

Solov'ev, the Late Tolstoi, and the Early Bakhtin on the Problem of Shame and Love

Author(s): Caryl Emerson

Source: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 663-671

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2499862>

Accessed: 04-02-2019 23:03 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Slavic Review*

CARYL EMERSON

Solov'ev, the Late Tolstoi, and the Early Bakhtin on the Problem of Shame and Love

This paper is part of a larger project, an attempt to understand Mikhail Bakhtin's early writings on ethics and aesthetics in their native, rather than their west European, context. The task is a complex one. Bakhtin's polemic with (and debt to) Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl, and other European philosophers is directly expressed in his texts and well documented; his Russian sources of inspiration are much more muted and elusive.¹ But Bakhtin's early writings surely qualify him as an heir to those great and maverick nineteenth century Russian thinkers who, while concurrently literary critics and moral philosophers, brought about a spiritual revival in the Russian creative intelligentsia between 1880 and World War I.

In any such list of Russian mavericks, Vladimir Solov'ev and Lev Tolstoi must figure prominently. Indeed, these two thinkers share with Bakhtin a number of common themes. Each in his own way, Solov'ev, Tolstoi, and Bakhtin rejected the characteristic polarization of nineteenth century criticism: its polemic between "art for life's sake" (the civic critics) and "art for art's sake" (the symbolist and later the formalist persuasion). Instead they sought a third intermediary position, one that insisted on formal criteria and categories for art but that was nevertheless suspicious of all demands for artistic autonomy, vigorously resisting the separation of art from life and art from ethics. All three were philosophers of religion (albeit highly irregular and hard to classify), who considered both the established churches and the established philosophical schools of their time seriously deficient—a situation with disastrous consequences, in their view, since a member of the "thinking intelligentsia" could no longer be a person of faith. And finally, in varying degrees of explicitness, all three thinkers connected a theory of aesthetic creativity with a theory of love.

These theories of love, it turns out, incorporate not only aesthetic creativity but also a peculiar understanding of shame. In linking love and shame, each of the three avoids logical, general, universal postulates; they approach the problem of love as an instance of individual case ethics rather than as a matter of ideals and abstractions. This might seem strange to those who know Solov'ev as an idealist and advocate of cosmic *vseedinstvo*, and to those who recall Tolstoi's controversial—not to say hysterical—views on carnal love in "The Kreutzer Sonata," and to those who know Bakhtin but cannot remember anything there on love at all. This paper will explore the logic that links these three thinkers along the lines of shame and love, and will suggest how this particular lens provides insight into their theories of creativity.

We will begin, then, with Bakhtin. His writings from the early 1920s are largely concerned with ethical questions, and the major moral category he develops is *otvetstvennost'*—by which he means each person's obligation to answer for his or her own acts, both toward another person

1. For a pioneering Soviet statement, see Iu. N. Davidov, "U ustokov sotsial'noi filosofii M. M. Bakhtina," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 2 (1986): 170–181, where Bakhtin is seen as a Russian response to Nietzscheanism and an alternative to the "aesthetic fatalism of (Oswald) Spengler," the "idealistic theoreticism of the neo-Kantians," and the depersonalization of Husserl; in English, see Nina Perlina, "Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum," Kennan Institute Occasional Paper no. 231 (1989). Alexander Mihailovic is currently at work on a study of Bakhtin's intellectual roots in Russian theology and *bogoiskatel'stvo*.

A good example of a Russian source is Bakhtin's relationship with Russian Orthodox Christianity. Some students of his thought have declared Orthodox theology and "encoded Christology" to be central to his writings of the 1920s (although concrete evidence of Bakhtin's religious convictions and activity is slim); others claim that Bakhtin was not engaged in a naive or proselytizing "believer's theology" but contributing to the perfectly conventional German academic discipline of *Religionsphilosophie*.

Slavic Review 50, no. 3 (Fall 1991)

and toward the world. What is peculiar about Bakhtinian *otvetstvennost'*, however, is its indifference to the ideas of guilt or shame. In Bakhtin one can find blame (*vina* and *vinovnost'*) but no crippling *styd* in the strong sense of the word. One explanation, perhaps, is that Bakhtin—with his magisterial disinterest in grim fictions like the Freudian unconscious and with his optimism about dialogue, the future, and the potential of communication to transfigure events—is a philosopher in whom there is very little rage and almost no concept of alienation. Naturally he would avoid such inward, backward-looking, psychologically isolated categories as shame, guilt, and sin.

