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Research article

## Memory and Style: Leo Tolstoy's Philosophy, the Tao Te Ching, and Machine Translation

Konstantin V. Azarov  

Saint-Petersburg State University of Veterinary Medicine, Chernigovskaya St., 5, 196084, St. Petersburg, Russia

[konstantin.v.azarov@gmail.com](mailto:konstantin.v.azarov@gmail.com)

### Abstract

In a world of intercultural conflict, when the Huntingtonian paradigm reaches new levels of relevance, all sources of cultural self-reflection and intercultural dialogue are vital. Answering to Francois Jullien's notion of the gap, Tolstoy's views on translation exhibit its integrative potential which machines cannot grasp. Some, like Alan Turing, developed the notion of an artificial intelligence in respect to a harmonizing dialogue, others defined it with reference to translation as perfect simulation. This raises the question whether translation should also be considered a harmonizing dialogue between two cultures. Tolstoy shows that it is more than mere harmonization but involves integration, thus indicating how the worlds of automated and human translation are unrelated to each other, coinciding only by accident or luck. Tolstoy moved from the idea of intellectual progress through harmonization to that of integration, from saying to showing, producing a cultural amalgam. From a literal point of view, translations can be semantically and syntactically incorrect, and yet reflect the state the original author was in. The opening stanza of Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* in the Russian translation edited by Tolstoy demonstrates this complexity. The psychological effects of the illogical or absurd, of koans, and of brilliant poesy, are indeed the final challenge to automated translation. In respect to Taoism, this has been discussed by Evgeny Torchinov, and it will be shown also by attending to Tolstoyan translational strategies regarding the *Tao Te Ching*. Machines should not replace human translators for cultural communication. Even in a world of total and totalitarian neuromorphic production, human translation will have the potential to function as a special kind of communicative art.

**Key words:** AI; Communication; Laozi; Integral; l'ecart; Cultural amalgam

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Научная статья

## Память и стиль: Философия Льва Толстого, Дао Дэ Цзин и машинный перевод

Константин Азаров  

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет ветеринарной медицины, ул. Черниговская, 5,  
196084, Санкт-Петербург, Россия

[konstantin.v.azarov@gmail.com](mailto:konstantin.v.azarov@gmail.com)

### Аннотация

В мире межкультурного конфликта, когда парадигма Хантингтона достигает новых уровней релевантности, любые источники культурной саморефлексии и межкультурного диалога становятся жизненно важными. Взгляды Толстого на перевод, напоминающие “l’ecart” (“разделение”) Франсуа Жюльена, показывают потенциал этой области, который машины не могут постичь. Толстой не только указывает, как миры автоматизированного и человеческого перевода не связаны друг с другом, но и как они являются потенциальными близнецами только благодаря контролируемой случайности в сборе данных ИИ. Во-первых, Толстой рассматривал перевод как источник литературного творчества, памяти и стиля. Во-вторых, появляется толстовская идея гармонизации как формы интеллектуального прогресса. Наконец, Толстой перешел от гармонизации к интеграции, от рассказа к демонстрации, став культурной амальгамой. Начальная строфа “Дао дэ цзин” в русском переводе, отредактированном Толстым, демонстрирует эту заключительную стадию в ее сложности. Психологические эффекты нелогичного или абсурдного, коанов и блестящей поэзии, действительно, являются последним вызовом для автоматизированного перевода. Эти факторы обсуждались в связи с даосизмом Евгением Торчиновым и будут показаны в “Дао дэ цзине” через толстовские переводческие стратегии. Машины не должны заменить людей в культурной коммуникации. Даже в мире тотального и тоталитарного нейроморфного производства человеческий перевод имел бы потенциал функционировать как особый вид коммуникативного искусства.

