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Fragments of a History of the Theory of Self-Consciousness from Kant to Kierkegaard

ABSTRACT

In the development of modern philosophy self-consciousness was not generally or unanimously given important consideration. This was because philosophers such as Descartes, Kant and Fichte thought it served as the highest principle from which we can 'deduce' all propositions that rightly claimed validity. However, the Romantics thought that the consideration of self-consciousness was of the highest importance even when any claim to foundationalism was abandoned. In this respect, Hölderlin and his circle, as well as Novalis and Schleiermacher, thought that self-consciousness, itself, was not a principle but must be ranked on a minor or dependent level, and presupposed the Absolute as a superior but inaccessible condition or ground. This reservation did not hinder them from recognising that the foundationalist Fichte was the first to have shown conclusively that from Descartes, via German Rationalism and British Empiricism, up to Kant, self-consciousness was misconceived of as the result of an act of reflection by which a second-order act bent back upon a first-order act that is identical to itself. This conception entailed circular entanglements and infinite regresses, and was too high a price to pay. Whereas Fichte thought pre-reflexive self-awareness was a philosophical principle, the Romantics and their vehement critic Kierkegaard, abandoned the idea of self-consciousness as a foundational starting point of philosophy. Instead, they founded self-consciousness on transcendent Being, a prior non-conceptual consciousness ('feeling') and reproached Fichte for having fallen back into the repudiated reflection model of self-consciousness.

KEYWORDS: Self-consciousness, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Kant, Fichte, Hölderlin, Sinclair, Herbart, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard

If one were asked to specify the lowest common denominator of modern philosophy from Descartes to Sartre, it would not take much time to decide on the reply: this common denominator is self-consciousness. Not only did Descartes rely on self-consciousness to guarantee ultimate certainty in the form of the *fundamentum inconcussum* for an epistemic self-orientation threatened by doubt; he also considered it to be a principle of deduction for all potentially true propositions. Leibniz followed him in this respect. David Hume was prevented by his empiricist premises (which only allow isolated sense experiences and the reflection on them as sources of knowledge) from recognising a self-consciousness which could remain identical with itself over time. However, in the appendix to his major work, he confessed that in this domain he was not only uncertain, but perplexed. The connectedness of the ‘bundles of perception’ required a unitary self-consciousness, which he could only reject on the basis of his own principles. “All my hopes vanish,” he admitted,

[. . .] when I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds them [sc. the successive perceptions as distinct existences] together, and makes us attribute to them real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings cou’d have induc’d me to receive it. [. . .] / [. . . In fact,] I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head.

In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences* [. . .].

For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflexions, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions.¹

This was Kant’s achievement. Like Descartes and Leibniz before him, he treated the knowledge possessed by conscious beings, not only of their mental states, but of the coherence of these states in the unity of conscious life, as a principle of deduction for all true propositions—in Kant’s terminology,

'Judgements'. He also undertook to derive the thought of possible objectivity from the application of this principle to sense experience. Like Descartes, Kant was so preoccupied with the foundational function which he attributed to the 'I' in his philosophy that he never really paid attention to the structure of this principle itself. To his surprise, this was to become a chief preoccupation of his pupils and successors. And that will be the topic of the following discussion.

I

Kant described self-consciousness as the "highest point" of (theoretical) philosophy: "all employment of the understanding, even the whole of logic, and transcendental philosophy," depend on it.² A little later, Kant presents it again, this time in the traditional form borrowed from Leibniz as the "unity of apperception . . . which is the highest principle in the whole sphere of human knowledge."³

Kant was by no means alone in this unbending belief that the consciousness which thinking beings have of themselves is apt to serve as the highest principle of philosophy. Rather, he stands in the history of a tradition, whose great figures are Descartes, Leibniz, and Rousseau. Kant was perfectly aware of this. His originality is not to be found here, but in the *function* which he attributes to the principle of self-consciousness with regard to the explanation of the objectivity of our representations. For Kant, speculation about the nature of the self was in no sense an end in itself (as it was later to be, in a certain sense, for Fichte and the early romantics). He was rather concerned with drawing wide-ranging conclusions from a certain characteristic of the 'I think' which is known to itself with Cartesian self-evidence: this feature is its identity. Identity is, of course, something different from analytical unity. The latter term indicates that property of the 'I' which is a common characteristic of all representations accompanied by the 'I' (namely, that they all have the same feature of being able to be accompanied by the one, constant 'I think'). 'Identity' (Kant also says 'synthetic unity'), however, indicates the property of the 'I' by virtue of which it can not only be connected transversally, as it were, to all representations, as in the previous use, but also links these representations together horizontally.⁴ To achieve this, a finite set of rules is required for connecting the individual representations: these are the

categories. Categories are predicates with such a wide extension that something cannot both be an object, and not be determined by them. In other words, categories are predicates of objects in general. When attributed to complexes of intuitions, they can be seen as constituting condensed judgements, and there will be as many of them as there are forms of judgement.

Kant derived this idea from the Savoyard vicar, at the beginning of Book IV of Rousseau's *Emile*.⁵ The basic idea can be sketched rapidly. While I feel myself to be passive as a sensible being, I experience myself as active insofar as I think. Thinking is judging. In the act of judgement, different representations deriving from various viewpoints are grasped as a unity, and this unity is recognised through the veritative 'is', common to all statements. Whoever uses the word 'is' meaningfully in relation to representations connects them together through a common feature: their concept, which captures what is common to them. If this concept is applied to something which exists—that is, if the judgement concerning the underlying state of affairs is right—then this something is constituted as an object. Its objectivity consists in, and can be proved by, the fact that, at any time, it can be translated into a set of true judgements. Thus, the objectivity of the individual things is a function of the truth of judgements concerning states of affairs.⁶ At the origin of objectivity there stands the identity of the 'I', which is operative in the 'is' of judgement.⁷

In this way—Kant merely presented the argument in more detail—there arises an indissoluble connection between the identity of the 'I', truth (as a property of statements), and objectivity (as a property of representations). To demonstrate the necessary character of this connection with the requisite precision was the sole ambition of Kant's 'transcendental deduction of the categories'. The principle of this deduction, the 'I' itself, was important to Kant only because of its—admittedly indispensable—function *as* a principle; in other words, because of the consequences that arise for the explication of the ground of objectivity. It seems to have been one of the greatest surprises Kant ever received that his pupils began to argue, above all, about the structure of this 'I', and strove to demonstrate that Kant's philosophy failed to provide an adequate description of it.

If this objection were sound, it would be a serious one. For it concerns nothing less than what Kant himself described as the 'highest point' of his philosophy. If the self-evidence of this 'highest point' were put in question, then

the transcendental deduction—which was itself never questioned by the Kantians—would lose its demonstrative force. The objection in fact runs as follows: entirely absorbed in this task of a deduction of the categories (as valid for *all* appearances), Kant neglected to show the self-evident character of his highest principle; indeed, he was obliged to deny that it could be known.

This is because—according to Kant’s own directives for the use of the word ‘knowledge’ (*Erkenntnis*)—only objects can be known. Objectivity is the result of the intervention of the unity of the self into the chaotic manifold which is delivered to us by the senses. This intervention occurs through the categories that allow me to move from one representation to another, according to rules that have *a priori* evidence, so that everything representable fits together into a continuous conception of the world. A manifold of intuition determined by the categories is precisely what Kant terms ‘cognition’. It is obvious, however, that the *principle* in whose name this determination takes place, namely pure self-consciousness, cannot become an object of knowledge, because it is not sensible. Kant, not without some embarrassment, terms it “an intellectual representation of the spontaneity of a thinking subject.”⁸ Conversely, only what can be cognised can claim to be an object, that is, a secured item of extant knowledge (component of our conception of the world). In fact, Kant does speak of the *objective* unity of the ‘I’.⁹ Since, at the same time, he denies the possibility of an ‘intellectual intuition’ (this would be a synthesis of the understanding in which the intuitional content would be not only unified, but produced), the question arises of how self-consciousness can be given the status of an objective existent.

In other words: insofar as only the act of cognition (*Erkenntnis*) can give one objective knowledge (*Wissen*), the pure ‘I’ cannot be known as an objective existent. As soon as this conclusion is accepted, however, it is clear that it has disastrous consequences for the self-evidence of the highest point of theoretical philosophy.

Kant draws a strict distinction between the *being* (*Sein*) of self-consciousness and its *appearance to itself* (*Sich-Erscheinen*) in time. The latter is only thinkable as an empirical fact (and therefore as an object of knowledge). By contrast, the former, the naked being of the self, as a condition of possibility of its self-appearance, remains a mere presupposition.¹⁰ What is presupposed in this way is an existent bereft of any property or quality;¹¹ all I know about

it is “that it is” not: “what it is” or “how it appears to itself.”¹² All I grasp of it is the *actus purus* of its naked being.¹³ Since every appearance of the ‘I’ has its being as a presupposition, one might say that its existence precedes its essence. Only the appearance—the essence—is accessible to knowledge. Kant remarks, in this context, that the ‘I’ only has access to its being via predicates through which it both determines itself and disguises its being.¹⁴ This being itself, which is pre-predicative and pre-categorical (thus, non-propositional, since categories are condensed propositional forms), is inaccessible to knowledge. And yet there must be a consciousness of it, if the ‘highest point of philosophy’ is not to lose its self-evidence. It might be objected that talk of the ‘being of consciousness’ (in contrast to its self-appearing) refers only to its *mode* of being, and thus to one of its qualitative determinations, much in the same way as does the formulation “I exist as intelligence,”¹⁵ which does not mean that intelligence, above and beyond the fact of appearing as intelligence, also has a subsistent being external to this determination.¹⁶ And yet it is transphenomenal *existence*—which alone could be described in a radical sense as ‘naked’ or featureless—with which Kant is concerned.

Fortunately, to demonstrate this, I can refer to a short, but highly significant note which Kant added to the second edition of the chapter on the paralogisms.¹⁷ Firstly, Kant here distinguishes clearly, as he does elsewhere in this context, between the *existence* expressed by Descartes’ statement *Cogito sum*, and concepts such as ‘reality’ (*Realität*) and ‘being’ (*Dasein*). These latter concepts refer to two different types of categories, those of *quality* and those of *modality*. Furthermore they require completion through an intentional content, and are therefore not suitable for characterising the essence of the purely determining ‘I’. Secondly, Kant distinguishes the bare existence of the pure ‘I’ from any actual relation to sensation, which is provided by the being of (sensible) objects. Under these circumstances, what mode of consciousness could correspond to the pure being of self-consciousness? Certainly not intuition, for intuition is directed towards the sensible world, and the being of the pure ‘I’ bears no trace of the sensible. But neither can it be thought, since thinking is never immediate, but reaches its object by means of a concept, an analytically isolated characteristic which this object has in common with many others.¹⁸ The existence grasped in pure apperception therefore cannot be accounted for in either the sensible or the conceptual components of our faculty of cognition (*Erkenntnisvermögen*). It is definitively situated this side of

the threshold beyond which the distinction between the intuitional and the conceptual becomes possible, and takes place. Kant suggests that this existence in pure apperception corresponds to a weird construction, “an indeterminate empirical intuition or perception,”¹⁹ which he had earlier qualified as “inner experience” or “inner perception.”²⁰ This inner and yet empirical perception is entirely distinct from, and has nothing to do with, what Kant, in other contexts, calls “inner perception,” where the term is synonymous with the “inner sense,” through which sensuous appearances of the (empirical) ‘I’ are experienced.²¹ This can be easily demonstrated by the fact that Kant characterises this inner self-perception or self-intuition as “purely intellectual.” He adds that it bears in itself the source of a “pure spontaneity,”²² which the empirical ‘I’ obviously lacks, but which also includes *existence*. Regarding this, Kant remarks that it is given to apperception [as] something real, and indeed for thought in general, thus not as appearance.²³

In Kant’s view it is clear that pure apperception includes the immediate consciousness of its own existence, and that this consciousness, although pre-intuitional, nonetheless includes the perception of an existent. This is because existence cannot be attained by thought alone; it must be *given* if there is to be consciousness of it. I pass over a lot of parallel quotations, because Kant’s problem, though enigmatic in its matter, is clearly posed in its terms. As Kant himself states:

The ‘I think’ is . . . an empirical proposition, and contains in itself the proposition, ‘I exist’ . . . [It] expresses an indeterminate empirical intuition i.e. perception (thus shows that sensation, which as such belongs to sensibility, lies at the basis of this existential proposition) but the ‘I think’ precedes the experience, which is required to determine the object of perception through categories with respect to time; and the existence here is not a category.²⁴

This experiential aspect, however, does not affect the fact that the sensation here referred to precedes the sort of experience through which our intuitional faculty receives sensuous material from outside, and passes it on to the understanding to do the categorical work. The existence of the pure *cogito* is neither intuition nor category. It is epistemically classified as an ‘inner perception’, which must be strictly distinguished from the perception of psychic objectivities, as these appear to ‘inner sense’. In the *Metaphysical Principles of Natural Science*, Kant notes in the same way:

Since the thought 'I' is in no sense a concept, but only inner perception, nothing can be deduced from it (except the utter difference of an object of inner sense from what we think of as an object of outer sense), and consequently not the continuous existence of the soul as substance.²⁵

In order to grasp the peculiar aporia of Kant's basic argument, it is worth examining Kant's conviction that "Existence (Being) is not a real predicate."²⁶ The property of reality constitutes one of the three sub-divisions of the category of quality; one of the qualities of the object concerned is judged by means of it, its *realitas*, its thinghood or mode of being.²⁷ 'Existence is not a real predicate' means then: existential judgements provide no judgement concerning the mode of being (*qualitas, realitas, quidditas*): being is not a property in this sense. If I say 'I exist as intelligence', then intelligence is a real predicate that belongs to the quality of the *cogito*, and the judgement itself is analytic.²⁸ Whether such a *cogito* also *exists* (beyond its being-thought-of), independently of its property as thinking, is left undetermined. And yet according to Kant the proposition *cogito* implies the empirical state of affairs, 'I exist'. The question is: in virtue of what does the claim of the existential judgement exceed the claim of the judgement about reality? Answer: in that existential judgements depend on sense-experience, where the latter judgements don't.

In a short text dating from 1763, *The Only Possible Ground for a Proof of the Existence of God*, Kant first presented in a systematic form his thesis that the indefinite verbal expression, 'to be', has two different meanings. Kant argues here that 'being' (*Sein*) is the object of a relative positing, whereas 'existence' (*Dasein*) is the result of an absolute positing. The positing of something is relative when this something is posited in relation to (relative to) something else, for example, in the statement 'a is B'. Here 'a' is only posited in relation to its 'being B', but not absolutely. This is the type of positing which is operative in the statement, 'I am as intelligence'. By contrast, the positing of 'a' would be absolute, if it were in relation not to 'B', but to 'a' itself. In this case, as Kant says, 'existence' (*Dasein*) is attributed to 'a'.²⁹ If I say 'this a exists', then I do not refer to anything else, or to any determination of 'a'; rather, I posit 'a' as existing, independently of any relation. Relative and absolute positing thus occur in the form of a judgement. Usually judgements link together different classes of representations. In the simple singular state-

ment, a content of intuition is linked with a concept ('a is B'); both—in Kant's terminology—are real determinations. In the judgement 'a exists', by contrast, no concept is imposed upon the intuitional content, but rather being is attributed to the thing concerned. It is posited as such, without any additional characterisation. This attribution of existence, which oversteps the purely conceptual determination of the thing, requires sense-perception. Indeed, only sense experience can convince me or dissuade me whether a concept has an existing content, or whether I am merely thinking it. According to Kant, the categories of modality (under which existence falls) "have the peculiar feature that they in no way enlarge the concept to which they are added as predicates, but merely express its relation to our faculty of cognition."³⁰

Now once more according to Kant, sense-perception is the *exclusive* character of existence (*Wirklichkeit*). The aporetic result is: our knowledge of the existence of the 'I' must somehow rely on perception. And that's exactly what Kant is asserting. In more detail: *Dasein*, *Wirklichkeit*, and *Existenz* (terms which Kant usually employs synonymously), merely bear on "the question whether such a thing is so given to us, that the perception of it can, in all cases, precede the concept. For the fact that the concept precedes the perception signifies the concept's mere possibility; the perception, however, which delivers the material content to the concept, provides the exclusive character of existence."³¹ If this is so, then the mark of being absolutely posited coincides with that of being experienced through the senses (only in this way can our cognitive faculties take up material which derives from a source that is independent of them).

I do not intend, in this context, to investigate the problematic and ambiguous character of this thesis. I am only concerned to make clear the reasons which motivated Kant to correlate the existential judgement 'I am'—in which, what is judged, is *pure*, not empirical, apperception—with an 'indeterminate, empirical intuition, or perception' (and thereby with 'sensation'). The only way in which consciousness can make contact with existence is through that specification of intuition which Kant calls 'sensation' (*Empfindung*). Only sensation can testify to the absolute positing of the cogito. If this is the case—and Kant's premises exclude any other explanation—then there must be an element of intuition correlated with the auto-perception (or: ad-perception) of the *cogito*, its pure spontaneity notwithstanding. In other words, Kant

cannot avoid bringing into play a possibility that he passionately rejects—the possibility of an *intellectual intuition*.³² It is a question of *intuition* here, because only ‘receptivity’, as opposed to the ‘spontaneity’ of intelligence, could testify to existence (absolute positing). The intuition is at the same time *intellectual*, because it is grounded in the pure spontaneity of the understanding and brings with it the idea of a complete determination. Thus, the pure ‘I’ exists, and we have an immediate (in other words, preconceptual and also prereflexive) awareness of it.³³ In other words: in order to justify the *existence* and at the same time the *Cartesian* transparency of the *cogito*, Kant has to admit an *intellectual intuition* as a fact of our conscious life.

Obviously, this is a conclusion that stands in an irresolvable contradiction to Kant’s conviction that the two sources of our cognitive faculty, intellect and sensibility, are entirely independent of one another. For Kant, the thought that I think is entirely free of any element of intuition, while “intuition in no way requires the function of thought”,³⁴ “for without any function of the understanding appearances can be given to us.”³⁵ Furthermore, in other contexts, Kant stubbornly opposed the possibility of *immediate* self-apperception (in this he follows Leibniz, who renders ‘*aperception*’ as ‘*réflexion*’, for example in his *Principles of Nature and of Grace*). “The transcendental I,” says Kant in a famous passage, “is a completely empty representation, which is only known through the thoughts which are its predicates, and of which, in itself, we can never have the slightest concept . . . but can only revolve in a perceptual circle, since any judgement upon it has already made use of its representation.”³⁶

Thus, the prepredicative *being* of pure apperception remains unelucidated; or rather, since we cannot renounce it, we have no other recourse than always to pre-suppose it.³⁷ A corresponding formulation in the A-Version of the chapter on the paralogsms had already indicated this:

Henceforth we can no longer derive [the concept of a substantially enduring self] from [the mere concept of the identical self], since this concept constantly revolves around itself, and brings us no further in any question concerning synthetic knowledge [. . .]. When I strive to observe the pure ‘I’ amidst the changing representations, I have no other basis for my comparisons than once again myself, with the general conditions of my consciousness. Consequently, I can only give tautological answers to all questions, by attribut-

ing to the properties which belong to myself qua object the concept of myself and of my unity, and thereby presupposing what I wanted to make known.³⁸

In other words, if I want to explain who I am, I must declare certain perceivable qualities to be mine. But as soon as I consider the legitimacy of this self-attribution, it obtains that I can only undertake it if I was already familiar with the meaning of 'I' or 'mine'. Thus, I find myself compelled to take myself (or the concept 'I') as the point of comparison which is to enlighten me as to what property defines me, and in this way I presupposes what I was supposed to learn through experience. So, the explanation, Kant suggests, is a completely circular one.

But the 'highest point of philosophy' can scarcely be admitted to be an unfounded *presupposition*—in another context Kant suggests that it could be called 'the subreption of hypostatised consciousness'—even less its description by means of a *circulus vitiosus*. And yet the description which Kant himself gave of his principle bears the unmistakable structure of such a circle. It refers back—perhaps against the original intentions of its author—to the untenable reflection model of self-consciousness, which always presupposes that which it is to demonstrate, and which stands at the centre of the Fichtean critique of Kant.

One must bear in mind that Kant's aporia has two dimensions, which are closely related, and yet distinguishable: one epistemological, and the other ontological. In the first instance, the issue is that of how a pure, non-objective subject of consciousness can acquire knowledge of itself, without objectifying itself (which would presuppose, in a circular manner, that the self-objectifying process is precisely that of a *subject*).³⁹ In the second instance, the question raised is how a pure, and thus non-sensible spontaneity can acquire a consciousness of its own being, given that—by definition—being can only be authenticated by sensation. It appears that both problems can, and must, be solved at the same time.