Two curious mentions of sin and shame appear, however, in Bakhtin's early manuscripts. One occurs in the text published as "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti," its single lone reference to *grekhopadenie*.² We sin, Bakhtin says, when our inner self "falls into deep contradiction with itself, into self-rejection." What does this entail?

In the scenario Bakhtin develops in this essay, our inner self (what he calls the *ia-dlia-sebia*) is always in flux, since it is constituted not by accomplishments but by potential. Only our external self, the *ia-dlia-drugikh*, can be a pile of finished achievements, because that self is viewed from the vantage point of others. So an inner self that "falls into sin"—which is to say, an inner self that begins to "contradict and reject itself"—is one that, in Bakhtin's words, succumbs to "the tendency of being to self-sufficiency" (p. 109). Bakhtin hastens to add that such self-sufficiency is profoundly counterintuitive; it is "an absurd and puzzling completedness, enduring the shame of its form."

"Shameful form," in other words, is a sense of completedness where there should be a sense of potential. In Bakhtin, this state of affairs is always connected with thinking that one can do without others. Early in the "Avtor i geroi" essay, Bakhtin remarks on the impossibility of such autonomy, which he equates with a vain striving to love one's own self. "I in relation to my own self is deeply *cold*, even in self-preservation," he writes. "The body is not something self-sufficient, it needs an *other*, it needs the other's acknowledgment and form-shaping activity. Only the inner body—heavy flesh—is given to the person himself, the external body of the other is posited: it must be actively created" ("Avtor i geroi," p. 47).

For Bakhtin, clearly, shame has nothing at all to do with "sinful acts," and nothing to do with any indiscretions of the body. "Falling into sin" is, rather, doing without other bodies—which is to say it is the sin of solipsism.

A second and related reference to shame occurs in that chronologically prior portion of the early manuscripts published as "K filosofii postupka."³ Bakhtin is reinterpreting the Christian teaching of love. One cannot love one's neighbor as oneself, Bakhtin intimates, nor should we strive to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Any such formula will always suggest identity. And what is needed is precisely difference, loving the other as an other, loving the neighbor as a neighbor. Or, as Bakhtin puts it, "I love another but I cannot love myself, another loves me but cannot love himself, each is right in his own place . . . another occupies his place in my . . . consciousness [only] to the extent that I love him as another, and not as myself" ("K filosofii postupka," p. 116).

Underneath this argument is a larger implication: that there is something shameful about a single isolated consciousness, and that the only way to get out of that sin or shame situation is by the proper sort of love. But what precisely is that love, and what is its link with shame? Further on in the essay ("K filosofii postupka," pp. 128–130), Bakhtin again returns to shame, this time in its social sense as *pozor*, disgrace or embarrassment over ethical error. He explicitly unites it with love in a moral paradox.

How will I react, Bakhtin asks, "esli ia sozertsaiu kartinu gibeli i sovershenno opravdan-nogo pozora edinstvenno liubimogo mnoi cheloveka?" The shame is wholly deserved. And yet

2. M. M. Bakhtin, "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti," in *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1979), 109.

3. M. M. Bakhtin, "K filosofii postupka," in *Filosofia i sotsiologiya nauki i tekhniki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 116–117; 128–130.

my reaction toward it is, and should be, special because love is involved. Bakhtin notes that toward strangers, toward people who are for me “evaluatively undifferentiated,” I have no problem applying an objective standard and dispensing the necessary deserved punishment.⁴ But as regards my beloved, although the details of the shameful behavior might be the same, all those “parts and details” that constitute the act of judgment really do appear objectively different.

Is this difference that is generated by love “immoral” or “illegal”? Should not the law be blind, that is, should not we treat all instances of justified shaming in the same way? Bakhtin suggests that we should not. And his reasons here have to do with the relationship he draws between love and knowledge. The difference between our acceptance of the shaming of strangers and our resistance to the shaming of our beloved is, for him, an aesthetic difference.

