

Disease of the Body, Disease of the State: A Metaphor of Political Discourse in XVth Century England (Thomas Starkey)

Abstract: In this paper, I try to focus upon a form of political discourse which carried considerable weight during the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern period, from the XIIth to the XVIIth century. That is the idea of political disease within the broader context of the analogy between the human body and the state as a „body politic”. Emerging within the XIIth century with the work of an English cleric, John of Salisbury and his treatise *Policraticus*, this metaphor of political discourse undergoes the greatest development during the XVth century and the beginning of the XVIIth century England, within the works of several English political theorists, among which the most preeminent in this regard is Thomas Starkey (1495 - 1538). His treatise, *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, makes the object of this study, for the most detailed and ample coverage which Starkey grants to this metaphor of the political disease.

Keywords: body politic, political disease, ideal commonwealth, healer prince

1. The political and cultural context of Starkey’s work

The analogy between the malfunctions of the „body politic” imagined by medieval theorists could be found in the majority of the political treatises approaching this subject. The equivalence drawn between the human body and the „body politic” was usually followed by an analysis of the latter’s way of functioning - which were the factors preserving its „health”, but also the ones which endangered it, as well as the prophylactic and curing practices, based on both the theological, and the medical concepts of that age. John of Salisbury, Aegidius Romanus, Marsiglio of Padua, Christine de Pizan, to mention only some of the main medieval political theorists, all resorted to this analogy, within the broader context of the „body politic”.

There are two main elements shaping this metaphor, the attention of medieval theorists is drawn upon: the causes of the political diseases and the methods of removing them. The former pays a significant fee to the patristic and pagan antiquity’s traditions. According to the theory brought forward first by

Plato, the malfunctioning of the body is determined by the lack of harmony between its parts, by not conforming to the tasks entrusted to them and, implicitly, breaking this way the natural order. If this concept had its origins in ancient Greece, it is doubtless that the Christian world represented an extremely fertile ground for it, being quickly assumed under a very similar form. For christianism, the natural order was godly given and thus positively valued: respecting it, including on the scale of the microcosm which was the human body, was a stringent necessity in order to avoid self-destruction. Restoring the health of the political body implied restoring the harmony of the parts, task which usually fell upon one of the most important organs, either the head or the heart, equated with the sovereign. This parallel (the sovereign as head or heart) did not always take place, as there were exceptions among the respective corporeal template. The political treatises were most of the time the product of specific circumstances, and the variations emerging within the traditional formula were the outcome of the necessities imposed by such circumstances.

The problem of the causes for the political disease was influenced by another ancient theory, this time not a political one, such as Plato's, but medical, belonging to a well-known personality of the ancient scientific world, whose thinking had a great impact upon the medieval medicine – first and foremost upon the schools from Salerno and Montpellier –, Galen of Pergam. According to this theory, the health of the body was the result of the balance between the humors inside the organism - and the excess or the shortage of one of them resulted in the emergence of the disease. Actually, the humoral theory was expressed for the first time by Hippocrates, but Galen was the one developing it, creating a typology of human temperaments related to the humors of the body: for Galen, a harmonious combination of the humors was the ideal state of health, and the galenic influence contributed to the survival of this theory until the XVIIIth century (Dolan and Adams-Smith 1978, 48-49). At the same time, the medieval galenism cannot be separated from the impact of the Aristotelian work during the same period: the intellectual argument of the former was „unintelligible without knowledge of the Aristotelian natural philosophy” (Garcia-Ballester 2002, 139) and a formula bearing a resemblance to the one existing within the humoral theory can be found in *De Animalibus*. Aristotle defined health as the balance between the basic qualities (heat, cold, dry, dampness and dryness) and this could be achieved when „the body as a whole (and each one of its parts) achieved and maintained a suitable balance among its qualities” (Garcia-Ballester 2002, 129). This concept could be repeatedly found within the political theory of Middle Ages, within the same metaphor of the body politic. This is how Marsiglio of Padua expressed himself in his famous work, *Defensor Pacis*: „The prince must determine within his realm the people, the quantity and the quality of those parts or offices, according to the number, the strength and other similar considerations, so that the political society should not be destroyed by an excess lacking moderation of one part to the other” (Marsile de Padoue 1968, 138). Obviously, this idea mirrors the galenic humoral

theory, according to which the state of health or illness is determined by the shortage or the surplus of one of the humors within the body. Marsiglio has the same opinion as his predecessors in regard to the ensuring of a good functioning of the political organism: the one this prophylactic and healing task befalls onto is the prince.