To my knowledge, there is only one single remark in the rest of Kant's work that unambiguously shows that he was aware of the dimension and of the dual nature of this problem-syndrome. I am referring to a posthumous reflection,⁴⁰ which relates to practical rather than theoretical philosophy. Indeed, the need to account for the intelligibility of the principle of practical philosophy, on the one hand, and its existence, on the other, runs up against the

same problems which we have already encountered with respect to the principle of theoretical philosophy. The principle is freedom, and both its intelligibility⁴¹ and its reality are in question ('reality' means 'existence' in this context; Kant's terminology is not entirely consistent). I will attempt to reconstruct the general context within which this set of problems appears.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant is concerned to show that the objective validity and universality of the moral law cannot be the outcome of an individual empirical maxim of only regional applicability. Here I shall pass over the various formulations which Kant gives of the categorical imperative ('categorical' here meaning 'unconditionally valid'), and consider only the fundamental idea, which justifies the supra personal and general character of commandments. The principle of morality is applied in such a way that all those norms, which cannot be agreed upon by those affected by them, must be excluded as invalid. The principle that intervenes, in order to make a general agreement possible, must thus ensure that only those norms that correspond to a universal will have validity. The categorical imperative can be understood as a principle that demands the strict universalisability of all actions and the maxims that prime them. In this way, all norms that contradict this requirement can be excluded. Kant has in mind those internal contradictions that arise in the maxim of an agent, when he or she attempts to reach a goal with means that are incompatible with the universalisation of his or her behaviour.⁴²

It is astonishing for the reader who only knows the first Critique that Kant grounds the universal will prescribed by the categorical imperative on a 'fact of reason', for which he claims *a priori* evidence.⁴³ For in fact only theoretical reason is endowed with *a priori* valid, and thus universal and objective, concepts. In contrast to the categories which ground the objectivity of knowledge, a categorical imperative only prescribes an 'ought', and cannot be demonstrated in the form of knowledge that can be checked against empirical facts. In other words, it is part of the structure of practical reason, that, despite its objectivity, its claims to validity can only be raised counterfactually, and this in contradiction to empirical reality, which can never be adequate to it.

We are confronted here with an aporetic structure that is analogous to that of the *cogito* as principle of theoretical reason. No knowledge can be adequate

to this principle either, for then it would collapse into the sphere of the sensible. On the other hand, neither the theoretical nor the practical principle can be inaccessible to any knowledge whatever, since in this case they would be unintelligible. Neither can existence be denied them, for then there would be no such principle.

Once again, I can use Kant's own formulations to show that he was aware of the extent of this problem. Although Kant categorically denies to pure apperception the status of an intellectual intuition in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he does at least consider this status for freedom. Kant argues that practical reason guarantees the *reality* of a supersensible object, namely freedom.⁴⁴ However, this reality (once more in the sense of existence) cannot be that of an empirical object in space and time, since it is supersensible. On the other hand, freedom cannot be merely required, it must really exist, if I am to make the least moral demand on my fellow human beings. We find ourselves in a situation which is comparable theoretically to that in which we were placed by the remark on page 422/23 of the B version of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: we must explain the *existence* of a pre-categorical and supersensible entity, which functions as the principle of that which has the character of an appearance in the 'I', and is accessible to knowledge.⁴⁵ Only the intellectual intuition could have access to such a 'supersensible reality', which definitely remains this side of the threshold beyond which the sphere of possible cognition begins. In the posthumous *Reflexion* to which I have already referred, Kant—at an early date—had already stated this conclusion:

We cannot establish the existence/actuality of freedom on the basis of experience. But we nevertheless have a concept of it throughout intellectual inner intuition (not inner sense) of our activity, which can be initiated through *motiva intellectualia*, and through which practical laws and rules of the good will itself are possible for us. This freedom is a necessary practical presupposition. Neither does it contradict theoretical reason. For, as appearances, our actions are always in the field of experience, while as objective data they are in the field of reason and are approved or disapproved of. Sensibility is under the laws of the understanding and departs [*manuscript ends*].⁴⁶

Similarly—although now in a more problematised formulation—this conclusion can be found in the note to paragraph 7 of the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

The consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason, since one cannot ferret it out from antecedent data of reason, such as the consciousness of freedom (for this is not antecedently given), and since it forces itself upon us as a synthetic proposition *a priori* based on no pure or empirical intuition. It would be analytic if the freedom of the will was presupposed, but for this, as a positive concept, an *intellectual intuition* would be needed, and here we cannot assume it. Nevertheless, in order to regard these laws as *given*, and to avoid misconstruing them, it must be stressed that what announces itself to be originally legislative (*sic volo, sic iubeo*), is nothing empirical, but the sole fact of pure reason.⁴⁷

Towards the end of the second version of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had already given some indications of the connection between the being of the pure spontaneity of the 'I', which precedes all appearances, and the subject of freedom.⁴⁸ Without setting off along this path, Kant considers carefully the possible discovery

of a spontaneity [. . .] through which our reality would be determinable, without requiring the conditions of empirical intuition. And hence we would become aware, that there is something contained *a priori* in the consciousness of our existence, which can serve to determine our existence (the complete determination of which is possible only in sensible terms) as being related, by dint of a certain inner faculty, to an intelligible world (which is of course only thought).⁴⁹

Here it would be a matter of a self-determination of the 'I' of such a kind that the appearing 'I' or the will would receive its instructions from the purely intellectual 'I'.⁵⁰ However this may be, the mere assumption of a purely intellectual and determining 'I' requires recourse to intellectual intuition (which alone makes possible an *immediate* acquaintance with the subject and is able to attain its *being*), and which in one stroke secures the intelligibility of the principles of theoretical and practical philosophy by referring both back to this act. It is in just this way that Fichte will conceptualise what he terms the 'absolute I'.

II

Before I turn to Fichte's revolutionary theories of self-consciousness and his departure from Kant, I will first look at some of the traditional rationalist

and empiricist approaches to self-consciousness that led to Kant's explanatory model. Following on from Fichte, I will then attempt to give an outline of romantic theories of self-consciousness that build on Fichte and will end with a glance at Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard.

Naturally, Fichte's point of departure is Kant, although his attitude to Kant is critical. We have seen that Kant was so absorbed in the task of deducing the thought of objectivity from the identity of consciousness that he paid hardly any attention to the internal structure of his deductive principle, namely self-consciousness. Even the question of how the self acquires epistemic access to itself generates great difficulties for him. He must deny the self the status of a possible object of cognition, because the term 'cognition' (*Erkenntnis*) is reserved by him to those operations in which the intellectual enters into synthesis with the sensible. At the same time he indicates the circle which arises from the fact that, in order to grasp itself reflexively, the Ego must always already have been acquainted with its own objectivity prior to any self-conception. And that way self-awareness turns out to be a mere presupposition—which it can't be if its existence is to be guaranteed.

However, we were forced to conclude that, should this implication prove to be unavoidable, then the 'highest point' of Kantian philosophy would collapse. Indeed, Kant never questioned the Cartesian self-evidence of the *cogito*, even though his metaphors are more cautious than those of Descartes. If this self-evidence is acknowledged, and if the existence of the phenomenon is thereby guaranteed, then the error must be with the explanatory model that is employed to make it comprehensible. (A phenomenon can either exist or not exist, but it cannot be true or false: truth and falsehood are properties of statements, thus elements of theory).

Despite this, the explanatory model employed by Kant derives from an honourable tradition. Let's call it the 'representation model of consciousness'. This model assumes that (apart from a few intransitive states such as pain) consciousness is always the representation of an object, which—to retain the image of the German *Vor-stellung*—is placed before the eyes of the subject of consciousness, as it were, standing over against it. Every (or rather: almost every) consciousness, Husserl will later assert, is consciousness of something (which is transcendent to consciousness). Thus the relation of being conscious is divided into a subject-pole and an object-pole of representation.

Every representation requires someone who represents, and something that is represented (in the revolutionary year 1789, Reinhold developed from this structural feature the conception of an entirely “New Theory of our Faculty of Representation”).⁵¹ Leibniz seems to have been the first to have referred to the subject of this representation with the nominalised form “*ce moy*.”⁵² With this step the subject of consciousness is identified as the same ‘I’ of which Kant and Fichte will speak. It appears as soon as the place of the object of representation is occupied by the objectified representing agency itself: as soon as the subject of representation re-presents itself, rather than something else.

Once again, it is Leibniz who takes the first step when he defines the subject or the ‘I’ of consciousness as the result of a “*connaissance réflexive de cet état intérieur*.”⁵³ Kant, who always equated ‘I’-hood (or egoity) with the self-reflexivity of representation, took over this definition, and also the term which Leibniz provided for it: ‘Apperception’. This borrowing may have been mediated by C.A. Crusius, who spoke of (self-) consciousness as a representation of representations.⁵⁴ Kant noted in a reflexion dating from 1769: “in fact the representation of all things is the representation of our own state.”⁵⁵ Or: “Consciousness is a knowledge of what comes before me. It is a representation of my representations, it is a self-perception.”⁵⁶

Thus, Kant’s circular definition of the nature of the transcendental ‘I’ summarises a whole tradition. Let’s give it the label *reflection-model of self-consciousness*. Its essential feature is that it interprets the consciousness that we have of ourselves on the model of representation: as the result of a turning-back of a representation onto itself, which transforms the representation in question into an object. Every reflection occurs between two distinct terms; its paradoxical character consists in the fact that it must then deny this difference, otherwise the goal reached by my turning back on myself would be something, or someone, else.

Lack of time permits me only to illustrate the mechanisms of this model by casting two spotlights on the work of two important precursors of German Idealism, Descartes and Leibniz. In addition, I will cast a glance at the use of the same model in Anglo-Saxon empiricism.

Descartes describes the *cogito* as a self-reaction that arises between thinking in general and a specific form of thinking.⁵⁷ Thinking splits into an indiffer-

ent and general consciousness, on the one hand, and a more closely specified consciousness on the other: for example, as willing, perceiving, loving, comprehending, acting. However, these two (as “*pensée déterminée d’une certaine manière*”) sides of thinking are indissolubly connected: a doubt could never arise without being supported by a consciousness in general, which takes cognisance of it by means of that “*témoignage intérieur*.”⁵⁸ The converse is also true: in order to doubt, to love, to think, and so on, thought-in-general must specify itself. Thus, doubt—taken simply as an example of a specific form of thought (“*penser d’une certaine manière*”)—would be one mode of being amongst others in which thought-in-general presents itself; of course, it is only in relation of the latter that the various modes of thought acquire their peculiar certainty: although I can doubt my love, I cannot doubt the immediate consciousness which I have of it. The relation is a classic example of the structure of reflection; and thus it has been handed down to us in Burman’s notes of his conversation with Descartes:

*Conscium esse est quiddam cogitare et reflectere supra suam cogitationem.*⁵⁹

Elsewhere Descartes speaks of the ‘idea’ of the *cogito* as that “*qui me représente à moi-même*.”⁶⁰ Here we have a reflection—an auto-representation of thinking—whose structure presupposes the identity of the two moments, but cannot ground it.⁶¹

This aporia becomes even more acute when one passes from Descartes’ work to that of Leibniz. Leibniz distinguishes, even more explicitly than his predecessor, “*entre la perception qui est un état intérieur [mais souvent insensible] de la Monade représentant les choses externes, et l’Aperception, qui est la Conscience ou la connaissance réflexive de cet état intérieur*.”⁶² It is these “*actes réflexifs*” he explains, “*qui nous font penser à ce qui s’appelle moi, et à considérer que ceci ou cela est en nous*.”⁶³

Thus the problem arises from the difficulty of explaining how a perception that is described as ‘insensible’ can become conscious (‘perceptible’, ‘sensible’) by virtue of its being reflected (“*dès qu’on s’aperçoit de ses perceptions*”) if a consciousness of it (although not one based on apperception) did not already exist.⁶⁴ In other words, if I had to wait for the light of reflection, in order to know that I had just perceived something, then I would never perceive anything at all. For either I am perceiving, in which case there can be no question

of unconsciousness, or I am not perceiving, in which case 'unconsciousness' means simply that the corresponding act has simply not taken place. (Reflection can only discover what was already there: if it finds consciousness, then the reflected act cannot have been unconscious). Leibniz is of course correct when he remarks that I do not need to pay reflexive attention to my perception in order to perceive. But the reason for this is that perception is conscious in itself and does not need a second, accompanying act to be imposed on it, in order to acquire this consciousness. When there is consciousness, it is immediate; of course acts of reflection can connect up mediately with this immediate consciousness and raise it to the level of knowledge. However, what is originally presented is consciousness itself, which is clearly single and does not appear as the object-pole of a subject of consciousness directed towards it.

In broad outline, this was the situation that confronted Kant in his own attempts to clarify the phenomenon of self-consciousness insofar as his gaze was directed towards the predominantly rationalistic tradition of continental Europe. The empirical tradition (above all in Scotland and England) was no less productive for our theme. But as this tradition only admitted individual sensations as sources of knowledge and considered each of those to be temporally and numerically distinct, the problem of the unity of consciousness over time was posed with particular acuteness. (The combining of singular perceptions into 'bundles of perceptions' is carried out in Hume by the imagination—thus objects, as syntheses of perceptions, are unfounded, literally 'imaginary' constructs—and thus his theory becomes entangled in the performative contradiction of its own validity/objectivity.) Hume claimed only ever to stumble on particular perceptions, and never on someone who—like the Cartesian ego—might unite them all.⁶⁵ Since he confuses self-consciousness with consciousness of a substantial ego, and since in fact there is no (sensuous) perception of the ego, he believes himself to have convicted the entire Cartesian tradition of incoherence. He overlooked the fact that the expressions 'sensation', 'impression', or 'perception' must analytically contain the property of consciousness (even without an ego), if such psychic processes are to be distinguished from their physical, or rather their intentional objects. And when Hume speaks of such conscious perceptions, he makes use of an awareness of consciousness that he can only deny at the cost of further self-contradiction. Fichte's critique of Kant also applies to Hume: the latter had self-consciousness, but without reflecting on it. And in partic-

ular Hume failed to realise that self-consciousness and ego-consciousness are not the same, so that the critique of Descartes' substantialisation of the ego in no way shows the possibility of a knowledge of consciousness, and thus of self-consciousness, to be incoherent.

However, Hume's radicalism was not characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon/empiricist tradition of the early eighteenth century in general, as we can learn from the *Essay on Consciousness*.⁶⁶ This tradition either assumed an 'inner sense' which directed itself towards objectified conscious experiences (and thus fell foul of the same critique as Descartes' theory of 'inspection' or '*témoignage intérieur*'); or (like Ralph Cudworth) it asserted an immediate awareness of sense-experience, although without making any enduring contribution to its clarification (Cudworth has recourse to metaphors derived from reflection theory to characterise the immediate awareness of sensation: "... that duplication, that is included in the Nature of synaesthesia, Con-Sense and Consciousness, which makes a Being Present with itself"; "wherefore that which is thus conscious of itself, and reflexive upon itself . . .").⁶⁷ For John Locke all thinking implies consciousness of thinking ("thinking consists in being conscious that one thinks")⁶⁸ and indeed is a mode which is distinguished from the reflexive-objectifying use of inner sense, a pre-reflexive or intuitive mode which Locke attributes not to animals, but only to rational beings. Here, however, the notion of 'thinking' is employed as broadly as in the Cartesian *cogitatis*, which refers to all modes of representation. Locke's thesis is surprising when one looks at it more closely:

Consciousness . . . is inseparable from thinking, and it seems to me essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, mediate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present Sensations and Perceptions.⁶⁹

Even Locke cannot escape the idea that self-consciousness 'accompanies' acts. Neither does he avoid the assumption that self-consciousness is comparable to a perception that makes other perceptions conscious. But when I *feel* pain, this *is* the required (self-conscious) perception; I do not need to perceive it in its turn. The logic of this model implies that the (perceived or accompanied) acts are not themselves necessarily conscious (which appears to be the case with animals according to Locke's view, since they have inner experiences

without being reflexively conscious of them). One may conclude that Locke considered self-consciousness to be an additional activity, modelled on reflection, which constantly accompanies the thought-processes of higher organisms. However, he made no contribution to the clarification of its structure.

Nevertheless, Locke's thesis that every act of thought is accompanied by a co-consciousness of thinking was strongly opposed by John Sergeant. In his, "Reflexions on Mr. Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding,"⁷⁰ Sergeant asserts, "We *may* think, *without being* conscious that we Think"⁷¹ (and illustrates this, unfortunately, with the case of a memory which is not at our immediate disposal, but which later returns, and thus precisely shows the continuity of consciousness, if not of reflection; Sergeant assimilates "remembrance" and "reflexion").⁷² Then he defends the counter-thesis to that of Locke, namely that "'T'is impossible to be conscious, or know we know, without a new Act of Reflexion,"⁷³ which would follow the primary, object-directed act of consciousness. Finally, he subjects the awareness of the act of reflection to the same condition: "'T'is impossible to be Conscious of, or know our present Reflex Act, but by a new Reflex one."⁷⁴ He explains this in the following way:

The same Argument demonstrates that we cannot be Conscious of our *Reflex* Acts at the very time we produce them. For, my *First Reflex Act* has for its *sole* Object that Operation of Mind, which I had immediately before by a *Direct* one; and my *Second Reflex Act* has for its object the *First*; and in the same manner, each succeeding Reflexion has for its Object—that *Act* which immediately *Proceeded*. Wherefore, if the *First Reflex Act* had for its Object, at the same time both the *Direct* and *itself* too; that is, did we, when we first Reflected, know by *that very Act itself* that we did reflect, then the *Second Reflex Act* would be forestall'd, and have no Proper Object left for it. To clear this better, let us assign one Reflexion to be the *Last*: it were not the *Last Reflexion*, unless the Object of it were that Reflexion which was the *last but one*. Wherefore, unless that Reflexion that went *last of all* remained *unknown*, the *Last* would have *two Objects*, *viz.* The *Preceding Reflexion* and *itself* too.⁷⁵

There we have an almost caricatural, and thus ideal, illustration of the circular theory of self-consciousness, based on the model of reflection. Sergeant assumes that every consciousness is objective, and consequently considers the consciousness of consciousness as the objectification of a foregoing con-

sciousness. The illusion of the immediate acquaintance of consciousness with itself is explained in terms of the ‘im perceptible rapidity’ with which the ‘Reflex Act’ follows the first one. Sergeant also assumes that the preceding consciousness acquires the quality of being conscious only under the gaze of the subsequent reflection directed upon it, which in its turn remains unconscious, until a further subsequent reflection raises it into consciousness. Thus, the last reflection, directed towards the penultimate one, remains non-objective, and this means: unconscious. The consequence is clear: “Hence we can never come to know our last Reflexion.”⁷⁶ But since the consciousness of all the preceding acts depends upon this last act, they too are unconscious, and the thesis that there is something like self-consciousness—even if mediated by reflection—destroys itself. “These are my reasons,” Sergeant summarises his “Certain and Evident Corollary,” “why I recede from Mr. *Locke* in his Opinion, that *A Man cannot think without being Conscious of it.*”⁷⁷

The theory of an unknown author (Pseudo-Mayne) fares better. This theory attributes to human beings a fundamental non-sensible knowledge of their own consciousness, and indeed sets the knowledge of objects in a relation of transcendental dependence on self-consciousness.

The Mind, in its several Acts of *Thinking* and *Perceiving*, of *Imaging*, *Remembering*, *Willing*, or *Affecting*, is *Conscious* of any of its Faculties, it is *conscious* of it, as its Objects, i.e. Something which is perceived by it self . . .

The Notion of Object (as I may here take the occasion to observe) is entirely owing to *Consciousness*; it being plainly impossible that I should be able to consider or regard anything, as having such an Appearance to me in my Act of Perceiving it, . . . any otherwise than by being *conscious* of my own *Perception*, and of the Appearance to which it refers. And whereupon it follows, that *consciousness* is indeed the Basis and Foundation of all Knowledge whatsoever; inasmuch as whatever I can know or Apprehend of a Thing by observing it, and reflecting on it with my *Understanding*, depends altogether on my first considering and regarding it as an Object, or something which hath such a certain Appearance to me in my perceiving it.⁷⁸

This (self-) consciousness is said to be clear and distinct, truthful and certain, present to the mind, and always adequate; it implies a feeling of existence and does not first arise through ‘reflection’, but is already at work in all reflection

(for example, that carried out by Descartes).⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Pseudo-Mayne presents it as 'accompanying' all *cogitationes*, thus assuming an analytical separation of the accompanying from the accompanied, which is not abolished by the addition of the term 'immediate' ('does immediately accompany').⁸⁰

Since Pseudo-Mayne does not set aside the common premises of all empiricists, according to which sense experience is the only source of knowledge, he also assumes that self-consciousness can only occur as a feature of an object-related act of perception in respect of which it (self-consciousness) is 'subsequent' and 'dependent':

For tho' we are as well *conscious* of every thing we do or act, as of our own Beings or selves; and it is absolutely requisite and necessary that some other should precede that of *Self-Consciousness*, for we are conscious of our selves only from our Acting, or because we act, and *Self-Consciousness* must of course depend therein for its Existence; yet is it impossible to be conscious of any Act whatever, without being sensible of, or perceiving one's *Self* to be that which Does it.⁸¹

This thesis is incompatible with the assumption of the pre-reflexive character of self-consciousness (which indeed is not clearly developed by Pseudo-Mayne). It shows clearly that our author belongs to a rich tradition of reflection theory, represented by names such as Sherlock and Robert South. The latter invites, in his considerations on a text of the former,⁸² that self-consciousness presupposes not only a person as its 'bearer' ('suppositum'), but first and foremost:

another Act Antecedent to it self. For it is properly and formally a *Reflex Act upon* the Acts, Passions, or Motions of the Person whom it belongs to . . . [and] being a *Reflex Act*, must needs in Order of Nature be posterior to the Act reflected upon by it.

Here self-consciousness is clearly explained as the subsequent reflection of a preceding (object-directed) representation and is given a temporal index ('posterior'). Another example is provided by Bishop Peter Browne's text, *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*,⁸³ which is significant in general for the theory of consciousness.

