

# Animals as Images in Medieval Mirrors of Sins

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This article explores the ways in which animals are used as images in Middle Dutch Mirrors of sins. As a corpus I have used all edited discussions of the seven deadly sins, whether they survive as separate treatises or as part of a larger whole. In this material animals are used as images for (aspects of) men, Christ, sins, and the devil. Animals are used as metaphors, as examples and as allegories. It is shown how animals are used in these ways to elucidate aspects of the argument of the text. To place the presented data in context the results are linked to the diverse ways in which the texts try to achieve their catechetical aims.

Some articles have a very long incubation period. The origin of this article, for instance, dates back to the autumn of 2001. I was then working on my inaugural lecture<sup>1</sup> about a Middle Dutch miscellany with religious texts and religious images, and in the first text of that miscellany, a catechetical text called *Wech der salicheyt* (*Way of Salvation*), I read:

Die hoverdege is gelijc der hinnen, want ghelijc dat de hinne vele kakelt ende groet ghescal maect om .i. clein ey, also doet de hoverdege om .i. clein goet dat hi doet. Hi beroemes hem vele ende wille daer of seere gheprijsjt sijn.<sup>2</sup>

The prideful man is like a hen, because just like the hen cackles a lot and makes much noise because of a small egg, so the prideful man behaves in a comparable way because of something small that he does. He brags much about it and wants to be praised excessively.

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1. Paul Wackers, *Terug naar de bron*, inaugural lecture 26.04.2002 (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, Faculteit der Letteren, 2002).

2. *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*. Hs. Wiesbaden, *Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10*, Kritische editie ingeleid en bezorgd door Hans Kienhorst en Kees Schepers. Met bijdragen aan de inleiding van Amand Berteloot en Paul Wackers (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), 156, ll. 474–478.

I liked that image, thought that this way of using imagery to illustrate the mind of a sinner was interesting and wanted to do more with that, but it did not fit into the larger whole that I was creating. So I dropped it but I never forgot it and when the 22nd colloquium of the International Reynard Society in Reading was announced with 'animals as image' as one of the preferred themes, I thought this was a good opportunity to delve further into the way animals are used as images to elucidate aspects of sinners and sins.

Thus I have collected all the passages in edited Middle Dutch texts in which the seven (or eight) deadly sins are discussed.<sup>3</sup> There are very many texts in Middle Dutch that deal with that topic, but most are only available in manuscript form, and for a first survey it seemed sensible to study only the edited texts. In chronological order (as far as that can be determined) these are:<sup>4</sup>

The *Nieuwe doctrinael* (*New Manual*) by Jan de Weert. Jan was a physician in Ypres and lived in the 14th century. He wrote his book for his fellow burghers because he wanted not only to care for their bodily but also for their spiritual wellbeing. It contains information about the deadly sins, the ten commandments and confession.<sup>5</sup>

The *Tafel van den kersten ghelove* (*Table of the Christian Belief*) by Dirc van Delft. Dirc was chaplain of Albrecht, count of Holland, in the second half of the 14th century and professor at the university of Erfurt. His book is a complete summa for the nobility and discusses history, ethics and worldly subjects. The deadly sins form but a small part of the whole.<sup>6</sup>

The *Spiegel der sonden* (*Mirror of Sins*). This is an anonymous text that was written in verse somewhere in the 14th century and was adapted in prose somewhere in the 15th century. Its sole subject are the eight deadly sins. It was based on Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis* but the verse text adapts Peraldus' material

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3. After the fourth Lateran Council William Peraldus wrote his immensely influential *Summa de vitiis*. In this text he added the sin of the tongue to the traditional seven deadly sins. Large parts of the tradition after him also contain eight deadly sins. Cf. <http://www.unc.edu/~swenzel/peraldus.html> (last consulted 8.9.2017).

4. Here I am giving a global characterisation. In the appendix the basic technical and bibliographical information about these texts and their editions is given. There they are placed in alphabetical order.

5. Cf. Frits van Oostrom, *Wereld in woorden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1300–1400* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013), 132–36.

6. Cf. *Ibid.*, 465–70.

by shortening, and adding of explanations, comparisons and exempla, etc.<sup>7</sup> The prose version follows closely the preceding verse version.

