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The Symbol of the Mirror in Le Roman de La Rose

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THE SYMBOL OF THE MIRROR
IN
LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

by

Trijntje Zwolsman Ouwinga

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Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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Trijntje Zwolsman Ouwinga
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART</th>
<th>THE SYMBOL OF THE MIRROR IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND ITS BACKGROUND</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Historical Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mirror Symbol in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>THE SYMBOL OF THE MIRROR IN <strong>LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of vision</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The mirror as symbol of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- God's fecundity</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Deceit and vanity</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The eye</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Human fecundity</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Truth</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART 1: THE SYMBOL OF THE MIRROR IN THE MIDDLE AGES
AND ITS BACKGROUND

By the time Guillaume de Loris (1212-1237) and Jean de Meun (ca. 1237-1277) wrote Le Roman de la Rose the mirror had acquired several symbolic meanings.¹ These meanings were not always consistent because they resulted from centuries of accumulated classical and Christian learning.

The authors of Le Roman de la Rose employ the mirror as a symbol in order to illustrate several facets of the Christian world and life view. First the mirror is seen as a symbol of God’s fecundity and eternity; next, it is a symbol of vanity and deceit; finally, the mirror is used as a symbol of human fecundity. All of these symbolic usages when brought together by the authors form the great all-encompassing symbol of Truth. Before we begin our analysis of these uses of the mirror symbol we must examine, in chronological order, the unfolding of that many-sided symbol within the Judeo-Christian and classical branches of the Western tradition.

In our earliest source, the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Torah, we see in verses 26-28 of Chapter I God’s

creation of man whose model, whose mirror He is. We also
read that man and woman reproduce themselves: "And God
said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness....
So God created man in his own image, in the image of God
created he him; male and female created he them. And God
blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and
multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it ..."1

That Judeo-Christian concept of a Creator is taken
over by the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 420 B.C.-320 B.C.)
who wrote of the maker: "So, being without jealousy, he
desired that all things should come as near as possible to
being like himself . . . Desiring, then, that all things
should be good and, so far as might be, nothing imperfect,
the god took over all that is visible . . . and brought it
from disorder into order, since he judged that order was
in every way better."2 Then he created man: "For the god,
wishing to make this world most nearly like that
intelligent thing which is best and in every way complete,
fashioned it as a single visible living creature,
containing within itself all living things whose nature is
of the same order."3 Demiurge, Plato's "maker", urges the
gods to keep creation going: "For the rest, do you, weaving

1 *Genesis, Ch.I:26-28, King James version. (London:
University Press).

2 Cornford, Francis M., trans. *Plato's Timaeus. (New
3 *loc. cit. p. 20.
mortal to immortal, make living beings; bring them to birth, feed them, and cause them to grow."^1

Plato, in another work, recognized the power of love and man's desire to procreate:^2 "There is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation--procreation which must be in beauty and not in deformity; and this procreation is the union of man and woman, and is a divine thing; for conception and generation are an immortal principle in the moral creature."^3 Beauty is of utmost importance to Plato. In order to recognize beauty and perfection we have to be able to observe it with our eyes. According to Plato, "The gods invented and gave us vision in order that we might observe the circuits of intelligence in the heaven and profit by them for the revolution of our own thought, which are akin to them, though ours be troubled and they are unperturbed; and acquiring the power to compute them rightly according to nature, we might reproduce th perfectly unerring revolutions of the god and reduce to settled order the wandering motions in ourselves."^4

Plato introduced a theme, later on repeated by St. Augustine

^1 loc. cit. p. 37.


^3 loc. cit. p. 165.

^4 Plato's Timaeus. p 45.
and St. Paul, and especially emphasized by Jean de Meun, that we have to look upwards to the perfect unperturbed mirror of God which shows us what we ought to do because it contrasts with our troubled vision, here on earth. It is only by observing God's mirror that we are able to imitate it.

Plato's famous allegory of the cave further underscores the importance of good vision in the search for truth. According to Plato, human beings in the cave "... see only their shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave." To them, "... the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images." What happens if any of them is liberated and looks toward the real light? "... he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows, and then conceive someone saying to him that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision."

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2. loc. cit. p. 388.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
These different levels of truth are also revealed in creation. Plato in Book VI of The Republic\(^1\) distinguishes between the sensible, visible world and the intelligible world. Within the sensible, changing world of Matter are two levels. On one level are images. Plato states: "And by images I mean in the first place, shadows, and in the second place, reflections in water and in solid, smooth and polished bodies and the like."\(^2\) These images are a reflection of the higher level where real objects exist. The sensible world is an image, a reflection of the unchanging intelligible world of Forms. The two levels within the intelligible world are: first, the more abstract mathematical representation of the real objects in the sensible world; secondly, the higher level is completely abstract, it is the level of "principles" or "theories".\(^3\) The two worlds, sensible and intelligible, reflect the One, the maker, the Good and the Perfect.

These different levels, existing in creation and reflecting God's goodness and truth, foreshadow the scale of beings later on discussed by Plotinus. Plato's ideas reverberated throughout the following centuries during which they influenced many thinkers.

\(^{1}\)The Republic VI, Jowett, B., trans. in The Dialogues of Plato.

\(^{2}\)op. cit. p. 387.

\(^{3}\)ibid.
Plato's follower, Aristotle, who lived from 384 B.C. till 320 B.C., repeated Plato's thought on the desire of creation to regenerate: "... for any living thing that has reached its normal development and which is unmitigated, and whose mode of generation is not spontaneous, the most natural act is the production of another like itself, ... in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive. ..."¹

Aristotle also mentioned that our vision deceives us when we experience emotions. He writes: "We are easily deceived respecting the operations of sense-perception when we are excited by emotions, and different persons according to their different emotions ... and the more deeply one is under the influence of the emotion, the less similarity is required to give rise to the illusory impressions."²

The generosity and importance of light was commented on by Cicero, 106-46 B.C.: "The Sun ... he is the chief, the leader, and the director of the other luminaries; he is the soul and guide of the world, and of such immense


bulk, that he illuminates and fills all other objects with his light. Jesus, 0-33 A.D., equals light to wisdom, to the highest truth. In John 8:12, He says: "I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall wander in the dark; he shall have the light of life." This text repeats what already has been written in Psalm 36:9: "For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."  

Paul, a follower of Jesus, who lived about 50 A.D., wrote about the darkness of ignorance here on earth as compared to the light of truth after death: "Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me." Paul's contemporary James used the mirror image to indicate how false images fade away while true images last forever: "A man who listens to the message but never acts upon it is like one who looks in a mirror at the face nature gave him. He glances at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he looked like. But the man who looks

3 King James version.
closely into the perfect law, the law that makes us free, and who lives in its company, does not forget what he hears, but acts upon it, and that is the man who by acting will find happiness."¹

Plotinus, 205-270 A.D., was a Christian philosopher who repeated Plato's and Aristotle's theory of the desire in creatures to regenerate.² He also expanded upon the plenitude of beings in creation, all reflecting God, the "first principle": "... there is from the first principle to ultimate an outgoing in which unfailingly each principle retains its own seat while its offshoot takes another rank, a lower, though on the other hand every being is in identity with its prior as long as it holds that contact."³ Like James, Plotinus also used the mirror and its images as symbol of deceit, of falsehood: "It is like a mirror showing things as in itself when they are really elsewhere, filled in appearance but actually empty, containing nothing, pretending everything. Into it and out of it move mimicries of the Authentic Existens, images playing upon an image devoid of Form, visible against it by its very formlessness; they seem to modify it but in reality effect nothing, for they are


³op. cit. fifth Ennaed II:2, p. 215.
ghostly and feeble . . ."

The inferiority of the mirror image as opposed to the real subject is also emphasized by St. Augustine, 354-430 A.D. This church father christianized Plato's thoughts and exercised great influence over medieval philosophy. He wrote: "Does not thy image in the mirror appear to will to be thou thyself, but to be therefore false, because it is not?" St. Augustine also wrote about the mirror of the mind when he discussed the difference between truth and ignorance: from our partial knowledge "certain false colors and forms pour themselves as though into the mirror of thought . . . Such imaginations are to be avoided with great care; they are recognized as false when they vary as if in a varying mirror of thought, whereas the face of truth remains one and immutable." This truth God has shown us in the Scriptures, the perfect mirror which we must follow. St. Augustine stated: "The mirror has set its writings before you, it is read to you: 'Blessed are the pure in heart,

1op. cit. third Ennead VI:7. p. 111.


for they shall see God.' The mirror is set forth in this reading: see whether you are what it has said. If you are not yet so, then groan, that you may become so. The mirror will disclose your face to you. As you will not see a flatterer in the mirror, so you will not wheedle yourself. Its brightness will show you what you are: see what you are . . ."¹ As Plato already observed, it is only by looking upwards to the perfect mirror that we learn what we must do to reach salvation.

