

Emperors in Mirrors Are Smaller Than They Appear

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In his novel *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy primarily tracks a segment of elite Russian society through the events of the Napoleonic Wars during the early nineteenth century. In addition to following such figures as Prince Andrew Bolkonski and Pierre Bezukhov, Tolstoy also takes the liberty to tackle another supposedly elite figure: Napoleon Bonaparte himself. However unlike a more purely historical text, Tolstoy isn't quite so interested in Napoleon's strategic prowess, his charisma, or rise--Tolstoy wishes to show the opposite of those aspects. He portrays Emperor Napoleon as being the exact opposite of his lofty elite position: he is simply a *slave* among many men in a vast universe. Napoleon is not the only so-called leader reduced to such lowly status, as Tolstoy broadly asserts that "a king is history's slave" (Tolstoy 537). Tolstoy will culminate all of these aspects--the history, the microcosm and macrocosm, and the characters--in his illustration of the Battle of Borodino.

Further, Tolstoy's beliefs regarding the so-called powerful rulers, those he considers slaves, correlates to his vision of history in general. Tolstoy's vision is as follows: any single incident within the war between Russia and France had an "incalculable number of causes" (536). He is reacting against what he perceives as being the popular trend of historians, and presumably other people when speaking about history. Tolstoy describes how "the historians tell us with naive assurance that its causes were the wrongs inflicted on the Duke of Oldenburg, the nonobservance of the Continental System, the ambition of Napoleon, the firmness of Alexander, the mistakes of the diplomats, and so on" (535). Here he shows how those with the opposing view of history tend to cite a small, finite number of causes, or even one single cause, as being the impetus for this or that event.

The popular method of historical inquiry, which Tolstoy rejects, is easy to comprehend and comforting in discussion on one hand. To translate this style of inquiry into logical terms, it is much more pleasurable, much easier, to conclude that ‘Napoleon did x , therefore y followed necessarily; if Napoleon had not done x , then y would not have occurred.’ That line of reasoning follows a strict course of cause and effect. On the other hand, the prospect of infinity, be it in mathematics, science, or philosophy, proves to be very troubling; it is daunting to tackle the concept of infinity itself. One may question whether to be incalculable is to be infinite, necessarily. That question is necessary in itself, along with the further question: does history have just an “incalculable number of causes” or actually an *infinite* number?

One way to understand these two words and their related questions, is to consider them once again in terms of ease of comprehension. Since Tolstoy rejects simplistic interpretations of history, he wants readers to understand that history is a very intricate matter. Perhaps, Tolstoy purposefully chose to employ incalculable rather than infinite in order to honor the view that history is made up of many small parts. If something in general is incalculable, for instance a problem in mathematics, then of course one could not rightly calculate it--the answer to dividing any number by zero is not even a numerical answer, but it is just “undefined.” With a fraction like that, at least there are two definite numbers which are singled out and put into play: the number being divided, and the zero. The issue comes in attempting to find an answer.

Although, Tolstoy applies “incalculable” to a number of historical causes, and due to the fact that history progresses forward with some linear order, perhaps “infinite” is a more accessible term. As discussed, dividing one number by zero is incalculable--in this situation one could randomly pick any number they like. Yet “infinity” implies a progression which goes on

forever, with each successive thing being related to the thing before it. Again considering numbers, there is the image of a “number line,” or the decimal places of pi. History might be likened more to the infinite then, since it goes on in a similarly indefinite way (history is always in the process of being made with each passing day). It is easier to consider history as infinite, and being made up of an infinite number of causes, rather than being made up of an incalculable number of causes.

On principle, incalculability and infinity are not the same necessarily, but in the context of Tolstoy and historical causes, Tolstoy may not be applying the most accurate concept. If history contains so many factors as he says, and the choice is between either infinity or incalculability, infinity fits the nature of history better. History is a little more like a constantly expanding number line. Assuming that all of history comprises an incalculable number of causes presents a troubling problem, namely that there would essentially be no point in discussing history. One could never say anything truthful about history even if they establish their conclusion(s) from a solid foundation of research. In fact the foundation couldn't be solid, if history is indeed so unknowable.

