

***NUGAE CURIALIUM RECONSIDERED:***

**John of Salisbury's Court Criticism in the Context of his Political Theory**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis challenges the scholarly convention that the political theory of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* occurs in the fourth, fifth and sixth books of the treatise; and the rest of the book is mainly irrelevant to this theme. By doing this, it highlights thematic and stylistic interconnections between the 'irrelevant' books and the political section with a method of close textual analysis. This holistic approach towards the *Policraticus*, which is regarded as the first thorough political theory of the Middle Ages, demonstrates that John of Salisbury, in contrast to what is generally attributed to him, does not support a hierocratic system, which amounts to the supremacy of the Church over temporal power. On the contrary, he follows a non-hierocratic line by separating the executive mechanisms of spiritual and temporal spheres. Therefore, this thesis proposes that John represents the court as the centre of the temporal sphere; and his court criticism acts as a governmental criticism because John accuses courtiers of neglecting their administrative duties. The philosophical sections of the work are also essential to understand John's political theory because he demonstrates here that man, both as an individual and a political creature, needs the guidance of philosophy. This reconsideration of the political theory in the *Policraticus* is not only instrumental in showing John of Salisbury's place in medieval political thinking but it also lays the groundwork for further investigation into the nature of twelfth-century court criticism.

*To Hasan, for being himself and being with me*

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## INTRODUCTION

John of Salisbury (late 1110s-1180), who is perhaps the best representative of the intellectual revival known to us as twelfth-century renaissance, is considered one of the most influential political theorists of the middle ages. Although our knowledge of his early life is scant, we know through his own accounts that he got his education in Paris from the best tutors of his age between 1136 and 1147. Then, he came back to England as a secretary to the archbishop of Canterbury, Theobald in 1148. He spent the following twelve years in the service of Theobald but mainly travelling between Canterbury and Rome as an emissary to the papal curia. His friendship with Thomas Becket, to whom John dedicated his two major works, the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*, is supposed to have developed in Theobald's court. After Becket was appointed to Canterbury as archbishop upon Theobald's death, John continued his career there. He acted as a counsellor and a secretary as well to Becket in the archbishop's conflict with the King over ecclesiastical rights. After Becket's assassination, he left England, being appointed as the Bishop of Chartres, where he died in 1180.

Owing to his importance as a figure in the centre of the most heated political clashes of his age and the complexity of the web of relations that he established with lay, monastic, and non-monastic personages of his time, John of Salisbury has many reasons to attract significant scholarly attention.<sup>1</sup> As someone who received education from the most outstanding masters of the time such as Peter Abelard, Robert of Melun, William of Conches, and Bernard of Chartres; who resided in the Canterbury curia in the capacity of

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<sup>1</sup> For the most recent bibliography on John of Salisbury, see Cary J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* Volume 288 (Tempe: Arizona State University/ Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).

the archbishop's secretary; who came to be a friend and an active defendant of Thomas Becket during his conflict with King Henry II; and who happened to be present in Papal curia in various instances, it is not surprising that John of Salisbury should be the subject of such scholarly interest. Besides having significance as someone close to the most outstanding political figures of the age, he has also aroused considerable scholarly interest for being the author of the *Policraticus*, which is sometimes regarded as the first major political treatise of the middle ages, and of the *Metalogicon*, which provides us with invaluable information about the practical and theoretical trends in Parisian educational centres on the eve of the appearance of the first universities.

In spite of all the scholarly interest and investigation into John of Salisbury, especially that of Cary J. Nederman, “who has almost single-handedly sustained the Salisburian scholarship for the last twenty years,”<sup>2</sup> as Quentin Taylor rightly observes, there still exist some issues that remain vague, misinterpreted, or even untouched both about himself and his works. His most famous work, the *Policraticus sive de nugis curialium et de vestigiis philosophorum*, for example, despite all the efforts of Nederman, who has examined the work in various contexts, has only been partly appreciated. The treatise has been continuously discussed only within the context of the fourth, fifth and sixth books where John presents his political theory more explicitly and elaborately. A.G. Rigg, for example, states that “the *Policraticus* is rambling and diffuse; it wanders from topic to topic with no apparent plan and no beginning or end ... Apart from IV-V (on tyranny) it is hard to discern a single theme for any part of the work.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Canning asserts that “although it [*Policraticus*] has often been treated as the first political thought

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<sup>2</sup> Quentin Taylor, “John of Salisbury, the *Policraticus*, and Political Thought.” *Humanitas* 19, no. 1/2 (2006), 134.

<sup>3</sup> A. G. Rigg, *History of Anglo-Latin Literature: 1066-1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 75.



treatise of the middle ages, this approach is misleading because it could only in part conform to such a description.”<sup>4</sup> The same kind of an approach has led Quentin Taylor in a quite recent article to suggest that “only about half of the *Policraticus*, a tome of some 250,000 words, falls under the category of political thought liberally defined. It is this part of the work, the so-called ‘Statesman’s Book’ (viz., books 4, 5, and 6) ...which has most interested modern scholars.”<sup>5</sup> This study aims to address this common failure in the scholarship by highlighting the interconnections between the more overtly ‘political’ sections and the rest of the work that have conventionally been left out on the grounds that they are irrelevant to the main argument. It will be argued that the true political claim of the *Policraticus* can be deduced only if the first three and the final two books of the treatise are also taken into consideration.

The *Policraticus*, completed in mid-1159, is composed of eight books. As the subtitle, *Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and Following the Footprints of Philosophers*, implies, the whole work has a more complex nature than the main title suggests. The first three books are dedicated to the first half of the subtitle, being a critical representation of the condition of twelfth-century courts and popular pursuits of courtiers. In these preliminary books, John of Salisbury criticises the courtiers on the ground that they neglect their administrative duties by surrendering to the ‘frivolities’ of courtly life. The following three books, which constitute the most appropriate section for the title ‘Policraticus’, elaborate on the contours of ideal government and discuss how a prince should govern his realm. Here, at the beginning of Book V, John establishes an analogy between corporate body and political community. According to this analogy, the head of the body corresponds to the king, who is conceived as the head of the state. The soul is

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 111.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, “John of Salisbury,” 138.

equated with the Church and the heart is with the king's Council; the eyes, ears, and tongue are occupied by the governors and local judges, while the armed hand corresponds to the army and the unarmed hand to officials. The stomach and the intestines are represented by the officials responsible for the finance system. The flanks correspond to the king's entourage and the feet to the peasants. Accordingly, John reflects upon this division of labour across the fifth and the sixth chapters, elaborating on the importance of each part in achieving the wellbeing of the system. Finally, the last two books support the political argument by giving it a more philosophical dimension with reference to the precepts of ancient philosophers. These chapters seek to address the ultimate meaning of life—happiness which can be achieved, according to John, through virtue and virtuous deeds. Although the political sections, also known as the Statesman's Book, lead the reader to treat it as 'mirror for princes' in terms of its genre, the treatise belongs to a wider generic position since it is also "a work of moral theology, satire, speculative philosophy, legal procedure, self-consolation, biblical commentary, and deeply personal meditation," as Nederman states in his introduction to the translation.<sup>6</sup>

In her doctoral dissertation of 1987, Kate Langdon Forhan criticised the partial treatment of the work and stated that "the conventional understanding of the *Policraticus* as an early example of 'mirror of princes' genre, has led to the relegation of the first three books to an inferior status. They have been characterised ... as discursive and irrelevant to the main purpose of the work. This failure to consider the work in its entirety has led to a serious deficiency in 'Salisburian' scholarship."<sup>7</sup> There are two significant aspects of this deficiency. One aspect is the view of incoherency, which suggests that "in gathering

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<sup>6</sup> Nederman, Introduction to *Policraticus: Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xv.

<sup>7</sup> Kate Langdon Forhan, "The Twelfth century "bureaucrat" and the life of the mind: John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*," PhD diss. (The John Hopkins University, 1987), 169.

the books together and examining them, he [John of Salisbury] united hitherto separate treatises dealing with courts and rulers and moral philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> The incomplete translations of the works is a testament to this scholarly belief, which sees the *Policraticus* as a treatise that consists of various themes spread across many sections which are also ordered incoherently. The *Policraticus*, in spite of all its popularity and acknowledged importance, has not been translated into English as a whole although it was edited by Clement J. Webb in 1909.<sup>9</sup> A virtually complete English translation of the work can only be achieved by piecing together the works of John Dickinson, who translated Books IV, V, and VI, and some parts of Books VII and VIII under the title of *The Statesman’s Book*, and of J. B. Pike, who rendered the remaining parts with the title of *The Frivolities of the Courtiers and the Footprints of the Philosophers*.<sup>10</sup>

It is indeed this partial treatment of *Policraticus* which has led Jan Van Laarhoven to render the whole treatise with all the titles and subtitles. His aim is to make the wholeness of the work more accessible in spite of the general tendency to deal with each part separately. Van Laarhoven comes to the conclusion that “in spite of its bipartite subtitle, the *Policraticus* consists of three parts, which did not receive a separate title each.”<sup>11</sup> Rejecting John’s own subtitling on the grounds that it neither addresses the needs of modern reader nor reflects the true meaning of the whole book, Laarhoven suggests that the treatise needs a new table of contents with brand new titles and totally

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<sup>8</sup> D. E. Luscombe and G. R. Evans, “Twelfth Century Renaissance,” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 326-328.

<sup>9</sup> *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policratici sive de Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum libri VIII. Recognovit et prolegomenis, apparatu critico, commentario, indicibus instruxit Clemens C. I. Webb*. 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909).

<sup>10</sup> (New York: Knopf, 1927); (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1927).

<sup>11</sup> Jan Van Laarhoven, “Titles and Subtitles of the *Policraticus*: A Proposal.” *Vivarium* 32, no. 2 (1994), 134.

modernised subtitles. In the absence of a complete translation of the work in English, his is a quite welcome attempt to reflect the unity of the *Policraticus*.

Laarhoven is right in that the tripartite structure of the *Policraticus* is important because the thematic coherence of the treatise actually lies in its tripartite nature. The first three books deal with the current conduct of the courtiers “by which John means the range of activities and luxuries that promote private interest at the expense of public utility.”<sup>12</sup> As he more clearly outlines in the fifth and the sixth chapters, John suggests that the State is formed by many different institutions and offices just as an animate body is composed of so many parts that work harmoniously and interdependently to fulfil the health of the whole body. Based on a hierarchically ordered system of division of labour, each member of the State should be content with his own place and he should not attempt to ignore his duty. In addressing the courtiers as the “enemies of public weal”, John criticises their habits on the grounds that they are harmful for the common good. John uses these preliminary chapters as a thematic introduction to his main point of discussion, which he elaborates later in the Statesman’s Book. He, in fact, proposes what he sees as an ideal after enumerating the shortcomings of the present ordering of the State. The last two chapters are also of primary importance to bolster John’s political theory by providing the required philosophical background.

The other deficiency resulting from the partial treatment of the work is much more significant. Treating the political theory in the *Policraticus* only within the context of the Statesman’s Book has led some scholars to accept John of Salisbury as a mere advocate of a hierocratic system that is based on the supremacy of the Church over the State. This interpretation stems from the organic metaphor. Constructing the so-called analogy, John

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<sup>12</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 52.

expresses that “the position of the head in the republic is occupied by a prince subject only to God and to those who act in His place on earth, inasmuch as in the human body the head is stimulated and ruled by the soul.”<sup>13</sup> On this interpretation, John of Salisbury is characterised as a hierocratic, and *Policraticus* is represented as a book in which John justified the supremacy of the spiritual authority over the temporal one.

