

Space and Light:
Ficinian Neoplatonism and Jacques Peletier Du Mans's
Amour des amours

Jacques Peletier Du Mans's *Amour des amours* of 1555 uses the fiction of a cosmic voyage inspired by love in order to join together a collection of love poems with a series of meteorological and planetary ones: the latter represent the poet's discoveries upon flying into the cosmos in pursuit of his lady, who has ascended into space in the penultimate love sonnet.¹ It has long been recognised that, like much French writing of the 1540s and 1550s, the *Amour des amours* is deeply indebted to the Neoplatonism of Marsilio Ficino and in particular to his *De amore*.² Peletier's love poems – the first part of the *Amour des amours* – have been seen to represent both a Neoplatonist quest for knowledge and also a movement from Ficino's vulgar Venus to a celestial Venus.³

However, I will argue that ultimately Peletier's love poems diverge from Ficino's *De amore* in their representation of the relationships between man, space, light, and the divine. As Isabelle Pantin has observed, Peletier uses solar imagery for his lady in an unusual way, and associates her light with the immensity of space.⁴ I will suggest that the implications of this become clear if it is read in the context of the poet's reference to space to represent not only the lady but also the god *Amour*, and, finally, himself. Focusing upon the love poems themselves (rather than the 'scientific' poems which they introduce), I shall suggest that Peletier – influenced by a particular conception of the divine in terms of immensity – depicts an ideal of the human, as well as of the universe, in terms of spatial immensity and light.

¹ On the echo of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, see Isabelle Pantin, 'Après une lecture de Dante: Soleil et lumière dans l'*Amour des amours* de Jacques Peletier du Mans', in *Les Fruits de la Saison: Mélanges de littérature des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles offerts au Professeur André Gendre*, ed. by Philippe Terrier, Loris Petris and Marie-Jeanne Liengme Bessire (Geneva: Droz, 2000), pp. 259–73.

² Jean Festugière, *La Philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVI^e siècle* (Coimbra: Imprensa da universidade, 1923), pp. 63-140; Marcel Raymond's introduction to his edition of the *De Amore* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956), pp. 123-9; Jean-Charles Monferran's introduction to his edition of the *Amour des amours* (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1996), pp. XVIII-XXXII. Quotations from the *Amour des amours* will be taken from Monferran's edition.

³ Guy Demerson, 'Dialectique de l'amour et 'Amour des amours' chez Peletier du Mans', *Actes du colloque Renaissance-Classicisme du Maine, Le Mans, 1971* (Paris: Nizet, 1975), pp. 253–82. Isabelle Pantin, 'Microcosme et "Amour volant" dans *L'Amour des amours* de Jacques Peletier du Mans', *Nouvelle Revue du seizième siècle* 2 (1984), pp. 43-54 (51). See also Marcel Françon, 'Pétrarquisme et néo-platonisme chez J. Peletier du Mans', *Italica* 36 (1959), pp. 28–35. Hans Staub discusses Peletier's poetry as a quest for knowledge but in relation to Cusa rather than Ficino, and without concentrating on the *Amour des amours: Le Curieux Désir* (Geneva: Droz, 1967).

⁴ 'Après une lecture'; 'Lumière des yeux, lumière des cieux: la perception de l'immensité cosmique à la fin de la Renaissance', in *Ombres et Lumières de la Renaissance: Colloque du Puy-en-Velay (8 et 9 septembre 1997)* (Puy: Imprimerie Départementale, 1998), pp. 63-74 (69).

1. The Lady, *Amour*, and the Universe: Light and Immensity

I) THE LADY AS LUMINOUS EXPANSE

In Peletier's second *Chant*, the lady's light is confused with that of the sun which spreads throughout the whole realm of the air, reaching the very edges of the cosmos:

J'en vois les beaux rayons épars
Qui naissent d'elle et qui en issent,
Qui croisent l'air de toutes parts,
Et au rond du Ciel se finissent.⁵

Similarly, in sonnet XII, the light of her eyes stretches from the earth to the heavens:

O deux beaux yeux où mon désir s'enserre!
Desquels le fil de ma vie est pendant,
Et le guerdon que je suis prétendant:
Avec lesquels j'ai si paisible guerre:

*Dont la clarté si heureusement erre,
Que son aspect bénévole épandant,
Et aux hauts feux sa vertu étendant,
A fait le Ciel amoureux de la Terre.*⁶

Sonnets LIIII and LXIX refer – using the verb *ouvrir* – to the 'opening' of the lady's celestial 'face'; thus they focus on the outwards movement of her light. Again, in sonnet IX the lady's light is 'dépliée' in the space of the sun, a formulation which emphasises the idea of her light spreading outwards:

L'autre Soleil, qui moins luisant s'avoue,
Quand il vous voit en son jour dépliée,
Cachant ses rais de honte humilié,
Rougit en nue et l'une et l'autre joue.

The 'jealous sun' topos used here is familiar from much contemporary love lyric, but the particular way in which it is presented suggests that the lady's superiority to the sun resides, for Peletier, precisely in the 'spreading' of the lady's light through the space of the cosmos.⁷ Finally,

⁵ pp. 19-20, ll. 117-20. Since Peletier's unique and rather challenging spelling system is not the focus of my discussion, I have modernised his spelling.

⁶ All italics are my own.

⁷ Cf, for example, Maurice Scève's dizain 124, in which the lady's superiority to Apollo is thought of in terms of brightness: ed. Gérard Defaux (Geneva: Droz, 2004), vol. I, p. 59. This is also the case in Ronsard's 'Le Soleil l'autre jour': *Les Amours*, ed. Henri and Catherine Weber, p. 392. See also sonnets 17 and 83 of Du Bellay's *Olive*: ed. E. Caldarini (Geneva: Droz, 1974), pp. 72, 135. Sonnet 17 is the closest to Peletier's depiction, since the lady's hair is scattered through the world by the wind.

sonnet VIII also opens by stating that the air shines with the lady's brightness: 'De vos clartés l'air serein resplendit.'⁸

The lady is also depicted – not as light filling the air – but as the air itself, or at least as the wind (sonnet LIII). More frequently, she is presented in more abstract terms as a vast expanse. The poet often refers to his lady's *grandeur*, as indeed he does in the first sonnet of the collection.⁹ Her *grandeur* may be an expanse of light, as in sonnet XLVI which evokes the lady's beauty as rays of light being emitted from a centre, then proceeds to refer to her dazzling 'grandeur'. Sonnet LIV also implies an association between spatial expansion and light, by referring to the lady's 'grand' lumière'.¹⁰ The lady appears as a luminary expanse; certainly she is so far from being thought of as a human lady that she can be referred to as 'il' (sonnet XC), the gender of the sun grammatically as well as in Neoplatonist thought.

