

NOVALIS AND THE AUTONOMY OF ART

by

CARLOS GASPERI LABBEE

A dissertation submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in German

Written under the direction of

Martha B. Helfer

And approved by

---

---

---

---

New Brunswick, New Jersey  
May, 2019

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Novalis and the Autonomy of Art

By CARLOS GASPERI LABBEE

Dissertation Director:

Martha B. Helfer

The dissertation that follows argues that the early works of Novalis together represent a philosophical critique of Romantic reflexivity as a concept of artistic autonomy. Chapter One addresses Novalis's "Bemerkungen zu Fichte," demonstrating that the Jena Romantic concept of artistic autonomy operates at the most elementary level of Novalis's aesthetic program, namely, the linguistic sign. In nuce, Novalis's semiotics represent an ongoing process of self-regeneration in visual form; stated otherwise, the sign engenders itself as a literary creation of its own imaginative powers of language. Chapter Two considers "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" to be a literary narrative about the "language of nature." Interpreting the text in the context of Novalis's semiotic discourse on the laws of language and scientific discourse on the laws of nature, the poetic autonomy of the sign comes to represent a microcosm of the poetic autonomy of nature herself. For Novalis, the "nature" of language and the "language" of nature convey one and the same intuition. Chapter Three understands "Monolog" to be the culmination of Novalis's philosophy of language as that of a living, animating force in the universe that maintains and regulates the manifold unity of our mundane reality.

## Acknowledgments

I suspect having been born and raised in an unusual family setting played a decisive role in my life choices. It was my parents who first taught me the value of mutual understanding among cultures. As an American expatriate residing in Venezuela, my mother insisted that English be spoken in our family household, whereas my Venezuelan father insisted that Spanish be spoken in equal measure. Moving to the United States at eighteen years of age, I initially intended to pursue an undergraduate education in the fields of business and economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The course of my academic trajectory changed in its entirety, however, after listening to Professor C.D.C. Reeve's eloquent lectures on Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift* of 1887. Professor Reeve's fine exposition of Nietzsche's consummate understanding of the historical origins of our social mores engrossed my mind completely. Nietzsche's ingenious style of philosophical writing by dint of literary tropes instigated my desire to engage questions of philosophy from the vantage point of a literary critic ever since.

Having been exposed to the value of learning foreign languages from an early age, I sought to learn how to read Nietzsche in his native language. My apprenticeship of the German language under the tutelage of many dedicated and talented teachers of German over the years has accorded me a more nuanced philosophical appreciation of Nietzsche's poetic language, as well as that of his predecessors. It is with great enthusiasm, indeed, that I find myself at the culmination of my formal studies immersed in the philosophical ruminations of one of his greatest nineteenth century literary precursors – Novalis. In

truth, I am most fortunate that by the grace of many fortuitous circumstances, life has afforded me the opportunity to amply pursue my passion for the study of countless great works of German Literature. The joyful endeavor of the past decade brought tremendous felicity to my spirit.

Since joining the academic community that forms Rutgers University's Department of German, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures, I feel honored to have been conferred the privilege of a graduate education under the auspices of such a fine group of mentors. I am foremost obliged, however, to my dissertation adviser, Martha B. Helfer. Her supervision with a most caring view to my professional development, as well as unflagging support in times of personal setbacks, were instrumental to the completion of the project at-hand. But more importantly, her work in the field of German literary studies continues to serve as the exemplar of what my own scholarship strives to be. The incontrovertible probity of character that distinguishes the intellectual honesty and incisive judgment of her research reflects the true vocation of the person I know as someone devoted to a lifetime of study of German Romanticism.

I finally wish to express my earnest gratitude to the staffs of *Freies Deutsches Hochstift* and *Schloss Oberwiederstedt*. Their elated enthusiasm for all things related to Novalis went hand-in-hand with their outstanding hospitality. I particularly wish to thank Dr. Konrad Heumann and Prof. Dr. Gabriele Rommel for sharing their erudition, as well as granting me full-access to their vast collections of investigative resources on Novalis.

## Dedication

I wish to dedicate the following dissertation to my family, Carlos Astolfo Gasperi Grillo, Carlos Daniel Gasperi, and Terri Lynn Labbée de Gasperi.

## Table of Contents

<u>Abstract</u>	ii
<u>Acknowledgment</u>	iii-iv
<u>Dedication</u>	v
<u>Introduction</u>	
“Novalis and the Autonomy of Art”	1-50
<u>Chapter I</u>	
“The Original Schema”	
<i>A Study of “Bemerkungen zu Fichte”</i>	51-104
<u>Chapter II</u>	
“Of Law and Nature”	
<i>A Study of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs”</i>	105-156
<u>Chapter III</u>	
“Anima Mundi”	
<i>A Study of “Monolog”</i>	157-184
<u>Concluding Remarks</u>	185-186
<u>Appendix A</u>	187-188
<u>Bibliography</u>	189

## Introduction

### “Novalis and the Autonomy of Art”

In recent discussions about art, the notion of the “autonomy of art” proves to be a panchreston. It offers an explanation concerning the nature of art which can be made to fit all cases, but is used in such a variety of ways as to become virtually meaningless. Göran Hermerén's 1983 *Aspects of Aesthetics* alone extrapolates thirteen definitions of the autonomy of art from contemporary art critics and philosophers; Owen Hulatt's 2013 anthology *Aesthetic and Artistic Autonomy* compiles ten wide-ranging essays on topics that further differentiate, according to Hulatt, between “aesthetic” and “artistic” autonomy. For those of us invested in such discussions, the meaning of the autonomy of art is rendered no less obscure by its commonplace association to the phrase “art for art's sake.” The latter is first recorded in an 1804 journal entry by Benjamin Constant, who reports a dinner conversation with Henry C. Robinson on the subject of Kant's inventive turn of phrase *Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*.<sup>i</sup> The equivalent in French *l'art pour l'art* is otherwise contrived by the mid-nineteenth century *parnasse* movement, where Théophile Gautier is the first to adopt the slogan in the preface of his 1835 epistolary novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.<sup>ii</sup> Broadly speaking, the phrase “art for art's sake” is understood to mean that art lacks any didactic, moral, or utilitarian function beyond its sphere of influence on human activities. To state the following clearly from the outset, this is not the concept of the autonomy of art that the present study intends to discuss.

Philosophically considered, several iterations of the concept of “autonomy” [*Autonomie, Selbständigkeit, Selbstgesetzlichkeit, Selbsttätigkeit, Souveränität*] are nevertheless worth here reviewing against the backdrop of early modern aesthetics to the present. Of course, while by no means exhaustive, the overview that follows frames

several preliminary definitions of the autonomy of art that deal with fundamental aspects of Jena Romantic aesthetics in the final decade of the eighteenth century. More expressly, I wish to make use of these preliminary definitions in an effort to illuminate the philosophical stakes of three early works by Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, otherwise better known by his celebrated nom de plume “Novalis.”<sup>iii</sup> Over the course of three studies, I interpret Novalis's “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” of late 1795 to mid-1796, “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs” of 1798, and “Monolog” of early 1799. I will argue that these works each in their own respect critically reflect on the concept of Romantic reflexivity as a form of artistic autonomy. With the findings of the present investigation, I hope to make a contribution of lasting value to the most current scholarship on Novalis, as well as offer a unique perspective on the autonomy of art which others may find of use in the pursuit of their own intellectual and scholarly interests.

## I

The German literary and philosophical traditions are unique in their tendency to view the autonomy of the work of art separately from the autonomy of art as such.<sup>iv</sup> During the Age of Enlightenment, Lessing's 1766 treatise on aesthetics *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie* distinguishes the ideals of the plastic arts in general and poetry on the basis of their representational limits. On the premise that “signs must stand in a convenient relation to the thing signified,” the signs of paintings and sculptures, forms and colors in-space, in contradistinction to the signs of poems, articulate sounds in-time, themselves signify two distinct artistic ends. Because the plastic arts are bound to observe spatial proximity, the painter or sculptor must therefore select and render the seminal, most expressive “pregnant” moment in a chain of events;

poets, in contrast, have the task of depicting events according to the temporal sequence of transitory actions (101-102).<sup>v</sup> The plastic arts and poetry are “autonomous” media of artistic representation in the sense that they designate independent semiotic systems on the basis of mutually exclusive structures of signification.

Only two decades later, Karl Philipp Moritz lays the theoretical groundwork for the distinct concept of autonomy that permeates Jena Romantic aesthetics. Moritz' lesser known collection of essays on aesthetics are regarded in the secondary literature as his *Ästhetische Schriften* of 1785-1790. In the course of his earliest reflections on art, “Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten” of 1785, Moritz posits the self-sufficiency of the work of art as a totality “complete in itself” [*in sich vollendet*]. Countering the theory proposed by Mendelsohn's 1757 “Ueber die Hauptgrundsätze der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften” that the purpose of art is to elicit various forms of pleasure, Moritz makes the argument that art is not a means to an end, but is rather an “end in itself.” More precisely, Moritz postulates that the work of art is structured according to its own “inner purpose” [*innere Zweckmässigkeit*]. Commentators have frequently remarked on this point that Moritz's concept of inner purposiveness anticipates Kant's characterization of the beautiful in the Third Critique as “purposive without a purpose” [*Zweckmäßig ohne Zweck*]. They acknowledge, of course, that the crucial difference between Moritz and Kant lies in the former's emphasis on the object rather than the subject of aesthetic experience. As Elliot Schreiber aptly observes in his 2012 *The Topography of Modernity: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Space of Autonomy*, this view is rather misleading, however. In truth, Moritz's philosophical view concerning the object of aesthetic experience is more nuanced (24-25). Early in the essay, the recipient endows the work of art with its inner purposiveness by regarding it as complete-in-itself: “Bei der Betrachtung des Schönen aber wälze ich den Zweck aus mir in den Gegenstand selbst zurück: ich

betrachte ihn als etwas nicht in mir, sondern in sich selbst Vollendetes, das also in sich ein Ganzes ausmacht und mir um sein selbst willen Vergnügen gewährt” (204). To interpret, the “inner purposiveness” of the object is not so much attributed to the object by its recipient, but is revealed instead in the reception of the object itself. Moritz reverses the aesthetic relation between recipient and artwork, in other words, such that it is rather the recipient who elicits the experience of beauty in the object as such.

Building on the aesthetic principles of his previous essay, Moritz applies the classic philosophical distinction between part and whole to his theory of the artwork in “Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendetes” of 1788. Moritz maintains that works of art must be self-satisfying “wholes” and therefore cannot serve the external purposes or interests of scientific models or moral systems.<sup>vi</sup> The specific relation between part and whole in the work of art remains an open-ended question in the final paragraph of the essay. Moritz curiously wonders how the individual parts of the work frame, or “mirror,” the work of art as whole:

Mein Vergnügen selbst aber muß ja erst aus dieser Beurteilung entstehen; es müßte also dasein, ehe es da wäre. Auch muß ja der Zweck immer etwas Einfacheres als die Mittel sein, welche zu demselben abzwecken: nun ist aber das Vergnügen an einem schönen Kunstwerke ebenso zusammengesetzt als das Kunstwerk selber, wie kann ich es denn als etwas Einfacheres betrachten, worauf die einzelnen Teile des Kunstwerks abzwecken sollen? Ebenso wenig wie die Darstellung eines Gemäldes in einem Spiegel der Zweck seiner Zusammensetzung sein kann; denn diese wird allemal von selbst erfolgen, ohne daß ich bei der Arbeit die mindeste Rücksicht darauf zu nehmen brauche. (203)

Moritz's unpublished 1789 outline “Bestimmung des Zwecks einer Theorie der Schönen Künste,” likely written during or immediately following his two-month stay in Weimar, answers these questions. In following with his outline, the recipient of the literary work must discover the proper vantage point [“*Gesichtspunkt*”] from which the work can be seen as a whole that is complete-in-itself: “Die Gefühl der Möglichkeit, sich in einem Kunstwerk ausser sich selbst zu stellen [...] [Erst so kann] das Schöne wahrhaft nützlich

werden; indem es unser Wahrnehmungsvermögen für Ordnung und Übereinstimmung schärft, und unsern Geist über das Kleine erhebt, weil es alles Einzelne uns stets im Ganzen, und in Beziehung auf das Ganze, deutlich erblicken läßt" (122). From the proper vantage point, each component of the work presents itself in a necessary relation to the whole, allowing the beauty of the artwork to emerge as a whole-unto-itself. As Moritz explains in the short-essay "Gesichtspunkt" of 1787, just as spiders possess an instinctive tendency to position themselves at the center of their web, so too do we as human beings possess an innate affinity for truth. For Schreiber, Moritz's later remarks on the perspectively constructed literary artwork concretize his shift toward an emphasis on the object of aesthetic experience. In summary, Moritz's conception of the autonomy of art reflects on the self-sufficiency of the artwork as the first principle of his aesthetics. For Moritz, more significantly still, works of art uniquely represent ideals of truth, order, and self-accord that define the human condition.

In the final decade of the eighteenth century, under the influence of Moritz, the Jena Romantic movement contemplates the work of art as a medium of self-reflection *sui generis*. In the famous "Athenäums-Fragmente" of 1798, Friedrich Schlegel comments on the self-contained perfectibility of the literary fragment in the form of a literary fragment: "Ein Fragment muß gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel" (KA I, fragment #206, 196).<sup>vii</sup> Given the wealth of scholarship on both Schlegel and Novalis, it is admittedly difficult to avoid platitudes that explain how the works of the former compare to those of the latter. Concerning the autonomy of art, one undeniable difference between the two is that there is a more complex philosophical discourse on the concept of "law" that prevails in Novalis's writings. As I intend to demonstrate in the first upcoming chapter, for Novalis, poetry is a product of its own self-determination in following with the natural, epistemic

laws of the poetic imagination. In his “Studien zur Bildenden Kunst,” Novalis implicitly dismisses the Kantian supposition that the imagination is a “faculty” of our cognitive abilities, elevating instead the primacy of the imagination over our senses: “Die Einbildungskraft ist der wunderbare Sinn, der uns alle Sinne *ersetzen* kann – und der so sehr schon in unserer Willkühr steht. Wenn die äußern Sinne ganz unter mechanischen Gesetzen zu stehen scheinen – so ist die Einbildungskraft offenbar nicht an die Gegenwart und Berührung äußer Reitze gebunden (II, 650).” Without mediation on account of external “mechanical,” causal laws of nature, or the moral laws of reason, as in Kantian epistemology, the poetic imagination is without any source of appeal other than itself.

Heralded by the Romantics, the subject of the autonomy of art reëmerges several decades later in the aesthetic practices and theories of late nineteenth century Realism, Symbolism, and Aestheticism. In his 1993 *Ästhetische Kommunikation der Moderne 2: Von Nietzsche bis zur Gegenwart*, Gerhard Plumpe under takes a Luhmannian systems-theoretical approach to his discussions of German late nineteenth century Realism. Plumpe observes how authors such as Adolf Horwicz, Theodor Fontane, and Gottfried Keller emphasize the importance of “transfiguration” [*Verklärung*] in literary representations, so as to maintain a commitment to the idea of aesthetic “autonomy” while recognizing the presence of an external social and natural world. “Die Soziale Wirklichkeit der Kunst,” Plumpe notes, “[ist] nicht in Werken, sondern in ästhetischer Kommunikation zu suchen” (8). In other words, the reality of art in modern society is not based on the fact that there are things with the ontological property of being art. Rather, the reality of art consists in that there exists a differentiated, continuing, and institutionally supported communicative convention that, despite all its incongruous elements, remains uniformly coded as “art” (Ibid.).<sup>viii</sup> As implied earlier, Plumpe's claims

are made in following with Niklas Luhmann's 1995 systems-theoretical analysis *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*. In his own work, Luhmann defines art as having two facets – “social” and “world” autonomy. “World autonomy” signifies the distinction between a pre-modern understanding of art and its modern counterpart. In the pre-modern era, art is thought to be either a mere representation of social practices or an imitation of nature independent of any extra-aesthetic demands, whether they be religious, political, or moral. Throughout modernity, art criticism differentiates itself from society as an independent self-organizing social system, thereby becoming an instrument with which to observe society according to its own internal self-referential criteria.<sup>ix</sup>

Writing from a critical perspective contemporaneous with the Symbolist movement at the close of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche denounces the phrase *l'art pour l'art* in section 24 of his collection of fragments “Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemäßen” from his 1889 *Götzen-Dämmerung, oder; Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*:

*L'art pour l'art*. – Der Kampf gegen den Zweck in der Kunst ist immer der Kampf gegen die *moralisierende* Tendenz in der Kunst, gegen ihre Unterordnung unter die Moral. *L'art pour l'art* heißt: »der Teufel hole die Moral!« – Aber selbst noch diese Feindschaft verrät die Übergewalt des Vorurteils. Wenn man den Zweck des Moralpredigens und Menschen-Verbesserns von der Kunst ausgeschlossen hat, so folgt daraus noch lange nicht, daß die Kunst überhaupt zwecklos, ziellos, sinnlos, kurz *l'art pour l'art* – ein Wurm, der sich in den Schwanz beißt – ist. »Lieber gar keinen Zweck als einen moralischen Zweck!« – so redet die bloße Leidenschaft. Ein Psycholog fragt dagegen: was tut alle Kunst? lobt sie nicht? verherrlicht sie nicht? wählt sie nicht aus? zieht sie nicht hervor? Mit dem allem *stärkt* oder *schwächt* sie gewisse Wertschätzungen ... Ist dies nur ein Nebenbei? ein Zufall? Etwas, bei dem der Instinkt des Künstlers gar nicht beteiligt wäre? Oder aber: ist es nicht die Voraussetzung dazu, daß der Künstler *kann* ... ? Geht dessen unterster Instinkt auf die Kunst oder nicht vielmehr auf den Sinn der Kunst, das *Leben*? auf eine *Wünschbarkeit von Leben*? – Die Kunst ist das große Stimulans zum Leben: wie könnte man sie als zwecklos, als ziellos, als *l'art pour l'art* verstehen? (1004)

Nietzsche pleads for a vitalist conception of the autonomy of art [“*das große Stimulans zum Leben*”] that rejects both the moralizing function of art according to Enlightenment thought, especially Schiller, as well as the circularity of aesthetic reflexivity associated with nineteenth century literary movements. Nietzsche's metaphor of the worm that eats

its own tail makes implicit reference to the early German Romantic literary and visual trope of the *ouriborous*, the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph of the snake that eats its own tail. The worm represents a disparaging critique of reflexivity as a symbol of organic decay and decomposition that opposes the early German Romantic notion of reflexivity as a symbol of organic reproduction and regeneration. Nietzsche and the likes of Novalis and Philipp Otto Runge view art and its relation to nature from orthogonal perspectives. Whereas the early German Romantics generally perceive art as coeval with nature and nature as coeval with art, Nietzsche holds art to be the highest expression of what he elsewhere calls our “will to power,” or our vital means of justifying our human existence through the exertion of mastery over our own nature.<sup>x</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the praxis of life that distinguishes the institutional status of art in bourgeois society forms the ideological content of the Avant-Garde according to the argument of Peter Bürger's *Theorie der Avantgarde* of 1964. Jochen Schulte-Sasse's foreword to Michael Shaw's 1984 translation of Bürger's work, an essay titled, “Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde,” comments at length on the contents of Bürger's third chapter, “Zum Problem der Autonomie der Kunst in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft.” Schulte explains that Bürger's argument actually follows from Marcuse's earlier thesis from his equally seminal work in the practice of theoretical art historiography “Über den affirmativen Charakter der Kultur” of 1937. Marcuse writes, “the autonomy of art has always had an ambivalent character from the beginning,” Schulte writes (xi). Throughout the history of Western art, while individual works may have successfully critiqued negative aspects of society, the anticipation of social harmony as psychic harmony, essential to the aesthetic experience of the individual, especially among the Greeks, has always risked degenerating into a mere cerebral compensation for society's shortcomings. In this manner, art often risks affirming

precisely what is criticized by the contents of the work itself. For Marcuse, rather, art's critical reception is that which contains the greatest potential to reaffirm art's content: "Die Schönheit der Kultur ist vor allem eine innere Schönheit und kann auch dem Äußeren nur von innen her zukommen." he writes (71). Marcuse maintains that even the most critical work inevitably exhibits a dialectical unity of affirmation and negation by virtue of its institutionalized separation from social praxis. For Bürger, this ambiguous status of art in bourgeois society provides the key to understanding the logic of contemporary art history. The contradiction between negation and affirmation, implicit in these "autonomous" modalities of art since the Age of Enlightenment, eventually leads to a feeling of impotence among late nineteenth century writers, or to be more exact, to a realization of the social ineffectiveness of their own medium. As ever more radical confrontations between artists and society take place, the elements of affirmation and compensation increasingly influence audiences' responses to contemporary art. Bürger considers these developments logical and necessary, on the one hand, because they reveal the structural function of "unmodern" art as a kind of cultural anodyne; on the other hand, he bemoans these developments, conceding that the Avant-Garde produces artworks of scarce artistic merit characterized by the output of semantic atrophy for its own sake.

During the interwar period in Austria, members of the Vienna Circle construe the aesthetic experience as fundamentally interrelated with language. In the view of several critics, Wittgenstein's aesthetics stem directly from his theory of the self-relationality of language enumerated throughout his major works *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* of 1921 and *Philosophische Untersuchungen* of 1936.<sup>xi</sup> The work of art is a "language-game," Wittgenstein implies, an arbitrary assembly of subject nouns and predicates whose essential meaning language itself fails to denote.<sup>xii</sup>

Around the same interwar period in Switzerland, Jung develops a psychoanalytic



receptive aesthetics that construes artworks in music, painting, and architecture as unique intentional objects conditioned by unique intentional sensate structures. Ingarden's philosophical hermeneutics seek to bring said objects to ontological completion as a distinct mode of phenomenological art criticism. In my own scholarly work, incidentally, I rely on Ingarden's theories as a means of establishing an ontology of various food commodities as independent objects of art, as well as explore the ways in which “food artworks” exceptionally resist technological reproducibility in connection to Benjamin's insights on the relation between technology and art at the turn of the twentieth century in his 1936 “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit.”<sup>xv</sup>

Throughout the same postwar period in Germany, Marxist aesthetics proposes that artworks singularly reflect the state of society and the power to incite change, hence, promising resistance to societal repression. In several works of the Frankfurt School including Adorno's 1970 *Ästhetische Theorie* and Marcuse's 1977 *Die Permanenz der Kunst: Wider eine bestimmte marxistische Ästhetik*, the work of art is an object bereft of practical value and yet an ideological expression of a unique social circumstance [“*Sozialer Tatbestand*”] – an enigma that ostensibly complicates the determinate “super-structural” grid of historical-material conditions from which the artwork emerges.<sup>xvi</sup>

Adorno in his 1962 “Engagement” essay from *Noten zur Literatur* writes, “Die rücksichtslose Autonomie der Werke, die der Anpassung an den Markt und dem Verschleiß sich entzieht, wird unwillkürlich zum Angriff” (425).<sup>xvii</sup> The foremost practitioner of Marxist aesthetics in twentieth century German literature, Brecht, along these same lines remarks in an entry from his *Arbeitsjournal* dated August 24<sup>th</sup> of 1940, “die Kunst ist ein autonomer Bezirk, wenn auch unter keine Umständen ein Autarker!” (63). According to Günter Hartung's interpretation from his “Die Autonomie der Kunst. Grundzüge der Brechtschen Ästhetik” of 1973, the passage is an elaboration of an earlier

remark made in Brecht's "Messingkauf" of 1940: "So ist die Kunst ein eigenes und ursprüngliches Vermögen der Menschheit, welches weder verhüllte Moral, noch verschönertes Wissen allein ist, sondern eine selbständige, die verschiedenen Disziplinen widerspruchsvoll repräsentierende Disziplin" (645). For Brecht, art is an orderly, prescribed conduct of behavior directed at the subversion of all disciplines.

Representative of the so-called "third generation" of the Frankfurt School, Christoph Menke's 1991 *Die Souveränität der Kunst – Ästhetische Erfahrung nach Adorno und Derrida* considers the "sovereignty" of art as just one among many modes of experience that encompass the realm of reason. For Menke, modern art's specific achievements are the result of its "autonomous" unfolding as an independent sphere of value. The measure of any theory of modern art is therefore contingent on its capacity to grasp this autonomy. In a relatively recent issue of *Monatshefte* from 2002, Arthur Strum reviews Neil Salomon's recent 1999 English translation of Menke's book, *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*. Philosophical hermeneutics beginning in the twentieth century conceives of the over-abundance of signification in Western culture as opening up the possibility of infinite valid interpretations of artworks. Here, Derridean deconstruction and Adorno's negative aesthetics coincide in emphasizing the suspension of the understanding as such. Menke specifically identifies this process as the "negative-aesthetic version" of Kantian disinterested pleasure (Strum, 136). From the second half of Menke's book onward, Menke considers the broader implications of his own semiotically reformulated concept of negative aesthetics. In Strum's estimation of Menke, Menke wishes to arrive at a conception of aesthetic negativity that is immune from the charges Habermas's 1985 *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* levels against aesthetically-inspired critiques of reason (Strum, 136). Art is sovereign for Derrida, Menke argues,

because it overcomes the “desire for meaning” that defines non-aesthetic discourses: “the experience of art's negativity at the same time uncovers the hidden negativity also found not in art, but rather in functioning discourse” (Solomon, 164). For Derrida, according to Menke, to restrict the validity of this experience of negativity by confining its validity to a particular sphere, that of the aesthetic, namely, “paradoxically stabilizes the validity of non-aesthetic discourses and thereby cheats it out of its own sovereignty” (Strum, 136; Solomon, 164). For Adorno, on the other hand, the relevance of art to non-aesthetic discourse lies in its effects or consequences for the recipient, “who enacts a sovereign aesthetic experience [and] who gains a new picture of non-aesthetic discourses as a result of passing through this experience” (Solomon, 164). Essentially, Menke's view is that art represents the threat of a potentially ubiquitous reënactment of processual non-aesthetic discourses within aesthetic experience (Strum, 136). On the basis of his clever reworking of the aesthetic, Menke thus agrees with Habermas that aesthetically-inspired critiques of reason violate the differentiation of value-spheres. But by elevating the aesthetic into a position above other particular discourses of reason, Menke agrees with Derrida, against Habermas, that aesthetic negativity represents a crisis for the discursive recuperation of meaning (Strum, 136). Menke finally insists that the aesthetic experience is tied to the specific structure of the aesthetic experience – art is only *one* discourse among others (Strum, 137). For Strum, Menke in effect insists on an even stricter “autonomy” of the aesthetic: “aesthetic negativity, taken seriously in its sovereign enactment, is in no relationship of interplay with non-aesthetic reason, but is instead in a relationship of interminable crisis” (Strum, 137; Solomon, 254). For Menke, as I understand his work, art is sovereign not despite, but because of its “autonomy.”<sup>xviii</sup>

Stemming from the French Continental tradition, Pierre Macherey's 1966 *A Theory of Literary Production* [*Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*] argues

alongside Louis Althusser for literature's special status relative to other ideological forms. Macherey and Althusser posit within art a relation of internal distancing, or redoubling, concerning its own ideological nature. Art, in a sense, shows the functioning of ideology, rendering its operations visible and breaking the spontaneous effects of closure, recognition, and misrecognition characteristic of ideology in general. "Art, or at least literature, because it naturally scorns the credulous view of the world, establishes myth and illusion as visible objects. [...] By means of the text it becomes possible to escape from the domain of spontaneous ideology, to escape from the false consciousness of self, of history, and of time," Macherey concludes in his commentary on Lenin and Tolstoy (132-133). Alain Badiou goes a step further in his 1966 *The Autonomy of the Aesthetic Process* [*"L'autonomie du processus esthétique"*] by arguing that, far from 'redoubling' and 'demystifying' ideology as if in a broken mirror, art "turns," or better, "reverts," already aestheticized elements into a self-sufficient reality. Thus, in place of a *redoublement*, as in Macherey and Althusser, Badiou speaks of a *retournement* as the key to the autonomy of the aesthetic process (77-89).<sup>xix</sup>

From the same lineage of the '68 generation of intellectuals in France, Foucault considers the question of art's autonomy as a question of authorial intent in his widely acclaimed 1969 Collège de France lecture "What is an Author?" [*Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*]. In his opening remarks, Foucault claims, "the coming into being of the notion of 'author' constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences" (206). "The writing of our day," he henceforth announces, "has freed itself from the necessity of expression; it only refers to itself, yet it is not restricted to the confines of interiority. On the contrary, we recognize it in its exterior deployment. This reversal transforms writing into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content of the signifieds than by the very nature of the signifier"

(206). In reading Foucault's essay, for Michel Chaouli, the “externality” of language sponsors a poetological model in which discursivity emptied of intent is as significant in the production of writing as are the writer's emotions, hopes, fears themselves (12). Foucault's contemporary Stephen Orgel, a critical exponent of New Historicism, for instance, sees Shakespeare less as a great author in the modern sense than as a means of reconstructing the cultural milieu of Renaissance theater and the complex social politics of an era.

Paul Crowther in his 1981 “Art and Autonomy” takes issue with the tenets of New Historicism. For Crowther, art has distinctive and intrinsically valuable properties which are mediated by a work's position in their respective tradition of artistic “making.” Crowther primarily alludes here to the Attic Greek etymology of the word for “art,” *techne* [τέχνη], meaning “craftmanship.” Crowther rejects the emphasis many scholars place on how meaning is bound up with a work's relation to those intentions and social conditions which inform the original circumstances of its production (12-21). Elsewhere in a more recent 2013 essay titled “Indifferent to Intentions: The Autonomy of Artistic Meaning,” Crowther regrets how whenever the intelligibility of specific artistic intentions are queried, the artwork's capacity to express its producer's broader attitude to power, race, class, and gender relations becomes an article of faith for feminist and postcolonial theory (14). At the same time, Crowther similarly pleads against the view of American philosopher of art Morris Weitz, for whom the logical indefinability of art guarantees the continuing autonomy and inventiveness of artistic production.<sup>xx</sup> According to Crowther, said view makes without justification an important assumption, namely, that artistic inventiveness and freedom are negative in character and based purely instead on the absence of ideological or conceptual restraint. The artist is free only when he does what he pleases, how he pleases, and for whatever reason he pleases. Much of recent artistic

production in Crowther's estimation has been a vindication of this negative conception of artistic liberty. On such terms, the work of art is reduced to whatever the artist intends as art, and rather than rise to this challenge, certain philosophers such as Arthur Danto and Jerrold Levinson have instead attempted to give this pseudo-perspective an air of intellectual legitimacy by what is known as the “institutional” definition of art (12, “Art and Autonomy”). In his 1964 “The Artworld,” indeed, Danto exalts the function of the artworld above that of the aesthetic experience itself: “to see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld” (571-584). To my knowledge, the earliest formal definition of the so-called “institutional” theory of art otherwise appears in George Dickie's 1971 *Aesthetics, An Introduction*: “the work of art in the classificatory sense is an artifact [upon] which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution, the artworld, has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation” (101).

In the American pragmatist tradition, John Dewey's 1934 *Art as Experience* and the work of Monroe Beardsley are clear examples of what Casey Haskins refers to as “instrumentalist autonomism” in art criticism (43).<sup>xxi</sup> In Dewey, the aesthetic value of the work of art is relative to its experiential function. To understand the Parthenon as the quintessence of the perfectly proportioned building, for instance, one studies the cultural significance of civic religion among the Athenians, to wit, the social import of their ceremonies and rituals dedicated to Athena. Artworks are thus isolated to varying degrees in the measure that their experiential function is pragmatically accessible to the critic.

Most recently in the twenty-first century, Jacques Rancière's “The Distribution of the Sensible” [*Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique*] from 2000 expounds an anti-institutional, non-contextualist theory of art throughout his engagement with Aristotle's *Poetics*. In his view, any object, in any measure or form, may qualify as “art”

inasmuch as art is no longer subject to essential criteria that condition art's representational aims in the modern age. In his 1989 "Kant and the Autonomy of Art," Haskins coins the term "strict autonomism" in anticipation of Rancière's position. The term "strict autonomism" makes reference to the non-representationalism of formalist programs in nineteenth to twentieth century art criticism and historiography. Haskins cites the influence of Hegelian aesthetics on the work of art historians Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin as his two cases in point (footnote #3, 53). On this note, it is worth mentioning that as one of the leading advocates of twentieth century philosophical Idealism in service of the neo-Kantian Marburg school, Ernst Cassirer intended to write a fourth volume on aesthetics to his 1923-1929 opus magnum *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* before his untimely death in 1945. Central to his critical Idealism and philosophy of human culture is the concept of symbolic form, a concept with a distinctly aesthetic resonance first developed by the late nineteenth century Hegelian aesthetician Friedrich Theodor Vischer.<sup>xxii</sup> For Vischer and Cassirer, the beautiful object is the harmonized whole of things "in microcosm."<sup>xxiii</sup> As the synthesis of the objectively beautiful in noumenal reality and the subjectively beautiful in the imagination, art is the symbolic form of an autonomously reconciled world.<sup>xxiv</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that the concept of autonomy never formally intervenes in Hegel's philosophy, it should be noted that *Selbständigkeit* nevertheless figures prominently in many formal elements of his Idealist aesthetics. To cite an example from the second volume of his lectures on art, classical architecture, as opposed to Gothic architecture, follows harmonic principles of regularity and symmetry for its own sake. Hegel observes how columns support arches, entablatures, and other structures standing alone as monuments without forming walls (221, 224).<sup>xxv</sup>

To summarize, from the time of early modern aesthetics to the present, a plethora

of perspectives concerning the nature of art and its so-called “autonomy” comes to light. These range from an emphasis on the medium of artistic production (Lessing), the subject and the object of aesthetic experience (Kant and Moritz), the vitalism of art (Nietzsche), the function of art in bourgeois society (Bürger), art as a system of observation (Luhmann), art as its own logical language (Wittgenstein), art as an independent, creative process of the unconscious (Jung), art as an ontologically unique phenomenology (Heidegger and Ingarden), art as a political instrument of change in society (Marxist aesthetics), art as a sovereign discourse (Menke), art as a mirror of ideology (Macherey), art as a “reversal” of ideology (Badiou), art as a product independent of its author's intentions (Foucault), art as contingent on its author's historical circumstances (New Historicism), art as a product to be judged on the merit of its craftsmanship (Crowther), art as the reaffirmation of the institutional legitimacy of the artworld (Danto), art as a form of liberation from the artworld (Rancière), art as a unique form of pragmatism (Beardsley), or even a unique form of pedagogical pragmatism (Dewey), and finally, art as a conglomerate of purely formal elements (Idealist aesthetics). Remarkably enough, noticeably absent from the theories I hereby outline is a theory of the autonomy of art based on the etymological meaning of the word “autonomy” as it applies to art. In the section that follows, I attempt to fill this lacuna in an effort to clarify and discuss various fundamental aspects of Jena Romantic aesthetics.

## II

Etymologically, the word “autonomy” derives from the ancient Greek *autonomia* [αὐτονομία], a term that conveys the independent right of a state to establish its own laws and administer its own affairs. The word may be parsed into the combining forms

“auto-,” from its post-classical Latin etymon, meaning “self,” and “-nomy,” an ablaut variant of the base of *nemein* [νέμειν] meaning “to deal, distribute, hold, manage.” At the turn of the nineteenth century, “auto-” is mainly used to form scientific terms referring to biological processes originating within the body of organisms as self-produced, self-induced mechanisms, i.e. “autocatalepsy,” “autoagglutination.” From the sixteenth century onward, “-nomy” becomes a secondary variant of the noun *nomos* [νόμος], meaning the principles governing human conduct as defined by culture and custom, or in one word, “law.” It forms nouns that designate the science or study of a subject specified by their first element, the earliest instances of which are the loanwords “astronomy” and “economy” from Old French and Latin. Essentially, the combining form “-nomy” denotes the system of laws that govern the sum of a specified field of knowledge.<sup>xxvi</sup> If we carry the etymology of the word “autonomy” over into the domain of aesthetics, the phrase “autonomy of art” identifies art as a subject that strictly deals with its own system of laws and concepts. As is the case with mathematics, art cannot be deduced from or reduced to the principles of other more fundamental forms of knowledge or disciplines. In an abstract sense, art is a creation of its own design. Or, in a concrete sense, art may be defined as a self-engendered organic process.

“Autonomy” is closely related, but not semantically identical to “autopoiesis,” which similarly makes reference to the self-maintenance of organized bio-entities through their own internal processes. “Autopoiesis” is first recorded in the work of Chilean biologists and philosophers of science Humberto Maturana Romesín's and Francisco J. Varela García's 1973 *Of Machines and Living Beings: A Theory of Biological Organization* [“*De máquinas y seres vivos: una teoría sobre la organización biológica*”].<sup>xxvii</sup> For Romesín and García, autopoiesis refers to the property of a living system, such as a bacterial cells or a multi-cellular organism, allowing it to maintain and

renew itself by regulating its composition and conserving its boundaries, as in cellular mitosis, to be exact. For Romseín and García, autopoiesis represents a core shift in perspective concerning biological phenomena: organic mechanisms of self-production attune our understanding of the diversity of nature to the uniform structures of organisms. John Briggs and F. David Peat in their 1989 *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness* explain how autopoietic structures possess definite boundaries, semipermeable membranes, for instance, which remain open and connect biological systems with infinite degrees of complexity to the world that surrounds them. In Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan's *What is Life?* of 2000, autopoiesis ultimately represents a concept of evolution that reconciles the diversity of living beings with their common ancestry traceable to a single-cell organism. What these ideas philosophically share in common is a notion of the individual self-formation of organisms that reflects the manifold unity of nature as a whole. As I discuss in Chapter I, the concept of autopoiesis is analogous to the concept of the autonomy of the sign, or better, the reflection of the manifold unity of poetic language in Novalis's oeuvre. In Chapter II, the analogy between the laws of language and the laws of nature reveals the manifold unity of poetic language in the poetic imagination as an immanent reflection of the manifold unity of nature herself. Chapter III finally interprets Novalis's conception of poetic language to be that of a living, animating force in the universe that maintains the manifold unity of our worldly reality.

The main exception to the similitude between “autonomy” and “autopoiesis” is that the former is a prescriptive term for art. By “autonomy,” I thus wish to emphasize the *lawfulness* according to which Romantic art maintains and regulates itself *of necessity*. In contrast, by “autopoiesis,” I would emphasize instead the self-formative character of Romantic art, this is to say, the manner in which it designs its own composition and

conserves its own formal boundaries. For the sake of clarity, I wish to further draw the distinction between these terms as follows. The subject of the autonomy of art in Novalis deals with his poetry as a product of his and Friedrich Schlegel's own theories of literature. This facet of Novalis's and Schlegel's works fall under the literary-theoretical rule of poetic autonomy – the imperative that their literary theory be written as poetry and that their poetry be written as a product of their literary theory. In fragment #117 of his “Kritische Fragmente,” Schlegel writes: “Poesie kann nur durch Poesie kritisiert werden. Ein Kunsturteil, welches nicht selbst ein Kunstwerk ist [...] hat gar kein Bürgerrecht im Reiche der Kunst” (KA I, 161).

The autopoietic element of Novalis's works otherwise deals with the view of several critics that the genre of Novalis's poetry represents itself a theory of genre. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, who mainly exclude Novalis from their 1979 *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* [*L'Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*"] incorrectly maintain that the lyric is the missing element of Jena Romanticism. In their view, Friedrich Schlegel was aware of, yet never overcame, this lyrical void, adding that the “subjective effusions” of Novalis “did nothing but damage the Jena Romantic reputation” (cited from Helfer, 106). Both in support and against their claims, Martha Helfer's 1996 *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* turns to a twofold definition of the term “Romantic theory” in response. Based on Friedrich Schlegel's statement that a theory of the novel would itself have to be a novel, as well as the etymology of the word “theory,” meaning “a spiritual act of seeing,” she characterizes “Die Hymnen an die Nacht” as a Romantic theory of the lyric (KA II: 337; Helfer, 106). In alignment with her view, I would venture along with Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy and others to similarly characterize Novalis's “Blüthenstaub” and other fragments of 1798 as Romantic theories

of the fragment, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon” and other scientific writings of 1798 as Romantic theories of the encyclopedia, “Christenheit oder Europa” of 1799 as a Romantic theory of the chronicle, and least contentiously of all *Heinrich von Afterdingen* of 1799-1800 as a Romantic theory of the novel, respectively.<sup>xxviii</sup>

This is not to suggest that the poetic autonomy of Novalis's works is mutually exclusive from their autopoietic elements. To the contrary, poetry and genre form part of the unending representational interchangeability [*“Wechselrepraesentationslehre”*] that is the semiotic hallmark of Novalis's artistic program (III, 266). Novalis's earliest meditations on poetic language are presented in the form of fragments in order to symbolize the fragmentary essence of his own semiotics. Inversely, Novalis's ongoing experimentation with genre after 1798 indicates the ambition to subsume all language under the rubric of a unified system of literature that already understands itself to be fragmentary in character from its inception.

In the preface of their study, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy make use of the term “autopoiesy” in their discussion of early German Romanticism, without citing either Romseis or García:

The absolute of literature is not so much poetry (whose modern concept is also invented in the [*Athenaeum* fragments]) as it is *poiesy*, according to an etymological appeal that the romantics do not fail to make. Poiesy or, in other words, production. The thought of the 'literary genre' is thus less concerned with the production of the literary thing than with *production*, absolutely speaking. Romantic poetry sets out to penetrate the essence of poiesy, in which the literary thing produces the truth of production in itself, and thus, as will be evident in all that follows, the truth of the production *of itself*, of autopoiesy. And if it is true (as Hegel will soon demonstrate, *entirely against* romanticism) that auto-production constitutes the ultimate instance and closure of the speculative absolute, then romantic thought involves not only the absolute of literature, but literature as the absolute. Romanticism is the inauguration of the *literary absolute*. (11-12)

To my knowledge, “poiesy” is not a word, or even a neologism corresponding to any author of the period. The early German Romantics appeal instead to the etymology of the word “poiesis” [*ποίησις*], the suffix of which, “-esis,” is generally used in Attic Greek to

form nouns of action or process. “Poiesis,” as such, is literally a kind of gerund-form of the noun “poet,” imperfectly meaning thus “to create, to produce.” The authors are indeed correct to suggest that the latter, rather, is closely associated with the etymology of “Poësie,” a French loanword meaning “poetry.” Here, I would add that *ποίησις* shares the same Indo-European base as the Sanskrit *cinoti* [चिनोति], a language Novalis also studied, meaning “to collect, to assemble.” In this respect, I agree with the authors that the question of literary genre is inextricable from the concept of autopoiesis. Novalis's project of a universal literature after 1798, as suggested earlier, most certainly involves the collection and assemblage of innumerable literary genres.<sup>xxix</sup>

In simple terms, whereas the subject of poetic autonomy in Novalis deals with the philosophical question of why poetry critically reflects on itself, the autopoietic character of his poetry deals with the ways in which his poetry gives form to itself. By my own admission, on this note, the main shortcoming of the following dissertation is that it limits itself to only three works by Novalis. This decision was taken in the interest of succinctness, let it be stated. Otherwise, the studies that follow encompass roughly the first third of a more comprehensive study of Novalis's works to be realized in the future. The future study I envision undertaking would indeed more fully address Novalis's theory of genre, or the autopoietic elements of his literary theory. Prior to commenting further on the organizational structure of the project at-hand, however, some introductory remarks concerning the concept of Romantic reflexivity are in order.

For Novalis, the art of poetry represents an ongoing process of self-generation in visual form. In a fragment he composed sometime between June and December of 1799, Novalis writes of poetry, “die Poësie [ist] nichts, als [...] ein sich bildendes Wesen” (#35, III, 560). Here and elsewhere in his works, poetry may be likened to a self-portrait artist who paints his own image in a style that reflects his own artistic vision of himself –

poetry creates its own image visually reflecting its own image on the canvas of language. In effect, the image of poetry is recursively embedded in the image of poetry itself. Works of art bear the trace of an “original schema,” as it were, that stands in a reciprocal relation to the works themselves: “Das [Ursprüngliche] Schema steht in Wechselwirkung mit sich selbst” (II, 109). In the words of Friedrich Schlegel, transcendental poetry ought “in jeder ihrer Darstellung sich selbst mit darstellen, und überall zugleich Poesie und Poesie der Poesie sein” (#238, KA II, 204). For Novalis and Schlegel, the theory of poetry is a visual reflection of its practice and its practice a visual reflection of its theory. In this regard, Moritz prefigures Novalis and Schlegel in his “Die Signatur des Schönen” of 1788-89: “Bei der Beschreibung des Schönen durch Worte müssen also die Worte, mit der Spur, die sie in der Einbildungskraft zurücklassen, zusammengenommen, selbst das Schöne sein.” (296). For Moritz, any theory of beauty must carry the “trace” of the beautiful itself in the words of the poet who expounds it. The aesthetic writings of Moritz, I believe, represent the first iteration of the concept of Romantic reflexivity which scholars have widely come to associate with the works of Novalis and Schlegel.

The present investigation thus wishes to build on the central argument of Alice Kuzniar's 1988 “Reassessing Romantic Reflexivity – The Case of Novalis.” According to Kuzniar, what characterizes Romantic reflexivity in the minds of many scholars of early German Romanticism is Romantic art's ability to contemplate the conditions, performance, and substance of its own being. For Kuzniar, these scholars tend to neglect, however, the moments in which the works of Novalis undermine themselves as a form of auto-criticism. In her view, the consequences of Romantic reflexivity are clear: “running counter to the Romantics' hope in an ever increasing poetic self-awareness is their sense that writing must elude understanding and representation of itself” (78). The exceptions are Manfred Frank and Jochen Hörisch, who begin their studies by acknowledging that

reflection splits the reflecting subject from the objectified, reflected self; rather than leading back to being, consciousness induces disjuncture. However, Frank and Hörisch overcome and redeem such division either, as in the case of Frank, by positing a pre-reflexive ground of being or, as in the case of Hörisch, by finding reconciliation in the poetic order of Novalis's oeuvre (Ibid.). So even in their case, Kuzniar is keen to observe that their desire for synthesis overrides other, “vigilantly skeptical” moments in Romantic poetics, “instances where they [Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel] recognize the insurmountable problems that reflection presents and conclude that poetry eludes reflexivity” (Ibid.).

As I understand Kuzniar's argument, Novalis's poetry eludes absolute reflexivity as an immanent symbolic reflection of the elusive transcendental nature of poetry itself. To my mind, the more fundamental question at stake in Novalis's poetry is the following, simply stated: why does Novalis's poetry reflect on itself and with what higher purpose? The answer to the first half of the question I pose is that the concept of Romantic reflexivity ought to be understood instead as a concept of aesthetic autonomy. In my view, Novalis's poetry reflects on itself in order to visualize and bring to fruition the natural, epistemic laws of the poetic imagination as products of the poetic imagination itself. Novalis writes in fragment #218 of his “Bemerkungen zu Fichte”: “Wenn man Vernunft die *Gesetze* der Einbildungskraft nennt, insofern man dieser überhaupt *Gesetzmäßigkeit* aufbürden kann, so ist Philosophie eigentlich nichts, als die Theorie der Vernunft [...] Allgemeine Naturlehre – Theorie der Anschauung” (II, 168). Speculating against Kant's philosophy, Novalis hypothesizes that reason owes its existence to the “laws” of the imagination instead. More poignantly still, he is even skeptical of the presumed epistemology in and through which the imagination is said to be “lawful” since the very notion, as he is aware, is inextricably tied-up with rationalist discourse. If the

“lawfulness” of reason is a product of the imagination, then reason is a fundamentally schematic, theoretical activity; naturally, it follows that all philosophical activity is of this character. Indeed, the philosophical implications that result from Novalis's aesthetics pertain to his broader engagement with Kantian epistemology. In my broader interpretation of Novalis's reception of Kant, discussed in Chapter I, the capacity of the poetic imagination to transcend the limits of human reason and understanding in defiance of Kantian moral and aesthetic theory is enacted by laws circumscribed by the poetic imagination itself. The main contribution I thus hope to make in following with this line of inquiry is to do justice to the aesthetic discourse on “law” that pervades the early works of Novalis.

The answer to the second question I pose concerning the purpose of Romantic reflexivity concerns Benjamin's first supposition of Romantic art in his 1920 dissertation *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* that “die Reflexion nicht in eine leer Unendlichkeit verlaufe, sondern in sich selbst substanziell und erfüllt sei” (27). I wish to underscore that my thesis concerning the autonomy of art is not at all intended as a constative statement about Jena Romanticism. Romantic poetry eludes absolute reflexivity in order to signal itself as an ongoing process of self-regeneration in the pursuit of ever greater artistic self-fulfillment and substance. Schlegel's dictum that Romantic poetry is “noch im werden,” moreover, may thus be interpreted to mean that we must remain “vigilantly skeptical” of even our own critical definitions of Romantic art (#183, KA II, 116). In essence, the autonomy of Romantic art is a thesis that critically reflects ever anew on what it means for Romantic art to critically reflect on itself.

