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Substance and Providence in the Old French Theological Romance

Abstract

The doctrine of divine providence was considered fundamental to understanding the nature of reality in medieval Christian orthodoxy. One of our greatest modern impediments to proper understanding of this law are the radically different ontologies that flourished in the Latin West through the recuperation of Ancient thought, most notably in the divisions between the Platonists and the Aristotelians. Whereas Biblical exegesis owed more to Augustine's Platonism, the rise of Aristotelian thought in the university curriculum entailed a serious threat to the doctrine of providence. The translation and dissemination of Islamic Aristotelians revealed an almost identical challenge to Islamic orthodoxy on the same matter. Philosophical, and especially ontological, speculation on the nature of substance (ontology) was therefore fertile ground for heresy. The main works under examination are the anonymous *Queste del Saint Graal* and the continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* by Jean de Meun. Deeply imbued with Augustinian figuralism and Biblical history, the *Queste* strongly distinguishes itself from the rest of the *Lancelot en Prose*, most notably *La Mort le Roi Artu*, in its theological purpose. It also shows a clever reworking of its source materials (Chrétien de Troyes and continuators, Robert de Boron, *Perlesvaus*) and an attempt to re-write the grail literature in its most sophisticated and orthodox formulation. By contrast, Jean de Meun's *Rose* continuation is fraught with heresy and obscenity as he denounces the corrupt practices of the mendicant orders and marks his clear preference for the University of Paris's secular masters (ca. 1270). Analyzing the question of ontology within the work, one notices heresies that originate in the Islamic reception of Aristotle, and which resulted in the large-scale condemnations within the decade of the continuation's composition. While strikingly different in tone and purpose, the *Queste* and the *Rose* are theological romances that use the concept of providence to explain the special place of man. While the former offers an explanation based on church sacramental practices, the latter offers an extreme naturalism with an Arab-inflected Boethius as its principal source.

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SUBSTANCE AND PROVIDENCE IN THE OLD FRENCH THEOLOGICAL
ROMANCE

Ian McConnon

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SUBSTANCE AND PROVIDENCE IN THE OLD FRENCH THEOLOGICAL
ROMANCE

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ABSTRACT

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Ian McConnon

Kevin Brownlee

The doctrine of divine providence was considered fundamental to understanding the nature of reality in medieval Christian orthodoxy. One of our greatest modern impediments to proper understanding of this law are the radically different ontologies that flourished in the Latin West through the recuperation of Ancient thought, most notably in the divisions between the Platonists and the Aristotelians. Whereas Biblical exegesis owed more to Augustine's Platonism, the rise of Aristotelian thought in the university curriculum entailed a serious threat to the doctrine of providence. The translation and dissemination of Islamic Aristotelians revealed an almost identical challenge to Islamic orthodoxy on the same matter. Philosophical, and especially ontological, speculation on the nature of substance (ontology) was therefore fertile ground for heresy. The main works under examination are the anonymous *Queste del Saint Graal* and the continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* by Jean de Meun. Deeply imbued with Augustinian figuralism and Biblical history, the *Queste* strongly distinguishes itself from the rest of the *Lancelot en Prose*, most notably *La Mort le Roi Artu*, in its theological purpose. It also shows a clever reworking of its source materials (Chrétien de Troyes and continuators, Robert de Boron, *Perlesvaus*) and an attempt to re-write the grail literature in its most sophisticated and orthodox formulation. By contrast, Jean de Meun's *Rose* continuation is fraught with heresy and obscenity as he denounces the corrupt practices of the mendicant orders and marks his clear preference for the University of Paris's secular masters (ca. 1270).

Analyzing the question of ontology within the work, one notices heresies that originate in the Islamic reception of Aristotle, and which resulted in the large-scale condemnations within the decade of the continuation's composition. While strikingly different in tone and purpose, the *Queste* and the *Rose* are theological romances that use the concept of providence to explain the special place of man. While the former offers an explanation based on church sacramental practices, the latter offers an extreme naturalism with an Arab-inflected Boethius as its principal source.

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Introduction

This dissertation will focus primarily on the interpretation of two theological romances of the thirteenth century in France, *La Quête du Saint Graal* and *Le Roman de la Rose*. The juxtaposition of two works, separated by some forty years in their completion and dissemination, under the same generic category might shock at first glance, for while the first work is obviously laden with much theological sermonizing, the theology of the latter is not foregrounded in the same fashion. And yet both romances are connected, to an extent, by their respective promotions of world-views that rely on conceptions of *substance* as this relates to providence. Both works elaborate on the position of man within a providential universe, and in their respective attempts to articulate such a position, they offer glimpses of their underlying ontology, or their perspective on being.¹ It is my contention that these works must be contextualized within their respective settings in order to understand how they could have been meaningful within the milieu from which they sprang.

La Quête du Saint Graal, composed anonymously c. 1230, fits oddly into the *Lancelot en prose* or *Vulgate* series, given the extended theological glossing that occupies a large portion of the narrative. But without disregarding its narrative insertion into a larger work, it seems that the *Quête* is more concerned with its extra-diegetical truth

¹ The link between allegory and ontology is brought to the fore in Peter Struck's discussion of the Neoplatonist Plotinus's theory of the intellects, emanating from the One, down to Mind (*nous*), Soul (*Psyche*), and eventually Substance (*Hyle*). "The significance of this basic understanding for allegorical interpretation is hard to overstate. First, the tiered ontology means that any given entity here in the physical world always also has other, hidden aspects to it." Drawn from "Allegory and ascent in Neoplatonism" in *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 59.

status than the other works of the *Vulgate*. The mode of interpretation offered by the work's hermits is both Augustinian and exemplary of contemporary thirteenth-century exegesis. This work exemplifies conservative militancy as it advocates for an increased ontology, meaning a universe with a greater number of existent things. Relying on mystical theology that draws heavily on the Cistercian tradition, this work poses a major problem for modern criticism, because it does not treat meaning as linguistic (i.e. as a by-product of language's symbolic function), but rather as substantial (meaning as *res*, or really existent *thing*). The term "theological" applied to the *Roman de la Rose* only properly describes Jean de Meun's continuation (c. 1268-85), and not Guillaume de Lorris's original (c. 1215), which was more concerned with a depiction of a courtly universe, both psychic and social, than a theological one. While Jean de Meun never forsakes these contemporary extra-diegetical circumstances in his composition, he nonetheless contextualizes his lover's quest within a larger frame, in such a way that the aesthetic and courtly *telos* of Guillaume de Lorris is supplanted with a universal and ontological one in Jean de Meun's continuation. Despite drastic differences between the theology propounded in this work and that of the *Quête*, Jean de Meun also propounds a theory of meaning (*glose*) that is highly "substantial", although he fleshes out this principle with more contemporary Scholastic learning and a greater reliance on Aristotelian logic.

This introduction will situate the problem of ontology, with special focus on 'things' (as exemplary of 'substance') within realistic medieval exegesis. This discussion necessarily entails some remarks on the history of the term allegory, whose usage was contaminated by a *translatio* from the Greek, thus cementing a homology of both verbal

and ‘providential’ (i.e. God’s writing) that is still in evidence in our 13th-century corpus. However problematic this homology may be from a modern perspective, I contend that it must be kept in mind throughout this dissertation in order to understand more fully the alternately conservative or subversive thrusts of the works in question. In an attempt to explicate the foundational ontology from an exegetic perspective, I will focus primarily on the question of things/substance, and their connection to providential writing, to underscore their historical trajectory. We will conclude this discussion with Dante’s (somewhat elliptically stated) idea that the poetic rendering of an ontological falsehood can paradoxically yield truth by an apparent homology of verbal and historical *translation*. This will be followed by the theoretical assumptions and brief outline of the dissertation.

The language of Providence

While the texts in this thesis are usually considered allegories, I show here that more fundamental than the term allegory are those of providence and ontology. In the context of this dissertation, providence will, in sympathy with the objects of my corpus, be taken as a conceptual reality (*res*). The acceptance of Providence as God’s (fore)knowledge was mostly steady throughout Ancient and Medieval exegesis. And yet to speak of ‘knowledge’ with reference to an omniscient God was naturally a thorny question for theology. In the thirteenth century, to speak of divine knowledge often yielded discussions of substance and creation, as can be seen in Aquinas’s dictum

(following Boethius) that God's knowledge, or providence, is the cause of things.² But this idea goes back even further, and we can see how Saint Augustine, in *De Civitate Dei*, had used the term to describe the ultimate reality from which all others, especially the reality of 'man', drew their existence.³ Put simply, this means that providence relates to both reality and history as does cause to effect.⁴ As we shall see in chapter one, Boethius accords in the physical, naturalistic foundations of providence, but in the context of distinguishing it from its Hellenic rival, fate.

Because providence is taken as a foundational *cause* for a real narrative, I will seek to underscore some of its *effects* on exegesis. Thus a discussion of 'allegory' imposes itself here, for this term, rich in both exegetical and rhetorical undertones, often exemplifies the tension between rhetorical and exegetical conceptions of writing that are operational in my corpus. Beyond the sense of 'trope', the assumptions of medieval

² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pars 1, Q14, A8.

³ "Therefore God supreme and true, with His Word and Holy Spirit (which three are one), one God omnipotent, creator and maker of every soul and of every body; by whose gift all are happy who are happy through verity and not through vanity; who made man a rational animal consisting of soul and body, who, when he sinned, neither permitted him to go unpunished, nor left him without mercy; who has given to the good and to the evil, being in common with stones, vegetable life in common with trees, sensuous life in common with brutes, intellectual life in common with angels alone; from whom is every mode, every species, every order; from whom are measure, number, weight; from whom is everything which has an existence in nature, of whatever kind it be, and of whatever value; from whom are the seeds of forms and the forms of seeds, and the motion of seeds and of forms; who gave also to flesh its origin, beauty, health, reproductive fecundity, disposition of members, and the salutary concord of its parts; who also to the irrational soul has given memory, sense, appetite, but to the rational soul, in addition to these, has given intelligence and will; who has not left, not to speak of heaven and earth, angels and men, but not even the entrails of the smallest and most contemptible animal, or the feather of a bird, or the little flower of a plant, or the leaf of a tree, without an harmony, and, as it were, a mutual peace among all its parts;—that God can never be believed to have left the kingdoms of men, their dominations and servitudes, outside of the laws of His *providence*." (italics are my own) *City of God*, 5,11

⁴ Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de veritate*, Q5,A1: "Properly speaking, God's providence is not the eternal law; it is something that follows upon the eternal law. The eternal law should be thought of as existing in God as those principles of action exist in us which we know naturally and upon which we base our deliberation and choice. These belong to prudence or providence. Consequently, the law of our intellect is related to prudence as an indemonstrable principle is related to a demonstration. Similarly, the eternal law in God is not His providence, but, as it were, a principle of His providence; *for this reason one can, without any inconsistency, attribute an act of providence to the eternal law in the same way that he attributes every conclusion of a demonstration to self-evident principles.*"

realism allowed the term ‘allegory’ to apply to God’s writing of history. In other words, Biblical allegory was seen as the fulfillment of God’s providential plan, and pertains as much to ontology as epistemology.

The exegetical tradition focused on the concept of providence in terms of universal history, manifested in the Scriptural *allegoria in factis*. God’s knowledge, necessarily omniscient, logically entailed his omnipotence, and was traditionally cast as the cause of all things and events. This system of decoding providence was already implicitly philosophical, for the early Patristic scholars, including Augustine and Origen, had already imbued the concept with Platonic and NeoPlatonic ontologies. This broad, and somewhat poetic, characterization of providence gave their exegesis its more literary flavor. Not simply a term that implied ‘foresight’ or ‘knowledge of the future’ (*providere*), providence included an implicit characterization of a beneficent deity who ordered the events of universal history in such a way as to ensure the ultimate triumph of Christendom. It is a concept that pertains more to ontology than epistemology in the Middle Ages, and the term’s closest derivatives in English (‘provide’) and French (‘pourvoir’) similarly attest to the primacy of this ontological understanding.

The most significant reinterpretation of providence was provided by Boethius (A.D. 480-524/5?), whose *Consolatio* was instrumental in pioneering Christian Scholasticism. Boethius clearly saw Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione* as crucial in developing the question of the determinism occasioned by divine knowledge. While clearly theological in tone and seemingly orthodox in intent, the *Consolatio* has bracketed providence from Christian, biblical history. Boethius allegorizes Aristotle’s explanation of necessity and contingency in such a way as to make it serviceable to his Christian

outlook. Linking the concept of providence with the process of generation itself, Boethius finds providence manifest in the cosmogony of substance:

Omnium generatio rerum cunctusque mutabilium naturarum progressus et quicquid aliquo mouetur modo causas, ordinem, formas ex diuinae mentis stabilitate sortitur. Haec in suae simplicitatis arce composita multiplicem rebus gerendis modum statuit. Qui modus cum in ipsa diuinae intellegentiae puritate conspicitur, prouidentia nominatur; cum uero ad ea quae mouet atque disponit refertur, fatum a ueteribus appellatum est. Quae diuersa esse facile liquebit si quis utriusque uim mente conspexerit; nam prouidentia est ipsa illa diuina ratio in summo omnium principe constituta quae cuncta disponit, fatum uero inhaerens rebus mobilibus dispositio per quam prouidentia suis quaeque nectit ordinibus. Prouidentia namque cuncta pariter quamuis diuersa quamuis infinita complectitur, fatum uero singula digerit in motum locis, formis ac temporibus distributa, ut haec temporalis ordinis explicatio in diuinae mentis adunata prospectum prouidentia sit, eadem uero adunatio digesta atque explicata temporibus fatum uocetur.⁵

The generation of all things, the whole progress of things subject to change and whatever moves in any way, receive their causes, their due order and their form from the unchanging mind of God. In the high citadel of its oneness, the mind of God has set up a plan for the multitude of events. When this plan is thought of as in the purity of God's understanding, it is called Providence, and when it is thought of with reference to all things, whose motion and order it controls, it is called by the name the ancients gave it, Fate. If anyone will examine their meaning, it will soon be clear to him that these two aspects are different. Providence is the divine reason itself. It is set at the head of all things and disposes all things. Fate, on the other hand, is the planned order inherent in things subject to change and through the medium of which Providence holds everything in its own allotted place. Providence includes all things at the same time, however diverse or infinite, while Fate controls the motion of different individual things in different places and in different times. So this unfolding of the plan in time when brought together as a unified whole in the foresight of God's mind is Providence; and the same unified whole when dissolved and unfolded in the course of time is Fate.⁶

Even if our human understanding, then, is limited to Fate, we have indirect access to the logic of Providence in the division of substance and generation. Paradoxically, it is the ultimate simplicity of God's providence that renders it inaccessible to our understanding, but we can infer something about its laws through its effects. If providence is the

⁵ Boethius, book VI, Prosa 6, Text derived from G. Weinberger (Vienna, 1935, volume 67 in the series *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*).

[http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/boethius/jkok/list_t.htm]

⁶ Boethius, book IV, 104.

ultimate reality, those things subject to change will understand only the fatalistic aspect. The intellectual, by contrast, can seek an understanding of providence by examining the natural order and finding therein the most universal logic. In one sense, Boethius's *translatio* can be seen as furthering bolstering Augustine's claim that full knowledge of *things* is necessary to proper exegesis. In another, it imbues the concept of providence with a physical naturalism, a maneuver that amounts to a time-bomb for the heretical ferments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Methodology

My method of analysis, which will contextualize these works within medieval exegesis and philosophy (more specifically in the "universals debate"), aims to reduce the possibility of *anachronism* by locating the assumptions that undergird medieval notions of 'substance' (especially 'man') within a universe whose conceptions of time are more providential (and to some extent, circular) than linear. By anachronism, I mean the imposition of our present knowledge, values, and interpretive codes on a text that was composed in very different conditions from those in which we now live. Such anachronism can undoubtedly be productive, for this separation can bring a different perspective from interpreters of yesteryear, and serves to re-enhance the work's transhistorical "value". New Critics and Structuralists alike have tried to free us from this anxiety of anachronism by focusing on the text, in the sense of "words on the page", yielding criticism that bespeaks a modern fondness for more empirical explanation. Despite the gains of these "schools", some of which will be evident in this analysis, their

rise has perhaps been to the detriment of philology and other historicist perspectives, and perhaps especially to the metaphysical notion of meaning.⁷ Not sharing in any distaste for this concept, I argue that some aspects of the work's meaning is bound to the conditions from which it arose, and that Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose*, with its careful exposition of heresies in an age of explicit censorship, is but one example of this historical meaning, which is no longer directly accessible without such a contextualization.

This anxiety of anachronism cannot be dispelled, however, by simple recourse to a philological methodology, and nor am I optimistic about fully extricating myself entirely from this constant temptation. Given the contingency that accompanies critics in their own historical moment and the explicit and implicit assumptions of our modern (and more particularly, Western) ontologies, this dissertation aims to overcome this chronological impediment by some more modern attempts to theorize the production of narrative and its ideas, most notably through the work of Fredric Jameson and Erich Auerbach. The whole of this thesis operates under one of the basic assumptions of Auerbach's *Mimesis*, namely that literature throughout the ages has tried to represent and imitate *reality* in the most ontological sense, not as an absolute and immutable phenomenon, but rather one that is bound to its historical moment. In this context, it is the concept of 'mimesis' itself which alone escapes the contingency of historicism, as it is taken as the foundational aspiration for literature throughout the ages. The absolute nature of this mimetic impulse thus yields an implicit teleology for the literary text, by making reality itself the providential *telos* to which literature aspires. Fredric Jameson's

⁷ Compare this to Jameson's polemics against the ideological foundations of Paul de Man's (*Allegories of Reading*) and Walter Benn Michael's (*Gold Standard*, "Against Theory") "postmodern" assessments of the concept of theory. "Theory" in *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. 181-259

theory of a providential history accounts for the shifting ontologies of Auerbach's transhistorical analysis.⁸

Without taking providence as an historical absolute (immutable throughout the ages), I would suggest that this concept, especially in its absorption of the related concepts of 'creation' and even 'reason for existence', can be seen as fundamental to 'ideology', a term rich in both philosophical (i.e. the logic behind ideas) and Marxist resonances. To recuperate the ideology of this pre-modern world that has since become alien, I would like to draw on the theoretical apparatus of Fredric Jameson as expounded in *The Political Unconscious*, for it is in the spirit of this work that I will try to resurrect the ideological, and in our case, ontological crux that hampers our understanding of providential signification. While Jameson opts for a thoroughgoing historicism, he is aware that some aspects of humanity must be constant throughout history in order to bridge our present gap with the past – for Jameson, this transhistorical constant is *narrative* itself:

These divergent and unequal bodies of work are here interrogated and evaluated from the perspective of the specific critical and interpretive task of the present volume, namely to restructure the problematics of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of *narrative*, which I take to be (here using the shorthand of philosophical idealism) the central function or *instance* of the human mind.⁹

Without really supplanting Auerbach's concept of mimesis, Jameson suggests that narrative is perhaps an even more immanent capacity of the human mind. Jameson thus elaborates a definition of narrative that is more dependent on idealism than materialism, for the philosophical implication is that narrative is a natural *effect*, the mind itself being

⁸ This is analogous to the revisionist goals of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode*, in which philosophical alignments are shown to have played a tremendous role in philological inquiry. Cf. Mailloux, Steven. "Hermeneutics, Deconstruction, Allegory" in *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 256-7.

⁹ Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. 13.

the *cause*. As a consequence, no narrative is exempt from ideological inscription because the root of both is the same (the mind), and similarly, both narrative and ideology try to map out the relations of individual to collective existence. To the extent that works arise from literary and artistic communities (clerkly and poetic circles, University of Paris, etc.), each with their own ideological investments, the notion that works could be intelligible to readers without inscribing traces of their libidinal and ideological preconceptions is, for all intents and purposes, untenable. I will have to forego, however, the materialist acceptance that drives Jameson's polemics, namely, *ideology* as that which prevents revolution by projecting a false relation to the mode of production. .

Seeing the explication or demystification of ideology as the interpretive nexus to which all criticism must aspire, Jameson reaches the conclusion that ideology inscribes itself within texts *allegorically*.¹⁰ The capacity of allegory to symbolize "universally" is maintained by what he describes as the collective impulse. Jameson, drawing on one of the key sources of Western hermeneutics, thus adapts the fourfold interpretation of Scripture to a Marxist hermeneutic, in which the moral and anagogical senses allow for the insertion of the individual subject into a providential Christian history by means of a libidinal and ideological investment.¹¹ Jameson's use of a *translatio* here results in a Marxist allegorization (and consequently, for him, a truer version) of the concept of Christian providence, as explicated later in the work:

¹⁰ *ibid*, 34: "The idea is [...] that if interpretation in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them; such allegorical narrative signifieds are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality."

¹¹ *Ibid*. 30, 31: "LITERAL (historical or textual referent)/ ALLEGORICAL (allegorical key or interpretive code)/ MORAL (psychological reading [individual subject])/ ANAGOGICAL (political reading [collective "meaning" of history]).

I have throughout the present work implied what I have suggested explicitly elsewhere, that any comparison of Marxism with religion is a two-way street, in which the former is not necessarily discredited by its association with the latter. On the contrary, such a comparison may also function to rewrite certain religious concepts – most notably Christian historicism and the “*concept*” of *providence*, but also the pretheological systems of primitive magic – as anticipatory foreshadowings of historical materialism within precapitalist social formations in which scientific thinking is unavailable as such.¹²

Jameson’s teleology ultimately aspires to a fully scientific explanation, and yet, sensitive to the work of Walter Benjamin, Northrop Frye, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Jameson offers us a materialist ideology that is particularly accommodating to theological thought. This should be tempered with the observation that, for Jameson, pure theological thinking is only ideology, while his scientific *translatio* presumably aspires to the level of praxis.¹³ Jameson’s invocation of the ‘totality’ is logically bound to his Utopian thinking, deriving ultimately from the Platonic rather than the Aristotelian tradition, and this exemplifies quite clearly the persistence of metaphysical thinking inherent in Jameson’s materialist and idealist “History”. Innate ideas seem to be common to both Platonic idealism and Providential accounts of the Fall (and by extension, man’s knowledge), and form a major part of Saint Augustine’s thoughts on man’s spiritual providence through grace. If, on the one hand, innate ideas and providential history seem to be philosophical foundations for the utopian impulse of the work, to use Jameson’s term, they are, on the other, philosophical impediments for an empirical, fully materialist Marxism. This conflict, cast roughly as that between idealism and materialism, lies at the heart of

¹² *ibid*, 285. (italics are my own)

¹³ *ibid*, 75,n1: “[E.D]. Hirsch’s distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, between the scientific analysis of a text’s intrinsic “meaning” and what he is pleased to call our “ethical” evaluation of its “significance” for us (see, for example, *The Aims of Interpretation* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976]) corresponds to the traditional Marxist distinction between *science* and *ideology*, particularly as it has been retheorized by the Althusserians.” Last italics are my own

Althusser's relentless anti-Hegelian critique, which Jameson likens to a distaste for any narrative whose logic is akin to that of providence:

The fullest form of what Althusser calls "expressive causality" (and of what he calls "historicism) will thus prove to be a vast interpretive allegory in which a sequence of historical events or texts and artifacts is rewritten in terms of some deeper, underlying and more "fundamental" narrative, of a hidden master narrative which would then include *providential histories* (such as those of Hegel or Marx), catastrophic visions of history (such as that of Spengler), and cyclical or Viconian visions of history alike." (italics are my own)¹⁴

These philosophical presuppositions inherent in Jameson's brand of idealism, as well as his use of dialectics with constant reference to the world as History and his insistence on *referential* signification (ibid, p. 35), make his methodology very serviceable for the interpretation of these theological romances.

Despite my emphasis on the idealist aspects of Jameson's thinking, there is still an element of materialism to be retained, in somewhat altered terms: In traditional Marxist analysis, "production" has been the dominant means of analysis for the market. I argue that distribution (via the translation movement of ancient texts) was more important than production in the ideological shifts which took place in the thirteenth century. This *translatio studii* is not merely the material translation/alteration of the study of ancient logic, however, but rather something far more fundamental to all thought, namely, the place of 'man' in the world/universe and the exact validity of such universal terms. Both works examined in this dissertation also elaborate quite extensively on these

¹⁴ Ibid, 28-29. Cf. Eagleton, Terry, "Ideology and its Vicissitudes in Western Marxism" in *Mapping Ideology*, 219: "Althusser inherits [the] notion of ideology as habitual behavior rather than conscious thought from Gramsci; but he presses the case to a quasi-behaviorist extreme in his claim that the subject's ideas 'are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus....' One does not abolish consciousness simply by a hypnotic repetition of the word 'material'. If *everything* is material, even thought itself, then the word loses all discriminatory force. [...] Althusser's insistence on the materiality of ideology – the fact that it is always a matter of concrete practices and institutions – is a valuable corrective to Georg Lukács's largely disembodied 'class consciousness'; but it also stems from a structuralist hostility to consciousness as such."

philosophical questions. Medieval works also have intricate material histories in the sense that they are material objects, and susceptible to scribal corruption, intercalation, and differences in production/consumption that separate them from modern material text. While the material history is sometimes necessary for explanation (e.g., the manuscript translation/transmission of Aristotle), it is the Scholastic history of the *idea(s)* of a *substantial* providence that will dominate the majority of this dissertation. It should also be noted from the outset that explicit censorship of ideas is a reality of this century, and heresy, both in the mind and in utterance, was subject to consequences of a material nature, including excommunication.

In an influential study, Maureen Quilligan states plainly the ideological foundations of allegorical reading and writing, though she never tackles the ideological assumptions when she ascribes to allegory a “suprarealist” attitude concerning things and words. By suprarealist is meant the belief that all abstract nouns are fully existent things. It is this conviction that animates her theory for the desuetude of the “genre” when this attitude was supposedly forsworn in the seventeenth century.¹⁵ Although the first statement seems to this reader be mostly correct, the totalizing assumptions about the dominant ideologies toward language are not borne out by historical evidence, as we shall see in the first chapter.¹⁶ Quilligan assumes that the suprarealist attitude toward language was lost in the seventeenth century, thereby resulting in the loss of allegory as the dominant form.¹⁷ We know, however, that realism suffered its greatest attack at the hands of Ockham in the fourteenth century, and Abelard’s anti-realism in the early twelfth

¹⁵ Quilligan, Maureen. 157.

¹⁶ This is also the flip-side of the argument propounded by Jung who claimed that nominalism was the dominant philosophy from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries: Jung, 21.

¹⁷ Quilligan, 172.

century was no less important in its own moment. Despite the lack of supporting evidence for her claims about the prevailing suprealist attitude, her intuition about the logical and philosophical underpinnings of integumental allegory is fundamentally correct. Augustinian sign theory was dominant throughout the Middle Ages, but dialectic was thriving in a curriculum that was becoming increasingly Aristotelian in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁸ This tension, between the Platonic realism that is inherent in Augustinian sign theory and the growing suspicion in logic that universals had no existence outside sensibles, resulted in the crisis of predication that *is* the universals debate, and reflects, in broad strokes, the ideological (also ontological and theological) context out of which these theological romances emerged.

Taking a turn from the exegetical account of substance (or things), the medieval universals debate offered a quite different, and somewhat more turbulent, perspective on the matter. The second part of the first chapter will show that ontology and epistemology were often indistinguishable in Scholastic logic, perhaps due to Aristotle's non-distinction between 'thing' and 'thing named.' While a modern critic might dub this a homology, we will see that it is crucial for thirteenth-century ontology, and one without which the exploration of truth of these theological romances cannot be fully grasped. The exegetical injunction to know things means that in chapter one we will explore the various conceptions of *substantia*, with special reference to 'man', by adherents to the two most influential sects on the Middle Ages, namely the Platonists and the Aristotelians. While Plato and Aristotle both preserved the immateriality of thought, the latter grounded knowledge of things within sensible objects (via abstraction), and the former located them within the immaterial realm of forms. The medieval debate about

¹⁸ Ebbesen, Sten. "Ancient scholastic logic as the source of medieval scholastic logic", 104-109.

universals found various prefigurations already within the ancient sects, e.g., Aristotle's writings already contain at least two (the *differentia* as "added to" substance, the *nous poetikos* or *intellectus agens* as a "world soul" [*Timeaus*]). Platonic realism suffered its death blow by Abelard, who contended that genera and species can no longer logically be treated as separable substances. The development of more complicated grammars in the 13th century (often tinged with elements of Priscian's Stoic grammar) led to the development of new theories of reference (supposition), meaning that grammar, rather than ontology, became the new battle ground for realists and nominalists. At the same time, translations of Aristotle were becoming increasingly prevalent, and the various Arab commentaries also revealed an entirely different conception of "the Philosopher" (Aristotle, as he was often dubbed in this century), one which fused Aristotle's logic with a Neoplatonist ontology. The writings of the Islamic philosophers were of enormous importance for the Latin West, but they presented an Aristotle that was no more conducive to contemporary Christian orthodoxy than he had been to Islamic. Averroes's contention that the world was eternal (an idea explicitly stated in Aristotle) and that the intellect was not multiplied by the number of living souls found numerous adherents in the Latin West, and these tenets were inextricably linked to the question of genera and species, universal and particular. This chapter will explain why the universals debate spills almost immediately onto theology, and becomes the *ne plus ultra* of ideological analysis, in the sense that ontology is the most fundamental of all ideologies. In the thirteenth century, this ontological question was necessarily a theological one: how freely does God create substance and how does man speak of this without falling into heresy? In addition, this chapter will show how the terms of the debate are intimately connected to

providence, thus relegating this extended debate to a vast and intricate background from which the works of our corpus frame their theological expositions.

The second chapter will develop the question of ontology and providence further with reference to the literature of the grail, culminating in an analysis of *La Quête du Saint Graal*. This last work, using an elaborate *translatio* of a somewhat contemporary object (here, “the grail” from *Roman d’Alexandre* to Chretien de Troyes, and continuations), manages to redefine *things*, including the object of the quest itself, within a theological providence that mirrors the narrative *telos*. By insisting on the real, extradiegetical referent of its story (i.e., the real world under the control of a Christian God), the glossing hermits almost wholly engulf the romance world in which the “literal adventures” take place. This real world is a world of things, and one that is ready to dispense with the advances in Scholastic logic even as it makes abundant use of Scholastic vocabulary. The logic of the *Grail*, in its lucid yet unproblematic realism, owes much, though by no means exclusively, to a vulgarized Augustinianism for its ontology. From this remapping of the *Quest*’s ontology I will show how this work expounds the place of man in the universe. By accounting for both historical Providence through genealogy and etiology, and double “senses” (adventure/gloss), the Grail (as literal and spiritual thing) is made to account for both the historical “age of miracles” and the eternal reality of Grace. Although conservative and militant in its ontology and ethics (partially in response to Abelardian theology), it often flirts with the ascetic ideology that begot the Albigensian heresy, in which the rigidly dualistic conception of substance proved dangerous to the faith as regarded the Incarnation (denial of Christ’s material substance). One of the corollaries of this ascetic ideology, however, is that all *meaning* is

spiritual and/or providential. At the end of this work, the expected gloss is missing, much in the same manner as the later *Rose*. By both philological and philosophical means, I will offer a selective glossing of the work that will lay bare its providential meaning.

The third chapter will be devoted to epistemology in the *Roman de la Rose*. I will be analyzing in particular the speeches of Reason and Faux Semblant to show how they develop a theory of reading various genres of writing, with specific instructions about the role of language in a whole gamut of modal registers (Scholastic, integumental, satirical, etc.). These voices are elaborating on different ways to reach truth, with a special focus on the growing autonomy of various disciplines (e.g., physics, theology, pure dialectic, and in Jean de Meun's case, mythography as well) and the resultant change in perspectives. While these characters diverge necessarily in the content and, even morals, of their respective speeches, they are both bound by contemporary Scholastic logic, and Jean de Meun shows here a particular reliance on Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*, a logical manual which cuts through sophisms to both comedic (i.e. Raison's refutations to the lover) and deadly effect (Faux Semblant and Malebouche). This manual is preparing the reader for the carefully developed heresies, namely the eternity of the world and the collective "world soul", that are in evidence in the Nature/Genius section.

This will be the subject matter of chapter four, which will explain how Jean de Meun revises the definition of Providence, a theological concept, using the contemporary dialectic concerning universals, to quite heretical and subversive ends. The logic that Jean de Meun uses to pursue this analysis is framed from an extended discussion of the place of 'man' as species, in which he evinces some of the logic and argumentation of the radical Aristotelianism that erupted at the University of Paris around the time of the

work's composition. Extricating Jean de Meun's naturalism from its apparent Chartrian subtext yields an entirely different perspective on the *Rose's* theology from the Augustinian debt that has been so crucial to previous theological interpretations of the work.

The anxiety of anachronism, which I evoked earlier in this introduction, cannot be dispelled by simple recourse to a philological methodology and an historical idealism. On the one hand, anachronism is a natural, and almost necessary, by-product of the contingency of critics in their own historical moment, insofar as one cannot fully extricate oneself from both explicit and implicit assumptions of our modern ideologies. On the other, this dissertation will show that some anachronisms (and sometimes even conceptual homologies) are *productive* and account for the difficulty of relating universal to particular, material to immaterial, and chronology to eternity, mirroring an anxiety that I detect at the heart of these romances. These conceptual dichotomies are products of the "homology of writing" that we have been exploring. Furthermore, they are also exemplified in the various acceptations of '*translatio*', which at once encompassed both 'rhetorical trope' akin to metaphor (Donatus's *Metaphora est rerum verborumque translatio*)¹⁹ and 'historical importation of knowledge' under the same term. And in fact, this may also be a quite common assumption for the less historically-minded proponents of the *translatio studii*, who believed that their interpretations of the Ancients were valid not only for their own time, but omnitemporally, as if the full implications of thought could be understood even without recourse to the specific context of its enunciation.²⁰

¹⁹*Barbarismus*. 667 Quoted in Reynolds, 125.

²⁰ Glenn M. Most states that this is one of the fundamental uses of 'allegory' in the Ancient Stoic conception: "Allegory was a way of decontextualizing them out of the determinate local situations and traditions from which they had initially arisen and for which they had once been intended, and of

But by the close association of ‘*translatio*’ and ‘*allegoria*’, the former cannot but assume many of the providential overtones of the latter, and it shall therefore be the main term used in my analysis of these works. Indeed, if we examine the uses of the term *translatio* – rhetorical (trope), theological (*signum translatum* of Augustine), material (translation), and historical (*translatio studii*) - we find that it more accurately reflects this “language of Providence” than any other term. Providence, here taken in the realistic sense as a ‘reality’ and which, in Christian manifestations of the thirteenth century, accounted for both linear and cyclical histories via *translationes*, provided a sound logic for these theological romances to be read for truth and *meaning*. It is this conviction that animates the interpretive maneuvers in this dissertation.

recontextualizing them within conceptual systems that were universally valid and comprehensible – and thereby it supplied a meaning to them which one did not need to have special local knowledge or to be a member of a specific political community in order to understand and appreciate.” “Hellenistic allegory and early imperial rhetoric” in *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, p.28. A more rhetorical reading of the *translatio studii* phenomenon might liken it to a species of allegory called “*paroemia*, defined by Donatus, Bede and Isidore as *adcommodatum rebus temporibusque prouerbium* (‘a story applied to [other] times and subjects’).” Reynolds, 137.

Chapter 1 - The Signifying Power of Substance

This chapter will explore the question of substance and its importance for both exegesis and medieval philosophy. The recuperation of the Pagan texts whose value had been displaced within Christendom led to the allegorization, or providential re-writing, of Virgil and Ovid.²¹ These stories were seen as *integumenta* for hidden (and to their original authors, unconscious) truths for which the Pagan author was merely the instrument or vehicle. Here the stories are rewritten as exempla of Christian truths, to be coded by means of similitude. This is similar to the Biblical exegesis of the *Song of Songs*, whose literal, and often carnal, sense is rewritten as the soul's quest for God. Allegorical reading in the Middle Ages has one ultimate source, namely Biblical exegesis.²² It is thus providential in origin.

The history of the term 'allegory' is somewhat complicated, even before we take the prejudices of the Romantics into account. On the one hand, there is a certain amplificatory continuum of its usage in medieval exegesis and Hellenic philosophy/theology, by which I mean that it referred, in both cultures, to writing which contained implicit, as opposed to merely explicit, truths. On the other, they had also inherited a host of definitions of the term from Latin grammarians and rhetoricians which

²¹ See for example, Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 5,19, which offers a providential interpretation of Virgil.

²² Cf. Hans Robert Jauss "Cette époque, en effet, est témoin d'une évolution décisive : dans un processus de laïcisation, on fit progressivement usage, sur le plan littéraire et profane, de procédés que l'interprétation des divers sens de l'Écriture avait développés au plus haut point. On passa ainsi graduellement d'une explication allégorique étroitement attachée au texte à une poésie religieuse d'une forme allégorique, qui se sert de la distinction entre l'esprit et la lettre (*senefiance* : *semblance*) pour donner du dogme chrétien une représentation imagée. On en arriva au libre emploi des procédés en question, et la poésie profane finit par donner le jour à de pures affabulations allégoriques et laissa au lecteur le soin de chercher leur *senefiance* par ses propres moyens." p. 9.

suggested that allegory was always a matter of ‘words’. Quintilian’s rhetorical definitions of allegory are still salutary in their concision: (a. “allegoriam facit continua metaphora” [*Institutio Oratoria*, III,9,2,46] b. “allegoria, quam inversionem interpretantur, aliud versibus aliud sensu ostendit” [ibid. VIII,3,83]). Donatus the grammarian offers another definition that says nothing of extended metaphor, but instead suggests that words conceal a true meaning beyond their literal sense: “Allegoria est tropus quo aliud significatur quam dicitur” [*De Tropis*, 17].²³ These Latin attempts to define allegory as a trope or device still remain fundamental to our contemporary conceptions. As trope, allegory belongs squarely within a verbal domain. Donatus’s definition suggests that some kind of verbal utterance is imperative in order for the word allegory to obtain. Narrative allegory can, to some extent, be seen as an extension and amplification of this foundational rhetorical definition, for rhetoric relates to entire texts as well as their constitutive sentences and tropes. While these Latin rhetorical/grammatical definitions were, in one sense, narrower than those offered by earlier Hellenic philosophy, by suggesting that allegory was a matter of words suggested the possibility for a species of allegory in the vernacular, even though this entailed a conceptual confusion between verbal and providential signification.

By the Latin Middle Ages, the term ‘allegory’ was already richly saturated, for the Classical Romans had borrowed a term from Greek philosophy, narrowed its usage to rhetoric, and bequeathed to the Christian theologians of the Latin West a confusion about allegory as both a theological concept/reality (early Greek philosophy) and a more limited verbal trope (Latin rhetoric/grammar). With such a broad conceptual conflation, allegory became the main tool for discerning God’s providence in action. The Bible came

²³ These examples were found in Armand Strubel, « *Grant senefiance a* », 21-22.

to signify not only through verbal representations; the sensitive exegete would now come to understand that God writes in events as well as words, and that human history can be analyzed within a providential narrative of salvation. This practice finds sanction in the words of Jesus himself: “Just as Jonas was in the belly of the sea monster [...], so the Son of Man will be in the bosom of the earth.”²⁴ (Matthew, 12:40). From this historical and logical correspondence between Old and New Testaments, the early church fathers cemented the conflation between verbal and historical allegory, though not without spilling into questions of ontology.²⁵ This is the famous distinction between *allegoria in verbis* and *allegoria in factis*, or that of the poets and that of the theologians, the former dealing with the verbal allegory of the words themselves and the latter being understood as God’s providential writing of human history within a structure of likenesses. This was a form of interpretation that pertained exclusively to God’s writing, for Revelation, via providence, meant that the world, its history, and ultimate teleology, were all meaningful and interrelated. Medieval commentators and certain modern critics have long separated the Bible from other texts under the assumption that the Bible requires a hermeneutic that could not, by definition, be applicable to secular texts:

W.K. Wimsatt reminds us that “The poetic universal is of a different sort from the historic and Incarnational,” and Morton Bloomfield similarly objects to such a symbolic approach, not because it finds a Christian *sententia*, but because “it assumes that this symbolic method is unique to the period and that there is no essential difference between literary works and theological or pastoral works. It misunderstands the nature of meaning and of literature.” Nor does historical perspective clear the confusion: St. Thomas reserves the fourfold method for the theologian, not the poet; Boccaccio interprets the poetic fiction of Perseus on four levels; and Dante, who distinguishes “allegory of the theologians” from “allegory of the poets,” apparently invites a reading of his *Commedia*

²⁴ Example drawn from de Lubac, Henri. *Exégèse Médiévale* vol. 1, 180.

²⁵ “Invoking an analogy that would later become commonplace, Origen remarks that the ontological structure of Scripture is analogous (homologous) to that of the universe. Just as the latter is of a dualist structure with corporeal/visible related by analogy to incorporeal/invisible, so is Scripture too.” Boyarin, “Origen as theorist of allegory: Alexandrian contexts” in *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 40.

which is theologically allegorical. St. Thomas, of course, speaks as theologian and not as poet; Boccaccio's fourfold interpretation does not accord with what we might call the "classical" tradition of scriptural exegesis; and critics are still arguing over what to do about Dante.²⁶

While some critics, especially those operating from a Christian framework, have taken great pains to reserve typological readings for the Bible, this hermeneutic has inevitably witnessed spillage into secular genres, not least of which is the theological romance. The exegetical basis for figural representation in the Bible must be underscored because "the special power of biblical language [lies] in its unusual method of signification."²⁷ Despite the almost vertiginous accumulation of senses, the usefulness of the fourfold method can hardly be doubted when one is aiming at a totalizing understanding, "because in a single method it found a way of representing history, morality, and metaphysics simultaneously."²⁸ Thus, the adoption of the fourfold method reflects the ideological presuppositions of an orderly providential universe that explains the whole continuum of history in one extended narrative. The figures of the Old Testament designate literal events in the New Testament as well as offering moral lessons and glimpses of the afterlife. While the means of representation for Biblical interpretation have not changed, the Greek *allegoria* and Roman *sententia* (akin methods that preceded the fourfold) resembled only one of the four senses: the moral. The newer method also had the advantage of diachronicity, because this seemingly cyclical history of Providence takes

²⁶ Stephen Manning. "Typology and the Literary Critic" 51-52. Cf. W.K. Wimsatt, "Two meanings of Symbolism: A Grammatical Exercise" *Renascence*, 8 (1955-56), 16; Morton Bloomfield, "Symbolism in Medieval Literature," *MP*, 56 (1958), 75; Boccaccio, *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, I. iii; Dante, *Convivio*, II. i.

²⁷ *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100 – c. 1375*, 67.

²⁸ Robert Hollander. 27.

place *in time* (after Creation).²⁹ This provided a providential context for both the Bible (as written) and the world, thus uniting the exegete with the object of his study on the same order of existence.

Before extending this concept any further, we must first take a detour through the sign theory of Saint Augustine (354 – 430 AD), who felt it necessary to begin with the most basic building blocks of reading and knowledge in order to lead his readers to a higher understanding of Biblical truth. An elucidation of this sign theory imposes itself as essential because its ontology must be rigorously distinguished from that of Saussure. The contrast between the two theories cannot be emphasized enough: Augustine believed in a world of *referential* signification, whereas Saussure underscored the notion of language as a self-contained system whose logic was internal and not rooted in extramental reality. Most of Augustine's sign theory can be found in his concise preaching manual entitled *De Doctrina Christiana*.³⁰ Augustine defines the sign as “a thing which, in addition to the impression it brings to our senses, yields knowledge of something else” (*Doct. Christ.*, II, 1,1). In addition to the *signum*, we have the *res*, the thing which yields no knowledge of anything outside itself, such as wood, stones, or cattle.³¹ According to Augustine, a *res* can become a *signum* when context would grant it

²⁹ The difficulties implied by chronological/historical versus narrative time was also a feature of the (non-Christian) NeoPlatonic analysis of myth : Cf. Peter D. Struck. “Myth gives Plotinus a means by which he can express synchronic realities in a diachronic narrative form. In the context of Plotinus’ work this is not the simple idea that a story might capture an abstract idea- since at the heart of his corpus Plotinus struggles with the idea of translating the utter transcendence on which his world centers into the discursive sequential logic of language.” *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 58.

³⁰ Saint Augustin, *De Doctrina Christiana*.. Translations are my own.

³¹ *ibid.*, I,2,2. Cf.: “This is why, in the distinction between things and signs, when we talk about things, we speak of them in such a way that certain things can be used as signs, and this is not a hindrance to our plan, which is to deal first with things and then with signs. We must remember for now, when dealing with things, it is their *reality* that we must first consider, and not what else they signify outside of themselves.” *De Doctrina*. (I, II.2). “Ignorance of things renders expressions obscure when it deals with natural properties of animate beings, stones, plants, or other things that figure in Scripture as symbols.” *Ibid* (II, 24.)

a meaning that would extend beyond its material ontology. God's writing can transform the natural object into one endowed with signification, thereby bestowing the things of this world with a greater signification in a providential universe. Augustine divides signs into two categories: natural (*signa naturalia*) and intentional (*signa data*). Natural signs are things which, by their very nature, lead to knowledge of something else. They can be as simple as the footprint of an animal or smoke resulting from combustion, or they can involve more primal aspects of human communication, such as facial expressions, which will be indicative of certain emotions. Among the intentional signs, which are given by animals, man, or God (through human intermediaries), the most common, of course, are *words*. Although words are things in themselves, they are used, first and foremost, to signify things beyond their sonorous characteristics. Moreover, Augustine sees in these signs different kinds of functions, depending on the degree of literality. Literal use of words (*signa propria*) will designate things belonging to a particular class in the most common acceptation. When figuration is involved, or the thing is removed from its usual context to signify something of a different order, we are dealing with a *signum translatum*, corresponding in rhetorical terminology (i.e., not ontologically) to 'metaphor'.

Absent from Augustine's discussion, however, is an even more fundamental question: namely, what are things? the answer to which I shall return to shortly, and which will reveal one of the most fundamental ideological gaps between our present age and the past. C.S. Lewis rightly pointed out that our critical impulses with regard to this question have been, to some extent, misguided: "To ask how these married pairs of sensibles and insensibles first came together would be great folly; the real question is

how they ever came apart.”³² Evidence for their disentanglement can be found as early as Geoffrey of Vinsauf (*Poetria Nova* – c. 1210) in the thirteenth century, who asserted the primacy of thought over language.³³ Centuries later, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) offered a philosophy of history which divided the world into three ages – the ages of gods, heroes and men - corresponding, respectively, to increasing rationalization and less abstraction, with the heroic age being the descriptor for what corresponds to allegorical writing.³⁴ Vico’s cyclical history concerning narrative, however antiquated, yielded some impressively suggestive explanations, which hinge in part on societies’ conceptual relation between ‘general’ and ‘particular’ throughout the ages. In this heroic age, less rigorous in its distinction between concrete and abstract (or alternatively, particular and universal) the mind is supposedly “closer” to the objects of thought. Ultimately I will suggest an alternative answer to Lewis’s question in the first chapter of the present work. Suffice it to say now that we can temper Lewis’s observation by saying that the marriage of sensibles and insensibles is fundamental to the *realist* mind rather than to mind in general.

Augustine’s conception of things belongs to a Platonized Christianity. No individual entity could signify anything in itself, but its properties can be abstracted to their most ideal form within the Divine Mind. This becomes evident in Augustine’s gloss of the *Genesis*, in which he reserves a huge place for the literal sense, but it must be maintained that the referent of this literal sense is usually the Platonized archetype

³² Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 44.

³³ Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*. in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 229: “When due order has arranged the material in the hidden chamber of the mind, let poetic art come forward to clothe the matter with words.”

³⁴ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, esp. 31 -32. Vico’s analysis allows for the simultaneity of the forms of signification, but his investigation is more sociological than literary. This work, which accounted for both linear and cyclical histories, was fundamental to Auerbach’s conception of literature. cf. Edward Said’s introduction to Auerbach’s *Mimesis* (Princeton, 2003) xii.

located within the Divine Mind. In a preface to *De Genesi ad Litteram*, A. Solignac explains why the literal sense is stretched to its very limits:

One may ask how one can call an exegesis 'literal' when it seems to devote so much explanation to allegory. [...] When the words concern God and His action, Augustine, in order to discern the literal sense within Biblical narrative – meaning not what we understand upon first reading, but what God wanted to tell us through the letter -, applies this rule of analogy that is inseparable from the very notion of creation. God speaks to man in a language that man can understand, a language borrowed from things from time and space, while He is before all time and all space.³⁵

In dealing with what may be called “ultimate truths” about the nature of the universe, Saint Augustine offers his literal gloss, but in relying so heavily on a Christian and Platonic ontology, his treatment of the Genesis seems to engulf all forms of figuration as a kind of “analogical” literalism. Thus, when speaking of God’s words “Let there be light”, Augustine offers a literal gloss in the following manner:

These words of God were prior to any vibration of air, prior to any voice from the flesh or the clouds; in His sovereign wisdom through which all things were made, God did not really make these words resound for human ears, but rather He inserted within the things made the causes of things to be made, He made the futures through his all-powerful virtue and he created man, who would be formed in his own time, by inscribing him the seed or in the root of time, when He created this beginning in which the worlds originate, created by Him who is before all worlds.³⁶

Augustine’s gloss on the Genesis remains squarely literal because human language is only an approximation of these divine concepts which are not empirically apprehensible. Augustine thereby extends the bounds of the literal sense by emphasizing the disparity

³⁵ Saint Augustin, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 44. "Nous nous demandions comment on peut qualifier de littérale une exégèse qui semble faire une si large place à l'allégorie. Les exemples auxquels nous venons de faire allusion mettent sur la voie de la solution. Lorsqu'il s'agit de Dieu et de son action, Augustin, pour dégager le sens littéral du récit biblique – c'est-à-dire non pas ce que nous comprenons à première lecture, mais ce que Dieu a voulu nous dire à travers la lettre -, applique cette loi d'analogie qui est inséparable de la notion même de création. Dieu parle à l'homme un langage que l'homme puisse comprendre, un langage emprunté aux choses de l'espace et du temps, alors qu'il est avant tous les temps et avant tous les espaces."

³⁶ *ibid*, 462. This passage is in reference to Genesis I, 26-29. All translations from this work are my own.

between divine and human signification, and one that is retained in Aquinas's theory of Analogy, as we shall see in the first chapter.

Augustine frequently appeals to a Platonic metaphor of ascension with regard to understanding, which stems from sensory impressions into something intelligible and ultimately to some spiritual truth. In book four of *De Doctrina*, "the theme [...] is that of the eloquence of words (*verba*) versus the immeasurably greater eloquence of realities (*res*), of truth."³⁷ Augustine warns of the danger of words being used for their own sake, for this would result in the preacher loving the words carnally and not for God (*cupiditas*). Unlike sacraments, themselves signs, words are subject to temporality and thus are not part of the immutable signs of a divine order. This is perhaps why Augustine, to supplement his exhortation that preachers become familiar with languages, also recommends knowledge of things. "The real utility of knowledge of things lies in the clarification of signs rather than *vice versa*."³⁸ It must be remembered that for Augustine, words themselves are things, and to confuse *signum* with *verbum* is to misunderstand a large portion of Augustine's semiology, i.e. words signify precisely because they form part of his theistic *ontology*. In addition, Augustine uses a common term for both terrestrial things and divine realities (*res*), thereby cementing a homology between concrete and abstract nouns/"things". Pagan authors had their place, according to Augustine, but only with the understanding that, in themselves, classical works imparted temporal wisdom rather than the immutable wisdom of the divine, both of these branches of wisdom falling under the term '*res*'.³⁹ Mazzeo argues that the ascension up the ladder

³⁷ Mazzeo. "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence", 177.

³⁸ Ibid. 181. Cf. Etienne Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de St. Augustin*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1943), 151-153.

³⁹ Mazzeo, 187. Cf. *De Magistro* III 5-6 and XI, 36 to XII, 46; Cf. Richard McKeon, "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages", 266.

of knowledge will result in direct contemplation of divine realities, a culminating moment which is marked by silence. At this crucial instant, one leaves behind temporal words in favor of immutable truths. The moment of ‘absolute’ understanding is accompanied by silence, and this is hardly paradoxical if one underscores the insufficiency of human language. Mazzeo’s observation is fruitful in that it underscores the importance of the metaphor of *movement* within Augustine’s conception of knowledge. Signs ultimately point to or ‘designate’ a destination. The bustling din of rhetoric is but a means of transport to a sphere of knowledge that, when coupled with *caritas*, renders the obscurities of the Bible intelligible.

Following in Augustine’s footsteps, the Venerable Bede (672? – 735 AD) offers a more succinct elaboration of tropes in his *De schematibus et tropis sacrae Scripturae liber*, a work which manages to synthesize the ‘allegory’ of the grammarians, notably Donatus and Cassiodorus, with Augustine’s more providential conception. His analysis of ‘allegory’, itself a genus, with “irony, antiphrasis, enigma, charientismus, paroemia, sarcasm, and asteismus” as various species of this master-trope, proceeds immediately from rhetoric to exegesis, as a reflection of the increased serviceability of the term after its *translatio* from the Greek. Bede frames rhetoric within a work of Christian apologetics and uses the former to examine various aspects of biblical symbolism.⁴⁰ When Bede defines the trope (“*tropus est dictio translata a propria significatione ad non propriam similitudinem*”)⁴¹, Armand Strubel, a keen reader of Jean de Meun’s *Rose*, asks the question of what “proper” means in this context and notes that the ambiguity lies in whether the propriety is with regard to the discourse itself or the symbolizing referents.

⁴⁰ Armand Strubel, “Allegoria in factis”, 348.

⁴¹ Bede, *Libri II De Arte Metrica et De schematibus et tropis*, 182. Strubel apparently uses a different manuscript with minor variations.

Terms such as ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ were both in use even into the late Middle Ages, and this categorization may have been, as I will argue in the first chapter, detrimental to the development of ‘improper’ signification and the role it plays in logic.⁴² As we shall see in chapter 1, ‘improper’ signification was discarded from the dialectic because it came to designate all figurative usage.

Bede makes historical allegory (*in factis*) a simple extension of his earlier definition of verbal allegory (*in verbis*), thereby retaining the same term ‘*allegoria*’ for both modes of signification. What at first appears a confused gesture on Bede’s part is ultimately revelatory of how inextricably linked these two forms of allegory are, for they betray his ultimate realistic assumptions about analogous (human and divine) forms of writing.⁴³ Bede explains that historical allegory, except in the case of prophecy, is necessarily contaminated by our notions of verbal allegory and operates by similar means, namely, by a similarity between predicates.⁴⁴ The historical event of Jacob’s coat finds resonance with all the faithful of Christ because the act of putting on a multi-color garb is similar, and not just rhetorically, to the act of ‘clothing oneself in virtue.’ Similar accounts are offered for the way in which Christ’s passion was prefigured both verbally and historically in the Old Testament. In contrast to Bede, Augustine’s use of the term

⁴² Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ch. 6: “Some *tropes* are employed to help out our meaning and others to adorn our style, some arise from words used *properly* and others from words used *metaphorically*.” 158.

