

## CHARITY IN JOHN OF SALISBURY'S *POLICRATICUS*

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**ABSTRACT.** *Charity in John of Salisbury's Policraticus.* In the *Policraticus*, charity is used synonymously to wisdom. Charity accounts for the deeply social character of John of Salisbury's political philosophy. Together with wisdom it rests at the core of the treatise, tying together all the subtopics into one cohesive system. Charity is essential for one to truly be a philosopher. In opposition to avarice, it involves the detachment from earthly goods and the manifested love towards one's peers. In addition, it has a regulatory function, being the origin of all virtues.

**Keywords:** *John of Salisbury, Policraticus, charity, wisdom, Political Philosophy*

### Introduction

At a first glance, charity seems to be one of the topics of secondary importance tackled within the *Policraticus*, with few passages explicitly referring to it. However, when analyzing the text in greater depth, it becomes evident that charity lays at the core of John of Salisbury's work, together with reason. In fact, the social character of the treatise is entirely based upon John's approach of the concept of charity.

### Charity versus Avarice

Firstly, charity unveils itself in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* in opposition to avarice. Avarice is treated extensively within the seventh book of the *Policraticus*. It appears as an inversion in the balance between body and soul. Because the human body is matter and the soul is form, within the normal paradigm form needs to rule matter, not the other way around. It is this exact reversal which takes place in the case of avarice.

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It is agreed that avarice is not only to be avoided but detested, particularly from the fact that it removes and sequesters its votaries far from the celestial, from association with divinity and the enjoyment of celestial beatitude. The nearer all things are to the celestial the less covetous and grasping they are. The winged creatures of the heaven neither sow nor do they reap nor spin nor gather into barns nor pile up stores, but disregard all solicitude for the morrow. On the other hand mice and creeping things store up for the future, and they are said to be the generations for whom the earth is food; they live on the same sparingly, fearing that someday, even that earth may fail them into which they themselves none the less will undoubtedly be resolved.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, through greed, man strays away from his divine essence, reducing the difference between him and the rest of earthly creatures. At the same time, avarice impairs man's way to his ultimate purpose, salvation. In the case of salvation, man reunites under spiritual form with God. The clinginess to material goods impedes the development of man's spiritual nature. Spiritual evolution makes one both worthy of appearing in the presence of the Creator and capable of connecting with Him.

The excessive attachment to earthly goods becomes more obvious when taking into account that avarice does not limit itself to the love of money, but extends to the love for goods which can be accommodated by money:

One not falling victim to the love of money is at times conquered by greed for its trappings. Horses, apparel, spurred falcons, hunting dogs, numerous herds of cattle and smaller beasts, and the varied furniture of the world (since it exceeds human capacity to enumerate each) are preferred to money by many, and they exhaust the strength of their whole being in acquiring and keeping these possessions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "Auaritiam uel ex eo non modo fugiendam sed detestandam constat quod a celestibus procul sectatores suos, a consortio diuinitatis et usu celestis beatitudinis, remouet et elongat. Omnia siquidem, quo celestibus uiciniora sunt, minus cupiunt et congregant pauciora. Volatilia celi neque serunt neque metunt neque nent neque congregant in horreis nec penum construunt sed omnem excludunt sollicitudinem crastini. E contra mures et reptilia congerunt in futurum; et generationes perhibentur esse quibus terra est in cibum; et eodem parce uiuunt, timentes ne quando eis terra deficiat, in quam tamen ipsae proculdubio resoluentur.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>2</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "et quem non subigit amor pecuniae, interdum superat cupiditas specierum. Equos, uestes, aues armatas, uenaticos canes, numerosos greges armentorum et pecorum, et uariam mundi supellectilem (quoniam per singula currere uircs humanas excedit) plerique pecuniae praeferimt et totius hominis uires exhauriunt in adquirendis his aut tenendis.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

