

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was a German philosopher of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of Christianity and traditional morality. He was interested in the enhancement of individual and cultural health, and believed in life, creativity, power, and the realities of the world we live in, rather than those situated in a world beyond. Central to his philosophy is the idea of “life-affirmation,” which involves an honest questioning of all doctrines that drain life's expansive energies, however socially prevalent those views might be. Often referred to as one of the first existentialist philosophers along with Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Nietzsche's revitalizing philosophy has inspired leading figures in all walks of cultural life, including dancers, poets, novelists, painters, psychologists, philosophers, sociologists and social revolutionaries.

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), Russian author, essayist and philosopher wrote the epic novel War and Peace (1865-69)

Man in connection with the general life of humanity appears subject to laws which determine that life. But the same man apart from that connection appears to be free. How should the past life of nations and of humanity be regarded—as the result of the free, or as the result of the constrained, activity of man? That is a question for history. (Epilogue 2, Ch. VIII)

Anonymously narrated, the novel is set during the Napoleonic wars, the era which forms the backdrop of Tolstoy's painstakingly detailed depiction of early 19th century Tsarist Russia under Alexander I: her archetypes and anti-heroes. Through his masterful development of characters Pierre, Andrew, Natasha, Nicholas, Mary and the rest, War and Peace examines the absurdity, hypocrisy, and shallowness of war and aristocratic society. It all comes to a climax during the Battle of Borodino. Initially Tolstoy's friends including Ivan S. Turgenev and Gustave Flaubert decided that the novels' 'formlessness' weakened the overall potential for its success, but they were soon proved wrong. Almost one hundred years after his death, in January of 2007, Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (1878) and War and Peace were placed on Time magazine's ten greatest novels of all time, first and third place respectively.

Egoism: *n.* 1 a: a doctrine that individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action; b: a doctrine that individual self-interest is the valid end of all actions (as opposed to altruism) (Not to be confused with egotism)

Altruism: *n.* the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others (as opposed to egoism).

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition centered on the linking of practice and theory. It describes a process where theory is extracted from practice, and applied back to practice to form what is called intelligent practice.

Anarchism is the political belief that society should have no government, laws, police, or other authority, but should be a free association of all its members. William Godwin, an important anarchist philosopher in Britain during the late 18th century, believed that the "euthanasia of government" would be achieved through "individual moral reformation".