Teleological Striving and Redemption in *The Death of Ivan Il'ich*

Inessa Medzhibovskaya

Princeton University

Teleological teaching is one of the oldest venues of philosophical inquiry, that which is concerned with discovering the final goal of universal being. In Greek, *telos* means both the "end" and the "final purpose or goal" and it is no exaggeration to say that the problem of *telos* in both these aspects occupied Tolstoy from his early youth.[1] This essay will apply the teleological point of view to the first work of fiction, *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* (1886), that Tolstoy published several years after his spiritual crisis in the early 1880s.[2] It will be argued that in this work, which first unfolds as "life most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible" (ch. two; 26: 68) and then culminates in Ivan Il'ich's spiritual salvation, Tolstoy claims that even most ordinary life lived wrongly has a recuperable purpose. Most significantly, his claim is that in the presence of energetic spiritual striving, this purpose can be redeemed even seconds before the body's physical demise.

As a student in the faculty of law at Kazan University, the young Tolstoy jotted this characteristic note in his diary of 1847: "What is the final goal of human life?" (17 April 1847; 46: 30-1). Just like the young Ivan Il'ich, graduate of the élite St. Petersburg law school (commonly known as *Pravovedenie*), the young Tolstoy believed that the goal of human life did not transcend earthly happiness, and the only way to such happiness was justifiable social activity (Eikhenbaum 107-8). Tolstoy did not aspire to become a lawyer, but he enrolled in the faculty of law in hopes that a legal career would open doors to such activity. In the drafts of the story, and in its final version, we witness the same linking of justifiable activity and happiness, traditional in the ethics of law.[3] Ivan Il'ich's life is "common" partially because he adheres to a familiar social trend. For those entering the legal profession in Russia simultaneously with Ivan Il'ich, it had become unpopular to commune with eternal law "through contemplation of death. . . . Immortality was guaranteed in an ineluctable historical process and not through impossible individual exploits" (Wortman 227). Proper activity was not perceived to be "impossible individual exploits" or heroic feats, but public service from which everything personal had to be excluded. This service [*sluzhba*] becomes the goal of Ivan Il'ich's life and also a safe haven where he can hide from difficult personal decisions and life's unpleasantnesses. Not surprisingly, in the early drafts, Tolstoy makes his hero impress upon a pessimistic colleague ("I. P.") the idea of personal happiness: "But come on, are you really happy? — Me? I certainly am (26: 523). Ivan Il'ich is happy because, so he says, he poses only tenable goals for himself and does not bother himself with matters outside of his scope or comprehension (26: 523-4). Good professional performance, aside from making him "absolutely happy," also makes him oblivious to fear of death (26: 424).[4] Feelings of absolute unhappiness, complete dissatisfaction, and horror of death pour out onto pages of his diary only in a deathbed confession of a mistaken final goal.[5]

Tolstoy writes in his own early diary (1847):

> I would be the most unhappy of human beings were I not to find the goal of my life—a goal common to all and useful; useful because the immortal soul, having developed, would be naturally transported into Supreme Being, commensurate with it. For now, my life in its entirety will be an active and perpetual striving towards this one single goal. What will my life in the country be like for the next two years? (46: 31)

Quite predictably, not two but five years later, in another diary entry marking his birthday, Tolstoy would still be castigating himself for not having found that single goal:

> I am twenty-four years old; and I have not done anything yet. — I feel that it has not been in vain that for eight years now I have been combatting

> doubts and passions. But what is my purpose? The future will show. Today I killed three snipe. (24 August 1852; 46: 140)

Not accidentally, snipe-hunting, too, is about discovering and hitting a hidden and elusive target.

Telos for the young Tolstoy was still a superficially Hegelian variety. What was taught to Ivan Il'ich at the School of Law was the same purely Russian remake of Hegel that was also taught to Tolstoy, student of a famous legal Hegelian and Professor of Civil Law Dmitrii Meier, at the University of Kazan'.[6] Hegel posited that for a separate being or organism there can be no legitimate end or goal outside of or beyond universal existence, thus individual teleology was a contradiction in terms (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 256: 256). When law students read Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie*, they discovered that "positive ends for an individuality" were a "hypocrisy" (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right* 140: 170). In fact, in Hegel's interpretation, fear of death was a useful mechanism working on behalf of Universal Spirit, which directed men back to universally meaningful social activity (Taylor 155). This activity was part of universal history, the single type of "inner" teleology that could legitimately be wrought in the course of human activity (Beiser 289).

The Hegelianism suitable to prepare high-quality legal professionals for the yet-to-be-realized Rechtsstaat stressed the notion that individual happiness could be found only in self-abnegation, that is, in social action. Hence, the young Tolstoy's guilt at his personal idleness and ineffectualness that, in his opinion, separated him from active life within the universal whole. Personal integrity [*tsel'nost'*] for Tolstoy was always predicated on the goal [*tsel'*].[7] But for the youngTolstoy it is also almost semantically predicated on the universal "whole" [*tseloe*]. The whole [*tseloe*], as Tolstoy defines it in his early years, is superior to the personal or individual because it partakes of universal will. The personal, meanwhile, is identified with the lazy and undisciplined corporeal, material part of being which needs to be supervised and controlled (Diary, esp. March-May 1847; 46: 269).

When in the early diaries Tolstoy was taking stock of the time spent searching for his purpose ("two years," "eight years"), he had no way of knowing how much longer his search would take. In his *Confession*, he retroactively divided it into stages and explained the earthly success of each stage as an inevitable spiritual failure because he could not grasp the purpose of life given the existence of death (23: 11). By the time he had finished *DII*, he had found a way out of the stalemate: "reasonable consciousness."

