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Hemsterhuis in Germany: An Introduction

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> "Hemsterhuis is a German because only here he found a public."
> —Friedrich Schlegel (1958-2002: 18.344)

> "Few authors have received as many elegies as Hemsterhuis; few are as forgotten today."
> —Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (1988: 114)

The following dossier of essays charts the ways in which François Hemsterhuis influenced, provoked, challenged and stimulated philosophical reflection in Jena and other sites of romanticism during the last years of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth. The essays all attempt to show why Hemsterhuis mattered to the early German romantics and so should matter to all of us interested in German romanticism.[1] And, in this introduction, I wish to briefly furnish some of the background to these essays in two ways—first, by providing a bare-bones summary of the intellectual history of Hemsterhuis's German reception[2] and, secondly (in a marked change of tone), by schematising some of the ways in which Hemsterhuis's philosophy can be and has been 'romanticised' in the essays that follow, so as to stand *alongside* the philosophies of Novalis, the Schlegels, Schelling, Jean Paul, Günderrode and others.

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[1] The dossier has been timed to celebrate (approximately) the tricentenary of Hemsterhuis's birth, as well as the first edition of his work in English (*The Edinburgh Edition of the Complete Philosophical Works of François Hemsterhuis*).
[2] For more detailed accounts of Hemsterhuis's German reception in English than I can provide here, see Moenkemeyer (1977), Cahen-Maurel (2022) and Trop (2022).

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1. The Becoming-German of Hemsterhuis

Hemsterhuis—*'viri dignissimi dignissimo filio'*, in Herder's phrase (1977-2016: 2.287), i.e., son of the founder of the *schola Hemsterhuisiana*, Tiberius Hemsterhuis—lived from 1721 to 1790 in Franeker in his youth, then in Leiden in his student days and, after a more migratory decade, from 1755 onwards in The Hague as a secretary to the Dutch Council of State. He was one of the last great representatives of the European republic of letters, as suggested by the fact that, while he signed his published work François, he had been baptised Franciscus, was known in his native Dutch as Frans and came to be known among his German 'public' as Franz. He was a military engineer; a pioneering inventor of telescopes and other optical instruments, including the first ever binocular achromatic eyepiece; a regular at the intellectual salons of The Hague replete with politicians, government officials and visiting dignitaries; a practising scientist with interests not only in optics, but also the anatomy of polyps, snails, dragonflies and microscopic parasites; an aficionado of engraved gemstones, assisting with the Prince of Orange's collection and building up his own 'cabinet' that was subsequently inherited by Goethe; and a draughtsman and designer of, among other things, funerary monuments for Herman Boerhaave and J. G. Hamann. Moreover, from at least 1753 onwards[3], Hemsterhuis also thought of himself *as a philosopher*.

His philosophical reputation (e.g., as 'the most original Dutch thinker of the eighteenth century' [Wielema 1993: 109]) rests on a relatively small body of eight short writings in French, most of which were originally circulated in semi-private form: *Lettre sur une pierre antique* (1762), *Lettre sur la sculpture* (written in 1765, published in 1769), *Lettre sur les désirs* (1770), *Lettre sur l'homme et ses rapports* (1772), *Description philosophique du caractère de feu monsieur F. Fagel* (1773), *Sophyle ou de la philosophie* (1778), *Aristée ou de la divinité* (1779), *Simon ou des facultés de l'âme* (written between 1779 and 1783, first published in French posthumously), *Alexis ou de l'âge d'or* (written in 1781, published by Jacobi in 1789), and *Lettre de Dioclès à Diotime, sur l'athéisme* (first drafted in 1787; revised and then published by Jacobi in 1789). These writings are typically divided in two—based on contextual, chronological and formal grounds (although not doctrinal ones): the early letters written from 1762 to 1773 within a circle of 'Orangist', anti-materialist civil servants, bankers and connoisseurs and, then, the four dialogues written across a four-year burst of activity from 1778 to 1782 and inspired (in part) by a new friendship with the Berlin-born, Amalie Gallitzin. Owing to

[3] I.e., when he first describes himself as a 'philosopher' in extant correspondence (*B* 12.4, 12.5).

Gallitzin's move to Münster in Summer 1779, the last of these dialogues (and *Alexis* in particular) were written with one foot in Germany.[4]

Hemsterhuis's philosophy during the 1780s (what one might call, the 'third Hemsterhuis', after the letters and dialogues) would come to be dominated by this German context, even though he occasionally admitted to less than proficient German language skills.[5] Indeed, like many well-received thinkers, the last years of Hemsterhuis's biography become blurred into his reception history—and, in this case, such a reception-history was (to begin with, at least[6]) predominantly *German*. Hemsterhuis visited Münster four times after Gallitzin's relocation: on the second occasion (in early 1781), he extended his journey to Düsseldorf to meet F. H. Jacobi on his Pempelfort estate; and, on the third occasion (Summer / Autumn 1785), he toured central Germany alongside Gallitzin and Franz von Fürstenberg, visiting, among other places, Gotha (where he assisted the Duke of Gotha in installing a Hemsterhuis-designed telescope), Dresden (where he toured the art galleries)[7] and Weimar. It was in Weimar that Hemsterhuis was introduced to J. W. Goethe, J. G. Herder and C. M. Wieland—all of whom had long been interested in his philosophy. J. H. Merck wrote to Petrus Camper in December 1785, 'Everyone in Gotha and Weimar is taken with enthusiasm for Mr. Hemsterhuis. I hope with my whole heart that he is forming the same happy idea of those who do justice to his superiority' (in Trunz 1971: 167); and Wieland had reported to Jacobi a few weeks earlier, 'This man is, in my estimation, one of the most perfect men who has ever existed; he comes close to being the Plato *of our time*; in his head everything appears so perfectly neat and arranged as in a Dutch nature-cabinet; he appears to know everything that is worth knowing and all his ideas have been brought into order, which makes him the most happy of men, as he is also one of the most worthy of devotion and respect' (in Hammacher 1971: 6).

On his return from Weimar and as a result of his increasing involvement (via Jacobi) in the *Spinozismusstreit*, Hemsterhuis began an intensive reading programme of contemporary German philosophy and literature, including Goethe's plays and novels, Herder's philosophical works, Jacobi's polemics

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[4] Prior to Gallitzin's move in 1779, Hemsterhuis seems to have had relatively little interest in German thought, with the exceptions of Leibniz's *Theodicy*, Lambert's cosmology (see *B* 3.67) and a slight acquaintance of some form with Moses Mendelssohn (see below).

[5] See, e.g., *B* 6.26. How seriously these remarks should be taken is another matter considering how much German-language material Hemsterhuis digested during the final years of his life.

[6] Hemsterhuis did also go on to have significant receptions in the Dutch Republic (e.g., the Groningen School) and among the French spiritualists (Maine de Biran, Cousin).

[7] See *B* 12.147; Sonderen 2000: 203-14.

against Mendelssohn and even some Kant. This formed the backdrop to Hemsterhuis's last publication—the *Lettre sur l'athéisme*—which initially appeared in the second edition to Jacobi's *Spinoza-Briefe*. It is in this way that the story of Hemsterhuis's philosophy increasingly became a German one, such that, with Poritsky, one might say that, while Hemsterhuis 'was Dutch, thought in Greek and wrote in French', he 'was read predominantly in Germany' (1926: 30).

2. The 'German' Hemsterhuis

Hemsterhuis's immediate impact in Germany was remarkably extensive and, in this section, I want to provide a cursory survey of some of the landmarks which occurred before and alongside his romantic reception[8] (which will then itself be resumed in §3 below). What follows takes the form of an alphabetised glossary of German thinkers influenced by Hemsterhuis (in order to avoid telling any narrative that prejudge the essays to follow).[9]

a) Franz von Baader

Baader read Herder's translation of the *Lettre sur les désirs* alongside Herder's own *Liebe und Selbstheit* in 1786, before embarking on a detailed reading of Hemsterhuis's works themselves in 1788—with a focus on *Aristée*. His claim in the 1798 *Über das pythagoreische Quadrat in der Natur* that 'Hemsterhuis makes use of the somewhat adventurous sounding and yet true expression of calling the body a coagulated spirit, and the corporeal universe a coagulated god' (2021: 246) is often taken to be the highpoint of Hemsterhuis's influence (see, e.g., Ayrault 1961: 1.484, Krop 2009: 1182). Nevertheless, it was a misattribution (even if an influential one)—and the history of this misattribution is explored in Zorrilla's essay below (see also Bonchino 2014: 15-23).

b) F. A. Boeck

As Vieillard-Baron pointed out forty years ago, 'The nostalgia for Plato among the students of Tübingen cannot be understood without reference to Hemsterhuis' (1988: 115) and this image of a Hemsterhuisian Plato (as well

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[8] That is, prior to Johann Neeb's 1814 essay, 'Über Hemsterhuis und den Geist seiner Schriften'. It is worth noting that Hemsterhuis makes a few comments about his German reception that are difficult to pin down, such as an extract made of the *Lettre sur l'homme* by a 'Haller' (*B* 1.122).