Macrobius, a fifth century philosopher, summarized Plotinus' theory of the scale of beings. He used for the first time the symbol of the mirrors to connect God with the different levels in creation: "Since, from the Supreme God Mind arises, and from Mind, Soul, and since this in turn creates all subsequent things and fills them all with life, and since this single radiance illuminates all and is reflected in each, as a single face might be reflected in many mirrors placed in a series; and since all things follow in continuous succession, degenerating in sequence to the very bottom of the series, the attentive observer will discover a connection of parts, from the Supreme God down to the last dregs of things, mutually linked together and without a break."² Jean de Meun was very familiar

¹ St. Augustine, Enarratio in Psalmum CIII. (PL,XXXII, col.1338), translated and quoted by Goldin, Frederick, The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric.
² Lovejoy, Arthur O., The Great Chain of Being. (New
with this text as was Guillaume de Loris. Both authors refer to Macrobius' treatment of the Dream of Scipio by Cicero in which the text appears (1.7-20; 1.18367-18388). The mirrors of Macrobius show God's perfect mirror, our own imperfect mirror and yet, the fact that due to God's radiating light within us we have the ability to redeem ourselves by imitating the perfect mirror.

Jean de Meun had translated Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*¹ (470-525 A.D.). The allegorical figure of Reason was patterned after Boethius' Lady of Philosophy as were the discussions on the instability of fortune. Boethius, as Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus before him, also believed God wanted creation to regenerate itself: "... nature always desires, namely the operation of begetting, by which alone the continuance of mortal things becomes enduring... Providence has given to its creatures this the greatest cause of permanent existence, the instinctive desire to remain existent so far as possible."²

These classical and Christian philosophers exercised

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²op. cit. p. 67.
great influence on the scholars of the Middle Ages. Gerbert, a tenth-century scholar in Rheims, used Aristotle, Boethius and Cicero extensively in his teachings. This tradition was continued by Fulbert, a beloved bishop of Chartres from 1006-1028 who founded the influential cathedral school of Chartres, and who emphasized the importance of Plato's thoughts, especially *Timaeus*, as well.

Two great twelfth century writers who were connected with the school of Chartres were Bernardus Silvestris and Alanus ab Insulis (1114-1202). Jean de Meun was very impressed by the works of these two men and their influence is visible in the second part of *Le Roman de la Rose*. Therefore, I would like to touch on some ideas in Silvestris' *De Mundi Universitate*¹ (ca. 1145-1153) and de Insulis' *The Complaint of Nature*² and *The Anticlaudian*.³

In *De Mundi Universitate*, the mirror is used as a symbol for the mind of God, the "speculum Providentiae", in which all of creation is reflected.⁴ Silvestris also

⁴ op. cit. p. 57.
believed in the chain of beings. He compared the images and their reflection in mirrors with the different levels created by God.\(^1\) Above all, Silvestris loved to describe nature, God's creation. The allegorical personage Nature is called "mater generationis"; he therefore made an immediate connection between the personage Nature and generation,\(^2\) a concept which Jean de Meun adopted in *Le Roman de la Rose*.

Aulus ab Insulis expanded on Sylvestris' theory of generation. Man has to recreate himself: "God by command creates man; the angel by work procreates him; man by obedience recreates himself."\(^3\) Aulus too wrote much about the function of the allegorical personage Nature. She is addressed as: "O offspring of God, mother of all things, bond and firm chain of the universe, jewel of earth, mirror to mortality, lightbringer of the world!"\(^4\) As the title already suggests, Nature complains about the failures of the human race to reproduce.\(^5\) She explains

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3 "The Complaint of Nature", p. 27.

4 op. cit. p. 32.

5 op. cit. p. 36.
her function. God has created a beautiful and rich earth. It is His wish "... that a series of things should be continually woven together in unbroken reciprocation of birth... Me, then, He appointed a sort of deputy, a coiner for stamping the order of things, for the purpose that I should form their figures on the proper anvils, and should not let the shape vary from the shape of the anvil, and that through my activity and skill the face of the copy should not be changed by additions of any other elements from the face of the original."¹ Jean was very mindful of this work when he wrote his own Nature's complaint in which she first describes her own function: "Cis Dieux mêmes, par sa grace, quant il [i] ot par ses devises ses autres creatures mises, tant m'onora, tant me tint chiere qu'il m'establi sa chamberiere; ... Por sa chambriere? Certes, vere, por connestable et por viquere."² Jean also uses the hammer and anvil as the tools which Nature employs in her workshop (l. 1609-19012). Alanus' Nature appoints Venus as her "underdeputy" who with the help of her son Cupid will keep the human race alive in spite of the three Fates.³ Jean uses the same gods "Venus" and "dieu d'Amors" for the reproduction of mankind.

¹ op. cit. p. 44.
² op. cit. l. 16768-16772, l. 16781-16782.
³ op. cit. p. 45.
In Alanus' work "The Anticlaudian", the mirror image is used quite frequently. When Nature talks to a council about man's creation, she suggests: "Let him be a mirror to us, that we may reflect ourselves in that man, that we may reflect whatever faith, power, virtue there be in us, so far as each can present itself to greater advantage and use." In this passage is reflected St. Paul's observation: "Man is the image of God and the mirror of his glory." Reason, a member of the council, holds in her hand a triple mirror: a metal one shows subjects and forms, the second silver mirror shows only forms and a third golden mirror shows "the fount of happenings, the origin of the world, the idea of the globe, the pattern, aspect, cause, first beginnings, the end." These mirrors show the different levels in God's creation, with the final mirror showing everything in its eternity. Plato's influence is strong indeed when one reads Alanus' works. Reason studies the mirrors which show the degeneration of the human race, which has forgotten its model, its source, "... as into the world there reflects the image of the idea, whose unobstructed brightness is felt in the shadow ..." Does this passage not remind

1 op. cit. p. 58.
2 I Cor. 11:7.
3 op. cit. p. 64.
4 ibid.
us of the cave allegory by Plato? Another perfect mirror appears in "The Anticlaudian" when the virgin Phronesis, who will help in the creation of man, is given "... an excellent, noble, glowing, neat, expansive and figure-inscribed mirror". This mirror makes everything clear in the celestial world. To see the heavens directly would dazzle one's view. The mirror therefore serves as a mediator: "This mirror supports the mind, and maintains the sight of wisdom, lest the greater brilliance hinder the eyes, injuring them, and tire the vision along with the mind." Did Dante not use Beatrice's eyes as a mirror when he reached up through the heavens? Yet, when he looked directly he could not support the view and fainted. The perfect mirror, showing God's truth, will return in Jean de Meun's part of *Le Roman de la Rose* in the form of a carbuncle.

While both Bernardus Silvestris and Alanus ab Insulis concentrated on the original creation of man and the world around him, Jean de Meun emphasized man's regeneration and made use of the different symbols of the mirror to get his point across to the readers.

As true medieval men, Guillaume de Loris and Jean de Meun, as well as their predecessors, Silvestris and ab

1 *op. cit.* p. 120
2 *ibid.*
Insulis, admired nature and wrote beautiful poetry describing God's creation. All of nature reflected God's goodness and love. Vincent of Beauvais, who wrote several *Imago Mundi* s, wrote in his introduction to *Speculum Majus*:

"I am moved with spiritual sweetness toward the Creator and Ruler of this world, because I follow him with greater veneration and reverence, when I behold the magnitude and beauty and permanence of his creation."¹ This thought was in the mind of medieval man. The earth, beautiful but limited was only a reflection of the heavens where every being is perfect and immortal. Therefore, in all his actions here on earth, man was mindful of the eternal God. "Over the daily life lay a whole tissue of meanings, derived from the Christian belief in eternity."² Did St. Augustine not believe "... that whatever we do rationally in the using of temporal things, we may do it with the contemplation of attaining eternal things, passing through the former, but cleaving to the latter."³

With this belief in mind, it was no wonder that during the thirteenth century especially, many fled to the convents and monasteries, where one could reflect upon...


the next world. Many believed that Christian, spiritual love was to be preferred to earthly, physical love. Jean de Meun was fully aware of this tension between Reason and Nature. His time was a time of conflicts, of different opinions, partially because scholars tried to combine ancient philosophy with religion. Jean de Meun, a scholar himself, could not escape these conflicts either, but he knew very well which love he preferred. Physical love was necessary, this biological activity reflected the activity of the Higher Being. Life had to be reproduced on earth. For that reason Jean de Meun wrote his part of Le Roman de la Rose.