**Ключевые слова:** ИИ; Коммуникация; Лао-цзы; Интерграл, l’ecart; Культурная амальгама

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## INTRODUCTION

Consider, in Pierre-Simon Laplace's fashion, a demon who is capable of finding two pieces in the Library of Babel which, due to chance and the Library's vast combinatorial potential, are like translations of each other. Are these two texts in fact translations of one another? On the one hand, one illustrates the sense of the other in another language. But would the one text relate to the other in the same way as does the lifelong translation of Sima Qian's *Shiji* by Rudolf Vyatkin, or the decades-long translation of the Gospels by Leo Tolstoy? If translation is considered as a movement from one side of a river to another, with Wittgenstein's ladder pushed aside after it has fulfilled its function, there is still that function, the movement, and different tasks and additional problems to work on. The approach of Tolstoy to translation is not so much about how to translate, but how the two worlds, so-called automated translation and human translation, are unrelated to each other and are would-be twins not in spirit but only by a controlled accident.

In Tolstoy's eyes, the translator is the final interpreter, not just changing the wording and grammar, but helping to integrate or re-integrate the source material, thus contributing to the progress of humanity. Tolstoy calls this process "integral," a way to integrate the meaning of the text being translated by compressing it, removing many words and letters to try to find the single symbol of truth resembling the Indian Om (ॐ).

This paper consequently elaborates on different aspects of Tolstoy's decades-long translational adventure, to show how, from the source of "memory and style" translation became one of the supreme forms of creativity for the great writer. The significance of translation resides in the meeting of cultures, in what François Jullien would call – remarkably, in Tolstoy's fashion – a gap. Mechanization of such intricate and complex matters jeopardizes intercultural dialogue and threatens to impoverish the culture. Ultimately, "teaching" a machine to truly translate would be analogous to "teaching" it to respect.

## SURVEY OF TOLSTOY'S TRANSLATIONS

The history and context of Tolstoy's decades-long adventure in translation has been researched in depth by a Turkish specialist in Russian literature, Hanife Çaylak (2015). However, Çaylak's work confines itself to literary history. Here her work will be enriched by examining one significant case, Tolstoy's involvement in translating Laozi's *Tao Te Ching*. The question of Tolstoy's philosophy of translation and its relation to the problem of machine translation remains wide open and approachable, thanks in large part to the wide scope and systematization of the biographical material provided by Çaylak.

The first significant encounter by Tolstoy with the world of translation was while writing his very first work of fiction, the semi-biographical *Childhood*. Tolstoy was doing both, translating Laurence Sterne, Heinrich Heine, and Benjamin Disraeli, and probably others during the daytime, and writing his own fiction at night (Çaylak, 2015, p. 774; Tolstoy, 1937, p. 177). Tolstoy discovered translation not as a way to reach other cultural worlds, but, according to his diaries, as a way of learning how to write. In a sense,



translation in this special experience becomes an extension of reading, and often, one process replaces another. The relevant diaries of 1852 and 1853 are rich with days when Tolstoy read rather than translated anything, or was riding, playing cards, traveling through Chechnya and Dagestan. In the diaries he scolded himself for all these diversions except for reading. And of course, reading is essential for developing writing skills, but translating venerated authors seems to be a less obvious addition to the self-education program of a young writer, an analogue to painters' time spent copying old masters. Tolstoy explicitly claimed that he wanted to develop “memory and style” through translation (Paperno, 2014, p. 11). So, in the very beginning, Tolstoy's approach to translation was his own and quite special. It also showed his tendency towards eclecticism if we consider the variety of authors mentioned in his diaries.

During the preparation for *War and Peace*, Tolstoy created an absolutely different approach to translation. He made a translation from French of the correspondence between two members of the high aristocracy, Maria Volkova and Varvara Lanskaya. Previously, Tolstoy presented it as if it were a found object, namely as the correspondence between two characters of *War and Peace*, Maria Bolkonskaya and Julie Karagina. The letters of Volkova and Lanskaya were directly quoted in the novel with minor changes. This event puts the philosophy of translation in a peculiar light, different than one would expect from a traditional view of Tolstoy's intellectual heritage because Tolstoy blurred the line between the roles of author and of translator.