Of course 'grandeur' could be used with no real spatial meaning but in Peletier's poetry it is associated precisely with space. It may be a vast circle, and the preposition *en* is frequently used to refer to what is 'contained within' the space within the lady. For example, in the opening sonnet, she is a 'grandeur' which contains 'tant de valeurs *en elle*'. Furthermore, in sonnet LV, the poet refers to a 'grandeur' which could not be filled by all that is to be found in the world; the lady has so many divine gifts that there is no immensity – no 'grandeur' – which could contain them. In a sonnet which clearly marks its allegiance to Nicholas of Cusa through a reference to 'ferme conjecture' and being 'savamment ignorant', the poet suggests that his lady is an 'infini' which resembles a 'fini', an infinity which resembles something finite.

II) THE LADY AND THE DIVINE AS IMMENSITY

As Hans Staub observed, the references in sonnet LV to an infinite and to a finite entity recall the terms which Cusa uses to represent God and the universe: Peletier thus departs from Cusa by painting the human with the qualities of the infinite.¹¹ In fact, I would suggest that not only in this sonnet but throughout the *Amour des amours*, Peletier develops an ideal

⁸ See also sonnet XVI: here the lady is a circle of light or fire resembling the sun, and produced by an infinity of rays which proceed outwards towards a circumference (ll. 4-11); like the sun, she is superior to any other celestial body, and visible throughout the supralunary realm (ll. 12-14). In addition, in sonnet XC the lady opens a face made of 'beaux rais': as so frequently, Peletier emphasises the outward movement of her rays and the spreading of her light; cf. sonnet LIV in which the lady 'opens' her 'celeste face'.

⁹ See also the second *Chant*, p. 20, l. 6.

¹⁰ Similarly, in sonnet XCI, the lady is so 'whole' ('entière'), that she constitutes an inexhaustible source of fire (or light).

¹¹ *Le Curieux Désir*, p. 31.

of the human influenced by a conception of the divine as an infinity, or at least as an immensity. The depiction of the lady recalls representations – by writers including Ficino – of God as an immense light,¹² but also depictions of God as an infinity or immensity thought of in more spatial terms. Moreover, Peletier’s love poems include the depiction of a divinity in similar terms as a vast expanse, although the divinity is named *Amour* rather than God. In the second *Chant* (pp. 13-22), the *je* wonders, in terms which recall Cusa’s discussion of God, how *Amour* can be known. He describes *Amour* in spatial terms as a *hautesse* (l. 10), and as an infinity of which only a point can be known (ll. 13-16), and asks what he himself can dare to do ‘au milieu d’une *si grand*’ chose’ (ll. 25-28); *Amour* is referred to as *grand* (ll. 141-42, 165).

As in Ficino’s *De amore*,¹³ the beloved is a sign of the divinity and is associated with divine light. However, in the *Amour des amours* she is herself a vast expansion of light or space, and therefore is herself conceived in terms very close to those of the divine as a spatial or luminary extension. Thus, in the aforementioned sonnet XLVI, the lady ultimately leads the *je* to love ‘encore plus grand’ chose’ – an abstract formulation which recalls the reference to *Amour* cited in the previous paragraph – yet in addition the lady is herself an extension of light and a *grandeur*:

En languissant près de votre beauté,
 Qui embellit la lumière du Monde,
 Dont je ne vois que les rais à la ronde,
 Témoins hardis de votre royauté,

Je ne vous peux blamer de cruauté:
 Car en blasphème Amour point ne se fonde:
 J’ose, sans plus, quand les deux parts je sonde,
 Mettre en avant mon humble loyauté.

O beau Soleil, cachez votre splendeur
 Si vous pouvez, de peur que j’en jouisse:
 Ou permettez qu’elle par sa grandeur,

Avec mes yeux la vie m’éblouisse:
 Car par ses rais votre face aimer j’ose,
 Par votre face, encore plus grand’chose.

¹² For example, ‘Quid lux in Deo? Immensa suae bonitatis veritatisque exuberantia’: *Quid sit lumen*, in *Théologie Platonicienne de l’immortalité des âmes*, ed. Raymond Marcel (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1970), vol. III, p. 373.

¹³ For example, ‘Non enim corpus hoc aut illud desiderat, sed superni numinis splendorem per corpora refulgentem ammiratur, affectat et stupet’ (‘For it [the lover’s passion] does not desire this or that body, but desires the splendour of the celestial divine shining through bodies, and is amazed and awed by it’). *De amore*, ed. by Pierre Laurens (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), II, vi, p. 37. All citations will be from this edition.

III) OTHER LOVE LYRIC AND FICINO

What is distinctive in the *Amour des amours* – by comparison with other love lyric of the period – is not the implied divinisation of the beloved but rather the particularities of her depiction. It is not at all unusual to idealise the lady as a light-giving cosmic body which resembles the sun. However, Peletier's emphasis both on the 'spreading' or 'opening-out' of the lady's light to fill all space – and also on the lady as vast immensity – are more unusual. Maurice Scève, in his *Délie* published eleven years before the *Amour des amours*, focuses on his lady as a divinised sun which illuminates or dazzles him; of central importance is the brightness of the lady's light but not its extension.¹⁴ Furthermore, in love lyric the importance of the sun often lies in its elevated position: by contrast, Peletier's lady-light is everywhere as well as being elevated; her light is an immensity which occupies the whole realm of the universe rather than only the position of the sun. That which is idealised or desired in the *Amour des amours* is not only celestial superiority or elevation, but also immensity or vastness, and the spreading of light through space.¹⁵

Peletier's love poems diverge not only from the topoi of love lyric but also from Ficino's conception of the relationship between the human, on the one hand, and light and space, on the other. Peletier's love poems are very much indebted to Neoplatonism: he links love, light, and knowledge, and associates light and love with divinity and with the sun. Furthermore, the depiction of light spreading through the cosmos recalls Ficino's concept of light as immaterial, and instantly filling the whole universe.¹⁶ However, in Peletier's poetry, this light is of course in some sense that of the lady, whereas in his *De Amore* Ficino does not represent the beloved in these terms. Ficino's human beloved contains a spark of divine light, but is not conceived as an *expanse* of light: rather the beloved is a definite locus or body in which the lover's soul may live.¹⁷

¹⁴ See, for example, dizains 51, 92, 269, 354, 386. See also Kathryn Banks, 'The Cosmic, the Human, and the Divine: The Role of Poetic Images in Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas's *Semaine* and Maurice Scève's *Délie*' (doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2006), pp. 119-28; Lance K. Donaldson-Evans, *Love's Fatal Glance: A Study of Eye Imagery in the Poets of the Ecole Lyonnaise* (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, Inc, 1980), pp. 99-144; Kathryn Banks, 'Situating the Masculine: Gender, Identity and the Cosmos in Maurice Scève's *Délie*, Marsilio Ficino's *De Amore* and Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi*', in *Masculinities in Sixteenth-Century France: Proceedings of the Eighth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 5-7 July 2003*, ed. by Philip Ford and Paul White (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 2006), pp. 61-84.

