The law of love was the cardinal principle of the meaning and teaching of life by Tolstoy. 'Love' in its very comprehensive sense was the basis of his philosophy of life. If the submission of the animal personality of men to reason was something negative in his explanation of life, the cultivation of love in heart for all was its positive aspect. He gave ample expression to it not only in his philosophical works but also in some of his choicest imaginative writing.

Though the law of love was suggested to him by Christ yet it got confirmed by his own rational analysis as well, because in the final aspect nothing could have formed a part of his explanation unless it received his rational approval. Or, we might say that the law would have surely come out of his own observation and analysis of life, and Christ's teaching of it only confirmed his conviction of it. We get a hint to it in the early exploratory period when he was as yet in the process of searching out the facts to base his
conclusions on life. In *A Landlord's Morning* Nekhlyudov, in whom Tolstoy put much of himself, reflects on the phenomenon of love and thinks that "love and goodness are truth and happiness - the only truth and the only happiness possible in the world...."This is it! This! So it is!" he said to himself in ecstasy, looking at all the phenomena of life in the light of this newly-discovered and as it seemed to him perfectly novel truth....'Love, self-denial - that is the only true happiness - a happiness independent of chance!"\(^1\)

At another place he wrote: "I found that immortality exists, that there is love, and that you have to live for others in order to be eternally happy. These discoveries surprised me by their conformity with the Christian religion, and from this time onward I began to search for them in the Gospels instead of in myself...."\(^2\) Even at a later period in a letter to V.A. Engelhardt, a stranger, he wrote that "had Christ and his teaching not existed I should myself have discovered this truth - so simple and clear does it appear to me now...."\(^3\)

The law of love formed the basis of Tolstoy's

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\(^3\)Tolstoy, "A Letter to Engelhardt," *What Then Must We Do?*, p. 278.
explanation of life. According to him, the basic contradiction in life arose due to the fact that whereas the animal personality of man craved for personal welfare, the reason in him indicated the deceptivity and impossibility of any such welfare. The two appeared to contradict each other. But love solved the contradiction and reconciled the two for the betterment of life. He remarked that life was the activity of animal personality subject to the law of reason. Reason was the law to which man's animal personality must be subjected for his own good, love was the only reasonable activity of man. The animal personality longed for its own good, but reason indicated the deceptiveness of personal good and left man with only one path: love.

Tolstoy's conception of love was universal. It was not to be the love of self, family, clan, or tribe; any such love would lack the basic essential of love which consisted in loving all without any inhibition, and which had common welfare for its end. If men were animals without reason they would love those for whom they had preference. Their love would be in accordance to their stage of consciousness. But man being rational knew that other beings had a similar love of their own.
which would come into conflict with the preferential love of others and result in the very opposite of the true conception of love. Therefore, only that love was real which transcended from the individual or sectional level to that of universal manifestation. It was to "love self-denyingly, to love everybody and everything; to spread a web of love on all sides and to take all who come into it."

He further remarked that only through a proper understanding of life — that is the Christian or divine understanding — could the aim of love be fulfilled. He disagreed with the opinion of those materialists who thought that man could transcend the stage of love from personal or socio-state level to that of entire humanity. He contended that such a transformation could not take place because the understanding of life on which the love of family and state was based rested upon the love of self which grew weaker and weaker as it extended from personality to family, tribe, nationality, and state, till in the state it reached the extreme limit beyond which it could not go. Such a love could not exist because there was no motive for it. It would

result only from a true understanding of life, i.e., Christian or divine understanding, which led to love and service of God.

Apart from what constituted the essentials of love he also advocated a method by which progress in the cultivation of love was possible: "I believe that to obtain progress in love there is only one means: prayer - not public prayer in Churches, plainly forbidden by Jesus, but private prayer, like the example given us by Jesus, consisting of the renewing and strengthening in our own consciousness of the meaning of our life and of our complete dependence on the will of God."¹

Tolstoy's law of love, in accordance with his conception of spiritual evolution, checked the materialistic law of the struggle of species and survival of the fittest. The brutal application of this law resulted in survival of the stronger and elimination of weak. The law of love, in contrast to it, brought mutual accord among the species and worked for common good. In place of suffering and pain which the law of the materialists entailed, the Christian law brought peace and happiness.

