

Leo Tolstoy in Mikhail Prishvin's Diary Discourse

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the different aspects of Leo Tolstoy's phenomenon in the diary discourse of Mikhail Prishvin, a Russian prose-writer, thinker/sophist and artist of a unique range, who lived through the tragic Russian history in the first half of the twentieth century. Prishvin's diaries represent a unique chronicle of the difficult epoch, a lively, subjective and at the same time inherently veracious evidence of historical time. A great deal of attention is paid to the writer's reflections on creative originality, philosophical and moral principles of many Russian and European prose-writers and poets, who considerably influenced Prishvin's creative method, his artistic philosophy and aesthetic distinction. Leo Tolstoy occupies a special place in the domain of the writer's internal dialogues, being the center of Prishvin's reflection, a symbolic figure, whose creative life became a special link between the cultural paradigm of the classical literature of the XIX century and the emerging trends of the Russian philosophical and artistic modernism. Throughout his life, Prishvin was concerned about Tolstoy's phenomenon, his ideas and life paradoxes. Prishvin tries to unravel "Tolstoy's mystery" – the mystery of a brilliant artist, essay writer, philosopher, and preacher, agreeing and at the same time disagreeing with the most significant principles of his world perception. Prishvin does not accept him as a moralist and a preacher, claiming that the writer cannot "abandon art". He has to serve only his creative gift. In Prishvin's diaries Tolstoy is the artist who portrays people as they are in a crucial historical moment, because even being under delusion he has always served the truth, understanding life as a great integrity.

Keywords: epoch, Tolstoy, literature, philosophy, moral, axiology, integrity, religion, people, Russia.

1. Introduction

Mikhail Prishvin's diaries introduce the writer's internal dialogues with the most outstanding representatives of the national literature. The reception of Pushkin's, Gogol's, Dostoevsky's, Tolstoy's, Gorky's, Bunin's and Blok's creative originality reflects the meaning of many Prishvin's philosophical questionings addressed primarily to the mystery of the national identity, to the phenomenon of "russianness", to the most important ideas and trends of the national culture. Tolstoy becomes the writer's "eternal companion". Even when Prishvin does not agree with him, thinking about the reasons of his life-creative paradoxes, he acknowledges the greatness of Tolstoy's contradictions, their profound and often sacred meaning. The problem of the dialogue between Prishvin and Tolstoy is significant for the understanding of Prishvin's artistic strategies, as his own reflections on "the great Leo's" life and oeuvre clarify many invariants of his own mental search, his philosophemes which often determine both explicit and implicit meanings and values depicted in the prose of different genres. In his mental disputes with Tolstoy, Prishvin defines complex concepts about the meaning of art, the genesis of artistic gift and the possibility to communicate through words the essential ontological foundations of the Russian world. It is of great importance that Prishvin actualizes the method of extended dialogism. Making a certain problem clear to himself, in his mental "conversation" with Tolstoy, he addresses another person, mostly a writer who enjoys an impressive literary reputation. The third person effect engenders new impulses and unexpected turns in the analysis of certain issues which are vitally important to Prishvin and also for a deeper comprehension of his artistic world perception.

2. Literature Review

Prishvin's dialogues with the most outstanding representatives of the Russian and European culture have always been of interest to researchers. However, in recent decades, the writer's artistic career has been viewed mainly in the context of its relationship with the prose writers, poets and philosophers of the twentieth century: M. Gorky, A. Blok, A. Tolstoy, A. Platonov, L. Leonov, and others. Prishvin's artistic debates, in particular, were studied in dissertations of N.P. Dvortsova (Drovtsova, 1994), A.A. Dyrkina (Dyrdina AA, 2002), N.N. Ivanov (Ivanov, 2000), Y.S. Mokhnatkina

(Mohnatkina, 2005), M.K. Shemyakina (Shemyakin, 2004), E.I. Yablokov (Yablokov, 1990). In the context of our work, special interest is aroused by the articles which analyze the specific features of Prishvin's diary genre and the structure of his diary books: A.M. Novosyolova (Novoselova, 2001). The diary form of writing as a special way of thinking becomes the subject of reflection in A.M. Kolyadina's article (Kolyadina, 2005) and in the article written by M.P. Kachalova (Kachalova, 2011).