I am not the first to stress the centrality of the autonomy of art in the works of Novalis. Géza von Molnár's 1987 *Romantic Vision, Ethical Context: Novalis and Artistic Autonomy* delivers an impressively rigorous analysis of Novalis's earliest observations on Fichte, as well as a compelling interpretation of Novalis's Romantic novel *Heinrich von Afterdingen*. Together with his 1970 dissertation *Novalis's 'Fichte Studies': The Foundations of his Aesthetics*, von Molnár's contributions are seminal to the field of German literature and Novalis scholarship. Primarily, this is because his dissertation is the first effort on behalf of a literary critic to analyze what are widely referred to in the secondary literature as the *Fichte-Studien*. His study influenced a generation of scholars of German Romanticism who have only since come to recognize the presence of Fichte's philosophy throughout Novalis's literary works. Furthermore, von Molnár's dissertation is the first to mark a clear distinction in the secondary literature between the so-called *Fichte-Studien* and Novalis's later collections of philosophical fragments including "Blüthenstaub" and "Das Allgemeine Brouillon."<sup>xxx</sup> This relatively recent contribution builds no less on the achievements of Hans-Joachim Mähl, who was asked by Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel to participate in the making of the most authoritative critical edition of Novalis's writings to date. As an important parenthetical note, the manuscript of Novalis's observations on Fichte appear in 1959 in New York upon the death of the publisher Salman Schocken while he was in exile. They were soon thereafter acquired from the Schocken family by the *Freies Deutsches Hochstift* at a 1960 auction in Hamburg. Sometime in 1965, Mähl first underwent the painstaking task of analyzing several hundred pages of Novalis's handwritten jottings. Mähl rightly deserves credit for the chronological arrangement of Novalis's remarks on Fichte into the reliable and coherent state as we know them today.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The contours of von Molnár's more recent study on the subject of autonomy in

Novalis are the following. In the fourth chapter of his book, “The 'Basic Schema' as it Evolves from the Fichte-Studies,” von Molnár makes the argument that Novalis derives a “basic schema” following Fichte's proposition of identity in the *Wissenschaftslehre* (29-56). This “basic schema” informs Novalis's definition of the autonomy of the self and appears to be the concept of autonomy that structures von Molnár's analysis. According to von Molnár, the identity of the self is unrepresentable other than through its non-identity, i.e. the other. This is to imply that the self never appears to the self as itself, other than through the effects of its own agency. Inasmuch as the self necessarily, yet freely assumes its identity in its relation to the other, the self autonomously circumscribes the conceptual horizon of the world that envelops it. Self-encounter in the other, or mediation afforded by the other, is not only the precondition of all knowledge, but also of moral action. The representational interchangeability or reciprocity that signals the relation between self and other, allows the self to claim, for itself, moral universality. Von Molnár refers to this moral philosophy as the “ethical context” in Novalis's writings based on Novalis's use of the phrase “free necessity” throughout his notes on Fichte.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Von Molnár is correct to suggest that, for Novalis, artistic expression is the exemplary realm in which the encounter between self and other occurs.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Throughout his interpretation of Novalis's Romantic novel *Heinrich von Afterdingen*, von Molnár compellingly interprets the titular protagonist's *Bildungsreise* as a kind of “Fichtean allegory.” Heinrich's “Romantic vision” reflects the developmental path of the autonomy of the self as the self gains consciousness of its inherent freedom. As Heinrich's knowledge of his self becomes ever more lyrically perceptive, the antagonism between his self and the world, spirit and nature, dissipates. According to von Molnár, the fundamental dissolution of difference that philosophically characterizes this developmental path defines Novalis's “poetic vision” itself (98). Early in the novel,

Heinrich “regresses” via a suspension of his pragmatic interests to a symbolic intuition of the self in which the world is a dream. As the novel progresses, Heinrich returns to an objective reality that “speaks” the language of the self, characterized by a lucid sense of self-presence whereby the dream becomes the world (123).<sup>xxxiv</sup> According to von Molnár's chapter “Poetic Statement and '*höhere Wissenschaftslehre*,’” Novalis sought to demonstrate the inextricability of the practical and the theoretical vis-à-vis Fichte's limited epistemology according to which only theoretical sciences reference self-knowledge (196).

Despite the critical consensus among Frederick Amrine, Alice Kuzniar, Daniel Purdy, Wolff A. von Schmidt and myself that von Molnár's work is marked by overall analytic subtlety and a number of critical insights, the work exhibits two shortcomings. The first is that his concept of autonomy is not clearly defined and is ill-situated in the context of Novalis's reception of Enlightenment aesthetics. To be fair, as Amrine astutely puts it, von Molnár “focuses not on the purported 'autonomy' of literature, but rather upon literature's power to represent the 'autonomy of the self’” (370). In von Molnár's own words, “the poet's genesis is at issue and not the poem's [referring to *Heinrich von Afterdingen*]; that is to say, he [Novalis] derives the poem's authenticity from the primacy of moral [...] autonomy” (98). To state the obvious, if von Molnár intended to dismiss the notion of “artistic autonomy” in favor of “moral autonomy” as a form of artistic praxis, it is unclear why he references the former instead of the latter in the title of his book. If von Molnár rather intended to conflate the two, as I suspect to be the case, this is not explicitly stated. This uncertainty is important to highlight because it is further unclear whether by “moral autonomy” von Molnár means the universal validity of the self's moral judgments as a form of art or the universal validity of the self's aesthetic judgments as a form of ethics, or both. In any event, von Molnár neglects Max Preitz's publication of

Schlegel's letters, which make clear that Novalis meticulously studied Kant's moral philosophy as early as 1793, at least two years before his engagement and eventual personal encounter with Fichte.<sup>xxxv</sup> Von Molnár could have further specified Novalis's "ethical praxis" of the self with respect to the theory of the autonomy of the will in Kantian philosophy and thereby adjudicated these equivocations.

Moreover, von Molnár's adverse criticism of the secondary literature on the subject of autonomy is consequence of his own over-simplifications. According to von Molnár, the autonomy of the self is "the crucial difference" between "Novalis and those for whom art constitutes a self-sufficient enterprise, be they symbolists or their contemporary heirs" (98). Our failure to recognize this critical insight has led in his view to "our misconstrued Romantic notions concerning the theoretical origins of artistic autonomy" (202). Does von Molnár suggest that the scholarship's philosophical reception of autonomy to date is inadequate, having failed to consider Novalis as the single precursor of the concept's true origin? Again, to state the obvious, could not the same be said about other authors of the period, such as Friedrich Schlegel, for whom the autonomy of the literary fragment is no less at stake? Von Molnár does not distinguish his own notion of "artistic autonomy" in Novalis from the autonomy of literature according to Jena Romantic literary theory. Von Molnár moreover reaches this implausible conclusion only after having reduced the autonomy of art to a vague notion of "self-sufficiency" in the Symbolist movements and an unspecified group of "heirs." But most problematically of all, von Molnár omits Moritz's aesthetic writings which lay the theoretical groundwork for the Jena Romantic theory of the autonomy of art.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The second shortcoming is that the "basic schema" that forms the basis of von Molnár's study consists of a partial misreading of Novalis's semiotic theory. Von Molnár speciously conflates and even mistranslates what he calls the "basic schema" with the

semiotics of the “original schema” [*das ursprüngliche Schema*] in fragment #11 of the Samuel edition (II, 109-110). Von Molnár, essentially, fails to recognize Novalis's own clear distinction between “Das Bezeichnende” versus “Der Bezeichnende.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> In my own interpretation, “Das Bezeichnende” implicitly corresponds to “Das Bezeichnende [*Ich*]” whereas “Der Bezeichnende” corresponds to the person or actor who creates signs. More exactly, “Das Bezeichnende [*Ich*]” otherwise referred to explicitly by Novalis as the “original schema,” is a semiotic abstraction of the signifying-agent in all instances of sign production; it is the schema that accounts for the production of all schemata – including itself. When Novalis writes that the schema stands in a “reciprocal” relation to itself, only then is Novalis referring to the idea that the production of signs as an autonomous process: “Das [ursprüngliche] Schema steht in Wechselwirkung mit sich selbst” (II, 109).<sup>xxxviii</sup> Failing to recognize this distinction, or the semioticity of the Fichtean I according to Novalis, von Molnár views the autonomy of language as subordinate to the moral autonomy of the self: “[Novalis] derives the poem's authenticity from the primacy of moral rather than linguistic autonomy”; he adds, “[Novalis] would [not] deny linguistic autonomy, which he had, after all, confirmed already in the 'Fichte-Studies'; rather, he would deny that linguistic autonomy could be considered anything but a function of the self's capacity for free moral agency” (98). Notwithstanding this misstep and ensuing conclusion, it must be acknowledged that von Molnár's critical insights on Novalis's semiotics are made no less illuminating. For instance, he defines the sign in Novalis's semiotics “as a conscious re-performance of the same function that underlies the fusion of subjective and objective validity in all acts of consciousness” (32). In my view, this insight discerningly and correctly suggests a fundamental philosophical link between Novalis's semiotics and ethics via Fichte.

On this same note concerning the autonomy of language, Kuzniar calls attention

to von Molnár's omission of Novalis's remarks on language in "Monolog." I agree with Kuzniar that one wishes von Molnár had addressed himself to this work, as well as to Novalis's later philosophical fragments in this context. This omission is odd, considering that in the second footnote of his chapter "Novalis in Contemporary Context" von Molnár shows himself to be keenly aware of contemporary studies linking the autonomy of language in Novalis's theoretical writings to the works of major twentieth century semioticians, including Roland Barthes, Roman Jakobson, and Charles S. Peirce (225).<sup>xxxix</sup>

William Arctander O'Brien similarly alludes to the concept of autonomy with reference to language in his chapter "The Richly Sown Field: Writings of 1798" from his landmark 1995 study *Novalis: Signs of Revolution*. In the first instance, he writes in reference to Novalis's "Monolog," "language's refusal of designation, which includes a refusal to designate itself, or to be used for its own understanding, makes it inherently a mystery. Autonomous and autotelic, language shuts out all attempts to penetrate it" (196-197). Here, he appears to understand the autonomy of language as precluding any rule of hermeneutic intervention other than in relation to itself. I am inclined to agree with this insight, except, in the second instance, he writes, "it is precisely through its freedom in the self-determination of its own 'world' – in its autonomy, capriciousness, and arbitrariness – that language becomes a 'natural' phenomenon among others" (Ibid.) Here, he appears to define the autonomy of language as the notion that the "natural" emblem of language consists in the freedom of its own self-determination.<sup>xi</sup> Is not the autonomy of language according to O'Brien's first definition what marks language's exceptionalism in the phenomenal realm? In the third instance, he concludes, "the naturalness of language, its subjection to natural order, and its analogical expression of this order are revealed only in its autonomy from external control, and its freedom from referentiality" (Ibid.). Here,

the phrase “subjection to natural order” contradicts his second definition, where he clearly asserts that the autonomy of language consists in the freedom of its self-determination, i.e. “its freedom from referentiality and external control.” I reluctantly agree with O'Brien's analysis, noting that he relies on a heterogeneous definition of autonomy that ultimately obscures the clarity of his insights.

In the introductory remarks to her translation of Novalis's philosophical fragments written between 1797 and 1800 titled *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, Margaret Mahony Stoljar comments that autonomy undergirds the entirety of Novalis's philosophical work. Stoljar and I agree on different terms. For Stoljar, autonomy in Novalis concerns the nature of representation, primarily in reference to the “image, the metaphor, and the symbol.” She claims that Novalis anticipates contemporary views on language and the metaphorical function of art, in particular those of Nelson Goodman, according to whom art, strictly speaking, neither depicts nor expresses the world of human affairs. Rather, according to Goodman, art refers metaphorically to the world by possessing certain features of the same within its own self-referential symbolic system. The coherence of any work of art, or that which makes it intelligible, in other words, does not derive from extrinsic factors made present by imitation or artistic expression. The coherence of art stems from its own unique “voice” allowing its symbolism to be articulated. Stoljar aptly remarks that Goodman's theory of metaphorical reference is analogous to Richard Rorty's rejection of the so-called correspondence theory of truth in keeping with the thesis that art posits a self-contained cognitive world.<sup>xli</sup> For Novalis, she concludes, “just as magical truth is not a reflection of something extrinsic to the self, but rather is constructed by the self in contemplation of itself, so art is not imitation of external reality, but a new world made of its autonomous activity” (10).

I agree, with the exception that Stoljar brings Novalis and Goodman into greater

proximity than I would concede is sound. Goodman's theory of art is based on the theory of “nominalist cognitivism,” the philosophical view that denies the existence of universals as well as other abstract objects of the mind and affirms the existence of abstract terms and predicates of cognitive processes instead. From the outset of his introductory remarks in *Language of Art: An Approach to the Theory of Symbols*, Goodman himself unambiguously states, “though this book pertains to some problems dealing with the arts, its scope does not coincide very closely with what is ordinarily taken to be the field of aesthetics [...] the objective is an approach to a general theory of symbols” (xi). In the sections on “metaphor” and “expression” of Goodman's second chapter “The Sound of Pictures” which Stoljar cites, Goodman relies on a series of distinctions that would undoubtedly seem foreign to Novalis. According to Goodman's formalist theory of symbolic expression, “what is expressed is metaphorically exemplified [...] what a face or picture expresses need not (but may) be emotions or ideas the actor or artist has, or those he wants to convey, or thoughts or feelings of the viewer [...] or properties of anything else related in some other way to the symbol.” In this way, much to the contrary of the autonomy of artistic expression in von Molnár, Goodman “reserve[s] the term 'expression' to distinguish the central case where the property belongs to the symbol itself – regardless of cause or effect or intent or subject-matter” (85). In other instances, Goodman's theory of the “schema” in section 6 of the same chapter is far removed from Novalis's reception of Kant's concept of the schema (71-74) as is no less Goodman's theory of “representation-as” in section 6 of his first chapter “Reality Remade” (27-31).

This difference of opinion notwithstanding, I moreover agree with Stoljar's fundamental assertion that Novalis applies his theory of the autonomy of art to particular literary forms. Oddly, Stoljar references a fragment which her translation misattributes to

fragment #15 of “Logologische Fragmente II” in place of fragment #214 of

“Anekdoten.”<sup>xlii</sup> Only the latter in fact states as follows:

Die erste Kunst ist die Hieroglyphistik. [...] Zur künstlichen Poësie, oder zur technischen überhaupt gehört die Rhetorische. Der Karakter der künstlichen Poësie ist Zweckmäßigkeit – fremde Absicht – Die Sprache im eigentlichsten Sinn gehört ins Gebiet der künstlichen Poësie. Ihr Zweck ist bestimmte Mittheilung. Wenn man also Sprache – Ausdruck einer Absicht nennen will, so ist die ganze künstliche Poësie Sprache – ihr Zweck ist bestimmte Mittheilung – Erregung eines *bestimmten* Gedanckens. Der Roman gehört zur *natürlichen Poësie* – die *Allegorie* zur Künstlichen. Die natürliche Poësie kann oft ohne Schaden den Schein der Künstlichen – der *Didaktischen* – haben – Es muß aber nur zufällig, nur frei damit verknüpft seyn. Dieser Schein der Allegorie giebt ihr dann noch einen Reitz mehr – und sie kann nicht Reitze (Incitamente jeder Art) genug haben. (II, 571-572)

In her interpretation of this passage, Stoljar explains,

If poetry, on the one hand, at a less perfect stage of its development betrays a specific purpose, as allegory or rhetoric may do, then it remains for Novalis in the category of artificial poetry, where representation is subjugated to the explicit purpose of communication. Natural poetry, on the other hand, is free, undetermined, and immediate, directly combining communication and representation as the language of hieroglyphs once did. (10-11)

To reiterate, I agree with Stoljar. I would only add that Novalis either contradicts himself or changes his mind concerning the function of allegory between the time he wrote “Anekdoten” around 1798 and later throughout his notes between June and December of 1799. In his notes, Novalis emphatically states, “Höchstens kann wahre Poësie einen *allegorischen* Sinn im Großen haben und eine indirecte Wirkung wie Musik etc. thun – Die Natur ist daher rein poëtisch” (III, 572). Evidently, allegory does not correspond to a less perfect stage of poetry's development, nor is it subjugated to the explicit purpose of communication beyond any “indirect effect.” As I interpret the latter, music without lyrics produces sensations without reference in the manner of allegorical meanings. For Novalis, the arbitrary references of sounds through music are equivalent to the arbitrary manifestations of language through symbols, hence, “true” poetry has only an indirect effect in matters of communication. As a literary form possessed of sense without reference, allegory directly combines communication with “free, undetermined, and

immediate” representation [*Darstellung*].<sup>xliii</sup>

The vital distinction between my own study and those of the secondary literature reviewed above is that I discuss the concept of the autonomy of art in strict accordance with Novalis's reception of Kantian moral and aesthetic philosophy. In the following section, I first introduce this reception by turning to the aesthetic writings of Moritz, whose work discloses the theoretical inception of the Jena Romantic concept of aesthetic autonomy.

#### IV

The Jena Romantic movement's theory of aesthetic autonomy, which I argue stems from its reception of Kantian philosophy, concerns the powers of the imagination in following with Moritz's *Rezeptionsästhetik*. In my opinion, the secondary literature has yet to become fully cognizant of the influence of Moritz's aesthetic writings on Jena Romanticism. Laurie Ruth Johnson's chapter on aesthetic autonomy in Moritz from her study *The Art of Recollection in Jena Romanticism: Memory, History, Fiction, and Fragmentation in Texts by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis* (74-85) in addition to Tzvetan Todorov's *Theories of the Symbol*, where he maintains that “Moritz was the first to combine all the ideas that determine the profile of the Jena Romantic aesthetic,” (148) are certainly exceptional in this regard.

Specifically, for Moritz, the imagination brings the artwork to ontological completion in following with “laws” of its own design. The autonomy of the imagination in all instances of artistic production moreover represents the kernel of Novalis's philosophical reception of Kant, I will argue. This reception is worth detailing at length because it provides the philosophical basis and greater conceptual clarity to the autonomy

of the “original schema” at the origins of language according to Novalis's semiotics.

In his essay “Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten,” Moritz writes,

Während das Schöne unsre Betrachtung ganz auf sich zieht, zieht es sie eine Weile von uns selber ab und macht, daß wir uns in dem schönen Gegenstande zu verlieren scheinen; und eben dies Verlieren, dies Vergessen unserer selbst ist der höchste Grad des reinen und uneigennütigen Vergnügens, welches uns das Schöne gewährt. Wir opfern in dem Augenblick unser individuelles eingeschränktes Dasein einer Art von höherem Dasein auf. Das Vergnügen am Schönen muß sich daher immer mehr der uneigennütigen Liebe nähern, wenn es echt sein soll. Jede spezielle Beziehung auf mich in einem schönen Kunstwerke gibt dem Vergnügen, das ich daran empfinde einen Zusatz der für einen andern verlorengiht; das Schöne in dem Kunstwerke ist für mich nicht eher rein und unvermischt, bis ich die besondere Beziehung auf mich ganz davon hinweg denke und es als etwas betrachte, *das bloß um sein selbst willen hervorgebracht ist, damit es etwas in sich Vollendetes sei.* (205, my emphasis).

As we “offer ourselves up” to the artwork in the interest of its ideal beauty, we ascend from the finite realm of our individual existence to that which is perfect in-and-of itself.

The attainment of this higher existential condition entails a radically subjective experience on behalf of the imagination: “Jede spezielle Beziehung auf mich in einem schönen Kunstwerke gibt dem Vergnügen, das ich daran empfinde einen Zusatz *der für einen andern verlorengiht*” (my emphasis). In this respect, Moritz contests what will later become Kant's claim in the Third Critique concerning the necessity of bearing others in mind as we partake in aesthetic judgments:

*Der gemeine Menschenverstand*, den man, als bloß gesunden (noch nicht kultivierten) Verstand [...] hat daher auch die kränkende Ehre, mit dem Namen des Gemeinsinnes (sensus communis) belegt zu werden [...] Unter dem *sensus communis* aber muß man die Idee eines *gemeinschaftlichen* Sinnes, d.i. eines Beurteilungsvermögens verstehen, welches in seiner Reflexion auf die Vorstellungsart *jedes andern in Gedanken (a priori) Rücksicht nimmt.* (224, “jedes [...]” my emphasis)

The empathetic character of Kant's moral precept relates back to section 2, “Das Wohlgefallen, welches das Geschmacksurteil bestimmt, ist ohne alles Interesse,” from the Analytic of the Beautiful:

Das Wohlgefallen, welches das Geschmacksurteil bestimmt, ist ohne alles Interesse [...] Interesse wird das Wohlgefallen genannt, was wir mit der Vorstellung der Existenz eines Gegenstandes verbinden. Ein solches hat daher immer zugleich Beziehung auf das Begehrungsvermögen, entweder als Bestimmungsgrund desselben, oder doch als mit dem Bestimmungsgrunde desselben notwendig zusammenhängend. (116)

Kant and Moritz agree for different reasons concerning the disinterested attitude of the subject.<sup>xliv</sup> For Kant, disinterestedness precludes our predispositions from having any part in the universal appeal of the aesthetic judgment.<sup>xlv</sup>

For Moritz, the observer's "unselfish love" of ideal beauty retains a distinctly theological resonance. According to Martha Woodmansee's findings, Moritz's disposition signifies a reverence toward the Deity in a quietist brand of German Pietism impressed upon him by his father, the devout mystic and military oboist Johann Gottlieb Moritz.<sup>xlvi</sup> In Moritz's autobiographical novel *Anton Reiser*, the first volume of which appears in the same year as the passage from "Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten" I cite above, Moritz recalls his quietist teachings as follows:

Die Lehren, welche in diesen Schriften enthalten sind, betreffen größtenteils jenes schon erwähnte völlige Ausgehen aus sich selbst und Eingehen in ein seliges Nichts, jene gänzliche Ertötung aller sogenannten ›Eigenheit‹ oder ›Eigenliebe‹ und eine völlig uninteressierte Liebe zu Gott, worin sich auch kein Fünkchen Selbstliebe mehr mischen darf, wenn sie rein sein soll, woraus denn am Ende eine vollkommne, selige ›Ruhe‹ entsteht, die das höchste Ziel aller dieser Bestrebungen ist. (11, my emphasis)<sup>xlvii</sup>

I agree with Woodmansee that this summary detailing the highest stage and ultimate end of human piety is imported nearly verbatim into Moritz's aesthetics.<sup>xlviii</sup> The mode of aesthetic reception Moritz describes derives from the nature of religious piety, as does the artwork from the nature of God. Like God, the artwork is an end in itself, perfectly self-sufficient (31-33). I would emphasize that Moritz's self-abnegation leads to an ecstatic communion with the divine by way of imagining God's reification in the artwork.<sup>xlix</sup> In effect, the imagination transforms art into a self-sufficient purpose – Christian *agape*, or love for love's sake, into a love of art for art's sake.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the same essay, Moritz implies that ideal beauty is sourced in the imagination of the artist's search for the work's self-sufficient purpose: "Der wahre Künstler wird die höchste innere *Zweckmäßigkeit* oder Vollkommenheit in sein Werk zu

bringen suchen [...] So wie der wahre Weise [...] sucht [...] die reinste Glückseligkeit oder den fortdauernden Zustand angenehmer Empfindungen als eine sichere Folge davon, aber nicht als das Ziel derselben betrachtet” (209, my emphasis). As the passage indicates, for Moritz, the “sage” and the artist become one. As Moritz imagines himself becoming lost in the artwork, he becomes himself an artist in search of the work's “reinste Glückseligkeit,” “der fortdauernde Zustand angenehmer Empfindungen.” In a conversation with Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer sometime between 1804 and 1812, incidentally, Goethe is recorded to have similarly stated, “Der Künstler gehört dem Werke und nicht das Werk dem Künstler [...] In eigentlichen Poemen ist keine als die Einheit des Gemüths. Alles Vollendete spricht sich nicht allein, es spricht eine ganze mitverwandte Welt aus” (177). Only a few years earlier, Novalis may have well anticipated Goethe's remark verbatim in fragment #737 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”:

Mit jedem Zuge der Vollendung springt das Werck vom Meister ab in mehr, als Raumfern – und so sieht mit dem letzten Zuge der Meister, sein vorgebliches Werck durch eine Gedankenluft von sich getrennt – deren Weite er selbst kaum faßt – und über die nur die Einbildungskraft, wie der Schatten des Riesen Intelligenz, zu setzen vermag. In dem Augenblicke, als es ganz Sein werden sollte, ward es mehr, als er, sein Schöpfer – er zum unwissenden Organ und Eigenthum einer höheren Macht. Der Künstler gehört dem Wercke und nicht das Werck dem Künstler. (III, 411)

The emancipatory potential of the artwork and the emancipatory powers of the imagination thus take place in equal measure. A passage from “Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen” conclusively evinces this insight:

Zu dem Begriff des Schönen, welcher uns daraus entsprungen ist, daß es nicht nützlich zu sein braucht, gehört also noch, daß es nicht nur oder nicht sowohl ein für sich bestehendes Ganze wirklich sei, als vielmehr nur wie ein für sich bestehendes Ganze *in unsre Sinne fallen* oder von *unsrer Einbildungskraft umfaßt* werden könne. (264)

Moritz here foreshadows Schlegel's aestheticization of Kantian secular theology. Schlegel philosophically grounds theological reasoning in our sense of the fantastic in fragment #8 of “Ideen” as follows: “Der Verstand, sagt der Verfasser der Reden über die Religion, weiß nur vom Universum; die Fantasie herrsche, so habt ihr einen Gott. Ganz recht, die

Fantasie ist das Organ des Menschen für die Gottheit” (KA II, 256).<sup>li</sup> Schlegel and Moritz assert the autonomy of art through the imagination's power to subjugate theological discourse into an external form or secondary representation of art.

The concept of the “will” of the artwork according to Moritz's aesthetic writings further illuminates the contrast between Moritz's own receptive aesthetics and Kantian critical aesthetics. In the main passage cited above from “Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten,” as I italicize, it is worth indicating that Moritz appears to project consciousness onto the artwork in epiphenomenal form. The “will” of the observer is hereby literally subsumed under the “will” of the artwork; chapters I and II revisit this possibility and its implications.<sup>lii</sup> The “will” of the work of art, metaphorically speaking, otherwise conveys the idea that artworks elicit our recognition of their ideal beauty in accordance with laws of their own design. The artwork's internal “relations” [*Beziehungen*], i.e. its “purposive structure” [*Zweckmässigkeit*] in similarly Kantian terms, determine the aesthetic judgment, but not vice-versa.<sup>liii</sup> This is contrary to Kant's principal thesis which states that the aesthetic value of the artwork is contingent on our subjective manner of representation and not the object of our aesthetic interest itself: “Um zu unterscheiden, ob etwas schön sei oder nicht, beziehen wir die Vorstellung nicht durch den Verstand auf das Objekt zum Erkenntnis, sondern durch die Einbildungskraft [...] mit dem Verstande verbunden [...] auf das Subjekt und das Gefühl der Lust oder Unlust desselben” (115). Elsewhere in “Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten,” Moritz states that the contemplation of beautiful objects is an experience that reflects the perfection of beautiful objects themselves: “ich betrachte ihn [den Gegenstand] als etwas nicht in mir, sondern in sich selbst Vollendetes, das also in sich ein Ganzes ausmacht und mir um sein selbst willen Vergnügen gewährt” (203). Moritz prolongs this thought in “Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen”: “das Ganze, als Ganzes betrachtet,

hingegen braucht weiter keine *Beziehung* auf irgend etwas außer sich zu haben” (263, my emphasis). In anticipation of one of the central philosophical tenets of Jena Romantic aesthetic theory, Moritz intimates that the artwork autonomously determines the conditions of its own aesthetic reception.

Throughout the remainder of his writings, this fundamental insight leads Moritz to diagram the Jena Romantic aesthetic program before the letter. For instance, I suspect Moritz is the first to articulate the Jena Romantic aesthetic link between cosmology and semiotics. The perfection of the artwork is an allegory of nature's perfection according to “Grundlinien zu einer vollständigen Theorie der schönen Künste,” where Moritz defines the artwork as a microcosmic “imprint” of nature's macrocosmic order: “Jedes schöne Ganze der Kunst ist im Kleinen *ein Abdruck* des höchsten Schönen im großen Ganzen der Natur” (309, my emphasis). Schlegel articulates a mere slight variation of the same insight in his “Gespräch über die Poesie” published in 1800: “Unermeßlich und unerschöpflich ist die Welt der Poesie wie der Reichtum der belebenden Natur an Gewächsen, Tieren und Bildungen jeglicher Art, Gestalt und Farbe” (KA III, 284). Applying this philosophy to the use of his own language in “Die Signatur des Schönen,” Moritz heralds the Jena Romantic rule of poetic autonomy – the imperative that literary theory be written as poetry and that poetry be written as a product of its literary theory: “Bei der Beschreibung des Schönen durch Worte müssen also die Worte, mit der Spur, die sie in der Einbildungskraft zurücklassen, zusammengenommen, selbst das Schöne sein.” (296). According to fragment #117 of Schlegel's “Kritische Fragmente,” we may recall, similarly, “Poesie kann nur durch Poesie kritisiert werden. Ein Kunsturteil, welches nicht selbst ein Kunstwerk ist [...] hat gar kein Bürgerrecht im Reiche der Kunst” (KA I, 161). Ultimately, both Moritz and Schlegel express alternate views to Kant's thesis that language cannot express ideal beauty. For Kant, the question of what poetry expresses

and how to critique the same accordingly is a strict matter of rational inquiry extraneous to the powers of the imagination. In the following section, I discuss how Kant arrives at this polemic conclusion.

## V

As a final introductory remark to the philosophical concept of autonomy in Kant, it is worth briefly discussing the significance of how Jena Romantic literature sought to close the gap between Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophy.<sup>liv</sup> Fragment #89 of Schlegel's "Ideen" asks, "Wie sollte die Moral bloß der Philosophie angehören, da der größte Teil der Poesie sich auf die Lebenskunst bezieht und auf die Kenntnis der Menschen!" (KA II, 263).<sup>lv</sup> In the aftermath of Kant's Third Critique, it is safe to assert Jena Romantic literature represents an engagement with the indelible mark Kant left on late eighteenth century Enlightenment aesthetics and ethics. Schiller, for instance, views the artwork and the aesthetic judgment as paradigmatic expressions of our free will, modeling both the refinement of our moral will and the cultivation of our human freedom. Schiller's 1794 "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen" pleads for political emancipation through the education of our aesthetic sensibilities accordingly. In his 6<sup>th</sup> letter, Schiller ascribes modernity's troubles to the fragmentation of society in the absence of the "aesthetic condition" ["*der ästhetische Zustand*"]. According to Schiller, the aesthetic education prepares the individual for the understanding of the ideal unity of humanity in alignment with the ideal beauty of art. In his 22<sup>nd</sup> letter, Schiller details the artwork's beneficiary psychic effects on the individual who partakes in the aesthetic judgment: "[die] hohe Gleichmütigkeit und Freiheit des Geistes, mit Kraft und Rüstigkeit verbunden, ist die Stimmung, in der uns ein echtes

Kunstwerk entlassen soll, und es gibt keinen sicherern Proberstein der wahren ästhetischen Güte” (637). As will be the case with the Romantics, Schiller's suggestion is contrary to Kant's principal thesis in the Third Critique, again, which states that the aesthetic value of the artwork is contingent on our subjective manner of representation and not the object of our aesthetic interest itself.

This introductory remark is essential in order to highlight that Kant divorces the concept of moral autonomy from its rightful philosophical implications in matters of aesthetics. Kantian autonomy, strictly speaking, denotes the capacity of a mental faculty to legislate for itself by means of a priori principles.<sup>lvi</sup> The term principally applies to Kant's thesis of the autonomy of the will, which first appears in his 1785 *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*:

Autonomie des Willens ist die Beschaffenheit des Willens, dadurch derselbe ihm selbst (unabhängig von aller Beschaffenheit der Gegenstände des Willens) ein Gesetz ist. Das Prinzip der Autonomie ist also: nicht anders zu wählen, als so, dass die Maximen seiner Wahl in demselben Willen zugleich als allgemeines Gesetz mit begriffen seien. (74)

Kant specifies this thesis further in his 1788 *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*:

Die Autonomie des Willens ist das alleinige Prinzip aller moralischen Gesetze und der ihnen gemäßen Pflichten [...]. Also drückt das moralische Gesetz nichts anders aus, als die Autonomie der reinen praktischen Vernunft, d. i. die Freiheit, und diese ist selbst die formale Bedingung aller Maximen, unter der sie allein mit den obersten praktischen Gesetzen zusammenstimmen können. (144)

Whereas heteronomy refers to the subjection to external law by the rule of another being or power, autonomy refers to the freedom of will which enables the subject to adopt rational principles of moral law as the prerequisite for taking moral action. It may be concisely defined as the capacity of reason for moral self-determination in lieu of personal desire or feeling; hence, it is a “law unto itself.”<sup>lvii</sup> Haskins makes the astute observation, to which my own insights are much obliged, that Kant elsewhere excludes what might otherwise seem like an obvious candidate for autonomy among the various

mental faculties, namely, the imagination in its aesthetically productive role. I hereby wish to demonstrate that the Jena Romantics were well-aware of this exclusion.

Throughout the Third Critique, we may recall, Kant defines the beautiful as a feeling of pleasure that arises in the aesthetic judgment when the faculties of the understanding and the imagination “correspond” [“*bestimmen*”] with one another in the form of a “free-game” [“*freies Spiel*”]. In section 22, Kant asserts the independent and productive role of the imagination in the aesthetic judgment: “Wenn nun im Geschmacksurteile die Einbildungskraft in ihrer Freiheit betrachtet werden muß, so wird sie erstlich nicht reproduktiv [...] sondern als produktiv und *selbsttätig* (als Urheberin willkürlicher Formen möglicher Anschauungen) angenommen” (160, my emphasis). In the next sentence, Kant remarks, most significantly: “Allein daß die Einbildungskraft frei und doch von selbst gesetzmäßig sei, *d. i. daß sie eine Autonomie bei sich führe, ist ein Widerspruch*. Der Verstand allein gibt das Gesetz” (Ibid., my emphasis) Haskins implies that the basis of Kant's reasoning for denying the imagination autonomy hardly amounts to more than a set of technicalities.<sup>lviii</sup> As I understand Kant's implicit argument, inasmuch as the imagination necessitates legislation on behalf of the faculty of reason, it is unlike the autonomy of the will proper, which necessitates self-legislation *a priori*. Because the imagination is not a “law-governed” activity in any meaningful sense of an ethical resolve, in other words, nor an activity governed by causal laws of its own making, as is reason, the imagination must remain ever subject to a rather rigid heteronomous determination. But as the passage also makes clear, Kant does not consider the free activity of the imagination to be restricted to the mere reception of fine art.<sup>lix</sup> The free activity of the imagination is one that applies to the extensive domain of aesthetics in all cases. For instance, the free activity of the imagination, again, in the sense of freely imposed self-legislation, reappears in Kant's discussion of the faculties constitutive of

artistic genius in section 49.<sup>lx</sup>

Die Einbildungskraft (als produktives Erkenntnisvermögen) ist nämlich sehr mächtig in Schaffung gleichsam einer andern Natur, aus dem Stoffe, den ihr die wirkliche gibt. Wir unterhalten uns mit ihr, wo uns die Erfahrung zu alltäglich vorkommt; bilden diese auch wohl um: zwar noch immer nach analogischen Gesetzen, aber doch auch nach Prinzipien, die höher hinauf in der Vernunft liegen. (249)

By Kant's inductive reasoning, the productive imagination follows “laws based on analogies” whose principles still have a higher seat in reason.<sup>lxi</sup> Said laws and principles are left unspecified, however. It is therefore difficult to ascertain why these laws stem from reason and not the imagination, or even the artwork itself. Presumably, the analogy to which Kant is referring is the analogy to moral law, given that Kant will later claim the beautiful to be a symbol of the moral good in section 59. Even so, Kant fails to demonstrate how the laws of the imagination structurally operate in any order of semblance to those of the autonomy of the will.

It may seem counter-intuitive that even the genius lacks autonomy according to Kant, despite being he who gives the rule [*“die Regel”*] to art according to section 46. To be sure, the genius entails a second-order heteronomy: the genius, whose imagination is already subordinate to the faculty of reason, represents an innate mental predisposition [*“angeborene Gemütsanlage”*] or *“ingenium”* according to which “nature,” rather, “gives the rule to art.”<sup>lxii</sup> Anticipating the Romantics, Schiller incidentally makes the opposite claim in his *Kalliasbriefe* of 1793, “Schönheit ist Natur in der Kunstmäßigkeit [...] was sich selber die Regel gibt – was durch seine eigene Regel ist” (410). More significantly, in any event, Kant's uncompromising stance on art's subordination to the faculty of the understanding extends to the realm of poetic language. In his system of the arts, poetry is formally reduced to a sub-category among the “spoken arts”: “Die redenden Künste sind Beredsamkeit und Dichtkunst. Beredsamkeit ist die Kunst, ein Geschäft des Verstandes als ein freies Spiel der Einbildungskraft zu betreiben; Dichtkunst, ein freies Spiel der

Einbildungskraft als ein Geschäft des Verstandes auszuführen” (257). For Kant, the commanding authority of the poet over language is safeguarded by the understanding, an assumption contested by Novalis's “Monolog,” as I discuss in Chapter III.

The main insight I offer is hence the following. In nuce, where Kant declined to define the imperatives of the imagination as being determined by the imagination itself, Kant inadvertently laid the groundwork for the Jena Romantic concept of autonomy. Namely, to the effect that the laws of the poetic imagination are products of the poetic imagination itself, Jena Romantic poetry philosophically represents a “law unto itself.”

## VI

In following with the idea that the production and theory of Jena Romantic literature conveys, in a Kantian manner of speaking, a “law unto itself,” I wish to stress Friedrich Schlegel's own artful definition of the concept of “law.” Schlegel departs from Kant's jurisprudential philosophy of the arts, suggesting instead that the laws of poetry ought to be critiqued as tropes using tropes: “Poesie kann nur durch Poesie kritisiert werden,” let us recall. In his “Gespräch über die Poesie,” Schlegel writes,

Es ist nicht nötig, daß irgend jemand sich bestrebe, etwa durch vernünftige Reden und Lehren die Poesie zu erhalten und fortzupflanzen, oder gar sie erst hervorzubringen, zu erfinden, aufzustellen und ihr strafende *Gesetze* zu geben, wie es die Theorie der Dichtkunst so gern möchte. Wie der Kern der Erde sich von selbst mit Gebilden und Gewächsen bekleidete, wie das Leben von selbst aus der Tiefe hervorsprang, und alles voll ward von Wesen die sich fröhlich vermehrten; so blüht auch Poesie von selbst aus der unsichtbaren Urkraft der Menschheit hervor. (KA III, 284, my emphasis)

Schlegel's definition introduces a set of similes that visually reflect on their own content: a poetic “law” is like the earth, born of its own seed, dressed in plants of its own creation. Like the genus of plants, poetic laws themselves “bloom” in unison with the creative spirit of humankind, a visual metaphor that doubles the powers of creation of the earth.

Fragment #168 of the “Athenäums-Fragmente” articulates the same theory as a kind of lawful cosmology of humankind's artistic creation: “Und welche Philosophie bleibt dem Dichter übrig? Die schaffende, die von der Freiheit, und dem Glauben an sie ausgeht, und dann zeigt wie der menschliche Geist sein *Gesetz* allem aufprägt, und wie die Welt sein Kunstwerk ist” (KA II, my emphasis, 191). According to Schlegel's aestheticized definition of “law,” poetic laws thus become “artworks onto themselves.”

In essence, the thesis that the production and theory of Jena Romantic literature is a “law onto itself” assumes a lawful understanding of its own metaphoricity. Poetic laws in this manner closely resemble Schlegel's “ideas”: “Ideen sind unendliche, selbständige, immer in sich bewegliche [...] Gedanken” (KA III, 256). For Schlegel, poetic laws themselves unfold recursively as ever changing, self-propagating “laws onto themselves.” A passage from the first edition of Fichte's 1798 *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie* articulates this identical thesis, only using a more formal philosophical nomenclature: “[Die] Handlung der Freiheit, durch welche die Form zur Form der Form als ihres Gehaltes wird und in sich selbst zurückkehrt, heißt *Reflexion*” (66).<sup>lxiii</sup> According to Benjamin's dissertation cited earlier, this single remark promulgates the merger between art and the concept of art criticism in Jena Romantic literary theory (16). Of significance in the passage that follows is Benjamin's emphasis on the function of “laws”:

Die Erkenntnis in dem Reflexionsmedium der Kunst ist die Aufgabe der Kunstkritik. Für sie gelten alle diejenigen *Gesetze*, welche allgemein für die Gegenstandserkenntnis im Reflexionsmedium bestehen. Die Kritik ist also gegenüber dem Kunstwerk dasselbe, was gegenüber dem Naturgegenstand die Beobachtung ist, es sind die gleichen *Gesetze*, die sich an verschiedenen Gegenständen modifiziert ausdrücken. Wenn Novalis sagt: »Was zugleich Gedanke und Beobachtung ist, ist ein kritischer [...] Keim«, so spricht er – zwar in tautologischer Rede, denn die Beobachtung ist ein Denkprozeß – die nahe Verwandtschaft zwischen Kritik und Beobachtung aus. Kritik ist also gleichsam ein Experiment am Kunstwerk, durch welches dessen Reflexion wachgerufen, durch das es zum Bewußtsein und zur Erkenntnis seiner selbst gebracht wird. (16, my emphasis)

According to Benjamin's receptive aesthetics, the laws of artistic reflection have the power to transform the very manner in which objects of art criticism take form. Critique is an “experiment” onto the artwork at the same time that critique is itself an “experiment” of its own artistic production. Chapter II revisits this thesis in relation to Novalis's “alchemical poetics” in “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs.”

Schlegel's 1798 remark concerning the lawfulness of poetry in the famous fragment #116 of “Athenäums-Fragmente” further support Benjamin's intuition:

Sie [Poesie] allein ist unendlich, wie sie allein frei ist, und das als ihr erstes *Gesetz* anerkennt, daß die Willkür des Dichters kein *Gesetz* über sich leide. *Die romantische Dichtart ist die einzige, die mehr als Art, und gleichsam die Dichtkunst selbst ist: denn in einem gewissen Sinn ist oder soll alle Poesie romantisch sein.* (KA II, 182, my emphasis)

For Schlegel, the rules or the manner according to which Romantic poetry must be written amounts to Romantic art itself. Accordingly, all poetry by definition ought to be, or better, *already is* Romantic poetry. Schlegel's reflections on the lawfulness of poetry indeed allude to a sense of its internal “purposiveness,” recalling Moritz, referred to more explicitly in fragment #65 of his “Kritische Fragmente”: “Die Poesie ist eine republikanische Rede; eine Rede, die ihr eignes *Gesetz* und *ihr eigener Zweck ist*, wo alle Teile freie Bürger sind, und mitstimmen dürfen” (KA I, 154, my emphasis). Schlegel's references to the lawful purposiveness of art apply not only to poetry, but to the universal spectrum of all writing including philosophy: “Die Philosophie ist eine Ellipse. Das eine Zentrum, dem wir jetzt näher sind, ist das *Selbstgesetz* der Vernunft” (KA III, 266, fragment #117, “Ideen,” my emphasis).<sup>lxiv</sup> The idea of art as the law of its making recurs in fragment #745 of Novalis's “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” where he asserts the autonomy of artworks as lawful imperatives: “Die höchsten Kunstwercke sind schlechthin *ungefällig* – Es sind Ideale, die nur approximando gefallen können – und *sollen* – ästhetische Imperative. So soll auch das Moralgesetz approximando

Neigungs(Willens)Formel werden” (413, III)<sup>lxv</sup> As I interpret the passage, artworks represent ideas of their own making, that is, according to which our own artistic practices and theories can only approximately reflect their absolute nature.

Besides his scientific writings, Novalis elsewhere philosophically contemplates “laws” as they apply to the self-legislating capacities of reason.<sup>lxvi</sup> In fragment #64 of his *Politische Aphorismen*, Novalis asks, “Aber fordert nicht die Vernunft, daß Jeder sein eigener *Gesetzgeber* sei? Nur seinen eigenen *Gesetzen* soll der Mensch gehorchen” (II, 500, my emphasis). In what may have been intended as an extension of Novalis's remark, Schlegel states, “Die Vernunft ist nur eine und in allen dieselbe: wie aber jeder Mensch seine eigne Natur hat und seine eigne Liebe, so trägt auch jeder seine eigne Poesie in sich (KA III, 283, “Gespräch über die Poesie”). For both Schlegel and Novalis, the monad that is every law of poetry becomes an allegory of our own individual subjectivity, whereby the implication is that the subject is itself “poetic law.”

Based on this poetic definition of the subject, I wish to turn to one of Novalis's most defining remarks concerning the autonomy of the work of art:

Es wird damit nur angedeutet, daß nicht das Objekt qua solches sondern *das Ich*, als Grund der Thätigkeit, die Thätigkeit bestimmen soll. Dadurch erhält das Kunstwerck einen *freyen, selbständigen*, idealischen Karakter – einen imposanten Geist – denn es ist *sichtbares* Produkt eines Ich – Das Ich aber setzt sich auf diese Art bestimmt, weil es sich, als ein unendliches Ich setzt – weil es sich, als ein unendlich darstellendes Ich setzen muß – so setzt es sich frei, als ein bestimmt darstellendes Ich (II, 282, fragment #633, “freyen, selbständigen,” my emphasis)]

This passage supports Martha Helfer's reading of Novalis's observations on Fichte, according to which Novalis transforms Fichte's discarded theory of the subject as *Darstellung* into a theory of *Darstellung* wherein the subject defines itself via a visual *poiesis* (80-105).<sup>lxvii</sup> In his notebooks of 1798 to 1800, and elsewhere throughout many other instances, Novalis defines the subject visually: “Wir sind Keime zum Ich” (314, III). Helfer's ensuing interpretation of Klingsohr's Tale from Novalis's novel *Heinrich von*

*Afterdingen*, serves as a translation of this theory into literary form. My own study builds on her findings, where I contend that the subject's effort to define itself visually mirrors much of Jena Romantic literature's own attempt to recreate the world in its own image.

In the following chapter, “The Original Schema,” I argue that the autonomy of the imagination is the key to understanding Novalis's theory of the sign. In brief, having rejected Fichte's theory of language acquisition through “cultural refinement,” Novalis revisits the question of our ability to effectively communicate using arbitrary designations for things. Namely, how are we able to communicate meaning, or a sign's arbitrary relation to its signified, without prior agreement on what the sign's designation is? Novalis thus refers to communication as seemingly “accidental, miraculous.” I attempt to explain Novalis's shift from *der Bezeichnende* [*Mensch*] to *das Bezeichnende* [*Ich*] at this critical juncture. My own insight is that signs are conjured simultaneously albeit independently, that is, autonomously among those who partake in communication. On the basis of second-order structures inherent in language otherwise referred to by Novalis as “schemata,” first-order symbolic representation extends from the human imagination of “the first” signifying-I to the immediate understanding of “the second” – “the first” and “the second” I believe are themselves arbitrary designations. Unequivocal relations among signs and signifieds that allow for effective communication are in this way formed. I introduce the chapter by turning to Novalis's theory of the imagination throughout his lesser known works, whose language strongly suggests a direct engagement with the heteronomy of the imagination according to Kantian aesthetics. I conclude the chapter maintaining that the concept of poetic autonomy operates at the most elementary level of Novalis's philosophical system – the linguistic sign.

## Chapter I

## “The Original Schema”

*A Study of “Bemerkungen zu Fichte”*

Was für eine Theorie suche ich? Ich suche, das, was in uns denkt etc. zu ordnen – die Veränderungen in uns unter Gesetze zu bringen – ein Anschauliches und begreifliches Ganze daraus zu bilden, nachdem ich dann meine innern Erscheinungen ordnen kann, und erklären – *Ein* Schema für mich.

“Bemerkungen zu Fichte”

Fichte's 1795 “Von der Sprachfähigkeit und dem Ursprung der Sprache” forms part of the canon of late eighteenth century philosophical writings whose guiding precept is to reject any and all theological speculation concerning the origin of language. The origin of language is of lesser interest to earlier seventeenth century thinkers because the metaphysical order of the world is believed to already be inherent in the world itself. As a mere imitation of this order, language is tacitly assumed to have originated in God.<sup>lxviii</sup> With Herder's 1771 Berlin Academy prize for his “Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache,” this question especially gains prominence in the German philosophical tradition having newly abandoned a theologically pre-established world-order in favor of the Kantian subject as the condition of possibility for human experience. One of the profound implications of this paradigmatic shift is that if all discursive production is said to be mediated by the subject, then language cannot have risen as a consequence of an external, objective world relative to human experience. Language is henceforth

anthropologically conceived as a distinctly human invention throughout the German Enlightenment.

