

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

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Philosophical Romanticism and German Idealism

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TRANSLATIONS

Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis,

Caroline Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel

Rivista internazionale sulla filosofia romantica

Internationale Zeitschrift für philosophische Romantik

Revue internationale de philosophie romantique

1/2019

Symphilosophie 1 / 2019

<https://symphilosophie.com>

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Symphilosophie is published yearly — *Symphilosophie* paraît une fois par an — *Symphilosophie* viene pubblicata con cadenza annuale — *Symphilosophie* erscheint einmal pro Jahr.

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Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

Editorial

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Symphilosophie*, a new online peer-reviewed international journal devoted to research on philosophical romanticism. The journal is completely open-access and will appear once a year. *Symphilosophie* is a quadrilingual academic and editorial undertaking: the website, which was launched at the end of 2018, is in four languages, and the journal publishes original research articles, new translations, book reviews and review-essays in English, French, Italian and German. It also aims to be a site for news and events relating to philosophical romanticism (conferences, workshops, research seminars, etc.).

The primary research field of the journal is philosophy. This is not on account of a wish to be exclusive. But rather because a large number of experts acknowledge that the complexity and richness of the philosophical writings and ideas of the romantics still remain greatly untapped and unexplored. Moreover, a single specific academic venue for publishing new work in this field has been lacking up to now, despite the recent burgeoning interest in philosophical romanticism thanks to the work of philosophers, historians of philosophy, and specialists of German idealism. Romantic philosophy is currently enjoying a renaissance not only in Germany, but also in North and South America, Asia, as well as Italy, Belgium and France.

The philosophical period of the journal is *Frühromantik* – i.e. the period of early German or Jena romanticism. However, in the same interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary spirit of early romanticism, *Symphilosophie* transcends the limits of philosophy and is open to literature, the arts and the sciences, just as it is open to European romanticism beyond the frontiers of Germany. Nevertheless, the topics to be treated should still retain a link with the field of philosophy.

Thus, this is a philosophical journal. But why “symphilosophy”? Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis coined the neologism, and it is a term related to “symphony” and “symposium”. Appropriately, this linguistic kinship furnishes an expression rich in philosophical evocations, including back to Plato, yet it also signifies a new forward-looking approach to collective practice and philosophical collaboration. Above all, in the minds of its creators the word originally reflected the profound intellectual affinity of two thinkers who initially met at the University of Leipzig in 1791/92. Their

symphilosophy, properly speaking, was first focused on Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Indeed, in the years 1795-1797, the two "Fichticized", carrying out an intensive exchange of views about a system of philosophy that had sought to complete Kant's work into a unified philosophical system. A year later, the "two" became the nucleus of a romantic "circle" or larger group of young people, including a number of women, who jointly carried out intellectual and artistic exchanges of thought or *symphilosophy*. From 1798-1800, this circle was centred on a journal: the *Athenaeum*. The group above all consisted of the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel; Caroline Michaelis, the spouse of August Wilhelm, who later became Schelling's wife; Dorothea Veit, the daughter of Moses Mendelssohn, who married Friedrich Schlegel; and Novalis (the pen name of Friedrich von Hardenberg). Other personalities who became associated with this circle include, among others, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ludwig Tieck and his sister, Sophie Bernhardt, F. W. J. Schelling, August Ludwig Hülsen, and Clemens Brentano.

Romantic symphilosophizing among these young writers and thinkers was not solely confined to the contemporary philosophies of Fichte and Kant. Romantic philosophy is much more complex and syncretic, in which the demands of a modern transcendental philosophy of rational autonomy fruitfully intersects with older and contemporary currents of thought. Their readings of Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Lessing, Hemsterhuis and Herder, among others, decisively combines with their views on Kant and Fichte to result in the development of new philosophical conceptions, methods and theories.

"Symphilosophy" is a collective exercise of thought. However, it does not just have one single concept or method in common, nor does it seek to be a school of thought as such. Before being harmonious, or rather in order to be harmonious, the collective has to first of all be polyphonic: it must be enriched by a plurality of original, individual and personal voices. There are naturally numerous nuances in sensitivity and views between the different members of the romantic circle, sometimes minor and sometimes more marked. "Symphilosophizing" also signifies setting the apparently fixed and rigid divisions and oppositions into fluid motion once again: between the individual and collective, the personal and impersonal, the private and public, or the feminine and the masculine.

Symphilosophical harmony arises from the synthesis of a series of diverse reflections on particular subjects and modes of writing, whether individual or communal. It employs multiple innovative and artistic forms – fragments, critiques, letters, dialogues, essays, treatises, poems etc. For example, Novalis and the Schlegel brothers attempted to combine their thoughts in the fields of the natural and experimental sciences with their knowledge in the domains of philology, literature and the arts, in order to

arrive at a truly creative synthesis. This collective and joint work of the romantics was not merely confined to philosophy, because they also spoke of “symphysic” and “sympoetry”. However, philosophy remains (like poetry) at the highest universal level. This is illustrated in the writings and correspondence between the members of the romantic circle, which is replete with allusions to symphilosophical practice. And this can be directly seen in the selection of twelve letters from August 1798 to January 1799 that has been translated into English for this first issue of *Symphilosophie*.

By aiming at quadrilingualism, the journal *Symphilosophie* seeks to be a venue for the active and extensive research work that is currently being carried out in these four languages, as well as being a supplement and complimentary to already existent organs of publication. The latter include: *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik*, now the yearbook for the Friedrich Schlegel Society (*Jahrbuch der Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft*), which since 1991 has been an important transdisciplinary organ above all in German for Germanists working on romanticism. Another site, concomitant with the launch of *Symphilosophie*, is the recent 2018 creation of the *SGIR Review*, the online journal of the Society for German Idealism and Romanticism. Specializing in the history of philosophy and aesthetics, it particularly publishes in English book reviews and debates between authors and their critics. Lastly, studies on philosophical romanticism have featured in the bilingual (German-English) journal *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus / International Yearbook of German Idealism*. For instance, the editors at the time, Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush and Jürgen Stolzenberg, devoted their sixth issue (2008) to the topic of philosophical romanticism.

Notwithstanding, in many academic philosophy journals, romantic philosophy still often only receives a marginal voice. The mission of the journal *Symphilosophie*, therefore, is to allow new studies on philosophical romanticism to finally take front and centre stage.

This first issue of *Symphilosophie* is devoted to the controversial question concerning the interconnections between German romanticism and German idealism. Much of course has already been written and continues to be written on the relationship between these two intellectual movements. One only has to recall the influential debate between the philosophers Manfred Frank and Frederick C. Beiser. In their wake, other researchers have continued this discussion in the last few years, either by taking positions or attempting to overcome the clivage, resulting in fresh and innovative readings. Among others, these scholars include: Jane Kneller, Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush, Alison Stone, Dalia Nassar, and Michael Forster in the Anglophone world; Bärbel Frischmann in Germany; Alessandro Bertinetto, Fabrizio Desideri, Federico Vercellone and Stefano Poggi in Italy; and Olivier Schefer and Augustin Dumont in the Francophone sphere. Naturally, this first issue of *Symphilosophie* does not seek to have the

final word or definitive interpretation on the relationship between idealism and romanticism. One thought, however, does unite the contributions: the conviction that romanticism is not simply a distortion or misunderstanding of idealism, but a chorus of philosophical voices formulating problems and developing concepts and languages whose wealth and speculative inventiveness have not yet been fully exhausted. Moreover, a detailed comparison with idealism reveals the impact that romanticism was able to have on the dominant philosophical debates of the time, sometimes in a hidden, sometimes in a more visible manner.

A principle holding not only for this issue but for the project of *Symphilosophie* in general is the conviction that the originality of German romanticism is capable of furnishing further intellectual and artistic tools for replying to questions that are still of genuine philosophical interest today. In this regard, the thinkers of romantic philosophy should not be viewed as outdated historical curiosities in the history of thought. Whether it is in the field of epistemology, metaphysics, politics or art, early German romanticism renders it possible to pierce the surface of problems in order to comprehend and analyse them from neglected, fresh, and still unknown perspectives. Hence, *Symphilosophie* likewise welcomes contributions that treat philosophical romanticism in conjunction with contemporary issues, such as discussions relating to modern pragmatism, “new realism”, or environmental questions; or which examine the legacy of romanticism in later authors of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Manfred Frank, Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak and Alexander J. B. Hampton were invited to contribute to this inaugural issue; their articles, as well as that of Laure Cahen-Maurel, were subject to a single-blind peer-review. The articles by Rylie Johnson and Christoph Haffter resulted from a call for papers and were subject to a double-blind peer-review by two experts. These articles are followed by three book reviews, by Giulia Valpione and David W. Wood, of recent publications on the philosophy of German romanticism. Lastly, as mentioned above, this issue contains a new translation into English of twelve letters from the Romantic circle from the years 1798-1799.

We would like to conclude by expressing our deep gratitude to the members of our editorial board and to our external expert reviewers for their support of this project, and to David, our associate editor. We are also grateful to the contributors to this first issue for generously making their work available here, as well as to the researchers who submitted a proposal. The interest and enthusiasm of all these people for a journal in its infancy has amply confirmed to us that such an academic project on philosophical romanticism is needed.

The call for papers is now open for the second issue of *Symphilosophie*; it will close on 31 May 2020, and the issue is scheduled for publication at the

end of 2020. The thematic focus of this second issue is the thought of the women writers of philosophical romanticism. For this second issue, the journal will also consider submissions of original research articles, book reviews or new translations relating to other aspects of romantic philosophy.

Brussels and Padua, 1 December 2019.

Laure Cahen-Maurel
Giulia Valpione

Éditorial

Voici le tout premier numéro de *Symphilosophie*, nouvelle revue en ligne à comité de lecture international, qui s'attache aux recherches philosophiques sur le romantisme et paraît en accès libre une fois par an. *Symphilosophie* est une entreprise scientifique et éditoriale quadrilingue : sur le site qui a été ouvert à la fin de l'année 2018, la revue publie en langues anglaise, française, italienne et allemande des articles de recherche originaux, accepte des traductions inédites, des comptes rendus d'ouvrages et des essais critiques. Elle entend également résumer l'actualité philosophique autour du romantisme en informant sur les manifestations scientifiques (colloques, conférences, séminaires de recherche...) qui lui sont consacrées ou simplement liées sans toutefois prétendre à l'exhaustivité.

L'enjeu porte sur la philosophie. Non par volonté de cloisonnement disciplinaire. Mais parce que bon nombre de spécialistes tomberont d'accord pour dire que la complexité et la richesse de la production philosophique des romantiques restent encore largement à explorer et à exploiter. Et qu'un lieu de publication fédérant les recherches menées dans ce domaine faisait jusqu'ici défaut alors que l'intérêt philosophique pour le romantisme a été réactivé ces dernières décennies grâce aux travaux de spécialistes de l'idéalisme allemand, notamment en Allemagne, mais pas seulement. La philosophie romantique connaît une renaissance outre-Atlantique, particulièrement aux États-Unis, aussi bien qu'en Italie, en France et en Belgique, ou encore en Asie.

Dans la perspective philosophique qui est la nôtre, le cas du premier romantisme allemand est exemplaire. Les recherches proposées ici sont donc principalement axées sur ce premier romantisme, dit « d'Iéna » (en allemand : *die Frühromantik*). Mais dans l'esprit inter- et transdisciplinaire des débuts du romantisme, *Symphilosophie* est, par-delà la philosophie, ouverte à la littérature, aux arts, aux sciences, en même temps qu'elle s'intéresse aussi au romantisme au-delà des limites du domaine germanique pour concerner, plus largement, le romantisme européen. Les disciplines

extra-philosophiques et les différentes aires géographiques du romantisme sont cependant interrogées en rapport avec la philosophie.

Donc une revue de philosophie. Mais « symphilosophie » ? Comme on le sait, Friedrich Schlegel et Novalis ont forgé le néologisme. Le mot s'apparente à « symphonie », comme à « symposium ». Une parenté linguistique appropriée pour prêter une expression riche d'évocations philosophiques (remontant au *Banquet* de Platon) à une pratique collective moderne, originale pour l'époque, et qui s'impose désormais à nous : la collaboration. Avant tout, ce dont le néologisme rend compte dans l'esprit de ses créateurs, c'est d'une affinité intellectuelle première, devenue un lien d'amitié profond, entre deux hommes qui se sont rencontrés à Leipzig à l'université, en 1791/92. Leur symphilosophie proprement dite a d'abord porté sur la *Doctrine de la science* de Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Les deux hommes, en effet, « fichticisent » ensemble, dans les années 1795-1797, en un échange de vues intensif sur cette doctrine qui tente de parachever l'œuvre de Kant dans ce qui devrait être un système entièrement unifié. Une année plus tard, le « deux » de l'amitié s'étendra à un « cercle » ou groupe de jeunes gens. Le groupe inclut des femmes. Ils sont réunis, de 1798 à 1800, autour, justement, d'une revue : la fameuse revue *Athenaeum*. Y œuvrent en commun les frères Friedrich et August Wilhelm Schlegel ; Caroline Michaelis, la femme d'August Wilhelm avant de devenir celle de Schelling ; Dorothea Veit, fille de Moses Mendelssohn devenue l'épouse de Friedrich ; et Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg). Mais d'autres personnalités se sont liées à ce cercle (de manière plus ou moins stable), tels Schleiermacher, Ludwig Tieck et sa sœur, Sophie Bernhardt, Schelling, August Ludwig Hülsen, ou encore Clemens Brentano.

La symphilosophie romantique ne se réduit pas à la rencontre de ces jeunes écrivains et penseurs dans des échanges consacrés, d'un point de vue philosophique, à Fichte et à Kant. La philosophie romantique est une philosophie plus complexe, elle-même syncrétique, où se croisent de manière féconde les exigences criticistes d'autonomie rationnelle et de réflexivité active, exprimées par la philosophie transcendantale, et des courants de pensée appartenant au monde antique ou plus contemporains. Où la lecture de Platon, Plotin, Spinoza, Leibniz, Lessing, Hemsterhuis et Herder, parmi d'autres, se combine de manière décisive avec la lecture de Kant et de Fichte, pour contribuer à la formation de doctrines, de concepts et de méthodes neufs.

« Symphilosophie » n'est pas non plus synonyme de pensée unique ou de communauté de méthode. Il s'agit en l'occurrence d'un exercice collectif de la pensée qui ne cherche pas pour autant à faire école. Avant d'être harmonieux, ou plutôt pour pouvoir l'être, le collectif se doit d'être d'abord polyphonique : de s'enrichir de la pluralité de voix originales, individuelles, personnelles. Il y a des différences de sensibilité comme de vues, parfois

minimes et parfois plus nettes, entre ses membres. Mais « symphilosopher », c'est aussi remettre en mouvement les partages apparemment fixés : l'opposition de l'individuel et du collectif, du personnel et de l'impersonnel, du privé et du public, ou du féminin et du masculin.

L'harmonie symphilosophique résulte de l'articulation en un tout supérieur de réflexions diverses sur des sujets particuliers et de modes d'écriture, individuelle ou commune, hétéroclites, souvent novateurs : fragments, critiques, lettres, dialogues, essais, traités, poèmes... Une unité doit potentiellement être produite dans ces champs de force et de tension. Il s'agit par exemple de connecter les apports de la pensée de Novalis dans le domaine des sciences naturelles, expérimentales, avec le savoir des frères Schlegel en matière de philologie, de littérature et d'art, afin d'arriver à une synthèse innovatrice et réellement créatrice. L'exercice collectif ne relève pas que de la seule philosophie – il est question aussi bien de « symphysique » ou de « sympoésie » – mais la philosophie n'en est pas moins située (comme la poésie) à ce niveau plus élevé du tout ou de l'universalité. En témoignent les écrits et la correspondance du cénacle d'Iéna, qui est émaillée d'allusions à la pratique symphilosophique, comme le montre la traduction anglaise inédite que nous faisons figurer dans ce premier numéro de *Symphilosophie* de douze lettres écrites entre août 1798 et janvier 1799.

En obéissant à un objectif de quadrilinguisme, la revue *Symphilosophie* se veut donc un lieu d'expression pour les recherches et travaux, en nombre croissant, menés actuellement dans les quatre langues ; en cela, elle entend aboutir à une complémentarité avec d'autres entreprises collectives déjà existantes. Par sa vocation transdisciplinaire, l'*Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik*, devenu dans l'intervalle les annales de la Société Friedrich Schlegel (*Jahrbuch der Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft*), est, depuis 1991, un lieu possible et privilégié de publication en périodique, où prennent surtout place des contributions de langue allemande destinées aux germanistes travaillant sur le romantisme. À côté de cet organe de référence, il faut aussi saluer la création en 2018, de façon concomitante au lancement de *Symphilosophie*, de la revue en ligne de la *Society for German Idealism and Romanticism*, la *SGIR Review*. Spécialisée dans l'histoire de la philosophie et de l'esthétique, elle met à la disposition du public, en accès gratuit, un imposant bilan critique qui passe en revue les nouvelles parutions de l'année écoulée dans le domaine anglo-américain ; elle joue également le rôle d'intermédiaire entre les auteurs et leurs critiques pour être un lieu d'approfondissement des travaux produits et des débats philosophiques tournant autour de l'idéalisme et du romantisme allemands. Enfin, le romantisme occupe aussi une place dans les études publiées au sein de la revue bilingue (allemand-anglais) *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus / International Yearbook of German Idealism* : ses directeurs de

l'époque, Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush et Jürgen Stolzenberg, lui ont notamment consacré en 2008 la sixième livraison de la revue.

Néanmoins, la philosophie romantique reste, dans de nombreuses revues de philosophie, plutôt en marge des analyses. *Symphilosophie* s'emploie pour sa part à placer le romantisme au cœur de la réflexion.

Ce premier numéro a pour thématique générale la question toujours controversée du rapport du romantisme à l'idéalisme. Le sujet a déjà fait couler beaucoup d'encre et continue – on le voit – de susciter des analyses. Il suffit de songer à l'influent débat qui s'est ouvert entre les philosophes Manfred Frank et Frederick C. Beiser. Dans leur sillage, d'autres chercheurs sont intervenus dans la discussion ces dernières années, soit en prenant parti, soit en tentant de dépasser l'opposition entre les deux interprètes, ce qui a permis de renouveler la lecture du romantisme. Pour ne citer que certains d'entre eux : les chercheurs Jane Kneller, Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush, Alison Stone, Dalia Nassar, Michael Forster dans le monde anglo-américain ; Bärbel Frischmann en Allemagne ; Alessandro Bertinetto, Fabrizio Desideri, Federico Vercellone et Stefano Poggi en Italie ; Olivier Schefer ou Augustin Dumont dans le domaine francophone. Nous n'entendons en aucune façon esquisser à travers ce premier numéro de *Symphilosophie* une interprétation univoque, encore moins une interprétation définitive, de la relation entre l'idéalisme et le romantisme. Une pensée unit toutefois les contributions publiées ici : la conviction que le romantisme n'est pas une simple distorsion ou, pire, une mécompréhension de l'idéalisme mais un chœur de voix formulant des problèmes, élaborant des concepts et des langages dont la richesse et l'inventivité spéculative, on l'a dit, n'ont pas encore été épuisées. Et qu'une comparaison précise avec l'idéalisme montre l'impact que le romantisme a pu avoir, tantôt de manière secrète, tantôt de manière patente, sur les débats philosophiques dominants de l'époque.

Au principe non seulement de ce numéro mais du projet d'ensemble de *Symphilosophie* réside en outre la conviction que le romantisme est susceptible de fournir des outils utiles et singuliers pour traiter et répondre à des questions qui présentent encore aujourd'hui un véritable intérêt philosophique. À cet égard, les penseurs romantiques ne doivent pas être considérés comme des curiosités historiques appartenant au passé. Que ce soit sur le terrain de l'épistémologie, de la métaphysique, de la politique ou de l'art, le romantisme permet de percer la surface des problèmes pour les appréhender sous un jour nouveau et en saisir des aspects encore trop souvent négligés. *Symphilosophie* accueille aussi, à ce titre, des contributions rattachant le romantisme à ce qui se passe dans les débats contemporains, comme par exemple les discussions tournant autour du pragmatisme, du « nouveau réalisme », de l'éthique environnementale... Ou portant sur sa postérité chez des auteurs plus modernes, des XX^e et XXI^e siècles.

Manfred Frank, Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak et Alexander J. B. Hampton ont été invités pour ce numéro inaugural ; leurs contributions, ainsi que celle de Laure Cahen-Maurel, ont fait l'objet – à titre exceptionnel – d'une évaluation en « simple aveugle » (*single-blind review*). Les articles de Rylie Johnson et de Christoph Haffter sont le fruit d'un appel à contributions et ont été soumis à une évaluation en « double aveugle » (*double-blind review*) par deux experts. Ces textes sont accompagnés de trois comptes rendus, par Giulia Valpione et David W. Wood, de publications récentes sur la philosophie du romantisme allemand. À quoi s'ajoute enfin la traduction en langue anglaise des douze lettres déjà mentionnées tirées de la correspondance des romantiques durant les débuts de l'*Athenaeum*.

Nous tenons ici à exprimer notre vive gratitude aux membres du comité scientifique et aux experts extérieurs au comité pour avoir accepté de soutenir ce projet, ainsi qu'à David, notre rédacteur en chef adjoint. Nous remercions également les contributeurs de ce premier numéro pour avoir généreusement mis ici à disposition du public leur travail, ainsi que les chercheurs et les chercheuses ayant soumis une proposition de contribution. Leur intérêt et enthousiasme pour une revue qui n'en est encore qu'à ses débuts nous conforte dans l'idée que ce projet n'est pas sans valeur.

L'appel à contribution est ouvert pour le deuxième numéro ; il sera clos à la date du 31 mai 2020. Le dossier thématique de ce second numéro, dont la publication est prévue pour la fin de l'année 2020, portera sur la pensée des femmes écrivaines et philosophes qui ont activement contribué à façonner le romantisme. Pour ce deuxième numéro, la revue accepte par ailleurs toute proposition d'article original, de compte rendu d'ouvrage ou de traduction inédite relatifs à n'importe quel autre aspect de la philosophie romantique.

Bruxelles et Padoue, le 1^{er} décembre 2019.

Laure Cahen-Maurel
Giulia Valpione

Editoriale

Abbiamo il piacere di presentarvi il numero inaugurale di *Symphilosophie*, una nuova rivista scientifica internazionale, on-line e sottoposta a peer-review dedicata al Romanticismo. La rivista è interamente open-access e verrà pubblicata con cadenza annuale. *Symphilosophie* è un progetto editoriale quadrilingue; sul sito della rivista, online dalla fine del 2018, vengono pubblicati articoli scientifici originali, nuove traduzioni, in inglese, francese, italiano e tedesco. *Symphilosophie* intende fornire un quadro del dibattito attuale sul Romanticismo attraverso recensioni, rendiconti tematici e pubbli-

cando, alla fine di ogni numero, un bollettino con gli appuntamenti che possono interessare studiosi e studiose della *Romantik* (convegni, giornate di studi, seminari, ecc).

La ricerca filosofica è il campo in cui si colloca la rivista. Questo non è dovuto ad un desiderio di esclusività, bensì alla consapevolezza che un grande numero di studiosi e studiose concordano nel sostenere che la complessità e la ricchezza delle idee e degli scritti filosofici dei Romantici sono tutt'ora ancora inesplorati e sottovalutati. Inoltre, nonostante il crescente interesse per il Romanticismo che si può notare negli ultimi decenni – grazie all'opera di filosofi, storici della filosofia e specialisti dell'idealismo tedesco – mancava finora una sede accademica per la pubblicazione di nuovi lavori in questo ambito di ricerca. La filosofia romantica sta vivendo una vera e propria rinascita non solo in Germania, ma anche in Nord e Sud America, Asia, Francia e Belgio.

Oggetto privilegiato della rivista è la *Frühromantik*, ovvero la filosofia del primo Romanticismo tedesco (detto anche 'di Jena'). Tuttavia, nello stesso spirito interdisciplinare e transdisciplinare del primo Romanticismo, *Symphilosophie* trascende i limiti della filosofia ed è aperta alla letteratura, alle arti e alle scienze, così come è aperta al Romanticismo europeo oltre i confini tedeschi. Gli argomenti trattati e le discipline che verranno coinvolte manterranno comunque sempre un legame con la filosofia.

Perché *Symphilosophie*, ovvero "sinfilosofia"? Questo è un neologismo coniato da Friedrich Schlegel e Novalis, ed è una parola che rimanda alla "sinfonia", al "simposio". La sua parentela linguistica mette giustamente in evidenza la ricca tradizione di una pratica collettiva, che si impone anche a noi: la collaborazione. In particolare, nelle menti dei suoi creatori la parola rifletteva originariamente l'affinità intellettuale di due pensatori che si erano incontrati inizialmente all'Università di Lipsia nel 1791/92. La loro sinfilosofia, propriamente parlando, si è concentrata per la prima volta sulla *Dottrina della Scienza* di Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Infatti, negli anni 1795-1797, i due "fichticizzavano", intrattenendo un intenso scambio di opinioni su un'impresa filosofica che aveva cercato di completare l'opera di Kant verso la costruzione di un sistema. Un anno dopo, i due divennero il nucleo di un circolo romantico, costituito da un insieme più ampio di giovani (tra cui alcune donne), tra i quali si svolgevano vivi e reciproci scambi sia intellettuali sia artistici. Dal 1798-1800 questo circolo è animò una rivista diventata celebre in breve tempo: l'*Athenaeum*. I più importanti membri del gruppo erano, in particolare, i fratelli Friedrich e August Wilhelm Schlegel; Caroline Michaelis, moglie di August Wilhelm (in seguito moglie di Schelling); Dorothea Veit, figlia di Moses Mendelssohn, che sposò Friedrich Schlegel; e Novalis (lo pseudonimo di Friedrich von Hardenberg). Altre personalità che si sono associate a questo circolo sono Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ludwig

Tieck e sua sorella, Sophie Bernhardt, Schelling, August Ludwig Hülsen o, ancora, Clemens Brentano.

La pratica sinfilosofica di questi giovani scrittori e pensatori non si limitava a discussioni sulle opere di Fichte e Kant, che proprio in quegli anni erano al centro del dibattito ben oltre i confini della città di Jena. La filosofia romantica è molto più complessa e sincretica, in cui, le esigenze di una moderna filosofia trascendentale dell'autonomia razionale si intersecano, tra l'altro, con precedenti correnti di pensiero. Le interpretazioni 'romantiche' di Platone, Plotino, Spinoza, Leibniz, Lessing Hemsterhuis e Herder, tra gli altri, si combinano in modo decisivo con le loro letture di Kant e Fichte, comportando lo sviluppo di nuove concezioni filosofiche, nuovi metodi e teorie.

La "sinfilosofia" non è segno di un concetto o di un metodo specifici in comune, né cerca di essere una scuola di pensiero in quanto tale; è invece pratica collettiva di pensiero, che per essere armoniosa deve prima di tutto essere polifonica: arricchita da una pluralità di voci originali, individuali e personali. Ci sono naturalmente numerose sfumature di sensibilità e di vedute – a volte minori e a volte più marcate – tra i diversi membri del circolo romantico. "*Symphilosophieren*" significa anche ridare fluidità e dinamicità alle divisioni e alle opposizioni apparentemente fisse e rigide: tra individuo e collettivo, personale e impersonale, privato e pubblico, intimo ed esterno, femminile e maschile.

L'armonia sinfilosofica nasce dalla sintesi di una molteplicità di riflessioni su particolari soggetti e modalità di scrittura, individuale o comunitaria. Si avvale di molteplici forme innovative e artistiche – frammenti, critiche, lettere, dialoghi, saggi, trattati, poesie, e così via. Ad esempio, Novalis ha cercato di coniugare il suo pensiero nel campo delle scienze naturali e sperimentali con le conoscenze dei fratelli Schlegel nel campo della filologia, della letteratura o delle arti, per arrivare ad una sintesi veramente innovativa e creativa. Questo lavoro collettivo e congiunto dei romantici non si limitava solo alla filosofia, perché per loro esisteva anche la "sinfisica" o "simpoesia"; tuttavia, la filosofia (come la poesia) è sempre oggetto e prospettiva privilegiata. Questo è evidente nella corrispondenza tra i membri del circolo romantico, ricca di allusioni alla pratica sinfilosofica, come si può vedere nella selezione di dodici lettere dall'agosto 1798 al gennaio 1799 che è stata tradotta nuovamente in inglese per questo primo numero di *Symphilosophie*.

Attraverso il suo quadrilinguismo, la rivista *Symphilosophie* vuole essere una sede per l'attivo e ampio lavoro di ricerca che si sta svolgendo in queste quattro lingue, oltre ad essere un supplemento e complemento ai progetti editoriali già esistenti. Questi ultimi includono: *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik*, ora divenuto l'annuario della *Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft*, che dal 1991 è un importante periodico transdisciplinare quasi esclusiva-

mente in tedesco per i germanisti che si occupano di Romanticismo. Un altro sito, nato in concomitanza con il lancio di *Symphilosophie*, è la recente creazione della *SGIR Review*, la rivista online della *Society for German Idealism and Romanticism*. Specializzata nella storia della filosofia e dell'estetica, pubblica online e ad eccesso gratuito bilanci critici sulle pubblicazioni apparse in ambito anglosassone. Infine, alcuni studi sul Romanticismo sono stati pubblicati anche sulla rivista bilingue (tedesco-inglese) *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus / International Yearbook of German Idealism*. Basti pensare al numero pubblicato nel 2008 che i redattori dell'epoca – Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush e Jürgen Stolzenberg – dedicarono interamente alla filosofia romantica.

Nonostante ciò, tuttora in molte riviste accademiche di filosofia la *Romantik* ha una voce solo marginale. La missione della rivista *Symphilosophie* è quindi di permettere che i nuovi studi sul Romanticismo siano finalmente in primo piano e al centro dell'attenzione.

Questo primo numero di *Symphilosophie* è dedicato alla controversa questione delle interconnessioni tra il Romanticismo tedesco e l'idealismo tedesco. Molto è già stato e continua ad essere scritto sul rapporto tra queste due correnti intellettuali. Basti ricordare l'influente dibattito tra i filosofi Manfred Frank e Frederick C. Beiser. Sulla loro scia, altri ricercatori sono intervenuti e hanno continuato questa discussione negli ultimi anni, prendendo posizione o cercando di superare il loro contrasto, dando luogo a letture innovative. Tra gli altri, questi studiosi includono: Jane Kneller, Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush, Alison Stone, Dalia Nassar e Michael Forster nel mondo anglofono; Bärbel Frischmann in Germania; Alessandro Bertinetto, Fabrizio Desideri, Federico Vercellone e Stefano Poggi in Italia; Olivier Schefer e Augustin Dumont nella sfera francofona. Naturalmente, questo primo numero di *Symphilosophie* non intende affatto avere l'ultima parola o fornire l'interpretazione definitiva sul rapporto tra idealismo e romanticismo. Un pensiero, tuttavia, unisce i diversi contributi qui raccolti. E cioè: la convinzione che il Romanticismo non sia semplicemente una distorsione o una superficiale interpretazione dell'idealismo, bensì un coro di posizioni filosofiche che formulano problemi e sviluppano concetti e linguaggi la cui ricchezza e inventiva speculativa non sono ancora del tutto esaurite. Inoltre, i diversi testi raccolti in questo primo numero concordano con l'assunto che un confronto con l'idealismo riveli l'impatto che il Romanticismo ha potuto avere sui dibattiti filosofici dominanti dell'epoca, a volte in modo nascosto, a volte in modo più visibile.

Alla base non solo di questo numero ma di tutto il progetto di *Symphilosophie* c'è la convinzione che l'originalità del Romanticismo tedesco sia in grado di fornire ulteriori strumenti intellettuali e artistici per trattare e rispondere a questioni che sono ancora oggi di autentico interesse filosofico. A questo proposito, i filosofi del Romanticismo non devono essere

considerati come mere curiosità per antiquari della storia del pensiero. Che si tratti di epistemologia, metafisica, politica o arte, la *Frühromantik* rende possibile scalfire la superficie dei problemi per penetrarli, comprenderli e analizzarli da prospettive trascurate se non ancora totalmente sconosciute. *Symphilosophie* accoglie quindi anche contributi che collegano il Romanticismo al dibattito contemporaneo, come ad esempio le discussioni sul pragmatismo, sul «nuovo realismo», sull'etica ambientalista ecc, o, ancora, riguardo la sua ricezione da parte di autori posteriori (nel XX e XXI secolo).

Manfred Frank, Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak e Alexander J. B. Hampton sono stati invitati a contribuire a questo numero inaugurale; i loro articoli, così come quello di Laure Cahen-Maurel, sono stati oggetto (in via del tutto eccezionale) di una revisione a singolo cieco. Gli articoli di Rylie Johnson e Christoph Haffter sono il risultato di una *call for papers* e sono stati oggetto di una peer-review a doppio cieco. Questi saggi sono seguiti da tre recensioni, a cura di Giulia Valpione e David W. Wood, di recenti pubblicazioni sulla filosofia romantica. Come già anticipato, questo numero contiene infine una nuova traduzione in inglese di dodici lettere del circolo romantico degli anni 1798-1799.

Concludiamo questo editoriale esprimendo la nostra profonda gratitudine ai membri del comitato editoriale e ai revisori esterni per il loro sostegno a questo progetto, e a David, il nostro redattore associato. Siamo inoltre grate agli autori che hanno collaborato a questo primo numero per aver messo generosamente a disposizione un loro scritto, così come ai ricercatori e ricercatrici che hanno partecipato alla CFP. Il loro interesse ed entusiasmo verso una rivista ancora ai suoi albori ha ampiamente confermato il valore di questo progetto.

Attualmente è aperta la *call for papers* per il secondo numero di *Symphilosophie*; che si chiuderà il 31 maggio 2020 e la cui pubblicazione è prevista per la fine del 2020. Il tema principale di questo secondo numero è il pensiero delle filosofe e scrittrici del Romanticismo tedesco. Per questo secondo numero, la rivista prenderà in considerazione anche articoli, recensioni di libri o nuove traduzioni relative ad altri aspetti della filosofia romantica.

Bruxelles e Padova, 1 dicembre 2019

Laure Cahen-Maurel
Giulia Valpione

Editorial

Wir freuen uns, Ihnen die erste Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* vorstellen zu können, eine neue internationale wissenschaftliche Online-Zeitschrift, die einen offenen Zugang für Forschungen zur philosophischen Romantik bietet und im peer-review-Verfahren herausgegeben wird. Die Zeitschrift ist völlig frei zugänglich und wird jährlich veröffentlicht. *Symphilosophie* ist ein viersprachiges akademisches und redaktionelles Projekt: Auf der seit Ende 2018 zugänglichen Website werden wissenschaftliche Originalartikel, neue Übersetzungen, Literaturberichte und -Kritik auf Englisch, Französisch, Italienisch und Deutsch veröffentlicht. In dieser Zeitschrift sollen auch Nachrichten und Hinweise auf wissenschaftliche Veranstaltungen zur Romantik und darüber hinaus zur klassischen Deutschen Philosophie (Tagungen, Workshops, Seminare, usw.) mitgeteilt werden.

Das Hauptforschungsfeld der Zeitschrift ist die Philosophie. Dies liegt nicht an dem Wunsch nach Exklusivität, sondern an dem Bewusstsein, dass eine große Zahl von Forschern der Meinung ist, dass die Komplexität und der Reichtum der philosophischen Ideen und Schriften der Romantiker noch unerforscht und unterschätzt sind. Darüber hinaus gab es trotz des in den letzten Jahrzehnten wachsenden Interesses an der Romantik – dank der Arbeit von Philosophen, Philosophiehistorikern und Spezialisten des deutschen Idealismus – bisher kein wissenschaftliches Forum für die Veröffentlichung neuer Arbeiten auf diesem Forschungsgebiet. Nicht nur in Deutschland, sondern auch in Nord- und Südamerika, Asien, Frankreich, Italien und Belgien erlebt die romantische Philosophie eine echte Belebung.

Das bevorzugte Objekt der Zeitschrift ist die Frühromantik. Dennoch, im selben interdisziplinären und transdisziplinären Geist der Frühromantik überwindet *Symphilosophie* jedoch die Grenzen der Philosophie und die Zeitschrift ist offen für Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft, ebenso wie für die europäische Romantik über die Grenzen Deutschlands hinaus. Die behandelten Themen bleiben sowieso immer in Verbindung mit dem Bereich der Philosophie.

Deshalb ist dies eine philosophische Zeitschrift. Aber warum „Symphilosophie“? Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis haben diesen Neologismus geprägt, der mit den Worten „Symphonie“ und „Symposium“ im Zusammenhang steht. Die sprachliche Nähe dieses Ausdrucks mit „Symposium“ liefert einen passenden Ausdruck, der reiche Verbindungen in philosophischer Hinsicht (auf Plato zurückgehend) erschließt, gewinnt aber auch durch ihr Hinweisen auf kollektive Praxis und philosophische Zusammenarbeit eine moderne, zukunftsweisende Bedeutung. Vor allem aber spiegelte das Wort in den Köpfen seiner Schöpfer ursprünglich die geistige Verbundenheit zweier Denker wider, die sich 1791/92 erstmals an der Universität Leipzig getroffen hatten. Ihre Symphilosophie konzentrierte sich im eigentlichen Sinne erstmals auf die Wissenschaftslehre von Johann

Gottlieb Fichte. Tatsächlich führten die beiden in den Jahren 1795-1797 einen intensiven Meinungsaustausch über das Fichtesche Unternehmen, das versucht hatte, Kants Werk in einem einheitlichen System zu vollenden. Ein Jahr später wurden die beiden zum Kern eines romantischen Kreises, der sich aus einer größeren Gruppe von jungen Menschen – darunter auch einige Frauen – zusammensetzt, die den gegenseitigen intellektuellen und künstlerischen Austausch weiterführen. Von 1798-1800 dreht sich dieser Kreis um eine Zeitschrift, die in kurzer Zeit berühmt geworden ist: den *Athenaeum*. Die wichtigsten Mitglieder der Gruppe waren insbesondere die Brüder Friedrich und August Wilhelm Schlegel; Caroline Michaelis, Ehefrau von August Wilhelm (später Ehefrau von Schelling); Dorothea Veit, Tochter von Moses Mendelssohn, die Friedrich Schlegel geheiratet hat; und Novalis (das Pseudonym von Friedrich von Hardenberg). Weitere Persönlichkeiten, die sich diesem Kreis angeschlossen haben, sind Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ludwig Tieck und seine Schwester Sophie Bernhardt, Schelling, August Wilhelm Hülsen und Clemens Brentano.

Die symphilosophische Praxis dieser jungen Schriftsteller und Denker beschränkte sich nicht nur auf Diskussionen über die Werke von Fichte und Kant, die in diesen Jahren im Mittelpunkt der Debatte weit über die Grenzen der Stadt Jena hinaus standen. Die romantische Philosophie ist viel komplexer und synkretistischer, in der sich unter anderem die Anforderungen einer modernen transzendentalen Philosophie der rationalen Autonomie mit früheren Denkströmungen überschneiden. Die romantischen Interpretationen von Platon, Plotinus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Lessing, Hemsterhuis und Herder, unter anderem, verbinden sich entscheidend mit ihren Lesarten von Kant und Fichte, was zur Entwicklung neuer philosophischer Konzepte, neuer Methoden und Theorien führt.

Die Symphilosophie ist eine kollektive Denkübung. Sie hat jedoch weder ein gemeinsames Konzept oder eine gemeinsame Methode zur Basis, noch versucht sie, eine Denkschule als solche zu sein. Die kollektive philosophische Praxis, um harmonisch zu sein, muss vornehmlich polyphon sein: Sie muss durch eine Vielzahl von ursprünglichen, individuellen und persönlichen Stimmen bereichert werden. Natürlich gibt es zahlreiche Nuancen von Sensibilität und Ansichten – manchmal kleiner, manchmal stärker ausgeprägt – zwischen den verschiedenen Mitgliedern des romantischen Kreises. „Symphilosophieren“ bedeutet auch, den scheinbar festen und starren Trennungen und Gegensätzen wieder Flüssigkeit und Dynamik zu verleihen: zwischen Individuum und Kollektiv, persönlich und unpersönlich, privat und öffentlich, intim und extern, feminin und männlich.

Symphilosophische Harmonie entsteht aus der Synthese einer Vielzahl von Reflexionen über bestimmte Themen und Schreibweisen, individuell oder gemeinschaftlich. Es verwendet mehrere innovative und künstlerische Formen – Fragmente, Kritiken, Briefe, Dialoge, Essays, Abhandlungen,

Gedichte und so weiter. So haben Novalis und die Gebrüder Schlegel beispielhaft versucht, ihr Denken auf dem Gebiet der Natur- und Experimentalwissenschaften mit dem Wissen auf dem Gebiet der Philologie, Literatur oder Kunst zu verbinden, um zu einer wirklich innovativen und kreativen Synthese zu gelangen. Dieses kollektive und gemeinsame Werk der Romantiker beschränkte sich nicht nur auf die Philosophie, denn für sie gab es auch „Symphysik“ oder „Sympoesie“; die Philosophie (wie die Poesie) ist jedoch auf eine höhere Ebene gestellt. Dies zeigt sich in der Korrespondenz zwischen den Mitgliedern des romantischen Kreises, reich an Anspielungen auf die symphilosophische Praxis, wie die Auswahl von zwölf Briefen vom August 1798 bis Januar 1799 zeigt, die für diese erste Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* zum ersten Mal auf Englisch übersetzt wurden.

Die Zeitschrift *Symphilosophie* will durch ihre Viersprachigkeit ein Forum für die aktive und umfangreiche Forschungsarbeit sein, die in diesen vier Sprachen stattfindet, sowie eine Ergänzung und Beilage zu den bestehenden Publikationsorganen. Zu den letzteren gehören: *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik*, heute das Jahrbuch der *Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft*, die seit 1991 eine wichtige transdisziplinäre Einrichtung fast ausschließlich in deutscher Sprache für Germanisten ist, die sich mit der Romantik beschäftigen. Eine weitere Website, die im selben Moment von *Symphilosophie* entstand, ist die *SGIR Review*, die Online-Zeitschrift der *Society for German Idealism and Romanticism*. Spezialisiert auf die Geschichte der Philosophie und Ästhetik, veröffentlicht sie insbesondere englische Rezensionen von Büchern und Debatten zwischen Autoren und ihren Kritikern. Schließlich wurden auch einige Studien zur Romantik in der zweisprachigen (deutsch-englischen) Zeitschrift *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus / International Yearbook of German Idealism* veröffentlicht. So widmeten die damaligen Redakteure – Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush und Jürgen Stolzenberg – die sechste Ausgabe des Jahrbuches (erschienen 2008) genau der romantischen Philosophie.

Dennoch hat die Romantik in vielen wissenschaftlichen Zeitschriften der Philosophie oft noch eine nur marginale Stimme. Die Mission der Zeitschrift *Symphilosophie* ist es daher, neue Studien zur philosophischen Romantik endlich in den Vordergrund und in den Mittelpunkt zu stellen.

Diese erste Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* widmet sich der kontroversen Frage nach den Zusammenhängen zwischen deutscher Romantik und deutschem Idealismus. Über die Beziehung zwischen diesen beiden intellektuellen Strömungen wurde bereits und wird noch heute viel geschrieben. Nur als Beispiel, erwähnen wir hier nur die einflussreiche Debatte zwischen den Philosophen Manfred Frank und Frederick C. Beiser. In ihrem Gefolge haben andere Forscher in den letzten Jahren eingegriffen und diese Diskussion fortgesetzt, indem sie entweder Stellung bezogen oder versucht haben, ihren Kontrast zu überwinden, was zu innovativen Lesarten führte.

Zu diesen Wissenschaftlern gehören unter anderem: Jane Kneller, Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, Karl Ameriks, Fred Rush, Alison Stone, Dalia Nassar und Michael Forster im englischsprachigen Raum; Bärbel Frischmann in Deutschland; Alessandro Bertinetto, Fabrizio Desideri, Federico Vercellone und Stefano Poggi in Italien; Olivier Schefer und Augustin Dumont im französischsprachigen Raum. Natürlich anmaßt sich diese erste Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* keineswegs das letzte Wort darüber zu haben oder die Beziehung zwischen Idealismus und philosophischer Romantik eindeutig zu interpretieren. Ein Gedanke vereint jedoch die verschiedenen hier gesammelten Beiträge. Das heißt: die Überzeugung, dass die philosophische Romantik nicht nur eine Verzerrung oder eine oberflächliche Interpretation des Idealismus ist, sondern ein Chor philosophischer Positionen, die Probleme formulieren und Konzepte und Sprachen entwickeln, deren Reichtum und spekulativer Erfindungsreichtum noch nicht vollständig erschöpft sind. Darüber hinaus zeigt ein detaillierter Vergleich mit dem Idealismus, welche Auswirkungen die Frühromantik auf die dominanten philosophischen Debatten der damaligen Zeit haben könnte, manchmal versteckt, manchmal sichtbarer. Ein Prinzip, das nicht nur für diese Frage, sondern auch für das Projekt von *Symphilosophie* im Allgemeinen gilt, ist der Glaube, dass die Originalität der deutschen Romantik zusätzliche intellektuelle und künstlerische Werkzeuge zur Verfügung stellen kann, um Themen zu behandeln und zu beantworten, die auch heute noch von echtem philosophischen Interesse sind. In diesem Zusammenhang sollen die Philosophen der Romantik nicht als bloße Kuriositäten für Antiquare der Gedankengeschichte angesehen werden. Im Bereich von Erkenntnistheorie, Metaphysik, Politik oder Kunst, die philosophische Romantik ermöglicht es, die Oberfläche von Problemen zu durchbrechen, um sie aus vernachlässigten, wenn nicht gar völlig unbekannten Perspektiven zu verstehen und zu analysieren.

Manfred Frank, Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak und Alexander J. B. Hampton wurden eingeladen, einen Beitrag zu dieser ersten Ausgabe zu leisten; ihre Artikel waren ausnahmsweise (wie der von Laure Cahen-Maurel) Gegenstand einer *single blind peer-review*. Die Artikel von Rylie Johnson und Christoph Haffter sind das Ergebnis eines *Call for Papers* und wurden von zwei Experten einem doppelblinde Peer-Review unterzogen. Auf diese Essays folgen drei Rezensionen von Giulia Valpione und David W. Wood zu aktuellen Publikationen über romantische Philosophie. Wie bereits erwähnt, enthält diese Ausgabe schließlich eine neue englische Übersetzung von zwölf Briefen aus dem romantischen Kreis der Jahre 1798-1799.

Zum Abschluss dieses Editorials danken wir den Mitgliedern des Editorial Boards und den externen Reviewern für ihre Unterstützung dieses Projekts sowie unserem Mitherausgeber David. Wir sind auch den Autoren dankbar, die zu dieser ersten Ausgabe beigetragen haben, dass sie ihre

eigenen Schriften großzügig zur Verfügung gestellt haben, sowie den Forschern, die an dem CFP teilgenommen haben. Ihr Interesse und ihre Begeisterung für eine noch an ihren Anfänge Zeitschrift haben den Wert dieses Projekts deutlich bestätigt.

Der *Call for Papers* für die zweite Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* ist derzeit offen; die Einreichungsfrist endet am 31. Mai 2020 und die Ausgabe wird voraussichtlich Ende 2020 veröffentlicht. Das Hauptthema dieser zweiten Ausgabe ist das Denken der Philosophinnen und Schriftstellerinnen der philosophischen deutschen Romantik. Für diese zweite Ausgabe wird die Zeitschrift auch Artikel, Buchbesprechungen oder neue Übersetzungen zu anderen Aspekten der romantischen Philosophie berücksichtigen.

Brüssel und Padua, 1. Dezember 2019

Laure Cahen-Maurel
Giulia Valpione

Symphilosophie

Revue internationale de philosophie romantique

L'« ironie romantique » comme procédé musical

L'exemple de Tieck, Brahms, Wagner et Weber

(Partie I)

*Manfred Frank**

RÉSUMÉ

L'ironie au sens où l'entend le premier romantisme allemand répond à la tâche impossible en même temps que nécessaire d'exprimer « l'inconditionné » dans un langage « conditionné ». Elle résout le dilemme en tenant en suspens la teneur spécifique de ce qui est dit par la *manière* dont cela est dit. C'est-à-dire qu'en même temps qu'elle dit quelque chose, elle annule ce qui est dit. C'est ce que la musique, art du temps par excellence, peut particulièrement faire, comme je le montre à l'appui de la mise en musique par Brahms des Lieder de la *Magelone* de Tieck et de quelques exemples tirés de la musique et de l'esthétique de Wagner.

Mots-clés : premier romantisme, ironie, inconditionné, musique, Tieck, Brahms, Wagner, Weber

ABSTRACT

According to early German romanticism, irony responds to the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of expressing the “Unconditioned” in “conditioned” language. It resolves this dilemma by suspending the specific content of what is said through *how* it is said. In other words, irony suspends while speaking what has been said. Music, as the temporal art par excellence, is able to do this in a special way, as I show in Brahms's musical setting of Tieck's *Magelone Lieder* and some examples of Wagner's music and aesthetics.

Keywords: early German romanticism, irony, the Unconditioned, music, Tieck, Brahms, Wagner, Weber

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En hommage à Wolfgang Iser pour ses soixante-dix ans¹.

« Nous *cherchons* partout l'inconditionné (*das Unbedingte*) et ne *trouvons* jamais que des conditions (*immer nur Dinge*) », énonce un célèbre fragment de Novalis². On a voulu y voir – à juste titre – la caractérisation d'une posture foncière du premier romantisme allemand d'une manière générale. Cette posture a des conséquences pour l'esthétique, bien plus elle a des conséquences pour la pratique artistique dans l'acception la plus large. C'est de ces conséquences-là qu'il sera question dans les pages qui suivent, en rapport avec la poésie et la musique.

L'esthétique du premier romantisme se trouve face à un problème plutôt singulier si l'on considère l'histoire de la pensée esthétique depuis ses origines antiques, et même un problème inédit. L'art doit réussir ce que la philosophie tente en vain : nous fournir une présentation de l'inconditionné (de cet inconditionné). Dans le discours philosophique de l'époque, l'inconditionné c'est l'« infini » ou l'« absolu » ; à l'inverse, on parle du monde des choses comme du monde de la relativité et du fini. Relatif ou conditionné est ce qui ne subsiste pas de manière indépendante par soi-même, ce dont l'être suppose quelque chose d'autre. Ce rapport à autre chose est l'exact opposé de l'absoluité, car est *absolu*, à la lettre, *quod est omnibus relationibus absolutum* (« ce qui est délié de toutes relations »).

Note des éditeurs : le présent article de Manfred Frank est paru originellement en langue allemande sous le titre « ‚Romantische Ironie‘ als musikalisches Verfahren. Am Beispiel von Tieck, Brahms, Wagner und Weber », dans la revue *Athenäum – Jahrbuch der Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft*, vol. 13, 2003, p. 163-190 ; réédité in Manfred Frank, *Mythendämmerung. Richard Wagner im frühromantischen Kontext*, München, Fink, 2008, p. 119-141. Il est traduit en français par Laure Cahen-Maurel en tenant compte des suggestions de l'auteur et publié ici en deux parties avec son autorisation. La seconde partie de cet article paraîtra dans le prochain numéro de la revue. Les notes de la traduction figurent entre crochets.

¹ Cet exposé est la reprise, fortement abrégée, remaniée et détachée de son contexte original, de la dernière (la 22^e) de mes leçons introductives à l'esthétique du premier romantisme allemand, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1989, p. 380-462. Les partitions des cinq morceaux chantés sont également reproduites dans cette édition. – J'avais trois raisons, mais suffisamment fortes, de rééditer ce texte : la commémoration du cent-cinquantième de la mort de Tieck ; la pression amicale exercée par mes collègues du comité de rédaction de l'*Athenäum* ; et l'attrait particulier que revêt la possibilité offerte aux lecteurs et aux lectrices d'entendre réellement la musique ci-incluse grâce au CD qui l'accompagne. La dernière fois que j'ai prononcé cette conférence avec un accompagnement musical, c'était à l'occasion du 70^e anniversaire de Wolfgang Iser, à Constance. Le texte lui est dédié. [Les exemples musicaux en question sont disponibles en ligne sur le site de *Symphilosophie* : <https://symphilosophie.com/manfred-frank/>]

² Tiré des *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, frag. n°1, in Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, hg. von Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel et al., Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1960-2016 (= NS), vol. 2, p. 412. [Cf. Novalis, *Remarques mêlées*, trad. fr. O. Schefer, in Novalis, *Semences*, Paris, Allia, 2004, p. 269.]

Or si le relatif – et ce point est l'idée rectrice des philosophes romantiques – était l'ultime aboutissement possible de nos besoins d'orientation, alors nous n'arriverions jamais à un savoir. Le savoir est (pour Platon déjà) une opinion vraie justifiée. Toute opinion dépend d'une condition – de sa justification par une autre opinion –, justification se trouvant hors d'elle et dépendant à son tour d'une condition. Et ainsi de suite. S'il n'y avait pas d'in-conditionné, au sens le plus littéral, toute tentative de justification visant un savoir impliquerait une régression à l'infini. On ne sortirait jamais de la chaîne de ces relativités sans fin. Il faut donc bien qu'il y ait une opinion fondée en elle-même, pas une croyance établie sur autre chose. Sans doute pareille opinion pourra être dite absolue.

Ce terme, comme on vient de l'apprendre, nous est pourtant refusé. Cela tient à la structure de notre pensée. Penser, c'est juger. Un jugement (une assertion, comme on dit aujourd'hui) a – c'est ce que Fichte enseignait au semestre d'hiver 1794/95 – la structure d'un « partage originaire³ ». Un jugement explique quelque chose (un sujet) au moyen de quelque chose d'autre (le prédicat). De sorte qu'une opposition vient à se former entre les éléments de l'énoncé ; ils sont certes conciliés par le petit mot de raccordement (la copule) *est* mais sans que le dualisme soit aboli. Ce qui ne vaut qu'en vertu de quelque chose d'autre qui concourt à le déterminer est conditionné par cette autre chose ; ce n'est pas, par conséquent, un inconditionné. Aussi notre pensée ne saurait-elle atteindre l'absolu, la quintessence de ce qui est nécessaire à la fondation ultime de nos convictions.

Mais c'est précisément là que s'exerce le pouvoir de l'art. Friedrich Schlegel déclare que « la nécessité de la poésie [est fondée] sur le besoin de présenter l'infini qui résulte de l'imperfection de la philosophie⁴ ». Nous nous apercevons, ajoute Novalis, que « si le caractère d'un problème donné est d'être non soluble, nous résolvons ce problème en exposant son insolubilité [en tant que telle]⁵ ». L'art a précisément à voir avec cela : la « présentation de l'imprésentable⁶ ». Qu'est-ce à dire ? Les premiers romantiques ont la conviction que le principe de notre savoir – l'absolu – repose sur un

³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, hg. von Reinhard Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky et al., Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1962-2012 (= GA), vol. II/4, p. 182.

⁴ Extrait d'une leçon privée de 1807, manuscrit de Marbourg, p. 52 sq. Cité d'après Karl Konrad Pohlheim, *Die Arabeske. Ansichten und Ideen aus Friedrich Schlegels Poetik*, München, Paderborn, Wien, Schöningh, 1966, p. 59. Cf. un fragment des *Idées* (datant de 1800) : « Là où cesse la philosophie, la poésie doit commencer », in Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel-Ausgabe*, hg. von Ernst Behler unter Mitwirkung von Jean-Jacques Anstett und Hans Eichner, Paderborn et al., Schöningh, 1958 sq. (= KA), vol. II, p. 261. [Friedrich Schlegel, *Idées*, frag. n° 48, trad. fr. A.-M. Lang, in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy (éd.), *L'Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1978, p. 211.]

⁵ Novalis, NS III [= *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798/1799)], frag. n° 612, p. 376. [Novalis, *Le Brouillon général*, trad. fr. O. Schefer, Paris, Allia, 2000, p. 159.]

⁶ Voir *ibid.*, frag. n° 671, p. 685. [Novalis, *Le Brouillon général*, p. 179.]

fondement transcendant, irréductible à l'intériorité subjective de notre familiarité avec nous-mêmes. Le fondement de l'être soi devient une énigme indéchiffrable. Ici, plus d'élucidation possible de cette énigme par la (seule) pensée. C'est pourquoi la philosophie s'accomplit dans l'art, et comme art. Un produit nous est donné en art dont aucune pensée n'est capable d'épuiser la richesse de sens. L'inépuisable pouvoir d'évocation pour la pensée auquel l'expérience du beau artistique nous confronte peut devenir dès lors le symbole de ce fondement de l'unité que la réflexion ne saurait ressaisir, qui échappe structurellement à la compréhension de la conscience de soi de par sa base duelle. (La conscience de soi est de même structure que le jugement : « partage originaire », *Ur-teilung* – un sujet s'y rapporte à lui-même comme à un autre, un objet.) Ce type de représentation symbolique, c'est ce que le premier romantisme appelle l'allégorie, renversant de manière polémique l'usage classique du mot. L'allégorie, affirme Friedrich Schlegel, « indique » indirectement ce qu'elle ne saurait exprimer de façon directe, à savoir l'infini⁷. C'est ce que signifie littéralement *allegoreîn* : laisser entendre autre chose que ce que l'on dit (*állo kai allôs agoreúein*). « Toute beauté, note Schlegel, est allégorie. Le plus haut, parce qu'il est inexprimable, ne peut justement se dire que par allégorie⁸. » Or chaque poème individuel tend à présenter en lui-même le tout, « cet Être-Un omniprésent, dans son unité indivisible » ; et « il ne peut le faire autrement que par l'allégorie »⁹. L'allégorie est une simple « allusion à l'infini [...], une perspective d'infini¹⁰ ». « Elle s'arrête sur le seuil du très-haut et de là se contente de faire signe de manière indéterminée vers l'infini, vers ce qui [l'absolu] ne se laisse ni désigner ni expliquer philosophiquement¹¹. »

Par conséquent, l'artiste producteur d'allégories veut signifier l'inconditionné et ne produit jamais que des choses : des mots, des images, des suites de sons, qui sont tous des objets, conditionnés par d'autres mots, d'autres images, d'autres sons. Il cherche à représenter « l'infini » mais ne produit éternellement que du fini. Or on voit aisément que cette contradiction est fondamentale. Schlegel écrit ceci : « Le contradictoire proprement dit, dans notre Moi, c'est que nous nous sentions finis et en même temps infinis¹² ». Comment résoudre la contradiction sinon en produisant (inévitavelmente) du fini, du défini, en même temps qu'en contredisant sans cesse la finitude de ce qui est présenté ?

⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, KA XVIII [= *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (1796-1806)], frag. n° 1140, p. 416.

⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, KA II [= *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800)], p. 324. [Friedrich Schlegel, *Entretien sur la poésie*, in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy (éd.), *L'Absolu littéraire*, p. 318.]

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 211 ; cf. KA XI [= *Geschichte der europäischen Literatur* (1803/1804)], p. 119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Friedrich Schlegel, KA XII [= *Die Entwicklung der Philosophie in zwölf Büchern* (Köln, 1804/1805)], p. 334.

La contradiction ne peut se situer au plan du contenu artistique. Aucun contenu ne porte en soi le démenti de sa propre finitude/déterminité. La contradiction doit donc résider dans la *manière* dont on le produit : dans un certain trait stylistique – celui de l'ironie. Tenons-nous en d'abord à la poésie : quelque chose est dit de manière ironique quand la détermination de ce qui est dit est annulée par la façon dont je le dis ou qu'elle est reléguée au second plan au profit de l'infinité de ce qui aurait tout aussi bien pu être dit à la place.

Comment le poète y parvient-il ? Évidemment pas à travers un énoncé simple, isolé, hors contexte. Pour que le discours ironique parle en même temps qu'il annule son propre dire, il doit évoluer dans une séquence temporelle, aussi variable que possible. Plus la variation est forte, plus les oppositions que l'entendement doit saisir sont abruptes, moins le sentiment d'une continuité (commandée par le principe d'identité) pourra se former et plus s'imposera, au contraire, le sentiment d'un flottement constant du sens sous la chaîne expressive. Tieck a examiné en détail la technique requise ici dans un écrit de jeunesse (paru en 1796). L'essai s'intitule *Le traitement du merveilleux chez Shakespeare*. Il est tout aussi instructif sur sa propre démarche poétique que lumineux quant à l'analyse de la structure du discours poétique en général.

La question de départ est la suivante : comment Shakespeare parvient-il, dans ses pièces, à préparer le public à recevoir ce merveilleux ? Précisément comme l'ironie, le merveilleux – c'est la première observation d'importance – n'est pas une caractéristique sémantique. En d'autres termes, ce n'est pas le fait de traiter de sorcières, de lutins ou de figures mythiques qui introduit dans le texte une dimension merveilleuse. Le merveilleux est amené par des traits stylistiques propres au langage poétique : un enchaînement fulgurant de sentiments opposés entre eux, tels le « terrible et le comique ».

[Q]ue le spectateur ne fixe jamais son regard fermement et durablement sur aucun objet, que le poète disperse sans cesse son attention et maintienne l'imagination dans une certaine confusion, pour éviter que les fantômes qu'il produit n'acquièrent trop de consistance physique et ne deviennent, ce faisant, invraisemblables¹³.

De cette façon, la faculté de juger qui cherche à s'orienter dans la série des opposés est matée et, confuse, finit par se laisser emporter aveuglément dans l'incommensurable. À la fin, écrit Tieck, nous perdons

les repères d'après lesquels nous jugeons ordinairement du vrai, nous ne trouvons rien sur quoi fixer les yeux ; l'âme est transportée dans une

¹³ Ludwig Tieck, *Kritische Schriften*, Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1848, vol. I, p. 55.

sorte de vertige où elle finit par s'abandonner, contrainte, à l'illusion, puisqu'elle a perdu tout repère en matière de vérité ou d'erreur¹⁴.

La fameuse définition de l'ironie donnée par Friedrich Schlegel fait également état d'un tel vertige :

L'ironie comporte et suscite le sentiment du conflit indissoluble de l'inconditionné et du conditionné, de l'impossibilité et de la nécessité d'une communication totale. C'est la plus libre de toutes les licences, car à travers elle on se transcende ; et pourtant aussi la plus conforme à la loi, car elle est absolument nécessaire. C'est très bon signe quand des esprits platement conformistes ne savent plus quoi penser de cette continuelle parodie de soi, qu'ils s'y laissent prendre, encore et encore, à tort parfois, jusqu'à en avoir le tournis, jusqu'à prendre la plaisanterie au sérieux et le propos sérieux pour une plaisanterie¹⁵.

Une chansonnette de Tieck, légère et pleine de sous-entendus, transmet quelque chose de ce vertige :

Mit Leiden
Und Freuden
Gleich lieblich zu spielen
Und Schmerzen
Im Scherzen
So leise zu fühlen,
Ist wen'gen beschieden.
Sie wählen zum Frieden
Das eine von beiden,
Sind nicht zu beneiden:
Ach gar zu bescheiden
Sind doch ihre Freuden
Und kaum von Leiden
Zu unterscheiden¹⁶.

