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The Place of Christianity and Zinzendorf in Novalis'

Philosophy of the Higher Self

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ABSTRACT

Accounts of Novalis' philosophy of religion, in Anglophone historiography, have not taken adequate account of the metaphysical consequences of his divergence from Fichte. Making a Kantian critique of Fichte's absolutely posited subject, Novalis' subject has no being *per se* but only insofar as it is situated in God. This situating *qua* gaining of being, however, requires the presence of God's moral essence within the subject. I find that the attainment of such a moral essence, in Novalis' philosophy, is best considered in the light of his Moravian background, and more particularly of the Moravian doctrine of the spouse as a sacramental vehicle to unity with Christ. Novalis' higher self, then, unlike that of Fichte, is attained from without - by faithful love for another - whereby God's essence is mediated and the subject's gaining of being is enabled.

Keywords: Novalis, Kant, Fichte, Moravian, philosophy of religion

RÉSUMÉ

Les commentaires portant sur la philosophie de la religion de Novalis (dans le domaine anglophone) n'ont pas pensé de manière adéquate les conséquences métaphysiques de sa divergence avec Fichte. La critique aux accents kantien qu'il développe du sujet fichtéen qui se pose lui-même de façon absolue montre bien que le sujet, pour Novalis, n'a pas d'être en soi : il n'existe qu'à être situé en Dieu. Cette situation en Dieu, en tant que gain d'être, suppose toutefois la présence de l'essence morale de Dieu dans le sujet. Le présent article démontre que c'est l'éclairage par ses origines moraves, plus particulièrement la doctrine morave du conjoint comme véhicule sacramentel de l'unité avec le Christ, qui permet le mieux de comprendre comment, dans la philosophie de Novalis, une telle essence morale divine peut être atteinte. Le moi supérieur au sens de Novalis, contrairement à celui de Fichte, est, dès lors, atteint de l'extérieur – par un amour fidèle pour un autre être, où la médiation de l'essence de Dieu s'exerce et un gain d'être pour le sujet devient possible.

Mots-clés : Novalis, Kant, Fichte, Frères moraves, philosophie de la religion

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1. Introduction: Novalis the Moravian

The principal aim of this paper is to offer an interpretation of Novalis' thought which answers a problem that I take to be substantially unaddressed in Anglophone scholarship, regarding his moral philosophy and philosophy of religion. In so doing, I take seriously Novalis' Moravian heritage, in particular the potential influence of Zinzendorf. I begin by sketching my understanding of Novalis' position and its relation to (as I understand them) those chiefly influential on his own: the views of Kant, Fichte, and the quasi-Spinozist metaphysics presented by Jacobi. Paralleling this, I indicate my relation to the Anglophone historiography on Novalis, thereby illustrating what I consider to be a current conceptual inadequacy in parts of the scholarship. Centrally, it is the problem in Novalis of accounting for the subject's divine (i.e. moral) character – paralleling the divine essence – when he (despite adopting Fichtean terminology) levies a Kantian critique at Fichte's absolutely posited (and therefore inherently moral) self, thereby framing all being as participation in a (quasi-)Spinozist, *moral* God. In this connection, I argue that Zinzendorf's view of the spouse as a metaphysically mediating Christ seems to have influenced Novalis, in which the latter's higher self becomes moral on account of an analogous mediation. I set forth precisely how their respective thought may be considered as interrelated, before briefly surveying the textual and historical support for Zinzendorf's influence on Novalis, as well as the historiographical treatment of these references. Thereafter, I offer a reading of Novalis' philosophy from this perspective, focusing on his higher self, in order to demonstrate its substantial possibility.

2. From Kant and Fichte to Zinzendorf

Kant claims that the (free) I is “merely intelligible”: an “idea of reason” that cannot be given representation (*Vorstellung*).¹ The I cannot be made the object of a cognition, and therefore has no identity that may be posited. Contra Kant, Fichte asserts that the I has being *per se*: it is its own ground:

We can point to something from which this category [of reality] is itself derived: namely, the I, as absolute subject. For everything else to which this category of reality could possibly be applied, it must be shown that

¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, second edition, 1787, ed. & trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See “The Antinomy of Pure Reason”, 511-550 (539-540), and “Conclusion of the Solution of the Psychological Paralogism”, 455.

reality is transferred to it *from the I* — that it must exist insofar as the I exists.²

Because the being of the I is asserted, Fichte abrogates Kant's separation of "nature" and practical reason's "intelligible order" (wherein the idea of the free I is imaginatively applied to perception, which thus "transfers" us from "nature" *qua* realm of empirical cognitions).³ Instead, there is simply the I and, posited within it, the *Not-I*. From the absolute I is derived the *Divisible I*, against which there is posited the *Divisible Not-I*. The divisions of these two entities are interrelated, whereby Fichte's subject may enact the process of (negatively) representing itself.⁴ Fichte's subject, however, is not *in* God, or otherwise contingently existent upon anything else, because it is posited absolutely. The moral effort of self-realisation is therefore rehearsed *within the subject*: between the higher self (divisible self) and everyday self; in short, the *Divisible I* (or higher self) is *inherently* moral.⁵ The inherent morality of Fichte's *Divisible I* is co-extensive, then, with the I being posited absolutely. Novalis' adoption of a Kantian critique of this position (early in his *Fichte Studien*, especially nos. 1-5) therefore abrogates this: claiming that a subject cannot be said to have identity abstracted from empirical relations, and thus that the assertion of the I's identity with itself (and thus its absolute positing) is a logical fallacy: "consciousness is consequently an image of being within being."⁶

Novalis, unlike Kant, argues that the subject exists *in* God. God is a metaphysical reality: the absolute. This is an important distinction, wherein I agree (as Dalia Nassar does) with Frederick Beiser's claim that Novalis' understanding of "Being" is the neo-Spinozist organic absolute - which is "an organism... in a constant process of growth and development", and behind this growth there is "a purpose... or idea" - rather than, as Manfred Frank argues, a Kantian regulative idea of existence.⁷ Because Novalis' subject

² J.G. Fichte, *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings (1794-95)*, ed. & trans. Daniel Breazeale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), "First, Purely and Simply Unconditioned Foundational Principle", 206.

³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 402-403. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. & trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37-38.

⁴ Fichte, *Foundation*, "Third Foundational Principle, Conditioned with Respect to its Form", 210-224.

⁵ See also Dalia Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 32-33, 39.

⁶ Novalis *Fichte Studies*, ed. & trans. Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), no. 2, 5.

⁷ Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 15, 23, 29; Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 352; Manfred

exists *in* God – the sphere of being – the (Kantian) subject’s lack of *identity*, *qua* abstraction from empirical relations, is understood as a lack of *being*. We exist, as free subjects without being, alongside nature (the *Not-I*), *in* God. Being is constructed by forming relations between subjects and nature: I and *Not-I*. This is substantially the understanding of Beiser and Nassar: being is formed through modifying nature, and this modification follows the model of a Kantian judgement, i.e. an essentially internal reference.⁸ Nassar however, unlike Beiser, (rightly) argues that Novalis adopts Fichte’s *Divisible I* (higher self) and *Divisible Not-I* model, and her understanding of Novalis’ absolute is concomitantly more precise.⁹

This is to say that being is formed – which is to say *personality* is formed – through an enactment (i.e. judgement) of reason. Nevertheless, following the Kantian critique of Fichte’s absolutely posited self, this *reason* cannot be considered identical with (i.e. *inherent to*) the self (e.g. *qua Divisible I*). Rather, Novalis’ subject is *in* God, who is a moral reality. Because God, who is the absolute sphere of being, is moral, morality is a condition of being. God, considered as the (not merely *necessary*) idea or moral essence of the absolute, must therefore be mediated to the subject in order for them to participate in being. The subject’s attaining of being, the formation of their personality by relating I to *Not-I*, therefore turns raw nature into a determination of self *and* God.

