



Knowledge Cultures 2(1), 2014
pp. 23–39, ISSN 2327-5731

MAORI THINKING WITH A DEAD WHITE MALE: PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE REALM OF NOVALIS

CARL MIKA

mika@waikato.ac.nz
University of Waikato

ABSTRACT. In this paper I shall discuss my experiences of referring to Novalis in the context of Maori postcolonialism and metaphysical philosophy. As with other methods of research, from a Maori perspective one always alights on and then carries the effects of the philosopher that stands behind the method, whether the philosopher is silent or explicit. This important onto-epistemological interaction, in a general sense, acknowledges for the indigenous person that one is always ‘within’ the world and not detached from it. The maligned dead white male hence unavoidably becomes the highly constructive, living impulse behind what is to become fresh and innovative indigenous thinking.

Keywords: Novalis; Maori postcolonialism; metaphysical philosophy

1. Introduction

Despite the growth of indigenous anti-colonial writing, one feature remains to be contemplated: the place of the Western theorist in that writing. One could argue, on the assumption that the indigenous self is located in writing, that every indigenous writer is engaging tacitly with someone from the West by virtue of the ontological nature of writing itself. Sustained and explicit use of a philosopher from the West, however, carries its own risks because, as some indigenous and postcolonial writers, such as Pihama¹ and Maffie² have indicated, the dead white male may either prescribe an acceptable field of discussion (which may not benefit Maori communities) or may be overtly racist towards the non-Western other. Or, more insidiously, their very existence might impose both racist and prescriptive colonising forces onto the text.

In this article, I present my work, as a Maori theorist, with the German Romantic poet and 18th century philosopher Novalis in an articulation of a

Maori colonized metaphysics. Although he resonates naturally with some Maori metaphysics, Novalis is not without his difficulties. While he harmonizes with Maori notions of mystery and uncertainty and thus disdains the full force of rationalism, he simultaneously imbues the Other with overly spiritual and romantic qualities. I argue that this latter tendency, along with his unavoidable involvement with the West, may imbed itself imperceptibly but deeply in his method of ‘sentences that push’, a concept I used in my PhD thesis as I attempted to remain free of what was Western in his influence. In this way, vestiges of Novalis remain even though I have apparently dispensed with him in my Maori theorizing. This inescapable feature of my engagement with his thinking signals another concern that must be taken into account by a Maori/Western method of encounter and may exemplify the sheer ubiquity of the dead white male in colonization generally. What remains for the indigenous writer is the importance of retaining both political and philosophical awareness – a retention that, to be sure, should be the practice of the indigenous writer or researcher in any context.

2. The Romanticism of Novalis

Novalis is not well known at all in the Anglo-American world of philosophy. The reasons for this are well beyond the scope of this article, but one of them may be baldly stated as follows: English-speaking philosophical studies have overwhelmingly preferred the analytic tradition, which pursues a clear, systematic description of a grounding proposition.³ Carnap and Heidegger’s well-known battle over the merit of metaphysics and logic respectively is at the front of the joust between analytic and continental approaches,⁴ and is often cited as the clearest drawing of the battle lines. Much earlier than this disagreement Carlyle⁵ had identified in his discussion about Novalis that German philosophy, unlike that of the English, had no problems with mysticism, showing that the divide was already tacitly, if not expressly, manifest. Calls for the two fields to reconcile⁶ are becoming increasingly insistent, though the German Romantics and that Movement’s students remain clear that a poetic representation of things in the world is key to a proper understanding of them. Thus Novalis, falling unequivocally on the side of the continental philosophers, is often taken to be poet *simpliciter*⁷ by the analytics, but with his ability to “grapple ... with the difficulties involved in conceiving the self’s relationship to itself as a form of knowledge”⁸ is more likely to be both poet and philosopher in Germany. In direct synchronicity with his poetic enterprise was his cautious use of first empirical principles to ‘romanticize’ the world, by which he meant:

Die Welt muß romantisirt werden. So findet man den urspr[ünglichen] Sinn wieder.... Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnißvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe so romantisire ich es – Umgekehrt ist die Operation für das Höhere, Unbekannte, Mystische, Unendliche – dies wird durch diese Verknüpfung logarithmisirt.

I give the general a higher sense, the usual a mysterious look, the well-known the dignity of the unknown, the finite an infinite appearance, I am romanticizing it – The converse operation is for the lofty, unknown, mystical, infinite – they are logarithmized by this association.⁹

This fragment most succinctly expresses the approach of the Romantics to rationalism. Novalis saw the romanticizing project as acting in concert with the Absolute and not merely as aesthetic. The Absolute, or Being, arranged things in the world in a rational manner (rational in that it organized according to its own inconceivable plan). Things in the world, including ideas, could become banal through their overuse or through an overriding subjectivity. The ‘higher sense’ involved making that mundane thing poetic. A thing in the world, thus romanticized, retained to itself its own integrity through its mystery and incomprehensibility in the presence of this activity that Novalis called Being/the Absolute.¹⁰ Novalis’ mission may therefore be thought of as much political as it is philosophical. It represents an attempt to try and conceive of the Absolute cognitively and with certainty would be akin to trying to grasp “doch eine Handvoll Finsterniß” (“a handful of darkness”)¹¹ – a delusional and highly detrimental approach because it acts against the imperative of the metaphysics of Being.