As man's actions are determined by his relation to material goods, they become a purpose in themselves, not a means for supporting the soul. Furthermore, the search for material goods goes beyond natural needs, since nature is the will of God, in John's view, and, as a result, its laws reinforce the dominance of form over matter. "For the frenzy of avarice in the abstract is based upon two considerations: that it covets to excess the possessions of others or guards its own too tenaciously; and that he who seeks to excess what he lacks, makes demands beyond the law of necessity or utility."<sup>3</sup> The resulting image of the greedy man is of one going against nature at multiple levels. On the one hand, the miser seeks material gain beyond necessity, becoming even lower than some animals, causing himself even more harm, as his excess often entails other vices, such as gluttony, debauchery etc. On the other hand, he goes against his spiritual nature, replacing the soul's craving for the divine with that for the material:

Greater indeed is the greed of the mind than that of the body; and unless God pours in his being, it can never be satisfied; for since the element of spirit in virtue of its nature contains corporeal matter in such a manner that it is itself filled by no amount of matter, and since one object having taken possession of its own space does not prevent another from being situated in space (the more received, for the more is there room), it is as clear as day that a corporeal object cannot fill soul, which is spirit. The whole universe is narrow as compared to the quantity of soul.<sup>4</sup>

The soul's natural longing for God is willingly ignored by the avaricious, demonstrating folly. This idea is reinforced by the fact that God is the truth, therefore the source of all true knowledge. Hence he who puts matter before the source of knowledge is a fool. Such a fool is not the one unaware of divine commandments and the righteous balance between form and matter, but the one who is aware of them and decides to defy them, expecting no negative consequences:

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<sup>3</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "Nam in his duobus articulis furor totius auaritiaie constat quod immoderatus appetit aliena aut sua tenacius seruat; et quidem immoderatus appetit quisquis quod deest, legem necessitatis excedens et usus, exposcit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>4</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "Maior enim est hiatus mentis quam corporis; et, nisi seipsum Deus infundat, omnino nequit impleri. Nam, cum natura spiritualis uirtute propria sic corporalia comprehendat ut nulla quantitate distendatur, nec res una loco praeoccupato alterius impedimento sit quominus illa comprehendatur, et quo plura concipiuntur, eo pluribus loeus est, luce clarius est quia res corporalis animam, quae spiritus est, implere non potest; totus enim mundus angustus est ad animae quantitatem.", transl. John Dickinson.

Folly is associated with it as its fellow, persuading men to love and seek for that which cannot be retained; and folly is the blameworthy ignorance of those things which it is our duty to know. So the book of the great Augustine on Free Will describes it. For if a man does not know that which it is not possible for him to know, this is not set down to the account of folly; but when he is in bondage to ignorance of himself, then he passes over into the ranks of fools. If he prefers ends which are patently inferior to those which are of greater value, he judges foolishly; if, pursuing the vices, he chooses the worse for the better part, he is condemned to the ill-repute of folly; if his error was caused by cupidity, a many-forked road of destruction yawns before him, since error leads a man not to know the right end to pursue, and while he wanders in the wilderness, the furnace of cupidity burns him with its fires from within. And yet the words of the unjust still prevail, and man, ignorant of the knowledge which belongs to him, and refusing to bear the yoke of the obedience which he owes, aspires to a kind of fictitious liberty, vainly imagining that he can live without fear and do with impunity whatsoever pleases him, and somehow be straightway like unto God; not, however, that he desires to imitate the divine goodness, but rather seeks to incline God to favor his wickedness by granting him immunity from punishment for his evil deeds.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, folly is not only exhibited through the miser's poor prioritization of what should be sought, but also through his unawareness that material things derive from and are obtained only through the celestial ones. Greed makes one ignorant of the frailty of material things, especially in comparison to eternal life, gained only through a detachment from earthly life belongings: "To come to the point; whatever charity pays out will be paid back by the Lord; what vanity spends, vanishes."<sup>6</sup> By contrast, charity is an expression of virtue considered at the expense of material gain. It depicts the normal balance between form and matter, where