⁴³ Bede, *De Schematibus et Tropis*, 205: “History is literally prefigured by verbal allegory, when the Patriarch Jacob’s pronouncement [Gn. 49.9], “Juda is a lion’s whelp; to the prey, my son, you have gone up”, etc., is understood to refer to the kingdom and victories of David. Verbal allegory expresses a spiritual sense concerning Christ or the Church, when the same speech of the Patriarch is taken in faith to refer to the Lord’s passion and resurrection. Likewise, historical allegory conveys a tropological, that is, a moral lesson, when the ankle-length coat of many colors which the Patriarch Jacob made for his son Joseph [Gn. 37:3, 23] alludes to the grace of the various virtues which God the Father commanded us always to be clothed in to the end of our life and which he confers upon us.”

⁴⁴ Cf. Strubel, *La Rose, Renart et le Graal*, 14: “Le double sens mis en oeuvre par l’allégorie repose sur une déduction qui va de la “surface” de la lettre à la “profondeur” du sens grâce à des réseaux d’analogies. La transposition s’effectue par l’identité des prédicats, exprimée par des comparaisons explicites ou sous-entendues.”

‘allegory’ had been rather more limited (i.e., pertaining only to realities and not words) and it seems that he does not see it as playing any direct role in his sign theory: “Allegory is not found in the words, but in the historical events themselves” (*De Trinitate*, XV, 9, 15).⁴⁵

We have seen how the term ‘allegory’ alternately embraces both a figure of speech and a historical reality, and in the latter some notion of “providence” can always be assumed. This is clearly exemplified in the same section of *De Trinitate*, where the providential aspect of the trope is in evidence in the testamentary significance of Jacob and Esau:

Of this trope, that is allegory, there are various species, and among them the one called enigma. Now the definition of the general term must necessarily embrace all its species. And thus in the same way as every horse is an animal while not every animal is a horse, so every enigma is an allegory while not every allegory is an enigma. [...] When the apostle talked of allegory, he did not find it in words but in a fact, arguing that the two testaments are to be understood from the two sons of Abraham, one born of the slave woman, the other of the free; this was not just said – it happened. And before he explained it, its meaning was obscure. So allegory of this sort, called by the general name, could specifically be called an enigma.⁴⁶

In keeping with his rhetorical training, however, Augustine explains the relation of the tropes as being one of genus (allegory) to a species (enigma).⁴⁷ What is interesting for our purposes, however, is how, within this conception, rhetoric and providential meaning

⁴⁵ Strubel. “ ‘Allegoria in factis’ et ‘Allegoria in verbis’ ” in *Poétique* 23. This quotation is drawn from the article. Strubel shows that Augustine’s use of the word ‘allegory’ sometimes contradicts this opinion. Translation is my own.

⁴⁶ Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book XV, 15. 406-407. Cf. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, 34: “The [poetic] characters of which we speak were certain imaginative genera (images for the most part of animate substances, of gods or heroes, formed by the imagination) to which they reduced all the species or all the particulars appertaining to each genus; exactly as the fables of human times, such as those of late comedy, are intelligible genera reasoned out by moral philosophy, from which the comic poets form imaginative genera (for the best ideas of human types are nothing but that) which are the persons of the comedies.” pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷ ‘Aenigma’, ‘symbolon’ and ‘hyponoia’ (under-meaning) were the three central terms for Ancient allegorical reading. Even Plutarch calls ‘allegory’ a recent term, thereby explaining its reduced importance as a term for Augustine. Cf. Struck and Copeland, *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 2-3.

were but two facets of the same reality, the consequence of which is that words are not the intermediary for things, but rather inseparable from them. This generic division of allegory into its various species was laid out more systematically, as we saw earlier, by Bede in his *De schematibus et tropis*, where we find a greater clarity of discussion about individual tropes, but without Augustine's clear exposition of his ontological foundations. Although the terms in question here - *allegoria*, *species*, *genus* - all acquired much more specific usages in Scholastic debates, the juxtaposition of said terms in this seminal work of Augustine is still evidence of, at the very least, a latent association. In this particular passage, Augustine divorces the term 'allegory' from rhetoric almost entirely, making it rather a function of extra-linguistic signification, for God can dispense with the signifiers, (i.e., human language) and link two referents (discrete historical events) by an analogous form of writing whose slate is divine providence. While the sign bridges the gap between the *mundus sensibilis* and the *mundus intelligibilis*, divine semiology utilizes events as if they were concrete signs, and the only link between them lies in some kind of external similitude.

Despite these gains that its methodology necessarily entailed, providential allegory, as exemplified in the fourfold method of reading Scripture, had become so complex and subject to confusion that twelfth and thirteenth-century exegesis was becoming a hodgepodge of various methods. There arose two problems with the fourfold interpretation of Scripture: the first pertained to parables, whose literal sense did not coincide with historical truth; the second was the fact that the fourfold method was first and foremost chronological, the historical sense belonging to the Old Testament and the

other senses to the New and beyond.⁴⁸ Many exegetes, including Hugh of Saint Victor (1096-1141), asserted that there are only three senses.⁴⁹ Alexander of Hales (c. 1183 – 1245) was not alone in trying to resolve this bifurcation of senses, and allowed for parables to be included within the literal sense because of their likeness (*similitudo*) to real events. In addition, he noted that there was some overlap in the other senses depending on perspective.⁵⁰ The ambiguity present in the words “allegorical” and “moral” may have been responsible for some of the confusion. While there seems to be some consensus about the chronological basis of the fourfold method, the semantic echo of such words inevitably led to expositions that were more suitable to the “allegory of the poets” than to the theologians. Sensitive to the excesses of interpretation following the fourfold method, Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274) dispenses with the method altogether, instead opting for only literal and spiritual senses of Scripture. The tension between verbal and ‘real’ allegory evoked in Alexander of Hales’ *Sum of Theology* finds more concise expression in St. Thomas’s *Summa Theologica*:

Though in every branch of knowledge words have meaning, this science [theology] has this special property, that the things meant by the words also themselves have meaning. That first meaning, whereby the words signify things, belongs to the first sense, which is the historical or literal sense. That meaning, whereby the things signified by the words in turn signify other things, is called the spiritual sense, and this is based upon the literal sense and presupposes it.⁵¹

By this broad stroke, Aquinas extends the domain of the literal sense to include all kinds of verbal figuration, and he is well aware of the consequences of such a statement that

⁴⁸ “Le premier sens, ou l’histoire, a rapport à l’Ancien Testament ; par rapport à nous il est donc maintenant lointain ; les trois autres sens concernent le Nouveau Testament. Précision capitale...” Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale I*, 24.

⁴⁹ Hugh of Saint Victor, *Didascalicon*, (5,2) 120-121.

⁵⁰ Alexander of Hales, *Sum of Theology*, in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, 222.

⁵¹ Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* Art. 10 found in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, 241. This topic is reprised in his *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, VII, Qu. 6, Art. 1.

“there should be several meanings in one passage of Scripture, even when interpreted literally.”⁵² Bede’s exposition of verbal allegory therefore becomes superfluous in Aquinas’s system, for the latter is not interested in allegory as a trope, but rather in the significance that extends from things.⁵³ As we shall see in the next chapter, Aquinas’s proposed conceptual shift in the senses of Scripture corresponds with his more philosophical (Christian Aristotelian) distinctions between human and divine predication, which, for the sake of concision, correspond to his theory of Analogy.

The word ‘*res*’, alternately translated as ‘thing’ or ‘reality’ depending on context, is, according to both Augustine and Aquinas, endowed with the capacity to signify other ‘*res*’ in the Bible in a similar fashion to words. Alexander of Hales, Thomas Gallus and Thomas Aquinas all mention ‘*similitudines*’ as the primary means of referring to something other than that which is designated. All three offer cogent examples of how things, through their likeness to other things, can be translated onto different chronological or contextual scenes.⁵⁴ Thomas of Chobham, following Cicero (*De Inventione* 1.24.34-27.41) and Boethius (*De tropicis differentiis*, book 4), states that one thing can signify another “through the interpretation of a name, through the quality of a

⁵² Ibid. 242.

⁵³ Aquinas uses Augustine to support his abolition of verbal allegory: *De util. cred.* Iii. 5 and *Confessions*. XII. Xxxi. 42. Cf. Armand Stubel, “Allegoria in factis”, 354, quoting Aquinas: “Tout ce qui provient de la signification même des mots se rapporte au sens littéral ; quant au sens spirituel, il vient de ce que certaines choses sont exprimées de façon figurée, par d’autres choses, car le visible est figure de l’invisible. Or, la vérité que l’Ecriture nous révèle à travers la figuration par les choses, a deux fins : la vraie foi, ou la bonne conduite.” (Quodl. VII. Qu. 6, Art. 2).

⁵⁴ It must be noted that likeness/similitude is only the primary step in exegetical decoding. Progressive knowledge will eventually seek more elaborate and strained metaphors between dissimilar objects: “I do not think that any prudent man would deny that dissimilar figures elevate our mind more effectively than similar ones [...] Therefore [...], the holy theologians in their wisdom, elevating men’s minds toward the heavenly, set themselves to use comparisons that are very unlike in designating heavenly things. Thus they do now [sic] allow our mind, which is immersed in material things, to rest content with such images, but by the ugly nature of the images, they stir up and raise that power which our mind possesses of understanding heavenly things.” Thomas Gallus, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 2, quoted in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, 178-179. A similar refutation of Dionysius’s claim that dissimilar metaphors are inappropriate to things divine can be found in Alexander of Hales’ *Sum of Theology* (Art. 3), found in *ibid.* 218-219.

thing, and similarly through quantity, condition, gesture, deed, and number; and especially through cause, manner, place, and time.”⁵⁵ Both quality and condition relate almost exclusively to persons and things and their attributes. One must in turn assume that these attributes are stable and immutable, i.e. posit that the Word is not susceptible to temporal/historical corruption, in order that its timeless significance can be transmitted from one age to the next.

It is a suspicion of contingency in the nature of things, however, that characterizes the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and gave rise to one of the great debates of the Middle Ages: namely, the universals debate. In Plato’s *Cratylus*, the word was assumed to arise naturally from a resonance within the thing itself. This belief, though not without contest (for even Porphyry acknowledges some ambivalence on this matter in his *Isagoge*), had done much to secure realistic ideology for centuries following its initial exposition. Marc-René Jung makes this point concisely in the introduction to his work on French allegorical poetry. This, however, accompanies his conviction that personification allegory flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth century which he dubs “l’*époque du nominalisme philosophique*.”⁵⁶ Despite the rather crude equivalence of certain centuries with one or the other philosophy, here yielding a historical error, there is nonetheless a correct intuition about the link between literature and philosophy. Allegorical literature in the vernacular, though hardly a new phenomenon, thrived at a time when the inherent link between words and things was being called into question in the universals debate. Predication or definition (i.e. that “man is a mortal, rational animal,” or the more contested “man is a species”) was a means of relating language to the extramental world,

⁵⁵ Thomas of Chobham, 5n.

⁵⁶ Marc-René Jung, *Etudes sur le poème allégorique en France au Moyen Age*, 21.

and not just descriptively, but necessarily. When the nature of the universal was called into question by the likes of Abelard (1079-1142), the claims for predication had to be reevaluated. Although I will treat this subject in greater depth in the first chapter, suffice it to say now that Abelard's interrogation of the nature of genera and species resulted in a crisis in predication, and by extension, a crisis in signification which medieval scholars in the twelfth century were hard-pressed to resolve. This resolution almost always began with a logical reevaluation of the authority's ontology, especially when resolution through verbal ambiguity was not a possibility.

We can see this "ontological anxiety" in operation Dante's characterization of his own prosopopoeia Amore in *Vita Nuova*.⁵⁷ Here, Dante asks a philosophical question that he does not resolve by philosophical methodology:

At this point it may be that someone [...] could be puzzled at my speaking of Love as if it were a thing in itself, as if it were not only an intellectual *substance*, but also a bodily substance. This is patently false, for Love does not exist in itself as a substance, but is an *accident* in a substance."⁵⁸

There is no doubt as to the provenance of this vocabulary: these are terms borrowed directly from Aristotle's *Categories*, and were equally important in the debate over universals. Dante is justifying the rhetorical use of 'Amore' for Cupid, god of love based on Roman precedence (Ovid, Virgil, *translatio studii*). He thus manages to avoid a discussion of the philosophical conundrum he poses, which deals with the homonymous

⁵⁷ Personification, or *prosopopoeia*, is a prevalent feature of medieval allegory, though I would contend that its usage owes more to tradition and to philosophical Realism than to any inherent relationship to intengumental allegory. Cf. Struck and Copeland, *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 6: "Personification is also an ancient device of poetry; in the rhetorical handbooks of antiquity it was treated under the term *prosopopoeia*, in which an imaginary character speaks. In various forms, personification was always a central component of allegorical procedures. Thus it is not surprising that it became the most prominent form of allegorical composition from late Antiquity through the late Renaissance."

⁵⁸ Alighieri, Dante. *Vita Nuova* (XXV) in *The Portable Dante*, 623-624. Italics are my own. Cf. C.S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 47n: "Potrebbe qui dubitare persona...di ciò che io dico d'Amore come se fosse una cosa per sè, e non solamente sustanzia intelligente, ma sì come fosse sustanzia corporale; la quale cose, secondo la veritade, è falsa; che Amore non è per sè sì come sustanzia, ma è uno accidente in sustanzia."

designation of material substance and immaterial reality, and this difficulty of conceptual representation is manifest in both logical, and consequently, theological discussions of substance that will be the subject of the first chapter. Dante's question brings us straight to the 'ineffability' *topos* that seems to be a constant of allegory itself.⁵⁹ While Dante eschews a realism that would grant existence to these abstract nouns outside sensibles, he simultaneously sanctions the use of *abstractum agens* (i.e. the god of love = love), because knowledge, from a cognitive standpoint, proceeds from the concrete to greater levels of abstraction. Both poetically and didactically I believe that Dante's justification would also have served Jean de Meun in his own highly abstract narrative, as we shall see in the third and fourth chapters.

Signification by ontology

A consequence of the incorporation of Aristotle into questions of substance is that it entails a questioning of what 'literal' designations are. Literality presupposes that words, and particularly substantives, are utilized in their most common acceptance. These substantives, which we called 'things' in the introduction, can be rendered more specifically here by the more technical term 'substance'. This last term, Aristotle's *ousia*, was foundational to his ontology, metaphysics and epistemology. Nonetheless, his complete, and sometimes contradictory view of the problem of substance, was not readily available throughout the Latin Middle Ages, due to lack of translations. While Porphyry (A.D. 234- c. 305) and Boethius had in their own time translated or partially expounded

⁵⁹ "Like metaphor metonymy, and synecdoche, allegory is a trope, but unlike these, it is also the name for what lies behind and beyond language." Copeland and Struck, *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 11.

some of the “Philosopher’s” works, both had broached Aristotle’s theory of substance from a perspective that was, in the case of the former, NeoPlatonic in the extreme, and in the case of the latter, derivative of a more mitigated Platonism.

The question of universals has long plagued philosophers. Ancient and medieval philosophers tried to solve the problem of genera and species, but judging from the history of philosophy, none has managed to offer the definitive sentence on this debate, for variations of the debate have appeared in such thinkers as Locke, Hume, and Kant. In the broadest strokes, the debate can be framed thus: there are those who believe that every existent thing is individual and that there is no such thing as a species ‘dog’, but rather there are only individual dogs, therefore universality is a property of the term ‘dog’ being applied to discrete individual dogs (early Ockham). There is another belief that ‘dog’ is not only a linguistic sign, but also a universal in that it calls to mind the same image and definition for many different people, even though the abstract species does not, in itself, exist (Abelard). There are other philosophers who believe that individual dogs are the reason for the species, and this abstract species is not merely conceptual, but rather reflects the common substance shared by any individual dogs (Aristotle). Finally, there are those who believe that the abstract species ‘dog’ is more real than any individual dogs, since the idea of ‘dog’ is immutable, whereas individual dogs are subject to change (Plato). In this quadruple schema, which is only a broad glimpse of the possible alternatives, we have the first option granting reality only to individuals, and the final option which grants the highest degree of reality to the universal (here treated as a *separately* existing substance). And yet, on both sides of the debate, there is an implied question which is always looming in the background yet rarely made explicit, namely,

how do we safeguard the validity of general (scientific) statements? Throughout western philosophical history, variations on this basic conceptual scheme have been myriad, and so, for the sake of brevity, I am limiting myself to only some of the most famous spokespeople on the debate throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Given the often complex network associations that occur within this debate for well over a millennium, as well as the reliance of our philosophers on the *auctoritas* of precedence, this chapter will aim, for the most part, to frame the problem chronologically rather than thematically. This methodology aims to ensure the realization that, at no stage in the history of this debate was there, properly speaking, unanimity on the subject. This survey of a thorny linguistic predicament will lay bare the foundational assumptions about language and reality which are integral to the notions of allegory and troping.

Both the *Queste* and the *Rose* aspire to a form of signification that can properly be called providential. Because discussions of substance logically lead into hypotheses of cosmogonies, they are one of the best markers at this time for dealing with providence in philosophical terms. If Augustinian exegesis held as its first tenet that one must know things, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries augmented the technical vocabulary for the discussion, in such a way that Aristotelian terminology would often be placed alongside quotations from the gospels. As we saw in the introduction, exegesis concerned the interpretation of Biblical language, and the means of exposition had to be, in theology as in any other science, “logical”. It would be hard to imagine that any of the exegetes dealt with in this study was unfamiliar with Aristotle’s *Categories*, and equally hard to imagine that they were unaware of the controversies surrounding this most fundamental of logical treatises. Because of the broad, though hardly monolithic, tendency within the

Middle Ages to treat language as a natural reflection of reality, rather than itself constitutive of that reality, it follows that when exegetes interpret the words of the Bible, they cannot but tacitly parse the sentences according to the same logic as in scientific inquiry. The relative autonomy of exegesis and glosses on the *trivium* need not dissuade us from tracing a connection between the two disciplines, for the fact that the Bible is written in a language entails the corollary that its language is susceptible of logical analysis.

The Ancient Foundations

In turning to our corpus of logical glosses from Antiquity to the high Scholastic period, it should be noted that the greatest instigators of our debate, Plato and Aristotle, were almost always the origin of the conundrum, though their influence on the first half of the Middle Ages was more like that of a vestige, for direct access to their works was certainly not a possibility, especially in the case of Plato. The inclusion, then, of these masters of Antiquity within a work that purports to explain the role of providence in the Middle Ages, might at first glance seem superfluous. It is my contention, however, that to begin with Porphyry or Boethius puts us in the same position as people such as Anselm or Abelard, whose important work was quickly rendered obsolete by the appearance of new translations and a more complete Aristotle in the mid twelfth century. The second advantage of such a chronological exposition is that it shows that throughout the various

phases of the debate, certain critiques remained constant, such as the appeal to allegory and figuration, or in the Islamic and Middle Ages, the threat of heresy.⁶⁰

Much care has been taken in scholarship to disentangle Aristotle from the Neoplatonism with which his thought was first presented, in an attempt to treat Aristotle's logic on his own terms. Given Aristotle's critiques of his former master, it seems odd now that Boethius believed the two philosophers could be reconciled. And yet, the dialectical reaction to these early endeavors, namely in the treatment of the two philosophers' thought as wholly dichotomous (the more standard interpretation nowadays), is also fraught with its own difficulties. In assessing the work of the so-called "Middle Platonism" (80 B.C. – A.D. 220), L.M. de Rijk has argued cogently against some of his contemporaries about the validity of the modern endeavor: "It seems [...] that the later Platonists are shamelessly appropriating and fathering on Plato the distinctive discoveries and formulations of Aristotle. [...] Modern enthusiasm for ferreting out 'aristotelianisms' and 'stoicisms' in works from (Neo)platonian circles, seems to lead to a false view of the historical situation."⁶¹ Although one may sense an element of Platonic apologetics in De Rijk's work, he manages to argue persuasively for the reasons such conflation between the two philosophers continued to crop up centuries after Porphyry's initial exposition. This is not only to show historical continuity between Ancient and Medieval times, but rather to show how the problems raised by Ancient logicians were echoed, not only in by Porphyry and Boethius, but also by several centuries of Islamic

⁶⁰ Cf. Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 1 : Greece and Rome* 294: "Plato tries to explain the relation [between Form and sensible object] by the use of terms such as "participation" or "imitation," but Aristotle retorts that "to say that they (i.e. sensible things) are patterns and that the other things share in them, is to use empty words and poetical metaphors." Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. M 1079 b 24-6; A. 991 a 20-2.

⁶¹ De Rijk 1- 84

thought (who had a much fuller Aristotelian corpus at their disposition than did the first generation of medievals), and by the two waves of medieval commentary with the arbitrarily drawn rupture that occurs with the vast translation movement of Aristotle's full corpus.⁶² One of the key points of De Rijk's reconstructionist argument is that the Peripatetics were already fully immersed in Platonic logic and that Aristotelian and Platonic logic need not be considered so antithetical.

The Platonic theory of forms and participation distinguishes Plato's ontology from Aristotle's most clearly. If we say that both Susan and Emily are beautiful, the primary reality of the sentence lies in the abstract predicate 'beauty', that real entity in which both women participate. And for Plato, beauty, a pure form, can also be a universal, or "the logical side of the ontology of Forms".⁶³ The corollary of the theory of participation is that the predicate will be both abstract and treated as a substantive, given that the temporal aspect of verbs signals their mutability, and consequently, their failure to assimilate into true knowledge. (i.e., Mary sings/is a singer = Mary participates in song). While a mainstay of Platonic thought, the theory of forms was problematized by Plato himself in the *Parmenides*, where the old Parmenides levels various critiques against Socrates's theory of participation, noting especially how the unchanging world of forms bears no relation the mutability of the sensible world.⁶⁴ In fact, Plato had already acknowledged as metaphorical such formulations as "So-and-so is beautiful" (in contrast to "so-and-so partakes of beauty"). Parmenides then shows that these metaphors break down when Forms are brought into question, for if one participates in the form of beauty, then this beauty must, consequently, be divisible, thereby destroying the absolute unity

⁶² For a fuller account of this translation movement, see Dod, 74-9.

⁶³ De Rijk 1- 89.

⁶⁴ De Rijk 1 – 90. Cf. Copleston, Frederick, *A History of Philosophy, Vol 1: Greece and Rome*, 181-185.

and simplicity of the Form. This is an early indication of a certain rationalism in Plato's writing, for he seems cognizant of the fact that such metaphorical language is not entirely propitious to his new philosophical system.⁶⁵ Cast in such terms, 'forms' have not only the qualities of substantives, but of substances.

Forms are arranged in hierarchy, as outlined in the *Sophist*, from the generic form (animal) all the way down to species (e.g. man, horse), and the physical, mutable world of individuals lying at the lowest chain of being. This world of individuals is not divisible, but rather is the consequence of the division of the most complex form, yielding parts (*moria* or *merê*). The divisible forms encompass individuals, but not in the sense of containment, but rather as "pervading them and extended throughout all of them."⁶⁶

While the ontology of the form has been at the forefront of this discussion thus far, it should also be noted that these forms bear also on linguistic usage, and a passage from the *Republic* makes explicit that the common name of individual objects, referring as they do to Forms, designate "the same object in the understanding of both speaker and interlocutor."⁶⁷

Plato's student Aristotle was one of the most critical of his master's theory of Forms. Instead he places individuals at the center of his ontology, making the secondary substances (genera and species) dependent upon the individuals for their existence. This pivotal step within Aristotle's *Categories* should not imply that the logical use of the categories trumps their ontological status, although this was the conclusion drawn by the

⁶⁵ Plato himself, while never forsaking his theory of forms, given that true knowledge is impossible without the existence of immutable objects, turns to a more supple view in later dialogues, especially *The Sophist*, where he "refuses to take any longer immutability as the characteristic of Real being and associate all change with the nature proper to the world of becoming." (De Rijk 1- 95)

⁶⁶ De Rijk 1- 100- adapting Plato's *Sophist*.

⁶⁷ De Rijk 1- 108.

Structuralist linguist Emile Benveniste.⁶⁸ De Rijk has argued persuasively that this tendency finds greater sanction in our modern way of thinking than was the case for Aristotle.⁶⁹ But De Rijk's salutary observations must be framed within his own ideological agenda, which consists, namely, in rejecting the epistemological break between Plato and Aristotle in favor of greater continuity. Thus, he is able to state that the latter's rejection of the theory of Forms "was just a rejection of their separate (i.e. transcendent) status and an attempt at yielding, accordingly, the ontological monopoly to their immanent status."⁷⁰ Indeed, Aristotle's formulations show not only a new primacy of the individual as far as sensible knowledge, but also a formalism that is strikingly not so divergent from that of his former master.⁷¹ The universal is equally real for Aristotle, although not located in an immaterial realm, but rather determinate of the form of the individual and, in the case of knowledge, abstracted from individuals.

While the homonymous term 'substance' encompasses both primary (individual) and secondary (species, genus) substances, Aristotle shifts drastically from the notion of participation by insisting that these secondary substances are not present within primary substances (like sugar in a cake), but rather they are said of a subject (e.g. Socrates is a man). Thus for Aristotle, the Platonic notion of these Forms ("universals" when these Forms are considered logically) existing *ante rem*, or prior to their individual instantiations, is flatly dismissed. So too, at least in the case of the *Categories*, is the possibility of universality *in re*, as would be the case if we were to say that "humanity

⁶⁸ Benveniste Émile, "Catégories de pensée et catégories de langue," 419-429.

⁶⁹ De Rijk 2 – 84. Cp. Copleston, Vol. 1, 279: "The Categories, however, were not in Aristotle's mind simply modes of mental representation, moulds of concepts: they represent the actual modes of being in the extramental world, and form the bridge between Logic and Metaphysics (which latter science has Substance as its chief subject)."

⁷⁰ De Rijk 2 – 98.

⁷¹ De Libéra, 71: "N'est il pas [Aristote], qui plus est, patonicien quand il justifie ce déplacement par le fait que la forme constitue toute la réalité de l'individu où elle est engagée?"

inheres in Socrates”.⁷² Therefore, Aristotle endorses a view of universality *post rem*, in which the sentence “Socrates is a man” remains valid but the common noun ‘man’ is subordinated to and made dependent on individuals for its existence. But this classification does not suggest that these secondary substances are merely logical figments, for they are, like individuals, substances. Furthermore, Aristotle does not think of predication as a mere linguistic game. It is not the name that is predicated of a subject, but rather the thing signified which is predicated.⁷³

A further investigation of Aristotle’s *Organon* (his logical corpus) shows that within the *Categories*, the *Metaphysics* and the *Posterior Analytics*, various, somewhat contradictory definitions are given of the universal. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle states that no universal is a substance, but this seems to be in direct conflict with the foundational principles of the *Categories* where genera and species are treated as secondary substances. To confuse matters further, in the *Posterior Analytics*, II, 19, he characterizes the universal as “resting in the soul as a unity outside of any multiplicity” residing “one and identical in all particular subjects.”⁷⁴ While the more standard (and Abelardian) interpretation of Aristotle favors the definition laid down by the *Categories* (the universal is ‘said of’ subjects rather than inhering in them), there is doubtless a case to be made that Aristotle’s writings about the universal are, when taken literally, more than slightly incongruous. It is no wonder then, that in the thirteenth century, when the full logical corpus became available and Aristotle was increasingly being taken on his

⁷² See also De Libéra , 30-31, for various examples of incoherence within Aristotle’s own corpus regarding universality. De Libéra traces Aristotle’s definition of the universal in the *Categories*, *Metaphysics*, and the *Posterior Analytics*. There was much fruitful ground for discussion on both sides of the issue (realism vs. nominalism) even if one limits the range of study to Aristotle alone.

⁷³ For a fuller account of Aristotle’s realism, see De Rijk 2 – 90-3: “Generally speaking the Ancients did not take a thing’s *name* apart from the *thing named* as strictly as moderns would do.” De Rijk 2-93.

⁷⁴ For a fuller account of these tensions , see De Libéra , 31-32.

own terms and divorced from his former master, there was a further realization of the complex network of Platonism residing within the thinking of Aristotle himself.⁷⁵

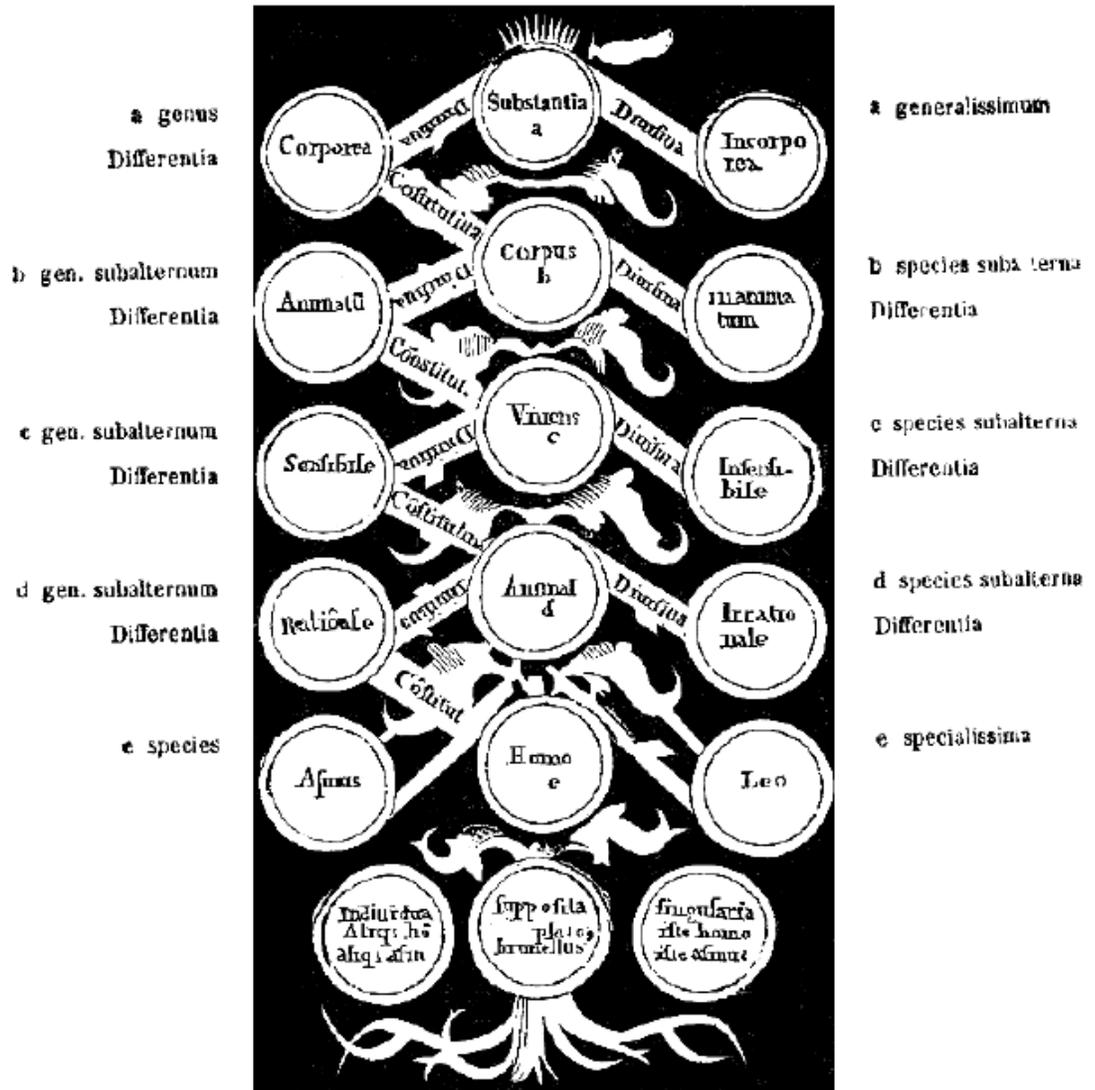
Although the complexity of the debate within Antiquity could hardly be known in the Middle Ages, except through secondary sources, we can see that even at its earliest stage there was already a vast network of intricacies that would later haunt future generations, often without significant alteration of the original terms.

Equally crucial to the medieval universals debate is stage of Middle Platonism, when one figure in particular, the avowed NeoPlatonic philosopher Porphyry, writes his logical textbook, the *Isagoge* (literally ‘introduction’), which meant to serve as an introduction to the *Categories*. Here he defines the Aristotelian substance (*ousia*), and proceeds, using division by various *differentiae*, to divide substance (here in an acceptance similar to prime matter, the *genus generalissimum*) into their various genera and species. This is demonstrated by his great pedagogical tool, the Porphyrian tree, which presents this division of substance (using the Aristotelian predicables definition, property, genus, differentia, and accident) as an ontological given:⁷⁶

⁷⁵ De Libéra , 33-34, and 68: "De l'Antiquité tardive à la fin du Moyen Age, la philosophie, dédaignant le repli élastique de Porphyre, ne cessa, quant aux universaux, de balancer entre Aristote et Platon, l'aristotélisme et le platonisme, le péripatétisme et le néoplatonisme."

⁷⁶ Diagram: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arbor_porphyriana. (public domain, probably translation of Boethius). Cf. Henry, D.P. "Predicables and categories" in *Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 129.

IN PORPHYRIUM DIALOGUS I.



In Late Antiquity as well as the Middle Ages, only natural things could properly be called substances. There seems to be no place for man-made items under the heading ‘substance’.⁷⁷ It is also important to note here that this division of substance is based on a theory of emanation, which itself can be considered a theology. If we posit a continuity

⁷⁷ Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 133-34.

between the thinking of Porphyry and his master Plotinus, we can infer that the latter believed in the diffusion of various intelligences, ultimately proceeding from the One (“God”), purely intelligible, down to the lowest stratum of being, i.e., sensibles. Aristotle’s similar reliance on the emanating intelligences further cemented the notion that these were uncreated and eternal, which entailed as a corollary that the world itself could not have been created in time. Therefore, this basic introductory textbook serves not only as an introduction to the logic of Aristotle, but also places him squarely within a mystical theology which accounted not only for the existence of material objects, but also the reason for their existence in the first place.⁷⁸ Unlike his master Plotinus, however, who believed that Plato’s exploration of categories as elaborated in the *Sophist* was wholly sufficient, Porphyry was less reluctant to accept the value of Aristotle’s *Categories*.⁷⁹

This is not to say that Porphyry shamefully traduced the logic of Aristotle, but rather that he did not bracket off his own (neo-Platonic) ideological presuppositions when expounding the Peripatetic. In addition, Porphyry states quite clearly the epistemological ramifications of his theory, and shows remarkable restraint (the textbook is explicitly deemed an introduction) in leaving these three questions unanswered: a) whether universals exist in the world or subsist only in the mind; b) if they exist, are they corporeal or incorporeal c) if they are incorporeal, do they exist within or around sensible things? Despite his aforementioned ideological prejudices, Porphyry writes with

⁷⁸ This Platonizing Aristotelianism was also noted in a NeoPlatonic successor of Porphyry, Simplicius. Cf. De Libéra, 61: “C’est donc grâce à Porphyre et Simplicius que le rapport grammatical de déchéance de l’abstrait dans le concret, caractéristique de la paronymie, a *permis*, contre Aristote, d’honorer l’invitation malheureuse que son texte faisait de passer du platonisme grammatical au platonisme métaphysique: avec eux, la relation de la réalité “donatrice” à la réalité “réceptrice” de l’ “appellation” est clairement interprétée en termes de participation.”

⁷⁹ Marenbon, John. *Medieval Philosophy: an historical and philosophical introduction*, 20.

remarkable impartiality, opting as he does for a sharp division between logic and ontology, a gesture that “was not always completely grasped or accepted by later scholastic authors.”⁸⁰

Now, the medieval universals debate must be framed, almost exclusively, in the restrictive art of predication, which corresponds roughly to defining a substance within a more general category, in other words, finding an individual substance’s species within a genus. Porphyry’s tree is an excellent pedagogical tool for understanding how the Aristotelians came to conceive substance and further paves a way of talking about it in terms of contrary possibilities, extending all the way from prime matter (*substantia/genus generalissimus*) down to individual men. The *differentia* is here presented as that which distinguishes species in the genus (e.g. rationality differentiates man from other species in the genus *animalia*). The concept of the *differentia*, however, is enmeshed in another set of problems that were not clearly expounded in Aristotle. Is the *differentia* a quality that inheres within every member of a species, like a universal, separable substance? De Rijk sees the *differentia* as similar to the vestige of a Platonic Form that has to account for both the logical and ontological differentiation of species. The fact that this *differentia* is raised to the level of a universal, along with species and genus, means that this unstable quality somehow entails the postulation of a separable world of being, as was found in Plato.⁸¹ In a discussion concerning the discernment of the *differentia* from an accident, D. P. Henry bolsters De Rijk’s claim by adding that the “differentia is a kind of half-way

⁸⁰ Ebbesen, Sten. “Ancient scholastic logic as the source of medieval scholastic logic”, 119. Cf. “[Porphyry holds that] Aristotle was right in considering individuals prior to universals when he established the category of substance, though a metaphysician would have to reverse the order.” (119)

⁸¹ De Rijk 2- 107. A further example of this kind of problem occurs in the translations of Boethius, who chose *substantia* for the Greek *ousia*, which can, in Aristotle, mean any of the following: quiddity, universal, genus, or subject. Alain de Libéra shows that this translation entails a direct contradiction between *Metaphysics* and the *Categories* in their Latin renderings De Libéra , 80-81.

(*quoddam medium*) between substance and quality, having some of the nature of each.”⁸²

It seems the case that when the rationalism of Aristotle is pushed to its very limits, various incarnations of Platonism emerge to fill that void. Whether or not these Platonisms are to be treated, following Ockham, as *entia ficta*, is another matter entirely. Suffice it to say that such lingering Platonisms result in what I identify as a three-fold possibility: 1) the *differentia* is a real existent quality that inheres in any member of a species; 2) the *differentia* is a real concept of the mind, based on observation of similitude within members of a species; 3) the *differentia* is a convenient fiction, or allegory, that designates a complex network of observable structures, here concretized for the sake of simple expression. This constellation of possibilities is mirrored by Jean de Meun’s *Rose* continuation, where the *differentia* serves as the denotative “gloss of things”, more equivocally, in his discussion of (alchemical) transubstantiation.

From Boethius to Early Scholasticism

Boethius is, by all accounts, one of the most important thinkers for the Middle Ages. Not only was he one of the first great Christian commentators on both Plato and Aristotle, but his translations, especially of the latter, held the monopoly on Peripatetic scholarship for half a millennium. Boethius explores the questions raised in Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, and the notion of abstraction is given greater attention than it had received at the hands of Porphyry. In addition, Boethius seems to emphasize the importance of formal coherence in logic, without really problematizing the relation of language to the extramental world. Indeed, the truth of self-evident statements is dependent on the kind

⁸² Henry, D.P., “Predicables and Categories”, 131.

of predicative expression to which it can conform, such that “every inference owes its cogency to an axiom”.⁸³ Axioms are self-evident propositions either of the ‘if-then’ variety or relational (e.g. hot is the opposite of cold, dogs belong to the genus ‘animalia’). This rationalistic idea of logic owes more to Aristotle than to Plato, but Boethius’s allegiance to both philosophers meant that this rationalism did not discredit the fundamental assumptions of Plato’s ontology. He thus proposes his own solution to the problem of universals by making the likeness (*similitudo*) “between particulars of a class” is “universal in thought” and “sensible within particulars.”⁸⁴ Neoplatonism is in evidence both when Boethius seems to suggest that in the construction of the universal in thought, the intellect is asserting its primacy over sense perception, and when he says that the mind grasps the incorporeal nature of bodies, “gazing at the form in itself.”⁸⁵

Logical curriculum at the medieval clerical schools included Aristotle’s full *Organon* – *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Prior and Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and the *Sophistical Refutations*. The *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* were also a part of early medieval curriculum, although not through Boethius. While Neoplatonism flourished in the half-millennium after Boethius, in writers such as John Scotus Erigeuna and Anselm of Canterbury, a different brand of logic began to appear toward the end of the eleventh century. This age saw the first major assault in the Latin West on Plato’s (or NeoPlatonic) ontology, as well as a greater formalism within logic. A more rigorous study of logic (*vetus logica*, comprised of the main logical texts of Aristotle, Porphyry, and Boethius) began in the second half of the eleventh century, in sharp contrast to the

⁸³ Ebbeson, 112.

⁸⁴ Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 37.

prior century.⁸⁶ It was during this time that Roscelin of Compiègne began formulating those radical tenets of his new vocalist logic and the sparest of ontologies.

Direct access to Roscelin's work has only been recent, but the greater part of our access to Roscelin's thought has been paved through the refutations of his adversaries.⁸⁷

Anselm had caricatured his beliefs on the Trinity, and questioned the foundations of his vocalism, both of which are inextricably linked. His Trinitarian reflections were probably spurred by a question of translation from Greek of *ousie*, or substances.

Roscelin puzzled over a remark made by Saint Augustine in *De Trinitate*, V, 8-9, that the Greeks opted for one essence and three substances, whereas the Latins opted for one essence/substance, and three persons.⁸⁸ Although he never reaches the conclusion that Anselm ascribes to him, namely a rejection of God's unity, he does indeed suggest that these plural names are based on linguistic convention. This conflation of person and substance was based on Priscian's definition of the term *nomen*, which signified substance and/or quality. Despite the ultimate simplicity of God, the plurality of persons/substances that "constituted" this single essence entailed a linguistic and spiritual conundrum for these philosophers. Roscelin's theological speculations must be framed within his linguistic Platonism, according to which "every noun, even those used of God, signified a substance".⁸⁹ Roscelin's reliance on Priscian (fl. circa 500 AD) entailed an atomistic belief in the correspondence between language and the world, with each word corresponding, in the end, to a kind of substantive.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 133.

⁸⁷ Mews, "Nominalism and Theology before Abaelard: New Light on Roscelin of Compiègne", *Vivarium*, 6. Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 133.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁹ Mews, 9.

This logic extended to composite substances as well, and Roscelin did not accept the dichotomy of parts to whole. If one considers a house to be the sum of and equal to a foundation, walls, and a roof, then the wall will be part of this thing which is walls, foundation and roof. And this means that the wall be a part of itself, which is plainly absurd. To bolster his claim, Roscelin states in a letter to Abelard that parts are naturally prior to their corresponding whole. Abelard retorted that, according to this logic, the wall would be anterior to the wall/foundation/roof composite, consequently making the wall anterior to the wall, resulting in another logical absurdity. Roscelin granted existence only to the whole, for the parts were not autonomous substances.⁹⁰ But because words refer to individuals, universals are only universal insofar as the same word ‘man’ can be applied to Socrates and Plato, but there is no logically-prior universal substance ‘man’ from which these two derive their humanity. Lacking corroborative evidence, we must rely on Roscelin’s adversaries for one of his most infamous statements, in which he allegedly calls universals *flatus vocis* (mere words).

Roscelin thus advocates the sparsest of ontologies by insisting that reality can only be accorded to whole, discrete individuals. This makes universality an effect of language insofar as the same word is said of many such individuals. But unlike the a house, which is a composite object made of parts, and indivisible in its unity, the universal is no such entity, for the universal word is not subject to the same division into its respective parts (the ‘ideal men’ encompassing individual men like parts to a whole) because this kind of universality can only be ascribed to the former (the house) metaphorically, although this appeal to figuration is not found within Roscelin’s work itself. One of the consequences of such a reduced ontology is a substantive literalism

⁹⁰ De Libéra , 145.

with regard to signification, for in his theory of reference, every utterance properly extends only to individuals, thus “respecting the identity of every proper noun invented by man.”⁹¹

One of Roscelin’s students, Abelard, eventually became one of the greatest dialecticians of his day. Although in his early years, he certainly propounded a form of vocalism not so distinct from that of his former master, his theory of genera and species goes much further than Roscelin’s in safeguarding the validity of general concepts. In fact, Abelard, having in greater part accepted the reduced ontology of his master, is writing against a more primitive Platonic realism that attributed to genera and species the same substantial reality as found in individuals. This seems to be one of the most striking consequences of the adherence to the Porphyrian tree, for there we start with the generalized substance and proceed down the line of division to individuals. In this schema, then, ‘man’ and ‘ass’ are both individual substances that take part or ‘participate’ in a higher level of substance, namely ‘animal’, therefore ‘animality’ must be a divisible substance fully inhering in any of the individuals who fall within the genus. But when this genus is posited as an existent substance (as opposed to a ‘subsistent concept’), then the qualities that define the individual substances beneath it must somehow be harmoniously reconciled. Now, the rationality of man can be contrasted with the irrationality of Brunellus (a donkey), both these adjectives being common (and considered intrinsic) to the objects they designate here respectively. But the animality that is informed by irrationality in Brunellus is also the animality that is informed by rationality in man. But if both qualities inhere fully within the genus, here considered a separable substance, they cannot be considered contraries anymore (resulting in a

⁹¹ Mews, 10.

semantic absurdity), for this would violate the terms of the rules laid forth in *Categories*, 6.⁹² To remember Aristotle's logic, substances can receive contraries, though never simultaneously, for the same water cannot at once be frozen and boiling. Although one could quibble that irrationality does not really inform the ass in the same way that rationality informs man, Abelard manages to go further than anyone before him in upsetting those NeoPlatonic hypostases that had plagued contemporary logic.⁹³

Given that every existent thing is a particular in Abelard's ontology, we come to another stumbling block in semantics, for a sentence such as "Socrates is a man" is nothing more than the insertion of a particular into a universal. Abelard opts for a broadly conceptualist view of language that does not consider words as significant in themselves, but rather insofar as they yield something to the mind: "Abelard insists that the intellectual import rather than the denotation (*omnia quibus est impositum*) is the proper Aristotelian sense of to 'signify'."⁹⁴ In other words, signification is not a property of terms, but rather of propositions. To account for universality in a world of discrete particulars, he must somehow fuse the ontological concerns of existent objects with the semantic concerns of signification. He insists, therefore, that genera and species have no real existence in nature, but do subsist as concepts (*sermones*) within the mind.

Universality, for Abelard, is consequently a property of words, insofar as the same word

⁹² Abelard, Peter. *Logica Ingredientibus*, 1, 29-30, in Spade, P.V. *Five Texts on the Medieval Problem of Universals*, 31. Abelard's argumentation seems to have been obscured by textual corruption. Cf. Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 139-140.

⁹³ De Libéra, 81: "Si la critique abélardienne du réalisme procède de deux principes "qui tiennent l'un à l'autre et se prêtent un mutuel appui": l'un physique, démontrant qu'une chose ne peut servir de prédicat à un sujet, parce qu'elle "subsiste en soi séparément", l'autre dialectique, expliquant qu'étant donné ce qu'est un prédicat, seul un *mot* universel peut servir de prédicat à plusieurs sujets pris un à un, c'est aussi, voire surtout, parce que le génie propre d'Abélard lui permet d'articuler ainsi plus clairement les définitions de la substance première et de la substance seconde si difficilement coordonnées par Aristote au long des *Catégories*."

⁹⁴ Henry, D.P., "Predicables and Categories", 137.

“dog” can refer to many dogs. But these words are not *vocis*, but rather *sermones/nomina* in that they designate a *status*- and by status, we mean simply “being a man.” Thus universality is a matter of being suitable for predication. The argument may seem circular, but Abelard ventures into some metaphysics to acquire an answer. The *status* is based on a similitude of particulars, and this similitude is abstracted from individuals, not from the properties of the words themselves. Abelard insists on the most semantic aspects of Aristotle’s thought regarding universality (i.e. “said of particulars rather than prior to them”), although the similitude that is identified within particulars is a real one, rather than an arbitrary philosophical imposition.⁹⁵

One of Abelard’s pupils as well as one of the greatest historical minds of his day, John of Salisbury, offered a brief account of Abelard’s forays into this philosophical problem:

One holds that universals are merely word sounds, although this opinion, along with its author Roscelin, has already almost completely passed into oblivion. Another maintains that universals are word concepts, and twists to support his thesis everything that he can remember to have ever been written on the subject. Our Peripatetic of Pallet, Abelard, was ensnared in this opinion. He left many, and still has, to this day, some followers and proponents of his doctrine. They are friends of mine, although they often so torture the helpless letter that even the hardest heart is filled with compassion for the latter. They hold that it is preposterous to predicate a thing concerning a thing, although Aristotle is author of this monstrosity. For Aristotle frequently asserts that a thing is predicated concerning a thing, as is evident to anyone who is really familiar with his teaching. Another is wrapped up in a consideration of acts of the [intuitive] understanding, and says that genera and species are nothing more than the latter.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ For a fuller account of the relation of universality to signification in Abelard, see Tweedale, Martin M., “Abelard and the culmination of the old logic” in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, 152-4.

⁹⁶ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, trans. D.D. McGarry (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1955), found in *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, 63.

This account from a fair-minded pupil allows a glimpse of the kind of reception that Abelard's philosophical speculations garnered from his contemporaries. He is perhaps, wrong, however, in asserting that predication for Aristotle always involved a thing of a thing, for this was indeed one of the classic ambiguities within *De interpretatione*, 7, 17a 39-40, according to which the universal is "what, by nature, is naturally predicated of many". This definition, which lacks both substantives 'word' and 'thing', allowed Aristotle to straddle the fence, so to speak, on the real nature of the universal. Abelard's questions, however, cannot be so quickly dismissed as a gross misunderstanding of Aristotle's text; rather, he was seizing upon the ambiguities that were inherent in Aristotle's early formulations, and subjecting the Platonism therein to his shrewd dialectics. He is a nominalist in the sense that he believes that there is nothing that exists which is not a particular, but he has transcended the vocalism of Roscelin by ascribing *meaning* to the universal. Indeed, such categories of ideological affiliation are at best anachronistic (Abelard's nominalism is far more Platonic than that of his fourteenth-century successor, Ockham), and at worst they imply a huge divergence with thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, who was, by all accounts, a realist, and yet, within a different chronological and ideological context, equally hostile to the various forms of Platonic ontologies which plagued contemporary thought.

Abelard's logical treatises were neither helped by his quarrels with Bernard of Clairvaux, a vowed Augustinian, concerning his tract on the Trinity. Long-standing rivals, Abelard challenged Bernard to a public debate among the council of Sens in 1141. Abelard remained silent and retired after Bernard's first question, an act which marked the first symbolic defeat of speculative thought in the twelfth century. Abelard and

Roscelin inaugurated the tendency within Scholasticism to graze the bounds of heresy when they attempted to reformulate prior conceptions of substance. Furthermore, the century after Abelard's death saw a great proliferation of Aristotle's non-logical works, a fact which may have led to the early obsolescence of his Aristotelian scholarship.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Abelard composed a dream vision called the *Collationes*, in which he stages a debate between a philosopher, a Jew and a Christian, in which the Christian out-argues the representatives of the other sects, though without any explicit judgment.⁹⁸ As the twelfth-century "philosophus" (Marenbon, 145) par excellence, he incarnated for his adversaries both the perverse dialectician and fornicator. If the post-Abelardian academy haunts the word-play of Chrétien, it is completely foresworn in the later, more Augustinian *Queste*. The common maneuver in both works to treat the question of substance from proto- to anti-Scholasticism, respectively, must owe something to this first phrase of the universals debate.

Logic, Semantics and Reference

While the formal aspects of logic had already been in place since Aristotle's foundational tracts, questions of reference and context, more properly ascribed to semantics, became increasingly important in the thirteenth century. An early distinction elaborated by Saint Anselm between *appellatio* (calling), an utterance taken as referential, and *significatio* (meaning), which yields a concept (*intellectus*) in the

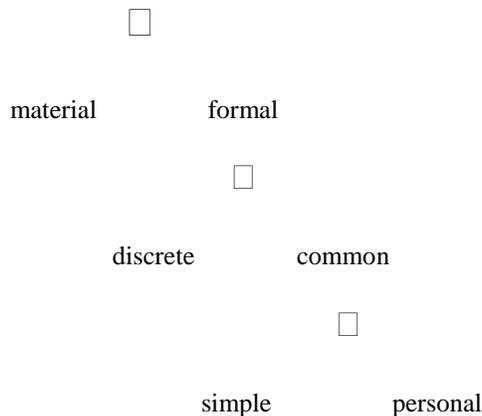
⁹⁷ Contrast with Kretzmann, 83: "The polemics of Peter Damian against the dialecticians, of Lanfranc against Berengarius, of Bernard of Clairvaux against Abelard represent the reaction of the older, monastic idea to the new, urban conception of the teacher's role. The new generation's search for hitherto unknown Aristotelian words is the expression of its own new self-image."

⁹⁸ Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 144-145.

definition attached to the name, shows that the question of context was already essential to these early grammarians.⁹⁹ The thirteenth century also saw the flourishing of the philosophical study of grammar. Supposition, an early theory of reference that stems from the mid-thirteenth century, was one way of classifying sentences that accounted for context before acceding to signification, as in modern pragmatics. Supposition was used by both realist and nominalist grammarians alike, although the inability to reach an agreement on the question of simple supposition eventually led to its near exhaustion in the fifteenth century. Proponents of supposition theory like Peter of Spain and the anonymous author of the *Summa Lamberti* espouse broadly realistic definitions of the universal;¹⁰⁰ others, such as William of Sherwood, used supposition theory at the service of a more nominalistic tendency.¹⁰¹

VARIETIES OF SUPPOSITION

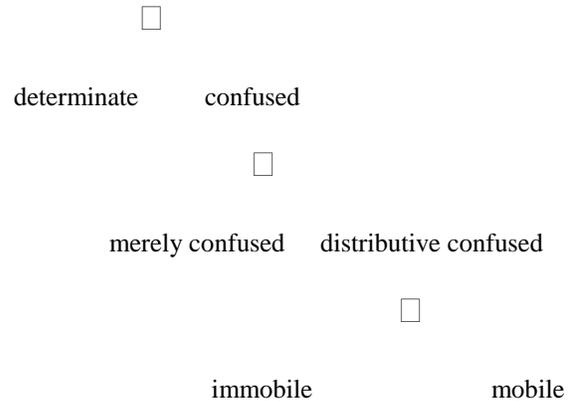
a) improper (metaphorical) b) proper (literal)



⁹⁹ Henry, D.P. “Predicables and Categories” in *CHLMP*, 137.

¹⁰⁰ See *Summa Lamberti*: “For suppositing belongs to what stands on its own and to what represents its stable [signified] thing, but to stand on its own and to represent its stable [signified] thing is a property of substantives.” *Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Klima, Allhoff, and Vaidya, 69.

¹⁰¹ De Libéra, 236-8.



