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### Leo Tolstoy's Principle of Non-Resistance to Evil by Violence and Its Criticism in Ivan Ilyin's Philosophy

Igor I. Evlampiev<sup>1</sup>  , Wang Yue<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>*Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation*

<sup>2</sup>*Beihang University, Beijing, China*

 [yevlampiev@mail.ru](mailto:yevlampiev@mail.ru)

**Abstract.** At the outset, Leo Tolstoy viewed the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence as a purely moral commandment, which was obligatory for everyone to observe and lead humanity to perfection. In his later teaching, though, he emphasized the need for people to transition from a lower ‘animalistic’ form of life towards the divine form; his principle of non-resistance to evil by violence could only apply to those who managed such a transition. According to Tolstoy, the divine life means an unmediated spiritual unity of people, enabling them to influence one another directly without any material sources. People who have gained divine life have a more complex and deeper understanding of being. They see the consequences of their actions not only in the short term but also in the future so they can more correctly assess them. Tolstoy argues that in this case, each person sees that evil deeds (even those committed for a good purpose) lead only to a general negative result, while good deeds lead to a positive one. Ivan Ilyin's philosophy states that people's souls are entirely isolated from each other and enclosed in bodies; therefore, purely spiritual stimulation techniques are ineffective. The soul of a villain can be disciplined only through her body with some material sources applied. The research proves that Tolstoy and Ilyin quite correctly develop their systems of ideas based on different metaphysical concepts of man, equally originating from Gnostic Christianity. Tolstoy takes a strictly monistic religious position of the absolute priority of the spiritual principle; Ilyin shares a dualistic metaphysics in which spirit and matter are equal in their value. Both Russian thinkers turn out to be right within the frames of their initial metaphysical assumptions.

**Keywords:** resistance to evil by force, divine life, Gnostic Christianity, Kabbalah

**Author Contribution.** All authors contributed equally to the conception, preparation, and writing of this manuscript.

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## Принцип непротivления злу насилieм Льва Толстого и его критика в философии Ивана Ильина

Игорь И. Евлампиев<sup>1</sup>  , Ван Юе<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет, Российская Федерация

<sup>2</sup>Бэйханский университет, Пекин, Китай

 [yevlampiev@mail.ru](mailto:yevlampiev@mail.ru)

**Аннотация.** В исследовании показано, что Лев Толстой первоначально понимал принцип непротivления злу насилieм как чисто моральную заповедь, обязательную для всех людей и ведущую человечество к совершенству. Но затем в своем учении он сделал акцент на необходимости для каждого человека преобразить свою жизнь из низшей, «животной» формы в божественную форму, и только для людей, осуществивших такое преобразование, признал применимым принцип непротivления. Согласно Толстому, божественная жизнь означает непосредственное духовное единство людей, благодаря чему они имеют возможность прямого духовного влияния друг на друга без материальных средств. Люди, обретшие божественную жизнь, обладают более сложным и глубоким пониманием бытия. Они видят последствия своих поступков не только в ближайшей временной перспективе, но и во всем будущем времени, поэтому они могут более правильно оценивать последствия своих поступков. Толстой утверждает, что в этом случае каждый человек видит, что злые поступки (даже совершенные ради благой цели) ведут только к общему негативному результату, а добрые – к позитивному. Иван Ильин в своей философии утверждал, что души людей полностью обособлены друг от друга и замкнуты в тела, поэтому чисто духовные методы воздействия на других бесполезны, воздействовать на душу злодея можно только через его тело с помощью материальных средств. В работе доказывается, что Толстой и Ильин достаточно правильно развивают свои системы идей, исходя из разных метафизических концепций человека, в равной степени происходящих из гностического христианства. Толстой занимает строго монистичную религиозную позицию абсолютного приоритета духовного начала; Ильин разделяет дуалистическую метафизику, в которой дух и материя оказываются равными по своему значению. Оба русских мыслителя оказываются правы в рамках выбранных ими исходных метафизических предположений.