[9] Elsewhere, I have tried to tell this story briefly in terms of a 'Münster Hemsterhuis', a 'Düsseldorf Hemsterhuis', a 'Weimar Hemsterhuis', a 'Tübingen Hemsterhuis' and a 'Jena Hemsterhuis' (Whistler 2022a: xiv-xviii).

as a Platonic Hemsterhuis) transmitted to the students of the *Stift* in the early 1790s—among them, Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling—was in part due to the teaching of Friedrich August Boeck who promulgated Hemsterhuis's ideas (see, e.g., Drees 1995: 535, Franz 2012: 80-2, Melica 2007: 148). Alongside Herder and Jacobi, Boeck is one of the key intermediaries in the transmission of Hemsterhuisian philosophy to the generation of the 1790s.

c) Karl von Dalberg

Before turning to affairs of state in his maturity, the young Karl von Dalberg gave Hemsterhuis a significant role in his *Betrachtungen über das Universum* (e.g., 1777: 7) which argued for a universal, if asymptotic tendency to unification, i.e. love as a metaphysical *Band* holding together the entire universe. Dalberg writes, for example, in a broadly Hemsterhuisian vein, 'Love is … unity is perfection in God. Creation strives to approximate to unity.' (1777: 136-7; see Bonchino 2014: 53-6). Dalberg and Hemsterhuis later met in Erfurt in 1785 (see Brummel 1925: 294-5), and van Sluis (in Hemsterhuis 2015: 59) conjectures that he was responsible for producing the third volume of Hemsterhuis's *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* in 1797. Dalberg's *Betrachtungen* was also one of the triggers for both Friedrich Schlegel's and Franz von Baader's turn to Hemsterhuis much later and may have been responsible for Hemsterhuisian resonances in Schiller's work. Karl's younger brother, Hugo von Dalberg, corresponded with Hemsterhuis over a treatise on melody, harmony and rhythm that took as its basis Hemsterhuis's own comments on these topics from the *Lettre sur l'homme* (*B* 12.V73).

d) J. G. Forster

Georg Forster's 1791 *Ansichten vom Niederrhein, von Brabant, Flandern, Holland, England und Frankreich* detailing his travel through the Dutch Republic in 1790 includes a panegyric to Hemsterhuis in the year of his death. He writes in a way that not only cements the 'modern Plato' trope in the Hemsterhuis-reception, but also approximates to the sorts of things Friedrich Schlegel will remark on Hemsterhuis's writing style:

> We found the elegant and learned Hemsterhuis—the Plato, not just of some academic phantom, but of our century as a whole—dying and could no longer visit him. If proof were still needed that fineness of sensation, richness and discernment in ideas, polish of taste, combined with the skill and insightfulness of genuine wit, along with the illuminated order of a sane philosophy, and the poetic adornment of an imagination that breathes life into everything, are not consigned to some

> single region of earth, then a man like this would at least prove that the Dutch Republic is not excluded from the list of countries where the noblest powers and the most delicate sensibilities of human nature can attain the highest point in their development and bear the ripest fruits. The spirit that dwells in this weak body was so sensitive to harmonies of all kinds, and genuinely suffered so much from every imbalance in sensible as well as in moral nature, that he was not even able to employ his native dialect as a vehicle for his thoughts, but wrote all his works in French and, in so doing, as it were, transformed this language for his purposes by forcing his own style on it. His writings are less known among us than they deserve to be; but one must read them in the original language if one does not want to lose anything of their Attic elegance, which is often only an inimitable breath of life. (1791: 2.707)

Forster also took upon himself the distribution of Hemsterhuis's works, sending *Sophyle* and *Aristée* to the Swiss historian Johannes von Müller, who in turn wrote to Gallitzin that Hemsterhuis was (once more) 'the Plato of his age' (see Brummel 1925: 265). Müller, moreover, was not alone among Germanophone Swiss thinkers in appreciating Hemsterhuis—for example and unsurprisingly given his connections to Herder and Jacobi, J. K. Lavater was a reader of Hemsterhuis.

e) Christian Garve

The Leipzig-based Garve was the first person to publish on Hemsterhuis in German—in a 1771 review of the *Lettre sur la sculpture* for the *Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künsten*. This review drew attention to Hemsterhuis's ideas at exactly the time at which Jacobi, Herder and Wieland—the 'first wave' of his German readers—were starting to encounter them. Moreover, extracts from this review were later included in Jansen's 1792 edition of Hemsterhuis's works, which was used by, among others, Günderrode, Hölderlin, the Schlegels and Novalis. Garve holds Hemsterhuis's account of beauty up to scrutiny against the rationalist canon of his day; for example, he writes:

> It seems to us that it is not only by the quantity of visible points and by the velocity with which they are presented to sight that objects affect the eye and the soul of the spectator to a greater or lesser extent, as Hemsterhuis writes; rather, it also depends a lot on the property of these objects and their relation. We thus think that [beauty is found] not only in the drawing… in which [the soul] can link these visible points in the smallest space of time; but also in [the drawing] in which it can pursue these points in certain directions. That a line has only half or a third of the length of another, this can add nothing to the quantity or velocity of

> the ideas; however, what one calls proportion depends entirely on [this property] and so too, to a large extent, does the pleasure we experience in seeing this object. (in Hemsterhuis 2015: 690)

f) J. W. Goethe

Whereas Hemsterhuis only began to read Goethe in the late 1780s (*B* 6.3), Goethe had been acquainted with the aesthetic theory presented in Hemsterhuis's *Lettre sur la sculpture* since the composition of *Von Deutscher Baukunst* in 1772-3 (see Fechner 1995), and, in 1781, gained access to a manuscript of the initial draft of *Simon* as well. In November 1784, Jacobi further gifted him copies of *Aristée*, *Sophyle* and the *Lettre sur l'homme* (see Trunz 1971: 22, 24), which were read alongside Spinoza's *Ethics* as part of Goethe's famous evening 'reading group' with Charlotte von Stein. Indeed, Goethe's use of the term 'Seelenführerin' to refer to von Stein in a letter from 9th November 1784 (sent to her along with a copy of *Alexis*) is a translation from *Aristée* that was subsequently taken up by Hölderlin (1887-1919: IV/7: 384), and it has even been suggested that the invocation of the golden age in Goethe's *Tasso* owes something to Hemsterhuis (Kurth-Voigt 1999: 168).

It is, however, after Hemsterhuis's death that Goethe's reception of Hemsterhuisian themes becomes most marked. In *Kampagne in Frankreich*, he relates a 1793 visit to Münster during which the recently deceased Hemsterhuis was a major talking point—with Goethe himself remembering him as someone 'led unwearily to strive after the intellectual and moral, as well as the actual and aesthetic.' (1849: 257; see further 1849: 253-4). As Trop describes in his essay below, Goethe uses the *Kampagne* to think through Hemsterhuis's definition of beauty and, more concretely still, Hemsterhuis's collection of gemstones, which 'were always at hand, as a delightful resource' (1849: 262). Goethe took the collection away, so 'that I might study it at home with my friends… [and] gain new insight into this important branch of the arts' (1849: 263; see Brummel 1925: 71-4) and he went on to formally catalogue its contents with Heinrich Meyer (in Trunz 1971: 176-86).

Goethe also took away from Münster Hemsterhuis's 1789 *Lettre sur l'optique*, and—as Petry has forcibly argued—this work was particularly influential. Petry contends that Goethe's conception of the *Farbenlehre* 'underwent a radical change' on reading Hemsterhuis: 'There can be little doubt that Hemsterhuis's work on optics contributed to this change in Goethe's basic approach to the phenomena of colour, and it is even possible that he precipitated it.' (Petry 1985: 233-4) In 1807 (in the wake of Gallitzin's death), Stolberg sent Goethe further manuscripts by Hemsterhuis,

including a mathematical treatise on divisibility, and, as late as January 1821, Goethe was still jotting down reflections in his *Tagebuch* on Hemsterhuis's *Lettre sur la sculpture* (in relation to the neurological experiments of his acquaintance, J. E. Purkinje) (1887-1919: III / 8: 5).

g) J. G. Hamann

Hamann came to know of Hemsterhuis's writings on Herder's recommendation in 1773 (Herder 1977-2016: 2.287) and was quick to praise them (1955-75: 3.33, 3.357, 3.464), revelling particularly in Hemsterhuis's insistence on 'dialoguing in Platonic guise' (1955-75: 5.434) and dubbing him the 'Haagsche Socrates' (1955-75: 7.445). However, during the 1780s, Hamann's estimation of Hemsterhuis's philosophy soured (e.g., 1955-75: 7.340). The change in attitude crystallised during Hamann's 1787-8 stay in Münster, which gave Hamann access to Hemsterhuis's unpublished manuscripts (particularly *Alexis II* [1955-75: 7.501]) and which gave rise to a rivalry with Hemsterhuis for Gallitzin's esteem (see Gründer 1955: 80-8).

Despite what Hamann, as a Protestant, called his '*differentia specifica* from Diotima' (Hamann 1955-75: 7.477), he began to win over Gallitzin at Hemsterhuis's expense. Gallitzin writes:

> For many days after [seeing Hamann] I could not endure Hemsterhuis's pompous Graecism at all. The childlike, sublime simplicity of the old Hamann enveloped me and Hemsterhuis was like one who wanted to wrest this holy spirit from me… It did not occur to the good man that Hamann (in his own way)… had taught me more about inner worth than Hemsterhuis's whole life and all his philosophical, even if beautiful writings (in Gründer 1955: 88; see Brachin 1952: 53-4).

Hamann died suddenly in Münster in June 1788, and, with some irony, Hemsterhuis took on the project of designing Hamann's gravestone and its inscription (see *B* 10.14, 10.17, 10.19).

h) G. W. F. Hegel

It is common among the scholarship (e.g., Henrich 1997: 122-3) to consider Hemsterhuis as a key reference point for Hegel and Hölderlin in their co-development of *Vereinigungsphilosophie* in Frankfurt during the mid-1790s. In Engelen's phrase, Hemsterhuis is 'an early precursor of *Vereinigungsphilosophie*' (1999: 119). While Hegel only mentions Hemsterhuis in the very restricted context of his essay on Hamann (2008: 49), leaving others to uncover 'traces' of his philosophy within the lectures on aesthetics (Engelen 1999: 120; see Melica 2007: 148-52), the early Hegel's focus on concepts of

love and unity are seemingly indebted in some way to Hemsterhuis's *Lettre sur les désirs* as mediated through Herder and Boeck (see Melica 2007: 148).

i) J. G. Herder

Alongside Jacobi, Herder was the most avid 'Hemsterhuisian' of pre-romantic Germany. While there is some debate about whether Herder and Hemsterhuis first met during Herder's tour of the Dutch Republic in 1769 (Fresco in Hemsterhuis 2007: 255), Herder was certainly reading Hemsterhuis by 1770. Hemsterhuis is a constant reference point in Herder's correspondence during the early 1770s (e.g., 1977-2016: 2.16) and his writings are judged to contain 'an original philosophy, such as there is only once in a hundred years' (1977-2016: 3.127). More fully, Herder writes to Hamann:

> He is to me more than Diderot as a philosopher and just as strong a mathematician and, among other things, there are Newtonian revelations on optics from his hand which have completely changed this science, even though he is no professor, but the first secretary of state in Holland and therefore an important man. To me this man seems as if we were together in Plato's original world (1977-2016: 3.287).

Or, as Herder also puts it elsewhere in correspondence, 'After Plato, Shaftesbury and Diderot, there are no philosophers so pleasant who understand so much and so deeply' (1977-2016: 3.35).