The question remains, however, as to how Novalis’ subject is to acquire this mediation – i.e. acquire such moral, ideal material out of which relating judgements may be constituted – and thereby gain being and realise God in nature. Here is my principal break with Anglophone historiography. Novalis’ subject is simply presumed to be inherently moral (i.e. divine) – realising God in the world – by Nassar, who rightly perceives the Fichtean categories of higher self and everyday self as pivotal in Novalis but assumes the unproblematic transference of the Fichtean higher self’s inherent morality despite Novalis’ very un-Fichtean ontology (which her book superbly elaborates).¹⁰ Nassar’s assumption is not uncommon; for example, Cahen-Maurel also assumes Novalis’ adoption of Fichte’s intrinsically moral self in her claim that the (Fichtean) “productive or creative imagination” of Novalis’ subject is based upon “exceptional inner moral and *spiritual* power.” Consequently, her thesis that Novalis goes beyond Fichte by way of

Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2004), 29-30, 51, 61-62.

⁸ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 422-423.

⁹ Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 32-33, 39, 66-67.

¹⁰ Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 32-33, 39, 66-67.

synthesising Schiller's concept of the self's "power of love" realising "the idea of God" in the world, with Fichte's "productive imagination", assumes the self's *innate* ability to love – i.e. the will's coincidence with God's.¹¹ Christine Weder makes the same assumption.¹² That Novalis' subject is to share in the divine essence and thereby enact a divine *Bildung* is uncontroversial, then, but little discussion (in Anglophone historiography) has been offered, to my knowledge, as to how.

Rather than derivative from any absolutely posited I, Novalis' divisible I (i.e. higher self) is instead, I argue, chosen from without and made, by an effort of *faith*, into an inwardly beheld idea. This idea *mediates* Christ, viz. God's moral essence: the idea behind the absolute. The higher self is necessary for the formation of personality in terms of providing the ideal material for the formation of individual relations to the *Not-I*, and its moral correspondence to God because these relations are *in* Him. Moreover, the subject relates to their higher self both as idea and as another person, and more particularly as a beloved (which Adrian Daub has noted).¹³ It is fruitful to consider Zinzendorf's influence in particular with regard to this inner idea of another mediating Christ.

For Zinzendorf, the believer is married to Christ (that is, *individually* rather than *qua* corporate personality of the invisible church). Importantly, this salvific marriage is experienced in devotion to the spouse and to the "dear little sidehole" (from the Roman soldier's spear on the cross) of Christ. Accordingly, the human spouse is conceived as a mystical vehicle to Christ, with sexual intercourse being considered a sacrament on par with communion.¹⁴ Moreover, depiction of Christ reflects His status as Husband to the believer. In particular, Christ is imagined as the wounded, dead husband, whose "cold dead lips" and "dear little sidehole" become the object of a tender love expressed in hymnal form.¹⁵ Centrally, then, Zinzendorf's

¹¹ Cahen-Maurel, "Novalis's Magical Idealism," *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019): 152-161.

¹² Christine Weder, "Moral Interest and Religious Truth: On the Relationship between Morality and Religion in Novalis," *German Life and Letters*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 2001), fn. 31.

¹³ Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Unions: The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 116-119.

¹⁴ Nicholas von Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses on the Redemption of Man by the death of Christ preached at Berlin* (London: James Hutton, 1740), 12, 35, 40, 49-50, 76, 81, 85-86, 93, 99. Nicholas von Zinzendorf, *Hymns composed for the use of the brethren* (London: 1749), no. 24: 3; Peter Vogt [trans.], "Zinzendorf's 'Seventeen Points of Matrimony': A Fundamental Document on the Moravian Understanding of Marriage and Sexuality," *Journal of Moravian History* 11, no. 10 (Spring 2011), *passim*, esp. no. 12: 48.

¹⁵ Craig Atwood, "Understanding Zinzendorf's Blood and Wounds Theology," *Journal of Moravian History* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 2006), esp. 33-35; Craig Atwood [trans.], "Zinzendorf's

marital Christology begets a duality in the object of love: Christ is made the object of a marital love, and relations to the human spouse are concomitantly invested with metaphysical significance.¹⁶ For example, in a hymnal work, Zinzendorf relates that from the “Moravian Handmaid” of marriage does “shine” the image of Christ to her spouse.¹⁷

Novalis’ higher self, I argue, is best conceived in relation to Zinzendorf’s “marital theology” (*Ehereligion*).¹⁸ As I understand it, a Zinzendorfic reading yields that the subject relates to their higher self maritally, as a beloved - analogous to Zinzendorf’s metaphysical spouse; and, by extension, the subject relates to Christ as “the beloved”, through this mediating higher self. My reading of Novalis’ work bears out this possibility as a serious one, and I consider Novalis’ plausible proximity to Zinzendorf’s idiosyncratic mixture of sanguine and marital (almost erotic) hymnal language, as well as his notion of marriage to Christ (viz. salvation) beginning with a spectral vision of Christ through the “Eyes of faith.”¹⁹ In the broader context of Novalis’ metaphysics, I consider it most plausible that Novalis’ subject is *married* to Christ by way of their marriage to a mediating higher self.

This in my view substantiates Novalis’ historical involvement with the Moravians, having been educated to be a preacher in the Moravian school at

‘Litany of the Wounds’”, *Lutheran Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1997), esp. 204-208; Zinzendorf, *Discourses*, 135.

¹⁶ See also Paul Peucker, “‘Inspired by Flames of Love’: Homosexuality, Mysticism, and Moravian Brothers around 1750”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan., 2006), 30-64; Paul Peucker, “In the Blue Cabinet: Moravians, Marriage, and Sex”, *Journal of Moravian History*, No. 10 (Spring 2011), 6-37. Craig Atwood, “Sleeping in the Arms of Christ: Sanctifying Sexuality in the Eighteenth-Century Moravian Church”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jul., 1997), 25-51.

¹⁷ Zinzendorf, *Hymns composed*, no. 24: 3.

¹⁸ Sean Hannan and W. Ezekiel Goggin have also emphasised the Moravian mystical marriage as important for Novalis. Their work rightly notices “the parallel between Novalis’ ecstasy in the Hymns and the sexually charged devotion to the “side hole” of Christ we find in Moravian theology”, but it does not move from noticing a “parallel” to discussions of a more concrete nature. Hannan and Goggin’s reading of Novalis as a “mystic” may account for this stylistic distinction between my aims and theirs. Furthermore, whilst I applaud their comparisons to Bernard of Clairvaux’s bridal mysticism whereby the lover’s love is “an expression of the mutual longing that unites the soul to Christ”, the question of the nature of this as “an expression of” is unelaborated. Moreover, their referencing of Bernard’s love-object as Christ, with the parallel connection that “Bernard’s love mysticism provides a lens through which we can examine the language of love in the Brouillon”, clashes with their claim that Novalis’ “mystical eros... can open poetic spaces for mystical intimation of the Absolute”, as opposed to Christ. A thoroughgoing ontological discussion, such as I here attempt, might illumine these nevertheless fertile comparisons. Ultimately, Hannan and Goggin do not appear to take my view that, for Novalis, Christ is mediated through a human beloved. W. Ezekiel Goggin and Sean Hannan, *Mysticism and Materialism in the Wake of German Idealism* (London: Routledge, 2022), 92-98.

¹⁹ Zinzendorf, *Discourses*: 14-18, 77-78, 92, 99; Zinzendorf, *Hymns composed*, no. 83: 9.

