
The Image of an Executioner: Princes and Decapitations in John of Salisbury's Policraticus

Nathan J. Ristuccia

University of Chicago

1. A Medieval Humanist

John of Salisbury's eclectic compendium of moral philosophy, personal reflection, court satire, and exegesis, the *Policraticus*, is a staple text in the history of European political thought.¹ Completed in 1159, it is the first treatise of political theory since antiquity and a work praised for its balance, reasonableness, classicism, and moderation.² John, after all,

NATHAN J. RISTUCCIA is Collegiate Assistant Professor, Harper-Schmidt Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts, at the University of Chicago.

¹ I am grateful to Patricia M. Lines, Richard J. Oosterhoff, Jared Holley, and John Moscatiello for the help that they provided me in preparing this article.

² The first four books of a new edition have appeared: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, CCCM 118 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993); for Books 5-8, the standard edition remains: *Policraticus*, ed. C. C. J. Webb, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909); for a selection of the voluminous scholarship, see Hans Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury* (London: Wartburg Institute, 1950); Klaus Guth, *Johannes von Salisbury (1115/20-1180): Studien zur Kirchen-, Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte Westeuropas im 12. Jahrhundert* (St Ottilien: Münchener Theologische Studien, 1978); David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People: Popular Politics and England's Long Social Revolution, 1066-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46-62; John D. Hosler, *John of Salisbury: Military Authority of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); A. Linder, "The Knowledge of John of Salisbury in the Late Middle Ages," *Studi Medievali* 18:2 (1977), 315-366; Ilya Dines, "The Earliest Use of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*: Third Family Bestiaries," *Viator* 44:1 (2013), 107-118; David Bloch, *John of Salisbury*

defends liberty and a commonwealth based on the rule of law, even justifying the assassination of a lawless ruler.³ And John's style is crisp and playful, with none of the turgidity so often associated with scholastic theologians.

Contemporary scholars have repeatedly exalted John as a learned humanist.⁴ For instance, Cary Nederman, John's foremost biographer, calls him "the quintessential figure of twelfth-century humanism," whose professed loyalties to "the moderate skepticism of the New Academy" "restrained him from any form of fanaticism."⁵ Likewise, Christopher Brooke, one of John's editors, notes that those who read John find it "impossible to believe that he has been parted from us for so long," for John speaks in a "familiar voice" with "cosmopolitan flavour," filled with "respect and sympathy for almost all."⁶ Medievalist Sigbjørn Sønnesyn describes John's "anticipation of distinctly modern ideas" such as his "doctrine of moderation" and his "preoccupation with liberty."⁷ Historian Walter Ullmann mentions "the fastidious elegance of John's style, the

on *Aristotelian Science* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012); Cary J. Nederman and J. Brückmann, "Aristotelianism in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 21 (1983), 203-229.

³ On John's theory of tyrannicide, Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, "John of Salisbury and the Doctrine of Tyrannicide," *Speculum* 42 (1967), 693-709; Cary J. Nederman, "A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury's Theory of Tyrannicide," *Review of Politics* 50 (1988), 365-389; Kate Langdon Forhan, "Salisbury Stakes: the Uses of Tyranny in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*," *History of Political Thought* 11:3 (1990), 397-407; Jan van Laarhoven, "Thou Shalt Not Slay a Tyrant! The So-Called Theory of John of Salisbury," *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 319-341.

⁴ For John's humanism, Ronald E. Pepin, "John of Salisbury as a Writer," *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, ed. Christophe Grellard and Frédérique Lachaud (Boston: Brill, 2014), 147, 173-175.

⁵ Cary J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University Press, 2005), 41-43, 58-60, 72-74; cf. Cary J. Nederman, "John of Salisbury's Political Theory," *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 258-289; for John's skepticism, Christophe Grellard, *Jean de Salisbury et la renaissance médiévale du scepticisme* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013); Brian P. Hendley, "A New Look at John of Salisbury's Educational Theory," *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. J. E. Murdoch et al. (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 1990), vol. 2, 502-511.

⁶ Christopher Brooke, "John of Salisbury and his World," *The World of John of Salisbury*, 1-2, 12, 20.

⁷ Sigbjørn Sønnesyn, "Qui recta quae docet sequitur, uere philosophus est: The Ethics of John of Salisbury," *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 308-311, 335-338.

comprehensiveness and logical consistency of the thoughts . . . his dispassionate approach . . . [and] high moral sense.”⁸ In the words of political theorist Quentin Taylor, John is “the most readable of medieval authors . . . as a *humanist* he speaks in a language intelligible to modern readers . . . remarkably *progressive*” (emphasis original).⁹ At times, hearing John’s acclaim, one cannot help imagining that the Englishman walked out of an Anthony Trollope novel—a stiff-upper-lipped vicar with a cup of tea in one hand and a Tory pamphlet in the other.

John “the most readable of medieval authors.”

John was more than a humanist, though; John was also a thinker fascinated with public execution, as this article depicts. What explains the tension between these two sides of his thought? Admittedly, “humanist” is an ambiguous word, especially when prefaced by “medieval.” Sir Richard Southern famously defined medieval humanism as the belief in human dignity, the dignity of nature, and an orderly universe accessible to reason.¹⁰ By that standard, John of Salisbury was a humanist. He accepted all three, at least in attenuated forms. Indeed, Southern cited John as a representative figure of medieval humanism. John was also a humanist in the literary sense of an author who studied Roman literature and the trivium and who imitated classical style. Yet, John’s humanism does not guarantee that his political ideas strike modern sensibilities as familiar, sympathetic, non-fanatic, or even attractive. John could be a humanist as Thomas More was when he applauded the burning of several Lutherans or as Erasmus was when he commended the massacre of rebel German peasants. A close reading of the *Policraticus* reveals that John’s humanism functions alongside and in harmony with a pessimistic political theology: his concept of the prince-headsman.

John’s pessimism matched his personal and intellectual context; it fit well with his humanism. For, as medievalist Ste-

⁸ Walter Ullmann, “The Influence of John of Salisbury on Medieval Italian Jurists,” *English Historical Review* 59 (1944), 384-385.

⁹ Taylor praises John as “the ‘finest flower’ of the twelfth-century Renaissance Indeed, it is difficult to identify another writer between Augustine and Chaucer with greater appeal to modern sensibility than the Sage of Salisbury”; Quentin Taylor, “John of Salisbury, the *Policraticus*, and Political Thought,” *Humanitas* 19:1-2 (2006), 133-136.

¹⁰ Richard W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 29-33, 76-77; cf. Willemien Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm: a Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1-3, 9-10, 215-218.

John's writings
"a conserva-
tive, rearguard
action."

phen Jaeger has noted, twelfth-century "humanist masters" such as John often exude "melancholy world-weariness" and a sense that "a culture they admired . . . [was] threatened, indeed, overwhelmed by a new culture that appeared to them shallow, corrupting, vulgar"; Jaeger describes John's writings as "a conservative, rearguard action."¹¹ Because of his Augustinianism and Platonic skepticism, John doubted that laws, reason, or public institutions could control human sinfulness without the support of exemplary violence.¹² Reason is limited; humans sinful; laws and institutions fragile. In times of emergency, power in this world must depend instead on violence, ostracism, and decapitation. John portrays public execution as the central ritual of monarchical rule; it serves as much to persuade spectators as to coerce criminals.¹³ His fascination with execution shapes arguments in the *Policraticus* about public offices, civil law, mass spectacle, and tyrannicide. In John's pessimistic vision, the prince is, at bottom, "the image of an executioner," who must dwell beyond the boundaries of ordinary society and its laws in order to preserve the commonwealth from self-destruction.¹⁴ Without the shedding of blood, there is no body politic.

¹¹ C. Stephen Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Speculum* 78 (2003), 1157-1159, 1169-1170, 1180-1183; on the gloomy atmosphere of John's writings, see C. Stephen Jaeger, "John of Salisbury, a Philosopher of the Long Eleventh Century," *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Enger (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 499-520; Taylor, "John of Salisbury," 141-142.

¹² For this Augustinian skepticism, Christophe Grellard, "John of Salisbury and Theology," *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 362-372.