(This table is reproduced from Spade, P.V., “The semantics of terms” in *CHLMP*, 196)

The note to Spade’s Porphyrian scheme states that it includes almost every variant on supposition theory, though of course some grammarians and logicians privileged certain ones over others. The ideological prejudices of the grammarians are especially salient in this pictorial presentation, though they were no less so in actual practice. Improper supposition is immediately discarded from logical analysis, and from such a rigid partitioning, the obvious conclusion to draw is that figuration is wholly separate from semantic reference, and indeed from logic itself. But the dismissal of improper supposition by the grammarians should not entail that it is a mere misuse, because in fact the notion of improper supposition is in fact dependent on the proper. Figurative designations cannot be said to be ontologically prior or even concomitant with literal ones; rather, figuration tends to stem directly from proper usage and supplement it, especially where proper designation would be laborious or unintelligible. Although supposition theory remained in use in the fourteenth century, the debate on universals would make such a theory, especially in the hands of William of Ockham, more serviceable to questions of philosophy than to grammar and semantics.

The three main kinds of supposition that will be of interest to us are material, personal and simple. The *suppositio materialis* is when a word is treated purely

grammatically (e.g. ‘Man’ is a noun). The *suppositio personalis* is when the word designates something as a particular (This man knows that man). Finally, the *suppositio simplex* designates an object definitionally (Man is a species/ Man is a mortal, rational animal). This final form of supposition would be the thorniest for philosophers, and the sentence “man is a species” could reliably serve as a litmus test of realism or nominalism in *semantics*.¹⁰² While both realists and nominalists could concede to the truth of the sentence “Man is a mortal, rational animal” (all men conform to this definition), the sentence “Man is a species” is another matter entirely. Realists would say that there is no difference between the two sentence (man’s species is his genus [*animalia*] differentiated [by rationality]) while a nominalist would retort that there is no individual man who corresponds to an entire species. At first, this seems like a clever semantic trick on the part of the nominalists, but when we think of Abelard’s objections to the hypostatization of species, we are better equipped to see exactly what their target was: the notion of ‘man’ as a separable entity, a pure idealized form in which individual men partook or participated. This was the most common explanation in Platonic realism for why the sentence “Man is a species” was literally true. It is no wonder, then, that later thinkers like Ockham and Buridan, respectively, either had to eliminate simple supposition (making it rather an extension of personal supposition), or bracket it from any realist connotations.¹⁰³

It is here that we can see the greatest rift between the nominalists and realists with regard to signification. For the nominalists, figuration is the mode of signification for simple supposition; indeed, simple supposition (*homo est species*) would be nothing more

¹⁰² De Libéra , 237.

¹⁰³ De Libéra , 238.

than improper supposition. For the realist, however, figuration would begin later, since man is, properly speaking, a “species”. But if both realists and nominalists availed themselves of supposition theory (e.g. Peter of Spain, William of Sherwood), then there must also be some unanimity with regard to the notion of improper supposition. In a sentence such as this one I drew from a sports headline, “Since dawn of man, ravens only as good as their defense”,¹⁰⁴ there cannot be any individual man which would make this sentence true. Similarly, “dawn” is a word that is predicated of man only allegorically, so the compound “dawn of man” is more properly a designation of time (immemorial) than a reference to the species or its constituents. As we can see here, the allegory is not simply an enlargement of simple supposition (as in Spade’s example for improper supposition, “After three moves, the chess player was another *man* down”), but rather a higher level of abstraction that relies on the association of more than one predicate (“dawn” and “man”). An important feature of such allegorical language is the privileging of quality (dawn of man) over quantity (first man, in such-and-such year), due to the fact that quantity is not susceptible of further abstraction.

It is now fitting to remember that abstraction was an Aristotelian concept that was meant to supplant Plato’s theory of knowledge as reminiscence (of when we were disembodied and connected with pure forms/ideas). The theory of abstraction also granted greater independence of the human mind from God, for Saint Augustine had offered divine illumination as a theory of knowledge to replace that of reminiscence. Both the Platonic and Augustinian conception relied, respectively, on either the postulation of a separable realm of forms, or God’s grace. The striking development of supposition theory shows the rising interest in an abstractive and philosophical approach

¹⁰⁴ <http://nfl.fanhouse.com/2009/01/10/as-has-been-the-case-since-the-dawn-of-man-ravens-only-as-good/>

to grammar. A corollary of supposition theory is that propositional language is necessary referential and contextual.

Islamic Peripatetics and New Translations

In his seminal book on the universals debate, Alain de Libera identifies three major phases of the debate in the Latin West:

Le platonisme eut son heure de gloire à l'époque où l'on ignorait tout de Platon. Aristote lui-même eut plusieurs vies : le haut Moyen Age mit l'accent sur l'ontologie des Catégories, la scolastique sur la *Métaphysique* et les écrits de philosophie naturelle, le XIVe siècle sur ce qu'il fallait retrancher de l'aristotélisme scolaire pour accéder à la philosophie authentique.¹⁰⁵

The second and third phases cannot be considered independently from the other culture that had been plagued by similar conundrums. Indeed, it would be impossible to shed light on the debate over universals in the thirteenth century without giving a brief account of Aristotelian thought in the Islamic world. Unlike the Latin West, the Islamic philosophers were privy to a much fuller Aristotelian corpus, including the *Metaphysics* and *Posterior Analytics*. This meant that they were already interspersing their reflections on the categories with corroborative evidence from Aristotle's other works. Their commentaries are therefore much different in flavor and scope than we had seen from the early Scholastics.

Arab philosophers had inherited the same Neoplatonism with their Aristotle, with Porphyry's *Isagoge* being particularly influential on their conception of logic.

Aristotelian commentaries by Alfarabi and Avicenna had similar difficulties in trying to

¹⁰⁵ De Libéra , 69.

reconcile Aristotelian doctrines with the Quran, most notably in the question of the *eternity of the world* and *God's knowledge of particulars*. Emanationism and participation were constant temptations due to the various brands of cosmologies and cosmogonies that had been bequeathed to them by the Ancients. Benefitting from a larger Aristotelian corpus than the Western dialecticians of the *logica vetus*, these Islamic philosophers were able to analyze Aristotle's metaphysical contribution to the question of universals in greater detail than Abelard. In addition, they go beyond the purely logical quandaries occasioned by the universal of the *Categories* to a greater level of psychological and cognitive analysis.¹⁰⁶ This does not imply, however, that Abelard's objections were nullified by the appearance in the Latin West of these Islamic philosophers, but rather that the problems within Aristotle's "pure" logic were more blatant in the absence of his entire system of metaphysics. What will be of greatest interest to us is not the complicated reasoning utilized by these philosophers in support of Aristotle, but rather the continuities that emerge when the same problem is dealt with in different religious, cultural and historical contexts.

Alfarabi (c. 872-c. 951) privileged certain knowledge over speculative reasoning and even outlined a hierarchy of disciplines in which he subordinates religion to philosophy. On the ladder of knowledge one proceeds from induction, yielding generalizations, to methodic experience, which alone yields necessary certainty. Such tendencies within his thought earned him suspicions of unorthodoxy, not only by the later Sufi philosopher Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), but also by Averroes (1126-1198), who would face similar accusations, both in Islamic Spain and in his philosophical successor of the Latin West. In his own commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Alfarabi goes much further

¹⁰⁶ De Libéra , 71.

than did his Greek precursor in fusing Aristotle's metaphysical observations to the logical status of universals.¹⁰⁷ Alfarabi does not problematize, however, the existence of universal forms the way Abelard does, for he relies on an emanationist scheme of the universe, with the last of the heavenly intelligences radiating out the universal natures of things in the sublunar world. Objectivity of knowledge is thus safeguarded by the presence of these universal forms which are numerically one both external (emanating/universal) and internal (particular) intellects.

When these forms are properly universal, irrespective of the multiplicity of minds that attend to such forms, there remains the problem of how certain knowledge is not shared by the multitude. Alfarabi sees this not as a result of the instability of language per se, but rather as a result of unstable usage, and this is especially true of those sciences whose fundamental premises are rendered figuratively :

Since religion teaches theoretical things only by imaginative representation and persuasion, and since its followers are acquainted with these two methods of instruction to the exclusion of others, it is clear that the art of theology, which is dependent upon religion, is only aware of the persuasive things and verifies religion only by persuasive methods and arguments, in particular if it seeks to verify the *similes* of truth as though they were true.¹⁰⁸ (italics are my own)

Much like Aristotle in his criticism of Plato's doctrine of forms, Alfarabi quickly dismisses from certain knowledge anything that cannot be rendered literally, otherwise the statement will be at best an approximation of truth, or at worst, yield a philosophical absurdity. Thus, figuration becomes for him the antagonist philosophy proper.

The Persian philosopher Avicenna (c. 980- 1037) made various commentaries on Aristotle in the following century, and he claimed to have read Aristotle's *Metaphysics*

¹⁰⁷ Alfarabi claims that "all universals are called genera and species." (Alfarabi, *Book of Letters*, 8).

¹⁰⁸ Alfarabi, *Book of Letters*, 2.

over forty times without being able to understand it, until he happened upon Alfarabi's commentary on the same work which finally rendered it intelligible. He does not play the role of a submissive successor to Alfarabi, however, and his treatment of logic shows a striking divergence. While Alfarabi believed that logic could be universal, insofar as logic dealt with meanings and not with words (he even tries to Hellenize his Arabic when dealing with logical propositions), Avicenna makes logic about second intentions, as it were, meanings of meanings.¹⁰⁹ At first glance, Avicenna's scheme seems to remove logic further away from linguistic considerations, but this is indeed not the case, for these second intentions are simply a further degree of abstraction from those first intentions to which Alfarabi had categorically attributed universality. This brings us to one of those famous phrases of Avicenna, much quoted in the Latin West: "*Equinitas est equinitas tantum.*" (Horseness is simply horseness). While the universal 'horse' is, for Avicenna, only existent as a concept within the mind, he also grants that there are common natures within particular things, which can in turn be abstracted by the soul: "When [the soul] comes to the form of 'human', which can be applied to many, with many taking on a single nature, it separates it from all material quantity, quality, and position, then it abstracts it from all that to make it suitable to be applied to all."¹¹⁰ Here we note a similarity with Abelard (*status*), for knowledge of the universal is made entirely dependent on the mind's abstractive faculties rather than any external illumination. Universality is thus not only a property of terms, it also reflects a common nature amongst particulars. He also makes a trenchant distinction between intellection and representation by insisting that intelligible forms within nature have no shape, for

¹⁰⁹ Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 105.

¹¹⁰ Avicenna, *On the Soul*, in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, 36.

that would make them representational rather than intelligible. Because the forms of things are purely intelligible and are seized by an immaterial faculty (the soul), they cannot be assimilated as a representation. This brackets logical predication from pictorial representations and instead makes predication a matter of receiving the ‘whatness’ or quiddity of the intelligibles directly from the (external) Active Intellect.

The consequences of his logical teachings extend all the way to his theology, and this would be the greatest cause of concern for both Muslims and Christians.

Answering how the Necessary Existent through Itself intellects Itself and things, Avicenna states: “The Necessary Existent intellects everything only universally, but nevertheless no individual thing escapes Its notice, ‘not even the weight of a dust speck, whether in the heavens or on Earth, escapes His notice.’ This is one of those wonders that require a subtle genius to understand.”¹¹¹ Despite the concession to Quranic teaching, Avicenna privileges universality in God, because the active intellect radiates universal forms, which alone are capable of being intellectured, because they alone are necessary. In fact, the question of divine providence extending to particulars is quite hard to reconcile with this philosophical groundwork. Furthermore, to preserve the notion of eternal bliss, Avicenna makes this dependent on the communion of the individual soul with the active intellect, and this can also be seen as a transformation of a particular substance (the individual soul) into a universal one (the active intellect).

Despite their wide renown in the Islamic world, Alfarabi and Avicenna were not without critics, the most famous of which was Al-Ghazali, the Sufi philosopher who underwent a conversion after a mystical experience. Ghazali was not so much hostile to

¹¹¹ Quotation from *Qur’an*, 10 :61 and 37 :11, Avicenna, “The Salvation”, in *Metaphysics*, II. 18 in *Classical Arabic Philosophy, An Anthology of Sources*.

intellectual speculations as he was suspicious of the Hellenizing tendencies of his fellow theologians. In his *Rescuer from Error*, he concedes that the philosophers can achieve demonstrative knowledge in mathematics, although their ventures into metaphysics cannot but remain conjectural.¹¹² But if metaphysics is a dead art for Al-Ghazali, this is perhaps a natural consequence of his occasionalism, that doctrine according to which no created being can be the efficient cause of anything. This is one of the most radical rejections of Aristotelianism, for it makes God the efficient cause of all action. A fire which burns wood can be said to be a normal occurrence, but within occasionalism that causal chain is no longer necessary. Al-Ghazali accuses the *falsafa* (= philosophers, including Alfarabi and Avicenna) of cutting off God from particular acts of creation by insisting on man's sovereignty, but his solution may have been no more orthodox than those of his predecessors.

By the time of Averroes, who for most of his lifetime resided in Islamic Spain in the 12th century, the arguments of all the preceding philosophers were well-known, and Averroes takes a major stand against Al-Ghazali, to whose *Incoherence of the Philosophers* he retorts with the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. Like Avicenna, he was a Renaissance man (doctor, lawyer, theologian, philosopher), but he goes beyond the Baghdad Peripatetic in striving for a greater Aristotelian orthodoxy. His numerous commentaries, both short and extended, earned him the sobriquet of Commentator in the Latin West, and the intellectual rigor of these documents bolsters his claim that the study of philosophy should be mandatory for the learned.

¹¹² Al-Ghazali, *The Rescuer from Error*, 69.

Averroes became especially known in the Latin West for a peculiar doctrine called monopsychism that he attributes to Aristotle himself.¹¹³ If the notion of the world soul (*anima mundi*) had been a point of contention for Abelard and the Chartrians in the previous century, it was then based almost entirely on the Plato's *Timeaus*, and lacked the rationalistic (and non-allegorical), Aristotelian explanation that would later be provided by Averroes.¹¹⁴ In Avicenna, Aristotle's active intellect was both an internal feature of the individual soul, as well as the entity that delivers the universal forms for intellection. By contrast, the material or passive intellect was just a feature of the individual soul. Averroes rejects the latter belief, stating instead that the material or passive intellect also had to be universal (one for all men), otherwise the forms delivered to it from the Active Intellect would be particular rather than universal.¹¹⁵ The separable material intellect therefore managed, though not without a (perhaps) unwitting return to Platonism, to

¹¹³ The term 'monopsychism' was a coinage of Leibniz in his *Discourse on the Conformity of Faith with Reason*. Cf. De Libéra, 217.

¹¹⁴ Jon Whitman, "Twelfth-century allegory: philosophy and imagination", 106-7: "One of the primary focal points of such tensions is the concept of the World Soul (*Timaeus* 34B-37C), the vital spirit that animates and informs the body of the Platonic cosmos. The long-controversial question of whether this immanent *anima mundi* could be accommodated to a transcendent Christian God receives a particularly provocative response in the early twelfth century with the theological writing of Peter Abelard. Abelard treats Plato as a kind of philosophic counterpart to a Hebrew prophet, and he finds the words of such gentile philosophers about the *anima mundi* to apply to nothing more fittingly than the Holy Spirit, 'by a most beautiful figural wrapping' (*per pulcherrimam involucris figuram*). William of Conches, who seeks more than Abelard to probe the cosmological factors and authorial aims underlying the conception of the World Soul, struggles with that conception over the course of his career [...] In 1140 the Council of Sens condemned the proposition that the World Soul is the Holy Spirit. Yet the very displacement of the World Soul from the divine sphere intensified its association with the natural sphere, where it was replaced in turn by a figure still more provocative in character: the figure of Nature itself."

¹¹⁵ Averroes, *Commentary on the Soul*, book 3, 3, in *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, 336 : "[The definition of the material intellect] obviously differs in [Aristotle's] opinion from prime matter in this respect, that it is potentially all intentions of the material universal forms, whereas prime matter is potentially of all those sensible forms, neither as knowing or comprehending. The reason why this nature discriminates and knows, whereas prime matter neither knows nor discriminates, is because prime matter receives distinct forms, namely individual and particular [forms], while [the material intellect] receives universal forms. From this it is apparent that this nature is not a particular, neither a body nor a faculty in a body, since if it were, the nit would receive the forms as distinct and particular."

“preserve the immateriality of the subject of thought.”¹¹⁶ There are obvious objections to this theory: namely, how can monopsychism account for individual thought? Secondly, Averroes seems to remove the active aspect of thinking entirely, instead defining man as ‘thought’ by the intersection of two external intellects. John Marenbon proceeds to answer the first of the objections, stating that the imaginative faculty can account for the ways in which thought is ordered and individuated.¹¹⁷ The second objection was raised by Saint Thomas Aquinas, and will be addressed later. From his revised definition of ‘mind’, Averroes takes up the metaphysical definition of the universal from Aristotle, much cherished by the fourteenth-century nominalists, according to which “the universal is only in the soul”, otherwise one would need, following Avicenna, to postulate an agent intellect to deliver the forms.¹¹⁸ It would be hard to claim, however, that Averroes bore nominalist tendencies, because while universals are not present within particulars, the universal is located within the separable world mind. The only individuation of mind occurs in the particular phantasmata and particular imaginative faculty of every human being, becoming the *acquired* intellect. The doctrine of monopsychism also caused a huge rift in Latin intellectuals of the thirteenth century, for this would be, along with the eternity (i.e. non-creation) of the world, the most controversial aspects of Averroes’s Aristotelianism.

Averroes is more sensitive than Alfarabi and Avicenna to the question of orthodoxy, and to this end he even advocates the killing of heretics! But orthodoxy is a

¹¹⁶ De Libéra , 219.

¹¹⁷ Marenbon, 185-186. Cf. De Libéra, summarizing the position of Averroes, 206: “La connaissance individuelle s’effectue chez l’homme par l’intermédiaire des images individuelles; cette connaissance est appelée “intellect spéculatif” ou théorique, lequel est individué et “corruptible” du fait de son union avec les images; une fois la connaissance humaine accomplie, l’intellect “matériel” s’unit à l’intellect agent et forme avec lui l’ “intellect acquis”, *intellectus adeptus*.”

¹¹⁸ De Libéra , 216-217.

slippery issue with these philosophers, and his critics in the Latin West were particularly hostile to what they saw as an endorsement of a "double truth", where the truth of Scripture was a popular (i.e. allegorical) expression of deeper philosophical truths.¹¹⁹ Within this conception there is no contradiction, only a different means of expression. Furthermore, Averroes does accept allegory as a valid mode of expression, however unscientific, and even concedes that allegorical interpretation has been the norm throughout most of the Islamic sects, save for "a small group of literalists who can be refuted by [sacred] texts."¹²⁰ Indeed, so constitutive is allegorical speech of all language that no one can dispense with it entirely. And if such figuration appears in the discourse of lawyers, Averroes sees no reason why it should not figure in that of the theologians.¹²¹

In this second chapter of *The Decisive Treatise*, Averroes seeks to show that there is nothing in philosophy opposed to Islam. If this is where the long justification of allegorical practices occurs, it is immediately followed by a discussion of God's knowledge of particulars, which was unresolved in Avicenna and Alfarabi, according to Al-Ghazali. In order to demonstrate the contrary, he rehabilitates not his Islamic predecessors, but rather the Peripatetics themselves. Here, he says that the Peripatetics believed in premonitory visions of particular events, which would refute the notion of only universal knowledge passing through the active intellect. Further, he sees the charge of heresy as moot, owing to the fact that knowledge, which is necessarily eternal and unoriginated in God, can only be predicated of Him homonymously, since His knowledge, which is the cause of all things known, transcends the categories of particular

¹¹⁹ "The picture-teaching of the Koran expresses the truth in a manner intelligible to the ordinary man, to the unlettered, whereas the philosopher strips away the allegorical husk and attains the truth 'unvarnished', free from the trappings of *Vorstellung*." (Copleston, 199)

¹²⁰ Averroes, *The Decisive Treatise*, I. p. 310

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 2. p. 314.

and universal.¹²² This reasoning, so similar to Aquinas's theory of Analogy, shows the extent to which divine Providence was the doctrine invoked, in both Islam and Christendom, when philosophical logic came to an impasse.

Scholastic Aristotelianism

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of these Islamic thinkers on thirteenth-century Christendom. Not only were their manuals in wide circulation throughout universities, they were also finding strong adherents in certain thinkers who were anxious to expound the "true" Aristotle. Perhaps the most famous of these was Siger of Brabant (c. 1240 – 1280s), whose teachings were so in accord with Averroes that they earned him a condemnation in 1270 by the bishop of Toulouse. Siger eventually modified his position, perhaps based on official constraints, but his first line of defense was to say that he was only transmitting Aristotle rather than seeking to refute sacred teachings. In a work dubiously attributed to St. Bonaventure, this appeal to Aristotelian orthodoxy within the Averroists was regarded as nothing more than a heretical subterfuge.¹²³ C.J. Lohr also suggests that for the Averroists, the divisions between philosophy and theology were quite pronounced, in a manner reminiscent of Alfarabi: "The theologian sought to unveil a truth concealed; the philosopher need not seek to conceal the errors in his sources."¹²⁴ These tendencies within a burgeoning university Aristotelianism were perhaps the most damning evidence of the apparent incompatibility

¹²² Ibid. 2. p. 316-317.

¹²³ Copleston, 437.

¹²⁴ Lohr, C.J. "The medieval interpretation of Aristotle", 91.

between Peripatetic and Christian doctrine, and further hindered the efforts of less radical Aristotelians (e.g. Aquinas) in their efforts to reconcile the two.

The transfer of Averroes's Aristotelianism to the Latin West makes the continuities between the Islamic and Christian conceptions of Aristotle strikingly similar in terms of the developmental phases. In both phases of Aristotelian exegesis, one notices ambiguities and contradictions within Aristotle's texts, resulting in several doctrines that are, in their own ways, at variance with both faiths (monopsychism, eternity of the world, God's knowledge of particulars). Furthermore, accusations of heresy are a feature of both civilizations, and the means of refuting such accusations is usually either an appeal to allegorical language or to a radical dissociation of theological and philosophical disciplines. The first condemnation of 1270 of Aristotelian teachings meant that subsequent Latin Aristotelians would not be afforded the luxury of Averroes's "double truth" in trying to safeguard the teachings of the Philosopher.

Writing around the time of the first condemnation, St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) was left with the task of freeing Aristotle from the heretical implications that strict adherence to his philosophy entailed. Not only was Thomas's philosophy markedly Aristotelian, but he also adopted certain distinctions made by Avicenna, especially when these were useful in combatting certain Averroistic interpretations. His *Summa Theologica* was meant to replace Peter Lombard's *Sentences* as the official theological textbook, but the condemnation in 1277 of 219 Aristotelian theses, 20 of which were Thomistic, by Etienne Tempier, bishop of Toulouse, left this goal unfulfilled.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ It should be noted that the 219 Propositions condemned were not only Aristotelian; they dealt with a number of topics, from fornication to religious confession. Cf. Lynch, Kathryn, 114-115: "Indeed, of the 219 Propositions, only fifty-eight have been securely traced to their sources, and sixty-eight seem never to have been argued in any form by anybody."

Aquinas served as regent master at the University of Paris, the first from 1256-59, the second from 1269-1272. During both tenures, he was engaged in the polemics roused by secular clerk Guillaume de Saint Amour against the mendicant orders, and this position of power that he occupies at this time makes him extremely important to discussions of the Jean de Meun's *Rose*.

Fully aware of the constraints of such a momentous reconciliation of disparate systems, St. Thomas had to forge a new Aristotelianism which would be in keeping with the literal truth of Scripture. To this end, he proposed a revision of the old vocabulary, and the notion of 'species' receives a wider application, since the hitherto ontological category of the species becomes also an epistemological one. Not only did Aquinas, like the Arabs and unlike Scholastic philosophers of the twelfth century, have access to an almost complete Aristotelian corpus, he also benefitted from newer, and sometimes specially commissioned translations from the Greek by William of Moerbeke.

As an avowed realist, Saint Thomas carefully selects his quotations from the *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics* in order to support this tendency. For him, then, the species was the intermediary between the intellect and the perception of the individual. In man, the theoretical faculty of the soul, distinguishing man's soul from that of animals receives the intelligible species – the *quidditas* (translated as the quiddity, or "whatness") – prior to knowledge of the individual. The species is not only a class of individuals, but also that by which any object is known. For the mind, being wholly immaterial, cannot grasp that which is material; rather, it must receive a form of the matter which turns the *species sensibilis* into a *species intelligibilis*. Since there is no knowledge of the singular, the species assumes a prominent role in his theory of knowledge. The species thereby

transforms the sensible object, which only *potentially* yields knowledge, into an object of perception *actually* known, and this knowledge of the object is properly designated as its 'quiddity' or 'whatness'. As with Abelard, who was less inclined than Saint Thomas to admit any essential reality of the species but who invoked the *status* as a similitude of particulars, Aquinas similarly grants a place for similitude within his theory of knowledge. The formation of a mental definition of an object occurs not through a representation within the mind, but rather through a similitude to the extramental object, but there must be two cases of similitude for such an apprehension, first of the intelligible species, the second being that of the "mental definition produced by the possible/potential intellect activated by the *species*".¹²⁶

This revised definition of the species is a careful way to preserve the universality of thought within individual souls. Saint Thomas was one of the harshest critics of the Averroistic doctrine of monopsychism. Following the Averroistic ferment at the University of Paris, he published a tract, *De Unitate Intellectus (contra Averroistas)* in 1270, in which he sought to disprove the existence of a separable material intellect, and "affirm that the intellect is numerically distinct and multiplied by the number of individual human souls".¹²⁷ Aquinas was aware that the doctrine of monopsychism was pernicious to the doctrine of personal immortality and free will, but his line of reasoning in this tract is philosophical rather than theological. In order to warrant the term 'human', thought must be considered an action immanent to man, rather than the

¹²⁶ De Libéra , 275. Translation is my own.

¹²⁷ De Libéra , 219. A more concise refutation of Averroes is given in Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles*, book 2, chapters 59-60.

"transitive action of the separate intellect".¹²⁸ As chapter four of the tract shows, the position of Averroes would hold that the intellect is the only thing that thinks and individual humans become its instruments. What emerges between these two philosophers is a radically different conception of the human soul, which for Aquinas, following Aristotle, is the substantial form of every human being. In addition, it is *through the species* that something is thought, but one thinks via an intellectual power, and this power is individuated within every human soul. In this case, it is hard to imagine how Averroes and Saint Thomas could have both been reading the same *De Anima* to reach such vastly different interpretations. Aquinas saw the separable material intellect as yet another invocation of Platonism that rationally accounted for the universality of knowledge, and, in rejecting this view, he had to establish the sovereignty of an individual soul capable of receiving the quiddities of things via the active intellect. It is entirely possible to see the elevation of the status of the species, like Averroes's monopsychism, as yet another unwitting Platonism in the thinking of Saint Thomas.

The recurring importance of similitude for such disparate thinkers as Abelard and Aquinas means that, throughout both phases of the Latin quarrel over universals, this concept is retained as a constant guarantor of knowledge. Whereas for Abelard, this similitude was only found among individuals, in Aquinas it is a similitude between the

¹²⁸ De Libéra , 220. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect*, 70, Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 8, 1050a 30-36). Cp. John Marenbon, 263: "The fault of [Aquinas's] criticism is its failure to recognize the complexity in Averroes's scheme (chapter 6, section 3) of the relationship between human imaginary forms and the potential intellect, of which they are the movers." Cp. De Libéra , 220: "Le défaut de la théorie d'Averroès est que ce qui est censé assurer la continuité de l'âme humaine avec l'intellect matériel séparé est ce qui la rend impossible; pour qu'il y ait forme intelligible en acte informant l'intellect matériel, il faut que cette forme ait été abstraite de l'intention imaginée. Or cette abstraction est une *séparation*. La forme intelligible ne peut donc être jointe à l'intellect matériel qu'en étant disjointe de l'imagination. Le circuit de l'abstraction, de la réception et de l'union décrit par Averroès ne peut fonctionner. L'image ne peut être actualisée sans être séparée de l'imagination et, une fois séparée, elle ne peut assurer ce qu'Averroès veut lui faire assurer: la "continuité de l'homme avec l'intellect par la forme de l'intellect *au moyen* des fantasmés". La double médiation postulée par Averroès est fonctionnellement impossible: dès qu'elle est activée l'image coupe le circuit de la pensée."

object in the world and its apprehension in the mind. Despite such drastic differences, it becomes clear that for both thinkers one cannot accede to general concepts without a certain likeness. Indeed, for Aquinas, the link between thought and world was a *similitudo* shared by the intelligible species and the mental definition.¹²⁹

Besides an early philosophical tract, *De ente et essentia*, universality was never a central issue within Aquinas's thought, but this does not mean that he is a passive bystander in a huge debate. Still less could one qualify him as a rhetorician or grammarian, but his ventures into the realm of divine predication, resulting in his theory of analogy, are indispensable to the elucidation of both his linguistic thought and his entire philosophy of being. While there are certain words that can be applied univocally to God, such as 'eternal' and 'simple', for the most part the words used to describe him are equivocal (God is wise and so are some people, though not in the same way). Therefore, most words can only be predicated of God by analogy, that is to say that they yield something to the human understanding, but precisely on human, rather than divine terms.¹³⁰ Analogy was a useful concept not only in maintaining the divine simplicity and demarcating the divine from the terrestrial, but it also had the great asset of preserving the literal truth of revelation. The sources of such a theory are taken directly from Aristotle's *Categories*, but it is also fitting to note that 'analogy' was one of the four senses of Scripture elaborated by Saint Augustine, although Aquinas classes it within the literal sense.¹³¹

¹²⁹ De Libéra, 275.

¹³⁰ For a concise explanation of Aquinas's negative theology, see Marenbon, Jon. 238.

¹³¹ For Augustine, the term 'analogy' had a very specific definition: it is where the truth of one text of Scripture is shown not to contradict the truth of another. (Aquinas - *Summa Theol.* Q 1. Art 10). Augustine had also made a distinction between accidental and substantial predication, saying that only the latter could apply to God, who is immutable. See Marenbon, 31.

It is only through an understanding of the place of analogy within Aquinas's thought that we can fully appreciate the import of his theology.¹³² The consequences of analogy are immediately present in his exegesis, which most moderns would properly call allegorical. "Sacred Scripture fittingly teaches divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things. For God provides for everything according to the capacity of its nature. Now it is natural to man to attain to intellectual truths through sensible objects, because all our knowledge originates in the senses." (Part 1-question 1 – article 9) This justification for figures of speech in the Bible does not entail the corollary that the truth of the Bible is purely allegorical. Rather, the Bible is literally true, and to accommodate the austerity of such a position, Aquinas must, as we have already seen, expand the bounds of the literal sense to encompass such figures. In addition, theology is not a science of words, but of things, and although certain revealed truths must resort to figures, the truth itself is not susceptible of such simple expression. Therefore literality and allegory must not be seen as a feature of words, but rather as a property of those things signified : "The author of Sacred Scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the distinctive property that the things signified by the words in it also have a signification." (question 1- article 10). If linguistic signification is thus subordinated to the significance of things, it is not only because language is ontologically posterior to real things and events ; it is also because things are the causes of words, and things alone are properly

¹³² For an interesting discussion of the incoherence of Aquinas's theory of analogy, in which the Platonic and Aristotelian elements of the theory are shown to be somewhat contradictory, see De Rijk II, 3.

intelligible. As in Aristotle, the distinction between the thing and the thing named is treated by Aquinas as superfluous.

Like Augustine, Aquinas accepts the principles of allegorical readings, but like Augustine, he is eager to show that allegory has a very limited application in exegesis, and he prefers the twofold 'literal' and 'spiritual' senses to the traditional fourfold method. This is because he recognizes figuration as an integral part of human expression, yet this is not what constitutes the Bible's unique power of providential signification. This also settles the problem of Biblical parables, for which the literal and historical senses cannot coincide (the parable is not rooted in history, yet there is still a literal sense):

The parabolical sense is contained under the literal, for words signify things strictly or figuratively. The literal sense is not the figure of speech itself, but what it stands for. When Scripture speaks of God's arm, the literal sense is not that God has such a physical limb, but only what is signified by such a limb, namely operative power. (question 1- article 10).

In this sense, all descriptions of God are a form of catachresis, the rhetorical trope by which we designate literal objects (e.g. the 'wings' of an airplane) with a figurative misnomer. This form of catachresis is not really so distinct from his theory of analogy. In fact, it is this theory, in making distinctions between terrestrial and divine predicates, that manages to avoid the difficulties associated with the inflation of the allegorical sense and likewise exposes the insufficiency of human language.¹³³

Aquinas is often associated with a natural theology. That is to say that divine realities are analogous with the reality of the world. We cannot know God for what he is,

¹³³ "The concord between philosophy and revelation which Thomas intended involved not only the demonstration of rationally accessible truths, but also the discovery of natural analogies to transcendent truths and the ordering of both natural and supernatural truths in a scientific way." Lohr, 93.

but rather by what he is not (material). But if there is logic to creation, then *Revelation* must be of analogous logic. Our concept of species is analogous to species as an idea in the Divine Mind, but unlike Augustine, they are not identical. Following an Aristotelian rubric, Aquinas no longer had to posit the universals as separable Forms/Ideas, and yet they did correspond to the repeatable, intelligible structures of reality.

Aquinas marks the end of our exploration of the debate over universals, not because he provided the definitive answer, but rather because his death is roughly coterminous with the end of our literary corpus. The debate over universality would continue to flourish in the hands of philosophers such as Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and John Buridan. It would be fair to say, however, that since the end of Scholasticism, the debate has never been given the same investment that it had received in the millennium following Porphyry's initial questions.

Conclusion

In all the phases of the debate explored here, including the Ancient, the question of universals can never fully be disentangled from theology. It is quite difficult to imagine how one could come up with a novel ontology of substance without butting against any questions that are the proper domain of the theologian. Even Aristotle and Plato were taken, especially in the later Middle Ages, as theists, and their thoughts on universality, although quite divergent from Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, were either treated purely logically (or ontologically) in the early Latin West, and later treated as part of a greater metaphysical system that could not be easily assimilated into the knowledge

gleaned from revelation. This is why the question of universality was frequently juxtaposed with naturalistic (especially in Islam) accounts of (non)creation, and at every stage they had to postulate a specific kind of God (providential, static, or arbitrary) according to their various ontologies.

In the prologue to this work, I claimed that the various attitudes towards universal genera and species could be deemed ideological; this is not meant to imply a flat dismissal of all the aforementioned theories as convenient fictions of their own time and context. Rather, they are ideologies in the sense that they are a network or bundle of assumptions about the basic building blocks of reality, from which myriad other principles and corollaries flow. ‘Ideology’ is also the term favored by Fredric Jameson in the *Political Unconscious*, there designated as those tacit assumptions that maintain power structures and prevent revolution. Jameson makes no such distinction between ideology and theology, and for his purposes, such a conflation is hardly problematic; indeed, it can even be understood as productive:

I have throughout the present work implied what I have suggested explicitly elsewhere, that any comparison of Marxism with religion is a two-way street, in which the former is not necessarily discredited by its association with the latter. On the contrary, such a comparison may also function to rewrite certain religious concepts – most notably Christian historicism and the “concept” of providence, but also the pretheological systems of primitive magic – as anticipatory foreshadowings of historical materialism within precapitalist social formations in which scientific thinking is unavailable as such.¹³⁴

Based on the fact that earlier in this work, Jameson had transcribed the fourfold senses of Scripture onto a Marxist hermeneutic that dispenses with providence in favor of a materialist trajectory of history, it becomes clear that allegories, for Jameson, are natural

¹³⁴ Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 285.

symbolic processes emerging both directly and indirectly from the contradictions entailed by the mode of production. The place of ideology, then, is to resolve these contradictions and render them palatable, and these instantiations of ideological inscription, however transmuted or displaced, find their place within collective narratives.

But if ideology is not considered mere false consciousness, but rather, as Jameson suggests, a “structural limitation” (p. 285), then we can see how much more clearly how the various ideologies surrounding universal genera and species can be rendered more properly as “theologies”, for it is here that we clearly see the structural limitation imposed on philosophical thinking under the constraints of orthodoxy. It is only within this last discipline of theology that full ramifications of the debate come to the fore. If we live in an atomized world of discrete particulars, the major problem is the validity of general concepts, as well as deriving meaning from “created” objects. On the other hand, if we are individuated within a species by our accidents, then we face the problems of personal immortality and God’s free act of creation.

In the thirteenth century, when philosophical speculation was often constrained by strict adherence to orthodoxy, we find the flourishing of the Latin *summae*, those encyclopedic works which offer discussions of all facets of reality. Concomitant with this development is the theological romance, which transposes traditional romance narrative elements onto a more universal sphere. The natural precedent for such a universal *translatio* is of course *allegoria in factis* of Biblical exegesis, which, in its comprehensiveness, accounts for both parabolic and historical/chronological aspects of allegory. The literal chivalric world of the *Queste* is but a degraded world of perishable sensibles which must be forsaken in order to accede to spiritual truths. By contrast, the

dream narrative of the *Rose* places all major actants within the mind of the lover, where the idealized rose and fountain of Narcissus stand alongside the concretized prosopopeias of Reason and Nature. The former work (c. 1220-30) advances a deeply Augustinian theology, with a depreciation of the senses and an emphasis on divine providence, whereas the latter, in the case of Jean de Meun's section, juxtaposes arguments from this older theology with the newer natural theology that was flourishing in the University of Paris at the time (c. 1270).

Both theological romances espouse a realistic ideology regarding signification. In the network of abstractions ranging from particular to universal to allegory, the mind has to move from particular encounters to general ideas and eventually to a *translatio*, or transfer, of those general ideas to a different logical sphere. This is most perfect example of this type of allegory is metaphor, Aristotle's sign of genius, for the "good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity within dissimilars."¹³⁵ The nominalists, especially in the fourteenth century, ascribed no reality to the universal, and therefore, allegory is in play even in the designation of universals (when treated as things, i.e. the universal man). Lacking the almost mystical flavor of the realists' view of the world-language relation, the nominalist favors the increasingly literal designation of things, ideas, and concepts by common terms which refer, at their origin, to individuals. If allegory is to be susceptible to decoding via predicative logic, we must once again tacitly suspend the disbelief occasioned by our scientific age, and once again allow for the possibility of immaterial existent entities/substances and a cyclical history. Hence our exploration of the signifying apparatuses utilized by these allegorical narratives, during a time in which such a process could hardly be deemed ideologically innocuous. In an age

¹³⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics*, XXI.

of explicit censorship, both the *Queste* and the *Rose* will attempt to provide the foundations for universal signification within the logic of divine providence.

Chapter 2 - The Holy Grail and Providential Re-Writings of the Prose Lancelot

La *Queste du Saint Graal* is a romance written with multiple senses, more specifically, the earthly and the heavenly. Although many theological resonances are prefigured in the *Conte dou Graal* of Chrétien, the works of Robert de Boron, and the *Perlesvaus*, only the *Queste* displays this rigorously drawn division between its senses. The *Queste* is explicitly and simultaneously allegory and allegoresis. While this work is inscribed on the level of plot within the *Vulgate* cycle, or the *Lancelot en Prose*, Jean Frappier's notion of a single architect for the entire cycle does not adequately account for the palpable difference in tone and motivation between the *Queste* and the rest of the cycle. The *Queste* is certainly a theological romance, but it does not quite fit the genre of philosophical allegory to quite the same extent as Dante's *Commedia* or Jean de Meun's *Rose*, for example. One will find in it few examples of dialectic or Aristotelianism. Instead, it favors a time-honored Augustinianism bolstered by a miraculous supernatural. This chapter will elucidate some of the peculiarities of the *Queste*, which bears little tonal and doctrinal affinity with its either its predecessor (*Conte dou Graal* and its continuations, *Perlesvaus*) or its successors (*La Mort le Roi Artu*). This chapter will focus first on Chrétien's verse romance before turning to the *Queste*; the chapter ends with a discussion of *La Mort le Roi Artu*, and through this comparative study the *Queste*'s singular providential structure emerges most clearly.

Chrétien's Epistemological Quest

We must first turn to the origin of the grail legend, namely Chrétien's incomplete *Conte dou Graal*, for the first indications of the grail as a Christian object. This romance is not, properly speaking, allegorical, for the romance world depicted here does not systematically refer to another reality of a different order. It does contain, however, the foundations of an allegorical narrative without explicitly inscribing itself in the allegorical tradition. This point has been contested by Jacques Ribard, whose Christological readings of the *Chevalier de la Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal* seek to add ideological coherence to the works' literal sense.¹³⁶ Evoking a similar allegorizing tendency, Winthrop Wetherbee has established both formal and thematic links between the romances of Chrétien and the allegorical poems emerging from the School of Chartres.¹³⁷ Without wishing to undermine such approaches, I contend Chrétien's poems seem to emerge from a more literal world of *merveille* and intricate Christian and secular poetic allusions. This is still quite far from the explicit bifurcation of senses that is propounded in the later *Queste*, whose value system derives more explicitly from Christianity (both militant and monastic) than Chrétien's courtly world. The tendency to allegorize Chrétien's Perceval is justified in part by the romance adaptation of Biblical proverb,¹³⁸ one which Eugene Vance has signaled for its reliance on Pauline allegoresis.¹³⁹ This didactic prologue thus « sows the seeds » for allegoresis, but in its

¹³⁶ Ribard, "Les romans de Chrétien de Troyes sont-ils allégoriques ?" and "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette – une allégorie du salut ?*"

¹³⁷ Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century*, 226-241. Wetherbee posits a Platonic universe for Chrétien's romances, the court being a reflection of the macrocosm. Wetherbee also demonstrates Chrétien's knowledge of both Vergil and Macrobius in *Erec et Enide*.

¹³⁸ "Qui petit seime petit quiault/ Et qui auques recoillir viaut/ En tel leu sa semence espanse/ Que fruit a cent doble li rande,/ Car en terre qui rien ne vaut/ Bone semence seiche et faut." - He who sows little reaps little, and if one wishes a good harvest he should spread his seed in a place to reap fruit a hundred-fold, for in worthless land a good seed will dry up and die

¹³⁹ Matthew 13 and Luke 8. This proverb is also taken up by Saint Paul in one of his exhortations to the spiritual interpretation of Scripture: Gal 6,8. "Car ce que l'homme aura semé, il le moissonnera aussi. Celui

incomplete state, there is little to suggest that this is any more allegorical than Chrétien's previous romances. In order to speak meaningfully about an incomplete work, I have assumed some unity within its bipartite structure, that is to say within the radically distinct 'Perceval' and 'Gawain' sections. We shall focus our attention first on the Perceval, the newcomer in Arthur's kingdom.

Perceval's first dialogue with his mother brings us right to the crux of an enigmatic chivalric past. Perceval's mother attributes the death of her husband and other children to chivalry, and has retired in the *Gaste Forest* to protect Perceval from the same fate [379-452]. This narration of a remote history will reveal its significance later in the story, but the evocation of both familial and societal devastation prefigures a recuperation of lost order, serving as the primary impetus which drives this romance's plot. The mother's narrative is a generational or genealogical one. The mother thus divides her narrative between the generation of Uther Pendragon, along with Perceval's father and brothers, and the new generation, of which Perceval is the only remaining exponent. What remains to be uncovered in her narrative is that which will expiate the misdeeds inflicted on the previous generation. This generational schema elaborated by the mother, as well as the 'testamentary' division of the Perceval and Gawain sections, suggest a much broader chronological scale than is in evidence in Chrétien's earlier romances. In addition, the mother's tale is filled with holes and mysterious invocations (e.g. the isles of the sea, the murder of Perceval's brothers), lending to the romance a cryptic opacity that

qui sème dans la chair moissonnera de la chair la corruption; mais celui qui sème dans l'esprit moissonnera de l'esprit la vie éternelle. » According to the late Eugene Vance, this metaphor was fundamental for medieval thought: « Dante exploite là une longue tradition exégétique fondée sur la vigoureuse parabole de Matthieu (13) où le Christ compare la révélation de la parole divine à du grain qu'on sème, parabole qui donna naissance au Moyen Age à bien des analogies osées entre l'acte de parler et l'éjaculation du sperme. » Eugene Vance, « Desir, rhétorique et texte », 142.

is far more developed here than elsewhere in Chrétien.¹⁴⁰ These will provide substantial fodder for more Christian renderings of this past in the *Queste*.

Prophecy emerges as the clearest example of prefiguration, this being a commonplace throughout medieval literature. In the *Perceval*, the prophesies of the young damsel [995-1000] and the fool in Arthur's court [1015-18, 1206-24] are realized in a literal manner: the young damsel predicts a time when young Perceval will surpass any of the knights in Arthur's court, while the fool more prosaically predicts Perceval's eventual defeat of Kay. This premonitory telling of future events signals a textual order that verges on the magical when the latter is realized:

Ensin con une seiche estele,
L'os do braz destre li brissa,
Si con li soz lo devissa,
Que molt sovant deviné l'ot.
Voirz fu li devinaus au sot. [4244-4247]

[Thus he broke the right arm with a dry switch just as the fool recounted, and as he had often predicted. The fool's prediction was indeed true.]

In this magical setting, it is not the hermit, endowed with a higher knowledge from God, but rather the fool who, on occasion, mysteriously yields exact predictions of significant events. But here the insistence is on the veracity of the prophecy and its literal fulfillment; the significance of the right arm is a literary commonplace of strength and power, but there is no suggestion that this scene's significance extends allegorically beyond the concept of chivalric superiority.

While the use of prophecy is one of the clearest forms of literary prefiguration, it is also dependent on a firm chronology by which retrospective similitude is established, a

¹⁴⁰ Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes et le mythe du Graal*, 67. Drawn from Keith Busby, 18.

luxury that is not always granted to readers of the *Perceval*. Jacques Ribard has demonstrated how the repetition of certain evocative verses serves to blur the time between the *Perceval* and *Gawain* sections:¹⁴¹

Dames en perdront lor mariz
Terres en seront essilliees
Et puceles desconseilliees
Qui orferines remanront,
Et maint chevalier en morront :
Tuit cil [mal] av[en]ront par toi ! [4608-4613]

Et si a dames anciènes
Qui n'ont ne mariz ne seignors,
Ainz sunt de terres et d'enors
Deseritees a grant tort
Puis que mari furent mort,
Et damoiseles orphenines
Et avec les does reïnes,
Qui molt a grant henor les tienent. [7490-7497]

[Women will lose their husbands, lands will become barren, helpless damsels will become orphans and many knights will die. All these ills will come to pass because of you!]

[There are old women who have neither husbands nor lords, but they have been unjustly disinherited of their lands and manors when their husbands died. And there are orphaned damsels who live with the two queens who hold them in the highest esteem].

Following Jean Frappier, Ribard notes that the future in the prophecy of the Loathly Damsel who mocks *Perceval* becomes a “quasi-intemporal” (105) present in the description of the enchanted castle by *Gawain*’s host. The verbal correspondence between the two passages is undeniable, in such a way that the enchanted castle seems at first glance the literal fulfillment of the Loathly Damsel’s prediction. The situation with the two queens as described by the host, however, harks back to well before the prophecy of the Loathly Damsel, given the familial relation between the queens and *Perceval*. And

¹⁴¹ Ribard, “Ecriture symbolique et visée allégorique dans *Le Conte du Graal*”.

while the apocalyptic prediction of the Loathly Damsel is partially realized in the Gawain section, the results are far less disastrous than what she had foretold. These narrations, one prophetic, the other literal history, are clearly linked thematically and semantically and lead this reader to postulate a spectral relationship of prefiguration and fulfillment. This interplay is rooted in an attenuated deterministic history, but it is impossible to tell whether we are dealing with Christian providence or a supernatural fatalism.¹⁴² In other words, does the narrative's teleology correspond to a divinely ordered history, or does the Perceval appeal to another form of preternatural determinism?

In a dense and detailed piece of criticism, Antoinette Saly demonstrates that the structure of the *Conte du Graal* rests on a series of inversions within the plot.¹⁴³ Relying on various examples, most of which deal with Gawain's expiation of Perceval's silence, Saly contends that these inversions provide the inner coherence of the narrative. In other words, within these inversions resides the work's *senefiance*:

On ne saurait parler ici de contrepoint ni d'entrelacement, car les aventures de Gauvain ne se situent pas sur le même plan que celles de Perceval, auxquelles elles se réfèrent. Le romancier, tout en les donnant comme aussi réelles, aussi vécues du point de vue romanesque, les charge d'une signification relative à autre chose qu'elles-mêmes [...] C'est une romanesque *allegoria in factis* mise comme en abyme.¹⁴⁴

Saly's thesis is borne out by a structural analysis of motifs within the romance, without recourse to Biblical exegesis. By showing a series of faults and expiations, she discovers an almost complete symmetry in the romance, allowing her to postulate Perceval's final victory in a tournament against Gawain. Saly's identification of *allegoria in factis* (here

¹⁴² *Moult Obscures Paroles*, 8 : "Le mortel ne peut soutenir le face-à-face avec la divinité. Pour communiquer avec les dieux, il lui faut un écran, ou plus précisément, un filtre. C'est à travers le prophète que l'homme entrevoit la sphère divine. Cela est particulièrement vrai pour ce qui concerne le langage, où il faut un truchement pour faire passer le langage surnaturel dans la langue des mortels..."

¹⁴³ Saly, "La récurrence des motifs en symétrie inverse et la structure du Perceval".

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 158-159.

stripped of any of its historical and chronological implications) suggests an expanded use of this Biblical (providential) signification, for the system of inversions that constitutes this allegory does not refer to biblical narratives. Saly provides an explanation for those narrative devices of prophecy, prefiguration and specularity which were exploited deftly in the full allegorization of the grail story that is the *Queste*, suggesting that such an enterprise may have been the continuation of a latent, or inchoate, allegory in Chrétien.

Names and Things

Chrétien's work privileges epistemology over ontology, fitting for a work that emerges at a time when the ontology of pre-Abelardian realisms was far less tenable than it had been just a century prior. Fully versed in the exegetical dialectics of Peter Lombard, who himself had been present for Abelard's lectures at Sainte-Geneviève, Chrétien employs a proto-Scholasticism that emerges mostly for comic effect in this particular romance. Furthermore, most invocations of any Scholastic methodology are used for questions of nomination, especially as this relates to substance. Chrétien's romance offers a comic, and often satirical rendering of the question of nomination than we find in the *Queste* or in Robert de Boron. When the seductive Gawain arrives in Escavalon, his kiss with a pretty damsel is interrupted by a rear-vassal who hurls accusations of murder at Gawain and unleashes a misogynist tirade against the damsel:

« Se fame doit faire nul bien,
En cesti n'a de fame rien
Qui het le mal et le bien aime.
Tort a qui plus fame la clame,
Que la en pert ele le non

Ou ele n'aime se bien non.
Mas tu iés fame, bien le voi,
Que cil qui la siet delez toi
Ocist ton pere, et tu lo baises !
Quant fame puet avoir ses aises,
De soreplus petit li chaut. » [5781-5791]

[If woman can do no good, then there is no woman in this one, who hates evil and loves good. It would be wrong to call her 'woman' for the name is lost on her if she loves nothing but good. But I see clearly that you are a woman, for the man who sits there next to you killed your father, and you greet him with a kiss. But when a woman can have her needs met, she cares little about the rest.]

Definition and nomination converge in this mock-Scholastic definition of woman. In Scholasticism, the typical example of definition would be 'man', since according to Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, 7.5), male and female derived their definitions from the genus animal (i.e., 'woman' is not a sub-species of human). In this extreme form of realism, the perversity of woman is treated as so inherent, that to insist on her innate goodness would be a perversion of language, or, a definitional error. By insisting on the mutual exclusivity of 'woman' and 'goodness', the rear-vassal brings us back to the less subtle realism of the generation that had preceded Abelard nearly a century prior to the composition of the *Perceval*. The rear-vassal thus shares with the young Perceval a certain hastiness to conflate nouns and names, which in this case amplifies his vitriol.

While the delayed revelation of knight's names is a commonplace in medieval literature, this work foregrounds the epistemological process in nomination and negativity more explicitly than Chrétien's previous romances. Perceval emerges in this romance as *nice* (that is to say, ignorant or Latin *nesciens*), and Chrétien develops this portrayal by insisting on Perceval's continual mistaking of objects based on rudimentary definitions. While such explicit references to contemporary dialectic are relatively few in this work, the repetition/wordplay of 'non' (name/word/not) permeates the work as a

whole. Perceval's mother, believing that her son's vision extended to the angels of death, is met with a more shocking revelation from her son: "Non ai, mere, voir, non ai, non! / Chevalier dient qu'il ont non." [373-374] [No mother! I most certainly did not (see angels). They said their name was 'knight'.] Perceval's 'unwitting' and emphatic word-play (*non/non*) suggests that apprehension of name, thing, and essence are neither simultaneous nor a given.¹⁴⁵ An epistemological uncertainty here yields both comic and dramatic effect, for one wonders how the young and chatty Perceval depicted here could have ever kept his mouth shut during the grail procession. As yet, Perceval does not distinguish between particular and universal, accident (knighthood) and substance (man). These seem to be the defining features of his *niceté*.

The incomplete Perceval is still a good deal longer than any of Chrétien's previous romances. In contrast to the *Lancelot*, or the *Yvain*, for example, the adventures of this romance are delayed and the action remains somewhat muted in the first half. With its more comedic opening, the *Conte dou Graal* employs a dissonant palate, combining brilliant wordplay with a thrilling juxtaposition of the sublime (description of knights' shining armor) and the bathetic (Perceval's questions). In this more bleak and serene world, Chrétien juxtaposes generic courtly openings with the dissonant and clamorous arrival of the knights. We begin with the typical troubadour *reverdie*, or springtime exordium, the birds singing '*an lor latin*', which imbues the scene with vitality and suggests an amorous awakening. Then suddenly, Perceval, here known as the

¹⁴⁵ This rhyme pair was used first in Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette*, though the effect is not as comic. Rather it shows the hospitality of the citizens of Logres to the victorious Lancelot, 2443-46: Et dit chascuns : "Sire, par foi, / Vos vos herbergeroiz o moi!" / "Sire, por Deu et por son non, / Ne herbergiez se o moi non!" [And each one said: "My lord, please lodge at my house!" "My lord, by God and his holy name, don't lodge with anyone but me!"]

nice (ignoramus) emerges “*de la gaste forest soutaine*” (the remote waste forest). The *reverdie* conceals a dark and mysterious past. Chrétien’s hauntingly evocative setting for this first scene is carried through to both the *Perlesvaus* and the *Queste*, both of which offer morbid explanations of how the forest was laid waste.

Renewal and retribution are both presaged by the juxtaposition of death and new life, yet Chrétien resolves the tension more immediately with levity. The irruption of the knights dazzles visually, and the sonorous din of their armor frightens young Perceval. With his limited experience of the world and his senses numb with the beauty before him, Perceval’s emotions shift rapidly, from panic to wonder to admiration. These confounded senses and the limited vocabulary of young Perceval lead him to postulate that the knights are devils, then angels, then finally God himself. At every turn, Perceval falls into error by assuming a theological explanation for the knights before him:

Ensin a soi meïsmes dist
Li vallez, einz qu’il les veïst.
Et quant il les vit en apert
Que do bois furent descovert,
Si vit les hauberz fremienz
Et li hiaumes clerz et luisanz
Et vit lo vert et lo vermoil
Reluire contre lo soloil
Et l’or et l’azur et l’argent,
Si li fu molt tres bel et gent
Et dit : « Biaus sire Dex, merci !
Ce sont ange que je voi ci.
Et voir or ai je molt pechié,
Or ai je molt mal exploitié
Qui dis que c’estoient deiable... » [121-135]

[And so the young man spoke to himself before seeing them. But when he saw them in the open out of the woods, their chain mail glistening, their bright and shining helmets, the green and red gleaming in the sunlight, and the gold, blue and silver, he simply said, “Dear Lord, my God, I beg your pardon! These are angels that I see before me. I truly sinned greatly before when I said they were devils.”]

