

Symphilosophie

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“Symphilosophizing”

Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel after 250 Years

*Laure Cahen-Maurel**

Nicholas Saul, Johannes Endres (eds.), *Ich liebe Deine Liebe. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Schlegel und Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis). Eine Ausstellung zum 250. Geburtstag der beiden Dichter*, Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Francfort, Göttinger Verlag der Kunst, 2022, 192 pp. ISBN 978-3-945869-13-0

Walter Zimmermann (ed.), *Novalis ABC Buch. Das „Allgemeine Brouillon“*. *Materialien zur Enzyklopädistik*, neu geordnet nach Novalis eigenen Klassifizierungen mit Zeichnungen von Nanne Meyer, Berlin, Matthes & Seitz Berlin, 2022, 312 pp. ISBN 978-3-7518-0366-3

The neologism ‘symphilosophy’ has been fateful. It has now passed into use in the ordinary language of philosophical and literary culture. Twenty years ago, Denis Thouard edited a volume of collected essays entitled, *Symphilosophie: F. Schlegel à Iéna*.¹ It contributed to the success of the concept of symphilosophy in the field of criticism by putting a vivid spotlight on this practice springing from the friendship between Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. There are other examples of a profound friendship between two philosophers, such as Montaigne’s with La Boétie, author of the *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* (1548). We recall Montaigne’s famous phrase for talking about La Boétie: “parce que c’était lui, parce que c’était moi” (because it was him, because it was me).² But the elective affinity between Novalis and Schlegel is unique with respect to the joint activities that it produced. Denis

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¹ Denis Thouard (ed.), *Symphilosophie: F. Schlegel à Iéna* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), with texts by Ernst Behler, Christian Berner, Donatella di Cesare, and Denis Thouard.

² Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, Livre I, Ch. 28, “De l’amitié”.

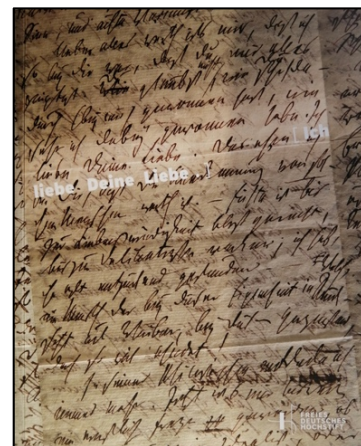
Thouard illustrates this point by referring to their shared project of an encyclopaedia. This project sought to overcome the fragmentation and heterogeneity of knowledge and allow for permutations of different points of view. This was done in order to satisfy the symphilosophical requirements of synthesis and shared intellectual work.

The two publications under review have appeared in the year 2022 to commemorate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the births of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, who were both born in 1772. These books provide an opportunity to reconsider the above central topics of German romanticism, namely, symphilosophy and encyclopaedism, and to make a brief assessment of the state of the editions and selected translations of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. Researchers who make an effort to return to the original sources acknowledge the valuable work of editing and translating texts. It is therefore important to give an account of them.

1. “Symphilosophy with Hardenberg. In letters.”

Even though the term symphilosophy appears more frequently in the writings of Friedrich Schlegel than Novalis, it is difficult to establish with certainty which of the two actually coined this neologism. That said, the written correspondence they exchanged allows us to observe the intellectual evolution and concrete practice of the joint philosophizing in these two romantic thinkers. The recent exhibition *‘Ich liebe Deine Liebe’. - Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Schlegel und Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis)* (‘I love your love.’ – The correspondence between Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis)) attempted to highlight precisely this form of shared collaboration. It was held at the new Deutsches Romantik-Museum in Frankfurt, from April 26 to September 8, 2022.

This event deserves to be praised not just for its own sake but for resulting in an important addition to the textual corpus, the exhibition catalogue. The exhibition displayed seven years of correspondence between the two friends, from 1793 until 1800. They had first met at the University of Leipzig one year before, in 1792. This material is essential for better understanding the idea of ‘romanticism’, an intellectual category that was under constant construction. In terms of quantity, the exhibition offered the most extensive presentation ever of the handwritten manuscripts of the correspondence held by the Freies Deutsches Hochstift. Fifty-four letters, plus two



copies of letters. Accordingly, it showcased fifty-six of the sixty-two extant letters (out of probably one hundred in total) that were exchanged by the two romantic thinkers. Twenty-five of the sixty-two letters are from Novalis, the other thirty-seven are from Schlegel. Thus, the number of letters preserved on both sides is sufficiently balanced to make this correspondence a proper object of study. From a qualitative point of view, this correspondence goes beyond mere social niceties and the purely biographical dimension: it unquestionably belongs to the domain of romantic philosophy itself. The letters belong the new genre of philosophical writing advocated by the romantics, while epistolary writing as such is the main impetus for their practice of *symphilosophizing*.

Published by Göttinger Verlag der Kunst, *Ich liebe Deine Liebe* is much more than a gorgeous exhibition catalogue. It additionally achieves the goal of restoring an intellectual prestige to the correspondence, which can often be undervalued in philosophical studies on romanticism. The musical score as it were of the symphilosophizing carried out by Novalis and Schlegel veritably resounds from its pages. The book is co-authored by the curators of the exhibition, who are two renowned specialists of German Romanticism: Nicholas Saul, Professor of German Literature and History of Ideas at Durham University and current President of the International Novalis Society; and Johannes Endres, Professor of Literature and History of Art at the University of California at Riverside, who has written and edited a textbook on the life and work of Friedrich Schlegel, published by Metzler.