The stakes of these essays prompt Novalis to reflect on the origins of literary language as early as 1795. Beginning with his remarks on Fichte, otherwise widely cited in the secondary literature as the *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis's observations comprise a collection of notes and aphorisms that reflect on the nature of self-consciousness, the relation of poetry to philosophy, and the essence of philosophical knowledge. What has more recently come to be known as fragment #11 marks the onset of a thoroughgoing theory of semiotics that bears striking resemblances to the tenets of structuralism in twentieth century linguistics. Fragment #11 is of primary interest to the present study inasmuch as the same seeks to demonstrate that the concept of autonomy operates at the most elementary level of Novalis's literary theory, namely, the linguistic sign.

As a note to the Kohlhammer edition, I refer to the *Fichte-Studien* as “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” because I suspect the former to be a misnomer. The title of the manuscript clearly indicates “Bemerkungen,” where Novalis in every case underlines the titles of his works or collections of fragments. To my mind, this suggests that Novalis privately considered his observations on Fichte to be a work of philosophy in its own right. Surely, the organizational complexity and philosophical sophistication of the work belie the impression to the unknowing reader that Novalis's reception of Fichte are the product of artless note-taking. What is more, Novalis on at least one occasion explicitly reserves the heading “Studien” for the title of his “Studien zur Bildenden Kunst”; the titles of Novalis's “Hemsterhuis-Studien” and “Freiberger naturwissenschaftlichen Studien,” to name but two examples, are artificially designated by Mähl and Gerhard Schulz respectively (II, x). I therefore suggest that the distinction between “Studien” and “Bemerkungen” is not arbitrary or trivial. The title of Novalis's “Vermischte

Bemerkungen” further evinces this insight, where Novalis's “observations” in the form of literary fragments indeed later become his first published work of literature known as “Blüthenstaub.” Otherwise, I strongly commend the editors for their impeccable transcription of fragment #11, save for one curious inaccuracy. The missing torn-off piece of the manuscript referenced on page 111, line 2 [or the 16<sup>th</sup> page of the manuscript] is due to mice-nibbling, not yellowing (II, 695). On this note, I wish to express my most earnest gratitude to archivist Bettina Zimmerman at the *Freies Deutsches Hochstift* for her graceful patience and insights as we reviewed together the Kohlhammer transcription of fragment #11 and editors' notes line by line.

# I

No other scholarship on Novalis's “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” garners as much attention as Manfred Frank's seminal lectures on romantic aesthetics dating back to 1989. As Jane Kneller has rightly stated, the publication of *Einführung in die Frühromantische Ästhetik* since became instrumental in reviving international scholarly interest in Novalis's reception of Fichte.<sup>lxix</sup> With the exceptions of Stephan Matuschek and Winfred Menninghaus, Jochen Hörisch and Friedrich Strack writing on Novalis, Ernst Behler on Schlegel, and Gabriele Rommel's outstanding curatorial work at Schloss Oberwiesendstedt, she is also correct that no other German critic in recent memory so admirably succeeds to spotlight the unique place that Jena Romanticism occupies within the German philosophical tradition and literary history of the Avant-Garde (Kneller, xxvi). Harkening back to Frank's now famous claim that the work represents “the most important philosophical work of early German romanticism,” there is no denying that Novalis's remarks on Fichte may well contain the most enlightened ruminations on the

metaphysical nature of philosophical inquiry among the Romantics, both early and late (*Einführung in die Frühromantische Ästhetik*, 248).

Besides the unlikelihood that the manuscript widely circulated among those who formed part of the Jena Romantic circle, I partly take issue with Frank's remark. Dalia Nassar's 2014 study *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romanticism, 1795-1804* stresses that Frank all but ignores Novalis's other philosophical fragments after 1798 (9-10). More importantly, I suspect Novalis himself would have taken issue with Frank's characterization of the work as "philosophical," as somehow to imply that the work cannot also be characterized as literary. Oddly, Frank himself is aware that Novalis elevates the status of poetic thinking to philosophy throughout his remarks on Fichte. In fragment #568, for instance, Novalis remarks, "Das oberste Princip muß schlechterdings Nichts Gegebenes, sondern ein Frey Gemachtes, ein *Erdichtetes*, *Erdachtes*, seyn, um ein allgemeines metaphysisches System zu begründen, das von Frey anfängt und zu Freyheit geht" (II, 273). Elsewhere in fragment #280 of "Vermischte Fragmente III," Novalis writes, "Die Poësie ist der Held der Philosophie. Die Philosophie erhebt die Poësie zum Grundsatz [...] Philosophie ist *die Theorie der Poësie*" (II, 591). In the interpretation of fragment #11 I offer, Novalis's allegorical rendering of the origin of language as a "self-portrait painting" of the signifying-subject entails the philosophical culmination of his analysis. Frank however insists that remarks such as these can only be described as the work of "genuine and rigorous philosophical speculation" (*Einführung in die Frühromantische Ästhetik*, 248).

Frank's contributions accomplish a number of things for a number of critics. In Martha Helfer's reading of Novalis's "Bemerkungen zu Fichte" in her 1996 *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* following Frank's and Gerhard Kurz's 1977 essay "*Ordo inversus*. Zu einer Reflexionsfigur bei

Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist und Kafka,” Novalis recognizes that Fichte is caught up in a vicious circle in what supposed to be the one incontrovertible statement at the foundation of his entire philosophical system, the proposition “I am I.” Accordingly, Novalis asserts that the fact of self-consciousness cannot be derived from the reflexive act of self-positing, because reflection, by definition a mirroring, results in reversal or inversion in representation: “Das Bild ist immer das verkehrte vom Seyn” (fragment #63, II, 142). As we reflect on this inversion – *ordo inversus* – we become aware that the 'pure,' pre-reflexive self is not accessible to the empirically reflecting ego. Novalis explains, “In diesem Felde ist Täuschung der Einbildungskraft, oder der Reflexion unvermeidlich – in der Darstellung – denn man will Nichtreflexion durch Reflexion darstellen und kommt eben dadurch nie zur Nichtreflexion hin” (fragment #25, II, 122). As Novalis later makes clear in fragment #612 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” moreover, “Wenn der Character des gegebenen Problem Unauflöslichkeit ist, so lösen wir dasselbe, wenn wir seine Unauflöslichkeit darstellen” (III, 376). To derive the fact of self-consciousness, thus, it is precisely the non-representability of the pure ego itself that must be presented. Novalis indeed asks, “Wie kann das empirische Ich sein eignes Bild entwerfen, ohne ein objektives Medium anzunehmen[?]” (fragment #220, II, 169). In response, Novalis is apt to state that the representation of the non-representability of the pure ego performs a regulatory function: *Darstellung* is the “pure concept” of a “necessary fiction” (“Der Begriff *rein* is also [...] eine *nothwendige* Fiction,” fragment #234, II, 179). In what are known as the “Nachlese” of Novalis's fragments from the summer and fall of 1800, Novalis writes, “[Der Sinn für Poësie] ist der Sinn für das Eigenthümliche, Personelle, Unbekannte, Geheimnißvolle, zu *Offenbarende*, das Nothwendigzufällige. Er stellt das Undarstellbare dar” (fragment #671, III, 685). Inasmuch as the sensible in poetry is able to reflect that which is unrepresentable directly, as I interpret Novalis here, poetry reflects

the “purest” principle of philosophy. Hence, proceeding from Fichte's definition of the self-positing subject as *Darstellung*, Novalis makes use of the visual dimension of reflection to prove that any empirical representation of this self-presenting subject must necessarily be illusory. To circumvent this necessary deception, Novalis develops a schema for representing the unrepresentable via what Helfer characterizes as a visual *poiesis*. As she demonstrates throughout her interpretations of Klingsohr's tale from *Heinrich von Afterdingen* and *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Novalis's definition of *Darstellung* relies on the rhetorical underpinnings of the Kantian notion of *Darstellung* from the First and Third Critiques, meaning “a setting before the eyes.” Kant thinks the term hypotyposis, “to present something so vividly so as to make its presence beholden to the eye,” jointly with the phrase *subjectum sub aspectum* in following with the classical rhetoric of Cicero and Quintilian. To be sure, the *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* entry for “darstellen,” “vor die augen bringen, hinstellen oder hinsetzen in vielfacher bedeutung, *ponere ante oculos*,” records the transmission of this etymology into the German language, as well as established literary and philosophical practice around this time.<sup>lxx</sup> In her assessment of Novalis's works, Helfer concludes that the telos of Novalis's aesthetic program is the construction of a poetic system in and through which the completed subject visually presents itself as *Darstellung* (Helfer, 22-23, 82-85). Novalis writes near his final remarks on Fichte, “Vollständiges Ich zu sein, ist eine *Kunst*” (fragment #659, II, 294); similarly, later in his 1798 “Fragmente oder Denkaufgaben,” Novalis writes, “Mensch werden ist eine *Kunst*” (fragment #153, II, 559). Helfer's interpretation aligns strongly with my own reading of fragment #11. Novalis's theory of the sign not only represents the application of Fichtean philosophy to problems of semiotics at the origins of language. More precisely, Novalis's theory of the sign points to the construction of a poetic system in and through which the signifying-

subject brings itself to ontological realization in the self-portrait painting of its own schema.

Theodor Haering's 1954 *Novalis als Philosoph*, the title of which I assume to be an eponym of Egon Friedell's 1904 study, represents the secondary literature's earliest survey of Novalis's philosophical influences under which Novalis articulates a series of metaphysical and epistemological problems around 1798. According to Otto Pöggeler's 1956 review in *Philosophische Rundschau*, Haering succeeds in polemicizing the question of whether to regard Novalis as a philosopher or a poet. Haering, in my view, sets the stage for what would become Frank's most famous claim to date. For Haering, Novalis liberates Fichte's dialectical account of the self from Fichtean idealism, forging a new metaphysics beyond Fichte's own understanding of the subject and the ego. As a proto-Hegelian under the influence of Schelling, Novalis extends Fichte's dialectical understanding of subjectivity to all natural phenomena. Nature and knowledge are subsumed under the concept of completion [*“Ergänzung”*] within the inner and outer spheres of a higher unity. With reference to Hegelian terminology, Haering interprets this process as a form of “sublation,” or “the manner of romanticizing,” for which Novalis is well-known (Haering, 45-46, 638).<sup>lxxi</sup>

Von Molnár's 1970 dissertation *Novalis' Fichte Studies: The Foundations of his Aesthetics*, as do Frank's lectures on Romanticism, argues against the central premise of Haering's study. In his final conclusion, von Molnár maintains,

The schema of interrelation, where the ego is the image of nature, nature the image of the ego, and the relation between the two the image of the nameless Absolute, is obviously not a static condition but constitutes rather a dynamic relationship which we came to know as representative action (*Darstellung*) [...] Novalis, to be sure, stays within the Fichtean framework, only his accentuation is more evenly distributed between self and world, since he never loses sight of the Absolute's “form-contentual” aspect, or, in Fichte's terms, he never forgets that *Tathandlung* comprises *Tat* as well as *handeln*, content as well as form [...] Fichte's absolute is the Ego [...] but Novalis can call this Absolute both God and Ego in one and the same breath, since his state of the empirical is

the simultaneity of action and passion, spirit and “being,” form and content, where paths reach out to the same Infinity and where a change in name is merely indicative of the direction from which the Absolute is reached. (97-99)

Kneller offers an excellent explication of von Molnár's conclusion, worth citing in-full:

The paradoxical fact of human existence, that we are both object and subject to ourselves, is to be understood in Novalis as a matter of perspective or aspect, of whether we are looking inward or looking outward. If the absolute is sought inwardly it gives rise to the regulative (thought) of the I as the source of all subjectivity; if outwardly, it gives rises to the regulative notion of God as the source [of] all objectivity, i.e. nature. The 'unifying function' of the I is [according to von Molnár] 'the only manifestation of the absolute unity which is the absolute ego' [von Molnár, 54]. (xxiv)

In her introductory remarks to the first English translation of Novalis's “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” from 2003, Kneller writes that Frank's investigation is not so much concerned with the absolute self, but the unity and being of the incapacity for reflection. When we understand the self as absolutely finite and the absolute as a merely regulative idea of infinite being, we truly grasp the nature of the self. The result according to Frank, in her view, is that Novalis radically distances his account of consciousness from any kind of metaphysical absolutes. Kneller comments that if Frank is correct, Novalis's account of subjectivity is of interest to not only contemporary theories of self-consciousness, but also makes Novalis an important and hitherto neglected precursor of postmodern theories of the subject (xxvii).

In Kristin Alise Jones's recent Harvard dissertation from 2013, “Revitalizing Romanticism: Novalis' *Fichte Studien* and the Philosophy of Organic Nonclosure,” Frank's “anti-foundationalist” reading fills the gaps of von Molnár's analysis. In her remarkably original interpretation of Novalis's reception of Fichte, Novalis develops a philosophy of “organic nonclosure,” a philosophical position she devises herself, which couples the notion of “nonclosure” from Kuzniar's 1987 study *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin* with her own notion of “organicism” derived from Novalis's reception of Jacobi. By “nonclosure,” she refers to the open-ended or ever-

hypothetical quality of any possible system of knowledge inasmuch as the absolute ground of knowledge cannot be known, specifically, because the ontological relationship between knower and known cannot itself be incorporated into said system of knowledge. By “organicism,” she refers to any ontology that positively characterizes the absolute as a “living organism.” The ontological ground of all things, or the very nature of the sum of existence, is accordingly a “living being” whose self-conditioning totality is greater than the sum of its immanent parts. Accordingly, “living being” conditions the difference and the union between knower and known by the activity of its maintaining itself as itself. Quite literally, in her view, what she calls the “absolute organism” “comes to know itself *in* human consciousness” (1-36). For Jones, Frank's contributions bring to light the import of Jacobi's philosophy into speculative philosophical discussions on consciousness among the Romantics, most notably Novalis.

Aside from the provocative element of Jones's theologically speculative claims, her strict confinement to Novalis's remarks on Fichte hinders her analysis. Even here, one wishes she had addressed herself to fragments such as #658: “Ist ein Organon der reinen Schematik möglich, oder ist dieselbe selbst das ursprungliche Organon?” (II, 294). In her own commentary on Lacoue-Labarthe's and Nancy's *L'Absolu littéraire*, she only cites the concept of the “organon” in the context of the authors' analysis of philosophy's relation to art. The concept's second, more germane appearance in the context of the authors' analysis on genre is moreover absent from her discussion: “And what, finally, is a genre? Or, more precisely, Genre? The answer is simple, and we know it already. Simple and abyssal: Genre is 'more than a genre' [Athenäum fragment #116]. It is an Individual, an organic Whole capable of engendering itself [Athenäum fragment #426], a World, the absolute *Organon*” (91). Noticeably, Novalis's “Blüthenstaub,” a work whose title inherently plays on the opposition between the organic and the inorganic, or life and

death, is never made reference to. Here, fragments #70, “Unsere Sprache ist entweder mechanisch, atomistisch oder dynamisch. Die ächt poetische Sprache soll aber organisch, lebendig seyn,” and #110, “Die Menschenwelt ist das gemeinschaftliche Organ der Götter. Poesie vereinigt sie, wie uns” seem especially relevant (II, 441; II, 461).

According to Willi Goetschel's 1991 *German Quarterly* review of Frank's lectures, Frank's work runs parallel to the Jena Romantic concept of aesthetic autonomy: “Parallel dazu und gegen die Positionen des Deutschen Idealismus, wie er [Frank] sich von Fichte bis Hegel aufbaut, suchen die Romantiker – und zwar gerade kritisch von Kant her die Autonomie der Kunst philosophisch zu begründen. Das bedeutet, daß Kunst selbst aufgrund philosophischer Reflexion Erkenntnis produziert” (387). As tempted as I am to agree with Goetschel, I disagree that the production of “knowledge,” in the strict epistemological sense of the word, defines aesthetic autonomy for the Jena Romantics. Goetschel adds, seamlessly in accord with Helfer's study, “Kunst und Dichtung werden als notwendige Komplemente der Philosophie begriffen. Sie leisten, was Philosophie selbst nicht zu leisten vermag: das Unbegreifliche gerade in seiner Unbegreifbarkeit darzustellen” (387). Goetschel cites what he perceives to be Frank's central thesis:

Die Moderne entspringt in der völlig unhegelschen Erfahrung unverfügbaren Abhängigseins vom 'Seyn' – und es war das Verhängnis der Frühromantik, in der Stunde Null des Bruchs mit dem Idealismus unter die idealistischen Systementwürfe gezählt zu werden – und zwar als scheiternder Versuch, ein solches zu errichten; sonst hätte man früher in der frühromantischen Paradigma-Wende den wirklichen Beginn der Avantgarde in Kunst und Philosophie erkannt. (388, Goetschel; 233, Frank).

For Nassar, Frank's “thesis” posits that early German Romanticism was a fundamentally skeptical movement whose roots can be traced back to the Niethammer's circle critique of first principles and Jacobi's critique of transcendental philosophy. Nassar takes issue with what she perceives to be Frank's main insights, which are not far removed from Goetschel's. For Nassar, the most striking problem in Frank's work concerns the

ambiguity surrounding his understanding of the Romantic notion of the absolute and its relation to “being.” Frank appears to waver on the ontological versus existential status of the absolute. In his lectures on aesthetics, he implies that the absolute is an ontological reality, where the Romantic absolute and Heidegger's phenomenology of being lead to the same eventuality: “both are the ground of the revelation of a world,” according to Frank (128). Nassar aptly discerns that Frank articulates several other inconsistent views in his other renowned, more recent 1997 study *Unendliche Annäherung. Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*. There, Frank claims that the Romantics begin with “original being” [*Ur-Seyn*] wherein he explicitly states that this “being” has an “existential meaning” or “reality.” In the same work, he claims that for the Romantics “pure being” is “an unreachable idea in the Kantian sense” (Frank, 662-689; Nassar, 9-10).

## II

I agree with Nassar. It is telling that Kneller's index does not even include an entry for the term “being.” For the exception of Heidegger's 1959 “Der Weg zur Sprache,” where Heidegger incidentally misreads Novalis's “Monolog,” the topic of Novalis and Heidegger is a red herring, but most especially concerning Novalis's reception of Fichte. It is one thing to argue as Martha Helfer has that Heidegger's 1938 “Die Zeit des Weltbildes” reaffirms its roots in the concept of *Darstellung* at the same time that it tries to escape them (4). In Helfer's interpretation of Heidegger's latter essay, Heidegger's critique of representation and the Cartesian subject, the role of reflecting in effecting this critique, the process of visualization that structures the modern age, and the compensatory power of the poetic to redress the shortcomings of philosophical

discourse already comprise the late eighteenth century's preoccupation and experimentation with the notion of *Darstellung* (3). It is an entirely different matter to bring Novalis and Heidegger into philosophical conversation or conceptual proximity. For O'Brien, the designation of being as "chaos" in Novalis's third fragment on Fichte sounds less like an engagement with Kant or Fichte and more like an engagement with Heidegger (II, 106; 87-88). In the seventh chapter of her 1988 study *Novalis: A Romantic's Theory of Language and Poetry*, "Isis, the Great Mother-Goddess of Nature and the Mystical Earth," Kristin Pfefferkorn maintains that Novalis and Heidegger share the same concept of "earth" according to Heidegger's 1950 "Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" (139-148). In her 2010 essay "From Romantic Tools to Technics: Heideggerian Questions in Novalis's Anthropology," Jocelyn Holland interprets that Novalis uses poetic language as a "tool" to complete the subject, a notion she argues predates Heidegger's philosophical discourse on tools and technology. Chapter 10 of Jeffrey Powell's 2014 *Heidegger and Language*, titled "The Way to Heidegger's 'Way to Language,'" as well as Donatella di Cesare's 1995 "Anmerkungen zu Novalis' Monolog" ratify Heidegger's philosophy of language in their commentary on Novalis's "Monolog" (Powell, 180-200; di Cesare, 158-168).

The title of the first chapter of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, "Notwendigkeit, Struktur und Vorrang der Seinsfrage," already announces Heidegger's utmost analytic disposition to frame the question of how we understand ourselves to be in the world in ontological terms (2). To my mind, it suffices that Novalis expressly states in his critique of Fichte, "Seyn drückt gar keine absolute Beschaffenheit aus – sondern nur eine Relation des Wesens zu einer Eigenschaft aus" (fragment #454, II, 247). More broadly speaking, Heidegger writes under the influence of the Husserlian phenomenological tradition, which sought to investigate the necessity and priority of eidetic structures of

consciousness at the source of a so-called “crisis” of the European sciences and humanities at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Phenomenologically prior to any analytic, therefore according to Heidegger, it follows that one must first define the mode of understanding with which one approaches the matter at issue. In other words, the most immediate distinction pertaining to Heidegger's analytic of being relates to “understanding” [*Verstehen*]. Heidegger's definition of this concept is too extensive and complex to address here, though suffice it to convey on Heidegger's behalf that whenever we attempt to understand being in the world, we must distinguish between two modes of understanding: understanding on the basis of our everyday experience of being in the world, or “ontic” understanding, which corresponds to “das Seyn,” in contradistinction to understanding proper on the basis of reflexive experience, or “ontological” understanding, which corresponds to “ein Seiendes.” Novalis makes no such distinction as O'Brien himself plainly states (338, footnote #16). O'Brien is keen to point out that Novalis rather moves without hesitation between discussions of “being” [*das Seyn*] and “a being” [*ein Seyn*] as if the terms were synonymous.

As compelling as the parallels between Novalis and Heidegger may seem, thus, the devil is in the details, as the saying goes. Let us take Novalis's pseudo-existentialist remark on morality from his same remarks on Fichte, for instance, where accordingly, “Die Moralität muß Kern unsers Daseyns seyn, wenn sie uns seyn soll, was sie seyn will” (fragment #556, II, 266). Heidegger presents his moral philosophy in sections 54 to 59 of *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger's concept of moral conscience relates his attempt to supersede classic questions of the Western philosophical tradition pertaining to moral good and evil, in particular as these relate to debt, responsibility, and guilt. Pleading against a traditional epistemological analytic of the concept in question, accordingly, “conscience” is not to be

understood as an *a-priori* concept to be rationally examined, nor as an *a-posteriori* concept to be derived synthetically from human experience. Epistemologically speaking, conscience is *non-relational* – a philosophical entity of its 'ownmost' determination according to Heidegger (272-301).

Heidegger insists that our common notion of “moral conscience” does more to philosophically obscure than to illuminate our understanding. Our inheritance of the Western philosophical tradition is accordingly to blame. St. Augustine confused conscience with God's voice in his *Confessions* [“*Confessiones*”] of 347-400; later, Luther believed conscience to be the work of God in the mind of man; at his most radical, Descartes attempted to reveal the very existence of God by way of meditations on first causes and the finitude of human existence in Meditations III and V of his 1641 *Meditations on First Philosophy* [“*Meditationes de prima philosophia*”]. Novalis's same remark about morality in the fragment previously cited resumes with, “Eine unendliche *Realisierung des Seyns* wäre eine Bestimmung des Ichs” (II, 266-267). The phrase “eine Bestimmung,” which connotes “a giving voice to,” resonates with the cosmological “voice” of the following memorable fragment in Novalis's “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”: “Der Mensch spricht nicht allein – auch das Universum *spricht* – alles spricht – unendliche Sprachen” (fragment #143, III, 266). For Novalis, the universality of our moral conscience originates from the infinite voices of a universe realized in the voice of an I that is the universe itself.

In section 54, Heidegger writes,

Die so angesetzte ontologische Analyse des Gewissens liegt vor einer psychologischen Deskription von Gewissenserlebnissen und ihrer Klassifikation, ebenso außerhalb einer biologischen »Erklärung«, das heißt Auflösung des Phänomens. Aber nicht geringer ist ihr Abstand von einer theologischen Ausdeutung des Gewissens oder gar einer Inanspruchnahme dieses Phänomens für Gottesbeweise oder ein »unmittelbares« Gottesbewußtsein. (269)

Heidegger dismisses what he regards to be philosophically ethereal accounts of conscience, such as the above just cited, along with biological and psychological accounts of the same from the time of the Enlightenment and the advent of modern science onward. By the same token, biology and empirical psychology only classify, describe, index our experience of conscience, thereby failing to define the concept's philosophical essence: “Die Forderung eines »induktiven empirischen Beweises« für die »Tatsächlichkeit« des Gewissens und die Rechtmäßigkeit seiner »Stimme« beruht auf einer ontologischen Verkehrung des Phänomens” (269). At face value, Heidegger's pronouncement problematically discards any value Novalis's scientific writings may have to offer.

Heidegger's path towards existential alterity similarly diverges from other of Novalis's pseudo-existentialist pronouncements such as the well-known 16<sup>th</sup> fragment of “Blüthenstaub”: “ist denn das Weltall nicht in uns? [...] Nach Innen geht der geheimnißvolle Weg” (II, 419). Turning to Heidegger's moral philosophy once more, alterity here emerges in the context of the “call of conscience” [“*Ruf des Gewissens*”]. Heidegger writes, “als Aufruf zum eigensten Selbstseinkönnen ist er [der Ruf des Gewissens] ein *Vor-(nach-»vorne«-)*Rufen des Daseins in seine eigensten Möglichkeiten.” The call's presence-at-hand [“*Vornerufen*”] is effectively concatenated with the past [“*Vorrufen*”] of its own periphrasis or future anteriority [“*Nachrufen*”] (273). Present only as a “will have been present,” emphatically, Heidegger's neologisms signal the call's metaleptic self-displacements of presence in-time. At the center of the ecstatic time-presence of *Dasein* is the rhythmic and counter-rhythmic [*Vor-(nach-»vorne«-)*] movement of this displacement.

Heidegger's 1942 lecture on Hölderlin's poem “Der Ister” firmly anchors these insights. The Ister, or the Greek name for the Danube river [from *Ἰστροίη*], equivocates at

its geographical origin in Germany before it resumes its west to east itinerary. Formed by the confluence of two streams, Brigach and Breg, the Danube briefly travels west at its natural source near the town of Donaueschingen in the Schwarzwald region of Baden-Württemberg.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Moving in the direction from which it returns “home,” the river’s endemic origin is foreign to itself at its source. This phenomenon is dramatized in the second strophe of Hölderlin’s poem, where upon his travels from a hot isthmus, Hercules is invited as a guest to a lightly adumbrated source of the Ister in toilsome search of an olive tree that he will plant at the sunlit festival arena of the Olympic games.”<sup>lxxiv</sup> To cite “Der Ister,”

Der scheintet aber fast  
Rückwärts zu gehen und  
Ich mein, er müsse kommen  
Von Osten.  
Vieles wäre  
Zu sagen davon.

Heidegger interprets, “Der Ister ist jener Strom bei dem schon an der Quelle das Fremde zu Gast und Gegenwärtig ist, in dessen Strömen die Zwiesprache des Eigenen und Fremden ständig spricht” (182). The call’s rhythmic and counter-rhythmic movements are like the Danube’s currents, remaining all the while “at home” in a “self” that speaks “toward” and “back from” its ecstatic temporality in language.<sup>lxxv</sup> Frank’s more recent 2004 essay “Fragments of a History of the Theory of Self-Consciousness from Kant to Kierkegaard” touches on the subject of ecstatic temporality in Novalis as it relates to consciousness and being, without any reference to Heidegger, and I believe for good reason.

[In Schleiermacher’s poetry] the unconditioned is discursively represented as hindered or inhibited striving [*‘gehemmtes Streben’*] (a solution we also find in Novalis, in Friedrich Schlegel, and in Schelling). For the sake of conceptual clarity, the unconditioned binds itself, albeit transiently, to limitation, but in virtue of its infinity, it constantly transgresses its own limitations. In a word, the unconditioned is made manifest as excentricity or ecstasis, as the temporality of consciousness, whereby ‘temporal’ is understood according to its celebrated definition as the being ‘that is, what it is not, and that is not, what it is.’

(88)

Because Frank does not cite any of the authors he makes reference to, it is difficult to assess the merits of his insights. One wishes he had addressed himself here, for instance, to the opening line of “Blüthenstaub”: “Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte, und finden immer nur Dinge” (II, 413). But even here, it is unclear to me how his insights help distinguish between Novalis's concept of “das Unbedingte” as opposed to “Dinge.”

### III

I wish to introduce the following section by earnestly stating that my own interpretation of Novalis's “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” is much indebted to the third chapter of O'Brien's *Novalis: Signs of Revolution*, “From *Filosofie* to Fiction: Language and Semiotics in the Fichte Studies” (77-118). In the first comprehensive study of Novalis's major works in English, O'Brien not only provides a fascinating document of critical theory at work, but also a compendium of incisive observations that vigorously advance the current scholarship on Novalis.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Besides several minor to more considerable differences of opinion, my close engagement with O'Brien results in what I hope the reader will agree is a valuable addition to his study. I begin with O'Brien's interpretation of the opening passage of Novalis's “Bemerkungen zu Fichte,” according to which the Kohlhammer edition reads,

#### Bemerkungen

In dem Satze a ist a liegt nichts als ein Setzen, Unterscheiden und verbinden. Es ist ein philosophischer Parallelismus. Um a deutlicher zu machen wird A getheilt. *Ist* wird als allgemeiner Gehalt, *a* als bestimmte Form aufgestellt. Das Wesen der Identität läßt sich nur in einen *Scheinsatz* aufstellen. Wir verlassen das *Identische* um es darzustellen – Entweder die geschieht nur scheinbar – und wir werden v[on] d[er] Einbildungskraft dahin gebracht es zu glauben – es *geschieht*, was schon Ist – natürlich durch imaginaires Trennen und vereinigen – Oder wir stellen es durch sein Nichtseyn, durch ein Nichtidentisches vor – Zeichen – ein bestimmtes für ein gleichförmig bestimmendes –

dieses gleichförmig bestimmende muß eigentlich durchaus unmittelbar das mitgetheilte Zeichen durch eben die Bewegungen bestimmen, wie ich – Frey und doch so wie ich. [...] Ersteres – wenn es durch ein Mittelbares, eine Vorstellung meiner Productions-handlung des Zeichens oder nur meiner *Absicht*, meines *Sinns*, letzteres, wenn es ohne dis Mittelbare, die Vorstellung meiner Causalitaet, es unmittelbar producirt – wie ich. Jenes ist bloßer Geschmack, dis Genie Geschmack. [...] Was ist Ich? / Absolutes thetisches Vermögen/ D[ie] Sfäre des Ich muß für uns alles umschließen. (II, 104)

For O'Brien, the passage complicates Fichte's philosophy in "three" specific ways.

"First," according to O'Brien, "Hardenberg's addition of the word *Schein* to Fichte's word *Satz* produces the neologism *Scheinsatz*. Where Fichte moves from the *Satz der Identität* to his *Grundsatz*, Hardenberg pauses to stress how the principle of identity, as an instance of language, functions as a "pseudo-sentence" and participates in *Schein* or "illusion" (84). I would add that the neologism references Novalis's own proposition as the specular reflection of Fichte's *ordo inversus*. Ostensibly, Novalis is aware of the irony that his own sentence is a *Scheinsatz*.

"Second," according to O'Brien,

Hardenberg remarks how, as a sentence, the proposition of identity operates at odds with identity. Like Fichte, Hardenberg begins by citing and then glossing the principle of identity in terms of its 'form' and 'content.' He however ignores Fichte's interdiction of any question of the principle's 'ground,' and draws attention to a difference between identity and its 'presentation' as a sentence or proposition. Hardenberg insists that the philosophical presentation of identity is possible only through its statement, or more exactly, its pseudo- or miss-statement in language: 'Das Wesen der Identität läßt sich nur in einen Scheinsatz aufstellen.' (Ibid.)

"Third," O'Brien writes,

Hardenberg asserts that the *Satz* makes what is already lost (namely the 'essence' of identity) *seem* to appear by presenting 'its non-being' or 'something not identical' in its place. This implies that the presentation of identity in language involves, not a re-presentation, but a loss that only seems to establish or present an identity already lost in the act of presentation. By introducing the term 'sign' [*Zeichen*] for what stands in the place of what is lost, Hardenberg divorces presentation, "*Darstellung*," from representation, and grounds it in semiosis. (Ibid.)

To first state the obvious, O'Brien's inadequate translation of *Darstellung* as

"presentation" reads to the detriment to his analysis, where his otherwise quite extensive bibliography on Novalis and the Jena Romantic period would have benefited from having

included Helfer's 1991 dissertation. In the final sentence of his third remark, even the antecedent paragraph offers no indication whether the pronoun "it" refers to the term "sign," "presentation," "representation," the "'essence' of identity," or whatever is lost in the "divorce" between "presentation" [here, "*Darstellung*"] and "representation." O'Brien places the accent on the notion of substitution for something lost without detailing how said replacement amounts to the "divorce of presentation from representation." I would stress instead, without equivocation, the non-being of identity, or the non-identical, as that which occupies the space that divides *Darstellung* from *Aufstellung*. Whatever is replaced or supplemented with the term "sign," it seems, Novalis would already deem to be a semiotic process by default. In my impression, thus, O'Brien's third observation misses the point that O'Brien himself makes in his second remark: the identical conforms to its *Darstellung* through pseudo- or miss-statement [*Scheinsatz*] and not through its replacement or substitution with signs per se.

With the exception of von Molnár's own analysis of this passage, which O'Brien does not cite, I would add that the passage adumbrates questions surrounding Fichte's metaphysical language as a problem of semiotics in relation to Novalis's theory of discursive communication according to fragment #11. Von Molnár agrees with the premise of this line of inquiry as follows:

In essence, these lines [from the opening passage of Novalis's remarks on Fichte cited above] develop the rudiments for a theory of communication and art from Fichte's contention that the identity of any one thing cannot be asserted except for the absolutely founded unity of subject and object in the pure activity he [Fichte] calls *Tathandlung* or Ego. Accordingly, the intellect's absolute agency in formulating the world of objects is necessarily on a preconscious level since consciousness can only contain the products of that activity; effectively, it has the power to formulate something as other than the self that has its significance only with respect to the self. This preconscious productivity can be likened on a conscious level to the fabrication of signs because, in accordance with Novalis's definitions, both are representative actions. The difference is that the use of signs presupposes the mediating ground of consciously established objects in relation to which the individuated, empirical self defines its purposes. Other than that, signs are related to their objects only in and for the human beholder, just like the object itself. (*Romantic Vision*, 32)

Von Molnár deftly recognizes that Novalis's semiotics and theory of communication pertain to specific problems of Fichtean metaphysics and the notion of *Darstellung* as representative action. O'Brien and I obviously disagree with von Molnár's observation that preconscious productivity can be likened on a conscious level to the fabrication of signs. Signs are not consciously fabricated. As fragment #11 spells out clearly, the relation between the sign and the signified is arbitrary. Therefore, the notion that communication presupposes a “mediating ground of consciously established objects in relation to which the individuated, empirical self defines its purposes” is invalid. Furthermore, von Molnár's suggestion that “signs are related to their objects only in and for the human beholder, just like the object itself,” is the exact antithesis of Novalis's “Monolog”: “Gerade das Eigenthümliche der Sprache, daß sie sich blos um sich selbst bekümmert, weiß keiner” (compare Appendix A and transcription, page 163).

As I interpret the same opening passage of the work, Novalis purposefully uses Fichte's lexicon of “positing” and “differentiation” to signal against Fichte's lexicon itself. For Novalis, Fichte's proposition symbolically represents a kind of univocal transcendental meaning upon which all philosophical reflection is based. Novalis's critique is effected in the language of the passage itself, for Novalis undercuts his own predication on Fichte's proposition. What is contained “in” Fichte's sentence [*“was liegt”*] is not a metaphysical substance, or even an object of reflection, but “contains” rather a semiotic process in-itself. For Novalis, Fichte's proposition represents essentially none other than an arbitrary “positing, differentiating, and combining” of signs with other signs. The same applies to the Fichtean I, incidentally. Shortly hereafter in fragment #5, Novalis speculates curiously, “Hat Fichte nicht zu willkürlich alles im Ich hineingefügt?” (II, 107). I will discuss this point at greater length in the following section. In any event, the opening passage sublates Fichte's untenable metaphysical language, a language that

seeks to reflexively ground itself in-itself, with a language that is critically aware of its own semioticity. Implied is a dialectical tension between the “unmoving,” transcendental content of Fichte's sentence and the abstract gerund phrases that signify the object itself of said content. Accordingly, the formation of the sign is neither strictly intellectual, or conceptual, nor strictly intuitive, or sensible, but both.

These particulars align verbatim with the dialectic that relates the spatial and temporal aspects of the sign's semiotic formation according to Novalis's theory of communication in fragment #11. Novalis remarks, “Das Denken kann aber nur einem zweyten Bezeichnenden, so wie alles *von außen*, nur durch den Raum, mittelst einer Anschauung, oder einer Gefühls mitgetheilt werden. [...] Raum ist die *äußere* Bedingung, Zeit die *innere* Bedingung, der sinnlichen Anschauung, oder Gefühls” (II, 108). For Novalis, the conduit of communication is “sensible intuition or feeling,” a phrase that clearly alludes to Kantian nomenclature. To be exact, this position undermines Kant's insistence that transcendental synthesis and intellectual apperception are the only means of apprehending the identical. Colin Marshall's 2010 “Kant's Metaphysics of Self” from *Philosophers' Imprint* confirms this insight; according to Marshall, the concept of the identical for Kant, as is for Novalis and Fichte, is entangled with the concept of selfhood. For Marshall, this occurs via Kant's close engagement with Hume's empirical theories about the difficulty in imputing existential connections among mental states. Kant's theory of transcendental synthesis and apperception in his deduction of the categories emerges from this exchange (1-18). Though more importantly, paramount to Novalis's theory of communication in the ultimate passage cited above concerns the formative power of the imagination at the source of our intuitions: “Die Anschauung besteht aus Gefühl und Einbildung” (fragment #211, II, 167). Novalis later remarks, similarly, “Vorgestellte Anschauung, und angeschaute Vorstellung machen also das Wesen

der Einbildungskraft aus,” and later still, “Die Einbildungskraft ist Schöpfungskraft in Beziehung auf die Anschauung” (fragment #234, II, 177; fragment #248, II, 188).

Accordingly, the following section of the present chapter details Novalis's theory of the imagination in order to fully contextualize its role in fragment #11.

To unpack Novalis's pronouncement on the spatial and temporal aspects of semiosis further, it is necessary to consider Novalis's elucidation in fragment #226: “Raum ist ein *Begriff*. Zeit eine *Anschauung*” (II, 170). Novalis earlier explains, “Ein angeschauter Begriff ist ein Zeichen. Eine Anschauung kann nicht angeschaut – sie kann nur begriffen werden” (fragment #219, II, 169). Novalis appears to be claiming that space is conceptual, but can only be intuited in-time, whereas time is intuitive, but can only be conceptualized in-space. This begs the question of whether this formal distinction is itself conceptual or intuitive. Novalis a few lines later makes clear: “*Unterschiede der Vorstellung und Anschauung*. Begriff und Empfindung correspondiren. Empfindung verhält sich zur Anschauung, wie Begriff zur Vorstellung” (fragment #219, II, 169). Novalis even revisits this distinction in fragment #248: “Anschauung und Vorstellung müssen aufs strengste geschieden werden. Die Einbildungskraft ist jedem alles – Durch *Beziehungen* aufeinander werden beyde *bestimmt*. Beziehung ist der Eine Act der Producirung” (II, 188). The answer thus appears to be both in both cases: “Form ist ein bloßes, weder an Raum, noch Zeit gebundenes Verhältniß” (fragment #218, II, 168). Without risk of committing a logical fallacy, Novalis earlier states, “Raum geht auf die Anschauungen – Zeit auf die Vorstellung” (fragment #218, II, 168). In my view, Novalis discerningly distinguishes the origin from the essence of space and time. Space gives form to intuitions without being intuitive itself, whereas time gives form to concepts without being conceptual itself. Space and time are thus external forms of mediation for signs [relations among concepts and intuitions, sensible and abstract forms] that are

themselves contingent on the semiotic system in and through which space and time structure communication. As cited above, “Zeichen – ein bestimmtes für ein gleichförmig bestimmendes – dieses gleichförmig bestimmende muß eigentlich durchaus unmittelbar das mitgetheilte Zeichen [...] bestimmen.” Without external mediation, it follows that any and all signs confuse the origin with the essence of the identical in the signified.

Conversely stated, Novalis's critique of Fichte in the opening passage of the work is that our intellectual apprehension of the concept of the identical confuses the origin with the essence of discursive communication. As do all philosophical concepts and their respective intellectual apprehension, the identical paradoxically originates as a sensible sign in abstract thought. Novalis states, “Sprache: Verknüpfung des besonderen sinnlichen Gedankenstoffs mit sinnlichen Zeichen. Zeichen ist eine hypothetische Anschauung, bedingt durch eine Vorstellung” (fragment #250, II, 189). It is made apparent in fragment #11 that Novalis understands semiosis to be fundamentally arbitrary in all instances of communication. As I understand the premise of fragment #11 in view of Novalis's later fragments, any act of communication consists basically as follows: the signifying-agent's imagination creates the *sensible sign* of its arbitrary “choosing” in relation to the arbitrary *signified* of the receiving agent's *abstract* understanding (II, 109). In turn, an arbitrary, non-identical structural relation between the sign and the signified prevails in our intellectual apprehension of the identical, which, prior to the communication of its concept, exists in what Novalis would call a “sphere” [“*Sphäre*”] strictly outside of either agent's powers of origination or reception. Whatever mediates the sign's relation to the signified in order to guarantee effective, “non-hypothetical” communication among those who communicate, in other words, remains entirely outside the grasp of our imagination or even understanding itself. Said primary, “pre-conscious” sphere becomes the index of the space that divides communication – or, ironically, the essence of communication

itself. In fragment #11, the “original” schema of language will come to bear an approximate solution to this enigma via poetic language.

In summary, the essence of communication remains concealed from intellectual apprehension, wherefore Novalis insists that we can at most intuit the structures of communication; and indeed, because communication as such can only be intuited as a process, not an object in-itself, it must be temporal in character. The immediate communicability of the identical through representative action [*Darstellung*] refers to the sign's “outer,” “illusory appearance,” or most concisely, its “concept.” The concept's delayed immediacy, or its “intuited presentation,” refers to the “sensible,” “inner-condition” of its meaning and whose semiotic formation in-time corresponds to the formative powers of the imagination. Accordingly, “Zeit ist die Bedingung aller Synthesis,” where Novalis later specifies further, “Zeit ist Form des Raums in der Einbildungskraft” (fragment #117, II, 154; fragment #225, II, 170). All considered, Novalis will himself come to understand that his own theory of communication communicates only a finite, fragmentary approximation of the ontology of language.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The section that follows presents Novalis's theory of the imagination as a means to fully contextualize the imagination's role in fragment #11 in following with Moritz's receptive aesthetics against Kant's critical aesthetics. Throughout acts of communication, the imagination brings the sign to its ontological realization via the processual *abstract formation* of the signified, where the imagination, moreover, mediates the “will” of the “original” schema of language as a rule or concept onto itself, just as the imagination mediates the “will” of the work of art, according to Moritz.

## IV

The bulk of Novalis's remarks on the imagination correspond to Group II of the Kohlhammer edition, including fragments #211-#287, written in the winter of 1795 before the early spring of 1796. The passages I hereby select sketch a philosophy of the imagination that carries Moritz's project forward while repudiating the heteronomy of the imagination according to Kantian aesthetic theory. We may recall that, according to Kant, inasmuch as the imagination necessitates legislation on behalf of the faculty of reason, it is unlike the autonomy of the moral will which necessitates self-legislation a priori. Because the imagination is not a law-governed activity in any meaningful sense of an ethical resolve, in other words, nor an activity governed by causal laws of its own making, as is reason, the imagination must remain ever subject to a rather rigid heteronomous determination. Despite the self-engendered productivity of the productive imagination in all matters concerning art, in Kant's view, the imagination is resolutely not autonomous. To begin with Novalis's reflection on the "lawfulness" [*"Gesetzmäßigkeit"*] of the imagination, I cite from fragment #218 as follows: "Wenn man Vernunft die *Gesetze* der Einbildungskraft nennt, insofern man dieser überhaupt *Gesetzmäßigkeit* aufbürden kann, so ist Philosophie eigentlich nichts, als die Theorie der Vernunft [...] Allgemeine Naturlehre – Theorie der Anschauung" (II, 168). Speculating against Kant's position, Novalis hypothesizes that reason owes its existence to the laws of the imagination instead. More poignantly still, he is even skeptical of the presumed epistemology in and through which the imagination is said to be "lawful" since the very notion, as he is aware, is inextricably tied-up with rationalist discourse. If the lawfulness of reason is a product of the imagination, then reason is a fundamentally schematic, theoretical activity; naturally, it follows that all philosophical activity is of this

character.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Referring back to fragment #218, as we philosophically reflect on nature through the formative powers of the imagination, our reflections inversely reflect the schematic, theoretical nature of the imagination itself. This principle of sorts is confirmed earlier in fragment #168, where Novalis elevates the primacy of the imagination, grounding our epistemological determination of nature in the realm of intuition: “Aus einem Prinzip der Natur und nach [...] den Stoffregeln der allgemeinen Natur entsteht jede Wissenschaft im Gebiet der Anschauung” (II, 168). The imagination acts autonomously as the natural principle of its own origination; stated otherwise, the imagination is an intuition of its own design as a symbolic activity in-and-of itself: “Symbolische Bildungskraft. Imagination” (fragment #226, II, 171). While all intuitions are linked together as schematic determinations of the imagination, mediating between sensibility and the understanding, the imagination itself cannot be intuited: “Einbildungskraft besteht aus Sinnlichkeit und Verstand – beyde müssen vereinigt schaffende und bildende Kraft seyn. Sie können nicht die Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft bestimmen – die Einbildungskraft muß ihre Vorstellungen bestimmen” (fragment #219, II, 169). To our imagination, the imagination is but a representation: “Einbildungskraft, für das Anschauende, ist Vorstellungsvermögen” (fragment #325, II, 224). Novalis himself draws the distinction between the active, material content and the formal, passive content of the imagination: “(Reine) Kraft ist der Stoff, (reine) Wirkung die Form der Einbildungskraft” (fragment #234, II, 177). Elsewhere in his “Studien zur Bildenden Kunst,” alluding to Kant, Novalis altogether dismisses the presupposition that the imagination is a “faculty.” Novalis elevates instead both the primacy and the autonomy of the imagination among the “senses”:

Die Einbildungskraft ist der wunderbare Sinn, der uns alle Sinne *ersetzen* kann – und der so sehr schon in unserer Willkühr steht. Wenn die äußern Sinne ganz unter mechanischen Gesetzen zu stehen scheinen – so ist die Einbildungskraft offenbar nicht an die

Gegenwart und Berührung äußerer Reitze gebunden. (II, 650)

Without mediation on behalf of external mechanical, causal laws of nature, or the moral laws of reason, the imagination is without any source of appeal other than itself. The imagination is the primary “sense-organ” of both our experience and knowledge of the world.<sup>lxxix</sup> As the passage cited makes clear, our imagination is contingent on our “will.” This statement contains the kernel of my interpretation of fragment #11, namely, that the imagination is that which founds the “will” of the signifying-subject that helps bring the “original schema” of language to its self-realization in acts of human communication.

From a philological standpoint, Novalis is naturally aware of the semantic composition of the word *Einbildungskraft*. In fragments #212-213, he writes,

Einbildungskraft ist lediglich produktif [...] [sie ist] schaffend und bildend [...] Ihr correspondirt die Vernunft. Ihre Gesetze enthält die Vernunft. Der Verstand entspricht dem Gefühl. Das Gefühl, der Verstand, und die Vernunft sind gewisserweise passiv – welches gleich ihre Namen bezeichnen – hingegen ist die Einbildungskraft allein *Kraft* – Nur Ein hervorbringendes – Alle vier sind immer zusammen – Sie sind Eins – nur für uns zu trennen durch sich selbst. Es giebt ein Vorstellungsvermögen und ein Gefühlsvermögen – kein Einbildungsvermögen. Vermögen ist passiv. (II, 167)

The active “force,” or “power” [*Kraft*] of the imagination connotes its capacity to synthesize images into one [*Ein-bilden*] as well as to partition the image into many [*Ein-bilden*]. The imagination has the function of both universalization and particularization in Novalis's metaphysics: “Das Anschauungsvermögen theilt sich in die Bildungskraft – und in das *Allgemeine* und *Besondre*” (fragment #222, II, 170). For Novalis, particularity even becomes a product of universality itself via the imagination: “Die Allheit ist Produkt der Einbildungskraft. Die Einheit ist Product der Allheit – das *Unendlich Bestimmte*” (fragment #240, II, 170). This reflects back on the multiplicity of the imagination, whereby the universal origin of the imagination consists in its own manifold expression: “Die [Einbildungskraft] ist [...] mehrfach [...] Das Ursprüngliche ist 8fach” (fragment #238, II, 184). In and through the imagination, as I demonstrate in the following section,

the “original schema” of language itself takes the manifold form of schemata.

