

## LANGUAGE AS A UNIFYING ELEMENT IN JOHN OF SALISBURY'S PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISES

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**Abstract** John of Salisbury's main political treatises, the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus* were not only published together, but also contain structural and thematic links, which suggest the author's intention of having the two works treated as a whole. The present article is targeted at highlighting the connections between the two texts, especially Salisbury's vision on language, seen as metatopic of both treatises. For this purpose, Christophe Grellard and Frederique Lachaud's *Companion to John of Salisbury* serves as the main critical source of bibliography.

**Keywords** John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, *Policraticus*, language, 12<sup>th</sup> century

### Structural Connections Between the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*

When confronting a text, be it a scientific or philosophical one, the post-modern reader may manifest a number of tendencies: to consider only the content of the text (a reminiscence of Russian Structuralism), to investigate the historical context in which it was written and the personal history of the author (perhaps even in a Freudian or Jungian manner), to resort to the internet or to other pieces of writing indicated by references, in order to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. Regardless of the reader's tactic, he/she will always bear in mind a potential randomness of the para-textual elements (i.e. the cover, the font, the division into chapters, the insertion of other pieces of text within the same volume), as these are in most cases chosen by the publisher(s) or by the publishing house. However, that is not the case when studying a 12<sup>th</sup>-century treatise, whose author is also the editor. In this situation, the text is set up with the view that everything has a purpose, including its layout, just like in the medieval concept, God does not leave anything without a purpose.

John of Salisbury's work makes no exception. His main political oeuvre, the *Policraticus* was published in 1159, together with the *Metalogicon*<sup>1</sup>, a defence of the

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liberal arts, as part of the same volume. Each of the two treatises is in its turn split in two parts. The first three books of the *Policraticus* focus on the frivolities of the courtiers, and the other five develop John's structure of the ideal state.

Indeed, some structure is evident in that the first three books concentrate on *nugae curialium*, the central ones on the art of right government, and the last two treat of *uestigiis philosophorum*.<sup>2</sup>

The *Metalogicon* concentrates on medieval grammar in its first book, and on logic in the remaining three. In spite of the apparent dissimilarity in the structure of the two treatises, when analysed more in depth, they are incredibly mirrored. The first part of both treatises contains a critique, in the *Metalogicon* it is the critique of those who disregard the liberal arts, and in the *Policraticus* it is a critique of the courtiers. Counting the number of the books, the first part of the *Metalogicon* comprises 25% of the whole treatise, while the second part makes up to 75%. Applying the same method to the *Policraticus*, the first part contains 37.5%, while the second part contains 62.5%. At first glance, the numbers are quite different, but if one splits the percentages correspondent to each book in half for the *Metalogicon* and compares them to the percentages per each book for the *Policraticus*, the following proportion emerges:

<i>Metalogicon</i>	
2 x 12.5% = 1 <sup>st</sup> part	6 x 12.5% = 2 <sup>nd</sup> part
<i>Policraticus</i>	
3 x 12.5% = 1 <sup>st</sup> part	5 x 12.5% = 2 <sup>nd</sup> part

Looking at the numbers in this format, the proportions show that the *Policraticus* is one section longer than the *Metalogicon* in the first part and one section shorter in the second part, respecting the same ratio. In addition, the *Policraticus* is one book longer than the *Metalogicon* per each section. Such an exact growth from one treatise to the other can hardly be considered random.

The connection between the two parts of the *Metalogicon*, the first book focused on grammar and the other three focused on logic, is more obviously identified as being the language. While grammar gives access to logic by teaching how to read and write, but also by providing access to ancient treatises of logic, logic is in itself a study of the values of words within the sentence and within the text.

By contrast, the relation between the two parts of the *Policraticus* is not so evident. However, if analysed more closely, one can see that the two parts actually represent contrasting models of society. The first three books comprise the frivolities

<sup>1</sup> See Cary J. Nederman, Introduction to *Policraticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007/1990), xvii–xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Roland E. Pepin, "John of Salisbury as a Writer", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, eds. Christophe Grellard and Frederique Lachaud (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 161.

of the courtiers, representing the negative model of society, while the other five books contain John's model of an ideal society.