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<sup>5</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVII "Sociatur ei stultitia comes, suadens id amari et quaeri quod teneri non potest; et est stultitia eorum quae scienda sunt uitiosa ignorantia. Sic eam liber magni Augustini de Libero Arbitrio pingit. Si enim nesciatur quod sciri non potest, in nomen stultitiae minime cadit; at, cum sui ignorantia quis tenetur, transit ad stultos. Si in bonis quae minora patenter sunt maioribus praefert, stulte iudicat; si uitia sequens partem suam deteriore faciat, stultitiae maledictione dampnatur; si ergo error fuerit cupiditate succensus, praecipitii multiplex uia patet, cum ab errore sit ut homo quid sit sequendum ignoret et ipsum in inuio abeuntem fomax cupiditatis inflammet. Et quidem adhuc praeualent uerba iniquorum, dum homo, propriae cognitionis ignaras et debitae subiectionis detrectans iugum, fictitiam quandam affectat libertatem ut possit uiuere sine metu et impune quod uoluerit facere et quodammodo iam esse sicut Deus; non tamen quod diuinam uelit imitari bonitatem, sed Deum dando impunitatem malis ad suam uult malitiam inclinari.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>6</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. IV "Quicquid caritas erogat, remuneratur a Domino; quod dispensat uanitas, euanescit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

the latter is subjected to and acts only as a mean for the former. Within the same logic, practicing charity is rewarded by God with eternal life, while avarice is sanctioned. Man moves between these two types of consequences in a conscientious manner, since he chooses to focus his attention on one to the detriment of the other, seeking either the material or the spiritual.

Holy Scripture specifies that two passions have existed in man from the beginning, to wit the craving for justice and the craving for self-advancement. [...] The love of justice therefore, since it is a soldier in the service of charity, seeks the things that are of God, while devotion to self-interest is occupied with its own advancement and relegates the things that are of God and of one's neighbor to second place.<sup>7</sup>

The free choice between these two tendencies permits one to go as far as judging individual character based upon it, especially since it defines one's relation to peers.

Character has its origin in these two sources: good, if one does for another what he would have another do for himself and refrains from imposing upon another what he would not wish another to impose upon himself; bad, if one harms another or does not help him when he has the power. Instances of both types are numerous. From the first originate love of liberty, of country, and ultimately of those outside its bounds. For he who loves himself and his country cannot fail to love liberty, and in due course whosoever truly loves his neighbor will love him outside this circle since consistent charity demands it.<sup>8</sup>

Man's relation to others defines his relation to God, because "Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the substitution between man's relation to God and the relation to his peers is explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, as part of the motivation for the Final Judgement:

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<sup>7</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. V "Duos quidem affectus in homine ab initio extitisse sacrae Scripturae designat auctoritas, appetitum scilicet iusti et commodi appetitum. [...] Alter ergo istorum, quoniam militat caritati, quaerit quae Dei sunt; alter in propria utilitate uersatur, postponens quae Dei sunt aut proximorum.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>8</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. V "Ab hoc duplici fonte mores oriuntur. Recti quidem, si faciat quis alii quod sibi uult fieri et ab eo absteineat alii inferendo quod sibi nollet ab alio irrogari; distorti uero, si quis alium ledat uel non prosit, cum possit, a quae quidem utrimque multipliciter fiunt. A priori quidem amor libertatis, amor patriae, et tandem extraneorum amor. Nam libertatem non amare non potest qui se ipsum et patriam amat et in gradu suo extraneum quicumque sincera caritate diligit proximum; siquidem in eo consistit caritas ordinata.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>9</sup> 1 John 4:20-21.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they will also answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.<sup>10</sup>

It can be observed that the choice between charity and avarice is in fact a choice between eternal life and eternal damnation. The love for one's peers measured through its manifestation into deeds is not optional for Christians and implicitly for citizens. It results that a second enemy to charity, and implicitly to society, is envy:

There is nothing that is more inimical to charity than the poison of envy. Envy is, as philosophers agree, the moroseness that originates at sight of the prosperity of another. If however one is rendered morose by the sight of the prosperity of a tyrant or wicked citizen, he is by no means disfigured by the stain of envy; for it is abhorrent even to the good to see success crown the efforts of those who are thought to be intent on evil to the destruction of the many. If therefore jealousy is aroused by the success of others it is self-evident that it is far removed from charity, which seeks not its own but its neighbors' good.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 25:31-46.