But most importantly, according to fragment #464,

Die Einbildungskraft suppeditirt der Urtheilskraft die Materialien, in unbekannten Ländern zu weilen, aber um wirkliche Materialien zu liefern, nicht Figmenta, muß sie *vernünftig* seyn – welches sie in unzählich verschiedenen Graden seyn kann – es kommt auf ihre *reinere* Selbstthätigkeit an. Je reiner die Einbildungskraft ist, desto wahrer wird sie seyn. (II, 250)

What safeguards Novalis's metaphysical theory of the speculative imagination from taking a position of radical philosophical skepticism is the reciprocal, autonomous relation that the imagination shares vis-à-vis our power of aesthetic judgment. The passage basically states that our power of aesthetic judgment schematizes the world through “the real materials” that the imagination “reasonably” acquiesces to the same. This helps define the autonomy [*“Selbstthätigkeit”*] of the imagination: aesthetic judgments regulate the external, concrete reality in and through which the imagination schematizes the world, including itself. To be sure, the philosophical relation between the concepts of the imagination and the aesthetic judgment in Novalis is a lesser explored topic that most likely merits greater critical attention in the secondary literature.

Let us recall similarly that according to Kant, language cannot express ideal beauty. For Kant, the question of what poetry expresses and how to critique the same accordingly is a strict matter of rational inquiry outside the powers of the imagination. The Third Critique's uncompromising stance on art's subordination to the faculty of reason extends even to the realm of poetic language. In his system of the arts, poetry is formally reduced to a sub-category among the “spoken arts.” Against this view, Novalis writes in fragment #29 of “Logologische Fragmente II,” “Das Poém des Verstandes ist Philosophie – Es ist der höchste Schwung, den der Verstand sich über sich selbst giebt – Einheit des Verstandes und der Einbildungskraft” (II, 531). Similarly, in “Vermischte Fragmente III,” Novalis attests that the imagination innately corresponds to the poet as an

“organ of [his] speech,”

Der Maler hat so einigermaßen schon das Auge – der Musiker das Ohr – der Poët die Einbildungskraft – das Sprachorgan, und die Empfindung – oder vielmehr schon mehrere Organe zugleich – deren Wirkungen er vereinigt auf das Sprachorgan oder auf die Hand hinleitet – (der Philosoph das absolute Organ) – in seiner *Gewalt* – und *wirkt durch sie beliebig*, stellt durch sie beliebig Geisterwelt dar – Genie ist nichts, als Geist in diesem thätigen Gebrauch der Organe – Bisher haben wir nur einzelnes *Genie gehabt* – der Geist soll aber total *Genie* werden. (584)

For Kant, nature “gives the rule” to the genius; for Novalis, the “world of spirit” strives to become genius. The imagination is accordingly the primary “sense-organ” of language, or better, a “manifold of organs,” whose sensory perceptions reflect the manifold nature of the spiritual world. The poetic genius thus represents himself an autonomous work of art, or as I discuss in Chapters II and III, the spiritual realization of Nature as the foremost purveyor of her poetry.

Novalis's theory of the imagination, as suggested earlier, builds on Moritz's receptive aesthetics from his philosophical writings on art. If we may recall, according to Moritz, the imagination brings the “will” of the artwork to ontological realization in following laws of the artwork's own design. As such, the artwork autonomously determines the conditions of its own aesthetic reception. Fragment #737 from “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” cited earlier, agrees with this interpretation of Moritz's aesthetics:

Mit jedem Zuge der Vollendung springt das Werck vom Meister ab in mehr, als Raumfernen – und so sieht mit dem letzten Zuge der Meister, sein vorgebliches Werck durch eine Gedankenluft von sich getrennt – deren Weite er selbst kaum faßt – und über die nur die Einbildungskraft, wie der Schatten des Riesen Intelligenz, zu setzen vermag. In dem Augenblicke, als es ganz Sein werden sollte, ward es mehr, als er, sein Schöpfer – er zum unwissenden Organ und Eigenthum einer höheren Macht. Der Künstler gehört dem Werke und nicht das Werck dem Künstler. (III, 411)

The passage is central to the interpretation of fragment #11 I offer. To reiterate, throughout acts of human communication, the imagination brings the sign to ontological realization in the abstract formation of the signified. In the sign itself, by contrast, the imagination brings the “will” of the “original schema” of language to ontological

realization in the visual formation of the sign. However, the theoretical rules, or “schemata,” according to which the imagination mediates sensibility and understanding in acts of communication do not originate within the imagination itself. The signifying-subject is himself more an abstract product of the sign than the sign is itself a concrete product of his own imagination. “Die Kunst bildet sich,” writes Novalis, what holds true no less of the poetic autonomy of the sign (fragment #251, II, 291).

## V

Fichte's *Von der Sprachfähigkeit und dem Ursprung der Sprache* outlines the theoretical stakes and motivations of fragment #11. Generally speaking, O'Brien and I agree that Novalis owes his insights to Fichte's essay on the origin of language in at least two regards. First, Novalis's notion of arbitrariness is indebted to Fichte's inversion of the eighteenth century hierarchy of natural over arbitrary signs. For both, arbitrariness is the grounding concept of language. In second place, Fichte is the first to apply the theory of the Kantian schema to semiotics (O'Brien, 92).

Wishing to circumvent hypothetical speculation, Fichte insists we must not ask how language could have been invented, but instead ask how it *must* have been invented:

Man darf sich daher nicht damit begnügen, zu zeigen, daß und wie etwa eine Sprache erfunden werden *konnte*: man muß aus der Natur der menschlichen Vernunft die Nothwendigkeit dieser Erfindung ableiten; man muß darthun, daß und wie die Sprache erfunden werden *mußte*. (255)

From the outset, there exists a tension between Fichte's language of necessity and a suspicion of non-philosophical language signaled by the verb “*zeigen*.” It is dissatisfactory to solely locate the origin of language, one must derive [“*ableiten*”] said origin from necessary causes pertaining to the nature of human reason. The origin of

language is thus articulated as a distinctly procedural task embedded in a larger system of knowledge. By positing the question in well-defined philosophical terms, Fichte demarcates the origin of language within the reflexive domain of idealism. If language derives necessarily from human reason and even as a necessity of human reason, then it follows that the origin of language must be contained in the language of human reason itself.

Fichte insists that it is insufficient to locate the origin of language, for one must theorize the very necessity of its origin. Yet, it is certainly not self-evident why language *must* have originated in human reason. Fichte further justifies his position:

Der Mensch sucht also [...] die nicht vernünftige Natur sich deswegen zu unterwerfen, damit alles mit seiner Vernunft übereinstimme, weil nur unter dieser Bedingung Er selbst mit sich selbst übereinstimmen kann. [...] Der Mensch geht nothwendig darauf aus, alles, so gut er es weiß, vernunftmäßig zu machen. (262)

For Fichte, human beings possess an innate drive [*“Trieb”*] to subordinate nature to this faculty, one his own essay surely attempts to exemplify. In this vein, Fichte's phrase “die nicht vernünftige Natur” is peculiar for reasons that elude O'Brien's analysis. The passage states that language entails the appropriation or subordination of nature, that which is antithetical to human reason, allowing the subject to coincide or come into accord with itself. Like Fichte's not-I [*“Nicht-Ich”*], the premise of the argument appears to be that human reason is posited a-priori in an external, antithetical relationship to itself. This begs the question: does nature become self-attuned in the sublation of its “unreason” to human reason, or does human reason become “natural” in its attunement to its appropriation of nature? Fichte expressly refers to “the nature of human reason” [*“die Natur der menschlichen Vernunft”*] elsewhere in the essay, which indeed suggests the latter (255).

I agree with O'Brien that Fichte's ensuing analysis consists of a highly improbable

narrative detailing the philological development of language throughout history (91). Fichte first imagines a hieroglyphic, primeval language [*“Ursprache”*] first-spoken by “uncultured peoples.” In this language, the sign is motivated by “natural resemblance” [*“natürliche Ähnlichkeit”*] to the signified (267-268). It is unclear whether the language is pictographic, and its indexical capacity to signify by “natural resemblance” to the signified more unclear still. Principally, in any event, the sign is motivated by arbitrary needs on behalf of the signifying-agent, but is itself determinate: “es stand in meiner Willkür, ob ich dem andern meine Gedanken bezeichnen wollte, oder nicht; aber im Zeichen selbst war keine Willkür” (267-268). In language proper, the sign itself is arbitrary: “Sprache, im weitesten Sinne des Worts, ist der Ausdruck unserer Gedanken durch willkürliche Zeichen” (256). Fichte explains that this historical development culminates in the abandonment of natural signs for auditory signs lacking resemblance to their signifieds. The replacement of the spoken word with the written word represents a further stride still in this development, for the written word represents in Fichte's view even greater stability in pronunciation and hence meaning (272-273). Over time, all natural signs are effectively replaced by signs that efface any trace of the *Ursprache* whence they originate (297). By this reasoning, Fichte likely considered his own essay to be the ideal high point of Western culture.

Language's progression toward abstraction in Fichte is motivated by the necessity that the sign and the signified be mediated by abstract or ideal signification. Fichte's idealist philosophy, in truth, wishes to represent itself in signs that are determinate in both their articulation and philological origin. As Fichte himself acknowledges, however, idealism bears a strictly arbitrary relation to signification, where idealism further ought to preclude any “natural resemblance” to sensibility. O'Brien and I differ here in our respective interpretations. Although I would concede that the question of motivation and

its complex relation to arbitrariness is central to Fichte's essay, I would emphasize instead that the question of sensibility is what bedevils Fichte's idealist language.

Subsequently, Fichte adopts the Kantian theory of the schema in an effort to disavow the character of both arbitrariness and sensibility that sullies the ideal language of philosophy. Before addressing Fichte's essay further, as well as Fichte's own subtle alterations to Kant's theory of the schema, let us first recall Kant's remarks on the subject. In the First Critique, Kant theorizes the schema as a speculative solution to the problem of how empirical intuitions are subsumed under pure concepts of the understanding.<sup>lxxx</sup> In all subsumption [*“Subsumtion”*] of an object under a concept, he explains, the representation of the object must be isomorphic [*“gleichartig”*] with the same concept; stated otherwise, the concept must contain something of the same form which is represented in the object to be subsumed under it. His example is the empirical intuition of a plate, which he refers to as being homogeneous with the pure geometrical concept of a circle (187). Neither purely sensible nor purely intellectual, schemata mediate between forms of the understanding and sensory appearance.

It is worth noting that Fichte applies this theory of the schema to language with some minor distinctions. O'Brien observes that whereas schemata mediate between the “sensible” and the “intellectual” for Kant, schemata mediate between the “sensible” and the “suprasensible” for Fichte (95-96). In my own observation, Fichte claims that schemata are “borrowed” [*“hergenommen,” “entlehnt”*] from sensible objects in order to designate suprasensible concepts, as opposed to “subsumed” from strictly sensible representations by suprasensible ones.

According to the innate logic of schemata, sensible signs are “carried over” [*“übergetragen”*] to a suprasensible register of language. Fichte's full account is detailed as follows:

Hat sich aber der gemeine Verstand einmal zu der Idee einer übersinnlichen Ursache der Welt erhoben, so entdeckt er [Der Mensch] von diesem hohen Gesichtspunkt aus bald auch die übrigen geistigen Ideen, der Seele, Unsterblichkeit, u. s. w. So wie sich nun bei einem Menschen diese Ideen mehr und mehr aufklärten, regte sich auch in ihm der Trieb, andere mit dem, was erforscht hatte, bekannt zu machen; denn nie ist der Trieb, sich mitzutheilen, lebhafter, als bei neuen und erhabenen Gedanken. Es mußten also auch Zeichen für jene Vorstellungen aufgefunden werden. Diese Zeichen finden sich, bei übersinnlichen Ideen aus einem in der Seele des Menschen liegenden Grunde, sehr leicht. Es giebt nämlich in uns eine Vereinigung sinnlicher und geistiger Vorstellungen durch die Schemate, welche von der Einbildungskraft hervorgebracht werden. Von diesen Schematen wurden Bezeichnungen für geistige Begriffe entlehnt. Nämlich das Zeichen das der sinnliche Gegenstand, von welchem das Schema hergenommen wurde, in der Sprache schon hatte, wurde auf den übersinnlichen Begriff selbst übergetragen. Diesem Zeichen lag nun freilich eine Täuschung zum Grunde, aber durch dieselbe Täuschung wurde es auch verstanden, weil bei dem andern, welchem der geistige Begriff mitgetheilt wurde, an dem gleichen Schema auch der gleiche Gedanke hieng. [...] Daher entsteht auch nicht aller Aberglaube durch Betrügerei, sondern dadurch, daß geistige Ideen nicht anders, als durch sinnliche Worte ausgedrückt werden konnten, und daß derjenige, der sich nicht bis zum Bezeichneten erheben konnte, bei dem ersten rohen Zeichen stehen blieb. (298-301)

For Fichte, the signified precedes the sign, and so the discovery [*“Erforschung”*] of pre-existing suprasensible signs is what concerns him. Suprasensible signs are discoverable on the basis of a common schematic relation between the sensible sign and its corresponding suprasensible signified. Fichte accomplishes here two things. He first shows that suprasensible signs, or philosophical language proper, are determinate both in use and motivation. Albeit that the rules according to which suprasensible signs are determined may well be concealed “deep within our souls,” they nonetheless abide and are even motivated by *derivation* from their schemata – not arbitrariness. Second, he shows that suprasensible signs, properly understood, are ontologically distinct. Suprasensible signs are not mere figures or metaphors of sensible signs, but rather designate abstract representations of their own making as ideations of sensibility. An “unavoidable necessity,” only the uncultured are unable to raise themselves above the “raw materiality” of the sensible sign to the linguistic register of suprasensible signification. Culture's refinement of language culminates with Idealism's dissolution of linguistic arbitrariness and sensibility – the subsumption of the sign's “crude” materiality

as well as origin in “deception.”

To summarize, Fichte holds several views which Novalis will either dismiss or oppose in fragment #11. For Fichte, signs originate and culminate in human reason. For Novalis, signs originate and culminate in the imagination. For Fichte, language is either sensible or suprasensible, where the distinction is culturally relative. For Novalis, language is visual, a-historical, and universal. For Fichte, the signified precedes the sign. For Novalis, the sign precedes the signified. For Fichte, the ideal of culture prevails over the “crude materiality” of the sign. For Novalis, the ideal of art “triumphs” instead: “Die Kunst muß über die rohe Masse triumphiren” (fragment #251, II, 291). From the outset, Novalis dismisses the supposed exceptionalism of idealist philosophical language, since schematization applies to all language alike.

## VI

In O'Brien's appraisal of fragment #11,

Hardenberg's application of schematism to all signs sets the *Fichte Studies* onto a radically different trajectory from that of its predecessor. In one sense, however, Hardenberg's innovation merely Fichtecizes or extends Fichte's thought more consequently than Fichte himself – an extension consonant with Hardenberg's initial understanding of his procedure (104).

I differ here with O'Brien. More than setting a different trajectory, or being an extension of Fichte's philosophy, I understand fragment #11 to be a critical revision of Fichte's semiotics in their entirety. Under the heading “Theorie des Zeichens,” Novalis undertakes his single most systematic and sustained philosophical attempt at a comprehensive theory of the sign. The fragment begins with,

Theorie des Zeichens oder was kann durch das Medium der Sprache *wahr* seyn?  
Über Philosophie überhaupt – Möglichkeit eines Systems etc.  
System selbst. (II, 108)

Under the sub-heading “Erfordernisse einer allgemeingültigen Philosophie,” based on another manuscript containing notes on fragment #11, Mähl considers these programmatic points to be the “germinal cell” [“*Keimzelle*”] from which all subsequent fragments of the work receive their topical coherence (II, 43). I agree with von Molnár who views Mähl's “germinal cell” as the most succinct formulation of the main points of interest that gradually unfold over the course of the work's first eight fragments. For von Molnár, the first eight fragments record Novalis's reflections arising from the basic premises of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, as well as the implications contained in Fichte's proposition of identity, “A = A” (*Romantic Vision*, 39). I take the gist of von Molnár's insight to be that, for Novalis, the ontology of the sign can be subsumed under the ontology of philosophical knowledge and systems. What we come to know about language, we foremost come to know through philosophy. O'Brien's opposite impression here I believe is similarly correct, albeit vague to state that “philosophy itself [...] becomes subsumed, along with the possibilities of its truth and systematicity, under the more general topics of semiotics and language” (87). Fragment #635 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon” leans in O'Brien's favor: “Kritick der Sprache – Vorarbeit des [Wissenschaftslehrers]” (III, 384). To my mind, the essential question brought to bear by Novalis's brief program in the narrow context of fragment #11 entails asking what is the exact reciprocal relation, or isomorphism, between language and philosophy: in and through what semiotic system can language represent philosophy? Conversely, in and through what philosophical system can philosophy represent language? Moreover, if the sign precedes the signified, does the sign take primacy over philosophical truth? And if so, is this to imply that the sign introduces inaccuracy into our epistemology, such that the sign can be represented only approximately? Is any and all philosophical knowledge

contingent on language, as Novalis himself later wonders, “Ist Sprache zum Denken unentbehrlich?” (fragment #495, II, 257).

In “Monolog,” Novalis drives at the idea that to define language with philosophy or philosophy with language leads to a kind of self-referential, metaphysical “inner-dialogue.” To define music with song, or mathematics with formulae, entails by analogy the same problem. In fragment # 124 of “Das Allegmeine Brouillon,” Novalis comments on the philosophical impurity of representational intermediality through language: “Die Sprache ist für die Philosophie, was sie für Musik und Mahlerey ist, nicht das rechte Medium der Darstellung” (III, 573). Language cannot represent music or painting directly, or elsewhere according to Novalis and other writers of the Romantic movement, nor can music, painting, mathematics, or art in general represent language directly either. In his notes between June and December of 1799, Novalis regards nature as “purely” poetic, suggesting that if nature is a linguistic phenomenon, then all phenomena are innately linguistic: “Höchstens kann wahre Poësie einen *allegorischen* Sinn im Großen haben und eine indirecte Wirckung wie Musik etc. thun – Die Natur ist daher rein poëtisch” (III, 572). In “Monolog,” likening language to mathematical formulae, Novalis writes, “Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln ist sey – Sie machten eine Welt für sich aus – Sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll – eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnißspiel der Dinge” (compare Appendix A and transcription, page 163). This assertion finds resonance in the late romantic period of 1857, where Eichendorff calls for the necessity of nature’s “hieroglyphs” in landscape art’s display: “ein Landschaftsbild [wird] nur dadurch zum Kunstwerk, daß es die Hieroglyphenschrift, gleichsam das Lied ohne Worte [...] fühlbar macht” (25-26). In Friedrich Schlegel’s 1828 “fifth” Dresden lecture,

similarly, art is branded a hieroglyphic language of nature: “Die Kunst [...] selbst ihrem innersten Wesen nach [...] [ist] eine höhere geistige Natursprache, oder wenn man will, eine innere Hieroglyphen-Schrift und Ursprache der Seele” (“Philosophische Vorlesungen,” 132). Language cannot represent any medium, be it musical, mathematical, visual, or artistic, without the external mediation of a representational system. Conversely stated, no communicative system can define language without the internal mediation of language necessary in order to represent said definition. The automorphism of linguistic communication, or the epistemological problem of systematically representing the ontological formation of the sign, I believe is what Novalis has here in mind at the outset of fragment #11.

On the sign's relation to the signified, Novalis initially writes as follows:

Beyde sind in verschiedenen Sphären, die sich gegenseitig bestimmen können. Das Bezeichnete ist eine freye Wirkung [,] das Zeichen ebenfalls. Gleich sind sie sich also im Bezeichnenden – sonst völlig ungleich [...] beyde sind in Beziehung auf einander blos im Bezeichnenden. (108)

The passage is significant because it introduces the signifying-agent, or signifying-subject, an element otherwise absent in Fichte's semiotic theory, as O'Brien is the first to aptly recognize (101). In addition, Novalis appeals to a peculiar concept of causality. Novalis writes that the sign and signified share a reciprocal relation of correspondence and determinacy [“*Bestimmung*”] across mutually exclusive “spheres,” “freely effected.” Novalis much later clarifies, as though to himself, “Sphäre kann man mit Begriff vielleicht übersetzen” (fragment #517, II, 261). Thus, as such, the causal relation effected among these concepts is “free,” i.e. arbitrary. Incidentally, fragment #362 of “Das Allegemeine Brouillon” articulates the concept of causality as an arbitrary sign itself: “Der Begriff der Caussalitaet ist z.B. ein *willkührliches Zeichen*, (transcendentales Zeichen) eines gewissen Verhältnisses” (III, 305). In order to make better sense of these quizzical

pronouncements, whereby the sign and signified arbitrarily determine each other on the arbitrary basis of their own abstract causality, let us turn to fragment #251:

Alle Kaussalität verlangt Sfäre. Sfäre ist aber nur durch Opposita möglich – Sfäre ist also Form der Kaussalität – Alle Kaussalität ist in der Einbildungskraft. Folglich muß die Einbildungskraft eine Sfäre haben. [...] / Thurmbau zu Babel / [...] Was kann die Sprache für eine Art von Gedankenbild *der Natur* liefern. (II, 189)

Be it as it may that while the Bible represents a fertile source of allusions for every Romantic philosopher, to my knowledge, allusions of this nature rarely feature in Novalis's far-reaching philosophical writings.<sup>lxxxi</sup> Oddly, the editors of the Kohlhammer edition have no comment on the passage in question. The spherical imagery associated with the tower renders Novalis's abstract reflections into visible contours, what leads me to speculate that the excerpt rather alludes to a Renaissance depiction of the tower of Babel. For instance, Marten van Valckenborch the Elder's "Tower of Babel" [*"Toren van Babel"*] of 1595 has been continuously on display at the art chambers of Dresden's *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister* since the year 1700. It is certain that Novalis saw this painting during his visit to Dresden's art galleries with the Schlegels in the fall of 1798. However, in view of the fact that Novalis completed his remarks on Fichte no later than the winter of 1796, according to Mähl, Novalis must have inserted this excerpt belatedly. Indeed, the excerpt in the manuscript is marked-off with Novalis's idiosyncratic forward slashes (/). Forward slashes signal belated fragments that reflect or comment on a preceding fragment. Novalis elsewhere refers to these after-thoughts of sorts as "logological fragments," a brand of philosophical fragments that partially reflect on the philosophical reflections of other fragments themselves (II, 522-534). For this matter, Novalis may have been contemplating any other depiction among the overabundant number of illustrations of the tower of Babel from the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance. Pieter Bruegel the Elder's, Hans Bol's, Hendrick van Cleve III's, Louis de Caullery's, Abel

Grimmer's, Maerten van Heemskerck's, Lucas van Valckenborch's, Frederik van Valckenborch's, and Tobias Verhaecht's depictions, to name only a few, I suspect are mostly on display throughout Germany and Austria at some time or another during Novalis's lifetime.

The tower's etiological myth for the existence of multiple languages at once opposes Fichte's scientific analysis of the historical origin of language. The tower of Babel evokes confusion amid the origin of human languages, both in the sense of “misunderstanding across” as well as “intermingling of” at their inception. The myth is a fitting philosophical allegory of the origin of semiotics in view that the sign and signified are entirely unrelated at their inception. Let us recall from fragment #251 that they exist in mutually exclusive “spheres” outside the causal nexus of the imagination – both in their “determinability” and in their “determinedness”: “Bestimmbarkeit und Bestimmtheit sind die allgemeinsten Begriffe – das Product a priori der modalen Einbildungskraft” (fragment #238, II, 184).

Contrary to both Fichte and Kant, this *Gedankenbild* essentially reverses the primacy of the “intellectual” or the “suprasensible” with the primacy of the visual. Specifically, the image of the tower's spherical shape veers from the otherwise “intellectual” or “suprasensible” concept of causality that would ostensibly explain the relation between the sign and the signified according to Fichte. The tower abstracts the image of nature's representation in language, thereby implying that the image mediates what language itself naturally represents. Unlike the suprasensible sign, the tower is the arbitrary image of a schematic relation to its theoretical postulate, not a derivational one. The image stands alone as its own schema and its schema as its own image. Novalis writes, “das Schema steht mit sich selbst in Wechselwirkung,” where later in fragment #249, he explains, “Zeichen – Bild. Im Zeichen praevalirt der Begriff – im Bild die

Anschauung – Sprach oder Begriffsbild” (fragment #11, II, 109; II, 188). Novalis elsewhere articulates his theory of the sign as a theory of the image in fragment #131: “Theorie des Zeichens – des Bildes” (II, 155). Fragment #685 of “Das Allegemeine Brouillon” summarizes these insights best, where Novalis's semiotics of self-same association and relationality explicitly oppose Fichte's semiotics of causation and derivation:

Jedes Symbol kann durch sein Symbolisirtes wieder Symbolisirt werden [...] Auf Verwechselung des Symbols mit dem Symbolisirten – auf Ihre Identisirung – auf den Glauben an wahrhafte, vollständige Repraesentation – und Relation des Bildes und des Originals – der Erscheinung und der Substanz – auf der Folgerung von äußerer Aehnlichkeit – auf durchgängige inner Übereinstimmung und Zusammenhang – kurz auf Verwechselung von Subject und Object beruht der ganze Abergalube und Irrthum aller Zeiten, und Völker und Individuen. (III, 397)

At the foundation of Novalis's semiotics of self-same association and relationality, the imagination's formative powers are later once again at stake in fragment #234: “Freylich ist im Reiche der Wircklichkeit, oder der Einbildungskraft alles Beziehbare,” and even more conclusively still in fragment #571, “Von der productifen Einbildungskraft. Im bloßen Begriff der Bestimmung liegt der Begriff der Wechselbestimmung, des Entgegensetzens, der Substantialitaet. Darinn liegt auch der Grund, warum die höchste Bestimmung sich selbst immer mit bestimmt.” (II, 177; II, 275).

As a final remark on the penultimate block-quote cited, the Latin *opposita*, or in this case the accusative neuter plural of *oppositus*, is a telling reminder of Novalis's erudition in the field of medicine. It is worth mentioning that Novalis's studies of anatomists and physiologists such as Petrus Camper, Johann Peter Frank, Johann Joseph Kausch, Andreas Röschlaub, Christian Gottlieb Selle, among others, have until recently been a lesser known facet of Novalis's intellectual influences.<sup>lxxxii</sup> *Oppositus*, also referred to as *situs transversus* or *situs inversus*, indicates a congenital condition in which the major visceral organs are reversed or mirrored from their normal positions through the

sagittal plane. The confusion of linguistic registers generated by Novalis's diction reflects an awareness of confusion itself as the foundational deixis of language. As I argue in Chapter II, this theme recurs throughout the polyphony of voices that lay claim to the origin of language in “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs.”

The “free-effect” of the signified, with reference to the antepenultimate passage cited from fragment #11, concerns yet another intrinsic facet of Novalis's concept of causality:

Insofern der Bezeichnende *ganz frey* entweder in der Wirkung des Bezeichneten oder in der Wahl des Zeichens, nicht einmal abhängig von einer in sich selbst bestimmten Natur, ist – insofern ist beydes nur für ihn in wechselseitiger Beziehung da und keins von beyden steht für einen zweyten Bezeichnenden in einer nothwendigen Beziehung auf das Andre. Sie sind für einen zweyten Bezeichnenden völlig getrennt. (II, 108)

The “free-effect” of the signified is synonymous with its arbitrariness: there is no a-priori determinate relation that guarantees a correspondence between the sign and the signified, causal or otherwise. What is more, Novalis claims that the signifying-agent is similarly independent of any self-determination. There is no determinate, mediating relation by which the signifying-agent ought to correspond or be determined by the sign, the signified, or most radically, even the signifying-agent itself. But it must at least be true, Novalis will admit, that there is some sense of determinacy by which the sign and the signified correspond through some yet unspecified relation of identity. Otherwise, how else does effective communication among human subjects take place at all? Novalis reasons, “die Nothwendigkeit der Beziehung eines Zeichens auf ein Bezeichnetes soll in einem Bezeichnenden liegen. In *diesem* aber wird beydes frey gesetzt.” The relation that binds the sign to the signified is itself “free” in the sense that both sign and signified are “freely posited” in the signifying-agent. Novalis insists, “es muß also eine freye Nothwendigkeit der Beziehung beyder im Bezeichnenden vorhanden seyn.” But in what sense can said relation be both “free” and “necessary”? Novalis asserts, “freye

Nothwendigkeit könnte man Selbstbestimmung nennen.” I take this formulation to convey that the mediation of signs is simultaneously self-determined and arbitrary.

O'Brien does an excellent service here of tracing the concept of freedom throughout its multiple permutations in fragment #11 (102-103). However, O'Brien does not equate this problem, as I do, with the problem of arbitrary signification.

This picture is more complicated still, we should be reminded, in view of the “second” signifying-agent: “Sind aber, wie oben, Zeichen und Bezeichnetes völlig getrennt, ist ihre Beziehung blos im ersten Bezeichnenden, so kann es nur ein Zufall oder Wunder seyn, wenn durch ein solches Zeichen das Bezeichnete dem 2ten Bezeichnenden überkommt” (II, 109). Paradoxically, as Novalis is aware, it follows that the effective production and exchange of information among those who partake in communication appears to be mediated by the indeterminacy and arbitrariness of that which is communicated itself – the sign's relation to the signified. Novalis's abstract notion of indeterminacy warrants citing fragment #283 here: “Unbestimmt ist aber nur eine Abstraktion – denn es ist im Grunde auch bestimmt, weil es ein Begriff ist [...] – Schema – bloße Sphäre” (II, 201). Indeterminate, arbitrary correspondences are schematic, which is to say, available to our intuition via abstraction, not concepts. If effective communication among agents may seem “accidental or miraculous,” this is because the structures that link signs to their signifieds remain concealed from our intellectual apprehension.

Novalis already alludes to his Kantian schematization of the sign when he writes, “der erste Bezeichnende braucht also nur, um sich mitzutheilen, solche Zeichen zu wahlen, die eine in dem *homogenen* Wesen des 2ten Bezeichnenden begründete Nothwendigkeit der Beziehung auf das Bezeichnete haben” (II, 109). Communication occurs on the basis of an isomorphic relation between the sign and the signified of the first signifying-agent's “choosing” – if and only when said relation is grounded in the

“homogeneous being” of the second. Absent from this pronouncement is a theory of how the isomorphic relation between sign and signified originates from this choosing, or its grounding in the homogeneity of “being” among those partake in communication – be they the “first” or “second” to communicate. At this critical juncture, Novalis applies the Kantian theory of the schema in order to “schematize” the origin of the isomorphic relation between the sign and the signified. Accordingly, Novalis shifts from *Der Bezeichnende* [*Mensch*] to *Das Bezeichnende* [*Ich*]:

Das 1ste Bezeichnende hat also im zweyten Bezeichnenden ein ursprüngliches Schema gefunden – und diesem zufolge wählt es die mitzutheilenden Zeichen. Das zweyte Bezeichnende ist nur frey, insofern es nothwendig ist und umgekehrt, es ist nur nothwendig inwiefern es frey ist – kürzer gesagt – es ist *nothwendig frey*. (II, 109-110)

In the manuscript, or line 35 of Kohlhammer edition, Novalis crosses-out “*Der*” [*Iste Bezeichnende-Mensch*] and in its place writes “*Das*” [*Iste Bezeichnende-Ich*]. This fortuitous occurrence offers us hard evidence that the shift is deliberate and calculated on Novalis's behalf. The Kohlhammer edition notes the correction, but has no further information to disclose on the matter (II, 695).

Novalis himself does not explain the shift explicitly, but I gather this much from the correction: Novalis establishes a doubling, or second-order isomorphic relation, between the agents that mediate communication and the relation of the sign to signified. Signifying-agents create signs for the express purpose of communication in a manner that is both self-determined and arbitrary. This is the first indication that agents operate within the structures of language no differently than signs or signifieds themselves. Indeed, I am suggesting that Novalis construes agents of communication as themselves semiotic entities: “Das Subjekt ist also nur eine Idee,” as he later writes in fragment #219 (II, 168). After all, it cannot be an “accident or miracle” that signifying-agents are able to communicate on the basis of arbitrary signs. It cannot be the case, as Novalis himself

admits, that they simultaneously invent identical languages that allow them to communicate effectively. Accordingly, schemata allow the signifying-I to choose adequate signs for effective communication on the basis of common linguistic second-order structures shared with an other I. The function of the schema, as I understand it, is to structurally link the imagination of the I to the understanding of the other. Ultimately, and the following is central to the concluding remarks of the present chapter, the production of signs amounts to a self-reflexive gesture, since, structurally speaking, there is strictly nothing that a signifying-I communicates to an other signifying-I that is not already present in the I itself.

Returning to fragment #11, Novalis finally re-articulates his prior analysis as follows:

Wenn ich ihm [dem Bezeichnenden] also ein Zeichen gebe, das in einem schematischen Verhältniß zum Bezeichneten steht, so wird es auf die ihm nothwendig freye Art das Bezeichnete finden – oder vielmehr selbst bezeichnen. Der erste Bezeichnende steht in Wechselwirkung mit dem zweyten. Er richtet sich im Zeichnen nach ihm, der Zweyte im Bezeichneten nach dem ersten – *Freyer Vertrag quasi*. [...] Der Wille des anderen muss zur eigentlichen Handlung, die *im* ersten geschieht, schlechterdings zugleich eintreten – wenn auch die Bestimmung nicht deutlich gedacht würde. (II, 110-111)

Beyond the convoluted and strange psychologism that orients the “will” of the signifying-agents, Novalis's analysis begs the following more fundamental question made on his own behalf: “Wie? wird nun aber ein schematisches Verhältniß zwischen Zeichen und Bezeichneten und welches? Bestimmt?” Novalis here shifts again to *Das Bezeichnende [Ich]*: “wenn nun das Erste durch das zweyte einem dritten Bezeichnenden etwas mittheilen will, was muß es da bey dem 2ten voraussetzen, was für Vermögen und Kräfte etc.?” After quickly realizing the ensnarement of this train of thought, the second shift carries Novalis over to his final conclusion: “[*Das Bezeichnende-Ich*] seine im Schema entwickelte Handlungsart muß allen zum Grunde liegen” (II, 111). When Novalis writes that the signifying activity of the signifying-I is at the foundation of all

things, he implicitly defines the schema of the signifying-I as the origin of all things including language itself. Harking back to section III of the present chapter, it is worth noting that the representational activity of the “original schema” is sourced in the “*Vermögen und Kräfte*” of the signifying-I's imagination: “Anschauungsvermögen. Anschauungskraft. (Einbildungskraft)// Das für das Subject Vereinigende aller Vermögen und Kräfte ist also diese Kraft” (fragment #41, II, 131); in fragment #746 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” similarly, “Aus der produktiven Einbildungskraft müssen alle innern Vermögen und Kräfte deducirt werden” (III, 413). To conclude, modifying Kant's definition of the schema, “a rule of synthesis of the imagination,” Novalis implicitly defines the sign as an arbitrary rule of semiosis that is the free-product of the signifying-I's self-determined imagination. This theoretical rule is the kernel of Novalis's semiotic theory of the autonomy of language.

The desultory “logological” fragment in which Novalis likens the signifying-I to the self-portrait of the sign represents the philosophical culmination of his analysis:

/Das erste Bezeichnende wird unvermerkt vor dem Spiegel der Reflexion sein eignes Bild gemahlt haben, und auch der Zug wird nicht vergessen seyn, daß das Bild in der Stellung gemahlt ist, daß es sich mahlt./ (II, 110)

The daedal image Novalis paints conjures Pieter Claesz's 1628 “Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball” [*“Vanitas met viool en glazen bol”*]. In Claesz's painting, the artist is made visible through the mirror-reflection of himself painting a self-portrait on the spherical glass ball depicted on the canvas. To comment on the passage, Novalis's choice of metaphor generates a rich structural chain of doubles. As it were, the passage attempts to translate a theory of the origin of semiotics into an image. This is equivalent to the doubling of painting itself, an activity whereby abstract thoughts are translated into images. This is doubled by the signifying-I's self-portrait, or the translation of its own concept into an image via the imagination. The above are doubled by the doubled-phrase

“mirror of reflection,” which depicts the *Gedankenbild* for the philosophical act of reflection in what is already a visual metaphor of reflection. The philosophical fractal that emerges here visually symbolizes the unending spheres of reflexivity and specular reflections at stake in language. It must be added that Novalis's inventive imagination is doubled by the signifying-I's ability to imagine and paint its own schema, where the latter's imagination brings the schema to ontological realization in the visual formation of the sign. All told, the passage anticipates one of Novalis's most defining remarks from fragment #64: “Das eigentliche Object, zu dessen Untersuchung wir nunmehr vorschreiten ist das Bild des analytischen Ich” (II, 142).

Furthermore, the passage centers on various meanings of the word “*unvermerkt*.” The signifying-I cannot intellectually access schemata, as they stem from the imagination. Their application therefore go “unnoticed.” The portrait only mirrors what the structural confines of the I's imagination are able to project of themselves, where the I “adds nothing” of its own genius to the canvas of language. The portrait displays nothing that is not already schematic, or contained within language itself, precisely because the portrait is its own schema, both figuratively and literally.

It follows that the I's so-called “will” to determine the shapes and contours of schemata on the canvas of language is a figure of speech. The I is only a passive medium through which the mirror-image of language is projected. The sign, thus, cannot be said to be of the I's willful making. I therefore insist that the solution to Novalis's convoluted psychologism surrounding the “will” of the signifying-agent is to interpret the intentionality of the sign as a stand-in for language itself. Language in-and-of itself directs its awareness in its own image – language alone, not the signifying-I, nor even Novalis himself, amounts to the true genius of the “self-portrait artist” of its own image.

## VII

It follows from the interpretation I present in this chapter that the origin of signs is *autonomous*. The sign is principally determined by the “laws” of the sign itself, independent of whatever our abilities for communication may entail. For Novalis, we may recall, our use of language represents itself the symbolic designation of a second-order language, or the language of the “original schema.” The language of the “original schema” is essentially a form of abstract semantics that mediates the imagination's formative powers to visually create signs and the understanding's intellectual ability to apprehend them as signifieds. Symbolic representation hence entails a twofold-reflexive notion of representation [*Darstellung*]: the term itself represents the formative power of the imagination to originate signs, as well as the theoretical rules of the semiotic system in and through which the imagination represents semantic meaning in the signified. Like Fichte, Novalis attributes the origin of linguistic communication to human cognition, namely, the imagination and the understanding – unlike Fichte, Novalis attributes the origin of signs to the semioticity of the I (*das Bezeichnende [Ich]*).

Having rejected Fichte's theory of language acquisition through “cultural refinement,” Novalis revisits Fichte's stupefaction at our ability to communicate effectively using arbitrary designations for things. Namely, how are we able to communicate meaning, or a sign's arbitrary relation to its signified, without prior agreement on what the sign's designation is? Novalis thus refers to communication as seemingly “accidental, miraculous.” I attempted to explain Novalis's shift from *der Bezeichnende [Mensch]* to *das Bezeichnende [Ich]* in fragment #11 at this critical juncture. I proposed that *der Bezeichnende [Mensch]* should be translated as “signifying-agent,” whereas *das Bezeichnende [Ich]* should be translated as “signifying-I.” *Das*

*Bezeichnende* [*Ich*] is no human person who partakes in symbolic communication, but signals rather a philosophical subject. As the linguistic entity that mediates the sign's relation to the signified, it denotes the semiotic abstraction of the signifying-agent in all instances of sign production and semantic exchange. Explicitly, and most importantly, Novalis equates this term with the “original schema” of language (II, 109-110).

I wish to emphatically state that I am most grateful to Martha Helfer and Gabriele Rommel for this insight with respect to Novalis's idiosyncratic grammatical gender designations. I believe this to be the most important insight of the present chapter. The translation I propose not only revises various translations of fragment #11 in the secondary literature, but more importantly, it affords one a more philosophically accurate understanding of Novalis's theory of the sign. It follows conclusively from the translation I offer that fragment #11 represents Novalis's theoretical application of Fichte's self-same definition of the I unto language. The implications of this approach to semiotics, I argue, firmly amounts to a theory of the autonomy of the sign.

I therefore respectfully disagree with Jane Kneller, Elizabeth Mittman, and Mary R. Strand, for whom *das Bezeichnende* “refer[s] to the sign itself as signifying thing, as opposed to the agent's act of signification” (See Kneller, 9, footnote #5). I likewise disagree with von Molnár's translation because, as I detail in the Introduction of the present study, he speciously conflates the term with Novalis's “basic schema” according to the nomenclature of his own interpretation in fragment #1. This lapse leads von Molnár to the false conclusion that, for Novalis, the autonomy of language is subordinate to the moral autonomy of the artistic subject. Finally, I disagree with the notion that signs are born of necessity for the purpose of communication “among agents of semiotic activity,” as O'Brien interprets, much less among “primitive cultures,” as is the case in Fichte's essay on the origin of language (O'Brien, 101; Fichte, “Ursprung,” 91).

On the basis of second-order structures innate to language itself, or schemata, Novalis initially writes that first-order symbolic representation extends from the imagination of the “first” signifying-agent to the immediate understanding of the “second” – the “first” and the “second” I believe are themselves arbitrary designations. Unequivocal relations among signs and signifieds that allow for effective communication are formed, as it were, simultaneously albeit independently among those who partake in communication. On Novalis's behalf, I would solve this first-order problem of arbitrary signification by turning to the implicit role of the imagination. Unequivocal relations among signs and signifieds that allow for effective communication are formed, I would claim, on the basis of the universal validity of the imagination. Vis-à-vis a mutual self-recognition of each others' ability for linguistic schematization, signifying-agents reciprocally intuit the same schemata. For von Molnár, in similar albeit less clear-cut terms, when Novalis speaks of “free necessity,” “he indicates primarily that an arbitrarily chosen sign derives its significance not from the thing to which it refers, but from the same source that lets us endow our actions with meaning we expect others to share” (*Romantic Vision*, 41). Novalis never provides either of these answers verbatim, but I believe my own to be valid based on Novalis's pronouncement that the “second” signifying-I is able to effectively communicate with the “first” on the basis of what the “first” is able to “see in itself” (II, 110). In addition, I cite fragment #567 from his same remarks on Fichte:

Die Fichtische Philosophie ist eine Aufforderung zur Selbstthätigkeit – ich kann keinem etwas erklären von Grund aus, als daß ich ihn auf sich selbst verweise, daß ich ihn dieselbe Handlung zu thun heiße, durch die ich mir etwas erklärt habe. Philosophiren kann ich jemand lehren, indem ich ihn lehre, es eben so zu machen, wie *ich* – Indem er thut, was ich thue, ist er das, was ich bin, da, wo ich bin. (II, 271).

Similarly, absent from Novalis's theory of communication is a theory of how the schema is brought to ontological realization in the visual formation of the sign – the semantic

meaning of which is only subsequently carried over unto the signified. If I am correct that the imagination is what closes this gap in Novalis's theory, it is worth highlighting that the imagination acts here autonomously. Since schemata have no bearing on the visual composition of the sign as such, but rather only mediate the imagination's formative powers, presumably, the imagination creates signs in conformity to "laws" of its own determination.

On the basis of language's second-order structures stemming from language itself, or schemata, Novalis later writes that first-order symbolic representation carries over from the imagination of the "first" *signifying-I* to the immediate understanding of the "second" [*signifying-I*]. Unequivocal relations among signs and signifieds that allow for effective communication are in this way formed, not on the basis of the universal validity of the imagination, but more abstractly, on the basis of the sameness and otherness that defines the I as both the object and the subject of its own reflection: "Ich bin relatives Subject, Object, Anschauung, wenn ich etwas von mir prädicire – aber absolutes Subject zugleich, indem ich auch prädicire – Ich bin thätig und leidend zugleich – wie Object und Subject" (fragment #233, II, 176). When Novalis thus writes that the "original schema" stands in a reciprocal relation to itself, he firmly associates this schema with the I as the rule of its own definition. It is indeed assumed, after all, that the "original schema" accounts for the production of all schemata in language including itself. The necessity according to which the sign and the I *must* correspond schematically is already established from the outset of his remarks on Fichte in fragment #1: "Zeichen – ein bestimmtes für ein gleichförmig bestimmendes – dieses gleichförmig bestimmende *muß* eigentlich durchaus unmittelbar das mitgetheilte Zeichen durch eben die Bewegungen bestimmen, wie ich – Frey und doch so wie ich" (my emphasis, fragment #1, 104). It is worth noting that this correspondence is initially made possible by the "productive

imagination”: “Frey seyn ist die Tendenz des Ich – das Vermögen frey zu seyn ist die productive Imagination [...] Ichheit oder productive Imaginationskraft” (fragment #555, II, 266). To use Novalis's phrase, by dint of a “free necessity,” the sign freely determines the conditions of its own semantic reception in the signified in following with the self-same definition of the I: “Als Grund alles Bestimmens für das Ich, oder aller *Form* ist es mithin Grund seiner eignen Bestimmung, oder Form. Kürzer: es ist eine selbstständige Bestimmung des Gehalts – damit hat es *sich* selbst *alle* Bestimmung gegeben” (II, 104). Later, Novalis reversely applies this signature phrase of fragment #11 to the I itself: “Freyes und nothwendiges Ich” (fragment #294, II, 294). “Ich ist Handlung und Produkt zugleich,” what leads Novalis to wonder, “Kann ich ein Schema für mich suchen, da ich das Schematisierende bin?” (fragment #294, II, 294; fragment #469, II, 252). Conversely stated, like the sign itself, the I reflects on the I as the autonomous object of its own reflection as a form of “free necessity,” or “freely imposed legislation,” to use the Kantian equivalent, via the imagination. In his remarks from fragment #466, Novalis writes that “Unser Gemüth ist durchaus schematisch,” which conveys that our mental disposition, no less concerning the imagination, is schematic from the reciprocal perspective of both language and selfhood (II, 250).

At the limits of his analysis in fragment #11, Novalis struggles to explain how the sign originates from the “will” of the signifying-I. Only much later he writes, “Wollen und Vorstellen sind Wechselbestimmungen – das Ich ist nicht anders, als Wollen und Vorstellen” (fragment #294, II, 294). On behalf of Novalis's inquiry, I would argue that signs originate from the phenomenological intentionality of language in relation to itself.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Much like the “will” of the artwork according to Moritz, language elicits our reception of its ideal meaning in conformity to rules of its own design by the powers of the imagination.

Recognizing the impossibility of a formal, self-same definition of language, Novalis reflexively relies on poetry in order to define the symbolic origin of the sign. Notwithstanding that the secondary literature neglects the passage in fragment #11 where Novalis names the schema the “self-portrait” of the signifying-subject, I find this desultory remark to be the culmination of his theoretical analysis. To briefly recapitulate, the schema is likened to a painting on the canvas of language. Accordingly, the “second” signifying-I is able to effectively communicate with the “first” on the basis of what the “first” is able to “see” in itself (II, 110). As I interpret this latter remark, the sameness and otherness that defines the signifying-I as both the object and subject of its own reflection mirrors, literally, the relation between the “first” and the “second” signifying-I in language. The “original schema” of language and the schema of the “I” act effectively thus as reciprocal effects of each other: “Nachzuholen möchte noch seyn – daß die Urhandlung mit sich selbst in Wechselwirkung steht” (fragment #25, II, 122). Here, the internally mediating role of the imagination cannot be overstated: “Die Einbildungskraft ist das verbindende Mittgleid – die Synthese – die *Wechselkraft*” (fragment #247, II, 186). But to render the imagination's role here into even sharper relief still,

Das Ich scheint im Widerspruch zu stehn, wenn man die Natur seiner Wirksamkeit die Thätigkeit der produktiven Imagination nicht kennt, indem die Erreichung seines Zwecks gleichsam durch das gewählte Mittel zu vereiteln scheint – aber eben dadurch handelt es sich selbst in Uebereinstimmung, consequent möchte ich sagen, es muß so, vermöge seiner Natur, agiren – nemlich weil es nichts ist als ein *Schweben* etc. und so gerade allein nur hervorbringt, und hervorbringen kann, was es hervorbringen sucht (fragment #556, II, 267).

The “hovering” of the imagination stands in a “lawful” reciprocal relation to the concept of “law” itself: “Freyheit bezeichnet den Zustand der *schwebenden* Einbildungskraft./ Gesetz muß Produkt der *Freyheit* seyn” (fragment #249, II, 188).

To conclude, Novalis not only abstracts our human capacity for communication into a semiotic process. At his most radical, Novalis abstracts *language itself* into a

reflexive semiotic process, whereby the “original schema” of language becomes a kind of allegory of language's own specular reflection – a visual representation of language itself. Wishing to augment this conclusion, the present chapter perceives Novalis's most compelling philosophical insight in fragment #11 to be that the Jena Romantic concept of aesthetic autonomy naturally adheres to the fundamental semiotic structures of language. As a “law onto itself” of its own natural accord, language is the product of its own artistic genius. The following chapter explores the reciprocal relation between semiotics and nature, as well as the lawfulness of the former that gives form to the latter. If the laws of semiotics should reflect the fundamental structure of nature in its conformity to law, it follows that nature must fundamentally be regarded as the product of its own artistic genius no less. Chapter II explores the implications of this thesis.

