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The Body Politic in the Social and Political Thought of Christine de Pizan (Abridged Version). Part I: Reciprocity, Hierarchy and Political Authority¹

Abstract: While some scholars have seen the political theory of Christine de Pizan as being very like that of her sources in its presentation of hierarchy as the basis of rightful order, others have stressed the originality of her thought and have judged her conception of society to be more inclusive and egalitarian than that found in traditional conceptions of the body politic. Here it is argued that while Christine stressed the importance of reciprocity and mutuality within the political community, she also emphasised the need for hierarchy and deference and that, even by medieval standards, she was profoundly suspicious of popular involvement in political life. Part II of this article argues that this political theory was simply one expression of a much broader social outlook, one which relied on the Aristotelian notion of “distributive justice” in order to reconcile the ideals of hierarchy and obedience with the achievement of justice and equity.

Résumé: Pour certains commentateurs de l'œuvre de Christine de Pizan, la pensée politique de cette dernière est presque identique à celle de ses prédécesseurs, dans la mesure où c'est la hiérarchie qui servirait de fondement essentiel du bon ordre. En revanche, d'autres érudits ont insisté sur l'originalité de la pensée christinienne en ce qui concerne sa conception de la société qu'ils estiment plus inclusive et égalitaire que celle préconisée d'habitude dans le discours médiéval sur le corps de policie. À notre avis, Christine, tout en soulignant l'importance de la réciprocité et de la solidarité dans la communauté politique, met néanmoins l'accent sur la nécessité de la hiérarchie et de la déférence dans celle-ci ; en effet, elle se distingue de ses contemporains par son degré de méfiance quant à toute participation du peuple dans la vie politique. Dans la deuxième partie de cet article, nous tenons à replacer cet aspect de la pensée politique de Christine dans le contexte de sa conception plus large de la société, conception basée sur l'idée aristotélicienne de la “justice distributive” afin de concilier les idéaux de la hiérarchie et de l'obéissance avec l'instauration de la justice et de l'équité.

Although the work of Christine de Pizan (c. 1364-c.1430) now enjoys a central place in the canon of late medieval literature and thought, the nature and originality of

¹ Part II of this article will appear in the next issue of *CRMH*. A longer version of this article, which includes more detailed references to the primary sources and to the secondary literature, will also appear in the electronic version of this journal in the *Miscellanées* section. In writing this article, I have benefitted greatly from the generosity of Tracy Adams, who commented on a previous version of it, and from the guidance provided by Craig Taylor and Sigbørn Sønnesyn. As always, I am indebted to Robert Nash for the many stylistic and structural improvements which he suggested to my work. I am particularly grateful to Angus Kennedy for his comments and advice and, above all, to Rosalind Brown-Grant for sharing her expertise on Christine de Pizan with me.

her political and social theory remains extremely controversial.² For some scholars, the outlook developed by Christine in works such as the *Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, (1404), the *Livre du corps de policie* (c.1404-07), and the *Livre de paix* (1412-13) is very similar to that of the earlier political thinkers whom she drew upon.³ As a result, her views are interpreted as being “consistently conservative” in their emphasis on hierarchy within the community as a precondition of social and political order.⁴ By contrast, others have characterized Christine’s political theory in very

² For excellent introductions to Christine’s life and works, see C. C. Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, New York, Persea, 1984 and N. Margolis, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2011.

³ For the convenience of readers, references to works by Christine de Pizan are given in the form of abbreviated titles in the text (for abbreviated references to John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* and to Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum*, see notes 8 and 9, below). Abbreviated titles: AB: *Autres Ballades in Oeuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pizan*, Volume I, ed. M. Roy, Paris, Librairie de Firmin Didot et Cie, 1886; BBP: Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. K. L. Forhan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; BCL: Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, ed. R. Brown-Grant, London, Penguin, 1999; BDAC: Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, ed. S. Willard and C. C. Willard, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999; BP: *The Book of Peace by Christine de Pizan*, ed. K. Green, C. J. Mews and J. Pinder, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008; CB: *Cent Ballades in Oeuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pizan*, Volume I, ed. M. Roy, Paris, Librairie de Firmin Didot et Cie, 1886; CD: Christine de Pizan, *La Cité d’elles*, ed. E. J. Richards, Milan, Luni Editrice, 1998; CLE: Christine de Pizan, *Le chemin de longue étude*, ed. A. Tarnowski, Paris, Le Livre de Poche, 2000; DJA: Christine de Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*, ed. A. J. Kennedy and K. Varty, *Medium Aevum Monographs*, n.s. 9, 1977; EO: Christine de Pizan, *Epistre Othea*, ed. G. Parussa, Paris, Droz, 1999; EPVH: Christine de Pizan’s *Epistre de la prison de la vie humaine*, ed. A. J. Kennedy, Glasgow, University of Glasgow, 1984; ERF: Christine de Pizan, *Une épistre a la royne de France*, in “*The Epistle of the Prison of Life*” with “*An Epistle to the Queen of France*” and “*Lament on the Evils of Civil War*”, ed. J. A. Wisman, New York, Garland, 1984; LAC: Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de l’advison Christine*, ed. C. Reno and Liliane Dulac, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2001; LCP: Christine de Pizan, *Le livre du corps de policie*, ed. A. J. Kennedy, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1998; LFBM: Christine de Pizan *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. S. Solente, 2 volumes, Paris, Société de l’Histoire de France, 1936, cited by volume and page reference; LMF: Christine de Pizan, *La lamentacion sur les maux de la France de Christine de Pizan*, in *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Charles Foulon*, ed. A. J. Kennedy, Rennes, Institut de Français, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 1980, p. 177-85; LTV: Christine de Pizan, *Le livre des trois vertus*, ed. C. C. Willard and E. Hicks, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1989; LWF: *Lamentation on the Woes of France*, in *The Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. C. C. Willard, New York, Persea, 1994, p. 304-309; MF: Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, ed. S. Solente, 4 volumes; Paris, A. and J. Picard, 1959-1966; TCL: Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies, or The Book of the Three Virtues*, ed. S. Lawson, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985; VCP: *The Vision of Christine de Pizan*, ed. G. McLeod and C. C. Willard, Woodbridge, D. S. Brewer, 2005.

⁴ Willard, *Christine de Pizan*, p. 182; R. L. Krueger, “Christine’s Anxious Lessons: Gender, Morality and the Social Order from the *Enseignements* to the *Avision*”, *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilynn Desmond, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 16-40, at p. 18; J. Quillet, “Community, Counsel and Representation”, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c.350-c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 520-72, at p. 542-3; J. Quillet, *De Charles V à Christine de*

different terms, portraying it as highlighting the “democratic currents” which were present in the France of Christine’s own day and as being consistent with her inclusive and egalitarian feminism in its advocacy of “involving the people in government” and in offering an expansion of the political realm as “a solution to the problem posed by tyranny”.⁵ In this approach, the stress is not so much on Christine’s debt to earlier writers but rather on the originality of her political philosophy, either in its foreshadowing of the work of later thinkers, such as Machiavelli or Erasmus, or in its anticipation of modern political values in being inclusive, proto-democratic, pacifist, anti-clerical, secular and egalitarian.

In particular, the view of Christine’s political theory as being characterised by its inclusivity has been set out in a number of important articles by Cary J. Nederman. For Nederman, Christine’s work forms part of a broader shift in 14th- and 15th-century political philosophy towards a more reciprocal and egalitarian notion of how the political community should be organized. In this perspective, Christine’s political theory seems to exemplify a new understanding of the “body politic”, a metaphor which had long been central in medieval political thought. Traditionally, the organic analogy, and the obedience of the body’s members to its head, had usually been invoked in order to legitimate monarchical authority and, more generally, to demonstrate the need for hierarchy, deference and subordination within the social order.⁶ By contrast, Nederman argues that later middle ages witnessed the emergence of a new conception of the body politic with thinkers such as Marsilius of Padua, Nicholas of Cusa, Nicole Oresme and John Fortescue now emphasising the accountability of rulers to the political community and presenting rulers as being constrained by the same laws which bound their subjects. The orthodox “head-orientated conception” of the body politic was now replaced with the idea that “there is a natural equilibrium within the body – a sort of equitable harmony – that must be maintained for the sake of the health and well-being of the organism. Equalization means that no part of the entity can legitimately lay stake to a disproportionate amount of common resources and/or refuse to share what it possesses when required for the common good. No part (not even the clergy) is greater than the whole. The operation of the body is thus a homeostatic process, in which a premium is placed on intercommunication and exchange among the various limbs and organs themselves, as a result of which the head (or ruler) is treated as a servant of the whole rather than as a commander”. For Nederman, the political theory of Christine de Pizan, in particular her *Livre du corps de policie*, develops the “emphasis on equilibrium”

Pizan, Paris, Perrin, 2004, p. 41, 145; S. Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990, p. 95-6; C. C. Willard, “Christine de Pizan: From Poet to Political Commentator”, *Politics, Gender and Genre: The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*. ed. M. Brabant, Boulder, Westview, 1992, p. 17-32, at p. 29; F. Autrand, *Christine de Pizan: une femme en politique*, Paris, Fayard, 2009, p. 326-7, 364-8.