After finding his senses completely dazzled, Perceval reveals his lack of knowledge by taking every universal for a particular. When Perceval asks a knight to identify himself, he receives a laconic “Chevaliers sui.” [170], leading him to postulate that ‘chevaliers’ is a proper name: “Biaus sire chiers, Vos qui avez non chevaliers...” (My dear lord whose name is Knight) [183-184].¹⁴⁶ In setting up a romance dedicated to the greatest of Arthurian heroes, our first glimpse of Perceval is of a simpleton, or *tabula rasa*, from the remote wilderness. Perceval’s induction into knighthood is therefore both a primordial loss of innocence and an initiation into knowledge.

Perceval is eventually destined to transcend his *niceté* through trials and experience. This is because we are dealing with an epistemologically optimistic romance. Perceval’s disorderly reality of discrete particulars is the first sign of his limitation. It is clear, however, that Perceval is not to blame for this lack, since he does not have any exposure to or experience of the court.¹⁴⁷ After mistaking a universal noun for a particular, Perceval tries to remedy his error by assuming that ‘knighthood’ is an inherent quality (“Fustes vos ensin nez?” – Were you born thus? [276]).¹⁴⁸ In addition, Perceval

¹⁴⁶ This comic assumption that all nouns are particular finds an analogous inversion in Perceval’s dialogue with his cousin. concerning Perceval finds “the Fisher King,” to be an epithet of mutually exclusive terms :

- Ha ! sire, ou geüistes vos donques ?
 Chiés lo riche Roi Pescheor ?
 - Pucele, par lo Salveor,
 Ne sai s’il est peschieres o rois,
 Mais molt est riches et cortois. [3432-3436]

[“My lord, where did you lodge then ? At the Fisher King’s Palace?” “Maiden, by the grace of the Savior, I don’t know if he was a king or a fisherman, but he certainly was very wealthy and courteous.”]

¹⁴⁷ Ribard, “La symbolique du nom dans le *Conte du Graal*”, 122. “Il s’agit pour [Perceval] de bien marquer que la connaissance du nom de ces armes ou de ces édifices religieux manifeste un progrès évident dans la formation du jeune sauvageon de la forêt galloise. Il passe de l’inconnu au connu.”

¹⁴⁸ When viewed from a philosophical perspective, Perceval’s question asks whether knighthood is an essential and intrinsic quality. The knight invokes existentialist reasoning *avant la lettre*, insisting that one is not born a knight, but rather becomes one:

Et cil qui petit fu senez

builds all of his definitions from particulars, including mistakenly believing that one hurls (lance) a spear (lance) like a javelin, a homonymous designation of noun and verb which provokes Perceval's interlocutor to dub him *soz* (foolish).¹⁴⁹

The link between epistemology and nomination is developed further as an essential part of Perceval's induction into knighthood, most often with comic consequences. Perceval's mother insists on the importance of knowing proper names (N'aiez longuemant compaignon/ Que vos ne damandez son non/ Et lo sornon a la parsonne. Par lo sornon conoist en l'ome [523-6]), (Never delay in asking a fellow knight his name and epithet, for it is by the epithet that one knows the man). She also asks that Perceval visit churches and abbeys for the preservation of his soul. Yet, lacking any exposure to such places, Perceval believes the first tent in the forest to be that which corresponds best to the definition of 'église' given to him by his mother.¹⁵⁰ As was the

Li dist : « Fustes vos ensin nez ? »
- Nenil, vallez, ce ne puet estre
Que nule riens puise ansin nestre. [275-278]

[And the young dim-witted lad said to him : "Were you born that way ?" "Not at all, boy, for nothing can be born that way."]

¹⁴⁹ - Que est ce que vos tenez ?
[.....]
- Jo te dirai : ce est ma lance.
- Dites vos, fait il, la lance qu'en
Si con je faz mes javeloz ?
- Nenil, vallez, tu ies toz soz,
Ainz en fiert en tot demenois. [185, 191-195]

["What are you holding ?" "I'll tell you : this is my spear/lance." "So you say that you throw it just as I throw my javelins?" "Not at all, boy! You're quite foolish. You must strike from close range."]

¹⁵⁰ - Mere, fait il, que est eglise ?
- Uns leus ou en fait lo servise
Celui qui ciel et terre fist
Et homes et bestes i mist.
- Et mostiers qu'est ? Filz, ce meïsmes :
Une maison bele et saintime
Et de cors sainz et de tressors. [537-543]

case earlier with knighthood, Perceval's solecism is the result of his taking an accident for an inherent *differentia*, a common Aristotelian error that is amplified for comic effect.

In order to achieve knighthood, Perceval opts not for imitation, but rather a total usurpation of the knight's name and identity well before his career has even begun ("Ne serai chevaliers des mois/ Se chevaliers vermaus ne sui" - I won't be a knight for ages, if I am not the Red Knight. [954-955]). In their encounter, Perceval slays the red knight with a javelin through the eye [1068-1073] before proceeding to rob the cadaver of his armor in a highly uncourtly gesture:

Et li vallez est descenduz,
Si met la lance a une part
Et l'escu do col li depart,
Mais il n'en set venir a chief
Do hiaume qu'il ot sor lo chief,
Qu'il ne set comant il lo praigne
Et l'espee, qu'il li desceigne
Maintenant, mes il no set fere
Ne do desarmer a chief traire. [1076-1084]

[The young man puts his foot on the ground and leaves his spear to one side, he takes the knight's shield off his neck, but he is unable to remove the helmet from the knight's head

["Mother," he says, "what is a church?" "It's a place where they give the service to Him who made the heavens and the earth, and placed man and beast there." "And an abbey? What's that?" "My son, it is a beautiful and most saintly house with many relics and treasures. "]

Li vallez vers lo tref ala
Et dit ainz qu'il parvenist la :
« Dex, or voi je vostre maison !
Or feroie je desraison
Se aorer ne vos aloie.
Voir dit ma mere tote voie,
Qui me dist que ja ne trovasse
Moutier ou aorer n'alasse
Lo Criator an cui je croi... » [627-625]

[The young man headed toward the tent, and before reaching it he said, "God, now I see your house! It would be senseless of me not to go worship you. My mother certainly told the truth (about your beauty) and she told me if ever I found a church or monastery, to go worship there the Creator in whom I believe."]

for he doesn't know where to grab it from. Now he tries to ungird the sword, but he is unable to do so, and thus cannot bring the disarming to completion.]

The naturally gifted yet unschooled Perceval derides the proper meaning of knighthood by believing it to be a matter of external appearances. In this respect, Perceval's first victory is heavily qualified.

Having witnessed the procession of the grail in the Fisher King's castle, Perceval remains silent and does not ask the purpose of the grail, an omission which is later recounted as a sin. His first cousin reveals to him that his born identity (Percevaus li Gaulois [3513]) is to be replaced by a more appropriate epithet ("Tes non est changeiez, biax amis/ - Commant? – Percevaus li chaitis!" ("Your name has changed, fair friend?" "To what?" "Perceval, the weak/unfortunate") [3519-20]), further bolstering his mother's claim that the epithet is the clearest marker of one's identity. In a probable clerical interpolation found in two manuscripts, Perceval's identity during his first encounter with the knights goes through a more rapid (and comical) shift that reflects the protagonist's poor grasp of nomination and definition:

- Par quel non je t'apelerai.
- Sire, fet il, jel vos dirai,
J'ai non Biaus Filz. - Biaus Filz as ores ?
Je cuit bien que tu as ancores
Un autre non. – Sire, par foi,
J'ai non Biaus Frere. – Bien t'an croi,
Mes se tu me viaus dire voir,
Ton droit non voldrai je savoir.
- Sire, fet il, bien vos puis dire
Qu'a mon droit non ai non Biaus Sire.
- Si m'aït Deus, ci a bel non.
An as tu plus ? – Sire, je non,
Ne onques certes plus n'an oi.¹⁵¹

[“By what name do I call you?”
“My lord, I will tell you. My name is Fair Son.”
“Fair Son is your name now? I think that you still have another name.”
“My lord, yes, my name is Fair Brother.”

¹⁵¹ This interpolation follows verse 334 in my edition. For a commentary on this passage, see Ribard, “La symbolique du nom”, 127.

“I believe you, but if you wish to tell the truth, I do not think you can do it justice.”
“My lord, I can tell you to the best of my knowledge that my name is not Fair Lord.
“Good heavens, that’s a nice name. Do you have any more?”
“My lord, I don’t, at least I never heard any others.”]

Unaware of how to converse with his interlocutors, Perceval reveals that his identity is constellated through the various relations into which he was born, yet invariably qualified by his beauty (*biaus*), which here functions almost as Perceval’s given name. Attached as he is to this qualifier, his self-designations are relational, that is to say that their definition (father, son, lord) is predicated on a relation to another noun. Perceval’s shifting and inchoate identity is here depicted as the play of various parts of speech from a mind as yet unaccustomed to abstraction.

The importance of knowledge, nomination, and recognition of objects in the *Conte dou Graal* suggests that epistemology (rather than ontology) is used as a structuring device for the narrative. Perceval’s emergence from *niceté* into full-fledged knighthood makes it an early precursor to the *Bildungsroman*, and the importance of unasked questions (what was the purpose of the grail?) and misrecognized objects (church, armor) show that the epistemological process is brought about by reconciling words with their corresponding things. In its incomplete state, we can only surmise that the work will conclude with Perceval’s expiation of his sin and full assimilation into knighthood. It is impossible to conclude, however, that this would be based on divine providence. For while Christian allusions abound in Chrétien’s final romance, including an intricate network of prefiguration and fulfillment, we are still in a very different ideological setting from the providential narrative of the *Queste*.

La Queste del Saint Graal

The *Queste del Saint Graal* inverts the chivalric values exemplified in Chrétien. The shift from poetry to prose, or from rhymed romance to historical chronicle is the most obvious generic and stylistic difference. Absent from the *Queste* is Chrétien's humor, irony, and word-play; instead we have a more intricate plot and a truly epic scale which runs from Genesis to Late Antiquity. Its deeply Christian ideology can be seen most clearly in the systematic *translatio* of 'heavenly' for 'worldly' chivalry, a distinction that owes something to the *Perlesvaus* (c. 1200), where it is less schematically and rigorously developed, and which finds no precedent in Chrétien. If we compare the *Queste* to the rest of the *Vulgate*, the former still emerges as ideologically and intentionally singular despite more stylistic and generic homogeneity.¹⁵² It is this double narrative of adventure and gloss, allegory and allegoresis, which sets the *Queste* apart, and it is within the more systematic framework of Christian providence from which the discrete and various adventures of the *Queste* draw their ultimate meaning. The goal is no longer to “*arimer lo mellor conte qui soit contez en cort reial*” (rhyme the best tale ever told in a royal court) (*Perceval*, 62-3), but rather to transmit Christian truths within a chivalric context, truths that are to resonate with the reader on both the level of affect and that of intellection.¹⁵³ The work exhorts the reader to accede to these deeper truths by

¹⁵² Unlike the other works of the Lancelot en prose, the quest of the holy grail is neither recounted in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1135-8) nor in the French adaptation by Wace, *Roman de Brut*. The *Queste* is therefore not quite so constrained in its plot by earlier “historical” accounts of a quest.

¹⁵³ Etienne Gilson, relying heavily on Pauphilet's assertions of Cistercian authorship or influence, underscores the primacy of affective as opposed to intellectual understanding: “Il se trouve que l'école mystique de Cîteaux a pour caractère propre de désigner par des formules cognitives des états essentiellement affectifs. En d'autres termes, il y a deux manières d'atteindre Dieu pour un mystique cistercien, l'extase en ce monde et la vision béatifique dans l'autre. [...] Les bénédictins de Cîteaux sont des augustinien, et ce sont même les représentants typiques de la mystique affective dont s'inspireront des Franciscains tels que saint Bonaventure.” “La Mystique de la Grace”, 345.

furnishing the tools of contemporary (and ancient) exegesis. Unlike the *Conte dou Graal*, which had engaged in extensive word-play and equivocation, the *Queste* opts for an ideology of the sign's transparency that is consistent with the latter work's greater realism, as we shall see when we come to the hermits' exegesis. While the author has clear predecessors in the process of "Christianizing" the grail story or even in inserting it within an extended Biblical history, he is certainly unique making it conform to the logic of providential Augustinian exegesis.

The tendency to attribute Cistercian patronage and influence to the *Queste* has certainly elucidated much of the work's theology.¹⁵⁴ In her preface to the work, Fanny Bogdanow demonstrates multiple similarities between the wisdom of the *Queste* and that of the monks of Cîteaux, most notably Bernard of Clairvaux. I find that this presentation, especially in the juxtapositions of quotations from Saint Bernard and the work in question, excessively limits the field from which the work's author could have drawn his theology. While it is clear that Bernard of Clairvaux favored allegorical readings, as illustrated by his gloss on the *Song of Solomon*, it seems that the exegesis of the *Queste* appeals to a much wider audience than the mystically-minded monks of Cîteaux. Points of commonality abound between the exegesis of Saint Bernard and that of the *Queste*, such as a disdain for lust, a taste for mysticism, the ineffability *topos*, and a certain skepticism toward the notion of semblance/appearance. Such similarities are too general to suppose Cistercian authorship, and Karen Pratt and Jean Frappier, *pace* Bogdanow and Pauphilet, have made this point by a categorical claim that Cistercian monks did not write

¹⁵⁴ Pauphilet inaugurated the connection between the *Queste* and the Cistercians, a position still held by the Bogdanow in her edition of the work. *La Queste du Saint Graal*, ed. Anne Berrie et Fanny Bogdanow (2006). All citations from the work are drawn from this last edition.

romances.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the apocryphal attribution of the work to Gaultier Map only weakens the claim of Cistercian influence, for Map had made remarks concerning the decadence of the order in his *De Nugis Curialium*.¹⁵⁶ It seems more tenable, therefore, to posit a broader theological foundation than the writings of Saint Bernard.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the *Queste* seems to share the Cistercian hostility (evinced primarily in Bernard) to the ‘decadence’ of certain secular dialecticians, especially Abélard et Gilbert de la Porrée, noticing in their « efforts intellectuels des obstacles sur le chemin de la réforme intérieure. »¹⁵⁸ The advances in dialectic made in the twelfth century are here rejected in favor of a more militantly Augustinian realism which I shall discuss further on.

Following the example of Robert de Boron (*Roman de l’Estoire dou Graal*), the *Queste* inscribes itself in biblical history. The grail, as a mysterious object in the Fisher King’s castle in the Chrétien’s *Conte dou Graal*, is endowed in the *Queste* with an extra-textual history. The mysterious and marvelous objects which haunt Chrétien’s marvelous world are given full etiology, or historical causality: « Ci doit sooir cil.... .iiii.c. anz et .liiii. a aconpliz après la Passion Jesucrist. Au jor de Pentecoste doit ciz sieges trover son mestre. » (Here shall sit a man....454 years after the passion of Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost this seat shall find its master.) (*Queste du Saint Graal*, p. 88). The knights marvel at the prophecy, and Lancelot adds that the prophecy, if true, will find its confirmation that very day. In other words, this narrative will re-write the marvels of

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* 87. see also Jean Frappier, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* 114.

¹⁵⁶ Karen Pratt, “The Cistercians and the *Queste del Saint Graal*”.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Michel Zink, “Traduire Saint Bernard: Quand la Parabole devient Roman”, 30: “Ainsi, dans la *Queste du Graal*, l’esprit cistercien, mis en évidence par Albert Pauphilet et par Etienne Gilson, viendrait étouffer la richesse romanesque qui était jusque-là celle de l’univers arthurien, simplifier le sens, réduire les personnages à des ectoplasmes ou à des symboles algébriques de la vertu et du vice [...] A l’époque de la *Queste du Graal*, un auteur de langue française intéressé par les questions religieuses ne pouvait pas, quel que fût son propre statut, ne pas subir l’influence de la spiritualité cistercienne.”

¹⁵⁸ *Histoire de la Philosophie*, 1334.

previous romances by replacing them with the more religious category of miracles. The marvelous resists explanation, whereas the miraculous offers the first step towards the rationalization of the narrative for the modern Christian community. While the history is no doubt apocryphal, this rationalization of the marvelous is an indication that the *Queste* offers a historical (and omni-temporal/universal) setting which further bolsters this work's designation of reality.

This transformation toward increasing verisimilitude in the *Queste* is not the result of a more scientific or empirical conception of the world, but rather a testament to the preponderance of the didactic mode in comparison with Chrétien's romance. Its pedagogical efficacy lies in its systematic conversion of esoteric exegesis into exoteric givens about the nature of the universe, here relayed in narrative form. If there is epistemology to speak of, it is in the form of intuitive knowledge, viz., knowledge that is conceived as an ontological given rather than as a logical process. This privileging of intuitive knowledge comes at the expense of the sensory, which invariably deludes the knights, including the notably sensuous Gawain: "Et ce n'avint onques mes en nule cort, se ne fu chiés lo Roi Pescheor, que l'en apele lo Roi Mehaignié. Mes de tant sont il engignié qu'il ne le porent voir apertement, ainçois lor en fu coverte la veraie senblance...ne revendré ja mes a cort por chose qui aviegne devant que je l'aie veu plus apertement que il ne m'a [ci] esté mostré.." (And this had never occurred in any court before that of the Fisher King, now known as the Wounded King. But they were so enchanted that they were not able to see it openly, but rather its real appearance remained hidden from them. I will not return to this court before I see more clearly what has been shown to me) (p. 114). Gawain is not satisfied with his first vision of the grail, yet

blinded by his own pride, he believes that his future vision will be more complete, with a vocabulary pertaining to vision and revelation (*semblance, voir, covert, apertement*). The warning of an old hermit sent by Nascien explains the reason for Gawain's failure:

Ceste Queste n'est mie queste de terrienes ovres, ainz doit estre li encerchemenz des granz segrez et dez grans repostailles Nostre Seignor qui li Hauz Mestres mosterra apertement au beneuré chevalier qu'il a esleu a son serjant entre toz les autres chevalier terriens, a cui il mosterra les granz merveilles del Saint Graal, et fera vooir ce que cuers [morteus] ne porroit penser ne langue d'ome terrien deviser. (p.120)

[This is not a quest for earthly things, but should be the search for the great secrets and mysteries of Our Lord which the High Master will show openly to the fortunate knight whom He has elected as his sergeant from among all worldly knights. He will show him the great marvels of the Holy Grail, and will make him see what no mortal heart can fathom and which no language of man can express.]

Here the *Queste* elevates its pedagogy to the same level as the Bible, for it uses human language to describe divine realities which cannot be apprehended by the senses. This 'heavenly' or 'spiritual' sense eludes all knights contaminated by sin, especially of a sexual nature. And while this heavenly chivalry remains elusive, it is not depicted as an intellectual or rational category, but rather an ontological, and indeed ethical one. This is to say that the ethical disposition of the knights, rather than their intellect, is what makes heavenly chivalry available to them.

Militant Realism

In the early twelfth century, Abelard launched an attack on Platonic realism, which when combined with the Aristotelian 'substances' (genera and species), affected the entirety of logic up to that point. Abelard's dialectical pyrotechnics were often received hostilely, not least by Bernard of Clairvaux, whose focus on the intuitive

knowledge was inherently resistant to the former's cold logic. The Augustinian realism that bolstered Bernard's mystical tradition, with an ontology that included divine ideas as causes of things and man's innate knowledge, finds a militant proponent in the author of the *Queste*. These long-standing ideas are developed with extensive use of Scholastic vocabulary, which suggests that the author must have been versed in all aspects of the trivium, including dialectic. There is, however, no concession to any nominalist logic here.¹⁵⁹ The author's realistic ontology is expressed readily in the common phrase of the hermits: « *Or vos dirai la senefiance de ceste chose* », or even the more realistic “*Senefiance est chose*”. Augustine's insistence on signification being a property of things (*res*) is rendered here in the vernacular with ‘chose’ (from Latin ‘causa’). The semantic evolution of the Latin ‘*res*’ into the French ‘*riens*’ (something) would have made this an unsuitable translation of Augustine's terminology. As a property of things (*res*, ‘reality’), meaning (*senefiance*) is thereby inscribed within ontology rather than epistemology. For this quest is indeed more ontological than Chrétien's narrative: Chrétien's romance hinges on an unasked question (What is the grail used for?), and the *Queste* hinges on the quest for the grail tout court.

The *Queste*'s amplified ontology, at the expense of epistemology, has consequences for the hermits' allegoresis. In an article concerning the *Queste*, Tzvetan Todorov suggests that the rhetorical figure of tautology functions like a degree zero of this allegorical format.¹⁶⁰ Todorov demonstrates that tautology (as based on the formula

¹⁵⁹ See Strubel (*La Rose, Renart, et le Graal*, 281-282): “La richesse du vocabulaire technique est remarquable, et chaque niveau de sens a sa constellation de termes regroupés autour d'un concept clef (« semblance » / « senefiance » - « demonstrance »)[...] La *Queste du Graal* est comme celle de la rose une *queste* de la connaissance, de la présence du sens. A ceux qui savent déceler les « démonstrances » sont réservés les « secrez et repostailles » tandis que les autres ne dépassent pas le stade de l'étonnement.”

¹⁶⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, “La Quête du récit”.

A = A) never yields perfect equivalence even in the most simple of utterances. If one allows that the gloss is the spiritual explanation, or equivalence, of worldly adventures, then the *Queste*'s narrative is double: the literal/historical narrative is systematically transformed into a spiritual narrative, one whose meaning is supposed to be the purer, truer narrative.

Il ne suffira pas que les signifiants et les signifiés, les récits à interpréter et les interprétations soient de même nature. *La Queste du Graal* va plus loin ; elle nous dit : le signifié *est* signifiant, l'intelligible *est* sensible. Une aventure est à la fois une aventure réelle et le symbole d'une autre aventure ; en cela ce récit médiéval se distingue des allégories auxquelles nous sommes habitués et dans lesquelles le sens littéral est devenu purement transparent, sans aucune logique propre.¹⁶¹

Todorov's interpretation is salutary for the grail, for it underscores the ontological radicalism of the *Queste* while preserving the autonomy of its literal and allegorical meanings, in keeping with the Patristic tradition.¹⁶² Todorov's schema is in accordance with medieval allegoresis, then, for both adventure (literal sense) and gloss (spiritual sense for the soul) are both *senefiances*, that is to say existing *things* or *realities*, the former only temporal, the latter both temporal and eternal. Within this partial simultaneity of senses (on the chronological, rather than the narrative level), the work must explain how these literal adventures could signify a heavenly battle for the individual soul. Taking the work's fictional status for granted, Todorov does not require any historical reality to correspond to the adventures, seeing them instead as parabolic. The advances made by his article, therefore, bear more on its literary, rather than

¹⁶¹ Todorov, 136.

¹⁶² Rosemond Tuve explains that the literal sense must correspond to real history, and the meaning of the literal sense is not derived from its allegorical significance: "There is no question of substitution of figurative for literal meaning; all doctrine touching allegory, varied and irreconcilably different in some other respects, is unanimous in claiming the validity of both the literal historical event and its allegorical significance." *Allegorical Imagery*, 222.

philosophical, analysis. The later Tree of Life sequence will, in fact, show that history does indeed play a role in the hermit's exegesis.

This self-glossing work explains the correspondence between the two senses through an allegoresis that is much indebted to the Augustinian tradition. In one particular scene, Perceval dreams of two ladies, one seated on a lion, the other on a serpent. These are the same animals that Perceval has seen fighting previously in the narrative. The lady on the lion urges Perceval to prepare for conflict, then the other asks him to expiate the crime of killing the serpent, or, in other words, become her vassal. Perceval refuses her demand and wakes up instantly. Confused as to the dream's meaning, Perceval seeks the aid of a hermit (*prodons*) who counsels him thus:

Percevax, de cez .ii. dames que vos veistes si diversement montees, que l'une estoit montee sor .i. lion et l'autre sor .i. serpent, c'est grant senefiance, si la vos dirai. Cele qui sor le lion estoit montee senefie la Novele Loi, qui sor le lion, [...] Cele dame siet sor le lion, qui est Jesucrist ; cele dame si est Foi, Esperance, [creance], batesme. Cele dame si est la pierre dure et ferme sor quoi Jesucriz dist qu'il [ferm]eroit Sainte Yglise la ou il dist : « Sor ceste pierre edefieré je m'yglise. » Par cele dame, qui estoit montee sor le lion, doit estre entendue [la Novele Loi], que Nostre Sires maintient [en force et] en pooir ausi com li peres sostient l'enfant. [284-286]

[Perceval, you saw two women, one of whom was riding a lion and the other a serpent, and this has (lit. is) great significance. The woman who was on the lion signifies the New Law, Jesus Christ, faith, hope, belief, baptism. This woman is the hard and firm rock on which Jesus said he would build his Holy Church, proclaiming "On this rock I will build my church." By this woman on the lion is meant the New Law, which Our Lord keeps in vigor and power just as a father looks after his child.]

On a lexical level, the preponderance of the verb '*estre*' is not insignificant ('*est senefiance*', '*le lion qui est Jesucrist*', '*cele dame est Foi...*'). Through this verb a series of equivalences and identities are explained, in which abstract/concrete distinctions play no part (*lion = foi, espoir, la Nouvelle Loi, la pierre*). This paradigmatic designation of one thing by another is possible through an inherent similarity in the attributes of the two,

e.g., the woman is young and her lion is strong, in the same manner as faith, hope, and the rock ('Peter').

The hermit completes his gloss by turning to the woman on the serpent. Here we find an almost exact symmetry between the first and second part of the gloss, the battle between good and evil, which finds its particular historical instantiation in the "battles" of New and Old Laws, Church and Synagogue, Christ and Devil, heresy and orthodoxy.

- Mes ore me dites de l'autre qui chevauchoit le serpent, que de cele ne conoistroie je mie la senefiance, se vos ne m'en fesiez certain.

[...]

- Cele dame que tu veis le serpent chevauchier, c'est la Synagogue, la vielle Loi, [qui] fu arriere mise si tost com Jesucriz ot aportee avant la Novele Loi. Li serpenz qui la porte, c'est l'escriture mauvesement entendue et mauvesement esponse, ce est ypocresie, iresie, iniquité, pechié mortel, [c'est li anemis meismes... Sez tu de quel serpent ele se plaint ? Ele ne se pleint pas del serpent que tu oceis ier sor cele roche, ainz dit de celui serpent qu'ele chevauche, c'est li enemis. Et sez tu ou [tu] li feis tel duel don ele se pleint ? Tu li feis au point que li enemis te portoit quant tu venis a ceste [roche, a cele eure] que tu feis la croiz sor toi. (288)

["But now tell me about the other woman who was straddling the serpent, for I do not know the significance of this vision if you don't explain it to me."] "

"The woman you saw straddling the serpent is the Synagogue, the Old Law, which was left behind when Jesus Christ had brought the New Law. The serpent carrying her is Scripture that is poorly understood or poorly glossed, hypocrisy, heresy, iniquity, moral sin, the Enemy himself. Do you know which serpent she was bewailing? It was not the serpent that you murdered on that rock, but rather the one she was riding, the Enemy. And do you know how you inflicted this injury of which she complains? You injured her when the Enemy brought you to the rock at that time and you made the sign of the cross."]

Here the hermit underscores that there are two serpents, the one mentioned by the woman in speech (and the one really killed by Perceval) and the one on which she is seated, the first being a particular symbol and the latter a universal (Biblical) one. Despite the ontological difference between the reptiles, their ultimate referent is the same, explained here by a successive host of related nouns. The lion and serpent ultimately represent diametrically opposed forces, as evinced by the parallelism of both structure and

vocabulary [*la nouvelle Loi, la foi, l'espoir, Jésus-Christ... l'ancienne Loi, l'hypocrisie, l'hérésie, l'Ennemi*]. This is not mere synonymy, but rather the presentation of an ontology that consists of analogous realities. In this case, the correspondence of these realities is based on Genesis, more specifically, the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent, from which the diabolical connotations of the serpent ensued.¹⁶³ It is not from the intrinsic qualities of the serpent that the correspondence is sealed, but rather a prelapsarian history that vouchsafes this universal equivalence. Perceval escapes this perilous situation only by making the sign of the cross. Yet this event, as explained by the hermit, was proleptically announced by the woman on the serpent, who complained to Perceval of an evil inflicted on her. According to the hermit, she displaced (to borrow Freud's term) the 'evil' of the serpent-killing onto Perceval's divine invocation. Unlike chronological prefiguration, the woman uses direct discourse to refer to an event that has yet to take place. While prefiguration had served to blur chronology in Chrétien's Perceval, the woman's prolepsis here suggests that the realities depicted in dreams cannot be treated temporally.¹⁶⁴

The notion of temporality is treated thematically with the distinction, found earlier in the *Perlesvaus*, between the Old and New Laws. The analogous grouping of Church and Synagogue found in both works seems not to have been associated with Judaism, for

¹⁶³ Strubel shows that a different line of interpretation than the 'bestiary' is required for the more anthropomorphic animals of medieval French literature. "Le transfert est [...] bien préparée et l'observation familière ne fait pas oublier que ce coq n'est pas un individu, mais un type en qui se fondent les caractéristiques de l'espèce, elles-mêmes déjà interprétées anthropomorphiquement puisque les 'défauts' de l'animal sortent du lexique moral humain. La 'nature' du coq importe d'ailleurs moins que la situation dont il est l'acteur contingent." Strubel, *La Rose, Renart et le Graal*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Todorov: "Lorsque nous vivons [une épreuve] avec le héros instant après instant et que le discours reste collé à l'événement : le récit obéit évidemment à la logique narrative et nous habitons le présent perpétuel. Lorsque, au contraire, l'épreuve est engagée et qu'il est annoncé que son issue a été prédite depuis des siècles, qu'elle n'est plus par conséquent que l'illustration de la prédiction, nous sommes dans l'éternel retour et le récit se déroule suivant la logique rituelle. Cette seconde logique ainsi que la temporalité du type « éternel retour » sortent ici vainqueurs du conflit entre les deux." (141)

even Peter Damian had claimed more than a century prior that the Jews had almost ceased to exist.¹⁶⁵ Helen Adolf assumes that the real target of the *Perlesvaus* is actually the Albigensians, and likewise posits that the *Queste* has stripped the binary of all militant connotations in accordance with a now-outmoded threat to orthodoxy and Christendom.¹⁶⁶ Without stripping the Old/New Law binary entirely of its militant connotations in the *Perlesvaus*,¹⁶⁷ the *Queste* finds in this theme a pretext for guiding exegesis, where one event prefigures another by an extension of the Biblical *allegoria in factis*. This is most apparent in the sequence concerning the Tree of Life, which explains, through a long detour, the meanings of the spindles of different colors in the *nef merveilleuse* (marvelous ship). Following Robert de Boron, from which a part of this sequence is drawn, the Tree of Life inscribes the grail adventure (and consequently, knighthood) within biblical tradition dating back to pre-history. Here the story of Cain and Abel (Old Law), linked genealogically to the Tree of Life through Adam and Eve, mirrors the crucifixion (New Law). Similarities between the Testaments are thus used to echo actual plights within the grail narrative, and the Tree of Life is shown to be one of the originary providential substances within the *Queste*'s amplified testamentary history:

¹⁶⁵ Adolf, Helen, 727.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 737.

¹⁶⁷ *Perlesvaus* offers a similar model of penetrative reading to the *Queste*. Its allegoresis is based on affective, rather than logical, understanding. « Li hauz livres du Graal commence o non du Pere e du Fill e du Saint Esperit. Cez trois persones sont une substance, e cele sustance si est Dex, e de Dieu si muet li hauz contes du Graal ; e tuit cil qui l'oent le dovent entendre, e oblier totes les vilenies qu'il ont en leur cuers, car il iert molt porfitables a toz cex qui de cuer l'orront. » [The high book of the Grail begins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are one substance, and this substance is God, from whom this high tale of the Grail proceeds. All those who hear it must understand it, and forget all the wickedness in their hearts, for it will be very beneficial to all those who hear it with their heart]. (*Perlesvaus*, 127). The *Perlesvaus*, as well as Robert de Boron's *Estoire del Saint Graal* in prose, makes extensive use of Trinitarian symbolism as a didactic tool (Valette, 86), yet they do not insist on the double sense of their adventures.

Et tot autresi com [Abel] avoit esté conceuz au jor de vendredi, si com la vraie Bouche le met avant, tot autresi fu il mort au jor de vendredi [par cel tesmoing meesmes]. La mort que Abel reçut en traïson a celui tans qu’il n’estoit [encore] que trois homes en terre senefie la mort au verai Crucefi, car par Abel fu il senefiez et par Caÿn fu senefié Judas par cui il reçut mort. Et tot ausi come Caÿns salua [Abel] son frere et puis l’ocist, tot ausi fist Judas qui salua son seignor, et mort non mie de hautece, mes de senefiance. Car ausi com Seignor [au vendredi], non mie de sa main, mes par sa langue. Et molt senefia bien Caÿn Judas de maint choses... (528)

[And just as Abel had been conceived on a Friday, as told by the true Word, he likewise died on a Friday by the same testimony. The treacherous death blow dealt to Abel when there were but three men on earth signifies the death of Christ on the cross, for Abel signifies Jesus just as Cain signifies Judas. And just as Cain greeted his brother Abel before killing him, so did Judas greet his Lord. And their deaths are not the same in magnitude, but in significance. For just like Abel, our Lord died on Friday, not by Judas’s hand but by his tongue. Thus Cain signifies Judas in many respects...]

In this case, *senefiance* and its paronyms designate historical correspondences. The historical events are linked by a common familial greeting and murder. While the two events share a common *senefiance*, they differ in *hautece* (degree or magnitude).¹⁶⁸ The discrete events of the Old and New Testament thus participate in the same *senefiance*, which is ontologically (if not necessarily temporally) prior to their realization. The hermit’s exegesis is thus a demonstration of divine providence in action.

The *Queste* does not always opt for direct, or tautological, signification, however, as many of the glosses are reliant on metaphorical representation. By metaphor we mean the comparison of objects of different natures linked by a perceived similitude. To render metaphor intelligible, we turn to the attributes of the compared objects in a process that

¹⁶⁸ Terminological and thematic similarities are used to describe the coming of Galahad, with whom the Christ comparison is even more explicit : “Car tot ainsi com l’error et la folie s’en fōi par la venue de lui et la verité fu adonc [aparanz et] manifeste, ausi vos a Nostre Sires esleu sor toz chevaliers por envoyer par les estranges terres por abatre les greveuses aventures et a fere conoistre coment eles sont avenues. [Por quoi l’en doit vostre venue comparer pres a la venue Jhesucrist, de *semblance et non pas de hautece*.] (158) (Italics are my own). [For just as error and madness were dispelled with his coming and the truth became apparent and manifest, so our Lord elected you from among all wordly knights to go off into foreign lands and to bring an end to those arduous adventures and to explain how they came about. For this reason, your coming can rightly be compared to that of Jesus Christ, in similarity rather than magnitude.]

Todorov calls “identification by the predicate.”¹⁶⁹ This means that from one noun we infer another by a similarity of properties or attributes between the two. This similitude is not historically conditioned, nor is it a nominal one (e.g., punning, paronomasia), but rather is found when nouns are considered substances with intrinsic characteristics by which they gain contextual meaning. This kind of exegesis owes considerably to Augustinian realism, as demonstrated by Lancelot’s failure to enter the grail castle and his receipt of a cryptically allegorical message whose significance is revealed by a hermit:

- Et por Deu, sire, dites moi la senefiance de *cez trois choses* (pierre, fust, figuier) car onques n’oï chose que je desirasse tant a savoir com ceste. [...]
- Certes Lancelot, je ne [me] merveil mie se *cez trois paroles* vos ont esté dites.....En ce qu’il vos apela plus dur que pierre puet en une merveille entendre, que tote pierre est dure en sa nature [et meesmement l’une plus que l’autre]. Par la pierre ou l’en treuve durté puet en entendre le cuer del pecheor, qui tant s’est endormiz [et demourés] en son pechié que ses cuers en est si adurciz qu’il ne puet amoloiez par feu ne par eve...Par cele entencion est li pechierres apelé pierre, par la [grant] durté que Nostre Sires treuve en lui [.....]

Amertume est donc en toi si grant com la doçor i deust estre. Donc tu es semblable au fust mort et porri ou nule doçor n’est remese, fors amertume. Or est la tierce chose a mostrer coment tu soies plus nuz et plus despoilliez que fier. [De cel figuier], dont [on parole ici], il fet mencion en l’Evangile [la ou il parole del jor] de Pasque florie, qant Nostre Sires vint en Jerusalem sor l’asne, le jor que li enfant des Ebrex chantoient encontre sa venue le doz chant dont Sainte Yglise fet chascun an memoire...Et Nostre Sires [vint a l’arbre, et quant il le vit desgarni de fruit, il en fu ausi comme corrociés, dont il maudist l’arbre por ce qu’il ne portoit fruit....Or esagrde se tu porroies estre autel [ou plus nus et plus despoilliés que il ne fu]....Mes quant li Sainz Graax fu apotez devant toi, il te trova si desgarni qu’il ne trova en toi [ne] bone pensee ne bone volenté, mes vilain et ort et conchié de luxure te trova il, [et tot desgarni de feuilles et de fruit et de branches], ce est a dire de bones ovres. (218-224, italics are my own)

[“My lord, tell me the significance of these three things (stone, wood, fig tree) for I never heard anything that I desired to know as much as this.”

“Of course, Lancelot. I am hardly astonished by these three words that have been spoken to you. When he called you harder than stone, you can consider it a great marvel, for

¹⁶⁹ "La relation entre la série-à-traduire et la traduction s’établit à travers une règle qu’on pourrait appeler l’ « identification par le prédicat ». Le pavillon est rond ; l’univers est rond ; donc le pavillon peut signifier l’univers. L’existence d’un prédicat commun permet aux deux sujets de devenir le signifiant l’un de l’autre. Ou encore : le soleil est lumineux ; Jésus-Christ est lumineux ; donc le soleil peut signifier Jésus-Christ." (Todorov, 134-135).

every stone is hard by nature. By the rock in which hardness is found is meant the heart of a sinner, who has slumbered and remained in sin for so long that his heart can be softened by neither water nor fire. In this sense, the sinner is equated with stone, for God finds great hardness in him. [...] Bitterness resides in you where sweetness should dwell. Thus you're like the dead and rotten wood where no sweetness remains, only bitterness. Now the third thing to explain is how you are more bare and fallow than the fig tree. The fig tree is mentioned in the Gospels when he speaks of the Flowery Easter, when our Lord came into Jerusalem on a donkey, the day that the children of the Hebrews were singing in honor of his coming and which the Holy Church has us memorize. And our Lord came to the tree, and when he saw it barren of fruit, he was angered and cursed the tree for not bearing fruit. Now ask yourself if you could be barer than this fig tree. When the Holy Grail was brought before you, it found you so barren as to reveal neither good thought nor good will, but rather found you wicked and burning with lust. You were barren of leaves, fruit, and branches, namely, good deeds.”]

Certain nouns (*pierre, fust*) and adjectives (*desgarni, despoillies*) are shown to extend their significations to Lancelot's soul, with both nouns referring to adjectival qualities (hard, dry) and both adjectives referring to privation of a quality (stripped of 'fruit' or 'virtue').¹⁷⁰ In rhetorical terms, the hermit uses the figure of zeugma for the adjectives, for the '*desgarni*' refers to both the fig tree (of leaves) and Lancelot (of good deeds). By predicating a single adjective both concretely and abstractly, this zeugma lays bare the foundations of allegorical signification within the sequential order of language. The case of the fig tree is somewhat different, for here the metaphor is amplified by a *translatio* of the biblical parable, and through this scriptural parallel an *allegoria in factis* is staged. Thus, Christian Providence (as demonstrated in the tree's "timeless" historical etiology) and Platonic realism are both essential to the hermit's exegesis.

The author of the *Queste* also seems to have some knowledge of Neo-Platonist allegoresis, from which the notion of the *integumentum/involucrum* was derived. These

¹⁷⁰ Cf. “Ces paroles qu'ele te dist ne sont pas sanz grant senefiance, car ele i entendi molt autre chose que tu n'i entendoies. Li paveillons, qui ert roonz a la maniere de la circonstance del monde, senefie tot apertement le monde, qui ja ne sera sanz pechié.” (138) [These words that she spoke to you are of great meaning, for she meant something quite different from what you understood. The tent, round like the circumference of the world, clearly signifies the world, which will be without sin.]

fabulous narratives conceal deeper truths by means of pretty wrappings, and require penetrative readings. Metaphors of interiority and exteriority are re-written in Christian terms, if we take the hermit's explanation of Gawain's failure as an example: "Tu es li velz arbres, qu'il n'a mes en toi ne fueille ne fruit. Car te porpenses tant, au moins, que Nostre Sires ait en toi eu la moole et l'escorce, puis que li enemis en a eu la fueille et le fruit." (You are the old tree, which no longer bears leaf or fruit. Resolve at least to give to Our Lord the sap and the bark, since the enemy has taken the fruit and leaf). (412) This husk and kernel metaphor privileged by Macrobius in his *Somnio Scipionis* is re-written as sap and bark, and puts us at quite a remove from the old binary of literality and figuration. The privileging of the interior sense is a reflection of the superiority of the soul over the flesh, and also warns of the carnality that results from literalistic reading.

The exegesis offered by the hermits and ladies in the *Queste*, which relies on Todorov's "identification by the predicate", is necessarily dependent on both grammar and logic, despite the primacy accorded to affective and intuitive understanding. The elected knights, being neither grammarians nor logicians, rely mostly on instinct as these adventures confound their senses. Unable to expound the gloss themselves, the knights must turn to hermits for their adventure's proper gloss. The hermits must translate sensory realities into intelligible ones, for to remain on the sensory level is the domain of literality, or, as it were, bad reading. This recurring motif of improper understanding explains why 146 out of 150 knights are destined to failure, as most are still attached to the surface/appearance of the adventure:

Quant il ot ceste parole, si est tant liez que nul plus, com cil qui ne prent garde qui ce soit a cui il parole. Il quide [bien] que ce soit feme, mes non est, ainçois estoit li enemis qui le voloit decevoir et metre en tel point que s'ame fust perdue [a toz jors mes]. (266)

Quant tu veis cest brief, si te merveillas que ce pooit estre ; [et] maintenant te feri li enemis d'un de ses darz. Et ses tu de quel ? D'orgoil, car tu pensas que tu t'en istroies par ta proesce. Melianz, fet li prodons, einsi fus tu deceuz par entendement, car li brief parloit de chevalerie celestiel, et tu entendoies de la seculer, par quoi tu entras en orgoil ; et par ce chaïs en pechié mortel. (172-174)

[When (Perceval) hears these words, he is delighted, and does not pay attention to the person he is speaking to. He thinks it's a woman, but it's not. Rather it was the enemy who wished to deceive him and disturb his wits so that his soul would be lost forever.]

[“When you saw this inscription, you wondered what it could be, and at that point the enemy shot you with one of his arrows. Do you know which? The arrow of pride, because you thought would emerge victorious by your knightly prowess. Meliant,” the hermit continues, “you were thus deceived by the understanding/intellection, for the inscription spoke of heavenly knighthood, and you understood the worldly, at which point pride entered your heart, and you lapsed into mortal sin.”]

Much of the *Queste*'s pedagogical efficacy relies on such examples of bad reading, which always have material consequences. In another adventure, Arthur's knights sacrifice Perceval's sister, whose virgin blood cures a princess from leprosy. This in turn provokes God's wrath, manifested in a disastrous storm, because it is later revealed by a hermit that the princess was actually a wayward sinner. This sacrifice contravened the celestial hierarchy, in which pure flesh is deemed to be superior to any nobility. Reinforcing the link between reading and action, such examples of bad reading collapse into the notion of 'sin' and its correlates. Here the text accords with Saint Augustine in suggesting that bad reading is that which exhorts not *caritas*, but *cupiditas*. Perceval's lapse is sensory, for he relies on his sight and his sound instead of asking if the words of the damsel (the devil in disguise) were in accordance with Holy Scripture. Meliant's misreading is, in contrast, is an intellectual one (*par entendement*). By mistaking earthly for heavenly chivalry, Meliant “enters into pride” and “falls into mortal sin.” These turns of phrase betray, philosophically speaking, some allegiance to the Platonic notion of participation, and show that the concepts of reading and judgment are always ontological,

for proper reading is made dependent as much on the ontological polarities of good (virginity, New Law, Christ, celestial chivalry) and evil (lust, Old Law, Devil, earthly chivalry/pride) as on technical knowledge of exegesis. Any notions of ethics, therefore, are subsidiary to an ontology. We are now worlds away from the ethics of Abelard, who had predicated sin on the intention (necessarily particular to the individual) rather than the act (universal). If the *Queste* appears to be an ethically charged work, this is in part because every adventure can be recast as a battle for the human soul, both individual (the reader, character) and universal (the fate of humanity). The *Queste*'s adventures are therefore connected to salvation history, and consequently divine providence, but with both greater intricacy and subtlety than in the *Perlesvaus*, which had relegated all aspects of the adventures to the divine will.¹⁷¹

The *Queste du Saint Graal*, although reliant on logic and grammar for its glosses, owes little to Aristotelian or Scholastic predication. Common substantives like water are glossed as 'good' (rather than simply 'transparent'), further cementing the substantive aspect of moral signification. Similarly, Galahad's shield is providentially destined to him ("Messire Galaaz, metez a vostre col cel escu, qui onques ne fu fez se por vos non." - Galahad, put your shield on your shoulders, for it was made for you alone" 142) by means of his participation in 'the marvelous': Et por ce ne soit nus si hardiz qui a son col

¹⁷¹ "Josephes nos tesmoigne que les samblanches des isles se muoient por les diverses aventures qui par le plaisir de Deu i avoient, e si ne plot mie as chevaliers tant la queste des aventures se il nes trovasent diverses, car quant il avoient entré en .i. forest e en une isle o il avoient trové aucune aventure, se il revenoient autre foiz si troveroient il recés e chasteaus e aventures d'autre maniere, que la peine ne li travax ne lor anuiast, et por ce que Dex voloit que la terre fust confermee de la Novele Loi." (*Perlesvaus*, l. 6615sq, found in Valette, 93). [Joseph recounts that the images of the islands were moving according to the various adventures which happened to them by God's will. And the quest for adventures would not have been as pleasing if they had not had variety, for when they had entered a forest or stumbled on an island where they found no adventure, if they came back a second time, they would find diversions and castles and adventures some other way, so that neither pains nor travails would bother them, and because God wished that the world be subjected to the New Law.]

le pende ce cil non a cui Dex l'a destiné. Si [i] a tele acheson que, tot ein si com en cest escu ont esté veues merveilles gregnors qu'en autres, tot ausi verra l'en plus merveilleuse proece [et] plus haute vie en lui qu'en autre chevalier. (150) [And there for none was so bold as to hang the shield on his shoulders for God had not destined it to them. For, just as this shield has seen marvels greater than any others, so the greatest prowess and probity must be in evidence for its bearer.] This shield has been the source of numerous marvels. Its history, dating back to the age of Josephé and King Evelach, inscribes the object within the same lineage as that which links Galahad with Christ.¹⁷² Here the exegete relies on a double *translatio*. The first is the spatial and historical transfer of the object, the second relies on realistic predication, by which the shield is tied to Galahad by the word (the most *marvelous* of shields for the most *marvelous* knight). The semantic drift between connotations of adjective (morally valorizing) and noun (suggesting the supernatural) are here disregarded; rather, the adjective and noun are made to designate the same reality. In this context, a certain Cratylism concerning words serves to further confirm the providential etiology of the shield and the illustrious lineage of its new owner.

The Holy Grail

Of all substantives within this narrative, it is the grail itself which assumes the greatest importance. The philosophically minded Gilson suggests that this object must be the starting point for any interpretation of the text: “Le premier point à fixer, c’est la

¹⁷² Cf. E. Jane Burns, *Arthurian Fictions*, 61. “The explanations offered for the *écu merveilleux*, the *Chastiaus as Puceles*, and the *nef merveilleuse* form secondary narrative tales whose function is etiological: to document how events evolved from a distant point in time to their present state.”

signification du Graal lui-même. Il est clair, en effet, que toute erreur, ou simplement tout manque de précision dans l'interprétation de ce symbole, risque de fausser le sens de l'œuvre entière."¹⁷³ Like the shield and the marvelous ship, the grail is an etiological object used to collect Christ's blood after the crucifixion. It thus has a history which serves to explain the significance of British chivalric adventures more than three centuries after the Gospels. This etiology is part of the grail's *senefiance*, the ontological category that transcends history in favor of the omni-temporal or divine.

In Chrétien's romance, Perceval failed to ask the purpose of the grail. By the time of the *Queste*, this is no longer a viable question, for the object's Christological associations have been sealed by the various continuers of the Perceval as well as Robert de Boron. Boron infuses Chrétien's object with esoterism, as the grail is shown to be the vessel that collected the blood of Christ's wounds after the crucifixion, then a book containing the holy secrets, and by an etymological pun, the source of *agrément* (pleasure), and perhaps by further extension, *grace*.¹⁷⁴

Adonc est il errant couruz,
 A son veissel et si l'a pris,
 Et lau li sans couloit l'a mis,
 Qu'avis li fu que mieuz seroient
 Les goutes ki dedenz cherroient
 Qu'en liu ou mestre les peüst,
 Ja tant pener ne s'en seüst.
 A son veissel ha bien torchiés
 Les plaies, et bien nestoïes
 Celes des meins et dou costé,
 Des piez environ et en lé. [562-572]

¹⁷³ Etienne Gilson, "La mystique de la grâce dans la *Queste del Saint Graal*", 323.

¹⁷⁴ The semantic slippage of 'li gré' and 'la grace' owes to the common root, the latin 'gratia.' The *Queste* borrows this etymology from Boron, yet offers a more providential explanation of nomination. [*«...ce est l'escuele que onques hons mescreanz ne vit a qui ele ne grevast molt. Et por ce que ele a si servi a gré toutes genz doit ele estre apelee le Saint Graal.*] (636)

[Then he approached his vessel and took it and placed it where the blood was flowing. He thought it would be better if the drops fell into a place where they could be collected, and so he took great pains to do so. He scooped the wounds with the holy vessel, cleaning those on his hands and flank, his feet and around.]

[...]

Se je le grant livre n'avoie
Ou les estoires sunt escrites,
Par les granz clers faites et dites.
La sunt li grant secre écrit
Qu'en numme le Graal et dit. [932-936].

[...] if I didn't have the great book, where the stories, deeds and sayings are recounted by the great clerks. There the great secrets are written which are called the Grail].

- Et queu sera la renummee
Dou veissel qui tant vous agree ?
Dites nous, comment l'apele on
Quant on le numme par son non ? »
Petrus respont : « Nou quier celer :
Qui a droit le vourra nummer
Par droit Graal l'apelera :
Car nus le Graal ne verra,
Ce croi je, qu'il ne li agree :
[...]
Autre non ne greent il rien
Fors tant que Graal eit a non.. [2653-2661, 2672-2673]

[From where does this vessel that pleases you so derive its renown? Tell us, what do they call it when they use its proper name? Peter responds: I will tell you openly. He who wants to call it properly will call it the Grail, for there is no man who sees the Grail and is not delighted at the sight. No other names suited it quite so well, hence the joyous name Grail.]

Taken rhetorically, these multiple elaborations of the grail amount to an equivocation, but when viewed ontologically from a NeoPlatonic perspective of participation, we see that Boron is incrementally augmenting the divine reality to which the grail corresponds.

L'estoire del grail recounts the exodus or *translatio* of the grail to the West by Joseph of Arimathea, while the account of the grail shows a *translatio* from thing to book/secrets to *gre*. The term 'graal' had been used as early as the *Roman d'Alexandre* (c. 1160), and for Chrétien, it was certainly a universal, as indicated by the presence of an indefinite article (Un Graal entre ses .II. meins/ Une damoisele tenoit) (A damsel held *a* grail in her two

hands) [3157-3158]. By the time of Robert de Boron, it seems to have become a proper noun, capable of taking only the definite article. Boron's romance paves the way for allegorical re-writings of the grail by fusing esoterism and exoterism, abstract and concrete, spiritual and material. Moreover, it includes an evocative depiction of the Last Supper, in which Eucharistic transubstantiation is shown to mirror the reality of the grail (containing the divine body, without the guise of bread or wine).

The *Queste* maintains and expands Boron's descriptions by insisting on the grail as both a concrete and an abstract reality. In one scene, a hermit explains to Gawain and Hector the meaning of Hector's dream and the reason for their failure to see the grail:

Vos montastes entre vos .ii. sor .ii. grant chevax, c'est en orgoil et en bobant, ce sont li dui cheval a l'enemi. Puis disiez : « Alons querre ce que nos ne troverons ja, » ce est le Saint Graal, [les secrees choses Nostre Seignor, les repostailles qui ja ne vos seront descubertes, car vos n'estes pas dignes del vooir.]...Et quant il avoit une piece chevauchié, si venoit a une fontaine, la plus bele qu'il onques veïst, et descendoit por boire ; et com il s'estoit abessiez, la fonteine se reponoit ; et quant il vooit qu'il n'en porroit point avoir, si retornoit la ou il estoit venuz. Fontaine si est de tel maniere qu'en ne la puet espuisier, ja tant n'en savra l'en oster : c'est li Sainz Graax, c'est la grace Nostre Seignor. [404-406]

[When you set out on your two great steeds, it was with pride and self-deception. Those were the two horses of the enemy. Then you said: "Let's see what we can find" and this is the Holy Grail, the secrets of our Lord, the mysteries which will not be revealed to you, for you are unworthy of beholding them. And when he [Lancelot] had ridden a fair ways on his horse, he came to a fountain, the most beautiful he had ever seen. But when he bent down to drink from it, the fountain vanished. And when he saw that he would be unable to drink, he returned to whence he came. The fountain is such that it can never be exhausted: it is the Holy Grail, the grace of our Lord.]

The *Queste* further develops Robert de Boron's ontological and etymological conflation in Hector's dream, where we see the metaphor of Tantalus and the fountain (source) of both grace and divine secrets, which eludes the unworthy. Evoking again the identification of the predicate, God's grace, like the fountain of Tantalus, is inexhaustible.

The quest of the holy grail, as material (*escuelle/veissel*) and spiritual (*fontaine/grace*) substance, is therefore an ontological quest, while epistemology is treated as a matter of revelation (by hermits) and ethical prerequisites (purity of flesh).