After that often overlooked experimental gesture reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp, Tolstoy needed translations for his pedagogical experiments when he decided to make his own translation of Aesop included in Tolstoy's collection of readings for pupils (Tolstoy, 1953, p. 247). In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Tolstoy showed great interest in Greek language, literature and philosophy. Aesop was to become Tolstoy's fellow traveler and exemplar, the more so as time went on, especially in Tolstoy's late short stories, so treasured by Ludwig Wittgenstein. There is the absence of the moral summary at the end of these stories as was customary for fables, but instead there is a special moment: Tolstoy wants to show, rather than say, according to the famous maxim by Wittgenstein.

Usually a very particular form of Bible studies is considered to be Tolstoy's main translational project, also according to Çaylak. Indeed, *The Gospel in Brief* (1883), Tolstoy's only finished work on religion, expresses views on the philosophy of religion relevant until the very last years of the writer's life. It demonstrates an extremely counter-intuitive approach to translation, combining elements from all previous work of Tolstoy as a translator. However, there was one more very significant engagement with translation that is overlooked in Çaylak's analysis, and this is Tolstoy's participation in the translation of Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* (1894). It is the first published Russian translation of the text. However, it is not the first translation of *Tao Te Ching* in Russian, that being the text by Dmitrij Sivillov done in the 1820s (Zhang & Luo, 2023). Tolstoy's Gospels and his *Tao Te Ching* are best understood together. Unbeknownst of Sivillov, Tolstoy tried to translate the principle text of Taoism uniting and harmonizing different western translations. Tolstoy worked on this project together with his disciple, Yevgeny Popov. It was a project



reminiscent of Tolstoy's work with the Gospels from approximately 1879 to approximately 1892. However, just like the main text regarding the harmonization of the Gospels (1891), Tolstoy abandoned the idea. Probably harmonization did not satisfy him, he was already moving on to his integral view on the world. His conception of integration got a practical realization in *Gospel in Brief* and philosophically was presented in *What is art* (1897). Tolstoy's *Gospel* is a unified rendition of the pluralist view presented in the canonical Gospels, just as his attempt to translate *Tao Te Ching* united different visions of the text from French, German and English translations. Ultimately, Tolstoy edited the first Russian translation of *Tao Te Ching* with Konishi Masutaro as translator, who believed Tolstoy to be a Taoist. Tolstoy and Konishi considered French and Japanese translations of Laozi's work, as well as the Chinese original. The translation is indebted to the French version by Stanislas Julien. However, the dependency does not go beyond questions of literal translation from classical Chinese. Thus, there are some debates with Julien in the notes of Konishi's translation. For instance, the note to the 9<sup>th</sup> line in stanza 29 “或歔或吹” (“huo xu huo chui”) indicates a difference with Julien. Konishi and Tolstoy's text translated the line as “[they] howl or blow” (“voyut ili duyut”), following the Chinese correctly if a bit out of context of the stanza, while in Julien the same line is translated “[some of them] warm up and [others] cool down” (“les uns réchauffent et les autres refroidissent”). In contemporary translation by Moss Roberts the two variants are synthesized “[n]ow breathe hot, now cold” (Laozi, 2001, p. 90).

## TOLSTOY AND PHILOSOPHY OF MACHINE TRANSLATION

Let us try to find a place for Tolstoy's philosophy of translation inside the subject-related academic mainstream. In the philosophy of translation, for a long time, the main focus has been on the dream of automated translation (Granell & Varela, 2023). This question of automated translation goes far beyond the narrow field of business communication. If Alan Turing's understanding of AI was in dialogical form, its critics, Anatoly Dneprov in 1961, and John Searle in 1980, reacted in thought experiments based on analogies with automated translation (Azarov, 2021). It is not an accident that artificial intelligence as a metaphor for a set of generative procedures is best shown through translation. In both cases, the generated analogue of translation work and the successful simulation of consciousness, there is an idea that simulation will somehow provide the real thing. It is as if a translator is the natural enemy of strong AI, and below it will be shown how exactly it is so.