To understand this move we must remember that for Bakhtin, “the aesthetic” owes nothing to the concepts of beauty or sublime form. Thus he is spared the need to polemicize like Tolstoi—who strove, in the interests of Truth, to eliminate beauty altogether as a basis for art—or like Solov'ev, who strove to confirm beauty as something natural, useful, and virtuous. For Bakhtin, the aesthetic is a special kind of relationship whose task it is to mediate between the cognitive and the ethical realms. His argument—not, of course, original with him—runs like this: Purely cognitive experience, “ideas in general,” are impersonal, noncontextual and therefore “free.” Ethical experience is personal, particular, and inevitably tied to specific real-life contexts. Only in the mediating category of aesthetic creation can we partake of the best of both realms, that is, can we be both creatively free from real-life consequences and yet at the same time irreducibly particular. To bring about aesthetic relations, love is required.

For Bakhtin, there is nothing sentimental about this category.⁵ Love is above all a concentration of attention; its value to humans is cognitive, which is to say it brings into being a certain sort of knowledge. Only love, Bakhtin writes (“K filosofii postupka,” p. 130), “can muster enough intense force to grasp and retain the concrete multiplicity of existence without impoverishing or schematizing it.” Love, in this sense, is an alternative to standardization, classification, and rules. Since managing life effectively requires a constant “schematization” of our activities, it follows that we cannot and should not love everything. Here Bakhtin introduces the term “*bezliubost'*,” or unlove, as a sort of safety valve and distributor of our attention. “Unlove or indifference,” he writes (“K filosofii postupka,” p. 130), “never develops sufficient strength to linger intensely over the object,” and thus it can pass an object by, or ignore it, or simply surmount it. *Bezliubost'*, along with forgetfulness, focuses our energy as we pass through the world.

4. For an excellent expansion of the issues Bakhtin raises here only in passing, see Stephen Toulmin, “The Tyranny of Principles,” *The Hastings Center Report* (December 1981): 31–39, esp 34–35 on the domination in legal studies of an “Ethics of Strangers.” See also Toulmin, “The Recovery of Practical Philosophy,” in *The American Scholar* (Summer 1988): 377–452; and Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), esp. part 1.

5. Significantly, there is also nothing sentimental (or erotic) about Bakhtin's approach to sexual love. In striking contrast to Solov'ev's rapture but in a peculiar overall harmony with Solov'ev's ultimate ethical stance on sexual matters (see below), Bakhtin's tone on the issue in “Avtor i geroi” is almost clinical:

The sexual approach to the body is an absolutely special one. It is incapable of developing on its own any form-shaping, plastic, or pictorial energies, that is, it is incapable of creating a body as an external, finalized, and self-contained artistic definitiveness. Under these conditions the external body of the other disintegrates, becoming merely one aspect of my inner body; it becomes valuable only in connection with those inner-bodily possibilities—carnal desire, physical pleasure, gratification—that it promises me, and these inner possibilities flood and overwhelm the other body's stubborn external finalizedness. During a sexual approach to another person's body, my body and the other's body fuse into one flesh, but this single flesh can be only internal. To be sure, this fusion into a single internal flesh is the outer limit toward which my sexual relation strives in all its purity; in reality, however, it is always complicated by aesthetic components resulting from an admiration of the external body, and consequently by form-shaping and creating energies as well. But the creation of artistic value by these components and energies is here only a means, and does not achieve autonomy or fullness (“Avtor i geroi,” 47–48).

For anyone seeking precedents within Russian thought, Bakhtin's comments here will recall the writings of Solov'ev during his final decade.⁶ What sort of love is required of us to approach the world creatively? What sort of art can human creativity hope to add to the beauties of the natural world? And how is the idea of shame connected with creative love? Solov'ev addresses these issues in his essays "Krasota v prirode" and "Obshchii smysl iskusstva," in the first two parts of his moral treatise *Opravdanie dobra*, and in his 1894 essay "Smysl liubvi."

