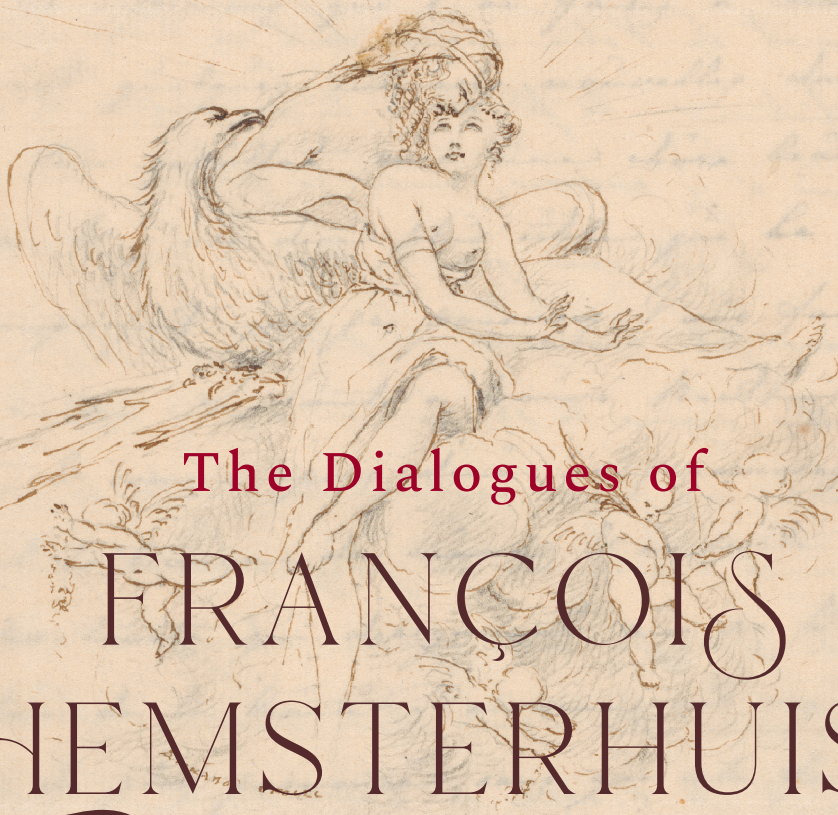


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The Dialogues of
FRANÇOIS
HEMSTERHUIS,
1778-1787

*Ma Toute Mere dioteme je crois que je suis
au lieu de Vouz servir j'ai barbouillé mon pap
pourtant je ne le changerai pas. Vendredi
j'ai dîné avec le p. & le Comte Romansof a
Campagne. c'est la premiere fois depuis huit
ans que je sois cet endroit a jamais sacré pais*

Edited and Translated by
Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler

The Dialogues of
François Hemsterhuis, 1778–1787

Volume 2 of
The Edinburgh Edition of the Philosophical Works of François Hemsterhuis

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Volume 1 *Early Writings, 1762–1773*
Volume 2 *The Dialogues, 1778–1787*
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The Dialogues of François Hemsterhuis, 1778–1787

Edited and translated by Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler

With introductions by Daniel Whistler and Laure Cahen-Maurel

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Contents

Series Introduction	vii
<i>Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler</i>	
Hemsterhuis's Life, Works and Reception	xi
Abbreviations	xviii
INTRODUCTIONS	
Forms of Philosophical Creativity: An Introduction to Hemsterhuis's Dialogues	3
<i>Daniel Whistler</i>	
Philosophical Paths: The Legacy of Hemsterhuis's Dialogues in the Age of German Romanticism	22
<i>Laure Cahen-Maurel</i>	
DIALOGUES	
Sophylus, or on Philosophy	45
Aristaeus, or on the Divinity	62
Simon, or on the Faculties of the Soul	100
Alexis, or on the Golden Age	123
Notes	153
Index	175

Series Introduction

Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler

Born in Franeker in 1721, François Hemsterhuis was raised on Greek and mathematics by his father, the philologist Tiberius Hemsterhuis. After Tiberius's appointment to the University of Leiden in 1740, Hemsterhuis found himself at the heart of Dutch Newtonianism and imbibed its experimental methodology, taking lessons with Willem 's Gravesande, forging a lifelong friendship with Petrus Camper and developing a passion for the design of astronomical instruments. After brief stints as a military engineer and a tutor, Hemsterhuis relocated to The Hague to enter the Dutch civil service, rising to the post of First Secretary to the Council of State. Correspondence with an Amsterdam banker, Theodorus de Smeth, led to a series of four epistolary publications in French on art and philosophy during the 1760s and early 1770s: *Letter on an Antique Gemstone*, *Letter on Sculpture*, *Letter on Desires* and *Letter on Man and his Relations*. Then, in 1775, he began an intense philosophical collaboration with Amalie Gallitzin, with whom he would exchange over 2,000 letters as the 'Socrates' to her 'Diotima'. Their joint work resulted in four dialogues written in French during a three-year creative burst, from 1778 to 1781: *Sophylus*, *Aristaeus*, *Simon* and *Alexis*. On Gallitzin's relocation to Münster, Hemsterhuis became increasingly drawn into German philosophical circles, visiting J. G. Herder and J. W. Goethe in Weimar and forging an intellectual alliance with F. H. Jacobi during the latter's battles over Spinoza. He died in 1790 at The Hague.¹

To A. W. Schlegel, Hemsterhuis – 'a Dutchman, who wrote in French but was only properly esteemed by Germans' – was 'a prophet of transcendental idealism'; to J. G. Herder, his was 'an original philosophy, such as appears only once in a hundred years'; to C. M. Wieland, he was 'the Plato of our times'; and to J. G. Hamann, he was the 'Haagsche' Socrates.² And the influence of Hemsterhuis's philosophy on German Classicisms, Romanticisms and Idealisms is elsewhere palpable in the writings of, among others, Goethe, Hegel, Hölderlin, Jacobi, Jean Paul, Kant, Lessing, Novalis, Schelling, Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher. Such a legacy has gained Hemsterhuis the rank of the most influential modern Dutch philosopher after Spinoza. But his philosophy matters not just because of its German reception: it is also a monument to late Dutch Newtonianism, a key moment in the north European recovery of Plato and Socrates in the second half of the eighteenth century, a dialogue partner for many Enlightenment philosophies (not only Diderot's, but d'Alembert's and Mendelssohn's too), a source for later definitions of beauty (from that of Tolstoy to that of Croce), and a product of advances in optics, astronomy and telescope design at the period; and it went on to influence nineteenth-century constructions of the categories of 'Christian Platonism' and modern 'pantheism'. Hemsterhuis's philosophical works – which range from empiricist arguments for metaphysical dualism to a history of art, from

arguments for the existence of God to the priority of sentiment and enthusiasm, from the critique of private property to the role of imagination in constituting ethical character – are essential reference points for any proper understanding of late eighteenth-century thinking.

The Edinburgh Edition of the Philosophical Works of François Hemsterhuis provides the first ever English translations of his oeuvre. Timed to coincide with the tricentenary of his birth in December 2021, its three volumes make Hemsterhuis's philosophy as a whole accessible to Anglophone readers, building on the growing critical attention it has received: ever since Klaus Hammacher launched modern Hemsterhuis scholarship with his 1971 monograph *Unmittelbarkeit und Kritik bei Hemsterhuis*, it has been a domain charted in ever-increasing detail by, among many others, Marcel Fresco, Henri Krop, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, Elio Matassi, Claudia Melica, Heinz Moenkemeyer, Paul Pelckmans, Michael John Petry, Peter Sonderen, Wiep van Bunge, Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron and Michiel Wielema.³ Over the last twenty years alone, new editions of Hemsterhuis's writings have appeared in French, Dutch and Italian.⁴ More recently still, Hemsterhuis's political reflections have become important reference points for Jonathan Israel's history of the Enlightenment and both Dalia Nassar and Leif Weatherby make much of Hemsterhuis's conceptual influence on the German Romantics.⁵ This edition builds on the growing body of research, while demonstrating, in addition, Hemsterhuis's significance for those interested in experiments with philosophical styles, Deism, art theory and the history of the physical sciences. Hemsterhuis's writings matter not just to readers in philosophy departments, but also in modern languages departments, history departments, literature departments, art history departments, religion departments and politics departments.

This is the first translated edition in any language to make use of the recently published critical edition of Hemsterhuis's works and complete correspondence.⁶ It consists of three volumes: volume 1 (*Early Writings, 1762–1773*) comprises Hemsterhuis's first series of publications, penned as letters to his acquaintances in The Hague, including the *Letter on Sculpture*, *Letter on Desires* and *Letter on Man and his Relations*; volume 2 (*Dialogues, 1778–1787*) presents translations of Hemsterhuis's later series of published dialogues – *Sophylus*, *Aristaeus*, *Simon* and *Alexis*; and the third volume (*Philosophical Correspondence and Unpublished Writings, 1773–1789*) supplements the earlier volumes with the *Letter on Atheism*, *Letter on Optics* and *Letter on Fatalism*, among other fragments, as well as selections from Hemsterhuis's feted correspondence with Gallitzin, dubbed 'the most significant European correspondence of the eighteenth century'.⁷

The texts used for this edition are based faithfully on the French critical edition established by van Sluis in 2015, with the exception of some texts in volume 3 which were not included in van Sluis's *Œuvres philosophiques* and are instead based on Petry's 2001 *Wijsgerige werken*, van Sluis's recent *Œuvres inédits*, or van Sluis's edition of the complete correspondence.⁸ As always, we have made a number of key translation decisions that inform what follows – including:

1. *L'homme*: Hemsterhuis uses 'homme' and the corresponding pronouns not just in the title *Lettre sur l'Homme et ses rapports* but throughout his writings to designate

the paradigmatic human subject. There is typically nothing particularly male about this subject and, indeed, a twenty-first-century (Anglophone) Hemsterhuis might well have decided upon the gender-neutral *Letter on Humans and their Relations*. Nevertheless, Hemsterhuis's language is decisively marked by the eighteenth-century discourse on 'man' – with all the gendered logic this entails – and we have chosen not to disguise this fact, but rather to insist on Hemsterhuis's part in a tradition that runs from Pope's *An Essay on Man* to Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*.

2. *Le rapport*: 'Rapport' is the master-concept in Hemsterhuis's philosophy, appropriated from debates in French aesthetics and metaphysics – particularly the philosophies of Diderot and Bonnet – but transformed into a figure of ontological interconnectivity. While 'relation' is in many ways a mistranslation of the underlying philosophical concept ('affiliation', 'connection', even 'correspondence' all get at its meaning more accurately), we have followed Hemsterhuis himself in employing this fairly neutral term ('relation') as an unobtrusive lexical marker for such a rich and fluid concept.
3. *La relation*: Hemsterhuis also uses the more precise 'relation' in two contexts: first, in the sense of a proportion when discussing order, symmetry or numerical series; secondly, in the sense of a personal relationship, particularly with the divinity. We translate 'relation' as 'relationship' in the latter case and 'interrelation' in the former case to distinguish it from translations of 'rapport'.
4. *Velléité and volonté*: From Diderot onwards, Hemsterhuis's readers have baulked at the obscure concept of 'velléité' and tried to determine the exact nature of the relation between it (as an indeterminate power that constitutes part of the individual's essence) and 'volonté' (as a particular purposive effect). So as to replicate the alienating effect of Hemsterhuis's terminology, we employ the similarly obscure English cognate 'velleity' and translate 'volonté' more standardly as 'act of will' or, on occasion, 'will'.
5. *Sentir*: Few translations matter as much in determining Hemsterhuis's place in the history of ideas as 'sentir'. When translated as 'to sense', it places him firmly in eighteenth-century empiricist and Newtonian traditions; when translated as 'to feel', it both thematises his Rousseauian tendencies and anticipates his role in the Romantic movement. We have, where possible, opted for the former, despite it occasionally effacing the close link between 'sentir' and 'sentiment'.
6. *Le tact*: Hemsterhuis is a great thinker of tact, but he also grounds his thinking firmly in a study of the five sense organs, where the French 'tact' refers to touch. He thereby implicitly plays on a continuity between 'le tact' as sensation and 'le tact' as judgement that is obscured by the English lexical distinction.

Footnotes (denoted by an asterisk, *, then dagger, †, etc.) are Hemsterhuis's own (or, in the case of *Simon*, contain additional material by Hemsterhuis) and often refer the reader to clarifications and explanations given at the end of each work. We provide information concerning the (sometimes) obscure erudite references that litter Hemsterhuis's texts in the translators' endnotes, indicated by an Arabic numeral. They follow at the end of the volume. We have, as far as possible, refrained from either providing interpretative material or making judgements on

Hemsterhuis's sources within these endnotes. As van Bunge has recently emphasised, Hemsterhuis was 'almost secretive' about such sources⁹ and we have no wish to restrict the possible connotations of a conceptual armoury that draws variously on classical allusions, Dutch Newtonianism, the French Enlightenment and much more – often at the very same time.

Hemsterhuis himself long held translation to be an impossible art and despaired when his own writings were first translated into German.¹⁰ Subsequently, Jacobi's rendering of *Alexis* into German changed his mind on this point,¹¹ and, while we have no desire at all to compete as translators with Jacobi, we do hope that this edition does some justice to the rigour and grace of Hemsterhuis's 'Socratic poetry'.¹²

Hemsterhuis's Life, Works and Reception

<i>Date</i>	<i>Chronology and Context</i>
1717	Tiberius Hemsterhuis takes up position as Professor of Greek and Mathematics at the University of Franeker
27 December 1721	Hemsterhuis born in Franeker in the Dutch Republic to Tiberius and Cornelia, second daughter of Jacob de Wilde, a noted collector of antiquities, which the family inherits
1738	Tiberius additionally appointed Professor of Natural History at the University of Franeker
1740	Hemsterhuis moves to Leiden, where Tiberius is appointed Professor of Ancient Greek and History at the University of Leiden; informally attends private seminars given by Willem's Gravesande (Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy) and Pieter van Musschenbroek (his successor)
Summer 1740	Hemsterhuis begins lifelong friendships with Petrus Camper, J. N. S. Allamand (later Professor of Philosophy at Franeker and Leiden) and Hendrik Feyth, an enthusiast of optical instruments in Amsterdam
1741	Sale of Jacob de Wilde's antique gemstone collection
28 February 1742	Death of 's Gravesande
Early 1740s	Hemsterhuis participates in experimental natural history at Leiden, describing – through Abraham Trembley's indirect influence – the freshwater polyp, as well as the visual anatomy of the dragonfly
1746	Camper completes his <i>Dissertatio optica de visu</i> ; Condillac publishes <i>Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge</i>
24 June 1747	Hemsterhuis officially matriculates in mathematics at the University of Leiden and begins career in military engineering
Late 1747	As military engineer, Hemsterhuis draws plans of recently besieged Bergen op Zoom's military defences
1748	La Mettrie publishes <i>L'Homme machine</i>
28 August 1748	Birth of Adelheid Amalie von Schmettau (later Gallitzin) in Berlin
1750	Diderot and d'Alembert begin publishing the <i>Encyclopédie</i>
1751	Death of William IV

- 1752 Around this time, Hemsterhuis works as tutor to the Van Aylva family and perhaps also the Fagel family
Caylus begins publishing his *Inventory of Antiquities*
- 1755 Hemsterhuis nominated as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Franeker, but is passed over for the position
- December 1755 Hemsterhuis accepts role as civil servant at The Hague, rising to First Secretary to the Council of State
- 1757 Hemsterhuis begins lifelong correspondence with Pieter van Damme on antique coins and gemstones
- 1760 Hemsterhuis observes the Great Comet and is commissioned to design a memorial for Boerhaave (later installed in the Pieterskerk, Leiden)
Bonnet publishes his *Analytic Essay on the Faculties of the Soul*
- 1762 *Letter on an Antique Gemstone* is published in response to an enquiry by Amsterdam banker, Theodorus de Smeth
Rousseau publishes *Emile*; Fürstenberg becomes 'prime minister' of the Bishopric of Münster
- 1763 Hemsterhuis successfully nominates Camper as Professor of Anatomy at University of Groningen
- 1764 Winckelmann publishes *History of Art in Antiquity*
- January 1765 Hemsterhuis drafts *Letter on Sculpture*
- 1766 William V reaches maturity and assumes powers of Stadtholder
- 7 April 1766 Death of Tiberius Hemsterhuis
- 1767 Lessing publishes *Laocoon*
- 28 August 1768 Amalie von Schmettau marries Prince Dmitri Gallitzin, Russian *ministre plenipotentiair* to France, in Aachen
- November 1768 Hemsterhuis drafts *Letter on Desires*
- 1769 *Letter on Sculpture* is published
Gallitzins move to The Hague, where Dmitri is appointed Russian Ambassador to the Dutch Republic; Diderot writes *D'Alembert's Dream*
- August 1769 Jacobi reads *Letter on Sculpture* and attempts to arrange a visit to The Hague
- 1770 *Letter on Desires* is published; Hemsterhuis designs first ever achromatic binocular telescope, which is manufactured over the next few years through the London firm John Dollond

- 1771 Italian astronomer G. F. Fromond visits Hemsterhuis and borrows manuscript on optics
Garve publishes review of *Letter on Sculpture*; Herder mentions Hemsterhuis in correspondence; early community of Hemsterhuis readers gathers around de la Roche, Merck and Wieland
Dmitri Gallitzin publishes posthumous edition of Helvétius's works
- 1772 *Letter on Man and his Relations* is published
Short review of *Letter on Man* appears immediately in the Parisian *Journal encyclopédique*
- 1773 *Philosophical Description of ... Fagel* is published, after Fagel's death on 28 August
Nieuhoff completes doctoral dissertation at Leiden, *De sensu pulcri*, influenced by Hemsterhuis; Herder familiarises Hamann with Hemsterhuis's writings
- June 1773 Hemsterhuis meets Diderot in The Hague, where the latter is staying with Dmitri Gallitzin on his way to Russia
- August 1773 Diderot and Jacobi discuss Hemsterhuis when Diderot passes through Düsseldorf
- 1774 Diderot returns to The Hague and presents Hemsterhuis with annotated copy of *Letter on Man*
- 1775 Herder announces a translation of *Letter on Sculpture*, but it never appears
- Spring 1775 Hemsterhuis forges an intense and lasting friendship with Gallitzin (the 'Diotima' to his 'Socrates'), exchanging c. 2,000 letters over the next fifteen years
- Late 1775 Gallitzin separates permanently from her husband and takes her children to the secluded country estate of Niethuis, near Scheveningen, where Hemsterhuis visits twice a week
- 1776 Sophie de la Roche visits The Hague
US Declaration of Independence
- January 1776 Hemsterhuis writes *Letter on Fatalism*
- February 1776 Hemsterhuis finishes translation of Plato's *Symposium*
- July 1777 Hemsterhuis meets the Abbé Raynal
- 1778 *Sophylus* is published
- 2 July 1778 Rousseau dies
- December 1778 Hemsterhuis meets the French sculptors E. M. Falconet and A. M. Collot

- 1779 Hemsterhuis works on a catechism of 'true philosophy' for educating children
D'Alembert comments approvingly on two of Hemsterhuis's published works
- January 1779 Hemsterhuis begins correspondence with Fürstenberg in Münster on the latter's *Ordonnance on the Reform of Colleges*
- May 1779 Hemsterhuis travels with Gallitzin to Münster to meet Fürstenberg
- Summer 1779 *Aristaeus* is published
Gallitzin moves permanently to Münster
- October 1779 Hemsterhuis forges lasting friendship with Anna Perrenot (later Meerman) (the 'Daphne' to his 'Diocles')
- 1780 Hemsterhuis finishes the first version of *Simon* (published in translation in 1782)
Herder reproduces a long extract from the *Letter on Man* in his *Letters Concerning the Study of Theology*
Lessing finishes *The Education of the Human Race*; the fourth Anglo-Dutch War begins
- June 1780 Jacobi visits Lessing in Wolfenbüttel and presents him with many of Hemsterhuis's works
- 9 October 1780 Hemsterhuis retires from post as First Secretary to the Council of State
- 1781 Hemsterhuis starts to reflect on the political state of the Dutch Republic
Herder publishes a translation of *Letter on Desires* in *Der Teutsche Merkur*, followed by a critical commentary (*Love and Selfhood*)
Kant publishes *Critique of Pure Reason*; the Patriottenbeweging (Patriot Revolt) begins with a proliferation of democrat pamphlets; Herschel discovers Uranus
- February 1781 Hemsterhuis begins a several-month stay in Münster and meets Jacobi at his estate outside Düsseldorf
- Spring 1781 Hemsterhuis writes *Alexis* while in Münster (published in 1787 by Jacobi)
- 1782 Blankenburg translates Hemsterhuis's works for a two-volume *Vermischte philosophische Schriften*
Publication of Rousseau's *Confessions*
- 1783 Hemsterhuis begins, but then puts aside, unfinished dialogue *Alexis II*

- March 1783 Hemsterhuis completes second version of *Simon*
- December 1783 Hemsterhuis is present at one of the first launches of an unmanned Montgolfier hot-air balloon
- 1784 Jacobi translates *Alexis* (published in 1787 alongside the French original)
- Fourth Anglo-Dutch War ends
- 31 July 1784 Diderot dies
- 7 August 1784 Jacobi sends Hemsterhuis a long letter on Spinoza which appears in full in the first edition of Jacobi's *On the Doctrine of Spinoza*
- November 1784 Jacobi presents Goethe with Hemsterhuis's dialogues
- 1785 Hemsterhuis is recalled for secret meetings of the Council of State aimed at quashing the Patriot Revolt; he meets Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Gotha, who commissions a binocular telescope from him
- Jacobi publishes *On the Doctrine of Spinoza*; the Patriot Revolt reaches its climax in a series of riots and sieges
- August 1785 Hemsterhuis embarks on a tour of Germany, lasting into the autumn, with Gallitzin and Fürstenberg, visiting Weimar, Dresden and Gotha
- 1786 Hemsterhuis is invited to design vases for the Wedgwood company, England; he begins an intense reading programme of contemporary German authors, including Goethe's novels and plays
- 28 August 1786 Gallitzin formally re-enters the Catholic Church after a serious illness and corresponds with Hemsterhuis on the nature of 'belief'
- 1787 Hemsterhuis writes an instruction manual for the Duke of Saxe-Gotha's binocular telescope; Hamann spends time in Münster, forging a rival friendship with Gallitzin
- September 1787 Hemsterhuis pens the first version of the *Letter on Atheism* in response to Jacobi's request
- Restoration of Stadtholder William V after an invasion of Prussian troops
- June 1788 Hemsterhuis goes to Münster, where he stays until December; he receives J. F. H. Dalberg's *Reflections on Melody, Harmony and Rhythm*
- 21 June 1788 Hamann dies in Münster; Hemsterhuis designs his gravestone
- December 1788 Hemsterhuis completes *Letter on Optics*
- January 1789 Hemsterhuis revises *Letter on Atheism* and submits it to Jacobi (who publishes it in the second edition of *On the Doctrine of Spinoza*, 1790)
- 7 April 1789 Camper dies

- 14 July 1789 Storming of the Bastille and the start of the French Revolution
- 7 July 1790 Hemsterhuis dies
- 1791 Public auction of Hemsterhuis's library
C. G. Herrmann publishes *Kant and Hemsterhuis in Respect to their Definition of Beauty*; G. Forster calls Hemsterhuis 'the Plato of our century'
- 1792 H. J. Jansen publishes a two-volume edition of Hemsterhuis's works, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, in Paris; Goethe visits Gallitzin in Münster, discusses Hemsterhuis's legacy and later receives *Letter on Optics* from her
- January 1792 A. W. Schlegel meets Novalis, whose 'favourite writers are Plato and Hemsterhuis'; the Schlegel brothers go on to correspond extensively on Hemsterhuis
- December 1792 Goethe takes Hemsterhuis's gem collection to Weimar
- 1793 Schleiermacher studies Hemsterhuis's work in the context of a commentary on Jacobi's *On the Doctrine of Spinoza*
- April 1793 Herder and Jacobi discuss a memorial to Hemsterhuis
- 1794 Hegel and Hölderlin develop *Vereinigungsphilosophie* in Frankfurt with Hemsterhuis as a key source; the German Idealist C. G. Bardili publishes a dialogue entitled *Sophylus*
- 1795 Collapse of the Dutch Republic
- 1797 A third volume of the *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* is published, possibly by K. T. von Dalberg; it includes an essay comparing Hemsterhuis to Kant
- September 1797 Novalis begins a three-month intensive reading of Hemsterhuis, resulting in his thirty-six-page *Hemsterhuis-Studien*
- 1802 Schelling discusses *Alexis* in his *Further Presentations of the System of Philosophy*
- 1803 Dmitri Gallitzin dies
- 1804 Jean Paul's *School of Aesthetics* launches a critique of Hemsterhuis's definition of beauty
- 27 April 1806 Gallitzin dies
- 1807 Stolberg sends Goethe Hemsterhuis's unpublished *Treatise on Divisibility to Infinity* from Münster
- 1809 Jansen republishes his Paris edition of Hemsterhuis's works in a second, extended edition

- 1813 De Staël's *De l'Allemagne* groups Hemsterhuis with Jacobi and Lessing as the three progenitors of transcendental idealism; Coleridge discusses Hemsterhuis's definition of reason, alongside Jacobi, in volume 1 of *The Friend*
- 1814 J. Neeb publishes *On Hemsterhuis and the Spirit of his Writings*
- 1819 Jacobi dies
- 1825 S. vande Weyer publishes a new two-volume edition of Hemsterhuis's *Œuvres philosophiques* in Louvain
- 1840 L. S. P. Meyboom devotes his doctoral dissertation at the University of Groningen to a 'theological-philosophical' reading of Hemsterhuis as a Christian Platonist
- 1846 Meyboom publishes the standard three-volume edition of Hemsterhuis's *Œuvres philosophiques*; William Hamilton mentions Hemsterhuis in his survey of *The Philosophy of Common Sense*
-

Abbreviations

- B* François Hemsterhuis and Adélaïde Amélie de Gallitzin, *Briefwisseling (Hemsterhuisiana)*, 16 vols, ed. Jacob van Sluis. Berltsum: van Sluis [Lulu print on demand], 2010–17. Digitally available at: <https://www.rug.nl/library/heritage/hemsterhuis/> and in print at: www.lulu.com. Citations by volume and numbered letter (e.g. *B* 2.45 – volume 2, letter 45).
- EE* François Hemsterhuis, The Edinburgh Edition of the Philosophical Works of François Hemsterhuis, 3 vols, ed. and trans. Jacob van Sluis and Daniel Whistler. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022–. *EE* is used to cite other volumes in this series (e.g. *EE* 2.112 – volume 2, p. 112). Where citations are to the same volume, they take the form of, for example, ‘p. 45 below’.
- IN* François Hemsterhuis, *Œuvres inédits*, ed. Jacob van Sluis. Berltsum: van Sluis [Lulu print on demand], 2021.
- LSD* François Hemsterhuis, *Lettres de Socrate à Diotime. Cent cinquante lettres du philosophe néerlandais Frans Hemsterhuis à la princesse Gallitzin*, ed. Marcel Fresco. Frankfurt am Main: Hänsel-Hohenhausen, 2007.
- OP* François Hemsterhuis, *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. Jacob van Sluis. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- WW* François Hemsterhuis, *Wijsgerige werken*, ed. Michael John Petry. Leeuwarden: Damon, 2001.

INTRODUCTIONS

Forms of Philosophical Creativity: An Introduction to Hemsterhuis's Dialogues

Daniel Whistler

From Letters to Dialogues

In one of the earliest studies of François Hemsterhuis's philosophy, Émile Grucker tries to put his finger on exactly what makes the dialogues of the late 1770s and early 1780s feel so different from the earlier works. He concludes that the dialogues

are not only superior to the earlier essays in terms of execution and conception, which might be naturally explained by the development of one's thinking; but they are different in their tone, their look, their sentiment. There is not only progress, there is transformation ... *Alexis*, *Simon* and *Aristaeus* are no longer [like the earlier letters] mere treatises of little originality and charm, written in an almost entirely dry and diffuse style; they are interesting, lively dialogues animated by a poetic breath, where imagination and sentiment are united in thinking to give [the texts] brilliance and warmth.¹

Grucker establishes a break in Hemsterhuis's output between the 'treatises', on the one hand, and the 'poetic' dialogues, on the other – and this break is not to be understood incrementally, but as radical metamorphosis. Such a distinction between these 'two Hemsterhuises' has gone on to be cemented in the scholarship: there is 'a rupture in style and genre', as van Sluis has recently put it, following Grucker (*OP*, p. 7). On this view, Hemsterhuis's philosophy is to be split in half – into an early period ending in 1773, containing the epistolary triptych (*Letter on Sculpture*, *Letter on Desires* and *Letter on Man and his Relations*), and a late period that consists of a four-year burst of creative energy, from *Sophylus* in 1778 to *Alexis* in 1782.

The popularity of this 'two Hemsterhuises's interpretation is born from an undeniable sense of an ending that permeates the 1772–3 publications: they are not only haunted by the double loss of Theodorus de Smeth and François Fagel (the interlocutors who triggered the early letters), but also the *Letter on Man* itself has the air of being a definitive and comprehensive philosophical statement. It gives the impression of saying everything that Hemsterhuis had to say. And in a way it does: there is relatively little in the *Letter on Man* at which the late Hemsterhuis of the 1780s would have blushed, for the dialogues do not say much that deviates from the ideas of the earlier works. Rather, it is, as Grucker and van Sluis suggest, *how Hemsterhuis says it* that now differs: he speaks in a new way after 1778. This new form of communicating philosophy is most visible in the shift in genre from letters

to dialogues, but there is more to it than that: it is a turn to myth, to allegory, to anachronism, to fictions and forgeries, to the construction of a fictional world, to philological play and to esoteric imagery.

This introductory essay rehearses some of the features of such a turn and attempts to specify some of the reasons for it. The initial two sections provide the more obvious contextual and biographical grounds for a break between Hemsterhuis's earlier and later periods. The bulk of the introduction is then spent in closer inspection of each of the four dialogues in turn. The final section returns to the question of this 'rupture in style' to specify a few of the philosophical reasons that might justify it.²

Struggles with the Popular

From the moment that the *Letter on Man* was published, it proved difficult to read. The *Journal encyclopédique* published a review that 'doubt[ed] that this work is accessible to a large number of readers', consigned it to 'the metaphysicians' and criticised its pretension to instruct 'all men' in its stilted jargon. The reviewer went on to contrast Hemsterhuis's presentation of 'the truth in all its austerity' with a more popular, 'ornamental' style.³ Such conclusions were reinforced by Diderot's reading of the *Letter on Man* in 1773–4. Diderot took issue with Hemsterhuis's obscurity on at least three levels – in his odd use of French, his strange terminology and his abstruse concepts. Hence, he criticises this letter for employing 'false expression[s]', for employing metaphorical terms (like 'organ') which 'work badly in a text where one speaks strictly', and for employing an out-of-date language when the contemporary vocabulary of the Paris salons would have, instead, supplied 'a language in use, completely ready to lend itself to your ideas' and so would have made the letter 'infinitely easier and more pleasant to read'.⁴ Diderot summarises, 'It is the too frequent and often unnecessary use of these ways of speaking that make your book obscure'.⁵

It was in response to these kinds of criticism that Hemsterhuis returned to the *Letter on Man* in the mid-1770s to add a prefatory 'Addition'. The 'Addition' addresses this scandal of obscurity: 'The author has been accused quite generally of being obscure, and this accusation is not unexpected. Perhaps obscurity is a vice of style in him' (*EE* 1.127). It goes on to justify the 'strange' and 'a little barbarous' language of the *Letter on Man* on the grounds that 'anyone who hazards to say something new is obliged to create his own language, which few readers are interested in learning' (*EE* 1.127). To create something philosophically 'new' is to flout popular style and linguistic good taste for what resists the dominant norms of philosophical communication. It is to cultivate a 'barbarous' style. To innovate philosophically is, Hemsterhuis claims, to write strangely – and this is what makes his writing feel obscure.

This reasoning (i.e. the more radically new a philosophy is, the more difficult and unpleasant to read it becomes) is precisely what Hemsterhuis struggles with in the writing of the dialogues. Indeed, it will give rise to two opposing tendencies in his later philosophy. On the one hand, despite the note of defiance struck

in the ‘Addition’ to the *Letter on Man*, Hemsterhuis is frequently anxious to make his philosophy as accessible as possible: he keenly felt the demands of popularity. *Sophylus*, in particular, attempts to communicate his philosophy in a ‘simple style’ (B 11.79) that will make its argumentation available to all. Likewise, he will speak of the poetic devices of his late dialogues as ‘honey’ to better wash down the ‘relatively bitter medicine’ of philosophy (p. 124 below) – a sentiment that reflects the *Journal encyclopédique*’s recommendation of a popular, ‘ornamental’ style. However, insofar as *Sophylus* was intended to popularise Hemsterhuis’s philosophy, it failed. Hemsterhuis later laments that it has been ‘so little understood by people’ (B 10.4) – or, more fully, ‘I am mortified to find so often my poor *Sophylus* ... so little read or understood’ (B 10.2). As a result, Hemsterhuis (to some extent, at least) gives up on accessibility in his last three dialogues, and constructs an ever more private language limited to communicating with Gallitzin and a few other chosen initiates. Of course, Hemsterhuis was never really writing for a general public in the first place: the early letters have a single addressee, and he was always ambivalent about publication. But the dialogues radicalise this tendency: they contain allusions decipherable only by those with an intimate knowledge of his own personal circumstances (e.g., the dedications to ‘Diotima’ in *Aristaeus*, *Simon* and *Alexis*). From this perspective, therefore, Hemsterhuis doubles-down on the ‘strange’ and ‘barbarous’ style invoked in the ‘Addition’ to the *Letter on Man*: his late dialogues revel in obscurity as the mark of intellectual creativity.

This continual struggle with the popular, that is, Hemsterhuis’s unsteady oscillation between embracing and rejecting accessibility, motors his experiments in dialogue. He might repeatedly praise Socrates for his democratic universalism in philosophy (i.e. the idea that the philosopher should teach everyone) at the expense of Pythagorean elitism (p. 133 below) and he might idealise the Athenian cobbler’s shops and marketplaces in which philosophy became a public conversation, but he was himself increasingly diffident about communicating to more than just one or two of his initiates.

The Collaboration with Gallitzin

If this struggle with obscurity was a negative stimulus for the writing of the dialogues, a more positive trigger was Hemsterhuis’s encounter with Amalie Gallitzin. In fact, the distinction between Hemsterhuis’s early and late periods is often drawn precisely on the basis of this encounter. For example, Boulan distinguishes ‘two groups’ of writings (the letters and the dialogues) on the basis of whether they occurred ‘before or after ... the date on which he met his Diotima’.⁶

Gallitzin had moved to The Hague in 1769, but it was at the moment when she was in the process of separating from her husband, in the spring of 1775, that she forged her intense, lifelong friendship with Hemsterhuis. When, that autumn, she left The Hague with her two children to take up a more isolated existence at her country estate of Niethuis (literally: no one’s home), Hemsterhuis was one of her few visitors. It was here (before her move to Münster in the summer of 1779) that they consecrated ‘our marriage in friendship’ (B 1.40) through a series

of intense conversations or ‘philosophical debauches’, as Hemsterhuis describes them (*B* 11.219). These resulted in a reanimation of Hemsterhuis’s philosophical project. Gallitzin became allegorised as the ‘divine Diotima’ (*B* 1.52) to Hemsterhuis’s ‘Socrates’ – a gesture on Hemsterhuis’s part that not only renders her muse and thematises the ‘platonic and Platonising’ context to their collaboration (*LSD*, p. 11), but also illustrates his concerted (if not entirely successful) attempt to divest himself of mastery and authority. It is inaccurate to dub him Gallitzin’s ‘counsellor, mentor, father’,⁷ for it was, in intention at least, a matter of rigorous, two-way collaboration – a prototype of *Symphilosophie*.

Gallitzin’s marital disharmony was, in part, born of intellectual estrangement: she had come to find distasteful the materialisms beloved by her husband and was on the way to developing a starkly dualist immaterialism that anticipated her re-entry into the Catholic Church in 1786. Seclusion at Niethuis formed part of a Rousseauian project shared with Hemsterhuis of retreat from the norms of contemporary society to concentrate on the education of her two children. Thus, on the one hand, Hemsterhuis’s role was curriculum designer: applying the ‘metaphysico-moral’ faculty psychology (*B* 1.135) developed with Gallitzin to a concrete pedagogic programme. On the other hand, their common refusal of the present was anchored in a shared love for the Socratic as an alternative to the encroaching radical Enlightenment. For Gallitzin, Socrates was ‘my first love on this earth’⁸ – and this rubbed off on Hemsterhuis, who undertook (for example) a French translation of the *Symposium* in 1776.

Hemsterhuis is clear that his post-1775 philosophical productivity is indebted to Gallitzin. ‘I feel’, he writes, ‘that your way of thinking and feeling has altered the path of my philosophy’ (*B* 1.153). The four dialogues are ‘our children’ (*B* 1.217, 10.26), the fruits of ‘our philosophy’ (*B* 3.76): *Aristaeus* ‘carries the most marked traits of the soul of my Diotima’ (*B* 1.201); ‘our *Simon* ... really belongs to you’ (*B* 8.3); and *Alexis* ‘is completely yours’ (*B* 4.2). Although he never went as far as to attribute co-authorship to Gallitzin, he does communicate to her insistently that ‘our common philosophy ... is contained in our four dialogues’ (*B* 4.35). Their mode of production testifies to such sentiments: drafts were passed back and forth between Hemsterhuis and Gallitzin and would not have been completed ‘if we had not discussed and re-discussed a hundred times the subjects these works contain and if we had not read and reread them a hundred times piece by piece’ (*B* 2.46). The content of the dialogues also bears witness to Gallitzin’s influence: her impact can be felt in the theory of faculty psychology, as well as – by way of the access she provided to the early Münster circle – the emergence of concepts of personality and enthusiasm in the final dialogue, *Alexis*. However, her biggest influence is on Hemsterhuis’s moral epistemology. Whereas, in the 1772 *Letter on Man*, the ‘moral organ’ rendered the moral subject utterly passive (morality was a matter of sensation alone), after 1775 this changes dramatically. Hemsterhuis writes to Gallitzin on this point, ‘I long considered [the moral organ to be] a simple organ, until one day at Niethuis you taught me that I must at least divide it into active and passive [components]’ (*B* 7.92). Under Gallitzin’s tutelage, he comes to see that intellectual activity is a necessary component of moral epistemology. Thus, when Hemsterhuis returns to the ‘moral organ’ in *Simon*, it is conceived in analogy to the

activity of reasoning, rather than the passivity of sensation. The moral organ now possesses ‘two distinct parts’ – one in which ‘the soul is completely passive’ and the other in which ‘it judges, it modifies, it moderates, it incites, or it calms these sensations’ (p. 116 below).

It is also likely that Gallitzin influenced Hemsterhuis’s stylistic decisions after 1775. For example, the very choice of dialogue form speaks to a renewed emphasis on the intersubjectivity of the philosophical process. At its most extreme, this can give rise to an interpretation of the dialogues (e.g. in Viellard-Baron) as merely an ‘aide-memoire of real conversations’, the faithful transcription of those ‘philosophical debauches’ at Niethuis.⁹ However, it is important to remember how little is properly explained by the reference to Gallitzin: the dialogues are not remarkable for their dialogic form, but for the whole host of poetic devices they employ, from myth to the construction of a realistic Athenian world.

A more helpful way to conceive of Gallitzin’s influence is in terms of the ‘Socratic turn’ she inspired. This is manifest in two ways. First, after 1775 Hemsterhuis began to understand his philosophical project in a much more concerted way as part of a distinctly Platonic tradition. This is evident in his frequent apostrophes to Socrates from *Sophylus* onwards and in his fine-grained emulation of the detail of Platonic writing. On rereading the *Symposium*, the late Hemsterhuis confesses to ‘have always felt an analogy, such a perfect accord, such prodigious intimacy’ with this text, to the extent that ‘if I believed in metempsychosis, I would believe that, when Plato is the interpreter of his hero and master [i.e., of Socrates], a bit of his soul composes the essence of mine’ (B 1.144). Secondly (and as the previous quotation suggests), Hemsterhuis begins to understand both himself and Gallitzin as ‘belonging’ more to the Greek world than to the modern one. Both of them have been born *out of time* – ‘born Greek’, as Hemsterhuis repeatedly puts it in correspondence. He writes, ‘I have only ever seen or known, either personally or in their works, three people genuinely born Greek: you [Gallitzin], Goethe and me’ (B 7.17) – and he associates this Greek provenance with a love of freedom and a refusal of tyranny, particularly the tyranny of the present. In other words, for Hemsterhuis, this turn to the Greeks is a means to resist the hegemony of present mores, intellectual fashions and institutions. He repeatedly exclaims to Gallitzin: ‘We belong to a century that is not our own’ (e.g. B 1.90). His Graecism is a mode of self-alienation, deliberately estranging himself from modernity in order to re-enter a past Greek form of life. As he explains, when elaborating on why he, Gallitzin and Goethe appear to him to have been born Greek:

These three persons are born with something in their minds, in their soul or in their faculties which I have not seen in other people, and by which they see, feel and envisage the arts at the same distance and from the same perspective as the Greeks did.... When composing *Man and his Relations*, I had already formed a furious desire to clearly show why some men appear to belong, either wholly or in part, to centuries very distant from those in which they were born. (B 7.19)

Untimeliness thereby becomes a crucial philosophical virtue in Hemsterhuis’s late philosophy. Of course, in hindsight, such untimeliness was very common (even

timely) in the late eighteenth century and is but one manifestation of the neo-classicism, Graecophilia and Plato-Renaissance then sweeping northern Europe. Nevertheless, Hemsterhuis still experienced it as an urgent imperative, as a call to intellectual resistance, a means of escaping contemporary thought structures to do something different – to innovate backwards, as it were.

Sophylus

During 1776, Hemsterhuis and Gallitzin were working together on the critique of materialism the former had first elaborated in the *Letter on Man*, and out of this collaboration resulted two short, programmatic ‘treatises on the immaterial’ (*WW*, pp. 138–54). These formed the base texts for two further works: the ‘Clarifications’ to the *Letter on Man* and, in 1778, the dialogue *Sophylus*. Both are derived word for word from these earlier drafts (see *OP*, p. 717). As a result, *Sophylus* is more of a treatise shoehorned into a conversation than a dialogue proper: a master character, Euthyphro, acts as Hemsterhuis’s mouthpiece in converting the eponymous Sophylus away from materialism. It is the least formally ambitious of the dialogues – hence, the complaint of some that it is ‘thoroughly unSocratic’ in form.¹⁰

Hemsterhuis’s purpose in *Sophylus* is made clearer in later complaints to Gallitzin over its failure to have been properly read (see above). He speaks of it as ‘a small work of philosophy in which I tried to show to messieurs the materialists from where their errors arise’ (*B* 2.4). Indeed, the dialogue seems to have been envisaged as a kind of manual for immaterialism, ‘the ABC of all orthodox philosophy’ (*B* 10.2) and ‘the most basic without comparison of all my little books’ (*B* 10.4). Its accessibility is key: it was to be understood ‘by all men who have a mediocresly well constituted head’, particularly children (*B* 2.49). However, what prevented *Sophylus* from being so understood, Hemsterhuis continues elsewhere, was prejudice, for the dialogue required readers who, as ‘free men’, were able ‘to discard everything superfluous from their heads at will’ (*B* 10.4).

This invocation of freedom from prejudice resonates with the central passage within the dialogue itself, which also calls for ‘free’ readers who reject school philosophy and systems. Philosophising must begin by ‘forgetting everything systematic we have learned’, for systems are ‘limited’, prejudiced and arbitrary (p. 48 below). The philosopher must instead start again from foundations, which are not to be found in books or in tradition, but within the thinking subject: ‘philosophy is ... in man. We are men, so let us boldly look for philosophy in ourselves.’ Moreover, it is at this point that a Socratic ideal first explicitly appears in Hemsterhuis’s publications, as a cipher for a turn within:

Socrates, and Socrates alone... taught men that [philosophy] can be found in every healthy head, in any upright heart; that it is not the daughter of the mind or of the imagination, but that it is the source of universal and indestructible happiness.... My philosophy, my dear Sophylus, is that of children; it is that of Socrates; it is that which is found at the bottom of our heart, of our souls, if we make the effort to seek it there. (p. 47 below)

This Socrates of common sense and untrained virtue is common in the eighteenth century. He becomes the emblem for an outsider philosophy that flourishes when liberated from academic discipline.

However, the appeal to common sense should not be confused with an anti-speculative impulse. *Sophylus* in fact begins by pitting a creative – or, at least, ampliative – form of empiricism against the critical empiricisms of the Lockeo-Condillacian tradition. Both sides agree that philosophy’s ‘unshakeable foundation is experience, and there is no truth beyond this’, that a ‘philosophy based on experience is certainly the only good one’ (p. 45 below). They are distinguished, though, by their speculative intent. *Sophylus*, faithful to a variant of the Lockean tradition, insists that philosophy’s primary purpose is critical: empiricism ‘delivers us from prejudices, and it shows the precise limits of our knowledge’. However, Euthyphro (i.e. Hemsterhuis) refigures empiricism as ampliative, taking the philosopher beyond the present state of knowledge into ‘unknown lands’ (p. 45 below). Hemsterhuis attempts to expand the range of possible knowledge through new experiences. His point is a basic one: there is more to experience than is dreamt of in any sensualist philosophy. And it is for this reason he advocates a creative, rather than a critical practice of empiricism.

This polemic implicitly aligns all forms of Lockeo-Condillacian empiricism with materialism. That is, critical empiricisms – no matter how well intentioned – will necessarily give succour to those who affirm that the physical properties perceived by the five senses exhaust reality (as *Sophylus* puts it, ‘there is no truth beyond the experience of our senses; in a word, there is only matter’ [p. 46 below]). The subtitle to *Sophylus, or on Philosophy* thus refers to the type of empiricist philosophising to be adopted, according to Hemsterhuis, in order to avoid materialism. More precisely, the break between creative and critical empiricisms is encapsulated in the character *Sophylus*’s inference from a position that is shared by the two standpoints (indirect realism) to one that ends in materialism, that is, that ‘from our ideas we can conclude surely to the essence of things’. Euthyphro immediately distances himself from this inference, as ‘going too far’ (p. 51 below). He counters with a key Hemsterhuisian tenet: what exists in part exceeds our capacity to perceive it. That is, Hemsterhuis here rejects what he sees as the materialist axiom of the convertibility of being and knowing to posit, instead, an excess to being not fully captured in current human knowledge. This is, he argues, something that the materialist reduction of being to what is perceived through the five sense organs cannot countenance.

However, what is most interesting about Hemsterhuis’s argumentation is not so much this conclusion as how he goes about arguing for it. While the syllogistic proofs of dualism given in the *Letter on Man* are repeated, they are quickly superseded by a new, very different set of arguments.¹¹ *Sophylus* proceeds by taking a materialist principle – the contingency of the human sense organs – and radicalising it, historicising the relation between being and knowing, such that their convertibility can no longer be posited as a constant, ahistorical given. *Sophylus* therefore turns on the principle that what is empirically available to knowledge is subject to historical change. To put it another way, Hemsterhuis’s argument is taken fairly directly from Diderot’s *Letter on the Blind*, which had argued that what are usually taken to be eternal metaphysical, anthropological and moral truths are, in fact, nothing of

the sort, but are relative to the organs that the human individual happens to have evolved at a particular time. Hemsterhuis turns this argument back on the materialist: the same holds for any concept of matter too. The materialist concept of matter is not the only one possible: it ‘depends on the number of my organs’, and ‘since I am able to suppose an indefinite number of organs’ (p. 52 below), then it follows that matter can be perceived in an infinite number of ways, of which the materialist variant is but one. Hemsterhuis thereby accuses materialists of not taking their own organological reasoning about the contingency of the senses seriously enough; he accuses them of ‘the poverty of the idea [they] attach to the word matter’ (p. 53 below). Matter can be so much more.

Consequently, his own definition of matter expands to encompass more and more of what exists – and, ultimately, Hemsterhuisian philosophy tends towards the claim: ‘matter ... has an infinite number of attributes’ (p. 52 below). Matter must be subject to a process of amplification, so that, in the end, nothing is excluded from it. On one reading at least, Hemsterhuis is attempting to be more radical than the materialists: to liberate materialism from the last vestiges of the permanent. He laments that, since Newton, ‘the idea of matter has unnoticeably acquired a rigidity’ (p. 58 below) and argues, instead, for a hypermaterialism or excessive materialism: matter exceeds any materialist account of it. There is too much of matter to be circumscribed in thinking at present. Or, as Moenkemeyer succinctly puts it, “‘Matter’ is more than we know of it at any given time”.¹² This is no traditional immaterialism.

Aristaeus

Aristaeus was first sent in draft to Gallitzin in April 1777 and Hemsterhuis worked on it until it went to the publishers in December 1778. It is often considered his most impressive work, and this is due to the fact that the competing tendencies of clarity and innovation here intersect to produce something both pleasing to read and philosophically ambitious. Grucker, Boulan and Moenkemeyer all label it (in almost identical words) the ‘most complete expression of his thought’.¹³ Indeed, *Aristaeus* is an unconventional dialogue precisely because of its diffuse scope: the subtitle, *or on the Divinity*, envelops many disparate topics, from teleology to desire and from plant reproduction to definitions of inertia. Hemsterhuis himself summarises laconically, ‘The subjects it treats are order, the principal parts of morality and physics, and our relations with God’ (B 12.92). Nevertheless, its structure remains simple and repeats the formal dynamics of *Sophylus*: one character (Diocles) takes up a master position and converts an eponymous disciple character (Aristaeus) from materialism to true philosophy. The major exception to this simple form is the addition of a bizarre fictional preface and dedication – even Hemsterhuis himself labels this playful flourish ‘mad’ (B 3.9). The preface is written by an ‘editor’ who claims the text is a long-lost manuscript of ancient Greek provenance, ‘found, it has been claimed, on the Isle of Andros, during the time of the Russian [navy’s] expedition to the archipelago’ (p. 63 below). It allows Hemsterhuis, moreover, to imagine a direct connection to a Socratic origin (‘the

author ... appears to belong to Socrates' school' [p. 63 below]) and throughout the dialogue this Socratic identity is reaffirmed. Furthermore, the dedication allows Hemsterhuis to address Gallitzin in a veiled manner, returning to the idea that his intention in *Aristaeus* is 'to develop the maxims that guide you in the education of your children' (p. 64 below).

The stated topic of the dialogue is 'the divinity' and, for much of the dialogue (although, crucially, not the final pages), 'divinity' denotes an impersonal principle that both explains the universe and exists external to it. All the various lines of argument within the dialogue try to show that such a transcendent explanatory principle is a necessary postulate from whatever perspective one considers reality. At stake therefore, once more, is the danger of materialism – in this case, the reduction of the universe to a self-sufficient entity with no need for any external principle. The materialist idea that the universe might make sense of itself is the ultimate target of *Aristaeus*.

After an initial framing of the dialogue as an endeavour in theodicy, the argument begins by casting doubt on any teleological inference from various kinds of order in the world to a transcendent explanation for such ordering. In other words, a traditional version of the teleological argument fails: 'those who wish to prove the Divinity by way of the small amount of what they call order which they see build, in my opinion, on shaky ground; and it seems to me that God and Order must be proven in completely different ways' (p. 66 below). In so arguing, Hemsterhuis deliberately positions himself in opposition to a vast swathe of physico-theological reasoning in Dutch Newtonianism. *Aristaeus* goes on to attend to various forms of the cosmological argument that infer from physical, organic, libidinal or moral movements to a transcendent cause of such movement. With respect to all these perspectives, Diocles tries to show that the universe does not exist self-sufficiently. He concludes that the universe 'cannot exist by itself' and 'movement cannot be a quality of matter' (p. 75 below). Finally, *Aristaeus* goes on to consider 'moral evidence' for God's existence – that is, the dialogue looks to non-syllogistic forms of certainty that God exists. This results in one of the most famous passages in Hemsterhuis's corpus, which was dear to Jacobi and, through him, much of the German tradition to follow:

Man, Aristaeus, seems to be capable of two kinds of conviction: one is an internal sentiment, ineffaceable in a well-constituted man; the other derives from reasoning, that is, from the orderly labour of the intellect. The latter cannot exist without having the first as its sole basis; since, when working back to the first principles of all our knowledge, whatever their nature may be, we will arrive at axioms, that is, at the pure conviction of sentiment... In a well-constituted man, a single sigh of the soul, which manifests itself from time to time towards something better, towards the future and what is perfect, is a more than a geometric demonstration of the nature of the Divinity. (p. 92 below)

The passage rests on an objection to mediation which is something of a constant in Hemsterhuis's philosophy. Whenever there are intermediaries, he worries about error – and he often identifies syllogistic reasoning as an intellectual practice where

such intermediaries are legion. The further one passes through intermediate steps from an original self-evident axiom, the weaker the certainty that attaches to the conclusion and so the greater the chance of error. For Hemsterhuis, the human failure to ‘link together in a single instant all of the truths through which I passed to reach it’ (*EE* 1.128) weakens original conviction. On this basis, the above quotation sets forth an alternative, superior mode of conviction to the syllogistic – a non-discursive ground of all reasoning, a feeling. As Hemsterhuis puts it in later correspondence, ‘In ourselves, *knowledge is feeling, is intimate, perfect conviction*’ (*B* 7.178). And in *Aristaeus* this model becomes Hemsterhuis’s favoured one for justifying the existence of the divinity.

Hemsterhuis is again in conversation with the Dutch Newtonian tradition of his youth. Just like the teleological argument interrogated at the beginning of the dialogue, the appeal to sentimental certainty involves a reference to ‘s Gravesande’s canonical systematisation of Newtonianism, in which ‘moral evidence’ was accorded equal rank alongside ‘mathematical evidence’ as a non-syllogistic means of recognising truth. The task in *Aristaeus* is to sift through Dutch Newtonian principles, to disentangle those strands of the tradition that were, despite themselves, complicit with the materialist assertion of the universe’s self-sufficiency from those helpful in the struggle against contemporary materialisms. Unlike the teleological argument, Hemsterhuis recovers the category of moral evidence as a significant anti-materialist tool.

Elsewhere in *Aristaeus*, Hemsterhuis returns to modify and reconceptualise many of the key doctrines of his earlier works. For example, the definition of the beautiful from the *Letter on Sculpture* (the maximum number of ideas in the minimum space of time) is repurposed to make sense of the concept of order (thereby underlining, in proto-Kantian fashion, strong links between aesthetic experience and teleological reasoning). Similarly, the closing remarks of the *Letter on Desires* that posit a supernatural counter-principle to the immanent logic of desires are developed further so as to form an integral part of Hemsterhuis’s anti-materialist armoury. Moreover, the final pages of *Aristaeus* draw the reader back to *Sophylus*’s presentation of organology and particularly its emphasis on the plasticity of the sense organs. The underlying axiom that our organs have a history is here transposed into a mystic register that both harks back to some of the more enthusiastic passages of the *Letter on Man* and also presages Diotima’s speech in *Simon*. At the end of *Aristaeus*, Hemsterhuis speculates that any access to God (and so any evidence for His existence) is limited by the current, temporary limits of our epistemic apparatus. It follows that to know God better, ‘developments are needed; the material husk must be shaken off.... How many developments, how many deaths are necessary for the soul to attain the greatest perfection of which its essence is capable’, that is, knowledge of the divinity (p. 98 below). ‘The most beautiful property of man’, Hemsterhuis had earlier asserted, ‘is that of being able to correct and perfect himself’ (p. 87 below) – and this principle of perfectibility will draw the subject closer and closer to full experience of God, gradually approaching a beatific state only achieved on a future plane of existence.

Simon

Hemsterhuis took greater pains over the composition of *Simon* than over any other text; indeed, so obsessed with its details did he become that he could not bring himself to publish it, and when an unauthorised German translation appeared in 1782, he was saddened as well as surprised. This translation actually provoked him to return to and revise the text, which had first been drafted during winter 1779–80, and, in consequence, he sent a second draft to Gallitzin in 1783. The fact that no definitive publication of *Simon* exists results in editorial difficulties: there are two competing versions of the texts – the standard edition based on the 1780 draft, first published in French by Jansen in 1792, and a reconstruction of the 1783 draft published for the first time by Petry and Melica in 2001. Nevertheless, differences between the two versions are not particularly radical (certainly outside of the opening preface); we have noted the most significant in the translations below.

Hemsterhuis's anxiety over the composition of *Simon* means its creation is well documented. However, this anxiety had little to do with the contents of the dialogue, for, from the beginning, he was clear to Gallitzin that *Simon* was to 'contain the entire basis of our psychology' (*B* 3.94) and had already worked out this material in the letter on virtues and vices of March 1776, on which the closing passages of *Simon* draw extensively. Rather, what exercised Hemsterhuis was the dialogue's formal properties. Central to his plans for *Simon* was to make it 'as pretty as possible' (*B* 2.55) and to enhance 'the lightness of the piece' (*B* 3.13). However, he found this difficult: he complains that, while '*Simon* is of an elevated tone', Diotima's speech possesses 'an elevation of a completely different sort' (*B* 2.55) – that is, he specifies, this early draft of the speech did not succeed as 'an imitation of Plato-Homer', but was, rather, based on 'Greek poetry from Egypt in the time of the Ptolemies' (*B* 2.63). These perceived flaws provoked him into further revisions, and he sent more requests to Gallitzin to 'tell me whether this dialogue has the taste of [Athens]' (*B* 3.9). As this suggests, *Simon* is Hemsterhuis's most Platonic text: it is explicitly tasked with 'speaking the language of Plato and Athens as much as possible' (*B* 2.58), and he reported himself satisfied with the result – 'I do not believe that the most erudite Greek antiquarian would find any shocking anachronism there' (*B* 3.9). In order to emulate this Platonic model, the dialogue's structure is far more complex than that of any of the others, with a host of characters, five levels of nested recollections and a series of allusions to a whole tradition of Socratic writing, from Simon the shoemaker himself to Phaedo of Elis. The result did not just please Hemsterhuis, but has often been labelled his 'masterpiece'¹⁴ – the moment at which he fully achieves 'Socratic poetry', as Friedrich Schlegel put it.¹⁵ Pelckmans, for instance, commends how 'the discussion becomes more mobile, the arguments intertwined with anecdotes and digressions' in an overall 'beautiful disorder',¹⁶ and Hammacher similarly lauds *Simon* as Hemsterhuis's 'most living dialogue', which 'elevates the poetic form of presentation', such that 'both the aesthetic and the logical occur without excluding each other'.¹⁷

The argument in *Simon* is less easy to summarise than that in *Aristaeus* or *Simon*. Like the former, it begins with a fictional preface and dedication that playfully lay claim to classical Greek provenance ('it is to the same Russians and to the same

archipelago to which we owe *Aristaeus* that we are indebted for this small and singular work' [p. 100 below]). The conversation itself consists of four sections: an argument over the ability of the aesthetic surface to express inner realities; a comparative study of the various perfections ascribed to each of the arts; the first part of Diotima's speech, as remembered by Socrates, which narrates a creation myth on human psychology; and, finally, the second half of Diotima's speech, on the ways in which the relative perfections of the faculties produce various character types. The dialogue ends, much like Plato's *Symposium*, in noise and confusion. The guiding thread connecting these aesthetic, psychological and moral topics is the concept of expression, specifically the relation between the inner and the outer. It is easy to see why this subject mattered to Hemsterhuis: as a psychologist, he worried about his ability to understand the inner workings of someone's mind from their outward behaviour; as an educationalist, he worried about how he could amend these inner workings such that a better person might result; and as an aesthetician (and an artist), he worried about the very possibility of representing such inner workings.

This perspective also makes sense of the double polemic that motivates *Simon*. First, the dialogue was triggered in part by Hemsterhuis's 1776 criticisms of Lavater's physiognomic studies, particularly their overconfidence in the convertibility of the inner and the outer, that is, their faith in expressive transparency (*B* 1.90).¹⁸ Secondly, and more fundamentally, *Simon* is (like *Sophylus* and *Aristaeus* before it) an attack on materialism, specifically on materialist psychology and materialist pedagogy. The figure of Democritus symbolises the materialist within the fictional world of the dialogue: he is emblematic of those who reduce intellectual, imaginative and moral operations to bodily processes. The confrontation with Democritean materialism serves as an opportunity for Hemsterhuis to contrast his own pedagogical principles from an idea so dear to Helvétius (for example) that 'our virtues, our vices and our faults ... [are acquired] in education and in the course of life, and not the effect of the mixing of faculties which pertains to the nature of the soul itself' (p. 112 below).

Like Plato, Hemsterhuis deploys the character of Diotima to impart doctrine that would have been inappropriate in Socrates' mouth. Diotima is able to occupy the position of master in a way Socrates refuses to, and, in *Simon*, what Diotima teaches is that organs have a history. At the end of her speech, she reflects on the condition of her own organs as an example of her devotion 'to the charge of perfecting' herself and how this 'charge' had led 'new organs [to] manifest themselves' (p. 121 below). These new organs enable a more immediate relation with the divine (as *Aristaeus* had already intimated), a more holistic conception of the universe, a better understanding of the human and even penetration into the future. Diotima's soul has, she reveals, become 'all organ' (p. 121 below). The task of self-perfection here reaches a prophetic pitch.

Alexis

Alexis is Hemsterhuis's 'last masterwork'.¹⁹ However, far less is known of its composition than that of the preceding dialogues, for the dialogue was 'born in Münster [in early 1781] in front of [Gallitzin's] chimney and sofa' (*B* 4.46), and few

letters are extant from this period. He had first conceived *Alexis* in October 1779 while writing *Simon* and, indeed, forever thought of the two dialogues as ‘wife and husband’ (B 4.5). Much of the preparatory material for the dialogue developed out of his astronomical research on the rotation of the planets, as well as from a close reading of Hesiod’s *Work and Days* in November 1780. *Alexis* circulated in manuscript until Jacobi prepared it for publication (alongside his own German translation) in Riga in 1787. That both *Simon* and *Alexis* were first published in Germany is indicative of Hemsterhuis’s new-found German audience, after Galitzin’s move to Münster.