⁵ C. Reno, “Christine de Pizan: ‘At Best a Contradictory Figure?’”, in Brabant, *Politics, Gender and Genre* p. 172-91, at p. 174-5; E. J. Richards, “Bartolo da Sassaferrato as a Possible Source for Christine’s *Livre de paix*”, *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*. ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews, Turnhout, Brepols, 2005, p. 81-97, at p. 96-7; M. Brabant and M. Brint, “Identity and Difference in Christine de Pizan’s *Cité des dames*”, in Brabant, *Politics, Gender and Genre*, p. 207-22, at p. 217.

⁶ S. H. Rigby, “Aristotle for Aristocrats and Poets: Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum* as Theodicy of Privilege”, *Chaucer Review*, 46, 2011-12, p. 259-313, at p. 271-3.

found in Nicole Oresme's work so as to produce an "inclusive, reciprocal, and interdependent conception" of the body politic and of the relationship between the French people and their kings. Rather than merely focusing on the prince and nobility, she expresses her "deep concern about the needs and interests" of women, city-dwellers and the lower social orders, valuing the contribution made to society by the common people and expressing her sympathy for the sufferings of the poor. Christine therefore "extends the more equitable line of organic thinking" that she may have inherited from Nicole Oresme towards an emphasis on the need for the government to frame its policies with consideration for their impact on all the members of society and especially upon those who are "most vulnerable to the use of power and least able to protect themselves".⁷

Did Christine de Pizan's political theory form part of a contemporary shift away from an emphasis on hierarchy and strict inequality within the body politic towards a more reciprocal, inclusive or egalitarian vision of the political community? Part I of this article offers an assessment of the nature and originality of Christine's thought by comparing it with the political theory of her predecessors, in particular with John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159), a work with which she was familiar in the form of the French translation by Denis Foulechat (1372),⁸ and with Giles of Rome's *De regimine*

⁷ C. J. Nederman, "Body Politics: the Diversification of Organic Metaphors in the Later Middle Ages", *Pensiero Politico Medievale*, 2, 2004, p. 59-87, at p. 60-1, 63-8, 73-8, 80-88; C. J. Nederman, "The Living Body Politic: the Diversification of Organic Metaphors in Nicole Oresme and Christine de Pizan", in Green and Mews, *Healing the Body Politic*, p. 19-33, at 19-26, 32-3; C. J. Nederman, "The Expanding Body Politic: Christine de Pizan and the Medieval Roots of Political Economy", *Au champ des escriptures: Ille colloque international sur Christine de Pizan, Lausanne, 18-22 Juillet, 1998*, ed. E. Hicks, Honoré Champion, Paris, 2000, p. 383-97, at p. 387-90.

⁸ For the Latin text of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, see *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policraticus sive De Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum, Libri VIII*, ed. C. C. I. Webb, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1909; two volumes. The Latin text is also available in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina, volume 199*, ed. J.-P. Migné, Paris, Garnier, 1900, and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Ioannis Saresberiensis: Policraticus I-IV*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1993. A complete English translation of the *Policraticus* is provided by *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers, being a Translation of the First, Second and Third Books and Selections from the Seventh and Eighth Books of the Policraticus of John of Salisbury*, ed. J. B. Pike, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1938, and *The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury, Being the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth Books and a Selection from the Seventh and Eighth Books of the Policraticus*, ed. J. Dickinson, New York, Russell and Russell, 1963. For a more recent partial translation, see *John of Salisbury, Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers, the Footprints of the Philosophers*, ed. C. J. Nederman, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990 (see, however, the review by Michael Winterbottom in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43, 1992, p. 145-6). For the parts of Foulechat's version which have so far appeared in print, see Denis Foulechat, *Le Policraticus de Jean de Salisbury (1372), Livres I-III*, ed. C. Brucker, Geneva, Droz, 1994; *Le Policraticus de Jean de Salisbury traduit par Denis Foulechat (1372). (Manuscrit no. 24287 de la B.N.)*, ed. C. Brucker, Nancy, Presses Universitaires de Nancy 1985, for Book IV; Denis Foulechat, *Le Policraticus de Jean de Salisbury (1372), Livre V*, ed. C. Brucker, Geneva, Droz, 2006; Denis Foulechat: *tyrans, princes et prêtres (Jean de Salisbury, Policraticus IV et VIII)*, ed. C. Brucker, in *Le Moyen Français*, 21, 1987, for Book IV and Book VIII: 17-23. In the text above, the *Policraticus* (abbreviated as "Pol") is cited by the book and chapter numbers which are common to the Latin version (in Webb's edition), to Foulechat

principum (c. 1280), a work she may have known in its original Latin version and which she had certainly read in its French translation by Henri de Gauchy (c. 1282).⁹ It argues that, in fact, the basic principles underlying Christine's political outlook were in accord with these earlier works of medieval political theory, to which she had access in the French royal library. Part II of this article (in the next issue of *CRMH*) shows that Christine's political theory, with its emphasis on both reciprocity and hierarchy, formed part of a wider social outlook within which she attempted to reconcile justice and inequality. It concludes that the originality of Christine's achievement lay not so much in her having arrived at a new political outlook but rather in the novel means which she found to present afresh to her readers views with which they were already extremely familiar.

Christine's Political Theory

Reciprocity within the body politic

Did Christine de Pizan's work, in particular her focus on the reciprocity that should exist between the parts of the body politic, represent a shift away from the principles on which medieval political theory had traditionally been based? It is certainly true that Christine's work devotes more attention to the situation of the lower orders of society than do many medieval mirrors for princes. Developing the image of the body politic with which she was familiar from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (Pol: I: 1 (p. 4)) and the glossed translation of Valerius Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* produced by Simon de Hesdin and Nicolas de Gonesse between 1375 and 1401, Christine insists that, just as the belly, legs and feet of the body are necessary if the whole is to be perfect and healthy, so the common people, who "support and have the burden of all the rest of the body", are indispensable for the health and functioning of society.¹⁰ Without merchants, artisans and peasants who provide "things proper and necessary for human beings to live" and who feed and nourish their fellows then

and to the modern English versions by Dickinson, Pike and Nederman, and, where appropriate, by the page numbers in Nederman's translation.

⁹ There is no complete modern edition of the Latin text of Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*. Here, I have cited the Latin edition published in Rome in 1482 by Stephanus Planck but have particularly relied on the recent edition of John Trevisa's Middle English translation of the text which is a faithful version of Giles's text and which, unlike Gauchy's *Livres du gouvernement*, retains Giles's original chapter divisions. Reference to these works is given in the form of abbreviated titles in the text. Abbreviations: DRP: Egidius Romanus, *De regimine principum*, Rome, Stephanus Planck, 1482; GKP: Giles of Rome, *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*, ed. D. C. Fowler, C. F. Briggs and P. G. Remley, New York, Garland, 1997, cited by page reference; LGR: *Li Livres du Gouvernement des Rois: A XIIIth Century French Version of Egidio Colonna's Treatise De Regimine Principum*, ed. S. P. Molenaer, New York, Macmillan, 1899, cited by page reference.

¹⁰ Valerius Maximus, Simon de Hesdin and Nicolas de Gonesse, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, Southern Netherlands: Printer of Flavius Josephus, 1475, fol. 379^v-380^r; A. J. Kennedy, "The Image of the Body Politic in Christine de Pizan's *Livre du corps de policie*", *L'Offrande du cœur: Medieval and Early Modern Studies in Honour of Glynnis Crop*, ed. M. Burrell and J. Grant, Christchurch, NZ, Canterbury University Press, 2004, p. 18-29, at p. 18, 21; Kennedy, "Introduction", in *Le livre du corps de policie*, p. xxxiii-vi.

“neither the estate of kings and princes nor even the polities of cities and countries could exist” (BBP/LCP: I: 1; III: 1; III: 8-10; MF: 4071-4128, 5131-6580). Christine also shows an awareness of the sufferings experienced by the common people of France in her own day, sympathizing with those who were despoiled and pillaged by the king’s own soldiers or who were driven to starvation by the burden of taxation (LCP: I: 9 (p. 14-15); I: 11 (p. 17-18); III: 10 (p. 108); BP: I: 9 (p. 16-17); I: 11 (p. 20); III: 10 (p. 109); BDAC I: XIV (p. 41); III: VII (p. 152). In her *Livre des trois vertus*, she advises princesses not to permit their officials “to take anything from the people against their will or at an unfair price” and to ensure that “the poor people of the villages and other places” are paid promptly for their produce (TCL: I: 19; I: 22; LTV: I: 20; I: 23). Similarly, in her *Livre de paix*, Christine stresses the need for the king to make sure that justice is provided by his officials to the “poor and simple” and argues that princes had been established on earth to aid widows, orphans or anyone else with a just cause (BP: II: 6, 9, 22; see also LFBM I: 62, 83, 133; LMF: 184-5; LWF: 308; BDAC: I: IV).

