



# Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy

By Robert B. Pippin

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**Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy** By Robert B. Pippin

Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the most elusive thinkers in the philosophical tradition. His highly unusual style and insistence on what remains hidden or unsaid in his writing make pinning him to a particular position tricky. Nonetheless, certain readings of his work have become standard and influential. In this major new interpretation of Nietzsche's work, Robert B. Pippin challenges various traditional views of Nietzsche, taking him at his word when he says that his writing can best be understood as a kind of psychology.

Pippin traces this idea of Nietzsche as a psychologist to his admiration for the French moralists: La Rochefoucauld, Pascal, Stendhal, and especially Montaigne. In distinction from philosophers, Pippin shows, these writers avoided grand metaphysical theories in favor of reflections on life as lived and experienced. Aligning himself with this project, Nietzsche sought to make psychology "the queen of the sciences" and the "path to the fundamental problems." Pippin contends that Nietzsche's singular prose was an essential part of this goal, and so he organizes the book around four of Nietzsche's most important images and metaphors: that truth could be a woman, that a science could be gay, that God could have died, and that an agent is as much one with his act as lightning is with its flash.

Expanded from a series of lectures Pippin delivered at the Collège de France, *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy* offers a brilliant, novel, and accessible reading of this seminal thinker.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“Through sympathetic and creative readings of Nietzsche’s imagery, and with an unusually strong emphasis on his project of a ‘gay science,’ this book presents Nietzsche’s commitment to the priority of psychology in a new light. Arguing against the tendency to give naturalist readings of Nietzsche’s psychology, Pippin’s refreshing proposal is to place Nietzsche’s project in the light of the earlier French “moralistes” and of Montaigne in particular. From this perspective he is able to cast light on Nietzsche’s treatments of agency, erotic longing, and self-deceit in ways which challenge much recent thinking about Nietzsche. This book should provoke lively debate and anyone interested in Nietzsche will gain much from Pippin’s subtle reflections.”--Christopher Janaway, University of Southampton

“What counts in the context of Nietzsche as a successful or even legitimate interpretation is open to dispute in a way that is true of perhaps no other major figure in the history of philosophy. The need for a unifying characterization of Nietzsche’s philosophical project is both pressing and extremely hard to fulfill. Pippin’s interpretation of Nietzsche—as occupied fundamentally with subjective deficiencies which not even a full realization of Enlightenment ideals in modernity could eliminate—is by any measure outstanding and merits the attention of all concerned to understand the development of philosophy in the wake of Kant. Readers who fear that unless Nietzsche is equipped with an original and cogent set of doctrinal commitments in epistemology, metaphysics, and meta-ethics, his strictly philosophical interest will evaporate, will find in Pippin a trenchant, rigorous, and persuasive account of how Nietzsche’s psychological turn, understood corr

“There have been literally hundreds of works on Nietzsche published over the last thirty years, but none of them approach him in quite the way Robert Pippin does here. The result of long and deep reflection on Nietzsche’s philosophical project, “Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy” does not attempt to reduce all philosophical theorizing to psychology, but instead suggests that Nietzsche’s philosophical thinking, like that of the French “moralistes” before him, was driven by a desire to understand how human beings think about their lives and why they think about their lives in the ways that they do.”--Alan D. Schrift, Grinnell College

### About the Author

**Robert B. Pippin** is the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, the Department of Philosophy, and the College at the University of Chicago. He is the author or editor of nearly a dozen books, including, most recently, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*.

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### **Jonathan Leake:**

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