Vues de plus près, les joies perdent leur caractère distinctif et s'apparentent à leur contraire, les peines, et vice versa. Il y a certes spécification et différenciation mais leur traitement poétique est tel que leur position est mystérieusement surdéterminée par l'abolition de ce qui est posé : par la transgression de ses propres limites vers ce qu'il n'est pas.

Dans les instructions prodiguées par Tieck sur la façon de produire l'effet du merveilleux, on reconnaîtra aisément les traits fondamentaux de l'ironie schlegélienne : deux émotions en tout point contraires – par exemple

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, KA II [= *Lyceums-Fragmente* (1797)], frag. n° 108, p. 160.

¹⁶ Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften*, Berlin, Reimer, 1828-1854, 28 vol. ; reprint Berlin, de Gruyter, 1966 (ci-après : *Schriften*), vol. 10, p. 96 : « Jouer de la douleur et de la joie avec une grâce égale, et ressentir si peu la souffrance dans la badinerie, n'est pas donné à tous les esprits. Pour être en paix, ils choisissent l'une des deux. N'envions pas les esprits badins : leur joie est bien trop mince et se distingue mal de leur peine. »

le sentiment d'être face à quelque chose d'effroyable et de drôle, de sérieux et de risible tout ensemble – s'attachent si rapidement au même objet que, désespérée de voir les choses avec plus de clarté, notre faculté de juger finit par volontairement s'abandonner au film des contrastes. La rapidité avec laquelle les messages se succèdent relativise la teneur de sens de ce qui est communiqué et la rend virtuelle, de sorte que l'impression prévalant en définitive est justement celle du « il se peut que ce soit ça, comme ça pourrait aussi bien être tout autre chose ». Le germaniste zurichois et esprit sérieux s'il en est (plus encore que conservateur), Emil Staiger, a vivement reproché à la démarche poétique de Tieck d'égarer le lecteur si l'on considère isolément chacun des aspects de ses récits fantastiques : il n'y aurait pas une seule interprétation homogène qui puisse être étayée sur l'intégralité des caractéristiques du texte¹⁷. Comme si ce n'était pas là précisément l'ironie romantique poussée à la perfection, à chercher non pas dans la substance sémantique des textes, ni dans leur capacité à provoquer le rire, mais dans leur facture aérienne et leur sens omnivoque. Nombreux sont les textes de Tieck, les poèmes en particulier, qui suscitent en nous ce genre de vertige, et ce sont souvent les plus attrayants. La grâce du style a cet « esprit éthéré » que Tieck attribuait à « l'ironie supérieure » par opposition à « l'ironie ordinaire » qui « appelle le mal un bien, et le bien un mal, comme chez Swift et d'autres ». Cet esprit éthéré de l'ironie supérieure, écrit-il, « [flotte] sur le tout de l'œuvre, satisfait et sans parti-pris, tout autant qu'il l'infuse d'amour en profondeur »¹⁸. August Wilhelm Schlegel, le premier commentateur important de Tieck, loue la grâce de ses poèmes : « J'oubliais la grâce, remarque-t-il, une qualité si innée chez lui [Tieck] qu'elle survient d'elle-même et qu'il ne pourrait y renoncer même s'il le voulait¹⁹. » Cet état d'apesanteur du dire ironique ne lui a pas attiré les faveurs de tous. Il lui a valu la hargne particulière des esprits sérieux (de Schiller à Hegel en passant par Kierkegaard), jusqu'au grand sérieux des Études germaniques qui sous le national-socialisme ont vilipendé le désengagement et l'inconsistance de Tieck, l'intellectualité corrosive de son ironie²⁰. En réalité, Tieck croyait mettre en œuvre une vérité, pas une faiblesse, lorsqu'il cherchait à

¹⁷ Emil Staiger, « Ludwig Tieck und der Ursprung der deutschen Romantik », in Emil Staiger, *Stilwandel. Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Goethezeit*, Zürich, Atlantis Verlag, 1963, p. 175-204.

¹⁸ Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften*, vol. 6, p. XXVII sq.

¹⁹ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, hg. von Eduard Böcking, Leipzig, Weidmann, 1846 sq. (reprint Hildesheim, Olms, 1971), vol. 11, p. 144 (= Schlußanmerkung zum Wiederabdruck der *Athenäum*-Rezension).

²⁰ Voir les deux articles parus dans le lieu d'expression central des Études germaniques de l'ère nazie, la *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde*: Josef Veldtrup, « Friedrich Schlegel und die jüdische Geistigkeit », vol. 52, 1938, cahier 7, p. 401-414 ; et Walther Linden, « Umwertung der deutschen Romantik », vol. 47, 1933, cahier 2, p. 65-91. Voir aussi Ralf Klausnitzer, *Blaue Blume unterm Hakenkreuz. Die Rezeption der deutschen literarischen Romantik im Dritten Reich*, Paderborn et al., Schöningh, 1999, en particulier p. 115 sq. et 401 sq.

communiquer par son traitement de la langue l'idée que notre âme est légère comme l'éther et transparente comme le rien.

Les personnages de Tieck sont travaillés par un vide intérieur, ils veulent « le lointain et le proche, le possible, ce qui est justement impossible²¹ », et tiennent pour mensongère la stabilité des figures classiques. Novalis, l'ami de Tieck, avait déjà noté ceci : « Un poème doit être *inépuisable*, comme l'homme²². » Il avait aussi aspiré passionnément à une « diversité dans la *présentation* des caractères humains » : « à l'exclusion des *marionnettes*, de ces soi-disant "caractères" – plutôt un monde vivant, bizarre, inconséquent, bariolé. [...] Plus la vie est colorée, mieux c'est²³. » Tieck le dit de façon plus ironique. Dans un de ses romans les plus confus et les plus malmenés par la critique, on trouve le dialogue suivant :

— Si vous faites le constat d'une absence, dans nos existences humaines, de but et de cohérence, vous renoncerez sur le champ à vouloir les introduire dans le cours de ma vie.

— Tu as raison, vraiment, s'écria Bemard, et tu es réellement plus raisonnable que je ne le pensais.

— Je suis peut-être plus intelligent que vous, répondit Peter, mais je ne le montre que rarement.

— Ainsi, médita Bemard, toute la grande existence humaine ne serait rien de ferme ni de fondé ? Elle ne mène peut-être à rien et n'aurait aucun sens, ce serait folie d'y chercher une connexion historique quelconque et une grande composition poétique, une Bambocchiade ou un Wouvermanns l'auraient peut-être exprimé de la façon la plus juste²⁴.

L'existence humaine s'exprimerait avec justesse dans ce style d'une légèreté et volatilité extrêmes que Novalis envoyait chez son ami²⁵. Tieck a en effet traduit dans sa poésie la recette de cette facture ironique.

Prenons par exemple le cycle des *Romances de la Maguelone* (de 1796). Les sentiments les plus contradictoires s'y relayent dans une course si folle que souvent même des conjonctions destinées à l'organisation logique de la phrase font défaut (les asyndètes dominent). Heine²⁶ a comparé la

²¹ Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 112.

²² Novalis, NS III [= *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*], frag. n° 603, p. 664.

²³ *Ibid.*, frag. n° 16, p. 558 [Novalis, *Art et Utopie. Les derniers fragments (1799-1800)*, trad. Olivier Schefer, Paris, Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2005, trad. mod., p. 44] ; et NS II [= *Vermischte Bemerkungen*], n° 120, p. 466.

²⁴ Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften*, vol. 9, p. 193.

²⁵ Voir Novalis, NS II [= *Fichte-Studien (1795-1796)*], frag. n° 504, p. 258. Voir aussi NS III [= *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*], frag. n° 537, p. 647 et frag. n° 580, p. 654 ; et NS III [= *Das allgemeine Brouillon (1798-1799)*], frag. n° 345, p. 303.

²⁶ Dans le *Musikalisches Salon* (= compte rendu pour la *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* du 25 avril 1844), in Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, hg. von Klaus Briegleb, München, Carl Hanser, 1997, vol. 5, p. 529 sq.

poésie de Tieck à la finesse de la musique de Mendelssohn ; elle aussi, dont on dit qu'elle entre par une oreille et sort par l'autre, ne révèle la magie de sa légèreté extrême qu'à une « oreille fine ». Chez Mendelssohn, on a toujours l'impression que la musique est trop tendre voire trop basse, mais ce n'est pas une question d'orchestration qui serait timide ou de faible volume sonore. C'est une question d'ironie, la dissolution s'y tissant de manière ironique. En cela, c'est une musique très romantique. C'est sa sœur, Fanny, qui a mis en musique une partie des Lieder de la *Maguelone*, et non pas Felix. Cependant la mise en musique que Johannes Brahms en a donnée plus d'un demi-siècle plus tard (entre 1861 et 1869) est si proche du génie de la poésie de Tieck que nous n'avons pas trop à regretter que cette idée séduisante selon laquelle Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy aurait écrit la musique des Lieder de Tieck soit une idée erronée.

Après vous avoir fait attendre si longuement, vous êtes certainement avides de recevoir quelques illustrations de l'écriture ironique. Je suis muni pour cela. Écoutons d'abord le troisième Lied du cycle de la *Maguelone* :

Texte I

Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden,
Die durch meinen Busen ziehn?
Alle alten Wünsche scheiden,
Tausend neue Blumen blühn.

*Est-ce la douleur, est-ce la joie
Qui traverse ma poitrine ?
Tous les désirs anciens s'en vont
Mille nouvelles fleurs éclosent.*

Durch die Dämmerung der Tränen
Seh ich ferne Sonnen stehn, -
Welches Schmachten! Welches Sehnen!
Wag ichs? Soll ich näher gehn?

*Par-delà le crépuscule des larmes
Je vois un soleil lointain,
Quelle langueur ! Quel ardent désir !
L'oserai-je ? Dois-je m'approcher ?*

Ach, und fällt die Träne nieder
Ist es dunkel um mich her,
Dennoch kömmt kein Wunsch mir wieder
Zukunft ist von Hoffnung leer.

*Ah, si mes larmes coulent
Tout s'obscurcit autour de moi ;
Pourtant si aucun désir ne revient,
Le futur est vide d'espoir.*

So schlage denn, strebendes Herz,
So fließet denn Tränen herab,
Ach Lust ist nur tieferer Schmerz,
Leben ist dunkles Grab. -

*Alors, bat, cœur impatient,
Ainsi donc, coulez, larmes
Ah, le plaisir n'est qu'une douleur
plus profonde,
La vie est un sombre tombeau,*

Ohne Verschulden
Soll ich erdulden?
Wie ist's, daß mir im Traum
Alle Gedanken
Auf und nieder schwanken!

*N'étant pas coupable,
Devrais-je souffrir en silence ?
Comment se fait-il qu'en rêve
Toutes mes pensées
Sont sens dessus dessous !*

Ich kenne mich noch kaum.
 O hört mich ihr gütigen Sterne,
 O höre mich, grünende Flur,
 Du, Liebe, den heiligen Schwur:
 Bleib ich ihr ferne,
 Sterb ich gerne.
 Ach! nur im Licht von ihrem Blick
 Wohnt Leben und Hoffnung und
 Glück²⁷!

*C'est à peine si je me reconnais.
 Ô écoutez-moi, bonnes étoiles,
 Ô écoute-moi, verte campagne,
 Et toi, amour, ce serment sacré :
 Si je dois rester loin d'elle,
 Je préfère mourir.
 Ah, seule la lumière de son regard
 Héberge vie, espoir et bonheur !*

De prime abord : rien de spectaculaire dans ces vers rimés, ni dans le fond ni dans la forme. À la seconde écoute, on remarque au moins ceci : le mètre change après qu'un schéma de strophes homogène revient deux fois (quatre trochées aux rimes alternées), pour dès lors renoncer – ce glissement se produit presque imperceptiblement – non pas à la rime mais au mètre. Il manque entièrement à certains vers un mètre régulier, comme par exemple dans ce vers : « Ach Lust ist nur tieferer Schmerz (*Ah, le plaisir n'est qu'une douleur plus profonde*) » (u ú u [ú] u u ú), où seulement deux des huit syllabes sont accentuées, la première et la dernière : *Lust* (plaisir) et *Schmerz* (douleur). Ou encore : « Wie ist's, daß mir im Traum [...] (*Comment se fait-il qu'en rêve*) » (u ú u u u ú). De façon générale, la longueur des vers est assez inégale. Le plus long comporte huit syllabes, le plus court quatre. À quoi correspond le nombre d'accents, qui varie de deux à quatre, au plus. Qui lit le poème à voix haute pour la première fois éprouve des difficultés inattendues à le scander, surtout quand on s'est mentalement préparé à un mètre qui fait défaut aux vers à partir de la troisième strophe. En réalité, plus le poème progresse, moins on est sûr de rencontrer des couples de vers dont la cadence est travaillée d'après le même schéma métrique. Cette indétermination – que déjà la version musicale de Carl Maria von Weber, puis véritablement celle de Brahms a respectée, et même renforcée – est poussée si loin qu'à la déclamation de certains vers on ne saurait décider, pas plus avant qu'après lecture, selon quelle métrique ils se déploient. Mais il y a plus : le mètre que nous sommes incapables d'indiquer uniformément à l'avance semble se plier au choix préalable et assez arbitraire du lecteur. Rien n'empêche fondamentalement, par exemple, d'identifier l'avant-dernier vers comme une séquence de quatre iambes : « Ach! nûr im Lîcht von îhrem Blîck (*Ah, seule la lumière de son regard*) ». À vrai dire, tout dans ce vers s'oppose à une accentuation aussi mécanique, et la mise en musique de

²⁷ Extrait de *Phantastus*, in Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften in zwölf Bänden*, hg. von Manfred Frank, Frankfurt a.M., Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, vol. 6, p. 257 sq. (ci-après : *Phantastus*) ; trad. Pierre Mathé, https://festival-aix.com/sites/default/files/imce/documents/2017_06_22_programme_la_belle_maguelone_exe.pdf

Brahms a attribué aux vers le rythme suivant (dans lequel tout mètre disparaît) : « Äch! nur im Licht von ihrem Blick ». On pourrait prendre d'autres exemples, et ils participent tous de la même tendance. D'une manière générale, on observe que la seule règle pouvant être définie – et cela vaut plus encore pour d'autres Lieder de la *Maguelone* – est celle de la variation la plus grande des pieds et des contrastes s'enchaînant de la façon la plus soudaine possible. Voilà comment Tieck parvient à nous intéresser à la question de la forme et de la composition avant celle du contenu du poème – entièrement dans le droit-fil, semble-t-il, de la question posée par Rudolph dans le roman *Les Pérégrinations de Franz Sternbald* : « Pourquoi le contenu devrait-il former le contenu d'un poème²⁸ ? »

Si l'on se tourne toutefois vers le contenu, si peu captivant qu'il doive paraître à première vue, on est témoin d'une instabilité, d'une versatilité, d'une accumulation de ruptures d'humeurs et d'états émotionnels si frappante qu'il est difficile d'y apercevoir quelque chose comme le fil rouge d'une plausibilité ou une logique psychologique. Pareille tentative serait même vouée par avance à l'échec. Le procédé employé par Tieck nous oriente bien plus vers l'incohérence, la discontinuité, bref : le flux des émotions dans le temps, que vers leur constance, leur permanence ou leur fiabilité. Le poème s'ouvre sur un doute, ou plutôt sur une incertitude totale : « Est-ce la douleur, est-ce la joie / Qui traverse ma poitrine ? » Les désirs anciens s'en vont, de nouveaux font leur apparition. Or c'est précisément la nouveauté et ce qui suscite l'espoir qui ne se laissent deviner que derrière le « crépuscule des larmes ». Le poème est traversé d'oxymores de bout en bout. Cette figure de style est l'expression de l'indécidabilité entre des sentiments en conflit. Mais toujours est-il que l'effacement des vieux désirs au moment de l'éclosion de milliers de nouveaux semble annoncer quelque chose plein d'espoir ; à travers des larmes, certes, mais ce que ces larmes prédisent, c'est le lever de « soleils lointains ». Ce qui s'avère aussitôt une tromperie : « Ah, si mes larmes coulent / Tout s'obscurcit autour de moi ; / Pourtant si aucun désir ne revient, / Le futur est vide d'espoir. » Toutefois le désespoir invoqué n'a pas le dernier mot ; le « serment le plus sacré », plus que l'espoir, prévaut : plutôt mourir que de rester loin d'elle. C'est un acte de discours qui n'affirme rien, le « pouvoir assertif » lui fait défaut, dirait Frege. Tout reste donc indécis, même la fin.

Écoutez à présent la mise en musique que Brahms en a donnée. La composition peut difficilement être plus sensible aux particularités, notamment formelles, du texte lui-même. Notez, surtout, l'habileté avec laquelle, après la réitération une fois, à l'identique, de la forme des premières strophes, la syntaxe musicale prend son essor en une suite de sons libre sans mètre prédominant ni figures mélodiques : en une mélodie qui, pour ainsi

²⁸ Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften*, vol. 16, p. 333.

dire, s'invente elle-même spontanément en fonction d'inspirations soudaines, imprévisibles et surtout très contrastées.

[Morceau n°1, interprété par Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, accompagnement de Sviatoslav Richter ; extrait à écouter ici :

<https://symphilosophie.com/manfred-frank/>]

Si joli que soit le Lied que vous venez d'entendre – tant le texte de Tieck que sa mise en musique par Brahms –, il serait étrange de vouloir lui conférer une note avant-gardiste. Il ne s'agit pas pour moi de faire de Tieck ou de Brahms des contemporains du siècle dernier – les deux s'y prêtent mal à bien des égards. Dieu sait à quel point tout ce qui s'est démarqué du premier romantisme allemand n'est pas allé en Allemagne, en politique et dans la culture, dans le sens d'un progrès qualitatif. Néanmoins on constate, dans la poésie de Tieck, un changement radical de direction qui, comme pour toute mutation de style, commence modestement pour bientôt prendre les dimensions qu'on lui reconnaît aujourd'hui. Mais avant d'esquisser les principales étapes de ce processus, j'aimerais présenter un autre Lied de la *Maguelone* :

Texte II

Wie soll ich die Freude,
Die Wonne denn tragen?
Daß unter dem Schlagen
Des Herzens die Seele nicht scheide?

*Comment puis-je supporter
La joie puis la volupté ?
Pour, sous les battements
De mon cœur, ne pas perdre mon
âme ?*

Und wenn nun die Stunden
Der Liebe verschwunden,
Wozu das Gelüste,
In trauriger Wüste
Noch weiter ein lustleeres Leben zu ziehn,
Wenn nirgend dem Ufer mehr
Blumen entblühen?

*Et si maintenant les heures
De l'amour ont disparu,
À quoi bon l'envie,
Dans un triste désert,
La poursuite d'une vie vide de
plaisir,
Quand sur nulle rive ne fleurit une
fleur ?*

Wie geht mit bleibhangnen Füßen
Die Zeit bedächtig Schritt vor Schritt!
Doch wenn ich werde scheiden müssen,
Wie federleicht fliegt dann ihr Tritt!

*Comme le temps, trainant des pieds,
Avance lentement, pas à pas !
Et lorsque je devrai partir,
Comme ses pas voleront légers
comme la plume !*

Schlage, sehnsüchtige Gewalt,
In tiefer treuer Brust!
Wie Lautenton vorüber hallt,
Entflieht des Lebens schönste Lust.
Ach, wie bald
Bin ich der Wonne mir kaum noch
bewußt.

Rausche, rausche weiter fort,
Tiefer Strom der Zeit,
Wandelst bald aus Morgen Heut,
Gehst von Ort zu Ort;
Hast du mich bisher getragen,
Lustig bald, dann still,
Will es nun auch weiter wagen,
Wie es werden will.

Darf mich doch nicht elend achten,
Da die Einzge winkt,
Liebe läßt mich nicht verschmachten,
Bis dies Leben sinkt;
Nein, der Strom wird immer breiter,
Himmel bleibt mit immer heiter,
Fröhlichen Ruderschlags fahr ich hinab,
Bring Liebe und Leben zugleich an
das Grab²⁹.

*Bats, force d'un désir ardent
Dans une profonde, fidèle poitrine !
Le plus beau plaisir de la vie s'enfuit,
Comme résonnent les notes du luth.
Ah, est-ce bientôt
Que je ne ressentirai plus guère la
volupté.*

*Gronde, gronde encore plus,
Puissant courant du temps,
Pars vite, dès ce matin,
Vas de place en place ;
Puisque tu m'as porté jusque là
Tantôt joyeux, tantôt silencieux,
Je veux encore maintenant oser
poursuivre,
Advienne que pourra.*

*Je n'ai pas le droit de m'estimer
misérable
Quand mon unique amour me fait
signe,
L'amour ne me fera pas mourir de
langueur
Tant que ma vie n'aura sombré !
Non, le courant ira toujours
s'enflant,
Le ciel restera toujours radieux
Avec de joyeux coups de rame je
descends le flot,
Je mène ensemble amour et vie au
tombeau.*

Ce Lied fait un pas de plus dans la direction prise par le précédent. Tout d'abord en ce qu'il ne présente la répétition stricte et ponctuelle d'aucun schéma strophique. Le rythme s'émancipe ici de tout mètre prédéterminé, conformément à l'idée fondamentale de Tieck selon laquelle un poème, au lieu de se soumettre à un schéma qui lui est extérieur, doit créer lui-même son propre rythme selon les sentiments qui s'y succèdent et le poids qu'ils revêtent. Autrement dit – ce sont à peu près les mots de Tieck lui-même –, s'il doit y avoir une règle en matière de rythme des vers, alors c'est celle de la « série des sensations », de la succession réelle des sentiments, non régie par un schéma quelconque, telle qu'elle se trouve directement matérialisée dans

²⁹ Ludwig Tieck, *Phantasus*, p. 267 sq. ; trad. Pierre Mathé.

la nature musicale des sons³⁰. Chaque son, en tant qu'il est porteur d'un ressenti, possède une qualité déterminée et remplit par cette seule qualité une certaine mesure de temps. C'est sur la base de ces quanta temporels, si j'ose dire, que se forment les mètres ; et puisqu'ils ne suivent aucune autre règle que celle des sentiments ou des sensations qui s'expriment spontanément, ce n'est que lorsque la sonorité du dernier pied du vers s'efface peu à peu que l'on est en mesure de déterminer rétrospectivement le mètre du poème, qui ne vaudra alors que pour ce poème-là. Bref, le mètre de ce dire poétique – dont Tieck est l'inventeur – ne procède pas de l'obéissance à une règle métrique préalablement définie mais produit lui-même cette règle par le poids que prennent les sensations fluctuantes et qui déterminent à leur tour le rythme du poème. Pour représenter correctement ce temps vécu, la langue poétique doit s'affranchir de toute « contrainte de convention ». Car les « règles conventionnelles » n'ont pas l'authenticité qu'ont de tels rythmes libres qui suivent les « règles intérieures » « que la nature exige de l'art ». Les vrais poètes ne connaissent au fond qu'une règle : « tenir compte de tout ce que la nature exige des sentiments³¹ ». Comme justement, à coup sûr, « cette aptitude [...à] l'alternance rapide des sentiments³² ».

La succession des sentiments dans notre poème a pour seule règle l'impératif d'une variation maximale et d'un vrai télescopage de sentiments contraires. À l'expression d'une joie jubilatoire, presque exaltée, succède – sans indication d'aucune logique psychologique – l'abandon au découragement le plus total, et même un certain goût pour la mort. La troisième strophe médite sur le caractère éphémère de tout ressenti en raison de sa temporalité qui l'oblige à fluctuer à tout moment sans aboutir à aucune identité de soi durable et définitive. Toute joie n'est qu'un moment, qui passe vite et dont l'étendue dans le temps est si courte que la conscience dont elle est faite doit forcément s'exprimer avec cette grâce la plus humble possible : « Ah, est-ce bientôt / Que je ne ressentirai plus guère la volupté ? » Certes, ce sentiment n'a pas non plus le dernier mot. Comme dans le poème précédent, l'espoir l'emporte sur la résignation. Mais qui espère est sans certitude aucune. Espérer signifie ne pas savoir « ce qui adviendra », manquer de savoir. En outre, s'agissant des choses humaines espérer est une ligne de conduite admirable : c'est une façon de se projeter positivement vers l'avenir. Et cela n'est possible que pour un être qui n'est essentiellement pas identique à lui-même : comme Novalis l'a le premier énoncé, seul un être à qui, par essence, l'être fait défaut – qui est imperfection, aspiration à ce qui lui manque – peut se projeter vers ce qui n'est pas (encore) à partir d'un présent qui est. En un

³⁰ Ludwig Tieck, *Das Buch über Shakespeare. Handschriftliche Aufzeichnungen von Ludwig Tieck. Aus seinem Nachlaß*, hg. von Henry Lüdeke, Halle a. d. Saale, Niemeyer, 1920, p. 117 sq.

³¹ *Ibid.*, note 18, p. 300.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

mot, la perspective d'avenir sur laquelle se clôt ce poème composé avec insouciance ne diminue en rien le pouvoir du temps sur toutes ses manifestations de sentiments, elle en accroît le poids au contraire. La transposition musicale du poème par Brahms, la musique étant, par excellence, l'art du temps, rend cela merveilleusement tangible.

[Morceau n°2 ; extrait à écouter ici : <https://symphilosophie.com/manfred-frank/>]

Seconde partie dans le prochain numéro de Symphilosophie.

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

Between Romanticism and Idealism: Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, Philosophy as the Thought of Revelation

(Part 1)

*Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak**

ABSTRACT

This article argues for a reading of Solger's philosophy centred on the concept of revelation (*Offenbarung*). It aims to show how in this philosophy, developed mainly between 1815 and 1819, ontology, epistemology, philosophy of art, philosophy of mythology and political philosophy, are all systematically articulated around the paradoxical experience of the revelation of the idea in existence. Solger attempts to develop a position that can integrate and surpass on the one hand the transcendental idealism of the early Fichte and Schelling's philosophy of identity, and on the other hand Jacobi's dichotomy between faith and knowledge. He shares with the romantics the concern for a philosophy that is itself life. Going beyond the reduction of Solger to a theorist of romantic irony or a proto-Hegelian lost in mysticism, the goal here is to more precisely determine his philosophy from out of itself and its links to the post-Kantian constellation.

Keywords: Solger, revelation (*Offenbarung*), faith, system, dialectics, idealism

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente une lecture de la philosophie de Solger centrée sur le concept de révélation (*Offenbarung*). Il s'agit de montrer comment dans cette philosophie, élaborée principalement entre 1815 et 1819, ontologie, théorie de la connaissance, philosophie de l'art et de la mythologie et philosophie politique sont articulées de manière systématique autour de l'expérience paradoxale de la révélation de l'idée dans l'existence. Solger cherche à élaborer une position qui puisse intégrer et dépasser, d'une part, l'idéalisme transcendantal du premier Fichte et la philosophie de l'identité de Schelling, d'autre part, la dichotomie jacobienne entre foi et savoir. Il partage avec les romantiques le désir d'une philosophie qui soit elle-même vie. Au-delà de la réduction de Solger à un théoricien de l'ironie romantique, ou à un pré-hégélien égaré du côté de la mystique, le but est ici de cerner sa philosophie à partir d'elle-même, et de ses liens à la constellation postkantienne.

Mots-clés : Solger, révélation (*Offenbarung*), foi, système, dialectique, idéalisme

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On the two hundredth anniversary of Solger's death

„Die Philosophie ist also nichts anders als das Denken
über die Gegenwart des Wesens in unserer Erkenntniß und Existenz,
oder mit andern Worten, über die göttliche Offenbarung.“¹

„[eine] Offenbarung,
d.h. (...) ein[e] wirklich[e] und nicht bloß eingebildet[e] Wahrheit“²

At the intersection of the major currents of post-Kantian German thought, Karl Solger's philosophy not only engages with the transcendental idealism of Fichte and the young Schelling, with the speculative idealism of Hegel and Schelling's philosophy of identity, but also with the romanticism of Ludwig Tieck or the Schlegel brothers, and even with F. H. Jacobi's "non-philosophy". The hypothesis of the following study is: Solger's thought can be comprehensively grasped as a philosophy of revelation (*Offenbarung*).³ Metaphysics, aesthetics, philosophy of mythology, and political philosophy, will be broadly reconstructed to the extent that they are deployed and rendered more concrete under the different aspects of the concept of revelation. For Solger, philosophy has to stand at a highly fragile and paradoxical centre, one uniting the knowledge of the absolute and the finitude of individual existence, while maintaining an acute consciousness of their opposition.

From the point of view of the history of philosophy, Solger's thought reveals an interest in questioning categories that had long become fixed, but that the scholarship on idealism and romanticism in the last few decades has fortunately shown to be porous. Moreover, the manner in which Solger's philosophy holds in tension the temptation of nihilism, and the desire to believe in the true, the powerlessness of thought and the affirmation of the presence of the Idea, is not without contemporary resonances. Solger rejects for example that inevitable sterile pendulum game swinging between blind religious faith and empty rationalism. He asks how it is possible to do philosophy in an epoch that considers it to be useless. He keeps the idea that individual existence cannot be surpassed, but places at the centre of

¹ "Philosophy is therefore nothing else than the thinking of the presence of the essence in our knowledge and existence, or in other words, of divine revelation", Solger, *Über die wahre Bedeutung und Bestimmung der Philosophie*, NS II, 116. (See the end of the essay regarding the bibliographical abbreviations.)

² "(a) revelation, i.e. (...) a real and not merely an imagined truth", Solger, *Über die wahre Bedeutung und Bestimmung der Philosophie*, NS II, 175.

³ The importance of the concept of revelation has already been noted. See especially Luca Ghisleri, *L'Unità nella dualità. L'ontologia della rivelazione di K.W.F. Solger* (Milan: Mimesis, 2007). However, the present article is the first attempt to re-examine revelation with respect to the whole of Solger's philosophy.

philosophy the experience of a truth that annihilates the individuality. In many respects, Solger's philosophy requires a re-reading today that recognizes its uniqueness and situates it in its rightful historical and intellectual context.

1. Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger (1780-1819): Life, Works and Reception

a) Biographical overview

Born 28 November 1780, in Schwedt-an-der-Oder, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger embarked on a career as a civil servant in the *Kriegs- und Domänenkammer* in Berlin after the completion of his studies in classical philology and law at the university of Halle. In 1806 he quit his position to devote himself exclusively to philology (and to related studies in mythology) and to philosophy. He studied in particular the works of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, as well as those of Spinoza, Plato and Giordano Bruno. During the winter 1801-1802 he attended Schelling's⁴ lectures in Jena, and in 1804-1805 he was an auditor of Fichte in Berlin.⁵ However, it was firstly as a philologist, or more precisely, as a translator of Sophocles that he became known; this work launched his academic career. In 1804 he published an anonymous translation of *Oedipus Rex*⁶; in 1808 there appeared under his own name a groundbreaking translation of the entire tragedies of Sophocles.⁷ The same year he obtained his doctorate in philosophy and made the acquaintance of Ludwig Tieck. From 1811 onward the latter became a close friend with whom Solger had intense discussions, particularly during the composition of his principal work, *Erwin. Vier Gespräche über das Schöne*

⁴ The courses given by Schelling in Jena in the winter semester 1801/02 especially concern the "Introduction to the idea and limits of true philosophy" (*Einleitung über die Idee und Grenzen der wahren Philosophie*), in *F.W.J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. H. Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier, 1962), vol. 1, 235. They were most likely based on his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) and on the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1801). Solger subsequently read the 1809 treatise *On Human Freedom*. See too W. Henckmann, "Solgers Schellingstudium in Jena 1801/1802. Fünf unveröffentlichte Briefe", *Hegel-Studien* 13 (1978): 53-74; and "Etwas über das Verhältnis des Ideals zur Nachahmung der Natur in der Kunst. Ein Aufsatz Solgers zur Auseinandersetzung mit Schelling", *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 16 (1972): 409-52.

⁵ Solger attended the third series of lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* given by Fichte in Nov.-Dec. 1804 (cf. NS I, 131), and the lectures on the *Philosophische Charakteristik des Zeitalters* (Nov. 1804-March 15, 1805), and the course, *Principien der Gottes-, Sitten- und Rechtslehre* (beginning Feb. 6, 1805). Cf. R. Lauth, "Über Fichtes Lehrtätigkeit in Berlin von Mitte 1799 bis Anfang 1805 und seine Zuhörerschaft", *Hegel-Studien* 15 (1980): 9-50; and Fichte, GA II/7, 375. "It's a sheer delight to get to know and to compare him [Fichte] and Schelling, the two greatest men of our epoch in this field." (Solger, letter to his brother Friedrich, 1 December 1804, NS I, p. 134).

⁶ *Königs Oedipus*, translation in the meter of the original (Berlin, 1804).

⁷ *Sophokles*, in the meter of the original, translated by K.W.F. Solger, 2 vols., Berlin 1808 (then 1824, 1837 and Munich 1977).

und die Kunst (Erwin. Four Conversations on Beauty and Art).⁸ A long sojourn in Dresden in 1812 permitted Solger to spend time at the Art Gallery in direct contact with works of art. During his lifetime, there also appeared a series of *Philosophische Gespräche* (Philosophical Dialogues) in 1817, as well as a *Review* of August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature).⁹ It was only several years after his death that more voluminous material was published, providing the public with a better knowledge of his thought. This occurred in 1826 with the two-volume edition of Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich von Raumer: *Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel* (Posthumous Writings and Correspondence)¹⁰, which collected together a number of significant philosophical texts and a large portion of his correspondence. In 1829 Karl Ludwig Heyse (a student who had attended the lectures of both Solger and Hegel) edited Solger's *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* (Lectures on Aesthetics) that had been delivered in Berlin in 1819.¹¹

In October 1809 Solger was nominated to the University of Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, where he taught philology (Greek tragedy) and philosophy (aesthetics and logic); he declined the inhabitants' offer to become the mayor of the town, in order to devote himself to his scientific research. Furthermore, he always considered his role as husband and father to be important. In August 1811, he was called to the newly founded University of Berlin as professor of philosophy and mythological studies. Solger gave lecture courses on aesthetics virtually every year, numerous courses on logic, dialectics, and the foundations of philosophy, regular courses on mythology and the Greek and Roman classics; and especially after 1813, he also lectured on the philosophy of right and political philosophy. Moreover, he became increasingly interested in the philosophy of religion.

In July 1814 Solger took over the role of the rector of the University (which had been occupied by Fichte until his death in January 1814). After the assassination of Kotzebue by the student Karl Ludwig Sand, he drew up

⁸ *Erwin. Vier Gespräche über das Schöne und die Kunst* [Berlin 1815, then 1907], ed. W. Henckmann (Munich: Fink, 1970).

⁹ Solger, *Rezension: A.W. Schlegel, "Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur"*, *Jahrbuch der Literatur* (Vienna) VII (1819): 80–155.

¹⁰ Henceforth NS I and NS II. Although this edition does not meet current scientific standards, these volumes have constituted (because of the difficulty of the dialogue *Erwin*) one of the principal means for the diffusion of Solger's thought.

¹¹ There is now an excellent recent edition by G. Pinna (Hamburg: Meiner, 2017). The *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* (henceforth: *Vorlesungen*) present the contents of *Erwin* in a more systematic and accessible manner, much like in a manual. In fact, Solger would have not agreed with the publication of these lectures (cf. the letter to F. von Raumer of 22 March 1812, NS I, 225); in addition, questions could be asked about a possible Hegelian distortion by Heyse. See, too, the Italian translation: K.W.F. Solger, *Lezioni di Estetica*, trans. by G. Pinna (Palermo: Aesthetica, 1995); and the French anthology: *L'art et la tragédie du beau*, translation and introduction by A. Baillot (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2004).

a text of protestation in the name of the Berlin university senate against the Carlsbad decrees that were aimed at restricting the freedom of the universities and the press (11 October 1819). From 1818-1819 Solger warmly supported the nomination of Hegel to Berlin and was then his colleague for several months. Their intellectual relationship was characterised by mutual respect and appreciation. Solger writes for instance: "I admire Hegel very much, and agree with him, surprisingly, in many places. In dialectics we have both taken almost the same path, but entirely independently of one another, and have at least tackled the matter entirely from the same and indeed from a new side."¹² However, this friendship wasn't given time to flourish: on the 25th October 1819, before his thirty-ninth birthday, Solger's life was brutally cut short by illness. A saddened Hegel writes: "The day before yesterday I accompanied Solger to his final resting-place; his tomb is not far from Fichte's. It will therefore be mine too, next to my colleagues. Judging by these two, philosophers do not seem to grow old here."¹³

b) Reception

Without ever becoming a 'classical' philosopher in the manner of Fichte and Schelling, or an iconic figure of Early German Romanticism like Friedrich Schlegel or Novalis, Solger has nonetheless never entirely disappeared from philosophical consciousness.¹⁴ He was read relatively little during his lifetime. Already at that time his friends criticized the complexity of his philosophical dialogues, while he himself deplored his lack of serious readers. Read and admired after his premature death by Hegel, Goethe, Kierkegaard and Friedrich Theodor Vischer, he was considered up until the start of the 20th century as one of the seminal authors of philosophical aesthetics. However, even from the outset the reception of his philosophy was not just confined to his aesthetics. For example, Hegel's *Review of his Posthumous Writings and Correspondence (Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel)*¹⁵ demarcated him from the romanticism of Friedrich Schlegel or Novalis, which was allegedly subjectivist, and recognised in him a genuine understanding of the 'speculative', albeit an abstract one. The kind words of the master

¹² Solger, letter to Tieck, April 26, 1818, NS I, 620, Matenko 423. Cf. also Solger's letter to Hegel, May 1818 (in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1953), vol. II, 189. See M. Galland-Szymkowiak, "La critique hégélienne du dialogue solgérien. Dialogue, systématisme, intersubjectivité", in *Formen der Philosophie. Deutschland und Frankreich 1750-1830*, ed. A. Baillet and C. Coulombeau (Hanover-Laatz: Wehrhahn, 2007), 149–71. Regarding Solger's understanding of Hegel's philosophy, see my commentaries in Solger, *Écrits philosophiques*, 290–91.

¹³ Hegel, letter to Creuzer, 30.10.1819, *Briefe von und an Hegel*, vol. II, 220.

¹⁴ The following state of the research does not presume to be exhaustive, but simply to provide an overview.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Solgers „Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel“*, *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 1828.

subsequently piqued the interest of Hegelian historians of philosophy, who were inclined to characterize Solger as the missing link between Schelling's philosophy of identity and the philosophy of Hegel.¹⁶ Other commentators view him as an intermediary between Fichte and Hegel¹⁷, and some as Schellingian.¹⁸

Solger research experienced a first renaissance (in German studies and in philosophy) in the 1930s, notably by authors who ascribed to him – due to his interest in phenomenal appearance and the finitude of existence – a position close to that of the emergent existential phenomenology.¹⁹ But Solger was also studied for his own sake.²⁰ A second renaissance started in the 1960s and 1970s, with the re-issuing or re-editing of his works.²¹ In addition, a large number of detailed critical studies were published from the second half of the 1990s onwards, in German and in Italian²²; the reception

¹⁶ Cf., for example, K. Rosenkranz, *G.W.F. Hegels Leben* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1844), 282.

¹⁷ F. J. Schmidt, "Solger", in *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, vol. 54 [1908] (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1971), 381.

¹⁸ E. von Hartmann, *Die deutsche Ästhetik seit Kant*, in Hartmann, *Ausgewählte Werke* (Berlin: Haacke, 1886), vol. 3, 61; T.W. Danzel, "Über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie der Kunst und ihre nächste Aufgabe", in Danzel, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. O. Jahn (Leipzig: Dyk, 1855), 52–3, 54 sq.; F. Überweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Part 4: *Die deutsche Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts und der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Mittler, 1923), 56 sq.; X. Tilliette, "Schelling, l'art et les artistes", in Schelling, *Textes esthétiques*, ed. A. Pernet (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978), XLI.

¹⁹ O. Becker, "Von der Hinfälligkeit des Schönen und der Abenteuerlichkeit des Künstlers", *Festschrift für Husserl, Ergänzungsband zum Jahrbuch für phil. und phän. Forschung* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929); M. Boucher, *K.W.F. Solger. Esthétique et philosophie de la présence* (Paris: Stock, 1934). Boucher maintains that Solger is not a romantic (186–87) and should not be reduced to a "theorist of irony", which is nothing "but a consequence" in his philosophy (274).

²⁰ J. E. Heller, *Solgers Philosophie der ironischen Dialektik. Ein Beitrag zur romantischen und spekulativ-idealistischen Philosophie* (Berlin: dissertation, 1928) (which distinguishes Solger from both the idealists and the romantics); and the articles of O. Walzel: "Methode? Ironie bei Friedrich Schlegel und bei K. W. F. Solger", *Helicon* 1 (1938): 33–50; "Allgemeines und Besonderes in Solgers Ästhetik", *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 17 (1939): 153–82; "Tragik bei Solger", *Helicon* 3 (1940): 27–49.

²¹ R. Herzog, *Die Bewahrung der Vernunft. Eine Untersuchung der Metaphysik K.W.F. Solgers* (Munich: dissertation, 1967; for Herzog, the key to Solger is his metaphysics); M. Frank, *Das Problem 'Zeit' in der deutschen Romantik. Zeitbewußtsein und Bewußtsein von Zeitlichkeit in der Frühromantischen Philosophie und in Tiecks Dichtung* [1972] (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zurich: Schöningh, 1990), 97–129. The numerous articles of Wolfhart Henckmann, the chief contributor to the renaissance of Solgerian studies, will be cited throughout our study.

²² We will refer here only to books. See G. Pinna, *L'Ironia metafisica. Filosofia e teoria estetica in K.W.F. Solger* (Genoa: Pantograf, 1994); V. Pinto, *Filosofia e religione in K.W. F. Solger* (Naples: Morano Editore, 1995); the works of Valerio Verra and those of Marco Ravera; L. Ghisleri, *L'Unità nella dualità*.

In German: F. Decher, *Die Ästhetik K.W.F. Solgers* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1994); D. Potz, *Solgers Dialektik. Die Grundzüge der dialektischen Philosophie K.W.F. Solgers* (Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 1995); P. Schulte, *Solgers Schönheitslehre im Zusammenhang des deutschen Idealismus: Kant, Schiller, W.v. Humboldt, Schelling, Solger, Schleiermacher, Hegel* (Kassel: Kassel Univ. Press, 2001); A. Baillot, M. Galland-Szymkowiak (eds.), *Grundzüge der Philosophie K.W.F. Solgers* (Berlin/Münster: LIT Verlag, «Ideal&Real», 2014) (this volume contains contributions on the different areas of Solger's philosophy).

of Solger developed in the Francophone world in parallel;²³ while there is currently very little secondary literature on Solger in English.²⁴

Among others, a current is discernible that tried to disengage Solger from his somewhat limited reputation as an ‘aesthetician’ or ‘theorist of romantic irony’, conferring upon him instead a much broader place in the history of philosophy by emphasizing the fundamental features of his metaphysics. This is the perspective that we will be adopting, by choosing to present the entirety of his thought based on the central idea of ‘revelation.’

Even if Solger was not part of the Jena group of romantics, who formed around the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Novalis, and the journal *Athenaeum* (1798-1800), constituting the inner core of Early German romanticism between 1796 and 1800/1801, he shared (through the intermediary of Tieck among others) the interests of the romantics. For example, the question concerning the *presentation* (*Darstellung*) of the absolute in finite reality, which was philosophical in general and aesthetic in particular, or again, his reflections on *irony* and the *symbol*. Like the romantics, he sought a form of philosophy that is less abstractly universal than the systematic presentations, a form of thought capable of achieving the synthesis of philosophy and “life.”

At the same time, Solger’s philosophy is constructed within a framework, and he employs philosophical motifs that are certainly those of

²³ See the works of Jacques Colette, the rediscoverer of Solger in France, half a century after Maurice Boucher: “Art, mystique et négativité: K.W.F. Solger”, *Études philosophiques* 1 (1983): 69–86; “Enthousiasme et ironie. La dialectique artistique selon K.W.F. Solger”, *Études philosophiques* 4 (1992): 487–98. See furthermore the translation and introduction to: Hegel, *Compte-rendu des Écrits posthumes et correspondance de Solger*, trad. J. Reid, N. Tondut under the title *L'Ironie romantique* (Paris: Vrin, 1997); A. Baillot, *Genèse et réception de la pensée esthétique de Solger entre 1800 et 1830*, doctoral dissertation, Université Paris VIII, 2002 (<https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00783069/document>); A. Baillot (ed.), *L'Esthétique de K.W.F. Solger* (Tusson: Du Lérot, 2002); X. Tilliette, “Dans le sillage de Schelling: l'intuition esthétique de K.F. Solger”, in *Divinarum rerum notitia. La teologia tra filosofia e storia*, ed. A. Russo and G. Coffele (Roma: Studium, 2001), 619–29; M. Galland-Szymkowiak, *Présence de l'absolu. Le problème esthétique du symbole et ses enjeux philosophiques dans les systèmes postkantien (Schelling, Solger, Hegel)*, doctoral dissertation, Université Paris IV, 2005; Ph. Grosos, *L'Ironie du réel à la lumière du romantisme allemand* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2009), 115–37; K.W.F. Solger, *Sur Sophocle et la tragédie antique*, translation, introductions and annotations by N. Angehrn (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2010); K.W.F. Solger, *Écrits philosophiques*, introduction, translation and commentaries by M. Galland-Szymkowiak (Paris: Vrin, 2015).

²⁴ English-language research on Solger is mostly in the fields of German and literary studies: René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, vol. 5, The Romantic Age* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), 298–303; Moshe Barash, “Solger”, in *Modern Theories of Art*, 1. “From Winckelmann to Baudelaire”, ed. M. Barash (New York/London: New York University Press, 1990), 305–08. However, there are a number of recent articles in English published by Italian scholars on the metaphysics of Solger: Paolo Diego Bubbio, “Solger and Hegel: Privation and Negation”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17, no. 2 (2009): 173–87; “Solger’s Notion of Sacrifice as Double Negation”, *The Heythrop Journal* 50, no. 2 (2009): 206–14; L. Ghisleri, “Absolute, Revelation and Nothing in the Thought of K.W.F. Solger”, in *Nichts, Negation, Nihilismus. Die europäische Moderne als Erkenntnis und Erfahrung des Nichts*, ed. A. Bertinetto and C. Binkelman (Berlin/New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 107–17.

the idealistic philosophy of Fichte and Schelling. He refuses to be labelled as an “aesthetics professor”²⁵, writing in 1817: “My philosophy has now extended itself so far that I can develop it with complete certainty. It is neither the Fichtean philosophy, nor – as some appear to believe – the Schellingian, rather I am convinced that it is a new and particular development of German philosophy.”²⁶ And: “It is not some kind of recast Schellingianism or Fichteanism that I’m presenting. I believe that I have found a standpoint from which I can also construct these side roads.”²⁷ Solger’s philosophy, which essentially develops between 1815 and 1819, is situated in continuity with the transformation of Kantianism accomplished in Fichte’s transcendental idealism and in the young Schelling. Furthermore, Solger shares some of the answers given by Schelling up to and including 1809, but also by Fichte in 1804–1806. Nevertheless, he also roundly criticizes them, and has been described as their “bad conscience.”²⁸ This is because he sets transcendental and speculative idealism in confrontation with a person who radically challenged it (and in this way helped to determine it). And that person is: Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Solger’s valorisation of the inner experience of “revelation” in “faith”, the importance he grants to existence and to the individuality, are all inconceivable without Jacobi’s influence. Solger’s explicitly admits such an influence. He particularly seeks to reconcile, on the one hand, the systematic idealistic understanding of consciousness and the world, and on the other hand, the affirmation of a transcendence of the absolute; he wishes to grasp how it is deployed in “life”, in the individual and contingent experience of existence.²⁹

2. Philosophy as the Thought of ‘Revelation’

a) The post-Kantian problem of the principle of philosophy

Like Fichte and Schelling, Solger considered the vocation of philosophy to be a systematic science (for him philosophical systematicity was a requirement, although distinct from the *form* of a systematic presentation).³⁰ The early Fichte and the early Schelling developed a construction of philosophy as science (*Wissenschaft*). It could only be founded on a principle that was at once *absolutely immediate*, i.e. that could not be deduced, that was given like a fact in the subject (as indicated by the terms *Tatsache* in

²⁵ Solger, letter to Tieck, 1.1.1819, NS I, 707, Matenko 511.

²⁶ Solger to Abeken, 15.11.1817, NS I, 573.

²⁷ Solger to Keffler, 8.11.1817, NS I, 568.

²⁸ M. Ophälders, *Romantische Ironie. Essay über Solger* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 19 (cf. p. 61).

²⁹ My commentaries in the volume, Solger, *Écrits philosophiques* (pp. 245–317), underscore the confrontation points between Solger and Fichte, Schelling, Jacobi and Hegel.

³⁰ Cf. M. Galland-Szymkowiak, “La critique hégélienne du dialogue solgérien” (see note 12), 160–63.

K.L. Reinhold and *Tathandlung* in Fichte), and *absolutely universal*, i.e. likely to ground the totality of our theoretical and practical relationship with everything that *is*. Therefore, starting from the thinking subject, in early post-Kantianism it was a matter of finding a first principle of philosophy³¹ that was unconditional and universal, and which attested to the inner and fundamental unity of being and thought. Only after being founded on a principle of this kind could the philosophical *system* legitimately present itself not as an arbitrary description but as an exposition in the element of thought, of the unity of being and thought that grounds the whole of reality. With his concept of *revelation* as the principle and centre of philosophy, Solger furnished an original solution to a problem lying at the heart of the post-Kantian constellation.³² However, by doing so he questions both the Fichtean and Schellingian perspectives, and finally the very status of the problem itself.

b) Solger's theory of knowledge and conception of philosophy

In a manner similar to Fichte and Schelling, Solger also inherited the project of understanding the conditions of the possibility of knowledge from Kant's critical philosophy. He distinguishes between two types of knowledge. In 'ordinary knowledge' (*gemeine Erkenntnis*), knowing is *thinking*, that is to say, abstracting and judging,³³ linking concepts and intuitions, and opposing and comparing. This knowledge is purely relative – a relativity that is at the same time an essential character of our existence.³⁴ Nevertheless, we experience within ordinary knowledge the demand that the concept and intuition fully coincide, or again, a non-relative 'fixed point'. The access to "higher knowledge" (*höhere Erkenntnis*) of this kind is indicated in us by the *conviction* that the relation established by our consciousness, e.g. of a concept and an intuition, is well and truly the expression of their essential identity:

We only call our state 'conviction' if we do not merely have the relative connection in our consciousness, but also if the knowledge of this

³¹ Cf. Ch. Asmuth, "Anfang und Form der Philosophie. Überlegungen zu Fichte, Schelling und Hegel", in *Schelling: zwischen Fichte und Hegel*, ed. Ch. Asmuth, A. Denker and M. Vater (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Rodopi, 2000), 403–17.

³² For a more detailed exposition of Solger's position in this context, cf. M. Galland-Szymkowiak, "Philosophie und Religion bei K.W.F. Solger. Ein Beitrag zur nachkantischen Frage nach dem Prinzip der Philosophie", in *Der Eine oder der Andere. Gott in der klassischen deutschen Philosophie und im Denken der Gegenwart*, ed. Ch. Asmuth and K. Drilo (Berlin/Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009), 191–206.

³³ Solger, *Über die wahre Bedeutung und Bestimmung der Philosophie, besonders in unserer Zeit* (henceforth: UWB), NS II, 70.

³⁴ "Existence is precisely the moment of the most perfect reciprocal action between the universal and the particular." (Solger, *Philosophie des Rechts und Staats* [henceforth: PhiRS] in NS II, 263–365, here NS II, 301). Cf. Solger, UWB, chap. 2.

perfect unity enters into the same. If by means of classification and comparison of natural objects with their general concepts we discover that some kind of newly discovered creature belongs to this or that genus, then this does not depend on the fact that I assign to it a special aspect of infinite multiplicity under the empty form of this generic concept; but that I assume this concept is present in the thing in the entire fullness, which comprises its unity; and that it fills the thing with its essence, and communicates to it all the determinations and expressions which are generally compatible with the thought of such an essence.³⁵

The ‘conviction’ not only refers to the unity of the concept and the intuition, but also to the coincidence of the activity of the cognizing subject with which it cognizes itself, i.e. to the unity of thinking and being. Solger uses the term ‘*idea*’ to designate these points of unity in knowledge. He defines the idea by means of the identity between matter and the form of knowledge.³⁶ However, by the *matter* of knowledge, he not only understands, like Kant, the sensible manifold, but the concepts unifying the manifold as well, yet each time under a particular angle; and by the *form* of knowledge, he understands the unity of the consciousness linking the matter of knowledge into a whole.³⁷

If philosophy wants to become a science, it must take the *idea* as its principle, the point of unity of the subject and object, that is constitutive of all knowledge. Or more precisely: not merely this point, but the manner in which it effectively constitutes our cognitions, i.e. the *dynamic of the transition* of this higher unity *in* the relations of ordinary cognition. The task of philosophy is not simply a matter of showing how the universal and the particular fuse into each other, but how the *idea* (the absolute unity of the universal and particular) *and existence* (pure relativity, non-unity or difference of the universal and the particular) merge into one another.³⁸ This *transition* will constitute the core, the principle on which the totality of our knowledge will be founded and recognized as a knowledge of what *is*. What has to be overcome is the opposition between, on the one hand, a network of concepts in relation to which the particular is never more than something possible, and on the other hand, the undeniable but inexplicable encounter with the individual existence of empirical things.

Fichte and Schelling, stresses Solger, had certainly considered that it is essential for philosophy to “elevate relative knowledge into an essential unity

³⁵ Solger, UWB, NS II, 80.

³⁶ “In and for itself knowledge must be the unity of the universal and the particular, and therefore also the unity of the form and the substance, and this is one of the primary meanings of the word ‘idea’”. (Solger, UWB, NS II, 91).

³⁷ Solger, UWB, NS II, 90.

³⁸ “(..) what merges into one another in revelation is indeed not the universal and particular, but the idea itself and existence on the whole” (Solger, UWB, NS II, 124–25).

of opposites.”³⁹ They attempted to determine how this absolute unity grounds all reality for us: their goal was to “determine the whole of reality (*Wirklichkeit*) through philosophy”, or to “give a wholly specific positive content to philosophy”⁴⁰. However, instead of situating themselves at the *very point of the transition* of the idea into reality (at the “centre of consciousness”⁴¹), they situated themselves on either one *or* the other side of this transition.

Moreover, Solger explains, in the *Grundlage* (1794-95) Fichte made the absolute unity of opposites into a principle of philosophy – with the absolute I as the pure activity of self-positing.⁴² The grasping of the “I am” indeed gives us a point of cognitive unity, since the subject in the “I am” is its own predicate. But, according to Solger, on the one hand, this unity results from an activity of the connection of the I with itself; on the other hand, the I remains opposed to the real and cannot truly be shown as its own productive principle, unless one assumes that the unknown *Anstoß* stimulates it to this productivity. Hence, the absolute unity is never present as such in our existence.⁴³ As for *Schelling*, Solger notes, in his philosophy of identity he wished to demonstrate the reality of absolute unity – ‘reason’ or ‘absolute identity’ – in any being.⁴⁴ Yet he failed to show how absolute identity passes over into *temporal, finite reality*, or into empirical “factual consciousness”⁴⁵: thus, here as well reason (higher cognition) remains solely “formal”.⁴⁶ To put it another way: in Schelling’s system of identity, it is not a question of the reality of our existence, but simply of a reality that is always already in the absolute. Inversely, in order to explain how absolute identity assumes an infinity of forms, Schelling is forced, according to Solger, to furtively introduce relations and oppositions into the identity that depend in fact on finite existence. The very finitude of existence is here neutralized in advance as it were.

Fichte and Schelling have therefore lost “the moment of transformation that alone is the true act of cognition, in which the antitheses are simultaneously one and cancel out each other.”⁴⁷ Thus, the principle they

³⁹ Solger, UWB, NS II, 130.

⁴⁰ Solger, UWB, NS II, 135.

⁴¹ Solger, UWB, NS II, 128.

⁴² Cf. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer* (1794-95), in GA I,2. Cf. Solger, UWB, NS II, 130.

⁴³ Solger, UWB, NS II, 131.

⁴⁴ Cf. Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (1801); “Presentation of my System of Philosophy”, English translation in: *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)*, edited and translated by Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood (Albany/N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2012), 141–205. Cf. Solger, UWB, NS II, 132.

⁴⁵ Solger, UWB, NS II, 133.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Solger, UWB, NS II, 130.

assigned to philosophy is only a partial one,⁴⁸ and does not permit philosophy to reach a “conclusion (*Abschluß*)”⁴⁹, to fully complete the idealist project by showing how the idea effectively constitutes the reality of our knowledge and existence. Their philosophies make “within the complete circle of philosophy a restricted movement in a one-sided direction”.⁵⁰ If philosophy wants to be a systematic explanation of everything that exists starting from absolute unity, then it has to give itself as a principle the very point of the junction between the idea (in its eternity) and existence (in its temporal finitude), their mutual transition from the one into the other.

c) Revelation, the transition of the idea into existence

In order for philosophy to arrive at a “conclusion”, it requires “the first foundation and presupposition itself to become once again a fact and a full, living experience.”⁵¹ The idea, the basis of philosophy, must become our existence and even in its contingency. The *idea* is also called by Solger the *essence* (*das Wesen*), i.e. which we could explain as the thought unity of being and thought. Thus, the essence (or the “divine essence”) needs to become our existence. However, in its relativity and temporality⁵² existence is precisely what the absolute idea, the one and eternal, is *not*, i.e. its nothingness or nothing (*Nichts*). Hence, to explain the *presence* of the idea (or the existence of the essence), is nothing else than to nullify the negation of the idea itself, i.e. to show the nullity of finite phenomenal appearances:

Existence in and for itself is only what the essence is *not*, the *nothingness of the essence* [*das Nichts des Wesens*] (...). Consequently, the essence reveals itself as such, or it only becomes real essence *by cancelling and annihilating this nothingness*. For us it is only there in this complete opposition with the nothingness.⁵³

In fact, if the “divine essence” did not continually annihilate the existence in which it reveals itself, it would not be revealed *by itself* anymore, but would depend in some manner on finite properties through which it would have to reveal itself.

The higher art of existing [*dazuseyn*], is to reveal oneself, and to reveal oneself means to destroy one’s nothingness, i.e. to be there through oneself; both are entirely One.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Cf. Solger, UWB, NS II, 128, 135.

⁴⁹ Solger, UWB, NS II, 134.

⁵⁰ Solger, UWB, NS II, 134.

⁵¹ Solger, UWB, NS II, 129.

⁵² Manfred Frank has particularly stressed the Solgerian determination of finitude as temporality (*Das Problem ‘Zeit’ in der deutschen Romantik*, 1990, 97–129, 505–6).

⁵³ Solger, UWB, NS II, 172.

⁵⁴ Solger, letter to Tieck (01.01.1819), NS I, 703, Matenko, 508.

To know the presence of the idea in our existence cannot signify anything else than to understand the nullity ('nothingness') (*Nichtigkeit*) of our existence, that is, the fact that *by itself* it neither contains nor produces any *being*:

The highest knowledge of the essence in our existence [*Daseyn*], is wholly one and the same with the complete conviction of its nothingness.⁵⁵

That the absolute exists, or is "real", therefore signifies that it must annihilate the purely relational and relative character of phenomenal appearances. But the significance of Solgerian dialectics goes even further: it is not only a matter of negating phenomenality in general, but clearly even the phenomenality of *the absolute* itself. "Revealing oneself means destroying *one's* nothingness": hence, the absolute must abolish its *own* existence if it has to reveal itself *as* absolute. For nothingness (the existence) is not a second principle, a second kind of being that the idea would have to destroy, but indeed its *own* non-being (what it is not); from the point of view of the absolute itself, there is no nothingness.⁵⁶ Thus, the revelation of the idea in and through the annihilation of finite existence is at the same time the *self-annihilation* of the idea as far as it exists:

(...) the essence, insofar as it is entirely nothing, once again cancels itself, which means the same as saying that as essence it would make itself real, or it would become immediately there.⁵⁷

According to Solger, the foundation of all being and of all truth resides in this "divine self-revelation and self-sacrifice."⁵⁸ However, this sacrifice⁵⁹ or this self-annihilation of the essence does not mean that the absolute is hidden or concealed from us: revelation, Solger underscores, is complete and entire. It is the full presence of the absolute idea for our finite consciousness. Because for a finite being the *presence* could not mean a *parousia*, a fully positive advent of the absolute as such – but only a fullness that is simultaneously its own evanescence. Revelation is *whole* to the extent that it

⁵⁵ Solger, *Briefe, die Mißverständnisse über Philosophie und deren Verhältnis zur Religion betreffend*, NS II, 31.

⁵⁶ "Everything that is genuine is only the revelation of God, and we know of no other genuine existence [*Daseyn*] and acting than what consists in the continual annihilation of our self, i.e. of our appearance [*Schein*] in order that this revelation freely radiates forth. With God it will be different: there, the nothing is really nothing, which for us, however, is solely something insofar as it appears to us" (Letter of Solger to Keßler, 16.5.1818, NS I, 631).

⁵⁷ Solger, *Philosophische Gespräche*, 317.

⁵⁸ Solger, *Philosophische Gespräche*, 320.

⁵⁹ See P. D. Bubbio, "Solger's Notion of Sacrifice as Double Negation."

is *kenotic*⁶⁰, that it is nothing more than the very destruction of that which reveals itself.

Precisely through this nothingness of the idea as an earthly appearance [*Erscheinung*] (...), we first arrive at the point of recognizing it as real and everything that appears to us as the being of the idea.⁶¹

d) Ontology and the epistemology of revelation

The starting point of Solger's philosophy, which is inscribed in the post-Kantianism tradition, resides in *self-consciousness*⁶² and an inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. Ontology for him does not merely have a realistic meaning, but is identical with an epistemology (or a theory of knowledge).

"Revelation" is the actualisation of a foundation for consciousness, renewed at each moment in existence. But *what* exactly is revealed? With regard to the absolute unity in itself, Solger notes:

Thus, we cannot say anything more about it except that it was originally there, independent of the relation and merging activity, that it is there merely in and for itself, that it is the eternal, the concluded and perfected.⁶³

Because the absolute as such is absolutely one, and existence does not consist, in contrast, of anything but differentiations, oppositions and relations, then *strictly speaking* absolute unity does not *exist*. Solger also calls it an "obscure being", and notes its radical transcendence and unknowability.⁶⁴ However, Solger's own perspective consists less in insisting on this transcendence (Fr. Schlegel or Novalis insisted much more on this), than showing that the absolute, or rather the absolute idea (which is what we can know of "obscure being") is certainly *present* – albeit as a *kenosis* that keeps simultaneously referring to its absence. Of course, we cannot know anything at all about the absolute unity as such. However, our existence is no *other kind* of being than this "obscure being", it cannot receive its being except from this. Considered in itself, existence is nothingness, but at the same time it is indeed the sole place possible for the real presence of the idea.⁶⁵ Solger

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Ravera, "Presentazione", in Solger, *Erwin. Quattro dialoghi sul bello et sull'arte*, ed. and trans. by M. Ravera (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2004), 9, 11, 12–13.

⁶¹ Solger, *Erwin*, 388–389.

⁶² Cf. Solger, Letter to Tieck (19.11.1815), NS I, 376, Matenko 191.

⁶³ Solger, UWB, NS II, 91.