In a time when the whole world was a symbol of God's creative ability, the allegory and the symbol were commonly used rhetorical devices. "A une époque où l'on croit pouvoir déchiffrer le monde comme un livre écrit par Dieu, l'allégorie fait débaucher la rhétorique sur la métaphysique. Les œuvres médiévales en latin ont en effet entrepris l'exposé du système du monde sur le monde allégorique." Allegories and allegorical personages were not new. These devices had already been used by pagan poets (Statius' Thebaid, Vergil's Aeneid) and

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Christian poets, among whom we already mentioned Boethius' Lady of Philosophy.

The symbol is very closely related to the allegory. C.S. Lewis points out that: "Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression."¹ The symbol is "... something that stands for or represents another thing: especially an object used to represent something abstract."² Barbara Seward expands on this definition: "... for literary purposes it is most accurate to define it as the concrete embodiment of a conception too intricate, vast, or mysterious to be adequately expressed in any other way. A literary symbol contains within itself a multiplicity of meanings and can therefore be employed to suggest either a complex of concordant ideas or a fundamental harmony beneath apparent discords."³ I believe the symbol of the mirror suggests the latter.

During the Middle Ages the symbol of the mirror was often used in didactic works or in encyclopedia to show readers the truth regarding a moral problem. As we already have seen the Scriptures were considered to be a

mirror of God, a mirror of perfection after which man ought to strive and which he ought to imitate.

The symbol of the mirror was used in this didactic way by the poets of Le Roman de la Rose. Jean de Meun especially used the mirror symbol to make his teachings more alive and concrete. What did the poets want to teach their readers? Guillaume de Loris wrote: "Et se nus ne nulle demande comment je veil que cis romans soit appellés, que je commans, que c'est li Romans de la Rose, ou l'art d'Amors est toute enclose." However it was Jean de Meun who used the symbol of the mirror in his explanation of the poem's purpose: "Car tant en lira proprement que tretuit cil qui ont a vivre devroient appeler ce livre le Miroër as amoreus, tant: verront de bienz pour eus, mes que Raison n'i soit creüe." Later on, after having named many vices he again advises: "Ces vices conter vous vodroie, mes d'outrage m'entremetroie. Assés briement les vous espose li jolis Romans de la Rose. S'il vous plaist, la les regardés por ce que miex d'aus vous gardés." To achieve this purpose, the poem exhibits several small mirrors, showing every facet; each mirror reflecting its own images, only to come together in one gigantic brilliantly-lit mirror of love.

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1 op. cit. 1.34-1.38.
2 1.10648-1.10653.
3 1.19879-1.19884.
PART 2: THE SYMBOL OF THE MIRROR IN LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

Whenever we think about a mirror, we think about vision. Vision is a concept which has several meanings. One definition is: "actual sight; ocular perception." and another meaning is: "something seen otherwise than by ordinary sight; something beheld as in a dream or ecstasy, or revealed, as to a prophet."¹

The whole poem is a grandiose dream, which is interesting because it again brings to mind the mirror which stands between the real object and its image. The dream acts like the mirror frame itself. It reflects reality and yet is not real. Dream visions can both be true and false as Guillaume de Lorris was well aware of: "Maintes gens dient que en songes n'a se fables non et mençonges; mes l'en puet tex songes songier qui ne sont mie mençongier."² Guillaume himself had much faith in dreams: "Quicunques cuide ne qui die que soit folce ou musardie de croire que songes aviegne, qui ce vodra, por fol me tiegne, car endroit moi ai je creance que songes soit signifiance des biens as gens et des anuis; car li plusor sognent de nuis maintes choses couvertement qu'il voient puis apertement."³ This particular dream pleased

¹Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary. p. 954.
²op. cit. 1.1-1.14.
³1.11-1.20.
Guillaume much: "lor vi un songe en mon dorment qui mout fu biaus et mout me plot; mes onques riens ou songe n'ot qui avenu tretout ne soit si cum li songes recontoit."¹

While Guillaume showed the lighter side of the dream, Jean will later return to this theme and disagree completely with Guillaume. Jean will emphasize the darker dream images. This difference in opinion shows up the nature of each poet. Guillaume de Loris was mainly the poet of courtly love. He was familiar with the courtly love code but was less familiar with the works of classical philosophers and poets. Jean de Meun was a scholar, familiar with the main writings known in the thirteenth century. Jean expanded the courtly love theme, and even though the lover remained faithful to Amor, Jean showed him all the other good and bad facets of the mirror of love as well.

We need "actual sight" to be able to look into the mirror in the first place. Plato thought vision so important that the eyes were the first organs given to man.² We already have cited the purpose of vision as Plato saw it.³ Vision is needed to be able to imitate, to imitate the good images shown to us.

¹l.26-1.30.
²Cornford, F., trans., Plato's Timaeus, p. 42.
³note p. 3.
The poem itself is full of beautiful descriptions of nature. We already mentioned how medieval man saw nature around him as part of God's love, and both poets of Le Roman de la Rose were no exception to that rule. Guillaume lyrically describes the beauty of nature in the month of May. Jean too talks with obvious joy about the sun, the clouds and rainbows nourishing the earth. The language used is rich and beautiful; it reflects the theme of fecundity which dominates the poem. Alan Gunn wrote about this subject: "In Jean de Meun's verses, the fountain and mirror symbols and the other recurrent images and classical and modern instances which reinforce them are perhaps equally important in transporting us into that poetic cosmos in which fertility is the highest good, where beauteous and multicolored forms well forever from that fount of beauty which is Nature, or stream from that self-luminous mirror of God which is at once Nature's source and model."

At this point I would like to discuss "that self-luminous mirror of God", the mirror as symbol of God's fecundity. Jean de Meun felt that it is wise to know first the perfect mirror which we ought to imitate before we attempt to imitate it. We ought to grasp some of the

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1 note p. 17.
2 op. cit. p. 305.
highest truth as he saw it. Then we can understand how wise or how ignorant we are.

To Jean de Meun and other medieval writers, God's love "... consists primarily rather in the creative or generative than in the redemptive or providential office of the deity."\(^1\) From Plato on, man saw God's goodness reflected in the diversity and beauty of creation. Jean de Meun touched upon the overflowing love of God: "Car Diex, li biaus outre mesure, quant il biaute mist en Nature, Il [i] en fist une fontainne touz jors corans et touz jors plainne, de qui toute biaute desrive; nulz n'en savroit ne fonz ne rive."\(^2\) This fountain image Jean repeats when Genius talks to Amor's army and compares the Shepherd's Park with the Garden of Delight, as described by Guillaume de Loris. The fountain in the Shepherd's Park is "la Fontene de Vie".\(^3\) Those who drink from it "... ne jamés nus hont ne morroit."\(^4\) Its sources come from "... trois doiz sotives yaues douces, cleres et vives; si sont si pres a pres chascune que toutes s'assemblent a une si que, quant toutes les verrois et une en trois en troverois, se volés au conter esbatre, ne ja n'en y troverés quatre, mes touz jors trois et touz

