

Hegel und Beethoven wie auch für die philosophische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Freiheitsbegriff bietet der Band einen anregenden, in mancher Hinsicht auch erfrischenden Zugang, der zeigt, wie eng Kunst, Denken und Leben zusammenspielen. Gleichzeitig regt dieses Buch dazu an, über den Freiheitsbegriff weiter nachzudenken und interdisziplinär zu diskutieren.

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Luis Felipe Garcia (ed.), *The Concept of Nature in Classical German Philosophy*. Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2025, 301 pp. ISBN: 978-3-11-100239-2

This collected volume contains an insightful introduction and fourteen essays by established specialists and young scholars in the field of *Naturphilosophie* in classical German philosophy, tackling the concept of nature within different intellectual fields and with varying systematic approaches. The book is based on a conference organized at the LMU Munich in April 2021.

The fourteen essays are divided into three main groups. Section I: “Visions of Nature”, provides an overall panorama of the *Zeitgeist* with distinct visions of nature from unique thinkers such as Herder and Goethe (article by John Zammito), Ludwig Feuerbach (Silvestre Gristina), and the traditional German idealists, such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Section II: “Inorganic Nature”, deals with aspects of non-living nature as a philosophical foundation for further understanding nature in general, such as Kant’s derivative pure concept of force and its application in both physics and psychology (Stephen Howard); as well as Goethe’s empirical methodology and its source in Spinoza, Francis Bacon, and Kant (Troy Vine). Section III: “Organic Nature” is above all dedicated to Schelling’s and Hegel’s theories of nature as a living organism. As Luis Felipe Garcia points out in his informative introduction, the renaissance of classical German nature philosophy places natural philosophical speculation in a broader context, in which, for instance, the revolutionary developments in biology (Jantzen 1994; Zammito 2018; Gambarotto 2018; Steigerwald 2019) play a crucial role. The articles in this volume dive into the relationship between *Naturphilosophie* and related subdisciplines, such as physiology and anatomopathology (Stefania Achella).

Since this short book review cannot cover every essay, I’ll single out those articles on the classical German idealists that emphasize the inner

tension between the idealistic principle and natural sciences, empirical methods, and contemporary stakes. The materialistic and even naturalistic implications in *Naturphilosophie* need serious examination since all philosophical positions aim to elucidate the relationship between nature and humanity.

Laure Cahen-Maurel's innovative paper "Nature as a 'You': Novalis's Philosophical Extension of Fichte" investigates the often-neglected commonality between Novalis and Fichte, as well referencing among others Novalis's "Notes on Schelling's *On the World Soul*" (45-47). The romantic philosopher Novalis replaces Fichte's more abstract "Nicht-Ich" (Not-I) with the more personal "You." However, in contrast to a widespread anti-Fichtean interpretation of this issue, Cahen-Maurel claims that such an idea already exists in Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre*. The well-known conception of *Anstoß* for Fichte is the unconscious foundation and a reflexive return to the self, which becomes a "solicitation" on a second person (49-50). The Fichtean schema of *Wechselwirkung* was equated by Novalis with the geometrical method of exhaustion, which further transforms the *Anstoß* into reciprocal love as a foundation for a community of rational and natural beings (53-56).

Johanna Hueck's essay "Schelling on Comprehending Nature as an Absolute Activity: From Intellectual Intuition to Ecstasy of Reason" traces Schelling's critique of self-sufficient subjectivity from an epistemological perspective. The important but problematic conception of intellectual intuition lacks an elaborate methodological explanation (65-68). According to Hueck, the notion of ecstasy in Schelling's *Erlanger Vorlesungen* not only functions as a form of cognition of the Absolute, but also provides a possibility to understand nature as a processual-living subject (69-72).

Anton Kabeshkin's text "Hegel and the Rationality of Nature" provides an alternative reading of Hegel's account of *Naturphilosophie* and natural science. According to Alison Stone's deflationary interpretation, the natural sciences are guided by metaphysics of the wrong kind for Hegel (81-83), whereas Kabeshkin emphasizes the rationalist presuppositions in Hegel's dissertation on cosmology, and Hegel's praise of Goethe's scientific sense (85-87). For Kabeshkin, Hegel's analysis of the category of heat proves that nature philosophy could be useful as a guide for empirical research (88).