**Ключевые слова:** непротivление злу насилieм, сопротивление злу силой, божественная жизнь, гностическое христианство, каббала

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Up to now, the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence that Leo Tolstoy used to interpret the teachings of Jesus Christ has been regarded as controversial. It contradicts our reality in that individuals and nations are often forced to resort to physical and military resistance against the enemies encroaching on their dignity and property. Among the Russian philosophers of the early 20th century, almost no one shared the views of Tolstoy. Moreover, an opinion prevailed that it was Tolstoy and his preaching of ‘non-resistance’ that allowed the Bolsheviks and V. Lenin to take over the power in Russia since their opponents (the monarchists and liberals) did not dare to act against this evil with all the required determination. One of the philosophers who expressed this thought as early as 1918, immediately after the Russian revolution, was Nikolai Berdyaev: “...the Russian revolution tends to manifest its own unique triumph of Tolstoyism. He proved an evil genius for Russia, a seducer of it. <...> The world war played itself out as a loss for Russia because it took hold of the Tolstoyan moral attitude towards war. <...> It is necessary to get free from Tolstoy as a moral instructor. The overcoming of Tolstoyism as such represents a recovery of spiritual health for Russia...” [1. P. 277–285].

The most fundamental philosophical rationale for this view was presented by Ivan Ilyin in his renowned book *On Resistance to Evil by Force* (1925). Ilyin gave the following argumentation of his theoretical fight against Tolstoy: “...the pernicious teaching of Count Leo Tolstoy ‘about non-resistance to evil by force’ <...> managed to poison the hearts of several generations in Russia and, imperceptibly spilled over the souls and weakened them in the fight against villains” [2. P. 224].

We will demonstrate that this principle can be explained solely if there is a transition from moral and political to religious and metaphysical points of view. This will reveal the importance of the objections Ilyin expressed against Tolstoy. This article demonstrates that both thinkers have a point, and what we choose – non-resistance to evil by violence or forceful resistance – depends on how we

understand the human being, their attitude towards other people, and the Divine Principle of Existence, or God. Two metaphysical models appear to be possible in this respect; accordingly, two forms of fighting evil exist. We will reveal that, to a certain degree, both principles can be accepted as true and mutually complementing within the particular understanding of the history of humankind.

### **The principle of non-resistance as the law of divine life**

Tolstoy described his path to the principle of non-resistance in his book *Confession* (1879, publ. 1882, 1884), but the detailed description of the principle per se he included in the book *My Religion (What I Believe)* (1884). The latter represents Tolstoy's first significant work on his religious and philosophical views. He believed, though, that he was not creating a teaching of his own but was reconstructing the actual teaching of Christ distorted by the history of both the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Tolstoy accepted the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel according to St. Matthew as the foundation of Christ's teachings, in which Christ gives moral commandments to people. The first and foremost commandment is "resist not evil" (Matt. 5:38–39), and it instructs people not to retaliate in case of any insults and evil but either bear with them or respond with good deeds.

The Orthodox Church accepts this commandment and its meaning, but the Church regards it as an idealistic requirement that cannot be fully met in earthly life. In contrast, the writer believes Christ's teachings were intended to acknowledge this commandment as mandatory for everyone. Tolstoy maintains that the actual teaching of Christ aims at the transformation of earthly life to make it entirely perfect and turn our world into Heaven. The teaching of Christ is the teaching about a human's perfection in her immediate terrestrial life and history: "The establishment of the kingdom of God depended upon our personal efforts in the practice of Jesus' doctrine <...>. The whole doctrine of Jesus has but one object: to establish peace – the kingdom of God – among men. <...> If men will only believe in the doctrine of Jesus and practise it, the reign of peace will come upon earth – not that peace which is the work of man, partial, precarious, and at the mercy of chance; but the peace that is all-pervading, inviolable, and eternal" [3. P. 108].

Tolstoy's doctrine gained popularity and was widely discussed after his book *My Religion* was published. Most of the reviews of Tolstoy contained severe criticism; some prominent works criticizing his teaching were written by Nikolai Berdyaev, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Sergei Bulgakov, and Vasily Rozanov.