The catalogue’s 192 pages are arranged in a chronological thread. This thread is divided into six biographical epochs called “episodes”³ and these epochs are interspersed with extracts from the correspondence which are commented upon by the editors. The book receives its originality from the fact that within this linear presentation of the letters the episodes still remain open to a thematic path. The headings of these six biographical episodes are i). University Studies and Early Grief, ii). Civil Vocation and Literary Calling, iii). Surfeit of Life and Polemics, iv). Symphilosophy and Epistolary Exchange, v). Encyclopaedia and Bible, vi). Illness and Departure. While some of the topics covered include: the writer’s craft, criticism, philosophy, science, republicanism, ancient Greece, women, and so on. Each page has a distinctive layout: a topic is extracted from a letter and commented upon by Nicholas Saul and Johannes Endres. The commentary is frequently embellished by a rich colour iconography that further brings to life the contents of

³ The exhibition was organized into six successive times, showing each time to the public a different ‘episode’ in the evolution of this epistolary material.

the handwriting – e.g. we find well-known contemporary portraits (Caroline Böhmer, Dorothea Veit, Sophie von Kühn, Julie von Charpentier et al); various paintings, drawings, or engravings (such as Martin Schongauer's *Saint John the Evangelist in Patmos*); as well as documents from the period (frontispieces and pages from first editions etc.). However, the main bulk of the catalogue (144 pages) is devoted to a commentary of the letters. The appendix contains a transcription of thirty selected letters.

The book is not a philosophical commentary on the correspondence (that's not its purpose), but it still manages to highlight how much these letters are a kind of laboratory of thought, opening up fresh lexical and conceptual creations. We discover other examples of neologisms invented by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis that did not become as well known as the word symphilosophy. For instance, the neologism *epichronism* created by Novalis: the term means something like an extension or filling out of the present time, in opposition to the regressive 'anachronism' where a fact is placed before its date (p. 47). This recalls the powerful extension that Walter Benjamin's concept of 'actuality' (in his *Theses on the Concept of History*) gave to the romantic idea of experiencing the intensity and density of the historical present. It becomes associated with the concept of elasticity, in contrast to the quantitative and mechanical conception of an empty and homogeneous physical time.

In the letters, the term 'symphilosophy' inaugurates an entire series of lexical forms with the same prefix *sym-*: there is 'sympoiesis', 'sympraxis', 'symphysics', 'symorganization', 'symevolution', etc. 'Symphilosophy' is first used in the correspondence and occurs the greatest number of times there. After a latent period of two years between 1794 and 1796 when the letters between Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis were interrupted, the term symphilosophy first appears in the letters of September 1797 and May 1798 when they started writing to each other again.

Symphilosophy arose out of the two friends' earlier practice of *fichtisiren*, which is a verb referring to their joint discussions of Fichte's philosophy in Jena in the winter of 1796. After this reading of the first published version of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Friedrich Schlegel wanted to extend their symphilosophizing to the field of writing, especially within the framework of his new journal, the *Athenaeum*. Under Schlegel's pen, the neologism acquires a philological slant. He writes to Novalis on 26 September 1797:

I am impatiently looking forward to your philosophical communications. Even though *symphilosophy* is the true name for our association, don't be parsimonious and only restrict it to this field. - It would be

wonderful if I could also render you *diaskeuastēs* services in philosophy.
(p. 166; commentary p. 84)

That is, Schlegel is offering Novalis his services as a scribe, copyist, editor, and compiler. But it is the correspondence that will become the proper place of symphilosophy. The fourth episode of the exhibition catalogue (Symphilosophy and Epistolary Exchange) especially illustrates this point. Schlegel writes again to Novalis on May 28, 1798:

Doesn't the epistolary form suit you more for your philosophical essays and other pieces? If you like the idea of an epistolary symphilosophy, I'll put together a plan; of course, in order to promote freedom and not to restrict it. (p. 171)

During the following summer, Schlegel jots down this passage in his notebooks: “Symphilosophy with Hardenberg. In the form of letters. He's a magician; I'm merely a prophet.”⁴ From 1798 onwards, their ‘epistolary symphilosophy’ intensifies in the context of joint reflections on the projects of an encyclopedia and a new ‘Bible’ (see episode 5).

It is striking to note while reading the correspondence how the relationship between the disciple and master eventually becomes reversed. At the beginning of their letters, Novalis describes himself as a student whose mind is still developing and who has lost his philosophical innocence under the influence of Friedrich Schlegel. In the first half of August 1793, for example, Hardenberg confides to Schlegel: “For me, you have been the high priest of Eleusis. Through you, I have learned to know heaven and hell; to taste the fruits of the tree of knowledge” (p. 149). Friedrich Schlegel was of course a philologist by training. With the publication of his first writings on Greek poetry in 1794, he embarked on a career as a literary historian and critic. Novalis considers himself to have been educated by Schlegel in this historical sense. After Schlegel renewed the contact between them, Hardenberg replied on 8 July, 1796: “You know how much you have contributed to my education in the past. Even the most ordinary gratitude does not forget its master. Every thought in which I tested my historical culture is linked to your memory” (p. 154).