The revelation of the grail's mysteries requires a further *translatio* of the vessel from West (Corbenic) back to East (Sarras), like a symmetric reversal of its original exodus recounted in the *Estoire del Graal*. Sarras is the grail's "spiritual palace" which metonymically designates its oriental origins and a fitting place for the revelation of the divine (spiritual) secrets: "Mes encores ne l'as tu pas veu si apertement comme tu le verras. Et sez tu ou ce sera ? En la cité de Sarras, el palés esperitel." (But you still haven't seen it as openly as you will. And do you know where this will come to pass? In the city of Sarras, the Grail's spiritual palace) [636] Once restored to its place of origin, the grail can reveal the entirety of the divine secrets to Galahad, as prefigured at the castle of Corbenic. (120)¹⁷⁵ The *topos* of the ineffable and secret further supports the esoteric nature of this quest, which renders intelligible realities sensible: "[Et] il tret tantost avant et regarde dedenz le saint Vessel. Et [si tost comme il ot regardé, si] comença a trembler molt durement, si tost come la mortel char comença a regarder les esperitex choses." [650] (Galahad stepped forward and looks inside the holy vessel. And as soon as he saw within, he began to tremble violently, as his mortal flesh started to behold divine realities.) In contrast to the spiritual vision of the grail at Corbenic, Galahad's vision straddles both material and spiritual. In the work's closing theophany, a hand from on high takes the grail, the bleeding spear, and Galahad directly to heaven.

¹⁷⁵ The dialectic of *overt* and *covert* is further developed in reference to the the knights of the Fisher King: "Et ce n'avint onques mes en nule cort, se ne fu chiés lo Roi Pescheor que l'en apele lo Roi Mehaignié. Mes de tant sont il engignié qu'il ne le porent voir *apertement*, ainçois lor en fu *coverte* la veraie *senblance*..." (p. 114 – italics are my own).

Such an apotheosis was the goal of the Eucharistic sacrament, the ‘reality’ of which is here shown to be analogous to both the incarnation and the ascension. For lack of a more specific designation, the ‘*esperitex choses*’ evoke contact with the divinity through analogy to material substance (Aristotle’s *pros hen* equivocation). Galahad’s spectacular apotheosis distinguishes him ethically from even the finest of Arthur’s knights (including Perceval and Bors), and yet, if one accepts the reality of the Eucharistic sacrament, a similar divine communion is a possibility for the whole of the Christian community. Galahad’s ascension thus models the sacrament in a grand, pictorial form, but the real, divine presence in this scene is not simply analogous to the sacrament, but identical with it. The degradation of sensory knowledge is therefore necessary to ensure proper faith in the divine presence that is the Eucharist.

In its optimistic ending, the work’s utopian impulse shines forth. This didactic work seeks to initiate the reader into a spiritual transformation. Using Galahad as ideal exemplum, the individual soul can seek perfection by imitation. By successive imitation and education, a new Christian community can be formed, which would distinguish itself through sexual purity and religious fervor. In one sense, this utopia is already a reality: this community, though imperfect, is already existent and the (real) Eucharist pertains to the same substantial reality as the (literary) grail. In another sense, the utopia is an emergent one, and one that is obtained through spiritual warfare and consistent preparation for the Eucharistic sacrament. This utopia would be predicated both on chastity and sensitive reading that relies on theological experts. Even the more militant *Perlesvaus* does not accord so much didacticism to its account of the grail quest. If it is true that “the medievals seem to have read the *Queste* as a secular romance rather than as

a religious work”, then it seems that the didactic and exegetical thrust of the work has often been lost on readers, serving as both a testament to the coherence of the work’s literal sense and to the long-standing attempt to normalize the most aberrant work of the *Lancelot en prose*.¹⁷⁶

***La Mort le Roi Artu* – Fatalistic Determinism**

The *Queste du Saint Graal* is a hard act to follow. The reader who begins the *Mort Artu* must ask: how could Arthur’s court, blessed as it was with a brilliant and unprecedented quest, ever decline? Is it due to the absence of the divine body (grail) on earth resulting in the end of a miraculous age, which had been marked by supernatural occurrences and the lengthy exegesis of hermits? If the narrative logic of the *Queste* relies both explicitly and implicitly on Christian providence, the same cannot be said of the concluding work of the *Vulgate Cycle*. *La Mort le Roi Artu* picks up the narrative right where the *Queste* left off, namely with the return of Bort to Arthur’s court and mention of the grail adventures. *La Mort* completes our study of the *Queste* by virtue of its markedly different form of narrative determinism, and consequently, its tone and doctrinal perspective. The Christian emphasis on chastity and spiritual chivalry are notable absences from the narrative. In addition, *La Mort le Roi Artu* has a more intricate plot than the *Queste*, and despite the proleptic announcement of the fall of Arthur’s kingdom, the Apocalyptic battle between Arthur and his stepson on the plains of

¹⁷⁶ Freeman Regalado. “The medieval Construction of the Modern Reader: Solomon’s Ship and the Birth of Jean de Meun”. Regalado bases this on manuscript glossing and marginalia and continues, “for them, [the *Queste*]’s genre was marked by its characters – Arthur, Lancelot, Galahad – and by its adventure plot.” (90)

Salisbury is shown to result from the concatenation of a series of random but interconnected assaults on the kingdom's integrity. With this more complex plot and comparative reticence on theological issues, it is clear that we are not working from the same aesthetic or ideology as the author of the *Queste*.¹⁷⁷ Alfred Adler posits that "the difference between [the two works] is one between two modes of thought, *figuralism* on the one hand, and the *early phase of Aristotelianism*."¹⁷⁸ And while the lexicon of the *Mort Artu* is perhaps even less Scholastic in flavor than that of the *Queste*, the tragic fatalism of the former is shown by the greater role played by Fortune and the absence of theological grace.¹⁷⁹

David Hult has argued that the invocations of Fortune, by Bors, Gawain, Arthur and Sagremor occur at moments of powerlessness and impotence and refer to subjective states within the characters rather than to an external force. Hult thus denies all realism with regard to this personification and sees it as an allegory of distancing oneself from one's own action; in other words, invocations of an external fortune are merely the projections of an internal hubris. Jean Frappier, by contrast, had viewed Fortune as an alibi for a cruel and fickle God, or rather, as a complementary force to Providence.¹⁸⁰ Hult's reading allows for greater psychological depth while depriving Fortune of any philosophical overtones (except perhaps in the form of an implicit negation of divine

¹⁷⁷ This is not to say that the work is devoid of religious elements, but rather that the supernatural is only witnessed and recorded by hearsay, in striking contrast to the *Queste*. The *Mort Artu* ends not with Lancelot's apotheosis, but rather a dream-vision in which the Archbishop sees angels escorting Lancelot's soul to heaven, and the Archbishop glossing this as a testament to the power of penance. (*Mort*, 904).

¹⁷⁸ Adler, Alfred. "Problems of Aesthetic versus Historical Criticism in *la Mort le roi Artu*", 933.

¹⁷⁹ Karen Pratt has also noticed what seems to be the triumph of Abelardian ethics as regards human intention, as demonstrated in the *judicium Dei*, where Lancelot rightly champions Guenevere who had no intention of poisoning Mador's brothers. Pratt, 96. F

¹⁸⁰ Hult, *La Mort le Roi Artu*, 49-55. "Dans la *Mort Artur*, [...] le silence que garde le narrateur sur la présence (ou l'absence) de Dieu nous laisse dans un certain vide. L'accent est mis non pas sur la fin, inévitable celle-ci, mais sur la façon dont les personnages vont amener cette fin. Et leur soumission au personnage de Fortune nous montre, d'une perspective boécienne, que leur vision du monde est plutôt païenne puisqu'ils ne montrent aucune confiance en la providence divine." (59)

providence), while Frappier retains the externality of fortune and views it as essential to the narrative's logic. These positions, however antithetical, can be partially reconciled if we see Fortune not as a mental figment, but rather as a narrative account of the world's vicissitudes, such as flourishing and decline, birth and death, love and scorn. Fortune therefore seems to be invoked when the latter term in these processes gains ascendancy, so it can be considered as the negative aspects of these natural processes and therefore a subsidiary of fate/determinism. It is by this association with the negative term that Fortune assumes its psychological overtones, as exemplified in Bors's warning to Queen Guenevere concerning her adultery: "Dame, fet soi Boorz, c'est nostre grant damage a tot nostre parenté, et por ce si me poise molt durement que li aferes vait einssi, car tels i perdront en vostre amor qui ne l'avront pas deservi; ne Fortune n'assembla onques l'amor de vos .ii. en tel manière come je la voi assemblee fors por le nostre grant damage." (356) ["My lady," says Bors, "your hatred of Lancelot is a great harm to our entire family, and so it saddens me greatly that the matter is going so poorly, for many will suffer undeservedly for your love. As far as I see it, Fortune only arranged the love of you two to bring great harm upon us."] Since death and decline are universal inevitabilities, they are depicted as manifestations of a capricious fortune.

This is in striking contrast to a scene in the *Queste*, where Lancelot's departure grieves the queen, who resolves to let her lover go, assuaged only by the thought of divine providence: "Vos n'i alissiez ja mes, fete le, par ma volenté. Mes puis qu'il est einssi que aller vos en convient, alez en la garde de Celui qui se lessa traveillier en la sainte Croiz por delivrer l'umain lignage de la pardurable mort, qui vos conduie a sauveté en toz les leus ou vos iroiz." (130) [If I had my way, you would never leave. But since it

is such that you must leave, go with Him who willingly suffered on the Holy Cross to deliver humanity from eternal death. May He guide and lead you to safety wherever you go.] Here, the queen invokes divine providence to console herself, whereas Bors invokes Fortune to express his powerlessness when faced with Camelot's decline. The *Queste* and *La Mort* depict the psychology of hope and despair, respectively, by invocations to Providence and Fortune as existent realities, and not, *pace* Hult, "*un leurre*" [illusion] (44).

The distinction between external and psychic realities is still, as in the *Queste*, mostly moot in the *Mort Artu*, a fact which casts some doubt on Hult's explanation of Fortune through psychology. This is because the mind is shown to represent faithfully both present and future events, and this is especially clear during Arthur's premonitory dream before the final battle of Salisbury, in which he finds himself cast down from Fortune's wheel after seeing that his dominion has extended *too* long:

Ele li demandoit: "Artur, ou es tu? – Dame, je sui sor une roe, mes je ne sai qex ele est. – C'est, fet ele, la roe de Fortune. » Lors li demandoit ; « Artu, que voiz tu ? – Dame, il me semble que je voi tot le monde. – Voirs est, fet ele, n'il n'i a graument chose dont tu n'aiest esté sires jusque ci ; et de tote terre, la circuite que tu voiz, as-tu esté li plus poissanz rois qui onques encores i fust. Mes tel sont li orgoil terrien qu'il n'i a nul si haut assis qu'il ne coviegne chooir de la poesté del monde. » Lors le trebuchoit a terre si malement que au chooir li estoit avis qu'il estoit toz debrisié et que il perdoit tot lo pooir del cors et des membres. Einsi vit li rois Artus en .ii. manieres sa meschaance, qui li estoit a avenir. (MRA, 802)

[She asked him, "Arthur, where are you?"

"My lady, I'm on a wheel, but I don't know which one.

"This," she said, "is the wheel of fortune." Then she asked, "Arthur, what do you see?"

"My lady, it appears that I see the whole world."

"That is the truth. There is hardly anything of which you haven't been lord up to now. And of all the earth, the whole sphere you see before you, you have been the most powerful king ever to live. But earthly vanity is such that there is none so well placed as not to fall from worldly power."

Then she hurled him down to earth so harshly that, during his fall, he believed that he was coming undone and he was losing control over his body and members. Thus King Arthur saw in two ways his future misfortune.]

Arthur confesses his sins and explains his dream to the archbishop of Salisbury (alternately referred to as *arcevesque* and *preudons*, to reinforce the glossing continuity with the *Queste*), who counsels him to return to Dover and await reinforcements before confronting Mordred. Arthur thus renounces the wisdom of his own premonitory dream as well as its sacred exegesis, for if he had not done so, the final destruction would not have been so inevitable. Karen Pratt analyzes the tragic mode with the *Mort*, mostly with reference to Boethius's discussion of Fortune, and shrewdly dodges the question of whether Fortune is an extension of Divine Providence or a psychological figment, instead concentrating on whether tragedy, as mode, forms a part of the work's general ethos.¹⁸¹ Pratt shows how the Boethian conception of Fortune in books I and II of the *Consolatio* (a negative, literary presentation) differs greatly from that of the last three books, where Fortune becomes the handmaiden of Providence and an instructive tool. Since the first conception of Fortune seems to dominate the *Mort*, it seems that its use here indicates a more literary than theological or philosophical endeavor, and serves to augment the impact of the work's *dénouement*.¹⁸² Less dogmatic about the purely psychic existence of Fortune than Hult, Pratt opts for an equivocation concerning Fortune's proper ontology (literary, philosophical, or psychic) in keeping with the work's theological vagueness.

Arthur's tendency toward misreading was brought to light earlier in the tale, when his earlier confirmation of Lancelot's adultery with the queen by the frescoes in Morgan's prison is conveniently forgotten when he returns to Camelot. These frescoes,

¹⁸¹ Pratt, Karen, "Aristotle, Augustine, or Boethius?"

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 103.

in contrast to the *Queste's* adventures, are the bearers of *senefiance*. This *senefiance* is supplemented both by written captions and Morgan's own veridical account of Lancelot's adultery, and yet, this discovery leads to naught as Lancelot's absence from the court puts the king's jealous mind to rest. In this context, *senefiance* is used in a more humdrum sense than in the *Queste*, where the term was without fail used theologically:

Li rois comença a regarder tot entor lui, si voit les ymages et les portretures que Lanceloz del Lac i avoit portretes tant com il avoit leenz demoré en la prison ; et li rois Artus si savoit bien tant de letres que il pooit bien .i. escrit ententre. Et quant il ot veü les letres des ymages qui devoient les senefiances des portretures, si les comença lors a lire, et tant que il conut tot apertement que cele chambre estoit pointe des ovres Lancelot del Lac... (MRA, 334)

[The king began to look around and saw the images and portraits that Lancelot of the Lake had painted there when in captivity. King Arthur was literate enough to understand the written word. And when he saw the captions which explained the significance of the images, he began to read them, and thus he knew openly that this room was painted with the feats of Lancelot of the Lake.]

The largest gap between the ideology of the *Queste* and that of the *Mort* is shown in the absence of a utopian impulse in the latter work. Both works are indeed marked by forms of determinism, or predestination. Yet the *Queste* differs markedly in terms of the narrative freedom accorded to its author, for the holy grail is a medieval French invention. With its recent introduction into contemporary literary history, the quest is subject only to the whims and imaginations of Chrétien's more overtly Christian successors. The skeletal action of the *Mort*, by contrast, is given by apocryphal historical chronicles (Monmouth, Wace) and written from a post-decline perspective. The greatest silence of the text concerns the continuation of the Christian community after Arthur's death, and Lancelot's final frocking as a priest, or Guenevere's refuge in a convent, are less signs of the persistence of Christendom (both are decisions of practicality rather than spiritual conversions) than they are of a desire for stasis after years of turmoil. While

Christian providence had brought about a last age of miracles and an apotheosis in the *Queste*, a fatalistic determinism yields a full-fledged eschatology and its aftermath in the *Mort*. Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose*, composed some forty years after the *Mort Artu*, will opt for a determinism that is referred to as providence. Curiously, the *Rose*'s materialistic (and carnal) rendering of this theological concept betrays a greater philosophical affinity with the *Mort*, even though the utopian impulse and double senses align it more with the *Queste*. With such striking differences in tone, one wonders how a single author for both *Mort* and *Queste* could have ever been posited. For even if one accepts the notion of a single architect for the entirety of the *Vulgate*, this architect would ensure only continuity of plot, rather than theme, tone, or purpose. It is the *Queste*, then, that is the most unusual of the works considered here from a philosophical perspective, for it uses logic and exegesis to confirm the notion of theological providence and to rationalize the determinism of its own narrative structure. The bleaker *Mort Artu*, however, does not emphasize providential *senefiance* at all: its fatalism is rather exposed by a carefully constructed plot, aided by fortuitous happenstances that subsequently feel inevitable. Falling within the genre of 'romance tragedy', Karen Pratt rightly gets to the crux of the *Mort*'s determinism, which "reflects the equivocal attitude of so many secular writers in the Middle Ages towards the problem of explaining history and the rise and fall of great civilizations."¹⁸³ Following Boethius's *Lady Philosophy*, this mutable Arthurian world is subject to all the constraints of Fate, and the *Mort* offers no providential explanation to mitigate its gloomy fatalism. Written from the perspective of

¹⁸³ Pratt, "Aristotle, Augustine, or Boethius?" 108. See also Clough, Andrea. "Medieval Tragedy and the Genre of *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series, 11 (1982) 211-27.

post-decline, the inexorable fall of Arthur's kingdom does not require any additional divine Providence to topple it.

Chapter 3 - Epistemology and Theories of Reading the *Rose*

This study aims to shed new light on the governing ideology of the *Rose*. To this end, I will be examining Jean's section from the perspective of the history of ideas, to the extent that these are both culturally and temporally specific, and yet mingled with a poetic and literary syncretism that, along with the use of allegory, is tendentially employed to normalize even the most radical aspects of the work's ideology. The most complete study on Scholasticism in the *Rose* is still that of Gérard Paré, whose *Les Idées et les Lettres au XIIIe Siècle* from 1947 still merits a close examination for its exhaustive erudition. His assertion that "l'inspiration foncière du roman de Jean de Meun remonte à l'aristotélisme universitaire du 13^e siècle"¹⁸⁴ has indeed served as a guiding principle for this study. Jean's section of the *Rose* has traditionally been considered to be more literalistic than the work of his predecessor Guillaume de Lorris, and the sheer volume of didacticism in Jean's continuation lends more than ample support for this thesis. But I would argue that this view needs to be tempered, because while literalistic in one sense, the allegorical mode of expression, including the common traits of exempla, personification and prosopopeia, integumental allegory and prefiguration still dominate Jean's section, so the supposed literalism is only with respect to his use of scathing satire and his extensive philosophical and historical digressions (e.g. Nero used as exemplum of "fortune" rather than "evil"). Despite the vast differences of perspectives glimpsed in the *Rose*'s allegorical personifications, they all share a common tendency: namely to pass quickly from *pure logic* to *ethics*, the result of which is almost always comedic and often quite ambiguous. In order to reach any coherent sense of the *Rose* as a whole, we must

¹⁸⁴ Paré, Gérard, 13.

resort to the method used by the Scholastics themselves, namely (an attenuated version of) the dialectic through which we will uncover the ethical implications of the allegory.

Allegory in the *Rose* is primarily dependent on realist abstractions in order to become intelligible. This can be seen easily in the naïve courtly realism of Guillaume, which treats states of mind and ethical categories as if they were objective realities. Yet our ‘modern’ narrative impulses seem to demand nominalistic readings that are about individuals caught in a plight that is primarily particular, such as when the *Aeneid* is read as the plight of an individual Aeneas. It is only by allegorical extension (from species to genus) that this same work can be read as a narrative capable of yielding universal Christian truths, with each plight of Aeneas reflecting a vicissitude in the human soul: “*integumentum vero est genus demonstrationis sub fabulosa narratione veritatis claudens intellectum, unde et involucrem dicitur.*” (An integument is a form of demonstration that wraps the understanding of the truth in a fabled narrative – that is why it is also called a wrapping.)¹⁸⁵

To treat the *Rose* as a particular lover’s narrative, on the other hand, is to subscribe tacitly to a nominalistic theory of narrative, as opposed to the paradigmatic or realistic conception. This seems to be one of the greatest ideological tensions in contemporary criticism of the *Rose*. I would argue that philosophical nominalism is only referenced in the most oblique manner, even in the figure of Faux Semblant, and that all other incidences of nominalism seem to belong to the more generalized *poetic* nominalism (often in the form of Euhemerism, as we shall see) which refuses to admit any objective reality to these abstract personifications, as words are considered in terms

¹⁸⁵ Quoted and translated by Reynolds, 141. from *The Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid Commonly Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, eds. J.W. Jones and E.F. Jones, Lincoln, Nebraska and London, 1977, p. 3.

of their materiality. In the final Nature/Genius section, what we have is an extreme form of realism whose basis is not Plato, but rather Aristotle, but with the NeoPlatonic spin bequeathed to him by the Islamic Peripatetics. By the mid-thirteenth century, nominalist arguments were becoming relegated exclusively to the domains of grammar and rhetoric rather than logic proper, their philosophical import having depreciated significantly by the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁸⁶ In addition, Aristotle associated troping and allegory with poetics rather than logic, for he aspires to avoid these figure in his *Organon*. It is a testament to the complexity of these later incarnations of Realism and Jean de Meun's literary eclecticism that his philosophical vision is developed in such supple verse. The rhetoric of his continuation, such as the repeated use of purely verbal troping, - punning, allegories teetering on literality, innuendo - reflects Jean's virtuosity on the verbal, as well as conceptual level. I would say that it is in this poetic, non-logical domain that Jean grants support to the nominalist detachment of a name from any Cratyllic 'essence'.

While aiming to elucidate not only the meaning(s) of a text but its foundational ideology, I do not wish to posit that my own relation to the text is not itself ideological. The term dialectic denotes ultimate resolution and may to some degree, imply synthesis, perhaps even that dreaded teleology of *ultimate meaning* so favored by the Robertsonians or even the naturalistic adherents, who have both managed to provide coherent readings of the poem as a whole, yet whose conclusions are not mutually reconcilable. The other

¹⁸⁶ De Libera, 221-2: "Les averroïstes latins situent le problème des universaux au niveau de l'opposition entre le conceptualisme et le réalisme, sans référence aux discussions du siècle précédent. *C'est la marque du nouveau départ de la pensée latine, la phase scolastique, gréco-arabe, où le nominalisme ne joue aucun rôle théorique*, même si, au XIV siècle, Occam récupérera à son profit le conceptualisme aristotélico-averroïste." (Italics mine)

extreme has opted to view the work as a polymorphous mass of intellectual heterogeneity, the work of a virtuoso aping different voices of his contemporary society, without any single voice gaining ascendancy. The principal deficiency of the latter position is that it does not take the dialectic into account and thus rejects any meaningful synthesis extracted from the din of polyphony. While the abuses of Scholasticism would be noted in later centuries, perhaps due to the early lack of autonomy of philosophy from theology, the dialectical methodology of Scholasticism was intended to vouchsafe the veracity of the argument; the realists and nominalists were debating, so to speak, on whether to ground truth, ultimately, in subsistent *universal species* or in particulars. That being said, the truth-seeking methods of the Scholastics need not be shared by the poets, and courtly love *dits* and *romans* were not molded so exclusively on this dialectical practice. By recourse to allegorical signification, Jean shows his allegiance to a teleology, but this *telos* will take the form of an intellection (*intellectio*), to use the Scholastic term, rather than an explicit and systematic glossing. In this attempt at a critical synthesis, I posit that the *Rose* establishes both implicit and explicit links between the question of universal genera and species, on the one hand, and that of the allegorical mode on the other. In fact, in the new naturalistic and rationalistic context of Jean's continuation, this appeal to universality will serve as the foundational tenet for why allegory is a viable mode for the transmission of truth. And it is ultimately through the universals debate that the prominent Aristotelian (condemned) tenets emerge concerning divine providence, and I will demonstrate that this debate is used, both tendentiously and allegorically, to further Jean's defense of such heresies.

Jean de Meun's allegory is never quite as lucid and well-sustained as that of his predecessor, Guillaume de Lorris, and this is due in part to the greater preponderance of non-narrative allegory in Jean's continuation. Paul Zumthor has identified three operational allegorical modes in the conjoined *Rose*: the narrative, the didactic and the deictic, the first being the preponderant mode of Guillaume's section, while the latter two dominate Jean's section. Of these three modes, it is the didactic element of Jean de Meun's poetry that I will focus on primarily, given that this is probably the source of greatest alienation with regards to modern readership of the *Rose*. Contrasted with Guillaume de Lorris, one finds in Jean de Meun an immediate difference in the nature of his personifications. The poetic device of *amplificatio* is also used to great effect in Jean's continuation, but to such an extent that this becomes also a dominant *narrative* motif of Jean de Meun's narrative continuation. One of the major sources of this narrative amplification is the use of Aristotelianism, this particular sect serving as the bedrock of Jean de Meun's logic and explaining the abundance of Scholastic neologisms in his vernacular from the very outset of his continuation (e.g. the use of '*silogime*' and '*conclure*', respectively [4084,4086]).¹⁸⁷ The flavor of the Paris university teachings abounds in Jean's section of the *Rose*. The new climate surrounding the work's composition is beginning to assume a greater theoretical and methodological rigor. The new exegesis of Aristotle was making the previously rigid adherence to the *trivium* unfeasible. As Gordon Leff notes, "rhetoric virtually disappeared, and with it grammar, as a guide to literary expression. The study of grammar was now governed by its logical

¹⁸⁷ "La langue de la seconde partie du *Roman de la Rose*, les modes et les procédés de composition de son auteur indiquent, à eux seuls, qu'il était en relation très étroite avec les milieux universitaires de son temps." Paré, Gerard. *Les Idées et les Lettres au XIIIe Siècle*, 52

aspects; literary usage was now subordinated, as incidental, to the discovery of the universal laws regulating human thought.”¹⁸⁸

As the methodology of exegesis was changing rapidly due to the hasty incorporation of Aristotle in the curriculum, many orthodox clergy found this new fount of logical inspiration worrisome, especially the growing tendency for Aristotle’s logic to supplant the teachings of Scripture, or even the more attenuated suggestion that Scripture expounds the truths of Aristotle allegorically. This led to the climate of censorship, reaching its apex in the major condemnations of 1270 and 1277. Like Al-Gazali, who had railed against the *falsafa* for their deistic and unorthodox tenets in the Arab world, the authors of the Latin condemnations, both far-reaching and prohibitive, lacked Saint Thomas’s conviction that faith and reason could be synthesized. The example of Averroes here is key: unlike Avicenna, who provided a rationalistic explanation for much of the supernatural, including prophecy and miracles, Averroes did not accept Alfarabi’s subordination of religion to philosophy. Refusing to grant the inverse, however, he advocated a greater autonomy among the various disciplines. In a maneuver familiar to the Latin Averroists, Averroes was thereby able to proceed with his literal exegesis of Aristotle, all the while allowing for fideism concerning Revelation.¹⁸⁹ The change in the curriculum at Paris, in 1255, which allowed for a much fuller Aristotelian corpus, meant that the original *Organon*, the primer, as it were, for dialectics, was now met with the equally daunting non-logical corpus (including ethics, poetics, and metaphysics), and not without a greater challenge to the prevailing theology. As Leff has noted, Aristotle’s

¹⁸⁸ Leff, 169.

¹⁸⁹ William of Ockham, the great 14th-century nominalist, would also appeal to a kind of omnific fideism based on the creed (*Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem*) in order to support his notion that divine ideas limited God’s ultimate freedom and power. See Gilson, *La Philosophie au Moyen Age*, 653.

dialectical treatises were not such a danger in themselves, for dialectic presented no direct attack on theology, given that “dialectic depended upon explaining what was already there.”¹⁹⁰ The same cannot be said of the Stagirite’s philosophy of nature and man. The presentation of the Arts syllabus meant that Aristotle’s work was considered a guide to knowledge on the same level as that of Scripture, in terms of its exposition of literal truths. The increasing autonomy of the disciplines at this moment of ferment is what we will loosely call Latin Averroism, a topic to which we will return further on, for I see this as instrumental in Jean’s presentation of natural philosophy. The censorious climate with regard to heresy underscores to a further extent the audacity of Jean de Meun’s vulgar courtliness and theological speculations.¹⁹¹

Jean de Meun has been considered a poor allegorist by at least one critic;¹⁹² but in the context of his other authorial talents (“satirist”, “philosopher”, “poet of nature”, etc.) and the explicit subject matter of the poem handed down from Guillaume de Lorris, these other modes are often elegantly interwoven into the fabric of the dream vision. Jean de Meun only emerges as somewhat digressive when held against the refined courtly standard of his predecessor. In his *Magister Amoris*, Alastair Minnis contends that the employment of the satirical mode (necessarily literal), as well as the fact that the interpolation of Scholasticism into the *Rose*, with its technical precision, together necessitate the additional literalism of Jean de Meun’s section.. Minnis exposes the central *stylistic* dichotomy between integumental allegory and outspoken satire. In terms of tone, judging by the Reason and Faux Semblant sections respectively, they could not be more different. Yet allegory and satire are likewise modes that presuppose truth, with

¹⁹⁰ Leff, *Medieval Thought*. 225.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 226.

¹⁹² Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 137.

allegory containing satire as genus to species. Minnis is therefore judging allegory and satire as conventional styles rather than ontological modes, stating that “Jean was a plain-style poet whose main (though by no means only) modes of procedure are narration and exemplification rather than enigmatic fable and allegory (‘personification allegory’ or prosopopeia being, of course, a different thing altogether, and fundamental to the poem). The language of the *Rose* is frequently outspoken, explicit, literal.”¹⁹³ Minnis’s conclusions are philologically based, by comparison with Jean de Meun’s translation of Boethius’s allegorical dream vision, a topic Minnis has addressed previously.¹⁹⁴ But Minnis’s above parenthetical remark on the autonomy of personification and allegory seems a quibble, if only from an abstractive or cognitive perspective, as we can see in the further example that Minnis, following John Burrows, provides:

Good working definitions of allegory (not prosopopeia) and exemplification are offered in John Burrow’s cogent remarks: ‘These two modes often overlap in practice, but in theory there is a fundamental distinction between them. Exemplification treats facts or events (real or imagined) as examples which demonstrate some general truth; whereas allegory treats facts or events as metaphors which represent some truth or some other event. Allegory requires the reader to translate; exemplification requires him to generalize’.¹⁹⁵

By his insistence on the autonomy of exemplification and allegory, we are left with the sense that “translation” and “generalization” are themselves mutually exclusive as well. As we saw in the first chapter, to generalize is to translate the action of a particular into something universal. While exemplification bears more in common with synecdoche than with metaphor, it cannot, at this time of the universals debate, be so readily assimilated into literal language. Minnis does

¹⁹³ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 85. In discussing the speech content of a prosopopeia, Zumthor makes the salutary suggestion that “there is no metaphor: the ‘personification’ (if one can use the term here) serves to bring to light the object which is spoken of: these words are its predicate.” “Narrative and Anti-Narrative”, 190. Allegoresis might reverse the process, however, treating the personification as the ‘ideal’ to which the particular words aspire.

¹⁹⁴ Minnis and T.W. Machan, “The *Boece* as Late-Medieval Translation” 172-3

¹⁹⁵ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 85, citing John Burrows, 87.

demonstrate admirably, however, the increased tendency toward literalism in Jean de Meun's section. He cites the rising development of the *modus exemplorum suppositivus* – or the moralizing allegoresis –, along with history and tragedy, as revelatory of an increasing importance of the literal sense, but this is linked also to a decline in the spiritual sense of the Bible, based on a reduced number of glosses on the spiritual sense at this time. While I believe the work does contain a more abstract, “spiritual” sense, the absence of a systematic gloss that would expound this sense is perhaps a matter of contemporary fashion.

Because Jean de Meun has at his disposal a wide range of scholarship, it seems that he is familiar with all the most common modes of contemporaneous allegoresis. The first which we will examine is the one that seems to be a literary version of nominalism known as Euhemerism. While it would be erroneous to say that the Euhemerists, who date from the fourth century BC, share the later nominalists' philosophical tenets, both groups ground knowledge of abstract concepts (divinity in case of Euhemerists) in concrete particulars. In his analysis of pagan myths, the Christian apologist of the third and fourth centuries Lactantius surmised in his *Divinarum Institutionum* that the pagan gods must have descended from particular people.¹⁹⁶ Euhemerism is a form of rationalism in that it provides concrete understandings of abstract texts, and it hampers any attempt to universalize divinities in the form of an abstract ‘essence’. But while rationalistic in accounting for concrete origins to myth, Euhemerism maintained an anthropomorphism as regards abstract properties by accounting for the deification of

¹⁹⁶ John Fleming notes that Lactantius and Boethius were the leading theorists of the Golden Age for the Middle Ages, and even notes similarities between the style of Lactantius's and Jean de Meun's [?] Christian apologetics. Fleming explains that Lactantius believed that the Golden Age was “an actual historical epoch, a definite state in the religious and anthropological history of mankind, an age of monotheism before the advent of polytheistic idolatry.” (118) *Reason and the Lover*, 115-24 (full discussion).

human heroes. Almost all examples of Euhemerism in the *Rose* serve a comedic purpose, probably because it was not considered a philosophically adequate position at the time of Jean de Meun's continuation (see p.3, n). One example of Euhemerism occurs when Reason presents herself as part of the courtly economy that she has just been warning against:

Et se tu les vues refuser,
N'est riens qui te puisse escuser
Que trop ne faces a blamer :
C'est que [tu] me vuelles amer,
Et que le dieu d'Amors despises
Et que Fortune riens ne prises.
Et se tu trop foibles te fais
A soutenir cest treble fais,
Je le sui preste d'alegier
Por porter le plus de legier.
Pren la premiere solement,
Et si te maintien sagement. [6869-80]¹⁹⁷

[And if you wish to refuse [my requests] there will be nothing to excuse you, and you will be subject to censure: I ask that you love me, that you disdain the god of Love, and that you pay no heed to Fortune. And should you find yourself too weak to sustain this triple request, I am now ready to reduce the request in order to lighten your burden as far as possible: follow the first alone and maintain good conduct].

Here the boundaries between courtly love and man's love of his own faculty are being blurred as the allegory's literal sense becomes antithetical to its allegorical sense: Reason, who had previously dealt censoriously with the lover's courtly love quest, here plays the

¹⁹⁷ References to the *Roman de la Rose* come from Poirion's edition (1973), based primarily on B.N fr. 1559, supplemented with Langlois's amalgamated edition, whose verse numeration Poirion follows. All translations are my own, and compared with Strubel's bilingual edition, where the manuscripts are similar: *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Strubel (1992), further aided by Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français*. I will not be exploring the intricacies of the manuscript tradition here, but this would give an even fuller account of the *Rose*'s reception, remaniement, and interpretive ideologies. For further reference on this matter, see Huot. *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission*.

role of a jealous lover and momentarily participates in the courtly love economy. The text sanctions both readings simultaneously, but in both cases absurdities, resulting either from a parodic courtship from a female voice or the fetishism of a human faculty (reason), can be smoothed over by the equivocal nature of our terms, for only several lines after asking for his love, she says that whoever agrees with Reason “*jamés par amors n’amera*” [6885], thereby separating the concept of the verb ‘*amer*’ (to love) from ‘*Amors*’ (god of love, courtly love) . To read Reason purely Euhemeristically would be the complete refusal of abstraction (Reason would be flesh and blood alone), her exhortations to stoic disdain for fortune would become no more than a self-contradictory plea for courtly love from a woman in heat. While Jean de Meun savors the humor of a male-female allegorical confrontation, the philosophical import is momentarily sacrificed for the sake of comedy.¹⁹⁸ When talking about herself, she embodies the sexual economy she wanted the lover to eschew, thereby contradicting her almost innumerable caveats about the fickleness of Fortune. When she is read allegorically, however, her exhortations to the lover are nothing more than an appeal to his higher faculties. This would be similar to those readings of the *Song of Songs* which completely de-eroticize the subject matter. Jean seems to be encouraging both allegorical and literal readings at the same time, resulting in either lofty abstraction or literal ribaldry. Lactantius conceded nothing to allegory: the narratives are lovely tales whose truth can be expounded by recourse to Euhemerism, which Minnis calls “a strategy of humanization.”¹⁹⁹ Nancy Regalado

¹⁹⁸ The section with Nature and Genius is also susceptible to these parodically “Euhemeristic” readings. Genius addresses Nature as “dame” and assimilates her prolixity and moodiness [16314-30] to her gender. Likewise, Faux Semblant begins his speech in the guise of a mendicant friar before revealing that his *human* avatars are manifold. See also my discussion of Alexander the Great further on.

¹⁹⁹ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 108, citing John D. Cooke, ‘Euhemerism: A Medieval Interpretation of Classical Paganism,’ *Speculum* 2 (1927), 396 – 410

suggests that Euhemerism and moral reinterpretation are the main routes by which the exegete tackled these texts from Antiquity.²⁰⁰

Augustine opts for the latter in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, his manual for the decoding of figuration in the Bible, according to which classical texts served merely as rhetorical teaching tools. Allegory becomes the imperative if the literal reading of the Bible is seen to exhort carnality. In the debate over the *Romance of the Rose* in the fourteenth century, neither defenders nor censors of the *Rose* invoked integumental analysis; rather, they drew their arguments from the authority of the *dramatis personae* of the *Rose*. As for whether Jean is responsible for such views, Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson would say that the writer is responsible for all views expressed in the work.²⁰¹ Integumental analysis yielding to moral interpretation, therefore, seems to be something which, though fruitful, is more of a recent luxury accorded to the work. The most optimistic and devout of pan-allegorical readers (such as Robertson, Dahlberg, and Fleming) could conceivably read the entire work as a theological quest, and one whose more illicit elements can be glossed by recourse to an almost mystical equivalence between various forms of knowledge, especially divine and carnal, as has been a common tendency in the Christian mystics.

Jean's *Rose*, as a monument of learning, is framed around one of the time treasured paradoxes of Christian teaching, namely how to ensure the propagation of species within the context of a highly regulated sexual ethics. His recourse to parody, satire as well as willed logical aporia, never actually manage to neutralize the force of his exposition of this obvious conundrum, which he later solves with a facilely vulgar

²⁰⁰ Regalado. "« *Des contraires choses* » – La fonction poétique de la citation et des *exempla* dans le « *Roman de la Rose* » de Jean de Meun", 69.

²⁰¹ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 26-7.

Aristotelianism in the *dénouement*. Guillaume's Amor had supplied his "ten commandments" [2000-24] for the lover, thus replacing his Christian law with a new set of tenets, suitable for those who are ready for induction into his amorous, courtly sect. These commandments cannot quickly be dismissed as a demonstration of rhetorical virtuosity; rather these tenets, voiced in memorable rhyming couplets, are a courtly *ethics*, and perhaps the major aspect of Guillaume's romance that require a revision in the ostensible form of continuation. By expanding the scope of inquiry, Jean de Meun universalizes and refines Guillaume's courtly ethics by adopting a providential framework for the poem's interpretation.

In order to understand how the romance is to be read from a Scholastic and theological perspective, this chapter focuses on the characters Reason and Faux Semblant, who offer complementary views on proper reading, both allegorical and literal. Furnished with their epistemological reflections on language, the reader is sufficiently 'primed' for the most contemporary ontology (and heresy) of Nature and Genius.

Reason's "proper" speech

For the Robertsonians, Reason has been seen as the closest thing to, if not *the*, authorial voice, given that she is the only one who urges the lover to forsake his courtly quest. The depiction of the soul's descent into sin is given a moral tone by the merciless satire accorded to the lover's words and deeds. This argument is mostly cogent, for it emphasizes the internal consistency of Reason's speech, albeit a consistency based on the sweeping implications of the Christian fall. This reading, however, reduces the Fall to a

narrative for the explanation of concupiscence alone, while the ostensible reason for her mythographic interpolation was to describe the loss of primal justice. Her mythographic explanation of the Fall is the first indication that providential narratives will be examined primarily from pre-Christian Greek sources.

Reason had first appeared in Guillaume de Lorris's section, offering a broadly Stoic alternative to Amor's courtly sect. Guillaume's Amors was preaching a doctrine antithetical to the tenets of Stoicism, according to which emotions were cognitions that could be true or false, and whose only method of verification was reason. She reappears near the opening of Jean de Meun's section, with a vast amplification of her previous concerns and erudition. Given her fetishism of the intellect, she naturally exhorts the lover to forsake the god of love and his rose quest since these allegiances subject the lover to fickle Fortune, for which she provides the notorious *exempla* of Manfred, Croesus and Nero. Many of the elements of Stoicism are elaborated in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, a work that Jean had translated, thus explaining the amusing commentary by Reason that it would be so nice to have this work available in the vernacular [5035-40]! It is therefore fitting that they should get stuck not on a distinction (proper/gloss) that belongs to the tradition of Stoic grammar. These terms of contention, *proprietas* and *translatio*, which had been used in authors like Cicero, Isidore of Seville and Diomedes, are exploited for maximum humor as Reason and the lover make of them their central equivocation.²⁰² The moral thrust of Reason's argument fits in nicely with the ethics of Stoicism, so it seems to be a remarkable act of continuity to maintain their grammar, however infused with the wisdom of other sects it may be.

²⁰² Ineichen, Gustav, "Le discours linguistique de Jean de Meun", 250. Ineichen also offers a critique of Poirion's nominalist thesis, but on Augustinian grounds, (249), thereby explaining Fleming's fondness for this interpretation.

Reason begins a discussion of the perils of fortune, which some people love in itself, but which brings none of the lasting comfort associated with the love of Reason. When pressed for a demonstration of the superiority of love over justice, she begins her account by glossing the myth of Jupiter and Saturn,²⁰³ during which she voices an uncourtly word [5537], earning her the reprehension of the lover [5701-5]. In this section, the lover plays the role of a courtly censor, imposing the ethics of his sect on his interlocutor, and not without some broad comedy, as an obscene pun on fellatio escapes “the mouth” of the censorious yet illogical lover [6928-31].²⁰⁴ Reason is thereby forced to defend her position by recourse to manifold Scholastic, ancient, Biblical and mythographic wisdom. She believes that the lover has accused her not of a barbarism, but rather a solecism, resulting in the mutual misunderstanding, or equivocation, of the meaning of *‘propre’*, which Reason supplements with the theory of social habituation. The lover ultimately concedes her “proper” use of the words [7199-204] even though he cannot join her sect. The lover, in heat, forsakes Reason (reason) in favor of Cupid (lust), after a refusal to engage with Reason in her recommended sublimation of desire just as he unequivocally rejects her recommended program of allegorical reading [7160-4].²⁰⁵

As the vernacular translator of Abelard’s *Historia Calamitatum*, Jean de Meun was no doubt aware of nominalist thinking and uses it to poetic effect, though mostly in the form of Euhemerism, although Poirion would disagree, finding in Reason an avatar of Abelardian signification. « Ce n’est pas forcer le texte, en tout cas, que de dire que Jean

²⁰³ Macrobius, the authority for Guillaume’s “prophetic vision”, had given Saturn’s castration of Caelus as the preeminent example of the crude fabled narratives to be avoided when attempting to gloss the role of nature. See Fyler, 79.

²⁰⁴ Si ne vous tienz pas a courtoise/ Que ci m’avés coilles nomees,/ Qui ne sont pas bien renomees/ En bouche a courtoise pucele. (And I don’t consider you courteous/courtly, you who have uttered the word ‘balls’, which are of ill-renew in the mouth of a courtly maiden [virgin].)

²⁰⁵ Jung, “Jean de Meun et l’Allégorie”, 28.

de Meun n'est plus un « réaliste » au sens où l'entend la scolastique médiévale. Et l'on est alors tenté de le confronter à ce courant nominaliste qui se caractérise par l'opposition entre *res* et *vox*, la chose signifiée et le mot qui la signifie."²⁰⁶ In the context of Reason's "proper speech" however, I find this argument unconvincing because I can find nothing in her speech which would assert that words *properly* designate individuals. Furthermore, the analogy of *vox* and *res* to signifier and signified seems at best anachronistic, and at worst, a gross misrepresentation of the terms of the 12th-century universals debate: in other words, to make it simply a question of semiology suggests a tacit acceptance of nominalist theses. And Poirion himself readily acknowledges the applicability of this scheme only to Reason's speech: "C'est plutôt dans le discours de Nature qu'on retrouvera les éléments d'une théorie de l'intellect, en même temps qu'une théorie des espèces dont on semble considérer l'existence comme transcendant celle des individus."²⁰⁷ In purely literary terms, Poirion's first quoted assertion is not without merit, for he justly seizes on Reason's refusal to engage in equivocal speech, because she predicates «*propre* » only of words in their grammatical and logical sense. The lover focuses on propriety in courtly terms, thus staging an extended narrative equivocation between linguistics and ethics that will continue to haunt the rest of the work.

Reason's target, however, is no longer the outmoded realism of Anselm or Guillaume de Champeaux, nor is she arguing against Guillaume's courtly (and perhaps naïve) realism, but rather against the courtly ethics of censorship. In such a loaded debate mixing courtly ethics, philosophical questions of language, and obscenity, both literally and figuratively, Reason is able to expound a coherent theory of language that accounts

²⁰⁶ Poirion, Daniel. "De la signification selon Jean de Meun", 176.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 174.

for both its utilitarian and spiritual aspects. Poirion sees the castration metaphor as applicable to medieval realism itself, with the dismemberment of the Titan analogously suggesting a break between sign and referent. As we saw in earlier, however, nominalism was a well-known position at this time in thirteenth century, though it seemed to have lost its philosophical credentials (p.131n). In fact, Reason's conceptual realism concerning the reproductive organs and their generative power will serve as the foundation for the more heretical logic concerning the species in the next chapter. Reason also accepts universal grammar, which posits a universal structure for all language, i.e., same in vernacular as in Latin.²⁰⁸ Bracketing off ontology from Reason's *disputatio*, Poirion thereby limits the scope and importance of Reason's speech to an outmoded philosophical debate. I contend, however, that her argument is always as ontological as it is epistemological, and she therefore accords with Nature and Genius far more than Poirion suggests.

Wetherbee helpfully acknowledges the most apparent contradiction in her speech: she espouses a natural love and even reproduction, but this is contradictory to her elaboration of "fallen" sexual relations, which seems to be sweeping and universal in its condemnation of amorous psychology. I would say that the lover's inadequacy as a *logician* need not lead us to believe that Reason was equipped to deal with the already fallen lover. Reason is confident of her victory well before the debate is over, when the lover believes he has pushed Reason into an *aporia*, preaching 'hate' in opposition to 'love'. Reason invokes not allegory, but satire, as the model (Horace) [5735], explaining that turning away from one vice should not entail its contrary vice [5737-51] a maneuver that still fails to convince the lover [5752]. Reason responds thus: "Tu n'as pas bien por

²⁰⁸ Minnis, 121.

moi mater/ Cerchiés les livres anciens;/ Tu n'es pas bons logiciens." [5754-6] "You haven't consulted the books of the masters of Antiquity that you would need to best me. You're not a good logician." The humor is, of course, that the lover was not actually engaging her in a *disputatio*, but merely rejecting her 'advances' because she has a foul mouth.

Poirion qualifies the flavor of Reason's speech as decidedly nominalist²⁰⁹, but Kathryn Lynch convincingly argues that this is unlikely, and she proposes that Reason is the abstracting principle!²¹⁰ This seems a more apt formulation, especially when we consider her theory of language and integumental allegoresis, both relying on abstraction, and it also serves as a fitting Aristotelian antidote to the excessive (and moralistic) Augustinianism bequeathed to her by John Fleming in his *Reason and the Lover*. Reason does in fact show that obscenity (an ethical category) is not an intrinsic property of the sign, but rather opts for a gloss that is both satirically vulgar and yet rooted in the realistic empiricism of Aristotle. Therefore, while Poirion and Dragonetti read this as an allegory of the literal sign, I would argue that it does not address that issue, even indirectly; rather,

²⁰⁹ Poirion's thesis casts doubt on the status of allegorical language, as well as all cases of linguistic realism, and to my mind, even linguistic conceptualism. He inaugurates the common tenet in contemporary scholarship that Jean de Meun was a nominalist: "L'allégorie scolastique, qui s'élabore depuis longtemps dans les écrits en latin, n'établit que des relations arbitraires entre les différents systèmes de signes. Les personnifications sont traitées comme de simples abstractions. Il n'y a guère de symboles, mais des exemples. L'allégorie n'est qu'un cas particulier de l'arbitraire du langage : il faut bien pour parler, dire autre chose, *allegorein*, puisqu'il n'y a pas de rapport essentiel entre le mot et la réalité." Poirion, "Les mots et les choses selon Jean de Meun", 10. Hult follows Poirion's analysis in "The Language of Dismemberment", supplanting Poirion's linguistic nihilism with linguistic determinism, 110: "I would submit that Jean is functioning at a second level where, taking the world of language and texts as a given, further sense (or nonsense) is produced by the operations of language and not by the prior existence of things." Also, 120: "Jean de Meun proves Raison's nominalist point." Cf. R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, 140: "Saturn's mutilation entails a break in genealogical continuity, a disruption of lineage, that is indissociable from semiological dispersion, a break with the fixity of signs implying [...] the breakdown of character and even logic (e.g. Reason acting incoherently and desiring what she denounces)." It seems to me that 'desire' can only be predicated of Reason equivocally in this instance, for the word must necessarily be exempt from carnality if we are dealing with an immaterial personification.

²¹⁰ Kathryn Lynch, 125.

it serves as a radical separation of ethics from semantics. While this separation *necessarily* entails other interpretive difficulties in Reason (i.e. her capacity, as universal faculty, to deal with the individual), these do not really contaminate her sign theory as such. In addition, she is borrowing from so many different traditions, those of *Genesis*, the Aristotelian, Augustinian. As John Fyler has argued, the tension between linguistic Cratylism and conventionalism need not necessarily be seen as dichotomous in the Middle Ages, for both beliefs seemed to exist simultaneously, though in different fields of discourse.²¹¹ As we will see, Reason invokes Augustinianism for God's primary imposition, and signification by 'reasonable' convention for man.

It is in this perilous juggling act of different philosophical traditions that Reason's account of (post-lapsarian) language seems most problematic. The rhyme pair that caused the initial offense (*coilles* and *andoilles*) was initially found in the satirical *Roman de Renart* (early branches c. 1170-80), used by Hersent in reference to the castration of her husband, Isengrin.²¹² But the *Renart* uses the word 'coilles' and its various paronyms as a recurring motif, though always in reference to the unwilling eunuch. This implicit citation suggests satire to the versed audience, but Reason's *tour de force*, so to speak, is to found a theory of language that is rooted in (generative) things. While John Fleming has somewhat tendentiously pointed out the Augustinian debt for Reason's sign theory, and Wetherbee has seen her as reflecting on similar issues to Natura in Alain's *De Planctu*, Gerard Paré has noted the Aristotelian flavor of her speech, relying on the

²¹¹ Fyler, John. *Language and the Declining World*. 19.

²¹² [Dame Hersent forment le haste,/ Il se trestorne, ele li taste,/ Iloc ou la coille soloit/ Estre par raison et par droit./ N'i trova mie de l'andoille. / « Chetis, fet ele, ou est ta coille,/ Qui ci endroit te soloit pendre ?] (Branche 1b, 2659-65). (Lady Hersent presses him strongly (for intercourse), he turns around, and she gropes him in the spot where his balls should reasonably and rightly be found – not even the slightest sausage link. “Woe,” she cried, “where are the balls which normally hung in this spot?”) *Roman de Renart*.

utilitarian nature of the sexual organ and its generative capacity as a justification for its inherent goodness.²¹³ I think the more explicit debt to Boethius (Philosophia) goes without saying, and perhaps the reason why critics have found equal support for both Platonic and Aristotelian foundations for Reason's theory of language, given that Boethius was fully immersed in both of these ancient traditions.²¹⁴

Within Lady Reason's ontology, every existent thing is good, and from this it follows that every literal designation of an existent entity must therefore also be viewed in a positive light:

Biaus amis, je puis bien nommer,
Sanz moi faire mal renomer
Proprement, par le propre non
Chose qui n'est se bonne non. (6945-48, Poirion)

[Handsome friend, I can indeed name properly/literally, with the proper name, any existent thing, which is nothing but good, without falling into disrepute.]

Here we see the glimpse of an Aristotelian notion of existence being equated with actuality, and consequently, a good, although here it is framed using the figure of litotes (*chose qui n'est* = something which is not/does not exist, *se bonne non* = if it is not/except good). This logic has its roots in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, where in the discussion of Fortune, where actual existence is seen as superior to potential or non-existence. And yet the expression "bad fortune" exists, and so the narrator asks Lady Philosophy to state her claim in a manner more in keeping with everyday usage. She then proves that fortune all is good based on its instructive and morally edifying utility.²¹⁵ Reason follows her literary predecessor by glossing her terms with the language of the academy.

²¹³ Reason cites Plato's *Timaeus*, a foundational text for the Chartrians, as her authority for "plain speech". (7104, Poirion). *Reason and the Lover*, 99-113.

²¹⁴ Marenbon, 35.

²¹⁵ *Consolation of Philosophy*, book 4, 112.

The first argument in her *disputatio* concerns the concept of imposition. Reason claims to be the *impositor* of names, just as God is the *creator* of things:

Mes il vot que non lor trovasse
A mon plesir, et les nomasse
Proprement et communement
Pour croistre notre entendement ; (7091-94, Poirion).

[But He wanted me to find names for them as I saw fit, and that I name them properly and commonly in order to increase our understanding.]

Boethius seems to concur with imposition by reason: “Reason, too, when it looks at some universal, without using imagination or the senses, comprehends the imaginable and sensible objects of both. Reason it is that so defines the universal concept.”²¹⁶ This Aristotelian solution to the problem of language, signaled by the use of « *a mon plesir* », which is Aristotle’s characterization of the name being fixed conventionally (*ad placitum*).²¹⁷ This Latin terminology for conventional signification is, to my knowledge, less connotative in Latin than the hedonistic undertones which lurk in Reason’s vernacular *translatio*; however, pleasure, in any sensual sense of the word cannot properly be predicated of immaterial reason. The fact that Reason, as prosopopeia, is shown to have a “will” of her own, almost verging on courtly, is broad Scholastic comedy. Reason is paradoxically fighting courtliness with a courtly, yet moralized, seduction.

This conception follows, and indeed supplements, the Augustinian conception of God’s initial imposition (necessarily distinct from human imposition) found in Augustine’s *De Genesi ad Litteram* (7086-89), as we saw in the introduction:

²¹⁶ Ibid, book 5, 127-8.

²¹⁷ Fyler, 17, drawing from Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, book 2.

Tu, qui me requires de gloser,
Vues opposer? ançois opposes
Que, tout ait Diex faites les choses,
Au mains ne fist il pas le non,
Je te respon: espoir que non,
Au mains celi qu'eles ont ores,
Si les pot bien nommer lores
Quant il premierement cria
Tout le monde et quanqu'il y a [7082-90]

[You wish to object to my arguments while requiring me to gloss? Before, you objected that, even if God did make things, at least he didn't make the name. I respond: perhaps not, at least the names that things formerly had, and He was able to name them accordingly, when He first created the world and everything in it.]