Herder was particularly taken with the *Lettre sur l'homme* on publication, writing that 'this book has a hundred of my favourite ideas' and 'everyone has said to me that I am very similar to this man' (1977-2016: 2.240) He, in fact, was involved in an unpublished translation of the work (see Trunz 1971: 235, Van Sluis 2022: 34), as well as including a long extract from it on the historical laws of knowledge in his 1780 *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend* (1877-1913: 11.125-9). However, it is above all the *Lettre sur les désirs* that determines Herder's thinking: in 1781 he translated it for *Der teutsche Merkur*, writing that 'perhaps since Plato there has been nothing so rich and finely thought on the nature of desire in the human soul' (1877-1913: 15.56) and appending a 'postscript', *Liebe und Selbstheit*, that adds a creative, if critical supplement to Hemsterhuis's text. Herder presents a neo-Platonic Hemsterhuis committed to a metaphysics of unification governing the whole of nature, such that the supreme moral ideal is monism—to which Herder himself reacts with a defence of the integrity of the individual (see Heinz 1995). After Jacobi's *Spinoza-Briefe*, no German publication was more influential on the Hemsterhuisianism of the subsequent generation of

German philosophers than Herder's 1781 contributions to *Der teutsche Merkur*.

Elsewhere, Hemsterhuis is cited in Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1877-1913: 13.14); Bonchino, for one, insists on his influence over *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* (2014: 36-41); and Herder's *Plastik* is written, in part, in critical conversation with the *Lettre sur la sculpture* (see Cirulli 2015: 66, Gaiger 2018: 226). After Hemsterhuis's death in 1793, Herder began to plan a 'Denkmal an Hemsterhuis' in collaboration with Jacobi (see Trunz 1971: 83).

j) Friedrich Hölderlin

Hölderlin possessed a copy of the 1782 Blankenburg translation of Hemsterhuis's works and borrowed the 1792 Jansen edition from his brother (1975-2008: 19.63). He also knew the Herder translation, had heard Boeck's teaching on Hemsterhuis, and Jacobi's presentation of an anti-Spinozist Hemsterhuis in the *Briefe* appears to have been particularly important for him (see Drees 1995: 535, Franz 2012: 81, Melica 2007: 150). As Drees (1995: 527) has argued, Hemsterhuis's '*Alexis* played a constitutive role' in the composition of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*: the invocation of history as an 'exzentrische Bahn' in its *Thalia-Fragment* and *Vorletzten-Fassung* (1975-2008: 10.47, 10.276) reappropriates the very Keplerian language Hemsterhuis borrows in the *Lettre sur l'homme* and *Alexis*. Indeed, considering Hemsterhuis's position as a precursor of *Vereinigungsphilosophie* (see the 'Hegel' entry above), it is likely that Hemsterhuis lurks in the background whenever the early Hölderlin speaks of love, unity or the archaic.

k) Wilhelm von Humboldt

Hemsterhuis is occasionally noted as an influence on Humboldt's work of the early 1790s, especially essays like *Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluss auf die organische Natur* (e.g., Bulle 1911: 40-1). However, Hemsterhuis's name is never cited by Humboldt and there is no direct evidence for such claims (see Moenkemeyer 1977: 511). Nevertheless, Humboldt's insistence at this period that everything in nature strives 'without exception' to 'unite into one whole' (1795: 311-2) may well be in part determined by Herder's reading of Hemsterhuis.

l) F. H. Jacobi

Jacobi long saw himself as Hemsterhuis's official representative in Germany, taking it upon himself to formally distribute his works to Lessing, Goethe and

others—and Hemsterhuis for one was grateful: 'It is not just the celebrity I owe to you, but, what is worth more, the insight.' (*B* 12.150) Jacobi's engagement with Hemsterhuis is a long story (see Hammacher and Jaeschke in Jacobi 1998-: V/2.461-75, Whistler 2023a), beginning with an initial encounter in 1769[10], passing through moments like Jacobi's and Diderot's conversations about Hemsterhuis in 1773, Jacobi's first meeting with Hemsterhuis (arranged by Gallitzin) in February 1781, Jacobi's aborted translation of *Simon* (devised in conversation with Goethe), Jacobi's publication of *Alexis* in both its original French and his own translation in 1787, and culminating in his various uses of Hemsterhuisian philosophy in his polemical writings of the late 1780s. As Jacobi writes to Gallitzin in 1789, 'Hemsterhuis certainly does not imagine how much I love him and how much I value him. Such a mixture of naivety and subtlety, as is in this man, is perhaps not to be found twice in nature.' (1981-: I/8.196-7)

Jacobi frequently cites Hemsterhuis, particularly Hemsterhuis's more effusive invocations of the epistemic value of sentiment and immediate sensation, in order to construct what might be called a 'pietist' image of Hemsterhuis. Yet, Jacobi's reception is about far more than citation: in the *Spinoza-Briefe* Hemsterhuis's philosophy functions as a key trigger setting off the conversations with Lessing alongside Goethe's *Prometheus* (see 'Lessing' entry below); a fictionalised Hemsterhuis takes centre stage as a character in dialogue with a fictionalised Spinoza in the central doctrinal section of the work; and, of course, Hemsterhuis is also incorporated into the text as author with the inclusion of the *Lettre sur l'athéisme* in the 1789 edition. One of the most climactic moments in the drama of the *Spinoza-Briefe* is when Jacobi gives up on a rational refutation of Spinoza to throw himself into the arms of the Hemsterhuis of the *Aristée*:

> At this point I leave Spinoza, impatient to throw myself into the arms of that sublime genius who said that the occasional occurrence in the soul of even one aspiration for the better, for the future and the perfect, is a better proof of the Divinity than any geometric proof. For some time, my attention has been directed with full force in this direction, which can be called the standpoint of faith. (1994: 214)

Jacobi's very next work, *Wider Mendelssohns Beschuldigungen betreffend die Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza*, will continue this lionisation of Hemsterhuis by placing a long passage from *Alexis* on prejudice on the very first page (1786: iii-iv).

[10] Jacobi is in fact mentioned by Hemsterhuis in 1770 (*B* 12.V8), before disappearing from the correspondence for a decade.

m) Immanuel Kant

Whereas Hemsterhuis only began to familiarise himself with Kant's philosophy at the very end of his life (*B* 7.78, 8.20), Kant had a longstanding interest in Hemsterhuis's work—from 1770 onwards. Hamann testifies to Kant's 'enthusiasm for the whole series of dialogues' from *Sophyle* to *Alexis* (1955-75: 5.125) and elsewhere also mentions that *Alexis* 'was so admired by Kant' (1955-75: 7.255). It is also clear that Marcus Herz, Kant's student and correspondent, knew Hemsterhuis's philosophy well (Schüppen 1995: 588) and letters sent to Kant equally speak of Hemsterhuis in a way that presumes familiarity with him (e.g., 1999: 257). It is for this reason Petry, for example, has suggested, 'A thorough study of [Hemsterhuis's] influence upon the writing of the three *Critiques* would certainly be a worthwhile undertaking.' (1985: 217) The question of the relationship between Kant's philosophy and Hemsterhuis' philosophy also became something of a *Schwerpunkt* in German intellectual circles at the time—from C. G. Hermann's 1791 *Kant und Hemsterhuis in Rücksicht ihrer Definitionen der Schönheit* to the essay, *Einige Bemerkungen zur Vergleichung der Hemsterhuisischen Philosophie mit der kritischen*, included in the 1797 third volume of Blankenburg's *Vermischte philosophische Schriften*, as well as in A. W. Schlegel's framing of Hemsterhuis 'as a prophet of transcendental idealism' or Schleiermacher's idea of Hemsterhuis as doing critical philosophy without knowing it (see below).

Among Kant's successors, W. G. Tennemann mentions Hemsterhuis in his various histories of philosophy (e.g., 1820: 455; see Schüppen 1995: 590), and, while J. G. Fichte is often cited as someone who shows no familiarity with Hemsterhuis's works (e.g., Moenkemeyer 1977: 512), like Kant, his correspondents write to him with a seeming presumption of familiarity with them; indeed, in a 1812 letter to Fichte, Ludwig Cölln nods in passing to Hemsterhuis's 'elegant' French, calling him 'the Plato of the moderns' (1962-2012: III / 7.172).

n) G. E. Lessing

Much of the critical discussion around Lessing's and Hemsterhuis's relationship has tended to focus on whether the *Laocoön* influenced the *Lettre sur la sculpture* (e.g., Brummel 1925: 112), which it presumably did not considering the latter was written, if not published, before the appearance of the former. In fact, Lessing was certainly aware of the *Lettre sur la sculpture* in the 1770s (at least), but had not encountered any other of Hemsterhuis's writings until Jacobi visited Wolfenbüttel in Summer 1780.

As Jacobi tells the story, on leaving Lessing's home on 10th July he presented him with the *Lettre sur l'homme*, *Sophyle*, and *Aristée*, later sending on the *Lettre sur les désirs*. Jacobi returns to Wolfenbüttel on 10th August,

> On my return I found Lessing totally fascinated by just this *Aristée*, so much so that he had resolved to translate it himself. It was patent Spinozism, Lessing said, and in such a beautiful and exoteric a guise that this very guise contributed in turn to the development and the explication of the inner doctrine. (1994: 198)

Although Jacobi did not personally know Hemsterhuis at this point, he had still formed a robust interpretation of him as anti-Spinozist; Lessing, though, deciphers a crypto-Spinozist image of Hemsterhuis in the late dialogues. Thus, Jacobi reports Lessing as saying, 'In the letter *sur l'homme et ses rapports* there still is a bit of hesitation, and it is possible that Hemsterhuis did not at the time know his Spinozism fully yet; but now he is quite clear about it.' (1994: 198) In particular, Jacobi considers Lessing to be referring to a passage towards the end of *Aristée* in which Hemsterhuis discusses space as an attribute of God or as the medium of God's omnipresence (*EE* 2.92-3)—a claim that seems in many ways to mimic Spinoza discussion of the relation between extension and God in the scholium to *Ethics* IP15.