¹³ For medieval ideas on deterrence and other purposes for execution, see Trisha Olson, "Medieval Blood Sanction and the Divine Beneficence of Pain: 1100-1450," *Journal of Law and Religion* 22:1 (2006/2007), 63-129; on execution as a spectacle, see Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 17-21, 131-142; Esther Cohen, "Symbols of Culpability and the Universal Language of Justice: The Ritual of Public Executions in Late Medieval Europe," *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989), 407-416; Nathan J. Ristuccia, "Ideology and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon Monastic Education," *American Benedictine Review* 61:4 (2010), 373-386; Daniel O'Gorman, "Mutilation and Spectacle in Anglo-Saxon Legislation," *Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Jay Paul Gates and Nicole Marafioti (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2014), 149-164.

¹⁴ Carnificii . . . imaginem, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.3.11-12, CCCM 118.236.

2. The Office of a Prince

A reader who has only perused extracts from the *Policraticus* can understandably misinterpret John as an arch-monarchist. Certain passages in John's treatise display an extraordinary reverence for the prince. At times, his language points forward to the divine-right monarchy of early modern theorists like Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet or Robert Filmer. The king is, for John, the divinely appointed head over the body politic, an "image of divinity," protected with terrifying punishments against *lèse majesté*.¹⁵ Nonetheless, this depiction of the prince as god-on-earth has a limited place in the *Policraticus*, restricted to a few excerpts where this language illuminates John's larger concept of the body politic. The dominant picture of the prince in John's treatise is less glorious—not a god, but an executioner.

John of Salisbury repeatedly describes the prince as an executioner (*carnifex*). He begins the *Policraticus*, for instance, by satirizing the aristocratic pastime of hunting. John mocks nobles for considering this "art of execution" worthy of comparison with a liberal education.¹⁶ Evidently, John perceived similarities between hunting and execution. In Latin, *uenatio* can mean both hunting animals and fighting beasts in the arena: a normal method of execution in Rome.¹⁷ Moreover,

¹⁵ John distinguishes the "image of God" (*imago dei*), which is in all humans, from the "image of divinity" (*imago deitatis, imago diuinitatis*), which is in the Prince alone: *imago deitatis, princeps amandus uenerandus est et colendus*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.17, Webb, 2.73; for *lèse majesté* (*crimen maiestatis*), see John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 6.25-27, Webb, 2.73-82; John of Salisbury, *Vita Anselmi* 8, PL 199.1024D; on the prince as head, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 5.2, 5.6, Webb, 1.282, 298.

¹⁶ *Ad haec carnificium eorum artem exigit et artem facit . . . Haec sunt temporibus nostris liberalia nobilium studia, haec sunt prima elementa uirtutis*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.4.61-68, CCCM 118.31; Pepin, "John of Salisbury as a Writer," 161-162; on the relationship between hunt, sacrifice, and execution, Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 12-22, 46-48.

¹⁷ Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *uenatio, venator*; Donald G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1998), 43, 77-80, 90, 187-190, 265-266. Isidore treats "gladiator" (*lanista*) as synonymous with *carnifex*: *Lanista, gladiator, id est carnifex, Tusca lingua appellatus, a laniando scilicet corpora*, Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 10.49, 10.159, 18.2.6, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1911); cf. Paul the Deacon, *Excerpta ex libris Festi de significatione uerborum*, ed. W. Lindsay (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931),

hunting and execution were both elite spectacles that the political leaders performed—in the arena, on the scaffold, or in restricted royal forests—before the eyes of a non-participating population.

For John, the hunter—like the executioner—is a liminal figure, who serves a useful, though distasteful, role. According to John, in a just commonwealth, only a small marginal group would hunt, for “the pagan political philosophers fashioned justice by requiring that each person be content with his own office, and so they shut hunters off from nobles and city-dwellers.”¹⁸ John scorns the Thebans—who supposedly required that all their citizens hunt—as a “polluted race” (*gens foeda*), which wallowed in the asocial sins of parricide, incest, and oath-breaking.¹⁹ The Thebans, thus, were uncivilized in the pure sense—feral and alien from civic behavior. According to John, kings, popes, nobles, and hunters have different offices in the body politic; only a foolish prince would ever “usurp the hunter’s task of executing.”²⁰ No wonder that Nimrod the mighty hunter “learned contempt for God through the slaughter of animals” and then set himself up as the world’s first tyrant over Babel—the archetype for the depraved city of man.²¹

By associating hunting and execution, John plays on an ambiguity in Latin. In Medieval Latin, *carnifex*—etymolog-

56; for John’s use of Isidore, Cédric Giraud and Constant Mews, “John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12th Century,” *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 51-52, 58.

¹⁸ *Philosophi gentium iustitiam, quae politica dicitur, praeceptis et moribus informantes, cuius merito res publica hominum subsistit et uiget, unumquemque suis rebus et studiis uoluerunt esse contentum . . . uenandi ars uel officium uix permittitur accedere ad suburbanos, cum uenatores . . . ab urbibus nobiliorum que coetu longius arceantur*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.3.11-16, CCCM 118.28-29.

¹⁹ For the Thebans (*e.g.*, Oedipus), John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.4.1-7, CCCM 118.29.

²⁰ *Cur illius usurpas officium . . . ad uenatoris carnificium uel sordes prolaboris*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.4.302-308, CCCM 118.40; for the death of the tyrant William II Rufus of England while hunting, John of Salisbury, *Vita Anselmi* 11-12, *PL* 199.1028D, 1030A, 1031A.

²¹ *Nembroth robustus uenator contra dominum . . . Tyrannidis ergo fastigium in contumeliam creatoris a uenatore incipiens, alium non inuenit auctorem quam eum qui in caede ferarum et uolutabro sanguinis domini contemptum didicisset*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.4.162-170, CCCM 118.35.

ically a “meat-maker”—denotes either a butcher or an executioner; in Classical Latin, though, the word always means “executioner.”²² Since John was well-read in Roman literature and classical *florilegia*, he would have known this distinction.²³ The Latin Vulgate, for example, employs *carnifex* only once, while depicting how the tyrannical Hellenistic king Antiochus IV slew the Maccabean Martyrs.²⁴ In the *Policraticus*, *carnifex* translates as “executioner,” for John frequently portrays the prince putting criminals to death, as discussed below. But the double meaning lingered.

This opening section of the *Policraticus* links execution not with princes, but with tyrants like Nimrod: for John, the opposite of law-abiding princes. This usage parallels sections in other works by John. In his didactic poem, the *Entheticus Maior*, for instance, John refers to the tyrannical king Stephen of Blois and his son Eustace—both dead at the time of writing—as “executioners” (*carnifices*) and the corrupt royal court as a “place of execution” (*carnificina*).²⁵ In two of his letters, likewise, John speaks of “the execution grounds of tyrants” (*carnificinas tirannorum*), contrasting such killings with the proper use of the sword by the prince and his magistrates.²⁶ Elsewhere in the *Policraticus*, though, John ties the executioner to the prince. John saves his adulation for the pope, not the prince. The pope, John emphasizes, should have nothing to do

22 C. T. Lewis and C. Short (ed.), *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), s.v. *carnifex*. In Classical Latin, a butcher is a *lanius* or *macellarius*. Cf. Charles du Fresne Du Cange et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Niort: L. Favre, 1883-1887), s.v. *carnifex*; *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975-2013), s.v. *carnifex*, *carnificina*, *carnificium*.

²³ For John’s knowledge of the classics, see Laure Hermand-Shebat, “John of Salisbury and Classical Antiquity,” *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 180-214; Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 53-55, 76; Rodney Thomson, “John of Salisbury and William of Malmesbury: Currents in Twelfth-Century Humanism,” *The World of John of Salisbury*, 117-126; Janet Martin, “John of Salisbury as a Classical Scholar,” *The World of John of Salisbury*, 179-201.

²⁴ 2 Macc. 7:29; cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.22, Webb, 2.398.

²⁵ The English translation renders the word “butchers” here, but references to hanging (*suspensia*) and crucifixion (*cruce*) soon afterwards demonstrate that John intended “executioners”; John of Salisbury, *Entheticus Maior*, ed. Jan van Laarhoven (Leiden: Brill, 1987), ll. 1297-1300, 1315, 1327, 1412-1416.