The structural duality does not stop at the level of the topics treated. The dedicatees of the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* can also be categorised as twofold.

Although John's major works were composed for Chancellor Thomas Becket, they were surely intended to circulate more widely. John himself identified some recipients: Peter of Celle received a copy of the *Policraticus*, as did Brito, a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury, who was an object of John's good natured jibing in the *Entheticus maior*: "You will find Brito happy, if there is cheese around!" Brito and a fellow-monk, Odo, who would one day become Abbot of Battle, are specifically mentioned as readers of the *Entheticus* when John advises in his book: "Let these men be your companions; disclose all to them." In fact, Odo and Brito are the only two names of actual contemporaries that occur in the poem, and significantly, both are hailed for their love of books. For John, such men were kindred spirits; they and the learned clerks in the household of Archbishop Theobald became his audience, an elite group of friends who would recognise his many allusions and unidentified quotations.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the completion of the *Policraticus*, Thomas Becket was the second major political figure in the state, after the king, whose friend and adviser he was. Dedicating and providing the manuscript to Becket was John's way of trying to facilitate his work's access to King Henry II himself. John had high hopes that the young king would read his work and, as a result, the ideal reign that he had envisaged in the *Policraticus* would be brought closer to reality. The other recipients of the treatises were clerics, not to mention that Becket himself had emerged from the clergy. This way, John of Salisbury manages to bring together two factions of the public life, the clergy and the court, which were involved in a fight over influence at that time.

However, these apparently conflicting elements are not put together just for the sake of creating an antithesis, they are in fact unified through John's view upon the world.

### **Content Connections Between the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus***

Despite the relatively fugitive mentions of some common elements, the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* have until now been treated separately. A clear flow from one to the other has not been demonstrated so far. It is this particular unexplored characteristic that will be approached in the present paper.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 148.

Firstly, the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* share not only the dedicatee and the target readers, but also the constant use of ancient sources. Both works abound with ancient textual references, a typical trait for John of Salisbury's writings, an issue that has led critics to consider him a "Christian humanist":

The earliest studies that so defined John founded their judgement on his admiration for classical antiquity and his vast knowledge of Roman authors: what is variously called Latin, literary or scholastic humanism. But since John embraced the fusion of classical Latin literature and Christianity, and demonstrated his devotion to the traditions and texts of both, he is usually cited as a "Christian humanist." To be sure, "humanism" is a term that lends itself to complex definition and interpretation, as insightful studies have illustrated, but none would seem to exclude John from the ranks of its proponents. On the contrary, he "embodied the new humanism that came to permeate 12th-century thought," and he "has come to be known as the most eminent of the humanists."

As a writer, John consistently reveals his theoretical and practical devotion to humanism. He rarely misses an opportunity to impart moral principles and good counsel for righteous behavior, and these are usually bolstered by citation of authoritative sources.<sup>4</sup>

Intertextuality is not limited to classical and Christian references in Salisbury's works, but it also works between his texts. While in *Metalogicon* John describes a series of stylistic devices, he actively employs them in the *Entheticus Minor*, which appears as an introductory poem to the *Policraticus*.

In matters of style and technicality, John was well acquainted with classical prosody, and he imitated the ancient satirists in his use of hexameters and pentameters, executing these flawlessly in his own poetry. His mastery of technical skills and his reliance on numerous poetic devices further attest to his wide reading and assimilation of the classical Latin poets. Like them, John adorned his verses with alliteration, assonance and repetition.<sup>5</sup>

John did not use these stylistic devices to merely imitate the ancients; he genuinely understood their role and the manner in which they deferred from the other contexts of speech, as can be observed from Chapter 17 of the first book of the *Metalogicon*.