Neudietendorf, as well as his avid readership of the bible and Zinzendorf (two of whose songbooks and whose *Deutsche Gedichte* Novalis is known to have owned), as noted by his brother Karl.²⁰ Lastly, it is worth remarking that visions were experienced by Novalis' father, who was also affiliated with the Moravians.²¹ A reading of Novalis as influenced by Zinzendorf in this manner thus makes conceptual and historical sense. Furthermore, mentions of Zinzendorf's influence, or of the Moravians more generally, do appear in Novalis' writings,²² but have received scant (Anglophone) historiographical treatment. One particular instance is a letter to Friedrich Schlegel from July, 1796:

I feel more in everything that I am the sublime member of an infinite whole, into which I have grown and which should be the shell of my ego. Must I not happily suffer everything, now that I love and love more than the eight spans of space, and love longer than all the vascillations of the chords of life? Spinoza and Zinzendorf have investigated it, the infinite idea of love, and they have an intuition of its method, of how they could develop it for themselves, and themselves for it, on this speck of dust. It is a pity that I see nothing of this view in Fichte, that I feel nothing of this creative breath. But he is close to it. He must step into its magic circle.²³

Despite often quoting this letter, Anglophone historiography never meaningfully connects Zinzendorf to Novalis. Benjamin Crowe reads the reference to Zinzendorf as demonstrable of a merely *general* Christian colouring to Novalis' reception of Spinoza; John Neubauer takes a similar reading, whereas Beiser ignores it and Frank glosses Novalis' reference as more properly indicative of (the Platonist) Hemsterhuis' influence. Cahen-Maurel, whilst noting the reference to Spinoza, reads this letter (I think accurately) as indicating Novalis' critical distance from Fichte, but not as

²⁰ Karl von Hardenberg, "Biography of His Brother Novalis 1802," in *The Birth of Novalis: Friedrich von Hardenberg's Journal of 1797, with Selected Letters and Documents*, ed. & trans. Bruce Donehower (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), 109; August Cölestin Just, "Friedrich von Hardenberg, Assessor of Salt Mines in Saxony and Designated Department Director in Thuringia, Born May 2, 1772, Died March 25, 1801," in *Birth of Novalis*, 112, 122, 123. John Neubauer, *Bifocal Vision: Novalis' Philosophy of Nature and Disease* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 166.

²¹ Lilian. R. Furst., "Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* and Nerval's *Aurélia*," *Comparative Literature* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1969), 36.

²² Novalis, "Christianity or Europe: A Fragment," in *The Early Political Writings of The German Romantics*, ed. & trans. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996), 67; Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, ed. & trans. David W. Wood (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), nos. 782, 1125: 143, 186.

²³ Cf. Beiser, *German Idealism*, 419.

demonstrating any relation to Zinzendorf. Alexander Hampton, in an excellent treatise on Platonism in the German Romantics, pivots from this mention of Zinzendorf to write of Spinozistic substance unity. This is not an insensible comparison *per se*, but the peculiarities of Zinzendorf's thought are thereby circumvented.²⁴ There is a tendency (with the marked exception of Crowe), then, to assimilate Christian influence in Novalis to Platonist or Spinozist tendencies. Margaret Mahony Stoljar, David W. Wood, and Beiser are comparable to Frank and Hampton in this regard; Wood writes of Novalis "reconcil[ing] Platonism with the deeper aspects of Christian spirituality", but makes no elaboration on such aspects.²⁵ Beiser, in *The Romantic Imperative*, claims "that the young romantics were, in fundamental respects, also heavily influenced by the Protestant tradition", but claims the opposite at every instance of Christianity's mention throughout the book, attributing influence instead to Platonic or "Classical" sources.²⁶ Indeed he claims, in his monumental *German Idealism*, that Novalis' "religious feelings" contradicted his "own critique" of systematic first principles.²⁷ Similarly, Bruce Donehower mentions Novalis' father's piety as influential on his son, but makes no elaboration beyond an inherited industriousness.²⁸ To my knowledge, in Anglophone historiography only Crowe substantiates the claim that "traditional Christianity" plays a major role in Novalis' thought – arguing for the pertinence of faith.²⁹

It is to be hoped that, in some small manner, this paper may begin to remedy the deficit of attention to Christianity in Novalis' thought, and more particularly that of his Moravian heritage.

3. Self and World

Novalis begins his philosophical writings with an extensive critique of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794). What emerges are embryonic forms of

²⁴ Benjamin Crowe, "On 'The Religion of the Visible Universe': Novalis and the Pantheism Controversy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (April 2008): 128; Neubauer, *Bifocal Vision*, 152; Beiser, *German Idealism*, 419-420; Frank, *Foundations*, 161; Cahen-Maurel, "Novalis's Magical Idealism", 154. 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), 194.

²⁵ Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. & trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (New York: SUNY Press, 1997), 2-4; Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, xxv.

²⁶ Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 30, 34-36, 63-64, 95.

²⁷ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 417-418.

²⁸ Donehower, "Introduction," in *Birth of Novalis*, 17, 41.

²⁹ Crowe, "Visible Universe," 126, 131.

Novalis' concept of a higher self to be actualised, and how this is determined in nature. I lay out, in this section, Novalis' concepts of the pure I and the empirical I as he defines them in his *Fichte Studies*. I find that the empirical I consists of a *constructed* inner world which is, by Kantian judgment, related to the outer world of nature. The pure I is the *non-actual* undivided I; the empirical I is the *actual* I, constructed through dividing this pure I. Therefore, the pure I is in some sense approximated by the empirical I's construction. Section 4 will elaborate this, looking at Novalis' later extensions and clarifications of this groundwork. In his *Fichte Studien*, Novalis also outlines the nature of the absolute within which this takes place.

Novalis begins the *Fichte Studien* with a refutation of Fichte's absolute positing of the I. He therefore significantly breaks from Fichte in at least two ways: the self is not its own ground but is *in* "an absolute sphere of existence";³⁰ the self's identity, moreover, now unmoored from any absolute self, is thrown into question. The absolute which Novalis posits is God. God is the sphere of being: "God is absolute thesis, antithesis and synthesis"; "God is ground and world together."³¹ Here, he is echoing his understanding of Spinoza as garnered through Jacobi; Jacobi writes: Spinoza's God is "an immanent one, an indwelling cause of the world."³² Hence, the subject moves *within* the absolute, and therefore is neither outside nor within nature but alongside it.³³ However, in distinguishing God and nature he consciously distances himself from Spinoza; rather, Novalis draws a distinction between man, i.e. the subject, and nature (or *Not-I*), and the whole: "Spinoza ascended as far as nature – Fichte to the I, or the person. I [ascend] to the thesis God."³⁴ Nature and subject form the two constituents, interrelated halves of the whole. The whole, which is the absolute, and God, are equivalent terms.³⁵ This whole is comprised of nothing but the totality of determinate objects – all of which share the quality of being. What renders an object determinate is its relations to other objects.³⁶ Thus, "totality is only the completeness of relations", and "an I is of course only an [actual] I insofar as it is [related to] a not-I";³⁷ or, as Jacobi writes: "the one infinite substance

³⁰ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 3: 6.

³¹ Ibid. nos. 144, 425: 53, 135.

³² Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, "Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn (1789)," in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, (ed. & trans.) George di Giovanni (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 350.

³³ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 142: 53.

³⁴ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 151: 55.

³⁵ Ibid., nos. 8, 144, 151, 153: 7, 53-55.

³⁶ Ibid. nos. 444, 647: 139-140, 186-187.

³⁷ Ibid. nos. 651, 562: 190, 166. See also no. 659, 192.

of Spinoza has no determinate and complete existence on its own apart from individual things.”³⁸ Nassar rightly writes of Novalis’ absolute: “reality, as the common sphere of mediation, is nothing outside of the mediations. In turn, this sphere of mediation is the sphere of being.”³⁹

Insofar as we form relations to objects – thereby partaking in the whole – we therefore *become* and *are* God.⁴⁰ Furthermore, through determining ourselves within the whole by forming relations to nature, we reciprocally determine nature by this activity. Nevertheless, because the “totality [i.e. the whole] is only the completeness of relations,” one cannot relate oneself to it like one does to a singular object. Instead, we are *in* God – the sphere of being. However, the question remains as to the specific nature of the subject which is to be related, since Novalis has rejected Fichte’s absolute self.