Before getting to the radical aspects of Tolstoyan “integral” position, let us consider another, more moderate view, according to which in translation there is a meeting of two cultures as if having a conversation, or encountering what Jullien called “l'ecart” (“the gap” or, in the translation by Pedro Rodríguez, “the divide”). This moment seems inevitable in the translation of any abstract text. The idioms, the cultural-context-sensitive words and phrases, the values, all these elements collapse and mix, they concentrate. And to some degree, if we take a closer look at the philosophy of comparative studies by French sinologist Jullien, “l'ecart” opens a window for interpretation and mutual understanding. According to Jullien, as Rodríguez summarizes in a note,



[r]ather than set cultures side by side, Jullien places them on either side of an exploratory divide, so that they can “reflect” each other. In so doing they reveal each other’s biases – or, to use another of Jullien’s images, they discover each other’s cultural headwaters – and thus bring forth new possibilities. (Jullien, 2018, p. ix)

As a result, what Jullien (2018) calls “the common” (“le commun”) may appear, it is what “comes to light once cultures that are set face-to face across a divide have reflected each other, each bringing to light what lies beneath the other’s biases” (p. 17). Therefore, what at the surface seem to be an extreme case, in a deeper analysis could work as different only in degree as one represents the cultural role of a translator. Jullien’s belief in this effect is based on the meeting of Chinese and European civilizations, and it is up to the philosophy of culture to show how it is necessarily so for any other cultural meeting. Tolstoy, on the other hand, being a representative of Russian culture, is a real living amalgam of European and Chinese civilizations. He is, so to speak, exposed to the three elements of Russia, the West, and China. Such amalgams seem to be more safely reliable, than the voluntarily chosen “divides” that are sought out by Jullien. Nevertheless, as the survey of Tolstoy’s translations has shown, any translator should be considered as embodying and experiencing such a gap or, in particularly significant cases, such an amalgam.

Jullien’s “l’ecart” has great affinity to what Tolstoy would call by a very special term of “integration”. Tolstoy uses the term from time to time in his diaries and theoretical works, however he seldom explains what he means by it. Probably, the most explicit case is in a passage from *What is Religion*. In Aylmer Maude’s translation, with modifications by Gary Jahn “Tolstoyan integration” is presented in this way: “reasonable men should do, and always have done, in reference to the infinitely small affairs of life affecting their actions, what in mathematics is called integrate: that is to say, they must set up, besides their relation to the immediate facts of life, a relation to the whole immense Infinite in time and space conceived as one whole” (quoted in Jahn, 1975, p. 63). Moreover, reasonable people draw guidance for their actions from this source, just as Laozi’s sage draws his actions from following the Tao of the universe. Integration helps one see oneself in the context of infinitely big scientific data regarding the world – not as someone lost in the forest but as a point on the map somewhere. The bigger the scale, the smaller the field around this point up to the cosmic point of Chinese abstract painter Li Yuan-jia (李元佳) that is related to the yin-yang symbol of Taoism. Regarding translation, it is both an example of how translation can influence the translator, and what translation should be according to Tolstoy – a way of presenting numerous textual possibilities in a condensed form, thought in opposition to the infinity of the universe as the limit of the integral.

On the one hand, the translator Tolstoy approached the sacred texts from East and West as a student, but not as a student of art, as it were with Laurence Sterne, Heinrich Heine, or Benjamin Disraeli, but of wisdom. On the other hand, we cannot see Tolstoy as a pupil of Sterne, Heine, or Disraeli because in many aspects the three authors are quite