Moreover, the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* also share the same typology of antagonist, whom John generically names Cornificius. There has not yet

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 174.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 153.

been sufficient evidence to identify Cornificius with any particular contemporary of John's. He is the image of the epicurean, who disregards the liberal arts and seeks personal advantage once he has become a courtier.

The contribution by Constant Mews and Cédric Giraud ("John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century") shows that against the figure of "Cornificius" John develops the ideal of an education that hones the critical judgement of each individual through the practice of liberal arts. [...] It remains difficult, however, to explain why John needed to criticize "Cornificius" at a stage in his life where he did not belong to scholastic circles anymore. The repeated allusions to his adversaries' attacks may pertain to literary fiction; but there is no doubt that what John criticizes here is the distortion of Epicurus's thought, in particular among curial clerics, and the incitement to seek an immediate return on investment in studies. This criticism – which is the precise opposite of his praise of the liberal arts – is the intellectual equivalent of the dichotomy between the vanities of the court and the exemplarity of philosophers. At a time when John saw arriving at court an increasing number of clerics fresh from their studies in law and logic, his purpose was to denounce the intellectual foundations of the spontaneous epicureanism of the curiales, and to remind those keen to take part in public life of the necessity of practising the liberal arts.<sup>6</sup>

An almost chronological evolution can be traced from the *Metalogicon* to the *Policraticus*. While the focus of the treatise in the former is schooling, in the latter it is the result of schooling. This result has direct qualitative consequences that can be visibly traced in Cornificius. In *Metalogicon* he is depicted in his school years as desirous of listening to hollow masters, who disregard the importance of the liberal arts, especially of grammar, a proto-science of the time, which was necessary to be thoroughly learnt in order to access the other possible branches of study. Even from this point, somewhere in his youth, Cornificius is described by John as an epicurean, and therefore as an ignorant and, at the same time, as an enemy of truth and of true value. In John's view, this does not stop Cornificius from gaining a place at the royal court, where his formerly described traits are not only maintained, but they are brought to a new level, which can cause harm to the state.

This denunciation of study for the sake of money making and its adherents recalls, as proved by John's career itself, that frequenting the schools and acquiring educational skills facilitate social mobility. During the course of

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<sup>6</sup> Christophe Grellard and Frederique Lachaud, "Introduction", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 17–18.

the 12th century, possibilities multiplied for pursuing a career in courts and bureaucracies, both lay and ecclesiastical. Contemporaries often observed this, generally to deplore the practice. Criticism of money-making skills, like law and medicine, became a common topos of moralizing preachers, as it was for John of Salisbury.<sup>7</sup>

Cornificius represents the courtier par excellence, as John of Salisbury portrays him in the first three books of the *Policraticus*.

This type of character evolution is not only a temporal succession, but a portrayal of the cause-effect relation. For this reason, the *Entheticus maior*, which is an anticipation of the *Policraticus*, starts with a defence of the liberal arts.

It begins with a broad defense of the traditional curriculum, and specifically the place of logic in it, against educational innovators who denigrate the liberal arts and disparage wide reading of the classical *auctores* in favor of a facile, utilitarian course based on “natural eloquence.” John has their brash spokesman declare that “natural ability is the source of all [eloquence]” (*sit ab ingenio totum*), so there is no need for books and study, which are hindrances (*libri impediunt*), a form of torture (*tormenti genus est saepe uidere librum*). His advice: just be garrulous; away with writings! (*esto uerbosus, scripta repelle procul!*). In the *Metalogicon*, John would devote several Chapters (1. 6–8) to a refutation of the claim that “[p]recepts of eloquence are superfluous, since eloquence is present or absent in one by nature.” (*Superflua sunt praecepta eloquentiae, quoniam ea naturaliter adest, aut abest*).<sup>8</sup>

In John of Salisbury’s view, the epicurean who disregards the liberal arts in his youth is bound to become a frivolous courtier.

