TOLSTOY ON MUSICAL MIMESIS: PLATONIC AESTHETICS AND EROTICS IN "THE KREUTZER SONATA"*

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Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata" begins as a dialogue: several people, gathered together in a train compartment drink beer-like tea and discuss love, marriage, and adultery in contemporary society. Eventually the conversation comes to be monopolized by Pozdnyshev, a man who has a monomaniacal interest in these subjects. The bulk of "The Kreutzer Sonata" consists of his confessional self-vindication for murdering his wife, whom he suspected of adultery. Still, the story, which clearly begins as dialogue, never fully lapses into monologue, for the unnamed narrator, the "I" who records his experience on board the train, keeps up with Pozdnyshev, cross-examining him, asking him leading questions, answering Pozdnyshev's queries and making occasional comments of his own. The form of "The Kreutzer Sonata" is thus a cross between a confession and a philosophical dialogue.[1]

The ties of "The Kreutzer Sonata" to both the Rousseauvian confession and the Socratic dialogue exist on a thematic level as well, with Pozdnyshev at times sounding like Rousseau and at times like Socrates.[2] Tolstoy's Pozdnyshev

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[1]From the Bakhtinian point of view, "The Kreutzer Sonata" would probably qualify as a dialogue only technically, since it presents its truth "monologically," much as, according to Bakhtin, Plato himself did in his later dialogues where Socrates has "been turned into a 'teacher'" and the dialogue has been "turned into a simple means of elucidating ready-made ideas (for pedagogical ends)." In such cases, "the monologism of the content begins to destroy the form of the 'Socratic dialog'" (Bakhtin, 90).

Caryl Emerson in "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin" appears to suggest that dialogue, for Tolstoy, was likely to become "pedagogical" and thus lose what for Bakhtin was the spirit of dialogue (152). Pozdnyshev certainly does not brook any "interpenetration of points of view" and thus does not truly engage in true Bakhtinian dialogue.

[2]Tolstoy identified at various points quite strongly with both Rousseau and Socrates. The period in which he wrote "The Kreutzer Sonata" may perhaps be seen as a particularly Socratic one. In 1885, Tolstoy had collaborated with A. M. Kalmykova on a life of Socrates. Of

has borrowed Rousseau's technique of turning a personal confession into an indictment of society. Guilt for behavior that some may regard as criminal is thereby fobbed off on society. This confessional model was also to some degree followed by Tolstoy in his own "Confession."

Pozdnyshev's debt to Socrates is perhaps more significant and complex. Of the Socratic dialogues which "The Kreutzer Sonata" could be said to resemble, certainly Plato's Symposium, in which several people at a drinking party discuss love, comes to mind. Tolstoy had overtly embedded in Anna Karenina a "symposium" on love in the restaurant scene between Oblonsky and Levin in which the two discuss love and marriage, with Levin chiding Oblonsky for his "non-platonic" love and asserting the possibility of a "clear and pure" form of "platonic" love such as that advocated by Socrates in the Symposium.[3] It may seem that Tolstoy in "The Kreutzer Sonata" is simply setting up another "Symposium," one which would be much more cynical and desperate than that in Anna Karenina, for, in Pozdnyshev's view, people are never redeemed or uplifted by love because they are, in his view, incapable of anything other than love based solely on physical pleasure. Furthermore, he argues that such love will, of necessity, lead to damnation.

While "The Kreutzer Sonata" may deliberately respond to Plato's Symposium, it has other, more covert, formal and thematic links to another Platonic dialogue. At the same time that Pozdnyshev addresses his own particular sexual misadventures, culminating in the adultery his wife ostensibly committed and the murder he committed; and at the same time that he condemns contemporary society for its sex-driven depravity, he outlines a vision, however befuddled, of an ideal, sex-free society where crimes such as adultery and wife-murder would be unheard of.[4] In its visionary intimations of an ideal society, where crimes of passion would be unknown because citizens would be schooled to govern and control their passions, Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata"

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this endeavor, Gudzii writes: "Vidimo, Tolstoy i vzheznennoi sud'be Sokrata usmatrival nechto napominaiushchee ego sobstvennuiu sud'bu. Nekotorye mesta knizhki napisany tak, chto oni legko mogli by byt' primeneny i k samonu Tolstomu i ego biografii." (25:856).

[3]This is discussed by Richard Gustafson (133). See also Irina Gutkin (1989). For an extended discussion of the treatment of love in "The Kreutzer Sonata," see Moller (1988), especially chapters 1 and 10.

[4]The fact that Pozdnyshev, in the course of his narrative, preaches an "ideal" is discussed by Robert Louis Jackson (1978) and by Stephen Baehr (1976).

suggests Plato's Republic, in which Socrates and friends, responding to the decay and depravity of Athenian society around them, outline a plan for a utopia.

