

Novalis and Magical Idealism: A Forgotten Pioneer of Parapsychology?¹

Renaud Évrard

University of Lorraine

Abstract: German natural philosophy was an important intellectual movement from the late 18th to the mid-20th century. It integrated phenomena such as animal magnetism into a multidisciplinary vision aimed at bringing the sciences closer together. Its influence on parapsychology remains little-known, however. I take the example of Friedrich von Hardenberg, better known by his pseudonym Novalis (1772-1801). Not cited in parapsychological literature, the young scientist and poet nevertheless mentioned his personal experiences of the apparition of his dead fiancée and his practice of animal magnetism. He also theorized a new metaphysics called “magical idealism,” which aims to go beyond other forms of idealism to identify, within an immanentist yet moral framework, “magic” as a possible solution to the union of opposites (subject and object, ideal and real). His project seems coincident with that of modern theoretical parapsychology, and in particular dual-aspect monism.

Keywords: Novalis, Romanticism, Naturphilosophie, history of parapsychology, magic

Highlights

- Novalis, the German scientist, philosopher and poet claimed to have had some anomalous experiences.
- He developed an original “magical idealism” to integrate them in the philosophy of nature.
- “Magic” seems acceptable as a possible solution for Romantic philosophy of mind and nature.

¹ Address correspondence to: Renaud Évrard, Ph. D., Psychology, University of Lorraine, Renaud.evrard@univ-lorraine.fr

As the French philosopher Georges Gusdorf (1985) deplored, few works in the history of science focus on the “Romantic” trend associated with German Naturphilosophie:

The discredit that the triumph of the positive sciences cast on Naturphilosophie in the second half of the 19th century led to a misunderstanding of this knowledge, which was henceforth regarded as a folly of reason. An important part of the future of Western thought has been consigned to the dustbin of history, by virtue of an option that runs counter to the historical spirit. The history of knowledge cannot be conceived as a history of truth, pursued according to the sole standard of discrimination between the true and the false. (p. 17; all translations by the author)

By employing a symmetrical approach to the history of science (Mauskopf, 1979; Wallis, 1979), we can attempt to overcome these biases. This involves (temporarily) relativizing the existence of a precise dividing line between the true and the false, and “between science and scholars proper and the adventurers of knowledge, who speculate indiscriminately, extrapolating from the true into the plausible, then slipping into the imaginary” (Gusdorf, 1985, p. 325). The same philosopher identifies a perverse effect of the “repression” of *Naturphilosophie*: its return in the form of “parapsychologies” (Gusdorf, 1985, p. 333). Is this the only link to be made between natural philosophy and parapsychology?

The *Naturphilosophie* (philosophy of nature movement) proposes an overall intelligibility of the world, ensuring human’s harmonious integration into the universe. Going against mechanicism and then positivism, *Naturphilosophen* filled “the blank spots where observations are lacking, where positive data are insufficient, with speculations governed by the general laws of analogy and harmony” (Gusdorf, 1985, p. 265). Rather than rigorous exactitude, they prefer a “trans-empirical plenitude, at once poetic and religious as well as aesthetic” (*idem*). The Romantics celebrate the alliance of science and poetry, “a truth untouched by poetry would seem to them, if not dead, at least suspect” (*idem*). Nothing could be more contrary, a priori, to a parapsychology with scientific ambitions, a cult of facts, advocating an approach based on endless checks and verifications.

However, I will try to show by way of an example that this gap is not so great after all. I have chosen Friedrich von Hardenberg, known as Novalis, who has not before been studied in the German, English, and French parapsychology journals I consulted. (An exception is a book by Norwegian scholar Simonsen (2020) on popular parapsy-

chology/anomalous cognition, which mentions Novalis twice for his poetic work). Yet he is mentioned by French parapsychologist François Favre as the “only genius parapsychology has ever had” (Favre & Garnier, in press). Favre, who trained as a psychiatrist, devoted his life to parapsychology and then to a broader philosophy of science, mainly within the *Groupe d’études et de recherche en parapsychologie* (Parapsychology Studies and Research Group; Evrard, 2010, 2016). He deplored the fact that Novalis was confined to the literary domain of Romanticism, even though he exceeded it on all sides. Novalis is said to have initiated the study of the relation between psi and metaphysics, typical of the German Romantics (Stanguennec, 2011), positioning himself as the “founder of metaphysical science” towards which Favre was converging. Favre’s strong assertions aroused my curiosity about this unknown philosopher.

After giving some biographical details of Novalis’s brief life, I will focus on his very particular way of integrating personal experiences of apparition and the practice of animal magnetism. I will situate him philosophically, before devoting a detailed account to his “magical idealism”, an original metaphysical proposition that aims to go beyond other forms of idealism, identifying, within an immanentist yet moral framework, “magic” as a possible solution to the union of opposites (subject and object, ideal and real). Novalis’s scientific project is not only transdisciplinary, but also leaves a special place for aesthetics and morality, as reflected in his conception of poetry and romanticization. I conclude that the wonder he placed at the heart of his study seems to be the same wonder that parapsychology has inherited.

Biography

Georg Philipp Friedrich von Hardenberg was born on May 2, 1772, at Oberwiedersstedt Castle (Arnstein), then in the Electorate of Saxony, and died on March 25, 1801, at Weißenfels in present-day Germany. His family came from the old nobility of northern Germany. He was the youngest and first son in a family of eleven children. Novalis was the pseudonym he chose for his first major publication, *Blüthenstaub* (“Grains of Pollen”).

Novalis’s frail health was revealed at an early age, when he contracted severe dysentery at the age of 9. According to his brother Karl, “The effect of this dazzling illness was to awaken in him all at once the intellectual faculties that had lain dormant or asleep” (quoted in Schefer, 2023, p. 50). Previously, he had shown no particular intellectual disposition (Schefer, 2005, p. 29).

He studied philosophy at the University of Jena, where he befriended Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), then professor of history, who exerted a considerable influence on his work. As Maeterlinck (1895, p. XXXIV) summarizes, “Novalis’s entire youth was spent at the very center of this vast conflagration of human thought” (see also Wulf, 2022). He went on to study law in Leipzig, where he became a friend of Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1859) in 1792, and mathematics with the physicist and mathematician Carl Hindenburg (1741-1808). In 1794, at the age of 22, he obtained the equivalent of a law degree in Wittenberg, but he preferred to train as an engineer and work as a salt-works administrator. From 1797, at the Freiberg School of Mines, he learned differential calculus, chemistry and, above all, geology and mineralogy under the guidance of Abraham Gottlob Werner (1750-1817), one of the most important figures in the natural sciences at the time: “A genial observer of mineralogical phenomena, Werner strove to bring to light universal analogies whose radiance extended from the order of geology, the archaeology of planet Earth, to linguistics, the ‘mineralogy of language’ and archaeology of the human mind” (Gusdorf, 1985, p. 242). Fulgurant as usual, integrating a wide range of subjects while satisfying his pronounced taste for detail, Novalis completed his training two years ahead of his classmates. His teacher of halurgy (the art of extracting or making salts), the chemist Johann Christian Wiegleb (1732-1800), mentioned his name with reverence, as it had taken him ten to twelve days to grasp the whole of this teaching (Schefer, 2023, p. 154).

Novalis died of tuberculosis at the age of 28, leaving behind numerous unpublished manuscripts. His complete works were only identified and translated at the beginning of the 21st century.

Sophie’s Ordeal

In Grünigen, Novalis met by chance the very young Sophie von Kühn (1782-1797), with whom he became secretly engaged a few months later, in 1795. He was 23 and she 13. However, she developed tuberculosis, requiring operations and long convalescence, and eventually died in March 1797.

