



Novalis and the problem of the origin of the I

Fernando Silva¹

Recibido: 09 de octubre de 2017 / Aceptado: 03 de mayo de 2018

Abstract. Between 1795 and 1796, Novalis produced an extensive group of fragments on Fichte's philosophy, the posthumously entitled "Fichte-Studien". Of the topics examined in this, one of the most important is that of the *origin of the I (Urhandlung)*, and the *possible or impossible union of the opposites that model human life and thought*, feeling and reflection. The aim of this article is to examine Novalis' view of this problem of paramount importance for the philosophy of the I; namely, to investigate the contours of Novalis' circular conception of the problem, and the differences with Fichte; to discuss the dilemma of the necessity and yet impossibility of a union between opposites; and to show how the young philosopher considered this problem in both its real and its ideal perspective, thereby proposing, as a solution, a *union in disunion*, an *(im-)possible union between opposites*, which Novalis affirms as a new conception of the circular study of the I and the foundation for a new philosophy.

Keywords: Novalis; Fichte; original action; opposites; philosophy.

[pt] Novalis e o problema da acção originária do Eu

Resumo. Entre 1795 e 1796 Novalis produz um vasto grupo de fragmentos sobre a filosofia de Fichte, os postumamente intitulados "Fichte-Studien". Entre os tópicos aí abordados, um dos mais importantes é o da *acção originária do Eu (Urhandlung)*, e a *possível ou impossível união dos contrários que modelam o viver e o pensar humanos*, o sentimento e a reflexão. O objectivo deste artigo é inquirir a visão novaliana de um problema de tão seminal importância para a filosofia do Eu; a saber, investigar os contornos da concepção circular que do problema tinha Novalis, e as diferenças entre esta e a de Fichte; expor o dilema da necessidade, e porém impossibilidade, de uma união entre contrários; e mostrar como o jovem filósofo considera este problema tanto no seu prisma real como no seu prisma ideal, assim propondo como solução uma *união na desunião*, uma *(im-)possível união entre contrários*, a qual é por Novalis afirmada como uma nova concepção do estudo circular do Eu, bem como o fundamento para um novo filosofar.

Palavras-chave: Novalis; Fichte; acção originária; contrários; filosofia.

Sumario: 1. Introduction. The circular nature of the problem of the original action of the I; 2. The original action of the I, or the union in disunion of the opposites; 2.1. The double prism of the opposites. The opposition which must, and yet cannot occur; 2. 2. The problem of a reciprocal (one and divided) vision between opposites; 3. Bibliography.

Cómo citar: Silva, F. (2019): "Novalis and the problem of the original action of the I", en *Revista de Filosofía* 44 (1), 25-41.

¹ Center of Philosophy
University of Lisbon, Portugal
fmfsilva@yahoo.com

1. Introduction. The circular nature of the problem of the original action of the I

Various aspects now unite, now separate Fichte's *Doctrine of Science* and Novalis' "Fichte-Studien" (1795-1796)². Not by chance, however, the aspect which most unites both theories is also that which most separates them; and, as such, this aspect is fundamental in both. We refer to *the collocation of the problems of the self-comprehension of the I, of the original action of the I and his reflection*³, in a word, the whole problem of philosophizing, under a circular form.

In Fichte's case, such an image pervades the work of the great philosopher. The circle of the comprehension of the I, the circle of philosophy, is a circle composed of two essential parts: *feeling*, that is, the original self-activity of the I, wherein the I finds himself in himself (*Insichfindung*), and *reflection*, through which the I is born and exists. Fichte's circle runs uninterruptedly and eternally; but uninterrupted and eternal is something which the comprehension of the I cannot be, rather the I must have a finite comprehension of himself. Namely, the impulse for the I, and hence feeling and reflection, must converge and be consummated in a specific point – the original action of the I (*Urhandlung*) – herein being laid the grounds for the self-comprehension of the I, as well as for the I's procedure in life and his philosophy.

² Bearing in mind Baggesen's vision that "only two metaphysical systems deserve the attention of all who are acquainted with philosophy and its history, for they contain that which is coherent in all the others and link it masterfully as a whole; [namely,] the two only systems, that of Spinoza and that of Fichte, [which] are infinitely similar and infinitely dissimilar: two equal triangles, with the difference that the extremity of one is the basis of the other" (B, 2: 213); or Schelling's very similar vision that there were only two possible systems, that of Kant and that of Spinoza (Letter to Hegel, 4th of February 1795 (BrH 1: 22)), we could say that Novalis' thought, despite not Spinozian, is to be held *in indubitable opposition to critical philosophy*. This does not mean, however, that Novalis was a stranger to Fichtean philosophy; much on the contrary, Novalis was a reader of Fichte, much on account of Reinhold's prior influence, in Jena (1790-1791), or his previous acquaintance with Fichte's first works, such as the "Aenesidemus-Review" (1792). Nor does this mean that Novalis has no affinity points with Fichte; indeed, he does depart from Fichte's "Factum", his fundamental images and propositions. But Novalis' aim was to rethink Fichte's philosophy by inverting it. Hence the fundamental topics of the circularity of the comprehension of the I, of the original action of the I, of philosophy in general and the possibility or impossibility of the suppression of the opposites which model human life and thought, which are common to both authors, and yet hence their complete divergence in relation to all these topics; in a word, the natural divergence between a poet and a philosopher who are faced with the same problems.