In comparison with *Simon*, *Alexis* sees Hemsterhuis return to a more sober structure, free from the convolutions of Platonic emulation: there is no fictional preface (although the dedication remains – marking out the dialogue as belonging to the same fictional world as the others) and there are just two characters: a master, Diocles, who converts a pupil, Alexis, to the truth. And yet, *Alexis* does still continue the trajectory marked out in *Simon* towards increasingly exuberant imagery, allegory and myth. The speech of Hysicles, the Libyan priest, on the lunar catastrophe is the most obvious set-piece, but, throughout, Hemsterhuis’s style is freer. And this informs the content too: in *Alexis*, Hemsterhuis thematises his late poetic turn by way of a defence of the importance of poetry for the production of truth. The age-old quarrel between the philosophers and the poets is thereby restaged – and, as in the Platonic original, it is restaged in a philosophical text drenched in poetry.

Unlike the three previous dialogues, *Alexis*’s polemic is no longer primarily directed against the Parisian materialists, but rather against Rousseau and his followers. The character Alexis initially resembles the Rousseau of the *First Discourse* in his admission that ‘I don’t like poets’ (p. 124 below) and in his insistence that truth must appear ‘stark naked’, without ornament or rhetoric (p. 124 below). He also initially resembles the Rousseau of the *Second Discourse* in his recourse to the principle of perfectibility as a preliminary means of distinguishing the human from the animal. And he resembles the late Rousseau in the ‘touch of misanthropy’ manifest in his words (p. 125 below). Diocles’ task in the dialogue is to convert Alexis away from this Rousseauianism.

Some context helps make sense of *Alexis* as a reckoning with Rousseau’s legacy. The dialogue is dominated by the concept of perfectibility, a term coined in Rousseau’s 1755 *Second Discourse* as follows:

There is another very specific property that distinguishes between [man and animal], and about which there can be no argument, namely the faculty of perfecting oneself... [Why is it that] man again loses through old age or other accidents all that his *perfectibility* had made him acquire, thus relapsing lower than the beast itself? ... This distinctive and almost unlimited faculty is the source of all man’s miseries.²⁰

Rousseau ‘invents’ the principle of perfectibility to stress the human’s spiritual vocation in contradistinction to the rest of organic nature. The human’s participation in historical change, her ‘malleability of spirit, her plasticity’²¹ succeeds where

other criteria (e.g. intelligence, memory, linguistic capacity) fail in defining the uniqueness of human life. The fact that every human can improve herself acts, for Rousseau, as a specifically anthropological a priori. And this, in turn, informs Hemsterhuis's own stress on human educability: for Hemsterhuis too, innate in the human subject is the possibility of improving oneself ever further. As the key passage from *Aristaeus* puts it, 'The most beautiful property of man ... is that of being able to correct and perfect himself'.

Yet, Hemsterhuis's concept of perfectibility is not strictly Rousseauian, and this is unsurprising since, after 1755, the concept of perfectibility was everywhere subject to a rapid process of contestation and fragmentation. Particularly pertinent is Charles Bonnet's palingenetic mutation of perfectibility into a unilateral process of becoming perfect. Bonnet rejects the Rousseauian use of perfectibility as a means of sharply distinguishing the human from the animal. Instead, he naturalises perfectibility, such that it is the structuring feature of the entire organic world – that is, Bonnet insists that nature has a history too. In his *Philosophical Palingenesis*, he claims that 'an animal is a perfectible being, perfectible to an indefinite degree' and that there is 'a continual progress ... of all species towards a superior perfection'.²² The human still remains 'the most perfectible of all terrestrial beings' according to Bonnet,²³ but this is a matter of degree. Hemsterhuis's principle of perfectibility owes much to Bonnet. Indeed, while Hemsterhuis is scathing of Bonnet's disciples and some of Bonnet's methods in his correspondence, he stresses that the two share much: Bonnet's 'philosophy and mine meet each other at the end of the day, and the only difference is that he began with the tail and I with the head' (*B* 3.47; cf. 11.30). And this shared project is nowhere clearer than in *Alexis*. The starting point for the dialogue is Alexis's Rousseauian inference 'from the fact that men have changed immensely, while the other animals have remained in the same position' to the conclusion that 'there is some principle of perfectibility that adheres to the nature of man' but which is not to be found 'in other species of animals' (p. 126 below). Immediately, however, Diocles (i.e. Hemsterhuis) contests this position and successfully converts Alexis away from Rousseauian dogma. So, to his later question 'Are we to say then that animals are absolutely destitute of this principle?', Alexis changes his mind, rescinds his earlier response, and answers, 'It seems to me at present that we cannot do so... [The animal] has this power of which you speak' (p. 126 below). Diocles then summarises, 'man and animal are endowed with the same principle' and, indeed, one can trace 'the nature and progress of your principle of perfectibility in all animals' (p. 126 below).

Alexis thus shifts towards a Bonnetian position in which perfectibility marks a universal feature of the organic world. The natural world is perfectible too, and the human and the animal are to be distinguished only in terms of degree of perfectibility (the human's principle is, according to *Alexis*, richer, more energetic and less 'determinate' [p. 143 below]). Indeed, so Bonnetian is Hemsterhuis's rendering of perfectibility as a becoming perfect of the natural world that he has to appeal to a foreign, inorganic body (the moon) to explain the fact that history is structured by decline as well as progress. Left to itself, nature would have proceeded from perfection to perfection; only an external principle could have disrupted this logic. As a result, where Hemsterhuis is closest to Bonnet and furthest from Rousseau is

in his imagining of the continual operation of perfectibility as an eschatology: souls scale ‘degrees of perfection’ owing to the ‘continual pull’ they experience towards ‘another state’ (B 1.19).

Communicating Perfectibility

At the beginning of his friendship with Gallitzin in 1775, Hemsterhuis could still write to her of the vices of the ‘poet-philosophers’ who present big, imaginative claims about the universe. Instead, he advocated the ‘humble prose’ of analysis – a method which proceeds cautiously with geometric rigour to establish only those simple foundations that are the most certain and secure. The poet-philosophers ‘treated philosophy in the narrative genre’, they ‘recounted their opinions without proving their truth’, whereas the ‘edifices’ of humble analysts are ‘of the most austere simplicity’ – and, as such, are secured all the way down (B 1.3).

Such a vision of what philosophy looks like stands in tension with the later dialogues. *Simon* and *Alexis* are difficult to reconcile with such a sober programme, unless one downplays the formal properties of the texts as an ornamental disguise, behind which abides some analytic kernel. Yet, the care with which Hemsterhuis pored over the stylistic details of his final works suggests that these properties cannot be so ignored. The embrace of dialogue, myth, speculation and poetry from 1779 onwards are the fruit of a different approach to philosophical communication. The earlier sections of this introduction presented some of the contextual and biographical reasons for this poetic turn; in conclusion, it is worth considering the way in which the late Hemsterhuis’s experiments in dialogue, etc., were entailed by his own arguments.

The principle of perfectibility occupies a central position in this regard. As the above reconstructions make clear, it took on an increasingly explicit structural role in the late Hemsterhuis’s philosophy: perfectibility bubbles under the surface in *Sophylus*’s historicisation of the human’s epistemic apparatus, it is alluded to in *Aristaeus*’s comments on self-perfection as the most remarkable feature of the human, it returns in Diotima’s eschatology of organs in *Simon* and it is, of course, the master concept of *Alexis*, the point around which the whole argument of the dialogue is oriented. And this concern with perfectibility has, in turn, implications for philosophical writing practices.

Communicating the Intimate

One of the most distinctive features of Hemsterhuis’s principle of perfectibility is that, while each individual can come to recognise and cultivate her own perfectibility ‘by means of internal forces’, ‘it is absolutely impossible for one individual to give it to another’ (B 5.27). In other words, there is a problem of communication when it comes to perfectibility. Perfectibility is a ‘singular principle that adheres to [man’s] nature’ [B 8.1]) and, as such, is too intimate, too indeterminate, too essential to be articulated in discourse. Perfectibility resides so deep down that it is unshareable.

This resonates with *Aristaeus's* invocation of sentimental certainty as a means to recognise a truth that resists discourse. Implicit already in *Aristaeus* is the idea that what good philosophy requires is a form that discloses the intimate source of truth without falsifying it in the syllogism. And the dialogue goes on to give one example of such a form – myth. Hemsterhuis claims that out of the ‘pure conviction of a simple truth’ originates mythic imagery, like that of Olympus. ‘A single sigh of the soul’ in perfectibility is so intimate to the essence of the human that it ‘cannot be communicated’ – *except* indirectly, that is, solely through myth (p. 92 below). This is the warrant for Hemsterhuisian indirect communication. Mythic forms communicate the uncommunicable: they present non-discursive conviction in discourse. As Hammacher points out, this passage makes the case for a kind of ‘argument that employs a specific artistic method for achieving what merely scientifically-ordered arguments cannot’ – one that relies on a ‘moral-aesthetic sensibility’.²⁴ Myth, in particular, he concludes, is ‘the strongest means of producing that unifying, perfect inner conviction’.²⁵

Hemsterhuis’s clearest statement of this methodological approach comes in a series of letters to Gallitzin on Platonic style. He there insists that philosophical writing cannot ‘speak only to the intellect’ but must also appeal to ‘sentiment’: it must ‘add into the dry language of demonstration, which occupies solely the intellect, another language’. Thus, Plato, like any good philosopher, had to include some sentimental ‘hymn’ to ‘accompany the monotonous accents of geometry’ (*B* 7.84). Hence, in *Alexis*, when Hypsicles talks of the principle of perfectibility, he cannot do so directly: he is unable to state plainly the principle which stands at the very centre of his words. Rather, perfectibility can be brought to the reader’s mind only by way of mythic discourse, by twisting words so that they do more than merely convey conceptual meanings. Elsewhere, Hemsterhuis names this twisting of language to exceed the discursive the ‘sublime’ (*B* 7.92).

Communicating Plasticity

Each of the dialogues (in very different ways) stresses the idea that human organs have a history, that, in the words of the *Letter on Atheism*, ‘it is given to the nature of man to acquire more organs in the rest of his existence or for other organs to develop’ (*OP*, p. 680). Indeed, Hemsterhuis’s late work contains one of the more rigorous and ambitious organologies of the late eighteenth century. As Weatherby has recently delineated, these organologies were modes of ‘technological metaphysics’ that gave rise to ‘an entirely new type of speculation’:²⁶ doing philosophy in the organological tradition meant working on one’s senses and so working on the tools for philosophising. Alterations to organs were intended to render philosophy *malleable*, capable of being worked on by tools: ‘Organs of sense are tied to spectra of possible cognition; the sense *as organ* becomes the means to alter the nature of cognition.... To potentiate a sense – to make a new field of sense available – is to make a *novum* in the world, to alter or modify the world through the organ.’²⁷ Organs were to give thinking a history.

Hemsterhuis’s organology, as reconstructed above, renders not only organs historically variable, that is, plastic, but the very practice of philosophy as well.

What we know and how we come to know it are, according to Hemsterhuis, dependent on the present, contingent condition of our organs. Philosophy too is subject to radical change in the future and in the past. Hence, it is no coincidence that the dialogues are full of stories that are precisely concerned with how things were radically different in the past and how they will again be radically different in the future. Characters such as Hypsicles and Diotima talk of little else: they tell stories that describe the radical historical changes organs have undergone. Furthermore, Hemsterhuis additionally situates the act of telling these very stories in an archaic past, communicated to the reader only via series of recollections, lost and rediscovered manuscripts and, generally, fragmentary transmissions that thematise their distance from the present. These stories draw attention to their own pastness and dramatise for the reader the temporality at stake in truth.

In other words, one of the lessons to be drawn from both the content and the form of Hemsterhuis's dialogues is that philosophical statements are contingent. He is committed to presenting truths in a way that acknowledges their historicity, that communicates to the reader the transient nature of philosophy. Hemsterhuis writes organologically; he fashions a plastic writing, a writing thoroughly permeated by its own impermanence. The fictional prefaces to *Aristaeus* and *Simon* are prime examples of this writing strategy: in these passages, the rapid oscillation between the competing demands of an untimely, anachronistic past and an all-consuming present gives rise to a series of ironies intended to shift the ground from under the reader's feet and estrange her from any secure footing in the present. The strategy is Socratic, that is, the establishment of a dialectical tension between, on the one hand, a polemical target that is hyperbolically praised in its arrogant pretensions and, on the other, philosophical truth deflated and belittled. Both prefaces ironically oppose the 'serious', comprehensive and 'profound' to the 'small', trifling and superfluous, satirising the astonishing 'perfection and refinement' of Enlightenment philosophy against the 'crude' nature of past philosophies (p. 100 below). In correspondence, Hemsterhuis will radicalise this self-ironisation by insisting repeatedly on his own philosophical texts as 'eternal gibberish' (B 6.47, 5.18, 7.16), as 'philofolly' (B 6.47).

The unassuming smallness of the dialogues thus opposes the total mobilisation of all facts and dates of human knowledge in the Enlightenment. The eighteenth-century desire to bring everything to presence encounters resistance from the archaic and the prophetic in these texts. To repeat: Hemsterhuis philosophises *as untimely*, and he does so, in part, to compel acknowledgment from the reader of the relativity of the present. The 'now' is engulfed by history and the reader must recognise that it is not all there is, that new organs and new modes of philosophising could emerge at any moment. Hemsterhuisian irony opens up the future to new truths.

Communicating Hope

By dint of the principle of perfectibility, the human is always pushing *beyond* what is given, always surpassing her present state. As Hemsterhuis puts it more generally, 'There is in the nature of man a principle of perfectibility which appears to have no limit', and to represent it would be to represent '*the progress* of this principle' (B 3.86;

my emphasis). Hence, one of the difficulties Hemsterhuis faces in his dialogues is how to communicate an indeterminate, mobile tendency, how to present a virtual power that cannot be fully actualised in any one determinate form, but which always exceeds any single coming to presence. When in *Simon* Hemsterhuis pauses over the sculptor's inability to represent tendency and dynamic movement through time (p. 108 below), something of his own difficulties become apparent.

How is it possible to capture forward-momentum in a philosophical text? Hemsterhuis answers: by means of hope. Hope is the affective correlate of the principle of perfectibility – ‘an indestructible instinct that pertains to essence’ (B 8.55) and makes the human subject feel her forward motion, a presentiment of ‘the natural progress of the soul that proceeds always ahead of us into eternity’ (B 11.143). And in one of his more radical statements on philosophical methodology, Hemsterhuis envisages substituting geometric style for a hopeful one: what is needed, he asserts, is ‘not the style of geometry, but that of hope. Hope! most precious gift of heaven’ (B 2.49). One task of the dialogues, then, is to *philosophise in the style of hope*, to impart hope in an ever-better future to his readers, and so wrest them from the hegemony of the present. More concretely, the dialogues achieve this end by *telling stories*. Again, Hypsicles' myth of the golden age is the paradigmatic example: its narrative arc is intended to convey to the reader a sense of momentum towards a future good. It opens up the possibility of radically different futures by means of emphasising the contingencies of any settled condition. Everything, it implies, is in transition. A similar narrative can be located in the closing lines to *Simon*, in which Diotima insists on a golden age that still virtually abides in every human *in germe*. More is possible and more always will be possible. By returning to Hesiod as a philosophical model, the later Hemsterhuis desires to communicate a presentiment of a new, plastic future – one generated from the momentum of his narratives.

Communicating the New

Alexis's solution to the ancient quarrel between the philosophers and the poets is reserved to the very end of the dialogue. Here Diocles finally persuades Alexis of the cognitive value of poetic language – and thus, at this point in his oeuvre, ‘Hemsterhuis manifests the poetic interior of philosophy’, according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy.²⁸ Alexis goes on to articulate the epiphanic moment of conversion that has taken place as follows,

I understand for the first time what poetry is. I sense that the most profound reasoning, the wisest and most reflective march of the intellect would supply us with very few new truths, if it were not sustained, directed or pushed by this enthusiasm which brings ideas together.

The dialogue concludes, ‘Philosophy owes much to poetry’ (p. 143 below). The poetic imaginary of a philosophical text matters: it does not merely ornament reasoning, but produces it in the first place. Poetry is the sustaining ground, the condition of possibility of philosophical invention: it generates new truths for the

philosopher. Poetry is *poietic* in the strict sense: it denotes a productive and creative moment in human thinking. To reason in poetic form is therefore to open oneself up to a novel event – the emergence of a new truth.

As Hemsterhuis relates in more detail, in ‘happy moments of enthusiasm ... it is no longer the prudent, exact and determinate march of the intellect ... that we follow’, but ‘Jupiter’s lightning’ or ‘a vague and blind effort’ of the self: we go ‘beyond our ordinary reach’ by way of ‘an effort whose nature is absolutely unknown even to us’, but which constitutes the sustaining principle for all intellectual creativity (p. 142 below). This enthusiastic ‘condensation of the imagination’ is, he writes elsewhere, ‘the faculty of true philosophers’ (*B* 5:305). True philosophers turn to the figural to create, to discover those ‘new lands’ of which Euthyphro speaks at the opening to *Sophylus*. Without it, thinking would soon become staid and cliché.

These are some of Hemsterhuis’s last published words and it is here that he gives the fullest justification of his own late writing practices. This account of his poetic turn underscores the commitment to creativity in thinking, to advancing philosophy into ever new domains and making its limits contingent. This turn constitutes the textual correlate to the human’s principle of perfectibility, just as Hemsterhuis’s ampliative empiricism is its methodological correlate: they all pull the subject ever onwards towards what is novel. The conclusion to *Alexis* does not just account for the cognitive value of poetry in general, but also for Hemsterhuis’s late style in particular – as what makes creative thinking possible. To embrace imagery, myth and fiction within philosophy is to embrace innovation, to embrace a relentless drive towards new truths.

Philosophical Paths: The Legacy of Hemsterhuis's Dialogues in the Age of German Romanticism

Laure Cahen-Maurel

Impasse and Bridge

François Hemsterhuis has suffered from unfair neglect in the recent past, and this contrasts greatly with the success he enjoyed in his own day. The fate of his writings is a remarkable phenomenon in the history of late European Enlightenment philosophy, and his desire to inspire his epoch ended up being realised practically independently from his own efforts.

At the beginning of his philosophical career, Hemsterhuis undoubtedly expected to find the most fruitful reception for his ideas in France. He did not write his dialogues in Dutch, but in French, the language of Diderot, his 'sparring partner', as Israel puts it.¹ The composition of his works in French also gave Hemsterhuis broader access to the learned readers of Europe, since French was the *lingua franca* of scholars, philosophers and educated people of the time. The *Letter on Man and his Relations*, and the first two of his dialogues, *Sophylus* and *Aristaeus*, were all self-published in Holland, but with Paris cited as the apparent place of publication.²

However, Hemsterhuis was initially unsuccessful at establishing his presence on the Parisian philosophical stage that formed the centre of the predominantly atheist French Enlightenment. Diderot commented on Hemsterhuis's *Letter on Man and his Relations* in 1773–4 but ultimately dismissed Hemsterhuis's 'proof of the essential inertia of matter and immortality of the soul'.³ Although the encyclopaedist d'Alembert was more appreciative, the later dialogues of Hemsterhuis failed to have any immediate influence on contemporary French discussions of materialism and sensualism. Hemsterhuis's work therefore seemed to have reached an impasse in France, and it was nearly two years after his death before the publication of the first compilation of his works actually appeared in Paris. However, even before the French reception of Hemsterhuis had properly taken place,⁴ a profound reception was already well underway in Germany, where his writings were being read, highly praised, translated and interpreted.

The German reception of Hemsterhuis began as early as 1771, 'when the first reviews of some of his writings began to circulate, and the echo of some of his theses started filtering into the correspondence of German writers and philosophers'.⁵ From the very beginning, Herder and Jacobi played a prominent role in introducing Hemsterhuis to the German public. In 1781 Herder made

the *Letter on Desires* (1770) available in Germany for anyone to read by publishing his own German translation of the text in Wieland's *Der Teutsche Merkur*. It was accompanied by a short essay entitled 'Love and Selfhood. A Supplement to the Letter of Mr. Hemsterhuis on Desire'. This first translation formed a crucial bridge that allowed Hemsterhuis's thought to pass over the Rhine into Germany. It 'shaped' the German reception of Hemsterhuis considerably, as Melica has stressed, especially 'influenc[ing] scholars and philosophers of early Romanticism'.⁶ The following year, in 1782, a complete German translation of his available works – the *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* – was printed in Leipzig 'without Hemsterhuis's participation', as van Sluis notes (*OP*, p. 4). This edition also included a German translation of *Simon*, which had not even yet appeared in French. Finally, in 1787, through the mediation of Johann Georg Hamann, *Alexis* – the last of Hemsterhuis's four major philosophical dialogues – appeared in Riga for the first time. It was published by Kant's publisher, Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, in a German translation by Jacobi alongside the French original, no doubt because of the particularly decisive impact that the earlier 1779 dialogue *Aristaeus* had had on German thinkers.

The striking early contrast between the scant interest in Hemsterhuis's ideas in France and their broad philosophical reception in Germany is due to the vastly different context of the Enlightenment on either side of the Rhine. To be sure, the conflict between faith (*Glauben*) and cognition (*Wissen*) was also inescapable in the German tradition, but a more moderate form of enlightened rationalism emerged. It endeavoured to reconcile religion with reason and so involved a secularisation or moralisation of belief and faith. Lessing, and later Kant, set the standard for this enlightened approach to religion. Moreover, a religious reformation had already taken place in Germany. In France, on the other hand, religion was still synonymous with the Catholic Church and politically associated with the despotic monarchy of the Ancient Regime. During this period, events were coming to a head that culminated in 1789 in the French Revolution. Thus, on account of the unique intellectual climate in France during Hemsterhuis's lifetime, the public and the leading French *philosophes* (many of them professed atheists) were much less intrigued by expositions touching on religious questions.

This introduction will principally consider the most significant reception of Hemsterhuis's four main Socratic dialogues. Although Hemsterhuis himself is not at all to be classified as a Romantic thinker, it has long been agreed that his most influential impact occurred among the German Romantics. Consequently, the following pages will primarily concern the *philosophical* legacy of Hemsterhuis's dialogues in Early German Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century and turn of the nineteenth century. I will further touch on their reception in the thought of Lessing, Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling and Hölderlin. Nevertheless, since surely the richest legacy of these dialogues can be found in Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), this introduction will repeatedly return to the many original transformations of Hemsterhuis's ideas in his work in particular.

In fact, there existed several different conceptions of Hemsterhuis's work in the minds of his contemporary German readers. Generally situated by scholars between the *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic movements, Hemsterhuis associated

himself more with the so-called *Vereinigungsphilosophie* of the mystically inclined thinkers around Gallitzin's circle in Münster and Weimar (Hamann, Herder, Jacobi). Hemsterhuis corresponded with them and even spent time with Gallitzin in Münster. It could be said that these leading German intellectuals were less concerned with French materialism than with opposing philosophical rationalism *tout court*, for they remained deeply attached to the mystery of faith and to a Christianity of feeling. The positive reception of Hemsterhuis's work at this time precedes the reception of Kant's philosophy, which only began to take root in Germany in the years 1786–7, notably thanks to Reinhold's efforts. Furthermore, the early scholarly tendency to read Hemsterhuis in the light of the irrationalism of the Münster circle appeared to be reinforced by the apparent non-reception (or, at least, absence of a direct reception) of Hemsterhuis among the German Idealists, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, who all followed in the rationalist tradition of Kant. Yet more recent Hemsterhuis scholarship shows that such an irrationalist interpretation cannot be justified. Although the relationship of the German Idealists to Hemsterhuis certainly demands closer scrutiny, as mentioned above, I can only touch on it here.⁷

Naturally, the present introduction also cannot include all the allusions, interpretations and new conceptions that sprang from Hemsterhuis's ideas. Rather, it seeks to provide an account of the key issues at stake in the reception of Hemsterhuis's work by furnishing an overview of three 'productive' tendencies in his early readers. These key issues are: (1) the revival of the Platonic tradition at a time when the distinction between Plato's rationalism and Neoplatonism was becoming increasingly blurred; (2) pantheism as a form of 'philosophy of life';⁸ and (3) moral perfectibility, history and poetic philosophy. Of course, these themes are intimately interrelated and run through all four of Hemsterhuis's dialogues.

This introduction particularly attempts to account for the philosophical *legacy* of Hemsterhuis. Here 'legacy' is not to be understood merely in terms of positive references to Hemsterhuis's work, but also as *creative appropriation and further development* of his dialogues. Not all scholars agree that Hemsterhuis's greatest philosophical legacy is to be located in the early German Romantic movement. Hammacher, for instance, has argued that the appropriations and creative transformations of Hemsterhuis's ideas by the German Romantics are simply based on a 'misunderstanding' of the philosophical Cartesian tradition in which his thinking should be embedded.⁹ Hammacher's critique is especially directed at Novalis. According to Hammacher, the Romantic reception of Hemsterhuis was only superficial and metaphorical, and not at all genuinely philosophical, since the Romantics merely selected single isolated 'theories, thoughts and images' from Hemsterhuis's work.¹⁰ However, as the following pages will show, the presence of Hemsterhuis in Novalis is profound and ubiquitous throughout his entire oeuvre. Novalis's apparent lack of acquaintance with the French Cartesian tradition from which Hemsterhuis emerged does not change anything in principle, since Novalis's methodological approach also remains perfectly rational. In any event, the philosophical legacy of the Dutch thinker in Novalis is still underappreciated, and more original and substantial than is often recognised in the scholarship.¹¹

**The Path of Truth:
Sophylus or the Revival of the Platonic Tradition**

It is well known that Hemsterhuis regarded himself, and was regarded by many of his contemporaries, as a modern incarnation of Socrates, bringing to a new generation the revival of the Platonic tradition. In 1785 Wieland called Hemsterhuis the ‘Plato of our time’ – a designation that in many ways stuck.¹² The Hellenic rationalism of the Platonic tradition had for him a human and moral character in particular – it was primarily a system of ethics based on a dualistic ontology which laid claim to the existence of spiritual entities – ideas – irreducible to material entities, as well as on a theory of knowledge that defended the view that the external world as it appears to us is not independent of our representations as perceiving and thinking subjects. Hemsterhuis’s figure of Socrates represents a conception of philosophising as a way to transcend the thinking subject’s present state of knowledge to take them into ‘unknown lands’ (p. 45 below).

The Path Within and to the Universe

A first Socratic ideal that unites Hemsterhuis’s four major philosophical dialogues is that the path of philosophy starts by turning our gaze within. The opening discussion of philosophy in *Sophylus* has recourse to the metaphor of the spider web, in which philosophy is likened to a more or less circular frame with a centre from which particular threads branch off as radii, so as to form expanding, ascending layers of knowledge. For Hemsterhuis, philosophy is a sphere of this kind, whose centre is ourselves. The thread which we must follow to arrive at more complete knowledge is the thread of our own common sense, central to our being as thinking subjects. In other words, what should form the foundation for a true philosophical quest, and which enables philosophers to reach ‘the remotest truths’ (p. 46 below) – such as astronomical truths – is our own thinking insofar as it becomes free of all prejudices, systems of thoughts, traditions and scholarly knowledge. Though our common sense might be ignorant, tracing its capacity back to the centre of reflexivity constitutes the initial solid foundation for the construction of knowledge.

This idea is formulated by Euthyphro in the opening pages of *Sophylus*, where he states that philosophy’s task is to reveal ‘unknown lands of an immense size’, which are, however, not just ‘imaginary spaces’ (p. 45 below):

Philosophy is ... in man. We are men, so let us boldly look for philosophy in ourselves. Pull that thread I spoke of; it will surely be attached to some truths, and by this means we will go on to traverse the universe without danger.... Let’s begin by being impartial and free from all prejudices.... Socrates, and Socrates alone ... preached philosophy itself, while others merely preached their limited philosophical systems. He taught men that it can be found in every healthy head, in any upright heart; that it is not the daughter of the mind or of the imagination, but that it is the source of universal and indestructible happiness. (p. 47 below)

Similar Socratic appeals to turn our gaze within can be found in the later dialogues. Thus, in *Aristaeus*, when it comes to knowledge of God, Diocles says to Aristaeus:

To acquire knowledge of his nature and of our relationships with him, we must enter into ourselves, and make the husk of humanity disappear. If ever the Delphic oracle produced an injunction worthy of the reputation of the brilliant son of Leto [= Apollo], then it is the universal teaching: *know thyself*. It is from this knowledge alone that we can draw out the nature of the Divinity. (p. 95 below)

This imperative for introspection and for a freedom from philosophical systems perfectly resonates with the views of the early German Romantics – views which are often considered not only original, but also *prima facie* anti-systematic. Schleiermacher, who would later develop with Friedrich Schlegel the project of translating the whole of Plato’s dialogues, refers to Hemsterhuis’s philosophy as a model for independent thinking. In a letter dating from May 1790, Schleiermacher recommends his son ‘to read Hemsterhuis’s philosophical works’ alongside Bacon’s *Novum Organum*, in order to see ‘that true philosophers and independent thinkers are highly modest people. They seldom wed themselves to any party. Indeed, it is necessary to refrain from a party if we are to search for the truth.’¹³ Schleiermacher seems to have gleaned from *Sophylus* the importance of the idea of independent, individual and original thinking. For, nine years later, he would put to work a similar idea in his 1799 *Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers*, when searching for the essence of religious truth and proposing rather unorthodox ideas on religion as an ‘intuition of the universe’.

As for Friedrich Schlegel, he corresponded with his brother August Wilhelm Schlegel about Hemsterhuis, making several requests ‘to his brother to send him Hemsterhuis’s writings’ in the late summer of 1793.¹⁴ In Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Hemsterhuis is mentioned again and again in connection with the Socratic element’, that is, Socratic philosophy and irony.¹⁵ During the 1790s, Schlegel developed an a-systematic philosophy of Romantic irony in which he defended the fundamental thesis of the human being’s inability to attain definitive knowledge. He also attributed irony to Hemsterhuis himself, ‘based on his appropriation of classical (antique) works’.¹⁶ The Socratic-Hemsterhuisian appeal to turn our gaze within, so prominent in *Sophylus*, further reinforced Schlegel’s conception of the Romantic fragment as a *Denkanstoß*, that is, as a stimulus for independent cognitive or reflexive work. Schlegel also applied the key Romantic notion of ‘symphilosophy’ to this inner Socratic dialogue of thought. Indeed, in a fragment first published in the *Athenaeum* in 1798, Friedrich Schlegel remarks: ‘Is the life of a thinking human being anything else than a continuous inner symphilosophy?’¹⁷

However, the most striking and yet – to my knowledge – hardly acknowledged reception of the Socratic-Hemsterhuisian conception of an inner philosophical path is to be found in Novalis. Just as for Friedrich Schlegel, the non-analytic, non-systematic form of philosophising as well as the autonomously reflexive path of thought are important tenets of Novalis’s philosophy. Yet the legacy of *Sophylus* is most fully embodied in one of Novalis’s most famous fragments – fragment 16 of *Pollen*, which poetically expresses the Romantic motif of the ‘mysterious path within’. The lack of scholarly attention given to this crucial philosophical source to *Pollen* is surprising, for it is well known that Novalis greatly admired Hemsterhuis

and that this admiration was initially linked to his Platonism. This is attested by Friedrich Schlegel, who, in January 1792, wrote to A. W. Schlegel of his encounter with Novalis:

he talks three times as much and three times as fast as the rest of us – he has the most rapid powers of comprehension and sensitivity. The study of philosophy has granted him a glorious lightness of touch for developing beautiful philosophical thoughts – he doesn't proceed onto the true, but rather to the beautiful – his favourite writers are Plato and Hemsterhuis. – Wildly inflamed he related his opinion to me on one of the very first evenings – there is nothing evil in the world – and everything is again approaching the Golden Age... His name is v. Hardenberg.¹⁸

Novalis studied philosophy in Jena (1790) before going on to study law in Leipzig (1791), where nine years earlier the German edition of the *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* had appeared. With its reference to Hemsterhuis as well as to the topics of theodicy, beauty and the golden age, Schlegel's report clearly shows that, as early as 1791, Novalis was already familiar with many of the major themes of Hemsterhuis's works. In this respect, he might have first learned of Hemsterhuis's philosophy through Herder's translation of the *Letter on Desires*, in which the translator reminds us in his foreword that: 'Perhaps no one since Plato has thought so richly and finely about the nature of desire in the human soul as our author. His system is great like the world, eternal like God, and our soul...'.¹⁹

Studying philosophy in Jena meant studying Kant and his epigones. But six years later, between his close reading of Fichte's 1794/5 *Wissenschaftslehre* and Kant's epistemological writings (essentially the first *Critique* and the writings on natural sciences), Novalis spent the autumn of 1797 intensively re-examining and excerpting from Hemsterhuis's philosophical writings. This coincided with the publication, in September 1797, of the third volume of the German edition of Hemsterhuis's work, which contained the dialogue *Alexis, or on the Golden Age*. In addition, A. W. Schlegel owned a copy of Jansen's two-volume 1792 French edition of the collected philosophical works (*Œuvres philosophiques*), which Novalis borrowed in order to read Hemsterhuis in the original French, as well as carrying out his own translations from it, as Mähl as shown.²⁰ Novalis's extensive three-month reading of the entire corpus resulted in thirty-six pages of notes and reflections, which are preserved under the title *Hemsterhuis-Studies*.²¹

That the legacy of Hemsterhuis's conception of the path of true philosophy in Novalis's *Pollen* has so far remained philosophically underappreciated is surely due to the fact that his *Hemsterhuis-Studies* contain numerous direct excerpts from all the major philosophical dialogues except one – *Sophylus*. This lack of an extant excerpt has led some commentators to apparently assume that Novalis was unacquainted with this dialogue.²² To see that this assumption is false, we merely have to compare the opening pages of *Sophylus* quoted above and fragment 16 of *Pollen* to see not only that Novalis did know Hemsterhuis's first dialogue, but that he positively appropriated and transformed its very language and content. Novalis's highly significant and frequently misread fragment 16 reads as follows:

16. Fantasy [*Fantasia*] places the world of the future either far above us, or far below, or in a relation of metempsychosis to us. We dream of travelling through the universe – but is not the universe within ourselves? The depths of our spirit are unknown to us – the mysterious path leads within. Eternity with its worlds – the past and the future – is in ourselves or nowhere. The external world is the world of shadows – it throws its shadows into the kingdom of light. At present this kingdom certainly seems to us so inwardly dark, lonely, and shapeless. But how entirely different it will seem to us when this darkness is past, and the body of shadows has fled.²³

This fragment takes up the inversion schema typical of Novalis's philosophy, with a clear echo of both Plato's allegory of the cave and Hemsterhuis's definition of the task of philosophy as the opening up of new lands. Thus, in both Hemsterhuis's *Sophylus* and Novalis's *Pollen* fragment 16, the desire for terrestrial unknown lands and the intent to discover them are contrasted with mere imaginary or otherworldly spaces of fantasy. Moreover, there is of course the *path* within – it is ultimately an *interior* path for the two thinkers: 'let us boldly look for philosophy in ourselves', according to Hemsterhuis; 'the mysterious path leads within', according to Novalis. The second sentence of Novalis's fragment – 'We dream of *travelling through the universe* [emphasis added] – but is not the universe within ourselves?' – directly recalls Euthyphro's above-quoted claim in *Sophylus*: 'Pull that thread I spoke of; it will surely be attached to some truths, and by this means we will go on to *traverse the universe* [emphasis added] without danger'. Finally, the idea that philosophy or a more complete form of knowledge (philosophy as a progression from the known to the unknown) lies within the subject's interiority directly harmonises with Novalis's own famous definition of philosophy as 'really homesickness – *the drive to be everywhere at home* [*zu Hause*]'.²⁴ Hence, though neither *Sophylus* nor Hemsterhuis's name are explicitly cited in *Pollen* fragment 16, we can find numerous metaphysical and linguistic parallels between the two, and a clear attempt by Novalis at developing some of the key themes in *Sophylus*.

A 'Prophet of Transcendental Idealism'

Yet one main difference between fragment 16 of *Pollen* and Hemsterhuis's *Sophylus* is that the 'mysterious path within' leading from the known to the unknown remains an *imaginative* path for Novalis. In effect, the thread of true philosophy we must follow is the productive imagination, that is, 'genius', rather than the thread of 'common sense' invoked in *Sophylus*. However, we should recall that Novalis considers genius to be something that *all* human beings have, and which differs only in degree, and similarly Hemsterhuis's *Letter on Man and his Relations* emphasises genius as that from which 'we must expect great and remote truths' (*EE* 1.92).

It is also worth stressing that, although Novalis's conception of the philosophical path is deeply indebted to Hemsterhuis's *Sophylus*, the language and philosophy of *Pollen* fragment 16 possess markedly Fichtean features as well. I have argued elsewhere that this fragment is linked with the chapter on beauty and the duty of the 'fine or aesthetic artist' in Fichte's *System of Ethics* (1798).²⁵ In other words, in a

syncretic manoeuvre characteristic of his philosophical method, Novalis not only posits a ‘harmony’ between Hemsterhuis’s and Fichte’s thinking, but fragment 16 reinterprets the Dutch philosopher’s ideas in the light of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.²⁶ This is why the chief thread of philosophy for Novalis is actually the *creative imagination* – in both the Fichtean transcendental and Hemsterhuisian sense.

More generally, this illustrates how Novalis and the other Romantic thinkers could read Hemsterhuis’s Platonic idealism as a precursor to critical philosophy or German Idealism. Indeed, A. W. Schlegel explicitly states in his Berlin *Lectures on Fine Art and Literature* (1801–4) that Hemsterhuis should be viewed as a ‘prophet of transcendental idealism’.²⁷ In his posthumously published *History of Philosophy*, Schleiermacher also claims that Hemsterhuis (alongside Jacobi) stood very close to critical idealism without being fully aware of the fact: ‘What Hemsterhuis, and with him Jacobi, philosophically state about the various perspectives of the world according to the receptivity of the organs, belongs precisely here; they are all incredibly close to critical idealism without knowing it’.²⁸ In other words, not only Hemsterhuis’s theory of knowledge, but also his emphasis on ethics, art and religion, or Platonism as such, were considered compatible with Kant’s standard of rationality. This is also the case with Fichte, who likewise incorporated Platonic and Neoplatonic elements into his system of transcendental philosophy.

A crucial point should be noted here: if the inward path is the first step on the path to knowledge in both Hemsterhuis and Novalis, it remains solely the *first* step. Additional steps are needed. As Novalis writes in fragment 24 of *Pollen*, that is, just after fragment 16:

The first step will be an inward gaze – an isolating contemplation of ourselves. Whoever stops here has come only halfway. The second step must be an active outward gaze – autonomous, constant observation of the external world.²⁹

Many of the clichés and misconceptions about German Romanticism, especially about Novalis, stem from the fact that, even among scholars, this second outward step to a knowledge of nature or the outer world (i.e. the realist tendency and the many scientific studies that lead to the infinite wealth of real objects and the sensible fullness of the external world) is not sufficiently or often taken into account.

Like Euthyphro’s spider, Novalis and the German Romantics expanded the web of true philosophy to all the domains of the arts and sciences. These included the spheres of astronomy, physics and optics, which are all treated at length in Novalis’s late encyclopaedia project, the 1798/9 *Das allgemeine Brouillon*. Here too Novalis was directly following in Hemsterhuis’s footsteps. Hemsterhuis remained a committed Platonist or metaphysical philosopher, on the one hand, and a committed Newtonian physicist, on the other. In other words, Novalis fully agrees with the main philosophical principle of *Sophylus* that both the inner and outer worlds need to be better known, explored and reconciled. But this marks the frontier of physics. However true the Newtonian doctrine is, it ‘does not merit the name system of philosophy, since it comprises only a very small branch of it, embracing just mechanics, insofar as it is applicable to pure geometry’ (p. 47 below). Whereas many scholars read Novalis’s 1798 *Pollen* fragments as the beginning of a turn away

from philosophy towards mere poetry and mysticism, it is more accurate to say that they express in poetic form a radical endorsement of ‘philosophy’ in the best sense of Hemsterhuis – namely, philosophy sheds light on the higher truths of the material world and is able to trace the path from this material foundation all the way back up to its immaterial primary cause.

The Religious Path: *Aristaeus*, or the Question of a New Pantheism

As Wilhelm Dilthey underscores in his *Leben Schleiermachers*,³⁰ another focal point for the reception of Hemsterhuis in Germany relates to the concept of pantheism (or panentheism). According to pantheistic philosophy, the world or nature, humanity and each individual human being is a portion of God, that is, a part of the original, perfect and unique being, but God does not lose his essence as an absolute unity by dissolving himself into these different parts. With respect to the pantheism question, *Aristaeus* stands as one of Hemsterhuis’s most important works, and of all his dialogues it is the one that had the greatest impact.

Presenting itself as a theodicy and concluding with reflections on ‘the omnipresence of the Divinity’ (p. 93 below), *Aristaeus* went on to become the subject of a highly contested Spinozist reading of Hemsterhuis. This Spinozist reading of *Aristaeus* lies at the heart of the so-called ‘Pantheism Controversy’, a major event in Germany’s philosophical and cultural life that ignited in 1785 with the publication of Jacobi’s *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*. When it comes to religion, the German reception of Hemsterhuis mirrors – on a smaller scale – the larger complex position that Spinoza and Spinozist monism occupied in late eighteenth-century German thought.

Thematically, the dialogue *Aristaeus* discusses order, morality and physics, and our relation to God. It deals with the philosophical understanding of nature, and the question of the link between the infinite and the finite, as well as introducing discussions on love, and the notions of directionality, force and the will. All these themes proved to be of crucial importance in the philosophical development of German Romanticism and German Idealism.

Jacobi’s 1784 Hemsterhuis Letter

Jacobi’s book *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn* contains recollections of his conversations with Lessing between July and August 1780. Lessing had already covertly read Spinoza with great interest by the early 1750s, and in the summer of 1780 he would confess his conviction that ‘[t]here is no other philosophy than that of Spinoza’, a confession that Jacobi went on to publicise in 1785.³¹

It was through this book that the fate of Hemsterhuis’s work in Germany came to be inextricably linked with the revival of an interest in Spinoza’s philosophy. Before the summer of 1780, Lessing was in fact familiar only with Hemsterhuis’s 1769 *Letter on Sculpture*. Jacobi thus presented him with copies of the other texts: *Aristaeus*, along with the *Letter on Man and his Relations* and the dialogue *Sophylus*.

According to Jacobi's report, Lessing was so taken with Hemsterhuis that he avidly devoured a fourth Hemsterhuis text too, the *Letter on Desires*. Most importantly, however, in terms of Hemsterhuis's reception, Lessing became 'so enraptured with *Aristaeus* that he resolved to translate it himself'.³² This is because Lessing was reading Hemsterhuis as a scarcely veiled crypto-Spinozist. Unlike the *Letter on Man and his Relations*, the dialogue *Aristaeus* 'was manifestly Spinozism, said Lessing, in such a fine exoteric garb that the garb itself also helped to amplify and elucidate the inner doctrine'.³³ To summarise: Lessing was convinced that he saw in *Aristaeus* a double sense in Hemsterhuis's manner of writing. He found pantheism esoterically hidden there. Jacobi comments:

What he [Lessing] described as the exoteric garb of *Aristaeus* can quite properly be seen merely as an extension of the doctrine of the inseparable, intimate, and eternal connection of the infinite with the finite, of the universal (and in that respect indeterminate) power with the determinate, individual power, and of their necessarily opposite directions. The rest of *Aristaeus* can scarcely be seen as incompatible with Spinozism either.³⁴

In contrast to Lessing, Jacobi rejected the idea that Hemsterhuis was Spinozist. Indeed, Hemsterhuis would position himself in opposition to Spinozism in his 1787 *Letter on Atheism*, although he refrained from entering directly into the heat of the Pantheism Controversy itself.

An arguably less-known fact is that Jacobi had already written a long letter to Hemsterhuis on Spinoza's philosophy, portraying Hemsterhuis as the latter's greatest foe, so as not only to prove Lessing wrong, but also to refute Spinoza's materialism. In this sixteen-page letter, which appears in full in the first (1785) edition of *On the Doctrine of Spinoza*, Jacobi imagines a philosophical dialogue or battle between the two Dutch thinkers.³⁵ He takes as his imaginary premise Spinoza's reaction if he had actually read Hemsterhuis's *Aristaeus*. As we recall, in this dialogue the character of Diocles seeks to convert his younger interlocutor, Aristaeus, from materialism to true philosophy. But, unlike Aristaeus, in Jacobi's imaginary battle Spinoza is anything but an immature philosophical mind: he is an incredibly impressive and strong representative of the rationalist philosopher. And although Hemsterhuis partly leaves Spinoza's doctrine in ruins, it is impossible to entirely destroy pantheist philosophy, because, as Jacobi admits, Spinoza ultimately turns out to have a perfectly consistent position. Jacobi therefore concedes that there is no way of definitively refuting Spinozism on its own conceptual battleground. Jacobi brings this imaginary scene to a close by inviting Hemsterhuis to expose the weaknesses of metaphysics in general rather than opposing Spinoza's doctrine, just as he would famously invite Lessing, whom 'he thought was walking on his head in the manner of all philosophers, to perform a *salto mortale* [a jump head-over-heels] that would redress his position and thus allow him to move again on the ground of common sense'.³⁶ However, in contrast to Lessing, Jacobi considered Hemsterhuis to already be on the right path – that of faith and feeling as opposed to reason, since Hemsterhuis was responsible for consecrating the kind of subjective certainty of feeling that Jacobi himself had sought in his own writings – 'pure conviction of

sentiment' and moral evidence (p. 92 below). In other words, just as for Lessing, Hemsterhuis's central legacy in Jacobi's philosophy revolves around *Aristaeus*. Here Jacobi finds a conception of religious feeling that he can adopt and transform into an imaginary dialogue on religion and philosophy.

It is not particularly important whether Jacobi accurately described Hemsterhuis's thought by presenting it as rationally failing in the imaginary battle with Spinoza, because Jacobi's influence on the dissemination of some of the most characteristic and informative principles of Hemsterhuis's philosophy was much more significant. For instance, it was while reading Jacobi's letters *On the Doctrine of Spinoza* in 1790/1 at the Tübinger Stift, in a room he shared with Hegel and Schelling, that 'Hölderlin's interest in Hemsterhuis seems to have begun'.³⁷ Schleiermacher similarly closely studied Hemsterhuis's work while commenting on Jacobi's Spinoza letters in 1793 – and this is to mention but two instances.

The main battle cry directed against Spinoza in Jacobi's imaginary dialogue is that the dynamic concept of motion has to be distinguished into two types at two different levels: on the one hand, there is a reaction at the physical level of matter, which is tantamount to inertia, and on the other hand, there is a force of action proper (*Wirkungskraft*³⁸) at the spiritual level of volition and agency that is external to matter and involves the notion of directionality.

Indeed, in Hemsterhuis's *Aristaeus*, motion in material bodies is merely reaction to an external impulse; their motion requires an external mechanism in which action and reaction balance each other out, essentially rendering matter inert. The force that makes the world alive is an immaterial principle in the sense of a 'surplus of action over reaction' (p. 76 below). The 'faculty of willpower' or 'velleity' (p. 82 below), in which all directions are possible, and the morally determined 'act of will' (p. 74 below) that achieves a determinate directionality in movement, are instances of this immaterial principle of action that is more than mere reaction. The same immaterial principle holds for universal gravitation and attraction in matter; for the force pulsating in all living beings, granting them organisation as well as intelligibility as an organising principle for the totality of existing beings; for the libidinal movements of attraction between entities; and for the moral movements of association between human beings. According to Hemsterhuis, all of these elements can ultimately be traced back to the purely spiritual creative force that is the true and first cause of everything: the divinity.

Hemsterhuis's idea of directionality in movement will also prove analogous to elements of J. G. Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Most commentators oppose Fichte and Hemsterhuis, for Fichte developed a philosophy of radical activity (of the autonomous will), while Hemsterhuis proposed, in part, a more passive approach to morality.³⁹ Nevertheless, in Fichte's philosophy too we find a constant reciprocity of natural laws or mechanism and laws of the mind or idealism, in which the two levels are distinct yet also interrelated, via the common link of action or force.

Although it might be argued that there is a possible reception of Hemsterhuis's *Aristaeus* in Fichte's philosophy (via Jacobi's Hemsterhuis letter, at least), its most undisputable influence is to be found, once again, in the writings of Novalis. Whereas Jacobi attempts to pull Hemsterhuis's thought in the direction of religion in opposition to metaphysics or speculative philosophy, Novalis seeks to reconcile

it with Fichte's system in order to develop a 'philosophy of religion', which for him equates with a 'philosophy of nature'. As Bonchino writes, 'The classical ideals of Hellenism and Platonism in the Dutch thinker were increasingly interpreted in the direction of a hermetic and Neoplatonic tonality, which, although alien to his thought, gave rise to the rehabilitation of a certain *religio prisca* or *religio naturalis* in the early Romantic period.'⁴⁰ Indeed, it has been maintained that the Herderian reception and re-elaboration of certain ideas in Hemsterhuis's early writings transforms the Dutch philosopher's Cartesian dualism 'into a monism in which body and soul are different modes of a single spiritual chain.'⁴¹

A Precursor to the 'Holy' Path to Physics: The Moralisation of Nature

As previously noted, A. W. Schlegel saw Hemsterhuis as a 'prophet' of transcendental idealism. Similarly, Novalis viewed him as the precursor of his Romantic philosophy of religion. Novalis explicitly admitted in a 1798 letter to Friedrich Schlegel that his own approach to the understanding of existence and reality was directly inspired by his reading of Hemsterhuis. This is because such an understanding of reality takes place within a much more comprehensive philosophical discourse that specifically includes, among other things, a theory of morality.

Through his reading of Hemsterhuis – primarily of *Aristaeus* – Novalis discovered what he called a 'religion of the visible universe'. He writes,

In my philosophy of everyday life I've hit upon the idea of a *moral* astronomy – in the Hemsterhuisian sense – and I have made the interesting discovery of the religion of the visible universe. You cannot imagine how far-reaching it is. I think I will go far beyond Schelling in this regard. What do you think: might not the correct path be to treat physics in the most general sense thoroughly *symbolically*?⁴²

This 'religion of the visible universe' is altogether different from Schleiermacher's theory of religion, which is nevertheless similarly influenced by a reading of Hemsterhuis. In his 1799 *Speeches on Religion*, Schleiermacher claimed that the essence of religion is a passive 'intuition of the universe' that forms an independent sphere distinct from both metaphysics and morality. Here Schleiermacher stands closer to the Jacobian appreciation of Hemsterhuis, since he views the latter as a representative of that irreducibility and necessity of faith in which a mode of feeling or intuiting is to be opposed to reason.⁴³ For Novalis, on the contrary, Hemsterhuis opened a path for expanding the transcendental-idealist standpoint of Kant and Fichte to include the domains of religion and nature. Hemsterhuis's philosophy revealed to him that a complete account of the sensible world – that is, 'physics in the most general sense' – could provide a 'visible' proof of its order and of the divinity.

In a letter written to Caroline Schlegel, dated January 1799, Novalis again discussed this idea of a possible 'religion of the visible universe':

However, these gentlemen [Ritter, Schelling and Baader] still plainly fail to see the best within nature. Here Fichte will once again put his friends to shame, while *Hemsterhuis* anticipated this *holy* path to physics sufficiently clearly. Even

Spinoza harboured this divine spark of natural understanding. *Plotinus*, perhaps inspired by Plato, first graced the holy sanctuary with genuineness of spirit – and yet no one after him has again penetrated so far. In numerous ancient writings there beats a mysterious pulse, denoting the place of contact with the invisible world – a coming into life. Goethe will be the *liturgist* of this physics – for he perfectly understands the service in the temple. Leibniz's Theodicy has always been a magnificent attempt in this field. Our future physics will achieve *something similar*, yet clearly in a loftier style.⁴⁴

As this passage attests, Hemsterhuis's *Aristaeus* is not the only source of inspiration for Novalis's philosophy of nature: other influences include the philosophies of Plotinus, Leibniz, Spinoza and Fichte himself, and Goethe also plays a role. It is worth noting, in this regard, that, in contrast, Ritter, Baader and Schelling are all seen as failing to see 'the best within nature'. This is because both Baader and Ritter were not philosophers but actual physicists, more interested in understanding nature in a physical sense. As for Schelling, he was a philosopher and not a professional physicist, but his interest in physics was altogether different. Novalis groups him together with the two other figures, because Schelling considered his own philosophy of nature as a parallel to transcendental philosophy, rather than as expanding it. In other words, Schelling's understanding of nature remains isolated from the main philosophical tenets of transcendental idealism, such as the doctrine of the human mind or spirit – the spider at the centre of the web, to employ once more the image from *Sophylus*.

How exactly was Hemsterhuis able to play the role of precursor in his treatment of the sensible world such that it could be interpreted within the framework of transcendental philosophy? Hemsterhuis's philosophy supplied Novalis with a concept of morality compatible with the teachings of Newtonian physics. From a philosophical point of view, *Sophylus* had already demonstrated that matter's true essence should not be reduced to how empirical sense objects are perceived by us, that is, as tangible, visible and audible. Hemsterhuis subsequently argues in *Aristaeus* that there are six different points of view by which the comprehension of the 'great whole' (p. 98 below) of the universe can and should be differentiated, including a moral vantage point. According to Hemsterhuis, philosophers should especially enquire into this *moral* facet of the universe, for this side is still hidden or unknown territory and the key to the true essence of the world. The moral facet is pervasive and 'runs through the visible world of things like a thread of the unconditional'.⁴⁵ To better know this moral facet, Hemsterhuis calls for physics to function as a powerful analogical tool: Newtonian considerations on the universal centrifugal and centripetal forces of gravitation and attraction in matter can be transposed into the moral world, that is, into the very nature of the soul and its desire (attraction) for a connection with the desired. These mechanical and physical ideas assist the philosopher in interpreting and obtaining a universal system of desire or love, in which love is defined as a striving for the whole.

Novalis's *Hemsterhuis-Studies* focus especially on those passages in *Aristaeus* where Hemsterhuis interprets love as a principle of unity. Or as Novalis expresses it in his notes for a Romantic encyclopaedia: love is 'the One (*Unum*) of the universe'⁴⁶, that

is, the all-connectedness of every living thing. In sum, Novalis finds in Hemsterhuis's *Aristaeus* the idea of love as the law-giving principle of the moral world, and he transforms it into a 'religion of the visible world', that is, a new religion (*re-ligio*), in which the philosophy of nature meets the sphere of the subject. Love becomes an absolute within the external world. It accounts for the hidden order and harmony of the universe, with which the I's moral sense stands in an infinite kinship. Hence, in one sense, Novalis attempts to go even further than Hemsterhuis, by seeking not merely indirect and *analogical* links, but *actual* direct inner links or intimate relations – 'the place of contact with the invisible world'. He strives to attain an ideal-real form of monism that passes beyond Hemsterhuisian dualism, a monistic philosophy that Novalis would later term 'magical idealism'.⁴⁷

Universalising and Encyclopaedistic Knowledge

Apart from the powerful tool of analogy, that is, of finding parallels between the worlds of nature and morality, another idea that Novalis derives and transmutes from *Aristaeus* is Hemsterhuis's conception of 'order'. As we shall see, this same idea of order underlies Novalis's principal definition of Romanticism. Indeed, one of the central purposes of Hemsterhuis's dialogue on 'theodicy' is to reveal that the universe is an ordered system; it may appear disordered – but this is just a harmony that is still to be discerned by the philosopher.

Aristaeus defines order as the 'faculty of linking several ideas to make a whole out of them' (p. 67 below). What is at stake here is the intelligible 'chain or link' (p. 67 below) that allows us to bring together or to put into a series certain parts to form a determinate whole. Order in external things – in the universe – exists only insofar as it is recognised, designated and determined. Order is relative to human beings and, in the understanding, there exist varying degrees of the relationship between things according to the level of (acquired) knowledge or (natural) insight attained by each individual. In other words, a person's level of insight depends on the further development of the cognitive and moral organs.

The various methodological images in *Aristaeus* of a 'chain' of infinite links joining together the apparently most separated and heterogeneous elements, or of a spider-like 'web' of interconnections between everything, or of a 'ladder' allowing us to move from lower to higher stages, that is, from inorganic matter to pure spirit, all play a crucial role in Novalis's philosophy. In addition to the name 'magical idealism', Novalis also calls his philosophy 'encyclopaedistics' or a 'total science' – encapsulating its mission in the cry: 'romanticising the world'.

How does Novalis transform Hemsterhuis's idea of a web or chain of infinite links? It forms one of the foundations for fragment 105 of the *Poeticisms*, which declares that the synthetising operation of romanticising – which is 'still quite unknown' – enables us to 'recover' the original meaning of the world, despite its modern fracture and separation into subject and object. In other words, 'romanticising' is an operation that permits the researcher to make a harmonious whole out of these two separate objective and subjective poles. More technically, it is designated as the operation of 'qualitative potentiation', that is, a qualitative elevation from the finite to the infinite, and of the reverse lowering operation that involves

'logarithmising' the infinite into the finite. In Novalis's famous formulation: 'The world must be romanticised. Only in that way will one rediscover its original sense. Romanticising is nothing less than a qualitative potentiation.'⁴⁸ This is a matter for science insofar as it is an operation distinctively modelled on mathematics. However, by drawing this analogy with the *quantitative* mathematical operation of raising a number to a higher power, Novalis's *qualitative* conception of romanticising is recast as a kind of universalising. That is to say, it strives to overcome isolated elements and to coherently link together vastly different things – everything in the inorganic and organic worlds, as well as the human self – and view them as intermediate stages or links of one and the same universal system or *total science*, that is, as ascending points on a line progressing from the finite to the infinite.

Accordingly, the most visible attestation of Hemsterhuis's considerable influence on Novalis's Romantic philosophy can be found in the encyclopaedia project for a total or universal science, *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798/9). In a letter relating to this project, Novalis writes to Friedrich Schlegel that he 'expects to generate truths and ideas *writ large* [*im Großen*]',⁴⁹ As the *Hemsterhuis-Studies* clarify, this expression *im Großen* or *writ large* means: 'in its relation to the whole, of which a thought is an element'.⁵⁰ Under the heading 'Encyclopaedistics', in entries 197 to 199 of *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, Novalis explicitly refers to three key ideas of Hemsterhuis: (1) to the 'moralisation of nature' or the moral organ, (2) to combinatorial analysis and (3) to the analogical uniting operation which provides the methodological basis for a future 'total science':

197. ENCYCLOPEDIISTICS. The magical sciences, *according to Hemsterhuis*, arise through the application of the moral sense to the other senses – i.e. through the moralization of the universe and the other sciences.

198. ENCYCLOPEDIISTICS. According to Hemsterhuis, science on the whole is composed of the product of the memory sciences, or *given* knowledge, and of the rational sciences. ... Here *combinatorial analysis* would be necessary.

199. ENCYCLOPEDIISTICS. We owe the most sublime truths of our day to contact with the long-separated elements of the total-science. Hemsterhuis.⁵¹

Aristaeus lives on in Novalis through the notions of analogy and order, transformed into a science and a method – 'encyclopaedistics' – that is not only a way of organising, uniting or classifying knowledge, but of completing knowledge by discovering as yet unknown elements. In other words, it is a *heuristic method* of scientific discovery: an 'art of inventing' that aspires to advance the sciences.

The Historic-Moral and the Imaginative Paths: *Simon* and *Alexis*

The German reception of Hemsterhuis's final pair of dialogues, *Simon, or on the Faculties of the Soul* and *Alexis, or on the Golden Age*, disseminated the mythical theme of the Golden Age that had been a tool for criticising actual history from Hesiod via Plato to Virgil. At a time of economic and political crisis in Germany, the topos of

the golden age was fruitfully deployed within the works of the Romantic thinkers, Hölderlin and Schelling – and all did so by referring to Hemsterhuis. Hemsterhuis puts forward the theory of the golden age at the end of *Simon* and it goes on to form the heart of the whole last dialogue, *Alexis*. In the ancient Graeco-Roman poetic tradition, the golden age represented a perfect, past age of unity, happiness and abundance – the first epoch of humanity: the golden human race under the reign of Cronus. Just like Virgil singing of the return of the golden age in the *Fourth Eclogue*, Hemsterhuis advances the possibility of a new future golden age in his original philosophical myth of the decline and regeneration of holism. What was important for Hölderlin, Novalis and Schelling, at a time when philosophy was beginning to become more interested in history and to contemplate historical phenomena, was not only the turn from the past to the future, but the historicisation and pluralisation of the golden age motif. In *Alexis*, Hemsterhuis complicates the myth and speaks of three distinct golden ages. I will conclude this introduction by briefly presenting three essential features of the immanentising of transcendence in Hemsterhuis's treatment of the golden age, and its impact on the younger German generation. These three features are: a psychological, a historical and an aesthetic facet of the doctrine of the golden age.

The Moral Organ and Human Perfectibility

A consequence of the pantheist view of the world set out in *Aristaeus* is that the mechanism of history itself becomes the instrument for the moral perfectibility of humanity which will lead it to resemble God as well as to perfect knowledge. Indeed, the type of perfection assigned to human beings, which posits an ultimate end for their perfection through time, is divine perfection. According to the final passages of *Aristaeus*, the attributes of God are unknown to us and this is because our cognition is dependent on and limited by our organs (infinite, indivisible space is the only exception to this unknowability, for space is perceived). Therefore, one cannot begin from an a priori, theoretical definition of divine perfection. Once again, the most suitable path for attaining this knowledge is to traverse the path within – to seek it in ourselves as individuals and to inwardly discover how we ourselves are related to the divine or what renders us homogeneous to it. *Simon* therefore provides the psychological basis for Hemsterhuis's theodicy.

