

COGNIZING LIFE CONFERENCE

JULY 16-19, 2025, TÜBINGEN, GERMANY

Over the last 25 years, the organism, as both an ontological reality and an epistemological category, has been gaining increasing attention. This attention has often included a consideration – or re-consideration – of the views of the German romantics and idealists (Kant, Goethe, Schelling, Hegel, among others) and of 20th century organicists. While Kant and Schelling focused on the epistemological preconditions of cognizing the organic, Goethe developed an empirical method (“delicate empiricism”) to understand life. The Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner discussed Goethe’s method in detail and inspired a little-noticed field of empirical research. The conference will focus on the problem of cognizing the organism from historical, ontological, metaphysical, epistemological and Goethean perspectives.

Confirmed speakers/contributors: Benjamin Bembé (Witten), Bohang Chen (Zhejiang), Luke Fischer (Sydney), Andrea Gambarotto (Vienna), Levi Haeck (Ghent), Craig Holdrege (Ghent, NY), Christoph Hueck (Tübingen), Philippe Huneman (Paris), Jan Kerkmann (Freiburg), Dalia Nassar (Sydney), Daniel Nicholson (Fairfax), Greg Rupik (Toronto), Ulrich Schlösser (Tübingen), Matthew Segall (San Francisco), Joan Steigerwald (Toronto), Georg Toepfer (Berlin), Gertrudis Van de Vijver (Ghent), Denis Walsh (Toronto).

Preliminary schedule:

	Wed, July 16	Thu, July 17	Fri, July 18	Sat, July 19
09:00-10:15		Philippe Huneman: <i>[Kant on the Organism]</i>	Matthew Segall: <i>Revitalizing the Life Sciences: Whitehead’s Organic Realism and the Return of Romantic Science</i>	Jan Kerkmann: <i>Metaphysical Implications of Goethe’s Philosophy of Nature</i>
10:15-10:45		<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>
10:45-12:00		Andrea Gambarotto: <i>Kant’s Controversial Legacy for Contemporary Biology</i>	Daniel Nicholson: <i>The Failed Organicist Revolution During the First Half of the 20th Century</i>	Christoph Hueck: <i>Steiner on Goethe’s Morphology as Rational Organicism</i>
12:00-13:15		Gertrudis Van de Vijver/Levi Haeck: <i>Functional Accounts of Organisms: Divided Between Imaginary and Symbolic</i>	Gregory Rupik: <i>Goethe and the Challenge of Representing Metamorphosis</i>	Georg Toepfer: <i>Viewing in Thinking. On the Methodology of the Goethean Understanding of the Organism</i>
13:15-14:45		<i>Lunch break</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>	<i>Round table closing</i>
14:45-16:00		Dalia Nassar: <i>Life and Death in Schelling’s Philosophy of Nature</i>	Craig Holdrege: <i>Practicing Goethean Science</i>	
16:00-16:30	<i>Welcome and Coffee</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>	
16:30-17:45	Ulrich Schlösser: <i>On Philosophy of Nature (Naturphilosophie)</i>	Bohang Chen: <i>Aspects of Chronic Vitalism: A Historico-Critical Reflection</i>	Benjamin Bembé: <i>Mammalian Morphology in a Goethean Perspective - Polarity and the ‘Open Secret’ of the Middle</i>	
17:45-18:30	Denis Walsh: <i>[What is an organism?]</i>	<i>Round table</i>	<i>Round table</i>	
18:30-20:00	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Dinner and visit to Cloister Bebenhausen</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	
20:00-21:30	Joan Steigerwald (public) <i>Tübingen’s Place in the Formation of Biology: Kiehmeyer, Schelling, and German Contributions at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century</i>		Luke Fischer: Public reading/concert / exhibition	