far apart from each other. Two are masters of prose, and one of poetry. Two are from the 19<sup>th</sup> and one is from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. If we compare the mixture of Sterne, Heine, and Disraeli with Tolstoy's late tendency of eclecticism, we would see that Tolstoy's choice of the authors is hardly the result of limited resources, although not all books were available for Tolstoy during his military service. But, on the contrary, this choice is a beginning of Tolstoyan important personal trait. Tolstoy took from many different sources throughout his life, often making a distinct set of sources inconsistent with the dominant viewpoint of his time. He combined folk fairy tales, religious texts of the Russian church, Indian and especially Chinese philosophies. All could be sandwiched by Tolstoy in a single text, as it is the case with the article written in response to Émile Zola, where Tolstoy made Laozi reply to Zola and positivists, the article's title being "Non action," after the Taoist conception of *wuwei*.

Tolstoy's eclecticism raises the question of the influence of Chinese philosophy, because the Chinese mind is a mind of eclecticism par excellence, not only intellectually, but also aesthetically. The ideal dish in China combines five tastes, that is, all possible tastes. The ideal palette combines five colors (*wuse* 五色) meaning all possible colors, blue, red, yellow, white and black – as stated in 1842 by Julien whom Tolstoy and Konishi read. This is what F. Jullien calls "compossibility – the act of entertaining all possibilities equally (...) falls to the painter to exploit" (Jullien, 2018, p. ix). Since everything is present in the void (Laozi, 2021, stanzas 2, 5, 40), then syncretism is a consequence of following this ideal.

Tolstoy's syncretism in his translation becomes understandable not only as a syncretism of content, but as a methodological syncretism, not dividing tasks into stages and goals or prioritized hierarchies, but intuitively bringing together a confluence of processes and meanings that tend to be taken apart by an analytical mind, that distinguishes means and ends and separates out statistical probabilities and logical chains. As Francois Jullien (2018) puts it, "compositional logic is embedded in our [Western] language. Its fundamental schema, as the Greeks themselves observed, is the structure of the alphabet (letters, as units, come to compose syllables, words, phrases, and speech)" (p. 31).

In stanzas 2, 5, 40 Laozi claims that nothingness (*wu* 無, "nichts" in Tolstoy and Konishi's Russian translation, Stanislas Julien's "le non-être") produces something or being (*you* 有) in the form of primordial eclecticism of chaos. The creative potential of this primordial state is manifested by the softness, weakness, submissiveness, and adaptivity of a newborn baby, of water, or a river. The Taoist opposition of "being" and "nonbeing" is linguistically much closer to "absence" and "presence," especially in contemporary Chinese. It is important that the Russian language allows to translate absence and presence as "*nalichnoye*" (can be translated in English as "present-to-us") and "*otsutstvuyushchiye*" ("not-present-to-us"), as it was indeed translated in some recent Russian Laozi studies. This intimates the very subtle idea inside the absence-*wu*, that it is not substantial, but relational, as is Chinese thinking in general according to Jullien. However, the language of Tolstoy and Konishi in the *Tao Te Ching* is more indebted to



Hegelianism which dominated the Russian academic scene at the time of their translation operating with the opposition “*bytiye*” (“being”) and “*nichto*” (“nothingness”). Nevertheless, Tolstoy, as a native Russian speaker and, what is more crucial in this context, as a genial writer in this language, is still influenced by the Chinese idiomatic-lexical resource.

For certain pragmatic situations, ordinary reason is certainly suitable, but for self-cultivation, one must understand the toxic side effects of a purely mechanical or procedural reason. Tolstoy does not simply translate, he criticizes, reacts, denies, and creates the language from which he translates no less than the language into which he translates.

Let us return to the case of the ladies’ correspondence from 1812. When Tolstoy turned it into a literary ready-made and later translated the correspondence, it was just a curiosity, one of countless similar documents that had hopelessly lost their context, the living environment in which letters to Moscow were written, mailed, read, soaked with tears, and even burned along with the old capital. And yet, Tolstoy hit a nerve as he extracted for analysis the thick venous blood of the Russian spirit of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, was Tolstoy really interested in the particular content conveyed in those letters?