⁶⁴ Solger, *Philosophische Gespräche über Seyn, Nichtseyn und Erkennen* (henceforth: USNE), NS II, 232. Cf. M. Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 318.

⁶⁵ "Hence Solger's dialectics turns out to be ontic dualism (two types of being) but still ontological monism (a single ground)", D. Potz, *Solgers Dialektik*, 159 (see note 23).

defines existence as “true positive nothingness (*das wahre positive Nichts*)”,⁶⁶ “nothingness” in itself, devoid of its own consistence with respect to Being, “positive” insofar as it seeks to posit itself as valid on its own, outside of revelation, and therefore to become “evil”.⁶⁷

Solger emphasizes that we certainly have an experience of the unity in our relative knowledge and existence. From the point of view of knowledge, “*conviction*” is the certitude to have reached within thinking, the unity of thought and being. From the point of view of being, it is the unity of *individually existing things* which impose their irrefutable presence on us, their one and only being-there.⁶⁸ In the two cases, consciousness detects or confirms the presence of a unity that *it knows it did not create itself*. Even though philosophy has indeed the unity of self-consciousness as a starting point, according to Solger that unity cannot be understood either as posited by the I in a free act (Fichte), or discovered by the I as its own foundation in a process of abstraction going beyond the subject-object division (Schelling in 1801): at the expense of a grounding powerlessness, the unconditional unity is received by the I as the radical exteriority of its most intimate foundation.

The task of philosophy therefore consists in elucidating the conditions of the “presence” of this unity in existence, or again, to discursively expose the modalities of ‘revelation.’ From an ontological point of view, revelation is defined as the deployment of being by means of its non-being: being enters into existence by opposing itself to a non-being (which is nothing in itself), in order to finally infinitely recreate its own unity in the diversity of the finite, in individuals.

(...) then being attains a reunion with itself already in every point of non-being, but always only by means of the particular.⁶⁹

From an epistemological point of view (not dissociated from the preceding), revelation is revelation of the *idea*, ‘higher knowledge’ *within* ‘ordinary’ finite and relative knowledge. The idea is the “eternal act of unity”⁷⁰ to oneself, by means of finite existence and knowledge. It assumes different configurations (ideas of the good, of beauty, of truth, of blessedness), depending on whether it appears to us as mediated or immediate, in external objects or in consciousness.

If we have discarded the shell of the nothingness, then we shall clearly perceive how the whole of nature is nothing else than the existence

⁶⁶ Solger, Letter to Tieck, 7.12.1817, NS I, 579, Matenko 395. Cf. the letter to Tieck of 19.11.1815, NS I, 378, Matenko 192 ; of 1.01.1819, NS I, 703, Matenko 508.

⁶⁷ Cf. Solger, UWB, NS II, 168, and the letter to Tieck, 2-4.02.1817, NS I, 512, Matenko 346.

⁶⁸ Cf. Solger, USNE, NS II, 207; UWB, NS II, 76.

⁶⁹ Solger, USNE, NS II, 249.

⁷⁰ Solger, UWB, NS II, 93.

[*Daseyn*] of God dissolving itself in its harmony, how religion, morality and art are nothing more than the different reappearing deed [*That*] in reality of the self-destruction and self-revelation of the divine essence. ... They too are all one and the same, only viewed from different standpoints.⁷¹

e) The unity of revelation and speculation

If the task of philosophy consists in elucidating the “*what*” of revelation, to conceptually describe the manner in which the unity of the idea is diffracted in the different domains of our finite cognition and existence, philosophy could not, however, give an account of the “*that*” or the very *fact* of revelation through its own (discursive) means. Thought cannot produce the fact of unity but only receive it from revelation.

Solger discovers this “fact” in the contents of the Christian religion, with the existence, death and resurrection of Christ (seen in themselves, but also in their connection with Christian salvation). Nonetheless, the ‘eternal fact’, the principle of philosophy, does not *coincide* with the ‘historical’ fact of the life and death of Christ. Or to use the words of Valeria Pinto, Christ and the cross constitute the *prototypos* for the genesis of philosophical dialectics (whereas artistic irony would be the *ektypos*).⁷² This fact that philosophy chooses as its own centre “is not a relative fact, but the absolute fact, which for us, however, only ever exists at once in a relative form.”⁷³

... The deed of the self-annihilation and self-revelation of God [is the] sole object of philosophy ... This event is not at all simply an external one, insofar as we picture to ourselves that it has occurred in Christ, but the fact and the eternal world law, that repeats itself everywhere and at every moment in its effect, are thoroughly one and the same. Just as in the son and in his death God sacrificed himself in the visible world, and therefore entirely cancelled this and destroyed it as appearance: thus, the Father continues to live on in the universal subsistence of this world and sacrifices himself in it at every moment whenever he descends down again as son in the appearance and again destroys himself as such in the consciousness of every single one of us.⁷⁴

By choosing “revelation” as the principle of philosophy, as the “absolute fact”, Solger follows the lead of the Reinholdian and Fichtean reflection on

⁷¹ Solger, *Philosophische Gespräche*, 320. Also: “Hence, that there is a multiplicity of ideas is due (...) to the different relation that the one and the same eternal idea has with existence and ordinary consciousness, in which it expresses itself along different paths and in different formations. However, in all of them this relation is the unity of the one essence with itself, which precisely for this reason is a living and not a dead unity, because it unfolds itself in existence and in the cancellation [*Aufhebung*] of it and its opposites, to become once again united with itself.” (Solger, UWB, NS II, 95–6).

⁷² V. Pinto, Introduction to: Solger, *Scritti filosofici* (Napoli: Guida Editori, 1995), 12.

⁷³ Solger, UWB, NS II, 175.

⁷⁴ Solger, Letter to Keßler, 16.05.1818, NS I, 631–32.

the principle of philosophy as a ‘fact’, i.e. on the immediacy and autonomy of this principle. But he profoundly renews this reflection by showing that the immediate and self-sufficient foundation sought by the post-Kantians in the unity of self-consciousness points back to an even more original act given in the eternal fact of revelation: “Without revelation there is no genuine self-consciousness.”⁷⁵ Solger, who is again inspired by Jacobi while simultaneously criticizing him, chooses to give the name “faith” (*der Glaube*) to the inner experience of the revelation of the divine essence:

This word does not designate an indefinite inkling or even a conjecture; it is rather the clearest and most certain element in our entire cognition; for only through it do we really arrive at bringing together our consciousness as something that is single and immediately present. In every other view our consciousness only ever remains partially and relatively present.⁷⁶

Accordingly, Solger’s central thesis is the following: the contents of faith and philosophy are one and the same.⁷⁷ Philosophy as a whole consists in the *thought* of “divine revelation”, of the “presence of the essence within our knowledge and existence”,⁷⁸ which is only *experienced* in faith:

Revelation is everything; in one case it is experienced, while in another it is conceived and understood, or becomes an insight and is raised to consciousness.⁷⁹

But the division between experience and thought of revelation is unavoidable because it results from our finitude; the two are distinguished only “because we are thrown into existence (*in das Daseyn geworfen*), where the existence of the essence known to religion, and the essence of existence unveiled by philosophy, have to be distinguished from one another, because we are not God, but through him we reside in the eternal and the true.”⁸⁰

Only by placing the given ‘fact’ of revelation at the centre of the philosophical thought is the latter guaranteed to be veritably alive and connected with the real; that is to say, it is situated at the very point of the

⁷⁵ Letter of Solger to Abeken, 23.1.1818, NS I, 602. Cf. also for instance *ibid.*, 601; letter of Solger to Tieck, 4.2.1817, NS I, 513, Matenko 346–47.

⁷⁶ Solger, UWB, NS II, 98. Also Solger, *Philosophische Gespräche*, 256.

⁷⁷ Cf. E.g. Solger, UWB, NS II, 157, 169, 174, 179; *Philosophische Gespräche*, 255; Letter to Abeken, 23.01.1818, NS I, 598–99, 605. On this theme of the unity of speculation and revelation, cf. W. Henckmann, “Solgers Auffassung der Einheit der Offenbarung und der wahren Philosophie”, in *Religionsphilosophie und spekulative Theologie. Der Streit um die göttlichen Dinge (1799–1812)*, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1994), 221–50; F. Decher, “Unité de la révélation et de la spéculation. Remarques sur le fondement mystique de la philosophie solgérienne”, in *L’Esthétique de Karl Solger. Symbole, tragique et ironie*, 49–65.

⁷⁸ Solger, UWB, NS II, 116.

⁷⁹ Solger, UWB, NS II, 178.

⁸⁰ Solger, *Briefe, die Mißverständnisse über Philosophie und deren Verhältniß zur Religion betreffend*, NS II, 52.

transition from the idea to existence. Far from simply illustrating a philosophical theorem here, the Christian doctrine of revelation (as incarnation and redemption) furnishes philosophy with the “absolute fact”, which is both internal (in its content) and external (in its existence) for philosophy. Without this fact, it is incapable of becoming a systematic whole. This philosophical understanding must be clearly distinguished from the immediate experience of the fact of revelation, and for which understanding cannot be a substitute. However, the philosophical content and significance of this fact can only be determined by philosophy itself and not by religion.⁸¹ The positivity of Revelation in the fruitful tension of its identity and its difference with the philosophical (dialectical) concept of revelation, is certainly central to Solger’s thought, which for he himself is Lutheran.⁸² Nevertheless, his project is not a philosophical religion, but a philosophy.

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide here a detailed comparison between the Solgerian and the Schellingian approaches to the relation between revelation and philosophy, so we will only highlight a few points. The late Schelling states: “reason, insofar as it takes itself alone as the source and principle, is incapable of any effective knowledge”⁸³; revelation on the other hand, contains something that philosophy cannot possess without it, “something that goes beyond reason and is more than what reason contains.”⁸⁴ In both philosophers there is the idea that philosophy will only be complete if it fully reflects the “factuality” of this revelation – factuality that is the other of reason, but can only be understood as such through reason.⁸⁵ Both of them are also aware that taking revelation into account through and in thought, and conceiving its very factuality, can only profoundly modify the way philosophy understands itself.⁸⁶ However, Schelling’s philosophy of Revelation is only one part of philosophy, whereas for Solger the whole of philosophy should recognise itself as the thought of revelation.

⁸¹ “It is yet entirely certain that his science [= the science of the philosopher] is essentially distinguished from every other science due to its comprehensiveness. Every other one has something presupposed and given, either a definite form of knowledge, like mathematics, or a definite matter, like history, the theory of nature and so on. It alone has to create itself; and since this is impossible from the outside, then it has to take place from the inside, and even this means nothing else than: the essence itself has to be revealed in it” (Letter of Solger to Tieck, 4.2.1817, NS I, 507, Matenko 342). On the relation between philosophy and religion according to Solger, see: V. Pinto, *Filosofia e religione in K.W. F. Solger* (see note 22), especially chap. I; M. Galland-Szymkowiak, “Philosophie und Religion bei K.W.F. Solger” (see note 32).

⁸² Cf. L. Ghisleri, *L’Unità nelle dualità*.

⁸³ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, SW XIII, 152.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 143.

⁸⁵ See *ibid.*, 171.

⁸⁶ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, SW XIII, 142.

f) Dialectics and dialogue

To philosophize, is to conceive the omnipresent recurrence of the absolute fact of revelation; it is to comprehend the oppositions and relations of ordinary knowledge “as the development of an original unity”⁸⁷, as the “illumination of the idea in existence.”⁸⁸ The philosophical tool most adapted to this endeavour is *dialectics*, the description of a double movement: here the absolute idea posits itself in existence and negates the nothingness of its own phenomenalization. For Solger, only the *dialogue* could be an appropriate form for this conception of philosophy. If the author of *Erwin* here shares an affinity with certain romantic tendencies, his theory of the dialogue should above all be understood as intimately related to his conception of dialectics.⁸⁹

According to Solger, philosophy could not be founded on an undifferentiated intellectual intuition of absolute unity,⁹⁰ but only on a living and differentiated intuition, of the idea relating to itself by means of existence. Thus, philosophy does not coincide with a higher knowledge separated from ordinary knowledge, rather, it consists in a dialectical relation between these two modes of knowledge. Ordinary consciousness is nothing unless the unity of the idea is discerned in it; however, this is possible only through the means of ‘thought’, i.e. through putting into relation differentiating and opposing – the characteristic traits of ordinary knowledge. Hence, the two modes of knowledge simultaneously have a relation of identity *and* a relation of mutual negation.⁹¹ Only the philosophical form of the *dialogue*, according to Solger, is capable of realising this dialectical relationship. The Solgerian dialogues are striking in their literary value,⁹² presenting highly individualized personalities interlinked by multiple relationships of alliance or opposition that develop throughout the length of the discussion: here there is no absolute knowledge of the absolute, but the individual consciousness of the reader progressively discovers the common core of different false opinions because of their mutual negation.⁹³ The

⁸⁷ Solger, UWB, NS II, 92.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ On the Solgerian theory of the dialogue see: M. Frank, “Einverständnis und Vielsinnigkeit oder: das Aufbrechen der Bedeutungseinheit im ‚eigentlichen Gespräch’”, in *Das Gespräch*, eds. K. Stierle and R. Warning (Munich: W. Fink, 1984), 87-132; W. Henckmann, “Lehren und Lernen der Philosophie: zur Dialogtheorie bei F. Schlegel, Schleiermacher und Solger”, in *Lehren und Lernen der Philosophie als philosophisches Problem*, eds. H. Girndt, L. Siep (Essen: Blaue Eule, 1987), 103-160 ; *ibid.*, “Die Dialogform”, in *Erwin, Nachwort*, 492-501; M. Galland-Szymkowiak, “La critique hégélienne du dialogue solgérien” (see note 12).

⁹⁰ This is Solger’s criticism of Schelling’s conception of intellectual intuition (cf. F. Decher, *Die Ästhetik K.W.F. Solgers* (see note 22), 377).

⁹¹ Cf. Solger, UWB, chapter V.

⁹² Cf. R. Wildbolz, *Der philosophische Dialog als literarische Kunstwerk. Untersuchungen über Solgers “Philosophische Gespräche”* (Bern/Stuttgart: Haupt, 1952).

⁹³ Cf. Solger, *Erwin*, 85.

dialogue does not offer an impersonal truth, it arouses reflection in the first person: it is therefore an appropriate form for the expression and experience of a revelation which, in the Solgerian conception, is always the *individual* experience of the presence of the divine unity for a singular consciousness.

In Solger, dialectics is at once immanent and transcendent, or ‘horizontal and vertical’⁹⁴: the analysis of the unity of the idea into the relations of the understanding is immanent for finite existence, but the very fact itself that a unity is revealed, the fact that in the self-negation of ordinary knowledge there shines the lightning of higher knowledge, is not created by consciousness but always received, as “the eternal fact” of revelation. The Solgerian dialogue is characterized by an intermediate content that reflects the at once immanent and transcendent character of dialectics: it is not a (false) dialogical presentation of theses initially determined and that can be furthermore expressed *more geometrico*⁹⁵, neither is it a dialogue in which the truth would emerge solely from the finite interactions between the characters. The aim of a dialogue is not to construct the truth – for the latter, consisting of the eternal fact of revelation, is always already there⁹⁶ – but to indicate a correction of the individual opinions one by means of the other, to finally present the true *within* finite existence. Solger writes:

I would like to present the ideas in such a way that one would recognize them again in all their diffractions in the real world, and see how in the end they do not consist as universal forms, but how they permeate all appearances, and how when we get up and drink coffee in the morning we have to start to live in accordance with them (...).⁹⁷

Solger also takes in account the idealist project of philosophy conceived as a systematic science, articulating in discursive relations the connection of the whole of reality to a principle.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, if he refuses the *form* of philosophical writing which is typically of a system (that of Schelling’s *Darstellung* or of Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia*, both following the very movement of the absolute in “science”), and prefers the form of the dialogue, it is because his philosophy excludes the idea of absolute knowledge of the absolute, and therefore a philosophical exposition coinciding with a complete understanding of the absolute (which is the system in the sense of Hegel).

⁹⁴ Cf. J. Heller, *Solgers Philosophie der ironischen Dialektik* (see note 19), 198.

⁹⁵ Cf. Solger, UWB, NS II, 196–97.

⁹⁶ “I would really like thinking to be allowed to be wholly apparent in life again, to happily express and currently present it; this cannot be created through all constructing and demonstrating, but can only be purified and developed” (Letter of Solger to Tieck, 26.04.1818, NS I, 620, Matenko 423).

⁹⁷ Letter of Solger to F. von Raumer, 12.03.1812, NS I, 224–25. The demands to which Solger subjects the philosophical dialogue make it difficult to read, as his friends had already noted. No doubt this is one of the reasons for Solger’s poor reception in the history of philosophy (cf. Solger, UWB, NS II, 190).

⁹⁸ Cf. Solger, Letter to Tieck, 5.12.1813 (NS I, 296–297, Matenko 102). See M. Galland-Szymkowiak, “La critique hégélienne du dialogue solgérien”(see here note 12), especially note 8.

The focus of philosophizing must remain the individual experience of revelation, which breathes its spirit⁹⁹ into philosophy and is engendered by reading the dialogue. Hence, the latter is just as much a product of art (an immediate experimentation of the true) as philosophy (a discursive elucidation of relations in which the true is deployed). Solger's philosophy of art, the part of his oeuvre traditionally the most studied, is therefore also coherent with the metaphysical principle of revelation.¹⁰⁰

Part II of this article will be published in the next issue of Symphilosophie.

ABBREVIATIONS

- GA: J.G. Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, eds. R. Lauth, H. Jacob, Erich Fuchs *et al.* (Stuttgart/Bad-Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962-2012), 42 volumes.
- HW: G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832-1845, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Surhkamp, 1969 ff.).
- NS I & II: K.W.F. Solger, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel*, 2 vol., ed. by L. Tieck and Fr. von Raumer (Leipzig, 1826); identically re-edited Heidelberg 1973.
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- SW: F.W.J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, 14 vols. (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1856-1861)

⁹⁹ "Without this grounding and illumination through the essential, through the presence and the pure consciousness of the eternal in us, even the forms in which the spirit pours through the matter of cognition would be enticed to become ghostly appearances, to become semi-madness" (Solger, UWB, NS II, 192).

¹⁰⁰ An earlier version of this text was written in French in 2008 and translated into English by David W. Wood and Laure Cahen-Maurel. It was originally commissioned for a handbook on Early German Romanticism, which in the end did not see the light of day. A French version of it was published in 2015 as part of the Introduction to my translation of the principal writings of Solger: K.W.F. Solger, *Écrits philosophiques*, introduction, translation and commentary by Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak (Paris: Vrin, 2015). For the present publication in English, the article has been supplemented, revised and the bibliography updated. I sincerely thank Laure Cahen-Maurel and Giulia Valpione for their invitation to publish it in *Symphilosophie*.

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

Romantic Religion

Dissolution and Transcendence in the Poetics of Hölderlin

*Alexander J. B. Hampton**

ABSTRACT

A central element of Hölderlin's poetic project was to find a new language for transcendence in an age of immanence. To do so, he turned not to philosophy or theology, but to poetics. Its rhythmic nature, he argued, was capable of re-presenting the transcendent. This examination will begin with a brief historical consideration of the relation of transcendence and immanence, with particular attention to the influential philosophies of Spinoza and Fichte. It then proceeds to Hölderlin's consideration of the loss of the language of transcendence, and his project to develop a new one. The final section will examine how Hölderlin aimed to achieve this in his poetics.

Keywords: Romanticism, poetics, Hölderlin, transcendence, religion

RÉSUMÉ

Un élément central du projet poétique de Hölderlin était de trouver un nouveau langage pour dire la transcendance à l'âge de l'immanence. Pour ce faire, il s'est tourné non pas vers la philosophie ou la théologie mais vers la poétique. La nature rythmique de la poésie, affirmait-il, était capable de re-présenter le transcendant. Le présent article commence par un bref historique de la relation entre transcendance et immanence, avec une attention particulière prêtée à l'influence des philosophies de Spinoza et de Fichte. Il passe ensuite à la réflexion de Hölderlin sur la perte du langage de la transcendance et à son projet d'en élaborer un nouveau. La dernière partie de l'article examine la manière dont Hölderlin a cherché à réaliser ce projet dans sa poétique.

Mots-clés: romantisme, poétique, Hölderlin, transcendance, religion

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Introduction



C. D. Friedrich, *The Jakobikirche in Greifswald as a Ruin*, 1817
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It is something of a cliché to begin a consideration of German Romanticism with an image by Caspar David Friedrich.¹ However, *The Jakobikirche in Greifswald as a Ruin* (c. 1817), is particularly illustrative of the important religious dimension of early German Romanticism. The sketch, perhaps the study for an unrealized painting, transforms the church in Friedrich's native birthplace, still intact today, into a ruin.² As the viewer, we are situated in the nave, looking toward the altar directly in front of us. Almost the entirety of the church's roof is missing, leaving the columns that run the length of the nave pointing heavenward, their abaci now supporting only the wild plants that grow from them. Somewhat incongruous with the rest of the ruination

¹ This article is based on a paper that was delivered at the Post-Secular Perspectives on Romantic and Victorian Poetry Colloquium, Duke University, September 2019. For a more detailed presentation of the topic of romantic religion, see: Alexander J.B. Hampton, *Romanticism and the Re-Invention of Modern Religion: The Reconciliation of German Idealism and Platonic Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

² Matthew Hargraves and Rachael Sloan, *A Dialogue with Nature: Romantic Landscapes from Britain and Germany* (London: Holberton, 2014), 46–47.

is the state of the apse, whose vaulting remains intact, and from which the figure of the crucified Christ is suspended. Christ's head leans slightly to his right, as if to make eye contact with the two of Friedrich's hallmark *Rückenfiguren* who stand below and toward the side aisle, surveying the ruin.

More conventionally, Friedrich's ruined church could be understood as a representation of the state of religion, depicting it as a crumbling institution in an ever-secularising world. Yet while it is undoubtedly a comment on religion in general, and Western European Christianity in particular, to interpret the ruin so does not do justice to the Romantic project it represents. For the Romantics the old language of transcendence, the language of the institutes of religion, was indeed in ruins, but this ruination betokened renewal. The roof opened to the sky, and the columns pointing heavenward, gesture toward the mythological abode of the transcendent. By rendering the church momentarily porous, the institutional language that had lost its meaning gives way to the transcendent which continues to exist beyond it. Friedrich's ruination of the intact church does in pen and ink what the early German Romantics sought to achieve by their own aesthetic explorations. The divine remained but the past language of transcendence had ceased to function in an age that increasingly thought in terms of immanence alone.

The Romantic desire to reconstitute this language was not merely sentimental or reactionary. The language of transcendence provided the unifying ground of subject and object, self and nature. With this ground gone, these conceptual pairs seemed increasingly to present themselves as antinomies. The vocation of the Romantic poet, as Friedrich Hölderlin saw it, was to reconstitute this language:

Zu Sorg' und Dienst den Dichtenden anvertraut!
Der Höchste, der ists, dem wir geeignet sind
Daß näher, immerneu besungen
Ihn die befreundete Brust vernehme.³

Here, in his poem *Dichterberuf* (*The Poet's Vocation*), Hölderlin writes of how the poets must now take up the duty of the hierophant. In doing so, however, he cautions that they must avoid both aesthetic egoism and intellectual arrogance, since to do so would come at the cost of their divine end:

Furchtlos bleibt aber, so er es muß, der Mann
Einsam vor Gott, es schützet die Einfalt ihn,
Und keiner Waffen brauchts und keiner

³ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke (Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe)*, eds. Friedrich Beißner, Adolf Beck (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1946–1985), 8 vols., II.1, 46–48, ll. 13–16 (Hereafter, GSA). “A different task and calling is entrusted to poets! | The Highest, he it is whom we serve | So that more closely, ever newly snug, | He will be heard with a friendly heart.”

Listen, so lange, bis Gottes Fehl hilft.⁴

According to Hölderlin, rather than being attentive to the divine presence that they seek, the poets must instead be aware of the divine absence that is their challenge. In the same way that the ruination of the Jakobikirche by Friedrich opens again the possibility of divine communion, ‘God’s absence helps’ the Romantic poet according to Hölderlin.

The past twenty years have seen tremendous contributions made to the study of early German Romanticism. In particular, this work has demonstrated the unique contribution the movement made to the history of philosophy, bringing it out of the long shadow cast by idealism.⁵ However, the story of early German Romanticism is not one of philosophy alone. What has often received less attention is the role of religion in Romantic thought; a responsibility that must be taken up by those in the field of the study of religion. The concerns of religion play an undeniably central role in its intellectual history. Focusing upon the thought of Hölderlin, this examination places early German Romanticism in the context of the history of religion, at a time when the religious outlook of the West was undergoing profound change. Hölderlin was concerned with the loss of divine language, which had the capacity to hold together subject and object, self and nature, in a transcendent ground that united both. The loss of this language made these conceptual pairs appear increasingly as antinomies. This was evinced in the popular, but mutually exclusive philosophies of Spinoza and Fichte, which both sought an immanent foundation to replace the loss of the transcendent. A central element of Hölderlin’s poetic project was to find a new language for transcendence in an age of immanence. To do so, he turned not to philosophy or theology, but to poetics, whose rhythmic nature, he argued, was capable of re-presenting transcendence. This examination will begin with a brief historical consideration of the relation of transcendence and immanence, before proceeding to Hölderlin’s consideration of the loss of the language of transcendence, and the need to develop a new one. The final section will examine how Hölderlin aimed to achieve this in his poetics.

⁴ Ibid., GSA II.1, 46-48, l. 61-64. “But fearless remains, as he must, man | lonely before God, simplicity protects him, | and no weapons are needed and no artifices, | so long, until God’s absence helps.”

⁵ See Margarete Kohlenbach, “Transformations of German Romanticism 1830-2000,” in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. Nicolas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 271-275; Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, “Romanticismo e postmoderno: Variazioni incomprese sulla critica della modernità,” in *Prospettive sul Postmoderno*, vol. I, ed. by N. G. Limantis and L. Pastore (Milan: Mimesis, 2006), 27-59; Alexander J.B. Hampton “Religion and the Problem of Subjectivity in the Reception of Early German Romanticism,” *Journal for the History of Modern Theology/Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte*, no. 22 (2015): 35-58.

1. Immanence and transcendence

In the past it was often the case that one encountered two mutually exclusive characterisations of Early German Romanticism, either as the aesthetic articulation of post-Kantian Fichtean egoism, or as the literary extension of Spinozistic monist pantheism. Both subsume the movement into immanentizing philosophical developments, which it in fact resisted. Indeed, the incompatibility of these readings points toward their inadequacy, and the need to examine the wider intellectual-historical situation of the movement. This requires the adoption of a standpoint which is wider than that of the Enlightenment, the rise of critical idealism, or the age of revolution, and examining it in relation to much longer-term trends in the intellectual history of the West. In particular, this means giving due consideration to the gradual evolution of the system and structure of knowledge. Here one can draw upon a range of late twentieth and early twenty-first century scholarship by a diverse range of authors such as Marcel Gauchet, John Milbank, Michael Allen Gillespie, Jan Aertsen, and Charles Taylor.⁶ Though their work differs in significant ways, what they hold in common is an overarching attempt to outline the transition from an understanding of reality secured in the transcendent, where the meaning and truth of things ultimately resided with the supernatural, to an immanent understanding, set over and against the transcendent, where meaning was grounded in the natural order, whether that be physical nature, or the self, or some uneasy combination of the two.

While a description of this transition is far beyond the bounds of this brief explanation, it is possible to illustrate this change briefly. The transcendent worldview was defined by its theurgic understanding of the cosmos, wherein all finite reality was shaped by God, not at a distance, but immanently. An illustrative example of this may be found in Bonaventura's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. In terms of nature, the text describes how "We may behold God in the mirror of visible creation, not only by considering creatures as vestiges of God, but also by seeing Him in them; for He is present in them by His essence, His power, and His presence."⁷ Alternately, however, the same is true for the self. "Entering into ourselves," writes Bonaventure, "we ought to strive to see God ... Here the light of Truth, as from a candelabra, will shine upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the

⁶ Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008); Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁷ Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), II.1, 11.

most Blessed Trinity appears in splendor.”⁸ In both cases, whether one turns inward or outward, to the subject or object, both are unified by the divine transcendent foundation that is beyond the particularity of both.

Over a long period, this God-saturated transcendent worldview changed through a process of conceptual evolution and reform, that can be termed immanentization. It is not possible to pinpoint any particular historical moment where this process begins. Indeed, the case can be made that it was always present. However, the process of the ascendancy of this immanent view of reality began to coalesce with the development of late mediaeval nominalism, and was secured with the foundational role of this form of thought in the powerful intellectual revolution brought about by the Reformation. Immanentization allowed for the development of a worldview that could operate without reference to the transcendent. In so doing it came to exist, by incremental degrees, in opposition to the transcendent worldview as the legitimate understanding of reality. This is succinctly expressed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which brings us to the period from which Romanticism would emerge. In it we can find one of the first antithetical, binary uses of the terms transcendent and immanent.⁹ Kant writes:

We will call the principles whose application stays wholly and completely within the limits of possible experience immanent, but those that would fly beyond those boundaries, transcendent principles.¹⁰

Here, immanent and transcendent are opposed forms of knowing, with the former favoured, having its ground in experience, and the latter questioned, as moving beyond empirical strictures. Kant’s position, and the development of critical idealism in general, was not so much the inauguration of a new way of thinking, as it was the punctuation point on a long process of immanentization. Kant may have said that he was ‘limiting reason in order to make room for faith’, but he was equally denying faith understanding of its object, and his language of transgressive flight is tinged with the accusation of *Schwärmerei*.¹¹ This was reflective of a larger state of affairs, where the immanent understanding of reality, as we can see in Kant’s statement, is set over and against transcendent realism, such that transcendent statements appear increasingly problematic, unfounded, and even anachronistic.

⁸ Ibid., III.1, 18.

⁹ Johannes Zachhuber, “Transcendence and Immanence,” in *The Edinburgh Critical History of Nineteenth-Century Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel Whistler (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 164-181; Merold Westphal, “Immanence and Transcendence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. Joel D. S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 111-126.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 295-6/B 352), edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 385.

¹¹ “Thus I had to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*”, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxx, 117.

This process of immanentization also set out one of the definitive tasks of modern philosophy, which was to find an immanent ontology that no longer relied on problematic transcendent foundations. Though radically divergent, both Spinoza and Fichte shared this definitive task. If the aim of establishing this ontology was approached *ab extra* (i.e. from the standpoint of the object), as is the case with the substance monism of Spinoza, the foundation becomes the one monist substance that constitutes all reality. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza claims: “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God.”¹² Consequently, according to Spinoza’s logic, it is impossible to suppose that things could be other than the unique, infinite and necessary substance that Spinoza called God. God, therefore, was not transcendent of the world, but indistinguishable from it. Spinoza wrote that, “God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things.”¹³ Spinoza’s collapse of transcendence into immanence was expressed in his oft-quoted formulation “*Deus sive Natura*,” which meant that it was possible to conceive of the world in two separate ways beneath one infinite substance.¹⁴ If on the other hand the aim of establishing an immanent ontology was approached *ab intra* (i.e. from the standpoint of the subject), as with the transcendental idealism of Fichte, then the foundation becomes the principle of the “I”. At the centre of Fichte’s philosophy is the self-determining activity of the ego, which was the ground of experience and the basis for consciousness. Fichte argued that philosophy need not generate its own first principle; rather it had only to engage this “I” to initiate an action free from a series of causes.

In this light, whilst the philosophical systems of both philosophers radically diverge from one another — Spinoza designating the single monist substance which constitutes all reality as foundational, and Fichte designating the principle of the “I”, which thinks all reality, as foundational — they share the distinctively modern task of providing an immanentized ontology respectively through either substance or self, object and subject. With Spinoza and Fichte, Hölderlin and his fellow Romantics encountered two extremes of philosophy, both of which were separately capable of offering an immanent philosophical foundation, yet together constituted a problematic antinomy.

2. The loss of a transcendent language

Hölderlin would explore this problematic antinomy, making it the subject of both philosophical and poetic explorations. In the fragmentary *Über Religion*, Hölderlin observes how both physical causation and the moral

¹² Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 15, in Spinoza, *Ethics and Selected Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982), 40.

¹³ Ibid., Part I, proposition 18, 46.

¹⁴ Ibid., Part IV, proposition 4, proof, 158.

imperative constitute forms of divergent necessity, which nevertheless simultaneously adhere.¹⁵ In turn, this leads us to search for a ‘higher context’ that unifies the two.¹⁶ In searching for this, Hölderlin writes that: “Neither from himself alone, nor only from the objects surrounding him, can one experience that there is more than mechanism, that a spirit, a god, is in the world, but in a more living relation, raised above need, in which he exists with what surrounds him.”¹⁷ This ‘living relation’, the text goes on to explain, cannot be expressed conceptually. Hölderlin comments: “Those more infinite, more than necessary relations in life can also indeed be thought, but not *merely* thought; thought does not exhaust them.”¹⁸ Instead, they are expressed in action, as Hölderlin describes in his poem *Heimkunft*. The poem details the poet’s return home to his family. It articulates his joy in returning to familiar countryside, the friendly faces of his neighbours, and the warm voice of his mother. Yet in responding to these he writes of how he lacks a language sufficient for expressing these ‘living relations’ whose nature is beyond causal and moral necessity. At home he blesses the family meal, and in enjoying kinship, he gives thanks. However, in both instances he asks to whom such thanks should be directed: “Vieles hab’ ich gehört vom großen Vater und habe | Lange geschwiegen von ihm.”¹⁹ Consequently, Hölderlin sees his age as lacking a language for the holy that can express this sense of a reality beyond necessity: “Schweigen müssen wir oft; es fehlen heilige Namen, | Herzen schlagen und doch bleibt die Rede zurück?”²⁰

Hölderlin further elaborates this sense of a lost language in a letter written around the same time. He describes his own age as sharing conditions not unlike those that adhered just before the birth of Jesus and the emergence of Christianity. Both his own age and that of the late first century BC were times of spiritual dissolution. But both are also deeply pregnant with anticipation:

The way things are now had to come about, particularly with regard to religion, and it is now with religion almost as it was when Christ appeared in the world. But just as winter is followed by spring, so the spiritual death of man has always been followed by new life, and the holy always remains holy, regardless of whether people respect it. And

¹⁵ GSA IV.1, 275–81. “‘Herzen schlagen und doch bleibt die Rede zurück?’ Philosophy, Poetry, and Hölderlin’s Development of Language Sufficient to the Absolute,” in *Philosophy and Literature and the Crisis of Metaphysics?*, ed. Sebastian Hüsch (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 20–33.

¹⁶ GSA IV.1, 275

¹⁷ GSA IV.1, 278.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ GSA II.1, 98 (ll. 86–7). “Much have I heard of him, the great Father, | and long have I remained silent about him.”

²⁰ GSA II.1, 99 (ll. 102–03). “Often we must remain silent; lacking in names that are holy | Hearts pound and nevertheless speech remains behind?”

there will be many who are more religious in their hearts than they like to or can say, and perhaps many of our preachers, who simply cannot find the words, say more in their sermons than others suspect because the words that they need are so ordinary and have been misused a thousand times.²¹

In particular, two things stand out in this passage. The first is the description of a loss of language appropriate for the transcendent and the holy, responsible for what Hölderlin calls a 'spiritual death'.²² This is the case, he explains, for individuals, who are unable to express the feeling in their hearts, as well as for the clergy, who have inherited a language of religion that has become meaningless through both misuse and overuse. Later in the same letter, Hölderlin describes his own unwillingness to express his spiritual convictions for fear that he will be condemned by dogmatists for his heterodoxy, and equally by atheists for his foolishness.²³ This leads to the second element that stands out in the passage, expressed by his claim that 'the holy always remains holy'.²⁴ The loss of a holy language does not mean the destruction of the holy; rather divinity abides without a human voice. This same sentiment is expressed in Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*, where the protagonist, in the context of the modern Greek landscape, considers the present state of the antique god Apollo: "Now he rose in his eternal youth, the ancient Sun God, [...] and smiled down upon his deserted country, on his temples, his pillars, which fate had thrown down before him like withered rose petals that a child thoughtlessly tore from the bush as it passed and scattered over the ground."²⁵ In both cases, despite the loss of a language, the object of that language remains, and the task of finding a new one becomes the vocation of the Romantic poet.

In a letter to Schiller, Hölderlin wrote of his plans to address this lacking spiritual language, whilst at the same time, identifying its loss with the problematic division of subject and object that resulted from immanentized ontology:

I want to find the principle that will explain, to my satisfaction, the divisions in which we think and exist, but which is also capable of making the conflict disappear, the conflict between the subject and the object, between our selves and the world, and between reason and revelation, - theoretically, through the intellect, without our practical reason having to intervene. We need an aesthetic sense to do this...²⁶

²¹ GSA VI.1, 310.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ GSA III, 15-16.

²⁶ GSA VI.1, 203.

Hölderlin develops this aesthetic sense in his epistolary novel *Hyperion, oder der Eremit in Griechenland*, his largest complete poetical achievement. In it he sought to move away from speculative philosophy, and to explore the struggle between the ideal and real aesthetically. He outlined this in one of the many draft prefaces he wrote for the work:

We tear ourselves loose from the peaceful *hen kai pan* of the world, in order to restore it through ourselves. We have fallen out with nature, and what was once one, as we can believe, is now in conflict with itself, and each side alternates between lordship and servitude. Often it is as though the world were everything and we nothing, but often too it is as though we were everything and the world nothing. Hyperion too was divided between these two extremes—to end that eternal conflict between our self and the world, to restore the peace of all peace that is higher than reason, to unite ourselves with nature into one infinite whole—that is the goal of all our striving, whether we want to understand it or not.²⁷

In this passage, Hölderlin articulates what he understands to be the condition of his present age: All individuals are rendered as either lords over nature, or servants to it. All seek unity with nature, or liberation from it. Together, these respectively represented the immanent fundamental principles of Fichte's 'I' and Spinoza's substance. In the novel *Hyperion*, this struggle is dramatized in the striving of the eponymous protagonist: He attempts to liberate Greece in failed revolution. He experiences the ecstasy of love and tragic loss. He confronts betrayal and reconciliation in the intensity of philosophical friendship. Yet none of these particular moments overcomes the division that Hölderlin describes him as experiencing. Instead, it is only within the retrospective context of the totality of a life lived, that these moments of discord and harmony come together to form a unity. Towards the end of the novel, Hyperion describes how life reveals a rhythm of becoming and dissolution that characterise the course of life: "I look out to the sea and reflect on my life, its rise and fall, its bliss and its sorrow, and often my past sounds to me like the music of the lute, when the fingers of a master run through all the chords and integrate discord and harmony in a concealed pattern."²⁸ Hyperion's life, viewed together through the course of the novel, reveals what would come to characterise the central insight that Hölderlin would gain from his aesthetic approach: that the divine language which he was searching for was as much characterised by dissolution and absence, as it was by becoming and presence.

²⁷ GSA III, 236; *ibid.*, 163.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

3. Dissolution and the language of transcendence

Hölderlin goes on to further develop this insight in the philosophical-poetical fragments and poetry that followed from the insights gained in *Hyperion*. In these he particularly focuses upon the role of dissolution in establishing a transcendent language. In the fragment *Das Werden im Vergehen*, Hölderlin explains that in the moment of dissolution, that which we seek through knowing its absence discloses itself as the possibility of everything that is not present to us: “In the state between being and not-being the possible everywhere becomes real, and the real ideal, and in free artistic imitation this is a terrible, but divine dream.”²⁹ The terror that Hölderlin describes arises from the fact that it is only through the reproduction of this moment of dissolution that poetry can create a language for transcendence that is capable of making the unifying divine present. In this moment of dissolution, the ‘divine dream’ that Hölderlin describes is the moment when all is not-being joins all that is being to create an instantiation of absolute transcendence

This concept of dissolution as revelation receives its fullest articulation in *Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes*, one of Hölderlin’s most sustained elaborations of this poetical-metaphysical theory, and also one of the most difficult prose fragments in all of his works. In it, Hölderlin explains how the poetic moment of dissolution constitutes ‘the grounding and meaning of the poem’, which is beyond any aesthetic representation or philosophical idea. This endows the moment of dissolution with ‘its seriousness, its firmness, its truth’.³⁰ Hölderlin continues:

This is the spiritually sensuous, the formally material quality of the poem... marked by the fact that it is everywhere opposed to itself: that it divides everything united, instead of the spirit’s reconciling everything that is formally opposed, fixes everything that is free, generalises everything particular, because according to the meaning what is treated is not simply an individual whole, nor a whole united into a whole in connection with its own harmonious opposition, but a whole.³¹

The moment of complete dissolution that Hölderlin describes is capable of making the spiritual sensuous. This reflects the capacity of the poetic language of dissolution to make the transcendent present, or perhaps, better put, incarnate. This seemingly impossible state is characterised by what he calls the ‘hyperbolic procedure’ of poetic language, which is characterised by a constant going beyond itself.³² He writes: “The pure [i.e. the transcendent absolute], grasped in each specific mood, conflicts with the organ [i.e. the

²⁹ GSA IV.1, 283.

³⁰ Ibid., 245.

³¹ Ibid., 245–46.

³² Ibid., 246.

finite] in which it is grasped.”³³ According to Hölderlin, what makes this new language of transcendence possible is ‘the mediatory link between the spirit and the sign’ that is achieved in the rhythmic “transition from the pure to this thing which must be discovered, and so back from this to the pure.”³⁴ Accordingly, the purely transcendent is not contained in the matter of the poem, nor in the words that make it up, nor in the concept of being itself, (which is also a product of finitude), but in the failure of all of these. In this way, through the hyperbolic procedure, the poem generates what Hölderlin calls a “*point of opposition and union*, and that *IN THIS POINT THE SPIRIT IN ITS INFINITY IS PERCEPTIBLE*.”³⁵

Über die Verfährungsweise des poetischen Geistes is not straightforwardly a work of speculative prose. Instead, the nature of the textual form which Hölderlin employs replicates the hyperbolic striving of poetics in a dithyrambic form. The sentences that make up the text last for hundreds of words, describing and enacting the rhythmic oscillation between subject-object-subject, extending themselves to the breaking point of both syntax and logic. In this way, the form replicates the message of *Hyperion*: that no conceptual apparatus invented by the subject can replicate the lived experience of encountering the transcendent absolute through the process of becoming and dissolution in the course of time. Where speculation falters, however, the form that Hölderlin gives to the text suggests the shape that a poetic response ought to take.

Much of Hölderlin’s work is characterised by a desire for divine presence, and an awareness of its overwhelming dissolving transcendence. In one of the central strophes of his later hymn *Friedensfeier*, which anticipates a celebration that will unite gods and humans, Hölderlin writes:

Denn längst war der zum Herrn der Zeit zu groß
Und weit aus reichte sein Feld, wann hats ihn aber erschöpft?
Einmal mag aber ein Gott auch Tagewerk erwählen,
Gleich Sterblichen und teilen alles Schicksal.
Schicksalgesetz ist dies, daß Alle sich erfahren,
Daß, wenn die Stille kehrt, auch eine Sprache sei.
Wo aber wirkt der Geist, sind wir auch mit, und streiten,
Was wohl das Beste sei. So dünkt mir jetzt das Beste,
Wenn nun vollendet sein Bild und fertig ist der Meister,
Und selbst verklärt davon aus seiner Werkstatt tritt,
Der stille Gott der Zeit und nur der Liebe Gesetz,
Das schönausgleichende gilt von hier an bis zum Himmel.³⁶

³³ Ibid., 248.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 249–50. Hölderlin’s emphases.

³⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Friedrich Beißner and Jochen Schmidt (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1969), I, 165 (ll. 10–91). “Because, for a long time, he for lord of time, was too great, | And far

According to Hölderlin, for too long the divine has been without language, leaving the age of immanence to be divided against itself in antinomy, subject from object, nature from self. But as *Friedensfeier* points out, silence and absence are always pregnant with divine presence. In the *Dichterberuf* Hölderlin describes how to be attentive to the helping absence of God: ‘Gottes Fehl hilft’.³⁷ As the *Friedensfeier* expresses, when silence returns there will also be language. That language is poetry, whose reconciliation applies from here up to the heavens.

away reached his domain, but when did it ever exhaust him? | But sometime a god also may elect day-labour | Like mortals and share all destiny. | The law of destiny is this, that all experience themselves | That, when the silence returns, there be also a language. | But where the spirit works, we are also with, and quarrel, | Which to be sure, be the best. Thus me thinks now the best | When now his image complete and finished the master, | And himself transfigured thereby, steps from his workshop | The silent god of time and only love’s law, | The beautiful-reconciling applies from here up to the heavens.”

³⁷ GSA II.1, 48. 1. 64.

Symphilosophie

Internationale Zeitschrift für philosophische Romantik

Grenzen der Reflexion

Pragmatismus, Idealismus und Frühromantik als Formen unendlicher Philosophie

*Christoph Haffter**

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In jüngster Zeit sind eine Reihe pragmatistischer Deutungen der nachkantischen Philosophie vorgelegt worden (Fred Rush, Dina Emundts). Der Text fragt nach der Tragfähigkeit einer solchen Deutung. Der Pragmatismus verneint die Möglichkeit apriorischen Wissens. In Schlegels frühromantischer Philosophie, aber auch in Hegels Logik wird die Idee kritisiert, die Philosophie könne auf einer unerschütterlichen Grundlage ruhen. An ihre Stelle tritt eine Philosophie der unendlichen Reflexion. Dennoch, so die These, unterscheidet sich die frühromantische, wie die idealistische von der pragmatistischen Auffassung der Reflexion. Sie bilden daher drei eigenständige Formen unendlicher Philosophie.

Stichwörter: Hegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Pragmatismus, Romantik, Letztbegründung

ABSTRACT

Several pragmatist readings of post-Kantian philosophy have been recently suggested (Fred Rush, Dina Emundts). In this article, "The Limits of Reflection. Pragmatism, Idealism and Early German Romanticism as Forms of Infinite Philosophy", I want to question the justification for such an approach. Pragmatism denies the possibility of apriori knowledge. The anti-foundationalist arguments in Schlegel's early romantic philosophy and in Hegel's *Logic* have been highlighted in recent research. Without such an ultimate ground, philosophy is conceived as a form of infinite reflection. Nevertheless, I want to argue that the early romantic and the idealist conceptions of reflection differ substantially from the pragmatist one. Hence, they must be understood as three independent forms of infinite thought.

Keywords: Hegel, Friedrich Schlegel, pragmatism, romanticism, foundationalism

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Einleitung

Philosophiegeschichte ist kein Selbstzweck. Jede Rückwendung ins Vergangene ist motiviert durch die Lage der Gegenwart. Auch das philosophische Interesse an der Frühromantik, das in den letzten Jahrzehnten zu beobachten war, kann auf solche Motive hin befragt werden. Die Arbeiten Ernst Behlers, Manfred Franks und Frederick Beisers, welche diese Entwicklung vorantrieben, entstanden im Bannkreis der Debatten um die Postmoderne. In diesem Umfeld brachte Ernst Behler in den 1990er Jahren die Frühromantik als Wegbereiterin jener künstlerischen Avantgarde in Stellung, welche die Wortführer des Postmodernismus als überholt erachteten.¹ Die postmoderne Kritik am gealterten Modernismus will Behler, gegen ihr Selbstverständnis, als Fortsetzung des kritischen Impulses der Frühromantik deuten; wobei er sich auf die künstlerischen Verfahren des Fragments und der Ironie stützen kann, welche die Postmoderne aus der Romantik übernimmt. Manfred Frank hingegen erblickt in der postmodernen Philosophie eine Vernunftkritik, die in einen unhaltbaren Antirationalismus abdriftet.² In der frühromantischen Philosophie findet er eine Zwischenposition, welche konsequent die Anmaßungen der Vernunft kritisiert, ohne dabei von einer Orientierung am emphatischen Wahrheitsbegriff abzuweichen. Auch die Hinwendung zur Kunst, welche die romantische Philosophie charakterisiere, sei keine Abwendung von der Wahrheitsfrage, sondern vielmehr deren Vertiefung.³ Diese Stoßrichtung teilt er wiederum mit Frederick Beiser, der jedoch noch in der Betonung des Ästhetischen eine falsche Angleichung der Frühromantik an die ästhetisierte Postmoderne erblickt.⁴ Dagegen unterstreicht Beiser die Kontinuität der Philosophie Friedrich Schlegels mit dem politischen Aufklärungsdenken, das sich um den Gedanken eines fortschreitenden Bildungsprozesses im Zeichen der Vernunft dreht.⁵ Alle drei Autoren vereinigt der Impuls, die scheinbare Ausweglosigkeit jenes gegenwärtigen Denkens, das die Moderne verabschieden will, durch die Erinnerung an die Frühromantik zu überwinden: Die Selbstkritik der Moderne zeigt nicht deren Auflösung an, sondern ist ihr von Beginn an eingeschrieben. Damit soll der postmodernen Kritik an den emphatischen Ansprüchen des modernen Denkens der Wind aus den Segeln genommen werden. Denn die Kritik, welche die Postmoderne an der Moderne übt, erscheint nun als Wiederaufnahme eines bisher vernachlässig-

¹ Vgl. Ernst Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, Paderborn/New York 1997; ders. *Irony and the Discourse of Modernity*, Seattle/London 1990.

² Vgl. Manfred Frank, *Was ist Neostukturalismus?* Frankfurt/M. 1991; ders., »Unendliche Annäherung«: *die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Frankfurt/M. 1997.

³ Vgl. Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, Frankfurt/M. 1995.

⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London 2006.

⁵ Ebd., S. 88ff.

ten, eines vergessenen Strangs der Moderne selbst: Einer Moderne, die sich nicht im Vollbesitz universeller Wahrheit wähnt, sondern sich selbst als ein in die Zukunft offenes, abschließbares Projekt deutet.⁶ Die Aktualisierung der Frühromantik zielt so auf die Entdramatisierung der Postmoderne.

Heute ist die Debatte um die Postmoderne tatsächlich abgeflaut. Die eigentümliche Verbindung von Skepsis und Enthusiasmus, von hellsichtiger Selbstkritik und standhaftem Optimismus, welche man in der nachkantischen Philosophie wiedererkannte, wird heute vielmehr in die Nähe eines anderen philosophischen Traditionsstrang gerückt, der sich unter dem Schlagwort des Pragmatismus vereinigen lässt.⁷ Im Folgenden soll daher das Verhältnis von Pragmatismus, Frühromantik und Idealismus geklärt werden. Eine Diskussion der pragmatischen Deutung der frühromantischen Philosophie Schlegels, die Fred Rush vorgelegt hat (1), erlaubt den Vergleich mit Motiven des Neopragmatismus bei Richard Rorty und Hilary Putnam (2). Die Positionen vereint die Konzeption einer unendlichen endlichen Reflexion. Der pragmatistische Zugriff auf Schlegels Philosophie stößt jedoch in der Idee des Absoluten, die den Bezugspunkt der frühromantischen Reflexion bildet, auf eine Grenze (3). Schlegel deutet diese Reflexion als eine gemeinschaftliche Auslegung des Absoluten, die sich vom pragmatistischen Lernprozess unterscheidet (4). Schlegels geschichtsphilosophische Wendung dieser Idee verlangt jedoch nach einem objektiven Reflexionsbegriff, den Hegel in der Wissenschaft der Logik entwickelt. In Auseinandersetzung mit Dina Emundts' pragmatistischer Auslegung dieser Idee (5), wird Hegels Programm einer absoluten Reflexion skizziert (6). Im Umgang mit den Grenzen der Reflexion lassen sich so Frühromantik, Idealismus und Pragmatismus unterscheiden (7).

1. Der pragmatische Romantiker

Auf die Verwandtschaft von Pragmatismus und Frühromantik hat in jüngster Zeit Fred Rush hingewiesen, der Schlegel einen Pragmatisten *avant la lettre* nennt.⁸ Diese Bezeichnung ist erstaunlich. Denn der frühromantische Hang zum Fantastischen steht ja ganz im Gegensatz zu dem, was der Alltagsverstand als pragmatische Lebenseinstellung bezeichnet. Mit dem Wirklichkeitsmenschen, der sich ans Machbare hält und sich durchs Denken nicht

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, »Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt« [1980], in: *Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt: philosophisch-politische Aufsätze (1977-1990)*, Leipzig 1994, S. 32–54.

⁷ Vgl. Michael G. Festl (Hg.), *Handbuch Pragmatismus*, Stuttgart 2018; Mike Sandbothe (Hg.), *Die Renaissance des Pragmatismus: Aktuelle Verflechtungen zwischen analytischer und kontinentaler Philosophie*, Weilerswist 2000; Michael Hampe, *Erkenntnis und Praxis: zur Philosophie des Pragmatismus*, Frankfurt/M. 2006; Joseph Margolis, *Die Neuerfindung des Pragmatismus*, Weilerswist 2004.

⁸ Fred Rush, *Irony and Idealism: Rereading Schlegel, Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Oxford 2016, S. 27, 279.

irre machen lässt, hat Schlegel wenig zu tun. Und auch der philosophische Pragmatismus hält sich ja zugute, der Tendenz des Denkens, über sich hinauszuschießen, nüchtern zu widerstehen. Für Rush sind dies jedoch oberflächliche Differenzen, hinter denen sich die Einheit der Philosophiekonzeption von Frühromantik und Pragmatismus zeigt. Diese gemeinsame Grundlage liegt in der frühromantischen Kritik der Letztbegründungsprogramme, die Rush als pragmatistischen Fallibilismus deutet. Dem Fallibilismus zufolge gibt es keine Sätze, die mit absoluter Gewissheit behauptet werden können: Jede Aussage muss daher mit der Einschränkung vorgetragen werden, dass ihre Widerlegung durch zukünftige Erfahrung nicht ausgeschlossen werden könne. Der Fallibilismus weist die Möglichkeit erfahrungsunabhängiger Erkenntnisse zurück. Daher kann es auch keine Sätze geben, die als unerschütterliche Grundlage der Wissenschaft angesehen werden könnten: Ein Satz ist wahr, insofern er sich bewährt. Die Bewährung eines Satzes erfolgt aber in der Praxis.

Rush liest Schlegels Begriff des Wechselerweises in diesem Sinne:⁹ Gegen die Idee einer Fundierung der Wissenschaft in einem unwiderlegbaren Grund fordert Schlegel bekanntlich, dass sich die Wahrheitssuche als Wechselerweis vollzöge.¹⁰ Diese Idee kann so gedeutet werden, dass sich die Geltung von Aussagen nicht isoliert entscheiden ließe, weil Aussagen eine solche Geltung nur als Momente eines Begründungszusammenhangs, als Stelle in einem inferentiellen Netz von Überzeugungen erhalten, die sich wechselseitig stützen. Sätze erweisen sich wechselseitig als gültig, sofern sie ein kohärentes Begründungsganzes bilden. Ein solcher Zusammenhang hängt nicht an der Gültigkeit eines ersten Glieds, sondern bewährt sich auf eine dezentrale Weise. Wenn es die Kohärenz dieses Netzes verlangt, kann prinzipiell an jeder Stelle korrigiert werden: Keine Aussage ist für sich genommen gewiss.

Diese Einsicht Schlegels kann wiederum als Verallgemeinerung des regulativen Vernunftgebrauchs gedeutet werden. Rush spricht von einem »global regulativism«,¹¹ der sich noch auf die Kategorien und Anschauungsformen ausweitet, welche bei Kant als unerschütterliche Voraussetzung der objektiven Erkenntnis gelten. Regulative Prinzipien sind notwendige heuristische Vorannahmen des Erkennens, deren Geltung sich nicht darlegen lässt: Sie leiten die Erkenntnis als Orientierungsgrößen an und rechtfertigen sich dadurch, dass sie diese Funktion erfüllen. Notwendig sind solche Orientierungsgrößen, um die Mannigfaltigkeit der Erkenntnisse in einen Zusammenhang zu bringen – und nur in einem solchen Zusammenhang

⁹ Ebd., S. 41ff.

¹⁰ Bspw. Friedrich Schlegel, *Woldemar-Rezension*, in: *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, II, Paderborn/München/Wien 1967–, S. 72 [im Folgenden KFSA]; ders. *Philosophische Lehrjahre I. Beil. II*, KFSA XVIII, S. 520.

¹¹ F. Rush, *Irony and Idealism*, S. 53.

können diese Erkenntnisse wiederum Geltung beanspruchen. Die Geltung der Erkenntnisse, die sich solcher Leitung verdanken, gründet jedoch nicht in den regulativen Prinzipien und umgekehrt lässt sich auch die Geltung des Prinzips nicht objektiv erkennen: Regulative Begriffe und Erfahrungswissenschaften bewähren sich somit aneinander. Solchen Regulativismus zu verallgemeinern hieße, jeden Begriff, jeden Grundsatz, jedes Gesetz oder jede Allgemeinaussage als solche Orientierungsgröße zu verstehen, die genau solange Geltung beanspruchen kann, wie sie sich für die Erkenntnis als dienlich erweist.¹²

Aus dieser Anlage ergibt sich ein Primat der Praxis gegenüber der theoretischen Vergewisserung von Wissensstandpunkten. Wenn die Gültigkeit von Prinzipien des Denkens nur dadurch verteidigt werden kann, dass sie sich in der Praxis bewähren, so verschiebt sich das philosophische Nachdenken von einer Betrachtung dieser Sätze selbst auf die Auswirkungen, die ihre Annahme für das praktische Selbstverhältnis besitzen. Die Zentralstellung der Kunst in der frühromantischen Philosophie sieht Rush aus ebendieser Idee motiviert. Denn in der Poesie und Literatur würden die lebensweltlichen Konsequenzen philosophischer Überzeugungen durchgespielt: Nicht die Frage, ob eine philosophische Position begründet sei, sondern die Frage, welche Lebensform ihr entspräche, welche Auswirkungen sie auf die Subjektkonstitution habe, zu welchen Wünschen, Handlungszielen, Hoffnungen und Gewohnheiten sie veranlasse, wird in der Kunst zum Gegenstand des Nachdenkens.

One of the signal contributions of Jena romanticism is to offer an account of what it is like to be an agent that is focally oriented in terms of her subjectivity, where experience of the absence of the foundation of her subjectivity is central to that orientation. With Schlegel's Jena writings the romantics' concern with the lived impacts of their theory of the absolute comes into its own, that is, their concern with the existential or phenomenological deliverances of the theory.¹³

Es gibt freilich kein striktes Kriterium, an dem sich eine solche Befragung philosophischer Positionen orientiert: Welche Wünsche wünschenswert, welche Hoffnungen begründet, welche Lebensformen lebenswert seien, sind ja Fragen, die sich nicht außerhalb des Rahmens philosophischer Überzeugungen entscheiden ließen. Der imaginative Nachvollzug liefert jedoch Argumente, die in einen solchen Meinungsbildungsprozess eingehen können, ohne ihn endgültig abschließen zu können. Im Rahmen dieser existenziellen,

¹² Rush schränkt Schlegels Regulativismus insofern ein, als er in erster Linie jene Bereiche der Erkenntnis betrifft, die es mit Wertungen und historisch geprägten, dichten Begrifflichkeiten zu tun habe – also nicht mit Mathematik, Geometrie oder Physik oder ähnlichem (S. 53). Aus der Sicht des Pragmatismus ist diese Trennung von wertfreien und wertenden Bereichen der Erkenntnis jedoch grundsätzlich problematisch.

¹³ Ebd., S. 39.

phänomenologischen oder eben: lebenspraktischen Befragung philosophischer Grundbegriffe erhalte nach Rush zuletzt auch die Ironie ihre eigentliche Bedeutung. Die Ironie bezeichnet jenes kritische Selbstverhältnis, die der fallibilistischen Einsicht in die mögliche Widerlegbarkeit jedes philosophischen Grundsatzes gerecht wird. Zugleich hält sie an der Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit der regulativen Funktion solcher Grundbegriffe fest: Ihre Struktur ist daher eine Doppelbewegung von Affirmation und Relativierung, von Setzung und Aufhebung. Der Ironiker erhebt mit jeder seinen Aussagen und den mit ihr einhergehenden Lebensvollzügen einen Geltungsanspruch, der über seine individuellen Neigungen hinausgeht, den er aber im selben Zuge auch wieder partiell zurücknimmt – er behauptet etwas im Bewusstsein, dass jede Behauptung nur durch eine tentative, niemals aber durch eine abschließende Begründung gestützt werden kann.

Taken as a whole, then, irony is an acute, circumspect awareness that one's own self always in principle outpaces given circumstance. Irony is, then, simultaneously an affirmation of and critical distancing from purported identity-constituting features of one's own concrete way of being.¹⁴

2. Der romantische Pragmatiker

Die so umrissene Haltung des jungen Friedrich Schlegels weist nun in der Tat eine gewisse Nähe zu jener neopragmatistischen Position auf, die mit dem Namen Richard Rortys verbunden ist. Die regulative Funktion philosophischer Grundbegriffe entspricht Rortys Rede vom »final vocabulary«, mit welchem die Teilnehmer einer gewissen Lebensform ihre Handlungen und Überzeugungen rechtfertigen.¹⁵ Aus der Einsicht, dass ein solches Vokabular letzter Gründe selbst nur zirkulär begründet werden kann und der Erfahrung, dass es eine Vielzahl von Lebensformen mit je unterschiedlichen Finalvokabularen gibt, zieht Rorty den Schluss, dass es für jeden geboten ist, sich nichts auf sein Letztbegründungsvokabular einzubilden. Dass ich einem gewissen Grundvokabular anhänge, ist letztlich unbegründbar: Es ist ein kontingenter Sachverhalt jener Lebensform und Sprachpraxis, in welche ich eingeübt wurde. Aus dieser Einsicht folgt, dass ich meine Handlungen und Überzeugungen nicht rechtfertigen kann, ohne mir dabei der Kontingenz der Gründe bewusst zu sein; solches Kontingenzbewusstsein definiert mich als Ironiker. Jede moralphilosophische Begründung steht etwa unter dem Vorbehalt, dass sie von unbegründbaren Voraussetzungen abhängt. Gepaart mit der – freilich ebenso unbegründbaren – »liberalen« Grundüberzeugung, dass die Vermeidung von Grausamkeit und die Ermöglichung von individueller Selbstbestimmung Werte sind, die keiner

¹⁴ Ebd., S. 68.

¹⁵ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1989, S. 73ff.

weiteren Begründung bedürfen, ergibt sich die Haltung der liberalen Ironikerin, die Rorty verteidigt. Diese liberalen Werte seien auf keine philosophische Begründung angewiesen, weshalb die Philosophie auch keine politisch-öffentliche Funktion habe und somit als Privatsache erachtet werden müsse. Der private Ironiker ist, sofern er die liberalen Werte teilt, dazu angehalten, sein Begründungsvokabular zu erweitern, um dadurch auf Verletzungen dieser Werte aufmerksam zu werden, die ihm in seinem Stammvokabular entgangen wären. Denn jedes Vokabular erlaubt andere Beschreibungen der Wirklichkeit. Ein neues Vokabular zu erlernen, heißt daher zugleich, über neue Wirklichkeitsbeschreibungen zu verfügen. Auch für Rorty machen daher Kunst und Philosophie gemeinsame Sache, insofern sie beide dazu beitragen, durch imaginative Erweiterung der Begriffe die Sensibilität für Grausamkeit und Unterdrückung zu erhöhen. Die private Ironikerin strebt somit aus unbegründbaren moralischen Gründen ziellos danach, ihren Besitz inkommensurabler Mittel zur Wirklichkeitsbeschreibung zu vergrößern.