²⁶ *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. W. J. Millor et al. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1995), vol. 2, nos. 269, 281, pp. 544, 616; cf. Rom. 13:1-5, 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

For John, a tyrant kills illegally, a prince does so in accordance with the law.

with bloodshed and is not an executioner. At various places in his treatise, John worries lest a usurping pope eventually drag the papacy down to the level of a headsman.²⁷ But, for John, the distinction between tyrants and temporal princes is not that one is an executioner and the other not, but that one kills illegally and the other in accordance with the law.

Early in Book 4, for instance, in a section contrasting the prince and the tyrant, John describes the prince as an inferior minister, who “receives a sword from the church” in order to “coerce bodies” on behalf of the priesthood.²⁸ A good Gelasianist, John distinguishes between royal power and priestly authority. The “pious office” of the prince is “exercised in the punishment of crimes and represented in the image of an executioner.”²⁹ Indeed, according to John, the ritual of public execution is only possible due to the will of God. Why else, at the block, would men willingly “offer up their neck” to the prince to be cut off?³⁰ Reason alone cannot justify such fearsome majesty. But as “the public power,” the prince receives

²⁷ Quis autem eo iniquior qui ministerium pacis, sacrificandi officium in rixas mittit et carnificium, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.23, Webb, 2.407-408, 411; in John’s *Historia pontificalis*, the heretic Arnold of Brescia lambasts Pope Eugenius III as “a man of blood who establishes authority by burning and killing” (*uirum sanguinum qui incendiis et homicidiis prestat auctoritatem*); John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, 31, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 64; John applies the title *uir sanguinum* (cf. 2 Sam. 16:7) to princes with reluctance and never to popes. According to Arnold, Eugenius is the opposite of a proper pope. While John disagrees, he worries that one day just such a papal “man of blood” may arise. Cf. *Policraticus*, 4.2.45-50, CCCM 118.235; *Policraticus*, 7.19, 7.21, Webb, 2.176, 198.

²⁸ Hunc ergo gladium de manu ecclesiae accipit princeps, cum ipsa tamen gladium sanguinis omnino non habeat. Habet tamen et istum, sed eo utitur per principis manum cui coercendorum corporum contulit potestatem, spiritualium sibi in pontificibus auctoritate reseruata. Est ergo princeps sacerdotii quidem minister et qui sacrorum officiorum illam partem exercet quae sacerdotii manibus uidentur indigna, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.3.1-9, CCCM 118.236.

²⁹ Sacrarum namque legum omne officium religiosum et pium est, illud tamen inferius quod in poenis criminum exercetur et quandam carnificii representare uidetur imaginem, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.3.9-12, CCCM 118.236.

³⁰ Est ergo, ut eum plerique diffiniunt, princeps potestas publica et in terris quaedam diuinae maiestatis imago. Procul dubio magnum quid diuinae uirtutis declaratur inesse principibus, dum homines nutibus eorum colla submittunt et securi plerumque feriendas praebent ceruices, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.1.19-23, CCCM 118.232.

from God an “abundance of miraculous power” (*magnum diuinae uirtutis*), a non-rational “divine force” (*impulsu diuino*), which frightens men into obedience.³¹ For John, execution enthralled. John’s language parallels the famous section in Edmund Burke’s treatise on the sublime, where Burke comments that theater-goers will empty “the most sublime and affecting tragedy” in order to gawk at a hanging.³² According to John’s tale of the Indian Bragmani, even a heathen monarch like Alexander the Great would not conquer a people who committed no injustice and deserved no chastisement; a land without capital punishment is a land without the need for a prince.³³ But in a world of sin, all people, even the clergy, must venerate the prince as “the scourge of God for the punishment of evil-doers” (alluding to Rom. 13:1-7).³⁴

The “pious office” of the prince “exercised in the punishment of crimes.”

John’s language startles, for the *carnifex* was not a respected profession in ancient Rome. The *carnifices* were not even free Roman citizens, but state-slaves.³⁵ The presence of a *carnifex* was so contaminating, that Roman law forbade executioners from living within the limits of the city of Rome or visiting the public baths. Executioners had to wear red clothes to identify them from far off. A churchman as familiar with Roman law and Cicero’s speeches as John likely would have known such prohibitions.³⁶

³¹ Et impulsu diuino quisque timet quibus ipse timori est. Quod fieri posse non arbitror nisi nutu faciente diuino, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.1.24-25, CCCM 118.232.

³² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Sublime and Beautiful* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.7, 1.15.

³³ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.11.47-65, CCCM 118.267.

³⁴ To illustrate this veneration, John relates the meeting between Attila and St. Lupus of Troyes: *flagellum dei . . . quae a Domino instituta est ad uindictam malefactorum*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.1.34-45, CCCM 118.233.

³⁵ For Roman executioners, Gottfried Schieman, “Carnifex,” *Brill’s New Pauly*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 40-41, 101-102, 133-134, 156, 163-169, 219, 265-267; Jack J. Lennon, *Pollution and Religion in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 25, 138, 146-158; Gillian Clark, “Desires of the Hangman: Augustine on Legitimized Violence,” *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices*, ed. H. A. Drake (London: Ashgate, 2006), 137-146; T. J. Cadoux, “The Roman Carcer and Its Adjuncts,” *Greece & Rome* 55 (2008): 202-221.

³⁶ Yves Sassier, “John of Salisbury and the Law,” *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 235-257; M. Kerner, “Römisches und kirchliches Recht im *Policraticus*,” *The World of John of Salisbury*, 365-379; Hermand-Shebat, “John of

The executioner was also a defiled trade in medieval Europe—although laws regulating executioners are not extant before the thirteenth century.³⁷ Nonetheless, ideas of pollution arose earlier, for twelfth-century headsmen often were obliged to perform penance after executions, until Pope Innocent III banned this practice. Restrictions on executioners sometimes borrowed from Roman law—influential from the twelfth century forward—but probably originated independently. Local ordinances differed. In many areas of late medieval Germany, for instance, executioners had to wear special clothing, live outside the city-walls, and stand alone in a special place at church; they could not inherit, join a guild, attend weddings, visit the baths, give testimony in court, or hold citizenship.³⁸ These numerous lifelong taboos ensured that the private life and public function of the *carnifex* were inseparable.³⁹ In the language of Giorgio Agamben, the *carnifex* lacked any “bare life”; all his life was part of the polis and structured by its demands.⁴⁰ A prince-headsman would be a shameful ruler indeed.

In addition to the *carnifex*, John describes the prince as a lic-

Salisbury and Classical Antiquity,” 180-214.

³⁷ For medieval executioners, Kathy Stuart, *Defiled Trades and Social Outcasts: Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11-12, 26-27, 43-44, 59-60, 233-234; Paul R. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 5-6, 97-99, 105-106, 192, 249-251; Joel F. Harrington, *The Faithful Executioner: Life and Death, Honor and Shame in the Turbulent Sixteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 2013); Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 58-70; Esther Cohen, “The Meaning of the Head in High Medieval Culture,” in *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Catrien Santing et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 59-76; Trevor Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550* (London: Longman, 2001), 118-143; Gerald D. Robin, “The Executioner: His Place in English Society,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 15:3 (1964), 234-253; Katherine Royer, “Body in Parts: Reading the Execution Ritual in Late Medieval England,” *Historical Reflections* 29:2 (2003); 319-339.

³⁸ Stuart, *Defiled Trades and Social Outcasts*, 26-27.