. . . so that all the Operations of the Mind necessarily presuppose Ideas of Sensations as prior Materials for them to work upon; and without which

the Mind could not have worked at all; no, nor have even a Consciousness of itself, or of its own Being; Inasmuch that it never could have exerted an Act of Thinking, if it had not been first provided with some of these to think upon; and this the compound word of consciousness plainly imports.⁸⁴

Pseudo-Mayne takes over this view, and thus becomes entangled in the following circle: on the one hand, every object-consciousness must have its condition of possibility in a non-sensible (purely intellectual) self-consciousness, whose bearer is a spiritual I-substance; on the other hand, self-consciousness can only appear as an epiphenomenon of, and subsequent to, an object-related act.

Neither does Pseudo-Mayne hesitate to attribute an *object* to self-consciousness: it has an (inner) 'object'. The correct insight that all object-consciousness presupposes self-consciousness⁸⁵ does not prevent the author from interpreting the kind of consciousness in which self-consciousness occurs as a special case of object-consciousness:

In narrowly inspecting and examining into *Conscious Knowledge* and *Perception*, we shall find that *Self*, or one's own proper Being, is its Principal and most proper object.⁸⁶

As a result of this recourse to the model of representation, Pseudo-Mayne does not hesitate to ascribe the mode of (inner) *perception* ('perceiving one's *Self*') to self-consciousness. But the fact that perceptions are always conscious does not entail that they themselves can be perceived as objects.⁸⁷ (When I have pains, consciousness is implicit in having the pains; I do not need in addition to 'feel' or 'sense' my pain, as people sometimes misleadingly say; furthermore, as self-observation, self-consciousness would lose its adequacy and distinctness.) No more helpful is the thesis that in self-perception the perceived object (the self) is given in an 'incomparably inward' way; perceiver and perceived are here the same.⁸⁸ Once subject-object duality is introduced into the relation of self-consciousness, its ideality *can* become epistemically uncertain; in reality, however, we encounter no identification problem in the sphere of self-consciousness.

The problematic character of this separation becomes more acute when Pseudo-Mayne denies consciousness to dreamers (as to animals).⁸⁹ If my dreams were unconscious, they could not be attributed to me as part of my biography as

a conscious being. Statements such as ‘I remember that yesterday I dreamt of my first day in school’ would be inadmissible. It is enough to say that the dream is not originally reflexively known; however, when I remember my dream of last night in a reflexive attitude, I can only do so because there is a continuity of consciousness between my present act of contemplation and that which was dreamt, which is itself known. Since the author grounds the unity of the person (and of all objects in general) on self-consciousness, this expulsion of the unconscious becomes all the more difficult to achieve.

Kant shares with Browne, Sherlock, Robert South, and Pseudo-Mayne the conviction that self-consciousness only appears in object-related consciousness (as the conscious unification of its manifold under categories).⁹⁰ Kant also becomes caught in the contradiction between his conviction that the thought ‘I think’ has Cartesian self-evidence (and is thus appropriate as the principle of deduction for the categories), and his inability to explain this self-evidence without recourse to the representational model, according to which consciousness—including that of the ‘I’—stands over against its object. In reality, Kant interpreted the ‘I’ as the activity in which the subject of consciousness turns away from all particular objects, and, turning back upon itself, grasps its continuous identity with itself. Thereby this identity splits into the pure, non-objective spontaneity of the subject of knowledge and a phenomenal ‘I’ opposed to it, whose identification with the former rests on an unproven presupposition, and whose faultiness Kant perceived, but had no means of avoiding.⁹¹ This inadequacy implies the failure of the explanatory model employed by Kant. For if there is ‘I’-hood (egoity), and if Cartesian self-evidence is claimed for it, then it cannot be based on a *petitio principii*. The model must therefore be false.

That’s the way the problem arises—but no modern philosopher seems to have recognised it as such. The first to become aware of the full ramifications of the fundamental problem with the reflection theory of self-consciousness was Fichte, and I shall now deal in more detail, first with his suggested solution, then with why it doesn’t satisfy either. Fichte wrote:

But there *is* consciousness; so that claim must be false. If it is false, then its opposite is true. Hence the following claim is true [you may ask: which claim? The one, according to which self-awareness is the result of a subjective act turned back onto itself as an object]: there is a consciousness in which

the subjective and the objective are not to be separated, but are absolutely [and without any mediation] one and the same. Thus it is this kind of consciousness that would be needed to explain consciousness at all.⁹²

The bogus claim to which Fichte refers runs something like this: I come to know the I through reflection, which is to say that the I enters into a self-relation and consequently sets eyes upon itself.

But how can the subject recognise itself, if it is to be true that it is nothing but pure subject? Kant drew a definite distinction between pure apperception and the 'I think' and even went so far as to claim that the former produces the latter.⁹³ It corresponded to his distinction between pure, non-objective being and the objectified self-appearance [*das gegenständliche Sich-Erscheinen*] of the I.⁹⁴ If it is true that knowledge proper is only ever knowledge of phenomena which stand over and against a knowing subject (and Kant's conviction on this matter never wavered), then there can be no knowledge of the Subject-I, which thus remains an unfounded assumption.

The theory of reflection as Kant inherited it from Descartes and Leibniz (as well as numerous other thinkers from the British empiricist tradition) has therefore to presuppose the very phenomenon whose structure it took upon itself to explain. That is why Fichte repudiated the 'sophistry' of reflection theory in his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1797-1799).

I shall briefly sketch the main thrust of Fichte's argument. If our experience of being conscious of ourselves were the result of a concatenation of several states of consciousness, whereby the penultimate state of consciousness were always witnessed by the last one in the series, then there would be no self-consciousness. This is because the same conditions hold for the final consciousness, namely, that in order to become conscious of itself, it would have to be made the object of yet another consciousness. But this other state of consciousness needs to be unconscious, attaining self-consciousness only through being objectified in its turn, and so on *ad infinitum*. But there *is* consciousness; so this model must be wrong. If wrong, then consciousness must have been immediately acquainted with itself, that is, prior to any objectification by means of a succeeding consciousness. Fichte accounts for this immediate self-acquaintance as the complete indiscernibility of subject and object in self-consciousness. Now in Kantian terminology an immediate consciousness

is an intuition. But what is intuited here, is not a spatio-temporal entity, like in sensible intuition, but rather the being of the sheer spontaneity of apperception: hence the intuition is deemed to be intellectual.

Once we do know this so well, the question arises again of how we found it out. Obviously we intuited the very intuition of the internally acting 'I'. Hence it must be possible to have an intuition of the internally acting 'I', and such an intuition is intellectual. This does not refute the Kantian system. Kant only denies the possibility of a sensible intellectual intuition and rightly so. However, the intuition of the I is not something fixed, quiescent, it is *an acting I*. In his system Kant does not explicitly consider this type of intellectual intuition, the type that results from our representations being the product of our own self-active mind. Kant's system nevertheless presupposes the result of this type of intellectual intuition.⁹⁵

If the I must indeed be explained by intellectual intuition, then several consequences ensue. Firstly, self-consciousness can no longer be considered as a result of deliberate, purposive action (one can only posit *oneself*, if one already *knows* what 'self' means). Being coincides here (and only here) with being known. Fichte puts this another way, namely: all consciousness of something (including its own psychological states) presupposes an immediate consciousness of the initial consciousness itself.⁹⁶ Secondly, self-consciousness is not an instance of knowledge, because all knowledge is conceptual, and concepts are related mediately to objects, through the analysis of a feature or features common to several representations. Thirdly, self-consciousness is not an instance of genuine (informative) identification. Every identification equates semantically discernible elements according to certain criteria. But in self-consciousness there is no such difference of polarity, and no need for such criteria. Identity is a form of relation (indeed it is the most precise of all forms of relation, in the eyes of contemporary logicians), whereas self-consciousness is unitary and acquainted with itself in the absence of any detour via a second term.

III

The figure of speech with which tradition likes to sum up the early romantic post-Fichteana is that of 'outdoing' (or even out-Fichteing) Fichte, and,

provided one can make clear what it means to out-Fichte Fichte, this judgement is not inappropriate. The accepted version is that, what is outdone, is Fichte's alleged subjectivism. This view of romanticism predominates in the tradition which spans such thinkers as Hegel, Rosenkranz, Kierkegaard, Haym and even Heidegger. It is, however, not just erroneous, but actually reverses the main current of the early romantic continuation of the Fichtean project. If Fichte was indeed outdone, then it was not by virtue of ever more extravagant subjectivism, but, on the one hand, by an increasing concern as to the meaning of the term 'identity', to which Fichte had allotted the central position in his grounding principle, and on the other, by a radicalisation of his critique of the reflection model of self-consciousness.

Both concerns are closely allied. I shall begin with the first, and then proceed to the second. In what follows I shall take Hölderlin and Novalis as representative of the whole of the early romantic movement, because their thought alone attained a sufficient degree of thoroughness and clarity. They levelled the following accusation at Fichte; namely, that he had been lucid enough to spot the shortcomings of the reflection model of self-consciousness, but had ultimately failed to find a way around them. This criticism seems harsh and above all unfair. The point is nonetheless not unfounded, and from about 1800 Fichte—with the early Romantic critique evidently in mind—had himself toyed with the idea of making certain improvements to the formulation of his principle, improvements which show a similar train of thought to that of his critics, and which have been definitively presented elsewhere by Dieter Henrich.⁹⁷

These improvements pertain to the notion of intellectual intuition that in what follows was to be suppressed. When, contrary to Kant's own intentions, Fichte took up the claim of intellectual intuition, as the presupposition of all method, including Kantian criticism, he meant to vindicate this with the thought that self-consciousness could not legitimately be thought as the opposition of a subject and an object. Intuition alone could vouchsafe the indiscernibility of both poles, and this intuition, due to the intellectual nature of the 'I', certainly had to be understood as non-sensible.

On further analysis, however, it becomes clear that the formula of intellectual intuition is not up to the task of explaining the complete lack of differentiation between that which has consciousness, and that of *which* consciousness

is had. The formula does draw a clear distinction between an object and a subject of consciousness, and, furthermore, between an intuition and a concept. In other texts Fichte distinguishes, with no less conviction, between the original, intuitively observed act of self-positing and its result, the thereby obtained concept 'I'. Of course he swiftly re-emphasises their indiscernibility and moreover, he emphatically repudiates the notion that the two moments could be separated in time; (the rather hackneyed phrase 'in one fell swoop' is supposed to make the paradox disappear). Hölderlin and Novalis are not that gullible. They point out that, as soon as a duality of moments is introduced into the sphere of self-consciousness, then its prereflexivity must remain in question. No binary structure could possibly furnish the grounds of a strict identity. Underlying this critique is a radicalisation of the meaning of the term 'identity', for identity has traditionally always been defined as a relation.

In fact Fichte does define the concept 'I' further as "activity returning into itself."⁹⁸ He even believed both terms to be synonymous:

I prefer to use the term egoity rather than the word intelligence: since the latter is the most direct description of the return of activity into itself, for those capable of only minimal attention.⁹⁹

Within the defining term 'egoity' the activity can be discerned from the process of its return into itself. Fichte goes one step further and assigns to this activity the cognitive mode of intuition. Only such a cognitive intuition, he thinks, can establish both immediate consciousness and the lack of all distinction between what posits and what is posited. The intuition intuits the act of self-positing, even before it comes to the light of conceptual differentiation. Fichte uses the term consciousness to mean distinct consciousness, (true to the tradition of Leibniz and Kant in which consciousness is defined as explicit, distinct or reflected consciousness).¹⁰⁰ Yet at the same time he holds self-consciousness to be completely immediate, and moreover, immediately conscious.¹⁰¹ Hence he slides into terminological ambiguity. One moment he stresses that intuition is not merely immediate, but also conscious, the next he claims that consciousness presupposes conceptual differentiation (and thus the possibility of mediation). At times he only disputes that intuition has 'distinct consciousness' (borrowing the Cartesian/Leibnizian distinction), but grants it clarity of consciousness,¹⁰² which, as Leibniz and Wolff use the term, does not exclude confusion [*confusionem*].¹⁰³ Whatever the case, according to Fichte the intuition

ensures the immediacy of consciousness, but does not suffice to establish the distinctness of the concept 'I'. Hence what is needed is a concept to establish the identity of the intuited contents. But concepts are mediate, they refer to a feature common to several representations; in this case the feature which belongs to, or better still, which constitutes an I. Representations [*Vorstellungen*] are distinguished by means of concepts, and distinction presupposes opposition; *omnis determinatio est negatio*. Here are Fichte's own words.

Only the state of opposition can make clear to us what it is to act, (for an act strictly speaking cannot be defined); [it is only] through fixity and repose that we can think *activity*, and hence conversely we can only think repose through activity.¹⁰⁴

There is a law at work here, one that Fichte later, with great lucidity, was to call "The law of reflection that governs all our cognition":

namely: we cannot know what something is, without our thinking at the same time that which it is not.¹⁰⁵

To know something, to know something conceptually by opposing it to something else, means 'determining something', and 'determination' (conversely) in the *Doctrine of Science* means delimitation, narrowing something down to a particular region or sphere of our knowledge.¹⁰⁶

In order to identify myself as me (and to differentiate myself from all that is not I)¹⁰⁷ I have to distinguish myself from everything else, that is, to limit myself to an extension, which still allows for some otherness on my side, against which I can define myself. Distinction rests essentially upon a relation of differentiation ("determined is to say limited, or confined to a particular sphere by means of what is opposite").¹⁰⁸ However, differentiation gainsays both the claim to simultaneity and immediacy *and* the subject-object identity in intellectual intuition. Fichte in fact speaks of a 'law of reflection' without which (distinct) consciousness would not take place. It infiltrates the innermost articulation of the *cogito* and destroys its pretensions to prereflexivity. In this manner an unbridgable dualism is engendered in the structure of egoity; in order to describe this duality, the positing activity which intuition lays hold of, has to be distinguished from its own result—the concept. The concept is the *product* of intuition; a state of repose in contrast to the intuition itself, which is characterised by *agility*.¹⁰⁹

In this repose we can observe that the positing of activity turns into the posited. This is to say that this activity is first thought of as non-action, i.e. in a state of fixity and quiescence. It is perceived and intuited thereafter as quiescent, for otherwise we could not actively intuit the activity as active. In this manner a product, or rather, the concept of the 'I' comes to be. This 'I' can be thought but not intuited, since acting activity alone constitutes intuition, and acting activity cannot be thought without simultaneously thinking its opposite, namely the same activity in its previous state of repose, i.e. without a concept. Concept and intuition—which are always immediately and simultaneously combined—coincide, collapse into one.¹¹⁰

However, Fichte only asserts the coincidence of concept and intuition. So, what seems to happen to Fichte, in spite of his intentions, is that he lapses back into the reflection model of consciousness. He draws in fact a distinction (in almost Kantian terms) between what are intrinsically blind intuitions on the one hand, and empty thoughts on the other. Their difference is clear, not so their 'collaps[ing] into one'. From 1800 onwards Fichte attempted to locate identity beyond the sphere of reflection. But this is not my current topic.

Instead I shall try to show the precise meaning that is given to the term of 'identity' in the *Doctrine of Science*. We have just seen how the notion of 'identity' contradicts the immediacy of self-acquaintance, and how Fichte would have done better not to employ this term in such a context. It is understandable, however, that he should want to hold on to the term. For the Leibnizian tradition had defined identity as a relation holding between semantically different entities which concur in all essential features. Hume had added that simplicity (the characteristic of something's being itself, so as to be capable of being predicated of itself tautologically and without contradiction) was not to be confused with identity. For, whether or not something is identical to something else cannot be decided analytically; an identity cannot be inferred from semantic features and the mere application of the law of non-contradiction alone. On the contrary, judgements of identity only make sense in Hume's view when that which is identified, and that by means of which it is identified, can be indicated by two different verbal expressions (or two different modes of being of an object); with the result that the identification forms a synthetic judgement that adds to my knowledge: (simplicity is tautological, whereas identity is informative).

Fichte does not want to relinquish the distinctness of either of the two terms that coalesce in the identity-judgement of self-consciousness, since this would rule out a conceptual knowledge of the self. On the other hand, this distinctness cannot be relied upon, or we risk losing the immediacy of self-consciousness.

In the third opening paragraph of the first *Doctrine of Science* (1794-5) Fichte, following in the footsteps of Reinhold and Maimon, tries to defend the view that difference and sameness can and do coexist in the ultimate grounding principle of philosophy. His argument runs as follows:

Every opposite is like its opponent in one respect = X; and each like is opposed to its like in one respect = X. Such a respect = X is called the ground; in the first case of conjunction, and in the second, of distinction: for to liken or compare opposites is to conjoin them, and to set like things in opposition is to distinguish them.¹¹¹

This claim is 'proven' in the following way. A and B are the two terms to be conjoined with and distinguished from each other. If I then oppose A with B (in the sense of positing the one in place of the other), A must nevertheless remain partially intact, otherwise B would have no opposing term, and the relation would fall apart. Thus A is only partially annulled in favour of B, as something of A remains. Fichte uses the symbol X to show that A and B, in order to oppose each other, have at the same time to share a common domain. The formula 'A is not B' can therefore be replaced by, 'there is an X which is partly A and partly B'.

The same holds for the relation of identity between the two. If I judge that 'A is the same as B' I do not necessarily assert that A, insofar as it is A, is also B, or that B, qua B is at the same time A. That would be absurd, for in this case I would not have identified one entity with another, but would only have uttered a tautology; I would merely have said the same thing twice. Identity cannot take place between one term and itself, for the very good reason that here there would then be no second term to be related by identity to the first. Moreover, if the semantic distinction of A and B ('I' and 'not I') is a necessary condition for a possible relation of identity to obtain between the terms, then it seems to be the case that an identification presupposes *a priori non-self-sameness*¹¹² of the *relata*. Instead of writing 'A = B' we have to try and describe this relation in another way: there is an X, such that this X

is A on the one hand and B on the other. But A is not B, and B is not A—*qua* A and *qua* B respectively. In this manner Fichte can declare the proposition 'A = B' to be commensurate with the opposite proposition 'A ≠ B'. The actual identity, that is, the strict identity in the sense of complete unison, takes place not between the terms A and B, but between the X and itself (here in the sense of Humean 'simplicity'). This identity alone is absolute, the one between A and B presupposes difference, and is thus only relative. Now, the question arises, however, of whether an identity (defined that way) can be known of in self-awareness. And the romantic thinkers deny this with emphasis. (Schelling developed this idea of Fichte in illuminating fashion, without actually adding anything new. He speaks pertinently of a "union that is the unity of the subject, not the predicates" which is fully compatible with "the so-called principle of non-contradiction".)¹¹³ Anyhow, Fichte quite clearly understands the third principle of the first *Wissenschaftslehre* not as the principle of contradiction, but merely as the principle of opposition. I and not-I are diametrically opposed, and thereby, as the extreme members of a sub-category, fall under the higher concept of the absolute I, and—by 'quantifying' themselves—have to divide themselves up into reality.

IV

The early romantic thinkers, most of whom (including Johann Friedrich Herbart) attended Fichte's lectures on the *Doctrine of Science*, were well acquainted with the Fichtean theory of the self. Following, indeed furthering Fichte's critique of Kant, they took up the (epistemic) question of how to understand this identity which, like the identity of the Kantian subject of consciousness, is condemned to remain a mere presupposition of any relation, be it one of unification or opposition. If strict identity takes place only between X and itself, then although identity can become manifest in consciousness (whose being is conditioned by opposition and distinctness, according to Fichte, and the divisive form of judgement according to Novalis and Hölderlin), identity cannot be understood through its function there. Strict identity (or 'absolute' identity to the early Romantics) would in this case, so to speak, emigrate out of consciousness and occupy a position that is not merely pre-reflexive but wholly irreflexive with regard to consciousness. This is in fact the very conclusion reached by Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich von

Hardenberg (Novalis) along their different but related paths of thought. This conclusion is a logically consistent development of the Fichtean critique of tradition, but it has certain ramifications that can no longer be reconciled with consciousness-immanent idealism.¹¹⁴

Hölderlin attended Fichte's first lecture series at Jena on the *Doctrine of Science*, as can be seen from his first letters to his friends Schelling and Hegel. In late January of 1795, Hegel writes to Schelling:

Hölderlin writes to me from Jena every so often (. . .) He's listening to Fichte, and is full of enthusiasm for him, likening him to a Titan fighting for mankind, whose sphere of influence will certainly not remain confined to the four walls of the auditorium.¹¹⁵

On the 19th of January 1795, Hölderlin had written to Neuffer: "I am now working full time every day, and only in the evening do I manage to attend Fichte's collegium." He relates his first impressions in a letter to Hegel on the 26th of January 1795, and they give a foretaste of his later critique of Fichte:

Fichte seems, if I may make so bold, to have stood at the crossroads, [between criticism and dogmatism] indeed he is still there—much of what he says shows that he wants to go beyond the fact of consciousness within theory, that much is certain, and it strikes me as even more transcendent than the desire of all previous metaphysicians to go beyond worldly existence—his absolute 'I' (= Spinozean substance) contains all reality. It is everything; there is nothing outside it; this absolute 'I' thus has no object, for otherwise it would not contain all reality within it; but consciousness without an object is unthinkable, and if I myself am to be this object, then I am as such necessarily limited, if only in time, but I am therefore not absolute; hence consciousness cannot be thought in the absolute 'I'; as absolute 'I' I do not have consciousness, and insofar as I have no consciousness, I am nothing (for myself), hence the absolute 'I' is nothing (for me).¹¹⁶

It is noticeable that in this argument there is a certain hesitancy, indecisiveness, indeed a tendency to recoil as it develops. In solidarity with the spirit of Kantian criticism, Hölderlin begins with the observation that the search for an 'I' which is prior to all relation, and which grounds all our knowledge, is an overly ambitious enterprise which takes no heed of the limits of our

faculty of cognition. A little later he remarks that an 'I' cannot, in any case, be called absolute, if it is conceived as an object upon which cognition is brought to bear, since objectification calls forth limitation. And his conclusion is equally aporetic. An absolute I, beyond the bounds of my understanding, would be unthinkable for us, and hence nothing.