A concrete example of Friedrich Schlegel's historical culture is his review of Kant's pamphlet *On Perpetual Peace*. He published this review in August 1796 in the journal *Deutschland* under the title *Essay on the Concept of*

⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, Summer 1798. Cited in *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs* (= HKA), ed. by P. Kluckhohn, R. Samuel, H.-J. Mähl, G. Schulz *et al.* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960–), vol. 4, p. 621.

Republicanism. In his essay, Schlegel takes Kant's thesis a step further by defending a truly democratic form of the Republic based on the model of ancient Greece. It is a vision of peace based on fraternity. Schlegel's historically informed conception anticipates Novalis's later vision of a universal revolution – a future golden age – which if not utopian, is at least forward-looking and encompasses politics, morality, art, and science.

Beyond the fields of history and politics, the letters reveal that Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis mutually guided one another in difficult philosophical readings of Fichte, Kant, Schelling, as well as Hemsterhuis, Plato, and Spinoza. We can detect the image of Ariadne's thread, which she gave to Theseus to help guide him through Daedalus's labyrinth, behind Novalis's following June 1797 words to Friedrich Schlegel:

Fichte is the most dangerous thinker I know. He firmly enchants a person within his circle. [...] You have been elected to protect from Fichte's magic everyone who strives to think for themselves. I've personally experienced how bitter this understanding can be. I am indebted to you alone, and to the idea I have of your free and critical mind, for the many hints and signs that have helped me to orient myself in this frightful labyrinth of abstractions. (pp. 164-165)

Here Novalis again places himself under the aegis of Friedrich Schlegel by acknowledging that he owes his freer reading of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* to his friend's independence of spirit. Yet it is precisely during the earlier period of their symphilosophy when they are Fichticizing together, especially after Novalis had written his *Fichte Studies*, which reveals that Novalis is “clearly the true philosophical mind of the two” (p. 7), in the words of Nicholas Saul and Johannes Endres. Here the two editors are in agreement with Manfred Frank, for whom Novalis's studies on Fichte's *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794 / 1795) are the most philosophical text in the entire romantic corpus. Thus, whereas Novalis placed Schlegel in the position of master at the beginning of their correspondence, from 1797 onwards it is Friedrich Schlegel who now takes on the role of the pupil. He writes to Novalis on May 5: “Wouldn't it be nice if we could sit alone together for a few days and philosophize, or as we used to say, *Fichticize*” (letter transcribed p. 163). And on June 21: “I'm sure I could learn as much from you and your writing as I've learned from Fichte.”⁵

⁵ Cited by Nicholas Saul and Johannes Endres in the Introduction to the catalogue, p. 7. Cf. *Friedrich Schlegel – Kritische Ausgabe seiner Werke* (= KFSA), ed. Ernst Behler, Jean-Jacques Anstett, and Hans Heichner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958–), vol. II, p. 374.

But what the correspondence ultimately shows is the extent to which their symphilosophical thinking is nourished as much by tensions and divergences in opinion as it is by convergences. These “ambivalences of symphilosophy” are underlined by Nicholas Saul and Johannes Endres (p. 86). As early as August 1793 the two friends saw themselves advancing on the same road, but in opposite directions: Friedrich Schlegel in the direction of the east, Novalis towards the west (p. 39). Five years later they are essentially travelling on two different paths. Friedrich Schlegel talks about their “dualism of symphilosophy”⁶ in a crucial letter of 2 December 1798, emphasizing in particular the major differences between his own and Novalis’s conceptions of encyclopedism and a new ‘Bible’: while the Bible project has an inherently religious aim for Schlegel, Novalis’s new Bible will be at once scientific, philosophical, and literary.

2. Learning to Read the Universe. Novalis’s ABC Book

Unlike the correspondence, which can be conveniently presented in a strictly chronological fashion, Novalis’s thousand or so preparatory notes written in 1798-1799 for his “scientific Bible”, which have come down to us under the title *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (The General Draft), raise the question of their internal organization. Novalis himself had not entirely fixed the final composition of these pages, which then became dispersed at his death. Apparently, Schlegel wasn’t able to play here the symphilosophical role of the *diaskeuastēs*, by taking on the task of rereading the drafts, extracting and collecting notes deemed suitable for publication, or rejecting those of lesser value. The *Brouillon* is a set of more or less developed heterogeneous notes. The text moves without any apparent progression from the sciences of nature to the sciences of the spirit, from the principles of matter to the principles of human intelligence, from terrestrial realities to spiritual realities, and vice-versa. However, Novalis himself had actually foreseen a more semantically appropriate organization for this initially confusing corpus. Towards the end of October 1798, the poet-philosopher began to order these notes and classify them with specific subject headings, such as chemistry, medicine, astronomy, cosmology, theory of the future, theory of education, encyclopedistics, and many others. But the classification of this mass of notes was never completed by Novalis. Nor did he alphabetically arrange or number the entries; the numbering was added by later editors. Of the 1151 notes, 643 of them are

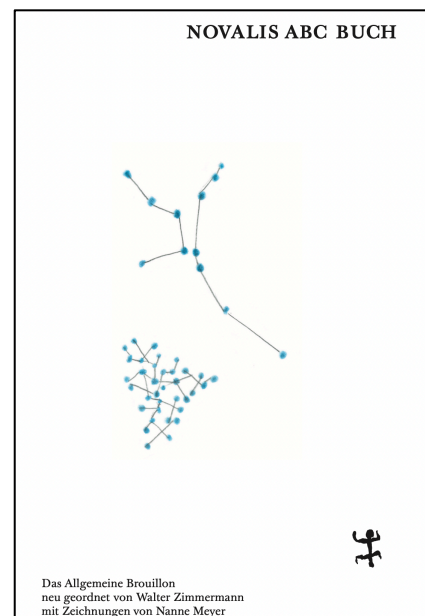
⁶ Friedrich Schlegel, letter to Friedrich von Hardenberg, 2 December 1798, KFSa XXIV, 206.

listed under subject headings; that is to say, approximately only half the notes which make up the *Brouillon*.

