

Book Review

**Nietzsche as Metaphysician**  
By Justin Remhof

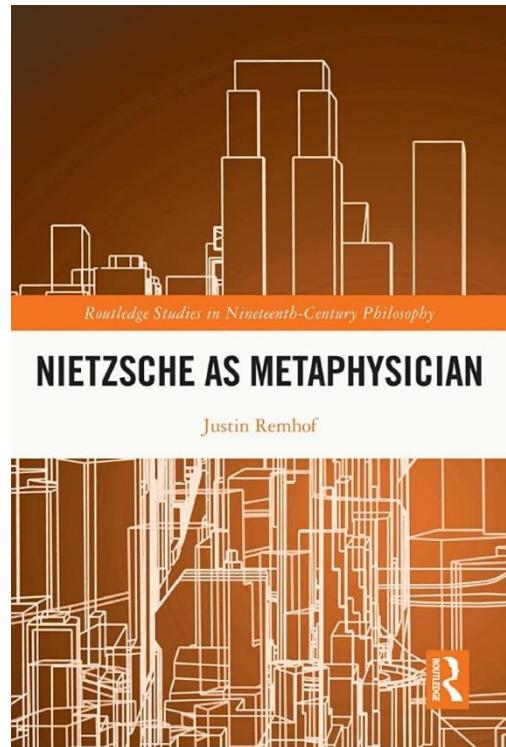
A Review by  
**Theptawee Chokvasin\***

*Department of Philosophy and Religion, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, Thailand*

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Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is considered a metaphysician by some philosophers because he addressed long-standing problems in the history of philosophy, particularly in metaphysics and theology, and provided severe critiques of the traditional philosophical conceptualizations of these problems. Nonetheless, is it a valid line of reasoning to call him a metaphysician solely because he wrote metaphysical critiques? The present author, Justin Remhof, provides several reasons for a well-structured consideration of Nietzsche as a metaphysician, and these reasons are genuinely novel and extremely intriguing. Before this present book, Remhof already wrote about another possibility of Nietzsche's trait of metaphysical philosophy. It was to render Nietzsche a constructivist theorist on the consideration of material object metaphysics (Remhof, 2018). However, in this present book, Remhof turns to the other side of the same consideration of Nietzsche's metaphysics which is more about its methodology of reading so-called metaphysical issues and of doing philosophy with an aid of metaphysical process of argumentation (*p.1*).

Why even consider Nietzsche to be a metaphysician? On the one hand, it is widely acknowledged in the academic world of philosophy that Nietzsche disapproves of what is the truth in its purest sense or the truth in itself. This idea of rejecting the truth might in part prompt

\* Corresponding Author +66 2579 6525 ext. 109  
E-mail Address: [fhumtwc@ku.ac.th](mailto:fhumtwc@ku.ac.th)

some philosophers to label Nietzsche as an anti-metaphysical thinker who prefers to practice philosophy devoid of metaphysics. Some even claim that applying a metaphysical framework to Nietzsche's conception of the will to truth would be in direct opposition to his own position as an opponent of metaphysics (Beery, 2020: 28). Furthermore, if one reads Nietzsche's own words with sincerity, they should make it abundantly clear that his goal was to dismantle any metaphysics that supported a fundamental reality (Mitchell, 2017: 347). Reading Nietzsche's philosophical writing can consequently be anything but metaphysical from this perspective.

On the other hand, Remhof offers us two diverse ways of reading Nietzsche, metaphysical and non-metaphysical. He explains that the non-metaphysical way of reading should not be understood as the only way of interpreting Nietzsche. There are even more reasonable lines for us to conclude that the non-metaphysical reading is incorrect in the case of reading Nietzsche (*pp. 1-10*). If it is to be interpreted correctly, Nietzsche did not accept what is called "two-world metaphysics," or the sort of metaphysical theories that presumed that there were two worlds of reality, namely, the real world of eternal truth in itself that was independent of human beings, and the world perceived by human beings. However, this is not at all to make a decisive judgment on Nietzsche that he rejected the whole metaphysical philosophy (*pp. 10-12*).

