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# Berühren Denken

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# Rethinking Romanticism with Spinoza: Encounter and Individuation in Novalis, Ritter, and Baader<sup>1</sup>

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## I. Freiberg Romanticism

Novalis did not read Spinoza directly, and, as far as the evidence shows, neither did his interlocutors in Freiberg, such as Franz Baader and Johann Ritter. Yet Spinozan ontology proves decisive in elucidating a materialist strain in Romanticism, distinguished by its stress on the questions of emergence, singularity, and individuation in nature. By giving a consistent account of Spinozan ontology and theories of individuation among romantic thinkers, it is possible to show that this strain is not merely incidental or secondary but central and constitutive. Such an approach displaces dominant receptions of Novalis as a mystic at worst or a poet and philosopher of subjectivity at best, subsumed under the umbrella of Jena Romanticism, an intellectual current known for its affinities with German Idealism and theories of the romantic subject. Instead, contextualizing Novalis's discussion of effectivity, power, and bodies with respect to his contemporaries, an entirely different constellation of thinkers emerges. Centering on the intellectual milieu around Freiberg, this constellation includes Ritter, Baader, and Abraham Gottlob Werner, among others; Friedrich Schelling and Alexander von Humboldt also contribute to this constellation in significant ways. Instead of taking root in the Idealist philosophies that were hegemonic at the time, these thinkers delve into the natural sciences of the day in order to engage the phenomena of emergence and forms of life. It is as a student in Freiberg Mining Academy that Novalis started developing this line of thought in 1797, marking his departure from the study of the philosophies of Kant and Fichte.<sup>2</sup> Novalis and his interlocutors share romantic impulses for the fusion of

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with kind permission from: *Germanic Review* 94.4 (2018), pp. 271–298.

<sup>2</sup> This epistemological break in Novalis's thought has been widely noted. See Dalia Nassar: »Interpreting Novalis' Fichte-Studien«, in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 84.3 (2010), pp. 315–341; Leif Weatherby: *Transplanting the Metaphysical Organ: German Romanticism between Leibniz and Marx*, New York 2016, pp. 206–216.

science and metaphysical speculation, of conceptual experimentation and empirical observation. Most importantly, they all focus on the emergence of individuals through the conception of nature in a Spinozan materialist key: as one, infinite, and immanent, refusing all transcendence and religiosity. Displacing Jena Romanticism with its theories of subjectivity, I propose to designate this tendency to think individuation in a Spinozan key as »Freiberg Romanticism«.<sup>3</sup>

Reconsidered in this constellation of thinkers around 1800 and in dialogue with Spinoza, I argue that Novalis's project comprises a critical tendency that runs against the grain of western metaphysics. Gilbert Simondon points out the proclivity of the metaphysical tradition to elaborate the *principle* of individuation from constituted individuals and thus repress the *process* of individuation itself.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, Novalis's project proves an outlier, offering conceptual categories for thinking the primacy of encounter (instead of immobile substances), of individuation (instead of first principles and stable essences), and of transindividuality (instead of indivisible individuals). The materialist impulse of this intellectual tendency around 1800 in Freiberg is not only latent but also highly equivocal, and for this reason it remained largely ignored in the scholarship on Romanticism. Indeed, it is only in view of Spinozan ontology and the theory of transindividuality, more fully developed only in recent Spinoza scholarship, that this constellation of thinkers becomes intelligible as a significant intellectual current.<sup>5</sup> In making this claim, I follow Novalis's (and Spinoza's) own epistemological procedure. Unlike Ritter and Baader, Novalis's theory of individuation does not only concern physical individuals (e.g., minerals), but also applies to the register of thought – concepts, ideas, theories, too, are individuals. Like physical individuals, a conceptual individuation for Novalis presupposes an encounter that underlies its emergence. In my account, Novalis's own theory of individuation emerges in full scale in the encounter with Spinozan thought, without which it remains abstract and dispersed. In order to reconstruct this theory, as well

3 To my knowledge, Alberto Bonchino is the only person to suggest this apt designation of »Freiberger Romantik« in his recent study on Franz von Baader. See Alberto Bonchino: *Materie als geronnener Geist. Studien zu Franz von Baader in den philosophischen Konstellationen seiner Zeit*, Schöningh 2014.

4 See Gilbert Simondon: *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information*, hrsg. von Jacques Garelli, Grenoble 2005.

5 In my forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Spinozan Mediations: The Limits of Materialist Thought in Novalis and his Contemporaries*, I explore more fully the emergence of Novalis's anti-metaphysical positions in Spinozan key. There, I provide a more sustained and detailed discussion of the relation between the works of Novalis and Spinoza, including the reception history of Spinozism around 1800 as well as the mediations by which Novalis develops Spinozan positions.

as the current of Freiberg Romanticism in which it develops, I proceed by an initial juxtaposition of Novalis's and Spinoza's respective conceptions of the body and individual. I then detail Novalis's theory by showing how it develops in dialogue with his contemporaries in the context of scientific debates of the time around Freiberg, at each step reassessing how these developments relate to Spinozan materialism. Finally, I demarcate the limits and shortcomings of Freiberg Romanticism – such as vitalist and animist variations of Spinozism – while showing the challenges this current poses to the Spinozan materialist tradition.

Novalis's theory of the individual and individuation crystallizes around his concept of *Berührung*. ›Berührung‹ translated literally as touch or contact and etymologically as transitive affecting (as *be-rühren*), is best rendered conceptually as encounter in view of its use in Novalis and of the Spinozan tradition.<sup>6</sup> Although the term ›Berührung‹ does not figure centrally in the scholarship on Novalis as one of the main themes in his thought, I will show how Novalis's insistent and systematic use of this term warrants greater attention.<sup>7</sup> In conjunction with Novalis's latent Spinozan positions, this concept emerges first and foremost from Novalis's participation in debates around the theory of Galvanism (most importantly Ritter's work) and his engagement with Baader's largely ignored theory of elementary physiology. This reconstruction of Novalis's theory of individuation allows one to reassess Novalis's contribution to the materialist tradition, thereby troubling his reception as a post-Kantian thinker and challenging the hegemony of the idealist philosophies in Germany around 1800.

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6 Because of its frequent and conceptual use, I will henceforth not italicize the term ›Berührung‹.

7 To my knowledge, there is only one exception to this in the scholarship on Novalis: David Farrell Krell: *Contagion: Sexuality, Disease, and Death in German Idealism and Romanticism*, Bloomington 1998, pp. 54–61. Krell notices Novalis's systematic usage of *Berührung* in relation to his concepts of health and illness. But Krell's study is extremely limited, insofar as it reduces the concept of *Berührung* to medicine, and to Brownian medicine in particular, without discussing further semantic fields of this term, such as Baader and Galvanism. Furthermore, he fails to distinguish *Berührung* from *Selbstberührung*, a differentiation that I argue is critical to demarcate materialist and idealist tendencies in Novalis. Krell draws no conclusions with respect to the relation of *Berührung* and individuation, which is its constitutive function. See Jürgen Daiber: *Experimentalphysik des Geistes: Novalis und das romantische Experiment*, Göttingen 2001, pp. 156–167. In this notable treatment of *Berührung*, reduces Novalis's discussion of *Berührung* to the theories of Galvanism. Furthermore, Daiber pays closer attention to the notion of *Selbstberührung*, which indeed stems from Galvanism, but which, as I argue further in the chapter, Novalis abandons as an aborted conceptual experiment.

Much like Novalis's relevance to theories of individuation is largely overlooked in the reception of Romanticism today, Spinoza's theory of singular things remained largely obscured around 1800, if not entirely repressed.<sup>8</sup> In the wake of codification of Spinozism in the *Pantheismusstreit*, general consensus – also mainstream criticism of Spinoza and Spinozism – was that only substance has reality for Spinoza, whereas determinate things, that is to say individuals, are mere negations.<sup>9</sup> This interpretation is exemplified by the emphasis placed on Spinoza's famous letter to Jarig Jelles (Letter 50), in which Spinoza announces his much proliferated formulation »*et determinatio negatio est*«. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi sets the tone for future deployment of this formula, also signaling the resolute end to all further discussion of the reality of individuals in Spinoza:

*Determinatio est negatio, seu determinatio ad rem juxta suum esse non pertinent.*<sup>10</sup> Individual things therefore, so far as they only exist in a certain determinate mode, are *non-entia*; the indeterminate infinite being is the one single true *ens reale, hoc est, est omne esse, & prater quod nullum datur esse.*<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Spinoza's substance – eternal but immobile, all-consuming but devoid of life – envelops all reality, while particular things are reduced to *non-entia*, mere negations stripped of any real being. Subsequent discussions of Spinoza in Europe largely ignored Parts II–IV of the *Ethics*,

8 Baruch Spinoza: *Spinoza: Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, transl. Samuel Shirley, Indianapolis 2002. References with abbreviation E (= *Ethics*) directly in the text, followed by Roman numeral to indicate the part of the *Ethics*. The following abbreviations have been used: A = Axiom; Ap. = Appendix; C = Corollary; D = Definition; L = Lemma; P = Proposition ; Pr = Proof ; S = Scholium.

9 See Willi Goetschel: *Spinoza's Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine*, Madison 2004, in particular for the reception of Spinoza and the repression of his philosophy in the *Pantheismusstreit* (and Jacobi's role in this repression in particular), Leibniz-Wolff school of interpretation as well as later intellectual history.

10 This is a loose and misleading rendition of Spinoza's Letter 50. Jacobi here blends two sentences of Spinoza's Latin translation of the letter in *Opera Posthuman*. Shirley's translation of these two sentences reads: »This determination therefore does not pertain to the thing in regard to its being; on the contrary, it is its non-being. So since figure is nothing but determination, and determination is negation, figure can be nothing other than negation, as has been said« (Letter 50).