¹⁵ In addition to the uses of *grand* and *grandeur* noted, there are frequent uses of *haut* and *hautesse*; these fit well with the notion of a future trajectory up into the cosmos, and are less surprising than the evocations of the desired object as an immensity.

¹⁶ Pantin cites Ficino's definition of light in the *Quid sit lumen*: 'Après une lecture', p. 263; 'Microcosme', p. 49. In addition, Ficino also writes in the *De amore* that light cannot be a body because it instantaneously fills the whole world from east to west (p. 101).

¹⁷ For example: 'Ille [Plato], inquit, amator animus est proprio in corpore mortuus, in alieno corpore vivens [...] iste in illo, ille in isto vivit'. "'That lover", he (Plato) said, "is a soul dead in its own body

As in Ficino's *De Amore*, the lady is a 'light' which is a sign of the divine. However, she is not a 'microcosm' in the sense of being either a 'smaller' light than the sun, or a smaller version of the cosmos as a whole.¹⁸ As for *Amour*, Ficino also refers to him as a '*magnum deum*' and to his '*magnitudo*'; however, these expressions are not given the spatial implications present in, for example, 'au milieu d'une *si grand*' chose'. In Peletier's *Amour des amours*, the lady, the divinity *Amour*, and the cosmos are all conceived and idealised as vast expanses.

IV) THE COSMOS

In Peletier's love poems, not only the lady and the god *Amour* are conceived as vast expanses: Peletier's depiction of the universe also emphasises its vastness. Sonnet XLII begins by apostrophising this vastness as if in a hymn, and uses the words 'immense' and 'grandeur'. In addition, in Peletier's second *Chant*, the divinity *Amour* is joined to the 'Tout'— the whole, the universe: the divinity is associated with its vastness.¹⁹ One aspect of the universe which is wonderful is its immensity. Therefore, when the lady is represented as a vast expanse, this recalls Peletier's depiction of both the divine and the cosmic. Thus the *Amour des amours* implies a very particular conception of the relationship between the human, the cosmic, and the divine.

Of course the *Amour des amours* as a whole probably emphasises cosmic hierarchy as much as cosmic immensity, since the love poems are inserted into the narrative of an upward trajectory through the cosmos. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the meteorological and planetary poems do not emphasise the notion of hierarchy as much as they might. As Isabelle Pantin has pointed out, each poem depicts one cosmic object in itself, and, by contrast with his model, Pontano's *Urania*, Peletier does not seem concerned to emphasise the role of these objects within a cosmic system.²⁰ Furthermore, he does not complete the cosmic system

and living in a foreign body" [...] this one lives in the other one, and that one in this one' (II, 8; pp. 43-45). The *je* in Héroet's *Parfaicte Amye* explains that human beauty is a small 'spark' of the immortal beauty which is 'entiere et immobile': in Héroet's *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Ferdinand Gohin (Paris: Droz, 1943), pp. 5-70 (ll. 875-83).

¹⁸ Peletier expresses this particularly clearly in the sestet of sonnet LXI: 'Elle et le Ciel par ensemble plaisent, / Et a l'envie des dons s'entreprésentent: / Elle en reçoit et en rend d'aussi beaux, / Clartés, beautés, graces ils s'entre'aspirent: / Lui à ses yeux, et elle à ses flambeaux, / Et contre moi, cependant, ils conspirent.' See also sonnet XII, ll. 5-8.

¹⁹ 'Toi qui es à ce Tout si joint' (p. 15, l. 39).

²⁰ *La Poésie du ciel en France dans la seconde moitié du seizième siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1995), pp. 201-13.

since he neglects to write about Saturn and Jupiter, instead proceeding to a final short section of his work entitled ‘Vers liriques’.²¹

Moreover, the meteorological poems lead into the planetary ones with no indication of the fundamental distinction between the sublunar and supralunary realms, or between the domains of meteorology and astronomy.²² The important transitional points in the *Amour des amours* seem to be the departure from the earth and Mount Parnassus rather than the moon: the poet signals his departure from earth as a miracle,²³ there is metrical change,²⁴ and the words becomes those of Urania as refashioned by the *je* rather than those of the *je* himself.²⁵ Thus it is the departure from human experience which is striking rather than the alterity of the celestial realm with respect to the sublunar. Indeed, by contrast with a contemporary French ‘scientific poet’, Jean-Antoine de Baïf in his *Premier des meteores* of 1567,²⁶ Peletier departs from Aristotle by failing to outline the sublunar-supralunary distinction prior to his discussion of meteors. Instead, Peletier prefaces his meteorological and planetary poems with two long poems about the air;²⁷ this innovative move may be significant given that, as I shall explain, air also plays an unusual role in Peletier’s love poems.

2. The *Je*: Space, Light, and Expansion

I) FIRE AND SPACE

²¹ Peletier did publish poems about Saturn and Jupiter with the *Louanges* of 1581; furthermore, he suggested that they were ‘pour mettre après les cinq Planètes décrites par l’Auteur en son Uranie’ (*Amour des amours*, p. 175, n. 1).

²² Meteors were a sublunary phenomena according to Aristotle’s *Meteorology*, Pliny’s *Naturalis historia*, Seneca’s *Naturales quaestiones*, and Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*, the principle sources of information about meteors in the period. For a more detailed discussion of meteorology and meteorological poetry in the sixteenth century, see Guy Demerson, ‘Météorologie et Poésie Française de la Renaissance’, in *French Renaissance Studies 1540–70: Humanism and the Encyclopedia*, ed. by Peter Sharratt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976), pp. 81–94; and Demerson’s introduction to his edition of Baïf’s *Premier Livre des poèmes* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1975), pp. 14–37; and Monferran, ‘Introduction’, pp. XXXII–XL.