The *Cancellierboeck* (*Book of the Chancellor*). This anonymous text from the 14th century is based on two Latin texts by Robert de Sorbon, the first chancellor of the Parisian university. It discusses much religious material within the image of studying for an examination to be admitted to the university. The setting of the content is academic, but the text is meant for lay people.<sup>8</sup>

The *Des coninx summe* (*The King's Compendium*) by Jan van Brederode. Jan was a member of an important noble family in the county of Holland. He wrote his translation of the French *Somme le roi* while he was *convers* (lay brother) in the Carthusian monastery Zelem near Diest in the Bishopric Liège around 1400. The book treats the ten commandments, the twelve articles of the faith, the seven sacraments, the seven deadly sins, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and many more religious subjects.<sup>9</sup>

*Tghelove* (*Our Belief*). This is a confession formula and consists mainly out of lists of, for instance, the ten commandments, the twelve articles of the faith, the seven sacraments, the seven deadly sins, etc.<sup>10</sup> We know it from one manuscript from the beginning of the 15th century.

The *Wech der salicheit* (*Way of Salvation*). This is an important catechetical text that we know not only from manuscripts but also from three incunabula. It treats many religious subjects and is written, according to the prologue, for simple people who do not know Latin.<sup>11</sup>

Only the *Spiegel der sonden* is a mirror of sins in the strict sense of the word. Most of the others are catechetical tracts that cover many subjects because they want to serve the complete spiritual development. And, as already stated, *Tghelove* is a confession formula, and the *Tafel vanden kersten ghelove* a summa for the nobility.

7. Cf. Hans Neumann, "Der westflämische 'Spiegel der Sonden' und seine Quelle," in: Unterscheidung und Bewahrung. Festschrift für Hermann Kunisch, hrsg. von Klaus Lazarowicz und Wolfgang Kron (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961), 277–93. Van Oostrom, *Wereld in woorden*, 194–96.

8. Cf. Van Oostrom, *Wereld in woorden*, 187–88 and the introduction to the edition (see the appendix).

9. Cf. Frits van Oostrom, *Nobel streven. Het onwaarschijnlijke maar waargebeurde verhaal van ridder Jan van Brederode* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017), 139–67.

10. Cf. the introduction to the edition (see the appendix).

11. This text deserves a study of its own but that must yet be written. Cf. for now Wackers, *Terug naar de bron* and the introduction to the edition (see the appendix).

I have read all the parts in these texts about the deadly sins and found much material, but it was not evenly spread.<sup>12</sup> Two texts, the *Canceliersboeck* and *Tghe-love*, contain no images of animals, and one, the *Spieghel der sonden*, contains more than 70% of all the material. I will come back to this imbalance at the end of my paper.

The animal imagery is fairly evenly divided over the deadly sins as can be seen in the following table:

| Sins              | Texts | Images |
|-------------------|-------|--------|
| Greed             | 4     | 24     |
| Pride             | 3     | 14     |
| Sloth             | 2     | 14     |
| Sin of the tongue | 2     | 13     |
| Lechery           | 3     | 8      |
| Gluttony          | 3     | 7      |
| Envy              | 2     | 6      |
| Wrath             | 2     | 6      |
| <i>General</i>    | 3     | 14     |

The sins are ordered according to the number of different images that are used within the treatments of that sin (column 3). The second column gives the number of texts in which animals are used as images. The category 'general' in the first column refers to introductions and passages in which the deadly sins are treated as a group.

It must be stressed, however, that this selection of animals as image from the material is highly artificial. The imagery in mirrors of sin and in catechetical texts is in fact very diverse, and the animal imagery is neither peculiar nor isolated. A very interesting example of this is found in Chapter 31 of the *Spiegel der sonden* which is titled: *Vracken slachten der helle, der doot, der zee, den hond, den mol* ('Misers resemble hell, death, the sea, the dog and the mole').<sup>13</sup> The chapter itself explains why the resemblances exist: hell and death are never filled, nor is the miser. The sea always takes the water of rivers but never gives it back. So does the

12. In *Des coninx summe* I have also used the general introduction to the text, because that deals with the nature and the effect of sins, and the part on the seven virtues because those are presented as remedies against the deadly sins.

13. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Jacob Verdam, 2 vols. (Leyden: Brill, 1900–1901), vol. 1, 48. When I refer to the *Spiegel der sonden*, I refer to the verse version unless stated otherwise.

miser. When a dog gets a piece of bread he swallows it whole and immediately wants a new one. In the same way the miser takes everything he can get and wants ever more. And the mole roots continually and blindly in the soil. So wallows the miser blindly in earthly, perishable goods.

So when I concentrate in the following on imagery in which animals play a role I am taking a part out of a larger whole and to understand my findings completely they should also be integrated in a study of imagery in general in mirrors of sins or in catechetical texts. But one point is true and important for all imagery including that involving animals: the image is always created on the basis of one property of the creature used. This is of course a general aspect of metaphorical language but I think in a medieval context it may mean more and I shall return to this in due course.

Now to animals as images. To what do they refer and how do they create an image? Let us start with the first. Animals are used as images for Christ, for sins, for devils and most often for humans or aspects of humans.

In my material there is only one place where an animal is used as an image for Christ. This is in the prose version of the *Spiegel der sonden*. There it is said in the introduction that God hates the sins and that the third reason for that is that he let his only son be tortured and killed to kill the sins.<sup>14</sup> And then follows: *Hier afscrijft sunte Augustinus: "Doe dit onnosel lam starf, doe wart gecruset die sunde."* [About this Saint Augustine writes: "When this innocent lamb died sin was crucified."] <sup>15</sup> The lamb is of course a preferred symbol of Christ since the early phases of Christianity. Nevertheless this is an interesting passage because it is stated that the death of Christ results in the crucifixion of the sins.

Twice animals are used as an image of sins. In the first chapter on sloth in the *Spiegel der Sonden* Ecclesiastes 21, 2 is quoted:

Hier toe mach tword wel gesecht wesen,  
Dat wi in Ecclesiaste lesen:  
"Du must pinen sonde te vliene,  
Als dat serpent dat verslaet met siene."<sup>16</sup>

Regarding this the word may well be said / that we read in Ecclesiastes: / "You must strive to flee the sins as you do the snake that kills you when it sees you."<sup>17</sup>

14. When I use 'the sins' instead of the more usual modern expression 'sin' there is a plural in the Middle Dutch passage I am discussing.

15. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 2, 11, ll. 34–36.

16. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 4, vv. 248–50. Cf. Eccl. 21:2.

17. The Middle Dutch wording is ambiguous. I have translated following Ecclesiasticus. Another possible translation, however, would be: "... that kills with its look."

So here the snake is an image for all sins and especially for sloth. In the *Tafel van den kersten gelove* the seven deadly sins are presented as animals:

... die wrede beesten, dat sijn die seven hoofsonden ... als sijn dese: die lewe der hoverdicheit, die hont der nidicheit, die wolfs des toorns, die esel der traechheit, die eghel der giericheit, die beer der gulsicheit, die swijn der oncuusheit.<sup>18</sup>

... the cruel animals, that are the seven deadly sins ... namely: the lion of pride, the dog of envy, the wolf of wrath, the ass of sloth, the hedgehog of greed, the bear of gluttony, the swine of lechery.

This list is not completely traditional but is in part an invention of Dirc van Delft. Mireille Vincent-Cassy states that in the 15th century there was a fixed list in religious texts for simple people of seven animals as emblems for the seven deadly sins: lion–pride, mole–greed, goat–lechery, boar–wrath, pig–gluttony, dog–envy, and ass–sloth. Before the 15th century, however, and in other types of texts many other animals could be used to represent the deadly sins.<sup>19</sup> We see in Dirc’s text the lion, the dog and the ass, which were probably fairly traditional already in his time. And when he uses other animals, his choice is always understandable. After all a wolf is as wild a beast as is a boar. And even the hedgehog is fitting, because he gathers grapes on his quills. In the *Physiologus* and in some French bestiaries this behaviour of the hedgehog is linked to the devil.<sup>20</sup> Here it is linked to greed.