The creative relationship between Prishvin and Vasily Rozanov is analyzed in Podoksenov's monograph (Podoksenov, 2010). The problem of understanding Dostoevsky's phenomenon in Prishvin's diary reflections is the main idea of A.A. Medvedev's work (Medvedev, 2005). In his article Uryupin investigates the dialogues between Prishvin and Bulgakov (Uryupin, 2008).

The article written by I.G. Mineralova is of the greatest interest to us (Mineralova, 2004).

However, the subject of Prishvin's artistic dialogue with Tolstoy, whose phenomenon Prishvin addressed during his life, remains outside the modern studies.

3. Methodology

The research method is aimed at implementing the most effective approaches to the analysis of Prishvin and Leo Tolstoy's artistic dialogue. The following methods can be regarded as productive ones: comparative-typological, biographical and hermeneutic methods. The comparative-typological approach presupposes the necessary comparison of the main principles of the writers' artistic consciousness taking into account their typological originality. It is important to emphasize the dialectical contradictions of their world perception and Leo Tolstoy's paradoxes, which became the subject of Prishvin's deep reflection. The biographical method, being a classic and very relevant tool for literary research nowadays is necessary in the context of our study because it allows considering the artists' aesthetic and philosophical views in the sphere of their life styles, based on the biographical facts within a single locus of the author and the artist. The hermeneutical method is also actualized in the present study. A number of different philosophical ideas, actualized in Tolstoy's artistic and publicistic discourse, are reflected in Prishvin's diaries and find very fancy and not always explicit expression in the writer's prose. The diaries become a certain creative laboratory for "the maturity and ripening" of the future images, plots, main sense generating lines and motifs of many Prishvin's writings, such as Kashchey's Chain, Ginseng and others. The relationship "diary - prose - diary" creates a hermeneutical structure where the single "etropic domain" is born.

4. Results

The writer's diaries represent a striking dialogue between a man and the surrounding world: "... by studying his diaries carefully, the reader can easily see that they are not just memories of a deeply talented man, but they are real artwork" (Shustov, 2008). At the same time, they are the evidence of a complex era, which is full of inner tragic elements. The writer's daily records (during all his life!) are essentially a special way of living through his own existence and a specific experience of philosophical reflection. The reader observes the author's philosophy of how he daily conceptualizes the "restless Russian being" during the first half of the XX century which is represented by people, facts and events. The central place in this chronicle is given to the Russian literature, the national writers who embody the Russian culture, belonging to a special kind of people who "... do not write with a pen but plough through the paper, piercing it, turning over the black earth onto the white sheets. For this reason, easy writing or belles-lettres seem vulgar to a Russian person. Moreover, a Russian writer finishing his path with one or another form of teaching declared the matter of his early years "artistic nonsense". The Russian word is solid and meaningful in everyday life and culture of the country, where "every honey is bitter and smells of wormwood", where the writer's word "has to be prophetic and is far from being used for fun and entertainment" (Prishvin, 2010). To these, first of all, he refers "the great Leo", who filled him with awe and "even more". All his life Prishvin was charmed by Tolstoy, "moreover, in comparison with the effect that other classics of the Russian literature had on him, this one was the most straightforward and profound, the most multi-faceted and continuous ... which is proved not only by his work, but also by Prishvin's numerous diary entries of different years, the very intimacy and authenticity of which reveal the story of his intense inner dialogue with Tolstoy. The scope of this communication covers the area of moral, philosophical and aesthetic thought. In other periods of his life its intensity increased, in others it faltered, but never disappeared altogether. For Mikhail Prishvin, Leo Tolstoy was not only "the person you live with, but the one you die with" (Rudashevskaya, 2005).