Evoking the mythological origins of the human soul, *Simon* propounds a doctrine of the plasticity of the human psyche that draws readers back to the theory of organology and human physiology presented in *Sophylus*, which emphasised the plasticity of our sense organs. According to the 'psyche-gony' myth related by Diotima in her central speech in *Simon*, not only can our cognitive capabilities be enhanced but such a perfectibility of our faculties could even furnish us with new faculties. The most inherent faculty in human personality is indeterminate velleity (along with its particular determinations into acts of will). But the active principle of velleity does not constitute the whole of human psychology. The human soul is additionally endowed with imagination and intellect. However, the completed constitution of the human soul involves a final, fourth faculty. Hemsterhuis calls this fourth faculty the 'moral organ' (p. 116 below). It is the organ of true love – spiritual

love and not sensible love, for it is ‘turned towards divine things’, as Hemsterhuis writes in *Aristaeus* (p. 97 below). In Diotima’s myth in *Simon*, it is the personified goddess of love, Venus Urania, who brings the ‘golden age’ (p. 115 below) into existence. She does so by wisely adding the moral organ to the human soul – to its three original faculties of velleity, imagination and intellect. The history of humanity reveals that we have now partly lost this fourth faculty – or to be more precise: we currently possess it merely in germ, as a substantial yet undeveloped power.

Thus, Hemsterhuis historicises the nature of the human being: not all of our faculties are manifest in the first historical development of the human soul. There is a force in the human mind that has mostly remained unknown, and this faculty grants a possible knowledge of the still unknown moral side of the universe. It is present in every human being and simply demands to be reanimated and reawakened. In this way, our soul will be able to become as complete and absolute as the human soul can be. And what is more, by forging our four faculties into a harmonious whole, our soul will finally resemble God.

Novalis extensively adopts this organological schema as a method for accessing divine perfection, yet not without some original developments. His *Hemsterhuis-Studies* directly comments on a number of excerpts from *Simon* concerning our homogeneity with God and the definition of the soul as harmony.⁵² Most importantly, however, the Hemsterhuisian conviction that *all* human beings have natural potencies to ultimately approach the infinite is part and parcel of Novalis’s above-quoted definition of Romantic philosophy. Indeed, regarding this operation of romanticising the world, Novalis explicitly notes: ‘The lower self is identified, in this operation, with a better self. As we are ourselves are such a qualitative series of powers.’⁵³ Hence the history of our limited and bounded species is linked with the development and perfectibility of our inner organs, with the qualitative elevation of the self. To this end, Novalis’s *Hemsterhuis-Studies* retains from *Simon* the idea that contemplating works of art enables a person to develop their moral sense. Furthermore, the golden age for Novalis will not only be confined to the human soul, but also relates to our finite body, for corporeal matter is infinitely plastic and modifiable thanks to the spirit’s influence on it: ‘The body is the instrument for the development and modification of the world – we should therefore make our body into an all-purposive organ capable of everything. Modifying our instrument, means modifying the world.’⁵⁴

The New Golden Age as Historical Possibility

The influence of Hemsterhuis’s last two dialogues is also evident when it comes to the conception of history as a site of harmony and the unification of human tendencies. In a continuation of Diotima’s speech in *Simon*, the final dialogue, *Alexis*, presents an ‘updated’ version of Plato’s cosmic theory – the Atlantis myth – in line with ‘the principles of the eighteenth-century philosophy of nature’.⁵⁵ Here the golden age corresponds to a real primordial time prior to the appearance of the moon, whose appearance violently altered the order of the world. The destruction provoked by this intra-cosmic catastrophe ruptured the homogeneity of the

physical and spiritual existence of the human being. Henceforth, human beings had to live with this widening gap in their own relationship to themselves. This included death, which was no longer a blessing of nature but an enforced state, a burgeoning dissatisfaction with the finitude of the sensible world. This gap was also manifest in humanity's relation to the world: in the wake of this catastrophe, the sensations of human beings became diminished, while their understanding of reality as a whole became increasingly incomplete. Drawing on the psychological basis of *Simon*, in *Alexis* Hemsterhuis champions the idea that the perfectibility of our human faculties – their progression from instinct to intellect, free will and imagination – may become the catalyst for a new golden age for present-day human beings, that is, a fresh reconciliation of human life with itself and with the world. According to Hemsterhuis's vision, the new golden age is a departure from the old one, and takes on, if not a less religious demeanour (since, as we saw, the completeness of our human faculties and the perfection of our knowledge amounts to being homogeneous with God), at least a less mythical and a more anthropological one.

The early German Romantics began reading Hemsterhuis's *Alexis* in 1790. A. W. Schlegel commented on Hemsterhuis's dialogue while reviewing Schiller's 1790 poem 'The Artists'.⁵⁶ And it is worth recalling that during his first meeting with Friedrich Schlegel in January 1792, after citing Plato and Hemsterhuis as his favourite authors, Novalis declared that 'there is nothing wicked in the world – and everything is again approaching the golden age'.⁵⁷ In addition, Hölderlin surely read *Alexis* around the same time, as his interest in Hemsterhuis was sparked by his reading of Jacobi's Spinoza letters in 1790/1, and he went on to buy the two volumes of the German translation of Hemsterhuis's work, the 1782 *Vermischte Philosophische Schriften*.⁵⁸ Schelling too, as Moenkemeyer points out, 'indicated agreement with Hemsterhuis's hypothesis concerning the moon' in his early writings around 1793.⁵⁹ In other words, they all read *Alexis* shortly after the 1789 French Revolution, which itself had been believed by many to mark the dawn of a new golden age – yet they penned their own works after the French Revolution had degenerated into terror.

Politically, both Hölderlin and Novalis were inspired by Hemsterhuis to prophesise the emergence of a new golden age. This fed into their own political thinking, and contrasted sharply with the Schlegel brothers' views on the golden age. Their divergence is exhibited in Friedrich Schlegel's historical narrative of the epochs of poetry where the Golden Age is viewed as a 'modern disease'⁶⁰ linked to the current crisis in Germany. Indeed, the opening discussion of the golden age in Friedrich Schlegel's *Dialogue on Poetry*, published in the *Athenaeum* in 1800, demonstrates that both brothers found it 'problematic' that anyone could 'still possibly evoke a new Golden Age' in a historical context.⁶¹ For them, this mythological theme had mere aesthetic legitimacy, rather than any philosophical interest or historical value. Notwithstanding this, both Hölderlin and Novalis wished to pursue the people's revolution to its proper conclusion, believing that the only possible form that a revolution could still take after the French Revolution was in an inner reform of mind and civilisation.

Departing from conventional Christian religious traditions, Hölderlin saw in ancient Greece the ideal of a fortunate time or golden age. And like Novalis,

Hölderlin encountered in Hemsterhuis the striking idea of a ‘moral astronomy’ that could account for the real possibility of societal upheaval and a genuine regeneration of modern humanity, bringing it closer to another golden age. The idea of a ‘moral astronomy’ depicts human progress as an elliptical process moving towards or away from the sun. This thesis is found in Hemsterhuis’s *Letter on Man* and further deepened in *Alexis*. The astronomical perspective proposes a specific articulation of the ‘periods’ of history (past, present, future) according to a vision of history that is not linear but cyclical. It is based on a ternary scheme: first, a primitive unity and harmony; second, a period of rupture and crisis or fragmentation; and third, the ‘restoration’ of unity in a regained golden age. According to Drees, in the 1796 *Hyperion* Hölderlin employs the astronomical concept of the ‘eccentric orbit’ in reference to Hemsterhuis’s ‘moral physics’, reflecting ‘Hemsterhuis’s theory of the impact of attraction and repulsion within the sphere of the human being’.⁶² In effect, the mainstay of social renewal for Hölderlin can only be moral attraction or the force of love. Love is opposed to egoism and, as such, is capable of forming a new religion.

Yet the future Golden Age remains utopic in Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, just as it does in Hemsterhuis’s *Alexis*. On the contrary, in his 1799 essay *Christianity or Europe*, Novalis claims to concretely perceive in his own time and country – late eighteenth-century Germany – the seeds and beginnings of social and cultural tendencies that point beyond the fragmented and contradictory post-revolutionary horizon. Aside from allusions to astronomy and the ‘heights’ now reached by physics, which again evoke Hemsterhuis, in order to designate the seeds of the emerging future golden age, Novalis deploys the idea and term ‘ferment’ (*Gährung*), synonymous with the Hemsterhuisian concept of ‘germ’. Nevertheless, there is a further divergence from Hemsterhuis’s doctrine of the future golden age in *Alexis*: Novalis’s discourse in *Christianity or Europe* is based on the key Schillerian notion of *Bildung* (following the Kantian and Fichtean tradition of transcendental philosophy). In this regard, the Romantic idea of a new future golden age is understood as a consciously elevated and constructed harmony. For Novalis, therefore, the supreme degree of happiness and the reconciliation of human life with itself and the world comes from human beings *actively undertaking* their own self-development and education, whereas for Hemsterhuis the distant future golden age is a matter of divination: ‘For to know something more of the last age [of perfection to which human nature can lay claim], we must have recourse to the oracles of the Gods; a divine breath is needed to bring together our ideas such that we sense all their relations’ (p. 146 below).

Poetic Philosophy

Finally, to conclude this introduction to the legacy of Hemsterhuis in the age of German Romanticism, it is important to note that Hemsterhuis’s reception is intimately associated with the question of the *form* of writing philosophy. This involves the use of the *imagination* and poetry in philosophy, especially for the early German Romantics, but not only for the latter.

Around 1800, the question of the artistic form of philosophy initially found a privileged point of crystallisation in the genre of dialogue. The dialogue gained

prominence due to its dialectical character and as a stimulus for independent reflexive thinking in line with the Socratic definition of philosophy as a turn within. But it was also regarded as a means for philosophy to regain a foothold on earth by becoming more 'living' or 'vivid'. From Schelling to Solger via Friedrich Schlegel in his *Dialogue on Poetry*, all adopted – in Hemsterhuis's wake – the Platonic dialogic form of philosophising as a point of reference. Once more the conception of the dialogue as a *plastic whole* becomes a central motif. Just as Hemsterhuis defended the idea of the plasticity of human psychology and physiology, here again we encounter the idea of a *plasticity of the idea* itself that develops in a necessary or organic way.

But that is not all: Hemsterhuis considerably influenced the German Romantics by arguing that the true philosophical element could also be found *within* the *beauty* of the dialogue or in the myths and poetic images used within the dialogues. Indeed, in *Alexis* Hemsterhuis refuses to endorse the rationalist rejection of myth. On the contrary, he contends that myth contains a part of the truth, that it is the aesthetic envelope of a historical truth, as it were, which reveals the meaning and truth of what it says in a kind of intuitive and immediate completeness. According to the theory of poetry at the heart of this dialogue, the proper epistemological contribution of beauty is precisely the power that makes us aware, in a sudden and illuminating manner, of the deeper and more comprehensive relations that hold between things.

The extant notes taken by Novalis in the autumn of 1797 while reading *Alexis* do not mention the central concept of the golden age, but they retain this association of history, philosophy and poetry. He writes elsewhere in 1798: 'Hemsterhuis is quite often a logical Homeridae'.⁶³ Novalis's *Hemsterhuis-Studies* extends this idea of poetry's essential contribution to philosophy by pointing to the fact that poetry is based on the faculty of the imagination, whose synthetic scope and power of 'condensation' (p. 141 below) of ideas is greater and more instantaneous than the power of the intellect. Novalis therefore agrees with Hemsterhuis's assertion that poetry is 'total' knowledge. He expands upon this idea by making poetic knowledge the reality or actualisation of the whole. Poetry is the unity linking all the parts into a whole, apprehending it from the inside, whereas philosophy externally comprehends it from the outside and possesses only the possibility of the whole.

This helps explain another key slogan under which Novalis's Romantic philosophy has also become known, namely, the 'poetisation of the sciences'. But as in his conception of history and the emergence of a new future golden age, and as with the role of poetry in Hemsterhuis, Novalis's theory of poetisation is not associated with any kind of *Schwärmerei*, that is, any deceptive inspiration, enthusiasm or illumination. On the contrary, it aspires to be an elevation and completion of philosophy by means of the creative imagination, in which the imagination is understood as an active, conscious and voluntary production of a higher synthesis.

DIALOGUES

Sophylus, or on Philosophy

*Te dea te fugiunt venti, te nubila coeli
Adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
Submittit flores, tibi rident aequora Ponti,
Placatumque nitet diffuso lumine coelum.*¹

Published in Paris, 1778.²



Sophylus, or on Philosophy

SOPHYLUS AND EUTHYPHRO.³

SOPHYLUS. Oh, philosophy is such a good thing!

EUTHYPHRO. Why?

SOPHYLUS. Why? because it makes known the truth, it delivers us from prejudices, and it shows the precise limits of our knowledge.

EUTHYPHRO. I avow it, but it is still more beautiful, because it makes the universe and ourselves richer: it shows unknown lands of an immense size.

SOPHYLUS. Your unknown lands, my friend, are imaginary spaces, believe me. Philosophy is beautiful and good only because it destroys these fables. Its unshakable foundation is experience, and there is no truth beyond this.

EUTHYPHRO. We agree. A philosophy based on experience is certainly the only good one, but how many kinds of experiences there are!

SOPHYLUS. I know just one sole kind; it is experience through our five senses. Do you know of others?

EUTHYPHRO. To tell you the honest truth, there was a time when I had precisely the same opinion, but I have changed since. I am so changed that when I think of my small-mindedness then, I feel ashamed.

SOPHYLUS. Assuredly, I congratulate you on your present eminence: but is it not permitted to examine the robustness of the ladder up which you have climbed so prodigiously high that, up there, you're just like a meteor. Who made this ladder for you?

EUTHYPHRO. I made it myself, and I am convinced that all men who reflect are

capable of doing the same. But, strictly speaking, it is not a ladder. Do you know how spiders manage to cross large rivers with ease?

SOPHYLUS. I don't remember.

EUTHYPHRO. They possess an extremely fine fluid in a ventricle. They push this fluid through two small holes with a prodigious effort. As soon as the fluid is exposed to the air, it condenses, becomes a thread and, blown by the wind, it attaches to some distant tree at the other side of the river. Here is how the ladder is made. My spider passes safely, observes everything that crosses its path, and eats mosquitoes and mayflies that were unknown to it before. The purer, finer and closer to the ethereal spirit this fluid is, the longer the thread can be, and the better it can be attached by a fair wind to the tops of the highest mountains.

SOPHYLUS. But what is this spider's thread doing here? Do you place your trust in it, my poor Euthyphro?

EUTHYPHRO. The spider's liquid is the good sense, or common sense, that all men possess in large or small doses. When it is very fine, very pure and well conditioned, and pushed outwards with effort, it condenses and becomes a very long and very strong thread, which attaches, either by circumstance or by the direction given it, to the remotest truths.

SOPHYLUS. No poetry or fables in philosophy, my friend; I beg you. Let's keep it simple. I tell you, and I repeat that there is no truth beyond the experience of our senses; in a word, there is only matter. Do you have something against this claim? Tell me, but be clear and brief.

EUTHYPHRO. Certainly, I have many objections to this claim, since, at the very least, there is movement as well.

SOPHYLUS. Oh yes, there is matter and movement, although movement is merely a modification of matter. Hence, I say that nothing in the world can come from nothing, that no single thing can be reduced to nothing, that matter exists, that therefore it always has been and it always will be, and that the changes we see are only appearances of different arrangements of particles of matter, which change at every moment by means of continual movement; in short, I say that there is only matter. If you could make me see, hear, touch, smell something other than matter, you would give me great pleasure. Here is my confession of faith.

EUTHYPHRO. My dear Sophylus, this is very accurate, I admit: but have you read many books where this system is maintained?

SOPHYLUS. Yes, of course.

EUTHYPHRO. Have you read many books that say exactly the opposite?

SOPHYLUS. No.

EUTHYPHRO. However, you believe that there are many of them?

SOPHYLUS. It may be so, but I've already been convinced of the truth by the first ones.

EUTHYPHRO. And I am convinced by the other ones. Thus, it is absolutely necessary that one of us is wrong, or that we are both in error.

SOPHYLUS. That is certain.

EUTHYPHRO. So, my dear Sophylus, if we aspire to the truth, let's throw away those books that contradict each other. Neither Minerva nor the Seraphims brought

philosophy to earth.⁴ The first philosopher was a man: philosophy is therefore in man. We are men, so let us boldly look for philosophy in ourselves. Pull that thread I spoke of; it will surely be attached to some truths, and by this means we will go on to traverse the universe without danger. The thread of good sense cannot be broken. Let's begin by being impartial and free from all prejudices. As for me, if at the end of my investigation I have to give myself the name of some particular sect, this does not matter as long as I know the truth. I admit, however, that I shall experience a moment of sadness, if we come to discover that, after this life, I will no longer form part of the universe of which I am today a part and [that] I will ultimately be destroyed: but I prefer the truth to everything, and without it there can be no real happiness. For suppose that I had the idea of some exquisite dish the existence of which was impossible, it would be no misfortune to learn of the impossibility of tasting it, because its existence is impossible.

SOPHYLUS. But why do you want to throw away books and renounce the truths we have already acquired through the work of so many centuries?

EUTHYPHRO. By throwing away books, I don't want to throw away the truths they contain. The real truths will quickly be rediscovered in our investigation. An isolated truth is unalterable. Men cannot abuse an isolated truth, but they do abuse it in the arrangement, in the composition of truths, and this is the work of the mind. For man is not made to know them all, so his mind takes a number of truths, approaches them as closely as he can, links them together by some probable relations, and places them next to each other, in a way that appears to him to make the most beautiful whole: and this is what is called a system. It is obvious that, in this way, there may be as many systems of philosophy as the mind will be able to make different arrangements and different compositions of truths, and that the true system would exist when all truths are closely linked together by other intermediate truths, making only one sole truth. All systems of philosophy that men have so far wrought are only loose assemblies that appealed to some individual or to his sect. If all truths were set beside each other, without gaps, there would be knowledge and learning, but there would be no disputes. There are only two philosophies in the world in which truths occur and in which the mind is not corrupted: the Socratic and the Newtonian. The latter, I admit, does not merit the name system of philosophy, since it comprises only a very small branch of it, embracing just mechanics, insofar as it is applicable to pure geometry. But in the case of the Socratic, everything is within its reach. Socrates, and Socrates alone, who gave us the belief that man resembles God, preached philosophy itself, while others merely preached their limited philosophical systems. He taught men that it can be found in every healthy head, in any upright heart; that it is not the daughter of the mind or of the imagination, but that it is the source of universal and indestructible happiness.

SOPHYLUS. What you tell me, Euthyphro, seems to me quite true in general. But say, what then is your philosophy?

EUTHYPHRO. My philosophy, my dear Sophylus, is that of children; it is that of Socrates; it is that which is found at the bottom of our heart, of our souls, if we make the effort to seek it there.

SOPHYLUS. It well deserves such effort, if it is true that it is to be found there, and that it is the source of happiness. But how would you proceed in this investigation?

EUTHYPHRO. If you have the desire and the leisure to undertake it with me, we will both be the winners.

SOPHYLUS. I do have the desire and leisure. But, I pray you, be short and clear.

EUTHYPHRO. You will be satisfied, I hope. But when I ask you a question, you will likewise answer me in a few words.

SOPHYLUS. With pleasure.

EUTHYPHRO. So, let's start by forgetting everything systematic we have learned, and then let us reason as follows. All that is, is passive: I sense, thus I am passive; therefore I am.⁵ I tell you that I am: if you exist, and if you believe me, I am fully convinced that you believe the truth; in consequence, if you tell me that you exist, I believe you, and I have the same conviction that I believe a truth; therefore, there is you and other things outside of me, and I could demonstrate this truth to you in twenty different ways.

SOPHYLUS. But Euthyphro, is there any need to prove that I am and that there are things outside of me? Please spare me such trifles.

EUTHYPHRO. We must not pass over anything without proof. Tell me, Sophylus, how do you know that this ball is outside of you?

SOPHYLUS. Well, because I see it; if it falls, I hear it; if I touch it, it seems to me solid; if I hold it, it weighs something.

EUTHYPHRO. Yes; but when you see this ball, the idea that you have of that ball, is it the ball?

SOPHYLUS. Not really, it is only the result of this ball's relation to me, to my eyes, my organs, the light, and to everything that is between this ball and me.

EUTHYPHRO. That is very true. But would you say the same thing about this cube here?

SOPHYLUS. Most certainly.

EUTHYPHRO. And about this cone?

SOPHYLUS. Yes.

EUTHYPHRO. Here a very significant truth already appears to us, namely, that our eyes and our organs do not deceive us, at least in relation to the order of things.

SOPHYLUS. I don't understand you fully.

EUTHYPHRO. I am saying that the idea of the ball is the result of the relation that I, my eyes, and the light have to the ball; that the idea of the cube is the result of the relation that I, my eyes, and the light have to the cube; and that the idea of the cone is the result of the relation that I, my eyes, and the light have to the cone. It follows that, in [all] these cases, [assuming that] I, my eyes, and the light stay the same, the cause of my idea of the cone is the object that I call cone; that of the idea of the ball is the object that I call ball; that of the idea of the cube is the object that I call cube; and, consequently, the idea of the cube is to the cube as the idea of the ball is to the ball, and as the idea of the cone is to the cone. Therefore, between the ideas there is the same analogy as between the things; and by reasoning on the ideas, the conclusions I draw will be equally analogous to those I would draw from reasoning about the things themselves.

SOPHYLUS. I believe so, Euthyphro; for you are saying nothing other than: 'my

reasoning about ideas is analogous to my reasoning about things'. You should have been able to say, 'are the same', for you only know the things by your ideas.

EUTHYPHRO. I wish it were the case that the ideas we have of things were the things themselves; then, at least, we would never fall into error. But this is impossible, because the things that are outside us cannot get into our heads; and therefore, media and organs are necessary for us to have some sensations of their existence; and it is already a lot to have found this analogy between things and ideas. From it we know that the relations that hold between our ideas are exactly the same as those that hold between the things of which they are the ideas.

SOPHYLUS. That is very true, Euthyphro. But when you speak of things, please add, I pray you, 'insofar as I know them by my ideas'.

EUTHYPHRO. You are right, Sophylus; I understand you; and this is why we now need to discern the value of an idea in relation to the object of which it is the idea.

SOPHYLUS. That is exactly what we must do.

EUTHYPHRO. Some thing, whatever its nature may be, is an essence, since it exists as it is. This thing, or this essence, can have a thousand ways of being that are unknown to me.

SOPHYLUS. What do you mean by ways of being?

EUTHYPHRO. The cone you see has, among all the ways of being it can have and that are unknown to me, just such a way of being by which, when it coexists with the light, with my eyes and with me, it produces an effect which is the idea that we both currently have of this cone: it has that way of being by which it is visible for all who see: it has such a way of being by which it differs from the ball and the cube.

SOPHYLUS. I understand you perfectly well.

EUTHYPHRO. So, this cone is such as it is; and being such as it is, it is impossible for it to give to me, [insofar as] I stay as I am, another idea than that which I have of it. But, Sophylus, we have considered only two things, on one side the cone such as it is, and on the other side the combination of me, my eyes, and the light; let us turn the matter around and consider, on the one hand, the combination of the cone, the light, and my eyes and, on the other hand, I who have the idea. You will see that the cone doesn't deceive me, rather that it is actually and really such as it appears to me, when I add to it the light and my eyes; and if we pay attention to the fact that a thing, which is such as it is, cannot have another way of being that would result in it not being what it is, we clearly see that something we watch, we hear, we touch, is, among other things, really what it appears to us to be. The first man who made a watch began with the ideas he had of a spring, a cog, a lever; and by combining these ideas and giving some consideration to them, there resulted an imaginary watch. He realised this result – hence a real watch [came to be]; and a great difficulty is overcome, for if the ideas did not perfectly represent how things are, there would have been an infinitesimally small chance that the realisation of this man's ideas would have resulted in a real watch; and it would be absolutely impossible for any product of human genius to exist.

SOPHYLUS. What are you saying?

EUTHYPHRO. I am saying that if the spring did not have the effect that its idea made it appear to have to the man, if his ideas of the cog or of the lever were false, then the idea of the watch that he composed from these ideas would be absurd, and could not be realised: but this man realises the watch, it is as it was in his ideas. Therefore, the spring, the cog and the lever are such as they have appeared to this man.

SOPHYLUS. Euthyphro, I am in agreement with what you just said; and I admit that we can frankly agree that our simply acquired ideas don't deceive us, but actually represent qualities that are essentially in the things of which they are the ideas; and that, when it comes to how we compose these ideas, there will be between them the same order and the same analogy as there would be between the things, if we could form them directly. Tell me if I have understood you correctly?

EUTHYPHRO. Perfectly; and I have nothing to add.

SOPHYLUS. But what would you say if the first watch was due to chance?

EUTHYPHRO. This would change nothing. Vaucanson's admirable duck existed in his head before astonishing spectators;⁶ because you easily sense that, in any composition which has a certain end for its goal, the ideal must necessarily precede reality. We will see further on what chance is; but, please, let us not proceed too quickly.

SOPHYLUS. But once more—look, I ask you, at this beautiful column of white marble: when I look at it through this red glass, it appears red to me; and when I look at it through this glass with different and uneven layers, it appears bent and broken.

EUTHYPHRO. By placing these glasses between your eyes and the column, you didn't do anything to the column, I guess?

SOPHYLUS. Certainly not.

EUTHYPHRO. So, the column is what it was: therefore, if the column was not what it is, it would not appear red to you in the first instance, or bent and broken in the second.

SOPHYLUS. I agree. But when I look at the column through a glass with a hundred facets, I see a hundred columns instead of one: and so, this organ deceives me, does it not?

EUTHYPHRO. If the column were not such as it is, you would not see a hundred columns such as you see them. If a hundred men were placed around this column, and each of them said to you, 'Sophylus, I see a column', would you conclude that there are a hundred columns? or would you not rather say that they all see the same one? If the number 4 were not 4, the number 4 multiplied by 3 would not make 12.

SOPHYLUS. That, my dear Euthyphro, is a nicely put sophism, if I am not mistaken.

EUTHYPHRO. I wish you were mistaken, Sophylus. However, there is nothing that we ought to be avoiding so carefully: this would be the sole vice into which we could fall in our assignment; and the consequences would be irrevocable. Let us first see what is going on.

SOPHYLUS. You say that if 4 were not 4, then 4 multiplied by 3 would not be 12. You take 4 for the object, 3 for your organs and all that separates you from the object,

and 12 for the idea that you have of 4. But this idea is false, since 4 is not 12. If you did know the 3, or your organs, then there would be no difficulty: because you would only have to divide the known 12 by the known 3; and you would find the unknown 4, or rather the essence of the object.

EUTHYPHRO. I know very well that, in the case of an object outside of me, the idea that I have is not the object; but I am saying that the cone, along with all that is between the cone and me, makes the idea of the cone; the cube, along with all that is between the cube and me, makes the idea of the cube; but since what is between the cube and me is the same as what is between the cone and me, I conclude that the difference I sense between the cone and the cube pertains to the true essence of the cone and cube; and, since this difference pertains to the reason why the cone is not a cube, and why the cube is not a cone, and as each of these reasons pertains reciprocally to the true essence of both the cone and the cube, I conclude from this that I sense one of the qualities which belongs to the true essence of the cube, and one of the qualities that belongs to the true essence of the cone. I'm not saying that my 12 makes 4, but that a part of the true nature of the 4 is included in the 12.⁷

SOPHYLUS. You are right; I have nothing further to object against you yet.

EUTHYPHRO. So let us finish this investigation and take as an unshakable truth that something outside of us which appears to us as visible has everything required to be visible and to appear so to us; and that something outside of us which appears to us as audible has everything required to be audible and to appear so to us; and that even if we had inadequate organs, this would change nothing, since we have just proved geometrically the truth of the analogy that holds between things and ideas and that the relations that hold between ideas are exactly the same as those that hold between things.

SOPHYLUS. I am pleased, Euthyphro, by our conversation. I am convinced that our senses don't deceive us. This is part of my system; and it appears true to me that from our ideas we can conclude surely to the essence of things.

EUTHYPHRO. This is going too far, my dear Sophylus. Let us suppose a block of marble on which there were four different inscriptions, in Greek, in Arabic, in Latin, in French. Because I only know my own language, I will tell you what this monument reveals to me. But listen to the Greek [person]; he will tell you: this fragment tells me many things about the siege of Troy. The Arab will say: this marble illuminates the history of Saladin's chivalry.⁸ The Roman: I now know that Cestius was a slave freed by Pompey.⁹ As you can see, these people can judge only what is turned towards them, what is comprehensible to them; and it is quite the same when it comes to essences.

SOPHYLUS. That appears quite true to me. But explain, please, what you just said.

EUTHYPHRO. The Greek inscription is comprehensible only by means of the Greek language and for those who understand it; the Arabic the same; and essence is visible only by means of the light and for those who have eyes; it is audible only by means of the air and for those who have ears; it is tangible only by means of the sense of touch and for those who have touch; to put it briefly, it is such only by certain media and for those who have organs analogous to these media. An essence can have a hundred thousand sides, all pertaining equally to its nature,

and among which only three or four are analogues to our current organs. An essence can have a hundred thousand faces* which pertain equally to its nature, and none of which is turned towards our organs. Thus, when we conclude from our idea of the essence of the object, [we conclude] to this face or part of the essence which can act on our organs.

SOPHYLUS. I admit, Euthyphro, that this is very well argued; and that what you say would be possible if there were essences other than matter.

EUTHYPHRO. Can you tell me what matter is?

SOPHYLUS. Oh, yes: what is visible, what is impenetrable or solid, what is audible.

EUTHYPHRO. Are these essential qualities of matter parts, or faces, of its essence?

SOPHYLUS. Without any doubt, since we found that our organs do not deceive us.

EUTHYPHRO. I believe so, like you, Sophylus. But if you had been blind, you would not have spoken to me of the visible; and your matter would not have been so.¹⁰ If you were deaf, you would not have spoken to me of the audible; and your matter would not have been so. You see by this that, in these cases, matter would have had essential qualities, or faces, unknown to you, but which would not have been so for those who, endowed with sight and hearing, were able to know that these qualities or faces are to be found there. Would you have judged correctly in these cases if you had said that matter is merely impenetrable because you had the sense of touch alone? Would not you have judged better, if you had said: matter seems to me impenetrable only because I have touch; if I had other means of sensation, it would have appeared to me completely differently; if it can act on me by a hundred thousand media, by a hundred thousand different organs, I would be affected by it in a hundred thousand different ways; it would have for me a hundred thousand attributes that define it? From this it follows that the number of times that I may have a different idea of matter, or rather of essence, depends on the number of my organs and on my media; and since I am able to suppose an indefinite number of organs and media, matter, or rather essence, can be perceived in different ways an indefinite number of times; and therefore matter, or rather essence, has an infinite number of attributes. But let us suppose once more that an essence, a globe [for instance], is immersed simultaneously in water, air, ether, in a thousand or in ten thousand fluids of a different nature and a different density; just one movement from this globe would make all these fluids oscillate; and if there were sentient beings endowed with organs analogous to each one of these fluids, this essence or this globe would have ten thousand attributes. Where then does this leave us, Sophylus, with our four or five attributes of matter, or rather of essence? The first essential attribute

* All that composes or can compose the All, or the entire universe, is necessarily essence. Insofar as essences relate to the organ of sight, these essences are called visible essences or things; insofar as essences relate to the organ of hearing, these essences are called audible essences or things. Thus, such a modification, such a way of being, by which some essences relate to the organ of sight, is called the visible face of the universe; and such a modification, such a way of being, by which some essences relate to the organ of hearing, is called the audible face of the universe; and likewise for other faces by which parts of the universe are perceptible for some beings.

of a thing is to be. The other essential attributes are its relations to different kinds of things that it is not; and since the things that it is not can be infinite in number, so its relations can be too; and therefore an essence, or any thing whatsoever, can have an infinite number of essential attributes. Thus you see, my dear Sophylus, the poverty of the idea we attach to the word matter; you see that it designates nothing but the essences which relate to four or five of our organs; that they are able to become manifest to us through these organs; and that, therefore, all that we call matter is just an infinitely small part of all that is essence.

SOPHYLUS. Truly, matter has here been fairly deposed. But Euthyphro, there are constant relations between all coexisting things, are there not?

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, certainly.

SOPHYLUS. You call everything essence. All the essences that coexist with us relate to us. But, according to you, there are essences which can manifest their relations to us by means of our organs; and there are others which cannot so manifest [their relations] to us. I pray you, what can you say about this latter type?

EUTHYPHRO. What [can I say]? – Why! – Can we not speak of the temple of the Olympian Zeus, of the dome of St Peter,¹¹ of their beauty, of their faults, without ever having seen them, and, indeed, perhaps [we can do so] even better than a thousand others who enjoy these great works of architecture at first hand?

SOPHYLUS. My dear Euthyphro, that proves nothing; for the temple and the dome are visible things, and we can imagine them perfectly well with the help of those who have seen them. I am asking you what you can say, and how, about things which are neither visible nor audible, which have no relation to you that would permit them to become manifest to you and your senses? This is what I am asking you. Answer me, please.

EUTHYPHRO. You are right; the parallel, I admit, is not accurate. But can I not speak of smelling salts which consist in the flower's action on the sense of smell, although I don't see them?

SOPHYLUS. This is not much better: for when you speak of smelling salts, and actions by salts, you speak of things that we call corporeal, that is, visible, tangible, etc.

EUTHYPHRO. But do not iron filings show us that they are attracted, and their movements modified, by the magnet's emissions,¹² and even in what way they are so modified? an emission, however, that we will never know? Can I not speak likewise of electrical actions and effects? Can I not reason about the air I cannot see? Do I not modify it often in my fantasy?

SOPHYLUS. I agree, Euthyphro, that everything you say is very true; and any physicist will agree with us. But can I not assume, by analogy with all that I see, that what is between the magnet and the iron, what is between the electric body and the non-electric body, what constitutes the air, is some active subtle matter, whose particles are so configured and modified that they produce the effects we see?¹³ And that these particles also belong to the classes of the visible and the tangible, just as the larger bodies do, even if the weakness, coarseness or imperfection of our organs prevents us from having the slightest sensation of their figure, their colour or their weight? – My dear Euthyphro, we are looking for the truth, are we not? So, tell me in all good conscience, have you the slightest idea of the possibility that any body is set into motion, or modified

from what it is, in any other way than by the immediate contact of another corporeal thing? In other words, can something that has nothing in common with our senses act effectively on things of which we are able to have ideas or sensations through our senses?

EUTHYPHRO. I see, Sophylus, that you're getting a taste for our investigation; that this celestial love for the truth inspires you. Your ardour is contagious. Hence, let us swear by the genius of Socrates to not quit before finding what we are looking for. What we said earlier, that everything that is is an essence – this is a truth, is it not?

SOPHYLUS. Yes, no doubt.

EUTHYPHRO. All essences that coexist necessarily relate to each other somehow.

SOPHYLUS. That's true.

EUTHYPHRO. Therefore, every essence that coexists with us relates to us somehow.

SOPHYLUS. Yes.

EUTHYPHRO. One essence is only able to manifest its relations to another essence by means of its action on this essence, or on what separates them.

SOPHYLUS. It is true.

EUTHYPHRO. One essence is only able to have any knowledge of another essence by the relations it has to it.

SOPHYLUS. I admit it.

EUTHYPHRO. And this knowledge is limited to those relations which can be manifest, either by an immediate action or by an action on some organ or medium.

SOPHYLUS. Yes.

EUTHYPHRO. All essences which manifest their relations to us, insofar as they do so manifest them to us, are called matter; as, for example...

SOPHYLUS. It is true, Euthyphro; and I sense perfectly that the word matter is only a sign to express essences insofar as they have some analogy to our current organs. I have nearly been convinced of the possibility that essence has an infinity of faces different from those by which we call it matter. I will say further that I likewise feel the probability of it. But it is a matter of 1°. proving to me its reality, 2°. knowing how we can have an idea of it, and 3°. knowing how an essence, which has no analogy at all to our organs, can act on an essence that does have an analogy to our organs.¹⁴

EUTHYPHRO. These are precisely the three difficulties that remain for us to overcome. Would you like, Sophylus, for us to treat them separately, one after another, and thereby limit our investigation in this way?

SOPHYLUS. With pleasure. But remember the genius of Socrates, and our oath.

EUTHYPHRO. Don't be afraid that I will commit perjury. Tell me, Sophylus, if a European prince orders a siege in the heart of India, will this prince be the physical cause that moves the train of artillery that is going to be used in this siege?

SOPHYLUS. That's an odd question. – But no; he gives the order to others, and they give it to others, and so on, until finally [it is given] to those who make this artillery move.

EUTHYPHRO. Without this prince, this artillery would have remained in place.

SOPHYLUS. Well, yes.

EUTHYPHRO. To move thirty cannons, it still takes a real force of fifty thousand pounds at least.

SOPHYLUS. Yes.

EUTHYPHRO. The prince doesn't transmit this force from Europe to Asia, I think.

SOPHYLUS. No.

EUTHYPHRO. He sends one ounce of paper, and the artillery moves. If everything were matter in the universe, things would not proceed so easily; and so you see, Sophylus, that there are essences that are not what we call matter and which act with much greater ease and more energy. But tell me, I pray you, do you remember the discourse of our friend, and his various proofs of the heterogeneity of the soul and the body?¹⁵

SOPHYLUS. I don't recall them well. Help me recollect them, if you can.

EUTHYPHRO. He gives us three different proofs; and they are:

1°. A body at rest or in uniform motion persists, by its own nature, in this state of rest or in its uniform motion.

2°. Therefore, a body cannot pass from rest to motion or from uniform motion to accelerated motion, unless by the action of something that is not that body.

3°. By an act of velleity, man's body passes from rest to motion or from uniform motion to accelerated motion.

4°. Thus, man's body is set in motion, or its motion is accelerated, by the action of something which is not that body.

5°. It follows from this that the motor principle of this body, which we call the soul, is something different from this body.

1°. It is contradictory for anything to destroy an essential property of itself, since it is of its essence to have this property; thus, it would reduce itself to nothing; which is absurd.

2°. An essential property of a moving body is its persistence in moving in the same direction.

3°. But a man changes the direction of movement of his body by an act of his velleity.

4°. Consequently, if he were nothing but his body in motion, man would be destroying an essential property of himself.

5°. It follows that the initial motor of this body, which we call the soul, is something different from this body.

1°. The ideas which we have of things derive from the relations that hold between things and our way of perceiving and sensing.

2°. It is possible that we have an idea of everything that has extension and figure.

3°. The smallest particle of our body has extension and figure.

4°. Therefore, it is possible that we have an idea of the smallest particle of our body.

5°. But the idea is the result of the relation that holds between the particle and the one who perceives.

6°. Therefore, what perceives is something other than the particle, and the soul is something different from the body.

Do you remember these demonstrations now, Sophylus?

SOPHYLUS. Yes, very well; and I remember now something odd that happened to me during our friend's speech, and comes back to my mind at this moment.

EUTHYPHRO. What is it?

SOPHYLUS. My reason follows perfectly the course of his mind. I have nothing to contradict it. It seems to me that he goes from truth to truth. But at the end his arguments repel me: I can no longer conceive them: I don't feel the truth; I don't have that intimate and perfect conviction by which it is always accompanied; and however simple his arguments may be, I tacitly fear that he has deceived me, and has strung me along with some sophisms that I failed to notice.¹⁶

EUTHYPHRO. I can well believe it, Sophylus, but it is not the fault of the reasoning; it is the fault of the natural limitations of our mind which can nevertheless be completely reversed through exercise. What happened to you in relation to this is precisely what happens to every man the first time it is demonstrated to him that a finite square is equal to an infinite space.¹⁷ His mind is in a state of perplexity – perplexity that he is able to overcome thanks to meditation. When a demonstration revolves around the comparison of two things, or around the investigation into the relation between two things, and when, at the end of the argument, we find that these two things are of a completely different nature, the mind is astonished, stunned by the huge gap between these two things – a gap it cannot cross because it does not know the road that leads from one side to the other. If you managed to conceive how the immaterial soul can act on the material body, don't you think that these doubts would quickly disappear?

SOPHYLUS. Yes, I am convinced of it; but the reflection you just made was sufficient to convince me perfectly that the soul is another thing than the body.

EUTHYPHRO. Well, Sophylus, so you agree then that there really are other essences than those we call matter; and the first of our difficulties is vanquished, is it not?

SOPHYLUS. Yes, fully, but how do you have an idea of these essences?

EUTHYPHRO. We must, Sophylus, now give some thought to the word *idea*.¹⁸ The perception that the soul has of something, whatever it may be, necessarily arises from some sensation; and insofar as it has a sensation, insofar as it feels, it is passive: either these sensations come to it by some action from outside, or the soul itself gives itself or procures itself a sensation. It is passive as long as it feels. The word *idea*, or εἶδος or ἰδέα in Greek, is the same as the word *image*. I have the perception of a statue, that is, I have the idea of the statue, I have the image of the statue. *Image* assumes figurability, visibility, contour, etc., and thus it seems that the word *idea* pertains properly only to those perceptions we have of all that we call matter.

SOPHYLUS. I understand perfectly well; but do we have other perceptions?

EUTHYPHRO. Do you have a perception of what is right?

SOPHYLUS. Yes indeed.¹⁹ – But there would be people who will tell us that there is only the perception of justice thanks to the idea of a set of scales, or something similar.

EUTHYPHRO. Leave these people be, Sophylus; they only think in this way owing to the blindfold that is given to the figure of justice. But do you have a perception of a lie, of a crime, of a government, of love, gratitude, kindness?

SOPHYLUS. Yes; but these are perceptions of qualities, of modifications.

EUTHYPHRO. [Modifications] of what? Of the cone or the cube?

SOPHYLUS. You're kidding, Euthyphro – no – of our own souls; of those of others, and of their actions.

EUTHYPHRO. You cannot have the perception of a modification, or of a quality of a thing without having [a perception] of a part of its essence.

SOPHYLUS. That is very true.

EUTHYPHRO. However, we are convinced that the soul is not what is called matter; hence, we can have the perception of things which are not matter.

SOPHYLUS. I admit it.

EUTHYPHRO. You don't have the image of a lie, of a crime, of a government, of love, of gratitude, of kindness, of a soul.

SOPHYLUS. No, but I have a perception of them.

EUTHYPHRO. We have seen that each perception arises from some sensation. A sensation necessarily presupposes something passive in what feels. What is passive necessarily presupposes something active, or some external action. Thus, a perception arises from the action of anything outside of us. However, one essence can act on another essence only by immediate contact, or by organs or by media. The immaterial soul acts on the material body, and vice versa. The body acts on the body, the immaterial on the immaterial; and since what concerns us now are essences which have the ability to feel, then there must be organs and media between them to serve as vehicles, and to propagate their reciprocal actions, so as to produce these sensations.

SOPHYLUS. I confess, Euthyphro, that this is beginning to become clear to me. It is down to you to enlighten me fully. Don't dawdle on this beautiful path; I beseech you, in the name of your patron,²⁰ whose genius watches over the oath we have just sworn.

EUTHYPHRO. It is up to you alone, my dear Sophylus, to see the light. I will not reason in any other way than how you yourself could reason if you had wanted to reflect, and make yourself free and absolutely independent of anyone else's opinion. I just ask for your undivided attention; and just as you wanted me to be clear, you must forgive me a few repetitions to which the course of my ideas obliges me.

SOPHYLUS. I will listen with all due attention; and, as for the repetitions, I think they are useful and necessary in investigations such as our present one.

EUTHYPHRO. When we reason in the following way (and it is in this way that we reason more often than you think),²¹ 'what is neither tangible nor visible nor audible is nothing, and therefore can never produce any physical effect, that is to say, any effect that would be tangible, visible, etc.', this reasoning is worthless, without doubt. For suppose a blind man reasons as follows, 'what is neither audible nor tangible is nothing', what remains of that immense space, all those suns, all those worlds of which a blind man is not capable of having the least idea! We have said that all that is, is essence. Insofar as an essence relates to the organ of sight, we call it a visible essence; insofar as it relates to the organ of hearing, we call it an audible essence; insofar as it relates to the organ of touch, we call it a tangible essence; and generally, insofar as it relates to all these organs, we call it matter. To define this matter as philosophically as possible,

we are only able to draw from our sensations, and from our ideas which are the results of these relations – and from these are derived the attributes we give to this matter, such as extension, impenetrability, etc. or rather visibility, tangibility, etc. The accuracy of this definition of matter made it more applicable to geometry; and finally, treated by a genius like Newton, it produced a true physics, whose foundations were inalterable. This great man's sectarians, proceeding in his footsteps, furthered the domain of truth in physics to an astonishing degree: but as they progressed in this science, the idea of matter unnoticeably acquired a rigidity which it assuredly did not have in Newton's mind. Let us now suppose that a man deprived of the organ of touch gave the name matter to all essence which related to his organs; it is obvious that impenetrability would no longer enter into the definition of matter. Let us suppose a blind man gave the name matter to all essence that related to his organs, then extension would no longer be an attribute of matter. Let us suppose someone endowed with a hundred other types of organs, all of which have other and different relations to essence, gave the name matter to all essence insofar as it related to his organs, matter would have completely different attributes. Let us note the apparent absurdity resulting from these suppositions. In the first case: what idea is to be formed from a matter without impenetrability! In the second, what idea is to be formed from a matter without extension! In the third, what idea is to be formed from a thing of which we are unable to either affirm or deny anything! Light is only light for the eyes; sound is only sound for the ears; and essence is visible, tangible, audible, only by its relations to sight, touch and hearing – that is, because it is what it is. Thus, once it has been demonstrated that the soul is not matter, it is demonstrated that the soul is not essence, insofar as essence relates to touch, sight or hearing. My dear Sophylus, I am following the order you have prescribed for me. I believe that these reflections suffice, for all reasonable and unprejudiced men, to convince them fully of the possibility of the existence of essences that cannot manifest to us the relations they have to us. But let us summarise the proofs for the reality of their existence, with all possible clarity.

In order²² for a person to have a sensation of some other essence outside of him, three things are necessary:

1°. It is necessary that this essence can act on what is between it and the person.

2°. There must be something between it and the person, what I call a vehicle of action.

3°. It is necessary that the person has an organ analogous to this vehicle, that is, capable of receiving its action.

If one of these three things is missing, there is no sensation. For example:

1°. A perfectly transparent body cannot reflect light. Therefore, there is no vision, for lack of the object's action on the vehicle.

2°. Put a chime in a vacuum, there will be no sound, for lack of an intermediary vehicle.

3°. For a person who is deaf and blind there will be neither sound nor vision, for lack of organs analogous to the vehicles.

A large piece of crystal – the purest and most perfectly polished – will be invisible, because it will allow all light to pass through; and we owe its relation to the organ of touch alone for any knowledge of its impenetrability. With touch annihilated, will not this large piece of crystal then become nothing? The air – this agent so necessary for everything that breathes, and so terrible when its pressure ceases – will it thus be nothing without touch and hearing? Magnetic effluxion, whose effects are so quick and so perceptible, will this be nothing because it is an essence which precisely manifests no relation whatsoever to any of our organs, or because there is no vehicle between it and us that is analogous to its activity and our organs?

I will not remind you, Sophylus, of the subtle but sure proofs of the immateriality of the soul. What need is there [in getting involved] in these abstractions? We know that a cause must always be analogous to its effect, and the effect to its cause. In physics we know that to move a mass of one thousand pounds, a real force of at least a thousand pounds is needed. Put a weight of a thousand pounds on one side of a set of scales, it must take one thousand, at least, on the other to move it. Let us assume that the pyramid of Rhodopis,²³ or the tomb of Mausolus,²⁴ weigh fifty million pounds: how were these monuments constructed? By machines, by bare hands, whose real forces, all joined together, amounted to, at least, fifty million pounds. If everything in the universe is matter, then search out the real forces analogous to those prodigious masses; search out the weight of fifty million pounds in Rhodopis's charms, or Artemisia's sensibility.²⁵ It is not me who is being ridiculous, Sophylus, in reflecting thus; it is those who, without reflecting, hold tight to an opinion that destroys itself by its own ridiculousness. After having proved to you the real existence of all these essences which are not of the [same] class as those we call material, I must show that it is possible for an essence, by a quality that cannot be made manifest to us by our organs, to be able to act on essences that can be made manifest to us by our organs, such that this [second type of] essence manifests [the first type] to us by means of our organs.

Let²⁶ us suppose a person who has been deprived of the organ of touch and endowed with that of hearing. It is clear that essence is not manifested to him by touch, and therefore, for him, it is not impenetrable. But then a hammer strikes and acts on the bell, insofar as this hammer and this bell are both impenetrable, or insofar as both pertain to the tangible face. Yet, the hammer's action on the bell manifests the relation of the bell to the man, insofar as it pertains to the audible face.

Suppose a person deprived of the organ of touch and placed in front of an immense block of the purest crystal. This crystal doesn't exist for him, since he cannot see it for lack of the crystal's action on what separates it from the person; nor can he feel it for lack of an analogous organ. Suppose another block of the same nature strikes against the first and breaks it into a thousand pieces; at that very moment, these two crystals will be visible and audible to this person; and thus, [this happens] by the action of these two blocks upon each other – insofar as they are both impenetrable and solid, that is, insofar as they have a common quality of which this particular person could never have the slightest idea nor

any notion whatsoever. Let us assume that our man is a philosopher and that he is not satisfied with just seeing effects, but that he wants to know their causes too; it is obvious that he will seek in vain for all eternity the cause of this phenomenon. Make the effort to apply these reflections to all those effects whose causes we do not know; you will see, on the one hand, how many of these causes there are in nature – causes whose analogy with their effects is completely veiled for us and for our current organs, or whose actions, which produce effects that are sensible for us and for our organs, have nothing in common with our modes of perceiving and sensing; and on the other hand, [you will see] how often man seeks blindly and occupies himself eagerly in ultimately useless investigations.

From what I have just said it naturally follows that – by means of a quality that cannot be made manifest to us by any of our current organs – an essence can act on another essence, such that this other essence manifests its relation to us by means of one of our organs; and, therefore, all this apparent incomprehensibility evaporates, and it is very likely that all that we call immaterial essence (because it does not manifest any relation to us by way of any of our organs) can act on what we call material essence (because it manifests its relation to us by way of our organs). In other words, there is no longer anything absurd in the action of the immaterial soul on the material body.

But let us try again, my dear Sophylus, to conceive, as far as it is permitted to man, in what way this soul acts on the body.

One thing can act on something else only by relating to this other thing; it can only relate to something else insofar as it has one or more qualities, modifications, or manners of being in common with this other thing; therefore, it can act on something else only insofar as it has one or more qualities, modifications, or manners of being in common with this other thing.

The soul and the body are two totally different things for us, as we have already agreed: consequently, insofar as we know them, they have different qualities, modifications or manners of being.

Yet, the soul and the body act on each other reciprocally: consequently, the soul and the body must also have in common one or more qualities, modifications, or manners of being that we do not know of.

But it has just been proven²⁷ that – by an unknown quality, modification, or manner of being – two things can act on each other such that these things are made manifest to us by means of known qualities, modifications or ways of being.

Therefore, by its unknown qualities, modifications, or manners of being that it has in common with the body, the soul acts on the body, such that the body manifests its known qualities, modifications or manners of being – and vice versa.

The relation that exists between a nerve or the brain and the soul derives – in accordance with this demonstration – from a quality, a modification, or a way of being that is common to the soul and to the nerve or the brain. The nerve or the brain, as nerve or brain, is a composite essence. The qualities which it may have in common with the soul exist in it as a composite, since otherwise the soul could itself act on all matter that was neither nerve nor brain; and this is

not the case. The machines made by Huygens or by Orrery²⁸ imitate or predict the movements of celestial bodies solely by their quality of being composite. However, the nerve or the brain will decompose at death; therefore, the qualities it has, as composite, are destroyed; therefore, its relation to the soul is destroyed; but the soul remains.

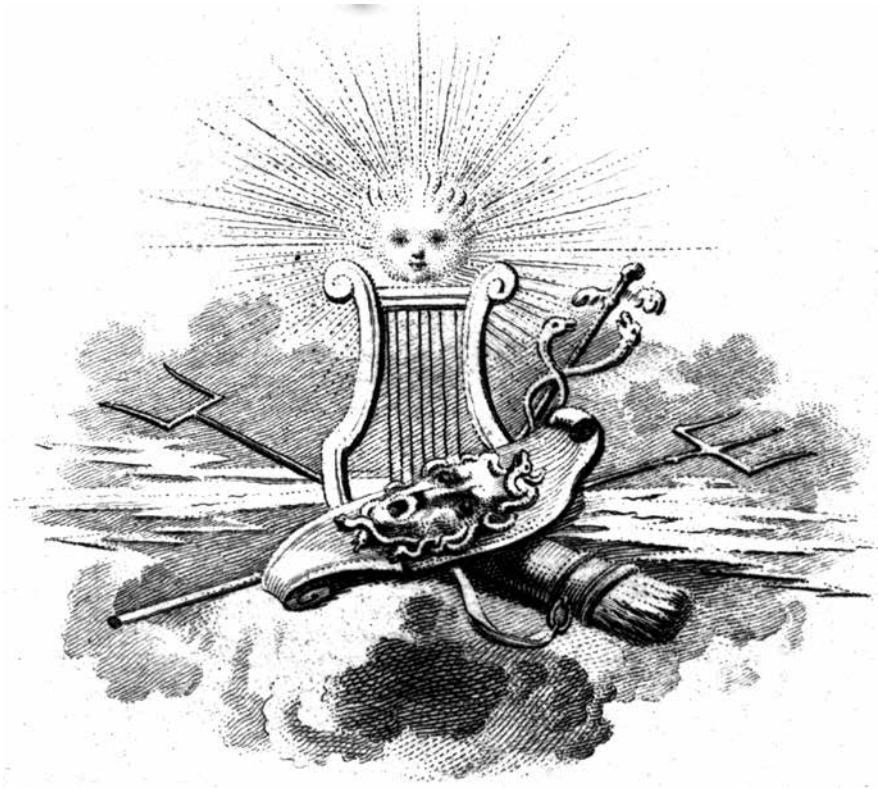
This, my dear Sophylus, is the basis on which I found my philosophy; and I am convinced that, starting from here, we can aspire, on the one hand, to a physics free from errors and precarious assumptions, and, on the other, to an elevated, consoling morality that is worthy of those who feel the full force of their existence. If you desire to make the effort to recall the results of our reasoning, you will judge for yourself whether I have committed perjury.

SOPHYLUS. We have found, 1°. That our organs do not deceive us, but they represent to us, on the one hand, many essential qualities of essences, and on the other, the true relation that things have to each other, insofar as they are analogous to our organs; 2°. That what we call matter is only essence insofar as it is analogous to our organs; 3°. That there are essences which are something other than what we call matter; 4°. That we have perceptions of many qualities of immaterial essences, as truly and as surely as we have ideas of many qualities of material essences; 5°. In what way it is easy to conceive how what we call the immaterial acts on matter.

My dear Euthyphro, insofar as a man is capable of persuasion, I declare myself persuaded by your speech. No, you have committed no perjury; the genius of Socrates will from now on be my guide too.

Aristaeus, or on the Divinity

Ἄν γνῶς τί ἐστὶ Θεὸς, ἠδίον ἔση.¹



Published in Paris, 1779.²

Editor's Announcement

Since there is no one today who does not have knowledge of philosophy, and since the study of morals has reached such an astonishing level of perfection and refinement, we flatter ourselves to be contributing to the amusement of the public by offering them this small metaphysico-moral work.

The manuscript was found, it has been claimed, on the Isle of Andros, during the time of the Russians' expedition to the archipelago.³ The Greek text is extremely corrupted: this has compelled the translator, who is not well trained in criticism,⁴ to occasionally give merely the outline of the reasoning, and, in order to be intelligible to all, often to substitute the indecipherable jargon of the Ancients' physics with the terms of our physico-geometry. We thought it best to warn our savants of this, so that they do not ascribe to the Greeks any knowledge whose discovery or creation does not belong to them.

We are obliged to the century's public prudence to excuse some excessively crude expressions found in this small work: but we humbly implore the public, on the one hand, to consider that they are inevitable when one has the aim of investigating the nature of desires; and on the other, to reflect that centuries owe each other some indulgence, and that, if it were decent or sensible to imagine a century even more perfect than our own, we, in all our perfection, would have need, as it were, of some goodwill on its part.

As for the author of this writing, he appears to belong to Socrates' school. We see in the work some traits, although weak, of the good sense of this philosopher, of Plato's poetry, and of Aristotle's precision. He appears to be an Athenian and from the time of Demetrius of Phalerum;⁵ since, on the one hand, he speaks in his dialogue of the famous Protogenes,⁶ a painter who flourished towards the time of the siege of Rhodes; and, on the other, it is evident that one of the speakers shone in the Lamian War.⁷

The work is addressed to Diotima. We know that Diotima was that sacred and prodigious woman, from whom Socrates admitted that he had learned all that he knew about the nature of friendship,⁸ and who flourished around the LXXXII Olympiad; however, to confuse her with the one who is mentioned here would suppose her to be at least a hundred and forty years old.

I sincerely wish that this small work might please and instruct – which are synonymous for us today.





Diocles to Diotima – your health.

Holy and wise Diotima,* I address to you this Dialogue on the Divinity, in which I have tried to develop the maxims that guide you in the education of your children, in the instruction of those who understand you, and generally in your conduct in life. You will see with pleasure a description of your customs, of your doctrine, and of the tone which reigns in your actions. But you will often say with sorrow: Had it pleased the Gods, Diocles, that your dedication was addressed to all Athenians!



Aristaeus, or on the Divinity

ARISTAEUS AND DIOCLES.

DIOCLES. What are you looking at, my dear Aristaeus?⁹ Is it some unknown plant?

ARISTAEUS. No, it's a spectacle that has kept me busy for a quarter of an hour and gives me sad and unpleasant ideas. Look, I pray you, at this poor earthworm: it is attacked by a black insect which never lets it go: it is utterly ripped apart, with

* It is in Greek: Ἱερὰ καὶ σοφωτάτη Διοτίμα.

no weapon by which it can defend itself against its cruel enemy.¹⁰ – See how it struggles and flounders. – Don't you think that this animal suffers tremendously?

DIOCLES. Surely, I believe so. Its unnatural movements make visible to me a language too eloquent to doubt such a thing. – Come on, crush this insect; for this is not pleasant to watch.

ARISTAEUS. If I crush it, you will say of me what I am saying about the insect; for it will not be able to defend itself any better than the worm.

DIOCLES. Here you are – let us end this war. – Now they are both dead. The insect has been punished and the poor worm no longer suffers.

ARISTAEUS. Oh, how cruel you are! Do you not fear that some elephant will crush you in turn?

DIOCLES. No. – But, tell me, what sad ideas does this spectacle give you? Unpleasant ideas, I think.

ARISTAEUS. Isn't it sad to see a sensible being torn to pieces to serve – while still alive – as food for another being, without being able to lessen its torments with any defensive action? If Jupiter, all powerful and just, had formed this universe, we would not see such disorder. Must I not conclude from this disorder that the universe was not formed by a God, but that it exists eternally by itself, and that its parts change only by way of fortuitous contingencies?

DIOCLES. Certainly, Aristaeus, what you are saying is very valuable and encompasses many things in a few words.

ARISTAEUS. What do you mean?

DIOCLES. You say that the evil of being devoured is a disorder; that if there were a God, this disorder would not exist; that, consequently, there is no God; and that, therefore, the universe is governed by chance.

ARISTAEUS. Yes, so it seems to me. – And you?

DIOCLES. I admit that to be devoured alive is an evil for the one who is devoured, but, for the one who is devouring, it is a good; and I do not see, after all, any disorder.

ARISTAEUS. Pardon me! Is it not a disorder in the universe for a being that is capable of pleasant sensations to suffer the most horrible torments?

DIOCLES. To answer this question, Aristaeus, we need to know what disorder is. Do you know?

ARISTAEUS. Just compare the nomadic life of the ancient Pelasgians¹¹ to the regulated society of our Athenians today; and you will know what it is.

DIOCLES. My dear Aristaeus, you are perhaps giving me a description of good and evil, but not of order or disorder.

ARISTAEUS. How would you define them better, I pray you?

DIOCLES. The idea of order, Aristaeus, pertains to our way of thinking in our present state. The word *order* designates a specific modification, a specific disposition in many things which results in our intellect – constituted as it is at present – being able to perceive with the greatest facility the whole [as it is] formed by coexistence, or by succession, or by the nature of these things, and [being able] to sense with the greatest facility the relations they hold with one another. – Do you agree with this definition?

ARISTAEUS. Perfectly.

DIOCLES. Thus, since men differ enormously in their intellectual forces – that is, since one person can see relations [between things] that are much further away from each other than another person, it follows that the idea of order is relative to each individual, and that order in the head of a savage is something other than order in the head of a profound metaphysician-geometer. The former will, perhaps, see order in an arithmetic progression; the latter will see order in an extremely complicated series which would be completely disorderly for the former. But *order* is equally relative both in progressions and in series – that is, in things arranged in a certain order. Therefore, my dear Aristaeus, limited as we are by the small number of our organs, if there is any order in the universe, how, I ask you, could we understand it? When we see the algebraic expression* of one or two extremely complicated quantities and when no order nor analogy between the parts that compose them appears to us; how are we to judge whether these quantities are isolated, or rather form part of an infinite sequence, which is ordered far above our way of conceiving? Then, we would have little reason to assert that what we call evil or good is order or disorder in the universe.

ARISTAEUS. I avow that you are right, Diocles. But you will be well aware, I guess, that you injure the hearts of those who admit the existence of a God.

DIOCLES. What do you mean?

