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ARTICLE

The Impoverishment of Metaphysics in Pontus de Tyard's *Premier* and *Second Curieux*

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Abstract
Pontus de Tyard may be well known as a poet of la Pléiade, also as the bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône towards the end of his life, yet throughout all these, he was a philosopher. He played an important part in the Royal Academy in promoting philosophy in the French language, being one of the first to write in French. His metaphysics is a good example of the poverty of philosophy in the Renaissance. His first philosophical works were devoted to the arts: *Solitaire premier* (1552) and *Solitaire second* (1555). Metaphysics appears for the first time in the *Second Curieux* (1578), when *De l'Univers ou Discours de la nature du Monde et de ses parties*, published 20 years prior, was divided into two parts. Hence one of the first metaphysics in French was born of physics and astronomy. There are three characters in Tyard's *Curieux*: Curieux gathering all opinions he can find, Hieromnime expressing an orthodox theology, and Solitaire proposing in first person generally skeptical philosophical conclusions. The metaphysics of the future-bishop sometimes resemble a cabinet of curiosities, but with a theological guardrail. For metaphysical reasons, Tyard overpasses geocentrism and infinite universe to a universe in expansion of modern sciences.

Keywords: Metaphysica paupera; Pontus de Tyard; Premier Curieux; Second Curieux

The *Second Curieux*, published in 1578 by Mamert Patisson, was born out of the division into two volumes of *L'Univers, ou Discours de la nature du Monde et de ses parties*, published more than 20 years earlier. It was given a new title, *Deux Discours de la nature du Monde et de ses parties. A sçavoir le Premier Curieux traittant des choses matérielles et le Second Curieux des intellectuelles*. It was thus that metaphysics was detached from physics in the work of Pontus de Tyard, in the same year when he became bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône. The two *Curieux* still appear in the 1587 edition of Pontus de Tyard's

Discours Philosophiques, where they follow the *Solitaires* and *Mantice* and precede the *Discours du temps, de l'an et de ses parties*, first published in 1556.

An evolution from poetry to episcopal preaching: the place of metaphysics

Pontus de Tyard's philosophical writings followed the development of his poetic work in the early 1550s, *Solitaire premier* (1552) being his first philosophical work. In the two *Solitaires*, Mythos and Logos still appeared together. The first examines poetry as an inspiration of the Muses – one of the four kinds of inspiration identified by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. As he advocated for philosophy in vernacular, Pontus de Tyard did not make an abrupt break with poetry: the third book of *Erreurs amoureuses*, the *Livre des Vers Lyriques*, and the *Solitaire second ou Prose de la musique* were published in Lyon in the same year, 1555.

As music was a medieval propaedeutic to philosophical wisdom, *Solitaire second* shows both Pontus de Tyard's expertise in music and the close link he saw between music and his own art. Yet his first philosophical approach in the two *Solitaires*, closely connected to literary art, is far from delivering a complete philosophy encompassing psychology, physics, metaphysics, and so on – unlike what we find in the three works (*Discours, Univers*, and *Mantice*) published between 1556 and 1558. The trilogy opens with the *Discours du Temps*, featuring a dialogue with Maurice Scève, the friend for whom Pontus had boundless admiration. Astronomical questions take a considerable amount of space, as preparations were already being made for the reform of the calendar that Pope Gregory XIII would promulgate in 1582. A skeptical distance from the historical sequence of time/calendar calculations is combined with a scientific concern that makes room for Copernicus' recent theories. Metaphysical reflection on time and its evanescence is not absent throughout the work and can be found in the conclusion left by Pontus de Tyard to his friend[1]. Is not the limit of all speculation on time the same as of our own lives, which remain in the hands of God?

Physics and metaphysics were still intertwined, with a clear preponderance of the former, in *L'univers ou discours des parties et de la nature du monde* (1557); the astronomical dimension of cosmology continued to dominate with the publication of *Mantice* in 1558. At the end of a long *pro* and *contra* argument in *Mantice*, the Solitaire character clarifies the position of Pontus de Tyard. He was interested in astronomy, but his aim was to gain a knowledge of celestial movements and a calendar that would be useful for social and political life. He recognized no value in judicial astrology (horoscopes); his rejection of these divinatory claims was based on the imprecision of the astronomical knowledge of his time. The calculations in Ptolemy's system did not match those of Copernicus. Pontus de Tyard rejected the division according to the signs of the zodiac, which drew imaginary figures without any scientific rigor.

For Solitaire, the sky does indeed have an overall influence on human life, but it cannot be related precisely to any constellation[2]. Solitaire makes it clear that if he

[1]'As for me, I believe that life has been given to me by God as a deposit to be kept in safekeeping, and truly I will guard it dearly, waiting for it to please the Lord, who gave it to me, to claim it back' [*… quant à moy j'estime la vie m'estre donnée de Dieu comme un depost en garde et vrayment je la garderai si cherment, attendant qu'il plaise au Seigneur duquel j'en ay la charge, de la r'avoir de moy*] (Tyard 1556: 80).

[2]Sylviane Bokdam (2003) alludes to an evolution or a shift between this conclusion of *Mantice* and the way that Pontus elabortates on astrology in his later works. The *Ephemerides Octavae Spherae* (1562)

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conducted astronomical research, it was only to derive scientific knowledge that could be useful for 'the maintenance of republics, the observation of the seasons', and the guidance of 'religious constitutions'. Pontus de Tyard, however, was in no way 'academic'; he claimed to be 'Socratic' in his ode III 'On the Socratic'. The result is a posture that pits Epicureans and Cynics against each other and claims freedom of philosophical examination, without allegiance to authority. His search for wisdom takes up Cicero's definition at the beginning of his 1573 dedication to the young King Charles IX, aiming at 'true knowledge of divine things and good government of human things'. A divide seems to be emerging here between a practical aim of knowing human things and a metaphysics that would focus on the speculative knowledge of divine things. But metaphysics still must distinguish itself from physics, which is not without problems, as we shall see in our discussion of the two *Curieux*.