Taken together, these three works constitute the most important programmatic statements of Solov'ev's late period. They also form the core of his polemic with Tolstoi—that other great generator of programmatic statements on the meanings of things. On many matters, of course, the two thinkers simply disagree⁷: on the ethics of nonviolence, for example, and on the proper role of human sexuality (Solov'ev's great defense of eros in "Smysl liubvi" is structured in part as a rebuttal of Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata"⁸). Too little attention, however, has been paid to the areas in which their thought is compatible.

We might begin with the relationship between art and love. Like Tolstoi, Solov'ev is quite uninterested in definitions of art produced by formal poetics. In Solov'ev's aesthetics—and on this point Tolstoi would surely concur—the right sort of beauty does not imply any special harmony, perfection of form, or sensual enchantment. Beauty is not the realization of some abstract ideal form, nor need it intoxicate the senses.⁹ Beauty is, rather, a quality brought about through a dynamic, open, but at all times necessarily contested relation between an embodied and an unembodied force.

As an example of this "contested relation" in the inorganic world, Solov'ev gives us light—which for him is always an activating, spiritualizing energy—passing fretfully and indirectly through cut glass, resulting in the beauty of the diamond. Neither a lump of coal nor a clear pane of glass is beautiful, he notes, for at those two "uncontested" extremes of the given material there is no genuine penetration or relationship: One substance is too impervious, the other too transparent. In the higher forms of human art, Solov'ev intimates, this relation takes the form of a concrete embodied personality and its inner spiritual potential.¹⁰

The best illustration of this thesis in Solov'ev can be found in his defense of erotic idealiza-

6. After this paper was completed, an essay by Boris Groys came to my attention: "Problema avtorstva u Bakhtina i russkaia filosofskaia traditsiia," in *Russian Literature* 26 (1989): 113–130. Groys also seeks traces of the "Russian philosophical tradition" in Bakhtin's early ideas, and points to Solov'ev as a major, if hidden, source. According to Groys, the central role Solov'ev assigns to the "philosopher" in any culture is assigned by Bakhtin to the "novelist." In neither case could the figure be reduced to a "theorizer" (115), for both Bakhtin and Solov'ev reject any notion of "psychically neutral" consciousness in the world; thus both reject the authoritative models of the Cartesian "I," the Kantian transcendental "I," and the phenomenological "I" of German idealism (122–124).

7. For a sensible survey of the Tolstoi-Solov'ev relationship that suggests Tolstoi's interest in the philosopher (always ambivalent) was in fact limited almost entirely to the latter's adoption of what appeared to Tolstoi to be "Tolstoyan" positions, see Z. G. Mints, "Iz istorii polemiki vokrug L'va Tolstogo (L. Tolstoi i V. Solov'ev)," *Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii* 9: *Literaturovedenie* (Tartu, 1966): 89–110.

8. See Peter Ulf Moller, *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoj and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s*, trans. John Kendal (Copenhagen: E. J. Brill, 1988), esp. chap. 10, "Solov'ev and the Meaning of Love."

9. For more on this question, see Judith Deutsch Kornblatt (currently at work on Solov'ev's aesthetics), who addressed the issue in her 1988 AATSEEL presentation "The Transfiguration of Plato in the Erotic Philosophy of Vladimir Solov'ev." Comparing the images of light in Platonic and Solov'evian philosophies of love, she ably demonstrates how Solov'ev "rewrites Plato" into the language of Orthodox liturgy by replacing Platonic principles of dualism and reflection by mediation and penetration.

10. In his 1889 essay "Krasota v prirode," Solov'ev defines the positive content of beauty in nature as an active transformation of material by some extramaterial principle: the transformation of matter from a passive sign [*znak*] to active power [*sila*] to spiritual-bodily power [*dukhovno-telesnaia sila*]. See "Krasota v prirode," in S. M. Solov'ev and G. Rachinskii, eds., *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva*, vol. 6 (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1901–1907): 30–68. The diamond example is discussed on 36–37.

tion in "Smysl liubvi."¹¹ There he argues that the state of being in love (as opposed to its more placid, less possessive counterpart, "loving someone") is marked precisely by an idealization of the beloved that is not a "subjective illusion." Solov'ev insists that all those extravagantly good traits that intoxicate us, that make the other person an object of desire, really do exist in the beloved. They exist because erotic love "opens up to us" the other person's potential and impels the lover to invest that degree of "true faith, active imagination and real creativeness" necessary to bring those traits into being. The ideal, in short, might begin as an attitude or a hypothesis but then becomes a genuine interactive process: Its goal is to realize and create potential, and that takes risk, intense concentration of energy, and work.