Tolstoy likely accepted criticism of his doctrine. In 1888, he published a treatise *On Life* with a new version of his views [4. P. 288–341]. The new version of Tolstoy's doctrine marked a distinction between the two levels of human existence, i. e. the mundane and the divine life. According to Tolstoy, a person lives a low 'animalistic' life if she pursues her own benefits and egoistic terrestrial interests: "The life of an individual striving only for her own welfare amid an

infinite number of similar individuals destroying each other and destroying themselves, is an evil and an absurdity, and the true life cannot be such” [5. P. 20]. A human’s reason is able to find and point the way to a faithful life. One can overcome all the negative aspects of life and reach its highest level by shifting the idea of the greatest good *from oneself to all other people*. The commandment of love is an essential addition to the commandment of non-resistance to evil by violence because the latter is a forbidding principle in its essence. This was emphasized by Tolstoy’s numerous critics who pointed out that his doctrine had no instructions for an effective and active mode of life [6]. The principles of non-resistance and love for one’s neighbors should be interpreted as one whole that presumes continuous doing good to people. In this sense, the focus of the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence shifts from the word ‘non-resistance’ to the word ‘force’: Tolstoy rejects force, but he does not reject the need for active life, including active resistance to evil but solely by kindness and love [7. P. 263–264].

The spiritual vs. material opposition is not the primary point in the differentiation between lower and higher life. The essential aspect in this respect is the radical transformation that occurs in a person’s understanding of herself and her relationship with others and the world as the result of the transfer from ‘animalistic’ to divine life. In his *On Life* treatise, Tolstoy reveals that people discover the illusory nature of their independence from others when they embrace divine life. According to Tolstoy, the higher life is the life in unity and literally ‘in fusion’ with others.

Upon entering the higher life, the relationship with the world transforms, and the world takes a new and different form. Tolstoy pays particular attention to the transformation of time from earthly to divine life [8]. The shortcoming of earthly time is that its moments are split from and ‘force’ out each other. The general structure of time leads to separation and opposition of the past, present, and future. Such characteristics are not found in the time structure of divine life: all moments are ‘in fusion’ and interact with each other, and each moment is ‘reflected’ in all other ones. Thus, the past and future are not detached from the present that is happening right now. The essence of time is captured in the act of present that ‘absorbs’ both the past and the future.

The doctrine of the Church rejects the possibility for a sinful person to unite with God or even get closer to God in her existence. In the new version of his teaching, Tolstoy proposes an opposing idea: the divine life means *a complete merging* of man and God. In this respect, the writer defines man as “the Infinite Beginning that manifests itself within certain limits” [9. P. 28]. However, a merging with God attaches some mysticism to man’s life, manifested in the transformation of time. God exists eternally, at all times; by merging with God, man embraces an infinite timeline, but not just the moment of the present. This leads to Tolstoy’s claim that a man’s whole life is one deed completed in infinite time: “My whole life is one deed. And this deed has been done. I just do not know what deed it is” [9. P. 121]. Tolstoy fiercely denied the vulgar ‘folk’ mysticism of the church

teaching (beliefs in immediate healing, ts walking on water, etc). However, he cannot avoid the necessity of attributing to man uniting with God the qualities and aptitudes that break the laws of earthly existence.

The above-reviewed concepts of two levels of life and two forms of time allow us to explain unconstrainedly the meaning of the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence. This explanation can be found in Tolstoy's later diaries. Since a person exists on two permanently and inextricably linked levels, everything that person does reflects on the structure of both levels and affects them somehow. However, the two levels are arranged differently. The lower material existence is fragmented into elements by space and time; therefore, a person sees the consequence of her action only within the limited sphere of her earthly life. The greater existence is fully coherent and integral; in the more significant existence, all the fragmented elements of the material level are transformed and fused, and therefore, a person sees the same action as affecting the entire infinite existence. A person living a divine life sees not only the immediate but also the most distant consequences of her action (literally years and decades away), what ordinary people cannot see and understand. This results in a big difference in self-questioning about the actions from the point of view of the lower and greater existence. The overarching priority of the principle of non-resistance in the lower life is the direct outcome of this difference.

Thus, for a person who has become genuinely religious and has made the center of her life divine, the complete and infinite existence opens up. Thus, that person can see the most distant outcomes of her acts. Ultimately, the person realizes that a good act, or even non-resistance to evil by violence, bears positive results in the infinite integral existence; at the same time, an evil act or violence for the sake of good bears nothing but negative consequences in the infinite existence. Though in the lower, material existence, the *immediate* consequences of these acts may correlate oppositely.

By admitting that the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence does not have a purely moral but a *religious* essence, Tolstoy admits that the right attitude to this principle suggests a mystical prospect of the union with God and infinite existence. To the extent people exist in the material world and live a material life, they must admit that fighting force by evil is justified, as it is the natural law (albeit relative) of earthly life. Tolstoy immediately agrees with this fact in his last work: "It is clear that violence and murder arouse the wrath of a man, and their first impulse is naturally to oppose violence and murder. Such actions, although akin to animal nature and unreasonable, are not absurd or self-contradictory. It is different, however, with attempts to find excuses for these actions" [10. P. 212].