Fichte’s divisible (higher) self seeks, ultimately, to *represent* the absolutely posited self, because it has already been posited; it is already *real*. Novalis, on the other hand, because he does not begin with the absolutely posited self, must *determine*, i.e. make *actual*. Novalis’ self begins with nothing: “the I is fundamentally nothing – everything must be given to it.”⁴¹ Fundamentally, Novalis’ subject is *in* God and seeks to *become* through forming relations to objects in nature. Since God is not an amoral being, this process of *gaining being* is couched in a moral philosophy which will be addressed in section 5.⁴² Importantly, all that is actual is in God, and the subject seeks to become absolutely actual, which would make them analogous to God: “a thing can have more or less being – Only the All is absolute.”⁴³ Novalis describes this process especially clearly in entry no. 647:

The determinate in the world of sense and the world of spirit – We must seek to create an inner world that is an actual pendant to the outer world – that, insofar as it is in direct opposition to [the outer world] at every point, constantly increases our freedom.... All determinations proceed outward from us – we create a world out of ourselves – and thereby become more and more free, since freedom is only thinkable in opposition to a world – The more we determine, the more we lay out what is in us – the freer – more substantial – we become – we set aside, as it were, more and more that which is inessential and approach the

³⁸ Jacobi, “Letters,” 353, 355.

³⁹ Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 29-30.

⁴⁰ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, nos. 1, 454 : 4-5, 145. See also Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 320: 47.

⁴¹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 568: 171.

⁴² See also Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 63: 10.

⁴³ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 454: 145.

thoroughly pure, simple essence of our I. Our (creative) power gets as much free play as it has world under it.⁴⁴

Thus, the subject is determined by the relating of the inner world to the outer “at every [individual] point.” This “outer world” is nature, and “the inner world” is the indeterminate subject, both of which “are set up in opposition to each other *in the whole*.”⁴⁵ By relating these two worlds the subject acquires the relations to objects which render the subject “more substantial”, i.e. *actual*. Here Novalis implies that the outer world is the sphere of non-intelligible matter, i.e. nature, to which the subject has no determinate relation, and the inner world is the sphere of spiritual ideal identity – respectively “the world of sense and the world of spirit.” This would mean that, in the statement “I am a student”, that the identity of “student(ness)” is of my inner world and thereafter related to the sense data, or mere *stuff*, of “student(ness)” in the outer world; I have gained substantial identity because I am related to the (outer) world. I have given *meaning* to a part of nature and simultaneously related myself thereunto. Importantly, Novalis’ subject *constructs* – with “our (creative) power” – its inner world’s parts, like “student(ness)”, which means that this process of relating inner and outer is active. This *construction* is best understood in relation to Fichte’s “productive imagination”, as has been demonstrated by Cahen-Maurel.⁴⁶

Novalis elsewhere retains this distinction of inner and outer as, respectively, ideal identity and unintelligible *stuff*, especially in entries nos. 225 to 233, which discuss the relation of spirit and matter:⁴⁷

The materials of empirical spirit are reason (ideas) and understanding (concepts). The materials of empirical matter – [are] elements and drives. The thought possibilities of this are contained in the materials of pure spirit and pure matter.⁴⁸

The first sentence supports this conception of the inner world’s “empirical spirit” containing ideal identity. In claiming that the subject creates the identity of the objects to which it relates, i.e. as its inner world, Novalis is making a Kantian point: “from where do I borrow my concepts? – necessarily I – necessarily from myself.”⁴⁹ Thus, the identity of an object to which the I

⁴⁴ Ibid. no. 647: 186.

⁴⁵ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 653: 191.

⁴⁶ Cahen-Maurel, “Novalis’s Magical Idealism,” 133-152.

⁴⁷ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, nos. 225-233: 68-74.

⁴⁸ Ibid. no. 232: 73.

⁴⁹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 567: 168; see also nos. 373, 541: 130, 161.

is related originates within the I, but its matter, or *stuff*, is from the outer world.

The inner world, however, belongs to the empirical I and it is derived from the pure I, which contains its “thought possibilities.” This distinction, found in no. 232 above, corresponds to the subject’s “approach [to] the thoroughly *pure*, simple essence of our I.” In entry no. 32, the empirical I appears to be the *actual* I: “The I must be divided in order to be an I – only the drive to be an I unifies it – the undetermined ideal of the pure I is thus characteristic of the I in general.”⁵⁰ “The drive to be an I” corresponds to “the materials of empirical matter” in no. 232. Put alongside no. 647, the divided I presented here would seem to be the constructed inner world which is determinately related, as “an actual pendant”, to the divided *not-I*. In short, the divided I is the subject insofar as it is related to nature, the *not-I*. Moreover, the opposition between the pure and the empirical can explain why Novalis writes that division is necessary “in order to be an I.” The undivided I, simply put, is the “pure I”, which is thus not an *actual* I. Rather, the “substantial” I (which is the divided I) is *constructed from* the “pure I” which contains “the thought possibilities of this”; hence, “we create a world out of ourselves.” In short, only insofar as I relate myself to individual objects in the outer world of *not-I*, the identity of which I construct, am I real; that is, my pure I becomes empirical. Entry no. 568 is a good summary of this:

The I is fundamentally nothing – everything must be given to it – But something can only be given to it and the given only becomes something through the I... the I is nothing but the principle of approximation. Everything that steps into its sphere belongs to it – because the essence of its being consists in this conversion to its own use. Appropriation is the original activity of its nature.⁵¹

Or again, no. 562: “I is only thinkable through a not-I. An I is of course only an I insofar as it is a not-I – for the rest, it could be what it wants – only it would not be an I.”⁵² Whilst considered to be divided, i.e. constituted of a plurality of parts, the empirical I should be seen also as a construction, because the ‘pure I’ is “fundamentally nothing.” The objects to “be given to it” are through the mingling of the inner and outer worlds’ facets; hence, following entry no. 647, the I becomes more substantial in proportion to how much “it has world under it.” By no. 562, it is only substantial “insofar as it

⁵⁰ Ibid. no. 32: 25.

⁵¹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 568: 171.

⁵² Ibid. no. 562: 166.

is a not-I”, i.e., an empirical I, *qua* inner world, related to the outer world, *qua* ‘not-I’.

Resulting from this, the “pure I” receives its identity indirectly, through something being posited in the empirical I’s inner world in opposition to the outer.⁵³ Hence, the pure I is “the principle of approximation” and its identity consists in “appropriation.”⁵⁴ In other words, the “pure I” is “approximated” in every singular relation between the inner world and the outer world; however, the “pure I” only gains being through the totality of these judgments, because it is itself nothing *actual*. Put simply, in saying “I am a student” and “I play tennis”, I am determinately relating myself to two real objects, which as relations constitute two facets of my empirical I, i.e., my inner world’s relations to the outer; likewise, I am approximating my (pure) “I” for which I have a feeling, but also providing it with identity. After all, I would not claim that “tennis” and “student(ness)” are my whole identity, but importantly they are, herein, the only determined, i.e., empirically *actual*, parts of me. Self-consciousness, therefore, parallels *being*, and thus substantiality and the *known* empirical I are equivalent: “We ourselves only are insofar as we know ourselves.”⁵⁵ Therefore, with every relation I “approach the thoroughly pure, simple essence of our [my] I.”⁵⁶ Novalis describes this undetermined “pure I” in the following way: “What I don’t know but feel (the I feels itself, as content) I believe.”⁵⁷ In short, because it is indeterminate, it can only be an object of feeling and belief.