In keeping with the Greek approach where the realms of government and ethics had no distinct boundaries, Socrates devotes much attention to the education and moral upbringing of the "philosopher-ruler" or "guardian." In this ideal republic, intimate matters were to be public to the extent that sex would become an affair of state, as can be seen from this excerpt from the dialogue of Socrates and his friends:

> Socrates: "But tell me: does excessive pleasure go with self-control and moderation?"
> Glaucon: "Certainly not; excessive pleasure breaks down one's control just as much as excessive pain."
> Socrates: "Does it go with other kinds of goodness?"
> Glaucon: "No."
> Socrates: "And is there any greater or sharper [keener] pleasure than that of sex?"
> Glaucon: "No: nor any more frenzied."
> Socrates: "But to love rightly is to love what is orderly and beautiful in an educated and disciplined way."
> Glaucon: "I entirely agree."
> Socrates: "Then can true love have any contact with frenzy or excess of any kind?"
> Glaucon: "It can have none."
> Socrates: "[True love] can therefore have no contact with this sexual pleasure and lovers whose mutual love is true must neither of them indulge in it."
> Glaucon: "They certainly must not [...]" (Plato, 402e–403b, pp. 163–4)

By use of the method that now bears his name, Socrates here compels his interlocutor to admit that sex should be avoided in the name of achieving a higher good. In the ideal republic mused about in this dialogue, laws would be laid down to prevent sex, of all sorts, except that aimed specifically at procreation.

As outlined to the narrator, Pozdnyshev's vision is more radical, indeed apocalyptic, in that he advocates putting an end to all sex, a policy the narrator is reluctant to accept for it would bring an end to the human race.[5]

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[5]Although Pozdnyshev goes so far as to argue that all sex (and the human race in the form in which it is known) should, ideally, be eliminated, he, too, looks on sex for the sake of procreation differently than sex not engaged in with the specific purpose of having children. And he regards sex during pregnancy as being tantamount to murder, his imagery recalling that of Plato when he speaks in Laws

> Narrator: Still, if everyone embraced this [i.e., not having sex] as their law, the human race would come to an end.
> Pozdnyshev: You ask how the human race will be carried on? [...] Why should it carry on, this human race?
> Narrator: What do you mean, why? Otherwise we wouldn't exist.
> Pozdnyshev: And why should we exist?
> Narrator: What do you mean, why? In order to live, that's why.
> Pozdnyshev: And why should we live? [...] Take note: if the goal of humanity is the good, goodness, love, as you wish; if the goal of humanity is that of which the prophets spoke, that all people should come together as one in love, that swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and so forth, then what in fact is it that hinders the attainment of this goal? Passions. Of passions, the strongest, cruellest and most stubborn is sexual, carnal love, and therefore if passions are destroyed, including the last and strongest of them, carnal love, then the goal of humanity will have been attained [...] (27:29)

Both Pozdnyshev and Socrates agree that sex is the most dangerous of the passions (Socrates declaring it to be "the greatest, sharpest, most frenzied pleasure," Pozdnyshev declaring it to be the "strongest, cruellest, and most stubborn of the passions"). In both conversations, the dominant interlocutor ends up suggesting that the utopian ideal, whether in the form of a republic or of heaven on earth, consists of a society without sex.

Although considered the most dangerous public enemy, sex is not the only one of the passions Socrates and Pozdnyshev wish to control. In the course of their dialogues, they identify other passions which likewise hinder human beings in their progress toward the good. More specifically, Socrates, in his orderly description of the upbringing of the philosopher-ruler just before his discussion of sexual passion, describes how literature and music must be controlled by the state lest they, like sex, corrupt by placing people's souls in a state of irrational frenzy and causing them to lose self-control. Socrates in fact persuades his interlocutors to agree that most poets and musicians should be banished from the ideal state. Similarly, in the realm over which Pozdnyshev would rule supreme, musicians, especially performers of Beethoven, would be banished (or simply murdered).

"The Kreutzer Sonata," unlike the Republic, does not contain full-fledged blueprints for a utopia and Pozdnyshev's policy on the arts is not as clearly worked out as Socrates's. However, in the course of his discussion, Pozdnyshev does suggest that governmental control should, ideally, be exerted

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(838e) of non-procreational sex as the "deliberate murder of the human race" (as quoted in W. K. C. Guthrie, 76, note).

on music. His fear is based on his notion that musicians have a hypnotic effect on their audience and can do with their audience what they please. This gives too much power, Pozdnyshev argues, to musicians, who may well be amoral people. He remarks that "In China music is an affair of state. And so it should be." (27:61). Pozdnyshev here refers to Confucius's pronouncements on music (Rischin, 46). As he put those words in Pozdnyshev's mouth, Tolstoy may have also had in mind another "realm" where for similar reasons music was controlled by the powers-that-be: Socrates's ideal republic.