ARISTAEUS. You make problematic the existence of any order in the universe; while they prove the Divinity by way of the order that they claim to recognise there.

DIOCLES. This is very nicely perceived, Aristaeus. However, here is my opinion. I see that there is what I have called order in some parts of the universe that I know; but I do not think I must conclude from this that there is order in the infinite, which I do not know; and those who wish to prove the Divinity by way of the small amount of the so-called order they perceive build, in my opinion, on shaky ground; and it seems to me that God and Order must be proven in completely different ways. If we pursue our investigation of what God and order are with the ardour and love for the truth that such subjects demand, we may perhaps attain truths which would be perfectly connected to those which we have already discovered, and which – forming a whole together – might serve to give the soul that vigour, that tranquil repose, that piercing vision, which results in it perceiving its future state with confidence and with an indestructible pleasure.

ARISTAEUS. I wish this very much, my dear Diocles. But it is up to you to start us off down this path; for I confess that the magnitude of these subjects astounds me, and I do not know from where to begin.

DIOCLES. I am pretty much in the same position, Aristaeus. But I will try to satisfy you, as long as you warn me when I am falling short in clarity or accuracy in my reasoning. If we consider what we call order, we find that it presupposes similarity, proportion, regularity, constant analogy, uniform succession – either uniformly slowed down or accelerated – a universal law which produces effects

* In this passage, as in a number of others that concern an infinite series, a clock, a watch, etc., there are very considerable lacunae in the original and the translator has been obliged to sacrifice his custom of following Diocles' reasoning to draw his own conclusions which are often quite interesting.

proportionate to the things that are subsumed under it, etc. When we observe these qualities in several things, we call it order; and this order is agreeable to us, for the reason that the soul naturally wants the greatest possible number of ideas in the smallest space of time;¹² for it is clear that these qualities of similarity, proportion, etc. serve as a chain or link which facilitates in us the means [we have] for forming the idea of a whole composed of several parts. It is evident, then, that for beings whose souls would not have the faculty of linking several ideas to make a whole out of them, the parts that make up the universe – insofar as we have known it until now – would not have what we call order. Therefore, what appears as order to us is not order in the things. Our *order* is only the result of some qualities which are found in things analogous to this singular faculty. I do not say, my dear Aristaeus, that there is no order in the universe; but that [an order] exists there that is quite different from what we call order; and that is why I said that those who would like to prove the existence of the Divinity by way of the order they see, and who start their derivations from the nature of man, are making use of a proof not worthy of the majesty of the subject. – The proof of what I say is that they see their order only in everything that is close to them, on the surface of the earth or in the motions of the planets around their sun. But let them, one beautiful night, contemplate the vastness of the starry vault and tell me, in accordance with their ideas of order, whether there could be a picture of a more perfect disorder.¹³

ARISTAEUS. You have just made me distinctly see, Diocles, what I have supposed for a long time – namely, that what we call order could not be in things nor serve as a rule for what would be order for beings composed in a different way or for a Creator God, if there is one; in a word, that *order* is relative and that there is no *order* in general.

DIOCLES. Aristaeus, let's not quit our investigation into the nature of order yet. Let's keep on looking before we affirm that there is no order in general. We have said that order was also relative in things governed by a specific order. Look, I pray you, at this beautiful colonnade of the Propylaea:* some order exists here, if I am not mistaken.

ARISTAEUS. Sure, there is some.

DIOCLES. The order you admire, Aristaeus, does it pertain to the first column, or to the fifth, or to the eighth?

ARISTAEUS. No, of course: it pertains to all the columns together.

DIOCLES. These columns are made of white marble, but suppose that – without altering the figure, magnitude, or spatial relation between these columns – there were some [made] of porphyry, of red jasper, of granite and of brilliant Paros marble,¹⁴ in a random fashion. Would you still see order there?

ARISTAEUS. Yes certainly, I would see it [in] the colonnade; but I do admit that the order in this colonnade will no longer be so perfect, nor so rich.

DIOCLES. And the reason is?

* This was the name for the superb gate at the entrance of the Citadel of Athens. This building was built, under the auspices of Pericles, by Mnesicles the architect. It cost 2012 Talents.¹⁵

ARISTAEUS. The reason? That the equality of colour in these columns facilitates in me, at this moment, the means for quickly forming the idea of the whole they compose.

DIOCLES. It follows from the second example that things which have some qualities in common are susceptible to order; and from the first, that the more that things have qualities in common, the more they are susceptible to order.

ARISTAEUS. That is true, Diocles. But if I look at the flute which the God Pan invented, I see regularity and order, even though its pipes are of unequal length; if I consider any series whatsoever, I see order there, although all the terms differ from each other. Where, then, are the common qualities of these flute pipes and of these terms in the series?

DIOCLES. Each pipe of the flute and each term in the series has the quality of exceeding the one which preceded it to the same extent as it is exceeded by the one which follows; and this clearly shows us, Aristaeus, that order is not in one thing or in one individual, but consists in the regularity of the relations which exists between things.

ARISTAEUS. Well, I agree; and I accept with you three fundamental truths, 1°. that things which have qualities in common are susceptible to order for those beings alone which have the faculties needed for perceiving these qualities; 2°. that the more that things have qualities in common, the more they are susceptible to order for those beings; and 3°. that what any being is able to call order in things consists in the relations it can perceive between them. But where does this lead us, my dear Diocles? For it is clear by these truths that order is only relative to beings who have the faculties needed for perceiving certain relations between things. This is so true that I posit the fact that no being, whatever it may be, could perceive what for it is order except in things produced by its own activity or by that of similar beings. Note that I regard as similar all animals which (to speak your language, which I adopt) pertain to the visible, to the audible, etc. I maintain that no being, no matter what face of the universe it belongs to, or what degree of perfection or imperfection it enjoys in the hierarchy of beings, has ever been able to perceive what in his eyes is symmetry, regularity, or true proportion other than within those arts invented by its own kind and [within] those which do not hold to the imitation of nature, but which make its purpose and goal the utility of this kind.

DIOCLES. Although you are pushing things a little far, Aristaeus, you make it perfectly clear that order is relative to the being who is sensing it. But, nevertheless, it derives from the nature of things. Let us suppose that a hundred things have a twentieth of all their qualities in common between them; it follows from our fundamental truth that these things would be richly susceptible to order for a being who has the means to sense these qualities. Now, everything that exists in the universe, without exception, has in itself a power of being and of being as it is; it is its essence [and] each of its qualities that we or other beings perceive in it is only an interrelation. Everything that shares this power of being, this primitive quality of essence: therefore, all things that exist together can form the most beautiful order for a being who happened to know the essences of things as perfectly as we perceive their figures or their colours.

ARISTAEUS. I admit this is possible: but there are odds of infinity to one that it is not so.

DIOCLES. What do you mean?

ARISTAEUS. Imagine a hundred columns, which share their colour and the proportion of their figure, but whose heights differ without proportion and without order; I pray you to make from them a colonnade as beautiful as the one you see here. – The parts of the universe appear to us just as heterogeneous.

DIOCLES. I understand, Aristaeus: you are trying [to base this reflection] on our regularity and our symmetry. – So be it. – Your reflection is dear to me, because it makes clear to me that we have gone much too quickly so far in the definition of order, and that we could reduce it to a simpler and more general statement. We have considered order only in terms of symmetry, proportion and regularity. We have considered a whole only as it is composed of parts that are either equal or in a continuous proportion, an arithmetical proportion, a geometric proportion or whatever proportion you please. But recall, my dear Aristaeus, that famous picture from Rhodes, in which Protogenes represented the beautiful figure of Ialysus by means of small pieces that related so perfectly that we cannot discern their edges.* If Protogenes had taken the pieces which form Ialysus's pupils and those which compose the nails of his toes, and if he had swapped them round, the beautiful Ialysus would have been an absurd and hideous whole.¹⁶ And if I were then to ask you if these pieces were in their place or were in order, what would you say?

ARISTAEUS. I would say that they are not in order nor in position to form an Ialysus.

DIOCLES. Imagine any series; if I put the tenth term in place of the third, there would be no series anymore; why?

ARISTAEUS. Because the terms are not in position to form this series.

DIOCLES. We said earlier that things are susceptible to order by the qualities they have in common; and that they would be more or less capable [of order] to the extent they have qualities in common. But we drew this conclusion by only considering a peristyle, whose every column had equal height and figure. Thus, in order to make our definition general, and work for Ialysus, for series and for the Propylaea as well, we must correct it and say, 1°. that things are susceptible to order by the qualities they have in common for forming together a determinate whole; and 2°. that things are more or less capable of order to the extent they more or less have these qualities in common for forming a determinate whole. Therefore, my dear Aristaeus, the general definition of order has been found: it is the disposition of the parts which form some determinate whole; and disorder is the disposition of things which do not form a determinate whole. So, it follows from this, 1°. that, in every subordinate whole that is determined and limited by the faculties of some limited being, there reigns order, but an imperfect one; since, in these wholes, the parts which compose them do not do so in terms of their essences or in terms of all their qualities together; the different materials

* This passage is remarkable, since no passage among the ancient writers is to be found where it is positively said that Protogenes' famous picture was a mosaic – and this, moreover, does not seem very likely.

which compose the Jupiter at Elis or the Minerva at Athens* compose them only in terms of their colour, their figure and their splendour; 2°. that for any limited being, there must exist an infinity of things which do not form a determinate whole for [the being]; because [the limited being] cannot know their essences or the collection of all their qualities; and so, much disorder exists for this being; and 3°. that this infinitely determinate whole, this absolute all, this universe, whether it was created by the all-powerful energy of a God or exists by itself, is composed of parts, and they compose it – not in terms of their qualities – but in terms of their entire essences; and thus, all disorder in the universe is impossible. – So, my dear Aristaeus, what you said earlier about evil being a disorder in the universe is false: and since you dared conclude from such supposed disorder that there was no God, I have the right to conclude from my order the very opposite. But this conclusion would seem too rash to me, for if the universe were to exist by itself, it would equally enjoy this order we have discovered; and so, you see that we cannot prove God by way of order, but that we could prove order directly by way of God.

ARISTAEUS. I admit, Diocles, that I cannot contradict your striking reasoning. But I said earlier¹⁷ that the magnitude of the subjects we are treating astounds me. And I say now that the difficulties which remain for us to overcome make me dizzy.

DIOCLES. Is it because of their number or their quality?

ARISTAEUS. Because of their quality.

DIOCLES. How fortunate, my dear Aristaeus! For if it were because of their number, we might lack the time. As to their quality, we should fear nothing, protected as we are by the powerful genius of Socrates. But what are these difficulties, if you please?

ARISTAEUS. There are three of them: the first is that, from this order in the universe, absolute necessity follows; the second is that we must prove that evil is not an evil; the third is that we must prove the necessary existence of a Creator God.

DIOCLES. Let us start with the first one; then we will move on to the third; and, with these two difficulties overcome, we shall easily find, not that evil is not an evil, but what it really is.

ARISTAEUS. As you wish. – But to tell you the truth, Diocles, you are showing a little too much audacity, it seems to me.

DIOCLES. I am showing off all my audacity, Aristaeus, so as to give some to you to oppose me with all your power. This is the path of truth. August truth dwells in a temple on top of an unshakable rock, which brushes against the immortal Gods' dwelling. It is forever surrounded by thick clouds, fogs and mists, which disrupt the rays that descend from the Goddess to our eyes – and let us perceive her irregular and confused spectre, often even removed from her true position. Each of us sees her apparition in accordance with the cloud's refraction before him. – Let us despise our apparitions, pierce these vapours; and separate these clouds, Aristaeus; let us look for the Immortal in her temple; let us not fear anything; she

* The Jupiter at Elis and the Minerva at Athens were the two most famous of Phidias's statues.

loves bold lovers: she does not ask that we respect her; she desires us to know her; and the worship which we owe her will derive from [the Goddess] herself. What happiness for us, my dear Aristaeus, once we have come before her throne, if we are able to penetrate her light directly along the pure road we have followed!

ARISTAEUS. What you are saying is very beautiful, Diocles. But do not waste time on poetry. – Do you sense everything that seems to follow from this absolute all, from this universe composed of its parts in terms of all their essences?

DIOCLES. Not everything, maybe.

ARISTAEUS. If the parts of the universe compose a determinate whole, in terms of their entire essences, and if each part holds to its place, so as to cooperate – inasmuch as its whole essence permits – in the formation of this whole, [then] part *A* could never be found in part *B*'s place; and therefore, there can be no change or movement in the universe; and the whole and its parts would be eternal, necessary and immutable: and this is exactly the case for your Ialysus and the series.

DIOCLES. You are talking about a block of marble, I think. – On this assumption, you are right. If the universe is a determinate block of marble, everything you just said about it is exactly true. – But a clock – is this a determinate whole?

ARISTAEUS. Yes, it is.

DIOCLES. When it is not wound up or when it shows the time?

ARISTAEUS. In both cases, it seems to me.

DIOCLES. In the first case, it is like the marble block; and in the second, it is like the universe; for you were not considering, perhaps, that the activity of the spring and the movement of the wheels form part of the clock's essence. – You take the universe to be this little aggregate of parts that are analogous to our touch, our eyes or our ears. When it comes to this immense universe, recall, I pray you, that it has as many different faces as there are possible relations between the essences which compose it. Remember that part *A*, of which you speak, is not only an atom of what we call matter. Remember that there are parts of the universe endowed with movement, activity, will, freedom – limited, not by their nature, but by their relations to other parts that surround them. If it belongs to the nature of a part to be active and mobile, it belongs to its nature to act and to move itself; and don't think, Aristaeus, that these capacities destroy order in the universe. The more the parts have qualities in common, the more they will be richly susceptible to order, according to the truths we've discovered. So, do not fear that mobility in the universe spoils order, if it is true that you see order in rhythm and dance. – This, my dear, is enough to answer some of your difficulties. But before going any further, let me ask you a question. You assumed that the whole and the parts of the universe were immutable, eternal and necessary. I have responded to the first point, have I not?

ARISTAEUS. Yes, fully; and I feel that I have taken the expression *in position* too literally, and that I ought to have said *in an order which agrees with it*.

DIOCLES. This is very true. But here is what I want to ask you. You said that the universe is eternal and necessary: have you concluded this from its immutability? or did you have other reasons? In the first case, we would have completed our task; but in the second case, we should listen to you.

ARISTAEUS. I confess, Diocles, that, in the heat of the debate, I took these three things as synonyms. Reflection does not compel me to change my mind. What is immutable cannot change; what cannot change is eternal; and what is truly eternal is necessary.

DIOCLES. So, I think I have proved to you, Aristaeus, that, from the fact that the universe is capable of the most beautiful order, it does not follow that it is immutable, eternal and necessary. – However, the proposed next step in our investigation demands, it seems to me, a somewhat more rigid examination of these three expressions. You have nicely defined the immutable, Aristaeus, and, according to this definition, I can imagine an immutable thing in two ways: either it is a thing whose essence is immutable, but whose relations to other essences may change; or [it is] a thing whose essence is immutable and all its relations stay the same. But as this latter case would presuppose an immutable universe, which we see to be false – this latter case is absurd. To be immutable is to be eternal into the future, but that does not exclude a beginning. To be immutable in essence would exclude every beginning. In this way, we see that *immutability* is a quality which pertains to the nature of essence or to essence itself. *Eternity* is a quality of relationship; it is a quality of essence relative to duration and it does not exclude beginning. To be eternal by essence, or by itself, is to be relative to absolute eternity. *Necessary* is a word that philosophers have strangely abused. They say that a thing necessarily exists when it would be contradictory for it not to exist. This is true; but, according to this definition, there is nothing in the entire universe which necessarily exists; since then it would be contradictory that, existing, it does not exist. I know very well that they also give another meaning to the word *necessary*: they say that a necessary being is a being whose essence is to exist and which exists by its own nature; and, in this case, all beginning and all ending would be excluded. But this returns [us] exactly to the same point: for to prove that a being is necessary in this way, we must first prove that it exists or that it has existed at all times. They say too that the cause necessarily produces its effect, once they have stated that the cause is the cause of the effect only in producing the effect. This is true; but, in so saying, they say only this: *the cause is the cause*. Suppose that essence *A* can produce *B*: if I say that *B* is necessarily produced by essence *A*, I consider *A*, not in its essential quality nor in its essence, but as a cause which actually produces *B*. Thus, when I say that *A* necessarily produces *B*, I say nothing if not that, when *A* produces *B*, it is contradictory that *A* does not produce *B*; or, when *B* is actually the effect of *A*, it is necessary that *B* is actually the effect of *A*, which is its cause. But if essence *A* does not produce *B*, *A* is and remains *A*. By all this, my dear Aristaeus, we clearly see that the word *necessary* is only an epithet added to what is; and that to be, to act, to produce, to persist necessarily, says nothing other than to be, to act, to produce, or to persist. – Do you agree?

ARISTAEUS. This seems to me indisputable. But continue, please.

DIOCLES. It is impossible, Aristaeus, for nothing to produce anything. Thus, from the mere assertion that there is something, we can surely conclude that there is a Being that exists by itself, and for whose existence there is neither any end nor any beginning – whether this Being is a Creator God or a universe existing by

itself. And this is a truth so perfect that it immediately follows from the feeling of our own existence: that it is the first of all the truths that we owe to the intellect, not only in terms of its importance, but also in terms of its clarity.

ARISTAEUS. I perfectly agree with this truth. But it is also true that we would be more reasonable in assuming that this Being is the universe, for we see something of it, than in assuming it is a Creator God, of whom we see nothing.

DIOCLES. If Eudoxus of Cnidus*¹⁸ said to us: 'We would be more reasonable in positing the motion of the sun, for we see it, than in positing that of the earth, which we do not see' – would we agree with him?

ARISTAEUS. No, of course, for we know with scientific certainty that the earth is rotating.

DIOCLES. Thus, we would say to him: 'Acclaimed Eudoxus, to be even more reasonable, let us not assume anything, but rather let's try to know'. And for us, Aristaeus, in order to assume nothing, let us examine whether within the nature of the universe – with respect to the side we know of it – there would not be something that is absolutely repugnant to an existence by essence. If we raise ourselves to contemplate the universe from its proper point of view, we will see that we can consider it from six different sides: 1°. as purely physical; 2°. as organised; 3°. insofar as it is susceptible to action and reaction; 4°. from the intellectual side; 5°. as moral; and finally, 6°. from the side of the relations between its parts and the laws which derive from it. – We agree on what we call physical: it is the tangible, the visible, the audible, etc. We see that the universe, as physical, is an aggregate of determinate and circumscribed parts. One billion distinct, determinate and circumscribed parts form a determinate and circumscribed whole. Therefore, the immense universe, considered as physical, – so prodigiously [immense] its limits may be beyond the reach of our organs – is a determinate and circumscribed whole.

ARISTAEUS. But if the number of its parts proceeded to infinity?

DIOCLES. Up until now, there have been for us only two infinities, space and duration; and they are infinite because they have no parts. A body is in space but does not form part of it; an event is in duration but does not form part of it. True infinity is one; it is neither determinate nor circumscribed.

ARISTAEUS. But an infinite series?

DIOCLES. Is circumscribed and determinate by its nature. You may call eternity to your aid in vain; it is such in every moment of eternal duration; and it is such because its parts are determinate. But, Aristaeus, we are talking here of things that exist, not of imaginary quantities.

ARISTAEUS. I understand and I conclude for you that the universe, considered as physical, cannot be infinite. – But let's pass on to the universe as organised.

DIOCLES. All that we call organ is a whole, the parts of which we have either modified or composed, so that this whole corresponds to a determinate goal,

* All that we know for certain of this philosopher hardly justifies the great reputation he enjoyed among the Ancients.

to a proposed end, which is not this whole [itself], but its use or effect. A file is made to file, a clock to mark the time, a poem to please or to instruct. Thus, everything that is the work of men or a limited being is a *means* to produce a determinate effect, and not to produce a substance. Man has discerned in the mechanism of animals and plants the means to bring about generation, vegetation and the growth of individuals; he believes that he has seen some analogy between these means and the works of his own industry; and he has called these means *organs* – that which can get something done in some way. But there remains this remarkable difference: that the work of man is a thing only for one specific, determinate effect, whereas the work of nature is a thing in order to be this thing, to be as it is, independently of its effects. When, by abstraction, you take away from the watch the capacity to measure time, the watch is no longer a whole, but a confused mass of heterogeneous pieces; whereas a tree is always tree whatever abstraction you undertake from the effects it could bring about externally. Nature produces substances in order to be, whereas man produces only means to modify effects. I will make two further remarks: first, where an organisation occurs, there appears a goal and consequently a determinate limit; secondly, where a goal appears, some ideal seems to have to precede the real.

ARISTAEUS. You express it very well: *it seems*; for it could well be that what you call a *goal* was only the end, the total sum of the efforts of some organisation's natural activity.

DIOCLES. You are right, Aristaeus; and we do not yet have the right to take the *goal* for the effect of some act of will. – But in the end, we clearly see that every substance which forms part of this universe is finite and that every organisation leads to the finite, except the one which oversees the propagation and possible eternity of the species.

ARISTAEUS. I admit this. But this very organisation is not unalterable. We can turn it from its path; we can modify it in a hundred different ways; we can make mules and monsters; and it is no absurdity to imagine that man will change species on the surface of the earth.

DIOCLES. I agree, Aristaeus, and I am considering what we call organisation in the universe merely in general and as a means by which a substance is formed. – I agree that you can destroy a seed; that you can prevent it from germinating; that you can mix species that nature does not seem to want to mix. But what you can neither alter nor destroy is this general tendency towards organisation, this firm and steady march of the parts of the universe to attain the formation of a substance. It is this general course [of nature] whose cause we must seek.

ARISTAEUS. But you are not unaware, Diocles, that the activity of fire, if universally spread throughout nature, could completely destroy this organic course you are speaking about.

DIOCLES. That being so, Aristaeus, we no longer need to seek proof that the universe cannot exist by itself: for if it did exist by itself, how could it have within itself a principle so cruelly destructive and capable of modifying it in such a horrible way? – In some cases, fire spreads; it prevents this march I have been speaking of; it confuses the combination of the parts; it removes some essential ones; it

is put out. But in other cases, more gentle, more moderate, it helps with this combining. – But, ultimately we agree, I suppose, that what we call an organ in nature is the means by which it forms determinate substances; and that organisation, in nature, is that tendency of parts to form substances.

ARISTAEUS. We fully agree on that, Diocles. Let's move on to what you mean by the universe as active.

DIOCLES. I see in the universe, as physical, movement and rest, action and reaction. The parts of the material universe appear to me to form a traffic, a commerce of these qualities between themselves. A moving part communicates its movement to another part at rest and receives rest in return. Action and reaction, whatever their principles, are equal.¹⁹ Thus, the sum of all actions in the universe is equal to that of all the reactions. One destroys the other – and this leads us to the most perfect rest and to true inertia. I conclude from this, first, that, if action and reaction equally pertain to the material universe's nature, it cannot exist by itself; and secondly, that movement cannot be a quality of matter.

ARISTAEUS. I confess that I do not quite understand you.

DIOCLES. Suppose [just] one part was endowed with a principle of action; as soon as this principle affected some other part, it would find a principle of the same value, but directly contrary [to it], which would destroy it; consequently, the universe would destroy its own activity at every moment – which is absurd; consequently, the universe, as material, would be perfectly inert. However, we see movement in it; consequently, there is an active principle, more powerful and of a different nature than that of reaction.

ARISTAEUS. You are right. It must be absolutely necessary that there reside in [the universe] an alien power capable of overcoming this true inertia.

DIOCLES. Without a doubt. But there is, however, something more: to overcome this inertia, there would need only be a discrete impulse on one part. But recall, I pray you, this organisation. The firm march of nature towards a formation of substances requires a continual impulse, a power which would either desire and govern, or would, by an essential quality, have to do what it does.

ARISTAEUS. I get your point, Diocles; and I think of the wise Thales' God,²⁰ whose universe is drenched; or rather, you make me believe, with Anaxagoras and so many illustrious philosophers, that the universe is an animal and that the God we seek is the world-soul.²¹

DIOCLES. What do you mean by world-soul?

ARISTAEUS. It would be to the universe and to the world what my soul is to my body; it would govern the parts of the universe as I govern my limbs.

DIOCLES. My dear Aristaeus, there are two things that govern in your body: one is the movement and activity of its parts, insofar as they can produce some effect on external things, on things other than themselves; the other is the activity of the glands, the secretion of the humours, the transformation of food, the circulation of blood.²² Do you govern both these things, or only one of them?

ARISTAEUS. I admit that I govern the former only a little bit.

DIOCLES. You see then, Aristaeus, that you receive your body from the hands of nature only for its use, just as Achilles received his arms from [the hands] of the Gods. The hero's actions had nothing in common with the admirable art of

Vulcan,* and your actions have nothing to do with the principles which have formed the tools you use. – See too how inaccurate your comparison is. Would the world-soul then govern the parts of the universe to produce external effects? But there is nothing external to it. Moreover, it would be necessary to have recourse once more to Vulcan's art, to those prolific vegetative and growth principles which form the substantial parts of the universe. – But, seriously, tell me, Aristaeus, do men, such as they are, form part of the universe or not?

ARISTAEUS. No doubt they are parts of it.

DIOCLES. But they do not agree on much in this world and probably not even in others. If, then, men are to this world-soul, [as] our arms and legs are to us, it would be impossible to see a more perfect symbol of folly than this God or world-soul. – But every day, we see animate beings persecuting each other, hating each other, detesting each other in all their activities. Therefore, these beings do not obey a single general act of will; but each of these beings is isolated and free in the domain of its own activity. – But we will see elsewhere what could be called the world-soul. Let's conclude here that there are principles in nature which can overcome the reaction of inertia and which must overcome it continually – and this presupposes a sustained combat between the parts of one thing, which, consequently, cannot exist by itself. – Until now, Aristaeus, we have considered the universe only as purely physical, as organised, and as capable of reaction; and from these perspectives it offers us only isolated substances, which have no communication, no connection between them, except in forming together the sum of the whole. But when considering this universe as intellectual, the scene changes: images of interrelations and relations [*les images des relations et des rapports*] between things are concentrated into or placed in the imagination of another Being; and this Being is endowed with a faculty called intellect, which can mix, compare and compose these interrelations. By this means, a transposition of the universe is formed in this imagination – an imaginary, but possible other universe; and if this Being then joins to the imagination and to the intellect that free and active principle capable of overcoming the reaction of physical inertia, [then] it can realise this imaginary universe, it can form wholes, not of essences, but of interrelations, in proportion to the interrelations that it knows and in proportion to the strength and extent of its activity. And since we have found in the physical world that action and reaction between physical beings are perfectly equal, it is here that we find the principle of that surplus of action over reaction which preserves movement in the universe. So we see, Aristaeus, the universe divided into two parts, one of which is perfectly inert and passive, and the other endowed with force, activity and the sensation of various interrelations between the passive parts; one of which is inert, and the other living and vivifying. We cannot conceive action without direction, and direction has a cause which is a free act of will. Suppose that this active part of the universe is one, [then] the act of will will be one, the direction of action will be one, and the effects that

* It was Vulcan himself, according to Homer, who forged the beautiful arms of Achilles.²³

result from it on the passive parts will be uniform. But it is evident that we see a quantity of great effects in nature where a perfect uniformity reigns, and which consequently result from a single direction and a single act of will. But we see, at the same time, a quantity of small effects which derive from the activity of men and animals, or limited beings, which collide with and destroy each other, and which consequently have for their cause various directions and various free acts of will. I say free; for if they were to depend on one supreme act of will, they could not contradict or destroy each other; they would be no more than a single act of will, which could not take on one direction as well as the opposite direction at the same time.

ARISTAEUS. Diocles, this reasoning would seem to me admirable, if it were not based on an assumption which is either false or too rash.

DIOCLES. Which is?

ARISTAEUS. You say that we cannot conceive action without direction, and that direction necessarily has an act of will as its primary cause. Put a small glass ball with a drop of water onto a burning coal – do you call the effect that results from it at the moment of explosion an action?

DIOCLES. Yes.

ARISTAEUS. And what is the direction of this action?

DIOCLES. From the centre to the circumference, it seems to me.

ARISTAEUS. Be it so. – But why, I pray you, does this action have an act of will as its primary cause?

DIOCLES. An essence cannot have two contradictory essential properties. The most incontestable essential property, in the essence we call matter, is to react against all action. Therefore, it is impossible that, being reactive by its nature, it is active by its nature. Hence, when it appears to us to be acting, it is properly only obeying something with a different nature [to it] – what I call the cause of action. Thus, Aristaeus, you are obliged to agree that the cause of the activity of the water, or the steam, or matter, contained in your ball, is not what we call matter. But this cause is called *elasticity* by physicists: a rather vague word, and one which masks our ignorance in many cases. – An uncompressed coil-spring in its natural state can be compressed only by the action of an alien force. The coil-spring reacts in proportion to the tenacity of its parts' coherence, and when the cause, which compresses it, is destroyed, it will return to its natural state. You see by this that what we call elasticity is but one and the same thing as inertia or that faculty of reaction; and if you wish to apply this truth to your ball, all we can really conclude from it is that the parts which constitute water in their natural state are differently arranged among themselves, are more dispersed and occupy a much larger space than the one they occupy when we call their aggregation water; and [we can conclude] that the action of fire releases these parts from the bonds which kept them in this forced state. Thus, my dear Aristaeus, we must rather seek the cause which compresses the coil-spring than [the cause] of the activity of the coil-spring which is manifest in the reactivity of its inertia. – You sense that this cause, taken in general, is the same as that which governs organisation, the formation of substances, and the direction of planetary orbits; it is the same [as that] which constrains, which links dead and inert parts of matter,

and forces them to live and to act, by way of the very principle of their own inactivity. – But, Aristaeus, do you agree that any action must have a direction?

ARISTAEUS. Perfectly. But why would an act of will be its cause?

DIOCLES. Is there any reason why everything that is, or everything that appears [to be], essence, mode, or whatever you like, is and appears such, and not otherwise?

ARISTAEUS. Certainly, yes.

DIOCLES. So, a direction has a why, a reason. Now, that why is not in the direction, since then it would have been before being.

ARISTAEUS. I admit it.

DIOCLES. Therefore, it is in what is active, and there is its reason. Now, you cannot go from reason to reason to infinity, since there is a fixed moment when what is active directs: thus, you will find the first reason either in the activity of what is active, which is its velleity, or in a modification of what is active. The former possesses its why; and [going] from reason to reason you will arrive at the determinate activity, or at the will of something that is active; and consequently, direction has, for a primitive cause, an act of will. But we cannot conceive of a determinate activity, a will which directs, without an intellect which foresees, without consciousness of being. Add to this, my dear, the axiom that effects are proportionate to their causes; and we will easily draw this conclusion that, when we see this constant march of nature towards the formation of substances, towards the propagation of species, when we see the celestial bodies, whose motions are within the reach of our organs, directed by centrifugal and centripetal forces, obeying constant laws, when we see these great uniform effects, then, I say, the primitive cause of these effects is the action of an intelligent will, infinitely great and infinitely powerful. I say infinitely, since, when going from cause to cause, we are compelled to recognise this.

ARISTAEUS. I admit, Diocles, that you surprise me.

DIOCLES. I would prefer to convince you, Aristaeus, and, to achieve this, let's continue and move on to morality.

ARISTAEUS. What are you really calling morality?

DIOCLES. Have you ever loved, Aristaeus?

ARISTAEUS. Oh shades of Antiphilus,²⁴ listen to this blasphemy! – Whether I know love! – Ask of Apollo whether he knows light.

DIOCLES. Forgive me, my lovely Aristaeus. – I'm wrong, I admit it. – But you interrupted me. If, when speaking with Palinurus,²⁵ I said to him, 'Palinurus, you have seen Scylla and Charybdis, you have seen the furious winds, the waves merging with the clouds' – then, if he let me speak without interrupting me, I would continue as follows: – 'Sage Palinurus, did you reflect before and during the storms? Did you discover whether the setting of some star or an unexpected calm or a black cloud on the horizon when night falls announces or causes thunderstorms?' – This is what I am asking you, wise Aristaeus: did you reflect before and during the effervescence of your love?

ARISTAEUS. I do not know whether I reflected, Diocles, but I do know I felt, and [did so] with fury.

DIOCLES. That is enough for us, my dear. You have only to answer, and then we will reflect together. – But, tell me, what do you call love, in the most general sense?

ARISTAEUS. Desire. – Everything I love, I desire.²⁶

DIOCLES. That is, you desire to contemplate it?

ARISTAEUS. To contemplate it? – to possess it, to be absolutely master of it, to admire it, to embrace it, to smother it with my caresses, to devour it.

DIOCLES. Please continue.

ARISTAEUS. I cannot. I lack the words. But you feel, I hope, what I cannot express.

DIOCLES. Yes, I can feel it. But when you have smothered and devoured the object of your desires, are you happy? or would you like to revive it?

ARISTAEUS. Surely, I would.

DIOCLES. In order to devour it again, I suppose. – But, my dear Aristaeus, does this not prove that the enjoyment was only momentary and imperfect?

ARISTAEUS. Are there any other possible enjoyments?

DIOCLES. Perhaps: and if we could attain with the object of our desires what we could not express earlier, it seems to me that the enjoyment would be perfect.

ARISTAEUS. I believe so; I feel it. But do you know what it is?

DIOCLES. Not quite, but I think I intimately feel, as I reflect on the progress of your desires, that it is an inclination towards perfect union. – Wouldn't you be happy to be your Antiphilus?

ARISTAEUS. – My very dear Diocles, I cannot express to you what is happening at this moment in my soul. – What you say is true, and so true that it seems to me that it is of all truths the most important one: it is the same as that of our existence. – But it seems by what you have just said that Pygmalion's prayer²⁷ would have been wiser if he had asked the Goddess to become that ivory out of which his mistress was made instead of [asking the Goddess] to bring her to life; he himself would have been his mistress without interruption, whereas [when he was] with the beautiful girl his enjoyments were fleeting.

DIOCLES. I must defend the wisdom of Pygmalion. By asking to be ivory, he would not have [thereby] become his mistress, whose whole essence resided in her shape; but by praying to Venus to bring her to life, he [in fact] made her more homogeneous to his essence. Thus, he teaches us, by the wisdom of his prayer, that homogeneity is proportionate to the attractive force in every kind of desire.

ARISTAEUS. I agree with that.

DIOCLES. But, Aristaeus, before leaving this subject, we must take advantage of your insight. You are so expert! – We found that organisation in nature was the firm and constant advance of the parts of the universe towards the formation of substances. – Do you feel something within you of this advance, when you desire?

ARISTAEUS. I believe that there is no man on the surface of the earth who does not more or less feel it in every kind of desire.

DIOCLES. That being so, Aristaeus, can we not believe that this progress is precisely the same thing as the inclination towards a union of essence, as this attraction we have talked about?

ARISTAEUS. Oh, my dear Diocles, you are far from the truth! Now I feel that I can teach you something. I realise that I have reflected without thinking about it, and I'm going to tell you everything I know. – As a child, my soul was devoured by countless desires and passions, whose violence and disorder robbed me of progress and character. When I arrived too young at Corinth, I saw those famous

courtesans there,²⁸ and if, then, you had asked me the same question, I would have agreed with you. I had pleasure in Corinth; but I regretted nothing of it – and this indicates the poverty of my enjoyments [there]. In Sicyon,²⁹ I stayed at the same house as the young Philarete.³⁰ She was charming, lively, gay, and none of the perfections which she possessed from nature had been tamed by the art of education. As soon as I saw Philarete, the rest of the universe was no longer interesting; I saw it across a gauze, except for those parts that had some relation to Philarete. When I approached her, my heart was beating, my knees were trembling: running hot and cold, my blood no longer flowed steadily through my veins – in her absence I made a mess of everything, and worse than anyone else; except in cases where my imagination gave me Philarete as a witness: in her presence, I was and I felt invincible – all that I did voluntarily had only her as end and goal – my will acted as if it were hers: her happiness, her pleasures, her desires were mine, and I had no others. – I remember us declaring our love for each other with so much confusion, disorder and fear, it was as if we were confessing a crime. – During this entire age of innocence, I would never have suspected, in her presence, the existence of this organic march of which you are speaking, even when a thousand far more heterogeneous objects manifested it to me. – Finally, one summer evening, we were sitting on the grass: we spoke of our love. – She was lightly dressed; and our souls, tired of feeling, left the faculty of seeing to our eyes alone. – This organic principle, of which you are speaking, mingled for a moment with that attraction which held to our essences, thereby corrupting and destroying it, and so plunged us into unhappiness. – It is from the mixture of these two principles that modesty and shame are born. – We no longer dared look at each other. – The innocent and pure Philarete no longer existed; and I was like a man who, having desecrated altars, believed he saw the vengeful Gods pursue him. – Since that moment, my dear Diocles, I have learned to love. – But I am telling you here only what has a direct relation to our subject; and I can very much assure you that this organisation, this course of nature towards the formation of substances, has nothing in common with the principle that leads to a union of essences. They can coexist, because both of them have the same composite [object] as goal, namely the beloved object and because both of them appear to follow a homologous path – I say appear, for, in regard to the organic principle, it has a goal, a fixed end: it is finished by its nature, as you have well proven; whereas the other principle seems to me an eternal approximation. They never coexist without the former more or less corrupting the latter. They often appear to coexist, for the reason that there are few men who know properly how to disentangle them, and because [there are] laws that have claimed to be able to fix them together. Finally, Diocles, be aware that, in pleasure, the moment when the first principle finds its death and its end is the same as that which destroys the eternity of the second, just as the moment which mixes an ignoble and fragile metal with pure gold is that which destroys its marvellous ductility – and those who do not agree with this have not reflected on Corinth or have never known love.

DIOCLES. Certainly, Aristaeus, you make me very aware that I can learn from you. The description you give of the difference between the two principles seems

excellent to me: and if I have understood you correctly, you consider this organic march as the effect of a general law, of an impulse given to the entire universe by one great, determinate activity, by one great will; whereas you envisage love, or desire, as the effect of a law which results from the nature of each individual endowed with intellect and liberty. – You remind me that, in animals, this course of nature does not have a particular individual as its goal, but a sex in general, which is mixed with [another] sex in general; and [you remind me] that it manifests itself only by accident as a mixture of an individual with [another] individual, since the end of all organisation is a determinate substance, a determinate and finite individual. In man, the same would be true, if the faculties of his soul were removed – those which attract not his body, but his essence towards another essence. In man, the propagation of the species could be accomplished in exactly the same way, without it ever being suspected that this act had anything in common with morality, or with the attractive metaphysical principle. But these are the laws which have regarded an individual as the possession of another individual,³¹ which have ordained that the two principles might progress together – and this is no less absurd than if they had ordained centrifugal force and gravity to proceed in the same direction. The mixture of these two heterogeneous principles together had to produce a monster; and this monster is shame and modesty, as you have pointed out so well. It then mixed with other principles and produced goods and evils of which man had no need.

ARISTAEUS. You have perfectly understood my idea, Diocles. But please continue – we are on such a good path.

DIOCLES. You asked me what I properly call morality. The insight you have just provided makes my answer a lot easier. – This principle that you feel so strongly, my dear Aristaeus, this love, this tendency towards a union of essence with some being or thing, is a faculty which links beings together in some way and which acts out of homogeneity. The laws which derive from the nature of this principle, or from this faculty, constitute morality. The individual is capable of virtues and vices in proportion to the perfection or imperfection of this faculty within him. Just like the imagination, which receives the ideas and the images of the interrelations [that hold] between the outer covering of certain things, is perfect in proportion to the number, clarity and tenacity of these images, [so too] this attractive principle approaches perfection, because of the number, liveliness and tenacity of the sensations that it has of interrelations between the essences of certain things. A free and active being makes use of this imagination to compare, compose and decompose such images, from which arise the sciences and the arts. Likewise, a free and active being compares, composes and decomposes these sensations, from which arise moral actions. – This is the point, my dear Aristaeus, to which we are able to push the parallel between the intellectual and the moral. To depict their differences to you would be out of place here. But let us nevertheless draw this [one] conclusion: that the images and ideas which the imagination presents to us are determinate, circumscribed, divisible and external to our essence, whereas moral sensations are identified with [our essence] and have no limits other than their own.

ARISTAEUS. I beg you, Diocles, to clarify this idea.

DIOCLES. When I have the idea or the image of a visible, tangible, or audible object, I can imagine half its size, half its intensity, or half its energy; I can double [these attributes], triple them, increase them, decrease them according to my fantasy; but, affected by love, hatred, or anger, I cannot imagine half or double this anger, this hatred or this love. In the same individual these affections are not capable of a more or a less. Their intensity is fully proportionate to the affecting object and to the sensibility of the affected individual; but our whole essence is imbued with it. I want to believe that Aristaeus's essence is more deeply penetrated by a moral sensation than that of a Troglodyte:* but both of your essences would [in fact] be equally saturated by it in proportion to the quantity and finesse of your sensitivity. – It is this moral principle by which an individual identifies himself with another essence in some way, by which he senses what she senses, and [by which] he can contemplate himself from the centre of another individual, so to speak:† and it is from this that sensations of commiseration, justice, duty, virtues [and] vices arise, as well as, in short, all the qualities that distinguish man from animal and by which he belongs to the legislative principle of the universe.³² It is by this principle that an individual becomes his own judge; he judges himself as another would judge him; and it is in this school that he learns to blush, that he learns to perfect himself and to make himself happy. For what idea is to be formed of true happiness, Aristaeus, if it is not the state of a being which, by this faculty [of] viewing itself from the centre of every essence which surrounds it, sees itself always equally beautiful and perfect; of a being who is always in others, so as to enjoy the brilliant spectacle and the energy of its own perfection,

* Diodorus of Sicily and, above all, Agatharchides, in the beautiful fragment that Photius conserved for us, shed some light on this passage. Speaking of the Troglodytes and the Ichthyophages, they say that they had no sensation of harm to others and they add further things which make clear that these peoples were almost destitute of all moral sense and closely approached animals.³³

† It appears from all of Diocles' reasoning that he attributes four distinct faculties to the soul: imagination, which is merely the receptacle of all ideas; intellect, which compares, composes and decomposes these ideas; velleity, or the faculty of willpower and act; and finally, the moral principle, which is sometimes sensible and passive, and sometimes active. By this principle, the soul is attracted towards some other essence, and is attached to it; it feels the goods and evils of this other almost as vividly as it feels its own pleasures or sufferings; and, in so doing, this principle appears as merely passive; but when [it is] identified, so to speak, with another individual, the soul reflects on itself [and] then this principle becomes active; the soul judges its own relations to this individual, and its own actions towards this individual; it sees itself, so to speak, from outside, and it judges itself as the other would judge it; and from this arises what is called conscience, repentance and that pleasure derived from the intimate sentiment of having done a good deed. Identified with the other, the good that it does to the other is a good that, in fact, it does to itself; it enjoys the fruits of its own generosity, and so it follows that if the sensibility or passivity of the moral principle was always accompanied by a proportionate activity, there would not be what is called cruelty and injustice, man would do good to the other; since he makes himself the other: he does what is good so as to do good to himself. It must be admitted that Diocles' reasoning nicely establishes the precept: Love your neighbour as yourself.

and who is always in himself, so as to preserve it? – If our limited intelligence is accompanied by such a principle, such a germ of happiness, could you believe, Aristaeus, that the infinitely great and infinitely powerful Intelligence, which we have discovered, can be eradicated from it? – Do you understand now what I mean by morality?

ARISTAEUS. If to sense is to understand, then I have perfectly understood it.

DIOCLES. The conviction of sentiment is of equal value to that of the intellect, my dear Aristaeus. – But let us also examine the laws that seem to govern the different parts of the universe with which we are familiar. In it there are two kinds [of laws]; one contains those which derive from the very nature of essences; the other those which are imposed from outside. – In every physical or material part of the universe, we see mutual and reciprocal attraction. In physics, we have seen that reactivity, or perfect inertia, is an essential attribute of matter. This inertia or this reactivity is properly in a thing merely the force by which it is what it is, since it is reactive only by means of this force and in proportion to this force. Primitive action, which has the power to overcome this inertia and which sets bodies in motion, is therefore not physical or corporeal, but has a different nature from matter. Suppose this primitive action is destroyed, the universe will be one, by the mutual attraction of its parts; and the forces of being, or the inertias of every part, will together form a single force of being, a single [force of] inertia, namely, that of the entire universe. Therefore, it is this primitive action which prevents the universe from being one; it is this action, this energy, this primitive cause of motion of any kind, that places every part of the universe into a forced state, into the state of a tensed coil-spring, which becomes, by its forced tension, the secondary and generative cause of action and motion.³⁴ We see by this that the natural state of the universe is to be one; that attraction is just the return of the parts of the universe to their natural state; that it is nothing other than the force of being, or the inertia of the entire universe, and that the universe's inertia is intimately linked to its essence, being not only an essential attribute of each of its parts, but also of all its mass as a whole; finally, that inertia is the only intrinsic law of the physical universe – one which derives directly from its nature. Hence, leaving aside our demonstrations drawn from the finite and from the limits of the universe, I ask whether we can imagine a being whose nature would be more diametrically opposed to that of a being which existed by [its own] essence than this material universe, this perfect symbol of passivity, whose changing modifications depend absolutely on principles from another nature; that is, ultimately, this universe, which, far from being its own primitive cause, cannot be a primitive cause of anything. – But let us examine the laws which concern the active parts of the universe. When we reflect on the moment when our will becomes active or applies its activity to matter in order to produce some effect or some change or motion, we cannot perceive – whatever attention we pay it – the transformation of our active will into [its] effect. – If we take the simplest example, namely the case where we put our own body into rapid motion, we distinctly notice that, to stop or to slow down, an active will opposed to the preceding one is not enough, but that we must look for obstacles to this motion in external things. Hence, it is evident that activity, or action, or

the acting will – once applied to something external to it – endures, and perishes only by means of obstacles whose actions and reactions are stronger than the intensity of the first action that was undertaken. – What is more, the motion which results from an action, or from an active will, is equally proportional both to the intensity of this action and to the force of being, or to the inertia (or inert quantity) of the thing that is set in motion. But since the intensity of the action at the moment of its first impulse is determinate, and since the quantity of the force of being or inertia of this thing in motion is likewise determinate, it follows that the motion is determinate and, consequently, uniform and thus eternal by its nature – that is, only destructible by obstacles whose intensity is stronger than its own. – From this we see the eternal continuity of action or effect of activity from which motion results.

ARISTAEUS. I pray you, my dear Diocles, to repeat to me what you have just said about motion; otherwise I won't be able to follow you.

DIOCLES. I am saying that motion is proportional to the intensity of the active principle which produces it, and to the inertia or the inert quantity of the body that is set in motion. This intensity of the active principle and this inert quantity of the body which is about to be moved are determinate. Therefore, the motion is determinate. But the motion is determined at one moment as it is at every moment. Therefore, it is uniform by its nature, and thus eternal by its nature; and it further follows that, since effects are proportionate to their causes, every first principle of motion is eternal by its nature.

ARISTAEUS. I admit it. But if I suppose the intensity of the active principle is zero, [then] the motion becomes zero, that is, comes to rest, and thus the same reasoning you've just proposed concerning motion will also hold for rest.

DIOCLES. This is very true, Aristaeus; and [with respect to] everything that I have said above, it is astonishing that having seen so distinctly, by a much simpler [chain of] reasoning, the eternity of rest, men did not directly conclude to [the eternity] of motion, and therefore [the eternity] of the active principle which is its cause. – But let us move on. If we now examine these two principles, the only universals that we know of in nature, activity and inertia, we see that the first may well lead the second to organisation and to the formation of determinate substances; but neither of these principles offers us a productive power that creates. In the latter [instance], the thing is manifest by itself; and in the former [instance], we see only one power which modifies interrelations between things which are [and] which exist. Moreover, all we have to do is to go back into ourselves to sense that we do not exist by essence and that we are not the cause of our existence. – This obviously proves, Aristaeus, that the two principles possess their existence and their origin [from] elsewhere. – As to the second [case], I think you still agree with that, and you no longer have any difficulty in doing so?

ARISTAEUS. None, my dear Diocles. But you seem to want to say something on the subject of activity. I beg you to remember that nothing is to be left behind.

DIOCLES. Activity in a being is the faculty of being able to act on things within its grasp. This activity, this energy, this principle of force, has all possible directions; and this is what its freedom consists in: it is a vague force which constitutes

the velleity or the faculty of willpower. If we consider this faculty in a foolish being, in Pentheus, in Ajax in his fury,³⁵ we see it pure and indeterminate; and if Ajax's and Pentheus's bodies did not compel them to a thousand actions, which were contradictory in truth but yet determinate in appearance, we would see Ajax and Pentheus without motion, exhaling their strength and energy as an aroma exhales its smell, in every direction. If we contemplate this faculty in the prudent and wise Odysseus, it is completely determinate: all his energy is concentrated and directed towards a single goal, and it is completely an act of will. We see from this that the active being is necessarily endowed with intellect for altering this vague velleity, or this faculty of willpower, into a determinate act of will. When the intellect, and the imagination which belongs to it, is destroyed, it wills and acts without effect, lacking a lever and a goal. Activity or intellectual velleity alone can have for its goal solely the exclusive conservation of the individual – and this supplies a very small number of acts of will, or determinations of activity. But when the active being is endowed with the moral principle, which transports it, so to speak, into other beings and makes it sense, suffer and enjoy on their behalf, this activity acquires a tone of nobility and grandeur proportionate to the extent and delicacy of the moral principle in that being. Finally, from whatever side we examine what is called activity, primitive action or pure cause of motion, this principle could be called the world-soul; it could only be raised to a faculty of modifying what is – to a legislative faculty, if you like – but never to the creative power. This Power is a principle infinitely above our intellect, but whose existence is just as indubitable as that of the entire universe, since, without the existence of this Power, that of the entire universe would be absurd. This is the God who created the universe, who gave it an eternal impulse to form substances ceaselessly and without end, who populated it with free beings whose activity finds its limits not in its nature, but in the activity or the reactivity of what surrounds it, and whose essence is eternal by nature, since the motion which derives from its activity is eternal, and finally, whose manner of being is capable of happiness.

ARISTAEUS. But also [capable] of unhappiness, my dear Diocles! – Anyway, you have perfectly convinced me of the necessary existence of a Supreme Being who created everything. But here are some difficulties that I am still having. The only relation by which we know of this Being is that he created everything. Now, if I understood you correctly, the creative principle is of an order infinitely above that of the principle of activity; it is infinitely above our intellect. So, what idea, my dear Diocles, am I to form of the God? I cannot compare him to anything. – If I assume some relationship to him, there must be some analogy between him and me. I do not find it in my shape, in my capabilities, in my intellect: and if I seek it in the most beautiful part of my essence, how could I attribute to him kindness, justice and all those qualities which adorn weak mortals and which derive uniquely from their manner of being – not as a property of the circle derives from its nature, but as the thick foliage of a vigorous oak derives from the soil which nourishes it.

DIOCLES. The seed of the oak, Aristaeus, contained this rich greenery within its kernel, and the fertile soil facilitated its development. – If the great Aristides³⁶

had never had occasion to demonstrate his justice, would you have thought him unjust?

ARISTAEUS. I would have thought him neither just nor unjust.

DIOCLES. But knowing now that he was just, you presumably agree that Aristides possessed within him all that was needed to be just?

ARISTAEUS. Yes.

DIOCLES. Therefore, he would have had what was needed to be just, even if he had lacked the opportunities for making himself appear so.

ARISTAEUS. I admit it.

DIOCLES. Consequently, Aristides' justice pertained to his essence, just as the property of the circle pertains to the nature of the circle – and it is the same with all the virtues.

ARISTAEUS. And did Phalaris's cruelty³⁷ also pertain to his essence?

DIOCLES. Yes, my dear. But I know what you mean. – To compare Aristides and Phalaris, one must not compare the good actions of the former with the bad ones of the latter: these two kinds of actions are opposed by their effects; the former produced good, the latter produced bad; but it should not be concluded that Aristides and Phalaris are opposites. They differ in degrees of perfection. Phalaris lacks the part that constitutes Aristides' beauty. And do you believe that if Phalaris had had the faculty to contemplate himself from the bosom of the unhappy man screaming within his bull, he would have been foolish enough to be cruel?

ARISTAEUS. You are right, my dear Diocles, but you are not responding to what is essential in my question. I am asking you, what is the nature of the Divinity which I am unable compare to anything else I know? by what means will I conceive of my relationships to a Being about whom I know nothing but his existence? and what could I expect from an Almighty who is equally author of evil and good, and who seems to have assigned them indifferently to the nature of beings?

DIOCLES. To answer your question, it is necessary to begin by investigating what good and evil, happiness and unhappiness, good and bad appear to be and what they [in fact] are. – Tell me, Aristaeus, is this beautiful tree, this superb pine, either good or bad?

ARISTAEUS. Surely it is good.

DIOCLES. Why?

ARISTAEUS. Why? – We draw from it oils and precious salts; and I don't know how many illnesses Eryximachus the Doctor³⁸ has told me he's cured [with them]. – Besides, it is used to crown the winners in the Isthmian games.³⁹

DIOCLES. Therefore, it is good for the sick and for those who compete in honour of Neptune. But is it good or bad in itself?

ARISTAEUS. It is, it exists; and that's all. It cannot be either good or bad in itself.

DIOCLES. That's just how I see it; and it follows that things are good or bad only in relation to other things, and that there is good or evil only for beings who enjoy the consciousness of being, and who are capable of sensations.

ARISTAEUS. That is certain.

DIOCLES. Hence, good and evil do not derive from things that are either good or

bad in themselves; but we call these things good or bad depending on the good or bad that results from them for sentient beings. Therefore, evil is only an effect relative to the one who is affected by it; and it is produced by some cause, which cannot be bad in itself. Volcanoes, floods, pestilences are scourges only in relation to their effects on sentient beings. A cruel or vicious man is bad by his actions only relative to other beings, and he is, by himself, merely of an inferior kind.

ARISTAEUS. On this basis, Diocles, the cruel or vicious man would be neither reproachable nor to be pitied.

DIOCLES. Man, Aristaeus, is more or less endowed with the moral principle, intellect and will. He owes the richness of these faculties to nature, but their harmony he owes to his works. Few owe both of them to the source of all things. If man lacks some of these faculties, if they are poor and weak for him, if he does not feel their dissonance, if he cannot feel the effect of his actions on others, it is true that the law will judge him and condemn him on this point for the benefit of society; but, properly speaking, he is neither reproachable nor to be pitied. Compared with others, he is either more or less perfect; but he is what he is. Let us suppose his faculties are so small that he does nothing but vegetate, that he approaches the nature of this shrub beside you; – do you find this shrub reproachable or to be pitied?

ARISTAEUS. No, of course not. – But before you go any further, do permit me to make a reflection here. You said that Aristides' justice and Phalaris's cruelty pertained to their essences; you are [now] saying that the man who more or less lacks intellect, moral principle, or willpower, or activity, constitutes a relatively vicious man; thus vice, and the evil which derives from it, is of the essence of a being which receives its essence from elsewhere. That being said, there is nothing more unjust than the Areopagus;⁴⁰ and so, I beg you, my dear, tell me who are the men that are to be reproached or punished?

DIOCLES. The most beautiful property of man, Aristaeus, is that of being able to correct and perfect himself as much as the richness of his composition will allow him. He receives his faculties from nature; and he can modify his actions – that is, the causes of good and evil – to his greatest advantage, as well as to that of others. If he produces the greatest possible good for others, and also [produces] harmony and repose within himself, he possesses all the perfection of which his being is capable; if he neglects himself so much that evil results outwardly from his actions and inwardly from the discordance of his own faculties, he is imperfect, he degrades himself, he voluntarily puts himself into the class of the shrub. These are two kinds of imperfections: one that derives from poverty of essence and the other from misuse of the richness of the faculties. To judge which of these two imperfections is the cause of a determinate action from which evil results is a faculty that Cecrops⁴¹ was not able to pass on to his Areopagus. Moreover, the Areopagus judges not the degree of perfection, virtue or vice; its job is less difficult: it judges the crime; and it is easier to prove to an Athenian that his action is contradictory to Solon's written will⁴² than to prove to him the imperfections within his composition from which derive the action he has just undertaken.

ARISTAEUS. Please, my friend, clarify further this important subject for me. From

what you have just said, it seems to me to follow that Phalaris could have made himself better and that Aristides could have made himself wicked, and that, consequently, the justice of the one and the cruelty of the other do not pertain to their essences.

DIOCLES. My dear Aristaeus, we are unfair and very incompetent judges of each other. Each of us knows, or can know, the strength of his own activity, the strength of his faculty of willpower, [the strength] of determination of his vague velleity and reduction of it into an act of will; he may know the vivacity and delicacy of his own moral feeling, the richness of his imagination, the agility of his intellect; each of us knows, or may know, the proportion that holds between these faculties in him, the degree of their harmony or their dissonance; each of us knows whether in some action he ceded too much to the beauty of his imagination, to the vehemence of his will, to the compass of his reason, or to the delicacy and vivacity of his moral sensitivity; and it follows that if man wishes or dares to enter into himself, so as to review his faculties, he alone is his own fair and competent judge; even if he isn't yet that God, whom we have discovered, in those cases where he deigns to mix in the affairs of men. – But let us suppose, Aristaeus, that I recount to you a base and cowardly action performed by the valiant son of Tydeus,⁴³ a foolish or extravagant action by the wise Odysseus, another great and beautiful [action performed] by the vile Thersites;⁴⁴ would you believe me? No, of course not; and you would tell me that generosity and frankness are of the essence of Diomedes, that prudence and wisdom are of the essence of the son of Laërtes,⁴⁵ and baseness of that of Thersites. You would judge Diomedes, Odysseus and Thersites on what they were when each of them was already formed, when their faculties – having already been mixed together – composed a whole out of each of them: and it was at that moment that they became rounded and that their vices and virtues constituted properties of them. But when we are asked whether Diomedes, Odysseus or Thersites all owe the perfection or the imperfection of their composition either to the richness, poverty or happy proportion of their faculties, or else to their own works, it would be beyond us to respond. What is certain is that Odysseus and Diomedes are beings of a different class from poor Thersites. – But let us now consider what evil is. It consists in a manner of being, or in relationships to other things, or to other beings, contrary to the will; and it is necessary to look for its cause in some external actions which affect freedom, or constrain, in a manner of being contrary to the will. From which it follows that evil consists in any obstacle to the will. We have seen that velleity, or the faculty of willpower, the faculty of being able to direct activity, naturally acts in every direction. The intellect and the imagination offer it determinate ideas of something external, or some determinate sensation – that is, goals and ends for determinate directions of the velleity, or objects for the will to compare and choose from. If there were no comparison to make, if there was no possible choice, there would be neither what is called good nor what is called evil, owing to a lack of determinate direction of velleity, that is, owing to a lack of an act of will. But as soon as there are intelligent, free and active beings with different degrees of perfection or richness – as soon as there are objects for comparison and choice – there is a conflict of acts of will,

and therefore some obstacle to will; there is a gradation of degree among these obstacles, and consequently a gradation of degree in what we call good or evil. In the Supreme Being, in whom the whole mass of velleity, or of the faculty of willpower, is determinate act of will, there is no choice, and so [there is] neither gradation of degree, nor what we call good or evil. – Thus, a gradation of degree in good or in evil pertains to the nature of a limited, free and active being, as a property of the circle pertains to the nature of the circle. Without this property, the circle is absurd; and [likewise], without degrees of good or of evil, the limited, free and active being is absurd. When it is rashly asserted that the Supreme Power cannot make a triangle without such a property, one is saying nothing but that the Supreme Power cannot [both] make a triangle and not make a triangle at the same time; for the property is the same as the triangle; and likewise, the Supreme Power cannot create free and active beings without this gradation of degree in the good, since the one necessarily presupposes the other. – To say that it would be better if there were no free beings, since various degrees of the good pertain to their essence, is to say that it would be better if there were no triangle, since it has this or that property. Hence, what is called evil in the universe pertains essentially to what the good and life make of it; or rather, it is one and the same thing. As for bodily pain, it also consists in a modification contrary to the will. But it should be noted here that the intensity of this pain must be necessarily proportional to the sensibility of the individual. Now, this sensibility is proportional to the richness or to the poverty of the individual's essence or faculties; thus the intensity of the pain is proportional to this richness, or to this poverty; and therefore it seems, my dear Aristaeus, that earlier we have wrongly judged the sufferings of this poor earthworm, because we tacitly presupposed in it all the richness of our composition. We considered what it would have suffered in our place, possessing the quantity and finesse of our faculties; and we lost sight of those formidable weapons we find in morality to combat or to overcome this bodily pain. Do you believe that Othryadus, that Spartan, the sole winner of the Argives⁴⁶ – his body ripped open with wounds and still holding in his feeble hands a kind of trophy of the debris that he finds around him – do you believe that he is concerned with his bodily pain while he writes the word *Victory* on his shield in blood?

ARISTAEUS. Diocles, I love your grand perspective on things. – I admit that by considering the whole, or the totality of free and active beings, from without, you fully discharge the Supreme Intelligence from the evil men attribute to him. But come down to earth for a moment please and watch Socrates drinking hemlock in that vice- and crime-riddled haunt. Is this scene not one evil within the universe?