Rortys Position kann aus zwei Gründen als Pragmatismus bezeichnet werden. Erstens verneint sie die Möglichkeit apriorischen Wissens, von dem aus sich theoretische Positionen begründen ließen: Alles Wissen ist prinzipiell fallibel. Zweitens beurteilt sie daher theoretische Positionen nicht mit Blick auf ihre Wohlbegründetheit, sondern mit Blick auf die Konsequenzen, die sie für die soziale Praxis zeitigen – Theorie hat ihre Wahrheit darin, sich praktisch zu bewähren. Rorty spitzt die Position freilich weiter zu, indem er den Wahrheitsbegriff auf das Für-wahr-Halten reduziert: Als wahr gelten schlicht Sätze, die mit jenen Plattitüden des Common Sense vereinbar sind, die sich in der jeweiligen Lebensform ausgebildet und verfestigt haben. Weil diese Plattitüden jedoch nicht begründbar sind, ist die Zuschreibung des Wahrheitsprädikats letztlich haltlos. Rortys Skepsis zieht somit nicht einfach die Wahrheit gewisser Aussagen in Zweifel, sondern er bezweifelt den Wahrheitsbegriff selbst.¹⁶

Das bringt ihn in einen Gegensatz zu nicht-skeptischen Varianten des Pragmatismus, wie besonders Hilary Putnam gegen Rorty eingewendet hat.¹⁷ Solche Pragmatismen vertreten zwar ebenfalls den Fallibilismus sowie das Primat der Praxis. Sie ziehen daraus jedoch andere Konsequenzen. An der naturwissenschaftlichen Forschungspraxis orientiert, wenden sie ein pragmatisches Argument gegen den pragmatistischen Wahrheitsskeptiker: Solange eine theoretische Annahme dem Gelingen der Praxis – hier der naturwissen-

¹⁶ Rortys vornehme Resignation gleicht jener des Pilatus, der nach Hegel die Frage »Was ist Wahrheit?« stellt wie einer, der schon mit allem durch ist (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I, Werke*, 8, Frankfurt/M. 1986, S. 69).

¹⁷ Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism. An Open Question*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1995, S. 74ff. Zur ähnlichen Kritik bei Jürgen Habermas, »Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn«, in: Robert Brandom (Hg.), *Rorty and his Critics*, Malden/Oxford 2000, S. 31–55.

schaftlichen Forschung – nicht entgegensteht, gibt es keinen Grund, an ihr zu zweifeln. Das gilt auch für den Zweifel am Wahrheitsbegriff. Rortys unbeschränkter Skeptizismus, der letztlich alle Wahrheitsansprüche angreift, ist in diesem Sinne grundlos und würde darüber hinaus die Forschungspraxis verunmöglichen. Die Wissenschaft kann zwar jede partielle Aussage bezweifeln und überprüfen. Ginge sie jedoch dazu über, mit dem Wahrheitsbegriff die Gültigkeit der Gesamtheit ihrer Aussagen in Zweifel zu ziehen, so käme sie zum Erliegen. Diesem anti-skeptischen Zug des Forschungspragmatismus gesellt sich ein Vertrauen in die Fähigkeit gemeinschaftlich vollzogener Praktiken, sich von Irrtümern und Vorurteilen zu befreien. Worauf sich Menschen in einer gemeinschaftlichen Wahrheitssuche, in zwanglosem und verständnisorientierten Austausch einigen können, ist keine bloße Anreihung unbegründeter Plattitüden, sondern die beste Annäherung an wahre Aussagen, die dem endlichen Verstand des Menschen möglich sind. Solche Resultate kollektiver Wahrheitssuche zu bezweifeln, ist nur dann angebracht, wenn der Zweifler Erfahrungsgründe vorweisen kann, welche im Forschungsprozess nicht beachtet wurden. Der kollektive Lernprozess der Wissenschaft wie der politisch-moralischen Meinungsbildung wird so als unendlicher Vollzug solcher Selbstkritik und Selbstkorrektur vorgestellt. In ihm reflektiert die Gemeinschaft der Wahrheitssuchenden auf bestimmte Annahmen, die im Lichte neuer Erfahrungen problematisch wurden: Voraussetzung werden in Zweifel gezogen, sobald sie in Widerspruch zu anderen Überzeugungen oder Beobachtungen treten und so das Gelingen der Erkenntnis bedrohen. Solche partielle Reflexion ist an das Problematisch-Werden ihres Gegenstands, an eine Krisenerfahrung gebunden. Unproblematisch geltende Voraussetzungen zu hinterfragen, alleine weil es sich um Voraussetzungen handelt, ist hingegen ein unzulässiger Zug in einer erfolgsorientierten Reflexionspraxis.

Beide Varianten des Pragmatismus, die hier lediglich holzschnittartig dargestellt sind, lassen eine gewisse Nähe zu Schlegels früher Philosophie erkennen: Rorty wegen der Vereinigung von Kunst und Philosophie, Putnam aufgrund des Vertrauens in die praktische Beurteilung. Im Grunde handelt es sich um philosophische Programme, die aus der Endlichkeit der menschlichen Erkenntnisfähigkeit, aus der Einsicht in die Täuschungsanfälligkeit und Begrenztheit des menschlichen Wissens, die Forderung einer unendlichen Philosophie ableiten; eine Philosophie, die deshalb unendlich ist, weil sie sich prinzipiell für Veränderungen, Korrekturen und Selbstkritik offen halten muss und daher niemals ihren eigenen Abschluss behaupten darf. In diesem Sinne sind es Gestalten unendlicher endlicher Reflexion: Die Reflexion, das Nachdenken über die Begründung bedingten Wissens, begreift sich selbst als eine endliche, beschränkte Denktätigkeit und schließt eben aus dieser Einsicht in die eigene Endlichkeit, dass sie zu keinem Ende kommen kann und daher ins Unendliche fortgesetzt werden müsse.

Die Unterschiede zwischen den Positionen liegen freilich in der Konzeption dieser Fortsetzung: Rorty fordert resignativ die ziellose Vervielfältigung des Privatvokabulars, ohne eine solche Forderung begründen zu wollen. Seine resignative Ironie versteht die unendliche Reflexion als Akkumulation inkohärenter Begriffsrahmen. Für die wissenschaftliche Forschungsgemeinschaft ist diese Akkumulation letztlich bedeutungslos: Sie ist eine von unbegründbaren moralischen Setzungen abhängige Privatsache.¹⁸

Der nicht-skeptische Pragmatismus konzipiert die unendliche Reflexion hingegen zweckoptimistisch als ein nicht-abschließbarer, kollektiver Lernprozess, im Verlaufe dessen der Wechsel von Widerspruchserfahrung und partieller Selbstkritik zu einer immer besseren Anpassung der Erkenntnispraxis an die Unwägbarkeiten der sozialen wie natürlichen Wirklichkeit führen soll. Der Optimismus dieses Pragmatismus ist freilich selbst nur pragmatisch begründbar: Die Annahme, dass der Lernprozess fortschreitet, ist der Forschungspraxis selbst förderlich und ein grundsätzlicher Zweifel an ihr, bringt deren Sache nicht voran. Ein direktes Argument, das diesen Optimismus stützt, kann nicht geliefert werden: Denn jede Vorstellung einer gelingenden Annäherung des empirischen Forschungsprozesses an ein Ziel würde ja eine apriorische Erkenntnis dieses Ziels voraussetzen; eine solche Erkenntnis schließt der Pragmatismus jedoch gerade aus.¹⁹ Einem höherstufigen Argument zufolge, dass man bei Dewey findet, besteht der Fortschritt des Lernprozesses vielmehr darin, dass sich im Verlauf des Lernprozesses die Lernfähigkeit selbst erhöht: Nicht die Anpassung des Wissens an die seiende Realität, sondern die Anpassungsfähigkeit des Wissens an neue Erfahrungen bietet so die Richtschnur des Fortschritts.²⁰ Denkt man diesen Gedanken jedoch zu Ende, so tendiert das kollektive Wahrheitsstreben hin zu einem Zustand der größtmöglichen Flexibilität des Wissens; was der pragmatischen Vorstellung brauchbarer, weil gesicherter Erkenntnis freilich zuwiderläuft.

3. Probleme der Reflexion

Sowohl die resignativen wie die zweckoptimistischen Züge des Pragmatismus lassen sich in Schlegels frühromantischen Positionen wieder zu finden. Dennoch möchte ich im Folgenden dafür argumentieren, dass sein philosophisches Projekt grundsätzlich anders gelagert ist. Seine Distanz zum

¹⁸ Vgl. »I agree with Habermas that as public philosophers they are at best useless and at worst dangerous [...]«, R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, S. 68.

¹⁹ Dazu Richard Rortys Einwände gegen Habermas und Putnam, »Universality and Truth«, in: Robert Brandom (Hg.), *Rorty and his Critics*, Malden/Oxford 2000, S. 5ff.

²⁰ Vgl. Rahel Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen*, Berlin 2014, S. 417ff.

gegenwärtigen Pragmatismus wird in Aphorismen wie dem folgenden deutlich:

Der revolutionäre Wunsch, das Reich Gottes zu realisieren, ist der elastische Punkt der progressiven Bildung, und der Anfang der modernen Geschichte. Was in gar keiner Beziehung aufs Reich Gottes steht, ist in ihr nur Nebensache.²¹

Die unendliche endliche Reflexion der Frühromantik versteht sich selbst in Beziehung auf einen Begriff des Absoluten, der sowohl dem resignativen Zug der Philosophie Rortys wie dem Zweckoptimismus des Forschungspragmatismus fremd ist. Sind diese gegenwärtigen Positionen vom Verlangen geprägt, metaphysische Altlasten wie den Gottesbegriff ein für alle Mal hinter sich zu lassen, so muss die frühromantische Philosophie gerade umgekehrt aus dem Ringen um denselben verstanden werden. Diese Ausrichtung aufs Absolute ist zugleich eine Ausrichtung am Gedanken des Subjekts. Um dies zu verdeutlichen, möchte ich einen Schritt zurück gehen und jenen schillernden Begriff genauer zu untersuchen, der bereits in der pragmatischen Deutung im Zentrum stand: Den Begriff der Reflexion.

Der Begriff der Reflexion bezeichnet in erster Linie eine Denktätigkeit. Das Denken ist, sei es theoretisch oder praktisch, mit der Bestimmung von Sachverhalten beschäftigt: Es ist intentional verfasst, d.h. auf Gegenstände gerichtet, die es in begrifflichen Bestimmungen denkt. Die Intentionalität des Denkens impliziert einen Geltungsanspruch: Dass das Denken auf Gegenstände bezogen ist, heißt, dass der Gedanke auf etwas zutrifft, was von ihm unterschieden ist: Die Sache selbst. Reflexiv wird das Denken, wenn es sich aus dieser Ausrichtung auf sein anderes, seine Gegenstände, auf sich selbst zurückwendet. Reflexion ist die Rückwendung des Denkens auf sich selbst, es ist ein Nachdenken über das Gedachte. Weil es ein solches Nachdenken ist, setzt es das gegenstandsbezogene Denken voraus, auf das es nachträglich seine Aufmerksamkeit richtet. Reflexion ist somit ein Selbstbezug, der einen Fremdbezug voraussetzt; sie bezeichnet ein Selbstverhältnis, das durch ein Fremdverhältnis vermittelt ist.

Eine solche Rückwendung des Denkens auf sich selbst geschieht aber nicht grundlos: Sie wird angestoßen durch die Erfahrung des Irrtums, der Fehleranfälligkeit, des Widerspruchs im Denken. Die Reflexion setzt in dem Moment ein, da ein Gedanke fragwürdig wird. Im Moment des Widerspruchs wird fragwürdig, ob der Gedanke überhaupt zutrifft – ob er die Gültigkeit, die er natürlicherweise beansprucht, zu Recht beansprucht. Die nächste Antwort auf einen solchen Zweifel ist freilich die Fortsetzung des Versuchs, Gegenstände zu bestimmen, um Realität und Denken, Gegenstand und Gedanke miteinander zu vergleichen und so die irregeleiteten von

²¹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeums-Fragmente*, KFSa II, S. 201, Nr. 222.

den zutreffenden Gedanken zu trennen. Aber offensichtlich dreht sich dieser Versuch im Kreis. Denn die Erfahrung der Fehleranfälligkeit des Denkens besteht ja gerade darin, dass ein gegenstandsbezogener Gedanke, den man für wahr hielt, sich als unwahr herausstellen kann. Eine Ungewissheit breitet sich daher aus: Dem Zweifel, ob ein gegenstandsbezogener Gedanke zutrifft, entkommt man nicht dadurch, dass man weitere Gegenstände bestimmt; denn jeder weitere Gedanke steht nun unter demselben Verdacht des Irrtums. Um sich über die Gültigkeit der eigenen Gedanken Klarheit zu verschaffen, muss sich das Denken auf sich selbst richten: Um objektives Wissen zu begründen, muss das Denken ein Selbstwissen sichern.²²

Eine solche Reflexion kann nun zwei unterschiedliche Richtungen einschlagen.²³ Das Denken kann zum einen fragen, wie die Gedanken, in denen es die Welt erfasst, zu Stande kommen, wie sie zusammengesetzt sind, welcher Akte sie sich verdanken und wem sie zuzuschreiben wären. Diese Fragerihe benennt die Konstitutionsreflexion, sie untersucht die Konstituenten des Gedankens. Eine andere Richtung schlägt die Reflexion ein, wenn sie nach der Quelle der Geltung der Gedanken fragt: Worin gründet der Anspruch eines Gedankens, wahr zu sein? Dieser Gedanke führt nicht auf Konstituenten, sondern auf Maßstäbe, an denen sich entscheidet, ob ein Gedanke zutrifft, auf Kriterien, welche die Wahrheit eines Gedankens verbürgen. Und natürlich bleibt die Reflexion bei solchen vorgefundenen Wahrheitskriterien nicht stehen, sondern geht zur Frage über, ob diese Kriterien selbst gültig sind und wie sie sich begründen ließen. Die Größen, welche eine solche Reflexion bedenkt, sind keine Konstituenten, keine Seinsgrößen, sondern Geltungsgrößen: Wahrheitsgarantierende Prinzipien, Denkgesetze, Rationalitätskriterien, Standards der Täuschungsvermeidung oder ähnliches.

Die beiden Reflexionstypen können sich ergänzen, ihre Resultate können sich stützen, sie können aber auch widersprüchliche Ergebnisse fördern – den Unterschied beider Typen gilt es in jedem Fall festzuhalten. Er erlaubt es, die Unvermeidbarkeit der Reflexionsproblematik einzusehen. Denn so wird ersichtlich, dass noch die Zurückweisung der sogenannten Reflexionsphilosophie ein Vollzug der Reflexion ist. Unter Reflexionsphilosophie versteht man jene philosophischen Begründungsprogramme, welche vom Subjekt-Objekt-Verhältnis als einer Grundtatsache des Denkens ausgehen, um im reflexiven Subjektrückgang die Objektivität des Wissens zu erweisen. Der klassische Einwand gegen dieses Vorgehen besteht im Regressargument: Wenn alles Denken sich in Subjekt-Objekt-Relationen vollzieht –

²² Diese klassische Verknüpfung von Selbstwissen und Objektivität verteidigt auch Sebastian Rödl, *Self-Consciousness and Objectivity*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2018, S. 1–18.

²³ Diese Unterscheidung führt Hans Wagner ein, *Philosophie und Reflexion*, München/Basel 1980, S. 59.

ein denkendes Subjekt richtet sich auf ein gedachtes Objekt – so ist nicht einsichtig, wie ein solcher Rückgang gelingen können soll. Denn jeder gedankliche Versuch, ein denkendes Subjekt zu denken, verwandelt dasselbe unweigerlich in ein gedachtes Objekt. Das weltzugewandte Subjekt wird so zum Objekt eines, wenn man so will, höherstufig denkenden Subjekts. Das Subjekt des Denkens kann sich nicht selbst denken, ohne sich zu vergegenständlichen. Vergegenständlicht es sich aber, so denkt es sich nicht mehr als das, was es zu denken vorgibt, nämlich als Subjekt. Das Subjekt des Denkens entflieht somit bei jedem Versuch, es gedanklich zu erfassen, auf eine höhere Ebene: Es wird im Reflexionsgeschehen niemals selbst thematisch, sondern bleibt ewig Voraussetzung. Die Reflexion ist so dazu verurteilt, das Subjekt, das es zu erkennen vorgibt, zu verkennen.

Aus dieser Einsicht lassen sich verschiedene Schlüsse ziehen. Man kann versuchen die Reflexion um eine andere Form des Denkens ergänzen, in der sich das Subjekt seiner selbst gewahr wird – die Theoreme einer präreflexiven Selbstgewissheit oder einer intellektuellen Anschauung der subjektiven Selbstsetzung verfolgen diese Strategie.²⁴ Man kann aber aus dem Scheitern der reflexiven Selbstwissens auch die Konsequenz ziehen, die Reflexionsproblematik müsse als ganze verabschiedet werden: Das Reflexionswissen trägt zur Begründung des objektiven Wissens nichts bei und muss deshalb durch andere Verfahren der Wissenssicherung ersetzt werden: etwa durch die Rekonstruktion von Standards und sozialen Normen der Gültigkeitsprüfung, die existierenden Sprachpraktiken innewohnen.²⁵ Ohne über das Gelingen dieser Vorschläge zu urteilen, lässt sich aber bereits einsehen, dass auch sie der Reflexionsproblematik nicht entkommen. Im ersten Fall ist dies offensichtlich, weil die Postulate einer nicht-reflexiven Selbstvergewisserung eine explikative Funktion ja nur in Bezug auf das Reflexionsproblem haben: sie bilden die Abschlussfiguren, letzte Wendungen in der Reflexionsbewegung und setzen dieselbe somit voraus. Aber selbst die zweite Lösung, die Zurückweisung des Reflexionsproblems kann nicht anders als durch Reflexion geschehen. Denn das Wissen um das Scheitern des reflexiven Selbstwissens kann doch nicht anders herbeigeführt werden als durch Reflexion – es ist selbst ein Reflexionswissen. Wer die Möglichkeit reflexiven Wissens zurückweist, muss zugleich zugestehen, dass zumindest diese eine Form des Reflexionswissens möglich sei: Jenes Reflexionswissen, welches das Scheitern des Reflexionswissens einseht.

Die Unterscheidung von Geltungs- und Konstitutionsreflexion erlaubt es, diese scheinbar paradoxe Situation aufzulösen: Der Regress des reflexiven

²⁴ Vgl. Dieter Henrich, *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht*, Frankfurt/M. 1967.

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, »Wege der Detranszendentalisierung. Von Kant zu Hegel und zurück«, in: *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung. Philosophische Aufsätze*, Frankfurt/M. 2004, S. 186–229; Ernst Tugendhat, *Selbstbewusstsein und Selbstbestimmung: sprachanalytische Interpretationen*, Frankfurt/M. 1979.

Selbstwissens betrifft ja offensichtlich die Konstitutionsreflexion, genauer: den Versuch, das Subjekt der Denktätigkeit zu denken. Dieser Versuch fällt nicht per se mit der Frage nach der Geltung eines Gedankens zusammen. Es wird nun deutlich, dass die Zurückweisung der Reflexionsphilosophie auf eine spezifische Annahme derselben zielt: nämlich, dass die Begründung der Geltung eines Gedankens in der Selbsterkenntnis des Subjekts besteht, das den Gedanken hervorbringt. Die Negation dieser Annahme ist selbst eine Einsicht, die sich einer Reflexion auf den Geltungsanspruch des Denkens verdankt. Sie empfiehlt keine Abwendung vom Reflexionsproblem als solchem, sondern führt vielmehr zur Forderung, die Geltungsreflexion anders zu vollziehen.

4. Die gemeinschaftliche Suche nach Wahrheit

Dieser Zusammenhang ermöglicht es, einen Kerngedanken der frühromantischen Philosophie Friedrich Schlegels aus dem oftmals wirren Textmaterial herauszuschälen, der größten Nähe zum Pragmatismus aufweist und sich zugleich von diesem unterscheidet. Er lautet auf den gemeinschaftlichen Charakter der philosophischen Geltungsreflexion. Was das frühromantische Programm in der Konstellation der nachkantischen Philosophie auszeichnet, ist die Einsicht, dass das Nachdenken über die Geltungsgründe des Denkens nicht monologisch gelingen kann, sondern die Form eines Streitgesprächs annehmen muss. Diese Einsicht gründet in der Kritik der Grundsatzphilosophie, die in der Forschung immer wieder ins Zentrum der Frühromantik gestellt wurde. Diese Kritik besteht in einem relativ schlichten, aber doch unabweisbaren Gedanken.²⁶ Die Grundsatzphilosophie sucht nach einer unerschütterlichen Grundlage, von der aus sich auf systematische Weise die Geltung praktischer wie theoretischer Urteile darlegen ließe. Die Grundlage aller Geltung müsste eine Größe sein, die aus sich selbst heraus gilt, die in sich selbst begründet wäre und in ihrer Wahrheit von keiner weiteren Bedingung abhängt: Sie wäre in diesem Sinne eine absolute Einsicht, eine Erkenntnis des Unbedingten. Eine solche evidente Grundlage zu bieten versprach bekanntlich der Ich-Gedanke, die Gewissheit des Selbstbewusstseins. Die Probleme des reflexiven Subjektrückgangs zeigen jedoch, dass der Ich-Gedanke diese Begründungslast nicht tragen kann. Denn sofern das Subjekt den Gegenstand eines bestimmenden Gedankens bildet, ist es, wie jeder gedachte Inhalt, von der bestimmenden Tätigkeit des denkenden Subjekts bedingt: Das Subjekt wird als Objekt und somit als bedingter Inhalt gedacht. Setzt man sich über diese Beschränkung hinweg und postuliert man eine Subjektgröße, die sich jenseits des bestimmenden Denkens hält, so verliert eine so postulierte Größe jegliche Bestimmtheit.

²⁶ Vgl. Manfred Frank, »Unendliche Annäherung«, Frankfurt/M. 1997, S. 569ff.

Aus einem gänzlich Unbestimmten lässt sich aber die Geltung des bestimmenden Denkens nicht begründen.²⁷ Der Punkt lässt sich verallgemeinern: Gleich welcher Satz oder welches Postulat als absolute Grundlage der Geltung des Denkens angenommen wird, ein solcher Grund wird sich entweder als bestimmt und somit nicht-absolut oder als absolut aber unbestimmt erweisen. Die Absolutheit und die Begründungsfunktion des Geltungsgrunds schließen sich aus.

Daraus resultiert die Kritik am Systemgedanken, für die Schlegels frühe Philosophie bekannt ist. Der Unterschied dieser Kritik zum Pragmatismus besteht jedoch darin, dass nicht das Programm einer Begründung der Wahrheitsansprüche in Frage steht, sondern die Weise, dieses Programm umzusetzen. Die Konsequenz ist daher nicht die Verabschiedung der Geltungsfrage, sondern die Revision der Begründungsstrategie. An dieser Stelle tritt eine Voraussetzung der Grundsatzphilosophie hervor: Sie geht davon aus, dass eine Letztbegründung des Wissens ein Gedanke sein soll, der im Prinzip von jedem rationalen Denker alleine nachvollzogen werden können muss. Die Idee einer jeden systematischen Deduktion zielt ja gerade darauf, den Gesamtzusammenhang des Wissens für den einzelnen Denker erfassbar zu machen. Dagegen erinnert Schlegel mit Platon daran, dass die Philosophie eine gemeinschaftliche Suche nach der Wahrheit sei.²⁸ Was hieße es, diese Idee einer wesentlichen Vielstimmigkeit des philosophischen Unternehmens ernst zu nehmen? Die Formen des Gesprächs, der Polemik, des Streits wären dann keine bloße Darstellungsform, in der ein Gedanke mitgeteilt wird, der sich auch anders mitteilen ließe. Die Form der Widerrede wäre der Begründung des Wissens selbst wesentlich. Vieles spricht dafür, dass die frühromantische Textproduktion, die auf den ersten Blick als bloße Gedankenflucht erscheint, unter einer solchen Leitidee stand.²⁹ In dieser Idee einer gemeinschaftlichen Wahrheitssuche kreuzen sich genauer betrachtet zwei Linien, die das frühromantische Projekt charakterisieren. Zum einen steht sie im Einklang mit dem Gedanken der kritischen Philosophie.³⁰ Sie bezeichnet das Programm der Geltungsreflexion: Der Selbstprüfung des Wahrheitsanspruchs des Denkens. Schlegel wendet immer wieder gegen die kantische Philosophie, besonders die Kantianer ein, dass sie den Weg der Selbstkritik der Vernunft nur halb gegangen seien. In diesem

²⁷ Vgl. »Erkennen bezeichnet schon ein bedingtes Wissen. Die Nichterkennbarkeit des Absoluten ist also eine identische Trivialität.«, Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophische Lehrjahre I*, KFSa XVIII, S. 511, Nr. 64.

²⁸ F. Schlegel, *Philosophische Lehrjahre I*, KFSa XVIII, S. 509, Nr. 50.

²⁹ Dies spricht gegen Beisers These, dass die Fragmentform dem frühromantischen Projekt äußerlich sei. Dass Schlegel später begann, systematische Abhandlungen zu schreiben, geht meines Erachtens mit seiner Abwendung vom frühromantischen Projekt einher, vgl. F.C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, S. 4.

³⁰ Die kritische Dimension der Philosophie Schlegels unterstreicht Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy*, New York 2007, S. 127ff.

Sinne beginnt die Sammlung der *Athenaeum*-Fragmente mit dem Satz »Über keinen Gegenstand philosophieren sie seltener als über die Philosophie«:

Die philosophische Kritik ist vielleicht nichts weiter als Logik in der zweyten Potenz. [...] Nicht bloß auf das einzelne Philosophem, auf das einzelne philosophische Individuum/auf historische Massen der Philosophie, auf philosophische Klassen und Gattungen wendet sich die philosophische und logische Kritik des kritischen Philosophen, sondern auf die Philosophie selbst. In dieser Rücksicht ist die philosophische Kritik nichts als [...] Philosophie der Philosophie.– Nur durch die Idee von kritischer Totalität, von einer absolut kritisirten und kritisirenden Philosophie, und durch die gesetzmäßige Fortschreitung, kunstmäßige Annäherung zu dieser unerreichbaren Idee wird der Philosoph den Beynahmen des kritischen Philosophen verdienen. [...].³¹

Eine kritische Philosophie darf sich nicht mit der Kritik philosophischer Positionen begnügen, sondern muss sich auch auf die Mittel, die Verfahren richten, derer sie sich bedient. Eine solche Kritik muss aber notwendigerweise den Standpunkt verlassen, den sie untersucht: Sie kann die Geltung eines kritischen Verfahrens nicht in der Prüfung desselben voraussetzen. Diese Selbstkritik der Vernunft kann folglich von keinem festen Boden aus geschehen, keine begriffliche Unterscheidung, kein kategorialer Rahmen, keine wissenschaftliche Methode und kein logisches Gesetz kann als gegeben akzeptiert werden. Kants Kritiken sind so gesehen noch nicht kritisch genug, weil sie mit logischen Kategorien wie etwa den Urteilsformen arbeitet, die sie selbst keiner Kritik unterzieht, sondern unbefragt aus der philosophischen Tradition entnimmt: Die Kritik zielt lediglich auf die Begrenzung des Geltungsbereichs. Eine Philosophie, die hingegen keine ihrer Voraussetzung unhinterfragt lassen will, kann sich, so Schlegels Idee, nur als Streitgespräch verwirklichen, in dessen Vollzug die Gesprächsteilnehmer die argumentativen Voraussetzungen ihrer jeweiligen Gesprächspartner thematisieren. Kein einzelner Standpunkt des Denkens, sondern nur eine Vielzahl aufeinander bezogener Standpunkte kann das kritische Projekt verwirklichen.³² Ein solches Gespräch führt von selbst freilich zu keinem Abschluss, aber es bewegt sich zumindest hin auf jenen Idealzustand einer vollständig selbsttransparenten Gesprächsgemeinschaft, die all ihre Voraussetzungen ausbuchstabiert und durchdacht hat.

³¹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Zur Philologie II*, KFSa XVI, S. 64, Nr. 47.

³² Im Unterschied zur Transzendentalpragmatik im Stile von Apel, Habermas oder Brandom denkt Schlegel nicht an die impliziten, formalen Normen der sozialen Sprachpraktik, noch an einen Konsens einer demokratischen Meinungsbildung, sondern eher nach Platonischem Vorbild an einen Austausch Eingeweihter, eine Diskursavantgarde, wenn man so will, vgl. »Man soll nicht mit allen symphilosophieren wollen, sondern nur mit jenen, die à la hauteur sind.«, Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeums-Fragmente*, KFSa II, S. 210, Nr. 264.

Diese synchrone Dimension der Verständigung wird ergänzt durch die diachrone Besinnung auf die Geschichte der Philosophie. Dies ist die zweite Linie, die in den Gedanken der gemeinschaftlichen Wahrheitssuche eingeht. Die gegenwärtige Konstellation konkurrierender Standpunkte muss als ein vorläufiges Resultat eines Verständigungsprozesses verstanden werden, der weit in die Vergangenheit zurückreicht. Erst aus dieser Geschichte erhalten die Fragen und Antworten der gegenwärtigen Debatten ihren Sinn und ihre Dringlichkeit: Auch die Vorgängerpositionen sind Voraussetzungen der gegenwärtigen Philosophie, die noch als überwundene Standpunkte in die Gegenwart fortwirken. Diese ihre Vergangenheit muss sich die Philosophie vergegenwärtigen, wenn sie über ihr eigenes Tun im Klaren sein will. Schlegel kritisiert in diesem Sinn die Anmaßung der nachkantischen Philosophie, ohne Reflexion auf ihre Vorgeschichte Philosophie betreiben zu wollen. Die Geltungsreflexion der philosophischen Kritik wird so durch eine historisch gewendete Konstitutionsreflexion der Philosophie selbst ergänzt: Die historische Besinnung erweitert somit nicht nur die Gesprächssituation um die Stimmen der Vergangenheit, sondern sie holt damit auch jene Konstitutionsgründe ein, der sich die gegenwärtigen Positionen verdanken.

Die beiden Linien – Kritik und Geschichte – stehen in einer eigentümlichen Spannung. Denn die historische Reflexion führt unweigerlich in eine gewisse Relativierung der gegenwärtigen Philosophie: Wenn etwa eine logische Kategorie wie jene der Substanz, des Grunds oder der Qualität als ein Begriff verstanden wird, der erst zu einer gewissen Zeit ins philosophische Gespräch aufgenommen wurde, so scheint dieser Begriff jene Denknötwendigkeit zu verlieren, die ihm etwa in einer transzendentalphilosophischen Reflexion zugeschrieben wird. Diese Relativierung kann soweit führen, dass die sich ablösenden, historischen Begriffsrahmen für sich genommen als gleichermaßen gültige Alternativen erscheinen: Die Bindung an das gegenwärtige Vokabular der Philosophie wäre dann ein unbegründbares Faktum. Als ein solches Faktum wären die Kategorien des Gegenwartsdenkens wiederum der Kritik entzogen, sie müssten hingenommen werden: Die Historisierung der Philosophie geriete so in einen Widerspruch zu ihrem kritischen Selbstverständnis. Ein solcher Historismus der Vergleichgültigung ist uns bei Richard Rorty begegnet: Solcher Relativierung fällt die kritische Funktion der Philosophie zum Opfer. Die Reflexion auf die Philosophiegeschichte, die Schlegel vorschwebt, kann bei dieser Vergleichgültigung des Historischen nicht stehen bleiben, will sie an ihrer kritischen Dimension festhalten. Sie muss daher versuchen, die gegenwärtige Konstellation philosophischer Standpunkte als Resultat einer sinnvollen, zielgerichteten Entwicklung zu deuten, in der sich – wie im philosophischen Gespräch im

Kleinen – eine Selbstaufklärung des Denken vollzieht.³³ Im Verlauf einer solchen Geschichte der Philosophie werden Einseitigkeiten und Beschränktheiten aufgehoben, verschwiegene Voraussetzungen ausdrücklich gemacht, vermeintlich Allgemeingültiges auf sein partielles Recht gebracht, scheinbare Totalitäten als Moment größerer Zusammenhänge sichtbar, kurz: Die Geschichte wird als Fortschritt der Integration und Vermittlung konkurrierender Standpunkte, als »eine Totalisazion von unten herauf«³⁴ gedeutet. Eine solche Geschichte ist somit selbst nichts anderes als der kritische Reflexionsprozess, in welchem sich die Philosophie verwirklicht. Die Überlegenheit einer gegenwärtigen Philosophie zeigt sich dann in ihrer Fähigkeit, sich selbst als Moment dieser Fortschrittsgeschichte zu begreifen und sich so an deren vorläufigem Ende zu verorten. Die Philosophie ist als Fortschreibung eines Reflexionsprozesses konzipiert, der gerade darin reflexiv verfasst ist, dass er sich in jeder Phase kritisch auf seine Vorgeschichte zurückbezieht. Eine viel zitierte Notiz aus den Vorlesungsnachschriften zur Transzendentalphilosophie, in der Schlegel behauptet, dass alle Wahrheit relativ sei und sich aus der Vernichtung zweier homogener Irrtümer³⁵ ergebe, fügt sich zwanglos in dieses Bild: Relativ ist die Wahrheit philosophischer Positionen, insofern diese nur in Bezug auf ihre historischen Vorgänger verstanden werden kann, auf die sie antwortet. Sieht man gänzlich von solch historischen Bezügen ab, so sind philosophische Aussagen weder wahr noch falsch, sondern letztlich unverständlich. Die Wahrheit und Überzeugungskraft einer solchen Position hängt insofern davon ab, wie sie die Verkürzungen bestehender Theorievorschlüsse zu überwinden vermag: Wahr sind philosophische Gedanken, insofern sie Widersprüche, Selbsttäuschungen, Vereinfachungen oder Vorurteile sichtbar zu machen und abzutragen erlauben; wahr sind sie, kurz gesagt, als Kritik des Scheins. Eine solche Geschichtsdeutung unterscheidet sich von der pragmatistischen Konzeption historischer Lernprozesse, weil sie auf ein

³³ Seltsamerweise findet man auch bei Rorty eine solche Geschichtsdeutung, die seinem philosophischen Projekt eigentlich widerspricht: Unmissverständlich deutet er die Herausbildung der liberalen Grundüberzeugung als einen Fortschritt. Der Liberalismus habe sich in dieser Entstehungszeit jedoch auf Ideen wie »Menschheit«, »Vernunft« oder »Wahrheit« gestützt, die er nun, da er in den westlichen Demokratien fest etabliert sei, als illusorische Hilfskonstruktionen einsehen und abwerfen könne: »I have been urging that the democracies are now in a position to throw away some of the ladders used in their own construction.« (R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, S. 194). In diesem Sinne schließt Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* mit der Aussage: »The self-doubt seems to me the characteristic mark of the first epoch in human history in which large numbers of people have become able to separate the question ›Do you believe and desire what we believe and desire?‹ from the question ›Are you suffering?‹ In my jargon, this is the ability to distinguish the question of whether you and I share the same final vocabulary from the question of whether you are in pain. Distinguishing these questions makes it possible to distinguish public from private questions, questions about pain from questions about the point of human life, the domain of the liberal from the domain of the ironist. It thus makes it possible for a single person to be both.«, S. 198.

³⁴ »Die Cyklisazion ist wie eine Totalisazion von unten herauf <Bey Fichte doch ein Herabsteigen>«, F. Schlegel, *Zur Philologie II*, KFSa XVI, S. 68, Nr. 84.

³⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, *Transzendentalphilosophie*, KFSa XII, S. 93.

Ziel bezogen ist: Sie versteht Geschichte in Bezug auf den »revolutionären Wunsch, das Reich Gottes zu realisieren«.³⁶ Nimmt man die beiden Momente der gemeinschaftlichen Wahrheitssuche zusammen, so erkennt man das Programm als ein hermeneutisches: Die unendliche, historisch-kritische Reflexion ist die Auslegung eines Absoluten, um dessen entzogener Sinn das gemeinschaftliche Gespräch kreist.

Aus dieser Anlage der frühromantischen Philosophie wird auch die Zentralstellung der Kunst verständlich. Die moderne Kunstkritik wird für Schlegel zum Modell des Philosophierens, weil in ihr historische Einordnung, hermeneutische Auslegung und kritische Beurteilung aufeinander bezogen sind. Die historische Einordnung verläuft über die Unterscheidung der Kunstepochen – allen voran die Unterscheidung der Antike von der Moderne – welche die Kriterien der Kunstkritik – schematisch: das Schöne vs. das Interessante, Objektivität vs. Subjektivität – relativiert: Das Gelingen moderner Kunst kann nicht am Maßstab der Alten gemessen werden. Diese Relativierung geht aber mit einer Forderung an die moderne Kunst einher: Sie muss sich selbst als moderne Kunst ins Verhältnis zum Alten setzen, sie muss sich in Bezug auf die überwundenen Formen vergangener Kunst bestimmen. Dies kann nur gelingen, wenn sie das Überkommene in irgendeiner Weise in sich enthält und begreift. Daher ist die moderne Kunst wirklich modern erst dann, wenn sie den abstrakten Gegensatz zum Alten überwindet und Formen findet, in der auch das Alte – Schönheit und Objektivität – zu seinem partiellen Recht kommt. Die Aufgabe des Kritikers besteht darin, das Gelingen der Kunstwerke in dieser historischen Spannung widerstrebender Gelingenskriterien zu artikulieren. Das Bleibende, Objektive, Gelungene eines Kunstwerks – jener Charakter des Klassischen, der auch für die moderne Kunst gültig bleibt – zeigt sich daran, dass in ihm die Kunst selbst »weiterkommt«.³⁷ Dieses Fortschreiten der Kunst kann nur als Reflexionsprozess verstanden werden, im Verlaufe dessen sich die Kunst über ihre eigensten Möglichkeiten aufklärt. Und auch hier sind es die gelungenen Werke selbst, die jene historisch-kritische Reflexion ihrer Ansprüche im Widerstreit der künstlerischen Positionen vollziehen: Die gemeinschaftliche Auslegung des Werks im Streit der Kunstkritik artikuliert jene Selbstkritik, die das Werk selbst vollzieht: Kritisierendes und Kritisiertes fallen in eins.³⁸

³⁶ Vgl. Manfred Frank, »Alle Wahrheit ist relativ alles Wissen Symbolisch—Motive der Grundsatz-Skepsis in der frühen Jenaer Romantik«, in: *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 50, n° 197 (1996), S. 434–35.

³⁷ »*Studium* hieße das Werk wodurch nur der Künstler weiterkommt; *Werk* wodurch die Kunst selbst [...]«, Friedrich Schlegel, *Fragmente zur Poesie und Literatur I*, KFSÄ XVI, S. 108, Nr. 282.

³⁸ Diese Interpretation der Stellung der Kunst in der frühromantischen Philosophie unterscheidet sich von Manfred Franks Betonung eines genuin ästhetischen Wahrheitsgeschehens, das für die romantische Kunstauffassung zentral sei. Bei Schlegel scheinen mir die Methoden der Kunst – die Verfahren der Philologie, Hermeneutik und Kritik, welche den reflexiven Charakter der Kunst

5. Das Schattenreich der Logik: Hegel als Pragmatiker

Mit dieser historischen Wendung hat sich jedoch der Reflexionsbegriff, wenn nicht verändert, so doch merklich erweitert. Der Ausgangspunkt unseres Gedankens war ja die Überlegung, dass die Reflexion eine Denktätigkeit benennt. Nun sind wir aber an einem Punkt angelangt, an dem sich die Philosophiegeschichte – nach dem Modell der Geschichtlichkeit der Kunst – als Reflexionsprozess gedeutet werden soll. Die Philosophiegeschichte ist aber sowenig wie ein Kunstwerk ein denkendes Subjekt. Solange nicht klar ist, wie eine solche Übertragung funktionieren soll, erscheint die Rede von der Reflexion als bloße Metapher. Um diesen naheliegenden Einwand zu entkräften, möchte ich auf Überlegungen aus Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik zurückgreifen. Hegels Logik gehört in dreifacher Hinsicht in unseren Zusammenhang. Zum einen legt die Interpretation, die ich im Vorhergehenden skizziert habe, offensichtlich eine Verwandtschaft der frühromantischen Philosophie zu Hegels Philosophie nahe – das historische Selbstverständnis, der Zentralbegriff der Dialektik und die Kritik am Ursprungsdenken zeigen diese Nähe an. Zum andern gilt der Reflexionsbegriff für viele Interpretationen als Schlüsselbegriff in Hegels Logik.³⁹ Bei aller Schwierigkeit diesen Begriff in all seinen Dimensionen zu erfassen, ist doch zumindest eine Eigentümlichkeit in Hegels Auffassung der Reflexion deutlich: Er diskutiert die Reflexion nicht bloß als eine Tätigkeit, in der denkende Subjekte auf ihre eigenen Gedanken aufmerksam werden. Vielmehr gilt ihm die Reflexion, wie alle Bestimmungen der Logik, als eine logische Struktur, die dem Verständnis ganz unterschiedlicher Sachverhalte zu Grunde liegt. Zuletzt wurde in den letzten Jahrzehnten vielfach vorgeschlagen, auch die Philosophie Hegels als einen Pragmatismus *avant la lettre* zu deuten. Diese Deutung ist vielleicht noch erstaunlicher als jene der Frühromantik – bildet doch der systematische und metaphysische Anspruch der Philosophie Hegels genau den Gegenspieler jener systemkritischen, nachmetaphysischen Praxisphilosophie. Den genauen Sinn dieser Deutung zu untersuchen, wird es jedoch erlauben, das Verhältnis dieser Positionen zueinander besser zu bestimmen.

Dina Emundts hat folgende pragmatische Deutung der Philosophie Hegels vorgelegt:⁴⁰ Pragmatisch ist eine Philosophie, welche erstens die Möglichkeit apriorischen Wissens verneint und zweitens die Gültigkeit von

erschließen – für die Angleichung von Philosophie und Kunst entscheidender zu sein. Der Schellingsche Gedanke, die Kunst biete einen privilegierten Zugang zu einer ursprünglichen Gewissheit, auf der die Philosophie sozusagen aufbauen könnte, ist bei Schlegel weniger präsent: Philosophie und Kunst sind gleichermaßen unabgeschlossene, fortschreitende Projekte, in welchen Gewissheit immer ein entzogener Fluchtpunkt bleibt.

³⁹ Klassisch: Dieter Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext*, Frankfurt/M. 2010, S. 95ff.

⁴⁰ Dina Emundts, »Hegel as a Pragmatist«, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 23/4, 2015, S. 611–63.

Wissen von praktischen Verfahren des Testens abhängig macht.⁴¹ Beide Bedingungen erfülle die Philosophie Hegels. Denn erstens formuliert sie, wie Schlegel, eine Kritik an der Idee apriorischen Wissens. Ein solches Wissen wäre erfahrungsunabhängig: Es wäre also ein Wissen, welches das subjektive Denken von sich selbst erlangt, indem es von allen Erfahrungsgegenständen absieht. Hegel kritisiert jedoch gerade diesen kantischen Gegensatz von subjektivem Gedanken und objektiver Wirklichkeit: Wissen ist, richtig verstanden, immer begrifflich erfasste Wirklichkeit. Dies aber lasse, so Emundts, die Rede von apriorischem Wissen sinnlos werden. Zum andern befinden sich selbst die Grundbegriffe des Denkens nach Hegels Auffassung in einer Bewegung, welche Emundts als eine Art Testdurchlauf deutet. So gehen in der Phänomenologie des Geistes die verschiedenen Gestalten des Bewusstseins ineinander über, weil jeder jeweils erreichte Standpunkt des Bewusstseins eine Erfahrung von Widersprüchlichkeit macht, die ihn zwingt, über sich hinaus zu gehen.⁴² Freilich geschieht dieser Test nicht realiter in der Sprachpraxis, sondern virtuell, im philosophischen Nachvollzug.⁴³ Diese Widersprüche seien dennoch praktischer Natur, weil sie nicht von einem anderen Standpunkt aus beobachtet werden, sondern erst dadurch hervortreten, dass der jeweilige Standpunkt experimentell eingenommen wird und in all seinen Konsequenzen nachvollzogen wird. Dasselbe gelte jedoch auch für die Denkbestimmungen der Logik: Auch sie treiben jeweils über sich hinaus, nachdem sie einem praktischen Test unterzogen werden. Auf diese Weise bilde die Logik keine starre Begriffsordnung ab, sondern vollziehe einen Prozess der Konzeptualisierung nach, im Verlaufe dessen Begriffe in praktischer Auseinandersetzung mit den Wirklichkeiten entstünden.

Instead, according to Hegel, we have to take into account that to know something about something is just a process of conceptualizing which is only made possible by dealing with real things. 'Conceptualizing' means that referring conceptually to things and their relations and thereby determining them without the concepts being fixed from the beginning. [...] Thus, there is no non-conceptual material on the one side and a priori concepts on the other. [...] After obtaining our concepts through an experimental process, we might consider their connections and developments independently of experience. Although this is possible,

⁴¹ Diese Auffassung lässt offen, ob ein Pragmatismus sich auf metaphysische Aussagen wie etwa die begriffsrealistische Annahme einer logischen Grundstruktur der Wirklichkeit festlegt oder solche metaphysischen Positionen negiert – C. S. Peirce und Hegel seien in diesem Sinne metaphysische Pragmatisten, vgl. ebd., S. 629.

⁴² Emundts macht dies am Beispiel der Gestalt der sinnlichen Gewissheit deutlich, welche in einen performativen Widerspruch gerät, wenn sie die unmittelbare Gewissheit des sinnlich Gegenwärtigen dadurch verdeutlicht, dass sie auf das hier und jetzt Anwesende zeigt: Denn das Zeigen selbst ist ein Akt, der mehrere Momente in sich zusammenfasst und deshalb gerade die unmittelbare Gegenwart übersteigt, vgl. ebd., S. 617.

⁴³ Vgl. »Furthermore, philosophy itself is part of our practice«, ebd., S. 626.

this does not mean that concepts are possible without experience and that they do not require a procedure of explication from practice. For this reason, Hegel makes clear in the introduction of the *Logic* that the concepts and principles discussed in the *Logic* are only abstractions from concrete experience. This is also the reason why he calls the principles and concepts in the *Logic* 'shadows'.⁴⁴

Die Rede vom »Schattenreich«⁴⁵ der *Logik*, auf die jüngst auch Robert Pippin seine pragmatistische Deutung der *Logik* stützte, zielt in ihrem Zusammenhang freilich in eine andere Richtung. In dieser Passage des Vorworts steht in Frage, wie die logische Wissenschaft dem Einzelnen erscheint, der sie sich aneignen will. Das Logische erscheint demjenigen, »der an die Wissenschaft erst hinzutritt« und »am Anfange des Studiums« steht als Schattenreich, weil es ein von »sinnlicher Anschauungen und Zwecken, von Gefühlen, von der bloß gemeinten Vorstellungswelt fernes Geschäft« treibe.⁴⁶ Wer hingegen mit den Wissenschaften vertraut sei, könne die Denkbestimmungen der *Logik* wertschätzen, weil sie das »Wesen, das Absolut-Wahre«⁴⁷ der einzelnen Wissenschaften erfasse.

An diesem scheinbaren Auslegungsdetail wird eine allgemeine Schwierigkeit der pragmatistischen Hegel-Deutung deutlich. Sie betrifft das Verhältnis von *Logik* und Erfahrungswissenschaft resp. Sprachpraxis. Es steht außer Frage, dass die Begriffe, welche die *Logik* diskutiert, nicht erfunden oder frei eingeführt wurden, sondern sich historisch auf irgendwelche praktischen Erfahrungen mit der Welt zurückführen lassen. Insofern nimmt die Philosophie den Stoff, über den sie nachdenkt, aus dem Alltagsverstand sowie aus den Erfahrungswissenschaften auf. Zugleich zielt das logische Unternehmen als Ganzes jedoch gerade auf eine kritische Umgestaltung jener Begriffe, die sie dem Alltag wie den Wissenschaften entnimmt: Die wahre Bestimmung der Begriffe muss die philosophische *Logik* erst konstruieren. Die pragmatistische Vorstellung, dass sich die logischen Denkbestimmungen in der Anwendungspraxis zu bewähren hätten, läuft diesem Grundverständnis der logischen Wissenschaft entgegen. Denn die Praxis, aus der die Begriffe stammen, erfasst ihre Begriffe nicht in ihrer Wahrheit.

Dieser Verdacht drückt sich in der Unterscheidung zwischen endlichem Verstand und unendlicher Vernunft aus. Der Verstand bezeichnet das »natürliche« Denken, den Standpunkt der alltäglichen Kommunikation und der Einzelwissenschaften. Er bezeichnet in zweifachem Sinne endliches Denken. Das verständige Denken bestimmt einerseits Sachverhalte, indem es Unterscheidungen trifft, Hinsichten, Merkmale oder Aspekte einer Sache

⁴⁴ Ebd., S. 621–622.

⁴⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I, Werke*, 5, Frankfurt/M. 1986, S. 55.

⁴⁶ Ebd., S. 53–55.

⁴⁷ Ebd., S. 56.

begrifflich voneinander trennt und diese unterschiedenen Bestimmungen festhält.⁴⁸ In diesem Sinne denkt der Verstand in endlichen Bestimmungen: Seine Begriffe haben ihren Inhalt in der festgehaltenen Unterschiedenheit von anderen Begriffen. Begriffe verhalten sich daher zueinander wie endliche Entitäten, die sich anhand von Identifikationskriterien isolieren lassen: Das Verstandesdenken ist so ein verdinglichtes Denken. Zum andern versteht das verständige Denken auch sich selbst in einer endlichen Weise, indem es sich selbst vom Gegenstand, den es bedenkt, unterscheidet und an dieser Trennung festhält. Die Bestimmungen, in denen der Verstand denkt, erscheinen ihm daher als von ihm selbst hervorgebracht und an die Realität herangetragen.

Das Unternehmen der Logik kann als Kritik dieses Verstandesdenken gedeutet werden: Sie zielt darauf, die Denkbestimmungen des Verstands zur Vernunft zu bringen.⁴⁹ Diese Kritik hat zwei Momente: Zunächst muss sie zeigen, wie die endlichen, isolierten Verstandesbestimmungen notwendigerweise in Widersprüche führen. Darin folgt sie der Kantischen Auffassung der Dialektik als einer Logik des notwendigen Scheins des endlichen Denkens.⁵⁰ Kant erklärt diese Widersprüche dadurch, dass die endlichen Verstandesbestimmungen fälschlicherweise dazu verwendet werden, das Absolute zu bestimmen. Er zieht daraus bekanntlich den Schluss, dass die Verstandesbegriffe oder Kategorien ihre guten Dienste tun, solange sie nur auf die endlichen Gegenstände möglicher Erfahrung bezogen werden. Hegels Logik lässt diese Einschränkung nicht gelten: Die Widersprüche, welche die Verstandesbestimmungen hervorkehren, sobald sie als absolute Bestimmungen gedacht werden, sind diesen Begriffen wesentlich. Denn als endliche Bestimmungen haben sie ihren Inhalt nur in Bezug auf anderes; werden sie als isolierte Bestimmung betrachtet, so haben sie diesen Bezug auf ihr anderes an sich selbst – sie enthalten ihren Gegensatz. Daher werden die endlichen Verstandesbegriffe, sobald man sie an sich selbst betrachtet, instabil, widersprüchlich: Sie treiben über sich hinaus. Diesem negativ-dialektischen Schritt der Kritik folgt der eigentlich vernünftige, spekulative Gedanken, der die sich selbst widersprechenden Bestimmungen rückblickend in ihrem Zusammenhang denkt. Dieser Zusammenhang kann keine klassifikatorische Ordnung voneinander abgegrenzter Begriffe, keine Verstandesmetaphysik sein. Vielmehr muss ein solcher Zusammenhang die Ordnung des Ineinander-Übergehens sich selbst negierender Verstandesbestimmungen darstellen. Sie ist der Zusammenhang der in ihre Selbstkritik

⁴⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I, Werke*, 8, § 80, Frankfurt/M. 1986, S. 169.

⁴⁹ Vgl. Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein: die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*, Frankfurt/M. 1994; Marc Nicolas Sommer, »Die Selbsterkenntnis des Verstandes«, in: A. Arndt, B. Bowman, M. Gerhard und J. Zovko (Hg.) *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, Berlin 2018, S. 40-45.

⁵⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 298 / B 354.

überführten Scheingestalten des Verstands. Die festgehaltene Unterscheidung von Verstand und Vernunft erweist sich nun freilich selbst als eine verstandesmäßige. Denn, sofern dieses Kritikprogramm gelingt, ist die Tätigkeit der Vernunft ja nichts anderes als die Selbsterkenntnis des Verstands.⁵¹ Vernünftig geworden erkennt der Verstand sein verendliches Tun als den Grund der Widersprüchlichkeit seiner Bestimmungen – in dieser Selbsterkenntnis ist er aber über seine Endlichkeit hinaus und somit nicht mehr endliches Denken, sondern unendliches, Vernunft.

6. Die absolute Reflexion

Vor diesem Hintergrund lässt sich Hegels Reflexionsbegriff einführen. Es ist nun vielleicht weniger überraschend, dass Hegel den Begriff der Reflexion anhand des Gegensatzes von Wesen und Schein erklärt: Die Reflexion ist das Scheinen des Wesens in ihm selbst.⁵² Schein besteht darin, etwas, das in Wahrheit von anderem abhängt, isoliert als Ganzes, als Selbständiges zu nehmen: Der Schein ist Schein von Unmittelbarkeit. Die endlichen Verstandesbestimmungen produzieren daher Schein, insofern sie unterschiedene Merkmale einer Sache isoliert bestimmen. Jedes Merkmal hat den Anschein unmittelbarer Gegebenheit. Nach dem Wesen einer Sache zu fragen heißt dagegen, diesen Anschein von unmittelbarer Bestimmtheit zu durchbrechen und über den Zusammenhang dieser Einzelbestimmungen nachzudenken. Dieses Nachdenken ist die Reflexion. In solcher Reflexion wird das scheinbar Selbständige auf seinen wesentlichen Zusammenhang befragt: Worin die Identität des Unterschiedenen, der Grund eines Existierenden, das Gesetz einer Veränderung, die Ursache der Wirkungen oder die Substanz besteht, in welchen die Attribute und Modi sind – um nur einige der Bestimmungen zu nennen, die in der Reflexionslogik thematisiert werden. Man kann diesen Unterschied auch so markieren, dass von den vereinzelt Bestimmungen, wie eine Sache unmittelbar erscheint, übergegangen wird zur Frage, was den Anschein dieser Sache erklärt. Solches Nachdenken über das Wesen einer Sache vollzieht eine Doppelbewegung: Es geht einerseits von den unmittelbaren Einzelbestimmung aus, um von ihnen auf das Wesen zu schließen, das ihren inneren Zusammenhang verständlich macht. Andererseits muss das Wesen so geartet sein, dass es einsichtig macht, weshalb es sich genau so und nicht anders in Einzelnes entäußert. Die Verinnerlichung des Scheins zum Wesen und die Entäußerung des Wesens in den Schein bilden so die gegenstrebigenden Richtungen der Reflexion.

Nun sind aber Schein und Wesen offensichtlich nicht gleichwertig: Das Wesen einer Sache ist ja im Kontrast zu ihrem Anschein das, was die Sache in Wahrheit ist. Die Einsicht in das Wesen setzt den Schein eben zum bloßen

⁵¹ Vgl. M.N. Sommer, »Die Selbsterkenntnis des Verstandes«, S. 40-45.

⁵² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II, Werke*, 6, Frankfurt/M. 1986, S. 23.

Anschein herab: Das Wesen negiert den Anspruch der Einzelbestimmungen, bestimmen zu können, was die Sache in Wahrheit ist. Die Verinnerlichung, welche die Reflexion vollzieht, ist somit eine Kritik des äußerlichen Anscheins. Weil aber das Wesen diesen Schein zugleich erklären soll, so kann ihm selbst der Schein, dessen Wahrsein das Wesen negiert, nicht völlig äußerlich sein: Das Wesen erklärt den Schein, weil es den Schein hervorbringt, weil es seine Einzelbestimmungen und Unterschiede setzt. Was in den endlichen Scheingestalten des Verstandesdenkens gedacht wird, ist die Selbstentäußerung des Wesens in das, was gerade nicht Wesen, sondern Schein ist: Das Wesen entäußert sich in sein Anderes. Die erste Bewegung, die Verinnerlichung, beginnt mit dem Schein. Ist der Schein aber Produkt des Wesens, so setzt die Verinnerlichung in Wahrheit diese Entäußerung bereits voraus. Wenn auf diese Weise der Schein als das Scheinen des Wesens erkannt wird, dann ist die Erkenntnis des Scheins die Erfassung des Wesens in seinem Anderen, das zugleich es selbst ist. Das Verhältnis von Schein und Wesen weist so dieselbe Struktur auf, die wir im Nachdenken über die Gültigkeit von Urteilen antrafen: Reflexion ist ein Selbstbezug im Fremdbezug.

Die Idee einer Selbstentäußerung des Wesens ist von vielen Kommentatoren als Schlüsselgedanke der gesamten Logik gedeutet worden.⁵³ Der Witz dieses Gedankens besteht darin, das Wesen selbst als nichts anderes als den Zusammenhang des Scheins zu denken, den das Wesen hervorbringt. Das Wesen besteht allein in der Vermittlung des Scheins, der Schein ist ihm wesentlich.⁵⁴ Das Wesen ist somit einerseits das Resultat der Scheinkritik, es ist die Negation des Scheins. Zugleich ist der Schein aber nichts anderes als die Selbstentäußerung des Wesens: Es ist das Resultat der Selbstnegation jenes Wesen, das selbst nichts anderes als die Negation der Selbstständigkeit des scheinbar Einzelnen ist. Ist der Schein die Selbstnegation des Wesens, so war das Wesen von Beginn an die Negation seiner selbst, nämlich die Negation seiner entäußerten Gestalt im Schein. In diesem Sinne ist die Reflexion eine Bewegung durch Negationsgestalten, die sich selbst negieren; sie ist eine Bewegung von Nichts zu Nichts.

Damit ist zunächst bloß eine logische Struktur umschrieben, in der aus der Negationsoperation durch Selbstanwendung verschiedene, sich entgegengesetzte Negationspole entstehen: Wesen und Schein, Negierendes und Negiertes. Die Einsicht, dass das Wesen mit dem Schein eigentlich sich

⁵³ Dieter Henrich, »Hegels Logik der Reflexion«, in: *Hegel im Kontext*, Berlin 2010, S. 95–157; ders., »Hegels Grundoperation«, in: U. Guzzoni, B. Rang, L. Siep (Hg.), *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart*, Hamburg 1976, S. 208–230; Christian Georg Martin, *Ontologie der Selbstbestimmung. Eine operationale Rekonstruktion von Hegels »Wissenschaft der Logik«*, Tübingen 2012, S. 25ff.

⁵⁴ Vgl. Gunnar Hindrichs, »Der Schein ist dem Wesen wesentlich«, in: T. Braune-Krickau, T. Erne, K. Scholl, (Hg.), *Vom Ende her gedacht: Hegels Ästhetik zwischen Kunst und Religion*, Freiburg 2014, S. 68–98.

selbst negiert und gar nicht anders denn als solche Selbstnegation gedacht werden kann, hebt jedoch diese Unterscheidung von Wesen und Schein sogleich wieder auf: Wesen und Schein sind als voneinander getrennte Pole selbst Scheingestalten des in Wahrheit Zusammenhängenden, denn Schein und Wesen sind – insofern die Resultate von Selbstnegation sind – dasselbe.

Die schwierige Frage besteht darin, wie man diese logische Struktur auf jene subjektive Denktätigkeit bezieht, die für gewöhnlich als Reflexion bezeichnet wird: Das Nachdenken über gedachte Gegenstände, über den Zusammenhang ihrer Merkmale, über die Begriffe, in denen diese Aspekte einer Sache unterschieden werden, über die Tätigkeit solchen Unterscheidens und zuletzt über die Gültigkeit dieser Begriffsanwendung. Diese subjektive Reflexionstätigkeit nennt Hegel die äußere Reflexion. Sie ist die verstandesmäßige Auffassung jener Reflexionsstruktur, die wir oben skizzierten; sie ist somit eine Scheingestalt der Reflexion, in der als unterschieden festgehalten wird, was wesentlich zusammenhängt. Unterschieden erscheinen in ihr die Reflexionspole der Unmittelbarkeit, des Scheins, der äußerlichen Sache auf der einen und der Vermittlung, des Wesens, der Überlegung auf der anderen Seite. So haben wir auch die Reflexionsproblematik eingeführt: Den Anfang macht eine vorliegende Sache, über die reflektiert wird. Der Anschein der Sache ist die Voraussetzung der subjektiven Reflexion über ihn; aber es ist die Reflexion selbst, die sich die Sache, wie sie unmittelbar gegeben scheint, zur Voraussetzung macht. Die äußere Reflexion ist dadurch charakterisiert, dass sie vergisst, dass ihre Voraussetzung Resultat der Selbstentäußerung ist. Sie hält am Unterschied zwischen dem Vorliegenden und dem Nachdenken fest. Dadurch erscheint ihr das Reflektieren als ein subjektives Tun, das dem vorausgesetzten Gegenstand äußerlich bleibt. Der Gegensatz von Wesen und Schein kann nun in beide Richtungen gewendet werden: Entweder erscheint sich das Nachdenken selbst als das scheinhaft, weil es niemals fähig ist, jenes Wesen, dass es sich vorausgesetzt hat, zu erfassen. Das Denken hat es nur mit Erscheinungen zu tun; das Ding, wie es in Wahrheit ist, bleibt unerkannt. Der Verstand versteht sich so als endlich und ist unfähig, das Absolute zu erfassen, das er sich voraussetzt. Oder aber der Verstand erscheint sich selbst als das Wesen, dessen reflektierender Tätigkeit aller vorliegende Schein entspringt: Alle Voraussetzungen lösen sich in bloße Setzungen der Reflexion auf. Alles, was solche setzende Reflexion sich entgegensetzt, wird sogleich als mit ihr deckungsgleich gedacht. Damit wird zwar die Einheit von Wesen und Schein erkannt, aber diese Identität ist genauso leer wie jenes scheinhaftes Nachdenken, das seine Voraussetzung nie erreicht. Solange die Reflexion als subjektive Tätigkeit gegen ihre Objekte festgehalten wird, muss sie als ein ergebnisloses Insichkreisen erscheinen.

