

Metaphor or Method.
Jennifer Mensch's Organicist Kant Interpretation in Context¹

Metáfora o método.
Contextualizando la interpretación organicista de Kant de
Jennifer Mensch

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Abstract

In her recent study, *Kant's Organicism. Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), Jennifer Mensch employs the technical term "organicism" to designate both Kant's thinking about organisms and his thinking about other matters—chiefly among those transcendental cognition—in terms of his thinking about organisms. The article places Mensch's organicist reading of Kant into the wider context of recent and current work on Kant as a natural historian (*Naturforscher*) and its repercussion for understanding the critical core of Kant's philosophy. To that end, the article addresses the methodological function of conceptual metaphors in general and of biological metaphors in particular in Kant. The article proceeds in three steps, first focusing on an alleged anthropological turn in recent work on Kant, then addressing the distinction between schematism and symbolism in Kant's critical epistemology and concluding with a consideration of the possibilities and limitations inherent in an organicist reading of Kant.

¹ The print version of my contribution to the book panel on Jennifer Mensch's *Kant's Organicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), arranged by the North American Kant Society at the meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, in Philadelphia in December 2014, was written during my tenure as Visiting Professor at Università Ca' Foscari Venezia and Venice International University during the spring of 2015.

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Key words

Kant; Organicism; Epigenesis; Critical Epistemology; Natural History

Resumen

En su reciente estudio, *Kant's Organicism. Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), Jennifer Mensch emplea el término técnico “organicismo” para designar tanto la reflexión de Kant sobre los organismos como su pensamiento sobre otras cuestiones, especialmente la relativa al conocimiento trascendental, donde emplea los términos de su reflexión orgánica. El artículo sitúa la lectura organicista de Mensch en el contexto amplio de trabajos recientes y actuales sobre Kant como historiador natural (*Naturforscher*) y su repercusión para la comprensión del núcleo crítico de la filosofía de Kant. Con ese fin, el artículo plantea la función metodológica que tienen en Kant las metáforas conceptuales en general y de las metáforas biológicas en particular. El artículo procede en tres pasos, centrándose primero en el giro pretendidamente antropológico sostenido en recientes trabajos sobre Kant, y discutiendo después la distinción entre esquematismo y simbolismo en la epistemología crítica de Kant, para concluir con una consideración sobre las posibilidades y limitaciones inherentes a la lectura organicista de Kant.

Palabras clave

Kant; organicismo; epigénesis; epistemología crítica; historia natural

“I am not concerned with the evolution of concept like Tetens [...] nor with their analysis like Lambert, but only with their objective validity”²

Having previously had the occasion to address and assess the details and the merits of Jennifer Mensch’s fine study on Kant’s “organicism”³ – as she terms both Kant’s thinking about organisms and his thinking about other matters in terms of organisms – I would like to take the occasion of the book panel of the North American Kant Society for offering some more general remarks and reflections on the book in the wider context of recent and current work on Kant as a natural historian (*Naturforscher*)⁴ and its repercussion for

² AA 18:23 (Refl. 4900).

³ *Kant's Organicism. Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013).

understanding the critical core of Kant's philosophy. To that end, I will be concerned with the methodological function of conceptual metaphors in general and of biological metaphors in particular in Kant. I will proceed in three steps, first focusing on an alleged anthropological turn in recent work on Kant, then addressing the distinction between schematism and symbolism in Kant's critical epistemology and concluding, quite briefly though, with a consideration of the possibilities and limitations inherent in an organicist reading of Kant.

1. The Other Kant.

The past few decades have seen a substantial increase in the quality and quantity of scholarly and philosophical work devoted to Kant worldwide. First, the Anglophone world emerged out of its narrow and monoglot focus on the first half of the first *Critique* and the first two sections of the *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals*, discovering and exploring the wider scope and deeper grasp of Kant's critical *theoretical* philosophy – an extension and expansion soon followed by similar forays into Kant's critical aesthetics and his mature moral philosophy, including ethics and the philosophy of right. Further fields of emerging Kant studies have included the philosophy of history and political philosophy.