More than that, there are other issues which arise as Tolstoy speaks further on his theory, which even show potential contradictions. On one hand Leo Tolstoy seems to believe that history runs a mysterious course humans can never truly know or shape, but on the other hand he presents two ways in which historical events in the making may have occurred differently, and how they came into being. In the first case Tolstoy is aiming at figures such as the Emperors Napoleon and Alexander, saying “every act of theirs, which appears to them an act of their own will, is in an historical sense involuntary and is related to the whole course of history and

predestined from eternity” (538). Tolstoy’s language is intriguing, and it is evident that he chooses his diction purposefully; “predestined from eternity” is the most curious part of this passage. Predestination may be a term more commonly associated with Christian theology than historical inquiry, which is why it is a strange concept for Tolstoy to introduce into the latter subject. When he says “predestined from eternity,” it implies that there is a master plan for all of history, and a master planner. Unless he wishes a reader to consider History itself as being a godlike figure, or a collection of mythological Fates who have spun threads of history since before the dawn of humanity, it is unclear what he means. It would be one thing to say that once a series of events happens in history, certain other events are sure to follow--for example, ‘since the French won at Austerlitz, a battle within Russia, like Borodino must necessarily follow.’ It is another to say that the Battles of Austerlitz and Borodino were predestined since *eternity*.

Insofar as the battles happen, Tolstoy goes so far as to say that the actions of any given lowly army corporal would not only prevent those engagements, but indeed end Napoleon’s conquest. He posits the following:

the wish...of this or that French corporal to serve a second term appears as much a cause as Napoleon’s refusal to withdraw his troops...for had he not wished to serve, and had a second, a third, and a thousandth corporal and private also refused, there would have been so many less men in Napoleon’s army and the war could not have occurred. (536)

Tolstoy’s proposition appears to directly contradict everything that he theorizes about the way historical events occur, and how humans influence them. It implies that after one or a miniscule number of corporals--a rank with extremely limited influence--refused further service, it would

initiate a chain reaction throughout the whole *Grande Armée*, whereby many more corporals refuse. Not only is it corporals, but he assumes that the privates under the corporals would also stop serving, due to the actions of the corporals, and there wouldn't be an army to fight the battles and war, Q.E.D. While Tolstoy claims that his theory is divergent from the historians, he actually does what they might do, linking a major alternative outcome (the disintegration of the French army) back to a smaller identifiable event (one corporal's refusal).

Furthermore, it is most bizarre to try to imagine how Tolstoy's example of the corporals fits in with his theory that history is "predestined from eternity." Not to speak of the issue of who or what, exactly, is spinning the annals of history in the first place, what would be the reason to predestine the internal dismemberment of Napoleon's army from eternity, after already having predestined his domination of Europe? This concept almost makes sense as a Greek tragedy, or the admission of mythological Fates, but these are out of place in *War and Peace*. The more likely entity given the context would be God. Characters speak of God at various points. Yet, although Pierre and Prince Andrew do contemplate God and Freemasonry on occasion, and Mary is deeply involved with her spirituality, classical Greek aspects don't fit into their beliefs, nor Tolstoy's positions on history. Tolstoy himself, through the narrative voice of the story, does not appear to subscribe to a "will of God" worldview.

Once again to revisit a previous statement, it ought to appear logical to say that in a conquest for control over Europe which progresses from west to east, a battle in a more easterly quarter would come after one in the west. A victory in the west would naturally carry the victor eastward, or entice them to continue on in whichever direction they are going. Tolstoy could say that this is an example which bolsters his point, that Napoleon (in this case) is little more than a

slave. Since the French had already determined their final geographic goal on the European continent--indeed the farthest eastern reaches of it--then Napoleon must adhere to that objective. Tolstoy might say that Napoleon's army carries Napoleon along, and Tolstoy could also question if the army is indeed Napoleon's, or that of the soldiers themselves.