3. Novalis: Traits of the Dead White Male

It will be Novalis’ membership with Western theorists and theory, I suspect, that raises the suspicion of many indigenous writers. As with other Western theorists, the danger of Novalis’ writings is in their potential to undermine Maori expression, both epistemologically and ontologically. This is an important issue to consider because the history of colonizing writing, in such disciplines as anthropology, has consistently rejected the potential vitality of Maori text.¹² Crucial here is that the culpability of the dead white male appears to lie on two fronts: first, that he has contributed to a field of thought that has denied an indigenous explanation for existence; and second, that he has constructed a way of thinking about indigenous thought that only replicates and self-affirms his perceived superiority. One major concern that Maori writer Walker has about Western theory is that it has only ever

served the interests of a small group that has never had indigenous peoples as its concern. Indeed, for Sheilagh Walker, the dead white male “created and perpetuated European philosophical discourse ... for the benefit of other White Males”.¹³ Contextualized, this comment is explainable through a glance at such apparently objective disciplines as anthropology, which has defined indigenous peoples as objects of study.¹⁴ The positioning of Maori as curious, measurable entities resulted in spurious theories around intelligence and development, for example. The actors in this and other scientific and empirical fields were overwhelmingly “certain European men”¹⁵ who continued to “form ... and fabricate ... whiteness as a subject”; they would build on Hume’s and Beattie’s condescendingly racist attitude towards non-whites,¹⁶ and the alleged dearth of philosophy among those peoples, and be added to by Husserl who similarly believed that there could logically be no such thing as non-Western philosophy.¹⁷

Some more specific accusations, however, can be leveled at Novalis than merely that comprising an incidence of association. Central to a criticism of Novalis is his interest in the ancient ‘Morgenländer’, or Oriental, that similarly fascinated Herder but would be scorned by Hegel.¹⁸ His novel “Henry von Ofterdingen”¹⁹ is largely constructed around the poet Heinrich’s encounters with other exotic cultures, with Heinrich (Henry) hoping that those groups will point the way towards a more authentic mode of poetic representation. Some readers will at this juncture be reminded of the uncomfortably naïve ‘romanticizing’ of the other that has been written about extensively as a mode of engagement with indigenous peoples,²⁰ particularly in fragments to do with such fantastic and unknown countries as Arabia. With these sorts of fragments – and they are not uncommon throughout “Henry von Ofterdingen” – one could be forgiven in thinking that Novalis was *too* wistful about the other, to the extent that the other became a mere archetype. Just as outrageously, the country of the other is apparently there as a respite from something that is part of Heinrich’s arduous existence. The Morgenland itself is romantic and has the potential to save the German poet, who at the time of writing was thoroughly disillusioned by the dominance of the French. Novalis’ characters often undertake forays into foreign lands in search for authenticity and in a certain sense this was a necessary sojourn to discover a “unified body of human knowledge.”²¹ This search for a universal epistemology was, to be sure, a Romantic concern in general, and admittedly the romanticized other and his/her land was thought of as its repository. Although Novalis does not fully fit the label of white ethnographer – he does value something inherent to the other’s culture and allows them an epistemology even more serious than his own – he is guilty of attributing overly spiritual, fantastical qualities to the non-Western ‘other’.

There is more to Novalis than this, however, and his own paradoxical belief that one *cannot* find the ultimate in the other must quickly be acknowledged. Novalis' essentialism as I have described it may not be anthropological in the sense of Broeck's description, but it is highly exoticizing. Simply because it is unscientific and poetic does not make his exoticism any more beneficent. Descriptions of the 'childlike-albeit-superior other' threaten to lock the other into a place of certainty. My objection to this fixed regard that Novalis sometimes employs engages both with the consequences for the other as well as his own philosophy. For the question must be raised: how can Novalis plausibly sustain a project of mystery when he romanticizes the other as exotic? A certain *volte-face* that Novalis performs in his "Die Lehrlinge zu Sais", in which he stresses the *journey* for authenticity rather than its actual discovery in the other, may partly alleviate this concern. In "Die Lehrlinge", the Absolute tantalizes the seeker of poetic truth onwards, but it will never be found elsewhere apart from within.²² The protagonist Hyazinth finds that the true source of poetic authenticity is to be found as an aspect of himself, but only because of the workings of the Absolute and of nature. This imperfect reflection of the outside world within would lead Novalis to state that the world as a whole is to be read as an extension of the poetic self and that poetry is the "intentional, active, productive employment of our organs."²³ Thus the childishness that Novalis attributes to the other is already there in the self, if only the self knew it. It is closer to the truth that the *potential* for the authentic poetic self to be realized exists, but that if the poet feels they have to undertake circuitous journeys including the other, then so be it. We see here, then, Novalis' ambiguity towards the other. On the one hand, the other contains something that his society did not at his time of writing, while on the other, his community has that authenticity at a deep level but needs to resort to the other to be reminded of its presence.