Nevertheless, the fact that Christine included the commons as indispensable members of society and that she sympathized with the plight of the poor and the powerless does not mean that her political theory was either innovative or anti-hierarchical. After all, political thinkers such as John of Salisbury had long taught that the members of society who should be “advanced most” by the prince are “those who can do least for themselves” and that it was particularly necessary for the “head” of the body politic to look after the peasants whose position as the “feet” of society meant that they were most likely to come into peril. John thus invoked the Book of Job (Job 29: 12-13; 31: 16-40) as a warning to the prince about the sorry fate of those who failed to give charity to the poor, to widows and to orphans or who were guilty of eating “the fruits of the land without payment and have assaulted the livelihood of the peasant” (*agricola*/"laboureur").¹¹ He bemoaned the fate of the poor who are “oppressed with injuries, enfeebled by exactions, [and] despoiled by extensive pillaging” and demanded that the ruler should prevent the powerful from exacting wealth from the humble by means of violence and fear (Pol: IV: 2 (p. 31); IV: 5 (p. 40); V: 2 (p. 67). V: 6-7 (p. 71, 74-6); V: 8 (p. 80-1); V: 15 (p. 95); V: 17 (p. 101); VI: 26 (p. 141); VII: 25 (p. 175-6); VIII: 12 (p. 183); VIII: 22 (p. 214)). Similarly, Giles of Rome had argued that, unlike the tyrant who pillages and steals from his subjects, a “true” king would seek to defend the community and would care for widows and orphans, explaining that “orphans” should be understood to refer to all those who lacked the power to defend themselves (GKP: 20, 317, 338; LGR: 17, 294, 317). Here, however, he was hardly being original as, from the 7th-century Pseudo-Cyprian *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* and Jonas of Orleans’ 9th-century *De institutione regia* through to the later middle ages, it was, following Exodus 22: 22 (see also Isaias 1: 17; Jeremiah 7: 6; Job 29: 25), a commonplace of Christian political theory that rulers and knights should defend the rights of orphans and widows.¹²

¹¹ All Biblical references are from the Douay-Rheims version, Baltimore, John Murphy, 1899; reprinted Rockford, Illinois, Tan Books, 1971.

¹² “Pseudo-Cyprianus de xii abusivis saeculi”, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, ed. S. Hellman, 34:1, Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1910, p. 51; Jonas of Orleans, *Le métier de roi (De institutione regia)*, ed. A. Dubreucq, Paris, Editions de Cerf, 1995, p. 188, 200, 214. For later sources, see S. H. Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry: Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale and Medieval Political Theory*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 189.

Thus, far from Christine's insistence that superiors should respect their inferiors and that rulers should protect the most vulnerable in society representing a late-medieval shift towards a more reciprocal and egalitarian view of the body politic, such claims merely repeated the arguments with which she was familiar from John of Salisbury's mid-12th-century *Policraticus* and Giles of Rome's 13th-century *De regimine principum*. Indeed, a stress on reciprocity was inherent in the very notion of the body politic and had always been one of the main aspects of the social and political order which the organic analogy had been meant to express. After all, the body had long functioned as a metaphor for the "harmonious unity in plurality" which medieval metaphysics inherited as its ontological ideal from the ancient world and which philosophers and moralists saw as the correct model for the organization of human society. Following St Paul and Augustine, and invoking the authority of Aristotle, thinkers such as Aquinas and Giles of Rome argued that the perfection of the world required the existence of diverse kinds of things each of which performed its own particular task for the benefit of the wider whole of which it is a part, with the body being a classic case in point (GKP: 59, 193, 234, 285, 295, 297-301; LGR: 167, 213, 266, 271).¹³ When applied to human communities – whether to the "Church" or to particular kingdoms – the organic analogy was inevitably used to highlight the need for a variety of estates and occupations, all of which, like the body's diverse members, had to fulfill their own particular functions and to co-exist harmoniously with their fellows, with each reciprocally exchanging its services with those of the others.¹⁴ These ties of interdependence and reciprocity constrained even the head of the body politic. As John of Salisbury argued, if the ruler's position of command over his subjects entitled him to "great privileges", he should also seek the "utility" of all within the community, putting the public welfare even before that of his own children. He therefore advocated that the superior members of the body politic "should devote themselves to the inferiors" and even argued that Plutarch's supposed *Institutio Trajani* (from which he claimed to have taken the metaphor of the body politic, although most modern scholars see this work as actually being John's own invention) had taught that, in public policy, "what is to the advantage of the humbler people, that is, the multitude, is to be followed; for the fewer always submit to the more numerous" (Pol: III: 15 (p. 25); IV: 1 (p. 28); IV: 5 (p. 40); IV: 6 (p. 41); IV: 11 (p. 58-9); VI: 20 (p. 126)).¹⁵

¹³ A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1960, p. 67, 76-77; E. Grant, *Planets, Stars and Orbs: the Medieval Cosmos, 1200-1687*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 148-49; Aristotle, "On the Universe", *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Volume I, ed. J. Barnes, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, 392a-b, 396a-b, 397a, 399a-b; Aristotle, "Politics", in *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. S. Everson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, II: 5 (p. 37); Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. H. Bettenson, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, V: 11 (p. 196); XII: 4-5 (p. 475-77); XII: 23 (p. 503); XII: 28 (p. 508); XIX: 11-13 (p. 865-71); XXII: 18 (p. 1059); XXII: 24 (p. 1073-74).

¹⁴ G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1966; second edition, p. 557-63.

¹⁵ Christine, like Jean Gerson, followed John of Salisbury in ascribing the *Institutio Trajani* to Plutarch (CLE: 5493; BBP/LCP: I: 1; II: 1; III: 9; III: 11; Jean Gerson, "Pour la réforme du royaume", in *Jean Gerson: Œuvres Complètes*, Vol. 7:2, ed. P. Glorieux, Paris, Desclée et Cie, 1968 p. 1146).

Thus, even before the translation of Aristotle's *Politics* into Latin, the influence of Cicero's *De officiis* meant that it was a political commonplace that the ruler should devote himself to the common good of his subjects and that such virtue provided the touchstone of legitimate government.¹⁶ John of Salisbury, for instance, had differentiated between the true prince and the tyrant not simply in terms of whether the ruler governed by law or by his own arbitrary will but also on the basis of whether the ruler put himself "at the service" of his people and so looked after the "entire community" (Pol: IV: 1 (p. 28); VIII: 17 (190-1)). From the 13th century onwards, the same idea was frequently expressed in terms of the Aristotelian distinction between the three "true" forms of government (monarchy, aristocracy and "constitutional government"), where the rulers pursued the "common interest" of the community, and the three "perverted" forms (tyranny, oligarchy and democracy) in which they sought their own "private interest" (GKP: 20, 55, 309, 325, 328, 372; LGR: 17, 43, 300-2, 347).¹⁷ Rather than medieval notions of authority and power being based on a conception of antagonistic, independent individuals competitively seeking to impose power on each other, a conception which Christine supposedly transcended with a vision of "interdependence and cooperation", reciprocity and cooperation within a hierarchical division of labour were actually the conventional ideals of medieval social and political ideology as set out in mirrors for princes, even if, inevitably, the reality was very different from the ideal.¹⁸

Hierarchy within the body politic

Yet, if Christine, like earlier political theorists, used the metaphor of the body politic to teach that all members of society should perform their services for the benefit of their fellows, there was no reason why this emphasis on co-operation and mutuality should have precluded an understanding of the polity which was based on inequality and on the exclusion of most members of society from an active political role within it. Thus, while we today might see an emphasis on political "mutuality and interdependence" as being at odds with "hierarchy and subordination" for medieval thinkers, including Christine these principles were perfectly compatible.¹⁹ After all, as theologians and philosophers such as Augustine, Aquinas and Giles of Rome had

¹⁶ Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, I: 22 (p. 9-10); I: 31 (p. 13); I: 51-63 (p. 22-6); I: 85-6 (p. 33-4); III: 21-31 (p. 108-11). See also Seneca, "De clementia", I, iii: 2- I, iv: 3, in Seneca, *Moral Essays*, ed. J. W. Basore, 3 volumes, London, Heinemann, 1928-1935, Volume I.

¹⁷ Aristotle, "Politics", III: 7 (p. 71-2); IV: 2 (p. 93); M. S. Kempshall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, *passim*; C. R. Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 184-97.

¹⁸ Brabant and Brint, "Identity and Difference in Christine de Pizan's *Cité des dames*", p. 211, 215-7.

