Fascination and Aversion: Science in Tolstoy’s Work*

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I. Introduction
II. Science in Tolstoy’s Life and Non-Fiction
III. Science in Tolstoy’s Fiction: Levin’s Path
IV. Science and History
V. Conclusion

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I. Introduction

Lev N. Tolstoy (1828-1910) has been widely regarded as an ardent critic of science and modern technology. His aversion to science is treated as something tantamount to a universally accepted view to the extent that critics do not bother to offer justification or qualification for such a view. For instance, a recent monograph by a Tolstoy expert Hugh McLean maintains that Tolstoy is antagonistic to science, lacking interest in it.\(^1\) Isaiah Berlin, a prominent scholar who wrote excellent essays on Tolstoy, extends the scope to Tolstoy’s “constant disparagement of scientific culture”\(^2\) without further elaboration as if it is an axiom about Tolstoy. Their statements have a ground to hold. Tolstoy’s antagonism to science is difficult to be unnoticed even by a casual reader of *On the Significance of Science and Art* in which the writer unleashes vehement attacks on science. In addition, Tolstoy’s rejection of modernity, deeply rooted Rousseauism,\(^3\) explains Tolstoy’s hostility toward civilization based on the development of science. Tolstoy insists that we resist the benefits of science in favor of going back to nature and finding our true self.

Aside from the non-fictional argument, Tolstoy’s metaphor of the train in *Anna