Animals are used as an image of devils in statements such as that we must fly from the devil as from a snake<sup>21</sup> – compare the snake as an image for sins, especially sloth, cited above – or in extended comparisons such as when it is said that a

18. Dirc van Delf, *Tafel van den kersten ghelove*, ed. L. M. Fr. Daniëls, 3 vols. (Antwerpen: Neerlandia / Nijmegen: Dekker & V.d. Vegt, 1937–1939), IIIa, 43, ll. 293–299.

19. Mireille Vincent-Cassy, “Les animaux et les péchés capitaux: de la symbolique à l’emblématique,” in *Actes du XVème Congrès de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l’Enseignement Supérieur Public, Toulouse, 25–26 mai 1984, Le monde animal et ses représentations au moyen-âge (XI<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)* 15 (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1985), 121–32. As proof she refers among others to Appendix I in Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins. An introduction to the History of a Religious Concept with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (Michigan: State College Press, 1952), 245–49. In this appendix 115 animals are listed as representing one of the deadly sins. I have not made a comparable list because Vincent-Cassy and Bloomfield write about animals as allegory or emblem of a specific deadly sin, while I study all the ways in which animals are used as images (for in principle whatever) in the context of writings about the deadly sins.

20. Cf. Clara Wille, “Quelques observations sur le porc-épic et le hérisson dans la littérature et l’iconographie médiévale,” *Reinardus* 17 (2004): esp. 192–195 (181–201).

21. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 2, 13, ll. 20–32, esp. 29–32.

crow with a hard nut flies high into the air and then drops the nut so that the rind breaks and he can eat the inner fruit. So does the devil with humble people. He gives them a high position. Then they become proud, their shell cracks and they become his prey (a splendid image, and completely matching the actual behaviour of the crow!).<sup>22</sup>

Most often animals are used as an image for humans or for a human trait. Examples of the first are the comparison of the prideful man with a chicken with which I began or the characterisation of an envious person as the devil's owl or bat because he cannot see the virtues of others just as an owl or a bat cannot see the clear daylight.<sup>23</sup> An example of the second is the statement that the worm is the gnawing of the conscience that always follows a bad deed.<sup>24</sup> The way this imagery is used will become clearer during the discussion of the next point, i.e. how animals function as images, because animal imagery points almost always to humans.

Animals are used as examples, in metaphors or comparisons, and as allegories.<sup>25</sup> They will be discussed in this order.

Animals are used as examples when their behaviour is contrasted with that of humans. A famous example is the biblical admonition of Proverbs (6:6–8) to the sluggard to go to the ants and follow their example. This is quoted both in the *Spiegel der sonden* and in the *Wech der salicheit* during the discussion of sloth.<sup>26</sup> In the majority of these cases the contrast is that animals behave in a natural way, and humans do not. Hence the *Nieuwe doctrinael* (*New Manual*) states that animals are content with water while we overeat from strange dishes, become sick and then need medical care (rr.1414–15).<sup>27</sup> The *Spiegel der sonden* says during the

22. Ibid., vol. 1, 137–138, vv. 10760–76.

23. *Des coninx summe*, ed. D.C. Tinbergen (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1907), 246, Section 48.

24. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 8, vv. 540–44.

25. There are a number of places in my material where animals play a role without being an image. So it is said for example that the miser does not want to burden his donkey too much but does not mind his own burden of possessions at all (*Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 46, vv. 3614–23), or that humans can tame all animals but not their own tongue (*Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 189, vv. 14710–15; cf. Letter of James 3:7–8), or that the way of an eagle in the air or that of a serpent over stone is unknowable (*Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 64, vv. 5024–34; cf. Proverbs 30:19). Some of these are very interesting but as they do not involve animals as images I will leave them out.

26. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 100–01, vv. 7896–7904; *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*, ed. Kienhorst en Schepers, 162, ll. 677–682.