Given the problems for Maori that, among others, Husserl, Hume, and even Novalis, pose, it is difficult to see their use in indigenous thought. Yet some writers do indeed see a tentative approach. In more moderate fashion than Walker, Pihama states "I have no intention of adhering to an academic addiction that promotes ongoing injections of work from 'dead white men'"²⁴ but she is not prepared to completely disregard this group, acknowledging that its members have made certain contributions. She rightly adds that most of them "have absolutely no understanding of how **Māori** experience the world, or the complex cultural relationships that are a part of our experiences". Her caveat here suggests that they may step in at certain points in Maori writing but that they should not be relied on to explain a contextualized Maori reality. Hall²⁵ argues that the only reason certain of these men have become familiar to non-Western intellectuals – he names Plato,

Aristotle, Kant, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Austin and Quine – is their natural uptake through globalization, and identifies that it is problematic to refer to them when discussing Chinese philosophies around ‘truth’ because they originate from a thoroughly other tradition which can only roughly approximate the depth of Chinese phenomenological thought. Maffie briefly discusses the dangers inherent to his own method of referring to Nahua metaphysics hermeneutically: he states that “Approaching Nahua philosophy in these terms is not without hazard”²⁶ and that “employing [Western philosophers] must not mislead us into thinking that Nahua philosophy conceived philosophy in precisely these [fragmented] terms”. These descriptions of Western philosophers include that they may prove helpful in certain undefined ways, especially if a critique of them takes place to begin with so that the indigenous writer is aware of their limitations.

I now turn more specifically to my own work with Novalis, keeping the above cautionary descriptions in mind whilst describing how he became so fundamental to how I articulated a Maori notion of Being.

4. My Free Thinking in the Realm of Novalis’ Provocations

4.1. The Problem of Highly Systematic Thinking for Indigenous Writers

The dead white male may also represent a much more amorphous problem – the arena of rational thought which indigenous writers are forced to cooperate with, and in which Novalis deliberately does not participate. As Pihama and Maffie have respectively highlighted, the challenge for the indigenous writer engaged in philosophizing involves avoiding being fixed by the Western individual. The ‘European philosophical discourse’ that we have seen Walker allude to is one that critical indigenous writers are aware of, and is characterized in the first instance by a ground of thinking from which indigenous writers are not allowed to stray. In this process, highly cognitive and rational descriptions are privileged and add to the supremacy of that discourse. A highly systematic process of thought follows and must be adhered to. Such a rigid representation of things in the world was not one privileged in traditional Maori society and indeed in some contemporary contexts. To begin with, the Maori term ‘whakaaro’, which is often taken as ‘to think’, means “to cast attention to”²⁷ which is not “the actual process of rational thought”. With this more phenomenological notion of the act of thinking, various terms step in that convey a sense of provocation for the thinker, including ‘kupu whakaaro’ (a word or term that incites the thinker to respond), kupu whakakoaro (signifying a response to a word with a view to overturning a conventional approach), and kupu ohore (the immediate

prickly or provocative sense that accompanies a proposition). It is believed that learners responded anew to a problem through provocation²⁸ and that, in political and more current contexts, “indigenous elders can do wonderful things with an interview. They tell stories, tease, question, think, observe, tell riddles, test and give trick answers. Conversely, they can also expect that an indigenous researcher will do the same back to them.”²⁹

For the indigenous writer, thinking and writing so that the cognitive process is untethered from other things in the world is problematic. It ensures that the strictures of a paradigm not of those writers’ making are sustained. Moreover, that paradigm is vastly different to that of indigenous thought. Linda Smith states in relation to kaupapa Maori theory:

... there is more to kaupapa Māori than our history under colonialism or our desires to restore rangatiratanga. We have a different epistemological tradition that frames the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask, and the solutions we seek.³⁰

Little Bear more broadly fleshes out the tradition Smith speaks of. He notes, against the truth seeking of the Socratic Greeks, that Aboriginal thought right down to its linguistic characteristics sought to convey the fluidity of the world through its “verb-rich languages that are process- or action-oriented language.”³¹ The challenge here for the indigenous writer lies in presenting this orientation towards fluidity of a particular term as well as acknowledging the finite nature of things in the world.