"Reasonable consciousness" [*razumnoe soznanie*], a concept worked out over the conversion years but most comprehensively developed in the treatise *On Life* [*O zhizni* 1886-7], provides a crucial backdrop for the ideas that motivated Tolstoy's depiction of the awakening of purpose in the dying Ivan Il'ich.[8] Reasonable consciousness was a term to describe complete attainment of the right understanding of the meaning of life, and it was thus a goal in and of itself (although usually a tortuous undertaking). Reasonable consciousness had no physical body and no time-frame but this is not the only reason why it could never die (*On Life* 26:400). It could never die because the task of the correct comprehension of life became commensurate with happiness in and within the discovered goal. Unlike earthly happiness, this individually achieved happiness neither vanished with the physical cessation of being nor was dispelled by posthumous revelations or accidents. In ecstatic possession of this newly discovered key to immortal happiness, Tolstoy lets Ivan Il'ich achieve it, too, at the latest minute, face to face with the end, and after tortured mortal illness complicated by the realization of having lived his entire life in the wrong.

DII is written as an allegory of the search for the final goal(from deception to revelation). As a teleological narrative, the story became an important touchstone to Tolstoy for several reasons. First of all, in it, as Tolstoy directly and semi-publicly announced, he intended to square his accounts with his former, wrong, morally unreformed life and thus rid himself of its terrible deceptions. He conceived of *DII* as a fictional farewell to the unreasonable life of his class and

his family. In a letter to Chertkov from 1-2 June 1885,Tolstoy confessed that *DII* was tantamount to the call of moral duty: "just as the innocent but condemned decent man, when led out of the hotel to be put to death, would not forget to pay what he owed for room and board" (85: 209). Second, Tolstoy conceived of *DII* as a fictional medium in which to test the new mode of being in reasonable consciousness. The story was a rehearsed departure from that physical world in which no purpose or happiness could be found. Such a claim borders on an unsolvable paradox for, according to Tolstoy's design, an allegory of quest had itself to be personified, and the transcendental experience had to be carried out practically. It is on the tension of transcendental psychology of the hero who undergoes such an experience, and on the presumption of the final purpose (*respice finem*) encoded on a medallion worn by Ivan Il'ich that the spiritual suspense of the story is built.[9] When in Chapter Two Ivan Il'ich, fresh out of law school, hung on a key-chain a little medallion on which *Respice finem* was inscribed, he also hung on himself an allegory of telos. *Respice finem* (look to the end, purpose) is a Roman refraction of the Greek use of *telos*.[10] Philosophical *telos*, from its very inception, contained within itself three major elements, and all three are recorded in that Latin variant of the Greek *telos*: first, the necessity to see the end; second, the understanding of the purpose that leads to the end; third, self-orientation toward the ultimate goal in accordance with that purpose.

One of the long-debated issues of the story's structure, why *DII* begins its narration from the end, may now be explained in the following way.[11] In Chapter One it was important for Tolstoy to show that the found purpose outlives physical presence. Those who arrived at Ivan Il'ich's parlour to pay him their last respects seek to comprehend the riddle of life and death as they look at the physical result of death: the cold and ossified cadaver. At the same time, the dead man's facial expression, forever fixed, bespeaks the secret meaning that has been opened to him alone. Ivan Il'ich's silent and frightening reproach articulates unmistakably that "what was necessary had been accomplished, and accomplished rightly. . . ." (26: 64; 125). What is this found purpose?

Ivan Il'ich has spent the twenty-five years since his graduation from law school trying to get the right appointment, which was literally and figuratively perceived by him as his final destination. From Chapter Two to Chapter Five, Tolstoy follows his hero's peregrinations and career leaps around the juristic institutions of Russia, first on the eve, and then in the midst of her legal reform. These peregrinations are over in Chapter Five, in which the destination, suddenly, reveals to Ivan Il'ich its true and immanent identity: death. From Chapter Five to Chapter Ten, this destination is perceived by Ivan Il'ich as his only remaining purpose. Not only is he shocked and demoralized, he is revolted by his failing body and its inability to perform in the Supreme Court, and is also revolted by the pity that others show him, ranging from solicitous indifference to indifferent interference. Most important, he feels framed on the grandest scale of justice: he incriminates God, condemning Him in the second person singular for having thrown him, "little Vania," into life, and then for abandoning him there to die just at the point when life was beginning to yield its fruits, with no explanation and no guidelines. That same vision of the end about which his medallion has been warning him now stands in front of his eyes as his materialized final purpose and as the final meaning of his life. From Chapter Ten to Chapter Twelve, all alone, one-on-one with his pain and the unanswerable question "what for?", tossing and turning in the "black sack" into which he has been shoved (26: 105), Ivan continues to struggle for the final meaning. As soon he understands that physical pain and physical death have no meaning [*ne to*], but the real meaning [*to*] has yet to be found, he embarks on a symbolic flight but, like a stone dropped by somebody else, he is disoriented, feeling only that he is flying away from death (ch. 10, 26: 109). Ivan Il'ich's flight acquires an orientation only after he acknowledges his former delusions about choosing the right goal. At this realization, he falls through the black sack and concludes his flight toward his final destination [*"koncheno!"* (it is finished)], the

right end imbued in the light of discovered truth ("Instead of death there was light. . . . So that's what it is!" . . . What joy!" [26: 113]). This breath-taking and self-steering flight toward the final goal is Tolstoy's artistic contribution to an understanding of human teleology. Even placed in the continuum of Tolstoy's life-long preoccupation with telos, his treatment of it in the story may seem somewhat schematic, as vivid and pictorial as it is. It needs to be put into genealogical and conceptual perspective, in order for its striking originality and humanism to be fully appreciated.

The first concrete encounter with teleology in the story occurs in Chapter Two, when Ivan Il'ich dons the medallion with the inscription *respice finem* and pays a visit to "the prince" (26: 70). We shall linger on both the inscription and the "prince," as they are connected in the most fascinating fashion.[12] The philosophical implication of the phrase, long associated with the profession of law, will be connected with its legal appropriation and with its adaptation to the changing intellectual climate in Russia and in Tolstoy. In its Latin form it was first used by Caesar in his *Gallic Wars* where it referred to the extent of one's power and property.[13] The phrase later became one of the axioms in the *Digestae*, collected quotes from outstanding Roman lawyers and statesmen that formed part of Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, known as Roman Law. Tolstoy's study of Latin and Roman Law at Kazan is recorded on the pages of his daily planner for 1847 (46: 249, 251, 255, 256).[14] Ivan Il'ich's knowledge of the phrase is more than curricular: it borders on the fetishistic. But as every lawyer would know, Caesar borrowed the phrase from Solon, the great Athenian legislator and teacher of wisdom.