Prishvin's Tolstoy is a giant of spirit, brilliant and at the same time "saintly naive" in his wisdom, in his quests and contradictions. Being the center of Prishvin's reflection and axiological reflections on literature and its best

representatives – Pushkin, Gogol, Goncharov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Gorky – Tolstoy appears to be the figure which combines the XIX and XX century Russian culture.

Tolstoy is present in the sphere of Prishvin's philosophical questionings about the role of culture, the meaning of the Russian history and the destiny of the national literature. He closely contemplates Tolstoy, a man and an artist, like in the mirror of his own identity, in which he recognizes himself and all that surrounds him, although he was "scared to see himself in the mirror of a terrible time" (Prishvin 2009). Another reason why the "Leo the Great" is particularly close to him is being his immediate neighbor, "I tried to think about the many wonderful people who were born on the Earth; over there, not very far from here, Leo Tolstoy would plowing, Turgenev would hunt, Gogol would visit the elderly monk Amvosy, and you never know how many great people came from this Central Black Earth Region. But they are gone, like perfume which has worn off, and because of this the earth itself seems to have become poorer (Prishvin, 1982).

The environment of little Kuryushka, the autobiographical hero of the novel "Kashchey's Chain", which is very close to the author, highly respected the two great elders - Leo Tolstoy and the elderly monk Amvosy of Optina. In his diary of 1918 the writer noted that his aunt "equally worshiped Leo Tolstoy and Amvosy of Optina. Lyubov Aleksandrovna was committed solely to Amvosy, and considered Tolstoy to be apostate" (Prishvin 67).

Tolstoy's neighborhood is extremely important for Prishvin, who considered himself a "live perception of Russian backwoods" and a province writer. He perceives the province as a close and personal space where he finds it easy to breathe. The writer with a cosmic world perception can easily stay "away from the capital"; the province is "the center of his cosmos"; the life here is "alive", there is something close, established, without that "miserable urbanism" or the underlined sociocentrism in which, according to Prishvin, the spirit of natural harmony disappears.

Tolstoy stays with the writer in a variety of circumstances. Even during the hungry, exhausting time of the civil war, escaping from the bloody chaos to Yelets, Prishvin creates his autobiographical hero Alpatov "heavily influenced by Tolstoy", in particular, under the influence of his main motto "be your own self". "He rejected all Tolstoy's ideas with Chertkov at the head of them, with his plowing and non-resistance. However, the idea of being *one's own self* under all conditions was involuntarily (as a principle) taken by him, which was right and good. The wrong thing was that from this principle he made a conclusion about some compulsory height above the White and Red. There was no such height: he was hiding from the voids between the Red and White. Because of Tolstoy he had to follow some higher principle in the issue of "the Red or the White?" but he could not say to himself what this higher principle was, or rather all this higher principle was Leo Tolstoy himself" (Prishvin, 2010).

Tolstoy is great as an artist when portraying people as they really are, since he possesses a rare artistic talent "to sculpt people out of something live", finding prototypes for his prose in people's environment, at the same time the "bitter notes are closer to his heart than the rational thoughts of mind" (Prishvin, 1999). It is important that Prishvin considers the reflections on the artistic gift of the Russian genius and the amazing range of his ideas in the domain of national and European cultural traditions and a broad historical literary context. Giving birth to titans like Tolstoy, the Russian literature has the courage to "go all the way to the end".

Prishvin returns to Tolstoy's artistic world in his meditations about Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Gorky. The comparisons with Gorky are particularly eloquent. The artists are, of course, considerably different, but the main difference is that, for Prishvin, Tolstoy is a "religious writer" even though he disagrees with the Christian dogmata and Gorky "just did away with the God" a long time ago. At the same time, Prishvin is convinced that even the ingenious Tolstoy cannot capture "the whole flesh and the soul of a person" because artistic creativity, addressing the eternal problem of the dialogue between a man and the world cannot replace the religious discourse, even though these very different sides of existence, which are close at the same time, have a "common destiny" in an entire stream of creative life. The way Prishvin sees it, Gorky is inferior to Tolstoy – the artist.