Hegels Reflexionsbegriff – die bestimmende Reflexion⁵⁵ – nimmt beide Momente zusammen. Die Reflexion ist ein Selbstverhältnis, das sich erst nachträglich über den Umweg durch ein Fremdverhältnis einstellt: Sie ist Wiederaneignung eines als fremd vorausgesetzten Eigenen. Aber die Pointe ist, dass es dieses Eigene, das Wesen, nicht vor der Entäußerung in den Schein, sondern nur als Wiederaneignung, als Rückkehr gibt.⁵⁶ Vor diesem Hintergrund wird klar, wie man auch einen historischen Prozess als Reflexionsgeschehen verstehen kann. Das Vergangene ist die Voraussetzung der Gegenwart. Aber diese Voraussetzung ist der Gegenwart nur gegenwärtig, wenn sie sich das Vergangene zur eigenen Voraussetzung macht, wenn sie ihre Geschichte als eigene Vorgeschichte versteht. Dieses Verstehen ist aber in gewisser Hinsicht ein Hervorbringen dieser Vorgeschichte als solcher; sie ist eine Selbstentäußerung der Gegenwart ins Vergangene. Erst über diese Selbstunterscheidung vom Vergangenen kann sich aber die Gegenwart als solche erfassen: Das Fremdverhältnis zum Gewesenen ist die Bedingung dafür, dass Gegenwart als solche überhaupt thematisch werden kann.⁵⁷ Insofern bildet jedes historische Phänomen, das sich in seiner Unterscheidung vom Vorangehenden erfasst, eine Reflexionsstruktur aus. Hegel fasst die Reflexion nicht als eine subjektive Denktätigkeit, sondern als eine Struktur der Selbstbeziehung durch Selbstentgegensetzung, die gewissen Denkbestimmungen – den Reflexionsbegriffen – selbst zukommt.

Wendet man diese Einsichten nun auf das Unternehmen der Logik selbst an, so lässt sich die Kritik am Verstandesdenken als Selbsterkenntnis des Denkens über den Umweg durch die Scheingestalten der endlichen Bestimmungen verstehen. Diese Bestimmungen sind Selbstentäußerungen des Denkens, die es sich in der Kritik wiederaneignet und so zu sich selbst kommt. Die verdinglichenden Formen des Denkens sind somit sich selbst fremd gewordene Hervorbringungen des Denkens, im Durchgang durch welche es sich selbst erfasst. Diese Selbsterkenntnis des Denkens kommt für Hegel freilich zu einem gelingenden Abschluss. Die selbstnegierende Bewegung der endlichen Scheingestalten des Denkens schließt sich zu einer Totalität, sie findet am Ende zu ihrem Anfang zurück und gerät so zum Kreis aus Kreisen.⁵⁸ Die Reflexion wird absolut.

⁵⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Logik II*, S. 32.

⁵⁶ »Die Rückkehr des Wesens ist somit sein Sich-Abstoßen von sich selbst. Oder die Reflexion-in-sich ist wesentlich das Vorausgesetzte dessen, aus dem sie die Rückkehr ist.«, G.W.F. Hegel, *Logik II*, S. 27.

⁵⁷ Zu dieser Anwendung auf die Geschichte, sowie der vorangehenden Rekonstruktion, vgl. Christian Georg Martin, *Ontologie der Selbstbestimmung*, Tübingen 2012, S. 143ff. Sowie sein Hinweis auf die These der logischen Begründung der Geschichte im Reflexionsbegriff bei Herbert Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit*, Frankfurt 1975.

⁵⁸ Vgl. »Vermöge der aufgezeigten Natur der Methode stellt sich die Wissenschaft als ein in sich geschlungener *Kreis* dar, in dessen Anfang, den einfachen Grund, die Vermittlung das Ende

Auch die pragmatistische Deutung betont die Begriffsbewegung, die Hegels Logik auszeichnet. Sie interpretiert diese Bewegung so, dass sich die Begriffe in einem Testverfahren praktisch bewähren müssen. Darin zeige sich, dass Hegel die Idee apriorischen Wissens verabschiedete. Die reflexionslogische Skizze dieser logischen Bewegung kommt jedoch ohne den Bezug auf eine Anwendungspraxis aus. Denn die Reflexionsbewegung, die Selbstnegation, ist ja den endlichen Verstandesbestimmungen inhärent. Daher beschreibt Hegel sein Verfahren auch als ein Zuschauen: Die Logik schaut der Selbstbewegung des Begriffes zu, sie stellt dar,⁵⁹ wie die Denkbestimmungen, der logische Raum, die Grundbegriffe des Denkens sich durch selbstbezügliche Negation auseinanderentwickeln.⁶⁰ Zugleich beschreibt diese Reflexionsbewegung eine fortlaufende Selbstkritik des Begriffs. Wenn man von einer Kritik durch Anwendung sprechen wollte, so müsste man sagen, dass die Bestimmungen dadurch in Selbstkritik übergehen, dass sie für sich selbst betrachtet werden, indem sie als Bestimmungen des Absoluten genommen werden. Als solche absolute Bestimmung genommen, zeigen sie, was in der alltäglichen Verwendung gerade verborgen bleibt: nämlich, dass die Verstandesbegriffe insofern beschränkt sind, als sie intern auf andere bezogen sind und deshalb in Widersprüche geraten. Eine solche Kritik ist aber nicht mit der Absage an Selbstbegründung identisch. Es spricht vielmehr einiges dafür, dass Hegel gerade in diesem kritischen Verfahren eine überlegene Form der Selbstbegründung des Denkens erblickt. Das Problem der Geltungsreflexion bestand ja darin, dass sie die Geltungskriterien nicht prüfen kann, ohne sie vorauszusetzen. Hegel will dieses Problem lösen, indem er diese Grundbegriffe des Denkens nicht voraussetzt, sondern die Totalität der Denkbestimmungen aus dem Nullpunkt von Bestimmung – dem bestimmungslosen Sein – durch Selbstnegation entstehen lässt.⁶¹ Dieses Verfahren setzt jenen »Begriff der

zurückschlingt; dabei ist dieser Kreis ein *Kreis von Kreisen*; denn jedes einzelne Glied, als Beseeltes der Methode, ist die Reflexion-in-sich, die, indem sie in den Anfang zurückkehrt, zugleich der Anfang eines neuen Gliedes ist. Bruchstücke dieser Kette sind die einzelnen Wissenschaften, deren jede ein *Vor* und ein *Nach* hat oder, genauer gesprochen, nur das *Vor* *hat* und in ihrem Schluss selbst ihr *Nach* *zeigt*.«, G.W.F. Hegel, *Logik II*, S. 570–71.

⁵⁹ Zu dieser Interpretation auch, Anton Friedrich Koch, »Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Logik – Kleine Anmerkung zu einem großen Thema«, in: D. Emundts, S. Sedgwick (Hg.), *Logik – Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus*, Berlin/Boston 2018, S. 314.

⁶⁰ Vgl. »Das, wodurch sich der Begriff selbst weiterleitet, ist das vorhin angegebene *Negative*, das er in sich selbst hat; dies macht das wahrhaft Dialektische aus.«, G.W.F. Hegel, *Logik I*, S. 51. Koch hat für diese Selbstentwicklung des Begriffs den Ausdruck einer Evolution des logischen Raumes geprägt (Anton Friedrich Koch, *Die Evolution des logischen Raumes. Aufsätze zu Hegels Nichtstandard-Metaphysik*, Tübingen 2014).

⁶¹ Vgl. »Was hiermit als Methode hier zu betrachten ist, ist nur die Bewegung des *Begriffs* selbst, deren Natur schon erkannt worden, aber *erstlich* nunmehr mit der *Bedeutung*, daß der *Begriff* *alles* und seine Bewegung die *allgemeine absolute Tätigkeit*, die sich selbst bestimmende und selbst realisierende Bewegung ist.«, G.W.F. Hegel, *Logik II*, S. 550.

Wissenschaft«⁶² voraus, den die Phänomenologie des Geistes⁶³ als ihr Beweisziel zu erreichen vorgibt: Ein Wissen, in welchem die subjektive Rechtfertigung und objektive Geltung, Fürsich und Ansich, Gewissheit und Wahrheit in eins fallen. Erst von diesem Standpunkt aus, der die Unterscheidung von Bewusstsein und Objektwelt ausklammert, ergibt die Methode der Logik Sinn, die begriffliche Selbstbewegung nachzuzeichnen. Das so erarbeitete, dynamische System von geordneten Begriffsübergängen, wäre ein Selbstwissen des Begriffs, das keine Voraussetzung besitzt, die es sich nicht selbst gesetzt hätte. In diesem Sinne wäre es durchaus apriorisch: Nicht im Sinne einer subjektiven Selbsterkenntnis, sondern im Sinne einer Erkenntnis aus Begriffen allein, eine Erkenntnis des »Absolut-Wahren«.

7. Grenzen der Reflexion

Es kann hier nicht darum gehen, zu entscheiden, ob das Unternehmen Hegels gelingen könnte. Die frühromantische Einsicht in die Geschichtlichkeit der Philosophie scheint einen gewichtigen Einwand dagegen zu liefern: Denn die Geschichte ist eine Voraussetzung des Denkens auch dann, wenn dieses Denken sie nicht als seine Geschichte erfasst. Die Geschichte des Denkens ist, nach der Einsicht Adornos, als Herrschaft über Natur mit dieser vielfach verwickelt – sie auf die Selbsterfassung des Begriffs zu verkürzen, hieße, sie zu verkennen. In diesem Sinne wäre es möglich, die Negative Dialektik Adornos als Erben der frühromantischen Einsicht in die Geschichtlichkeit der Philosophie zu lesen. Dieser Gedanken führt jedoch über diesen Text hinaus. Vielmehr soll hier der Unterschied zwischen diesem Begründungsprogramm absoluter Reflexion und der romantischen, wie der pragmatischen Reflexionsphilosophie verdeutlicht werden. Allen gemein ist eine Kritik an einer Selbstbegründung des Denkens, die von einem unerschütterlichen Fundament ausgeht. Der Pragmatismus verwirft das Letztbegründungsprogramm und bindet den Wahrheitsanspruch der Gedanken an die Bewährung in Sprachpraktiken zurück: In der resignativen, wie in der zweckoptimistischen Variante wird die Geltungsfrage in einen unendlichen, offenen Vollzug von Rechtfertigungspraktiken verlängert. Die Frühromantik sucht nach einem hermeneutischen Begründungsverfahren, das die Geltung der Gedanken von einer unendlichen Auslegung eines entzogenen Absoluten abhängig macht. Der Unterschied zum Pragmatismus

⁶² G.W.F. Hegel, *Logik I*, S. 42.

⁶³ »Diese letzte Gestalt des Geistes, der Geist, der seinem vollständigen und wahren Inhalte zugleich die Form des Selbsts gibt und dadurch seinen Begriff ebenso realisiert, als er in dieser Realisierung in seinem Begriffe bleibt, ist das absolute Wissen; es ist der sich in Geistsgestalt wissende Geist oder das *begreifende Wissen*. Die *Wahrheit* ist nicht nur *an sich* vollkommen der *Gewißheit* gleich, sondern hat auch die *Gestalt* der Gewißheit seiner selbst, oder sie ist in ihrem Dasein, d.h. für den wissenden Geist in der *Form* des Wissens seiner selbst.«, G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Werke, 3, Frankfurt/M. 1979, S. 581–2.

mag als Nuance erscheinen, gerade in seiner praktischen Konsequenz ist es aber ein Unterschied ums Ganze: Denn die unbegrenzte Selbstkritik der Fixierungen des endlichen Denkens begreift Schlegel nicht als Beschränkung aufs Machbare. Die gemeinschaftliche Verunsicherung der vermeintlich selbstsicheren Grundlagen des Denkens soll ein Vollzug sein, in welchem sich ein undenkbares Absolutes geltend macht. Hegel wiederum glaubt mit dem Verfahren der Selbstnegation darstellen zu können, wie sich die Gesamtheit der Grundbestimmungen des Begreifens wie des Begreifbaren in einer Reflexionsbewegung, die zuletzt in sich zurückkehrt, selbst hervorbringt. Die Geltungsgrundlage ist daher kein festes Fundament, sondern ein absoluter Reflexionszusammenhang, der sich nicht satzförmig fixieren lässt.

Vor dieser Unterscheidung kann abschließend die Frage wieder aufgenommen werden, die diesen Überlegungen vorangestellt war. Was sagt uns der Rückgriff des Pragmatismus auf den Deutschen Idealismus über die Lage des gegenwärtigen Denkens? Im Vorwort zu Robert Brandoms transzendental-pragmatischer Hegel-Deutung *Wiedererinnerter Idealismus*, das die Publikationsreihe *Analytischer Deutscher Idealismus* eröffnet, bieten die Herausgeber James Conant und Andrea Kern ein klares Motiv: Die gegenwärtige Dominanz des empiristischen, naturalistischen Szientismus, der die geistige Freiheit des Menschen leugnet, habe die analytische Philosophie in einen falschen Gegensatz zum Deutschen Idealismus gezwungen, der von jeher das Verhältnis von Natur und Geist zu denken versuchte. Auf diese Weise habe sich aber die analytische Philosophie von sich selbst entfremdet:

Philosophie ist, so sagt es Hegel, der Versuch, das Denken aus sich selbst zu begreifen. Sie ist ein Begreifen des Denkens, das von keinen ›Voraussetzungen und Versicherungen‹ abhängt, wie er sagt, eine radikal voraussetzungslose Untersuchung der Voraussetzungen des Denkens. Darin liegt der gemeinsame Zug der Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus: dass die Begriffe, die sie durcharbeitet, von nirgendwoher – von keiner Wissenschaft und keinem Common Sense – übernommen werden, sondern diese Begriffe nur dann verwendet werden, wenn sie als notwendig für das Denken erkannt werden. Diese Einsicht, dass die Philosophie ihre Begriffe nur aus dem Denken selbst nehmen kann, macht den radikalen Anspruch des Deutschen Idealismus aus. Und so ist die Idee der analytischen Philosophie, die Idee der Philosophie als logischer Analyse der grundlegenden Formen des Denkens und der Aussage, nirgends so streng durchgeführt worden wie im Deutschen Idealismus. [...] Die analytische Philosophie kommt erst da zu sich selbst, wo sie sich nicht von der idealistischen Philosophie

abwendet, sondern auf diese ausgerichtet ist: in ihren Grundbegriffen und in der Radikalität ihrer Methode.⁶⁴

Der Deutsche Idealismus steht wie die frühromantische Philosophie für ein Denken, das die Fähigkeit besitzt, durch Arbeit am Begriff zu substanziellen Antworten zu den drängenden Fragen ihrer Zeit zu gelangen, um sich so von herrschenden Vorurteilen und Vereinfachungen zu befreien. Die Hinwendung des gegenwärtigen Pragmatismus zur nachkantischen Philosophie ist nicht allein aus dem historistischen Interesse zu erklären, unlesbar gewordene Texte zu erschließen. Sie zeugt vom Ungenügen der gegenwärtigen Philosophie an sich selbst als einer Philosophie, die sich an die Faktizität bestehender Diskurse und Praktiken bindet: Die Rückwendung zielt auf die eine Wiedergewinnung der Möglichkeit normativ anspruchsvoller, kritischer Philosophie. Allein, es ist ihr dabei nicht geholfen, wenn sie die historischen Positionen sich selbst angleicht. Die Einsicht in die geschichtliche und sprachliche Bedingtheit des Denkens, der die Frühromantik den Weg bereitete, lässt sich nicht ohne Weiteres überspringen: Die gegenwärtige Philosophie wird ihre Kritikfähigkeit nur dann in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem nachkantischen Denken wiedergewinnen, wenn sie sich des historischen Abstands bewusst bleibt, der sie von jenen Diskussionen trennt. Die Geschichtlichkeit des Denkens gilt auch für die Philosophie: Sie kann sich nur begründen, indem sie ihre eigene Begrenztheit erkennt. Die Konfrontation von Pragmatismus und Idealismus wird womöglich dazu führen, diese Grenzen der Reflexion neu zu verstehen – ignorieren darf sie sie nicht.

⁶⁴ Andrea Kern, James Conant, »Vorwort«, in: R. Brandom, *Wiedererinnerter Idealismus*, Berlin 2015, S. 11.

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

From Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* to Novalis' Poetic Historicity

*Rylie Johnson**

ABSTRACT

This article broadly concerns the role of history in Novalis' romantic philosophy. It is broken up into two parts. First, it contrasts Fichte's system of critical idealism with Novalis' magical idealism. Unlike Fichte, Novalis argues that the "I" can intuit the absolute – constituting the realization of unconditional freedom – through poetry. Given that the end of history consists in the realization of the absolute, then the poet must play an essential role in the process. Second, it argues that the poet's role in history is to re-present human activity – past and contemporary – in terms of a fable, which serves to educate people morally. To render the world moral is to make freedom manifest, which is the teleological goal of history. Practically, Novalis turns this goal into a more political project of reviving European Christendom, which has disappeared as a result of secular modernity.

Keywords: Novalis, Fichte, Absolute, History, Poetry, Christendom, Magical Idealism

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article, "De la *Doctrine de la science* de Fichte à la poétique de l'histoire de Novalis", examine dans ses grandes lignes le rôle que joue l'histoire dans la philosophie romantique de Novalis. Il compare, dans un premier temps, le système de l'idéalisme critique de Fichte et l'idéalisme magique de Novalis. Contrairement à Fichte, Novalis soutient que le "Moi" peut intuitionner l'absolu – et réaliser en cela la liberté inconditionnelle – par le biais de la poésie. Étant donné que la finalité de l'histoire consiste dans la réalisation de l'absolu, le poète doit jouer un rôle essentiel dans ce processus. Dans un second temps, l'article défend l'idée que le rôle du poète dans l'histoire est de re-présenter l'activité humaine – passée comme contemporaine – sous la forme d'une fable servant à éduquer moralement les gens. Rendre le monde moral, c'est rendre la liberté manifeste, ce qui est le but téléologique de l'histoire. En pratique, Novalis fait de cet objectif un projet plus politique : celui de faire revivre la Chrétienté européenne qui a disparu avec la sécularisation moderne.

Mots-clés : Novalis, Fichte, absolu, histoire, poésie, Chrétienté, idéalisme magique

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Introduction: History and Futurity

Novalis' novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* details the education of its protagonist Heinrich into the vocation of a poet.¹ Specifically, Heinrich is educated in five fields of knowledge: war, nature, history, virtue, and poetry. While each field is a necessary component in the education of the poet, we will focus on explicating the particular meaning of history for Novalis. After all, in his incomplete notes for a romantic encyclopedia, entitled *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, Novalis projected the creation of a "historical Doctrine of Science" (*Wissenschaftslehre*).²

While Novalis accounts for the historian's activity as both curator of the past and spectator of the present, he also emphasizes that history is necessarily tied to the anticipation of the future as well.³ This point is also carried over into his encyclopedia, "All history is threefold - remote antiquity, present time and future."⁴ Hence, the historian's task is not just to recollect and represent the past from the perspective of the present, but also to anticipate the future.

This *futural history* is also coextensive with his romantic cosmology. He maintains that through a process of historical development, nature will become moral, i.e. natural and human ends will be in accord, a state that is tantamount to the very realization of God.⁵ However, this process is not merely intellectual, rather it occurs through artistic practice, whereby nature becomes identified with art itself. In particular, he claims that art and nature are united in love, which marks the very end of his cosmology: "Love is the final goal of *world history* – the One of the universe."⁶ Consequently, we can see that Novalis' theory of history goes beyond human activity to include the cosmos as a whole. Given his claim in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* that poetry is meant to convey the nature of love, we can already posit that the poet has a necessarily historical task, realizing the very end of history itself.⁷

¹ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Long Grove: Waveland Press Inc., 1992). I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editorial team for their criticism and support, which greatly helped improve this article.

² Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (Albany/N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), #429, 66.

³ For historian Reinhart Koselleck, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* reflects the late eighteenth century debates regarding the constitution of history. History was not just the purview of the past, but a dynamic subject that connected the past with the future. He writes, "*Geschichte* (history) did not then primarily mean the past, as it did later; rather it indicated that covert connection of the bygone with the future whose relationship can only be perceived when one has learned to construct history from the modalities of memory and hope." Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985), 270.

⁴ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #598, 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, #78, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, #50, 8.

⁷ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 116.

In order to better grasp Novalis theory of history, it will be contrasted with Fichte's philosophical system, which according to Novalis remains at the level of pre-history.⁸ Novalis criticizes Fichte's absolute "I" insofar as it lies only at the beginning of history, or rather the point anterior to history, since the absolute is rendered as the condition of time: "Fichte's ego – is a Robinson Crusoe – a scientific *fiction* – to facilitate the presentation and development of the *Doctrine of Science* (*Wissenschaftslehre*) – like the beginning of history etc."⁹ The absolute "I" is an epistemological premise with no reality unto itself. Even when Fichte pays heed to what is to come or what ought to come, the absolute "I" is only a regulative idea that the empirical "I" must strive for infinitely, i.e. without end.¹⁰ Consequently, if the realization of the absolute "I" in empirical reality is understood as the end of historical development, and this end is necessarily unrealizable, then the end of history is a fundamentally impossible concept.

How do we square Novalis' theory of history with the influence that Fichte had on the very shape of that theory? This article argues that the distinction can be found in Novalis' critique of the Fichtean absolute; for Novalis, the realization of the absolute is not an infinite task, but something that can be achieved through poetry. Consequently, the end of history becomes an actual possibility for Novalis. As such, there is a utopian kernel in Novalis' thought that can be fleshed out, relative to Fichte's more abstract, ideal system.

This argument will take shape in three parts. First, given that this is a paper on the philosophy of history, we will contextualize Novalis' and Fichte's views on historical development relative to debates regarding history in the late eighteenth century. Second, we will compare and contrast Fichte's critical idealist system with Novalis' magical idealism. Unlike the former, the

⁸ Why Fichte? Novalis' philosophical thought was largely informed by his studies on Fichte. It is for this reason that, according to Frederick C. Beiser, Novalis was for a long time dismissed as simply constructing a "poetic version of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*." Today, however, Novalis is recognized as a thinker in his own right who was quite critical of Fichte's system. For Beiser, Novalis belongs to the tradition of absolute idealism, pre-dating and anticipating both Schelling's and Hegel's respective systems. Specifically, Novalis criticizes Fichte for his reduction of the absolute to the "I," and sought to "synthesize Fichte and Spinoza" through an appeal to an absolute *qua* God. However, this point is not uncontested. Hence, in her book *The Romantic Absolute*, Dalia Nassar criticizes Beiser for rendering the romantic project into a kind of Spinozism; obscuring the romantic investment in constructing the "I" in a manner consistent with Fichte. As such, Novalis' philosophical projecting consists in realizing God in the world through the activity of the "I," but not in a matter of striving; a task, which, unlike Nassar or Beiser, this article seeks to show, is necessarily historical in nature. See: Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 420; Dalia Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 11.

⁹ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #717, 132.

¹⁰ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 286.

latter contends that the “I” can intuit the absolute – in this case, God – constituting the realization of unconditioned freedom (the harmonization of nature and morality). Moreover, this intuitive freedom can be instantiated in the world through rendering nature as an artwork, especially through poetry. This capacity to realize the absolute in practice makes possible the end of history. Second, we will argue that if poetry is the art that best presents the absolute, the poet must also be a historian in some form. This will explain why an education in history is necessary for the formation of the poet. As such, the poet-historian emerges as an agential force for the realization of the absolute.

1. The End of History?

Before further explicating the historical nature of Fichte’s and Novalis’ respective philosophical projects, it is necessary to contextualize this article in relation to notions of history that were operative in the late-eighteenth century. In his book *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Reinhart Koselleck argues that consistent with the enlightenment project of the eighteenth century was the rise of a distinct historical consciousness. In light of the French revolution, the notion of history transformed from the instructive representation of the past into a subject in its own right. Accordingly, one could now speak of history as being the agent of social transformation (e.g. one can be on the “wrong side of history”). In the German language, this is marked by the transition of generally denoting history with the word *Historie* to *die Geschichte*, i.e. from history as an account of past events to a collective singular narrative. In being rendered into a narrative, history takes on characteristics of an epic poem.¹¹ Koselleck writes: “Increasingly, historical narrative was expected to provide the unity found in the epic derived from the existence of Beginning and End.”¹² Accordingly, the notion of an end of history is itself a product of this new historical consciousness.

For Koselleck, modernity ushered in a distinct futurity that replaced religious eschatology (i.e. the anticipation of the end of the world) with the notion of indefinite progress. “The future became a domain of finite possibilities, arranged according to their greater or lesser probability.”¹³

¹¹ In his lectures on the philosophy of history, G.W.F. Hegel had explicitly made this point of connecting history as *Geschichte* with narrative. “In our language the term *History* (*Geschichte*) unites the objective with the subjective side, and denotes quite as much the *historia rerum gestarum*, as the *res gestae* themselves; on the other hand it comprehends not less what has *happened*, than the *narratives* of what has happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 60.

¹² Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 29.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

However, although the future became an open horizon of relative possibilities, the notion of an end of history nonetheless remained operative. In other words, those distinct possibilities are framed within a generalized goal that history itself strives for. In the philosophy of history this took shape both in the idea that history has an end, in the sense of a teleological goal, and the construction of a universal account of history, i.e. all particular histories became inscribed within a singular, over-arching history. Furthermore, this appeal to historical teleology was matched with a sublimation of chance and contingency, in favor of necessity. As Koselleck notes, Novalis is emblematic of this point insofar as he argued that the craft of history involves taking up chance events and rendering them into a “pleasing and instructive whole,” forming them into something poetic in shape.¹⁴

These three aspects of history (teleological, universal, and necessary) were particularly embodied in German idealist thought. Before Novalis and Fichte, for example, in his essay “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View,” Immanuel Kant had hypothesized that history is the process that will ultimately bring about the “perfectly constituted state” that is consistent with human nature.¹⁵ After Novalis and Fichte, Hegel posited the notion of an end of history more forcefully, arguing that its end consisted in the realization of freedom in the world:

The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom; a progress whose development according to the necessity of its nature, it is our business to investigate ... The destiny of the spiritual world, and ... *the final cause of the world at large*, we allege to be the *consciousness* of its own freedom on the part of Spirit, and *ipso facto*, the *reality* of that freedom.¹⁶

With this in mind, it should be clear that Novalis’ and Fichte’s futural reflections on the end of history are consistent with their own historical period, albeit the former with a romantic orientation. Indeed, as we will see, they reflect the general German idealist trend that history is a process that reflects the progressive realization of freedom.

However, this trend experienced its own end with the rise of historicism in the middle of the nineteenth century. As Frederick C. Beiser argues, this new scientific approach to history would ultimately “liberate” itself from the philosophy of history, including the work of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and by extension Novalis. This was primarily due to the fact that these philosophers were not practicing historians. “The problem was that the philosophers – Schiller, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel – had little idea of, or appreciation for, the distinctive methods and goals of historical research. They saw history as

¹⁴ Ibid., 128.

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *On History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1985), 21.

¹⁶ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 19.

part of philosophy, and they could conceive it only as the philosophy of history.”¹⁷ In opposition to a universal and teleological history, historicism contends that each historical era has its own coherency, which must not be subsumed into some overarching historical goal. As such, historicism should be interpreted as a “break” with the Enlightenment, which would include the historical consciousness discussed by Koselleck.¹⁸ Although this is certainly not to say that universal and teleological history is not an operative concept in the world today. In any case, with this historical backdrop in place, this article turns to explicate Fichte’s system and its relation to the philosophy of history.

2. Fichte’s Absolute “I” and Historical Striving

Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* (*Science of Knowledge*) is structured around the opposition between his own system of “critical idealism” and what he designates as “dogmatism.” The former reduces and grounds all conscious experience in the activity of the free, self-positing “I.” Whereas the latter grounds experience in a posited thing-in-itself, of which the “I” is only a specific modification thereof. However, given that the thing-in-itself cannot appear to consciousness, Fichte maintains that it is a “pure invention.”¹⁹ Moreover, in a rebuke to Kant, positing the existence of a thing-in-itself has no explanatory power precisely for this same reason.

The primary problem with dogmatism consists in the fact that it is incompatible with freedom. Consciousness itself becomes an appearance that is conditioned upon the thing-in-itself. Consequently, dogmatic systems necessarily result in a form of fatalism. Conversely, the advantage of critical idealism is precisely that it posits “the presence in consciousness of the freely acting intellect, which is the basis of its explanation of experience.”²⁰ In other words, critical idealism is consistent with freedom. But while it has this advantage over dogmatism, neither system can actually be proven to be true, nor can they “refute” each other.²¹ They are both rooted in first principles, which are the presuppositions that the respective systems derive their results from. As Fichte explains in *The Vocation of Man*:

In short, neither of the two opinions [systems] can be justified with reasons ... I cannot ever become conscious either of the external forces which determine me in the system of universal necessity [dogmatism] nor of my own power through which I determine myself in the system of freedom [critical idealism]. Whichever of the two opinions I may

¹⁷ Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 428.

²⁰ Ibid., 430.

²¹ Ibid., 429.

adopt, therefore, I will always adopt it simply because I happen to adopt it.²²

Since neither system is provable, the choice between them is a function of one's personality and desires. In short, the difference is between those who want to consider themselves free and those who do not.

Fichte's system is grounded on three fundamental principles: (1) the absolutely unconditioned principle, the law of identity ($A=A$); (2) the law of opposition (A does not $= \sim A$); (3) the law of mutual restriction or limitation ($A=\sim A$, which means that both poles of the equation are not totally negated, but mutually divided). The first simply posits the self-evident law of identity, $A=A$, which also states the conditional claim that if "A exists, *then* A exists," or X. X can also be rendered as "if A is posited, then A exists as posited." But what does the positing? The self, or simply the "I." Hence: "if A is posited in the self, it is thereby posited, or, it thereby is."²³ Now, if there is a positing "I," then the "I" also exists. In this case, the "I" is self-positing, which is represented by the proposition " $I=I$," or "I am I." Positing anything in experience presupposes the "I's" self-identity. "Hence it is a ground of explanation of all the facts of empirical consciousness, that prior to all postulation in the self, the self itself is posited."²⁴ However, as the condition of empirical consciousness, the absolute, self-positing "I" is not itself a possible object of experience. It is rather something known immediately by an Act (*Tathandlung*) of "intellectual intuition."²⁵

As an abstraction, in order to represent its identity, the absolute "I" must empirically demonstrate its activity by "counter-positing" a "not-I" upon which it can act. This introduces the principle of opposition (A does not $= \sim A$), which posits that the "I" is opposed to the "Not-I." As Fichte puts it: "As surely as the absolute certainty of the proposition ' $\sim A$ is not equal to A ' is unconditionally admitted among the facts of empirical consciousness, *so surely is a not-self opposed absolutely to the self.*"²⁶ However, since the absolute "I" posits the opposition," this produces a logical contradiction whereby the "I" posits the "not-I" ($I=\sim I$).²⁷

The third principle is meant to resolve the contradiction above. The "I" and "Not-I" mutually limit/divide each other: "In the self, '*I oppose a divisible 'not-I' to the divisible 'I'.*'"²⁸ Fichte argues that to limit something is not to "abolish its reality," but only to negate a part of its being.²⁹ Moreover,

²² Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Press, 1987), 24.

²³ Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 93-94.

²⁴ Ibid., 95.

²⁵ Ibid., 463.

²⁶ Ibid., 104.

²⁷ Ibid., 103.

²⁸ Ibid., 110.

²⁹ Ibid., 108.

given that the absolute “I” is initially posited as infinite because it is not limited, to divide it relative to a “not-I” renders the “I” finite. This produces a further contradiction in need of resolution: the infinite “I” posits itself as finite.

Fichte attempts to resolve this second contradiction by means of his concept of “striving” (*Streben*), which refers to the inherent drive in the finite “I” to determine itself through the negation of the “not-I,” effectively becoming the absolute, infinite “I” it intuitively knows itself to be.³⁰ By introducing striving to his system, Fichte makes it largely into a practical task where the finite “I” desires to become absolutely free (i.e. not bound by the “not-I”).³¹ However, given that the system strives for the infinite, the task itself becomes infinite, and therefore impossible to complete. At best, the finite “I” can only seek to “approximate” the infinite.³²

By making his system an infinite task, it can never be realized in time. Consequently, there is no historical completion; at least insofar as history is understood as the detailed account of human striving. This is not to say that there is no account of history in Fichte’s corpus. *The Vocation of Man*, for example, presents a history of the steps that humans have taken to realize their freedom in the world (like the foundation of the state). There is even a futural dimension to this history, since Fichte thinks that there is a progressive striving to make the world better, or more in line with human freedom: “I simply cannot think of the present situation of mankind as the final and permanent one, simply cannot think of it as mankind’s whole and final destiny ... My whole life incessantly flows towards the future and better state of things.”³³ As such, Fichte projects the cultivation of humanity by

³⁰ Ibid., 261.

³¹ It is important to understand Fichte’s concept of freedom in relation to its conceptual opposite, necessity; or to be more specific, the necessity of nature. According to Frederick C. Beiser, Fichte accepts the Kantian definition of freedom as “spontaneity:” to be a first cause. However, this cause cannot be purely indeterminate. There has to be a reason for acting in the first place. But, if there is a reason, then this reintroduces necessity into behavior, undermining freedom. Fichte avoids this problem by specifically framing freedom as a matter of “self-determination.” The “I” determines the ends by which it acts, which are not reducible to natural necessity. But, this does not mean that necessity entirely disappears, given that Fichte argues that self-determination can only take place through harnessing nature (i.e. the “not-I”) in order that its purposes will be determined only by itself, and not something other. Outside the practical task of mastering nature to accord with the absolute “I,” there is also a moral dimension to this striving towards self-determination. In her interpretation of Fichte’s *Vocation of Man*, Angelica Nuzzo argues that the “I” determines its self through following moral duties that it imposes on itself. In other words, the “I” realizes its freedom through acting in accord with duty, which ought to be done and thereby contains an element of necessity. As such, Fichte reconciles the determinism of dogmatism and freedom of idealism through a process of moral self-determination. See: Beiser, *German Idealism*, 273-288; Angelica Nuzzo, “Determination and Freedom in Kant and in Fichte’s *Bestimmung des Menschen*.” In: *Fichte’s Vocation of Man: New Interpretative and Critical Essays*, eds. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Albany/N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2013), 236-237.

³² Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 116.

³³ Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, 81.

means of taming nature through science and the unification of all humans in one single, world community.

Although this text exceeds the present article, due to the fact that it was given after Novalis' untimely death, it is also important to note that Fichte's most sustained account of history occurs in his 1804/05 series of lectures, *Characteristics of the Present Age*, published in book form in 1806. Here, Fichte divides world-history into five distinct epochs: (1) when human behavior was governed by reason in the form of unreflective instinct; (2) when instinct grows weaker, and human behavior is governed by the reason of external authority (e.g. a monarch); (3) when this authority is overthrown, and consequently reason itself is cast aside; (4) when reason as such becomes an object of knowledge; (5) when reason governs and shapes all human behavior in the manner of art.³⁴ As such, the end of history is specifically rendered as the point when human activity becomes synonymous with art, which is rendered as the realization of freedom. Fichte's critical diagnosis consists in arguing that the present age best accords with the third epoch, which he calls the "Epoch of liberation" and the "State of completed Sinfulness."³⁵ With the liberation from the external authority (e.g. the aristocracy) humans have become free, but this also means that they are now free to sin as well. In the absence of reason to govern their behavior, humans have achieved total sinfulness, which can only be corrected by making reason into an object of knowledge, i.e. in inaugurating the fourth epoch.

In this lecture, Fichte presents his account of the role of philosopher in regards to history as well. The philosopher understands and reflects upon the *a priori* historical "World-Plan" – the transition from the first to the fifth epoch – in order to help point out specific *a posteriori* events that mark the possibility for transitioning to a new epoch (e.g. the French Revolution). Fichte writes:

Throughout the whole course of events, therefore, he selects only the instances in which Humanity really advances towards the end of its being, and appeals only to these instances, – laying aside and rejecting everything else; and as he does not intend to prove historically that Humanity has to pursue this course, having already proved it philosophically, he only points out, for the purposes of illustration, the occasions on which this has been visible in History.³⁶

In this manner, as will be evident, Fichte's philosopher-historian is not distinctly different from Novalis' poet-historian insofar as both point to historical events as specific examples for moral cultivation. While the World-

³⁴ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Characteristics of the Present Age and The Way Towards the Blessed Life or Doctrine of Religion* (Washington D.C.: University Publications of America, 1977), 70.

³⁵ Ibid., 17.

³⁶ Ibid., 154.

Plan is necessary, Fichte nonetheless gives the philosopher the role of helping attend to its development, including its ultimate end.³⁷

And yet for all his concrete predictions (i.e. that history ends in the realization of freedom in the state, the rationalization of nature, etc.), Fichte still undercuts his position by making the goal of realizing the absolute fundamentally impossible. In *The Vocation of Man*, he reduces the historical shape of striving to merely an “earthly goal,” placing the absolute into the “eternal world.”³⁸ Consequently, he maintains a strict – infinitely so – separation of the eternal and the earthly, of which the finite “I” stands in the middle. It is precisely this infinite separation that Novalis will attempt to dissolve.

3. Novalis’ Critique of Fichte’s Absolute and The Emergence of Magical Idealism

Novalis’ most sustained reflections and criticisms of Fichte can be found in his *Fichte Studies* (*Fichte-Studien*), which are a collection of notes that Novalis composed while studying the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the mid-1790s. While the fragmentary nature of the text makes it difficult to distinguish Novalis’ criticisms of Fichte’s system, one can readily discern his primary critique that the absolute is unattainable. Paradoxically, Novalis posits that the absolute can be realized, but only by giving up the very concept. He writes:

Unending free activity in us arises through the free renunciation of the absolute – the only possible absolute that can be given to us and that we only find through our inability to attain and know an absolute. This absolute that is given to us can only be known negatively, insofar as we act and find that what we seek cannot be attained through action.³⁹

This quote is consistent with Dalia Nassar’s argument that Novalis’ absolute is not something that we need to attain precisely insofar as it is already given

³⁷ This article agrees with the interpretation that Fichte’s conception of history is linear, necessary, and progressive. In other words, Fichte’s history of human striving is necessarily coextensive with the gradual and progressive realization of freedom. However, this position is not uncontested. Some commentators point out that Fichte’s five epochs of human history can exist simultaneously in a singular time-line, i.e. while some communities exist in a state consistent with the first epoch, others might exist in the third. Likewise, although concretely progressive, Fichte’s history is also circular in its ideal character, given that the end of history is the realization of the absolute “I” that lay at the beginning of history as its motivating principle. In this way, Fichte’s history can be both linear and circular. Cf. Eric Michael Dale, *Hegel, the End of History, and the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 144; George Armstrong Kelly, *Idealism, Politics and History: Sources of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 236.

³⁸ Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, 91-94.

³⁹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) #566, 167-168.

to us.⁴⁰ Instead of striving for infinite freedom, Novalis proposes that we find freedom by renouncing the desire for it. Hence, the absolute is the very negation of action. This claim renders the absolute into a kind of quicksand, whereby we sink the more we struggle to free ourselves. The ultimate act of freedom is to renounce the desire for freedom.

Novalis' criticism of Fichte's absolute is coextensive with his commitment to aesthetics. As Michael G. Vater explains: "Novalis' instinct ... is to recoil before the image of endless distorted self-imaging, or the journey ever onward to an I that is never fully active or self-realized ... Novalis opts for an aesthetic eternity, available in the moment, and rejects the long-march of Fichte's elongated moral striving."⁴¹ How does aesthetics realize absolute freedom, in such a way that it is not reducible to some activity *qua* striving?⁴² Unlike other activities, art is not done for the sake of an intended end. Novalis calls art something that "presents for the sake of presenting," which makes it a "free presenting" (i.e. it's not conditioned).⁴³ For example, a wind turbine is not an artwork because it is made in order to harness energy, while a painting by Cézanne has no purpose outside of itself; it simply presents what it is. Specifically, the artwork presents the activity of the unconditionally, free "I:" "... what is being presented is the activity of presentation, the activity of the I. The artwork, then, is nothing but a manifestation of free activity."⁴⁴ Thus, the absolute is something that can be intuited and realized, but only through the free presentation of the artwork.

However, the artwork is also not passive, since it does creatively transform the natural world, such that it increases our freedom (i.e. it makes the natural world align with our being). For example, clay can be molded into a vase. This vase can be artistic for its own sake (i.e. a decorative pot), but it can also serve the function of collecting and distributing water. Thus,

⁴⁰ This reading of Novalis' *Fichte-Studies* is largely in accord with Dalia Nassar's interpretation of the text. Taking up Manfred Frank's claim that the absolute *qua* being is "given," rather than constructed, Nassar argues that being is given as a "self-determining relation." As immediately given to intuition, the absolute can be made manifest in artwork, which opens up the possibility for realizing the absolute in a way that Fichte foreclosed. However, while Nassar briefly discusses Novalis' desire to realize a "golden time [age]" – a time consistent with human freedom – she does not flesh out the historical character of Novalis' project that becomes partially worked out in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*. See: Dalia Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 19-38.

⁴¹ Michael G. Vater, "'Philosophy on the Track of Freedom' and 'Systematizing Systemlessness': Novalis' Reflections on the *Wissenschaftslehre*," in: *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, eds. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 290.

⁴² However, we might object that while Vater presents an accurate characterization of Novalis' critique of Fichte, i.e. through an appeal to aesthetics. Fichte does ultimately appeal to aesthetics as having a fundamental role in the striving for the absolute. After all, Fichte does claim that the final, fifth epoch of his world-plan consists in the formation of reason into art, whereby human beings model themselves according to reason itself. In other words, not unlike Novalis, the fifth epoch is turning humanity, and the world itself, into an artistic model. Cf. Fichte, *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 9-10.

⁴³ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, #633, 181.

⁴⁴ Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 34.

the artwork is not constrained to presentation as such, and can have practical effects in the world; in fact, it ought to. However, while we have explained that the artwork presents the absolute freedom of the “I,” we have yet to determine how the “I” has access to the absolute. Which is another way of asking, how is the artwork possible in the first place?

Unfortunately, the answer is not very clear. Novalis thinks in accord with Fichte that we have an intellectual intuition of the absolute. However, Novalis differs from Fichte by arguing that it can be tapped into at any moment, i.e. it requires no mediation nor does it have to be something strived for. Novalis writes, “But since we are also in a sphere outside of time, we must reach it [the absolute] there in every moment ... in this sphere we are able to be pure simple substance. /Here is morality and peace of mind, because an endless striving after what hovers ever out of reach before us seems unbearable.”⁴⁵ Vater argues that Novalis’ critical appropriation of Fichte’s system includes an implicit appeal to “Spinozistic theology,” which renders the finite “I” a manifestation of God.⁴⁶ Novalis identifies humans as the individuated expressions of God, and consequently we possess the power to immediately intuit God, which constitutes a “divine I.”⁴⁷ The intuition of the God is consistent with the intuition of freedom, since the God is unconditionally free. Hence, human willing is ultimately rooted in being the material manifestations of God.

Novalis’ theory that we have an intuition of the absolute that becomes instantiated in the artwork, which in turn signifies the moralization of nature (nature in line with human willing), constitutes his own philosophical project that he calls “magical idealism.” As David W. Wood explains: “As the name suggests, it was a combination of the idea of romanticizing and an extension of transcendental idealism. The term ‘magical’ referred to Novalis’ belief in the ‘art of using the sense world at will,’ that is, that the rest of nature could some day conform or be subjugated to our will.”⁴⁸ The ability to instantiate the absolute in the natural world is “magical,” in the sense that the magician is usually understood as someone who has the capacity to control the forces of nature. Intuition magically alters the world of nature that we belong to.

In line with Fichte, magical idealism has a critical function as well. For Novalis, criticism is still a method that studies the self as the condition for knowledge of the natural world, but he adds that one should apply that knowledge in such a way that the world conforms to the activity of the self. “It [criticism] lets us divine Nature, or the *external world*, as a human being – It proves that we can and should only understand *everything*, as we

⁴⁵ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, #647, 186-187.

⁴⁶ Vater, “Philosophy on the Track of Freedom,” 291. Beiser also makes this point of connecting Spinoza’s God as the counteractive to Fichte in Novalis’ thought. See: Beiser, *German Idealism*, 419.

⁴⁷ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, #218, 66.

⁴⁸ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, xxiv.

understand ourselves and our *loved ones*, as we understand us and *you*.”⁴⁹ Criticism simultaneously grasps hold of nature and changes it as well. But, what is the meaning of love in this quote? What does this mean for magical idealism to transform nature into a loved one?

As Wood discusses, love is a crucial concept for magical idealism.⁵⁰ Indeed, love makes magical idealism possible: “Love is the basis for the possibility of magic. Love works magically.”⁵¹ In one sense, love appears as indefinable to the extent that it is not an object of experience. However, a few distinctive characteristics can be discerned. (1) Love constitutes the “inner union of 2 beings.”⁵² Love unifies people, both in terms of sexual copulation and simply sharing a life. This typical conception of love can be applied to nature as well. It is through love that human activity (art) becomes unified with nature. It is not sufficient to simply force nature to accord with the will, rather it has to be understood, which implies a certain degree of respect and reverence that is consistent with love. (2) Learning to love one thing allows the “I” to love everything.⁵³ Love is not relegated to one object, rather it opens up into the world as a whole, such that it can be in accord with the “I.” (3) The unification of the “I” and nature, through love, means that the latter does not impede the activity of the former. Consequently, love is consistent with freedom: “Freedom and love are one.”⁵⁴ Love constitutes and expresses the unity between humanity and nature, forming Novalis’ conception of the absolute. Hence, as mentioned above, Novalis posits love as the goal that history strives for.⁵⁵

Novalis’ veneration of love is also consistent with his appeal to poetry. He shows the necessary relationship between love and poetry in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*: “Love is mute; only poetry can give it voice. Or love itself is nothing but the highest nature of poesy.”⁵⁶ On the one hand, poetry is the means to express love; on the other, love is identified with poesy itself. In any case, the quote above indicates that poetry is the most important form of artwork. Although all forms of artistic presentation make manifest the freedom of the “I’s” will over nature, poetry is the highest form this freedom can take. Indeed, Novalis calls it the “Ideal of total willing. Magical will.”⁵⁷

The reason for this lies in the fact that the poet is master of the world of language (a system of signs and sounds). This linguistic world can be

⁴⁹ Ibid., #820, 151.

⁵⁰ Ibid., xxv.

⁵¹ Ibid., #79, 13.

⁵² Ibid., #653, 120.

⁵³ Ibid., #723, 134.

⁵⁴ Ibid., #717, 132.

⁵⁵ Ibid., #50, 8.

⁵⁶ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 116.

⁵⁷ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #769, 141.

posited over the natural world, expressing the poet's will over nature itself.⁵⁸ By doing so, the poet makes the world appear human-like, or something also invested with a will. This is best exemplified by the poetic fable. The fable tends to anthropomorphize various natural entities, including animals and natural forces. For example, Aesop's fable "The North Wind and the Sun" depicts a competition between the north wind and the sun to see which force is stronger. Fables also contain a moral theme, which in this case is that persuasion is more powerful than force, since the force of the wind could not blow off a traveler's cloak, while the heat of the sun "persuaded" the traveler to do so.⁵⁹ As the paradigmatic form of poetry, the fable signifies that poetry is a fundamentally moral activity.⁶⁰ Poetry moralizes nature, making it more amenable to human willing (not something hostile).

The realization of the absolute becomes a necessarily poetic task. Novalis' magical idealism, therefore, calls for the combination of poetry and philosophy. Philosophy deals with universal first principles and concepts, while poetry concerns the particular sensuous content that is derived from experience. For Novalis, philosophy is incomplete if its generality is not informed by some particularity, i.e. it would be too abstract to adequately reflect reality. As Nassar explains: the "object of philosophy is to understand the relation between the general and the particular and to see not only how the particular is part of the general but also how the general is manifest in the particular."⁶¹ Philosophy requires the particularity of poetry in order to adequately express its object, i.e. the absolute. Given that the realization of the absolute is also the resolution of the infinite with the finite, Novalis posits that poetry acts as the "communion" between the finite and the infinite.⁶² In Fichtean terms, poetry dissolves the contradiction of the infinite "I" with the finite "I."

Poetry performs the task of realizing the absolute, a task that Fichte had rendered structurally impossible. For Fichte, human striving for the freedom of the infinite "I," which is manifest in historical activity, is never ending. In making infinite something that can be adequately resolved in the finite, Novalis opens up the possibility that there can be a realizable end to history. Specifically, if love is the goal of history, and poetry is the expression thereof, then poetry serves as the force to bring about this goal in reality. This indicates the necessary relationship between the study of history and poetry that Novalis' expresses in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. However, this raises a

⁵⁸ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 116.

⁵⁹ Aesop, *Fables* (New York: Signet Classics, 2004), 98.

⁶⁰ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #769, 141.

⁶¹ Nassar's claim that philosophy requires the particularity of poetry to grasp the absolute is due to her interpretation of the absolute as relational. The absolute is neither universal nor particular, but the relation between the two. Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 30.

⁶² Novalis, *Philosophical Writings* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), 54.

multitude of questions. As the agent that helps realize the end of history, why exactly does the poet need to learn history? Moreover, how does the poet harness historical knowledge? Moreover, how is the past available as an object at all? To answer these questions, it is useful to turn to Novalis' account of recollection and memory.

4. History and Recollection

While we have so far emphasized the futural project of Novalis' posited goal of history, this is not to say that the future is privileged relative to the past, or the present for that matter. History is threefold – past, present, future – where each aspect of time is not reducible to another.⁶³ Rather, they consist as an interconnected whole. One of the crucial implications of Novalis' magical idealism is that we can intuit both the future and past, given that the absolute is both the end of history and what constitutes the beginning. Of course, this intuition is already conveyed in Fichte's system. The absolute "I" is the beginning of history since it is the origin of time itself, i.e. time is constituted through the dialectical mediation of the finite "I" with the "not-I."⁶⁴ The absolute "I" is also futural; given that it is what the finite "I" strives for.

Novalis' appropriates this picture, but gives it a romantic, literary flair. He represents the intuition of the absolute in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, when Heinrich finds a novel that depicts the story of his life.⁶⁵ This reflects Novalis' broader claim in his encyclopedia: "Nothing is more romantic than what we commonly call the world and destiny – we live in a colossal novel (writ *large* and *small*)."⁶⁶ Through intuition, humans have the capacity to read the world – past and future – like a novel. However, the quote above raises a significant question. If history can be intuited as a whole, and given his mention of "destiny," then does Novalis' magical idealism constitute a form of determinism? If so, how does this square with his appeal to freedom?

Fate and destiny are prominent themes in both Novalis' and Fichte's respective work.⁶⁷ For example, Johann Heinrich Gottlieb Heusinger and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi accused Fichte of being a fatalist. Specifically, the latter calls his system an "inverse Spinozism," which "compared the personal, creative power of God (and the individual, concrete freedom of the

⁶³ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #598, 106.

⁶⁴ Specifically, it is through the faculty of the productive imagination that the "I" and "not-I" are able to waver between each other, constituting time: "It is this wavering of the imagination between irreconcilables, this conflict with itself, which... extends the condition of the self there to a moment of time." Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 217.

⁶⁵ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 90-91.

⁶⁶ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #853, 155.

⁶⁷ For more information regarding Fichte on freedom, see footnote 31.

moral subject) to the mechanical, self-reverting activity of the I.”⁶⁸ However, Fichte, and by extension Novalis, could be called compatibilists.⁶⁹ The finite “I” has the almost unconscious drive to become what it already is, i.e. the Absolute “I.” Thus, the “I” is determined to become itself, which paradoxically means being absolutely free. As such, Fichte’s system can be understood as a kind of stoicism whereby the finite “I” comes to terms with its destiny/fate. Likewise, Novalis projects that the poet must acquire a certain “mastery of fate,” which is rendered as a freedom over the determinate forces of nature, including the forces that implicate human behavior as well.⁷⁰ However, in terms of compatibilism, it is not the case that mastery negates fate, rather it simply recognizes and works with it. In terms of magical idealism, the magician makes nature correspond to his or her will, not negate the very forces of nature as such.

Both Novalis and Fichte attempt to reconcile freedom with a determinate course in historical development. Moreover, this development is necessarily circular insofar as the end mirrors and reproduces the beginning, albeit in a concretized form. The belief in an idealized past that serves as the archetype for the future is a common theme in romantic thought. We find this theme, for example, in Novalis’ *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, when he speaks of a “primeval golden age” that will eventually “return.”⁷¹ He also calls this age “eternal,” implying that it never ended. We can speculate that it is always already present for intuition, given that the golden age represents the unity of nature and willing, or the absolute.⁷² Novalis appears to indicate this claim when Heinrich states that his father was capable of reflecting on this age through “recollection.”⁷³ As such, intuition and recollection appear to be functionally identical.

Recollection and memory are two extremely important themes in romantic literature in general. According to Laurie Ruth Johnson, and similar to Koselleck’s historical claims, romanticism reflects a “memory-crisis” that

⁶⁸ Yolanda Estes, “J. G. Fichte’s *Vocation of Man*: An Effort to Communicate,” in: *Fichte’s Vocation of Man: New Interpretive and Critical Essays*, eds. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2013), 85.

⁶⁹ Beiser would disagree with calling Fichte a compatibilist insofar as the latter wants to renounce the claim that human action can be consistent with natural necessity. Rather, Fichte wants to overtake nature such that it accords with the “I’s” activity. However, I defend calling Fichte a compatibilist insofar as the “I” strives to realize the compatibility of natural necessity and freedom, such that both appear synonymous. See: Beiser, *German Idealism*, 275.

⁷⁰ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 109.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷² Nassar also discusses the intuition and realization of the “golden time [age].” But she denies its historical realization by rendering the task as something fundamentally unattainable: “every moment in which the human being acts freely – morally – he or she is doing nothing less than realizing the eternal in the temporal. Thus, the golden time will never be fully attained, though it can be achieved in every free act.” Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 34.

⁷³ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 161.

occurred as a consequence of the French revolution.⁷⁴ This event constituted a radical break in history, inaugurating the modern world from out of the ashes of the pre-modern past. The romantics attempted to recollect and reproduce the pre-modern past in their literary texts. However, the romantics did not simply want to overcome the crisis, rather they creatively harnessed it. Instead of recovering the past as such, they creatively “re-collected” the past in an idealized form. In the case of Novalis, there is a drive to reproduce the golden age in a distinct, concrete form.

Johnson emphasizes that Novalis tends to use the word *Erinnerung* for “recollection.” This form of memory is distinct from *Gedächtnis*, which refers to memory as the storage of past impressions, and *Wiederholung*, the act of remembering those impressions. *Erinnerung*, however, refers to the reproduction of impressions through the faculty of the imagination, making it a fundamentally creative form of recollection. As Laurie Johnson explains, *Erinnerung* is a “creative capacity, one that allows us to transcend the time that both enables and destroys our earthly existence and to intuit ... an alternative world, a different life.”⁷⁵ Again, we see that recollection as *Erinnerung* accords with Novalis’ intuition of the absolute.

However, in making recollection creative, Novalis also renders it fallible; that is, memory does not always give factual knowledge about the past. Recollection appears as an interpretative activity. Count Hohenzollern directly implies this in his conversation with Heinrich: “Our countless memories are entertaining company and all the more so as the point of view from which we look at them changes; indeed, it is this change in our point of view which discloses their true interconnection, the profundity of their sequence, and the significance of their phenomena.”⁷⁶ Here, memories are not posited as the simple recordings of past impressions, and for this reason the recollecting of them takes shape differently in time, like when a childhood experience becomes recollected as something traumatic from the position of adulthood. By making recollection creative, we also return to the theme of poetry.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Laurie Ruth Johnson, *The Art of Recollection in Jena Romanticism: Memory, History, Fiction and Fragmentation in Texts by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 5.

⁷⁵ Johnson, *The Art of Recollection in Jena Romanticism*, 105.

⁷⁶ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 83.

⁷⁷ The present article has made use of Johnson’s book to help articulate the relationship between memory and history in Novalis thought. However, it departs from her book in a significant way. In discussing Novalis’ essay *Christendom or Europe*, Johnson argues against the view that Novalis’ history is a “seamless, organic continuity,” consisting in taking up actual past events as such, i.e. in their true character. For Johnson, Novalis’ emphasis on creative recollection means that there is a distinct separation between the past, present, and future, which allows for the creative recollection of each. While I agree with this discontinuous and fragmentary reading, it is nonetheless the case that Novalis does present a distinct picture of a perfect future that will necessarily be realized, which concretely exists in the reintegration of Christianity with the state. As such, there is a distinct history from which continuity can be creatively constructed from a discontinuous past. Novalis writes: “That which does

5. The Poet-Historian

This account of recollection *qua* creative activity has important implications for understanding history, where the articulation and transmission of past experiences becomes a creative interpretation. Given that the word poetry comes from the Greek *poiesis*, which can be translated as creation, historiography is rendered as a poetic practice. We obtain an indication of this point in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. While in conversation with Heinrich, the Count of Hohenzollern claims that the historian must be a poet: "... it seems to me a historian must necessarily also be a poet, for perhaps the poets alone master the art of skillfully organizing events."⁷⁸ The adequate presentation of historical events is therefore poetic in form.

How does the poet acquire historical knowledge? While Novalis posits that knowledge of history is partially experiential, insofar as events gain their coherence over time, Novalis affirms that history is best learned through intuition. As finite, experience will only present history as discrete events, while intuition allows us to immediately grasp human history as a whole.⁷⁹ Novalis' historical intuition is identical with his account of recollection, wherein the individual has an implicit memory of the world as a whole, past and future. In being able to recollect these memories as a "total past" one can succeed in discovering "the simple rules of history," or its teleology.⁸⁰ This possibility is founded on the circularity of history, whereby the ideal golden age of the past is to be realized in the future. Both the end and beginning of history are expressions of the absolute, thus to intuit the absolute is to also intuit history as a teleological whole. In terms of Novalis' conviction that the world is one great novel, then the role of the historian-poet is to recollect and represent that novel.

However, all of this remains quite abstract. If the poet intuits the beginning and end of history, then why study the material events in the middle? In other words, how does Novalis account for the more typical conception of history as an account of human events over time? This will become clear if we discuss Novalis' primary objects of historical recollection and poetic presentation: war and religion. The latter is especially significant, given that religion is one of the ways in which humans present the absolute (God) in experience.

In his discussion with Heinrich, the poet Klingsohr argues that war is one of the primary subjects of poetic representation and historical reflection,

not achieve perfection now will achieve it at some future attempt or the next; nothing captured by history is ephemeral, from countless transformations it comes forth renewed in ever richer forms." See Johnson, *The Art of Recollection in Jena Romanticism*, 32-33; Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 140.

⁷⁸ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 85.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 29-30.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 83.

because it mostly conveys the passionate nature of humans. Moreover, in warfare humans attempt to destroy what is deemed “evil,” which is generally tied to what is immoral and opposed to freedom. Hence, war implies the freedom that belongs to the absolute. However, this dimension of war is not explicit, for people are “not aware that the romantic spirit excites them in order to annihilate useless evils along with themselves.”⁸¹ Studying war has an instructive power for the poet-historian, because it demonstrates the absolute in human activity. We can then hypothesize that the poet-historian studies the events of history in order to better intuit the absolute, and, in turn, instantiate it in the world through artistic presentation.

More importantly, the poet’s creative activity is mirrored in warfare. Novalis posits that any act of destruction ultimately results in a new creation, of which it is the very job of poetry – *poesies* – to reflect. Klingsohr writes: “In war ... the primal sea stirs. New continents are to arise, new races to come forth out of the great dissolution. The true war is the religious war; it positively aims at self-destruction, and in it the madness of men appear in its perfect form. Many wars, especially those that spring from national hatred belong in this class and are genuine poetic creations.”⁸² Thus, an education in history has two values: (1) history helps the poet intuit the absolute; (2) to help the poet improve his or her art by seeing it materialized in the act of warfare, being itself a poetic formation. But, why is the religious war the best presentation of the poetic, as opposed to other forms of war? What is the role of religion in Novalis’ account of history?

Religion is a crucial concept in Novalis’ work. In *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, Novalis calls “religious” people those who “perceive” God in all things. Given his identification of the absolute with God, then the religious person is someone who can intuit the absolute.⁸³ As such, the poet would also have to be a religious person. This is indicated by Novalis’ identification of the poet with the priest.⁸⁴ However, obviously not everyone involved in a religious organization is a poet. We can speculate that while the masses of Christians cannot immediately intuit God directly, they do so indirectly via the mediation of the priest/poet. Moreover, religion cannot be just the personal work of a few religious people; rather it has a necessarily social function as well. Specifically, Novalis argues that the primary role of religion is to construct a human community: “People will only truly become one through religion.”⁸⁵ This is rooted in the fact that unification is an expression of love, which is identical with God’s being. Consequently, the religious community is the incarnation of God’s being on Earth.

⁸¹ Ibid., 113.

⁸² Ibid., 113–114.

⁸³ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #257, 38.

⁸⁴ Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 36.

⁸⁵ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #834, 153.

With this picture, we receive the impression that the process of history (the realization of the absolute as God, love, freedom, etc.), is going to necessarily take shape through religion. Or, as Count Hohenzollern states, the “church is the dwelling place of history.”⁸⁶ This is most concretely manifest in Novalis’ essay *Christendom or Europe*, where his theory of history takes on a directly religious-political character. Idealizing the middle ages, Novalis claims that Europe was once a fully united Christendom.⁸⁷ “There once were beautiful, splendid times when Europe was a Christian land, when one Christendom dwelt in this continent... one great common interest bound together the most distant providences in this broad religious empire.”⁸⁸ However, due to human immaturity, the state of unity was ruptured by a variety of factors: the reformation, “business life” (capitalism), and general selfishness.⁸⁹ The remains of the Catholic Church furthered this rupture through its violent counter-reformation and its war on Protestant states.⁹⁰

However, in accord with his circular, but progressive conception of history, Novalis argues that the downfall of Christendom only necessitates its eventual reemergence in a more powerful form. Novalis writes: “That which does not achieve perfection now will achieve it at some future attempt or the next; nothing captured by history is ephemeral, from countless transformations it comes forth renewed in ever richer forms.”⁹¹ With this theory in place, he projects the emergence of a new Christendom that will not negate secular institutions entirely, but reinvigorate them by making them co-extensive with religion. “Then no one will protest any more against Christian and secular constraints, for the essence of the Church will be true freedom, and all necessary reforms will be carried out under its direction, as peaceful and

⁸⁶ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 84.

⁸⁷ However, while Novalis venerates a supposed past where Europe was united through Christianity, this does not mean that this was a historical fact. While it has often been argued that Novalis’ romanticized past renders his philosophical thought into a reactionary desire to return to medieval feudalism, Pauline Kleingeld argues that this “past” is a creative symbol that is used to set up an antithesis to the problems of the modern world, in order to thereby better constitute a new cosmopolitanism, i.e. in contrast to the individualist, enlightened cosmopolitanism. She writes: “It would be misguided to take the poet-philosopher as wanting to represent an accurate historical description of medieval reality. It is a ‘mistake’ to confuse or identify the symbol with the symbolized ... The Middle Ages thereby come to symbolize the cosmopolitan unity of humanity, pointing the audience in the direction of a cosmopolitanism ideal of love, faith, and unity, but without providing a specific and determinate blueprint.” With regard to this claim of not actually representing the past, Kleingeld is consistent with Johnson’s point that Novalis’ recollection is creative. See Pauline Kleingeld, “Romantic Cosmopolitanism: Novalis’s ‘Christianity or Europe,’” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2008): 281.