²³ ‘L’Amour volant’, l. 8 (p. 101).

²⁴ Whereas the love poems are mostly sonnets, the poems in the second part show great rhythmical variation. There is a different approach to the planetary objects than the meteorological, signalled by the personification and apostrophising of the moon and all higher cosmic bodies with the exception of Mars; the lower realms and weather phenomena are, by contrast, represented in more ‘technical’ terms. However, this shift is not particularly apparent since even within the planetary poems there are a range of styles and approaches. The shift between the love poems and the other poems is much more striking.

²⁵ The *je* explains that he recites Urania’s song (‘Le Parnase’, p. 217, ll. 257–64).

²⁶ Baïf defines the sublunar realm. In *Le Premier Livre des poèmes*, ed. Guy Demerson, p. 57, ll. 1–16.

²⁷ Henri Weber has suggested that this be traced to Pliny the Elder’s discussion of the air in the *Natural History*: *La Création poétique en France au XVIème siècle* (Paris: Nizet, 1956) p. 470. However, Pliny’s brief treatment of the air is very different from Peletier’s.

The *je* conceives in spatial and luminous terms not only the lady – who is very much intertwined with the celestial – but also himself. He insistently represents himself or his desire as a *feu* or *flamme*, himself and his quest as *ardant*, and the effect upon him of *Amour* or of the lady using the verbs *enflammer* or *ardre* or *s'allumer*.²⁸ These images are familiar from Ficino's writing, in which the human soul is 'inflamed' by divine light, and moves towards it 'ardently' just as a flame moves upwards.²⁹ For Ficino, fire was a lesser light which derived its vigour from the heavens,³⁰ and the 'flame' of the human soul moves towards the greater light of the divine. Thus the depiction of the *je* as a flame suggests that he is a sort of smaller light than that of the lady, inferior to the light which fills the whole cosmos and yet resembling it.

Furthermore, the *je* says in sonnet LIII that at present he resembles a firebrand which catches on fire but then goes out, however one day the 'splendeur' will be 'infused' into him; thus he is a potential 'container' for brightness and shining:

La chaleur vive en mes esprits diffuse
 Mon trop d'humeur a presque consumé,
 Pour quelque jour me rendre accoutumé
 A la splendeur qui me doit être infuse:

Mais ma pensée encore un peu confuse
 Semble au tison, qui encore enfume,
 Tantôt éteint, tantôt est rallumé,
 Pour la verdure qui la flamme refuse.

Mais d'où viendra cet agréable vent
 Pour éclaircir ce mien désir fervent?
 De vous, ma Dame: et encores qu'il vienne

D'autre faveur, quand il sera venu,
 N'ayez pas peur que d'autre je le tienne,
 Tant je veux être à vous de tout tenu.
 (s. LIII)

Similarly, in sonnet XXXV the *je* has eyes which – unlike those of his lady – have '*rais necessiteux*' (l. 6), however he suggests that he and his eyes will come to resemble the lady so that the rays of his eyes will be stronger (ll. 9-12). It is the lady and *Amour* who will help him come to

²⁸ S. II, l. 2; s. VI, l. 6; s. XI, ll. 13-14; s. XIX, ll. 12-14; s. XXVIII, l. 2; s. XXXIII, l. 4; s. XLV, l. 1; s. LX, l. 1; s. LXXII, l. 3; s. LXXX, l. 9; s. LXXXIII, l. 6; s. XCI, ll. 5, 9-14; *First Chant*, p. 10, ll. 29-30; *second Chant*, p. 13, l. 6, p. 19, l. 101, pp. 21-22, ll. 149-52, 165-68.

²⁹ For example, *De amore*, pp. 34, 72, 120. In addition, in the *Commentarium in Phedrum*, Ficino uses fire as an image of human understanding and desiring, which is internal and then expresses itself externally, an idea which Peletier perhaps evokes in his contrasts between a fire which is hidden and one which reveals itself (*first Chant*, p. 10, ll. 29-30; sonnet XI, ll. 13-14): in Michael Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 87.

³⁰ 'Quid [lux] in igne? Vitalis quidam vigor a caelestibus insitus et efficax propagatio' *Quid sit lumen*, p. 373.

resemble them: for example, in the second *Chant*, the *je* says that he is rendered ‘shining’ (‘luisant’) by the bright fire of *Amour* (ll. 133-36).³¹

In the same *Chant* Peletier also mentions perceiving *Amour* in the ‘grandeur’ of the lady (ll. 121-44 (126)), then says that he hopes *Amour* will be ‘grand’ in him too, just as it is in the lady (ll. 141-42). Furthermore, he hopes that by thinking of ‘la chose grande’, his own ‘image’ will ‘s’agrandi[re]’ (ll. 135-36). Thus the *je* conceives himself as having the potential to be a ‘vastness’ or ‘grandeur’ like the lady. In addition, while the *je* is not situated ‘everywhere’ as the lady is, he *is* in a *multiplicity* of places. He often refers to whether he is ‘hors moi’ or ‘en moi’, vocabulary which is familiar from Ficino but which – along with other spatial vocabulary such as *dedans* – is particularly frequent in the *Amour des amours*. Moreover, in the first *Chant*, the *je* is not only ‘outside of himself’ but also ‘in more than one hundred places’, one of which is the lady’s shining eyes (p. 12, ll. 48-9) which of course fill the whole cosmos with light. The verb *ouvrir* – which is used in relation to the lady’s celestial face – is also employed to suggest the ‘opening’ of the *je* or his heart or *esprit*.³² Finally, the *je* is the object of verbs of movement, such as *mouvoir* or *ébranler*.³³

II) MOVEMENT INTO THE AIR

In addition, while the *je* does not occupy all of cosmic space like the lady, he does make a joyful and hopeful movement into the air. In sonnet L he recounts that he thought he had the ability to ‘en haut air [...] m’étendre’, to be spread in the air: this is presented as a positive experience which associates the *je* with the fertility of a tree growing upwards, and is contrasted in the following quatrain with a more ‘wintry’ time which the *je* is currently experiencing.³⁴ In sonnet XXXI, the *je* goes (under the impulse of joy) ‘hors moi en l’air’, and is led (by desire) ‘au loin, en haut’ and ‘partout’.³⁵ In sonnet LXXIII, the air is not mentioned explicitly, but

³¹ He also refers to the ‘fire’ of *Amour* in ll. 149-52, and 167-68, as well as in the first sonnet in which the reference to ‘ton feu, tes traits’ suggests that *Amour* may implicitly be a sun like the lady is.