In the last quoted sentence, Tolstoy emphasizes that no *religious* justification exists for resisting evil by force. According to him, everyone who reads the doctrine of Christ correctly should strive for the divine life, for their unity with God; only after will these people comprehend the need to live per the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence. For Tolstoy, the principle of non-resistance is

undoubtedly secondary to the idea of transition from animal to divine life (to inner perfection). It is stated explicitly in the same book: “Nothing hinders the improvement of people’s lives so much as the fact that they want to improve their lives by acts of violence. People’s violence against people distracts them utterly from the one thing that can improve their lives, which is trying to self-improve. <...> *all men are urged to perfect their inner world alone; they hold power for it, and through it, they can influence the lives of others*” [10. P. 217] (italics supplied).

The last statement emphasizes that accepting the principle of non-resistance does not imply the refusal to fight evil. However, religious people should fight using exclusively spiritual and not material tools. One might call these tools ineffective, but a point should be made that people who achieve unity with God through inner perfection have entirely different means of influence on others and the world compared to people who stay away from God and lead an ‘animalistic’ life.

However, and what is important, it does not mean that people should not act to deal with evil. Tolstoy often highlighted that accepting the non-resistance principle should not prevent people from fighting evil, though religious people should fight using exclusively spiritual and not material tools. One might call these tools ineffective, but a point should be made that people who achieved unity with God have entirely different means of influence on others and the world compared to people who stay away from God and lead an ‘animalistic’ life. By uniting with God, people spiritually integrate with others, and in this integrity, one can directly affect others through their familiar divine spirit. This is the very expression of the mystical nature of the higher divine life: a person who reaches this level of life with no material tools will use her spiritual efforts to curb evil and avert a villain ready for crime.

This conclusion is logical in Tolstoy’s teaching. After all, he believes that a person who has risen to divine life comes out of submission to the laws of the earthly world and gains mystical power because God manifests himself in him (as Tolstoy asserts, in this case, it is not the person himself who lives, but God who lives in him). Obviously, God does not need to resort to material means to influence people and limit their evil will. It is essential to see the religious sources of this idea. Nikolai Berdyaev’s idea that Tolstoy’s religious teaching is closer to Judaism than to Christianity is very well known [11]. In support of this statement, Berdyaev cited Tolstoy’s assertion that a person must completely submit to the will of God, and God can act directly in him. It must be admitted that Berdyaev is wrong if we have in mind ancient, orthodox Judaism, but his statement becomes surprisingly accurate if we have in mind the later form of Judaism, the Kabbalistic teaching, especially in its classical form, which was given to it by Isaac Luria in the 16th century. According to modern researchers, this form of Judaism arose under the influence of the Cathar religion, which is a developed form of authentic, Gnostic Christianity, which has opposed throughout history the distorted and false form of historical church Christianity [12]. Orthodox Judaism is incompatible with the genuine teaching of Jesus Christ and with the true, Gnostic Christianity that arose

on its basis. However, Kabbalah, the Gnostic version of Judaism, is surprisingly close in its basic principles to true Christianity [13. P. 563–581], it is no coincidence that in European philosophy, beginning in the 16th century, a tendency appeared towards a synthesis of the mystical teaching of Kabbalah and philosophical concepts, developing the principles of Gnostic Christianity. In this sense, the parallels between Tolstoy's religious teachings and Kabbalah become entirely legitimate.