When reading those letters, we do not know who their authors were, or their feelings. Certainly their internal dialogue is nowhere accessible to us. The Jullienian “gap” or “divide” is hidden from us by a good translator. We do not know how far apart our cultures or epochs are, how different or congenial they are. Any translation requires a similarly ambitious reinvention of the translated text. Translators experience the authors as their characters, as the case of Tolstoy’s encounter with Volkova and Lanskaya shows. The translator thinks and speaks of the author of a text being translated in the third person, attributing feelings and sentiments. In complex cases of inconsistent, conflicted, self-contradictory texts, translators are forced to find those reference points of the author’s spiritual vicissitudes that obey only the law of drama. And this means that only people can translate people, lead them into the common world of the phenomenality of bodily, socio-cultural and aesthetic development. Here, the Tolstoyan *Tao Te Ching* is particularly illuminating. And the story behind translation matters more than the result which can be achieved at times by mere language-processing just as numbers can also be translated from one field to another (Heusch et al., 2018). Tolstoyan translation is the meeting of two cultures, not only of two languages or sets of statistical data. And only in cases of emergency, when there is an extreme lack of time, it is reasonable to ignore all the story and allow the above-mentioned demon from the library of Babel to fool us.

### **THE OPENING STANZA OF THE TAO TE CHING AND WHAT COMPUTERS STILL CAN’T DO**

Besides the three levels of phenomenological order of the living world (social, cultural, and psychological), Tolstoy with his understanding of translation shows one more level, where machines necessarily fall short when compared to human beings. This can be seen in Konishi and Tolstoy’s translation of the opening stanza of the *Tao Te Ching*





which is something of an anomaly in the practice of translation into Western languages, not just in relation to the standards of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To be sure, the opening stanza itself is anomalous, it is the *Tao Te Ching* in miniature, “an anchor to reexamine the different paths [to the Tao of the *Tao Te Ching*]” (Tan & Bao, 2022, p. 1). In Chinese the opening line is:

道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。(Dao ke dao, feichang dao. Ming ke ming, feichang ming.)

Even to an ear completely alien to Chinese, the line resonates with two series of triple repetitions, one related to *Tao*-way (道), the other to *ming*-name (名). The paradigmatic translation of the sentence in English, particularly close to the modern meaning of the words Laozi uses, can be found in Legge:

The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.

The consensus on the meaning of the words here is that Tao is a way to be walked (trodden, led, followed) or something verbal, to be expressed, spoken or named. Konishi and Tolstoy, however, took a different approach. Despite the literal meaning of the Chinese words and the known extant translations by Julien, James Legge’s (1891), and Victor von Strauss’s (1870), Konishi and Tolstoy render this line differently:

The Tao that is actual is not the general Tao.  
The name that is actual is not the general name.

Konishi and Tolstoy managed to combine the Tao as something verbal, as something which can be said (“*ausgesprochen*”), as in Strauss’s translation, and Tao, as in Tao-the way, as seen in Julien’s and Legge’s translations. Thus, Konishi and Tolstoy succeed in keeping the question of the “verbal” or “non-verbal” nature of Tao open. The second peculiarity of Konishi and Tolstoy’s text regards what Tao is not. In all translations of the period, it is “not eternal Tao” (*changdao* 常道, von Strauss’s “ewige Tao”, S. Julien’s “la Voie éternelle”, Legge’s “enduring and unchanging Tao”). In Konishi and Tolstoy’s text, it is “general” or even “ordinary Tao” (“*obyknovennoye Tao*”), where the words chosen are far from being ordinary or natural for the Russian language. To say that something is actual but, at the same time, is not an ordinary or general instance of itself is odd in English too. In a sense, this beginning could be intended to produce a particular effect on the reader, from the very first stanza pushing readers towards viewing the text as something that can change their world view. To say that p is not eternal p (the generalized form for Legge, von Strauss, etc.) is far from being the same as saying that q is actual but not a general q (Konishi and Tolstoy). In the former case, p is denied the special conditional attribute of eternity. The latter seems to be a way of saying that q is actually not itself. This leads, in effect, to the meaning of the sentence collapsing with the sentence’s last word, as in the original line in classical Chinese, practically showing how our cognitive functions are limited in comparison to Tao. It parallels the effects of koans