Novalis broke off his work of classifying the entries and we will probably never know what he had in mind as the text's final form. Both in terms its method and content, the *Brouillon* is still awaiting a comprehensive interpretation. And the editor of a text such as this, aware that the traditional meaning of the word 'encyclopedia' does not altogether capture Novalis's program, would have no other choice than to publish these materials in the chronological order in which they were written. This was Hans-Joachim Mähl's approach in the third volume of *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs* (HKA) – the historical and critical edition of Novalis's work.

Fifty-seven years after the first critical edition in the HKA, the contemporary German composer Walter Zimmermann has attempted something new, and taken up again the thread of the encyclopedia project at the point where Novalis interrupted it. Under the title *Novalis ABC Buch*, published by Matthes & Seitz Berlin, Zimmermann has edited a partial reprint of *Das allgemeine Brouillon: Materialien zur Enzyklopädistik*. Resulting from a collaboration with the Germanist Josef Schreier, who wrote the introduction to the volume, and the visual artist Nanne Meyer, the book is a 'total' work in the sense of an encyclopedia written in words, but as we shall see, it is also a work in images and sounds. This is because in Zimmermann's mind, a fresh presentation of the scientific considerations of the *Brouillon* can allow it to serve as a matrix for transposing and transcribing textual notations into musical structures.

Walter Zimmermann, whose reputation is well established, belongs to a line of composers who have an intimate bond with philosophy, which is founded on a personal questioning of the work of certain of their favorite authors. He shares a continuity in this field with John Cage. This editorial work is not Zimmermann's first attempt. He also published in 2022 with Suhrkamp a collection of reflections from Wittgenstein's posthumous papers on musical experience and the limits of language, especially philosophical



discourse, for describing this musical experience.⁷ In addition to Novalis and Wittgenstein, Nietzsche is another thinker whose work Walter Zimmermann has tackled from the perspective of music, in a volume of aphorisms entitled *Afrikanische Heiterkeit - Nietzsche zur Musik* (Beginner Press).

But Zimmermann is much more than a person who has edited Novalis’s work. A certain idea is particularly inspiring to him: it is the idea of the hovering of the imagination that oscillates between two extremes. In Novalis’s poetic language: the “light-point of oscillation” (*Lichtpunkt des Schwebens*) from which “all reality radiates.”⁸ This idea is Fichtean in origin, and where the movement and work of the productive imagination strives to overcome contradictions in the world, to reconcile the ideal and the real. The term ‘encyclopedistics’ is another neologism coined by Novalis in the *Brouillon*. It designates a method that is likewise based on this synthesizing work of the imagination. Encyclopedistics is not merely a manner of organizing scientific knowledge but a method of extending it by discovering things that are still unknown.⁹ Walter Zimmermann has creatively seized upon this principle of indeterminacy to open up another possible compositional path: he transposes the *Schweben* of the productive imagination into a compositional process that he calls “non-centered tonality.” – He theorized and experimented with this process in a cycle entitled *Sternwanderung* (1982-1984), and again in the 2013 piece, *Novalis-Fragment*.¹⁰ *Sternwanderung* (Star Wandering) set to music passages from Novalis’s novel of the blue flower, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

Tonality is to Western classical music what grammar is to speech: it is a system that prescribes a priori determinations in the moving and ephemeral flux that is the matter of sound. It confers regulated functions on the notes, and determines stable relationships between fixed values (the different degrees in the pitch of a sound) and privileged intervals. The language of tonality draws a measured arrangement, a general scheme of tension and resolution, consisting of consonances and dissonances, which for the ear are to be related to a tonal center. The compositional practice of “non-centered

⁷ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Betrachtungen zur Musik. Aus dem Nachlass zusammengestellt von Walter Zimmermann auf der Basis der Transkriptionen des Wittgenstein-Archivs an der Universität Bergen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2022).

⁸ Novalis, *Fichte-Studies*, edited and translated by Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), frag. 555, p. 164.

⁹ For further details on this point, see Laure Cahen-Maurel, “Vers une ‘science totale’ : l’encyclopédistique vivante de Novalis”, *Klesis* 42 (2018): 79-109.