And while this is most certainly the first concession to Augustinianism, it is framed in contemporary Scholastic logic. The divine word is not the same as the human word, but rather analogous to it. Even Genesis (2:19) supplements the divine word with a more rationalistic (humanistic) explanation for human language, as exemplified in Adam's nomination of things. Unlike Adam, however, Reason is not a particular, and instead of declaring imposition to be the work of any individual, it follows that words were instituted by man's universal reason. This is quite different from Abelard's less idealized version of human imposition as summarized by John Marenbon: "Abelard holds that the reference words are given by their imposition is *direct*. When the impositor imposes the word 'dog' on the animal standing in front of him, he thereby makes it refer to every animal which does in fact belong to the same natural kind, even though he himself may have no clear idea of what are the defining features of it."²¹⁸ By situating the word within a universal faculty, itself the source of our universal concepts, I find much less

²¹⁸ Marenbon, John, "The Rediscovery of Abelard's Philosophy", 341.

contingency in the word than is apparent in Abelard's account.²¹⁹ Rather, it comes closer to Boethius's more realistic elaboration of imposition as found in his second commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*: "the human race, which flourishes by virtue of both reason and speech, imposed names."²²⁰

If Reason, then, is read as a particular *damsel*, however, as opposed to a universal faculty, then she becomes, like Adam, yet another possible particular 'impositor' in the long line of myths concerning nomination. Abelard did not wish to deny that the things of this world bore common natures, but merely that the name, in itself, did not reveal anything about such a nature. In other words, he does not require the 'first impositor' to fully understand the nature of thing named.²²¹ 'Raison la sage' [6987] is surely the faculty that does know things not indeterminately, but determinately, based on their nature and common form. Reason presents language as a tool, whose value is ultimately positive: words have to be good because they designate things which are good, and the act of understanding, which brings potential knowledge into actuality, is effected by the

²¹⁹ Abelard drew his theory of the first impositor from Priscian - versed in both Greek and Latin and with obvious affinities to the Stoic sect, and later to serve as foundational to the *modistae* - and this was fundamental to his conception of the *status*, which corresponded neither to divine ideas nor to any essence. For further discussion of Stoic linguistics in Abelard, see Bardzell, Jeffrey. *Speculative Grammar and Stoic Language Theory in Medieval Allegorical Narrative*, esp. 70-79. Serge Lusignan has shown that, in Priscian's *Institutiones*, the author cannot but point out that the article, a necessary part of speech in Greek, according to Stoic grammar, does not exist in Latin: *Parler Vulgairement*, 25. Lusignan notes that Priscian's many commentators, most of whom were ignorant of Greek, conceived this phenomenon by turning to a language that accommodated the use of the article, namely in their respective vernaculars.

²²⁰ Quoted in Reynolds, Suzanne. p 48 : « *hominum genus, quod et ratione et oratione vigeret, nomina posuit.* »

²²¹ Abelard's ascribes commonality to the 'term' and not the 'essence': Abelard, "Glosses on Porphyry" from *Logica Ingredientibus* (91): "But it seems we should balk at taking the agreement of things according to what is not any thing, as if we are uniting in *nothing* things that exist when we say this man and that man agree in the *status* of man – that is, *in that they are men*. But we mean only that they *are men* and in this respect do not differ at all – I mean in the respect *that they are men*, even though we appeal to no *essence* here." Trans. Spade, Paul Vincent. *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*, 42.

inherent goodness of language. To this end, Reason resorts to a theological, yet corporal, metaphor (*reliques*) for *coilles*.²²²

Se je nomme les nobles choses
Par plain texte, sanz 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 humaine,
Qui fust sans eus et casse et vainne.
Car volentiers, non pas envis,
Mist Diex en coilles et en vis
Force et generacion
Par merveillouse entencion,
Por l'espece avoir toute vive
Par renouvelance nayve
[C'est par nissance rechaable
Et par chaance renessable,
Par quoi Diex les fait tant durer
Que la mort ne puet endurer..
Aussi fist il as bestes mues
Qui par ce resont soutenues,
Car quant les unes bestes meurent,
Les formes es autres demeurent. [6957-78]

[If I name the noble things with plain text, without glossing, it is because my Father in Heaven made them with His own hands long ago, along with all the other instruments, which are the pillars and arguments to sustain the human nature, which is vain and futile without them. Willingly, and not begrudgingly, did God place power and generation²²³ in balls and shafts, by his marvelous intention to keep the species alive

²²² Reason does indicate the possibility of 'arbitrary' imposition: *Je te di devant Dieu qui m'ot,/ Se je, quant mis les nons as choses/ Que, si reprendre et blames oses,/ Coilles reliques appellese,/ Et reliques coilles nomasse,/ Tu, qui si m'en mort et depiques,/ Me redeisses de reliques/ Que ce fust lais mos et vilains..* [7108-16, Poirion]. The use of the subjunctive here indicates a purely hypothetical circumstance, similar to Nature's musings on the hypothetical linguistic capacities of animals. I think that the distinction between 'conventional' and 'arbitrary', respectively' is clearly marked in the *Rose*, by the use of indicative versus subjunctive. The arbitrariness reason invokes here is more for the sake of comedy, and an extension of the discussion of connotation, than a philosophical statement about language. The only space for such 'arbitrariness' is in poetics, and by this I mean that an author can use metaphor, or "imposit" a figurative word on another, and this selection would be arbitrary with regard to a the choice, but I would add, loosely following Aristotle, that the great metaphors, in allowing us to perceive "similarity in dissimilarity", generates, by this very similarity, a retrospective feeling of necessity. This particular metaphor is shocking in its conflation of the spiritual and the profane, but apt in that both "*reliques*" and "*coilles*" are designated as corporeal, and indeed corporal, matter invested with meaning.

²²³ Bernard Dod lists the surviving manuscripts of Aristotle's *De Generatione et Corruptione* as follows : Three translations directly from the Greek : Anonymous (vetus) – 12th century- 118 surviving manuscripts; Gerard of Cremona – before 1187 – 8 surviving manuscripts; William of Moerbeke (?) – before 1274 – 190 surviving manuscripts. Averroes's middle commentary was translated by Michael Scot, ca. 1220-35.

through simple reproduction (for it is by birth susceptible to corruption [*rechaable*], and by chance susceptible to rebirth), through which God makes them live long enough so that death cannot prevail. He made the same things for the irrational animals, which are maintained by this same logic, for when some animals die, the common forms remain in the others.]

Reason is already subjecting her proper speech to allegory, as these corporal members become the “pillars” and “instruments” by which the human race perpetuates itself. At first glance, Reason seems to “gloss over” the central equivocation of the word ‘gloss’, thus mirroring the fate of its companion adjective ‘proper’. Following E. J. Ashworth, I am using ‘equivocation’ in the “non pejorative medieval sense, since it covers both the case of homonymy and polysemy.”²²⁴ At first finding it unfathomable that she could have committed a barbarism, she defends herself as if her crime were a solecism. The lover is treating the gloss as euphemism (concealment - ethical) while Reason’s lessons on glossing draw firstly on the other, and in Scholasticism, primary sense, where the gloss takes the form of an explication leading to intellection. While the lover insists on a ‘gloss’, he was asking for an euphemistic gloss rather than the literal (Scholastic) use tied to the medieval tradition of the *lectio*, namely to “interpret or indicate the meaning of a word, sentence or passage.”²²⁵ To gloss her uncouth terms, Reason demonstrates that the process of generation is the same even for irrational animals (*bestes mues*), before offering a *realistic* theory of the common form that survives any individual mortality.²²⁶

(*CHLMP*, 76). These terms are found in abundance in the confession/dialogue of Nature and Genius, and almost always rendered literally, i.e. in the Aristotelian sense. See Paré, *Idées et les Lettres*, 59-61.

²²⁴ Ashworth, E.J. "Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy", 45.

²²⁵ Paré, *Les Idées et les Lettres*, 19.

²²⁶ Compare with Nature’s “competition” with death: Ensi Mors qui n’iert ja saoule,/ Glotement les pieces engoule;/ Tant les suit par mer et par terre/ Qu’en la fin toutes les enterre./ Mes nes puet ensemble tenir ;/ Si que n’en puet a chief venir/ Des espieces du tout destruire,/ Tant sevent bien les pieces fuire ;/ Car s’il n’en demeroit que une,/ Si vivroit la forme commune. (Poirion, 15965-74). (That is how Death, who will never be satiated, devours singulars like a glutton. She follows them so far by sea and land that in the end she buries them all. But she cannot take them all at once, and as such she can never fully accomplish her

Reason's theory of generation and corruption are here treated as physical phenomena, but in this maneuver, she is able to accord a morally positive valence to all of creation and language, while the lover argues in opposition based on the censorious morality laid down by Amors. The lover, therefore, draws his arguments from authority while Reason bolsters her arguments from the natural order.

In order to win the argument, Reason takes the traditional Aristotelian posture of showing that the lover's reasoning is fallacious. Although the explicit reference to the source text for this kind of argument is not mentioned until the Faux Semblant section, Reason is drawing heavily on Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*, in which Aristotle explained how the Sophists (here the lover) tried to combat their opponents (Reason) by showing that their conclusions are inconsistent with tradition or the law (Amors's commandments).²²⁷ In sum, the lover cannot expose Reason's reason as paradoxical (fallacious) because Reason, like Nature, has situated herself as above all linguistic tradition, and thence exempt from any *particular* ethics. In order to account for the

task, namely the destruction of the entire species, for individuals/singulars know how to flee her grasp. For if there were only one left, the common form would still survive.)

²²⁷ Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 12.1: "*The widest range of common-place argument for leading men into paradoxical statement is that which depends on the standards of Nature and of the Law: it is so that both Calicles is drawn as arguing in the Gorgias, and that all the men of old supposed the result to come about: for nature (they said) and law are opposites, and justice is a fine thing by a legal standard, but not by that of nature. Accordingly, they said, the man whose statement agrees with the standard of nature you should meet by the standard of the law, but the man who agrees with the law by leading him to the facts of nature: for in both ways paradoxical statements may be committed. In their view the standard of nature was the truth, while that of the law was the opinion held by the majority. So that it is clear that they, too, used to try either to refute the answerer or to make him make paradoxical statements, just as the men of to-day do as well. [...] Some questions are such that in both forms the answer is paradoxical; e.g. 'Ought one to obey the wise or one's father?' and 'Ought one to do what is expedient or what is just?' and 'Is it preferable to suffer injustice or to do an injury?' You should lead people, then, into views opposite to the majority and to the philosophers; if any one speaks as do the expert reasoners, lead him into opposition to the majority, while if he speaks as do the majority, then into opposition to the reasoners. For some say that of necessity the happy man is just, whereas it is paradoxical to the many that a king should be happy. To lead a man into paradoxes of this sort is the same as to lead him into the opposition of the standards of nature and law: for the law represents the opinion of the majority, whereas philosophers speak according to the standard of nature and the truth.*" (Italics are mine and indicative of Reason's self-fashioning as a philosopher against the sophistic, courtly ethics of Amors.)

ethical valences of words, she invokes a theory of social conditioning (*acoustumance*) as the sole source of connotative speech. The *acoustumance* theory would probably not have had drawn a substantial realist opposition, especially since it seems to be an exclusively social and ethical category. It seems rather to be aimed at the kind of thinking that haunts the *Cratylus*, and continued in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, for if some words, via a mystical resonance derive their meaning directly from the thing, then the *connotation*, as by-product of that essential meaning, will likewise depend on this primary association. Following that logic, bad words are bad because the things they name are bad. The lover cannot condemn the thing, instead insisting that the words are themselves ontologically separate, i.e., not created by God, and therefore wicked [6985-6]. Connotation must be divorced from signification, if we are to understand Reasons's words correctly. Augustine had already acknowledged the conventionality of language, *signa data*, as we saw in the introduction, a matter on which Augustine and Aristotle were in perfect accord.²²⁸ But while all words are conventional by definition for these last two thinkers, their connotations really do not belong to any *logical* category. Reason depicts such aspects of connotation as an ethical superfluity, even as regards designations of the genitalia:

Il convenoit que nonz eussent,
 Ou genz nomer ne les seussent ;
 Et por ce tex nonz lor meïmes
 Qu'en les nomast par ceus meïmes.
 Se fames nes nomment en France,
 Ce n'est fors de acoustumance.
 Car le propre non lor pleüst,
 Qui acoustume lor eüst ;
 Et se proprement les nomassent,
 Ja certes de riens ne pechassent.
 Acoustumance est trop poissans,

²²⁸ Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 2.

Et se bien la sui cognoissans,
Mainte chose desplest novele
Qui par acoustumance est bele. (7127-40)

[It was fitting for [these things (*coilles/viz*)] to have names, otherwise people wouldn't know what to call them. And this is why we imposed such names, so that they could be called by these very names. If women don't utter such words in France, that is only because they are unaccustomed, because they would surely like the proper name if they were accustomed. And if they were to name them properly, they would be committing no sin in doing so. This social conditioning is too powerful, and if I'm versed in this matter, many a new thing may cause displeasure, which later gains beauty through habituation.]

Reason places taste in the category of 'fashion' or Aristotle's '*habitus*', in contrast to the lover, who believes that connotation is an intrinsic attribute of the substance. Her literal designation of the pudenda is also explicitly connected to 'pleasure' (here in the sensual sense), which links her more closely to the ethical valorization of this substantive (*plesir* or *deliz*) which we will address in the next chapter.

Reason explains that she should not have to gloss a word that is being used allegorically, even though she extends the bounds to literal language over the course of her argument. Through the deliberate manipulation of bawdy speech, Reason explains how metaphors arise quite naturally even in more profane contexts. Her defense of speaking "properly" extends therefore even to vulgar metaphors:

Chascune qui les va nommant
Les apelle ne sai comment,
Borces, hernois, riens, piches, pines,
Aussi cum ce fussent espines ;
Mes quant les sentent bien joignans,
Ne les tiennent pas a poignans.
Or les nomment si cum eus suelent,
Quant proprement nommer nes vuelent.
Je ne lor en fere ja force,
Mes a rienz nulle ne m'efforce,
Quant riens vuel dire apertement,
Tant cum a parler proprement. [7141-7152]

[Every woman who refers to them [*coilles*, viz] calls them as she pleases: bags, harnesses, things, nuts, pricks, as if they were thorny, but when they feel them entering, they don't consider them prickly. Now they call them as they are accustomed to do so, when they don't want to call them by their proper name. I will not oblige them to name things properly. But I strive, more than anything, to speak properly when I want to state something openly.]

Here, Reason compares *harnais*, *bourses*, obvious metaphorical slang, with her more 'proper' *coilles*. This is where her initial equivocation could eventually turn into sophistry. While she seems to undermine her initial refusal to gloss terms, here she advocates (non-euphemistic) metaphorical designations, though these seem not to be rooted in a property of the thing, but rather in the specific contextualization of action ("*bien joignans*"). By this maneuver, Reason is able to show, unlike the lover, that vocabulary (and more specifically, literal versus figurative designation) varies naturally according to the context of enunciation. Because their in human reason, ultimately, all words are, by their nature, intrinsically exempt from obscenity. Since all created things are good insofar as they are actual, literal and allegorical (save perhaps euphemistic) designations likewise are presented as good and natural, far removed from the complex courtly ethics of censorship. David Hult notes that in Jean de Meun's translation of Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*, he renders the male genitalia as "*coilles*", an act which seems to suggest that this is the proper word for a plain-style poet.²²⁹ Reason's choice words turn out to be a double vulgarization: the translation from Latin to the vernacular being the first, and the metonymic designation of man's parts being a vulgarization of the Scholastic topic, which took autonomous substance (i.e. wholes) as their main field of inquiry. For Reason, 'proper' translates as literal, whereas for the lover, 'proper' means

²²⁹ Hult, "Language of Dismemberment", 120.

decorous. In the author's later *apologia*, where he freely quotes Sallust (who wrote not love, but war, chronicles) to justify his "words being cousins to deeds", we see that this author figure accords with Reason's linguistic ethics:

Li dis doit le fait ressembler;
Car les vois as choses voisines
Doivent estre a lor fais coisines. [15190-2]

[The narrative must resemble the deed, for just as words [from Latin *vox*] are likenesses of things, they must be cousins to their deeds.]

Jean may have also had, as Minnis shows us, another thinker in mind for this passage, one closer to the *Rose*'s more Scholastic concerns. Boethius's *Li Livres de Confort* was translated by Jean himself: "Il couvient que les paroles soient cousinez aus chosez dont il parlent".²³⁰ Both Lady Reason and the narrator, therefore, share the same insistence on representation using likenesses, a testament to the realistic assumptions that subtend this work's linguistic ideology.

Despite the high comedy of this mock-Scholastic *disputatio*, in which immaterial reason triumphs over the unschooled lover, Reason confesses that she did not even wish to linger over this point, one which she considered moot since she was speaking in the manner of parables. The severed organs must be called by their proper name, because they are not real (mythical) and because, as Poirion, and especially Hult, have elegantly demonstrated, they are treated as autonomous wholes by virtue of castration. In addition,

²³⁰ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 124, quoting *Li Livres de confort*, iii pr. xii, 102-3, in "Boethius" *De Consolatione* by Jean de Meun', ed. Dedek-Hery, 232 One should note Reason's hypothetical (to her) and literal (to us) endorsement of Jean for his translatio(n) of Boethius's work: "Ce puet l'en bien des clers enquerre/ Qui Boece De Confort lisent/ Et les sentences qui la gisent;/ Dont granz biens a genz laiz feroit/ Qui bien les lor translateroit." [5036-40] (This matter can be investigated by clerks who read Boethius's *Consolatio* and the *sententiae* found therein, hence he who translates it for the laity would be doing them a great service.)

the myth was a ‘gloss’ on Justice, an abstract term that requires concrete *exempla* in order to become intelligible:

Si dist l'en bien en nos escoles
Maintes choses par paraboles
Qui mout sont beles a entendre.
Si ne doit l'en mie tout prendre
A la lettre, quanque l'en ot.
En ma parole autre sens ot,
Dont si briement parler voloie
Au mains quant de coilles parloie,
Que celi que tu i vues metre ;
Et qui bien entendroit la lettre,
Le sens verroit en l'escriture
Qui esclarsist la chose obscure.
La verité dedens repote
Seroit clere, s'ele ert espote ;
Bien l'entendras se bien repetes
Les integumens as poetes.
La verras une grant partie
Des secrés de philosophie. [7153-70]

[Many things in our schools are recounted in parables which are very pleasing to the understanding. And one should not take everything literally, however much the letter abounds, for in my words there was another sense than the one you wished to give to give them, a sense which I wanted to discuss only briefly, at least when I was talking about balls. And whoever understood the letter would see the true sense in Scripture which would clarify the obscure matter. The truth nestled within would become clear if it were expounded. You will understand it if you follow faithfully the integuments of the poets. There you will find a large portion of the secrets of philosophy.]

Reason is quite clear in her defense of free speech, for censorship short-circuits the understanding. Reason's obscene words were allegorical because of their mythical (unreal) context, though quite literal in that they designated a real context, namely the Fall, which would explain contemporary society's disordered sexuality and sense of justice. What follows is that learning and philosophy, not love, should become the lover's source of *delit*, or pleasure [7173-4], and this is the closest thing that Reason offers to the lover as a substitution for his beloved rose. This passage, situated near the close of

Reason's long speech, has often been used as a justification for panallegorical readings of the *Rose*, but I must agree with Minnis in his assessment that an integumental analysis of the work as a whole seems over-zealous, especially as the interpretations of myth become increasingly materialistic, and in the case of *Ami* and *La Vieille*, wholly Euhemeristic.²³¹

I think that Minnis is arguing from a rather tenuous homology of obscenity and literalism when he says that Reason's account of Saturn's castration "may appropriately be described as 'unflinchingly literal'."²³² Reason was talking about Saturn's balls as the source of lust (Venus) which made man's sexuality subject to Fortune. In doing so, she endowed them with a censorious moral etiology that lies in sharp contrast to the positive valences she accords to their generative capacities. In this passage, therefore, Minnis shows his allegiance to the *Amant* (i.e., Reason contradicts herself), and this is where I disagree. Minnis seems to see the debate between Reason and the lover as the ethical justification for his employment of the satirical mode in the following sections, most notably in the case of *Ami* and *la Vieille*, both of whom exhibit similar 'ribaldry' to Reason's, but which goes uncensored by their respective interlocutors, the lover and *Bel Accueil*. Even Minnis says that this outspokenness on Reason's part, traditionally associated with satire, seems methodologically opposed to the integument, for allegory has been traditionally associated with more covert truths, while satire exposes shortcomings in a more overt and less lofty manner.²³³ Reason knows no obscenity, for as a purely social reality, it is not one of those simple intelligibles seized by this faculty.

²³¹ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 89: "In sum, here – at the very (and only) point in the entire text at which integumental allegoresis is described, and immediately before the passage which modern panallegorizers regularly cite in justification of their totalizing readings – is a defence of 'proper' language and plain speaking which seems to be quite at variance with a language of secrecy and concealment that bespeaks the coterie of knowledge of the privileged few who have studied long in the schools."

²³² *Ibid.*, 89. Minnis puts the term in quotes because the locution belongs to Wetherbee, and Minnis is aware of Fleming's specific objections to this reading.

²³³ *ibid.*, 18.

As regards satire, Minnis notes the common tendency among satirists to proclaim that they were not slandering individuals, but rather people and vice in general.²³⁴ But this is to admit that satire relies on abstraction, though perhaps not the conceptual abstractions (conceits) required by integumental allegory. The abstract nature of ‘vice’ is magnified in satire more than the humanity of its actants, like a metonymic reduction of man to his accidents (vice). The main difference in the case of satire is that its referents are so rarely treated this abstractly, given the tendency of readers to search for the “real” (individual) target(s) when this mode is employed. Nonetheless, the satire has not really begun yet, only its ‘overt’ methodology. The fact that the lover did not understand Reason’s message does not mean that she did not deliver one. Her final verdict is that allegorical speech, when aimed at producing an intellection, is reasonable and reflects reality just as well as literal designation, as she implies that correspondence is not between single words (i.e. balls = simply balls or simply generative power, reminiscent of Aquinas’s “arm” of God in the introduction), but rather between words and sense, which is why she describes her (quasi-veridical) histories and myths as ‘*paraboles*’ (parables).

While I have rejected the notion of any philosophical nominalism in the voice of Reason, some may assume that what will follow will be an endorsement of the more realistic view proposed by John Fleming’s *Reason and the Lover*, whose Augustinian analysis of Reason, and consequently, the entire poem, makes both conform entirely to the precepts of the early church father. I agree with Fleming’s assessment of her impeccable credentials, based on the iconographic representation of Reason’s Scriptural wisdom,²³⁵ and his analysis of ridicule to which the author subjects the lover. However,

²³⁴ *ibid*, 97.

²³⁵ *Reason and the Lover*, 25.

Fleming makes little of the comic potential of Reason and her poor self-presentation as an alternative ‘lover’. Her principal mistake, according to Averroes, would lie in not knowing her audience, and assuming that the less unversed lover would have access to her allegoresis.²³⁶ In other words, I think his argument tends to conflate Reason with Wisdom in a way that seems Scholastically problematic for the time, even if it may be true in Biblical lore. By following the Augustinian credentials of Reason alone, Fleming is able to vouchsafe the integrity of her moral vision and read the rest of the poem as an *exemplum in malo*, and this would make the whole section of Jean’s work that does not include Reason (roughly 14,000 verses) tantamount to a bleakly extended induction into vice. The Aristotelian reading manages to elude this ethical polarity, for Aristotle’s account of virtue may suggest something more complicated than reliance on reason alone. For in individuals, virtue is maintained by the “rule of right reason” (*logos*), in contrast to character and passion, and later Nature will proclaim that reason is one’s only guarantor of free will, without which we are subject to determinism.²³⁷ This eminence is not enough, in itself, however, to maintain the rectitude of society at large, for “reason may persuade to actions contrary to both nature and habit, and the problems of ethics and politics are determined by the fact that the good is achieved when nature, habit, and reason are in harmony.”²³⁸ In other words, Reason should not be considered ‘defeated’ simply because she fails to inspire the lover to forsake his quest: she has no sway over the

²³⁶ Averroes. *The Decisive Treatise*, book 2, 39: “[There are] texts [of Scripture] that must be taken in their apparent meaning by the lower classes and interpreted allegorically by the demonstrative class. It is inexcusable for the lower classes to interpret them allegorically or for the demonstrative class to take them in their apparent meaning.” 2, 40: In reference to the unexcused errors of Scripture, Averroes states “error that is not excused to any person whatever, and that is unbelief if it concerns the principles of religion, or heresy if it concerns something subordinate to the principles.” *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, 320.

²³⁷ McKeon II, 34.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 35.

lover's nature or habit, and her epistemology-laden discourse falls on the deaf ears of the more 'ontologically-minded' lover.

Reason's humorously philosophical digression demonstrates great conceptual virtuosity, and serves as a gloss, or a reading manual, to the integumental aspects of the *Rose*. In the lover's more concrete plight, however, Reason's digressions on the vicissitudes of fortune seem to prefigure her fondness for equivocation demonstrated above on a more macrostructural level: that is to say that the stories of Nero, Croesus, and Manfred seem to bear on the lover's situation only through the broad conceit whose tenuous predicate is "subject to Fortune". If I find there to be a fault with Reason, it is due to her very nature - she is so insistent on abstraction that her answers relate to the lover in ways that are purely intelligible rather than sensible. Reason Aristotelianizes, and in this sense, "demythologizes" the genitals, thus prefiguring a key point in the *Rose*'s satire of the mendicants who are linked allegorically to the self-mutilating Origen. This maneuver, predictably, amounts to a rationalistic killjoy for the languishing lover. By making all words good, Reason mocks courtly aesthetics and divorces ethics from semantics. This is perhaps why the two categories become conflated yet again, with Aristotle once more as the source, in the denouement.

Faux Semblant "at the University"

The next figure who will fall under examination, Faux Semblant, is the most explicitly Scholastic of all the speech characters in the *Rose*. Allegorically, he represents the absolute version of Ami's and La Vieille's duplicitous ethics, and more literally and

explicitly, he is tied to the satire of the mendicants, rapidly rising to prominence in the University of Paris from the mid-thirteenth century on. Like Reason, he is an over-determined character, which is to say that he is being used symbolically to account for hypocrisy in all of its various avatars, be they Scholastic (mendicants), courtly (Amors), or satirical (Renart). Ami had counseled the lover to placate Malebouche and to avail himself of dissimulation in order to dispense with the slanderer. Because a feminine personification (*hypocrisie*) would not have been as effective for his polemic against the all-male mendicant friars, Jean de Meun has lifted a masculine personification from his fellow poet Rutebeuf (himself a writer of anti-mendicant satirical poetry), Faux Semblant, a term that is even more vague, and consequently, more suggestive in its semantic polyvalence, while Barat (Fraud) and Hypocrisie become Faux Semblant's parents [10982-3], as a means of combining all aspects of deceit into one entity. This apocalyptic figure is one of the most complex of all speech figures of the *Rose*, because, despite his avowed preference for mendacity, the effectiveness of his speech depends on his telling the truth. And while his ethics differ markedly from Reason's, with his 'deceit' and 'concealment' supplanting her 'love' and 'justice', he accords with her logic in some key ways, thereby providing a fuller context to her refutation of the lover's courtly censorship.

It should be noted that Faux Semblant's character is introduced after a parody of a Biblical prophecy by Amors, following his famous introduction of Guillaume de Lorris (here as the *amant*) as following in the tradition of the classical Roman love poets in their treatment of the subject [10522-3]. The prophecy is both veridical and parodic: veridical because "from a certain perspective, the prophecy, in being read, is fulfilled ipso facto

and therefore takes on the semblance of truth”;²³⁹ and parodic, for as has been noted, the *je – amant – auteur* entails a polyphony that is hardly retained in the closing section of the *Rose*, when the ‘*je*’ seems to suggest all three simultaneously and indistinctly. This prophecy is used to show that the *Rose* conforms to providence as well, though here the concept is used analogously, since the source of the veridical prophecy is not a Christian prophet, but rather the pagan god of love:

Puis vendra Jehan Clopinel,
 Au cuer joli, au cors inel,
 Qui nestra sur Loire a Meun,
 Qui a saoul et a geun
 Me servira toute sa vie,
 Sanz avarice et sanz envie,
 Et sera si tres sages hon
 Qu’il n’avra cure de Raison
 Qui mes oignemenz het et blame,
 Qui olent plus soef que bame.
 Et s’il avient, comment qu’il aille,
 Qu’il en aucune chose faille,
 Car il n’est pas honz qui ne peche,
 Touz jors a chascuns quelque teche,
 Le cuer vers moi tant fin avra
 Que touz jors a moi retorra ;
 Quant en coupe se sentira,
 Du forfet se repentira,
 Il ne me vodra pas trichier.
 Cis avra le romans si chier
 Qu’il le vodra tout parfenir,
 Se temps et leus l’en puet venir,
 Car quant Guillaume cessera,
 Jehanz le continuera,
 Apres sa mort, que je ne mente,
 Ans trespases plus de quarante (10565-90)

[Then will come a certain Jean Clopinel, with a fair heart and a swift body, who will be born along the Loire in Meun, and who, whether satiated or on an empty stomach, will serve me his whole life, without avarice and without envy, and he will be a very wise man, who will pay no heed to Reason, who hates and maligns my ointments, which smell sweeter than balm. And should it so happen that he fail/err/be lacking in something (for there is no man who does not sin, everyone always has some fault [lit. “stain”]), he

²³⁹ Guynn, Noah. “Authorship and Sexual/Allegorical Violence in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*”, 635.

will still show me such a fair heart, always turning back to me). When he feels guilty, he will repent for his misdeed, for he won't want to deceive me. He will hold the *Roman* in such high esteem that he will want to complete it entirely, if he finds the time and place for it. For when Guillaume ends it, Jean will continue it, more than forty years after his death, if I'm not lying.]

Here the prophecy is given not by a prophet, but the winged god of Love. The Lover's quest was placed in peril by the death of Guillaume, but the new continuator is presented in the third person and said to continue the lineage of Amor's avatars – Catullus, Gaulus, Ovid, and now Guillaume de Lorris. Thus Jean is defined as an Ovidian *magister amoris*, to use Minnis's term. Amors's final victory is anticipated in Jean's faithful service of continuation as love poet. This is a parodic self-introduction, for Jean is presented as a servant of Love, just like Guillaume, but Amor distinguishes them in their respective "categories" within the romance, for Amor "ends his speech with a double request of his barons: that Guillaume qua lover-protagonist be helped in his quest to win the rose and that Jean qua poet-narrator be helped in his "quest to write the romance."²⁴⁰ Their identities are clearly separate, and yet they are engulfed in the same, now Testamentary typology. Individuals may perish (Guillaume, his *Roman*, Ovid) but through providential continuation (Jean's *Miroër aus Amoureux*) [10651]), the species, or art of love, lives on. This pagan *allegoria in factis* reveals that *continuation* is perhaps a better way of understanding providential logic.

While secular masters outnumbered mendicant friars at the University of Paris during the work's composition, the latter were granted a certain amount of leeway in terms of professional ascension: they were exempted from the Arts course and could proceed directly to the faculty of theology because they had their own schools for such preliminary training. In addition, their doctors were not answerable to the Chancellor, and

²⁴⁰ Brownlee, "Problem of Faux Semblant," 257.

they remained active during the strike of the secular masters in 1229.²⁴¹ Faux Semblant has adopted the guise of a mendicant friar, freshly frocked for his scathing polemic of the mendicant orders with all the virulence of Guillaume de Saint-Amour's *De Periculiis novissimorum temporum* [11513], a pamphlet that earned the Church's official condemnation in 1257, and a work that drew an attack from the Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra impugnantes Dei Cultum*.²⁴² Guillaume de Saint-Amour was also famous for his commentaries on two logical works by Aristotle, namely the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, something which suggests that he was almost as renowned for his work on the Philosopher as he was for his exegesis and polemics. Saint-Amour continued his anti-mendicant leanings in much the same, indeed more erudite, manner in 1266 or 1267 with his *Collectiones catholicae et canonicae Scripturae ad defensionem ecclesiasticae hierarchie*, which suggests that the controversy was alive and well during Jean's continuation of the *Rose*.²⁴³

While Faux Semblant's polemic of the orders does not really evince integumental signification,²⁴⁴ he does make some implicit suggestions about deceit being a 'real' part of allegorical narrative, leading us to the obvious question of whether integumental allegory, or a *narratio fabulosa*, always deceives like a *belle mensonge*. As an abstract incarnation of deceit, Faux Semblant provides a serious worldly context for characters like Ami and La Vieille, who both used aspects of his teachings to effect (both ultimately unsuccessfully, despite "experience") their own love quests. Faux Semblant begins his attack on the mendicants by suggesting the complete disjunction of appearances from

²⁴¹ See Leff, *Medieval Thought*. 181-182.

²⁴² Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, 216.

²⁴³ Paré, *Idées et les Lettres*, 167.

²⁴⁴ In this respect, Faux Semblant merely concretizes the (less pointed) claims against the mendicants made by Reason [5101-54] and even Ami [8099-8109].

reality. His mode of attack is not only the common *topos* of illusion versus reality, but also the cherished syllogism of the Peripatetics. This is the second Scholastic allegory in the *Rose*, the first being Reason's discussion with the lover about obscenity, while this one takes the form of a discussion of hypocrisy (ethical, social), yet clearly developed and modeled on the "sophistical" Scholastic (linguistic, philosophical). In both cases, an ethical category (propriety, hypocrisy) bifurcates into philosophical one (words/things in Reason, and sophisms in Faux Semblant). The Stoics had developed doctrines on the non-reality of appearance, but this was predicated on other philosophical premises not found in the *Rose*. A better source of inspiration for Faux Semblant is the Sophist, the ancient Greek polymath intellectuals who earned a negative reputation (owing mostly to Plato and Aristotle) for their abstruse and often seemingly inconclusive arguments. Eluding absolute characterizations, Faux Semblant is both a Sophist and his logical adversary, showing a peculiar relationship to this sect that is based on simultaneous contraries, especially since his only act of sophistry is during his mock sacrament.

This is why he turns to Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*, a work that had already been implicitly evoked in Reason's refutations against the lover, and an obvious manual for a practitioner of deceit. The *Refutations* outlines possible errors in argumentation, especially those errors of language which tend to obscure the nature of reality. Some errors are attributed to poor usage (not because language refers ultimately to individuals), and others to mistaken intellection of a thing's nature.²⁴⁵ Fallacies are the work's

²⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 4: There are two styles of refutation: for some depend on the language used, while some are independent of language. Those ways of producing the false appearance of an argument which depend on language are six in number: they are ambiguity, amphiboly, combination, division of words, accent, form of expression. [...]Of fallacies, on the other hand, that are independent of language there are seven kinds:

(1) that which depends upon Accident:

(2) the use of an expression absolutely or not absolutely but with some qualification of respect or place, or

ultimate target, but also to be avoided are paradoxes, which in the logic of the *Refutations*, result almost inevitably from the juxtaposition of two antithetical theses, one or both of which must rest on a false premise. More than any other of Aristotle's logical treatises, the *Refutations* presents arguments strategically, which gets allegorically translated as *renardie* [11523], or ruse:

A rule specially appropriate for showing up a fallacy is the sophistic rule, that one should draw the answerer on to the kind of statements against which one is well supplied with arguments: this can be done both *properly* and *improperly*, as was said before.' Again, to draw a paradoxical statement, look and see to what school of philosophers the person arguing with you belongs, and then question him as to some point wherein their doctrine is paradoxical to most people: for with every school there is some point of that kind. It is an elementary rule in these matters to have a collection of the special 'theses' of the various schools among your propositions. The solution recommended as appropriate here, too, is to point out that the paradox does not come about because of the argument: whereas this is what his opponent always really wants.²⁴⁶

Faux Semblant feels assured that no one understood Aristotle's manual in the first place, making it even more apt for his purposes. Its importance as a battleground for the logical, as opposed to the rhetorical, analysis of grammar in the preceding century is summed up nicely by Suzanne Reynolds: "While twelfth-century commentaries on Aristotle's *Sophistici elenchi* sought to describe the semantic structure of ambiguity, the rhetorical tradition took a more judgmental view."²⁴⁷ Faux Semblant will bear on the side of semantics when invoking the arguments of the *Refutations*, but Jean de Meun cannot resist the metaphorical opportunities presented by this weapon against sophistry.

time, or relation:

- (3) that which depends upon ignorance of what 'refutation' is:
- (4) that which depends upon the consequent:
- (5) that which depends upon assuming the original conclusion:
- (6) stating as cause what is not the cause:
- (7) the making of more than one question into one.

²⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 12. (My emphasis)

²⁴⁷ Reynolds, 146.

The tool that Faux Semblant uses for his ‘trenchant’ critique is a razor, here used allegorically, or more specifically, ambiguously, in the form of Aristotle’s dialectical razor, a use that prefigures the literal designation of the razor as a tangible object:

Ne sont religieux ne monde;
Il font un argument au monde
Ou conclusion a honteuse :
Cis a robe religieuse,
Donques est il religieux.
Cis argumens est trop fieus,
Il ne vaut pas un coutel troine :
La robe ne fait pas le moine.
Ne porquant nus n’i set respondre,
Tant face haut sa teste tondre,
Voire rere au rasoir d’Elanches
Qui barat trenche en .xiii. branches ;
Nus ne set si bien distinter
Qu’il en ose un seul mot tinter. [11051-64]

[They are neither religious nor pure. They proffer on the world an argument with a shameful conclusion: this man wears a habit, therefore he is religious. This argument is entirely specious, not worth even a privet blade: the habit does not make the monk. And yet, no one knows how to refute this, however high he shaves his head, or even shaves with the razor of [Aristotle’s] *Sophistical Refutations*, which divides [lit. slices] fraud into thirteen branches; no one knows, in sufficient depth, how to distinguish (between these branches) enough to dare utter (resonate) a single word.]

Barat, Faux Semblant’s father, previously glossed as ‘fraud’ or ‘deceit’, is associated here explicitly with Aristotle, but the term is used here as being synonymous with sophistry, a circumscription which is more specifically academic than the Old French word implies. Aristotle’s manual of refutations was, by all means, an ethical document, insofar as it advocated action against sophistic (false/deceptive) argumentation, but it was more frequently associated with pure logic, as based on its position in the medieval *Organon*. It dealt directly with the mechanics of argumentation and the reliability of its foundational premises. What we have, then, is a work of logic used in the service of *satire* which, by definition, entails an ethical condemnation. The *translatio* of ethics onto logic is a staple

of the ideology in the *Rose*, for this tactic will be exploited to the maximum in the Nature/Genius section, and this lesson is, as we saw, the inversion of Reason's divorce of ethics from semantics. Here logical fallacy and ethical fraud are rendered equivalent semantically, while allegorically hypocrisy (Faux Semblant, or his mother) and fraud (Baraz) had been equated genealogically.

Faux Semblant continually warns the reader not to trust him, as exemplified in the now common proverb "*La robe ne fet pas le moine*". The habit would always be considered a conventional, rather than natural sign, for the monk's habit is manmade. Ascribing meaning to it, especially one that is highly connotative, is clearly the province of poetry. For example, a habit's purpose is not to deceive people of one's identity, rather it is to frock a clergyman. Outer garments and adornments are completely accidental to substance and therefore have no bearing on identity. When used to deceive, the habit is being used metaphorically, and it is this sense that Faux Semblant tries to impose on it by allegorical contextualization (Nature working in her forge, Reason descending from her tower, the [false] mendicant preaching in his habit). The maxim is of course perfectly acceptable to any Aristotelian, for no substance (monk) could ever be defined by his accidents (habit – '*habiz*' in some manuscripts, here '*robe*'). Faux Semblant seems to suggest visually, if not intellectually, that the mendicant frock is associated with deceit. What is perhaps most curious is that the almost fabliaux anti-clericalism manifests itself as being a quite serious reflection on the nature of the sign, as is common with sartorial metaphors, e.g. text/textile. The thrust of the satire depends on sound contemporary linguistic logic.

Despite his apparent nihilism, Faux Semblant does not deny that there is a way out of an endless misunderstanding, though it would require the very manual that he formerly said no one understood (*Sophistical Refutations*). All judgments based on appearances will be treated as sophisms, and by this we mean, broadly speaking, the collapse of logic into rhetoric. By increasing his use of technical vocabulary, the way out of Faux Semblant's sophistic syllogisms is very thorny indeed:

Mes ja ne verrés d'aparence
Conclurre bonne consequence
En nul argument que l'en face,
Se default existence efface ;
Tous jors i troverés sophime
Qui la consequence envenime,
Se vous avés sotilité
D'entendre la duplicité. [12139-46]

[But you will never see a sound consequence concluded from an appearance in any argument that you encounter, if an error erases existence. You will always find a sophism to vitiate the consequence, if you have enough subtlety to understand the duplicity.]

This also provides a further context for the lover's false syllogisms, outlined by Marc-René Jung, including one in which the lover finds fault with himself for his current state because the god of love, insofar as he a god, must be exempt from vice [4185-94].²⁴⁸ By relying on appearances and homonymy, the lover resorts to sophistic logic, which in turn necessitates the appearance of Faux Semblant.

As the vehicle of satire, Faux Semblant must establish unassailable authority for his polemics. To this end, he uses both Scripture (to attack mendicancy) and Aristotle (against fallacies) to allow for a realm of truth, without which his 'lies' would be meaningless. Kevin Brownlee has noted that as regards the Bible, "here Faux Semblant

²⁴⁸ Jung, "Jean de Meun et l'Allégorie", 28.

speaks the ‘truth’. His Biblical interpretations are valid,”²⁴⁹ especially when used (Matthew, 23:2) to combat the buttressing ideology of mendicants. Furthermore, in this biting satirical section, our shape-shifter makes it clear that these examples are to be understood in the literal sense:

Se povreté le va grevant,
Bien puet, si cum j’ai dit devant,
Mendier tant qu’il puisse ouvrir
Por ses estevoirs recouvrer,
Mes qu’il ovre de mains itiex,
Non pas de mains espiritiex,
Mes de mains de cors proprement,
Sanz metre double entendement. [11475-82]

[If poverty continues to beset him, he can, as I’ve said before, beg until he’s able to resume work in order to provide for his basic needs. But he must work with these very hands – not spiritual hands, but corporeal hands in the proper sense – without adding a double sense to my words.]

This literalism finds further support in Faux Semblant’s reference to the gospels (Matthew, 7:15) [11123-32], the proverbial wolf in sheep’s clothing.²⁵⁰ Belin and Isengrin from the satirical *Roman de Renart* are made to conform to a Biblical truth, thereby ennobling this more ribald genre.

Following this purported defense of literalism, Faux Semblant ironically supplements, with an *exemplum in malo* (if we presume that this is scathing satire), Reason’s *integumans aus poetes*. He applies this exegetic principle to a religious controversy involving the publication of the (Joachimite) Franciscan *Evangile Parduarle* by Gerard de Borgo, thus reminding us that the mendicants themselves were not immune to heresy. The Joachimites were a millenarian offshoot of the Franciscans who believed

²⁴⁹ Brownlee, Kevin. “The Problem of Faux Semblant: Language, History, and Truth in the *Roman de la Rose*”, 253-7.

²⁵⁰ Wetherbee, 276.

that the Apocalypse, predicted for 1260, was impending and that it would be followed by a Utopian reign of the Holy Spirit. The Joachimites were renowned for their highly abstruse exegesis based on complex integuments. Many of their tenets were deemed heretical, some of Joachim's tenets being refuted as early as 1215, and Gerard was sentenced to prison in 1263 after a commission of Cardinals, set up by Pope Alexander IV, condemned this very book.

Il est ensi escrit ou libre
Qui ce raconte et segnefie :
Tant cum Pierres ait seignorie
Ne puet Jehanz monstrier sa force.
Or vous ai dit du sens l'escorce
Qui fait l'intencion repondre ;
Mes or en vueil la mole espondre.
Par Pierre vuet le pape entendre
Et les clers seculers comprendre
[...]
Et par Jehan, les prescheors
Qui diront qu'il n'est loi tenable
Fors l'*Evangile pardurable*. [11854-62, 11866-68]

[Thus it is written in the book which recounts these things and which signifies the following: As long as Peter has lordship, John cannot show his strength. I have told you the husk of the sense, which conceals the deeper meaning, but now I want to explicate the kernel. By Peter are meant the Pope and the secular clerks, and by John, those preachers who will say there is no tenable law except for the *Evangeliū Eternū*.]

By this almost truistic example of integumental reading, Faux Semblant mocks the value of abstruse allegory but for his own polemical purposes, especially since this omni-temporal form of allegoresis (exegesis) is used for the service of a very contemporaneous controversy. By adopting an exegetical gloss for this Joachimite tract, Faux Semblant is using the privileged mode of reading scripture on a heretical text, or in Poirion's terms, "un texte dont on dénonce l'imposture."²⁵¹ While the author of the tract shares a name with the author of the text, there is no simple conclusion to be drawn by the suggestive

²⁵¹ Poirion, "De la signification selon Jean de Meun," 177.

conflation of the Joachimite and Jean de Meun: if one ascribes heresy to Faux Semblant, one should remember that this figure endorses a papist view (the pope himself in league with the ‘secular clerks’) in contrast with this fringe sect of Franciscans. Poirion suggests that the heresy undermines the allegory here, both in this particular section and as a whole. It is also possible to see the occurrence of the obverse, however, if we posit that the allegorical mode remains intact, in which case it is orthodoxy that is called into question. The latter seems to be the more tenable with regard to the *Rose* as a whole. This is the introduction of (recent) history and heresy into the *Rose*; Jean de Meun’s gambit, so to speak, is to frame any potential heresy within the voice of this evil character, as if to attenuate the virulence of his polemics. Just as Reason found no shame in uttering her obscenity, Faux Semblant does not scruple to proclaim his heresies aloud.

If the deceit of the integument is here depicted as a negative reversal of the *belle mensonge*, the reason may be due to the over-development of logic and rhetoric that we find in this character. Unlike Reason’s more timeless logic and allegoresis, Faux Semblant’s logic smacks of greater contemporary influence, most notably from the university. “Paris was also *the* centre for the study of semantic theory and ‘speculative’ or ‘modistic’ grammar, the so-called *modi significandi*; most of the key thinkers taught or had been taught there.”²⁵² Following Nicholas of Paris, Howard Bloch suggests that this is where the Scholastics developed a more modern (as opposed to Augustinian) “universal grammar.”²⁵³ The rise of the modistae entailed a reduced autonomy of logic and grammar, in such a way that the latter could now be universalized within the former.

²⁵² Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 5.

²⁵³ Bloch, *Etymologies*, 151. Here one can also think of the common Scholastic question, though occurring in many different formulations, treated by Siger of Brabant: *Quaestio utrum haec sit vera: Homo est animal nullo homine existente.* (whether man is an animal even if no man exists). These questions may seem sophisticated now, “and yet, the entire so-called question of eternal truths is posed in this formula.” (Paré, 9)

But the modistic grammarians were also constrained by the fact that their “epistemological reflection” could “only deal with words [*semocinalis*] accidentally.”²⁵⁴ This is also the period where the modist Franciscan Roger Bacon (an Arts Master in Paris in the 1250s, writing well before the peak of Aristotelian censorship) also developed an influential theory of signs, rejecting both Aristotle and Boethius in favor of direct signification of words and things, and making a fruitful distinction between abstraction and separation that was retained by Aquinas.²⁵⁵ Bacon accepts the notion of imposition in a more realistic manner than Abelard, for he makes imposition belong to recognizing the *inherent* likeness amongst objects of the same kind. But he also recognizes a further imposition than this initial designation, “a less deliberate, more implicit sort, by which a word gains the power of referring to other objects too.”²⁵⁶ Bacon thus suggests, without recourse to nominalism, that polysemy is yet another reality of the sign (sophism = fraud, ‘*coilles/viz*’ = ‘*force et generacion*’, razor = dialectic, etc.). Bacon seems to have been inspired by some of Alfarabi’s work, which had fused Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism into a kind of mega-realism, where both emanation and abstraction were inextricably linked by the various properties of the Agent Intellect, which both delivers the common form to individuals as it renders them perceptible and/or intelligible. With these rising currents in logical and linguistic thought, Faux Semblant advocates a linguistic usage that is literal, free of broad integuments, and yet one that preserves the sign’s polysemy.

²⁵⁴ Lusignan, Serge. 31.

²⁵⁵ De Libera, 111-115. Marenbon, 230.

²⁵⁶ Marenbon, 230. Marenbon also explains that Bacon was one of the most prolific commentators of Aristotle, especially in the period spent in Paris between 1237 and 1247. He joined the Franciscans in 1257, but his order tried to silence his views and lead to his fall-out with the order. He was able to gain the sympathy of Pope Clement IV in the late 1260s. In addition, he makes the comment in his *Compendium philosophiae* that all the current translations of Aristotle are so bad that he would like to see them burned. (Copleston, vol. 2, 443). Copleston also notes that Bacon was not ill-disposed to astrology, provided it be limited to human complexions rather than fatalistic determinism (against free will). Bacon was also spearheading advances in science, including topics relevant to the *Rose*, namely optics and mirrors.

It is this property of the sign (here the ‘habit’) that Faux Semblant is later able to exploit (with Malebouche) to deadly consequences:

Sanz faille, traître sui gié
Et por traître m’a Diex jugié.
Parjur sui, mes ce que j’afin
Set l’en envis jusqu’en la fin (11169-72)

[Without fail, I am a traitor, and God has deemed me thus. I am a perjurer, but one barely suspects what I complete until it’s too late.]

These statements lead us directly to some of the greatest challenges presented to logic by the rise of grammar, i.e., the liar paradox and other *insolubilia*,²⁵⁷ where grammatical possibilities yield no semantic content (e.g. “I’m lying”). Faux Semblant’s name can designate both a noun and a gerund (“semblance” and “seeming”), making him the most contingent character in the entire *Rose*, the only one of the speech characters with this status. The paradoxical nature of a statement such as “I’m lying” can be easily remedied by an appeal to a more universalizing use of the present, as in “I lie” or by appeal to a specific context. Thus the apparent paradox of “This statement is false” becomes more intelligible when a referent is given: “This statement is false: $2 \times 2 = 5$.” There were several approaches to dealing with such *insolubilia*²⁵⁸: the first emerges around 1125, known as cassation or nullification, meaning that the insoluble “says nothing”; the second, drawing on a passage from the *Sophistical Refutations*, treats insolubles as a branch of logical fallacies, but Spade notes that insolubles fit awkwardly in this category; the *transcasus* theory which, also based on the *Refutations*, treats these as meaningful when the present tense is extended semantically. Faux Semblant’s words are therefore

²⁵⁷ Marenbon, 320-1.

²⁵⁸ Spade, Paul Vincent. “Insolubilia” in *CHLMP*, 246-253. The term *transcasus* is a coinage of Walter Burley’s, who rejected the theory. Spade enumerates the more sophisticated theories of insolubles that were to emerge after the publication of the *Rose*, pp. 259-253.

caught in the deviations within meanings that are a by-product of the clash between grammar and semantics. The liar paradox seems to be central to Faux Semblant's character: he is an allegory of the one who says "I'm lying," yet to take the entirety of Faux Semblant's discourse as ironic has the devastating potential to collapse the satirical thrust of his speech. Aristotle warned in his *Sophistical Refutations* that taking speech or language as the basis of inquiry often leads to deception, for the likenesses inherent in language trump the likenesses of the things signified.²⁵⁹ Faux Semblant, the treacherous perjurer, serves as the poetic incarnation of these *insolubilia*, just as Barat (Fraud) embodies the totality of possible sophisms.

As we have seen before, Faux Semblant complicates matters further by telling the truth in key places. His continued profession of hypocrisy does not prevent him from making a speech full of veridical statements. In fact, until the overt duplicity in his "confessing" Malebouche through rhetorical subterfuge (a sophism that had at least been anticipated/prefigured by references to the *Renart* – "Renart mange son confesseur"), an Arts master who shared Faux Semblant's antipathy towards the mendicants might read the entirety of Faux Semblant's speech as veridical, but even those who ascribe to such univocality may be dismayed to find that their speech character is a shape-changing Proteus who can assume any form necessary in order to deceive:

Mes tant est fort la decevance
Que trop est grief l'apercevance,
Car Protheüs, qui se soloit
Muer en tout quanqu'il voloit
Ne sot onc tant barat ne guile
Comme je faiz, car onc en vile
N'entrai ou fusse congneüs,
Tant i fusse oïz ne veüs.

²⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 7. McKeon, 2, 30.

Je sai bien mon habit changier,
Prendre l'un et l'autre estrangier. [11179-11188]

[But so great is the deceit that to notice it would be too difficult, for Proteus, who often transformed into whatever he wanted, never knew as much about fraud and guile as I do, for I would never go into town where I would be recognized, for there I would be seen and heard so often. I also know how change my habit, assuming one as I discard the other.]

What follows is an enumeration [11189-11216] of his various human avatars, suggesting indeed the bleak omnipresence of hypocrisy in society at large, reflected allegorically in both Scholastic and vernacular (Renart, Rutebeuf) incarnations.

Even though Faux Semblant is exposing the fraud or sophistry of the mendicants, his skill in ruse means that he is also perfectly suited to concealment. It is this concealment, leading to a misreading by Malebouche, which eventually proves fatal:

Samblant ravoit il bien veü
Mes faus ne l'ot pas conneü.
Faus iert il, mais de fauceté
Ne l'eüst il jamais reté
Car le semblant si fort ovroit
Que la fauceté li covroit. [12119-24]

[He (Malebouche) had clearly seen the Semblance again, but he did not recognize it as false. He was indeed false, but Malebouche would never have accused him of falseness, because he worked the semblance so as to conceal its falseness].

This is the prelude to the most violent scene in the *Rose*, where Faux Semblant, pretending to lead a *sincerely penitent* [12362-3] Malebouche through confession to absolution, strangles him and removes his tongue with a literal razor (the first had been allegorically associated with Aristotle's logic), before burying him in a ditch, thereby leaving Malebouche's portion of the fortification unguarded. As Sarah Kay has eloquently noted, "this grisly scene is an accomplished piece of allegorical writing, indicating that the most effective way to combat jealousy is to silence slander by means

of hypocrisy (Faux Semblant) and sexual deceit (Abstinence Contrainte).”²⁶⁰ This should serve as a reminder of the complex interplay between these abstract nouns on a semantic and conceptual level reminiscent of Prudentius. On the level of plot, he thus plays the censor to Malebouche’s wholly veridical (at least in *Rose*) reports.

Faux Semblant is most assuredly a wicked character, and this is part of the effectiveness of Jean’s satire of the mendicants. Having firmly established his diabolical foundations, Faux Semblant introduces eschatology into the work, thereby assimilating the *Rose* into a providential history whose meaning is guaranteed by the divine act of prefiguration. Richard Emmerson and Ronald B. Herzman discuss the apocalyptic imagery associated with Faux Semblant, noting that such imagery has its sources in Guillaume de Saint Amour’s *De Periculiis*.²⁶¹ The evidence they present for the association of Faux Semblant with the Antichrist is cogent, as is their following salutary remark: “Modern scholars have tended to see that quarrel as history rather than eschatology. We submit that the split is a modern one, and that it is both history and eschatology at the same time.”²⁶² The fourfold method of reading Scripture was also based on reading history as providential, in which the anagoge reflected the (future) history of the end of days. I would only wish to temper this observation with another: namely, that Aristotelian time may be as relevant to Jean’s conception as the providential time of Scripture. If the model is the historical (providential) *allegoria in factis*, this “Antichrist” could be the symbol of the end of the moral, in anticipation of the anagogical sense, which will presumably follow in Nature and Genius. Herzman and Emmerson

²⁶⁰ Kay, Sarah. *The Romance of The Rose*. 29.