³ Being Novalis, to this day, one of the most neglected *philosophers* of his time – to the extent that some claim Novalis was indeed a poet, a novelist, a literate, but no philosopher – it must come as no surprise that the "Fichte-Studien", an unpublished group of philosophical fragments from the onset of Novalis' philosophical career, and especially the topic of the original action of the I, have drawn little attention, even among Novalis scholars. Among the exceptions, notable not so much because of their approach to these topics, but because of their interest for Novalis' study of Fichtean philosophy in general, we would stress: Frank, Manfred, "Von der Grundsatz-Kritik zur freien Erfindung. Die ästhetische Wendung in den »Fichte-Studien« und ihr konstellatorisches Umfeld", in *Athenäum* 8, 1998, pp. 75-95; Gabel, Martin, *Überlegungen zum Erkenntnisbegriff in Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre von 1794 und in den Fichte-Studien des Novalis*, München, Grin Verlag, 2013; Haering, Theodor, *Novalis als Philosoph*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1954; Loheide, Bernward, *Fichte Und Novalis: Transzendentalphilosophisches Denken im romantisierenden Diskurs* (Fichte-Studien-Supplementa 13), Amsterdam – Atlanta, 2000; Loheide, Bernward, "Artistisches Fichtisieren: Zur Höheren Wissenschaftslehre bei Novalis", in *Fichte-Studien* 19, pp. 109-123, 2002; Nassar, Dalia, "Interpreting Novalis' 'Fichte-Studien'", in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 84 (3), pp. 315-341, 2010; Rühling, Frank, *Friedrich von Hardenbergs Auseinandersetzung mit der kritischen Transzendentalphilosophie. Aspekte eines Realitätsbegriffes in den »Fichte-Studien«*. Diss. Jena 1995; Schefer, Olivier, "Les »Fichte-Studien« de Novalis et la »Tathandlung«, à l'épreuve de la transcendance", in *Les études philosophiques*, N. 1, pp. 55-74, 2000; Waibel, Violetta, "«Filosofiren muss eine eigne Art von Denken seyn». Zu Hardenbergs Fichte-Studien", in *System und Systemkritik: Beiträge zu einem Grundproblem der Klassischen*, hrsg. von Birgit Sandkaulen, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, pp. 59-90, 2006.

This problem, the exhaustive and reiterated effort to reenact such a consummatory union, is approached by Fichte in his “Eigne Meditationen” (1793), where, after many a vain attempt⁴, the philosopher concludes that the mutual reduction of the opposites (A and – A) – and their respective union – *is not an infinite task*, as infinite is not the self-comprehension of the I or the course of philosophy (a conclusion drawn in Fichte’s “Aenesidemus-Rezension” (1792)). Quite on the contrary, *this task is attainable through the minimums of both opposites*; namely, through the belief that feeling, which must be thought alongside reflection, is the ideal from which the latter must come to be real (and that hence *there is not, nor could there be equality between opposites, rather one must incorporate the other*). In other words, Fichte solves the dilemma of the incompatibility of the opposites through the idealization of one pole in detriment of the (total) realization of the other, and from this arises the reflexive I; an I which, by being born from such an “inexplicable and incomprehensible interruption of the original activity of the I” (FiW I: 331)⁵, therefore arises not to a world of opposites, but within a one-way circle (action-action), a world of the infinite – yet finitely comprehensible – subjectivity and/or reflexivity of the I: a world where the I arises prescient of the need for its own consummation, that is, in the ante-chamber of its own absoluteness; in a word, a world where the I is the whole circle of its comprehension, where the I holds itself as the infinite continuity of itself, and hence is the absolute principle of itself (“A = A”).

Now, upon conceiving the relation between the opposites which constitute the I and their union and/or disunion in the original action, *Novalis considers the question somewhat differently*. For, no doubt, Novalis too conceives such a problem in its circular form; Novalis too acknowledges feeling and reflection to be the two halves of the circle of the I (see NS, II: 20); and hence, Novalis too recognizes that the original action, model of all actions and all thoughts of the I, must arise from these two opposites (see id: 24). But, according to the poet, feeling and reflection are no mere opposites, nor can they be seen negatively⁶. *Instead, they are the opposites of opposites, the archetype of a progressive resistance which is the propeller spring of human action and thought*, and hence they are endowed with unalienable dignity and relevance, to be proved only in their simultaneous affirmation and inter-dependence.

As such, then, the problem lies in the possible or impossible union of the opposites in an original point – as it does in Fichte. But, according to Novalis, the solution for this problem is to be found not in the maximum reduction of the opposites, or in the amalgamation of the weakest one; nor is it in the positing of an I whose reflexivity opens to a one-way circle, devoid of points of orientation; nor is it in the belief that the philosophy of the I runs a finite path towards its consummation.

⁴ In “Eigne Meditationen” – an unpublished group of annotations much like Novalis’ “Fichte-Studien” – Fichte undertakes his greatest, for first real confrontation with the task of uniting opposites, from which he was to derive his principle of absolute identity. In it the reader witnesses the doubts and fears, the tos and fros of Fichte’s chain of thought on this problem – so to say, the very formation of his philosophical edifice. This is, as such, the best example of Fichte’s approach on the topic; one of which all others are but repercussions.

⁵ All citations will be presented in a traditional manner (Abbreviation of work, Volume of work, number of page(s)). The abbreviation of each work cited finds correspondence in the final bibliographical section. All citations have been translated from their original German language into English. The citations are of my own translation, and therefore my own responsibility.

⁶ “Feeling and reflection are one in the original action. Here arises a primordial need to oppose. A feeling of reflection, a reflection of feeling. Both impulses act in One.” (NS, II: 23); or: “The original action is the unity of feeling and reflection, in reflection.” (id.: 24).

Quite on the contrary, Novalis concludes in fragments 15 to 19 of the 1st group of Manuscripts of the “Fichte-Studien”, the task is here to negate all this and state the need to expose such assumptions as a natural *illusion of the human spirit*, of which Fichte’s philosophy would be a perfect example. Namely, according to Novalis, the problem of the original action rather presupposes that feeling and reflection are individual entities and that neither of them can be silenced; something which Novalis presents as *a new circularity of the self-comprehending I*, and defends according to the following line of thought: 1) Feeling does not progress from limited to unlimited, and reflection from unlimited to limited, rather feeling progresses from unlimited to limited and reflection from limited to unlimited (see NS; II: 19): which means that the circle of the comprehension of the I has not one, but two simultaneously contrary and concomitant directions. 2) This being a circle with two directions, and two opposed but also compatible directions, then the original action, the real contact point between feeling and reflection, will have to be thought in relation to a second point of interruption and orientation in the circle, namely, *an ideal contact point* between the illimitations of feeling and reflection: which means that the circle of the I has not one, but two orientation points. 3) The real and ideal contact points being points of union, but also points of disunion of the opposite, then the contacts between feeling and reflection cannot occur, in the real point, between mere limitations (minimums), and in the ideal one, between mere illimitations (maximums); which would still suppress one of the opposites. Instead, the real I must arise from a double limitation – namely, an intensification – of the opposing natures of feeling and reflection, in such a way that both opposites are at the same time validated and restricted – in a word, equal; and the ideal I must arise from the exact contrary of this, both opposites thus being kept in existence during the course of the I. Were it not for this proposition of *an active-reactive circle*, and the opposites would not be mediately reciprocal and could not claim veritable equality.