¹⁹ K. L. Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, p. 50; K. Langdon Forhan, "Polycracy, Obligation and Revolt: the Body Politic in John of Salisbury and Christine de Pizan", in Brabant, *Politics, Gender and Genre*, p. 33-52, at p. 35, 38; K. L. Forhan, "Salisburian Stakes: the Uses of 'Tyranny' in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*", *History of Political Thought*, 11, 1990, p. 397-407, at p. 407; Nederman, "The Expanding Body Politic", p. 388-91.

traditionally presented equality as being synonymous with simple uniformity, it followed that they saw the self-evident need for diversity within the body – and within the body politic – as also implying the need for inequality between its members (DRP: III, i: viii-ix; GKP: 59, 193, 234, 285, 295, 297-301, 411; LGR: 46, 167, 213, 271, 391).²⁰ This hierarchical understanding of the body (and of its application to society) had a number of sources. One was the Pauline idea of Christ as the “head” of the Church and of the Church as the members of His body (Ephesians 1: 22-23, 4: 15-16; Colossians 1: 18, 2: 10, 19), an image which was commonplace throughout the Middle Ages. Equally familiar were the Pauline texts teaching that the husband is “the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church” (I Corinthians 11: 3; Ephesians 5: 23). Another source for the conception of the members of the body as being hierarchically related was ancient and medieval physiology and medicine where although the bladder, anus and intestines might be seen as being indispensable to the body’s operations, this did not mean that they could usurp pride of place from the more “noble” members such as the head or heart. Medieval writers also inherited a hierarchical conception of the body from Aristotle who had taught that the rule of the soul and of reason over the body and the passions was “natural and expedient whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful”, and who had used this mutually beneficial but unequal relationship as an analogy with which to justify the superiority of humans over animals, men over women, and masters over their slaves.²¹

Moreover, for medieval philosophers, the hierarchical nature of the human body provided simply one instance of the much broader Aristotelian metaphysical principle that rightful order could only be maintained within any object made up of diverse elements when a hierarchical ordering was found between its parts and, in particular, when one chief part exercised an overall control within it (GKP: 193, 278, 280, 327; LGR: 167, 257, -8, 260, 302-3). For instance, in any body made of mixed materials, the heavy element of earth has a mastery which means that the object naturally moves downwards, towards its rightful place at the centre of the Earth; similarly, within the cosmos, the rotation of the *primum mobile* rules the movements of all the rest of the heavens (GKP: 175, 273-4, 327; LGR: 251-3, 302-3).²² When this hierarchical perspective was applied to the body politic, it was inevitably used to demonstrate that just as the parts of the human body were ranked in terms of their “honour” and of the degree of control which they exercised over the other members, so it was inevitable that the different estates within society would be ranked hierarchically in terms of their economic, political and social status. As John of Salisbury argued, just as nature has ordained that the members of the body should be subject to the head in order that “all of them may move correctly provided that the will of a sound head is followed”, so the prince, as head of the body politic, has “power over all his subjects”, enjoying such a primacy that he constitutes “a certain image on earth of the divine majesty” (Pol: IV: 1 (p. 28), VI: 25 (p. 137)). As a result, it was perfectly possible for thinkers such as John of Salisbury to have anticipated Christine de Pizan in expressing a concern for the poor,

²⁰ Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, p. 67, 76-77.

²¹ Aristotle, “Politics”, I: 5 (p. 16-17), I: 6 (p. 19), VII: 1 (p. 167), VII: 15 (p. 190). See also Seneca, “De clementia”, I, iii: 5.

²² *Giles of Rome’s On Ecclesiastical Power*, ed. R. W. Dyson, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 19, 25-37, 57, 59, 191, 217, 233-43, 259-61, 279-81, 287, 307, 391; Rigby, “Aristotle for Aristocrats and Poets”, p. 267-73.

in a stress on the need for the ruler to provide protection for his subjects and in presenting of each member of society as being “reciprocally” linked to all the others and yet still to have remained wedded to a head-orientated conception of the body politic (Pol: VI: 20 (p. 126); VI: 25 (p. 137)). While it is the duty of the “superior members” of the body politic to devote themselves to the well-being of their inferiors and to seek what is to the advantage of the humble, inferiors, in their turn, “must serve superiors” and respect their supremacy and all the members of the body must “subject themselves to the head”, i.e., to the prince, who is “a sort of deity on earth”, or at least an “image of the deity”, who should be “loved, venerated and respected” so that an attack on him is like an act of sacrilege. It was not that the idea of the head as the commander of the rest of the body was necessarily at odds with that of its being the body’s servant but rather that the head served the rest of the body by carrying out its function of commanding the body’s movements and operations (Pol: IV: 7 (p. 48-9); V: 15 (p. 96); VI: 20 (p. 126); VI: 25 (p. 137); VI: 26 (p. 140); VI: 28 (p. 142); VIII: 17 (p. 191)).

Thus, when Christine de Pizan insisted that the poor should be paid for their produce, that they should not be disdained by their superiors, that all the members of the body politic were bound by reciprocal duties, and that the function of the prince was to serve the interests of his subjects, this certainly did not mean that she was breaking with the hierarchical conception of the body politic. On the contrary, in doing so she was rehearsing opinions which had been expressed 250 years previously by John of Salisbury. Indeed, to make her point Christine followed John in citing the fable of how the limbs of the body futilely and self-destructively complained about having to serve its belly in order not only to warn the prince of the troubles which would result if he demanded more from his subjects than they could bear but also to depict the evils which arise when subjects do not show “love, reverence and obedience” to their prince: “In such discord, they all perish together” (Pol: VI: 24 (p. 135-6); BBP/LCP: III: 1).²³ Accordingly, while Christine, like John of Salisbury and Giles of Rome, reminded princes of the negative consequences (not least to themselves) of their own moral failings and of the need to win the love of their subjects by their treatment of them, she still insisted on the necessity for subjects to show obedience to their rulers (TCL: I: 7; I: 16; LTV: I: 8; I: 17). It was not that Christine advocated reciprocity despite her stress on social subordination but rather that she justified subordination precisely in terms of the reciprocal benefits which it brought, in terms of justice and protection, to those who deferentially accepted their place in the social hierarchy. After all, if ideology offered only a one-sided obedience and patient suffering on the part of the ruled, it would hardly have functioned very effectively as a justification of the existing social order in the first place.

That Christine, like her predecessors, saw no necessary tension between reciprocity and inequality within the body politic is evident in her *Livre du corps de policie*, a work which is unambiguously pro-hierarchical in its political theory and in its use of the organic analogy. Just as John of Salisbury had done, Christine here equates the prince with the head of the body because he is “or should be sovereign” and so should direct the “external deeds” of the limbs of the body. Whilst the prince

²³ Christine was also familiar with the fable from the translation of Valerius Maximus by Hesdin and Gonesse. See Valerius Maximus, Simon de Hesdin and Nicolas de Gonesse, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, fol. 99^v; Cicero, *On Duties*, I: 85 (p. 33); III: 32 (p. 111); III: 22 (p. 108).

should love his subjects, be gentle and kind to them, and ensure that they receive justice, he should also be “obeyed and feared by right and reason”, as is appropriate to the majesty of a prince, there being no “true justice” where a prince is not feared (BBP/LCP: I: 1; I: 12; I: 16; I: 19; I: 21; III: 1). While Christine does not follow those medieval philosophers and poets, including John of Salisbury (Pol: VI: 25 (p. 137); VI: 26 (p. 142); VIII: 17 (p.191)), who described the prince as actually being an “image” or “likeness” of God, she nonetheless argued that the prince had been chosen by God for the burden of office, one in which he was, as in the title traditionally reserved for emperors but which Charles VI had adopted in 1385, “vicar of God” on earth (BBP/LCP: I: 7; TCL: I: 6; LTV: I: 7).²⁴ Accordingly, she taught that everyone should be obedient not only to God’s commandments but also to the laws of the land and to the commands of their sovereign or superior. Thus, while, her *Livre des trois vertus* advised the princess to intercede with her husband on behalf of his people if they complained to her of excessive taxation, Christine also counseled the princess to remind her husband’s subjects of the need “always to be loyal, good and obedient towards their lord”. She advised a similar obedience of barons to the king, of wives to their husbands, of nuns to their abbesses and prioresses, and of servants and labourers to their masters, mistresses and employers (TCL: I: 7-8; I: 8; II: 13; III: 9; III: 12; LTV: I: 8-9; II: 13; III: 9; III: 12). Christine’s outlook thus formed part of a long tradition of medieval political thought, from Jonas of Orleans through Aquinas and Giles of Rome to Jean Gerson and Thomas Hoccleve, in which obedience was seen not in terms of servile subordination but as an aspect of individual virtue and of rightful social order (DRP: III, ii: xxxiv; GKP: 387-9; LGR: 364-6).²⁵

However, Christine not only recommended subjects and inferiors to be patient and obedient towards their rulers and superiors as a matter of individual virtue but also, in the *Livre du corps de policie*, explicitly advocated hierarchical rule and rejected egalitarian or popular government on the grounds of constitutional principle. While recognizing the diversity of political institutions and customs to be found in different lands, including elected emperors, hereditary kings, and a variety of types of elected rulers, she argued, on the supposed authority of Aristotle’s *Politics*, that “the polity of one is best, that is governance and rule by one. Rule by a few is still good ... but rule by the many is too large to be good, because of the diversity of opinions and desires”. Where rulers were elected by the people, the choice was often made “more by will than by reason”, with the rulers being chosen and then deposed “by caprice”. For Christine, such government was “not beneficial where it is the custom, as in Italy in many places”. While in some cities “the common people govern and each year a number of persons are installed from each trade”, Christine argued that “such governance is not profitable at all for the republic and also it does not last very long once begun, nor is there peace in and around it”, citing Bologna (her father’s native city) as an instance of the evils which resulted

²⁴ Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry*, p. 199-201; G. Zeller, “Les rois de France candidats à l’empire. Essai sur l’idéologie impériale en France”, *Revue Historique*, 173, 1934, p. 273-311, at p. 309.