Novalis was absolutely passionate about Sophie. During his lifetime, he wrote: “I have religion for Sophie – not love. Absolute love, independent of the heart and based on faith, is religion” (in Schefer, 2023, p. 115). Schefer (2023, p. 115) comments: “Sophie will undoubtedly have been for him a mythified figure, both real and ideal, present though already absent, and as if transfigured during his lifetime”. He would also merge his intellectual work with his emotional impulse: “My favorite study is basically named

after my fiancée. Sophie is her name – philosophy is the soul of my life and the key to my innermost self” (in Schefer, 2023, p. 116). This “inner convergence” (Margantin, 2012, p. 10) has played a major part in building this legend around the figure of the “mystical couple – beyond death” (Margantin, 2012, p. 10).

Suicidality and Sophie’s Apparition

Novalis was deeply affected by Sophie’s death on March 19, 1797. A month later (April 14), his brother Erasmus, with whom he was very close, died (Margantin, 2012, p. 37), having given him “all sorts of advice on how to overcome his melancholy” (Schefer, 2005, p. 29). From April 18 onwards, Novalis kept a “mourning diary” in which he “regularly recorded the ‘progress’ of his illness, the moments of calm and relapse” (Schefer, 2023, p. 124–125). Each entry is marked by a double chronology: the date of the day on which he writes, but also the number of days since Sophie’s death (31 days when he begins). Schefer (2023, p. 125) reads “two interlocking times, that of memory and the present, [which] undoubtedly allow us to consider that this text implements, in its own way, a form of writing of subjective and objective time.”

Reading this diary, whose tone is at times very dark, one guesses that the all-important decision (*Entschluß*) he says he has made since Sophie’s death could be that of suicide: “In the morning, the resolution was very distant – in the evening, much closer” (May 8–9–10, in Schefer, 2023, p. 129). He frequently visits the nearby cemetery where his sweetheart is buried. In a letter, he vows to see her reappear:

I have plenty of ideas in my head – my mind has gained more than it has lost – but love, love is missing – and with the absence of love, everything is absent – for love gives everything – and love also takes everything back. What use is it to me to be a loom for weaving ideas [*Ideenwebstuhl*]? – nothing can replace the living. But at least I have gained the firm hope that I haven’t lost her – and this hope would be strengthened if Sophie could appear before me again.

What unspeakable happiness it would be here if she could appear to me from time to time – comforting me and giving me strength with a single look of love! How transfigured I would be! (...) What you tell me about Sophie’s invisible presence is a shining truth – Her image will become and must become my best self – the magic image, which is illuminated within me by an eternal glow, and which will undoubtedly save me from so many

trials and temptations of the evil one and sin. (in Schefer, 2023, p. 121)

On May 13 (the 56th day since her death), he describes an experience that could be interpreted as an apparition:

I got up early, at 5am. The weather was pleasant. The morning passed quickly without me doing much. Captain von Rockenthien, his sister-in-law and her children came. I received a letter from Schlegel with the first part of his new Shakespeare translations. After lunch, I went for a walk – then coffee – the weather darkened – first a flash, then cloudy and stormy – very lascivious – I started reading Shakespeare – I really enjoyed it. In the evening, I went to Sophie. There, I was in a state of indescribable joy – luminous moments of enthusiasm – With a breath, I scattered her grave like dust – centuries were like moments – her presence was palpable – I believed she would appear at any moment – When I returned home – I had some emotion chatting with *my dear* [French ‘Gouvernante’ Janette Danscour]. Otherwise, I was very happy all day. In the afternoon, Niebekker was there. In the evening, I had a few more good ideas. Shakespeare gave me a lot to think about. (Novalis, 2015, note 244, p. 326)

The immediate recollection in the diary refers only to a strong sensation of presence, but in a poem created later, Novalis acts as if she had appeared. This experience would become the third hymn in his *Hymns to the Night*, published in 1800. So, we have two versions of the same events:

One day when I was shedding painful tears, when my hope, soon vanished in suffering, was streaming away, and I was standing alone by the dry mound, whose narrow, dark space sheltered the shape of my life, solitary as no solitary ever was, cornered and driven by an unspeakable anguish, without strength, I was barely the idea of distress; and suddenly, as I stood there looking around me, begging for help, no longer able to go forward or backward, clinging with infinite nostalgia to fleeting, evanescent life, I was seized by a twilight shiver from the blue distance, from the peaks of my former bliss – and the bond of birth, the chain of light, was torn asunder all at once. Earthly splendor fled into the distance, and with it my mourning, and melancholy confluent in a new world of unfathomable depth – yes, your own world, nocturnal enthusiasm, sleeping sky that came to me: the site gently lifted, and my spirit, unbounded, newborn, floated above it. The mound became a cloud of dust, and through the dust I saw the transfig-

ured features of the beloved. Eternity rested in her eyes – I grabbed her hands, and the tears turned into a sparkling, unbreakable chain. Below, in the distance, the millennia passed like a storm. At his neck, I shed tears of ecstasy for new life. – That was the first, the only dream – and ever since then I have had an eternal, unchanging faith in the night sky and its light, the beloved. (Novalis, 2014, p. 5-7; slightly modified version p. 43)

Other rhyming verses echo this experience: "Infinite and mysterious,/ A suave shiver runs through us -/ It seems to me that from the deep far away/ Vibrated the echo of our mourning./ Our loved ones likewise desire us,/ And from their nostalgia send us the sigh." (Novalis, 2014, p. 31).

The status of this experience is difficult to qualify according to contemporary parapsychological categories. The initial sensation of presence becomes a full apparition in the poem, while retaining an ambiguous status since it allows tactile contact while also being described as a "sigh." The experience is also presented as an out-of-the-body experience, assimilated to a dream. Interestingly, the altered states of time consciousness are reported similarly in both the diary and the poem as the time of centuries/millennia passed very quickly. The psychological and contextual conditions suggest that Novalis indeed experienced an altered state of consciousness that facilitated the realization of his wish – an after-death communication with his fiancée. This experience played a pivotal role in his life, even if it was sublimated by a narrative embellishment, a romanticization.

Caroline, August Wilhelm Schlegel's wife, noted the exalted form that young Hardenberg's grief took: "His melancholy has thrown him, with redoubled activity, into the abstract sciences: his inner restlessness expresses itself through the quantity and novelty of his original points of view." (Schulz, 2005, p. 73). In any case, Sophie revealed to him "the existence of another plane of reality" (Schefer, 2020, p. 19), and he devoted a kind of personal cult to her. She was a source of inspiration for tales that culminated in the resurrection of the beloved (Novalis, 2005, p. 98). A metaphor for his own work?

Animal Magnetism

In addition to his interest in communion with the afterlife, Novalis was also interested in "animal magnetism," which was the subject of much controversy in Europe. From December 1798, he had a new fiancée (her name appears in his diary on the 110th day of Sophie's death), Julie von Charpentier (1776-1811), daughter of a mining

inspector, with whom he conducted several magnetism sessions, using passes and conductive metals. He makes numerous allusions to magnetism in these manuscripts (Novalis, 2005, pp. 83, 89; 2020, p. 89).

Novalis envisioned magnetism (like electricity, chemistry, and mechanics) within the three kingdoms: mineral, vegetable, and animal (Novalis, 2005, p. 93). In this, he was influenced by Johann W. Ritter (1776–1810), a German physicist and chemist who had also studied at Jena and was a supporter of the nascent *Naturphilosophie* (Wetzels, 1990). Ritter conducted numerous experiments on galvanic (electric) phenomena, which he sought to generalize to all organic and inorganic bodies. He postulates that inert matter must be regarded as living matter at an inferior stage of evolution.

