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"Nature as a You: Novalis' Philosophical Thought and the Modern Ecological Crisis"

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This paper aims to introduce the German Romantic poet Novalis into the discussion of the modern ecological crisis. In particular we examine Novalis' unique philosophy of nature as a You in which he deals with both of the two aspects of the relationship between humans and nature: their original identity as well as the distinction between them. We analyse the way in which Novalis understood the relationship between nature and humankind dynamically, and show the significance of his concept of poetry for this question. This concept is analysed and described in respect to its principal features: creativity and love. The former is regarded by Novalis as a general capacity of humans as well as an expression of nature itself. Together with love it forms the base for a possible harmonious relationship between humans and nature. We furthermore interpret Novalis' economic thought against the general background of his philosophy of nature and his understanding of humankind. Novalis recognises the crucial role economic action plays in the relationship between nature and humankind and he offers some important insights into this issue. Finally, we discuss the relevance of Novalis' concept of nature as a You for environmental philosophy. By comparison with other concepts of nature in the modern environmental debate, we show how Novalis' thought offers a new perspective on the human-nature relationship and thus fruitful stimulation for today's environmental philosophy.

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