<sup>11</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIV "Plane nichil est quod magis caritatem impugnet quam uenenum inuidiae. Est autem inuidia, ut philosophis placuit, tristitia ex apparenti prosperitate alicuius initium (habens). Si enim de tiranni uel peruersi cuius apparenti quis prosperitate tristatur, nequaquam deturpatur inuidiae macula. Nam et bonis displicet, cum in

It becomes more evident that charity goes hand in hand with the love of justice, since sadness at the sight of a tyrant's prosperity is not deemed to go against it. Consequently, charity is compulsory for the citizen, but it is conditioned by the moral stance of one's peers.

### Charity as Wisdom

In the *Policraticus* John of Salisbury does not provide a definition per se of charity, however he explicitly correlates it with wisdom:

Fear, then, is the beginning, and in fear is the increase; and the apex of all the virtues, whether you call it charity or wisdom, is not far removed from fear. Distinguish, however, servile from filial fear; the former is the beginning, the latter the achievement and perfection, of wisdom. In whatever manner the pomp of words clothes its vanity, the truth is that wisdom begins in fear, and that the holy fear of the Lord endureth forever. And so the root remains, and, drawing strength from increments of grace, puts forth into the branches of the virtues, until its vital force issues finally in the fruit of perfected charity, which no longer acts under the stimulus of penalties; for in charity there is no terror or servile fear, which acts by penalties, but rather it is the mark of this holy fear that it continually performs good works, and, clinging to justice, holds it fast. Terror then is seen to pass away, while grace grows into virtue; because now there is no servile fear, but instead filial affection, which instigates to reverence and good works.<sup>12</sup>

Charity and wisdom are used interchangeably, both originating in the fear of God, but being the ultimate results of the perfected state of this fear. For this reason, in John of Salisbury's view, one cannot truly become a philosopher in the absence

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perniciem multorum succedit his qui ad mala creduntur proniores. Si ergo liuor bonis affligitur alienis, planum est quod a caritate plurimum distat quae sua non quaerit sed proximorum.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>12</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book V, ch. IX "Timor ergo initium et in timore processus est et omnium uirtutum culmen, siue illud caritatem siue sapientiam dicas, non usquequaque alienum est a timore. A filiali seruillem diuide; in hoc initium, in illo sapientiae constitue perfectionem. Quocumque modo se luxus uerborum extollat, uerum est quia sapientia initiatur in timore et quod sanctus timor Domini permanet in seculum seculi. Manet itaque radix et incrementis gratiae inualescens in ramos uirtutum proficit, et uis eius ad fructum perfectae caritatis usque pertingit, quae penarum nescit aculeos, cum non sit metus in caritate, qui penam habet, et sit timoris indicium quod bona opera iugiter facit et iustitiae continens eandem apprehendit. Metus ergo uidetur cedere, dum gratia proficit ad uirtutem; quia iam non timet seruiliter qui filiali affectu ad reuerentiam et bona opera incitatur.", transl. John Dickinson.

of practicing charity “Whoever then by the agency of philosophy acquires or spreads charity has attained his aim as a philosopher. Consequently, this is the true and unvarying rule of philosophers, that each one busy himself in all that he reads or learns, does, or abstains from doing, with advancing the cause of charity.” The reasoning behind the necessity of practicing charity in order to be considered a philosopher comes from the fact that, for John of Salisbury, philosophy is the love of wisdom, therefore philosophy is the love of God, since God is the unique source of true wisdom. At the same time, God is not only the truth, but also “God is love”.<sup>13</sup> Charity is the expression of love, as it should be manifested both in relation to God and in relation to other people.

So also the Incarnate Wisdom of God, though He limits many things, enjoins that love for God be limitless; except that this mode is prescribed for charity, that God be loved with love that has no limits; for Jesus said “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” He likewise had said before “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength.”<sup>14</sup>

Charity should be limitless, just like man’s love towards God. This reinforces the idea that one’s relation to peers acts as a substitute in the earthly life for one’s relation to God.