Novalis recognized in Ritter “a genius superior to his own” (Montiel, 2009, p. 63). Convinced that a secret lay behind every phenomenon he observed, all Ritter’s work “remains at the service of a conception of science and of existence as a whole in which the most important thing is always elsewhere, in the realm of the mind” (Montiel, 2009, p. 63). It was in this context that he became a fervent promoter of animal magnetism and, later, of the “telluric electrometry” that was supposed to justify the effectiveness of dowsers (Ritter, 2001).

Philosophical Studies

The years 1795–1797 were marked by the pain of Sophie’s ordeal and the discovery of the philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), one of the founders of German idealism, based on a re-reading of Immanuel Kant. Fichte was appointed Professor of Philosophy at Jena in 1793. The publication of *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (“Principles of the Doctrine of Science”) in 1794–1795 ensured his renown.

As early as 1795, Novalis was writing notes, later published as *Fichteian Studies* (Novalis, 2012). It was here that he developed his fragmentary style of philosophical writing. Ideas are expressed in a variety of forms: one word, a succession of words, telegraphic sentences, whole paragraphs, lists, projects of ideas to be developed... With Friedrich Schlegel, they exchanged many of these “philosophemes,” which they compared, in a chemical metaphor, “to the production of *precipitates* from the association of various substances, whose reactions to one another are unpredictable and surprising” (Margantin, 2012, p. 45).

It is very difficult to enter this philosophy, which does not present itself as a closed system, but connects extremely different fields in an interconnection that is up to the reader to reconstruct. Some of these fragments will be redeployed from entirely new perspectives in other texts, such as the notes taken from his reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which are later integrated into his *Grains of Pollen* (Margantin, 2012, p. 39).

This style would nevertheless inspire other philosophers, such as Nietzsche (1882) and his aphoristic style in *The Gay Science*. Early Romanticism drew on these incomplete and unfinished sketches “to divert the logical constructs of philosophy, incapable of embracing the world in its multiplicity and its becoming” (Schefer, in Novalis, 2020, p. 12). This open system generates an original dynamic, prompting the Austrian novelist Thomas Bernhard (1988) to say, “All philosophers age with time, Novalis does not.”

Novalis discovers and constructs his own thinking through his various readings. Over the next six years (1795–1801), he adopted this fruitful method, multiplying fragments that echoed his personal life, his academic training, his correspondence and his reading. “Particular attention should be paid to the poet’s efforts to link and exchange dissimilar dimensions, to uncover structures of *mediation*” (Schefer, 2005, p. 18). Novalis attempts both to bind disparate elements into a continuous whole and to fragment the whole into discrete forms.

He even constructed an original method of philosophy, involving: 1) dealing with all domains at once (science, philosophy, morality, etc.); 2) applying a combinatorics of concepts; and 3) applying a combinatorics of domains, in a kind of metaphysical science without borders. Novalis calls this study of the relations between the sciences *encyclopedistics*: this method “has no other object and no other purpose than to bring all disciplines and all practices into contact with each other” (Schefer, in Novalis, 2015, p. 15). The young scholar is not system-oriented: “It is not a matter of defining or circumscribing the truth in a text, but of bringing it into being through multiple and often unprecedented relationships.” (Schefer, in Novalis, 2015, p. 15). In his correspondence with Friedrich Schlegel, he nevertheless refers to this project as that of the constitution of a Bible: “Total truth is not a total of truths, but the rallying, alliance or even coalescence of the various components of presence in the world, among which religion and poetry overload the objective data of scientific investigation with their specific values” (Gusdorf, 1985, p. 53).

Novalis, poet, philosopher, and scholar, is one of the most singular figures of the Romantic movement, but “although he is *unique* and probably the most complete spirit of this period, Novalis is nonetheless one of its most *emblematic* representatives, insofar as he condenses and catalyzes all Romantic aspirations” (Schefer, 2005, p. 10). While this polymathic profile may come as a surprise, Novalis took Goethe as his model (Margantin, 2012, p. 103) and had several opportunities to exchange ideas with him.

Critical editions of these philosophical studies now include all the elements, even the fragments that Novalis himself had “crossed out”:

- 1797–1799: *Seeds* (Novalis, 2004)
- 1798: *The World Must Be Romanticized* (Novalis, 2021)
- 1798–1799: *The General Draft* (Novalis, 2015)
- Summer 1799 – Autumn 1800: *In the end, everything becomes poetry* (Novalis, 2020)
- 1799–1800: *Art and Utopia* (Novalis, 2005)

These essays are complemented by the novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Novalis, 2011), the poems and fictions *Hymns to the Night*, *Spiritual Songs*, *Disciples at Sais* (Novalis, 2014), and the discourse *Europe or Christianity* (Novalis, 1975). Many ideas emerge from all these texts. To find an order for them, I will follow Olivier Schefer (2003) in his attempt to identify the originality of the “magical idealism” proposed by Novalis.

The Magical Idealism

Novalis attempts to resolve the question raised by Kant: “how can the heterogeneous kingdoms of human freedom and nature be united?” (Schefer, 2003, p. 514). Fichte’s solution is to focus on the *free ego*, uncoupled from nature, as a means of overcoming the unbridgeable gap between subject and object. “But for this to happen, pure reflexive consciousness must take itself back into spiritual interiority” (Schefer, 2003, p. 515). We therefore need to rethink the connections between the ego and the outside world, and this involves a form of animism that incorporates the notion of “magic,”: “*magic* constitutes a possible solution to the *idealist* problem of the union of opposites: subject and object, ideal and real.” (Schefer, 2003, p. 515)

So, contrary to the widespread idea that Romanticism is a morbid, pathological and poetic rejection of reality (Schefer, 2005, p. 9–10), Novalis’s proposals can be seen

“as an attempt to *construct the real*. A real that involves the self as much as the world, phenomenal experience as much as a global anthropology” (Schefer, 2005, p. 11).

A Realistic Idealism

Novalis’s “magical idealism” (an expression used as early as 1798) was the culmination of a long line of idealist thinkers, reconciling “Fichtean subjective idealism (philosophy of freedom) and Schellingian objective idealism (philosophy of nature)” (Schefer, 2003, p. 516). Magic, then, is not the “sense of wonder, staged in fairy tales” (Schefer, 2003, p. 516), but the completion of idealism, its dialectical synthesis. Schlegel concluded that Novalis’ philosophy “wants to absorb physics” (by Margantin, 2012, p. 140): does this necessarily mean that he sought to spiritualize matter?

However, this is not a cleverly constituted doctrine, but rather an open, protean “philosopheme”: “We are dealing less with a massive thesis than with a fragmentation of propositions, or rather, with a tangle of paths that sometimes take opposite directions.” (Schefer, 2003, p. 516) This is characteristic of Novalis’s productions: “mobile thought, resistant to any form of dogmatism,” with its “definitive singularity” (Schefer, 2003, p. 517).