\(^1\)Lovejoy, A.O., *The Great Chain of Being*, p. 67.
\(^2\)op. cit. 1.16233-1.16238.
\(^3\)1.20521.
\(^4\)1.20403.
jors une, c'est la propriété commune."\(^1\) Then Genius continues to associate the overflowing fountain with the light of truth as we have seen in Psalm 36:9.\(^2\) For in the fountain "... luist uns charboucles merveillous sur toute merveilleuse pierres, tretouz reons et en trois quierras, et est emmi si hautement que l'en le voit apertement par tout le parc reflamboier."\(^3\) The sun does not illuminate it, yet it has a fine, clear light. "Si ra si merveillous pooir que cil qui la vodrent vooir, si tost cum cele part se virent, [et] lor face en l'iaue remirent, touz jors, de quelque part qu'il soient, toutes les choses du parc voient, [et les congnosissent proprement, et eus meimes ensement;] et puis que la se sont vei jamés ne seront deceu de nulle chose qui puisse estre, tant y deviennent sage et mestre."\(^4\)

God's light dispels all ignorance, obscurity, and darkness. This carbuncle is the mirror Dante talked about when he wrote: "I see it in the True Mirror, Itself the perfect reflector of all things in Its creation, which nothing in creation can reflect."\(^5\) Alanus ab Insulis was

\(^1\) 1.20469-1.20478.
\(^2\) Note p. 7.
\(^3\) Op. cit. 1.20528-1.20533.
\(^4\) 1.20567-1.20578.
also familiar with this mirror. When the virgin Phronesis looks at the mirror, she discovers that "... Vision rests in this mirror, finds a friendly illumination, and the light rejoices, flashing in splendor. She perceives by a glance into this mirror, observing with wisdom, whatever the divine orb embraces in itself. Since whatever she sees is new, she is amazed at all, delights in all, and the rareness of things beget new joys; her mind is delighted by the sight and casts off all the clouds of error, pleasures pour down on the mind and every symptom of its sorrow vanishes." Once man looks at the mirror, whose light strengthens him, he knows the truth, and, facing down again, he remembers and tries to imitate it.

What exactly does God show us in the carbuncle within the fountain of life that we ought to imitate? Jean has given us more details: "Tex es la vertu de la pierre, vaut autant cum les autres deus, tex sont entr'eus les forces d'euz. Ne les deuq ne valent que cele, cum bien que chacune soit bele; ne nus nu les puet deviser, tant i sache bien aviser, ne si joindre par avisees qu'il ne les truisse devisees." Three facets and yet the three are one, a theme that is repeated several times. The fountain has a triple well and yet no distinction can be made, they

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1 "The Anticlaudian", p. 120.
2 op. cit. l. 20538-1.20546.
are like one. This image of three and yet one was often used in the Middle Ages, when God was conceived as a Trinity, a Trinity of love.\textsuperscript{1} It is the Trinity of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, man must observe. The three facets of the stone, itself a gem of Venus, goddess of love, show man what he ought to recreate: another trinity.

Richard of St. Victor ( -1173) wrote in \textit{De Trinitate} how God's love necessitated a trinity: "from the first moment of eternity, there is one person, admitting of absolutely nothing preceding himself; for that person, another, his equal, is necessary, whom he loves and who loves him; from this is derived the necessity of a third, also equal, so that their common love is not restrained in any way."\textsuperscript{2} This perfect mirror of love, of God's fecundity could not be self-contained. It had to spill over into creation. Plotinus wrote: "Seeking nothing, possessing nothing, lacking nothing, the One is Perfect and, . . . has overflowed, and its exuberance has produced the new: this product has turned again to its begetter and been filled and has become its contemplator and so an Intellectual Principle."\textsuperscript{3} God's fountain is its own

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item op. cit. Richard of St. Victor paraphrased by Vignaux, p. 67.
\item op. cit. fifth Ennead 2:1, p. 214.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
source, it has no beginning and no end, it is eternal. God himself is the mirror in which everything is seen and known, and the mirror of truth: "Cis miroors est il meimes, de qui commencement preimes. En ce biau mirooir poli, qu'il tient et tint touz jors o li, ou tout voit quanqu'il avendra et touz jors present li rendra."¹ This eternal mirror of wisdom and love is reflected in the abundance and beauty of creation. Macrobius used a series of mirrors linking God's love with the different levels in creation.² The light shines down on every person and every thing. If man sees the light and understands it, he will return the light, however inadequate, to his Creator and thus return to his source. God wants creation to reflect Him. He is eternal, therefore creation has to be immortal as well, as God told man in the book of Genesis: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." Plato's "maker" reiterates this: "Only an evil will could consent to dissolve what has been well fitted together and is in a good state; therefore, although you, having come into being, are not immortal nor indissoluble altogether, nevertheless you shall not be dissolved nor taste of death, finding my will a bond yet stronger and more sovereign than those wherewith you were bound together

¹ op. cit. 1.17471-1.17476.
² note p. 10.
when you came to be."¹

To carry out God's will, God appointed Nature. Nature explains her function to Genius, God's priest in her complaint, so similar to "The Complaint of Nature" by Alanus ab Insulis as we already have seen.² As God's "chambriere", her purpose is: "je gart, Diex tant m'a honoree, la bele chaainne doree qui les quatre elemens enlace tretouz enclins devant ma face; et me bailla toutes les choses qui sont dessous la chainne encloses, et commanda que jes gardasse et les formes continuasse, et vout que toutes m'obeïssent et que mes regles apreissent [si que james nes obliassent, ains les tenissent et gardassent] a touz jors pardurablement."³ The "bele chaainne doree" was apparently the golden chain of Homer, another metaphor used by Macrobius, to indicate the links between God and His creation. God wants the chain to remain intact, if any link is broken off, it would create a void and disturb God's perfect creation. God is the example, the model, the source of Nature: "C'est li biaus mirooirs ma dame; ja ma dame riens ne seüst se cest biau mirooir n'eust; cis la governe, cis la regle, ma dame n'a

¹Plato's Timaeus, p. 36. Jean de Meun was very influenced by Plato's Timaeus. See l.16745-16746 and compare with Timaeus, p. 19. l.19083-19112 and Timaeus, p. 36,37.

³op. cit. l.16785-l.16797.
point d'autre regle."¹ God's mirror, in itself an inferior reflection of Him, is reflected on Nature, while Nature reflects the light of truth on Mankind. Man looks up at the mirror of the Trinity and knows that he has to create his own trinity, held by the bond of love. Jean de Meun associates the trinity explicitly with birth, when he talks about the virgin's womb, shaped like a triangle: "... li merveillous triangles dont l'unité fait les trois angles, ne li trois tout entierement ne font que l'un tant seulement. C'est li cercles trianguliers, c'est li triangles circuliers qui en la Vierge s'ostela."²

The triangular circle is also the shape of the carbuncle: round and yet it has three facets. Man has to perpetuate his race to remain immortal, a thought expounded by classical and Christian philosophers alike.³ Man's immortality on earth will open the gates to Paradise and give man eternal life after death as well. God's mirror in Nature establishes clarity, permanence and stability. To carry out God's will: "Nature, qui pensoit des choses qui sont dessous le ciel encloses, dedens sa forge entree estoit, ou toute s'entente metoit a forgier singulieres pieces por continuer les espieces; car les pieces tant

¹1.19900-1.19904.
²1.19133-1.19139.
³note p. 3, p. 6, p. 8, p. 11.
les font vivre que Mors ne les puex aconsivre."¹ Nature
works hard and continually in her race against Death.
The regeneration myths of Phoenix and Deucalion with
Phyrrha support this work; they show the necessity to
continue the perpetuation of the human race. God's love
asks men and women to love each other and Him. But
before man is able to love another, he has to know
himself: "Car cis seus aime sagement qui se connoist
entierement."² One has to see a clear image of oneself,
one has to gain maturity before one can love another
person in a mature way. Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine,
Boethius were well aware of it already and we seem to
learn it slowly in the twentieth century, as our rate of
divorce attests.

In the carbuncle within the beautiful fountain God
has given us the perfect mirror of His love so we can see
our own clear image in order that we may reproduce new
mirror images. Jean de Meun believed that man's biologi-
cal activity of procreation on earth served the spiritual
goal of eternal life after death. Once man sees God's
mirror of love and imitates it as well as he can, he sheds
his sins and may enter Paradise because in creating new
mirrors, man obeys God's will.