²⁶¹ Emmerson, Richard Kenneth, and Herzman, Ronald B. “The Apocalyptic Age of Hypocrisy: Faus Semblant and Amant in the *Roman de la Rose*”.

²⁶² *Ibid.* 614. The authors note that Peter McKeon and [Pope Benedict XVI] relegate the apocalyptic imagery in Guillaume to a rhetorical device: 613, n. 4.

therefore make this eschatology a part of real history with a specific chronology. Such a providential reading would inevitably (though I must exempt Emerson and Herzman from this possible heresy of mine) conflate the symbolic value of the *Rose* with that of Christian gospel and would serve to further concretize the real contemporary referents of this allegorical dream vision. As we will see in the next chapter, however, the *Rose* offers a gloss on the sense of 'eternity' which hampers any attempt to categorize allegorical referents within any chronological history.

Even Faux Semblant gets subsumed into Genius's universal plan at the end, making Faux Semblant's demonstrations of dialectic [razor] seem like moments of pure poetic and Scholastic decadence. The Lover prays for these incarnations of hypocrisy that helped him, even as he realizes that, by their union, Abstinence Contrainte and Faux Semblant are about to become parents to the Antichrist [14739-53]. If there were extensive apocalyptic allusion in the *De Periculiis*, it finds a literal realization here through the extended satire of the "diabolical" mendicants. Faux Semblant is the greatest enemy of integumental allegory in the *Rose*, but his literalism is often oblique, polysemous, and deceptive. While Lady Reason had used allegorical integuments in order to increase one's understanding (intellection), the more literalistic Faux Semblant, on the other hand, obscures his meaning by resorting to the most contemporary linguistic and logical technology. Rather than supplanting Reason's integumental programme of reading, he complements it with a more modern flavor. These personifications, unlikely allies as they may be, provide us with our first lessons in Scholastic terminology, argumentation, multiple senses (both *in verbis* and *in factis*), making them our principle guides in reading the romance through a Scholastic lens.

Naturalism, Generation, and *Deliz*: an allegory of the Species

Omnes homines natura scire desiderant. -By nature, all men desire to know. – Aristotle, Latin translation by William of Moerbeke.

If Reason's foul mouth shocked both lover and reader early on in Jean de Meun's continuation, her terms find a more complete glossing in the final section. Together, Nature and Genius will complement Reason's *disputatio*, retrospectively showing her anatomical terms to be fully apposite to Jean's project. From her forge, Nature rails against man in a mock-confession to her priest Genius. In this diatribe, man is considered in the most realistic and scientific way possible, namely as a species of animal. When man's universal responsibility to propagate and continue the species is jeopardized, Nature and Genius align themselves with Cupid, with the double purpose of bringing the lover's quest to fruition and to maintain the natural order. But while all other species of animals reproduce naturally and are in no danger of extinction, individual men are given the faculty of reason, thus exempting them from universal determinism. This chapter will focus on the new ontological schema that Jean de Meun provides, and we will locate precisely the various forms of determinism to which man is subject. This new conception of the natural order is still glossed with the Christian term 'providence' (*pourvoyance*), although this term is corroborated not by Revelation or Christian history, but rather by the continual process of generation and corruption affecting all animate species.

If Reason and Faux Semblant provided the epistemology (theories of reading) for understanding the Rose, it falls on Nature and Genius to furnish the most complete exposition of Jean de Meun's ontology. These last prosopopeias elaborate a more substantive conception of the universe, and Nature begins her diatribe against one

substantive species in particular, man, by considering his ethical fulfillment of duty (propagation) in the same manner as all other animate species. By shifting out of the courtly garden of Dedit and turning to Nature working in her forge, tirelessly maintaining the world by keeping all species alive, this section supplants our more limited courtly setting with a universal one. The emphasis on man as species entails one of the most radical ethical corollaries, namely, that man's behavior should be in accordance with his being a rational animal, or, thinking substance that reproduced naturally. Nature's tirade against man therefore bolsters her argument by clarifying the various forms of determinism to which man is subjected, and framing this under the common Scholastic question of divine foreknowledge and future contingency. Through an elaborate conceit, Nature revises the definition of divine providence, locating it within the material process of the continual renewal of the species. Once this new providential universe is expounded, we see that the work's shockingly obscene ending is a necessary one for Jean de Meun's radical, and indeed heretical, theological perspective.

Nature and Genius signal an implicit citation of the *De Planctu Naturae* by Alain de Lille, preparing us for a return to Christian ethics after an extended anti-allegorical and materialistic development in *Ami*, *Faux Semblant* and *La Vieille*, though the naturalism prevalent in certain Chartrian allegories is accentuated still further with more rationalistic foundations. The allegories of Chartres, especially in the case of Bernard Sylvester and Alain de Lille, brought about a spiritual transformation of pagan myths. I argue that the key source texts are not only the Chartrian allegories, however, but also, as Paré notes, the naturalistic theories found in the tracts of Boethius of Dacia and Siger of Brabant. This is just to point out that in the Scholastic climate of Paris, the Chartrian

allegories, which relied on a NeoPlatonic theory of emanationism which was ascribed to Aristotle by all of the Islamic *falsafa* with the exception of Averroes (this would be unknown to Latin medievals). This convergence of various naturalisms in the thirteenth century meant that they could have been interpreting the Chartrian allegories in more rationalistic and less evocative manner than had been the case in the prior century.²⁶³ If anything, this adds to the audacity of the project. For a full understanding of the *Rose*, and its syncretic manipulation of both ancient and contemporary sources, we must disregard as fallacious Zumthor's statement that the sum total of Jean's learning reveals a "university culture which was fairly broad, not very original, and *already old-fashioned* towards 1280."²⁶⁴

Over and above the Chartrian tradition looms the *Timaeus* of Plato. This work was the only work of Plato's available directly in the thirteenth century and it was of particular interests for the Ecole de Chartres. Plato had condemned poetry in the *Republic*, yet in his deeply philosophical moments he often turns toward myth to overcome the cognitive hurdles, marking the beginning of apophatics. The same is the case for Alain de Lille in both his *Anticlaudianus* and his *De Planctu Naturae*. As in the case of the parable, here the literal sense has no historical truth; rather truth is located within their similarity to real (universal) narratives or conflicts. "As Alan said of the *Anticlaudianus*, 'the sweetness of the literal sense' is meant to sooth the ears of boys, while the 'moral instruction' will 'inspire the mind on the road to perfection.' Most important and elevated of all, however, is the 'sharper subtlety of the allegory', which is

²⁶³ See, for instance, the teleological notion of Nature presented in Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*, 1.1: "Again, whenever some end is apparent toward which a motion progresses if nothing impedes, we say that the motion is for the end. Hence it is evident that there is something of this sort, which we call nature."

²⁶⁴ Zumthor, "Narrative and Anti-Narrative," 199. (italics my own)

designed to ‘whet the advanced intellect’.”²⁶⁵ Here the convergence between the question of universal genera and species, on the one hand, and allegory, on the other, finds its greatest expression in the Chartrian figure of Genius.²⁶⁶ As they straddle the bounds between literature and philosophy, we will have to examine the speeches of Nature and Genius on their own terms while remaining cognizant of the wider contemporary context: “During the twelfth century the difference between, say, the school of Chartres and the Paris schools, or between the Victorines and individual thinkers like Alan of Lille, is clear to see, to say nothing of divisions in the schools themselves. Theories drawn from the *Timaeus* mingle with the theory of abstraction and the atomic theory. Diversity is the keynote. In the thirteenth century the philosophical aspect becomes uppermost.”²⁶⁷ It should not surprise, therefore, to find nature arguing her point with a syncretism that verges on digressiveness.

Jean’s Nature is only a Chartrian on the surface, for despite the obvious intertextuality, there is a striking difference in tone and argumentation. Wetherbee concords in this matter, for he characterizes Jean’s “debt” to the Chartrians as being “primarily a matter of highly complex poetic allusion, rather than adherence to their philosophical ideals.”²⁶⁸ This is where we see the most complete transformation, or even inversion, of the paratext:

Ensi s’acordent ce me semble
Genius et Nature ensemble.
Si dist Salemons toute vois,

²⁶⁵ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 84, quoting Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, trans. J.J. Sheridan (Toronto, 1973) 40

²⁶⁶ “The tradition of the tutelary Genius is derived from two central texts of the School of Chartres, the *De Deo Socrates* of Apuleius and the *De nuptiis Philologiae et Marcurii* of Martianus Capella.” (282) Baker, Denise N. “The Priesthood of Genius: A Study of the Medieval Tradition” in *Speculum*, Vol. 51, No. 2, (April, 1976) 277-291.

²⁶⁷ Leff, *Medieval Thought*. 170.

²⁶⁸ Wetherbee, 265.

Puis que par la verité vois,
Que hons bien eürés seroit
Qui bonne fame troveroit. [18147-52]

[And so it seems that Nature and Genius are in accordance on this matter (i.e. women's deceit). And yet, as Solomon said, since you can only see what is true, namely that happy would be the man who found a good woman.]

Wetherbee sees this as a mockery of the values of the *De Planctu*, for here we learn that Genius, in addition to being Nature's confessor, has also found in her a mistress.²⁶⁹ Thus, the anti-sacramental satire continues, and is indeed exploited to quite different ends in this section. The ontology of the *De Planctu* hinged on a NeoPlatonic emanationist scheme of the universe, first elaborated by Plotinus in his *Enneads*, but found again in Alfabari, slightly modified by Avicenna, and finally fully rejected by Averroes (unknown to Latin medievals).²⁷⁰ On the one hand, Alain's sexual ethics do not stray from orthodoxy, making the *De Planctu* an odd choice for implicit citation.

With regard to its naturalistic ontology, on the other, the *Rose* differs little from its Chartrian predecessor. As Paré noted, "la crue de l'aristotélisme du XIIIe siècle a intensément développé ce naturalisme: ce fut une véritable ivresse. Jean de Meung participe à cet esprit conquérant."²⁷¹ Alain's suggestively poetic, if not allegorical, cosmology, now found rationalistic, and indeed, literal underpinnings in the works of

²⁶⁹ Wetherbee, 282.

²⁷⁰ Alan of Lille, *Plaint of Nature*, ed. James J. Sheridan (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies: 1980), Prose 3, 118: "My [Nature's] bounteous power does not shine forth in you alone individually but also universally in all things. For I am the one who formed the nature of man according to the exemplar and likeness of the structure of the universe so that in him, as in a mirror of the universe itself, Nature's lineaments might be there to see." Alan's emanationist scheme finds its authority in the apocryphal Aristotelian (really Proclus) work, the *Liber de Causis*: see *Histoire de la Philosophie* I, vol. 2, 1358. This work was enormously influential for the Arab *falsafa*. Avicenna made God a separate substance from the radiating tenth intelligence, while Averroes reduced the intelligences only to their cognitive function. In addition, Jean's Nature works in a forge, continuing a central relational metaphors of Aristotelianism, namely that of artisan to artifact. Jean's Nature is not the *source* of these exemplars but merely entrusted with their perpetuation.

²⁷¹ Paré, Gérard. *Le Roman de la Rose et la Scolastique Courtoise* (Paris: Vrin, 1941) 136.

Aristotle's Arab commentators. I would venture that it is the Averroism at the contemporary Arts Faculty in Paris that is the ultimate source of all the central heresies that dominate.²⁷² The preponderance of Averroism was noted first by Paré, in his *Idées et Lettres*, but this was given a fuller, and indeed more radical, exposition the following

²⁷² The term "Averroism" is being used loosely for the sake of concision. I am using it, in the first sense, to designate the general "accordance" (i.e. in their "literal" glosses on the Philosopher's work) of three Arts Masters, namely Siger of Brabant, John of Jandun, and Boethius of Dacia, with Averroes on two key matters: the unicity of the human intellect and the eternity (non-creation) of the world and the species, for these two doctrines were probably the most dangerous to Christian Orthodoxy, for from them the questions of free will and individual immortality become afterthoughts. Averroes's reliance on the unicity of the material intellect was to safeguard the immateriality and universality of thought, as we saw in chapter 1. Additionally, and perhaps more appropriate to the case of Jean de Meun, I am using Averroism to designate the "literal" interpretation of Aristotle without heed to the constraints of orthodoxy. Averroes and Avicenna seem to be, in this sense, the avatars of "free thinking." Jon Marenbon has pointed up one of Averroes's commentaries on Plato's *Republic*, now surviving in only one fourteenth-century Hebrew manuscript, and most specifically the question of marriage: "Averroes is aiming to instruct his Almohad patrons in political science, and so this commentary can be put alongside the triad of original compositions (the *Decisive Treatise*, the *Explanation*, and the *Incoherence*) in which he launched his attempt to found a new ideology for the regime. Yet he also shows at times an ability to grasp Plato's purposes very clearly, however distant the thinking behind them from the norms of his own society. One instance is his discussion of the position of women and the passage on 'weddings' for the soldier-philosophers of Plato's ideal city. He not only accepts Plato's view – ask unusual in Greek antiquity as in twelfth-century Islam – that women of suitable intellectual and physical capacities should be trained as soldiers and philosophers; he defends it, remarking that women in cities other than Plato's are not allowed to develop their human virtues and are treated as if they were plants – and that this treatment makes them into a burden on the men and brings poverty to the community. In his dialogue, Plato goes on to describe a system in which soldier-philosophers are selected to copulate with each other on eugenic grounds, though they are tricked into believing that they are chosen by lot; and the children are not identified as belonging to their parents, but are brought up communally. Twelfth-century Latin readers, who read this system summarized at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, were so shocked that they found ways of pretending that Plato had never advocated such (to their eyes) gross immorality. Averroes not only takes Plato at his word, but he takes issue with Galen. Galen had apparently suggested as a possibility that Plato envisaged these unions as permanent marriages. Averroes ridicules the suggestion, rightly seeing that it goes against Plato's whole purpose to allow soldier-philosophers to set up their own households and for couples to form, to the detriment of the brotherly and sisterly love that binds the community. The couples, he says, should copulate just for the time needed for the woman to become pregnant." (Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy*, 191). While I would not wish to suggest that the Latin "Averroists" had access to this document, this endorsement of eugenics in Plato is not as difficult to reconcile with his brand of Aristotelianism as it is his Islam. What occurs at the end of the *Rose* is not a case of eugenics, but in both cases, fornication finds a rationalization in terms of a greater good. I think that the suspicions suggested by the condemnation of 1270 and 1277, are correct in assuming that logic and metaphysics spill quickly into questions of ethics (perhaps the reason why 20 Thomistic theses were censored in the second condemnation), a conflation which, at its worst, became associated with the hair-splitting logic of casuistry so often satirized in the Renaissance. For further accounts of Averroes's underestimated influence on the development of early modern thought, see Grudin, Michaela Paasche, "Credulity and the Rhetoric of Heterodoxy: From Averroes to Chaucer" in *The Chaucer Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2000) 204-22, specifically 207-208, and De Libera, *Penser au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1991) 21-23, 109-16.

year by Franz Walter Müller.²⁷³ This aspect of Jean de Meun's thought has unfortunately been underplayed by critics in the intervening years. Here I must respectfully disagree with Kathryn Lynch's assumption that "there does not seem to be any Averroism at play in the *Rose*."²⁷⁴ Unconvinced by Mary Katherine Tillman's article on this topic, itself inspired heavily by Müller, Lynch assumes this aspect of *Rose* scholarship to be a critical figment.²⁷⁵ Her equation of Averroism with nominalism is patently false, which makes her rejection of Tillman's thesis equally problematic, for without recourse to the Arabs and Aristotle, Jean de Meun's faith in astral determinism would have no rationalistic foundations. Although more sober and illuminating than her predecessor, Lynch is still marked by the strong influence of John Fleming's Augustinianism. To my mind, this leads to a misreading of the tone of the poem, perhaps more regrettable since her analysis of Reason is extremely cogent.

In a provocative article, Stuart MacClintock takes great pains to reject the term "Latin Averroism," but for our purposes and the sake of conciseness, I will be employing this term metonymically to designate the particular Aristotelianism at the University

²⁷³ Müller, Franz Walter. *Der Rosenroman und der Lateinische Averroismus des 13. Jahrhunderts*. (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1947). Müller's more forthright approach to the Averroism is demonstrated in his "Epicurean" treatment of pleasure (*deliz*) in the *Rose*: "Es ist möglich, dass die Verurteilungsdekrete von 1277, wo ausdrücklich von Büchern über die Liebe die Rede ist, auch Lehren, wie die J.d.M's ins Auge fassten. So die libertinistische Verteidigung der Hurerei: *quod simplex fornicatio, utpote soluti com soluta non est peccatum*. Gerade bei J.d.M ist der ausserehelich Beischlaf eher eine Tugend als eine Sünde, realisiert er doch seine Lehre vom Recht Recht auf freie, dem Naturinstinkt gehorchende Liebe. Die blasphemische Rede des Genius, in der er die Pflicht der Zeugnung als einzige ethische Forderung zur Erlangung des Paradieses aufstellt und an ihre Erfüllung den Generalablass für alle Sünden knüpft, zeigt deutlich, wie weit die christliche Sittenlehre säkularisiert ist. Für J.d.M's Naturalismus ist folgerichtig nicht mehr Gott das höchste Gut, sondern die Lust: *Car deliz,..../ C'est la meudre chose qui seit/ E li souverains bien en vie* [20105]."

²⁷⁴ Lynch, 129

²⁷⁵ Tillman ascribes all quotations in the *Rose* to Jean, much in the same manner as Christine de Pizan. She tries to flesh out Müller's thesis with more data, but her argument is still too compressed to do so, and she uses an English verse translation as her source. Nonetheless, her main thesis, stating the influence of Averroism on Jean de Meun, is obviously, to my estimation, quite sound. "Scholastic and Averroistic Influences on the *Roman de la Rose*" in *Duquesne Studies: Annuaire Mediaevale* vol. 11. 1970.

which smacked of Arabic influence.²⁷⁶ In an effort to give a glimpse of possible reasons for the difficulties involved in interpretations of both Averroes and Aristotle, MacKlintock notes the similarities between Neo-Platonism and allegory, in such a way that, when the 13th century comes into contact with Aristotle, they were insensitive to the aspects of language and thought as processes, insisting “rather on the position that nature and discourse exactly reduplicate each other; this meant that elements of discourse were made into real existing entities.”²⁷⁷ In other words, the Averroistic Aristotle that the Latin West received had already undergone an allegorization, by which verbs and processes are rendered as autonomous substances. This no doubt owes something to the divergent lexical and syntactical structures of Greek and Arabic, a fact which Alfarabi makes quite apparent in his treatment of genera and species.²⁷⁸ But this also means that both scientific and allegorical aspects of Aristotle’s philosophy were rendered similarly in this translation movement, to the extent that the parameters between the two seems to have become, at this time, exceptionally blurry.

For good or ill, Latin Averroism has been associated with that “double truth,” though this seems to be the negative characterization of the Averroists by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *De Unitate Intellectus*. Their glosses of Aristotle made an attempt at literal exposition, rather than an effort to reconcile the Philosopher with the faith. And if one reads Boethius of Dacia’s *On the Supreme Good*, in which he exalts philosophy as

²⁷⁶ MacClintock, Stuart. “Heresy and Epithet: An Approach to the Problem of Latin Averroism, *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 8, no 1 (Sept. 1954) pp. 176-199, vol 8, no. 2 (Dec. 1954) pp. 342-356, vol. 8, no 3 (526-545). It should be noted that much of the article is in part framed as a polemic against the thesis of P. Mandonnet, who found in Siger of Brabant merely a plagiarist of the Commentator : 529n.

²⁷⁷ MacKlintock, III, 532-3, citing Randall, Jr. J.H. *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 259-60: “These abstract nouns reinforced the Platonizing tendencies of the Averroistic commentaries to make independent existences out of the substantives of discourse. Verbs were turned into nouns, and operations into substances.”

²⁷⁸ Al-Farabi, “Eisagoge” 1.19 in *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, 60.

the highest of moral callings, one notices the undeniable influence of the Arab Peripatetics.²⁷⁹ In the Latin West, they never enjoyed the liberty for such tenets as “Scripture expresses allegorically the literal truths of philosophy” as we would find in Alfarabi or Avicenna (perhaps also in Averroes, but rather than subordinating theology to philosophy, he argues for complete autonomy of the disciplines). It is true, however, that their literal expositions of the Philosopher must have been quite unsettling, given the status of “Philosopher” he enjoyed at the university after 1255. Siger of Brabant notes in his conclusion to the *De Anima Intellectiva* (having clearly digested Aquinas’s opposition): “Therefore I say that because of the difficulty of the premises and of certain other matters, I have long been in doubt as to what the method of natural reason should hold in this problem [the intellective soul being unique with respect to the species], and what the Philosopher felt in this matter; *and in the case of such doubt the Faith must be adhered to, as transcending all human reason. (et in tali dubio fidei adhaerendum est, quae omnem rationem humanam superat)*”.²⁸⁰ Siger’s concession to orthodoxy here comes only after having reiterated (from his commentary on *De Anima* five years prior) his logical arguments for the inverse, almost as if to ask his reader not to believe what has clearly been demonstrated.

The term heresy has a very concrete sense in the age of censorship surrounding the composition of the *Rose*, and for this we must turn to the official Condemnations of 1270, and the even more sweeping set dating from 1277.²⁸¹ These condemnations provide

²⁷⁹ Boethius of Dacia, *On the Supreme Good, or on the Life of the Philosopher*, in *Medieval Philosophy* (Blackwell, 2007) 353-8.

²⁸⁰ Siger of Brabant, *De Anima Intellectiva*, cited in MacKlintock I, 192.

²⁸¹ Bishop Etienne Tempier aims the condemnation mostly at the Arts Masters of Paris, duly acknowledging that they may not be the authors of these theses, but even as propagators of such thought they are deemed reprehensible. All references from “Selections from the Condemnation of 1277” in *Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Kilma (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007-2009) 180-189. The only individual work

a fuller context for both the use of citation and the fondness for showing censorious logic to be allegorically akin to prudish, courtly taboo. Based on the severity of the consequences for heresy at this time, Paré infers that the work must have been completed before the date of the condemnation of 1277. The publication of the earlier condemnation of 1270 meant a more precarious situation for any philosophical venture, but Tempier's list of 13 philosophical theses seemed ineffectual in silencing Siger of Brabant, who continued to write with only the most "perfunctory submission to the Bishop's strictures."²⁸² This situation led to a definitive schism concerning the "literal" interpretation of Aristotle, lasting from 1272 to 1275.²⁸³ 1270 is also the year of Aquinas's famous tract (to be discussed further on) seeking to prove that Aristotle held the individuation of every particular human soul, against the Averroistic position which maintained a separable active-passive intellect (i.e. intellection and intelligibles remain external to the individual). Even Aquinas's teachings, traditionally deemed more orthodox than those of the Averroists, are not spared censorship in 1277, as twenty of his own theses are added to the Condemnations. The Latin Averroists placed great faith in human reason and also ascribed to Aristotle the eternity of the world, the denial of individual mortality, limitations on man's free will and a revised definition of divine providence, all of which figure in Nature's and Genius's speech. Salim Kemal has demonstrated that the Islamic Aristotelians (Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes) relied on

explicitly condemned in the title is Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* (181). In addition to this philosophical list, I feel compelled to say something about Jon Marenbon's remark in *Later Medieval Philosophy*, 73: "Some of the articles condemn extreme opinions (Confession is unnecessary, except for appearance's sake [203], Fornication is not a sin [205]) which no other evidence connects with the arts masters." While it would be perhaps premature to assume that the censors would read vernacular romance, these tenets can find their support in the *Rose*. Whether this is evidence of a common source, coincidence, or even a misreading of the allegory, is of course another matter.

²⁸² MacKlintock. "Heresy and Epithet" I, 182.

²⁸³ Ibid. 182-3. It is also useful to note the history of interdictions of the Aristotelian corpus, for they also occurred in 1210, 1215, and 1231, only officially reaching the curriculum in 1255. (183, n. 1)

a much more logical interpretation of the *Poetics*, thereby explaining its frequent appearance in the Arab *Organon*.²⁸⁴ He has also shown that the Arabs made much of the syllogistic structure of poetry, allegory, and even metaphorical language, a tendency that is clearly in evidence in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose*.²⁸⁵

The consequences of accepting Averroism are undoubtedly dangerous to Christian doctrine, but one could say that Genius's heresies are a comedic take on Averroism, perhaps as a direct consequence of his analysis of 'man' in the most naturalistic of settings, unaided by reason. This naturalism, which maps all action onto the single polarity of generation and sterility, seems to be the main justification for the *Rose*'s ending. The most dangerous aspects of Averroes's thought can be glimpsed in the following summary: Averroes had been more interested in the common ability of man to understand, rather than "particularity of individual acts of understanding", and in addition, "that in salvation the human individual is essentially depersonalized."²⁸⁶ Paré suggested that the climate changed immediately after the second condemnation, but MacKlintock and Marenbon disagree, arguing instead that the Aristotelian exegesis continued "undeterred" for the last quarter of the thirteenth century.²⁸⁷ The condemnations were aimed at literal propositions written in Latin. With the proviso, then, that these heresies never find a literal exposition within the *Rose*, we will see that, on the allegorical level, the work draws heavily on the Averroistic ideology of the universal

²⁸⁴ Kemal, Salim. *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroës: The Aristotelian Reception* (London: Routledge, 2003) 1-6.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 30-36.

²⁸⁶ MacKlintock, II, 351.

²⁸⁷ MacKlintock, I, 184. Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy* (1150-1350), 74.

soul, the eternity of the world, astrological determinism, and the possibility of free will.²⁸⁸

In order to prepare us for the ending, which will continue to rely on Scholastic models for ethics, Nature introduces one of the key Scholastic *disputationes* in order to account for both Providence and man's responsibility for his actions. There can be no question that the inclusion of this particular *disputatio* in the poem pertains to ethics and will directly bear on the conclusion of the work. This discussion is also found in another work that Jean de Meun himself translated, the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius, who himself was already theologizing chapter nine of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Thus this *translatio* was, in a sense, an allegorization, for the implications of Aristotle's thought become quite different in a Christian providential universe, and by a providential

²⁸⁸ Take, for instance, the following condemnations, which give a broad view of the kind of thinking the censors were targeting:

61. That since an intelligence is full of forms, it impresses these forms on matter by using the heavenly bodies as instruments.

73. That the heavenly bodies are moved by an intrinsic principle which is the soul, and that they are moved by a soul and an appetitive power, like an animal. For just as an animal is moved by desiring, so also is the heaven.

76. That the intelligence moving the heaven influences the rational soul, just as the body of the heaven influences the human body.

115A. That God could not make several numerically different souls.

126. That the intellect, which is man's ultimate perfection, is completely separated.

146A. That the fact that we understand less perfectly or more perfectly comes from the passive intellect, which he says is a sensitive power. – This statement is erroneous because it asserts that there is a single intellect in all men or that all souls are equal.

154. That our will is subject to the power of the heavenly bodies [...]

159. That the appetite is necessarily moved by a desirable object if all obstacles are removed. – This is erroneous in the case of the intellectual appetite.

161. That in itself the will is undetermined to opposites, like matter, but it is determined by a desirable object as matter is determined by an agent.

162A. That the science of contraries alone is the cause for which the rational soul is in potency to opposites, and that a power that is simply one is not in potency to opposites except accidentally and by reason of something else.

163 A. That the will necessarily pursues what is firmly held by reason, and that it cannot abstain from that which reason dictates. This necessitation, however, is not compulsion but the nature of the will.

169A. That as long as passion and particular science are present in act, the will cannot go against them.

universe, it is with the caution that individual free will is in no way hindered. In the case of Boethius, the discussion was a fusion of Aristotelian logic and Stoic ethics - an earnest consolation for a writer during his incarceration - , whereas Jean frames the discussion in Nature's bathetic lament. This is no doubt a parodic inversion, for Nature is criticized for her womanly garrulity and her crying [16312-3], again signaling the temptation to read the work through the lens of Euhemerism.

Nature's question is a medieval commonplace, spanning from Boethius, to Anselm, Abelard, Peter Lombard, Bonaventure, and Aquinas, to name only a few: namely, does God's providence determine all action, and, its corollary, can man be said to have free will if God is omniscient (and by extension, omnipotent)? These questions provide some of the most sustained argumentation within the work, and a remarkable flair on Jean de Meun's part for rendering this jargon in the vernacular. Daniel Heller-Roazen discusses this section with great erudition, noting the virtual absence of sustained critical commentary on this section with the exception of Paré and Helder, despite the fact that "in this distribution of its arguments, the passage is logically and rigorously constructed."²⁸⁹ Heller-Roazen shows that Nature preserves contingency over determinism, having carefully weighed all the arguments in favor the latter. His analysis aims to preserve as much contingency as possible by relegating Nature's "*miroer pardurable*" (17475) to God's supplement, which in turn needs to be polished (by God himself) in order for proper functioning. The mirror is the first explicit allegory in this *lectio* sequence, precisely at the moment where Nature is seeking to define her terms. Heller-Roazen argues that Jean violates the precept of divine simplicity by suggesting he

²⁸⁹ Heller-Roazen, Daniel, *The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2003) 111.

is working with an instrument. This image has its roots in the text of Boethius: “[God] looks out from the watch-tower of Providence, sees what suits each person, and applies to him whatever He knows is suitable.”²⁹⁰ Here, the mirror seems to be glossing that last piece of the puzzle that would have defined simple and conditional necessity more precisely. Nature argues that truth and necessity are not interchangeable, given that necessity can be used equivocally (simple and conditional):

Certes il diroit chose voire,
 Mes non pas chose necessario ;
 Car comment qu’il l’ait ains veüe,
 La chose n’est pas avenue
 Par necessaire avenement,
 Mes par possible seulement ;
 Car s’il est qui bien i regart,
 C’est necessité en regart,
 Et non par necessité simple,
 Si que ce ne vaut une guimple :
 « Et se chose a venir est voire,
 Donc est ce chose necessaire »,
 Car tele verité possible
 Ne puet pas estre convertible
 Avec simple necessité
 Si comme simple verité :
 Si ne puet tex raison passer
 Por franche volenté casser. (17221-38)

[Of course he would be speaking a true fact, but not one which was necessary, because, however he foresaw it, the fact did not occur by necessary succession, but only by possible succession. For if we examine the matter carefully, this is conditional necessity and not simple (i.e. absolute) necessity, and thus the following argument is not worth a wimple: “And if the event to come is true, then it was necessary”, for such possible truth cannot be convertible with simple necessity, just like the case of simple truth. Thus you cannot use this as a reason to eradicate free will.]²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. Victor Watts, book 4, (Penguin: 1969) 107. Heller-Roazen notes that the word for watch-tower is *specula*, etymologically related to *speculum*, or mirror. “A complex lexical and semantic *translatio* from Latin to Old French and from the field of philosophy to that of poetry may, once again, be at play here: the canonical definition of eternity as vision *ab specula* can be understood to give rise, by means of the Latin *speculum*, to the text’s *mirouer*, in which – in a striking revision of theological doctrine – divine vision is figured not as *ab specula*, “from a watch-tower,” but, instead, as *per speculum*, “through a looking-glass,” the product of the reciprocal mirroring of contingency and necessity.” Heller-Roazen, 129-30.

²⁹¹ Boethius, *Consolation*. book 5, 135. “For there are two kinds of necessity; one simple, as for example the fact that it is necessary that all men are mortal; and one conditional, as for example, if you know

In order to preserve man's free will, she has to secure some aspect of man that will not be subject to conditional necessity.²⁹² The question of determinism had been an issue since Augustine, but the writings of the Islamic Peripatetics, including Avicenna, all seem to adopt a deterministic interpretation of Aristotle, that was bolstered by their more complete metaphysics, in addition to the *De Interpretatione*, where the question of linguistic determinism is framed more explicitly (book 9). It is also useful to remember that they had also inherited a very NeoPlatonic Aristotle. The *Liber de Causis* was attributed to the Philosopher until Aquinas finally vouched for its being an apocryphal NeoPlatonic (Proclus mingled with Pseudo-Dionysius) misattribution. I believe that the insertion of this topic is carefully chosen and deliberate, given the almost unanimous Scholastic deference to Aristotle, because the challenge to the individual's free will was becoming more concrete with the apparent backing of the Islamic Peripatetics. In true Scholastic fashion, Nature argues that the problem is not one of *concepts*, for both free will and Providence are compatible, but one of *terms*, for the polysemy surrounding 'necessity' obscures the ultimate compatibility of these theological realities. My only reservation with Heller-Roazen's analysis is that, after a discussion of all the various inscriptions of contingency, he ascribes a single determinate significance to the debate, thereby collapsing all ideology into poetics: "Decomposed and recomposed by the

someone is walking, it is necessary that he is walking. [...] No necessity forces the man to walk who is making his way of his own free will, although it is necessary that he walks when he takes a step." Cf. Avicenna, *The Soul*, V.1. in *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, 187, where particular action is ascribed to the practical intellect (fully dependent on body), in contrast to the theoretical (partially dependent on body and partially self-sufficient), which involves discernment of truth from falsehood. Thus, he is able to preserve free will, but on the other hand, he makes every existent thing necessary, but this is only in reference to the ontological category of substance, cf. *The Salvation*, "Metaphysics" II. 3, *ibid.* 212.

²⁹². For an interesting discussion of Jean de Meun's rendering of these "necessities" in the vernacular in their Scholastic context, see Heller-Roazen, 115-116.

arguments of the romance, the *quaestio de futuribus contingentibus* shows itself, in the end, to concern a fact of literary composition alone. [...] Here, [...] the poem shows itself for that it is: a work dedicated, through its language, its form, its rhetoric, and its organization, to an exploration of the many forms of its own possibility and actuality.” (Heller-Roazen, 131). I think there are certainly implications for the *Rose* itself as a work, but here the significance extends well beyond the context of the poet gazing at his unfinished work. As we shall see, the orthodox solution to this question offered by Boethius is being used tendentiously to prepare us for the new ethical manifesto of Nature and Genius.

Heller-Roazen draws his conclusion in favor of contingency by maintaining a close textual (and Scholastic) analysis of the debate’s terminology. What his discussion avoids almost altogether is the question of ontology, where the most “medieval” aspects of Jean de Meun’s thought are in evidence. It is my contention, however, that this universal ontology provides an additional explanation the prevailing determinism in this section. And while much of the Nature section is directed against superstition, we find that his ontology includes faith in astrology, as the movement of the heavenly spheres are said to influence sublunary events. Astral determinism should more properly be ascribed to Avicenna, for it was the Baghdad Peripatetic who translated the NeoPlatonic hierarchy of Intelligences into an astronomical scheme in which every existent flows necessarily from the Necessary Being through a series of intermediaries.²⁹³ And it is indeed Avicenna

²⁹³ This theistic, and indeed, rationalistic schema was one of the principal targets of Al-Gazali’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Avicenna was offering a revised schema of Alfarabi’s, but both relied on the apocryphal *Liber de Causis* (the work of the Neoplatonist Plotinus) for their commentaries on Aristotle. In the Latin West, astrology was discussed quite explicitly in Alain de Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*, though without any rationalistic underpinnings. Paré notes that Albert the Great had also documented the current fervor for astrology at the University, and St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Comment. in Metaphysicam*

rather than Averroes that Siger of Brabant follows in establishing the intelligences as intermediaries between God and his creation that accounts for the influence of the heavenly bodies in human affairs.²⁹⁴ And this, now rationalistic, foundation for astrology may mean that Reason's myth about Jupiter, Saturn and Venus conforms to both allegorical and astrological truth (i.e. Saturn's "moons" having been intercepted by Jupiter's orbit):

S'el n'avoit la clarté joieuse
Des cors du ciel reflamboians,
Parmi l'air obscur et raians,
Qui tornoient en lor esperes,
Si cum l'establi Diex li peres.
La font entre'eus lor armonies,
Qui sont cause des melodies
Et des diversités de tons
Que par acordance metons
En toutes manieres de chant
N'est riens qui [par] celes ne chant.
Et muent par lor influences
Les accidens et les sustances
Des choses qui sont sous la lune. [16944-57]

[If she (Night) did not possess the joyous brightness of the flaming heavenly bodies, radiating among the dark air, and which turn in their spheres, as established by God the Father. There they make their harmonies amongst themselves which are the causes of the melodies and the diversity of tones, whose accordance (hear *chords*) we place in all kinds of song. There is nothing which sings except through these movements. And they transmute through their influence the accidents and substances of all sublunary things.]

The allegory of the spheres and their harmony, inaudible to human ears, also becomes the source of all song. This is indeed one of the most Neo-Platonic passages in the entirety of the *Rose*. What follows is a hylomorphic account of material composition drawn from Aristotle (*De Generatione et Corruptione*) [16958-74]. Nature looks to the radiating intelligences of the spheres as the determiners of created substances. The only means to

Aristotelis, 6.3., exempts Reason from any kind of determinism, making St. Thomas more kindly disposed towards this determinism than the compilers of the Condemnation of 1277, Paré, 233-4.

²⁹⁴ Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 438

achieve free will without falling prey to astral determinism is through his use of a non-material faculty, namely Reason:

Car quant de sa propre nature,
Contre bien et contre droiture,
Se vuet homme ou fame atorer,
Raison l'en puet bien destorer
Por qu'il la croie solement.
Lors ira la chose autrement
Car autrement puet il bien estre,
Quoi que facent li cors celestre,
Qui mout ont grant pooir, sanz faille,
Por quoi Raison n'encontre n'aille.
Mes n'ont pooir contre Riason,
Car bien set chascuns sages hon
Qu'il n'est pas de Raison mestre
N'il ne la firent mie nestre. [17087-17100]

[For when a man or woman wishes to turn away from his or her proper nature, against the good or against moral rectitude, Reason can turn him back, if only they believe her. For the matter will then proceed differently, for it can always be otherwise, whatever the celestial bodies may do (and these, without fail, show their great power) if they are not hindered by Reason. But they have no power over Reason, for every wise man knows that he is not the master of Reason, and neither did he give birth to her].

While the attribution of Reason to God himself is no doubt orthodox (“God-given reason”)²⁹⁵, there is a very clear implication as well that humans are not the source of their reason, and neither are they sovereign to it; rather it is a tool to be implemented, and indeed the only tool by which man finds exemption from determinism. While the Averroists would have agreed that reasoning takes place via bodily faculties, they would situate the actual intelligibles, and consequently, knowledge, as operating from the outside. And this is connected to their conception of the soul, and in the case of the Averroists, or more specifically, Avicenna’s [sic] active intellect, which is not individuated in man, but rather external to him; according to this tenet, man’s various

²⁹⁵ This is Paré’s conclusion, 235.

faculties of thought (common to all animals) are individuated by their matter, but the intelligibles are never found within the faculties themselves. This theory also paved the way for a realistic conceptualism with regard to universal genera and species, now wholly conceptual and reflecting the nature of existent things.

This separation of Reason from man is immediately followed by a return to the question of future contingents and providence, and Jean's solution ends up, in quite typical Scholastic fashion, rendering the notions of eternity and temporality moot in the divine order:

Mes de sodre la question
Comment predestination
Et la divine prescience,
Plene de toute proveance,
Puet estre o volenté delivre,
Fors est a genz laiz a decrivre ;
Et qui vodroit la chose entreprendre,
Trop lor seroit fort a entendre,
Qui lor avroit neïs solues
Les raisons encontre meües.
Mes il est voirs, quoi qu'il lor semble,
Que s'entresoffrent bien ensemble. [17101-12]

[To resolve the question of how predestination and divine prescience, full of all foreknowledge, can exist alongside free will, is a difficult matter to explain to the laity. And whoever wished to embark on this matter would find it too difficult to understand whoever had resolved the matter with the opposing arguments. But it is true, no matter what it seems, that divine foreknowledge and free will will get on rather well together.]

C'est la predestinacion,
C'est la prescience devine,
Qui tout set et rienz ne devine,
Qui seult as gens sa grace estendre
Quant el les voit a bien entendre ;
Ne n'a pas por ce sozplanté
Pooir de franche volenté.
Tuit homme euvrent par franc voloir,
Soit por joïr, ou por doloir.
C'est sa presente vision ;
Car qui la diffinicion
De pardurableté deslie,
Ce est possession de vie

Qui par fin ne puet estre prise
Trestoute ensemble sans devise. [17484-98]

[This is predestination, this is divine prescience, which knows everything and guesses at nothing, which can extend its grace to those it sees who intend to do good, and which does not, on this account, supplant the power of free will. Every man works through his free will, for either joy or suffering. [Divine prescience] is God's present vision, for whoever manages to discern the definition of 'eternity' is in possession of life which cannot be brought to an end, for everything is considered together simultaneously].

As Paré notes, "God's eternal instant has neither past nor future: it is only present."²⁹⁶

This definition, originating in Boethius's *Consolatio*, provided a sound (and orthodox!) solution to this thorny Scholastic problem, for it is even evoked with approbation by St. Thomas Aquinas. It can be said that the eternity (non-creation) of the world is not explicitly stated in the *Rose*, for Nature endorses creation *ex nihilo* [16741-50] with a description that closely resembles the demiurge or Plato's *Timaeus*. But we must remember that even Aristotle describes his eternal universe using the language of temporality, and so his First Mover is ontologically, but not temporally, prior to his intermediaries. Boethius had allowed Eternity to be a category for God, albeit one that is only loosely connected to temporality: "Eternity then is the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life; this will be clear from a comparison with creatures that exist in time."²⁹⁷ What this means is that temporality becomes a 'human' term and only predicated equivocally of the Divine, which 'sees' everything as an eternal present.

²⁹⁶ Paré, 245. (Tant ai pooir povre et onuble/ Au regart de la grant puissance/ Du Dieu qui voit en sa presence/ La triple temporalité/ Sous un moment d'éternité.) (19072-76)

²⁹⁷ Boethius, book 5, 132. St. Thomas seems to follow Boethius on the equivocal or allegorical predication of eternity, while, as regards the eternity of the world, St. Thomas had a much more difficult time 'refuting' this Aristotelian doctrine than he did the "Averroistic" unicity of the intellect. Cp. *De Aeternitate Mundi* and *De Unitate Intellectus*, both glosses on Aristotelian "heresies", the second, for him, being in both philosophical and religious senses of the word.

Nature's first *disputatio* on the question of divine foreknowledge is later revisited in a work of Platonic allegoresis (in which Plato is made to voice an Aristotelian theory of forms), but further glosses the meaning of eternity:

Dont je fais tel conclusion:
Puis que vous commençates estre
Par la volenté vostre mestre
Dont fait estes et engendré
Par quoi je vous tienz et tendré,
N'este pas de mortalité
Ne de corruption quité
Du tout, que touz ne vous veïsses
Morir se je ne vous tenisse.
Par nature morir porrés
Mes par mon vuel je ne morrés,
Car mon voloir a seignorie
Sus les liens de vostre vie,
Qui les compositions tiennent
Dont pardurabetés vous viennent.
C'est la sentence de la lettre
Que Platon vot en livre metre. [19098-19114]

[From this I draw the following conclusion: Since you came into being through the will of your Master, by whom you were made and created, and it is to this will that I hold and will continue to hold you. You are not at all exempt from mortality and corruption, and you would all regard yourselves as immortal if I did not hold you to his will. By nature you are mortal, but by my will you will not die, for my will has lordship over the bonds (of the Fates) of your life, which hold the compositions from which your eternity originates. This is the *sententia* (meaning) of the letter that Plato wanted to put in his book.]

Nature's exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus*, handed down through the Calcidius translation, suggests that the eternity of man resides in his material form rather than his soul. God made man's intellect (*entendement*) [19146] before giving it to him. The reading of Plato is heavily Christianized, and this is hardly exceptional. But in addition to prefiguring Christian theological truth, Plato is made to conform to a new set of scientific knowledge as his *Timaeus* now imparts the wisdom of Aristotle. If we remember that in Plato, the source of man's immortality lay in his connection to the immaterial realm of forms, quite

different from (material) immortality via *composicions*. Nature's point is that we are eternal in virtue of our form/composition and our capacity to generate likenesses.

After this discussion comes a caution about the limits of Plato's theological knowledge, for he could have had no conception of the divine triunity, nor of the Virgin birth. In regards to this last miracle, Nature herself admits that it occurred without her help and she frankly does not understand miracles [19161-2], thereby suggesting a willful separation of theology from natural science, a maneuver that had been prefigured by Avicenna and Averroes. But immediately following the establishment of a rigid demarcation between the natural and the divine, Nature begins to talk about the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, beginning with Virgil's *Bucolics* (IV, 7-10) [19169-70]. Unlike Siger and Boethius of Dacia, Jean establishes viable parameters between the various subjects of inquiry in order to flout them.

After elaborating the ineffability *topos*, claiming how Art can never equal Nature, Nature herself brings up a particular topic that is at the very margins of her science, namely alchemy, that singular 'artificial' process that effects the transmutation of species. Alchemy (transformation of base metals into gold) had previously been refuted by Al-Kindi, Avicenna, and Averroes, even though the Latin West attributed the Arabic manuals of alchemy to Avicenna himself.²⁹⁸ The topic is examined with abundant technical and Scholastic vocabulary, resulting in extreme ambiguity (equivocation) as these alchemical terms find resonance with other fields of inquiry:

Ou d'arquemie tant aprenge
Que touz metauz en colors tengne
Qu'el se porroit ançois tuer
Que les especes remuer,

²⁹⁸ Newman, William R. *Promethian Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature*, (University of Chicago, 2005) 41-42

Se tant ne fait que les ramene
 A lor matire premerene ;
 Et ouvre tant cum el vivra,
 Ja tant Nature n'aconsivra.
 Et se tant se voloit pener
 Que les y peüst ramener,
 Si le faudroit, espoir, science
 De venir a tel atrempance,
 Quant el feroit son elixir,
 Dont la forme devroit issir,
 Qui devise entr'eus les sustances
 Par especiaus differences,
 Si cum il pert au definir,
 Qui bien en set a chief venir.
 [...]

Car comment qu'il aut des espieces,
 Au mains les singulieres pieces,
 Qu'en sensibles ovres sont mises,
 Sont muables en tant de guises,
 Que pueent lor compleccions
 Par diverses digestions,
 Si changier entre'eus que cis changes
 Les met sous especes estranges
 Et lor toust l'espece premiere. [16065-82, 16087-95]

[He should learn so much about alchemy that he should be able to dye the metals different colors. But he could kill himself before converting the species, unless he were to bring them back to their prime matter. However long he works at it, he will not be able to equal nature. And if he really wanted to struggle, such that he thought he could bring metals back into such a state, he would perhaps lack the knowledge to come to such a perfect mixture, so that when he sets out to make his elixir, from which there would emerge the form which divides substances according to their specific *differentiae*, as it pertains to the definition, for him who knows how to bring this transformation to completion.(...) For whatever the case may be for the species, particulars, when subjected to careful work, are subject to change in so many respects that they, through various alterations, exchange their 'complexions' in such a way that it removes the first species and categorizes it under another.]

Nature seems to be straddling both sides of the issue here, for alchemy is presented both as an *ars veritable* (16084), but this is after a suggestion that alchemy was the science of dyeing metals, or in other words, changing their accidents. If Nature's assessment of alchemy seems somewhat contradictory (if alchemy is a true art, then shouldn't the species transmute?), there is a way out of this conundrum, if we see it as a reflection on logic and poetics; within the mind, the various genera and species can commute with

each other, thus making this passage metaphorically refer to *metaphor* itself. After elaborating the various avatars of this trope (which involve some permutation on genera and species), the Philosopher states confidently: “But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.”²⁹⁹ Here C.S. Lewis proves instructive: “By abstaining from all technical details and giving only the root idea of that science, which is all that a layman can be expected to learn, gives also, as it happens, just that part of the alchemical idea which is truly imaginative.”³⁰⁰

Further supporting the interconnected nature of language and alchemy, Jean warns that false alchemical science is yet another form of sophistry:

Car de fin argent font or nestre
Cil qui d’arquemie sont mestre
[...]
Et les autres metaus desnent
De lor formes cil qui les muent
En fin argent par medecines
Blanches et tresperçans et fines.
Mes ce ne feroient cil mie
Qui ovrent de sofisterie ;
Travaillent tant cum il vivront,
Ja Nature n’aconsivront. [16135-36, 16141-48]

[For those who are masters of alchemy can give rise to gold from fine silver, and those who transmute substances strip the other metals of their (common) forms in order to create fine silver by white, translucent and fine ointments. But they would not be able to achieve this if they were working by sophistry. Even if they worked for the rest of their days, they would never be able to equal Nature.]

Like the Sophist who proffers false arguments based on appearance, the false alchemist strives to disguise the real nature of things through dyeing. The limitations of the human

²⁹⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 22.

³⁰⁰ Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 143.

artisan are contrasted with the more amazing power of Nature. And while the topic of Eucharistic transubstantiation is never explored explicitly, the implications of this discussion of alchemy no doubt extend to this most “substantial” sacrament. In this allegorical context, it becomes impossible to ascribe primacy to science, metaphor, or sacrament, the last of which finds no logical foundations in Aristotle or Averroes. Given the implicit attack on holy orders, marriage, and confession, it would be hard to read this mini-treatise on alchemy as a confirmation of sacramental efficacy, especially since the more literal “science” (alchemy) as depicted here is, at best, rendered equivocally.

Nature continues her substantive explanation of natural phenomena when she turns to the topic of dreams, a reminder of our allegorical setting. It is Nature who explicitly rejects the previous authority of Guillaume de Lorris on this matter (Macrobius) who had defended the validity of premonitory dreams. Nature suggests instead a more naturalistic and less spiritual account of dreams:

Et ce n'est fors trufle et mençonge,
Ausinc cum de l'omme qui songe,
Qui voit, ce cuide, en lor presences,
Les esprituex sustances
Si cum fist Scipion jadis ; [18363-67]

[And it is nothing but illusion and lies, just as in the case of the man who dreams, who believes he sees the spiritual substances in their physical manifestation, just as did Scipio of yore].

Nature implies that the spiritual substance would not be visible, therefore vision cannot be predicated of any non-corporeal entity. The derision to which Nature subjects Scipio may be aimed at more than just Macrobius's theory of premonitory dreams, according to which spiritual substances become visible; her target may have also been the anti-

Aristotelian diatribe that Macrobius launches against the Peripatetics in book 15 of the *Somnio Scipionis*. This constitutes a rejection of the authority that Guillaume had laid out for his dream vision. It now seems that Macrobius would hardly endorse a courtly love vision as a “*somnium*” (or allegorical, prophetic dream), but this was Guillaume’s “mistake”.³⁰¹ At this time, Macrobius represents an outmoded nature of reading dreams that relied on a less sophisticated Platonic realism as well as mystical oneirics. Instead, Aristotle’s somatic and rationalistic account of dreams is made to account for Scipio’s delusions. It can be yet seen as another ‘act of castration’ on Jean’s part, by reducing the explicit authority of his precursor to a crackpot.³⁰² Minnis argues that the Aristotelian, rationalistic interpretation of dreams was picked up by the Latin Averroist Boethius of Dacia, who relegated the supposedly prophetic dream to matters of coincidence: “the event would have happened even if there had been no appearance similar to it in a dream.”³⁰³

Genius’s Eternal World

Genius is the homonymous figure of Alain’s *De Planctu* and also a parody of his Chartrian avatar. Despite the comedy of this section, Genius provides the clearest and most sustained example of the Rose’s Utopian impulse, wherein man’s sexual practices are in accordance with his nature and not fettered by religious or sacramental ideology.

³⁰¹ David Hult discusses the problematic incorporation of Macrobius as Guillaume’s authority in *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986) 123-6.

³⁰² It should be noted, however, that Reason made use of the veridical premonitory dream in her discussion of Croesus [6459-6589], see Lynch, 133-4.

³⁰³ Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 6, citing Boethius of Dacia, *On the Supreme Good; on the Eternity of the World, On Dreams*, trans. John F. Wippel (Toronto, 1987) 71

His zeal for generation is exemplified in his literalizing treatment of the myth of Jupiter and Saturn, here resulting in the appearance of the word '*coilles*' twelve times, though sometimes paronymously (*escoillier*), in fewer than fifty lines [20036-80], thereby insisting on the ensuing sterility of Saturn, as man. This seems to be a Euhemeristic reading of the myth (Jupiter and Saturn as real individuals), but Genius has combined it with a moral interpretation in which castration is made equivalent to the ultimate evil, and hence all real and mythographic figures are recast in terms of production or sterility. Wetherbee, following Jauss, remarks on the "unflinching literalism" of "Genius and La Vieille" with regard to sexuality in comparison with Raison's citing of Plato and "recourse to *integumanz*", and he finds in this evidence of how Jean "de-allegorizes his materials".³⁰⁴ Genius thus continues Reason's anatomical frankness, yet without suggesting a secondary sense to his words. And yet, it is through this literalism that the poem's ultimate gloss emerges.

Earlier in his article, Wetherbee states "It is Genius who provides a full allegorical context for the laws of conduct which Raison had offered to the Lover. It is he who elaborates on the myth of the castration of Saturn, showing how Jupiter's violent act ushered in the world of necessity, yet did so in the name of a false, willful *delit*."³⁰⁵ Genius uses literality (initially) in the service of his tendentiously naturalistic allegory. As he is associated with a Christian, NeoPlatonic, and Aristotelian "good" (creation), Genius falls outside the church's conception of grace and personal immortality, and this ignorance should be supposed by the very term 'Genius'.³⁰⁶ The comic capacities of any allegory of the "procreative instinct" are, of course, exploited to their maximum. I agree

³⁰⁴ Wetherbee, 286.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. 283.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. 284.

with Wetherbee's assessment that "[Genius] is unaware that Grace is a necessary supplement to those innate capacities which are his only resource."³⁰⁷ Unlike Reason, Genius uses '*coilles*' literally, therefore, the myth of Saturn's castration as an exemplum of castration itself. By his very nature as the generative principle, Genius constantly universalizes, thereby making the species consistently commute with any individual. He longs for a world (Golden Age) where creation is at the forefront, but his speech proceeds as if man had never fallen, as if there were no need for grace, and as if his only immortality is to be found by extending one's lineage. As a consequence, the fall is re-written as a fall from potency, not from grace.

By metaphorical extension, Genius also represents the faculty of imagination, the mind's production of images being analogous to the reproductive capacities of the species. In Boethius, the imagination was transcended by reason, because the latter was able to proceed from the shape (*figura*) given by the imagination to the species.³⁰⁸ His concept of generation is conveniently extended to all of its semantic fields – textual, reproductive, agricultural, artisanal, to name only the most common. Genius complicates matters because he introduces the allegory of the penis/pen to the vagina/page, the hammer to the anvil, and the plough to the field [19561-19582], all utilitarian metaphors, suggesting that writing is not masturbatory or auto-erotic (in other words it does not supplement), but rather is analogous to procreative coitus. The propagation of the species becomes associated with the analogous propagation of the text, and the pen must, like the organs of generation, be capable of generating likenesses. The moral injunction is

³⁰⁷ Wetherbee, "The literal and the allegorical", 284.