Tolstoy does not speak of this mystical transformation of a man in his treatises, but he depicts it in one of his last works of fiction, *The Forged Coupon*. In the first part of this short story, mischief committed by schoolchildren (counterfeiting a small banknote) leads to a chain of increasingly grave atrocities, the result of which a common peasant, Stepan Pelageushkin, becomes a criminal and commits several severe murders. He kills children without any twinge of conscience. However, during his last murder, an old woman, Maria Semenovna, not only does not resist him but also pities him as he is ruining his soul by murdering her. This act of non-resistance to evil strikes the murderer to the point that he experiences a mental upheaval; he constantly sees the murdered woman in his dreams, surrounded by the devils tormenting him. In the second part, Stepan confesses to the crime, accepts punishment, and radically changes his life. Tolstoy describes it as follows: "Continually he saw HER before his eyes, heard her voice, and then again the black devils with their horrible eyes came and tortured him in the usual way. / He again tried to say his prayers, but, just as before, it did not help him. One day, when, after his prayers, she was again before his eyes, he began to implore her dear soul to forgive him his sin and release him. Towards morning, when he fell quite exhausted on his crushed linen bag, he fell asleep at once, and in his dream, she came to him with her thin, wrinkled, and severed neck. 'Will you forgive me?' he asked. She looked at him with her mild eyes and did not answer. 'Will you forgive me?' And so he asked her three times. But she did not say a word, and he awoke. From then onwards, he suffered less and seemed to come to his senses. He looked around him and began, for the first time, to talk to the other men in the cell" [14. P. 52].

Gradually, he becomes a true religious prophet who calls everyone to follow him, repent, and change their lives. Under the influence of his sermons, people become kinder and refuse to adhere to the usual evil, as in the example of an executioner who refuses to do his job.

In this case, Tolstoy shows an example of non-resistance to evil by violence as a religious rather than a moral act [15]. After all, a moral principle is only effective when applied to most people, and it affects the entire system of their relations, reshaping society. Tolstoy's story reveals only one act of non-resistance to evil, affecting not the whole society but only one murderer; mystically, it transforms his life from an animal to a divine form. The murdered woman, who he dreams about, becomes a "God's messenger" and saves the murderer's soul. This can be understood as a literal confirmation of the idea of "God's intervention" through an act of non-resistance to evil.



Thus, understanding the principle of non-resistance as a religious and mystical rather than a moral one and associating it with the radical transformation of existence into a divine form conditioned by the union with God helped Tolstoy to address all the shortcomings that had provoked criticism among his contemporaries. Nevertheless, this kind of criticism is found nowadays because researchers consider only the first and simpler version explained in *My Religion* and fail to see the evolution of Tolstoy's views. The criticism becomes groundless when the second and more complicated version and the whole philosophical and religious doctrine of Tolstoy are addressed. Tolstoy commenced to develop his second version of the *On Life* treatise and completed the work in his philosophical diaries in 1890–1910. Perhaps it is because his thoughts are scattered around numerous diaries that scholars struggle to comprehend the later version of Tolstoy's doctrine fully. Hence, proper restoration of the writer's ultimate doctrine enables us to appreciate the depth and consistency of his philosophical thought.

However, there is one more difficulty that remains here. It is related to the fact that in some of his late works, and mostly in his famous treatise *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. He seems to return to the opinion expressed in his book *What I Believe*, i.e., he depicts the non-resistance to evil by violence as a moral principle obligatory to everyone. It must be admitted that Tolstoy expounds his teaching in different ways depending on whether these are strictly theoretical treatises aimed at the most accurate and consistent exposition of all the details of his teaching or more popular journalistic writings addressed to the general public and aimed at encouraging people to live following this teaching. The focal element of the final version of Tolstoy's teaching – the statement about the need to move from animal to divine life – is difficult enough to understand. Thus, in his popular writings, Tolstoy pays attention to the primary outcome of the transition towards a truly religious life, i.e., the principle of non-resistance rather than this focal element. At the same time, he talks about his principle as if it is a regular moral that everyone can accept. Perhaps he does so to force people to consider accepting this principle as the basis of their lives and to make them reflect on the need to change their lives radically. In other words, he is trying to push people to understand the true essence of his teaching. In these cases, the tactical task of popularizing his teaching makes him slightly shift the emphasis in the teaching per se. Nevertheless, we still cannot assert that Tolstoy returns to the early form of his teaching and puts the principle of non-resistance above the idea of animal to divine life transformation. At the end of chapter XII of *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, he says that people gradually understand the need for the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence, and further states: “And already they are beginning to understand it. Though all do not understand it yet, the advanced guard (передовые люди) understand, and the rest will follow them. And the advanced guard cannot cease to understand what they have once understood; and what they understand the rest (остальные люди) not only can but must inevitably understand hereafter” [16. P. 135]. In this statement, Tolstoy acknowledges that not all people can immediately understand the principle

of non-resistance and implement it in their lives. So far, only the advanced people have understood and are able to follow it. The rest of the people will follow the advanced and will understand the meaning of the principle of non-resistance much later. Here, we see the same model as in the treatise *On Life*. It is natural to understand the ‘advanced people’ (передовые люди) as those who managed to transition from animal to divine life.