Tolstoy comments directly on Socrates's banishment of the artists in his magnum opus on aesthetics, Chto takoe iskusstvo? (What Is Art?), completed in 1898, nine years after "The Kreutzer Sonata." When he discusses Plato's views on art, Tolstoy lumps him together with early Christians, Buddhists and strict Moslems and argues that categorically rejecting art, as they did, is wrong. (Here, it might seem that he misrepresents Plato, since Plato allowed some art into his republic.) But Tolstoy adds that "no less wrong are people of our European civilized society, circle and time, for allowing any and all art, so long as it serves beauty, that is, brings people pleasure." (30:170). Actually, somewhat later in What Is Art? Tolstoy makes it clear that, if forced to choose between the two policies, the banishment of all art or the tolerance of all art (in its present form), he would opt for the former, for banning all art.[6]

By the time he wrote "The Kreutzer Sonata" in the late 'eighties, Tolstoy appears to have already adopted a Socratic view holding that art (especially music) is dangerous and tempting, that people are not to be trusted to yield not to temptation and hence art must be controlled if not banned completely. The equation that appears to have existed in Tolstoy's mind between art and temptation to evil may have been reinforced by the linguistic relationship existing between "art" (iskusstvo) and "temptation" (iskushenie) (and

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[6]In discussing *What Is Art?* in relation to "The Kreutzer Sonata," Stephen Baehr notes (41-2): "Tolstoi's fear of the perverse power of bad art recalls Plato's views in the *Republic* (which are mentioned in ch. V of What is Art?). But unlike Plato, Tolstoi did not feel the necessity of banning art. Tolstoi believed that bad art would be eliminated when the quality of human feelings improved — an event which he felt would come about naturally."

Although Baehr correctly asserts differences between the two men's views on art, the similarities are striking, especially if one keeps in mind that the difference in genres between the *Republic* (a fantastic utopia, which, naturally, would advocate a *tabula rasa* approach) and *What Is Art?* (a sober treatise) dictated different programs for making art better serve the people in their ascent toward the good.

for that matter, "tempter" (iskussitel'), a term for the devil which Tolstoy occasionally uses). For example, his diary bears the following passage: "I think incessantly about art and about the temptations and seductions that obscure the mind and I see that art numbers among them but I do not know how to fathom it." (53:118 [16 Nov. 1896], as quoted by Lomunov, 95). In "The Kreutzer Sonata" and many of his other later works we witness his struggle to fathom the link he had posited between art (iskusstvo) and temptation (iskushenie).

While finishing "The Kreutzer Sonata," Tolstoy was actively thinking about issues of aesthetics, for he was simultaneously writing an article, "Ob iskusstve" ("About Art"), one of several attempts, culminating in What Is Art?, to come to terms with art. When in "The Kreutzer Sonata" Pozdnyshev goes from declaring "This sonata is a terrifying thing" and, more generally, "Music is a terrifying thing" to asking outright "What is music?" (27:61), we sense that Tolstoy was, indirectly, engaging the fictional Pozdnyshev in the search for that same truth about the meaning of art that, at the time, was beckoning but eluding Tolstoy himself. Perhaps Tolstoy, frustrated by direct attempts to capture this truth in the form of a philosophical treatise, found it easier to approach this truth more indirectly, in the fictional dialogue between Pozdnyshev and his fellow-travellers in the train.[7]

Tolstoy's diaries reveal that the two endeavors, the treatise on art and "The Kreutzer Sonata" (in its final stages), occupied his thoughts simultaneously during the summer of 1889. For example, on August 11, 1889, Tolstoy reports: "I didn't do anything all day long. I gathered mushrooms and thought about the Kreutzer Sonata and art." Tolstoy does not record his specific thoughts but what he was thinking on that day (August 11th) was perhaps influenced by his reading of August 9th, 1889 (50:121), for which he had reported: "I read Plato about art and thought about art."