## Chapter II

“Of Law and Nature”

*A Study of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs”*

Die Natur zeugt, der Geist macht.  
Il est beaucoup plus commode d'être fait, que de se faire lui même.

“Das Allgemeine Brouillon”

The doctrine of nature and her conformity to law becomes the principal source of intellectual confluence between German-speaking artists and natural scientists at the close of the eighteenth century.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Throughout the Electorate of Saxony, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Margraviate of Baden, *Naturphilosophie* and Romanticism exert great influence over academic life and the joint pursuit of a unified theory of the natural world. As tandem developments, the preeminent model of speculative inquiry and the dominant paradigm of artistic activity coalesce under the guise of a universal Romantic philosophy. Whereas Newton's mechanical explanation of natural phenomena is preempted by the hylozoism of the *Naturphilosophen*, a concomitant passion for the observational study of nature materializes instead however in the poetry of Heidelberg and Jena Romanticism. In the case of von Arnim and von Görres, or likewise Novalis and the Schlegels, intuitions and principles ordinarily reserved for the empirical investigation of nature become vitally interrelated with matters of aesthetics. The common preoccupation at the heart of these two developments finally concerns the epistemological question, or the conditions of possibility, under which the laws of nature are known to the human mind.

In Novalis's oeuvre of 1798, the doctrine of nature and her conformity to law expressly fall under the domain of his semiotics. A literary fragment from his late notes for a Romantic encyclopedia, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” roundly evinces this assertion: “Die Naturlehre ist nothwendige [...] *Grammatik* – Symbolistik” (#943, III, 450). Novalis understands the doctrine of nature to be a form of grammar, or symbolic order, whose inflections shape and structure the essential nature of language itself. Sometime prior to 1798, pursuant of theoretical insights into the nature of symbolic representation and the symbolic representation of nature, Novalis turns to the mythology of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, Old Germanic runes, and Vedic Sanskrit.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Of special significance to his vested interest in these esoteric symbols is the mystical convergence of their verbal and visual elements into a higher form of language. Novalis shows himself to be captivated in an early fragment of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon” by a form of “grammatical mysticism” he speculates lies at the foundation of the original philological distinction between speech and writing: “Überall liegt eine grammatische Mystik, wie mir scheint zum Grunde – die sehr leicht das erste Erstaunen über *Sprache* und *Schrift* erregen konnte. (Die wilden Völker halten die Schrift noch jetzt für Zauberey.) Hang zum Wunderbaren und Geheimnißvollen ist nichts als Streben – nach *unsinnlichen* – *geistigen* Reitz” (#138, III, 267). Galvanized by a kind of proto-impressionist view of language, his literary effusions come to imbue the pictorial aspects of these occult symbols with divine secrets, paradoxes, fragmentary visions, and ever higher symbolic meaning. To the Jena Romantics, these numinous features signal themselves the inscriptions of a so-called “Book of Nature” that actually predates the Jena Romantic cultural imaginary to the times of Galileo Galilei.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The “language of nature,” as it became known, conveys to them at last an immanent reflection of the elusive transcendental nature of the symbolic order of poetry and scientific knowledge alike.

In the previous chapter, I sought to demonstrate that at the most elementary level of Novalis's aesthetic program the sign represents a work of art created in accordance to laws of its own making; stated otherwise, the sign's artistic genius accords of its own nature with the autonomy of Romantic art. Following this line of inquiry, the present chapter takes the poetic autonomy of the sign to be a microcosmic reflection of the poetic autonomy of nature in Novalis's "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" of 1798. Novalis's first work of literary fiction mainly tells the story of a youthful group of apprentices bound by the wisdom of an elderly sage with a view to learning the art of interpreting the "language of nature." In reality, the work is a work a meta-fiction, or meta-literature, whose elated, rhapsodic style depicts nature's terrain as a "wondrous script" written in harmony with laws of her own artistic production. Nature, as it were, becomes the impassioned author of her own literary effusions in the narrative of which she is the main rhetorical figure. The imaginative transport of the work autonomously enacts, thus, its own concept of literary interpretation: the art of interpreting "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" symbolizes a mode of literary interpretation that represents the art of interpreting the "Book of Nature" itself. Where the apprentices must learn the art of interpreting nature as a text that beckons an ever higher understanding of her laws and other wondrous mysteries, the text of "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" compels its reader in equal measure to develop ever more critical interpretations of its own inscrutable meaning. I thus conclude that "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" represents an allegory of the elusive transcendental nature of Romantic poetry as itself an intrinsic mode of literary interpretation.

Despite the critical disregard with which scholars have viewed the work as the fledgling cry of a literary novice, an inspired yet immature prelude to Novalis's superior 1799 novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the philosophical and literary complexity of the work belie this preconception.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The uncertain role of language as mediator between

humankind and nature, which I agree with Kenneth S. Calhoon is the central question at stake in the work, reveals a continuity in connection to Novalis's earlier writings on language prior to 1798. In my own estimation, the work culminates precisely the trajectory of Novalis's philosophical prepossession with the nature of literary language in the form of a literary narrative about the language of nature.

## I

In the section that follows, I wish to introduce the literary motif of the “language of nature” in “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs” within the philosophical ambit of Novalis's epistemological writings on nature. Concurrent with Novalis's encyclopedic endeavor to consummate the repertoire of a Romantic theory of knowledge in “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” his philosophical fragments of 1798 to mid-1800 contemplate the laws of nature from the vantage point of the poetic imagination. Contingent, discontinuous, irregular, as opposed to causal, continuous, and orderly, the laws that form the metaphysical realm of objects of human experience are firsthand products of the poetic imagination; put in another way, the poetic imagination gives form, or poetic expression, to the appearance of objects that form our experience of the natural world. For Novalis, it is the faculty of the mind that predicates our rudimentary knowledge of the natural sciences and all other subsequent divisions of human knowledge accordingly.

Essentially, Novalis holds what one may refer to as a “constructivist” or “intuitionist” view of nature. In fragment #607 of his notes from mid-1800, he postulates, “Die Natur fängt, um mich so auszudrücken, mit dem Abstrakten an. Der Grund der Natur, ist, wie Mathematik durchaus notwendige Hypothese” (III, 667). In the field of mathematics, “constructivism” is the philosophical position according to which only

constructive proofs, and entities demonstrable by them, are admissible, indicating that mathematics possesses no ontological status of its own. According to the “intuitionist school” of mathematics founded by renowned Dutch mathematician Luitzen Egbertus Jan Brouwer, more specifically, mathematics is considered to be purely the result of the constructive mental activity of human beings, as opposed to the discovery of fundamental principles claimed to exist in an objective reality independent of human existence. Logic and mathematics are not considered analytic activities wherein deep properties of objective reality are revealed and applied, but are instead considered to be an application of internally consistent methods used to realize ever more complex mental constructs. Exactly as Novalis describes, mathematics, as do the laws of nature, represent a purely hypothetical activity of the mind relative to our empirical observance of the natural world.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

“Nature,” as I understand Novalis, is a conglomerate of figments of the poetic imagination that harmonize perfectly, albeit mysteriously, with the phenomenal reality of physical objects. The nature of poetic intuition, as a linguistic construct of itself, represents an altogether “other” language in itself. As the poetic imagination comes to inwardly reflect on the ineffable source of its own being, it learns of an infinite semiotics within. To wit, the “language of nature” is the fictional counterpoint of the poetic imagination as the external object of the poetic imagination's own internal act of self-reflection. The poetic imagination excogitates nature and her own imaginative gifts as its ownmost “other,” whereupon “nature” mirrors the poetic imagination in her power to engender herself through language. For Novalis, the “nature” of language and the “language” of nature convey one and the same intuition. Ultimately, Novalis's epistemology and metaphysics of nature align with one another of their own philosophical complexion, being one and the same at their most elementary form of

representation to the human mind, videlicet, the autonomy of Romantic art. Of the same lawful order of reflexivity according to which the “original schema” of language forms the poetic imagination, “nature” represents a literary creation of her own poetic genius.

The earliest collection of Novalis's philosophical musings on nature are first made known in an epistle to August Wilhelm Schlegel dated February 24<sup>th</sup> of 1798: “Ich habe noch einige Bogen logologische Fragmente, Poëticismen, und einen Anfang, unter dem Titel, der Lehrling zu Saïs – ebenfalls Fragmente – nur alle in Beziehung auf Natur” (IV, 252).<sup>lxxxix</sup> In his correspondence with Schlegel, Novalis plainly states his prospective aspiration to aestheticize all branches of scientific knowledge as follows: “Künftig treib ich nichts, als Poësie – die Wissenschaften müssen alle poëtisirt werden – von dieser realen, wissenschaftlichen Poësie hoff ich recht viel mit Ihnen zu reden” (Ibid.). A year to the date of his missive, sometime in February of 1799, a fragment from “Das Allgemeine Brouillon” concisely captures the triumphant conclusion of their exchange: “Der *Poët* versteht die Natur besser, wie der wissenschaftliche Kopf” (fragment #1093, III, 468). As I interpret the passage, epistemologically considered, the reality of nature is mediated by the poetic sensibilities of her artful observers. As Romantic poetry herself, in other words, nature elicits the idealization of her lyric grandeur in a language that harmonizes with our own poetic intuitions of her wondrous forms.

Besides demonstrating once more the influence of Moritz's aesthetic writings on Novalis, Novalis's epistemology is implicitly directed against the critical philosophy of the First Critique.<sup>xc</sup> Despite evidence that Novalis studied Kant while in Freiberg in 1798, of course, one can only at best surmise what may have gripped Novalis's philosophical interests while reading Kant. This being said, nonetheless, I am of the opinion that a certain “autonomy of the understanding,” as I refer to it, appears to have keenly influenced his aesthetic writings on nature during this vital intellectual period of his life.

According to Kantian epistemology, the laws of nature are themselves, strictly speaking, firsthand products of the understanding. Kant expounds said thesis in the first book of the first division of “Die transcendente Analytik” as follows:

Die Ordnung und Regelmäßigkeit also an den Erscheinungen, die wir Natur nennen, bringen wir selbst hinein, und würden sie auch nicht darin finden können, hätten wir sie nicht, oder die Natur unseres Gemüts ursprünglich hineingelegt. Denn diese Natureinheit soll eine notwendige, d.i. a priori gewisse Einheit der Verknüpfung der Erscheinungen sein. Wie sollten wir aber wohl a priori eine synthetische Einheit auf die Bahn bringen können, wären nicht in den ursprünglichen Erkenntnisquellen unseres Gemüts subjektive Gründe solcher Einheit a priori enthalten, und wären diese subjektiven Bedingungen nicht zugleich objektiv gültig, indem sie die Gründe der Möglichkeit sind, überhaupt ein Objekt in der Erfahrung zu erkennen (125).

“Nature” originates in the measure that the lawfulness of the understanding acts in uniformity with the orderliness and regularity that characterizes the form in which natural phenomena appear to our view. To be more exact, the form of the object is contingent on the systematic unity in and through which the understanding uncovers the plenary rules governing the orderliness and regularity of the object at hand. Kant later discusses the synthetic a priori unity of the understanding as the kernel of our apperception, which objectively considered, as he underscores, “grounds the possibility of the object's recognition.” In notes to his “Dialogen” of late 1798, Novalis considers virtually the same question as Kant, namely, “Ob der Naturlehre *eine wahre Einheit* zum Grunde liegt.” (II, 669). In the same vein, Novalis remarks in his “Physikalische Bemerkungen” of late 1799, “Wie der denkende *Experimentator* Gedanken oder Ideen, d.i. Gesetze in der Natur sucht – so sucht der *Philosoph* die Einheit der Gesetze oder des Gedankensystems zu einer reichen Mannichfaltigkeit zu entwickeln” (fragment #344, III, 611). Novalis's Romantic epistemology, in contradistinction to Kant, as I hope to demonstrate in brief, achieves the seamless fusion of the manifold unity of the laws of nature and the manifold unity of the laws of the poetic imagination.

I understand one of Kant's most peculiar insights in the block-quote cited above to

be that the understanding “recognizes” the form of the object as an object of its own reflection. To this point, we should stress that Kant makes no distinction between the appearances of objects that he refers to as “nature” [“die Erscheinungen, die wir Natur nennen”] and the “nature” of our epistemological attitude toward the same [“die Natur unseres Gemüts”]. To speculate with regard to Novalis's reception of Kant, it is as though, according to Kant, the understanding understands itself to be both the subject and the object of the primary origin of nature. Again, to speculate, Novalis instead might suppose that it is the poetic imagination, rather, that imagines itself to be both the subject and the object of the true primary origin of nature. It follows naturally that the metaphysical order of nature ought to be understood, or better, contrariwise, *imagined* in poetic terms stemming from the poetic imagination itself.

In “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs,” a “higher” natural order underlying the realm of appearances springs from the fecund imagination of the First Apprentice as he contemplates the language of nature. While picturing the hieroglyphic inscriptions that decorate the halls and pillars of the temple at Saïs, the First Apprentice remarks in his daydreams, “Mich führt alles in mich selbst zurück [...] so tritt mir alles in ein höher Bild, in eine neue Ordnung [...]” (I, 84). As Novalis himself describes in his own enigmatic prose in the sixteenth fragment of “Blüthenstaub,” the mystery of nature becomes ever more unfathomable in the measure of the poetic imagination's inward turn to self-reflection:

Die Fantasie setzt die künftige Welt entweder in die Höhe, oder in die Tiefe, oder in der Metempsychose zu uns. Wir träumen von Reisen durch das Weltall: ist denn das Weltall nicht in uns? Die Tiefen unsers Geistes kennen wir nicht. – Nach Innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg. In uns, oder nirgends ist die Ewigkeit mit ihren Welten, die Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Die Außenwelt ist die Schattenwelt, sie wirft ihren Schatten in das Lichtreich. Jetzt scheint es uns freylich innerlich so dunkel, einsam, gestaltlos, aber wie ganz anders wird es uns dünken, wenn diese Verfinsterung vorbei, und der Schattenkörper hinweggerückt ist. Wir werden mehr genießen als je, denn unser Geist hat entbehrt. (I, 419)

Epistemologically considered, for Novalis, the inner experience of the world takes primacy over our exterior experience of the world – the visual aspects of natural phenomena, made possible by light, obscure rather than illuminate the paths of the poetic imagination. Formless, free, even secretive, Novalis writes in his notes from the summer and fall of the same year concerning the similarly arbitrary, contingent, and individual character of our inner intuitions of nature: “Jedes Willkührliche, Zufällige, Individuelle kann unser Weltorgan werden. Ein Gesicht, ein Stern, eine Gegend, ein alter Baum, etc. kann Epoke in unserm Innern machen” (#665, III, 684). In my view of the passage, the arbitrary, contingent, and individual character of said natural objects refers to their semiotic attributes. Objects of nature comprise a poetic language in and through which we come to envision transcendental perspectives of nature reflected back onto ourselves: “Was ist die Natur? – ein encyclopaedischer systematischer Index oder Plan unsers Geistes” (#248, II, 583, “Vermischte Fragmente III”). In the end, where the language of poetry penetrates the inner essence of nature, the language of nature penetrates our own inner essence: “Der Sitz der Seele ist da, wo sich Innenwelt und Außenwelt berühren. Wo sie sich durchdringen, ist er in jedem Punkte der Durchdringung” (#19, I, “Blüthenstaub,” 419).

Kant thereafter postulates that the power of the understanding transforms the order and regularity that characterizes the “rules” of scientific evidence and observation into “laws”:

Jetzt können wir ihn [den Verstand] als das Vermögen der Regeln charakterisieren. Sinnlichkeit gibt uns Formen, [...] der Verstand aber Regeln. Dieser ist jederzeit geschäftig, die Erscheinungen in der Absicht durchzuspähen, um an ihnen irgendeine Regel aufzufinden. Regeln, sofern sie objektiv sind, (mithin der Erkenntnis des Gegenstandes notwendig anhängen) heißen Gesetze. (Ibid.)

Kant begs the question of whether the analytic insights afforded by the understanding are

prescriptive of higher metaphysical principles governing nature, or whether the laws of the understanding merely describe nature on the contingent basis of our empirical outlook of the same. Kant addresses the problem of defining “lawfulness” in general, of the concept's own accord with the understanding, as follows:

Ob wir gleich durch Erfahrung viel Gesetze lernen, so sind diese doch nur besondere Bestimmungen noch höherer Gesetze, unter denen die höchsten, (unter welchen andere alle stehen) a priori aus dem Verstande selbst herkommen, und nicht von der Erfahrung entlehnt sind, sondern vielmehr den Erscheinungen ihre Gesetzmäßigkeit verschaffen, und eben dadurch Erfahrung möglich machen müssen. Es ist also der Verstand nicht bloß ein Vermögen, durch Vergleichung der Erscheinungen sich Regeln zu machen: er ist selbst die Gesetzgebung für die Natur, d.i. ohne Verstand würde es überall nicht Natur, d.i. synthetische Einheit des Mannigfaltigen der Erscheinungen nach Regeln geben: denn Erscheinungen können, als solche, nicht außer uns stattfinden, sondern existieren nur in unserer Sinnlichkeit. (125-126)

To my knowledge, Kant is the first philosopher to critically engage the epistemological question at the crux of all scientific approaches to nature around and since 1800, namely, whether the laws of nature are altogether descriptive or prescriptive of the metaphysics of nature. In the next sentence, Kant elucidates that the unity of the apperception, or the unison of the mind's reflexive apprehension of its own inner states, grounds the transcendence of the understanding as the primary form of “legislation” [*“die Gesetzgebung”*] over nature:

Diese aber, als Gegenstand der Erkenntnis in einer Erfahrung, mit allem, was sie enthalten mag, ist nur in der Einheit der Apperzeption möglich. Die Einheit der Apperzeption aber ist der transzendente Grund der notwendigen Gesetzmäßigkeit der Erscheinungen in einer Erfahrung. Eben dieselbe Einheit der Apperzeption in Ansehung eines Mannigfaltigen von Vorstellungen (es nämlich aus einer einzigen zu bestimmen) ist die Regel und das Vermögen dieser Regeln der Verstand. (Ibid.)

Objects of our experience consist of manifold representations that reflect back on the systemic unity of their own appearance. As I understand Kant, the orderliness and the regularity that defines the appearance of the object is the same that defines the systemic unity of the apperception. Otherwise, the unity of the apperception cannot subsume the individual totality of the object under its plenary rules. The formal structure of the

object's appearance and the structure of the systemic unity that facilitates said object's appearance must align harmoniously. From the abstract isomorphism that in turn follows, the sensible appearance of the object operates as though a synecdoche of its own unity in the understanding – the object is the “part” of the understanding that stands for the unity of the understanding as a “whole.” The object mediates the rules of the unity of the apperception that already signal the productivity of the understanding's legislative powers on the object.

As I discuss in the final section of the study at present, Kant's reflections bear significant implications concerning the question for any philosophy of science of how to qualify and subsequently measure fundamental units of life in nature. The relation between the object and the understanding in the human mind may be deemed analogous to the self-enclosed totality of individual organisms as representative of the whole of nature. For Novalis and Goethe, as I later discuss, this is not a problem of the scientific understanding, but rather a question proper for the poetic imagination to speculate upon. Concerning the “language of nature” relative to the greater totality of the systemic unity of Romantic art, the “language of nature” represents a distinct rhetorical class of metonymy, a synecdochical order of visual metaphors, each of which symbolizes the whole of nature with every iteration; as we have seen, products of nature collectively signify a grammar by dint of which the poetic imagination articulates a language that reflects on the nature of its own being. To once again speculate on Novalis's behalf, the “language of nature” essentially represents an internally recursive symbolic order of representation in and through which the poetic imagination and nature become one in Romantic art.

Contrary to Kant, for whom the understanding “legislates” the laws of nature, Novalis understands poetry instead to be the purpose and meaning of philosophy's

“legislation” on the world:

Die Poësie hebt jedes Einzelne durch eine eigenthümliche Verknüpfung mit dem übrigen Ganzen – und wenn die Philosophie durch ihre Gesetzgebung die Welt erst zu dem wirksamen Einfluß der Ideen bereitet, so ist gleichsam Poësie der Schlüssel der Philosophie, ihr Zweck und ihre Bedeutung. (Fragment # 31, II, 533, “Poësie”)

Poetry subsumes the individual, self-enclosed capacity of the understanding to apprehend general relations among particulars, giving philosophy its ultimate purpose and meaning. In Novalis's writings of 1798, the unity of the poetic imagination's manifold expressions in the realm of art supplants the role that the unity of the apperception plays in Kantian epistemology – art, not philosophy, shapes and structures the form of appearances to our view of objects in nature.

Within the bailiwick of Romantic poetry, propositions of science in Novalis's view are only complete after their individual totalities are made to reflect back on the systemic unity that engenders their form in the poetic imagination. Novalis remarks in fragment #17 of his late 1798 “Logologische Fragmente I”: “Die vollendete Form der Wissenschaften muß poëtisch seyn. Jeder Satz muß einen selbständigen Karacter haben – ein selbsverständliches Individuum”(II, 527). Novalis earlier explains in “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” similarly, “Eine Wissenschaft ist vollendet, 1. wenn sie auf alles angewandt ist – 2. wenn alles auf sie angewandt ist – 3. Wenn sie, als absolute Totalitaet, als Universum betrachtet – *sich selbst* als absolutes Individuum mit allen übrigen Wissenschaften und Künsten, als relatives Individuen, untergeordnet wird” (fragment #176, III, 272). “Die eigentliche Naturlehre [...] ist [...] eine gemengte Wissenschaft,” Novalis thus concludes in fragment #816 of the same work (III, 428).

In the pursuit of a Romantic doctrine of nature that unfolds in unison with nature herself, Novalis subsumes specified laws of scientific knowledge under the rubric of universal poetic norms. One of the finest examples of this literary technique relates to

Antoine Lavoisier's law of conservation of mass and energy from his 1789 *Elementary Treatise on Chemistry* [*Traité élémentaire de chimie*]. In his groundbreaking treatise, Lavoisier sets his most time-honored statement to print: “Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed” [*Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout se transforme*]. Novalis's physics allude to Lavoisier in fragment #934 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”: “Wir werden erst Physiker werden, wenn wir *imaginative* – Stoffe und Kräfte zum regulativen Maßstab der Naturstoffe und Kräfte machen” (III, 448). Novalis transforms Lavoisier's law by crafting the productivity of the imagination into the regulative principle of physical nature as the measure of its matter and energy. To Novalis, the poetic imagination forms the very substance of all living forms: “Wenn das Leben wirklich die höchste Substanz ist – so kann es nur durch die vollendete Bearbeitung aller einzelnen physicalischen Glieder – eine Erklärung hoffen. [...] Die vollendete Physik wird die universelle Lebenskunstlehre seyn” (fragment #596, III, 372, Ibid.). Wishing to elevate the epistemological status of Romantic art, in other words, Novalis reenvisioned the laws that form human experience under the vanguard of Romantic poetry.

Diametrically opposed to Kantian epistemology, as a law of its own accord, for Novalis, nature originates in quasi-mathematical proportion to the productivity of the poetic imagination. Indeed, like a geometrical arc equaling a right angle when added to a complementary arc, or the musical interval that complements an octave, Novalis confirms this suggestion in the earliest fragments of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”: “Die Kunst ist das Compliment der Natur” (fragment #248, III, 284). To be precise, it is the synthetic powers of the poetic imagination that complement the lawfulness of nature: “Gesetze sind das *Complement mangelhafter Naturen* und Wesen, daher synthetisch” (fragments #250, III, 284). Romantic art itself complements nature herself, to be more precise; Novalis rephrases several fragments later: “Die Kunst ist die *complementarische* Natur”

(fragment #583, III, 368). In his 1798 essay on Goethe, Romantic art finally becomes the foremost poetic expression of the essential nature of nature: “Natur soll Kunst und Kunst 2te Natur werden” (fragment #468, II, 646, “Über Goethe”). Roughly two years thereafter, Novalis declares, “Einst soll keine Natur mehr seyn – In eine Geisterwelt soll sie allmählich übergehn” (fragment #291, III, 601, “Physikalische Bemerkungen”). For Novalis, art transforms nature into the appearance of a “higher,” second-order metaphysics of “spirit” [“*Geisterwelt*”] representing a more “truthful” epistemological order still in poetry: “Die Poësie ist das ächt absolut Reelle. Dies ist Kern meiner Philosophie. Je poetischer, je wahrer,” he affirms (fragment #473, II, 647, “Über Goethe”).<sup>xci</sup> The chapter that follows on “Monolog” explores the implications of this reading at length in connection to Novalis's concept of *Die Weltseele* – the notion that Romantic poetry is the conduit of the “soul” of the world.

Novalis's use of figurative language borrowed from the field of botany with the word “*Kern*” in the ultimate passage cited is especially noteworthy. The commingling of branches of scientific knowledge using rhetorical language represents Novalis's efforts to poeticize a variety of scientific nomenclatures throughout early 1798 to mid-1800.<sup>xcii</sup> The fragment Novalis refers to in his epistolary correspondence with Schlegel bearing the title, “Der Lehrling zu Saïs,” for instance, reads in-full, “Der geognostische Streit der Vulkanisten und Neptunisten ist eigentlich der Streit: Ob die Erde sthenisch oder asthenisch debütirt habe” (I, 110). Incidentally, the fragment is one of two extant fragments that remain in possession of the *Freies Deutsches Hochstift* as part of the “Paralipomena” to the lost manuscript of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs.” “Neptunism,” in any event, refers to the superseded scientific theory first proposed by Abraham Gottlob Werner, Novalis's mentor while in Freiberg, which held that inorganic material, including stones and other rock formations, emerge from the crystallization of minerals found in

seawater. Humorously speculating whether the debut of the earth is sthenic in scientific origin, Novalis applies a diagnosis for diseases characterized by the excessive accumulation of “excitability” according to John Brown's 1788 *The Elements of Medicine* [*Elementa medicinae Brunonis*]. As Novalis's romantization of geology inches into Brown's medical discourse, the empirical question of determining the earth's natural origin becomes an epistemological problem only the poet can “cure”: “Poësie ist die große Kunst der Konstruktion der transzendentalen Gesundheit. Der Poët ist also der transzendente Arzt” (fragment #42, II, 535, “Logologische Fragmente II”). In fragment #606 of his mid-1800 notes, Novalis makes clear that he is referring here to himself: “Kranckheiten sind gewiß ein *höchst wichtiger Gegenstand der Menschheit*, da ihrer so unzählig sind und jeder Mensch so viel mit ihnen zu kämpfen hat. Noch kennnen wir nur sehr unvollkommen die Kunst sie zu benutzen. [...] Wie wenn ich Profet diese Kunst werden sollte?” (III, 667). In following with this pronouncement, the task of the poet is thus to “heal the wounds” that the understanding inflicts upon our knowledge of nature: “Poësie heilt die Wunden, die der Verstand schlägt” (fragment #572, III, 653, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”).

One may wish to hold Novalis accountable to the implication that the aestheticization of the natural sciences inversely reflects the transformation of poetry into a natural science itself. As the theoretical equivalent to a “law” of natural science, the nature of poetry ought to concern universal claims about objects of nature that hold true under stipulated empiric conditions. Ostensibly, it follows that the poet should find himself under the obligation to subsume every empirical object of the natural world under the plenary rules of his own poetic exertions. Consistent with the theoretical ramifications of his own Romantic epistemology, Novalis speculates curiously whether the natural science of chemistry may be transformed itself into art: “Kann die Chymie Kunst

werden? Hauptfrage” (fragment #77, III, 253, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”). In his slightly earlier notes on chemistry from mid-1798, Novalis conversely asks whether the empirical methods of chemistry are in and of themselves applicable to art: “Wenn man die Kunst zu azotiren, zu hydrogeniren und Carbonisiren so gut nachzumachen wüßte, wie das Säuren, so hätten wir vielleicht die Kunst, lebendige Wesen zu machen, in unsrer Gewalt” (III, 40, “Chymische Hefte”).

Even prior to the aesthetic realization of nature in the demesne of the poetic imagination, for Novalis, objects of empirical inquiry already signal poetic expressions in-themselves. Elsewhere, Novalis draws the rather perplexing distinction between “Naturpoësie” and “Kunstpoësie,” the former of which represents the “true” origin of nature: “Der ächte Anfang ist NaturPoësie. Das Ende ist der 2te Anfang – und ist KunstPoësie” (fragment #50, II, 536, “Poësie”). A few months later, Novalis elaborates in greater detail, “Die Naturpoësie ist wohl der eigentliche Gegenstand der Kunstpoësie – und die Äußerlichkeit der poëtischen Rede scheinen sonderbare Formeln ähnlicher Verhältnisse, sinnbildliche Zeichen des *Poëtischen* an den Erscheinungen zu seyn” (fragment #570, III, 652, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”). Said pronouncements, to my view, deal with the manner in which the exteriority of poetic language and the visual appearance of natural phenomena represent the same symbolic order in nature. Harkening back to Fichte and his account of “first” languages, “Naturpoësie” may refer to the phenomenal character of signs bearing a “natural resemblance” [*“natürliche Ähnlichkeit”*] to their visual counterparts in nature. As a case in point, according to Sir Alan Gardiner's authoritative compilation of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, the phonogram of the letter “J” derives from the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph for “reed,” the pictograph of which visually resembles a species of reed mace ambatch of the cattail genus endemic to the river banks of the Nile River.

I believe Novalis designates “Naturpoësie” as the object of “Kunstpoësie” on the basis of the latter’s arbitrary designation of the former. In “Kunstpoësie,” or “poetry proper,” as I interpret Novalis, arbitrary images of nature form the language of Romantic poetry much in the same fashion that arbitrary visual appearances of natural phenomena form the metaphysical laws of the natural sciences. For instance, the arbitrary images of symbols that collectively designate our logographic Latin alphabets in English and German, in a philosophical sense, could be deemed analogous to the arbitrary colors of a spectrum. To the color-blind natural scientist, the continuum of color that is formed when a beam of white light is dispersed, as by passage through a prism, so that its component wavelengths are arranged in order, signifies a contingent set of metaphysical laws that fail to prescribe the phenomenal character of light from an optical standpoint.<sup>xciii</sup> Novalis’s epistemological insight, as I understand it, is that poetic language is inherently poetic of its own visual appearance as a natural phenomenon of the inherently arbitrary symbolic order of the laws of nature.

One may similarly wish to hold Novalis accountable to the implication that the aestheticization of the laws of nature likewise ought to concern moral laws of the kind rationalist philosophers believe derive from nature as opposed to social mores. Once again concordant with the theoretical ramifications of his Romantic epistemology, Novalis actually situates the aesthetic education of our moral sentiments at the helm of the highest of all doctrines of knowledge: “Natur und Kunst werden in einer höhern *Wissenschaft* – (der *moralischen Bildungslehre*) vereinigt” (fragment #76, III, 253, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”); elsewhere, Novalis declares, “Der ächt moralische Mensch ist Dichter” (fragment #49, II, 536, “Poësie”). Morality even mediates nature and poetry as reciprocal products of their appearance and representation in the poetic imagination: “Natur und Kunst werden durch Moralitaet gegenseitig armirt ins undendliche” (fragment

#76, III, 253, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”). For Novalis, the poet is the moral subject that bridges the gap between our aesthetic experience and theoretical knowledge of nature:

“Weisheit ist moralische Wissenschaft und Kunst” (fragment #277, III, 289, Ibid.)

According to his notes from the summer and fall of 1800, Novalis finally concludes of morality and nature, “Das System der Moral muß System der Natur werden” (fragment #601, III, 662).

To conclude, Romantic poetry more veraciously captures the philosophical essence of nature than the empirical laws of the natural sciences or the rational laws of moral philosophy because it represents nature as the ingenious subject and the artful object of her own scientific knowledge and moral principles. Nature and poetry are reciprocal products of their appearance and representation in the poetic imagination, let us emphasize. Ultimately, the distinction between nature and poetry in Novalis becomes untenable, especially to the poet, for whom his own sensibilities already express nature's artistic instincts:

Die Natur hat Kunstinstinkt – daher ist es Geschwätz, wenn man Natur und Kunst unterscheiden will. Beym Dichter sind sie höchstens dadurch verschieden, daß sie durchaus verständig und nicht leidenschaftlich sind, welches sie von denjenigen Menschen unterscheidet – die aus Affekt unwillkürlich musicalisch poetische oder überhaupt interessante Erscheinungen werden. (Fragment #554, III, 650, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”)

In the absence of any distinction between poetry and nature, our own poetic instincts become a symbolic representation of the artistic genius of nature herself.

Novalis objects to Kant because if nature were wholly apprehensible to our understanding, as Kant claimed, we should see no need to philosophically contemplate the metaphysics of nature to begin with. Novalis reasons, “Sollte die Natur an sich *verständlich* seyn – gar keines Commentars bedürftig – bloße *Beschreibung* – reine Erzählung hinlänglich” (fragment #122, III, 573, “Aufzeichnungen von Juni bis

Dezember 1799"). Analytic insights afforded by scientific observation via the understanding at best describe nature's metaphysical principles. Laws of nature that derive from conventional scientific experiments hence derive from "nothing," strictly speaking: "Die allegemeinen Naturgesetze sind aus dem experimentiren mit Nichts entstanden" (fragment #634, III, 383, "Das Allgemeine Brouillon"). "Laws of nature" are ultimately descriptive, not prescriptive of the essential nature of nature; such laws define nature on the contingent basis of solipsistic insights that fail to reflect on the merits of the poetic imagination's boundless sensibilities: "Zum Experimentiren gehört *Naturgenie*, d. ist, wunderartige Fähigkeit den Sinn der Natur zu treffen – und in ihrem Geiste zu handeln. Der ächte Beobachter ist *Künstler* – er *ahndet* das *Bedeutende* und weiß aus dem seltsamen, vorüberstreichenden Gemisch von Erscheinungen die Wichtigen herauszufühlen," writes Novalis in his "Medizinisch-naturwissenschaftliche Studien" of 1798-1799 (III, 179). For Novalis, the ideal "artful observer" situates the noumenal realm of our apperception at the fountainhead of nature, where only Romantic poetry may unveil the transcendental realm from which the linguistic productivity of nature emerges.

## II

The enigma of the language of nature forms the central literary motif of "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" from the outset. The first paragraph of the work reads as follows:

Mannichfache Wege gehen die Menschen. Wer sie verfolgt und vergleicht, wird wunderliche Figuren entstehen sehn; Figuren, die zu jener großen Chifferschrift zu gehören scheinen, die man überall, auf Flügeln, Eierschalen, in Wolken, im Schnee, in Krystallen und in Steinbildungen, auf gefrierenden Wassern, im Innern und Äußern der Gebirge, der Pflanzen, der Thiere, der Menschen, in den Lichtern des Himmels, auf berührten und gestrichenen Scheiben von Pech und Glas, in den Feilspänen um den Magnet her, und sonderbaren Conjecturen des Zufalls, erblickt. In ihnen ahndet man den Schlüssel dieser Wunderschrift, die Sprachlehre derselben; allein die Ahndung will sich selbst in keine feste Formen fügen, und scheint kein höherer Schlüssel werden zu wollen.

Ein Alcahest scheint über die Sinne der Menschen ausgegossen zu seyn. Nur augenblicklich scheinen ihre Wünsche, ihre Gedanken sich zu verdichten. So entstehen ihre Ahnungen, aber nach kurzen Zeiten schwimmt alles wieder, wie vorher, vor ihren Blicken. (79)

There are many paths here from which to begin the task of literary interpretation. We may begin by first addressing the question of narrative form in the passage cited above. The voice of the narration takes the form of an omniscient third-person observer, whose interior monologue, characterized by associative leaps in thought, simultaneously impresses upon the reader the seemingly subjective reflections of a first-person observer within the diegetic frame of the narrative. Literary studies commonly refer to this technique as the use of free indirect discourse [*“erlebte Rede”*], namely, the manner in which an author conveys a character's first-person perspective through the voice of a third-person limited narrator, or conversely, when a character speaks in language that emulates the voice of an omniscient third-person narrator. Novalis subtly complicates the task of the interpreter, where the narration shifts to direct-speech from a first-person perspective in the paragraph that follows. The First Apprentice remarks,

Von weitem hört' ich sagen: die Unverständlichkeit sey Folge nur des Unverstandes; dieser suche, was er habe, und also niemals weiter finden könnte. Man verstehe die Sprache nicht, weil sich die Sprache selber nicht verstehe, nicht verstehen wolle; die ächte Sanscrit spräche, um zu sprechen, weil Sprechen ihre Lust und ihr Wesen sey. (79)

The pronouncement lends itself to several possibilities against the backdrop of the opening paragraph. The First Apprentice becomes a more adept interpreter of the ciphered language of nature only after his teacher allows him to sleep in the temple of Isis much later in Part II of the narrative. It is therefore possible, albeit improbable, that the wisdom imparted in the introduction of the work is sourced in the voice of the First Apprentice. This consideration belies the seamless continuity that appears to exist, moreover, between the first and second paragraph in the absence of quotation marks. Causing no less confusion, the direct speech of the First Apprentice takes the form of free

indirect discourse itself as he comments on the indirect speech of an unknown speaking subject from whom he acquires knowledge of “the incomprehensible.” In the third paragraph, it likewise remains uncertain whether the pronouncement of the third unknown speaking subject is introduced from the perspective of the First Apprentice or the narrator of the opening paragraph: “Nicht lange darauf sprach einer: Keiner Erklärung bedarf die heilige Schrift. Wer wahrhaft spricht, ist des ewigen Lebens voll, und wunderbar verwandt mit ächten Geheimnissen dünkt uns seine Schrift, denn sie ist ein Accord aus des Weltalls Symphonie” (79). Finally, the fourth paragraph introduces the voice of the teacher from the third-person perspective of the First Apprentice who speaks collectively on behalf of the other apprentices: “Von unserm Lehrer sprach gewiß die Stimme, denn er versteht die Züge zu versammeln, die überall zerstreut sind” (79). In effect, the text precludes the reader from making any final correlation between the narrative voices of the first four paragraphs and their respective narrative perspectives. The insight I wish to offer is that the associative leaps by means of which the poet intuitively nature's “wonderful figures” limned in the opening paragraph reflect the associative leaps by means of which the reader must interpret the narration of the text. It is as though the narrator were nature herself, inasmuch as the narrative form of the text accords of its own nature with nature's own textual forms, or “figures.”

The polyphony of narrative voices we hereby encounter at the outset of the narrative may be described by analogy to “[iron] filings” [*Feilspäne*] as signaled by the content of the first paragraph. The science of physics commonly defines magnetic fields as vectors that designate non-contact forces acting on particles at precise locations in space. When the south pole of an iron filing attracts to the north pole of its neighboring particle, a chain of filings parallel to the direction of the magnetic field comes into view. The pattern reflects forces that are both contiguous and yet discontinuous much like the

narrative voices relative to their narrative perspectives in the text. The more fundamental problem still concerning the uniform discontinuity of nature and the associative leaps that inhere in our schematization of the same stems from Novalis's ongoing engagement between 1798 and late 1799 with Leibniz's metaphysical principle *lex continuitatis*.

Novalis's engagement with Leibnizian metaphysics deals with questions of epistemology and language in ways that illuminate several further philosophical aspects of the language of nature. Leibniz expounds his philosophy of the immutable metaphysical continuity of nature in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Mathematics* [*Initia Rerum Mathematicarum Metaphysica*] of 1715 as follows: “Kontinuität aber kommt der Zeit wie der Ausdehnung, den Qualitäten wie den Bewegungen, überhaupt aber jedem Übergange in der Natur zu, da ein solcher niemals sprungweise vor sich geht” (*Math. Schriften* VII, 17-29). Novalis's abiding contention with Leibnizian metaphysics begins with his reading of Goethe's “Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären” of 1790. Goethe himself writes that the scientist need only briefly observe a plant before witnessing the plant's external parts transform and thereby “cross-over” into the form of their respective neighboring parts: “Ein jeder, der das Wachstum der Pflanzen nur einigermaßen beobachtet, wird leicht bemerken, daß gewisse äußere Teile derselben sich manchmal verwandeln und in die Gestalt der nächstliegenden Teile bald ganz, bald mehr oder weniger übergehen” (64). In his 1798 essay “Über Goethe,” Novalis writes in consequence, “Alle Wirckung ist Übergang” (#460, II, 644). Speaker “B” of Novalis's late 1798 “Dialog” explicitly critiques the supposed metaphysical continuity that underlies natural phenomena according to Leibniz. The passage in which Speaker “B” alludes to the famous Leibnizian dogma “nature does not take leaps” [*natura non facit saltus, lex continuitatis*] is as follows: “[A.] Die Definition der Natur hab ich nun als Resultat unsers Gesprächs – Sie ist Inbegriff der Grobheit. [B.] Daraus lassen sich alle

Naturgesetze ableiten – daß sie unaufhörlich grob ist, ohne abzusetzen und immer gröber wird – und keine Grobheit die Gröbste ist, *lex continuitatis*” (II, 670). As I interpret Speaker “B”’s facetious remark, the unending proliferation of scientific theories concerning the behavior of nature reflects aimless exertions to render her comportment evermore abstract, or “coarsely impersonal.” In his notes from mid-1800, Novalis comments on the work of contemporary scientists, “Die Personalitaet ist ihr [der Natur] entgegen. Sie ist ein gehemmter Personificationsprozess. Je gehemmter desto *natürlicher*.” (fragment #607, III, 667). Roughly a year earlier, in his early notes from “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” Novalis articulates the uniform discontinuity of nature as that which forms the rule of artistic genius – including that of nature herself: “Natur! here – Die Natur *verändert* sich sprungsweise [...] Regelmäßigkeit des Genies – *des Springers par excellence*” (fragment # 183, III, 273). Ultimately, whereas the natural sciences fail to form a continuity of knowledge on the basis of scientific discovery, the wellspring of poetic forms to be unearthed within our inner-selves more objectively represent nature’s manifold appearance: “Verstand, Fantasie – Vernunft – das sind die dürftigen Fachwercke des Universums in uns. Von ihren wunderbaren Vermischungen, Gestaltungen, Übergängen kein Wort [...] Wer weiß welche wunderbare Vereinungen, welche wunderbare Generationen uns noch im Innern bevorstehen” (fragment #138, III, 574, “Aufzeichnungen von Juni bis Dezember 1799”). To interpret the passage, the manifold unity of the poetic imagination represents an immanent, symbolic reflection of the manifold unity of nature herself. For Novalis, the discontinuity that underlies the contingency of scientific discoveries through empirical observations must therefore be subsumed under the infinite heterogeneity of poetic expression, or the representation of philosophical “leaps” in the realm of art: “Über die Philosophie und ihre Darstellung. historische Konstruktionen. Nichts ist poetischer, als alle *Übergänge* und heterogène

Mischungen” (fragment #221, III, Ibid.). The exchange between Speaker “A” and Speaker “B” in the “fifth” dialogue is worth citing at this point in full:

A. Am Ende, Lieber, was sollen alle Hypothesen – Eine einzige wahrhaft beobachtete Thatsache ist doch mehr werth, als die glänzendste Hypothese. Das Hypothesieren ist eine risquante Spielerey – Es wird am Ende Leidenschaftlicher Hang zur Unwahrheit – und vielleicht hat nichts den besten Köpfen und den Wissenschaften mehr geschadet, als diese Renommisterey des fantastischen Verstandes. Diese szientifische Unzucht stumpf den Sinn für Wahrheit gänzlich ab, und entwöhnt von strenger Beobachtung, welche doch allein die Basis aller Erweiterung und Entdeckung ist. [...]

B. Hypothesen sind Netze, nur wird fangen, der auswrift. Ist nicht Amerika selbst durch Hypothese gefunden? Hoch und vor allen lebe die Hypothese – nur sie bleibt Ewig neu, so oft sie sich auch selbst nur besiegte. (II, 668)

Columbus believes that heading West, he will reach India; instead, he inadvertently discovers America. Speaker “B” suggests that all scientific discoveries reflect back on the source of their own hypothetical activity in the imagination. The ideal of hypothetical thinking eternally survives in the measure of its own overcoming, what represents itself a 'leap' no less in the domain of scientific thought: “Die Ideale sind auch Produkte eines Übergangsmoments” (fragment #753, III, 414, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”).

In view of such statements, the language of nature in “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs” reveals more than a mere literary motif or theme: the text advances Novalis's philosophical view that the lawful, metaphysical order of nature accords of her own poetic faculties with the powers of our own poetic imagination.

### III

I am not the first to underscore the uttermost significance of Novalis's Romantic epistemology concerning our critical reception of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs.” Von Molnár's 1970 essay “The Composition of *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*: A Reevaluation,” which essentially attempts to refute Jury Striedter's findings from his earlier 1955 seminal essay,

“Die Komposition der '*Lehrlinge zu Saïs*,’” offers the following remark regarding the hermeneutics of the first paragraph:

Novalis begins by pointing out the manifold array of signs united in a signature that, if it could be read by anyone, would spell the name of nature. The obvious reaction upon reading these initial lines is to ask whether the appearance of nature will permit conclusions concerning its reality. The author thus creates in the reader's mind the very question that the novel is to answer by exploring the intricacy of the relationship between subject and object in terms of the confrontation between man and nature. Once this questioning attitude has been assumed, those lengthy philosophical arguments that permeate the text no longer seem disconcerting and irrelevant. (1002)

As I interpret von Molnár's thesis, the seemingly indecipherable character of the language of nature raises the epistemological question of whether the phenomenal reality of nature can at all be known. The language of nature symbolizes an ongoing “confrontation” between humankind and nature, or more exactly, the gradual eclipse of an original, congenial state of unity with nature to a state of total estrangement from the same (1006). For Novalis, the convergence between Romantic poetry and its counterpoint in nature represents a kind of literary mode that restores our noble and even illustrious presence in the kingdom of nature. I would further agree with von Molnár that said literary mode is reënacted in the hermeneutic exchange that transpires between the poetic sensibilities of the reader and the rhetorical function of the language of nature in the text. As ever more imponderable aspects of the language of nature unfurl, the reader intuits the point of dialectical unity between philosophical analysis and poetic representation that is the semiotic hallmark of Novalis's Romantic epistemology (1002).

I disagree with von Molnár inasmuch as he speciously conflates Novalis himself with the narrator of the frame narrative. Should we interpret the opening paragraph to represent Novalis's interjection into the text's diegetic sphere, as von Molnár appears to suggest, von Molnár offers no explanation for said intervention. Besides, if we should narrowly interpret the characters in the novel as mouthpieces for Novalis's philosophical

engagement with Fichte, does this not contradict von Molnár's own thesis of the “autonomous self” in *Romantic Vision*? On the basis of these objections, I therefore suggest the alternate possibility that the disembodied voice of the first paragraph corresponds to none other than the voice of nature herself. Only months later, Novalis gives credence to this interpretative possibility in fragment #145 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”: “Der Mensch spricht nicht allein – auch das Universum *spricht* – alles spricht – unendliche Sprachen” (III, 268).

In accordance with the interpretation I propose, the paradoxical nature of nature's sapience is otherwise revealed as follows. The omniscience of nature firmly delineates the limits of human epistemology, while at the same time, nature invites the apprentices to the insoluble task of interpreting the ephemeral forms of her language: “In ihnen [in den wunderlichen Figuren der Natur] ahndet man den Schlüssel dieser Wunderschrift, die Sprachlehre derselben; allein die Ahndung will sich selbst in keine feste Formen fügen, und scheint kein höherer Schlüssel werden zu wollen” (I, 79). Like the veiled virgin statue at the temple of Saïs carrying the inscription, “I am all that is, that was, and that shall be, and no mortal has hitherto lifted my veil,” nature's veiled message represents both an invitation and a prohibition to a higher knowledge of her inscriptions. Infinitely forestalling hermeneutic closure, I interpret her inscriptions to symbolize the elusive transcendental nature of Romantic literature as such.

We may also wish to consider how nature's veiled message otherwise conveys an invitation on behalf of the text itself to read its own superscription on the language of nature. At the conclusion of Part I of the narrative, titled “Der Lehrling,” the First Apprentice speaks in proverbial form of lifting nature's veil as follows: “wenn kein Sterblicher, nach jener Inschrift dort, den Schleyer hebt, so müssen wir Unsterbliche zu werden suchen; wer ihn nicht heben will, ist kein ächter Lehrling zu Saïs” (I, 82). It is

just about certain that Novalis is familiar with the Latin etymology of the word *textus*, according to Quintilian, “that which is woven, web, texture,” or the participial stem of *texere*, “to weave.”<sup>xciiv</sup> Elsewhere in his philosophical fragments, he explicitly refers to mathematical symbols as looms in the “Nachlese” of his notes from the summer and fall of 1800: “Wunderbarkeit der Mathematik. Sie ist ein *schriftliches Instrument*. [...] Webstühle in Zeichen. *Gemahlte Instrumente*” (III, #659, 684). Rhetorically speaking, nature's “veil” signifies a “veiled” reference to the “woven texture” of the text.