Tolstoy claims that the latter case is true. He asserts that in fact, Napoleon could only counteract this marching momentum at peril to himself. Tolstoy speaks about how "the French army pushed onto Moscow, its goal, its impetus ever increasing as it neared its aim..." (733). He specifically uses the example of "the velocity of a falling body increase[ing] as it approaches the earth" later in the sentence. Napoleon is like a single man trying to stop a speeding train--it could not happen. The passions of the French soldiers to continue in their march towards Moscow would promptly overwhelm Napoleon. Tolstoy uses the language of physics to describe how Napoleon is powerless to alter course by the time his army is approaching the end goal.

On the other hand, while it is possible that Bonaparte couldn't have kept his army back from Moscow without severe consequences--in other words that he couldn't counteract the velocity and momentum gained over time--it is important to consider how that momentum begins. It is certainly of great import because it affords the Emperor Napoleon with some agency. This "beginning," historically, is the 1793 Siege of Toulon. The context of this siege is that a British fleet and expeditionary force had taken over the southern French port of Toulon by taking advantage of the prevalence of French Royalists, or those who were against the new Republicans such as Napoleon. Napoleon chose to visit a fellow Corsican who was in the French army staff at Toulon, and who informed Napoleon that the officer in charge of artillery needed a replacement due to wounds he received. Thus, Napoleon, a twenty-four year old captain, began to reform the

efforts to retake Toulon. He augmented the numbers and effectiveness of the artillery, gaining the admiration on both sides. "He was extraordinarily active and demonstrated an uncommon degree of fearlessness. He was always with his men and...he never left his batteries" said one French general. Even the commander in chief of the British forces, whom Napoleon and his troops took prisoner during a counterattack, said of Napoleon's men that "with soldiers like these, you could conquer the world" (napoleonicsociety.com).

Through these quotes, it is clear to see that Napoleon has the ability to inspire others with his charisma and effectiveness in battle and command. During the Siege of Toulon, not only is Napoleon Bonaparte able to inspire his own men or other French commanders, but he inspires the very enemy commander he is pitted against. Although this background information on Toulon dates back to a period before the events of *War and Peace*, it is still necessary to consider it because Tolstoy brings up the siege in his book. Tolstoy places the formative siege, and Bonaparte's role at Toulon, directly into the mind of Prince Andrew Bolkonski. Before the Battle of Austerlitz, Prince Andrew spends time contemplating and making predictions about the coming fight. "Tomorrow perhaps...I have a presentiment that for the first time I shall have to show all I can do'...And his fancy pictured the battle, its loss, the concentration of fighting at one point, and the hesitation of all the commanders. And then that happy moment, that Toulon for which he had so long waited, presents itself to him at last" (229). The result is that during the battle, the following day, Prince Andrew takes advantage of a hopeless situation in the interest of bringing glory upon himself. When much of the Russian army is fleeing at Austerlitz, Andrew rushes to take hold of a fallen battle standard and thinks to himself "here it is!" (243)--in his mind he is initiating his own Toulon.

He imagines that he is revolutionizing the army's efforts, will produce victory, and make himself known to all, just like Napoleon. It is curious that Tolstoy attributes Prince Andrew's passion for glory and zeal in battle to Napoleon at Toulon, especially if one compares Andrew to Nicholas Rostov. Nicholas greatly admires the Russian Emperor Alexander, so the Emperor drives him. Although giving this same motive, that of zeal for the emperor, to both characters would partially conflate them, Tolstoy makes Prince Andrew leap into action simply based on the concepts of "honor" and "glory" themselves, rather than consideration of a particular physical entity like Alexander; unless the flag inspires him. Historically, battle standards were an integral part of a unit's honor and spirit in battle, so a falling standard would be a plausible motive in and of itself. However, Tolstoy chooses to grant Napoleon Bonaparte agency in influencing events, and even his opponents, by making Andrew attempt a Toulon-esque feat. Napoleon may lose some control over his forces and the forces of history later on, he is the one to have set them in motion originally, especially at Toulon. Tolstoy's characters share a startling level of knowledge on and admiration for Napoleon, who is supposed to be a slave.