How much of the Republic did Tolstoy reread on August 9th, 1889? The section in which Socrates forces his interlocutors to banish sex from their republic on the grounds that it is "the great[est]," "keen[est]," most "frenzied" of pleasures (403b) is tagged on to the section in which Socrates proscribes other pleasures -- literature and music. Thus, in reading about art, Tolstoy may also have read about sex. If so, he would have found strange echoes of the views he imparts to Pozdnyshev, in particular his conviction that sex hinders

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[7]In her article "Socrates Crowned," Helen Bacon stresses the fact that the Platonic dialogue avoids formulas and is "an oblique approach to the truth" (417). Plato and/or Socrates found this method more conducive both to teaching and learning philosophical truths.

one's progress toward the good and his yearning for a sexfree society. Tolstoy of course found additional validation and/or inspiration for these views elsewhere in his readings at the time. For example, he read with interest about sexual abstinence among the Shakers in America [27:571]. It is even possible that Pozdnyshev's declaration of sex to be the "strongest, cruellest and most stubborn of passions" was influenced by similar formulations by Socrates in the Republic.[8]

We know from descriptions of Tolstoy's drafts of the story that Pozdnyshev's discourse on the dangers of music in general and the Kreutzer Sonata in particular (found in the 23rd chapter of the story) was a new addition to the eighth draft, which was completed in October of 1889 (30:581). Although the ostensible subject of this story is adultery, music, particularly that of Beethoven, already played a role in the plot of the story and in Tolstoy's thinking about the story. Yet, at this late stage of his writing of the story, perhaps under the influence of his reading of the Republic, Tolstoy decided to place more emphasis on theory of music, perhaps because he, like Plato, concluded that sex and music lead to a similar state of abandon and threaten the soul in a similar way.

Tolstoy had been acquainted with Plato's theory of art and music well before August 9, 1889. A Platonic concern with the effect of art, in general, and music, in particular, on the sentimental education of the young was something that Tolstoy exhibited even in his earliest fiction. Childhood (1851), a patently personal work subjectively treating the childhood of one boy, also manifests broader concerns with upbringing and education, something which for Tolstoy, as for the Greeks, involved much more than mastery of the "3 R's." As he wrote Childhood, Plato's Republic came into Tolstoy's mind. At one point in the drafts of the story children in boarding school are deprecatingly said to make up a "republic" (respublika [1:203-4]). More interestingly, the drafts focus particular attention on Plato's views on musical mimesis. Tolstoy seems to accept the assumption voiced in the Republic that music is teleological, that it aims at arousing specific emotions with a specific end. ("Muzyka eshche u drevnykh Grekhov byla podrazhitel'naia, i Platon v svoei "Respublika" polagal nepremennym usloviem, chtoby ona vyrazhala blagorodnye chuvstva. Kazhdaia muzykal'naia fraza vyrazhaet kakoe-nibud' chuvstvo--gordost', radost', pechal', otchaianie i t.d., ili

[8]Descriptions of the drafts (27:563-88) do not reveal whether the conversation (recorded at 27:29) about abstention from sex (on the grounds that sex keeps humanity from reaching its goal) was altered (or added) after August 1889.

odno iz bezkonechnykh sochetanii etikh chuvstv mezhdu soboiu. Muzykal'nye sochineniia, ne vyrazhaiushchie nikakogo chuvstva, sostavlennye s tsel'iu ili vykazat' uchenost', ili priobrest' den'gi, odnim slovom, v muzyke, kak i vo vsem, est' urody, po kotorym sudit' nel'zia.") (1:182-3).

As the passages describing the response of Nikolen'ka to the music he hears attest, music clearly plays a major role in his emotional development. In his drafts for What Is Art?, Tolstoy argued that "almost all emotions felt by a person are prepared for in him by art: before he himself feels them in life, he has experienced them in art and the more he has been prepared for them by art, the more strongly he feels them" (30:383, as quoted in Lomunov, 108). If one accepts this premise, which is implicit in Childhood, then being exposed to the wrong kind of music may cause emotional damage. Tolstoy's Nikolen'ka does not live in an ideal republic where the music is carefully controlled so as to dictate only positive, beneficial emotions. He is exposed to the music of Beethoven from a young age.

In fact, it is when Nikolen'ka listens to his mother play the music of Beethoven ("Sonata Pathetiquée") that Tolstoy cites Plato to document the dangers of music. When, nearly forty years later, Tolstoy reread part of the Republic (1:182-3), it may have brought back to him this same network of ideas, since once again he was attempting in a fictional work to come to terms with the music of Beethoven. Although he does not refer to Plato by name (as he did in the drafts of Childhood), Tolstoy, as he wrote "The Kreutzer Sonata," appears to have enlisted Plato in yet another battle against Beethoven.

Why did the music of Beethoven, perhaps more than any other music, bring out the Platonist in Tolstoy?[9] Tolstoy's son reports that his father "considered Beethoven to be not the culmination of the highest flowering of music, but the originator of the decline of music which has continued into [his] present time." (S. L. Tolstoi, 369). In his indictment of Beethoven, Tolstoy's Pozdnyshev goes one step further: in describing the effects of his wife's and Trukhachevsky's performance of the Kreutzer Sonata, he suggests that Beethoven's music embodies not just the "decline of music" but of society in general. For Pozdnyshev, this music embodies and, what is worse, apotheosizes the languor, lasciviousness and licentiousness which, in his view, permeated the behavior of his class.