In addition, charity, together with the detachment from the noise of the mob, is shown as the way for man to appear undefiled before God at the final judgement “Yet I do know the rule of truth by which I am convinced that religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulations and to keep oneself unpolluted by the world. This rule applies to all laymen as well, and happy they if they faithfully keep it.”<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the image of the monk serves as an example of the wise man, detached from earthly matters, but applying charity in his life. In fact, charity is the only reason for which the monk is saddened, just like the angels, empathizing with the rest of humanity

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<sup>13</sup> 1 John 4:8.

<sup>14</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XI “Sic et incarnata Dei Sapientia, cum multis praescribat modum, Deum sine modo praecipit diligendum; nisi quia caritati modus ille praescribitur ut Deus sine termino amoris diligatur. Qui enim ait: Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum, idem praemisit: Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, ex tota anima tua, ex tota mente tua et ex omnibus uiribus tuis.”, transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>15</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIII “Noui tamen regulam ueritatis qua michi constat quia religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem haec est, uisitare pupillos et uiduas in tribulatione eorum et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc seculo. Haec autem politicorum ao omnium est; et bene cum istis agitur, si eam fideliter seruant”, transl. Joseph B. Pike.



"If there is aught which seems to sadden them, it is to be attributed to their affection for their brethren, since even the angels in heaven somehow take compassion upon our lapses, and rejoice together over a single sinner brought to repentance."<sup>16</sup>

John's approach is an exhaustive use of God's definitions, which link together the entire *Policraticus*. God is reason and God is love, therefore reason is interchangeable with love in John's philosophy. As a result, the reason/love duo is the driving force of the wise man's life and consequently of the ideal human community. It is around this conceptual pair that all the other subjects of the *Policraticus* gravitate, exploiting their multiple facets, in an attempt to provide a practical guide of good living, both for the individual and for society, so as to achieve salvation as the ultimate goal.

### Charity as Social Wisdom

The correlation between charity and wisdom, taken to the degree that the two are interchangeable from John of Salisbury's perspective, has a major impact when considering his political theory. For John, politics, like all human affairs, need to be guided by reason, since God is "indisputably a God of knowledge".<sup>17</sup> Reason is the distinguishing criterion between vice and virtue. Its use separates the frivolous from the philosophers. Reason is the common faculty between man and God, functioning as a permanent connection between the two. In addition, it is from divine reason that clerical law springs, and from the latter, in turn, lay law springs. When lay law goes against clerical law, it strays away from divine wisdom and becomes null. Those who attempt to change lay laws so as to go against the clerical one are to be considered tyrants. It is charity seen as wisdom which explains the profound social nature of John's political philosophy, in which all parts of the body politic need to be taken care of "the more humble elements of the commonwealth should receive proportionately greater care and attention from those in higher station as part of their public duty."<sup>18</sup>

Being synonymous to wisdom, charity too has a regulatory function. Irene O'Daly examines John of Salisbury's concept of charity when discussing the system of duties within the commonwealth. She traces the roots of John's use of charity in a political context back to Augustine:

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<sup>16</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXI "Si quid autem est quod eos contristare uideatur, ad caritatem fraternam referendum est, quia et in celis angeli nostris quodammodo lapsibus compatiuntur et super uno peccatore penitentiam agente congaudent.", transl. John Dickinson.

<sup>17</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Brepols 1993, ed. Keats-Rohan, Book II, ch. XXVII "procul dubio scientiarum Dominus est", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>18</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VI, ch. XXV "quae in re publica humiliora sunt, maiorum officio diligentius conseruentur.", transl. John Dickinson.