Magic as a Concretion of the Will

The first surprise is that the young philosopher dispenses with the usual prejudices (especially of the Enlightenment era) concerning magic, and sees in it a link between the imaginary and objectivity:

(I)t is clear that Novalis rejects, in all cases, the irrational and passive character often attributed to magic. Magical power, as long as it is exercised outside the subject, is a mechanical, unconscious and constraining exercise of forces. ‘Out of laziness, man wants only a *simple* mechanism or a *simple* magic. He doesn’t want to be active and make use of his *productive imagination*.’ [Novalis, 2015, no. 724, p. 192] Unambiguously, then, Novalis makes magic a dimension of *voluntary* subjectivity, of which imagination embodies all freedom. (Schefer, 2003, p. 517)

Magic thus expresses the concretion of subjective will outside the subject. Schefer reduces this process to “mechanics,” to “forces” dependent on the “uncon-

scious,” which is not what Novalis says. Indeed, it is through the free act that Novalis underpins his notion of magic:

The exhilarating, vertiginous possibility of apprehending being through the free *act* of self-affirmation of the self, anterior to all intentional object consciousness, fascinated the early Romantics, who saw in it an unprecedented aesthetic perspective. Despite the abstraction of this system, deplored by Novalis as early as 1797, the radicality of the first reflection (*Tathandlung*) provides muted nourishment for the Romantic thesis of an *absolute fantasy of the self*. (Schefer, 2003, p. 517)

Novalis explores this imaginary determinism that, starting from the free ego, modifies the object. In his reading of Fichte, he explores this notion of the ego as “fundamentally nothing – everything must be *given* to it”. He then defined its modus operandi: “The ego is not an encyclopedia, but a universal principle,” that of “appropriation” (*Vereigenthümlichung*): “Everything that enters its sphere is its own – for the essence of its being consists in this power to make its own (*Aneignen*)” (Novalis, 2012, p. 221). The Romantic theory of knowledge emerges from a purely logical operation: it rejects the separation between subject and object at the heart of the postulate of the scientist’s objectivity. On the contrary, subjective experience is in alliance with reality, as Novalis sums up in this formula: “How can a man understand a thing of which he does not bear the germ within him? What I am destined to understand must develop organically within me” (Novalis, 1947, p. 37).

The boundaries of this imaginary world are not immediately obvious. Here, Novalis goes beyond Fichte and Kant:

Fichtising artistically means increasing the original power of the imagination, and rejecting any mimetic thesis, any residual or factual data external to consciousness. This creative and poetic dynamic of an imagination that frees itself from external experience (contrary to what Kant advocated), in order to self-limit and self-engender, is one of the possibilities of “magical idealism”: the expression of an absolute and unfailing will. ‘Ideal of total will. Magical will. Would all free choice be abs[olutely] poetic – moral?’ [Novalis, 2015, no. 769, p. 201] (Schefer, 2003, p. 518)

Imagination is thus able to break through the usual determinism of reality, which raises the question of the limitations of this superior will. The notion of morality soon appears as a counterpoint to this power. And vice versa, magic becomes a necessary reinforcement of morality: “To be truly moral, we must seek to become magicians

[*Magier*]" (Novalis, 2015, p. 34).

The Creative Magician

The link between this imaginary determinism and creativity is immediately apparent to the early Romantics:

To understand how the ideal and the real, transcendence and immanence, are articulated in Novalis, it is the phenomenon of *creation* that we must focus on, for it always stands at the intersection of the two planes we have identified. (Schefer, 2005, p. 18)

Armed with magic, idealism ceases to be an abstract contemplation, since it possesses its own mode of action to "pass into realism" (Schefer, 2005, p. 13). "Imagination is a similar extra-mechanical force (Magism or synthetism of the imagination). Philosophy appears here entirely as magical idealism.)" (Novalis, 2015, no. 826, p. 215) This objective concretization enables idealism to be no longer a monism detached from reality, but rather an effective complementarism:

Recourse to magic gives a weight of reality to the subjective imagination, always threatened within itself with losing itself in the emptiness of its pendulum movement (*Schweben*). In this respect, magic presents itself as 'poetic-noetic' thinking, which partly meets the idealist demand for the unification of opposites. (Schefer, 2003, p. 519)

The idea of magic enables Novalis to reinterpret certain concepts of German idealism, such as the "intellectual intuition" present in the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling: "In a radical way, he links this to the productive imagination, i.e. to the capacity that the mind would have, from imaginary representations, to realize the ideal" (Margantin, 2012, p. 88).

The status of the person who produces through imagination is thus compared to that of the artist, the latter reciprocally becoming a "magician":

So the philosopher-poet is in the "*state of absolute creator*" [Novalis, 2015, no. 758, p. 199; in French in the text]. The 'absolute creator', like the poet or musician, is therefore a 'magician' [Novalis, 2021, no. 286, [*Anecdotes*], p. 116.] who produces an art that is necessarily 'abstract', i.e. of exclusively spiritual origin. (Schefer, 2003, p. 518)

The artist, he adds, is thus “able to use his organs as instruments to modify the real world at will” (quoted by Margantin, 2012, p. 94). The connection between imagination and creation is thus established. The creator is considered here in an immanentist way: “Novalis reformulates, or modifies, the question of transcendental subjectivity into creative subjectivity, to which he seems to lend properly theurgic and magical powers” (Schefer, 2003, p. 519). Magic is first and foremost the magic of creative subjectivity.

Moving Away from Transcendental Idealism

What Novalis proposes introduces a break with previous idealisms. For example, he criticizes Fichte, who “does not understand hypostasis” (Novalis, 2015, no. 1067, p. 251). By this term, he designates a fundamental substance, a first principle, which places the spirit in a complete metaphysical model. If we dismiss magic, and thus the possibility of the will exporting itself into the objective world, we deprive ourselves of “the other half of the creative spirit” (Novalis, 2015, no. 1067, p. 251). Novalis is interested in these bridges between inside and outside, as Schefer comments:

The mind too enclosed within itself, in Fichte, is incapable of positing an otherness that is truly its own, and of hypostasizing itself in a real that proceeds from the producing mind. This is an insistent motif of his thinking: the movement towards the self, the internalization or ecstasy of an internal conversion, is always counterbalanced by the opposite movement out of the self, a movement of procession of the subject into the world. ‘The outside,’ he writes, ‘is in short only a *transposed* and *distributed* inside – a *higher* inside.’ [Novalis, 2015, no. 703, p. 187] It is not merely the recognition of the spirit in an alien form that is at stake, but its concretion. (Schefer, 2003, p. 520)

Novalis’s position is “dual, but not dualistic” (Schefer, 2005, p. 16), reminiscent of dual-aspect monism (Atmanspacher & Rickles, 2022; Rabeyron, 2023). Not only does Novalis attempt to extricate idealism from its monistic rut, he also rejects the easy solution of religious transcendentalism, going against the grain of his cultural heritage. It is always through the Ego that the magical operation proceeds:

Fascinated by Spinozism and its postulate of a natural divinity, Novalis does not depart from the principle of (self-)mediating subjectivity. For God has fundamentally nothing to do with nature, at least in a direct way: hence his

depreciation of a ‘magical God’ (Novalis, 2015, no. 60, p. 31), i.e. here natural and external to the subject. (Schefer, 2003, p. 520)

The only God accepted by Novalis is therefore a “personal God” with ideal value, “to be sought within the consciousness that subjectively appropriates the divine, through creative ecstasy (conversion, hypostasis), or creates (recreates) it through the act of *theurgic* faith, itself a source of *fictions*” (Schefer, 2003, p. 520–521). With a certain malice, Novalis leads magical idealism towards what he elsewhere calls “applied religion”: the creation of a *God of one’s own*. This was taken up by Friedrich Schlegel, when he concluded his *Lectures on Transcendental Philosophy* in Jena, with an allusion to his young friend’s thinking spotted by Schefer (2003, p. 521):

A science that links politics, religion and morality equally well, all the arts and sciences in one, and which would consequently be the art of producing the divine, could only be described by the name MAGIC. (Schlegel, 1991, p. 105)

This relativization of divinity can be seen as early as the *Fichtean studies*: “Wherever man places his reality, that is where he fixes his God, his world, his whole” (Novalis, 2012, p. 177). In the same fragment, he affirms the reality of human fantasy (*Fantasie*) and will, as well as the *freedom* of destiny’s self-determination.

