

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910299809403321
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Titolo	Vital Forces, Teleology and Organization : Philosophy of Nature and the Rise of Biology in Germany // by Andrea Gambarotto
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cham : , : Springer International Publishing : , : Imprint : Springer, , 2018
ISBN	3-319-65415-2
Edizione	[1st ed. 2018.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (XXII, 137 p.)
Collana	History, Philosophy and Theory of the Life Sciences, , 2211-1956
Disciplina	128
Soggetti	Biology - Philosophy Science - History Philosophy of nature Philosophy of Biology History of Science Philosophy of Nature
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references.
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-- 4. Core of the Göttingen School: Kiehmeyer's Lecture as Program for a General Biology -- 5. Explanatory Framework of the Göttingen School: Link's Deflationist Approach -- 6. Concluding Remarks -- III. Classification -- 1. Classificatory Frameworks in the Late-Eighteenth Century -- 2. Blumenbach on Natural History -- 3. The "Kantian Principle" for Natural History -- 3.1. A New Principle? -- 3.2. Ideas so Monstrous that Reason Recoils Before Them: Kant on Transformism -- 3.3. Phyletic Origin: Kant and Girtanner on Archetypes -- 4. The Unity of Plan in Goethe's Morphology -- 4.1. Metamorphosis as Idealized Epigenesis: Goethe's Relation to Wolff and Blumenbach -- 4.2. Archetype and Compensation: Goethe's Relation to Kiehmeyer -- 5. "Vital-Materialism" and Naturphilosophie -- 5.1. "A New Epoch of Natural History": Schelling's Relation to Kiehmeyer -- 5.2. The Unity of Plan in the Erster Entwurf -- 6. Transcendental Morphology: a Legacy of Naturphilosophie -- 6.1. Unity of Plan and Vertebrate Theory: Oken's Transcendental Morphology -- 6.2. Transcendental Morphology outside Germany: Geoffroy and Owen -- 7. Concluding Remarks -- IV. Biology -- 1. A New Epistemological Field -- 1.1. The Transformation of Natural History -- 1.2. Defining Life -- 1.3. Vital Force -- 2. The Göttingen School in the Biologie -- 2.1. Epigenesis and Biology -- 2.2. Reproductive Force in the Animal Kingdom -- 3. Naturphilosophie in the Biologie -- 3.1. Mechanism and Teleology -- 3.2. Nature and Spirit -- 4. Ecology and Transformation -- 4.1. Distribution of Living Forms -- 4.2. Transformation of Living Forms -- 5. Treviranus and Lamarck: Notes for a Comparative Perspective -- 6. Concluding Remarks -- Conclusion.

Sommario/riassunto

This book offers a comprehensive account of vitalism and the Romantic philosophy of nature. The author explores the rise of biology as a unified science in Germany by reconstructing the history of the notion of "vital force," starting from the mid-eighteenth through the early nineteenth century. Further, he argues that Romantic Naturphilosophie played a crucial role in the rise of biology in Germany, especially thanks to its treatment of teleology. In fact, both post-Kantian philosophers and naturalists were guided by teleological principles in defining the object of biological research. The book begins by considering the problem of generation, focusing on the debate over the notion of "formative force." Readers are invited to engage with the epistemological status of this formative force, i.e. the question of the principle behind organization. The second chapter provides a reconstruction of the physiology of vital forces as it was elaborated in the mid- to late-eighteenth century by the group of physicians and naturalists known as the "Göttingen School." Readers are shown how these authors developed an understanding of the animal kingdom as a graded series of organisms with increasing functional complexity. Chapter three tracks the development of such framework in Romantic Naturphilosophie. The author introduces the reader to the problem of classification, showing how Romantic philosophers of nature regarded classification as articulated by a unified plan that connects all living forms with one another, relying on the idea of living nature as a universal organism. In the closing chapter, this analysis shows how the three instances of pre-biological discourse on living beings – theory of generation, physiology and natural history – converged to form the consolidated disciplinary matrix of a general biology. The book offers an insightful read for all scholars interested in classical German philosophy, especially those researching the philosophy of nature, as well as the history and philosophy of biology.