²⁵ Gerson, “Pour la réforme du royaume” p. 1140, 1147, 1158-9; J. M. Blythe, *Ideal Government and the Mixed Constitution in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 48, 83-4; Rigby, “Aristotle for Aristocrats and Poets”, p. 300-302. For references to primary and secondary sources, see Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry*, p. 195-8.

from such popular government.²⁶ Her work thus stands in a long tradition of medieval political theory which presented peace as being brought about by a universal monarch ruling over the world, a tradition with which Christine may have been familiar from Dante's *De monarchia* and which, more specifically, was associated with contemporary prophecies that Charles VI would conquer Europe, be crowned as emperor and then lead a crusade to Jerusalem, prophecies which were also invoked in the work of Philippe de Mézières and Honoré Bouvet.²⁷

Like other thinkers who saw monarchy as the best form of government, Christine inevitably stressed the need for the prince to possess virtue and to acquire a knowledge of the wise doctrines of thinkers such as Aristotle and Boethius if the common good was to be achieved (GKP: 341; LGR: 319; BDAC: I: V (p. 19); MF: 5827-46).²⁸ In particular, the ruler needed the prudence which allowed such learning to be applied to the realities of government, prudence being located, as Christine said *Livre des fais et bonnes meurs*, in the part of the human soul from which "advient pratique, qui appartient aux choses ouvrables" (LFBM II: 21). Nevertheless, Christine's stress on the ruler's need for "applied wisdom" by no means involved a re-invention or re-imagining of the reinventing or reimagining of the notion of the ideal sovereign.²⁹ On the contrary, the ideal of kingly prudence had been set out by Aristotelian political theorists long before Christine's day and a very similar discussion of prudence to that offered by Christine is to be found in Giles of Rome's account of this virtue in the *De regimine principum*, including his location of prudence in the *intellectus practicus* within the soul and his emphasis on the need for the ruler's wisdom to find its application in actual practice (GKP: 25, 37, 51-3, 117-20, 149, 256, 328-9, 332, 340-51, 390-1; LGR: 21, 39-41, 98-101, 133, 233, 302-3, 310, 319-28, 368-9). Aristotle himself had classified knowledge as "theoretical", "poetical" and "practical" and had further

²⁶ It is not clear which specific episode in the city's turbulent history Christine had in mind. For references, see Carol Lansing, "Bologna", *Medieval Italy: an Encyclopedia, Volume I*, ed. C. Kleinhenz, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 134-8. See also Cecelia M. Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna: A Study in Despotism*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 1-10.

²⁷ G. Mombello, "Quelques aspects de la pensée politique de Christine de Pizan d'après ses œuvres publiées", *Culture et politique en France à l'époque de l'humanisme et de la Renaissance*, ed. F. Simone, Torino, Accademia delle Scienze 1974, p. 43-153, at p. 41-2, 96, 149; S. J. Hindman, *Christine de Pizan's Epistre Othéa: Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986, p. 145-6, 169-81; Dante, *Monarchy and Three Political Letters*, ed. D. Nicholl and C. Hardie, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954, I: V-10; K. Green, "Introduction", in Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, p. 1-31, at p. 25-7; Autrand, *Christine de Pizan*, p. 341; Zeller, "Les roi de France candidats à l'empire", p. 298-300, 307-8; M. Chaume, "Une prophétie relative à Charles VI", *Revue de Moyen Âge Latin*, 3, 1947, p. 27-42; M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: a Study in Joachimism*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1969, p. 321-31. For a contrasting view, see B. A. Carroll, "The Causes of War and the Quest for Peace", in Hicks, *Au champ des escriptures*, p. 337-58, at p. 357 and B. A. Carroll, "Christine de Pizan and the Origins of Peace Theory", *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. H. M. Smith, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 22-39, at p. 33-9.

²⁸ Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry*, p. 12.

²⁹ D. Delogu, *Theorizing the Ideal Sovereign: The Rise of the French Vernacular Royal Biography*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 173-182.

sub-divided practical knowledge into ethics, economics and politics, i.e., rule of the self, of the household and of the polity, with his categories being adopted by medieval Aristotelians such as Latini and Gower.³⁰

Nor, given Christine's definition of princely prudence as a means of achieving the common good, should her work be seen as anticipating Machiavelli in appealing "not to a ruler's vision of the good life but to his self-interest", in contrast with earlier writers, such as John of Salisbury and Giles of Rome, for whom the pursuit of self-interest had been the hallmark of the tyrant.³¹ Firstly, Christine's awareness of the need for pragmatism on the part of the prince was hardly original. Giles of Rome, for instance, had followed Seneca and John of Salisbury (Pol: III: 3 (p. 17)) in recognizing that, by nature, humans are inclined to love themselves and to seek their own profit and good.³² It was thus the immoderate pursuit of his own interests at the expense of the common good which distinguished the tyrant from the virtuous ruler (GKP: 20, 55, 70, 76, 100, 119-20, 309, 325, 328, 330, 372; LGR: 17, 43, 61, 100, 300-1, 304, 307, 347). Secondly, while emphasising that political prudence was a form of "practique", Christine associated such practical wisdom not with a Machiavellian amorality but with discretion and virtue since such prudence was grounded in the human capability to "distinguish good and evil" and was a means of achieving justice and reason: virtue and competence were thus one (BP: I: 4-7; BBP/LCP: I: 6; MF: 7721-83).³³ Christine's thought can thus be located within the mainstream of medieval political theory in which good government was thought to be achieved not through the reform of political institutions but rather by the ethical self-rule of the prince and within which social and political problems were conceived of in moral terms and thus as requiring moral solutions.

If Christine's hierarchical political outlook is evident in her defence of rule by a virtuous prince as the best form of polity, it is equally prominent in her discussion in the *Livre du corps de policie* of the government of individual towns within the realm. Here she argues that burghers (old city families with a surname and family coat of arms) and wealthy merchants should ensure the good government of the town whereas the "humble people" ("le menu peuple") who "do not commonly have great prudence in words or even in deeds that concern politics ... should not meddle in the ordinances established by princes". If the common people are aggrieved in some way with the prince or the burdens which he imposes on them, the burghers, wealthy citizens and merchants should "not allow them to do anything" for themselves, "for that leads to the destruction of cities and of countries", but should send some of the "wisest and most discreet" from amongst

³⁰ John Gower, "Confessio Amantis", *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, two volumes; Early English Text Society, e.s. 81, 82, 1900, 1901, Volume II, VII: 23-202, 1522-44, 1641-99, and see the notes to these lines. Latini actually divides knowledge into three forms: theoretical, practical (including ethics, economics and politics) and logic (Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure (Li livres dou tresor)*, ed. P. Barette and S. Baldwin, New York, Garland, 1993, p. x-xi, 2-5).

³¹ Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, p. 100-8, 164-5; Aristotle, "Politics", III: 7.

³² Seneca, *Ad Lucilium, Epistulae Morales*, ed. R. M. Gummere, three volumes; London, Heinemann, 1917-1920, Volume II, 82: 15-16. See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I: ii, 8.

³³ Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, p. 126; K. Green, "On Translating Christine de Pizan as a Philosopher", in Green and Mews, *Healing the Body Politic*, p. 117-37.

themselves to make the popular grievances known to the prince or his council. They should, however, beware of “foolishly complaining” about the policies of the prince and his council and instead should assume the “good intentions” of their rulers even when their purposes are not apparent. The “wise should teach the simple and ignorant to keep quiet about those things which are not their domains and from which great danger can come and no benefit”. Appealing to the authority of the Book of Exodus, where it is commanded that “you will not complain about great rulers nor curse the princes of the people” (Exodus 22: 28), and to Solomon’s warning to subjects not to “betray the king in your thought” (Ecclesiastes 10: 20), Christine concluded that “no subject ought to conspire against his lord” (BBP/LCP: III: 6-7).³⁴ In the light of these passages from the *Livre du corps de policie*, it is difficult to interpret Christine’s political thought as representing an anti-hierarchical shift in political theory, as exhibiting any egalitarian sensibility, or as involving a view of the ruler as simply being the servant rather than the commander of his people. On the contrary, this work was explicitly unsympathetic to the “many” enjoying any active or autonomous role in political life, let alone to them becoming the dominant element within the polity or backing up their case by armed force. Similarly, in the *Mutacion de fortune* (1403) and the *Livre de l’advison Cristine*, Christine had attacked those in the lower orders who would not know their place as troublemakers, as the “worms of the earth”, as an “abominable, poisonous mass of vermin”, and as like a “plague” on the land (MF: 4071-4128; LAC/VCP: I: 10). Christine’s attitude to the poor was thus a mixture of compassion and fear: compassion when they suffered, but fear when they acted on their own initiative to do anything about it. If the people enjoyed a “primacy” in Christine’s definition of good government, they did so in their capacity as the object of the ruler’s actions in his defence of the common good rather than as active political agents in their own right.³⁵

However, if Christine had always been hostile to government by the people then the experience of the Burgundian-backed Cabochian Revolt of 1413, a Parisian rising involving popular violence in which Armagnac nobles were killed or imprisoned and ordinances restricting royal privileges were issued, seems to have made her particularly anxious about the dangers of popular rule. Thus, her *Livre de paix*, written after the revolt, describes the common people as “changeable” and as “led on by sensuality and scarcely checked by reason”. If human nature is in general “inclined toward all the vices, when discretion and reason do not intervene”, such reason was particularly weak in the common people “because they do not receive much instruction in virtue or in how to tell good from evil” so that many of them are “little better than beasts, as far as reason is concerned” and have “ever been, through their very nature, inclined to go astray through foolish credulity and bad counsel”, with even poverty, “for the most part”, failing to remove their pride. Christine thus described those members of the lower class who had taken part in the Cabochian uprising and who aspired to have a role in government as “fools” and as the members of a “base rabble” who were more suited to spending time in “low taverns” than to governing others. She mocked the perversity, foolishness, evil and wilfulness of these “vile and wretched people”, the “low born and bestial rabble” with their

³⁴ Christine here, as elsewhere, seems to depart from the literal text of the Vulgate.

