As he concludes, “Brekhunov is Nikita, and Nikita is Brekhunov.” The bondsman in Hegel realizes that he is the real master, while in Tolstoy the master realizes that he is a man just like his worker and every other man. If Hegel begins with the sameness of the two self-conscious-

nesses, which develops into inequality (and necessarily so), Tolstoi begins with inequality and diffuses it into sameness. Following Rousseau, Tolstoi argues that inequality is socially constructed and is, and always was, a deceptive surface phenomenon. For Tolstoi there can be no real dialectic, because there is no real difference.

Tolstoi could not accept the Hegelian dynamic which begins with unity but necessarily creates otherness. What makes merging possible for Tolstoi is precisely his *denial* of the Hegelian progressive dialectic. For Tolstoi, all human beings are fundamentally the same and therefore there is no need for the dynamics of progress since there is no goal superior to the harmonious union of man with man and man with God. If for Hegel the dialectic is created by a standard of truth that creates its opposite, that is, falsity which must become a new truth when merged with another one, Tolstoi's transformations revolve around a single stable truth. Truth and falsity are the only two opposites in Tolstoi and this opposition is real and cannot be dialectically dissolved. The truth consists in universal unity, an ontological sameness underlying all apparent differences. Paperno notes that "merging with the other," for Tolstoi, does not mean "relating to the other" (123). Relation presupposes difference, and the later Tolstoi's ideal is non-differentiation.

Death is an essentially defining moment of life for both Hegel and Tolstoi. But they understand this essentiality differently. For Hegel, the moment of biological death is insignificant; far more important is the human commemoration of this moment, which maintains the dead "in Spirit." According to Hegel, burial rites, which exist for the living rather than for the dead, give us insight into what it means to be human and transcend biological existence. For Tolstoi, however, the significance of death is to be found precisely within the consciousness of the dying subject. Bakhtin emphasizes this point when discussing death in Tolstoi and Dostoevskii: "Tolstoy depicts death not only from the outside looking in but also from the inside looking out, that is, from the very consciousness of the dying person, almost as a fact of that consciousness. Tolstoy is interested in death for the person's own sake, for the dying person himself, and not for others, not for those who remain behind" (289). As we saw in Nikita's case, in Tolstoi the lesson of death is intended for the dying and not for the living.²²

Tolstoi and Hegel would agree that the roles of the lord and the bondsman, or the master and worker, are socially constructed, but this sociality of being means different things to the two thinkers. We have seen that in each narrative, the identity of the master depends on the bondsman's submission: their

22. Interestingly, "Master and Worker" was written for the publishing house Posrednik (The Intermediary), established by Tolstoi and his disciples for the edification of the peasants. Yet it describes the educational process of the master. One wonders whether Tolstoi did not also intend "Master and Worker" as a sort of confession, a message to the peasants, which might be read as "I wish I could die for you."

roles emerge in their interaction and acceptance of their positions. But if for Hegel this social construction is the ontological state of affairs, for Tolstoi it is only the social aspect, which obscures the true state of being. Hegel is an ontological socialist: he believes that self-consciousness emerges only in social interactions and is thus constructed. There is no underlying essence: appearances are essences, as he claims in several of his works. Tolstoi, like Kant, believes that appearances cover up and conceal essences. But unlike Kant, he thinks that these essences can be known. To reach an essence, one should free oneself from the crust of “bad animality,” as well as from impositions of social institutions and their hierarchies. In “Master and Worker” this ontological position is laid bare, as Tolstoi contrasts the world of social order and the symbolic existential snowstorm.

For Tolstoi, therefore, the Hegelian “being-for-another” acquires a wholly new dimension. It does not involve only the sociality of our being and our mutual dependence for identity construction, but, with additional sacrificial undertones, it also becomes quite literally “being-for-another”—living and dying for others. Hegel is an ontological socialist, but he is also an ethical individualist. Tolstoi is neither. Tolstoi believes neither that we are entirely socially constructed, nor that morality is historically relative. Again with Rousseau, Tolstoi believes that we are fettered by our sociality; if these fetters are stripped away along with the “bad animality,” we will reach a core that will be the same for all. This core is universally and unconditionally moral.