11 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and transl. George di Giovanni, Montreal 1994, p. 219. This is an extraction from Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*; the full sentence in Shirley's translation reads: »For this entity [Nature] is unique and infinite; that is, it is total being, beyond which there is no being« (§76). For a detailed discussion of such reception of Spinoza's Letter 50, see Yitzhak Y. Melamed: »Omnis determinatio est negatio: determination, negation, and self-negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel«, in: Eckart Förster/Yitzhak Y. Melamed (eds.): *Spinoza and German Idealism*. New York 2012, pp. 175–196.



where his theory of individuality and affectivity is developed not as mere negation, but also as affirmation inherent in actually existent singularities.<sup>12</sup>

It is arguably not until the second half of the twentieth century that Spinoza's conceptualization of individuality came into focus. It was due to the interventions of Gilles Deleuze, Martial Gu eroult, and Alexandre Matheron as well as thinkers affiliated with Louis Althusser, most notably Pierre Macherey, and more recently  tienne Balibar, Warren Montag, and Vittorio Morfino, among others. It is this tradition that reclaims Spinoza as a materialist, no longer in a pejorative sense of crude insistence on the existence of matter only, but in the sense of exemplary articulation of immanent, complex models of causality and determination that do not lose sight of singular things. Spinoza's theory of the individual is decisive for grasping his departure from the western metaphysical tradition, laying the foundations for contemporary materialist thought. Balibar, whose remarkable analysis in *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality* I largely share and follow in this article, succinctly formulates the significance of Spinoza's conception of the relation between individuals and substance as follows:

In Spinoza's philosophy, not only is individuality a central notion, but it is the very form of *actual existence*. In the strong sense of the term (associated with necessity) only individuals really exist. As a consequence, ›substance‹ and ›individuality‹ are reciprocal concepts. Not in the aristotelian sense, however, in which the ›primary substance‹ is identified with the individual, but in the sense that ›substance‹ (or God, or Nature) is an infinite process of production of multiple individuals, whereas ›individuals‹, being all different and all causally dependent, are the necessary existence of the substance. In short, ›substance‹ is nothing *other* than the individuals; especially, it does not ›transcend‹ or ›underlie‹ their multiplicity, as a platonian *paradeigma* or a kantian *Ding an sich*, but it is the very name by which we designate the causal unity of this infinite multiplicity of ›modes‹.<sup>13</sup>

Far from being mere negations of substance, as Jacobi and others after him supposed, the production of individuals and their perpetual activity is the only reality of substance for Spinoza. He thus offers an ontology – neither Aristotelian, Platonic nor Kantian – which not only rigorously eliminates any notion of transcendence, but which also refuses a strict ontological opposition between substance and individual, while nonetheless articulat-

<sup>12</sup> For the discussion of Romantic appropriations of Spinoza's concept of *Amor Dei intellectualis* from Part V of his text as a means of providing a ›corrective‹ to his atheist system by means of foregrounding Spinoza's saint-like reputation, see Hermann Timm: »Amor Dei intellectualis: Die teleologische Systemidee des romantischen Spinozismus«, in: *Neue Hefte f ur Philosophie* 12 (1977), pp. 64–91.

<sup>13</sup> Etienne Balibar: *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*, Delft 1997, p. 8. References with abbreviation IT and page number directly in the text.

ing their conceptual difference. This account of *Spinozan thought*, thus, stands in stark opposition to *Spinozism* in its historical reception in the eighteenth century as dogmatism and pantheism – the reception of Spinoza that still pervades the Romanticism scholarship today, which the current article aims to undermine.

It is only from this perspective, in the unfolding of the Spinozan ontology latent in what I proposed to call Freiberg Romanticism, that the radicality of Novalis's thought can be reconstructed. In what follows I argue that Novalis's and Spinoza's respective theories of individuation share conceptual presuppositions as well as epistemological consequences. I then show how Novalis's Spinozan thought emerges through a trajectory of encounters with his contemporaries: reading Kant and Schelling, Novalis reconceptualizes the notion of *Berührung* around 1800 in a Spinozan key; in Ritter's theory of Galvanism, Novalis develops the logic of integration of individuals, or what Balibar, using Simondon's concept, identifies in Spinoza as transindividuality; from Baader's theory of elementary physiology, Novalis adopts the logic of individuation, in which relation, emergence, and becoming are considered as processes primary to individuals. Regulating Novalis's equivocations in my argument is Spinoza's theory of substance and modes. In turn, Novalis's theory of *Berührung* offers a strong concept of the encounter otherwise only implicit in Spinoza's *Ethics*, providing a particular interpretation of the conceptual impasses that Spinoza's thought presents, while also shedding light on the potential weaknesses of Spinoza's positions.

## II. Spinoza-Novalis: *Berührung in distans*, Power and Complexity

While the term »*Berührung*« finds a systematic usage among Novalis's contemporaries, Novalis deploys it in a reconfigured set of relations. Rather than the colloquial usage of »touch«, understood spatially as contiguity, Novalis associates *Berührung* primarily with the processes of becoming and emergence.<sup>14</sup> The following formulation concisely expresses the tendency of Novalis's thinking about *Berührung*:

<sup>14</sup> Novalis: *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl/Richard Samuel, 3 vols., München 2005. References with abbreviation directly in the text, followed by fragment number: AB = Allgemeines Brouillon; FS = Fragmente und Studien; VB = Vermischte Bemerkungen; VF = Vorarbeiten zu verschiedenen Fragmentsammlungen; Novalis: *Schriften: die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn/Richard Samuel, 6 vols., Stuttgart 1977. References with abbreviation HKA directly in the text, followed by volume and page number. English translations of AB

In every contact [Berührung] a substance is created the effect of which lasts as long as the contact. This is how all synthetic modifications of the individual come about. (39)

In jeder Berührung entsteht eine Substanz, deren Wirkung so lange, als die Berührung, dauert. Dies ist der Grund aller synthetischen Modificationen des Individuums. (VB 88)

The primary characteristic of Berührung, then, is *production* of something substantially new (rather than mere contiguity).<sup>15</sup> The central tenet of this production is effectivity: the emergent individual consists in the effectivity of Berührung (lasting only as long as the Berührung persists).<sup>16</sup>

Novalis thus espouses a generative understanding of Berührung, entering into a direct polemic with the limits that Kant imposes on this concept. Kant defines the term as follows:

Contact [Berührung] in the physical sense is the immediate action and reaction of *impenetrability*. The action of one matter on another in the absence of contact is *action at a distance* (actio in distans).<sup>17</sup>

Berührung im physischen Verstande ist die unmittelbare Wirkung und Gegenwirkung der *Undurchdringlichkeit*. Die Wirkung einer Materie auf die andere außer der Berührung ist die *Wirkung in die Ferne* (actio in distans).<sup>18</sup>

Novalis purposely perverts Kant's definition, when he writes: »Das *Bedürfnis eines Gegenstandes* ist schon *Resultat einer Berührung in distans*. Anfang der *Negation* – der Heterogenisierung« (AB 201), i.e., »The *essential need of an object* is already *the result of contact at a distance* [Berührung in distans]. Beginning of *negation* – of heterogenization« (30). Whereas Kant specifically uses the term Berührung to designate the spatial proximity of individuals, defining »*actio in distans*« precisely as that which falls outside the sphere of Berührung, Novalis introduces the

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refer to page numbers of Novalis: *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, ed. and transl. David W. Wood, Albany 2007 with page number directly in the text. English translations of FS and VB, and some of VF refer to *Novalis: Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, ed. and transl. Margaret Mahoney Stoljar, Albany 1997 with page number directly in the text. Brackets indicate my slight modifications of published translations. If the English translation is not followed by a page number, the translation is my own.

15 Novalis does not use »substance« conceptually in the way that Spinoza does. He means, rather, chemical substance. See Stadler, Liedtke for situating »substance« around 1800.

16 Here and elsewhere one is reminded of Louis Althusser's discussion of the »materialism of the encounter«, a tradition in which Althusser also locates Spinoza. Louis Althusser: *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–1987*, ed. Oliver Corpet/Francois Matheron, transl. G.M. Goshgarian, New York 2006, pp. 163–207.

17 Immanuel Kant: *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, transl. Michael Friedman, Cambridge 2004, p. 49.

18 Immanuel Kant: *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, in: idem: *Werke*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, vol. 9: *Schriften zur Naturphilosophie*, Frankfurt am Main 1964, p. 67.

conception of »Berührung in distans«, which in Kant's definition would constitute a contradiction in terms. For Novalis, Berührung – whether contiguous or not – is a token of heterogenization and negation, in a word, of differentiation. Thus, Novalis uses the term to designate *any* process of individuation predicated on the emergence of minimal difference – here, designated by need of an object, this difference is secondary to an encounter, a Berührung. In this way, Novalis also significantly departs from the Fichtean idealism of subjectivity; primordial difference does not arise from the alienation of not-I from I, but rather from an encounter that would be the basis of all such difference.<sup>19</sup> Novalis's conception of Berührung, thus, points to a line of thinking both foreign and antagonistic to his reception as a post-Kantian theorist of subjectivity.