The material basis for much of this renaissance or rather *naissance* of philosophical work on Kant in the Anglophone world has been the comprehensive editorial project of the Collected Works of Immanuel Kant, the so-called Cambridge Edition, under the general editorship of Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. The more than a dozen voluminous volumes of the Edition have made available to the English-language reader virtually the entire Kant in modern translations that supply introductions, factual and linguistic notes as well as bibliographical information. The Kant so prepared and propagated comprises the extensive pre-critical writings as well as the critical works, the printed works as well as the correspondence, and the literary remains (*Nachlaß*) as well as the lecture transcripts (*Vorlesungsnachschriften*), the latter sorts of texts in substantial selections – not to mention the *Opus postumum* in an edition that surpasses the work's current presentation in the Academy Edition, which itself is in the process of being revised, redone and rearranged.

⁴ The pioneering work for the consideration of Kant as a natural historian is Erich Adickes, *Kant als Naturforscher*. 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1924/25).

To be sure, the worldwide editorial work on Kant undertaken over the past couple of decades is as much a reflection of the widened view and the wider work on the Kantian *corpus*, as it itself has played a causal role in shaping and directing that global development. Moreover, the spread of the new editions (many of them issued as separate study texts, in addition to their incorporation into the large edition) and of the recent work based on them, which has gone well beyond their more narrow home bases – chiefly Germany and the U.S.A. – is as much due to the global connectedness of philosophical work, as it has strengthened those connections between Europe and North America, between North and South America (especially Brazil) and between Europe together with North America and East Asia (especially China).⁵

But the editorial expansion of Kant's works and the associated extension in scholarship on Kant, to be found worldwide, has not only increased and enlarged the general acquaintance with Kant's work. The texts by Kant previously either unknown, hardly studied or little appreciated have brought into view aspects, sides and dimensions of Kant's philosophical work hitherto invisible and therefore effectively inexistent. For one, Kant's canonical texts, chiefly the three *Critiques*, have been placed into the wider context of the publications and the unpublished materials surrounding them by way of earlier preparation and further articulation. Moreover, the acquaintance with published and unpublished works by Kant that are contemporaneous with the critical canon has introduced a broadened view of Kant's *oeuvre* that is not limited to its critical core but indicative and representative of Kant's wider role and larger effect as a public intellectual and an academic teacher of considerable renown and substantial reputation.

Most importantly, though, the sheer scope and the intellectual import of the further texts by Kant that have come to the fore and have received attention and scrutiny worldwide in recent years have managed to modify and revise the received image of Kant. Behind, next to or ahead of Kant the critical philosopher, the transcendental idealist, the moral rigorist and the aesthetic formalist, there has emerged another, differently oriented

⁵ For evidence of international scholarly cooperation in research on Kant's lectures, see *Kant's Lectures*, ed. Bernd Dörflinger, Robert Loudon and Ubirajara Rancan de Azevedo Marques (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter) and *Reading Kant's Lectures*, ed. Robert Clewis (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter).

and alternatively ambicionado Kant, whose primary concern is not with principles and prescriptions, with norms and rules, with pure reason and a priori conditions but with the factual circumstances of human existence in the natural and cultural world – in a word, with Kant the natural and cultural human historian or with Kant the anthropologist. In fact the very term for the disciplinary treatment of human beings as such, "anthropology," owes its introduction into modern academia to Kant and his innovative treatment of this subject matter, which he developed over decades in a popular public lecture course.⁶

To be sure, the existence of an entire anthropological *oeuvre* in Kant had long been known and even appreciated. The published textbook of his long-standing lecture course on the subject had been included among his major works, and scholars had taken note of Kant's scattered contributions to contemporary debates in physical and cultural anthropology, such as the pathology of bipedality and the institution of stable human sub species ("races").⁷ Still the anthropological works had seemed marginal rather than major, accidental rather than essential and circumstantial rather than central in the context of Kant's overall philosophical project, with its well-established focus on synthetic cognitions a priori of various kinds and in distinct domains. The very designation given by Kant to his published anthropology ("in a pragmatic regard")⁸ seemed to indicate the decisive disciplinary difference between the prudential aims and orientation of worldly anthropology and the genuinely practical, i.e., moral focus of the specifically critical treatment of law and ethics in Kant's practical philosophy.