Nederman and Campbell oppose the hierocratic interpretation, claiming that a more detailed textual analysis of the work proves that John’s political theory is more consistent in a non-hierocratic way.<sup>14</sup> Although they have made a massive contribution to the field with their non-hierocratic interpretation, it is surprising to see that they have maintained the conventional approach in the scholarship by treating the *Policraticus* partially. They attempt to prove their argument in the context of the political sections. However, the non-hierocratic interpretation cannot be understood without the aid of the preceding and the subsequent books, which also serve John’s political views.

Although Forhan in her PhD and Nederman in many of his articles have referred to the unnoticed thematic unity of the *Policraticus*, there is no existing comprehensive study of how the courtly and the philosophical sections of the treatise contribute to its entire political claims. Therefore, expanding on the works of Nederman and Campbell as well as that of Forhan, this study aims to demonstrate that John of Salisbury’s non-hierocratic standpoint in twelfth-century political thinking can only be understood with the aid of preceding chapters, which have hitherto been treated by scholars as a critique of

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<sup>13</sup> John of Salisbury. *Policraticus: Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 67. This translation will be used for quotations from the political sections. It will be abbreviated as *PN* hereafter. For the courtly and philosophical sections Pike’s translation will be used, and it will be abbreviated as *PP*.

<sup>14</sup> Cary J. Nederman and Catherine Campbell, “Priests, Kings, and Tyrants: Spiritual and Temporal Power in John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*.” *Speculum* 66, no. 3 (1991), 579.

court life and of the last two books, which gives the reader the philosophical strand of the ideal government.

To this end, the first chapter is allocated to a discussion of John of Salisbury's political theory. This chapter will investigate first the political theory of the *Policraticus* in the context of twelfth-century political thinking to see better John's position as a theorist. It will analyse later the details of John's ideal state. It will be argued that close analysis of the *Policraticus* holistically demonstrates that John's political theory is far from being hierocratic because he represents neither the Church nor the State as superior to one another. By assigning different spheres two temporal and spiritual realms, John reveals that they serve the common utility cooperatively and interdependently.

With this in mind, the second chapter aims to discuss to what extent the courtly sections of the *Policraticus* help to support this non-hierocratic view. To this aim, this chapter will explore the representation of court as the centre of temporal government and courtiers as assistants of the King. It will be argued that John's aim to criticise court life and courtiers is not based on a moralistic intention. On the contrary, he criticises courtiers as political creatures on the ground that they commit a crime against common utility by busying themselves with 'frivolities' instead of accomplishing their own duties.

Finally, the third chapter will deal with the philosophical argument of the last two books, and in what way this argument works with John's political theory. Therefore, it will investigate John's appraisal of philosophy as the guide for all actions. Since John of Salisbury sees happiness as the ultimate end of life for everyone, this chapter will examine to what extent philosophy helps one to reach happiness. John links the quest for happiness to his first chapters because he thinks that courtiers seek happiness in worldly pleasures. He discusses here the importance of true philosophy, which guides one to act

virtuously, and which is the only way of reaching ultimate happiness. Overall, the thesis comes to the conclusion that John of Salisbury develops a political theory whereby the State and the Church, exempt from any kind of hierarchical ordering, work for the wellbeing of the commonwealth through their own executive mechanisms, and whereby courtiers as the administrative agents of the political community should act with the guidance of philosophy, to achieve happiness as both individual and political creatures.

## CHAPTER I

### *REGNUM and SACERDOTIUM*

Considering the acknowledged significance of the *Policraticus* as the earliest example of medieval political theory, it is essential to examine the treatise by putting it into the context of twelfth-century political thinking in general. It is also important to take into consideration the intellectual climate of the period, which undoubtedly influenced the making of John's political thinking. With this in mind, this chapter addresses first the nature of political thinking in twelfth-century Europe to see whether the *Policraticus* fits well into the existing political debate. Secondly, it discusses how John of Salisbury defines a political entity and how he constructs his theory.

#### **Twelfth-Century Political Thinking and the *Policraticus***

The period between mid-eleventh and late thirteenth century, which also involves John of Salisbury's life span, witnessed fundamental developments in European political thinking. Discussing the social and economic changes which paved the way for these developments would far exceed the scope of this study. However, the general nature of the political thinking in the period and how it differed from the previous period ought to be described, albeit briefly in order to see better the connections between the *Policraticus* and the world in and for which it was produced.

The Carlyles assess the pre-eleventh-century state of affairs between temporal and spiritual powers, namely the Church and the State, as follows:



To the Western Church it was in the main clear that there were two great authorities in the world, not one, that the Spiritual Power was in its own sphere independent of the Temporal, while it did not doubt that the Temporal Power was independent and supreme in its sphere.<sup>15</sup>

The authors are clear that there are two authorities that are both supreme and autonomous in their own spheres. According to this dualism of authority, the King took his dominant place in the sphere of temporal matters in which the Pope did not have an impact, while the latter solely embodied and dominated the spiritual life independent of lay interference, at least in theory. This dualistic doctrine, as developed by Pope Gelasius I at the end of the fifth century, prevailed in medieval political thinking until it was reformed in the Carolingian era by a new approach based on the theory of seeing the Church as a 'Body of Christ' within which both the temporal and spiritual spheres function.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, "empires and kingdoms were *in* the Church, not *beside* the Church," as Lardner noted.<sup>17</sup> Defining the Church as the all-embracing community and milieu in which both the spiritual and the temporal power exist, this new concept reduces the State to a function within the Church in contrast to its earlier interpretation as a realm on its own.<sup>18</sup> However, there was a significant problem caused by this theory: it had never been easy to define the line which separates the sovereignty of the Church and the State, namely *sacerdotium* and *regnum*.

It is not unexpected therefore that there appeared instances, more occasionally from the eleventh century onwards, which challenged this theory in practice since the

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<sup>15</sup> R. W. Carlyle and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, 5: *The Political Theory of the Thirteenth Century* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1950), 454.

<sup>16</sup> Gerhart B. Ladner, "Aspects of Mediaeval Thought on Church and State," *The Review of Politics* 9, no. 4 (1947): 408.

<sup>17</sup> Lardner, "Aspects of Mediaeval Thought," 405.

<sup>18</sup> Lardner, "Aspects of Mediaeval Thought," 407.

holders of these spheres sometimes tended to extend their authority over the other sphere. The most vivid example of this was the matter of the appointments of ecclesiastical magnates such as bishops and abbots who also became holders of large feudal estates. Kings or lay magnates started to be involved more often in these ecclesiastical appointments, which caused a series of conflicts between temporal and spiritual authorities. The best example of this occurred at the end of the latter half of the century, when Pope Gregory VII excommunicated King Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor because the King was involved in appointing ecclesiastical investiture.<sup>19</sup> The event, also known as the Investiture Controversy, led both the Papacy and the King to question the authority of the other *vis-à-vis* his own. How diverse the reasons which brought temporal and spiritual powers into conflict might be, it is indisputable that the relation between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* entered into a new phase after this event. As Lardner notes,

From St. Gregory VII to Innocent III more than a hundred years later the Popes came to consider kings and Emperors less and less as functionaries of the Church; instead of encouraging rulers of the priest-kingly type they themselves would at least from Innocent III onward claim the title Vicar of Christ. They made it increasingly clear that for them rulers were simply the leaders of peoples and holders of territories.<sup>20</sup>

Briefly, the emphasis of the Gregorian period was on the separation of these two powers by stressing “the hierarchical superiority of the clerical order.”<sup>21</sup> In the period following the pontificate of Gregory VII, the debate over the relationship between temporal and spiritual powers did not cease; instead, it continued to be one of the

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<sup>19</sup> For a detailed analysis of the events and movements that paved the way for the controversy, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Lardner, “Aspects of Mediaeval Thought,” 409.

<sup>21</sup> Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450*, 87.

paramount issues of political thought. The *Policraticus* has received considerable attention in this context as being the first systematic treatment of church-state conflict after a period of the pamphlet literature of the late eleventh century.<sup>22</sup> It is true that the *Policraticus* reflects various paradigms of this discussion, such as the role of the king as a temporal ruler and of the Pope as a spiritual ruler; worldly involvement of the priests and ecclesiastical involvement of the Kings, tyrannical tendencies of the representatives of both spheres, etc. However, John's stance as a political theorist was by no means self-evident and simple; this ambiguity constitutes a big problem in Salisburian scholarship, and thus has become the subject of a longstanding debate.

Providing us with a brief historiography of the debate, Nederman and Campbell point out that there exist roughly two opposing scholarly camps with regard to John of Salisbury's conception of the relation between spiritual and temporal authorities.<sup>23</sup> The proponents of the first camp, such as Carl Schaarschmith and the Carlyles, draw their argument on two outstanding features of the *Policraticus*. The first of them occurs in Book Four, where John refers to the traditional doctrine of two swords, which is a metaphor commonly used in the middle ages to describe how the relationship between the Church and the State should work. Actually, the doctrine of the two swords is based on an interpretation of a scene in Luke's Gospel and was generally used to emphasise the dualistic attitude towards the power of the Church and the State by assigning them separate spheres.<sup>24</sup> In the *Policraticus*, though, the metaphor is used in a different context. John of Salisbury asserts that "this sword is therefore accepted by the prince from

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<sup>22</sup> Luscombe and Evans, "Twelfth Century Renaissance," 306.

<sup>23</sup> Nederman and Campbell, "Priests, Kings, and Tyrants: Spiritual and Temporal Power in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*," *Speculum* 66, no. 3 (1991).

<sup>24</sup> J.A. Watt, "Spiritual and temporal powers," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 370.

the hand of the Church ... The prince is therefore a sort of minister of the priests and one who exercises those features of the sacred duties that seem an indignity in the hands of the priests.”<sup>25</sup> Quite obviously, being “a sort of minister” of the priests makes the temporal authority inferior, according to this interpretation.

The second allegation regarding John being a hierocratic stems from the very nature of the organic metaphor between the animate body and political community. According to this analogy:

A republic is, ..., a sort of body which is animated by the grant of divine reward and which is driven by the command of the highest equity and ruled by a sort of rational management. By all means, that which institutes and moulds the practice of religion in us and which transmits the worship of God ... acquires the position of the soul in the body of the republic. Indeed, those who direct the practice of religion ought to be esteemed and venerated like the soul in the body ... Just as the soul has rulership over the whole body so those who are called prefect of religion direct the whole body.<sup>26</sup>

Again in this extract, John reveals that the spiritual power has rulership over the temporal just as the soul does over the body. Although there seems to exist compelling evidence to accept the conclusion that John of Salisbury advocated the supremacy of the Church over the State, Nederman and Campbell remind us of names such as Ernst Schubert and Ewart Lewis who claimed this view to be one-sided on the grounds that John never followed a consistent line in the *Policraticus* with regard to his views on Church-State relations and that such a claim would contradict the other features of the book.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *PN*, 32.

<sup>26</sup> *PN*, 66-67.

<sup>27</sup> Nederman and Campbell, “Priests, Kings, and Tyrants,” 575.