Yet the Western academic tradition does not easily permit this approach, either to discrete terms or to a view of language generally. Trenchant criticism comes from those indigenous writers who have identified Descartes in particular as invalidating an indigenous worldview that is not so cognitive or rational. Descartes (rightly or wrongly) occupies pride of place as *the* identified antagonist of holism, even if he never had indigenous metaphysics in his sights. Largely the critique lies in the way Descartes posits the subject in relation to the rest of the world. Oskal points out that crucial to Descartes’ epistemology is the ability of the perceiving self to turn away from “the outside world”³² and towards the more rarefied world of inner representation. Given that the origin of indigenous thinking is the outside world, this is likely to be a dangerous activity, or at the very least it represents an undesirable move – a step away from the all-important connections to the outside world³³ that other indigenous peoples assert are all-important. Descartes’ dichotomy of mind and body has moreover been seen as a source of ill-health.³⁴ Even the apparently banal act of reading and writing is not free of Descartes’ influence, helping as it did to abstract the thing being discussed from the self through the alphabet.³⁵

The inevitable outcome of a preference for a Cartesian representation of things in the world is the exclusion of what indigenous peoples have always traditionally valued. For the Maori writer, it means that a non-Maori view of the world is easily sustained. It then happens that certain issues of importance to Maori cannot be addressed. Simmonds expands on the detrimental effects of acceptable theory, stating that it has established a field of orthodoxy, outside of which lies the realm of mere myth and nonsense. Indigenous ways of thinking were supplanted by these strict criteria and, moreover, the notion of strict criteria itself became important. This deep philosophical entrenchment, it seems, is not circumventable as it lies at the basis of how, for instance, Maori spirituality is now viewed. Simmonds continues thus:

The marginalisation of wairua persisted and continues today. Māori spirituality is commonly described as symbolic and not real. While scientific knowledge is given credibility, almost unproblematically, discourses premised on the spiritual are lumped with the burden to prove their validity.³⁶

Simmond's announcement that a field of thought has threatened a traditional Maori one is perhaps closer to the truth of the impact of the West than are any assertions about specific individuals and their respective influences. As a suggestion that emphasizes the development of Western philosophy as a whole and its dominance over indigenous peoples, it conjoins more with a 'hidden' aspect of the West and its continued impact on indigenous thought. Individuals do not declare themselves in the problem. Stewart therefore indicates about Western knowledge that it involves "compartmentalisation";³⁷ one can infer here that it is the knowledge itself that is at issue rather than any individual/s as such. Against the non-dichotomous process of categorization in indigenous languages³⁸ is pitted a language that attempts to make specific distinctions, leading to (or originating in) an equally disparate language that threatens indigenous world-views.

4.2. Novalis' Method of Provocation and Its Opposition to the Strong Self

His undeniable exoticism notwithstanding, somewhat surprisingly Novalis may be at his most helpful in his critique of the strongly placed self in rational thinking. His method for moving towards a more metaphysically and politically transformative approach to things in the world is equally important. Novalis does not deal explicitly with Descartes, but he sustainedly attends to the philosophical arguments of Johann Georg Fichte. Fichte, an Idealist who, having an even more nihilistic attitude than Descartes towards

objects in the world that are the *not-I*, proposed that the activity of the self is the “pure act of thinking as such.”³⁹ Fichte was probably influenced by Descartes,⁴⁰ and attempts to banish Kant’s ‘thing in itself’ by proposing a single principle from which all knowledge originates, and it is this focus on cognitive knowledge as a self-originating process that Novalis takes aim at in his method for encouraging others to think in line with the Absolute. Avoiding this tightly prescribed parameter of thinking is as important for Novalis as it is for those indigenous thinkers who take Descartes to task, and compelled by his concern he steps in as a provocateur, rather than a dictator, of thought. To that general extent, he echoes others in the Romantic Movement such as the Schlegel brothers, who proposed that “[d]ie romantische Dichtart ... allein ist unendlich, wie sie allein frei ist und das als ihr erstes Gesetz anerkennt” (“the Romantic style of poetry ... is on its own as being as unending as it is free”).⁴¹ We see him both deal with the implicit solipsism of both Descartes and Fichte and observe him make a proclamation about thinking that would lay the foundation for my own theoretical method in my doctorate:

Die Darst[ellung] der Philosophie besteht demnach aus lauter Themas, Anfangssätzen – Unterscheidungssätzen – bestimmten Stoßsätzen – Sie ist nur für Thätige, für Wahrheitliebende da – die *analytische* Ausführung des Themas ist nur für Träge oder *Ungeübte* – denen die *Mutter* erst fliegen, und sich in einer bestimmten Direction erhalten, lernen muß.