Still there have been readers and interpreters of Kant who have sought to mine the other, specifically anthropological Kant not for purposes of supplementation and completion only but with the intent of confronting the critical Kant with an altogether alternative and radically revised Kant – one perceived to be more compatible with contemporary as well as current sensibilities and standards of a naturalist, realist or common-sensualist persuasion, from which the official, critical Kant is said to have diverged to his own disadvantage and at his own detriment. Such a reassessment of the

⁶ See AA 25.

⁷ See AA 2:421-425, 2:427-443, 8:89-106 and 8:157-184.

⁸ See AA 7:117-122.

critical Kant in light of the anthropological Kant– of the critic of reason in light of the natural historian, of the supranaturalist in light of the naturalist – has been most prominent and quite controversial in moral matters. To those scholars it has seemed that Kant’s anthropological *oeuvre* effectuates a metacritical correction of the seeming severity and sustained single-mindedness of Kant’s critical scrutiny of human life under the norms and forms reason, in particular in the latter’s guise as practical reason or will.

Anthropologically geared rereadings of Kant in general and of Kantian moral philosophy in particular typically portray themselves as correctives or counterweights to the perceived onesidedness and imbalance of Kant’s core positions in philosophy. Against the latter’s focus on form, they tend to maintain the indispensable import of the material, against its apriorism, they stress empirical factors and features, against its necessitarianism and universalism, they insist on contingent conditions, and against its orientation toward the normative, they stress the natural. On those readings Kant appears less as a solitary revolutionary who completely changed the course of (Western) philosophy, and more as a congenial contemporary, akin to the likes of Tetens and Lambert in the German Enlightenment and A. Smith and D. Hume in the Scottish Enlightenment. The Kant so created is less monumental and more human, but also less radical and more moderate – perhaps a reflection of a current age and a contemporary culture such as ours that seeks the ordinary and praises the average.

In a larger perspective that takes into view the extended history of the reception and effective history of Kant’s philosophy and the spread and development of scholarship on Kant, the anthropological Kant of recent vintage comes to stand in a long line of adaptations and assimilations that again and again have sought to integrate Kant’s work into current concerns – from the anti-Hegelianism and scientism of the neo-Kantians through the traditionalism of the ontological or metaphysical Kant interpretation to the analytic reconstructionism of the 1960s and the claims on Kant made in the name of more recent philosophical fashions such as the philosophy of mind. In each case, the Kant so retrieved and reconstructed was made to match a prevailing philosophical culture and its specific standards. To be sure, in all these cases the attempted appropriations and actualizations could claim evidence and support for their readings and rewritings in Kant

himself. Yet the plural positions so developed out of Kant also indicate that none of them quite captured Kant completely and comprehensively.

The same seems to hold for the anthropological Kant and for Kant the natural historian of current concern. By focusing on the natural at the expense of the normative and on the factual at the expense of the principled, the naturalists and culturalists among Kant's recent readers risk losing sight of the normative core and the critical center of Kant's enterprise. In particular, reading Kant primarily as an anthropologist and a natural historian detracts and deflects from the non-empirical dimension of the critical philosophy, which – while not transcendent in the deficient sense exposed and eliminated by Kant himself – maintains the non-empirical basis of experience and, most importantly, the non-empirical character of the freedom involved in rational volition.

Moreover, the recent readings that feature Kant the anthropologist and natural historian tend to disturb, if not distort the overall structure and the precise proportions of Kant's philosophy in its entirety, as designed and developed by Kant in response to reason's own purposive structure. The dimension of application so stressed by the anthropological apologists of Kant risks reducing Kant's non-empirical double theory of nature and freedom ("pure philosophy")⁹ to preliminaries for an empirically enriched account of situated subjectivity. In the process, the practical tends to collapse into the pragmatic and the categorical into the conditional. Most importantly, though, the narrow focus on actual application and empirical instantiation obscures the intended import of Kant's critical account of nature and freedom, which is not the empirically or culturally given, but the domain of principles governing nature and freedom under the guise of the a priori forms of nature and the a priori norms of freedom – what Kant termed their "metaphysical first principles" (*metaphysische Anfangsgründe*).¹⁰

The applicative dimension of Kant's philosophical project that emerges from its critical core therefore is not an anthropology, however practically portioned, but a "metaphysics of morals" (*Metaphysik der Sitten*) which operates under a general – and to

⁹*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 848/B 878.