Accordingly, I plainly interpret the pronouncement of the First Apprentice as an address to the reader. The art of interpreting “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs” thus signifies the schema of its own literary production: the text “weaves” itself together by entwining the perspective of the reader with the invitation of the First Apprentice. As it were, our invitation to lift nature's veil is our adjuration to interpret the text of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs” as itself the key to the ciphered language of nature.

Von Molnár and I agree for different reasons as per the narrative continuity that follows from the first to the second paragraph of the text. Of the second paragraph, he remarks,

The first answer the author offers to his questioning audience is bluntly negative. The second paragraph states in effect that there is no relationship between subject and object because the subject only reflects its own self in all acts of understanding and the object constitutes an act of pure self-expression so that in neither case can the one have access to the other. (1003)

Besides my own difficulty in following von Molnár's reasoning, or better, use of philosophical terms, his insight appears to be unsubstantiated: what does it mean for an object to constitute an act of pure self-expression, such that the object cannot have access to the subject, and vice-versa, as he writes? The voice of the Second Apprentice instructs that “incomprehensibility follows from [the incomprehensibility of] the incomprehensible.” I dare to speculate that this reflection forms the basis of Friedrich

Schlegel's philosophical ruminations on etymology in his “Über die Unverständlichkeit” of 1800: “Der gesunde Menschenverstand, der sich so gern am Leitfaden der Etymologien, wenn sie sehr nahe liegen, orientieren mag, dürfte leicht auf die Vermutung geraten können, der Grund des Unverständlichen liege im Unverstand” (KA II, 363). The associative leaps by which the etymologies of words are formed through human acts of communication resemble the same discontinuous patterns in nature that give form to her language. The etymology of the title of work at-hand, “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs,” itself signals several associative leaps in anticipation of the work's content, let us be reminded. In her 2005 dissertation, Monica Birth Hoesch discusses how the ancient Egyptian name “Saïs” at once evokes the intellectual history of the late eighteenth century's fascination with the origins of monotheism, the invention of hieroglyphs as the secret code of Mosaic law, and the seductiveness of draped female figures throughout antiquity as elusive symbols of nature.<sup>xv</sup> To conjecture on Novalis's behalf by way of Schlegel, the associate leaps and discontinuities that innately characterize the morphology of human language mirror the symbolic order of nature and vice-versa.

O'Brien advances a similar interpretation of the introductory paragraph to von Molnár's concerning humankind's incapacity to interpret the language of nature. In his essay “The Nature of Language and the Language of Nature” from *Signs of Revolution*, O'Brien claims that the language of nature resists our comprehension because any attempt to understand its grammar is already mediated by human language (199-213). Novalis visually represents this epistemological problem in and through the figure of the “alkahest,” he contends. Otherwise known as the “philosopher's stone” in the ancient *Cheirokmeta* of Zosimos of Panopolis, the “alkahest” refers to an elusive solvent capable of dissolving any substance as described by the medieval alchemist Paracelsus. Citing Novalis's scientific writings of the same year, O'Brien correctly assumes Novalis learned

of the alkahest during his studies of alchemy and geology at the Freiberg Mining Academy. In his “Physikalische Fragmente,” Novalis articulates the double property of the alkahest to resolve and dissolve as follows: “Das Allgemeine Scheidungsmittel ist auch das allgemeine Verbindungsmittel” (III, 85).

I agree less with O'Brien's ensuing conclusion, however, in which he claims that,

the ambiguous reference in *Saïs* to an alkahest poured over 'the senses' [*Sinnen*] suggests a dissolution of all 'meanings' as well as of the 'sensory faculties.' [...] Because an alkahest has been poured over our senses, we approach nature both *as* and *through* language. Mediated in all our senses by language, we can never fully figure the grammar that lies beyond or beneath the language of nature. (199-200)

O'Brien's association of the alkahest with the total dissolution of our “sensory faculties” and therefore “all meanings” is unduly skeptical. In the event that no substance exists that may contain the alkahest, theoretically speaking, the alkahest would dissolve all of nature into one unified substance, hence physically engendering a state of complete unity among all things. I thus interpret the alkahest instead as a veiled reference to the boundless powers of the poetic imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] endowed to humankind on behalf of nature herself – both to resolve [*Ein-bilden*] nature into her many forms, as well as to conjoin the same [*Ein-bilden*] into a single, unified symbolic system. O'Brien himself convincingly suggests that Novalis would have been made aware of the essential link between poetry and the alkahest through Schiller's writings. Schiller's distich “An den Dichter,” which Novalis read in the *Tabulae Votivae* published just a year prior to the composition of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs,” advises its reader: “Laß die Sprache dir sein, was der Körper den Liebenden; er nur / Ists, der die Wesen trennt und der die Wesen vereint” (O'Brien, 199; Schiller, 302).<sup>xvii</sup>

In the same vein, I would venture to link the figure of the “alkahest” in Novalis to Schelling's metaphor of the “whirlpool” in contemplating the idea of nature: “Der Wirbel ist nicht etwas Feststehendes, sondern beständig Wandelbares aber in jedem Augenblick

neu Reproducirtes. Kein Produkt in der Natur ist als fixirt, sondern in jedem Augenblick durch die Kraft der ganzen Natur reproducirt" (III, 18). For Kant, objects of nature are static, stable, soluble; for Novalis and Schelling, objects of nature are erratic, unstable, fluid. Like a whirlpool, with every new iteration, or formation, the language of nature represents a fluid, ever-changing reflection of our whole view of nature. Throughout Part II of the narrative, fittingly titled "Die Natur," Novalis writes of fluidity in general, "Wie wenige haben sich noch in die Geheimnisse des Flüssigen vertieft und manchem ist diese Ahndung des höchsten Genusses und Lebens wohl nie in der trunkenen Seele aufgegangen. Im Durste offenbaret sich diese Weltseele, diese gewaltige Sehnsucht nach dem Zerfließen" (104). For Novalis, fluidity and solvency represent the defining poetic forms of our metaphysical relation to nature amid the world of "spirit," an insight I return to in the following chapter.

As underscored by the verb "*scheinen*" three times in rapid succession at the close of the opening paragraph of "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs," I thus agree with O'Brien that, like the alkahest, or a whirlpool, the visual representation of the language of nature has the effect of dissolution and resolution to the minds of the apprentices (199-200). However, I disagree with O'Brien's position, to reiterate, that the nature of human language in and of itself precludes our ability to contemplate nature and her language. Otherwise, as I discuss in the section that follows, O'Brien's skepticism undermines the pedagogical impetus of the text.

Showing similar signs of discord with O'Brien, Calhoon articulates that our affinity to nature, or lack thereof, is contingent on the language of modern science – a language that excises us from nature. Calhoon primarily cites Part II of the narrative. In an allusion to Fichte, according to the narration's mythological account of the origins of language, an earlier form of humankind, "die früheren Menschen," spoke a language of a

one-to-one correspondence with natural phenomena; “ein wahrer Naturzug,” writes Novalis (I, 83). This primitive, though more “natural” form of language regresses during the age of Enlightenment into “abstract propositions” and “strange, foreign-sounding words” [“*abstrakte Sätze*,” “*fremd klingende Worte*”] as a means to circumscribe natural phenomena (I, 107). Adopting a methodology that seeks to isolate forms from the whole of nature, modern science causes an ever-widening rift to appear between humankind and its own natural surroundings. In Calhoun's words, the language of modern science, conceived for the purpose of conjuring purely formal explanations [“*Gestalten-Erklärung*”], partakes of and perpetuates the duality between humankind and nature (I, 83). Rather than bringing humankind closer to nature, modern science draws humankind ever inward down a path of existential isolation, restricting the boundaries of the world to a discourse that grows increasingly self-referential and unimaginative (51).

Following this train of thought, to understand the origin of poetic expression as itself an artistic product of Jena Romantic aesthetics, I believe that one must turn to Novalis's system of the arts. Suitably titled “Anekdoten,” written the same year as the text at hand, Novalis imagines a time before speech and writing, mediation and representation, intuitive art versus visual art, language and poetry: “Mittheilungs, Besinnungskunst oder Sprache, und Darstellung, Bildungskunst, oder Poësie sind noch Eins. Erst später trennt sich diese *rohe Masse* – dann entsteht Benennungskunst, Sprache im eigentlichen Sinn – Philosophie – und schöne Kunst, Schöpfungskunst, Poësie überhaupt” (572, my emphasis). Novalis once more appeals to Fichte's sublation of the “raw, crude materiality” of the sign, later superseded by the art of “naming,” a point I will return to in brief. The sensible immediacy of the image to both communicate and mediate sense perception is the most adequate vehicle of language at the earliest stage of communication in human history. In modernity, we have otherwise lost our aesthetic

appreciation for the epistemological insights that our sense perceptions afford us of nature. Novalis's perhaps most famous dictum, “Die Welt muß romantisiert werden,” followed by, “so findet man den urspr[ünglichen] Sinn wieder,” entails the search for the original unity of our manifold sense-perceptions (I, 545). Novalis intimates a desire to return to this earlier historical time, or if not, *reimagine* it. Only in this manner may we, like the teacher, come to understand the interrelated appearance of all things in nature:

Er [der Lehrer] merkte bald auf die Verbindungen in allem, auf Begegnungen, Zusammentreffungen. Nun sah er bald nichts mehr allein. – In große bunte Bilder drängten sich die Wahrnehmungen seiner Sinne: er hörte, sah, tastete und dachte zugleich. Er freute sich, Fremdlinge zusammen zu bringen. Bald waren ihm die Sterne Menschen, bald die Menschen Sterne, die Steine Thiere, die Wolken Pflanzen. (I, 80)

On this note, precisely, O'Brien's skepticism against the apprentices' ability to read the language of nature undermines the pedagogical impetus of the text. It is the teacher, according to the fourth paragraph, we may recall, whose voice, like an alkahest, rhetorically speaking, “unifies and redirects the scattered paths” taken by the apprentices (I, 84). As the apprentices gradually learn to better interpret the polymorphous signs of nature under the tutelage of their master, I believe that we as readers similarly develop ever more critical interpretations of the text and what it teaches us concerning the art of contemplating nature. Although I agree with O'Brien that “like the nature [that the work] describes, [...] all of the voices [we encounter in the work] fall prey to irony of some sort or another,” I agree less that this irony ultimately indicates the “superfluity” of the master's wisdom (201-202). Contrary to O'Brien's final assessment that “the topos of *Saïs* has always been about the impossibility of revelation,” I opine that the relationship between master and apprentice is a recurring literary motif that symbolizes the philosophical “immaturity” of humankind in the age of Enlightenment and modern science (Ibid.).

## IV

In “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs,” the language of nature represents also a language of the moral education of humankind. Von Molnár is keen to observe that Novalis introduces the figure of a child in order to indicate that the unity between humankind and nature is the first inception of former's “being and heritage.” For von Molnár, the symbolic function of the child as a point of unity between humankind and nature is made explicit midway through Part I of the narrative by an unnamed child, whose physique the First Apprentice conflates with images of natural phenomena – “sky-blue eyes” [“*himmelblaue Augen*”], “lily-skin” [“*Lilienhaut*”], and “clouds of locks” [“*Lokkenwolken*”] (I, 80). When the child joins the apprentices, the child's inherent powers are immediately apparent upon being perceived as the master's equal: “Eins war ein Kind noch, es war kaum da, so wollte er ihm [dem Kind] den Unterricht übergeben. [...] Die Stimme [des Kindes] drang uns allen durch das Herz, wir hätten gern ihm unsere Blumen, Steine, Federn alles gern geschenkt” (I, 80). The child leaves, but there is a promise of his return at which time all the struggle of learning will presumably cease: “Einst wird es wiederkommen, sagte der Lehrer, und unter uns wohnen, dann hören die Lehrstunden auf” (I, 80-81). In von Molnár's words, the nominal reference to the child suggests that he is the *Messias*, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, “the absolute framework of that toilsome interlude called life during which subjective trends stand embattled with objective demands” (1003).

To build on von Molnar's insight, I interpret that the central symbolic function of the child is to caution us against Kant's famous motto of the Enlightenment presented in his 1784 “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”: “Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit” (481). To be clear, this is

not to mean that the text instructs us to become “immature,” child-like individuals, but rather that we must remain ever self-critical of our own sense of “maturity” as members of a natural order that transcends the limits of our own understanding. In order to interpret nature accordingly, we must revert to an attitude of earnest humility as we contemplate the essence of our own nature. In practical terms, we are instructed to pursue all knowledge with the insatiable curiosity and innocence of a child's yearning to understand the nature of things. Where the Enlightenment's pursuit of knowledge as a form of mastery over nature has led humankind astray from a more congenial state of being with nature, the wisdom of the “true” apprentice assumes a kind of mastery of its own that ironically presides over the “immaturity” of the Enlightenment philosopher.

The teacher's own apprenticeship as retold by the first apprentice in Part I reinforces von Molnár's remark. Early in the narrative, the teacher reports that he was similarly driven by the impulse to exercise and satisfy his senses as a child: “Oft hat er uns erzählt, wie ihm als Kind der Trieb die Sinne zu üben, zu beschäftigen und zu erfüllen, keine Ruhe ließ” (I, 79-80). The teacher, whose discipleship alludes to the discipleship of the twelve apostles according to the New Testament, represents himself a figure of redemption from the present age of “Unenlightenment.” As I interpret the passage in question, the teacher's apprenticeship as a child symbolizes the first inception of humankind's apprenticeship prior to the advent of the child-figure. The teacher and the child-figure represent “the alpha and the omega” of the ongoing cycles of apprenticeships that recur throughout the narrative as literary motifs. As similarly evinced by the tale of Hyacinth and Roseblossom mid-way through the frame narrative, which I discuss in the section that follows, ever more profound revelations are to be learned just as soon as they end by those willing to come of age anew by virtue of nature's wisdom.

The perennial reconfiguration of the master and the apprentice throughout the

symbolic register of the narrative may be characterized to reflect the ongoing process of resolution and dissolution of the narrative's symbolic meanings. As the lack of consensus in the secondary literature clearly demonstrates, there is no interpretative resolution that resists dissolution. Any interpreter who attempts to “master” the text through so-called authoritative final interpretations misses the didactic point of the narrative. Against O'Brien's final assessment of the work, the final irony consists rather in that the text champions self-critical interpretations of complex philosophical figurations shared by an author who considers himself to be a “child-like” apprentice of nature.

Another facet of the Enlightenment giving impetus to the work's pedagogical aims is the narrative's caution against the Enlightenment's sense of absolute confidence in the self-reliance of the individual. In the same essay by Kant cited earlier, he sets forth his definition of “Unmündigkeit” in a manner that validates said moral sentiment as follows:

*Unmündigkeit* ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. *Selbstverschuldet* ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschliebung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines *eigenen* Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung Faulheit und Feigheit sind die Ursachen, warum ein so großer Teil der Menschen, nachdem sie die Natur längst von fremder Leitung frei gesprochen (naturaliter maiorennnes), dennoch gerne zeitlebens unmündig bleiben; und warum es anderen so leicht wird, sich zu deren Vormündern aufzuwerfen. (53-54).

On the one hand, the teacher's lifetime pursuit of knowledge reaffirms the social contract between himself and the legitimacy of his authority over the apprentices. From the time they are children, the apprentices surrender their freedoms in exchange for initiation into a higher societal order, as well as nurture and protection from the more tenebrous forces of nature: “Sieht er uns traurig, daß die Nacht nicht weicht, so tröstet er uns, und verheißt dem ämsigen, treuen Seher künftiges Glück” (I, 79). On the other hand, the text deems the innate value of societal order and the discipleship's collective pursuit of knowledge in terms that remain more or less ambivalent. Several apprentices are chosen out over others

to be sent back to their parents' home, never to learn of the wonders of nature, while others are invited of their own initiative to become members of the teacher's inner circle. After years spent in caves and forests studying natural phenomena, the teacher learns of revelations which he invites the apprentices to experience for themselves. If they should accept his invitation, the apprentices must choose of their own volition to depend on their teacher's guidance: "Er sagt uns, daß wir selbst, von ihm und eigner Lust geführt, entdecken würden, was mit ihm vorgegangen sey" (80). In one instance, a pupil is sent out to the forest as a child, never to be seen again for a period of several years, before his unexpected return to the discipleship culminates in the discovery of what appears to be another veiled reference to the "philosopher's stone":

In unsre Mitte trat er [der Lehrling] bald, und brachte, mit unaussprechlicher Seligkeit im Antlitz, ein unscheinbares Steinchen von seltsamer Gestalt. Der Lehrer nahm es in die Hand, und küßte ihn lange, dann sah er uns mit nassen Augen an und legte dieses Steinchen auf einen leeren Platz, der mitten unter andern Steinen lag, gerade wo wie Strahlen viele Reihen sich berührten. Ich werde dieser Augenblicke nie fortan vergessen. Uns war, als hätten wir im Vorübergehn eine helle Ahndung dieser wunderbaren Welt in unsern Seelen gehabt. (I, 80)

"Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" makes clear that there is more than one path "for humankind to come of age by virtue of nature," [*naturaliter maiorennes*] to use Kant's phrase. Contrary to Kant's insistence on the use of reason as the "sole secure path" of achieving said goal, let us recall the opening line of the work: "Mannichfache Wege gehen die Menschen." The teacher's didactic convictions bolster the work's dictum – the final paragraph of Part I ends where first paragraph of Part I begins, signaling once more the cyclical unity of the work's thematic content: "Ich [der erste Lehrling] weiß es, er [der Lehrer] versteht mich, er hat nie gegen mein Gefühl und meinen Wunsch gesprochen. Vielmehr will er, daß wir den eignen Weg verfolgen, weil jeder neue Weg durch neue Länder geht, und jeder endlich zu diesen Wohnungen, zu dieser heiligen Heimath wieder führet" (I, 82).

Contrary to von Molnár's opinion, I do not believe it to be obvious that our

reaction as readers to the first paragraph ought to be to question the reality of nature on the basis of its appearance, but rather to challenge ourselves to find ever more critical interpretations of the same. Ultimately, O'Brien and von Molnár both to fail to trace the progression that exists between the wisdom imparted by the narration of the opening paragraph and the wisdom acquired by the First Apprentice throughout his initiation into the cult of Isis. The opening paragraph, for instance, contrary to von Molnár's assessment, makes no explicit or implicit reference to nature's signature, or name, but rather to its wondrous grammar and hieroglyphic ciphers. To my mind, what von Molnár describes occurs rather much later at the outset of Part II, titled "Die Natur": "Es mag lange gedauert haben, ehe die Menschen darauf dachten, die mannichfachen Gegenstände ihrer Sinne mit einem gemeinschaftlichen Namen zu bezeichnen und sich entgegen zu setzen" (82). Whereas the opening paragraph of the work introduces the enigma of the language of nature, whose indecipherability is innately reflected in the evanescent quality of human knowledge, the outset of Part II emphasizes the power of naming as a distinct feature of human language with which the First Apprentice intuits nature's manifold unity.

Novalis's related, though philosophically dissimilar interest in our ability to assign nature a common name otherwise stems from Herder's 1772 "Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache." Novalis perused the essay sometime in 1795 while in Jena under the encouragement of friends and colleagues studying with Herder in nearby Weimar. "Humankind awakens from the dream of nature," writes Herder, at the instant at which he is able to reflect on his sensations in the midst of reflecting upon said act of reflection itself:

Der Mensch beweiset Reflexion, wenn die Kraft seiner Seele so frei würket, daß sie in dem ganzen Ozean von Empfindungen, der sie durch alle Sinnen durchrauschet, eine Welle, wenn ich so sagen darf, absondern, sie anhalten, die Aufmerksamkeit auf sie

richten und sich bewußt sein kann, daß sie aufmerke. Er beweiset Reflexion, wenn er aus dem ganzen schwebenden Traum der Bilder, die seine Sinne vorbeistreichen, sich in ein Moment des Wachens sammeln, auf einem Bilde freiwillig verweilen, es in helle ruhigere Obacht nehmen und sich Merkmale absondern kann, daß dies der Gegenstand und kein anderer sei. (SWS 34-35)

The passage bears striking similarities to the following excerpt from Part II of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs”:

Auf alles, was der Mensch vornimmt, muß er seine ungetheilte Aufmerksamkeit oder sein Ich richten, sagte endlich der Eine, und wenn er dieses gethan hat, so entstehn bald Gedanken, oder eine neue Art von Wahrnehmungen, die nichts als zarte Bewegungen eines färbenden oder klappernden Stifts, oder wunderliche Zusammenziehungen und Figurationen einer elastischen Flüssigkeit zu seyn scheinen, auf eine wunderbare Weise in ihm. Sie verbreiten sich von dem Punkte, wo er den Eindruck fest stach, nach allen Seiten mit lebendiger Beweglichkeit, und nehmen sein Ich mit fort. Er kann dieses Spiel oft gleich wieder vernichten, indem er seine Aufmerksamkeit wieder theilt oder nach Willkühr herumschweifen läßt, denn sie scheinen nichts als Strahlen und Wirkungen, die jenes Ich nach allen Seiten zu in jenem elastischen Medium erregt, oder seine Brechungen in demselben, oder überhaupt ein seltsames Spiel der Wellen dieses Meers mit der starren Aufmerksamkeit zu seyn. Höchst merkwürdig ist es, daß der Mensch erst in diesem Spiele seine Eigenthümlichkeit, seine specifische Freiheit recht gewahr wird, und daß es ihm vorkommt, als erwache er aus einem tiefen Schlaf. (96-97)

The First Apprentice appears to describe the creative process by which the poet pens his impressions of nature's ocean as awakening from a dream. A key philosophical implication of both these poetic expositions concerning the origin of language is that naming every characteristic, perception, or sensation in the “ocean” of which both Herder and Novalis describe would make the world absolutely comprehensible in conformity to the word of humankind. In his 1791 *Ebräische Poesie und jüdischer Volksgeist*, Herder articulates this exact implication by expressly defining humankind as the linguistic creator of the world by virtue of its capacity to “name” it: “Indem er [der Mensch] alles nennt und mit seiner Empfindung auf sich ordnet, wird er Nachahmer der Gottheit, der zweite Schöpfer, also auch Dichter” (SWS 6). It remains in any event uncertain whether the origin of linguistic expression proper ought to be defined with respect to its original content, namely, the ocean of experience that is “handed to us” by nature, or in the very poetic act of its realization in human language – for Novalis, I believe there is no

distinction between the two.

I further wish to suggest that Novalis's narrative presents us with an allegory that critically reflects on the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Adam's consumption of the forbidden fruit not only represents the symbolic loss of an innocent, trusting relationship with God, but also the loss of a state of perfect linguistic comprehensibility with nature. Immediately after God's reprimand in verses 17 to 19 of the third Book of Genesis, “cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field ... until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken,” Adam immediately thereafter names his wife “Eve” in verse 20. Proper names, exclusively a form of human language, become necessary in order to signify differentiation among human beings once they no longer share a perfect state of unity with nature. Indeed, with the possible exception of Numbers 22:28, where Balaam's donkey is said to speak, human characters in the Bible subsequently lose their ability to communicate with animals as Eve once did with the snake. Adam's loss of innocence as he eats from the fruit of the tree of knowledge marks the symbolic loss of humankind's unity with not only God, but also nature. In Novalis's veiled reinvention of the myth, our current state of disunity with nature is consequence of the Enlightenment's “original sin.” As an allegory of redemption, the text bears the promise of a return to an original state of harmony with nature, if we should choose to seize its knowledge with the moral sentiment and intellectual curiosity of a child, as Eve once did. As I discuss in the section that follows, this is the philosophical attitude that is required in order to become an initiate into the cult of Isis.

The provenance of the language of initiation that prevails throughout the narrative can be traced to the import of ancient Egyptian esoteric culture into German intellectual discourse around 1800.<sup>xvii</sup> Monica Birth Hoesch plausibly suggests that the statue of the goddess Isis at the ancient Egyptian temple of Saïs carrying the inscription, “I am all that is, that was, and that shall be, and no mortal has hitherto lifted my veil,” is introduced to late-eighteenth century Europe via the ninth chapter of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* written around 120 A.D. near Delphi. Assmann, whom Hoesch cites in her bibliography, makes the same claim verbatim several years earlier (118). According to Plutarch, Egyptian theologians conveyed their wisdom by means of riddles and symbols as a means to illustrate the principle that truth can only be transmitted indirectly. As his case in point, Plutarch cites the custom of putting sphinxes at the doorways of temples, the veiled statue at Saïs, and the name of *Amun*, meaning “the Hidden one,” whom the Egyptians consider to be their highest God. In the second chapter of his work, Plutarch explains that after undergoing a long process of consecration, the successful initiate into the cult of Isis is rewarded with direct knowledge of the deity herself (2:121). Plutarch associates the name that corresponds to the temple of Isis with the intellectual pursuit of absolute knowledge: “it is called the *Iseion* to indicate that we shall know what really exists if we approach the sanctuaries of the goddess with reason and reverence” (2: 121; Hoesch, ix).

I suspect Novalis first became familiar with the etymology of the Egyptian goddess Isis as delineated by Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* written around 120 A.D. near Delphi during his rigorous immersion in classical philosophy and literature under the private tutelage of Carl Christian Erhard Schmid, a member of the rectorate of Novalis's secondary school [*Gymnasium*] in Tennstedt, with whom he shared the prime years of his

youth under the same roof. Because Schmid was also a student and close friend of Schiller around this time, other probable sources of influence during Novalis's composition of "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs" include Schiller's "Die Sendung Moses" and "Das verschleierte Bild zu Saïs," as suggested earlier, as well as Louis chevalier de Jaucourt's encyclopedic entry in Diderot and D'Alembert's 1765 *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [Rational Encyclopedia or Dictionary of the sciences, arts, and other affairs]:

Minerva, goddess of wisdom and the arts, the only child of Jupiter who merited participation in the privileges associated with the highest status of divinity [...] when the mythologists tell us that she was born to Jupiter without the help of a mother, that signifies that Minerva is nothing other than virtue, wisdom, the adviser of the sovereign master of the gods. [...] It is in vain that the ancients recognized several Minervas: the five that Cicero counted are one and the same person, the Minerva of Saïs, that is to say, Isis, according to Plutarch. Her cult was taken from Egypt to Greece, passing through Samothrace, in Asia Minor, with the Gauls and the Romans. (144)

Minerva is born "without the help of a mother," as the passage indicates, which links the etymology of the figure of Isis and Jupiter to the autonomy of nature in "Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs." Along the same lines of Jaucourt's insight, classical philologist Reinhold Merkelbach cites chapter 62 of *De Iside et Osiride*, where according to Plutarch, "the Egyptians often give Isis the name Athena [Neith], meaning approximately, '*I came from myself*'" (See also Plutarch, 62: 217; Hoesch, 159). This etymology serves once more as evidence that Novalis preconceives of nature as a creation of her own making in the text, or more precisely, a literary creation of her own authorship, as I put it.

Nowhere is this etymology perhaps better illustrated in literary terms than in the tale of Hyacinth and Roseblossom, whose very names are etymologically entwined. Together, they symbolize an instance of the poetic autonomy of nature at the lexical register the text. According to ancient Greek mythology, "hyacinths" are said to spring from the blood of the slain youth Hyacinthus. In Novalis's adaptation, Hyacinth's learns

of his true-self in “*Rosen-blüthchen*” as she sinks back into his arms at the culmination of his *Bildungsreise*. Nature's symbolic language comes full circle in and through the tale of Hyacinth and Roseblossom as an internal, self-referential representation of her autonomy.

As we learn of the trials and tribulations that Hyacinth must endure in order to become an adept interpreter of the language of nature, furthermore, we are summoned as readers to cultivate sentiments of reverence toward nature's sublime appearance. To use the language of initiation that appears in Schiller's 1790 “*Die Sendung Moses*,” which Kant loosely borrows in his remarks on the front-piece to Johann Andreas von Segner's 1770 *Einleitung in die Naturlehre* in the Third Critique, the text invites us to contemplate nature with “sacred awe” [“*heiliger Schauer*”] and “solemn attention” [“*feierliche Aufmerksamkeit*”]. As emphasized by Kant in his second definition of the sublime, the initiatory function of said experience is to prepare the mind for the apprehension of a truth that it may only grasp in an unnerving state of emotional arousal. In more philosophical terms, the sublime consists in a feeling of superiority of our own power of reason as a supra-sensible faculty over nature. The overwhelming allure of nature's grandiosity makes us recognize our physical powerlessness at the same time that it reveals a capacity for judging ourselves to be independent of nature. The humanity in our person, as Kant phrases it, remains thus undemeaned while itself having to submit to the very dominion that presides over our existence.<sup>xcviii</sup>

The interpretation I wish to offer is that Kant's definition of the sublime is the key to the philosophical hermeneutic of the tale of Hyacinth and Roseblossom. Hyacinth's climactic unveiling of the virgin figure at the temple of Saïs represents a dramatic re-enactment of the unnerving state of emotional arousal that Kant, in addition to Schiller's 1795 ballad “*Das Verschleierte Bild zu Saïs*,” describes upon gaining direct insight into nature. Unlike Schiller, however, Novalis intuitively the experience of the sublime less as one

of devastating rapture and terror than as a threshold experience in the ongoing process of initiation that becoming a critical interpreter of nature entails. Just as soon as Hyacinth lifts the veil of Isis and Roseblossom sinks into his arms, the two youths are initiated into a closed circle of their own: “Eine ferne Musik umgab die Geheimnisse des liebenden Wiedersehns, die Ergießungen der Sehnsucht, und schloß alles Fremde von diesem entzückenden Orte aus” (I, 95). The ongoing cycle of apprenticeship that recurs as a literary motif throughout the narrative begins anew with Roseblossom as a teacher-figure to her grandchildren: “Hyacinth lebte nachher noch lange mit Rosenblüthchen unter seinen frohen Eltern und Gespielen, und unzählige Enkel dankten der alten wunderlichen Frau für ihren Rath und ihr Feuer” (I, 95). The passage leaves open the possibility that her grandchildren may well become disciples of nature of their own under her auspices. The tale abruptly ends and the apprentices are quick to digress into a plethora of other philosophical topics: “Die Lehrlinge umarmten sich und gingen fort” (I, 95). I interpret the swift return to the frame narrative at this critical juncture to be a defining instance of the work's pedagogical aim.<sup>xcix</sup> As a *mise en abîme* of the discipleship at Saïs, the tale of Hyacinth and Roseblossom teaches us that the sublime is only the last stage of initiation into a higher societal order that otherwise understands its true vocation to be the endless exegesis of the sublimity of nature.<sup>c</sup>

## VI

Throughout the fall of 1797 and winter of 1798, during his enrollment at the Mining Academy of Freiberg and his brief retreat at the famed health resort for genteel artists in Teplitz [*Teplice-Šanov*], Kingdom of Bohemia, a speculative fascination with nature's decrees engrosses the mind of Novalis. Novalis writes the “Teplitzer Fragmente”

shortly after becoming ill with tuberculosis, marking the beginning of a relentless yearning to unveil the origins of nature throughout the final years of his life. The collection's tenth fragment is the most conspicuous; Novalis speculates with a sense of wonder whether nature is engendered by nature herself: “Wo ist der Urkeim – der Typus der ganzen Natur zu finden? Die Natur der Natur?” (II, 597). As I interpret the passage, *Der Urkeim* is a poetic figure, whose reproductive function reflects back on the source of its own fertility: nature conceives of an archetypal specimen that models nature, whereupon this very same specimen begets nature herself. What may be characterized as an organ, or better, structure in its earliest discernible stage of development, the rudimentary basis of nature's archetype represents the primordium of nature. Like a leaf that forms from the anlage of a scale, or the accumulation of cells that structure the homology of an organ, nature's first offspring becomes the primary symbol of the autonomy of nature.

Novalis's most probable interlocutor here is Goethe from his “Tag- und Jahreshefte” of 1790. At the outset of his journal entry, Goethe reminisces about his years acting as curator of local museums in collaboration with faculty members of the University of Jena. The motivations he describes for writing his now celebrated “Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären” of the same year is revealing. As the overseer of a newly inaugurated botanical garden, he recounts writing his essay on plants in order to compensate for having failed to pursue more artistic endeavors [“*Mangel an Kunstleben*”] while in Jena. Harkening back to his findings, Goethe relates his newfound conviction as follows:

Ich war völlig überzeugt, ein allgemeiner, durch Metamorphose sich erhebender Typus gehe durch die sämtlichen organischen Geschöpfe durch, lasse sich in allen seinen Teilen auf gewissen mittlern Stufen gar wohl beobachten und müsse auch noch da anerkannt werden, wenn er sich auf der höchsten Stufe der Menschheit ins Verborgene bescheiden zurückzieht. (14-16)

According to the 1758 edition of *Systema Naturae*, Carl Linnaeus's taxonomic system of Latin binary nomenclature for genera and species defines “types” as the particular specimens for which the scientific names of organisms are formally denominated. A. S. Hitchcock's 1921 “The Type Concept in Systematic Botany” discusses the development of the binomial system of nomenclature in botany from the time of Linnaeus to the Paris Code of 1867 and the Vienna Code of 1905. The distinction between typology prior to 1758 and modern typology in botany is explained according to Hitchcock as follows:

The type species of a genus or the type specimen of a species is the species or the specimen respectively that directs or controls the application of the generic or specific name. A generic name shall always be so applied as to include its type species; a specific name shall always be so applied as to include its type specimen. The old concept [prior to 1758] was that a genus was a group of species having a given combination of characters; a species, similarly, a group of specimens. The new or type concept is that, from the nomenclatural standpoint, a genus is a group of species allied to the type species, a species a group of individuals similar to the type specimen. (252)

Nikolaus Dahlberg, a student of Linnaeus, transferred the term from entomology to botany in order to prognosticate the discrete phases of plant morphology on the basis of type specimens (von Mücke, 37). In his 1998 “Zeitgestalten der Natur: Goethe und die Evolutionsbiologie,” Wolfgang Schad highlights that Goethe read Nikolaus Dahlberg's 1755 “Dissertatio botanica metamorphoses plantarum sistens,” such that the title of Goethe's essay on plants in truth stems from the title of Dahlberg's own work (359).<sup>ci</sup> On a related note, the field of mineralogy similarly defines “type specimens,” also known as “type materials,” as the reference samples according to which new mineral “species” are denominated.<sup>cii</sup>

In her 2006 “Goethe's Metamorphosis: Changing Forms in Nature, the Life Sciences, and Authorship,” Dorothea von Mücke elucidates that the scientific term “metamorphosis,” prior to the eighteenth century, is indeed exclusive to the field of entomology and its formal descriptions of the developmental stages of insects. Later, the

term more generally designates various models of change across organisms according to the commonly named “life-sciences” at the time. By examining the growth and maturation of different plants, Goethe reached the conclusion that the leaf constitutes the most basic and most versatile building block of the plant kingdom. For Goethe, the leaf assumes every shape and function essential to a plant – its petals, stamina, and sepals. Throughout his botanical and zoological writings, the term metamorphosis thus qualifies the natural changes of organisms as “open-ended processes” in von Mücke's view (31-32). In other words, a stem-leaf may be construed as a transformed petal, or the same organ of the plant, only at a lower stage of development; by the same token, a petal is a transformed stem-leaf. In nuce, each part of the plant stands for the modification of a single organ, or an open-ended process of transformation from a non-hierarchical standpoint. Goethe's model here contrasts starkly with that of the butterfly, for example, whose transformations are linear and non-regressive, i.e. teleological. In light of this discrepancy, Goethe is obliged to assume the existence of a systemic unity that reflects back on the source of nature's manifold phenomenal reality. Otherwise, Goethe cannot establish rules of scientific observation that preclude the botanist from making specious claims concerning singular 'type' specimens amid the greater totality of nature. Jacques Roger comments in his 1965 “Die Auffassung des Typus bei Buffon und Goethe” on Goethe's earlier 1784 discovery of the intermaxillary bone – *premaxilla* [*Zwischenkieferknochen*] in this same vein. Notwithstanding the fact that Goethe is not the first to make the discovery in the field human anatomy [*os incisivum*], he is the first comparative anatomist in Europe to confirm its presence in mammals.<sup>ciii</sup> Most significantly, to Goethe's mind, the discovery becomes the single piece of irrefutable evidence throughout his scientific career in support of an archetypal homology of nature within nature. Hypothetically speaking, the primordium of nature would aid found a

speculative, albeit systematic theory of scientific observation with which to articulate a unifying model of nature's morphology.

At the limits of Goethe's observations, the pronounced metaphysical resonance of his writing carries forth the prospect of a scientific methodology unfettered by Cartesian or Newtonian constraints. In the first comprehensive study of Goethe's scientific works written in English, *The Will To Create: Goethe's Philosophy of Nature*, published in 2002, Astrida Orla Tantillo suggests that physical phenomena represent the surface manifestations of underlying mystical phenomena in Goethe's botany. As she interprets Goethe's scientific precept, if scientists are to gain understanding of nature, scientists must become one with their objects of study as a means of apprehending their morphology directly. An ineluctable degree of artistic ingenuity characterizes the methodology of the scientist accordingly. In seamless alignment with Tantillo, as well as Goethe's own telling admission of his artistic ambitions, Novalis lauds Goethe as the 'first physicist' for his exemplary ability to observe nature as an aesthete: "Seine Betrachtungen des Lichts, der Verwandlung der Pflanzen und der Insecten sind Bestätigungen und zugleich die überzeugendsten Beweise, daß auch der vollkommene Lehrvortrag in das Gebiet des Künstlers gehört. Auch dürfte man im gewissen Sinn mit Recht behaupten, daß Göthe der erste Physiker seiner Zeit sey" (II, 640). The passage cited indeed corresponds to Novalis's "Über Goethe," his late 1798 short prose essay and collection of reflections on Goethe's three main scientific writings. In Goethe's work, for Novalis, scientific observation emerges in unison with the metaphysical realm of nature; nature and the theory of nature are coextensive: "Natur und Natureinsicht entstehen zugleich" (II, 640). Nature becomes thus the subject and the object of its own scientific inquiry; borrowing from Fichte's idiom, let us emphasize on Novalis's behalf: "Object und Subject entstehen [...] immer zugleich" (fragment #622, III, 378, "Das Allgemeine

Brouillon”). Here, an abstract homology develops, namely, between the morphology of non-hierarchical functions in plants and the non-hierarchical morphology that defines the subject and the object of the speculative imagination. The morphology of nature is thus effectively construed as the theory and the practice of the scientific mind becoming one with nature.

In the fifth section of Tantillo's first chapter on Goethe's principle of polarity titled, “The Subject and Object and the Argument against Hierarchy,” she describes Goethe's polarity as reciprocal: inhalation follows exhalation, the diastole precedes the systole, passion has its reasons in reason (47). For Novalis, the simultaneity of thought and observation represents another such polarity in Goethe. In following with the ideal of philosophy according to Fichte's “demand,” Novalis confirms here: “Fichtens Forderung des Zugleich Denkens, Handelns und Beobachtens ist das Ideal des Philosophirens – und indem ich dies zu leisten suche – fange ich das Ideal an zu realisieren” (fragment #603, III, 373). In an earlier fragment, the simultaneity of thought and observation signals the origin of poetic genius: “Was zugleich Gedanke und Beobachtung ist – ist ein kritischer im engern Sinn, *genialischer Keim* [...] Der Keim des gebildeten Menschen ist der genialische Keim” (fragment #480, III, 344). Novalis elsewhere conflates Goethe's genius with nature itself: “Naturgenie. [...] Göthe” (II, 669, “Dialogen”). Novalis hypostatizes the elements of his own philosophy of nature in “chemical” and “mechanical” form: “Philosophie. Product der Harmonie von Subject und Object – ihrer chemischen Mischung ihrer mechanischen Berührung etc.” (fragment #286, III, 291, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”). Earlier still in fragment #119, the simultaneity of creation and reflection is the law of motion that undergirds thought: “Über den Mechanismus des Denkens – Machen und Betrachten zugleich – in einem unzertrennten Acte” (III, 572). As it were, Novalis transforms the metaphysics of nature into the physics of his own speculative imagination.

The converse is true where physical phenomena transform into Novalis's metaphysical insights themselves. As an example, according to Novalis's "Mathematische Fragmente" of mid-1798, physical syntheses of neutral salts foretell a "new," "higher" nature within nature at the intersection of mathematics and physics: "Die sogenannten Physicomathematischen Wissenschaften sind, wie Neutralsalze oder andre chemische Verbindungen, Mischungen von Physik und Mathematik – die eine neue *Natur* angenommen haben – die man in einem andern Sinn *höhere* Natur nennen kann" (III, 125).<sup>civ</sup>

In virtually perfect accord with Novalis's insights, Eckart Förster observes concerning Goethe's essay that the transitions between the parts of plants can never be experienced as one empirical unity. The plant as a whole presents the eye with a mere combination of manifold parts. Said ideal unity of the metamorphoses of plants can thus only be experienced as a product of the speculative imagination, i.e. the 'eye of the mind' [*"Auges des Geistes"*]. For Goethe, the eye of the mind brings the plant's generative, formative motions to ontological completion as one totality within the totality of nature.<sup>cv</sup> In the penultimate block-quote cited from his 1790 "Tag- und Jahreshefte," to be sure, Goethe articulates the vestige of nature's archetypal specimen in humankind as a product of the imagination. Nature's "allgemeiner, durch Metamorphose sich erhebender Typus," we should recall, sustains several metamorphic changes before finally assuming its "humble" form, "hidden" in a realm we cannot observe. The origin of nature is not static, but rather continually undergoes transformation itself:

Jede Ursach erweckt Ursachen – die *Caussa prima* ist nur das erste Glied der ursächlichen Reihe – diese Reihe ist aber vorwärts und rückwärts unendlich. Nur unter Voraussetzungen und willkürlichen Annahmen oder Datis giebt's eine *Caussa prima* – nicht absolut. (Fragment #615, III, 376, "Das Allgemeine Brouillon")

Let us now return to the tenth fragment of the "Teplitzer fragmente." Novalis

speculates here, “Wo ist der Urkeim – der Typus der ganzen Natur zu finden? Die Natur der Natur?” To interpret, hence, nature grows at the sprout or shoot of its own seed; nature matures in the fertilized embryo of its own impregnation.<sup>cv</sup> The allegorical meaning of the self-consummation of nature within nature itself broadens when we turn to several historic discoveries taking place in the natural sciences around 1798. To my mind, the passage intimates a properly scientific, albeit speculative theory of nature's autonomy. We may consider, for instance, the theory of germination as first proposed by Girolamo Fracastoro in 1546 and later developed by Marcus von Plenciz in 1762. Nature's archetypal germ cell [*“Urkeimzelle”*], we could say, is the pathogen that contains both the source and the cure of all disease. We might similarly consider the theory of cell biology as first discovered by Robert Hooke in 1665 and later founded as the field of cytology by Matthias Schleiden and Theodor Schwann in 1839, less than four decades after Novalis's passing. Nature's archetypal gamete [*“Keimzelle”*] fuses with the haploid cell of its own gender during fertilization. From the viewpoint of microbiology, nature's archetypal unicellular organism [*“Kleinstlebewesen”*] signals the cellular organism whose “micro-structure” inversely reflects the “macro-structure” of nature – as well as vice-versa: “Die Naturlehre. – Doppelte Wege – von Einzelnen – vom Ganzen – Von innen – von außen” (II, 669, “Dialogen”). Mineralogical studies define “seed crystals” [*“Kristallisationskeime”*] as small pieces of single crystals, or poly-crystal materials, from which a large crystal of the same material can be grown in a simple laboratory.<sup>cvii</sup> Nature's archetypal mineral acts as a synecdoche of nature, whose crystallization reflects back on the continuity of its own fluid formation.<sup>cviii</sup>

I should emphasize that regardless of the degree to which Goethe or Novalis may have been aware of these developments, this is hardly the matter at issue. The question that motivates the aforementioned developments in modern science is the same

philosophical question that captivates the speculative imaginations of Goethe and Novalis, and even Kant, namely, what is the origin of nature? To be more precise, how does the scientist define the fundamental unit of life according to which the scientist can qualify and subsequently measure the individual, self-enclosed totality of an organism within the greater “whole” of nature?

To draw some concluding remarks, the poetization of Linnaeus's scientific language foremost illustrates Novalis's unique proclivity for understanding the metaphysics of nature in artistic terms. Novalis's practical search for the archetypal specimen of nature represents the epistemological equivalent to the theoretical pursuit of the genus of genera, i.e. the “nature of nature.” For Novalis, the genus of language under which all specimens of the imagination are subsumed, *Poësie*, represents the commanding nomenclature of nature's formal designations. It follows that the self-consummation of nature within nature reciprocally grounds the inner self-realization of the poet's imagination in the realm of symbolic language: “Poësie ist *Darstellung des Gemüths – der innern Welt in ihrer Gesamtheit*. Schon ihr Medium, die Worte deuten es an” (fragment #553, III, 650, “Aufzeichnungen von Juni bis Dezember 1799”) Like nature, the sign forms of its natural own accord with itself, whose schema translates into the signified of its own artistic designation in the course of human communication. Like the sign, nature articulates herself in her own language, whose schemata translate into the findings of their own hypothetical designations in the course of scientific observation. As both the source and the finality of nature, poetic language inversely reflects the subject and the object of nature's creative instinct: “Die Natur hat Kunstinstant – daher ist es Geschwätz, wenn man Natur und Kunst [Poësie] unterscheiden will” (fragment #554, III, 650). From the outset of Novalis's “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs,” let us recall, nature is the artistic genius behind the creation of the language in which she expresses herself in

poetic terms: “In ihnen [die Figuren der 'wunderlichen' Natur] ahndet man den Schlüssel dieser Wunderschrift, die Sprachlehre derselben” (I, 79). In the end, Novalis's speculative wanderings in pursuit of the origin of nature return to the source whence they originate: “*Die vollendete Spekulation führt zur Natur zurück*” (fragment #702, III, 403, “Das Allgemeine Brouillon”).

The chapter that follows re-articulates once more Novalis's notion of poetic autonomy. Whereas the present chapter considered the poetic autonomy of nature as a macrocosmic reflection of the poetic autonomy of the sign, the following chapter turns to Novalis's cosmological theology of language as a theory of the microcosmic dimension of nature and her language in the context of the universe at large.

## Chapter III

## “Anima Mundi”

*A Study of “Monolog”*

Von der Bearbeitung der transzendentalen Poësie läßt sich eine Tropik erwarten – die die Gesetze der *symbolischen Konstruktion* der transzendentalen Welt begreift.

“Poësie”

Anima mundi, or the “soul of the world,” is understood by early philosophers to be the animating principle, power or spirit, present throughout the material universe, organizing and giving form to the whole and to all its parts, regulating both change and movement.<sup>cix</sup> It is first articulated during the neo-Platonic period, mainly by Plotinus, as a theory of *hypotaxis corporis sub animam*.<sup>cx</sup> Partially derived from the Attic Greek *psyché* [*ψυχή, ψύχειν*], meaning “to breathe,” it imparts the cosmological and theological wisdom that the universe is possessed of the same cognitive faculties as living beings, including consciousness, feeling, perception, memory, character, even reason. Whereas the notion gains traction in medieval philosophy, retaining its allure well into the Renaissance, early modern rationalists, especially Leibniz, wholly dismiss the possibility of an intramundane deity. The Jena Romantics, many of whom believe God to be present in all of nature, on the other hand, believe that God and nature together form an “absolute” as a theory of the interpenetration of the sum of infinite and finite substances within the firmament of Romantic art.

Novalis's contribution to this genealogy is to offer a distinctly poetic conception

of *anima mundi* in his “Monolog” of early February, 1799. Novalis's remarks on what I will refer to as the poetic autonomy of the world are not without precedent. In his Freiberg studies of 1798, he writes,

Statt Materie überhaupt würde ich den Ausdruck Welt setzen. In der metaphysischen Naturlehre muß dafür der *Ausdruck Natur* gesetzt werden. Die Natur ist schon ein Glied der Welt. Die metaphysische Naturlehre ist also ein Theil der metaphysischen Weltlehre. Sie wird also nothwendig erst dann vollständig bearbeitet werden können, wenn die metaphysische Weltlehre vollendet ist. (III, 177)

Novalis postulates that the metaphysics of nature is subordinate to the metaphysics that undergird the materiality of the world. As I understand Novalis, the world is a “lawful” system of aesthetic representation in and through which the metaphysics of nature unveils the aesthetic character of all natural phenomena. If I may venture to speculate, the world could hence be conceived itself as a “higher” still language of artistic representation made to represent the language of nature itself. According to the “Teplitzer Fragmente,” written only months before the final composition of “Monolog,” the world is the universal trope, or symbolic image, of our intellect: “Die Welt ist ein Universaltropus des Geistes – Ein symbolisches Bild desselben,” Novalis emphasizes (II, 600). In fragment #248 of “Vermischte Fragmente III,” likewise written in 1798, let us recall here, he postulates, “Was ist die Natur? – ein encyclopaedischer systematischer Index oder Plan unsers Geistes” (II, 583). Novalis ideates the world as the symbolic image or transcendental perspective from which we see the nature of our inner-selves reflected back onto nature; stated otherwise, the world is the theory of the discursive interrelation between the nature of our inner-selves and our own external view of the nature of things. The interrelationship between our inner- and outer-selves as a fundamental premise of Novalis's philosophical thought is anticipated late 1796 in his observations on Fichte: “Unsre innre Welt muß der äußern durchaus, bis in die kleinsten Theile correspondiren – denn sie sind sich im Gantzen Entgegengesetzt. Was sich dort so entgegengesetzt ist – ist

sich hier umgekehrt entgegengesetzt, oder durcheinander bestimmt” (#293, II, “Bemerkungen zu Fichte”).

