Relations of the Self
At first sight it seems not only possible but also legitimate to connect the philosophy of nature of German idealism, particularly Schelling’s philosophy of nature, with certain modern theories developed in the course of debates about self-organization and auto-poiesis, or, in another domain, about the evolution of the universe. That such relations are conceivable is testified by the several essays made: more than three decades ago, the north-American philosopher Joseph Esposito related Schelling’s philosophy of nature with the «general system theory», formulated for the first time before the Second World War by Ludwig von Bertalanffy. In the same order of ideas we could also mention, in Germany, the work, a little more recent, of Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik. Our observations in this paper will follow almost along the same line. Nevertheless, we should not forget a specificity of German idealism that must be kept in mind. The philosophy of nature, in the case of Schelling as in the case of Hegel, may well take its point of departure in the achievements of contemporary science, with the aim of joining them together in a convincing narrative of the phases of the evolution of natural processes; that’s what happened in relation to Blumenberg’s Bildungstrieb, in the case of Schelling, or to the theory of analytical functions of Lagrange, in the case of Hegel, to mention only two examples chosen almost at random. But as long as the transcendental motive is still present in both, Schelling and Hegel, such a philosophy of nature tries to understand philosophically the conditions of possibility of the natural processes themselves. And since the real issue are the natural processes – and not only, as it was the case with Kant, our knowledge about them – philosophy assumes the task of showing how they are possible, at the same time, as natural phenomena and as objects of a conscience that thinks them. Besides, Schelling and Hegel have a peculiar and somewhat