This way, the author underlines the essential role of the study of medieval grammar as part of the liberal arts. In the Middle Ages *grammatica* was the first of the liberal arts to be studied, as it formed the basic knowledge and skills necessary to approach the other subjects of the medieval curriculum, as John states in the *Metalogicon*: “grammar does not busy itself around only one subject, but with all of those which can be taught through words, so as to make the mind ready for

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<sup>7</sup> Cedric Giraud and Constant Mews, “John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century”, in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 48–49.

<sup>8</sup> Roland E. Pepin, “John of Salisbury as a Writer”, in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 151–152.

understanding”.<sup>9</sup> Grammar encompassed a wide range of skills, from learning to read and write to the study of rhetoric, and even a kind of proto-linguistics.

### Language as a Gate to Metaphysics and Politics

The role of *grammatica* as the basis of the other subjects also included a spiritual dimension, as grammar was the study of language, of the word, and Christianity was a religion of the book and of the word. This heavily relied upon the gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. [...]

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.<sup>10</sup>

Knowledge of grammar made access to metaphysics possible, enabling the believer to read the Scripture, to participate in the mass and rites through meditation and prayer.

It is this exact trait of language that John considered significant, and which unifies the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus* within the same train of thought. Language made the connection between man and God, by giving man access to the word of God, and therefore by making him better. To this John adds the access that grammar gives the medieval courtier to the teachings of the ancients, particularly to philosophical works, which instructed one even more in the course of virtue.

By connecting the study of grammar to the description of the four tasks that lead to both philosophy and virtue, John presents this discipline as the foundation of a true art of living, which develops into ethics. Inasmuch as the first three tasks (reading, teaching, meditation) create the knowledge that allows for right conduct, grammar, the basis of reading and of communication, acts in cooperation with prevenient grace. In this way, John restores grammar to the Christian economy of learning and re-establishes for the society of his own day the Ciceronian ideal of the *homo bonus*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, ed. J. A. Giles (London: Oxonii, 1848), 52, “*non circa unum grammaticam occupari; sed ad omnia, quae verbo doceri possunt, ut eorum capax sit, animum praeformare*”.

<sup>10</sup> John 1:1–4, 1:14.

<sup>11</sup> Cedric Giraud and Constant Mews, “John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century”, 52.

The benefit of language does not stop at the vertical relationship between man and God, but it necessarily applies to the relation between men, that is to society, to the *civitas*, as this relation is the one by which God assesses man at the end of the world:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?

And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'<sup>12</sup>

Thus, language becomes essential for metaphysics, ethics, and even politics: "From its first definition, grammar plays a civilizing role, since it teaches man to express himself."<sup>13</sup>

A man like Cornificius, who did not want to gain access to language through the study of grammar, was implicitly not a Christian. In the conception of a medieval humanist, such as John of Salisbury, this attitude made vileness unavoidable.

In John's view, the difference between an ideal society and a corrupt one is made by the quality of the communication which takes place within society. Post-lapsarian communication and language can be both constructive and destructive, providing the same quality in human interactions.

Speech, on the one hand, makes communication possible and guarantees the civilization that John holds so dear. On the other hand, the world of governance is exemplified by miscommunication, competing dialects and acts of mendacity. These negative qualities of human discourse, as depicted in the *Historia pontificalis*, guarantee the strife and confusion in the world that is a mark of the perennial contingency of human language after the fall. This is the antinomy that informs all of John's writing, that which exists

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew, 25:34–40.

<sup>13</sup> Cedric Giraud and Constant Mews, "John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century", 51.



between language as God-given, and yet also the most evident mark of man's post-lapsarian location in time.<sup>14</sup>

John considers that truthfulness marks the difference between constructive and destructive language. Originally, before the fall of man, language was strictly truthful, because Christ, the divine *Logos* is truth itself: "Jesus said to him: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'."<sup>15</sup> Because the purpose of man is to get as close to God's likeness as he can, the same goes for society:

John recalls for the occasion the etymology proposed by the Stoics, according to which faith derives from the fact of doing what one says. This idea of confidence, or contract, nevertheless equally provides the point of departure for the religious notion of fides. Faith is a kind of contract by which one gives one's confidence to invisible truths revealed by grace<sup>16</sup>