DIOCLES. The example is badly chosen, my dear Aristaeus. Socrates sufficiently teaches us that it was not given to men's small acts of will to fight against the forces of a soul like his; he sufficiently teaches us that neither Anytus nor Meletus,⁴⁷ nor his judges, could ever reach the heights from which he regarded them, as you would regard small insects piercing your skin to feed on your blood, amused at all their hard work. Here there is neither struggle nor combat. – We have seen that what constitutes evil are obstacles to determinate velleity,

to acts of will. If Socrates' free will had been oriented towards luxury, lust, [social] rank, or honours, there is no doubt that, acting in opposite directions, Anytus and Meletus would have engendered the obstacles that constitute evil. – Rhadamanthus gave Tantalus⁴⁸ the desire to drink, and that is what his torments consist in: if you were able to take away his desire, Tantalus would be happy. – Let's assume that, on the open seas, you are steering your ship towards some wreckage that floats at the will of the waves; each wave forces you to change direction; each wave is an obstacle that attempts to take away from you the elusive object of your efforts; but if you plot a course towards the fertile Phthia,* [even] when each breaking wave impedes your path a little, it cannot prevent you from reaching port safely. – You see by this, Aristaeus, that when the free will orients itself to fixed objects and when it steps off the path frequented by world events and by men's active passions, it has no obstacles, and therefore no evil to fear; and, if you wanted to take the trouble to apply this reflection to all the infamous disasters of the house of Pelops, you would find that the source of their ills resided in the orientations of the Pelopidians' free will.⁴⁹

ARISTAEUS. I agree, Diocles, that evil cannot touch Socrates. I grant you, if you wish, that the Pelopidians were the cause of their own misfortunes. I even agree that the wise and strong man can prevent evil, and that, if it arrives unexpectedly, he can overcome it and feel himself the better by his victory. – But is this how you would console old Hecuba,⁵⁰ a mother whose husband and many children perished by the blade, a queen robbed of her crown, of food, betrayed by false friends, reduced to slavery, despised, and trampled underfoot by her victor? – Is this how you would console blind Oedipus, incestuous and parricidal, and yet virtuous? [Or] the honest slave who groans under the blows of his cruel master? [Or] the poor man who dies, in pain, of hunger, shame and misery? – These are evils: and suppose that Philosophy could teach us to bear them, will it teach this to every individual? – And if Hecuba, Oedipus, the slave and the poor man were on the ground before your feet here, crying out to you, 'Diocles, is our existence a good for us?', what would you reply? – I fear that with Talthybius,[†] even if you do not [yet] doubt the existence of Jupiter, you do at least doubt that he would meddle in the affairs of men.

DIOCLES. Do you believe souls are immortal?

ARISTAEUS. You convinced me of that by proving to me the eternity of motion.⁵¹

But, Diocles, this is not, I am guessing, the answer you would give to our unfortunates.

DIOCLES. Why not?

* Phthia, city and country of Thessaly, formed the best part of the Kingdom of Peleus, father of Achilles. The author refers here to a passage from Plato's *Crito*, in which Socrates relates that a very beautiful woman had appeared to him in a dream and said to him: 'In three days you will be in fertile Phthia', Ω Σώκρατες, Ηματί κεν τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐριβόλων ἴκοιο.⁵²

† In Euripides' tragedy, *Hecuba*, Talthybius doubts the existence of the Gods on seeing this unhappy queen lying on the ground unconscious and almost lifeless.⁵³

ARISTAEUS. First, how do we know that the germ of unhappiness will not accompany them in all their possible modes of being, as a shadow accompanies an opaque body?

DIOCLES. And therefore, the germ of happiness will always accompany them, as light accompanies an opaque body which casts a shadow. – But, Aristaeus, if evil consists in external actions contrary to our good, to our desires, to the directions of our will, and if the good consists in directions of our will which meet no obstacle, it follows that the germ of evil is in the relations that hold between things outside of us and ourselves, and that [the germ] of the good is in our own nature. Yet, these relations are continually subject to change; but we are ourselves eternally. Thus, the germ of evil is vague, and passes like a meteor; whereas that of the good is unalterable like the fire of that star which illuminates us; and this is so true that, in supreme evil, we are left with desire and, in supreme good, neither fear nor pain remain for us.

ARISTAEUS. What you are saying here, Diocles, is true, I admit it; but I fear that these unfortunate people will not be very satisfied with such an answer.

DIOCLES. And why should they not be content with it?

ARISTAEUS. Because their evils are present, they feel them now; and are you claiming to compensate a present and real evil with the vague hope of a future good?

DIOCLES. But do men do anything else during the whole course of their life? Look at an athlete stretched out in the arena, covered with sores and swimming in his own blood: these are present evils that he reckoned as nothing when comparing them with the vain expectation of the laurel. Look at old Biophilus,⁵⁴ who undergoes the most painful cure in the faint hope of a few days' peace; and you, Aristaeus, to what dangers did you not expose yourself in the battle at Lamia,* in order to appear the most valiant of the Athenians? – So, you see, in every man's calculations, whether [they are] good or bad, they take the present much less into account than the future. I exempt those rare and sublime moments when the soul – completely absorbed in its own joys – renders the imagination inactive and stops it from adding to the present, so as to glimpse a richer and more embellished future.

ARISTAEUS. I admit, Diocles, that you have changed my ideas on good and evil. I sense that both of them, or rather one of the two, with its degrees, pertain to the essence of free beings. I understand by man's indestructible attraction towards the future and towards something better that there is a future and something better for him. I avow that the germ of the good is in man and that of evil is outside him; that another way of modifying his imagination from his youth onwards would have diminished or annihilated what he called evil, and would have rendered – even in this life – [his] enjoyment of the good more continuous, more uniform and more homogeneous. I feel that man has created

* Lamia [is the] city of Phthiotis in Thessaly, where Antipater had taken refuge after being defeated by the Greeks. It was in front of this city that the battle took place in which the Athenians, abandoned by the Boeotians, were defeated, and in which their general Leosthenes lost his life. Antiphilus succeeded him in command of the army and then won a remarkable victory over the Macedonians.⁵⁵

for himself these monstrous gradations in good and in evil. He owes his ills to the distance [separating] royalty from slavery [and] from [a] feebleness cultivated and decorated by pain: and this distance is his work. This is what we fully agree on. – But, my dear Diocles, I have a complaint against you. It seems to me that you are imitating the wise Simonides too much.⁵⁶

DIOCLEES. What do you mean?

ARISTAEUS. The more questions he was asked about the Gods, the more he postponed the time of his response. You do the same: for, every time I ask you what God is and what my relationships to him are, you respond to just the essential parts of my question.

DIOCLEES. I wanted to make you feel acutely, Aristaeus, that properly there is no evil in the universe and that what we call good or evil is only a property of a limited, intelligent, free and eternal being. Now, we can further our investigations into the nature of this powerful Being by which everything exists. – Man, Aristaeus, seems to be capable of two kinds of conviction: one is an internal sentiment, ineffaceable in a well-constituted man; the other derives from reasoning, that is, from the orderly labour of the intellect. The latter cannot exist without having the first as its sole basis; since, when working back to the first principles of all our knowledge, whatever their nature may be, we will arrive at axioms, that is, at the pure conviction of sentiment; and you should even include, Aristaeus, Olympus, Cape Tenaro and the smiling plains beyond Acheron,⁵⁷ which – even though adorned and modified by the charms of Poetry – have their primitive source in the pure conviction of a simple truth. In a well-constituted man, a single sigh of the soul, which manifests itself from time to time towards something better, towards the future and what is perfect, is a more-than-geometric demonstration of the nature of the Divinity. But to the extent men have multiplied their needs, they have perfected their intellectual faculties; and their internal sentiment has lost its vivacity. The sure and geometrical progress of the intellect has led to the determinate and precise conviction that results from it being preferred over that of sentiment, which is of infinite simplicity, and hence vague and indeterminate in appearance. The first of these convictions is much more analogous to those among our organs that we have learned to use the most and so are the most exercised; the second is relative to the degree of elevation, perfection and temper of the soul of each individual. Moreover, by means of language, I can modify the intellect of another in such a way that there results for him the same geometrical and determinate conviction that I myself possess, whereas purely sentimental conviction is born in [our] essence and cannot be communicated. Let us try, therefore, to find a path that leads to this first [kind of] conviction.

Space is the only real infinite, and [is] perfectly absolute in nature: it is one: it has no parts: it encompasses within itself everything actual and everything possible, without the actual or the possible forming part of its essence. Therefore, its non-existence is absurd. Hence, eternal duration is a consequence of its existence. – Two absolute infinities, distinguished from one another, are impossible, since this would presuppose some boundary, which is contradictory to infinity. – Through our reasoning we have arrived at the geometric and perfect conviction of the existence of a single Creator God, who exists in essence, by

his own force, and who is therefore infinite. – Hence, space, [which is] one and infinite, is not a Being or a distinct essence; and therefore it is an attribute of the God. – It is the only attribute by which we know of this great Being by means of our organs. What infinity of attributes must be added to [that of] space to complete the whole of Divinity[?] – that is a question, Aristaeus, which God alone could answer. But what results geometrically from this great attribute is the omnipresence of the Divinity. The whole universe – both what is actual or what is possible together – cannot form one part, one atom, or one mode of this infinite God. Yet he is everywhere: he is here: there is in this shrub, in you, and in me, Aristaeus, no part – however indivisibly small we conceive it – that he does not penetrate. He is as perfectly present in you as [he is] in the whole universe, as [he is] in himself; and you doubt whether Aristaeus has relationships with him!

ARISTAEUS. – Diocles, permit me to interrupt you for a moment. It is not to contradict you; for I vividly sense the truths that you have just told me and proved to me: it is [rather] to implore your help. – I prided myself on the perfect conviction of Jupiter's proximity; but considering the nothingness of all humanity, I feel myself deprived of my happiness. – When I see how volcanoes, floods, pestilences, earthquakes destroy millions of beings like me, and all their possible offspring, [and] when, placing myself on some distant star, I look at the smallness of our planet, when I think of the accidents which could destroy this entire globe in a moment, I admit that I am lost, I do not foresee any relationship with the God, and little is needed to push me back into the chaos of doubts from which you had pulled me.

DIOCLES. – My dear Aristaeus, if, while climbing towards the summit of the Aornos, that sharp and steep rock which the ancient Hercules must have left intact and which the Macedonian conquered,⁵⁸ we glanced backwards [when we were] halfway up, our heads would spin and the surrounding cliffs would make famous the names of Aristaeus and Diocles; but if, by continuing our labours and our efforts, we were to reach the summit! – The summit of the Aornos is a fertile plain, filled with springs, interspersed with streams, adorned with greenery and eternal flowers, and here the beautiful sun shines without clouds. – Having attained, as we have, perfect knowledge that the germ of the good resides in the bosom of [a] free being and that the Creator God is everywhere we are and everywhere we will never be – look back down from this height to the earth. – In truth, it is not surprising that, from such a distance, the objects whose mere husk you wish to see appear small to you. – The nothingness of humanity weighs on you. But, Aristaeus, are you so small when you fly from star to star to contemplate from afar this globe that we inhabit? Are you so small when, as a physicist, you penetrate the laws of Nature? when, as a legislator, you put a stop to the vices of society? when, by your insight, you enlighten the centuries to come? – Why depict humanity in terms of what your eyes alone reveal to you about those beings down there? and why not take your model from what you sense about yourself? You do resemble these men in shape; but they resemble you from the point of view of their souls, their faculties, their indestructible existence. This is humanity. But you, who see so many plagues destroying the millions of beings who resemble you, and who, to make things even gloomier, further add all their

possible offspring – you make the existence of these offspring impossible by destroying its cause; and so describe the wretch whose existence is not possible. – But, at bottom, what do these plagues destroy, I ask you? They decompose a few clumps of particles of matter, but not humanity; [humanity] does not consist in the constrained outline of the human body. – The God is greedy when it comes to matter, Aristaeus, and, from this perspective, the universe is poor. A particle of matter is something borrowed: it must sometimes serve Achilles, sometimes Homer, sometimes Aristaeus, sometimes an animal, a plant, or a stone.

ARISTAEUS. But these souls, whose bodies are destroyed, will no longer beget their fellow men?

DIOCLES. Fire is part of everything, acts on everything, reproduces itself in everything; and water itself seemingly extinguishes it only because it loves it too much: it attracts it and absorbs it; and do you believe, Aristaeus, that, for our soul, there are other essences than matter that join themselves to it, act on it, and reproduce themselves in it?

ARISTAEUS. O Diocles, you who console me, who sustain me and put me in my place at the moment when I risked hurrying, finish your work. Make me understand that the God interferes in the affairs of men: this is the last of the tasks I impose on you.

DIOCLES. The last of Alcides' labours was to tame the three-headed Cerberus⁵⁹ – the one you have just imposed on me, Aristaeus, resembles it, because your question is threefold. When you ask me whether God interferes with humanity, or with men, the answer is easy, since he interfered with them when forming their species. When you ask me whether he interferes in the affairs of men, like Minerva who slowed down the flight of Pandarus's javelin* or like Pan who rescued our fathers on the plains of Marathon[†] – that is, whether he interferes in the events of their society, in their actions as effects of their free will, as well as [in their] modifications given to matter by their will; then the answer must be that, without being impossible, it must appear impossible to every limited being that God would destroy, in one particular case, the law which derives from the general impulse he has given to Nature. But when you ask me whether the Divinity interferes with man or with the individual, like the Tyndaridae whom Simonides invoked to save him from Scopas's fate;[‡] it's necessary to take up once more our earlier reasoning, after having remarked that there are relations, or certain interrelations, between any two things or two beings which coexist. From the unity and omnipresence of the Divinity that has been proven, it necessarily

* It is in Book IV of the *Iliad* that we find that Minerva changed the direction of the arrow which Pandarus, son of Lycaon, fired against Menelaus.⁶⁰

† It was alleged that the God Pan had come to the aid of the Athenians at the battle of Marathon by casting terror among the Persians; and it is from this that we still have the expression of Panic terror to express a fear whose cause we do not know.⁶¹

‡ Finding himself one day at a feast with Scopas, or, according to others, with a certain Pharsalus, Simonides delivered a eulogy to Castor and Pollux; and in order to recompense him for his piety towards them, the Gods sent for him; and, the moment after he left the house, it fell into ruins and crushed all who were within.⁶²

follows that the least atom and the most sublime or least limited being both have relationships with God, in proportion to the richness of their composition and of their homogeneity with him. Consequently, the excellence and the happiness of a being is measured by the proximity and the multiplicity of these relationships. Hence, it is evident that the free being which has the faculty to contemplate and to modify itself, as long as I suppose that it has some knowledge of the nature of the God, is in a state to perfect, to diminish, or to multiply these relationships. Therefore, [the object of] his great study must be to know this God. It is by the slow and rigid march of the intellect from simple truths that our crudest organs discover for us that we have come to the determinate and precise conviction of the existence, the power and the omnipresence of the God. To acquire knowledge of his nature and of our relationships with him, we must enter into ourselves, and make the husk of humanity disappear. If ever the Delphic oracle produced an injunction worthy of the reputation of the brilliant son of Leto,⁶³ then it is the universal teaching: *know thyself*.⁶⁴ It is from this knowledge alone that we can draw out the nature of the Divinity. You reflected well, Aristaeus, when you said that you could not compare your shape, your body, or your strength to God. However, as there are relations [*rappports*] between all things that coexist, there must be relationships [*relations*] between your shape, your body and your forces, and the Divinity. But knowledge of these relationships – even supposing that you could acquire them – would be perfectly useless to you, since, being unable to change neither your figure, nor your body, nor your strength, you could neither increase nor perfect these relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to look for relationships that you can change, modify and perfect at will; that is, you must consider in yourself the things whose modifications depend the most on you yourself and which you have the power to perfect: these are the faculties of your soul, and the degree of harmony in their combination. You have felt keenly that, for something to have a relationship with something else, they must have homologous qualities in common: therefore, we must see whether, among everything in you over which you have mastery and control, there are not things homologous, or homogeneous, with the Divinity. Our faculties, insofar as we know them, consist in the power to will, the power to act; and you do not refuse [to ascribe] this faculty to the great Motor of the universe. They [otherwise] consist in the intellect, or intelligence, which compares and composes the ideas that your imagination encloses; now, we have seen that this faculty is of the essence of a free being which can will and act, so, you cannot refuse [to ascribe] it to supreme Jupiter, who is sovereignly free: even if he does not compare or compose, as we do, ideas or interrelations, but the essences themselves. We can deduce from this that, no matter how prodigious the distance is between this God and us, the nature of our activity on matter is the same as his activity, insofar as he performs what we call acting; and that the nature of our intellect, or of our reason, is the same as that of this infinite Intelligence; that is, the nature of truth for us is the same as that of truth for this [Intelligence]. But let us see whether the homogeneity is not even greater when it comes to the moral principle by which you enjoy and you suffer with other beings, by which you sovereignly judge what is just and what is unjust, and by which you sense the pleasure from

a good action and repentance from a bad one. If we follow the progress of our faculties during some unforeseen event, we find that, in the first moment, we have the sensation, or rather, imagination represents to us the simple idea of the thing or of the event; in the second [moment], [there is] the moral principle, insofar as it is sensitive, desires, becomes sad, or abhors, owing to its sensibility or its relationships with this thing or with this event; in the third [moment], this same principle judges what is just or what is unjust, that is, it senses what must be our modification to this event, so that the soul's repose and internal contentment is not disturbed; in the fourth [moment], the intellect gets involved, compares, composes, calculates and corrupts or modifies moral sensation; and in the fifth [moment], the force of the willpower and the power to act is determined.

You see, Aristaeus, that, in the first two moments, the soul is passive; and that, on the contrary, it is active in the final two; but, in the third, it is modified in a completely different way and in such a way that we can no longer compare its state either to an active activity or to a passive inertia. To give us an idea of it, let us remark that no man has ever committed a bad deed knowing that it was such, without a sense of uneasiness, repugnance, pain, and without perceiving an internal voice crying at him: 'unjust, or cruel – stop!' This voice, Aristaeus, is nothing other than a law which derives from our essence, which God has given to free and active beings, so that they love one another, so that they unite together with each other; just as he has given the law of inertia or attraction to matter, from which derives the reaction against any action contrary to this law; and if a particle of inert matter could sense and speak, it would describe to us its tendency towards what is homogeneous to it, its reaction against everything that would tear it away from this, in a way that resembles the description we could give it of our conscience. Thus, Aristaeus, this moral judgement is neither action nor passion; it is the immediate effect of the nature of our eternal souls, of their attraction towards what resembles them, towards what is great, towards what is beautiful, towards the Divinity; and it is to this attraction that Jupiter and Eros owe the first altars that men erected to them.

ARISTAEUS. I beg you, Diocles, to clarify these ideas for me.

DIOCLES. To judge what is just and what is unjust is merely to contemplate ourselves and our actions from the centre of another individual; and this presupposes the faculty of being able to place oneself there. This faculty constitutes morality; and since it is neither passive nor active, but pertains to the essence of the soul or forms part of it, it follows that it consists merely in the natural tendency, or attraction, of an individual towards other individuals. But attraction between two things derives from some relationship between them; and therefore, attraction is reciprocal. But we have seen that two things cannot have relationships with each other without having some homogeneous or homologous aspect in common; thus, when the tendency, the attraction towards the Divinity is manifest, it follows that our relationships and homogeneity will be likewise [manifest]. Now, this tendency, this attraction is [indeed] manifest – not that it should be sought in the cries of pain, of weakness, or of fear which are not addressed to God but to some end of suffering; – and not that I wish you to believe me on this point or believe the delirious Pythia⁶⁵ or the obsequious Priest of the Libyan

Jupiter who sees in Alexander the son of his God.⁶⁶ Rather, believe in Socrates, believe in yourself, Aristaeus, once you have purified that organ which is turned towards divine things,* as the eye is turned towards the light. It is then that you will find this attraction and this homogeneity with which it is easy for men to accomplish the good. If we consider the tone that reigns in the actions of Sesostrius, Themistocles, the Macedonian himself,⁶⁷ and if we compare it to [the tone] in the actions of Socrates, Epaminondas, Timoleon,⁶⁸ we do in truth discover greatness in the [actions] of the former; but [also] effort, pains, labour, sweat; whereas for the others everything is greatness, ease, nature, simplicity – a sure mark of the constant harmony of their whole. The impossibility of doing evil is there manifest. Happiness (which is a continuity of the good) which in others seems merely to be the effect of events, circumstances, and the virtue of the day, appears in these heroes as an emanation of their essences. What men call unhappiness ceases to exist for them and takes on the tone of happiness itself. The retreat at Delium[†] has the same tone as the Theban victories;[‡] and what sensible man would not prefer to be proud Socrates in chains than the son of Philip deep in the Indies?⁶⁹ It seems, Aristaeus, that when man arrives – either by his labours or by the excellence of his nature – at the perfect harmony of the faculties which we recognise in him, other faculties – until now unknown – begin to be developed and increase his homogeneity with the God to the point that the very shadow of Divine Power appears to manifest itself there. Hence, my dear, if it were ever doubtful that the omnipresent Jupiter mingled with such individuals, it is nevertheless undeniable that these men have the faculty to mingle with the God. Imagine a boat on the banks of the Ganges run up against its precious sand; the helmsman's labours move it with an effort; its movements are forced and of short duration; but when the helmsman has finally managed to put it back afloat, it obeys without difficulty; its movements are easy; it follows the course of the Ganges with ease, since the helmsman's and the Ganges' goal is in the same direction. Behold an eagle that hovers in the air by modulating its flight to Aeolus's breath;⁷⁰ it doesn't get tired; its wings appear motionless; it is the most perfect symbol of the virtuous man, of the happy man who encounters no obstacle and whose flight, although finite and limited by his nature, is pushed without end and unceasingly towards true felicity by the immense torrent of the supreme will.

This, Aristaeus, is what I believe we can safely say about Jupiter's nature and our relationships with it. – Let's finish our conversation here; it's getting late. – Look at the Arctophylax,[§] which is already shining and announces the

* We read in the Greek: ὄργανον ψυχῆς ᾧ μόνῳ θεατόν ἐστι τὸ θεῖον.⁷¹

† The author is surely speaking here of the defeat of the Athenians at Delium, where Socrates saved Xenophon's life, and defended Laches, while redeeming the retreat.⁷²

‡ These are the victories won by Epaminondas at Leuctra and at Mantinea.⁷³

§ The Arcturus, or Homer's Οὐρὸς δύνων, marked α in Ptolemy, Bayer and Flamsteed, is the brightest star in the constellation of Boötes; or rather it is a formless [body] of the first magnitude, which belongs to this constellation. The Ancients also designated the whole constellation of βόρηος or of Boötes as Arctophylax.⁷⁴

approaching night. – Besides, we have done, I think, what we had proposed to do. We have discovered that there must reign perfect order in the universe, which can be visible only to the eye of the Divinity. We have seen, by contemplating this great whole from every side sensible to us, that its dependence is evident, and that it is purely the product of a creative, infinitely intelligent Power. We have seen that the absolute infinity of space is the measure of the God's extension and his presence. We have glimpsed the nature of our relationships and degree of our homogeneity with him. To sense them both distinctly, Aristaeus, developments are needed; the material husk must be shaken off; death is necessary. How many developments, how many deaths are necessary for the soul to attain the greatest perfection of which its essence is capable – this is a veiled secret for us as long as succession of time and of parts are the only means for us to have distinct ideas, just as the divine Homer's sublime songs are veiled secrets for the child who still forms only syllables by the succession of sounds and characters. It suffices for us to know that it is from this life that we take wing, that death does not change the direction we have taken, and that it only accelerates the soul's movements in this direction, which depends entirely on the energy of the free being.

ARISTAEUS. Diocles, you make death an object of my deepest curiosity. But there is one thing, my friend, that grieves me.

DIOCLES. What is that, my Aristaeus?

ARISTAEUS. Seeing the flight you are preparing for, I fear that death is going to separate you too far from me; and how then will we cross the immense space separating us?

DIOCLES. My dear Aristaeus, you are mistaken. Remember that Alpheus travels much further to mingle its waves with those of its beautiful Arethusa.⁷⁵



Explanation of the Vignettes

The title vignette represents several attributes of pagan deities.

The [vignette] placed above the dedication appears to indicate a sacrifice that Diocles makes before commencing his work. The Greek inscription found on the altar, Διοτιμαι ψυχαγωγ. κ. παρθοι. κ. χαριτ. διοκλ. Ανεθ. is to be explained thus: Diocles has built this altar to Diotima, director of souls, and to Persuasion, and to the Graces.

The [vignette] at the head of the dialogue is copied from an engraved stone which represents an ancient urn surmounted by three butterflies. They apparently indicate the souls of those whose ashes rest in the urn: it must be admitted that the ancients were extremely expressive when it came to sentiment. The letters on the urn read, ΛΔΣ, which gives the number 234, or 2, 3, 4. It is difficult to judge whether these characters are initials or whether they designate some era. In the latter case, they might mean the year 234 of the Seleucids,⁷⁶ or else the year 234 of some Egyptian era, supposing that the Λ designates the word λυκάβας,⁷⁷ although on the medals of the Ptolemies and the Emperors this word is ordinarily expressed by the Roman L. These letters might instead be linked to the Pythagorean sect, since these three numbers, taken together, form the most perfect number.⁷⁸ Moreover, this little monument might be a kind of amulet, even though the shape of the vase is quite elegant. We see here how erudition and criticism may illuminate the relic, but that often they illuminate it too much.

The vignette which ends the work relates to the passage near the end of the dialogue: *Behold an eagle*, etc.⁷⁹

Simon, or on the Faculties of the Soul¹

Ταῦτά σε τῆς θεΐης ἀρετῆς εἰς ἴχνια θήσει,
Ναὶ μὰ τὸν ἀμετέρα ψυχᾶ παραδόντα τετρακτὸν
Παγὰν ἐνάου φύσεως.²

Editor's Announcement

What man would have the effrontery to say to a frivolous public: My public, once more for your amusement I am presenting you with some profound metaphysics? I say to ours without scruples: I offer you a *Dialogue of Simon the Athenian on the faculties of the human soul*.³ You know that Simon was a leather merchant* who lived in the Piraeus next to Telecles the weaver.⁴ His familiar intercourse with the most illustrious of all men, as well as Pericles' vain efforts to attach himself to him, speak enough in his favour to interest you. The first people of the republic, whether by their talents, their wealth or their positions, came to chat familiarly in his shop, and it is claimed that he had such an excellent memory that he could retain whole speeches from Socrates and put them down faithfully in writing. There were thirty-three of these speeches or dialogues that are called *scutic* after the profession of the editor. Diogenes Laertius has conserved the titles for us, but none bears that of Simon, and it is to the same Russians and to the same archipelago to which we owe *Aristaeus*⁵ that we are indebted for this small and singular work.[†] As far as its style is concerned, it has even more of that tone which reigns in Plato than the noble naivety of Xenophon,

* [*The 1783 manuscript adds a note here:*] Σκυτοτόμος has been translated differently: currier, tawer, shoemaker, leather merchant, tanner, but it properly means the one who cuts leather. Σκυτικός (*scutic*) derives from the same source.

† [*In the 1783 manuscript, this sentence is replaced with:*] Diogenes Laertius handed down the titles to us, but none bears that of Simon, so it seems much more probable that the dialogue in question here only bears the title of Simon because he is the main actor, and that the real author of this writing is Phaedo of Elis, the friend of Socrates, Crito, Alcibiades, and Plato. We know for certain that Phaedo composed a dialogue entitled *Simon*. It is also said that he made another one under the title of *Zopyrus*. This *Zopyrus* was the famous physiognomist and tutor of Alcibiades. A large part of our dialogue concerns physiognomy, so when we merely add to Diogenes' text the particle ἦ and change the plural into the singular, we will read: 'Phaedo was undoubtedly the author of the dialogue entitled *Zopyrus* or *Simon*, etc.'^(**). For this reason, it seems quite obvious that this dialogue is properly the work of Phaedo. Anyway, it is to the same Russians and to the same Archipelago to which we owe *Aristaeus* that we are indebted for this small and singular work.⁶

[*In the 1783 manuscript, the following note is appended to this passage:*] (**) Here is Diogenes' text corrected: Διαλόγους δὲ συνέγραψε γνησίον μὲν Ζόπυρον, ἦ Σίμιονα, καὶ δισταζόμενον

or the popular simplicity of Aeschines.⁷ The manuscript is much better preserved than that of *Aristaeus*, and the text has been left as it is, correcting in the notes only a few crude errors that will hardly bother the attentive reader.

It appears from the Dedication that our conjectures about the Diotima to which *Aristaeus* was addressed were very felicitous,⁸ and thus that this dialogue of Simon was lost and then found again by Diotima and Diocles beside an altar which still existed in the time of the Antonines⁹ [and which contained] a very ancient inscription* which claims that Charmus, as the first of all the Athenians, had dedicated this altar to Love.¹⁰

As for the content of the work, Socrates's purpose or Diotima's reasoning, I can tell you nothing. I have studied each sentence with care, but I have not read the work in the spirit required to understand its full meaning. I am a brave translator, a great antiquarian and a hardy critic, but for psychology one has need of algebra, which I do not possess. I am told, however, that this is a theory which could serve to perfect men. That being said, the redundancy and uselessness of such a doctrine in your century of perfection means I am merely left with the unfortunate service of having offered you an antiquity.[†]

Diocles to Diotima – your happiness.

Wise and sacred Diotima, you may remember that when we discovered this dialogue of Simon's beside the altar that Charmus dedicated to Love at the entrance to the Academy,¹¹ we were so struck by the resemblance between the speeches of the divine woman who bears the same name as you and the philosophy that you have formed for your own happiness and for that of others that we thought seriously of countenancing Pythagoras's metempsychosis,¹² and you imposed upon me the task of restoring in this writing what it might have lost over the course of more than a century. Having finished this work, I can neither address it [to anyone] more justly than to you, nor offer it to the Athenians under a more imposing authority than that of your approbation.

Νυκίαν etc.: Theon of Alexandria in his *Progymnasmata* and Pollux speak of this dialogue, and the former even quotes a passage from it.

* Χάρμος Αθηναίων πρότος ἔρωτι νέθηκε.¹³

[*In the 1783 manuscript, this note continues:*] This inscription is reported a little differently by Cleidemus in his travel book: Ποικιλομήχαν' ἔρωσ σοι τόν δ' ἰδρύσατο βωμόν Χάρμος ἐπὶ σκιεροῖς τέρμασι γυμνασίου. This Athenian Charmus, a general or polemarch who commanded the army under the Peisistratids, dedicated this altar to love on the occasion of his intimate liaison with Hippias to whom he had given his daughter in marriage.

† [*In the 1783 manuscript the final paragraph reads:*] Moreover, this altar is celebrated in a dream of Socrates. The day before Plato was presented to him for the first time, he thought he was seated opposite this altar, on which there was a cygnet. The bird left the altar and came to kneel on Socrates, who caressed it, then, flapping its wings, it took flight to the heavens, where Socrates lost sight of it. The next day when he saw Plato, he said that [Plato] was the swan that had appeared to him, as Diogenes Laertius, Apuleius, Pausanias, Olympiodorus and others tell us.¹⁴

Simon, or on the faculties of the soul.

SIMON. HIPPONICUS.

HIPPONICUS. Simon, Simon! where are you going? Listen.

SIMON. Who is calling me so familiarly? – Ah, son of Calaiscre,¹⁵ is that you? I haven't seen you for a long time. Where have you been? – But what am I saying! You have fled my house like so many others fed up with philosophy and the debaters who, for want of anything better to do, come to amuse themselves in my home.

HIPPONICUS. You do me wrong, Simon. May the Protectress of our city¹⁶ preserve me from abandoning philosophy and my friends! I have been at sea and on the Sicily expedition¹⁷ where we achieved nothing worthwhile, and I assure you that a failed project is not what makes us abandon philosophy. I just arrived back the day before yesterday, and to convince an ingrate such as you that I forgot neither you nor our friend's philosophy, I was going to your house to ask you for something, unless you have business elsewhere that might keep you from listening to me.

SIMON. My dear Hipponicus, I have just concluded my business, and intended to return home alone; coming home with you is much to be preferred. – Come in. – Rest. – What did you have to tell me?

HIPPONICUS. I have a question for you about Socrates. Have you seen him recently?

SIMON. It was just three days ago he came to my house with several others.

HIPPONICUS. I will tell you. Yesterday, I was walking along the rampart towards the gate of Diomis when I was caught in a terrible rainstorm. All I could do was save myself in Cleinias's [house],¹⁸ whose father lives close to the city gate, opposite the Amazon colonnade.¹⁹ On entering, I there found Aristophanes, who appeared to have been drinking well, as well as some strangers. I asked for news of Socrates, at which point Aristophanes laughed and told me that he was doing very well and that he had just spent a great part of the day with him at your house, that Socrates had greatly amused the company, and that he had told you all how one of his favourite Goddesses, *the Clouds*, had dissected man for him into all his visible and invisible parts;²⁰ finally, he added so many other absurdities that I did my best to change the conversation, ashamed before these strangers who did not know what to think of all these follies. So now, Simon – you who have the faculty to retain entire speeches by Socrates – I pray you to tell me the truth. Could Socrates possibly have said such extravagant things?

SIMON. Are you joking, Hipponicus? – Aren't you familiar with this jester? – What did he say when he was here with us? He went out without saying a word. I have never seen him altered like that. He looked so awkward and so uncomfortable that we all took pity on him. Besides, Socrates' speech seemed so interesting to me that I took it down immediately in writing. Thus, if you absolutely wanted to, I could read it to you from start to finish. What do you think?

HIPPONICUS. Oh, my dear Simon, I beg you. Read. Don't hesitate. You will make me forget all the inconveniences of my journey.

SIMON. Well, I will content you, but you need to know beforehand how many we were and what provided the opportunity for this speech. I had just received from

the hands of Mnesarchus, son of Terpander;²¹ this beautiful group in bronze over there which represents Prometheus forming the first man.²²

HIPPONICUS. In truth, Simon, it is a very beautiful piece in my opinion.

SIMON. I was at home with Socrates, Cebes, Agathon and Damon, the musician. We were all admiring Mnesarchus's skill and the art with which he had expressed, on the one hand, a deep and attentive genius in Prometheus's physiognomy and attitude, and, on the other, that air of candour, of naivety and of astonishment in the newborn, without there appearing, as of yet, any of that celestial fire which cost Prometheus so much, when, at that moment, Aristophanes came in, and sat down with us. After greeting us, he gazed at the work for a moment, and said that it was worthless: that the artist had given Prometheus too much acuity, that it didn't require all that to make men, and that, moreover, Deucalion and Cadmus had done the same thing as Prometheus for much less cost.²³ Since Mnesarchus, who is still young, ambitious and full of his art, was present, and I saw his tears of rage ready to run, I whispered to Aristophanes that he was wrong to joke and to discourage this young man by showing indifference to his work. Turning to Mnesarchus, he answered me out loud, that he had not taken offence at Mnesarchus, but at Prometheus himself, who had made man all wrong by putting what ought to be inside outside and what should be outside inside; that he had thereby hidden the most essential parts of man, while he had given the light of day to those which have been merely made to be seen, and that, therefore, it was [Prometheus'] fault that the wise Athenians, seeing only the skin of men, so often entrusted their affairs and their armies to people without brains or hearts. We all laughed at Aristophanes' bitter joke, but Cebes, who is serious, told him: 'Aristophanes, you are speaking against your own interests. If the inside of man were outside, the sycophants, the orators and the comedians of today would die of hunger, for there would no longer be food for corruption and slander.' As the conversation threatened to turn sour, Socrates changed tack by addressing Mnesarchus. 'Son of Terpander', he said to him, 'it seems to me that your Prometheus well refutes the accusation that Aristophanes has just brought against him, for this young man, which he created, does not only manifest his youth, his vigour, and his agility by means of the beauty of his perfectly well-proportioned limbs, but also [manifests] what is going on inside him; the pleasure of sensing himself exist; the astonishment at seeing other things outside of him; the desire to know them, and that calm of the soul which clearly marks the perfect absence of any obstacle to his desires.'

MNESARCHUS. I admit, Socrates, that you are listing admirably all that I wished to express.

ARISTOPHANES. We agree on this, but what your Prometheus ought to have expressed are the vices of man, the nooks of his heart, the dark and remote paths which turn his soul into a labyrinth for which there is no guiding thread.

SOCRATES. Do you believe, Aristophanes, that the grandson of Heaven and Earth²⁴ formed a vicious man?

ARISTOPHANES. Let's get this straight. I see in this beautiful work (don't be displeased by it, Mnesarchus), I see, by the somewhat stupid appearance of this little man, that Prometheus has not yet committed his theft, and, thus far, I have nothing

to object; but when he mixed this heavenly fire, divine intelligence, with the silt he had just kneaded, he should have known that two so heterogeneous things cannot be mixed together without corrupting each other, and when he saw the vices and the inequalities which resulted from his absurd mixture, he should have given us a means to judge human vices, just as the touchstone judges the impure alloy of gold, and, by this means, our Athenians would have realised that they should entrust neither their money to Cleon nor their army to Philocrates.²⁵

MNESARCHUS. Let the Athenians all become sculptors or painters, [then] they would not be mistaken. It is the ignorant who are deceived. For since we others can express in the physiognomies and attitudes of men all that is found at the bottom of their souls, it is clear that the outside of man forms certain signs of what they really are within. Look at the works of Theodorus of Samos, of Epeius of Panopus, of our immortal Phidias,²⁶ and doubt this truth if you dare. And yes, my dear Aristophanes, I want to descend to the poets. Tell me where Homer, Archilochus,²⁷ our Agathon, and you yourself draw the truth for your descriptions, if the outsides of men were not to paint exactly what they are and what they feel?

ARISTOPHANES. Young Mnesarchus, poets do not depict the truth, but what is likely, and they modify this likelihood according to the end that they themselves propose.²⁸ They themselves choose, in the moment, what they want to depict, and the more they know how to do this with skill, the more their [depiction of] what is likely approaches the truth.

MNESARCHUS. And what is the end that they propose?

ARISTOPHANES. To entertain and to instruct.

MNESARCHUS. I see. So, in *The Clouds*,²⁹ you merely portrayed one possible Socrates: a Socrates who would have been the Aristophanes of the moment, and not our one here; and this [is done] for the entertainment of the public?

ARISTOPHANES. – My child, you will never amuse the sacred public of Athens, unless you are presented in the theatre with a few alterations.

SOCRATES. It seems to me, Mnesarchus, that Aristophanes is not entirely wrong to get a little angry with you. You would not argue with the wise Nestor over the art of driving a chariot, nor with the doctor of Kos over the art of curing diseases.³⁰ Now, Aristophanes has acquired mastery in his art by as many triumphs and successes as they did in theirs, and, certainly, no one is more confident than him in the art of entertaining the sacred public of Athens and of giving it the instruction it desires. But both of you are wrong, when you see Simon, Cebes and me, as well as perhaps Agathon before you, not to instruct us, instead of quarrelling over things upon which you seem to me to agree.

ARISTOPHANES. Do Mnesarchus and I agree, Socrates?

SOCRATES. I'm saying that it seemed so to me, but what I know for certain is that the interesting things you both have just uttered ignite in me that insatiable desire to learn the truth. – You owe me some instruction, because – so as not to hide anything from you – you have almost made me doubt several things I had been taught in the past, and that I believed to be certain.

MNESARCHUS. What could I teach you, Socrates, for, at the Propylaea, there are the three Graces and Mercury [sculpted] by your own hand.³¹

SOCRATES. It is true that, when I was very young, I made these two works under my father's gaze, but my familiar genius made me see early on that the Gods had refused me those sublime talents which are required to amaze men by art and that [instead] they granted me merely those [talents] which are enough to learn from others what the arts are and what they can be. Now, since that is what your speeches are about, I beg you, Aristophanes and Mnesarchus, to be so good as to show me the truth, and to tell me beforehand if I have understood you correctly.

ARISTOPHANES. If you think we agree, you have hardly understood us, Socrates.

MNESARCHUS. In this I fully agree with him.

SOCRATES. Mnesarchus, you said that you sculptors have the faculty to represent, in physiognomies and attitudes, everything found at the bottom of the soul of the subject that you treat. Could you express Hercules' vigour in suffocating the lion of Nemea, or Ariadne's torments on the isle of Dia?³²

MNESARCHUS. Perfectly well, Socrates.

SOCRATES. And to such an extent that we will be seized with fear or pity in seeing these two works?

MNESARCHUS. You will be affected in much the same way as those who saw these objects in nature.

SOCRATES. I believe you. But could you represent Orestes when he is speaking to his mother and to Aegisthus a few moments before he sacrificed them to Agamemnon's spirit?³³ Or Atreus when he offered Thyestes the horrible food he intended for him?³⁴

MNESARCHUS. Just the same.

SOCRATES. And to such an extent that we will see in Orestes and Atreus what is happening within their souls?

MNESARCHUS. Yes, Socrates, I can.

SOCRATES. So, your admirers will see in your Orestes and Atreus what neither Aegisthus nor Thyestes saw in the original, because they were taken in.

MNESARCHUS. – But one cannot express what does not appear. – I feel the effect that the imminent parricide must cause in Orestes' soul, and that's what I express.

SOCRATES. Therefore, my dear, you are representing Mnesarchus, while just borrowing Orestes' name, and not the true Orestes. – Do you think that if Damon wanted to imitate the sweet concert of the Sirens, he could make you feel the voracious cruelty of these monsters? If so, the prudent Odysseus would not have needed to be bound. So, my dear Mnesarchus, you will have to admit that you do agree with Aristophanes, and I conclude from this that there are things in man which cannot be expressed by any art, because they are not perceivable in any way whatsoever from without.

MNESARCHUS. However, before your sentiment was different, Socrates, because you said that my little man here did not only manifest the strength and agility of his body, but everything that is within him.

SOCRATES. I admit it, but, at this moment, there is nothing within him but the simple sensation of the things that surround him; he is a pure mirror which only reflects back the actions which come to him from outside, and you seem to me really admirable, my dear Mnesarchus, for having chosen the only subject in which the inside and the outside can be expressed equally.

MNESARCHUS. So, can you tell me, Socrates, what things can be expressed, and what cannot?

SOCRATES. This seems fairly simple to me, for things about which we cannot have any notion whatsoever cannot be imitated or expressed, and those about which we can have notions can [be imitated or expressed]. But how do you have notions of anything, I ask you?

MNESARCHUS. But by the eyes, by the ears, by touch, by taste, by smell, by that moral sense which I am unable to depict for you very well, and these organs give my soul ideas or sensations of those things.

SOCRATES. I understand you, and so, when you want to give me some idea or some sensation in my soul, you have to go by way of my eyes, my ears, my touch, taste, smell, or moral sense.

MNESARCHUS. That is certain.

SOCRATES. And when you want to express to me, or to give me ideas of things that exist or that have existed, you must have had the ideas or the sensations of these things by the very same ways we have just mentioned.

MNESARCHUS. I readily agree, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Let's suppose, Mnesarchus, that you had seen Orestes and Atreus at the moments we were talking about. You did not see what was happening within them, since they possessed the will and power to hide it from you. And they did possess this will and this power, since those who were present were deceived by them; therefore, you could not represent to me what was happening in Atreus and in Orestes at these moments. Hence, it seems to me impossible to express the state of a man who has the will and the power to hide himself. It is not by means of the insolent harangue that Thersites addresses to the assembled kings that Homer depicts him as vile and cowardly.³⁵ It is when he weeps and his back is bent under the sceptre of the sage Odysseus, and we see by this that we can express well a man who is afraid, but not his fear [itself], or [the fact] that he is cowardly when there is nothing that makes him scared. And so it is with all the faults and all the vices of men, when they have the ability to hide them. A thing does not appear visible when it is not illuminated. A lyre does not appear audible when it is not played, or when it does not communicate its vibrations to the surrounding air.

MNESARCHUS. You are right, Socrates, but don't you feel that, when a man is often angry, often envious, deceitful, jealous, that the external parts of his body and his physiognomy take on, by daily habit, a mark that remains, and which evidently shows that he is naturally subject to these defects?

SOCRATES. Do you believe, Mnesarchus, that the lyre that Damon plays every day – the qualities of the sound that it produces under Damon's fingers – will make you more familiar with his person than a lyre which has never been played? If so, Alcamenes would have been wrong to make his Juno almost as beautiful and as desirable as his Venus in the gardens, whereas the poets portray her as a wife who is too often belligerent and obstructive.³⁶

ARISTOPHANES. Yet it must be said, Socrates, that in your Juno the marks of nastiness appear consistent.³⁷

SOCRATES. I am delighted, Aristophanes, that my Xanthippe turns nasty when she

sees you, but, with me, when she takes off those [draped] folds, I don't want to tell you how kind she is. – But, my dear Mnesarchus, please tell me, when you see a body at rest, how do you see that it is mobile? how do you see that something is active when you do not see that it acts? how do you see in the sleeping lion – the animal that appears laziest – the vigour and vehemence of its activity?

MNESARCHUS. I confess that I do not see it at all, but I conclude from this, it seems to me, that men are not what I can express by my art.

SOCRATES. But you know, my dear, that the poets often paint Love as the most terrible, cruellest and most deceitful of all the Gods. Could you do this in your art as well?

MNESARCHUS. Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES. And how would you do it? because he must still remain a child.

MNESARCHUS. To render him terrible I will make him stamp on Jupiter's lightning. To represent him as deceitful he will steal some weapon from the God of combat or the lyre from Apollo, and to show him cruel I will make him tear apart something.

SOCRATES. Very nice, Mnesarchus, but when he steals the lyre or the weapons he does not seem cruel, and when he tramples Jupiter's lightning he does not seem deceitful, and it is obvious, therefore, that you make him seem such and such only by such and such action. When he is playing on Dione's lap,³⁸ you could make him a little bit clever perhaps, but never deceitful, cruel or terrible. And so, it seems that nothing is visible in an intelligent, moral and active being other than what constitutes one real and present action.

MNESARCHUS. What do you mean, Socrates – is not sadness, depression, anger, falsehood, greed, envy, or, in short, all passion visible on the outsides of man?

SOCRATES. A passion of the soul is not visible as a passion of the soul, but only to the extent that this passion acts on the visible parts of the body. And this action is of two different natures: one – as in sadness, depression and hope – when it simply changes the modifications of the visible parts of the body; the other, when it makes this change so that there results from it an external effect, as in anger, fear or desire. I admit, Mnesarchus, that all these passions can be expressed in the physiognomies and attitudes of men, but if I suppose in man the will or the power to hide them, even these passions cannot be expressed.

MNESARCHUS. In this you are right, Socrates.

SOCRATES. So it seems to me. – But, my dear, I will make another reflection. You should not perhaps confound virtue, vice and defect, first, with the passions of the soul, and secondly, with the actions that result from them, since these are three very different things.

CEBES. This reflection seems subtle to me, Socrates, and I beg you to elaborate on it for us.

ARISTOPHANES. I agree, but you have reprimanded this young and wise Mnesarchus so well that I would pray you to finish [this task] before confusing him, and to teach him what rank his art occupies among the classes of the arts, so that he will no longer take the trouble to descend from sculpture to poetry.

MNESARCHUS. Oh, I'm not afraid of being confused by Socrates, so I will ask him to satisfy you.

SOCRATES. I cannot be a judge in your quarrel, unless each of you will teach me what his art is. Then I could judge which of these arts is closest to perfection, as those who stand at the end of the race judge which of the runners is the first to the finish. So, my dear Mnesarchus, [for] you are the youngest, tell me, please, what is your art of sculpture?

MNESARCHUS. But, Socrates, I don't understand you. – The art of cutting stones and shaping them.

SOCRATES. If Aristophanes or Agathon were to respond that their art is that of writing characters or uttering words, or if you asked the shoemaker what his art was and he replied that it is the art of cutting and shaping leather, would you be happy with his answer? No, of course not. But if the shoemaker replied to you that it is making shoes that fit well the feet presented him, [then] he tells you the purpose of his art and what it can produce, and that is what I want to know about yours.

MNESARCHUS. My art, Socrates, is without a doubt the most perfect of all the arts, since it speaks to two senses at once, to touch and to vision. It is the most perfect because it perfectly represents everything that can be represented. It is the most perfect since it is the only one of the arts that can master time by making one happy moment eternal and rendering it visible from all sides and into all centuries. And I believe, Socrates, that this is enough to paint the perfection of the art of sculpture and its pre-eminence above all other arts.

SOCRATES. Since you are only talking of its perfection, please explain a bit more. You are talking about three perfections. In relation to the first, tell me please, do you know the beautiful Polyxena by Polykleitos of Sicyon,³⁹ of which a poet said that he saw in its eyes the entire Trojan War?

MNESARCHUS. Yes, I do know it! and I dare add that the poet was quite right.

SOCRATES. I want to believe it so. But what I have trouble believing is that you will sense the Trojan War by touching its eyes.

MNESARCHUS. You are joking, Socrates? No. When I said that sculpture pertains to touch, I meant that what it represents is as solid as the subject represented is, or could be.

SOCRATES. Thus, it does not speak to touch, but much more richly to vision than all the other arts.⁴⁰ For its second perfection [also] pertains to vision, since we have said that it represents perfectly only what is visible. And concerning the last one, my dear, do you think that Alcámenes' Procne who eternally deliberates over the killing of little Itys supplies a happy moment for eternity?⁴¹ But tell me, please, why do you always want to give movement to your figures, to make them speak, to inspire them with soul and life, if making the moment eternal was not an imperfection? Your art is obliged by its nature to annihilate movement: the succession of actions; and ultimately everything that designates the continuous energy of an active being, and to reduce this movement, this succession, this life, to rest and to inertia; and do you call this a privilege that your art has over other arts? It seems to me that, in this vein, the only subjects which you can represent truly are limited to the punishment of Niobe, or to those unfortunates who gazed at the Gorgon's head.⁴² Homer's art, which puts Gods and men into action, which passes over centuries, which ascends Olympus, crosses seas and

descends into that night which even the Immortals abhor, [that art] has a vaster field, it seems to me, to spread out its riches and power.

ARISTOPHANES. I do not believe, Socrates, that he yet understands you.

SOCRATES. – You must not take badly what I have just said, my dear Mnesarchus, and when I think about it, it might well be that we were both mistaken in seeking the perfection of an art in the number and the diversity of the things to which it could be applied.

MNESARCHUS. What do you mean, Socrates?

SOCRATES. Because, on this basis, the art of calculation would be the most perfect of the arts, for a number can be applied to all that can be. Thus, if each art has a determinate purpose, it would seem that we ought to seek the perfection of an art in the perfection with which it approaches its purpose.

MNESARCHUS. But in this way the art of calculation will still be the most perfect, which is absurd if you compare it to sculpture, music or poetry.

SOCRATES. In truth, you are right, Mnesarchus, and although we have said nothing but what seems to me fair and reasonable, I nevertheless believe that we've taken a wrong turn in our enquiry. This is your fault. You've confused me, to amuse yourself perhaps, by considering your arts in particular. – But listen. – We call the Scythians⁴³ barbarians with very little justification; for those of them who have appeared among us have shown themselves to be men of great sense and were highly esteemed. I remember that when I was very young, I met a stranger, Scythian by nation. He may have been sixty years old or so, a very handsome man with a venerable look. He had nothing in his looks which proclaimed a Scythian, for he had abandoned the clothing of his country. He arrived in Athens after having toured all of Greece. He was related to that Toxaris to whom our city has awarded divine honours,⁴⁴ and whose monument can still be seen near the double gate on the left when going to the Academy. He was the only one of his nation who, since Anacharsis,⁴⁵ had come to Greece with the true intent to learn. One day when he was at Aspasia's,⁴⁶ he was questioned about Greece and what he thought about the arts and sciences he had found here. He replied that he found the Greeks much more enlightened than he could have imagined, but Greece much less so – perhaps referring to our political dissensions and the prodigious diversity of our opinions. When Mnesicles⁴⁷ told him that it was a great pity that the arts were not cultivated in his country, [such that] he could not have grasped all the beauties of these arts nor know their nature as perfectly as a Greek who had been brought up in their bosom, he replied that it might well be that some Athenians felt some of the finesses and delicacies of art better than he did, and were able to overcome many of its difficulties, but that he was convinced that it was necessary to be a Scythian to judge [art's] nature. [He continued] that the Greeks were too much artists, that each of them, very excellent in his profession, saw only his own art distinctly and saw the other arts merely through a cloud and without interest; whereas the Scythian, entering fresh into Greece, had received the sensations of all the arts at the same time, and, therefore, all of them had the same tone for him, and from this it resulted that the Scythian saw them much better as a whole and [saw] the constitution of their nature. Since these words suggested a man who had thought about it, we

all burned with envy to listen to him, and so Aspasia, seeing this, asked him to communicate to us what he thought about the arts. And this is what he said, if I remember correctly. Art produces effects for the utility, the use and the pleasure of men, and since man is a being composed of a soul and a body, the activity of art has two branches: the utility, use or pleasure of the soul and the utility, use or pleasure of the body. The effect of art in the first branch is to enrich the soul by giving or modifying ideas or sensations. The effect of art in the second branch is to enrich the body by adding to the organs and perfecting them. Therefore, the perfection of art consists in enriching as much as possible the soul, on the one hand, and the body, on the other – that is to say, to produce the most effect in the least time possible. To the first branch belong all the noble and liberal arts, such as poetry, sculpture, music, painting and rhetoric. To the second branch belong all the mechanical arts, such as those of the tailor, the carpenter, the shoemaker, the mason, the carter, etc. Between these two branches there is a third which contains the mixed arts, such as civil, naval and military architecture, and all the arts of the second branch insofar as they are capable of ornamentation. Now I will only speak to you, he said, of the arts of the first branch, since the application of my conception of them to the other branches seems easy to me; and he continued thus. Ideas either come to us from outside by means of organs, or are composed within us. The work of the poet, the rhetorician, the painter, the sculptor and the musician is to give me the ideas that they intend to give me. They have two means to give them to me, either to present the very object of the idea to my organs or to oblige me to form [the idea] myself by way of signs, and, through these two ways, they can push their talent to the point that they oblige me, not only to receive or to form the ideas that they want, but to compose some in conformity with their goal. The painter, the sculptor and the musician mostly make use of the first means; the orator and the poet mostly make use of the second; however, the painter, the sculptor and the musician do make use of the second [means] in their designs or sketches, and the orator and the poet use the first in their dramaturgy.

From what I have just said, he added, it is obvious that every art which concerns the soul has the same principle and the same goal, and I confess that Homer's and Phidias's Jupiter have each equally provoked in my mind what all men must adore in order to feel happy. This being so, you see, Athenians, the prodigious power of art, [which is] much too great, and which governs man within and seizes all of his freedom. As he said this, he happened to be looking at me – by I don't know what chance – [so] I told him: Excellent foreigner, we believe that nothing should be freer than the arts, and that it is to the complete freedom that they enjoy among us that they owe their progress and their glory. If I were to tell you, Socrates, he went on, that man must be free, you would doubtless aver it, but if I wanted to conclude that the murderer, the highwayman, the sycophant must be free, you would not grant me that, and, to tell you the truth, I am unable to recover from my astonishment when I see that in your republic the government regards with indifference a dangerous tyrant, who can do much more harm than laws could do good; for he holds the legislator himself in chains. If you were to fall again under the domination of one single

man, not under that of a Peisistratos⁴⁸ or any great man who resembles him, but under that of a hard and severe despot, do you believe that he would allow your sculptors to make statues of Jupiter Liberator, [allow] your poets hymns in honour of Harmodius or Aristogeiton,⁴⁹ and [allow] your orators to praise your heroes of Marathon and Salamis?⁵⁰ Of course not, and we would say, Socrates, that this despot was acting wisely to preserve his government. Among you, the empire of art has no limits. It reigns in your public assemblies, in your courts, in your theatres, in short, everywhere; and although I do know what it adds to your glory, I am thinking of the harm it can produce. In the assemblies of the people, where Lacedaemonian simplicity⁵¹ ought to preside, personal interest guided by art gives rise to resolutions that are most harmful to the state. In your courts, where pure common sense ought to preside alongside laws, interest, hatred or envy supported by art works for the victory of injustice. In your theatres, where no one should leave without being improved, corruption and slander enveloped in art spread in the souls of the spectators and produce the most disastrous effects.⁵² If the effect of art were only to show the virtues or the vices, or the good or bad intentions of the artist, you would only need to stone the artist who produced such malicious effects; but it is effective insofar as it is analogous to the character and to the genius of the listener or the spectators. And, among you, the listener and the spectator are your despots: this is a people who are enlightened, but arrogant, cruel, active, restless, suspicious, evil, who love flatterers above all things; finally, forgive me, excellent Athenians, if a man of character from your people were to appear among us barbarians, he would hardly pass for a good man; judge by this what vice enveloped in art is capable of effecting. I have not been able to recover from my astonishment that a people so singularly devoted to the Divinity of Wisdom, so fertile as excellent citizens, and so often victorious over tyranny, still kisses the chains which attach it to its misfortune.

Surprised by the audacity of the Scythian's speech, I said to him: Wise foreigner, I do not understand that much of what you've just said, because we envisage art as a divine inspiration. – My dear Socrates, he said to me, you are mistaken. All art is the bastard child of a God. You know that the Gods often leave Olympus, the bottom of the seas and Tartarus, so as to mix themselves in body with the human bodies that please them, from which have sprung Hercules, Perseus, the Tyndarids, and a number of heroes and demigods who have become the object of our worship; but do you know that the souls of the Gods are even more often pleased to couple with human souls whose beauty attracts them, and it is from this intermingling that the arts are born. [The art] of legislation and politics is a child of the soul of Jupiter, and [the soul] of Minos, Solon or Lycurgus; sublime poetry was born from the soul of Apollo, and [the soul] of Homer, Hesiod or Orpheus; sculpture and painting have Vulcan as their father, and their mothers are the souls of Daedalus, Diponeus⁵³ or your Phidias. Blessed are men if their souls yearn only for the heavenly Gods! But Pan and the ugly Satyrs, and the infernal Deities whose names are so horrifying also enjoy this monstrous intermingling with the souls of mortals, and it is from this that are born lascivious music and poetry, the art of chicanery, and that kind of low comedy of our day which teaches the people to hate, to

persecute and to destroy those [arts] which strive for nothing but their glory and their happiness.

When the Scythian had finished speaking in this way, I said to him: Respectable foreigner, let us suppose that from decency an Athenian was able to agree with you, he would still retain the right to ask you how you could prevent these clandestine marriages of souls. – Socrates, he said to me, I neither want to nor can prevent these marriages. All the active souls of men, who enjoy all their faculties, are always in heat and desire solely to be fertilised: all prostitute themselves to the first person who suits them. Beautiful and virtuous souls find their lovers among the Divinities of Olympus; the ugly and the vicious relieve their fury only among the dregs of the earthly Gods, and on the banks of the Cocytus and the Styx.⁵⁴ It is, therefore, not in this way that one should try to prevent evil, but [instead] by indicating by intractable laws the sole subjects to which the arts should be permitted to be applied.

During Socrates' speech, my dear Hipponicus, poor Aristophanes cut the saddest figure in the world. He had prided himself on making Mnesarchus look ridiculous and mistreating him, but this redoubtable Scythian's polemic arranged things otherwise. He no longer knew where to put himself: he blew his nose, or pretended to do so, and went out without looking at us; and that is why I am surprised that he could tell you about what went on to happen, unless Damon or Agathon told him about it.⁵⁵ You can easily imagine, Hipponicus, that after his departure we had a lot of fun at his expense, except Socrates, who, having been very cheerful and joyful until then, now appeared to look a little serious and pensive, but, in the end, Cebes dragged him from his distraction by reminding him that he had said that virtues, vices and defects should not be confused with the passions of the soul, nor with the actions that result. Thereupon, he resumed [by recalling] that he had made this reflection when Mnesarchus had classified, within the same class, despondency, a passion of the soul which appears only by way of its inertia, anger, a passion of the soul which appears because it is willed, falsity, a vice of the soul which, when perfected, is absolutely invisible, and greed, a defect of the soul which always seeks to hide itself; whereas these things were very different and derived from different mixtures of faculties. – At this Cebes answered: Really, Socrates, I was not able to understand you, for our virtues, our vices and our faults have always seemed to me to be faculties of the soul which it acquires in education and in the course of life, and not the effect of the mixing of faculties which pertains to the nature of the soul itself. Thus, I beg you, if you still have some time to spare, to tell us what you mean by the faculties of the soul, and what their mixing may produce.

SOCRATES. I cannot tell you anything, my dear Cebes, but what I learned a long time ago from the wise Diotima, that famous woman who knew how to read the future; it is she who taught me to know Love, and it is she again who taught me to know myself. – If you want me to repeat to you as much as I can her teachings on this subject, I will, but if you find fault with it, or if you perceive some obscurities, it would be for Diotima to clarify and to answer you, not me. – What I can assure you is that she perfectly convinced me. – If her teaching can convince others, so much the better, if not, I can but try, because it is only a

description of what this extraordinary woman knew and appeared to have seen by her divine science.

One day coming home a little later than usual, she said to me: Socrates, where have you been? What's the matter with you? You are dreaming, look at me. What are you dreaming about? – I said to her: Wise Diotima, don't be angry I'm a dreamer. I have just learned things so beautiful and so strange that I'm having trouble recovering from my astonishment. I spent a good part of the day with Micyllus, from the village of Thria,⁵⁶ who studies medicine, and we just read together the Sage of Abdera's admirable book,⁵⁷ which treats the nature of the human body, organs, and passions. – And what did you learn from it, my child? she asked me. – Diotima, I replied, I learnt about the sources of our virtues, our vices, our faults and our passions; that we must seek them through anatomy, and that they are to be found in the seat, the rarity, the overabundance, the colour and the acidity of bile: in the constitution of the liver: in the slowness or rapidity of the movement of blood: in its thickness, or its fluidity: in the complexity, the coarseness, the fineness or the elasticity of our nerves: in their mutual correspondence, and, in truth, if I think about all that he says on anger, lust, sadness, cheerfulness, it seems to me that the path he takes in his research indicates someone with a very great mind. – But you are smiling, Diotima. In the name of Epidaurus's God,⁵⁸ tell me if he is right or wrong? – My dear Socrates, she said to me, you know that by means of drugs one can speed up or slow down the movement of the blood: one can increase or decrease the elasticity of the nerves: one can soften or make bitter the humours; do you believe that by the same means you could make Thersites a hero, and the son of Nauplius a not properly honest man?⁵⁹ – Let the Gods preserve me from this, Diotima, I said to her, and now I sense that the Abderite is in error. – Not as much as you think, she said. You are not wrong to believe that Democritus is a great genius, and he is right to seek the source of our virtues and our vices with the aid of anatomy, if he has in view that [source] in man and not only in the human body. Democritus has touch for judging the softness or hardness of the nerves, and the rapidity of the movement of blood: he has taste and smell to judge the acidity of the humours: he has eyes to judge the colour, configuration and position of solid particles; but what he lacks is that eye through which he could perceive other organs and other parts of man – those he cannot taste, nor see, nor touch, and in which he would find with much more success this rich source which he seeks. – Divine Diotima, I said to her, you for whom the future is present, you who have commerce with the Gods, please teach me whether our souls enjoy more organs than those we already know? Thereupon she embraced me tenderly and embarked on this speech which will never be effaced from my memory.