¹⁰ These two pieces can be freely listened to on the SoundCloud website at the following links: <http://home.snafu.de/walterz/07.html>; and <https://soundcloud.com/user-985460328/novalis-fragment>.

tonality” does not consist in abandoning this musical grammar. On the contrary, it aims at attaining “a kind of hovering pan-tonality”. That is to say, to let the music “flow in new directions” and the ear “hover between different centers” of attraction, without resolution or refocusing on a single dominant center.¹¹

Zimmermann explains in the preface to the *Novalis ABC Buch* that this new edition of the *Brouillon* continues an initiative by the composer and musicologist Rainer Riehn. Inspired by John Cage’s proposal entitled *Européras* (1987), a musical collage in which the selection of elements was not made by the composer but by chance, Riehn had the idea in 1987-1990 of composing a small compilation of Novalis’s main thoughts on the topic of chance, which the *Novalis ABC Buch* reprints in an appendix (pp. 281-285). Nevertheless, though placed under the paradoxical sign of romantic philosophy that must “systematize systemlessness”¹², Zimmermann’s editorial appropriation of the *Brouillon* is still rather radically different in spirit to Riehn’s initiative. Zimmermann defends the idea of a system where an intelligibility holds in the relation between the parts. His view is diametrical to an opinion still prevalent in the research that the form of Novalis’s *Brouillon* project is characterized by a postmodern conception in which its meaning is marked by illogic, fragmentation, and chaos. The composer writes: “The idolatry of the fragment in Novalis is a modern aesthetic category that has been projected onto early romanticism” (p. 7). We fully agree with him that the reflections in the *Brouillon* are not fragments *per se* but a set of recurring entries or classifications. They should be viewed as evidence that Novalis was certain of the sufficiency rather than the insufficiency of our human attempts to rationalize in the face of the complexity of what exists.

In this respect, Zimmermann prefers to place his new *Brouillon* edition under the auspices of the rationalism of the French Enlightenment, opting for a presentation that treats the subjects in the manner of Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*. Accordingly, the classifications of the subject headings that were created by Novalis are arranged in the *Novalis ABC Buch* in alphabetical order. Hence, the subjects are not selected at random (or

¹¹ Walter-Wolfgang Sparrer, *Ursache und Vorwitz. Walter Zimmermann im Gespräch mit Richard Toop* (Hofheim: Wolke, 2019), 147; cited by José L. Besada and Moreno Andreatta in: “...Die Musik in immer neue Richtungen fließen... : Walter Zimmermann et les carrés magiques”, in: Pierre Michel, Moreno Andreatta, José Luis Besada (eds.), *Les jeux subtils de la poétique, des nombres et de la philosophie. Autour de la musique de Walter Zimmermann* (Paris: Hermann, 2021), 141.

¹² Novalis, *Fichte Studien* (1795 / 1796), frag. 648, HKA 2: 289; Novalis, *Fichte-Studies*, p. 187.

under the sign of chance, like in Riehn), nor are they ordered according to some kind of an externally enforced logic, as was the case with many compilations of the *Brouillon* prior to the HKA. That kind of external logic would be similar to the case in music where the system of tonality prescribes determinations for the musical work from the outside. Zimmermann’s edition, in contrast, only includes those entries for which Novalis assigned a classificatory subject heading, i.e. up to entry number 643 in the HKA; the final entries 644 to 1151 are omitted, in order to avoid assigning any kind of extraneous classification to the source material. Furthermore, if several entries fall under the same subject heading (e.g. under mathematics or physics), then the chronological order of the historical-critical edition is still carefully adhered to within the entries themselves. The numbering of the HKA entries has also been retained, and the work is accompanied by a table of concordance between the new arrangement and the critical edition. The work, therefore, partly circumvents H.-J. Mähl’s rejection of any other presentation than a strictly chronological one. Indeed, according to the specialist Mähl, a chronological ordering is the only form that is representative of the semantic proximities and interconnections intended by Novalis.

This alphabetical classification of the entries not only places the work in the encyclopedia tradition of the French rationalists, but makes it more convenient to consult. It should not be thought that this choice is the result of a formulaic choice on the part of the editor (for the volume of Wittgenstein’s considerations on music is similarly in the form of an ABC book). Zimmermann’s edition shows that this type of alphabetical arrangement is thoroughly appropriate for the *Brouillon*. We only have to recall Novalis’s statement in the Teplitz Fragments, where the term “alphabet book” (*Abc-Buch*) is explicitly used: “The *supreme book* perhaps resembles an alphabet book.”¹³ As Josef Schreier recalls, there is an analogous structure between an elementary book spelling out the letters of the alphabet and Novalis’s project of a new scientific Bible. The latter was the ideal of an encyclopaedia. It aimed to be an absolute and total book unfolding on every level of being and encompassing every field of knowledge. A book for learning to decipher the silent language and grammar of the book of nature in all its diversity. We still have to learn to read and understand the language of the universe, since “it is not only the human being that speaks – the universe also

¹³ Novalis, *Teplitzer Fragmente*, fragment 82, HKA 2: 610.

speaks – everything speaks – infinite languages.”¹⁴ This signifies that it is also possible to find an ordering of universal simplicity for the complex realities that the *Brouillon* attempts to approach.