In “Master and Worker,” Tolstoi strives to show that even someone as socially corrupt as Brekhunov can reach this core and that even in him this core is moral. But Hegel, as a phenomenologist rather than a moralist, refrains from ethical judgment. Instead he casts the master and slave dialectic as a necessary step (both individually and historically) on the ladder toward the formation of self-consciousness and its irregular but continuous growth. It is an experience that requires time—and only through the philosophical study of these social experiences can one continue climbing Hegel’s ladder toward perfectible awareness. Tolstoi places his ladder inward, and for the purpose of descending rather than ascending. What Tolstoi is after is a *core consciousness*, something closer to a soul than a self. Hegelian self-consciousness could never have been a desirable goal for Tolstoi—quite the opposite. It is in large part the source of the problem. Instead of striving toward self-consciousness, then, one should strive to rid oneself of the self in order to be one with the world through this universal “core consciousness.” For this spiritual state Tolstoi would coin the term “reasonable awareness,” *razumenie*.

This true and reasonable moral core, according to Tolstoi, is shared by everyone and is not gained gradually, as is Hegel’s perfectible self-consciousness. For Hegel, life is a process of becoming; for the later Tolstoi, it is a state of being. While one’s overall life experience can lead one to this core, its realization for Tolstoi usually happens through an unexpected event, a sudden

confrontation with death; it is an epiphany, a kind of Augustinian revelation. The suddenness and totality of Tolstoian transformations and unexpected illuminations—apparently out of character for the protagonist—will by some readers be seen as “unrealistic.” Realist literature posits the gradual development of a character based on accumulated experience. Tolstoi's contemporary N. K. Mikhailovskii, for example, claims that Brekhunov's final transformation is “too sudden a turnaround, too unmotivated an act—since only a short time before he was ready to betray and abandon the man to his fate in order to save himself” (Katz 455).²³ Yet this suddenness of transformation is not a matter of verisimilitude. It is Tolstoi's philosophical claim about the truth of such transformations. Since for Tolstoi the goal is the realization of an internal, universal and timeless core, the way to achieve this goal is to rid oneself of both time and the self in order to be at one with the timeless world. The process of regaining this unity cannot itself be temporal. For Tolstoi it is not so much a process of becoming that which we strive for, or learning from mistakes how to become better, but a state of being. In “Master and Worker,” therefore, Tolstoi is not interested in depicting a process of transformation that will prepare Brekhunov for his final selfless act, as Mikhailovskii thought would have been more plausible. The task, as Tolstoi sees it, is to place Brekhunov in a timelessness that will lead to a diffusion of the self. This is a difficult task, as narrative itself is a temporal art form: it unfolds over time. Although readers do witness a gradual transformation of the heroes, “Master and Worker” is fundamentally not a temporal journey but a spatial one, a journey happening in some kind of phenomenological “now.” The entire story is of an event which takes up only about twelve hours of Brekhunov's life.

Since the truth of the moral core shared by all humans is universal in Tolstoi's system, time has no power over it. Time, for Tolstoi, is another fetter of the finite world of sociality. And self-consciousness is fundamentally temporal: to be aware of a self is to be aware of that self as it changes over time. A self-consciousness occupied with the self, like Brekhunov's, is at almost any

23. Mikhailovskii contrasts the suddenness of transformation in “Master and Worker” with one of its possible inspirations, Gustave Flaubert's “The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller” (1877). Mikhailovskii finds Flaubert's story more convincing, as Saint Julian's final act of self-sacrifice, warming a leper with his body and thus obtaining salvation, is prepared for by years of repentance and servitude. Interestingly, Tolstoi himself finds the ending of “The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller,” which certainly inspired Brekhunov's death scene, unconvincing, but in a different sense—he finds it insincere in that the author himself would not have committed the act: “The last episode of the story which ought to be the most touching represents Julien lying on a bed together with a leper and warming him with his body [...]. The whole thing is described with great skill, but in reading this story I am always left perfectly cold and indifferent. I feel that the author would not have done and would not have cared to do what his hero did, and I therefore have no desire to do it, and experience no emotion on reading of this marvelous exploit,” (i.e., Tolstoi was not “infected”) writes Tolstoi in his introduction to S. T. Semenov's *Peasant Stories* written a few months after “Master and Worker” (193).