When⁶⁰ Jupiter had resolved to give existence to the human race, he himself created the soul of the first man, a pure essence, capable of any kind of possible sensation and capable of any kind of action. The difference between this essence and Jupiter's [essence] is that the latter senses and acts without the use of means by way of divine omnipresence, whereas the former requires means to sense and to act – and these constitute the limits of its nature. Jupiter placed this

essence into the hands of Prometheus to finish the work by attaching to it those means to make it effectively living, sensitive and active. As capable of activity, [this essence] derived that indeterminate spring, that force of willpower and power to act when it has the means [to do so] from the God himself; or rather, the faculty that you call velleity adhered to [the first man's] nature. The first thing that Prometheus added to [this essence] was a receptacle for all actions, all sensations, perceptions, or ideas that were to enter it from without and be imprinted upon it; and it is this receptacle that you call imagination. In this imagination – which does not have an essence which you would call visible, audible or tangible – Prometheus made an infinite number of openings or apertures through which actions, perceptions, sensations or ideas of infinitely different kinds were to enter, and for each opening he made a kind of tube which was analogous to the kind of perception or sensation that it was to receive and transmit to the large receptacle. To receive the actions of essences as visible, he made the tube whose end is the organ that we call the eye which is analogous to light – the only vehicle which can communicate the actions of an essence as visible. To receive the actions of essences as audible, he made the tube whose end is the organ that we call the ear, which is analogous to the air – the only vehicle that can communicate the actions of an essence as audible; and so on to infinity. – Wise and sacred Diotima, I said to her, permit me to interrupt you for a moment. You say that this imagination has an infinite number of tubes and ends to receive the different actions of essences that are outside of it, yet I know only three or four of these organs, [and] they are all material. Whence come those that are not? – My dear Socrates, she said to me, a day will come when you will receive ideas and sensations through all these tubes and ends, and then they will all seem equally material to you, because you call matter all that gives you ideas by means of the organs that you know yourself. But you are now going to ask me why you do not receive perceptions and sensations through these other openings? Remember, Socrates, that the human soul does not enjoy omnipresence like Jupiter's soul does, therefore the actions of external essences on it must be transported by means of some vehicle. The action of a visible essence is communicated by light: that of an audible essence is transported by means of vibrations of the air. Know, Socrates, that the movements of all these vehicles do not have the same velocities. The movement of air is less rapid than that of light, and there are thousands of vehicles whose vibrations have not yet arrived at the tubes that are made to receive them. See this bright star of Orion: if it had left the breast of nature only ten thousand years ago, it would be many centuries more before you could perceive its existence; and suppose that there was nothing visible except the brilliance of Orion, it would be many centuries before you would know that you have this end of perceptibility, this tube you call the eye.

This is why man is endowed with this velleity, with this active principle he received from Jupiter, and, alongside it, the vast imagination, this reservoir of all possible ideas and perceptions. But rightly fearing the disorder and the uselessness of so many heterogeneous perceptions, Prometheus took it into his head to do something very daring. He stole a spark of that divine intelligence, that sacred fire which burns without cease before Jupiter's throne and which

radiates its energy through all of Olympus. He thus formed that organ or that faculty that we call the intellect. The government of the great reservoir was entrusted to its care. It keeps an eye on all the perceptions and all the ideas that enter it. It orders them. It arranges them. It compares them. It conjoins them and composes them to give birth to others. In a word, this government is entirely despotic and must be so, as in Nestor, in Palamedes and in Odysseus; for when democracy gets involved and these ideas or these perceptions revolt and overthrow the intellect, this [results in] the disorder of Pentheus⁶¹ or the Korybantes.⁶² These [first] men who enjoyed this active velleity, this vast imagination and this intellect were very imperfect beings, and [so] Prometheus made himself guilty before the Gods without benefiting men. You know his sad fate on Mount Caucasus, where he atones for his crime and his misbehaviour. But see the effects of the mistake he committed. Those men endowed with these three faculties had nothing to link them together. They were isolated beings. Each was for himself. All their enjoyment consisted merely in the sensation of the destruction of some obstacle. All kinds of arts that [could be] useful to these individuals and consequently harmful to their society were soon produced by these rich intelligences. They delved into the bowels of the earth. Gold and iron came out. This was the birth of what is yours and what is mine, and the earth was drenched in blood. Typhon, Enceladus, Porphyryon⁶³ and their horrible breed arose, and they would have ended up like the fruits of Cadmus⁶⁴ if there had been no Gods to fight. Having struck down these monsters, Jupiter considered completely destroying the human race. The sole Divinity to save us from the God's wrath was the Goddess who watches over you, Socrates; it was Venus Urania, celestial Love,⁶⁵ who approached the throne of Jupiter, saying to him: Father of the Gods and men, why destroy the beautiful work designed by your own hands? Prometheus failed. He is [suffering] enough for your justice.⁶⁶ But if ever I have given you enjoyment of your own works: if happiness is the fruit of our eternal love: if you taste the fullness of your power in my arms, grant me the glory of finishing what you started. The Arbiter of the universe smiled and kissed the Immortal's brow.⁶⁷ She descended, and the loves, the virtues and all that contributes to the bliss of the heavenly sojourn accompanied her. The ethereal exhalations which preceded this retinue spread over the entire surface of the globe. Human souls, whose source is divine, effortlessly imbibed the Goddess's breath, just as the Pythia fills herself with the spirit of her God.⁶⁸ At this very moment the world changed, and the earth was covered with flowers. Man flew to man to embrace him, to swear eternal love to him. And what is more, he got more pleasure in the other than in himself: in the other, he felt the needs of the other and so satisfied them himself. For the first time, he saw and worshiped the august image of justice in his brother's breast. It is not possible to better imitate the omnipotence of the Gods in human nature. Astraea⁶⁹ and peace reigned, and the golden age appeared. Celestial Love smiled at her work. The eyebrow of the Father of the Gods is terrible when [raised] in anger and makes the whole of Olympus tremble, but celestial Venus's smile purifies heaven and earth, and instantly brightens Jupiter's brow. Because of this smile, Olympus left Olympus and Gods and men mingled.

I am speaking to you about the remotest of times, Socrates, and, since those happy times, man has not been able to keep the Goddess's precious gift in its entirety. Yet, [man] has conserved the germ of it, which, when cultivated with care, produces the same fruits.

Great Diotima, I said to her, in truth your anatomy seems more interesting to me than that of the Abderite.⁷⁰ I sense your four faculties each separate and unmixed with the others. I sense that seeing, wanting, loving and reasoning are things of totally different natures, but forgive me for bothering you again by asking you to teach me how our virtues, our vices and our faults derive from the mixing of these faculties?

Nothing is easier, Socrates, she continued, after what you have just said to me. You see that the first of these four faculties, the velleity,⁷¹ is neither organ nor means, but pertains to the essence of the soul itself. It constitutes all of its activity and manifests it by determining itself into particular acts of will. When it is not determined into acts of will, it is only an indeterminate principle of activity which can be determined into particular acts of will by the strongest impulses that come to it from without, either from the side of the imagination, or from the side of moral sensibility, or from both together. [You see] that the second [faculty], which is the imagination, is the receptacle of all the ideas which come from without; [you see] that the intellect combines them; or that the velleity makes them reappear. [You see] that the third [faculty], or the intellect, possesses, to begin, a vague intuition of all the ideas the imagination contains, and then [is] the faculty of composing, comparing and decomposing these ideas, and in this latter quality it is called reason. And the fourth [faculty], this principle, this means, this moral organ, provides sensations of everything that pertains to the moral. This organ has two distinct parts. By one, the soul is completely passive: it is affected by love, hate, envy, desire for revenge, pity, anger. By the other, it judges, it modifies, it moderates, it incites, or it calms these sensations and works on them much like the intellect works on the ideas that the imagination presents to it. And just as the intellect, [which is] also subject to the velleity regarding its direction towards some subject, judges the determinate velleity or acts of will, in terms of whether they are in conformity with or contrary to what is possible, so too the moral organ, in its quality of judging, is also subject to the velleity concerning its activity, [and] judges the determinate velleity or acts of will on whether they are in conformity with or contrary to what is just. And just as what is contradictory repels the intellect, so too what is unjust repels the moral organ, insofar as it judges, that is, insofar as it is commonly called conscience.

Now⁷² consider a soul whose velleity is indeterminate – that is, it does not determine itself into particular acts of will, but lets itself be determined by the impulses of its imagination into acts of will so as to manifest its activity: a soul whose intellect is not at all exercised, inasmuch as it compares or composes ideas: a soul whose imagination is so poor that it provides only one or two impulses for the purpose of determining the velleity: finally, a soul whose moral organ is nothing – you will have an animal or a newborn child, and, because of the very few impulses of the imagination on the indeterminate velleity, you will easily understand the nature and force of what is called instinct.

Suppose a soul whose velleity is quite strong, whose moral organ is neglected as judge and weak as sense, a soul whose intellect is formed, and whose imagination is sparsely filled with ideas – you will get an ordinary man of the first kind. You will easily see that this man whose actions derive from an indeterminate velleity determined into particular acts of will by the impulses of the imagination, which [in turn] is – because of the constitution of the body – more inclined to some kind of ideas than to any other – this man is really ruled by the constitution of his body, and that even supposing his intellect to be very well formed, it will not produce any change in this man's actions but what makes them more refined and more complex. Yet these actions which necessarily produce some effects, either indifferent, beneficial or harmful to society, are arranged into classes of virtues and vices, such as generosity, prodigality, avarice, modesty, vanity, baseness, continence, lust, sweetness, cruelty – although these actions are really just necessary effects of the bodily constitution of this kind of men. It is evident from what I have just said, Socrates, that men of this kind are neither virtuous nor vicious, and that they deserve neither praise nor punishment. In the case of punishments, society inflicts them on [these men] to prevent crimes which harm society and could do so in the future – [crimes resulting] from actions which are improperly called vicious.

Suppose a soul whose velleity is quite strong, whose imagination is sparsely filled with ideas, whose intellect is well conformed, but whose moral sensibility is excessive and the judging part of this organ either weak or neglected – you will have an ordinary man of the second kind – one whose velleity will be determined into acts of will solely by this moral sensibility. It is evident that this man governed at random by moral actions which come to him from without will appear in turn vicious or virtuous according to what accidents befall him, and he will have pity for the poor to the extent he believes in their misfortune, and anger and hatred for someone to the extent that he feels himself aggrieved by them.

Suppose a soul whose velleity is active and determines itself with ease into particular acts of will: whose moral organ is defective, neglected, or rather subjugated or enthralled by this active and determinate velleity, so much so that this velleity fails to consult the [moral] organ in comparing its determinate acts of will to what is just or unjust: whose intellect is well formed, possessing all its possible agility and swiftness: and, finally, whose imagination is lively, and retains the ideas it receives for a long time – you will have a really vicious man, either one who commits crimes, that is, actions contrary to the established law in a certain society, or one who does not commit them – and this is because he does not have or does not use the sole measure which compares his determinate acts of will to what is just and unjust. The more the intellect of this man is perfected, and his imagination rich and well composed, the more vicious and dangerous he will be. It is into this class that must be allotted cruel men and great villains.

Finally, suppose a great and robust soul, whose indeterminate velleity has all its elasticity, and always determines itself into particular acts of will with ease: whose moral organ has all its sensibility and all its perfection: whose intellect is exercised and as perfect as possible, and whose imagination receives and represents to the intellect all ideas in an equally clear and distinct manner. When all

these parts are equally perfect, in such a soul is manifest simultaneously supreme virtue and true wisdom. This soul, Socrates, is the richest being of which we are able to form an idea in our current state, and no comparison is possible between it and [the souls] which make up the first four classes. It is true that chance can sometimes, within those classes, give the appearance of a single isolated action which seems to derive from the soul of a Palamedes, a Gelon or an Aristides,⁷³ but that is only a transitory appearance which does not have virtue as its origin. In the soul of Palamedes, Gelon or Aristides every faculty of the soul is equally perfect and in complete harmony. All actions which derive from the activity of these beings are uniform, since, when discharging them, the soul makes use of all its tools at once. All its parts identify with each other, so to speak, in such souls by means of continual exercise, and the moment when the velleity determines itself is the same as when the moral organ judges what is just, the intellect what is possible, and when the imagination exhibits its brilliant riches; and this is the reason for that tone of simplicity admired and wondered at in the actions of the truly great man. Although it is true that real virtue is not found anywhere except in this last class, it would be of little comfort to humanity if this class were only composed of the small number of perfect heroes I've just spoken about. Fortunately, there are many individuals who are less perfect but who have entered into and adorned [this class]. These are the souls whose faculties or organs have different degrees of perfection, and who therefore lack that happy harmony, that equilibrium which derives from an equal perfection in all the parts, as well as the souls whose less important organs are defective.

If we consider their continual tendency towards virtue, happiness and perfection, their prodigious internal activity with which they fight even the appearance of vice – although their actions appear to have something uneven and rough about them – we cannot justly refuse to place them close to the rank of those fortunate pre-eminent [heroes]. Moreover, it is even evident that this rough, uninterrupted exercise, which is nevertheless undertaken in the prodigiously energetic presence of the immortal Gods whom such work cannot displease, will carry them into another state, to a degree of vigour and perfection at which other [heroes] only arrive so easily because of a somewhat richer composition or a somewhat more fortunate nature.

From all that I've just told you, Socrates, it is evident that, in the first class, there can be no virtues, vices, faults or crimes; that, in the second, there is neither virtue nor vice, that there are only faults, and that there can be crimes; that, in the third, there are only faults which [pass] in turn under the appearance of vices or virtues, and the greatest crimes are here possible; that, in the fourth, there are no virtues, but great vices from which great crimes can derive; and that, in the fifth, there are virtues and sometimes defects, but no vices, and crimes [only] by accident.

It also follows that supreme virtue consists in the prodigious richness of the soul; in the velleity's activity of self-determination; in the sensibility and activity of the moral organ; in the agility and accuracy of the intellect; in the clarity and richness of the imagination; in the equilibrium or equal and proportionate perfection of these four faculties, and in the combined and instantaneous use that

the soul is able to make of its velleity's determination. [Furthermore, it follows] that vices derive from too much power in the velleity or in moral sensibility, and from the misuse of the other faculties which results from it; and [it follows] that faults have their source only in the weakness of the velleity, which cannot determine itself and which therefore remains prey to the imagination and to moral sensibility.

This, Socrates, is the true theory of the human soul insofar as you are able to understand it. Its usefulness is threefold. It serves to know men better, to perfect education, and to correct ourselves.

In regard to knowledge of men, it is obvious that if, in any individual, you knew the reciprocal perfections and imperfections of his velleity, his moral principle, his intellect and his imagination, you could say precisely what virtues, what vices and what faults result from their combination. If you take as examples Achilles, Odysseus and Diomedes, three figures in whom all the faculties are found at a point of perfection and extraordinary richness, you will see that, in Achilles, an excessive violence of the velleity and a sensibility too lively for morality dominate his entire rich composition, and contravene both the judging part of his moral [organ] and his intellect. From which it follows that Achilles possesses everything that constitutes a hero, but not what makes a great man. In Odysseus, the perfection of his imagination and the prodigious agility of his intellect perfectly restrain and govern his strong and active velleity, but they obscure his moral [organ], and so, when he takes on the tone of sagacity, it loses its brilliance and acquires some of the appearance of vice – hence, Odysseus, the wise Odysseus, is neither a great man nor a hero.

Diomedes, [whose composition is] less rich than the other two, has much more harmony in the whole. He is a hero and approximates more to a great man. Look at Anchises's son:⁷⁴ too little velleity, intellect and imagination in proportion to the sensibility and activity of his moral [organ] renders him pious and good-natured, but weak, and so the son of Anchises is neither a great man nor wise, nor hero.

In regard to education: by taking as its foundation that these four faculties constitute what is essential to the human soul in this life, you can easily study in a child these four parts separately, and come to know their value and reciprocal imperfections, and you can then modify these faculties so that, in regard to each other, there results the greatest good and the least harm possible. In a soul in which velleity is weak and does not determine itself, and in which moral sensibility seems small, you must not enrich the imagination, for this will direct and determine the velleity. You must be as discriminating as possible with the kind of ideas that enter into it, and, at the same time, you must perfect as much as possible the intellect which composes and compares the ideas, so that this imagination, which is going to govern the whole, although poor in regard to the quantity of ideas, will be as regulated as it can be. In those rare children in whom the judging part of the moral [organ] is clearly manifest, you must perfect all the other faculties as much as possible. In a child in whom the velleity will be violent, the imagination lively and moral sensibility weak, you must impoverish all the faculties to prevent harm, or else, you must try to tame this fiery velleity

by continual and unforeseen obstacles and, at the same time, perfect the intellect as much as possible, so that the ideas in the imagination become accustomed to order. Finally, it should be observed that the velleity, or the degree of force of willing, cannot be increased or decreased in itself, but that it can be exercised or made active more or less frequently by means of motives drawn from the imagination or the moral [organ]; and [it should be observed] that moral sensibility, the most beautiful but most dreadful gift we received from the hands of the Immortals, is the one of our faculties that requires most care. When it is strong and lively, it deceives us. The smallest object of real pity or the semblance of pity attracts it. It turns with ease to mercy, beneficence and the care of others. We are happy to leave it unbridled, since its effects then have the appearance of virtues because of the good that results from it; but, once at liberty, the slightest real or apparent offence attracts it with the same violence, and its hatred, its anger and its vengeance are more really vices than its lively and tender pity was really a virtue. It follows that this sensibility must never proceed alone, nor without moral judgement and the intellect at its side, for it rules the velleity much more despotically than the most vivid imagination; and it is only [when] accompanied by moral judgement and the intellect that it is the mother of all virtues and embellishes wisdom. [It should be observed] that this judging part of the moral [principle] cannot be perfected in itself, but its activity can be made more or less frequent by offering to moral sensibility objects chosen for this purpose; [and it should be observed] that the intellect can be perfected by continual or violent exercise, and that the imagination is enriched by work and is perfected by the operations of the intellect.

If you regard the usefulness resulting from this theory for ourselves, you will see with what precision and ease we can attain the true sources of our vices and our faults no matter how deeply hidden they may be, and we will find by their side the true means needed to rectify us. When we judge others by this theory, unknown circumstances lead us astray, but in ourselves every relationship is known. If, in order to perfect ourselves, we had to compare our faculties to those of Codrus, Solon or Pericles,⁷⁵ I admit that we could not count much on the impartiality of our judgement; however, it is a matter of our happiness and our individual perfection, and this requires solely knowledge of the reciprocal strengths or weaknesses of our faculties, whatever they may be: their richness depends on the Gods. Having achieved this knowledge, hard work is necessary at the beginning, but soon it ceases to be [so hard], and we obtain the most perfect ease in a uniform activity. We must prevent any one of these faculties obtaining dominion over the others. They must not conflict, collide with each other, or contradict each other. They must be taught to progress together, to love each other, to respect each other, to help each other, to make a harmonious whole together. This is the perfection that man can achieve by his own strength with the faculties he is already aware of. His perfection and his happiness are the harmony I've been speaking to you about, and be sure, my dear Socrates, that it is not by crimes or beautiful actions that Minos and Rhadamanthus judge souls in hell:⁷⁶ it is by the degree of this harmony which measures purity of conscience and strength of virtue.

At these words I threw myself onto Diotima's hand and, while kissing it in transport, said to her, Diotima, what name should I give you from now on, for your appearance is human? – My dear Socrates, my son, she said to me, your love for the truth has gained all my trust and piqued my interest. – I want to be true with you. – You, like the masses, believe me to be a being of a different nature from yours. You are mistaken. The Gods, who are most just in the distribution of their gifts, grant faculties of the same nature to men, but it is in the intensity of their faculties and in the use they make of them that one must seek the cause of the huge distances you perceive from person to person. As for us prophets who appear higher than the rest of mortals: know that we have no other ladder to climb to the height at which you contemplate us. We ascended faster, and that is what gives us our advantage; but this advantage is great. To obtain it needs the courage and will to undertake a great task, the consistency to sustain it, and the strength to execute it. It is with such wings that some fortunate souls raise themselves. They devote themselves entirely to the charge of perfecting themselves. They disengage themselves from all that is earthly and perishable around them. They accelerate their development, and new organs manifest themselves. It is then that our relations to the Gods become more immediate, and that the universe manifests itself to us from several sides which are yet naught to you and other men. It is then that the brilliant spectacle of the human soul's riches appears unveiled, and it is then, to conclude, that, seeing the relations of effects to their causes, we penetrate into the future, and obtain the mystic title of prophets from those who sense us without being able to comprehend us. – My dear Socrates! the day-star which sees only what it illuminates has not always been so bright and so beautiful. At its birth, it was enveloped in a thick, opaquely black crust; but the violence of its internal fires and the energy it carried in its breast disengaged it from its crusts during the eras and centuries that followed, and the universe unfurled itself before its eyes. This is the most perfect symbol of the soul at the moment when it derives from the activity of its august cause. The most beautiful work of man, Socrates, is to imitate the sun and to cast off its outer layers in as few centuries as possible. And when the soul is completely freed, it becomes all organ. The gap which separates the visible from the audible is filled with other sensations. All sensations are linked and together form one body, and the soul sees the universe not in God, but in the manner of the Gods.

When Socrates had spoken in this way, my dear Hipponicus, we were all affected in different ways. Mnesarchus did not seem to understand too much of it. Damon said that Diotima was right to place perfection in harmony. Cebes had the appearance of a man astonished at the sudden apparition of a great light, and Agathon said: I am charmed, Socrates, by your Diotima's fine speech, but do you not find that there is a close relation between the language of philosophy and the dithyramb? A very close one, said Socrates, because both are dictated by the Gods, but the dithyramb, my dear Agathon, is inspired by the God of wines, and philosophy by the Divinity of wisdom. Agathon wanted to reply, but at that moment my good neighbour Telecles came knocking on my door,⁷⁷ howling and shouting at me with all his strength: Simon! Simon! come help me! my poor wife

is about to give up the ghost, what will become of me with my poor children? We all left – I [went] to comfort my poor Telecles, and the others went to the Lyceum, where, I learned later, Socrates and Agathon continued their discussion of the dithyramb.

Alexis, or on the Golden Age

– φίλοι μακάρεσσι Θεοῖσι
Θνήσκον δ' ὡς ὕπνω δεδημημένοι· ἐσθλά δὲ πάντα
Τοῖσιν ἔην· καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
Ἄυτομάτη πολλὸν τε καὶ ἄφθονον.¹

Published in Riga, by Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1787.²

Diocles to Diotima³

Wise and sacred Diotima! Walking one day in the temple of Saturn, nothing attracted my attention more among the rich decorations which shine from every side than the famous painting which represents the joys of that divinity's century.⁴ On returning to Athens, I wanted to give my friends some weak idea of the impressions that this painting had left on my soul and so I tried to imitate Zeuxis's brush in this work;⁵ but since I find nothing in this century of iron to which I can compare my work to judge its value, I address it to you in prayer with the desire [you might] evaluate it well; for if there still remains on this side of Elysium a true type for the golden age, I would vainly seek it anywhere except in Diotima's holy and pure soul.

Alexis, or on the Golden Age

DIOCLES. ALEXIS.⁶

DIOCLES. How are you, my dear Alexis? I've not seen you in a long time. Where are you going?

ALEXIS. I'm going to take a walk around the Cynosarges,⁷ and perhaps then on to Demophon's,⁸ who gives a great feast today to which he invited me. Do you want to join us? I assure you that you know all our guests, and Demophon would complain bitterly if he did not see you at all.

DIOCLES. I cannot. Aristaeus⁹ is sick and I promised to pass some time with him today. – Let's sit here; it's hot. – I don't know any place outside of town where one can enjoy such a pleasing freshness. So, will you accompany me as far as Aristaeus's house[?]: it's on your way.

ALEXIS. Very willingly, my dear Diocles. – But is that not Strato of Lindus¹⁰ who is going that way?

DIOCLES. Yes, it's him.

ALEXIS. He does not see you. – That's great for me, for I always like to be alone with you.

DIOCLES. Seeing him reminds me of a question I must ask you. He told me that Simmias of Rhodes, the lyric poet, is here.¹¹ As Simmias was an old friend of your father, I presumed he was staying with you. Is he here?

ALEXIS. No, he is expected. – But I will not see much of him.

DIOCLES. Why?

ALEXIS. – Frankly, I don't like poets.

DIOCLES. My dear Alexis, may Apollo preserve us! What then do you like?

ALEXIS. You are going to be as astonished as [you will be] pleased by it, but since you gave me the taste for Socrates' philosophy, I can do nothing but that; I'm a servant to these masters.

DIOCLES. Do you believe that Socrates was not a poet, and that Orpheus, Hesiod and Homer were not philosophers?

ALEXIS. It is as poets that I do not like them. They please for a few instants, but nearly all one finds there are lies and fables. The beautiful truth is stark naked by nature, and all ornament which obscures it is a stain that diminishes its effect.

DIOCLES. My dear Alexis, it is because you compare [truth] to the Olympian Venus that you judge it thus. If you were to compare it to some salutary but relatively bitter medicine, you would agree that, in order to swallow it, some honey or gilding is necessary. Your comparison may be just and true among the Gods, but mine is better suited to the nature of us mortals.

ALEXIS. It could be. But I'm not complaining about poets when they give truths in their language; I am indignant when they want to give me their dreams and ruminations in place of truths.

DIOCLES. If their dreams and their ruminations are plausible, they can at least represent truths.¹²

ALEXIS. I admit it. But they cannot when they are extravagant and absurd. I leave to Hesiod and Homer all of their theogony and what they tell of the Gods whom they created and whom I know not; but when they utter a stream of extravagances on the subject of beings that I do know, then I get angry. Recall, I ask you, Hesiod's description of the golden age, when he says to us: 'that under Saturn's reign men lived like Gods, in a deep peace; in a perfect rest without work and without trouble; that the old had no ailments; that, being always perfectly fresh, they always enjoyed their festivities of mutual love; that the earth provided for them abundantly and with little effort all the fruits they could desire; that they were cherished by the immortal Gods, and they died as overcome by a deep sleep'.¹³ Do you believe, my dear Diocles, that the men with whom we live, who hate one another, betray one another and kill one another for the most vicious reasons, are capable of such a state of happiness as Hesiod paints for us?

DIOCLES. Not the men with whom we live, but those who lived then.

ALEXIS. Do you believe that these men from before could ever produce offspring such as us and that human nature could be so bastardised?

DIOCLES. Human nature has not been bastardised, and Hesiod's golden age is not a lie.

ALEXIS. That seems extraordinary to me. – If you are able to prove to me the truth of these two assertions, I will reconcile with Hesiod; for, to tell you the truth, what has made me take against him so is the comparison I have made between the men of his golden age and the present corruption of these same men and the awful disorder of their society.

DIOCLES. I am sensing a touch of misanthropy in your words. – But I will try to heal you, if you attend to me a little.

ALEXIS. With pleasure.

DIOCLES. Can you imagine the globe of the earth just after it had emerged from the breast of nature, and forget for a second that you inhabit it?

ALEXIS. Yes, without difficulty.

DIOCLES. Let's see if you can. – You see this globe populated by animals. Do you notice any difference between these animals?

ALEXIS. Yes, of course. They differ in shape, in size, in power and in mode of living.

DIOCLES. And how do they differ? – Which is the largest of them, for example?

ALEXIS. The elephant appears to me as the largest and wisest of them; the lion the strongest and most courageous; man the most subtle in the movements of his body and the most fearful; the fox the most cunning, and so on.

DIOCLES. Does this earth belong in common to all these animals, or just to some of them?

ALEXIS. It does not belong to any of them; or more precisely: it belongs to each animal insofar as it can use it to satisfy the needs of its nature.

DIOCLES. But do all of them have the same right to this earth or to what it produces?

ALEXIS. Yes, all of them; that is, each in proportion to its capacity, and the lion often makes them feel this truth.¹⁴

DIOCLES. I believe it; but on this footing do they live very badly together?

ALEXIS. No, it's fine. They do, it's true, [inflict] some harm from species to species, but those of the same species live quite peaceably among themselves.

DIOCLES. I am charmed, my dear Alexis, in the simple and pure way in which you envisage things. You are right to compare truth to a beautiful, naked Venus, and I was wrong to reproach you for it. But in your description man scarcely seems to play the lead among the animals.

ALEXIS. No; but he does not play the least either. All things considered, the particular advantages of each species end up being sufficiently compensated in the other species, and one is as good as another.

DIOCLES. Thus, the proportion between man and another animal in your primitive globe is close to equality; that is, one is to the other as one is to one.

ALEXIS. That is quite correct.

DIOCLES. Return for a moment from your primitive globe and cast your eyes on this globe such as it is at present; do you still find the same proportion between the different species of animals?

ALEXIS. Yes, with respect to the animals. – When it comes to them, there has been no change.

DIOCLES. And with respect to man?

ALEXIS. The difference is immense, I admit it. I hadn't thought about this.

DIOCLES. Would I be saying too much in suggesting that this proportion which was at the beginning one to one is at present like a thousand to one unit?

ALEXIS. No, without doubt. In power and in wisdom, man has gained infinitely; and this is his misfortune perhaps.

DIOCLES. This is what we will soon see, my dear. But what do you conclude from the fact that men have changed immensely, while the other animals have remained in the same position?

ALEXIS. I conclude from it that there is some principle of perfectibility that adheres to the nature of man and that acts either by an external force or by his own energy.¹⁵

DIOCLES. Is there something similar to this principle in other species of animals?

ALEXIS. No, absolutely nothing; for all these centuries would have brought something to our attention.¹⁶

DIOCLES. Let's see, however, what we must understand by this principle of perfectibility in an animal. It is for you to define it; you have brought it up.

ALEXIS. This principle necessarily presupposes two things: first, that the nature of the animal is capable of a happier state than its current state; secondly, the sensation of a better state than the one it enjoys.

DIOCLES. This is correct, my dear Alexis. And this principle thus properly consists in the power to approach this better state?

ALEXIS. Yes, certainly.

DIOCLES. Are we to say then that animals are absolutely destitute of this principle?

ALEXIS. — It seems to me at present that we cannot do so, for the state of the animal at the moment when it satisfies its desires is better than that of the preceding [state] when it still desires. And we see that it is able to bring about this state; therefore, it has this power of which you speak.

DIOCLES. This seems incontestable to me, and here then man and animal are endowed with the same principle. But this power, this principle is unable to go beyond the sensation of a better state, since then it would lack a goal and a cause; thus, this principle and this sensation go hand in hand, and can be confused, such that if we knew the richness of the sensations of a better state in two species of animals, we could conclude from it to the relative force of this principle in each of them; and knowing, on the contrary, the force of this principle, we could conclude from it to the reciprocal richness of this sensation of [something] better. Moreover, if we compare the effects of this perfectibility among our Athenians at present to the same effects at the time of the Pelasgians,¹⁷ their fathers, and [then compare] these effects again to those in your animal-man in the primitive world, you will easily see the great force of this principle in man, and therefore the immense disproportion between the richness of the sensation of [something] better in him and [the richness] of that sensation in the animal. In regard to the cause of this disproportion, we easily find it by investigating the natural progress of this principle of perfectibility. But, Alexis, let's come back to this task another day. I don't want to displease Demophon, nor to prevent you from enjoying his feast.

ALEXIS. Unjust man that you are! You inspired me with love for philosophy and now you would like me to abandon it for a feast? By Socrates, continue and prove to me what you have promised. Demophon will know that I willingly preferred you to his feast and I am sure that he would do the same in my place.

DIOCLES. I easily believe what you say; for I have known Demophon for a long time. – Let's continue then, my dear Alexis, and not interrupt our course.

Alexis, what is the first sensation of a newborn animal? What is its first modification that informs it of its own existence?

ALEXIS. Insofar as I can imagine it, it is pleasure or pain.

DIOCLES. You are right; but this is not exactly what I asked you. Pleasure and pain are already two determinate states. They are to enjoy and to suffer. These two states are accidental to the animal and derive from external causes; it is passive when it comes to both of them. I am asking what is the first sensation which manifests [the animal's] velleity to it, its faculty of willpower?

ALEXIS. Then, I will say it is desire or sadness.

DIOCLES. This is a perfectly good response, except for the particle. It is desire and sadness; for these two things are mixed up together.

ALEXIS. I don't understand you very well.

DIOCLES. – Can you recall some moment of enjoyment?

ALEXIS. Yes.

DIOCLES. Did your sensation at this moment seem to you something simple?

ALEXIS. It's appeared that way until now.

DIOCLES. However, my friend, if you pay attention to it, it must be composed of two different sensations, which are in truth merged perfectly in the moment and make but one sensation.

ALEXIS. And what are they?

DIOCLES. That of a need and that of something which satisfies this need. When these two sensations coexist in all their force and merge, there is enjoyment.

ALEXIS. I understand you.

DIOCLES. Thus desire, which is the first sensation that arises in the nature of the animal, is composed of the sensation of some need and that of some object which could satisfy it; and therefore, before enjoyment, desire is a sorrow. If you ask me from where in the animal [arise] these sensations of a need and some object which can fill it, this is a question of another kind, and we will return to it one day. But as we are undertaking a serious investigation into the nature and progress of your principle of perfectibility in all animals, we must begin with three things.

1°. By recalling that a limited being cannot exist by itself.

2°. By recalling an experience which is never contradicted; that is, that, in the ordinary course of nature, to produce some being which has the faculty of sensing and acting requires the intercourse of two beings of the same species, but a different kind.

3°. By concluding from this that each species of animal – or sensible and active limited beings – has begun by two beings of a different kind or sex which owed their existence to some Agent with a more energetic and more sublime nature.

Whether this production of the two first beings was achieved by Jupiter himself, at the time he shaped the unformed chaos that he had engendered in infinite space, or whether he left this magnificent work to the wise industry of the unfortunate son of Clymene¹⁸ – this is all uncertain and we can believe with impunity what the Gods have revealed to our fathers about it, what has been consecrated to it in our templates, what the soothsayers and priests have told us about it, or what the inspired poets have said to us of it in their immortal songs.

ALEXIS. I am perfectly in agreement with your truth, your experience and your conclusion; but please, my dear Diocles, I still believe nothing on the good faith of poets.

DIOCLES. Just as it pleases you; but, on the good faith of your eyes, believe, at least, that the first desire that we notice in men and in animals is a tendency towards food. The viviparous [animal] turns towards its mother, the oviparous towards some cruder food, and it follows incontestably that the newborn animal possesses within it, in a relatively indeterminate or determinate way, a sensation composed of a need and of an object which could fulfil it. It is this sensation which constitutes the principle of perfectibility in all animals, it is this sensation which is called instinct. In respect to its cause and its origin, as I have said, we will speak of it another time;¹⁹ but in respect to its nature, we must proceed deeper into it now.

Do you recall Diotima's beautiful words on the faculties of the human soul that Phaedo of Elis passed on to us in his dialogue *Simon*?²⁰

ALEXIS. Do I recall them! I believe that they will no more be effaced from my memory than they were from [the memory] of Socrates who reported them.

DIOCLES. I see that you recall them and that makes things easier. And let us now remark that, for this double sensation of a need and its object to produce some determinate effect, these sensations must be determinate. If we consider the state of the animal or man in these first moments of its existence, we find: 1°. That its imagination is still only furnished by these two sensations alone; 2°. That morality is nothing; 3°. That the intellect has solely these two sensations or ideas for the objects of its activity; 4°. That the faculty of willpower has no choice, for if it had a choice, it would be between the sensation of need and that of an object which fulfils it. But these two sensations merge into that of desire; therefore, the determination of the faculty of velleity into an act of will is pure and simple and naturally orients the latter towards enjoyment.

You see then, my dear, that in this case, in these first moments, there can be no freedom in man or in animal. Its desire is unique. Its morality cannot compel it to feel any duty, nor its intellect show it any relation: one sole sensation, one sole goal to produce one sole effect. But as soon as man becomes more enlightened, many ideas or sensations of an equal force are placed within the imagination alongside this primitive sensation, [then] all his faculties find the space to develop, to extend themselves; and he feels himself free.

ALEXIS. I understand your idea. But shall I tell you frankly what I think and reason in the way you have taught me?

DIOCLES. Yes, of course, my friend.

ALEXIS. Instinct consists in a desire, in a unique sensation in truth, but [is] composed of the sensation of a need and that of an object which can fulfil it. I agree with you and I agree with you again that, being unique, it necessarily determines the velleity in a unique way. If I presuppose many desires in the animal, many ideas, many sensations, all of exactly the same force, I conceive that the faculty of willpower will only be determined to will by itself; but since I believe this presupposition to be false and absurd, does it not follow that every preponderant idea in the imagination must act with the force of instinct? And where then is this much-vaunted freedom?

DIOCLES. What you have just said is very fair; but all that you have proven is that there are few free men and that, really, only the wise man is [free].

ALEXIS. I beg you, my friend, unless this disrupts too much your flow to cure me, tell me clearly who is wise in your opinion?

DIOCLES. The wise man, my dear Alexis, to use your expressions, is he who suffers no preponderant ideas or sensations, unless his intellect and his morality have consented to them after mature examination. It is he who is never enslaved by his imagination or his moral sensibility; he who uses them only to enjoy his faculty of willpower or to enjoy it if need be. You are right to attribute the actions of every animal and most men to some preponderant idea which enslaves all their faculties.²¹

In instinct as such, the idea which governs is absolutely preponderant, being unique.

In fanaticism, it is equally so. When at Delphi we lead the Pythia²² towards the trivet and she approaches with repugnance the sacred basin where she is going to begin to receive the God, her whole body turns pale and white and she trembles in all her limbs. Finally, arriving at the very place where she must prophesise, all her faculties are in disorder and abandon her. Her body swells, her fists are clenched, her arms thrash about, her enflamed eyes roll haphazardly in her head without fixing on any spot. The convulsion is universal. Her open mouth is full of foam, and her hollow and hoarse voice which emerges from the bottom of her breast evidently shows that the Pythia is no more and that it is the language either of the God which agitates her or the idea of this God which masters her.

In fury, see the son of Telamon²³ skin the cattle that he takes to Odysseus or the Atrides.²⁴ The wretched Athamas who crushes his son Learches and pursues Ino and Melicertes, taking them both for lions.²⁵

In madness, see the hypochondriac Athenian* who spends all his days at the port of Piraeus and registers all the ships which enter and leave, imagining that they are his.

As for prejudice, its force is terrible. It is a strong, lively, isolated idea [that exists] far apart from common ideas; it is put into the head of a child or a less enlightened man. It finds in this tender or empty brain no homologous ideas with which it could be mixed or compared. Completely isolated, it grows there

* See remark (**a*) [p. 147 below].

like a mighty oak in the middle of shrubs which surround it at a distance. – But Alexis, have you ever made the journey to the island of Crete?

ALEXIS. No, never.

DIOCLES. When you arrive at Knossos, there is not a single Cretan who will not try to show you Jupiter's tomb with a holy respect; everyone has learnt it from their childhood. The poet has tried to tell them:* 'Oh, King Jupiter! The Cretans are always liars. The Cretans say that they have built your tomb; but you are not dead, you are eternal.'²⁶

The antiquarian may say to them:† 'Cretans, you are wrong. This tomb is Minos's and what has deceived you is that time has effaced two words from the epitaph.' What Cretan would not be killed in defence of the glory of such a famous monument for his country!

All things considered, it does not matter what the people of the island of Crete think of Jupiter; but what matters more, Alexis, is that philosophers themselves are subject to this evil.

To complete a history of prejudice, I will recount to you, in shame, what happened to me a few months ago. But this should stay between ourselves.

I was walking towards Sunium with Aristaeus, Autolycus, Chrysothemis, the Epicurean with the long beard, and Callicles who is from the Portic.²⁷

We had not gone far when Callicles and Chrysothemis were already at blows over virtue, beauty, honesty, sensual pleasure, etc. – and this got my attention. I soon noted in each of the two heads that all the ideas found there had the tone and colour of the principal idea of the system that had been implanted in them in their youth; and as these systems were pretty much diametrically opposed, it was impossible for the idea of one to enter into the completely full and pre-occupied head of the other. Therefore, they did not understand each other at all; and although they both often shouted at the same time, since each of them was listening solely to what he himself had said, each was persuaded that he had convinced his opponent – and they parted this time content and without doing each other any harm. A few days later, Autolycus celebrated the birth of his grandson. We were all at this celebration, and Autolycus, perhaps in malice (for which he was, however, paid back in kind), placed Chrysothemis and Callicles next to each other at the table. Soon the argument started up again. Everything went well while they did not understand each other, and therefore neither of them could be upset by his opponent's gibberish; but in the end, as a result of all the shouting and repeating of what they called their axioms, some ideas from one penetrated into the head of the other. You might believe that this was a good thing and could lead to conviction. It was far from that, my dear Alexis; for the few ideas which entered found in this full and preoccupied new head no analogous or friendly ideas with which it could link up and become one, and so they only got tangled up with the others and caused disorder and confusion everywhere. Callicles, who first felt something out of order in his head, grabbed

* See remark (*b) [p. 147 below].

† See remark (*c) [pp. 147–8 below].

Chrysothemis's beard with one hand and, by extending all his force into the fingers of the other hand, tried to blind him in one eye; but Chrysothemis fortunately found a leg of lamb in front of him and gave the Stoic's face such a violent blow with it that he let go of him.

This scene would have turned bloody if Autolycus had not put himself between the two opponents, braving their blows and shouting out to them that they were wisemen and should be ashamed.

ALEXIS. How is this possible? From philosophers!

DIOCLES. Yes, my friend. But let us respect philosophy and tell nothing of it to anyone.

From it, you see the indestructible force of prejudice. The stranger, more marvellous, more incomprehensible or more incompatible with other ideas in the mind that this strong idea is when received in childhood, youth or an empty imagination, the more it will be held sacred, take root, be consolidated and, within an active head, attract all the surrounding ideas, like a magnet which appropriates all the surrounding iron particles and lets them go only after having penetrated them all with its own properties. I am speaking here even of well-composed heads, and not of those where the imbecilic intellect leaves the imagination uncultivated and ideas at the prey of the dominion of chance.

You see further that when [there is] prejudice or preponderant ideas in two completely different heads, if the ideas of one want to enter into the other's [mind], then they float completely by without really doing them any good or any bad; and the only effects that this difference can produce will be either pity or derision, according to the common people. But when the ideas are not so heterogeneous or disparate, they enter more or less into the other's mind and alter some of the ideas already found there, by more or less mingling with them and thus putting them into disorder. This is the disagreeable sensation of such disorder; the tacit perception of the possibility that the preponderant idea, the ruling idea itself, could put at risk the very foundations of its throne – and it gives birth, not to inert passions of pity or derision, but to the furies of hate and the cruellest persecutions.

There is in man, dear Alexis, a principle raised far above all the faculties of his soul; a principle which sees them all, measures them, judges them, corrects them, composes them, subtracts from them or adds to them activity and harmony in proportion to their value; a principle which uniquely constitutes the personality of man. And the extent of this principle's independence and energy is the extent of [this man's] wisdom.

ALEXIS. My dear Diocles, I now conceive why there are so few wise men; or rather why there aren't any.

DIOCLES. You are wrong, Alexis; there are many more of them than you think. For since wisdom consists in the harmony and just employment of the faculties and since it is less easy to achieve this on a large scale than a mediocre one, it is clear that we must look for wise men among mediocre men who are everywhere the most numerous. When wisdom accompanies great faculties, this is the apparition of a God among men.

ALEXIS. But, my friend, would not the wise man who had great faculties be useless

or unhappy on earth, since he would find nothing analogous to his grandeur? Would not the first characteristic of his wisdom be to change his residence? Apollo the shepherd on the banks of the Amphrysus²⁸ is scarcely at home there.

DIOCLES. Oh, how stupid! It is precisely on the banks of the Amphrysus that Apollo became the God of harmony; it is on these happy banks that he invented that powerful lyre that defies heroes and animates the festivities of the immortal Gods. The wise man with great faculties is at home everywhere and if he were permitted to descend into the infernal regions, he would render them orderly and happy. It is said that during the few moments that the wise and divine Orpheus²⁹ was to be found in that frightful place, all the torments of the unfortunates ceased and Sisyphus, Tantalus and the Danaides were released.³⁰ These are the effects that emanate from the wise man. I am not speaking to you of what [the wise man] senses within himself. You can sense it, Alexis.

ALEXIS. Alas! I sense the truth of what you are saying and that is all that I sense. – But you, my dear Diocles, do you not sense that we have been violently diverted from our path? In the name of the Gods, let us retrace our steps and lead me to that golden age to which I aspire.

DIOCLES. O Mnemosyne, fecund mother of the Muses, I invoke you on this day!³¹

ALEXIS. Why?

DIOCLES. Why? Do you know that we owe her a bit of incense, you and I, if she deigns to give us back the thread we have lost?

ALEXIS. Diocles, it is not out of impiety that I am going to say this; but I am about to give you the end of the thread for a lot less.

DIOCLES. Ah well, let's see.

ALEXIS. You said that there is, equally in man and in animals, an instinct which I have called a principle of perfectibility, which was necessarily composed of the sensation of a need and of that of an object which could fulfil it; and that this composition, this principle, which is found alone in the mind or in the soul of the animal or the newborn child, necessarily determines the faculty of velleity as it actively [determines itself in] acts of will, which directs this man or animal towards enjoyment – that is, towards a state happier than that which he is enjoying; towards something better, analogous to his nature. Is this not the end of the thread we had lost?

DIOCLES. In truth, my friend, you have put me back on the path. Just now, when considering the first moments of the existence of man and animal, we found that the sensation of need is equally determined in both of them, and the object which could satisfy it is purely physical. The first desire for food being fulfilled, the man and the animal sleep and vegetate until new needs give birth to new desires. While dormant, the organs are strengthened and exercised. The idea of the object is determined more and more. This idea, which at the beginning is probably formed only by means of smell, comes to be formed by touch, sight and hearing, and is acquired in different forms. The imagination is enriched and here is what gives rise to the activity of the intellect in linking, comparing and composing ideas. The first fault which man and animal perceive in nature and which gives them sadness is that it is not always ready to provide them with what is necessary at the very moment of desire, but appears to have obstacles in the

way of their enjoyment either owing to universal physical laws or owing to the interests of other species which often seem to cross it. And these inconveniences oblige men and animals – or rather, most of them – often to quit their resting place to follow the seasons into other climates to guard themselves from harm, from the weather and to defend themselves against those who are more powerful and want to destroy them. When man and animal are finally able to procure for themselves, as best they can, the objects of their needs at the moment when the sensation of these needs demands, they enjoy it to the extent that and as much as they can enjoy it; in consequence, they are happy; and for the animal, this is its perfect golden age.

ALEXIS. That makes sense; but is it likewise for man that age that is so prized?

DIOCLES. Yes. But remember, I pray you, that man has the faculty of taking pleasure in his fellow man and so, when generally evaluating the happiness of man and that of the animal, you will find the latter equal to one unit, whereas that of man is the unit multiplied by all who are happy.

ALEXIS. – You would evaluate unhappiness in the same manner, I reckon? – But besides, I do not see at all in this description the condition of some shepherds or even that of the inhabitants of Attica before Theseus gathered them together;³² and if you have no other century of Saturn to paint me, will you still claim to have justified Hesiod and your poets?

DIOCLES. – When you travelled around Greater Greece,³³ did you visit some of the most celebrated Pythagoreans?³⁴

ALEXIS. No. – Why are you asking me this?

DIOCLES. Because, if this were so, I could take less trouble in enlightening you about the golden age.

ALEXIS. – I have seen few philosophers from this sect. No, I respect them infinitely, but as soon as I believed I had glimpsed the difference in purpose between Pythagoras and Socrates, I chose the latter.

DIOCLES. Of what purposes are you speaking?

ALEXIS. Socrates, it seems to me, proposed to make each human as perfect as his nature could allow – and this I think is possible; whereas Pythagoras wanted to make a few individuals absolutely perfect, so that, governing others, everyone would be happy – and this appears to me an injustice and a chimera.³⁵

DIOCLES. This is very well observed, my dear Alexis. – But ultimately, Pythagoras's purpose obliged him to separate a small number of his elect from the rest of men and to encase the study of wisdom in mysteries and secrets – and this is the cause of this school being in possession of many very important pieces of knowledge that have not been divulged. – You surely know the reputation of that Archytas*³⁶ – he was not only, like Homer's Agamemnon, a great leader of peoples and a great captain, but also a very excellent philosopher?

ALEXIS. You are surely speaking of the Tarentine, the illustrious friend of Plato?

DIOCLES. The same. Now, this Archytas used to recount to his intimate friends that when Pythagoras travelled in Phoenicia, he went to Byblos,³⁷ less to contemplate

* See remark (**d*) [pp. 148–9 below].

the ancient ruins of this famous town which Saturn founded than to listen there to an old priest of Adonis,³⁸ who was well instructed in the science of the stars and who had the reputation for being more enlightened than other men.

He taught him the mysteries of the great festival of Adonis³⁹ that is annually celebrated on those days on which the river that bears his name – originating in Mount Liban⁴⁰ and issuing near Byblos into the sea – emits the colour of blood onto the banks of the Delta. This is the festival which the Egyptians and Assyrians came to participate in with marvellous pomp. He said to him that every year, on certain days, the beautiful Adonis reappears on the mountain to drive the hunt on, as he had done long ago; that every year a monstrous boar once more wounds him in the thigh, as had happened on that lamentable day that cost the Goddess of beauty so many tears; and that the blood which flows each time from the new wound, mixing with the currents of the river, is the cause of this annual red hue of the sea.

ALEXIS. Tell me, by Jupiter, did Pythagoras believe these derisory [words]?

DIOCLES. I doubt it; but if Pythagoras had learnt them from the cradle like the priest, he would have surely believed them, just like anyone else did.

ALEXIS. How weak is man!

DIOCLES. Yes, in childhood.

ALEXIS. You are right. But I pray you, after such a beginning, what of substance do you want me to take from the priest's teachings?

DIOCLES. It would not be extraordinary, my dear Alexis, for the priest to be very wise in every other case, apart from this one article, which by time and exercise may have been transformed into instinct in him. – But to save you from embarrassment, it is scarcely probable that this wise old man himself believed what I just reported to you; for he added that what he had just said he had done so in his capacity as grand Pontiff, but that philosophers gave as the reason for this phenomenon a very impetuous east wind which, for six or seven days of the year, reigned in Mount Liban's surroundings. This wind, [they said,] expelled a prodigious quantity of red sand from the mountain into the river which runs past it and swirls around its base and which then carries along this sand to the sea and washes up on the banks of Phoenicia and Egypt.

ALEXIS. This I understand! Continue, I pray you.

DIOCLES. He was the first to teach Pythagoras that the globe of the earth goes around the sun in a great circle over the span of a year; that the earth turns around on its axis in a day and a night from the West towards the Orient – and this, he said, is the cause of the apparent movement of all the stars from the East to the West. He taught him the causes of the change of the seasons. He explained to him the course of the planets, as well as comets, whose return he predicted in the manner of the Chaldeans.⁴¹ Finally, when he came on to the moon, Pythagoras complained to the old man of the extravagant vanity of the Arcadians⁴² who called themselves the most ancient people on earth, since they were even older than the moon; and thereupon, the priest said to him these remarkable words: Pythagoras, it is the ignorance of your Greeks that you should complain of. Endowed with too much spirit, you have deranged your genius which is exercised on the rich phantoms of your luminous imagination

and have lost the path of simple truth. You have twisted the truth with so many fables, both absurd and laughable, that it has been lost entirely from your eyes; and those among you whose good sense has blushed at these dreams and those who have wanted to know what still remains of the ancient truth have had to go abroad so as to rediscover among those you call the Barbarians the treasure that you have lost by your petulant thoughtlessness. The Arcadians do not boast of anything that is not true.* The earth was inhabited for many centuries before the moon came to illuminate it. In those times, its axis was perpendicular to the plane of its orbit; thus, its two poles were equally distant from the sun. Day and night were equal everywhere. There were no seasons; there were only climates. Each zone of the earth always retained the same degree of heat without undergoing the least change. The simple action of the sun rendered the flux and reflux of the seas more regular and tranquil; and the fluids in the bodies of animals and plants retained their volume and their density. There could be no other wind than the Zephyr,⁴³ by the uniform, daily movement of the earth from West to East. Nothing could alter the atmosphere. Each animal and each plant had to be born in the place most suitable to their nature. Trees were always equally laden with fruit, flowers and greenery, and the rich fecundity of the earth found no obstacle for its infinite productions in the vicissitudes of the seasons. Nature's constant equality offered much more nourishing herbs and fruits, whose species would [otherwise] have been destroyed by the rapid succession of the seasons. Man and animal found everywhere their food around them; neither of them were ever reduced to the sad necessity of looking for horrific nourishment in the blood or viscera of their fellows. Rarely did man quit the zone where he had been born, since he found nowhere a better place than home. Each man believed himself the happiest on earth – all ambition, all spirit of property or conquest was impossible. Even commerce was absurd, for there was nothing on the earth which, by shifting place, appeared useless or without value. All men had to resemble each other in a fairly homogenous way; man saw himself in each individual of his species he encountered, and, since he believed himself happier than anyone else, the goal of his desires was to make every other being in whom he recognised himself as happy as him. It was then that language was absolutely perfect, having no other words or signs than those which strong internal affections obliged the organs to manifest by word or gesture.⁴⁴

If we reflect on the infinite difficulty that we often find in expressing a number of delicate or sublime sensations of which we are still really conscious, it is easy to understand how perfectly men would then identify their intellect with that of another, how clear and energetic were expressions of a happiness, of a joy, of love, of a hymn to the Divinity; how much, then, were the sciences illuminated, being administered only by signs whose perfect accord with the objects that represented them, rendered absurd all figural elocution and all those words that are borrowed so as to give rise in a feeble way to ideas, which no longer [themselves] act sufficiently on our feeble organs to produce expressive effects.

* See remark (**e*) [pp. 149–51 below].

It is said that in those times one sole sigh, one word, one gesture, which now is only an imperfect, vague or equivocal sign of our intimate sensations, was the vivid, pure and perfectly complete and rounded impression of the state of the soul swimming in a sea of voluptuous pleasures, each wave of which – as weak or delicate as it may be – caused a sensation of its benign impulse. It is evident that imaginations which were so pure, so lively and so adapted to receive and to render the finest and lightest sensations were much more distinctly affected by the omnipresence of the Divinity; and their absolute ignorance of unhappiness eliminated from their morality any tone of effort or victory which appears to us illustrious and brilliant in our present condition, like the star Sirius,⁴⁵ which sparkles for us in the shadows of the night. It was then that man, for whom all evil and all fear were absurd, quit life like he quit being awake or, rather, being asleep, and cast off his body as a fruit once formed throws off the flower which announces it.

This was the happy state of man before the appearance of the moon. When it came from faraway regions to pass into the neighbourhood of the sun, it did not escape man's observing eye. It appeared small, trailing after it a long tail of light. Its movement became more and more rapid, until it was lost from view in the rays of the great star. The first time that [men] saw it reappear on its return from the sun, it had the appearance of the morning star, but surrounded by a thick atmosphere and preceded by a weak halo. As it advanced almost directly towards the earth, it appeared increasingly immobile within the same place in the sky; but growing in size, it appeared brighter, and [men] judged it to be getting closer day by day, hour by hour. They soon perceived an irregular movement in the waters, which rose up and burst their banks and whose surfaces were covered with foam. A strange alteration was felt within the body of every animal, owing to an unknown disorder in their fluids. Stains appeared on that azure sky whose purity had never been stained; the first clouds were formed. What one still saw of the stars seemed to have changed place, for the axis of the earth was already inclined, and its heaviest parts lent with an attractive force towards this new mass without it being perceptible. The earth, which had only ever been moistened by the morning dew, came to be inundated by waters which fell from the skies above. The simple and uniform movement of the globe, which until then had prevented the different materials that it bore within from mixing together, struggling with each other and fermenting with each other, was now destroyed and altered; nitre, sulphur, fire, all were confounded. Black vapours rose up. The fire of lightening criss-crossed the dark and vast vault of the sky for the first time. The horrifying roar of thunder was heard. Soon the thick crust of the earth broke in a hundred places to give rise to disorder which tormented every part of it from within. All the elements were in confusion, and their indigestible mixture gave birth to mixed, bastardised and, by nature, ambiguous materials. The air, being pressed from opposite sides, became agitated and sought, by howling, to escape in different directions. Each breath struck down the thickest forests. Millions of men and animals perished in this terrible catastrophe. Those who, by some fortunate or unfortunate chance hung on to tree trunks ripped from the depths of the earth to float on the surface of the waters which already covered

this entire scene of horror, found themselves in terrifying repose. They saw only a sea in turmoil, a strange and impure sky, and the doubtful and livid light of this hideous body,⁴⁶ the terrible principle of their sufferings. Man who, shortly beforehand, adored in each star, in each flower, in each brother, at each dawn, a propitious God whose sun appeared [as] its most perfect symbol, believed to see in this new star that of a victor God, more powerful than his own; an evil God of destruction and of shadows – and this was the first cause of the foolish idea of a good and an evil principle. The cries of men and animals were a new language that they had the misfortune to understand by strong reciprocal sensations. Terror, distress, a stupid fright took the place of the sweetest tranquillity. For the first time, man saw death under a new aspect, as a forced state; this moment of transition, this pleasurable moment, this moment previously sown with flowers and adorned – not by the hope that man did not [yet] know, but by the infallible and distinct sensation of a nascent and visible future, more delicious still than the past and the present – this very moment appeared to him the height of all horror; for the time had not yet arrived when he would forge for himself, for his sad consolation, the absurd idea of an impossible annihilation.

Finally, with the earth panting still from its sufferings, the elements began to recover. The moon lost its atmosphere and its halo, and, being reduced by these horrible fires that were borrowed from its close neighbour, the sun, to a dead head, an inert essence with a useless eternity, the great law of nature fixed the equilibrium between it and the earth and ruled that it would accompany us forever.

For centuries, man deplored his fate and was scarcely able to maintain his precarious existence. The apparent contradictions that he had seen at work in nature made him err for a long time into a doubtful half-light between true and false, between good and evil. Stupid and dizzy, having lost the signs of the true, he embraced only the marvellous, the vain shadow of his past grandeur.⁴⁷ Having then arrived at some more tranquil moments that allowed reflection, man began to more or less recognise himself. The wise came to terms with its evils, and, since the beautiful is less in the nature of the object than in man's means of perceiving and, although accustomed previously by means of richer and more distinct sensations, to easily find the beautiful in more harmonious objects, still he was able over time to see in much more discordant and much more heterogenous objects a vaguer and less sure beauty than before, but the only possible [beauty] in the present category. Finally, the wise sensed the beautiful and the sublime even in those objects that had been horrible to the eyes of their fathers; and they concluded from it that this great physical catastrophe and the fine times that preceded it were equally foreign to their being and subject to their contemplations.

Here, my dear Alexis, as much as I remember it, is the speech of Hypsicles (this was the priest's name); and, in truth, if we consider that death, evil, vice and pain are things contrary to our nature, and if we feel ourselves almost always capable of a greater happiness than that which we are enjoying; if we reflect on the many contradictions which appear so often in our actions, in our thoughts and in our desires; on those vague and obscure notions that we have of certain

objects whose reality is demonstrated to us by the most intimate and most perfect conviction; on the bizarreness of our cults which are so disparate in appearance; on the nature of most of our sciences which have interstices, lacunas, gaps everywhere, whereas geometry and our senses* prove to us that we are capable of knowing and sensing the chain, the cohesion of integral truths that form part of the great truth; [if we do all this] is it possible, my dear Alexis, to not sense the great probability that it is the case that we have lost senses or rather vehicles of action which were analogous to them, by means of which intermediary ideas and sensations previously made a whole or a sum of our limited knowledge, of which there no longer remains any vestige except in the more or less altered traditions of our ancient condition? Is it possible to deny all belief in Hypsicles' speech – the priest whose disciple Pythagoras himself deigned to become? Tell me, I pray you, dear Alexis, what do you believe?

ALEXIS. – I confess to you that the priest's speech, along with your reflections, have surprised and shaken me. Yes, I believe it in a certain way, but [a way] which is difficult to express. – I believe in his golden age in his speech, as I would believe in the existence of a body which I had never seen, seeing only the shape of its well-defined shadow.

DIOCLES. Do you not dare conclude from the shadow that you see to the existence of the body which is its cause?

ALEXIS. Certainly not; nor do you, if I know you; for the shadow that I see is only an appearance which could be but a production of art.

DIOCLES. Ah well, you at least conclude from it to its probability?

ALEXIS. Not that either; but to its possibility, that's all I can do.

DIOCLES. But, my dear, if you compare history to a shadow and if you always conclude thus, what will then become of history and the belief you accord to it?