³⁵ S. J. Dudash, “Christine de Pizan and the ‘menu people’”, *Speculum*, 78, 2003, p. 788-31, at p. 796-8.

“mad government” and “diabolical” assemblies: if they followed each other like sheep, they also became worse than wild boars in their fury, showing no respect for prince or princess, lord or master as they murder and pillage. The leaders of such evildoing should not be spared but punished according to the law (BP: II: 1; II: 2; III: 7, 11).³⁶

Attempting to correct the “madness” of those tempted to “rise up in rebellion against their superiors”, Christine taught that since God “dislikes dissension by subjects against their superiors and princes” and has regularly punished the pride of those who “want to climb higher than they should”, he has ordained that the people of all nations should be “humble” beneath the rule of their “superiors”. As was shown by God’s punishment of those who were guilty of “murmuring and sedition” against Moses, which included killing “fourteen thousand men on the spot” (Numbers 16: 41-9), it was “always a bad course for the people to conspire against their rulers or their royal estate”. Thus while the common people, whose “trade and labour are necessary to the realm” should not be “downtrodden or unreasonably burdened”, Christine remained suspicious of allowing the people any political role. Lacking in reflection, the common people were prone to hastiness, to “commotion and tumult” and to complaining that they were “badly governed and would be better so”. They should not be elevated to responsibility or rank greater than that which belonged to them: “They should not have authority of any office, nor prerogative of any government of city or town – things that belong to worthy burgers from old families”. Men of the artisan class who had done nothing but work by their hands could scarcely be expected to have acquired the knowledge which made people “fit to be placed in government”. They would not have “mixed with jurists or experts in matters of law and justice”, they would not have “seen honour”, “know what intelligence is” nor “have learnt how to speak in ordered way with fine and clear arguments” (BP: III: 2, 7, 10, 11, 21).

While allowing that, “even among simple artisans”, there were “very good people who would never participate in such disturbances”, Christine concluded once more that “civic office is not suitable for the populace”. Appealing again to the example of Bologna, Christine argued that rule by the people in the contemporary world did not lead to good government or to peace. In opposition to those who cited the examples of ancient Rome or the Venice of her own day as praiseworthy instances of government by the common people “without a lord”, she claimed that these were actually instances of rule by what were, in effect, “nobles” since these cities were governed by “ancient lineages of worthy burghers” who would “by no means admit any of the common people to their councils”. As in her *Livre du corps de policie*, Christine once more invoked the authority of Aristotle to buttress her claim that no wise man would approve of “government by the common people” with the Philosopher having affirmed that rule by the many in a country or city “is a confused thing”. Similarly Cataline had shown that “the poor – the common people – always envy the rich and because of this they are quick to rise up and exalt the wicked, wanting new lords and revolutions. Since they are never satisfied no matter how good their rulers are, they constantly want the city’s government changed”. Likewise, the Cabochian rising had demonstrated that the poor

³⁶ Gower, “Vox clamantis”, Book I, in *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*, ed. E. W. Stockton, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1962.

desired civil war so as to be able to “overrun the rich”. To give authority to such people would thus be “no different from giving licence to robbers and murderers” and it would be great foolishness for the prince “to allow the common people to arm themselves”. Thus, if the prince lacked sufficient men-at-arms from his own country, he should hire foreign mercenaries so as to avoid having to arm the common people amongst whom there was “no stability or security” and who were good only for pillaging (BP: III: 12; BDAC I: X (p. 27-8); III: VII (p. 152-3)).

Christine did not, however, apply the same caution when it came to allowing the nobles to bear arms even though she admitted that it was actually they who had recently been engaged in a civil war whose mutual “slaughter and confusion” were reminiscent of the actions of the madman who tore at his own flesh with his teeth and whose feet sought to kick his own eyes. On the contrary, she urged that the nobles should be trained and armed for war while also reminding them of the need to refrain from the internal quarrels which gave the “diabolical common people” the chance to arm themselves (BP: III: 13-14). It is hard to see such passages from the third book of the *Livre de paix* as exhibiting a “populist” orientation”, as involving a “careful and subtle focus” on “the people” as part of an attempt to incorporate them “into the political decision-making process”, or as advocating “the expansion of the political realm to the people”.³⁷ Thus, while Christine was certainly willing to criticise all the classes in the France of her day, from the very top of society to the bottom, her specific criticism of the princes and the nobles was that they were failing to carry out their political duties whereas her criticism of the lower orders was that they presumed to have a political role in the first place.

Resistance to the tyrant

If, as Christine argued, the establishment of peace within the political community depended upon the actions of a prince who was individually virtuous and who was willing to attend to the counsel of the wise, this inevitably raised the enforcement dilemma of what should happen if, in practice, the prince lacked the virtue which was required of him or if he refused to listen to good counsel and so lapsed into tyranny. There was a tradition of political thought, one which can be traced from Cicero, through John of Salisbury (Pol: VIII: 18-21) to Aquinas, Oresme, Gerson and others, which taught that it was “lawful and glorious” to resist tyrants.³⁸ Even Giles of Rome, who did not positively advocate the deposition of tyrants, had still maintained that, since tyranny was illegitimate and unnatural, the tyrant was soon likely to face the opposition of the excellent and noble men whom he had sought to destroy (GKP: 25, 117-20, 328-9, 332-8, 340-9; LGR: 21, 99-101, 310-16, 319-27).³⁹ When judged against this tradition, Christine’s own attitude to tyranny, at least as it appears in the *Livre du corps de policie*, actually seems rather acquiescent. Thus, in arguing that subjects should be “humble” and “readily obedient to their lords and rulers”, she

³⁷ Richards, “Bartolo da Sassaferrato as a Possible Source for Christine’s *Livre de paix*”, p. 84, 88, 96-7.

³⁸ For references to other primary and secondary sources, see Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry*, p. 183.

³⁹ Aristotle, “Politics”, III, 17; V: 10; Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. H. Rackham, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 1996, IV, v: 7.

cited the words of St Paul, who had taught that the powers that princes enjoy have been ordained by God so that he who resists their power “is recalcitrant or rebellious against the command of God”. Similarly, she invoked the authority of St Peter who had commanded that subjects and servants should be obedient to their princes and masters (Romans 13: 1-2; Titus 3: 1; 1 Peter 2: 13-18). Likewise, Christ himself, in teaching that subjects should “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” and pay the taxes required from them, had commanded that, in deed and in word, we should “revere and obey lords and princes” (Matthew 17: 24-6; 22: 21). Anticipating the objection that the command to obey superior powers rulers only applied in those cases where princes were “good”, Christine paraphrased St Peter as saying that even when princes were bad (“feussent mauvais”), people should still subject themselves to them “for the love of God” (1 Peter 2: 13-14, 180; BBP/LCP: III: 3). It is no surprise then when her *Chemin de long estude* lists rebellion alongside famine, earthquakes and pestilence as being among the disasters ills which befall the sublunary world (CLE: 2149-63) or that her *Livre de l’advison Cristine*, portrays the deposition of the “good king” Richard II of England by his “changeable people” as a “dure pestilence” which the king and his realm had suffered (LAC/VCP: III: 11; MF: 4541-4554, 23501-23511; LFBM: I: 147-8, 171; AB: XXII).

However, while Christine’s *Livre du corps de policie* advocates unconditional submission to the ruler, even a bad one, her *Livre de paix* adopts a rather different position. Here, while still teaching that *popular* rebellion against the prince or the nobles “offends God”, Christine does seem to allow that subjects have some right of resistance against a tyrant and his abuses of power. As she said, in defending the rights of lords and superiors, she did not advocate that such lords could “trample” on those who were subject to their power (BP: III: 4, 7, 10). In general, Christine’s discussion of the evils that result from tyranny – not least those which befall the tyrant himself – are intended more as a warning to the would-be tyrant rather than as an encouragement to the potential tyrannicide. As a result, much of her discussion focuses on the punishment which God sends directly to evil princes, such as the “bitter torments of the inner parts” and stinking worm-filled sores with which He afflicted the proud Antiochus (2 Macabees 9: 1-28). She also stressed the suffering which tyrants inflict upon themselves, with those who seek to make the world tremble themselves enduring a living hell of fear and apprehension. Nonetheless, Christine does also refer approvingly to those instances where God worked to punish tyrants indirectly, via human agency. Even here, however, many of the cases she cites are actually of those who opposed proud, foreign invaders, as when Judith killed Holofernes, the Assyrian general (Judith 1: 5; 2: 3-4; 3: 13; 6: 2) or when Judas Maccabeus defeated the Syrian leader Seron (1 Maccabees 3: 13, 23-4), with such resistance to external aggression being a much less controversial issue for medieval thinkers than rebellion by subjects against their own lord.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Christine does also refer to the wretched end of a tyrant such as Nero who was overthrown by his own subjects. After all, following Aristotle and Cicero, it was a commonplace of medieval political theorists that, in provoking opposition from those whom he has wronged, the rule of the tyrant would inevitably be the most short-lived form of government (GKP: 25, 118-20, 332-8, 340-9; LGR: 21,

⁴⁰ Christine gives the story of Judith in her *Livre de la cité des dames* (BCL: II: 31) and see her view of Joan of Arc as a new (and even greater) Judith in the *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc* (DJA: 217-24). See also Pol: VIII: 20 (p. 207-9).