Before doing so, may we end this introductory section with a few remarks on the form of Pontus de Tyard's philosophical dialogues, particularly in the two *Curieux*, where the discourse is divided between three characters: Curieux, Solitaire, and Hieromnime. Note that it is the second who speaks in the first person, a narrator who resembles the author. His point of view is generally that of a reflective and critical thinker, sometimes ironic, even if he often takes up and follows very closely the developments of his other two sources. Curieux monopolizes eighty percent of the spoken words and reports opinions whose source can generally be identified. The apparatus of the notes shows that he often follows the same secondary source for several pages. His point of view is one of erudition, not necessarily very academic, mixing philosophical and legendary points of view. Hieromnime, for his part, represents a theological approach, mainly based on traditional patristic sources (Jerome, Augustine, Basil, John of Damascus…) but drawing biblical etymologies from Talmudic and even cabalistic sources. From a philosophical standpoint, this curious erudition is surprising for the wealth of sources used by Pontus, but in fact it lacks coherence and rigor, and the discourse is often very disjointed. The theological authority of Hieromnime thus appears as a safeguard where the critical distance of Solitaire may seem skeptical. Above all, the opinions recited most often by Curieux, but also by the other two characters, follow one another in no particular order, giving the impression of a jumbled cabinet of curiosities. This profusion is a permanent subversion of the Aristotelian order and its way of articulating physics and metaphysics. The Curieux character has been likened to Pontus de Tyard's cousin, Guillaume des Autels, whose research seems to be that of

mention an unpublished document prepared by Tyard that provided exact rising and setting tables for over 300 stars; he thought that it would help fix the astrologers' unreliable computations through actual observation. He seems hopeful that the principles of ancient astrology would be reconciled with the scientific observation of the real positions of celestial bodies. In the Homilies, as well as at the end of *Mantice*, we find a condemnation of judicial astrology; but Pontus in no way denied the link between the first and the second divine causality of the created universe. His intention was to decry the idolatry of those who, unaware of the difference between these two causalities, see in the stars 'a power by their influences to do or undo something on our Souls, spirits, and understandings' (Tyard 2022: Homily V, f. 96, ro, vo). Concerned with science as well as with theological doctrine, Pontus de Tyard agreed with Thomas Aquinas that there is indeed an influence of the macrocosm on the microcosm, and even a place for destiny in the second causality exercised in time on each creature. However, they cannot alter eternal Providence over our souls, and salvation depends on the response of our free will. See Aquinas, *III Contra Gentiles* 92 (2-12); *S. Th.*, IIa IIae, Q. 95 a.5; *De sortibus*, 4.

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a dilettante. However, his motto, *Non otiosus in otio*, may free us from any doubt. Was it not inspired by the thoughts of Saint Bernard in his *De consideratione*[3]? Did Pontus de Tyard not combine scientific curiosity with metaphysical depth?

Presence of metaphysical themes in the Premier Curieux: Μετά- *or* Πρίν-*physics?*

The *Premier Curieux* considers the four elements after first offering a meditation on the central place of man and his finality[4]. Yet this humanism seems to have been appropriated from the writings of its predecessors (Tyard 2010: 60). The scholarly notes in Jean Céard's edition show that Pontus copies or translates without any concern for intellectual property or originality. This is a major poverty of this philosophy, one of the first examples in the French language, very much inspired by Italian sources. The following proliferation of collected opinions opens with an apology for plagiarism and approximation[5]. What matters is to 'show the way to other studious and diligent persons', as Solitaire puts it, even before he is joined in his reflection by Curieux and Hieromnime.

The discussion opens with mathematics. Following Regiomontanus, Curieux holds that Astronomy and its handmaidens (Arithmetic and Geometry) are the best way to transition from natural realities to immutable and divine beauty. He goes on to assert that these disciplines distinguish us from brute beasts, demonstrating the superiority of our species (ibid.: 63). But Hieromnime completes this philosophical journey from Nature to God by adding the path of grace (ibid.: 62). Through grace, divine light comes to impart truth directly onto human intelligence. Curieux concedes that the doctrine of religion can satisfy a mind adorned with the virtue of piety (noting in passing that we have descended from saintly to religious devotion); yet he argues in favor of the usefulness of 'honest and liberal sciences' (ibid.). Another major poverty is that by separating Curieux and Hieromnime, the author avoids articulating their two discourses, the philosophical and the theological; Solitaire's rationalist and often ironic arbitration remains largely sibylline. We can note also that the practical claim extends to the liberal arts, and it concerns the 'honest' sciences, probably as opposed to the 'curious', occult sciences – a stance that is consistent with de Tyard's criticism of all divination in *Mantice* and elsewhere.

Above all, however, 'honest sciences' are deemed necessary for 'the usefulness and tranquillity of men […] on them depend the governments of all well-constituted republics' (ibid.). Pontus de Tyard's loyalty to his sovereign was unwavering and, in the context of the Catholic League, it may help to explain his sudden promotion to the episcopal see of Chalon-sur-Saône. It is also worth noting, in the variants of the

[3]'Although the wise man rightly urges us to cultivate wisdom at leisure, we must beware of being idle in our leisure' [*Etsi recte Sapiens hortatur sapientiam scribi in otio* (Si 38, 24), *cavendum et in otio otium est*] (*SBO* 3: 429).