Pozdnyshev's reaction to music directly parallels that of Socrates and his interlocutors in the Republic, for when they

[9]Tolstoy's phobia about the music of Beethoven has been discussed in various places. For a comprehensive study, see Rischin 1989.

condemned certain types of music as being unsuitably languid and when they sought rhythms "which suit a life of courage and discipline" (Plato, 400a, p. 160), they were responding to what they saw as a general decay of Athenian life, a decay manifest in what was seen as "the decline of music and poetry into license and lack of discipline" (Jaeger, 3:237-8).

Although more than two millennia separate Plato and Tolstoy, Socrates and Pozdnyshev, and although music and society had developed differently in their respective cultures, what Pozdnyshev and Tolstoy experienced was something like history repeating itself. They seemed to have shared the feeling ascribed to Plato and Socrates by one scholar of living in "a new age in which some composers, who had great creative talent but no sense of how to preserve the ethical standards of art, were carried away by Dionysian ecstasy and utter sensuousness [...] These people obliterated all artistic frontiers. They thought anything was permissible if it gave pleasure to the senses somehow or other, for they were too ignorant to believe in existence of standards of right and wrong in music" (Jaeger, 3:238). This passage draws most directly on Plato's Laws (700d-e) where musicians, "possessed by a frantic and unhallowed lust for pleasure" ended up "unintentionally slander[ing] their profession by the assumption that in music there is not such thing as a right and a wrong, the right standard of judgment being pleasure given to the hearer, be he high or low."

The response of Tolstoy to Beethoven and the general trend in art of "de la musique avant toutes choses" closely imitates that of Plato to musical trends in his day. In What Is Art? Tolstoy, decrying the fact that the art of his day appeared to pander to base human emotions ("lichnoe narlazhdenie" had become the only aesthetic criterion, all moral criteria having been lost), directly identifies Plato as a kindred spirit (30:175).

This notion, that certain music can lead men and women to the assumption that "anything was permissible," is indirectly embodied in Pozdnyshev's narrative where a Dionysian ecstasy, brought about by performance of the Kreutzer Sonata, led Pozdnyshev's wife to assume that adultery was permissible and Pozdnyshev to assume that murder is permissible. How could music become so criminal?

Music, Pozdnyshev claims, has the effect of altering the listener, causing him or her to lose his or her identity and even assume a false one. "How can I explain it to you?" asks Pozdnyshev. "Music forces me to forget myself, my true circumstances, it transports me into other circumstances that are not mine: under the influence of music it seems to be that I feel that which I actually am not feeling, that I understand

that which I do not understand, that I can do that which I cannot." (27:61).[10]

Underlying Pozdnyshev's understanding of music is a strong belief in mimesis. This concept, so basic to the Platonic understanding of art, holds that the experience of art involves direct imitation of what the art represents. Of this mimetic process, Werner Jaeger has written: "All imitation means changing one's soul -- that is, abandoning its own form for the moment, and assimilating it to the character of the model, whether the model be good or bad." (2:223)

In listening to Beethoven's music, Pozdnyshev felt that he was being seduced into "imitating" the mood the composer was in when he wrote it: "It, the music, immediately, directly transports me into the emotional state in which the person who wrote it found himself. I unite with him emotionally and together with him am transported from one state to another, but what I do this for, I do not know. He who wrote take, say, the Kreutzer Sonata, -- Beethoven, why, he knew why he found himself in that state, -- that state led him to certain acts and that is why that state had meaning for him, whereas for me it has no meaning whatsoever. And that is why music only excites but does not culminate." (27:61). As his testimony reveals, Pozdnyshev expected music, along with everything else, to be teleological. The absence of a clear answer to his question "Zachem?" makes such music suspect and even diabolical.[11]

Pozdnyshev concedes that certain types of music should be allowed to exist and even should be allowed to alter people's souls. But these types of music must aim at a particular goal: "Well, suppose a military march is played, soldiers march by

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[10]Pozdnyshev's description of how music affects him echoes the drafts of Childhood (1:182), in which Tolstoy describes the effects of Beethoven ("Kazhetsia kak budto uspominaesh' to, chego nikogda ne bylo"), just before referring to Plato's theory of representational music.