Novalis produces a novel concept by bringing the two opposing terms that Kant employs into contact. This gesture is performative: the emergence of a new concept – an epistemological individual – comes about as an effect of the encounter between »Berührung« and »*actio in distans*«. Mediating this epistemological encounter is Schelling's adaptation of the *Wirkung in die Ferne* or *actio in distans* in the preface to *Von der Weltseele* (1798), which Novalis intensively studied and discussed. Schelling points out that the concept of *Wirkung in die Ferne* relies on

the idealist notion of space [...] because according to this, two bodies at the greatest distance can be represented as touching [*berührend*] each other, and vice versa, bodies that (according to the ordinary notion) are actually touching, can be represented as effecting one another at a distance.

der idealistischen Vorstellung des Raums [...] denn nach dieser können zwei Körper in der größten Entfernung voneinander als sich *berührend*, und umgekehrt, Körper, die sich (nach der gemeinen Vorstellung) wirklich *berühren*, als aus der Entfernung aufeinander wirkend vorgestellt werden (Hvh. S.B.).<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in the »idealist notion of space«, contact is not constituted by spatial proximity; instead, it takes into account the effectivity of bodies on one another: »Es ist sehr wahr«, Schelling argues, »daß ein Körper

<sup>19</sup> At one point, Novalis compares Berührung to Fichte's notion of *Anstoß* [obstacle/impulse], which he discusses as necessary for the emergence of the *Ich* (AB 634). However, the difference between their respective theories is irreducible. In Fichte, the *Anstoß* that engenders the separation of subject and object comes from exteriority, but it leaves the subject all the freedom of self-determination; that is, as a result of the *Anstoß* the subject finds itself as object of self-reflection. Whereas for Fichte the nature of the *Anstoß* is indifferent, for Novalis the nature of the Berührung is what constitutes an individual in its singularity. See Johann Gottlieb Fichte: *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*, Jena/Leipzig 1796, pp. 22–24.

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling: *Sämmtliche Werke*, hrsg. von Karl Friedrich August Schelling, 13 vols., Stuttgart 1856, I, II 351. References with indication of volume, part and page number directly in the text.

nur da *wirkt* wo er *ist*, aber es ist eben so wahr, daß er nur da *ist* wo er *wirkt*« (I, II, 351), i.e., »It is very true that the body only *makes effects* there, where it *is*; but it is equally true that it *is* where it *makes effects*.« Schelling seems to imply that »to be« is »to be effective«.

Novalis takes up Schelling's association of *actio in distans* and Berührung in terms of effectivity and radicalizes his position. Whereas for Schelling, »sich wirklich berühren«, i.e., »actually touching«, still means spatial proximity that must be overcome by representation through the idealist notion of space, for Novalis, the »reality« of Berührung consists solely in the effectivity of bodies on one another. Novalis writes:

Ineffective contacts are not really contacts in the strict sense – they are only *apparent* contacts. Real and apparent contacts are not always connected. Genuine contacts are reciprocal excitations. [...] A body, whose soul is not active via any proper contact, can be said to be relatively dead. (82)

Unwirksame Berührungen sind keine Berührungen im strengern Sinn – es sind nur *scheinbare* Berührungen. Nicht immer sind scheinbare und wirkliche Berührungen verbunden. Ächte Berührungen sind wechselseitige Erregungen. [...] Relativ todt kann ein Körper heißen, dessen Seele durch keine gehörige Berührung reg ist. (AB 477)

Thus, Novalis differentiates between genuine Berührung and *apparent* (*scheinbar*) Berührung: the latter is characterized by spatial proximity – as in Kant's understanding of Berührung, or the colloquial understanding of contact – while the former is predicated on effectivity. Novalis understands the effectivity of Berührung as the demarcation between animate and inanimate bodies, thereby significantly expanding the domain of the living: it is not a living body that is capable of Berührung, but rather the effectivity and capacity of Berührung determines what a living body *is*.

A shared concern with effectivity in the processes of individuation is the constitutive presupposition that makes it possible to think Novalis's and Spinoza's respective theories of the individual together. For Spinoza, nothing exists except substance and modes, which are affections of one substance (E I, P4Pr). The understanding of a mode – an individual or singularity – is inextricable from its effectivity and the causality of substance. Spinoza always identifies a mode as a cause (most centrally in E I, P28 and E I, P36), defining the individual, which is always a composite unity, as follows: »By individual things (*res singulares*) I mean things that are finite and have a determinate existence. If several individual things concur in one act in such a way as to be *all together the simultaneous cause of one effect*, I consider them all, in that respect, as one individual« (E II, D7; Hvh. S.B.). The existence of the individual is an exercise of

effectivity on other individuals – or, as Balibar puts it, »to exist means to operate, or to act upon other things« (IT 13f.). On the other hand, substance – God or nature – is nothing but the power of self-actualization in the emergence of individuals. The causality pertaining to this self-actualization of substance is not mechanistic or transitive, but immanent: »God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things« (E I, P18). The individual in Spinoza is a site of immanent causality, because what constitutes an individual is not a set of a priori conditions, which would determine what an individual *essentially is*; rather, what determines an individual are the *effects* it produces – the individual is an effect of its own effects.

It is not difficult to recognize that this logic of effectivity is also at work in Novalis's conceptual usage of *Berührung*. On the one hand, *Berührung* designates the process of individuation, and on the other hand, it is only in its effects that one can determine whether *Berührung* took place at all. Echoing Spinoza's conception of singular things, Novalis characterizes the individual as the locus of activity in causal terms. Novalis writes: »*Individuen* vereinigen das Heterogène [...] Sie bringen wunderbar das Verschiedenartigste in Eine Gemeinschaft des Zwecks und der Arbeit – der Zusammenwirckung [...]« (AB 1070), i.e., »[Individuals] unite whatever is heterogeneous [...] They wonderfully bring together the most disparate elements into a single joint purpose and work – into a combined effect« (180). As in Spinoza's understanding of the individual as a composite unity, Novalis also departs from the metaphysical assumption of the individual's primacy and indivisibility, insisting that »Das ächte Dividuum ist auch das ächte Individuum« (AB 952), i.e., »The genuine *dividuum* is also the genuine *individuum*« (168). For Novalis, thus, the individual is a site of effectivity and unification between heterogeneous elements, i.e., their *Zusammenwirckung*.

Before addressing the causality of *Berührung* in greater detail, it is important to give a brief exposition of Novalis's conception of the body – especially in light of its inextricable relation to the understanding of *Berührung*. Novalis's theory of the body entails an interaction between internal and external determinations. Novalis writes: »Der organische Körper ist eine Synthese von Grad und Quantitaet – Energie und Figur. Jede Veränderung des Grades ist mit *Veränderung* der Figur verbunden« (AB 477), i.e., »The organic body is a synthesis of degree and quantity – energy and figure. Every change in the degree is connected with a *change* in the figure« (81). Quantity, or figure, is an effect of being in the world and interaction with it. Degree, or energy, designates a certain intensity or power that corresponds to the body's capacity to persist in

its being in spite of external stimuli.<sup>21</sup> This power (*Kraft*) is a token of the body's complexity and its capability: »Je mehr Kraft er [der Körper] besitzt – ruhende Kraft ist Vermögen – also je vermögender er ist, desto höher ist sein *Grad*« (AB 477), i.e., »The more [power] it possesses – latent [power] is capacity – the more capable it is, and thus the higher its *degree*« (82).<sup>22</sup> In turn, the particular power of the individual and its singular capacity or tendency to absorb external stimuli is a manifestation of the power of nature: »Alle Kraft gehört zur Welt Kraft« (AB 477), i.e., »All [power] belongs to the World-[power]« (82). Because the singular power of the body is a manifestation of the power of nature, Novalis conceives degree (*Grad*) as *inner-modified* power: »Der Grad entsteht durch innen modificirte Kraft« (AB 477), i.e., »The degree comes into being through an inwardly modified [power]« (81 f.). The living body and *Berührung* coincide in their properties: »Die *Berührung* selbst hat Grade und Größen – und *Richtungen* i.e. Figuren« (AB 477), i.e., »Contact itself has both degrees and magnitudes – and *directions* i.e. figures« (82). This is because the process of inner-modification of the total power of nature in a singular body is the function of *Berührung*: »Alle *Berührung* ist ein Anlaß zur Erregung der Einenden, systematisirenden Kraft – i.e. der Weltseele – oder der Seele überhaupt« (AB 477), i.e., »All contact gives rise to an excitation in the unifying, systematizing force – i.e. the World-Soul – or the soul in general« (82). *Berührung* gives occasion to the systematization and unification of what will be the singular relation between figure and degree. *Seele*, i.e., soul, is the name for this process of individuation as unification of multiplicity, that is, for the separation of the individual from its milieu: »ich nenne Seele, wodurch Alles zu Einem Ganzen wird, das individuelle Princip« (VF 118), i.e., »I call soul the in-

21 In this context, Novalis, though critically, often adopts physiological vocabulary of *Reiz* and *Erregung*. The scholarship generally reduces such references to the influence of the then-popular medical theories of John Brown, mistakenly ignoring the importance of the same vocabulary in Galvanism. On the relation between Novalis and Brown, see John Neubauer: »Dr. John Brown (1735–88) and Early German Romanticism«, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1967), pp. 367–382.

22 Rendering the term »*Kraft*« into English, which may mean both force and power, does not only pose an obstacle for translation but also carries with it philosophical import. Discussions about »forces« and »elementary forces« are typical around 1800 and for Freiberg Romanticism in particular. Force is generally associated with a particular quality that inhabits or forms an individual (e.g., gravity is such a force). Power and powers, on the other hand, are homogenous in quality and unfolded in time; that is, power is realized in different quantities or at difference instances. For this reason, Spinoza's *conatus*, as actual essence of an individual, designates a singular realization of the power of one substance. Novalis's use of *Kraft* is not always consistent, but insofar as in his discussions of bodies he associates it with »capacity« (*Vermögen*) and quantity (e.g., a body has more or less *power*, rather than more or fewer *forces*), it is more precise to render it as »power«. In all other case, I translate it as »force«.



dividual principle whereby everything becomes one whole« (62). In other words, *Seele* is the separation of an individual's singular power from the entirety of the power of nature, of which it remains a part: just as *Seele* or soul pertains to *Weltseele* or world-soul, so does a singular *Kraft* or power pertain to *Welt-Kraft* or world-power. Power and effectivity are thus central to Novalis's conception of the individual, which is manifestation of the power of nature in its singular modification.