Rejection of the Supernatural

Novalis claims to have seen his dead fiancée appear. But did he believe in the existence of spirits? He himself asserted: “Where there are no gods, ghosts reign” (quoted by Margantin, 2012, p. 151).

In *Pollen*, he explains that spirits have no other means of acting in this world than through the memory of the living, “hence the duty to think of the dead. This is the only way to remain in communion with them” (Novalis, 2004, p. 76). The same applies to God, who “is effective for us only through faith” (*idem*).

Even so, the finale of *Hymns to the Night* (Novalis, 2014) evokes the *passive* dissolution of the finite subject in the infinite whole (Schefer, 2005, p. 15). But an expanded understanding of spirit opens the door to this beyond: “The world of spirits is in fact already open to us – It is always *manifest* – Should we suddenly become as elastic as possible, we would find ourselves in it” (Novalis, 2015, no. 341, p. 89).

In his tendency to go beyond oppositions, Novalis would instead point to the complementarity between miracles and the laws of nature: "Miracles and the laws of nature are in a relationship of alternating effect: they limit each other and form a totality. They are united insofar as they neutralize each other. There is no miracle without a natural event, and vice versa" (*Pollen*, quoted in Margantin, 2012, p. 55).

For what Novalis retains from Sophie's appearance is final determinism:

"And believing that my little Sophie is at my side and can appear, and behaving according to this belief, then she is *at my side* – and appears to me for sure infinitely, precisely where *I did not expect it* – In me, perhaps as my soul, etc. (Theory of chance and necessity) And from the outset really *outside me* – for what is really outside can only act through me – in me and on me – and in enchanting relationships." (Novalis, 2015, no. 603, p. 165)

This episode enables him to identify a general process of circular determinism: "In determining myself, I determine the world – and thus I indirectly determine myself and vice versa" (Novalis, 2015, no. 603, p. 165). Hence paradoxes involving a different logic: "The result of the process is the goal inverted – only when I know it can I proceed with certainty – I have the goal and at the same time I don't have it, when I want to simultaneously realize the goal and its opposite, and so on." (Novalis, 2015, no. 603, p. 165).

This finalist immanentism (or own final determinism) associated with magic is not just one possible form of idealism, but is in fact, according to Schefer (2003, p. 522), "one of the first avatars in the turbulent history of modern subjectivity". Indeed, it can be likened to metapsychic thought, emerging at this time in the current of induced somnambulism (Méheust, 1999), in the heritage of studies on "natural magic" (Faivre, 1986), since it admits a "transitive" action of the imagination that is exerted on objects outside the subject's body (Panese, 1999). Such ideas will later reemerge to explain mediums' ectoplasms through "ideoplasty" (Méheust, 1999).

The Negativity of the Absolute

Schefer (2003, p. 522) locates this magical idealism in relation to two other elements: the *negativity of the absolute* and the *emergence of the proper body*. The negative absolute is another formulation of *complementarity*, since everything is brought into relation: nothing is totally independent. Schefer (2003, p. 522) identifies this "im-

portant fragment”, according to which true magical idealism “would hold together the self and the world, the ideal and the real, without claiming to resolve this tension in favor of one of the two terms (like theurgic magic depositing itself in a product)”. The fragment in question is eminently complementarian:

If you cannot make a thought into an autonomous soul separating itself from you – and now becoming *foreign* – that is, existing outside, then proceed in the opposite direction with external things – and transform them into thoughts. Both operations are idealistic. He who has them both perfectly in his power is the *magical idealist*. Wouldn't the accomplishment of each of these operations depend on the other? (Novalis, 2015, no. 338, p. 83)

Magical idealism is concerned with the passage from ideas to reality and from reality to ideas, in other words “the metaphysical and experimental approach to the world” (Schefer, 2005, p. 24). It expresses itself in a complementarian way, using chiasms: “The scholar,” he says (Novalis, 2015, no. 737), “knows how to appropriate the *foreign* (bring it to the plane of his transcendent will, bring it back to reflexive consciousness), but also how to make the *proper* foreign (reintegrate it into nature, into an immanence whose laws are not necessarily those of the subjective mind)” (Schefer, 2005, p. 16).

Novalis works on the interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) of opposing terms, which are always “in a relation of alternating effect”: the notion of “interaction” “expresses this reciprocal action of two poles, which either ‘neutralize’ each other while composing a totality whose two parts are indissociable, interdependent and interactive, but remain themselves, or exchange and mingle, constituting new entities” (Margantin, 2012, p. 55). His idealism involves “reversible operators”: “In and through the *Wechsel*, these operators tear us away from the autarchy of the self and its statics; they initiate an exit from the self and a dynamic” (Lancereau, 2014, p. 324).

The object of study also determines the working method. In one passage, anticipating Hegelian dialectic, Novalis describes the “polemical” method as excellent: “To learn to know a truth correctly, one must also have *polemized* it: 1. *Praise*. 2. *Blame*. 3. *Final result*.” (Novalis, 2015, no. 801, p. 221). He points out that this subversive method is also reflexive:

Strictly speaking, *criticalism* – (or the *method of exhaustion*, which includes the method of inversion) is that theory which, during the study of nature, refers us to ourselves, to internal observation and experience, and during the study of our self, which refers us to the external world, to external obser-

ventions and experiences – considered philosophically, it is the most fruitful of all *indications*. (...)

We naturally understand all that is foreign only by making ourselves *foreign* to ourselves – *by modifying ourselves* – by observing ourselves.

We now see the true links in the articulation between subject and object – we see that there is also an external world within us, which maintains an analogous link with our interiority, just as the external world outside us is linked to our exteriority, and the one and the other are equally connected, like our interior and our exterior. (Novalis, 2015, no. 820, pp. 224-225)

Transcendental idealism, referred to the subject, then appears to him in a totally new light through this anticipated complementarity.

The Limitation of the Proper Body

Novalis's metaphysics led him to conceive of a balanced process, with two inverted operations linking the subjective and objective worlds. From then on, magic, as "absolute doing" (akin to the supposed omnipotence of "psychokinesis"), is necessarily limited outside the purely imaginary: "[...] We cannot do absolutely, because the problem of absolute doing is an imaginary problem. There is no absolute beginning – that is a matter for imaginary categories of thought" (Novalis, 2015, no. 1000, p. 242).

This negativity of the absolute ties in with the constraint posed by the existence of the body itself, at the intersection of worlds. Novalis formulates this co-dependence as follows: "I must not and will not voluntarily act on the world in its totality – that is why I have a body" (Novalis, 2004, no. 485, p. 289). He develops a completely "organic" conception of the world:

Whoever undertakes to explain the organism without taking into account the soul and the mysterious link that unites it to the body, will not get far. Life is perhaps nothing other than the result of this unification – the action of this contact. (...) Life is perhaps the result of the awakening (penetration) of organic matter. (Novalis, 2004, n°453, p. 240)

Idealism cannot describe everything, since being has no absolute consistency, as Schefer analyzes:

Above all, I see in it the expression of an originally *embodied* subjectivity, intricately knotted to the interplay of forces and energies of the world, through which the subject passes and through which he is at the same time passed. There is a “trembling” of the idealist foundation in Novalis, insofar as consciousness discovers that it is, strictly speaking, *nothing*, or rather that it is intimately an experience of the multiple and of change. ‘The world is like the object in general the result of infinite agreement, and our own internal plurality is the foundation of the worldview [*Weltanschauung*].’ [Novalis, 2005, no. 598 [April 18, 1800], p. 113]. (Schefer, 2003, p. 524)

This infinite agreement is that of a present as the only real that actualizes existence via the body (Favre & Garnier, 2024). From then on, the internal plurality of the infinity of imaginary selves, of potential realities, is actualized in the present. Novalis proposes a union of the dynamic and the static through embodiment.