The exact nature of the “pure I” in the *Fichte Studies* remains ambiguous, but the nature of this distinction is elaborated in Novalis’ later works, which themselves illuminate other more cryptic parts of the *Fichte Studies*. What is clear enough from the *Fichte Studies* is the importance of constructing an inner world and relating it to the outer in order to become substantial; moreover, the pure I is both clearly distinct from the empirical I but also prior to it. Here, how exactly these two selves relate is obscure, and what it means to approximate the pure I is unclear, but Novalis retains these fundamental distinctions in later writings.

⁵³ See also *Ibid.*, no. 1: 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* no. 568: 171.

⁵⁵ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 454: 145.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* no. 647: 187.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* no. 1: 4.

4. Marriage to the Higher Self

For Novalis, the “pure I” comes to play a role strongly analogous to Fichte’s “higher self”. He comes to understand it, as I will demonstrate, as the empirical I’s ideal object of marital love; this relationship is the basis for the empirical I’s existential development in the world. This development is an existential application of artistic genius, which also, as a kind of by-product, approximates this higher self through each relating judgment. Reciprocally, this activity of determining the empirical I, and approximating the higher self, determines nature into an aesthetic *work of art*. Essentially, however, Novalis elaborates his philosophy as laid out in the *Fichte Studien. Logologische Fragmente I*, no. 20, lucidly elaborates the function and nature of the quasi-personal relationship between the higher self and empirical I:

There are certain poetic works within us that have quite a different character from the others, for they are accompanied by a sense of necessity, and yet there exists simply no other external reason for them. A person believes he is involved in a conversation, and some kind of unknown, spiritual being in a miraculous way causes him to think the most obvious thoughts. This being must be a higher being, because it communicates with him in a way that is not possible for any being which is bound to appearances.... This higher kind of self has the same relation to the human being as the human being has to nature or the wise man to the child. The human being yearns to be the equal of this being in the same way as he seeks to make himself the equal of the nonself.⁵⁸

This excerpt seems to be discussing the “pure I” of section 3 as a higher self which the subject “feels”, and seeks to progressively realise.⁵⁹ The empirical I, i.e. the *actual* I, seeks to further construct its inner world and thereby become “the equal of the nonself [i.e. nature]”, whilst also becoming “the equal of this being” – the “pure I” it “feels”. Accordingly, Novalis writes: “Doing philosophy is a conversation with oneself of the above kind – an actual revelation of the self – arousal of the real self through the ideal self.”⁶⁰

Evident here is the *non-actual* nature of the higher self, here “the ideal self”, as opposed to “the human being” of no. 20 which is the *actual* empirical I – hence the opposition between “real” and “ideal self.” Reiterated, however, is the *relationship* between these two selves as being of acute importance for the “arousal of the real self”: that which “causes him to think the most obvious thoughts.” Indeed, the analogy is one of a human relationship, albeit

⁵⁸ Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” in *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, no. 20: 52-53.

⁵⁹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, nos. 1, 647: 4, 186-187.

⁶⁰ Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 21: 53.

with a kind of *othered* ideal self. Considering the implication in no. 20 that this higher self plays an integral role in the formation of “certain poetic works within us”, it seems fruitful to explore Novalis’ concept of the personal “god” of art and poetry in the *Fichte Studies*.

Art and poetry, for Novalis, are existential enterprises; the subject’s active determination of itself in nature is artistic activity: “the voice accompanying our developing self.”⁶¹ Each poem, however, has “its own world, its own god”, and, as he writes elsewhere, “Art is: the cultivation of our causal influence – a certain sort of wanting – according to an idea.”⁶² Highly suggestively, he writes:

Our I is genus and individual – universal and particular.... The individual form remains only for the whole, insofar as it became a universal.... What you really love remains with you.... We are, we live, we believe in God, because this is the personified genus.... All reverence endures forever – all truth – everything personal.⁶³

Lastly, Novalis writes: “Where a person places his reality, what he fixes upon, that is his god, his world, his everything. Relativity of morality. / Love /.”⁶⁴

A consistent reading of this, considering *Logological Fragments I* nos. 20 and 21, is that the higher self and the ideal self are equivalent to this *personal* “god”. Since art and poetry are processes whereby the self becomes *actual* and determinate – reiterated in entries nos. 435, 521, 639, and 651 – the fact that each poem has “its own god” and art is made “according to an idea” suggests a paralleling to nos. 20 and 21.⁶⁵ Just as the real self is aroused through the ideal self, to which it has an intimate relation, so art follows “according to an idea”, and likewise poetry follows a “god”. The implication, reading entries nos. 462 and 396 alongside each other, is that the real self has an intimate relation of “love” to a “god” which is, like the higher self, “his”.

Furthermore, just as the relationship in fragment no. 20 had a causative effect upon the real self – i.e. the causing of “thoughts”, and the “arousal” of no. 21 – so entry no. 462 suggests that the relationship of love is crucial for the making *actual* of the self: “What you really love remains with you.” Only insofar as the relations of the inner-outer world correspond to the “genus”, i.e. the higher self, do they remain. Likewise, the “wanting – according to an

⁶¹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 435, 135-136. See also *Ibid.*, no. 521: 159, and Novalis, “The Poet’s Realm,” in *Birth of Novalis*, 60.

⁶² Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, nos. 414, 639: 134, 183.

⁶³ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 462: 147.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* no. 396, 132.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* nos. 435, 521, 639, 651: 135-136, 159, 183, 189-190.

idea” is simply the self’s “appropriation” of objects to further realise “the [pure] I [which] is nothing but the principle of approximation.”⁶⁶ Furthering this reading, Novalis writes:

We seek the design for the world – we are this design ourselves. What are we? Personified all-powerful points. But the execution, as the image of the design, must also be equal to it in free activity and self-reference – and vice versa.... Only in so far then as the human being lives a happily married life with himself... is he capable of marriage and family at all. Act of embracing oneself.

One must never confess to oneself that one loves oneself.... The first kiss in this understanding is the principle of philosophy – the origin of a new world – the beginning of absolute chronology – the completion of an infinitely growing bond with the self.⁶⁷

The “human being” is, following nos. 20 and 21, the “real self”; therefore, the self to which he is to be “married” is the higher self, whence comes the ideal “design for the world.” Accordingly, the union of love thereunto – “the first kiss” – is “the origin of a new world.” Likewise, it seems plausible to read the subject’s capacity for “marriage and family at all”, garnered through this union, as a rendition of the “real self” gaining being through its relationship to the higher self. Lastly, the “personified all-powerful points” contrasted with the “human being” seem to refer to the fact, in no. 462, that man is both genus and individual. Considering entry no. 396, if we understand the personal “god” to be the ideal higher self; alongside entry no. 462, that “God... is the personified genus”; and *Logological Fragments II* no. 27, that “God wants there to be gods”;⁶⁸ then, put together, each person’s “god” is their own “personified genus” – here rendered, in the plural, as “personified all-powerful points” – as opposed to the absolute, God, *the* (singular) personified genus.

Art and poetry, then, are the process described in no. 647, whereby “we create a world out of ourselves” and become “freer – more substantial”;⁶⁹ except the “pure, simple essence of our I” which this world is built to realise is, properly speaking, the higher self: “his god, his world, his everything.”⁷⁰ Or, more properly, this world comes *from* the higher self, since “we are this

⁶⁶ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, nos. 639, 568: 183, 171.

⁶⁷ Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 55: 58-59.

⁶⁸ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, nos. 396, 462: 132, 147; Novalis, “Logological Fragments II,” in *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, no. 27: 76.