¹⁰ See AA 4:465-479, 6:203-209 and 6:373-378.

that extent anthropological – premise, viz., human social coexistence on a finite earth surface, and proceeds to subject human freedom, in its two manifestations as the outer freedom of choice and the inner freedom of conviction, to rational rules of (juridical) law and ethics. In a remarkable development in recent research, concurrent with– but also contrary to – the naturalizing notions governing a good deal of wider work on Kant, there has been an upsurge of interest precisely in Kant’s critical theory of law and right, including the latter’s development out of natural law (*ius naturale*), as documented in a fascinating understudied text from 1784, the transcript of Kant’s lecture course on natural law (*Naturrecht Feyerabend*),¹¹ which currently is being translated in no less than four languages (English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese), in addition to having become the object of scholarly scrutiny and philosophical analysis.¹² The Kant to come out of that body of work (and the related recent research initiatives on Kant’s published philosophy of law and right in the late *Metaphysics of Morals*)¹³ is likely to be neither the austere assessor of pure reason nor the empirically embedded historian of human nature but the astute analyst of the juridical principles governing political society and its purposive development.

Placed against the background of recent scholarship on Kant and into the wider context of the latter’s anthropological *ambitus*, Jennifer Mensch’s study on Kant’s organicism stands out for its judicious reliance on historical materials in the interest of enhancing our understanding of Kant’s critical philosophy. The particular angle of Mensch’s investigation is the development of Kant’s thinking about living organism in response to contemporary controversies and their competing conceptions regarding the phenomenon of organic life. The focus of Mensch’s work is on Kant’s own, original

¹¹AA 27:1317-1394.

¹² See Philipp-Alexander Hirsch, *Kants Einleitung in die Rechtslehre von 1784. Immanuel Kants Rechtsbegriff in der Moralvorlesung "Mrongovius II" und der Naturrechtsvorlesung "Feyerabend" von 1784 sowie in der "Metaphysik der Sitten" von 1797* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 2012). See also Günter Zöller, "'Without Hope and Fear'. Kant's *Naturrecht Feyerabend* on Bindingness and Obligation," forthcoming in *Reading Kant's Lectures*, ed. Robert Clewis (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter) and id., "'Allgemeine Freiheit.' Kants *Naturrecht Feyerabend* über Wille, Recht und Gesetz," forthcoming in *Zum Verhältnis von Recht und Ethik in Kants praktischer Philosophie*, ed. Bernd Dörflinger, Dieter Hüning and Günter Kruck (Hildesheim: Olms).

¹³ See *Kants "Tugendlehre." A Comprehensive Commentary*, ed. Andreas Trampotta, Oliver Sensen and Jens Timmermann (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013).

position in the ongoing debates on the natural history of animal life. Most importantly, though, Mensch's study aims at elucidating the import of Kant's "organicism" for the methodological and doctrinal (re-)orientation of his epistemology (and moral philosophy).

The scholarly value of Mensch's work and its approach to Kant lies both in the amount of detail devoted to the emerging views of Kant and his predecessors and in the sustained focus on the guiding role of Kant's views in natural history for the formulation of key features of his critical theoretical philosophy. Rather than relating Kant's emerging biological thought to the third *Critique* and its critical theory of organic life, Mensch brings Kant's views on organism to bear already on the development of his critical epistemology. Particularly note worthy is the detailed treatment of two important material sources for Kant's emerging views on organisms and the latter's repercussions on transcendental philosophy, viz., the work of Buffon and Tetens.

Yet rather than to continue seeking out the good and praising it with regard to Mensch's book, I propose to turn to Kant himself and to draw on him for matters of methodology that, on my view, deserve more detailed discussion than they have received within the close confines of Mensch's book. These concerns regard the very status and function of organicist concepts in Kant's critical epistemology, as chiefly exemplified in Kant's (and Mensch's) recourse to epigeneticism in general and the "epigenesis of pure reason"¹⁴ in particular. My concern will be not be with the doctrinal specifics of the analogies drawn by Kant (and explored by Mensch) between natural history and transcendental critique. Instead I will focus on the possibilities and limits of conceptual metaphors in Kant's account of cognition. In addition, I propose to explore the implications of Kant's mature account of purposiveness in nature, provided in the third *Critique*'s second part, the "Critique of the Power of Teleological Judgment," for an organicist reading of Kant's epistemology. My remarks are meant to further enhance the reliance on natural history in general and on theories of generation in particular found in Kant and followed by Mensch.