In a word, and to attempt an initial sketch of Novalis’ theory of the original action of the I, we would elaborate on the previous points as follows:

Firstly, Novalis’ conception of circle is different from Fichte’s insofar as it proposes, within the same circular comprehension of the problem of the I, a different conception of that circularity. Namely, Novalis completely inverts Fichte’s conception of circle by affirming the opposites as completely equal, by ascribing them two directions and two orientation points within the same circle and molding the original action, the language and even the philosophy of the I, in their image.

Secondly, and not unrelated to the previous conclusion, the original action is a moment wherein the matter of feeling contacts with the form of reflection. However, *this contact takes place in a maximum point and therefore at the summit of the antagonism of the opposites*. And hence, if the original action is an immediate moment for the I, it must be however a moment of mediation between opposites; an immediate moment, yes, but one which must be preceded by many mediate moments between opposites, if it is to be set in motion: feeling, proceeding from matter to matter, in self-intensification, up to its maximum, and reflection, proceeding from that maximum, from form to form, in self-deintensification. That is, *the original action must not only presuppose scission (independence, immediateness), but also promote maximum dependency between the opposites (mediateness and inter-dependence)*, which means that upon the original action opposites will have to be simultaneously preserved and annulled, they will have to exist as such, but cannot exist as such.

Thirdly, and in belief of our second conclusion, we state that one plane of the question takes place prior to the original action, but another one, a very different one, takes place during the actual event. For prior to the original action opposites are independent. But in the moment of the original action, the paradigm of the relation between opposites must change, if not be inverted. Namely, upon this contact, feeling and reflection must lose their pure absoluteness and assume themselves as reciprocally mediate, and therefore inter-dependent, for only in their mediateness and reciprocal dependency can their maximums contact without their suppression. Only thus, says Novalis, may something new and singularly productive happen; and what happens is that reflection “suppresses its particular relation with the absolute I, conversely to the I – this does feeling too” (NS, II: 31) - and, Novalis adds, “Thus arise two mediate I’s” (id.)⁷ and all the “reciprocal effect of the I with itself [is] *apparently mediate*”! (id.: 24). That is, here, and only here, may two I’s⁸ arise in their own right: *two I’s which not only are not nothing, but are already something*, and two I’s which at last may call themselves not only *pure I*, the mission of which is to be divided into two, but also *empirical I*, which, along with its most essential attributes such as liberty, self-comprehension or philosophy, has the task of being one with the latter. For, according to Novalis, “The absolute I is one and divided at the same time (NS, II: 32). “*One*” because it is one in the mutual mediateness in which it involves feeling and reflection, absolute and empirical; “*divided*” because the spirit must always separate feeling and reflection in favor of a correct conformation of the opposites to the decisive approximation to the I. Finally, “*one and divided*” because even though the original action is immediate, feeling and reflection are nonetheless mediate in the empirical consciousness (separated in their mediateness, but united by the impulse to be I): “The I must be divided to be I – only the impulse to the I unites it” (id.), or, in other words: “We are I – consequently identical and divided – consequently mediate and immediate I at the same time. The mediate I is the divided I” (ibid.).

As a result, the outcome of this *approximation* or *intensification* must be that, for the first time, the feeling I and the reflecting I cease to be absolute, purely isolated and total and thus *consider themselves* as two legitimate Is. Pure I and empirical I, feeling and reflection are therefore, in relation to the original action, a reciprocal and mediate pre-action of the I, one which is consummated in the maximum intensity of its illimitation and another one which departs from a totality of itself, a maximum point of its limitation, each one carved by the other: “Thus arise two mediate I’s – the I which is felt and the I which is thought. The absolute I tends from the infinite to the finite, the mediate I tends from the finite to the infinite” (NS, II: 31). Hence, and to sum up: the original action must consist in a double contact between infinities within a maximum limitation, and as such it is pure (il-)limitation, total reciprocity between maximum infinitudes, a singular cumulative moment, *as if all the force, all the impulse towards the I could go through a single thread: the most pungent and ineffable thread of human destination, where the I comes to be I*; and because, according to Novalis, maximum with maximum is not only a maximum cumulation

⁷ “It [reflection] suppresses its particular relation with the absolute I, conversely to the I – this does feeling too – Thus arise two mediate I’s – the I which is felt and the I which is thought. The absolute I tends from infinite to finite, the mediate I from finite to infinite” (NS, II: 31).

⁸ The option for the term “I’s”, though indeed grammatically incorrect, seems to be more appropriate than “Is” or “I”, and hence the best one to designate the existence of more than one I.

of opposite forces, but also the mutual affirmation of those opposites – *the disunion as well as the union of opposites* – then this means that, without ceasing to be pure and empirical, without abdicating from their maximums, these I's put into contact that which previously was simply separated – and was not yet I – and affirm themselves as one I, *united and divided in itself*; an I which arises from a maximum neutrality or hybridity, just as it follows feeling and reflection in the total inter-dependence of their maximum points. It is precisely in this moment that feeling and reflection, considering each other as opposites but also as perfect correlates, must acknowledge themselves as essential components of the I and assume that their one, yet divided form is precisely the form of the latter.

Now, it is our opinion that the previous aspects of Novalis' pre-collocation of the problem of the original action of the I, and its adjacent considerations, are not incongruent, rather they converge and lay the grounds for a *fundamental problem*. For such aspects are the necessary preparatory work for the reformulation of the reciprocal relation between the two essential constituents of the I, a work which is indeed important and without which the I could never come to be I. But, as is natural, *for the I to be I – in the original action, through the union and disunion of the opposites – something more is demanded*. Namely, the original action of the I cannot stem from the minimums of the opposites, as it does in Fichte's "Eigne Meditationen", for that means a total inequalization of the opposites. But, according to Novalis, because the original action has no random position in the circle, and because it is not simple matter, or simple form which ascribe it its being, then neither can it stem from the mere inversion of Fichte's system, or a simple equalization of the opposites. No; that is not the correct manner of thinking the original action of the I, simply because here there is not yet the total reciprocity, the mutual necessity which Novalis discerns between the opposites which compose the original action. Quite on the contrary, one must think that until the original action the I is merely either pure feeling, that is, pure matter ("Feeling is matter in the I" (NS, II: 27)), or pure reflection, that is, pure form ("Reflection is form in the I" (id.)); for, in the first case, feeling *lacks* a form in which it may consummate itself, and in the second case reflection too *lacks* a matter to which it may ascribe a form. And so, as a result, one must think that feeling and reflection rather need each other in the intellectual intuition, and are nothing without each other: "Both impulses are equally unsatisfied in the intellectual intuition – hence the latter's need – the feeling needs form in its final point – (...) reflection needs matter in order to be form. They are nothing, both nothing, without the impulse to be I, which unites both in itself, which is both and yet none of the two" (id.: 30). Now, if this is the case, and if indeed the opposites depend on one another, on their incompatibility and their cooperation to operate the original action, then *until both opposites are indeed thought in their possible maximum approximation and/or distance – not just rendered equal – there is not yet reciprocity between them*. For total equalization, just as total inequalization, signifies the exclusion of one of the opposites. Hence, what this means is that for there to be total reciprocity, the I cannot stem from just any matter, or just any form (for there are plenty of these, among which those of a total inequalization and equalization of the opposites), rather from a singular matter and form, as they are to be revealed from the actual ponderation of the contact between opposites. For we hope to prove that *the solution to this problem is in one, and only one singular, mediate intermediary path: a unique form for the feeling of the I and a unique matter for the reflection of*