With this in mind, it is now possible to show the affinity between Spinoza's and Novalis's theories of the individual more concretely. Echoing Novalis's notion of »inwardly modified power«, Spinoza inextricably ties the essence of a singular thing to its power and the relations that constitute its actual existence: »The [power or] conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself« (E III, P7). This singular power is a determinate manifestation of the power of nature: »Particular things are [...] things which express in a definite and determinate way the power of God whereby he is and acts« (E III, P6Pr). On the one hand, the effectivity of the individual is determined by its essence, that is, by its power to act. On the other hand, its essence is determined through relations it enters with other singular things in actual existence. Spinoza thematizes an individual as a relatively constant ratio of parts; as long as the proportion of these parts is preserved, the individual will »retain its own nature as before without any change in its form« (E II, L5). An individual, thus, cannot be conceived as an atom or indivisible »solid« substance; not only is the individual determined relationally, it is *essentially* a relation: »The component parts of the human body do not pertain to the essence of the body itself save insofar as they preserve an unvarying relation of motion with one another« (E II, P24Pr). The parts are replaceable, the relation between parts is constitutive. In turn, an individual always entails a potentiality of decomposing when this regulative ratio among its parts is dissolved, while it can also become a part in relation to other parts of a greater individual without losing its form. Thus, an individual is always a double relation, as Balibar points out: a unifying relation between parts, and a relation of that unity of parts to its own external milieu (IT 17). However, the stability of the individual is only relative; its unity is provisional and precarious. If external relations threaten the unstable unity that is the individual, it is nevertheless only through such external relations that an individual can reproduce its power. Thus, the tendency of western metaphysics to conceive of an individual as an isolated and indivisible entity is nothing but an abstraction – the work of imagination – according to Spinoza's ontology.



Because for both Spinoza and Novalis an individual is a composite unity in perpetual activity, the complexity of the individual always corresponds to its capacity to undergo encounters without dissolution and enter into complex relations with other individuals. The more complex the body, according to Spinoza, the »more capable [it is] of being affected in more ways and of affecting other bodies in more ways«; the relations it enters that increase or decrease this capacity are beneficial or dangerous, respectively (E IV, P38). As Morfino summarizes this aspect of Spinoza's theory of individuation: »the more complex the relations, the more powerful the individual«. <sup>23</sup> For Novalis, an encounter is not only an event underlying the emergence of the individual, but a perpetual necessity in the preservation of the individual – each individuation presupposes further individualizations. Indeed, the power and the complexity of the individual is predicated on its capacity for *Berührung*:

The more complex and diverse the soul, the stronger and more excitable. Thus if the *most inward*, or the greatest, or the most sustained *contacts* or *stimuli* are necessary for the excitation of the weakest soul, then it is altogether different with the stronger soul – With diversity or intensity [...] the contacts also become *more diverse* – stronger and longer lasting, and so too the stimuli. Thus the simple soul is only aroused into activity through one *contact* and one *stimulus*. The complex soul through diverse contacts and diverse stimuli. (82)

Je complicirter, mannichfacher die Seele, desto stärker, desto erregbarer. Wenn also zur Erregung des schwächsten Seele die *innigsten*, oder größten, oder dauerhaftesten *Berührungen* oder *Reitze* gehören, so verhält es sich anders mit der stärkern Seele – Mit der Mannichfaltigkeit oder Stärke [...] werden auch die *Berührungen mannichfaltiger* – stärker und dauerhafter und so auch die *Reitze*. Die Einfache Seele wird also nur durch Eine *Berührung* und Einen *Reitz* in Thätigkeit gesetzt. Die complicirtere Seele durch mannichfache *Berührungen* und mannichfachen *Reitz*. (AB 477)

Insofar as *Seele* or soul is Novalis's name for the »Einenden, systematisirenden Kraft«, i.e., »unifying, systematizing force«, this means that the process of individuation, its complexity, strength and endurance, is inseparable from the constituted individual. In short, the body's capacity to navigate external stimuli is the capacity of the body's reproduction in time. In this sense, the greater the complexity of the individual, the more it is capable of a multiplicity of encounters, whereas the weak *Seele* is only capable of simple encounters.

Importantly, this logic applies as much to physical bodies as to ideas and concepts. For Novalis, this complexity of the body in relation to its power manifests itself on the level of extension as well as on the level

<sup>23</sup> Vittorio Morfino: *Plural Temporality: Transindividuality and the Aleatory between Spinoza and Althusser*, Leiden 2014, p. 61.

of thought, just as it does for Spinoza. According to Spinoza, the greater the capacity of the body's activity, »so is its mind more apt than other minds to perceive many things simultaneously« (E II, P13S), and thus »to understand their agreement, their differences, and their opposition« (E II, P29S). In the Spinozan key, Novalis also holds that a more complex individual is capable of more complex ideas, or more complex analogies and differentiations.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the genius is produced (*gebildet*) »durch genialische Berührungen der mannichfaltigsten Art« (AB 455), i.e., »by inspired contacts of the most varied kind« (75). This is because for the Spinozan tradition thought and extension are two attributes, expressing the same eternal essence of a single substance. Just as for Spinoza an idea is a mode under the attribute of thought, so for Novalis an idea is considered an individual; it is a product of individuation and *Berührung*, and the more complex the idea, the greater its capacity to integrate encounters that give rise to it: »Eine Idee ist desto gediegener und *individueller* – und reizender – je mannichfaltigere Gedancken, Welten und Stimmungen sich in ihr *kreutzen*, berühren« (HKII 610), i.e., »An idea is all the more dignified and individual – and stimulating – the more thoughts, worlds, and moods *intersect*, encounter [berühren], in it.« As I already showed, Novalis's own conception of *Berührung in distans* is such an integration of the encounter between Kant's and Schelling's respective concepts of *Berührung* and *Wirkung in die Ferne*. This is because Novalis treats epistemological individuations as part of nature. The Spinozan tradition, to which Novalis in this respect contributes, is characterized by a specific concern with *epistemo-ontology*, because the processes of individuation apply as much to ontology as they do to epistemology.<sup>25</sup>

In locating Novalis in the Spinozan tradition, a number of questions arise. As Balibar has demonstrated with respect to Spinoza, the conception of the individual entails that every individual participates in transindividual reality; it is both composed of other individuals and belongs to the composition of greater individuals. Describing such individuals belonging to different levels of complexity, Spinoza writes:

If we now conceive another individual thing composed of several individual things of different natures, we shall find that this can be affected in many other ways while still preserving its nature. [...] Now if we go on to conceive a third kind of individual things composed of this second kind, we shall find that it can be affected in many other ways without any change in its form. If we thus

<sup>24</sup> See VB 72.

<sup>25</sup> On the relation of ontology and epistemology as two manifestations of the same operation, which Kiarina Kordela calls »epistemontology«, see A. Kiarina Kordela: *Epistemontology in Spinoza-Marx-Freud-Lacan: The (Bio)Power of Structure*, New York 2017.

continue to infinity, we shall conceive the whole of Nature as one individual whose parts – that is, all the constituent bodies – vary in infinite ways without any change in the individual as a whole. (E II, L7S)

In other words, participation in transindividual reality is the fundamental function of every individual, be it a frog, a stone, or a concept. Novalis offers a theory of the complexity of the individual, but it remains to be determined whether, in what sense, or to what extent he also shares Spinoza's radical position of transindividuality as the integration of individuals in its full scale. In short, Novalis emphasizes effectivity and power in the processes of individuation, but how widely do these dynamics apply?

Furthermore, situating Novalis's theory of *Berührung* in the context of Spinoza's epistemo-ontology raises the following issue: does Novalis's understanding of the individual as the product of and capacity for *Berührung*, framed in terms of stimuli (*Reiz*) and excitability (*Erregbarkeit*), produce a *vitalist* reading of Spinoza? Does Novalis's theorization of the specifically *organic* body as a model for ontology, which must also include inorganic phenomena, pose a problem for the Spinozan strain in Romanticism? Jacques Monod identifies vitalism and animism as the two dominant tendencies of accounting for the teleonomic properties of living beings in relation to metaphysical and cosmological concerns. While vitalism, according to Monod, privileges a biosphere as the epicenter of living matter, animism involves a projection of the organic body's teleonomic functions onto the entire universe.<sup>26</sup> The shared consequences of these two tendencies often entail a lapse into anthropomorphic and teleological thinking – consequences that Spinoza's thought rigorously seeks to avoid. Given Novalis's insistence on the rejection of ontological difference between animate and inanimate things – as well as his expansion of the sphere of the »living« to include anything that has a capacity for *Berührung* – he cannot properly be called a vitalist. However, insofar as his emphasis falls on elucidating the function of *Berührung* with respect to the organic body, but also on employing it with regard to social and epistemological concerns, can he be said to have animist proclivities? And does this line of inquiry show that Spinozan thought itself is vulnerable to vitalist and animist appropriations?

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<sup>26</sup> See Jacques Monod: *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology*, transl. Austryn Wainhouse, New York 1971, pp. 23–44.