¹ op. cit. 1.15893-1.15900.
² 1.17791-1.17792.
However, even though the perfect mirror of God's love and fecundity is given to us, if we do not look at it we will not know how to imitate it. For that reason Amor and Nature both complain about mankind: "Mal fussent onques d'Adam né [qui si pensent de moi grever!],"¹ and Nature echoes: "Seus honz que je fais et devis haut vers le ciel porter le vis; seus honz que seulement faiz nestre en la propre forme son mestre; seus honz por qui pene et labor."²... "il me fait tant de contraire... Onques ne fu miex ledengié: [Mar s'est de moi tant estrangié.]"³ and Nature continues to recite man's vices because he refuses to obey her.

If God's and Nature's mirror is not imitated, it will mean that the mirror looked at by man is false. Where God's mirror shows immortality in physical and spiritual life, another mirror will show impermanence and death. This mirror of deceit and falsehood is also shown in Le Roman de la Rose, because it is an unfortunate, yet necessary part of the complete mirror of love.

The perfect mirror is directed toward others, it emphasizes love for one another. The false mirror is directed towards self. In its most innocent form it may

¹l.15856-1.15857.
²l.19023-1.19027.
³l.19217 and l.19221, 19222.
be called vanity which in its extreme form is called narcissism. Jean de Meun used the mirror as a symbol of deceit extensively, yet it was Guillaume de Loris who used the negative aspects of the mirror first and who gave Jean a chance to embroider upon the theme forty years later.

The mirror as symbol of vanity is only one facet of the false mirror. It may seem innocent, yet it is a very dangerous mirror. Its emptiness is frequently quoted in the book of Ecclesiastes. Vanity emphasizes youth, beauty and fortune. These do not last forever; therefore the mirror as symbol of vanity is impermanent and unstable.

Barbara Seward wrote: "Pagan delight in earthly beauties for their own sake was vanity of vanities and worse than vanity, being a perversion of the power of love and hence resulting in its own destruction." This is brought out several times in Le Roman de la Rose. When the dreamer comes to the garden gate, he meets a lovely maiden who allows him to enter and who "... en sa main tint un mireor." She introduces herself: "Je me faiz, dist elle, Oiseuse appeler a mes connoissans. Riche fame sui et poissans, s'ai d'une chose mout bon temps, car a nulle [rien] je ne pens qu'a moi joer et solacier et a moi

1 The Holy Bible, King James version. p. 699-p. 708.
2 op. cit. p. 19.
3 op. cit. 1.557.
pignier et trecier." The only interest is in her appearance; her mirror-image is therefore very superficial. Guillaume's courteous lady despises work, as her name indicates, just like Jean de Meun's enemy Faux Semblant who claims: "... laborer ne me puert plaire. De laborer n'ai je que faire, trop a grant pene en laborer." This laziness goes completely against the work ethic of Nature and Genius, who tells Amor's army: "... pensés d'escrire. N'aiés pas les bras emmouflés: martelés, forgiés et souflés." Well, Oiseuse is not planning to do any work, therefore her mirror image will fade away and the mirror will be empty, as Plotinus already told us in the third century. Oiseuse shows a barren image, of whose dangers Raison, Ami and Vieillesse all were aware.

The same symbol of superficiality returns later on in Jean's work when Ami quotes Vergil to the distraught lover thus trying to teach him some practical aspects of love. Ami talks about ladies who get all primped up to deceive men, to attract and seduce them. These promiscuous ladies are not mature enough for marriage, all they want is to play. Ami's jealous husband rails against his

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1. 582-1. 588.  
2. 1.11519-1.11511.  
3. 1.19794-1.19796.  
4. note p. 8,9.  
5. op. cit. 1.9013-1.9018 and 1.9040-1.9058.
unfaithful wife: "Que me revalent ces gallandes, ces coiffes, et ces dorees bendes et ces dyores treceoirs, et ces yvorins miroois, . . . Que tout dedens trois jors vendrai et vilz et sou piés vous tendrai!"¹ Vieillesse has led a similar life when she was young and she tries to convince her young lady to do the same. She tells her pupil that before leaving her house: "Mes bien se soit ancois miree savoir s'ele est bien atiree et quant a point se sentira et par les rues s'en ira, si soit de beles aleüres, non pas trop moles ne trop dures, trop eslevees ne trop corbes, mes bien plesanz a toutes torbes."², because: "[, . . Ainsinc doit fame par tout tendre ses raiz por tous les hommes prendre,]"³. Outward appearances, beauty, youth and money play only too great a role. None of these ladies has time to work on the reproduction of the human species. Once they are old and ugly, nothing will be left except sadness and regret as Raison makes very clear: "... Jonece, qui tout a gité son preterit en vanité, et qu'ele a sa vie perdue se du futur n'est secourue, qui la soutiengne en penitance des maus qu'ele fist en s'enfance."⁴ Raison and later on Nature both emphasize the importance of inner strength,

¹1.9271-1.9274 and 1.9293-1.9294.
²1.13529-1.13533.
³1.13589-1.13590.
⁴1.4533-1.4538.
of inner nobility, necessary to protect oneself against the instability of fortune and beauty which are always subject to change. It is maturity, inner strength and constant love which are necessary to promise stability in life. Vanity results in destruction; all the "trufes et fanfelues" will fade away and leave the mirror empty.

Vanity in its extreme form leads to narcissism. Whereas vanity, even though it is concentrating on oneself, at least wants to please others, narcissism has no time to consider others. It only looks at oneself, excluding everyone else. This is the "Mirror Perilous" Guillaume de Loris talked about. Guillaume was very familiar with the myth of Narcissus, written by Ovid, 43 B.C.-18 A.D., whose works were so popular in the Middle Ages.

The first part of Le Roman de la Rose is full of lovely descriptions of nature in the month of May as we follow the dreamer on his search for identity and happiness. He walks along a stream in which he washes his face. All he sees in the water: "Si vi tout couvert et pave le fons de l'iaue de gravele." At this point the youth does not see his own reflection in the water. He does not yet have a self identity, a self image. He is innocent and eager for adventures, an eagerness brought about by the spring season. In the garden of

1.120, 121.
Deduit, the garden of courtly life, the dreamer is amazed at its beauty: "et sachies que je cuidai estre por voir en paradis terrestre; tant estoit li leu delitables qu'i semboit estre esperitables." He observes the music, dances and games taking place in this Eden, where youth, riches and beauty are emphasized. After a while, not entirely satisfied, he continues to look farther in the garden, till he reached "... En un trop biau leu arrivé au darrenier, ou je trouvé une fontainne sous un pin." This fountain was set within a marble stone "... si ot dedens la pierre escrites, ou bout amont, lectres petites, qui disoient que ci dessus se mori li biaus Narcissus." This fountain, so contained and limited, so very artificial, bodes ill: "C'est li miréors perilleus." Guillaume tells us the myth of Narcissus who refused to love the nymph Echo who died of a broken heart as a result. Narcissus, this youth too immature to be able to love another, knelt down at the water, fell in love with his own face and died of sorrow: "Car quant il vit qu'il ne porroit acomplir ce qu'il desirroit, et qui l'avoit si pris par fort qu'il n'en pooit avoir confort en nulle fin, ne en nul sens, il perdit d'ire tout son sens, et fu mors en peu de termine."
Narcissus' love was unattainable, a fruitless love, directed to himself only. It was a love which looked down and not up. Narcissus never saw the carbuncle with the image of the Trinity, he did not know how to imitate God's mirror. His mirror was so far removed from the highest Truth that it had to be utterly false. He did not even have the ability to love a second person, let alone produce a third one. He only could see himself and he drowned trying to grasp his mirror image. In trying to discard the mirror, the water surface, he found death instead of life. The mirror's deceit and resulting grief appears more strongly in Ovid's recital of the Narcissus myth:

"... for he saw an image in the pool, and fell in love with that unbodied hope, and found substance in what was only shadow."¹ Ovid continues: "Why try to catch an always fleeing image, poor credulous youngster?... The vision is only shadow, only reflection, lacking any substance."² Narcissus' worst punishment was that in hell he was forced to stare into a pool. He was condemned to a physical and spiritual death, paradise he never had a chance to enter. It is interesting to think that only the nymph Echo, an inferior similitude of the voice, could love Narcissus who was only able to love an inferior

²op. cit. p. 71.
similitude of himself.