[4]'Man was born to contemplate the world. Many Philosophers and the whole band of Theologians agree with one voice, that everything in the World […] is made for the use and service of man…' [*L'homme est nay pour contempler le monde. Grand nombre de Philosophes et l'entière troupe des Théologiens accordent d'une voix, que tout ce qui est au Monde* […] *est faict à l'usage et service de l'homme*…] (Tyard 2010: 60).

[5]'In the consideration of which, having enjoyed myself a few times, […] I did not want to deny my Frenchmen, in this Discourse, some of the fruit that I had made there…' [*En la consideration desquelles m'estant quelquesfois délecté […] je n'ay voulu refuser à mes François, en ce Discours partie du fruict que j'y avois fait*…] (Tyard 2010: 61).

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passage from the *Premier Curieux* that we just quoted, the Aristotelian spirit of the *Curieux*'s reflections on the usefulness of natural philosophy for upright forms of government. The 1557 version reads: 'on them depend the constitutions of all well-governed republics'. We will recall the three upright forms of government and their degenerate forms in a synoptic table inspired by the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VIII, 12) and *Politics* (III, 7):

Type of government	Based on	Resembling relationships between	Degenerate form of government	Characterized by
Monarchy	Respect	Father/Children	Tyranny	Fear
Aristocracy	Honor	Husband/Wife	Oligarchy (Plutocracy)	Prevarication
Civil government	Virtue	Brother/Brother	Anarchy (Democracy)	Insubordination

According to the 1578 version, the governments of well-constituted republics (with upright constitutions) need natural philosophy to effectively carry out their political actions. Can we recognize Dante's legacy here[6]? If this Aristotelian reading is coherent, it should be noted that the break with scholasticism in natural philosophy does not seem to affect Aristotle's influence on Pontus de Tyard's political thought and on his *Curieux*.

Aristotle remains at the center of the debate on the world, finite or infinite. We recall that to Aristotle, actual infinity could not exist. The world must therefore be finite. Since, according to him, it is not contained in any void, should it not be infinite? The *aporia* is thus posed[7]. We can observe Pontus de Tyard's speculative talent. His erudition reviews the 'various troubles' and opinions generated by this apparent contradiction in the Aristotelian system. The solution proposed from the outset by Curieux may seem classic for the time, and hardly compatible with Pontus' favorable opinion of Copernicus' calculations[8]. Is Solitaire's friend simply asserting that the world is finite and that it is only subjectively infinite? The end of the passage might lead us to think so, and he gives the example of Archimedes' calculation of the arena: it is not because his count exceeds our finite understanding that the number of grains of sand on all the beaches of the world is infinite.

If we pay attention to this text, is not the main reason why the universe must be finite its spherical shape? It is finite in the sense that, like grains of sand, all the realities

[6]See Dante, *Monarchia* (1998: III, XV, 10); Trottmann (2019).

[7]'Beyond the World, and since it is All, nothing can exist according to Aristotle's opinion, […] neither place, nor time, nor void […] if it moves, it must move in some place that contains it: and if it is contained, it is finite: but if beyond it there is nothing, it must be infinite.' [*Outre le Monde, puis qu'il est Tout, rien ne peut estre selon l'opinion d'Aristote,* […] *ny lieu, ny temps, ny vuide* […] *s'il se meut, il faut qu'il se meuve en quelque lieu qui le contienne: et s'il est contenu, il est fini: mais si outre luy il n'y a rien, c'est conclu une infinité*.] (Tyard 2010: 63).

[8]'The safest opinion is that the World, tending, inclining, and always pressing against its middle, is finite, of round kind and measure […] it is finite in itself, but it seems infinite in us, due to our difficulty to enumerate its parts…' [*L'opinion plus soustenable, que le Monde, tendant, et s'inclinant, ou pressant tousjours contre son milieu, est finy, d'espece et de mesure ronde […] il est finy en soy, mais semblant infini en nous, pour la difficulté qui est à faire denombrement singulier de ses parties*…] (Tyard 2010: 63).

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that arise in it remain finite in number. In a time when other philosophers such as Nicholas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno were opting for an infinite universe, Pontus de Tyard's *Curieux* maintains that it is precisely because it is spherical and expanding that the universe cannot be infinite. The temptation to believe that it is infinite is due solely to our subjectivity, which is incapable of counting everything that can be contained in this expanding sphere. Between the old world petrified in its geocentric immobility and the headlong rush into the idea of a possibly heliocentric infinite world, the *Curieux* seems to choose a middle way. The universe is in motion, and its expansion can only be centrifugal: it is constantly bowing and pressing against its own center[9]. But at the same time, we understand that it does not need to be surrounded by emptiness. This sphericity of the world will eventually be reconciled with the old geocentric immobility: it is the sky that is in motion, but the concentric spheres of the four elements, and even of the planets and the heavens, will be able to fit together while preserving the central immobility of the earth. Without taking sides, Curieux evokes Cleomedes, who, against Aristotle, wanted there to be a void around this spherical world[10]. The argument is that providence governs the nesting of elementary spheres that make up the universe (ibid.: 64).