### III. Galvanism and the Logic of Integration

The two lines of questioning that arise from my initial comparative sketch of Novalis's and Spinoza's respective theories of the individual come together in Novalis's participation in the debates surrounding Galvanism, also known as *Berührungselektricität*. Most broadly, Galvanism designates the phenomenon of movement in an organic body (contraction of a muscle) as a result of an electric current. As I will show, for Novalis, Galvanism ties *Berührung* to the emergence of life and it also allows him to understand the individual as *transindividual*, in terms of the logic of integration and differentiation.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, however, as Gaston Bachelard (along similar lines as Monod) points out, Galvanic theories around 1800 exemplify the »animist obstacle«: a tendency in scientific thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to lapse into metaphysical and magical thinking.<sup>28</sup> Without a doubt, galvanic theories mark a tendency of obscurantism around the thinkers in Freiberg, also contributing to Novalis's own more mystic and idealist speculations.<sup>29</sup> As I will show, Galvanism is the historical condition of Novalis's Spinozan thought and it is also its greatest obstacle. My task, then, is twofold: to give an account of the logic of integration of individuals in Novalis and Ritter, and to demarcate the idealist strains in Novalis's thought from his Spinozan theory of individuation and encounter. This procedure will establish the limits of Spinozan thought in Freiberg Romanticism, on the one hand, and gesture toward potential weaknesses of Spinozan ontology, on the other hand.

The proliferation of the debates around Galvanism stems from a discussion between Luigi Galvani and Alessandro Volta in Italy, which had significant cultural resonance across Europe. In 1791 Galvani conducted an experiment in which he connected the sciatic nerve of a frog and its leg to a metal arc (usually made of two metal plates – commonly of silver and zinc), thus making a circuit and causing the frog's leg to twitch. Galvani argued for the existence of animal electricity to account for this effect. Volta, his colleague, collaborator, and theoretical adversary, held

27 Schlegel notes in a letter to Schleiermacher that »Galvanismus des Geistes und das Geheimniß der Berührung« are some of Novalis's favorite ideas, though admitting that they nonetheless still remain mysterious to Schlegel himself (HKAIV 619–620).

28 See Gaston Bachelard: *Formation of the Scientific Mind*, transl. Mary McAllester Jones, Manchester 2006, pp. 154–171.

29 For instance, enunciations like the following are commonplace in Novalis's writing: »Der Geist *galvanisirt* die Seele mittelst der gröbern Sinne. Seine Selbstthätigkeit ist *Galvanism* – Selbstberührung en trois« (VF 102), i.e., »The spirit *galvanizes* the soul by means of raw sense. Its self-activity is *Galvanism* – Auto-encounter en trois.«

that the electricity was not intrinsic to the animal body, but was a result of the polarity produced by two heterogeneous metals. Because the discussion between Galvani and Volta did not result in conclusive proofs,<sup>30</sup> it gave rise to a multitude of conjectures concerning the relationship of electricity to the phenomenon of life, spanning well beyond the limits of the experiment.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, despite the limited nature of the Galvani-Volta debate, the theoretical effects that it produced around 1800 were highly significant for philosophy. This was especially the case in Germany, where Alexander von Humboldt and Ritter published influential texts on the subject in 1797 and 1798, respectively, which came to mediate Novalis's engagement with Galvanism.<sup>32</sup> While Humboldt's discussions remained rather reserved, Ritter's importance for Novalis consists in his proclivity for drawing metaphysical conclusions from his galvanic experiments. Ritter insists on the unity of different processes – the chemical, the electric, and the physiological – thus offering a model for understanding nature as a cohesive whole (BG ix). In Galvanism, Ritter believes to have found an »originary force« and »central phenomenon«, the very principle of life. Thus, Galvanism is no longer a name for a limited experiment, but a more general process active in nature. For Ritter, where there is life, the galvanic process is already at work.<sup>33</sup>

By articulating an understanding of the body as a chain or circuit (*Kette*) that consists of parts or members (*Glieder*), Ritter offers a valuable model for thinking of nature as different orders of integration of relational bodies. Ritter defines chain (*Kette*) as »[e]ine in sich selbst zurücklaufende Reihe von Körpern«, i.e., »series of bodies in a circuit within itself«. <sup>34</sup> A body, which Ritter calls a *System*, consists of parts, which are also bodies or systems comprising smaller chains. Ritter thus conceives the animal body as a »System unendlich vieler auf die mannichfaltigste Art in und durch einander greifender beständig thätiger Glavanischer Ketten« (BG 159), i.e., »a system of infinitely many perpetually active galvanic chains,

<sup>30</sup> For the discussion of this debate, see Nahum Kipnis: »Changing a theory: The case of Volta's contact electricity«, in: Enrico A. Giannetto/Fabio Bevilacqua (eds.): *Volta and the History of Electricity*, Milan 2003, pp. 17–35.

<sup>31</sup> For context, see Richard Samuel HKAI 6.

<sup>32</sup> See Alexander von Humboldt: *Aphorismen aus der chemischen Physiologie der Pflanzen*, transl. Gotthelf Fischer, Leipzig 1794; Johann Wilhelm Ritter: *Beweis, daß ein beständiger Galvanismus den Lebensproceß in dem Thierreich begleite: Nebst neuen Versuchen und Bemerkungen über den Galvanismus*, Weimar 1798. References with abbreviation BG and page number directly in the text. For the discussion of the Galvanism debate in Germany in particular, see Elena Agazzi: »The impact of Alessandro Volta on German culture«, in: Fabio Bevilacqua/Lucio Fregonese (eds.): *Nuova Voltiana: Studies on Volta and his Times*, Milan 2002, pp. 41–52.

<sup>33</sup> See Daiber: *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* (fn. 6), p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> All translations of Ritter are mine, S.B.

which are gripping in and through each other in most varied of ways«. Systems or bodies – animal bodies are exemplary for Ritter – consisting of the complex intersection of a multitude of chains also unite into greater chains, finally giving rise to a conception of nature as the totality of all possible chains:

However, such systems emerge once again as parts in greater chains, and these are parts in still greater ones, and so on until the greatest, which encompasses all others. In this way, the parts run into the whole, and the whole back into the parts. – But is it so different in the human body as under the skin of a worm? So different from the elephant all the way to delicate copepods, from a whale to infusoria-animals? – No! Everywhere there is the foundation present, and with it the founded. And the founded is the perpetual activity in the continuously closed chains.

Solche Systeme aber treten nun wieder als Glieder in höhere Ketten, diese sind Glieder noch höherer, und so fort bis zur grössesten, die die übrigen alle umfasst. So laufen die Theile in das Ganze, und das Ganze in die Theile zurück. – Aber, ist es anders etwas im Menschlichen Körper, anders in der Hülle des Wurmes? Anders vom Elephant herab bis zur zarten Naide, vom Wallfisch bis zum Infusionsthier? – Nein! Ueberall ist der Grund, und mit ihm das Begründete vorhanden. Und das begründete ist fortdauernde Thätigkeit in den fortdauernd geschlossenen Ketten. (BG 159)

A number of ontological consequences follow from this understanding of a body as a system consisting of other bodies. 1) A body is an integration of relations, which is itself integrated into greater bodies. 2) A body is necessarily engaged in the perpetual activity of exchanges with other bodies (BG 170). 3) The relation between a part and a whole is strictly reciprocal (BG 170). 4) Nature, as the highest order system, is a totality of all galvanic processes in perpetual dynamism.

Novalis does not completely embrace Ritter's ontological constellation as described above, but he does accept Ritter's logic of the integration of individuals in ever greater relational unities. Novalis writes: »Der Körper ist eine unendliche Kette von lauter *Individuen*« (FS 265), i.e., »The body is an infinite chain of mere individuals.«<sup>35</sup> Thus, he also assumes the necessity of thinking individuals relationally, and, drawing on the galvanic idea of a »chain«, he supplements this insight by conceiving individuals as distributions of a single power: »Alle Kräfte sind, was sie sind – durch Vertheilung in Ketten. Eins ist, was das Andre ist – nur verschiedentlich durch seine Stelle, seine Nachbarschaft modificirt« (FS 253), i.e., »All powers are what they are through their distribution in chains. One is what the other one is – only different through its position,

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<sup>35</sup> See FS 254.

modified through its vicinity.« The singularity of an individual power is its relational position, its »vicinity«. This »vicinity« designates an individual's capacity to enter relations; the more complex the individual, the greater is its vicinity and its sphere of *Berührung* and effectivity: »Je mannichfacher Etwas individualisirt ist – desto mannichfacher ist *seine Berührung* mit andern Individuen – desto *veränderlicher seine Grenze – und Nachbarschaft*« (AB 113), i.e., »The more diversely something is individualized – the more diverse *its contact* with other individuals – the more *variable its boundaries* – and [*vicinity*]« (18). On the other hand, insofar as an individual is also integrated into greater individual unities, its greater relational spheres also belong to its body: »Der Mensch hat gleichsam gewisse Zonen des Körpers – Sein Leib ist die Nächste – was ihn zunächst umgiebt – die Zweyte, seine Stadt und Provinz die Dritte – so geht's fort bis zur Sonne und ihrem System« (AB 593), i.e., »[The human being] has certain zones in his body as it were. – His body is his most immediate surrounding – The second is his town, while the third is his province – and so it continues, up until the sun and its system« (104). While Novalis takes up Ritter's vocabulary, what interests him is not the principle of Galvanism, but the idea of a *chain* – or *concatenation*, to use Spinozan terminology – which enables him to think the individual in terms of its effectivity through the widest scope of its relations as the integration of other individuals.