³⁹ For public and private offices, see John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 5.4, Webb, 2.290;

⁴⁰ The *carnifex* recalls another Roman figure: the *Flamen Dialis*, a priest of Jupiter who was forbidden from actions like mounting a horse, seeing an army, and touching iron. The *carnifex* and the *Flamen Dialis* are the opposite of the proscribed outlaw, who is nothing but bare life; Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 182-184.

tor, a different category of ancient Roman executioner. Roman magistrates with the authority of *imperium*—the consul and the praetor—were accompanied by lictors: public guards who carried the *fasces*, a bundle of axe and rods that symbolized the power to judge and execute.⁴¹ Roman lictors did not normally perform executions: a task generally left to *carnifices*. Multiple twelfth-century authors, however, use *carnifex* and *lictor* as synonyms, so John may have thought that the two positions were the same.⁴²

According to John, “lictor” refers to a prince’s attendants only by metonymy. John avers that the prince himself, rather than his mere attendants, is “the sole and preeminent lictor,” because “it is lawful (*licitum*) for him only to give the death-blow through the subordinate hand [of his attendants].”⁴³ Directly after, John adds a second spurious etymology for *lictor* to the first from *licitum*, asserting that the prince is the “smiter of the law” (*legis ictor*), having the duty of beheading those whom the law convicts.⁴⁴ He bears the rod of correction “with the moderation of the sage.”⁴⁵ John praises the philosopher Plutarch for scourging a criminal while remaining emotionally calm and rational.⁴⁶ As an executioner, the prince should act without anger, gall, or guilt, pronouncing and performing the sentence of the law dispassionately, “so that his gentleness

As an executioner, the prince should perform the sentence of the law dispassionately.

⁴¹ Christian Gizewski, “Lictor,” *Brill’s New Pauly*; Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 40-41.

⁴² For the two words as synonyms, cf. Peter Cantor, *Verbum Adbreviatum, Textus Prior*, 129, ed. M. Boutry, CCCM 196B (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 650.11-17; Gerald of Wales, *Vita Aethelberti, Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. John Sherren Brewer (London: Longman, 1863), vol. 3, 418.23-29; *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, s.v. lictor.

⁴³ *Principes potest ita a deo est ut potestas a domino non recedat, sed ea utitur per subpositam manum . . . Nam etsi suos principes uideatur habere lictores, ipse aut solus aut praecipuus credendus est lictor, cui ferire licitum est per subpositam manum*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.1.27-29, 4.2.56-58, CCCM 118.235-236.

⁴⁴ *Lictor dicitur quasi legis ictor, eo quod ad ipsius spectat officium ferire quam lex iudicat feriendum*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.2.58-61, CCCM 118.236.

⁴⁵ *Virga quoque eius et baculus adhibita moderatione sapientiae contractus omnium et errores ad uiam reducit aequitatis*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.2.37-38, CCCM 118.235.

⁴⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.8.92-122, CCCM 118.261-262; Martin, “John of Salisbury,” 194-196.

calms the misery of those condemned to die."⁴⁷ At the sublime ritual of beheading, the people, the priesthood, and even those with their heads on the block obey in awe of the prince.

John's vision of the prince's office as executioner sprouted out of more than just his reading of classical exemplars and Latin etymologies; broader Christian themes like blood sacrifice, redemption, and the scapegoat also contributed. The parallels between John's prince and Anselm of Canterbury's satisfaction theory of the atonement are potent. John lived in Canterbury for years, knew Anselm's writings well, and even wrote a hagiography of the archbishop.⁴⁸ In the *Policraticus*, John employs the terminology of atonement when speaking both about Christ's redemption of sinners and about the prince's duty to suffer divine punishment in the place of his people.⁴⁹ For Anselm, the willing self-immolation of the God-man Christ is the only satisfactory atonement for the sins of humanity. For John, the prince can be both "the image of a divinity" and "the image of an executioner," both god and man, both the sacrificer and the victim. When the prince takes onto himself the dishonor and social ostracism of an executioner, he imitates Christ, who left his heavenly kingdom in order to take on the dishonorable form of a bondservant and sacrifice himself for his people.⁵⁰

3. *The Royal Outlaw*

In John's pessimistic theory, the prince-headsman is not glorious; he is not even civilized. Just as medieval custom banished executioners from ordinary society, John's prince

⁴⁷ Et homines frequenter occidat ut non incurrat nomen homicidii uel reatum . . . Vnde et antiquitus officialibus quorum manu iudex nocentes punit, cum reo gladius immineret, "obtempera legis arbitrio" dicebatur uel "legem imple," ut rei tristitiam mitigaret uel mansuetudo uerborum, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.2.46-47, 61-64, CCCM 118.235-236.

⁴⁸ Cf. John of Salisbury, *Vita Anselmi* 10, PL 199.1027A.

⁴⁹ For language like *propitiare*, *redemire*, and *satisfacere*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.4.246-251, 2.27.144-150, CCCM 118.37, 151; cf. Timothy Gorringer, *God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5, 86-87, 101.

⁵⁰ Hoc enim sentite . . . formam serui accipiens . . . humiliavit semet, Phil. 2:5-11; for a possible allusion: princeps . . . se prompta humilitate mentis et pia exhibitione operis seruorum profiteatur, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.7.16-17, CCCM 118.255.

is removed from all human emotion, relationships, and legislations—a personification of abstract justice. Yet John also emphasizes that the prince remains under the law; for John, ruling against the law is the definition of the tyrant, not the prince.⁵¹ John's knowledge of Roman law was extensive.⁵² In fact, he cites the paradox of the Roman *Lex regia* and *Lex digna vox*: a ruler who is both above and below the law, whose "pleasure has the force of law," yet "professes himself bound by the law."⁵³ John insists that the prince is not an outlaw (*ex-lex*) and scorns those interpreters of the *Lex regia* who claim otherwise.⁵⁴ Yet, John's repeated anxieties demonstrate that the author recognized how much the prince and the outlaw held in common. Indeed, John admits that the prince is absolved from the law and only follows the law out of love.⁵⁵

For John, the prince not an outlaw, though he only follows the law out of love.

⁵¹ Est ergo tyranni et principis haec differentia sola uel maxima quod hic legi obtemperat et eius arbitrio populum regit cuius se credit ministrum, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.1.1-3, CCCM 118.231; cf. *Policraticus*, 8.17, Webb, 2.345-346.

⁵² For John's knowledge of Roman Law, Sassier, "John of Salisbury," 235-257; Tilman Struve, "The Importance of the Organism in the Political Theory of John of Salisbury," *The World of John of Salisbury*, 303-317; Kerner, "Römisches und kirchliches Recht," 365-379; Peter von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik: Das rhetorische Exemplum von der Antike zur Neuzeit und die historiae im "Policraticus" Johannis von Salisbury* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1988), 440-443.

⁵³ John cites the *Lex regia* (Quod principi placuit legis habet uigorem) at *Policraticus*, 4.2.30-31, 4.7.40-42, CCCM 118.235, 255; *Policraticus*, 7.20, 8.7, Webb, 2.186, 265; the *Lex digna vox* (*digna uox est maiestate regnantis se legibus alligatum principem profiteri*) occurs at *Policraticus*, 4.1.46-50, CCCM 118.233; see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 94-107, 135-136, 150-153, 294-298; Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 20-21, 28-32, 44-48, 77-90, 126-129, 207-208, 213-214, 217-218.

⁵⁴ Procedant nunc dealbatores potentium, susurrent aut, si hoc parum est, publice praeconentur principem non esse legi subiectum, et quod ei placet non modo in iure secundum formam aequitatis condendo sed qualitercumque legis habere uigorem. Regem quem legis nexibus subtrahunt, si uolunt et audent, exlegem faciant: ego non modo his renitentibus sed mundo reclamante ipsos hac lege teneri confirmo, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.7.38-44, CCCM 118.255-256; cf. *Policraticus*, 7.20, Webb, 2.186; John refers to corrupt officials as *exlex*; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 6.1, Webb, 2.4.

⁵⁵ Princeps tamen legis nexibus dicitur absolutus, non quia ei iniqua liceant, sed quia is esse debet qui non timore poenae sed amore iustitiae aequitatem colat . . . Sed quis in negotiis publicis loquetur de principis uoluntate, cum in eis nil sibi uelle liceat nisi quod lex aut aequitas persuadet,

The prince submits to the pope's sacramental authority only out of love.

According to John, the prince is unable to will anything except equity, hence his pleasure has the force of law. For instance, John tells the famous story of how Emperor Theodosius, the paragon of a Christian prince, did penance at the command of St. Ambrose of Milan.⁵⁶ John states that Theodosius did not need to obey Ambrose: “under what necessity did he act? His will.” Moreover, John calls Theodosius both emperor and bishop (*antistes*) and discusses Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, soon afterwards. For John, Theodosius’ will seems to have the force of royal and priestly law alike. Although John never draws this conclusion, his radical suggestion, if taken to its logical extreme, would indicate that the pope cannot excommunicate a prince without that prince’s own consent.⁵⁷ The prince only submits to the pope’s sacramental authority out of love.