The main point that the opponents of the hierocratic view emphasise is that the *Policraticus* contains inconsistencies with regard to the relation between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. At the beginning of Book IV, John states that “the prince is the public power and certain image on earth of the divine majesty.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, he says elsewhere that “what in human affairs is greater than princely government, whose duties, in a certain manner encircle, complete and penetrate everything and which bears the troubles of the whole republic with its immoveable strength?”<sup>29</sup>

Nederman and Campbell, therefore, propose a third alternative to the debate by interpreting John’s conception of the relation between spiritual and temporal powers in a non-hierocratic way, which is theoretically coherent, according to the authors. They show two features of the *Policraticus* which militate against the hierocratic interpretation. Firstly, they contend that “royal submission is not imposed upon the King. The Church does not make him obey it out of fear of either spiritual or physical punishment.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, temporal power willingly follows the guidance of the Church, according to John. Secondly, they refer to the point where John alleges that the priest as well as the King must also seek common utility by putting aside his own interests, which amounts to the fact that there exist certain rules and laws binding the holder of the ecclesiastical body. If both the King and the priest are lawful, the system runs perfectly.

Therefore, the authors allege that “he [John] presumed that the Church and temporal government are independently ordained institutions, each one with its own special purpose and tools. Their aims and methods are interconnected, however, in such a

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<sup>28</sup> *PN*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> *PN*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> Nederman and Campbell, “Priests, Kings, and Tyrants,” 579.

fashion that the condition of one sphere affects the circumstances of the other.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, John neither follows the Gelasian theory that advocates the separation of the powers nor supports the supremacy of the Church. He issues his own theory which is based on “neither duality nor subordination, but interdependence.”<sup>32</sup> Although Nederman and Campbell’s non-hierocratic view is revolutionary not only in Salisburian scholarship but also in the general scholarship of medieval political thinking, it still needs to be backed up with more evidence from the treatise because the authors surprisingly stay within the boundaries of the Statesman’s Book, namely the fourth, fifth, and the sixth books of the treatise. However, the non-hierocratic interpretation can be understood in its entirety with the aid of the courtly and philosophical sections. Still, the political theory in the Statesman’s Book needs to be explored first in order to see better to what extent the rest of the treatise is essential to the non-hierocratic view.

### **John of Salisbury’s Ideal State**

In John’s ideal state there are two main spheres, *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, which are organologically represented by the body and the soul, respectively. The nature of the relationship between the two determines how the state operates. If the holders of the two spheres work harmoniously, the whole system also functions harmoniously. A detailed examination of the *Policraticus* demonstrates that both the *regnum* and *sacerdotium* attain their power from God; they have their own executive mechanisms though, which function interdependently because they work for the same objective: the wellbeing of the whole community. Within the contours of this co-existence, the most significant duty of the

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<sup>31</sup> Nederman and Campbell, “Priests, Kings, and Tyrants,” 580-581.

<sup>32</sup> Forhan, “The Twelfth century ‘bureaucrat,’” 15.

prince is to keep the state in good condition while the role of the Church is, without interfering in the duties of the prince, to provide spiritual guidance by means of which the prince would act lawfully. Therefore, John says that,

The ancient philosophers have defined human beings as consisting of a rational soul and a corruptible flesh. Yet flesh takes life from the soul, since the body cannot otherwise be alive, inasmuch as that which is always inert will remain inactive unless it is moved with the aid of some spiritualised nature.<sup>33</sup>

Obviously, what John of Salisbury meant is beyond subordination and supremacy; he rather proposes a stimulating guidance from the side of the soul. If both spheres acknowledge this interdependence and show relevant reverence to one another, John does not see any reason for them to be in conflict. We can see this same attitude in a letter written to King Henry in the name of Archbishop Theobald to ask for advice about the papal schism:

When the members of the Church are united in loyalty and love, when princes show due reverence to priests, and priests render faithful service to princes, then do kingdoms enjoy that true peace and tranquillity that must always be the goal of our desire. But if they clash, one against the other, in all their might, the vigour of the secular power will be impaired no less than the ecclesiastical ...<sup>34</sup>

The letter bears a primary importance to bolster John's ideas about Church-State relations. Although the letter is written in the name of Archbishop Theobald, Brooke suggests that the archbishop might have been betrayed by his own secretary, John of

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<sup>33</sup> *PN*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. by W. J. Millor and H. E. Butler. 2 vols., Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 190.

Salisbury, who wrote letters on his behalf while Theobald was on his deathbed.<sup>35</sup> It seems that the letter itself is already of primary importance whether it was written by John himself or the archbishop, considering John's support for the archbishop's views on many matters. The resemblance of the letter in attitude to the *Policraticus* proves that its writer shares the same notion of interdependence with the writer of the *Policraticus*, even though they were not the same person. In both cases, it is the reciprocal character of the relation between the Church and the State that is clearly emphasised, rather than the subordination of one to the other. The lines, "when princes show due reverence to priests, and priests render faithful service to princes," indicate that the author of the letter is far from the hierocratic line.

If we take heed of another letter, this time indisputably authored by John, we can see that he repeats the same notion of reciprocity in addressing his close friend, Abbot Peter of Celle, to whom he also sends a copy of his newly finished book, the *Policraticus*, for proofreading. Although John does not mention the title of the book in the letter, the sentence, "I have published a book about the trifles of the courtiers and the footprints of the philosophers,"<sup>36</sup> self-evidently indicates its connection to the *Policraticus*. What John writes in the letter reads as follows:

All things derive their strength from mutual aid, and heavy things are blended with light and light with heavy; it is for this reason alone that all things go upon their way because the same indwelling spirit of unanimity nurtures the concord of things dissident and the dissidence of things concordant, and arranges the divers parts of the body of the universe as

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<sup>35</sup> C. N. L Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), xxxviii.

<sup>36</sup> *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 182.



though they were its members, in order that they may be attuned together for mutual and reciprocal service.<sup>37</sup>

These lines show that John's notion of reciprocity is the prevailing feature of everything since in nature everything takes its power from the same divine ordination. Therefore not only must the Church and the State develop their relation with the merits of reciprocity, but the components of these spheres must also work harmoniously and cooperatively.

As the example of the organic metaphor illustrates, John wants to emphasise the importance of the active participation of each institution for the effective functioning of the state. Just as the parts of the body naturally function for the health of the whole body, the officials of the state should act individually but cooperatively for the wellbeing of the commonwealth. By describing the cooperation between the parts of the body, he comes to the conclusion that every person has a duty to perform for the utility of the whole:

... as many offices as exist in the administration of the princely government, such are the number of members of the prince's body. Hence, provided that each individual office is conserved in the integrity of virtue, and in a high degree of esteem, the health and fitness of these royal members is in a way procured. Yet when by negligence or dissimulation on the part of the ruler, virtue and renown are lost from these offices, it is as if illness and blemishes have attacked its own members. Nor does the head subsist safely for long when weakness pervades the members.<sup>38</sup>

As Janet Martin mentions, "if the body is to be healthy, each member must perform its own duty properly and not try to usurp the functions of the other members."<sup>39</sup> In John's state, all members, whether superior or inferior, whether secular or non-secular, actively

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<sup>37</sup> *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 181.

<sup>38</sup> *PN*, 63.

<sup>39</sup> Janet Martin, "The Uses of Tradition: Gellius, Petronius and John of Salisbury," *Viator* 10 (1979), 62.

cooperate for the fulfilment of the common good. If any of the members fails to perform what it is supposed to perform, this will influence the whole mechanism.

In that sense, the hierarchy absent in the relationship between temporal and spiritual spheres is clear among the members of the state since John sees the hierarchy as a touchstone of the state. In the aforementioned letter written to Peter of Celle, John reveals his notion of hierarchy as such:

In the human body the members serve each other and the offices of each are allotted for the benefit of all. There are less of some and more of others according to the size of the body, but all of them are united to secure the body's health. They differ in their effects, but, if you consider the health of the body, they are all working for the same end. Not all of them are equal, but the inferiors serve to their superiors. The foot which moves in the mire does not aspire to the dignity of the head; but the head on the other hand does not, because it is erect to heaven, despise the foot for plodding in the mud.<sup>40</sup>

John of Salisbury's state is ordered hierarchically from head to feet.<sup>41</sup> However, he never proposes a hierarchy in which the superiors suppress the inferiors. On the contrary, John's hierarchy is based on the willingness of the inferior and the tolerance of the superior:

The health of the whole republic will only be secure and splendid if the superior members devote themselves to the inferiors and if the inferiors respond likewise to the legal rights of their superiors, so that each individual may be likened to a part of the others reciprocally and each believes what is to his own advantage to be determined by that which he recognizes to be most useful for others.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 182.

<sup>41</sup> Tilman. Struve, "The Importance of the Organism in the Political Theory of John of Salisbury," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 309.

<sup>42</sup> *PN*, 126.

As Nederman points out, “while a measure of hierarchical duty to rulers and superiors is retained, all parts of the body are primarily bound to a collective end which is greater than any of its members and which is equivalent to the good of the whole society.”<sup>43</sup> This hierarchical ordering in the temporal realm constitutes the backbone of John’s body politic. If office holders as well as the prince remain loyal to these rules of hierarchy, “neither would the members be burdened by the arrogance of the head nor would the head languish from the abandonment or idleness of the members.”<sup>44</sup>

With regard to John’s organological theory of the state, Canning, who is in line with the view seeing John as a hierocratic, asserts that “he made no clear distinction between church and state. The clergy after all, were the soul of the body politic.”<sup>45</sup> However, it should be noted that John never shows the soul as a part of the body. Instead, he proposes the soul and the body to be two distinct but co-existing parts of the organism. It is the same for the Church and the State. John represents them as two distinct but co-existing parts of the political community. As Nederman wisely observes, “the clerical soul of the polity is not, strictly speaking a ‘member of commonwealth’, just as the eternal soul of man is not co-extensive with the mortal physical organism which it directs.”<sup>46</sup> One interpretation of this might help to reveal John’s non-hierocratic stance because he clearly excludes religious offices from the temporal sphere. It is important in the context of the *Policraticus* that not only *sacerdotium* attain its power from God; *regnum* is equally divinely oriented. Struve suggests in this regard that “as the

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<sup>43</sup> Nederman, “The Physiological Significance of the Organic Metaphor in John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*,” *History of Political Thought* 8 (1987), 215.

<sup>44</sup> *PN*, 142.

<sup>45</sup> Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought*, 113.

<sup>46</sup> Nederman, “A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury’s Theory of Tyrannicide.” *The Review of Politics* 50, no. 3 (1988), 370.

organization of the State as a whole was considered as a reflection of the divine order of the cosmos, the ruler himself could also be understood as God's likeness on earth."<sup>47</sup>

But it also shows that John, as a cleric himself, does not question the supremacy of the Church in spiritual matters. He emphasises the autonomy of the ecclesiastical body from lay interference later in the work as follows:

As is provided by the canons, none of the powers of the ecclesiastical sphere may be seen to be ascribed to laymen, even if they are religious men. Above all, it would be a sign of true religion if they refrained from the administration of those things which by God's prohibition it is not permitted for them to touch.<sup>48</sup>

The body and the soul metaphor, therefore, demonstrates that John does not put the State and the Church into any hierarchical order. By assigning them separate spheres of the organism he highlights their autonomy and interdependence, and emphasises that the Church and the State, although working cooperatively for the same end, have their own spheres with different operational systems. As far as the state is concerned, it works with the hierarchical ordering of its members operating in coherence for the fulfilment of the common good just as the parts of the body. The soul has a distinct operational system, though. John clearly asserts that "just as the life of the body is animated –moving by means of the soul, acquiescing in its movements to the disposition of the soul itself, and harmonising with the soul in obedience to necessity – so the soul lives according to its own mode of animation."<sup>49</sup> Unlike the body, the soul is a whole without parts:

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<sup>47</sup> Struve, "The Importance of the Organism," 313.