³² First *Chant*, p. 10, l. 28; sonnet LXIX, l. 2; sonnet LXXXVI, l. 9.

³³ First *Chant*, p. 11, l. 40; Second *Chant*, p. 13, l. 7; sonnet XXVIII, ll. 2-4; sonnet LXXIX, l. 6. The subject of the verbs is usually *Amour*. See also the second *Chant*, p. 18, l. 83.

³⁴ ‘Au temps qu’Amour sa racine encore tendre / Prenait en moi, mon humide natif [nature] / Me faisait franc, verd et végétatif, / Et en haut air promettait m’étendre’ (s. L, ll. 1-4). The wintry period ‘à moi-même odieux m’a su rendre’ (l. 8), which may simply mean that he has been rendered hateful to himself but could also imply that he has been ‘returned to himself’ by contrast to his earlier growth outwards.

³⁵ Other spatial ideas are that joy puts him ‘au milieu de tout mon bien’, then desire takes him away again (ll. 9-10).

the *je* is figured as a tree which is pushed in many different directions by *Amour* who resembles a wind.

The image of the air is unusual in love lyric, whereas the sun is a much more common cosmic image: the sun represents the lady and so the desire of the *je* is focused upon it. This gives rise to the common image of the *je* as a flower engaged in a heliotropic movement towards the sun. By contrast, the *je* as tree in the *Amour des amours* simply ‘spreads out’ into the air (‘en haut air [...] m’étendre’), as if there were something positive about outwards movement *in itself* rather than only because of the solar goal of that movement. The image of the flickering flame – which represents the desire or thought of the *je* – similarly implies movement without definite direction rather than movement towards a specific place or body; the image of fire is much more common in love lyric than the image of the air but Peletier’s particularity is that he represents himself or his soul as a flame, and tends to associate fire with movement.

Peletier’s reference to movement into the air also contrasts with Ficino’s concept of the lover’s movement in the *De Amore*: Ficino states that the lover requires the beloved’s body in which to live, since *it is not possible* for him to live in a cosmic realm such as the air; although the inspired soul may occasionally travel as far as the heavens, it is impossible for it simply to move about in the cosmic realms which are situated between the human and the divine.

Simplex amor, ubi amatus non amat amantem. Ibi omnino mortuus est amator. Nam nec uiuit in se, ut satis iam demonstrauiimus, nec in amato etiam, cum ab eo reiciatur. *Ubi ergo uiuit?* Numquid *in aere* uel aqua aut igni uel terra, aut aliquot bruti corpore? *Nequaquam*. Animus enim humanus non in alio uiuit corpore quam humano.³⁶

In the *Amour des amours*, the air may be threatening, a realm in which the *je* or his voice may be lost,³⁷ however, as we have seen, by contrast with the lover in Ficino’s model, he nonetheless seems to hope to move around in the air rather than focusing solely on the potential goals of that movement, namely the beloved and the heavens.

III) ABSTRACT SPACE

More than the cosmic space of the air, though, the *je* uses abstract spatial terms. In sonnet LXXXVI, Peletier refers to his ‘endroit’; similarly, in sonnet XLIX, he writes ‘endroit moi’ in the sense of ‘as for me’, thus

³⁶ p. 45. ‘Simple love is where the beloved does not love the lover. There the lover is completely dead. For he neither lives in himself, as we have already sufficiently proved, nor does he live in the beloved, since he is rejected by him. *Where, then, does he live?* Possibly *in the air*, or water, or fire, or earth, or in some brute body? *By no means*. For a human soul does not live in a body other than human.’

³⁷ S. XIX, l. 2; s. XLIII, ll. 3-4; s. XLVIII, ll. 7-8; s. II, ll. 12-14;

implicitly representing himself as a ‘place’. His heart is another ‘endroit’ (sonnet XXII), as is *Amour* (sonnet LXXXVI). The lady is also an ‘endroit’ (s. LXXVII, l. 6). In addition, in sonnet LXXXIII, the lady is said to be present in a series of ‘places’ (‘endroits’), as well as being absent from another set of ‘endroits’: Peletier employs the common topos of being harmed both by the lady’s presence and also her absence, yet rephrases this to use the abstract spatial term ‘endroit’. Furthermore, the more the *je* tries to reach her, the more obstacles there are, and the more he remains in space: these obstacles are also evoked in spatial terms, namely as ‘entredeux’, and he loses himself ‘au milieu des grâces’; like the air, spatial expanses evoked in abstract terms can apparently be threatening. In addition, in sonnet XIII the *je* rejects Petrarchan compliments of the female body in favour of a mathematical description of his lady, concluding as follows:

Que si j’en veux aucunefois parler,
Je dis, sans plus, que sa haute excellence
Ne se pourrait qu’à soi-même égaler.
(Sonnet XIII, ll. 12-14)

Finally, sonnet XX evokes the lady as a portrait painted according to the rules of perspective, that is, with a vanishing point. As in the aforementioned solar imagery, the lady is made of lines spreading out from a central point, but here she is situated in geometric space rather than cosmic space. Other abstract terms with potential spatial or mathematical meaning include *le plus*, *le tout*, *le milieu*, *une partie*, *le peu*, *un trop*, *le rien*, *le plus*, *moins*, *la moitié*, *le partage*.³⁸

Geometry and arithmetic were of great importance to Peletier: he wrote books on them and taught them. Indeed he was working on his *Algèbre* and an expanded re-edition of his *Aritmetique* while composing the *Amour des amours*. Then, after 1555, he decided to devote himself almost exclusively to mathematics together with medicine.³⁹ In addition, Peletier often expressed the idea that mathematics provided truth about both the celestial and the earthly realms.⁴⁰ Such a claim was not at all unusual on the part of writers influenced by Neoplatonism. Ficino himself used abstract spatial figures, particularly in his commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, the *Compendium in Timaeum*, in which the cosmos is

³⁸ See, for example the second *Chant*, p. 13, l. 16; p. 16, ll. 43, 49, 58, 60, 64. See also sonnets XXVI, sestet; XXVII, ll. 11-14; XXXVI; XLIII, l. 6; XLVIII, ll. 10, 13; LXXXII, l. 5; LXXXV, l. 9.

³⁹ See Monferran’s introduction, especially pp. VIII-XI. See also Sophie Arnaud, *La Voix de la nature dans l’œuvre de Jacques Peletier du Mans (1517-1582)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), *passim*.