The term *'caritas ordinata'* was coined by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*, and derived from Song of Songs 2:4, *'ordinavit in me caritatem'*. In 1.3–40 of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine discusses how one can 'use' other people. They are correctly used when they are loved for God's sake, but incorrectly used when exploited for earthly or temporal ends. Correct use requires *'caritas ordinata'*, that is, love that is properly directed towards appropriate ends. Written in the mid-twelfth century, the *Summa decretorum* of Rufinus suggested that proximity, extending from the familial circle to incorporate strangers, was a guide to the appropriate exercise of charity. Rufinus described this system of discrimination as *'caritas ordinata'*. Therefore, the notion of charity as a duty-system constructed on the basis of associative bonds was a familiar idea in medieval Christian writings. Indeed, the *Glossa ordinaria* on the *Decretum* would propose a hybrid scale of merit based in part on one's virtue and in part on one's relational proximity to the giver. These examples demonstrate that in Christianising Stoic principles governing the performance of duties, John was inspired by contemporary discourse on Christian *caritas*. Like Augustine, John sees justice as defined not only in Ciceronian terms of giving to each their due, but also as founded on the Christological precept of not doing to one's neighbor what one would not have done to oneself.<sup>19</sup>

While Augustine's origin of the term hints at the afore mentioned oscillation between man's love of earthly goods and his love for God, in the *Policraticus* one's fellows are depicted more as objects of love, rather than means to manifest one's love. The difference is subtle, but it shifts the emphasis from the act of love for its own sake to the ones love needs to be manifested upon. Going further, the influence of Rufinus, with meritocracy involved in choosing the objects of charity, is clearly present in John of Salisbury's approach. However, for John of Salisbury, the lack of merit does not completely exclude those deemed frivolous from becoming the beneficiaries of charity, but it requires a correction of the vices prior to the manifestation of charity.

For it is indeed a just deed to give gifts to the richly deserving and a pious deed to give succor to the needy; in such a way however that attention be given to that in each instance which can without shame or blame be exposed to the gaze of the sage, since we should imitate Him who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if we see a destitute actor or mimic, we should assuredly not foster evil; but after having reproved it and if possible corrected it, we are bound in the spirit of brotherly love to supply his

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<sup>19</sup> Irene O'Daly, *John of Salisbury and the Medieval Roman Renaissance*, Manchester University Press, 2018, p. 102.

natural wants. It is quite proper to give to everyone that asketh us our compassion or the solace of our love. At times however it is more beneficial to chide the sluggard and to disconcert the harlot or actor than to lavish upon them what they are demanding.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, vice is not encouraged, and, at the same time, charity is practiced indiscriminately. Although O'Daly introduces the analysis of charity within the context of discussing duties, she also correlates it with John of Salisbury's tackling of justice. Like in the case of wisdom, charity stands at the basis of the legal system:

He also added "On these two words dependeth the whole law and the prophets." If therefore all that has been written attends on the prophets and the law, that is to say, if all teaching has the aim of subjecting man to the law of God, who doubts that all things are accredited to the law of God; who doubts that all things are accredited to the realm of charity? [...] Charity is never meaningless and apart; it conducts honor, self-control, and sobriety, modesty, and the whole army of venerable virtues to man as to the temple of the Lord and dedicates him to piety.<sup>21</sup>

It can be observed that charity acts as a moral compass. It is both the source of all the other virtues, without which these cannot exist, and the only way by which man can achieve his ultimate goal, salvation

The Christian Fathers have long since agreed that beatitude rests upon virtue and that there can be no virtue without charity. The fruit of this is indeed most agreeable on the testimony of the apostle, who clearly opposes to the works of the flesh the works of the spirit, which avail for life, and these are peace, patience, longanimity, goodness, joy, mildness, continence, and chastity.

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<sup>20</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. IV "Illis enim qui praemeruerunt donare iustum est, et eis qui indigent subuenire pium; ita tamen ut id respiciatur in singulis quod in facie eapientis sine rubore et nota ualeat denudari; siquidem imitari debemus eum qui solem suum facit oriri super bonos et malos et pluit super iustos et iniustos. Si enim pauperem histrionem uideamus aut mimum, non debemus utique fouere malitiam, sed correpta et, si fieri potest, emendata, fraternae caritatis iure oportet sustentari naturam. Expedi quidem omni petenti tribuere uel affectum mentis uel solatium caritatis. Interdum tamen increpare pigrum, meretricem uel histrionem confundere salubrius est quam quod exigunt elargiri.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>21</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XI "Idem quoque adiecit: In his duobus uerbis pendet tota lex et prophetae. Si ergo omnia quae scripta sunt prophetis famulantur et legi, id est, si omnis doctrina illuc tendit ut homo subiectus sit legi Dei, quis ambigit ad regnum caritatis uniuersa referri? [...] Ipsa uero numquam inanis aut sola est, sed honestatem, modestiam cum sobrietate, pudicitiam et aliarum uenerabilium uirtutum cetum in ipsum hominem quem pietati consecrat quasi in templum Domini introducit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