According to him, love was the moral guiding principle without which the various activities of men and matter might lead to dangerous consequences. "When the life of people is unmoral and their relation are not based on love, but on egoism, then all technical improvements, the increase of man's power over nature, steam, electricity, the telegraph, every machine, gun powder, and dynamite, produces the impression of dangerous toys placed in the hands of children."¹

Tolstoy was fully convinced of the absolute necessity of the law of love to ameliorate the sad state of mankind. He was quite aware of the criticism levelled against any way of life based on love. It was often referred to be unrealistic, ineffectual, and impracticable. Making reference to a letter by Alexandre Dumas in _Man-Acting_ in which Dumas predicted that man would seriously apply to life the law of brotherly love, and that change to take place much sooner than expected, he raised common objections to the feasibility of it and then answered himself the objections in the following manner:

If the love of one's neighbour is possible and is inherent in human nature, why have so many thousand years elapsed (for the command to love God and one's

¹Tolstoy diary as quoted in K.J. Simmsome, _Introduction to Tolstoy's Writings_ (Chicago, 1988), p. 209.
neighbour did not begin with Christ but had been given already by Moses) without men who knew this means of happiness having practised it? What prevents the mani-
estation of a sentiment so natural and so helpful to humanity? It is evidently not enough to say, "Love one another." That has been said for three thousand years past; it is incessantly repeated from all pulpits, religious and even secular; yet, instead of loving one another as they have been bidden to do for so many centuries, men continue to exterminate each other just the same.

...Must it be said that love applied to life is a chimera? If so, how is it that so many centuries men have allowed themselves to be deceived by this unrealisable dream? It were time to see through it. But mankind can neither decide to follow the law of love in daily life nor to abandon the idea. How is this to be explained? What is the reason of this contradiction lasting through centuries? It is not that the men of our time neither wish to, nor can, do what is dictated alike by their good sense, by the dangers of their situation, and above all by the law of him whom they call God, and by their conscience — but it is because ... they are busy, they all labour at some work commenced long ago and in which it is impossible to pause to concentrate their thoughts or to consider what they ought to be. All the great revolutions in men's lives are made in thought. When a change takes place in men's thought, action follows the direction of thought as inevitably as a ship follows the direction given by its rudder.

...Jesus ... said...change your view of life or you will all perish...The meaning of your life cannot consist in the pursuit of your personal well-being, or in that of your family or of your nation, for such happiness can be obtained only at the expense of others. Relate that the meaning of your life can consist only in accomplishing the will of him that sent you into this life and who demands of you not the pursuit of your personal interests but the accomplishment of his aims — the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven....

It makes it clear that to realize the efficacy of the law of love in real life there ought to be a change in the conception of life. When a change took place in thinking — in the view of life — a change would simultaneously take place in action which would make the law practically realizable in life.

II. NON-RESISTANCE

Corollary to the law of love was the law of non-resistance to evil by violence. Tolstoy was deeply influenced by this commandment of Christ and quite a considerable part of his later life was spent in propagating it. "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."¹

As remarked earlier, to Tolstoy the explanation

of life was not merely academic or simply a theoretical exposition of the problem; rather it was meant to be very much a part of the practical conduct in life. His argument to evolve a better state of life was to bring the animal personality of man under the submission of reason and to cultivate love in heart for all. Love along with reason was to bring about the improvement in life. As a corollary to the law of love, and to facilitate the methodology to bring a better state of life, he argued for the Christian commandment of non-resistance to evil by violence. With the cultivation of love in heart for all the forswearing of violence in every form was consequentially a must. To translate the theory of life into practice it was logical to call to aid the law of non-resistance. Love and non-violence went together. As he wrote:

Our one general, basic principle is love, not in words only but in deed and truth, that is to say, love that involves the spending and sacrificing of one's life for God and one's neighbour.