The conviction that consciousness presupposes opposition and that the absolute identity must therefore be unconscious pervades the preliminary draughts of *Hyperion*, which in part predate, and which are in part contemporaneous with Hölderlin's attendance of Fichte's lectures. The preface to the *Fragment of Hyperion*, written as early as mid-1794, distinguishes between "a state of ultimate simplicity" based upon "the mere organisation of nature," and a state of highest education (. . .) by means of the organisation which we are capable of giving ourselves."¹¹⁷ Between the two points there runs the "eccentric path" ("*exzentrische Bahn*"). I shall not comment upon this phrase, which has attracted so much interpretive attention. Contextual correlates clearly show that both the natural unity, and the unity achieved by means of education, their transreflexive status notwithstanding, are composite and articulated. With this unity there are "in general and in particular" "essential orientations," which other texts gloss as antagonistic tendencies proper to being, within the domain of the unconditioned or of love, (the prose version and the metrical version of winter 1794/5 are particularly good examples of this). With this exciting thought, Hölderlin, doubtless under Niethammer's influence, departs abruptly from the Jacobian idea, whereby the unconditioned has to be thought of, even for the most obvious semantic reasons, as unencumbered by any opposition which would situate it in a relation—in other words, the unconditioned is bereft of all opposition which would condition it. Perhaps the reader is familiar with the beautiful iambic pentameters in which *Hyperion* (in the metrical version of winter 1794/5) is delivered by "a wise man" (line 27) from his reliance on the subject-object schema of the modern age. He then draws a distinction between a state of unconscious purity, intimacy, and freedom on the one hand (corresponding directly to the natural state of "ultimate simplicity" mentioned in the preface to the *Fragment of Hyperion*), and a state of consciousness on the other:

The day on which the beauteous world began,
Began for us the indigence of life,

and we exchanged our state of consciousness,
for our state of purity and freedom.¹¹⁸

At this point Hölderlin comes up with a conception of essential unity as a structure articulated through opposition, a conception which is incompatible with the dualistic intuition of Descartes and Kant, and even that of Fichte, and one which, although not widely known, heralds a turning point of modern thought.

Pure spirit, free of passion, embraces
Not the stuff of life, and is not conscious
Of any thing, not even of itself,
Pure spirit has no world, beyond its bounds
Is nothing.—Yet these words are merely thoughts.—
We feel the limitations of our being
And the hindered power strives impatient
Against its shackles and the spirit longs
Back into the distant, undimm'd ether.
And yet within us there is something, that
Wants to keep its chains, for if the divine
In us encountered no resistance, then
We'd not feel one another or ourselves.
But not to feel oneself, amounts to death,
To know nought, to be obliterated,
Are for us the same.—Were we to deny
The drive to stride forth t'ward the infinite,
To purify, ennoble, liberate
Ourselves: that would be brutish. But neither
Must we proudly set ourselves above
The drive to limitation, to passion:
that would not be human, tw'ere almost death.
So love unites the conflict of the drives,
None of which can rest unsatisfied.¹¹⁹

The first lines basically reproduce the position of the preface to the *Hyperion* fragment. This position can also be found in the aforementioned letter to Hegel of January the 26th, which contains Hölderlin's thoughts on Fichte's lectures. The unity, which remains forever presupposed by the self-relation

of consciousness, can itself not be thought as conscious, and hence it is “nothing for us.” Therefore this unity is no longer just the prior ground of reflection (used synonymously with ‘consciousness’), but rather the transcendent ground. Schleiermacher, in his lectures on *Dialectics*, will make the characteristic move of replacing the phrase “transcendental ground” with the alternative “transcendent ground.”¹²⁰

To return to the above quotation from the metrical version, the second half moves beyond the demand for a suprarreflective unity. The ultimate—unconscious—unity is nevertheless not opaque, it has an internal structure. It opens the space for two antagonistic drives in which Schelling’s notion of a “reciprocity of hindrance and striving” is prefigured.¹²¹ There interrelation is articulated as the opposition between a real activity, heading forth into the infinite, and an ideal activity, working retroactively against the first, driving it back into itself. If the unconditioned were to be represented on the model of infinite striving, then it would remain unconscious. But if it showed itself to be limited, it would contradict its own concept (determination presupposes negation, hence limitation, and hence conditions; whereas the infinite is *completudo realitatis*). Thus the unconditioned is discursively represented as hindered or inhibited striving (*gehemmtes Streben*) (a solution we also find in Novalis, in Friedrich Schlegel, and in Schelling). For the sake of conceptual clarity, the unconditioned binds itself, albeit transiently, to limitation, but in virtue of its infinity, it constantly transgresses its own limitations. In a word, the unconditioned is made manifest as *excentricity* or *ecstasis*, as the temporality of consciousness, whereby ‘temporal’ is understood according to its celebrated definition as the being ‘that is, what it is not, and that is not, what it is’.

The discordance between “the drive to stride forth to infinity” (which Hölderlin calls ‘real activity’) and the “drive to limitation” (or ‘ideal activity’) does not on this account destroy the structure of the unconditioned. It is rather its most proper articulation: “*Den Widerstreit der Triebe, deren keiner / Entbehrlich ist, vereinigt die Liebe.*” (“The combat between the [two] drives, neither of which / Can be missed, is unified through love.”)

‘Love’ is usually understood as a consubstantial relation between beings, equal in status and autonomy, which leaves no room for bondage or coercion. Schelling puts it beautifully:

It is the mystery of love, that it bonds in such a way, that each can be for itself, but neither is nor can be without the other.¹²²

Through love a being transcends the 'sphere' of its individuality whose centre of gravity seems to lie outside itself. A person who is, as was once said, 'inflamed' by the love for another, seeks his own worth outside of himself, he seeks to reclaim his own essence in a heightened form, from where his/her beloved lies. The lover, says Schiller, does not desire the other, like he or she desires to possess a thing, but values the other, as one respects a person.¹²³ So, in defiance of all dualistic intuition *à la* Kant and Fichte, love calls forth a principle that surpasses the dichotomy of self and other, a principle which embraces two related terms equiprimordially, without one having to be sacrificed "to the God that reigns within us" ["*dem in uns waltenden Gott*"],¹²⁴ though the lovers do indeed experience the bond that unites them as the "God within us."¹²⁵

This speculative conception of love brings into play a completely new conception of what identity is.

Since the conception was first developed in the analysis of the structure of self-regulating entities, that is, organisms, it is not difficult to understand why, in this context, so much weight is attached to the concept of nature, as a being, bearing the highest degree of organisation. Hölderlin takes the idea one step further: not only nature, as a whole, but spirit itself is organically structured. Spirit consists in the absolute identity of the real and the ideal, an identity that is articulated as the complete equiprimordiality of identity and difference. This formula is often incorrectly associated with the name of Hegel, and contains the following thought: unlike tautology (whereby one and the same thing is merely repeated, $A = A$), identity is not trivial, it is a real relation. The model of identity is $A = B$. It shows, how, "to use a fairly mundane example, a man who for instance has two names, can nevertheless be one and the same person."¹²⁶ This example bears a striking resemblance to Frege's Venus, which is differently determined as the evening and the morning star, but not at the cost of its identity, and qua evening star is the same as the morning star, and not trivially so. (It took thousands of years for mankind to discover this identity. Schelling would say that it took thousands of years for mankind to grasp their own identity with nature, in a non-reductive way, that is, neither materialistically nor idealistically). In much the same

way absolute identity identifies two semantically discernible terms—the ideal and the real limiting activity, an activity that strives towards infinity. However, this difference remains only a virtual difference in the matrix of the absolute, and only becomes actual when I disregard the bond that unites the two. This means to say that two things which are only virtually opposed can still co-exist; since that which can only be real, but is not, is powerless to banish from its domain that which can only be ideal, but is not. Only when one of the moments is realised, does it have to eject the other from its place, and determine this other as its predecessor or successor. Once we disregard the bond of ‘substantial unity’, then the real opposes itself to the ideal, and only in virtue of this actuated relativity does the whole succeed in realising itself as finite and temporal reality that is opposed to the absolute.¹²⁷

It follows that Hölderlin’s philosophy of love could not be deemed a philosophy of *absolute* identity, if its concept of the absolute did not also include what it is not—the relativity, the difference of the separate essential tendencies. Relativity proves, on the one hand, to be a moment within the structure of the absolute, since whatever manner of ‘Being’ persists in relativity, it is nothing but the presence of the whole in the part, and the whole here means precisely the absence of all distinction between difference and identity. In this manner the structure of the absolute is analogous to that of the organism, which similarly includes within itself its own opposite—mechanism.

However, amongst all these poetic drafts of a philosophy of love, one thing remains ambivalent and undecided. It is the seamlessness of the identity which guarantees that the relation between infinite striving, and limiting activity is indeed a true *self*-relation. But this identity cannot be evinced from the duality of reflecting and reflected moments alone; it is still presupposed, rather than posited by reflection. For this very reason Hölderlin comes up with a solution, a few months after the metrical version—supposedly in May 1795 (though, as will be shown, this supposition is perhaps unjustified)—a solution which he scribbled down upon the fly leaf of a copy of a book—we ignore which one.¹²⁸ I shall now attempt to sketch out the bones of his argument.

Kant sees judgement as the activity of thinking, an idea that stems from the “*Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard*” in Rousseau’s *Emile*. Every judgement works towards cementing a synthetic unity, for a judgement is nothing but

the combination of a subject and a predicate. Now if the resultant proposition is true, then what is known is the type of relation that holds between the proposition and the object it denotes (analytic judgements either presuppose a prior synthesis, or they are tautological, like judgements of logic, which are based exclusively upon the principle of non-contradiction). Hölderlin, under the aegis of Kant, but drawing upon a voguish though bogus etymology, interprets the German word *Urteil* (judgement), as the index of an originary separation *Ur-teilung*.¹²⁹ In the act of judgement a prior unity is split into two members or two *relata*, whose relation at once conceals and reveals the original unity: *reveals*, because two different representations are combined in the judgement, hence they are both referred back to a grounding unity, but *conceals*, because this unity never appears as such but only *as* the differentiation of two mutually dependent types of representation (that is, the unity is articulated through grammatical subjects and concepts). Hölderlin then applies this general principle to the judgement 'I = I'. Even here there is a differentiation: the judgement divides the *relata*, otherwise the determinacy of what was judged would be occluded. But in this case the differentiation occurs because the *content* of the judgement contradicts its own *form*. What the judgement states is that the *relata* are undifferentiated. But *formally* what happens is that the judgement differentiates the undifferentiated terms. From this observation Hölderlin draws the following conclusion. On the one hand, I can have no knowledge about something without my forming a judgement upon it, that is to say, without my depriving it of its absolute identity. On the other hand, the judgement, as a relation (of two things, for instance the I and itself), is now dependent upon a fundamental and non-relative identity. It follows quite clearly that the synthesis of judgement has to be distinguished from a pre-judgemental, non-relative unity. Hölderlin joins Spinoza and Jacobi in naming the latter unity 'Being' ('*Seyn*'). Being is of a higher order than the relative or predicative identity of which Fichte speaks. Being cannot be thought, (since to think is to judge, and to judge is to differentiate) yet I cannot simply do without being, since the actual and evident experience of the 'I = I' qua ego-identity remains a mystery without the postulate of a unity that grounds the terms of the relation.

Strictly speaking it is not only the pre-identitarian unity that cannot be derived from relations within judgements. Hölderlin supposes that self-consciousness is only made possible "by opposing myself to myself, by separating myself

from myself, but by recognising the identity of the opposed self in spite of the separation."¹³⁰ Put differently: not only is it the case that the reflection model of self-consciousness cannot explain the fact that subject and object are identical; it also fails to explain how my awareness that in dealing with the other of myself I am indeed dealing with myself ("as the same self"). (For it could always happen that a subject and an object as conceived in our self-consciousness are identical without our conscious awareness of this identity; thus it is quite conceivable that someone correctly identifies a person as X, and knows of X that he is such-and-so, without, at the same time, necessarily knowing that his knowing actually amounts to an epistemic *self*-relation).¹³¹

This initial idea represents in my opinion a deep conviction underlying all early Romantic thought. It is the assumption that Being, qua simple, seamless unity, in contrast to the Kantian or Fichtean *cogito*, cannot be epistemically retrieved from either relations of judgement or reflection, which all perform an originary separation on what they were supposed to unite, and only ever manage to presuppose the original, simple unity. Hölderlin's critique of Fichte is to be found in the way he emphatically opposes '*intellektuale Anschauung*' (as he calls it) to the act of *Ur-teilung*: judging, or originary separation (that is, the determinate consciousness of something.)

The radicality of this move takes it a step beyond Fichte's conception of intellectual intuition, which articulates the claim to immediate unity only mediately, that is, by means of the conceptual pair of intuition and intellection. Of course a conceptual pair could betoken unity, but only with the circular presupposition, that immediate knowledge of this unity already existed, prior to the act of originary separation. If, on the contrary, knowledge is bound to consciousness, then we are forced to conclude that there can in principle be no knowledge of the absolute unity, which is only mediately available to us in the play of reflection.

Hölderlin's objection to Fichte is more extensively expounded and more clearly thought out in a lengthy footnote to another of his essays not intended for publication, *On the Operations of the Poetic Spirit*.¹³² Again I shall only summarise Hölderlin's thoughts.¹³³ Hölderlin argues in the following manner: The two defining characteristics of the representation 'I'—that it is simultaneously absolute and self-referential—are mutually exclusive. If egoity were subject to the condition of having to refer to external reality in the form of a

synthetic judgement, then its claim to unconditionality would *a fortiori* be null and void, since it would depend upon relation, and relation means quite the opposite of absoluteness. On the other hand, we cannot, for the sake of expounding the 'I', do away altogether with its claim to unconditionality, for then we would be left with two discrete and non-identical parts, and the moment of *self*-possession—the evident feeling of identity and oneness in my consciousness of myself—would remain unexplained and inexplicable. Therefore we cannot afford to drop either viewpoint. We must stress the point that the active self-relation of the I does not give rise to knowledge of the absolute identity of what is combined in this relation (but not by it). Yet I do have this knowledge in an utterly pellucid way. Hence Hölderlin concludes that within the "infinite oneness of the self" there is revealed "an ultimately united and unifying power which is not an I as such."¹³⁴

Sometimes Hölderlin calls this power the 'One', and sometimes 'Being', but always in contrast to identity, which only creates relative (synthetic) or judgemental links between related terms, thus laying claim to a criterion that cannot be discursively retrieved from the relation as such, but a criterion that always has to be presupposed. Being does found consciousness, but strictly speaking it is not itself conscious (insofar as consciousness is synonymous with reflection, as it is for the whole of the post-Leibnizian tradition). In this sense we can speak of the primacy of Being over consciousness. The light in which consciousness basks, does not radiate from consciousness itself but comes from a ground which is not causal and which consciousness can never quite illuminate. Only the inexhaustible wealth of meaning in aesthetic representation manages to depict it as such, that is, as reflexively non-representable; herein lies the superiority of aesthetic means of expression over speculative ones. This is the consequence that Hölderlin draws from the *aporia* that concludes the above-mentioned footnote.

Even if the footnote was not written down before 1800, we can still get an accurate picture of the state and content of Hölderlin's thought of around 1795 by looking at the so-called *Philosophische Raisonnements* of his friend Isaak von Sinclair. This will also enlighten us as to the aesthetic consequences that Hölderlin draws from the failure of reflection epistemically to retrieve the absolute. Unlike his friend, Sinclair had come to Jena as early as 1794 and was amongst those present at the reading of the first (theoretical) part of

Fichte's *Doctrine of Science*. Moreover, Sinclair came into contact with Karl Christian Erhard Schmid, an early intellectual ally (and later opponent) of Fichte's, a man who was close to Novalis, having formerly been his tutor, and whom he had kept informed of the fate of the *Doctrine of Science* and the surrounding debate. Sinclair valued Fichte and Schmid above all for political reasons:

Their cold inspection, their reasoning which proceeds from the depths of reason, and which spreads to all branches of human action, will vindicate the rights of man and overthrow the thrones.¹³⁵

In the winter term Hölderlin came to Jena along with Jakob Zwilling, another friend whom Hölderlin will meet again in Bad Homburg.¹³⁶ Of the three Sinclair, who had been part of the intellectual circle formed by the former students of Reinhold and the friends of Niethammer, was by far the most capable of giving an informed judgement about Fichte's own thought. As far as the dating of the notes is concerned, we can be fairly precise. The notes are written on the back of a programme for a concert which took place on the 6th of December 1795. Sinclair later twice reworked the *Raisonnements*, which were hastily and rhapsodically written, but the main ideas of the two subsequent versions did not substantially alter. Dieter Henrich and Hannelore Hegel suggest that it is likely that the theory sketched out by Sinclair assumes knowledge of Hölderlin's *Urtheil und Seyn*. On this account it is all the more instructive, all the more conceptually acute, and all the more delightfully argued.

The *Raisonnements* presents four theses. 1) Reflection (which in everyday language is termed judgement) is a separation, in which the demand for unity lives on, and is co-positd as such a demand. 2) Fichte's 'I' is not a substance. 3) Praxis cannot be evinced from theory: and finally 4) Being's resistance to discursive articulation by reflection raises art to the emblem *ne plus ultra* of the downfall of philosophy. Of these four theses, only the first interests us here. As stated above, the position corresponds to Hölderlin's conviction that the relation of one to another (for us or from the third-person perspective) can always be a self-relation, but that the self can only apprehend its own act in the other by means of its knowledge of a unity that survives within the separation and yet goes beyond it. Insofar as this (material) unity cannot make itself manifest as such in the form of separation, it becomes a mere postulate (or a demand). But this demand must be rationally motivated within

the structure of self-consciousness, and this motive is the factual knowledge of myself as a single and united (not as a divided) being.

Sinclair (along with Novalis) was the first to hold consciousness to be a positing [*Setzung*] or 'thesis'.¹³⁷ What is posited by consciousness is the other of itself (the object or itself as object). Since judgement—as the originary expression of the self-sundering of Being, or of the $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ¹³⁸—consists in just such a thesis, then Being proper has to be thought as immaterial, non-objective. Being corresponds to the mode of consciousness pertaining to the non-positing *cogito*, the 'athesis'.¹³⁹ *Aisthesis*, which Sinclair, by dint of an adventurous etymology, renders as 'Aeisthesis' (or continual positing), makes the content of what is not posited and what cannot be posited comprehensible to the positing consciousness. In this sense "the aesthetic reality (. . .) [is] a self-denial of the I, a repudiation of the pure thesis"; it is the return of dirempt Being into aesthetic unity.¹⁴⁰ This (positive) sense of 'aesthetic', however, stands over and against the (Kantian) 'aesthetic' of the sensible world, whereby 'Aeisthesis' takes on yet another meaning, namely the persistence of the divisions of finite human understanding: "Knowledge is always incomplete for the aesthetic, because knowledge, as the product of reflection, always presupposes the judgement (originary separation), that renders it incapable of thinking the existence of unity, incapable of thinking the aesthetic ideal."¹⁴¹ In this quotation it is noticeable that the second (negative) meaning of 'aesthetic' slides into the first (positive) meaning, whereby the aesthetic becomes an ideal of the understanding, the utopia of a sensible representation of unity.

The moment one tries to know or to posit the $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ (the athletic unity, or athletic essence), one makes it into the I (into Fichte's absolute I). By reflecting upon and positing his ultimate nature, this nature is divided, and then after the division its undivided character is restored by unification; a process in which, as it were, the Being of division is presupposed; it is the most incomplete concept. *Ev και Παυ*.¹⁴²

If Being (that is, not the relative unity of synthesis, according to Sinclair, but absolute 'oneness')¹⁴³ were not presupposed by the division, then it could not be read as "the proposition 'I am I'."¹⁴⁴ In order to find myself and nothing else in the other related term, then the unity that is negated by the form of judgement has to persist in the form of a postulate, ("reflection upon limits is only possible under the condition of unity as an ought").¹⁴⁵ Sinclair declines

to follow the path of Jacobi, who relied upon a 'feeling' to which absolute unity as such is supposed to be given.¹⁴⁶ That would amount to abandoning consciousness for transcendent explanations.¹⁴⁷ Philosophy cannot go beyond reflection, or beyond whatever can discursively be redeemed within reflection "as a reaction" against it. This does not mean that philosophy's discovery of the relative unity of self-consciousness cannot rationally motivate its demand for absolute unity: hence the warrant for the postulate of unity lies in the fact that "reflection (. . .) reflects upon itself";¹⁴⁸ hence philosophy comes to know the formal rules which prevent it from grasping the thought of the absolute, at the same time as it comes to comprehend the indispensability of the absolute, as a warranted presupposition.¹⁴⁹

Sinclair's philosophic and aesthetic *raisonnements* (ratiocinations) concur in a most surprising manner with the deliberations of Friedrich von Hardenberg-Novalis, which were written either simultaneously or only a few months earlier, and which are known to us as the *Studies on Fichte*. They date back to just after Hölderlin's notes on "Judgement and Being," that is to say between autumn 1795 and early 1796. Once again I can only offer a résumé of the work.