Therefore they who lop off these branches of virtue from the soil of their heart and destroy the root of charity whence they spring, by what path do they advance to beatitude?<sup>22</sup>

Practicing charity appears as the greatest opportunity for the rich. At the same time, it comes out as the greatest benefit of possessing riches, since they have more means to manifest virtuously.

If however one possesses wealth, there is nothing more glorious than the type of liberality which expresses itself in giving, especially since even Socrates, it is said, being asked what the essence of beatitude was, replied "Giving to those deserving." I think that the explanation of Socrates' definition is found in the belief that the honor resulting from relieving the necessities of others belongs as well to those who have deserved such help.<sup>23</sup>

Charity is such an impactful virtue that its presence significantly betters the person manifesting it. This is valid even in the case of individuals who could otherwise be considered tyrants.

No tyrant in any state approached closer to the legitimate prince than did Caesar; for though he oppressed his country yet the Roman People approved all his decrees, doubtless through fear of sedition caused by the passions surviving the civil war. The opinion prevailed however that because he was endowed with the greatest of virtues, that is with clemency, the people approved his measures as being for the most part favorable to their interests. Consequently Cicero says in his praise, "None of your virtues are more admirable or acceptable than your compassion."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIV "Patribus siquidem pridem placuit beatitudinem consistere in uirtute, et nullam sine caritate posse esse uirtutem, cuius utique fructus iocundissimus est, Apostolo testante qui operibus carnis haec opera Spiritus quae ad uitam proficiunt euidenter opponit; quae sunt pax, patientia, longanimitas, bonitas, gaudium, mansuetudo, continentia, castitas. Qui ergo hos uirtutis ramos a terra cordis sui succidunt et radicem caritatis, de qua oriuntur, exterminant, quam uia ad beatitudinem pergunt?", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>23</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. IV "Si tamen archa suppeteret, nichil gloriosius est ea liberalitate quae consistit in donis; maxime cum et Socrates, ut dicitur, interrogatus quaenam esset substantia beatitudinis: Dignis donare, respondit. Ego quidem Socraticam diffinitionem sic interpretandam arbitror ut dignitas in accipientium necessitate credatur esse uel meritis.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>24</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. VII "Ergo bene agitur cum principibus popularibus qui ex necessitate coguntur ad custodiam famae uilissimis nebulonibus adulari; nam in re publica nemo tyrannorum Cesare magis accessit ad principem; licet enim rem publicam oppressisset, populus tamen Romanus omnia quae ipse decreuerat approbavit, forte ueritus seditionem

By guiding individual human conduct, charity should implicitly guide society as a whole. In John of Salisbury's view, the result of collectively following charity would potentially lead the commonwealth to a common mindedness "Charity regards nothing as its own in blessings and nothing in misfortune as alien to it; it pities the woes of others and expends upon its neighbors its own goods, for it unites minds so that they have the same likes and dislikes."<sup>25</sup> An ideal situation for humanity is depicted as one in which each individual within the commonwealth cultivates charity, with its two aspects, empathetic actions towards peers and disregard for earthly goods. This, paired with a prevalence given to reason would lead to a hive mind like state, generating a paradise-like society, in John's opinion "For if every man were to labor in the cultivation of himself, and were to regard things external to himself as no proper concern of his, straightway the condition of each and all would become the best possible, virtue would flourish and reason prevail, and mutual charity would reign everywhere, so that the flesh would be subdued to the spirit and the spirit would serve God with full devotion. And if these things come to pass, the members will not be bowed down beneath the weight of the head, nor will the head languish because of the weakness and cowardice of the members; for such are the results which follow from the infirmity of sin.