The most poignant manifestation of the medical metaphor appear not in one of the political treatises from the XII - XV centuries, but immediately afterwards, in a treatise written by the English humanist Thomas Starkey (1495 – 1538), named *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*¹. The period when it was written remains until today quite uncertain, several dates being suggested in this regard, such as between 1529 - 1532 (Mayer 1989, 77), 1533 - 1536 (Burton, comments for Starkey, 1948, 1) or 1535 - 1536 (Hale 1971, 61). A final conclusion is hard to draw, but I am prone to accept a later dating, at least in regard to finalizing the respective treatise: what determined Starkey to write this work was the hope of exploiting Reginald Pole's position for some personal political gain. Once finished, there was no reason for Starkey to postpone offering this treatise to the king until 1536, when Pole's position was already starting to crumble, due to his disapproval regarding the king's divorce and his religious policy.

England was the first country which accepted the political implications of a Christianity lacking unity and, in order to cope with them, the tudorians theorists reactivated the old concept of the body politic under a new form. This concept was used to support the sovereignty of the king with his people and his trait of *rex in parlamento*, asserting at the same time the authority of the head as integral part of a corporate entity, bound by the same laws which were specific to natural organisms (Gurr 1994, 2-3). A form of this expression can be found in

¹ There are three modern editions of this treatise, all based on the same original manuscript, the only one which survived and which can be found in London, in the Public Record Office, State Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII: because of this, there are no differences in regard to the content of the text between the three editions, but there are differences in regards to its form, which have great importance from a paleographic perspective and less for a study dedicated to the political ideas expressed in *A Dialogue*. The first of these belongs to J.M.Cowper, published in 1871 in a volume edited by Sydney J. Herrtage: Cowper keeps the original spelling used by Starkey, the alterations which he brings being limited to splitting the text into paragraphs and chapter and using additional punctuation marks. The second edition, published in 1948 by Kathleen Burton, altered the form of the original text the most: the split into paragraph, used by Cowper, is kept, but, besides this, the spelling was also modified, by modernizing the spelling specific to the XVIth century, probably with the purpose to make the text easier for the modern reader. Finally, the last edition, published by Thomas Mayer in 1989, is the one most faithful to the original text, the editor keeping the manuscript format unaltered, in regard to spelling, punctuation and fragmentation of the text. For this reason, this edition was used the most in this study, albeit we think that, despite the severe criticism expressed by Thomas Mayer against his predecessors in regard to the alterations they made, the use of any edition does not hinder an analysis of the theories expressed by Starkey or the metaphors he uses. The significance of the differences between the three editions depends also on the kind of study one carries out about Starkey's treatise, being the most important obviously for a study of paleographic or literary nature and less for analysis focused upon the ideological metaphors existing within the text and the political theories proposed by the author.

the infamous *Act of Appeals* from 1533, which preceded the *Act of Supremacy* and had forbidden the appeals to the Holy See for problems of religious or secular nature, transferring to the king the ultimate authority in this regard: „...this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degree of people divided in terms and by names of spirituality and temporality, be bounden and owen to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience” (Gurr 1994, 3; Elton 1974, II, 231). This formula was persistently reiterated by the political authors of that age, such as Thomas Starkey, Richard Morison or Stephen Gardiner, in their efforts to grant legitimacy to the new political situation from the English kingdom. An interesting particularity of this model was the merging of the two bodies, the Church and the state, within a single body, whose physical representation was the king and his Parliament. The human body was a microcosm, a reflection on a smaller scale of the divine macrocosm, and his functioning an ideal desiderate. Using this metaphor of the body politic in order to justify the new authority of Henry VIII implied the idea of divine approval, just as much as the natural body subjected itself to the Aristotelian natural law and his form and way of functioning were the expression of the divine will.