For those who have explained that Nietzsche is not a metaphysician, because of his rejection that metaphysics has dealt with problematic questions and struggled to construct puzzling questions which cannot be answerable. Remhof explains that the traditional way of doing philosophy with two-world metaphysics instead is the real problem. Nietzsche's system of reading metaphysical philosophy can be an alternative for us to look for the answers. In other words, framing the metaphysical questions in Nietzschean way of doing philosophy will give us the long-awaited answers to those questions (*pp. 52-54*). The so-called Nietzschean way of doing metaphysics is explained as "naturalized metaphysics" which is to go along with scientific research and findings. The illusive depiction of two-world metaphysics has urged philosophers to believe in the existence of immutable world above and beyond the changing world studied by natural science. Naturalized metaphysics will ask instead about the existing structure of nature that can be comprehended by human beings (*pp. 82-100*). Moreover, the beliefs in systematic treatment of philosophical paradigms from many notable philosophers have involved with the beliefs in allegedly ahistorical principle of what should be the ground of knowledge. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of morality can be the best example of what could be the thing that has severely shaken the ground of such beliefs (*pp.116-119*) Asking metaphysical questions with that sort of systematic method should be considered problematic instead, not that metaphysics in itself is problematic (*pp.136-141*).

Now that things have passed, what way does Nietzsche offer us to see and study the world as we do today? Nietzsche proposes that we use what we as human beings have; to look at the world through the human eye without denying or fearing that the innocence of the human eye will result in distorted knowledge of reality. This has led to the interpretation that metaphysical subjects in academic studies become worrisome because they are approaching a psychological view of the world. However, if we are looking for an answer as to how Nietzsche could be a metaphysician in that aspect, there must be an answer of this kind. It is this state of humanity that is the ultimate source of reality that man has and is the cornerstone of all metaphysical issues (*pp. 142-172*).

One of my interpretations from reading Nietzsche's writings on the will as existential drive is that he considers the vanity of human existence in the same way that traditional philosophy would tempt us to do so. In Nietzsche's view, the existence of a human being predicated on strong principles was absurd. However, what kind of rational explanation does he propose for the existence of human will? According to my interpretation, the ground devoid of any fundamental basis will become, for him, a new answer. In other words, we can infer

from Nietzsche's writings that the realms he is proposing are negative metaphysics indicating the groundlessness of human existence. Nietzsche denies existence based on solid foundations, and his ideology causes him to reject the truth's foundations, which traditional philosophy has always held to be fundamentally immutable. Nietzsche did not dispute with traditional philosophy that the basis is weak and not really substantial, but instead argued that such a basis does not exist outside of human existence. This concept lies behind what is commonly referred to and interpreted as the will to truth in Nietzsche's writings. Some scholars have expressed similar interpretations. An example to be cited here is Daniel I. Harris's interpretation that, if interpreted as having some ground for truth, for Nietzsche then the ground for such truth was "unstable" (Harris, 2020). Moreover, in one of the greatest theses on the consideration of Nietzsche as a metaphysician, Peter Poellner's *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, pointed out that the trait of Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will was involved with a theory of perspectival truth, or the theory which was to hold that truth of natural science could be at best explicated in terms of the observer's interpretation (Poellner, 1995: 288-292).

However, if Nietzsche's ideas were to be interpreted in this manner, would ethical and religious truths need to be completely refuted? Often, it is asserted that ethical and religious principles have a solid, immutable foundation, such as invoking God as their originator and establishing them as an independent, universal principle. If Nietzsche's ideas were accepted as true, it would result in the complete destruction of ethical and religious foundations, and it would be anticipated that the rest of the subsequent judgments would also be based on these shattered principles. It would become a weird and oxymoronic conceptualization of principle based on the individual who can create any principle of his or her own will. Thus, it would be emphasized that Nietzsche could not be considered a metaphysician just because he undermined the very metaphysical concepts underlying the universality of ethical and religious principles. However, Remhof argues that Nietzsche's argument against this monotheistic viewpoint should not be interpreted as a rejection of metaphysical philosophy at all. According to Remhof, these arguments are based on Nietzsche's "preferred metaphysical views of reality" that are involved with several issues about human beings studied in various realms of academic subjects (pp. 147-148).

The present book by Justin Remhof is marvelously well-structured. This is because he makes arguments against those who do not endeavor to see how Nietzsche could be a metaphysician and organizes those arguments in a logical progression. He stages his arguments in relation to the various aspects of metaphysics, beginning with the nature of metaphysics, its meaning, the search for answers, the methods of inquiry in metaphysics, and concluding with the subject matter of metaphysical philosophy. Finally, he informs us that Nietzsche is a metaphysician, and that the line he proposes is genuinely reasonable. Moreover, this book by Remhof is excellent in its portrayal of Nietzsche's philosophical methodology, which can be on the path of metaphysics or at least cannot be completed without it. It is therefore a valuable resource not only for scholars of Nietzschean studies, but also for scholars of metaphysics and of related philosophical issues.

In my opinion, the best interpretation resembles waiting for the finest produce to ripen. As fruit requires time to fully ripen, Nietzsche's philosophy requires a metaphysical interpretation in accordance with his own conception of metaphysics in order to be understood.

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