When the dreamer arrived at the fountain, he was already wiser than Narcissus, he was familiar with the myth and its disastrous ending. Because he knew, the mirror scared him: "Je m'en traîs lors un poi ensus, que dedens n'osai regarder."\(^1\) The dreamer is thinking and drawing conclusions. However his curiosity overcomes him and he looks, seeing two crystal stones at the bottom of the fountain which mesmerize him: "Aussi cum li mireoirs montre les choses qui li sont encontre et y voit l'en sans couverture et lor color et lor faiture, tretout aussi vous di por voir que li cristal, sans decevoir, tout l'estre du vergier accusent a ceus qui dedens l'iaue musent; car touz jors, quel que part qu'il soient, grant partie du vergier voient; et s'il se tornent, maintenant puuent veoir le remanant."\(^2\) Do these mirrors not resemble a convex lens, a lens which distorts images it receives, simply because it is rounded? Yet, our dreamer thinks they are true images, "sans decevoir".

But his mood changes rapidly. The mirror's danger scares him again: "C'est li mireors perilleus."\(^3\) What can happen to man when he looks into it? "Maint vaillant

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\(^1\) op. cit. 1.1514, 1515.
\(^2\) 1.1555-1.1566.
\(^3\) 1.1571.
homme a mis a glaive cis mirors, car li plus saive, li plus preu, li miex afetii i sont tost pris et aguetie. 
Ci sors as gens noveles rages, ici se changent li corage, ci n’a mestier, sens ne mesure, ci est d’amor volenté. 
pure, ci ne se set consillier nus;"¹ and about his own experience the dreamer exclaims: "Cis mirors m’a deceu:
si j’eusse avant cagneu quex sa force ert et sa vertus, ne m’i fusse ja embatus, car mentenant ou las chaï qui maint homme a pris et trahi."² Why was he so scared all of a sudden? Because, like Narcissus, he had seen himself within the crystal stone: "Mes de fort hore m’i miré."³ Frederick Goldin explains this fear as follows: "Courtly love begins in the Fountain of Narcissus. Here the youth’s pristine self-love is made conscious, and that consciousness grows until he is terrified by his passion for a barren image; and his survival depends upon whether he is to love a lifeless reflection of himself or a living one."⁴ Fortunately, our dreamer survives, because he concentrates on the beautiful stones, the eyes of his lady love.

Guillaume de Loris shows in the "Mirror Perilous"

¹1.1579-1.1587.
²1.1609-1.1614.
³1.1607.
⁴Goldin, F., The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric, p. 58.
the close relationship between beauty and death. This sadness that prevails in the Narcissus fountain is a far cry from the delight and beauty found elsewhere in the garden. Guillaume is well aware of the different facets in the mirror of love. As a poet, Guillaume celebrates the beauty of courtly love but he sees the darker aspects of love and life as well. He describes in detail the ugly personages painted on the garden wall, excluded from the world of courtly love. Guillaume is more of a realist than we give him credit for. Even courtly love has its pains, its obstacles as part of its code. It would be interesting to speculate what Guillaume would have done with the symbol of the mirror, had he lived longer. However, Jean continued his work and we know what he did with the mirror as symbol of falsehood and deceit. Jean used the Mirror Perilous towards the end of the lover's Rose quest. Genius talks about the Park of Deduit and the fountain to the army of Amor: "Pour Dieu, seignor, prenés ci garde, qui bien la verité regarde, et les choses ci contenues, ce sont trufes et fanfelues. Ci n'a chose qui soit estable; tout quanqu'il vit est corruppable."¹ About the fountain itself, Genius warns: "L'en li devroit faire la moe quant il tele fontaine loe: C'est la fontaine perilleuse tant amere et tant venimeuse qu'el

¹op. cit. 1.20349-1.20354.
tua le bel Narcisus quant il se miroit par dessus... "1
... "Vez quel doucor en l'yaue sent! Dieux, cum bonne
fontene et sade, ou li sain deviennent malade!" 2 About
the water itself, Genius explains: "... Ains est [si]
noire et troble et ledè, chacuns qui la sa teste boute
por soi mirer, il n'i voit goute. [ Tuit s'i forcenent et
s'angoissent por ce que point ne s'i congnoissent.]" 3
Even the crystal stones, which the dreamer so admired for
their clarity, do not appear all that beautiful: "Certes,
ains sont trouble et nuisous. Par quoi ne font il
demoustrance, quant li solaus ses rais y lance, de toutes
les choses ensemble? Par foi ne puent, ce me semble,
por l'occure que les onnuble, qu'il ont si troble et
onuble qu'il ne puent par eus soffire a celui qui leens se
mire, quant la clarté d'ailors aquierent." 4 What
contrast with the carbuncle, the perfect mirror of love
and fecundity which gives its own light, so gentle and
yet so strengthening to others! This fountain and these
crystals are like Plato's dark shadows or St. Paul's
"puzzling reflections". What a difference between the
dreamer's first observation and his opinion later on when
he realized how dangerous the superficial beauty of the

1 1.20407-1.20412.
2 1.20420-1.20422.
3 1.20434-1.20438.
4 1.20448-1.20457.

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fountain and its stones were!

Nature spends much of her time and speech on the characteristics of the false mirrors. She mentions mirrors which show big things nearby to be far off.

"... Autre font diverses ymages aparoir en divers estages, droites, belongues et enverses, par composicions diverses; et d'un en font il plusors nestre cil qui des mirooirs sont mestre;" depending upon the angle in which the rays enter a mirror or glass: "... la forme se reverse, qui tant se va montepliant..." How well can a person see whether a mirror image or an object itself is true or not? If one does not wear glasses, everything seems false: "sans mirooirs, granz decevances:" but even with glasses good eyesight is not guaranteed: a dwarf may look like a giant and vice versa. Everyone of us makes mistakes: "N'il n'est nus qui si bien regart qui sovent ne faille en regart, dont maintes choses jugie sont d'estre mout autre que ne sont." Jean de Meun, himself amazed at the powers of the mirrors and glasses, is fully

1. 18045-1.18298.
2. 1.18153-1.18156.
3. 1.18173-1.18178.
4. 1.18190-1.18191.
5. 1.18210.
6. 1.18221-1.18230.
7. 1.18243-1.18246.
aware of the difficulty to make an objective, truthful observation. It depends so much upon the state of mind of a person whether a mirror image is clear or obscure. Most of us live, unfortunately, like the prisoners in Plato’s cave and see only obscure shadows. Narcissus’ mirror showed only a faint shadow of the truth. The lover sees more clearly, yet his image in the mirror is not sharp either for the lover lives in a dream. Moreover, the dreamer is in love, a very strong emotion which affects the way he sees the image in the mirror as well. Aristotle wrote about dreams quite extensively. Dreams are deceptive because “... even when the external object of perception has departed, the impressions it has made persist, and are themselves objects of perception.”¹ Add to this observation Aristotle’s opinion on the way emotions influence a person’s objectivity² and we can see the lover is still in dark water!

Guillaume de Loris had much faith in dreams, but Jean strongly disagreed with him. Nature follows her discourse on mirrors with her opinion on dreams, which "... qui les cinc sens ensi deçoit par les fantomes qu’el reçoit."³ When a man is given to excesses or gets ill, all the images he sees "... ce n’est fors trufle et

¹De Somniis. p. 620.
²note p. 6.
³op. cit. 1.18423-1.18424.
True physical love is not possible within dreams because one's sweetheart is not really there even though one may think so. All the dream images are obscure and empty. A dream is a poor reflection of reality, it only shows ignorance and therefore darkness as far as Jean de Meun is concerned.