In addition to being influenced by Napoleon and his victory at Toulon, Prince Andrew also describes incidents where Napoleon served as a driving force and shaped history. Further, at Anna Pavlovna's soiree, Pierre shares his unpopular opinion in support of Napoleon. "The execution of the Duc d'Enghien,' declared Monsieur Pierre, 'was a political necessity, and it seems to me that Napoleon showed greatness of soul by not fearing to take on himself the whole responsibility of that deed'" (16). After quoting Napoleon more than once, Prince Andrew helps Pierre by citing examples of Napoleon's greatness. "One must admit,' continued Prince Andrew, 'that Napoleon as a man was great on the bridge of Arcola, and in the hospital at Jaffa where he

gave his hand to the plague-stricken...” (18). Thus, even before Prince Andrew is at war with Napoleon’s *Grande Armée*, and hasn’t yet fantasized about a Toulon moment, he still defends Napoleon. His position is unpopular but he stands by it; Pierre adopts a similar position, as he doesn’t feel the same about Napoleon as other guests.

To say nothing of the actual substance or quality of Prince Andrew and Pierre’s claims at the gathering, just the fact that two Russians voice an opinion which is unpopular in their country in defense of Napoleon, suggests that Napoleon is significantly influential. A slave is supposed to lack influence. What, then, is Tolstoy intending to do? Apparently he contradicts his own charge that Napoleon is a slave by showing that his influence transcends battle lines? As described before, Tolstoy plants Toulon in Prince Andrew’s mind. Not only that--at the same time, he is planting it in the reader’s mind as well. It serves as a kind of link between the prince and Napoleon. Napoleon’s historical significance is funneled through Andrew to the reader, which seems to elevate him from slave status to someone whose deeds are worth aspiring to on the battlefield. Although Napoleon’s ardent leadership at Toulon and Andrew’s impassioned charge at Austerlitz share some general similarities, and Tolstoy makes the connection more obvious, there is a less conspicuous yet striking relationship between Prince Andrew and Napoleon at Arcola. While speaking at the first soiree, Prince Andrew operates under the assumption, contemporary to the time, that Napoleon took hold of a dazzling French flag at Arcola, and personally led his army to victory across the bridge against Austrian defenders. Yet the reality of the Battle of Arcola is different. While Napoleon did take up colors at one point in an attempt to lead a successful crossing, neither he nor his assaulting force managed to get far in sufficient numbers. Despite the fact that Arcola was a tactical defeat for the French, it was also a

strategic French victory, and Napoleon helped all of Europe see it as a glorious French triumph (obscurerattles.blogspot.com).

Consequently, it should be immediately obvious how much the real Arcola and Tolstoy's Andrew Bolkonski at Austerlitz share an uncanny resemblance to each other. It is possible that during the time Leo Tolstoy was writing *War and Peace* he was unaware just how well Arcola fit actual events, for he never gives an obvious nod to it like Toulon, and never mentions Arcola in conjunction with Austerlitz. However, it is also easily plausible that he used Napoleon Bonaparte at Arcola as an inspiration for Andrew Bolkonski at Austerlitz, based on the similarities of both taking up flags, both trying to lead thus far unsuccessful troops in a charge, and both being unsuccessful. If so, then Tolstoy does not make an overt connection, which is strange because it could support Tolstoy's view about how events can happen any which way, despite what leaders intend with word or action.

Herein lies a dilemma. Tolstoy most likely chooses to bring attention to Toulon before Austerlitz because it represents an ideal situation. Andrew imagines a glorious fantasy where the French are taking the field, and the Russian chain of command is disintegrating, but he saves the day. This dream transforms into reality at Austerlitz--until the prince falls, and his ideal fantasy is cut short. He did not accomplish anything, just like Napoleon in his assault at Arcola. The opportunity for glory isn't supposed to end in Andrew's mind, but it does. However on the other hand, the real history of Arcola fits Tolstoy's belief that leaders are really powerless. It foreshadows Andrew's failure at Austerlitz, since Prince Andrew himself mentions Arcola in the beginning of the novel, and replicates it later.