John classifies political interactions in two categories: flattery (marked by deceiving language, which harms society) and friendship (characterised by truthful language, which enables society to develop). Flattery is characteristic of the courtiers whom John criticises in the first three books of the *Policraticus*: "John treats flattery as the quintessential courtly vice, according to which the flatterer seeks his own good without reference to the good of others",<sup>17</sup> while friendship is a trait of the ideal society, presented in the second part of the *Policraticus*:

Perhaps as importantly, at least in the context of John's immediate concern with courtly flattery, virtue stands in close and irrevocable connection to truth. Since virtue requires knowledge of the good, which is grounded in truth, as John says above, the bond of friendship must rest on the commitment of the friends to seek and respect the truth. As a general precept of his thought, John emphasized that open and free debate and criticism formed a crucial quality of the public spheres of the court and of the school. Individuals should be protected in their liberty to engage in conscientious, constructive reproval of the morals of others and to challenge ideas that do not meet up to rational evaluation. (John's concept of liberty in this regard will be elucidated more fully below.) Likewise,

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<sup>14</sup> Clare Monagle, "John of Salisbury and the Writing of History", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 232.

<sup>15</sup> John, 14:6.

<sup>16</sup> Christophe Grellard, "John of Salisbury and Theology", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 368.

<sup>17</sup> Cary J. Nederman, "John of Salisbury's Political Theory", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 261.

people should be prepared to listen to and consider seriously such honest criticism when it is rendered. This quality seems particularly necessary in the case of friendship, which is guided by truthfulness.<sup>18</sup>

Language as a means of human interaction is the basis of politics, not just at a more subtle level, but also overtly, through rhetoric.

John was, in the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*, a determined exponent of the role of effective rhetoric in human affairs. That is, in both works, he stressed the importance of morally grounded persuasive speech as the foundation of society. And persuasive speech, the art of rhetoric, aimed not at finding the Truth, but in generating probable logic, in playing around with a hypothesis, rather than in proving an ultimate thesis.

John's insistence on the necessity of rhetoric as the foundation of society was pronounced for its time. While all schoolmen were trained in rhetoric, as part of their grounding in the liberal arts, John was singular in his articulation of the relationship between rhetoric and effective governance and administration.<sup>19</sup>

Language represents the basis on which society is constructed at a cultural level as well, through the creation of history. Even though in the 12<sup>th</sup> century history was regarded as a part of literature, historical works still moulded the identity of various people and highlighted the spirit of various events.

As a scholar, John was, first and foremost, interested in the use of language to build political communities and maintain peace. His statement that he will only deal with events that he has witnessed himself, or experienced through the words of trusted people, itself testifies to that conviction of civilizations built in words. That is, in claiming the epistemological reliability of witness, he was more broadly asserting that the communities of men could adequately represent the past in human speech. As a rhetorician aiming at the presentation of plausibility, John's *Prologue* thus suggests that the use of the idea of the archive, the criticism of other historians, and, the idea of the witness, all had purchase in that regard.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 262–263.

<sup>19</sup> Clare Monagle, "John of Salisbury and the Writing of History", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 219.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 220.

In fact, in the *Metalogicon*, John states that in the absence of language human beings would be reduced to the level of beasts.<sup>21</sup> This brings to mind Aristotle's statement from *Politics* that man outside society is either a beast or a god. What is interesting to analyse is the way in which John modifies Aristotle's statement. Firstly, society is identified with language. As I have previously stated, John sees language as the basis of society and therefore he treats the two as synonymous. Secondly, he eliminates the possibility of man being a god outside society, because the Christian context in which he writes is no longer polytheist. There is only one God, who is the original, creative Word. As a result, only one option is left for man outside society and language, and that option is the status of beast. Through this simple statement John also underlines the impossibility of man to evolve in the absence of language, either spiritually (as he cannot access either the rites, or the Scriptures), or in terms of knowledge (as he cannot access the writings of the ancients).