³⁰⁸ Boethius, *Consolation*, book 5, 126: "Man himself is beheld in different ways by sense-perception, imagination, reason and intelligence. The senses examine his shape as constituted in matter, while imagination considers his shape alone without matter. Reason transcends imagination, too, and with a universal consideration reflects upon the species inherent in individual instances."

loosened somewhat by the allegorical extension of ‘generation’, but those who forsake all its forms are subject to condemnation:

Vis les puisse l’en enfoir
Quant les ostis osent foir
Que Diex de sa main entailla,
Quant a ma dame les bailla,
Et por ce les li vot baillier
Qu’el seüst autex entaillier
Por donner estres pardurables
As creatures corrupables. [19575-82]

[If only we could bury them alive when they dare forsake the tools that God made with His own hands and gave them to my lady [Nature]. And he gave them to her so that she might be able to make such tools in order to give everlasting being to corruptible creatures].

Despite the plain metaphors, the allegorical sense is clear: immortality is being explored from a more materialist perspective. This is not the eternity evoked by Boethius in his *Consolatione*, but rather the newly emergent Aristotelian ‘science’ which made eternity a natural phenomenon, perceptible in the continual renewal of the species.

In this matter, Boethius accords nicely, especially in his greater orthodoxy, with the Averroism of Siger of Brabant, whose most extended discussion of the question of universals appears in his tract *De aeternitate mundi*. The doctrine of the eternal world was particularly damaging to that of Providence, for without creation and an ultimate *telos*, it becomes impossible to view any orderly linear history within a divine plan. This tract shows, yet again, how the key philosophical heresies of the day are being argued with the terms ‘genera’ and ‘species’, a phenomenon explained and contextualized in Siger’s tract by Alain de Libera:

Le contexte est caractéristique des thèmes attribués aux partisans latins d’Averroès : l’éternité du monde, c’est-à-dire aussi l’éternité du temps, du ciel et des espèces et celle des universaux, n’est pas extrinsèque. Pour deux raisons : (a) une raison philosophique

générale – la question des régularités nomologiques est liée conceptuellement au problème des universaux ; (b) une raison spécifiquement médiévale, qui tient à la manière dont est conduite la discussion. Pour les partisans de la création du monde : (majeure) l'espèce humaine, comme toute espèce naturelle (c'est-à-dire soumise à génération et corruption) a commencé d'être absolument et universellement parlant (*penitus et universaliter*). Or (mineure) l'espèce humaine (et toute espèce d'individus en général) est telle que n'importe quel individu de cette espèce a commencé d'être sans avoir été auparavant. Donc (conclusion) toute espèce de ce genre est « nouvelle » (a eu un commencement absolu dans le temps) et a commencé d'être sans avoir été auparavant.³⁰⁹

This is the conclusion that Siger struggles against (namely, that man, or any member of the species, came into being *ex nihilo* without having existed before), because, following Aristotle, he can find no way of accounting for the emergence of the species either in time or absolutely. The analysis of temporality is inextricably linked to that of ontology and succession. Siger is of course aware of a logically sound “nominalism” which would posit the species “coming into being within a determinate individual”, but he ultimately rejects that argument in favor of a more “philosophical” position according to which the “human species came into being by accident, by the generation of one individual before another *ad infinitum*, and not in a single determinate individual, who would not have been before.”³¹⁰ Due to the Statute of 1272 which banned the teaching of any thesis contrary to the faith where the Artists and Theologians shared an area of inquiry, Siger could not bring any arguments to justify this last position, instead returning to the premises behind the universal, where he elaborates a cautiously Averroistic thesis according to which universals are simply things intellectuated, hence in the soul and necessarily universal in thought. Pressing the question of universals, in this particular university context, to their logical conclusions can lead to demonstration of the world's eternity or monopsychism, both now heretical, and both subject to severe censorship.

³⁰⁹ De Libéra, 221. See full discussion of Siger's position on universals, 220-228.

³¹⁰ De Libéra, 222.

Nonetheless, such positions do find their logical support within the *Rose*, and for this Genius re-directs his venom once again to the sterile mendicant orders, whose precept of chastity, in exchange for grace, would lead to the disappearance of the species if universalized. Creation, propagation and continuation, insofar as they manifest the superiority of actuality over potentiality, become taken as absolute goods. Siger's arguments for the eternity of the world were framed on the question of succession. If the species can be originated (a tenet that an Averroist would deny), then it can surely likewise become extinct if man eschews his own nature. The satire reaches its most audacious point here, for if the world is not eternal, then clerical celibacy will lie in opposition to divine providence, and would therefore be based on a theological heresy:

Mout ovrent mal, et bien le semble,
Car se tretuit li homme ensemble
Seissante ans foïr les voloient,
Jamés homme n'engendreroient.
Et se ce plait a Dieu, sans faille
Dont vuet il que li mondes faille. [19583-88]
[...]
S'il noviaux hommes ne faisoit,
Se refaire les li plaisoit,
Ou ceus feïst resusciter
Por la terrie arrier habiter ;
Et se cil virge se tenoient
Soixante ans, de rechief faudroient,
Si que, se ce li devoit plaire,
Tous jors les auroit a refaire.
Et s'il ert qui dire vousist
Que Diex le voloir en tousist
A l'un par grace, a l'autre non,
Por ce qu'il a si bon renon
N'onques ne cessa de bien faire,
Dont li deveroit il bien plaire
Que chascuns autretel feïst
Si qu'autel grace en li meïst ;
Si ravrai ma conclusion
Que tout n'aille a perdicion.
Je ne sai pas a ce respondre,
Ne foi ne vuet creance apondre,
Car Diex a lor commencement

Les aime touz uniement
 Et donne raisonnables ames
 Aussic as hommes cum as fames
 Si croi qu'il vodroit de chascune,
 Non pas tant seulement de l'une,
 Que le meillor chemin tenist
 Par quoi plus tost a li venist.
 S'il vuet donques que vierge vive
 Aucuns por ce que miex le sive,
 Des autres por quoi nel vorra ?
 Quele raison l'en destorra ?
 Dont semble il qu'il ne li chausist
 Se generacion fausist. [19591-624]

[They are working for evil, it seems, for if all men together wished to shun their tools for sixty years, they would never engender any man. And if this pleases God, then he surely wishes the world to vanish. Unless he made a new man (if remaking one of them pleased Him) or if He resurrected the Ancients so that they might again dwell on earth. But if these men remained virgins for sixty years, once again they would vanish, so that if it pleased Him, he would constantly have to remake them. And if there were an objector who wished to say that God removed desire from one man by grace, and not the other, because of his great reputation (he never ceased to do good), then he should be happy to see each man do the same so that God will grant him such grace. And again I will have my conclusion: that everything would go to perdition. I don't know how to respond to this conclusion, and the faith does not wish to expound this belief. For God loves them all equally when they are born and gives rational souls to both men and women. And I believe that he wants every woman, and not just one, to follow the best path in order to reach Him sooner. If He wants therefore for men to live as virgins, some in order to better follow Him, why will he not want the same for all others? What reason would convince him otherwise? It seems that that it matters little to Him whether or not generation ceased to occur.]

By commuting man, metonymically in the form of his 'generative parts', with the species, Genius has drawn on one of the most basic forms of metaphor, species (here the individual) to genus (here the species).³¹¹ Genius's question is similar to the one posed in Siger's *De Aeternitate Mundi*, namely, could we exist without our capacity to reproduce, and is this logic not universally applicable to all animate species? Sarah Kay brings us right to the center of the controversy, calling Genius's address to the army "one of the most problematic parts of the *Rose*." Within his speech one finds "outrageous miscegenation of sex and theology in the promise that the individual can achieve union

³¹¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*. 21.

with the Godhead through reproduction. In addition, there is quite egregious confusion of the particular with the universal. Immortality is the concern of the individual, whereas reproductive sex enables the perpetuation of the species.”³¹² And this is precisely the crux of the Averroistic interpretation of the *Rose*. If this logic, here contextualized in the continued satire of clerical celibacy, were followed to its ultimate conclusion, that problem which “faith does not wish to expound,” we could see the eternity of the species (by extension, world), not simply as a spiritual reality, but as a natural, material one. The eternal world conundrum, here presented in the form of a satirical *translatio*, entailed a series of dangerous consequences for the faith, just as it had done previously for the Arab philosophers.

In this universal process of generation, which requires the active participation of individuals, man is framed more in terms of his genus, *animalia*, directed toward his natural appetite. This provides an equally humorous, if less satirical, context for the words of la Vieille, who equated Nature with an instinctive determinism when discussing young men who vow celibacy for clerical life:

Mes Nature ne puet mentir
Qui franchise li fait sentir,
Car Oraces neïs raconte,
Qui bien set que tel chose monte,
Qui vodroit une forche prendre
Por soi de Nature deffendre
Et la boutast ensus de soi,
Revendroit elle, bien le soi.
Touz jors Nature retorra,
Ja por habit ne demorra.
Que vaut ce? toute creature
Vuet retourner a sa nature,
Ja nou lera por violence

³¹² Kay, Sarah. *The Place of Thought: the Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007) 180.

De force ne de convenance. [14017-30]

[But Nature cannot lie, she who makes men feel freedom, for Horace, who knew how precious freedom was, once told us that if someone wanted to take up a pitchfork, swinging it above himself to defend himself from Nature, she will always come back, never to be deterred by a habit. What does this mean? That every creature wishes to return to his nature, which it will never forsake, despite violence, brute force, or convention].

La Vieille recognizes that her instincts are shared by the animals [14053-90], which is how she has rationalized her own dissolute past; her ideology has led her to believe that man's '*naturel appetit*' [14089] is not subject to control by Reason. This is an example of la Vieille's vulgar realism, or as it were, a crude biologism, which parodically universalizes every maxim in the service of self-interest. In resorting to the logic of species, la Vieille offers scientific backing, based on common observation, to defend fornication. Her ethics, while so satirical in isolation, are subject to a new relativism as the notion of the individual self becomes moot in Genius's and Nature's universal plan.

And this brings us back to the question of immortality, which in Christian terms, was the survival of the immaterial soul. In this respect, medieval Christianity and Islam were united, at least from an "orthodox" perspective, but this did not mean that there were not rationalistic attempts to imagine the afterlife in a less spiritual fashion. While Avicenna had made a concession for the afterlife via absorption into the active Intellect, Averroes believed that man's immortality lay in the separate Intellect, entirely depersonalized and retaining no memory, while the species, with its common form, was naturally immortal.³¹³ And this seems to accord with Nature's characterization of man's

³¹³ "Averroës maintient, en accord avec Alexandre d'Aphrodisie, l'idée d'une intelligence séparée, mais refuse, contrairement à lui, l'idée que l'intelligence humaine en puissance soit une simple disposition liée à la complexion organique. [...] D'autre part, cette intelligence humaine en puissance, dont l'indépendance à l'égard de la complexion organique est affirmée contre Alexandre d'Aphrodisie, n'est pas pour autant celle de l'individu personnel. A celui-ci, en tant que tel, ne reste qu'une disposition à recevoir les intelligibles, et

immortality [15911-76], namely through man's cheating of Death by successive generation, ensuring the perpetuation of the "*forme commune*"[15974], a discussion which includes Avicenna [15961], who, as individual, could not escape death despite his skill as a physician. To begin his sermon, Genius establishes Nature's position in a deistic, astrologically ruled universe [19505-42], an introduction that reveals the dominance of Avicenna's theory of the emanating intellects. Despite a rhetorical concession to the world's "coming into being" (*Puis que cis mondes vint en estre* – 19518), we find no equivalent of an artisanal creation as depicted in Genesis. In Genius's sermon, then, a scientific naturalism is proselytized through a comedic, and thoroughly anti-sacramental religious symbolism.

This conflation of spiritual and material immortality was already prefigured in Nature's discussion of nobility, an attribute that she refuses to confer upon Alexander the Great, who is himself conflated with Christ triumphant and the randy lover:

Dist il, tant fu d'orgoil destrois,
 Que cis mondes ert si estrois
 Qu'il s'i pooit envis torner,
 N'il n'i voloit plus sejourner,
 Ains pensoit d'autre monde querre
 Por commencer novele guerre,
 Et s'en aloit enfer brisier
 Por soi faire par tout prisier ;
 Dont tretuit de poor tramblerent
 Li dieu d'enfer, car il cuiderent,
 Quant je le lor dis, que ce fust
 Cis qui par le baston de fust,
 Por les ames par pechié mortes,
 Devoit d'enfer brisier les portes
 Et lor grant orgueil eschacier
 Por ses amis d'enfer chacier. [18771-86]

cette disposition disparaîtra avec l'existence du corps." *Histoire de la Philosophie* I, vol. 2 ed. Parain, Brice. (Paris: Gallimard – Folio, 1969) 1192.

[(Alexander), so consumed by pride, said that the world was too small, that he could barely turn back to it, that he didn't want to stay there any longer, instead he wanted to find another world to begin a new war, and that he was going to annihilate hell in order to earn the esteem of everyone. And this made the gods of the underworld tremble, for they thought, when I told them of his plan, that it was he who was supposed to tear down the gates of hell with his wooden staff for those souls who had died by sin, and purge them of their great pride, in order to deliver his friends from hell.]

Here it is not the cross which demolishes the gates of hell, but rather a wooden staff, later glossed more licentiously as the poem draws to its conclusion. As we have seen previously, Euhemeristic mythology, Biblical and Hellenic history are willfully conflated. I mention Euhemerism because this is a depiction of its emergence: Alexander, proud of his many conquests and absolute power, begins to flirt with the idea of his own divinity. That which escapes his power absolutely is the afterlife, as theological a concept in ancient Greece as in Christendom. This theological term 'enfer' is used equivocally here as it refers to analogous 'realities' within Hellenic and Christian civilizations. This passage seems to be a comedic inversion of one of the passages in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle describes how the heavenly movers/intelligences were deified by their ancestors and handed down in the form of myth, something "we must regard as an inspired utterance, and reflect that, while probably each art and science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished, these opinions have been preserved like *relics* until the present."³¹⁴ Etienne Gilson has noted how Averroes could have justified his apparent deism by recourse to this passage in Aristotle,³¹⁵ making it a particularly dangerous passage for instruction during the time of official censorship beginning in 1270 and reaching its zenith in 1277. The orders are reversed between Aristotle and Jean de Meun (heaven(s) to hell, heavenly intelligence to mortal Alexander), for Aristotle

³¹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 1.8. Italics are my own: Barnes's translation of 'relics' is particularly resonant with the *Rose*.

³¹⁵ *La Philosophie au Moyen Age*, 559.

explains how the species imposed these divine names for the eternal intelligences, Alexander's individual apotheosis is merely the whim of his imagination and is doomed to failure. His story is an exemplum of false deification and a reminder that the reproductive organs (wooden staff) are man's sole connection to immortality.

When Genius retells the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea [20817-21183], we are confronted with an example *in bono* of the transformative power of desire to animate the inanimate. But this recasting of the Ovidian myth, in which Galatea is given the role of a speaking subject and object of desire, for she is, unlike the rose, a speaking and actively desiring subject; what is more, she uses a non-embellished speech to signify desire literally and without trappings.³¹⁶ As artist, Pygmalion resembles the poet Jean, who loves his *Rose*, and as lover, he represents the lover Guillaume whose first exemplum of Narcissus [1439-1506], directed at women, yielded a fatally sterile result. As regards the more fruitful coupling of Pygmalion and Galatea, however, Jean de Meun is too skilled with comedy to give us a purely *in bono* exemplum. According to Marc-René Jung, myths can represent a typology which the character is experiencing (*sensus allegoricus*), and this seems the most credible explanation for its insertion here.³¹⁷ Hill reads Pygmalion, *pace* Gunn, as an exemplum of folly, so this must surely be a continuation of parody. Jean's version exploits the comedic potential of Pygmalion much more than the *Ovide Moralisé*, as Hill demonstrates in his article. But even within the narration of the myth here, the folly of Pygmalion is comedic, while the concupiscence of the lovers is condoned by valorization of this vice's generative capacities [21184], especially when contrasted with the sterile, and by allegorical extension, fatal self-love of Narcissus,

³¹⁶ Brownlee, "Pygmalion", 197: "In Jean's text, Galatea's use of courtly discourse effects a positive inversion of Ami's systematically deceptive linguistic practice."

³¹⁷ Jung, "Jean de Meun et l'Allégorie," 33.

recalled again by Genius [20874-88]. Once again, there seems to be two allegorical referents to Pygmalion's sculpture – the rose and the *Rose*, established through the earlier equivalence of coitus and writing. These myths often reflect fabliaux values but with firm logical and philosophical backing.

If Jean de Meun showed some difficulty in keeping his rhetoric separate from his ethics, he finds a sound justification in Aristotle, for the latter's ethics are often found in peculiar places, i.e., in works other than his two books dedicated explicitly to the subject (*Nicomachean* and *Eudamion*) After Aristotle's first sentence of the *Rhetoric*, establishing the discipline as "the counterpart of dialectic",³¹⁸ the Philosopher proceeds to define the art in utilitarian terms, with "persuasion" being at the forefront of his discussion. Besides being a manual on good usage, the *Rhetoric* seems to be a preliminary to law, politics and ethics.³¹⁹ In *Rhetoric*, 1.5, Aristotle underlines a tenet about human nature that is, for the most part, compatible with any materialistic and teleological ethics: "It may be said that every individual man and all men in common aim at a certain end which determines what they choose and what they avoid. This end, to sum it up briefly, is happiness and its constituents."³²⁰ To situate happiness as the *telos* of human action was condemned in Augustine's later ethical teachings. This goal is not only

³¹⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.1

³¹⁹ "Poetry is treated as such in the *Poetics*; its educational function is taken up in the *Politics*; the statements and arguments of poets and of characters in poetry are analyzed in the *Rhetoric*; the moral situations and moral aphorisms of the poets are used in the *Nicomachean Ethics*; and poetry and mythology are quoted as evidence in the *Metaphysics*." McKeon II, 37.

³²⁰ He goes on further to list the constituents of happiness: "good birth, plenty of friends, good friends, wealth, good children, plenty of children, a happy old age, also such bodily excellences as health, beauty, strength, large stature, athletic powers, together with fame, honour, good luck, and excellence. A man cannot fail to be completely independent if he possesses these internal and these external goods; for besides these, *there are no others to have*. (*Rhetoric*, 1,5) Italics are my own. There seems to be nothing even remotely akin to 'love' in this schema. Aristotle's ethical philosophy is not really related to Hedonism, however, as illustrated by book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he elaborates on the three moral states to be avoided, namely vice, incontinence, and brutishness. Incontinence means taking the natural good "pleasure" and perverting it by "excess". (*N. Ethics*, 7. 4-5).

presented as natural to man, but also as desirable.³²¹ He goes on: “Health, beauty, and the like, as being bodily excellences and productive of many other good things: for instance, health is productive both of pleasure and of life, and therefore is thought the greatest of goods, since these two things which it causes, pleasure and life, are two of the things most highly prized by ordinary people.”³²² This is why “Nature, for Aristotle, is an insufficient premise for practical matters, for men are not ‘naturally’ good but are also subject to reason and habit. Therefore art and education complement nature in ensuring good action.”³²³

If we think back to Reason and Faux Semblant, who had underlined the importance of the *Sophistical Refutations*, we can again see how Aristotle sought to disentangle ethics from tradition (not the case of the Sophists) in contradistinction to the philosopher who uses “nature and truth”. Aristotle shows that oppositions between law and nature do not result in paradoxes, because this would imply that they belong to the same field of inquiry. Indeed, Jean de Meun furthers the claim of the *Refutations* by “failing to generate” a paradox between Nature and the Law, for, quite simply, Nature *is* the Law of God, thus transcending mortal laws. The Fall, both Biblically and mythographically, provided the reason for both man’s carnality and the necessity to police it, but it provided a temporal explanation to an omnitemporal trait of the species.

³²¹ I would not wish to suggest that Aristotle’s ethics were in any way Hedonistic; this seems only to be a feature of taking certain passages in isolation. According to Aristotle, man is virtuous on three accounts, by nature, reason, and habit. (McKeon, 204). Cp. Paré, 334-5: “Les théologiens qui conçoivent ainsi la moralité comme étant d’abord une conformité à la raison droite et à la saine nature peuvent sembler s’écarter de la doctrine chrétienne officielle qui présente d’ordinaire la vie morale comme une obéissance à la loi divine. Il faut voir cependant qu’il n’en est rien [...] Les lois de la nature humaine et de la raison droite ne sont que l’incarnation temporelle de la loi éternelle. C’est pourquoi les Scolastiques répètent constamment après saint Augustin qu’obéir à la raison droite, c’est obéir à Dieu ; s’en écarter, c’est contrevenir à la loi divine.” But while recognizing the non-equivalence of the divine and natural laws, Paré does not stress how the two may be antithetical, which, as we saw with Siger, was precisely why he stated that the Faith was preferable to Reason.

³²² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.6.

³²³ McKeon, II, 46-7.

Aristotle does not write from the perspective of the Fall, and can therefore suggest that the goal of happiness (or beatitude for the Christian Peripatetics) is not only achievable but desirable in this lifetime, and it is here that the challenge to Christian ethics becomes most apparent.

After Genius concludes his sermon to an enthralled audience, the poem's narrator addresses youth, in terms that are remarkably similar to the *carpe diem* motif found at the beginning of the *De Amore* by Andreas Capellanus (the only work explicitly condemned in 1277), thereby fusing a theme found in the poetry of Catullus and Ovid with Aristotelian logic:

Et s'il vous plect a ce flechir
Vos cuers por plus tost enrichir,
Ou vous qui delit y savés,
Se regart au delit avés,
Bien poés ce chemin tracier
Por vous deduire et solacier.
[...]
Croie m'en qui m'en vodra croire,
Qu'il fait bon de tout essayer
Por soi miex es biens esagier,
[...]
Et set loer et set blamer
Liquel sont dous, li quel amer,
Car de plusors en a goutés.
[...]
N'onc nus ne sot quel chose est aise
S'il n'ot avant apris mesaise,
Ne n'est pas dignes d'aise avoir
Qui ne vuet mesaise savoir ;
Et qui bien ne la set souffrir,
Nus ne li devroit aise offrir.
Aussi va des contraires choses,
Les unes sont des autres gloses ;
Et qui l'une en vuet defenir,
De l'autre li doit sovenir,
Ou ja par nulle entencion
N'i metra diffinicion ;
Car qui des deus n'a connoissance
Ja n'i metera difference,

Sanz quoi ne puet venir en place
Diffinicion que l'en face. [21539-44, 21550-52, 21559-61, 21567-82]

[And if you wish to submit your hearts to this logic in order to enrich your hearts at an earlier age, or those of you who have found pleasure there, if you are inclined to pleasure, you can take this path to delight and gratify yourselves. (...) Believe me if you will: it is good to try everything, so that one can take greater pleasure in such goods. (...) And he knows how to find merit or fault, which things are sweet and which are bitter, for he has partaken of many. (...) No one ever discovered what happiness was if he had not previously learned of unhappiness, nor is he worthy of happiness if he does not wish to know unhappiness. And if he is unable to bear unhappiness, no one should offer happiness to him. And so it goes for contrary things, which are glosses of each other. And if you wish to define one, you must remember the other, otherwise you will not be able to form a definition regardless of your intention. For whoever lacks knowledge of both will not be able to identify the specific *differentia*, without which the corresponding definition can never emerge.]

The epistemological imperative supersedes any kind of ethics. By this maneuver, carnal knowledge, being a species of knowledge, is a good that requires actualization. Aristotle's *Topics* and *Categories* are being wrested from grammar and utilized tendentiously for a new ethical manifesto, reminding us of Wittgenstein's claim that his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was a guide to ethics. Like Alain's Nature, Jean's narrator is arguing an ethical position based on the need to know substances. Although the philosophical underpinnings are hardly the same, we see here that Jean de Meun shares with the writer of the *Queste* a conflation of ontology and epistemology. Rather than seizing on linguistic violations as a reflection of man's fallen nature as Alain had done, Jean de Meun will use grammatical contraries as an injunction to know 'substantive' pleasure. The definition of a substance, for Aristotle, was the capacity to admit of contraries while remaining numerically one.³²⁴ While 'pleasure' is an accident of substance rather than a substance proper, the narrator tendentiously shows that contraries are not only essential for knowing language, but also for knowing things, such

³²⁴ Aristotle, *Categories*, 4.10

as *delit*.³²⁵ Here we can see how Aristotle's logic, when translated or allegorized from semantics to ethics, result in a more crude relativism in the latter than the former.

I contend that this argument must be taken seriously as an ethical justification for the poem's conclusion. "It is widely known that the study of literature and the study of ethics are intimately allied in the medieval commentary tradition, and that literature is defined, in theory at least, by its ethical credentials."³²⁶ It even seems that Jean de Meun recognizes the sophistic nature of his logic, for just before this passage he tells us that old ladies (birds), so skilled in ruse, can only sometimes be taken in by their younger suitors' (birdcatcher's) sophisms [21498] or their "figures of diction" [21500].³²⁷ But even if we are being lulled into an extended sophism, this particular sophism is to serve as the ethical basis for the poem's conclusion and the natural order.³²⁸ While Jean does not offer a systematic gloss the poem, this will be the last appearance of the word '*glose*',³²⁹ here

³²⁵ Aristotle, *Topics*, 7.3: "That a definition may thus be reached by a process of reasoning is obvious. The means whereby it should be established have been more precisely defined elsewhere, but for the purposes of the inquiry now before us the same commonplace rules serve. For we have to examine into the contraries and other opposites of the thing, surveying the expressions used both as wholes and in detail: for if the opposite definition defines that opposite term, the definition given must of necessity be that of the term before us. Seeing, however, that contraries may be conjoined in more than one way, we have to select from those contraries the one whose contrary definition seems most obvious." Aristotle believed that "only substance is definable." Cf. *Metaphysics*, 7.5: The other categories can only be defined by a further addition, e.g. odd only with respect to number, or female only with respect to animal.

³²⁶ Reynolds, 147.

³²⁷ This last term is explained, with Scholastic sources, notably Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas in Hilder, Gisela, *Der scholastische Wortschatz bei Jean de Meun* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer: 1972) 102-104. This work should be signaled for the breadth of its investigation into both Latin and Vernacular texts. Like the work of Paré, it offers a different philology to refute Langlois's appraisal that Aristotle's influence on the *Rose* was limited to 3 discrete references.

³²⁸ Cf. Emmerson and Herzman, « Age of Hypocrisy », 631 : "In the poem's concluding lines Amant thanks all the barons of love (including Faus Semblant) and explicitly rejects Reason (21,713-44) but it would be a mistake to believe that in doing so he is following the dictates of Nature. There is a difference between carrying out Nature's command for the good of the species and using the 'good of the species' argument as a means to another end."

³²⁹ A more specific '*glose*' for the final consummation occurs in Nature's speech, in the middle of her discussion of divine foreknowledge: Et por tenir la droite voie,/ Qui bien vodroit la chose emprendre,/ Qui n'est pas legiere a entendre, Un gros exemple em porroit metre/ As genz laiz qui n'entendent lettre,/ Car tex genz vuelent grosse chose/ Sanz [grant] soutiveté de glose. [17390-6] (And to stay on the right path, whoever sets forth on this matter, which is not easy to understand, he could use a coarse example for the

used in a technical and ‘revelatory’, rather than euphemistic, sense. In these circumstances, I think this might be the closest thing we have to that oft-promised gloss of the entire work. And this reminds us of the chronological - a teleological historian might say logical - successors of the Aristotelians, the Stoics and the Epicureans. While the former developed reason to achieve impassivity to the world, the latter tried rather to cultivate their greatest good: pleasure. Both of them drifted from Aristotle in that they did not posit thought as immaterial. If Reason used Boethius to explore a more Stoic resignation in the face of Fortune’s vicissitudes, the narrator offers a vulgar Epicureanism, in the guise of Aristotelianism, to contextualize his conclusion.³³⁰

Conclusion

In the Scholastic terminology, the work’s ending/climax represents Aristotle’s generative entelechy, the fertilization of the rose signaling the triumph of actuality over what was formerly only potential. While it seems that he has used Averroistic naturalism to condone the plucking of the rose, unquestionably sinful by Christian standards and obscene by courtly standards, he has also used it to endorse the virtue of creation. This ending was prefigured literally both by Guillaume [3502-04]³³¹ and by Jean [10599-602], but there is of course something quite unseemly about the realization of these

laity who cannot follow the letter, for such people want a coarse material without an overly subtle glossing.)

³³⁰ Paré sees Jean de Meun’s ethics as the major controversial aspect of his work: “Alors que pour ses idées spéculatives, Jean de Meun n’a rien qui ne soit conforme à la doctrine traditionnelle, pour ses idées morales, il se rattache à l’aristotélisme hétérodoxe.” Paré, 325.

³³¹ Brownlee, Kevin. “Allegory in the Roman de la Rose” in *Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Copeland, Rita and Struk, Peter. (Cambridge: CUP, 2010) 123n9: “This proleptic ‘end point’ is explicitly articulated in the narrator’s voice in vv. 3500-2 [Langlois]. See Douglas Kelly, “Li Chaistieus... Qu’ Amors prist puis par ses esforz » : The Conclusion of Guillaume de Lorris’s Rose », in Norris J. Lacy, ed., *A Medieval French Miscellany* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1972) 61-78.”

prophecies. As Kevin Brownlee has noted regarding the context of Guillaume's work, "the representation of this amorous success would presumptuously violate courtly rules and would invalidate the poem's status as an extended erotic speech act considered extradiegetically." (195)³³² This amorous success makes manifest the teleology laid down by Guillaume, but which the former poet could not, in his courtly framework, articulate at the literal level. As regards courtly ethics, then, this ending is sheer heresy.

The closing scene of the *Rose* is clearly a virtuoso piece of allegorical writing, though it is equally possible to see this obscene allegory as only a slightly ennobled form of innuendo. It should be noted that, in accordance with the commandments of the God of Love, all obscenities are glossed in the *cueillette*. The most ribald moment in the *Rose* is specifically a moment when Jean has favored metaphor, in keeping with Cupid's command to bowdlerize offensive terms. The 'deflowering' of the rose is an "extended *ornatus*", or extended metaphor, but the "univocal allegory includes no *sensus allegoricus*".³³³ Kevin Brownlee has analyzed the ending rhetorically, glimpsing in the pilgrim's journey [21346-21365] the preponderance of metaphor, which eventually yields to a "radical metonymy" [21601-50] as the generative parts are treated as autonomous wholes, irrespective of their agent.³³⁴ In other words, this discourse is metaphorical with regard to the organs themselves (rendered in religious and horticultural imagery), but metonymic with regard to the integrity of the human body. The effect of this rhetorical shift is in keeping with the ethos of Genius and Nature, who saw the fate of the species as essentially depersonalized. It is also, while no doubt virtuoso, far less complicated than

³³² Brownlee, Kevin. "Pygmalion, Mimesis, and the Multiple Endings of the Roman de la Rose" in *Yale French Studies*, no. 95, Rereading Allegory: Essays in Memory of Daniel Poirion. (1999) 193-211.

³³³ Jung, "Jean de Meun et l'Allégorie", 24.

³³⁴ Brownlee, "Pygamlion", 206-7.

the abstruse metaphors of fallen relations that no doubt delighted the more prurient readers of the *De Planctu*. Alain's depictions of fallen relations are grammatical (there is a grammar to sex just as there is to language, both subsidiary to God's grammar) and therefore abstract, whereas Jean depicts coitus with concrete and sacred metaphors (pilgrim's staff, relic bag, narrow slit in sanctuary), thereby replacing Alain's abstract, Platonic allegory with a vulgarized sacramental one. And while Ovid and Catullus had set a precedent for this kind of scurrilous verse, they did not prefigure the kind of sacramental iconoclasm in evidence in the *Rose's* conclusion.

I must agree with Hill in saying that a "good" (in the act of generation) has arisen from man's fallen sexuality, even if the concept of that "good" has eluded the lover.³³⁵ Having sought mere fornication with the rose, the lover unwittingly engages in an act of generative coitus and leaves her pregnant:

Car je voloie tout cerchier
 Jusques au fons du boutonnet,
 Si cum moi semble que bon est.
 Et fis lors si meller les grenes
 Que se desmellassent a penes,
 Si que tout le boutonnet tendre
 En fis eslargir et estendre. [21724-30]

[For I wanted to search deeply for everything up to the back of the bud, as it seemed good to me. And then I mixed the seeds which barely separated, and I made the whole tender bud expand and stretch.]³³⁶

The lover's ignorance of the inherent 'good' of his act makes perfect sense, given his earlier rejection of Reason, and her injunction to read allegorically and love more generally [5441-48]. At the end, he has, quite unintentionally, followed Reason's sanction of procreative love (*engendreüre* [5773]), yet he seems to be lacking, given his

³³⁵ Hill, 414.

³³⁶ This seems to suggest pregnancy because the rhyme pair is similar (tendi – entendi vs. tendi – estendi) when speaking of the incarnation in the Virgin Mary's womb. [19122-26].

reaction, that added component of “*amour naturel*”, namely the *cure de nourriture* [5774], both of which were exempt from blame and praise by virtue of their stemming from nature. On the generative front, Reason accords nicely with Genius in her support of procreative sexuality. The lover, however, does not manage to follow Reason’s sanctions to *amer geraument* [5447] with the *amor du commun* [5450], but rather remained steadfast to his master, Cupid, that is to say, in the courtly fetishism of the individual. This is because desire and pleasure, formerly explained by the Fall, are treated here as a biological fact. In forsaking reason (*Mes de Raison ne me sovint,/ Qui tant en moi gasta de pene* [21760-61], But I didn’t recall Reason, who wasted so much effort on me)³³⁷, the lover has abandoned his specific *differentia* ‘rational’, and is therefore reduced to his genus, *animalia*, for which he thanks Venus and Cupid, both of whom are conventionally associated with man’s carnal desires as opposed to reproduction.³³⁸

The tendency in medieval philosophy, following the NeoPlatonic philosopher Plotinus, is to nominalize the word ‘good’ as ‘a good’, and thus Aristotle the act of creation is a perfection (the potentially living has been actualized in conception). This pregnancy occurs without the lover’s consent or understanding (*g’y forfis* for spilling the seed [21731]). In other words, the good of the species sometimes depends on the ill of its particulars.³³⁹ This is perhaps the ultimate inversion of the ethics of the *De Planctu*, for the ending of the *Rose* suggests that the divine act of generation occurs even in the most

³³⁷ There may lurk an obscene pun here if one considers a Latin reading of ‘*de pene*’. Compare with the above cited [21728].

³³⁸ Cf. Hill, Thomas D. “Narcissus, Pygmalion, and the Castration of Saturn: Two Mythographical Themes in the *Roman de la Rose*” in *Studies in Philology*, Vol, 71 (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1974) 424: “Sexual experience involves, even for a married Christian committed to Christian asceticism, at least a momentary lapse of rationality.”

³³⁹ Fleming would disagree entirely with this rationale: Cp. *Reason and the Lover*, 17-20, but his quibbles with Thomas Hill, almost verging on an *ad hominem*, are vitiated by his rejection of any operational ethics in the *Rose* that are not fundamentally Augustinian.

desacralized of generative acts (*fornicatio*). We have no reason within the *Rose* to assume that the lover's ethics ever transcends the duplicitous sanctions set forth by Ami. But this matters little in this particular context, since the lover's deed is here presented as transcending any individual ethics. Even Boethius, a Christian, seems to draw almost Leibnizian ethical conclusions in book four of the *Consolatio*: "It is only the power of God to which evils may also be good, when by their proper use He elicits some good result. For a certain order embraces all things, and anything which departs from the order planned and assigned to it, only falls back into order, albeit a different order, so as not to allow anything to chance in the realm of Providence."³⁴⁰ Even if we did not suppose the more rationalistic determinism of his university contemporaries, Jean could find ample support for a highly deterministic and, indeed, optimistic relativism in the Christian work of Boethius. From this perspective, the ending operates not on irony, but Providence, written with a capital precisely because the divine is confirmed by the natural order of continual generation and corruption.

In the context of censorship, the allegorical and often seemingly digressive nature of the poem serves to obscure and generalize much of its more radically naturalistic thrust, as we see in Paré's gloss of the work: "Ses doctrines spéculatives semblent un jeu d'enfant à côté des audaces d'un Siger de Brabant; et même son naturalisme moral, assez vague en comparaison de celui d'un Boèce de Dacie."³⁴¹ While Paré takes great pains to contextualize Jean's university Aristotelianism, one of the consequences is that he *normalizes* it too much. The frequent citing of Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great are

³⁴⁰ Boethius, book 4, prosa 6, 109. [Sola est enim diuina uis cui mala quoque bona sint, cum eis competenter utendo alicuius boni elicit effectum. Ordo enim quidam cuncta complectitur, ut quod adsignata ordinis ratione decesserit hoc licet in alium, tamen ordinem relabatur, ne quid in regno prouidentiae liceat temeritati.] [http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/boethius/jkok/4p6_t.htm]

³⁴¹ Paré, *Les Idées et les Lettres*, 324.

more interesting because they show an affinity for a common source (Aristotle) in contemporary culture.³⁴² While fully aware of heterodoxy within the *Rose*, his conclusions on the author are too sober and restrained, based on the evidence that he himself mounts. In one sense, he may be right: Jean may have been quite a normal, bourgeois realist of his time, with some “fringe doctrines” interspersed, but this seems to disregard the extent to which the *Rose* foregrounds its own heresy, a category that is constantly deflected onto the presuppositions of courtly love and the monastic ideals of the mendicants. In contrast with Paré, I find Jean de Meun’s Averroism to be even more radical than Siger’s, because in the latter’s *De Anima Intellectiva*, he explicitly denies the conclusions to which “reason” (i.e. Aristotle’s logic) led him (concerning the unicity of the intellect) in favor of Christian faith. In Jean de Meun, the hierarchy is plainly reversed as Catholic sacramentalism (the frocking of Genius) is used as a guarantor of the work’s “theological” truth.

The frenzied climax yields an intellection of the work based on a common homology of intellectual and carnal knowledge, both of which reach their simultaneous entelechy. For the Averroists, the separate material intellect is, along with our capacity to reproduce, our only access to immortality, though it still differs radically from the Christian conception of the immortal soul. This brings us to Aristotle’s most

³⁴² Paré, *ibid*: 12: “Pour les commentaires scolastiques, j’ai beaucoup utilisé Albert le Grand. La raison en est qu’il est un excellent témoin des principales idéologies qui se sont rencontrées au 13^e siècle en Occident, et que la plupart des thèmes philosophiques que développe Jean de Meun sont longuement exposés dans ses oeuvres.” It may be useful to note that this book is issued from Publications de L’institut d’études médiévale Albert-le-Grand, for the justification presented here meshes oddly with his conclusions about Jean de Meun below. Albert, although a Dominican (read mendicant), was one of the great pioneers of a “purer” Aristotelianism in the Middle Ages. He was the master of St. Thomas, the latter was more optimistic about applying reason to faith. Jean de Meun relates to them both insofar as they are all Aristotelians, but his is, of course, more closely connected to the Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle than either of the above mendicants, something which the author himself recognizes, 342: “[Jean] participe à la mentalité réaliste des bourgeois de son époque, *plus particulièrement à l’esprit raisonneur et souvent frondeur des maîtres contemporains de l’Université de Paris.*” (Italics are my own)

controversial passage on this very subject, one which polarized St. Thomas Aquinas against the Averroists and which retains some of its enigmatic quality still to this day:

Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but absolutely it is not prior even in time. It does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (we do not remember because, while this is impassible, passive thought is perishable); and without this nothing thinks.³⁴³

Barnes's translation of the *nous poietikos*,³⁴⁴ or *intellectus agens*, brings us right to the heart of this controversy.³⁴⁵ While 'knowledge' is certainly not a common personification in "literal" English, the disembodied 'agent intellect' is a substantive that, when a subject for a predicate, quickly resembles a personification allegory. For when given a rationalistic (albeit highly NeoPlatonic) explanation by the likes of Avicenna, and as McKlinton suggested, the highly "substantive" translation of these works from the Arabic to the Latin may have made this now allegorical theory of the intellects seem like a fit tool for explaining reality *ad litteram*. This tendency provoked the ire of St. Thomas, who wrote *De Unitate Intellectus (contra Averroistas)*, a work coterminous with the first condemnation of 1270 and about which Jon Marenbon has said:

Aquinas, who is normally a balanced, respectful participant in argument, takes an unusually scornful attitude. He seems to have been stung by the Arts Masters' claims that the Latins had misunderstood Aristotle's doctrine of the intellect [...] Aquinas also attacks another sort of presumption: he complains that the Arts Masters have treated subjects which are matters of revelation and so beyond their competence, alluding to the

³⁴³ Aristotle, *De Anima*. 3.5.

³⁴⁴ Greek terminology found in Kuksewicz, Z. "The potential and the agent intellect" (595) in *CHLMP*, 595-602.

³⁴⁵ Barnes still finds Aristotle's characterization of thought in the *De Anima* to be both paradoxical and "obscure": "The special status of thought depends upon the view that thinking does not involve any corporeal activity. But how can Aristotle hold such a view? His general account of the soul makes it plain that thinking is something done by 'natural organic bodies', and his particular analysis of the nature of thought makes thinking dependent upon imagination and hence upon perception." *Aristotle: Short Introduction*, 109.

question of whether the souls of the damned are tortured by corporeal fire in Hell, treated by Siger in his commentary on *On the Soul* in a skeptical manner.”³⁴⁶

Aquinas said that Aristotle’s remark on the *intellectus agens* is in reference to the intellectual human soul as the actualized form of the substantial body, eventually separated from the body in death and living eternally, thus bringing the Philosopher into accordance with Christian doctrine, and indeed Themistius and Algazali (also quite tendentiously in the case of Avicenna). By contrast, he scathingly dubs Averroes “not so much a Peripatetic as a perverter (*depravator*) of Peripatetic philosophy.”³⁴⁷ And the principle reason for this tract is stated in the first *caput*, and one that was addressed in Nature’s discussion of divine foreknowledge and contingency, namely, how responsible is man for his own actions? The Averroists did not share the belief in the individuation of the human soul (as regards the immaterial aspect of the soul that contemplates intelligible concepts), because Averroes had demonstrated, using Aristotle’s logic, that if it were individuated, knowledge would only be particular rather than universal, thus this belief

³⁴⁶ Marenbon, 264. Though a staunch opponent of Siger, Aquinas opposed the Averroists mostly for their doctrine of the soul, but his zeal for Aristotle meant that many of his theses were also subject to censure in the second condemnation. Although a mendicant, and indeed far more orthodox than Jean de Meun, the two are also united with respect to their defense against heresy, something which comes to the fore in his tract of the same year, dealing with the other major Averroist controversy, *De Aeternitate Mundi*. It must be said that Aquinas finds no rational arguments against the eternity of the world, rather the truth was laid down by revelation. In his philosophical interrogation on the world’s eternity “[Aquinas] is very keen to emphasize that, in the sort of questions he is considering, to give the wrong answer is not heretical, just as it is not heretical to say that God can alter the past, although it is, Aquinas believes, untrue.” (Marenbon, 260) But there is no question Aquinas would not have approved of Jean de Meun’s light treatment of Scripture, Indeed, Jean de Meun’s “hellfire and brimstone” account of hell is reserved for ‘sterile’ men in at the close of Nature’s speech, where a number of Biblical and mythological forms of torture intermingle humorously [19270-19322]. In this sense, Jean de Meun’s work seems more overtly subversive than the philosophical tracts of Siger.

³⁴⁷ Aquinas, *De Unitate Intellectus*, caput 2: « Haec autem praemisimus, non quasi volentes ex philosophorum auctoritatibus reprobare suprapositum errorem, sed ut ostendamus, quod non soli Latini, quorum verba quibusdam non sapiunt, sed etiam Graeci et Arabes hoc senserunt, *quod intellectus sit pars vel potentia seu virtus animae quae est corporis forma*. Unde miror ex quibus Peripateticis hunc errorem se assumpsisse gloriantur, nisi forte quia minus volunt cum ceteris Peripateticis recte sapere, *quam cum Averroie oberrare, qui non tam fuit Peripateticus, quam philosophiae Peripateticae depravator*. » (<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html>) Italics mine.

was always a logical one, and only remotely psychological. It is now clear that Aristotle's natural philosophy and philosophy of mind, when combined with his abstruse metaphysics and ontology of the universal, yielded numerous insoluble heresies for this generation of thinkers.

When the work ends, what remains is the actualized knowledge gained from the *Rose*, which, in the naturalistic leanings of its author, will become, like procreative generation, a means of achieving immortality. This remark would also clarify just why and how the *Rose* seems to de-allegorize its materials; it is precisely because his Aristotelianism is still indebted to the "science" of the intellects which reads more like theological allegory in our own time. Although the allegory may obscure the level of reality Jean de Meun actually granted to the personifications in the *Rose*, he does seem to forsake individual psychology in favor of objective knowledge. Jean de Meun's contemporaries at the Arts Faculty were accused of heresy, perhaps in part due to quibbles arising perhaps not directly from their individual thought, but from the transmission of their authority via translation, where, in the case of Greek or Arabic into Latin, treatises on the mind may have evolved into 'separable' allegories. It seems to me that this strain of Arab Aristotelianism may be, to borrow Jameson's term, a "vanishing mediator" between the logic and the ethics of the *Rose*. And this naturalistic and rationalistic theology has given rise to an extremely bizarre allegory, one that literalizes and vulgarizes its source materials in order to preserve its didactic, and often subversive, thrust.

Conclusion

As we saw in the introduction and first chapter, the concept of providence took two major strains in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, namely, the exegetical and the philosophical. Boethius partially bridged the gap between the two with his poetic, philosophical, and theological work *De Consolatio Philosophiae*. It is clear that the two strains were never antithetical, and often fed into each other. But it is my contention that this was never so much the case as in the thirteenth century, where the growing number of *summae* attested to such syncretic methodology. The slow and cautious incorporation of Aristotle into the university curriculum seems now to owe mostly to the fear of controverting the Christian doctrine of providence. The theological romances that I have examined here, the *Queste del Saint Graal* and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, both rely on this concept for their internal narrative logic, despite little other generic affinity.

At first glance, the *Queste* pertains almost entirely to the exegetical strand of providence, that is to say in the historical *allegoria in factis*. The 'élus' reveal the concept of predestination, with Galahad depicted explicitly as a Christ-like redeemer. The 'écu merveilleux' and 'siège périlleux' offer examples of etiological transmission of substance and meaning. Finally, the Tree of Life sequence inserts the narrative into a more universal Christian history. The glossing hermits even give lessons in the correspondence between Old and New Testaments. These are but commonplaces of providential narratives. Given the sway that Providence holds in the narrative, the question of free will is never explicitly evoked, though it is clearly taken for granted.

The hermits' didacticism often spills into discussions of substance as if this notion were integral to understanding providential signification. The exegetical thrust of the work is clear as it logically demonstrates its principles of correspondence between divine and material orders. Its vocabulary is simple but apt and precise for its purposes, and the discernment of providential signification is based on correspondence of predicates, as well as similarities in qualities and attributes of distinct substances. Augustine's ontology is thereby preserved entirely. In fact, in the work's clear Augustinian realism, the term '*senefiance*' is elevated to a transcendent substance, itself a "*chose*", from which the material adventures derive their existence, and not vice versa. While this order is necessarily reversed in the logic of narrative, where gloss follows adventure, the *Queste* is clear in asserting the ontological primacy of the former.

The corresponding adventures and glosses derive from both integumental and parabolic allegory. On a macrostructural level, we see the extended integument of preparation for the Eucharistic sacrament. The reality of transubstantiation is entirely analogous to that of the Holy Grail, as both fully contain the divine substance. Galahad's contact with the divine realities of the grail leads to his final apotheosis. The ending is nothing short of euphoric: one senses the author's faith and fervor in a restored Christian community. Orthodoxy is vindicated as austere trials, chastity, and reliance on intuition lead the way to success in the quest. Based on this theological perspective alone, the attribution of a single author to the *Queste* and *Mort* can be discarded. If Jean Frappier's notion of a single "architect" for the entire *Vulgate* is retained, it likewise cannot be made to account for anything more than continuity of plot and action. In its theological depth and coherence, the *Queste* surely stands alone, separated even from its more militant

predecessor, the *Perlesvaus*.

Though certainly more comical, audacious, and even heretical than the *Queste*, the Jean de Meun's *Rose* continuation is no less prone to moralism. Jean de Meun, unlike the nameless writer of the *Queste*, has chosen the format of the theological romance to prolong the courtly allegorical romance of Guillaume de Lorris. This continuation is just as ethically charged as the more orthodox *Queste*, as Jean de Meun even incorporates vitriolic satire into poem. In recent years, there has been a tendency to interpret Jean's continuation more literally, especially as regards the Nature/Genius section. This impetus is noticeable even in the works of C.S. Lewis (*Allegory of Love*, 1936) and Alan Gunn (*Mirror of Love*, 1952), but has been further bolstered by the work of Alastair Minnis (*Magister Amoris*, 2001) and Winthrop Wetherbee ("The literal and the allegorical", 1971). This seems to be more in keeping with the direct style of Jean's poetry and preserves the emphatic force of his moral and theological disquisitions.

Indeed, critical discussions of providence in the *Rose* were somewhat stagnated by a common tendency (e.g., Robertson, Dahlberg, Fleming) to reduce the work's theology to Augustinianism. Critics who took the *Rose* as a work of Christian apologetics had to concede that the dominant form of allegory in the work is extended narrative irony, i.e., a depiction of the effects of the fall. This interpretation should now be as obsolete as Fleming's cursory dismissal of Paré's findings.³⁴⁸ Unlike in the *Queste*, the survival of the individual soul is moot in the Averroistic scheme of Nature and Genius. However unorthodox this duo may be, they manage to resolve (allegorically) the previous stalemate between the vices and virtues. Genius even suggests that we are reading a salvation narrative, for in procreative coitus of the work's

³⁴⁸ Fleming, 30n.

conclusion, the immortality of the species is safeguarded.

Like the ending of the *Queste*, then, that of the *Rose* exemplifies a similar euphoric tone, as both have made divine providence manifest in the terrestrial realm, the former through the symbolic fulfillment of the sacrament, and the latter through the eternally radiating intellects and the generation of sublunary things. Since the deity depicted by Jean de Meun shows little trace of anthropomorphism, but rather, in typical and orthodox Scholastic formulation, is an utterly simple entity which “sees” everything as an eternal present, one may puzzle that he even keeps the term providence in the first place. Even Aquinas, the bitter enemy of the Averroists, had mentioned that the term ‘knowledge’ and, by extension, ‘providence’, were always analogous, since the divine and human realities never corresponded entirely. We should not be surprised then, that Jean de Meun is expounding his vision of man with the terms that describe reality most universally.

It is the materialism undergirding the Nature/Genius section that makes it so radical. This is not to say that Jean de Meun did not believe in immaterial substances, which is patently false, but rather that man is subject to a determinism that is entirely material and natural (reproductive libido, astrology, being animal). Aristotle’s discussions of substance therefore abound in the *Rose*, beginning with Reason’s first *disputatio* on the use of proper terms for the generative organs. Indeed, without the emergent Aristotelian metaphysics and naturalistic documents, it would be hard to distinguish clearly between the ideology/theology of the Jean’s *Rose* and Alain’s *De Planctu*, despite their thematic similarity. We can now see more clearly how Jean de Meun revises the ideology of the *Queste* just as much as that of Guillaume’s *Rose*. The

anti-sacramental verve of Jean de Meun's *Rose* is not simply a matter of iconoclasm, or even the clash with the mendicant friars. Rather, it seems to be sacramental ideology more generally that seems to be his principal target. If Alain de Lille had suggested that man's fall from his true nature was due to his propensity to sin, in Jean de Meun, it is the constraint of the sacraments that is posited as the source of the Fall.

It is fitting that the most celebrated heir of the theological romance tradition should attempt to reconcile partially such conflicting takes on the concept of providence in his precursors. In *Paradiso*, canto X, Dante the poet finds himself in the solar sphere, surrounded concentrically by beatified spirits, who have advanced the wisdom of the faithful with their writings. Saint Thomas Aquinas (v. 99) steps forward to reveal himself and his master Albert the Great. Other notable members of the circle include Boethius, Peter Lombard, Isidore, Bede and Richard of Saint Victor. The most noteworthy of all, however, is the last to be introduced. It is none other than Thomas Aquinas's secular adversary, Siger of Brabant:

Questi onde a me ritorna il tuo riguardo,
è 'l lume d'uno spirto che 'n pensieri
gravi a morir li parve venir tardo:

essa è la luce eterna di Sigieri,
che, leggendo nel Vico de li Strami,
silogizzò invidiosi veri. (133-8)

[This light from which your eyes return to me/ shines from a soul once given to grave thoughts, who mourned that death should be so slow to come:/ this is the endless radiance of Siger,/ who lectured on the Street of Straw, exposing invidiously logical beliefs.]³⁴⁹

In the less than fifty years after the publication of the *Rose*, Dante providentially re-writes (to nullification) the crux of the controversy expounded by Jean de Meun. Thomas is not

³⁴⁹ *Portable Dante*, ed. Musa (452).

just sympathetic to Siger in this moment; in the celestial realm, Siger's light is the conduit of the shared vision of the poet and theologian. As both souls have drawn closer to the realm of divine providence, Thomas recognizes the similarity of his fellow philosopher's endeavor. The beatified Siger had merely "syllogized" his "disreputable truths" (*silogizzò invidiosi veri*, v. 138). Dante's endlessly evocative juxtaposition of these Scholastic adversaries lacks any foundation in real history, but we can see that divine providence can unite that which is thought to be reconcilable. In this fictional world, the thirteenth-century disputes over divine providence which led to the great condemnations are recast as falling under the domain of providence as well. This is the privileged perspective of the poet who has been granted a glance at human history from the perspective of eternity, and one which is said to bring eternal beatitude at the end of this same canto.

Dante's elucidation of providence is more esoteric and less rationalistic in methodology in method than Jean de Meun's, although both authors accord in their notion of providence as a transcendent reality that subsumes all others, and this seems to be shared by both exegetical and philosophical explanations. Despite the staggering commonality implicit in this rendering, the works in this corpus depict a providence that is hardly monolithic. Few works of art attempt to explain the totality of existence, and these providential narratives distinguish themselves in such an endeavor. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, a faulty or incomplete gloss of providence may alter one's perspective on the entire romance. And if we think again of Jameson's vague periodization in the political unconscious, we see clearly that these works are not "magical narratives", effecting fanciful resolutions to narrative problems,

but rather belong to a qualitatively different “providential” narrative. In other words, their utopian visions are depicted as real possibilities in a currently imperfect world.

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