There is indeed a *transgression* between the subjective and the objective world, but there is no *transcendence* involved. The targeted operation is inseparable from the immanence of an embodied subjectivity, hence its obvious connection with “psychosomatic magic”: “The link between the ideal and the real now operates through the mediation of the magician’s body, which interweaves the subject with the flesh of the world. ‘MAGIC. The physical magician knows how to animate nature and manipulate it at will like his *own body*.’ [Novalis, 2015, no. 322, p. 79]” (Schefer, 2003, p. 526). In this quotation, the formula suggests that magic proceeds from a *communion* in which external nature becomes one with my own body. The equivalence between magic, creativity and psychosomatics is even more evident in this other fragment:

“The active use of the organs is nothing other than *magical* and *miraculous* thinking, or an *arbitrary* [*voluntary*] use of the world of the body – for the will is nothing other than a magical and *powerful* faculty of thinking.” (Novalis, 2015, no. 1075, p. 265)

The Metaphysical Significance of Magical Idealism

Schefer (2003, p. 526) clearly identifies this extension of magic as an essential process in the dynamics of the universe: “Magic, then, designates less an absolute power of creation than an *ability of infinite transformation of the world*”. Unfortunately, Schefer’s analysis remains at the artistic level, as a prefiguration of the “poetics” of creative making (Schefer, 2005, p. 22), without drawing the metaphysical consequences.

Thus, Novalis is never seen by his commentators as a metaphysician attempting to theorize paranormal phenomena, even though he had first-hand knowledge of them. For Manfred Frank (2007), such an interpretation of Novalis's magical idealism would even be "nonsense". By what miracle would Novalis escape the exploration of the *Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* in which *Naturphilosophie* is immersed? Nonetheless, Schefer (2005, p. 22) speaks of a "metaphysics of the will" in which magic becomes a "dimension of the imagination, the expression of the poet-philosopher's creative and performative force." He acknowledges the legacy of another pre-romantic philosophy:

For all that, Novalis did not renounce, far from it, the idea of a natural magic, specific to Antiquity and the Renaissance, of which he became particularly aware through the Hermetic current, which largely nourished the thought of nature on electricity or galvanism (Baader, Ritter). He sometimes refers to the Paracelian doctrine of signatures, this mysticism of natural signs postulating a 'sympathy of the sign with the signified' [Novalis, 2015, n°1073, p. 252], or to the Plotinian theme, taken up by Marsilio Ficino, of "magician love", which Pierre Hadot [2004, p. 122 ff.] has clearly shown to refer, beyond the attraction between beings, to a science of correspondence and sympathy between elements. (Schefer, 2005, p. 23)

According to Schefer (2005, p. 23), Novalis is led to reinterpret "the data of paganism and sacred physics in the sense of an ultrasubjective and, in this case, poetic Christianity." But how does Novalis's own God still relate to Christianity? Christianity, like other monotheisms, is built against magic, and in particular against the vision of Jesus as a miracle-worker (Méheust, 2015). It is more a question of the relation between macrocosms and microcosms (Vieillard-Breton, 1983). Novalis envisages reciprocal determinisms: "We must seek to create an inner world, which would be the true counterpart of the outer world – which, by being opposed to it on every determined point, enlarges our freedom ever more." (Novalis, 2012, p. 237) In other words, he builds bridges:

Our inner world must completely correspond [to the world] outside, down to its tiniest parts – for they oppose each other in the whole. What thus opposes itself in the former – opposes itself in the latter in an inverse manner, or else [they are] determined by each other – nothing but antithetical determinations. (Novalis, 2012, no. 653, p. 243)

His proposal is strikingly modern, so much so that Schefer (2005, p. 23-24) likens it to André Breton's *Art magique* (1991).

The Moralization of Romantic Metaphysics

Novalis's project was not to dominate nature through knowledge of natural magic:

Novalis strives to link objective and subjective magic, not for technical reasons of mastering reality, but above all for creative and poetic reasons. It is about creating through psychomotor excitements, connecting the "absolute" creative will to the interplay of sthenic and asthenic forces, by soliciting the body of the creator, its health as well as its illnesses. This is why this idealism, which stands at the crossroads of philosophy, poetry and medicine, is as much a matter of theory as of empiricism, and its object is none other than their difficult correlation. (Schefer, 2005, p. 24)

By reducing it to an artistic goal, Schefer does not sufficiently consider the moral purpose of this metaphysics, which Novalis proclaimed on several occasions. As early as the summer of 1796, he conceived of an ethic of the infinite realization of being:

Morality must be the core of our existence (*Daseyn*), if it is to be (*soll*) for us what it wants to be. Its end, its origin, must be the *ideal of being*. The destination of the self would be an infinite *realization of being*. Its effort would be to be more and more. The path of evil descends from the I am, the path of good ascends. The highest philosophy is ethics. This is why all philosophy begins with the I am. (Novalis, 2012, no. 556, p. 213)

While placing existence back at the center of philosophy, Novalis asserts that existence is amoral if it seeks only to persevere in stasis; it becomes moral by following a purpose of unfolding being, towards a "total free-being" (Novalis, 2012, no. 556, p. 213). Yet this morality is built on its magical means: "The self seems (*scheint*) to be contradictory when one does not know the nature of its efficacy, the activity of the productive imagination, in that the accomplishment of its end seems, as it were, thwarted by the chosen means" (Novalis, 2012, no. 556, p. 213). Novalis rightly points out that this magic is in the very nature of being, and that in employing it, he therefore acts in accordance with himself, even if this being is only an unstable "floating."

This metaphysical moralization is achieved through action. Indeed, Novalis constantly asserts that we know a thing only insofar as we do it (Novalis, 2004, p. 50, 59 and 187): "Everything that tends towards unity will therefore have to prove itself in the real and as the real." (Schefer, 2005, p. 11). This ability to act is connected to freedom

of thought: "Freedom of thought leads to freedom of the acting self" (Novalis, 2012, no. 559, p. 214). The affirmation "I exist" is central to the process:

(T)he principle of all reality, its guarantor, the foundation of thought is – SUM ["I am" in Latin]. Philosophy is strictly restricted to the determined modification – of consciousness. It is modest – it stays within its boundaries. It grasps what is within it, or what is within its power. (Novalis, 2012, no. 559, p. 214)

Novalis evokes "in turn our mission to educate the Earth, the necessity of a cosmopolitan policy applied to plants and stones, or the miraculous power of faith (*Wunderkraft des Glaubens*)" (Schefer, 2005, p. 20). Magical idealism is linked to his desire for a "romanticization of the world," which expresses his deepest aspiration: "to renew the lost links between man and the cosmos, man's childhood and the ages of the earth" (Schefer, 2020, p. 8). According to Novalis, in his *Poeticisms*, "romanticizing" is merely a qualitative potentiation, the identification of an inferior self with a better self: "This operation is still totally unknown. When I give the ordinary an elevated meaning, the common a mysterious aspect, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the appearance of the infinite, then I romanticize it" (Novalis, 2004, no. 105, p. 142).

Practical Mysticism

It is through this "romanticization" that Novalis proceeds with all dogmas, starting with Kant's assertion that there could be no knowledge beyond the sensible world. Novalis asks himself: "Is there still extra-sensible knowledge?" (quoted by Margantin, 2012, p. 67). In *Pollen*, he goes further in criticizing this "most arbitrary prejudice according to which man will be deprived of the faculty of being outside himself, of being with his consciousness beyond the senses". In *Heinrich*, the dream is thus described as a path leading to new experiences and "signs announcing what he is about to experience" (Margantin, 2012, p. 183).