ALEXIS. If I am sure that the history is [indeed] a shadow, I will boldly conclude from it to the truth of the event which it represents; but when I instead believe it to be fake, how can you wish me to do other than I am doing? Let us suppose that a skilled painter paints before you, on the parvis of this archway where there is sun, the shadow of Minerva or Diotima, it will be easy for you to conclude from it that the Goddess or her friend is probably to be found behind you somewhere. But if the painter has traced there a centaur's shadow that you have never seen, you will not conclude from it with the same confidence that the centaur could be found there. You believe more easily in the Peloponnesian War that Thucydides recounts to you than in the war of the Titans and the Gods. Thucydides gives you the true shadow of a thing that he sees and that he explains; Hesiod paints for you shadows of things which exist only in his imagination and which appear very absurd to me; and when it comes to Hypsicles, I do not know whether he gives me true shadows of true things or paints for me things which do not seem to me very likely. Thus, my dear, your Hypsicles could well be only a poet a little more reasonable than Hesiod, and, in fact, you appear to be wanting to prove to me the truth of Hesiod's very absurd fable through the likelihood of Hypsicles'

* See *Sophylus, or on Philosophy*.

less absurd fable. You are laughing; but know that if I am making it too difficult, it is the fault of you and Socrates.

DIOCLES. If you were only difficult, great! But if you make things too difficult, this is not our fault.

ALEXIS. My only difficulty, my dear Diocles, is that I ought to mistrust truths that have passed through the enchanted hands of poets. They love the truth merely with an impure love and abuse it. Beautiful [truth] is inaccessible to them: it flees at their approach; it changes; it dissolves into a thousand parts and they scarcely catch a few of them which they corrupt – but the beautiful whole escapes them.

DIOCLES. That the God Pan may not hear us, dear Alexis! For it is he that they imitate.

ALEXIS. How?

DIOCLES. You know of his passion for the young girl of the river Ladon?⁴⁸

ALEXIS. Ah well!

DIOCLES. When, on this God's approach, the beautiful Syrinx transformed into a thousand reeds, he cut up as many as he could and made flageolets out of them to amuse the nymphs, fauns and dryads.

ALEXIS. – They would do better to imitate Jupiter, who remade a Pelops out of the pieces of the little Pelops.⁴⁹

DIOCLES. This is the philosopher's job, my dear Alexis, and this is what makes his job so difficult – the little Pelops lacks a shoulder; for to replace it would require a Jupiter. – But listen. – Truly, I do not understand what prejudice animates you against divine poetry. Do you well know that in the Elysian fields, Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato, and Linus,⁵⁰ Orpheus, Hesiod and Homer are always together and never leave each other's side?⁵¹ – Tell me, I beg you (for we must heal you) – in architecture how many orders are there?

ALEXIS. Three.

DIOCLES. You admire without doubt solidity in the Doric; precision and elegance in the Ionic; and richness and beauty in the Corinthian?

ALEXIS. Certainly.

DIOCLES. Does the latter sustain the weight of a building less well than the Doric?

ALEXIS. Not that I know.

DIOCLES. Is it less elegant and precise than the Ionic?

ALEXIS. No, without doubt.

DIOCLES. Does it not have the solidity of the first, the elegance and precision of the second and does it not join to [these properties] richness and beauty?

ALEXIS. Without contradiction.

DIOCLES. What are the three orders that sustain the vast edifice of all our knowledge?

ALEXIS. Really, I don't know.

DIOCLES. Is it not *history* which relates facts; *philosophy* which untangles them and gives them order and elegance? And what is, in your opinion, the third?

ALEXIS. You mean *poetry*?

DIOCLES. Yes; and it is this which decorates and enriches the two others, if you find my comparison quite accurate.⁵²

ALEXIS. It seems quite accurate to me; but it is singular way of reasoning.

DIOCLES. Why? – Have you any other way, even in geometry? – On the island of

Lemnos,⁵³ you can just about see Mount Athos in Macedonia. By drawing a small triangle on the beach and comparing it with another similar to it, you will know the distance or the height of the mountain. Is this not the same reasoning? Your comparison of the truth to naked Venus is not right; and this is your error. – Beautiful Venus is decent. – Ask Homer, who knew this.⁵⁴ She ensured she was adorned by the Graces, and her girdle took nothing away from her power. Do not fear that poetry might spoil any of your truth.

Moreover, it is not without reason that poetry is called the language of the Gods; at least, this is the language that the Gods dictate to all sublime geniuses who maintain relationships with them, and without this language we would make very little progress in our sciences. Although it might be shameful to defend poetry with other arms than the forces of its beauty, I am going to call philosophy to my aid, for it owes [poetry] enough not to abandon it to the fury of its barbarous enemies.

ALEXIS. You're angry.

DIOCLES. A little, since it is necessary. – But tell me: every idea, every sensation, does it not have some truth for its first principle? Does it not have a true prototype of which it is the faithful, relatively strong, vivid or distinct impression?

ALEXIS. Definitely.

DIOCLES. In all science, is not a newly discovered truth the result of the composition of many reconciled ideas?

ALEXIS. Yes.

DIOCLES. In geometry, is there truth sensed by the great masters before being proven? Are there in rhetoric, in poetry, truths, beauties, sublime features felt and expressed even before they have been discussed or examined in detail by the intellect?

ALEXIS. Yes; I sense that this is so.

DIOCLES. And from where do these ideas result or what constitutes these felt truths or beauties, what composes them?

ALEXIS. In truth, I do not know.

DIOCLES. This composition must be made either by chance or by the very nature of these ideas, or by some agent who knows how to direct them. – Could it perhaps be by chance?

ALEXIS. No, of course, since then it would happen as frequently in a fool's mind as in a wise man's; and, moreover, Plato would not often be Plato.

DIOCLES. Could it then be by the very nature of these ideas?

ALEXIS. This cannot be; for there cannot be active relations between ideas as ideas, no more than between shadows as shadows.

DIOCLES. Thus, there remains, as cause, only an agent who directs and who we must now examine. – But tell me first, between real things, whose ideas are either faithful ideas or faithful impressions, are there found the same relations as between the ideas [themselves]?

ALEXIS. Yes, without a doubt.⁵⁵

DIOCLES. Thus, the composition of the ideas represents what would effectively result from an analogous composition in things, with so much truth that each idea represents each thing individually and in part.

ALEXIS. This is certain.

DIOCLES. Hence, if this ideal composition forms beauty, then must the real composition, if it exists, form [beauty] likewise?

ALEXIS. Yes.

DIOCLES. Therefore, the ground of poetry, at least, is made up of truths?

ALEXIS. Yes, they are truths or possibilities.

DIOCLES. You are right; but you will see that this will come back to the same thing in our investigation. – Does not beauty consist in the number of ideas and the little time required to link them together or to compose them, or rather in the facility with which the intellect can embrace some whole?⁵⁶

ALEXIS. I agree.

DIOCLES. Therefore, if by some means the ideas of many existent or possible things can be reconciled such that they are almost coexistent in the mind for some moments, it is certain that the intellect will perceive most of the relations between these ideas, which let themselves be grasped with the utmost facility – that is, relations which constitute for us the richest, truest and simplest beauty; and this is why, ordinarily, in a man of genius, the first idea is the most beautiful, and the first expression the most energetic.⁵⁷ Hence, my dear Alexis, it is the faculty of bringing together the most and the best ideas which gives birth to the beautiful and the sublime, and which, so to speak, shows great truths by intuition to those souls which thereby appear to us to have the most intimate relationships with the Divinity. But if we consider this faculty in itself, in those happy moments of enthusiasm when we pluck from the breast of nature some spark of the true or the beautiful, we will find that what we add on our part is insignificant. It is no longer the prudent, exact and determinate march of the intellect, however slow or rapid, that we follow; we take [the path] of Jupiter's lightning which strikes at the very moment it is produced. All that we observe in our activity is a vague and blind effort of which this approximation of ideas is the effect – and thus the intellect simply does its ordinary job, it contemplates what the most compact and densest imagination presents it with in these moments, and it faithfully imitates it in its expressions. Let us assume, Alexis, what is not certain: that this approximation of ideas, this condensation of the imagination, is sometimes, uniquely, the effect of this unknown effort; it is no less indubitable that very often, without this effort, the same approximation is manifest and shows to us the sublime or the truly beautiful beyond our ordinary reach. – Who, in this latter case, is the author or cause of this happy approximation? Who else made Homer sing and who at Dodona or at Delphi instructed us about a relatively uncertain future?⁵⁸ Hence, you see that poetry, whether it is born from the effort of a great genius or produced by divine breath, presides over all the arts and all the sciences, and that it is not only to the august truth as the Graces are to Love, but is as Aurora is to the statue of Memnon which it illuminates and which it makes speak.⁵⁹

ALEXIS. My dear Diocles, I do actually understand a part of your reasoning; but if you want me to grasp your idea perfectly – which I strongly desire – do please repeat what you have said, but in a simpler manner and more within my reach.

DIOCLES. You will be satisfied. But as I do not believe myself able to simplify the

issue, I can only recall to you a little of what I've just said. – The acquisition of a new truth, the sensation of new relations between things, [the sensation] of the beautiful and the sublime in all genres, are they born from one sole isolated and individual idea or must there be a composition or concurrence of many?

ALEXIS. There must absolutely be the concurrence of many.

DIOCLES. When there is the approximation or concurrence of many ideas in the imagination, the intellect intuits these ideas and some of their relations – does it not?

ALEXIS. Yes.

DIOCLES. Which of these relations are most perceived by the intellect?

ALEXIS. Just those which are the easiest for it to grasp.

DIOCLES. These are [the relations] that it can grasp in the least time?

ALEXIS. Of course.

DIOCLES. That is, those which constitute the beautiful and the sublime?

ALEXIS. This follows from what you have proven to me before.

DIOCLES. Thus, when many ideas which have the most direct and most sensible relations between them are the closest to an absolute coexistence, the intellect will see the true, the beautiful and the sublime as the richest with which these ideas are able to supply it.

ALEXIS. This is true.

DIOCLES. To see or to sense the true, the beautiful or the sublime, all you need is this approximation of ideas?

ALEXIS. I agree.

DIOCLES. It's us who bring them together – or what?

ALEXIS. Certainly.

DIOCLES. When it is us, we make a vague effort which does not have a determinate goal, an effort whose nature is absolutely unknown even to us and which we call enthusiasm; but the approximation of many ideas is a constant consequence of it, and then we see the true, the beautiful and the sublime without labour and without effort. Is this not true?

ALEXIS. Absolutely.

DIOCLES. But when this approximation of ideas is manifest without any effort and we see the true, the beautiful and the sublime, and even the future, without the least operation on our part, do you not believe that a Divinity intervenes and that it is not wrong to call this an inspiration?

ALEXIS. – Now I think I've grasped your idea. You will judge yourself whether I am wrong. For the first time I understand what poetry is. I sense that the most profound reasoning, the wisest and most reflective march of the intellect, would supply us with very few new truths, if it were not sustained, directed or pushed by this enthusiasm which brings ideas together. I sense that it is this approximation that offers the intellect the occasions to employ that rapid intuition called tact.⁶⁰ I sense that our perfect ignorance of the nature of this active enthusiasm, which often appears to us as mixed with the action of some foreign agent, justifies your opinion that man is not here everything which the nature of a complete being demands and that, therefore, the human species could well have lost in a prior revolution either some organ (which is less probable) or some vehicle

of sensation; for it seems to me that a complete being, whatever limits it might have, or whatever faraway view it might have of a distant perfection of which it could be capable, must have a more accurate and more rounded knowledge of its condition and its relations. I confess to you that Hypsicles' speech not only contained nothing that revolted me, but that it now appears to me as having great probability.

If it is true, as you say and as I sense it, that philosophy owes much to poetry, it is equally true, my dear Diocles, that, under your guidance, [philosophy] will not be ungrateful. I promise you, and for a very particular reason, that this enthusiasm, this singular approximation of ideas, this fecund source of true poetry will from now on be the most pressing object of my study and my investigations; but I pray you, in the meantime, to teach me before we separate whether the golden age which has properly been the subject of our talk is an object susceptible to contemplation by your philosophy, or whether we owe knowledge of it uniquely to history and to poetry?

DIOCLES. My dear Alexis, everything is the object of philosophy; but what you want to know comes back, it seems to me, to the question of whether – without regard to traditions or to divine inspiration, and taking for its ground solely the nature of man as we know it – we can find proofs of some golden age, or rather of a richer and more elevated existence than we now enjoy? Is this not what you are asking?

ALEXIS. It is the same.

DIOCLES. Ah well, this was from the beginning the path that I proposed to take and I would not have related Hypsicles' traditions to you nor tried to make you know and respect poetry, if you had seemed content with my starting point.

ALEXIS. I bid you, return to your path. I have nothing to lose in making an additional journey – one that is infinitely interesting to me, especially in the situation in which I find myself.

DIOCLES. – The golden age, Alexis, is a figurative term by which you understand like me, I assume, the state of some being which enjoys all the happiness of which its nature and current manner of being are capable?

ALEXIS. Of course.

DIOCLES. We have seen that animal and man must equally attain [this state] by the force of their instinct or their principle of perfectibility, and [do so] more or less perfectly in proportion to the energy of this principle, whose nature you without doubt recall?

ALEXIS. Perfectly.

DIOCLES. Having attained that very point where we still see it [remain] even now, the animal was fixed there and became happy, since it had no sensation of a happiness beyond the one which it enjoyed, either by its nature or by its industry – and so it follows that its principle of perfectibility has a determinate limit.

If man, who reaches the same point by similar means, but perhaps a bit later, had rested in the same way; what would you conclude about his fate, my dear Alexis?

ALEXIS. I would conclude that his fate was exactly the same as that of the animal who is born, vegetates and dies.

DIOCLES. Your conclusion would be very correct. – But in every being, must not all possible [and] determinate desires be proportionate to its needs, or to the quantity and quality of things of which it is capable of enjoying and of which it can form an idea?

ALEXIS. Yes.

DIOCLES. Thus, having presupposed the desires of some being, you can deduce from them with certainty the kinds of enjoyment of which its nature would be capable?

ALEXIS. Surely.

DIOCLES. And even, if its desires were vague and indeterminate, you would conclude from them without doubt that this being was capable of enjoyments beyond those of which it could form an idea in its present state.

And if you want to reflect on the hope which appears innate in man – not on that everyday hope which aims only at something comparatively better to his present state, but on that hope which has for its constant goal what is better in an absolute though indeterminate way – you will be convinced that man's desires, his instinct, his principle of perfectibility are indeterminate and do not possess sensible limits for us in the conditions in which we are; and that therefore man necessarily belongs to another state.

ALEXIS. Will he attain that state?

DIOCLES. But, my dear, when you see a small bird just coming out of its shell and I show you its wings – thereby indicating to you that its nature is to fly – do you fear that it will not fly?

ALEXIS. No, certainly it will fly someday.

DIOCLES. If I show you a little fish which has, by accident, just been born on the bank and I prove to you from all its parts that it could not live long in the air, but its nature requires that it be in the water; do you believe that it will not swim with the first tide?

ALEXIS. Of course, it will swim.

DIOCLES. And if I show you man who by his nature forms desires which no longer have any analogy to the little with which this earth can supply him insofar as he is an animal; do you believe that this earth is the element which agrees with his nature?

ALEXIS. – Therefore, in this world, only the animal can be happy.

DIOCLES. Nothing is truer, my dear, and man [at present] only imitates that fish which moves its fins, jumps, wiggles and thrashes about and who will only completely enjoy its own existence in the waves that it must vaguely comprehend while in my hands.

But let us return once more to the moment when man and animal were at the same point, when man was happy as an inhabitant of the earth. This moment must be for him of short duration; for his indeterminate and limitless principle soon carried him to [the point of] despising this happiness. He passed beyond, and since vague and indeterminate desires, which lack analogous objects that could satisfy them, caused him suffering, he looked in vain for these objects in the finite and determinate world which he found at hand. He will go further, beyond the natural insatiability of desires – as soon as his joys lead

him to glimpse the limits of these objects which are necessarily finite by their nature – in the vain and mad hope of finding in the quantity of these finite and determinate objects that infinite analogue of the great indeterminate principle which agitates him. As long as the progress of his knowledge was limited to a specific perfection in mechanics and agriculture, man found himself perfect in his quality as animal, but as soon as he measured the heavens, crossed the seas, drew metals from the depth of the earth to decorate his figure, to destroy his brothers or to forge signs for the property he had claimed; as soon as he formed states, prescribed laws and, at the height of absurdity, wanted only one man to be the proprietor of thousands of his fellow men; as soon as this astonishing being who has been amphibious since his fall but who was fundamentally a being of a homogeneous existence, wanted to draw into the same moment the two extremities of his nature – the connection and link between which he had lost by the loss of some modes of perception – immediately all the madness, the horrors and the disorder, the absurdities and the inconsistencies, which do so much wrong in Hesiod in your mind, had to naturally manifest themselves, while, at the same time, demonstrating to man, in the most perfect way, the nobility and stability of his nature and that his bastardisation was merely an accidental appearance.

ALEXIS. My dear Diocles, I believe I understand most of what you've just said to me; but I beg you, do not spare your words on a subject so interesting. You know me. I will not leave you until I've obtained distinct ideas.

DIOCLES. You sense well, Alexis, that although philosophy handles, with the same ease and the same precision, matters as abstract as the simplest object of geometry, it nevertheless finds less facility in the expression of ideas, since we often lack the terms when it is a matter of bringing together ideas that are fairly distant from each other and disparate in appearance. But in this case, it is up to the listener to remedy [this fault] by attaching to the speaker's train of thought many more words than he pronounces. By this means, these words translate themselves in the listener's head and will be replaced by signs which are more familiar to him. However, I will try to be as clear as it is possible for me to be in the little time that remains.

In Hesiod's and Hypsicles' golden age, man was absolutely perfect insofar as the nature of his essence could permit; and although he was created an eternal being, the nature of his developments and his joys were successive; but the movement of this succession from the first moment of his birth until eternity was uniformly accelerated, and death appeared to him only as one of the continual and ordinary developments of his essence. After the great catastrophe of the earth when man seemed to lose sensations, death changed shape to him. It was accompanied by so many strange and disagreeable circumstances that it appeared very different from every other development: death appeared to cut man's existence into two parts, one of which was the present life and the other a vague, doubtful and, at the very most, possible eternity. Then, man attained, by that principle of perfectibility lodged in his nature, that golden – or rather, silver – age of which we have spoken; the end of this age could only be an animal perfection; and it was only after having past beyond this perfection that

man became an unhappy being on the earth, until the wise taught him by an enlightened philosophy to link again the present to the future* and to recognise the homogeneity of his eternal existence.

Here are the two golden ages of a very different nature; and if we follow with care the natural progress of man's faculties in this life, we will gain a glimpse of a third age, which will not differ any less from the preceding ones. It will take place, my dear, when the sciences of man have reached as far as they can be carried by his current organs; when he distinctly sees the limits of his intelligence in the faces of the universe that he can know; when he perceives the absurd disproportion between his desires and what he can enjoy on the earth; and when, seeing the strange effects that result from it, he retraces his steps and finds a salutary and just equilibrium between his desires and the objects placed in the sphere of his current activity; finally, [it will take place] when, having been enriched by all the insight of which his nature here below is capable, he joins it to the happy simplicity of his first state and adorns [his nature] with it.

When it comes to the golden age of man after this life, his joys will there be more intimate, more coherent; and all his knowledge will be joined together, like the colours of the rainbow are mixed in the heart of a crystal and form together just one pure light,⁶¹ the perfect image of that shining star which it bears in its breast.

Here, my dear Alexis, it appears to me, is all that philosophy can teach us about the different ages of perfection to which human nature can lay claim.

For to know something more of the last age, we must have recourse to the oracles of the Gods; a divine breath is needed to bring together our ideas such that we sense all their relations.

ALEXIS. – Diocles, you cannot guess all the good you have done me, nor in what manner.

DIOCLES. No, certainly.

ALEXIS. For some time, I have conceived of an important project that must influence all the rest of my life. Often the idea has come to me to go to Dodona and Delphi to consult the Gods on my enterprise; but doubts over the value and possibility of oracles have always prevented me from doing so. You have made me recover from my errors and I am fully resolved now to address myself to the Gods, since I feel ready to be able to present myself in their temples animated with a sort of respect that I have never known before and which is perhaps what attracts us to their favours.

DIOCLES. I am delighted, my admirable Alexis, and all the more so since the Divinity will release you from your travels; for this disposition, my friend, is enough to make [the Divinity] descend upon this hill and [enter] into you, where he will render oracles perfectly intelligible without you needing to make recourse to the efficient wisdom of priests to explain them to you.

ALEXIS. – My dear friend!

* See remark (*) [pp. 151–2 below].

DIOCLES. – Well, what do you want?

ALEXIS. Go to Aristaeus's house and leave me here, for I sense that I will find Dodona and Delphi in such solitude and this is down to you!

DIOCLES. This being so, my dear, we owe a sacrifice to Love tomorrow!

Notes

*Original remark (*a):* See the hypochondriac Athenian, etc.

This Athenian is Thrasillus.⁶² His brother, Crito, returning from Sicily, put him into the hands of an excellent doctor who cured him. Thrasillus often remembered the happiness which he enjoyed during his illness and never pardoned his brother for healing him.

*Original remark (*b):* The poet has tried to tell them, etc.

Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται· καὶ γὰρ τάφον, ὃ ἄνα, σεῖο
Κρήτες ἐτεκτῆναντο· σὺ δ' οὐ θάνες, ἐσσι γὰρ ἀεὶ.⁶³

These verses are found in Callimachus, a poet who flourished principally under Ptolemy Philadelphus⁶⁴ and who therefore appeared some years later than Diocles and Alexis. Here are those thorns that criticism often finds it difficult to remove. However, there is much probability that these verses originated far before Callimachus, since we know with certain science that the beginning of the first verse, κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται, 'Cretans are always liars', is from Medea's composition, who pronounced these words when Idomeneus [of Crete] judged her less beautiful than Thetis.⁶⁵ Whether, on this occasion, she added the rest, will long remain unknown to us.

Moreover, Lucian also says on the subject of the Cretans, in Book VIII of his *Pharsalus*:

*Tam mendax Magni tumulo quam Creta Tonantis.*⁶⁶

*Original remark (*c):* The antiquarian may say to them, etc.

St Chrysostomus⁶⁷ in the Epistle of St Paul to Titus⁶⁸ gives the epitaph in this way: Ἐνταυθα κεῖται Ζάν, ὃν Δία κυκλήσκουσιν, 'Here lies Zan, who they call Jupiter'. St Cyril against Julian attributes this epitaph to Pythagoras.⁶⁹ Lactantius Book I, Chap. II has transmitted it to us in the following manner, ὁ Ζεὺς τοῦ Κρόνου, 'Jupiter son of Saturn'.⁷⁰ Cedrenus gives it still differently: Ἐνθάδε κεῖται θανὼν Πῖκος ὁ καὶ Ζεὺς, 'Here is buried after his death Picus who is also called Jupiter'.⁷¹ See also Sedelius, St Jerome, Origin against Celsus, Epiphanius, Philostratus, Cicero, Diodorus of Sicily, Lucian and many others. Moreover, it appears, and not only according to Theophilus, Minucius Felix and St Cyprien, that this tomb still existed in their time, but Psellus who lived under Constantine Ducas, around 700 AD, teaches us that then there was still a sign indicating the

place of this famous tomb.⁷² But finally, the Scholiast of Callimachus's hymn to Jupiter⁷³ better explains this place by giving this inscription: Τοῦ Μίνωος τοῦ Διός τάφος, 'Tomb of Minos son of Jupiter'. When time had effaced the first words, Τοῦ Μίνωος, there remained: 'Tomb of Jupiter', an explanation which is exactly in line with our author.

I know well that Ptolemy Hephaestion,⁷⁴ a serious author, speaks still differently of this tomb, saying that it is that of Olympus the Cretan, who saved Jupiter from the hands of Saturn, became his tutor, and instructed him in religion; but Jupiter struck [him] down on the mere suspicion that the Giants could wage war against the immortal Gods.

Jupiter, seeing his benefactor and master lying dead on the ground, repented and having no other means for providing reparations for the effects of his impetuosity, changed the name of Olympus which was put on his tomb, to that of Jupiter; an exaggerated gallantry that makes the fact less likely.

*Original remark (*d):* This Archytas, etc.

Archytas of Tarentum,⁷⁵ a Pythagorean philosopher who lived a hundred years after Pythagoras, belonged to the great men of the world. As a geometer, he discovered the squaring of the cube. He was the first to apply geometry to mechanics, and he lay the foundations of the true physics. Among the machines he invented, the ancients have most celebrated a pigeon which flew very well; but which, when earthbound, did not have the force to lift itself back up.⁷⁶

In Tarentum he was forbidden under penalty of death from becoming chief of the republic and the army twice. [But] Archytas was [still] forced seven times by his fellow citizens to be chief and general of the Tarentine and Greek alliance in Italy. He never waged war nor combat without bringing back complete victory. The only time he resigned as commander, to cede to those jealous of him, the entire army of the Tarentines and their allies were made prisoners of war.

He gave Plato the true taste for geometry and instructed him in Pythagoras's philosophy. He saved him from Dionysius's wrath.⁷⁷

We still have the letters of these two great men.⁷⁸ Archytas complains bitterly of how his post weighs him down and prevents him from being free and enjoying philosophy (it is in this alone that he is inferior to Socrates, who wanted to be a man on earth and whose philosophy was purely active). Plato councils him strongly against abdicating, by preaching to him patriotism, the duty of a philosopher and, above all, retaining his post for fear he will see it occupied by some wicked man.

There is no virtue not attributed to Archytas. He had an extreme reticence in his actions and his speech, loving better, on the occasions when he had to use a less honest word, to write it rather than to pronounce it. The softness and simplicity of his behaviour is discernible in the fact that he very often spent time instructing infants and his own slaves and playing with them.

His works and his apophthegms remain to us. He wanted to give boys and girls the same education. He said among other things that beatitude consists in making use of virtue in felicity. He defined virtue as the most excellent countenance of the parts of the soul which have no relation to the intellect.

Horace speaks of his death in *Ode* 28 Book 1:

*Te maris et terrae, numeroque carentis arenae
 Mensorem cohibent, Archyta,
 Pulveris exigui prope litus parva Matinum
 Munera, nec quicquam tibi prodest,
 Aëris tentasse domos animoque rotundum
 Percurrisse polum, morituro etc.⁷⁹*

*Original remark (*e):* The Arcadians, etc.

However strange Hypsicles' tale might seem, a Commentator's zeal and duty obliges me to relate what I could find in favour of his system.

1°. The Arcadians' tradition of which he speaks is noted by Plutarch, Lucian and a number of ancient authors.⁸⁰

2°. Proverbs among the Egyptians and others which designate everything that has a prodigious antiquity by [expressions such as] before the moon or having existed before the moon illuminated the earth, are quite often reported by the Ancients.

3°. The universal tradition among almost all peoples of the world of a golden age, a paradise, a happiness that is not interrupted or cut short by illnesses, wars, floods or other scourges is well known. Moreover, it is true that when assuming the axis of the earth to be perpendicular to the plane of its orbit, all the movements of the air, the water and the earth would have to be formed in the same direction and on the [same] parallel planes – from which is born necessarily all these uniformities and homogeneities of which the learned priest from Byblos speaks.

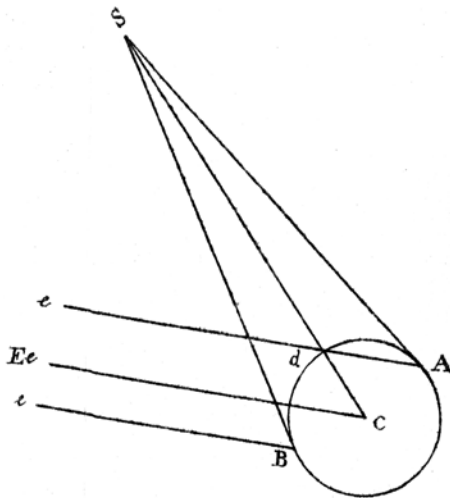
4°. The first comet mentioned by the cometographs appeared in the sign of Pisces in the year 2312 before the Christian Era – that is, the year of the universal deluge. It crossed the whole Zodiac in the space of 29 days. The illustrious Hevelius⁸¹ reports it in his *Cometographia* according to Heinrich Eckstorm's history of the comets⁸² and drew it from the 1607 description of the comet by David Herlitz,⁸³ who took it from the Orientals.

Father Riccioli,⁸⁴ that wise astronomer, in his *Almagestum*, and the famous Mr Struyk⁸⁵ in his *Algemeene geographie* do not speak of this comet; and many great astronomers have made no case for such a precarious, ancient and seemingly absurd observation, which could be of no use to them in their investigations of a theory of these stars.

However, if one considers [whether] this observation is true or false without prejudice, one will find that it is much more reasonable to believe that we owe it to some prodigiously ancient tradition than to suppose it forged for some purpose; for this purpose would be discernible by all astronomers, since, on the one hand, the time of its orbit is the same as that of the apparent orbit of the moon and because, on the other hand, this comet was considered to traverse the entire Zodiac – which is impossible for all comets, as much by their smallness as by the prodigious length of the large axis of their orbits, unless their proximity and the action of the earth compelled them to remain close to us, as Hypsicles says of the moon. And if some imposter had designed to deceive us with this purpose, how would it have come about that neither he nor anyone else for more than a century took advantage

of this imposture to offer us Hypsicles' system in this era when infinitely more absurd novelties are no longer scared off? If, for the present, we assume that we owe knowledge of this comet to some ancient tradition, there is no need that it be very ancient for the astronomers from that time to be unable to propose a purpose similar to the one I have just mentioned; and therefore [there is] little probability that it was by chance that they forged an observation which coincides with many truths of a completely different nature, which [together] form a very natural whole. — [All this] greatly increases the probability that fundamentally the [Ancients'] observation is not a supposition.

5°. If when observing the moon through binoculars composed of two of the strongest and most perfect achromatic lenses,⁸⁶ we see that it is a limestone body, dead, vitrified in some places,^{*87} and its surface shows by thousands of punctured bubbles that it [once] was in a state of fusion; then it appears evident to us that this moon is a comet which in the time of its perihelion was reduced into this state by its close approximation to the sun and that then, continuing in its orbit, it passed so close to the earth that it was compelled to remain with it and to follow it in orbit. Finally, if we reflect on the fluctuations of the moon or on its flotations by which it shows to us always basically the same face, it will appear that the hemisphere which is turned to our side and the opposed hemisphere do not have the same specific gravity, which makes [the claim that] its former state was liquid very likely, unless its true shape was [like] a drop of tallow, which would still suggest a preceding state of fusion.



Moreover, I can say in favour of the Priest of Adonis that, despite what the astronomers and the physicians say of it, the movement of rotation and the perpendicular position of the axis on the plane of orbit is a necessary state of every planet which

* This makes comprehensible the observations of the eclipse of the sun on 24 June 1778 made by Ulloa and Desoteux at great distance from each other and during which the moon appeared to them transparent in one spot.

describes some path around its sun. For suppose that planet AB is attracted towards the centre of a sun S , all its parts A , d , B are equally attracted towards this centre in their directions BS , dS , AS . Assume further that the planet has a movement of projection or translation by some impulse towards the range E , all its parts will equally have this movement, each in its direction Be , Ce , Ae , which are all parallel. Now, it is evident, since angle SBe is greater than angle SAe , that part B in its direction Be acts more directly against its direction towards S , BS , than part A in its direction Ae against its direction towards S , AS . Therefore, the effect of the attraction towards S is greater in A than in B and the equilibrium is broken. Hence, planet AB must necessarily receive a movement of rotation from A , by d , towards B , and one of the poles of the axis of this rotation is point C and the other its opposite – that is, this axis must necessarily be perpendicular to the plane of orbit. Now, as this state of a planet which describes some orbit around its sun derives necessarily from reciprocal interrelations between it and its sun and from the modification of its movement of projection or translation; it follows that when I observe this altered state in some planet, I must look for its cause in a foreign force; and since I see the axis of the earth inclined on the plane of its orbit at an angle of $66^{\circ} 31'$, I must attribute it to some external action. And where do I seek this action if not in the most proximate body to the earth whose influence on all our fluids is so sensitive and whose movements show us so many irregularities? That is, the moon.

But, others will say, perhaps, the moon has been formed in the same moment as the earth; and here is why this is impossible for two reasons.

1^o: If the moon had been formed at the same instant as the earth, following all the laws of dynamics – in whatever spatial relation to the earth it is placed – it would have composed with the earth one single whole, one single system which would have made its orbits around the sun with the most perfect regularity.

And 2^o: The moon could bring about the inclination of the axis of the earth only when [the earth] was already flattened out towards its poles and expanded at the equator. Now, [the earth] could acquire these two properties merely by centrifugal force caused by its own movement of rotation; but [if] being formed at the same time as the moon, it did not yet have any movement of rotation or determinate axis: it was not flattened out, but perfectly spherical; and thus some perfect regularity would have followed – which is not the case. Therefore, the earth and the moon were not produced at the same time, at least with their current interrelations.

We see here many things of a very different nature which end up at one point. How many things of a different nature must coincide to constitute a fact is a problem which has not yet been resolved. To determine the nature of a homogeneous curve, only three points are needed.

This is all that I can say on Hypsicles' speech. It is up to the physicians, astronomers and geometers to judge it. For me I will limit myself to wishing that the discovery of some other tale by this good priest might soon allow me to exercise my profession once more.

*Original remark (*f)*: To link again the present to the future, etc.

This passage and what precede it appear to throw some light on an idea of Alcmaeon the Pythagorean.⁸⁸ Τοὺς γὰρ ἄνθρώπους φησὶν Ἀλκμαίων δία τοῦτο

ἀπόλλυσθαι, ὅτι οὐ δύνανται τὴν ἀρχὴν τῷ τέλει προσάψαι. 'Men perish, says Alcmaeon, for the reason that they cannot link the beginning to the end, or rather the principle to its goal.' Κομψῶς εἰρηκῶς, says Aristotle, εἴ τις ὡς τύπῳ φράζοντος αὐτοῦ δέχοιτο, καὶ μὴ διακριβοῦν ἐθέλοι τὸ λεχθὲν.' An elegant expression', says Aristotle, 'if one takes it figuratively and not in its rigour.'⁸⁹

Notes

Series Introduction

- 1 For more details on Hemsterhuis's life, works and reception, see the chronology that follows this Series Introduction. We would like to thank the Advisory Board in general and Louis Hoffman in particular for all their help with the translations.
- 2 A. W. Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. E. Lohner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1964), vol. 3, p. 83; J. G. Herder, *Werke*, ed. B. Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877), vol. 3, p. 127; C. M. Wieland, 'Letter to F. H. Jacobi, 11 October 1785', in F. H. Jacobi, *Briefwechsel*, ed. A. Mues *et al.* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1981–2018), vol. 4, p. 204; J. G. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, ed. A. Henkel (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1955–75), vol. 7, p. 445.
- 3 For a selection of significant scholarship on Hemsterhuis since 1971, see K. Hammacher, *Unmittelbarkeit und Kritik bei Hemsterhuis* (Munich: Fink, 1971); M. F. Fresco *et al.* (eds), *Frans Hemsterhuis (1721–1790): Quellen, Philosophie und Rezeption* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 1990); H. Krop, 'A Dutch Spinozismustreit: The New View of Spinoza at the End of the Eighteenth Century', *Lias* 32.1 (2005), pp. 185–211; P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J.-L. Nancy, 'Le dialogue des genres', *Poétique* 21 (1975), pp. 148–75; E. Matassi, *Hemsterhuis: Istanza critica e filosofia della storia* (Napoli: Guida, 1983); C. Melica (ed.), *Hemsterhuis: A European Philosopher Rediscovered* (Napoli: Vivarium, 2005); H. Moenkemeyer, *François Hemsterhuis* (Boston: Twayne, 1975); P. Pelckmans, *Hemsterhuis sans rapports* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987); M. J. Petry, 'Hemsterhuis on Mathematics and Optics', in J. North and J. Roche (eds), *The Light of Nature* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1985), pp. 209–34; P. Sonderer, *Het sculpturale denken: De esthetica van Frans Hemsterhuis* (Leende: Damon, 2000); W. van Bunge, *From Bayle to the Batavian Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, *Platonisme et interprétation de Platon à l'époque modern* (Paris: Vrin, 1988); and M. Wielema, 'Frans Hemsterhuis: A Philosopher's View of the History of the Dutch Republic', *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 14.1 (1993), pp. 55–63.
- 4 Specifically: F. Hemsterhuis, *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. J. van Sluis (Leiden: Brill, 2015); F. Hemsterhuis, *Opere*, ed. and trans. C. Melica (Napoli: Vivarium, 2001); F. Hemsterhuis, *Wijzgerige werken*, ed. M. J. Petry (Leeuwarden: Damon, 2001); F. Hemsterhuis, *Œuvres inédits*, ed. J. van Sluis (Berltsum: van Sluis [Lulu print on demand], 2021); and F. Hemsterhuis, *Briefwisseling (Hemsterhuisiana)*, 16 vols, ed. J. van Sluis (Berltsum: van Sluis [Lulu print on demand], 2010–17).
- 5 For Jonathan Israel, see, among other texts, 'Failed Enlightenment': *Spinoza's Legacy and the Netherlands (1670–1800)* (Wassenaar: NIAS, 2007). See also D. Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795–1804* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); L. Weatherby, *Transplanting the Metaphysical Organ: German Romanticism between Leibniz and Marx* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).
- 6 See note 4 above.

- 7 E. Trunz, *Goethe und der Kreis von Münster* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1971), p. x. Throughout this edition, wherever the surname Gallitzin is used, it refers to Amalie Gallitzin (whereas her husband is designated by his full name, Dmitri Gallitzin).
- 8 For details, see note 4 above.
- 9 Van Bunge, *From Bayle to the Batavian Revolution*, p. 180.
- 10 See his comments at the end of the *Letter on Sculpture* (*EE* 1.75), as well as those on Blankenburg's German edition (*B* 3:172–3).
- 11 See, e.g., *B* 12: 224–5.
- 12 F. Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. E. Behler *et al.* (Munich: Schöningh, 1958–2002), vol. 1, p. 244.

Forms of Philosophical Creativity

- 1 E. Grucker, *François Hemsterhuis: Sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: Durand, 1866), pp. 28–9.
- 2 The suggestions made at the end of this introduction are developed further in my forthcoming *Hemsterhuis and the Writing of Philosophy*.
- 3 *Journal encyclopédique*, 15 September 1772, pp. 360–1. On both this review and Diderot's comments, see van Sluis's introduction to volume 1 of the Edinburgh Edition (*Early Writings*) (*EE* 1.29, 32–3).
- 4 F. Hemsterhuis, *Lettre sur l'homme et ses rapports, avec le commentaire inédit de Diderot*, ed. Georges May (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 265, 239.
- 5 Hemsterhuis, *Lettre*, ed. May, p. 421. In retaliation, Hemsterhuis will later label Diderot's philosophy 'obscure' (*B* 6.37).
- 6 E. Boulan, *François Hemsterhuis: Le Socrate hollandais* (Paris: Arnette, 1924), p. 34.
- 7 P. Brachin, *Le cercle de Münster (1779–1806) et la pensée religieuse de F. L. Stolberg* (Lyon: IAC, 1952), p. 19.
- 8 Gallitzin, quoted in Brachin, *Le cercle de Münster*, p. 242.
- 9 J.-L. Vicillard-Baron, *Platonisme et interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Vrin, 1988), p. 119.
- 10 H. Moenkemeyer, *François Hemsterhuis* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), p. 106.
- 11 On the difference between the two sets of arguments, see T. Verbeek, 'Sensation et matière: Hemsterhuis et le matérialisme', in M. F. Fresco *et al.* (eds), *Frans Hemsterhuis (1721–1790): Quellen, Philosophie und Rezeption* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 1990), pp. 243–62.
- 12 Moenkemeyer, *Hemsterhuis*, p. 92.
- 13 Grucker, *François Hemsterhuis*, p. 201; Boulan, *François Hemsterhuis*, p. 84; Moenkemeyer, *François Hemsterhuis*, p. 109.
- 14 P. Pelckmans, *Hemsterhuis sans rapports: Contribution à une lecture distante des Lumières* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), p. 50.
- 15 F. Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. E. Behler *et al.* (Munich: Schöningh, 1958–2002), vol. 1, p. 244.
- 16 Pelckmans, *Hemsterhuis sans rapports*, p. 50.
- 17 K. Hammacher, *Unmittelbarkeit und Kritik bei Hemsterhuis* (Munich: Fink, 1971), pp. 162, 165.
- 18 See P. Sonderer, *Het sculpturale denken. De esthetica van Frans Hemsterhuis* (Leende: Damon, 2000), pp. 177–81.
- 19 J. G. Hamann, *Schriften*, ed. F. Roth (Berlin: Reimer, 1843), vol. 7, p. 255.
- 20 J. J. Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. V. Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 144–5 (original emphasis).

- 21 F. Lotterie, *Progrès et perfectibilité: un dilemme des Lumières françaises (1744–1814)* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2006), p. xxix.
- 22 C. Bonnet, *La palingénésie philosophique*, ed. C. Frémont (Paris: Fayard, 2002), pp. 137, 155.
- 23 Bonnet, *La palingénésie philosophique*, p. 227.
- 24 Hammacher, *Unmittelbarkeit und Kritik*, p. 7.
- 25 Hammacher, *Unmittelbarkeit und Kritik*, pp. 120, 123.
- 26 L. Weatherby, *Transplanting the Metaphysical Organ: German Romanticism between Leibniz and Marx* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp. 46, 225.
- 27 Weatherby, *Transplanting the Metaphysical Organ*, p. 235.
- 28 P. Lacoue-Labarthe and J.-L. Nancy, 'Le dialogue des genres', *Poétique* 21 (1975), p. 155.

Philosophical Paths: The Legacy of Hemsterhuis's Dialogues in the Age of German Romanticism

- 1 J. I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 634.
- 2 According to van Sluis, this was a fictitious designation of place of publication, confirmed by the fact that the name of the printer was omitted – see *OP*, p. 7.
- 3 Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, p. 696.
- 4 This French reception took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with de Biran, de Staël and Portalis. On this point, see *OP*, p. 18.
- 5 A. Bonchino, *Materie als geronnener Geist. Studien zu Franz von Baader in den philosophischen Konstellationen seiner Zeit* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014), p. 34.
- 6 C. Melica, 'Longing for Unity: Hemsterhuis and Hegel', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 55/56 (2007), p. 145.
- 7 See further J. Neubauer, *Bifocal Vision: Novalis' Philosophy of Nature and Disease* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 88–93 (especially on Hemsterhuis and Schelling), as well as Melica, 'Longing for Unity'.
- 8 Bonchino, *Materie als geronnener Geist*, p. 35.
- 9 K. Hammacher, 'Hemsterhuis und seine Rezeption in der deutschen Philosophie und Literatur des ausgehenden achtzehnten Jahrhunderts', in M. Fresco *et al.* (eds), *Frans Hemsterhuis (1721–1790): Quellen, Philosophie und Rezeption* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 1990), p. 407.
- 10 Hammacher, 'Hemsterhuis und seine Rezeption', p. 413.
- 11 See, more generally, on the Novalis–Hemsterhuis relation: U. Flickenschild, *Novalis' Begegnung mit Fichte und Hemsterhuis* (Berltsun: van Sluis [Lulu print on demand], 2010); H.-J. Mähl, *Die Idee des goldenen Zeitalters im Werk des Novalis* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994).
- 12 Quoted in J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, *Platonisme et interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Vrin, 1988), p. 115.
- 13 Quoted in *The Life of Schleiermacher, as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*, trans. F. Rowan (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1860), vol. 1, p. 85 (translation modified).
- 14 F. C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 208.
- 15 B. Frischmann, *Vom transzendentalen zum frühromantischen Idealismus: J. G. Fichte und Fr. Schlegel* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), p. 334.
- 16 Frischmann, *Vom transzendentalen zum frühromantischen Idealismus*, p. 334.
- 17 This fragment written by Friedrich Schlegel was his own contribution to Novalis's collection entitled *Pollen* (or *Blüthenstaub* in German), which first appeared in the *Athenaeum*.

- See Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. P. Kluckhohn *et al.*, 6 vols, Historische-Kritische Ausgabe (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960–2006), vol. 2, p. 419. Henceforth cited as HKA.
- 18 HKA 4.571–2.
- 19 J. G. Herder, ‘Vorerinnerung des Uebersetzers’, *Der Teutsche Merkur* (November 1781), p. 98.
- 20 See HKA 2.318.
- 21 HKA 2.360–78.
- 22 For example, even Mähl omits *Sophylus* when listing the works of Hemsterhuis that Novalis studied – see HKA 2.321. An exception to this is Balmes, who briefly notes a passing parallel between *Sophylus* and *Pollen*. Balmes in Novalis, *Schriften. Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. H.-J. Mähl and R. Samuel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), vol. 3, p. 318.
- 23 HKA 2.417–19.
- 24 HKA 3.434 (original emphasis); *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. and ed. D. W. Wood (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), p. 155.
- 25 See L. Cahen-Maurel, ‘The Romantic Self and World in the Philosophy of Novalis’, in M. Kisner *et al.* (eds), *Das Selbst und die Welt. Beiträge zu Kant und der nachkantischen Philosophie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2019), pp. 245–59.
- 26 Here I disagree with Hammacher’s claim that, after reading Fichte’s critical idealist philosophy, Novalis went back to Hemsterhuis, because the early German Romantic poet-philosopher considered Hemsterhuis to be a mystically inclined Platonist like himself. Hammacher suggests that the Romantic reception of Hemsterhuis therefore ruined the earlier first reception of Hemsterhuis’s philosophy as a forerunner to critical idealism. See Hammacher, ‘Hemsterhuis und seine Rezeption’, pp. 417, 423.
- 27 A. W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Schöne Literatur und Kunst*, ed. J. Minor (Stuttgart: G. J. Göschen, 1884), vol. 2, p. 92.
- 28 F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Geschichte der Philosophie. Aus Schleiermachers handschriftlichem Nachlasse herausgegeben von H. Ritter* (Berlin: Reimer, 1839), p. 301.
- 29 HKA 2.423.
- 30 W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. M. Redeker (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), vol. 14, p. 13.
- 31 F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, ed. M. Lauschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), p. 23; English translation in G. E. Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. H. B. Nisbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 244.
- 32 Jacobi, *Über die Lehre.*, p. 42; English translation, p. 254.
- 33 Jacobi, *Über die Lehre.*, p. 42; English translation, p. 254.
- 34 Jacobi, *Über die Lehre.*, p. 43; English translation, p. 254.
- 35 See Jacobi, *Über die Lehre*, p. 56.
- 36 G. di Giovanni, ‘Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi’, in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friedrich-jacobi>> (accessed 19 February 2021).
- 37 M. Drees, ‘Alexis im *Hyperion*? Bemerkungen zu Hölderlins Hemsterhuis-Rezeption’, in Fresco *et al.* (eds), *Frans Hemsterhuis*, p. 543. Though, as Drees suggests, Hölderlin had probably discovered Hemsterhuis’s work much earlier, through Friedrich August Boek, his professor in the history of philosophy at the Tübingen Stift, or through Herder’s 1781 translation of the *Letter on Desires*. See Drees, ‘Alexis im *Hyperion*?’, p. 535.
- 38 Jacobi, *Über die Lehre*, p. 69.
- 39 See, for example, Mähl, *Die Idee des goldenen Zeitalters*, pp. 266–86.
- 40 Bonchino, *Materie als geronnener Geist*, p. 45.

- 41 Bonchino, *Materie als gerommener Geist*, p. 36.
- 42 HKA 4.255. Quoted in G. Rommel, 'Romanticism and Natural Science', in D. F. Mahoney and J. N. Hardin (eds), *The Literature of German Romanticism* (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), p. 226.
- 43 For more detailed expositions of the reception of Hemsterhuis in Schleiermacher's concept of religion, see (among others) W. Dilthey, *Leben Schleiermachers*, ed. M. Redeker (Berlin: Gruyter, 1966), vol. 2, p. 580.
- 44 HKA 4, p. 275–6; English translation by D. W. Wood, 'Twelve Letters from the Romantic Circle (1798–1799)', *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019), p. 190.
- 45 Balmes in Novalis, *Schriften*, vol. 3, p. 318.
- 46 HKA 3.248; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, p. 8.
- 47 See L. Cahen-Maurel, 'Novalis's Magical Idealism: A Threefold Philosophy of the Imagination, Love and Medicine', *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019), pp. 129–65.
- 48 HKA 2.545.
- 49 HKA 4.263.
- 50 HKA 2.363.
- 51 HKA 3.275; *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, p. 30.
- 52 See HKA 2.376.
- 53 HKA 2.545.
- 54 HKA 2.587.
- 55 A. Nivala, *The Romantic Idea of the Golden Age in Friedrich Schlegel's Philosophy of History* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 68.
- 56 See A. W. Schlegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. E. Böcking (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1846), vol. 7, pp. 20–1.
- 57 HKA 4.572.
- 58 See Drees, 'Alexis im Hyperion', p. 535.
- 59 H. Moenkemeyer, *François Hemsterhuis* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), p. 196. Cf. F. W. J. Schelling, *Schellings Werke, Jugendschriften 1793–1798* (Munich: Beck, 1958), p. 543.
- 60 F. Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. E. Behler et al. (Munich: Schöningh, 1958–2002), vol. 2, p. 289.
- 61 J. Lèbre, 'L'âge d'or. Qu'est-ce qu'une époque à l'époque des Romantiques allemands et de Schelling?', *Revue germanique internationale* 18 (2013).
- 62 Drees, 'Alexis im Hyperion', p. 543.
- 63 HKA 2.462.

Sophylus, or on Philosophy

- 1 The epigraph is taken from the opening to Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, book 1, lines 6–9: 'From you, O goddess, from you the winds flee away, the clouds of heaven from you and your coming; from you the wonder-working earth puts forth sweet flowers, for you the wide stretches of ocean laugh, and heaven grown peaceful glows with outpoured light.' Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, trans. M. Ferguson Smith (London: Loeb, 1992), pp. 1–2. Sophylus's initial 'confession of faith' of a worldview constituted out of matter and movement alone takes up this Lucretian inspiration very literally.
- 2 The attribution of the place of publication ('Paris') is probably fictitious, although there is no reason to doubt the date. Hemsterhuis speaks elsewhere of this dialogue as a product

- of his philosophical collaborations with Gallitzin (*B* 1.201). The publisher is not known. The following translation follows the text established in *OP*, pp. 334–87.
- 3 Euthyphro is Hemsterhuis's alter-ego in this dialogue. He is, of course, the title character in the Platonic dialogue on piety, in which he takes the role of Socrates' interlocutor. Plato presents him as orthodox in religion and, generally, an unpleasant individual who has charged his father with murder. For this reason, it is puzzling why Hemsterhuis names his own main character after him. It is likely to have little to do with the Platonic figure and more the etymology of the name: 'having the right mind'. In the later dialogues, Hemsterhuis names his alter-ego Diocles, and, in fact, a version of this dialogue does exist in which Sophylus is renamed Aristaeus and Euthyphron renamed Diocles (the dialogue is entitled accordingly, *Aristaeus, or on Philosophy*). See *OP*, p. 42.
 - 4 That is, philosophy does not have a supernatural provenance either of classical origin (from Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom) or of Judaeo-Christian origin (i.e. angelic).
 - 5 Hemsterhuis here rewrites Descartes's *cogito* by way of passive perception. Similar empiricist reworkings of the *cogito* are frequent in the French sensualist tradition.
 - 6 Jacques de Vaucanson (1709–1782), French inventor who constructed many famed automata (such as 'the Turk') in the mid-1700s. The 'digesting duck' was a machine which appeared to be able to eat and to digest food.
 - 7 That is, something of the essence itself is included in the idea of the essence.
 - 8 Saladin (d. 1193), the first sultan of Egypt and Syria.
 - 9 An allusion (presumably) to the Roman general Pompey (106–48 BC), although Cestius is unknown.
 - 10 This kind of argument (proceeding from the lack of an organ) was popularised in Diderot's *Letter on the Blind* (although Hemsterhuis here employs it against materialism). Nicholas Saunderson, the protagonist of Diderot's *Letter*, is a reference point in Hemsterhuis's correspondence (e.g. *B* 2.53).
 - 11 This reference to St Peter's Basilica in Rome (as well as to Newton earlier in the dialogue and Huygens later) makes clear that, despite reference to columns and so on, Hemsterhuis is not, in any sustained way, attempting to pass this dialogue off as of Greek provenance, as he does his later dialogues. *Sophylus* stands apart from *Aristaeus*, *Simon* and *Alexis* in its lack of Athenian pretence.
 - 12 Hemsterhuis's frequent use of electromagnetic examples stems, in part, from his study at the University of Leiden in the 1740s, during which period the Leyden jar was discovered by Pieter van Musschenbroek (whose lessons Hemsterhuis attended).
 - 13 That such imperceptible effects were due to some 'subtle matter' was a thesis of Cartesian physics and optics (although its origins are earlier). For example, there is a subtle matter in air, the function of which is to transmit the action of light.
 - 14 These three tasks structure the remainder of the dialogue: the first task (proving the reality of the infinite faces of the universe) is undertaken on pp. 54–6, the second (demonstrating how we know of them) on pp. 56–7 and the third (showing how the unknown faces act on the known ones) on pp. 57–61.
 - 15 The reference is to Hemsterhuis's own *Letter on Man and his Relations*, which is here reimagined as a speech within this fictional world. What follows is a reproduction of a passage from the *Letter on Man* (*EE* 1.94–5).
 - 16 This ironic interrogation of the persuasive power of Hemsterhuis's own arguments from the *Letter on Man* is repeated in the opening Clarification (*a) to the *Letter on Man* itself (*EE* 1.127–8). The allusion to 'an intimate and perfect conviction' is expanded on in *Aristaeus*'s central discussion of sentimental conviction (see p. 92).

- 17 Presumably through the trick of noting that any square is made up of smaller squares which are, in turn, made up of smaller squares ad infinitum, giving the illusion of an infinity of smaller squares, each with a determinate area, enclosed within the initial square.
- 18 Hemsterhuis returns to this important passage at length in his correspondence with Gallitzin – see, in particular, *B* 5.54.
- 19 Hemsterhuis here alludes to (and develops) his doctrine of the moral organ set out more fully in the *Letter on Man and his Relations* (*EE* 1.103ss). Notably, however, he does so without expressly speaking of a moral ‘organ’.
- 20 That is, Socrates.
- 21 The following several paragraphs (to ‘... affirm or deny anything!’) follow almost verbatim *Letter on Man and his Relations*, Clarification (*h) (*EE* 1.130–3). They also closely follow Hemsterhuis’s two unpublished fragments, *On the Immaterial*.
- 22 The following several paragraphs (to ‘... then become nothing?’) follow almost verbatim *Letter on Man and his Relations*, Clarification (*h) (*EE* 1.130–3). They also closely follow Hemsterhuis’s two unpublished fragments, *On the Immaterial*.
- 23 See Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, book 36, 82: ‘Such are the wonders of the pyramids; and the last and greatest of these wonders, which forbids us to marvel at the wealth of kings, is that the smallest but most greatly admired of these pyramids was built by Rhodopis, a mere prostitute.’ Trans. D. E. Eichholz (London: Loeb, 1962), pp. 64–5.
- 24 The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (one of the seven wonders of the classical world), built for Mausolus, a Persian satrap (governor), who reigned from 377 to 353 BC, by his widow, Artemisia (mentioned in the text below).
- 25 On Rhodopis and Artemisia, see previous notes.
- 26 The following two paragraphs (to ‘... ultimately useless investigations.’) follow almost verbatim *Letter on Man and his Relations*, Clarification (*h) (*EE* 1.130–3). They also closely follow Hemsterhuis’s two unpublished fragments, *On the Immaterial*.
- 27 See pp. 58–9.
- 28 Christiaan Huygens (1629–95), the Dutch astronomer, and Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery (1674–1731). ‘Orrery’ was the name given to the first mechanical solar system model that could demonstrate the proportional motion of the planets around the sun, made under Boyle’s patronage.

Aristaeus, or on the Divinity

- 1 The epigraph is adapted from a fragment by Philemon (c. 362–262 BC), an Athenian playwright. The original runs: Ἄν γνῶς τι ἐστ’ ἀνθρώπος εὐδαίμων ἔση, translated as ‘If you may have come to know what man is, you will be happy’. However, Hemsterhuis’s variant reads: ‘If you may have come to know what God is, you will feel more at ease’. H. Grotius and J. Clericus (eds), *Menandri et Philemonis reliquiae* (Amstelodami, 1712), p. 358. (English translation of this passage courtesy of Dr Ben Schomaker.) Hemsterhuis often cites Philemon; see *EE* 1.93, 103.
- 2 Again, the attribution of the place of publication (‘Paris’) is probably fictitious, although there is no reason to doubt the date. A first draft of the dialogue existed as early as April 1777, when Hemsterhuis sent a copy to Gallitzin (*B* 1.158). In December 1778, he completed preparing the work for publication (*B* 1.240) and it appeared in August 1779. The publisher is not known. This translation of *Aristaeus* follows the text established in *OP*, pp. 388–497.

- 3 During the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74, the isle of Andros in the Aegean Sea was occupied by a Russian fleet. Hemsterhuis's dialogue *Simon* follows exactly the same conceit with the same 'editorial' statement of classical provenance and opening dedication.
- 4 Criticism in the sense of the philological art of establishing an accurate text.
- 5 That is, around 300 BC, as Demetrius of Phalerum, Athenian statesman, was born c. 350 BC and died c. 280 BC.
- 6 See p. 69.
- 7 The Lamian War (323–322 BC), fought by an Athenian coalition against Macedonia – the last war in which Athens played a central role.
- 8 As related in Plato's *Symposium*. There are three 'Diotimas' at play here: (1) the Diotima of the *Symposium*, (2) the Diotima who lived much later, to whom the dialogue is fictionally dedicated and (3) 'Diotima' as Gallitzin, to whom Hemsterhuis is ultimately alluding.
- 9 It is unlikely 'Diocles' and 'Aristaeus' were intended to refer to any historical persons by Hemsterhuis. Aristaeus was a common name, primarily referring to a minor deity who was a son of Apollo. Diocles is one of Hemsterhuis's favoured pseudonyms and he signs himself by this name in his extensive correspondence with Anna Perrenot, as well as reusing it in *Alexis*. It was a common name in antiquity (pertinent Dioclees include the philosopher Diocles of Cnidus, an influential mathematician and a priest of Demeter to whom the Eleusinian mysteries were first revealed). Just as there are multiple Diotimas at play here, so too then there are multiple Dioclees: (1) Diocles as participant in the dialogue from the fourth century BC, (2) the Diocles who dedicates the dialogue to Diotima at a later date (see note 3 to *Simon*) and (3) Diocles as Hemsterhuis's pseudonym.
- 10 Hemsterhuis made a drawing of this scene in a letter to Gallitzin (*B* 2.2). See *OP*, p. 720.
- 11 'Pelasgians' is the ancient Greek name for the first inhabitants of Greece, prior to the Achaeans, Aeolian and Ionian invasions.
- 12 This is the main conclusion drawn in both the *Letter on Desires* and the metaphysical parts of the *Letter on Sculpture*.
- 13 This passage marks one of Hemsterhuis's more conspicuous breaks with the mainstream of Dutch Newtonianism, which relied on the physico-theology popularised by Bernard Nieuwentyt (1654–1718).
- 14 Paros is an island in the Aegean Sea known for its translucent marble.
- 15 That is, the monumental entrance to the Athenian Acropolis built by Mnesicles on Pericles' orders between 437 and 432 BC.
- 16 Protogenes (fourth century BC), a famous Greek painter, who is reported to have spent seven years on a portrait of Ialysus, the mythological founder of a town of the same name on the island of Rhodes.
- 17 See p. 66.
- 18 Eudoxus of Cnidus (fourth century BC), reportedly a pupil of Plato on whose works Euclid and Archimedes relied.
- 19 Hemsterhuis is constrained by his Athenian setting from mentioning that this is Newton's third law of motion.
- 20 According to Cicero, the pre-Socratic philosopher Thales of Miletus (c. 625–c. 547 BC) 'states that water is the principle of all things; and that God is the mind which shaped and created all things from water' (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, I.10). See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983b6.
- 21 According to Plato's *Phaedo* (97c–98b), the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras (c. 500–c. 428 BC) attributed the creation of the cosmos to 'nous', a seemingly immanent principle of mind in the world. The idea of the 'world-soul' would go on to play (at least,

- according to modern reconstructions) a significant role in many classical philosophical traditions, but would enter modernity in Giordano Bruno's writings as a conceptual means of refusing divine (i.e. Christian) transcendence.
- 22 The circulation of blood, as pumped by the heart, was first described in detail by William Harvey in 1628, and so is an uneasy anachronism within the fictional world of the dialogue.
 - 23 See *Iliad*, book 18, where Hephaistos (i.e. Vulcan) forges the arms of Achilles.
 - 24 The Greek name Antiphilus literally translates as 'he who responds to love'. There were a number of famous Antiphiluses in antiquity and later in the dialogue Hemsterhuis refers to a (supposed) Athenian general in the Lamian War (see note 7) who bore that name (see note 55 below), but it is not clear whether he is identifying the same Antiphilus here. Blankenburg's 1782 German translation takes 'Antiphile' (as the name is spelt in the French) to be female and this is one explanation for the appearance of a female 'Antiphile' in Hölderlin's *Hymne an die Schönheit*. See M. F. Fresco, 'He was Greek, this Frisian Socrates: From Cicero back to Plato', in M. F. Fresco *et al.* (eds), *Frans Hemsterhuis: Quellen, Philosophie und Rezeption* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 1991), pp. 145–7.
 - 25 Palinurus, the helmsman of Aeneas's ship in Virgil's *Aeneid*, book 6.
 - 26 The discussion of desire, love and morality that develops over the next several pages extends and clarifies many of the claims first sketched in the *Letter on Desires*.
 - 27 See also Hemsterhuis's allusion to this prayer in the *Letter on Sculpture* (*EE* 1.86).
 - 28 Slaves were known to prostitute themselves for Aphrodite at her temple in Corinth.
 - 29 A city state close to Corinth.
 - 30 Philarete's name literally translates as 'lover of virtue'.
 - 31 Hemsterhuis here alludes to his critique of the institution of marriage, which he develops more fully in his letters to Gallitzin, whose own marriage had failed (e.g. *B* 4.41, 11.76).
 - 32 Hemsterhuis's moral epistemology is here redescribed without reference to a moral 'organ' that had been so prominent in the *Letter on Man and his Relations* (*EE* 1.103ss) and would reappear once more in *Simon* (pp. 116–18).
 - 33 The historians Diodorus Siculus (first century BC), Agatharchides (or Agatharchus) of Cnidus (second century BC) and Photius I (Patriarch of Constantinople, c. 810 – c. 893) describe Troglodytae (literally 'cave-dwellers') and Ichthyophagi (literally 'fish-eaters') as peoples in Ethiopia.
 - 34 This passage takes up the concluding sentences to the *Letter on Desires* (*EE* 1.85–6) in more detail.
 - 35 Pentheus (a mythical king of Thebes killed in a Bacchic frenzy) and Ajax (hero of the Trojan War who attacked a flock of sheep in a fit of lunacy) both stand here as examples of madness.
 - 36 Aristides (530–468 BC), nicknamed the Just, was an Athenian statesman and general during the Persian Wars.
 - 37 Phalaris, sixth-century BC tyrant of Agrigentum in Sicily famed for his cruelty. For example, Pindar writes: 'Phalaris, that man of pitiless spirit who burned men in his bronze bull'. Pindar, *Pythian Odes I*, lines 95–6, trans. W. H. Race (London: Loeb, 1997), p. 233.
 - 38 Eryximachus, the physician who speaks in Plato's *Symposium* in praise of love from a medical point of view.
 - 39 The Isthmian games were panhellenic games held at the Isthmus of Corinth. Held biannually, they were dedicated to the god Poseidon (i.e. Neptune).
 - 40 The Areopagus, the Athenian lawcourt, named after the hill on which it stood.
 - 41 Cecrops, the mythical founder of Athens, renowned for his justice.
 - 42 Solon of Athens (c. 640 – c. 560 BC), mentioned here in his function as legislator.