2. Conceptual Metaphors and Analogical Thinking.

¹⁴*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 167 (in the original emphasis).

Given the towering originality of Kant's mature thinking, which characterizes his theoretical philosophy no less than his practical philosophy and his aesthetics no less than his natural philosophy, it should come as no surprise that Kant draws on metaphors in a concerted effort to lend intelligibility and acceptability to his novel conceptions and innovative doctrines. Accordingly, Kant's use of metaphorical language is not limited to the occasional poetic license he might take with figurative speech. Rather his recourse to metaphorical language is sustained and strategic. It serves the pronounced purpose of introducing novel ways of philosophical thinking by drawing on concepts and doctrines outside of philosophy that then are made to serve for introducing, illustrating and illuminating Kant's philosophical innovations.

In order to be suitable for their propaedeutic philosophical purpose, the established conceptions and received views drawn upon by Kant often are chosen with an eye to their own original and innovative status, even if the latter is a historical rather than a current matter. In particular, Kant tends to draw on theoretical innovations and scientific discoveries in an effort to lend intelligibility and interest to his own challenges to received wisdom and established beliefs. A crucial case in point is Kant's use of the Copernican turn in theoretical astronomy to introduce his analogous innovation in theoretical philosophy.

But Kant's resorting to conceptually metaphorical discourse is not limited to the successful transmission and diffusion of his novel positions and propositions. The reliance on metaphorically recast concepts serves to articulate Kant's novel notions even prior to their outward presentation to a readership. Antecedent to their didactic deployment, Kant's conceptual metaphors function as heuristic devices that aid and facilitate the very formation and formulation of original insights and novel ways of thinking by Kant.

Accordingly, conceptual metaphors are not auxiliary and supplementary but fundamental and essential to Kant's philosophical thinking. To be sure, the radical reliance on metaphorically employed concepts does not make Kant's thinking metaphorical in a relativist and reductive sense. Drawing on metaphors to articulate one's thinking is as little a case of metaphorical thinking as drawing on a given language to express one's thoughts constitutes the derivation of thought from language (glossomorphism).

The relationship involved in Kant's pervasive practice of conceptual metaphors is not one of dependence but of reliance. Kant's philosophical thinking is not driven by conceptual metaphors, as though the very shape and direction of his thoughts were controlled and determined by metaphors and, for that matter, by language. Rather Kant deliberately and purposively draws on conceptual metaphors, which he pointedly places into the service of his thinking for the latter's articulation to himself as well as to others. A chief case in point is the use of biological conceptions of generation, especially the notion of epigenesis, to articulate novel matters of transcendental philosophy ("epigenesis of pure reason"), as explored in detail in Mensch's book.

For Kant the philosopher of spontaneity and freedom, it is not language, much less metaphorical language, that speaks – as it would for Heidegger the philosopher of thrownness and fallenness. Rather it is the philosopher who speaks, intent on being clear and making himself clear to others and employing language, both ordinary and figurative, to achieve such clarity. On Kant's account, language, including metaphorical language, does not exceed its speakers but serves them and their purposes of expression and communication. In particular, for Kant, language is subordinated to thought as the latter's medium and vehicle.¹⁵

Similarly, for Kant, the logical device of analogy – of thinking in analogies or of analogical thinking – is to be put to epistemological use.¹⁶ The identical proportion between non-identical items in two different domains allows to detect or describe a set of proportionally related items from one domain by means of the identical proportionate relation between items of another domain. In cases where one such domain is more established, familiar or known and the other one less so, the proportional relationship from the former domain may be used to identify the same such relationship in the latter domain. In the process, the second domain is described by analogy with the first domain.

¹⁵ On the semiotic context of Kant's account of language, see AA 7:191-194.

¹⁶ On the logical status and epistemological function of analogy in Kant, see AA 4:357f. and 5:464 note. On the overall analogy between reason and nature in Kant, see Angela Breitenbach, *Die Analogie von Vernunft und Natur* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2009).

