

Leo Tolstoy was a great humanist. Evolution of human character was a subject of his close attention.

The main personage of the story "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" is ordinary official who conduct his life according to a strict social code, never deviating from what was ruled by society, by his pleasure, by materialistic motives, but never by conscience. His contact with his wife and children was limited and shallow because he didn't find pleasure in this. His life satisfied him when he was healthy, but when he faced with death his loneliness overwhelmed him. After the accident which starts his long dying Ivan Ilyich realized that his life, though he has been successful and has always done the proper things, is all false. He understood that his life was meaningless. As his illness progressed, Ivan Ilyich felt increasingly the need to be loved. Only in front of death he knew what real feeling is. Ivan Ilyich felt real empathy and pity from peasant Gerasim and son Vasya.

His moral misery was worse than physical. The result of this was that Ivan Ilyich in dying became the individual that he never was in his typical life. He understood that his notion about his decent and helpfulness was just illusion. He felt as if he were being squeezed down into a black hole and there at the bottom was light.

This metaphor serves as image of physical death and spiritual rebirth. His death gave birth to new consciousness. He suddenly perceived that man's essential life belongs to the spirit and well-being is achieved through loving of people. He asked forgiveness of his family for his sins and welcomed death... This moral transformation makes real end of his unreal life.

As a moralist Tolstoy would like to play attention of Russian intelligentsia how badly they live, how they waste their talents, strengths, and capabilities. He called on moral self-improvement.