In previous chapters, I sought to demonstrate that at the most elementary level of Novalis's aesthetic program the sign represents a work of art created in accordance to laws of its own making – the sign's poetic genius accords of its own nature with the autonomy of Romantic art. Where his semiotic discourse on the laws of language and his scientific discourse on the laws of nature become one set of laws, the “nature” of language and the “language” of nature convey for Novalis one and the same intuition. Thus, in the same manner according to which the poetic autonomy of nature “lawfully” accords with the autonomy of the sign, the poetic autonomy of the world must accord with the autonomy of nature. The following chapter is dedicated to defending this thesis.

## I

While by no means exhaustive, the overview that follows discusses several conceptions of *anima mundi* that deal with fundamental aspects of Novalis's philosophy of language in “Monolog.”<sup>cxix</sup> Although Aristotle himself rejects the notion, the Aristotelian “unity of the intellect” as a theological premise first proposed by the medieval Muslim philosopher Averroes garners attention in the modern period. Averroes famously asserts that human beings universally share the same intellect, or “soul,” such that a newfound autonomy of the human spirit supplants the role of the divine as the perfect image of transcendent reality and enchantment in nature. The interrelation of the human soul and intellect, manifest through universal forms of knowledge, primarily philosophy and mathematics, predetermines the place of every individual living being in the cosmos as a member of its organic unity and harmony. Permutations of the same

theory influence a various group of eccentric writers owing to esoteric inclinations, including Giordano Bruno, Jakob Böhme, the Cambridge Platonists, and the Christian Kabbalists.

From a rationalist, Christian theological standpoint, Leibniz adamantly objects to such theories, for it would categorically contradict the concept of omnipotence to postulate an omnipresent spiritual being that orders and organizes nature by delegation of the powers of God. One of the core philosophical tenets of early modern theology, besides, is that God always chooses the simplest possible means to achieve the greatest possible effects, scilicet, the “law of parsimony” or “Occam's Razor.” Therefore, as Vassányi aptly remarks on Leibniz's behalf, what need could there otherwise exist for an omnipotent and omniscient being to insert an additional medium or link between Himself and Creation? (Vassányi, 5).

Throughout the German philosophical and theological traditions of the eighteenth century, theories of *anima mundi* gradually culminate in the works of speculative theologian Franz von Baader and idealist philosopher F.W.J. von Schelling. With the publication of Baader's *Vom Wärmestoff* of 1787 and Schelling's *Von der Weltseele* of 1798, the laws of thermodynamics and electricity replace Newton's mechanical view of the universe with a notion of “universal attraction” among all known objects of nature. German Romantic literary concepts such as affinity and sympathy finally gain scientific legitimacy as sound aesthetic intuitions concerning the internal determinations of nature.

Novalis no less rebukes the Enlightenment concept of a “clockwork universe.” Based on Johannes de Sacrobosco's early medieval astronomical theory *machina mundi* detailed in his *De sphaera mundi* of 1230, the “clockwork universe” conveys the notion that the world acts autonomously as though a great machine that goes on without the interference of God, indeed, much like a clock without the assistance of its clockmaker.

Novalis imagines instead the poetic imagination as the original machine of the universe; in fragment #70 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon,” he imagines the imaginative origin of the world as follows: “Eine *sinnlich wahrnehmbare*, zur Maschine gewordene Einbildungskraft ist die *Welt*. Die Einbildungskraft ist am leichtesten und ersten zur Welt *gekommen*, oder *geworden* – die *Vernunft vielleicht zulezt*” (III, 252). Enlightenment philosophy projects its own rationality onto its own rational conception of the universe. For Novalis, only poetry is the true autonomous origin of the world and its lawful nature. Elsewhere, in his short collection of fragments of 1798 known as “Poësie,” he writes, “Von der Bearbeitung der transzendentalen Poësie läßt sich eine Tropic erwarten – die die Gesetze der *symbolischen Konstruktion* der transzendentalen Welt begreift” (Fragment #48, II, 536). A tropic is defined as either of two circles on the celestial sphere, one lying in the same plane as the tropic of Cancer, the other in the same plane as the tropic of Capricorn. Tropism, conversely, refers to the involuntary orientation by an organism or one of its parts that involves turning or curving as a positive or negative response to a source of stimulation. Novalis predicates, as though himself the “lawmaker” of the world, the interrelation between the natural laws of biology and medicine and the natural laws of astronomy and cosmology as one single universal law. “A law of its own making,” the logic of his pronouncement comes full circle, literally, being at once center and circumference of the knowledge that engenders Novalis's worldview.

At the outset of the same collection of fragments, Novalis best summarizes the nature of poetry as the cosmological reference of human existence, the ultimate source of sympathy and co-activity among living beings, the perceptive “organ” of the universe, and the “innermost communion” of all finite and infinite substances:

Die Poësie hebt jedes Einzelne durch eine eigenthümliche Verknüpfung mit dem übrigen Ganzen – und wenn die Philosophie durch ihre Gesezgebung die Welt erst zu dem wirksamen Einfluß der Ideen bereitet, so ist gleichsam Poësie der Schlüssel der

Philosophie, ihr Zweck und ihre Bedeutung; denn die Poësie bildet die schöne Gesellschaft – die Weltfamilie – die schöne Haushaltung des Universums. Wie die Philosophie durch System und Staat, die *Kräfte* des Individuums mit den Kräften der Menschheit und des Weltalls *verstärckt*, das Ganze zum Organ des Individuums, und das Individuum zum Organ des Ganzen macht – So die Poësie, in Ansehung des *Lebens*. Das Individuum lebt im Ganzen und das Ganze im Individuum. Durch Poësie entsteht die höchste Sympathie und Coactivität, die innigste *Gemeinschaft* des Endlichen und Unendlichen. (Fragment #31, II, 533, “Poësie”)

## II

Contrary to several accounts in the secondary literature, “Monolog” was written early February of 1799 as an addendum to Novalis's “Dialogen” of late 1798.<sup>cxii</sup> This is made incontrovertibly evident by the fact that the first page of “Monolog” contains the missing page of the sixth dialogue of “Dialogen.” This observance is of significance for two reasons. In the first place, the title “Monolog” was inserted belatedly by Novalis himself, not Tieck or Schlegel, which makes clear that Novalis wrote “Dialogen” and “Monolog” as interrelated texts.<sup>cxiii</sup> There is to my knowledge no published commentary on the thematic or stylistic overlaps between these two texts. In the second place, “Monolog” represents the culmination of Novalis's philosophy concerning the nature of language and the language of nature, and hence could not have been penned prior to the composition of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs.” Novalis himself blue-pencils “Naturgenius” for “die Weltseele” referring to language in general. This is evidence of Novalis's overall philosophical progression between mid-1795 and early 1799 – from his earlier philosophy concerning the nature of language in “Bemerkungen zu Fichte,” through his later philosophy concerning the language of nature in “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs,” to his final cosmological theology of language in “Monolog.”

*Freies Deutsches Hochstift* acquired the manuscript from the Max Warburg autograph collection on the occasion of the 2001 J.A. Stargardt auction in Berlin,

reproduced hereby with permission of the same. According to my own transcription,

Novalis's manuscript reads as follows:

Es ist eigentlich um das Sprechen u[nd] Schreiben eine närrische Sache. Das rechte Gespräch ist ein bloßes Wortspiel. Der lächerliche Irrthum ist nur zu bewundern, daß die Leute meynen – sie sprächen um der Dinge willen. Gerade das Eigenthümliche der Sprache, daß sie ~~⟨sich⟩~~ <sup>⟨sich⟩</sup> ~~blos sich~~ um sich selbst bekümmert weiß keiner. Darum ist sie ~~⟨ein⟩~~ <sup>⟨ein⟩</sup> so wunderbares u[nd] fruchtbares Geheimniß – daß wenn einer blos spricht, um zu sprechen, er gerade die herrlichsten, originellsten Wahrheiten ausspricht. Will er aber von etwas Bestimmten sprechen, so läßt ihn die launige Sprache das lächerlichste u[nd] verkehrteste Zeug sagen. Daraus entsteht auch der Haß, den so manche ernsthafte Leute gegen die Sprache haben. Sie merken ihren Muthwillen, merken aber nicht, daß das verächtliche Schwatzen ~~das~~ die unendlich ernsthafte Seite der Sprache ~~sey~~ ist. Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln ~~ist~~ <sup>ist</sup> sey – Sie machten eine Welt für sich aus – Sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll – eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnißspiel der Dinge. Nur durch ihre Freyheit sind sie Glieder der Natur u[nd] nur in ihren freyen Bewegungen äußert sich ~~der Naturgenius~~ die Weltseele und macht sie zu einem zarten Maaßstab u[nd] Grundriß der Dinge. So ist es auch mit der Sprache – wer ein feines Gefühl ihrer Applicatur, ihres Takts, ihres musicalischen Geistes hat, wer in sich das zarte Wirken ihres ~~G Nat~~ <sup>G Nat</sup> innern Natur vernimmt, und darnach seine Zunge oder seine Hand bewegt, der wird ein Profet seyn, dagegen wer es wohl weis, aber nicht Ohr u[nd] Sinn genug für sie hat, Wahrheiten wie diese schreiben ~~wird~~, aber von der Sprache selbst (zum besten) gehalten u[nd] von den Menschen, wie Cassandra von den Trojanern, verspottet werden wird. Wenn ich damit das Wesen u[nd] Amt der Poësie auf das deutlichste angegeben zu haben glaube, so weiß ich doch, daß es kein Mensch verstehn kann, und ich ganz was albern gesagt habe, weil ich es habe sagen wollen, und so keine Poësie zu stande kömmt. Wie wenn ich aber reden müßte? und dieser Sprachtrieb zu sprechen das Kennzeichen der Eingebung der Sprache, der Wirksamkeit der Sprache in mir wäre? und mein Wille nur auch alles wollte, was ich müßte, so könnte dies ja am Ende ohne mein Wissen u[nd] Glauben Poësie seyn und ein Geheimniß der Sprache verständlich machen? und so wär ich ein berufener Schriftsteller, denn ein Schriftsteller ist wohl nur ein Sprachbegeisterter? – (Appendix A)<sup>exiv</sup>

To offer a preliminary reading of the text cited above, I interpret as follows.

Writers ordinarily judge the spontaneity of free speech to be of lesser merit than the forethought of premeditated writing. Writers ostensibly communicate more effectively than those who speak without deliberation or restraint because the former aptly choose the words that will safely procure the outcome of their own carefully considered reception. Accordingly, the powers of words are ever subject to the powers of the writerly imagination; stated otherwise, the writer is ever the “master” of language. For Novalis, the writer is instead the “jester” [*“Narr”*] of language. Novalis, of course, understands his

own genius to be no exception to the rule. The writer is a mere “language enthusiast,” he concludes, intimating that even his own affinity for words is fetishistic and without higher purpose. In hindsight, Novalis views his own sententious didactic exercise as “foolish,” a mere “game of words.” In the end, “like Cassandra of Troy,” Novalis bears the gift of prophesy, but is no less fated to disbelief by his audience than by his own use of language.

“Called-upon” only to reveal nothing of philosophical value concerning the nature of language, under whose calling and with what higher purpose does Novalis then write? Wittingly tongue-in-cheek, Novalis is very much aware of the conundrum. Only the unnoticing, unattentive philosopher of language is able to convey “the infinitely serious aspects” of language to his audience, he contends. True to his conviction, Novalis writes in a style that emulates the voice of said philosopher, precisely. Novalis carefully contemplates the metaphysics of language seemingly free of deliberation or restraint in simultaneity with the progression of a heady monologue that appears to be without rule or concept. Fragmentary and discontinuous, his prose represents a stark contrast to the analytic, systematic writing style of fragment #11 written in direct response to Fichte's essay on the origin of language. Indeed, this suggests that Novalis's self-demoralizing contains a sense of irony and is not without philosophical discernment. The insight in the narrow sense, as I interpret Novalis, is that writing is epistemologically subordinate to any form of free speech. This is paradoxical because he likewise appears to elevate the status of cultivated poetic expression above that of his own remarks on language.

The paradox begs the central question of the text, namely, what is the relation of speech to writing within the broader scope of Novalis's philosophical discourse and in what manner does poetry transcend said relation? In the sections that follow, I attempt to frame this question in the context of several deeper problems of language I find Novalis

to be raising in the text. If Novalis should claim, for instance, that language engenders a “world onto itself,” would he not appear to contradict himself by using language in order to contemplate what language is? Novalis's conspicuous remark lends itself to at least three cardinal lines of inquiry.

The first is that language is a self-enclosed semiotic system, indicating a fundamental distinction between the language of human communication and language in general. For Novalis, language and what language references itself are altogether unrelated subject matters, such that no speculative philosophy exists that may veritably represent the metaphysics of language in-and-of itself. Contrary to Fichte's ambition, human philosophical discourse cannot achieve the status of a “supra-sensible” semiotics other than through poetry.

The second is that the “tender effects” of speech and writing conceal the inner-workings of language, whose internal coherence and structure are determined by none other than language itself. I turn here to Kleist's 1805 “Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden,” where I observe a number of both philosophical and stylistics parallels to the content of Novalis's “Monolog.” Kleist sketches a vivid phenomenological account of the “obscure, handicrafts of language” in a scene in which he recalls a monologue on the mathematics of Leonhard Euler and Abraham Gotthelf Kästner. Like Novalis, Kleist equates the incalculable expressiveness of the human mind with “higher” inner-workings of language. Relying on the “tools of superfluous appositions, inarticulate sounds, and other gimmicks of language,” Kleist believes that language itself actively works on our behalf with the sole intent and purpose of “fabricating ideas inside the workshop of reason.” At their most radical, Novalis and Kleist believe rational thought owes its *raison d'être* altogether to pleonasm of language.

The third is that speech and writing are the microcosmic reflections of a “higher”

still, macrocosmic order of language that patterns the fabric of nature and her laws.

Whereas sections III and IV revisit the poetic autonomy of language discussed in previous chapters, section V advances the thesis that Novalis's poetry understands itself to be the representation of a living, animating force in the universe that maintains and regulates the manifold unity of the world – *Die Weltseele*.

### III

Early in the text, Novalis compares language in its communicative function to the relationality of mathematical formulae. Language is not the world of things that it represents, but rather the imitation of the infinite series of relations among the things that it visualizes, or better, *schematizes*.<sup>cxv</sup> Let us begin with the premise that symbolic language, inclusive of poetry and mathematics, represents a self-enclosed semiotic system. By this, I mean that symbolic language represents a form of language that is independent of the world of human affairs. Poetic signs and mathematical symbols in-and-of themselves reveal nothing of essence concerning what their symbolic representations designate as such. As is the case of any “Wortspiel,” or “zero-sum game,” we might say, with the gain or loss of symbols, the integral domains of poetry and mathematics remain ever constant from one application to another. As in chess, no differently, the arithmetic potential for win or loss, or more exactly, the precise lower-bound combinatorial “game-complexity” of  $10^{120}$  according to French mathematician Claude Shannon, prevails invariably from game to game. In other words, symbolic representation may well comprise an infinite number of strategies for the purpose of discursive communication among human subjects, none of which, however, define the potential for understanding or even misunderstanding what language is. Language, in the

strictest sense, bears no relationship to our engagement with the phenomenal world, but instead only to language itself.

Any attempt to direct language otherwise, Novalis warns, will only occasion embarrassment to the commanding authority of the speaker. In his essay “Mathematics and the Metaphysicians,” from his 1917 collection *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*, Bertrand Russell falls victim to his own use of language under the exact circumstances Novalis describes:

Pure mathematics consists entirely of assertions to the effect that, if such and such a proposition is true of anything, then such and such another proposition is true of that thing. It is essential not to discuss whether the first proposition is really true, and not to mention what the anything is, of which it is supposed to be true. Both these points would belong to applied mathematics. [...] Thus mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about, nor whether what we are saying is true. (58)

Russell must admit the futility of his endeavor to define the subject of mathematics, precisely because mathematical propositions are without reference to anything other than themselves. They “bespeak nothing definite,” as Novalis would attest. Russell's apodictic assertions of “truth” and “error” represent but mere projections onto the internal coherence of mathematical discourse.

If Novalis should claim, however, that language engenders a world that is *wholly* onto itself, would he not appear to contradict himself by using language in order to contemplate what language is? To borrow from an innovative distinction originally articulated by Gottlob Frege, I would rephrase the question by stating instead that the expression of Novalis's pronouncement purposefully undermines the “sense” of its own “reference.”<sup>cxvi</sup> For Frege, the “reference” [“*Bedeutung*”] of a proper name is the object that it indicates; by contrast, what Frege refers to as the “sense” [“*Sinn*”] of a proper name is what that name expresses. Whereas the reference of a sentence may be deemed simply “true” or “false,” the “thought” [“*Der Gedanke*”] that it expresses may be more or

less ambivalent. “Sense,” thus, is something typically possessed of a name, whether it may or may not have a “reference.” For example, the phrase “the greatest prime number” possesses “sense” on the basis of its intelligibility, despite the fact that such a number does not exist, and as such, lacks any “reference.” It is the case, simply put, that Novalis knowingly speaks of language in a meaningful manner whilst speaking without any reference to language as such.

Language and what language references itself are unrelated subject matters; hence, for Russell, confusion emerges when the former is used to define the latter. Novalis makes a further distinction between the internal counter-play that language in general entails: “daß wenn einer blos spricht, um zu sprechen, er gerade die herrlichsten, originellsten Wahrheiten ausspricht. Will er aber von etwas Bestimmten sprechen, so läßt ihn die launige Sprache das lächerlichste u[nd] verkehrteste Zeug sagen.” In following, the paradox's counter-paradox is disclosed. What one cannot express formally concerning the nature of language can be grasped directly through the language of poetry: “Wenn ich damit das Wesen u[nd] Amt der Poësie auf das deutlichste angegeben zu haben glaube, so weiß ich doch, daß es kein Mensch verstehn kann, und ich ganz was albernes gesagt habe, weil ich es habe sagen wollen, und so keine Poësie zu stande kömmt.” Novalis's admission of failure to occasion a poetic phrase is telling. The uncertain nature of poetic expression would seem exactly “strange” if applied “literally” to any formal definition of language. Conversely, Novalis cannot assail literal speech while obviating figures of speech. As the novices of Saïs learn early on, it is often language itself that willfully obstructs the path leading toward its own comprehension: “man verstehe die Sprache nicht, weil sich die Sprache selber nicht verstehe, nicht verstehen wolle” (I, 84).

I would emphasize on Novalis's behalf that our contemplation of language ought to be intuitive, not analytic, since language is strictly a matter of “sense” without

“reference.” The following fragment, discussed previously in Chapter I, relates the structural semblance of music without lyrics to poetry in a manner that evinces my suggestion: “Höchstens kann wahre Poësie einen *allegorischen* Sinn im Großen haben und eine indirecte Wirkung wie Musik etc. thun” (III, 572). Music without lyrics produces sensations without reference in the same manner of language in general. The arbitrary references of sounds in music may be deemed equivalent to the aleatory manifestations of language in and through which languages of human communication make use of arbitrary symbols.

Poetry, Novalis moreover recognizes, is a special order of language having the potential to be critical of itself in ways that metaphysical language cannot. Except, paradoxically, poetry ceases to be poetry the moment that it essentializes what it seeks to designate – including poetry itself as language. Fragment #280 of his “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” expounds the necessity of self-negation concerning any epistemological determination of the incomprehensible: “Aufgehoben durch den Begriff v[on] Bestimmung, der schon darinn liegt [...] Unbestimmt enthält im Grunde, eine Bestimmung durch den bloßen Begriff Bestimmung – es drückt das nicht aus, was es ausdrücken soll. Es soll Bestimmung ganzlich negiren” (II, 198). The instant that we speak about, reflect on, or otherwise attempt to determine the indeterminacy of language, we will have already failed to determine what language is.

Only through poetry in the guise of philosophy or philosophy in the guise of poetry can one adequately engage the question of language.<sup>cxvii</sup> The genesis of Jena Romantic poetics in Friedrich Schlegel's programmatic ambition to unite philosophy and poetry are worth here citing: “Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive *Universalpoesie*. Ihre Bestimmung ist nicht bloß, alle getrennten Gattungen der Poesie wieder zu vereinigen und die Poesie mit der Philosophie [...] in Berührung zu setzen. Sie

will und soll auch Poesie und Prosa [...] bald *verschmelzen*” (fragment #116, KA II, 182). For Schlegel and Novalis, it is not sufficient to merely combine different genres of writing across literary and philosophical traditions in order to produce universal poetry. Universal poetry dissolves the limits of its own genre to allow for the interpenetration of philosophy into poetry and poetry into philosophy.

In this same vein, Stefan Matuschek discusses how the work performatively undermines the parameters of its own intellectual history.<sup>cxviii</sup> For Matuschek, the internal tension between “redensartlicher Banalisierung” and “andächtiger Erhebung” function as opposing “moods” [“*Stimmungen*”] that signal a dialectical tension between Novalis's Romanticism and the *Naturphilosophie* of the Idealists (205). Critics naively fall prey themselves to the “game” of language that the text itself contrives, he argues, by failing to read the text rhetorically. Steven S. Schaber, for example, finds that Novalis's “Monolog” shares many of the same preoccupations with language and poetic introspection addressed in Hugo von Hofmansthal's 1902 “Brief des Lord Chandos an Francis Bacon.” Whereas the commitment to the introspective world of lyrical perceptions is a positive and even religious experience for Novalis, Hofmansthal depicts visions of art which he himself comes to reject in favor of what he calls “das Leben,” or the world of social interaction, public service, family, and the nation (212-213).

Matuschek concludes that Novalis's playful awareness of his own intellectual-historical determinations fails to sublimate any contradictions and instead illustrates the impossibility of universally defining language:

Strategische Wortspiele, in denen die poetologische Tradition als ein Verhältnisspiel bestimmter Leitmotive aufscheint [...] damit bestimmt sich zugleich der historische Ort des *Monologs* im Kontext der Frühromantik: Es ist eine aus der sprachlichen Analyse und Kritik der Fichteschen Dialektik hervorgegangene praktische Kunst des Theoretisierens. Sie ist virtuos im wortspielerischen Verfugen über große Perspektiven und schärft genau dadurch den Blick, wie in diesen Perspektiven der Fluchtpunkt eines trickhaften Formalismus wirkt. [...] Das ist kein sich selbst aufhebender Widerspruch, sondern das

Problem aller sprachphilosophischen Generalerklärungen. (205-206)

While I agree with Matuschek that the text is plausibly the “site” of a deconstruction of its own intellectual history, thereby undermining Schaber's claims, Matuschek's conclusion runs contrary to Novalis's endorsement of *Universalpoësie*. As I interpret Novalis, one of the central claims of “Monolog” is that poetry transcends contradiction and therefore maintains a privileged status concerning the possibility of universally defining language. Second, and more importantly, the philosophical question of what it means to formally define language using language itself is of greater significance than Matuschek appears to concede.

Edgar Landgraf and O'Brien indeed view the question of the autonomy of language as the central philosophical question of the text. According to O'Brien,

[‘Monolog’] is a summary of the theoretical paradoxes that accompany Hardenberg's analyses of language since the *Fichte Studies*, offers resolution to them, and turns them back upon itself, in order to account for its own use of language – all within the course of a single page. [...] Language is not referential, but autotelic. Secondly, language refuses to be used by any external subject for speaking or writing: it is autonomous. Its own subject, means, and object, not only does language itself speak [...] it speaks *with* itself *about* itself.” (196-197)

It is worth adding Clare Kennedy similarly observes in passing that “our illusory assumption that we control language is inevitable,” making language “the grammatical subject, creating a subtle and uncanny sense that language is animate and autonomous” (63).<sup>cxi</sup> I could not agree more with O'Brien and Kennedy. I would add that the intramediational, intrareferential character of language O'Brien describes could be understood as an allegory of the world according to Novalis.

Edgar Landgraf approaches the same question from a systems-theoretical perspective.<sup>cxx</sup> For Landgraf, the autonomy of language is based on an “operational constructivism” that understands representation, and even “reference,” as derived from the operations of a closed-system – as opposed to an outside asserting itself onto a

cognitive agent or medium. As I myself believe to have similarly articulated, according to Landgraf's view of Novalis's "Monolog," language "cannot be defined as the successful representation or transfer of one system's content by another" (595).

From a radically formalist, non-representational understanding of poetry, here and elsewhere, Novalis achieves an unmediated, sublated expression of his own philosophy. In summary, for Novalis, philosophical, poetic, and mathematical discourses are mere schematizations of their own designations. Fragment #612 articulates the structural semblance of philosophical discourse to mathematical schematization incisively as follows: "Die metafysischen Worte sind gleichsam nur Buchstaben – wie die Formen in die Algeber. Sie sind nur schematische Substanzen" (II, 280). With Fichte's idealist language of the "supra-sensible" sign in mind presumably, Novalis here takes aim at metaphysical language that denies the arbitrary nature of what it designates through words. We are reminded that, like numbers, words and letters are symbols arbitrarily formed. According to arbitrary rules of syntax, likewise, letters are assembled in order to designate the similarly arbitrary designation of words for metaphysical concepts. Words-in-themselves, in short, reference nothing pertaining to the metaphysical nature of things. In this measure, all language is entangled in multiple orders of schematization across layers of symbolic representation. As I understand Novalis, his suggestion is that metaphysics cannot engender a metaphysics of language such that metaphysics is able to theorize itself through language – precisely Fichte's ambition. The "substance" of language consists rather of the complex set of internal operations contained within the inner-workings of language that disclose what we as human subjects refer to as "semantic meaning." With every iteration, language thus articulates a kind of inner-coherence and structure known only to language itself. The section that follows delves into this insight.

## IV

The second reading I offer concerning Novalis's pronouncement that language engenders a world onto itself addresses the inner-workings of language manifest through acts of speech and writing. Referring to language in general, Novalis writes, “wer ein feines Gefühl ihrer Applicatur, ihres Takts, ihres musicalischen Geistes hat, wer in sich das zarte Wirken ihres ~~G~~ Nat innern Natur vernimmt, und darnach seine Zunge oder seine Hand bewegt, *der wird ein Profet seyn.*” As I myself here emphasize, for Novalis, the poet is a spiritual medium in and through which language communicates with itself. Referring to nineteenth century German musical nomenclature, *Applicatur* denotes the art of playing string, key, or wind instruments with one's fingers or hands. According to the passage, the pen is the musical instrument of the hand's *Applicatur*; as it were, language plays the hand that plays the pen that writes poetry. This recursive image, one could say, foreshadows M. C. Escher's lithograph of 1948 “Drawing Hands.” Language finally conducts music with the baton of our tongue in furtherance of keeping the tempo of our speech, such that “we fail to notice” that even our own speech is not our own instrument of language. Novalis once more reverses the hierarchical order between the poet and language as instrumental objects of discursive communication.

Conspicuously, Novalis attributes the most distinguishing feature of language to the secretive manner in which language appears to solely concern itself with itself: “Gerade das Eigenthümliche der Sprache, daß sie ~~(sich)~~ *bloß* sich um sich selbst bekümmert weiß keiner. Darum ist sie ~~(ein)~~ *so* wunderbares u[nd] fruchtbares Geheimniß – daß wenn einer *bloß* spricht, um zu sprechen, er gerade die herrlichsten, originellsten Wahrheiten ausspricht.” To my mind, it is worth asking who the actual monologist of Novalis's soliloquy is. If language “speaks to us” as ourselves instruments of its own

various forms of communication, may it not be plausible to suggest that the monologist of the text is but language itself? “Philosophieren ist eine Selbstbesprechung,” writes Novalis in fragment #22 of “Logologische Fragmente I” (II, 529). Through a kind of immanent representation of the autonomy of language, Novalis allows language to direct and command his attention at the “will” of language itself, much like an autonomous work of art according to Mortitz's view of the same, let us recall from the Introduction. Considering that the addressee of Novalis's rhetorical questions is Novalis himself, it would appear as though his inner-dialogue is the double of the text's own inner-dialogue. Let us recall here also our discussion of the internal doubling and “re-doubling” of language according to fragment #11 in Chapter I. Like the signifying-I, Novalis becomes in a certain manner a stand-in for language itself. Perhaps, to conclude, Novalis is no “prophet,” but instead the puppet of his own ventriloquy.

In his 1805 “Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden,” Kleist sketches a vivid phenomenological account of the obscure “handicrafts of language” throughout the formation of our thoughts during speech. The excerpt I cite echoes many of Novalis's same insights concerning the nature of language in “Monolog,” and moreover, shares numerous stylistic similarities with the same:

Der Franzose sagt, *l'appétit vient en mangeant*, und dieser Erfahrungssatz bleibt wahr, wenn man ihn parodiert, und sagt, *l'idée vient en parlant*. Oft sitze ich an meinem Geschäftstisch über den Akten, und erforsche, in einer verwickelten Streitsache, den Gesichtspunkt, aus welchem sie wohl zu beurteilen sein möchte. Ich pflege dann gewöhnlich ins Licht zu sehen, als in den hellsten Punkt, bei dem Bestreben, in welchem mein innerstes Wesen begriffen ist, sich aufzuklären. Oder ich suche, wenn mir eine algebraische Aufgabe vorkommt, den ersten Ansatz, die Gleichung, die die gegebenen Verhältnisse ausdrückt, und aus welcher sich die Auflösung nachher durch Rechnung leicht ergibt. Und siehe da, wenn ich mit meiner Schwester davon rede, welche hinter mir sitzt, und arbeitet, so erfahre ich, was ich durch ein vielleicht stundenlanges Brüten nicht herausgebracht haben würde. Nicht, als ob sie es mir, im eigentlichen Sinne, sagte; den sie kennt weder das Gesetzbuch, noch hat sie den Euler, oder den Kästner studiert. Auch nicht, als ob sie mich durch geschickte Fragen auf den Punkt hinführte, auf welchen es ankommt, wenn schon dies letzte häufig der Fall sein mag. Aber weil ich doch irgendeine dunkle Vorstellung habe, die mit dem, was ich suche, von fern her in einiger Verbindung steht, so prägt, wenn ich nur dreist damit den Anfang mache, das Gemüt, während die

Rede fortschreitet, in der Notwendigkeit, dem Anfang nun auch ein Ende zu finden, jene verworrene Vorstellung zur völligen Deutlichkeit aus, dergestalt, daß die Erkenntnis zu meinem Erstaunen mit der Periode fertig ist. Ich mische unartikulierte Töne ein, ziehe die Verbindungswörter in die Länge, gebrauche wohl eine Apposition, wo sie nicht nötig wäre, und bediene mich anderer, die Rede ausdehnender, Kunstgriffe, zur Fabrikation meiner Idee auf der Werkstätte der Vernunft, die gehörige Zeit zu gewinnen. (1)

*L'idee vient en parlant* admonishes us to speak freely and witness the gradual formation of our ideas whilst speaking. Like Novalis, Kleist privileges the spontaneous expression of our thoughts, believing that they are subordinate to “higher” inner-workings of language. Relying on the tools of “superfluous appositions, inarticulate sounds, and other gimmicks of language,” language actively works on our behalf with the intent and purpose of “fabricating ideas inside the workshop of reason.” At his most radical, Kleist believes rational thought owes its *raison d'être* to pleonasm of language.

Like Novalis, Kleist writes half in jest, half in earnest. Kleist delivers a piercing philosophical punchline parodying what is already the jocular adage of a French *bon vivant*. Kleist's intuition coincides with Novalis's own intuition that often the most “infinitely serious aspects of language” require the least serious means of expression. We are reminded that the articulation of philosophical truth bears an arbitrary relation to both the language of metaphysics and the metaphysics of language. There is in other words nothing of essence in-or-of language as such that precludes philosophical truth from being expressed through “jest.”

This being said, to be clear, I am not suggesting that Kleist's and Novalis's stylistic innovations or philosophical tactics convey an endorsement of poetic anarchy predating the likes of dadaists Hugo Boll or Emmy Hennings. At the same time that philosophical intuitions determine what Novalis and Kleist write, their intuitions are in no way constrained by any particular style of writing, that is, other than by the use of irony itself. Like the origin of language according to fragment #11, “self-determined” yet “freely

necessary,” their use of language is a philosophy of language articulated in simultaneity with the gradual formation of their philosophy itself.

Kleist's phenomenological account of the gradual formation of his thoughts whilst speaking tellingly begins with him gazing into the brightest light of the room. The light illuminates an obscure preconception [*“dunkle Vorstellung”*] that locates language “within his innermost being.” The scene is ambiguously intended as a parody of Enlightenment thought, or the epiphany of reason through light; mentioned in passing, it is overshadowed by the conversation with Kleist's sister. Kleist and Novalis both suppose that language originates from an undisclosed metaphysical location within our inner-selves, indeed, what could be conceived of as “a world onto itself.”

As they do Novalis, the discursive features of mathematics similarly interest Kleist, except under a different set of superventions. Kleist's conversation with his sister is curious, for how does a monologue on Leonhard Euler and Abraham Gotthelf Kästner yield the mathematical solution to the algebraic problem that is before him? Their spontaneous conversation about two unrelated subject matters somehow unfurls in mathematical epiphany. Wittingly tongue-in-cheek, Kleist is very much aware of the conundrum, and like Novalis, he knowingly becomes the marionette of his own use of language throughout the gradual formation of his thoughts whilst writing.

Elsewhere in the text, Kleist instructs the reader to speak with the intent of self-enlightenment, “ich will, daß du aus der verständigen Absicht sprechest, dich zu belehren.” From this, we learn that ideas revealed in our speech whilst speaking are already present from the onset of our speech. What begins as parody in Kleist ends with what was already a matter worthy of serious philosophical contemplation to begin with. Novalis's insights about speech and writing, similarly, conclude with their own premises. For Novalis and Kleist, to loosely borrow from a phrase by Friedrich Schlegel, language

would appear to understand itself better than those who use it in order to understand what language is.<sup>cxxxi</sup>

## V

For Novalis, speech and writing are the microcosmic representations of a “higher” language still. At stake in Novalis's philosophy of language are at least two competing infinities, the combinatorial infinity of symbolic representation, or speech and writing, and the infinity of the cosmic order of language. Let us contemplate that whilst speaking or writing, our imagination has no limits for the use of language, except where the incommensurability of what our imagination seeks to describe is greater than our imagination itself. The imagination's sublime recognition of an infinity greater than its own is wondrously illustrated in Chapter VIII of *Heinrich von Afterdingen* as follows:

Die Sprache, sagte Heinrich, ist wirklich eine kleine Welt in Zeichen und Tönen. Wie der Mensch sie beherrscht, so möchte er gern die große Welt beherrschen, und sich frey darinn ausdrücken können. Und eben in dieser Freude, das, was außer der Welt ist, in ihr zu offenbaren, das thun zu können, was eigentlich der ursprüngliche Trieb unsers Daseyns ist, liegt der Ursprung der Poesie. (I, 287)

“Language,” Heinrich explains, is essentially a small-scale isomorphism of the world, whereby we become “free” in the measure that we are able to represent the world itself with language. Figuratively speaking, the world at large is “conquered” in the measure that the “small” world of language is “discovered.” Symbols and sounds, or speech and writing, “map” the uncharted territories of the world before us. Heinrich's sense of scale is counter-intuitive, for the discovery of the “small” world of language he imagines reveals the limits of the “larger” world he knows. The “small” world of language would thus appear to represent the world on a scale larger than that which Heinrich otherwise already knows the world to be. Whilst speaking, Heinrich is ostensibly made aware that

the liberties of free expression afforded by speech and writing may conquer the world on any scale. His imaginative use of words expands the limits of his language, and so, in effect, the limits of his world are created anew. This tacit lesson brings to mind A.W. Schlegel's literary theory with regards to the origin of language: "Wir betrachten den Ursprung der Sprache überhaupt nicht als etwas in einen gewissen Zeitpunkt zu Setzendes, sondern in dem Sinne, wie die Sprache noch immer entsteht, so wie die Schöpfung der Welt sich jeden Augenblick erneuert" (396). For Schlegel, for whom the origin of language signals the creation of the world, the world is created anew with every iteration of the sign. This sublime realization, whether Heinrich is aware of it or not, demonstrates that the imagination is able to imagine an infinity greater than its own powers of symbolic representation. Whereas the numerical infinity of symbols and sounds is exceeded by the combinatorial infinity of speech and writing, the latter is exceeded by the infinity of the cosmic order of language. The lesson we learn from Heinrich is that the totality of language attainable by the powers of the imagination is finite relative to the limitless recreation of the world with every iteration of the sign.

We learn, in nuce, that the world is not the limit of our language, but rather that language is the limit of our world. Wittgenstein's philosophy from his 1921 *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* resonates here throughout the subset of philosophical propositions 5.6 – 5.63: "Dass die Welt meine Welt ist, das zeigt sich darin, dass die Grenzen der Sprache (der Sprache, die allein ich verstehe) die Grenzen meiner Welt bedeuten [...] Ich bin meine Welt. (Der Mikrokosmos.)" Like Heinrich, Wittgenstein's subject represents the private microcosm of a world whose limits are subsumed under the macrocosmic expanse of language. This observation is further evinced by the narrator's report of Heinrich's speech. From the reader's second-order of observation, we glimpse a kind of spherical mirror of the novel's "self-portrait," or "inner-dialogue," wherein the

“small” world of language Heinrich imagines becomes the world of the novel we read.

With Heinrich acting as Novalis's mouthpiece, taken a step further still, Heinrich's speech channels Novalis's metaleptic breach from the intra-diegetic to the extra-diegetic frame of the text, or the world of the reader outside the novel inside the novel.<sup>cxvii</sup>

Through a kind of “abstract constructivism,” we might say, language demarcates the limits of the world that it creates in-and-of itself, irrespective of what our own use of language may entail. Where language conceals its limits from our purview, speech and writing signify the structural possibilities of an infinite “world-making”

[“*Welterzeugungskraft*”] beyond our own mundane reality. “The origin of poetry,”

according to Heinrich's revelation, let us recall, emerges “*within* [the worldly] joy of free expression” as an internal view of that which is “*outside* the world.” Heinrich's remark lacks spatial orientation precisely because the world is not a space, but rather a theory of the discursive interrelation between the nature of our inner-selves and our own external view of ourselves reflected back onto nature. Heinrich is himself a microcosm of language, whose allegorical function is to represent the fathomless, unbounded nature of poetry within the inner-world of his own lyrical perceptions, or in the words of the First Apprentice: “Es ist ein geheimnißvoller Zug nach allen Seiten in unserm Innern, aus einem unendlich tiefen Mittelpunkt sich rings verbreitend” (I, 85).

To further elaborate on the pertinence of these observations to “Monolog,” I now wish to turn to Novalis's remarks on language and the power of poetry to unbosom the “spirit” of the world. He writes,

Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln ~~ist~~ sey – Sie machten eine Welt für sich aus – Sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll – eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnißspiel der Dinge. Nur durch ihre Freyheit sind sie Glieder der Natur u[nd] nur in ihren freyen Bewegungen äußert sich ~~der Naturgenius~~ die Weltseele und macht sie zu einem zarten Maaßstab u[nd] Grundriß der Dinge. So ist es auch mit der Sprache.

The passage conveys that language is the “form and measure” of all things, including language itself. In following with the shapes and contours of the “self-portrait” of language according to fragment #11, language creates language in its own image.

Novalis's philosophy of language as that which gives form and measure to the nature of the cosmos is undoubtedly influenced by Schelling's *Von der Weltseele* of 1798. The most significant passage can be found in the final segment of the work; section IV, “Von der positiven Ursachen des Lebens,” accordingly states,

Den Ausbruch großer Erdbeben hat, mit veränderter Farbe des Himmels, Traurigkeit und selbst das Wehklagen mancher Tiere verkündet, als ob dieselbe Ursache, welche Berge verschüttet und Inseln aus dem Meere emporhebt, auch die atmende Brust der Tiere höbe – Erfahrungen, die man nicht erklären kann, ohne *eine allgemeine Kontinuität aller Naturursachen* und *ein gemeinschaftliches Medium* anzunehmen, durch welches allein alle Kräfte der Natur auf das sensible Wesen wirken. Da nun dieses Prinzip die Kontinuität der anorganischen und der organischen Welt unterhält und die ganze Natur zu einem allgemeinen Organismus verknüpft, so erkennen wir aufs neue in ihm jenes Wesen, das die älteste Philosophie als die *gemeinschaftliche Seele der Natur* ahndend begrüßte. (664)

Novalis would agree with Schelling's emphasis that there exists an organizing principle, or better, an “original schema” that signifies the continuity of natural causes in all things – including language itself. Fragment #788 of “Das Allgemeine Brouillon” states thus:

“Alle Wirckungen sind nichts, als Wirckungen Einer Kraft – der Weltseele – die sich nur unter verschiedenen Bedingungen, Verhältnissen und Umständen offenbart – die überall und nirgends ist” (III, 423). The phrase “die überall und nirgends ist” is a literal borrowing from the foreword of the first edition of Schelling's *Von der Weltseele*.<sup>cxxiii</sup>

Novalis elsewhere ascribes the organic condition of matter to the soul of the world in parallel to a teleological scheme [“*Weltplan*”] emanating from a “worldly-being” possessed of reason; in essay on Goethe, he writes: “Den Organism wird man nicht ohne Voraussetzung einer *Weltseele*, wie den *Weltplan* nicht ohne Voraussetzung eines *Weltvernunftwesens*, erklären können. [...] Die individuelle Seele soll mit der *Weltseele*

übereinstimmend werden. Herrschaft der Weltseele und Mittherrschaft der individuellen Seele” (#453, II, 643).

It is telling, moreover, that Schelling should refer to said principle as a “medium.” Schelling's principle actively manifests itself in the passive sensibilities of sentient beings, which for Novalis may have well foreshadowed acts of speech and writing. Schelling's principle fuses the “worlds” of the organic and inorganic into a single “universal organism.” In a letter dated January 12, 1798, to August Wilhelm Schlegel, Novalis describes poetry: “Sie ist von Natur Flüssig – allbildsam – und unbeschränkt – Jeder Reitz bewegt sie nach allen Seiten [...]. Sie wird gleichsam ein organisches Wesen – dessen ganzer Bau seine Entstehung aus dem Flüssigen, seine ursprünglich elastische Natur, seine Unbeschränktheit, seine Allfähigkeit verräth” (I, 656-57). The galvanistic references to fluidity and stimulus link Novalis's concept of poetry to the elasticity, limitlessness, mutability, and organicity of the world-soul according to Schelling. With the idea of the novel as a genre of “organic unity,” similarly, language dissolves the boundaries that divide Heinrich's “small” world of language from the world of the novel itself.

To set forth what may seem like a provocative suggestion, where Schelling clearly did not intend for the verb “*unterhalten*” to mean “converse,” Novalis may have interpreted the passage otherwise. Novalis, for whom the fabric of nature is discursive, elsewhere describes the “life of the universe” [*das Leben des Universums*] as an “eternal conversation of a thousand voices” [*ein ewiges tausendstimmiges Gespräch*] (I, 106-107). Novalis's envisioning of a cosmic “inner-dialogue” whence the language of the world originates is indistinguishable here from the core tenet of Schelling's philosophy.

The second interpretation of the penultimate passage I cite concerns the overall theological framework of the text. As the form and measure of all things mundane,

language replaces the image of God in the universe. Created in the image of language, Novalis becomes the spiritual medium of the world within the firmament of Romantic art. His poem “Wenn nicht mehr Zahlen und Figuren” of 1800 substantiates these assertions:

Wenn nicht mehr Zahlen und Figuren  
Sind Schlüssel aller Kreaturen  
Wenn die, so singen oder küssen,  
Mehr als die Tiefgelehrten wissen,  
Wenn sich die Welt ins freye Leben  
Und in die Welt wird zurück begeben,  
Wenn dann sich wieder Licht und Schatten  
Zu ächter Klarheit werden gatten,  
Und man in Märchen und Gedichten  
Erkennt die wahren Weltgeschichten,  
Dann fliegt vor Einem geheimen Wort  
Das ganze verkehrte Wesen fort. (I, 344)

The poem contemplates a world made in the image of the Jena Romantic imaginary. The creation of the world and the origin of language are one in the “secrecy” of the word *Poësie*. From the acts of revelation that follow from the “inner-dialogue” of the poem, a literary world of its own making unfolds. The poem rejects Heraclitian principles of order and knowledge, championing instead wonder-tales and poems. Aware of the formal elements of its own composition, the poem repudiates the erudition of Enlightenment speech and writing, whose aim is to represent the world numerically and empirically. “A world of its own 'creation',” *Poësie* thus stands in antithetical relation to *logos* [λόγος]. The poem dismisses the word of God as the principle of divine order from which the universe is created according to Genesis 1:3, or similarly the conflation of God with *logos* according to the Gospel of John 1:1. Yearning for the “(re-)coupling” [“*gatten*”] of “light” and “shadows” before the time of God's pronouncement, the poem pleads for “proper clarity” [“*ächter Klarheit*”] against “the light” of reason in the modern age of Enlightenment. This confusion of anachronisms is reminiscent of Novalis's writings on the figure of the Tower of Babel in fragment #251 from his “Bemerkungen zu Fichte.” Novalis's Romantic vision of world history envisages instead manifold beginnings [“*die*

wahren Weltgeschichten”] whose past futurity is created anew with every iteration of the sign.

Novalis's poem moreover dramatizes the encounter between the titular character Faust from Goethe's tragic play of 1808 *Faust I* and the “macrocosmic sign” [“*das Zeichen des Makrokosmus*”]. In the memorable “night” scene, Faust has grown existentially weary of the scientific worldview to which his scholarly erudition has confined him (20-32). In hopes that through speech, like Kleist, he may reveal to himself a deeper knowledge of the world, Faust turns to magic: “Drum hab' ich mich der Magie ergeben, Ob mir durch Geistes Kraft und Mund, Nicht manch Geheimnis würde kund” (19). Haphazardly, he stumbles upon a book lying on his desk displaying an elusive, secretive symbol [“*geheimnisvolles Zeichen*”]. While examining it, a world unfolds before him: “[*Er beschaut das Zeichen*] Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt, Eins in dem andern wirkt und lebt!” (20-21). Like Novalis in the passage I cite from *Heinrich von Afterdingen*, Goethe intends that we glimpse the spherical mirror of Faust's book as a portrait of the literary world we encounter upon reading Goethe's *Faust* itself. Language thus finally “weaves” together Faust's inner- and outer-worlds into a single, living whole, or “organic unity.”

As if elicited by the 7<sup>th</sup> verse of Goethe's 1821 poem “Eins und Alles,” “Weltseele, komm, uns zu durchdringen!” language actively “seeps through,” becoming the “soul” that manifests itself in the natural determination or order of all things mundane (540). Like Heinrich, Faust comes to a renewed aesthetic conception of the world whilst speaking to himself, subsumed under the macrocosmic expanse of the sign.

›Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen;  
Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist tot!  
Auf, bade, Schüler, unverdrossen  
Die ird'sche Brust im Morgenrot!‹ (21)

This “wordly” spiritual revelation through language unveils a new “dawn” in Faust's future exploits, echoing the “awakening day” of the “prophet” in the first cycle of Novalis's “Hymnen an die Nacht.”

### Concluding Remarks

Throughout the present study, I sought to demonstrate that the early works of Novalis together represent a philosophical critique of Romantic reflexivity as a concept of aesthetic autonomy. It is my hope that my findings will make a contribution of lasting value to the most current scholarship on Novalis and Jena Romanticism, as well as offer a new perspective on the question of the autonomy of art which others may find of value in the pursuit of their own intellectual and scholarly interests.

My final conclusion harkens back to Benjamin's first supposition of Romantic art from his 1920 dissertation *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* that “die Reflexion nicht in eine leer Unendlichkeit verlaufe, sondern in sich selbst substanziell und erfüllt sei” (27). I wish to underscore once more that my insights concerning the autonomy of art are not constative statements about Jena Romanticism. Romantic poetry eludes absolute reflexivity in order to signal itself as an ongoing process of self-regeneration in the pursuit of ever greater artistic self-fulfillment and substance. The poetic autonomy of the sign, the language of nature, and the spirit of the world envelops only the beginning – the “first cycle” of Novalis's wellspring of literary and philosophical ambitions post-1798 to create art that critically reflects on itself ever anew.