The topic of *Naturphilosophie* and natural science continues in Luis Felipe Garcia's valuable article "From Kant to Schelling: Metaphysics of Nature and the Rise of Modern Science." Garcia puts Schelling and Kant in the same context of the conceptual challenges raised by modern sciences, while Schelling elaborates a concept of transformable nature instead of a

mathematized nature (136-137). Following Watkins and Pollok, Garcia argues for a transcendental reading of Kant's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe*, in which a metaphysics of nature functions not only as a regulative principle, but also provides the conceptual possibility for natural sciences and corporeal nature in general (142-145). In contrast, Schelling's concept of matter better clarifies the chemical phenomena, which considers matter in its becoming and transformation (152). Garcia offers a precise assessment: Kant follows the order of reasons, while Schelling the order of discovery (150).

Emmanuel Chaput's original text "Hegel's Concept of Inorganic Nature as *Umwelt*" interprets Hegel's conception of inorganic nature from historical, ethical, and exegetical perspectives. Chaput connects Hegel's concept of inorganic nature within organic nature as its own otherness with Uexküll's concepts of *Umgebung* and *Umwelt*, revealing the initial genesis of subjectivity and consciousness within nature (187-188). For Chaput, the observing reason in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* indicates the priority of the human being as a thinking animal (193-195). But Hegel ascribes a certain level of autonomy and freedom to the animal, thereby opening the possibility for certain ethical respect (196-200).

Márcio Suzuki's paper "Nature *versus* Life: Dialectics and Physiology in Schelling" examines Schelling's theory of organic functions in the history of medicine and physiology. According to Suzuki's detailed narrative, the concept of irritability and excitability by Brown and Roschlaub provides the presupposition for the non-empirical evidence and necessity of modern medicine (210-212). The duplicity of passivity and activity in the concept of *Erregbarkeit* aligns precisely with Schelling's view of life as a continuous struggle against nature (212-214). Suzuki then differentiates Schelling's individualism from a finalist explanation of living being and the universal life of species (217-218).

Levin Zende's contribution, "The Emergence of Sentience: Hegel's Conception of Animals" reveals the dilemma within Hegel's conceptual framework of sentient animals. Zende tries to solve the dilemma between the Hegelian doctrine of interruption and stages, while committing to the contemporary belief: animals are composites of microphysical entities (256). The answer lies in the ideal character of animal subjectivity. A collective of micro-constituents determine its own components non-causally through its self-position (257-259).

The two articles by Benjamin Berger and Victor Béguin both treat ideal versions of natural history. In "Great Chains of Being in Schelling's Würzburg System", Berger presents two models of chains of being in Schelling's 1804 system. The atemporal progression of life consists of plant,

infusoria and animal life (267-272). From infusoria as an indifference point, a bifurcated series of life-forms replaces the traditional model of a single and continuous series of life-forms (272-274). Berger understands Schelling as an immanent rationalist who is concerned with the logic of origination (279) rather than historical transformation. “In What Sense is Nature a Scale of Degrees? Schelling and Hegel on ‘Degrees’ in Nature” pursues these questions. Victor Béguin reads the hierarchy of *Potenzen* in Schelling’s identity philosophy as the universalization of stages in nature toward levels of being in general (285-286). Hegel criticizes the scalar ontology of nature, either as a temporal series (evolution), or as a spatial series (emanation). For him, the proper use of *Stufe* is limited to the stages of spirit, which is capable of development and self-production (289-292).

This collection of essays makes a significant contribution to the ever-burgeoning field of classical German *Naturphilosophie*. The volume offers numerous intriguing and new perspectives and textual details that help us understand the complex relationship between nature philosophy and the idealist positions.

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Luke Fischer, *Philosophical Fragments as the Poetry of Thinking: Romanticism and the Living Present*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024, xiv + 135pp. ISBN 9781350270091

This is a slim volume from a practicing poet whose works include *A Personal History of Vision* (2017), *The Poet as Phenomenologist: Rilke and the ‘New Poems’* (2015) and a collection of bedtime stories, *The Blue Forest* (2015). It treats the romantic fragment not as a piece of literary or philosophical history, but as a living option for the poet’s voice that is perennially on a quest to speak the novel or true word (‘the living present’) to a world where singular insight and agency lie suffocated beneath the pseudo-universality of everyday speech and the cultural idols of relativism, materialism, and scientism. Modeling his practice on the Schlegels’ *Athenaeum* fragments, Novalis’s *Pollen*, and the clues to the self-transformative structure of nature provided by Goethe’s *Metamorphosis of Plants*, Fischer presents us with a collection of some five hundred “poetological fragments” followed by an essay “The Fragment as