⁶⁹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 647: 186.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* no. 396: 132.

design ourselves”, and is dependent upon a “happily married life” between the real self and the higher self. The higher self, to harken back to entry no. 232, contains the “possibilities” of the inner world’s “empirical spirit”, and in this sense the world comes *from* it.⁷¹ Thus, the empirical I seeks to be the equal of both the higher self and the *not-I*, i.e. realise the higher self as well as relate itself to the outer world – each through the progressive construction of an inner world.⁷²

Analogous to Kant’s genius,⁷³ Novalis’ subject gives the law as a part of its artistic creation and determination of the inner world: “positing [*setzen*] is the verb of *Gesetz* [law]. Law is [the] property of activity.”⁷⁴ Novalis’ artistic activity is thus “free rule – victory over raw nature in every word.”⁷⁵ It is, however, always governed by “the idea of a whole” – each poem’s “own world, its own god”, the higher self.⁷⁶ Novalis’ subject thereby *becomes* through artistically realising itself in the world, and, reciprocally, determines “raw nature”. The result of this is that, following entry no. 647’s expression of the subject’s “free play” seeking to gain “world under it”:⁷⁷ “the more positive we become, the more negative will the world around us become – until at last there will be no more negation – but instead we are all in all. / God wants there to be gods.”⁷⁸

This is the goal of realising one’s higher self in the world, and thereby becoming fully *actual*, i.e. “positive” – using and transforming the (outer) world as material – as the “negative” to ourselves. Magic, or “Magical Idealism”, is Novalis’ expression for this artistic process: the construction of an inner world and the forming of relations between it and the outer, resulting in a determined self and the transformation of nature.⁷⁹

Beiser understands this process as Magical Idealism’s formation of “the world into a work of art.”⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Beiser is wrong to consider this process as definitively non-Fichtean; the root of his error seems to be that, despite his claim that Novalis is substantially influenced by Fichte, he fails to

⁷¹ Ibid. no. 232: 73.

⁷² Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 20: 53.

⁷³ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), no. 50: 188-189.

⁷⁴ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 444: 140.

⁷⁵ Ibid. no. 435: 152. See also Ibid., nos. 485, 588: 152, 176.

⁷⁶ Ibid. nos. 587, 414: 176, 134.

⁷⁷ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 647: 186.

⁷⁸ Novalis, “Logological Fragments II,” no. 27: 76.

⁷⁹ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 338: 51.

⁸⁰ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 424.

note the importance of Fichte's higher self.⁸¹ Whilst articulating Novalis' goal of constructing an inner world as a pendant to the outer, he misses the entailed goal of the inner world progressively approximating the higher self. Nos. 601 and 603 in his *Encyclopaedia* illuminate this:

The ego believes it sees a foreign being – through the latter's approximation there arises another intermediate being – the product – which belongs to the ego, yet also doesn't seem to belong to the ego.⁸²

Supposition of the ideal – of that which is sought – is the method to find it.... As a attempts to determine b – it determines itself – and by determining itself, it determines b. Indirect construction of the intention.⁸³

Leaving aside, for the moment, the fact that the ideal self is found through “supposition”, these excerpts demonstrate that the real self's goal of realising its higher self results in the furtherance of the real self's substantiality alongside an “approximation” of the higher self, i.e. this “foreign being”, in “the [singular] product.”

For Nassar, the subject aims “to [progressively] realize the moral (higher) self in the world” – explicitly the Fichtean higher self.⁸⁴ Because the subject and nature are both within the absolute – “the common sphere of mediation”⁸⁵ – this activity results in the moral transformation of both nature *and* the self.⁸⁶ Here I completely agree with Nassar. To explain, however, how the approximative determination of the higher self “is nothing other than the attempt to bring the divine into the world”⁸⁷, greater attention must be paid to Novalis' concepts of faith and love, which appear to come together in marriage to Christ, through the higher self.

5. Christ and Sophie

Love functions firstly as the motive force for the construction of the inner world, i.e. the “arousal” of the real self through the ideal; secondly, love is the divine essence which renders the subject's substantial determinations imperishable: “what you really love remains with you.”⁸⁸ The operation of

⁸¹ Ibid., 420, 424.

⁸² Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 601: 106.

⁸³ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 603: 107.

⁸⁴ Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 39, 66.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 29-30.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 66-67.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 66.

⁸⁸ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 462: 147.

this second function of love in Novalis may be understood in relation to his Moravian heritage.

This divine essence appears to become present within the subject through its higher self mediating Christ as a kind of spiritual presence. The subject's mediated marriage to Christ, through the higher self, entails that their activity determines Christ in the world *qua* their higher self being approximated by their empirical self; this has eschatological consequences. The ideal higher self is itself an external love-object (beloved) which has been internally idealised by faith. Christ is spiritually mediated, *through* this inner ideal. Christ's inner mediation and the subject's own substantial existence are consequently dependent on faith. Novalis exhibits this process regarding his own deceased fiancée, Sophie, whom he makes such an object through faith; Christ is present for Novalis *through* his idea of her. This marriage to Christ and the Christological significance of a human beloved is explicable in relation to Zinzendorf's *Ehereligion*.

Daub has demonstrated that marital love unto the higher self causes the subject to *perceive* itself "everywhere", and thus that "love [actively] constitutes a world of correspondences."⁸⁹ Daub pivots from Novalis' *Glauben und Liebe*, entry no. 4:

What one loves one finds everywhere and sees similarities to it everywhere. The greater the love the wider and more varied the resembling world. My beloved is the abbreviation of the universe, the universe the elongation of my beloved.⁹⁰

Combining this with that fact that the real self is married to the higher self,⁹¹ Daub concludes that that which is found "everywhere" is indeed "nothing other than the poetic projection of our own transcendental self"; accordingly, this self-love "turns into abandonment of the self for an other – egoism becomes a source of a love relation with the other."⁹²

Described in the framework I have laid out, the world which is created by the subject to realise its higher self is generated through the marital relation of love unto the higher self. Love stimulates the subject to associate a whole world with their "beloved", i.e. their ideal higher self – potentially the *idea* of a human beloved – and thence to construct this inner world to realise this idea. Hence, "of a lovable object we cannot hear, we cannot speak,

⁸⁹ Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 116.

⁹⁰ Novalis, "Faith and Love," in *Political Writings*, no. 4: 35-36; Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 116.

⁹¹ Novalis, "Logological Fragments I," no. 55: 58-59.

⁹² Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 119.

enough”⁹³; but the *speaking*, as opposed to the love which causes us to speak, is our own doing. Therefore, “love popularises the personality”, because⁹⁴: “Once we understand how to love One thing, we will also know best how to love everything.”⁹⁵ This would explain why Novalis cryptically writes that “love is the basis for the possibility of magic.”⁹⁶ The higher self is the stimulus to magic, which also means it stimulates its own approximation.

Nevertheless, love is not only a generator of self-development, but also, as the rest of this paper bears out, the divine essence: it is requisite for being. Hence, not only does the subject *become* through love *qua* motive force, but it only remains insofar as it *is* love, i.e. is divine. Novalis’ eschatology contextualises this. A particularly lucid expression of this can be found in fragment no. 27, from his *Freiberg Natural Scientific Studies*:

Perfect life is heaven. The world is the totality of imperfect life.... perfect life is the substance – the world is the totality of its accidents. What we here designate as death is a consequence of absolute life, of heaven – hence the incessant annihilation of imperfect life.... The goal of our life is the exercise of virtue.... Everything will become heaven.... The world is the sphere of the imperfect unions of the spirit and Nature. Their perfect indifferentiation forms the moral being par excellence – God. The essence of God consists in incessant moralization.... God makes the world moral – unites life or heaven and spirit. 1. Everything shall become heaven – 2. everything shall become spirit – 3. and everything shall become virtue. No. 3 is the synthesis of 1 and 2.⁹⁷

God, then, is destroying all that is immoral in order to produce a new world of “perfect life” which appears equivalent to “moral” life and a life of “virtue.” “Heaven”, or this perfect world, is created by the “unions of the spirit and Nature.” Moreover, this new world *is* God, since this union “forms” Him. The implication is that insofar as the subject exercises “virtue” they *become* God and participate in this moral-eschatological process.⁹⁸ This becomes clearer when examining precisely what God’s spirit is.