The ideal society that John of Salisbury envisages is also split in two: the body politic and its soul:

For a republic is, just as Plutarch declares, 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 (not the 'gods' of which Plutarch speaks) 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. [...] The position of the head in the republic is occupied, however, 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. The place of the heart is occupied by the senate, from which proceeds the beginning of good and bad works. The duties of the ears, eyes and mouth are claimed by the judges and governors of the provinces. The hands coincide with officials and soldiers. Those who always assist the prince are comparable to the flanks. Treasurers and record keepers (I speak not of those who supervise prisoners, but of the counts of the Exchequer) resemble the shape of the stomach and intestines; these, if they accumulate with great avidity and tenaciously preserve their accumulation, engender innumerable and incurable diseases so that their infection threatens to ruin the whole body. Furthermore, the feet coincide with peasants perpetually bound to the soil, for whom it is all the more necessary that the head take precautions, in that they more often meet with accidents while they walk on the earth in bodily subservience; and

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<sup>21</sup> See John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 13.

those who erect, sustain and move forward the mass of the whole body are justly owed shelter and support. Remove from the fittest body the aid of the feet; it does not proceed under its own power, but either crawls shamefully, uselessly and offensively on its hands or else is moved with the assistance of brute animals.<sup>22</sup>

Even though John attributes the authorship of this structure of the state to Plutarch, research has proven that the *Instructio Trajani* is in fact a fictional treatise, invented by John in order to give authority to his ideas.

Books Five and Six are most famous for their development of an extended analogy between a commonwealth and the human body, which John claims to adopt from Plutarch, but which Hans Liebeschütz convincingly traced to Robert Pullen, one of John's teachers. Commenting on *Deuteronomy* (17:14–20) in his *Sentences* (7.7), Pullen had likened the roles of kings and priests, *regnum et sacerdotium*, in governing a commonwealth to those of body and soul in a human being. He developed the theme by outlining the duties of judges, knights, peasants and other classes in society. John of Salisbury introduces the same topics in the same order as his former teacher, who later became a cardinal and served in the papal curia, where John was likely reacquainted with him.

This organic metaphor, in which our author likens the prince to the head, the king's council (*senatus*) to the heart, judges to the eyes and ears, soldiers to the hands, and so on through all the classes of the commonwealth, expresses John's fundamental view of the state. He was fond of examples of this type, and in Book Six (24) he related a fable told to him by Pope Adrian IV about the rebellion of the members of the body against the voracious belly. From their subsequent deprivation they learned a salutary lesson about mutual cooperation, an ideal embraced by John of Salisbury, who was later credited with authorship of popular verses on this theme called "*De membris conspirantibus*."<sup>23</sup>

The body politic comprises all the lay institutions in an organic relation, in which each one contributes to the well-being and functionality of the whole. The soul is represented by the church with its structure.

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<sup>22</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 38–39.

<sup>23</sup> Roland E. Pepin, "John of Salisbury as a Writer", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 163–164.

Just like the human body and soul, the state and the church can be involved in both good and bad matters, which is why John mentions the existence of both lay and clerical tyrants:

He identifies in the *Policraticus* several species of tyrant: the private tyrant, the ecclesiastical tyrant, and the public or royal tyrant. According to John, anyone who employs the power he possesses to impose his own will arbitrarily upon another person may be classified as a tyrant.<sup>24</sup>

The difference between the king and the tyrant lies in their approach towards the law:

When undertaking to distinguish the prince from the tyrant, which he does on two occasions in his *Policraticus*, John chooses the criterion of legality, very common in Antiquity but scarcely used since.<sup>25</sup>

The law is a relevant criterion, as it is the defining language of the state, inspired by God to the wise men of the state (the philosophers) and in accordance with the divine law revealed by the Scriptures:

In John's eyes, law as a gift of God can only be *dogma sapientium*, and *compositio ciuitatis*: it depends on the truth revealed to those who possess sapientia, who formulate it, and, in a way, relay it to other humans; it "assembles" the city, and "puts [it] in order" (the main meanings of *componere*, from which *compositio* derives).<sup>26</sup>

As the law is inspired by God, it is above the king, who has to obey it, not out of necessity, but out of his natural care for his people and for the commonwealth.