According to Herodotus, who recorded the legend of Solon and Croesus, Solon advised man "to *look* always *to the end* of everything" and "never . . . consider himself happy until he is dead" (1.32, 48; emphasis mine). Ivan does not heed the inscription on his watch-chain, which in its original Greek form was one of the few written (absolute) laws of Athens, carved over the portico at Delphi. Herodotus relates how it became law (1.29-92). Croesus was about to be sacrificed on a pyre erected by his victorious enemies. Earlier, he had punished Solon for questioning the happy ending of his life by exiling him (1.32; 47). But now he realized that he was indeed mortal, and repeated Solon's injunction to his captors, who then spared him. Croesus' fetters were taken to Delphi, with Solon's gnome carved on them (I.90-1;76), and thus the law was born. Herodotus's tale of King Croesus and Solon was the title tale for "Tsar' Krez i uchitel' Solon" [Czar Croesus and the Teacher Solon] published by Posrednik, Tolstoy's publishing house for the people, in 1886, the same year as *DII*.[15] If collated with the text of a very long tale in Herodotus's rendition (chs. 29 to 90 of book I), which lists one case of peripeteia after another to impress upon the stubborn Croesus that "man is entirely what befalls him" (I.32: 47), the redaction of the legend in Posrednik is very succinct. Without mentioning Delphi, it names Solon's virtuous wisdom ("this story that is worth more than all the gold of the czars") a predecessor of Christ's teaching and quickly proves Croesus wrong. According to Solon, there was just one happy person in Athens: an honest hard-working labourer who was raising his children well. Although Tolstoy's popular edition departed in several ways from the text of Herodotus, it did quote Solon's dictum in full ("Bednyi chasto byvaet schastlivee bogatogo. Nikakoi chelovek do smertnogo chasa svoego ne dolzhen schitat' sebia schastlivym" [The poor are often happier than the rich. No man can consider himself happy until the hour of his death]). It is important, moreover, that the Croesus in Posrednik abides by the same easy and pleasant principle of disregarding the end as did Ivan Il'ich before his illness: "Budu zhit' poka zhivetsia." Utterly humiliated by his inglorious defeat, Tolstoy's Croesus could only break into tears and say: "akh Solon, Solon!" As soon as he said that, he was released, just as Ivan Il'ich was allowed to slip through the black sack upon acknowledgement of his wrong.[16]

Croesus and Caesar, who fleetingly appears as a character in the famous syllogism cited at the beginning of Chapter Six of *DII* to the effect that "he, too, is mortal" because he is like other hu-

mans (26: 92-3), became emblems of material might and dispossessed spirit. They denied the existence of the immortal soul and yet purported to immortalize themselves in earthly possessions and continuation in progeny.[17] Both famously failed. Capitalizing on this magnified dichotomy of human nature and directly referring himself and his reader to Solon's semi-apocryphal adage, Aristotle in *The Nichomachean Ethics* laid the foundations of the theory of *telos* as happiness in activity rather than as the end result of life. There was no way that one could counter the unavoidable and perilous instabilities of fate and circumstance ". . . *[I]f we are to look to the end*: this is not accomplished by following a man's fortunes, past or future, since fortunes come and go, but by ascertaining his constancy in happiness, and happiness, once again, is activity" (*Nichomachean Ethics* I: XI-XIII; emphasis mine).[18]

Natural law, as the most powerful alternative to Aristotle, when applied to human life postulates that happiness understood as striving for an ultimate goal cannot be futile, even if the achievement will never be known in this world when the human being is already beyond it, having entered into the sphere of divine light. The theory of natural law was a corrective to Aristotle in that it claimed that genuine happiness is indestructible, it cannot be lost due to hapless contingency. According to it, supreme happiness is tantamount to seeing God (divine light) as the goal in the metaphysical sense, and thereby attaining full control of one's intellectual power. Natural law, moreover, dictated that man has no right to doubt the purposefulness of his striving toward full intellectual control. Thanks to Aquinas's contribution to natural law, which linked justice, moral law, and happiness, conscience became a power stronger than physical might, and reason became the supreme judge (Aquinas 1-81).[19] Kant's moral teleology (or deontology) was the direct heir of natural law in its insistence that man is bound by the categorical imperative enacted by his conscience. Tolstoy, the majority of scholars agree, closely embraced this part of Kant's teaching. By the mid-1880s, Kant's teaching (which Tolstoy discovered later than the works of its critics, Hegel and Schopenhauer) provided him with an indispensable moral assurance about the spiritual source of knowledge.[20] Kant's categorical imperative, despite the vagueness and abstractness of its definitions, made one point abundantly clear: one was not supposed to confuse the moral effort toward a final goal with the material means of its achievement.[21] It also made unambiguous that the achievement of the final goal, the source of highest human happiness, lay in the ability to judge.[22] Kant's faith in this ability was so great that he found it necessary to cap his third *Critique* (of judgment) with a lengthy appendage called *Critique of Teleological Judgment*. In it, moral judgment, on which human happiness is contingent, is invested with extraordinary legislative agency, making "the furtherance of happiness in agreement with morality the final end" (451: 119). The spiritual energy that a morally motivated human being possesses (*vis locomotiva*) propels him forcefully to the level of omniscience fitting for the "final end of creation."[23]

Tolstoy's choice of Kant's teleology over Hegel's and Schopenhauer's provides an unexpected gloss to the phrase on Ivan's medallion. The relation of these moral strategies to the phrase *respice finem* on Ivan's medallion is as follows. Ivan Il'ich's visit to the prince in Chapter Two has been misunderstood as a sign of Ivan Il'ich's servility. What was clear to Tolstoy's contemporaries eludes the modern reader. It is important that Ivan Il'ich is paying a personal final visit to Prince von Oldenburg, the founding father of the school, an honourable, highly principled, charitable, and merciful man whom lawyers of all generations recalled with reverence. An avid Kantian, Oldenburg wanted his students to become dedicated lawyers who would combine a high level of professionalism with a high standard for moral justice.