Lessing received the *Lettre sur les désirs* a few days later and became in turn enthusiastically taken with this text, writing to Jacobi on 4th December 1780 of how much 'the Hemsterhuisian system of love' resonated with his own thinking (in Jacobi 1981-: I/2.228). More generally, it does not seem farfetched to suggest that Lessing's output over the last months of his life may have been partially determined by this encounter with Hemsterhuis and, while it was too late for him to incorporate much into *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* which he was finishing during Jacobi's visits, it certainly seems possible that *Daß mehr als fünf Sinne für den Menschen sein können* does bear traces of Hemsterhuisian organology (following Brummel's conjecture in 1925: 128; see further Whistler 2023b).

o) Moses Mendelssohn

It is not clear how Hemsterhuis came to send his *Aristée* to Mendelssohn in 1782, but it does not seem to have been due to his new network of acquaintances in Germany. Mendelssohn's reply from April 1783 has not survived, but Hemsterhuis comments on it to Gallitzin as follows:

> Here is a letter from the famous and amiable Mendelssohn… I'm annoyed that he did not finish his second demonstration, for I believe

> that he would have realised that he is confounding time with eternal duration which is *one* and determinate space with infinite extension which is *one*. (*B* 4.33)

Whatever else one can discern from this comment, it seems likely that Mendelssohn's critique of *Aristée* focused on the same passage from the dialogue as Lessing's (see above) concerning extension as an attribute of God and its pantheistic implications. As Hammacher concludes, 'This shows that a monistic and more-or-less Spinozist interpretation of *Aristée* was universal in Germany' (2003: 24).

Before this exchange, Mendelssohn had also shown interest in Hemsterhuis's *Lettre sur la sculpture* in a series of unpublished notes that are, in Wellbery's estimation, 'a significant contribution to the project of a mathematical aesthetics' current in German rationalism (1984: 56). Mendelssohn attempts, that is, to formalise Hemsterhuis's definition of beauty into a kind of equation: 'Amount of good (m) multiplied by distinctness (p) over time (t) equals the quantity of the motive'. (in Wellbery 1984: 56-9; see Gaiger 2017: 241-4).

p) The Münster Circle

As narrated in §1 above, Hemsterhuis's primary line of access into Germany was through the Münster Circle which consisted, at various times during its existence from 1779 to around 1806, of Gallitzin, Fürstenberg, F. C. Buchholtz, J. F. Kleuker, B. H. Overberg, A. M. Sprickmann, F. L. Stolberg, etc. Letters and manuscripts sent to Gallitzin were immediately circulated around the group and formed the subject of discussion at Gallitzin's salon (Muller 1955: 37-8; see Goethe 1849: 260). Particularly important was Hemsterhuis's translation of Plato's *Symposium* which, in 1781, was adopted by the group as a template for philosophical practice (Oehlert 1955: 24-26), creating an image of Hemsterhuis as a Platonist and enthusiast which corresponds closely to Kant's later critique of their philosophical position in *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*.

As a Herder-enthusiast and Plato-translator, Kleuker was a significant mediator of Hemsterhuis's thought. With Herder and Dalberg, he formed a triumvirate of philosophers prior to 1790 who associated Hemsterhuis with speculative forms of Neoplatonism, including the Cambridge Platonists and Shaftesbury, and – in Kleuker's specific case – even with Saint Martinian theosophy, Kabbala and Orphic hermeticism (see Bonchino 2014: 47-53, Vieillard-Baron 1988: 91-113). For example, in Kleuker's *Magikon*, the Hemsterhuisian golden age is identified with a perennial, but hidden wisdom.

q) A. W. Rehberg

Rehberg had close familial ties to the Schlegels, but a very different philosophical temperament which drew him towards a conservative critique of 'Jacobin' radicalism. Nonetheless, he shared with the Schlegels their appreciation for Hemsterhuis, making use of *Aristée* in the 1787 *Über das Verhältniss der Metaphysik zu der Religion* (see Trunz 1971: 281) and even more explicitly calling Hemsterhuis, in a note to the 1785 *Philosophische Gespräche über Vergnügen*, 'a writer whose works surpass everything that has ever been thought and written on this topic [of desire], even those of Plato, and to whom his century fails to do justice.' (1785: 30; see Brummel 1925: 264-5)

r) Friedrich Schiller

Like Fichte (see the 'Kant' entry above), Schiller is often cited as a German thinker with no interest in Hemsterhuis's philosophy (Moenkemeyer 1975: 167). Nevertheless, this seems implausible. Bulle (1911: 42-4; see Regin 1965: 66) provides some suggestions for passages that show the implicit imprint of Hemsterhuisian thought. One might also cite Schiller's use of mythological narrative in his poems—such as the descent of Venus Urania in the creation-story provided in the 1788/9 *Die Künstler*—which is strongly reminiscent of the mythological stories told in *Alexis* and *Simon*.

s) Ludwig K. von Schrautenbach

A friend of Merck's (see below) with pietist leanings, Schrautenbach was charged, under Merck's editorship, to write notices of Hemsterhuis's *Lettre sur les désirs* and *Lettre sur l'homme* in 1772 for the *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen* (reproduced on pp. 321-38 below—see the introduction, pp. 321-3 below, for more biographical and contextual details). These notices, which were long misattributed to Herder and appeared alongside work by Goethe, consist, in Schrautenbach's own words, of 'extensive excerpts' from Hemsterhuis's texts —enthusiastic paraphrases intended to instigate a wider dissemination of his ideas in Germany, and, to this end, they explicitly position themselves as continuing the work begun in Garve's review of the *Lettre sur la sculpture* in 1771. Schrautenbach's interest in Hemsterhuis was, in fact, longstanding (and he even managed to obtain a rare manuscript of *Simon* in the early 1780s), and, in general, he seems to have benefited from a system of patronage established by Hemsterhuis (and functioning relatively independently of Gallitzin's mediation), in which his writings were distributed to foreign dignitaries (in Schrautenbach's case, the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt), who he had initially met at The Hague, with the expectation

that they would further circulate them among interested readers attached to their courts.

t) C. M. Wieland, J. H. Merck and Sophie La Roche

While Garve, Herder and Jacobi presented themselves as relatively isolated in their discovery of Hemsterhuis's ideas at the beginning of the 1770s, at the same period a more communal appreciation of Hemsterhuis's philosophy emerged. This network of Hemsterhuisian readers came into existence in around 1771 and comprised Wieland, Merck and La Roche. Wieland himself seems to have begun reading Hemsterhuis in the 1760s when composing *Aspasia* (see Ermatinger 1907: 150), but Hemsterhuis comes to be a specific point of reference at the end of 1771. Merck writes to La Roche on 31st December 1771 (in the earliest German criticism of Hemsterhuis):

> I'm pleased Wieland has finally come back from his admiration for the Hemsterhuisian hypothesis. It couldn't last long, for the idea was always utterly wrong to me… If the soul finds its highest pleasure in the perception of the maximum of ideas in the shortest space of time, such as at the sight of a statue – why does this soul afterwards, so to speak, close its eyes and feel with its hand for the intimate impression of each individual beauty which forms part of the admired object? And if [the soul] has exhausted everything [in this highest pleasure], why does it become disgusted with pleasure, and why does it thirst once more for a succession of other ideas? (1968: 60-1; see Fechner 1995: 513-5)

La Roche and Merck both went on to later visit Hemsterhuis (in 1776 and 1784/5, respectively) and, as well as editing Schrautenbach's notices (see above), Merck was a key mediator in circulating a manuscript of *Simon* at the beginning of the 1780s. A few years later in August 1787, after finally meeting Wieland in Weimar, Hemsterhuis further sent Wieland a copy of *Alexis* (Starnes 1987: 2: 109). It is probably due to Wieland's influence that the novelist Wilhelm Heinse came to know of Hemsterhuis, even if his attitude remained more critical (see Moenkemeyer 1975: 127-9). At the end of the century, Wieland and Hemsterhuis remain linked in the German imagination, as evidenced in the anonymous 1796 article, 'Die Liebe, betrachtet nach Pope, Wieland, Fielding und Hemsterhuis' which appeared in the *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks* and reads them both through the lens of Herder's *Liebe und Selbstheit*.

u) J. J. Winckelmann

Despite their obvious affinities, Winckelmann is not a thinker influenced by Hemsterhuis: his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* appeared in 1764 prior to the *Lettre sur la sculpture*. However, Winckelmann is relevant precisely because of the ways in which his works prepare the way for Hemsterhuis's German-reception. Van Bunge helpfully notes that, through his philhellenism, his philological approach to antique art and his emphasis on simplicity in artistic composition, 'it was Winckelmann who must have been largely responsible for creating a German audience for Hemsterhuis' (2018: 185).

3. Hemsterhuis in Romanticism

It was as part of this wider movement that a new 'romantic' generation of Hemsterhuis-readers emerged in the 1790s in Jena and beyond. In what follows, I want to again provide the bare bones of an intellectual history of these readings (this time proceeding in roughly chronological order) that will be filled out by the essays below.

One difference that marks the generation of the 1790s apart from earlier readers of Hemsterhuis is that, while the latter often had a personal connection with the Dutch philosopher or his circle and accessed his works through the circulation of unpublished and rare manuscripts, the romantics did not need to rely on these contingencies and had a different mode of access to his texts. In 1782, C. F. Blankenburg had published an unauthorised German translation of Hemsterhuis's writings, *Vermischte philosophische Schriften*, excluding *Alexis* and the not-yet-written *Lettre sur l'athéisme*, but including the as-yet-unpublished *Simon* (see van Sluis in Hemsterhuis 2015: 54-61). A third volume was added to Blankenburg's edition in 1797 (after his death) which further includes *Alexis* and some material from Jacobi's *Spinoza-Briefe*. Further German translations included Jacobi's 1787 authorised version of *Alexis*—vociferously praised by Hemsterhuis (*B* 12.224)—and Herder's 1781 translation of the *Lettre sur les désirs* (singularised in the German into *Brief über das Verlangen*), which went on to be included in both the Blankenburg and Jansen editions.[11] By the 1790s, many philosophers owned copies of Blankenburg's edition, but were still

[11] There were a number of unfinished and unpublished German translations in circulation during the period, including (not exhaustively) H. C. Bois's plan to translate some of the early letters, Herder's involvement in plans for a translation of the *Lettre sur l'homme*, a further translation of it by Georg Ernst von Rüling, Jacobi's aborted translation of *Simon* (although he did complete a version of Diotima's speech in that dialogue), Sprickmann's translation of *Simon* in Münster and two versions of *Aristée*, one completed in Münster in November 1782 and one by M. W. Müller, also from 1782.

keen to get hold of H. J. Jansen's newly-appeared 1792 French edition of Hemsterhuis's complete works (*Œuvres philosophiques*), which included the first original-language publication of *Simon*, along with a version of the *Lettre sur l'athéisme* that had (along with *Alexis*) been supplied by Jacobi in manuscript form. As a result, among Novalis, Hölderlin and the Schlegels, there is a tendency to prefer the Jansen-edition.

a) A.W. Schlegel

Schlegel was, as in many areas, the first of the romantics to appreciate Hemsterhuis's value, mentioning him in print as early as 1790 (see Cahen-Maurel 2022: 39). As he put it in 1795, Hemsterhuis had long been 'our darling' (1964: 1.155-6). Moreover, his value for Schlegel can be quite precisely defined as a forerunner of the Kantian Copernican revolution that he saw culminating in the *poietic* philosophy of Jena:

> Hemsterhuis (a Dutchman, who wrote in French but was only properly esteemed by Germans) who, so familiar with the culture of the Encyclopaedists, accordingly dared to take the rights of speculation, ethics, art and religion from them and link himself to forms of antiquity, is considered as a precursor of ever-growing philosophy, as it were a prophet of transcendental idealism. (1964: 3.83)

In so claiming, Schlegel inaugurated a tradition of reading Hemsterhuis as a 'precursor' according to a logic of anticipation (as well as buying into a pre-existing tradition of pairing Hemsterhuis with Kant). Through his influence on Germaine de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, this motif entered nineteenth-century France: for de Staël, Hemsterhuis was 'the first who, in the middle of the eighteenth century, indicated in his writings the majority of the beneficent ideas on which the new German school is founded' (1814: 432), and, a few decades later, Émile Grucker will still dub Hemsterhuis 'Kant's precursor' (1866: 264).