Now, if Curieux refrains from taking sides between Aristotle and Cleomedes on the question of the void surrounding the universe, is it not because he prefers to give the floor to Hieromnime[11]? In this infinite sphere surrounding the finite sphere of the universe, he recognizes God himself. Curieux could not bring himself to admit the existence of a material void; outside of this expanding universe, therefore, there must be only an immaterial and eternal God. Curieux refers to the first theologian-poets and cites Ronsard as their successor in his *Hymne de l'éternité* without taking the question of God's immanence and transcendence in relation to the world any further. Both God and the world are spherical, the most perfect form. Proponents of a flat world or any other volume are easily dismissed, and Curieux notes the philosophers' agreement on a world conceived as an interlocking of spheres (ibid.: 67).

We understand that it is for metaphysical, even metamathematical, reasons that the world can only be spherical. Admittedly, the earth is a little rough because of its mountains and valleys, but this irregularity disappears in the outer spheres, water, air, fire, up to the sky 'rounder than any roundness' (ibid.). As for movement, the most plausible opinion 'by authority and by reason' is that the sky moves, with the earth immobile at the centre. The old geocentric and fixist model is thus assumed.

These reflections on the sphericity of the world would, on the contrary, lead Solitaire to favor Copernicus' heliocentric hypothesis. But it is Curieux (once again inspired by Calcagnini's *De perenni motu terrae*, which he follows step by step), who will reverse the previous hypothesis (ibid.: 156-157). It is indeed the lightness of the

[9]Nicholas of Cusa's universe, open to divine absolute infinity, presupposes a double movement: centrifugal and centripetal. See Trottmann (2016, 2017).

[10]Note 25 in Tyard (2010: 186) indicates that Curieux translates from a paraphrase of Cleomedes (1, 1) by Jacob Ziegler.

[11]'Should we not confess that what contains Heaven, along with the four contents of Heaven, differs from these five that it contains, and is consequently incorporeal and immaterial? Infinite (said Hieromnime) is nothing other than God'. [*Faut-il pas confesser que ce qui contient le Ciel, et les quatre contenus du Ciel, est different des cinq qu'il contient, et par bonne suite, incorporel et immateriel ? Infini (dit Hieromnime) n'est autre chose que Dieu.*] (Tyard 2010: 64).

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celestial element that guarantees its immobility up there, whereas earth's gravity forces it to move (ibid.: 157)[12]. Curieux thus turns Aristotle's argument in favor of the movement of the sky upside down. Following Calcagnini, Pontus envisages only local movement, from one place to another. Yet there is no place towards which Heaven could move. The metaphysical problem thus posed is much more complex. For Aristotle, movement is not just local but includes all kinds of change. Growth and decay are transformation on the spot, without local movement. But does the expanding universe, which Pontus de Tyard seems to argue for following Calcagnini, not undergo this type of change devoid of local or mechanical movement? Following Plato, Aristotle envisaged only circular celestial motion; like Calcagnini and Copernicus, Pontus prefers to attribute such motion to the Earth. For him, this kind of motion could only occur in a universe that was both immobile and expanding, because it was spherical and with no possible periphery.

Moreover, unlike other Renaissance philosophers who supported an infinite cosmos, he did not really transgress the impossibility of an 'actual infinity'. For Nicholas of Cusa, for example, this interdict entailed distinguishing between the restricted infinity of a created universe and divine absolute infinity, which could only be articulated together in a philosophical Christology. We could say that the sphere of Pontus de Tyard's world would not constitute an 'actual infinity' precisely because its very sphericity requires it to be finite and expanding. 'Infinite convexity' prevents heaven from having anywhere to go and therefore from moving. On the contrary, air and water surround the earth to help it move without friction (ibid.: 67).

In this reflection, which contrasts an immobile sky with a moving earth, we note an intervention by Solitaire, who wants to acknowledge here the Platonic doctrine (ibid.: 157). He adds that this corresponds to the interpretation of the sacrificial songs by the ancient lyric poets who accompanied the strophes and antistrophes with lateral movements evoking the displacement of inferior realities, whereas to address the epode to the gods, these movements stopped, thus signifying the immobility of the divinity (ibid.: 157-158). Platonizing erudition and the ability to make the link between poetry and metaphysics thus fall to the character of Solitaire.

Smiling at Hieromnime, he evokes an etymology that links the Hebrew *Haaretz* (earth) with the root *Rutz* (to run). At that moment, he brings up Copernicus' heliocentric hypothesis (ibid.: 158-159). The tone leaves no doubt as to de Tyard's support for heliocentrism. Solitaire then reconstructs the six spheres revolving around the sun according to the length of their cycle, an indication of their distance from the sun, starting with Saturn (30 years), then Jupiter (12 years), Mars (two years), the Earth (one year, its sphere including the elements and the moon), Venus (nine months), and Mercury (180 days). He goes on to recall the main reasons that led Copernicus to revive Aristarchus' heliocentric assumption: inconsistencies in the old system for calculating the proportion of the epicycles, in particular for Venus, but also for calculating

[12]'In addition, who doubts that to move is anything but moving from one place to another […] and Heaven being on all sides extended in convexity […] what places can be imagined for it to move from one to another…' [*Davantage qui doute, que mouvoir soit autre chose que remuer d'un en autre lieu […] et le Ciel estant de toutes parts estendu en convexité […] quels lieux pour se mouvoir d'un en autre lui peut on imaginer…*'] (Tyard 2010: 157).

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the movement of the planets, in particular the sun and the moon, with disastrous consequences for the calendar, leading to serious political consequences.

Before having Curieux speak again, Pontus de Tyard draws a moral teaching, not without irony, from the superiority of Copernicus' system (ibid.: 159). Although it may seem paradoxical, or even misleading, Copernicus' hypothesis allows us to account for phenomena much more clearly than the common geocentric view. It may come as a surprise that Hieromnime is not given the floor here to complete the series of celestial spheres; in fact, he did so earlier by adding the Crystalline and Empyrean skies to the geocentric nesting proposed at the beginning by Curieux[13].