While Toulon, Arcola, and Austerlitz are interesting all on their own, in truth the main attraction is the Battle of Borodino. Not only does it garner a significant amount of attention from those who study Napoleonic era history, but Tolstoy also ventures to put forth his own interpretation (or reinterpretation) of it. As with Austerlitz, Tolstoy tackles the battle from a specific standpoint, one which is more intimate than a historical text and its broad overview might be. To a great extent Tolstoy's version of Borodino is the final performance which follows the dress rehearsals that are his prior musings about history and free will. As he puts the Battle of Borodino into the spotlight, everything he has said thus far, even if questionable before, appears as if it is nigh impossible to counter now. The other battle scenes, combined with his philosophy on history, introduce and argue his point. Tolstoy takes advantage of the opportunity to employ Borodino as a convenient case of saving the best for last. In short, his depiction of the Battle of Borodino is Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece. It is important not to jump too hastily, and declare Tolstoy perfectly correct all at once because of Borodino; likewise it is also important to use Borodino as the example to track his strongest points and method of argumentation.

First, Tolstoy makes it clear early on that Napoleon's expectations for the engagement are meaningless. In fact, this futility is true before the battle begins, since his plan does not bode well for French forces. The Napoleon prior to and during Borodino is not the same inspiring genius, savior, and hero of France that he was at Toulon. Tolstoy paints this picture in a very meticulous way:

The batteries placed on the spot chosen by Napoleon...102 guns in all...were to open fire and shower shells on the Russian fleches and redoubts. This could not be done, as from the spots selected by Napoleon the projectiles did not carry to the Russian works, and

those 102 guns shot into the air until the nearest commander, contrary to Napoleon's instructions, moved them forward. (Tolstoy 697)

Recall that Napoleon gained his fame in part due to his competent implementation of artillery support at the Siege of Toulon. The French artillery guns, under the direction of a prior, superior officer, were too far back from their targets to hit effectively, so they provided little assistance. Hitherto young and insignificant Captain Napoleon Bonaparte recognized this grave error and reversed it so that the guns could provide a significant amount of support. Tolstoy repeats this segment of the man's history, a success from Napoleon's past, but reverses the roles. It is not Napoleon who fixes the problem, but rather he must be corrected himself by a subordinate. This contradiction is somewhat less shocking for Tolstoy's Napoleon, because Tolstoy already voices his doubts about Napoleon's true significance. Yet it is diametrically opposed to one's expectations of Napoleon as the historical figure. That is ultimately what Tolstoy is doing after all, challenging the popularly understood versions of historical events and figures.

As if Napoleon committing to the same failure near the end of his military career that he corrected at the beginning of it doesn't carry enough of Tolstoy's case in the one point, Tolstoy continues to point out flaws in the Emperor Napoleon's plan. Tolstoy concludes that "not one of the orders in the disposition was, or could be, executed" (698), and this is reflected in the course of the battle. Once again the lens through which Tolstoy lets the reader view Borodino and Napoleon is detailed and intimate. Tolstoy describes how "the sun...struck straight into Napoleon's face...sometimes shouts were heard...Napoleon...saw smoke and men, sometimes his own and sometimes Russians, but when he looked again with the naked eye, he could not tell" (712). There is a clear sense of confusion during the battle from *Napoleon's* perspective, not just

other characters'. This is noteworthy. Until Borodino, Tolstoy only describes the disorientating effects of the battlefield from the point of view of characters like Prince Andrew, for instance at Austerlitz. While Pierre, of course, does find himself in the midst of a raging battle for the redoubt at Borodino, and experiences plenty of confusion, Borodino is really the first time that Tolstoy reveals a blind, deaf, and dumb aspect to Napoleon.