Comparing Tolstoy's "Childhood" and Gorky's autobiographical work of the same name, Prishvin quite unflatteringly speaks about the latter: "As a writer, he is only equal to Levitov but fans extol him like Tolstoy – is he aware of this? His "Childhood" is a monotonous work, although well written, in it *the whole landscape belongs to the land and there is no sky at all*. In comparison with Tolstoy's "Childhood" it is as follows: the blade of the windmill rotates, touching the green earth, the blue sky – Tolstoy. And in Gorky's work the blades of the windmill rotate on a vertical axis, like the threshing drive, without getting up from the ground. Well written as it is, but I could not finish reading as many as sixty pages. The environment outweighs the person, and thus stiffens the reader" (Prishvin, 1991).

Prishvin constantly emphasizes Gorky's dual nature, which aligns him with many of his contemporaries. He notices Blok's inner duality in Blok, "the noble" poetry knight, in Gippius and Merezhkovsky. Gorky is false and true at the same time, but this strange falsehood is not a personal quality, it is in the nature of his talent.

Prishvin has his own understanding of truth, including the artistic one. And this is where Tolstoy becomes a certain moral tuning fork.

Striving for ontological truth is understood by the author of the diary as an organic feature of the classical literature, and therefore he is particularly close to Tolstoy, "The embodiment of the truth is considered to be optional in the vast majority of cases. On the contrary, the desired peace is an unattainable ideal which is possible only in fiction ... Tolstoy's writing strives for the truth. Every line written by Tolstoy expresses confidence that the truth lives among us and can be artistically found by an explorer like iron ore, for example" (Prishvin, 2004).

Prishvin himself, being deeply sincere and truthful in his diary books, was striving in prose for the same kind of truth, which does not deny the necessity of fiction but, on the contrary, considers it to be the main condition for artistic image creation, and above all, for the creation of his autobiographical hero Alpatov in the novel *Kashchey's Chain*, where he "clarifies" his own life in the character's destiny.

Tolstoy, like no other, is close to the "organic way of life", the center of which is God. "God is the core of the world that goes with me. All the great works by Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and others ... are written in relation to this core" (Prishvin, 1999).

However, the access to "this core" may be different. Thinking about it, Prishvin refers to Tolstoy's and Gogol's artistic behavior, because they chose a common path of many Russian writers – to get out of the sphere of art towards something "more important for a man".

Being a writer himself, contemplating the correlation between the art, word and religion, he believes that the artistic consciousness differs greatly from the religious one: "The genuine art should know its place and should not become what the religion alone does" (Prishvin, 1995).

An artist's happiness lies in the awareness that he does the only thing, which was destined for him. However, a writer, being the demiurge in his created world, must remain humble, because the light of his talent, even if it is enormous, is similar to the light of the moon, which shines only with the light it reflects, "comes from the sun, but he is not the sun himself" (Prishvin, 1995).

Prishvin considers a fallacy that Tolstoy and Gogol "abandon their art song", abandon themselves as writers and plunge into morality and religion ... It's a hopeless thing for the writer. The error is that no means will be enough to say everything.

The artist should "develop and master" his own talent, to understand, to feel and convey the depth, complexity and beauty of the world, because "the gift of seeing the beauty of the world is a gift that should be multiplied by creativity. This gift is the ability to give qualities to things, to create changes and differences, there is the power of the first glance, parental attention, distinguishing love" (Prishvin, 2010).

Maybe for this reason why Prishvin does not accept Tolstoy as a moralist, it is unpleasant for him to read Tolstoy's moral reasoning, particularly preaching.

He does not accept Tolstoy's heretical views, in which "heavily flirting, he carved out an indigestible sledgehammer from the Gospel with some ivory force, where John's Word is referred to as comprehension" (Prishvin, 1994).

It is not religion that killed an artist in Tolstoy, as Prishvin says, but it is that "arrogant, conceited and proud creature, which grows within a man, feeding on his public reputation of an artist. If an artist began his work in harmony with God and constantly looked back on his behavior and lifestyle, he would be able to be creative without meeting the devil, like the Greeks created their statues of gods and Christians created their liturgy in their paintings and music" (Prishvin, 2004).