After this apology for Copernican cosmology, Curieux takes the floor again, agreeing that 'his demonstrations are certainly ingenious, and his observations exact, and worthy of being followed' (ibid.: 159). However, he is quick to bring the discussion of physics down to earth[14]. He returns to ordinary physical knowledge and to the immobility of the earth as a religious dogma. He adds that land and water form a single globe (which reduces asperities) and divides its surface into three continents.

We leave the *Premier Curieux* here. In this volume, which is supposed to be confined to physics, metaphysics is not missing, particularly in the reflections on the sphericity of the world. It does, however, appear as instrumental to defend an astronomical discourse favorable to the Copernican revolution. Thus, leading back to physics or accompanying it, this meta-physics could almost be described as *prin-* or *para*-physical.

Poverties and riches of metaphysics in the Second Curieux

This second volume, the result of the split between metaphysics and physics in the 1578 edition of *L'Univers*, opens with an address to the King, which marks a break with the *Premier Curieux*. Pontus now intends to adapt the philosophers' prose to the French language. He contemplates the risks of this undertaking in his *petitio benevolentiae*[15]. The poet-turned-philosopher was aware of the challenge: he had to construct a philosophical language from French itself, at the risk of being neglected not only by the vulgar, but also by scholars who preferred to read Latin.

[13]'But those who, moved by a higher contemplation, did not remain at matter […] considered that above the ninth Sphere there is not only a tenth Heaven, called the Crystalline, but also an eleventh, called the Empyrean, or igneous as you would say […] due to the unutterable splendour which brightens it, as the fatal seat for the eternal abode of God, the Angels, and the blessed Saints.' [*Mais ceux, qui poussez d'une plus haute contemplation, ne se sont si tenamment arrestez aux matieres […] ont estimé sur la neufieme Sphere, estre non seulement un Ciel dixiesme, surnommé Crystalin, mais encores un onzieme, appellé Empyree, comme vous diriez ignee […] â cause de l'indicible splendeur dont il est illustré, comme siege destiné pour l'eternelle demeure de Dieu, des Anges, et des Saincts bien-heureux*] (Tyard 2010: 68-69).

[14]'Our knowledge of the Earth […] is in no way disturbed: and we are not prevented from believing that it is a heavy, cold, and dry element: which by a vulgar, received, and religious opinion, we believe to be immobile'. [*La cognoissance de l'estre de la Terre […] n'en est aucunement troublee: et ne nous empesche de croire que ce soit un Element pesant, froid et sec: lequel par receuë, vulgaire, et comme religieuse opinion, nous croyons immobile*.] (Tyard 2010: 160).

[15]'Seeing that French writers had only ever written in prose collections of stories or novels […] I had no doubt that it would be difficult to create a style […] to properly represent and express the high and beautiful conceptions of the Philosophers…' [*Car voyant les escrivains François n'avoir encores traicté en prose, que des recueils d'histoires ou Romans […] Je ne doutois point qu'il seroit mal-aisé de former un stile […] pour dignement representer et exprimer les hautes et belles conceptions des Philosophes…*] (Tyard 2013: 125).

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Did Cicero and Varro not face the same problem when they tried to adapt Greek philosophy into their language? Tyard cites them as examples in his address to the King, perhaps echoing the discussions that took place at the Académie du Palais, where he played an important role alongside Jacques Davy Duperron (Roudaut 2013: 15). Pontus turns to the Greeks: some, such as Plutarch, Ptolemy, and Galen, deigned to learn the Latin language; this choice did not prevent them from continuing to write in their mother tongue (Tyard 2013: 126). As for the Latins, when they decided to express their philosophical ideas in their own language, they successfully elevated the level of their language (ibid.: 127); Tyard urges the French to dare to do the same (ibid.: 127-128).

He was encouraged by the success of poetry in French, even among those who knew Greek and Latin. Hoping they would not despise his philosophical writings in French, he presents himself as a pioneer (ibid.: 128)[16]. Was Pontus de Tyard really the first? Duperron and Ramus could make the same claim, and the editor of his work lists several French translations of Plato and other philosophers (ibid.: 193 n. 24). But is the *Second Curieux* not one of the very first metaphysics in French? In addition, are we not witnessing its difficult parting from physics? The Middle Ages and scholasticism had first focused on the question of being and essence, and their metaphysics went from the world to God. For Pontus de Tyard, however, the question of the world was dealt with at length in the *Premier Curieux*, which was supposedly devoted to physics. This 'poverty about the world', typical of a metaphysics of souls and spirits, was also accompanied by a lesser philosophical concern for God. This double poverty has a reverse side of riches in the abundance of patristic and scholastic erudition shown by the three characters: if Solitaire intervenes little, Curieux usually recites all available philosophical opinions and Hieromnime argues for orthodox positions through a wealth of theological erudition.