Sophie's death probably precipitated this "belief in true revelations of the spirit," in this "aptitude for Revelation" peculiar to man and said to be more developed in certain individuals (quoted by Margantin, 2012, p. 68). He formulates the idea of a universe already contained within us, accessible by a "mysterious path" enabling us to explore the unknown depths of our mind, propositions that are generally interpreted as the expression of his "mystical thought" (Margantin, 2012, p. 68).

Magical idealism is the theorization of this significant coincidence between an imaginary expectation (to see one's beloved again) and its physical realization. The inside and the outside can coincide... even if it is impossible. Laurent Margantin interprets this fragment of the "mysterious path" as a common thread running through his work:

There is thus in this fragment a skillful blend between the two spheres, metaphysical and psychological, but also physical and psychic, spiritual and corporeal, a blend that gives the mystical experience a concrete dimension that will always be present in the poet's later writings. (Margantin, 2012, p. 71)

To say that the French Enlightenment did not correspond exactly to the German *Aufklärung* would be an understatement (Belaval, 1979). German rationalism is not anti-religious, and the young philosopher is an excellent example of this: "Novalis attempts not to reconcile religion and reason, but to open reason to the perception of the infinite, which would be indistinguishable from religious experience" (Margantin, 2012, p. 136). Maurice Maeterlinck (1895, p. XXIX) described Novalis as "a scientific mystic, although he only deals with science at times and places when it is on the verge of merging with poetry."

Conclusion

What a strange discovery Novalis was! A shooting star in intellectual history, but one whose intuitions seem to have grasped many things. His fragmentary and combinatorial method is apt to inspire all those who reject dogmatic systems. Nevertheless, his link with parapsychology remains tenuous. Favre's (Favre & Garnier, 2024) initial assertion of Novalis's "parapsychological genius" may seem exaggerated. Apart from Favre, Novalis clearly had no influence on parapsychologists through any empirical or theoretical work. At best, we are belatedly discovering a kinship between his reflections (informed, among other things, by anomalous experiences that are difficult to identify) and certain contemporary conceptions.

To reconcile Novalis with contemporary parapsychology, we would have to equate his "magic" with "psi." Novalis makes it a normal process, part of the way the world works, not something marginal and spectacular. He even makes it an essential process associated with life and creation (as Favre also defends), immanentist by nature, which distances itself from all supernaturalist attempts to associate parapsy-

chology with survival issues or transcendent forces. In short, magical idealism is not an unknown ancestor of today's parapsychology, but perhaps a harbinger of a parapsychology to come.

Novalis's encyclopedic approach embraces a trans-disciplinarity that also suits today's scientific parapsychology, but with a poetic twist. His approach, based on hypostasis and "the negativity of the absolute," is that of a complementarian psychophysics, in the manner of dual-aspect monism (Atmanspacher & Rickles, 2022): a psychology that seeks to absorb matter, while recognizing the limits of embodiment. Combining the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of freedom, Novalis questions the morality underlying this free will that appropriates the rest of the world. He comes to identify the circular determinism of the magician who modifies the world and himself in the process. Is it not the same with the psi paradox (Rabeyron, 2023), when the researcher obtains a psi-effect that corresponds to his own beliefs, thus shaping the psi-effect he will be led to seek?

Globally, there is an important affinity between *Naturphilosophie* and phenomena dear to the hearts of future parapsychologists (Gusdorf, 1985). It is one of the rare philosophical and scientific currents to preserve a place of choice for the marvelous, as parapsychology has come to do today. Our incursion into this intellectual current of Romanticism, through a historical and philosophical approach, gives only a glimpse of the possible connections.

Novalis's magical idealism is an attempt to ensure that "magic" is not excluded from the Enlightenment project. It implies an *animism*, an *immanentism* and a *complementarianism* that stand in stark contrast to *naturalism*, *transcendentalism*, and the various *monisms* and *dualisms*. This properly revolutionary metaphysics is not consolidated as a refined doctrine, but rather as "grains of pollen" and "fragments," in the form of a "general draft" left as a legacy for future generations. All that remains to be done is to bring them together and articulate them with the scientific progress made over the last two centuries.

Declaration of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- Atmanspacher, H., & Rickles, D. (2022). *Dual-aspect monism and the deep structure of meaning*. Routledge.
- Belaval, Y. (1979). L'Aufklärung à contre-Lumières [The Aufklärung against Enlightenment]. *Archives de philosophie*, 42(4), 631-634.
- Bernhard, T. (1988). *Maîtres anciens* [Ancient masters]. Gallimard.
- Breton, A. (1991). *L'Art magique* [The magical art]. Phébus.
- Evrard, R. (2010). Parapsychology in France after May 1968: A history of the GERP. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 24(2), 283-294.
- Evrard, R. (2016). *La légende de l'esprit. Enquête sur 150 ans de parapsychologie* [The legend of the mind. Investigation on 150 years of parapsychology]. Trajectoire
- Faivre, A. (1986). «Vis imaginativa» (Étude sur l'imagination magique et ses fondements mythiques) [«Vis imaginativa» (Study of the magical imagination and its mythical foundations)]. In *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental*. Vol. II (pp. 171-219). Gallimard.
- Favre, F., & Garnier, Ph. (in press). *La finalité, le paranormal et la science : entretiens avec François Favre* [Finality, paranormal and science: Interviews with François Favre]. Éditions de l'Institut métapsychique international.
- Frank, M. (2007). Die Philosophie des sogenannten "magischen Idealismus" [The philosophy of so-called "magical idealism"]. In *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus* (pp. 27-66). Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Gusdorf, G. (1985). *Le savoir romantique de la nature* [Romantic knowledge of nature]. Payot.
- Hadot, P. (2004). *Le voile d'Isis. Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de nature* [The veil of Isis. Essay on the history of the idea of nature]. Gallimard.
- Lancereau, D. (2014). Une « biographie intellectuelle » de Novalis [An «intellectual biography» of Novalis]. *Études Germaniques*, 274, 321-326.
- Maeterlinck, M. (1895). Introduction. In Novalis, *Les disciples à Saïs et les fragments de Novalis* (pp. V-LVII). P. Lacomblez.
- Margantin, L. (2012). *Novalis*. Belin.
- Mauskopf, S. H. (Ed.). (1979). *The reception of unconventional science*. Westview Press.
- Méheust, B. (1999). *Somnambulisme et médiumnité* [Somnambulism and mediumship], 2 vol. Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond.
- Méheust, B. (2015). *Jésus thaumaturge. Enquête sur l'homme et ses miracles* [Jesus the wonder worker. Investigating the man and his miracles]. InterÉditions.
- Nietzsche, F. (1882). *Le gai savoir* [The gay science]. Mercure de France.
- Novalis (1947). Grains de pollen [Pollen seeds]. In *Petits écrits*. Aubier.
- Novalis (1975). *Europe ou la chrétienté* [Europe or Christianity]. Gallimard.
- Novalis (2004). *Semences* [Seeds]. Allia.
- Novalis (2005). *Art et utopie. Les derniers fragments (1799-1800)* [Art and utopia. The last fragments (1799-1800)]. Éditions Rue d'Ulm / Presses de l'École normale supérieure.
- Novalis (2011). *Henri d'Offterdingen*. Gallimard.