Some later voluntarist theologians—notably William of Ockham and Huldrych Zwingli—depicted God himself as an outlaw (*deus exlex*).⁵⁸ This imagery was a controversial extension of the standard two-power distinction in medieval scholasticism, the *potestas absoluta* and the *potestas ordinata*: that is, God’s omnipotence versus God’s choice to restrict his power in order to establish an orderly universe. Even before Ockham’s

John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.2.22-28, CCCM 118.234-235.

⁵⁶ Non modo ut imperatorem uenerata est sed ut antistitem? Qui leges tulerat, quam patienter tulit sententiam sacerdotis Mediolanensis . . . exclusus ab ecclesia, et paenitentiam coactus est explere sollemnem. Sed quid eum tantae necessitati subiecerat? Voluntas utique subiecta iustitiae Dei et legi eius usquequaque obtemperans, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.6.77-86, CCCM 118.250; cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.3.31-32, CCCM 118.237.

⁵⁷ On John’s non-hierocratic vision, Cary J. Nederman and Catherine Campbell, “Priests, Kings and Tyrants: Spiritual and Temporal Power in John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*,” *Speculum* 66 (1991), 572-590.

⁵⁸ Jamie Taylor, “Neighbors, Witnesses, and Outlaws in the Later Middle Ages,” *English Language Notes* 48:2 (2010), 85-97; Stephen John Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 66-69; Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3: *The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2003), 475-478, 484; Paul R. Hinlicky, *Paths Not Taken: Fates of Theology from Luther Through Leibniz* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 39-40, 57-61, 89-90, 114-115, 142-145, 201, 246, 252-258, 291; Paul R. Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology After Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 157-158, 161-165, 175, 365; Heiko A. Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970), 61-64.

work, medieval theologians and jurists debated the relationship between these two forms of power, both in regard to God and in regard to kings and popes.⁵⁹ These theological disputes mirrored John's apprehensions about the semi-outlaw prince of the *Lex Regia*. Both God's will and the prince's will are logically prior to law and determinative of the law; yet they are loving wills which allow the law to bind them.

The supreme example of John's semi-outlaw prince is his discussion of the notorious crime of parricide. Although John once opines that any violation of the law of "Mother Nature" is parricide, he usually employs the word with its standard meaning of kinslaying.⁶⁰ John cites numerous examples of parricides, from Cain to Nero. The ancient Romans so dreaded the pollution of kinslaying that they would enclose parricides in wolf-skin sacks to avoid their impure touch, place a rooster, dog, serpent, and monkey in with the criminal—signifying his exclusion from human society and degradation to the level of a beast—and cast them all together into the purifying waters of the Tiber.⁶¹ This bizarre punishment was revived on the Continent in John's own lifetime, due to the reintroduction of Roman law. In fact, the punishment of the sack continued in sporadic usage until the eighteenth century.⁶²

In the laws of the early Roman Republic, moreover, the parricide, along with a few other types of criminals, was proscribed as a *homo sacer*: a man devoted to the chthonic gods for destruction, who anyone could legally kill, but no one could sacrifice.⁶³ This idea, too, has a twelfth-century parallel in the

⁵⁹ For these debates, Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, 54-77, 106-120, 212-213, 264-265.

⁶⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 1.2.6-8, 3.9.62, CCCM 118.28, 198; cf. *Policraticus*, 7.21, 7.24, 8.10, 8.18, Webb, 2.193, 213-215, 293, 363.

⁶¹ Cf. Lennon, *Pollution and Religion*, 23, 37, 91-99, 130, 157-158, 193; Artur Völkl, "Parricidium," *Brill's New Pauly*; Walter Simon, "Homicidium," *Brill's New Pauly*.

⁶² For the *poena cullei*, Florike Egmond, "The Cock, the Dog, the Serpent, and the Monkey: Reception and Transmission of a Roman Punishment, or Historiography as History," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 2:2 (1995), 159-192; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 5.27.36.

⁶³ According to an important Roman plebiscite, "it is impious to sacrifice [the *homo sacer*] but anyone can kill him without legal condemnation" (*neque fas est eum immolari sed qui occidit parridii non damnatur*); Judy E. Gaughan, *Murder Was Not a Crime: Homicide and Power in the Roman Republic* (Austin: University

common-law institution of the wolf's head: a felon who was pronounced beyond the boundaries of the commonwealth and law and, thus, could be hunted down like a beast by anyone.⁶⁴ As Giorgio Agamben has argued, outlaws such as parricides are mirror images of the prince in Roman law—both stand outside and inside the juridical order at the same time.⁶⁵ The prince—like the hunter, the outlaw, the executioner—is alien from the city.

Admittedly, John speaks with horror about kinslaying, recommending hanging from a gibbet to those who commit the crime.⁶⁶ Yet the churchman also abhors those who set love of their family above love of their fatherland. He twice excuses parricides who killed for the sake of the people. The premier example of a parricide in the *Policraticus* is Romulus, the founder of Rome, “who consecrated the omens of the city to the gods by his brother’s blood.”⁶⁷ Harried by the shades of the dead, Romulus ritually expiated his parricide. The Romans continued to follow this precedent: first “immolating tyrannical emperors and then deifying them” as atonement.⁶⁸ Remus’

of Texas Press, 2010), 10-12, 53-56, 84-88, 91-98, 159; Gordon P. Kelly, *A History of Exile in the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27-29; Leon ter Beek, “Divine Law and the Penalty of *Sacer Esto* in Early Rome,” *Law and Religion in the Roman Republic*, ed. Olga Tellegen-Couperus (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 11-30.

⁶⁴ Timothy Scott Jones, *Outlawry in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 25-28, 106; Maurice Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend* (London: Routledge, 1961); Melissa Sartore, *Outlawry, Governance, and Law in Medieval England* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 10-40; and the essays in *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society, c. 1066 - c. 1600*, ed. John C. Appleby and Paul Dalton (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009).

⁶⁵ For the *homo sacer*, see Agamben, *Homo Sacer*; Peter Gratton, *The State of Sovereignty: Lessons from the Political Fictions of Modernity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 161-199.

⁶⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.5, Webb, 2.248; cf. *Policraticus*, 5.10, 8.19, Webb, 1.32, 2.367.

⁶⁷ John disapproves of the pagan ceremonies after Remus’ death, but never explicitly condemns the parricide itself: *Vrbis auspicia sacrilegio parricidii et fraterni sanguinis cruore numinibus suis Romulus consecrauit. Deinde lemurbus infestatus honore uano simulata communicatione imperii fratrem placauit occisum*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.10.79-82, CCCM 118.202; cf. *Policraticus*, 8.23, Webb, 2.411.

⁶⁸ *Suos quoque imperatores quos de more Romanus populus fideliter iugulabat, deificauit fidelius . . . tyrannis ascitis*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.10.79-82, CCCM 118.202.

paradigmatic death as a scapegoat established a new political order.⁶⁹

Likewise, John describes how Lucius Iunius Brutus, the first consul of Rome, slaughtered his own rebel sons lest they restore the ousted tyrant Tarquin.⁷⁰ The churchman emphasizes that this beheading was a symbolic event in the foundation of the Republic “demonstrating publicly that Brutus had adopted the people of Rome [as his new family] in the place of his children.” Brutus executed his sons in order to communicate to the people. Although acknowledging that the rectitude of Brutus’ emergency action was an open question among ancient philosophers, John commends Brutus’ fidelity.⁷¹ Immediately after, John praises the Athenian Areopagus for declining either to convict or to acquit a woman of Smyrna who had murdered her husband and son in retribution for their own earlier “crimes against the whole polity.”⁷² Her action was not personal; it was public, just as Brutus’ was. John lets philosophers debate whether Brutus and the woman of Smyrna behaved rightly. As an Academic Platonist, John judges on probabilities, not certainties.⁷³ His skepticism prevented as-

⁶⁹ On sacrifice and the scapegoat, see Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W. D. Halls (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

⁷⁰ Brutus, primus consul, liberos suos de reuocandis in urbem regibus agere cognouisset, eos protraxit in forum et in media contione uirgis caesos tandem securi percuti iussit, ut plane publicus parens in locum liberorum uideretur populum adoptasse. Ego quidem, etsi parricidium perhorrescam, consulis non possum non approbare fidem, qui maluit salutem liberorum suorum periclitari quam populi, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.11.88-94, CCCM 118.268.