Establishing and presenting an analogy between two domains that possess different epistemic status thus allows to draw on relational features of the epistemically more disclosed and discerned domain in order to capture and conceptualize relevantly similar relational properties in the epistemically more obscure domain. Carrying out the analogy takes the form of transferring (Greek *metapherein*) conceptual qualifications of a relational kind from the one domain to the other domain. The metaphor involved is not so much a particular term or item but the entire procedure of assimilating the relevant proportions in the two domains to each other. The procedural transfer results in the indirect characterization of a relationship in one domain by means of the relevantly similar relationship in the other domain, the basic dissimilarity across domains between the *relata* involved notwithstanding.

While Kant does not offer a full fledged account of metaphors and even less so of conceptual metaphors in philosophy, he offers important considerations for the specific need of analogical thinking in philosophy.¹⁷ Moreover, Kant's justification of conceptual metaphors and analogical thinking in philosophy is explicitly based on his critical account of cognition. In particular, Kant relates his reliance on conceptual metaphors to the critical distinction between sensibility and understanding as the distinct but complimentary sources of objectively valid theoretical cognition ("knowledge," *Wissen*).

According to Kant, the duality that gives rise to analogical thinking and to the use of metaphors in philosophy is a foundational feature of the human cognitive constitution. Unlike cognitively perfect beings that would be equipped with an intuitive intellect and its intellectual intuition, humans are not able to grasp things instantaneously in their entirety. Rather human cognition is based on a discursive intellect that refers to a multitude of things by means of a universal, termed "common concept" (*conceptus communis*, *Allgemeinbegriff*),¹⁸ which apply to possibly infinitely many objects and therefore are not sufficient to single out any particular object for conceptual determination. In order to cognitively grasp particulars, concepts are in need of being presented with individual items situated in space and time.

¹⁷ See AA 5:351-353.

¹⁸ See *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 133f. note .

On Kant's account, the direct mode in which objects can be given to a discursive intellect incapable of grasping them on its own and by itself is through "intuition" (*Anschauung*). The specific point at which, for the critical Kant, figurative thinking becomes constitutive for cognition is the need for a mediation between what is sensible and intuitable, on the one hand, and what is intellectual ("intelligible") and conceptual, on the other hand. According to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the required transition from concepts to intuitions, along with the needed mediation between the intellectual and the sensual, is carried out by "images" (*Bilder*) and "schemata" (*Schemata*), the latter term being derived from the Greek word for "figure" (*schema*).¹⁹ For Kant such devices, while originally distinct from concepts, serve to render concepts concrete and to lend reality – more precisely, "objective reality" (*objektive Realität*) – to what otherwise might remain mere forms.²⁰ On Kant's account, only sensorily based mediating devices are able to "realize" (*realisieren*) conceptual forms, which otherwise remain "empty" (*leer*).²¹

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* the distinction between image and schema as alternative modes of rendering empirical concepts sensible and intuitive is merely preparatory, though, for another type of concept and its mode of instantiation, viz., the "pure concepts of the understanding" or the categories, as Kant terms them with reverential reference to Aristotle.²² As concepts that ground and steer the move from possible appearances given in intuition to possible objects entertained in thought, the categories are forms-in-waiting and essentially in need of a further factor beyond their control that is to provide them with the conditions for their engagement. But since the concepts in need of being saturated are not specific empirical or mathematical concepts (such as 'dog' or 'five')

¹⁹ See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 137-147/B 176-187.

²⁰ On Kant's systematic account of objective reference, see Günter Zöllner, *Theoretische Gegenstandsbeziehung. . Zur systematischen Bedeutung der Termini "objektive Realität" und "objektive Gültigkeit" in der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft"* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984).

²¹ On the relation between possibly empty concepts and possibly blind intuitions in Kant, see Günter Zöllner, "Of Empty Thoughts and Blind Intuitions. Kant's Answer to McDowell/Sobre pensamentos vazios e intuições cegas. A resposta de Kant a McDowell," in *Trans/Form/Ação. Revista de Filosofia da Universidade Estadual Paulista*, 33 (2010), 65-96 and "Not Seeing and Seeing Nothing. Kant On the Twin Conditions of Objective Reference", *Kant e-Prints*. Campinas, Series 2, vol. 8, n. 2 (2013), 1-21.

²² See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 81/B 107.

but general categorial forms, such as 'cause and effect,' their figurative rendering – schematization – cannot occur by particular instances but only can take place in general terms, viz., by means of correlating specific patterns of intuitions to specific categorial forms.