In other social and political writings calling on people to abandon the service of state power as organized violence, Tolstoy states even more directly that the basis of such a transition should be the adoption of a true religion. He does not mention the principle of non-resistance explicitly, though: “The evil from which men of our time are suffering is produced by the fact that the majority live without that which alone affords a rational guidance for human activity – without religion; not that religion which consists in belief in dogmas, in the fulfillment of rites which afford a pleasant diversion, consolation, stimulant, but that religion which establishes the relation of man to the All, to God, and, therefore, gives a general higher direction to all human activity, and without which people stand on the plane of animals and even lower than they” [17. P. 19–20].

As we can see in this passage, Tolstoy believes that getting rid of evil and violence is possible only through a religious transformation of life, which means the transition from animal life to divine (to union with God). Here, too, he admits that very few people have managed such a transition, and most still lead an animal’s life. It is remarkable that Tolstoy clearly distinguishes the two terms – ethical and metaphysical – in true religion, and he regards the metaphysical one that determines the relationship of man to God as the main one: “Until this teaching, not in its distorted (ecclesiastical) state, and not bereft of its chief foundation – the metaphysical principle of man’s relation to God – until this teaching is recognized in its true meaning by men of the Christian world, and until it is spread amongst all, as the Church faith is now spread – until then, there can be no change in those various forms, especially of governmental violence, from which men suffer most to-day” [18. P. 50].

The metaphysical origin of Tolstoy’s teaching holds the key to its correct understanding. Comparing it to Ilyin’s concept of resistance to evil by force facilitates such understanding. Tolstoy’s and Ilyin’s teachings complement each other and are best understood in relation to each other.

## I. Ilyin’s doctrine of resistance to evil by force

First and foremost, Ilyin’s views on Tolstoy’s religious and philosophical doctrine were not always negative. His earliest opinion on Tolstoyism is found in his article *The Basic Moral Contradiction of War* (1914). In the article, Ilyin admits the need for the citizens to take up arms and defend their country when war occurs; at the same time, he tries to justify Tolstoy’s negative attitude to war. According to

Ilyin, Tolstoy successfully exposes ‘the moral contradiction of war’: it is imperative by the laws of our world and reprehensible from the moral point of view.

However, in his book *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, Ilyin changes his views dramatically; he believes that the biggest theoretical mistake of Tolstoy is the negation of the evil matter. In his opinion, Tolstoy sees everyone as good by nature, and there is no exception to it; evil should be regarded as some insignificant distortion of the good nature. Thus, complete revelation of good in people will defeat evil. Ilyin agrees that every person experiences the primary fight between good and evil deep down in their souls; if a person manages to curb evil, then she chooses the right path of fighting evil, and there is no need for any violent external material means.

However, unlike Tolstoy, Ilyin sees this path as something other than universal, fitting everyone and having no alternatives. He believes evil is rooted in human nature and is more potent than good: "Evil is, first and foremost, *a psychic disposition* inherent to all of us. It is like a fervent inclination to free our beast, and it constantly expands its power to possess us to the fullest" [19. P. 39]. This means that the souls of many people are dominated by evil and not pleasing; moreover, these people are not able to defeat evil, and they do not perceive extrinsic good anymore. Thus, any spiritual acts of others will not change them. Tolstoy’s path of fighting evil will lead to failure. On the contrary, it will further spread evil because evil people with no resistance on their way transmit evil to others, pushing them to follow their way.

Material resistance should be applied precisely against those who succumbed to the power of evil because they cannot be influenced spiritually. Nevertheless, Ilyin refuses to use the word ‘violence’ to describe such resistance, as Tolstoy does, and chooses ‘forcing’ instead: "*Forcing is an imposition of will on the outer or inner composition of man that does not appeal directly to the spiritual vision and affection of the forced soul but tries to compel it or curb its activity*" [19. P. 50]. Violence is when one person suppresses the will of the other person, forcing others to pursue a different goal: it aims to convey a ‘message’ to the soul about illegitimacy and inappropriateness of evil acts through bodily manipulation. Ilyin concurs with Tolstoy that violence does not bring any good; forcing, however, is a necessary and effective measure of affecting an evil person. It can curb her evil actions and push her to overcome her own evil. Tolstoy’s misunderstanding of the difference between violence and force is one of his errors, according to Ilyin.