The exposition [*Darstellung*] of philosophy consists, therefore, merely in themes, first sentences – certain sentences that *push* [Stoßsätze] – the exposition exists only for active lovers of the truth. The analytical elaboration of the theme is for slow or unskilled ones, those whom the mother first needs to teach how to fly, and how to maintain a certain direction.⁴²

Novalis’ idiosyncratic method was an important one in my own theorizing around a Maori notion of mystery and ontology, and is linked with his general disdain for systematic philosophy that required stepping the thinker through to a predetermined end. Thoughts to him are “Bewegungen und Actionen” (“movements and actions”)⁴³ and are to be encouraged but not confined to a final philosophical system, which, as we have seen, for him was an analytical one. Thus thinking is a creative and ongoing exercise and, importantly, was not solely cognitively derived but also emotional. This crucial proviso is reflected in his belief that sentences that push should sometimes be as much awkward for the reader as they should sit snugly within the reader’s comfort zone. Thinking here is not so much human centered as it is a result of a confluence of objects’ and the Absolute’s movements. The perceiver apprehends those movements and is, in turn,

compelled to think. The proposition, sentence or fragment that Novalis extends to the thinker hence acts in tandem with other impetuses that bring about a reaction for the self.

In the case of both Novalis' and Maori discourses, there is the potential for a thought or perception of an object to be transformed through the method of provocation. Novalis, overtly distancing himself from the more systematic proposals of Fichte, is of tremendous help to the indigenous thinker who does not want to be imprisoned by what Novalis himself called the "versteinerte Zauberstadt" ("petrified, enchanted city")⁴⁴ of scientized systems. However, one must allow for the possibility that one's own cognitive approach is not all that is at work. Thinking *qua* unpredictable act is important for Novalis, as we can see in the continuation of his assertion about the sentence that pushes:

Hemsterhuis hat hier eine herrliche Stelle vom Geist und Buchstaben der Philosophie.... Nach ihm ist der Buchstabe nur eine *Hilfe* der philosophischen Mittheilung – deren eigentliches Wesen im *Nachdenken* besteht. Der Redende leitet nur den Gang des Denkens im Hörenden – und dadurch wird es zum Nachdenken. *Er denkt* – und der *Andre denkt nach*. Die Worte sind ein unzuverlässiges Medium des Vordenkens. Die ächte Wahrheit muß ihrer Natur nach, *wegweisend* seyn. Es kommt also nur darauf an jemand auf den rechten Weg zu bringen, oder besser, ihm eine bestimmte Richtung auf die Wahrheit zu geben. Er gelangt dann von selbst, wenn er anders *thätig* ist, *begierig*, zur Wahrheit zu gelangen, an Ort und Stelle.

Hemsterhuis has a wonderful passage on spirit and letter in philosophy.... According to him the letter is merely a help for philosophical communication – the true essence of which consists in after-thinking [Nachdenken]. The speaker merely leads the direction of thought in the hearer – and thereby it becomes after-thinking. He thinks and the other thinks after him. Words are an untrustworthy medium of fore-thinking [Vordenken]. The genuine truth must, according to its nature, show the way. Therefore, the only thing that matters is sending someone onto the right road, or better, giving him a certain direction towards the truth. He will then get there automatically, if only he is active, desiring, to get to the truth.⁴⁵

At the forefront of Novalis' argument is a vital feature of Romantic belief that the reader may have already discerned: that thinking becomes less about the tightly enclosing field of rationalistic permission and more constituted by mystery. Informed by Novalis, thought for the Maori person here ceases to be constrained by any parameters. Chance itself, and all it engenders with the unknown, comes to bear on how the Maori writer will negotiate

Novalis' sentences, and the after-thinker (to translate literally from the German) is drawn into ever new articulations that appear to have no finality (they are characterized by 'free concatenation').

4.3. My Use of Novalis' 'Sentences that Push': Some Reflections

Novalis' sentences/fragments allowed me to retain my own Maori voice while provoking me to think about colonization and metaphysics. More than this, his cautiously critical regard of rationalism threw light on where the world has grown rigid for Maori through colonization. It is at the anti-rational edge that poesy occupies that Novalis has the greatest value for the Maori writer, for to be poetic is to possess a greater creative and political insight into Being. His fragments generally encouraged me to think about the ways in which a Platonic metaphysics of permanence and visibility operates for Maori where it may not have traditionally. A hallmark of rationalism for Novalis, unrelenting light in scholarship (in the sense of 'throwing light on' a problem) catches a 'thing' – concrete or abstract entity, including the self – in its glare. That thing then loses its fluidity – or, in Novalis' language, it needs to rediscover its "potent single word"⁴⁶ that will once again bring light and dark together again. This provocation alone compelled me to consider how a Maori regard for things in the world threatened to be 'hardened' to the point of fitting a scientized worldview. I was sent off by his fragments on a line of thinking that ostensibly did not carry any of his own thinking in it. I could therefore suggest how Maori have been historically encouraged to conceive of the highly apparent as truthful through the colonizing practices of dominant institutions such as law, health and education, and could refer to his fragments to incite me to consider how those most fundamental modes of expression – Maori terms – could be reconfigured to fit with a constant reference to the Absolute.⁴⁷