<sup>48</sup> *PN*, 173.

<sup>49</sup> *PN*, 14.

As long as it is wholly alive, it is disposed in accordance with a whole which is not divided between a number of parts, but which is a genuine whole in that it operates simultaneously in every part and each.<sup>50</sup>

John neither talks about a clear hierarchical ordering in spiritual spheres nor divides it into offices as he does with the temporal sphere. Instead, he asserts that the soul, as a whole operates in line with every single part of the temporal sphere, which amounts to a spiritual guidance. This same type of guidance is the guarantee for the harmony between the institutions since they will be directed by the same divine ordination. It is crucial therefore to understand correctly how John describes the function and operational system of the soul, namely the Church. It is as follows:

God occupies totally the soul that lives perfectly; He possesses it totally; He rules and vitalises it in total. No corner of it is excepted. But why say ‘corner’ or ‘part’ regarding the soul? It is devoid of parts, uncompounded in nature and utterly unacquainted with duplication. Were such parts possible they could be claimed only from the distributor of all that is good. It may be asked, what parts could be claimed? At minimum these would be the virtues through which the soul grows strong, functions and gives itself tests.<sup>51</sup>

John describes in this way the nature of the soul, which is identical to God himself. It is therefore devoid of parts. If one is to claim some parts, these would be virtues, according to John of Salisbury, because virtue creates in any human “an appetite for the good and an aversion for the bad.”<sup>52</sup> This feature of the soul has a primary importance in terms of the main argument of the *Policraticus*. When the hierarchical and sub-divided nature of the body is guided by the soul, which is composed solely of all kinds of virtues, the whole

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<sup>50</sup> *PN*, 14.

<sup>51</sup> *PN*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> *PN*, 15.

organism will be led to good in action. One might use the guidance of the soul through philosophy because only true philosophy might help us find virtue. The philosophical sections of the *Policraticus* are therefore significant in terms of showing which philosophy is true in John's mind.

John's ideal state is not a heavenly city in Augustinian terms; it is far more down to earth in that it is ruled by rational laws and institutions with spiritual guidance. John establishes two main bodies, two self-functioning spheres: *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. The nature of the relationship between the two determines the functioning of the state. As long as the holders of these spheres work in harmony with one another, there is no need to emphasise the supremacy of one over the other. However, John himself also admits that this may not happen in real life. There are instances, of course, where the holder of one sphere usurps or attempts to usurp someone else's office by violating the favour of common utility. Therefore, his adherence to the doctrine of common utility draws John of Salisbury into the discussion of tyranny and the lawfulness of tyrannicide because a tyrant "who oppresses the people by violent domination"<sup>53</sup> commits a crime against the whole society, according to John of Salisbury.

It would far exceed the limits of this chapter to analyse John's views on tyranny and tyrannicide, since the secondary literature on it is extensive and diverse. But if these views are to be linked to his political theory, it can be said that they are along the same lines. First of all, John's initial motivation to talk about tyranny is to figure out the differences between a lawful prince and a tyrant. In John's ideal state, the head of the state, who is at the top in the hierarchal structure of temporal sphere, governs his realm within the limits of common law and justice. Only in this condition, he is "the public

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<sup>53</sup> *PN*, 30.

power and certain image on earth of the divine majesty.”<sup>54</sup> According to this, a lawful prince is someone “who does not fear the penalties of law but someone who loves justice, cherishes equity, procures the utility of the republic, and in all matters prefers the advantage of others to his private will... The prince is therefore, the minister of the public utility and the servant of equity.”<sup>55</sup> Since it is a duty of the prince to act lawfully, he commits a crime if he does not act so. Under these circumstances, it could be the permissible end of the tyrant to be slain by the public, according to John of Salisbury.<sup>56</sup>

However, John’s views about tyranny are not that straightforward. He believes that tyranny is usurping one’s position by violating justice. In that sense, tyranny is a crime that should be dealt with in terms of the merits of hierarchy. As mentioned, John sees hierarchical structure as the backbone of body politics. However, this is a hierarchy in which the inferiors respect the superiors and the superiors consider the rights of the inferiors because both are the servants of common utility. Tyranny, therefore, amounts to violating the rules of this hierarchy:

It is said that the tyrant is he who oppresses the people by violent domination; yet each one can exercise his tyranny not only over the people but also over those of lesser importance... for even though one does not dominate over the people still each one dominates to the extent that he can. Who among them [political creatures] will you show to me who does not wish to excel even one other person in power?<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, he claims that “not only kings practise tyranny; many private man are tyrants.”<sup>58</sup> There are even tyrants in ecclesiastical spheres, according to John of Salisbury,

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<sup>54</sup> *PN*, 28.

<sup>55</sup> *PN*, 30-31.

<sup>56</sup> *PN*, 205.

<sup>57</sup> *PN*, 163.

<sup>58</sup> *PN*, 191.

since there can be some priests who are being tyrants under the pretext of religion.<sup>59</sup> However, John does not see all types of tyranny as the same. He asserts that the private tyrants need to be restrained by public laws; and the ecclesiastical tyrant can only be judged within the rules of the Church.<sup>60</sup> So, although tyranny is not a crime that is committed only by the prince, it is a public crime only when it is committed by the prince. This type of tyranny is so big a crime in John's appraisal that after giving so many examples of tyrants from history, he argues that the end of the tyrant is to be slain since he acts against common utility.<sup>61</sup>

To sum up John's non-hierocratic political theory, which is quite coherent in itself, as Nederman and Campbell suggest, one can say that it is based on harmony, reciprocity, and interdependence. All these features apply to every single part of the political community, not only to the relation between temporal and spiritual realms. Thus, the members of the state, who occupy various positions or offices within the community, being bound to a hierarchal structure, serve common utility reciprocally and cooperatively. But at the same time, the Church, by providing spiritual guidance to the members of the state as well as to the head of it, serves to this same end. Both the coherence between the head and the parts of the body and also the cooperation between the head and the soul determine the health of the organism. Likewise, the relationship between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* and the reciprocity between state officials and the prince guarantee the wellbeing of the society.

Unlike the Gelasian theory, which suggests a dualism, John of Salisbury stresses interdependence and cooperation. Rather than struggling to separate temporal and

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<sup>59</sup> *PN*, 192-93.

<sup>60</sup> *PN*, 205.

<sup>61</sup> *PN*, 205.



spiritual authorities, which would never work in practice because of the difficulty of distinguishing the realms that each power governs, John establishes a new theory foregrounding interdependence by combining them within the same organism but in separate spheres, which means that both serve the same end: the utility of the whole state. If the animate body corresponds to political community, then *regnum* and *sacerdotium* are the spheres making up that community just as the soul and the body make up the organism. In this sense, John's theory is not based on separation but cohesion. This non-hierocratic interpretation constitutes the basis of this thesis. However, it will be argued in the following chapters that the Statesman's Book is not sufficient to support this view. The courtly and philosophical sections of the treatise are also essential to understand the true nature of the political theory in the *Policraticus*.

## CHAPTER II

### COURT and the BODY POLITIC

Drunk with the gift of Fortune the new court under a youthful  
king believes that all things are lawful for it...  
The court loves, hears, honours only the triflers;  
every courtier holds the arts as detested;  
the courtier hates the arts which serve virtue,  
but every courtier loves servants of the flesh.<sup>62</sup>

So utters John of Salisbury in his first major written work, the *Entheticus de dogmata philosophorum*,<sup>63</sup> which is observed by Laarhoven as “a large and partly elaborated draft of a great doctrinal poem, which was intended to embrace ‘school’ and ‘society’, ‘church’ and ‘state’, the Bible and Antiquity, philosophy and ethics.”<sup>64</sup> In this less-studied work, consisting of 1850 lines in elegiac couplets, John of Salisbury satirises the domains of school and court bitterly by deploying the classical education he received from various teachers in Paris, as well as the religious training he had been involved in for many years. Under the guise of classical pseudonyms, which he uses abundantly, he directs his criticism sometimes at a general group associated with these domains but sometimes at certain individuals.<sup>65</sup> John’s appraisal of the court and the courtiers has a moralistic tone in the *Entheticus*. He criticises the moral abuses and the vices in the court, and lampoons the courtiers harshly on the grounds that they corrupt the ethics of Christian belief. Due mainly to this feature of the *Entheticus Maior*, the courtly sections of the

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<sup>62</sup> John of Salisbury, *Entheticus Maior and Minor*, ed. and trans. Jan Van Laarhoven, *Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*, 17 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 200.

<sup>63</sup> Commonly known as *Entheticus Maior* to distinguish it from the shorter poem *Entheticus Minor* written as a preface to the *Policraticus*.

<sup>64</sup> Jan Van Laarhoven, Introduction to *Entheticus Maior and Minor*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Rodney M. Thomson, “What is *Entheticus*?,” in *England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1998), 287-301.

*Policraticus*, which sometimes share certain themes and motives with the *Entheticus*, are customarily separated from the political section of the work, and are treated separately in a different context because they are considered to be irrelevant to the main argument of the work.

As noted in the previous chapter, John's political theory is based on the reciprocal relationship between temporal and spiritual spheres as well as between the components of each sphere. The nature of the relationship between the Church and the State by no means depends on a hierarchical ordering, which means that neither the Church has supremacy over the State nor does the State have supremacy over the Church. The so-called Statesman's Book, however, is not enough *per se* to see John of Salisbury's non-hierocratic position as a theorist. This chapter aims to investigate in what way the courtly sections contribute to the non-hierocratic argument of the treatise. Before doing this, it firstly discusses the general context of twelfth-century court criticism, since the courtly sections of the *Policraticus* have traditionally been examined as a part of this tradition.

### ***Policraticus* and Twelfth-Century Court Criticism**

It is true that there was a newly flourishing tradition among court clerics in twelfth-century England, currently known as anti-court literature or twelfth-century court satire, when John of Salisbury wrote the *Policraticus*. The task of examining the nature of this critical attitude against court and courtiers is so broad that it could easily constitute the subject of another study. However, it would be helpful to discuss it briefly since John of Salisbury is regarded as one of the pioneers of this tradition.<sup>66</sup> The subtitle of the

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<sup>66</sup> See C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origin of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); and Jaeger, "The Court Criticism of

*Policraticus*, ‘de nugis curialium’ was echoed by many court satirists; and became a common *topos* in twelfth-century court satire. In these satirical works, the court is represented as the centre of wickedness and corruption, and it is likened to hell. The courtiers are depicted like “dogs and serpents; they are called parasites, backbiters, and flatterers, men whose only motive is ambition, whose only interest is raising or maintaining their position by supporting the whims of the king; they are called enviers, intriguers and manipulators, who conceal the emptiness and malice of their minds behind the good manners and affability.”<sup>67</sup> By drawing on the classical topology formulated by satirists such as Horace, Juvenal, and Persius, the critics of the English court created a new distinctive anti-court tradition, which would become more popular in the later Middle Ages and in the Renaissance. By creating certain *topoi* of court criticism, these clerics satirised the English court in various contexts and for different reasons.