Hemsterhuis's philosophy plays a number of roles in Schlegel's lecture courses—in their philosophy of history (as explored by Galletta in her essay below), with Schlegel praising 'Hemsterhuis's very ingenious description of the rise and fall of culture as an elliptical cycle' (1964: 2.17, 3.78); in their definition of beauty (1964: 2.122) and understanding of sculpture (1964: 3.78, 2.111, 2.125); in their remarks on the origin of language drawn from the *Lettre sur l'homme* (1964: 1.155-6); in their palingenetic thesis that death is a 'natural development of one's essence' (1964: 1.38); and in their account of the origins of music (1964: 1.166, 2.209-10), the success of which is due,

according to Schlegel, to the fact that 'Hemsterhuis found a way through the labyrinth of physiology and psychology' (1964: 1.167).

b) Friedrich Schlegel

In late 1792 through to Spring 1793, Schlegel wrote frequently to his brother for information about editions of Hemsterhuis's writings (1958-2002: 23.122; 23.134-35, 23.152). By 16th October 1793, he could finally report, 'I am now familiar with all the known pieces by Hemsterhuis, except only one, the *description philosophique du caractere de feu Mr Fagel*.' (1958-2002: 23.140). These readings formed the basis for Schlegel's rich, if fragmentary reception of Hemsterhuis during the 1790s. References to Hemsterhuis are scattered through the notebooks and publications and can be organised into three broad groupings: Hemsterhuis's imitation of Plato and Socrates; his experiments in philosophical style; and what might be dubbed his prophetic moralism.

On the first point, Schlegel stands in the tradition of using Plato and Socrates as a hermeneutic frame for Hemsterhuis, characterising him as 'the only genuine Socratic of his age.' (1958-2002: 18.6) and 'still the best' of all modern imitators of Plato (1958-2002: 11.119)—with Schlegel noting in particular Hemsterhuis's 'Socratic philosophy of nature' (1958-2002: 18.79) and 'classical' conception of irony (1958-2002: 2.160, 18.223). Indeed, according to Schlegel, Hemsterhuis saw 'how to beautifully limit modern breadth through antique simplicity, and from the heights of his *Bildung*… he gazed simultaneously into the old and into the new worlds.' (1958-2002: 2.211) This idea that Hemsterhuis synthesised the ancient and the modern comes most prominently to the fore in comments on 'Hemsterhuis mediating Plato and Spinoza' (1958-2002: 18.277) and anticipating 'some intimations of realism of poetry' by identifying Plato with 'moral ideas' and Spinoza with 'poetry', 'in order to newly revive Greek mythology.' (1958-2002: 16.270)

Hemsterhuis's Socratism is clearest, Schlegel further argues, in how he writes philosophy, and, for this reason, Schlegel for the most part neglects Hemsterhuis's early letters, including the definition of beauty in the *Lettre sur la sculpture* which had been so important in the earlier reception-history, to attend to the more stylistically experimental dialogues, especially *Simon*. Schlegel writes:

> Hemsterhuis speaks of a philosophy which is similar to the dithyramb [at the end of *Simon*]. What does he understand by this but the freest outpouring of ethical feeling, a communication of great and good sentiments? I would like to call the *Simon* of this philosopher a Socratic

> poetry. To me the ordering of the whole appears at the very least neither didactic, nor dramatic, but dithyrambic. (1958-2002: 1.244)

Schlegel continues a year later, 'Hemsterhuis unites Plato's beautiful visionary flights with the strict rigour of the systematiser… Hemsterhuis's works might be called intellectual poetry.' (1958-2002: 2.187) Elsewhere, Schlegel will praise Hemsterhuis' 'scientific rigour and brevity of expression united with clarity, life and grace, even with an often-Platonic beauty of style' (1958-2002: 3.271) and considers his French composed

> so beautifully and harmoniously, without constraint and with the grace of the ancients, that, even from this perspective, his Socratic conversations correspond to the genuinely Platonic and philosophically Christian spirit which forms their content. (1958-2002: 6.346)

Schlegel also stresses the didactic nature of Hemsterhuis's project—the fact that it poeticises in order to persuade. In this vein, Schlegel writes that 'Hemsterhuis has morally combined poetry and philosophy' (1958-2002: 18.286), or again that 'Hemsterhuis's aesthetics is moral-philosophical and his morals are thoroughly aesthetic.' (1958-2002: 18.116). And this reading of Hemsterhuis is closely connected to Schlegel's appreciation of the eschatological dimension of this ethical theory (which will come to the fore in Novalis's reception). The key claim Schlegel makes thematises the organological tendency in Hemsterhuis's thought to unlock future 'spiritual' organs through self-cultivation and prophetic practices: 'Exceptional is Hemsterhuis's opinion that there could be very many completely new and unknown senses—as if more completely world-encompassing senses were possible than the sense of space and time' (1958-2002: 18.550).

c) Novalis

Novalis's interpretation marks the culmination of the German Hemsterhuis-reception. He began reading Hemsterhuis in 1791 at the latest and in January 1792 met Friedrich Schlegel for the first time, who immediately reported to A. W. Schlegel that Novalis's 'favourite writers are Plato and Hemsterhuis' (F. Schlegel 1958-2002: 23.40). However, it was between 5th September and 30th November 1797 that Novalis's reading of Hemsterhuis became intense: during this period, he borrowed the 1792 Jansen edition of Hemsterhuis's works (in addition to the Blankenburg edition he already owned) (Mähl in Novalis 1960-2006: 2.318) and took notes on each of Hemsterhuis's works in turn. Generally, in Mähl's words, in these studies the 'boundary' between Hemsterhuis's and Novalis's thoughts is 'not always sharply drawn' (Mähl in

Novalis 1960-2006: 2.322): there is a bleeding of one into the other. The result was 36 sheets of translations, notes and occasional commentary that have come to be known as the *Hemsterhuis-Studien* (translated below in this special issue by James Reid for the first time in English).[12] Novalis also consulted Herder's 1781 *Liebe und Selbstheit*, which is included in both the Jansen and Blankenburg editions. The only major piece by Hemsterhuis not included is *Sophyle* (although Novalis was familiar with the dialogue) and the *Studien* also continue the romantic trajectory of minimising the importance of the *Lettre sur la sculpture* (it is accorded just three one-line entries among the 36 pages) (p. 344 below). The *Studien* emphasise an array of Hemsterhuisian ideas, including Hemsterhuis's political genealogies, his account of language and his theory of poetic genius; but most relevant to the essays in the dossier below are Novalis's development of Hemsterhuisian organs and the moral arts.

When it comes to the organic (in its etymological sense of 'tool-being'), Novalis is keen to take from Hemsterhuis the idea that the framework of the organ can helpfully make sense of all that the human, as finite, does or undergoes; as he bluntly paraphrases Hemsterhuis, 'Every finite being is an instrument' (p. 356 below). He also stresses the related idea that organs separate us from the world and each other and so generate an infinite striving towards immediacy, which becomes broadly Fichtean in Novalis's account ('Without organs, the soul would be permeated by the infinite object in the instant – both would become one – and the mutual enjoyment would be complete' [p. 345 below]). He also considers significant Hemsterhuis's account of the interrelation of organs or what he calls 'the sympathy of the organs' (p. 351 below), the fact that each capacity of the mind is a kind of organ, such as the 'organ of faith' (p. 352 below), and that thinking is fundamentally organological and relational: '*Understanding* and *reason* express the organs or faculties for relationships' (p. 349 below). Most importantly, Novalis describes in great detail the various practices, faculties and forms of thinking required for the cultivation of new organs—he exclaims, '*Germs of future organs* – perfectibility of the organs. How can something be made into an organ?' (p. 354 below) As Moenkemeyer sums up, Novalis appreciated in Hemsterhuis 'the perfectibility of our present organs and the possibility of some still undeveloped organs in man' (1975: 82). Two recent commentaries have picked up on precisely these aspects of Novalis's Hemsterhuis-reception. First, Leif Weatherby demonstrates that Novalis inherits from

[12] He also reports on this study-programme to A. W. Schlegel in a series of letters from November and December 1797 (1960-2006: 4.237, 4.239).

Hemsterhuis, among others, a 'new approach to speculation called organology' (2016: 210), according to which the future is always open, contingent and malleable. This is, in part, what Novalis means by magical idealism, the construction of an 'all-capable organ in philosophy' (1960-2006: 3.417). Secondly, Dalia Nassar has pointed to the communal, intersubjective character of this organic ontology shared by Novalis and Hemsterhuis. She writes, 'What Novalis finds in Hemsterhuis, and what he could not find in Fichte, was a way to think of the relational character of the self—in a political and moral context, and in a scientific context… Through Hemsterhuis, it seems, Novalis begins to develop a communal consciousness.' (2013: 41) Mitchell takes up these themes in his essay below.