27. Jan de Weert, *Nieuwe doctrinael of spiegel van sonden*, ed. J. A. Jacobs (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915), 245–46, vv. 1414–33. Note that the author was a physician....

discussion of Pride that too many or too luxurious clothes are sinful and then cites as an example a maiden that did not want to wear dyed cloth explaining that sheep are content with undyed wool.<sup>28</sup> Very often the contrast lies also in the willingness to help others. *Des coninx summe* characterises this behaviour explicitly as natural. The text states that greed can be countered by mercy and charity and the first impulse towards those virtues in humans should be nature, because:

... alser ghescreven staet inden boec der naturen vanden beesten: “Gheen vogel en eet dat ander, dat van sijnre naturen is”. Voert staeter in dat selve boec, dat een merrye voedet dat voelen eenre ander merrÿen die gestorven is. Voert is dicke ghesien ende gheproeft, dat die coye voedet die ionghen, die wech gheworpen waren, ende bescuddense van anderen beesten. Daer om soude een mensch billix ontfermherticheit hebben ende medeliden van dat verdriet eens anders die sijns ghelijc is inder naturen, want wi sijn alle van éénre naturen, van éénre formen ende ghemaect nae énen beelde, als voerseit is.<sup>29</sup>

... as is written in the book of the natures of the animals: “No bird eats another from the same species.” And in the same book it is written elsewhere that a mare feeds the foal of another mare who has died just as a cow feeds a calf that has been rejected and protects it against other animals. Therefore humans should have mercy for the trouble of another who has the same nature, because we all have the same nature, the same form, and we are created in the same image, as has been said before.

Mirroring this quotation are places where it is said for instance that swine mourn the sorrow of other swine but that envious people gloat over the woe of others.<sup>30</sup> It is never stated explicitly but very often there are hints that this superiority of animal behaviour should not exist because humans possess reason and the other animals do not, so in fact humans are obliged to behave better than animals, not worse.

Most of the metaphors in which animals are used for humans are fairly simple: an animal and a sinner are alike because they share a property. In this respect *Des coninx summe* is very interesting because that text compares often a sinner with an animal and during the discussion of the sins of the tongue it does it systematically: a series of subspecies of sinners is compared each time with another animal.

28. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 149, vv. 11614–24.

29. *Des coninx summe*, ed. Tinbergen, 422, Section 423. Cf. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 85, vv. 6633–45.

30. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 177, vv. 13783–86.



Flatterers and scandalmongers are discussed in combination:

Dit sijn die twee serenen, daer wi inden boec of lesen, daer die beesten nature in bescreven is, datmen Bestiarius heet.<sup>31</sup>

These are the two types of siren of which we read in the book that describes the nature of the beasts and that is called Bestiarius.

The first type of siren are half women, half fish and have claws like an eagle. These sing so beautifully that they cause sailors to sleep so that their ship perishes. In such a way flatterers fill the ears of other people with sweet sounds so that they fall asleep in their sins.<sup>32</sup> The other type of siren is like a snake and its poison is so strong that one dies even before one feels the bite. These are the scandalmongers, for their poison kills three people at the same time: the speaker itself, his object and the listener.<sup>33</sup> (To explain this: the speaker and the listener are killed because they participate in a sin, the object is killed because his social reputation is damaged.) Scandalmongers may also be compared to hyenas. Those animals excavate corpses and eat them. In the same way scandalmongers attack religious people who have died for the world.<sup>34</sup> Liars resemble the chameleon because both change their form and their colour to deceive.<sup>35</sup> Grumblers are like swine because their words stay within their mouths and resemble the grunting of swine.<sup>36</sup>

What is remarkable in this series is that sometimes it is said that the sinner is *like* the animal, and at other times that the sinners *are* the animal. This phrasing links these passages with allegory, i.e. with the idea that the world is a book written by God's hand and that the creatures are all words that he has given us to understand truth.<sup>37</sup>

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31. *Des coninx summe*, ed. Tinbergen, 299, Section 146. The information on the two types of siren is correct. See for instance: Willene B. Clark, *A medieval book of beasts. The second family bestiary* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), Chapter 70 (179) and Chapter 101 (200).

32. *Des coninx summe*, ed. Tinbergen, 299, Section 146.

33. *Ibid.*, 299–300, Section 146.

34. *Ibid.*, 300, Section 147.

35. *Ibid.*, 302, Section 150.

36. *Ibid.*, 308–09, Section 160.

37. Cf. Hugo of St. Victor, *Didascalicon VII, IV (Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina sive bibliotheca universalis, integra, uniformis, commoda, oeconomica, omnium ss. patrum, doctorum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum, qui ab aevo apostolico ad tempora Concilii Tridentini (1216) flourerunt)* accurate Jaques Paul Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1844–1890), 176, col. 814.