⁸⁸ Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 137.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

formal processes of state.”⁹² As true freedom, then, Novalis is positing the realization of the absolute in much more concrete terms, i.e. the recombination of Christianity and the state.⁹³

If this historical process takes place necessarily, we are once again confronted with why the poet needs to learn history? Or, in other words, what is the role of the poet in this realization of the absolute in history? *Christendom or Europe* contains an intermission whereby Novalis discusses the limits of the secular state that took shape with the Protestant Reformation and French Revolution. He identifies the revolutionary (i.e. as in the secular state inaugurated through the French revolution) with Sisyphus; any progress they make will be negated. He implies that the Sisyphian boulder will only remain uphill if it pulled from above, i.e. “heaven.” Thus, Novalis is implying that progress is impossible without religion (“heaven”). He argues that the study of history serves as evidence for this claim: “I direct your attention to history, search in its instructive context for similar moments, and learn to use the magical wand of analogy.”⁹⁴ We find the implicit presence of poetry in this quote. As an instance of poetic language, the use of analogy allows us to compare historical periods in order to discern generalizable lessons therein. In this case, societies cannot exist independent of religion, and thus the secular gains in Europe were necessarily doomed. As such, the poet is there to announce the limit that will necessitate the re-emergence of Christendom, or the end of history as true freedom.⁹⁵

Although Novalis recognizes determinism at work in the world, it is the capacity of the poet to harness their fate in order to bring about a higher, nobler end of humanity, i.e. the absolute. This is especially true given the moral function of poetry. As has been mentioned, poetry is meant to present the very activity of the free, divine “I;” it does this by also presenting nature as endowed with human qualities, making it amenable to moralization; as is

⁹² Ibid., 151-152.

⁹³ What does Novalis specifically mean by Christianity? Pauline Kleingeld argues that Novalis’ Christianity is meant in three ways: (1) as a general term for religion and spirituality as such; (2) the “mediation in general” that links the immanent to the transcendent; (3) the belief in Christ. It is interesting to note the second in particular, because this appeal to mediation explains why Christianity is necessarily connected to the absolute *qua* God, i.e. Nassar’s identification of the absolute as mediation. See Kleingeld, “Romantic Cosmopolitanism,” 275; Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 16.

⁹⁴ Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 146.

⁹⁵ Here is where this article critically diverges from Kleingeld’s reading of *Christianity or Europe*. Although she alludes to the text’s interpretation of the past as being performed with an eye towards the future of history: “In presenting the medieval image, he (Novalis) is not so much looking backwards as forwards.” She nonetheless posits that this romantic history is not to be taken as a “blueprint for the future.” As we have argued, however, Novalis does present a futural picture that will emerge from out of the necessity of history itself, hence there is a telos of historical development. Moreover, this telos can be rendered into a “blueprint” (a guide for making something), if we understand the specific task of the poet historian to be bringing forth this end, i.e. in realizing the absolute. Cf. Kleingeld, “Romantic Cosmopolitanism,” 272-273.

most manifest in the fable. In any case, the poet acts as master of his or her fate in order to take part in the realization of the absolute, i.e. the end of history. As such, the poet is a kind of an agent of the absolute.

With regard to Novalis' circular history, the role of the poet-historian is to read and present the historical development of the world as if it were a fable. But, given that the fable signifies the absolute, the poet-historian also helps to make the world itself into a fable. Cryptically, Novalis writes: "In time, history must become a fairy tale – it shall be once again, as it was in the beginning."⁹⁶ This point is mirrored towards the end of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Here, Novalis presents the end of history as the realization of conscience, the immediate knowledge of what is good and evil, such that it is no longer hindered by the natural world. Such a state amounts to the transformation of the world into a fable.⁹⁷ In any case, these claims can be simplified to mean that the poet makes nature into a kind of poem, something that teaches and uplifts humanity to the level of the absolute, in a concrete, realized form.

Conclusion: Novalis' Philosophy of History

In his "Last Fragments," Novalis writes: "History is applied morality and religion... From this comes the marvelous connection of history with our vocation – of Christianity and morality."⁹⁸ Albeit in a manner that is a bit vague, this nonetheless summarizes Novalis' philosophy of history. History, as we have seen, is recollected with an eye towards revealing the morality implicit in human events. Even if the event is horrific, like in the case of the reign of terror during the French Revolution, the presentation of the event has the educative effect of teaching people what is right and wrong. In the case of Novalis' critique of modernity, the lesson is that pure secularism can lead to violence. Consequently, religion serves some necessity in the constitution of a moral life. Of course, this example is a narrower account of history insofar as it accords with Novalis' valuation of religion, i.e. the presentation of the absolute on earth. For Novalis, history serves to demonstrate the absolute underlying human activity in the form of religious and moral practices. Consequently, history is crucial in educating humanity about their vocation. That is, to intuit and realize the absolute in the world, which would make nature moral, the "I" free, and to realize God as such; reconciling the contradiction of the finite and infinite that Fichte rendered structurally impossible.

The study of history is meant to facilitate the very end that it predicts. Novalis' theory of history is necessarily teleological; it emerges from and

⁹⁶ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, #234, 35.

⁹⁷ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 67.

⁹⁸ Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 163.

results in the absolute. Specifically, it is the role of the poet to help realize the absolute *qua* end of history, since the poem is the pure presentation of unconditioned freedom. This is not to say that the poet does this alone, since the end of history has a political end in terms of the creation of a new Christendom, which will obviously involve the activity of the religious community. However, the poet as priest is the voice through which the community expresses itself. The poet is then the preeminent actor in Novalis' theory of history. Although, this is somewhat inappropriate, given that the poet is only one individual expression of the absolute *qua* God. As such, the absolute is enacting itself through the poet's art.

In any case, we can conclude that while both Novalis and Fichte have teleological perspectives on history, only the former posits a finite, realizable end. While Fichte rendered the end of human striving to be a logical impossibility (one cannot make the finite infinite, and vice-versa), Novalis' magical idealism shows that the infinite can be immediately intuited and presented in the form of the artwork. Consequently, history does have an end, which is making the world as a whole one great artwork, i.e. as a fable or novel. Thus, Novalis' theory of history shows that the world begins and ends as a fable, the purview of the poet-historian.

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

Novalis's Magical Idealism

A Threefold Philosophy of the Imagination, Love and Medicine

*Laure Cahen-Maurel**

ABSTRACT

This article argues that Novalis's philosophy of magical idealism essentially consists of three central elements: a theory of the creative or productive imagination, a conception of love, and a doctrine of transcendental medicine. In this regard, it synthesizes two adjacent, but divergent contemporary philosophical sources – J. G. Fichte's idealism and Friedrich Schiller's classicism – into a new and original philosophy. It demonstrates that Novalis's views on both magic and idealism, not only prove to be perfectly rational and comprehensible, but even more philosophically coherent and innovative than have been recognised up to now.

Keywords: magical idealism, productive imagination, love, medicine, Novalis, J. G. Fichte, Schiller

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article défend l'idée selon laquelle trois éléments centraux composent ce que Novalis nomme « idéalisme magique » pour désigner sa philosophie propre : la conception d'une imagination créatrice ou productrice, une doctrine de l'amour et une théorie de la médecine transcendantale. L'idéalisme magique est en cela la synthèse en une philosophie nouvelle et originale de deux sources philosophiques contemporaines, à la fois adjacentes et divergentes : l'idéalisme de J. G. Fichte et le classicisme de Friedrich Schiller. L'article montre que les vues de Novalis tant sur la magie que sur l'idéalisme sont non seulement réellement rationnelles et compréhensibles, mais philosophiquement plus cohérentes et novatrices qu'on ne l'a admis jusqu'à présent.

Mots-clés : idéalisme magique, imagination productrice, amour, médecine, Novalis, J. G. Fichte, Schiller

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Introduction: The Modern Philosophical Underpinnings of “Magical Idealism”

“Mysteries are a means of nourishment—inciting potencies. Explanations are *digested* mysteries.”

– Novalis¹

“Novalis”, the *nom de plume* or pen name with which Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772–1801) signed *Pollen*, his first published collection of fragments in 1798, not only reflects the ancient Hardenberg family lineage of *de novali*, signifying “someone who opens up new land”. For this name also embodies the new philosophical programme that the poet-philosopher of early German romanticism began sketching out in 1798. Novalis called this programme “magical idealism”, and it too aimed at breaking fresh ground.² Novalis’s contribution to the history of post-Kantian philosophy has long fuelled and continues to fuel prejudices against the romantics, as well as debates among the specialists.³ It is sometimes assumed by certain readers and commentators that by choosing the designation “magical” Novalis wished to underscore the irrational and inexplicable elements of his thought. The present article shows such an assumption to be uncritical and inaccurate.

¹ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (1798/99), entry 138, in Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs* (hereafter: HKA), ed. Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl, Gerhard Schulz *et al.* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983), vol. 3, 267; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. David W. Wood (Albany/N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), 23.

² To be sure, in addition to “magical idealism”, Novalis also gives his conception of philosophy a number of other names. As this article will show, it is at times equated with the designation “realistic idealism”, at times with the operation of “romanticizing” the world, and at other times with the method of “encyclopaedistics”. Although they obviously carry different accentuations, I believe it can be shown that all these designations are synonymous at base.

³ For older and more recent philosophical studies directly treating the question of Novalis’s philosophy of magical idealism, see, among others, Heinrich Simon, *Der magische Idealismus. Studien zur Philosophie des Novalis* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1906); Theodor Haering, *Novalis als Philosoph* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1954); Manfred Frank, “Die Philosophie des sogenannten ‘magischen Idealismus’”, *Euphorion* 63 (1969): 88–116; Stephan Grätzel, Johannes Ullmaier, “Der magische Transzendentalismus von Novalis”, *Kant-Studien* 89/1 (1998): 59–67; Bernward Loheide, *Fichte und Novalis, Transzendentalphilosophisches Denken im romantisierenden Diskurs* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Olivier Schefer, “L’‘idéisme magique’ de Novalis”, *Critique* 59, no. 673–74 (June–July 2003): 514–527; Ives Radizzani, “Philosophie transcendante et idéalisme magique”, in *Einbildungskraft und Reflexion. Philosophische Untersuchungen zu Novalis / Imagination et réflexion. Recherches philosophiques sur Novalis*, ed. by Augustin Dumont and Alexander Schnell (LIT Verlag: Zurich, 2015), 103–113; Laurent Guyot, “Novalis et la question du prolongement poétique de la philosophie de Fichte”, *Fichte-Studien* 43 (2016): 277–89; and my monograph: Laure Cahen-Maurel, *L’art de romantisier le monde. La peinture de Caspar David Friedrich et la philosophie romantique de Novalis* (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2017).

In contrast, I argue that Novalis's conception of magical idealism essentially combines or *synthesizes* two adjacent, but divergent contemporary philosophical sources – J. G. Fichte's idealism and Friedrich Schiller's classicism – into a new and original philosophy. In this way, I demonstrate that the *syncretic method* of Novalis's thinking, his conceptions of *magic* as such and *idealism* and *realism* on the whole, not only prove to be perfectly rational and comprehensible, but even more philosophically coherent and innovative than have been recognised up to now.⁴

The present study builds on the work of scholars who have endeavoured to understand the rational strands of philosophical romanticism, and especially the extent to which it is embedded in post-Kantian debates. Manfred Frank's 1969 article "Die Philosophie des sogenannten 'magischen Idealismus'" is one such pioneering investigation that philosophically reassessed the nature of Novalis's romanticism within this tradition.⁵ Frank argued that the philosophy of magical idealism was not a mere whim of Novalis or a subjective trait of his fantasy, but the sensible and metaphysical expression of an unrealisable ideal of the absolute. In addition to Frank's seminal research in German, scholarly progress in grasping the rationality of philosophical romanticism in the American-Anglophone world is greatly indebted to the voluminous writings of Frederick C. Beiser, whose 2002 book *German Idealism* included among others an extensive chapter on "Novalis's Magical Idealism."⁶ Over the past two decades, many other researchers have travelled this path of rationally understanding and situating the major stakes of philosophical romanticism within the context of German idealism. These studies have provided in turn a powerful corrective to the customary and now thoroughly outdated interpretation of early romanticism as a form of irrationalism or anti-rationalism.

But the question still remains: how is it possible to critically understand Novalis's project of "magical idealism" as a rational and non-contradictory theory, when this project apparently attempts to combine the domains of magic and philosophy?

Magic belongs to an extremely old tradition, dating back to at least Zoroaster and the Persian magi, the Egyptian mysteries, to Pythagoreanism

⁴ Generally speaking, Novalis sought for a form of syncretism of various traditions, or as he also terms it, a form of "syncreticism". See, for example, Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, entry no. 457, labelled "PHILOSOPHY", HKA 3, 333; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 75. On the importance of syncreticism in Novalis, see Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism*, 431.

⁵ See Manfred Frank, "Die Philosophie des sogenannten 'magischen Idealismus'"; reprinted in Manfred Frank, *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 27–66.

⁶ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 407–434. Cf. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 18–21, 50–55.

and the Neoplatonist doctrine of theurgy.⁷ Novalis was well aware of all these older religious and philosophical traditions of magic, not to mention the many contemporary evocations of magic in prominent artistic works like Goethe's 1790 play, *Faust: A Fragment*, or Mozart's 1791 opera *The Magic Flute*. Hence, some of the key issues to be addressed in the present article are: what exactly did Novalis himself understand by magic? And what are the precise sources of magic for his conception of magical idealism – are they ancient or modern, religious or artistic, poetic or philosophical, or some combination of them all? For it is easy to see that any incorporation of magic into a serious philosophical programme could quickly devalue it, drawing it towards *Schwärmerei* or the deluded fantasies of a charlatan. Indeed, in *The Republic* Plato directly sets true philosophy against the charlatanry of the magicians.⁸ As we will see, even Novalis himself points out that magical idealism is not without some kind of internal risk that ultimately could end up leading to a pathological state.

An additional problem for many commentators is that although Novalis might have intended his conception of magical idealism to be serious philosophy, it can scarcely be called systematic. As Olivier Schefer points out in his article, "L'‘idéisme magique’ de Novalis", not only are the explicit textual sources highly fragmentary, but countless interpretative inconsistencies and uncertainties remain.⁹ Moreover, the very terminology of "idealism", which entered into wider contemporary discourse with Kant's critical idealism, did not have one single or stable meaning in the period in question. Commentators of Novalis's magical idealism are therefore correct in underscoring the different strands of idealism, and the need for interpretive reconstructions of the source materials. Although they generally agree that magic in Novalis seems to be correlated with the question of the absolute, they disagree on how to understand this romantic absolute. Accordingly, another issue is whether Novalis develops a negative philosophy of the transcendence of the absolute as a mere regulative idea in the Kantian sense, or whether he adopts a positive philosophy of the absolute as a constitutive and existential reality, one that is immanent to the universe and found at work within the phenomena of the sensible world, i.e. a view that seems to be more in line with F. W. J. Schelling's absolute idealism.¹⁰

⁷ See the special issue of the journal *Critique* entitled "2000 ans de Magie", *Critique* 59, no. 673–74 (June–July 2003). On the connection of magical idealism with the Neoplatonist theurgy, see Olivier Schefer, "L'‘idéisme magique’ de Novalis", 519–22.

⁸ See Plato, *The Republic*, 364e3–365a3.

⁹ See Olivier Schefer, "L'‘idéisme magique’ de Novalis", 516; also see Manfred Frank, "Die Philosophie des sogenannten 'magischen Idealismus'", in Manfred Frank, *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus*, 28–9.

¹⁰ The latter stance is essentially the interpretation of Beiser, for example, who lays particular emphasis on the idea of the absolute as the unity of the real and the ideal, the subject and the object, whereas the former is above all the position of Frank. See for instance, Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism*:

In this regard, some commentators have suggested that Novalis's theory of magical idealism is inspired by the paring of Fichte and Schelling.¹¹ Other commentators such as Beiser, put forward Fichte and Spinoza as the two decisive touchstones, since Spinoza is explicitly named along with the founder of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in Novalis's philosophical writings from 1795/96.¹² More recently, Augustin Dumont has argued that the origin of the expression "magical idealism" can be traced back to Novalis's early house tutor Carl Christian Erhard Schmid, who had negatively viewed Fichte as a magician; Schmid's anti-Fichteanism then ironically becomes the positive name of Novalis's project when formulating his own critique of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.¹³ While Jane Kneller points to the impact of Spinoza's monism, Schelling's organicism and Leibniz's vitalism on Novalis's thoughts about magical idealism.¹⁴ The textual sources undoubtedly show that Spinoza, Leibniz, Schmid and Schelling are all important philosophers for Novalis, including for the development of his new philosophical programme.¹⁵

Notwithstanding, my own position in this ongoing debate concerning the nature of magical idealism has arisen as a result of a close examination and reconstruction of the synthesizing principle that I believe drives Novalis's entire philosophical programme: that is to say, the *power of the productive or creative imagination*. My central claim is that Novalis's conception of

The Struggle Against Subjectivism (1781-1801); and Manfred Frank, "Philosophische Grundlage der Frühromantik", *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik* 4 (1994), 37–130, as well as the Introduction to: *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 7–26.

¹¹ This is the interpretation put forward by Olivier Schefer based on the following fragment of Friedrich Schlegel dating from 1806: "The third kind of idealism, in addition to objective and subjective idealism, is perhaps that of magical idealism; the idealists are to be sought for among the astrological magicians, and the alchemists of the middle-ages" (Die dritte Art des Idealismus neben dem objektiven und subjektiven ist vielleicht der magische; unter den astrologischen Magiern, Alchimisten des Mittelalters, sind die Idealisten zu suchen). Friedrich Schlegel, *Schriften und Fragmente: Ein Gesamtbild seines Geistes. Aus den Werken und dem handschriftlichen Nachlass zusammengestellt und eingeleitet*, ed. Ernst Behler [Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1956], 179). See Olivier Schefer, "L'«idéisme magique» de Novalis", 515–16.

¹² See for instance Novalis, *Fichte-Studien* (1795/96), fragment 151, HKA 2, 157; *Fichte Studies*, trans. Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 55: "Spinoza ascended as far as nature – Fichte to the I, or the person. I [ascend] to the thesis God."

¹³ See Augustin Dumont, "Metaphysik und Sophistik des Bildes im romantischen Deutschland. Platons *Sophistes* und das Problem des Verstehens bei Novalis" in *Einbildungskraft und Reflexion. Philosophische Untersuchungen zu Novalis / Imagination et réflexion. Recherches philosophiques sur Novalis*, footnote 81, 266; cf. Augustin Dumont, *De l'Autre imprévu à l'Autre impossible. Essais sur le romantisme allemand* (LIT Verlag: Zurich, 2016), footnote 84, 157.

¹⁴ See Jane Kneller, "Novalis, Nature and the Absolute", in *Ontologies of Nature: Continental Perspectives and Environmental Reorientations*, edited by Gerard Kuperus and Marjolein Oele (Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2017), 119–25.

¹⁵ I believe that Franz Baader (1765-1841) is also important for the development of magical idealism. See, among others, Novalis's letter to Friedrich Schlegel, 7 November 1798 (translated into English in this first issue of *Symphilosophie*), where he refers to Baader in connection with magic (HKA 4, 263).

magical idealism should be primarily understood as a new theory of the free creative imagination, and that its two chief modern inspirations are the philosophies of Fichte and Schiller. Of course, scholars of philosophical romanticism have long noted the attention that Novalis paid to Fichte's theory of the imagination.¹⁶ Yet detailed demonstrations of how Novalis understood and *positively transformed* Fichte's theory are still in short supply, while the crucial contribution of Schiller's philosophical thought to magical idealism has been surprisingly neglected so far. I will specifically show that Novalis's programme of magical idealism is decisively influenced by the conception of the imagination found in Fichte's 1794/95 text, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. The creative power of the imagination is there introduced as a living and substantial activity of synthesis, constituting a remarkable and most "wondrous" (*wunderbare*) faculty that both philosophy *and* art share in common. Here the imagination is not the inverse or opposite of reason, such that the former is simply irrational or fantastical. On the contrary, Fichte's theory of the creative imagination is famously conceived as a highly positive mediating faculty capable of overcoming and reconciling opposites. I argue that magical idealism too should be seen as another striking example of an attempt to reconcile two domains and traditions – magic and philosophy – that appear at first sight to be completely opposed or contradictory. That the original power of the *creative* imagination could be positively related to reason, and is not at all the same as either the unoriginal reproductive imagination or mere speculative fantasy, often continues to be misunderstood or underappreciated in the research.

Schiller and Fichte were colleagues at the university of Jena from 1794–1799, but unlike Fichte, Schiller is not explicitly named as a source for magical idealism. This might appear to be problematic, but the difficulties are resolved when an examination is made of the totality of Novalis's references to magical idealism and to his views on philosophy in general. Novalis attended the University of Jena during the winter semester of 1790/91, where he frequented Schiller's lectures. As his letters from this time clearly demonstrate, he viewed Schiller as an intellectual mentor and

¹⁶ Among others, see Beiser, *German Idealism*, 421; Jane Kneller, *Kant and the Power of Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 128–30; and Augustin Dumont: "... Novalis confusedly refers to Fichte until the end of his life, incessantly seeking to demonstrate that transcendental idealism properly understood is magical idealism, i.e. whose heart is the *creative* imagination, manifest in his language. Nevertheless, reading [Novalis's] *Fichte-Studies* is undeniably like witnessing a Trojan horse being introduced into Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, which then becomes along the way a 'sophistic of the I'". Augustin Dumont, "Ordre et désordre dans la philosophie postkantienne: le problème du perspectivisme transcendantal. Introduction à la lecture des *Études fichtéennes* de Novalis", in: Novalis, *Les années d'apprentissage philosophique. Études fichtéennes (1795–96)*, 20.

model.¹⁷ Philosophically speaking, Schiller was a Kantian who had tried to overcome the dualism of Kant's criticism by employing Fichte's important concept of "reciprocal action" – *Wechselwirkung*. – I will return to this point in section three below.

With regard to the question of magic, although we find such a conception in Fichte's work, particularly in the 1795 text *On the Spirit and Letter in Philosophy*, Fichte's manuscript remained unpublished until 1800, which is after Novalis's first 1798 thoughts on magical idealism. Despite this fact, Novalis already privately viewed Fichte as a philosophical magician in 1797.¹⁸ In the works of Schiller published before 1798, we find two strands of magic in a positive philosophical sense. The first strand concerns *beauty*, *art* and *medicine*. Schiller was indeed the theorist of the magic of beauty with his new concept of grace, presented in the 1793 essay, *On Grace and Dignity*. Schiller was also a representative of both a philosophical and medical anthropology, and championed a physiology of art. The second strand of magic has to do with *sympathy*, *love* and *theosophy*, and ultimately leads back to the philosophical stream of Neoplatonism. Here Schiller was the defender of a certain form of humanism, the author of a profession of faith embodied in selfless love in a work published under the title, "Theosophy of Julius" (1786).¹⁹

The goal of this article therefore is to try and more precisely reconstruct this twofold Fichtean and Schillerian heritage of magical idealism on the one hand, and to determine the more original elements of Novalis's philosophy

¹⁷ See Novalis's letters to Schiller from 22 September 1791 and 7 October 1791, as well as his letter to Reinhold from 5 October 1791, HKA 4, 89–91, 93–97, 98–102. Before becoming his student and meeting him personally at the university of Jena, Novalis also wrote an "Apologia of Friedrich Schiller" in defence of the latter's poem "The Gods of Greece", for which Schiller had been accused of atheism. See Novalis, "Apologie von Friedrich Schiller", HKA 2, 24–5. For an analysis of Schiller's influential poem in the context of early German romanticism, see Alexander J. B. Hampton, *Romanticism and the Re-Invention of Modern Religion: The Reconciliation of German Idealism and Platonic Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 13–17.

¹⁸ Among others, see the letter of Novalis in Wiederstedt to Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin, 14 June 1797: "Fichte is the most dangerous thinker I know. He powerfully enchants one into his circle. ... You are destined to protect the striving independent thinker against Fichte's magic." HKA 4, 230.

¹⁹ The "Theosophy of Julius" is a part of Schiller's 1786 *Philosophische Briefe*. There is an older tradition of theosophy that is related to Jacob Böhme, which has been treated in detail in Novalis scholarship. For instance, see Hans-Joachim Mähl, "Novalis und Plotin: Untersuchungen zu einer neuen Edition und Interpretation des *Allgemeinen Brouillon*", *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts* (1963): 139–250; Xavier Tilliette, *Recherches sur l'intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 230–31, 240–41; or Paola Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme: Theosophy, Hagiography, Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 76–95. In his book, *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Beiser notes that Schiller's "Theosophy of Julius" "would inspire the young romantics", but does not elaborate. See Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 35. In his book on *German Idealism*, however, Beiser mentions the mysticism of Schiller's "Theosophy of Julius" with reference to Friedrich Schlegel; see Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism*, 454.

on the other. It is divided into four sections: (1) reconstructs Fichte's theory of the imagination found in the 1794 *Grundlage* and its relation to the two domains of philosophy and art; (2) provides an account of Novalis's view of "true philosophy", underscoring how magical idealism understands itself as a continuation of Fichte's transcendental idealism insofar as it also synthesizes the spheres of idealism and realism; (3) examines what Novalis means by "magic" in the context of his philosophical programme; (4) highlights the specific influence of Schiller on the kind of magical idealism that Novalis philosophically envisaged, especially in relation to love, theosophy, pathology, and medicine.

1. Fichte's Creative Imagination as the "Most Wondrous Power"

Novalis read the philosophical works of Fichte during 1795-1796, writing two hundred pages of notes, reflections, and making numerous direct excerpts from the *Wissenschaftslehre*, that are preserved under the title, *Fichte Studies*.²⁰ Philosophical romanticism is often defined as a movement diverging from the metaphysical foundationalism of Fichte, and there is a lot of textual support for that interpretation. In certain other respects, however, the romantic philosophers appear to be in clear agreement with Fichte. In this section I will analyse the conception of the creative imagination found in Fichte's main published text: *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/95). Such an analysis will form the basis for my claim that the *Grundlage* is one of the primary idealistic inspirations for Novalis's philosophy of magical idealism.

Although Fichte's *Grundlage* is rightly known to be an extremely speculative, rigorous and logical text, it nevertheless contains the outlines of a genuinely fruitful philosophical theory of the imagination that tends to be neglected or overlooked, even by specialists.²¹ Scattered throughout the text are a series of specific characterizations of the power of the imagination, which when brought together provide an important foundation for his transcendental account of philosophy. I will present here four main characteristics of the Fichtean theory of the imagination in the *Grundlage* that I believe later become significant for Novalis's magical idealism. Methodically it is important to look at Fichte's theory first, because any claim

²⁰ See Novalis, *Fichte-Studien* (1795/96), HKA 2, 104-296.

²¹ There are of course exceptions. Commentators presenting recent treatments of the imagination in Fichte's 1794/95 *Grundlage* include: Christoph Asmuth, "Das Schweben ist der Quell aller Realität". Platner, Fichte, Schlegel und Novalis über die produktive Einbildungskraft", *e-Journal Philosophie der Psychologie* (2005), <http://www.jp.philo.at/texte/AsmuthC1.pdf>; Andreas Schmidt, "Fichtes Begriff der 'Einbildungskraft' und seine Maimonschen Ursprünge", in *Idealismus und Romantik in Jena. Figuren und Konzepte zwischen 1794 und 1807*, ed. Michael Forster, Johannes Korngiebel and Klaus Vieweg (München: Fink, 2018), 11-23; and Johannes Haag, "Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early *Wissenschaftslehre*", in *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, ed. Gerard Gentry and Konstantin Pollok (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 109-28.

that Novalis appropriated, transformed or even rejected elements of the Fichtean system, all depend on first knowing precisely what Fichte's philosophy is in order to properly carry out such a comparison.

a) Volitional originality

The first characteristic of the imagination in Fichte's *Grundlage* is that it is *creative*. Like in Kant, the philosophical focus of Fichte is on the imagination as a productive or creative power of the human mind (*die produktive or schaffende Einbildungskraft*). However, the imagination manifests itself in several forms or guises, not only in a creative or productive sense, and these other forms should be clearly distinguished. Fichte contrasts the higher creative imagination with the lower empirically-based form of the imagination. The latter is merely an imitator and a prisoner of the given, dependent on external perception and memory. This unoriginal and non-creative form of the imagination is therefore labelled the *reproductive* imagination – since it essentially reproduces what already exists. Conversely, Fichte elevates the productive and creative form of the imagination to the rank of a philosophical *power* or faculty (*Vermögen*) of the transcendental subject. Fichte not only understands it as an absolutely original power of the self or I, but also as a faculty of the mind that is absolutely free, self-active and independent. Philosophers who correctly employ their creative imagination are therefore thinkers who freely philosophize with originality and spirit:

This, however, is a task for the *creative power of imagination* (*schaffende Einbildungskraft*). All human beings share in this power, since without it they would also never have possessed a single representation (*Vorstellung*); but it is by no means the case that most human beings have free control over this power of creative imagination and are able to employ it to create (*erschaffen*) something purposefully; nor, should the longed-for image (*das verlangte Bild*) suddenly appear before their soul at some fortunate moment, like a bolt of lightning, are they able to hold it fast and investigate it and to imprint it indelibly for any use they may freely choose to make of it. It is this power (*Vermögen*) that determines whether one philosophizes with or without spirit.²²

The productive imagination is productive and creative insofar as it generates voluntary forms of possible intuitions: “representations” or new images (*Bilder*) – which may be artistic as well as philosophical images. These new

²² Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre 1794/95* (hereafter: *GWL*), § 4, in *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (hereafter: *GA*), ed. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky, Erich Fuchs, Peter K. Schneider, Günter Zöller et al. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962-2012), vol. I/2, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob, 1969, 414–15 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale). I am very grateful to Professor Breazeale for kindly allowing me to quote from his forthcoming translation of Fichte's *Grundlage*.

representations or *Bilder* produced by the imagination fall under the domain of the active will, in contrast with sense impressions that are merely passively received. Thus, true artistic creators or philosophers are those who have this higher function of the imagination “freely in their power”. Even more: if a philosopher exhibits any degree of innovativeness – i.e. both a flair for form and style and genuinely original content – then according to Fichte this thinker is not just employing their faculties of intellect and logical reasoning, but above all their power of the creative imagination. – Their originality is precisely due to this particular faculty of the mind; they have moved beyond the imitation stage of the mere reproductive imagination. Inversely, any thinker failing to properly make use of their creative imagination can never be an authentically original philosopher for Fichte.

b) Wonder and mystery

Second characteristic: the imagination for Fichte is the “most wondrous” power of the I. As Johannes Haag also remarks²³, in the *Grundlage* Fichte first leaves this faculty of the mind unnamed, characterising it in various ways, before finally designating this unnamed power as the faculty of the productive or creative imagination, and more closely determining its functions and scope:

By means of its most wonderful power (*durch das wunderbarste seiner Vermögen*) (one that we shall determine more closely at the appropriate time), the positing I brings the vanishing accident...²⁴

With this, we have, at the same time, begun conducting an experiment within us with the marvelous power of productive imagination (*mit dem wunderbaren Vermögen*)...²⁵

The German adjective used by Fichte is *wunderbar*, “wonderful”, “wondrous” or “marvellous”, in the strong sense of the miraculous – which comes from *Wunder*, a miracle or wonder. To be sure, from a purely philological point of view, this adjective could also have had a negative connotation in Fichte’s time, as an attenuation of the stronger word *seltsam*, “strange” or “weird”. But as we have seen, in the *Grundlage* Fichte makes all philosophical innovation dependent on the faculty of the imagination, thus the *wondrous* character of the creative imagination is clearly meant in a positive sense.

Why does Fichte marvel at this faculty or find it “wondrous”? At least two reasons can be given. First, doubtlessly because the creative imagination is correlated with the idea of genesis and *production*, the production of representations and images. That consciousness itself is at all possible stems

²³ See Johannes Haag, “Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte’s Early *Wissenschaftslehre*”, 117.

²⁴ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GWL*, GA I/2: 350 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 353 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

from this self-generating and productive ability of the imagination. In other words, the creative imagination is the *source* of all transcendental spontaneity for Fichte, and not the understanding or intellect, as it is for Kant. According to Fichte, understanding (*Verstand*) is a much more passive and static faculty that merely retains or holds the elements of the mind. Reason (*Vernunft*) then fixes and determines more precisely these elements, which have been actively produced by the imagination.²⁶ Thus, the imagination constitutes the dynamic faculty of the human spirit – it is the origin and basis of the mind’s representations and therefore of all consciousness and intellectual life. This power is the very condition for the spirit’s entry into time or the temporal world:

It is this power [the most wondrous power of imagination] alone that makes possible life and consciousness, and, in particular, consciousness as a continuous temporal series ... the marvellous power of productive imagination, which will soon be explained and without which nothing whatsoever in the human mind can be explained – ... may very well prove to be the foundation of the entire mechanism of the human mind.²⁷

In other words, the imagination is not only miraculous or wondrous insofar as it relates to our ability to rise above external nature, to the knowledge of a given sense object through the generation of representations and images, but also insofar it is a free process happening in time and temporality – within the ordinary phenomenal series of our sensibility. This is unlike the sphere of pure reason, which for Fichte is ultimately a-temporal and remains outside the sphere of time.²⁸

A second reason why Fichte designates the creative imagination as *wunderbar* (wondrous) is because it is related to mystery. However, this does not mean that we are dealing with mere fantasy (*Phantasie*), or with unknowable transcendent objects. Fantasy for Fichte is a completely different function of the imagination, one that is negatively connoted as the involuntary production of fantastic or dream images. These fantastic images are disconnected from realism and true reality, in contrast to the creative imagination’s voluntary production of new images that do have a link with reality. Hence, in Fichte’s eyes, the power of the creative imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) is not transcendent or fantastical but remains a matter of intellectual activity, of the normative and controlled transcendental productivity.

Moreover, by calling the productive imagination the “most wondrous power” of the I, Fichte is again following in the footsteps of Kant. In the

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 374.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 350 and 353 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

²⁸ On Fichte’s conception of reason, see *ibid.*, 360.

Critique of Pure Reason Kant famously defined the mysterious working of the schematism of the productive imagination as a “hidden art (*eine verborgene Kunst*) in the depths of the human soul”²⁹. For his own account, Fichte also takes up, almost to the very letter, precisely this Kantian idea of the creative imagination as a “hidden art”. Not only does the *Grundlage* underline that the nature of this creative power of the human mind is largely unknown, but Fichte emphasizes that the productive imagination is an “almost always misunderstood” power (*verkanntes Vermögen*), i.e. it is a power whose true scope and function still remains hidden to many people.³⁰ But by associating it with the wondrous, unknown, marvellous, and the flash of lightning (as quoted above), Fichte is also highlighting an essential convergence between the aesthetic point of view – that of *genius* or artistic inspiration – and the philosophical point of view. As we saw above, this relates to the originality of the imagination and to the fact that Fichte saw this faculty as a power to be deployed in the spheres of both philosophy and art.³¹

c) An infinite hovering

A third key characteristic of the Fichtean theory of the creative or productive imagination: it is in constant movement. But this movement should be understood in a very specific sense. According to Fichte, the imagination’s movement is one of oscillation or *hovering* (*Schweben*). This unusual oscillating movement is inscribed in the activity of the imagination itself, its structure is inherently dynamic, productive and processual:

The power of imagination oscillates or hovers (*schwebt*) in the middle between determination and non-determination, between the finite and the infinite ... This hovering (*Schweben*) designates the imagination through its product; in the course of its oscillation or hovering and by means of the same, the power of imagination, as it were, produces this product.³²

The creative imagination hovers between opposing directions and ultimately remains in an intermediate space where everything is still undetermined, and yet it still attempts to find a synthesis between them. Hence, not only does the creative imagination have a profound connection to the temporal world,

²⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (hereafter: *KrV*), B 180; *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 273.

³⁰ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GWL*, § 4, GA I/2: 350 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

³¹ Whereas Kant famously dismissed the possibility of speaking of genius in science. On the convergence between the aesthetic and the philosophical standpoints in Fichte and the Romantics, see David W. Wood, “From ‘Fichticizing’ to ‘Romanticizing’: Fichte and Novalis on the Activities of Philosophy and Art”, *Fichte-Studien* 41, no. 1 (2014): 247–78.

³² Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GWL*, § 4, GA I/2: 360 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

but also to the *spatial*, it likewise enters into the finite and determinate world of space, hovering in the middle between two endpoints or directions.

With this idea of a hovering Fichte is once again expanding on a point found in Kant – on the notion of the monogram.³³ Even though it is related to the topic of schematism, Kant included his most extensive discussion of the hovering movement of the monogram in the subject of the artistic imagination's aesthetic ideal (in contrast to the ideal of reason). When talking about the “creatures of the imagination” in its free lawfulness, Kant writes:

...no one can give an explanation or intelligible concept [of them]; they are, as it were, monograms, individual traits, though not determined through any assignable rule, constituting more a wavering sketch (*schwebende Zeichnung*), as it were, which mediates between various experiences (*im Mittel verschiedener Erfahrungen*), than a determinate image.³⁴

In Kant's definition, the imaginative monogram brings under the unity of a *single* sensible figure – a “silhouette” (*Schattenbild*)³⁵ or an “outline” (*Umriss*)³⁶ – a set of scattered and disparate traits that cannot be subsumed under the rule of any concept. The individual features of the monogram are themselves determinate, but the figure as a whole, its identity, remains indeterminate, hovering in the middle. This makes it uncommunicable, and no existing real individual corresponds to this figure which exists in the mind of the artist, which she has created in her imagination as an inner silhouette. In this regard, Fichte's view of the products that are generated by the creative imagination is quite consistent with Kant's view in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nevertheless, Fichte's conception may still be distinguished from Kant's view in at least three central respects. 1). For Fichte, the monogram of the imagination can in fact be communicated, provided that one exercises in turn one's own power of the imagination. 2). Its individual traits are not only sensible or empirically finite data, but it additionally has spiritual and infinite features. 3). The monogram as the product of the imagination hovers between two opposite extremes.³⁷

Similarly, the wondrous hovering productions (creatures) of the productive imagination in Fichte could also be defined negatively. Indeed, the Fichtean association of the creative imagination with the activity of

³³ I agree with Rudolf A. Makkreel that Fichte's idea of the “hovering” (*Schweben*) of the imagination could be brought into connection with Kant's idea of the hovering in the monogram. See Makkreel, “Fichte's Dialectical Imagination”, 9.

³⁴ Immanuel Kant, *KrV*, A 570/ B 598; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 552.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., A 833/ B 861; Eng. trans., 692.

³⁷ On this latter difference between Fichte's concept of the imagination and Kant's, see Andreas Schmidt, “Fichtes Begriff der ‘Einbildungskraft’ und seine Maimonschen Ursprünge”. Schmidt sees in Maimon the historical origin of the Fichtean connection between imagination and contradiction, topics that seem unrelated in Kant, or that Kant at least did not explicitly link.

hovering recalls the many polemical debates at the end of the 18th century stigmatising the ‘unbridled’ imagination for apparently preventing the human being from properly thinking and acting. Fichte’s creative “hovering of the imagination” may therefore evoke for some a reference to the alleged erratic ways of *Phantasie* (fantasy) or perhaps even of *Schwärmerei* (exaltation). However, in contrast to these more negative aspects, Fichte’s theory of the creative hovering imagination above all underscores the positive elements of this faculty. The idea of hovering points to the constant change, *agility* and fluidity of the *dynamic* imagination, which actively carries out interconnections and syntheses that make the very activity of intelligence and consciousness possible.³⁸

d) A living synthesis

Lastly, the fourth main characteristic of Fichte’s theory of the creative imagination is that it is not simply a faculty that just hovers or oscillates between two opposites, but that it is also a faculty of a *living synthesis*. This synthesis of the imagination takes place in and is carried out by a living and dynamic entity – the human self or I. The *Grundlage* characterizes the creative imagination as that power of our I that allows us to integrate and synthesize two opposing elements into our knowledge and cognition. These two elements are not only opposed at the abstract level of mere logic, but even perhaps at the level of external reality, right down into the living world of nature and its physical forces. Examples of two opposing elements that can be synthesized by the creative imagination include: the I and the Not-I, the finite and the infinite, the ideal and the real, and the self and nature. The imagination forms a synthesis that is capable of embracing the two antitheses within it, it relativizes and preserves them by cancelling their absoluteness and discovering the element of their *identity*:

This power is almost always misunderstood, but it is the power that combines into a unity things constantly posited in opposition to each other, the power that intervenes between moments that would have to mutually annul each other, and retains both. ... The task was to unite two terms posited in opposition to each other, the I and the Not-I. They can be completely united by the power of imagination, which unites items posited in opposition to each other.³⁹

The creative imagination is the only power capable of resolving these contradictions, in which two apparent opposites come together; but they clash rather than suppress, simultaneously imposing a limit on each other.

³⁸ For a more detailed treatment of the monogram in both Kant and Fichte, see my forthcoming article: “The Monogram of the ‘Sweet Songstress of the Night’. The Hovering of the Imagination as the First Principle of Fichte’s Aesthetics”, in *Fichte-Studien* 49 (2020).

³⁹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GWL*, GA I/2: 350 and 361 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

The synthetic activity of the imagination takes the technical name of *Wechselwirkung*, “reciprocal action”. At the same time as it generates contradiction and alternation (*Wechsel*) between these two opposites, the imagination is the decisive factor of their reunion and reconciliation. They remain distinct, but the imagination ultimately overcomes their contradictoriness by eventually finding an element in each of the two that they share in common – i.e. an intersection or meeting point – at which they organically coincide or are identical.

Thus, the very *life* of the creative imagination is defined by the *relationship*, *transition* and *synthesis* between two opposing directions. Or to put it another way, the life of the creative imagination is defined by the *diffraction* of its activity in two directions: from the finite to the infinite, and inversely, from the infinite to the finite; or from determination to non-determination, from non-determination to determination. The hovering or oscillating movement of the imagination is not a transition between separate and abstract opposites, but between the two directions of a living and composite whole formed by the imagination itself. The hovering process of the creative imagination is constant and necessarily unfinished: its power of oscillation never terminates, not even after the living synthesis is found and it has become fixed and determined as a concept by the power of reason, which is then held or preserved by the understanding.

Let us summarize this aperçu. Fichte’s theory of the productive or creative imagination in the *Grundlage* has the following characteristics: 1). Via the human will, it generates new products, images, and representations and is therefore original or creative; 2). Although it is frequently misunderstood or even unknown to many people, it is the most marvellous or wondrous (*wunderbar*) faculty of the human I, that both art and philosophy share in common; 3). It is distinguished by its hovering or oscillating movement, which forms a transition between two opposing elements or directions, one that is not purely abstract, linear or mechanical, but dynamic; 4). The productive imagination is the faculty of overcoming contradictions insofar as it is able to carry out a living synthesis of opposites such as the ideal and real, the finite and the infinite.

2. In the Tradition of Fichte – True Philosophy as “Realistic-Idealism”

In a fragment from 1798, Novalis presents the new philosophical land opened up by himself as the culmination of a history of philosophy that is conceived as a trajectory toward a higher philosophical standpoint. In so doing, he directly situates his own thought on magical idealism in the stream of transcendental and critical philosophy. His brief historical overview starts with various French philosophers as pure empiricists, progresses to the dogmatists and enthusiasts, moves from there to Kant and Fichte, before culminating in the romantic thinker’s own philosophical programme:

Similarity and dissimilarity between Asmus, Ligne and Voltaire. Jacobi also belongs among the *transcendent empiricists*. An empiricist is: someone whose manner of thinking is an effect of both the external world and fate—the passive thinker—his philosophy is given to him. Voltaire is a pure empiricist and so are several French philosophers.—Ligne imperceptibly tends to the transcendent empiricists. These form the transition to the dogmatists. From there we come to the enthusiasts—or to the transcendent dogmatists—then to Kant—then to Fichte—and finally to magical idealism.⁴⁰

For Novalis, philosophy can essentially be defined as the unified knowledge of the intelligence. It is the mind or spirit returning to its original element, where it feels intellectually comfortable in the world, as stated in his famous definition from 1798/99: “Philosophy is really homesickness – *the desire to be everywhere at home*.”⁴¹ However, in line with numerous other recurrent expressions in Novalis’s philosophical fragments, “true” or genuine philosophy, i.e. philosophy “proper” or “par excellence” (*kat’exochen*), is not simply to be understood as unitary or “one”. Rather, philosophy is “dyadic” (*Dyadik*)⁴²; that is to say, it has a twofold unity in which the union of two perspectives positively supplement or complement each other. These two main original perspectives are idealism (or rationalism), and realism (or empiricism):

PHILOSOPHY [...] The idealization of realism—and the realization of idealism leads to the truth. One *works* for the *other*—and hence indirectly for itself. In order to work directly for idealism, the idealist must seek to prove realism—and vice versa. The *proof of realism* is idealism—and vice versa.⁴³

Of course, both realism and idealism could be considered solely according to their own separate criteria. Realism generally refers to the outer world, to the senses, and everything related to the body. Whereas idealism particularly relates to the mind, to the sphere of ideas, concept and laws, which constitute a pure *a priori* system of the intelligence, just as formal logic enunciates certain laws of thought. The empiricist starts from the observation of contingent facts, the idealistic philosopher begins with thinking. In contrast to the empiricists, idealists are people who tend to generate their own thoughts; they do not think merely by means of outer experiences (*a*

⁴⁰ Novalis, *Teplitzer Fragmente*, frag. 56, HKA 2, 605; *Teplitz Fragments*, trans. M. M. Stoljar, in Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany/N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), 107 (trans. mod.).

⁴¹ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 857, HKA 3, 434; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 155.

⁴² Novalis, *Fichte-Studien*, entry 206, HKA 2, 166; *Fichte-Studies*, 64.

⁴³ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 634, HKA 3, 383–84; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 115 (trans. mod.).

posteriori), but especially by employing the autonomous forces of their own minds.

By the very fact that it is based on the principle of rational autonomy and active reflexivity, the philosophical point of view deployed in Novalis's work therefore makes best sense when it is understood as *ultimately* grounded in idealism. It is subordinate to the *primacy of idealism* – because it is founded on the self-knowledge of the idealist that the pure realist does not possess. Nevertheless, true philosophy for Novalis is far from a type of cognition that gradually detaches itself from its empirical roots to become pure speculative forms that are merely subject to the requirements of reason. Considered from the point of view of its internal functioning, genuine philosophy remains the cognitive “chain” (*die Kette*)⁴⁴ through which things become *tied together* or intertwined within a person's individual consciousness. Consequently, philosophy is interlinked with both the inner world of ideas on the one hand, and to all real or empirical sources on the other, and is the very movement in which life becomes joined to necessity and truth. In other words, true philosophy is that singular movement in which opposites like idealism and realism eventually form a harmonious unity.

Novalis's designates this positive unification of idealism and realism as the dynamics of their mutual “co-penetration” (*Durchdringung beyder*)⁴⁵, the “conversion” (*Umsetzung*)⁴⁶ of the one into the other. Here we are not only dealing with one or two isolated quotes, but this view of genuine philosophy is constantly and repeatedly affirmed throughout Novalis's philosophical writings. We find it in his 1797/98 *Vorarbeiten* (Preparatory Studies): “The realist is the idealist who knows nothing about himself. – Raw idealism – first-hand idealism, is realism”⁴⁷; then in his 1798/99 *Romantic Encyclopaedia* project: “PHILOSOPHY. Idealism is nothing but genuine *empiricism*”, and “PHILOSOPHY. The complete concurrence of idealism and realism – with the most complete independence, furnishes the complete proof of the correct methodology for everything.”⁴⁸; and up until the last fragments of 1799–1800. It is perfectly summarized once more in the following late thought:

In itself, all philosophy and wisdom is idealism—the realm of thought.
True philosophy is wholly realistic idealism.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Novalis, *Poëticismen*, frag. 184, HKA 2, 562.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 634, HKA 3, 382.

⁴⁷ Novalis, *Teplitzer Fragmente*, frag. 374, HKA 2, 605.

⁴⁸ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 402 and entry 634, HKA 3, 316 and 382; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 62, and 114.

⁴⁹ Novalis, *Fragmente und Studien 1799/1800*, frag. 611, HKA 3, 671.

This expression “realistic idealism” (*realistischer Idealismus*) deployed by Novalis in 1800, directly echoes that of *Real-Idealismus*, “real-idealism”, used by Fichte at the end of the 1794 *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. There Fichte writes: “The *Wissenschaftslehre* [...] is a critical idealism, though one could also call it a real-idealism or an ideal-realism.”⁵⁰ Like the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the philosophical position most *negatively* opposed to Novalis’s own position and with which it cannot be reconciled is not empiricism, materialism, or naturalism, but rather, a sterile kind of formalism or abstract type of idealism. Hence, in entry 565 of the *Allgemeines Brouillon* we read: “PHILOSOPHY. Idealism should not be opposed to realism, but to formalism.”⁵¹

Novalis’s philosophy is a serious reflection on the interweaving and positive intersection of the empirical and the rational, the sensible and supersensible, sensibility and reason, i.e. of realism and idealism. In other words, exactly like in Fichte’s *Grundlage*, magical idealism sees itself as a continuation of a programme within the tradition of transcendental philosophy that attempts to reconcile or synthesize apparent opposites, above all those of realism and idealism. As we saw, in Fichte, this synthesis of realism and idealism is carried out by the power of the creative imagination. But what carries out this reconciliation in Novalis’s philosophy? Does he also consider the faculty of the creative imagination as the living synthesis? This is where we need to turn to Novalis’s conception of magic and its cultural, literary and philosophical origins in order to provide an answer to these questions.

3. The Creative Imagination of the Magical Idealist

Compared to rational philosophy and science, at first glance magic seems to be at the opposite spectrum of human cognition, for it is often spontaneously associated with superstition, uncritical beliefs, and visions. Novalis himself writes in the *Allgemeines Brouillon* under the heading MAGIC: “Magic is utterly different from philosophy etc. and constitutes a *world*—a *science*—an *art* in itself.”⁵² Though he acknowledges the heterogeneity of magic and philosophy, after this statement, and without further explanation, Novalis immediately enumerates a list of possible combinations of magic with various

⁵⁰ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GWL*, § 5, GA I/2: 412 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale). Regarding Fichte’s idealism-realism, see Günter Zöller, *Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4; and “German Realism: The Self-Limitation of Idealist Thinking in Fichte, Schelling and Schopenhauer”, in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 201–03.

⁵¹ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 565, HKA 3, 364; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 100.

⁵² Ibid, entry 137, HKA 3, 266; trans., 23.

cultural and scientific fields. Some of these are: “Magical astronomy, grammar, philosophy, religion, chemistry, etc.”⁵³ Thus, what exactly does Novalis mean by “magic” when he labels his philosophy “*magical* idealism”?

a) The history of magic

Generally speaking, magic articulates a particular relationship to the sensible world. It is a category for thinking about effects on sensible reality or how a power of action is related to the natural world. In a well-known fragment from the *Poeticisms*, appearing just after the programmatic fragment 105 on the theory of “romanticizing” the world, Novalis formulates a generic definition of how magic is to be understood: “Magic is = the art of using the sense world at will.”⁵⁴ In other words, magic may be defined as an effective, arbitrary or free manipulation of the world of nature. Some older traditional examples include: to calm the winds, bring drought or rain, raise the dead etc.

Just as magical idealism may be understood in relation to the history of philosophy, seeing itself as the culmination of the diacritical shifts of idealism’s conceptual orientation, it may also be viewed in relation to the history of magic. In several fragments Novalis mentions the historical development of magic, at other times he talks about magic as constituting an actual period of history:

All true enthusiast and mystics have without doubt been possessed of higher powers—strange mixtures and shapes have certainly resulted from this. ... the time has not yet come when such tasks [clean, refine, and clarify this grotesque (wondrous) mass] can be performed with little effort. This remains to be achieved by future historians of *magic*. As very important documents of the gradual evolution of magic power they are worthy of careful preservation and collection.⁵⁵

... In the age of magic the body is the servant of the soul, or of the world of spirits.⁵⁶

Historically speaking, modern conceptions of magic consider it as a particular type of mental attitude, whereas primitive theories of magic viewed it as a set of specific *skills* with regard to religious functions, such as sacrificial and funerary rituals, divinatory practices, etc., but also healing skills. The term “magus” meant a “servant of the gods” and by extension “a human being that is divine”, and the magi originally referred to a caste of wise men or

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Novalis, *Poeticisms* (*Vorarbeiten*), frag. 109, HKA 2, 546.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; English trans. in Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 60–1 (trans. mod.).

⁵⁶ Ibid., frag. 111, HKA 2, 547; trans. mod., 61.

sacred sages among the Persians.⁵⁷ The characterization of someone as a “magician” was often pejorative in classical Greece, i.e. it denoted a sorcerer or charlatan. For Plato, the term *magi* or magician could not only refer to seers and initiates of the mysteries, but sometimes to sophists and painters and poets who are illusionist imitators. Subsequently, however, the figure of the “magus” became the source of a more positive appraisal among the ancient Greeks, especially with the advent of Neoplatonism. Because of its supposed therapeutic effects, the art of the magician was conceived as a *pharmakon*, among other things, i.e. both a poison and a remedy, which could heal the appetitive part of the human soul. In his writings, Novalis plays on this contrasting twofold reputation of the magician in antiquity, who was sometimes considered as a trickster, sometimes as a wise man.

And this is where we can start to see in Novalis one relationship between magic and the power of the imagination. It is the latter power that helps us to pierce through the coverings of illusion and error in the sphere of knowledge. For instance, in his *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, Novalis writes:

Evil is a *necessary illusion* ... just like *error* in the pursuit of truth.—So too with pain—ugliness—disharmony. These illusions can only be explained through the magic of the imagination (*Magie der Einbildungskraft*).⁵⁸

What were the effective means used by magicians in antiquity to act on and effect reality? They did not just employ external objects like amulets or talismans, but *spoken* incantations: ancient magic was therefore associated with an effective kind of speech that was addressed to the divine powers and aimed at bringing about a contact between human beings and the gods. The magician’s spoken performance is best illustrated by the musical power of poetic speech, an effective and modulated mode of speaking that is capable of acting or having an effect on a body or individual.

b) Passive and active magic. Physical and idealist magician

Like with its relation to the stream of idealism, Novalis’s philosophy of magical idealism also marks a shift in its theoretical orientation towards the stream of magic. For Novalis, all fantasy, illusion, or the wishful dream that something supernatural could take place without us having to do anything, should be viewed as “mere” or passive magic, something that is independent of our will. In opposition to this passive form of magic, Novalis proposes a *fully active form of magic*, one that arises through the voluntary exercise of

⁵⁷ See Fabienne Jourdan, “Orphée, sorcier ou mage?”, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 1 (2008): 22–3, <http://rhr.revues.org/5773>; DOI: 10.4000/rhr.5773.

⁵⁸ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 769, HKA 3, 417; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 141.

our own inner faculties, and more precisely, of the power of the *creative imagination*. Because it consciously involves our will and autonomy, this latter form of magic is superior compared to ordinary, simple or passive magic. Thus, in the late 18th-century, there is a mentality or type of thinking for Novalis that must be saved from the forces of mechanism, from inertia, laziness or “mere” magic. Yet many people do not wish to actively employ their power of imagination:

It is on account of indolence that man demands *mere* mechanism or *mere* magic (*bloße Magie*). He doesn't want to be active—to employ his *productive imagination* (*seine productive Einbildungskraft*).⁵⁹

Consequently, the link between Novalis's conception of true and active magic and Fichte's theory of the creative imagination – as a similarly active and productive cognitive faculty – is becoming progressively more explicit.

Furthermore, in line with his conception of “genuine philosophy” as realistic idealism or idealistic realism, Novalis distinguishes between two main types of magician: the “physical magus” of the natural or realistic world on the one hand, and the idealist magician or “magical idealist” on the other. These two magicians of the real and ideal worlds should ultimately constitute a modern philosophical synthesis.

According to Novalis, the “physical magus” is to be primarily considered from an empirical or natural point of view. This corresponds to the conventional idea of magic, noted above, in which the human being may enter into a volitional relationship of sympathy and direct action with the universe or nature, just as a person normally does with their very own body:

MAGIC. The physical magus knows how to enliven nature, and as with *his body*, to use it at will.⁶⁰

Perhaps the most famous example of a physical magus is the ancient figure of Orpheus, the Thracian bard whose spoken incantations (his poetry and music) had the ability to tame wild animals and to attract living creatures, and even trees and inanimate stones. His magical skill was equated with the power of bringing civilization to the natural world. Moreover, Orpheus was a miraculous healer figure, a discoverer of medicinal remedies.

In contrast to the physical magus of the real world of nature, the “magical idealist” should be primarily understood from the standpoint of the spirit or mind. A frequently discussed point in the scholarship on Novalis's magical idealism relates to it as a specific ability of the metaphysician, as a skill to carry out a *Wechselwirkung* or reciprocal action between external things and inner thoughts. In one of the most famous passages on magical idealism, found under the heading of “metaphysics” in his encyclopaedia

⁵⁹ Ibid., entry 724, HKA 3, 408; trans., 134.

⁶⁰ Ibid., entry 322, HKA 3, 297; trans., 47.

project (entry 338), this is how Novalis describes a thinker or philosopher who is a “magical idealist”:

METAPHYSICS. ... if you are unable to transform thoughts into external things, then transform external things into thoughts. If you are unable to make a thought into something independent, something separate from yourself—and *therefore* also something *alien* (*fremd*)—that is, into an externally occurring soul, then proceed in the opposite manner with external things—and transform them (*verwandelt sie*) into thoughts. Both operations are idealistic. Whosoever has both completely in his power, is the *Magical Idealist*.⁶¹

Thus, according to entry 338 of his encyclopaedia project, the philosopher as a magical idealist should have perfectly in their control that twofold reciprocal operation involving the realization of the ideal and the idealization of reality, which forms the core of Novalis’s conception of true or genuine philosophy. Even though the characterization of the magical idealist in this particular passage does not explicitly mention the power of the imagination by name, it should be clear from our earlier sections and arguments that this passage implicitly expresses and even endorses the main elements of the Fichtean theory of the creative imagination. In other words, this passage seems to be advocating that any thinker who wishes to be a true magical idealist should above all be someone who is capable of philosophically employing to a high degree their own power of the creative or productive imagination. Let us examine this famous entry 338 more closely in this light.

c) Novalis’s transformation of Fichte

From Fichte’s *Grundlage*, we know that the first characteristic of the productive imagination is creativity, i.e. originality and activity. Now, looking again at entry 338, magical idealists are characterized as not confining themselves to mere imitations or passive reproductions of external models, of something that is already given or produced by nature. In other words, Novalis is talking about a power of transformation that generates something new and original – the transformation of things into ideas and thoughts, for instance: how external phenomena can become transformed into an inner principle or conceptual law. And *vice versa*, the transformation of inner ideas or thoughts into external things, would take place when an aesthetic idea becomes turned into an outer work or art, where the one is no longer exactly the same as the other. Therefore, in Novalis’s description of the magical idealist, the first criterion of the higher form of the creative imagination as generating a new or original production seems to be fulfilled.

The second characteristic of the Fichtean creative imagination is that it has a wondrous, marvellous or mysterious aspect. Could what is described

⁶¹ Ibid., entry 338, HKA 3, 301; trans. mod., 51.

by Fichte as something marvellous and wondrous – *wunderbar* – be in fact related to Novalis’s idea of magic? We could say that we do have the element of *mystery* or at least hiddenness here, not only on account of Novalis’s explicit reference to the sphere of “magic” and the philosopher as a magical idealist, but also because curiously the term “imagination” is not explicitly uttered in this passage. – Even though this is what entry 338 seems to be explicitly referring to and describing, if my hypothesis is correct. In that case, the second criterion of the “wondrous” or “mysterious” would also be met, even though this is done by Novalis employing different terminology to Fichte: Novalis uses the term *magic* in place of the Fichtean term of wondrous (*wunderbar*). This reading is confirmed elsewhere in the encyclopaedia project, when Novalis labels *magism* as: “combining both fantasy (*Fantasie*) and the power of thought (*Denkkraft*)”⁶², where fantasy is redefined as the plastic force of an outer form (*Gestalt*) in the sense of sculpture⁶³, i.e. as the artistic activity, whereas the *Einbildungskraft* is conversely the inner forming force (*Bilden*). This again is another direct link between Novalis’s views on magic and the creative power of the imagination.

What about the third Fichtean characteristic: the “hovering” (*Schweben*) motion or moving between two opposite elements or directions? We clearly find this too in entry 338, especially in the first sentence describing the structure of a reciprocal action – the *Wechselwirkung*, to use Fichte’s technical term. – There is an alternation or oscillating between two poles: on the one hand ideas and thoughts, which are internal, on the other hand, things belonging to the external or the “alien” world of nature. From his earlier studies, Novalis was well-aware of the Fichtean conception of the *Schweben* or hovering of the imagination, and gives examples of its oscillation between two poles like being and non-being, the actual and the necessary.⁶⁴ Thus, although the specific term “hovering” is missing in this particular entry 338, there is still very clearly the Fichtean idea of a double directionality of movement between the internal and external worlds (interiorization and exteriorization).

Finally, as for an ultimate reconciliation or dynamic synthesis of these opposites – the fourth characteristic of the imagination in Fichte’s *Grundlage* – this also seems to be present, insofar as it is the goal or mission of the magical idealist to seek to achieve a synthesis of the ideal and the real, or

⁶² Ibid., entry 765, HKA 3, 417; trans., 141.

⁶³ See ibid., entry 698, HKA 3, 401; trans. (mod.), 129: “Theory of the *fantasy*. It is the *sculptural* ability (*das Vermögen des Plastisirens*).”

⁶⁴ See Novalis, *Fichte-Studien*, frag. 3 and 234, HKA 2, 106 and 178; *Fichte Studies*, 6 and 76: “Should there be a still higher sphere, it would be the sphere between being and not-being. – The oscillating (*Schweben*) between the two. – Something inexpressible, and here we have the *concept* of *life*. ... The concept *actual* is grounded in intuition and is the antithesis, since it is a relational concept – [the concept] *necessary* is grounded in imagination and is the synthesis – *possible* is a twofold relation in the third – it is nothing but an oscillating (*Schweben*) between the *necessary* and *actual*.”

idealism and realism. Like the Fichtean philosopher of the creative imagination, the magical idealist has fully in his or her power a twofold operation that is capable of presenting the sensible as spiritual, and *vice versa*, where inner thoughts become transformed into outer objects. Thus, once again, even if the word “imagination” (*Einbildungskraft*) is not explicitly mentioned in this passage, in his specific requirements for what the magical idealist should attempt to philosophically carry out, Novalis does seem to be describing the very idea and qualities of the productive imagination.

And what about the question of the originality of Novalis? If magical idealists are genuinely able to employ the “wondrous” or “marvellous” power of their own creative imaginations, they are not at all just passively following in the philosophical footsteps of Kant and Fichte. This is because the creative imagination forces a person to be active and productive, and in this regard they are always to some extent original. The true magical idealist therefore should simultaneously seek to be both an artist and philosopher, a thinker capable of generating “wonderful works of art”. This does not necessarily mean being a better transcendental or critical philosopher *per se*, but more endeavouring to be a creative and artistic thinker. – This is the sense of learning to “Fichticize” better than perhaps even Fichte himself had done. And it again encapsulates the task of the philosopher as magical idealist:

It may well be possible that Fichte is the inventor of an altogether new way of thinking—for which our language doesn’t even have a name yet. The inventor is not perhaps the most skillful and brilliant artist on his instrument—although I’m not saying that this is so. However, it is most likely that there are and will be people—who Fichticize far better than Fichte himself. *Wonderful works of art* (*wunderbare Kunstwerke*) could come into being here—as soon as one begins to Fichticize artistically.⁶⁵

Thus, to be a magical thinker or idealist, above all signifies for Novalis a person who is able to skilfully use their power of the creative imagination. In numerous other fragments and passages Novalis expressly employs Fichte’s terminology of the marvellous, wondrous or *wunderbar* in relation to the imagination. For example, he does so in the following fragment when introducing a further skill of the magical idealist that has to do with trying to increase the control over their external sense organs. It is precisely the power of our imagination that Novalis views as a new kind of *wunderbare* sense:

The power of the imagination is the wondrous sense that can replace all the senses for us—and that is already entirely in our power.