When it comes to the cultivation of moral sense, one of Novalis's key claims in the *Hemsterhuis-Studien* is as follows: 'Pythagoras's unconditioned end of the perfection of the moral organ. *Are there no binoculars for the same*?' (p. 352 below) The first sentence is taken from Hemsterhuis's *Lettre sur l'homme* and the second is his own way of bringing out the technological implications of a moral organ in need of amelioration. Novalis continues, 'Do we know—what discoveries have been reserved for us on this side—? The moral side of the cosmos is even more unknown and immeasurable than the space of heaven. *Moral Arts*.' (p. 355 below) Novalis places emphasis on the activities and technologies of the subject in generating a morally appropriate relation to others—and, when pushed to its extreme, this cultivation of moral sensitivity comes to be articulated in a prophetic key: 'There are human beings so tenderly moral, whose conscience perceives such remote relations that they cannot be members of current society.' (p. 351 below) As Novalis puts it elsewhere, 'Hemsterhuis's expectations of the moral organ are genuinely prophetic.' (1960-2006: 2.562) At stake is Novalis's appropriation of the Hemsterhuisian imperative to set about enhancing the moral organ which had become so neglected in modernity:

> The arts have indeed arisen through the excessive expansion and development of the lower faculties—but the most essential organ—the heart, has been lost? The development of this organ is reserved for a future existence—the development of this organ is the character of our genuine perfectibility. (p. 355 below)

Implicit in the above is Novalis's description of the pull felt by a principle of perfectibility towards new, higher existences—a thesis he makes explicit in the following, 'There are wishes and desires—that are so poorly fitted to the state of our earthly life that we can safely infer a state where they become

pinions that will elevate them into an element of their own, and an island where they can settle.' (p. 360 below)

Hemsterhuis's influence on Novalis evidently extends outside of the 1797 *Hemsterhuis-Studien* too. Alongside Novalis's interest in the figure of the golden age and Hemsterhuis's philosophy of history generally (see Mähl 1994), particularly visible once more is the various ways Novalis puts to work Hemsterhuis's concept of a moral organ. What Hemsterhuis offers Novalis is a 'new treatment of morality' (1960-2006: 3.561), a 'philosophical ethics' and 'poetic ethics' of the 'moral sense' that emphasises 'perfectibility' and the 'infinite' (1960-2006: 3. 420). As Chepurin describes in his essay below, Novalis is very keen to explore the cosmic and planetary discourse around morality in Hemsterhuis, whether by reappropriating *Alexis*'s account of the disruption caused by the moon (1960-2006: 3. 64; see Moenkemeyer 1975: 174), or by recasting philosophy of nature in a Hemsterhuisian key. On the latter point, he speaks of a 'holy way to physics' (1960-2006: 3.469), or more precisely to A. W. Schlegel in July 1798 of 'a *moral* (in the Hemsterhuisian sense) astronomy' and 'religion of the visible world' in which physics becomes 'absolutely *symbolic*' (1960-2006: 4.255; see Tokarzewska 2015, Flickenschild 2010). This 'moralising' of the philosophical project via Hemsterhuis is equally present in the *Allgemeine Brouillon*, where Novalis notes that 'encylopedics' emerges 'according to Hemsterhuis, through the application of the moral sense to the other senses—i.e., through the moralising of the world and the other sciences.' (1960-2006: 3.275) This is precisely the strand of Novalis's Hemsterhuis-reception that Napoli explores in his essay below.

d) F. W. J. Schelling

Schelling's Hemsterhuis-reception follows a number of the trajectories described above: his interest can be traced back to both the Tübingen Hemsterhuis of Boeck, later crystallised in Hegel's and Hölderlin's *Vereinigungsphilosophie*, and also to the Jena romantic group. It has even been claimed that it was Novalis who personally (re-)introduced Schelling to Hemsterhuis (Franz 2012: 82). Schelling's cousin, C. G. Bardili, might also have contributed to this story with his 1794 dialogue, *Sophylus oder Sittlichkeit und Natur als Fundamente der Weltweisheit* (even if it does not mention Hemsterhuis by name). And one further influence was Baader's *Über das pythagoräische Quadrat in der Natur*: its misattribution to Hemsterhuis of the claim that matter is 'coagulated spirit' was repeated in the 1800 *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1856-61: 3.453), which—in light of his mistake—

provoked further reflection in Schelling's late Berlin lectures (1856-61: 11.425), as explored by Zorrilla's essay below.

Hemsterhuis's *Alexis* is also cited at a crucial point in the last of Schelling's 1802 *Fernere Darstellungen der Philosophie*. He writes, 'Hemsterhuis's beautiful poem on the end of the golden age is well-known: he looks for the ground of the altered inclination of the earth's area in a necessary effect of the moon which he considers as a later newcomer to the earth. We are of the opinion that this idea approaches the truth to a considerable degree more than any of the others.' He continues that such a theory 'chimes with the old tradition illuminated in the myth of Arcadia, which is also mentioned by Hemsterhuis.' (1856-61: 4.490) It is also probable that Hemsterhuis was a source for some of the material in Schelling's lectures on the philosophy of art (given in 1802/03 and then 1803/04) (see, e.g., Tilliette 1970: 1.439, 1.455), particularly considering Schelling's reliance in drafting them on A. W. Schlegel's 1801 *Vorlesungen über schöne Litteratur und Kunst* which makes so much of Hemsterhuis.[13]

e) F. D. E. Schleiermacher

Schleiermacher is another Hemsterhuis-reader on the fringes of early Romanticism, and, if nothing else, his role as editor and translator of the Platonic corpus led to familiarity with Hemsterhuis's work. As Vieillard-Baron puts it,

> The decisive impulse that Hemsterhuis gave to the return and recourse to Plato did not solely influence original thinkers like Hamann or Jacobi. It also stimulated Platonic studies, in particular translations of the dialogues. The three most important translators of the time, Kleuker, Stolberg and Schleiermacher, recognised their debt to the Dutch philosopher. (1988: 191)

The young Schleiermacher had been familiar with Hemsterhuis from 1790 (on his father's recommendation), studied both Herder's postscript to the *Lettre sur les désirs*, *Liebe und Selbstheit*, and Jacobi's *Spinoza-Briefe* (see Grove 2011), although by 1801 he was pointing out to Friedrich Schlegel that Hemsterhuis was not as good a dialogist as first thought (1860-1: 3.258). In his posthumously published *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Schleiermacher makes his most significant passing comment on Hemsterhuis—concluding a discussion of the infinitude of the attributes in Spinoza's philosophy as seemingly 'quite close to critical idealism' with the following, 'What

[13] Caroline Schelling also, unsurprisingly, owned Hemsterhuis's works (2015: 2.319).

Hemsterhuis and, along with him, Jacobi say on different viewpoints on the world according to the receptivity of the philosophising organ also belongs here; on this point, they are both very close to critical idealism, without knowing it.' (1839: 300-1; see Hammacher 1995a: 415). More generally, it seems possible that the pietist image of Hemsterhuis transmitted by Jacobi may well have had some formative role in Schleiermacher's understanding of the self as constituted through a feeling of dependence (see Bulle 1911: 27-8, 54, Kraetke 1995: 545-8).

f) Karoline von Günderrode and Bettina von Arnim

A further study of Hemsterhuis's philosophy is to be found in Günderrode's notebooks, alongside notes on Kant, Fiche and Novalis. Having borrowed the Jansen edition from von Arnim, she reproduces an extract from the opening of the Prometheus-myth in *Simon* followed by her own free translation of the section setting out Hemsterhuis's faculty psychology. Following Hemsterhuis, she notes, for example, that 'the power of will is neither medium nor organ, but it is the ground of activity', that intellect becomes reason as soon as it develops the capacity to compare and contrast ideas, and that 'the moral organ has two instincts', one in which it is 'passive' and 'receives impressions of love, hate, envy, desire, sympathy, anger, etc.' and the other in which it is 'active' and 'judges, compares, stimulates, or pacifies sensations'. (1990: 2.299-301)

Hemsterhuis also plays a significant role in von Arnim's dramatization of her friendship with Günderrode and both women are pictured studying his philosophy. Additionally, an 'accompanying philosophical essay' found in an edition of Hemsterhuis is reproduced in *Die Günderode* extolling faith as an epistemic virtue that reconciles time and eternity (1842: 13, 21), and von Arnim also presents herself reading his works aloud to her grandmother, Sophie La Roche (see above) (1842: 93). More widely, Hemsterhuis's influence has been discerned in Günderrode's poems—for example, in the 1804 *Mahomets Traum in der Wüste* (see Christmann 2005: 176, Ezekiel 2021, Schüppen 1995: 592-3).

g) Jean Paul

Independently of the Jena circle, Jean Paul also developed a broadly romantic interpretation of Hemsterhuis's philosophy. 'Strong Hemsterhuisian overtones' (Cometa 2005: 121) are present as early as the 1791 *Über die Fortdauer der Seele und ihres Bewusstseins* with its organological claims about the emergence of new ways of perceiving and thinking, and are then further

advanced in the 1795 *Hesperus*. Most significant, however, is Jean Paul's commentary on Hemsterhuis's philosophy in the 1804 *Vorschule der Aesthetik*.

Here Jean Paul interrogates the definition of beauty given in the *Lettre sur la sculpture*: 'Beauty, says Hemsterhuis, is what yields the greatest number of ideas in the least time, an explanation which borders both on the older "sensuous unity in multiplicity" and on the later "free play of the imagination".' The reference to Kant is once again important. However, Jean Paul continues, what Hemsterhuis's definition presupposes is 'how ideas can be measured by time at all', and this, in his estimation, leads to two difficulties: first, Hemsterhuis's definition is so formal that it could equally apply to ugliness, and, secondly, aesthetic experiences actually look very different from this speedy apprehension and instead involve zigzagging and oscillation, as opposed to 'a numbing multiplicity of ideas' (1973: 24).

The *Vorschule* also discusses Hemsterhuis in another context—as an ally against the 'stylicists' who destroy art by analysing it. On the contrary, Hemsterhuis is a holist, someone to whom 'the poetic soul shows itself… only to the whole body, not in the single toes and fingers it animates'. Jean Paul continues, 'There can be philosophic works, like some by Hemsterhuis and Lessing, which inspire us with philosophical spirit without disposing their matter in separate philosophical paragraphs.' (1973: 42) Hemsterhuis, Jean Paul had already insisted, was 'the creator of a philosophical world' (1973: 33).