For the offences of his subjects detract from the merits of the good prince, and the sins of those in high place give to subjects an excuse and example of transgressing."<sup>26</sup> What results from here is that man can achieve a paradisiac society by exploiting the two definitions of God (God as love and God as reason) on which the entire *Policraticus* focuses.

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et ciuilibus belli reciduum passionem. Opinio tamen praeualuit ut, quia summa uirtute, id est clementia, praeditus fuerat, statuta eius quasi ex maxima parte benigniora populus approbaret. Vnde in laude eius Cicero ait: Nulla de uirtutibus tuis nec admirabilior nec gratior misericordia est.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>25</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIV "Caritas in bonis nihil suum, in malis nihil reputat alienum; malis compatitur alienis, bona sua diffundit in proximos; nam et animos unit ut idem uelint idemque nolint.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>26</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VI, ch. XXIX "Si enim in sui ipsius cultu quisque laboret et quae exteriora sunt reputet aliena, profecto optimus erit status singulorum et omnium, uigebitque uirtus et ratio praeualebit, regnante undique mutua caritate, ut sit caro subiecta spiritui et spiritus plena deuotione Domino famuletur. Quae si processerint, nec tumore capitis onerabuntur membra nec destitutione membrorum aut ignauiam languebit caput; ista siquidem a peccati infirmitate proueniunt. Nam ab inferiorum delicta bonum principem demerentur, et peccata superiorum subditis sunt occasio et auctoritas delinquendi.", transl. John Dickinson.

## Teaching as Intellectual Charity

A particular hypostasis of charity is found under the form of teaching philosophy. John of Salisbury presents it as more admirable even than practicing philosophy since it provides even less material gain, which makes it even more rare.

Rare is the person who essays in humility and love the path of wisdom that he may be taught himself or may teach others, for everything is referred to the shallow standards of filthy pleasure or futile utility; these are the aim of a soul astray. Meanwhile philosophy is the passport of but few because another way seems far shorter; for as the saying is, love of genius never made any man rich.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, teaching philosophy opens the path to wisdom and thus to salvation for others. It is a way of perpetuating virtue and a potential means to obtain the paradisiac state of society.

Teaching is not specific only to philosophers. At times, those who do not practice philosophy, but only pretend to, can also attempt teach it. However, this is a rare situation when they truly succeed. Both teaching and practicing philosophy is what makes a true philosopher complete: "Therefore to give expression to truth and justice is common both to those who are philosophers and to those who are not; to tell the truth and lies, to teach good and evil, is not a characteristic of philosophers. It is only at times that the mere imitator of the philosopher teaches righteousness, but he who practices the righteousness which he teaches really is a philosopher."<sup>28</sup>

The reason is that teaching philosophy involves both charity and wisdom reunited. It fulfills the need of the soul to get closer to God. In this way it fulfills a need which is more essentially specific to man. As a result, teaching philosophy is superior to other forms of charity, which are aimed at assisting with corporeal needs. Thus, it is a form of intellectual charity.

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<sup>27</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XV "Rarus est qui caritatis aut humilitatis pede sapientiae vias scrutetur ut doceatur aut doceat. Nam ad immundae uoluptatis aut uanae utilitatis ineptias omnia referuntur; in his enim finis est animae aberrantis. Philosophia interim uiaticum est, paucorum tamen, quia alia uia longe uidetur esse compendiosior; nam, ut dici solet, amor ingenii neminem umquam diuitem fecit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

<sup>28</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XI "Loqui ergo uera et iusta philosophantibus et non philosophantibus commune est. Vera et falsa loqui, bona docere et mala non philosophantium est. Sed et recta dumtaxat interdum docet uanus philosophi imitator; sed qui recta quae docet sequitur, uere philosophus est.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

## Conclusion

All in all, for John of Salisbury, charity is synonymous to wisdom. It is charity that is accountable for the social character of his political theory, as it appears in the *Policraticus*. All virtues originate in charity and its practice is the criterion for the final judgment, as well as for being a true philosopher. Charity should not encourage vice, but it should be practiced only after the vices of its benefiter have been corrected. The unanimous practice of charity within society could lead the commonwealth to a paradisiac state.

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