Although the courtly sections of the *Policraticus* indisputably contain harsh criticism regarding court and courtiers, and although it is undoubtedly reasonable to examine the treatise within the context of twelfth-century court criticism, one must be cautious about the way in which the *Policraticus* differs from other court criticism, of which the *Entheticus* would be a far better example. For the *Entheticus*, Jonathan Newman rightly observes that John separates this satirical target from his audience by establishing a sharp distinction between courtier and philosopher.<sup>68</sup> John aims neither to be read by his satirical target nor to improve their manners in the *Entheticus*. It must, therefore, be noted that John of Salisbury’s criticism of ‘nugae curialium’ serves a more

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MHG Didactic Poets: Social Structures and Literary Conventions,” *Monatshefte* 74, no. 4 (1982): 398-409; Claus Uhlig, *Hofkritik im England des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973.

<sup>67</sup> C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 55.

<sup>68</sup> Jonathan M. Newman, “Satire Between School and Court: The Ethical Interpretation of the artes in John of Salisbury’s *Entheticus de dogmate Philosophorum*,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007), 125.

practical aim, which is to bolster his political theory by using contemporary court life as a foil for his ideal state mechanism. By doing this John does not aim only to satirise and ridicule the vices of the courtiers, he actually aims to cure these vices by showing them the ideal as well as their shortcomings. Therefore, he expresses that:

No one should claim his own injury from anything said, since there is nothing derogatory towards particular persons but only an attack on vices that are to be avoided. In this I think indulgence is to be permitted to me to go over the bad as well as the good, in so far as in the latter is demonstrated what is to be done, and in the former, by singling out our vices, people can gain advantage in order that they may be improved.<sup>69</sup>

As is clear, John aims to improve certain manners of the courtiers since he believes that only then a well-functioning state can be established. In the first three books of the *Policraticus*, John of Salisbury elaborates on the current condition of courtly milieu. He criticises some certain pursuits of courtiers, such as hunting, gaming, gambling, fortunetelling, magic, etc. However, his criticism of court and courtiers serves a different aim from that of the other court satirists. For a better understanding of this, we need to explore initially what the terms, court and courtier, meant to John of Salisbury, and in which context they become a part of John's body politics.

'Courtier' in its most general meaning refers to 'one who is attached to the court' or 'who frequented the court of a sovereign or a prince.' The questions that are to be asked, therefore, are what it is to be attached to court and what we mean by court. In the essence of such a definition, there lies the juxtaposition of the multiple meanings of the Latin equivalent of the term *curia* which connotes three meanings altogether: a court of

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<sup>69</sup> *PN*, 148.

law, a palace, and a retinue.<sup>70</sup> In other words, the term *curia* is associated with three meanings altogether. It is a legal body dealing with more judiciary issues; it is the king's seat as the centre of the government, but it is also a private household which consists of the king's family and domestic servants such as the seneschal, butler, chaplain, constable, alongside a group of people Aurell defines as an "occasional entourage" which includes distinguished people in places where the king rested for a short period of time on his way between his residences.<sup>71</sup>

Looking at the sketchy portrayal of the structure of the royal court, one must not think that the court of Henry II was a fixed and stable place from where the king ruled his vast estate.<sup>72</sup> As Egbert Türk points out, twelfth-century England lacked well-defined offices and officials with precise functions, which began to develop only after the thirteenth century.<sup>73</sup> That was the reason perhaps why the members of the royal court changed a lot, which was harshly criticised by Walter Map, a court satirist, as follows:

I do know however that the court is not time; but temporal it is, changeable and various, space-bound and wandering, never continuing in one state. When I leave it, I know it perfectly: when I come back to it I find nothing or but little of what I left there: I am become a stranger to it, and it to me. The court is the same, its members are changed.<sup>74</sup>

What Walter Map refers to is an erratic group of people in the king's court, rather than his family and his magnates, who would form a more static group. Ralph V. Turner associates the rise of the term 'curialis' in court satire such as that of Walter Map with the

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<sup>70</sup> Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire: 1154-1224.*, trans. David Crouch (London: Longman, 2007), 31.

<sup>71</sup> Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire*, 33-35.

<sup>72</sup> Nicholas Vincent, "The Court of Henry II," in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 280.

<sup>73</sup> Egbert Türk, *Nugae Curialium: Le règne d'Henri II Plantegenêt (1145-1189) et l'éthique politique* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 5.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M. R. James, rev. C.N.L. Brooke and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 2-3.

appearance of a new administrative class in the royal court from the early twelfth century onwards.<sup>75</sup> According to Turner, this new class was generally composed of men not of good birth but of those coming from the lower ranks of the feudal class structure. These men, attached to the *curia* with the tie of patronage, held minor and sometimes significant positions in the royal court. Therefore Turner asserts that “the literal translation of the Latin *curialis* is courtier, yet it does seem to me that many contemporaries, especially moralists and satirists at Henry II’s court, used the word in a pejorative sense of careerists, which makes it particularly applicable to members of the new administrative class that was making its first appearance in Angevin England.”<sup>76</sup>

In the context of the *Policraticus*, the root of the problem lies in that John uses the term ‘curialis’ in various contexts without mentioning precise institutional or personal referents. However, it is still possible to find some hints about which group of people he meant. The most obvious place one may find John’s referent is in the organic metaphor. According to the division of labour described with the analogy of the animate organism, the flanks in the body correspond to “those who always assist the prince.”<sup>77</sup> Although John does not tell precisely that ‘those who assist the king’ correspond to courtiers, the chapter which is allocated to the function of the flanks, namely chapter 10 of Book V, reveals that he refers to courtiers with this expression. In this chapter, John adopts the same critical tone as the courtly sections of the treatise and continues his criticisms of contemporary courtly pursuits. This chapter, which occurs in the middle of John’s body

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<sup>75</sup> Ralph V. Turner, “Changing Perceptions of the New Administrative Class in Anglo-Norman and Angevin England: The *Curiales* and their Conservative Critics,” *The Journal of British Studies* 29, no.2 (1990); also *Judges, Administrators and the Common Law in Angevin England* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994).

<sup>76</sup> Turner, “Reflections and Reconsiderations,” in *Judges, Administrators and the Common Law*, xxi.

<sup>77</sup> *PN*, 67.

politics, might rightly hint at how the court and courtiers feature in the political argument of the *Policraticus*.

When John's representation of the courtiers as comparable to the flanks of the body is inscribed within the same context as Turner's so-called 'careerists', the picture might be clearer. We see that John's courtiers in the *Policraticus* represent this administrative class, as Turner puts it, who occupies some minor, even major offices in the curia. The point about how the critical appraisal of the *curialis* serves the political argument lies in John attributing ultimate importance to the court as the centre of the whole governmental mechanism. After all, the curia, with its second meaning discussed above, refers to the centre of the government where the king governs his realm. The curing of the political community, unsurprisingly, must start from this centre first.

It is for this reason that John of Salisbury starts his treatise by revealing the shortcomings at the centre of the government. He defines the present condition of court as an already-corrupted institution, which tries to contaminate with its disease those who attempt to enter this world:

Initially, they [courtiers] accept a drink at the banquet and, when they have become inebriated, a lethal venom or something worse is intermixed. The more their appearance is illuminated, the denser is the fog that spreads across their stupefied eyes; the prevalence of darkness is therefore the disappearance of truth, and the virtues are cut down at the root, the vices yield a crop, the light of reason is extinguished, and the whole man is carried headlong into miserable misfortune.<sup>78</sup>

Opposing this corrupted sphere, John places the theories of the ancients about the ideal state, evaluating the system holistically with all its components. As mentioned in the

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<sup>78</sup> *PN*, 9.



previous chapter, John characterises the structure of the state as an organic entity, each part of which has its own function and duties. According to this theory, “the individual and the body of citizens were solicitous for the public welfare. Each received on the basis of his worth the resources of nature and the product of his own labour and industry.”<sup>79</sup> His argument in these courtly sections, therefore, is that the courtiers in Henry’s court busy themselves with ‘frivolities’ instead of their own duties.

### **The Role of the Court in John’s Political Entity**

With this in mind, John aims to demonstrate the shortcomings of the current condition of the court, first. Then, he speculates over how the ideal should be. He uses these preliminary books as a thematic introduction to his main point of discussion, which he elaborates later in the following three books. Therefore, the first three books have a structural importance as well as a thematic one for John to introduce his views. After all, any attempt to formulate an ideal state stems from dissatisfaction with the current situation. As Poole suggests, “John begins in the first three books by clearing away the obstacles to the healthy life of the state, the vices and follies that impede its motion: in the next three he makes the first attempt since Augustine to frame an ideal system of government...”<sup>80</sup> Thus, John tries to reach the formula of the ideal state through the criticism of the already-corrupted one. John himself reveals this in the prologue to Book IV:

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<sup>79</sup> *PP*, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Reginald Lane Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 190.

The first step in philosophising... is that of prudently understanding what is true of particulars; the second step is that of faithfully comprehending the truth in everything which illuminates the particulars.<sup>81</sup>

John begins the *Policraticus* with a very clear notion of the state, and of the offices that make up a state. According to this notion, only when a clear division of labour among the members making up that political community is enforced, is it possible to establish a well functioning state. John starts his argument by referring to ancient philosophers and their division of labour in a political organisation; this is based on the separation of duties. Therefore John says:

Pagan philosophers, fashioning by precept and practice so-called political equity by which human government exists and thrives, decreed that each one should be content with his own activities and interests. They prescribed their own particular places and interests to those living in or about cities, also to the farmer and country man.<sup>82</sup>

If any office holder attempts to violate this division, it is where John's criticism starts. It is on this basis that John criticises courtiers for neglecting their administrative obligations since they spend so much time and effort with 'frivolities'. John's appraisal of the pursuit of hunting, which is the most popular courtly activity, well epitomises that.

Hunting was such an important activity in the Angevin England that it was considered as the chief sport and leisure activity of the aristocracy.<sup>83</sup> Since hunting in the king's forests was restricted to the king and his intimates, it was not uncommon to see lords with their own hunting fields, and even magnates wealthy enough to have their own

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<sup>81</sup> *PN*, 27.

<sup>82</sup> *PP*, 13.

<sup>83</sup> Judith A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 211.

forests.<sup>84</sup> Also, in the reign of Henry II, the extent of royal forests reached its highest. Not only the king but also his favoured magnates benefited from a series of hunting privileges.<sup>85</sup> There were certain animals such as red deer and wild boar whose hunting was restricted to this privileged class. In accordance with the forest law, forest area was extended by evacuating those living on that land. Consequently, forests covered approximately a third of the land of England by the end of the twelfth century. In the *Policraticus*, John deals with the practical consequences of this passion for hunting among the courtiers. Therefore, he criticises the so-called forest law as follows:

Farmers are kept from their fields that wild beasts may have liberty to roam. That feeding ground for them may be increased farmers are deprived of their fields of grain, tenants of their allotments, the herds and flocks of their pasturage. Hives are excluded from flowery places and the very bees are scarcely allowed to roam at liberty.<sup>86</sup>

The emphasis in John's criticism is on the 'victims' of this passion. This, first of all, is against John's theory of hierarchy in the political community, which is based on reverence between superiors and inferiors rather than the suppression and violation of farmers' rights. As far as the said forest law is concerned, which came into force to reserve some privileges to a certain group, John reminds the reader of other members of the political community, who are badly affected by this, which is why he asserts that "hunting should be pursued on preserves, on common or on public land, provided that no injury is done the community and provided the locality is not exempt from such disturbance by reason of its sanctity or renown."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England*, 211.