In his writing, Ilyin developed a complex system of various forms of force. He argues that nobody can fight even their own evil disposition solely with spiritual tools; at times, every one of us needs forcing, i.e., to force oneself to act morally.

Another error Tolstoy pointed out by Ilyin is the ‘subjectivity’ of his doctrine. Ilyin considers that within the framework of this doctrine, everyone should care exclusively about their own righteousness and not the morality and kindness of others. Therefore, they should not do anything that might break moral commandments. In this sense, Ilyin joins those critics of Tolstoy who claimed that

his principle would lead to the full cessation of the fight against evil. Ilyin has no point, though: on many occasions, Tolstoy emphasized the need to fight against evil by using kindness and spiritual influence, which are not material. Like many other critics of Tolstoy, Ilyin disregarded the second version of the doctrine, which gives a better idea of the fight against evil.

Ilyin advocates that everyone must fight evil not only inside their own nature but in all other people. Moreover, all of us have only two ways to act – either stand against evil or facilitate its spread. There is no neutrality in people’s relationships: “*All people continuously educate each other whether they want it or not, whether they are aware of it or not <...>. They educate each other with every manifestation of their own: response and intonation, smile or none, arrival and departure, exclamation and silence, request and demand, communication and boycott. <...> People educate each other not only by doing – by confident reciprocal actions, but also by non-doing – by an inert, evasive, weak-willed absence of a reciprocal act. And if, on the one hand, a harsh response, a rude demand, or an evil act can embitter the one against whom they are directed rather than correct this person, then, on the other hand, evading an energetic, explicitly discommending act can be tantamount to connivance, indulgence, and complicity*” [19. P. 60–61].

It goes without saying that if people simultaneously and permanently fight evil in each other, then they need to coordinate their efforts and form unique collective bodies and institutions to fight. Such an institution is a state with its laws and law enforcement agencies, including the army and police. If Tolstoy regards them as false ways of struggle, then Ilyin sees them as necessary and effective means to prevail over evil.

The struggle becomes particularly hard and tragic when people have retired into their shells and been wholly subjugated by evil. Ilyin admits that stern measures of ‘prevention’ can be applied to such people, including long-term imprisonment, hard work, and suffering to force the spirit to turn to good and God. If evil finally prevails in a person’s soul, then this person can be declared an ‘absolute villain.’ Christian love for this person “transforms into *negative love* and finds its consummation in the earthly removal of the rejected villain” [19. P. 149]. Ultimately, Ilyin arrives at a justification for capital punishment.

On the face of it, Tolstoy’s doctrine centered on the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence and Ilyin’s views on the resistance to evil by force are opposite in their foundation and cannot agree with one another. However, if we examine their philosophical and metaphysical base, we will find the way to reconcile them.

### **Metaphysical foundations of Tolstoy’s and Ilyin’s doctrines and their possible reconciliation**

Tolstoy is convinced that human existence in the material fragmented world is secondary to our spiritual life in which people constitute an integrated whole united with God. According to Tolstoy, most people live ‘animalistic’ lives. These people

believe that each of them exists separately, just like their bodies. However, true Christians, and there are very few of them, can rise to genuinely spiritual and divine life. They learn in theory about their unity with other people and God and apply this unity in practice. They literally connect with other people in a spiritual way. In such spiritual integration, they can influence people through their joint spirit and prevent them from being evil. They see no need to force others materially, and they cannot use force because force will bring suffering, and in the spiritual unity, this suffering will be perceived as their own.

Thus, Tolstoy's doctrine is built upon the ontological and existential unity of people that cannot be disintegrated in any way. However, it can be 'obscured' and unknown to people who live mundane lives. Ilyin strongly rejects this very principle of ontological unity of people.