the I, just as there is but one way of thinking the reciprocity between both opposites, and only thus may pure I and empirical I arise. And because there is no other way to ascertain such a form and matter, and since neither feeling nor reflection can do this on their own – as was Fichte’s incontrovertible belief already in “Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre” (1794) –, then the very impulse to be I, which is “at the same time the impulse to think and to feel” (NS, II: 31), will have to serve here as a third instance to bring the opposites to a maximum contact, that is, *to the maximum possible mediateness or reciprocity*, and thus occasion the original action.

In other words – and to quote Novalis – “The original action is the unity of feeling and reflection, in reflection. The intellectual intuition is the unity of the latter outside of reflection” (NS, II: 24); and if this is so, and if what we wish to understand is the second unity, then one must conclude that the mere equalization of feeling and reflection will surely suffice to consider the opposites as the two constituting parts of the problem of the impulse to the I, but not yet to satisfy the mutual need of the impulses of those opposites, which occasion the original action. For if we settle for such an insufficient independence, this renders feeling and reflection into two I’s, but two I’s which are, according to Novalis, “absolutely none” (id.). Quite on the contrary, there must be mediateness between the opposites so that the original action may be experienced immediately by the I; and in this mediateness a need must be suppressed, to be felt immediately. And so, until feeling and reflection, pure I and empirical I are affirmed as such and united through such a dialogical mediateness – a synthesis; until feeling and reflection “are something to each other” (NS, II: 30), and between them there is “an absolute ground of reference” (id.), the opposites remain isolated and inconsequent.

2. The original action of the I, or the *union in disunion* of the opposites

2.1. The double prism of the opposites. The opposition which must, and yet cannot occur

Given the previous problem and its inherent difficulties, namely, that the original action must be composed of feeling and reflection – because it is the field of dialogue of the latter – and that this is ensured when feeling and reflection ascribe final matter and final form to each other, in the maximum point of their simultaneous adversity and compatibility: it is not hard to conclude that the problem at hand is, due to its hybridity, something of a *Gordian knot between feeling and reflection*. For, in a word, *it is imperative that feeling and reflection are united; but at the same time it is impossible to unite feeling and reflection; and nonetheless it is precisely on this necessary, yet impossible union that depends the occurrence of the original action of the I*.

Let us then reconsider the problem, paying careful attention to the exact terms Novalis uses to express it (II.1), and how the young poet tries to solve it (II.2).

Novalis reconsiders the dilemma between feeling and reflection in fragments 19 and 20 of the “Fichte-Studien” (NS, II: 20-23), that is, immediately after his theory on the nature of the opposites (see NS, II: 17-21). Here there is a scheme on *the relation between the latter*. According to this, between feeling and reflection

there is a “direction back and forth” (id.: 22); namely, a reciprocity through which “the sphere is exhausted” (ibid.) and through which a “connection” (ibid.) of the circularity between directions “exists” (ibid.). Such is, according to Novalis, the “basis of all philosophizing” (ibid.).

1. 2.
Feeling-----Reflection

4. 3.
Reflection-----Feeling

Direction *forth* and *back*
Sphere exhausted – Connection exists
This is the basis of all philosophizing

This scheme, as well as the terms which compose it, inscribe us in the current point of Novalis’ train of thought on the problem of the original action. According to him, in the circle of the comprehension of the I there is between feeling and reflection opposition (“*back*” and “*forth*”), but also union, synthesis (“*back*” and “*forth*”), and both opposition and union *exhaust* the circle of our problem. At the same time, we are told that since the circle is composed of opposition and union between two contrary, yet concomitant directions, then there must be between the opposites an inevitable “connection”, namely, through a matter – a matter which cannot but be that of the absolute I (feeling before contacting with reflection) – and a form, that of reflection, or the empirical I. For, as we saw, the absolute I is at one “one and divided” (NS, II: 32); otherwise, it would never be without its total absoluteness and would not originate the empirical I. Namely, *the I must be one with itself and at the same time divided in itself*, and this because in the I there must be a direction “back and forth”, opposed in its unity, united in its opposition, between feeling and reflection. This is why, in the same fragment 20 of the “Fichte-Studien”, Novalis adduces that “before [...] said matter can be divided, it must be opposed” (NS, II: 22); and this is also why Novalis states that “We must collide everywhere with the synthesis of feeling and reflection, which no longer is nor can be opposed” (id.: 23). For, on the one hand, between feeling and reflection there must take place an opposition, and from this opposition there must arise a division (*Theilung*) – the original action; which is perfectly natural, since there is no division without prior opposition. On the other hand, in the moment of that opposition, or division, there must take place between feeling and reflection a *synthesis* – the original action; which is also perfectly natural, for Novalis considers the original action to be a *simultaneous scission and union between feeling and reflection*. After all, “Reflection and feeling are here on their limits” (id.: 22-23), and given the “back” and “forth” that must be forged between the two, which is their sphere, it is only natural that there must be a division which is one and non-one with a synthesis.