⁷¹ Peter von Moos, “The Use of *Exempla* in the *Policraticus*,” *The World of John of Salisbury*, 234-236; von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik*, 350-361; for Brutus as a symbol of sacrificial violence, cf. Jesse Goldhammer, *The Headless Republic: Sacrificial Violence in Modern French Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 5-7, 27-39, 47, 54-55, 61; Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 32-34.

⁷² Totius rei publicae suae tam atrocem iniuriam . . . licitum esse asserens ex indulgentia legum, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.11.94-128, CCCM 118.268-269; Leofranc Holford-Strevens, “Getting away with Murder: The Literary and Forensic Fortune of two Roman *Exempla*,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 7 (2001), 494-497, 512-513.

⁷³ Grellard, *Jean de Salisbury*, 65-71, 131-132.

surance. Like the Areopagus, John refuses to condemn the two killers, for their deeds seemed necessary.

The prince can be excused of parricide, in John's opinion, partly because—like Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem—the prince is without father and mother, “forgetting the affection of blood-ties” and setting aside familial connections in order to have no kin but the people.⁷⁴ Indeed, John dismisses hereditary claims to the throne; princes receive their rank not by dynastic lineage, but through God and the choice of the people. Brutus' parricidal adoption of the people is emblematic of rulership, for natural bonds cease in the public sphere (*in publicis locis*).⁷⁵ A public official, thus, is free to execute his own father just as he would any other criminal. In John's mixed metaphor from the fourth book of the *Policraticus*, the moderate prince must embrace his subjects as beloved brothers and then amputate away sinners from the body politic.⁷⁶ He can commit no parricide because, in some sense, every execution is parricide.

*The prince
can be excused
of parricide
because he has
no kin but the
people.*

4. *Spectacle and Tyrannicide*

John of Salisbury's pessimistic depiction of the prince-executioner shaped two other key arguments in the *Policraticus*, on ritual and tyrannicide. Consider, first, John's theory of ritual, discussed early in Book 5, in his section on the priesthood as the soul of the body politic.⁷⁷ Multiple scholars have noted that the *Policraticus* supplies an early defense for what Jean-Jacques

⁷⁴ Sine matre et in terris sine patre natus est . . . quia regnum et sacerdotium de ratione non pariunt caro et sanguis, cum in alterutro creando parentum respectus citra uirtutum merita praeualere non debeat . . . obliuisci debet affectum carnis, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.3.53-62, CCCM 118.238; Evan F. Kuehn, “Melchizedek as Exemplar for Kingship in Twelfth-Century Political Thought,” *History of Political Thought* 31:4 (2010), 557-575.

⁷⁵ John records an *exemplum* about a magistrate who no longer submits to his father's parental rights (*patrum iura*); John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.7.82-100, CCCM 118.257-258.

⁷⁶ Caritatis brachiis subiectos ut fratres amplexatur, moderationis limitibus clauditur. Sic etenim fratres diligit quod errores eorum medicinaliter corrigit, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.8.1-28, CCCM 118.258-259.

⁷⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 5.2, Webb, 2.282; Nederman, “A Duty to Kill,” 370; Ayşegül Keskin Çolak, *Nugae Curialium Reconsidered: John of Salisbury's Court Criticism in the Context of his Political Theory* (M.Phil. thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), 21-23.

Rousseau and other modern thinkers termed “civil religion.”⁷⁸ John’s ideas about ritual are complicated, and this article lacks the space to examine them in full.⁷⁹ Simplifying somewhat, while rare mystics and philosophers can approach God directly through love, most human beings can only see God “as through a glass darkly,” worshipping him via the sensory media of ceremonies.⁸⁰ Therefore, even the Roman king Numa instituted rites among the Romans in order to inculcate piety, fidelity, justice, and restraint in them.⁸¹ When the Romans later neglected their traditional gods and followed Epicurean philosophy and the “blind goddess” Fortune, the empire descended into immorality and weakness.⁸² Undoubtedly, John conceived of Christian liturgies as the primary ceremonies of the medieval commonwealth. But, by citing Numa, a heathen Roman king, as his chief example, John indicates that he also viewed royal ceremonies and even pagan rites as sensory mediators, instilling morals in the people.

Rites and ceremonies important as means of instilling morals in the people.

Fittingly, throughout the *Policraticus*, John often describes execution using the language of spectacle.⁸³ For instance, the section on Romulus’ sacrifice of Remus and ritual purification afterwards occurs within a series of three consecutive chapters

⁷⁸ See Christophe Grellard, “Le sacré et le profane: Le statut des laïcs dans la *Respublica* de Jean de Salisbury,” in *Les laïcs dans les villes de la France du Nord au XIIe siècle*, ed. Patrick Demouy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 167–187; Christophe Grellard, “La religion comme technique de gouvernement chez Jean de Salisbury,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 53 (2010), 237–254; Cary J. Nederman, “2012 Arthur O. Lovejoy Lecture Civil Religion—Metaphysical, Not Political: Nature, Faith, and Communal Order in European Thought, c.1150–c.1550,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74:1 (2013), 1–9.

⁷⁹ For John’s ideas on ritual, see Mark Silk, “John of Salisbury and the Civic Utility of Religion,” in *History in the Comic Mode: Medieval Communities and the Matter of Person*, ed. Rachel Fulton and Bruce W. Holsinger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 128–142; Mark Silk, “Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civil Religion in the West,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72:4 (2004), 863–896.

⁸⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 5.3, Webb, 2.284; cf. 1 Cor. 13:12.

⁸¹ *Vnde et Numam Pompilium cerimonias quasdam legimus indixisse Romanis et sacrificia, ut sub immortalium deorum praetextu ad colendam pietatem religionem et fidem . . . ita barbariem occupavit, ut ab iniuriis temperarent, feriarentur ab armis, iustitiam colerent, et ciuilem sibi inuicem impertirent affectum*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 5.3, Webb, 2.285.

⁸² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 5.4, Webb, 2.292–293.

⁸³ For instance, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.10.79–82, 4.2.46–64, 4.11.87–94, CCCM 118.202, 235–236, 268.

on drama.⁸⁴ There, John imagines the whole world as a stage, where men play out a comedy of their own foolishness before an audience of God and his saints. Interestingly, torture and execution scenes were common in medieval drama.⁸⁵ Execution and parricide, then, are theatrical performances; they mediate to an audience and communicate symbolically. Public execution is a sacrament of civil religion.

John's famous *apologia* for tyrannicide, moreover, also reflects these ideas on the prince-executioner. For John, the tyrant was the exact opposite of the prince, because the tyrant rules in opposition to the law.⁸⁶ Tyranny is fullest example of *lèse majesté*. As John notes, Roman law punished *lèse majesté* (*crimen maiestatis*) by executing the criminal and excluding his sons from property, inheritance, rank, office, and legal competency.⁸⁷ Therefore, the tyrant, like any violator of *majesté*, is outside the bounds of normal society.⁸⁸ John of Salisbury describes the tyrant as introducing "a savage state of exception" (*ferale iustitium*) and "banishing the laws and canons from the borders of the realm."⁸⁹ As one scholar of the *Policraticus* has concluded, the tyrant "becomes an alienated being . . . hunted like animals . . . all laws cease in the desert, the emptiness, of absolute will . . . when the kingdom was turned into the realm of nonsense, then anything was possible."⁹⁰

⁸⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.8-10, CCCM 118.190-205; Geoffrey Koziol, "England, France, and the Problem of Sacrality in Twelfth-Century Ritual," in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 124-148; Donnalee Dox, *The Idea of the Theater in Latin Christian Thought: Augustine to the Fourteenth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 8, 87-94; von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik*, 410-412, 508-511; Grellard, *Jean de Salisbury*, 178-192.

⁸⁵ For scenes of violence in Roman and medieval plays, Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

⁸⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.1.1-3, CCCM 118.231; cf. *Policraticus*, 8.17, Webb, 2.345-346.