⁴⁰ See Staub, *Curieux Désir*, pp. 18-19; in his ‘Louange de la Sciance’, Peletier refers to ‘l’ordre Arithmétique, et Géométrien, / Où gît le vrai savoir, Céleste et Terrien’ (quoted in Staub, p. 18). See also Peletier’s poem ‘A Ceux qui blâment les mathématiques’, which defends mathematics on the basis of the knowledge it can give about the cosmos; the poem is included in Dudley Wilson’s *French Renaissance Scientific Poetry* (London: The Athlone Press), pp. 16-17.

represented in terms of geometric harmonies, mathematical proportion, and the regular solids. Hans Staub has argued – primarily in relation to Peletier’s *Louanges* rather than the *Amour des amours* – that Peletier was strongly influenced by Nicolas of Cusa. For Peletier, as for Cusa, God created the universe through number and shape, and therefore it is through these that we can reach knowledge of God.⁴¹ The figure of the circle is particularly important in this. Certainly the *Amour des amours* is indebted to Cusa, and it would be very fruitful to carry out a more in-depth study of this. However, in the *Amour des amours*, as I shall explain, the circle is not the most striking geometric figure, and some of Peletier’s geometric figures are much more difficult to reconcile with Neoplatonist ideas, in particular with Ficino’s depiction of lovers and their relationship with space.

IV) EXPANDING OUTWARDS AND SEPARATION

As well as moving into the air, the *je* represents himself as *expanding* outwards. Generally in the love poems, the *je* represents his movement as being not only towards a specific body – that is, the lady – but more generally a movement outwards; it is not just a movement upwards towards the cosmos but also a growing or expanding outwards into space. The verbs *repâître* (or *paître*)⁴² and *croître*⁴³ are frequently used to suggest the notion of his expansion; here Peletier appears to have picked up on an idea present in Ficino’s *De amore*,⁴⁴ but he uses it more frequently. The idea of expanding through space – like the claim by the *je* that he *is in many places* – differs from Ficino’s suggestion that the lover situates himself *within the beloved’s body*, thus living ‘*in another*’, ‘*in alio*’ (p. 43; II, 8); while the *je* in the *Amour des amours* sometimes says that he lives in the lady,⁴⁵ elsewhere his interest and desire are apparently focused upon movement and expansion in themselves. Peletier’s ideal of ‘expansion’ also differs from Ficino’s ideal of the inspired soul flying off to the heavens: although in the ‘scientific’ poems, the *je* will visit the

⁴¹ *Curieux Désir*, pp. 18-21. See also Isabelle Pantin, ‘La Représentation des mathématiques chez Jacques Peletier du Mans: Cosmos hiéroglyphique ou ordre rhétorique?’, *A Journal of the History of Rhetoric: Rhetorica*, 20 (2002), pp. 375-89.

⁴² S. II, l. 2; s. XXXV, l. 6; s. LII, l. 14; s. LV, l. 14; s. LXXIX, l. 6; s. XCII, l. 3. See also first *Chant*, p. 9, l. 6.

⁴³ S. XXVIII, l. 14; s. LII, l. 4; s. XCI, l. 9.

⁴⁴ ‘Amor [...] efficit ut anima ueritatem, alimoniam propriam, concupiscat, per quam suo modo nutriatur et crescat’ (p. 175). ‘Love brings about that the soul desires truth, it’s own particular food, through which it is fed and grows in its own way.’

⁴⁵ Like Ficino’s lover, the *je* lives ‘en autrui cors’ while being dead in his own (s. XXXVI), and his *esprit* strays ‘en ma Dame’ (s. XXXIX).

heavens, in the love poems, the ideal for the *je* is presented as a self-expansion as much as a movement in the sense of a journey; it is worth noting here that when Peletier began composing his love poems he had not yet thought of using them to preface planetary poems, so they were not all conceptually shaped by the notion of the ensuing cosmic voyage.⁴⁶

The *je* apparently desires to be ‘spread outside himself’. He says – in his first *Chant* – that previously he had been concerned with himself alone but now his ‘bien’ is *spread out* or *divided*, and *grows*. This is presented as a positive experience for the *je*, who, by being ‘lessened’, is ‘reinforced’:

*Tout seul j'étais muni de mon effort,
Dedans moi seul trouvais mon réconfort,
A moi tout seul de moi je rendais conte:
Mais or mon bien départi⁴⁷ plus en croît,
M'être amoindri m'est renfort et surcroît,
Voire et ma part plus que mon entier monte.*
(p. 10)

Similarly, in sonnet LVI, the *je* expands, and is ‘taken away from himself in order to be better “returned to” himself’, ‘divided in order to be better gathered together’:

*O doux effort, qui tel gain me fait prendre!
M'ôtant à moi, pour mieux à moi me rendre,
Me départant, pour mieux me rassembler.*
(Sonnet LVI)

The *je* apostrophises his impulse towards external space, his ‘effort’; although the *je* was brought to movement by love, once again the *Amour des amours* expresses an interest in movement in itself rather than solely as a prerequisite for existence in another object or body.

The notion of being ‘separated’ (‘me départant’) suggests the Platonic frenzies, thus implying that the experience of the *je* has a divine source;⁴⁸ indeed the *je* has referred to the ‘ravisement’ of his heart. However, what is unusual is the particularly *spatial* way in which this experience is represented. Similarly, the notion of a ‘gain’ brought about by finding oneself outside of oneself also recalls to some extent the ‘gain’

⁴⁶ Peletier had already written love poems when it occurred to him that ‘l’Amour était un Sujet plus capable que ne l’avais pourjeté au commencement’; having decided to link his love poems and ‘scientific’ poems within one text, Peletier then wrote more love sonnets which are more directly linked to the ‘scientific’ section (Monferran, ‘Introduction’, pp. XV–XVI).

⁴⁷ The meaning of *départir* is different from its modern sense. See the glossary to Monferran’s edition, p. 254.

⁴⁸ It might also seem to recall Orpheus being torn apart but the experience is represented in a much less bodily and tormented way; indeed, while there is a sense of the *je* as a spatial presence, this tends to be abstract and mathematical rather than bodily.

for lovers which Ficino describes;⁴⁹ nonetheless, although the *je* refers in sonnet LVI to another heart taking the place of his own, he says that he is ‘taken away from himself’ and ‘separated’ rather than that he lives in the lady. Thus the *je* appears to be fascinated by spatial notions which are not reducible to Ficino’s idea of two lovers becoming one.