99-101, 310-16, 319-27).⁴¹ Christine herself emphasized the “transitory” nature of the tyrant’s rule. As she says, confronted with a ruler who is guilty of extorting wrongful taxes and who is cruel and unjust, it would hardly be surprising if “le peuple” and “toute gent” rebelled against him (BP: II: 4; III: 1, 4-5, 19-21).⁴² In allowing subjects the right, as a last resort, to overthrow a tyrannical ruler, Christine’s position in the *Livre de paix* thus seems to provide a contrast not only with that of a pro-monarchical thinker such as Jean Juvénal des Ursins who, in his *Tres Crestien, tres hault, tres puissant roy* (1444), was to teach that the king’s will “est réputé pour loy et raison” and that the king “n’a juge que Dieu”, but also with the quietist views which she herself had previously set out in the *Livre du corps de policie*.⁴³ Christine’s work can thus be cited as evidence that she was advocate of both of the two opposed responses to royal misrule – submission or resistance – which were proposed by the political theorists of late medieval France.⁴⁴ Significantly, it was in the *Livre du corps de policie*, when she was developing the organic analogy at length, that Christine’s political theory was at its most hierarchical.

At first sight, it may seem surprising that Christine should have been more sympathetic to resistance to tyranny at the time that she was writing *Livre de paix* than she had been in the *Livre du corps de policie*. After all, while tyrannicide was always likely to be a sensitive issue, it became even more controversial following the assassination, in 1407, of Louis of Orléans, brother of Charles VI, on the orders of his cousin, John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, an act for which the duke was pardoned by the king in the following year, the murder having been defended in a treatise by Jean Petit as an act of tyrannicide.⁴⁵ In such circumstances, one might have expected Christine to have been more cautious in her views about the right of resistance to tyrants in the *Livre de paix* (1412-13) than she had been in the *Livre du corps de policie*, which had been completed before Louis’s assassination.⁴⁶ In fact, as Autrand has argued, Christine’s new stance on tyranny may have been the result of her hostile response to Louis’s assassination and to the Burgundian-backed Cabochian rising so that, ironically, the duke of Burgundy, having justified his actions on the grounds of tyrannicide, was now himself implicitly cast by Christine in the role of the tyrant

⁴¹ Aristotle, “Politics”, V: 10; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, v: 7; Cicero, *On Duties*, II: 23 (p. 71); Gerson, “Pour la réforme du royaume”, p. 1159-60; J.-M. Mehl, “Le roi de l’échiquier: approche du mythe royal à la fin du moyen âge”, *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 58, 1978, p. 145-61, at p. 157.

⁴² See also T. van Hemelryck, “Description of the Manuscripts”, in Green *et al.*, *The Book of Peace*, p.41-52, at p. 45-7.

⁴³ *Les écrits politiques de Jean Juvénal des Ursins*, ed. P. S. Lewis, 3 volumes; Paris, Klincksieck, 1978-93, Volume II, p. 152-3.

⁴⁴ P. S. Lewis, *Later Medieval France: the Polity*, London, Macmillan, 1968, p. 87-101; B. Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985, p. 85-8. Guenée identifies a similar ambiguity in the thought of Gerson (*Ibid.*, p. 85, 88).

⁴⁵ The duke’s pardon was later withdrawn and Petit’s work was publicly burned although this occurred after the writing of the *Livre de paix* (R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless: the Growth of Burgundian Power*, London, Longmans, 1966, p. 44-8, 69-74, 196, 210-12; Autrand, *Charles VI*, p. 349-66).

⁴⁶ Christine herself never explicitly refers to the assassination in any of her works (Autrand, *Christine de Pizan*, p. 285).

who could legitimately be opposed.⁴⁷ It would thus seem that political partisanship led Christine to abandon the principle of submission even to the bad prince which she had set out at length in the *Livre du corps de policie*, demonstrating that, as Wallace has argued, rather than being concerned to produce a timeless statement of principle, works of medieval political theory were also often intended “to intervene in the specific struggle of a specific secular or religious ruler against a specific enemy at a particular moment”.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, although Christine may have adopted a new theoretical stance on tyranny in the *Livre de paix*, she once more went out of her way, as she had in the *Livre du corps de policie*, to remind the people of contemporary France that, in practice, they themselves did not have any grounds for rebelling against their rulers. On the contrary, they should be grateful that they had benefited from the rule of monarchs who had treated them gently and lovingly and who had governed “without tyranny” (BBP/LCP: III: 2; BP: III: 10; see also AB: XLIX).

“Ascending”, “descending” and “mixed” forms of authority

For Christine, as for John of Salisbury or Giles of Rome, the opposite form of government to tyranny was not one which was egalitarian or democratic but rather one which was based on the rule of a prince who was individually wise and virtuous. Indeed, given her emphasis on the evils of popular government in the *Livre du corps de policie* and the *Livre de paix* (BBP/LCP: III: 2; BP: III: 11-12), Christine seems even more committed to the necessity of an hierarchical system than were some of the other exponents of what Ullmann characterized as a “descending” or “theocratic” concept of political authority, in which power flows downwards, ultimately from God, let alone when compared to those who favoured an “ascending” or “populist” conception of political authority in which the ruler was seen as responsible to the political community which could restrain his power and might even elect him to office.⁴⁹ While Ullmann’s typology can be criticised in a number of ways, the basic distinction which he drew between those medieval theorists who saw the ruler as superior to the political community and those who emphasised the constraints placed on the ruler by his subjects does remain a useful one.⁵⁰ Giles of Rome, for instance, expressed this distinction in terms of the contrast between “regal” rule, in which the king takes counsel from others but makes the laws according to his own will, and “political” government, where the ruler is subject to law made by the citizens (GKP: 190-1, 213, 326; LGR: 165-6, 190-1, 301). Giles himself favoured “regal” rule and was particularly suspicious of the political role of the “common people” whom he regarded as being prone to pursuing sensual pleasures rather than the true felicity of virtue. Yet

⁴⁷ Autrand, *Christine de Pizan*, p. 271-4, 302-4, 356.

⁴⁸ D. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 3.

⁴⁹ W. Ullmann, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* London, Methuen, 1961, p. 20-1, 31-79; A. Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250-1450*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 125-6; Nederman, “Body Politics”, p. 66.

⁵⁰ For critiques of Ullmann, see F. Oakley, “Celestial Hierarchies Revisited: Walter Ullmann’s Vision of Medieval Politics”, *Past and Present*, 60, 1973, p. 3-48; C. J. Nederman, *Lineages of European Political Thought: Explorations Along the Medieval/Modern Divide from John of Salisbury to Hegel*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 2009, p. 3-12.

even the pro-monarchical Giles still followed the Philosopher and Aquinas in seeing not only government by the one or by the few (“monarchy” and “aristocracy”) as being rightful forms of rule, provided that they sought the common good, but also government by the many (the *policia*). While it may be more difficult for many people to attain moral excellence than it is for one man or for a few, rule by the many, such as that found in the case of the Italian city-states in which the people chose the rulers, officials and judges and had the right to assent to laws so that there were “as many lords as there are people”, was nonetheless a valid form of government provided that the rulers did not simply pursue their own private interests (GKP: 190-1, 325-9; LGR: 165-6, 300-6).⁵¹ By contrast, while Christine, in lecturing the artisan class about the need to eschew “lechery in taverns and the luxuries [‘friandises’] they use in Paris”, echoed Giles of Rome’s comments about the tendency of the common people to value the delectation of the senses rather than the felicity of the soul, she was, in her rejection of the legitimacy of government by the many as “too large to be good”, actually even less open than this arch-proponent of the “descending” view of political authority had been to the possibility of rule by the many (GKP: 16, 281; LGR: 262; BBP/LCP: III: 2; III: 9).