⁸⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 6.25-27, Webb, 2.73-82; cf. Rodger I. Wilkie, "Re-Capitating the Body Politic: The Overthrown of Tyrants in *Havelok the Dane*," *Neophilologus* 94 (2010), 139-150.

⁸⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.15.16-23, CCCM 118.230.

⁸⁹ *Tirannus . . . quis in prouincias induxerit feralē iustitium, quis leges et canones exterminauerit a finibus suis . . . ut quaeuis flagitia impune et sine ulla reprehensione committeret*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 7.20, Webb, 2.187.

⁹⁰ Michael Wilks, "John of Salisbury and the Tyranny of Nonsense," *The*

John borrows the rare Latin word *iustitium* (“a stopping of the law”) from the Latin epicist Lucan’s account of the panic in Rome after Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon.⁹¹ The word originally meant an emergency suspension of the legislature and judiciary decreed by the Roman senate. Once a tyrant like Caesar suspends the laws and institutions, it cannot be illegal anymore to kill him. Instead, the assassin restores the rule of law. John twice speaks respectfully of Marcus Iunius Brutus, the killer of Caesar.⁹² Like a sovereign out of Carl Schmitt, John’s tyrant-slayer must first decide that a seemingly lawful ruler is in truth a tyrant and that the state of exception already has begun; next, the tyrannicide ends this emergency through killing.⁹³ Strikingly, John refers to the “public power” (*publica potestas*) slaying the tyrant. Here, the tyrant-slayer embodies abstract “public power.” But elsewhere in the *Policraticus*—including in the very next chapter—this phrase is a synonym for “prince.”⁹⁴

Tyrannicide is a righteous act, “consecrated to the Lord by holy rites”; John highlights in particular Judith’s prayer and visit with priests before her murder of Holofernes.⁹⁵ Tyrannicide is even obligatory—the execution of an “enemy of the human race” (*hostis humani generis*).⁹⁶ In contemporary interna-

John viewed tyrannicide as obligatory . . .

World of John of Salisbury, 281-284.

⁹¹ *Ferale per urbem / iustitium*, Lucan, *Bellum Ciuile* 2.17-18, ed. D. R. Shackleton-Bailey (Leipzig: Teubner, 1988); John later refers to Lucan’s verses on the decapitation of Pompey (8.484-495) in his discussion of tyrannicide; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.17, Webb, 2.346; Julia T. Dyson, *King of the Wood: The Sacrificial Victor in Virgil’s Aeneid* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 88, 170-171; on John’s use of Latin epic, Hermand-Shebat, “John of Salisbury and Classical Antiquity,” 188-189, 205-207; Pepin, “John of Salisbury as a Writer,” 170; for *iustitium*, cf. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 41-52; Stephen Humphreys, “Legalizing Lawlessness: On Giorgio Agamben’s *State of Exception*,” *The European Journal of International Law* 17.3 (2006), 677-687; von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik*, 219-220.

⁹² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 7.25, 8.23, Webb, 2.218, 402.

⁹³ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 5-7; Phillip W. Gray, “Political Theology and the Theology of Politics: Carl Schmitt and Medieval Christian Political Thought,” *Humanitas* 20:1-2 (2007), 175-200.

⁹⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.15.17-18, 4.1.19-20, CCCM 118.203, 232.

⁹⁵ *Necem eorum reputant pietatem et . . . religione misterii dicunt Domino consecratum*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.20, Webb, 2.375-376.

⁹⁶ *Hostis humani generis iudicatus. Et haec quidem est descriptio tyranni*,

. . . yet tyrant-killers were ostracized from the rest of the commonwealth.

tional law, this Latin phrase refers to groups such as pirates and terrorists, who are outside any national jurisdiction and can be punished by any state. Medieval churchmen, in contrast, used the phrase for Satan. Indeed, John seems to be the first thinker to employ this exact phrase to justify the extrajudicial killing of a human. For John, pious Christians ought to slaughter tyrants with the same fervor as they battle the devil or mortify sin.

To ensure that the killing remained moral, John restricts the manner and means of tyrannicide. Even during emergencies, Christians must avoid sin. For instance, John insists that no one who has sworn fealty to a tyrant should violate this ceremony.⁹⁷ In practice, this requirement would prevent most medieval people from killing anyone but a foreigner, since in a country like England, all freeborn subjects owed fealty to the king. Many of John's exemplars kill foreign rulers: for instance, Ehud, Jael, and Judith.⁹⁸ John's tyrannicide, like John's prince, is not a member of the body politic and never bound to its laws. Tyrant-slayers stand ostracized from the rest of the commonwealth, able to seek its good because they are already outsiders.

Indeed, John defends the right of a tyrannicide to kill kinsmen, just as the prince can. John relates two different versions of the assassination of Philip II of Macedon by his relative Pausanias. According to the Roman moralist Valerius Maximus, Pausanias acted out of lust for glory and thus was justly executed as a parricide. The historian Justinus, in contrast, claims that Pausanias was avenging himself, for Philip had a role in the public childhood rape of Pausanias. John insists that if Justinus' version was true then the assassin's kinslaying "was excusable," like Brutus' or the woman of Smyrna's.⁹⁹ Indeed, John mentions that the widowed queen Olympias herself crowned Pausanias at his execution, symbolizing ritually that

qua explicatur res quae latet in nomine. Sicut ergo dampnatum hostem licet occidere, sic tyrannum, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.19, Webb, 2.378; cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 3.15.1, CCCM 118.203; Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (New York: Zone Books, 2009); Harry D. Gould, "Cicero's Ghost," *Maritime Piracy and the Construction of Global Governance*, ed. Michael J. Struett et al. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 23-46.

⁹⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.20, Webb, 2.378.

⁹⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.20, Webb, 2.374-377.

⁹⁹ Potest . . . crimen sacrilegii excusari, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.5, Webb, 2.248.

the killer acted more like a prince than the tyrant Philip had.

In addition to restricting who can be a tyrannicide, John also limits how the killing should occur. According to John, poisoning is always sinful, even when used against a tyrant.¹⁰⁰ In fact, throughout the *Policraticus*, John concentrates on decapitation, rarely mentioning other forms of execution. Hanging, however, not decapitation, was the dominant execution technique in the twelfth century, although it had been essentially unknown in the classical world.¹⁰¹ The Romans, in contrast, had executed using a variety of methods (e.g., the arena, burning, crucifixion), but decapitation was standard for the Roman upper class (the *honestiores*).¹⁰² This idea that beheading is the most honorable form of execution continued through early modernity; during the Middle Ages, executioners usually hung commoners but decapitated nobles.

Perhaps, John's picture of the prince-headsman refers to this medieval convention or derives from New Testament language about the sword (cf. Luke 22:38; Rom. 13:4) and the related Gelasian imagery of the two swords. But John likely also felt decapitation was the execution befitting the prince. After all, the prince was the head of the body politic. When he honorably removed the head of the criminal who threatened that body, he also signified his own position as the commonwealth's sole true head, as one who does not wield the sword in vain. The tyrant has borne the sword illegally and must be slaughtered by the sword justly used.

*The tyrant,
having borne
the sword
illegally, must
be felled by the
sword justly
used.*

¹⁰⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.20, Webb, 2.378.

¹⁰¹ Esther Cohen, "The Meaning of the Head in High Medieval Culture," in *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures*, ed. Barbara Baert and Catrien Santing (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 59-76; cf. Hosler, *John of Salisbury*, 52-58.

¹⁰² For medieval beheadings, Maribel Fierro, "Decapitation of Christians and Muslims in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Narratives, Images, Contemporary Perceptions," *Comparative Literature Studies* 45:2 (2008), 137-164; F. Suppe, "The Cultural Significance of Decapitation in High Medieval Wales and the Marches," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 36 (1989), 147-160; Paul H. Stahl, *Histoire de la décapitation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1986); Geoffrey Abbott, *Severed Heads: British Beheadings Through the Ages* (London: Andre Deutsch, 2003); Andrew Rabin, "Capital Punishment and the Anglo-Saxon Judicial Apparatus: A Maximalist View?," *Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England*, 181-200; and the essays in *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in the Medieval and Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

5. The Quasi-Modern John

John of Salisbury's prince-headsman is an innovative interpretation of princely power, which historians of political thought have neglected. His theory is more than an apology for capital punishment; it is a pessimistic response to the limits of human goodness, reason, and institutions. In the *Policraticus*, communal order can always break down and civic institutions need an uncivilized prince to stabilize them. Whether such a ruler deserves to be called "moderate" depends on personal opinions, but for John this ruler is almost a sage. The philosophic prince proves "the tranquil moderation of his mind" when he punishes sinners dispassionately.¹⁰³ According to John's interpretation of multiple classical *exempla*, execution expressed moderation.