⁶⁵ Novalis, *Logologische Fragmente* (*Vorarbeiten*, 1798), frag. 11, HKA 2, 524; trans. (mod.) in David W. Wood, “From ‘Fichticizing’ to ‘Romanticizing’: Fichte and Novalis on the Activities of Philosophy and Art”, 258–59.

(*Die Einbildungskraft ist der wunderbare Sinn, der uns alle Sinne ersetzen kann—und der so sehr schon in unserer Willkühr steht.*)⁶⁶

Not only is there a direct intertextuality with Fichte's thought in Novalis's use of the adjective *wunderbar*, but the characterization of the imagination as a faculty entirely in our power (*in unserer Willkühr*) should be brought together with the above-quoted definition of magic in the *Poeticisms*, where magic is termed the "the art of using the sense world at will (*willkührlich*)".

The future period of magic that Novalis is interested in is the epoch of a new theory of the sense organs called "organology"⁶⁷, where the new organ, or rather, the new use of our sense organs, becomes an effective principle for acting on reality itself. Genuine magic in Novalis's philosophy is no longer about calming the winds, bringing drought or rain, or raising the dead by an incantation addressed to divine powers. It is a matter of perception or sensibility ceasing to be a passive tribute paid to finitude. Perception and sensibility in the age of magic is no longer pathologically extorted and necessarily determined, no longer merely organic, determined by biological or physiological laws. Rather, genuine magic becomes voluntary and volitional, contingent, free or arbitrary and active. This is by virtue of its exceptional inner moral and *spiritual* power, i.e. for Novalis, this wondrous new use of the sense organs is based on none other than our own productive or creative imagination, so that the magical idealist leads back to the physical magus.

These are some of the conclusions that can be drawn so far. True magic as Novalis understands it is the development of a new use of the senses, and this is *another name for the active use of the creative imagination*. Thus, Novalis's choice of the term "magic" for his philosophy does not refer to anything irrational or inexplicable, but just as he himself had indicated in 1798, it is something perfectly understandable in line with the Kantian and Fichtean tradition of transcendental philosophy: for the true magical idealist is a rational philosopher-artist who has this *creative faculty of the imagination entirely within their power*.

4. "My Magical Idealism": From Schiller to Novalis

From what has been presented above, it might seem that an examination of solely the Fichtean heritage could be enough to interpret Novalis's philosophy. This is not the case. It would lead to misunderstandings of Novalis's theory and methodology, and fail to take into account other primary sources in Novalis's work. Attaining a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of magical idealism and its *originality* therefore

⁶⁶ Novalis, *Studien zur Bildenden Kunst*, frag. 481, HKA 2, 650.

⁶⁷ On Novalis's "organology", see Leif Weatherby, *Transplanting the Metaphysical Organ. German Romanticism between Leibniz and Marx* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

requires going beyond the influence of Fichte. Besides the obvious significance of the creative imagination, another important element of magical idealism that has not been mentioned so far is that of *love* (*Liebe*). Love forms an integral part of the philosophy of magical idealism. Indeed, under the heading THEORY OF THE FUTURE, in the *Allgemeines Brouillon*, Novalis writes: “*Love* is the basis for the possibility of magic. Love works magically.”⁶⁸ As one can see, love is not somehow simply related to magic for Novalis, but furnishes its foundation. In other words, love too should be conceived in relation to the transcendental philosophical tradition, insofar it forms the very basis for the possibility of magic.

Yet the philosophical writings of Fichte known to Novalis appeared to lack this element, for which he criticized the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. A letter of Novalis to Friedrich Schlegel from 1796 contains a direct criticism of Fichte in this regard: “Spinoza and Zinzendorf explored it, the infinite idea of love ... Too bad I haven’t found a trace of this view in Fichte yet.”⁶⁹ If Novalis was not able to find this key aspect of magical idealism in the works of Fichte, where did he find it? As noted in the Introduction, some commentators have proposed Spinoza as a source. There is of course much merit to that interpretation, and it even has the textual support of the above letter. I do not disagree with that view, but I think it is insufficient for fully grasping the essence of magical idealism. In this section I claim that Novalis also significantly engaged with the philosophy of love found in the writings of another contemporary poet-philosopher: Friedrich Schiller. Love is a form of magic and magism for Schiller too, and it appealed to Novalis for precisely that reason. This will in turn lead us to one final key element of magical idealism – Novalis’s doctrine of therapeutics or philosophy of medicine.

a) Schiller as a new Orpheus

In addition to the infamous “*Horen-Dispute*” (*Horenstreit*) that opposed Fichte and Schiller during the summer of 1795 on the question of style in popular philosophical writings, there are many direct and indirect interconnections between the philosophies of these two thinkers that Novalis was also familiar with. Perhaps the most well-known example is Schiller’s attempt in the letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) to ground his anthropology and aesthetics on the Fichtean transcendental methodological principle of “reciprocal action” or *Wechselwirkung* – a principle that defines the creative imagination’s inner dynamics in Fichte’s *Grundlage*.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 79, HKA 3, 255; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 13.

⁶⁹ Novalis, letter to Friedrich Schlegel, 8 July 1796, HKA 4, 188.

⁷⁰ See Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1795), Letter 13, footnote 1, in Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004; hereafter: SW), vol. V, 607.

Another point where their thoughts organically (though more indirectly) intersect is the theory of grace outlined in Schiller's 1793 essay *On Grace and Dignity*. For Schiller, grace is the expression of freedom in bodily phenomena and therefore of a moral beauty specific to the human beings. However, this latter theory is also where a characteristic difference already appears between the Schiller and Fichte that Novalis likewise knew. Schiller's text deploys an entire vocabulary of a love towards grace that is consistent with the philosophy of love already contained in his early 1786 *Philosophical Letters*, particularly the "Theosophy of Julius".

It is in the context of his discussion of the modern concept of grace in *On Grace and Dignity* that Schiller himself draws a connection with magic, positively underlining the magism of beauty and art. Schiller starts with the Greek myth of the Goddess Venus, who is the ancient archetype of beauty and love. Venus is escorted by the three Graces, and wears a magical attribute – the belt of grace. Here Schiller extends the Kantian concept of the ideal of beauty by enlarging it from the human bodily form to the latter's contingent movements emanating from the freedom of the human spirit or its emotional states:

As far as the ideal of beauty is concerned, all *necessary* movements *must be* beautiful, because, as necessary, they belong to its nature; the beauty of *this* movement is therefore already *given* with the concept of Venus, whereas the beauty of the fortuitous movement is an *enhancement* of this concept. There is a grace of the voice, but no grace of breathing.⁷¹

Grace is a living or mobile beauty. It is referred to as a movement that is subject to variation, which Schiller calls the "beauty of play" in order to distinguish it from the stable or fixed "architectonic" beauty of a pleasing body.⁷² Schiller links this kind of grace with the point of view of the "beautiful soul"⁷³, i.e. with the modern point of view of the subjective inwardness that is missing from the mythological figure of Venus. The magical power of grace now permits an elevation and openness to an order that is different from nature, to a freedom that is beyond necessity, to an ethics that is beyond pathological sensibility in Kant's sense, and finally, to a change and infinity that are beyond all fixed identity and finitude:

A belt which is nothing more than a fortuitous outward ornament certainly seems not very fitting image to denote the *personal* character of grace; but a personal characteristic, which is at once thought as separable from the subject, could not be illustrated otherwise than by means of a fortuitous ornament, with which the person may part without

⁷¹ Friedrich Schiller, *Über Anmut und Würde* (1793), SW V, 436; *On Grace and Dignity*, trans. George Gregory (Schiller Institute, Inc., 1992), 340.

⁷² Ibid., 446; trans., 349–50.

⁷³ Ibid., 468; trans., 368.

detriment to himself. The belt of grace, thus, does not work its effect *naturally*, since, in that case, it would be incapable of changing the person; rather, its effect is *magical*, that is, its power is enhanced beyond all natural conditions.⁷⁴

Like in Novalis, here we find again the general definition of magic as a particular kind of relationship to the sensible world, as a category for envisaging a type of acting that affects reality. More specifically: it is an effective and arbitrary or free manipulation of the world of nature. The soul and the spirit are the leading principle of the action, and the body is the means employed in this action whose ultimate principle however is spiritual. Novalis adopts this same triad of the spirit, soul and body.

Moreover, in *On Grace and Dignity*, the very grace of the voice that Schiller views as a paradigmatic example of the “beauty of play” takes us back to the magical qualities of the voice of an ancient singer – to the poet and musician Orpheus. For Novalis, Schiller is a much greater magician than Hamann, the so-called Magus of the North, because “Schiller makes exceedingly philosophical music.”⁷⁵ Indeed, Schiller not only had an impact on Novalis with his essay *On Grace and Dignity*, i.e. with the concept of the beautiful soul and morality’s exteriority in the human bodily form, Schiller’s philosophy of human history was just as important to Novalis. And according to Novalis, the philosophy of history, which emerged at the time hand in hand with the way in which the particular histories became encompassed into one single “universal history”, is a musical composition with respect to its form. In entry 461 of Novalis’s *Allgemeines Brouillon*, Schiller seems to be therefore a model for the new and modern philosopher of history in the tradition of Orpheus:

SCIENCE OF HISTORY. Mere history (movement, development) is musical and sculptural (*plastisch*). Musical history is philosophy. Sculptural (*plastische*) history is the *chronicle*—the narration—the experience. Every mass of material is a *chronicle*—every description a narration. Only then, when the philosopher appears as Orpheus, will the Whole arrange itself together into regularly common and highly formed, significant masses—into true *sciences*.⁷⁶

Schiller first presented his philosophy of history in his 1789 inaugural lecture upon taking up his professorship of philosophy at the university of Jena. This lecture is entitled “What is universal history and why does one study it?” The history in question here is a history in accordance with the idea, rather than the exact restitution of the past by the continuous narration of a succession

⁷⁴ Ibid., 435; trans., 339.

⁷⁵ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 419, HKA 3, 320; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 66.

⁷⁶ Ibid., entry 461, HKA 3, 335; trans., 77.

of facts over time. What enables the transition from the facts to the idea and permits the totalization of the entire sphere of time (past, present and future) is the concept of analogy, which is strictly defined in Kant as a structure of reasoning.⁷⁷ Analogy draws a universal connection between the facts into a “harmonious whole”⁷⁸, to use Schiller’s own terms. Via this epistemological tool, the philosophy of history (or the idea of a universal history) is borrowed from the philosophy of nature and establishes the reality of progress towards the human being’s own dignity – freedom – in the manner of a hypothesis – a conjecture – which is not gratuitous, but consistent with the principles of scientific reason. It involves both the faculty of reflective judgment and the imagination in the production of a symbolic presentation or indirect intuition of the rational idea. Schiller’s approach becomes further developed in Novalis’s late historical speech/essay *Christendom or Europe* (1799), where he outlines his own poetics of history. However, what was cautiously and tentatively employed in Schiller’s lecture⁷⁹ – the use of analogy – now becomes in Novalis’s speech an imperative, and associated with *magic*:

I refer you to history, research its instructive relations according to similar points of time, and learn to use the magic wand of analogy.⁸⁰

b) The magism of love: sympathy instead of *Anstoß*

As we saw above in Section 1, in Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, the productive imagination is a synthetic power that connects what the intellect has separated. By means of the hovering imagination, the antitheses of the real and the ideal, nature and the self, etc. are able to interfere, meet, intersect and collide with each other. The power of the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), in contrast to fantasy (*Phantasie*), therefore strives to be embedded in reality, it is never mere subjectivism. Rather, its independent movement and activity is inseparable from an impulse or a “check” – an *Anstoß* in Fichte’s language – through something approaching the I from outside. This *Anstoß* cannot be explained by any positing activity of the I, even though it

⁷⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*, in *Kant’s Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1902 sq.) (= *Akademie-Ausgabe*, hereafter: AK), vol. IV, 357; and I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 59, AK V, 352.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Schiller, “Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede”, SW IV, 764.

⁷⁹ See Friedrich Schiller, “Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede”, SW IV, 764: “The method of drawing conclusions by analogies is as powerful (*mächtiges*) an aid in history, as everywhere else, but it must be justified by an important purpose, and must be exercised with as much circumspection as judgment.” (Eng. trans. C. Stephan and R. Trout, https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/transl/Schiller_essays/universal_history.html)

⁸⁰ Novalis, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, HKA 3, 518: “An die Geschichte verweise ich euch, forscht in ihrem belehrenden Zusammenhang, nach ähnlichen Zeitpunkten, und lernt den Zauberstab der Analogie gebrauchen.”

presupposes it, and does not exist without it. It is the feeling that the I has of its original limitation, both opening the way to the deployment and realization of the pure I and attesting to its immanent limitation:

The impulse or check [*Anstoß*] (which is not posited by the positing I) would happen to the I insofar as it is active, and it would therefore be an impulse or check only insofar as the I is active. The possibility of such an impulse or check is conditional upon this activity: no activity of the I, no impulse or check. Conversely, the I's [independent] activity of determining itself would be conditional upon the impulse or check: no impulse or check, no self-determination. – Furthermore, no self-determination, nothing objective, etc.⁸¹

In other words, the Fichtean notion of something that is “Not-I” makes it impossible to separate the treatment of nature from the question of a certain type of opposition, from a check, even if the check occurs against the background of an original unity.

However, in the romantic philosophy of Novalis, it is *the power of love* that plays this specific role in knowledge; love is the driving force of cognition. This corresponds of course to the original etymological meaning of the term philosophy: the word *philo-sophia* reminds us that it is originally linked with a love of wisdom. Consequently, Novalis's philosophy of magical idealism receives a more intimate and affectionate accent in its connection with other living beings. This occurs in the soul's deeper *feelings* of love or friendship, where the encounter with the other is a recognition of the same, whereas Fichte's philosophy deploys the dual critical standpoint of the I and the Not-I, of the self and nature, as a weapon of differentiation, if not of combat. Perhaps the most famous gesture of Novalis in this regard is to replace the Fichtean “Not-I” with a “You”.⁸² In his encyclopaedia project, under the rubric PHILOSOPHY, Novalis proposes a “true Fichtism”, that is to say, a form of philosophy “without a check (*Anstoß*) – without the Not-I in *his sense*”⁸³; while another definition of philosophy reads as follows: “Higher *philosophy* is concerned with the *marriage between nature and spirit*.”⁸⁴ So much so that there is a major shift in Novalis's own understanding of the nature of metaphysics: philosophy no longer begins with the negatively deduced infinite striving of reason or with an endless process of reflection, as was the case in the earlier *Fichte Studies*, but as is appropriate for a philosophy of magical idealism, it now begins with the soul's awakening to the power of love. As Novalis writes in the 1798 *Poeticisms*: “The principle of philosophy

⁸¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GWL*, GA I/2: 356 (English translation by Daniel Breazeale).

⁸² Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 820, HKA 3, 430; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 151.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, entry 639, HKA 3, 385; trans. (mod.), 116.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, entry 50, HKA 3, 247; trans. (mod), 8.

is the first kiss in this understanding – the origin of a new world ... Who wouldn't be fond of a philosophy whose seed is a first kiss?"⁸⁵

Thus, I maintain that the reception of the idea of love in Schiller's thought decisively contributed to a modification in Novalis's magical idealism of the *Anstoß* aspect of Fichteanism, while still retaining a critical and transcendental idealistic core. To be sure, Novalis's elaboration of a true philosophy of love also places itself in the older tradition of Spinoza, as the above-quoted 1796 letter to Schlegel shows. Furthermore, one could even argue that Novalis is partly in the tradition of Jacobi too, just as Novalis himself had claimed in his 1798 brief fragment on the history of magical idealism. Jacobi ignited of course an intellectual fire-storm with the publication of his Spinoza book; but in his own philosophy there is also the idea of intersubjectivity based on a relationship of understanding and affection between human beings.⁸⁶ However, in Novalis's eyes, Spinoza's realism or naturalism is largely unconscious of itself – it is uncritical and therefore merely passive – whereas Jacobi is a dogmatic and even a utilitarian thinker. In addition, Jacobi actually lacks a poetic sense, which renders him unable to grasp the deeper sense of Fichte's philosophy and its commitment to the productive freedom of the spirit:

Jacobi does not have any sense for art and therefore lacks the sense for the *Wissenschaftslehre*—he seeks coarse, useful reality—and does not enjoy mere philosophizing—serene philosophical consciousness—affecting and intuiting.⁸⁷

Novalis's criticism that Jacobi lacks a sense or organ for art leads of course back to the question of the productive imagination as a species of philosophical magic. Why is true magic not possible without love? Because magic is precisely the idea that all its practices and actions are based on the belief that there exist regular relationships and laws of *sympathy* between all the different beings in the world. Consequently, any work of art or book expressing the power of love should be considered as a modern form of magic. In an entry on ROMANTICISM Novalis accordingly writes: "All novels in which true love plays a part, are *fairytale* – *magical events*."⁸⁸

Moreover, with this modern philosophical principle of magic, I believe it can be argued that Novalis romanticized the notions of sympathy and love found in Schiller's early 1786 *Philosophical Letters*, especially in the text

⁸⁵ Novalis, *Poeticismen*, frag. 74, HKA 2, 541: "Der erste Kuss in diesem Verständnisse ist das Princip der Philosophie – der Ursprung einer neuen Welt. ... Wem gefiele nicht eine Philosophie, deren Keim ein erster Kuss ist?"

⁸⁶ See my essay "'(Toi.) (À la place du Non-Moi – Toi)'. Jacobi, Fichte, Novalis", forthcoming in: *L'homme et la nature. Politique, critique et esthétique dans le romantisme allemand*, ed. Giulia Valpione (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2020).

⁸⁷ Novalis, *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*, frag. 121, HKA 3, 572.

⁸⁸ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 80, HKA 3, 255; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 13.

entitled the “Theosophy of Julius”. This text draws at times on the hermetic and Cabbalistic tradition and consists of a dialogue between two characters named Raphael and Julius.⁸⁹ The fact that Novalis gave the nickname “Julius” to Friedrich Schlegel, with whom he felt such an affinity and friendship, is therefore highly telling.⁹⁰ In these early *Philosophical Letters*, love is for Schiller “the omnipotent (*allmächtiger*) magnet of the spiritual world.”⁹¹ Unlike the later theory of grace from the critical, post-Kantian 1793 essay *On Grace and Dignity*, which properly speaking is a moral human beauty that “works magically” and attracts love, the moral beauty referenced in this pre-critical 1786 “Theosophy of Julius” is not merely the beauty of a ‘beautiful soul’: it is also the beauty of nature. Indeed, the character of Julius in this text wishes to extend the power of love to everything in the ladder of creation:

There are moments in life where we are impelled to press to our breast every flower and every distant star, every worm and every sensed higher spirit – to embrace the whole of nature like our beloved.⁹²

Schiller’s “Theosophy of Julius” puts forth the view that there is a harmony in the universe *qua* sacred and providential creation, and that love itself reflects this very harmony. In the tradition of the Platonic *eros*, it advances the theory of a mystical and initiatory dimension to love that is experienced as a religious knowledge of the world. As Julius states: “Hence, love, my dear Raphael, is the ladder upon which we climb to become like God.”⁹³

Besides the doctrine of love, Schiller’s “Theosophy of Julius” includes a cosmogony, a theogony, a theory of abnegation, and finally, a doctrine of God. As Frederick C. Beiser has underscored, this profession of faith in the doctrine of selfless love “reaffirms Schiller’s earlier views about the vocation of man. Just as in the first dissertation and *Karlschule* speeches, the highest good is to achieve spiritual perfection, and in doing so to imitate the divine spirit who has created us all.”⁹⁴ This is summarized in Julius’s closing declaration, according to which “all spirits create from four elements – their I (*ihr Ich*), nature, God and the future.”⁹⁵ And Schiller’s character of Julius goes so far as to suggest the heterodox if not heretical idea that, as Beiser observes: “God is an ideal that we create through our own activity”; for “if everyone were only to love one another, then they would overcome the

⁸⁹ For more detail, see Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 33.

⁹⁰ See for example Novalis, [*Randbemerkungen zu Friedrich Schlegels “Ideen”*], HKA 3, 493.

⁹¹ Friedrich Schiller, *Philosophische Briefe* (1786), SW 5, 348.

⁹² Ibid., 350: “Es gibt Augenblicke im Leben, wo wir aufgelegt sind, jede Blume und jedes entlegene Gestirne, jeden Wurm und jeden geahndeten höheren Geist an den Busen zu drücken – ein Umarmen der ganzen Natur gleich unsrer Geliebten.”

⁹³ Ibid., 353.

⁹⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 33–37.

⁹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *Philosophische Briefe*, SW 5, 358.

separations between spiritual beings and create a single spiritual being, which would be God.”⁹⁶

Why is Schiller’s early text the “Theosophy of Julius” so crucial for an understanding of magical idealism? Theosophy is the wisdom of God, and Novalis himself in his reflections on theosophy in the *Allgemeines Brouillon*, draws exactly the same links as Schiller between God and magic on the one hand, and God and love on the other:

THEOSOPHY. In order to be truly moral, we must endeavor to become magicians (*Magier*). The more moral, the more in harmony *with God*—the more divine—the more *in communion* with God. ...⁹⁷

THEOSOPHY. God *is love*. Love is the highest *reality*—the primal foundation (*Urgrund*).⁹⁸

All these points – the image of the ladder and its ascent, the four elements of all spiritual creation, the idea of God as a creation, theosophy as magic and love – evoke Novalis’s later interest in the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions of theurgy. They also recall his declaration in the *Fichte Studies* concerning the task of his own philosophy: “Spinoza ascended as far as nature – Fichte to the I (*Ich*), or the person. I [ascend] to the thesis God.”⁹⁹

c) Philosophy of pathology and medicine

One final important aspect to be accounted for in any interpretation of magical idealism, is the extension of it from the sphere of the creative imagination (the mind), to the realm of love (the soul), and then right down to the *body* and the spheres of physiology, pathology and therapeutics – i.e. to domains falling under medicine and the philosophy of medicine. This gives rise to a threefold philosophy of the body, soul and spirit.

The relationship between magical idealism and these medical fields and the philosophy of medicine is frequently neglected in the secondary literature.¹⁰⁰ Yet it was significant for Novalis. As he remarks: “The philosophy of medicine – and its history, are exceedingly large and still utterly unexplored fields.”¹⁰¹ In his eyes, the true transcendental philosopher and

⁹⁶ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 36.

⁹⁷ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 61, HKA 3, 250; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 9–10.

⁹⁸ Ibid., entry 79, HKA 3, 254; trans., 12.

⁹⁹ Novalis, *Fichte-Studien* (1795/96), frag. 151, HKA 2, 157; *Fichte Studies*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ Yet it has recently been the object of an international symposium entitled: “‘Construction der transscendentalen Gesundheit’: Novalis und die Medizin im Kontext von Naturwissenschaften und Philosophie um 1800” (Schloss Oberwiesenthal, 4–7 May 2017). See the proceedings of the conference in: Richard Faber, Dennis F. Mahoney, Gabriele Rommel and Nicholas Saul (eds.), *Blütenstaub. Jahrbuch für Frühromantik* 6 (2019).

¹⁰¹ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 142, HKA 3, 267; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 23.

artist or poet should know and work and be effective in both the idealistic and realistic worlds, to ultimately become a healer: "Poetry is the great art of the construction of transcendental health. The poet is thus the transcendental physician."¹⁰² Although the romantics were often castigated as mere *Schwärmer* or irrational otherworldly dreamers, Novalis was fully aware of the anthropological, medical and bodily aspects of a one-sided approach to life and philosophy. Thus, he was conscious of the intellectual dangers and extremes of philosophy, yet also cognizant of the medicinal means for remedying any one-sidedness. Magical idealism may recall therefore a *phármakon* in accordance with the ancient conception of magic, and in the word's double sense of both a poison and a remedy.

Indeed, magic is linked in Novalis with omnipotence, the absolute and the ideal of perfection: "Ideal of total willing. Magical will"; "one sought in philosophy an omnipotent organ. *Magical idealism*."¹⁰³ However, recalling the notion of *Wechselwirkung* or reciprocal action, any striving for perfection in philosophy that does without the reciprocal relationship of perfection with imperfection, or of the absolute with the limit, idealism with realism, etc. might easily result in a pathological disturbance or illness. Here the philosopher descends into "logical afflictions", into "types of delusion" with "morbid" physiological symptoms.¹⁰⁴ Novalis specifically underscores the logical pathology resulting from any unbounded, one-sided and absolute drive (*Trieb*) towards an unconditional completeness, one that is devoid of all sense of the relative, of the empirical, and negating all that is unfinished, incomplete, imperfect:

PATHOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY. An absolute drive for perfection and completeness is morbid, as soon as it shows itself to be destructive and adverse to what is *imperfect*, and incomplete. If we want to attain and accomplish something definite, then we must also set up provisional and definite limits. Yet whoever does not wish to do this is perfect, just like he who doesn't want to swim, before he is able to. He is a Magical Idealist ...¹⁰⁵

Novalis considers this as a pathological form of magical idealism because the sphere of the spirit is claiming to be absolute. Idealism or the spirit has become an abnormally enlarged and omnipotent center, instead of correctly seeing itself as merely one pole which only fully exists when it is completed

¹⁰² Novalis, *Poésie*, frag. 42, HKA 2, 535; Eng. trans. in Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 56.

¹⁰³ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 769, HKA 3, 417: "Ideal des Alleswollung. Magischer Willen." (trans., 141); and *ibid.*, entry 642, HKA 3, 385: "Man suchte durch Philosophie immer etwas werckstellig zu machen—man suchte ein allvermögendes Organ in der Philosophie. *Magischer Idealism*."

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, entry 638, HKA 3, 384–5; trans., 116.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

and synthesized with its other pole – that of realism or the body. As a mere philosopher or metaphysician, Novalis conceives the philosophical “ideal” that “nonetheless ... manifests or reflects itself”¹⁰⁶ within such a delusion. That is to say, the ideal of a pure spiritualism without any realism, without the principle of a limitation that operates as a “check” or *Anstoß*. But it is for him an unrealisable idea in the Kantian sense.

On the other hand, Novalis also connects the philosophy of magical idealism with the positive, anthropological and (in his view) realizable idea of immortality. In this regard, an explicit formulation of Novalis’s own stance as a representative of a particular type of magical idealism is presented in the encyclopaedia project under the heading of PHYSIOLOGY, and not under the heading of metaphysics.¹⁰⁷ There the magical idealist is conceived as a philosophical kind of therapist or poet-physician, as an artist who ultimately attains a knowledge of immortality by means of a higher kind of medicine. Entry number 399 of the encyclopaedia shows Novalis drawing another direct connection between physiology, therapeutics and medicine and his philosophy of magical idealism:

PHYSIOLOGY. ... True therapeutics is simply a prescription for the preservation and restoration of this special relation and exchange between the stimuli or factors. The artist of immortality practices higher medicine—infinesimal medicine. He practices medicine as a higher art—as a synthetic art. He constantly views both factors simultaneously, as one, and seeks to harmonize them—to unite them into one goal. ...
My Magical Idealism.¹⁰⁸

Novalis’s conception of magical idealism as a healing, medicinal and theosophical practice again situates him in the tradition of Schiller, who had trained and practised as a medical doctor before becoming a poet-philosopher. – Although of course, there are many other sources for Novalis’s thoughts on medicine and therapeutics besides Schiller.¹⁰⁹ However, in relation to the philosophy of magical idealism, it is not a matter of lower or ordinary medicine, but of a higher, musical, and spiritualised medicine in the sense of Orpheus: “MEDICINE. Every illness is a musical problem—the cure is a *musical solution*. The more rapid, and yet more complete the solution—the greater the musical talent of the doctor.”¹¹⁰ As we saw, magical idealism therefore becomes a remedy for the morbid neglect of the bodily world and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., entry 399, HKA 3, 315; trans., 61-62.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ See Richard Faber, Dennis F. Mahoney, Gabriele Rommel and Nicholas Saul (eds.), *Blütenstaub. Jahrbuch für Frühromantik* 6 (2019).

¹¹⁰ Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 386, HKA 3, 310; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 58.

nature by “practicing medicine as a higher art—as a synthetic art”.¹¹¹ That is to say, as an art that produces the “synthesis of the soul and body—and of irritability and sensibility.”¹¹²

In this reciprocal relationship of the inner with the outer that Novalis’s magical idealism is seeking, the “development and enhancement of the soul”, that is to say the animation, increase and development of sensibility, “is the first and most important undertaking”.¹¹³ This aligns magical idealism again with the doctrine of “organology”, in which the control over our external senses is increased so that they “become ever more *under our will* (voluntary).”¹¹⁴ Just as the ancient magus Orpheus had the ability to heal and bring civilization to the natural world through his music and poetry, so the “artist of immortality” in Novalis’s sense has the ability to bring the whole of the human body to a state of perfect harmony and freedom by reconciling the inner and the outer worlds. And how is this healing harmony accomplished? As we have seen, by the philosopher employing their powers of the creative imagination and love as a force of cognition. This idea of immortality is understood as a real and actual state of harmony, completion and perfection that would “improv[e] ... the human race, [raise] mankind to a higher level”, where the human being would be like God.¹¹⁵ Here Novalis is once again following in the footsteps of Schiller, who draws a distinction in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* between the “one-sided” point of view of morality and practical philosophy, and the “complete” point of view of anthropology, which embraces the whole of the human being.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

This article has attempted to demonstrate on the one hand the threefold nature of Novalis’s philosophy of magical idealism, and maintains on the other that it should be viewed primarily as a new and original synthesis of the thought of Fichte and Schiller. For Novalis, magical idealism expresses the threefold philosophical articulation of the human spirit, soul and body. This philosophy essentially consists of: 1) a transcendental conception of the creative imagination, which is the proper dynamics and source of the mind’s or spirit’s representations; 2) a doctrine of love and sympathy, which concerns the anthropological sphere of the feelings or the soul; and 3) a theory of transcendental medicine, which treats and relates to the senses and organs of the body.

¹¹¹ Ibid., entry 399, HKA 3, 315; trans., 62.

¹¹² Ibid., entry 409, HKA 3, 318; trans., 64.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.; trans., 64–5.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, Letter 4, SW V, 577.

Section 1 of this article reconstructed the Fichtean epistemological background of Novalis's philosophy of magical idealism, namely the hidden, wondrous and often misunderstood role of the *creative* imagination in its relation to reason, as theorized in Fichte's foundational text, the 1794/95 *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. This function of the imagination is common to both art and philosophy and strives to overcome and transform the opposition of the ideal and the real into a living synthesis. Section 2 showed that this synthesis accords with Novalis's view of "true" philosophy, which he himself directly situates in the transcendental tradition of Kant and Fichte. Section 3 demonstrated that the main four characteristics of Fichte's theory of the creative imagination underpin Novalis's own conception of genuine or "higher" magic. Hence, when seen in this textual light, Novalis's employment of the term magic for the name of his philosophy does not denote anything inexplicable, but becomes fully rational and coherent. However, Novalis extends Fichte's methodology and synthetic principle of reciprocal action (*Wechselwirkung*) into other domains. Some of these extensions were analysed in section 4. There I argued that the philosophy of magical idealism also encompasses the spheres of love, medicine, and the healing and therapeutic effects of poetry and art. I traced some of their philosophical roots back to the work of Schiller, not only to the writings *On Grace and Dignity* (1793) and *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), but to two earlier texts: the 1786 "Theosophy of Julius", and the 1789 lecture "What is universal history and why does one study it?"

A number of consequences can therefore be drawn from the above research relating to current debates in the scholarship. Firstly, it demonstrates that philosophical romanticism – especially with regard to Novalis's philosophy of magical idealism – not only crucially engages with and transforms the tradition of Kantian and Fichtean transcendental idealism, but also the classicism of Friedrich Schiller's thought. In other words, I claim that philosophical romanticism should be interpreted as an original synthesis of both idealism and classicism. Secondly, the question concerning a possible turn away from philosophy to poetry in Novalis's last writings. The present article has sought to underline that any answer to this question would need to take into account whether the literary works of Novalis might not just be a poetical expression of the philosophy of magical idealism itself, since these later works obviously depend, among other things, on the very use and employment of his own power of the creative imagination.

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

Twelve Letters from the Romantic Circle (1798-1799)

*Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg),
Caroline Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel*

Translated from the German by David W. Wood*

The following twelve letters were originally written between 20 August 1798 and 20 January 1799. They have never appeared in English before. This selection revolves around the correspondence of Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), at that time studying at the Mining Academy in Freiberg, with his friend Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin, and with August Wilhelm Schlegel and his wife Caroline Schlegel in Jena. It commences just prior to the famous meeting of the Romantic Circle in Dresden in late August 1798 and their joint visit to the city's Art Gallery, and ends six months later with the news that their romantic journal the *Athenaeum* would continue to be published. Not unexpectedly, these letters mention many personal facts and events – e.g. the illness of Novalis's second fiancée Julie, the divorce of Dorothea Veit, the financial issues of Friedrich Schlegel, and even the possible imminent death of Novalis.

A key intellectual concern of the correspondence is religion – what constitutes a modern religious impulse and the idea to write a new gospel, Bible or universal book. The letters above all provide a vibrant snap-shot of the extremely multifaceted interests of the German romantics. There are numerous references to different literary, cultural, political, poetical, and natural-scientific works, as well as to older and contemporary philosophers, such as Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Indeed, according to Friedrich Schlegel, it was precisely one of the goals of his written correspondence with Novalis to generate communal philosophical reflection. Or as he puts it in a notebook from the summer of 1798: “Symphilosophy with Hardenberg. In letters. He's a magician, me merely a prophet.”

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1. Friedrich Schlegel in Dresden to Novalis in Freiberg

Dresden, 20th August [1798]

I only received your letter¹ on Saturday², and Schelling³ arrived the same day, so it was much too late to inform you. You'll definitely be able to meet him this Saturday⁴, as he is staying here for quite a while, and he is even going to Freiberg.

[Rahel] Levin⁵ still hasn't arrived; even if she had come to take me straight back to Berlin, I wouldn't have gone. That said, I have now set the 4th September as the final date of my departure, and I don't know if I can change it. However, I find your invitation very tempting. When we are alone I enjoy your company in a completely different manner and more properly than when we are together with others. We have time enough to arrange everything next Saturday. See if you can stay as *long* as possible. Now that Schelling is here, he'll also demand a quota of your time. He read *Faith and Love* with great interest and is looking forward to talking with you about it.⁶ He also asks if you could bring along the *Zoological Fragments*.⁷ Regarding the latter, keep them for our correspondence, for you will also have to be my Socrates in physics, among other things. I have plenty of ideas and notebooks about this, which you'll have to read before we write the Letter.⁸ Apart from the introduction, this Letter should include a report about your inner symphilosophy and my texts to the extent that they touch on physics, so that the latter are critiqued by you.⁹

Could I also ask you to bring along *Ritter's* book¹⁰; as well as whatever you consider to be the best handbook on mineralogy, not to mention

¹ These twelve letters can be found in, among others, Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, eds. Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel *et al.* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960-2016), vol. 4 (hereafter: HKA). I am grateful to the various German editions for their annotations and endnotes.

² See letter of Novalis to Friedrich Schlegel, 16 August 1798 (HKA 4: 257-258), where the former says he plans to visit Schlegel soon in Dresden.

³ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854).

⁴ The romantic circle met together at the Dresden Art Gallery on 25 and 26 August, 1798. The participants included Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel, the translator Gries, and the philosopher Schelling.

⁵ Rahel Varnhagen, née Levin (1771-1833).

⁶ Novalis's text, *Glauben und Liebe oder Der König und die Königen* (Faith and Love or the King and the Queen), was published in the *Jahrbücher der preußischen Monarchie* in June-July 1798; reprinted in HKA 2 (3rd ed., 1981), 485-498. English translation in: Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, edited and translated by Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany/N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), 85-100.

⁷ *Zoological Fragments*, an envisaged collection of fragments.

⁸ Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis had planned to jointly write a *Brief über die Physik* (Letter on Physics).

⁹ Novalis wrote marginal notes to Friedrich Schlegel's *Zur Physik* in the summer 1798.

¹⁰ Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776-1810), physicist and chemist.

Darwin's *Zoonomia*¹¹, if you think it could be useful and understandable to me.

Your letters have recently been brief, my dear friend. How did you like Teplitz?¹² – You seem to have given up on the plan of coming to see us in Berlin at Easter. We'd form a lovely circle around you!

I still can't tell you much about Schelling at the moment. However, I do think that conversation with him will probably never be particularly interesting to me. Yet I'm glad to have met him.

Try and arrange things so that I'm able to see you as much as possible. Concerning my future visit, we'll first have to talk about it in person.

I warmly embrace you,

Friedrich Schl.[egel]

Please pass on my best wishes to old Carlowitz if you see him.¹³ I'd be very happy to have the chance to meet him again.

Caroline is surprised that you haven't written anything about Wilhelm's symbolic music. Everyone sends you their greetings, Charlotte as well.¹⁴

2. Novalis in Freiberg to Caroline Schlegel in Dresden

Freiberg, *Sunday morning* [9th September 1798¹⁵]

I haven't been able to either *leave*, or *send you anything yet*. However, anyone tasked with building a nature and a world clearly cannot depart. I've been on my journey of discovery, or on my pursuit, since I saw you last, and have chanced upon extremely promising coastlines – which perhaps circumscribe a new scientific continent. – This sea is teeming with fledgling *islands*.

The letter on the antiquities has been recast.¹⁶ You will receive instead a romantic fragment – the visit to the antiquities – in addition to an archaeological supplement.¹⁷ I'm fairly confident of awakening your interest. Well, at the very least, I believe this work will contain many novel things.

¹¹ Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1794), translated into German by J. D. Brandis under the title: *Zoonomie oder Gesetze des organischen Lebens* (Hanover: Gebrüder Hahn, 1795-1799).

¹² Novalis stayed in the spa town of Teplitz in July and August 1798, writing there the "Teplitz Fragments". Translated excerpts in: Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 101-110.

¹³ Hans Georg von Carlowitz (1772-1840), an old friend of Novalis from his student years.

¹⁴ Charlotte Ernst, née Schlegel, sister of the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel.

¹⁵ Date of letter uncertain, but presumably written on 9th September 1798.

¹⁶ Cf. the draft notes in Novalis, "Studien zur Bildenden Kunst" (Studies in the Fine Arts), HKA 2: 648-651.

¹⁷ See entry 52 on archaeology, antiquities and the Sistine Madonna in: Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 8.

My symphysics with Friedrich especially concerns my latest batch of philosophical-physiological experiments. In the present circumstances, I still can't picture the *form*. Please write to him about this. He will receive his papers – as soon as mine are improved, enlarged and rearranged? – I can't be any more precise. The delay is not due to a lack of hard work – rather, it is more on account of the uncultured nature of the subject – and its immense diversity. – For that reason, it is surely extremely simple – but still so difficult to grasp, seize and shape as it is. The deeper I penetrate into the immaturity of Schelling's *On the World Soul*¹⁸ – the more interesting his mind becomes to me. – He is able to divine the highest, but simply lacks pure *reproductive talent* – which makes Goethe into the most remarkable physicist of our age.¹⁹ Schelling *comprehends* well – but *retains* things to a much lesser extent – and understands *how to reproduce*, least of all.

Please write and tell me how long you still intend to stay in Dresden – so that I can organise my trip accordingly. I'm also not sure when I'll be able to send you something. Please give my regards to Funk²⁰, whom you'll no doubt see.

Your husband [August Wilhelm Schlegel] would be doing me a favour if he could pay the enclosed bill and get a receipt. I'll thank him in person and give him the outstanding amount.

Please pass on my warmest regards to the Ernsts²¹ and to Wilhelm. Above all – tell me how everyone is, and what you are all doing. May the Madonna safeguard your health and protect our friendship.²²

Hardenberg.

[P.S.]

Perhaps your husband might be able to do me an even *bigger favour*. I'm in desperate need of the works of Helmont²³ and *Fludd*.²⁴ Could Wilhelm borrow them from Dasdorf for 14 days, and if so, immediately send them on

¹⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *Über die Weltseele*. Novalis's notes on this reading can be found in HKA 3: 102-114; translated excerpt in: Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 204.

¹⁹ J.W. von Goethe (1749-1832), had already published his *Essay on the Metamorphosis of Plants* in 1790. Novalis's reflections on Goethe can be found in HKA 2: 640-647; translated excerpts in: Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 111-119.

²⁰ Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand von Funk (1761-1828), historian. Funk collaborated on the literary, history and philosophy journal *The Hours (Die Horen)*, edited by Friedrich Schiller between 1795 and 1797.

²¹ Charlotte Ernst, and Ludwig Emanuel Ernst (1756-1826).

²² This reference to the Madonna is also an allusion to the recent visit to the Dresden Gallery, and the viewing of Raphael's painting the *Sistine Madonna*.

²³ Jean-Baptiste Van Helmont (1577-1644), Belgian physician and philosopher, disciple of Paracelsus. A German edition of Helmont's collected works appeared in Sulzbach in 1683.

²⁴ Robert Fludd (1574-1637), English physician and philosopher, working in the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition of the Renaissance. Author of the text: *Historia macro- et microcosmi metaphysica, physica et technical* (Oppenheim, 1617).

to me. Bear in mind that the accompanying cosmogony is fascinating – and shouldn't be taken lightly. Schelling will be amazed and delighted by my discoveries. I'm bound to have Friedrich's approval – and sympraxis. Friedrich's sparkling spirit has wrought wondrous mixtures and admixtures in this physical chaos. His papers are really *inspired* – replete with inspired hits and misses. Write to him that my letter has turned into something completely *new* – just a little from out of the old papers. I hope our correspondence will truly encompass *fermenta cognitionis* in abundance and ignite more than a Lavoisierian revolution. I currently feel as if I'm sitting in the *Comité du Salut public universel*.

3. Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin to Novalis in Weissenfels

Berlin, 20th October 1798

I'd long waited and hoped to have a letter from you, and now I hear that you are in Weissenfels! – Surely I'll receive something *from* you soon. Yet I would prefer to have *you* yourself here. Indeed, that is virtually the only, and yet the most important thing that I wanted to tell you – that I want to see and speak with you more than anything else. – I'm actually just beginning to understand you. I've recently had a few revelations, and now feel that I understand you better, the more I understand religion.

If it is at all possible, and if you think it's not in fact a bad idea, visit me here in Berlin.

I'm especially curious to receive *from you*, apart from the Letter on Physics, the *romantic fragments* and the *Christian monarchy*. On my side, the goal of my literary projects is to write a new Bible and follow in the footsteps of Mohamed and Luther.

This winter I think I will be able to frivolously finish the frivolous novel *Lucinde*.²⁵

I'm not going to say any more, since I know you have a different view, and because I hope and believe that you will certainly come to Berlin if it is at all possible.

Apart from that, I think I'll have to more or less cut some ties here, and then depart sooner or later. For worries could threaten me and my family if we are unable to manage the current situation. You are incredibly precious to me, and indelibly rooted in my soul.

Take care, your
Friedrich Schl.

²⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde. Ein Roman* (Berlin: Heinrich Frölich, 1799). English translation in: *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, translated and with an introduction by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971).

You are definitely a member of the *Comité de salut public universel*, and as a citizen of the new century in my sense, are fully deserving of a civil wreath. I have recently thought of you incredibly often, or rather, I have always been thinking of you, accompanied by the most delicate friendship.

4. Novalis in Freiberg to Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin

Freiberg, the 7th November 1798

You'll receive this reply via Jena, for I'll refer to the letter I sent to your sister-in-law [Caroline Schlegel], which I asked to be passed on to you. Now, I don't want you to receive the quotation without the quoted, so I'll also send this letter to Jena to provide you with the relevant details. Your letter has strengthened my resolve regarding the necessity of us being together. When you continue to discover more things in me, so from my side I also continue to understand you much more. A striking example of our inner sym-organisation and sym-evolution is contained in your letter. You write about your Bible project, while I'm engaged in my study of science as a whole – and its body – the book – and have likewise hit upon the *idea of the Bible* – of the Bible as the *ideal of each and every* book. The theory of the Bible and its development furnishes the theory of writing or literary sculpting in general – that simultaneously yields the symbolic, indirect theory of the construction of the creative spirit. You can see from the letter to your sister-in-law that I'm occupied with an exceedingly comprehensive work – which will absorb my entire activity for this winter.

It ought to be none other than a critique of the Bible project – an attempt at a universal method of biblicizing – an introduction to genuine encyclopedistics.²⁶

Here I intend to generate truths and ideas *writ large* – of generating inspired thoughts – of producing a living, scientific *organon* – and by means of this syncretical politics of the intelligence, to clear a path to genuine praxis – to a veritable process of reunion.

I've taken the trouble of outlining this project using several expressions that will allow you to gain a more complete answer regarding this Bible idea.

The more time we spend together and reflect on each other, the more we'll share ever move intimately in the mystery of our *duality*.

I understood and enjoyed your fragments, as well as the piece on *Wilhelm Meister*.²⁷

²⁶ Encyclopedistics was the core subject of Novalis's *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*. See David W. Wood, "Introduction" to Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, pp. xxv-xxx.

²⁷ Review of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister*, which appeared mid-July 1798 in the journal *Athenaeum*.

However, there is *one* person who I would still like to be in our company – a person who can be compared to you alone – *Baader*²⁸

His magic unites once again

What the sword of folly has divided.

I've just read his earlier treatise from 1786 on substance and heat²⁹, what a mind! I'm thinking about writing to him. – Couldn't he perhaps be invited to collaborate on the *Athenaeum*? My friend, join together with Baader – and you'll accomplish incredible things.

Schelling is now delving into mathematics. – If he also writes here too quickly, he'll end up paying the price. It is a strange, modern phenomenon (which isn't to Schelling's disadvantage), that his book *Ideas* has already *wilted* and become rather *sterile*.³⁰ – Only recently have such *short-lived* books been published. Your *Greeks and Romans* too is in part a rather significant sign of the increasing velocity and progression of the human spirit.³¹

Standards, education and spirituality are all increasing within the brevity of a life-span. Books now resemble flashes of inspiration. – At once fleeting – yet creative sparks!

If only I was permitted to seize a single spark – as the activity of life.

I discussed the *Propyläen* in the letter to your sister-in-law.³² I still haven't received the *Almanach*.³³

Your *Lucinde* is enchanting me in advance like the Callipygian Venus – of which it will surely be a sister.

Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*³⁴ is a lovely legal specimen – a carefully crafted web of chicanes. Kant has become *juristic* – something you accused Leibniz of – and he has been like this from the very beginning. The philosophical faculty (like the most blatant sinner), is the easiest to defend. The philosophical presentation of this conflict could have been an incredibly beautiful defence of the philosophical faculty. But in relation to the Bible, Kant is not *à la hauteur*. To me, Schleiermacher seems to have treated

²⁸ Franz Xaver von Baader (1765-1841), philosopher, theologian, physician and mining specialist; Baader studied in Freiberg from 1788 to 1792.

²⁹ Franz Xaver von Baader, *Vom Wärmestoff, seiner Vertheilung, Bindung und Entbindung, vorzüglich beim Brennen der Körper: Eine Probeschrift* (Vienna/Leipzig: Paul Kraussische Buchhandlung, 1786).

³⁰ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, first published in Leipzig in 1797 and revised in 1803. English translation: Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, translated by Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath, with an Introduction by Robert Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

³¹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Die Griechen und Römer* (Neustrelitz: Michaelis, 1797).

³² *Propyläen*, a journal edited by Goethe.

³³ Friedrich Schiller's *Almanach*.

³⁴ I. Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1798).

Leibniz rather unfairly – the section on combinatorial analysis is worthy of all the praise that has been showered on it.

Take care – dear Schlegel, and remain devoted –

Your friend Hardenberg.

5. Caroline Schlegel in Jena to Novalis in Freiberg

Jena, 15 November 1798

Yesterday I received your two letters of the 7th and 11th November at the same time. You should try and find out what happened. You also received my letters fairly late. You can imagine how keen I was to try and carry out your request, which was communicated to me in a somewhat indefinite manner. I immediately guessed the illness of your dear friend, but I wish I'd known what kind of medicine to give her. I didn't want to be vague, because I know how dreadful it can become. So I decided to write to *Stark*, since you yourself favour him over Hufeland, and because I'm also not in close contact with the latter, as you are with the former.³⁵ However, because you yourself had not directly asked Stark for help, I thought I should be cautious, and told him that you had written to me about an acquaintance we have in common in the region x, and that you had asked me for advice. – Here is his answer. I sincerely hope it will lead to some relief. I immediately recognised it as a *facial affliction*, because Böhmer had to have it treated a number of times in the Harz, and it was really difficult for him to find a remedy.³⁶ I remember a woman who had such severe cramps that it degenerated into a seizure of the mouth and hydrophobia. She was cured by belladonna. Try the suggested remedy. The young doctor will certainly agree, and recommend those books to him in your own name, as an autonomous physician. I cannot rest until I post this letter and know that it will help. Your patient is surely no-one else's harmonica but her own.³⁷

I have received from you a long and precious letter, and it is also a genuine harmonica. But I won't be able to answer it today. I'm in a hurry and just recall your letter, because Friedrich then immediately took it. So I can only rely on my memory for the main general points.

³⁵ Johann Christian Stark (1753-1811), family doctor of Schiller, also treated Novalis and his first fiancée Sophie von Kühn; and Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland (1762-1836), personal doctor of Goethe, Herder and Wieland.

³⁶ Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Böhmer (died 1788) was the former husband of Caroline Schlegel, née Michaelis.

³⁷ Allusion to the harmonica theory. See Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, entry 245, p. 36.

We haven't seen the *Propyläen* yet. Why do we need this forecourt when we ourselves already possess the holiest of holies.³⁸ He [Goethe] now dwells here among us. Yesterday I had dinner with him, today I will have dinner with him, and soon I myself will host a feast. You should also come. – I'm looking forward to the *Propyläen*, for it is a pleasure too. He didn't bring any copies with him; and we don't want to ask for the ones already here. He will have a copy sent from Weimar. The preface seems to be full of the most paternal mildness. It should recall another preface or announcement. If you have read the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, then you would also have seen the true report of *Wallenstein's Camp* (*Wallensteins Lager*).³⁹ The letter it contains is no doubt from the hand of the master. He is doing it for his friend, who in the prelude and prologue reveals himself to be his disciple – and more Goethean than ever. What is otherwise in S.[chiller's] *Almanach* shows that he has exhausted himself in this direction. You could get the *Almanach* from Charlotte and a few words of mine about the prelude to *Wallenstein* if you request her, but she won't send them to you on her own account because I haven't asked her.

The *Athenäum* is on hold at the moment, dear friend. Vieweg is undecided as to whether he will continue it, and is behaving like a petty little businessman. He printed far too many copies – 1,500 – and he used too expensive paper. He is now doing the calculations for possible future issues. He doesn't have a clue that with this journal he has something long-term; for him, all the costs have to be immediately met and he has to turn a profit. They're in the middle of negotiating, so I won't go into further details. Our lovely essay *The Paintings* has not been published yet.⁴⁰ I'd like it to be published in the *Propyläen*. My view is that they, i.e. the brothers, shouldn't have burdened themselves with a journal and Wilhelm shouldn't have become a professor. He is so busy here with the university that the situation with the *Athenäum* barely made an impression on him. It hit Friedrich much harder, especially the economic aspects.

The stubborn Schelling was just here. He promised Prévost's work for you.⁴¹ He cannot get Le Sage's book.⁴² I have tried to write very clearly – you should just get used to my bad handwriting.

Please tell me how the patient is doing, so I can also inform Stark.

Take care, we are deeply fond of you.

³⁸ A play on the meaning of the name *Propyläen* – which is the sacred inner courtyard, forecourt, or sanctuary of a temple.

³⁹ One of Schiller's plays, first performed in Weimar on 12 October 1798, the prologue to a trilogy of dramas, along with *Die Piccolomini* (The Piccolomini) and *Wallensteins Tod* (Wallenstein's Death). Schiller finished his Wallenstein trilogy the following year in 1799.

⁴⁰ The dialogue *Die Gemälde*, written jointly by Caroline and August Wilhelm Schlegel, eventually appeared in 1799 in the *Athenaeum*.

⁴¹ Pierre Prévost (1751–1839), French physicist.

⁴² George Louis Le Sage (1724–1803), French physicist.

6. Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin to Novalis in Freiberg

Berlin. The 16th November [17]98

I hope you got my last letter. If I had to write it again, it wouldn't say anything else except my most pressing desire to know how you are and what you have been doing. Because I can't focus on anything until I know. I fully recall your condition and your last conversations with me. Let me also soon see your handwriting. Then one more thing.

First, some news. Vieweg is probably not going to continue the *Athenaeum*. It is clearly a huge financial mistake, and he doesn't want to wait any longer or continue it. How do you talk any sense into people like that? He's a shopkeeper, not a businessman, and seems perfectly happy to stay just the way he is.

Now to the main point. I am writing to you today about my current situation and hopefully you will be able to do me a big favour.

About 14 months ago I wrote to you about a friend of mine.⁴³ Since then, she has ended up, step by step, becoming my wife⁴⁴, and will remain so eternally. Civilly speaking, however, she is still the wife of another man, though in terms of their marriage they split up a number of years ago. I will never separate from her, and only wish to be fully united with her, it does not matter to me in which form. I would have preferred to put up with the circumstances and to have waited a bit, but things have now picked up pace, and we are currently disputing and negotiating with the husband, to whom she was sacrificed by her parents and her lack of experience. I still have no idea how and when it will all end. It is just a hugely chaotic and annoying state of affairs. But one thing I know, is that whatever happens, I'll need money, more than I presently have: but I'm not afraid of the future. Perhaps our freedom depends on the possession of this sum. Giving back her small assets, which are enough to initially get settled, would cause the least amount of difficulty. However, this would only be the case if we could part *amicably* with our opponent, and we still don't know if it is possible to have an amicable separation. Apart from that, I've immediately fallen into hardship, because my situation here has been greatly hampered and made worse by the terrible circumstances.

I'm presuming that it would not be difficult for you to procure that sum of money for me; however, I don't want to compromise you or your brother: that's why I am asking and requesting it from you. As you can see, I don't

⁴³ Friedrich Schlegel met Dorothea Friederike Veit, née Brendel Mendelssohn (1764-1839) in 1797. She had married Simon Veit in 1783, and divorced him in January 1799.

⁴⁴ *Frau*.— Friedrich Schlegel used this term in 1798 the sense of life partner. Dorothea and Friedrich were eventually married in 1804.

need much. – 200 thalers would already greatly help me out, and could even be enough.

7. Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin to Novalis in Freiberg

Berlin, the 2nd December [1798]

Indeed, the unintentional coincidence of our bible projects is one of the most striking signs and wonders of our agreement and disagreement.

I fully agree with your point that the bible is the central literary form and therefore the ideal of every book. But with several altogether specific conditions and differences. Even a journal, novel, compendium, letter, drama etc., should, *in a certain sense*, be a bible, and yet they remain both what is designated and included under this name and in the spirit of the former. However, I have in mind a bible which is not a bible in a rough sense, not approximately a bible, but which would be entirely literally and in every spirit and sense a bible, the first art work of this kind, because the ones so far have only been products of nature. In order to carry out a project of this kind, the ones that deserve to be called a bible would have to be posited as classical archetypes, just as the Greek poems are posited in practice by Goethe, and theoretically by me, as archetypes for the art of poetry.

As far as I can tell, your work has more of an analogy with an ideal book of mine about the *principles of writing*, which tries to highlight the missing centres of reading and centres of the universities. Consider my fragments and characteristics as the lateral-wings or poles of such a work, and through which these principles would attain their full light. These are the classical materials and classical studies or experiments of a writer, which drives or attempts to stimulate writing as an *art* and *science*: for up to now authors have hardly attained or done this, so that I am perhaps the first person who wants to seriously carry this out. My encyclopaedia will not be anything else than the application of these principles to the university, the counterpart to a genuine journal.

My bible project, however, is not a literary one, but – a biblical project, a thoroughly religious project. I intend to found a new religion, or more exactly, to help proclaim one: for it will come about and be victorious without me. My religion is not of the type that wants to swallow up philosophy and poetry. Rather, I permit the independence and friendship, the egoism and harmony of these two primordial arts and sciences to continue, though I believe that *it is now time* for them to change many of their characteristics. But when viewed without any kind of inspiration, I find that there are objects left over that cannot be treated by either philosophy or poetry. *God* appears to me to be an object of this kind, of which I have a completely new view. The best philosophy speaks of God in the most unspiritual and abstract manner, or carefully pushes him out beyond its borders. That seems to me

to be the main merit of Kant⁴⁵ and Fichte⁴⁶, that they guide philosophy to the threshold of religion, as it were, and then break off. While Goethe's education joyfully wanders in from the other side in the *Propyläen* of the temple. You can easily picture the intermediate links, and obtain an overview of the things, thoughts and poems that can only be unveiled to this epoch by means of gospels, letters, apocalypses, and so on. Or to take another perspective. One has spoken of and discussed for at least one hundred years now the *omnipotence* of the Word in holy scripture and who knows what else. Compared with what is really there and with what has happened, that just seems like a bad joke. But I'm willing to turn this into something serious, and to talk to people literally about their omnipotence. That this is supposed to take place by means of a book, might not seem that strange, since the greatest *authors* of religion – Moses, Christ, Mohammed, Luther – gradually became less and less politicians, and more and more teachers and writers. In addition, you also know that I ennoble and include smaller ideas, and for the latter, which are the heart and soul of my temporal and earthly life, I feel enough courage and strength, not merely to preach and be zealous like Luther, but like Mohammed, to also conquer the kingdom of spirits with the fiery sword of the word, or like Christ, to offer up myself and my life. – However, perhaps *you* have more talent to be a new Christ, and I would be your valiant Saint Paul. In any event, there is a similarity there, in that a certain energy and passion for the truth can only arise when it is preceded by an honest unbelief that stems from lethargy and not inability.

If Lessing were still alive, I wouldn't have to commence this task. The beginning would have already been completed. No one divined as much of the true new religion as Lessing did.⁴⁷ Not only is Kant far behind here, but even Fichte and Jacobi⁴⁸ and Lavater.⁴⁹ A few million of the latter poured into a melting pot would still not produce as much solid matter and pure ether of religion as Lessing possessed.

⁴⁵ See, among others, I. Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1793); English Translation: Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, edited by Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁶ Cf. J.G. Fichte's 1798 article, "Ueber den Grund unsers Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung" (On the Basis of our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World). English translation in: J.G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 142–155; and in: *J.G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798–1800)*, edited by Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 17–30.

⁴⁷ See Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Voß und Sohn, 1780); English translation in: Lessing, *Theological Writings*, selected and translated by Henry Chadwick (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1956), 82–98.

⁴⁸ Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau: Löwe, 1785).

⁴⁹ Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801), Swiss theologian, also known for his writings on physiognomy.

Nevertheless, don't let that be the criterion for you to agree with me. The actual point is to see if you can agree with positing Christianity in an absolutely negative manner, at least in a certain sense.

I could certainly approve when you posited it in a positive manner, because I not only understood but even anticipated your doctrine of the free power of choice⁵⁰ and its application to Christianity. However, what was practical to you, was simply pure history to me. Hence, the dualism of our symphilosophy even on this point. A semi-understanding and a semi-agreement is possible here, because practice and history remain an undissolved fermentation in your religion. If I succeed in reciprocally saturating the two and blending them together into a perfect harmony, then obviously you can only fully agree or fully disagree. Perhaps the choice is still yours to make, my friend, of either being the last Christian, the Brutus of the old religion, or the Christ of the new gospel.

I sense that this new gospel is already starting to appear.⁵¹ Apart from the indications of philosophy and practice in general, this religion is also starting to stir among individuals, who are above all especially our contemporaries and who belong to the few fellow citizens of the period that is now dawning. A few examples. Schleiermacher, who is certainly no apostle, but a born critic of all biblical expressions (and if he were only given a word of God would powerfully preach it) is now working on a book about religion.⁵² Tieck is whole-heartedly studying Jacob Böhme.⁵³ He is surely on the right path there. Or another observation: does the synthesis of Goethe and Fichte result in anything other than religion? Soon this synthesis shouldn't just be the order of the day, but something universal, since there is a discord of the two of them with the age. This irrevocably arises from their personal point of view, and is already so incredibly striking. The seeds for the means and instruments of this synthesis were already in Lessing, and now others are active in Wolf⁵⁴, not to mention Schelling and Hülsen⁵⁵, who are like the snails of an isolated philosophy, extending their antennae toward the light and warmth of a new day.

⁵⁰ *Willkür*.

⁵¹ The need for a new gospel is expressed in Lessing's *The Education of the Human Race*, and then forms the conclusion to Novalis's essay, *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (Christendom or Europe) from 1799 (HKA 3: 507-524). English translation in: Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, pp. 137-152.

⁵² Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834). See Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: Unger Verlag, 1st ed. 1799). English translation: Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. R. Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵³ Jacob Böhme (1575-1624), German shoemaker, philosopher, and Christian mystic.

⁵⁴ Presumably Christian Gottlob Wolf (1757-1838); from 1787 to 1792, he was private tutor in the house of Novalis's neighbours in Weissenfels.

⁵⁵ August Ludwig Hülsen (1765-1810), student of Fichte in Jena from 1794 to 1810; collaborated on the journal *Athenaeum*.

Isn't it possible for you to somehow continue our last conversation? The *Athenaeum* will be published again with a new name and publisher. Hence, send us as soon as you can whatever you have and wish to contribute. – How are your Christian fragments coming along? I'm really looking forward to reading them.

If you don't think we can carry out our romantic-philosophical letter on nature and physics, then at least please let me address my *Ideas* to you in an epistolary monologue⁵⁶, which seems rather appropriate to me; they only fail to adhere to the form of a letter, which is surely pretty appropriate to you. You could even mix in some fragments, poems, or small novels, whatever fits.

At the moment, I can't tell you anything definite about my situation. Only that it is more likely that I'll be leaving at Easter than staying here. By the way, nothing has changed, and so I'm obliged to repeat the request that I made in my last letter, and hope that you actually received it (it was addressed to you directly in Freiberg). I hope to soon hear about you and your projects.

I've written to you, insofar as I could write it down. It would be so much better if we could just speak in person about our new projects. Might that at all be possible?

Schleiermacher recently told me that there is also a Freiberg in Silesia and therefore it is highly doubtful if my last letter even reached you. It merely contained a *species facti* of my domestic situation and a question and request that can be summarized in a few words. It is highly probable that my friend, the woman I wrote to you about at the start of my arrival here 15 months ago, a woman who has gradually become my wife, will publicly divorce her husband around Easter time. She has been privately separated from him for a number of years now. Giving back her few assets, if we separate amicably, will cause the least amount of difficulty. But even that is highly doubtful, and then her freedom and my tranquillity could depend on the possession of a cash sum. This annoying domestic and literary state of affairs has not only made me poor with regard to money, but also with regard to credit. Hence, I asked, and I'm asking you again, without putting you or your brother in a compromising situation, whether you might be able to procure for me a sum of about 200 thalers?