This ABC book for deciphering this complexity of existence runs from “A” to “Z”. The first entry under A is a general remark (*Allgemeine Bemerkung*) on the *vignette* as an art form, with the last under Z a pertinent reflection on the psychological theory of the future (*[Psychologische] Zukunftslehre*). The vignette is at once microscopic and microcosmic. This particular reflection on the vignette that opens the *Novalis ABC Book* is the image of a flower. Here the earthly flower’s pollen and calyx become associated with the sky or heavens, or the microcosm with the macrocosm (*Pollen – Blütenstaub* – is also the title of Novalis’s first 1798 collection of fragments). Let’s quote this first opening remark:

All ash is *pollen* – the calyx is heaven.¹⁵

This image under A evokes the metamorphosis of the living, eternal rebirth of nature, while at the other end of the journey under Z, the book closes with another series of metamorphoses, this time on a historical level. The ultimate metamorphosis is one linked to human consciousness: the metamorphosis of the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), a faculty of the internal sense, into an external and internal power, instead of being simply a negation of exteriority. Was the trajectory that now emerges from this alphabetical reading of the *Brouillon*, from nature to history, from the past to the future, from the physiological to the psychological, originally envisaged by Novalis himself? If the answer to this question necessarily eludes us, the fact remains that such a reading does not cancel the connections of a strict chronological order. On the contrary, Walter Zimmermann’s edition has the merit of not establishing a hierarchy between the entries, each of which might constitute an autonomous center. This is evident in the visual layout of the book, where only one entry is printed on each page. It allows the reading to oscillate between opposing directions, and the meaning to hover in an in-between space, where everything is still indeterminate.

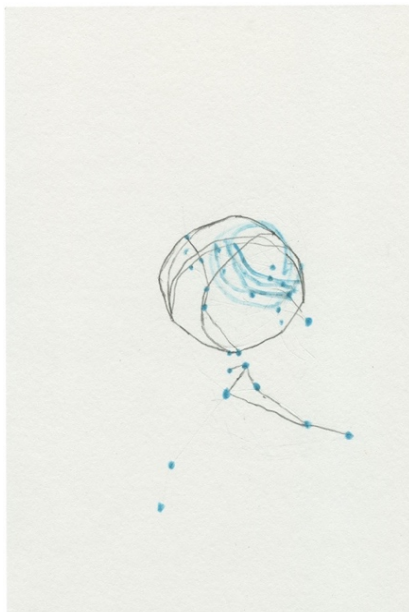
Fully exploring the possibilities of an alphabet book, this edition furthermore juxtaposes, like vignettes, numerous original drawings by Nanne

¹⁴ *Novalis ABC Buch*, p. 95. Cf. *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 143, HKA 3: 267-268; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, edited and translated by David W. Wood (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25. Cf. *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 339, HKA 3: 301; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 51.

Meyer, in graphite and blue pencil on paper, with Novalis’s own words. The technique is distinctive of the style of this German artist, who is well-known in the field of contemporary art, notably for her series *Wandlungen* (Transformations) and *Kartografie* (changing maps into portraits, and mapping spirits, animals, the cosmos...). Nanne Meyer’s work favours the medium of drawing to embody – or bear in its materiality – the fluctuating process of the more or less conscious games of her mind, which combine perception, experimentation, and free association, prompted by the evocation of a word. In the *Novalis ABC Buch*, the delicate motifs of these drawn vignettes fill the empty space in the lower part of the page when the written alphabetical entries are brief.

In addition to the meaning of the concepts that hover in the *Brouillon*, there is a sensitive figuration that exceeds conceptualization. It oscillates between figuration and abstraction. As the artist Nanne Meyer writes in a note: “The drawings place before our eyes what resonates in the text beyond language, what cannot be expressed in words, but is present nonetheless” (p. 11). Consider, for instance, the entry listed under the heading THEORY OF THE EARTH. It reads: “*Classifications of the earth. Philosophical and poetic geography. Historical geography is the specialized geography. Continents. Fictions of astronomy. Constellations. Art of measuring light. Couldn’t we calculate distances according to the average strength of light?*”¹⁶ The drawing



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visually express this idea of the earth’s measurement. Black lines, like longitudinal classifications, stretch across the surface of the globe, extending from one pole to the other. Blue pencil lines, encircle the northern hemisphere of the globe, further marking the world’s regions. But the blue shoots beyond the sphere of the earthly globe to form reference points as it were of stars in the heavenly constellations. Or take the entry headed THEORY OF THE SPIRIT, which

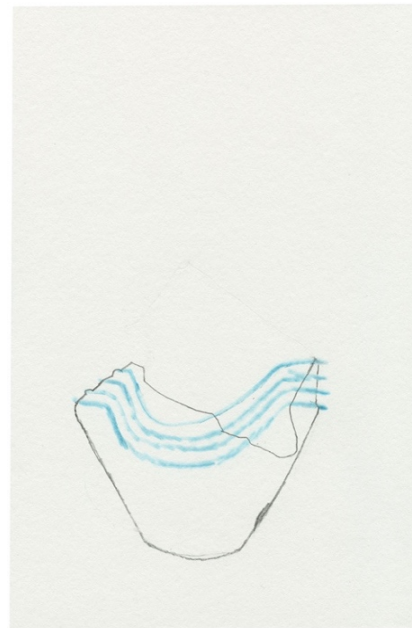
contains the following reflection: “True innocence – is absolute *elasticity* – not to *overpower*.”¹⁷ This entry and accompanying drawing are in the spirit of the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73. Cf. *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 107, HKA 3: 260; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86. Cf. *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, entry 188, HKA 3: 273; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, 29.

Dutch philosopher Hemsterhuis. They interlink the moral consciousness of the human being (innocence) with an idea from mechanical nature (elasticity). In this case, this elasticity of consciousness designates the positive flexibility of human feeling and not a negative lack of moral rigour. Like the distended blue threads of Nanne Meyer's drawing, innocence does not seek to dominate another person's space, but calmly reposes inside the volume with its black contours.