Novalis refuses to foreclose my own thinking. He *did* insist that I consider the role of the Absolute/Being in any representation of things in the world, but this *desideratum* should not be a foreign one for the indigenous writer in any case. The outcome of my thinking, so Novalis would have it, is Maori in nature, although he provides me with signposts for that process. At most a word of caution, at least a neutral comment, is due at this point for other Maori writers who believe they have happened upon a helpful Western source, and it is here that I add another possible worry to those of the indigenous writers above. Novalis himself seems to suggest that any contact with anything else results in an enduring effect of that thing, even when that thing appears to have been discarded or is now absent. One's transformation of the world continues even when one is not aware of it, but even more importantly something persists. A response to a sentence that

pushes might be thought of as entirely new and creative, and indeed it probably will not resemble that sentence in an epistemic sense, but there is always an ontological presence of what spurred it on to begin with. Perhaps disturbingly for some, it has not gone away. The suggestion by Novalis that there are shoots or geneses in a seed of thought that carry on even to full growth and simply remain⁴⁸ clashes with empiricist belief that, if it is not to be sensed, then it simply does not exist. I argue that the permanent presence of the original sentence adds to the mystery of the consequent thought, because the outcome always contains primordial, often opaque, vestiges of its progenitor. To a large extent the enduring effect is linked to a character of language itself – that it is imbued with a power, beyond being a useful envelope of meaning. Some Maori writers⁴⁹ imply that words themselves are animate; they could therefore well have an agency of their own that is dependent nevertheless on other entities and they could possess a ‘reach’ that moves onwards, beyond the sense perception of humans.

I refer to language, ontology and mystery to highlight that Novalis’ urge to think in light of his sentences necessarily poses its own hypothetical challenges. My writing, as reflective on a Maori reality as it professes to be, may contain the vestiges of Novalis’ deep sense (his own preference for discussions about Being) in his thoughts, his historical context (including his exoticizing racism), and his engagement with a highly empirical world (despite his opposition to it). This ‘metaphysical baggage’ that is an inevitable outcome of coming into contact with not just Novalis but any other theorist or discursive field is perhaps less of a problem when the philosopher’s arguments are somehow harmonious with those of indigenous metaphysics – Novalis is to be included among those thinkers. However, if one were to use Descartes’ Meditations, for instance, from which to springboard thought about an indigenous issue (such as, say, the relationship of the mind to the body), then the silence of that original source may in fact scream up through the outcome. In the writing of my doctorate, my constant camaraderie with Novalis may heighten that concern, with the result that what appears to be autonomous Maori thinking is imperceptibly ‘Novalian’. This problem may occur in any event for the indigenous writer who is not particularly interested in consulting a Western philosopher; the act of writing itself is Western derived in its most fundamental sense,⁵⁰ and Maori theorizing is forced to engage with that hidden colonizing presence even when it remains hidden within writing.

5. Conclusion

The Maori academic writer lives in exciting philosophical times, primarily because the deep impact of Western philosophy on Maori and the conse-

quences of this for the theorist themselves have yet to be fully and sustainedly explored. Despite this potential, though, there exists here a real responsibility for the Maori theorist – to philosophise about the extent and reach of the potentially colonizing philosophies they are referring to. In this way, Maori philosophizing is as much an ethical issue as human subject research is. In my doctoral research I found Novalis, a Western philosopher, provided me with a method of provocation that allowed me to pursue a theory of Maori metaphysics with some degree of autonomy. In large part, the method was liberatory because it did not seek to confine an outcome, as the strictures of Western academic in their very operation often do for indigenous writers. However, I have been quick to point out that, regardless of the Western philosopher’s position in relation to Maori thought, the writer must be prepared for the continued presence of that compelling philosopher. This phenomenon is of dual significance for the Maori writer, who indeed may not have nothing against that continued presence but who nevertheless needs to be aware of its possibility.

Glossary of Maori terms and phrases

Kaupapa Maori – a Maori way of engaging with the world
 Kupu ohoreere – provocation
 Kupu whakaaro – word or term that incites thinker to respond
 Kupu whakakoaro – a response to a word with a view to overturning conventional response
 Rangatiratanga – chieftainship; autonomy
 Wairua – spirit
 Whakaaro – to think; cast attention to.