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schlegel ended up publishing his text entitled *Ideen* in 1800 as a collection of fragments in the first issue of volume 3 of the *Athenaeum*. English translation in: *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, 241-256.

Could you also, the next time you are in Dresden, get Gareis⁵⁷ to paint your picture for me?

One more thing: Christianity contains the fullest seeds of the new religion; but they are in a rather neglected state.

The letter⁵⁸ is the true magic wand.

All the wishes of the beloved and all the images of the poets are literally true: namely, of the classical poets, of the true beloved.

Just a question about Baader, whom I know next to nothing about. Is he linking up with Fichte, just as Schelling and Hülsen do, and is he say a chaotic center for these two? Or is he a son of the new epoch, and did he, say, originally begin in the middle of physics, just as I did in the depths of the critique? – Then I could understand the polarity of our spirits to yours, and then it wouldn't merely be subjective. But then it wouldn't be necessary for me to join forces with him. I've already joined with you, and what is to take place through this union must solely take place through you.

The new religion should be entirely *magic*. Christianity is too political and its politics is far too material. On the other hand, symbolic-mystical politics is permitted and essential.

8. Novalis in Freiberg to Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin

Freiberg, December 10, 1798

I just received your long and detailed letter – which once again graphically transported me into your current dire situation. – I might be able to help you, but only after I've departed from here. – You know my situation – I live an uncertain life – for 2 years now I haven't thought about the future – I've neglected many things that I thought I wouldn't need any longer – and tried to make myself as free as possible. Fortune has protected me up to now – I wished to depart with the greatest composure and calmness. However, many things now appear to conspire against my plan. – So instead of seeing myself as dispensable – and becoming dispensable – I now find myself duty bound to old and new acquaintances. – I perceive how I might still be useful to many people; my friendship now compels me not to forsake those dearest to me at this chaotic time, and to share in life's every need with them. If you were all happy, then I could depart consoled. – However, such a fortunate destiny

⁵⁷ Franz Gareis (1775-1803), German painter, who inspired Ludwig Tieck for the character of the painter Franz Sternbald in the 1798 novel *Franz Sternbald's Peregrinations*. Gareis painted the only extent oil portrait of Novalis, now preserved and exhibited at the Novalis Museum in Weissenfels.

⁵⁸ *Buchstabe* – letter of the alphabet.

hasn't been allotted to me. If this state of affairs continues I'll soon have to begin a new life – and perhaps – a *higher* one. An early death is presently my greatest lot – continued life my second gain. The time of my departure from here is crucial. If I depart, then it is in my power to render a small service to you; if I remain – then I'll use my increasing energy for work to endeavour to be of some assistance to you soon.

Your request has strengthened my resolve, that if I live on – to become a rich man, hopefully in accordance with a grand plan. – It annoys me that I've made so few *useful* acquaintances. –

If you were in Jena, I'd still have some hope of helping you – well at least *per tertium*.

If only you were aware of my entire situation – you would quickly see that it is impossible for me to help you at the present time.

The uncertainty of the future now requires that I work in detail, delaying my literary projects – particularly since illness and other unpleasant factors have distracted and disrupted me, and continue to do so.

I haven't had a decent thought in the last three weeks. Up until then I'd been exceptionally fortunate. – That time will come again. – The sooner you write to me, the better, regarding how you yourself, or some fortunate turn of events – has helped you out – and who is looking after your legal situation – in short, all about your domestic circumstances.

You've told me some great news – that the *Athenaeum* is going to continue – that's why I told your sister-in-law that its cessation had greatly upset me. – My *new plan is extremely comprehensive* – I'll tell Wilhelm all about it *in extenso* at Easter. If I remain among you, then this plan will comprise a principal occupation of my life. –

It concerns:

The establishment of a literary republican order – that is thoroughly *mercantile* and political – a genuine cosmopolitan lodge.

A *printing place* – a *book shop*, must be the first seedling. Jena – Hamburg, or *Switzerland*, if there is peace – has to be the headquarters of the bureau. If everyone finds some suitable candidates – then joint hard-work, like-minded souls and communal credit may quickly fan the first tiny sparks. In both a literary and political sense, all of you should no longer be dependent on the book trade.

Who knows if your project will merge into mine – and therefore set heaven into motion, as mine does the terrestrial sphere.

One has *talked about* such projects for long enough. Why shouldn't we attempt to realize something in this vein? We have to be in the world, what we are on paper – creators of ideas.

I can't go into your thoughts on religion and the Bible at the moment – I can't actually do so, because most of them are so illusory and obscure to me – apart from a few excellent inspirations – particularly concerning the cornucopia.

More about this in person – or *in* writing, when *some fragments worth reading* are finished and published.

I can't recall if I've already told you about my dear Plotinus.⁵⁹ He is a philosopher born for me, and I first learned about him from Tiedemann⁶⁰ – and was struck by his similarity to Fichte and Kant – and his idealistic similarity to them. He is dearer to my heart than those two. Somebody told me that my discovery isn't new and that this enchanting conjunction has already been mentioned in Maimon's *Life*.⁶¹ Yet why didn't it cause a stir? There is so much that has not been ploughed in Plotinus – and a fresh proclamation would be certainly worthwhile.

Regarding the *Athenaeum*'s new style, and if it really continues, I'll probably contribute some literary epistolary news in a fleeting and light style – Perhaps I'll start off by saying something about Plotinus etc.

It's a pity that I've still got so much to do – I have masses of stuff for interesting letters. I'll have to put the romantic projects on hold for a while.–

The *merchant* is now the order of the day. Chemistry – and mechanics or technology, in the most general sense, are currently my most pressing concerns. The other things will just have to wait.

Take care – your *dear friend*,
Hardenberg.

9. Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin to Novalis in Freiberg

Berlin. 17th December 1798

Your dear wonderful letter was a true balm for *us*: then apart from any dullness that we ourselves create, everything around us here is suffocatingly dull. We can now delight in your friendship in a tranquil and undisturbed manner, since we do not need your assistance, for the moment at least. –

⁵⁹ Plotinus (c. 205-270), Greek philosopher, founder of Neoplatonism.

⁶⁰ Dieterich Tiedemann (1748-1803), historian of philosophy, author of a 6-volume compendium entitled *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* (Marburg: 1791-1797). It is through this compendium that Novalis discovered the philosophy of Plotinus.

⁶¹ Salomon Maimon (1754-1800), Jewish philosopher. His autobiography, *Lebensgeschichte*, was published in Berlin in 1792-1793 by Karl Philipp Moritz. English translation: *The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon*, edited by Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Abraham P. Socher; translated by Paul Reitter; with an afterword by Gideon Freudenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Salomon Maimon's autobiography does not contain a reference to Plotinus.

When I first wrote to you everything was in turmoil and uncertain; and I was without money and means, and there were a thousand chance things which could have depended on this money and means. – But now the world is much clearer; today I can see my friend in her own house for the first time, and shortly she will be divorced. Everything has been amicably negotiated, and even the issue of the property has been decided fairly. I'll tell you more about this later.

We are going to stay here this winter. We will not shy away from the attention, and it is always best to deal with it immediately. I won't actually marry her: for that is the sole condition under which she can and is allowed to keep her youngest son. I also personally prefer it if a ceremony isn't necessary. I don't think I've told you yet, but in this respect I'm in proximity to Leibniz's philosophy. Through a significant stroke of fate my friend is actually the daughter of old Mendelssohn.⁶² The ceremony is precisely the stumbling block. For the family would be more than reasonably affronted by a baptism.

We won't stay here for the summer, but I imagine we'll be in Dresden. We sincerely hope to see you! – Shall we even pass through Freiberg to see you before heading on to Dresden, or should we just meet in Dresden? – I'm sure you will really like her, a woman who has remained upright and dignified while in a wretched state without any support except for the energy of exasperation, and who has then emerged with a tranquil force. She is far behind my sister-in-law in external education and refinement. She is just a sketch, yet in a thoroughly grand style. Her entire being is religion, although she isn't aware of this. If she were to lose me, then in accordance with the Indian tradition she would follow me out of true religion, and without realizing that it would be something extraordinary or the right thing. I am relating this to you this because I have to confess that I told her about your mysteries. All these thoughts and views are so close to her heart that it seemed unnatural to me not to initiate her into them. The religiosity of her feeling is all the more decisive, since her intellect is still so numbed by misfortune as it were and she doesn't have the concepts. Let us soon know how and when we can see and meet each other again, and also write to me soon with an answer regarding my letter on the Bible.

Just a few more details about the finances. From your letter, it appears as though you actually cannot do anything *at the moment*, perhaps it might be easier towards Easter then.

Her own wealth will be deposited, and she will only receive the interest. After she has set something aside for the youngest son, she will obtain 400 thalers per year. Apart from that, she admittedly has around 1,100 thalers

⁶² Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), Enlightenment thinker, German philosopher of Jewish faith, disciple of Leibniz and Christian Wolff.

freely at her disposal. Out of this amount, she has to keep at least 500 thalers available in the very likely event that she contracts a serious illness, because she has had a few already. On her side, she has a debt of 200 thalers, and together we have 200 thalers debt. The first place we stay also has to be deducted from this capital. Now that I share assets in common with her, and we will henceforth live inseparably, then obviously it is absolutely necessary that I also put my things in order, above all two outstanding old debts, each of them 90 thalers, and which cannot be postponed any longer. However, the worst thing is, that the family would notice if she starts dipping into her finances and immediately starts spending a lot more of her own capital than they know she needs for herself and her own debts. This should not be done for many reasons. Thus, if between now and Easter, or whenever is convenient, you were able to fulfil my request, then I promise to repay it. By the way, you can now be certain that the mercantile spirit will be favourable to me, since I now no longer have to just take care of myself, and my life is no longer a chaos, but has received a center and shape and is being rebuilt on solid ground. Hence, all purchases and commerce, indeed all property, has to start: with the family.

Friedrich

Please do not say anything to Caroline and Charlotte about these financial matters. They know about everything else, or they should know. Are you also fine, or should I have not said anything to her about you? – We have so often thought of you with tears and joy. Yet her heart is aching.

10. August Wilhelm Schlegel in Jena to Novalis in Freiberg

Jena, 12 January 1799

Since I saw you last in Dresden, I have been as silent as a stone. – But because today our dear friend Herder⁶³ visited us, who travelled from near you, and will return back to where you are, I couldn't pass up the chance to greet you with a few lines. This winter I have been occupied with many different things, and that is also the reason for my silence, and my wife would have told you about that. So far my university lectures have not been without interest to me – I wished you could have attended some of the ones on aesthetics to give me your opinion. The public talks on the history of German poetry made me return to read some of our older and even ancient poets, and this caused me to become really excited again about my long-held project to write a poem about chivalry – next summer I am definitely going to start writing up this

⁶³ Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), theologian, critic and philosopher.

project. Otherwise, I am working hard on Shakespeare, and have almost finished the *Merchant of Venice* – hopefully you will like it.⁶⁴

Moreover – and so I don't forget the most important piece of news – the *Athenaeum* has fortunately been recovered from its stingy publisher; another bookseller, Fröhlich⁶⁵, who bought Vieweg's Berlin business, has now included it in his publishing house, and bought up the stockpile of the first issue. In about six weeks you should already receive the third issue. You are also hereby requisitioned to send us further contributions. Hülsen, who is now in Berlin and fraternizing with my brother, has promised him various things. We envisage continuing the sthenic diet, that is, not avoiding peppery critiques. Presumably the collected works of Wieland⁶⁶ will be reviewed in the next four issues, which the bookseller is obliged to do.

I have started writing a large elegy on Goethe and ancient art⁶⁷ – even more than started. I am extremely curious what you will make of it. But you should not see the work before it is finished and published (in the fourth issue of the *Athenaeum*). We would be incredibly delighted if you could then come and personally visit us.

Friedrich is currently detained due to the domestic disruptions that his friend Ms. Veit is caught up in, so please excuse his silence too. She is now divorced from her husband, and Friedrich assures us that a new period in his life's plan has now commenced. If we are to trust his letters, he has really indeed started writing a novel called *Lucinde*, and when it is ready he promises to send us soon a sufficient sample to allow us to form our own judgment of it.

Regarding the latest literary news, let me draw your attention to a text that has just been published: Tieck's *Phantasies on Art*.⁶⁸ It contains Wackenroder's (of the *Klosterbruder*)⁶⁹ literary remains, supplemented with a few essays by T[ieck].

⁶⁴ August Wilhelm Schlegel translated numerous plays of William Shakespeare into German. He completed and published many of these in the years 1797-1801. These translations later appeared together with those of Ludwig Tieck in a celebrated edition.

⁶⁵ Heinrich Fröhlich, took over from Johann Friedrich Vieweg as the publisher of the *Athenaeum* from January 1799 until the definitive cessation of the journal in 1800.

⁶⁶ Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), German poet, writer and translator, editor of the literary journal *Der Teutsche Merkur* from 1773 to 1789.

⁶⁷ See A.W. Schlegel, *Die Kunst der Griechen. An Goethe. Elegie. „Kämpfend verirrt sich die Welt“* (The Art of the Greeks. To Goethe. An Elegy), *Athenaeum* 2, no. 2 (1799): 181-192.

⁶⁸ See Ludwig Tieck, *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der Kunst* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1799).

⁶⁹ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798), friend of Ludwig Tieck and author of the *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Outpourings of an Art-Loving Monk), which formed the core text of the *Phantasies on Art*.

You would have heard about Fichte's arguments concerning our dear God from the *Intelligenzblatt der Literaturzeitung*.⁷⁰ The brave Fichte is actually fighting for all of us, and if he loses, then the funeral pyres would have gotten much closer again.

Take care, my dearest friend. Even though Caroline has not added anything here, she sends you her warmest greetings and will write to you soon. Sincerely,

A.W. Schlegel.

11. Novalis in Freiberg to Friedrich Schlegel in Berlin

Freiberg: January 20, 1799

I've put off for long enough answering your very welcome and kind letter.⁷¹ It was packed with material – and I ran out of time. My brother [Anton]⁷² was here with me for 14 days – we went to Dresden, and there I spent a couple of delightful hours with your sister. You, and your new circumstances, were the main topic of our conversation. We still only want one thing – that if possible this relationship also be civilly sanctioned – since you cannot overlook the unpleasant aspects that might arise. The Ernsts told me many fine things about your life's companion, and we all would like to visit you, the sooner the better, in order to meet her. I'll certainly see you after Easter – when you come to Saxony. I doubt that I'll be able to make it to Berlin. The most sensible thing would be for you to come to Jena. The Ernsts would also have to come. We would have a wonderful time. I have so much to tell you – the earth appears to want to hold on to me for some time yet. The relationship I told you about has become more inward and compelling.⁷³ I see myself loved in a way that I've never been loved before. The fate of a delightful young woman depends on my decision – and my friends, parents and siblings now need me more than ever. A very interesting life seems to await me – although I'd much rather be dead.

I'm keenly attentive to the course of events. – If I perceive the possibility of making myself no longer needed, or hit against hindrances – then these are hints to carry-out the first plan – and I hope Karl⁷⁴ or Carlowitz⁷⁵ would take my place. If my health were fine, then I'd now be experiencing happy and

⁷⁰ J.G. Fichte, *Appellation an das Publikum über die durch ein Kurf. Sächs. Confiscationsrescript ihm beigemessenen atheistischen Äußerungen: Eine Schrift, die man erst zu lesen bittet, ehe man sie confiscirt*, *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung, Intelligenzblatt* no. 1 (9 January 1799).

⁷¹ Letter of 17 December 1798 (letter no. 9 above).

⁷² Georg Anton von Hardenberg (1781-1825).

⁷³ Relationship to Julie Charpentier (1776-1811), daughter of the Professor of mathematics at the Freiberg Mining Academy, Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Charpentier.

⁷⁴ Gottlob Albrecht Karl von Hardenberg (1776-1813), a younger brother of Novalis.

⁷⁵ See above note 13.

wonderful days. *Julie* was tormented for an entire half-year with the most terrible pain – we feared the worse. – The affliction then suddenly departed during the most dreadful period, and she has been healthy and cheerful since Christmas Eve. I haven't been able to do much for 2 months. Anxiety, distractions, work and travel, then joy and love, not to mention bouts of illness – have kept me altogether at a distance from writing. In the last few months all kinds of technical studies have been closing in upon me. I'm collecting a lot – *perhaps* I'll be able to complete something in the summer. Your sister-in-law will send you a letter from me, which will reveal to you my principal ideas in physics. Baader has recently published a few sheets – *On the Pythagorean Quadrate in Nature*⁷⁶, it is nothing else but solid, sturdy poetry, yet patently packed in a rough and rocky frame, and difficult enough to polish and hew out. Your fraternal feelings toward Hülsen are an encouraging sign. Such constellations signify fortunate and fruitful times.

I can't wait to see your novel. I don't have any point of comparison to be able to picture it in advance. As for your view of religion, I'd rather discuss it with you in person. Your opinion concerning Christianity's negativity is excellent. Christianity thereby becomes elevated up to the level of a *foundation* – the *projecting force* for a new world-edifice and a new humanity – a genuine *firmament* – a *living, moral space*.

This wonderfully relates to my ideas regarding the hitherto misunderstood nature of *space* and *time*, whose personality and archetypal force have become indescribably illuminating to me. The *activity* of space and time is the force of creation, and their relations – are the very hinges of the world.

The absolute abstraction – annihilation of the present – the *apotheosis* of the *future*, of this veritable better world – all belong to the essence of Christianity's commands – thereby linking it with the religion of the *old sages*, with the divinity of ancient world, with the restoration of antiquity, as its 2nd main wing. – Like the body of an angel, both hold the universe in eternal suspense – in the everlasting *enjoyment* of space and time.

We'll discuss your domestic situation this spring in person. Perhaps you and me can then reach a truly useful agreement – particularly when I have more details about your future life plans.

With warmest greetings to your wife,
and remain as ever, a dear friend of

your friend, Hardenberg.

⁷⁶ F.X. von Baader, *Ueber das pythagoräische Quadrat in der Natur, oder die vier Weltgegenden* (On the Pythagorean Quadrate in Nature, or The Four Regions of the World) (Tübingen: Cotta, 1798).

12. Novalis in Freiberg to Caroline Schlegel in Jena

Freiberg: 20th January, 1799

I've been happy enough since I last wrote to you. Julie is miraculously healthy and happy again since Christmas Eve, when the dreaded affliction suddenly departed. My health is pretty fair, and I've seen the *good Ernsts*. Admittedly, it was only for a short while – nonetheless I envisage seeing them again soon and longer. I infinitely lament that my future home is so far from Dresden – the proximity of the Ernsts would be highly valuable to me. I say infinitely much from my inner being, when I say that she is a woman after my heart. I'm also inwardly joyous about Friedrich's happy union. I too have received a new and splendid sister-in-law. Of course, if it were possible, I would also be very happy about a civil union. *Wilhelm's* recent lovely letter was so very welcome to me. He will surely forgive me if I direct my reply to you – you, who have really become more precious and dear to me on account of all your heartfelt compassion and promptness.

In the last two months everything has come to a standstill with me, which is only natural with a liberal existence. I haven't had three decent ideas in this space of time. I'm now immersed in technical studies, because my apprentice years are coming to an end, and middle-class life with its many demands draws ever closer. With regard to my future projects, I'm only collecting at present, and imagine that in the summer I might be able to complete a number of things that I have begun or sketched out. Poetry with living forces, with human beings, and otherwise, pleases me more and more. One has to create a poetical world around oneself and live in *poetry*. My mercantile plan concerns this field. The art of writing falls in this domain. I praise Wilhelm for his lively professorial activity. Even this belongs to a *lovely*, liberal economy, to the actual element of the cultivated human being.

I can't wait to read *his elegies* – undoubtedly these will be a beautifully fashioned sediment of living matter from the fragrance of a past epoch. If he could only dissolve a dash of the future in them, then the crystallisation would be even more beautiful.

The resurrection of the *Atheneum* is invaluable to me. I won't presume to say anything in advance about Friedrich's novel. – It will surely be something altogether new. I've read Tieck's *Phantasies* – There are so many lovely things in the book, yet there could also be a lot less. The meaning is often spelled out at the expense of the words. I'm more and more beginning to love things that are sober, yet genuinely progressive and stimulating – while his *Phantasies* are always fantastic enough and perhaps they only wish to be

so. Tieck's *Don Quixote* is also underway.⁷⁷ Write to me soon about Ritter⁷⁸ and Schelling. Ritter [Knight] is a knight and we are merely his pages. Even Baader is only his poet.

However, these gentlemen still plainly fail to see the best within nature. Here Fichte will once again put his friends to shame, while *Hemsterhuis* anticipated this *holy* path to physics sufficiently clearly.⁷⁹ Even Spinoza harboured this divine spark of natural understanding. *Plotinus*, perhaps inspired by Plato, first graced the holy sanctuary with genuineness of spirit – and yet no-one after him has again penetrated so far. In numerous ancient writings there beats a mysterious pulse, denoting the place of contact with the invisible world – a coming into life. Goethe will be the *liturgist* of this physics – for he perfectly understands the service in the temple. Leibniz's *Theodicy* has always been a magnificent attempt in this field. Our future physics will achieve *something similar*, yet clearly in a loftier style. If only one had employed another word in so-called physico-theology instead of *admiration!*

However, enough of that – remain but a little devoted to me, and remain in the magical atmosphere which surrounds you, and amid a torrential tempest, amid suffering and fateful people, isolated like a spiritual family, so that no lower needs and cares can attach themselves and oppress you. Pass on this letter to Friedrich, I've only written him a short note, because I'm currently down in the mines a lot, while up on earth I'm plagued by my numerous sober studies. I depart here at Easter and intend to visit you in April. My future life might be highly attractive and fruitful.

Write to me soon – if possible, accompanied by the *Athenaeum*. I've so many things weighing me down at present. After Easter I'll create some deep and fresh air, and emerge again, warming myself early in the year. I can't exist without *love*. Many more really novel and beautiful things in person. Warmest wishes to W[ilhelm] and Auguste.⁸⁰

Your
friend
Hardenberg.

⁷⁷ Ludwig Tieck translated Cervantes's *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605-1615) into German. His translation appeared in Berlin (Unger Verlag) in 4 volumes, between 1799 and 1801.

⁷⁸ The physicist and chemist Johann Wilhelm Ritter. See above note 10.

⁷⁹ Frans Hemsterhuis (1721-1790), Dutch philosopher, adherent of Platonism. Novalis knew Hemsterhuis's philosophical dialogues and writings, which were written in French and partly translated into German by Jacobi and Herder, as early as 1792; he studied them more intensively from the summer of 1797 onward. The notes Novalis made on this intensive reading can be found in HKA 2: 360-378.

⁸⁰ Auguste Böhmer (1785-1800), daughter of Caroline Schlegel with her first husband, Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Böhmer.

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

RECENSIONI – REVIEWS

Antje Arnold, Walter Pape (Hrsg.), *Romantik und Recht. Recht und Sprache, Rechtsfälle und Gerechtigkeit*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2018, pp. 306, ISBN 978-3-11-061207-3.

C'è un assunto alla base del volume curato da Antje Arnold e Walter Pape (*Romantik und Recht. Recht und Sprache, Rechtsfälle und Gerechtigkeit*): che la germanistica sia stata vittima, a partire dal XIX secolo, di un percorso di specializzazione delle varie discipline che inizialmente la componevano. La germanistica si è separata dallo studio della storia e della giurisprudenza, focalizzandosi esclusivamente sullo studio della lingua e della letteratura. Lungo i 18 contributi che compongono questo testo, viene fornito uno squarcio sull'unità alla base di tale settorializzazione indicando la prolificità di una commistione delle discipline. L'ambito preso in oggetto – il Romanticismo – si mostra inoltre particolarmente adatto a tale scopo. Già Frederick Beiser (*The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, Cambridge/London, Harvard UP, 2003, p. 8) e Dalia Nassar al suo seguito (Dalia Nassar, *The Relevance of Romanticism: Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*, Oxford/New York, Oxford UP, 2014, p. 1) avevano sottolineato la necessità di superare la separazione tra letteratura e filosofia al fine di comprendere la *Romantik*, ma attraverso il volume di A. Arnold e W. Pape si aggiunge anche il contributo dello studio delle riflessioni romantiche sul diritto. Linguaggio e legge, storia e diritto, finzione e legislazione, analisi delle facoltà umane e scienza giuridica – questi non sono che alcuni dei nodi che scandiscono l'argomentazione.

Il volume è suddiviso in quattro parti. «Rechtsdenken und Rechtspolitik» è la prima e al suo interno si offre una panoramica dei temi che erano al centro del dibattito filosofico-giuridico all'inizio dell'800. Il primo contributo è di Hans-Peter Haferkamp («Die Funktion des "Volksgeistes" im Rechtsdenken der Historischen Rechtsschule») che illustra l'emergere, tra il 1806 e il 1814, del concetto di 'spirito del popolo' (*Volksgeist*) che da un lato si riferisce ad un'autoregolazione del diritto contro la legislazione Statuale e dall'altro (o meglio, conseguentemente) permetteva di sviluppare una visione del diritto civile nazionale anche in assenza di uno Stato. Il *Volksgeist*, inoltre, consentiva di tenere insieme la lotta giuridica contro lo *jus commune*, a cui

il popolo non si sentiva più legato (p. 6), e l'emancipazione dal *Code civil* napoleonico imposto in alcune regioni della Germania.

Il tema del *Volksgeist* torna anche nel secondo testo («Jacob Grimm und der "Volksgeist"», di Karin Raude) e anche qui si mostra il ruolo di tale concetto nella legittimazione di un diritto nazionale nonostante la divisione territoriale (p. 33). L'A. di questo articolo avvisa che al nome 'spirito del popolo' possano essere associati molti significati, ma soprattutto attraverso l'analisi della filosofia del diritto di Jacob Grimm arriva a distinguere dei punti chiave, come ad esempio l'esteriorità del diritto rispetto ad un processo legislativo astratto o statuale in quanto esso si trova collocato nel popolo stesso (p. 17). A chi debba spettare il compito di interpretare tale *Geist* è il centro dello scontro tra Grimm e il suo maestro Savigny: se per quest'ultimo è la scienza giuridica a giocare un ruolo cardine tra popolo e *Volksgeist*, per Grimm essa non è che un elemento di disturbo in tale relazione (p. 22).

Sul rapporto tra Savigny e il Romanticismo si concentra invece Christoph-Eric Mecke («Friedrich Carl von Savignys Rechtsdenken und die Romantik»). Certamente il padre della scuola storica del diritto non può essere avvicinato al Romanticismo politico più tardo, in quanto questo contrasta convintamente il diritto romano – difeso da Savigny – a favore del diritto medievale tedesco (p. 57). Ciononostante, il pensiero del giovane Savigny, che lascia tracce anche nei suoi sviluppi successivi, è legato alla *Frühromantik*, soprattutto nello scetticismo contro tutto ciò che è dedotto astrattamente dalla sola ragione. (p. 46, 50), nella centralità della *Bildung* per lo sviluppo di un'individualità in grado di sviluppare autonomamente la scienza del diritto e di applicare ad esso una nuova ermeneutica (p. 36).

A chiudere questa prima sezione del testo c'è il capitolo di Christina Marie Kimmel-Schröder («Sinn und Sinnlichkeit – ihr Bedeutungswandel als Rechtswörter»), che ricostruisce brevemente la storia del concetto di 'sensibilità' e di 'senso'. Dall'XI secolo, il *Sinn* indica la forza spirituale, la forza di pensiero, per poi spostarsi ad indicare in modo più ristretto le facoltà della percezione. Se però *Sinnlichkeit* e *Sinn* continuano ad avere una poliedricità semantica (basti pensare ai significati rintracciati dall'A. in Herder) in Schiller e in Fichte il *Sinnenwesen* indica la forza animale presente nell'uomo che costantemente lo porta a contrastare le leggi della ragione. Ed è in questo significato che essi rientrano anche nel lessico giuridico – si veda ad esempio il testo di Grolam, *Grundsätze der Criminalrechtswissenschaft* del 1798.

La seconda sezione del testo («Rechtspraxis um 1800») raccoglie alcuni esempi sia di pratiche giuridiche raccontate da autori romantici sia di procedimenti giuridici che li coinvolsero in prima persona. Il capitolo scritto da Christof Wingerts Zahn («Die Justiz und der Töpfer: Achim von Arnims Patrimonialgerichtsbarkeit») espone il rapporto di Achim von Arnim con la giurisdizione padronale. Per quanto la visione di Arnim sulla giustizia sia vicina ad una posizione liberale (p. 80), egli non rinuncia a vedere delle utilità

nella *Patrimonialgerichtsbarkeit*, in quanto permetterebbe un'amministrazione locale della giustizia che consentirebbe sia una comunicazione immediata tra giudice e imputati sia un adattamento del giudizio alle condizioni specifiche e individuali del caso (p. 90).

Il sesto e settimo capitolo del testo (rispettivamente di Konrad Feilchenfeldt, «Der Studentenstatus des romantischen Autors. Akademisches Bürgerrecht versus souveränes Künstlertum: Zum Beispiel Clemens Brentano» e di Barbara Becker-Cantarino, «Bettina von Arnims Rechtsstreitigkeiten und ihr Nachlass») analizzano due che consentono di analizzare la posizione di due rappresentanti della *Romantik* riguardo al diritto vigente, e non solo. Il primo riguarda lo status di studente utilizzato da Clemens Brentano come scusa per non convolare a nozze; si trattava di uno statuto giuridico a sé e implicava dei diritti civili particolari che però venivano persi in caso di matrimonio. Il secondo caso analizzato riguarda Bettina von Arnim, figura peculiare e interessante perché politicamente informata e contraria alla visione che escludeva le donne dal giornalismo e dal dibattito politico. Proprio per tali posizioni, la sua famiglia ostacolò la pubblicazione a scopo scientifico delle sue lettere private indirizzate al fratello Clemens Brentano.

Su una vicenda giudiziaria particolare si concentra anche Sheila Dickson («Rachel Fanny Antonina Lee vs. Loudoun und Lockhart Gordon: Recht und Gerechtigkeit in Oxford (1804) und in Achim von Arnim's "Mistris Lee" (1809)»), ma questa volta si tratta di un caso che coinvolge una cittadina inglese (Rachel Fanny Antonina Lee), poi trascritta da Achim von Arnim. Tale vicenda è per lo scrittore l'occasione per manifestare la propria critica alla pubblicità di vicende private. Il coinvolgimento del pubblico in tali frangenti fomenterebbe infatti la tendenza a erigersi a giudici delle vicende che riguardano la sfera privata altrui (p. 125).

L'interessante testo di Steffen Dietzsch («Juristisches im Werk von August Klingemann oder: Vom romantischen Umgang mit der Frage: Was darf Satire?») mette in luce alcuni aspetti di un autore meno conosciuto di quelli fino a qui citati, ovvero August Klingemann. L'A. analizza in particolare la posizione dello scrittore romantico riguardo la differenza giuridica tra ingiuria e satira.

Si apre in seguito la terza sezione del testo, «Recht und (poetische) Gerechtigkeit», che indaga il tema della giustizia attraverso alcuni racconti e opere romantiche. Il primo contributo qui è di Christopher Burwick («Rechtsbruch und Rechtsspruch: E.T.A. Hoffmanns "Das Fräulein von Scuderi"»), che attraverso *La signorina Scuderi* di Hoffmann svolge un'attenta analisi del tema proposto per questa parte del libro. Grazie ad un confronto con Kant, l'A. riesce ad esaltare la peculiarità del pensiero dello scrittore romantico, secondo cui se certamente la razionalità deve lottare per affermarsi contro l'arbitrio, dall'altra si unisce uno scetticismo nei confronti

delle facoltà umane che lo portano a concludere che la libertà umana è comunque sempre condizionata.

I due testi successivi (di Antje Arnold, «“damals gab es ein strenges Recht gegen die Zigeuner”: Achim von Arnims “Isabella von Ägypten”» e di Lothar Ehrlich, «“die Befreiung von rechtlosen Gesetzen”: Recht und Gerechtigkeit in Arnims Geschichtsdrama “Marino Caboga”») sono invece dedicati a due scritti di Achim von Arnim attraverso i quali si indaga la sua riflessione politica. Da tali righe emerge un pensatore certo conservatore, ma non reazionario, convinto della necessità di una riforma dell'ordine cetuale tedesco (p. 186) che prenda avvio dalla forza del popolo e non venga imposta da una scuola di giuristi o da un potere centrale (p. 181).

In chiusura di questa terza parte di *Romantik und Recht* Roswitha Burwick («“Was du versprochen hast, das mußt du auch halten”: Recht und Gerechtigkeit im Märchen») trova nell'opera dei fratelli Grimm un materiale per interrogare il rapporto tra giustizia e favole: queste non hanno solo fini pedagogici, ma contribuiscono all'istituzionalizzazione di norme di comportamento.

Nell'ultima sezione del testo («Recht, Sprache und Leidenschaft») gli autori chiariscono il rapporto tra Romanticismo e diritto attraverso gli strumenti o i materiali forniti da scrittori, filosofi o riforme giudiziarie a noi o a loro contemporanei. Friederike von Schwerin-High («Die Rechtsprache zu und in August Wilhelm Schlegels metrischen Shakespeare-Übersetzungen») analizza le ricorrenze di termini giuridici nelle traduzioni schlegeliane di Shakespeare, mentre Jan Wittmann («Urteil und Leidenschaft im “Zerbrochenen Krug”: Kleists Dorfrichter Adam im Lichte des zeitgenössischen Richterbildes») legge *La brocca rotta* di Kleist attraverso la lente della riforma del processo penale in corso attorno al 1800. Secondo Wittman, al centro della commedia si trova infatti il nuovo ruolo del giudice come intermediario tra probabilità e verità, dopo il rifiuto della tortura e prima dello stabilirsi di tecniche criminologiche, entrambi strumenti ritenuti oggettivi per la ricerca del vero (p. 234).

Kleist ritorna anche nel capitolo successivo («Kleists “Zweikampf” – ein Wettstreit der Deutungsmuster des Rechts», di Yasmine Salimi), questa volta messo in fruttuosa relazione con Foucault e le due conferenze del 1973 tenute a Rio de Janeiro (*La vérité et les formes juridiques*) in cui il filosofo francese si occupa dei mezzi utilizzati in campo giuridico per scoprire la verità, ovvero: *épreuve*, *enquête* e *examen*. Secondo l'A., *Il duello* di Kleist è un racconto che confronta e combina la prova (*Probe*) e l'inchiesta (*Untersuchung*).

Norman Kasper («Recht sprechen – Recht lesen. Eichendorffs “Das Schloß Dürande” als juristische Textur und die virtuelle Dimension des Rechts») fornisce un contributo all'interpretazione post-moderna del Romanticismo. Attraverso Roland Barthes l'A. legge la novella *Il castello Dürande*

di Eichendorff in cui la scoperta assenza dell'azione delittuosa porta, dal punto di vista estetico, alla presenza del crimine stesso.

Il volume è infine chiuso da Stefan Nienhaus («Rechtsprechung als Werkzeug des blindwütigen Fanatismus: Die "Tyrannei der Werte" in Tiecks Spätwerk») che utilizza *La tirannia dei valori* di Carl Schmitt per analizzare le ultime opere di Tieck. Così come Schmitt, anche Tieck critica i sistemi politici (in particolare lo Stato) che pretendono di essere custodi di valori oggettivi, applicando in modo automatico le regole che ne derivano: da essi può derivare solo il terrore. Come viene raccontato in *Hexen-Sabbath*, narrazione del risveglio del fanatismo religioso e dell'inquisizione all'interno di una comunità eretta sui principi dell'Illuminismo.

Complessivamente, il testo apre le porte ad una nuova intersezione tra discipline, al fine di comprendere al meglio il Romanticismo e soprattutto le riflessioni sul diritto dei suoi rappresentanti. Unica nota stonata è che, nel coro di voci che partecipano a questo volume, rischia talvolta di sfuggire il filo concettuale (al di là della ripresa, attraverso i vari testi analizzati, del tema del diritto) sottostante al testo. I singoli contributi infatti non sempre riescono a mostrare la commistione di giurisprudenza, germanistica, storia e filosofia del diritto. Ben lungi dal ritenere questo punto come la prova dell'infattibilità del proposito dei curatori del volume, speriamo semplicemente che ritorneranno – attraverso volumi e testi futuri – su questo loro importante obiettivo.

Giulia Valpione

Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, Judith Norman (eds.), *Brill's Companion to German Romantic Philosophy*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2019, pp. 315, ISBN 978-90-04-38822-2.

Il primo Romanticismo Tedesco sta ricevendo negli ultimi anni una grande attenzione da parte della ricerca anglofona. Sono proprio le due curatrici dell'ultimo volume della Brill ad esso dedicato (Elizabeth Millán Brusslan e Judith Norman) a fornire uno scorcio di queste nuove interpretazioni (su cui E. Millán Brusslan si è più lungamente soffermata in *The Revival of Frühromantik in the Anglophone World*, «Philosophy Today», Spring 2005, p. 96-117).

Il volume riesce pienamente nell'intento di destreggiarsi nel difficile compito di tratteggiare le peculiarità del pensiero di Hölderlin, Novalis, Fr. Schlegel e degli altri membri del circolo romantico jenese. Totalmente centrato è inoltre l'obiettivo di sottolineare la profondità filosofica del Primo Romanticismo senza alcuna reticenza nell'evidenziare l'importante ruolo svolto in esso dalla letteratura, sottolineando così la distanza che lo distingue sia dalla *Naturphilosophie* che dall'idealismo.

Lungo le pagine di questo testo emerge una lettura consonante della *Frühromantik* come reazione alla crisi della soggettività cartesiana, verso un rapporto dialogico tra un Io e un Tu contro la dicotomia soggetto-oggetto, a favore di una conoscenza pensata sempre in rapporto con la storia o con gli altri: ogni elemento che riguarda l'uomo, finanche il linguaggio, è il risultato di elaborazioni collettive. E ancora: un Romanticismo contro ogni interpretazione statica della natura, della cultura, della rappresentazione a favore invece della dinamica, di una «multiple identity» (p. 188) e della vita – tutti concetti ricorrenti all'interno del volume.

La portata innovativa del Romanticismo tedesco, data da concetti sviluppati dai suoi membri e tutt'ora ancora non sufficientemente elaborati dalla critica, è sottolineata anche dall'abilità dei vari contributi di porre come interlocutori privilegiati non tanto i grandi interpreti contemporanei del Romanticismo, quanto altre figure di spicco della storia della filosofia. Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Heidegger o Lyotard, prendono il posto in particolare di Manfred Frank e Frederick Beiser e delle loro interpretazioni del Romanticismo, spesso ritenute inconciliabili dalla critica. Su tale dibattito il volume prende comunque posizione all'interno del primo contributo («The Copernican Turn in Early German Romanticism» di Jane Kneller), senza però ritornare una seconda volta sull'argomento. Attraverso le parole di Kneller comprendiamo che il volume si colloca su quella linea interpretativa già di Alison Stone (*Nature, Ethics and Gender in German Romanticism and Idealism*, London/New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, p. 63-68) e di Dalia Nassar (*The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804*, Chicago/London, The University of Chicago Press, 2014, p. 9-19) che cerca di superare il contrasto Beiser-Frank troppo banalmente stigmatizzato in passato come l'opposizione semplicistica tra chi voleva vedere nel Romanticismo una fase dell'idealismo e chi invece lo interpretava come realismo.

Il secondo testo, di Howard Pollack-Milgate («Romantic Views of Language»), analizza l'importanza della riflessione sul linguaggio all'interno del Romanticismo tedesco. Attraverso una chiara panoramica delle prospettive di Herder, dei fratelli Schlegel, Novalis, Schleiermacher e W. Von Humboldt, l'A. evidenzia la messa in crisi da parte dei Romantici del carattere puramente imitativo del linguaggio, il quale assume un'energia propria (p. 45), diventando creativo e mutabile. La parola non solo non è perfettamente aderente all'oggetto, ma immette nel discorso degli elementi non conosciuti nemmeno ai suoi utilizzatori.

John H. Smith, nel terzo capitolo del volume («Religion and Early German Romanticism: the Finite and the Infinite»), apre con una critica alla lettura del rapporto tra finito e infinito nel Romanticismo come di un' *Unendliche Annäherung*. Nella *Frühromantik* tale relazione è infatti piuttosto nei termini di un'intuizione dell'infinito nel finito o di un'identità tra i

due contraddittori reami (p. 60). Da qui l'importanza della religione. Attraverso diversi riferimenti alla filosofia di Niccolò Cusano, l'A. delinea il rapporto del Romanticismo con il divino non come un allontanamento dalla scienza o dalla ragione, ma, al contrario, la religione permette di pensare con rigore la transizione dal finito all'infinito.

In «The Romantic Poetry of Nature: an Antidote to German Idealism's Eclipsing of Natural Beauty», Elizabeth Millán Brusslan mette in guardia gli interpreti dal voler schiacciare il Romanticismo sulla *Naturphilosophie*. Coerentemente con gli intenti dichiarati del testo, l'A. fa proprio il desiderio di emancipare i filosofi romantici dall'immagine di pensatori naïf soggetti ad una sorta di *réverie* poetica, ma allo stesso tempo Brusslan sottolinea l'importanza che tale emancipazione avvenga sottolineando le peculiarità proprie del Romanticismo, al fine di non renderlo una sorta di variazione minore dell'Idealismo o della filosofia della natura. La caratteristica principale della *Frühromantik* consiste secondo l'A. in una «poesia della natura» (p. 98), cioè la presentazione della natura come un processo con cui entrare in relazione attraverso un dialogo «vitalistico» (p. 104) che escluda quindi una dominazione del soggetto su di essa mediante un metodo storico o sistematico.

Il quinto capitolo («The Philosophy of Myth») è di Erwin Cook, che ricostruisce la rinascita del tema del mito alla fine del '700 grazie ad Heyne. È grazie al filologo tedesco che viene compresa la radicale portata concettuale del mito, una modalità di discorso (e non semplicemente come un contenuto narrativo, p. 118) che implica una specifica concezione della coscienza. Dopo un'attenta analisi del problema attraverso Herder (che equipara mito e poesia religiosa), Schiller (secondo il quale il mito è proprio dell'epoca precedente al Cristianesimo e al razionalismo scientifico che hanno lasciato una natura priva di dèi, p. 122) e F. Schlegel (giustamente criticato per non aver colto la differenza tra simbolo e allegoria) l'A. si concentra lungamente su Schelling, il quale considera il simbolo il cuore del mito.

Le trasformazioni della soggettività moderna sono al centro del saggio di Thomas Pfau, che nel suo «Romantic *Bildung* and the Persistence of Teleology» collega il Romanticismo alla crisi, a partire dalla seconda metà del XVIII secolo, dell'idea cartesiana dell'essere umano come agente trasparente e totalmente razionale, in grado di esercitare una giurisdizione metodica sulle proprie intenzioni e sulle rappresentazioni del mondo esterno (p. 143). L'identità del soggetto nel Romanticismo non è data, ma deve bensì essere costruita, adattandosi alla trasformazione nella concezione della ragione: da un modello statico e razionalistico, ad uno dinamico-speculativo (p. 144). Segno di questa trasformazione è il mutamento del ruolo sostenuto dall'errore all'interno della riflessione: nel razionalismo l'errore è da eliminare, estirpandolo attraverso un miglioramento del metodo filosofico astratto permettendo di raggiungere l'obiettivo della filosofia, ovvero la certezza e la verificabilità non lasciando alcuno spazio alla semplice

probabilità (p. 148-149). Nel Romanticismo l'errore è invece il propulsore verso una concezione del rapporto soggetto-oggetto fortemente dinamico e narrativo (si pensi ad esempio a quanto sostenuto da F. Schlegel nelle sue lezioni jenesi sulla *Transzendentalphilosophie*), favorendo anche l'affermarsi di un'idea della vita umana come continua trasformazione, un destreggiarsi nella contingenza e nell'instabilità; in altre parole, si afferma il concetto di *Bildung*, che eredita da Leibniz la ripresa della teleologia (eliminata dalla scienza meccanicistica), utilizzata però dal Romanticismo per ristabilire uno spazio di intelligibilità condivisa che il mondo leibniziano, composto da monadi chiuse ermeticamente, non rendeva possibile (p. 162).

Strettamente collegato al testo di Pfau è il capitolo scritto da Bärbel Frischmann («The Philosophical Relevance of Romantic Irony»), che riprende il tema della *Bildung* come costruzione di un'identità. Coerentemente con tutti gli altri capitoli del testo di Brusslan e Norman, il Romanticismo viene letto come proposizione di un modello dinamico di contro alla stasi. Riprendendo i propri studi precedenti (si pensi al testo da lei curato *Ironie in Philosophie, Literatur und Recht*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2014), l'A. si concentra sul concetto di ironia, che elimina ogni pretesa di una verità o di un senso ultimi, e che esclude ogni potere che si ritiene trascendente (p. 194). L'ironia è centrale per F. Schlegel, per il quale essa porta a definire la filosofia come amore per la conoscenza (p. 181), distante dalla chiusura in un sistema, e implica la *Bildung* non come costruzione di un'identità personale fissa, ma piuttosto come sviluppo di un'identità molteplice (p. 188).

Nel capitolo ottavo («Literary Criticism in the Age of Critical Philosophy» di Judith Norman), si ribadisce uno dei fili conduttori che attraversa l'intero volume: al fine di mostrare la peculiarità del Romanticismo rispetto all'idealismo, più volte si ribadisce il debito della *Frühromantik* nei confronti di Kant, prendendo questo come punto di partenza da cui le due strade filosofiche si sono poi dipanate. Norman sottolinea qui l'eredità kantiana parlando di una 'rivoluzione copernicana' compiuta in particolare da F. Schlegel nell'ambito della critica letteraria. Se fino al tramonto del XVIII secolo la critica aveva il compito di giudicare un'opera nei termini di aderenza o meno ai canoni dell'estetica neoclassica derivante da Aristotele e Orazio (p. 196), grazie al Romanticismo è l'opera stessa a porre un ideale individuale rispetto al quale essa deve essere giudicata: è l'opera d'arte a generare la sua propria critica (p. 200), in una modalità che – riprendendo il famoso studio benjaminiano *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* – manifesta una forma di riflessività priva di soggetto (p. 203).

Susan-Judith Hoffmann in «Fichte and the Early German Romantics» ritorna sul rapporto Romanticismo-Idealismo. In modo originale, al fine di scoprire nuovi possibili legami tra loro, l'A. non recupera quanto i membri del circolo di Jena abbiano ereditato da Fichte, bensì attraversando il testo

fichtiano *Sulla differenza dello spirito e la lettera nella filosofia* – saggio scritto nel 1795 e originariamente destinato alla rivista «Die Horen» – mette in luce l'importanza dell'arte nelle fasi iniziali dell'elaborazione della *Wissenschaftslehre*. L'A. accenna quindi alla possibile interpretazione del rapporto tra le due linee di pensiero avvicinandole senza rendere il Romanticismo una variante dell'Idealismo, bensì sottolineando come alcune opere dell'Idealismo tedesco abbiano una sfumatura “romantica”.

Anche il decimo capitolo («Hegel's Critique of Romantic Irony» di Jeffrey Reid) si occupa del rapporto tra Idealismo e Romanticismo. L'originalità di queste pagine consiste nell'ammettere che se certamente Hegel non rende giustizia della teoria romantica dell'ironia, d'altra parte egli è giustificato a vedere in essa una minaccia per la propria idea di scienza filosofica (p. 242), minaccia che viene neutralizzata non rifiutando l'ironia, ma incorporandola come momento nel movimento del Concetto (p. 253).

Il bel testo di Karl Ameriks («Hölderlin's Path: on Sustaining Romanticism from Kant to Nietzsche») si sposta su una figura non discussa altrove nel volume: Friedrich Hölderlin. Anche qui ritorna la vicinanza dei Romantici a Kant, questa volta nell'ambito pratico. Similmente a Kant, nella *Frühromantik* in generale, e in Hölderlin in particolare, la *Bestimmung* dell'uomo è considerata ancora come un'armonia tra ambiti che vennero considerati separatamente a partire dai filosofi successivi: Hegel vede nell'etica la realizzazione della *Bestimmung* umana, Kierkegaard invece nella religione e Nietzsche, infine, nell'estetica.

Il volume si chiude con Ian Alexander Moore, che in «Homesickness, Interdisciplinarity and the Absolute: Heidegger's Relation to Schlegel and Novalis» studia l'influenza di Novalis e F. Schlegel sull'autore di *Sein und Zeit*, dopo che il suo rapporto con Hölderlin, Schelling e Schleiermacher è già stato più volte analizzato dalla letteratura critica. In particolare, l'A. si concentra sul tema della “nostalgia” come «Trieb überall zu Hause zu sein» (Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, n. 857). Per Novalis lo *Heimweh* può, potenzialmente, essere superato, mentre per Heidegger esso fa parte della nostra finitezza (p. 295).

Il volume si presenta come un insieme coerente di contributi originali e che danno nell'insieme un riassunto discretamente esaustivo del dibattito attuale sul Romanticismo, soprattutto nel mondo anglosassone. Interessante è in particolare la ricorrenza della descrizione della *Romantik* come risposta ad una crisi o ad una trasformazione radicale (crisi della soggettività moderna, trasformazione del sistema capitalista, ecc), anche se qui il tema non è affrontato direttamente. L'unica perplessità emerge dall'avvicinamento, compiuto in alcune pagine del testo, del Romanticismo con la teoria degli anni '60 e '70 del post-moderno; se da un lato tale similitudine necessiterebbe di maggiore approfondimento, dall'altro non credo che essa possa aiutare a

comprendere il valore che la *Romantik* può avere ancora oggi nella discussione filosofica.

Giulia Valpione

Michael Forster, Johannes Korngiebel, Klaus Vieweg (eds.), *Idealismus und Romantik in Jena: Figuren und Konzepte zwischen 1794 und 1807*, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2018, 342 pp. ISBN 978-3-7705-6296-1.

This book contains fifteen essays by some of the leading specialists of classical German philosophy, ranging from up and coming researchers to established and renowned experts; thirteen of the articles are in German, and two in English. As the title indicates, the time-frame covered particularly concerns the period of roughly a dozen years from 1794 up to 1807, and takes the university and town of *Jena* as its chief intellectual and geographical focal point. The book is divided into four main sections. Section I concerns the early romantic constellation around Fichte (especially Novalis). Section II treats Schelling (article by Markus Gabriel) and A. W. Schlegel; and concludes with a lovely and detailed overview of Schleiermacher's Plato translation (by François Thomas). Section III above all examines in three essays the intellectual relationship between Friedrich Schlegel and Hegel; as well as including two thought-provoking and impassioned defences of Hegel's philosophy of consciousness (Klaus Vieweg) and theory of absolute idealism (Sebastian Stein). The final Section IV of the volume is highly original, with essays on the later reception of important figures and issues that are often overlooked in the research on classical German philosophy, including the decisive thinker K. W. F. Solger (Francesco Campana); the relatively neglected constellation between Henry Crabb Robinson and Madame de Staël (James Vigus); the topic of the "given absolute" (Andrew Bowie); and romanticism and conflicts and modernity (Helmut Hühn). This short book review naturally cannot cover every essay in the volume, but will single out and confine itself to a few influential issues and concepts in the intersections between the currents of German idealism and philosophical romanticism around 1800. These intersections were in fact the primary motivation for an international conference originally held in Jena in 2017, and this volume is the expanded result of those proceedings.

Andreas Schmidt's original paper "Fichtes Begriff der 'Einbildungskraft' und seine Maimonschen Ursprünge" seeks to find an answer to the question: what are some of the historical sources of Fichte's conception of the imagination insofar as it hovers between two extremes or apparently contradictory elements that initially are irreconcilable? Schmidt convincingly argues that besides Kant one highly plausible yet little-noticed origin is the

philosopher Maimon; and from the work of Maimon, he then extends the genealogy back to the mathematical thought of Leibniz and Galileo (p. 13). Schmidt maintains that a central publication by Maimon in this respect is his 1794 *Versuch einer neuen Logik*, as well as several of his earlier texts, including the autobiography. Like in Fichte but unlike in Kant, Maimon puts forward a theory of the imagination in conjunction with apparent and real contradictions on the one hand, and as a universalizing faculty related to the mathematical method of fictions, calculus and infinity on the other, issues similarly discussed in Leibniz and Galileo (15-20). Schmidt had commenced his article by noting the reception of the Fichtean hovering of the imagination in Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel (11-12), and concludes it by posing a further intriguing research problem for Novalis research: could it be that the latter's notes on mathematics and the imagination also indicate that he was aware of this mathematical legacy in the philosophy of the imagination (23)?

Suzanne Dürr's contribution, "Fichtes Theorie der Subjektivität", furnishes an outline of Fichte's theory of consciousness in both the 1794/95 *Grundlage* and 1797/98 *New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*. Her reading has at its core the question whether Fichte's model of subjectivity is truly aporetic or not, and if the early romantic alternative is therefore necessary (25). She first analyses the Kantian background to Fichte's theory of absolute I in his 1794/95 *Grundlage*, to the extent it is a self-positing, unified acting and generative agent, and compares it with Fichte's second later exposition in the *New Presentation*, particularly with respect to the issues of circularity and infinite regress, and Dieter Henrich's influential reading (28-33). Her concluding remarks touch on the claim that consciousness in Hölderlin and Novalis must be grounded in a form of pre-reflexive identity, and their view that Fichte's theory of self-consciousness only supplied a partial and incomplete form of this identity (38).

The articles of Marco Aurélio Werle and Kristin Gjesdal respectively examine the aesthetics and philosophy of art of August Wilhelm Schlegel. Werle strives to reconstruct the original idea of A. W. Schlegel's *Kunstlehre*, and to classify it as romantic aesthetics or "philosophy of art with systematic intentions" (73), not to mention to provide an exposition of A. W. Schlegel's "genuine obsession" with the *idea of an origin* (81), and its relation to mythology, language and phantasy (83-85). All these classifications, Werle notes, are not without difficulty, partly on account of issues like August Wilhelm's own brother Friedrich Schlegel's opposition to the idea of an aesthetics, and hence whether it still fits within the overall project of early romanticism (71-72). Werle also points out the natural-philosophical connection of A. W. Schlegel's *Kunstlehre* in the framework of the famous problems of the imitation of nature, manner and style. Not surprisingly, predecessors are Goethe's and K. P. Moritz's seminal essays on these same topics, with A. W. Schlegel, according to Werle, particularly defending an

organic theory of nature and a new understanding of imitation in the domain of art, one which becomes more and more internalized with regard to the outer objects of nature (76).

Kristin Gjesdal's insightful text, "Das Gedankenspiel – A. W. Schlegel zum modernen Drama und romantischer Kritik", firstly recalls the contrast between the incredible general European resonance of A. W. Schlegel's 1808 lectures *On Dramatic Art and Literature*, and their less than enthusiastic reception in academic philosophy. Gjesdal argues for the continuing importance of these 1808 lectures due to their aesthetic methodology, viewing them in relation to the dramas of William Shakespeare, whom A. W. Schlegel felt was a kindred romantic creator, even designating him as a "proto-romantic spirit". A. W. Schlegel of course became greatly admired precisely on account of his own uncanny talent for inhabiting in return Shakespeare's mind and translating his dramas into German. Gjesdal presents Schlegel's efforts to ultimately move beyond an Aristotelian dramatic heritage to develop a new comprehension of romantic drama and a philosophical concept of romantic critique. Here Schlegel's view of "romantic" drama as such is defined as any genuinely modern one that emerges from contemporary modern culture, and has its roots not in the French tradition of theatre (therefore agreeing with Lessing and Herder), but rather the Spanish and English Elizabethan traditions (85-88). Gjesdal also provides an analysis of the three key aesthetic categories of genius, genre and (organic) form found in Schlegel's theory of romantic drama, and particularly sees the latter two as still relevant and useful today (89-96).

Section III of the book contains three essays that directly compare the philosophical thought of Friedrich Schlegel and Hegel. I'll start with the last two essays, before concluding with Michael Forster's. Johannes Korngiebel's essay focuses on one particular year of the Schlegel-Hegel debate – the year 1801, when the two thinkers were both together teaching at the university of Jena. It provides an illuminating and entertaining introduction (181-189) to all the people, theories, philosophies, events and controversies of the year in Jena, including the difficult project of the romantic circle to realise a symphilosophy (187), the clashes between Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel on the one side, and seeds of the later conflict between Schlegel and Hegel on the other. The body of his essay is an extensive discussion of the lasting impact on Hegel of Schlegel's lectures on transcendental philosophy (190-208).

Folko Zander's valuable article "Hegels Kritik am Formalismus Kants und Friedrich Schlegels" undertakes an analysis of Hegel's criticisms and charges of formalism in Kant's practical philosophy and in Friedrich Schlegel's theory of romantic irony, in which formalism signifies for Hegel a specific conceptual deficiency (249). With regard to Friedrich Schlegel, aspects of Hegel's formalism criticism of irony take place in connection with

his critique of Fichte's absolute I (256), as well as in relation to the philosophy of right, where Hegel considers Schlegel's concept of irony as tending not to a genuine ethics or a fruitful understanding of duty but to subjectivism and "empty formalism" (257). Zander concludes with a section on Hegel's response to Friedrich Schlegel and the problem of formalism, in which Hegel's strategy is to lead the philosophical reader from these apparently "dead forms" to a "living unity" by means of the logical methodology and argumentative structure of his own system (258-263).

For Michael Forster, "Friedrich Schlegel was the real genius of German Romanticism" (139). One can perfectly understand that sentiment, particularly when Forster lists all the impressive achievements of Schlegel in the fields of linguistics and hermeneutics, but one could reasonably ask, if Schlegel might not have preferred to give that title to either his brother August Wilhelm or perhaps even more so to Novalis. Forster's highly engaging and sovereign contribution goes to the heart of Hegel's notorious critique of romanticism, and inverts the customary line of influence to show instead Schlegel's impact on Hegel, arguing for a number of anticipations in Schlegel's work of Hegel's later system, including among others: elements of the philosophy of absolute idealism; the synthesis of Spinoza's substance and Fichte's principle of consciousness; the reasons why the infinite substance had to become finite; philosophical thoughts on the whole and the idea of an encyclopaedia (140-142); and an impact with regard to his theory of tragedy (171-180). Forster greatly develops the thesis (143-155) that Friedrich Schlegel's early lectures in Jena from 1800-1801 on transcendental philosophy "introduced three important ideas concerning skepticism and its relation to philosophy which Hegel likewise took over and developed, which similarly came to play central roles in his own philosophy, and which are, moreover, of great intrinsic value" (155). Finally, the centre of Forster's essay contains a long discussion of Schlegel and Hegel in relation to logical principles, syllogistic reasoning, and the logic of C. G. Bardili (also an opponent of Fichte in 1801) that is exceedingly rare in the English-language literature (156-168).

This volume of fifteen essays is an important and stimulating addition to the burgeoning literature on the conjunctions and intersections between the streams of German idealism and philosophical romanticism. Yet the volume still manages to tackle these well-known currents from fresh and neglected angles, furnishing some of the most up-to-date and critical scholarship on this fascinating period in the history of philosophy.

David W. Wood

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

NOTICES – BULLETIN – BOLLETTINO – MITTEILUNGEN

International Workshop: “Aufklärung über Aufklärung – Zur Aktualität der klassischen Deutschen Philosophie”

12-13 December 2019, Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, Munich, Germany

Organisation: Giovanni Pietro Basile, Manja Kisner, Ansgar Lyssy, Michael Bastian Weiß

Speakers: Monika Betzler (LMU München), Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (LMU München), Paul Guyer (Brown University), Marco Ivaldo (Università Neapel), Steffen Martus (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Birgit Recki (Universität Hamburg), Marcus Willaschek (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt), Günter Zöller (LMU München)

Conference Programme: <https://www.aufklaerung2019.philosophie.uni-muenchen.de/programm/index.html>

★

International Workshop: “Art and Knowledge in Classical German Philosophy”

19-20 December 2019, Università degli Studi di Padova, Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia applicate, Padua, Italy

Speakers: Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer (Universität Leipzig), Giovanna Pinna (Università degli Studi del Molise), Barbara Santini (Università degli Studi di Padova), Elisa Ronzheimer (Universität Bielefeld), Giulia Valpione (Università degli Studi di Padova), Gian Franco Frigo (Università degli Studi di Padova), Paolo D’Angelo (Università Roma Tre), Paul Hamilton (Queen Mary University of London), Francesco Campana (Università degli Studi di Padova), Andy Hamilton (Durham University), Giorgia Cecchinato

(Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais), Luca Illetterati (Università degli Studi di Padova).

★

Colloque international : « Raison et sentiments : un débat allemand (1781-1841) »

28-29 mai 2020, Université de Poitiers, France

Speakers: Ugo Batini (Université de Poitiers), Christian Berner (Paris Nanterre), Arnaud François (Université de Poitiers), Miguel Giusti (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), Antoine Grandjean (Paris Sorbonne), Bruno Haas (Paris Sorbonne), François Ottmann (Paris Sorbonne), Alexandra Roux (Université de Poitiers), Birgit Sandkaulen (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak (CNRS), Giulia Valpione (Università degli Studi di Padova), Victor Béguin (Université de Poitiers).

★

Call For Papers: ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR GERMAN IDEALISM AND ROMANTICISM (2020)

11-12 June 2020, Södertörn University Stockholm, Sweden

Call for Papers: “Aesthetics in the Long Eighteenth Century”, see: <https://www.thesgir.org/cfps---conference-announcements.html>

★

Call For Papers: INTERNATIONAL SCHLEIERMACHER CONGRESS (2020) / CONGRES INTERNATIONAL SCHLEIERMACHER (2020)

2-5 June 2020, Paris, France

Call for Papers: “Communication in Philosophy, Religion, and Society” / « La communication. Philosophie, religion, société », see:

Venue/ Lieu/ Luogo/ Ort: Université Paris IV Sorbonne (2 June 2020); Université Nanterre (3 June 2020); Institut Protestant de Théologie Paris, IPT (3-4 June 2020)

Organisation: Université Paris Nanterre (Christian Berner); Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Sarah Schmidt); Centre Georg

Simmel-EHESS/CNRS (Denis Thouard); Internationale Schleiermacher Gesellschaft

Call for Papers in English and French on the Website of the Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft: <http://schleiermacher-gesellschaft.theologie.uni-halle.de/en/>

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XXXIII. Internationaler Hegel-Kongress der Internationalen Hegel-Gesellschaft / 33rd International Hegel Congress 2020 of the International Hegel Society

23-26 June 2020, Warschau, Polen / Warsaw, Poland

Theme: “Hegel und Freiheit / Hegel and Freedom”

Keynote Speakers: Axel Honneth (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Sozialforschung / Columbia University, New York), Walter Jaeschke (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Robert B. Pippin (University of Chicago), Violetta Waibel (Universität Wien), Birgit Sandkaulen (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Ewa Nowak (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan), Maxi Berger (Universität Oldenburg)

Conference Website: <https://hegel2020.uw.edu.pl/home>