Admittedly the readers, in a new state of poverty, have to make their way through a thicket of opinions listed in no particular order. Hieromnime systematically considers all the stances proposed by philosophers as well as by a variety of heterodox thinkers: all souls would proceed from the soul of the first man, like bodies; or they would all be created at one time with those of angels, numerous enough to animate all past and future bodies; they would transmigrate from one body to another, including those of animals, which seems unworthy of a soul endowed with intelligence, or, on the contrary, be conceived as sparks emanating from a divine substance… Hieromnime the theologian then turns to the orthodox explanation, which provides the most subtle and perfect metaphysics[17]. As the editor's notes emphasize, the discourse follows a

[16]'This hope gave me courage and made me dare to write the first […] on this subject of Philosophy and in this way […] this should be enough to encourage others to do better'. [*Cest espoir m'a donné courage, et m'a fait oser escrire le premier […] en ce sujet de Philosophie et de ceste façon […] ce devra avoir esté assez pour inciter les autres à mieux faire*]

[17]'At the end of all these opinions, the wisest one is that soul and body are formed together […] the latter by fluxion and seed, the former by the omnipotent will of the eternal Creator […] who forms the soul into a living essence, simple, incorporeal, invisible […], immortal, shapeless and endowed with understanding, reason, and free will, using the body as her carriage and flowing into each and every part of it …'. [*En fin de tous ses aviz, le mieux choisi est que l'ame et le corps sont formez ensemble […] cestuy par fluxion et semence, et elle par la toute-puissante volonté du Createur eternel […] qui forme l'ame en essence vivante, simple, incorporelle, invisible […], immortelle, sans figure et pourveue d'entendement, de raison, et de liberal arbitre, usant du corps comme de son chariot, s'espanchant en toutes et chacunes parties d'iceluy…*] (Tyard 2013: 130).

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path that goes from Augustine to the Scholastics via Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. But like Clichtove, Tyard defends the concomitant creation of the soul and the body, against Platonists who believe that souls are prior. If bodies do come into being, he says, 'by fluxion of the seed', souls can only come into being by the will of the Creator. He creates them at the very moment when the seed fertilizing the female creates the body of the child to be born.

Through the theological distinction between grace and nature, Hieromnime brings into the *Curieux* a Platonist perspective on the twofold destiny of souls, some of which will return to their celestial cradle, while others will be caught in a whirlpool of passions and be bound to earth – the intemperate, as opposed to the learned souls (ibid.: 131). He then comes to describe the faculties of the soul, but he dwells on the senses and uses analogies with the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Is this a theoretical impoverishment due to the Renaissance sense of curiosity, or a legacy of philosophy as it was practiced at the time in the faculty of arts and medicine? Coming to the virtues of stones and remedies concocted from powdered human bones (ibid.: 135), Curieux argues for the passion he draws his name from rather than from speculation.

Poor metaphysics…! While he considers alchemy (ibid.: 133), he gets lost in the properties of metals, conceived as inferior living beings as stones (ibid.: 135); he elaborates on how humans can imitate animals, as the Neapolitan who swam from Ischia to Porezzo[18] and return in the same day, or Colan of Catania, known as The Fish, who found it all too natural to go swimming from Gaeta to Sicily (ibid.: 136). And yet humans remain a microcosm whose faculties can be linked to celestial spheres (ibid.: 137).

After a long astrological wandering, Curieux returns to the human soul, a microcosm, and the soul of the world. Being out of breath, he gives way to Solitaire, who picks up the baton of an apophatic metaphysical discourse[19]. In fact, Curieux prefers to keep quiet about the period's Platonic fashion which identified the *anima mundi* with the Person of the Holy Spirit. But Solitaire builds on this analogy to argue for the human potential of knowing God by natural light. Since knowledge of God cannot be attributed to a child's experience, or even to a prenatal one, it must be related to human nature and not to the theologian's grace. Human soul cannot draw its knowledge of God from prior imagination. We are not yet dealing with the innate, clear, and distinct idea of God which, according to Descartes, is lodged in the finite understanding of human beings. Then, would this knowledge proceed from a vision of the divine essence, without the involvement of any image, reserved by orthodox theology for the blessed? We should not hold the future bishop of Chalon accountable for this heresy, which Parisian members of the Faculty of Arts had been indicted for in 1277. His attempt as a Platonic humanist is to ground a natural knowledge of God in the resemblance between the human microcosm and the *anima mundi* – a stance that places Pontus de Tyard halfway between them and Descartes.

[18]The toponyme is obscure. Tyard, following Alessandro Alessandri's *Genialium dierum libri sex*, II, XXI, fo 41 v, situates it at the entrance of the Gulf of Naples, see Tyard (2013: 217, n. 108).

[19]'It pleases me that so little is said about such an unintelligible subject […] There naturally falls into man […] a mark of knowledge of God, that owes its origin to nothing that could be imagined.' [*Bien me plaist le peu dire de tant incomprehensible sujet, […] Si tombe-il naturellement en l'homme […] une marque de cognoissance, de Dieu, qui ne doit son origine à rien qui soit ou puisse estre imaginé*] (Tyard 2013: 141).

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The possibility of this knowledge, like the very existence of humans and all creatures (ibid.: 141), presupposes an ontological dependence. Although a philosopher, Solitaire invokes the ancient poets and their penchant for immanence, which he contrasts with the flourishing pantheisms of his time. A metaphysician endowed with a good knowledge of theology would not forget that immanence is inseparable from transcendence[20]. Pontus de Tyard looked at these divine attributes as an astrological poet. God is above the highest heaven, and yet present everywhere at different degrees. This affects bodies as well as souls, which places human souls in an eminent position[21]. The adjective 'perennial', employed in the text, requires a metaphysical explanation: while his body is in a humble position, the soul of man is endowed with an immortality that gives it the stability required for contemplation. It enjoys the highest divine influence beyond that by which God confers vegetative and sensitive lives to plants and, respectively, animals (ibid.: 142-143). The hierarchy of living beings is therefore continued within humans, where the most learned ones benefit from the highest grace.