4. Hemsterhuis *alongside* the Romantics

The above tells the story—in a relatively cursory manner—of Hemsterhuis's reception history *from the German side*, as it were, cataloguing uses of his name and his concepts from 1771 into the early nineteenth century. However, such an approach immediately comes up against a significant body of literature in Hemsterhuis scholarship which takes it to be unhelpful, even harmful. That is, obsession with Hemsterhuis's German legacy has come to be considered misguided—concealing, distorting and generally falsifying Hemsterhuis's actual philosophical significance; and, as a result, Hemsterhuis scholarship has been keen on giving the other side of the story, i.e., both describing Hemsterhuis's ideas outside of this German context and also charting the ways in which the German reception gets them wrong.

This is clearest in Klaus Hammacher's commentary which splits Hemsterhuis's German reception-history in two: Jacobi, on the one hand, 'gets' Hemsterhuis; the later romantic generation, on the other hand, does not (1995a: 412-3), for it does not take seriously the Dutch Newtonian and

late Cartesian resonances to his concepts. Hence, because Jacobi had studied ‘s Gravesande’s Dutch Newtonianism as a student in Geneva, he retained a live connection with the original context to Hemsterhuis’s thought; however, by Novalis’s time, this connection had been lost. As such, Hammacher accuses Novalis of grasping Hemsterhuis’s ideas ‘purely metaphorically and poetically’ and ‘reducing them to an anthropological dimension’, thereby losing their scientific and experimental meanings (1995a: 418, 429-30). Melica (2023) goes even further: criticising the ‘deformations’ and ‘divergences’ at play in even Jacobi’s reception of Hemsterhuis: the *Lettre sur l’athéisme* is very literally, she shows, tampered with by Jacobi in order to make it better fit into a German context.

This feeds into a more general concern within Hemsterhuis scholarship concerning the ways in which Hemsterhuis’s philosophy has come to be lost beneath its German reception. The fame of his influence on the romantics has led to bad interpretations, since—following the tradition inaugurated by A. W. Schlegel—Hemsterhuis is reduced to the position of precursor and his philosophy is interpreted solely in light of what is to come. German romanticism becomes, on this view, a distorting prism. Hence, Petry, for example, worries that the romantic interpretation of Hemsterhuis fails to acknowledge that ‘his preoccupation with sensibility and aesthetic experience was only one aspect of his philosophy as a whole’ (1985: 211-2) and Pelckmans rails against the ‘literature of anticipation’ (1987: 11) engendered by an obsession with Hemsterhuis’s German legacy. To read Hemsterhuis’s philosophy through its German legacy is to deform it.

And yet, there is obviously something slightly odd about this counter-obsession with fidelity to an ‘original Hemsterhuis’. No reception history should be in thrall to categories of accuracy, or even those of distortion, perversion and fulfilment; instead, the task is surely to celebrate the perpetual mutations born of intellectual appropriations, affiliations and contestations across borders. As Michael Werner has put it in a different context, what we should be interested in are ‘currents of thought which have passed from one cultural space to another with all the sometimes instructive deformations that this type of phenomenon can engender.’ (1985: 278) In this vein, it seems clear—to me, at least—that the Jacobian image of Hemsterhuis or the Schlegelian image of Hemsterhuis furnishes as much material for thought as any original philosophical event named ‘Hemsterhuis’. Each mutation sits alongside the ‘original’ as one more historical singularity to be enjoyed, consumed and digested. Whether Novalis was faithful to the Hemsterhuis of the 1760s or not, what matters is the conceptual work the Novalisian Hemsterhuis achieves, the problems he is invented to solve.

In fact, one can be more radical still, and this is precisely where most of the essays that follow are to be positioned. Just as one can leave behind any question of fidelity to the 'original' Hemsterhuis, so too one can leave behind questions of fidelity to the Novalisian Hemsterhuis or the Schlegelian Hemsterhuis, etc., to perform *contemporary acts of romanticisation on Hemsterhuis's philosophy*. This is what the essays that follow have in common: they make use of the German Hemsterhuis-reception as a basis which they then go beyond—beyond the various historically-instantiated romantic Hemsterhuises to a romanticised Hemsterhuis invented from the present. Hemsterhuis is constructed anew in each essay below *as romantic*. That is, the essays that follow for the most part do away with the problematic of influence to look instead to the virtual Hemsterhuisian thinking that can *sit alongside* the romantic projects of 1790s and 1800s Germany, that can supplement them, complement them and diverge from them.

And in the final part of my introduction to the dossier I want to give a brief sense of some of the significant ways in which 'Hemsterhuis' can be constructed retrospectively as romantic from the present. This is to deliberately ignore how influential particular doctrines like his definition of beauty or his use of dialogue-form was to individual romantic thinkers, as well as to pass beyond those texts that romantic philosophers actually knew to Hemsterhuis's correspondence and unpublished fragments where he is at his most adventurous, most liberated and most speculative. And it is on this basis that I want to start sketching—in a way that anticipates the essays to come—some of the programmatic gestures of a Hemsterhuis who rivals the Schlegels, Schelling or Günderrode, a Hemsterhuis who is the virtual double of the romantics, whose potentialities are monuments to an as-yet-unthought romanticism.[14]

5. Absolute Coexistence and the Weaponisation of the Past

In the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, G. W. F. Hegel commits himself to a hyper-presentism in which philosophy is identified with 'its own time apprehended in thoughts'. This stance leads him directly to criticise those philosophers who make productive use of anachronism in a way that reads as a precise rebuttal of Hemsterhuis's philosophical attitude: 'It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age, jump over Rhodes' (2008:

[14] Much of the material below is summarised from my book, *François Hemsterhuis and the Writing of Philosophy* (2022a), which makes similar arguments, but from a position much more 'faithful' to the 'original' Hemsterhuis.

15). On the contrary, Hemsterhuis—who insists again and again on being 'born Greek' (e.g., *B* 3.61), on the need to speak Greek like a native and so be an outsider to his age—thinks through exactly the possibility, feasibility and value of so transcending the contemporary world, overleaping his own age. Hemsterhuis attempts to live philosophy as an anachronism.

He does so, in part, out of a will to resist the present and its failings: 'Those who say that our century is one of philosophy know very little of both philosophy and the century', he insists (*B* 3.58). This counter-modern tendency comes to the fore in the late dialogues which are framed within a past—an *other* world—that is intended to alienate the reader from modern prejudices. Philosophy is undertaken in the past tense, as something archaic that refuses to be made present. Hemsterhuis weaponises an archaic past—both the Athenian settings of his dialogues and the archaic memories of even earlier times recounted within these dialogues—and he does so naively, i.e., *as forgery*, immediately and unreflectively immersing the reader in another epoch through a fictitious genealogy to his dialogues. To follow Hemsterhuis in philosophy is precisely to overleap one's own age. Moreover, when Hemsterhuis does implicitly comment upon this immersion in a past world in the fictional prefaces to the dialogues, he does so by means of *Socratic irony*—flattering eighteenth-century Europe as an era of 'perfection and refinement', of 'serious' and 'profound' thought, in which ethics and metaphysics become 'redundant', in comparison to the 'small' and superfluous ancient dialogues written in 'indecipherable jargon' (*EE* 2.63). Hemsterhuis writes dialogues like Kierkegaard's 'philosophical crumbs', gadflies that circumvent and so relativise dominant ways of envisioning things by means of invoking an *other philosophy*.

And yet, Hemsterhuis is not just a philosopher of the past; he is also very much a philosopher of the present. That is, as well as putting into question the claims of the present from an outsider perspective, he affirms them wholeheartedly by way of his commitment to an ideal of 'absolute coexistence' (*EE* 1.91), i.e., the making present of as many ideas as possible at the same time. This is what he calls 'the optimum' (*EE* 1.65) and it structures much of his thinking from his definition of beauty to his account of genius. It is ultimately an ideal of encyclopaedic thinking: bringing all ideas, however disparate, forgotten or foreign, into one synchronic structure—as Novalis paraphrases, 'According to Hemsterhuis, science as a whole is… the *total-function of dates and facts*' (1960-2006: 3.275). Or, as Hemsterhuis himself puts it, 'Science would be perfect' if the mind could simultaneously comprehend 'ideas of all the relations and all the combinations of these objects' (*EE* 1.122). As well as resisting the present by

way of the past, Hemsterhuis celebrates *at the same time* the Enlightenment quest for 'everything all at once'.

Just like Novalis after him, Hemsterhuis thus occupies a radically ambivalent position in relation to modernity—an ambivalence that takes the form of a series of double affirmations: both the past and the present, both the archaic and the Enlightenment, both outsider and insider. And it is in the context of this radical ambivalence that the essays below by Viviana Galletta and Santiago Napoli can be understood. Galletta interrogates Hemsterhuis's treatment of the relation between past and present epochs in the context of the eighteenth-century quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. She demonstrates how, from the *Lettre sur l'homme* to *Alexis*, Hemsterhuis goes beyond merely deconstructing any hierarchy into a 'parallel' of two epochs. He ends up seeing all epochs as, on the one hand, united by the fundamental ontological postulate of infinite perfectibility and, on the other hand, quantitatively differentiated by this principle too. Napoli focuses more specifically on the encyclopaedic ideal in Hemsterhuis as taken up by Novalis. The constitution of 'total science' as 'the total-function of dates and facts' occurs, Napoli shows, by way of an activation of the moral organ, insofar as this organ is interpreted by Novalis to be a tool of holistic intuition and one with a history that determines the teleological structure behind his own invocation of a *mathesis universalis*-to-come.