Along with Hölderlin and Sinclair, the first independent thought of Novalis begins with a reflection upon the form of judgement. As with the Savoyard vicar, and with the author of *The Critique of Pure Reason*,¹⁵⁰ what is at issue is the meaning of the copulative 'is'. The 'is' identifies one thing with another, if only relatively. The verb 'to be' in this case really means 'to be identical'. In order to explicate the identity, as expressed in a judgement, we must step outside it, explains Novalis. "We leave the *identical* [,] in order to explicate it."¹⁵¹ In other words the Being of the original identity is transformed or rather transfigured in the act of synthesis. This act transmits the identity to consciousness (by means of judgements or concepts, which latter are just condensed judgements) but in so doing conceals the identity it transmits. The act of judgements does reveal a kind of identity, but does so by 'illusion': 'what already is, happens'. The act of synthesis produces a 'result' that already was, prior to the act. The forms of judgement can only ever impart relative identities to particular contents; the Being of absolute identity can only find expression as 'Non-being', 'Non-identity, Index' that is to say in forms which never fit properly, and which in fact denote the very opposite, since they substitute for, and thus fail to grasp, what is actually intended.¹⁵²

The same holds for the reflection by means of which consciousness represents itself to itself. This self-representation, however, in no way produces the self, but rather brings to light what already was: "What reflection *finds*, *seems to be there* already."¹⁵³ Any self-reflective knowledge that articulates self-acquaintance as an explicit self-relation must presuppose a prior unity that has nothing to do with any relation. Novalis calls this non-relational acquaintance 'feeling'.¹⁵⁴ Its epistemic status is 'non-positing' or 'non-knowledge' of what it is conscious of, and of what constitutes it as consciousness, in contrast to reflective consciousness which posits (and which knows) these same things. If all knowledge is positing, then it follows that feeling—or rather the 'spirit' revealed in feeling—cannot amount to knowledge. Hence Novalis gives it the epistemic status of 'belief'.¹⁵⁵ We believe what we cannot know, but what must be presupposed by all knowledge. Thus belief is anything but unfounded.¹⁵⁶ If it is true, however, that the supreme 'Being' overtaxes our faculty or cognition, then how is it that we can be conscious of it? Still true to the deepest conviction of Kantian and Fichtean criticism, Novalis devotes a whole series of deliberations to this very question, deliberations that may properly be called works of genius, given their originality and their effective history. These deliberations inaugurated a new and independent avenue of idealist speculation that led ultimately to the overcoming of idealism. Let me once again just sketch out his train of thought.

What triggered off Novalis' thought experiment was a consideration of the meaning of the word 'reflection'. Reflection means mirroring, and every image which is mirrored is inverted. When I hold an object in front of a mirror, right is reflected as left and left as right; moreover the rays of light that fall onto the surface of the mirror seem to be coming out of the mirror, in the opposite direction.

Now, Novalis asks himself: Does the reflection that we call self-consciousness behave differently? In fact, despite Fichte's protestations to the contrary, even intellectual intuition consists in consciousness' return into itself, since what is in the final analysis one and the same, appears as the duality of intuition and concept. On the other hand, *there is* something similar to intellectual intuition, and what is more, it constitutes the highest form of consciousness that we can achieve. But then the identity appears to give way to the manifest relation between intuition and concept; the identity is no longer a content of

consciousness. In intellectual intuition (Novalis like Hölderlin uses the neologism *intellektuale* instead of *intellektuelle*) we experience a perpetual failure to grasp the absolute that we aim for. But our aim, or rather our longing for the absolute, is itself the essence of intellectual intuition. What is intended has to be held separate from what is in fact achieved. Intellectual intuition aims to depict a seamless unity, with no distinction between subjective and objective poles, but this representation can only be brought about as the reciprocal play between two reflexes, as reflection. Intellectual intuition is thus characterised by a tension: when it aims for the absolute, as that which it can never grasp, then the absolute becomes the point of departure and the intentional object of its involuntary reflective movement. Novalis characterises this aim as the “illusory striding from the finite to the infinite,” hence from the ‘I’ (qua determinate intellectual intuition) to that in the ‘I’ which exceeds the ‘I’ itself; the true One, the prereflexive unity that it failed to secure.¹⁵⁷ The stride is illusory. The illusion that in the consummation of intellectual intuition we managed to step from the finite to the infinite lies in the way in which all reflected relations are turned around (the mirror image of the reflection throws the original relations back to us in reverse, ‘*ordine inverso*’). But reflection does possess the means to return this false appearance to truth by reflecting the reflection onto itself, or by doubling up the reflection. A reflected reflection inverts the reversed relations once again, restoring the original order, the one that obtained prior to all the mirroring. What appeared to tend from the finite towards the infinite is now revealed in the light of the dual reflection as the “illusory striding from the infinite to the finite.”¹⁵⁸

The point of what Novalis calls the ‘Deduction of Philosophy’ is to prove that under certain conditions we are justified in speaking of an absolute which intellectual intuition is still incapable of representing. The object of the first reflection is certainly not the absolute itself, and the wish to represent or to explicate it only leads to its polarisation into the play between two reflexes, (Fichte spoke of the ‘fundamental reflex’ [*Grund-Reflex*]): one which has consciousness, and another, of which consciousness is had. This is the classical model of reflection which is unable to explain the original unity of the self. Novalis calls the object that the first reflection fails to capture ‘feeling’—as soon as it is observed, its ‘spirit’ vanishes.¹⁵⁹ To feel the absolute, or rather, to possess a prereflexive intuition of the absolute, is not at all akin to objectifying, knowing, hence representing (or positing) the absolute. Feeling, for Novalis

is a type of receptive consciousness to which something must be given.¹⁶⁰ “The limits of feeling are the limits of philosophy.”¹⁶¹ It is towards this kind of consciousness that the view of the first of the two reflections is directed. Such reflection, taken as a cognitive mode of positive or positional knowledge, would have to be termed a reflection upon non-knowledge, and this reflection is only achieved at the price of the retreat or withdrawal of the absolute within the feeling (of the original intuition). But the second reflection is directed towards just this lack of Being that opens up within ordinary intuition at the very moment of its objectification. The second reflection makes clear that the mode of consciousness proper to the initial one was in fact not-knowing. What distinguishes the second from the first is that it is no longer merely reflection upon a state of original not-knowing, but not-knowing that reflects upon itself, that is, that knows itself as such. Philosophy must be content with this *docta ignorantia*. Only the inexplicable fecundity of meaning, proper to a work of art, can show positively what cannot be definitively resolved by knowledge. In this way the work of art remains the only available medium of representing the unrepresentable.¹⁶²

Even within the context of contemporary theories of reflection and self-consciousness Novalis’ attempted solution to the problem is unusual. Those who are suspicious of Novalis’ highly speculative imagination would do well to remember that his ideas were not intended for publication, and that he was a young man, who had just turned twenty-three at the time, and who had studied law and geology, and not philosophy. But we can ignore the form of his deliberations and turn instead to the question that Novalis addressed, namely: how can we speak of the absolute, when awareness of the impossibility of achieving a concrete knowledge of the absolute is built into its very concept? Knowing is a cognitive operation which in the understanding of the early romantics proceeds by means of relations, and in the case of self-knowing the relation assumes the form of reflection. In a reflexive relation two different entities are related to a unity. But this unity is lost in the moment of its representation, or strictly speaking remains beyond all representation.

We could endorse the Kantian conclusion that this unity, as a transcendent unity, can never become a theme for our finite faculty of cognition. However, this conclusion would be premature, since we cannot do without this absolute unity, even if we cannot explicitly represent it. In actual fact reflection does

not reveal to us a consciousness of endless diremption, but, in the medium of the specular play of two reflected images, evinces an acquaintance with a complete unity whose completeness eludes us. Fichte was hard on the heels of Novalis' finding, but the expression 'intellectual intuition' with which he hoped to grasp it was still caught up in the reflection model of consciousness, still marked by the latter's unreconciled dichotomies. What is needed to escape the reflection model is a call for a pre-identical simple unity, that is binding *ex negativo* in the identity of reflexive self-consciousness, and that can be rationally postulated from the existence or the fact of the latter, that is, as a presupposition which cannot be known. The postulate of unity is rational, since the structure of reflexive self-consciousness leaves us with no alternative but to make such a postulate, although this does not mean that the object of the postulate could ever come into our purview in the form of an object. The fact that our acquaintance with ourselves is based upon a pre-reflective 'feeling' finally carries us beyond the bounds of intellectual intuition, and gives a presentiment of the opening up of a completely new dimension, which no longer enters into our consciousness, but upon which our consciousness essentially depends. Instead of being understood as intentional self-positing, consciousness comes to grasp itself as the opening up of an anonymous dimension, a dimension in which it gains access to itself, but for which it is no longer responsible. Novalis calls this other dimension 'Being'.¹⁶³ In every self-acquaintance there is an opening up of Being whose circumambient obscurity far outmeasures what it can bring to light. But the subject does not renounce its enquiry here. Disabused of the idea of its sovereign self-authorship, and fully cognisant of its *radica* 'dependence' upon its Being,¹⁶⁴ the subject is nonetheless still responsible for the way in which this Being comes into appearance.

Though early Romantic thought does constitute a turning point in modern debate about the foundational nature of self-consciousness, the theory of Hölderlin is far away from the hysterical thesis of the 'death of the subject'. This thesis will find succour neither in the early Romantic speculation, which took upon itself the task of explaining our irrefutable acquaintance with ourselves, nor anywhere else, except perhaps in the decisionist self-renunciation of argumentative thought. Such an attitude may well be 'post-modern', but is definitely not romantic.

Johann Friedrich Herbart, like Hölderlin, was also a student of Fichte's and attended his lectures during his Jena period. He, like other democratic students, belonged to the "Association of Free Men" [*Bund der freien Männer*]. Although his intellectual temperament was less well disposed towards the influence of Jacobi and although he was less prone to romantic escapades, Herbart, as Kant's successor in the chair of philosophy in Königsberg, attempted to prove, in no less radical a way, how Fichte's model of reflection remains caught up in the reflection model of consciousness.

Herbart argues that Fichte's assumption that there is a subject-object identity in self-consciousness leads to insoluble 'contradictions' both in the subject and in the object.¹⁶⁵ This thought of identity, from either the perspective of the subject or that of the object, would lead to an endless iteration of the *Self* [*Sich*], and therefore an infinite regress—Hence we have gone no way towards answering the "age old question concerning the *Self*."¹⁶⁶

If one starts from the side of the object, then the subject *for which* the object is given and *through* which the object is known, is presupposed. But then, how can the subject for its part be known, in this conception of the object [*Objekt-Auffassung*]? Whenever the subject is changed into an object from the side of a thematised subject, the thematised subject itself, remains unobjectifiable, and therefore unknown. This is so, until it is represented by another subject. If this occurs, then the same process will only be carried out on a higher level. Herbart writes:

Who or What is the object of self-consciousness? The answer must be found in the proposition: the 'I' represents 'Itself' [*Sich*]. This 'Self' [*Sich*] is in fact the 'I'. If you replace the concept 'I', then the first sentence changes in the following way: the I represents the *representing* 'Self' [*Sich Vorstellende*]. If you repeat the same substitution with the term 'Self' you will find the following: the 'I' represents that, *which represents the representing* 'Self'. But here the expression 'Self' [*Sich*] is merely repeated. It therefore requires the same substitution. If you raise the question again what does this 'Self' mean? *Who* is ultimately represented? There is no other answer but that the 'Self' is dissolved into *its* 'I', and the 'I' into the *representing* 'Self'. This circle repeats itself into infinity without ever giving any detail about the actual object in the representation of the 'I'.¹⁶⁷

There is a corollary of this type of infinite regress “on the side of the subject.”¹⁶⁸ From this point of view, what is represented by the Subject in the position of the object, is always the Subject itself as representing. In this way the represented object will always dissolve into the act of ‘representing it’:

If you therefore assume that the ‘I’ is objectively given, then it is given to ‘Itself’ [*Sich selbst*] and to no other. It is represented *through* itself. However, you must not neglect the act of this representing itself. What the ‘I’ is, the ‘I’ must also know, according to its concept of itself. What it does not know, it cannot be. It is really the representing of itself. As such a representing ‘Self’ [*Sich Vorstellendes*] it must therefore be represented. However, that which is represented afresh, which was necessary to this end, insofar as it is certain that it is a real act of the ‘I’, must become again an Object for a higher-level knowledge. And this knowledge demands, in order to become known, the same act. Again we have an infinite regress, and again we ought not to have. For here too self-consciousness knows these albeit rare cases where certain repetitions of reflections have succeeded in working knowledge into the object [*Gegenstand*] of a new observation [*Betrachtung*], it knows nothing about why such a repetition is necessary if we are to talk about ourselves at all and it knows even less about the endless continuation of the series. Additionally, the repeated return to ourselves, where we always again become an Object of consciousness, takes time. The concept of the ‘I’, however, does not allow for time. This concept, if it can ever be thought, must include in itself all this thinking of thinking. Otherwise, it would not be an ‘I’ because at some point it would be lacking knowledge about itself. We can therefore see that the ‘I’, according to this interpretation, even if it had truly found its object, would remain for itself infinite and therefore an incomplete and uncompletable task.¹⁶⁹

Indeed the ‘I’ would have to wait for the end of an infinite regress, in order to become what its own definition claims that it is, that is, self-knowledge. This would happen only on Doomsday, hence never. Its definition would remain unrealised. One would go from “what can be thought to the unthinkable.”¹⁷⁰ This, however, contradicts the *phenomenon* of the ‘I’, which is factually properly known to itself and, as Herbart shows us in the above quotation, although in principle it can be known in individual cases of finite self-reflection, nothing can be known about a complicated infinite reflection: “because

self-consciousness does not know about this development into many parts, or about such a plurality of immanent interpolations."¹⁷¹ And anyway, such an iterated self-reflection can only be thought of as a process which takes place in time, and as such Fichte's conception of Immediate-Identity [*Im-Nu-Identität*] of the subject and the object in self-consciousness cannot be made compatible with it, but is, on the contrary, destroyed by it.

Herbart, like Hölderlin and Novalis, looks for an alternative explanation for the existence of the 'I', which he doubts as little as they do: "since it is self-evident, that a contradictory concept, if it cannot be totally dismissed, must at least be changed."¹⁷² With this in mind, Herbart distances himself from the—'Plurality of Faculties' of Kantian philosophy, which also Hegel, Herbart's contemporary (and later Nietzsche) have rejected as tautological: a phenomenon is explained by searching for a faculty which belongs to it and makes it possible. (In this way a cold is explained through a sneezing faculty [*Fähigkeit*] and love through the capability of loving—*vis amoris*, and so on.) In the place of this 'Faculty Psychology', Herbart wished to posit a mathematics of the functions of presentations which Fechner, Mach and Franz Brentano still entertained (according to which even self-consciousness is a function of representations). Not only Hegel, but even Fichte, Herbart's teacher, rejected the Kantian 'Plurality of Faculties'.

The ways in which Fichte and Herbart realise the identical programme are, however, in their result diametrically opposed. While Fichte searches for a totality of representations deduced from a single principle that is the 'I', Herbart attempts to illuminate and deduce the 'I' from the concrete traits of the inner (mental) life [*Seelenleben*]. He regards even Fichte's 'intellectual intuition' as a 'faculty', and an unjustifiable one, since Fichte cannot show us a way in which we can capture ourselves epistemically within a finite series of steps.

We must come to Ourselves from the direction of the objects [representations] and be guided by them, since *without* them self-consciousness is incoherent, and undoubtedly cannot be a concern of freedom. He who finds himself in pain and distress, and admits his weakness, and despairs with himself, he certainly *finds* himself [*Sich*], but in a way he did not want to, and would not want to, if he had a choice. Here there is even no room for deceptions, a characteristic that one generally tends to associate with the consciousness of the will.¹⁷³

Unlike Hölderlin and Novalis (though in some sense compatible with them) Herbart designates the phenomenon of the 'I' not as something sovereign which determines, but as an 'I' which is always already determined. We *find* ourselves in self-consciousness, a position in which we have not situated ourselves. The states of mind that the I goes through are even less its own work. ("The judgements: I am ashamed, I am sad, I am happy are altogether synthetic, since their predicates are not regarded as inherent in the subject.")¹⁷⁴

It is now a contradiction that any determinate A that is represented would even be able to modify or diminish the act of the A's representation. In this way A would have to be opposed to itself.¹⁷⁵

Herbart's criticism of Fichte attempted to show that the object cannot be found in the 'I' itself, that it therefore has to be looked for in the area of representations, which is placed independently.¹⁷⁶ "We must therefore firstly attach to the concept 'I' an unknown object which still remains to be determined; and then we will have to see what follows from that."¹⁷⁷ Has Fichte not shown definitely, however, that the 'I' as *self-consciousness* cannot be found amongst objects in the world? He showed, for example, in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* that "(. . .) an immediate consciousness never appears as an object."¹⁷⁸ Herbart admits, "we should not neglect this (. . .)"

That is why the consequence that has just been cited is in need of the following self-critical limitation: "(. . .) we can therefore only attach an object to the 'I' under the condition that it [the object] will disappear again from the conception of the self."¹⁷⁹ But then again in want of an object "although not necessarily *the same one*, which we forwarded at first."¹⁸⁰ In this way one has to understand self-consciousness as representations [note the plural!] that are successively absorbed-into-themselves and expelled-from-themselves,¹⁸¹ and through which "*many and different* objects are alternately" represented.¹⁸²

Thought would not begin, and the solution of the problem would not be in the least advanced if we wished to remain within the circle of these two reflections: first, *the 'I' needs a differentiating object*; and secondly, *the 'I' could never regard a differentiated object as itself*. These observations would lead us to separate the 'borrowed' object, introduce it, and take it away repeatedly; and oscillation without end, and purpose. If the successive character of reflection is to be superseded and the result were to be demanded, then the

following obvious contradiction would arise: *For the 'I', there is an external object that belongs and does not belong to it.* This contradiction before us cannot be solved as it stands, by any distinction. As long as we only deal with a single external object, there is not room for a modification to arise, whereby, on the one hand, the object would belong to, and on the other hand, would be expelled by, the 'I'.¹⁸³

The object of self-consciousness is replaced by a manifold of representations that remain totally external to it:

What is revealed is that the egoity [*Ichheit*] is based on an *objective manifold*. In this manifold *every* part is *contingent* because the *other parts* still support the 'I' when something is taken away from it. I posit myself as this or that, but I am in no way bound to either, as long as I can change. For example a table can stand which has many feet. In principle, it stands on all of them at the same time. However, it could do without one of them at a time, because the other legs would still support it.¹⁸⁴

Herbart seems to assume that even if the object of self-consciousness can never be located in a single representation, without muddying the waters of self-knowing, epistemic transparency of consciousness is nonetheless possible for itself within a plurality of presentations.

Only if a number of objects are represented could 'Something' in them belong to the representing agent, namely *their unification within a 'single representative process' [ein Vorstellen]* and what will later spring from this. This must provide for the requisite modification in virtue of which the various objects can be recognised. It, however, does not characterise *a single one of them*, and for this very reason it might precisely belong to 'us'. In this way, my representation of myself would remain dependent on the representations of objects,—it refers to them—it does not, however, coincide with them.¹⁸⁵

The logic of Herbart's approach leads him to regard this unity not as a 'transcendental synthesis of apperception', but as a rendezvous for anonymous (and also unconscious) representations which he attempts to explain by means of his 'factual mechanics'. We can link this up with a more recent position which Russell characterised as 'neutral monism' when he described Ernst Mach, William James, and Stout. Consciousness is here explained as

ontologically neutral (that is without bias towards either realism or idealism) based on constellations and configurations of anonymous representations.

First, we must obtain certain objective predicates. These, however, should not be of a kind which exist in themselves since in the end this would lead us into the humiliating necessity of merely *sticking* our 'knowledge-about-something' onto it, as it were externally. Rather, this wonderful knowledge which returns into itself must emerge by itself out of this objective foundation. That is to say, in a way where objectivity withdraws in the face of this knowledge so that the 'I' does not encounter the 'Self' as any kind of determined 'other', but as its own self.¹⁸⁶

We come to 'ourselves' from and through objects and are guided by them. *Without* them, self-consciousness remains inconsistent and has certainly nothing to do with freedom.¹⁸⁷

Herbart's approach is not uninteresting—and with his psychomechanical results, he is only apparently at the opposite end of the early Romantics and Schleiermacher. Both types of approaches refer self-consciousness to something in a non-reductive manner (that is, without undermining the Fichtean discovery of the problem), indeed even explain it from the standpoint of something which it itself no longer is: "(...) at last we can see clearly now that this 'knowing-about-oneself' [*Von-sich-Wissen*] refers to something which is presupposed and has until now been omitted and that we must correct the mistake by supplementing [*die Ergänzung*] the omission."¹⁸⁸ We know what Herbart is thinking about: the objective (innerwordly) basis-of-representation', whose primed mechanism should take us out of the regression and circularity of the Fichtean theory of reflection in which the self is continuously encased anew in its object.

It is doubtful, however, whether self-consciousness can spring out of a configuration of elements, where none of them contains self-consciousness as a predicate. If it were to contain it, then self-consciousness would only once again be presupposed and has not been explained by something which is itself not conscious.