Such a revelation as this is particularly intriguing because of how Pierre and Napoleon differ yet are affected similarly. Pierre is a civilian, unaccustomed to major, dangerous battles let alone any military life. He ventures inside the battle and sometimes he is unable to recognize who is friend or foe once the redoubt is directly contested. This confusion is understandable given the aforementioned circumstances. On the other hand, Napoleon is fully invested in military matters. He is experienced with both serving and leading, and accustomed to the dangers of combat based on his past battlefield experience. At Borodino, Tolstoy's Napoleon is very much the same as Pierre. The characters' backgrounds with the military are completely different but they are equally dumbfounded and unable to fully understand what is happening around them. Tolstoy doesn't do this by accident. He purposefully makes the event too big for even Napoleon to grasp with his senses. This confusion confirms what Tolstoy posits by way of Prince Andrew's perspective, when the character first views Napoleon up close following Austerlitz. At that time, Andrew believes that the expansiveness of the sky and the world outdo the Emperor Napoleon. Comparing that observation to Borodino, Tolstoy portrays Napoleon simply as a man among many men in the conflict, each with their own wishes.

Furthermore, it is important to discuss the matter of personal will, freedoms, motivations, interests, and loyalties in the context of macrocosms and microcosms, because that is precisely

what Tolstoy is doing at Borodino. For example the macrocosm of the whole Battle of Borodino versus the microcosm of Napoleon and Pierre has already been covered. The macrocosm of Napoleon's whole army as opposed to the microcosm of him alone comes to mind, too. The first example is still fresh, but the juxtaposition of the whole French Army to its one leader comes up nearer to the beginning of this writing. The reason why these earlier instances must reappear is because they mark two correlating points where Tolstoy considers factors such as personal will versus a leader's will. He charges that the former can negate the latter, through the examples of Pierre and Napoleon.

Pierre is a singular gentleman in Russian society, who is largely free to do what he likes. He isn't a serf or a slave with a master ruling directly over him, certainly. Neither does he enlist in the army, so he has no military officers, nor obligations, to thrust him or be thrust into a battle. The night before the Battle of Borodino, Pierre surprises Prince Andrew, who questions his motivation for coming. Pierre says "it interests me, I wish to see the battle" (687). Even though Pierre doesn't need to be there, he still puts himself into the battle out of curiosity. The thought of a Russian gentleman voluntarily attending a battle in which the fate of his home country, and its ability to fend off the invading army, is in question, is astounding. Yet perhaps it wasn't just curiosity driving Pierre to Borodino, but a collage of various other emotions, philosophies, and interests. They may be impossible to describe or pinpoint--one could even be very simple, the desire to visit his acquaintance Andrew Bolkonski. Therefore Pierre is a sort of microcosm of causes, loyalties, and feelings all swirling around inside of him.

In a similar way, the shift can now be made to the French Army, and Napoleon Bonaparte. It follows from what has been said that Napoleon himself, as a singular man, is a

microcosm just like Pierre. He may desire glory, wealth, historical recognition, unprecedented power--any number of tangible and intangible things. Initially Napoleon is capable of acting with a degree of autonomy and personal initiative, early in his career. However, as he expands his military and political power, that autonomy and personal initiative begin to shrink notably. Not only must he attempt to manage the entire, massive army of the French Empire, but the French Empire itself. Compared to the broad macrocosm of everyone Napoleon controls (the Empire and the military), Napoleon's microcosm is quite limited when one considers how the individual microcosms of every French citizen, dignitary, soldier's, and officer's lie within that broad macrocosm. Even beyond France, there would be the macrocosm-and-microcosms of Russia and Russians to outweigh Napoleon, then of course other allied powers would add their own weight. This kind of titanic collision of motivations, wills, and so forth is completely stunning. Thus, what Tolstoy has said about the "incalculability of causes" in history begins to make sense. It is not possible to pinpoint, say, Pierre's or Napoleon's microcosm. Furthermore it is exponentially more difficult--impossible--to do so with everyone remotely involved in Napoleonic era affairs across Europe. Thus, it is right for Tolstoy to use the term "incalculable," when he says that "an incalculable number of causes present themselves" as the causes of historical events (536). One might assume that the entities within the macrocosms (the microcosms), for instance the soldiers of the French invasion army, are unified in purpose with no will, thoughts, or loyalties of their own. The tendency to generalize that 'The French Army beat the Russian Army' or 'Napoleon beat Alexander' is a testament to this. Yet, suppositions like these are vague and they don't take into account the complexity of motives for everyone involved. Indeed maybe in this light, the French corporals could foil Napoleon's efforts by refusing to volunteer for another tour of duty

(536). Perhaps many of the French soldiers joined the army only to honor familial tradition, to avoid poverty, or like Pierre, because their friends were doing it, or they thought it would be exciting. They are not necessarily loyal to Napoleon, they wouldn't necessarily have the same goals, and may not even hate their foe.