For all the reasons above, Walter Zimmermann's proposed solution to the problem of how to internally organize Novalis's *Brouillon* is an extremely stimulating, effective, and judicious attempt. We warmly recommend this beautiful volume, which with its thoughtful composition, musical allusions, and evocative drawings, is a microcosmic *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art in its own right.



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3. Assessment and Perspectives

Besides these two new commemorative publications, the last seventy years have yielded a rich balance sheet in the reception of the work of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, both in the field of critical research and in the domain of publishing. Without any claim at all to exhaustively, we will confine ourselves here to a brief assessment of the state of their editions and outline some future perspectives.

First of all, it should be noted that the critical and historical editions of their respective works are both on the verge of being completed. The critical edition of Friedrich Schlegel's writings, the *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* (KFSA), published by Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, was launched in 1958 under the initiative of Ernst Behler, with the collaboration of Jean-Jacques Anstett and Hans Eichner. The Historical Critical Edition (HKA) of Novalis's *Schriften* (Writings) was begun two years later in 1960, published by Kohlhammer Verlag, and edited by Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel. Since then, thousands of pages of texts have become accessible to scholars and many crucial discoveries have been made.

Starting with Friedrich Schlegel. Of the 35 volumes planned for the KFSA, 31 have been published to date. It not only contains the entire poetic,

critical, and philosophical work published by Schlegel during his lifetime, but also the voluminous *Nachlaß* or posthumous papers, which include the numerous notebooks written during the years of his philosophical apprenticeship. It also has more than half the general correspondence of the couple Friedrich and Dorothea Schlegel, up until her death in 1839. Here it is worth mentioning the publication this year of the letters they sent and received during the war of liberation against Napoleon (1811-1814). The last four divisions of the KFSA contain two-thirds of the material from Friedrich Schlegel’s various editing and translation projects. The latter include his collection of historical memoirs and romantic poems from the French and German Middle Ages. The editions of his translations from the Greek, French and Spanish, are currently being prepared. Andreas Arndt has now taken over from Ernst Behler, Jean-Jacques Anstett and Hans Eichner. A new online edition available on the website of the publisher Schöningh is welcome news for the research.

The Novalis HKA edition is not far behind. The six planned volumes of the historical and critical edition of the *Schriften* – four volumes of primary material supplemented by two volumes of addenda and commentary – are also more or less complete. The first four volumes – the poetic works, philosophical works, diaries and correspondence – were published between 1960 and 1975. Since then editions of these materials have been revised and expanded. The sixth and final volume that will complete the HKA, is organized into four parts or separate sub-volumes: i). the Juvenilia (*Jugendnachlaß*) found in Krakow in 1983 by Hans-Joachim Mähl, and which mostly concerns Novalis’s earliest poetic texts; ii). a commentary on these youthful writings; iii). unpublished documentary notes unearthed by Gerhard Schulz, which relate to Novalis’s professional activities as assessor of the salt works in Weissenfels, as well as other unpublished biographical material, letters, diary entries, book lists, etc. The first three of these sub-volumes were published between 1998 and 2006. Only the final fourth one is yet to be published.

These critical and historical editions immediately made a huge impact on the research and on foreign translations. To begin with, they resulted in a number of anthologies of reference, including the well-known anthology by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’Absolu littéraire* (1978)¹⁸, which granted access for the first time to French-speaking readers the *Athenaeum* fragments and Friedrich Schlegel’s most significant texts on the

¹⁸ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.), *L’Absolu littéraire : théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1978). Partial English translation: *The Literary Absolute* (Albany / N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1988).

theory of literary criticism; another anthology by Frederick C. Beiser, which appeared in 1996, with the title *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*¹⁹; or the 2003 anthology *La Forme poétique du monde*, by Laurent Margantin, Charles Le Blanc, and Olivier Schefer.²⁰

Thanks to the HKA, Novalis's intellectual standing abroad has considerably heightened. As Giovanni Panno recalls²¹, the publication for the first time in Germany (in 1965) of the complete *Fichte-Studien*, was a turning point in the scholarly history and reception of Novalis, profoundly renewing approaches to his work by revealing the thinker and not just the poet.²² The HKA has also provided a huge impetus to translators.

In this regard, Italy has long played a pioneering role, with the impressive edition of Novalis's complete philosophical works, edited and translated by Fabrizio Desideri and Giampiero Moretti, published in 1993. This edition was recently reprinted under the title: *Scritti filosofici* (2019).²³

In the English-speaking world, the year 2003 saw Jane Kneller publish the first English translation of the complete text of the *Fichte-Studies*.²⁴ Shortly after in 2007, David W. Wood finished the first complete translation of Novalis's encyclopedia project, under the title: *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das allgemeine Brouillon*.²⁵ Fifteen years later, James D. Reid is about to publish a third indispensable volume, *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings*.²⁶ The translations will make available for the first time in English the complete text of the Logological Fragments, the last fragments of 1799-1800, and many others. Thus, together with the above-mentioned translations by Frederick C. Beiser, Jane Kneller and David W. Wood, English-speaking readers will now have at their disposal virtually the complete philosophical corpus. James D. Reid's book furthermore contains complete retranslations of Novalis's two unfinished novels, *The Disciples at Sais* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, as well as a partial retranslation of the

¹⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁰ Laurent Margantin, Charles Le Blanc, Olivier Schefer (eds.), *La Forme poétique du monde. Anthologie du romantisme allemand* (Paris: José Corti, collection « Domaine romantique », 2003).