In short, John takes the *Digest's* definitions as his starting point, but changes their wording in order to liberate the law in its fundamental aspect from any voluntarist intervention, to free it from the autonomous will of a human legislator; the voluntarist vision gives way to a theological vision of law's origin, in which the human mediator – the one who necessarily translates divine *aequitas* (the definition in Book 8 makes law the *forma aequitatis*) into words – is reduced to the role of telling to the people, in the manner of Moses the initial "legislator," or Gideon the arbiter of the law's application,

<sup>24</sup> Cary J. Nederman, "John of Salisbury's Political Theory", in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 266.

<sup>25</sup> Yves Sassier, "John of Salisbury and Law", in 240.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 246.

the rule whose *auctor* is none other than God. The two definitions, of an equity that subsumes justice and of the law as interpreter of divine will, serve the same end here: to assert that the will of the human legislator is a captive will, totally subjugated to this objective principle of equity, coming directly from God.

This definition of law is followed by an analysis of the particular situation of the prince in his relationship to the law. Here again borrowing the vocabulary of the glossators, John begins by saying that all the prince's subjects are constrained by obligation (*necessitate*) to observe the law. Then he comes to the prince, and to Ulpian's famous maxim *princeps legibus solutus est*, John's intention here being to give his own interpretation, endeavouring, it seems, to exclude the glossators' *ex uoluntate*, or at least to limit its scope. In substance, he writes that the prince is said to be exempt from the laws because what must guide him in his function, and does indeed guide him if he is truly a prince, is not fear of punishment, but his sole duty of cultivating equity through love of justice, and administering *utilitas rei publicae*, which implies the effacement of his personal will – his private will – in the general interest. Here John introduces what seems to be an allusion to submission *ex uoluntate*, derived from the glossators: "But who, when it comes to public affairs, can speak of the will of the prince (*de principis uoluntate*), when, in this domain, he is permitted to desire nothing except that of which he is persuaded by law or equity, or which is implied by considerations of general utility?" Thus in public affairs the will of the prince has to be subordinated to *lex*, *aequitas*, and *utilitas communis*, and it is on this basis that it possesses what John calls "the force of judgement" (*uim iudicii*), and that, he goes on, "what pleases him in such matters has the force of law, inasmuch as his ruling does not depart from the spirit of equity (*ab aequitatis mente*)." Such a ruling is bound to be, "as a consequence of painstaking contemplation, the image of equity," which is to say the image of the command of God.<sup>27</sup>

Clerics are not exempt from obeying the law, only that it is the clerical law, traced in the Bible and in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, which they obey. Due to the fact that the lay law is created in accordance with the clerical law, these two should not come into opposition, unless the king's or the courtiers' egotistical interests tried to bend the lay law. However, such a change of the lay law would indicate the rule of a tyrant, not of a king.

## Conclusions

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 246–247.

To summarise, there seems to be a fine thread connecting all the apparently heterogeneous pieces of the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*, and this thread is the language, as John of Salisbury sees it. Language is unifying. It is both stated directly and suggested as a central element governing the individual and the society of which he is part. Moreover, for John, language does not randomly and statically connect these elements, it marks the presence of the divine rationale imbedded in the world in a precise structure, created with the purpose of helping humanity raise itself towards God. Language becomes a metatopic, which brings extra meaning both overtly, creating continuity between the two works, and implicitly, through the structure of the treatises. In addition, the abundance of classical references is a means for John to mark himself as a continuator of the New Academy, in an improved, Christian version. Salisbury does not aim to merely propose theoretical philosophy, but a philosophy as Cicero sees it, used actively to benefit the commonwealth.