In addition to advocating the boundedness of the categorial understanding to time conditions, the *Critique of Pure Reason* also addresses the wider scope of the intellect in its guise as reason (*Vernunft*), which extends beyond the confines of time (and space). While the sought-after extension of reason beyond the natural order cannot fulfill the stringent requirements for objectively valid theoretical cognition, Kant considers the reach of reason beyond what it is able to grasp an integral part, even an essential feature of reason as such. For Kant, the critically contained domain of naturally limited, conditioned existence is not all there is, but indicated indirectly and negatively – more precisely, limitatively – a wider space that is specific to reason both in the latter's theoretical and practical use. The prime concepts for thinking this supra-sensible open space or world are the "concepts of reason" (*Vernunftbegriffe*) or the "ideas" (*Ideen*).²³

Unlike the concepts of the understanding (categories), which require and receive their realization through sensible intuitions given in the shape of temporal figurations (transcendental schemata), the ideas – in principle and on purpose – elude sensory realization, aiming as they do by definition at the supersensory. Yet in order for ideas not to aim at the void and to remain empty, there needs be, on Kant's account, if not an outright realization by means of schemata, then at least a functional equivalent of such form of validation. According to Kant, the required quasi-realization and pseudo-schematization of ideas involves indirect instruments and an analogical apparatus. The chief strategy advocated by Kant consists in drawing on the natural world and its objects in order to conceive of the supra-natural order and its occupants on the basis of relevant proportionate similarities or analogies.²⁴

²³ On the systematic status and the essential function of theoretical ideas in Kant, see Günter Zöller, "Der negative und der positive Nutzen der Ideen. Kant über die Grenzbestimmung der reinen Vernunft," in *Über den Nutzen von Illusionen. Die regulativen Ideen in Kants theoretischer Philosophie*, ed. Bernd Dörflinger and Günter Kruck (Hildesheim/New York: Olms, 2011), 13-27.

²⁴ See AA 5:351-353.

Kant envisions the supplementation of the schematism of the categories by means of the symbolism of the ideas. While the categories have at their disposal direct intuitional counterparts in their schemata, there is no direct intuitional correlate for ideas. As a matter of principle, there can be no intuition – whether a priori or posteriori, whether formal or material – that could match and meet the supra-sensible origin and reference of ideas. But on Kant's view of the matter, it is possible and, moreover, indispensable to rely on categorial concepts, or their contentual specifications as empirical concepts, in order to provide ideas with at least an indirect intuitional warrant.

The procedure Kant envisions for rendering ideas quasi-intuitive involves the transfer – again a reminiscence of the literal meaning of the Greek-based word "metaphor" – of relations among things or items in the natural world to items in the supra-sensible order of things. Typically, the relation between two items, a and b, from among the categorial order of nature is established as being identical with the relation between two entirely different items, c and d, in the order of ideas. In such an analogical set-up, the natural-world properties drawn upon for the determination of supranatural-world properties – such as the sensible intuitions involved in empirical concepts – do not render and realize the ideas directly or schematically but only indirectly or symbolically. The thinking in ideas and about the putative objects of ideas is informed or configured by relational features taken over from categorial cognitions and their object domain.²⁵

3. Metaphors Mixed and Mitigated.

Considered in the light of the indispensable methodological function that metaphors exercise in Kant's philosophy in general, the dual focus of Mensch's book on Kant's thinking about organisms and his thinking in terms of organisms takes on exegetical urgency and interpretive importance. Construing Kant's account of knowledge in general and of transcendental knowledge in particular on the basis of his account of organic life, is apt to track Kant's own investigative procedure for lending intelligibility and impact to his novel views about the necessary conditions of a priori cognitions regarding possible objects of experience. But Kant's careful consideration of the role of the metaphorical

²⁵ For Kant's exemplary account of aesthetic symbolism, see AA 5:353f.

method and its analogical mode of operation also indicates the limitations for the methodic use of metaphors in philosophy. To begin, the choice of the metaphors drawn upon for purposes of philosophical presentation and persuasion is limited by the state of art regarding the chosen metaphorical vehicle and hence subject to review and even retraction.