So that they would never forget their moral calling, Oldenburg chose for the school's motto the phrase *Respice finem* to be displayed in the hall of assemblies (Siuzor 35).[24] At graduation, Oldenburg presented his newly minted lawyers with newly minted medallions bearing the motto and addressed them with an instructional parting

word calling the motto an "oath" [*kliatva*]: "For remember the words of the Savior: 'From him to whom much is given, much is expected' . . . At the minute of temptation which inevitably awaits everyone, remember your oath and you will be returned on your right ways" (Siuzor 36; Wortman 308).[25] The students, under the sway of ideas more progressive than Kant's, lovingly complained about Oldenburg's old-fashioned principles (Wortman 206-7). We may interpret Ivan Il'ich's personal, unsolicited farewell meeting with his mentor as a gesture of empty formality to which Tolstoy gives a pejorative meaning ("povesil medal'ku" [hung that little badge]; 26: 70). Ivan Il'ich does not spend time thinking about the puzzle contained in the motto: he replaces a devotional ministering to the final goal (as Solon, Kant or Oldenburg would have it), with service or activity in accord with Aristotelean and Hegelian prescriptions. Tolstoy allows Ivan Il'ich to test his fate just as this was allowed to Croesus, and does not immediately frustrate his hero's hopes. On the contrary, he lets Ivan climb the ladder of success and overcome all setbacks so that there would indeed be good reason to believe that there was no final goal beyond the coveted appointment, a nice apartment, the daughter profitably married off. But then Ivan accidentally falls. The happiness that was all there suddenly evaporates, as Solon taught, without a trace. In order to test whether he was truly happy, Ivan needs to wait for the moment of death and even beyond it. This is precisely what Tolstoy would allow to happen.

As his disease progresses, the end and the purpose of his life begin to be identified for Ivan Il'ich with his misfunctioning organ and then with death itself.[26] When the vision of death hovers in front of Ivan and his petrified gaze is fixed upon it, the *telos* from his medal is realized in its most primitive, literal sense: "look to the end." But no matter how much and how long Ivan holds his gaze upon it, he does not see the purpose of his living and dying ("neuzheli tol'ko ona pravda?" [Could this be the only truth there is?]; ch. 6, 26: 94). There was neither an answer in his formerly meaningful activity (26: 94) nor in this meaningless suffering. Ivan Il'ich is overwhelmed with bewildered "why's" in Chapters Nine and Ten. "Zachem, za chto ves'etot uzhas? No skol'ko on ni dumal, on ne nashel otveta. . . . Zachem eti muki? I golos otvechal: a tak, ni zachem. Dal'she i krome etogo nichego ne bylo" [Why, and for what purpose, is there all this horror? But however much he pondered, he found no answer. . . . 'Why these sufferings?' And the voice answered, 'For no reason — just so.' Beyond and besides this, there was nothing] 26: 107). Ivan's bewilderment replicates the desperation of Tolstoy's two big Why's (*zachem?* and *za chto?*), to which Schopenhauer's philosophy had provided him temporary consolation in the late 1870s, and which were countered in the philosophy of the "Frankfurt sage" with "for no purpose" and "for no reason." For the author of *A Confession*, the temptation of this resignation to purposelessness ("Istina byla to, chto zhizn' est' bessmyslitsa" [The truth was that life makes no sense]; *A Confession*, ch. 4, 23: 12) is shaken off in subsequent chapters, and attacked as moral cowardice in *On Life*. It takes four weeks and three chapters of unspeakable physical pain and moral suffering for the hero to question the happiness of his past, pleasing, and successful, life. It takes him one hour before death to acknowledge the mistake, the horror of his past life, and find his purpose.

As Ivan gradually focuses on understanding his purpose, it is very clear that he isolates himself, and this happens not only because of his helpless condition. He begins to attain reasonable consciousness, by which, in Tolstoy's view, he transcends reality. According to Tolstoy's design, he need not ascribe seriousness to household combat, nor need he do battle against the oppression of his environment. In the 1880s, Tolstoy struggles to straighten out the priorities of personal duty and ultimately decides that the demands of reasonable consciousness should override personal and social obligations. In a letter written 15 July 1888 to Nikolai Ia. Grot, which appears to be the result of an ongoing debate, he delivers a tirade against spiritual traitors to reasonable consciousness who adjust the demands of their moral activity to the material conditions of the daily grind (64: 179-80).[27] Loneliness and the

courage to choose one's own purpose is valued over the mundane code of ethics which needs to be superceded through (to borrow Kierkegaard's phrase) a "teleological suspension of justice" (*Fear and Trembling* 54).

Tolstoy's own family did not share in his search for this individual *telos*. During one of the most heated family scenes when Lev Nikolaevich announced his need to leave home, Sofia Andreevna intimated that he was insane.[28] The opposition of his family was likely to remind Tolstoy of the writings of Kierkegaard, with which he had just become acquainted and enamoured. In *DII* we find a compelling fictional corollary to the exceptional nature of individual *telos*, of self-isolation in search of this individual telos, that is found in Kierkegaard.[29] Tolstoy's understanding of individual telos is in agreement with the radically anti-Hegelian idea of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, that the ethical component in the individual's life is established in a self-controlled and socially unmediated relation to God as a lonely feat of fright and courage (*Fear and Trembling* 55-56). A clear parallel can be drawn between Kierkegaard's Abraham, who keeps his purpose (*telos*) a secret from Sarah and Isaac (Livingston 316), and Ivan Il'ich. Before his illness and the ensuing change of orientation toward the absolute *telos* (*finis*),Tolstoy's hero engages in frustrating and pointless quibbles with his wife over Vasia's schooling, over bakery bills and, at early stages of his illness, over which doctor to see and which medication to apply. But after he begins to be his own judge, Ivan Il'ich discusses nothing, is largely silent and only listens, as does Abraham, who is anxious to discern his higher *telos*. That Abraham would keep his *telos* secret from his family would command Tolstoy's respect after his own thwarted attempts at an explanation with Sofia Andreevna, daughter Tatiana, and son Sergei. The only remaining hope that he held out was for the spontaneous understanding of his youngest son. We find the same picture in Ivan Il'ich's story: the complete misunderstanding of Praskovia, his daughter's indifference and the timid pity of little Vasia. In Kierkegaard, an illness and the border-state before death play an important role in choosing the right orientation toward the final goal.