From that general principle flow the special principles of humility, meekness, and Non-Resistance.\(^1\)

Tolstoy's conception of Non-Resistance was both an expression of love and reason. Explaining its constituents he wrote: "'Resist not him that is evil' means

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\(^1\)Tolstoy letter to Feinermann as quoted in Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, II, 291. Italicics mine.
'never resist him that is evil', that is, never do violence, never do an act that cannot but be contrary to love, and if they then insult you, bear the insult and still do not inflict violence on anyone else."§1
At another place he wrote that "Non-resistance to evil by violence really only means that the mutual interaction of rational beings on one another should consist not in violence ... but in rational persuasion; and that, consequently, all who desire to further the welfare of mankind should strive towards this substitution of rational persuasion for coercion."²

He remarked that as a process of evolution to a higher stage of development man should discard the outmoded pagan or personal, family or socio-state, conception of life, and in its place should adopt the Christian or divine conception which consisted in fulfilling the will of whom who created man and life. Men's salvation lay in the realization of this new truth. The ultimate purpose of this world might not be clear to men, but he came closer to its understanding when he worked for the betterment of life. And for that he was to endeavour to bring his animal personality

under the submission of reason and by cultivating love in heart for all work for the common good. This truth would go on be better understood as mankind advanced to a higher and higher spiritually evolutionary level. The understanding of the new conception of life made it essential for man to discard violence in any form and to follow the only path of non-resistance. The path of love as indicated by the new understanding was contrary to violence. According to Tolstoy "once violence is admitted, does not matter in even a single case, the law of love is thereby rendered futile." Only this way of life would help in the realization of the new truth and thereby the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth.

Tolstoy was fully convinced of the practicality and absolute necessity of the law of non-resistance. When it was subjected to being impracticable in life and that under certain circumstances to act upon it might be more harmful than good, he remarked that to follow the new conception of life it was the only path possible. There was no other way out. When he was confronted with the oft-repeated apprehension of a brigand

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1 Tolstoy letter to Gandhi as quoted in K. Neg, Tolstoy and Gandhi (Patna, 1950), p. 72.
killing or violating a child, he replied that having lived for seventy-five years he had never, except in discussions, encountered that fantastic brigand, but that he knew not of one but millions of brigands using violence towards children, women, and old people, in the name of a recognized right to do violence to their fellows.

As non-violence was the way of life for him and he was convinced of its efficacy in all walks of life, he never believed that violence could be of any help in solving the affairs of the individuals or the states. Violent political upheaval was repugnant to him. He never approved of the activities of the revolutionaries though however oppressive the political order might have been. Towards the end of his life, when there existed grave dissatisfaction among the common people against the corrupt Czarist rule and a violent revolution appeared in the swing, he pleaded with all his sincerity that violence only begot violence and resulted in overall suffering and loss. When a young Indian revolutionary, C.R.Desa, wrote to him about the inefficiency of non-violent method to fight against the English colonial regime in India, he replied to him in a long and very
enlightened letter\(^1\) about the only effective means of love and non-violence to counter any oppression or injustice. He admired and sympathised greatly the passive resistance movement of Mahatma Gandhi against the racially discriminating white regime in South Africa.

In the same spirit he supported the cause of the Doukhobors. Doukhobors were a Christian sect living in Caucausus who refused to obey the government by not enlisting in the army and paying taxes. Though there is a difference of opinion regarding their practice of non-violence in life, but Tolstoy felt that they practised love and non-resistance in daily life and due to that non-cooperated with the government founded on force. Later on when their persecution at the hands of the Russian government became severe he helped them financially and otherwise to emigrate to Canada.

Further, he remarked that men failed to accept the law of non-resistance because the conditions of human life were so distorted that those who considered the law once felt that its application to life would destroy the possibility of that social organization and conveniences of living which they enjoyed.

But according to him, the change need not be feared.

\(^1\)"A Letter to a Hindu," *Recollections & Essays*, p. 416.
Non-resistance was not a principle of coercion but of love and concord and therefore could not be made coercively binding upon men. The principle which substituted persuasion to force could only be accepted voluntarily. And the extent to which men renounced violence and based their relations on rational understanding could to that extent alone true progress be accomplished in their lives. Whether men desired it or not the principle was at the root of all true betterment that had taken place, or was taking place, in the life of men.

Tolstoy was aware that the Christian ideal of the kingdom of God upon earth, to which love and non-resistance were the means, was an ideal to be attained only in infinity, nevertheless, the betterment of life was possible only by moving towards that end. An ideal was an ideal only when its accomplishment was possible in idea, in thought, and the approach towards it realizable in infinite time. If the ideal was attained, or its attainment foreseeable in the near future, then it ceased to be an ideal. Christ's ideal was like this. The whole meaning of human life lay in progress towards that ideal. To strive for it in completeness, far from rendering life impossible, would only make the possibility of real life.