NOTES

1. Pihama 2001.
2. Maffie 2005a.
3. Levy 2003; Solomon 2003.
4. Friedman 2000.
5. Carlyle 1829.
6. Bowie 1997.
7. Kneller 2003.
8. Larmore 2000, p. 141.
9. The German quote is taken from Novalis 1960e, p. 545; the English quote is my own.
10. Stone 2008.
11. The German quote is taken from Novalis 1960c, p. 106; the English quote is my own.
12. L. Smith 1999.
13. Walker 1996, p. 26.
14. L. Smith 1999; Broeck 2002.
15. Broeck 2002, p. 826.

16. See for example Garrett 2000.
17. Maffie 2005b.
18. Germana 2007.
19. Novalis 1990.
20. See for instance Sardar, Nandy, and Davies 1993; L. Smith 1999; Hall 1997.
21. Seyhan 1992, p. 15.
22. Mika 2013a.
23. Behler 1993, p. 203.
24. Pihama 2001, p. 92.
25. Hall 2001.
26. Maffie 2005a, n.p.
27. T. Smith 2000, p. 58.
28. Hemara 2000.
29. L. Smith 1999, p. 136.
30. L. Smith 2000, p. 230.
31. Little Bear 2000, p. 78.
32. Oskal 2008, p. 337.
33. Fagan 2008.
34. Mobein 2011.
35. Aranga, Mika and Mlcek 2008.
36. Simmonds 2011, p. 15.
37. Stewart 2007, p. 139.
38. Little Bear 2000.
39. Lindberg 2007, p. 249.
40. Mandt 1997.
41. The German quote is taken from Schlegel and Schlegel 1798, p. 30; the English quote is taken from Strich 1962, p. 358.
42. The German quote is taken from Novalis 1960d, p. 374; the English quote is taken from Kleingeld 2008, p. 278.
43. The German quote is taken from Novalis 1960b, p. 595; the English quote is my own.
44. The German quote is taken from Novalis 1960b, p. 564; the English quote is my own.
45. The German quote is taken from Novalis 1960d, pp. 373–374; the English quote is taken from Kleingeld 2008, p. 278.
46. Dane 2011, n.p.
47. Mika 2013a; Mika 2103b.
48. Novalis 1960a.
49. See for instance Pere 1982; Raerino 2000; Browne 2005.
50. Aranga, Mika and Mlcek 2008.

REFERENCES

- Aranga, M., Mika, C., and Mlcek, S. (2008), "Kia Hiwa Ra! Being Watchful: The Challenges of Student Support at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi," *MAI Review* 1: 1–12. Retrieved from <http://www.review.mai.ac.nz>.
- Behler, E. (1993), *German Romantic Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowie, A. (1997), *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Broeck, S. (2002), "When Light Becomes White: Reading Enlightenment through Jamaica Kincaid's Writing," *Callaloo* 25(3): 821–843.
- Browne, M. (2005), *Wairua and the Relationship It Has with Learning te reo Māori within Te Ataarangi*. MA thesis. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Carlyle, T. (1829), "Novalis," *The Foreign Review* 497: 97–141.
- Dane, P. (2011), "Wenn nicht mehr Zahlen und Figuren," in *In die Natur – Naturphilosophie und Naturpoetik in Interkultureller Perspektive*, N. Franke and C. Mika (eds.). Wellington: Goethe Institut, n.p.
- Fagan, K. (2008), "The Delicate Dance of Reasoning and Togetherness," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 20(2): 77–101.
- Friedman, M. (2000), *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger*. Illinois, IL: Carus Publishing Company.
- Garrett, A. (2000), "Hume's Revised Racism Revisited," *Hume Studies* 16(1): 171–178.
- Germana, N. (2007), "Herder's India: The 'Morgenland' in Mythology and Anthropology," in *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, L. Wolff and M. Cipolloni (eds.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 119–137.
- Hall, D. (2001), "Just How Provincial Is Western Philosophy? 'Truth' in Comparative Context," *Social Epistemology* 14(4): 285–297.
- Hall, S. (1997), "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, S. Hall (ed.). London: Sage, 223–279.
- Hemara, W. (2000), *Māori Pedagogies: A View from the Literature*. Wellington: NZCER.
- Kleingeld, P. (2008), "Romantic Cosmopolitanism: Novalis's 'Christianity or Europe,'" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46(2): 269–284.
- Kneller, J. (ed.) (2003), *Novalis: Fichte Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larmore, C. (2000), "Hölderlin and Novalis," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, K. Ameriks (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 141–160.
- Levy, N. (2003), "Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the Differences," *Metaphilosophy* 34(3): 284–304.
- Lindberg, S. (2007), "The Living Consciousness of the German Idealists," in *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy*, S. Heinämaa, V. Lähteenmäki and P. Remes (eds.). Dordrecht: Springer, 245–264.
- Little Bear, L. (2000), "Jagged Worldviews Colliding," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, M. Battiste (ed.). Vancouver: UBC Press, 77–85.