From this point of view, and as our final topic, we might analyze the case of teleological self-authorship exemplified by Ivan's flight toward the final goal in Chapters Ten to Twelve. It will be first recalled that with regard to purposefulness, Tolstoy broke fully with Schopenhauer who insisted on meaninglessness. When Tolstoy asks why and for what man lives (in *A Confession*) and why he personally suffers, Schopenhauer's response from *The World as Will and Representation* was: "for no reason," "without goal," and "for nothing." A man is cast into life at birth and then abandoned; he has no goal or purpose of his own and if he conjures one, it will be no more than an illusion. At the beginning of his life, a man is thrown like a stone. It falls downward because of the power of gravitation, driven by the universal will, toward its death (bk. 2, 24; vol. 2: 126). Tolstoy disputes this view adamantly in *On Life*, where he tells us the parable of "man as dropped object." The madman, claims Tolstoy, is not the one who persists in choosing his purpose and authoring his own flight but rather is the one who, when told that he was dropped, said "dzin'" [clink]—and died (*On Life*; 26: 409). Ivan Il'ich does not immediately embark on a self-regulated flight. At the beginning of his life, when he thought that he knew his purpose for sure, and the purpose, to him, was a career, he was drawn to higher-placed people as a fly would be drawn to light ("kak mukha k svetu"), toward its death (ch. 2; 26: 69). When he was sick and imagined a flying stone that was falling downward, he identified himself with the stone waiting for the moment of its fall, "awaiting that dreadful fall and shock and destruction" (ch. 10; 26: 109). But Ivan Il'ich does not fall to his death. He will be suspended in isolation. He will have to become the stone that begins to know the purpose and regulate the direction of its flight, and comes into possession of its own agency. As Tolstoy describes this reorientation, he is following the model of Kierkegaard's "self-choice" as an alternative to Schopenhauer's "for no purpose."

Speaking about the moral responsibility of a given thought-project, Kierkegaard recalls Aris-

totle's *telos* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (III, 5, 1114a) and deliberates whether a depraved person is still empowered to change himself and the quality of his "flight." He quotes Aristotle: "The depraved person and the virtuous person presumably do not have power over their moral condition, but in the beginning they did have the power to become the one or the other, just as the person who throws a stone has power over it before he throws it but not when he has thrown it" (*Philosophical Fragments* 17). Remarkably, Aristotle connects our responsibility for "self-throwing" with a parallel between character and health:

> . . . it is unreasonable for someone doing injustice not to wish to be unjust, or for someone doing intemperate action not to wish to be intemperate. This does not mean, however, that if he is unjust and wishes to stop, he will stop and be just. For neither does a sick person recover his health [simply by wishing]; nonetheless, he is sick willingly, by living incontinently and disobeying the doctors, if that was how it happened. At that time, then, he was free not to be sick, though no longer free once he has let himself go, just as he was up to throw a stone, since the origin was in us, though we can no longer take back once we have thrown it. (1114a; Irwin 68-70)

Aristotle's "stone," fatalistically, cannot be entirely "responsible for how [the end] appears to him," although virtuous actions are voluntary, just as is our responsibility to initiate them (1114b).

Kierkegaard, meanwhile, invests immense energy in the power of conversion and its moment "in the fullness of time," which he believes will sustain itself into eternity. The teacher and judge that Kierkegaard presumes behind everyone among us can make conversion real and successful (18-22).[30] The stone flying badly can still reverse its trajectory and reorient itself toward the right purpose.[31] Schopenhauer's stone, by contrast, flies in a manner that is already outside Tolstoy's moral universe. It is the satiated stone that wishes to die, oblivious to agency or purpose once the physical powers of motion borne from, and in, will [*der Wille*] have been forfeited. To cite Schopenhauer: "Spinoza says (Epist. 62) that if a stone projected through the air had consciousness, it would imagine it was flying of its own will. I add merely that the stone would be right. The impulse is for it what the motive is for me, and what in the case of the stone appears as cohesion, gravitation, rigidity in the assumed condition, is by its inner nature the same as I recognize in myself as will, and which the stone would also recognize as will, if knowledge were added in its case also" (*The World as Will and Representation;* II: 24).[32]

When Tolstoy invokes the image of the stone in Chapter Ten of *DII*, Ivan experiences a Schopenhauerean degree of loneliness, purposelessness, and abandonment [*zaboshennost'*], one "that could not be more complete anywhere—either at the bottom of the sea or under the earth. . . ." A stream of remembrance carries him in a direction opposite to his progressing illness: one spot of light, there, behind, at the life's inception, and it grows darker and darker [*chernee i chernee*], and moves faster and faster. It rushes in regressive proportion to the square distance toward death ("in inverse ratio to the square of the distance from death" ["'obratno proportsional'no kvadratam rasstoianii ot smerti,' — podumal Ivan Il'ich"]; 26: 109). The image of the stone gaining speed after being dropped (a stone in free fall "downward with increasing velocity,"), fell into his soul ("zapal emu v dushu"; in the Katz edition; "entered his mind"). "I am flying" [*ia lechu*],- thinks Ivan Il'ich, while lying with his face to the back of the sofa, his life and its suffering flying ever and ever faster ["zhizn', riad uvelichivaiushchikhsia stradanii letit bystree i bystree"].