However, the *final shape* Novalis ascribes to the problem is not yet this. For what Novalis states is indeed that there must be a division and a union. But at the same time, for this division and union to come to be, one must assume, on the one hand, that “before [...] said matter can be divided, *it must be opposed*” (NS, II: 22, my it.); and, on the other hand, that “We must collide everywhere with the synthesis of feeling

and reflection, *which no longer is nor can be opposed*' (id.: 23, my it.). In other words, there must surely be a division and a synthesis; but, as it seems, it is Novalis' view that *this is to be explained through an almost paradoxical connection between opposites*. Namely, one where, on the one hand, the opposites *must be opposed* in the original action, because otherwise they would not be opposites, and the I would never feel that he thinks; that is, there must be opposition, for without opposition, without the resistance it instils, union could never be conquered. But, on the other hand, the opposition *can no longer arise* if there is to be synthesis; for otherwise the I would never think that he feels. And hence, while this struggle between opposing forces endures, there cannot emerge a "connection", the harmony of the synthesis, and there is only division, no union (and the sphere remains somewhat *Fichteian* in nature and is not exhausted). In short, *in the original action there must be a division which is synthesis, a synthesis which is division*; and only this final thought of the opposition between opposites seems to be able to provide us with a vision of what is, in Novalis' view, the indispensable hybridity of the original action.

Now, as we believe, and as Novalis believed, the kern of the question is in the manner how the human spirit, in whose vision the problem lies, faces the previous dilemma of its own comprehension. Novalis explains why this is so, and hence the dilemma as it is seen by the human spirit. The spirit assumes, as it should, that feeling and reflection are opposites; and even though the I must come to accommodate the opposites, the spirit knows the I cannot do this in their mere opposition, nor in their mere union, rather the I must think such a necessity as well as such an impossibility of opposition until from its own thought arises the solution for this impasse. Namely, in Novalis' own words, the spirit thinks the "back" and "forth" of feeling and reflection. But neither does such "back" and "forth" seem to produce a connection between opposites, nor does that connection therefore exhaust the sphere of the problem; and this because, on the one hand, a connection involves two extremities, and two extremities involve opposition – which, in the eyes of the spirit, is an error; and because, on the other hand, the absence of connection represents the existence of a single opposite – a single direction – and this yes, this does exhaust, in the eyes of the spirit, the sphere of the problem. Hence, the immediate reaction is to suppress one of the opposites. Now, the spirit knows that to suppress does not imply to indeed annihilate, and this because the opposition of the opposites must be supplanted, and yet also somehow preserved; otherwise, there could not be any synthesis. Hence, and because *the opposition must take place, and yet cannot take place*, the spirit knows that to promote the synthesis in such a way that it does not exceedingly violate the contrary nature of the opposites, *those opposites will have to be reconfigured, if not in reality, then at least in its – the spirit's – own eyes*. That is, the opposites may even continue to be contrary (for the opposition must take place), but they can no longer be so in the eyes of the spirit (for the opposition cannot take place): *a self-fictionalization of the spirit* which, according to Novalis, has the very harmful consequence of guaranteeing that the opposites mean nothing to each other and that they do not see one another. And hence, if this is assumed, and since opposites cannot cease to be opposites and yet have to obey the synthesis (have to be so in the vision of the human being), that is, since the opposites have to carry on being opposites in relation to something which they do not see, then, Novalis objects, they have no solution but to assume an *alternating existence* (either "back" or "forth", under the appearance of "back" and "forth"), according to which for one to be, the other cannot

be, and vice versa; in a word, as if they were still opposites, but nonetheless could not know that they are.

In a word, it is Novalis' opinion that the result of an erroneous and very human approach to what it may mean that there must be opposition but there can be no opposition between the opposites which compose the I, is that *when reflection is something, feeling must be nothing, and vice versa* (which is a return to Fichte's version of his first *Wissenschaftslehre*). That is, feeling and reflection so to say cease to be opposites and are henceforth singular pieces assembled to the original action – and this in each other's eyes, *taking turns, as if the other did not exist* – and all so that the I may be synthesis: “If feeling is something, then reflection is nothing, and the human being is the synthesis – and so the other way around” (NS, II: 23).

But this is not all, and according to Novalis, the false resolution of such a dilemma has other harmful repercussions for the human spirit. For if, according to the poet, and quite naturally so, “both [feeling and reflection] can only occur in reflection” (NS, II: 23), for reflection is reality, and all that is prior to reflection is ideal: then how are the opposites –if thus presented, devoid of themselves, unaware of each other– to constitute reflection? And how is reflection to accommodate them? Novalis answers: if the opposites do not acknowledge each other, they are nothing, and if they are nothing and the problem must be ultimately applied to reflection, then two additional problems emerge. Firstly, the half of the problem which accommodates the opposites – reflection – not only is *something*, but is *doubly so*: that is, reflection is here the only possible reality of the problem not only because it is so naturally, but because, according to the spirit, feeling is nothing and there is no opposition (as is the case in Fichte's “Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre”). Reflection is therefore, in Novalis' words, “the half which is strictly reality” (id.) – which is an error. Secondly, if reflection is the only reality in the problem, then the opposites no longer have meaning, that is, they are *nothing* to one another, there is no “connection” between them: “hence the nothing is both times a nothing – hence a something” (ibid.) – which, according to Novalis, is an even greater error. The nothing with nothing of feeling is therefore, in Fichte's eyes, the something of reflection (– + – = +); and since outside a double nothing everything is something, then this something is also all, pure reciprocity, the absolute. A double explanation which, according to Novalis, is nothing but an error of the human spirit in its eagerness to *exhaust the sphere* of the problem: “If feeling is something, then reflection is nothing and man is the synthesis – and so the other way around. But both can only occur in reflection, hence necessarily in the something – in the half which is strictly reality – hence the nothing is both times a nothing – hence a something – this is an illusion of reciprocity” (ibid.).

Hence, what this means is a final problem in the correct collocation of the original action, now not so much regarding its *form* (as it was dealt with in fragments 17-21 of the “Fichte-Studien”), but rather its *matter*; and until this is solved, one may conclude with Novalis that feeling and reflection are not yet correctly aligned in their disposition of constitution of the original action. That is, they may be correctly disposed for the original action; but something remains in the *alignment* which unites the eyes of both parties, that prevents them from seeing each other in their reciprocal vision, and thereby access the original action; something which, in a word, prevents the I from being at once “one” and “divided”.

