

## **Forward to Moles, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Nature and Cosmology***

Justin Remhof

Old Dominion University

I am excited to see this book available to the public again. Moles offers an excellent contribution to Nietzsche studies, especially with respect to Nietzsche's theoretical philosophy. Unfortunately, the book seems to have been overlooked by many in our field. To help correct this oversight, my goal is to lay out some strong reasons for delving into the book. First, however, it will help to have a summary of Moles's project.

*Nietzsche's Philosophy of Nature and Cosmology* concerns Nietzsche's philosophical understanding of the nature of the universe. After presenting key features of Nietzsche's methodology, such as his naturalism, Moles begins by laying out Nietzsche's challenges to philosophical accounts of substance, which, according to Moles, inform Nietzsche's attacks on received philosophical views of human nature, society, organic nature, and inorganic nature. Moles then explains how Nietzsche develops a conception of force—roughly “will to power”—to understand the nature of human individuals, and, since individuals cannot be understood apart from the contexts in which they are embedded, Moles expands his analysis to understand Nietzsche's view of social groups and living systems. Features of this analysis are in turn used to develop an explanatory model for understanding Nietzsche's conception of force in the inorganic world. This leads Moles to explain Nietzsche's rejection of mechanistic atomism and his unique positive conceptions of necessity, chance, temporality, eternity, space, and eternal recurrence. Moles finishes by addressing criticisms of the eternal recurrence and situating Nietzsche's cosmology with other models of the universe advanced by scientific cosmologists.

The discussion throughout is clear, provocative, insightful, and sometimes astutely critical—and the research is first-rate. To enjoy the ride, however, readers need to accept the *Nachlass* into their hearts. The second section of Moles's Introduction provides thoughtful reasons for why he utilizes the unpublished writings, so check that out. I should also add that there have been recent illuminating developments in the debate over using the notebooks that back Moles's approach (see Huang (2019) "Did Nietzsche want his notes burned? Some reflections on the *Nachlass* problem." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27(6), 1194-1214). Regardless of one's stance towards the *Nachlass*, however, Moles uses the unpublished writings exactly as he should: he presents an astoundingly detailed and wide-ranging account of Nietzsche's thinking.

Why does the book stand out? First, as mentioned, it is well done. Notable examples include the discussion of the intellect (chapter 1); force (chapter 5), time and space (chapters 7, 8), and eternal recurrence (chapters 9 and 10). The detail of some of these discussions, such as the treatment of time and space, remains arguably unprecedented in the secondary literature. See also the extensive endnotes, which are often not just informative but also creatively expansive (for just two examples, see chapter 3, note 294 and chapter 9, note 36).

Moles's book also stands out when compared to most commentary at the time, and it holds its ground when compared to a good deal of contemporary commentary. It makes significant advancements in Nietzsche studies and addresses key issues in current Nietzsche scholarship. Here are some examples. In the first chapter, Moles discusses Nietzsche on naturalism (chapter 1, I) and historical methodology (chapter 1, II). His second chapter attends to language (chapter 2, I); debunking arguments against belief in substance (chapter 2, II, III);

and memory (chapter 2, III). The third chapter contains readings of Nietzsche's denial of the substantial, self-identical ego (chapter 3, I); freedom and free will (chapter 3, I, II); consciousness, action, affect, willing, pain and pleasure, and the passions (chapter 3, II); and the body and features of drives (chapter 3, III). The fourth chapter continues this discussion by looking at drives constructed by social forces (chapter 4, I); growth or power between hierarchically situated social groups (chapter 4, II); commanding, obeying, mastery, and decline in living organisms (chapter 4, III); and critiques of natural selection (chapter 4, III).

In the fifth chapter Moles investigates Nietzsche's understanding of force, activity, process, and monistic intentionality (chapter 5, II, III). The sixth addresses criticisms of efficient causality (chapter 6, I); occasionalist necessity (chapter 6, II); and contingency in natural events (chapter 6, III). The seventh examines criticisms of Newtonian temporality (chapter 7, I); temporality as a product of will to power (chapter 7, II) and will to power and eternity (chapter 7, III). The eighth looks at challenges to objective space (chapter 8, I); the transcendental ideality of space (chapter 8, I); the relation of force to space (chapter 8, II); how forces communicate, how forces are continuous, and how forces operate according to a new conception of action at a distance (chapter 8, II); and spatial infinity and finitude (chapter 8, III). The final two chapters lay out Moles's cosmological reading of the eternal recurrence (chapter 9) as well as his systematic defense against prominent criticisms of the cosmological reading (chapter 10).

Finally, Moles does an impressive job locating Nietzsche's ideas in the history of philosophy and connecting Nietzsche's ideas to developments after his time, including advances in contemporary physics and cosmology. For example, in chapter two Moles looks at

how Nietzsche's view of grammar, which grounds his view of perception, compares with Chomsky's universal grammar thesis (chapter 2, I), and how Nietzsche's idealist epistemology compares with Kant and Lange's (chapter 2, III). The third chapter examines how Kant's view of empirical and transcendental self-consciousness, partly developed to challenge Hume's view of unified self-consciousness, might apply to Nietzsche's attack on the substantial, self-identical ego (chapter 3, I).

The fifth chapter illuminates how Nietzsche's conception of dynamic force compares with conceptions advanced by Newton, Boscovich, Leibniz, and Kant (chapter 5, III). The sixth contains detailed discussions of how Nietzsche's occasionalism compares with versions developed by Malebranche and Spinoza (chapter 6, I, II); how Nietzsche's criticisms of causality compare to Hume's criticisms and Kant's transcendental deduction of causality (chapter 6, I); and how Spinoza's conception of causality illuminates Nietzsche's will to power cosmology and ontological kind monism (chapter 6, III). The seventh looks at how Nietzsche challenges Newton's conception of time as linear, continuous, and infinite (chapter 7, I) and how Nietzsche develops a quantum theory of time (chapter 7, II);

In the eighth chapter, Moles lays out how Nietzsche's transcendental ideality of space compares with similar views developed by Kant and Schopenhauer (chapter 8, I); how Nietzsche's view of spatial infinity and finitude compares with views offered by Leibniz, Boscovich, and Kant (chapter 8, III); and how Nietzsche anticipates cosmological implications of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (chapter 8, III). In chapter ten he investigates how the cosmological reading of the eternal recurrence is not undermined by 20<sup>th</sup> century physics

(chapter 10, II). Many other views are discussed, including those developed by Piaget, Freud, Tarski, Reimann, and Zöllner.

Let me summarize before you open the book. Moles's project is insightful and original. It consistently explores new territory in Nietzsche studies. It makes powerful headway on central issues in contemporary scholarship. It is historically informed in unprecedented ways. It is nicely grounded in an informative understanding of physics. And it is extremely well researched and well written. I hope you enjoy it.