It should be mentioned that it is not only Tolstoy's doctrine that provokes rejection, but also Tolstoy's philosophical contemplations. The paradox of such reaction is that, Tolstoy is great for Prishvin because, in his view, Tolstoy was not a philosopher at all.

As a man and a writer, Prishvin is paradoxical in many aspects; all his life he repeated his famous formula "be afraid of philosophy" like an incantation, however, he could not "restrain himself" and created a complex philosophical novel "The Tzar's Road". He is confused by Tolstoy's philosophy of history, to say the least, "I have read the epilogue of War and Peace (philosophy of history) and recollecting that there remains a certain confusion (by the way) after reading books on philosophy, I ask myself on behalf of philosophers: isn't it the aim of philosophy to pull out simple, clear thoughts which work productively in every intelligent man's mind, like a spring of a watch, and to show how useless they are. This can be seen in "War and Peace": in the epilogue the author ostentatiously pulled out the spring which drives the artist, and the reader wonders how such a miserable spring could have set in motion such a wonderful life" (Prishvin, 1982-1986). Calling for Rousseau's and Tolstoy's simplicity seems to him slightly naive, more than that, – it is "a real mistake", since it is more difficult to lead a simpler life ... and the most difficult thing is that striving for life simplicity is found in the most complicated souls, and all simple things are yearning for complexity" (Prishvin, 1999). All that Prishvin was striving for was an endeavor to acquire simplicity in a hunting tale or a children's story, an autobiographical narration, in a large or small piece of writing. But the real simplicity is given to a genius only. To achieve the simplicity of Pushkin's

The Captain's Daughter, "the most Russian piece of writing", "it is necessary to penetrate into something very important in people's minds". The simplicity must be truthful like the life itself. Tolstoy is great, since his work is close to the organic matter of the life process, "therefore his writings seem to be almost like the life itself. Nowadays, we can observe the prevalence of the thesis literature, which is close to the working people's lives in terms of the topic only ... I wish our modern literature borrowed from Tolstoy's literature his natural honesty, mobility and freedom" (Prishvin, 2004).

Tolstoy, Gogol and Dostoevsky were closer to Prishvin, much closer than his contemporaries. In his diaries, Prishvin often compares the "nature of his talent" with the classics, and considering all Prishvin's modesty, he perceives Tolstoy as a "neighbor" in terms of the literary gift.

Tolstoy, Gogol and Dostoevsky are eminent writers, almost sacred and incomprehensible, people of inordinate mystery. It is difficult to put someone next to them. For Prishvin, the main thing is that they are national artists whose oeuvre addresses Russia, the mystery of its soul, destiny and nature. It is this feature that makes them different from writers whom Prishvin respected, recognized, admired and did not always agree with. Among them was Gorky, who "was drawn to Europe". Prishvin writes about his "eurocentrism", which somehow naturally "results from" all his life. Prishvin cannot agree with Gorky's perception of the Russian soul as "slavish", "motionless" and the people as "corrupted", "Gorky responds to my reproaches, "This is what I told you, I told you how corrupted these people are, and you made a judgment about them based on Dostoevsky's work".

That's not true: all these materialists, Marxists raised only antagonistic, exasperated and dark Russia. Listen to its voice: how many foreign words there are! ... Where are a wise proverb, a clever tale, and abrupt words, personally created off hand, what happened to all this unexpected Russian literature? Is this how the real Russia speaks? Is it so, my mother?

No, Gorky, you are wrong. It is you, progressive Marxists, socialists and proletarians, who raise the evil spirits" (Prishvin, 1991).

The people were not understood by the artistic intelligentsia either, particularly by the Russian symbolists; even those "who took materials from the Russian ethnography and archaeology" (Remizov) lost their perception of reality and suffered terribly from this (V. Ivanov, Remizov). The immediate sense of their (passionately loved) people's life completely abandoned them. And symbolists have always irritated me with this, but I was with them because naturalists-populists were even further from me" (Prishvin, 1995).