Novalis manages to detach his appropriation of Galvanism from crude empiricism, also avoiding the pitfall of animism.<sup>36</sup> By applying the idea of »galvanic chains« to the entirety of nature, Ritter comes to understand nature not merely as an organic system but as »the great All-Animal« (»das grosse All-Thier«), wherein the smaller individuals comprise its organs (BG 171). He thus reduces the capacity and power of nature to teleonomic properties of animal bodies. Contrary to this, I would like to suggest, Novalis departs from Ritter's animism not necessarily by rejecting his metaphysical conclusions, but by insisting that Ritter's application of galvanic phenomena, perhaps surprisingly, does not go *far enough*: »Der Galvanism ist wohl weit allgemeiner als selbst Ritter glaubt – und entweder ist alles Galvanism oder nichts Galvanism« (FS 272), i.e., »Galvanism is certainly much more general than even Ritter himself believes – and either everything is Galvanism or nothing Galvanism.« In order to achieve even greater generality of Galvanism, Novalis abstracts

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<sup>36</sup> See Daiber: *Experimentalphysik des Geistes* (fn. 6), pp. 99–113: Daiber shows that, unlike Ritter, Novalis is not a crass empiricist, and he refuses to accept the point that the ontological conclusions can be deduced from sheer empirical experimentation.



the forms and conceptual vocabulary of galvanic theory while metaphorizing its particular mode of experimentation. Novalis's deployment of Galvanism can be summarized in a formal dynamic, wherein relationally constituted bodies in *Berührung* produce a surplus that is irreducible to the bodies in question, whether this surplus be contraction of a muscle, or production of a new idea in an encounter of two disparate concepts. Galvanism in Novalis thus becomes one of the names for the processes that produce such surplus, while the literal experiment of Galvanism is merely a »privileged« manifestation of this dynamic (FS 251). It is for this reason that Novalis speaks of Galvanism in thought (as *Sympraxis*),<sup>37</sup> in chemistry,<sup>38</sup> in poetry,<sup>39</sup> in the economy,<sup>40</sup> in the erotic encounter and procreation,<sup>41</sup> in fermentation,<sup>42</sup> as well as in the political domain.<sup>43</sup> While Ritter takes the experiment's narrow domain and expands it to the very understanding of nature, Novalis extracts the dynamics from a narrow experiment (encounter, action, surplus), locating this dynamic as so many singular ontological or epistemological individuations in disparate spheres.

Despite his strategic appropriation of the insights that galvanic theories offer, the idealist nature of the latter nonetheless leaves traces in Novalis's thought, exemplified in his aborted attempt to unfold the notion of *Selbstberührung* or auto-encounter. It is noteworthy that, with one exception, every mention of this term in Novalis's notes appears in the context of his discussion of Galvanism. *Selbstberührung* designates encounter in interiority or encounter with oneself. The possibility of thinking *Selbstberührung* arises from the following extrapolation: if the body is a galvanic chain, and if this chain already entails a *Berührung* of its parts, then *Selbstberührung* is possible in the interiority of an individual. Consequently, if *Berührung* is the process of production of new individuals – such as new concepts – then radical innovation is possible without alterity and external encounter, through the individual's power of interiority, in the contact of the parts of which it is comprised.

This extrapolation of galvanic logic, in combination with Novalis's conceptualization of *Berührung* beyond Galvanism, lies at the root of some of the famous statements that contributed to the interpretation

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<sup>37</sup> HKAI 557.

<sup>38</sup> HKAI 644.

<sup>39</sup> FS 289.

<sup>40</sup> FS 69.

<sup>41</sup> AB 126. For a productive discussion of procreation in Novalis and Ritter, see Jocelyn Holland: *German Romanticism and Science: The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter*, New York 2009.

<sup>42</sup> AB 513.

<sup>43</sup> HKAI 603.



of Novalis as a mystic. Perhaps the most widely circulated fragment on *Berührung* in reception of Novalis states: »Es liegt nur an der Schwäche unsrer Organe, und der Selbstberührung, daß wir uns nicht in einer Feenwelt erblicken« (VF 195), i.e., »It is only because of the weakness of our organs and of our contact with ourselves [*Selbstberührung*] that we do not discover ourselves to be in a fairy world« (67). The notion of *Selbstberührung* promises the possibility of a magical world, wherein the realization of possibilities may come about as a result of inner wishes. The following fragment elaborates on this conjecture: »Die Intelligenz soll ohne und gegen das organische Vermögen – alles hervorbringen – ächte Gedankenwelt – unmittelbares BewußtSeyn der ganzen Welt« (VF 184), i.e., »The Intelligence should generate everything without and despite the organic capacity – a genuine thought-world – an immediate consciousness of the whole world.« This position is clearly irreconcilable with Novalis's Spinozan materialist strain that assumes the primacy of encounter in the processes of emergence. Novalis's notion of *Selbstberührung* thus points to the deep ambivalence in his thought between unstable and contingent individuations and the production of concepts as individuals, on the one hand, and the voluntarism of such production on the other. The idea of encounter *within* oneself breeds idealist proclivities of *ex nihilo* creation that give primacy to the interiority of the intellect as the agent of creation.

However, this ethical modality of »should« or »soll« in relation to *Selbstberührung* is important. It speaks not to the current ontological situation of unstable and precarious individuations, but to the possibility of radical change for ontology itself in the future – a coming ontology of harmony and wish fulfillment. As Novalis writes: »Der allgemeine innige, harmonische Zusammenhang ist nicht, aber er *soll* seyn« (AB 885), i.e., »The general inward, harmonious relation does not exist, however, it *shall* be« (158).<sup>44</sup> Between what *is* and what *should be* there is a tension of conflicting ontologies, that of Novalis the materialist and that of Novalis the mystic. The confusion and intermixing of these two ontologies, which Novalis himself marks as separate, lies at the root of the current reception of Novalis in the idealist tradition, thereby obscuring his Spinozan thought.

In fact, I would like to suggest that *Selbstberührung* is an aborted notion, a byproduct of conceptual experiment that failed. »Selbstberührung« appears in Novalis's notes only six times, all of which, with one unremarkable exception,<sup>45</sup> occur in the draft of preparatory notes for his encyclopedia (VF). None of these notes made it into the draft of the ency-

<sup>44</sup> See VF 195, VF 432, HKAI 61.

<sup>45</sup> AB 1032.

clopedia, the collection known as *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*. The abortion of this conceptual experiment negatively underscores Novalis's rigorous understanding of *Berührung*: an encounter in the strong sense – in its otherness, contingency, and effectivity – underlies processes of individuation, not the interiority of *Intelligenz*, with its idealist or religious undertones. Nonetheless, despite his effort to strip galvanic theories of their empiricism with respect to metaphysical questions, Novalis's aborted usage of *Selbstberührung* points to the fragility and limits of his Spinozan strain.

Despite providing Novalis with a model for thinking integration of individuals in nature through galvanic chains akin to the Spinozan idea of transindividuality, Ritter's theory runs up against the following limits: a) it reduces all natural processes to Galvanism, thus granting one phenomenal manifestation (galvanic experiment) the status of transcendental law<sup>46</sup>; b) though Ritter does not posit the exceptionality of the human, he nonetheless grants the human and other living organisms, in view of teleonomy, a privileged position in the order of nature; c) while galvanic theories enable a conceptualization of the emergence of surplus affection in individuals that enter encounters, individuals that enter galvanic chains are presumed to be already individuated. In short, Ritter's galvanic theory cannot think the primacy of the *process* of individuation, that is, the process of the separation of the individual from its milieu. Finally, while insisting on the productivity of encounter, galvanic theories do not provide any precise account of the causality that is constitutive of Novalis's understanding of *Berührung*. As I will show, it is Novalis's engagement with Baader's theory of the individual that supplants his adaptation of Galvanism, making it possible to consider the problem of Novalis's Spinozan theory of individuation and transindividuality in its full scale.

#### IV. Baader and the Logic of Individuation

To date, Baader's role in the development of Novalis's thought in particular and in the reception of Romanticism more generally has been either ignored or underestimated.<sup>47</sup> This is part of the reason that Novalis's theories of individuation, especially his conceptualization of *Berührung*,

<sup>46</sup> For Spinoza's critique of »transcendental terms« and »universal notions«, see E I, P40S1.

<sup>47</sup> See Samuel's discussion of Baader's importance for Novalis's thought (HKAI 512). See Ulrich Gaier: *Krumme Regel: Novalis' Konstruktionslehre des schaffenden Geistes und ihre Tradition*, Tübingen 1970. Gaier's book is one of the few books that discusses Baader's influence on Novalis at any length. For Baader's role in Freiberg Mining Academy, and his relation to Werner and Schelling, among other figures of importance for Novalis, see Bonchino: *Materie als gerommener Geist* (fn. 2), pp. 128–157.

have gone unremarked in current scholarship. Famously – and much to Friedrich Schlegel’s surprise<sup>48</sup> – Novalis included Baader in »the philosophical directorium in Germany« alongside Fichte, Schelling, Hülsen, and Schlegel (VF 25); following Baader’s induction into this exclusive club, one of Novalis’s earliest mentions of *Berührung* appears, appended by the note »Siehe Baaders Theorie der Gliederung« (VF 26), i.e., »see Baader’s theory of structuration«, an obvious reference to Baader’s text on individuation titled »Beiträge zur Elementarphysiologie«.<sup>49</sup> Novalis’s conceptualization of *Berührung* in terms of effectivity, as discussed above and further qualified here, clearly draws on Baader’s text:

Every genuine encounter [*Berührung*] is effective – There are apparent encounters – true non-encounters – and apparent non-encounters. The *non-effectivity* of an encounter does not necessarily testify to its apparent nature – or falsity.

True effectivity is not sensible – i.e., not *obtrusive*. The *phenomenon of effectivity* occurs only in the processes of unification – and during the inner process, which is followed by separation.

In order to unite, one becomes relatively fluid with respect to another – but all the more solid in opposition to otherness.

Jede ächte *Berührung* ist wirksam – Es giebt scheinbare *Berührungen* – die wahre Nicht*berührungen* – und scheinbare Nicht*berührungen*, die wahre *Berührungen* sind. Die *Unwirksamkeit* einer *Berührung* zeugt noch nicht von ihrer Scheinbarkeit – oder Falschheit.