At this point, Ivan Il'ich is still unable to justify or explain the magnitude of suffering that this flight is causing him. It is obvious, however, that he realizes the flight's outward velocity and direction (into more suffering, but life flies *from* death, "ot smerti"). He is conscious of this flight, and tries to account for it. Tolstoy would suspend Ivan Il'ich in a "black sack" and not let him fall through as an agent of his own flight until one hour before his death. Ivan Il'ich would think to himself: "'Yes, it was all not the right thing,' he said to himself, 'but that doesn't matter. The 'right thing' can still be done. But what is the

right thing?' he asked himself and suddenly grew quiet" ["'Da, vse bylo ne to,' — skazal on sebe, — 'no eto nichego. Mozhno, mozhno sdelat' *to*. Chto zh *to*?' — sprosil on sebiai zatikh"; 26: 112]. At that time, Ivan Il'ich fell through, saw the light ("and it was revealed to him that though his life had not been what it should have been, it could still be rectified" ["V eto samoe vremia Ivan Il'ich provalilsia, uvidal svet, i emu otkrylos' chto zhizn' ego byla ne to chto nado, no chto eto mozhno eshche popravit'"]; 26: 112.; Katz 166]. This, in essence, is how Tolstoy resolves the dilemma of *zabroshennost'* (literally, "the state of being thrown into") that he had left suspended in the concluding lines of *A Confession*.

Lest it be forgotten, the image of a train (or locomotive) that is used in Chapter Twelve to help define the direction of the stone's movement, originates in the locomotive energy of the soul discovering its final end that Kant introduced into moral teleology. There is also biographical support for Tolstoy's treatment of teleology as spiritual energy here. When Tolstoy was working on the final version of the story, he communicated with Nikolai Grot about the book that Grot had just finished, *O dushe v sviazi s sovremennymi ucheniiami o sile* [On the Soul, in Relation to the Latest Doctrines of Power].[33] Grot's book constructs a theory of spiritual force ("sila-dukh") from the positive idealistic ground of Kant's teleology and separates itself vehemently both from Schopenhauer's pessimism and from any connection with materialistic teachings of power (Büchner, Molleschott). (This active spiritual force directly confronts Büchner's famous work, *Force and Matter [Kraft und Stoff*] 1860). Grot inscribed the book to Tolstoy as a personal gift and glossed its entire content, footnoting the topics that he and Tolstoy had discussed "the other day." To these comments by Grot, Tolstoy added his responses, so the book's margins bear physical marks of Tolstoy's approval.[34] Not only does Tolstoy support Grot's idea of the soul's liberation from matter and its striving toward goodness as its teleological purpose, he also inscribes what seems to be the Russian letter "O" against the paragraph in which Grot depicts the soul's flight toward liberation. This letter could be the first initial standing for "Osvobozhdenie" [Liberation]. Grot speaks of the liberation of the soul referring constantly to Plato's *Phaedo*, with which he begins the genealogy of his theory, and it is this theme that connects Plato's final Socratic dialogue and Grot's essay to *DII*. Elsewhere, Tolstoy would quote the *Phaedo* to the effect that true philosophers see the purpose of their life as a preparation for death, the main event in life. Death liberates the soul from the constraints that bind upon the mind during life; but in order to die right, one is obliged to learn how to think correctly (23: 22, 381).[35] This connection helps explain Tolstoy's enthusiastic endorsements of Grot's fantastic picture of the soul's flight of escape ("Osvobozhdenie? Tol'ko osvobozhdenie . . ." ["Liberation? Only liberation . . .] or: "Osvobozhdenie? Tol'ko aktivno" [Liberation? Only an active one]) and then, with regard to the improbability of such escape, "Kak nevozmozhnost', a statistika" [As an impossibility, still, a statistic].[36] In drafts of *DII*, Tolstoy makes Ivan Il'ich a believer in Büchner and Molleschott who dismisses idealist approaches to death and soul (26: 524-5). In the final chapter, he realizes the wildest idealist dream: the flight of spiritual escape.[37] Ivan's much discussed and still enigmatic "fare well" as "stay out of my way" request to his wife ("prosti" as "propusti" [let me pass]) in the final Chapter Twelve can be read as acquisition of full spiritual liberty from the physical world (to which the word of farewell is uttered). On a spur of this now unstoppable movement, Ivan utters an interchangeable "let me pass."

To sum up: Tolstoy reinterprets the verdict of *zabroshennost'* as a change of teleological purpose and agency (as "self-throwing"). Tolstoy's radical innovation in interpreting *respice finem* lay in the fact that for him and his hero it became a model of transcendence and escape. From a denial of his personal duty "to look well to the end," Ivan Il'ich proceeds to the stage of contemplating his finitude, and then begins to question the purposelessness of suffering alone (*zabroshennost'*). What is the teleology of human life, according to Tolstoy? It is absolute, uninterrupted

and uninterruptable striving toward goodness, for it is never late to set things right: "Zhizn' cheloveka," — Tolstoy wrote at the conclusion of *On Life*— "est' stremlenie k blagu; k chemu on stremitsia, to i dano emu: zhizn', nemogushchaia byt' smert'iu, i blago, ne mogushchee byt' zlom." [Human life is a striving for goodness; what man is striving for, will be redeemed to him: life that shall not be death and goodness that shall not be evil] (26: 435). Upon discovering the purpose of his suffering, Ivan Il'ich sees that dying correctly is the main effort and accomplishment, the telos of his life. This resolution (*finis, "koncheno!"*), in its turn, releases him from suspension in the black sack, permits him to embrace the divine design of his life and become his own cause, as exemplified in his flight into the light.

Notes

1. Henceforth, I will be using these meanings of *telos* interchangeably, depending on the precise semantic context most important for Tolstoy in a given instance. For canonical elucidations of teleology see Kant 1952; Braithwaite; Nagel 401-428; Woodfield; Wright.

2. Henceforth in text *DII.* Unless otherwise noted, Russian quotations from Tolstoy's works (volume:page) are to the Jubilee edition (1928-1958). Translations from the Jubilee are mine. Quotes from the story in English, with some necessary modifications, are from Tolstoy 1991.

3. One of the founding principles of both Christian ethics and of the legal ethics of "juristic liberalism," this ethos was first summarized by Thomas Aquinas in *Exposition of Aristotle's Ethics*, *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa of Theology*.