<sup>85</sup> Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 456.

<sup>86</sup> *PP*, 22.

<sup>87</sup> *PP*, 25.

John is clear not to condemn the activity of hunting, but the courtier's passion for hunting. According to John's division of labour, hunting is not an activity that a courtier should be busy with. He believes that

It is quite possible, depending upon the circumstances, time, manner, individual, and purpose, for hunting to be a useful and honourable occupation. For it is the individual that glorifies the pursuit when following the path of duty and not infringing upon the rights of others. That activity of a man is most seemly which is in greatest harmony with its duty.<sup>88</sup>

His reaction, therefore, should be interpreted as a criticism of the violation of one's personal responsibility to the whole society because John believes that "this might cause confusion in the division of function, and if everyone focuses on its own function, the system works in harmony."<sup>89</sup> For the efficiency of the governmental system, each official should confine himself to his own duties. Therefore John alleges that "hunting, if properly pursued, is viewed as an occupation or business; if not, as a waste of time or as vicious; and they who practice it in the face of duty are punished by law."<sup>90</sup>

Briefly, John criticises the courtiers for their pursuit of hunting on the grounds that they are diverted from their proper duties and plunged into others. However, "for one to neglect his own business and to devote himself with excess of enthusiasm to another's is a disgrace." His reaction therefore remains harsh in what follows:

Who more brutish than he who, by lack of judgement and lustful passion disregards his own interests in attending to those foreign to him and unceasingly occupies himself not merely with the interests but even with the diversions of others? Who more bestial than he who, neglecting duties, rises at midnight, that with the aid of dogs keen of scent, his active

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<sup>88</sup> *PP*, 23.

<sup>89</sup> *PP*, 26.

<sup>90</sup> *PP*, 13.

huntsmen, his zealous comrades, and his retinue of devoted servants, at cost of time, labor, money, and effort, he may wage from earliest dawn till darkness his campaign against beasts?<sup>91</sup>

In every single criticism he raises against the passion for hunting, he emphasises his critical point clearly as one of ‘neglecting duties’. According to the ancients, or rather to John himself, hunting as a profession “was not conceded to those who dwelt in the neighbourhood of cities, since hunters, like farmers and other dwellers of the rural districts, are kept somewhat sequestered from cities and from the well-born as a class.”<sup>92</sup> Similarly, he returns to his original claim that every branch of the state, and every official of the state, has its or his own function, and asserts that:

Though a body have several members, all do not have the same function; each has its own to perform. Why therefore do you who do not surrender yours to the hunter claim the right to his? Would you not deem it unseemly should the hunter aspire to the regal or papal throne? It would be even more unseemly to descend from either of these exalted positions to the filthy and bloody work of the hunter.<sup>93</sup>

Yet, John’s does not condemn hunting completely. He emphasises the importance of the purpose of the one who hunts and to what extent this activity consumes his time. After all, he believes that “it is quite possible, depending on the circumstances, time manner, individual, and purpose, for hunting to be a useful and honourable occupation.”<sup>94</sup> John of Salisbury finds most of the contemporary pursuits acceptable as long as they are pursued in moderation. According to him, “if moderation is displayed ” there is no need to “judge it disgraceful for a wise man to enjoy leisure ... It is appropriate for even the wise man to

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<sup>91</sup> *PP*, 12.

<sup>92</sup> *PP*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> *PP*, 23.

<sup>94</sup> *PP*, 23.

enjoy leisure occasionally, yet not in order that the practice of virtue may be diminished, but rather that he may be reinvigorated and revived.”<sup>95</sup>

Moderation is an important criterion for John to emphasise the importance of focusing on one major duty. It is the same reason that leads John to criticise other worldly pursuits in courts: immoderation. John permits gaming as well, for example, if it is pursued in moderation and with a more innocent intention such as to “alleviate the strain of heavy responsibilities” and to have an “agreeable period of relaxation.”<sup>96</sup> However, if it is performed immoderately “gambling is the mother of liars and perjury for she is prodigal as the result of her lust for others’ possessions and, having no respect for private property, as soon as she has squandered her own, gradually has recourse to theft and rapine.”<sup>97</sup> As in the example of hunting, gaming also has a place in John’s political theory because he believed that gambling brings about covetousness. However, every member of John’s ideal state is expected to work for common utility and not for his own benefit.

Even music, one of the liberal arts, is subjected to John’s filter of moderation and intention. He gives numerous examples of the ancients as well as of the Church Fathers, who used music “for the purpose of improving morals and of turning men’s minds to the Love of God by inspiring a feeling of joy for goodness.”<sup>98</sup> He therefore believes that “one should not slander music by charging it with being an ally of the frivolities of courtiers, although many frivolous individuals endeavour by its help to advance their own interests.”<sup>99</sup> If one listens or plays it for good reasons, John praises it beyond mere approval; otherwise he does not distinguish it from the other ‘frivolities.’ John sees music as an anthem of idleness in courts, which creates all other sins.

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<sup>95</sup> *PP*, 186.

<sup>96</sup> *PP*, 28

<sup>97</sup> *PP*, 28.

<sup>98</sup> *PP*, 31.

<sup>99</sup> *PP*, 30.

Idleness, in this sense, has another important criterion for John of Salisbury to estimate a certain pursuit as good or bad. Among all the courtly pursuits, he allocates a relatively large place for the types of magic and fortunetelling. John's excessive treatment of these activities reflects how popular they were in twelfth-century society. As we learn from him, even the king consulted magicians on some important military decisions.<sup>100</sup> John admits that nature has some signs and it sometimes helps human beings with these signs. Farmers and sailors, for instance, decide what they need to do at any particular time by looking at the state of the weather to come from that which has proceeded.<sup>101</sup> Everything in nature has some signs, according to John of Salisbury. However, John suggests that some become addicted to it. Therefore, he says that "those who become enslaved to this type of inquisitiveness can no more be truthful than they who seek the chief places at feast and fare sumptuously everyday can be humble and abstemious."<sup>102</sup> John associates all these activities with idleness and sees idleness "as a foe of the soul."<sup>103</sup> Beyond this moralistic appraisal, it also has a practical referent in John's terminology. He believes that "the Enemy should find you occupied."<sup>104</sup> These activities however, hunting, gaming, and fortune-telling consume all the time that one must allocate to his duties as a member of the commonwealth.

All these courtly pursuits are condemned by John as obstacles to a well-functioning state, and as temptations an ideal official should resist. In addition to those, one must also pay attention to John's treatment of flattery in order to see the extent to which courtly sections of the *Policraticus* are relevant to the political argument of the treatise. John's treatment of flattery does not have a strong moralistic tone, in contrast to

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<sup>100</sup> *PP*, 128.

<sup>101</sup> *PP*, 58.

<sup>102</sup> *PP*, 127.

<sup>103</sup> *PP*, 37.

<sup>104</sup> *PP*, 37.

what one might expect. In parallel to other frivolities, flattery is also handled as a vice which corrupts the individual first then the whole society. In John's ideal state, "all of its members would serve one another reciprocally and would have each other's best interests at heart."<sup>105</sup> With reference to the Bible and the classics, John repeats the significance of social solidarity on the grounds that one needs to seek the wellbeing of his neighbour as much as he does his. Flattery, however, is posited by John as the opposite of friendship and social solidarity, since the flatterer seeks his own good without any reverence for the good of others.<sup>106</sup> He proposes that:

The flatterer is the enemy of all virtue and forms as it were a cataract over the eye of him whom he engages in conversation. He is the more to be avoided, as he never ceases harming under the guise of friendship, until he has blinded keen vision and put out the modicum of light that seemed present. Added to this he stops up the ears of the listeners that he may not hear the truth.<sup>107</sup>

Nederman, who observes John's treatment of flattery as an antithesis of friendship, alleges that "the ethical stringency of friendship would be the guiding principle applied in a well-ordered court. Such a court would be free of flattery and its members would concern themselves with their various duties in such a way as to promote the common good and justice."<sup>108</sup> However, John sees court as a place where flattery rules:

This scourge of flatterers, notwithstanding God's indignation, has grown to such an extent that if perchance it came to an open break I fear that they would have the power to expel the honourable and meritorious rather than

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<sup>105</sup> Nederman, "Friendship in Public Life during the Twelfth Century: Theory and Practice in the Writings of John of Salisbury," *Viator* 38, no. 2 (2007), 389.

<sup>106</sup> Nederman, "Friendship in Public Life," 388.

<sup>107</sup> *PP*, 159.

<sup>108</sup> Nederman, "Friendship in Public Life," 389.



suffer expulsion themselves; for the foul inundation of their cancerous disease seeps into all so that there is rarely anyone left uncontaminated.<sup>109</sup>

The chief reason why John sees flattery as a contrast to friendship is that he associates friendship with frankness because he believes that man can improve himself through friendly advice. The flatterer, however, is far from being frank, since “men of this type always speak to give pleasure, never to tell the truth. The words of their mouths are wicked guile which, even when friends are in error, bellows Bravo! Bravo! to their undoing.”<sup>110</sup> Flattery therefore is represented not only as a personal vice but as an important problem that influences the whole society in the context of the *Policraticus*.

When John’s treatment of courtly pursuits is considered together with his political theories, one can see that these courtly sections are of John’s structural preference which is to demonstrate the current problems in order to understand what is needed to improve them more precisely. Therefore, his criticism is not limited to the court. Beyond that, John believes that there is corruption and violation of offices in the entire society. In the *Entheticus Minor*, written as a prologue to the *Policraticus*, John expresses it as follows:

All places (if you do not know) are very full of frivolities,  
The whole troupe of which is hostile to you:  
In the church frivolities reign, and in the royal court,  
In the cloister they reign, and in the pontiff’s house;  
In frivolities is the clergy, in frivolities the soldier’s practice,  
In frivolities are the young men and whole throng of elders;  
The rustic is on frivolities, in frivolities are both sexes;  
Slave and freeman, rich and poor, they are in them.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *PP*, 166.

<sup>110</sup> *PP*, 159.

<sup>111</sup> *Entheticus Maior and Minor*, 238.

As evidenced in these lines, John's attack is not against a certain group of courtiers. He reacts against the condition of the entire society, including the Church. And his point of criticism is not a moralistic condemnation from the perspective of a religious man. Undoubtedly, dedicating oneself to "frivolities" to such an extent is also morally bad. John's emphasis is not on this moralistic strand though. Instead, he deals with the more practical effects of these vices and tries to explore to what extent they form an obstacle to the ideal government.