As I already stated, there are also instances in my material where animals are clearly interpreted in an allegorical way. These places cover all three subjects for which animals can stand.

*Des coninx summe* opens with a description of the beast from the sea that Saint John the Evangelist described in chapter 13 of his Apocalypse.<sup>38</sup> This beast had seven heads and these are the seven deadly sins. This beast had the power to attack, to capture and to overcome the saints. This is true because nobody can completely escape from sinning and we need divine grace, or we will be eaten by one of the seven heads.

In the *Spiegel der sonden* it is said that contractors often dupe their clients by not building what was promised, but in such a way that it is impossible to prove. These bear the sign of the beast. This refers to the beast from the earth from Apocalypse 13. Nobody on earth is able to buy or to sell, unless he bears the sign of that beast. We must understand that this beast is the devil, whose sign is falsehood and who is the father of lies because he was the first one who lied, namely when he deceived Eve. This is an interesting statement because two different Bible passages are linked to convey the message.<sup>39</sup>

Also in the *Spiegel der sonden* it is said that praying is the bird of the Holy Ghost<sup>40</sup> who brings peace to each creature, and that the dove that Noah sent out of the ark at the end of the flood is an allegory of this because that bird brought back an olive branch, and that is the sign of peace.<sup>41</sup>

Most of the allegories are based on a passage from the Bible but sometimes a 'biological fact' is interpreted allegorically. So it is said that a female stork that has committed adultery washes herself immediately afterwards because otherwise her husband will discover her misdeed and kill her.<sup>42</sup> In the spiritual sense

38. *Des coninx summe*, ed. Tinbergen, 21–22, Sections 21–23. For medieval exegetes John the Evangelist was also the writer of the Apocalypse. Modern exegesis thinks that these two books were written by two different authors.

39. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 58, Chapter 48, vv. 4517–48.

40. I think the wording is important here. Praying *is* the bird of the Holy Ghost. According to me this *is* can be linked to the *id est* in Latin etymological or allegorical explanations.

41. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 92, Chapter 112, vv. 7250–60.

42. This information may not be found in the second family bestiaries nor on [bestiary.ca](http://bestiary.ca) (last consulted 8.9.2017). Baudouin van den Abeele pointed out to me, however, that it appears in Alexander Neckam's *De naturis rerum*, ca. 1200 (I, cap. 64), then in the *Dialogus miraculorum* (10, 59–60) of Caesarius of Heisterbach (died in 1240; quoted in Jacques Berlioz, "Le bel oiseau ambigu," *Gryphe. Revue de la Bibliothèque de Lyon* 5 (2002): 24 (22–27)). It is also present in Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum* (book V, Chapter 28, lines 37–53, with moralisation), copied by Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum naturale*, XVI, Chapter 48, without

(*Gheestelike te verstante*) this means that a soul must wash herself with the tears of repentance, or else she must fear the judgement.<sup>43</sup>

Let us now look back, summarise what we have seen and reflect on what it could mean.

I have discussed animals as images, a part of a larger whole. In catechetical texts and in mirrors of sins, in fact in almost all types of medieval text, everything can mean something else and there are no borders in this system because the links are made on the basis of one property and every thing has very many properties. Moreover, every property can be interpreted *in bono* (in a good way) and *in malo* (in a bad way) and that leads at times to links that we would never make.

Nevertheless there is a preference to use animals as an image for humans or for aspects of human behaviour. This was to be expected because, after all, humans are also animals although of a special type because they are the only rational animals. Thus a difference between human and animal behaviour is almost automatically notable. And it is also not strange that it is often implied that humans are created as superior to animals, and so it is a shame when their behaviour is inferior to that of animals.

I have stated that animals are used as image in three ways: in examples, in metaphors or comparisons, and as allegory. Perhaps it would be better to say that they are used in two ways: as examples or as allegories. The examples are all based on the relationship *and* the difference between humans and animals. They work with the contrasts superior/inferior and natural/unnatural.