Tolstoy, "the master of the Russian truth" is great because the truth lives in his heroes, in their words and actions, and everyone who reads *War and Peace*, for instance, "believes the author" in each narrative fragment. Prishvin also tries to "keep up with the truth" because he measures his art with life in all its tragic twists. For Prishvin, this is the greatness of classical literature, and also the greatness of the people, who gave birth to such geniuses as Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, whose place is "next to Homer".

"Tolstoy being a naive realist" (in the highest sense for Prishvin) was brought up in religious reverence for common people. Expressing the intelligentsia's aspirations, together with populists and Slavophiles, he educated the society within this "reverence" for the people in their cultivation of bread: "... this feeling, probably, comes from the church. Now all of this faith has disappeared like the smoke, there remains the observation of everyday necessity wheel only (Marx's economic necessity) (Prishvin, 1994).

Literature is also truthful because among the people it found the prototypes of such "positive or negative heroes" like Tolstoy's Plato Karataev or Dostoevsky's Smerdyakov. In particular, Prishvin finds "Smerdyakovs" among the revolutionaries: "Smerdyakov and Platon Karataev, Smerdyakov is a commissioner. Smerdyakov is the chief commissioner in our city: a long, pale face with no hair, dull eyes, no one has ever seen a smile on his face. He is very smart and talented by nature, but without learning and without going out, any superiority grace turned into anger ... and I often encounter this type among our commissioners, city dwellers and village people" (Prishvin, 1994).

Karataev and Smerdyakov are like the two poles of artistic anthropology of the national literature, expressing extreme points of the people's spirit.

During the revolutionary period, the "time of the evil and hatred" the reverence for people "somehow wore off", but nevertheless, as the author of the diary states, "we, the writers, need to return to the people, it is necessary to listen in on their groans, to collect blood and tears and new souls nurtured by suffering, we must take all of the past in a new light" (Prishvin, 1995).

Prishvin also checks against Tolstoy his understanding of what he calls the ontology of the creative process. Prishvin's definitions of the art phenomenon can be found in the diaries dozens of times. He speculates a lot about the fact that the true art does not separate being and consciousness but unites them, that creativity "is the realization of the issues of being and consciousness" (Prishvin, 2004).

Prishvin believes that people's consciousness is deeply rooted in being and this makes it different from the

consciousness of intelligentsia, who "accumulates" its consciousness, "at the expense of being, so to speak".

In his prose and publicistic writing Tolstoy was able to express the synthesis of being and consciousness, so he became "the master of consciousness" for Prishvin: "Intelligentsia is the mind and the conscience, it is the consciousness of life; intelligentsia is the chanters in the choir gallery who sing while people pray and create" (Prishvin, 2004). Prishvin is attracted by "the big horizon of thought" in Tolstoy's oeuvre, he is at one with the "great Leo" in the struggle for his own thought. Processes in a person's consciousness and maturing of thoughts became a secret for Prishvin. This is connected with the search for an answer to the main question, which he asks in his creative heritage, "What am I?" Having perceived the world as a "mystery", he believes that the "inner Self" is formed in the domain of ever expanding consciousness. For Prishvin, the world is not final; it strives to create organic integrity out of itself, not being the space of accomplished senses. Therefore, his autobiographical novel *Kashchey's Chain* is in itself a certain "geography of thought" and the main character's initiation comes down mainly to intellectual maturation, spiritual self-expansion and the expansion of mental horizons.

Therefore, in his notes he is so careful about the basic principles of the consciousness process, admitting that Tolstoy's diaries have something in common with his contemplations: "We talked about Tolstoy's diaries and found some things in common with mine in a sense that these diaries are written for the purpose of self-understanding, and that the process of writing such diaries is a conversation with yourself. The power and the glory of such diaries are that they are written out of necessity when your consciousness grows and only for this" (Prishvin, 1982 - 1986).

He is interested in the depth of the contradictions between scientific and artistic consciousness, between science and art. "Like dray horses", the scientists pull the carts of "other people's thoughts", but the artist is free, he goes ahead to meet life itself with its contradictions, he will use "the science, morals and religion" for his creation.