V) DIVISION WITHOUT DIMINISHMENT

In both of the quotations discussed above, the *je* spreads out into space. This recalls the ‘opening’ and ‘spreading’ of the light of the lady. In addition, both quotations suggest that, by being ‘spread out’, the *je* becomes ‘greater’ or ‘larger’ rather than diminished or dissipated; similarly, by being ‘elsewhere’, by being ‘spread out’, the *je* is more truly himself. Thus the *je* not only suggests that he finds himself outside of himself, but also emphasises the *spatial* nature of these apparent paradoxes. The notion that expansion does not involve dissipation is not paradoxical with reference to light as discussed by Ficino, who explains that light is incorporeal and can thus spread through the whole world without itself suffering any loss. Therefore the *je*’s perception of himself as expanding outwards without being diminished constitutes another suggestion that he conceives of himself in the luminous terms of the lady: he begins to resemble the lady whose light spreads throughout the world.⁵⁰

The *je* ‘expands’ with much uncertainty, anxiety and hesitation. ‘Being in more than one place’ can be a negative experience; the *je* sometimes *does* perceive himself as diminished and regret this.⁵¹ In the second *Chant*, the *je* fears that he has been ‘trop ardent’, and that he moves to a ‘place’ where he is losing himself (‘en lieu où je m’aille perdant’, p. 19, l. 103) so that he wishes to be returned to himself or to the lady.⁵² In sonnet LIX, the *je* is divided and, by contrast with the previous examples, this does constitute a ‘lessening’ rather than a ‘growth’. At the beginning of the sonnet, it seems that the experience may nonetheless be positive, since the *je* is drawn to seek the best ‘part’ of himself. However,

⁴⁹ ‘*O inestimabile lucrum, quando duo ita unum fiunt, ut quisque duorum pro uno solo duo fiat*’ (p. 47). ‘*O inestimable gain, when two become one in such a way that each of the two, instead of being only one, become two.*’ See also *La Parfaicte Amye*, ll. 145-9.

⁵⁰ Peletier may also be influenced by the conception of the universe as formed through a sort of mathematical expansion, a notion he evokes in sonnet XLII (‘O un! O deux, dont tout l’œuvre commence’).

⁵¹ Elsewhere I have discussed spatial conceptions of the *je* in Scève’s *Délie*, which also involves division although this is depicted very differently: see my ‘Situating the Masculine’.

⁵² ‘Oh! Je crains d’être trop ardent, / Amour, et que je me transporte / En lieu où je m’aille perdant: / Rends-moi à moi, et me rapporte. / Ainçois rends-moi à celle-là / A qui être tu me commandes: / Rends-moi à elle: car elle a / Tout ce que de moi tu demandes’ (p. 19, ll. 101-08).

the *je* laments not being ‘whole’ (‘entier’), and ends the sonnet with the rather striking assertion that his ‘division’ means that he is ‘less than a half’:

*Amour puissant me rompt et divise,
Me fait chercher de moi la part meilleure,
Et la cherchant, je lamente, je pleure:
Et quelquefois tout de loin je devise,*

*O cœur perdu, si bonheur te ravise,
Obtiens moi paix en ta longue demeure,
Ou reviens tôt, afin qu’entier je meure:
Amour me frappe, et c’est à toi qu’il vise.*

*Amour te frappe, ô bien folle simplesse!
Répond le cœur: c’est moi, c’est moi qu’il blesse,
De si fiers coups, que le moins pesant d’eux*

*Sent bien la main d’un cruel ennemi.
Mais qu’est ceci? je parle comme deux,
Et toutefois je suis moins que demi.
(sonnet LIX)*

The language of halves is familiar from Ficino, who depicts man as two ‘halves’: love occurs because one half (the natural half) is looking for the other half (divine light).⁵³ Yet the *je* in the *Amour des amours* is *less than* a half. Therefore, while the division of the *je* recalls Ficino’s account of love, it cannot be reduced to a poetic demonstration of it. Peletier’s depiction is stranger, and thus revivifies the mathematical and abstract aspects of his language: being ‘less than a half’ is not simply a Ficinian way of representing love, but draws attention to itself as a rather mathematical statement. What is at issue in this language is the notion that love involves division and diminishment, and that this has quite literal spatial connotations. Like his celebration of growth, Peletier’s lamenting of diminishment suggests that he would like to be a *grandeur* like the lady.

3. Spatial Conceptions of the Human, the Cosmic, and the Divine

I) PELETIER’S *AMOUR DES AMOURS* AND FICINO’S *DE AMORE*

⁵³ ‘Instigatio uero appetitioque huiusmodi uerus est amor, quo duce dimidium hominis alterum alterum eiusdem dimidium concupiscit, quia naturale lumen, quod animi dimidium est, lumen illud diuinum, quod alterum eiusdem dimidium dicitur, olim neglectum, accendere rursus in animo nititur’ (p. 77): ‘This stimulation, this desire, is truly love, under the direction of which half of man desires his other half, because natural light, which is one half of the soul, strives to rekindle in the soul divine light, which is called its other half and which it had neglected up to that point’. See also p. 79.

The *je* would like to be an expanse resembling his lady, the universe, and the divinity *Amour* (as he conceives them). In this, Peletier's depiction both resembles Ficino's and differs from it. Peletier's love poems strongly recall Ficino's *De amore* in that the lover's desire for the divine light in his beloved means that he himself can become closer to this divine light, and resemble it more strongly himself. The lady's 'grandeur' is already complete while that of the *je* is simply an object of hope and desire; the *je* is a small light – a 'flame' – and begins to resemble the lady whose light spreads throughout the whole world. Indeed the *je* says in the first sonnet that the lady is an 'example' who teaches him, and often suggests that she or *Amour* teach or guide him; likewise, he is becoming like them, or imitates them. The *je* also expresses the desire to 'join to himself' 'si grand' divinité' (sonnet XXIX). The lady inspires him, and – when he is a firebrand struggling to catch alight – she is the wind which illuminates him (sonnet LIII, quoted above).

However, Peletier's love poems differ from Ficino's *De amore* in their representation of the relationship between the lovers and space. Like Ficino, Peletier associates love with movement, with being elsewhere than in oneself, and with growing and diminishing. However, in the *Amour des amours*, this is represented in more literally spatial terms. We have seen that the *je* represents his beloved as a luminary expanse and appears to desire expansion for himself too, to be himself a *grandeur*; furthermore, the *Amour des amours* often reminds us of the spatial value of such terms, preventing us from understanding them as 'only metaphors' with no real spatial implications. Moreover, movement and expansion are apparently desirable in themselves, since they are often celebrated without mention of that which, in the scientific poems, will function as the goal of movement, namely various cosmic bodies.