Numerous scholars who study the works of Ilyin acknowledge that the latter's religious views are only partially consistent with Eastern Orthodoxy and Christianity at large. They are close to the ancient religious doctrine of Manichaeism (named after its founder, Mani, a 3rd-century Persian prophet). This is a highly dualistic doctrine claiming that two equitable principles are co-existing in the world, which are good and evil, divine and diabolical, and spiritual and material. This doctrine sees evil as substantial and capable of beating good, and Ilyin's opinion of evil as substantial and decisive is precisely expressed in his book. Following Plato and many other philosophers, Ilyin maintains that good, spirit and God take the form of unity of all beings in our world, whereas evil and matter come primarily in the form of separation. People's link to both God and good presumes that they use their personal spirit to join the familiar divine spirit, but the force of evil *often fully separates their spirit from the divine one*. According to Ilyin's philosophy, all people exist individually and independently, not only in the material world where this individualism is obvious (individual bodies) but also in the spiritual world of individual spirits 'locked' into bodies.

To pursue its goals, evil employs the material principle of the world, which splits divine spirits into individual spirits without letting them (individuals) unite. Consequently, no matter how profoundly people profess Christianity and how strongly religious they are, they cannot fully integrate with God and other people. It drives Ilyin to the assimilation of a person's individual spirit to a solitary confinement 'prisoner' (with the body being a prison for the spirit): "Humanity is a multitude of psychic (essentially psychic and spiritual) beings, each of which is mysteriously hidden behind one principal and unique thing that serves them only and is called 'body.' Every human is such a 'psyche and spirit' hiding from other people behind the body and communicating through it. Our body shields our soul from others and shows (intentionally or not) the state of our mind for those around us to know. A material abyss separates our souls, but mutual observations and bodily manifestations connect them" [20. P. 20].

At this point, the fight against evil in other people by means of goodness and spirit is ineffective because individual spirits are 'locked' in body shells and cannot

be affected spiritually. Thus, Ilyin deduces the need to force another person's body, i.e., exert material influence upon it to make the individual spirit comprehend its involvement in evil and abandon it. When the individual spirit embarks on the path of good and restores its unity with the divine spirit, it will open itself to the spiritual influence of other people (individual spirits).

The degree of division of the divine spirit into individual spirits and their unity is not constant and may vary over the course of history, affected by human activity. With that in mind, we can align the metaphysical principles (Tolstoy's unity of individual spirits in divine spirit and Ilyin's division of divine spirit by individual spirits) of two doctrines in the framework of one concept.<sup>1</sup> The entire past of humankind should be viewed as the era of profoundly imperfect and dramatically disjoined existence of people; in this respect, Ilyin has a point. This era had people who lived a higher religious life, were involved in divine unity, and knew its powers; the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence held true exceptionally for these people. They set an example of a holy life, but they were so few that they could not transfer their experience to other people and could not demand them to accept the non-resistance principle immediately. People need to arrive at holy life naturally and on their own. When such a lifestyle becomes a norm for a significant number of individuals (and not necessarily for the majority of people), then the truth of the non-resistance principle will become universal and eliminate the need for 'resistance by force' as understood by Ilyin.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Manichaeism arose as an eastern form of true Gnostic Christianity and, in its historical development, experienced the influence of many religious movements of the Gnostic type. Considering what we said above about the closeness of Tolstoy's teaching to Kabbalah (the Gnostic version of Judaism), it can be argued that Ilyin and Tolstoy developed their concepts on two polar versions (radical monistic and radical dualistic) of the same religious worldview — Gnostic Christianity.

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#### **About the author:**

*Evlampiev Igor I.* – DSc in Philosophy, Professor, Department of Russian Philosophy and Culture, Institute of Philosophy, Saint Petersburg State University, 7–9 Universitetskaya Naberezhnaya, Saint Petersburg, 199034, Russian Federation. ORCID: 0000-0002-7209-2616. E-mail: yevlampiev@mail.ru

*Wang Yue* – PhD, Associate Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Beihang University, 37 XueYuan Road, Beijing, 100191, China. ORCID: 0000-0002-1390-8494. E-mail: yp20092011@163.com

#### **Сведения об авторах:**

*Евлампиев Игорь Иванович* – доктор философских наук, профессор, кафедра русской философии и культуры, Институт философии, Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет, Российская Федерация, 199034, Санкт-Петербург, Университетская наб., д. 7–9. ORCID: 0000-0002-7209-2616. SPIN-код: 8459-2723. E-mail: yevlampiev@mail.ru

*Ван Юе* – PhD, доцент, Институт иностранных языков, Бэйханский университет, Китай, 100191, Пекин, ул. Сюэюан, д. 37. ORCID: 0000-0002-1390-8494. SPIN-code: 8459-2723. E-mail: yp20092011@163.com