- Novalis (2012). *Les années d'apprentissage philosophique. Études fichtéennes 1795-96* [The years of philosophical apprenticeship. Fichtean studies 1795-96]. Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- Novalis (2014). *Hymnes à la nuit ; Chants spirituels ; Disciples à Saïs* [Hymns to the night; Spiritual songs; Disciples at Saïs]. Les Belles Lettres.
- Novalis (2015). *Le brouillon général* [The general draft]. Allia.
- Novalis (2020). *À la fin tout devient poésie* [In the end, everything becomes poetry]. Allia.
- Novalis (2021). *Le monde doit être romantisé* [The world must be romanticized]. Allia.
- Panese, F. (1999). Rationalisation scientifique et images du merveilleux : Brève enquête sur la photographie expérimentale des « esprits » au tournant du siècle [Scientific rationalization and images of the marvelous: A brief survey of experimental photography of "spirits" at the turn of the century]. *Traverse : Zeitschrift für Geschichte / Revue d'histoire*, 3, 100-113.
- Rabeyron, T. (2023). *Codex Anomalia*. InterEditions.
- Ritter, J. W. (2001). *Fragments posthumes tirés des papiers d'un jeune physicien* [1810] [Posthumous fragments from the papers of a young physicist]. Premières Pierres.
- Schefer, O. (2004). Fragments et totalité [Fragments and totality]. In Novalis, *Semences* (pp. 7-14). Allia.
- Schefer, O. (2005). Préface [Foreword]. In Novalis, *Art et utopie. Les derniers fragments* (pp. 7-38). Éditions Rue d'Ulm / Presses de l'École normale supérieure.
- Schefer, O. (2020). Science, art et religion [Science, art, and religion]. In Novalis, *À la fin tout devient poésie* (pp. 7-19). Allia.
- Schefer, O. (2023). *Novalis. Romantiser le monde* [Novalis. Romanticising the world]. Éditions du Félin.
- Schlegel, F. (1991). *Transcendentalphilosophie [1800-1801]* [Transcendental philosophy]. Félix Meiner Verlag.
- Schulz, G. (2005). *Novalis*. Rowohlt.
- Simonsen, T. G. (2020). *A short history of (nearly) everything paranormal: Our secret powers: Telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition*. Watkins Media Limited.
- Stanguennec, A. (2011). *La philosophie romantique allemande* [German Romantic philosophy]. Vrin.
- Vieillard-Baron, J.-L. (1983). Microcosme et macrocosme chez Novalis [Microcosm and macrocosm in Novalis]. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 2, 195-208.
- Wallis, R. (Ed.). (1979). *On the margins of science: The social construction of rejected knowledge*. University of Keele.
- Wetzels, W. D. (1990). Johann Wilhelm Ritter: Romantic physics in Germany. In A. Cunningham & N. Jardine (Eds.), *Romanticism and the sciences* (pp. 199-212). Cambridge University Press.
- Wulf, A. (2022). *Magnificent rebels: The first romantics and the invention of the self*. Vintage.

Novalis et l'Idéalisme Magique : Un Pionnier Oublié de la Parapsychologie ?

Renaud Évrard

Résumé : La philosophie de la nature allemande est un courant intellectuel important de la fin du XVIIIe siècle jusqu'au milieu du XXe siècle. Il a intégré des phénomènes tels que le magnétisme animal dans une vision pluridisciplinaire visant le rapprochement des sciences. Son influence sur la parapsychologie reste néanmoins méconnue. Nous prendrons l'exemple de Friedrich von Hardenberg, plus connu sous le pseudonyme de Novalis (1772-1801). Jamais cité dans la littérature parapsychologique, le jeune savant et poète a pourtant mentionné ses expériences personnelles de l'apparition de sa fiancée défunte et de sa pratique du magnétisme animal. Il a également théorisé une nouvelle métaphysique appelée « idéalisme magique » qui vise à dépasser les autres formes d'idéalisme pour identifier, dans un cadre immanentiste et néanmoins moral, la « magie » comme solution possible à l'union des opposés (sujet et objet, idéal et réel). Son projet semble éminemment coïncider avec celui de la parapsychologie théorique moderne, et notamment le monisme à double aspect.

French translation by Antoine Bioy, Ph. D.

Novalis und der Magische Idealismus: Ein vergessener Pionier der Parapsychologie?

Renaud Évrard

Zusammenfassung. Die deutsche Naturphilosophie war eine wichtige intellektuelle Bewegung vom späten 18. Bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Sie integrierte Phänomene wie den tierischen Magnetismus in eine multidisziplinäre Vision, die darauf abzielte, die Wissenschaften einander näher zu bringen. Ihr Einfluss auf die Parapsychologie ist jedoch noch wenig bekannt. Ich ziehe das Beispiel von Friedrich von Hardenberg heran, besser bekannt unter seinem Pseudonym Novalis (1772-1801). Der junge Wissenschaftler und Dichter, der in der Literatur zur Parapsychologie nicht erwähnt wird, berichtete dennoch von seinen persönlichen Erfahrungen mit der Erscheinung seiner verstorbenen Verlobten und seinem praktischen Umgang mit dem tierischen Magnetismus. Er entwarf auch eine neue Metaphysik, den sogenannten „magischen Idealismus“, der über andere Formen des Idealismus hinausgehen und in einem immanentistischen und zugleich moralischen Rahmen die „Magie“ als mögliche Lösung für die Vereinigung von Gegensätzen (Subjekt und Objekt, ideal und real) identifizieren soll. Sein Projekt scheint mit dem der modernen theoretischen Parapsychologie übereinzustimmen, insbesondere mit dem Duale-Aspekte-Monismus.

German translation by Eberhard Bauer, Ph. D.

Novalis e o Idealismo Mágico: Um Pioneiro Esquecido da Parapsicologia

Renaud Évrard

Resumo: A filosofia natural alemã foi um importante movimento intelectual do final do século XVIII até meados do século XX. Ela integrou fenômenos como o magnetismo animal em uma visão multidisciplinar que visava aproximar as ciências. Sua influência na parapsicologia, no entanto, permanece pouco conhecida. Tomo como exemplo Friedrich von Hardenberg, mais conhecido pelo seu pseudônimo Novalis (1772–1801). Não citado na literatura parapsicológica, o jovem cientista e poeta mencionou, no entanto, suas experiências pessoais com a aparição de sua noiva falecida e sua prática de magnetismo animal. Ele também teorizou uma nova metafísica chamada ‘idealismo mágico’, que visa ir além de outras formas de idealismo para identificar, dentro de um quadro imanentista, mas moral, a ‘magia’ como uma possível solução para a união dos opostos (sujeito e objeto, ideal e real). Seu projeto parece coincidir com o da parapsicologia teórica moderna, e em particular com o monismo de duplo aspecto.

Portuguese translation by Antônio Llima

Novalis y el Idealismo Mágico: ¿Un Pionero Olvidado de la Parapsicología?

Renaud Évrard

Resumen: La filosofía natural alemana fue un importante movimiento intelectual de finales del siglo XVIII hasta mediados del XX. Integró fenómenos como el magnetismo animal en una visión multidisciplinar que pretendió acercar a las ciencias, pero su influencia en la parapsicología es poco conocida. Tomo el ejemplo de Friedrich von Hardenberg, más conocido bajo su pseudónimo Novalis (1772–1801). No citado en la literatura parapsicológica, el joven científico y poeta mencionó sin embargo sus experiencias personales de la aparición de su prometida muerta y su práctica del magnetismo animal. También desarrolló una nueva metafísica, “idealismo mágico,” que pretende ir más allá de otras formas de idealismo e identificar, dentro de un marco inmanentista pero moral, a la “magia” como una posible solución a la unión de opuestos (sujeto y objeto, ideal y real). Su proyecto parece coincidir con el de la parapsicología teórica moderna, en particular con el monismo de doble aspecto.

Spanish translation by Etzel Cardeña, Ph. D.