2. 2. The problem of a reciprocal (*one and divided*) vision between opposites

To enunciate Novalis' problem in its last form, and in its *acutest* point, let us say that since the problem of the original action of the I cannot only be considered simply in its *formal* terms, those of the necessity and yet simultaneous impossibility of an opposition between opposites, it must also be seen through the prism of *the matter of the original action*. It is our task, then, to ascertain how the opposites relate to each other beyond their formal disposition, how they see or do not see each other, and how seeing or being seen means to exist or not to exist (that is, to be something or to be nothing). For, according to Novalis, the main question is now to attempt to refute the fact according to which, for feeling to be something, reflection must be nothing, and vice versa; and hence, what matters to the young poet is to know *how to render these opposites, and opposites in general, something for something*, and to inquire what influence this may have on the original action and in human actions in general. Until we answer this question we cannot advocate true reciprocity ("back" and "forth") between feeling and reflection; and hence, we cannot ascribe reciprocity the certainty of an infallible communication between opposing terms, nor can this reciprocity aspire to be a total and perfect mirroring (speculation) between opposites: the sphere is not exhausted. In other words, until we answer this question, we cannot state, as does Novalis, that "Feeling and reflection are one in the original action. (...) A feeling of reflection, a reflection of feeling. Both impulses act in One" (NS, II: 23).

Let us then consider this problem more thoroughly and try to discern what feeling and reflection see when they observe each other.

To see means to exist; and feeling and reflection exist, and as such it is reasonable to assume that, upon existing, they see, and that vision is precisely the possibility to *exit* their semi-sphere and contact with the other opposite. For *union in union* would presuppose that, in an absolute proximity between opposites, there was no reciprocal vision; *disunion in disunion* would presuppose that, in an absolute distance between opposites, there could be no reciprocal vision; but *union in disunion*, as is proposed by Novalis, suggests that, since there is no absolute proximity or distance between both existences, there are *two visions*. Only, knowing that one could not simply affirm a union in disunion, which would indeed be a *salto mortale*, Novalis states the primary need to think a hybrid form between union in union and disunion in disunion – one hitherto suggested by "If feeling is something, then reflection is nothing (...) – and so the other way around" (NS, II: 23). Now, according to Novalis, these words propose something twofold: on the one hand, *an alternated existence between opposites*, according to which for one to be something the other cannot be; which places the focus only upon reflection and tends to annul one of the opposites. On the other hand, and since vision presupposes existence and depends on it, then, if the opposites believe that they exist in isolation in the whole of the sphere of the problem, this has repercussions in the vision which the opposites have of one another. *For if they do not exist for one another, then neither can they see each other*. That is, for a contrary to be something, the other must be nothing, and hence, for one contrary to be and to see, the other one, upon being seen, must not be; which, according to Novalis, is a very harmful consequence of Fichte's theory of the opposites as posited in the "Eigne Meditationen" and hitherto enacted in all his versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: namely, that they cannot truly abandon their semi-sphere, that the opposites cannot establish contact with their counterpart and hence have to restrict their efficacy to themselves.

In short, the problem is such that when feeling sees reflection, it sees nothing, for reflection is opposed to it; and when reflection sees feeling, it sees nothing, for feeling is opposed to it. For if despite equal in their form, they are not yet so *in their matter* – as is here the case – then both opposites do not yet feel nor see each other as equals, and hence, to each other, they are that which cannot exist so that they themselves can – that is, they do not see each other as such. Translating this into other words, one could say that *when they see, feeling and reflection only see themselves and insofar claim for themselves total existence – they are something*. And ultimately, that is the meaning of “If feeling is something, then reflection is nothing (...) – and so the other way around”: namely, that he who observes is, and that what feeling or reflection do not observe is not. And hence, because one instance is not, the other one’s gaze is returned to itself, and deems itself the only something, and that is why there seems to be no possible union between the two.

Now, the aforementioned problem – that of the matter of the opposites – may be sub-divided into two further difficulties, that is, obstacles to a perfect reciprocity between opposites:

Firstly, the pole which sees does indeed see, and it is something while it sees, for upon being it annuls the other opposite; but if upon seeing the pole is something, and if it is so because it sees nothing, then it is something only to itself, or rather, *it is something only because the other pole is nothing*; and this, according to Novalis, is far from being a reciprocity between opposites.

Secondly, the problem is aggravated if we think that if only one of the poles can see, and this in such a way that it sees nothing, then *it is possible that both poles may exchange functions*, so that the pole which sees and the pole which is seen may perfectly well be, in a different occasion, that which is not seen and that which sees. That is, none of them may believe that it sees (is something) without, at the same time, fearing to be seen (being nothing); for if, for example, reflection sees, and feeling is seen, that renders reflection something and feeling nothing. But that is just as erroneous, or at least doubtful, as feeling being the pole which sees, and reflection the one being seen. And this, according to Novalis, is even further from a true reciprocity between opposites.

Let us then see how Novalis deals with such obstacles, until from the maximum point of their resistance there emerges the solution, in the shape of the harmonization of the matter of the opposites.

Now, as for *the first problem* – the one of the vision of the opposites – one may ask: what does reflection see? Nothing – feeling (which is why reflection is something). And *upon being seen as preceded*, what does feeling see? Indeed, one might think that feeling would see reflection, for, according to this line of thought, reflection is total and only it exists, and is something, in the former’s field of vision. However, according to Novalis, that is not what feeling sees. The problem within the problem is such that since reflection sees feeling as nothing, then feeling is nothing; and if feeling is nothing, then, in both reflection’s and the spirit’s own view, feeling does not even see, or, to put it in Novalis’ words: as nothing, feeling does not see. But the same happens from the point of view of feeling, for upon being nothing, reflection too is nothing for feeling – and hence reflection does not see. In face of this complex dilemma, the spirit must choose a side; and for it, the only valid and logical point of view in such an equation is that *reflection be something*. For, once this is assumed, reflection must see nothing apart from itself, and if that which

reflection (does not) see is nothing, then that which is nothing can see/be nothing, and nothing + nothing = something (“hence the nothing is doubly nothing – hence a something” (NS, II: 23)), in a circular motion, in an “illusion of reciprocity” (id.: 23) in which each pole’s gaze is only cast so it can return to itself. Hence, the “*illusion of reciprocity*” consists in there not being here any reciprocity between gazes, only a one-way vision which is but returned to itself⁹, because it has nowhere to reflect itself; and it is that *eternal return* which, in Fichte’s view – especially in “Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre” (1794) and in “Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre” (1795) – allows for the annulment of the opposites without their being totally suppressed, but which, according to Novalis, indeed does so and hence prevents a reciprocity between opposites.

As to the *second problem*, it is such that, upon seeing, reflection is; upon seeing, feeling is. Upon being seen, reflection is nothing; and upon being seen, feeling is nothing. These are the four corners of the quadrangular scheme of the reciprocity between opposites.