given moment either remembering the past or projecting itself into the future; it spends hardly any time in the present. A selfless consciousness, like Nikita's, constantly perceives the world as it is unfolding. It is grounded in the present. Such an active consciousness focused on immediate tasks would be the closest one could get to timelessness, to a universal "now." For Hegel, this is an almost pre-human state before the emergence of self-consciousness. For Tolstoi, it is the lost paradise that should be (and can be) regained.

For Hegel, developing self-consciousness is the homeland of truth. For Tolstoi, it is its prison. But if for Tolstoi this truth can be freed from self-consciousness and thus possessed by anyone; for Hegel, truth cannot belong to an individual subject but consists of the totality of movements that self-consciousness undergoes, both as subject and as Spirit. So if for Hegel a human being is the instrument of truth through which truth manifests itself and alters the world, then this truth, being process, also changes as it changes the world. Change is what constitutes the necessity of a Hegelian world of progress, and as finitude for him is the only infinity, change is the only unchangeable.

For Tolstoi, truth cannot change. The unchangeable essence of human beings defies difference and time: this essence is timeless, and anyone can find it within himself/herself. If for Tolstoi truth is within the subject, for Hegel the subject is within the truth. Only by hyper-awareness (such as that possessed by a philosophical super-self-consciousness, like Hegel's own) can one observe not only the development of self-consciousness but of world history as a whole, discerning the truth in its movements. Tolstoi rejected this assumption. To him such a super-consciousness observed not necessity but futility. The truth is not found in the ways of the world but within oneself, beneath the surface of social conventions and individual personality. Hegel would claim that the observations of the "futility" of everyday existence are what makes wider realizations possible, and thus necessary. But surely Tolstoi would not agree.

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Тезисы

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Диалектика Толстого: «Хозяин и работник» как переосмысление гегелевского нарратива

Толстой утверждал, что Гегель «слабый мыслитель» и считал его труды «пустым набором фраз». Но несмотря на часто выражаемое пренебрежение, в своих произведениях Толстой обходится с Гегелем так же, как с Евангелием — не как с чем-нибудь ненужным, но как с материалом, который необходимо переписать и исправить. В «Войне и мире» (1869) Толстой разыгрывает аргументы против философии истории Гегеля; в «Исповеди» (1882) он презрительно обращается с гегелевскими понятиями прогресса, хотя и не называет имени философа; в романе «Воскресение» (1899) Селенин, один из нелюбимых героев Толстого, читает Гегеля, чтобы обосновать своё искажённое мировоззрение. Хотя Толстой и утверждал, что Гегель был забыт к концу 1850-ых годов, сам он, на протяжении всей своей жизни, явно был не способен игнорировать гегелевские идеи. Данная статья анализирует то, как Толстой переосмыслил и переписал диалектику господина и раба Гегеля в рассказе «Хозяин и работник» (1895). Сходство траекторий диалектики господина и раба, а также совпадение многих конкретных деталей в развитии сюжетов, у Гегеля и у Толстого поразительно. Но при внимательном рассмотрении за этим сходством обнаруживаются разногласия между Толстым и Гегелем практически во всех философских сферах: онтологической, эпистемологической и экзистенциальной. С одной стороны, в «Хозяине и работнике» Толстой инсценирует гегелевскую диалектику господина и раба. С другой стороны, он вносит в эту диалектику исправления, которые существенно меняют многие траектории Гегеля. В отличие от гегелевской диалектики господина и раба, которая описывает процесс образования выжившего раба, в «Хозяине и работнике» описан процесс образования умирающего господина, траектория обучения которого соответствует траектории обучения гегелевского раба. Диалог между Гегелем и Толстым помогает понять не только формы и способы использования философского текста в художественном произведении Толстого, но и различия философских взглядах двух мыслителей, которые объясняют «громко разглашённую неприязнь Толстого к Гегелю».