In this sense, the courtly section is not irrelevant to the main argument of the treatise. On the contrary, it constitutes a case study on the basis of which John applies all his theories about his ideal political community. John's representation of the court and courtiers, coupled with his depiction of them as political creatures, demonstrates that he presents a theory of the state as a self-functioning mechanism through members with different functions. By muting his moralistic tone in his criticism of the courtiers, he also shows that he is dealing with courtiers as members of the political community, not as sinful Christians. This attitude of John put him into a more 'secular' mould.

### CHAPTER III

#### WHICH FOOTPRINTS TO FOLLOW

John's comparison of the State with a corporate body stands out as the most salient feature of the *Policraticus*, which is sometimes regarded as the most detailed political treatise of the Middle Ages because of the length of this very analogy. Although John names Plutarch's *Institutio Trajani* as his source, scholars almost agree in that this is a rhetorical invention of John of Salisbury who wants to mask his own ideas behind a classical pseudonym, because it is proved by compelling evidence that Plutarch did not write the so-called manual.<sup>112</sup> However, we also know that the metaphor was by no means original to John of Salisbury because there had already been a tradition of comparing state structure with the animate body before him.<sup>113</sup>

Yet, the metaphor in the *Policraticus* still stands out because John not only examines how each part physically contributes to the functioning of the whole but his conception of body politics also possesses a philosophical nature that is discussed in Books VII and VIII in detail. John of Salisbury's body politics is based on a theory of interdependence not only between the soul and the body but also among each member depending on whether it is in a superior or inferior position in the state hierarchy. According to this, the soul should provide spiritual guidance to the body in its actions, and the head should govern the whole body in accordance with justice and common law. Although he elaborates on the duties of each part of the body, he does not illustrate much

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<sup>112</sup> See Hans Liebeschütz, "John of Salisbury and Pseudo-Plutarch," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 6 (1943); and his *Medieval Humanism in The Life and Writings of John of Salisbury* (London: Studies of the Warburg Institute 17, 1950).

<sup>113</sup> Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Corporate Idea and the Body Politic in the Middle Ages," *The Review of Politics* 9, no. 4 (1947).

to what extent and in what way the soul should provide this spiritual guidance, which is essential for every single member of the commonwealth to perform his duty for the common utility. However, Philosophy and philosophers are so important a part of the work that Nederman rightly observes it as “the philosophical memoir of one of the most learned courtier-bureaucrats of twelfth-century Europe.”<sup>114</sup> Yet, it would be wrong to estimate the *Policraticus* as a philosophical theory in the strict sense. Philosophy embedded in the *Policraticus* functions as a background or a unifying strand which runs through the whole treatise. This chapter aims to discuss the importance of the philosophical section, namely Books VII and VIII, to see the nature of the guidance in John’s mind.

John’s organological metaphor rests on an association between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Man, as the smallest unity of the cosmos represents the microcosm, which is identical in structure to the much bigger macrocosm that is the entire universe.<sup>115</sup> The idea behind this, as Tilman Struve also mentions, is the copying of nature, which is perfect *per se* as it is formed by the divine order.<sup>116</sup> In imitation of nature, man as the smallest part of the unity is responsible for his own improvement in order to achieve the perfect functioning of the state. This is illustrated by John as follows:

The first task of man aspiring to wisdom is the consideration of what he himself is: what is within him, what without, what below, what above, what opposite, what before and what after.<sup>117</sup>

This self-perfection is important in two ways for John because man is not only a political unit of a greater mechanism but he is an individual himself. In both cases,

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<sup>114</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 51.

<sup>115</sup> Struve, “The Importance of the Organism,” 304.

<sup>116</sup> Struve, “The Importance of the Organism,” 305.

<sup>117</sup> *PP*, 155.

however, the ultimate end is happiness, according to John of Salisbury, who asserts that the goal of every single person is to reach happiness, which is the *summum bonum* of human life because there is no one who does not want to be happy.<sup>118</sup> As Nederman points out, “at least so far as life on earth is concerned, men play an active role in creating their own happiness both as individuals and as political creatures.”<sup>119</sup>

Although John admits that “the one unique highest good in everything is happiness,” he also pays attention to “another good which is higher in comparison to certain other ones and is in itself superior to certain others because it approximates more closely that which really is the uniquely and singularly highest of goods.”<sup>120</sup> This higher good is philosophy because John believes that true happiness can only be achieved through philosophy, which should be the guidance of all actions because

whoever seeks the path to happiness without philosophy falls down as a result of presumption, like a blind man travelling on a dangerous path to high ground ... However much anyone diligently pursue philosophy, to that extent does he more faithfully and correctly advance towards happiness. For philosophy assigns the virtues according to which one proceeds in particular duties.<sup>121</sup>

Happiness lies at the core of John’s philosophical message, because he sees it as the ultimate end of human life on earth. Philosophy is represented as a guide for achieving one’s happiness. How philosophy provides this guidance is by the way of virtue. John asserts that “a single route is laid out for all but it branches out into many paths like the king’s highway. This highway is virtue; for no one advances towards happiness except by way of virtue.” According to this, happiness or the quest for happiness brings virtue

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<sup>118</sup> *PN*, 157.

<sup>119</sup> Nederman, Introduction to the *Policraticus*, xxiii.

<sup>120</sup> *PN*, 157.

<sup>121</sup> *PN*, 157-160.

because “one is not happy in order to do right, but he does right in order to live happily,”<sup>122</sup> which means that one should act virtuously to reach his ultimate aim. It is clear in this notion that only true philosophy guides us to virtue, which is also the only way of true happiness. This also suggests that John makes a distinction between philosophy which creates virtue and philosophy which creates corruption and vice.<sup>123</sup>

What is the right path, then; what is true philosophy, according to John of Salisbury?

There is one thing which he admits: philosophy does not have one certain definition, as there can be various interpretations of a single thing for different philosophies. Although he says in the prologue that he leaves it to the reader to choose whose footprints are to be followed, he gives good hints for this. He demonstrates three groups of philosophers who are also split into many subgroups. These are the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Academics. The Stoic is someone, according to John of Salisbury, “who constrains everything to the necessity of law,” the Epicurean is one who “defends the freedom of material things,” and the Academics are those who are always sceptical about everything. John implies that the Academics are to be preferred not only because they number such names as Heraclides of Pontus and Cicero, whom John admires but also because of their moderation in assertion. Even in philosophy, John is against excessiveness and being immoderate. Yet, there are also issues in which John does not agree with all the sayings of the sceptics because there are points where they also get away from moderation. John believes that being sceptical in every kind of thing is not good either because “there are a number of things which are accepted on the evidence of sense, reason, or religion. Doubt in these bears the stamp of weakness, error, or

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<sup>122</sup> *PP*, 240.

<sup>123</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 52.

criminality.”<sup>124</sup> After all, the purpose of philosophy is not to drive one into a dead end. On the contrary, it aims to show one the correct way to happiness. Therefore, John asks “what does philosophy confer upon him who always fluctuates in his opinions, and for whom the light of reason which reveals the path to happiness is extinguished, almost as though he plucks out the eyes of one who is showing the way in order that the traveller may advance more cautiously and correctly?”<sup>125</sup>

In many issues, however, he follows the philosophical doctrine of the Academics, for Epicurean philosophy is the target of John’s attack. According to him, courtly lifestyle, which he criticised in detail in the first three books of the treatise, epitomises the Epicurean lifestyle as the Epicureans seek happiness in worldly pleasures. Before going into the details of Epicurean philosophy, John firstly reminds the reader of what Epicurus himself says in relation to happiness: “the happy life is that which is always filled with joy that there is no place for even the slightest suggestion of sadness or even perturbation.”<sup>126</sup> He believes that the Epicureans have somewhat distorted the words of Epicurus by opting for physical delights as they imagine that they would reach happiness by pursuing them.<sup>127</sup> This theory, which is based on physical pleasures, bears a primary importance for the understanding of the *Policraticus* because John believes that it is the paramount philosophy in court. John asserts that courtiers pursue an Epicurean life, which amounts to, in his appraisal, seeking happiness through worldly pleasures. This motivation, although he believes that this was by no means what Epicurus meant— draws many people into courts. For the courtiers, therefore, John asserts that, “it suffices to be entered on the list of courtiers, since even this by itself is a source of gain” because they

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<sup>124</sup> *PP*, 236

<sup>125</sup> *PN*, 151.

<sup>126</sup> *PP*, 273.

<sup>127</sup> *PP*, 273.

believe that their intimacy with great men may bring them the wealth that they desire.<sup>128</sup> In that sense, courtly life represents a centre for pleasure rather than a centre where the state is governed. The philosophical message of the *Policraticus* is addressed to these so-called Epicureans, to make them worthy officials rather than mere pleasure seekers, by directing them to follow true philosophy. He therefore shows that worldly pleasures will not guarantee happiness:

Broad therefore is the way of the Epicureans, and it leadeth indubitably to death, through perils however, through error, through bitterness, and through all kinds of vanities, so that no one finds on it a joyful and tranquil condition or ever reaches such a state by following it ...<sup>129</sup>

What John meant by happiness as the ultimate end of human life is not that which is achieved by worldly pleasures because seeking happiness in worldly pleasures and courtly pursuits leads man into a love of wealth, because one needs to be wealthy to pursue such a life. Therefore, he claims that “to be free to use one’s means ad libitum, wealth is required; the man who lacks it does not use them in this way, either because he does not have them or is sparing for fear of losing them.”<sup>130</sup> The need to be wealthy, which is the precondition of achieving worldly happiness, produces various vices such as avarice, love of wealth, and even jealousy for someone else’s wealth.<sup>131</sup> While true philosophy takes its source from wisdom, Epicureans takes theirs from lust, which produces four streams altogether: love of possession, enticements of self-indulgence, a

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<sup>128</sup> *PP*, 276.

<sup>129</sup> *PP*, 404.

<sup>130</sup> *PP*, 273.

<sup>131</sup> *PP*, 273.



stream of tyranny, striving for celebrity and respect.<sup>132</sup> These rivers, representing vices, are likely to produce many others, according to John.

Briefly, the role of philosophy, in Salisburian political theory, is to provide guidance to man because “there is no military or domestic duty that is not examined by philosophy, since it alone prevents vice and without it nothing can be properly transacted between human beings.”<sup>133</sup> John gives primary importance to philosophy, which is “the guiding spirit of all” because “there is nothing”, according to him, “having to do with duties or the state with which she [philosophy] does not have prior dealings.”<sup>134</sup> This suggests that one must use philosophy as guidance in his actions whether public or personal. The role that philosophy plays in all these matters is to prescribe moderation, which determines a certain act to be virtuous. Absence of philosophy in any deed is lack of moderation and lack of discipline.<sup>135</sup>

As far as the true philosophy in John’s mind is concerned, one might say that he does not mention any philosophy as entirely true. Although he prefers the Academic school to other philosophies, he does not accept the notion of being sceptical about everything. As a churchman himself, there are certain things about which he is not sceptical at all. Although John refers to ancient philosophers as the source of his own philosophical ideas, it is obvious that his ideas are blended with Christian theology. John believes that “it was not only possible for the man in the world to pursue the good, that is, the contemplation of God; but that it was essential for the health of the whole community that he do so.”<sup>136</sup> In John’s perception, philosophy is identical to the love of God, therefore he says that “if, indeed, according to Plato, the philosopher is he who loves God

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<sup>132</sup> *PP*, 397.