Prishvin rejects the "small mind" which addresses the accomplished truths, which "the Russian writers of the big mind" protested against: "Gorky often portrays himself as the patron of some "reason", but it is difficult to understand what reason he means: there is a European positivist's mind ... there is an American pragmatist's mind - this is hardly Gorky's "mind" ... This is the way I imagine this "mind" which I am ready to defend together with Gorky: it is a moment of clarity inside a person coming sometimes after a struggle between different contradictory feelings ... this moment of creative formation is predetermined by a preceding large painful struggle of feelings and without this prior process it is a completely different small mind, which is used in the hostel as something ready. It is against this small monkey mind that the people of the big mind like Tolstoy, Blok and others protested against" (Prishvin, 2003).

The search for "your own thought", "created in a personal form", the movement in the mind give birth to an inconceivable process – the creation of thought and its way into the space of a human being's integrity, into the space of great "unity of life".

For Prishvin Tolstoy is a "naive realist" whose strength lies in the ability to be surprised by the world like a child or a savage, like a naive viewer in the gallery who believes and worries during the performance. Tolstoy's "ingenious innocence and simplicity" gives him inner freedom. Prishvin himself had to defend his freedom in the most difficult life conditions of a totalitarian state, he was ready for "extreme poverty" in order to remain himself in the literature, which "was a song on the brim of a boiling tank, the song of the nightingale in a pruned birch" (Prishvin, 2007). The scale of Tolstoy's personality seriously contrasts with the literature of the 20-30s, which is disparagingly assessed by the writer: "The current literature is like a piece of paper tied by children to a cat's tail: our state cat runs and on its tail the piece of paper is hanging. Our literature is this piece of paper in which the cat's heroic achievements are praised (Prishvin, 2006). In these circumstances, the worst thing is that he loses "a desire to write": the heroes of his childhood hunting stories do not correspond to the "general Party line" and it becomes increasingly difficult to seek salvation in the nature.

Being reluctant to praise the achievements of the country, Prishvin tries to be close to "the leaders of the Russian culture", but not to the political leaders, "So the whole earth is devastated, we can still lean against the leaders of our culture, seek their protection. Well, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky? Well, Pushkin? The great deceased, arise, and we will see what you're like in the light of our fire and what we have against it?" (Prishvin, 1995).

The writer is convinced in the saving power of the Russian literature, the art of writing words, in the life-creating power of the national classics. On December 30, 1917, in the fatal diary the following entry appears: "Once in the street people gathered in front of our house and there was an orator who was telling them that Russia would die and would soon become a German colony. Then Nastya in his white scarf made her way through the crowd to the speaker and stopped him, telling the crowd, "Do not believe him, comrades, as long as Leo Tolstoy, Pushkin, Dostoevsky are with us, Russia will not die" (Prishvin, 1982).

5. Conclusions

The study shows the efficiency of the methodological approaches which allow the author to draw analogies between the two writers' world views, to reveal the similarities and differences in their philosophical and ethical ideas and to clarify the problems of succession in continuing what Prishvin called "the world co-creation".

Plunging into Tolstoy's artistic consciousness, Prishvin tries to determine the secret of his artistic talent, the reason for his creative ups and failures in life. The analysis of Prishvin's perception, the logic of his immersion in Tolstoy's world offers a new way of attributing such complex concepts of Prishvin's discourse as the flow of life integrity, the ontological truth of fiction, the "naive realism", the gnoseological and ontological unity, and others. He comes close to Tolstoy's phenomenon, comparing his work with such classics as Gogol, Dostoevsky, Gorky, which allows him to expand the horizons of his philosophical questionings, refine his artistic principles. Prishvin's philosophical and ethical reception of Tolstoy's deep intentions, his views on art, religion, revolution, consciousness helps to "find himself" in the art of writing. At the same time, Prishvin remains himself – a complicated writer, engaged in philosophical speculations, who reflects the anxiety of the twentieth century, the ups and downs of the Russian culture during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years. In the diaries there emerges a striking "image of the author", who preserved his gift despite all the temptations and deceptions of his writing career.

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