Tolstoy states that "history, that is, the unconscious, general, hive life of mankind, uses every moment of the life of kings as a tool for its own purposes" (537). "Hive life" is an effective way in which to explain the macrocosm-microcosm phenomenon as it relates to the characters of *War and Peace*, the war, Napoleon, and his army. The individual characters occupy cellular microcosms in the hive, which is a macrocosm. Leo Tolstoy presents such an image in order to bring an abstract concept to a more colloquial level. Similarly, attempting to comprehend the sheer number of human wills and motivations involved in the enormous battle of microcosms and macrocosms is sure to leave one mentally exhausted. That is why, once again, the Battle of Borodino is Tolstoy's masterpiece demonstration. He shapes Borodino into an effective illustration because it is limited--it isn't directly addressing a vast intellectual problem, history itself, or the whole war or campaign--but it is also still a major event. It is a limited macrocosm with a somewhat more easily comprehended set of participants, and thus microcosms. The one man Napoleon watching regiments, made up of many men, march into combat at Borodino, personalizes Tolstoy's points and assertions. How can Napoleon's microcosm really dictate to all of those multiple microcosms? Likewise, how much of a great emperor could he really be if he can't seem to be in control at Borodino? These are the questions which Tolstoy wants the reader to ask. He wants the reader to question their understanding of history by questioning such a prominent, seemingly powerful figure as Napoleon Bonaparte. Still, challenging historical

beliefs, and the study of those historical beliefs, is not necessarily Tolstoy's only purpose. Borodino and history help Tolstoy direct the reader's attention towards deep philosophical problems, namely that of the interaction between one and many. The problem of how one and many work together persists from ancient Greek philosophy. In Plato's *Parmenides*, the dialogue's namesake, as well as Zeno and Socrates, open a dialogue on the matter. They are unable to produce any clear answers to their questions, yet they do conclude that future generations must consider the problem themselves. Although Tolstoy does not address the issue directly, or in a strictly philosophical way like Plato, he does use aspects of this timeless philosophy to his advantage in analyzing history, Napoleon, and Borodino. History is his lens to both approach and exhibit the old problem. Tolstoy shows how each of these, namely history, Napoleon (or essentially any single character), and Borodino contains one and many. Furthermore Tolstoy parallels the inability to fully understand the one and the many to the incalculability of the microcosms and macrocosms present in single peoples, empires, and battles.

However, the scope of this thesis is to primarily focus on Tolstoy's literary work, not the ideas of Plato, nor lasting philosophical problems. Due to the complicated nature of those issues and of concepts like microcosms and macrocosms, Tolstoy uses more limited examples in order to clarify what he is saying. Borodino is limited, but it allows Tolstoy to focus his general theories about slave-kings and incalculable causes into one picture, the battle itself. Yet Tolstoy focuses his attention, and the reader's attention, on a very personal example post-Borodino that is almost a masterpiece in its own right due to the simple intimacy. When the French detain Pierre, he meets the captive peasant soldier Platon Karataev, and his dog. Tolstoy describes Platon

amiably through Pierre's point of view, stating that "his physical strength and agility during the first days of his imprisonment were such that he seemed not to know what fatigue and sickness meant" (860). Further, Pierre says that Platon "remained in his [Pierre's] mind a most vivid and precious memory and the personification of everything Russian..." (860). To Tolstoy, as to Pierre, Platon is like a model to the Russian people. Platon, socially speaking, is just a peasant while Pierre is a gentleman connected to high Petersburg society. Yet Platon emerges as an amazingly resilient and spirited "personification of everything Russian." Within the novel Pierre has sought and not found wisdom through Freemasonry, but then remarks that Platon's "proverbs, of which his talk was full...acquire a significance of profound wisdom" (860). By all expectations, the educated enlightenment-seeking gentleman should be influencing the peasant, not the reverse case.