and some ingeniously good poetry. If we sapient beings experience something like this, our language-based high psychological functions will fail us for a moment and we will enjoy our deeper animal selves. In a program, this can only be seen as a glitch, a “bug” to be removed. The dominance of machine translation threatens to eliminate such inspirationally stimulating or mind-provoking experiences, experiences that are best preserved by human translations of philosophical texts.

Konishi and Tolstoy found a way to deliver the effect of the opening line of the *Tao Te Ching* in languages where the nouns that are needed for this particular effect do not coincide with verbs. In Chinese, the nouns and verbs perfectly coincide, so that the discourse considers *Way-Tao* which can be trodden-*Tao*, an entity *q*, which denies itself through *q*-ing, denies itself through itself, so that *q* that *q*-s is not *q* (“道(*q*)可道(*q*-s), 非常道(is not *q*)”). Konishi and Tolstoy’s is, and remains, a highly original interpretation of the opening stanza. However, what is more important here is the effect it produces through a particular technique of translation. The technique itself is not based on grammar or lexical material. In fact, the translation is both grammatically and lexically incorrect but produces the same effect. In terms of Tolstoy’s aesthetic theory from *What is art* where he presents his integral method of writing, it is infected with the same state the author of the work was in. The first line of Konishi and Tolstoy’s translation points to the reality beyond the language by means of the Russian language, just as the Chinese original does by means of Chinese. It is a scale so big that philosophers whom Tolstoy calls “the teachers of humanity” turn out to be the teachers of the same doctrine – just as giant and diverse buildings can become a single dot on a large map that at a large scale signifies the city the buildings are in. The translation should be true to the spirit, as Tolstoy often phrases this task in other places. Moreover, the Russian writer allows the spirit to integrate itself back into a dot resembling the cosmic Taoist point by abstract painter Li Yuan-Jia.

## CONCLUSION

Tolstoy, as a thinker, posits an intriguing case for the philosophy of translation, just as he does with many other facets of philosophy. Tolstoy shows translation first as a creative and communicative activity. In his final years, the great writer formulated a sort of translational methodology for philosophizing, based on his notion of integration in a mathematical as well as spiritual sense.

The nuanced communicative, organic, and aesthetic functions of human translation, as shown by Tolstoy, suggest that machine translation could be one of the factors in reigniting the clash of civilizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The technocratic view of the other, as well as the technocratic view of oneself, can lead to cultural and civilizational differences being underestimated, which can in turn lead to conflict. This is probably not a primary concern when the natural resources and other economic necessities of humanity are at stake. However, it is still something important to consider. Tolstoy’s case stresses the role of translators and interpreters as an important medium, a silent membrane between lingual-cultural entities. Mechanization of the process of translation risks neglecting an important feature of human self-consciousness, making us even less self-



controlled and more auto-aggressive as a species. This resonates nicely with the deep integration by Tolstoy in his anti-theory of the concept of non-violence, or *ahimsa*. The limits of machine translation are not simply about context-recognition, though this does continue to create difficulties (Wu et al., 2024, p. 1), but rather the limits of respect.

Even in a world of total and totalitarian neuromorphic production, human translation would have the potential to function as a special kind of mental art necessary for mutual aesthetic admiration, intercultural respect and understanding, as beautifully suggested by Tolstoy's theory and practice of translation.

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#### СВЕДЕНИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ / THE AUTHORS

Азаров Константин Валерьевич,  
konstantin.v.azarov@gmail.com,  
ORCID 0000-0002-2029-9930

Konstantin V. Azarov,  
konstantin.v.azarov@gmail.com,  
ORCID 0000-0002-2029-9930

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