Generally speaking, the philosophical use of metaphors in Kant is opportunistic and circumstantial rather than universal and necessary. For Kant philosophical metaphors are devices and means rather than definitive and final. Moreover, given the inherent limitations of any analogy, no given philosophical metaphor is without alternatives and safe from revision and replacement. In fact, for strategic reasons, Kant has seen fit to have his metaphors multiplied and mixed, so that they may capture, by way of analogy, not only what eludes direct, immediate rendition but also the indirect, mediated rendition provided by a single metaphor and its limited analogical scope. On Kant's methodological outlook, philosophically used metaphors are meant to complement each other, with each one stressing and addressing a different dimension of the complex state of affairs in need of analogical presentation.

In the case of transcendental cognition – cognition regarding the very possibility of synthetic cognitions a priori – Kant's mixing of metaphors is clearly manifest and well motivated. In addition to drawing on organicist concepts, such as "generation," "preformation," and "epigenesis," Kant resorts to legal metaphor and their underlying juridical concepts, most famously "deduction,"²⁶ but also "acquisition," specifically "original acquisition" or "*acquisitio originaria*."²⁷ Furthermore, he draws on architectonic metaphors by evoking the building-like unity of plural cognitions in a stable structure,²⁸ not to mention the pervasive reference to paths and ways (methods) in pursuit of knowledge and science.²⁹

²⁶ See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 84/B 116.

²⁷ See AA 6:268-270.

²⁸ See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 707/B 735.

²⁹ See *Critique of Pure Reason*, B VII-XV.

Kant's purpose in mixing metaphors is to avoid a one-sided presentation and ensuing perception of the complex constitution – another metaphor– of transcendental cognition. In particular, Kant can be seen to avoid a generally geneticist image of this type of cognition, which would risk downplaying or even eclipsing the logico-epistemic features involved, such as the making of claims, the providing of justification and the asserting of validity, all them best rendered – on Kant's consideration – in juridico-political imagery. Accordingly, Kant's organicism in transcendental epistemology is strategically curtailed and systematically rivaled and by a juridicism (*sit venia verbo*) that is as prevalent and philosophically motivated as the sustained recourse to conceptual metaphors drawn from the natural history of living organisms.

The utility and functionality of organic metaphors in transcendental philosophy is further mitigated by Kant's own critical assessment of the possibilities of scientific cognition (*Wissen, Wissenschaft*) regarding living organisms.³⁰ As Kant turns to a systematic investigation of the forms and types of purposiveness, undertaken in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, his own earlier engagement in debates in natural history undergoes a critical assessment and methodological reflection that also affects the scope and significance of organicist metaphors in philosophy.

In particular, in the "Critique of the Power of Teleological Judgment" Kant denies that there can ever be a science of (organic) life, famously ruling out, on principal grounds, a Newton of the grass leave.³¹ He accordingly relegates epigeneticism to an explanatory hypothesis (*Lehrbegriff, System*) favored over other systems but without ultimate explanatory potential.³² Moreover, he dislikens natural teleology, especially the phenomenon of natural ends (*Naturzwecke*), to practical purposiveness, in fact to any known kind of final constitution, thus rejecting vitalism in the theory of living organisms.³³ Most importantly, he places the duality of mechanism and organism in the account of

³⁰ For Kant's restrictive conception of natural science, see AA 4:468-471.

³¹ See AA 5:400. See also Günter Zöller, "Eine 'Wissenschaft für Götter.' Die Lebenswissenschaften aus der Sicht Kants," *Deutsches Jahrbuch Philosophie* 3 (2011), 877-892.

³² See AA 5:423.

³³ See AA 5:375 and 394f.

living beings under the limiting condition of transcendental idealism, leaving open the hidden (noumenal) identity of the two types of causality apparently involved.³⁴ As a consequence, he maintains the maxim of joining mechanism and organism in investigating organic life forms and their functioning, stressing that the organization of living beings is always in need of mechanism for realizing the functional cooperation between parts and whole.³⁵

For an organicist reading of Kant's first *Critique* such as the one proposed and pursued by Mensch in her fine study, Kant's subsequent development of a specifically critical account of thinking about organisms and organization suggests a substantial supplement that might take the form a second book from her on Kant's critically considered organicism



³⁴ See AA 5:414f.

³⁵ See AA 5:410-415.