[11]In wanting the question "Zachem?" answered, Pozdnyshev expects of music what, according to Schopenhauer (1:261), music is ∞not$\mu\tau$ supposed to provide: the motives for the emotions it expresses. Schopenhauer writes: "Therefore music does not express this or that particular [emotion or state of mind], but [the emotions and states of mind] themselves, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories, and also without the motives for them. Nevertheless, we understand them perfectly in this extracted quintessence. Hence it arises that our imagination is so easily stirred by music, and tries to shape that invisible, yet vividly aroused, spirit-world that speaks to us directly, to clothe it with flesh and bone, and thus to embody it in an analogous example."

to it, then the music has reached its goal; a mass is sung, I receive communion, here too the music reaches its goal." (27:61). Pozdnyshev's musical platform here reproduces that of Socrates, in whose ideal republic two types of music are sanctioned: one mode that "will represent appropriately the voice and accent of a brave man on military service or any dangerous undertaking, who faces misfortune, be it injury or death, or any other calamity, with the same steadfast endurance" and another mode that would "represent him in the voluntary non-violent occupations of peace-time: for instance, persuading someone to grant a request, praying to God or instructing or admonishing his neighbor, or again submitting himself to the requests or instruction or persuasion of others and acting as he decides, and in all showing no conceit, but moderation and common sense and willingness to accept the outcome." (Plato, 399b, p. 159). For Socrates and Pozdnyshev alike, the ideal function of music is to act on the soul of listeners in such a way as to dispose them to go out and perform certain acts.

Upon hearing his wife and Trukhachevsky play Beethoven's sonata, Pozdnyshev assumes that this music also induces certain actions, that it encodes certain imperatives. He implies that playing such music requires following through on what the music suggests. One must "accomplish specific important acts that correspond to the music. One should play [the music] and do that to which the music inclined one." (27:62). The dénouement of the story reveals just what Pozdnyshev thought the music was dictating: to his wife, "Thou shalt commit adultery," and to him, "Thou shalt commit murder." From Pozdnyshev's point of view, both acts, his wife's supposed adultery and his actual murder, were performed not just under the influence, but at the explicit behest, of the music.

To many, however, it may seem that Pozdnyshev's tragic flaw, resulting in the murder of his wife, was his premise that music, in particular, Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata", dictates certain emotions which, in turn, inexorably bring about certain actions. Pozdnyshev assumed that the music was crudely mimetic and hortatory. Thus, the essential tragedy, the death of his wife, results from Pozdnyshev's assumption that art must have a message and that if it lacks an overt one, if it simply, as he puts it, "irritates but does not culminate," then the consequences -- what the individual does under the influence of this "irritation" of the emotions -- are out of his control and beyond his moral responsibility.

In the "The Kreutzer Sonata," Tolstoy sets up Pozdnyshev as an embodiment of an aesthetic "truth" that he himself was exploring at the time: the notion that art should have a message or at least an aim. In his diary of August 14, 1889, five days after he read Plato's theory of art and the same day

that he read Schopenhauer's aesthetics, Tolstoy wrote the following: "The empty art of our time consists of the arousal of those very emotions experienced by the artist, but not in order to represent anything, but for no particular reason: just as Petrushka read books for the process of reading." (50:122). Tolstoy refers here to Chichikov's servant, who, Gogol tells us, was an avid reader of books "whose content he didn't bother about: it made no difference to him. [...] He didn't care about what he read as much as the act of reading itself or, to put it better, the process of reading itself, the fact that the letters were always forming some word or another, which meant the devil knows what" (Gogol', 2:156-7).

Altough most people who read books are usually not complete Petrushkas, reading strictly for the process, paying no attention whatsoever to content or message, when it comes to music many more are Petrushkas, who listen to and even make music for "the process," for the sake of the music itself. Although Tolstoy recognized that music functions somewhat differently than other art forms, by acting more directly on the emotions (30:247), he often seemed to place on it many of the same representational expectations he placed on literature. When he declared music to be the "shorthand of feelings" (55:116 [20 Jan. 1905]), he suggests it to be a kind of intensified and accelerated version of literature, rather than something of a different order. In calling music the "shorthand of feelings," Tolstoy sought to convey its efficient evocation of emotion, yet his choice of metaphor suggests that music could be transcribed into longhand and thus become an intelligible verbal message.

Tolstoy appears to have struggled with what John Neubauer (1986) has called the "emancipation of music from language." Music was emancipated, not only in the sense that it no longer needed to depend on a written text for which it provided accompaniment, but also in the sense that it no longer even sought to represent specific scenes or evoke particular emotions. Neubauer shows how the debates arising when instrumental music became dominant harked back to Plato, who opposed the emancipation of music on ethical grounds. (In the Republic, Socrates insists that "both the rhythm and mode should be suited to the words and not vice versa" and that "the words must of course determine the music" [Plato, 400a, 400d, pp. 160-1].) Neubauer writes (24):

> Music could still be used to rouse the emotions for proper moral or religious ends, but Plato was now keenly aware that passionate music could work at cross-purposes with those ends, and he insists that music be accompanied by words. Most eighteenth century defenders of imitation and enemies of pure instrumental music echoed him.