I tend to conflate metaphors/comparisons and allegory for a number of reasons. The first is the use of words. That terms like *in figure* which is linked to the Latin term *figura* which means allegory, and *gheestelike*, which means spiritual are used not only when a passage from the Bible is interpreted but also to give meaning to the description of what we would call biological fact, is for me an indication that for the authors of these texts the meaning they described was not only based on their own ingenuity but at least for a part also on the divine order.<sup>44</sup> The second is that sometimes the truth of what is stated is implicitly stressed by referring

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moralisation). It could be also in other collections of exempla. This example shows that it is often in fact impossible to find the specific source for an anecdote in a medieval text. I found it interesting, however, that the encyclopedic texts in this list are the same type of books as are mentioned explicitly in the *Des coninx summe* to support the truth of the presented biological data.

43. *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 14, vv. 1008–23.

44. *In figure: Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, vol. 1, 92, v. 7252. *Gheestelike te verstante: Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Verdam, I, 14, vv. 1018.

to books like the book of the natures of animals (would this be *De proprietatibus rerum*?) and the bestiary – and in the medieval view the truth is always found in books. That facts are described links the attributed meaning to the divine truth. However, I am not completely sure of this, and the subject deserves a far wider study than I can provide here.

And as a last point: I found much material but less than I expected. Can that be explained? That two texts have no animal imagery at all is easy to explain. *Tghelove* is a confession formula, a guide to preparation for confession which consists only of lists. The content and the meaning of those lists are supposed to be known so it is logical that a text of this type contains no imagery. In the *Cancellierboek* the divine judgement is compared to the examination one has to take before the chancellor of the university of Paris before one is allowed to study there. This intellectual context and intellectual imagery are kept throughout the whole book and that no other types of imagery are used contributes to the unity of the text.<sup>45</sup> The other texts contain some images in which animals are used, but on the whole they tend to give their information fairly straight without too much embellishment. And Jan de Weert's *Nieuwe doctrinael* uses mostly examples from the daily life of humans because those examples are the clearest way to explain why a certain behaviour is sinful.<sup>46</sup>

My expectation was that the mirrors of sin would use every possible way to make their subject clearer to their public and that proved wrong. There is only one text that does that, namely the *Spiegel der sonden*. That is by far the longest text from my corpus and it contains a great variety of material. It has for instance far more exempla than any of the others. I am wondering now whether that text was originally designed for clerics to provide them with material to choose from when they had to instruct lay people, as was the case for its source, Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis*.<sup>47</sup> The other texts would then be meant for the laity itself, in any case in the

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45. Cf. Robert de Sorbonne, *Het cancellierboek*, ed. Anton Kessen (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1932), 133–139.

46. Cf. Herman Brinkman, “De stedelijke context van het werk van Jan de Weert (veertiende eeuw),” in *Op belofte van profijt: stadsliteratuur en burgermoraal in de Nederlandse letterkunde van de middeleeuwen*, Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen 4, ed. Herman Pleij et al. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), 101–20, 362–68.

47. This cannot be proven because the prologue of the verse version is missing and the prologue of the prose version does not give any information about the intended public. There are also no other indications of the intended public. Neumann (“Der westflämische ‘Spiegel der sonden’ und seine Quelle,” 284–85) states that the text was meant for lay people but I think the passage he quotes to support this view only shows that the author thinks that lay people should not try to find proof for the Christian belief (in contrast to the clergy for whom this

manuscripts we still have. There are clear arguments for this last supposition. The French source of *Des coninx summe*, the *Somme le roi*, was written by the Dominican Laurent d'Orléans for the French king Philippe III, so it was meant for the laity of the upper nobility. *Des coninx summe* was undoubtedly written for people with a lower status, but there are no indications that it was not meant for the laity. Jan de Weert was a medical doctor in Ypres and he wrote his *Nieuwe Doctrinael* for his patients and fellow burghers.<sup>48</sup> The *Tafel van den kersten ghelove* was written by Dirc van Delft for Albrecht of Bavaria, count of Holland, and all that we can learn about the public of the text points to lay circles.<sup>49</sup> *The Wech van salicheit*, finally, defines its public in the prologue as lay people who do not understand Latin.<sup>50</sup> Although the arguments are sound, however, my supposition remains a hypothesis and a really serious analysis of the intended public of my Middle Dutch corpus transcends the context of this article in all dimensions.

