

THE CONCEPTS OF "EGOISM" AND "DEGRADATION" IN THE FIGURATIVE SYSTEM OF THE NOVEL "WAR AND PEACE"

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Abstract

This article discusses issues related to the interpretation of the concept of "selfishness" and the issues raised by Leo Tolstoy in this area. The issues of the formation of the worldview of the famous writer are considered, as well as the evolution of the worldview of the great writer in this matter, which eventually led Tolstoy to create images reflecting a certain philosophical position of the author himself.

Keywords: non-resistance, tenets of Christianity, love against evil, biblical truths, evolution of consciousness, denial of some canons of Christianity, excommunication, salvation through forgiveness

Introduction

The epic novel "War and Peace" is recognized as an example of a psychological novel, where Leo Tolstoy examines the interaction of various human feelings, emotions and psychological experiences from different angles. The author deeply explores the inner world of his characters, the cause-and-effect relationship of their actions and decisions, on which numerous storylines are built.

The natural result of the "I-concept" should be considered one of the most common forms of social relationships "egoism", which is the basis of human success, but deceptive well-being for various authors (F. S. Fitzgerald "The Great Gatsby", A. P. Chekhov "Ionich"), for others—the cause of loneliness or rejection by society (F. M. Fitzgerald "The Great Gatsby", A. P. Chekhov "Ionich"). Dostoevsky "Crime and Punishment", A. P. Chekhov "The Man in the Case").

The theme of selfishness is often considered in many literary works of Leo Tolstoy. In the novel "Anna Karenina", one of the characters of Steve Oblonsky, due to his selfishness and carelessness, finds himself completely alone.

The "I-concept" in this perspective plays the role of an organizing idea, which embodies a causal relationship with the ideological essence of some characters, who in the final works come to complete degradation and physical end.

Selfishness and loneliness are always interrelated, acting both at the level of complementarity and at the level of causation. Egoism, by its very nature, is focused on a person—an egoist who, in an effort to achieve results related only to himself, voluntarily or involuntarily pushes others away from him, creating isolation and an atmosphere of loneliness around him, where the state of "I" cannot fill the space of "We".

In the novel "War and Peace", the manifestation of egoism, its nature and consequence of the



egoistic attitude towards others by Leo Tolstoy are used as a tool for creating numerous conflicts, on which the plot of the entire novel is based. Moreover, egoism is shown by the author as the cause of subsequent degradation, against the background of the manifestation of "altruism" in other characters that is absolutely opposite to the human form of relationships, which will be discussed below.

The formation of human morality is influenced by factors that *"are subject to the formation of such integrative characteristics as instincts, temperament, excitability, intelligence and memory, a tendency to a certain type of activity, ability and talents, general character traits such as kindness and cheerfulness, sullenness and malice, and such emotional reactions as love and compassion." hatred and rage, the instinct of self-preservation and the instinct of self-sacrifice – selfishness and altruism*¹.

Unlike F. M. Dostoevsky, who believed that in man, in his nature, good and evil are always present and oppose each other, L. N. Tolstoy believed that the predominant principle in human nature is good, and egoism is a loophole for the penetration into the human essence of evil and its development in it.

In the novel "War and Peace" Leo Tolstoy, using the antithesis technique, presents a whole palette of images that are opposed to each other on different ideological and thematic levels. The images that represent individualism through the concept of "I" are contrasted with the images that Tolstoy uses to reveal the concept of "sobornost" through the concept of "We". Accordingly, it is necessary to consider the division of images into a group representing an egoistic form of social behavior, and a group of images with an altruistic form of worldview.

This, of course, will primarily focus on the Kuragin family and its most striking, in artistic terms, character—Helen Kuragina.

Tolstoy's characterization of the Kuragins is already given at the beginning of the novel, where he calls the Kuragin family a "family" rather than a "family" in the usual sense of the word.

Each member of the Kuragin family reflects a particular character trait or behavior that gives a general idea of their family as a single organism, which embodies a view of life, family and relationships in the team that is absolutely contrary to Orthodox ethics.

Prince Vasili, the head of the family, a rich and influential nobleman at the imperial court, is also a relative of Count Bezukhov, with whom he maintains a semblance of warm relations because of the inheritance that old Bezukhov has not yet decided who to inherit. Prince Vasili has no love for his three children, and often says that " ... *My children are a burden to my existence. This is my cross. That's how I explain it to myself...*"².

However, when it comes to material well-being or status in society, Kuragin does not adhere to any moral norms, for the sake of his children he is ready to go to any fraud, forgery of documents, slander his neighbors, sacrifice his honor, which happens when he tries to steal Count Bezukhov's inheritance documents in favor of his illegitimate son Pierre.