Wahre Wirksamkeit ist nicht Sensibel – i.e. nicht *aufdringlich*. Das *Phaenomen der Wirksamkeit* erfolgt nur während des Processes der Vereinigung – und während des innern Processes, der der Trennung folgt.

Um sich zu vereinigen, wird man relativ flüssig gegen einander – aber desto starrer gegen das Fremde. (HKAI 54)

In order to distinguish between apparent and genuine *Berührung*, Novalis brings the concept of effectivity into greater focus. When he says that the »non-effectivity of an encounter« (*Unwirksamkeit einer Berührung*) does not testify to the false or apparent nature of the *Berührung*, he seeks to draw a line between the mechanistic or transitive conception of causality and the kind of causality that he has in mind. The causality at stake in *Berührung* is »true effectivity« (*wahre Wirksamkeit*) that is not obtrusive; unlike the mechanistic effectivity that is predictable, calculable, and reversible, »true effectivity« involves irreversible processes that may remain subaltern in the changes of a body itself.<sup>50</sup> True effectivity manifests itself

<sup>48</sup> Schlegel expresses this surprise to Novalis in a letter on 8th of July, 1798 (HKAI 496).

<sup>49</sup> Franz von Baader: »Beiträge zur Elementarphysiologie«, in: idem: *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Franz Hoffmann, vol. 3: *Gesammelte Schriften zur Naturphilosophie*, Leipzig 1852, pp. 202–246. References with abbreviation BzE and page number directly in the text.

<sup>50</sup> See HKAI 81.

processually in unification (*Vereinigung*) or separation (*Trennung*), in a compositional change as the becoming of an individual.

In order to explicate the exact nature of the causality in Novalis's theory of individuation, one must turn to Baader, whose conceptual language Novalis explicitly appropriates in the above passage and in other passages that address the phenomenon of *Berührung*. Like Spinoza and Novalis, Baader conceives the individual as a relational unity. Baader defines an individual as follows: »Eine Raum-Einheit (ein räumliches Individuum) qualificirt sich als solche (solches) bloss durch die ihr als einem Vielerlei Aussereinander entsprechende Vielheit Ineinander« (BzE 219), i.e., »A space-unity (a spatial individual) is qualified as such through its being an external diversity with corresponding internal multiplicity.«<sup>51</sup> Insofar as internal multiplicity (*Vielheit*) corresponds to external diversity (*Vielerlei*), the individual is always an assemblage of internal parts and external relations – a unity in multiplicity. Such relational unity is constitutively precarious. For this reason, instead of focusing on the analysis of pre-given individuals, Baader stresses the processes of emergence, becoming, and disappearance. For instance, in his typical privileging of fluids, Baader gives an account of a solid body moving through fluid at a speed sufficient for a new space-individual to become perceptible; as a result of the fluid's resistance, it manifests itself as a wave. Individuation takes place »als momentan sich bildende Einheit« (BzE 220), i.e., »as a momentarily generating unity«. Unlike the mechanistic approach to bodies, which can account for movement, but not for emergence and transformation, the standpoint of individuation allows Baader to conceptualize variously stable individuals in dynamic and relational terms, understanding them as effects of spontaneous generation, subject to spontaneous dissolution. Speaking of systems in which slight disturbance may engender drastic change – known today as »metastable states« – Baader theorizes such a change as a function of *Berührung*, of encounter: »Die leiseste *Berührung* ist oft hinreichend, diese Explosion zu bewirken« (BzE 220Fn), i.e., »The most gentle encounter [*Berührung*] is often sufficient to effect this explosion.«

Baader elucidates three types of processes and three modes of encounter that underlie the emergence and transformation of individuals: mechanistic, dynamic, and chemical. He further identifies three force-expressions that correspond to three types of association (*Gemeinschaft*) and causality (*Wechselwirkung*), which are also three modes of embodiment (*Verkörperung*) and de-individuation (*Entkörperung*). They are: A) *mechanistic*, wherein one body opposes another with all its force without any transfor-

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<sup>51</sup> All translations of Baader are mine.

mation of its composition; B) *dynamic*, wherein a body serves as a medium or conductor for the force exerted on it, in which case, remaining passive, it does not appear as an individual but as »nicht-individualisierter Stoff«, i.e., »non-individualized material« (BzE 224); C) *chemical*, wherein one body would be fully affiliated (*aufgenommen*) or saturated (*durchdrungen*) by another body, substance, or medium. In the chemical causality, a body will either become part of a greater relatively stable individual or it will not, in which case it decomposes in a way that »ein neues Individuum oder mehrere neue Individua hervortreten« (BzE 225), i.e., »a new individual or several new individuals emerge«. Although each of these three kinds of relation can cross over into each other (depending on the balance of forces), it is only the third kind of relation, the chemical, that applies to the process of individuation in its full scope. Indeed, it is the language of Baader's thematization of this chemical relation that Novalis employs when speaking about the »true effectivity« that is constitutive of »genuine encounters«. For this reason, Novalis designates chemistry as privileged domain for demarcating the living from the non-living as a function of *Berührung* (AB 477). Characterized by the processes of separation (*Trennung*) and unification (*Vereinigung*), the causality of *Berührung* is determined by the effectivity of the irreversible processes of dissipation or production of individuals.

The tendency to emphasize individuation that Novalis shares with Baader is further demonstrated by Baader's understanding of individuals as events. As Baader writes:

no generation (of an individual) can happen as a successive synthesis of the multiplicity that conduces to a unity, but rather it has to happen suddenly (*as if by a revolution or an explosion*).

keine Bildung (eines Individuums) [kann] als Synthesis einer Vielheit, die einer Einheit dient, successiv, sondern sie muss auf einmal (*gleichsam durch eine Revolution oder Explosion*) geschehen. (BzE 236; Hvh. S.B.)

This conception of individuation is neither evolutionary nor teleological, but eventful and contingent. Likewise, Novalis goes so far as to compare *Berührung* to the atomist *clinamen* (AB 634).<sup>52</sup> Referring directly to Baader's discussion of the »seat of the soul« (»Sitz der Seele«) (in BzE 218n298), Novalis characterizes the process of individuation, which he calls *Seele*, in terms of an event that presupposes Baader's chemical causality of saturation: »Der Sitz der Seele ist da, wo *sich Innenwelt und Außenwelt berühren*. Wo sie sich durchdringen – ist er in jedem Puncte der Durchdringung« (VB 20; Hvh. S.B.), i.e., »The seat of the soul is the

<sup>52</sup> See VF 171.

point where the inner and the outer worlds touch [berühren]. Wherever they [saturate] each other – it is there at every point of [saturation]« (26).<sup>53</sup> In short, the site of what Baader calls chemical causality and what Novalis calls *Berührung* is the site of an *event* of encounter resulting in individuation. Against the grain of western metaphysics, the stable individual is displaced by an eventful process of individuation and »solid« substance is displaced by the primacy of relation.

Importantly, both Baader and Novalis presuppose *one* ontology for all individuations, a Spinozan ontology that insists on the immanence of one substance *as relation* while conceiving individuals as so many of its modifications. Baader articulates precisely this position: on the one hand, »kann man den Begriff der Substanz nicht auf eine oder auf mehrere Grundmaterien anwenden, denn jede dieser einzelnen Materien oder Körper ist nur ein Individuum« (BzE 234), i.e., »one cannot apply the concept of substance to one or several basic materials, because each of these materials or bodies is only an individual;« on the other hand, to conceive individuals concretely, i.e., »in relation with others«, one must posit their emergence and disappearance as »einzelner (gewirkte) Individuen von und in dem einen wirkenden Individuum« (BzE 219), i.e., »singular (effectuated) individuals through and in the one effectuating individual«. To use Spinozan language, this means thinking *natura naturata* through *natura naturans*. All of these tendencies, shared in different degrees by Novalis, Baader, and Ritter – the tendency to think nature in the key of Spinozan ontology, to theorize its eventfulness in terms of the emergence and disappearance of individuals, and to stress the processes of individuation – comprise what I proposed to call Freiberg Romanticism.

## V. The limits of Spinozan thought in Freiberg Romanticism

While drawing on Baader to conceptualize the causality of *Berührung*, Novalis nonetheless does not accept a number of Baader's positions. For Baader, individuation is ultimately limited to the physical interaction of bodies and *Berührung* still largely implies contiguity. Baader thinks physical individuation in a Spinozan key, yet he does not offer an *epistemo*-ontology, which is constitutive of Spinozan materialism, in which ideas are also conceived as individuals. Baader privileges the liquid state for this reason, claiming liquid to be the »Werkstoff des Lebens«, i.e., »basic

<sup>53</sup> Philologically, this connection proves that Novalis read Baader even earlier than Samuel expects, already in 1797, at the very beginning of his studies in Freiberg. See HKAI 512–513.

material of life«, through which the body »erst zum beseelten wird«, i.e., »first becomes animate« (BzE 227). It is in opposition to this kind of logic that Novalis abandons the association of *Berührung* with liquids. More importantly, it is in opposition to this tendency that Novalis develops his notion of *Berührung in distans*, which enables him to conceive of conceptual individuations, i.e., *Berührung in Idee* (VF 401).