However, we believe there is a reason why Novalis described the problem as a *square*, or why he thinks its exhaustion as a *circle*. For if this square has four points, two of which are one and the same pair, that is because such points can be seen through two prisms, and not just through two different perspectives, as feeling-reflection or reflection-feeling. No; instead, this small yet fundamental distinction proves the importance of dividing not just between seeing and being seen, but especially between the feeling and reflection which see, and the feeling and reflection which are seen. For, indeed, considered from the prism of he who sees, it may even look like feeling is while reflection is not, or vice versa, for this seems to obey a relation of forces, of supremacy and/or subordination. But – Novalis adduces – if the object of consideration here is a square, one in which, nonetheless, the exchange of gazes must originate circularity; and if, therefore, what is at stake in this way of seeing is not one, but two opposites, let alone equal opposites, *then one might ask what prevents each of them from, upon seeing, neglecting, though erroneously, the existence of the other; and from, while considering, it, not ascribing it any vision, which would render this something and the one thus considering... nothing*.¹⁰ That is, he who sees is surely something for itself; but nothing can guarantee that, in its ignorance of the other, that very contrary does not exist, or is not even observing it, thereby rendering him nothing – a scenario which is more than just problematic, more so because to Novalis this is no mere supposition, rather a certainty. For, in this case, we are left not with an absolute existence, nor even with a relative existence of the opposites, rather only with *two inter-changeable, and therefore very feeble existences*.

In other words, through the prism of he who sees, feeling and reflection do exist and yet do not exist, they are something and yet they are nothing for one another, and this simultaneously; and just as reflection believes it sees the nothing which is feeling, at the same time feeling believes it sees nothing in reflection. That is: neither reflection is something and something only, rather it is also nothing upon being considered by feeling, nor feeling is simply nothing, much less when it is he

⁹ This explains, for instance, why the “Fichte-Studien” start with the words: “In the proposition a is a lies but a positing. Differentiating and connecting. It is a philosophical parallelism. (...) The essence of identity is to be established only in an illusory proposition. We abandon the identical in order to expose it (...)” (NS, II: 8).

¹⁰ “If in reflection reflection is something and feeling nothing, it is indeed the other way around, feeling is something and reflection is nothing.” (NS, II: 23)

who sees reflection – and vice versa; which means that neither something is entirely something, nor nothing is entirely nothing. And hence, feeling and reflection could certainly switch places, or prisms in silence, thus surprising each other, existing in each other's shade and hence mutually exchanging the same way as they would in an alternated existence, in such a way that no contrary would ever come to know which sees and which is seen, which is something and which is not.

Now, following this line of thought, the problem can be even more accentuated. For if feeling and reflection see while they are seen and seeing and being seen do not have here defined positions or valences, then upon returning, due to the (supposed) absence of their counterpart, *none of the gazes can properly return to their origin, and so forth, ad infinitum*. For, according to each of these opposites, the other one is also nothing, and if he who thinks it is seeing is being seen – and it is – then it cannot welcome back its own gaze, because it is nothing. Furthermore, if one wishes to be thorough, one could even say that the pole which sees could never have cast the gaze in the first place, for it itself, just as the other pole, despite being something, are also nothing; and if this is the case, then we could easily conclude that no gaze could ever have been cast by any pole, insofar as each of the poles is only something to itself, but nothing for the other. And if it Novalis' aim that this gaze is cast and perceived by two poles, thus forming two different directions within the same circle, then such a vision of the problem – in short, a vision which exists and yet does not exist (an *optical illusion*) – cannot be the correct solution for this problem.

Finally, given this problematic pinnacle, Novalis concludes that if the problem is such that the poles seem not to be able to exist, to see simultaneously, and when they do, that is *a mere illusion, and not real union and disunion, not real reciprocity*; then *the cause of the problem must reside in this very manifestation of shortsightedness*; which means that the problem will have to endure as long as we continue inquiring only the pole which sees, as long as we insist on thinking only the something, thus neglecting *the pole which is seen, the nothing*, or considering it as a minor or even inexistent repercussion of the effective one. And so, it is Novalis' opinion that there is perhaps need for *a more correct and profound acuity*, and, in that sense, the adoption of *a different prism*, to solve the problem: a prism which may open for a double vision, the singular “connection” between opposites which ensures that we exhaust the circle of the problem, wherein lies the “basis of all philosophizing” (NS, II: 22).

Let us then reconsider the problem one last time, now not through the prism of he who sees, but *through the prism of he who is seen*. In other words, let us forget the primacy of reality over ideality, and let us inquire the pole of ideality: namely, the nothing which both feeling and reflection can be, or not be, depending on their seeing or being seen.

The natural question is this: what takes place in the nothing? That is, what happens *in the lapse between gazes*, in the back of the well-known – and illusory – visions of feeling and reflection, which always lead to a mutual incompatibility of the opposites?

We have already stated that feeling and reflection have to be united in their disunion: this is their form, to which also their matter must comply. The question is that, in what regards the matter of the original action, between opposites, these only see themselves, they do not acknowledge each other. That is, the problem is in the matter of the vision of the opposites; more precisely, in the act of seeing, which is here irreducible and incompatible.

However, Novalis adds, regardless of which of the poles is omitted, one can say that there is a moment in the problem where the opposites not only see, but they are also allowed not to see each other as such, or rather, they are entitled to see each other beyond that which they are: namely, *that which they are not*. Translating into other words: in the gesture we have just described, which is the cause of the problem of the original action, there is a single and ephemeral moment which is in the back of that other moment when feeling and reflection insist on simultaneously being something in each other's eyes and end up not being. In this moment, feeling is indeed nothing in the eyes of reflection, which looks at it and sees nothing, and reflection is indeed nothing in the eyes of feeling, which looks at it and sees nothing. But in this condition of being nothing – Novalis suggests – feeling and reflection do see, they do exist, *they are something, yet ideally* (there, where they see without being seen). And so, what do the opposites see through this ideal prism? Not just the mere inexistence of the other, for that was the case with the something that gazed upon the nothing: rather *an equal, a correlate*, a nothing created by both opposites and of which both opposites are the creation. In a word, *feeling and reflection see each other not existing*; they see each other in each other's shadow... but they do see each other. And why do they? Because indeed each of them is rendering the other nothing, and hence each of them is nothing; and this, as was seen, is the real and inescapable condition of each of the poles. But if this is undertaken *mutually, and not alternately*, then, in the case of feeling, that which departs from it is the vision of a nothing, which tends towards its opposite (but an opposite which knows itself to be nothing), and in the case of reflection, that which departs from it is the vision of a nothing which also tends towards its opposite (but an opposite which also knows itself to be nothing). Now, this is an exchange of visions between nothings; and if it is so, then *the only something – the only thing which can have the power to transform nothing into something – is the ideal vision of each opposite*; and if before this seemed unattainable, it was because since none of the opposites was anything for the other, and both were only something for themselves, they neglected this prism of their own vision, and the same did the spirit. And so, in a word, it is the ideal vision between feeling and reflection, thus rendered nothing through their real vision, which is for Novalis the key of the problem: it is the ideal vision that which may unite feeling and reflection.