²¹ See Giovanni Panno, "Come ordinare un sistema di asistematicità. Nota a: Novalis, *Scritti filosofici* (2019)" / "How to Order a System of Systemlessness. Review essay of: Novalis, *Scritti filosofici* (2019)", *Symphilosophie* 2 (2020): 349-363.

²² See HKA 2: 29-298.

²³ Reviewed in issue 2 of *Symphilosophie*. See above footnote no. 21.

²⁴ See above footnote no. 8.

²⁵ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, edited and translated by David W. Wood (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007).

²⁶ Forthcoming in 2023 with Oxford University Press.

Hymns to the Night. A monograph provisionally entitled *Novalis’s Philosophical Fictions: Magical Idealism in Context*, will accompany the volume of translations with a philosophical commentary.

In the Francophone world, Olivier Schefer has undertaken a French critical edition of Novalis’s complete philosophical works. Titled *Œuvres philosophiques de Novalis*, the first volume was published in 2000 by Allia in Paris, and the edition has now reached four volumes.²⁷ The texts in this French edition have been translated for the first time or re-translated using the HKA as a basis. They include: the philosophical studies of 1797 on Hemsterhuis, Kant, and Eschenmayer; the preparatory works for various collections of fragments written by Novalis in Freiberg in the year 1798; the collections of fragments published in the *Athenaeum* journal between 1798 and 1800, as well as various fragments and political writings; the *Brouillon* encyclopedia project; and the final fragments of 1799-1800. The translation work of Augustin Dumont is also to be commended. In 2012 he published the first-ever French translation of Novalis’s *Fichte-Studien*, under the title *Les années d’apprentissage philosophique. Études fichtéennes (1795-96)*.²⁸ He has also retranslated three of Novalis’s main literary works: the poetic collections *Hymnes à la Nuit* (Hymns to the Night) and *Chants spirituels* (Spiritual Songs), and the novel *Disciples à Saïs* (Disciples to Saïs).²⁹

Turning to current editorial and translation projects. To begin with, we recall that Frederick Beiser was the first to provide a number of excerpts in English of Friedrich Schlegel’s Jena 1800 / 1801 *Lectures on Transcendental Philosophy*, in his anthology *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics* (1996); while not long after on the French side, Denis Thouard offered the first French translation of the Introduction and the third part of these lectures in his volume, *Symphilosophie: F. Schlegel à Iéna* (2002). Somewhat incredibly, however, no full translation of Schlegel’s text has ever been carried out in either English, French, or Italian. This state of affairs is being remedied. Joseph Carew, co-editor with Sean McGrath and Kyla Bruff of the *Palgrave Schelling Handbook*³⁰, has now begun to translate into English these lectures

²⁷ See Novalis, *Le Brouillon général* (Paris: Allia, 2000, reprint 2015); *Le Monde doit être romantisé* (Paris: Allia, 2002); *Semences* (2004); and *À la fin tout devient poésie*, (Paris: Allia, 2020).

²⁸ Novalis, *Les années d’apprentissage philosophique. Études fichtéennes (1795-96)*, translated into French and introduced by A. Dumont (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2012) .

²⁹ Novalis, *Hymnes à la Nuit, Chants spirituels, Les Disciples à Saïs*, translated and introduced by A. Dumont (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014).

³⁰ Sean McGrath, Joseph Carew, Kyla Bruff (eds.), *The Palgrave Schelling Handbook* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming May 2023).

in their entirety. His translation of the first half of the Introduction appears in the present issue of *Symphilosophie*.

Another important gap in the English and French-speaking worlds, concerns the complete edition of Novalis's *Freiberger naturwissenschaftliche Studien* (1798 / 1799). Thanks to Fabrizio Desideri, a full translation of these studies on natural sciences already exists in Italian in the *Scritti filosofici* edition. Only a partial selection of these studies is available in English, in the Appendix to the *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*. A complete edition of the *Freiberger naturwissenschaftliche Studien* does not yet exist in French, but fortunately one is in the pipeline, and will appear as volume V of the *Œuvres philosophiques de Novalis*, translated by Olivier Schefer. With this multi-volume edition of the *Œuvres philosophiques de Novalis*, the translation of Novalis's philosophical works into French is also now practically complete. That said, the main bulk of Novalis's correspondence still remains to be translated in most languages. We hope to have shown here that his letters to Friedrich Schlegel alone prove this correspondence to be of considerable philosophical interest and significance. Thankfully, a French translation is also envisaged by Olivier Schefer, who has already translated a handful of the letters.³¹ Several of these letters are also available in English in the first 2019 issue of *Symphilosophie*.³² But the completion all these enormous research, editorial, and translation projects in different languages will surely require the fruit of a collective effort. That is to say, two hundred and fifty years after the births of Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, the practice of symphilosophy still has a bright future.

³¹ "Six lettres de Novalis à Friedrich et August Wilhelm Schlegel", Novalis, *Semences*, 17-30.

³² "Twelve Letters from the Romantic Circle (1798-1799)", *Symphilosophie* 1 (2019): 167-190.