So let me conclude by admonishing us all that we should not be like the hen, the siren or the hyena, but should behave like the cow or the mare.

## Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to Daron Burrows for his correction of my English and to the editors of *Reinardus* for their suggestions.

## Appendix: Middle Dutch Mirrors of Sins

The headings are the names that modern researchers use for the text. The first line contains information about author, localisation and dating, as far as these are known. The second line lists the source(s), the third line the printed edition and a fourth line refers to an electronic edition (new for the *Cancellierboek* and the *Spiegel der sonden*; for the other texts identical to the printed edition).

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is – in moderate form – acceptable) and not that he has meant his text directly and exclusively for them.

48. Cf. Brinkman, “De stedelijke context van het werk van Jan de Weert”.

49. Cf. Frits van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer. Literatuur aan het Hollandse hof omstreeks 1400* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1987), 180–224 = Chapter 5, “Dirc van Delft”. Frits van Oostrom, “Dirc van Delft en zijn lezers,” in: *Het woord aan de lezer. Zeven literatuurhistorische verkenningen*, ed. Willelm van den Berg en Hanna Stouten (Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff, 1987), 49–71.

50. *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*, ed. Kienhorst en Schepers, 143, ll. 17–21.

*Cancellierboek*

Anonymous, loc. unknown, 15th century

Source: Robert de Sorbonne, *De conscientia* and *De tribus dietis*

Edition: *Het cancellierboek*, ed. Anton Kessen (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1932).

[http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/sorb002canc02\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/sorb002canc02_01/)

*Des Coninx Summe*

Jan van Brederode, Carthusian monastery Zelem near Diest, 1408

Source: Frère Laurent, *Somme le roi*

Edition: *Des coninx summe*, ed. D.C. Tinbergen (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1907).

[http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_con001coni01\\_01/index.php](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_con001coni01_01/index.php)

*Tghelove*

Anonymous, Brussels (?), end 14th --beginning 15th century

Source: unknown

Edition: "Tghelove," ed. Thom Mertens, in: *Klein kapitaal uit het handschrift-Van Hulthem: zeventien teksten uit Hs. Brussel, K.B., 15.589-623*, ed. Hans van Dijk, Willem Pieter Gerritsen, Orlanda S.H. Lie en Dieuwke E. van der Poel (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992), 48-56.

[http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_hul001hvan01\\_01/\\_hul001hvan01\\_01\\_0008.php](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_hul001hvan01_01/_hul001hvan01_01_0008.php)

*Nieuwe Doctrinael / Spieghel van Sonden*

Jan de Weert, Ypres, 14th century

Source: unknown

Edition: Jan de Weert, *Nieuwe doctrinael of spieghel van sonden*, ed. J. A. Jacobs (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915).

[http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/weer007jaja01\\_01/weer007jaja01\\_01\\_0001.php](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/weer007jaja01_01/weer007jaja01_01_0001.php)

*Spiegel der Sonden* [verse version and prose version]

Verse: Anonymous, loc. unknown, 14th century; prose: anonymous adaptation of verse text, loc. unknown, 15th century

Source: Peraldus, *Summa de vitiis*

Edition: *Spiegel der sonden*, ed. Jacob Verdam, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1900-1901).

Verse: [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_spi002jver01\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_spi002jver01_01/) - prose: [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/\\_spi002jver02\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_spi002jver02_01/)

*Tafel van den Kersten Ghelove*

Dirc van Delft, The Hague, second half 14th century

Sources: many, most important one = Hugo Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium theologiae veritatis*

Edition: Dirc van Delft, *Tafel van den kersten ghelove*, ed. L. Daniëls, 3 vols. (Antwerpen: Neerlandia / Nijmegen: Dekker & V.d. Veegt, 1937-1939).

[http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dirc001lmfd00\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dirc001lmfd00_01/)

*Wech van Salicheit*

Anonymous, loc. unknown, early 15th century (?)

Sources: Hugo Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium theologiae veritatis*, Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiae*

Edition: *Het Wiesbadense handschrift: Hs. Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10*, ed. Hans Kienhorst en Kees Schepers. Met bijdragen aan de inleiding van Amand Berteloot en Paul Wackers (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), 143–288.

<http://www.textualscholarship.nl/?p=7016>

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