John's humanistic values did not oppose his pessimism but helped constitute it.

John's treatise reflects the conservatism of medieval humanism.¹⁰⁴ In a twelfth-century world shaped by rapid political and intellectual changes, John feared that courtly education and Christian ritual—"the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion" in the language of Burke—would not be enough to prevent chaos.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the prince-headsman could. Values that many scholars have associated with John's humanism—classicism, moderation, rational dispassion, skepticism, concern for the common good—did not oppose his pessimism; they helped to constitute it. Thus, for instance, John's academic skepticism allows him to defend parricide. His commitment to the rule of law lets him support assassination. His classicism supplied Roman evidence for these conclusions. John's pessimistic vision of the prince-headsman accorded fully with his humanism, at least in John's own mind.

So far, this article has concentrated on understanding the idea of the prince-headsman within the context of John's own time, humanistic education, and intellectual influences. Here,

¹⁰³ Delinquentium culpas tranquilla mentis moderatione compescit, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.8.92-122, CCCM 118.261-262; cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.2.37-38, CCCM 118.235; Martin, "John of Salisbury," 194-196.

¹⁰⁴ For John's humanism as conservative, Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," 1169-1170, 1180-1181; Jaeger, "John of Salisbury, a Philosopher," 500-501.

¹⁰⁵ Edmund Burke, *Revolutionary Writings: Reflections on the Revolution in France and the First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 79-81.

at the close, I will consider some ramifications of John's theory for political philosophy today. John challenges our intuitions about the categories of "medieval" and "modern." As multiple scholars have noted—including some quoted earlier—John's political thought is "quasi-modern."¹⁰⁶ This quasi-modernity appears in the more attractive aspects of the *Policraticus*, such as its defense of liberty and the rule of law. But some of the most pessimistic and unappealing parts of the *Policraticus* are also quasi-modern.

John's conviction, for instance, that the executioner is one of the central offices of civilized life—perhaps the most central—reminds us of the Savoyard conservative Joseph de Maistre and the infamous panegyric to the hangman from his 1821 posthumous work *The Saint Petersburg Dialogues*. For a moment, Maistre sounds close to John of Salisbury when the nineteenth-century writer lauds the executioner as "an extraordinary being . . . the terror and the bond of human association. Remove this mysterious agent from the world, and in an instant order yields to chaos: thrones fall, society disappears."¹⁰⁷ Likewise, John's praise of public ceremonies such as executions—even of pagan public ceremonies—appears at first more like Rousseau's civil religion than like the theology of a twelfth-century churchman. And John's *apologia* for emergency tyrannicide mirrors elements of Carl Schmitt's theory of the state of exception.

The *Policraticus* is "quasi-modern," that is to say "not truly modern at all." If John seems modern to us, that reveals little about John and a great deal about our own preconceptions. Indeed, the *Policraticus* can function as a test; whenever I find something "quasi-modern" in it, I know that my concepts of medieval and modern remain confused. John sometimes reached the same conclusions as modern authors, but his motivations and circumstances differed. The prince-headsman is resolutely medieval—birthed partly from the idiosyncrasies

*The
Policraticus
is "quasi-
modern," not
modern.*

¹⁰⁶ For John as "quasi-modern," Johan Huizinga, *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 162.

¹⁰⁷ See St. Petersburg Dialogues, or, Conversations on the Temporal Government of Providence, trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 18-20, 216-217.

of John's own mind and life experiences.¹⁰⁸ During his years as secretary and legal advisor to Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, John dealt with murder trials and may have handed criminals over to the royal authority for capital punishment.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the churchman composed the *Policraticus* during the Anarchy of King Stephen (1135-1153).¹¹⁰ Understandably, John hoped that a strong ruler could prevent such chaos in the future and sought precedents in classical literature to support this view. The weakness of the medieval polities—particularly before the centralizing government reforms of Henry II or Philip II Augustus—shaped John's treatise.

Perhaps the most medieval feature of the *Policraticus* is John's method of argumentation. For John reasons as a medieval humanist, interpreting scripture, scrutinizing Latin etymologies, and citing exemplary tales of famous Greeks and Romans.¹¹¹ He rarely, if ever, deduces from first principles, appeals to empirical data, doubts the reliability of his sources, or mentions recent history or current affairs. For modern readers, John impresses; but he does not convince. A reader can easily finish the *Policraticus* and agree with John that humans are sinful, institutions fragile, and rationality circumscribed, without approving of capital punishment or tyrannicide. John could probably heap up a few more classical *exempla* on his side of the debate, but that would not sway a present-day critic. Modern detractors object not to the quantity of John's evidence, but to the nature of the evidence itself. John's pessimism may fit well with certain streams of modern political thought; his rhetoric, in contrast, sets him apart from such thought. Ironi-

¹⁰⁸ For John's biography, see Frank Barlow, "John of Salisbury and His Brothers," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995), 95-109; Brooke, "John of Salisbury," 1-20; Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 1-39; Hugh M. Thomas, *The Secular Clergy in England, 1066-1216* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 64, 148-152, 237-240, 270, 290-293; Christophe Grellard and Frédérique Lachaud, "Introduction," *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, 1-28.

¹⁰⁹ For instance, John wrote letters on behalf of Theobald about the trial of Osbert, a York archdeacon and poisoner; *Letters*, vol. 1, nos. 16, 25, fols. 26-27, 42.

¹¹⁰ John repeatedly complains of Stephen and the Anarchy; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 6.18, 8.21-22, Webb, 2.47, 394, 399; Cary J. Nederman, "The Changing Face of Tyranny: The Reign of King Stephen in John of Salisbury's Political Thought," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 33 (1989), 1-20.

¹¹¹ For John's method of *exempla*, see von Moos, *Geschichte als Topik*.

cally, when John is most a medieval humanist—dependent on classical sources and the trivium—he is least persuasive to modern readers. The methodology of the *Policraticus* operates in a different intellectual world with different standards of evidence.

If John's argument for the prince-headsman is unlikely to satisfy contemporary readers, how can the *Policraticus* influence political philosophy today? Many modern political thinkers do not seem so modern, when viewed from the perspective of John's treatise. Some of the most famous positions of writers who seem archetypically modern were positions already centuries old. Again consider, for instance, Joseph de Maistre. In perhaps the most influential work of scholarship ever written on Maistre, the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin claimed that Maistre's thought was "the origins of fascism," "terrifyingly modern . . . the heart of the totalitarianisms, both of the left and of the right, of our terrible century."¹¹² Berlin cited Maistre's panegyric to the hangman as central evidence of his totalitarian modernism. But in truth, Maistre supplied a novel rationale for a position similar to one that John had defended using his medieval methods of debate. Berlin's interpretation misunderstood the medieval/modern divide and, as a result, misread Maistre.¹¹³ Pessimistic enthusiasm for the executioner could reside in a medieval cleric and a modern reactionary alike; only the argumentation had changed. The *Policraticus* compels political philosophers to think more deeply about what separates medieval and modern thought, about how ideas changed and how they persisted. By comparing modern thinkers to John, scholars better perceive what is genuinely new about the methods and assumptions of modernity.

Modern and medieval methods of debate differ greatly, even when reaching similar conclusions.

¹¹² See Isaiah Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism," *The Crooked Timbers of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 91-174; cf. Isaiah Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 131-154.

¹¹³ For works opposing Berlin's interpretation, see, for example, Cara Camcastle, *The More Moderate Side of Joseph de Maistre: Views on Political Liberty and Political Economy* (Ithaca, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Owen Bradley, *A Modern Maistre: The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).