Thus, not only does Peletier depict his lady in terms which Ficino would apply to light itself or to the divine, but this image also influences the conception he has of himself, and the ideal which he imagines himself aiming to attain. In other words, Peletier expresses an ideal of the human – as well as of the universe – which is in terms of space and of light, and is inspired by a particular conception of the divine. Of course the notion that the human should come to resemble the divine is central to Neoplatonism: modelling the human on the divine is a very Neoplatonist move. What is unusual in the *Amour des amours* is the way Peletier imagines the human ideal not simply as moving upwards towards the heavens, but also as a spatial and luminary expansion.

Concerning Peletier's depiction of the universe, Sophie Arnaud has shown in her recent book that in his *Louanges* of 1581 – published twenty-six years after the *Amour des amours* – he moves away from the concept of a hierarchical cosmos towards that of a 'cosmogonie

mathématique' made up of a mass of points like atoms; here Peletier is closer to Lucretius than to the universe of Ficino's *De amore*.⁵⁴ Arguably in his love poetry of 1555, Peletier already displays an interest in the universe as an expanse of space rather than in terms of cosmic bodies and a corresponding cosmic hierarchy.

II) PELETIER, PATRIZI, AND PASCAL

Given his emphasis on geometrical space, light, and space as vastness, one could argue that the *Amour des amours* foreshadows a slightly later thinker, Francesco Patrizi, in his *De Spacio* of 1587. Patrizi maintained the cosmic hierarchy but he nonetheless argued that space was the primary category in nature, and also considered space in mathematical or geometric terms. Furthermore, for Patrizi, light – which is associated with fire – plays a role second only to that of space; God chose to fill space with light because it is most like space, Patrizi ultimately gives the same definition of light as space.⁵⁵ For Peletier, light is dispersed through the cosmos or through 'air' rather than through any category named 'space'; similarly, movement occurs in the air rather than in 'space'. Nonetheless, Peletier is interested in movement through a realm (the air) as much as in hierarchical cosmic structures, focuses upon light spreading through the world, and depicts his experience using geometric and abstract spatial terms. Both Patrizi and Peletier show – in different ways – the desirability of space as a vast realm of expansion associated with divine light: the *je* desires a beloved who is a luminous expanse, and wants to resemble her.

Luc Deitz shows that it is in Proclus that Patrizi's equation between light and space is to be found.⁵⁶ More generally, though, as Cesare Vasoli points out, Patrizi's model of space stems from the cosmological discourse which was also expressed in Ficino's *De Sole* and *De Lumine*.⁵⁷ Thus Patrizi uses Neoplatonist ideas to develop a concept of space which – although Patrizi himself maintains a hierarchically structured cosmos – ultimately undermines the cosmic hierarchy which is central to Neoplatonism in general as well as to Ficino's writing in particular. I

⁵⁴ *La Voix de la nature*, pp. 63-81. Some aspects of Ficino's own writings bear witness to his own interest in Lucretius but nonetheless the *De amore* depicts a clearly structured Aristotelian universe rather than one made up of atoms.

⁵⁵ Luc Deitz, 'Space, Light, and Soul in Francesco Patrizi's *Nova de Universis Philosophia* (1591), in *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, ed. by Anthony Grafton and Nancy Siraisi, pp. 139-70. See also Eugene E. Ryan, 'The *Panaugia* of Franciscus Patricius: From the Light of Experience to the First Light', in *Francesco Patrizi: Filosofo Platonico nel crepuscolo del Rinascimento*, ed. by Patrizia Castelli (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2002), pp. 181-95.

⁵⁶ 'Space, Light, and Soul', pp. 154-57.

⁵⁷ Cesare Vasoli, 'Francesco Patrizi sull'infinità dell'universo', in *Filosofia e cultura: per Eugenio Garin*, ed. by Michele Ciliberto and Cesare Vasoli (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1991), pp. 277-308.

would argue that Peletier's divergence from Ficino's *De Amore* represents an analogous movement: Peletier's love poems are deeply indebted to a Ficinian model of love, and are ultimately (thanks to the 'scientific' poems) inserted into a Neoplatonist trajectory through the cosmic hierarchy; however, the love poems tend to suggest that human desire is focused less upon movement through a hierarchy than upon space, through which light and the divine are dispersed, and in which the human subject might move and grow in imitation of this divine light.

However, the parallel between Peletier and Patrizi is limited, since what is particularly striking in the *Amour des amours* is that Peletier's spatial concept is an ideal for the human as much as for cosmic space. In thus perceiving the human in spatial terms, he differs from other later thinkers of space, forming a stark contrast to the later well-known thinker of spatial immensity, Pascal. In his discussion of man as a 'roseau pensant', Pascal writes: 'Toute notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée. C'est de là qu'il nous faut relever et non de l'espace et de la durée, que nous ne saurions remplir'.⁵⁸ Thus, for Pascal, the perception of the immensity of the universe went hand in hand with conceiving of man in something other than spatial terms. Similarly, Descartes – while having very different concepts of man and the cosmos from those of Pascal – argues that the thinking self is distinct from 'extension',⁵⁹ and that man's status does not depend upon the privileged 'position' in space which the structured cosmos had provided for him.⁶⁰ By contrast, Peletier's ideal of the human involved precisely thinking of man in terms of an immensity paralleling that of the universe as well as of the divine. Thus Peletier's depiction of the human, the cosmic, and the spatial is closely related to more explicit and well-known theories of space, yet occupies a unique position in the history of space; Peletier's joint interests in Ficinian love and in mathematics lead him to depict the human and the cosmic in terms which constitute a fascinating variation upon other early modern modes of thought.

⁵⁸ Pascal, *Pensées sur La Religion et sur quelques autres sujets*, ed. by Louis Lafuma (Paris: Éditions du Luxembourg, 1951), (fragment [200–391], p. 142); see also, for example, fragment [113–217].

⁵⁹ *Principia philosophiae*, Part I, Principle 63; *Meditationes*, Meditation II.

⁶⁰ Descartes writes to Chanut that an 'indefinite' universe (the term which Descartes uses in order to reserve 'infinite' for God) does not undermine man's status: although man's loss of a central position means that valued characteristics cannot be said to exist in him alone, this does not render these qualities any less admirable. *Correspondance*, ed. by Charles Adam and Gérard Milhaud, 8 vols (Paris: PUF, 1936-63), vol. VII, letter 601, pp. 345-51.