Herbart is convinced that all consciousness is linked to an object and that the thought of a consciousness without an object is, literally, 'groundless':¹⁸⁹

Without any doubt, when one talks about oneself, everybody (even if it is only vaguely represented) has something in mind, for a representation bereft of any object cannot be the true expression of the 'I'. First of all, we must therefore give the concept 'I' to an unknown object which remains to be determined and then see what follows from that.¹⁹⁰

In this way, our search for an object of self-consciousness is thought according to the 'model of representation'. Every representation [*Vorstellung*], according to this, is contrasted with something which is posed before us [*Vor-gestelltes*]. Fichte and his early romantic successors have made the eventual failure of the search plausible, even if one does not want to accept their suggested positive alternatives. It is impossible to ground the transparency of 'Self-Knowledge' in a duality of reflections: how is it possible to find *oneself* in the other without the existence of a trans-reflective unity, which only manifests itself in the interplay of object and subject within 'monadic consciousness', but cannot be explained by it?

Herbart then maintains that through the ingesting and expelling of the manifold of representations the 'I' manages to contrast its own unity to the 'variety-of-the-object'. Since what we mean when we refer to the 'I' is something different, something more comprehensive than what is just felt [*das Gefühlte*], such as desire, pain, and so on, which supersede each other in the objective succession of representations:

It might be more difficult to explain what it means to say I find myself feeling [*führend*]. However, what is apparent is that feeling (the objective in its own quality) such as this desire or that pain, in no way provides what we would regard as our own 'I'.¹⁹¹

Herbart admits that representation "as mere sum or aggregate" is not any more illuminating than intuition in its unrelated isolation when we link it to the thought 'I'.¹⁹² It is said, on the other hand, that we can only attain this thought through and by the objects themselves. The process of representing, according to this, is *first and foremost* an 'I'—and non-conscious.¹⁹³ We gain a consciousness of the 'I' by tearing ourselves away from the (objective) stream of representations. Since these are certainly not the product of our freedom, it is obvious why self-discovery [*Selbstfindung*] is always associated with a feeling of involuntariness.¹⁹⁴ This involuntariness of the self-representation

does not mean that it must not be distinguished from the stream of representations. We emerge from “being ensconced in the objects of [our] representations. The predicates [we ourselves] ascribe to the states, mentioned above, [pain and despair, complacency and pride], are still something objective, although the subject to whom we ascribe them is already presupposed as known.”¹⁹⁵ We have already seen that Herbart regards statements such as ‘I am happy’ as synthetic. He therefore ascribes something in the predicate to the representation of the subject which the latter did not contain before. Furthermore, we can only experience the representation of mourning through the condition that it is ours and that we have already become familiar with it.

Therefore the egoity does not lie in the articulation of what is objective, and this is in conformity with its own concept (the I). It rather forms an opposite pole even to the predicates attributed to the I. In fact, it is these predicates that allow us to distinguish between the egoity and those predicates, despite their being conjoined with it.¹⁹⁶

Is there not a hidden contradiction here? On the one hand, we are supposed to obtain our self-consciousness from mere objects (representations), whilst, on the other hand, one should be able to distinguish self-consciousness from the aggregate of representations. The first premise—the objective or the unconscious as the point of departure—seems to be the stronger one for Herbart. Thus he says that “only this objective content can provide the reason [*Grund*] for why we stand apart from the process of its representation.”¹⁹⁷ The manifold of representations themselves “must be constituted in such a way that it can loosen the chains that would shackle a subject which only knows objects and never ‘itself’.”¹⁹⁸ Herbart suggests the following solution to the problem:

The demand that our representations should lift us beyond them and bring us to ‘ourselves’ is a particular demand which is contained within a more general one, namely that: in a certain way, what we represent places us outside of the process of representing it. So it is a contradiction to say that any determined A which is represented would alone be up to the task of modifying or diminishing the act of representing this A. In that way, A would have to be opposed to itself.

Now no process of representation, taken in isolation, as the process of representing a determinate A or B or C and so forth, can place us outside of

itself. The only possible alternative is to conclude that the different representations, insofar as they are determined as one thing or another by the various represented elements, are mutually diminishing or modifying. This is the case, as long as it is determined as this one or that one through its differing representations. So that *one* can place us outside of the *other*.

For the being of 'I' to be possible, the manifold of representations therefore must supersede one another. This proposition is the result which we will stand by. It is easy to show that experience proves this proposition to be true. That it is also extremely fruitful will be shown below.¹⁹⁹

Herbart's thought is clear. If self-consciousness is constructed by the object alone, that is to say, if it is constructed from the material of a manifold of successive representations, and moreover if each of them were to be differentiated from one another, then this differentiation must itself be a characteristic of the succession of representations themselves. One representation withdraws in favour of another, and this self-negation *à tour de rôle* of the whole series then lifts the 'I' out as that which does not drown in the stream.

Certainly someone will ask how this "representation of the 'I'" comes about if there was no primary knowledge of oneself that was independent of any representation. Either these representations are already conscious—each considered by itself (this is what Herbart denies); or they only become known in their interference (this is what Herbart assumes). In the first instance, consciousness was not explained, but only presupposed. In the latter, one cannot see how consciousness could arise from the conjunction (or disjunction) of elements, where none of them were characterised with the predicate of consciousness. Nor can one see how consciousness succeeded in withdrawing itself from the series as a whole: Neutral monism falls at the very same hurdle.

Herbart, however, takes his conclusions so far as to categorically deny consciousness the possibility of any self-acquaintance. If the consciousness of consciousness were to arise out of the fact that each successive consciousness makes conscious its previous (though in itself unconscious) consciousness, then, at each moment, the final consciousness in the series—and in this way the whole series itself—would remain unconscious. This is exactly what Herbart assumes:

Amongst the many aggregates of representations, where each successive apperceives the preceding one, or where a third takes as its object the conjunction or conflict between the first and the second—out of all of them, then, one must be last. This ultimate apperception will not be apperceived again.²⁰⁰

The early romantics who tried to overcome Fichte—compared with this absurd consequence which has reproduced the worst lapses of the empiricist authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—appear to be more loyal to Fichte's original insight and more conscious of the problematic.

VI

Finally, I would like to outline the continuity between the early romantic context of the debate and the speculations of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Søren Kierkegaard on the subject. This appears to be relatively unproblematic for Schleiermacher. For although his decisive thought on this theme only came to light in his lectures on *Dialektik* in the first decade of the nineteenth century, especially in the introductory paragraphs of his *Glaubenslehre*,²⁰¹ they contain, nonetheless, the conception of 'self-consciousness' as a non-reflective feeling "in opposition to knowledge about something"²⁰² and as subordinated to the absolute. And these ideas have quite clearly been developed in the wake of the early Romantics.

Can the same be said about Kierkegaard, the bitter critic of the Romantics? I think it can. This consequence is not as striking as it might seem, given that the picture of romanticism outlined in the previous section is significantly different from the cliché vulgar romantic scenario with posthorns sounding, and moonlight glimmering and with its unwarranted moral and religious overtones; precisely the kind of scenario against which Kierkegaard directed his polemic.

In principle little is yet known about the early Romantics. It has only been a few years since Novalis' authentic speculations have become available in a critical edition. The same is true for the placing of Hölderlin's reflections, which we could not put into context were it not for the reconstruction of the speculations by the Homburg circle—and we have not been able to obtain Sinclair's and Zwilling's reasoning until recently.²⁰³

An overview of Friedrich Schlegel's philosophical development has only recently become possible. The vast text, however, still makes it a tricky undertaking to form an overall judgement, since we have to keep in mind that the *critical edition* is still far from completion. Just as unsatisfactory is the situation of Friedrich Schleiermacher's work. Most of it is recorded in a wholly inadequate and uncritical manner compiled from many transcripts of his lectures. And the critical edition has only recently been published in its initial volumes, among which there are not yet any specifically philosophical texts—especially not ones that relate to our theme. We, however, have to start with the authentic records of the authors concerned if we want to deal with romantic thought. These offer a very different picture than the one which Kierkegaard was able to or wanted to construct, who in any case was not neutral in these matters.

In my discussion on their respective approaches, I wish to bring to light the convergence of Kierkegaard's and Schleiermacher's speculations. They agree already to the extent that—in contrast to Hölderlin and Novalis—they both have a religious answer to the question of self-consciousness' dependence on whence [*Woher*] it comes. Kierkegaard emphasised even more resolutely than the liberal Schleiermacher who maintained that:

Here the word 'God' is articulated as meaning nothing else in our field of language than what is posited along with the original, absolute accessible feeling of dependence. Hence, all further determinations must be developed from this. The accepted view is the converse; that the feeling of dependency arises from a knowledge of God which is given elsewhere. This, however, is wrong.²⁰⁴

'God' is therefore only one of the many possible interpretations into which self-consciousness gets caught so as to give a name to its feeling of not-being-its-own-origin. With this, a principal right was conceded to non-Christian world-views, which the religious Anti-Climacus was in no way disposed to admit.

But let us first slow down and see how Schleiermacher's analysis of subjectivity works itself through to the thought of faith. In the handwritten *marginalia* of his first edition of the *Glaubenslehre*, he defined faith as "*das im Selbstbewußtsein mitgesetzte Bewußtsein vom Mitgesetzten*" ["a consciousness of co-positing which is co-positing in self-consciousness"], a formula that almost reminds us of Kierkegaard's reflection on the self at the beginning of *The Sickness into Death*.

Schleiermacher's *Dialektik*, unlike early Idealism, does not treat the subject as a philosophical starting-point. Within the course of an unanchored experience that unconsciousness forms from the simultaneous differences and interconnections of its internal and external functions, the subject itself becomes a theme precisely at the moment in which it seeks the ground that will explain the respective relations and differentiations. Such an experience cannot be assuaged by the discovery of a ground that is still determined solely as a higher order function, with respect to its subordinate functions; a ground that at the end of an even deeper reflection will eventually be revealed as a relation of a relation which has hitherto remained invisible. On the contrary, such an experience can only be assuaged by a ground that ultimately explains the *fact* of differentiation and unification.

In relation to this ultimate ground, Schleiermacher now realises that its likelihood increases successively with experience which consciousness forms from the dissonant yet uniform organisation of its functions. Indeed, he realised that any relative syntheses which are achieved on the way only become understandable through an absolute presupposition of a unity which simultaneously manifests itself in and withdraws itself from them, without it being clear (due to the bipolarity of consciousness) how this unity could catch up with its endpoint at any point along the path that is followed. It therefore makes sense to call this endpoint 'transcendent' in relation to the level of relations in which consciousness is active. The essential law, inscribed in consciousness, is that of its orientation towards the transcendent ground, wherein the difference between dispute and counterdispute would be annulled once and for all. This seems to contradict the very structure of consciousness, since even the most stable experience of which it is capable cannot get around the fact that none of the functions that have been isolated in the analysis can be maintained in this methodical abstraction without spilling over into the next, such that all the oppositions arising in the process of consciousness' self-understanding can only be described as the temporary *prevalence* or *disappearance* of one opposition in favour of another.²⁰⁵ The unity which is searched for its own sake can only be glimpsed at the point of the interval of the 'transition' between differences [*Differenten*], without being able to escape the dimension of the relation and emptiness.

In this way the *organic function*, which is itself already a generic term for diverging and converging moments, and the *intellectual function* for which the same holds, is united in the concept of thought.

What this formulation omits, namely, that the proof that the ultimately founding instance of any self understanding can be found neither in the syntheses of thinking nor of willing but only in their common origin: This is furnished by the fact that both thought and will exhibit a twofold lack which is carried over into their respective spheres in the form of a relation (thinking-thought or freedom-necessity and willing-willed or purpose and material resistance). Moreover, these pairs are defined as mutually completing moments which are opposed to one another and hence are again in a relation (towards each other). This relation cannot avoid the law of the object:²⁰⁶ That is, the transition between thoughts is mediated by 'free productivity' (even 'receptivity' would require it in order to be recognised *as* sensitivity [*Empfänglichkeit*]). In just the same way the acts of volition require intervention of cognitive acts, so as to be able to model themselves in accordance to aims. The syntheses of thought and will have not 'failed' because they did not bring about any 'hint' of a transrelative unity, but because they were not able to ground this unity in their own sphere.²⁰⁷

"Immediate (or immaterial) self-consciousness" and "feeling"²⁰⁸ are the terms that Schleiermacher gives to this function, a function that surpasses the duplicity of willing and thinking and tends towards the unity manifested in their intertwinement. The attribute "immediate" is supposed to suggest that we are dealing with a form of consciousness in which the *relata* of what is reflected upon, and of what performs its reflection, no longer diverge—as was the case with all previous syntheses. Both functions should be thought in unison as mutually self-'negating' moments of a single and integral reality.²⁰⁹ That is to say, as moments of an action which becomes transparent to itself in its own realisation, of a form of being that always manifests its own appearance—or in whatever way one may wish to express the coexistence of the deed and its reflex. In the choice of the appropriate conceptual form what is paramount is to do justice to the fact that "here the opposition between subject and object (. . .) (remains) utterly impossible and inapplicable."²¹⁰ This enables Schleiermacher to insist repeatedly upon calling immediate self-consciousness—in opposition to the mediated one—"immaterial" [*ungegenständlich*].

Here we encounter a theory of the subject which is strongly reminiscent of the one we became acquainted with earlier in the context of the speculative thought of the early Romantics and Hölderlin's, a theory whose historical roots lie in Fichte. As we know, Fichte's philosophy achieved its breakthrough with the discovery of the impossibility of explaining self-consciousness with the model of reflection (in order to be able to judge oneself as the reflected term, the one who reflects must have a prior knowledge about himself). Few of his contemporaries show such depth and dexterity in their understanding of this theory as Schleiermacher. The relevant passages from the *Glaubenslehre* and the *Dialektik* actually read as if Schleiermacher had been familiar with all the most standard formulations of the recent literature on Fichte,²¹¹ which, by the way, has hardly been influenced at all by Schleiermacher.

In "immediate self-consciousness" we are concerned with a matter whose mode of being cannot be described in propositions of the same grammar with which one forms statements [*Aussagen*] about the world of objects. Immediate self-consciousness is so radically opposed to "objectified consciousness" or "knowing about something,"²¹² that any attempt to *confront it with itself* by mediating it via a representation which it can then "observe" fails to do justice to its own peculiar mode of being [*Seinsweise*].

The reflection theory of consciousness does just this. It attempts to grasp immediate self-consciousness as "representation of itself," as reflection²¹³ or to grasp it as "objective consciousness,"²¹⁴ whereby the object is supposed to be the subject itself. A theory of reflection could not explain the indisputable fact of the "self-possessing" [*Sich-selbst-Haben*].²¹⁵ On the other hand, Schleiermacher was aware that heightened pure feeling could not avoid the discourse of the theory of reflection (which he denied).

Nobody has been more perspicuous than Schleiermacher in unravelling this aporia, upon which Fichte's approach failed. I summarise his complicated thought fragments that can be found scattered through his texts in the following way: one can *neither* think the reflection without presupposing a simple self-conscious identity (otherwise one limb of the relation could not be certain of seeing in the other *itself* rather than just the other limb). *Nor* can one disregard the fact that this identity is not immediately present itself, but has to call upon the other—the other linked *relata*—as a witness for it to be identical to itself. As we have seen, Hölderlin had depicted the aporia in

1794/5. Fichte, to whom he refers, did indeed discover that the evidence of the other must be authenticated by a pre-reflexive knowledge of one's own identity. But he also became entangled in a circle. He explains in his lectures *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* that the determinacy of the thought 'I' (its concept) is linked to the *difference* between at least two mutually differentiated expressions ("You think the 'I', and hence you think nothing else; you therefore do not think the 'Not-I'"), for a thought can only have conceptual distinction when it can delimit itself negatively against everything that it is not. Fichte called this differential basis of all conceptual knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] "the law of reflection in all our cognition." On the other hand, we have to get around the diremption of the two links by means of an immediate intuition [*Anschauung*] of their non-separation, otherwise the other is no longer the same as the one, and the indispensable identity of the thought 'I' has been lost.

This explanation gets us nowhere. The fact that the 'I' is exhausted by the other becomes its own condition of possibility. Even if it denies the ground of its own differentiation, the self is still split into two. The path from the reflected term to the reflecting leads through a mediation that cannot be circumvented.

The question now becomes: how can the thought of insuperable (and conceptually unavoidable) mediation be reconciled with that of necessary immediate familiarity? Schleiermacher has an ingenious answer to this question. What is made clear to immediate self-consciousness, when it flickers to and fro between the two poles of the reflexive split, is not the consciousness of the perfection of superreflexive identity, but rather *the negative consciousness, that is, its lack*.

He always says that self-consciousness crosses the empty space of an "absent unity"²¹⁶ in the moment of "transition"²¹⁷ from what is reflected to that which reflects. Since the self cannot ascribe this lack to its own activity, it must recognise it as an effect caused by a "transcendent certainty" [that is beyond its power].²¹⁸ This again can only be expressed by means of a "transcendent ground." It is (positively) "determined" even before it starts to determine itself (actively). In other words, (and here I will combine various citations from Schleiermacher), "feeling" has access to itself precisely because it reads the imprint [*Prügemal*] of its "transcendent determination"²¹⁹ as an indication of an identity which "supplements the defect"²²⁰ inscribed in reflection. Roughly speaking this is the conclusion reached by the "Analysis of Self-Consciousness

in Relation to the co-positeness [*Mitgesetztheit*] of an Other,"²²¹ and which leads it into the religious disposition of assuming a "feeling of dependency as such [*schlechthinnig*]" with respect to a "whence" [*woher*] to which it owes its determination as immediate self-consciousness, a determination which it cannot attribute to *itself* as its own achievement. "Its power is broken" upon this facticity of unavailable self-mediation.²²²

Schleiermacher attempted to capture this 'crisis of the subject' with the following formulation. In self-consciousness the Ideal- and the Real [*Real*] foundation diverge. That means that the self is the ground for its self-cognition [*Sich-Erkennen*], but not however, the ground of its being. It has not brought itself to a state of immediate self-intimacy. However, once it is there, it is just as free, responsible and spontaneous in its thoughts as Fichte and Kant had allowed.

Schleiermacher has emphasised over and over again that the predicate *schlechthinnig* [as such] is the German translation of the word 'absolute'. Self-consciousness is only dependent absolutely, or in other words, on the absolute. It is not the ground for its being. This does not mean that it depends on an innerworldly or natural authority. Such a dependency, as mentioned for example by the materialists, would have to be called 'relative'.

I hope I have managed to make apparent the complete analogy of Schleiermacher's construction of self-consciousness, in particular with that of Novalis. Both authors have one and the same problem in front of them. For convenience's sake we must think of the self as a relation between two *relata*.

If we wish, however, to avoid the circularity of the theory of reflection, this relation must be circumvented through a pre-reflective self-acquaintance. This acquaintance alone could ground an identity where 'being-itself' is maintained irrespective of its articulation as relation, and hence as difference. Since this identity is no longer within the reach of (conceptual) knowledge, it can only be postulated as a necessary condition for feeling in which two complementary, seemingly mutually exclusive experiences are required: 1) that the identity must exist in order to explain the existence of feeling; 2) that this identity does not itself enter into this feeling. In this way, 'feeling' shows up a fundamental lack in experience—and it interprets this lack as the absolute which is longed for. In feeling the 'whence' of its inaccessible determinacy is disclosed.

VII

This is the fundamental experience of the early Romantics *par excellence*. We can find it again with Friedrich Schlegel and Karl Wilhelm Solger, whose theories of self-consciousness ought to be covered by this paper but which I must omit due to lack of space. Is it still this same experience for Søren Kierkegaard?

I must, again due to lack of space, draw only on one single passage from one text; namely, the beginning of *The Sickness unto Death*.²²³ Kierkegaard's interpreters are confronted with some characteristic problems. On the one hand, its author, the 'edified' Anti-Climacus, writes with a Christian ardour. A devotional writing has no arguments. On the other hand, nowhere in Kierkegaard's complete work (as far as I am aware) can you find a similarly condensed speculative remark on the theme we are concerned with here; that is to say, the topic of self-consciousness.

The book starts in the first paragraph with the famous but obscure words:

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation [*Verhältnis*], but the relation's relating itself to itself.²²⁴

This structural sketch appears unnecessarily complex. Obviously the term 'relation' [*Verhältnis*], the understanding of which is difficult, has different meanings in different contexts. We can distinguish three ways through which the self appears as 'relation' [*Verhältnis*], or to use the language of the early romantics—as relationship [*Relation*] and moreover as reflection.

1) Kierkegaard explains this in the statement that follows. The self is a relationship [*Relation*] between infinity and finitude, temporality and eternity, freedom and necessity. If I had more space, I would and should have to show that these determinations, just like the determination of 'relation' [*Verhältnis*], have already appeared in Schleiermacher's *Dialektik* and in his *Glaubenslehre*, and with the same function. Obviously, Kierkegaard has studied this essential work of protestant dogmatics thoroughly, as, for example, one can discover in his diaries.

2) The relation of relationship is the self in its comportment [*Verhalten*] towards the two moments, or better still: as self-comportment in bipolarity. The self—

and this ambiguity leads to what Kierkegaard calls his possible despair—is, as we say in German (and as Adorno in particular was fond of putting it) forced to be [*ist dazu verhalten*] infinite and finite, subject and object, eternal and temporal. Yet it is never able to be only the one at the cost of the other.