Curieux then moves on to considerations about the name of God, unknowable as its essence but which in most languages is written in four letters (ibid.: 143-144). Proper metaphysical discourse yields to historical and philological considerations. Reasoning is buried under a long list of four-letter names compiled by Curieux, who soon loses himself in the polytheistic ramifications of Zoroastrian or Egyptian triads (ibid.: 145-146), where Hieromnime sees the foreshadowings of Christian Trinity. Poor metaphysics, where Curieux's evocation of Anaxagoras and Xenophanes, the first spiritualist philosophers, is lost among considerations of anthropophagi transformed into werewolves (ibid.: 147).

From page 149 onwards, the treatise addresses the existence of God. After a colourful evocation of Varro's cosmology, Plato and Aristotle are the first to be called upon. The 'self-born' Creator of the *Timaeus* may appear eternal, but does Pontus, like Saint Justin, differentiate between *poiètès* and *demiourgos*? This is what the editor of the 2013 edition suggests. It seems first-hand that Pontus recalls two key doctrines of Aristotle, conceiving God as a separate being (*Met.* K 1064a), and the first heaven as the eternal mover (*Met.* L, 1072a). Always anxious to be exhaustive, Curieux takes up Cicero's *De natura deorum* to divide philosophers who believe in the existence of God from those who do not. Concerning the former, he envisages that this belief is founded on a natural knowledge of God, an innate light likely to underpin natural religion and the diversity of pagan cults. Were this argument not convincing enough, Curieux calls as witnesses the poets, who never envisage Creation without its author, and most philosophers, including the Epicureans, who are supposed to admit the existence of God. The future bishop, notes his editor, seems to cast a wider net than Saint Justin or Eusebius

[20]'… extended as much in the centre, as in the circumference […] although it is assigned a peculiar seat in the regions beyond the highest Heaven.' [*… estendue autant au centre, qu'en la circonference […] bien que l'on luy attribue un siege peculier aux regions par dessus le Ciel plus eslevé.*] (Tyard 2013: 142).

[21]'Do we not see the most fragile of the human bodies being sustained by a perennial Soul thanks to its contemplation […] of this great distributor, from which it receives […] a more singular grace than any other animal?' [*Voyons-nous pas le corps humain plus fragile estre soustenu d'une Ame perennelle à cause de sa contemplation […] de ce grand distributeur, duquel elle reçoit […] plus singuliere grace, qu'aucun autre animal?*] (Tyard 2013: 142).

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of Caesarea, who contrasted the materialist pre-Socratics with the early spiritualists: Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Socrates, and Plato.

Curieux launches into a proof of the existence of God that builds upon the movement of material beings and is reminiscent of Aristotle's arguments. We recognize the impossibility of going back to infinity and the discovery of 'a power that moves by itself, and which is divine and eternal' (Tyard 2013: 149). And yet, such power presides over the birth of the living and over prudence of reasonable beings; therefore, it cannot be devoid of reason; and this prime mover is not immobile, but self-propelled. Curieux multiplies the arguments attributed to Socrates or Plato on the unity of the world, whose soul would be God. Religion, holiness, and wisdom all attest to its existence, as does justice. Arguments to the contrary are derisory: since the animal is the most perfect living being, God would have to be an animal, and therefore sentient, mutable, and ultimately mortal, which is contradictory.

As for the uniqueness of God, Hieromnime considers that all philosophical schools agree on this subject, except for the Epicureans and the Skeptics, whose arguments he prefers not to mention. In particular, he develops the point of view of Hermes Trismegistus *(Mercure Trimegiste)* and his lineage: from Pythagoras and his disciples, who attribute immutability and beatitude to God, to Plato, arguably a monotheist if we trust his Letter to Dionysius. As for the Stoics, they recognized in God the attributes of Unity and Eternity. Tyard quotes Aristotle's words ζῷον ἀΐδιον ἄριστον, which he suggests should be translated as 'eternally alive and very good' (ibid.: 167). Hieromnime mentions, without naming, various philosophers who knew God as creator, source of all reason, form of forms, eternal fruitfulness and life of all lives, perfect intelligence and bliss of the blessed, eternal wisdom, and goodness. He recalls the anecdote of philosophers questioned on this subject by powerful people – Thales by Croesus and Simonides by Hieron – who admitted that the more they thought about the question, the more they found themselves in the obscurity. However, Hieromnime does not linger in this philosophical apophaticism and professes the revealed truth in conformity, if we are to believe the editor's scholarly apparatus, with Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (ibid.: 167-168).

It is Curieux who takes up the question of the Creation of the world. He stumbles on the gap between the chronologies of the Jews and the Egyptians, of Plato and his Atlantis. It would be simpler if everyone agreed on a starting date, but most philosophers – Plato, the Stoics, and above all Aristotle, for whom the world is eternal – cannot accept that it has an end, nor *a fortiori* a divine origin (ibid.: 169).

Curieux attempts to summarize three possible opinions: 1) the world has no beginning and no end; 2) it had a beginning, but it shall have no end; and 3) it has begun, and it will end (ibid.). He brings up arguments in favor of each: for the first, its proponents rule out both internal and external causes of corruption. But Solitaire takes the floor to assert that the world shall either be consumed by fire or perish in deluge, citing the Greek terms ἐκπύρωσις and κατακλυσμός. Curieux objects that water does not burn but evaporates and then falls again (ibid.: 174-175); he refuses to attribute to God the intention of burning a world he has created, even in order to make a better one. Of the four kinds of corruption distinguished by Curieux – transmutation, transposition, removal, or addition – none is suitable for the end of the world (ibid.: 176-177). The argument against the eternity of the world follows from Philo of Alexandria's *De Mundo*. However, Curieux makes a few cases in favor of eternity; two of them deserve to

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be highlighted (ibid.: 180). The sciences are presented as eternal, which to some extent contradicts the argument of a general decay of human accomplishements. But this claim allows Curieux to accuse wars, tyrants, and the 'superstition defense of religions' of having long neglected their truth, which is nevertheless being recovered in blessed times like his own. The second argument is a response to those who point to the mortality of animals (ibid.). The disappearance of individuals does not threaten species, but Curieux envisages an 'unlikely' ecological catastrophe in which all species would disappear; he considers that this would not endanger the universal mass of matter.