So, directly confronting Tolstoi (or rather, confronting one of Tolstoi's many shifting positions on this matter), Solov'ev concludes that human sexual love is not justified by reproduction. In fact, Solov'ev argues, the sort of human love that matters in the world will always increase in value and intensity in direct proportion to its infertility and sterility. The true purpose of love is quite alien to self-propagation, or the propagation of others. Its purpose, rather, is to demonstrate that an individual is not merely an instrument of the species but is an end itself—and thus, as a moral being, unable to defer any of its responsibility and moral accountability.¹²

But, Solov'ev hastens to add, this ethical truth cannot be proved to oneself, on oneself, by oneself. The only guaranteed way to affirm individuality while at the same time avoiding the perils of solipsism is to be in love with someone else. In love, we are driven to "linger over the unique object," we devote ourselves to developing its potential over time. In Solov'ev's famous phrase ("Smysl liubvi," p. 157), which Bakhtin later echoes, erotic love is "the justification and salvation of individuality through the sacrifice of egoism."

A comparison of Solov'ev's sense of love in this late essay with Tolstoi's famous typology of love in chapter 24 of his early work, "Iunost'" is instructive. The theses are remarkably similar. Of Tolstoi's three types of love, we recall, two are completely fraudulent: *liubov' krasivaia*, a love of the exalted sentiment itself that is indifferent to the recipient, that is, to the actual human being involved; and *liubov' otverzhenaiia*, love that prospers on self-denial and protestations of sacrifice but cannot remember to bring the beloved a bowl of soup or to light a fire when he or she is ill. The only genuine love, Tolstoi insists, is the third type, *liubov' deiatel'naia*, active love—which expresses itself as a longing to satisfy the needs, caprices, even the vices of the beloved. Active love is rarely expressed in words, but it requires constant deeds; it strives to develop every possible potential and to understand the full context of every action. Thus active love is inevitably and often painfully individualized; abstract concepts of justice would not console it during the justified shaming of the beloved. Bakhtin appears to draw upon this third type of love, so central also to Solov'ev, several decades later, during his discussions of love and shame in his early ethical writings.¹³

This idea is expanded to the human realm in "Obshchii smysl iskusstva," where ideal content partakes of beauty only if it gains external bodily expression, only if it ceases to "remain solely the inner property of the spirit."

11. "The Meaning of Love," in *A Solov'ev Anthology*, comp. S. L. Frank, trans. Natalie Duddington (New York: Scribner's, 1950), 150–179, esp. 164–165 on erotic idealization.

12. In his expansion of this idea in part 2, chap. 1 of *Opravdanie dobra*, Solov'ev concludes: "It is unworthy of man to be merely a means or an instrument of the natural process by which the blind life-force perpetuates itself at the expense of the separate entities that are born and perish and *replace* one another in turn. Man as a moral being does not want to obey this natural law of *replacement* of generations, the law of *eternal death*." Vladimir Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1918), 138. Henceforth referred to in the body of the text as *OD*.

13. It might be noted—although this is not the place to develop the point—that here, over the question of erotic energy, we have one of several critical confrontations between Bakhtin and Sigmund Freud. The case is put well by Gerald Pirog in his "Bakhtin and Freud on the ego: (Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, ed., *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis* [Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1989], 401–415, esp. 409–410): "[In place of monadic and self-contained models of consciousness, among which he would in-

It remains to ask if, and how, a theory or meaning of shame can be constructed alongside Solov'ev's and Tolstoi's theories of love. I believe it can, and what is more, such an alignment opens up interesting, unexpected contrasts and parallels in their two larger worldviews, as well as in their dialogue with Bakhtin. Solov'ev's position on shame and love is perhaps the most radical, and certainly the most obscure. We will begin with him.