<sup>133</sup> *PN*, 159.

<sup>134</sup> *PP*, 334.

<sup>135</sup> *PP*, 334-335.

<sup>136</sup> Forhan, “The Twelfth century ‘bureaucrat,’” 110.

what else is philosophy if not the love of divine?”<sup>137</sup> This is the point that makes John’s body politics and philosophical message united.

As mentioned, John compares the soul of the organism with the priesthood in a political community. Accordingly, the priesthood should guide the temporal sphere in its actions. Since the soul is identical to God, it is a whole without constituent parts, and it is undivided in contrast to the body; but it is composed of all sorts of virtues. Therefore, true philosophy, as mentioned in the *Policraticus*, follows the guidance of the soul because it is the source of virtue, which is the only way of achieving one’s happiness. John asserts that “a tranquil state in public or private life can derive only from the source of wisdom,” which is “the luxuriant garden of pleasure from which the four rivers of virtue spring.”<sup>138</sup> The pleasure he refers to is a more spiritual one which is free from any kind of vice; it is not a pleasure “devoted to feasting, drinking, banquets, song and dance, sport, over-refinements of luxury, debauchery, and varied types of defilement.”<sup>139</sup>

With reference to Chrysippus, John asserts that there are three categories of human beings. Some are involved in philosophy because they enjoy it and these are the wise men. Some enter the service of philosophy; these are true philosophers. But there are also some others who wish to be philosophers but are not yet philosophers themselves.<sup>140</sup> So, not everyone involved in philosophy is a philosopher. The courtiers, who are already following the wrong footprints with their Epicurean lifestyle, must be separated, therefore, from those who manage to be true philosophers.

Although he believes that everyone needs philosophy because it is the guiding spirit of anything, John reveals, on many occasions across the *Policraticus*, that he makes

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<sup>137</sup> *PP*, 256.

<sup>138</sup> *PP*, 396.

<sup>139</sup> *PP*, 24.

<sup>140</sup> *PP*, 241.

a distinction between a man of the world and a philosopher. In praise of some monastic orders, for example, he states that “although it is difficult to imitate philosophers in our own times (when virtue is dissipated and it is agreed that Astrea, abandoning men, has returned to the heavens), the life of the cloistered excels incomparably the virtue of philosophers or, what I would rather believe, it is to be true philosopher in the most correct and secure manner.”<sup>141</sup> John does not say here that pursuing a cloistered life is the only way of being a philosopher. He rather believes that it is much easier and more correct because he sees court life not only as a foil for ideal government but a hindrance to a spiritual life. Thus, he believes that “extremely rare is the person, whose moral character is sufficient to perform the duties of both philosopher and courtier, since these would mainly consist in the most incongruent activities.”<sup>142</sup> He sees the two as incompatible because they belong to two different philosophies indeed:

And also it is useless to take for granted whatever was done earlier in life, since it is hardly possible to retain one’s innocence among courtiers. For who is it whose virtue is not cast aside by the frivolities of the courtiers? Who is so great, who is so resolute that he cannot be corrupted? For in order that virtue be unharmed, one must turn aside from the life of the courtier. He who said the following providently and prudently expressed the nature of the court: “He departs from court who wishes to be pious.”<sup>143</sup>

Although Forhan states that “the *Policraticus* addresses the problem of reconciling the apparently discordant values of the clerical ‘bureaucrat’ to allow him to lead the philosophical life in the world of actions,”<sup>144</sup> as someone operating between two spheres, *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, and as someone who is pursuing an active and contemplative

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<sup>141</sup> *PN*, 174.

<sup>142</sup> *PN*, 145.

<sup>143</sup> *PN*, 90.

<sup>144</sup> Forhan, “The Twelfth century ‘bureaucrat,’” 10.

life at the same time, John of Salisbury overtly tells the reader that his own preference between the two is on the side of philosophical life rather than the turmoil of court life. Because he categorises himself as a philosopher, he shows his disrespect for both the court and court life by alienating himself from this crowd:

I despise that which the courtiers embrace, and what I embrace they despise... I loathe and regret that at the moment almost twelve years have been squandered, despite extensive training for a different life; and as it were, being suckled at the teat of a more sacred philosophy, it is appropriate that one should pass into the company of philosophers rather than courtiers.<sup>145</sup>

It is not only the degeneracy of princely courts which leads John to make this distinction. By looking at John's distinction between court life and that of the philosopher, one should not assume that his non-religious criteria in courtly sections are replaced by a more religio-moralistic tone in the philosophical sections. John sees any kind of worldly commitment as an obstacle to philosophical life, including his own duties as a secretary to the archbishop. He complains about the abundance of worldly duties that he is supposed to do because these duties do not give him enough time to pursue his own intellectual interests. Therefore, he addresses Thomas Becket, who urged him to stay between these two worlds, like himself, with these words: "unavoidable and unsuitable business is transacted day and night, so that one is not permitted to apply oneself to more appropriate matters of concern."<sup>146</sup> It is exactly for this very reason that John admires the cloistered life and sees it as the most correct way of being a philosopher. As a court cleric himself, he knows that it is impossible to find enough time for fulfilling a philosophically true life. Therefore, his tone in criticism of the courtly philosopher is so harsh:

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<sup>145</sup> *PN*, 4.

<sup>146</sup> *PN*, 146.

He who engages in the trifles of the courtier and undertakes the obligations of the philosopher or the good man is an hermaphrodite, whose harsh and prickly face disfigures the beauty of woman and who pollutes and dishonours virility with effeminacy. For indeed the philosopher-courtier is a monstrous thing; and, while he affects to be both he is neither one because the court excludes philosophy and the philosopher at no time engages in the trifles of the courtier.<sup>147</sup>

It is also important here to make note of the difference between the ideal and the present. In John's ideal state, true philosophy guides man to act rightfully, to consider the well-being of the common good, and to be busy with his own duty in order to achieve this. This is not the case of the twelfth-century court, though. John's above-mentioned philosophical message regarding the ultimate end of life and his discussion of the duties of man both as a political creature and a Christian applies to his ideal state. Therefore, the difference between what should be and what is leads John to such pessimism about court life and courtiers that the only solution he sees for himself is to escape from the 'frivolities.' The dichotomy in the subtitle of the *Policraticus*, the frivolities of the courtiers and the footprints of the philosophers, denotes that John establishes a distinction between the hedonistic life-style of the courtiers, which is totally wrong in his appraisal, and that of a philosopher. However, this must not be taken to suggest that John's philosophical theory is not down to earth. On the contrary, his theory is that courtiers can only keep clear of frivolities by following the footprints of true philosophers.

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<sup>147</sup> *PN*, 90.

## CONCLUSION

John of Salisbury's most famous treatise, the *Policraticus: Frivolities of Courtiers and Following the Footsteps of the Philosophers*, consists of three main sections. The first section is comprised of the first three books, in which John criticises courtiers and courtly life in general. The second, also known as the 'Statesman's Book', comprises the fourth, fifth and the sixth books, which deal with how a political community should be by elaborating on the functions of each part making up that community. The third section is composed by the last two books discussing the importance of true philosophy for reaching the ultimate end of life, happiness. Since John does not use explicit thematic connections between the parts of the work, scholars traditionally have examined the *Policraticus* as a work, composed by its author gathering together some originally separate treatises. This conventional understanding of the *Policraticus* amounts to the separation of the courtly and philosophical parts from the political context of the work, since they are estimated as 'irrelevant' to the political theory that is proposed. This thesis has addressed this common failure in the scholarship.

The most studied part of the work is the political section, in which John develops the most elaborated organic metaphor of the Middle Ages. The political theory of the *Policraticus* is based on the comparison of the political community to the animate body, which means that each part in the organism corresponds to a part of the political body. A political community is made up of spiritual and temporal spheres, namely the Church and the State, inasmuch as the organism is composed of the soul and the body. The relationship between these two spheres is based on reciprocity and interdependence. As such, there is not a hierarchical ordering between the two since both are in the service of a

greater end: common utility. Therefore, John of Salisbury is far from being hierocratic, in contrast to what is generally attributed to him. However, the Statesman's Book remains insufficient to prove John's non-hierocratic standpoint. This thesis has argued that the political argument of the *Policraticus* can only be understood truly if the courtly and philosophical sections are taken into consideration. It has also been mentioned that this holistic approach can demonstrate to us the thematic unity between the sections. In this respect, the first three books have a structural importance because John of Salisbury gives the shortcomings of the present conditions of court. The political part helps to show the reader how these shortcomings can be improved. The philosophical sections complement this by discussing the importance of philosophy to guide one to act virtuously. By highlighting the thematic interconnections between the 'irrelevant' sections and the Statesman's Book, this thesis has investigated how the conventional understanding of the *Policraticus* has radically distorted the true political argument of the work. It has been shown that court is of primary importance in the political context of the *Policraticus* because John uses it in its political meaning as the centre of the government. Accordingly, courtiers are represented as people who are meant to assist the king in governing his realm. John criticises courtiers therefore as corrupted state officials who neglect their administrative duties by busying themselves with pleasures of courtly life. He sees them as enemies of the public weal when they are unable to perform their duties to the political community.

John's treatment of the court as the centre of the government reveals that he separates temporal and spiritual powers because he also criticises churchmen when they are involved in worldly business. The separation of the two spheres, temporal and spiritual, begets the main argument of the *Policraticus*. The courtly section demonstrates

the shortcomings of the temporal sphere in its current condition whereas the spiritual sphere is analysed more deeply in the philosophical section. It is clear in John's political theory that the spiritual realm, in contrast to the temporal one, is without parts because it is identical to God. The members of the spiritual sphere act as the representative of God on earth. Their duty is to guide the temporal sphere in its actions; and he expresses the nature of this guidance in the philosophical section. John suggests here that the ultimate end of everyone is happiness. There is not a single way of reaching happiness, though. Therefore, John criticises the way that courtiers follow because he believes that they seek happiness in worldly pleasures. John thinks, however, that true happiness can only be attained by virtue, which is the source of happiness. One needs the guidance of true philosophy, however, to reach virtue. Since for John of Salisbury, philosophy is identical to love of God, the Church as well as true philosophers can guide one to true philosophy.

When the courtly and philosophical parts are read in the same context as the Statesman's Book, one can see that the *Policraticus* develops a political theory that deals with the state as a self-sufficient community separate from ecclesiastical structure. The philosophical part in that sense emphasizes the importance of true philosophy for man both as an individual and as a political creature while the courtly part is a political criticism of the governing class rather than a moralistic satire of a Christian society. Undoubtedly, involvement in worldly pleasures and flattery through lying, are, in John's appraisal, morally bad. Nevertheless, the political tone drowns out the moralistic one. In this sense, it is also important to distinguish the *Policraticus* from other court criticism written by various clerics in the twelfth century. It is true that the *Policraticus* shares certain thematic and topical features with other court satires, such as those of Walter Map and Peter of Blois, and it has many reasons to be discussed within the context of anti-



court literature. However, it must also be noted that John of Salisbury's court criticism serves a more practical aim: the improvement of court as the centre of the government, and of courtiers as governmental officials. From this point of view, this study, besides reconsidering the political argument of the *Policraticus* through the method of close textual analysis, has laid the groundwork for further study—the investigation of John of Salisbury and his works in the context of twelfth-century court criticism.

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