Furthermore, Novalis goes beyond Baader's theory of individuation or structuration (*Gliederung*) by supplementing it with Galvanic logic of integration. While Baader stops at the claim that an individual is *structured* (*gegliedert*) and thus *systematic* (*systematisch*) (BzE 218Fn; 221Fn), Novalis understands each part or member (*Glied*) of an individual as another, less complex but still composite individual.<sup>54</sup> Novalis succinctly formulates the determination of a *Glied*, i.e., part or member, as follows: »*Jedes Glied eines Systems ist eine Function / 1. des Systems. / 2. Mehrerer Glieder. / 3. jedes andern Gliedes*« (HKAM III 92), i.e., »Each member of a system is a function 1. of the system. 2. of multiple members. 3. of each other member.« An individual is both a system and part of a system. As a system it consists of a multitude of parts, and as a part it concerns a relation between the system as a whole and other parts of this system. This difference is significant, because for Baader, *structuration* properly speaking is a systematic distribution of elementary *forces* (of three forces, to be precise), not of individuals (BzE 216). If one can speak of structuration of forces (*Kräfte*) in Novalis at all, it is only in the sense that an individual is a manifestation of a singular power, and not in the sense of enumeration of elementary forces. Using vocabulary borrowed from galvanic theories, Novalis enters into a latent polemic with Baader: »Keine Kraft, kein Phaenomen wird sich einzeln in der Natur erklären lassen – z.B. Schwere. Alle Kräfte sind, was sie sind – durch Vertheilung in Ketten. Eins ist, was das Andre ist – nur verschiedentlich durch seine Stelle, seine Nachbarschaft modificirt« (FS 253), e.g., »No force [*Kraft*], no phenomenon in nature can be explained by itself – e.g. gravity. All forces or powers [*Kräfte*] are what they are through their distribution in chains. One is what the other one is – only different in the modification of its position, its vicinity.« Thus, there are for Novalis no elementary forces, but a plurality of powers. In this plurality, all powers are singular in their relational determination (vicinity or *Nachbarschaft*) and homogeneous in substance as manifestations of one power of nature (*Welt-Kraft*).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See AB 820.

<sup>55</sup> For the differentiation of »force« (such as »elementary forces«) and »power«, see footnote 21. For the importance of Baader's contribution to the discussion of elementary forces, which is fully developed in his »Ueber das Pythagoräische Quadrat in der Natur« (1798),



Combining the processual understanding of individuation in chemical causality in Baader with the logic of integration in Ritter, Novalis offers a conception of processual transindividuality.

Just as the encounter of Baader and Ritter in Novalis's thought produces his Spinozan materialist strain, it also brings Novalis to an impasse. The impasse lies in the question of the status of nature with respect to its own individuality. This question lurks in Ritter, who considers nature to be a whole, an »All-Animal«, as well as in Baader, who speaks of nature as one »effectuating individual«. This position is particularly difficult in view of Novalis's axiomatic thesis that every individuation presupposes an encounter, a *Berührung*. That is, it yields a problem central to Novalis's thought: If nature-substance is considered an individual, does it also undergo encounters? If so, with other substances, other worlds, other natures?<sup>56</sup> Yet, this would mean that nature is neither infinite nor immanent, as the Spinozan tradition postulates it. Might it be necessary to return to Novalis's aborted notion of *Selbstberührung* or auto-encounter in nature as generative of individuals, with all of its idealist and mystical notions of harmony and interiority? Freiberg Romanticism – and with it, the Spinozan tradition in Germany around 1800 – is, thus, faced with a false alternative: the return of the harmonic and holistic conceptions of nature, disposed of the constitutive precarity of individuation and encounter; or, a dualist model, which enables encounter, but disposes of the concept of immanence of nature.

It is on this point that Novalis exhibits the highest degree of speculation and ambivalence. Commenting on the individual's degree of complexity, Novalis considers the limit-case:

An infinitely characterized individual is a member of an *infinitinomium* – Thus our world – [it] borders on infinite worlds – and yet perhaps only One. [T]he world as a whole only has one world opposite to it. *Heaven* and *earth*. The origin of illness through contact [*Berührung*] with a *stronger life*. Analogous equation with the other world – *Theory of heaven*. (19)

Ein unendlich characterisirtes Individuum ist Glied eines Infinitinomiiums – So unsre Welt – Sie gränzt an unendliche Welten – und doch vielleicht nur an *Eine*. Die Welt im Ganzen hat auch Eine Welt gegen sich über. *Himmel* und *Erde*. Entstehung der Kranckheit durch *Berührung* [Hvh. S.B.] eines *stärkern Lebens*. *Analoge Gleichung der andern Welt – Theorie des Himmels*. (AB 113)

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and especially on its influence on Schelling, see Eckart Förster: *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*, transl. Brady Bowman, Cambridge, MA 2012, pp. 241 f.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Novalis notes: »Universum – Multiversum – Omniversum« (AB 285).



Even the infinitely characterized individual, Novalis suggests, must be capable of *Berührung*. However, insofar as Novalis rejects the notion of *Selbstberührung*, he must posit an infinity of worlds or at least one other world («heaven») to conceive of constitutive alterity and possibility of encounter for an infinitely complex individual. But does Novalis thereby insinuate that there are two substances? Does this imply transcendence? That Novalis terms this «other» *heaven* speaks to that effect. Spinozan immanentist thought strictly prohibits such a position, lest it revert back to the plurality of substances posited by Descartes and others, thus voiding its radical import to the critique of western metaphysical tradition. Contrary to this, Novalis writes elsewhere: »Die *Atmosphäre des Universums* muß im Gegensatz *immanent* seyn. Synthese von Himmel und Erde« (AB 121), i. e., »In contrast, the *atmosphere of the universe* must be *immanent*. Synthesis of heaven and earth« (20).<sup>57</sup> While such statements underscore Novalis's commitment to thinking nature immanently, they do not resolve the conceptual aporia of his thought. But are these aporia not the effect of the Spinozan strain in his thought? Indeed, Novalis's equivocations on the matter are enabled by Spinoza's claim that in the progressive orders of integrations of individuals we may »conceive the whole of Nature as one individual«. Does this mean that Spinozan ontology runs into difficulty at the moment that the strong concept of encounter, such as Novalis's *Berührung*, is introduced into it?

To resolve the ambivalences and ambiguities inherent in Freiberg Romanticism definitively would be impossible. Indeed, they are constitutive of this romantic tendency and mark the limit of Novalis's materialism. This limit speaks to the fact that Novalis's thought, along with the theories of his contemporaries, is characterized by a weak and highly equivocal concept of substance. At the same time, Novalis's conceptual aporia on the issue of the encounter and individuality of nature as a whole brings Spinoza's strong concept of substance into a greater focus. That is, it highlights the conceptual difference between substance and mode as a central tenet of Spinoza's philosophy (E I, D3–5). For Spinoza, to think individuation as a process necessarily entails this distinction: despite Spinoza's own formulation cited above, one must maintain that substance or nature is a process, not an individual or a mode. More precisely, substance is an infinite and eternal unfolding of itself through its perpetual individuations. With Novalis, then, we can say that *Berührung* or encounter pertains to the emergence of modes, while substance is the name for such emergences in the plurality of encounters. For this reason, as Hans Jonas

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<sup>57</sup> For »Theorie des Himmels«, see AB 61 and HKAIII 60f.

puts it, »[s]ubstance cannot by the terms of [Spinoza's ontology] furnish identity«, since identity for Spinoza is understood only on the level of modes.<sup>58</sup> One must sustain Spinoza's position in its full radicality: substance *is* a relation; it is the name for immanent causality as the process of production of individuals.<sup>59</sup> While this position is disputed in Spinoza scholarship, the equivocations of Freiberg Romanticism contribute to the Spinozan tradition by making a case for its axiomatic assumption in order to combat mystical and idealist interpretations of Spinozism.

These equivocations notwithstanding, the Spinozan trace in Novalis's thought demands a reconsideration of the genealogy of the anti-metaphysical materialist tradition, on the one hand, and Novalis's place in intellectual history, on the other hand. Despite the repression of Spinoza's thought on individuation in the eighteenth century, it reemerges among the Romantic thinkers in Freiberg in conversation with the newest developments in natural sciences beyond the genealogy of influences. For the reception of Novalis's thought, it means that Novalis can no longer be simply considered part of a post-Kantian impulse of Jena Romantics. Novalis's project is not a synthesis of Fichte and Spinoza, as it is commonly perceived; neither is it a mere precursor to Hegel's dialectics.<sup>60</sup> Rather, Novalis's project, in light of its theories of individuation, if it is to be understood more concretely, refuses the idealist frame of reference dominant in his time and belongs to a different lineage altogether. The discontinuous history of the materialist tradition from Epicurus and Lucretius to Spinoza and Marx also runs through Freiberg.<sup>61</sup> Whereas Spinoza supplements Novalis's thought with a strong concept of substance, in his unfolding of the logic of *Berührung*, Novalis also contributes to the Spinozan tradition with a strong concept of encounter, which remains only implicit in Spinoza's *Ethics*. Rethinking Romanticism with Spinoza demonstrates the unrecognized singular tendency of Freiberg Romanticism around 1800, which

58 Hans Jonas: »Spinoza and the Theory of Organism«, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 3.1 (1965), pp. 43–57, p. 50. See Pierre Macherey: *Hegel or Spinoza*, transl. Susan M. Ruddick, Minneapolis 2011, pp. 146–162.

59 For a detailed account of this point see Morfino: *Plural Temporality* (fn. 22), pp. 46–71.

60 Both of these interpretations are reproduced in scholarship on Novalis countless times. Exemplary for the discussion of Romanticism, and Novalis in particular, as a synthesis of Fichte and Spinoza see Frederick C. Beiser: *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*, Cambridge, MA 2003, pp. 131–152. While this and similar accounts take Novalis at his word, they never read Spinoza's actual texts in any degree of detail, taking him for a pantheist and dogmatist, thereby also reproducing the repression of Spinoza's thought on individuation and singularity in the eighteenth century.

61 Althusser proposes one such discontinuous history of the materialist philosophy of the encounter. For the philological traces of this tradition see Morfino: *Plural Temporality* (fn. 22).

investigates the processes of individuation, conceptualizes the relational determination of the individual, and maintains the immanence of nature in a Spinozan key. In the encounter with Spinoza, Freiberg Romanticism emerges in all its ambivalence, radicality, and novelty.