6. Experimental Method

Hemsterhuis stands in a long tradition of Dutch experimental philosophers, having studied at the feet of Boerhaave and 's Gravesande, and this experimental spirit permeates his entire philosophy: from the vase experiment of the *Lettre sur la sculpture* onwards, Hemsterhuis thinks via experimentation. He works on aesthetics and morality (not just natural science) in a laboratory into which the reader must enter as a willing collaborator (see Sonderen 2022). As Weatherby puts it of Novalis, 'Everything can become an experiment—everything an organ.' (2018: 206) However, unlike many experimental philosophers of the eighteenth century, Hemsterhuisian experimentation is speculative, taking the philosopher outside of the current limits of experience in search of the *novum*. The opening to *Sophyle* is exemplary: Hemsterhuis turns to experiment not with a critical intention of 'destroying fables', 'delivering us from prejudices and making clear the precise limits of our knowledge', but instead 'to see unknown lands of an immense size.' (*EE* 2.45) As van Ruler puts it, Hemsterhuis 'stretches the empirical method beyond its own limits' (2005: 45). It is in this vein that

Jocelyn Holland's essay below stresses the scientific modelling that takes place in Hemsterhuis's texts in their analogy with romantic experimentation. Holland places Hemsterhuis's experiments on the concept of elasticity into conversation with naturephilosophical research into elasticity around 1800, particularly in Eschenmayer, Ritter and Novalis. She describes the various models of elasticity at play in these case studies, from the coil-spring to the elasticity of light, in order to exhibit how they mutate over the course of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

One of the key objects on which Hemsterhuis experiments is *himself*. The experimental method becomes both speculative *and introspective* in his philosophy. His correspondence is full of records of experiments performed on himself in order to get at untheorised powers of the mind. His is an anti-materialist variation of the Spinozan dictum: We do not yet know what *our mind* can do. Indeed, in a discussion of the possibility of knowledge of the future, Hemsterhuis writes as a kind of manifesto:

> Man, who has made so much progress in physics, is still a child in psychology and metaphysics. Let him enter into himself, let him—in tranquillity—perform thousands of experiments on what occurs within him, on his own sensations, let him combine them, and you will see whether the data does not come forth all at once. (*B* 3.87)

Two illustrations help here. First, in April 1780, Hemsterhuis tells Gallitzin about a meditation taken too far and the resultant abnormal effects he has documented. 'On one occasion,' he writes, 'I was extremely disconcerted to find myself—after a meditation that was too long, too deep and too contrived—deprived of memory and imagination.' He then goes about recreating such a mental state, retaining self-consciousness at the limit of his psychic disturbance, so as to witness 'the material parts of the organ of the imagination losing their tone and their energy for a time' (*B* 3.33). Secondly, Hemsterhuis describes to Gallitzin a series of experiments in automatic writing. He claims, after the first attempt, that when one 'writes blindfolded or with eyes closed', our 'expressions will be much more virgin and more native and the pure thought will be exactly on the paper.' (*B* 5.7) And, on the second occasion, he holds out hope that, as we grow accustomed to it, 'the hand will constitute nothing more than a part of the brain', such that writing is 'reduced to *thinking*' (*B* 5.10).

Hemsterhuis experiments in the natural sciences, in psychology, in aesthetics, in ethics, etc.—that is, he experiments across domains. This is what Hammacher dubbed his 'analogy-thinking' (1971: 153): like Novalis and Schelling especially, Hemsterhuis is happy to proliferate 'category errors'

by using astronomical terms taken from Kepler to describe historical phenomena or physical concepts taken from Newton to describe the workings of the mind, of morality and of society. He is explicit on the philosophical value of this metabatic practice, indifferent to disciplinary boundaries: 'Different categories,' he writes, 'borrow mutually from each other signs which properly belong to each of them… We borrow from the [physical] category signs of attraction, of inclination, of inertia so as to transport into someone else sensations of love, of friendship, of weakness, etc.' (*B* 7.100) Hemsterhuis's guiding thought is to 'discard that ridiculous barrier that separates the material from the immaterial' (*B* 6.55).

A number of the essays below explore this Hemsterhuisian thinking across domains. Gabriel Trop, like Holland, undertakes a conceptual genealogy of a scientific concept—in Trop's case, force—from Hemsterhuis through romanticism (to Günderrode, via Herder, Goethe and Schiller), making clear the transdisciplinary status of this concept in crossing politics, aesthetics, history, religion, metaphysics, ethics and natural philosophy. For Trop, Hemsterhuis stands alongside the romantics in his reinvention of the concept of force as ecstatic, thereby transforming what it means for things—of whatever kind—to be in relation. Zorrilla focuses on the parallel concept of matter in Hemsterhuis's philosophy. Using Schelling's and Baader's misattribution of the thesis that matter is 'coagulated spirit' as a jumping-off point, he shows how, ironically, something like this thought is indeed present in Hemsterhuis's philosophy, even if never explicitly articulated. To show this, Zorrilla turns to the organ's fundamental function for Hemsterhuis in mediating between domains: the material and the immaterial, the ethical and the physical, etc. All oppositions encounter one another by way of the organ, resulting in a perpetual circulation of sense between domains.

7. Histories of the Individual, of the Community and of the Cosmos

It is easy to fixate on Hemsterhuis's invocation of Socrates in *Sophyle* as the thinker of introspection, as the thinker who first realises that philosophy is nothing more than what 'is found at the bottom of our heart, of our souls, if we make the effort to seek it there' (*EE* 2.47), as the thinker who calls on each reader an 'to turn our gaze within' (Cahen-Maurel 2022: 25–6; see van Bunge 2018: 188). This is of course true, but neglects a more visible function Socrates takes on in Hemsterhuis's dialogues—as a character relating to other characters and conducting conversations in a social group. In addition to the introspective Socrates, Hemsterhuis also holds onto an ideal of Socratic sociability—a non-modern form of comportment that, to his mind, escapes

the statist, hierarchical and rigid models of intersubjective space that dominate modernity. Hemsterhuis's dialogues perform a Socratic community for the reader—a community which faces inwards and outwards at the same time. Moreover, it is this issue of mediation, intersubjectivity and community (in the broadest sense) that Andrew Mitchell takes up in his essay in the dossier—and like Zorrilla, he does so by way of sustained reflection on the concept of the organ. Mitchell undertakes something analogous to Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, rereading Hemsterhuis's understanding of finitude as a state of mediation not as a limitation or a negative definition, but as a positive ontology of community that does away with any need for release into transcendent bliss.

Hemsterhuis thinks on many scales, often simultaneously. This cross-scalar thinking is a consequence of both his commitment to the absolute coexistence of ideas and to his practice of domain-indifference. *Alexis* is the most obvious example of such 'tact': it argues for an anthropological truth (the contingency of the human subject possessing five sense organs) by way of a cosmological narrative of paradise and fall based on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century traditions of geological catastrophism, on ancient myths and on contemporary astronomical observations. At its most hyperbolic, this tendency is exemplified by Hypsicles, the priest who appears in *Alexis*, and who occupies an archaic position at the origin of Western modernity. He positions himself at a site prior to the separation of *logos* and *mythos*, prior to the disciplinary separation of sciences, a site of full semantic density, where the 'everything all at once' is performed in language. His words are symbolic in the strict romantic sense. In general, that is, for Hemsterhuis, psychological conclusions emerge out of speculation on the origin of the cosmos—in the *Lettre sur l'homme*, to take one more example, the origins of society are to be located in the individual's fear and trembling before the nihilistic implications of the Copernican revolution. The individual in the state of nature cannot cope with the fact 'that this globe was just a planet like so many others, that this important thing was a nothing, and that the universe was infinite' (*EE* 1.118). A political discourse on the origins of the social bleeds into a planetary one.

Kirill Chepurin's essay below takes seriously the cosmological story Hemsterhuis tells in *Alexis* as an attempt to do 'theodicy across scales'. He demonstrates the extent to which this dialogue arises out of a planetary concern with fallenness—it is a dialogue about global humanity, the geological history of the earth and the universe as a whole, all at the same time. *Alexis* is an anomalous and extreme example of the encyclopedic ideal of absolute coexistence: it is about everything all at once and, to this extent,

stands alongside the cognate romantic cosmisms that emerged in Jena during the 1790s.

Moreover, this cosmic story is but one of the most common methodological gestures in Hemsterhuis's philosophy—to embed a phenomenon within an overarching history that far exceeds it and so manifests the contingency of what had previously been taken to be immutable and necessary. Hemsterhuis follows Rousseau in using genealogy as a tool to undermine authority—and one helpful example is his critique of contemporary materialism. He undertakes this critique, not by way of establishing a dualism of the material and the immaterial, but by narrating the impermanence of the materialist idea of matter as part of a longer story. The result is that: what is currently thought to be 'material' (i.e., what is known through the five sense organs) is subject to change, as the nature of the human changes. Hence, despite their iconoclasm, Parisian materialists still consider matter too statically, too immutably; but Hemsterhuis is more radical: he puts matter into historical motion (and does the same for morality, religion, duty, law, sociability, atheism, empiricist methodology and philosophical knowledge itself).

8. New Genres of Thinking

Whatever else unites the above, one feature is Hemsterhuis's implicit opposition to both the Hegelian image of the philosopher as apprehending one's 'own time… in thoughts' and the Kantian image of the philosopher securely bedding in on the land of truth without transgressing its boundaries. From a Hemsterhuisian perspective, one can characterise both such images as ultimately uncreative and non-generative views of what the philosopher can do. Hemsterhuis, on the contrary, philosophises for the sake of the new, the experimental, the speculative and the contingent. Despite talking about the past so much, Hemsterhuis's is a philosophy of the future, of the infinite perfectibility of thinking.

Moreover, Hemsterhuis tries to make sense of this creative vocation for philosophy by reconceiving what philosophy might look like, whether that be in the halting, subjective presentations of the early letters, in the personal encyclopedia of the *Lettre sur l'homme*, in the ironic forgeries of the dialogues or in the reframing of *poeisis* as the ground of philosophical truth in *Alexis*. Hemsterhuis experiments with both philosophical matter and philosophical form (see Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1975, and Whistler 2022b). And at the heart of these experiments is an avowal of gibberish, conceived quasi-Platonically as the nonsense spouted by a philosopher misunderstood in his

own time. Again and again in correspondence, Hemsterhuis insists on his philosophical project as ‘my eternal gibberish’ (*B* 5.18) or ‘philofolly’ (*B* 6.47): ‘I do not produce anything but gibberish’, he insists repeatedly (e.g., *B* 5.15). This gibberish is to be found in the myths, forgeries, ironies and displays of erudition that litter Hemsterhuis’s texts, as well as in their various strategies for grappling and stuttering towards the new; it is what Diderot criticises as Hemsterhuis’s practice of generating images ‘pushed too far’ (Diderot and Hemsterhuis 1964: 471). And here once more Hemsterhuis very much stands *alongside the romantics*.

9. Note on Abbreviations

Throughout this dossier, the following two abbreviations are used for editions of Hemsterhuis’s work:

B — François Hemsterhuis, *Briefwisseling* (*Hemsterhuisiana*), 13 vols, ed. Jacob van Sluis. Berlstum, 2011-17. Citations by volume and numbered letter.

EE — François Hemsterhuis, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Complete Philosophical Works of François Hemsterhuis*, 3 vols, ed. Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022–23.

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