The Platonic subtext to "The Kreutzer Sonata" thus carries on the debate about musical mimesis that began in the eighteenth century and continued into Tolstoy's day.

In "The Kreutzer Sonata," Tolstoy responds indirectly to the musical theory dominant in his time, a musical theory in which the music of Beethoven played a pivotal role. Beethoven's music served as the model for the Schopenhaurian notion that music is a force that defies reason, that it is the language of feeling and passion, that it represents the will directly, without recourse to ideas or language, that it acts directly on the emotions. Tolstoy, in his diaries for August 1889, refers to Schopenhauer's aesthetics as "fluff and nonsense" [50:123 (16 Aug. 1889)]. Whatever criticism of Beethoven's music is levelled in "The Kreutzer Sonata" thus becomes a rebuttal of Schopenhauer's musical theory and a plea for music to remain unemancipated.

In World as Will and Representation, Schopenhauer acknowledges (450) the fact that Beethoven's music presents human emotions "only in the abstract and without any particularization" supplied. (This is what bothers Pozdnyshev.) Schopenhauer recognizes that "we certainly have an inclination to realize [or represent] it [i.e., music] while we listen, to clothe it in the imagination with flesh and bone..." But Schopenhauer adds: "On the whole, however, this does not promote an understanding or enjoyment of it, but rather gives it a strange and arbitrary addition. It is therefore better," cautions Schopenhauer, "to interpret [the music of Beethoven] purely and in its immediacy." Pozdnyshev as he listens to Beethoven is unable to resist the temptation to "clothe it in the imagination with flesh and bone." The consequences are not just "strange and arbitrary," as Schopenhauer feared, but disastrous.

From the Schopenhaurian point of view, the tragedy in Tolstoy's story results not from an ethical failure but from an aesthetic one. Pozdnyshev listens to the music in the wrong way. He allows it to stimulate his imagination in too literal a fashion. From the Tolstoyan/Platonic point of view, the tragedy serves as a graphic enactment of the ethical dangers resulting from the emancipation of music from language.

Tolstoy's Platonism, as expressed in "The Kreutzer Sonata," also counters the aesthetics of Nietzsche, another advocate of Beethoven and the emancipation of music.[12] In

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[12]In various places Tolstoy criticizes Nietzsche, blaming him for promoting decadence in art. Tolstoy had quite negative things to say about Nietzsche's philosophy, especially *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. I have not come across specific references in Tolstoy's writings to *The Birth of Tragedy*.

particular, "The Kreutzer Sonata" appears to carry on polemics with Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (1871). In this work, Nietzsche upholds the Dionysian rapture of music, despite or even because of its tendency to lead people to violate cultural and ethical rules. He chides Socrates for his rejection of music.

Moisei Semenovich Al'tman (76-77) writes: "Esli kogda-to molodoi Nietzsche pisal o rozhdenii tragedii iz dukha muzyki, to Tolstoy mog by, obobshchiv vse svoi vyskazyvaniia, napisat' o rozhdenii zla iz dukha muzyki, tak kak ni odin iz vidov iskusstva, po Tolstomu, v takoi stpeni ne apelliruet k bessoznatel'nomu v cheloveke, kak muzyka."[13] To Al'tman's comment, one might add that "The Kreutzer Sonata" quite directly illustrates how a domestic tragedy is born from the spirit of Beethoven's music.

Actually, as Pozdnyshev tells it, the music of Beethoven does not act alone in causing him to murder. The railroad, which was, for Tolstoy, the purveyor of debauchery and a symbol of the decay of society, becomes an accomplice to murder. After his wife and Trukhachevsky play the Beethoven Sonata that so disturbs and arouses him, Pozdnyshev retreats to their country estate only to return later by train. During this return journey on the railroad, the rhythm of the train so unsettles him that he finds himself transported once again into the state he experienced when he heard his wife and Trukhachevsky perform the Kreutzer Sonata. His capacity for mimesis has gone haywire. His imagination creates pictures ("Kartiny") of his wife's adultery which displace reality.[14]

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[13]Al'tman also suggests the possible relevance to Tolstoy of the admonishment "Practice music!," which, according to Plato's Phaedo, came to Socrates in a dream. (Nietszche interprets this dream of Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*.)