How can one explain the confusing duplication in the formulation by which the self is a relation [*Verhältnis*] that relates to itself? Obviously only by differentiating between two aspects in the subject-object relationship [*Relation*], which I take as a representation of all other semantic renderings of the same phenomena. First, the relationship [*Relation*] itself and as such, and secondly, the composites out of which it has been composed, (or better still, to which the relation leads), that is, subject and object, freedom and necessity. In a certain sense one must therefore say that the relationship [*Relation*] as such is not relative. Only the endpoints subject and object are relative. In this way it is impossible to represent the relation [*Verhältnis*] of both, in whose middle the self exists, the non-relative (or in idealist terms: absolute) identity of the poles as such. *The identity* would be the ‘whence’ of the relationship [*Relation*] just as it was for Schleiermacher. Kierkegaard expresses this by saying that man is only a ‘synthesis’ of both *relata* but not the self as such—because this self *is* the relationship and is therefore not *in* the relationship. (“In this way man is not yet a self”).²²⁵

3) In this manner we have also secured the third aspect. The self is a relation as well as a comportment [*Verhalten*] its ‘whence’, its ground. I quote Kierkegaard:

If the relation that relates itself to itself has been established by another, then the relation is indeed the third, but this relation, the third, is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation. The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another.²²⁶

Here we are confronted with the same confusing formula of a doubled relation [*Verhältnis*]. This time we are dealing with the relation [*Verhältnis*] of the subject-object relationship [*Relation*] towards that which allows it to exist as unity. This unity, which cannot be represented in the relationship [*Relation*], is its ‘whence’ or its ground. As we can remember, Schleiermacher talked

about the co-positeness [*Mitgesetztheit*] of the other in reflexivity or as Kierkegaard says in the relation [*Verhältnis*], that is, in the synthesis of the self as a link [*Beziehung*] between its subject and object pole. We can express this more simply: Every relation [*Verhältnis*] presupposes two moments. What cannot be explained by the relation *tout court*, is the fact that this duality in no way prevents the thought that what can be determined as either infinite or finite comportment [*verhalten*] is nonetheless one and the same thing, that is, the self. To explain this fact a third is needed, which can only be alluded to *ex negativo* in the syntheses, and which allows it to grasp itself, despite its relativity, as related [*bezogen*] (or comported [*verhalten*]) to an absolute. This is expressed by Kierkegaard when he says that the self only relates [*verhalten*] to itself by relating itself to another; since only this other permits it to exist in a finite relation as a *self*-relation, and not an external relation between different things.

I can see, at least up until now, no fundamental difference here from Schleiermacher's model. Both, as the early Romantics already had done, acknowledge self-consciousness' relativity as an uncircumventable condition of our (philosophical) description of it. And both add that this relativity demands that we transcend it to a trans-relative third or other which founds it and without which the relation could not be experienced as a self-relation. We have to say that the epistemological [*erkenntnistheoretisch*] aspect is peculiarly under-investigated in Kierkegaard. We have supplemented his text making use of the knowledge that we have of the texts already discussed, rather than because he has dealt with this aspect explicitly.

In contrast, we can find in Kierkegaard a quite peculiar interest in the freedom of the self, in opposition to the early Romantics. It is the foundation of his possible despair. Of course the relationship knows itself to be grounded in a third, that is, not itself. This foundation, however, does not rid the relationship of the undecidability of the two poles, between which it is swaying to and fro as if it were in a frenzy of possibility. Kierkegaard says that this despair is "a negativity";²²⁷ that is to say, it exists because the *counterpart*, the opposing half, or the other pole, has always been withdrawn from the comportment [*Verhalten*] in a *determinate situation*. Hölderlin knew this, when he despaired about the fact "that while I have the one, the other is absent." This despair about comportment is therefore the experience of an absent unity: an

absolute identity which escapes the play of appearance and counter-appearance and which would not be merely relative.

The self is essentially an 'unhappy consciousness'—without being able to transport itself into the realm which has escaped it [*das Verfehltte*], as is the case in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Or perhaps we should rather say: this transportation no longer occurs in knowledge but in and as faith. At the same time, faith has got a speculatively accessible basis, as in Schleiermacher. Only he who can contrast the being torn between two compartments *with* a condition of successful reconciliation can truly despair, just as only he who is aware of the idol of a happiness that has escaped him can be unhappy.

Thus the absolute, a state from which anything relative and negative would have been removed and which is an object of faith, remains for ever present in spite of its withdrawal. Kierkegaard alludes to this when he refers to the peace and the equilibrium which compartment cannot achieve by itself.²²⁸ It is the point of transition or indifference of Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*, which has also here aided Kierkegaard's thinking.

Now one might say: it is *this* which forms the actual despair of the Kierkegaardian self, since it cannot rid itself of the condition of negativity and can therefore not move across into the absolute. Like Tantalos, in the way in which his food is constantly withdrawing from his outstretched hands, the self is condemned to remain in a 'passion inutile'.

Two things can be said about this: Firstly, Kierkegaard—or at least the edifying author Anti-Climacus—is Christ, and despair is a test that should not be interpreted as an insurmountable *conditio humana* as did his later (atheist) pupil Sartre. The leap from despair into belief lends a new meaning to the negativity of the relation. It only lacked this meaning as long as it remained encapsulated within the duality of reflection. Secondly, it would be wrong, at least superficially, to oppose Kierkegaard to Schleiermacher and the early romantics by saying that the one remains in negativity while the others happily slid into a certainty about the absolute that has only just been gained. Friedrich Schlegel defined the romantic as "yearning for the eternal,"²²⁹ and he added that this yearning is never satisfied in a fulfilment: "Something higher [than the yearning for eternity] does not exist in man."²³⁰ Reflection has to be aware of the idea of an absolute in order to explain its relative unity

in which it sustains itself. To want to reach this unity (which Novalis, in a very Kantian way, has called “regulative”)²³¹ as an absolute is a senseless undertaking since reflection would have to destroy its goal by the means through which it wishes to achieve it. That is why our state is essentially one of a yearning; and yearning can only be experienced by a being which lacks that which it is yearning for. If one wishes to call this state despair, then the romantics would be more despairing than the believing Christ Anti-Climacus.

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Notes

¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. A.L. Selby-Bigge, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 635-6.

² Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B134, footnote.

³ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴ To show this is the object of Dieter Henrich’s work, *Identität und Objektivität. Eine Untersuchung über Kants transzendente Deduktion*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1976. Cf. idem, “Kant und Hegel. Versuch der Vereinigung ihrer Grundgedanken,” in *Selbstverhältnisse*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1982, pp. 173-208, esp. pp. 176 ff.; and idem, “Die Identität des Subjekts in der transzendentalen Deduktion,” in eds. Hariolf Oberer and Gerhard Seel, *Kant. Analysen—Probleme—Kritik*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1988, pp. 39-70.

Kant himself also attributes ‘numerical identity’ to self-consciousness, for example in the chapter on the paralogisms in Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A344 = B402, A361 ff. This identity can only be called ‘sequential’ [‘durchgängig’] if it is not relationless, but proves itself to be one and the same in relation to a manifold of changing representations (for example in the temporal sequence). Thus in the schema of A344 Kant defines the unity of self-consciousness as one which is attributed to it, ‘according to the different times at which it is present’. Since this sequential unity is one of self-consciousness, it is also known to itself; or in other words ‘the subject is one and the same at different times and knows itself to be so. Its unity is a knowing-itself-as-identical-with-itself at any given point in time or more generally: at any given point in an intuition’ (Karen Gloy, *Die Kantische Theorie der Naturwissenschaft. Eine Strukturanalyse ihrer Möglichkeit, ihres Umfangs und ihrer Grenzen*, Berlin & New York, de Gruyter, 1976, p. 117).

- ⁵ I have examined this in more detail in my *Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1985, pp. 32 ff.
- ⁶ Dieter Henrich has shown the limits of the legitimacy of this model in "Ding an sich. Ein Prolegomenon zur Metaphysik des Endlichen," in *Vernunft des Glaubens. Wissenschaftliche Theologie und Kirchliche Lehre* (Festschrift for Wolfhart Pannenberg), eds. Jan Rouls und Gunther Wenz, Göttingen, 1989, pp. 42-92.
- ⁷ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B141/2.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, B278.
- ⁹ For example, *ibid.*, B139 ff.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, B402: "Now it is clear that I cannot know what I must presuppose in order to know an object, and that the determining self (thinking) is distinct from the determinable self (the thinking subject), as knowledge is from objects."
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, B404, A355.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, B155-157.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, cf. note B157 ff.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, A366 and B404.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, B158.
- ¹⁶ Schelling accused Descartes of a false deduction of this kind (from veritative to existential being) in his Munich Lectures *On the History of Modern Philosophy*: "The *sum* comprehended in the *cogito* thus only means: *sum qua cogitans*, I am as thinking, that is, in that specific kind of being which is known as thinking, and which is only *another* kind of being than, for example, that of the body whose kind of being consists in *filling* space, in other words excluding every other body from the space which it occupies. The *sum* included in the *cogito* thus does not have the meaning of an unconditional 'I am', but only of 'I am in a certain way' namely as thinking, in this mode of being which is called thinking." (Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.S. Schelling, Stuttgart, 1856-61, 1/10, p. 10.)
- ¹⁷ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B422/3.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, A68/9 = B93/4.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, B422.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, A342 ff.-B400 ff.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, cf. BXL/XLI, A107, B68, B156, B277, B430.
- ²² *Ibid.*, B428, 430 ff.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, B430, with B423, ('real' [real] in this context obviously means 'existent/actual').
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, B422/3N.
- ²⁵ Kant, *Metaphysical Principles of Natural Science*, Kant's *gesammelte Schriften*, Akademieausgabe, Berlin & Leipzig, 1900 ff., vol. IV, p. 543.
- ²⁶ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A598/9 = B626/7.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, A598/9 = B625.

- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, A354/5. Kant also says ‘immediate’, or ‘tautological’.
- ²⁹ Cf. also *ibid.*, A598 ff. = B626 ff.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, A219 = B266.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, A255 = B272/3; cf. A374 ff.: “perception is the representation of an existence”; “what . . . is represented through perception is . . . also existent.”
- ³² See also W. Lütterfelds, “Zum undialektischen Begriff des Selbstbewußtseins bei Kant und Fichte,” in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie* 8, Vienna, 1975, pp. 7-38, here p. 19. Along with most other interpreters, Wolfgang Becker (*Selbstbewußtsein und Erfahrung. Kants transzendente Deduktion und ihre argumentative Rekonstruktion*, Freiburg & München, Alber, 1984, pp. 239 ff.) interprets talk of the experiential character of the proposition ‘I think’, or of the ‘indeterminate inner perception’, in terms of the emptiness, in other words depending on experience, of the pure *cogito* (in a similar manner to Sartre’s ‘ontological proof’ of the intrinsic nothingness of conscious, on the basis of reference to being). But the emptiness of the ‘I’ merely shows that it only appears in connection with the sensible (for example with the pure forms of intuition); it does not imply that what it is related to must be something experienceable (empirical). Thus the necessary co-giveness of sensation does not follow from the emptiness of the ‘I think’.
- ³³ Schelling had already accused Kant of this unintended consequence, with reference to the footnote to B422/3 (Schelling’s *Sämtliche Werke*, 1/1, p. 401 ff). He was entirely clear that this kind of ‘intellectual intuition’ does not come into contradiction with that which Kant explicitly rejects, in which the spontaneity of understanding autonomously generates the sensory material (*ibid.*, p. 181 ff.). I have set out and interpreted the relevant references in my *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*, p. 42.
- ³⁴ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A91 = B123.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, A90 = B122.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, A345/6 = B404.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, A402.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, A366.
- ³⁹ “I cannot know as an object, that which I must presuppose in order to know an object at all . . .” (*ibid.*, A402). “In thinking the categories, the subject of the categories cannot acquire a concept of itself as an object of the categories; for, in order to think them it must take its pure self-consciousness, which was to be explained, as the ground” (*ibid.*, B422).
- ⁴⁰ Kant, *Reflexion* (of uncertain date: 1770/1?, 1769?, 1773-5?, in *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*, vol. XVII, 509/10).
- ⁴¹ There is also a self-consciousness corresponding to freedom; one can readily foresee the consequences that would be entailed by the assumption that the ‘I’ of the

- ory is other than the 'I' of action (with action falling into the unconscious). Cf. Jürgen Stolzenberg, "Das Selbstbewußtsein einer reinen praktischen Vernunft," in *Metaphysik nach Kant?*, eds. Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1988, pp. 181-208, esp. pp. 183 ff. Stolzenberg refers, besides the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, to the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. The unconditional law as self-consciousness of freedom cannot appear in the form of knowledge. "For it is evident, that the concept of the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason as considered by Kant must be termed the concept of a self-consciousness *a priori*. Thus it is the concept of a self-reaction in which reason does not possess a *knowledge* of itself, and therefore fundamentally unsuited to provide an answer to the question of the ground of the *knowledge* of freedom, which is essential for Kant."
- ⁴² I have explained this in more detail in the special issue, edited by me, of the *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 42, no. 166, 3/1988, pp. 361-82 ("Comment fonder une morale aujourd'hui?").
- ⁴³ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, p. 56. See, on this concept, the still unsurpassed early text of Dieter Henrich, "Der Begriff der Sittlichen Einsicht und Kants Lehre vom Faktum der Vernunft," in *Die Gegenwart der Griechen im neueren Denken* (Festschrift for H.G. Gadamer on his 60th Birthday), Tübingen, Mohr (Siebeck), 1960, pp. 77-115.
- ⁴⁴ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, p. 9.
- ⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 9/10.
- ⁴⁶ Kant, *Reflexion* no. 4336 in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol. XVII, 509 f. Further evidence concerning Kant's view of freedom as "intuited intellectually" are to be found in *Reflexion* no. 4228, *ibid.*, vol. XVII, 467, no. 4224, *ibid.*, 470.
- ⁴⁷ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 55 f., (the first emphasis is mine; M.F.).
- ⁴⁸ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B430 ff.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, B430/1.
- ⁵⁰ Kant identifies to a large extent the concepts of 'Spontaneity' and of the 'intellectual': The intellectual is that whose concept is an activity (*Reflexion* no. 4182, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol. XVIII, p. 447). Thus the activity which is intuited in intellectual intuition is that of the intelligence itself: the 'I combine' Cf. also Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, BXL f., N.
- ⁵¹ Cf. Dieter Henrich, "Die Anfänge der Theorie des Subjekts (1789)," in *Zwischenbetrachtungen. Im Prozeß der Aufklärung*, Jürgen Habermas zum 60. Geburtstag, eds. Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe & Albrecht Wellmer, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989, pp. 106-170, esp. pp. 139 ff. The fragmentary character of the present sketch in part derives from the exclusion of the 'lesser Kantians' (Jacobi, Reinhold, Maimon, Aenesidemus—Schulze, Beck).
- ⁵² Leibniz, for example, in his *Discours de Métaphysique*, § 34. In an even more Kantian

manner in the *Philosophische Schriften*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt, Berlin, 1875-1890, Vol. 2, p. 53, Leibniz writes: “la notion de ce *moy* lie ou comprenne les différens estats [du sujet].”

⁵³ Leibniz, (§ 4 of *Principles of Nature and of Grace*; cf. *Monadology*, §§ 23 and 30: “*nous sommes élevés aux actes réflexits, qui nous font penser à ce qui s’appelle moi*”).

⁵⁴ C.A. Crusius, (*Entwurf der nothwendigen Vernunft-Wahrheiten, wiefem sie den zufälligen entgegen gesetzt werden*, Leipzig, 1745, p. 863).

⁵⁵ Kant, *Reflexion* dating from 1769 (No. 3929, *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*).

⁵⁶ Kant, *Vorlesungen über die Metaphysik*, ed. K.H.L. Pöhlitz, Erfurt, 1821, p. 135.

⁵⁷ Descartes, *Œuvres et lettres*, ed. André Bridoux, Paris, 1953 [= *Bibl. la Pléiade*], pp. 879, 284, 287, 289 *passim*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 899.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1359.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁶¹ Descartes saw the problem, but did not perceive its disastrous consequences for his explanation:

“C’est une chose très assurée que personne ne peut être certain s’il pense et s’il existe, si premièrement, il ne connaît la nature de la pensée et de l’existence. Non que pour cela il soit besoin d’une science réfléchie, ou acquise par une démonstration, et beaucoup moins de la science de cette science, par laquelle il connaisse qu’il sait, et derechef qu’il sait qu’il sait, et ainsi jusqu’à l’infini, étant impossible qu’on puisse jamais avoir une telle d’aucune chose que ce soit.” *ibid.*, pp. 526/7.

However, Descartes does not draw from this aporetic observation the obvious conclusion that self-consciousness cannot be thought on the model of a representation of one’s own representation. Rather, he has recourse to this model in what follows: “mais il suffit qu’il sache cela par cette sorte de connaissance intérieure qui précède toujours l’acquise . . .” Every form of knowledge (‘connaissance’) is the representation of an object distinct from it. Once the object is separated from it, no technical term will be able to show that, at the same time, it should *not* be separated from it, in order to be, in the radical sense, the *subject* of knowledge.

Descartes’ obliviousness to the disastrous consequences of the reflection model can also be seen in Burman’s notes on the conversation which I have already quoted. Burman had asked if the reflection model did not imply that the reflected subject is no longer in the same temporal location as the reflecting subject, thereby requiring a consciousness of *having* thought to be brought to light. Descartes replies: the consciousness of representing (*cogitare*) does in fact arise from a reflection on this representing. He simply denies the temporal gap between the act and the noticing of the act, and suggests that in general the soul can represent several things at once. If this answer is authentic, it simply shows that Descartes does not

- perceive the specific difference between a (successful) self-representation and the representation of an object. The former can never draw its certainty of identity from a numerical doubling into representing and represented unless the represented is already recognised as subject *before* the representation, and simply repeats this implicitly in and for knowledge.
- ⁶² Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and of Grace*, § 4.
- ⁶³ Leibniz, *Monadology*, § 30.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, § 23.
- ⁶⁵ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 252: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never observe anything but the perception." On the definition of identity, cf. *ibid.*, 14, pp. 200 ff.; for the (sceptical) application of this concept to the person, pp. 253 ft. and pp. 633 ft.
- ⁶⁶ Of an unknown English author, dating from 1728, Pseudo-Mayne, *Über das Bewußtsein*, translated and with an introduction and notes by Reinhard Brandt, Hamburg, 1983 (cf. esp. pp. XXVII ft). Brandt rightly states: "the history of the philosophy of consciousness will in future no longer be able to pass over [this first monograph on consciousness.]"
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. XXXI.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XXXII.
- ⁷⁰ Thus runs the second sub-title of his *Solid Philosophy Asserted, Against the Fancies of the Ideist: Or, The Method of Science Farther Illustrated*, London, R. Clavil, 1697, reprinted as a facsimile by Garland Publishing Inc., New York and London, 1984, with John Locke's hand-written marginalia. I would like to thank my colleague Richard Glauser for pointing out to me this remarkable author and his objections to Locke, derived from reflection theory. For further information I refer the reader to his essay "John Sergeant's Argument against Descartes and the Way of Ideas," in *The Monist*, Oct. 1988, vol. 71, no. 4, pp. 585-595.
- ⁷¹ John Sergeant, "Reflexions on Mr. Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *Solid Philosophy Asserted, Against the Fancies of the Ideist: Or, The Method of Science Farther Illustrated*, London, R. Clavil, 1697, p. 121.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

- ⁷⁸ Pseudo-Mayne, *Über das Bewußtsein*, pp. 6 and 8.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; with reference to practical self-consciousness, without which responsible and purposeful action would be inexplicable, cf. pp. 64-5.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.
- ⁸² *Animadversions upon Dr. Sherlock's Book, Entitled A Vindication of the Holy and Everblessed Trinity*, etc. London, 1693, p. 71, cited in Pseudo-Mayne, *Über das Bewußtsein*, ed. Reinhard Brandt, Hamburg, 1983 p. 111, n. 19.
- ⁸³ Bishop Peter Browne, *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*, London, W. Innys, 1728.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67; cf. ed. Brandt, Pseudo-Mayne, *Über das Bewußtsein*.
- ⁸⁵ Cf. esp. *ibid.*, p. 100.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8u.
- ⁸⁷ "Consciousness is the Mind's immediate Perception of itself, considered as now in the Act of perceiving itself: which is saying, that Self-Perception is its own proper Object; or that the Mind, in perceiving itself, is sensible of itself, as that which perceives, and is Conscious of itself." *ibid.*, p. 42.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10 n. Bishop Browne goes further, in the treatise already cited, *The Procedure . . .*, when he strictly distinguishes self-consciousness, as a type, from object-consciousness (and thus also from perception), although this does not prevent him from speaking of 'inner Perception' or 'inner Feeling': "Another Kind of Knowledge is that which we have from *self-Consciousness*. As we came to the knowledge of things without us by the *Mediation* of their *Ideas*; so on the contrary we have an *Immediate* Feeling or *Consciousness* of what is transacted in our Mind, without the Intervention of any *Ideas* whatsoever . . . This kind of Perception some have not inaptly called *Internal Sensation*, in order to distinguish it from the Perception we have of *External* objects by their *Ideas*." (Browne, *The Procedure*, pp. 124-5). However, the predicate 'internal' is no more sufficient to repair the damage done by the reflection model, than the assertion that self-consciousness does not follow the act (as Browne himself had maintained a page earlier ([*ibid.*, p. 125]), but 'falls indistinguishably within it' (*ibid.*, p. 126). Talk of the 'immediacy' of self-consciousness always indicates insight into a set of problems, even when no suitable conceptual tools are available for their solution.
- ⁸⁹ Pseudo-Mayne, *Über das Bewußtsein*, pp. 48-9 ff.
- ⁹⁰ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B133.
- ⁹¹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A366, B404.
- ⁹² Fichte, *Werke*, herausgegeben von Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Berlin, 1845, Neudruck Berlin, de Gruyter, 1971, vol. I, p. 527.
- ⁹³ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B132.

- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, §§ 24/35 of the Transcendental Deduction.
- ⁹⁵ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. Hans Jacob, vol. 1, Berlin, 1937, p. 357.
- ⁹⁶ Fichte, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 521, p. 528.
- ⁹⁷ Cf. *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht*, Frankfurt am Main, 1967, and *La découverte de Fichte*, in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, Année 72, 1967, n° 2, 154-169, especially 159 ff.
- ⁹⁸ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, pp. 350, 358 passim.
- ⁹⁹ Fichte, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 530, 2. Fichte in general does not distinguish between egoity and consciousness “for our self, or that which represents, or our consciousness are all *idem*. Our self is nothing other than consciousness itself” (Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 350). The dangers of this dual identification have been noticed early on (e.g. by Novalis and Schleiermacher) and have stimulated attempts at a non-egological explication of self-consciousness (for example in the work of the early Husserl and of Sartre as well as of Henrich and his followers).
- ¹⁰⁰ Leibniz, cf. la conscience où la connaissance réflexive [= § 4 of *Principes de la Nature et de la Grâce*].
- ¹⁰¹ For example, Fichte, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 528.
- ¹⁰² Fichte (e.g. *ibid.*, p. 525).
- ¹⁰³ A concept is clear when I can distinguish it from others, affirm or deny it correctly, re-identify it in different contexts and over time, and so on. A concept is distinct [*deutlich*] when I can give an account of all its individual constitutive features. [cf. Descartes, *Principia philosophiae* I, §§ 45/6; Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt, Berlin, 1875-80, reprinted Hildesheim 1983, vol. IV, 422.]
- ¹⁰⁴ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, pp. 357/8.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 368.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- ¹⁰⁷ Fichte, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 151.
- ¹⁰⁸ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 361.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 359/60; cf. the conclusion to the whole of paragraph 1, pp. 360-7.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 358.
- ¹¹¹ Fichte, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 111/tr. *Science of Knowledge*, eds. & trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970, p. 110.
- ¹¹² Schelling says: ‘non-self-sameness’ (Nicht-Einerleiheit), *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In der Urfassung von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter, Munich, 1946, pp. 26/7, 128/9.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- ¹¹⁴ By hypostatizing an immediate unity that could not be explicated in terms of reflexive relations the Early Romantics were able to link up with Jacobi. We owe

- to Dieter Henrich a first systematic reconstruction, using the original sources, of Jacobi's arguments that were of such relevance to Early Romanticism. Cf. his "Die Anfänge der Theorie des Subjekts (1789)," in *Zwischenbetrachtungen. Im Prozeß der Aufklärung*, eds. Axel Honneth *et al.*, pp. 106-170, esp. 123 ff. and 159 ff.
- ¹¹⁵ Hegel's letter to Schelling, end-January, in eds. Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz, *Materialien zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1975, p. 122.
- ¹¹⁶ Hölderlin Letter to Hegel, 26.1.1795, *ibid.*, p. 124.
- ¹¹⁷ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Textausgabe*, ed. D.E. Sattler, Darmstadt and Neuwied, Luchterhand, 1984, vol. 10, p. 33.
- ¹¹⁸ Hölderlin, *Fragment of Hyperion* (or draught), in *Sämtliche Werke*, 86 f., Lines 127-130.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Lines 131-154.
- ¹²⁰ Schleiermacher, *Sämtliche Werke*, III. Abtheilung, Vierten Bandes zweiter Theil, Berlin, 1839, esp. 422 ff.
- ¹²¹ "Vom ersten Ringen dunkler Kräfte/ Bis zum Erguß der ersten Lebensäfte,/ Wo Kraft in Kraft, und Stoff in Stoff verquillt,/ Die erste Blüt', die erste Knospe schwillt,/ Zum ersten Strahl von neu gebornem Licht,/ Das durch die Nacht wie zweite Schöpfung bricht/ Und aus den tausend Augen der Welt/ Den Himmel so Tag wie Nacht erhellt.[sic!]/ Hinauf zu des Gedankens Jugendkraft,/ Wodurch Natur verjüngt sich wieder schafft,/ Ist Eine Kraft, Ein Pulsschlag nur, Ein Leben,/ Ein Wechselspiel von Hemmen und von Streben" ("From the first wrestling of dark forces/ To the flowing forth of the first vital fluids,/ Where force with force and matter with matter are joined,/ Where the first blossom and the first bud are bursting/ In the first ray of newborn light/ That pierces the night like a second creation/ And which, through the thousand eyes of the world,/ Illuminates heaven as well as day and night. [sic!]/ Upwards to the youthful force of thought,/ Whereby nature, rejuvenated, recreates itself/ There is a force, a single heart-beat, a life/ a reciprocity of hindrance and of striving"). Schelling, "Epikurisch Glaubensbekenntnis Heinz Widerporstens," in eds. M. Frank and G. Kurz, *Materialien zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1975, p. 151, [6].
- ¹²² Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, F.K.A. Schelling, Stuttgart, Cotta, 1856-61, 1/7, p. 408; see 174.
- ¹²³ Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, eds. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert, (dtv-Gesamtausgabe), Munich, 1966, vol. 18, p. 46, 2.
- ¹²⁴ Hölderlin, *Der Abschied*, ("Ach! wir kennen uns wenig,/ Denn es waltet ein Gott in uns") (Ah! We know each other so little,/ for a God reigns within us).
- ¹²⁵ "Die Liebe allein (. . .) ist das *absolut Große* selbst, was in der Anmut und Schönheit

sich nachgeahmt und in der Sittlichkeit sich befriedigt findet, es ist der Gesetzgeber selbst, der *Gott* in uns, der mit seinem eigenen Bilde in der Sinnenwelt spielt" (Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 18, 49 f.). ("Love alone is what we call the absolutely magnificent, that which imitates each other in grace and beauty and finds itself satisfied in ethical life; it is the law giver himself, the God within us, who toys with his own image in the sensory world).

¹²⁶ Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, I/6, p. 501, para. 270.

¹²⁷ I have discussed in more detail the relation between virtual and actual identity/difference in my *Die Grenzen der Verständigung. Ein Geistergespräch zwischen Lyotard und Habermas*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1988, 85 ff.

¹²⁸ This short manuscript was eventually published as "Urtheil und Seyn" in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke. Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beißner, Stuttgart, 1961, vol. 4, p. 216 f. Cf. also Dieter Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein. Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken (1794-1795)*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1992.

¹²⁹ The incorrect etymology of 'Ur-teil' can also be found in Sinclair and Hegel. In his popular lecture series on logic and metaphysics (according to Platner's *Philosophische Aphorismen*) which Fichte, prompted by student request and with Hölderlin and Sinclair among his students, gave for the first time in the winter semester of 1794/5, Fichte emphasised not just the synthetic character of a judgement but also its differentiating nature: "To judge means: to posit a relation between different concepts. [. . .] This relation becomes obvious through opposition" (*Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. by Hans Jacob, Berlin, 1937, vol. II, § 469, p. 126). *Ibid.*, § 508, p. 129: "In the act of making a judgment concepts are set alongside each other. In the originary act to which this relates they may have been set alongside each other or separated from each other." The 'division' of particular things into general concepts Fichte calls "the *fundamentum divisionis*" (§ 462, p. 124). Violetta Waibel, in her Masters Thesis on traces of Fichte in the development of Hölderlin's writings (Munich, 1986, 54), has discovered a direct precursor of Hölderlin's etymology: "Urtheilen, ursprünglich theilen; (. . .) es liegt ein ursprüngliches Theilen ihm zum Grunde" ("Judging, originary separation; [. . .] it is grounded in an originary act of separating") Fichte, "Nachgelassene Schriften zu 'Platners Aphorismen' 1794-1812," eds. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Gliwitzky, in *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. II, 4, p. 182.

¹³⁰ Hölderlin, *Große Struttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beissner, vol. 1, p. 217.

¹³¹ Cf. Hector-Neri Castañeda, "'He'. A Study in the Logic of Self-Consciousness." *Ratio*, vol. 8, 1966, pp. 130-157.

¹³² Hölderlin, *Große Struttgarter Ausgabe*, vol. IV, pp. 253/4.

¹³³ For a more detailed discussion see my *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*, 61 ff.

- ¹³⁴ Hölderlin, "Letter to his Brother," mid-1801, *Große Struttgarter Ausgabe*, vol. V, p. 419.
- ¹³⁵ Karl Christian Erhard Schmid, Letter to Brühl 29.6.1794 in Jamme, 136, p. 9.
- ¹³⁶ Cf. Christoph Jamme, *Isaak von Sinclair. Politiker, Philosoph und Dichter zwischen Revolution und Restauration*, Bonn 1988, 9 ff., 48 ff.; idem, Isaak von Sinclairs "Philosophische Raisonements." Zur Wiederfindung ihrer Originale, in *Hegel-Studien*, 18, 1983, pp. 240-244. The 'Raisonements' have been published as an appendix to Hannelore Hegel's doctoral thesis titled: *Isaak von Sinclair zwischen Fichte, Hölderlin und Hegel. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der idealistischen Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, pp. 289-291 (page numbers in brackets above refer to this publication). Zwilling's contribution to the discussions at Jena and Bad Homburg has been investigated most thoroughly by Dieter Henrich and Christoph Jamme in their book *Jakob Zwillings Nachlaß. Eine Rekonstruktion*, in *Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft, 28, Bonn 1986, pp. 9-99.
- ¹³⁷ Isaak von Sinclair, "Philosophische Raisonements," in Hannelore Hegel, *Isaak von Sinclair zwischen Fichte, Hölderlin und Hegel. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der idealistischen Philosophie*, (doctoral thesis), Frankfurt am Main, 1971, p. 268.
- ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271.
- ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 268-9.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, for example, p. 271.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 269, 272.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270/10.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- ¹⁴⁹ According to what is currently known, the only remaining item of Jakob Zwilling's posthumous philosophical works is a fragmentary draft, some three pages in length, entitled "Über das Alles" (in eds. Henrich/Jamme, *Jakob Zwillings Nachlaß in Rekonstruktion*, pp. 63-65). Unlike in the case of Sinclair and Hölderlin, Zwilling seems to have believed that the defect of separation could be cured by reflection "since [according to the law of cognition-through-counterposition] a relation contains within itself a non-relation. Thus what is related must be counter-positing as non-related, or else we must posit as absolute the relation between a statement and its contradiction" (*ibid.*, 64 f.). This thought, however rudimentary and only hinted at by Zwilling, leads us, in the end, to Hegel's positing, as absolute, the self-referential negation (or reflection). The "category of relation us such" as an

autonomous posit is claimed by Zwilling as the truly Infinite, indeed, as “Infinity itself” (65). The opposition between unity “in terms of content” and separation “in terms of form” that is characteristic of Hölderlin and Sinclair can also be found throughout Zwilling’s fragment.

¹⁵⁰ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B141.

¹⁵¹ Novalis, *Schriften*, eds. P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel, 2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1960 ff. vol. II, p. 104, no. 1.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ The proviso contained in the word ‘seems’ here does not pertain to all terms of the relation, but only to the reflection which is nevertheless required, in order to gain epistemic access to what there is as such, prior to all reflection, *ibid.*, p. 112, No. 14.

¹⁵⁴ We might be justified in attributing Novalis’ choice of the term ‘feeling’ to his fondness of Jacobi, a choice that will come to full fruition in Schleiermacher’s theory of ‘Gefühl’. In his *Jacobi und die Philosophie seiner Zeit. Ein Versuch, das wissenschaftliche Fundament der Philosophie historisch zu erörtern*, Mainz, 1834. J. Kuhn, a disciple of Jacobi, has given us an excellent exposition and elaboration of Jacobi’s pathbreaking but conceptually little developed theory of non-objectifying self-consciousness or ‘feeling’. Kuhn saw very clearly the infinite regress that emerges if one wants to ‘support definitively’ the fact of ‘Self-observation’ through an ‘already reflexive consciousness’ (p. 19). For the ‘derived or reflected consciousness’ presupposes an irreflexive, ‘primitive’ or ‘originary consciousness’ in which no separation between representing and represented content can be found in the way this is possible in derived (i.e. higher-level) consciousness (35 f.). Since every explanation moves within the realm of reflection, the originary consciousness—just like imagination—remains ‘inexplicable’ (38 f., footnote). On pages 409 ff. Kuhn analyses how both unmediated feeling and mediated knowledge-of-one-self-as-object relate to each other; in other words, he investigates the structural unity of consciousness as such. He seeks to interpret the unmediated consciousness as a merely potential difference between the ideal and the real, a difference that does not contradict the actual difference that we find in mediated self-knowledge (411 f., 514). I am grateful to Alexander Weber for alerting me to the work of J. Kuhn.

¹⁵⁵ This term is again taken from Jacobi by Novalis.

¹⁵⁶ Novalis, *Schriften*, Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs, eds. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1960 ff., vol. 2, 106, No. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115 and 117, No. 19.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114, line 7.

- 160 *Ibid.*, p. 114, lines 3/4.
- 161 *Ibid.*, p. 114, lines 3/4.
- 162 Cf. M. Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, Vorlesungen, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1989. Novalis' theory is presented in detail in lectures 15 and 16.
- 163 Novalis, *Schriften*, p. 107, No. 3.
- 164 Cf. Novalis, *Schriften*, p. 259, nos. 508; p. 528, no. 21.
- 165 Johann Friedrich Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft, neu gegründet aus Erfahrung, Metaphysik und Mathematik*, Erster, synthetischer Theil, Königsberg, Unzer, 1824, mainly pp. 93-112; also in J.F. Herbart: *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by G. Hartenstein, Vol. 5, *Schriften zur Psychologie*, Erster Teil, Leipzig, 1850 ff. (All my citations refer to the latter edition).
- 166 Herbart, *Sämtliche Werke*, pp. 27, 275.
- 167 *Ibid.*, p. 274.
- 168 *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 169 *Ibid.*, pp. 275/6.
- 170 *Ibid.*, § 29, p. 284.
- 171 *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 172 *Ibid.*, § 28, p. 281.
- 173 *Ibid.*, pp. 284/5.
- 174 *Ibid.*, p. 285.
- 175 *Ibid.*, p. 286.
- 176 *Ibid.*, § 28.
- 177 *Ibid.*, p. 281.
- 178 Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, p. 362.
- 179 Herbart, *Sämtliche Werke*.
- 180 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- 181 *Ibid.*, p. 283, Middle. The 'objects' to which Herbart here refers are, as he warns "not real [reale] objects, but merely represented ones, as such [sondern bloße Vorgestellte, als solche]," 29, p. 284.
- 182 *Ibid.*
- 183 *Ibid.*
- 184 *Ibid.*
- 185 *Ibid.*, p. 283.
- 186 *Ibid.*, § 27, p. 278.
- 187 *Ibid.*, § 29, p. 284.
- 188 *Ibid.*, p. 278.
- 189 *Ibid.*, § 29, p. 284.
- 190 *Ibid.*, § 28, p. 281.

191 *Ibid.*, § 28, p. 284.

192 *Ibid.*, § 29, p. 284.

193 *Ibid.*

194 *Ibid.*, pp. 284/5.

195 *Ibid.*, p. 285.

196 *Ibid.*

197 *Ibid.*

198 *Ibid.*

199 *Ibid.*, pp. 285/6.

200 *Ibid.*, Section II, part. II, chapter 5, § 199. Franz Brentano quotes this passage in order to exemplify the absurdities one encounters if one believes that consciousness is originally unconscious, and therefore maintains that our knowledge of it is based on a later act of reflection [*Reflexions-Akt*] (*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Erster Band, 2. Buch, Kap. II [“About inner consciousness”], p. 7 [= p. 175]). This absurd theory which we have already encountered with John Sergeant, in a very caricatured form, is nowadays promoted by Niklas Luhmann. Like John Sergeant—and indeed already Thomas von Aquin (*Summ. teol.* P. I., Q. 78, A.4, ad 2; Q. 87. A.3 and ad 3; Q 87, A.3,2 and ad 2.)—he interprets the act of making conscious the (originally unconscious) consciousness as an ‘observation’: A consciousness relates to another (previous) mode of observation and does not only make it conscious, but also encapsulates it as an object of a ‘self-reference’ [*Selbstreferenz*] (Niklas Luhmann, “Die Autopoesis des Bewußtseins” in eds. A. Hahn and V. Knapp, *Selbstthematization und Selbstzeugnis: Bekenntnis und Geständnis*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1987, pp. 25-94). The obvious circularities of such an explanation have been brought to light and criticised by Véronique Zanetti, “Kann man ohne Körper denken? Über das Verhältnis von Leib und Bewußtsein bei Luhmann und Kant,” in eds. Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht und Ludwig Pfeiffer, *Materialitäten der Kommunikation*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1988, pp. 280-294.

201 Schleiermacher, *Glaubenslehre*, 1st edition 1821, 2nd edition 1830.

202 *Der christliche Glaube, nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*. 7. Auflage. Aufgrund der 2. Auflage und kritischer Prüfung des Textes neu herausgegeben von Martin Redeker. II Bände. Berlin, 1960 [cited *Glaubenslehre*], I. 16 bottom.

203 Cf. Dieter Henrich, “Hölderlin über Urteil und Sein. Eine Studie zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Idealismus,” in *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, 14, 1965/66, pp. 73-96; Hannelore Hegel, *Isaak von Sinclair zwischen Fichte, Hölderlin und Hegel. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte der idealistischen Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1971 (Sinclair’s ‘Philosophische Raisonsnements’, pp. 243-283); Dieter Henrich and Christoph

Jamme, eds., *Jakob Zwillings Nachlaß. Eine Rekonstruktion*, in *Hegel Studien*, Beiheft, 28, Bonn 1986, pp. 9-99, and *Isaak von Sinclair. Politiker und Dichter zwischen Revolution und Restauration*, Anhand von Originaldokumenten dargestellt von Christoph Jamme, Bonn, 1988, esp. 23 ff., 48 ff.

²⁰⁴ Schleiermacher, *Glaubenslehre*, I, pp. 28/29.

²⁰⁵ This is not a fundamental theorem of Schleiermacher's thought that can be found everywhere in his work.

²⁰⁶ Cf. F. Schleiermacher, *Dialektik*, ed. by Rudolf Odebrecht, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1942, pp. 265-267 (XLVI) and pp. 283/4 (L). I quote from this edition which is based on rewritten lecture notes of the Dialektikkollegs from 1822 by referring to *Dial 0*. I use the abbreviation *Dial J* when citing from Schleiermacher's handwritten *Nachlaß* of all Dialektikkollegs (*Dialektik*, III/4,2, ed. L. Jonas, Berlin, Reimer, 1839).

²⁰⁷ Schleiermacher, *Dial 0*, 284 (= L): "When we refer to the degree of failure, then we have, however, not failed to experience the transcendent ground, indeed we have achieved this through both functions. However, we have failed to bring this transcendent ground to a unity of real consciousness. We gain it, however, only insofar as we recognize the inadequacy of the onesided and divided forms."

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 286 ff., *Glaubenslehre*, 14 ff. The two terms do not mean exactly the same, although Schleiermacher does not always emphasise their difference. I will neglect the difference in this context.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

²¹¹ I am here thinking especially of Dieter Henrich's already cited work *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht*. Nearly all the important comments about the problematic of self-consciousness in Fichte are present in this little book.

²¹² Schleiermacher, *Glaubenslehre*, § 3, p. 2, with a hand-written note.

²¹³ Schleiermacher, *Dial 0*, p. 288, *Glaubenslehre*, § 3, p. 2, hand-written note.

²¹⁴ Schleiermacher, *Glaubenslehre*, I, § 8, p. 52.

²¹⁵ Schleiermacher, *Dial 0*, p. 288.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Schleiermacher, *Dial 0*, p. 290, = *Dial J*, p. 420 = SLI.

²²⁰ Schleiermacher, *Dial 0*, p. 287; cf. also pp. 290 and 295/6.

²²¹ Schleiermacher, *Glaubenslehre*, I, p. 24.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²²³ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (published 1849). I am quoting from the dtv-edition, Munich, 1976 (hence from the translation by W. Rest) cited here under

the title *Die Krankheit zum Tode*. My interpretation adopts gratefully the consequence which Günter Figal was first to point out, *Die Freiheit der Verzweiflung und die Freiheit des Glaubens. Zu Kierkegaards Konzeption des Selbstseins in der "Krankheit zum Tode"* in *Kierkegaardiana* XIII, København, 1984, 11-23. Obviously I emphasise, in contrast to Figal, the structural homology of Kierkegaard's account of the independent self with that of the early romantics.

- ²²⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode*, p. 31; *The Sickness unto Death*, p. 13. For a complete reference: This translation has been taken from: *The Sickness unto Death, a Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, by Søren Kierkegaard, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton, 1980.
- ²²⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *ibid.*
- ²²⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode*, 31 f., *The Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 13/14.
- ²²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode*, p. 69.
- ²²⁸ Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode*, p. 32.
- ²²⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, (*critical edition* of his works, eds. Ernst Behler, et al., Munich-Paderborn-Vienna, Schöningh, 1958 ff., vol. XVIII, m 418, No. 1168, already XII, 7/8.
- ²³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. XII, p. 7.
- ²³¹ Novalis, *Schriften*, II, 451 f., 454 f.

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