The case for shame is made in the opening chapters of part 1 and part 2 of *Opravdanie dobra*, Solov'ev's great moral treatise of the 1890s.¹⁴ There Solov'ev posits three "primary data" for human morality: shame, pity or compassion, and piety. Of the three, the feeling of shame—by which Solov'ev intends primarily sexual shame—is the root and source of conscience, and thus of all moral feeling. As such, it is a prerequisite for the second "primary datum of morality" posited by Solov'ev: a "firmly established, permanent compassion," which he equates with love.

The argument here is complex and not entirely persuasive, but among its ultimate judgments is this: Sexual shame, a universal attribute of human beings, separates us from the lower nature of animals and from our own animal nature. But it is not the bodily principle, nor the sexual act per se, nor the instinct driving it that is shameful. The natural fact of sexuality itself causes shame, and our awareness of this shame signifies our intuitive knowledge that we "must not as a passive instrument serve the vital purposes of nature" (*OD*, p. 31).¹⁵

The role of this individualizing, activating force of shame within the larger body of Solov'ev's work is problematic. For Solov'ev's worldview as a whole ultimately affirms the ideal and the Infinite in the realms of human history and religious philosophy. But as a philosopher of practical ethics, Solov'ev consistently expressed an antipathy to all passive and generalizing moralities, and this is the key to his insistence upon the individualizing power of erotic love. Since the world demands of us constant reevaluation and practical work, the Good is never pre-established (Solov'ev disputes Kant on this point [*OD*, pp. 153–159]). Thus the good life is never merely a matter of confronting a moral dilemma and resolving it, once and for all, by a simple rejection or by a moral rule. The moral life must increase in complexity, not decrease. Or, as Solov'ev puts it in *Opravdanie dobra* (*OD*, p. 57): "Ethics is the hygiene and not the therapeutics of the spiritual life."

We might now consider these Solov'evian categories of shame and love in a Tolstoyan perspective once again, this time in light of Tolstoi's famous triad of "life-concepts" in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*.¹⁶ Tolstoi's three options, which he sees progressively realized in human historical development, are based on different ways and objects of loving: the first a "personal" or animal life-concept, the second "social" or pagan, and the third "universal" or divine. These three categories, with their respective orientations toward a lower, an equivalent, and a higher power, have a clear analogue in Solov'ev's three primary "data of morality": shame (toward our lower or animal side), compassion or pity (toward others), and piety (toward God). Where Solov'ev derives his entire triad out of shame, however, Tolstoi—always more agitated by the appetites, and more fearful of their autonomous power—defines his three life-concepts

clude Freud, Bakhtin proposes] the author's artistic reaction to the hero and his life. This reaction is aesthetic love, a relationship *sui generis* of a lover to his beloved, in which sexuality is eliminated, and which is not motivated by the object itself, but is an active response to *the beloved's* need."

14. For Solov'ev's most concise analyses of shame, and in particular sexual shame (*polevoi styd*), see *Opravdanie dobra*, part 1, chap. 1 (25–40); part 2, chap. 1 (135–150).

15. It should be stressed that Solov'ev's defense of eros does not carry with it any special defense of an active sexual life. In fact, *Opravdanie dobra* devotes chapters to condemning "abstract hedonism" (chap. 6) and to advocating "the ascetic principle in morality" based on altruism and self-control (chap. 2). Solov'ev, and to a certain extent the early Bakhtin as well, appears to approach love in the spirit of some erotic mystics and non-Christian Hellenistic theologians, for whom knowledge, not sensation or union, is the goal. But both Solov'ev and Bakhtin insist that the knowledge love makes possible is always intersubjective; it cannot be directed toward an "Unmoved Mover" but must be specifically reciprocal and reciprocated.

16. Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, trans. Leo Wiener (New York: Noonday Press, 1961), 90–95.

according to their ability to satisfy us at various stages in our historical and biographical evolution, and also according to their chances for success.