We may finally ask, moreover, what didactic lesson is there to be learned from Novalis concerning the autonomy of art? I believe Novalis himself compellingly answers this question in fragment #414 of his “Bemerkungen zu Fichte”:

Man ist heut zu Tage zu wenig darauf bedacht gewesen die Leser anzuweisen, wie das Gedicht gelesen werden muß – unter welchen Umständen es allein fallen kann. Jedes Gedicht hat seine Verhältnisse zu den mancherley Lesern und den vielfachen Umständen – Es hat seine eigne Umgebung, seine eigene Welt, seinen eignen Gott. (II, 656)

For Novalis, the autonomy of art is a literary mode that teaches us how to re-envision the

world anew with every act of reading. Through the proper sense of reflection, as we allow the language of poetry to naturally command and direct our attention, we gain ever greater proximity to its inner-nature and the ineffable mystery of Romantic art.



[illegible]

### Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor. *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970.
- Assmann, Jan. *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Badiou, Alain. "L'autonomie du processus esthétique." *Cahiers Marxistes-Leninistes* Vol. 12-13 (1966): 77-78.
- Bayer, Thora Ilin. "Art as Symbolic Form: Cassirer on the Educational Value of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* Vol 40 (2006): 51-64.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*.  
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963.
- . *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*. Frankfurt:  
Suhrkamp, 1991.
- van den Berk, Tjeu. *Jung on Art: The Autonomy of the Creative Drive*. London:  
Routledge, 2012.
- Bertram, Georg W. "Autonomie als Selbstbezüglichkeit: Zur Reflexivität in den  
Künsten." *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* Vol 55  
(2010): 223-234.
- Birth Hoesch, Monica. "I am all that is, that was, and that shall be, and no mortal has  
lifted my veil: Kant, Novalis, Goethe, and the Veiled Goddess Isis." Johns  
Hopkins University Doctoral Dissertation, 2005.
- Bowie, Andrew. *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas*. London:  
Polity, 2003
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Arbeitsjournal*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973.
- Briggs, John and F. David Peat. *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory*

- and the Science of Wholeness*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.
- Bürger, Peter. *Theorie der Avantgarde*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995.
- . *Theory of the Avantgarde*. Translated by Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Calhoon, Kenneth. "Language and Romantic Irony in Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*." *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* Vol. 56 (1981): 51-61.
- Callanan, J.J. "Kant on Analogy." *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* Vol 16 (2008): 747-772.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *Ernst Cassirer, Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- . *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1923.
- Chaouli, Michel. *The Laboratory of Poetry: Chemistry and Poetics in the Work of Friedrich Schlegel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Class, Monika. 2014 "K. P. Moritz's Case Poetics: Aesthetic Autonomy Reconsidered." *Literature and Medicine* Vol 32 (2014): 46–73.
- Crowther, Paul. "Art and Autonomy." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol 21 (1981): 12-21.
- . "Indifferent to Intentions: The Autonomy of Artistic Meaning." In Hullat's *Aesthetic and Artistic Autonomy*.
- Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol 61 (1964): 571:584.
- Davies, Stephen. "Beardsley and the Autonomy of the Work of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol 63 (2005): 179-183.
- Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigee Books, 1934.
- Dickie, George. "Aesthetics: An Introduction." *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol 70 (1973): 303-307.

- Dissandro, Carlos. *Líricia de pensamento: Hölderlin y Novalis*. La Plata: Fundacion Decus, 2011.
- Durkheim, Émile. *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*. Paris: Revue philosophique, 1919.
- Eichendorff, Joseph Freiherr von. *Werke*. Frankfurt: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1998.
- Egan, Herman D. *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition*. Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 2010.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämtliche Werke*. Berlin: Verlag von Veit und Comp, 1845.
- Foucault, Michel. "Authorship: What is an Author?" *Screen* Vol. 20 (1979): 13-34.
- Frank, Manfred. *Das Problem "Zeit" in der Deutschen Romantik Zeitbewusstsein und Bewusstsein von Zeitlichkeit in der Frühromantischen Philosophie und in Tiecks Dichtung*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1990.
- . *Einführung in die Frühromantische Ästhetik. Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989.
- . "Fragments of a History of the Theory of Self-Consciousness from Kant to Kierkegaard." *Critical Horizons* Vol 5 (2004): 53-136.
- Frank, Manfred and Gerhard Kurz. "Ordo inversus. Zu einer Reflexionsfigur bei Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist und Kafka." In *Geist und Zeichen: Festschrift für Arthur Henkel*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1977.
- . *Unendliche Annäherung. Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997.
- Gasperi, Carlos. "On the Question of Taste in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility." *Food and History* Vol. 8 (2011): 199-212.
- von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Goethes Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden*.

Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1948.

Goetschel, Willi. "Reviewed Work: Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik.

Vorlesungen by Manfred Frank." *The German Quarterly* Vol. 64 (1991): 387-388.

Goodman, Nelson. *Language of Art: An Approach to the Theory of Symbols*.

Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1968.

Guyer, Paul. "Disinterestedness and desire in Kant's aesthetics." *The Journal of*

*Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol 36 (1978): 449-460.

Haering, Theodor. *Novalis als Philosoph*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1954.

Hartung, Günter. "Die Autonomie der Kunst. Grundzüge der Brechtschen Ästhetik." In

*Der Dichter Bertolt Brecht: zwölf Studien*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1973.

Haskins, Casey. "Kant and the Autonomy of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art*

*Criticism* Vol 47 (1989): 43-54.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang,

1995.

Hegener, Johannes *Die Poetisierung der Wissenschaften bei Novalis: dargestellt am*

*Prozess der Entwicklung von Welt und Menschheit: Studien zum Problem*

*enzyklopädischen Welterfahrens*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1975

Heidegger, Martin. *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1950.

———. *Heidegger Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984.

Helfer, Martha. *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German*

*Critical Discourse* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Hermerén, Göran. *Aspects of Aesthetics*. Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1983.

Hitchcock, A. S. "The Type Concept in Systematic Botany" *American Journal of Botany*

Vol 8 (1921): 251-255.

- Hörisch, Jochen. *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft der Poesie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989.
- Hulatt, Owen. *Aesthetic and Artistic Autonomy*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2007.
- Ingarden, Roman. *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst*. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1962.
- Jackson, Frank. "Epiphenomenal Qualia." *The Philosophical Quarterly* Vol 32 (1982): 127-136.
- Janik, Allan. "'Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins': Wittgenstein and Trakl." *Modern Austrian Literature* Vol 23 (1990): 55-70.
- Johnson, Laurie Ruth. *The Art of Recollection in Jena Romanticism: Memory, History, Fiction, and Fragmentation in Texts by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.
- Jones, Kristin Alise. "Revitalizing Romanticism: Novalis' Fichte Studien and the Philosophy of Organic Nonclosure." Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2013.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Immanuel Kant: Werke in zwölf Bänden*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- Kennedy, Claire. *Paradox, Aphorism and Desire in Novalis and Derrida*. Cambridge: Maney Publishing for the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2008.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Works of Love*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009.
- . *Fear and Trembling*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Kleist, Heinrich von. *Heinrich von Kleist: Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1978.
- Kneller, Jane. *Novalis: Fichte Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Korsmeyer, Carolyn. "Wittgenstein and the Ontological Problem of Art." *Pacific*

*Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 59 (1978): 152-161.

Krauss, Sebastian. *Die Genese der autonomen Kunst: Eine historische Soziologie der Ausdifferenzierung des Kunstsystems*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014.

Kuzniar, Alice. *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin*. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1987

———. “Reassessing Romantic Reflexivity – The Case of Novalis.” *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* Vol 63 (1988): 77-86.

Landgraf, Edgar. “Comprehending Romantic Incomprehensibility. A Systems-Theoretical Perspective on Early German Romanticism.” *MLN* 121 (2006): 592-616.

Lamarque, Peter. “Wittenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice.” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 50 (2010): 375-388.

Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie*. Vol. 6 of *Werke*. Munich: Hanser, 1970.

Lewis, Peter. “Wittgenstein on Words and Music.” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 17 (1977): 111–121.

Luhmann, Niklas. *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995.

Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Marcuse, Herbert. *Die Permanenz der Kunst: Wider eine bestimmte marxistische Ästhetik*. Munich: Hanser, 1977

———. “Über den affirmativen Charakter der Kultur.” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* Vol. 6 (1936): 54-94.

Margulis, Lynn and Dorion Sagan. *What is Life?* Oakland: University of California Press, 2000.

Matuschek, Stefan. “Über Novalis' 'Monolog' und kritische Erbauung.” *Athenäum* Vol 6

(1996): 197-206.

Minder, Robert. *Glaube, Skepsis und Rationalismus. Dargestellt aufgrund der autobiographischen Schriften von Karl Philipp Moritz*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974.

Menke, Christoph. *Autonomie und Befreiung – Studien zu Hegel*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2018.

———. *Die Souveränität der Kunst – Ästhetische Erfahrung nach Adorno und Derrida*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991.

Menninghaus, Winfried. *Unendliche Verdoppelung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987.

von Molnár, Géza. “Novalis's 'Fichte-Studies': The Foundations of his Aesthetics.” Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970.

———. *Romantic Vision, Ethical Context: Novalis and Artistic Autonomy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

———. “The Composition of *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*: A Reevaluation.” *PMLA* Vol 85 (1970): 1002-1014.

Moritz, Karl Philipp. *Karl Philipp Moritz: Werke in zwei Bänden*. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1973.

Moss, Gregory. *Ernst Cassirer and the Autonomy of Language*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.

von Mücke, Dorothea. “Goethe’s Metamorphosis: Changing Forms in Nature, the Life Sciences, and Authorship.” *Representations* Vol 95 (2006): 27-53.

Nancy, Jean-Luc and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

Nassar, Dalia. *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German*

- Romanticism, 1795-1804*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden*. München: Hanser, 1954.
- Novalis. *Novalis: Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960-1977.
- O'Brien, William Arctander. *Novalis: Signs of Revolution*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Plumpe, Gerhard. *Asthetische Kommunikation der Moderne 2: Von Nietzsche bis zur Gegenwart*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1993.
- Pöggeler, Otto. "Reviewed Work: Novalis als Philosoph by Theodor Haering." *Philosophische Rundschau* Vol 4 (1956) 58-65.
- Pradler, Andreas. *Das monadische Kunstwerk Adornos Monadenkonzeption und ihr ideengeschichtlicher Hintergrund Epistemata Literaturwissenschaft*. Munich: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
- Roberts, David. "The Paradox of Form: Literature and Self-reference." *Poetics* Vol. 21 (1992): 75-91.
- Romesín, Humberto Maturana and Francisco J. Varela. *De máquinas y seres vivos: una teoría sobre la organización biológica*. Buenos Aires: Lumen 2003.
- Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Russell, Bertrand. *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*. London: Routledge, 1917
- Salomon, Neil. *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999.
- Schaber, Steven. "Theory of the Work of Art as Hieroglyph" *The Germanic Review*:

- Literature, Culture, Theory* Vol 48 (1973): 35-43.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *Friedrich Schiller: Sämtliche Werke*. Munich: Hanser, 1962.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. Munich: F. Schöningh, 1958.
- Schneewind, Jerome. *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Schreiber, Elliot. *The Topography of Modernity: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Space of Autonomy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012.
- Snelders, H. A. M. "Romanticism and Naturphilosophie and the Inorganic Natural Sciences 1797-1840: An Introductory Survey." *Studies in Romanticism* Vol 9 (1970): 193-215.
- Souriau, Maurice. *Histoire du Parnasse*. Paris: Editions Spes, 1929.
- Stoljar, Margaret Mahony. *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Stolnitz, Jerome. "On the Significance of Lord Shaftesbury in Modern Aesthetic Theory." *The Philosophical Quarterly* Vol 11 (1961) 97-113.
- . "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness.'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol 20 (1961): 131-143.
- Strum, Arthur. "Reviewed Work: The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida by Christoph Menke." *Monatshefte* Vol. 94 (2002): 135-137.
- Stulberg, Robert. "Heidegger and the Origin of the Work of Art: An Explication." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 32 (1973): 257-265.
- Tantillo, Astrida Orla. *The Will To Create: Goethe's Philosophy of Nature*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Theories of the Symbol*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Trop, Gabriel. "Novalis and the Absolute of Attraction." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic*

*Studies* Vol 50 (2014): 276-294.

Vassányi, Miklós. *Anima Mundi: The Rise of the World Soul Theory in Modern German Philosophy*. Berlin: Springer, 2011.

Virgil. *Georgics*. Trans. Robert Hoblyn. Oxford: W. Phillips, 1825.

Wiora, Walter. "Der Grundbegriff Kunstwerk. Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Klärung." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* Vol. 31 (2000): 7-51.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003.

———. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*. London: Kegan Paul, 1922.

Wackenroder, Wilhelm. *Wilhelm Wackenroder: Werke und Briefe*. Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1967.

Warnach, Viktors. *Agape. Die Liebe als Grundmotiv der neutestamentlichen Theologie*. Ostfildern: Patmos, 1951.

Waterman, Walter. "Kant's Lectures on the Philosophical Theory of Religion." Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009.

Weitz, Morris. "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Criticism* Vol. 15 (1956): 27-35.

Wingerts Zahn, Christof. *Karl Philipp Moritz: Sämtliche Werke*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.

Woodmansee, Martha. "The Interests in Disinterestedness Karl Philipp Moritz and the Emergence of the Theory of Aesthetic Autonomy in Eighteenth-Century Germany." *Modern Language Quarterly* Vol 45 (1984): 22-47.

Ziolkowski, Theodore. "Reviewed Work: Novalis: Signs of Revolution by Wm. Arctander O'Brien." *Modern Philology* Vol 94 (1996): 240-246.

- i I owe this finding to Haskins, footnote #2 (52).
- ii See Maurice Souriau's 1929 *Histoire du Parnasse* (466).
- iii Besides Paul Kluckhohn's findings (see I, 2) based on a note on one of Novalis's letter to August Wilhelm Schlegel (IV, 834) linking the name to Novalis's ancestry *de Novali* or *von der Rode*, meaning "cleared land," William Arctander O'Brien suggests Novalis dropped the "de" in order to retain a quiet trace of his lineage, while avoiding the conspicuous aristocracy and awkward parachresis of "von Novali" (2-3). Carlos Dissandro plausibly suggests in his *Lirica de pensamiento: Hölderlin y Novalis* [The Lyric of Thought: Hölderlin and Novalis] that Novalis adopted the name from Virgil's *Georgics*, book I, verses 71-72: "Alternis idem tonsas cessare novalis / et segnem patiere situ direscere campum" (cited in Dissandro, 125). I likewise suggest book I, section 29 of Marcus Terentius Varro's *De Re Rustica*, "Novalis dicitur ubi satum fuit, ante quam secunda aratione renovetur," or the succession of corn and fallow in successive years according to Pliny, "Novalis est, quod alternis annis seritur." (See Robert Hoblyn's notes to his translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, 35). In both cases, "Novalis" signifies "the land which has formerly been under the plough, before it becomes subject to a renewal by fresh ploughing" (35-36). Novalis may have come across the term during his rigorous immersion in the Classics at the *Gymnasium* in Tennstedt. All of the above inform the first appearance of the name Novalis as the author of *Blüthenstaub*, whose opening epigram memorably states, "Freunde, der Boden ist arm, wir müssen reichlichen Samen Ausstreun, daß uns doch nur mäßige Erndten gedeihn" (I, 412).
- iv In his 2000 essay "Der Grundbegriff Kunstwerk. Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Klärung," Walter Wiora's genealogy of the artwork as its own concept refers almost exclusively to German literature and music.
- v In section XVI, Lessing writes, "Wenn es wahr ist, daß die Malerei zu ihren Nachahmungen ganz andere Mittel, oder Zeichen gebraucht, als die Poesie; jene nämlich Figuren und Farben in dem Raume, diese aber artikulierte Töne in der Zeit; wenn unstreitig die Zeichen ein bequemes Verhältnis zu dem Bezeichneten haben müssen: So können neben einander geordnete Zeichen, auch nur Gegenstände, die neben einander, oder deren Teile neben einander existieren, auf einander folgende Zeichen aber, auch nur Gegenstände ausdrücken, die auf einander, oder deren Teile auf einander folgen. [...] Die Malerei kann in ihren koexistierenden Kompositionen nur einen einzigen Augenblick der Handlung nutzen, und muß daher den prägnantesten wählen, aus welchem das Vorhergehende und Folgende am begreiflichsten wird. Eben so kann auch die Poesie in ihren fortschreitenden Nachahmungen nur eine einzige Eigenschaft der Körper nutzen, und muß daher diejenige wählen, welche das sinnlichste Bild des Körpers von der Seite erwecket, von welcher sie ihn braucht" (101-102).
- vi See here Monika Class's 2014 "K. P. Moritz's Case Poetics: Aesthetic Autonomy Reconsidered."
- vii While the Jena Romantic period in the history of German literature is often referred to by German-speaking scholars as *Die Frühromantik*, I prefer instead to overtly distinguish Jena Romanticism from other early German artistic movements taking place contemporaneously in Dresden, Heidelberg, and Berlin.
- viii I owe my summary of Plumble to Matthew Rampley's "Social Theory and the Autonomy of Art: the Case of Niklas Luhmann" in Hullat's same book from 2013 referenced earlier (228-229).
- ix See David Roberts's summary in his 1992 "The Paradox of Form: Literature and Self-reference" whose language I am partially indebted to (81-82). In my own summary, I emphasize that works of art are themselves a means of observing society. For a systems-theoretical, similarly "Luhmannian" study on the genealogy of the concept "autonomy of art," see Sebastian Krauss's *Die Genese der autonomen Kunst: Eine historische Soziologie der Ausdifferenzierung des Kunstsystems*.
- x Nietzsche writes "nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt" in section 6 of the 1886 edition of his work titled *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Oder: Griechenthum und Pessimismus* (40). The phrase "will to power" [*Wille zur Macht*] first appears in Nietzsche's 1883 *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, specifically, "Von der Selbst-Überwindung": "Wille zur Wahrheit« heißt ihr's, ihr Weisesten, was euch treibt und brünstig macht? Wille zur Denkbarekeit alles Seienden: also heiße ich euren Willen! Alles Seiende wollt ihr erst denkbar machen: denn ihr zweifelt mit gutem Mißtrauen, ob es schon denkbar ist. Aber es soll sich euch fügen und biegen! So will's euer Wille. Glatt soll es werden und dem Geiste untertan, als sein Spiegel und Widerbild. Das ist euer ganzer Wille, ihr Weisesten, als ein Wille zur Macht; und auch wenn ihr vom Guten und Bösen redet und von den Wertschätzungen" (369).
- xi See Carolyn Korsmeyer's 1978 "Wittgenstein and the Ontological Problem of Art," Peter Lamarque's 2010 "Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice," and Peter B. Lewis's 1977 "Wittgenstein on Words and Music."
- xii See Morris Weitz's 1956 "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics."
- xiii See Tjeu van den Berk's 2012 *Jung on Art: The Autonomy of the Creative Drive*.
- xiv I largely owe this summary of Heidegger's essay to Robert B. Stulberg's 1973 "Heidegger and the Origin of the Work of Art: An Explication."
- xv See "On the Question of Taste in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" from 2011 in *Food and History*.
- xvi In Durkheim's terminology, this refers to "*fait social*," or literally, "social fact." See his 1895 *Rules of Sociological*

*Method* ["*Les règles de la méthode sociologique*"].

xvii See Andreas Pradler's 2003 study on Adorno's theory of the autonomy of the artwork *Das monadische Kunstwerk: Adornos Monadenkonzeption und ihr ideengeschichtlicher Hintergrund*.

xviii See also Menke's 2018 *Autonomie und Befreiung – Studien zu Hegel* from Surhkamp.

xix I largely owe these summaries to Bruno Bosteels's introductory remarks to his 2013 translation of Badiou's book. See "An introduction to Alain Badiou's 'The autonomy of the aesthetic process'" (1-5).

xx See Morris Weitz' 1956 "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics."

xxi See here Stephen Davies's 2005 "Beardsley and the Autonomy of the Work of Art."

xxii More exactly, according to Bruce Prescott's essay "The Aesthetics of Ernst Cassirer," the concept of symbolic form in Cassirer originates in J.W. von Goethe's and F.W.J. Schelling's aesthetic theories and is later appropriated by Hegel.

xxiii See Cassirer's essay "Language and Art II," in *Ernst Cassirer, Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945* (195).

xxiv For further studies on this topic, see Gregory S. Moss's 2015 *Ernst Cassirer and the Autonomy of Language* and Thora Ilin Bayer's 2006 "Art as Symbolic Form: Cassirer on the Educational Value of Art." According to Bayer, the three principal sources of Cassirer's aesthetics are his chapter on art in his *Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*, two essays on the educational value of language titled "Language and Art I and II," and his brief study *Sprache und Mythos*.

xxv For a study of this topic in Hegel's aesthetics, see Georg W. Bertram's 2010 "Autonomie als Selbstbezüglichkeit: Zur Reflexivität in den Künsten." Bertram contends Nelson Goodman's notion of exemplification corrects the shortcomings of Hegel's understanding of aesthetic autonomy.

xxvi See entries for "autonomy," "auto-," and "-nomy," in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

xxvii See entry for "autopoiesis" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

xxviii See here again Helfer (106-107).

xxix It is unclear what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy mean with reference to "production, absolutely speaking," and therefore, their further distinction between the "truth" of literature and the "truth" of "poiesy's production of itself" remains likewise vague. I disagree that autopoiesis subsequently constitutes "the ultimate [...] closure of the speculative absolute," as I discuss in Chapter III. Finally, their distinction between the "absolute of literature" and the "literary absolute" in their view of Jena Romantic aesthetics remains unclear, or at the very least, unsubstantiated.

xxx Quoting Paul Kluckhohn, von Molnár writes in his dissertation: "Gerade weil diese Aufzeichnungen die Anverwandlung der Fichtischen Philosophie in ihren einzelnen Stadien bis zur Selbstfindung des Autors sichtbar machen, haben sie ihren Eigenwert und verdienen für sich allein betrachtet zu werden, was bisher noch nicht geschehen ist, da alle Darstellungen von Hardenbergs Philosophie die Studien mit den späteren Fragmenten vermischen" (22).

xxxi For greater detail on Mähl's work, including his notes on the watermarks and biographical information he relied upon, see his introduction to the *Fichte-Studien* in the Samuel edition (II, 29-103).

xxxii I owe this summary in part to Alice Kuzniar, in particular, her observations on reciprocity. In her review von Molnár's study, she makes a similar assessment of the first half of his study (581).

xxxiii I owe this formulation entirely to Kuzniar (581).

xxxiv I owe these last two remarks to Frederick Amrine (370).

xxxv See Novalis (II, 30).

xxxvi The concept "autonomy," moreover, is sparsely referenced 12 times throughout his 227 page study including notes.

xxxvii I cannot overstate my gratitude to Martha Helfer for this fundamental insight, as well as Gabriele Rommel for confirming it. It is the basis of the entire present study.

xxxviii I will explicate this interpretation in greater detail throughout Chapter I.

xxxix Kuzniar identifies a third shortcoming. She writes, "perhaps the most dynamic aspect to both Novalis's and Fichte's theories, as von Molnár presents them, is their presupposition that the self is only potential and always receptive, its unity never permanent but repeatedly reconstituted. Because of this fundamental premise, it seems contradictory, at the very least, confusing to the reader, that von Molnár in passing also speaks of the "noumenal self" (196) and of the "preconscious" or noncognitive "act of self-positing" (36, 41). If Novalis and Fichte are true to the logic of the virtual self, Kuzniar asks, on what basis can consciousness know of either a noumenal or preconscious self? I believe she is referring to Molnár's pronouncement that "[Novalis's] awareness of self and its powers to bridge the gap between subject and object is his consistent point of departure and return. The self marks the division into the basic dichotomy from which all other divisiveness stems and, in this capacity, the self also holds the key to its resolution" (xxxiii), where in turn, "the transcendental approach offers a possibility for avoiding the mutual exclusion of the consciously real and the reality referred to" (195). She indicates that this very question is raised and partially answered in the studies by Frank in his 1990 *Das Problem 'Zeit' in der deutschen Romantik* and Hörisch in his 1989 *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft der Poesie*.

xl O'Brien is alluding here to Novalis's own phrase "free necessity" in his semiotic theory according to fragment #11.

- xli See Rorty's 1979 *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (171).
- xlii The Samuel edition under no equivocal terms isolates the two, and to be sure, the title of "Ankedoten" is clearly stated in the original manuscript (see the facsimile reproduced on pages 566-567 of the Samuel edition). Because her translations are more or less randomly compaginated with the Samuel edition, at times, this makes her translations exceptionally difficult to assess. No less odd is that she herself states in the preface of her work that her translations are based on the second and third volume of the Samuel edition. The final section of her study "final fragments" can be especially misleading to the unknowing reader, since it essentially consists of none other than an arbitrarily numbered series of fragments selected at random by Stoljar from Novalis's several hundred pages of notes between 1799 and 1800 in the third volume of the Samuel edition. The title of this section presumably originates from Richard Samuel's and Gerhard Schulz's reference to these notes as the "last available" fragments in possession of the secondary literature (III, 527). One is left to wonder whether Steven Paul Scher in fact thoroughly reviewed Stoljar's translations after his final assessment of her work (see back cover of Stoljar's translation).
- xliii I speculate that this shift in Novalis's literary theory is partially consequence of the emerging discourse on hieroglyphs in the Jena Romantic cultural imaginary around 1796. For instance, Novalis's last notes were written around the same time he became acquainted with Ludwig Tieck, presumably also the time he read *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*. In "Von zwei wunderbaren Sprachen und deren geheimnisvoller Kraft" from their collection of essays on art, W. H. Wackenroder and Tieck write, "Die Kunst ist eine Sprache ganz anderer Art als die Natur. [...] Sie redet durch Bilder der Menschen und bedient sich also einer Hieroglyphenschrift, deren Zeichen wir dem Äußern nach kennen und verstehen. Aber sie schmelzt das Geistige und Unsinnliche, auf eine so rührende und bewundernswürdige Weise, in die sichtbaren Gestalten hinein, daß wiederum unser ganzes Wesen und alles, was an uns ist, von Grund auf bewegt und erschüttert wird" (192). Tieck's and Wackenroder's views do not align with Novalis's position that nature is "purely" poetic in form, for art "speaks" a language of a different kind. Otherwise, as for Novalis, art conveys meaning indirectly, or belatedly, to be exact ["*dem Äußern nach*"]. The function of art is to "translate" the unrepresentable ["*das Geistige und Unsinnliche*"] through sensible forms. The kind of "free, undetermined, and immediate" representation [*Darstellung*] that is characteristic of the Romantic allegory is no less characteristic of hieroglyphic pictographs. In this manner, Tieck and Wackenroder anticipate Novalis's pronouncements on allegory as a literary form of art.
- xliv Jerome Stolnitz attributes the import of the concept of "disinterestedness" into aesthetic discourse to Lord Shaftesbury's 1711 *Characteristics*; see his 1961 "On the Significance of Lord Shaftesbury in Modern Aesthetic Theory" and "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness'" of the same year.
- xlvi See here Paul Guyer's 1978 "Disinterestedness and Desire in Kant's Aesthetics."
- xlvii For further reading on the eccentric character that was Moritz's father, see Christof Wingerts Zahn's biographical notes in his edition of Moritz's collected works from 2008 (771).
- xlviii Søren Kierkegaard's contemplations on self-sacrifice in his 1847 *Works of Love* ["*Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*"] amplify the theological resonance of Moritz's disposition in like manner: "the work of praising love must be done outwardly in self-sacrificing unselfishness. Through self-denial a human being gains the ability to be an instrument by inwardly making herself into nothing before God" (364) Of course, Kierkegaard publishes his work more than 60 years after Moritz publishes his own essay. I reference the passage only because it uses Moritz's language verbatim, and hence amplifies the theological associations in Moritz's ascetic disposition. Incidentally, the self-sacrifice of the individual as a form of ascent into higher existential realms of ethics is a recurring theme in both Moritz and Kierkegaard. In Kierkegaard's 1843 *Fear and Trembling* ["*Frygt og Bæven*"], to name one example, Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia in order to secure the passage of his troops from Aulis to Troy represents Agamemnon's ascension from the realm of customary social mores to the realm of "the universal."
- xlix I suspect Moritz's notion of "unselfish love" as a form of ecstatic communion with the divine can be traced to the German mystic tradition. Herman D. Egan discusses the role of "unselfish love" in the writings and practices of the famous Cistercian-Benedictine convent at Hefta, Saxony. See his 2010 *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition* (141). Robert Minder investigates the influence of German mysticism on Moritz's writings in his 1974 *Glaube, Skepsis und Rationalismus. Dargestellt aufgrund der autobiographischen Schriften von Karl Philipp Moritz*.
- 1 See here Viktor Warnach's 1951 *Agape. Die Liebe als Grundmotiv der neutestamentlichen Theologie*. According to Saint Paul's letters to the Ephesians, *agape* supersedes any epistemology: "and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (New International Version, Ephesians 3:19, my emphasis). Again, in my view, Moritz's aesthetic theory is less as a philosophy of art than it is a displaced theology.
- li Although Kant's *Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre* do not appear until 1817, it can be argued that the ideas therein discussed are already present in the First Critique. See Walter Waterman's "Kant's Lectures on the

Philosophical Theory of Religion.”

- lii According to Romans 13:10 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version* from 2018: “Love is the fulfilling of the law [of God]” (1632). Referring back to Kierkegaard, who writes in the context of this biblical passage, one could interpret art's “will” as itself a theology, namely, where the “love” of art signifies “to fulfill art's laws according to art's will.”
- liii Although Kant's critique of teleological judgment is strictly concerned with the idea of ends or purposes in nature, I believe that Kant's definition of *Zweckmässigkeit* as “the causality of a concept with respect to its object” according to section 61 onward is applicable here (304). My own suspicion is that Kant may have appropriated the concept from Moritz's aesthetics in the first place.
- liv The effort to close the gap between moral and aesthetic philosophy persists well into the twentieth century. Wittgenstein, for instance, no less couples ethics and aesthetics in his *Tractatus*: “6.421 Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins.” For further reading, see Allan Janik's 1990 “Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins: Wittgenstein and Trakt.”
- lv Fragment #62 similarly states, “Man hat nur so viel Moral, als man Philosophie und Poesie hat” (261); fragment #33 states, “Das Moralische einer Schrift liegt nicht im Gegenstande, oder im Verhältnis des Redenden zu den Angeredeten, sondern im Geist der Behandlung. Atmet dieser die ganze Fülle der Menschheit, so ist sie moralisch. Ist sie nur das Werk einer abgesonderten Kraft und Kunst, so ist sie es nicht.” (258).
- lvi See here Jerome B. Schneewind's 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter on “Kant in the History of Moral Philosophy” from his 1998 *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*.
- lvii I wish to acknowledge that I owe my diction here, in part, to the *Oxford English Dictionary* entries for “autonomy” and “heteronomy” respectively.
- lviii I owe this initial insight to Haskins, *Ibid*. I suspect we may understand the technicalities differently, since Haskins does not entirely explain what the technicalities are.
- lix I partially owe this insight to Haskins, *Ibid*. For Haskins, the passage also makes clear that Kant does not consider the free activity of the imagination as restricted to even *the production* of fine art. In my view, this is only half-correct, because Kant does restrict the free activity of the imagination's ability to produce art in the case of the genius, i.e. the free activity of the imagination is undermined, if not obviated, by the powers of “nature” over the artistic production. See endnote lxi.
- lx I owe this insight to Haskins, *Ibid*.
- lxi For an extensive analysis of Kant's concept of analogy, see J.J. Callanan's 2008 “Kant on Analogy.”
- lxii See full citation: “Da das Talent, als angeborenes produktives Vermögen des Künstlers, selbst zur Natur gehört, so könnte man sich auch so ausdrücken: Genie ist die angeborene Gemütsanlage (ingenium), durch welche die Natur der Kunst die Regel gibt” (241).
- lxiii In the second edition, the same passage reads, “[Die] Handlung der Freiheit, durch welche die Form [...] zu ihrem eigenen Gehalte wird, und in sich selbst zurückkehrt, heisst Reflexion.”
- lxiv In Novalis's comments on Schlegel's theory of the relation between philosophy and poetry in fragment #46 of “Ideen,” Novalis no less sought to close the gap between Kant's aesthetic and moral philosophy: “Die Moral fehlt, als das Dritte vermittelnde Substrat” (490, III).
- lxv In a conversation with Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, sometime between 1804 and 1812, Goethe appears to quote Novalis directly without crediting him with the insight: “Die höchsten Kunstwerke sind schlechthin unzufällig, sie sind Ideale, die nur approximando gefallen können und sollen, ästhetische Imperative” (176). As the editors of these collected conversations themselves admit, however, the accuracy and veracity of these recordings is questionable: “Bei der Nutzung aller Aufzeichnungen dieser Art ist zu bedenken, dass die Authentizität der Goethe zugeschriebenen Äußerungen in jedem Falle fraglich bleiben muss” (1)
- lxvi I discuss Novalis's concept of scientific “law” in Chapter II.
- lxvii See Helfer's 1996 *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse*.
- lxviii I am obliged to Andrew Bowie's 2003 *Introduction to German Philosophy* for this assessment (92).
- lxix See her introductory remarks to the first English translation of Novalis's “Bemerkungen zu Fichte” from 2003.
- lxx See entry in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, 1854-1960, Digitalisierte Version im Digitalen Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. URL = <<https://www.dwds.de/wb/dwb/darstellen>> retrieved 08/16/2017.
- lxxi I am obliged to Kneller for this summary, see xxiv.
- lxxii See Husserl's 1936 *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*.
- lxxiii Although the so-called *Donauquelle* is the source of the *Donaubach* in Donaueschingen itself, hydrologically, the Danube is the source of the Breg as the larger of the two formative streams which rises near the town of Furtwangen. I take it that Heidegger was familiar with the rivalry between the municipalities of Donaueschingen and Furtwangen for the claim of being home to the “official” source of the Danube since the 1950's, often at the expense of involving the government of Baden-Württemberg.

- lxxiv An isthmus “is a narrow strip of land connecting two larger land areas, usually with water on either side. A tombolo is an isthmus where the strip of land consists of a spit or bar.” Source: Britannica Encyclopedia Online. Retrieved 12/11/14.
- lxxv My commentary here on Heidegger's reflects notes taken during Michael Levine's seminar on Heidegger's ecstatic temporality at Rutgers University, Fall 2014, as well as Andrzej Warminski's insights in his 1990 essay “Monstruous History: Heidegger reading Hölderlin” (201-202).
- lxxvi For all the gratuitous pedantry that Ziokolwski's 1996 *Modern Philology* review indulges in, one wonders why Ziokolwski never addresses with O'Brien's interpretation of fragment #11. As Ziokolwski himself is aware, O'Brien's entire study builds on three essays O'Brien wrote on Novalis's theory of the sign as the subject of his dissertation while at Johns Hopkins.
- lxxvii The sign is at last an esoteric pictograph whose essential meaning remains ever-concealed from view – not unlike a “hieroglyph,” figuratively speaking. This idea will later develop into the allegory of the “language of a nature,” as discussed in Chapter II, a collection of esoteric pictographs, or “nature-hieroglyphs,” whose essential meanings are “veiled” to the apprentices of Saïs. I would refer here also to F. Schlegel's definition of the hieroglyph according to his 1812 Vienna lecture “Vorlesungen zur Geschichte der alten und neuen Lliteratur,” according to which, “In der Hieroglyphe ist es das Ewige selbst und sein Geheimnis, dessen Verständnis in sinnlicher Figur bildlich gemacht wird” (KA II, 25).
- lxxviii As a clarificatory note to the reader, Novalis's non-exemplary, regulative concept of “law” here and its equivalence to the non-exemplary, regulative concept of the “schema” in fragment #11 is worth signaling, as I refer to both interchangeably throughout the present chapter.
- lxxix In fragment #327 of “Das Allegemeine Brouillon,” the imagination is “effected” upon the understanding: “[Die Einbildungskraft] ist das würckende Prinzip – Sie [heißt] Fantasie indem sie auf das Gedächtniß wirckt – und Denkkraft indem sie auf den Verstand wirckt” (III, 298).
- lxxx For a recent study on Kant's schematism, see Pendlebury's 1995 “Making Sense of Kant's Schematism” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.
- lxxxi One such exception includes fragment #572: “Adam und Eva. Was durch Revolution bewürkt wurde, muß durch eine Revolution aufgehoben werden. /Apfelbiß” (II, 275).
- lxxxii I am obliged here to Gabriele Rommel's exhaustive list of Novalis's influences displayed in her latest curatorial work at Schloss Oberwiesenthal titled “Novalis und die Medizin,” 2017. See also K. Anders's 1969 “Novalis als Philosoph der Medizin” in *Die Grüenthal Waage*.
- lxxxiii See Pierre Jacob's 2014 “Intentionality” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/intentionality/>.
- lxxxiv As prodigious scientific discoveries unfold across the European continent with the likes of Brown in England, Lavoisier in France, Ørsted in Denmark, the likes of Coleridge, Mary Shelley, and Wordsworth take vested philosophical interests in biology and chemistry. During this same period of intellectual history, German-speaking intellectuals bear witness to momentous cultural and political change. In the midst of a fragmented state governed by more than three hundred absolute monarchs, the “enlightened absolutism” of Frederick I comes to an end even before the aftermath of 1789. Here, see H. A. M. Snelders's 1970 “Romanticism and *Naturphilosophie* and the Inorganic Natural Sciences 1797-1840: An Introductory Survey.”
- lxxxv With the publication of their 1796 *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, Tieck and Wackenroder introduce the mythology of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs into early German Romantic discussions about art and its relation to nature. In their essay, “Von zwei wunderbaren Sprachen und deren geheimnisvoller Kraft,” the languages of art and nature are encoded “hieroglyphic” expression of the absolute vouchsafed to the visionary few – “intimations of immortality” which otherwise remain inaccessible to us mortals. I owe this characterization to Matthias Konzett's 2000 *Encyclopedia of German Literature* (829).
- lxxxvi See Johannes Hegener's 1975 *Die Poetisierung der Wissenschaften bei Novalis* (107). See also *The Language of Nature* *Reassessing the Mathematization of Natural Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* of 2015 edited by Geoffrey Gorham, Benjamin Hill, Edward Slowik, and C. Kenneth Waters; according to the editors, Galileo's dictum that the book of nature “is written in the language of mathematics” is emblematic of the accepted view that the scientific revolution hinged on the conceptual and methodological integration of mathematics and natural philosophy (42).
- lxxxvii I owe this characterization of the secondary literature on the work to Kenneth Calhoun's 1981 “Language and Romantic Irony in Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*” (51).
- lxxxviii See W. S. Anglin's 1994 *Mathematics: A Concise History and Philosophy*.
- lxxxix In their introductory remarks to the text, Kluckhohn and Samuel indicate that the letter was written to Friedrich Schlegel, a discrepancy I suspect to simply be a misprint (I, 71). In the letter, Novalis “fatally regrets” that two other of

his letters to Friedrich Schlegel became lost in the mail (IV, 252-253).

xc Novalis's study of Kant occurs during two phases in his life, the first around 1795 in Jena, under the influence of Reinhold, whereas the second phase takes around 1798 while in Freiberg.

xcii See also II, 519 for commentary on Novalis's essay on Goethe.

xciii According to Gabriel Trop's 2014 "Novalis and the Absolute of Attraction," "the movements of the absolute can also be found in the collision, juxtaposition, interpenetration, oscillation, metonymic contamination, and proliferating multiplication of discursive fields in 'Das Allgemeine Brouillon'" (277).

xciii allude here to Frank Jackson's groundbreaking 1982 "Epiphenomenal Qualia" in the field of philosophy of mind. Jackson famously writes, "Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor. She specializes in the neurophysiology of vision and acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky, and use terms like 'red,' 'blue,' and so on. She discovers, for example, just which wavelength combinations from the sky stimulate the retina, and exactly how this produces via the central nervous system the contraction of the vocal cords and expulsion of air from the lungs that results in the uttering of the sentence 'The sky is blue.' [...]" (127). Jackson then asks, "What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a color television monitor? Will she learn anything or not?" (Ibid.)

xciv See the Oxford English Dictionary entry for "text."

xcv See Monica Birth Hoesch's 2005 Johns Hopkins dissertation, "I am all that is, that was, and that shall be, and no mortal has lifted my veil: Kant, Novalis, Goethe, and the Veiled Goddess Isis." In the section that follows, I discuss several other etymologies at stake in the text at greater length

xcvi The poem first appears in Schiller's *Musen Almanach* of 1797 to which Novalis carried a subscription ( See O'Brien 348, footnote #54).

xcvii I wish to express my gratitude to Monica Birth Hoesch's 2005 Johns Hopkins dissertation, "I am all that is, that was, and that shall be, and no mortal has lifted my veil: Kant, Novalis, Goethe, and the Veiled Goddess Isis," as well as the fourth chapter of Jan Assmann's 1998 *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, "The Moses Discourse in the Eighteenth Century." Both studies offer rich commentaries on the subject of veiled female figures as elusive symbols of nature in the cultural imaginary of the most prominent artistic and scientific minds of the German enlightenment and romantic periods. The exposition that follows is largely indebted to their contributions.

xcviii I partially owe this paraphrase to Hannah Ginsborg's "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2014 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/kant-aesthetics/>.

xcix In following with Lucien Dällenbach's *Le récit spéculaire*, the scene recalls the famous scene in *Heinrich von Afterdingen* where Heinrich, like Hyancith, receives an illegible book from a stranger in an underground dwelling; the book not only praises the art of poetry, but also uncannily features the protagonist himself in the book. To borrow Kuzniar's phrase, the novel "mirrors itself in miniature." (Reassessing Romantic reflexivity," 83)

c "Die Lehrlinge zu Säis" is neither the first of work of art nor the first work of science to feature a veiled woman as an elusive symbol of nature. Pierre Hadot's 1982 *Zur Idee der Naturgeheimnisse* expertly reviews the iconography of "veiled images" in relation to the "secrets of Nature" according to the Western tradition. In following with Hadot's study, Assmann is correct to point out that Kant misinterprets Segner's vignette. In Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime," footnote #16 of section 49 titled, "Von den Vermögen des Gemüts, welche das Genie ausmachen," Kant asserts as follows:

Vielleicht ist nie etwas Erhabneres gesagt, oder ein Gedanke erhabener ausgedrückt worden, als in jener Aufschrift über dem Tempel der *Isis* (der Mutter *Natur*): »Ich bin alles was da ist, was da war, und was da sein wird, und meinen Schleier hat kein Sterblicher aufgedeckt«. *Segner* benutzte diese Idee, durch eine *sinnreiche* seiner Naturlehre vorgesetzte Vignette, um seinen Lehrling, den er in diesen Tempel zu führen bereit war, vorher mit dem heiligen Schauer zu erfüllen, der das Gemüt zu feierlicher Aufmerksamkeit stimmen soll. (249-256)

In Segner's vignette, we observe neither a statue nor an inscription, but instead a base displaying a geometrical drawing. Isis is accompanied by three putti who appear to measure her footsteps and movements with a large compass. Accordingly, the putti personify apprentices of the natural sciences and their loving devotion to nature. The veiled image of Säis has little relevance to Segner's illustration: the vignette conveys rather that nature cannot be studied directly. Michael Maier's emblem book of 1618 *Atlanta Fugiens* illustrates the same motif. Nature is represented as a young woman wearing a veil that drags behind like a sail in order to convey the swiftness of her motion. The natural scientist studies her footprints with a lantern from afar as to imply that nature cannot be gazed upon directly. Kant is correct, however, according to Assman, insofar as the motif of the veiled image and its unveiling appears on the front-pieces of many scientific and alchemist books such as that of Segner's. Gerhard Blasius's 1681 *Anatome Animalium*, "Zoology Unveils Nature," features a bare-breasted woman on the cover being unveiled by a female apprentice surrounded by nature's creatures. Other examples include François Peyrard's 1793 *De la nature et de ses Lois* ["Of Nature and its Laws"] and J.J. Kunkelius's *Der Curieusen*

*Kunst und Werck–Schul Erster und Anderer Theil* of 1705. In Kunkelius's rendition, we observe not only the unveiling of the veiled Isis, but also the sun as the fruit of her womb, which again cautions us of the danger which gazing directly upon nature represents. It is to-date unknown to what degree these works of art may have influenced Novalis during the composition of “Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs.” Other later examples worth mentioning include Bertel Thorwaldsen's engraving in Humboldt's 1807 *Ideen zu einer Geographie der Pflanzen* with a dedication to Goethe, as well as the front-piece Henry Fuseli made for Erasmus Darwin's poem “The Temple of Nature” in 1803. Fuseli's version evokes the same sense of rapture and terror Schiller associates with the sublime.

ci I owe this insight to von Mücke (48).

cii See Pete Dunn's and Joseph Mandarino's 1987 “Formal Definitions of Type Mineral Specimens.”

ciii This earns him the recognition of the following eponym in the field of comparative anatomy, “*os Goethei*.” See also George A. Wells's 1967 “Goethe and the Inter Maxillary Bone.”

civ Neutral salts are salts that fail to react to either acids or bases in aqueous solutions.

cv See Förster's 2001 “Goethe and the 'Auge des Geistes'”; see also Dorothea-Michaela Noé-Rumberg's “Naturgesetze als Dichtungsprinzipien,” Günther Schnitzler's and Gottfried Schramm's “Ein Unteilbares Ganzes,” and Margrit Wyder's “Goethes Naturmodell.”

cvi In the embryo, the nasal region develops from neural crest cells which start their migration down to the face during the fourth week of gestation; according to Johannes Lang, the boundary between the premaxilla and the maxilla remains discernible after birth and a suture is often observable up to five years of age. See Lang's 1995 “Clinical anatomy of the masticatory apparatus peripharyngeal spaces.”

cvi Used to replicate material, the use of seed crystals to promote growth avoids the otherwise slow randomness of natural crystal growth, allowing for the manufacture of crystals on a scale suitable for industry.

cvi Oscar Montelius's pioneering work in modern typology in nineteenth century archaeological studies is worth making note of. Using the calendar dates of the recently deciphered hieroglyphics facilitated by Jean-François Champollion's discoveries in 1821, Montelius employed a complex system of “typological” cross-dating. He used his findings in order to date archaeological artifacts across European museum exhibits with certainty. To speculate on Novalis's behalf, nature's archetypal “artifact,” as it were, reflects back on the origin of its own history.

cix “Anima Mundi” from Hellenistic Greek *ψυχή τοῦ κόσμου*. See OED entry for “Anima mundi.”

cx I am much obliged to Miklós Vassányi 2011 study *Anima Mundi: The Rise of the World Soul Theory in Modern German Philosophy*. I wish to acknowledge that much of my own work on the topic is indebted to his own. For more on Plotinus's theory of *anima mundi*, see his Introduction. “Hypotaxis corporis sub animam,” according to Vassányi, is the idea that the body is ontologically subordinate to the soul, where only the latter has any influence on the former. The soul of the world enjoys thus independence and impassibility from the material world; its lack of a body, including external organs of perception, is perceived as a sign of its perfection, or better, “autarchy” (2-3).

cxi I acknowledge that the overview that follows is indebted to Leo Catana's 2012 *Intellectual History Review* and Mogens Lærke's 2013 *Journal of the History of Philosophy* assessments of Vassányi's work.

cxii O'Brien, for instance, attributes the text with a probable date of composition sometime at the turn of 1797-1798 (194).

cxiii I am once more grateful to Dr. Gabriele Rommel for confirming that the title “Monolog” was inserted belatedly by Novalis himself, and not Schlegel, Tieck, or Bülow, as has previously been believed to be the case according to the secondary literature.

cxiv I am much obliged to Bettina Zimmerman for aiding me with the transcription.

cxv I partially owe this insight to Landgraf, who writes, “although Novalis rejects a mimetic relationship between poetry and nature, he replaces the idea of representation with one of emulation. In its liberal play with itself, language does not represent but rather imitates nature” (253). Landgraf does not further specify the exact features of “nature” that language imitates, nor the sense in which said imitation is “playful.” Most significantly, “nature” is nowhere explicitly mentioned in “Monolog.”

cxvi See Frege's 1892 “Über Sinn und Bedeutung.”

cxvii The passage exemplifies what Winfried Menninghaus calls the “unending doubling” [*Unendliche Verdoppelung*] of language in Jena Romantic poetics.

cxviii See his 1996 “Über Novalis' 'Monolog' und kritische Erbauung.”

cxix See her 2008 *Paradox, Aphorism and Desire in Novalis and Derrida*.

cxx See Landgraf's 2006 “Comprehending Romantic Incomprehensibility. A Systems- Theoretical Perspective on Early German Romanticism.”

cxxi “Ich wollte zeigen, daß die Worte sich selbst oft besser verstehen, als diejenigen von denen sie gebraucht werden,” (KA II, 363, “Über die Unverständlichkeit”)

cxix See here M.C. Escher's “Self-Portrait in Spherical Mirror” lithograph of 1935.

cxiii I acknowledge that I entirely owe this observation to Vassányi (357).