Hieromnime abruptly cuts the floor to Curieux. He requires human reason to refrain from discussing matters that touch at the purity of God and are reserved to faith (ibid.). Pontus is not content here to silence reason in the name of faith. Hieromnime's intervention recalls Augustine's rebuke of curiosity, as well as Saint Paul's (Rom. 1: 20-22): vain reasoning and disputes set us apart from truth (whose measure is divine) and lead to sophistry. Hieromnime argues that the Biblical Patriarchs lived to be more than 800 years old, whereas we are struggling to reach a tenth of that age. Even the stars are showing signs of ageing. He attacks Aristotle's argument that perfect circular motion cannot be altered: he suggests that the convexity of a circle be stretched until it becomes a straight line, then twisted in the opposite direction to form a concavity (ibid.: 181). Linear and circular movement, distinguished by most philosophers and related to the terrestrial and celestial worlds, are thus mutually convertible. He blames Aristotle for inconsistently admitting a coexistence of opposites in the heavens (right, left, high, low, ahead, behind), and not considering that heavens would then move forward, backward, upward and downward. And even if these arguments did not hold, and circular movement admitted no opposite, the very notion of movement would have its opposite – standstill or rest, which is the ultimate corruption of any movement. Circular movement is therefore not eternal but created, as taught by Thomas Aquinas (*S. Th.*, Ia, Q.46, a.1) and as the volume's editor reminds us. Tyard comes up with an image to do away with the blasphemy of a powerless God on the fate of heaven: the circular movement of the celestial world is subject to the divine will much like a spinning wheel is subject to the decisions of the woman who moves it (Tyard 2013: 182).

Hieromnime, arguing for a *creatio ex nihilo*, makes a distinction between three powers from which all things proceed: absolute, compliant, and natural power. He then criticizes the pantheism of the time, which strives to assign God a place in the material world. He sees in those who argue against God's absolute power the same arrogance that led Nimrod to build the Tower of Babel thinking he would attain heaven.

In the rest of the text, he follows Agostino Steuco's *De perenni philosophia* (1540), citing the Fathers in favor of the consummation of the universe, including heaven. Hieromnime adds another argument of eschatological common sense (ibid.: 185). For the humanist, the world is at the service of humanity, but once humans move to the blessed enjoyment and glory of eternal life, the world will lose all use and would happily go up in smoke (ibid.). François Roudaut demonstrates in the notes to the text (Tyard 2013) that this final part is nourished by some key questions of his time, including the age of the world and whether the heavenly bodies will persist after the Last Judgement, with a particular interest in the Kabbalah[22]. Tyard elaborates on

[22]See Secret (1967), Maillard (2003).

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calculations about the end of time, while he also cautiously steps back from them and from the prophecies of his time. His cosmic preoccupation finds a solution that is again expressed by Hieromnime: as the upper sky does not need to be purified, each star and planet will return to the place it had at the moment of its creation. The final word goes to Solitaire for an apophatic conclusion[23]. The *Second Curieux* ends on a Socratic note, or rather of a Christian Socratism, aware of the limits of reason before divine mysteries.

In conclusion, the poverties of this metaphysics lie in its riches, and vice versa. The abundance of opinions, often lined up as in a cabinet of curiosities, allows for an all-embracing discourse that jeopardizes consistent philosophical questioning. Yet, Solitaire's light and aparently skeptical attitude of scientific objectivity does emerge.

This posture is never at odds, even when it comes to cosmology, with a metaphysical reflection that takes place under Hieromnime's theological safeguard. Could this hint at the religious conformism of Pontus de Tyard, who would soon be caught up in his own destiny and made a bishop? His Catholic theology is open to the novelties of his time, showing a special interest in the Kabbalah, informed by scholastic subtleties, and nourished by patristic depth. This trinity of characters deprives us of a unified and systematic metaphysics, the ultimate poverty for the Renaissance; but is this not the richness of the two *Curieux*, nourished by the far-reaching erudition of their eponymous character, by Solitaire's scientific rigor, and Hieromnime's theological wisdom? Is the very choice of this name not significant? Grounded in the Latin tradition of St Jerome, Pontus de Tyard's metaphysical wisdom marks a distance from Aristotelian scholasticism, while cultivating, like Jerome, a taste for Hebrew words and poetic calculations.

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[23]'On subjects (I say) so high and so close to the Divinity, the clearest vision cannot see much […] I do not marvel that the difficulty of such a high subject cannot be easily cleared up, knowing that the minds which discuss it are human, and that to undertake by reason to discover the least knowledge of it, is to dare something that will never be taken to completion'. [*Aux sujez (dis-je) si haulx et prochains de la Divinité, la plus claire veue n'y voit goute […] je ne m'esmerveille si la difficulté de tant haut sujet ne peut estre esclarcie aisément, cognoissant bien que les esprits qui en discourent sont humains, et qu'entreprendre par raison d'en descouvrir la moindre cognoissance, c'est oser une chose qui ne sera jamais executee*.] (Tyard 2013: 187).

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