The *Fichte Studies* provide sketches of God as trinitarian. This is vital evidence of Novalis’ Christian understanding of the absolute. Entry no. 159 reads:

⁹³ Novalis, “Pollen,” in *Political Writings*, no. 41: 16.

⁹⁴ Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 55: 58-59.

⁹⁵ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 723: 134.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 79: 13.

⁹⁷ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (Appendix): *Extracts from the Freiberg Natural Scientific Studies* (1798/1799), no. 27: 197-198.

⁹⁸ E.g. Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, nos. 60, 61: 9-10.

God is three without being One – and indeed, he begins with the presentation of thesis and ends with the antithesis. Father, spirit and son. The son is pure personality. Jesus. / Spirit of synthesis – creating power, creator of nature.... Triune God / Spinozist God / Personal God.⁹⁹

A reading of this, which is consistent with entry no. 167, is that God creates a world through His spirit but that this spirit in some sense creates in accordance with Jesus, the “pure personality”: “the spirit is creative power. The Son is pictorial power – matter – form.”¹⁰⁰ Shedding light on this, Novalis writes: “God could create the world only according to an idea, consequently only through mediated creation.”¹⁰¹ Finally, he writes:

There is a World-Spirit, just as there is a World-Soul.... The world is not yet complete – as little as the World-Spirit – Out of One God there will arise a Universal-God. Out of One world – a Universe.... Yet the spirit is formed through the soul – for the soul is nothing more than tethered, arrested, harmonized spirit.¹⁰²

The inference which I make is that Jesus is this idea, which is also to consider him as the “world-soul”, whence derives the creating “world-spirit” that renews the present world; moreover, the coming “Universal-God” which is identified with a coming “Universe” can be read alongside the *Freiburg* fragment above, that God is heaven. Furthermore, Novalis writes that “spirit and person are one”, which dovetails nicely with his description of Jesus as God’s “personality.”¹⁰³

Novalis’ description of God as *becoming actual* in the world through the going out of His spirit, according to an inner ideal, is analogous to how Novalis’ subject *becomes* in the world¹⁰⁴; there is a higher self and a spiritual inner world thence derived which determines the subject *in* the world, and reciprocally *modifies* nature. This affiliation is metaphysical, because Novalis’ subject’s approximation of their own higher self *further*s this eschatological process, hence: the “development of the [subject’s] spirit is a codevelopment of the World-Spirit” and the “development of the [subject’s] soul is therefore a codevelopment of the World-Soul.”¹⁰⁵ He makes this conjunction, it would seem, by positing the higher self of each person as *mediating* Christ’s spirit,

⁹⁹ Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, no. 159: 57.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 167: 59.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, no. 604: 178.

¹⁰² Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 407: 63.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, no. 63: 10.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 72: 62; Novalis, “The Poet’s Realm,” 60.

¹⁰⁵ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 407: 63.

Who makes the subject *holy*. Following this, Novalis' subject's communion of marital love unto the higher self is best understood as an example of Zinzendorfic marriage-duality: unto higher self and Christ. Nevertheless, because the higher self is not derivative from any absolutely posited self, it must be drawn from without. This is the role of faith.

Novalis chooses his dead fiancée, Sophie, to be his higher self – his “soul” – by an act of faith.¹⁰⁶ His attempted feat is the transference of the thought of her into a stable, inner ideal object – i.e. his higher self. He variously expresses this attempted construction in his journal of 1797 as his attempt to feel her with “inwardness”, and desire to “live more fully in her. Only in her memory am I truly well.”¹⁰⁷ This construction is dependent upon faith:

All knowledge ends and begins in faith. The forward and backward extension of knowledge is an enlargement / – an extension of the province of faith. The ego believes it sees a foreign being....¹⁰⁸

If a person suddenly and genuinely believed... Supposition of the ideal – of that which is sought – is the method to find it.... As a attempts to determine b.... By believing that my little Sophie is around me and can appear to me, and by acting in accordance with this belief, then she is indeed around me – and finally appears certain to me – precisely there, where I least expect – Within me – as my soul perhaps etc.¹⁰⁹

Faith then, it would seem, makes present the chosen beloved as one's higher self. Given the fundamental necessity of possessing a higher self, Novalis makes no exaggeration in writing that “all knowledge ends and begins in faith.” Indeed, he writes elsewhere: “the whole world has come into being out of the power of faith – it is the synthetic principle.”¹¹⁰ This is because, as shown in sections 3 and 4, the subject is dependent upon the higher self, the “personal god”, to *become substantial*. Accordingly, “life is a moral principle. (Imperfect morality – imperfect life)”; those lacking faith and thus a moral higher self will also lack its entailed substantial realization of “life” in the world, but will instead be destroyed by God's “incessant annihilation of imperfect life.”¹¹¹ One can thus make sense of Novalis' striking claim: “few

¹⁰⁶ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 603: 107.

¹⁰⁷ Novalis, “Journal, April 18th-July 6th, 1797,” in *Birth of Novalis*, 79-96, esp. 80, 81, 83, 87, 92, 96.

¹⁰⁸ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 601: 106.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* no. 603: 107.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* nos. 512, 779, 852: 91-92, 143, 155.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 255, 852: 38, 155; *Ibid.* (Appendix): *Freiberg Natural Scientific Studies*, no. 27: 197-198.

human beings are human beings.”¹¹² The higher self’s determinate realization is moral, imperishable substance, because the higher self mediates the divine essence.¹¹³ Faith is thus prerequisite to substantial existence whereby we *are* God.

Novalis’ letter to Caroline Just of March, 1797, provides an early example of the higher self’s double character, namely, God’s presence *through* Sophie:

What you tell me about Sophie’s invisible presence is a brilliant truth – her image should and must become my better self – the magic image that is illumined deep inside me by an eternal lamp and which will certainly save me from so many trials and temptations of evil and sin.¹¹⁴

This is a particularly revealing letter because so much of what is significant about Novalis’ higher self is brought out. Sophie becomes Novalis’ higher self by his effort (of faith): “her image should and must become my better self.” Moreover, the fact that her image is “magic” seems a clear allusion to the fact that a world is to be constituted out of her, in the first sense of love as a generator, i.e. of love unto Sophie as the stimulus to magical idealism. The second sense of love, however, also seems present, because there is an “eternal lamp” which causes her to be “illumined deep inside” and gives her salvific power against “evil and sin.”

Corroborating my interpretation of this letter, Novalis writes: “hence it is a duty to think of the dead [such as Sophie]. It is the only way to remain in communion with them. In no other way is God himself present for us than through faith.”¹¹⁵ Here the concept of God becoming “present for us through faith” *through* the *thought* of someone else is evident.

Blüthenstaub no. 74 contextualises this. Every person must freely choose a “mediator” which “binds us to the divine”, lest he practice “irreligion”, but Novalis “makes the monotheistic mediator the mediator of the mediating world of pantheism, centring the world on him”; hence, whilst “to the religious person every object can be a temple... the spirit of this temple is... the monotheistic mediator”, i.e. Christ, the “him” on Whom the world *centres* and by Whom God is known (viz. “the monotheistic mediator”, e.g.

¹¹² Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 762: 140.

¹¹³ See also *Ibid.*, nos. 118, 320: 20, 47; Novalis, “Pollen,” no. 83: 26.

¹¹⁴ Novalis, “Friedrich von Hardenberg to Caroline Just in Tennstedt: Weissenfels, March 24, 1797,” in *Birth of Novalis*, 71.

¹¹⁵ Novalis, “Pollen,” no. 34: 15-16. See also Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 779: 143-144, and Novalis, *Hymns to the Night and Spiritual Songs*, trans. George MacDonald (Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing, 1992), hymn no. 5: 17.