- 43 That is, the Greek hero, Diomedes.
- 44 The abusive and vulgar Greek soldier in Homer's *Iliad*, book 2, lines 211–77.
- 45 That is, Odysseus.
- 46 A Spartan soldier who, as the only survivor of a battle, claimed victory, but then, ashamed of surviving his comrades, committed suicide on the battlefield.
- 47 Prosecutors in Socrates' trial.
- 48 Rhadamanthus, a judge of the dead, enforced Tantalus's punishment: standing up to his chin in water, which receded every time he tried to drink from it.
- 49 Pelops was the son of Tantalus and progenitor of the cursed House of Atreus – the effects of the curse is the subject matter of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, among many other Greek works of literature.
- 50 Hecuba, Queen of Troy and symbol of sorrow.
- 51 See pp. 77–8.
- 52 Plato, *Crito*, 44a–b: 'My proof comes from a dream I saw a short while ago this very night: and maybe it was opportune you didn't wake me up.... A beautiful attractive woman appeared to be coming toward me wearing a white cloak. She called me and said: "Socrates, on the third day you may reach most fertile Phthia.'" Trans. C. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy (London: Loeb, 2017), pp. 218–19. There is also an allusion here to Homer, *Iliad*, book 9, line 363.
- 53 An allusion to a passage from Euripides' *Hecuba* (lines 488–91) discussed in the *Letter on Sculpture* (*EE* 1.75–6). Talthybius complains to the gods, 'O Jupiter, what shall I say? That you watch over men? Or that you have won the false reputation for doing so, false, supposing that the race of gods exist, while chance in fact governs all mortal affairs?' Euripides, *Hecuba*, trans. D. Kovacs (London: Loeb, 1995), p. 442.
- 54 The name translates literally as: the one who loves life.
- 55 On the Lamian War, see note 7 above. In the footnote Hemsterhuis refers to Antipater (c. 400–319 BC), the Macedonian general, Leosthenes (d. 323 BC), the Athenian general, and Antiphilus, his successor (see note 24 above). Antiphilus had appeared earlier in the dialogue (p. 78). Hemsterhuis writes of this passage in a letter to Gallitzin: 'Antiphilus has taken Agathon's place. He was the young general who worthily succeeded Leosthenes' (*B* 1.235).
- 56 Simonides of Ceos (c. 556–468 BC), a Greek lyric poet. Hemsterhuis is referring to the following anecdote from Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, book 1, 22, 60: 'Inquire of me as to the being and nature of god, and I shall follow the example of Simonides, who having the same question put to him by the great Hiero, requested a day's grace for consideration; next day, when Hiero repeated the question, he asked for two days, and so went on several times multiplying the number of days by two; and when Hiero in surprise asked why he did so, he replied, "Because the longer I deliberate the more obscure the matter seems to me.'" Trans. H. Rackham (London: Loeb, 1951), pp. 58–9.
- 57 Three mythological locations with topological significance: Mount Olympus is the highest point in Greece, Cape Tenaro (or Cape Matapan) is the southernmost point of the Peloponnese (where lies a cave in which Hades was said to dwell) and Acheron is a river in north-west Greece and one of the five rivers of the underworld.
- 58 A mountain located in modern Pakistan, where Alexander the Great (i.e. 'the Macedonian') won his last victory in the winter of 327–326 BC. According to legend, Aornos had withstood Hercules' assault but gave way before Alexander the Great.
- 59 Alcides is another name for Hercules, who captured Cerberus, guardian of the underworld.
- 60 See Homer, *Iliad*, book 4, lines 127–40.
- 61 See Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 6, 105, 113.

- 62 On Simonides, see note 56 above. Hemsterhuis's anecdote can be found in Cicero, *De oratore*, book 2, 86, 352–535, and Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria*, book 11, ch. 2, 11–13.
- 63 That is, Apollo.
- 64 The motto inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi.
- 65 Pythia was the name given to the high priestess of the temple of Apollo in Delphi, who transmitted messages from the gods in a trance.
- 66 According to many sources, including Plutarch's *Greek Lives* (27.4), when Alexander arrived at the Temple of Ammon in Siwah in the Libyan desert, the priest greeted him, 'O, son of god'.
- 67 Sesostris, a legendary Egyptian pharaoh who conquered large parts of Europe and Asia according to Herodotus; Themistocles (c. 524 – c. 459 BC), Athenian politician and general; and 'the Macedonian himself' of course refers back to Alexander the Great.
- 68 Epaminondas (c. 418–362 BC), a Theban statesman; Timoleon (c. 411–337 BC), a Greek statesman and general.
- 69 That is, Alexander the Great.
- 70 Guardian of the winds.
- 71 A quotation from Plutarch, *Moralia*, book 8, 2, 718e: 'that organ ... within the mind ... by which alone the divine may be contemplated'. Trans. E. L. Minar Jr *et al.* (London: Loeb, 1961), p. 121.
- 72 Hemsterhuis's account of Socrates' role in the Battle of Delium (424 BC) is taken from Plato, *Symposium*, 220d–1c.
- 73 At the battle of Leuctra (371 BC), the Thebans conquered the Spartans. At the second battle of Mantinea (362 BC), the Thebans were again victorious, although Epaminondas was mortally wounded.
- 74 The reference is to Homer, *Odyssey*, book 5, line 272: 'late-setting Boötes'. Trans. A. T. Murray, revised G. E. Dimock (London: Loeb, 1998), pp. 202–3. Hemsterhuis also refers to Claudius Ptolemy, *Almagest* (second century AD); John Flamsteed, *Historia coelestis Britannicae* (London, 1725); Johann Bayer, *Uranologia, omnis asterismorum continens schemata* (Augustae Vindelicorum, 1603).
- 75 Alpheus was a river god who fell in love with the nymph Arethusa and chased her to Sicily, where Artemis turned her into a well. Alpheus then mixed his water with hers. Versions of the myth are to be found in Virgil's *Georgics*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Pausanias's *Description of Greece*.
- 76 The Seleucids refers to the system of numbering years in use by the Seleucid Empire, 311–363 BC.
- 77 That is, 'year'.
- 78 Hemsterhuis uses the term 'perfect number' here not in the contemporary mathematical sense of a Pythagorean perfect number (which is equal to the sum of its divisors): neither 234 nor $2 + 3 + 4$ are perfect numbers in this sense. Rather, this is presumably an approximate reference to the Pythagorean 'tetraktys', that is, the number 10, the sum of $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$.
- 79 See p. 97.

Simon, or on the Faculties of the Soul

- 1 Hemsterhuis never prepared *Simon* for publication and the original was not published during his lifetime; indeed, *Simon* has never been published separately from the other dialogues (hence, the lack of publication details given). The first mention of this dialogue

is in April 1779, when Hemsterhuis emphasises its emergence from collaborations with Gallitzin ('our Simon' – see *OP*, p. 45). Over the following eighteen months, the dialogue was continually altered and improved through Gallitzin's input, with particular attention given to Diotima's speech. The version produced in 1779–80 was subsequently published in German translation by Blankenburg in 1782 (*B* 4.5) and this provoked Hemsterhuis into correcting the manuscript once again, sending Gallitzin a new version in March 1783 (*B* 4.22). Thus, there are two distinct manuscripts – one dating from 1780, which was first published in French by Jansen in his 1792 edition of Hemsterhuis's works and most recently by van Sluis in the *OP*, and another from 1783, which was first published only in Petry's *WW* in 2001 (pp. 572–85). We follow the text of the earlier manuscript as established in *OP*, pp. 498–573; however, we also note any significant differences between the two manuscripts in footnotes. For more on the manuscript history of *Simon*, see Whistler's introduction above.

- 2 From *Carmen aureum Pythagoreorum*, book 1, lines 46–8: 'These will set you in the footsteps of divine Virtue, / Yes indeed, by him who transmitted to our soul the tetraktys, / Fountain of ever-flowing nature.' Translated by A. Laks *et al.* (London: Loeb, 2016), pp. 390–1. The 'tetraktys' is the Pythagorean holy number 10 – the sum of 1 + 2 + 3 + 4.
- 3 There are many ways in which *Simon* imitates Plato's dialogues, particularly the *Symposium*, although the opening lines also deliberately recall the opening to the *Theaetetus*. Perhaps the most obvious emulations are to be identified in *Simon*'s complex dramatic structure, particularly its multiple layers of nested discourses and reported speech. There are five distinct discursive layers at play:
 1. A 'modern' introduction by a fictional editor who recovered the lost manuscript in the mid-eighteenth century from Andros with help from the Russian navy;
 2. A dedication from Diocles, an Athenian who also rediscovered the lost manuscript and re-established the text, before it was then lost once more;
 3. An opening short dialogue between Simon and Hipponicus which occurs a few days after the main events of the dialogue in the mid-fifth century BC, and which functions, as in the *Symposium*, to thematise the ways in which Socrates' conversations were remembered badly and remembered well by his disciples;
 4. The main dialogue (recounted by Simon) of a 'symposium' involving Socrates, Agathon, Aristophanes, Cebes, Damon, Mnesarchus and Simon himself;
 5. The climax of *Simon* (and here too it comes very close to the *Symposium*) – a culminating dialogue with Diotima recalled by Socrates from his youth, which serves to answer the question under discussion (what is virtue?) in a more didactic manner than Socrates' own methodology would permit.

The following characters appear in the dialogue:

- Agathon (c. 448–c. 400 BC), a tragic poet and participant in Plato's *Symposium*;
- Aristophanes (c. 446–c. 386 BC), another participant in Plato's original *Symposium* and whose scathing portrait of Socrates in *The Clouds* dominates the early exchanges;
- Cebes of Thebes (c. 430–c. 350 BC), a disciple of Socrates and participant in Plato's *Phaedo*, where his earnestness is stressed;
- Damon (late fifth century BC), musician and music theorist, mentioned on numerous occasions by Plato as an authority, particularly when speaking of musical education in the *Republic*;
- Diocles, editor and dedicator of the dialogue – see note 9 to *Aristaeus*;
- Diotima: there are two Diotimas named in *Simon* itself – the dedicatee of the dialogue and Socrates' teacher from the mid-fifth century BC – see note 8 to *Aristaeus*;

- Hipponicus (no obvious historical reference);
 - Mnesarchus, a sculptor (no obvious historical reference);
 - Simon (late fifth century BC) – see note 4 below;
 - Socrates (d. 399 BC).
- 4 The Piraeus is the port of Athens named in the first line of Plato's *Republic* (the name Telecles has no obvious historical significance). Simon (often 'Simon the shoemaker') is a figure with a long and rich philosophical afterlife, although there is debate over whether he really existed. As Hemsterhuis intimates, following Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 4.2.1), Socrates could often be found at shops and workshops outside the agora and Simon's tannery has traditionally been identified as one he frequented the most. Furthermore, Simon is meant to have learnt by heart the conversations Socrates had in his shop and to have been the first to write them down (i.e. he is credited as the earliest writer of Socratic dialogues). Simon-like figures (cobblers, tanners, etc.) went on to play important roles for many classical philosophical sects, like the Cynics and the Stoics. Hemsterhuis is drawing, however, most extensively on Diogenes Laertius's comments on Simon: 'Simon was a citizen of Athens and a cobbler. When Socrates came to his workshop and began to converse, he used to make notes of all that he could remember. And this is why people apply the term "leathern" [*scutic*] to his dialogues. These dialogues are thirty-three in number, extant in a single volume: *Of the Gods. Of the Good. On the Beautiful. What is the Beautiful. On the Just: two dialogues. Of Virtue, that it cannot be taught. Of Courage: three dialogues. On Law. On Guiding the People. Of Honour. Of Poetry. On Good Eating. On Love. On Philosophy. On Knowledge. On Music. On Poetry. What is the Beautiful. On Teaching. On the Art of Conversation. Of Judging. Of Being. Of Number. On Diligence. On Efficiency. On Greed. On Pretentiousness. On the Beautiful.* Others are: *On Deliberation. On Reason, or On Expediency. On Doing Ill.* He was the first, so we are told, who introduced the Socratic dialogues as a form of conversation. When Pericles promised to support him and urged him to come to him, his reply was, "I will not part with my free speech for money.'" Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, book 2, 122–4, trans. R. D. Hicks (London: Loeb, 1972), pp. 250–3.
- 5 See p. 63 and the accompanying note.
- 6 Phaedo of Elis (fourth century BC), founder of the Elean school and present at the death of Socrates (hence, Plato's naming of the *Phaedo* after him). Hemsterhuis is referring in the 1783 text to Diogenes Laertius's biography of Phaedo in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (book 2, 105): 'Phaedo was a native of Elis, of noble family, who on the fall of that city was taken captive and forcibly consigned to a house of ill-fame. But he would close the door and so contrive to join Socrates' circle, and in the end Socrates induced Alcibiades or Crito with their friends to ransom him; from that time onwards he studied philosophy as became a free man.... Of the dialogues which bear his name the *Zopyrus* and *Simon* are genuine.' Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Hicks, pp. 232–3. Zopyrus (fifth century BC) is mentioned both in Plato's *Alcibiades I* (122a) and in Cicero's *On Fate* V as Alcibiades' tutor. In the footnote, Hemsterhuis goes on to mention Aelius Theon of Alexandria (first century AD) and Julius Pollux (second century AD).
- 7 Fragments survive from two writers called Aeschines (either of whom could be Hemsterhuis's reference): the celebrated Athenian orator (c. 390–c. 315 BC) with a natural and vivid style; and Aeschines of Spettus (c. 425–350 BC), a disciple of Socrates whose lost Socratic dialogues are preserved in fragments and discussed at length in Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch and Cicero.
- 8 See p. 63.
- 9 A dynasty of seven emperors who ruled over the Roman Empire from 96 to 192 AD.

- 10 Charmus of Kolyttus (mid-sixth century BC) was an Athenian general under the Peisistratids. Hemsterhuis is here following Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, book 1, ch. 30, 1: 'Before the entrance to the Academy is an altar to Love, with an inscription that Charmus was the first Athenian to dedicate an altar to that god.' Trans. W. H. S. Jones *et al.* (London: Loeb, 1918), pp. 164–5. The anecdote is also told in Plutarch's *Life of Solon*.
- 11 See note 10 above.
- 12 Hemsterhuis and Gallitzin often reflected on the plausibility of metempsychosis in their philosophical collaborations, even if they decisively reject it (e.g. *B* 1.144, 7.92). Diotima's speech below (p. 121) does, however, flirt more ambivalently with this doctrine.
- 13 The Peisistratids referred to in the 1783 addition to the note were three tyrants who ruled Athens from 546 to 510 BC – namely Peisistratos (d. 528 BC) and his two sons Hipparchus (d. 514 BC) and Hippias (c. 547–510 BC). Cleidemus (fifth century BC?) was a historian whose description of Athens, *Atthis*, is lost. On Charmus, see note 10 above.
- 14 For example, Diogenes Laertius's version of Socrates' dream reads: 'It is stated that Socrates in a dream saw a cygnet on his knees, which all at once put forth plumage, and flew away after uttering a loud sweet note. And the next day Plato was introduced as a pupil, and thereupon he recognized in him the swan of his dream.' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Hick, pp. 280–1.
- 15 Calaiscre has no obvious historical reference.
- 16 That is, Athena, the goddess of wisdom.
- 17 Athens' ill-fated military expedition to Sicily (415–413 BC) during the Peloponnesian War.
- 18 Cleinias of Tarentum, a Pythagorean philosopher and, according to Diogenes Laertius, friend of Plato.
- 19 Various ancient authors, including Plutarch and Pausanias, speak of monuments and shrines to the Amazons in Athens, including an Amazonian stele near the Itonian Gate.
- 20 As will become clear, this sentence is intended as drunken gibberish. *The Clouds* was Aristophanes' comic satire on Socrates and, according to Plato's *Apology* (19b–c), motivated in part the latter's persecution.
- 21 No determinate historical counterpart is intended, although the name is associated with the seventh-century BC lyric poet and father of Greek music.
- 22 Prometheus plays an important role throughout the dialogue. To resume his myth: a titan, who created mankind from clay and gave them civilisation by stealing fire from Zeus, he was thus invoked as the defender of the arts and sciences and appears on a frontispiece to Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* in that capacity. Zeus punished him by chaining him for eternity to a mountain in the Caucasus, where an eagle continuously gnawed on his liver, which grew back every night.
- 23 Deucalion, son of Prometheus, who rejuvenated the human race through a deluge and first ruled over men; Cadmus, founder of Thebes, who brought men into existence by sowing dragon's teeth.
- 24 That is, Prometheus.
- 25 Cleon (d. 422), radical Athenian demagogue; Philocrates, Athenian politician who negotiated an unpopular treaty with Macedonia in 346 BC.
- 26 Theodoros of Samos (sixth century BC), sculptor; Epeius built the wooden horse in which the Greeks stormed Troy; Phidias (fifth century BC), the great Greek sculptor.
- 27 Archilochus (c. 680–c. 645 BC), Greek lyric poet.
- 28 In line with Aristotle's *Poetics*, I.1x: 'It is evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.'
- 29 See note 21 above.

- 30 Nestor, king of Pylos, was lauded by Homer for his wisdom (*Odyssey*, book 17, lines 108–12); Hippocrates of Kos (c. 460–c. 370 BC), founder of medicine.
- 31 According to tradition (transmitted by Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, book 1, ch. 22, 8), Socrates, the son of the sculptor Sophroniscus, created statues that were exhibited near the Acropolis.
- 32 Two famous mythological scenes: the Nemean lion killed by Hercules and Ariadne abandoned by Theseus on the isle of Dia (i.e. Naxos).
- 33 The subject matter of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*: Orestes avenges the murder of his father, Agamemnon, by killing his mother, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus.
- 34 Atreus, in competition for the throne of Mycenae, tricked his brother Thyestes into eating the flesh of his murdered children.
- 35 In the *Iliad*, book 2, lines 211–77.
- 36 Alcámenes (late fifth century BC), Athenian sculptor. Homer, for example, is one poet who portrays Juno in this way.
- 37 That is, Xanthippe, the wife of Socrates, who, according to Xenophon's *Symposium* (2. 10), was 'the hardest to get along with of all the women there are'. Xanthippe went on to become proverbial for a scolding wife. The more positive portrayal of Xanthippe by Hemsterhuis in Socrates' reply immediately below accords, on the contrary, with Plato's remarks on her in the *Phaedo* (60a–b).
- 38 Dione, wife of Zeus and the mother of the gods, including Apollo.
- 39 Polykleitos of Sicyon (fifth century BC), Greek sculptor. Polyxena was the youngest daughter of King Priam of Troy, judged to be as beautiful as Helena. See *LSD*, pp. 261–3.
- 40 Compare Hemsterhuis's characterisation of sculpture in the *Letter on Sculpture* (EE 1.72).
- 41 As told in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (book 6, lines 427–647), Procne, the wife of Tereus of Thrace, killed their infant son Itis and served him as a meal to her husband. Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, book 1, ch. 24, 3) adds that Alcámenes made a statue of Procne at the moment she resolved to kill Itis.
- 42 Niobe was turned into stone by the gods and everyone who gazed at the Gorgons turned to stone.
- 43 The Scythians were a nomadic people who lived on the steppes of central Eurasia. Rousseau praises the Scythians over Athenian decadence in his *Discourse on Arts and Sciences* (trans. Victor Gourevitch [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018], p. 11), but Hemsterhuis is presumably drawing on a more common device in eighteenth-century texts (such as Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* and Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*) in which supposedly uncivilised outsiders come to experience Enlightenment culture and pass judgement on it.
- 44 Toxaris, a Scythian mentioned in Lucian, *The Scythian, or the Consul*, 1.
- 45 Anacharsis (sixth century BC), a Scythian philosopher who came to Athens and made a great impression as an outspoken barbarian.
- 46 Aspasia (c. 470–c. 400 BC), the wife of Pericles and host of an influential Athenian intellectual salon.
- 47 An Athenian architect mentioned in *Aristaeus* (p. 67).
- 48 Peisistratos (d. c. 528 BC), tyrant of Athens.
- 49 Two Athenians who killed the tyrant Hipparchus, son of Peisistratos, in 514 BC.
- 50 Two famous Athenian victories over the Persians, in 490 BC and 480 BC, respectively.
- 51 That is, Spartan simplicity.
- 52 This begins the concluding passage of the Scythian's speech, strewn with criticisms of Aristophanes' art.
- 53 A sculptor of Cretan origin, pupil of Daedalus.

- 54 In Greek mythology, the Styx and the Cocytus mark the borders of Hades.
- 55 Simon is here referring back to the opening of the dialogue, p. 102.
- 56 Thria, a deme (suburb) of Athens. Micyllus does not seem to have an obvious historical reference.
- 57 Diogenes Laertius lists a number of lost works by Democritus of Abdera (c. 460–c. 370 BC), the famous pre-Socratic materialist, to which Hemsterhuis might be referring, including *On the Nature of Man* and *On the Mind*. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, book 9, 40. Democritus was also credited with the idea that some individuals possess or develop more than the five senses. Aetius writes, ‘Democritus says there are more [senses] in irrational animals, in wise men and in the gods’. See H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), A116. See also Aristotle, *De Anima*, 424b–5a. Diotima will go on in her speech to give an immaterialist rendering of this precise doctrine.
- 58 Epidaurus, a small city in the eastern Peloponnese where resided a sanctuary for Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine.
- 59 Palamedes, son of Nauplius, was falsely accused of treason by Odysseus and sentenced to death. On Thersites, see note 35 above.
- 60 Hemsterhuis changes source text at this precise moment in *Simon* away from Plato’s *Symposium* to Plato’s *Protagoras*, specifically the myth of Prometheus narrated by Protagoras (320c–3a).
- 61 Pentheus was murdered in a Bacchic frenzy; see note 35 to *Aristaeus*.
- 62 Korybantes were male armoured dancers who ecstatically worshipped the Phrygian goddess Cybele with drumming and dancing.
- 63 Three giants in Greek mythology.
- 64 On Cadmus, see note 23 above.
- 65 The supplication from Venus to Jupiter is modelled closely on Virgil, *Aeneid*, book I, lines 223ss, although the notion of Venus as celestial love recalls Plato’s *Symposium*, 180d, 181c, 185c, 187e.
- 66 Hemsterhuis made a drawing of Prometheus’s punishment in a letter to Gallitzin (B 3.22). See *OP*, p. 750.
- 67 Hemsterhuis drew this celestial kiss in a letter to Gallitzin (B 3.63). See *OP*, p. 751.
- 68 Pythia is the name given to the high priestess of the temple of Apollo in Delphi. See p. 96.
- 69 The virgin goddess of justice.
- 70 That is, Democritus.
- 71 Hemsterhuis goes on to analyse individual character in terms of the four basic faculties of veility, intellect, imagination and moral organ. This is a staple of his correspondence, where Hemsterhuis and Gallitzin will analyse historical figures, friends and themselves in terms of this faculty psychology, and they even develop a diagram of a ‘trèfle’ or ‘four-leaf clover’ to represent these analyses. See *LSD*, pp. 147–9.
- 72 The following passage (to ‘... truly great man’) derives from a letter to Gallitzin from 1776, known as the ‘Letter on Virtues and Vices’.
- 73 These are three examples of wise rulers. In a parallel passage of his ‘Letter on Virtues and Vices’, Hemsterhuis mentions other examples: Socrates, Epaminondas, Timoleon, Scipio and Marcus Aurelius.
- 74 That is, Aeneas.
- 75 Codrus (eleventh century BC) was the last king of Athens, while Solon (c. 640–c. 560 BC) and Pericles (c. 493–429 BC) were later Athenian politicians.
- 76 Minos and Rhadamanthus, both sons of Jupiter and kings of Crete, were judges of the dead in Hades.

- 77 Compare the end of Plato's *Symposium* (223a–b): 'Agathon was getting up to put himself on the right of Socrates when suddenly a crowd of revellers, having found the street door open because a guest was just leaving, made their way straight into the dining room and began to take up places'. Agathon goes on to be the last participant standing, discussing the nature of dramatic poetry with Socrates. That is, at the conclusion to both *Simon* and the *Symposium*, Agathon is interrupted by a commotion and supplements the main topic of the dialogue with an unfinished discussion of poetry.

Alexis, or on the Golden Age

- 1 The epigraph is borrowed from Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verse 120, lines 116–18; the authenticity of the first (half) line, verse 120, is very doubtful. The translation reads: '... dear to the blessed gods – they died as if overpowered by sleep. They had all good things: the grain-giving field bore crops of its own accord, much and unstinting.' Trans. G. W. Most (London: Loeb, 2018), pp. 96–7. Hemsterhuis wrote in a letter to Gallitzin, dated 23 November 1780 (*B* 3.86): 'The other day I read in the magnificent poem of Hesiod, entitled *The works and the days*, his description of the golden age, which struck me more than ever. I always believed that this state was merely a fiction of the poets, but although the poets greatly adorned it, on closer inspection we will see that this condition must necessarily have existed.'
- 2 Hemsterhuis first conceived of *Alexis* in October 1779, in the middle of writing *Simon* (see *B* 2.53), and he forever thought of *Simon* and *Alexis* as a pair – 'husband and wife' (*B* 4.5). He did not finish a draft until April 1782, when Gallitzin received a copy (see *OP*, p. 49). And the dialogue was revised slightly over the subsequent years, before being prepared for publication in 1787. However, it was Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) who supervised the publication in Riga, publishing it alongside his German translation (*Alexis oder von dem goldenen Weltalter*). Jacobi's role in the production of *Alexis* is such that the editors of his *Werke* even speculate that he might have been responsible for supplying the above epigraph. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. K. Hammacher and W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Frommann-Holzboog, 2011), vol. 5.2, p. 574.
- 3 The dedication is congruent with those in *Aristaeus* and *Simon*, implying that – even without the editorial prologues that begin the other two dialogues – the same basic fictional details should be ascribed to *Alexis* too. That is, it is cast as a dialogue from the fourth century BC that was recovered and edited by Diocles, before being rediscovered in the eighteenth century. In other words, the three dialogues belong to the same fictional world. On the figure of Diotima, see note 8 to *Aristaeus*.
- 4 Saturn was, of course, the god who was supposed to have reigned during the golden age, and he is alluded to in passing on several occasions during the dialogue. The temple of Saturn mentioned here lies outside Athens, but its exact location is difficult to identify: there was one in Olympia and also a very famous one in Rome (and Rome, it should be added, was where many of Zeuxis's paintings ended up in late antiquity). Fresco points out that Cebes of Thebes (one of the characters in *Simon*) was the purported author of a small work, *The Tabula of Cebes* – which Hemsterhuis owned – that begins as follows: 'We happened to walk in the temple of Kronos [Saturn] where we saw many other votive offerings and, especially, in front of the temple a strange picture, representing allegorical images, difficult to interpret'. Trans. J. T. Fitzgerald and L. M. White (Chico: Chico, 1983). See M. F. Fresco, 'He was Greek, this Frisian Socrates: From Cicero back to Plato', in M. F. Fresco *et al.* (eds), *Frans Hemsterhuis: Quellen, Philosophie und Rezeption* (Munich: LIT Verlag, 1991), pp. 137–9.

- 5 Zeuxis, painter of the fifth century BC. It is not clear whether such a painting ever existed.
- 6 On Diocles, see note 9 to *Aristaeus*. 'Alexis' does not seem to refer to a historical counterpart, although one of the more celebrated Alexises of antiquity was, ironically, a comic poet.
- 7 A temple dedicated to Heracles, located just outside the walls of ancient Athens.
- 8 Demophon does not appear to have an obvious historical counterpart.
- 9 An explicit reference to *Aristaeus*, which occupies the same fictional world.
- 10 Lindus was a town in Rhodes. Strato is not an identifiable historical figure, though.
- 11 Simmias of Rhodes, poet and grammarian from the late fourth century BC.
- 12 See Aristotle's *Poetics*, I.ix: 'It is evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.'
- 13 Hemsterhuis's paraphrase of Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 111–16.
- 14 In this passage, Hemsterhuis is drawing on early modern discourse on natural right, such as Hobbes's account of the state of nature or Spinoza's identification of right and power. Spinoza, for example, writes in this vein, 'Nature, considered wholly in itself, has a sovereign right to do everything that it can do, i.e., the right of nature extends as far as its power extends'. *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. M. Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 165.
- 15 'Perfectibility' was a term coined by Rousseau in the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality among Men* in 1755, and much of what follows should be read as Hemsterhuis's reckoning with the early Rousseau's history of human development. Rousseau introduces the concept of perfectibility as follows: 'There is another very specific property that distinguishes between [man and animal], and about which there can be no argument, namely the faculty of perfecting oneself; a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all the others, and resides in us, in the species as well as in the individual, whereas an animal is at the end of several months what it will be for the rest of its life.' Trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 144. Rousseau thus emphasises that humans alone possess this principle of perfectibility and this is precisely what Hemsterhuis is going to interrogate in what follows.
- 16 See previous note: to begin, Alexis exemplifies the standard Rousseauian position that perfectibility pertains to the human alone, while Diocles will convert him to a more complex position in which animals can be said to possess some form of perfectibility.
- 17 The original inhabitants of Greece. See note 11 to *Aristaeus*.
- 18 Clymene, Prometheus's mother.
- 19 During the final years of his life, Hemsterhuis will promise Gallitzin an always-postponed treatise on instinct (e.g. *B* 1.233, 10.68).
- 20 The reference is, of course, to Hemsterhuis's own dialogue. Phaedo of Elis's presumed authorship of the dialogue is mentioned in the 1783 manuscript of *Simon*, but not in the more widely published 1780 manuscript. See note 6 to *Simon*.
- 21 A reference to the account of prejudice given in *Simon* (pp. 129–31).
- 22 Pythia, the priestess of the Apollonian oracle at Delphi, made her prophecies in a trance brought on by the fumes emitted from the trivet (or tripod) on which she was placed.
- 23 That is, Ajax (see note 35 to *Aristaeus*).
- 24 The Atrides are the sons of Atreus: Agamemnon and Menelaus.
- 25 Athamas, king of Boeotia, had two sons, Learchus and Melicertes, by his second wife, Ino. He was struck mad by the gods, killed Learchus, whereupon Ino and Melicertes fled and threw themselves into the sea.

- 26 As Hemsterhuis's own 'remark (*b)' makes clear, the quotation is taken from Callimachus's *Hymns I. To Zeus*, lines 8–9: "'Cretans are ever liars.'" Yea, a tomb, O Lord, for thee the Cretans built; but thou didst not die, for thou art for ever.' Trans. A. W. Mair (London: Loeb, 1955), pp. 36–7. The story is related to the Cretan liar paradox, originally attributed to Epimenides (c. 600 BC): Κρητες ἀει ψεύσται ('the Cretans [are] always liars'). Callimachus (c. 305–c. 240 BC) was a Greek poet and librarian of the famous Library of Alexandria.
- 27 Autolycus of Pitane (c. 360–290 BC) was a Greek mathematician and astronomer; Chrysothemis the Epicurean is presumably not a historical figure; Callicles (fifth century BC) is a character in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*; and Aristaeus is, of course, the character from Hemsterhuis's own dialogue of that name.
- 28 A river in Thessaly. Callimachus's *Hymn to Apollo* tells the mythological anecdote of Apollo tending sheep by the Amphrysus while banished from Olympus for killing the Cyclopes.
- 29 I.e. during his brief journey through Hades to rescue Eurydice.
- 30 Three examples of figures punished by the gods with eternal torments.
- 31 That is, the goddess of memory.
- 32 Mythical founder of Athens.
- 33 'Magna Graecia' refers to the southern part of Italy and Sicily, colonised by Greece.
- 34 Pythagoras's school was located in Crotona (southern Italy, Magna Graecia).
- 35 Hemsterhuis makes the same argument to Gallitzin on a number of occasions (e.g. *B* 2.63, 3.46, 7.47), but noticeably he here subjects it to some criticism.
- 36 Archytas of Tarentum (428–347 BC), a philosopher of the Pythagorean school and friend of Plato, whose biographical details are derived from Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*.
- 37 Byblos, port city in Phoenicia, north of present-day Beirut.
- 38 The priest, we later learn, is named Hypsicles, and seems to have something in common with Hypsicles of Alexandria (c. 190–c. 120 BC), Greek mathematician and astronomer. The main model for Hypsicles, however, is the Egyptian priest from Plato's *Timaeus* (21a–25e), who likewise speaks to Solon about global events in an archaic past. Hemsterhuis talks explicitly to Gallitzin of Plato's Atlantis myth around the time of writing *Alexis* (*B* 4.53) and components of it do recur in Hypsicles' tale, such as the relative youth of Greek civilisation, its ignorance of an archaic past and, most importantly, the central historical significance it accords to 'a derangement of the heavenly bodies'.
- 39 The Adonia, a festival celebrated annually to mourn the death of Adonis.
- 40 Mount Liban, a mountain in northern Lebanon.
- 41 The Chaldeans were a nomadic and Semitic-speaking people who lived in Mesopotamia between the tenth and sixth century BC.
- 42 Arcadia is a rural, mountainous area in the centre of the Peloponnese and the prototype for the idea of an 'arcadian' existence.
- 43 A gentle west wind.
- 44 Compare Hemsterhuis's account of the origins of language in the *Letter on Man and his Relations* (*EE* 1.121–4).
- 45 The brightest star in the night sky during winter in the northern hemisphere.
- 46 That is, the moon.
- 47 On the aesthetics of the marvellous among pre-Graecian peoples, see the *Letter on Sculpture* (*EE* 1.68).
- 48 Pan pursued the nymph Syrinx to the banks of the Ladon river. Her prayer for help was answered by the river nymphs, who turned her into a reed-bed. Pan cut the reeds to

- form the ‘pan flute’. The classic rendition of the myth is to be found in book 1 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.
- 49 Pelops was killed by his father, Tantalus, who served him as a meal to the gods without their knowledge. The gods detected the deception and brought Pelops back to life, but a portion of his shoulder had already been consumed and needed to be replaced with ivory.
- 50 Mythical inventor of lyric song.
- 51 Hemsterhuis brings together poets and philosophers as peers on the Elysian fields.
- 52 This is Hemsterhuis’s rewriting of d’Alembert’s comparison of history, philosophy and poetry in his *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia*. For d’Alembert, history relates facts, philosophy reflects on everything and poetry merely invents fictions, whereas in *Alexis* poetry acts as the foundation for the discovery of truth.
- 53 An island in the northern part of the Aegean Sea.
- 54 Hemsterhuis is referring to Homer, *Odyssey*, book 8, lines 362–6, and *Homeric Hymns*, 5, lines 60–3, 161–7.
- 55 See *Sophylus*, pp. 149–51.
- 56 This is the definition of beauty established in the *Letter on Sculpture* (*EE* 1.63).
- 57 Although it is used in this passage in a new way, the idea here under discussion is present in much of Hemsterhuis’s thinking – and is particularly clearly articulated in his remarks on the sketch in the *Letter on Sculpture* (*EE* 1.64).
- 58 Dodona, in north-west Greece, was the site of an oracle which prophesied by the murmur of an oak tree and the tinkling of bronze objects hanging from it.
- 59 Strabo, Pausanias, Pliny and many others in antiquity tell the story of the Colossus of Memnon: when the rays of the dawn sunlight touched the Theban statue, warm air was released from the statue’s throat and emitted a sound – as if to greet Memnon’s mother (Aurora, the goddess of the morning).
- 60 Tact was another subject on which Hemsterhuis kept promising Gallitzin a more detailed treatise that never appeared (see *B* 5.28, 10.25, 10.38).
- 61 An inverted prism.
- 62 Hemsterhuis’s remark is taken from Athenaeus of Naucratis (c. 200 AD), author of the *Deipnosophistae* (book 12, 554e–f).
- 63 This is the passage from Callimachus’s *Hymn to Zeus* that Hemsterhuis paraphrases in the main text – see p. 130 and accompanying remark.
- 64 Ptolemaeus II Philadelphus (c. 309–246 BC), the second pharaoh of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt.
- 65 Idomeneus of Crete, a commander during the Trojan War, was forced to judge whether Thetis or Medea was the more beautiful. He chose Thetis, and the offended Medea cried out that all Cretans were liars and cursed Idomeneus’s offspring.
- 66 Lucan, *The Civil War*, book 8, 872: ‘as false in her tale of the large tomb as Crete when she claims the tomb of Jupiter’. Trans. J. D. Duff (London: Loeb, 1928), pp. 500–1.
- 67 Saint John Chrysostomus (c. 347–407), *Homilies on the Epistle to Titus*, III.
- 68 This list of citations is remarkable, in part, for its heavy deployment of Christian literature, allusion to the New Testament (Letter to Titus 1:12) and display of familiarity with the Church Fathers – rare features of Hemsterhuis’s writings.
- 69 Saint Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444), *Against Julian the Apostate*, book x.
- 70 Lactantius (c. 250 – c. 325), *Divine Institutes*, book 1, ch. 11.
- 71 George Cedrenus (eleventh century), *Compendium historiarum*, ed. G. Xylander, p. 17c.
- 72 Michael Psellus (c. 1018–78), a Byzantine monk and historian, and Constantine X Ducas (1006–67), Byzantine Emperor from 1059 to 1067.
- 73 An anonymous commentator on Callimachus.

- 74 Ptolemaeus Hephaestion (also known as Ptolemaeus Chennus or Chennos), a Greek grammarian active at the beginning of the second century AD.
- 75 On Archytas, see note 36 above.
- 76 As described by Aulus Gellius, ‘Archytas made a wooden model of a dove with such mechanical ingenuity and art that it flew; so nicely balanced was it, you see, with weights and moved by a current of air enclosed and hidden within it. About so improbable a story I prefer to give Favorinus’s own words: “Archytas the Tarentine, being in other lines also a mechanician, made a flying dove out of wood. Whenever it lit, it did not rise again.”’ Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, book 10, 12.8; trans. J. Rolfe (London: Loeb, 1927), pp. 244–5.
- 77 Dionysius II, tyrant of Syracuse in the fourth century BC.
- 78 Plato’s extant Ninth Letter and Twelfth Letter are addressed to Archytas.
- 79 Horace, *Odes*, book 1, ode 28, lines 1–6: ‘You, Archytas, who measured sea and land and the numberless grains of sand, are now confined within a handful of dust (a paltry tribute) near the Matine shore. Nor does it profit you one whit that you ventured to climb in thought to the heavenly dwellings and to speed across the vaulted firmament; for you were doomed to die.’ Trans. N. Rudd (London: Loeb, 2012), pp. 74–5.
- 80 Plutarch (*Moralia*, sect. 76) speaks of the Arcadians as ‘pre-lunar people’, and Lucian writes, ‘The Arcadians affirm in their folly that they are older than the moon’. Lucian, *Astrology*, trans. A. M. Harmon (London: Loeb, 1936), p. 367, par. 26.
- 81 Johannes Hevelius (1611–87), astronomer who published his *Cometographia* in 1668.
- 82 Heinrich Eckstorm (1557–1622), a German theologian and astronomer who published his *Historiae eclipsium, cometarum et pareliorum...* in 1621.
- 83 David Herlitz (1557–1636), Professor of Mathematics at Greifswald, who published widely on celestial phenomena, including comets.
- 84 Giovanni Battista (or Giambattista) Riccioli (1598–1671), an Italian priest and astronomer who published the *Almagestum novum astronomiam veterem novamque complectens observationibus aliorum et propriis novisque theorematibus, problematibus ac tabulis promotam* in 1651.
- 85 Nicolaas Struyck (1686–1769), a mathematician from Amsterdam who published *Inleiding tot de algemeene geographie, benevens eenige sterrekundige en andere verhandeligen* in 1740.
- 86 Achromatic lenses were first used in the construction of telescopes in 1758, and Hemsterhuis supposedly wrote a lost treatise on why such lenses were an improvement over traditional, reflecting lenses. Moreover, in fact, it was Hemsterhuis himself who was the first to design and have manufactured a working binocular telescope made with achromatic lenses. He had designed this instrument in 1770 and, over the subsequent two decades, numerous exemplars were constructed by the London firm Dollond for various luminaries and enthusiasts of his acquaintance. See H. J. Zuidervaart, ‘The Long Forgotten Relation between an English Binocular and a Dutch Philosopher: Frans Hemsterhuis (1721–1790) as Herschel’s Precursor and Designer of Dollond’s Achromatic Binocular Telescope’, *Beiträge zur Astronomiegeschichte* 14 (2019), pp. 123–89.
- 87 Antonio de Ulloa (1716–95) published an account of the 1778 total solar eclipse he had witnessed in the Azores, entitled ‘Observationes de l’Eclipse du Soleil totale avec Retension et Annulaire faites le 24^e Juin 1778...’, *Philosophical Transactions, of the Royal Society of London*, vol. LXIX (1779), part 1, pp. 105–19. Pierre Marie Félicité Dezoteux de Cormatin (1753–1812) observed the same solar eclipse from Salé, Morocco. He visited Hemsterhuis in The Hague on 22 August 1779 and Hemsterhuis writes of the occasion: ‘He told me that when the sun was almost completely covered by the moon, he saw the light of the sun pass through the moon in one spot, and he was so astonished by this

phenomenon he attributed it either to his eyes or to his telescope. However, arriving in Paris at the Academy, he was handed the paper of my old friend Don Antoine de Ulloa, who had seen exactly the same thing during the same eclipse in America. You can imagine, my Diotima, that this news pleased me, because it clearly proves that my moon is not only charred but vitrified in more than one place' (*B* 2.31).

88 Alcmaeon of Croton (c. 500 BC), a natural philosopher from southern Italy, who is now usually held to be independent from the Pythagoreans.

89 A reference to Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems*, book 17, 3 (916a33–7).

Index

- Achilles, 75, 76n, 90n, 94, 119, 161
Adonis, 134, 150, 171
Aegisthus, 105, 167
Aeneas, 161, 168
Aeolus, 97
Aeschines, 101, 165
Aeschines Socraticus (of Spettus), 165
Aeschylus, 162, 167
Aetius, 168
Agamemnon, 105, 133, 167, 170
Agatharchides (Agathachus) of Cnidus,
82n, 161
Agathon, 103–4, 108, 112, 121–2, 162,
164, 169
Ajax, 85, 161, 170
Alcamenes, 106, 108, 167
Alcibiades, 100n, 165
Alcides, 94, 162
Alcmaeon the Pythagorean, 151–2, 174
Alember, J. L. d', vii, xi, xiv, 22, 172
Alexander the Great, 97, 162–3
Alexis, 16, 20, 123–47, 170
Allamand, J. N. S., xi
Alpheus, 98, 163
Anacharsis, 109, 167
Anaxagoras, 75, 160
Anchises, 119
Antipater, 91n, 162
Antiphilus, 78–9, 91, 161–2
Anytus, 89–90
Aphrodite, 161
Apollo, 26, 78, 107, 111, 124, 132, 160,
163, 167–8, 170–1
Apuleius, 101n
Archilochus, 104, 166
Archimedes, 160
Archytas of Tarentum, 133, 148–9, 171,
173
Arethusa, 98, 163
Ariadne, 105, 167
Aristaeus, 10–11, 25, 31, 62–98, 123, 130,
147, 158, 160, 171
Aristides, 85–8, 118, 161
Aristogeiton, 111
Aristophanes, 102–9, 112, 164, 166–7
Aristotle, 63, 152, 160, 166, 168, 170
Artemis, 163
Artemisia, 59, 159
Asclepius, 168
Aspasia, 109–10, 167
Astraea, 115
Athamas, 129, 170
Athena, 166
Athenaeus of Naucratis, 172
Atreus, 105–6, 162, 167, 170
Aurora, 141, 172
Autolycus of Pitane, 130–1, 171
Aylva, van, xii
Baader, F. von, 33–4
Bacon, F., 26
Balmes, H. J., 156–7
Bardili, C. G., xvi
Bayer, J., 97n, 163
Beiser, F. C., 155
Biophilus, 91
Biran, P. Maine de, 155
Blankenburg, C. F. von, xiv, 154, 161, 164
Boek (Bök), F. A., 156
Boerhaave, H., xii
Bonchino, A., 33, 155–7
Bonnet, C., ix, xii, 16, 155
Boulan, E., 5, 10, 154
Boyle, C., *see* Orrery, C. Boyle
Brachin, P., 154
Bruno, G., 161
Bunge, W. van, viii, x, 153–4
Cadmus, 103, 115, 166, 168
Cahen-Maurel, L., 22, 156–7
Calaiscre, 102, 166
Callicles, 130, 171
Callimachus, 147–8, 171–2
Camper, P., vii, xi–xii, xv

- Castor, 94n
 Caylus, A. C. P. de, xii
 Cebes, 103–4, 107, 112, 121, 164, 169
 Cecrops, 87, 161
 Cedrenus, 147, 172
 Celsus, 147
 Cerberus, 94, 162
 Cestius, 51, 158
 Charmus of Kolyttus, 101+n, 166
 Chrysostomus, Saint John, 147, 172
 Chrysothemis the Epicurean, 130–1, 171
 Cicero, M. T., 147, 160, 162–3, 165
 Cleidemus, 101n, 166
 Cleinias of Tarentum, 102, 166
 Cleon, 104, 166
 Clymene, 128, 170
 Clytemnestra, 167
 Codrus, 120, 168
 Coleridge, S. T., xvii
 Collot, A. M., xiii
 Condillac, E. B. de, xi
 Constantine X Ducas, 147, 172
 Crito, 100n, 147, 165
 Croce, B., vii
 Cronus (Kronos), 37, 169
 Cybele, 168
 Cyprien, Saint, 147
 Cyril of Alexandria, Saint, 147, 172
- Daedalus, 111, 167
 Dalberg, J. F. H. von, xv
 Dalberg, K. T. von, xvi
 Damme, P. van, xii
 Damon, 103, 105–6, 112, 121, 164
 Demeter, 160
 Demetrius of Phalerum, 63, 160
 Democritus of Abdera, 14, 113, 168
 Demophon, 123, 126–7, 170
 Descartes, R., 158
 Desoteux (Dezoteux), P. M. F., 150n, 173
 Deucalion, 103, 166
 Diderot, D., vii, ix, xi–xiii, xv, 4, 9, 22, 154, 158
 Dilthey, W., 30, 156–7
 Diocles, xiv, 10–11, 15–16, 20, 25, 31, 64–99, 101, 123–47, 158, 160, 164, 169
 Diocles of Cnidus, 160
 Diodorus of Sicily (Siculus), 82n, 147, 161
- Diogenes Laertius, 100+n, 101n, 165–6, 168, 171
 Diomedes, 88, 119, 162
 Dione, 107, 167
 Dionysius II of Syracuse, 148, 173
 Diotima, 12–14, 17, 19, 20, 37–8, 63–4, 99, 101, 112–14, 116, 121, 123, 128, 138, 160, 164, 166, 168, 169
see also Gallitzin, A. A.
 Diponeus, 111
 Dollond, J., xii, 173
 Drees, M., 40, 156–7
- Eckstorm, H., 149, 173
 Enceladus, 115
 Epaminondas, 97+n, 163, 168
 Epeius of Panopus, 104, 166
 Epidaurus, 113
 Ernst II, Duke of Saxen-Gotha, xv
 Eros (Love), 96, 101, 107, 112, 115, 141, 147, 166, 168
 Eryximachus, 86, 161
 Euclid, 160
 Eudoxus of Cnidus, 73, 160
 Euripides, 90n, 162
 Eurydice, 171
 Euthyphro, 8–9, 21, 25, 28–9, 45–61, 158
- Fagel, xii
 Fagel, F., xiii, 3
 Falconet, E. M., xiii
 Feyth, H., xi
 Fichte, J. G., 23–4, 27–9, 32–4, 156
 Flamsteed, J., 97n, 163
 Flickenschild, U., 155
 Forster, G., xvi
 Fresco, M. F., viii, 153, 161, 169
 Frischmann, B., 155
 Fromond, G. F., xiii
 Fürstenberg, F. von, xii, xiv–xv
- Gallitzin, A. A., vii–viii, xi–xvi, 5–8, 10–11, 13–14, 17–18, 24, 154, 158–62, 164, 166, 168–72, 174
see also Diotima
 Gallitzin, D. (sr.), xii–xiii, xvi, 154
 Garve, C., xiii
 Gellius, A., 173
 Gelon, 118
 Giovanni, G. di, 156

- God, viii, 10–12, 25, 30, 37–9, 65–7, 70,
 72–3, 75–6, 80, 85–6, 88–9, 92–8, 137,
 141–2
 gods, 40, 64, 70, 75, 80, 90n, 92, 94, 105,
 107, 108, 111–13, 115, 118, 120–1, 124,
 128–9, 132, 138, 140, 146
 Goethe, J. W., vii, xv, xvi, 7, 34
 Gorgon, 108, 167
 Gravesande, W. J. 's, *see* 's Gravesande, W. J.
 Grucker, E., 3, 10, 154

 Hamann, J. G., vii, xiii, xv, 23–4, 153–4
 Hamilton, W., xvii
 Hammacher, K., viii, 13, 18, 24, 153–6
 Hardenberg, F. von, *see* Novalis
 Harmodius, 111
 Hartknoch, J. F., 23, 123
 Harvey, W., 161
 Hecuba, 90, 162
 Hegel, G. W. F., vii, xvi, 24, 32
 Helena, 167
 Helvétius, C. A., xiii, 14
 Hemsterhuis, T., vii, xi–xii
 Heracles, 170
 Hercules, 93, 105, 111, 162, 167
 Herder, J. G., vii, xiii–xiv, xvi, 22, 24, 27,
 153, 156
 Herlitz, D., 149, 173
 Herodotus, 162–3
 Herrmann, C. G., xvi
 Herschel, W., xiv
 Hesiod, 15, 20, 36, 111, 124–5, 133, 138–9,
 145, 169–70
 Hevelius, J., 149, 173
 Hiero, 162
 Hipparchus, 166–7
 Hippias, 101n, 166
 Hipponicus, 102–3, 112, 121, 164–5
 Hoffman, L., 153
 Hölderlin, F., vii, xvi, 23, 32, 37, 39–40,
 156, 161
 Homer, 13, 76n, 94, 97n, 98, 104, 106,
 108, 110–11, 124, 133, 139–41, 162–3,
 167, 172
 Horace, Q., Flaccus 148, 173
 Huygens, Chr., 61, 158–9
 Hypsicles, 15, 18–20, 137–8, 143, 145,
 149–51, 171

 Ialysus, 69, 71, 160

 Idomeneus of Crete, 147, 172
 Ino, 129, 170
 Israel, J. I., viii, 22, 153, 155
 Itys, 108

 Jacobi, F. H., vii, x, xii–xvii, 11, 15, 22–4,
 29–33, 39, 153, 156, 169
 Jansen, H. J., xvi, 13, 27, 164
 Jean Paul (J. P. F. Richter), vii, xvi
 Jerome, Saint, 147
 Juno, 106, 167
 Jupiter, 21, 65, 70+n, 90, 93, 95–7, 107,
 110–11, 113–15, 128, 130, 134, 139,
 141, 147–8, 162, 168, 172

 Kant, I., vii, xiv, xvi, 23–4, 27, 29, 33
 Krop, H., viii, 153

 La Mettrie, J. O. de, xi
 La Roche, S. de, xiii
 Laches, 97n
 Lacoue-Labarthe, P., viii, 20, 153, 155
 Lactantius, 147, 172
 Laërtes, 88
 Lavater, J. K., 14
 Learchus, 129, 170
 Lèbre, J., 157
 Leibniz, G. W. 34
 Leosthenes, 91n, 162
 Lessing, G. E., vii, xii, xiv, xvii, 23, 30–2,
 156
 Leto, 26, 95
 Linus, 139
 Lotterie, F., 155
 Lucan, M. A., 147, 172
 Lucian of Samosata, 147, 149, 167, 173
 Lucretius, T., Carus, 157
 Lycaon, 94n
 Lycurgus, 111

 Mähl, H. J., 27, 155–6
 Maine de Biran, P., 155
 Marcus Aurelius, 168
 Matassi, E., viii, 153
 Mausolus, 59, 159
 May, G., 154
 Medea, 147, 172
 Meerman, A. C., *see* Mollerus, A. C.
 Meletus, 89–90
 Melica, C., viii, 13, 23, 153, 155

- Melicertes, 129, 170
 Memnon, 141, 172
 Mendelssohn, M., vii
 Menelaus, 94n, 170
 Merck, J. H., xiii
 Mercury, 104
 Meyboom, L.S.P., xvii
 Micyllus, 113, 168
 Minerva, 46, 70+n, 94+n, 138, 158
 Minos, 111, 120, 130, 148, 168
 Minucius Felix, M., 147
 Mnemosyne, 132
 Mnesarchus, 103–9, 112, 121, 164–5
 Mnesicles, 67n, 109, 160
 Moenkemeyer, H., viii, 10, 39, 153–4, 157
 Mollerus (married Perrenot, Meerman), A. C., xiv, 160
 Montesquieu, C. L. de Secondat de, 167
 Musschenbroek, P. van, xi, 158

 Nancy, J. L., viii, 20, 153, 155
 Nassar, D., viii, 153
 Nauplius, 113, 168
 Neeb, J., xvii
 Neptune, 86, 161
 Nestor of Pylos, 104, 115, 166
 Neubauer, J., 155
 Newton, I., 10, (47), 58, 158, 160
 Nieuhoff, B., xiii
 Nieuwentyt, B., 160
 Niobe, 108, 167
 Nivala, A., 157
 Novalis (F. von Hardenberg), vii, xvi, 23–4, 26–9, 32–41, 155–7

 Odysseus, 85, 88, 105–6, 115, 119, 129, 162, 168
 Oedipus, 90
 Olympiodorus, 101n
 Orestes, 105–6, 167
 Origen, 147
 Orpheus, 111, 124, 132, 139
 Orrery, C. Boyle, 61, 159
 Othryadus, 89
 Ovid, P., Naso, 163, 167, 171

 Palamedes, 115, 118, 168
 Palinurus, 78, 161
 Pan, 68, 94+n, 111, 139, 171

 Pandarus, 94+n
 Paul, J., *see* Jean Paul
 Paul, Saint, 147
 Pausanias, 101n, 166–7, 172
 Peisistratos, 111, 166–7
 Pelckmans, P., viii, 13, 153–4
 Peleus, 90n
 Pelops, 90, 139, 162, 172
 Pentheus, 85, 115, 161, 168
 Pericles, 67n, 100, 120, 160, 165, 167–8
 Perrenot, A.C., *see* Mollerus, A.C.
 Perseus, 111
 Peter, Saint, 53, 158
 Petry, M. J., viii, 13, 153, 164
 Phaedo of Elis, 13, 100n, 128, 165, 170
 Phalaris, 86–8, 161
 Pharsalus, 94n
 Phidias, 70n, 104, 110–11, 166
 Philarete, 80, 161
 Philemon, 159
 Philip II of Macedon, 97
 Philocrates, 104, 166
 Philostratus, 147
 Photius I, 82n, 161
 Picus, 147
 Pindar, 161
 Plato, vii, xiii, xvi, 7–8, 13–14, 18, 24–8, 34, 36, 38–9, 63, 90n, 100+n, 101n, 133, 139–40, 148, 158, 160–9, 171, 173
 Pliny the Elder, 159, 172
 Plotinus, 34
 Plutarch, 149, 163, 165–6, 173
 Pollux, J., 94n, 101n, 165
 Polykleitos of Sicyon, 108, 167
 Polyxena, 108, 167
 Pompey, 51, 158
 Pope, A., ix
 Porphyryion, 115
 Portalis, J. E. M., 155
 Poseidon, *see* Neptune
 Priam of Troy, 167
 Procne, 108, 167
 Prometheus, 103, 114–15, 166, 168, 170
 Protagoras, 168
 Protogenes, 63, 69, 160
 Psellus, 147, 172
 Pseudo-Aristotle, 174
 Ptolemy, C., 97n, 163
 Ptolemy (Ptolemaeus) Hephaestion, 148, 172

- Ptolemy (Ptolomaeus) Philadelphia, 147, 172
 Pygmalion, 79
 Pythagoras, 101, 133–4, 138–9, 147–8, 171
- Raynal, G. T. de, xiii
 Reid, T., ix
 Reinhold, K. L., 24
 Rhadamanthus, 90, 120, 162, 168
 Rhodopis, 59, 159
 Riccioli, G. B., 149, 173
 Richter, J. P. F., *see* Jean Paul
 Ritter, J. W., 33–4
 Rommel, G., 157
 Rousseau, J. J., xii–xiv, 15–16, 154, 166–7, 170
- Saladin, 51, 158
 Saturn, 123–4, 133–4, 147–8, 169
 Saunderson, N., 158
 Schelling, F. W., vii, xvi, 23–4, 32–4, 37, 39, 41, 155, 157
 Schiller, F., 39
 Schlegel, A. W., vii, xvi, 26–7, 29, 33, 39, 153, 156–7
 Schlegel, C., 33
 Schlegel, F., vii, xvi, 13, 26–7, 33, 36, 39, 41, 154–5, 157
 Schleiermacher, F. D. E., vii, xvi, 26, 29, 32–3, 156–7
 Schomaker, B., 159
 Scipio, 168
 Scopas, 94+n
 Sedelius, 147
 Sesostris, 97, 163
 's Gravesande, W. J., vii, xi, 12
 Simmias of Rhodes, 124, 170
 Simon, 13, 100–4, 121, 164–5, 168
 Simonides of Ceos, 92, 94+n, 162–3
 Sisyphus, 132
 Sluis, J. van, viii, 3, 23, 153–5, 164
 Smeth, T. de, vii, xii, 3
 Socrates, vii, xiii, 5–9, 11, 14, 25, 47, 54, 61, 63, 70, 89, 90, 97+n, 100–22, 110+n, 124, 127–8, 133, 139, 148, 158–9, 161–9
 Solger, K. W. F., 41
 Solon, 87, 111, 120, 161, 168, 171
 Sonderen, P., viii, 153–4
 Sophroniscus, 167
 Sophylus, 8–9, 45–61, 157–8
 Spinoza, B., vii, xv, 30–2, 34, 39, 170
 Staël, G. de, xvi, 155
 Stolberg, F. L. zu, xvi
 Strabo, 172
 Strato of Lindus, 124, 170
 Struyck, N., 149, 173
 Supreme Being, *see* God
- Talthybius, 90+n, 162
 Tantalus, 90, 132, 162, 172
 Tarentine, 133
 Telamon, 129
 Telecles, 100, 121–2, 165
 Tereus of Thrace, 167
 Terpander, 103
 Thales of Milete, 75, 139, 160
 Themistocles, 97, 163
 Theodorus of Samos, 104, 166
 Theon of Alexandria, 101n, 165
 Theophilus, 147
 Thersites, 88, 106, 113, 168
 Theseus, 133, 167
 Thetis, 147, 172
 Thrasillus, 147
 Thucydides, 138
 Thyestes, 105, 167
 Timoleon, 97, 163, 168
 Tolstoy, L., vii
 Toxaris, 109, 167
 Trembley, A., xi
 Trunz, E., 154
 Tydeus, 88
 Typhon, 115
- Ulloa, A. de, 150n, 173–4
- Vaucanson, J. de, 50, 158
 Venus, 38, 79, 106, 115, 124–5, 140, 168
 Verbeek, T., 154
 Vieillard-Baron, J. L., viii, 7, 153–5
 Virgil, P., Maro, 36–7, 161, 163, 168
 Voltaire, 167
 Vulcan, 76, 111, 161
- Weatherby, L., viii, 18, 153, 155
 Weyer, S. vande, xvii
 Whistler, D., 3, 164

- Wieland, C. M, vii, xiii, 23, 25, 153
Wielema, M., viii, 153
Wilde, C. de, xi
Wilde, J. de, xi
William IV of Orange (stadtholder), xi
William V of Orange (stadtholder), xii, xv
Winckelmann, J. J., xii
Wood, D. W., 157
Xanthippe, 106, 167
Xenophon, 97n, 100, 165, 167
Zan, 147
Zeus, 53, 166–7
Zeuxis, 123, 169–70
Zopyrus, 100n, 165
Zuidervaart, H. J., 173