After the death of his seriously ill father, Pierre Bezukhov, having received a large fortune, as a virtuous and trusting person, falls into the skillfully prepared trap of Vasily Kuragin, who convinced the inexperienced Pierre that his daughter Helene is madly in love with the young count

¹ Academician B. Astaurov, *Nomo sapiens et humanus - Man with a capital letter and the evolutionary genetics of humanity*. Novy Mir No. 10, 1971

² War and Peace. Volume 1, part 1, chapter I. Tolstoy Lev Nikolaevich.



and will become a suitable match for him.

The mother of the family, Princess Alina, is in many ways similar to her husband and shows the same greed, envy and hypocrisy to everyone around her. The princess feels a deep envy for beauty and a profitable marriage even for her daughter (" *She was constantly tormented by envy for her daughter...* ")³.

In the atmosphere of lies, hypocrisy and hypocrisy created by Vasily and Alina Kuragin, three children grew up: Ippolit ("calm fool"), Anatol ("restless fool") and Helen.

The eldest of the family, Ippolit Kuragin, is described by Leo Tolstoy as a young man "*whose face is clouded by idiocy.*" Hippolytus, indeed, was distinguished by that form of stupidity, which was expressed by self-confidence and peevish attitudes towards others. He communicated exclusively in French and did not have anything that would show his commonality with the "Russian" world. Ippolit Kuragin's exceptional hypocrisy and deceitfulness are shown in the salon of Anna Scherer, where he mentioned to the Viscount that Liza Bolkonskaya is his mistress.

Having left for the diplomatic service in Vienna, Ippolit Kuragin, without realizing it, was known among his colleagues as a buffoon, because, without possessing special eloquence, he impresses everyone with his tongue-tied and stupidity.

Elena Kuragina is one of the plot-forming characters of the novel "War and Peace". As mentioned above, this character is contrasted on the principle of antithesis to two others-Natasha Rostova and Marya Bolkonskaya, to create a more distinct contrast against each other. The author's attitude towards Helen is openly contemptuous, despite the creation of a very beautiful image.

Helene appears to us as the most beautiful girl in St. Petersburg ("*...And here she is, the Tsarina of St. Petersburg, Countess Bezukhov, " she said, pointing to Helene as she entered*"⁴), but Tolstoy gives her a different definition, calling her "*a beautiful animal.*" That is, by describing her in this way, the author gives her the definition of a person with the absence of any signs of human ethics and Orthodox upbringing.

Fashion for foreign names has always been present in Russian society, but Tolstoy calling her Helen, of course, gives a reference to her non-Russian worldview (for comparison, A. S. Pushkin in "Eugene Onegin" gives the eldest Larina the Russian-peasant name Tatiana, thereby denoting her "Russianness" and connection with the Russian people).

Helene's departure from Orthodoxy to Catholicism is portrayed by Tolstoy not as a decision to change her religious worldview, but as a rational and individualistic plan that Kuragina needs for an official divorce from Pierre Bezukhov, which will result in the division of Pierre Bezukhov's huge fortune between the spouses. Tolstoy, however, leads the reader to believe that such an act becomes an act of spiritual betrayal, which characterizes Helen as a person who renounces her spiritual, family and social foundations. The very idea of changing religion was instilled in her daughter by her mother Alina, who herself was thinking of going to Catholicism.

Tolstoy does not condemn the very transition from one religion to another, which happens and has happened more than once, but rather the spiritual betrayal of God and, ultimately, of oneself, in order to please one's material interests, which, according to Tolstoy, kills Helen much earlier than her physical end.

The atmosphere of the Kuragin family and the lack of proper upbringing lead Helen, as a result,

³ War and Peace. Volume 3-Tolstoy Lev Nikolaevich, p. 400

⁴ War and Peace. Volume 2- Tolstoy Lev Nikolaevich, part 3, Chapter XV



to a tragic end. Her love affair with her own brother is discussed throughout St. Petersburg, but does not receive proper condemnation, which suggests that the entire secular society is just as depraved and cynical. Further reinforcing his description of Helene as unprincipled and depraved, Tolstoy describes her open love affair with Fyodor Dolokhov, as a result of which she becomes pregnant and, while trying to get rid of the fetus, becomes infected and soon dies.

Helene's behavior, of course, is completely inconsistent with Orthodox culture. Her marriage of convenience to Pierre Bezukhov, her open display of infidelity to her husband, her immoral love affair with her brother—characterize her as a woman completely devoid of any Orthodox Christian values. And, of course, Helen's conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, as the apogee of her degradation, is shown by Tolstoy as a "spiritual betrayal", ending with her death, which is caused by an attempted abortion, which is also always denied by the principles of Orthodox morality.

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