To rephrase the problem through this prism, we could then say: in the original action feeling and reflection, to one another two nothings (only something for one another in reality) *see each other mutually*. And if in a real plane feeling and reflection omit each other, and do so by effacing that which is real in the other opposite, their existence; *ideally*, in the penumbra of the vision of the other, in the back of the (un-)conscious gaze of each of the opposites, *their gazes exist*, and although they are cast by something held as inexistent, that gaze not only is not nothing, but it is *the possible something* amid the apparent nothing, which hereby meets and unites, in disunion, with its counterpart.

The option for this prism results in *two important conclusions*. First of all, that each of the poles, because it does not know itself invisible to the other, casts an ideal extension of its existence towards the other; that is, each pole so to say is something in its gaze, in its vision of the other, for, according to Novalis, the important thing is not so much an effective existence with a diffuse gaze, rather *a diffuse existence with an effective gaze*. Secondly, and most importantly, that if each of the opposites,

which is simultaneously visible and invisible, existent and non-existent, casts such an ideal gaze over the other, and if herein each of the opposites is something, then there is a moment in which, despite their real incompatibility, the ideal gazes of both entities do coincide despite their opposition, thus inverting what took place between their real existences. For although feeling and reflection are here – really – nothing, however, in a circle endowed with two directions, as is that of Novalis, they too must progress, as do the real poles, not towards their evanescence, but towards a mutual contact between their maximums, *towards being something between nothings*. Hence, although feeling and reflection are really nothing to each other, and that is their incontrovertible disunion, that means that conversely they will have to contact ideally by means of their maximum intensities, and that those maximum intensities will have to be here a something, the only something that is possible: their union; and so, instead of one's gaze dying in the other, one could say that the gazes of feeling and reflection, two nothings, are two somethings, and ultimately a single something: they are the maximum intensities of feeling and reflection, and hence they meet and contact. All we have to do now is see exactly how.

Herein, at last, lies Novalis' final position on this question. For, according to Novalis' theory, in the real prism of the question there was also a contact, and this was also a contact between maximums. But those maximums, which were those of existence, as well as those of the visions of feeling and reflection, were the result of *a vision of two somethings over a nothing*. That is, the something which saw, saw nothing, and if he saw nothing then its gaze, which was obliged to return to itself, was nothing; and hence, we must conclude that this contact is not a contact as such, which leaves the two opposites abandoned to themselves, in a unique existence: and that is, according to Novalis, the necessary disunion between the opposites. But now that the question is considered through *an ideal prism*, we realize that its kern is precisely the opposite. For, according to Novalis, there are still, and there must be still, two opposites and two opposite visions. But because *two nothings which see one another do indeed, and quite effectively, see one another, that is, are equal*; and because their vision thus sees something, then this is not just any contact; for if the contacting vision of these opposites is something – and especially so, if this contact in something is already union – then, at the moment of the contact, this contact or this reciprocal vision of the opposites so to say stimulates the two opposite entities by making them cumulate until their maximums (“back” and “forth”). That is, the opposite does not merely attempt to establish contact with the other opposite and, upon seeing the impossibility of this, returns to itself, as is the case with the real prism. Quite on the contrary, because there is now a new horizon for each of the visions, but, on the other hand, each of the opposites is so to say devoid of itself, and is nothing (for so dictates the real prism of the question), and is something only in its vision, outside of itself (for so dictates the ideal prism of the question), then the threshold between opposites is reflected upon the very opposites, that is, *each of the opposites is conveyed, through its own vision, to its opposite, and inflates it with the something that is its vision, and hence each of the opposites enlivens, is inoculated, sees itself in the other opposite, and is indeed the other opposite (“forth”), while the other opposite is also inoculated, sees itself in the former (“back”): and this, according to Novalis, is the highest degree of reciprocity between opposites: one in which the I “is one and divided” (NS, II: 32), in which feeling is reflection and reflection is feeling, and the sphere is exhausted.*

Hence, we conclude that this ideal vision of the opposites is doubly pertinent; for through it not only each opposite exists in the eyes of its counterpart, which thus sees itself in the crossing of gazes, but especially each opposite henceforth exists, through that very something that is its gaze, in the other opposite. That is, the opposites unite, one is in the other while the other is not in itself, and *is* indeed the other, because that other is not itself, and vice versa. And hence, *feeling is in itself really, and in reflection ideally, and reflection is in itself really, and in feeling ideally*; which means, in a word, the union and disunion, the opposition that must occur, and yet must not occur, between the maximum poles of feeling and reflection: one of the main beams of Novalis' philosophical thought, and hence the "basis" not only of his own, but also "of all philosophizing" (NS, II: 22)¹¹.

3. Bibliography

- Baggesen, Jens Immanuel (1831), *Aus Jens Immanuel Baggesens Briefwechsel mit Kanrl Leonhard Reinhold und Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi*, 2 Bde., Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus. (B)
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb (1971), *Fichtes Werke*, 11 Bde., hrsg. von Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin. (FiW)
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1970), *Briefe von und an Hegel* (3 Bde.), hrsg. von Johannes Hoffmeister, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag. (BrH)
- Novalis (1999), *Schriften. Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, hrsg. von Hans-Joachim Mähl u. Richard Samuel (3 Bde.), Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt. (NS)

¹¹ The economy of the text forbids us from expounding this topic; suffice it to say that Novalis' own philosophical system will be based on this assumption – the possibility and/or impossibility of uniting the opposites – inasmuch as, according to Novalis and other idealist authors, philosophy, in its speculative nature, *is* the consummated image of the opposites; an image which philosophy itself will therefore attempt to suppress by progressing until the ideal point of the circle of the self-comprehension of the I. Hence the aforementioned need to suppress the opposites (necessary union) which, notwithstanding, constitute life (necessary disunion).