- Maffie, J. (2005a), "Aztec Philosophy," in *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*, J. Fieser and B. Dowden (eds.). Retrieved from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aztec/>
- Maffie, J. (2005b), "Ethnoepistemology," in *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*, J. Fieser and B. Dowden (eds.). Retrieved from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethno-ep/>
- Mandt, A. (1997), "Fichte, Kant's Legacy and the Meaning of Modern Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 50(3): 591–634.
- Mika, C. (2013a), *Reclaiming Mystery: A Māori Notion of Being, in Light of Novalis' Ontology*. PhD thesis. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Mika, C. (2013b), "Western 'Sentences that Push' as an Indigenous Method for Thinking," in *Of Other Thoughts: Non-traditional Ways to the Doctorate. A Guidebook for Candidates and Supervisors*, A. Engels-Schwarzpaul and M. Peters (eds.). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 23–26.
- Mobein, S. (2011), "Interconnectedness of Mind, Body and Nature in the Traditional Healing System of American Indians," in *2011 International Conference on Social Science and Humanity IPEDR*. Singapore: IACSIT Press, 2: 57–61.
- Novalis (1960a), "Das allgemeine Brouillon," in *Schriften: Das philosophische Werk II*, Vol. 3, P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel (eds.). Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 207–478.
- Novalis (1960b), "Fragmente und Studien 1799–1800," in *Schriften: Das philosophische Werk II*, Vol. 3, P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel (eds.). Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 527–693.
- Novalis (1960c), "Philosophische Studien der Jahre 1795/96: Fichte-Studien," in *Schriften: Das philosophische Werk I*, Vol. 2, P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel (eds.). Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 29–296.
- Novalis (1960d), "Philosophische Studien des Jahres 1797: Hemsterhuis und Kant-Studien," in *Schriften: Das philosophische Werk I*, P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel (eds.). Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 299–395.
- Novalis (1960e), "Vorarbeiten zu verschiedenen Fragmentsammlungen," in *Schriften: Das philosophische Werk I* (Vol. 2), P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel (eds.). Stuttgart, Deutschland: W. Kohlhammer, 507–651.
- Novalis. (1990), *Henry von Ofterdingen*. P. Hilty (tr.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Oskal, N. (2008), "The Question of Methodology in Indigenous Research: A Philosophical Exposition," in *Indigenous Peoples: Self-determination, Knowledge, Indigeneity*, H. Minde (ed.). Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 331–345.
- Pere, R. (1982), *Ako: Concepts and Learning in the Māori Tradition*. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Pihama, L. (2001), *Tihei mauri ora: Honouring Our Voices: Mana wahine as a kaupapa Māori Theoretical Framework*. Auckland: The University of Auckland. PhD diss. Retrieved from <http://www.kaupapamaori.com>.
- Raerino, H. (2000), *Te ku o te kupu*. MA thesis. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Sardar, Z., A. Nandy, and M. Davies. (1993), *Barbaric Others: A Manifesto on Western Racism*. Colorado, CO: Pluto Press.
- Schlegel, A. W., and F. Schlegel (1798), *Athenaeum: Eine Zeitschrift*, Vol. 1. Berlin: Friedrich Vieweg dem alteren.
- Seyhan, A. (1992), *Representation and Its Discontents: The Critical Legacy of German Romanticism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Simmonds, N. (2011), "Mana wahine: Decolonising Politics," *Women's Studies Journal* 25(2): 11–25.
- Smith, L. (1999), *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Smith, L. (2000), "Kaupapa Māori Research," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, M. Battiste (ed.). Vancouver: UBC Press, 225–247.
- Smith, T. (2000), "Nga tini ahuatanga o whakapapa korero," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 32(1): 53–60.
- Solomon, R. (2003), "Introduction," in *Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy*, R. Solomon and D. Sherman (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell, 1–7.
- Stewart, G. (2007), *Kaupapa Māori Science*. PhD diss. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Stone, A. (2008), "Being, Knowledge and Nature in Novalis," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46(1): 141–164.
- Strich, F. (1962), *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik*, 5th edn. Bern: Francke Verlag.
- Walker, S. (1996), *Kia tau te rangamarie. Kaupapa Maori Theory as a Resistance against the Construction of Maori as the Other*. MA thesis. Auckland: The University of Auckland. Retrieved from <http://www.kaupapamaori.com>
- Wood, D. (ed.) (2007), *Novalis: Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Carl Te Hira Mika is a senior lecturer at the University of Waikato. He is of the Tuhourangi and Ngati Whanaunga tribes. He has a background in legal studies and practice, indigenous and Maori studies, and German Romanticism and phenomenology. His current areas of research are into the role that Western philosophy has to play in both colonial and counter-colonial thought for indigenous peoples.