Why did Jean spend so much time on the mirror as symbol of vanity, deceit and falsehood? Because he wanted to show the truth. Jean wanted to attack the hypocrites who think or say that they know the true mirror and yet they do not follow it, instead they thwart God's will. The poet uses symbolic arrows with which he wants to kill the negative, the dark mirrors: "Ains pris mon arc et l'entesoie, quelque pechierres que je soie, si fis ma saiete voler generaumant por afoler. Por afoler? Mes por connoistre, fussent seculer ou de cloistre, les desloiaus genz, les maldites, que Jhesus appelle ypocri-
tes." Faux Semblant, whose mother is Hypocrisy, typifies their attitude: "Je sui des valés Antecrist." Jesus had no love lost for the hypocrites either. In Matthew 23:13, He told them: "Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites that you are! You shut the door of the kingdom of Heaven in men's faces; you do not enter yourselves, and

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1.18363.
2.18327-1.18388.
3.15257-1.15264.
4.1.11713.
when others are entering, you stop them." Just as Jesus in His time shocked the establishment, so did Jean's remarks surprise many. In the thirteenth century, he went against the clergy and those who entered the convents and monasteries to ponder upon the next world while neglecting this one. Jean was strongly opposed to celibacy. He felt the living had to be done here and now. God's will had to be fulfilled in the reproduction and therefore continuation of the human race. Jean, the scholar, the intellectual, respected Raison's arguments against physical love but in the end she loses out, and man's instinct for physical survival wins. Just before Nature talks about the distorted mirrors she mentions the telescope which enlarges the smallest things.\(^1\) This telescope can help us to focus, to see clear images. Nature thinks that the telescope could have helped Venus and Mars escape the net that Vulcan in his jealousy threw around the bed where they were making love. Had the lovers seen the net they could have escaped it and gone elsewhere.\(^2\) This net is the cloudy, obscure veil of misconceptions that society and especially the church threw over "natural" love both Raison and Vieillesse alude to. Jean's book is like a giant telescope needed

\(^{1}\)I.18045-I.18058.

\(^{2}\)I.18061-I.18152.
to open the reader's eyes to all that is deceitful. Only when one knows how to treat mirrors properly can one see clear and perfect images.\textsuperscript{1} Within the telescope Jean adjusts every little mirror so it focusses upon the mirror of God's love and its reflection in the beauty of creation.

In order to see sharply we need to use our eyes. The importance of vision and therefore of the eyes has already been mentioned.\textsuperscript{2} It is only through our vision that we will be able to leave the false mirrors behind and ascend to the mirror of perfection. It is only through our vision that man will be able to attain eternal life by imitating God's mirror.

Hans Leisegang in "La Connaissance de Dieu au miroir de l'âme et de la nature" wrote about the eye that is like "\ldots un miroir vivant, actif et productif, qui produit lui-même les images des objets éclairés par les rayons du soleil, tandis que le miroir matériel ne les reflète que mécaniquement."\textsuperscript{3} We know now about the impassiveness, the emptiness of the false mirror. The eye, as a living mirror, is superior to the deceitful one. It can show either sharp images or obscure ones. Our state of mind, our emotions, our knowledge determine our vision. In

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1}1.18163-1.18166. \\
\textsuperscript{2}Plato's theory on vision, p. 3, p. 17. \\
\end{flushright}
Matthew 6:22,23 it is stated: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eyes are sound, you will have light for your whole body; if the eyes are bad, your whole body will be in darkness. If then the only light you have is darkness, the darkness is doubly dark." We have seen God's shining mirror and the dark mirrors of deceit. Now we'll talk about the mirror as symbol of the eyes which can lead us from darkness into light. Beatrice told Dante: "Now make your eyes the mirror of the vision, this mirror will reveal to you, and fix your mind behind your eyes in strict attention." We will have to do the same, and we will see how in Le Roman de la Rose, love starts with the eyes and ends with the process of generation.

In the dream vision our dreamer goes from one place to another. He "gazes upon scenes rich in color, statuesque figures, shapes of sunbeam, shadow and waterspray." Each vision leads him "... closer to the Mirror Perilous and to the Rose, reflected within it." When the dreamer, after some hesitation, looks into the fountain of Narcissus, he sees two crystal stones and is hypnotized by them: "Ou fons de le fontaine aval avoit deus pierres de cristal qu'a grant entente remirai. Et une chose vous dirai qu'a

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3op. cit. p. 112.
merveilles, ce croi, tendres maintenant que vous l'entendrez. Quant li solaus, qui tout agiête, ses rais en la fontainne giet, et la clartés aval descent, lors perent colors plus de cent es cristaus, car por le solel deviennent jaunes et vermel. Si sont ci cristal merveilleus et tel force ont que tous li leus, arbres et flors, et quanqu'aorne li vergiers, i pert tous a orne.\(^1\) The glances, the rays of the lady's eyes, the "deus pierres de cristal", appear in many lovely colors and change the whole garden for the dreamer. Is this not what happens when one starts to fall in love? The sky, the grass, the flowers, the sun, everything is brighter and more colorful than usual. The dreamer is fascinated by the power of these lovely eyes. Then, as we already discussed\(^2\), he suddenly is frightened because he sees himself within the crystals. Goldin already explained how the youth became aware of his self love and Poirion agrees: "... dans le regard de l'autre, on peut voir ses propres yeux réflétés, où nous reconnaissons le danger du désir narcissique, ne cherchant dans l'amour que le reflet de soi."\(^3\) We have to have an image, an identity of ourselves before we can love another image. Our self love is part of our love for another. The problem is to find the balance, to make the

\(^1\)1.1537-1.1552.  
\(^2\)note p. 40.  
\(^3\)Poirion, Daniel. op. cit. p. 47.
choice between self love which leads us to death, and love directed towards another which can lead to life.

The dreamer survives, he looks beyond himself and "... ou miroër, entre mil choses choisi rosiers chargiés de roses qui estoient en un destour, d'une haie clos tout entour; adont me prist si grant envie ..."¹ After admiring the roses, he desired especially one: "Entre ces boutons en esluui un si tres bel, qu'envers celui nus des autres rien ne prisé puisque je l'oi bien avisé; car une color l'enlumine qui est si vermeille et si fine con Nature la pot plus faire."² How beautiful it is to fall in love! The brilliant glances of the lady penetrate into the heart of the dreamer through the arrows of Amor. The first arrow is Biautés "que parmi l'oel m'a ou cors mise ... ."³ As befits a courteous lover, it is through the eyes that one falls in love. The physical beauty of the lady has made from our dreamer a lover. Plato already had written that "Beauty, then, is the destiny or goddess of parturition who presides at birth."⁴, the birth of love indeed.

Amor, the god of love, knows the power of sight. He literally swears by his eyes (1.10431) and tells the lover:

¹op. cit. 1.1615-1619.
²1.1655-1.1661.
³1.1694.
⁴Symposium, op. cit. p. 197.
... et saches que du regarder feras ton cuer frirre et larder, et tout adés en regardant recouvreras le feu ardant. Qui ce qu'il aime plus regarde plus alume son cuer et larde. Ci lars alume et fet flamer le feu qui fait les gens amer. "Dous Regars" is given to the lover to remember his beloved in case he cannot reach her... car li oel, cum droit messagier, tout maintenant au cuer envoient noveles de ce que il voient. " and further on:

"... Tout aussi Dous Regars efface les tenebres ou li cuers gist qui nuit et jor d'amors languist, car li cuers de riens ne se diaut quant li oel voient ce qu'il viaut."

Now the lover is the servant of Amor, he loves the "Rose of all roses, the ideal, the perfect form toward which all others aspire." At this point the lover is a step farther than Narcissus, because his love is directed towards another human being. But the image of his beloved is affected by subjectivity and therefore false. To be in love is a very subjective experience which leads to a subjective and not necessarily a truthful image of the beloved. However once the lover sees the real (or ideal, needed citations here.)
in a Platonic sense) object of his affection, he wants to reach it. Frederick Goldin, talking about "the soul" writes: "... and the moment it turns toward its ideal it must study how to leave the mirror behind. For once enlightened, unless it passes beyond the mirror it will suffer the death that befell Narcissus."¹ From now on the lover only thinks about the plucking of the Rose. He only thinks about a way to become one with his beloved and thus leave the mirror behind. The complete "Mirror of Love" talks about this struggle which is painful and slow.

The colorful glances of the eyes which have begotten love, as Guillaume describes them, have been repeated by Jean, when he describes the colorful rays of the clouds and rainbows, which beget life on earth. Nature tells Genius how after a flood, when all is destroyed, the sun and the clouds return: "et quant les nues apercoivent que l'air si resbaudi reçoivent, adont se resjoissontes eles et por estre avenans et beles font robes, après lor dolors, de toutes les beles colors, et mettent lor toisons sechier au biau soleil plesant et chier, et les vont par l'air charpissant au temps cler et resplendissant."² The returning clouds and sun come "por le monde solacier"

¹op. cit. p. 14.
²op. cit. 1.17987-1.17996.
Jean knows very little about optics, but he knows how to praise the beauty and the joy of life as it exists in God's creation. Alanus ab Insulis wrote about the elements: "By my order and edict, the rains are married to the earth in a kind of imperial embrace. They, laboring with untiring production at the creation of progeny, cease not to be parents of the various species of things." Love and life are celebrated by both poets. We have seen how Jean used the darts, arrows or glances to aim at the hypocrites in order to kill the dark facets of the mirror, which prevent life. The arrows are now used to stimulate the light parts of the mirror which produce life. The arrow-image is used when Venus sends flying the lover's final passionate glances which melt the last defenses of the lady: "Venus n'i va plus attendant. Le brandon plain de feu ardant tout empené lesse voler por ceus du chatel afoier." and the defenses go down, fleeing and yelling "Trahi, trahi!"