4. Among the cancelled drafts of Chapter Four is a conversation (two months prior to Ivan Il'ich's death) between a journalist and a liberal. Advancing a legal ethos against their complaints about the misery of life (in Russia and in humanity at large), Ivan Il'ich attempted to prove that he was absolutely happy. In the next draft, this conversation takes place between Ivan Il'ich and Ivan Petrovich; Ivan Il'ich is assuring his friend that he is not afraid of dying and does not understand the fear of death, since he lives by the joys of today and disregards the evils of tomorrow (26: 524-5).

5. In the drafts, Ivan Il'ich's widow passes this diary along to the same Petr Ivanovich, who would become the most impressionable funeral visitor in the definitive version of Chapter One (26: 508-9).

6. Kazan' was one of the intellectual hotbeds of practical Hegelianism in Russia. Tolstoy switched to the department of law at Kazan' University when Dmitrii Meier had just been appointed there. Meier was one of the brightest minds and most promising intellectuals in the field (Wortman 230; Shklovsky 80). For the curriculum at Pravovedenie see Siuzor (esp. 116-159).

7. I owe this insight to Donna Orwin's discussion of *tsel'* and *tsel'nost'* (166-7).

8. On the connection between themes expressed in *On Life* and in the story, see Jahn 1993: 93-102.

9. The term "transcendental psychology" is used here in the same sense as in Kantian scholarship: as a sum total of spiritual responses to a transcendental challenge. See Kitcher 1990 and 1997: 175-190 for an expanded explanation of the phenomenon.

10. Rēspicio, spexi, spectum — I. To look back or behind, to look about, to look for. II. A. To look, have regard, turn attention; B. To have a care for, to look at with solicitude, regard, be mindful of, consider, bethink oneself of. Finis — 1) limit, border; 2) telos; 3) end of one's life (used not until after August, the meaning was developed by Horace in his odes); 4) the highest point, degree, summit, the idea of good (as defined by Cicero in *De Finibus*); 4) in rhetoric: explanation, definition; an end, purpose, aim, object: ad finem vitae; an intention, design, aim in view. See *A New Latin Dictionary* 1580-1; 751-2. *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.* shows that the above meanings were preserved in the vulgatis.

11. For an excellent discussion, see Jahn 1983 and its reworked version in 1993.

12. Katz translated this passage as "hung a medallion inscribed *respice finem* [look to, or regard, the end] on his watch, took leave of his professor and the prince who was patron of the school . . ." (Katz 130). The translation is correct, although no mention of the Prince's identity is provided in the explanatory notes.

Although, as Salys has persuasively shown, the phrase *respice finem* is one of the most meaningful signposts on Ivan Il'ich's "Road of Life" (1986: 18-28; 1999: 102-16), its full potential stands in need of a more detailed interpretation; for the modern reader this maxim, at face value, may appear as a secure symbol of Ivan's blindness and delusion.

Even as authoritative and symbol-specific exploration of death as Ariés makes very little of the presence of *respice finem* in Tolstoy's story. Ivan Il'ich "wears a little medal with an inscription unusual for Russia, *Respice finem*; a memento mori of the sort that was popular in the West from the late fifteenth to the seventeenth century. But his religion seems superficial and has no effect on his egoism." If anything, the memento in Ariés' interpretation is a symbol of Ivan's denial of death. Tellingly, the discussion of Tolstoy's work occurs in the chapter entitled "Death Denied" (Ariés 563).

13. Caesar's phrase reads, "animum conuertere ad: quod si ea, quae in longinquis nationubus geruntur ignorantis, respicite <respice> finitimam Galliam, quae ... perpetea premitur seruitute" (VII, 77).

14. For the history of Russian assimilation of Roman Law see Hammer 1-13.

15. I am in agreement with C. J. G. Turner who also believes that Herodotus's tale served Tolstoy as a reminder of *respice finem* in *DII.* He, too, notes biographical evidence of Tolstoy's familiarity with Herodotus (58).

16. At Iasnaia Poliana in August 2000, I was given the chance to examine this booklet, sewn by Sofia Andreevna Tolstoya into a collected volume of two- to three-page-long popular tales published by Posrednik in the same year. I wish to thank Liudmila Vasilievna Miliakova for assistance in procuring and using this material. The booklet with the tale bears the number 3612 in Tolstoy's personal library numbering system. ("Tsar' Krez I uchitel' Solon I drugie rasskazy." [Moscow: Posrednik, 1886],1-4). See the description of this, and a later edition of the tale, in *Biblioteka Tolstogo* (I (II): 420). In *Tak chto zhe nam delat'?* (1882-6), Tolstoy mentions Solon among those rare prophetic minds (Confucius, Moses, Socrates, Solomon, Homer, Isaiah, David) who managed to inscribe imperishable wisdoms on people's historical memory (25:369).

17. For a book-length discussion of Caesar's self-immortalization as a policy, see Gesche. For Solon and Croesus as two competing moral models of modernity, see Zimmern (esp. 1-59).

18. Aristotle's ethical teleology taught that man achieves what is good for him to achieve. Rational activity determines what man is. An excellent summary of immediate concomittants to this teaching, its extensions and its challenges are provided in Irwin 250-77; 327-43.

19. The founding principles of Christian and legal ethics of "juristic liberalism" was mainly summarized by Aquinas in *Exposition of Aristotle's Ethics*, *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa of Theology*. My understanding and discussion of Aquinas's natural law and its relation to the problems raised in Tolstoy's story was guided by Bradley (esp. 199-323), Lisska 143-201; 247-320, Finnis 170-6; 294-331; Owens 38-59. For a detailed description of Tolstoy's legal curriculum, see Eikhenbaum 109-110. Tolstoy's study of natural law is evidenced from the corrections he made to Biriukov's biography (esp. entries 17 and 18; 34: 397-8).

20. Jahn's "Tolstoj and Kant" provides the most systematic discussion of the time-frame and the character of Tolstoy's interaction with different facets of Kant's teaching.

21. Best summarized in the *The Metaphysics of Morals* [6:383]: 147.

22. "When a thoughtful human being has overcome incentives to vice and is aware of having done his often bitter duty, he finds himself in a state that could well be called happiness . . ." *The Metaphysics of Morals* [6: 383]: 142.

