

Andrei at all moments throughout the novel. His wife Lise, dies in the act of giving life to Andrei's child, her death affects Andrei's newly found desire to live, triggered by Andrei's near-death experience at the battle of Austerlitz. It is only at the end, that his beginning is resolved, and that is with his death, that is described as an "awakening from life"⁵. Thus Andrei's circle of existence is complete: from death he awakens into life and from life he awakens into death. This metaphysical palindrome evokes the biblical: "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"⁶ ([Genesis 3:19](#))

Laura Jepsen reminds us that Tolstoy defined his masterpiece as "Homeric"⁷ and insisted that *War and Peace* was a "new Iliad"⁸ and therefore an epic. With Andrei, Tolstoy toys with the concept and meaning of 'heroism'. He begins with Andrei seeking refuge in Homeric heroism as a means to escape his own nihilism, hence his search for purpose in glory, the obsession with "triumphing"⁹, rising above men, and the idealization of the self glorified Napoleon. When disillusioned by a Homeric vision of himself, Andrei abandons his previous views, yet remains the hero of Tolstoy's epic. Unable to practice his heroism, he spends the greater part of the novel in search of a cause to fulfil his role as a hero. Finally the answer comes through the embracing of Christianity and the teachings of Christ: By forgiving his enemy Anatole, and the unfaithful Natasha, Andrei becomes a champion of the Christian values of meekness, forgiveness and love. On his deathbed, he achieves that which corresponds to the glory of the Christian hero: he acquires vision, "the veil that had till then concealed the unknown was lifted from man's spiritual vision"¹⁰. Andrei 'wins the battle' by letting Christ in. The dream he has before dying, where "something not human-death"¹¹ tries to force its way through a closed door, on the inner side of which is Andrei, is a reference to the Book of Revelation:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.¹²

The threshold of the metaphorical door is breached and, as Jepsen rightly points out, Andrei "dies a Christian hero"¹³.

Like Pierre Bezukhov, and Tolstoy himself, Prince Andrei Bolkonsky is a seeker of truth. His ultimate 'heroic quest' is the quest for meaning. Throughout the novel he embarks on a philosophical journey, clinging to various systems of belief to then renounce them. These will guide him from cynicism, to nihilism, to military reform,

⁵ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (Cambridge World Classics), Kindle, 81%.

⁶ Gen. 3:19.

⁷ Laura Jepsen, "Prince Andrey as Epic Hero in Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'" *South Atlantic Bulletin* 34, no. 4 (November 1969): 5, accessed October 22, 2012, JSTOR.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (Cambridge World Classics), Kindle, 23%.

¹⁰ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (Cambridge World Classics), Kindle, 81%.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Gen. 3:20.

¹³ Laura Jepsen, "Prince Andrey as Epic Hero in Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'" *South Atlantic Bulletin* 34, no. 4 (November 1969): 5, accessed October 22, 2012, JSTOR.