Renato Poggioli, who was also struck by the similarity between Tolstoy and Socrates on this grounds of their rejection of "the spirit of music," writes that Tolstoy was "a kind of modern Socrates, always refusing to heed Nietzsche's summons to the old Socrates, i.e. to '[practice] music.' It was this rejection of 'the spirit of music' that determined the nihilistic tendencies of all Tolstoy's aesthetic and critical writings: his denial of poetry and art; his condemnations of some of the most classical works of the western tradition; his libels on Beethoven and Shakespeare, and other luminaries of the human spirit" (25).

[14]"Etot vos'michasovoi pereezd v vagone byldlia menia chto-to uzhasnoe, chego ia ne zabudu vo vsiu zhizn' ottogo li, chto ser v vagon, ia zhivo predstavil sebia uzhe priekhavshim, ili, ottogo, chto zheleznaia doroga tak vozbuzhdaiushchr deistvuet na liudei, ko tol'ko stekh por, kak ia sel v vagon, ia uzhe ne mog vladet' svoim

As when he listens to the Beethoven sonata, when Pozdnyshev rides on trains, the rhythm acts on his imagination, causing him, or so he maintains, to lose control over himself, to lose the ability to distinguish between the real and the imaginary, between the possible and the impossible, between the allowed and the forbidden. He experiences uncontrollable emotions which appear to demand some kind of resolution. Indeed, as he puts it, some demon was "prompting" him to consider certain "terrible notions," that is, killing his wife. Within Tolstoy's story, both Beethoven's music and train rides appear to have an intoxicating effect on Pozdnyshev; in this state of Bacchic intoxication, he murders.

The courts seem to have accepted the notion that Pozdnyshev was acting "under the influence" of something. Thus he apparently is not held morally responsible for his behavior and is soon allowed back on the streets and, what is perhaps more dangerous, back on the railroad, where he tells his story to the narrator.

In relating his crime and the events that led to it, Pozdnyshev recreates the circumstances, all but returning to the state of frenzy and stimulation which led him to commit murder. As he describes to the narrator the effect on him of that fateful railroad trip back to the city just before he murdered his wife, he remarks: "I was like a caged animal" and then he immediately, as he tells his story, jumps up and starts to pace the compartment, moaning: "I am afraid, I am afraid of railroad cars, terror comes over me. Yes, it's terrifying." (27:67).

One might wonder why, if this is the case, he travels on the railroad. But this is perhaps the point. As Richard Gustafson has noted (354-5), Pozdnyshev actively seeks to recreate and even relive his experience rather than avoid it. The narrator records the fact that, as their conversation progresses, Pozdnyshev gets more and more stimulated, not just by the railroad travel but by the tea they drink: "The tea was

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voobrazhemiem, i ono ne perestavaia s neobychainoi iarkost'iu nachalo risovat' mne razzhivaiushchie moiu revnost' kartiny, odnu za drugoi i odnu tsinichnee drugoi, i vse o tom zhe, o tom, chto proiskhodilo tam, bez menia, kak ona izmeniala mne. Ia sgoral ot negodovaniia, zlosti i kakogo-to osobennogo chuvstva upoeniia svoim unizheniem, sozertsaia eti kartiny, i ne mog otorvat'sia ot nikh; me mog ne smotret' na nikh, ne mog steret' ikh, ne mog ne vyzyvat' ikh. Malo togo, chem bolee ia sozertsal eti voobrazhaemye kartiny, tem bolee ia veril v ikh/deistvitel'nost'. Iarkost', s kotoroi predstavililis' mne eti kartiny, kak budto sluzhila dokazatel'stvom tomu, chto to, chto ia voobrazhal, bylo deistvitel'nost! Kakoi-to/d'iavol, tochno protiv moei voli, pridumyval i podskazyval mne samye uzhashye soobrazhiniia."

terribly strong and there was no water to add to it. I felt especially excited by the two glasses I had drunk. Obviously the tea was acting on him too because he became more and more excited" (27:20). Pozdnyshev, for all his criticism of the stimulating and irritating -- Bacchic -- effects of Beethoven, voluntarily recreates similar effects through the stimulus of railroad travel and tea.

What this suggests is that, although Pozdnyshev may dream of an ideal republic where there will be no sex, no Beethoven, no railroad and perhaps even no strong tea or other stimulants, for the moment he is caught up in a kind of drinking party, one at which love is discussed; he is, in short, at a symposium, like that memorialized by Plato.[15]

While a tea party in a train compartment may not be everyone's idea of Bacchanalia, a Bacchic presence infiltrates this dialogue, suggesting that Pozdnyshev and Tolstoy, for all their talk, failed to banish this element from their respective realms.

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[15]Helen Bacon stresses the importance of the Dionysian element in Plato's Symposium, a "drinking party" (literal meaning) where the subject matter is Erotic (433).

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