The animal concept, Tolstoi argues, is simply self-love, gratifying its personal drives with no second thoughts (of shame or anything else). The pagan or social concept is an extension and refinement of this animal love to include family, tribe, nation. In the social life-concept, however, the immediate personal body is no longer the locus of satisfaction, so some other criterion of success must be found—and this turns out to be “a precise execution of rules or laws” (*Kingdom of God*, p. 100). Although socialists and communists constantly strive to prove the contrary, Tolstoi remarks, “personal” or “pagan” principles of loving cannot be successfully applied to aggregates as large as “humanity.” The force simply gets thinner and thinner, and ever more prone to corruption. Active love for humanity must be based on another principle altogether, and at this point our three thinkers again converge.

The point of convergence is their understanding of the creative ideal. Not surprisingly for thinkers well versed in philosophies of religion, Tolstoi, Solov'ev, and Bakhtin perceive the highest human relation to be the positing of an ideal. But the concept is employed by all three in a particular, distinctly nonidealistic sense. For Solov'ev and for Bakhtin, as we have seen, “idealization” when performed by a person in love imposes no “ideal” at all but is, rather, an energetic drive to realize, as massively as possible, the many and perhaps even morally messy potentials of the beloved, embracing them all. In this context, the only “shame” that could matter is the sort of which Bakhtin spoke when he remarked on *grekhopadenie*: a perspective on the self that is self-sufficient and closed to the other, thus marked by “an absurd and puzzling completeness” and enduring the “shame of its form.” When Bakhtin later sees in Fedor Dostoevskii's Christ an “ideal human being”¹⁷ it is because this image is something living and still form-shaping, someone complex and incomplete whom we can follow and put questions to, not merely a set of impersonal rules or “truth-as-formula.”

And Tolstoi, for all his manifest passion for drawing up rules, has a similar understanding of the ideal. He discusses it in various places: in his “Afterword to *The Kreutzer Sonata*,” where proper moral guidance is described as dynamic and personalized, not as a matter of external laws,¹⁸ and also in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, in connection with his third life-concept, the “universal” or “divine.” Tolstoi notes that the “universal ideal” is often misunderstood as “an obscure, mystical demand which has no definite object of love” (*Kingdom of God*, p. 99). Nothing could be further from the truth, he insists; the ideal is never impersonal and is not a rule. It is entirely a goal, whose positive content is flexible and unrepeatable, dependent at all times upon context. For this reason, Tolstoi intimates, the Sermon on the Mount contains so many negative injunctions: Constraining instructions may guide us around known obstacles, but we supply the positive particulars. What is important is the direction of the motion, which must be the product of our individual efforts and result in our own synthesis (*Kingdom of God*, pp. 102–105). As Tolstoi observes, we are not supposed to achieve the ideal in the same way that we achieve and succeed at following rules; an ideal is not so much “achieved” as it is loved.

And this brings us back to the central role of love in these three thinkers. Love, like shame, always works to complicate and differentiate a consciousness; it guarantees the individuality of one's moral efforts outside the realm of self-propagating reflexes or formal rules. Bakhtin de-

17. Mikhail Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 97–98.

18. In his “Afterword to *The Kreutzer Sonata*” Tolstoi distinguishes between two kinds of moral guidance: external rules, which are simple to follow and unsatisfactory, and then “pointing out to a man an unattainable perfection”: “A man who professes an external law is like someone standing in the light of a lantern fixed to a post. It is light all around him, but there is nowhere further for him to walk. A man who professes the teaching of Christ is like a man carrying a lantern before him on a long, or not so long, pole: the light is in front of him . . . always encouraging him to walk further.” In A. N. Wilson, *The Lion and the Honeycomb: The Religious Writings of Tolstoy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 69.

voted most of his early writings on ethical activity to just this question.¹⁹ We might now close the circle by considering Solov'ev's underappreciated views on the relationship between law and morality. These were recently given eloquent treatment by the intellectual historian Andrzej Walicki in, of all unexpected places, a book on the legal philosophies of Russian liberalism.²⁰

As Walicki summarizes the matter, Solov'ev rejected both the amalgamating "integral wholeness" of the Slavophiles as well as the abstract, rational universality of categorical imperatives. In their place, Solov'ev endorsed law as the indispensable, yet always insufficient "minimum of morality" functioning in a society, as the voice that "tells man what he may not do but is silent about what he ought to do" (*Legal Philosophies*, p. 186). What one "ought to do" is simply not generalizable.