Inevitably, if Christine was less sympathetic to popular government than a pro-monarchical writer such as Giles of Rome, the nature of her outlook seem even more clear-cut when set against the views of those medieval theorists who developed an “ascending” concept of political authority. For instance, Brunetto Latini noted the varieties of lordship which existed in the world and explicitly defended election to office for a set term by the “wise men” of a city as one of the forms of government which enjoyed divine approval and which provided a means of obtaining the common good of the community.⁵² Likewise, whereas Christine cited Bologna as an instance of the evils of popular government, Ptolemy of Lucca’s preferred mode of government in his *De regimine principum* (c. 1300) seems to be based on that found in contemporary Italian city-states in which the rulers were elected for short periods of time, were, in theory, constrained by the laws which the community had laid down and were subject to some form of popular scrutiny.⁵³ Similarly, Marsilius of Padua, saw the authority of the ruler as being derived from the “legislator”, i.e., from “the whole body of the citizens, or the weightier part thereof”, with the citizens having the power to make laws, to correct the ruler “and even to depose him, if this be expedient for the common benefit” and so defended the superiority of elected monarchy over hereditary succession.⁵⁴ Christine de Pizan’s antipathy towards government by “the many” and her particular interpretation of the metaphor of the body politic were thus not only hierarchical by modern standards but were actually less egalitarian than those of a

⁵¹ Aristotle, “Politics”, III: 7; Thomas Aquinas, “Commentary on the Politics”, *Medieval Political Philosophy: a Sourcebook*, ed. R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1963, p. 329-32; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C. I. Litzinger, Notre Dame, Dumb Ox, 1993, 1672-8, 1697-8.

⁵² Latini, *The Book of the Treasure*, p. 118, 350-55, 362.

⁵³ *On the Government of Rulers: De regimine principum. Ptolemy of Lucca with Portions Attributed to Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. M. Blythe, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, 2:8; 4:1; 4:7. Ptolemy did concede that local conditions, particularly the existence of larger territorial units, might make hereditary monarchy a more appropriate form of authority.

⁵⁴ Marsilius of Padua, *The Defender of the Peace: the Defensor Pacis*, trans. A. Gewirth, New York, Harper and Row, 1956, I: XV (p. 61-5); I: XVI (p. 71-80); I: XVII (p. 80-6); I: XIX (p. 88-9).

number of other medieval political theorists, whether “ascending” or “descending” in their outlook.

However, if Ullmann’s “ascending” and “descending” concepts of authority are retained as labels for two basic perspectives principles within medieval political theory, it should be emphasized that, in practice, these two approaches were not necessarily mutually exclusive but rather could be combined to differing degrees within the work of any individual writer. Thus, while many thinkers, from Aquinas to Fortescue, followed Aristotle in arguing that the “monarchy of the perfect man” was the ideal form of government in principle, they also conceded that, in practice, given the frailties of human nature, the best type of polity may be one with a “mixed” constitution which combines the virtues – or at least limits the vices – of the different forms of government.⁵⁵ As a result, late medieval political theory did not simply take the form of an antithesis between the “ascending” and “descending” conceptions of political power but rather constituted a spectrum of different positions between the two poles. Christine herself has been seen as advocating a form of “mixed” constitution in her stress on the need for rulers to take advice from the wise, learned and experienced and her view of political society as a “web of intercession and intervention” by both groups and individuals.⁵⁶ Certainly, Christine took it for granted that, in order to be able to with prudence, the prince required the advice of wise counsellors although, when judged by this criterion, it is difficult to think of any medieval political theorist, however pro-monarchical he was, who could not be described as an advocate of a “mixed” form of government. However, while Christine followed Giles of Rome in suggesting that the prince should listen to the advice of older, wiser counsellors, she was rather more inclusive than Giles in her list of those whom he should consult. Thus, whereas Giles had simply stressed the need for the ruler to rely on “wise barons that love the realm”, Christine recommended the prince to select counsellors from a variety of different estates so as to be able to draw upon a range of different areas of expertise (GKP: 53; LGR: 41; BP: I: 9-12; BBP/LCP: I: 22).

Christine’s *Livre de paix* lists four groups who might counsel the king: firstly, knights and esquires who are qualified to “to advise on matters of war”; secondly, older knights and nobles who could advise on the management of his royal estate; thirdly, jurists, “whether prelates or not”, who would “advise on the administration of justice”; finally, “worthy gentlemen of good condition”, who are “versed in finance and accounts” who could counsel the prince on how to manage his finances. Only in a passing remark does Christine say that the prince can also consult “aucun du peuple” as the case requires (BP: I: 10). Christine’s *Livre des fais d’armes et de la chevalerie* (c. 1410) offers a slightly different list of those whom the wise prince should consult before going to war. Here she lists older nobles, clerks learned in war, the burghers who would have the responsibility of fortifying towns and of persuading the common people to help their lord, and finally “some representatives of the craftsmen” who should be “carefully approached” so that they would be “more inclined to help the lord financially”. As an example of this, she cited Charles V who had summoned these four “estates” to his “parliament in Paris” before renewing war against England (BDAC: I: 5 (p. 20-1)). Similarly, both the

⁵⁵ Aristotle, “Politics”, II: 6; III: 7; IV: 2, 8-11; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, x: 2; Blythe, *Ideal Government and the Mixed Constitution in the Middle Ages*, *passim*.

⁵⁶ Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, p. 75; but see also *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Livre de paix and the *Livre des faits et bonnes meurs* praise Charles V for calling upon the counsel of the “bourgeois de ses bonnes villes” and “meisment des moyenes gens, et de celz du commun”. However, Christine’s main emphasis here, following Aristotle and Giles of Rome, is not so much on the need to call upon the counsel of the lesser commons but rather to show the benefits for social harmony of the existence of a large middle class (the “moyenes gens”) whose position between the rich and the poor helps reduce the conflict and alienation between the two extremes within society with the poor, in particular, otherwise being prone to seeking to despoil their social opposites (BP: III: 6, 18; LFBM II: 28-30; GKP: 385-7; LGR: 363-4; DRP: III, ii: xxxiii).⁵⁷

Moreover, while Christine certainly saw it as both morally virtuous and pragmatically sensible for the ruler to take advice from others, she did not present him as being obliged or legally constrained to do so. Likewise, while teaching that counsellors should speak truthfully to the prince and even be willing to “censure” and “reprimand” him if necessary (in contrast with the flatterers who attend on the tyrant), she did not present the prince as being in any sense formally bound by the counsel he received. Approaching the issue of counsel from the viewpoint of the prince, rather than as a matter of the right of representation of the people, she thus had to depend on the prince’s magnanimity and good sense to ensure that he would first “call on” wise counsellors and then have the prudence to follow their advice – or to choose wisely between conflicting counsels (BP: I: 9-12). As she says in her biography of Charles V: the king, out of wisdom and good-will, summoned people to counsel him notwithstanding the fact that “de sa seigneurie et autorité”, he could “faire et ordener de tout à son bon plaisir” (LFBM II: 28-30). There may be an echo of here of the Roman law teaching that “What pleases the prince has force of law”, a maxim which was a commonplace amongst those medieval political theorists who sought to defend monarchical authority.⁵⁸ While we might expect Christine’s eulogistic account of the life of Charles V to focus on the king as the architect whose overall vision guided the generals and officials whom he used as his instruments, what is striking is that her account of the body politic in her *Livre du corps de policie* is similarly head-orientated. For instance, unlike the *Policraticus*, where John of Salisbury has “Plutarch” refer to the “senate” as the “heart” of the body politic, the *Livre du corps de policie* makes no mention of any formal assembly in its vision of the ideal body politic, even though Christine was familiar with the Roman Senate and its conciliar functions. Similarly, she equated the Roman consuls with “princes and dukes” of her own time and with the “leader of a great army” rather than with elected officials (Pol: V: 9 (p. 81); BBP/LCP: I: 7; I: 29; II: 4-5; II: 10; II: 13-14).

Equally significant is what she omits from her body politic in the *Livre du corps de policie*, i.e., any mention of the representative local or national assemblies or forms of popular association that were found in the France of the 14th and 15th centuries.⁵⁹ Nor,

⁵⁷ Aristotle, “Politics”, IV: 11 (p. 107-9).

⁵⁸ For detailed references, see Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry*, p. 179.

⁵⁹ M. T. Lorcin, “Christine de Pizan: analyste de la société”, *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. M. Zimmermann and D. De Rentis, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1994, p. 197-205, at p. 205; C. Gauvard, “Christine de Pizan et ses contemporains: l’engagement politique des écrivains dans le royaume de France au XIV^e et XV^e siècles”, *Une*

in contrast to her focus on the individual morality of the prince, did she show any interest in the detail of the nature of the assemblies or of the forms of counsel on which the king might rely. Thus, while Christine taught that the prince should make himself accessible to his subjects so as to be able to provide justice to them, that he should listen to their petitions and that he should respond to their legitimate complaints, this was very different from a theory of political representation in which subjects had some degree of ability to restrain their rulers (BP: II: 14; III: 1, 18). As Christine put it in her *Chemin de long estude*, explicitly referring to the metaphor of the body politic as it appeared in Plutarch's supposed letter to Trajan: "Of which body is the prince head,/By which all members will be led,/For as the head is over all,/The members must await his call/Which governs all the rest at will/Giving commands which then fulfil/The senses which control the rest" (CLE: 5493-5504).⁶⁰ If Christine it to be seen as an advocate of a "mixed" constitution, then the fact that, like many other political writers of the time, she saw a strong and authoritative monarchy as the answer to the internal disorder and external menaces which threatened France meant that, on the spectrum from "descending" to "ascending" views of political authority, she herself stood well towards the hierarchical or "descending" end of scale.

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femme de lettres au Moyen Âge: études autour de Christine de Pizan. ed. L. Dulac and B. Ribémont, Orléans, Paradigme, 1995, p. 105-28, at p. 107.

⁶⁰ Translation from Willard, *Christine de Pizan*, p. 178.