23. This imagery of a self-propelling non-corporeal moral force possessed by the soul intervenes when Kant discusses the differences between physico- and ethico- theology. The Latin phrase (*vis locomotiva*) in the original text was not rendered in Meredith's translation. My reference here will be to the original German text (*Kritik der Urteilskraft* [435-436: 469]. Kant defines the highest level of human moral omniscience as "inner theology" (*Critique of Teleological Judgement* [482:159]).

24. Siuzor is incorrect in attributing the phrase to Horace (36), in whose entire oeuvre no such phrase has

been found. The full form of the School's motto corresponded to the variant that had become wide-spread in medieval remakes of Roman books as found in an allegorical collection *Gesta Romanorum*: "quid-quid agis, prudenter agas et respice finem" [Whatever you do, do it with forethought and look forward to the end](Swan 177-80).

25. Oldenburg treated his students like members of the family. Tolstoy was personally acquainted with one of the Oldenburgs, Petr Aleksandrovich (1868-1924), and appreciated this family's charity and its commiseration with political and religious dissenters. See 73:71-2; 9:320-1.

26. "The wandering kidney" from his diagnosis becomes his "soulful matter" [*zadushevnoe delo*] (ch.5, 26:90).

27. Grot is attacked by Tolstoy because his priorities are wrong. If his spiritual survival is at stake, abandoning family and material effects should not be an obstacle.

28."Conversion" and plans of escape were presented by Sofia Andreevna as just "Levochka's" fretful paroxysms, which began to appear alongside his new illogical self. See the letter to her sister, 20 Dec. 1885 (85: 297), which may be compared with Praskovia Fedorovna's reaction to Ivan Il'ich's diary, which, in the drafts of the tale, she calls a "logbook of his new illogical wit" (26: 105).

29.The degree of Tolstoy's familiarity with Kierkegaard's philosophy is discussed by Fink, who argues persuasively that Tolstoy knew Kierkegaard at least from 1885 on, but his knowledge of *Fear and Trembling* cannot be adduced with any certainty before 1889. I thank her for the permission to quote from her forthcoming essay. Fink argues that Tolstoy was reading *Fear and Trembling* between 1886 and 1888.

30. Kierkegaard mounts a mighty anti-Hegelian defence of Socrates, the teacher, in *The Concept of Irony* 219-37; 264-65; 452 and *Fear and Trembling*, Problema III, 117. Kierkegaard's Socrates needs to behave as a teacher at the moment of death and therefore he speaks. But both Abraham and Ivan Il'ich in the final chapters need to arrive at the truth that Socrates already possesses: they do not speak and are mostly silent, in keeping with absolute Christian ethics, as Kierkegaard and Tolstoy understood it. For the difference between Hegel and Kierkegaard on Socrates, see Thulstrup (esp. 213-68).

31. For Kierkegaard, "the ethical demand is that one become *infinitely* interested in existing"(*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* esp. 1: 207-26). The purpose of this ethical subject, therefore, "is not simply to know the truth but to *become it*, not to produce objective truth but to transform one's subject's self" (Livingston 315; emphasis mine).

32. Similar pronouncements on the stone are scattered throughout the book. See vol.1 Book II, §26 (131); Book III, §43 (214); §70 (404); Book IV, (503). vol. 2 (174;299; "the will proclaims itself in the fall of a stone as in the action of a man"; 303; 443).

33. I am grateful to the publishing and research sections of Iasnaia Poliana library (Galina Alexeeva, Liudmila Miliakova) for allowing me to examine this book from Tolstoy's personal collection, August 2000.

34. On p. 77 of Grot's book Tolstoy has bent the upper corner where Grot speaks of the soul as a modification of other natural forces. ("[D]usha est' modifikatsiia drugikh aktivnykh sil prirody." Grot 77).

35. The *Phaedo*, whose connection with *DII* has not received the attention it deserves, is discussed by me in a separate work in progress. This dialogue was very much on Tolstoy's mind in 1886 because in the previous year he was collaborating with Alexandra Kalmykova on a popular biography of Socrates. Tolstoy's rewriting of several chapters of Kalmykova's manuscript resulted in a portrait of a prophet and moral teacher on the threshold of death who left his disciples a set of trenchant pronouncements on the essence of life, death, and immortality that they would have to decipher and interpret correctly when the moment confronted them. Tolstoy changed the title from *Uchitel' grecheskogo naroda Sokrat* to *Grecheskii uchitel' Sokrat* (25: 429-61).Thanks to Tolstoy's participation, there gradually emerged an image of Socrates ("khudoi pravednik-chudak"; 26: 453) as a prophet and teacher of the proper way to die. See Gusev 427.

36. Tolstoy bent the corner twice and made this inscription on page 78. In the text, I repeat the version suggested by the editors of *Biblioteka L'va Nik. Tosltogo v Iasnoi Poliane*, 1.1: 225. The editors tentatively suggest (a question mark is put next to their reading) that Tolstoy wrote "'Osvobodit'sia? Tol'ko osvobozhdenie' (?)". My opinion and that of Liudmila Pavlovna Velikanova, who assisted me in deciphering Tolstoy's hand, is that Tolstoy wrote "Osvobozhdenie? Tol'ko aktivno"

[Liberation? Only an active one.] The second inscription runs vertically along the concluding part of Grot's picture of the self-saving soul (98).

37. In 1877-78, Tolstoy was already testing the possibility of this physical spiritism in an unfinished dialogue *Sobesedniki*, which appears to be the first most significant unnoticed source of Tolstoy's character. Tolstoy's alter ego (Ivan Il'ich, me; 17: 371) and the main protagonist, is concerned with salvation. This Ivan Il'ich is uncertain which authority is right for him (he turns for answers to a natural scientist, a logical positivist, a theologist and a materialist philosopher), and this uncertainty reflects Tolstoy's own spiritual fragmentation at that time. He would seek to justify the wholeness of *telos* from the points of view of reasonable knowledge, religion and morality (17: 371-85). This prior dialogue shows us not only Ivan Il'ich's, but also Tolstoy's radical reinterpretation of the teleology of human life.

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