How, then, is unity realized on the basis of ungeneralizable particulars? According to Solov'ev, *vseedinstvo* is ideally a "synthesis of *heterogeneous* elements" (*Legal Philosophies*, p. 166); from this it follows that the primary purpose of law is not to standardize ethical behavior but rather to safeguard the autonomous personality, to keep it distinct and therefore penetrable by others. To guarantee this state of affairs, a "reciprocal limitation" of conflicting forces is sufficient. The positive or absolute content of the law can be provided only on a case-by-case basis, through an individual expression of charity or love.²¹

In conclusion, we might ask how this insistence on the individualizing and "cognitive" functions of love interacts with the idealizing, perfectivizing, rule-building impulses in these thinkers' other work. Of the three, Bakhtin might be said to adhere the most consistently and stubbornly to a context-bound, ethically diverse view of the world—with the exception, of course, of his "high carnival period," where love, shame, and ethics disappear altogether because the individual vulnerable body and its responsibilities also disappear. But we cannot ignore the "istinnyi sushchii" element in Solov'ev's search for unity and harmony, nor can we ignore Tolstoi's passion for tabulating "rules of life" and stages of human development. Indeed, in much of their work, both Tolstoi and Solov'ev—although to different degrees—partake of what might be called the dominant trend in the "Russian Idea": its tendency to treat the world as teleological, eschatological, ideological, and collectivist. But each has an important antidote built in—an antidote which, in prominent areas of their thought, speaks to an altogether counter idea.

We see the antidote functioning in Solov'ev when he insists that All-unity is not fusion, and that love in this world should work to make lovers more complicated, differentiated, and exclusive. It is also at work in his idea that beauty is not a static quality but the result of dynamic interaction under pressure. And Tolstoi, for all his general rules and prohibitions, is insistent on

19. It is worth noting that the most vital Mikhail Gorbachev-era reception of Bakhtin in the Soviet Union centers precisely on these early manuscripts and their discussions of human singularity over the claims of system or social class. See esp. V. A. Panpurin, "M. M. Bakhtin o prirode tsennosti" and G. A. Brandt, "Eticheskaiia dominanta kul'tury v filosofii M. Bakhtina," in A. F. Eremeev et al., *Estetika M. M. Bakhtina i sovremennost'* (Saransk: Mordovskii gos. univ-tet, 1989), 27–30 and 22–24.

20. Andrzej Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 3: "Vladimir Soloviev: Religious Philosophy and the Emergence of the 'New Liberalism,'" esp. 176–212. Walicki provides a welcome corrective to the familiar mystic and symbolist image of Solov'ev by demonstrating, with his customary lucidity, that Solov'ev "himself came to the conclusion that the entire sphere of ethics, including law defined as a 'compulsory minimum of morality,' should be completely divorced from religion and metaphysics" (166–167).

21. Walicki notes an important difference between Solov'ev and Tolstoi on this issue of institutionalized social life (*Legal Philosophies*, 186–187): Where Tolstoi endorsed only the "quasi-natural institution of the family," Solov'ev, more wary of the dangers of "abstract moralism," accepted both the law and the state, although within careful limits. It is no wonder, Walicki remarks, that Solov'ev found law insufficient; "we should rather wonder how it was possible that such a sharp contrast between juridical laws and the law of love did not push [Solov'ev] in the direction of Christian anarchism. His formula of the morality of love fits perfectly in to Tolstoy's writings. And yet nothing was more alien to Soloviev than the violent and intransigent legal nihilism of the great writer" (*Legal Philosophies*, 186).

this one point: that love is precisely an attention to detail, a constant individualization and filling-in of local context. These thinkers, along with Bakhtin, would endorse *sobornost'* or communality as the correct starting point of the Russian Idea, but they would find its working-out faulty. And in this way: The famous Slavophile dictum that "the individual is most free in a chorus" has usually concentrated on the rights of the chorus. For our thinkers, however, the locus of value is not the chorus itself but the means by which individuals "personalize" the chorus, and then answer for their own acts within that chorus. Their philosophies of love presume an understanding of individuality and morality that is not a transition to some ideal state, and not a passive part of a whole, but a responsible end in itself.