Colossians 1:15-20): the “pure personality.”¹¹⁶ Novalis is seemingly claiming that the subject has Christ mediated to them through another object, i.e. “temple.”¹¹⁷ I infer that this is a discussion of the higher self, and hence that Christ is the “eternal lamp” illuminating the inner Sophie: “the spirit of this temple.” Here Zinzendorf’s *Ehereligion* is most fruitful to consider.

Reading Novalis’ higher self in relation to Zinzendorf, the Christologically mediating status of the marital higher self dovetails Zinzendorf’s spouse-and-Christ marital dualism. Following this reading, Novalis synthesises Zinzendorf’s notion of a spectral vision of Christ through the “Eyes of Faith” with the effort of faith in making the chosen beloved into an inner idea (viz. a higher self). Hence, for Novalis, his marital higher self, Sophie, appears to him in a spectral vision - suggestively involving “faith”, perhaps because she is only thereby united with him - but it is Christ who “shines” *through* her. This is, I think, the content of Novalis’ famous *Hymn* no. 3, when through Christ’s spirit – “Thou, soul of the Night, heavenly Slumber, didst come upon me” – he sees the transfigured Sophie: “the glorified face of my beloved. In her eyes eternity reposed”; the text closes with him “welcoming the new life” and affirming his “unchangeable faith in the heaven of the Night, and its sun, the Beloved.” It appears that “*the Beloved*” is in fact Christ, as contrasted with “*my beloved*”, which is Sophie.¹¹⁸ This reading seems the most plausible given that Christ is here described in language which is, I think, strongly reminiscent of the language of Christ as the world-soul *by which* heaven, which is the Night, is created.¹¹⁹ He is the “soul of the Night” or, what appears equivalent, “its sun.” Accordingly, Novalis’ faith, at the closure of *Hymn* no. 3, is directed to Christ.¹²⁰

This Zinzendorfic *vision* of Sophie is poignantly echoed, definitively as his higher self, in his letter to Caroline Just, as well as in his journal entries, especially that of June, 29th, 1797: “always have dear Sophie in front of your eyes”, closing with, on its own line, the words “Christ and Sophie.”¹²¹

Zinzendorf’s theology, on the strength of making the believer *married* to Christ, entails a Christological aspect to the human spouse as well as a marital devotion to Christ *per se*. This latter aspect is synthesised with a *blood and*

¹¹⁶ Novalis, “Pollen,” no. 74: 20-23.

¹¹⁷ See Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 55: 58-59.

¹¹⁸ Novalis, *Hymns*, hymn no. 3: 12. My emphases.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, hymn no. 4: 13-15.

¹²⁰ See also *Ibid.*, hymn no. 5, 17; Novalis, “Pollen,” no. 34: 15-16; Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 779: 143-144.

¹²¹ Novalis, “Hardenberg to Just: March 24th, 1797,” 71; Novalis, “Journal, 1797,” 96, see also 80, 81, 83, 87, 92.

wounds theology, whereby marital and sanguine language mingle. Novalis appears to follow this imagery in *Song* no. 7:

In heavenly blood / Swims the blissful two. / Oh that the ocean / Were even now flushing! / And in odorous flesh / The rock upswelling! / ...Never close enough, never enough its own, / Can it *have* the beloved! / By ever tenderer lips... Then had they known Love's / Infinite fullness, / And commended the sustenance / Of body and blood.¹²²

Christ, then, is *the beloved*, as in *hymn* no. 3, and the marital (almost erotic) language of “never close enough, never enough its own, / Can it *have* the beloved” dovetails the mediating marriage to Sophie, also of *hymn* no. 3. *Hymn* no. 2 echoes this dual marriage: “True as wife's his heart for ever holdeth.”¹²³ Consequent to the higher self mediating Christ, if my reading is accurate, Novalis writes:

I would find my meaning, or body, determined partly by itself and partly by the idea of the whole – by its spirit – the world soul, and this so that both are inextricably united – so that properly speaking one could refer neither to the one nor the other exclusively. My body would seem to me not specifically different from the whole – but only a variant of it. My knowledge of the whole would thus have the character of analogy.... My body is a small whole, and thus it also has a special soul; for I call soul the individual principle whereby everything becomes one whole.¹²⁴

God and the subject indeed seem metaphysically analogous; furthermore, because the subject's “soul”, or higher self, mediates Christ, “the world soul”, the activity of the subject determines both the divine *and* the subject, in the world, towards an eschatologically completed “whole.” A starkest instance of this dual determination is in *Hymn* no. 4. Holy living in this imperfect world, the realm of Light, determines Christ, and thus is *of* Him, the sleeping Soul of the Night – i.e. the idea, or world-soul, of the coming world:

Afloat above [in the realm of Light] remains what is earthly, and is swept back in storms; but what became holy by the touch of Love, runs free through hidden ways to the region beyond, where, like odours, it mingles with Love asleep.¹²⁵

¹²² Novalis, *Hymns*, song no. 7: 39-40.

¹²³ Novalis, *Hymns*, song no. 2: 30.

¹²⁴ Novalis, “Logological Fragments I,” no. 72: 62.

¹²⁵ Novalis, *Hymns*, hymn no. 4: 13; see also Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 407: 63.

Christ is here referred to simply as “Love”, and this is repeated across the *Hymnen an die Nacht*, albeit most clearly in *Hymn* no. 1 which describes Mary as “the foster-mother of blissful love.”¹²⁶ This corresponds to Novalis’ interpretation of 1 John 4:8: “God is love. Love is the highest reality – the primal foundation.”¹²⁷ Hence, self-actualisation moralises the world by transforming it into love. Novalis therefore writes: “Love is the final goal of world history – the One of the universe”¹²⁸; and, equally, “Love is the ego – the ideal of every endeavor.”¹²⁹

6. Conclusion

Novalis is expressing the biblical view, which Zinzendorf shared, that the believer is *like* Christ in their own life: “Holy in him”, writes Novalis, we “knew ourselves akin to God.”¹³⁰ This is perhaps best expressed in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”, *through my higher self*, Novalis would add. The immediate conceptual significance of this holiness is that Novalis’ “dawn of humanity” and his Christian millenarianism occur in tandem; respectively, one might describe this as the eschatological fulfilment of the real self’s striving to be the equal of the *Not-I* as well as its striving to realise the divinely mediating higher self.¹³¹ Therefore, the returned Christ is “the inner reception of a new messiah in all his thousand forms”, or again: “He will be visible to the believer in countless forms.”¹³² He comes “in countless forms” because Christ is only fully *determined* through the completed plenitude of determinations which each approximate the higher self: “God... [only appears] in a thousand, diverse forms – God only appears as a whole pantheistically.”¹³³ Pauline Kleingeld, not appreciating the Christian aspects to Novalis’ thought, only sees his *Christianity or Europe* as concerned with “the culmination” of the “Cosmopolitan ideal... of *Bildung*” – i.e. an essentially secular eschatology.¹³⁴ It seems far more plausible, given especially its discussion of this messiah, to read the text alongside the *Hymns*; consequently, the millennium is the

¹²⁶ Novalis, *Hymns*, hymn no. 1, 10; see also *Ibid.*, hymn no. 5: 20-21.

¹²⁷ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 79: 12.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 50: 8.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 835: 153.

¹³⁰ Novalis, *Hymns*, song no. 1, 28-29; Zinzendorf, *Discourses*, iii, 12-13, 20, 35, 41-42, 61, 83-84, 119-121, 132, 174.

¹³¹ Novalis, “Christianity or Europe,” 74.

¹³² Novalis, “Christianity or Europe,” 74.

¹³³ Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, no. 398: 61.

¹³⁴ Pauline Kleingeld, “Romantic Cosmopolitanism: Novalis’s ‘Christianity or Europe’”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (April 2008), 282.

heaven of the Night – the eschatologically completed sum of individuals’
“touch[es] of love.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Novalis, *Hymns*, hymn no. 4: 13.