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1.18023-1.18027.
2 "The Complaint of Nature", op. cit., p. 36.
3 op. cit. 1.21251-1.21254.

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rainbows and clouds, and the final glances of the eye all lead to the bringing forth of new life, of love and of a new mirror.

Now we come to the last symbol of the mirror: the mirror as symbol of human fecundity, of procreation.

We have seen God’s mirror of love and creation and His desire to continue this creation as He revealed to Nature. We have seen His mirror showing mankind what it ought to be and do and we have discussed the mirror of deceit which shows how we are. Yet, optimistic and full of faith, Jean de Meun believes in the possibility of man to ascend to God’s mirror and imitate it, however inferior the attempt may be. Man wants to imitate God’s immortality in reproducing himself physically, which will give him not only an eternal physical existence in his descendants but also a spiritual immortality after death. Physical regeneration is therefore of the utmost importance, because it keeps the scale of beings, reflecting God’s overflowing love, intact. God shows us the Trinity within the carbuncle. Boethius urged "Thy glance is upward . . . and thus thy search is heavenward."¹ When he looks upward, man knows what to do, he has to recreate in his love a new human trinity.

When Jean continued Guillaume’s first part of the

¹The Consolation of Philosophy, op. cit. p. 112.
poem, he not only maintained the lover as servant of Amor, but he also added several other definitions of love. The allegorical personage Raison, created by God and not by Nature, speaks at length about love and thus Jean changed the tone and the direction of *Le Roman de la Rose*, in the second part. Raison does not approve of sexual passion or "natural" love. Yet she does explain it and grudgingly admits its necessity: "Car je sai bien, pas nel devin, continuer l'estre devin a son pooir voloir deust quicunques o fame geust, soi regarder en son semblable, por ce que tuit sont corruppable, si que ja par succession ne fausist generacion. Car puisque pere et mere faillent, vuët Nature que les fiz s'aillent por recontinuer cest ovre, si que par l'un l'autre recovre. Por ce y mist Nature delit, et si vuët que l'en s'i delit, que cil ovrier ne s'en foïssent, et que ceste ovre ne hahissent."  

She agrees at least that the task of procreation has to be a pleasant one. When she is attacked by the lover about her uncouth language, she stoutly defends her use of the word "coilles": "Onc en ma vie ne pechïé, n'encor n'ai je mie pechïé se je nomme les nobles choses par plain texte, sans metre gloses, que mes peres en paradis fist de ses propres mains jadis, et touz les autres instrumens qui sont pilers et argumens a soutenir nature

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1 op. cit. 1.4403-1.4418.
This phallicism shows the influence of mythology on Christianity, as it existed in the thirteenth century. Alan Gunn comments: "If the most significant characteristic of mortal beings as of their Eternal Creator is their fecundity, and if their chief duty is that of regenerating their kind, the conclusion that their most precious organs are their generative members almost inevitably follows." Bernardis Silvestris called the "precious organs": "... Conquerors of Death! they fill each empty place in Nature and immortalize the race." The reproductive organs are the tools which will keep the series of mirrors intact. Jean therefore praises the sexual passion of Venus and Mars, but he abhors castration, which would close the gates of heaven to the unfortunate ones, just as Saturn's castration meant the end of the Golden Age.

The lover has passed many obstacles. He has learned much about love, he has matured. He loves his lady very much, but he has become more realistic. Her idealized image has become human, down to his own level. Now the

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1 1.6955-1.6964.
2 Gunn, op. cit., p. 214.
4 op. cit. 1.20031-1.20082.
lover is ready to become one with her, to break through the mirror in order to recreate another mirror. He has arrived at that "Certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation . . ."\(^1\)

It is at this point that Nature delegates her responsibility to Amor and his mother Venus, goddess of love and generation. Therefore, having finished her complaint, Nature tells Genius to relay a message to Amor: "Dites li que la vous envoi por touz ceux escommener qui vous vuelent contrarier, et pour assoudre les vaillans qui de bon cuer sont travaillans as regles droitement ensivre qui son escrites en mon livre, et forment a ce s'estudient que lors linages monteplient et qui pensent de bien amer, car touz les doi amis clamer . . ."\(^2\) Well, Genius hurries to Amor's army. Faux Semblant left, the slave of Anti-Christ who brings death, couldn't face the representative of God who brings life. Genius' exhortation to fecundity is very similar to the speech Plato's Demiurge gave to his gods.\(^3\) First Genius curses those who refuse to do Nature's will\(^4\) however: "... Et cis qui de toute sa force de Nature garder s'efforce et qui de bien amer se painne sans nulle pensee vilainne, et qui loiaument y travaille,

\(^1\)Plato, *Symposium*, op. cit., p. 165.
\(^2\)op. cit. 1.19378-1.19388.
\(^3\)Plato's *Timaeus*, op. cit., p. 36, 37.
\(^4\)op. cit. 1.19527-1.19530.
floris en paradis s'en aille."¹, therefore: "Penses de mener bonne vie, voi chacuns embracier s'amie, et son ami chacune embrace et baise et festoie et solace."²

The lover's personal quest for the Rose remained in the background while Genius and Nature discussed God's plan with creation. Now the moment has arrived for the lover to conquer his beloved. The lover is ready for the sexual act, for pleasure but also for reproduction. Venus helps his mate to get ready after the lover fervently prays: "Si m'i sui je pieça voës, as reliques que vous oes, et se Dieu plaist jes requerrai si tost cum temps et leu avrai, d'escherpe et de bordon garnis. Or me gart Diex d'estre escharnis ne destorbés par nulle chose que je ne joisse de la rose!"³ The lover does not have to wait long. He soon is using his tools in the way Nature wants him to use them. He thanks Amor, Venus, Ami and others for their assistance in teaching him about the different facets in the Mirror of Love, all pointing upwards to the perfect living mirror of God's fecundity. But "Mes de Raison ne me sovint qui tant en moi gasta de pene."⁴ neither does he thank Richece, Jalousie and those who prevented him from looking upwards, who resisted his

¹ 1.19533-1.19538.
² 1.19885-1.19888.
³ 1.21243-1.21250.
⁴ 1.21760-1.21761.
attempts to fulfill Nature's will.

The complete quest for the Rose took place in a gigantic dreamvision, which is in itself a reflection of reality. At the end, the lover tells us: "Ensi oy la rose vermeille. Atant fu jors, et je m'esveille." The dream has become one with reality. The lover and the Rose have become creators themselves, they have produced an image in their likeness as God has created man in His image. The two lovers therefore have taken part in God's divinity and immortality. The lover left the mirror behind when he became one with his beloved. In dispensing of this horizontal mirror he created another mirror which will keep the vertical line of mirrors intact.

All the different symbols of the mirror in Le Roman de la Rose give us aspects of truth, both positive and negative. The mirror of God's love and fecundity shows the highest permanent truth to which we have to aspire. The mirror of vanity and deceit shows the unpleasant truth of our actions as they really are. The mirrors of the eye and of human reproduction show both aspects: illusory, fleeting images and the final sharp images.

The complete Le Roman de la Rose is a mirror, symbolizing the truth. Guillaume de Loris, the courtly love poet and Jean de Meun, the scholar, tell the readers

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\(^1\)1.21779-1.21780.
and lovers all they have to know, the good and the bad, in the Miroir as amoreus. The purpose is to arrive at the moment when the vertical and horizontal mirrors merge in one beautiful loving act of regeneration. This physical love has as a result eternal salvation in Paradise: "And because for us there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord; thus we are transfigured into his likeness, from splendour to splendour."1

1 II Corinthians 3:18.


de Psychologie et de Pédagogie, 1947.


