

Foreword

IN many countries of the world there is a sustained interest in the personality and creativity of Leo Tolstoy, and especially in the moral philosophy on which he worked in his later years. Why is his work of value to us in the world of today? Because, on the one hand, the scientific and technical revolutions of this century have claimed priority over humanity and morality because, and, on the other, because aggressive consumerism has replaced the love of creative art.

Tolstoy had a profound understanding of the cultures of the world, in that he realised that all religions are based on one idea, the union of the people in love, and that all wisdom and morality have this as their aim. We can easily see the parallels between Tolstoy's appeal for dynamic love to overcome the unchecked forces of evil and the basic principles of the ancient Hindu philosophy of Ahimsa [never to inflict injury on sentient beings]. We can also compare his appeal with those of Laotze, Socrates and the Stoics, who taught that 'it is better to suffer injustice than to be the cause of it', and with Christ's injunction [Matthew v, 43]: 'Love your enemies ...'. Nevertheless, Tolstoy was critical of many attitudes of the Christian churches, and contrasted them with his own humanitarian values. Also, he was concerned with such cultural obligations as the strenuous and persistent search for truth, not only in the outside world but also within oneself.

Tolstoy lived out his humanitarian values and moral wisdom on his estate, Yasnaya Polyana, a place of pilgrimage from all over the globe. One witness to his lifestyle was Mahatma Gandhi, 'the son of the Indian people'. Tolstoy's confidence in reason and experiment led him to embody his vision of human morality and wisdom in a collection of extracts from great

writers on which he worked systematically until his last years. It appeared in three variant editions under the titles of *A Circle of Reading* and *For Every Day*, but was never finished to his satisfaction. His followers' duty is now to complete and publish what he thought of as *The Moral Wisdom of the World*.

The important task that Tolstoy set himself was the freeing of the world from spiritual degeneration and evil; and he directed all his energy and learning to this end. Of course, few people enjoy his advantages; but we can all make a fresh effort to understand his un-shakeable moral principles and the history of human culture.

'To convey knowledge to the people, because this is the unique remedy for their problems ...' is how Tolstoy began his last work, *The Real Remedy*, written at Optin Pustin after his departure from Yasnaya Polyana.

As we come to the end of this century, famous for its unprecedented achievements in scientific and technical development, and move on to the beginning of the next, unheard of crimes have taken place, and people have shown terrible cruelty to each other and to nature. We have not been protected by our achievements; and there has been a growing comprehension of the importance and realism of Tolstoy's idealogy of culture before force, of the individual before the state, of common before private rights to land, of morality before lax commercial ethics. Morality was the central pivot of Tolstoy's philosophy. We cannot neglect his views in our search for an alternative form of society.

Tolstoy accumulated in his works the morality of the whole world. At the same time he portrayed the best features of the Russian character: humanitarianism, of which Dostoevsky also wrote, the passionate search for truth, that is, honesty and justice, democracy, creativity, moderation, presented in a unified and comprehensive form. Tolstoyan communities existed for some time after his death, and some are now re-appearing. Once again, in such a genius as Tolstoy was, the Russian people can meet up with the cultures of the world; but the world must also understand Russia, which F. Tiutchev called 'the ununderstandable'.

The Moscow Leo Tolstoy Society continues the progressive activity that he started. This kind of activity goes along the following lines:

- setting up people's schools for everyday study;
- publishing religious books;
- setting up charitable organisations and committees;
- financing and organising communities of all kinds.

Because Tolstoy considered the moral perfection of humanity to be based on the labour of a free peasantry, he was interested in how to make their work on the land productive and how best to benefit both to the individual worker and to society. In this respect, he turned his attention to Henry George's proposal for single tax on the value of land. Tolstoy saw in this idea the possibility of a just regulation of land matters and the improvement of social relations as a whole, and he promoted Henry George's ideas in many different ways.

If Leo Tolstoy were alive in the year 1992, his support of Henry George's single tax on the value of land as a means of achieving common rights to it would, to my mind, certainly remain absolutely unchangeable. As President of the Leo Tolstoy Society, I share this opinion.

Tolstoy also turned to Henry George in his last moral-philosophical works, written shortly before his death. Both the idea itself of a single tax and Tolstoy's thoughts on these issues deserve the closest attention today, not least in Russia, which is currently undergoing painful economic and agricultural reform.

Tolstoy was a vegetarian and he considered the refusal to eat meat as the first step towards moral perfection, anticipating in this respect today's broad environmental movement, he was one of the first to recognise that the killing of animals, and pollution, would lead to ecological crisis, and his courageous championing of an unpolluted environment provides a shining example for contemporary "greens".

I hope that this book will contribute to a better knowledge of Tolstoy's philosophy and of Russian society, and, best of all, draw people together in new ideals of creativity, love and understanding.

Anatoly Gorelov.

Anatoly Al. Gorelov is a Doctor of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences, Moscow. His publications include: *Ecology – Science – Simulation, Man – Harmony – Nature and The Split Man and The Integrity Of The Personality.*

His subjects are: Ecology, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Religion, Art, Philosophy, Methodology of Science, Ethics and Aesthetics, Political Science and Old Russian Culture.

He is President of the Moscow Tolstoy Society.