Tolstoy does not only use Platon as a personification of Russia or of Russians as a whole, but also as a simple personified representation of his concepts regarding history. While it may be difficult to grasp the more esoteric parts of Tolstoy's epilogues, for instance the relationship of microcosms and macrocosms and the one and many, Tolstoy's examples effectively illustrate what he believes. Tolstoy believes that an expectedly unremarkable peasant figure such as Platon is just as important, or even more important, than people like Napoleon and Pierre. In the same book which chronicles the members and drama of Russian aristocracy, renowned generals and conquests, and theories about history, Tolstoy still features Platon as a sort of Russian hero, a gem. To Tolstoy, Napoleon is not really a gem--he is "history's slave" like other emperors and so-called great people. Tolstoy wants to make it clear that Napoleon is but a single man, and there are many other people who are remarkable and unique. One way to consider this role

reversal is that the people under Napoleon, in fact, loom over him, and dictate the course of events which are then attributed to Napoleon. The other way to look at it derives from Tolstoy's description of Platon--he is round. So in this second interpretation, it is not a matter of people falling into in over-under hierarchies, and not a role reversal at all. Rather, those like Napoleon, Pierre, and Platon all surround each other and are surrounded on the same level.

Tolstoy's views about history, as expressed in *War and Peace*, are reasonable and valuable for historical inquiry--even for other disciplines as well. Leo Tolstoy makes bold claims like "a king is history's slave," and proposes scenarios like much of Napoleon's army refusing to fight and serve again, which seem preposterous and appear to contradict what he believes; he may use words with some vague intention initially. It is right to challenge him at some points, and one may even charge that he would be disappointed if he was accepted at face value. Still, even if what Tolstoy says is questionable, he shows what he is thinking, and it is difficult to argue with his presentation then. Is it easier to think of history in the context of steadily progressing infinity rather than incalculability? While the infinite *may* be likened to history (especially in the theory that history is circular), it is now understandable how and why Tolstoy utilizes the concept of the incalculable. Tolstoy prefers to consider the incalculably small, or in other words the infinitesimal, over the infinitely large. For instance Platon represents the infinitesimal in history, whereas Napoleon represents the infinitely large. One may wish to think of the relationship in terms of Newton's theory of ultimate equality, but unlike Newton, Tolstoy approaches the matter in the name of history.

A dedicated analysis shows that Tolstoy has a clear intention to revolutionize how one studies, learns, and understands the machinations of history. Even if Tolstoy's enunciations are

questionable, he elaborates with a proof, in the form of examples like Borodino and Platon, and it is difficult to argue with them. It is necessary to periodically challenge preconceived notions, both at a personal level and academically, and in these respects Tolstoy offers a method of doing just that, in a historical context. While Tolstoy focuses primarily on that historical context, is considering a more universal aspect as well. His approach to history is to search for deep and detailed truths rather than only seeing a generalized whole. This approach is beneficial for understanding the complexities of people, ideologies, current events, science, and research.

To restate one question from early in this thesis: if history, its events, and leaders are governed by incalculability, then is there any point to discussing history? Incalculability certainly complicates the matter. Strictly speaking, no one could truly understand why something happened. However on the contrary, incalculability should present *every* reason to discuss history; to search for all of the causes in history, like a philosopher works towards the goal of ultimate truth. Tolstoy inspires one to search for and appreciate the little known and hidden details in history, or even other disciplines, in a journey towards clarity. Of course there is another question: is history, as Napoleon Bonaparte once said, “a set of lies agreed upon?” In some ways perhaps it is, yet Tolstoy exhibits the spirit and vigilance one must adopt in order to avoid such a pitfall, and advance towards truth.

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