A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset was written during these radical transformations, both religious and political, which took place in England at that time. It is well known the desire of Henry VIII to divorce Catherine of Aragon, which could not give him a male heir, in order to remarry Anne Boleyn, in the hope that the new marriage would lead to the fulfillment of this wish. The refusal of Clement VII to grant the divorce would lead to the break up with Rome and the self-proclamation of the king as „supreme head of the Church” in England, in 1534, action which was followed by a series of reforming measures (such the dissolution of the monasteries), even though Henry VIII would never embrace the Lutheran reformation. These events had a great impact over the life and career of Reginald Pole - Starkey’s protector, which the latter would distance himself from because of the position assumed by the former regarding the actions of the Henry VIII - and of Starkey himself. Pole was a personality of the English aristocracy, descending through his mother from kind Edward IV, and Henry VIII tried to gain his support, by offering him the archbishopric of York or the bishopric of Winchester, but without success. Obviously, for Pole, an attitude of non-involvement in this problem was impossible. Thomas Cromwell asked in this regard for the services of Thomas Starkey, because the latter belonged to Pole’s circle during his stay at Padua, whose influence is obvious in *A Dialogue*. Starkey, which at that time resided in England, as king’s chaplain, exchanged several letters with Pole on this subject. In 1535, though, Pole’s answer arrived in the shape of the treatise *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione*, which completely rejected the royal

policy, something which meant at the same time the end of Starkey's political aspirations, who will also pass away soon after these events.

A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset was written in the shape of a Socratic dialogue between the two characters pointed out from the title: Pole, belonging to a distinguished aristocratic family, and Lupset, distinguished humanist which was close to the former and contributed to the publishing of Thomas More's *Utopia* while he was in Paris. James McConica considers even that *A Dialogue* carries on the concerns from *Utopia*, the subject of the well made Christian society and of the duty of the humanist towards the commonwealth being discussed in a dialogue which remains „a lasting monument to the royal school maintained through Pole in Padua” (McConica 1968, 198). The remark is correct, because the humanism present in Starkey's work was likely influenced by the time he spent in Padua after 1523. Here, the author made contact with characters like Pietro Bembo or Donato Gianotti, which Thomas Mayer considers that they contributed both to the form and to the content of the *Dialogue* written by Starkey (Mayer 1989, 43-44). In this environment, the political opinions of Thomas Starkey took the shape of a fusion between Aristotelian philosophy and the Venetian political tenets, which could be found later in his treatises. With some exceptions, the majority of the friends of Reginald Pole seem to have had political convictions leaning toward republicanism, and some of the member of the groups Pole and Starkey belonged to were supporting a theory of government by the „ottimati”, of an oligarchy cooperating with the prince (Mayer 1989, 63). The council described in *A Dialogue* as being formed by ten men by whom „all things pertaining to the princely state should be governed and ruled” (Starkey 1948, 166) is without any doubt the consequence of the influence exerted by the venetian political organization upon Starkey's thinking, during his stay in Padua. For the humanists of that time, Venice was founded on the principles of justice and freedom, the people enjoyed a lot of prosperity and were convinced of the virtues of this system, lacking the danger of a rebellion, and the Doge „ruled without ambition and being subjected to the law” (Mayer 1989, 57). Starkey was inspired quite a lot by the venetian ethos, so eloquently depicted by Gasparo Contarini and his treatise *De Magistratibus* (Mayer 1989, 63), which, in many regards, could be seen as an Italian equivalent of the *A Dialogue*.

The literary model assumed by Thomas Starkey in order to write his treatise was influenced as well by his stay in Padua, most of the humanists from that time Pole and Starkey made contact with having written an important number of dialogues. One of these, Giannotti's *De Veneziani*, display strong similarities to the ideas depicted by Starkey in *A Dialogue* (Mayer 1989, 67-71): the use of two interlocutors and the body metaphor, the criticism of the absolute power of the prince as one of the most important factors which could have led to the destruction of the body, the existence of one *maestro de cavalieri* similar to the constable imagined by Thomas Starkey, the mixed government, with an obvious preference showed to the aristocratic elements, the ways of protecting

the body against any possible corruption. Thomas Mayer considers that these resemblances could have been just a coincidence, but he notices as well that the humanist environment from Padua represented a determining factor for choosing the dialogue in order to discuss the most serious political problems (Mayer 1989, 71).

The Aristotelian and galenic elements which Starkey came into contact with at Padua could have influenced him quite a lot in regard to the medical concepts expressed later in *A Dialogue*. For Galen, medicine was a combination of reason and experience, which had to work together for the same purpose, the restoration of health, and in order to achieve this objective the knowledge of the workings of the human body was needed. To this it was added knowledge of the patient's specifics, both physical, and social, and establishing a positive relationship between the physician and his patient, whose cooperation was vital. As such, medicine became the art of restoring the natural functions, and this meant first and foremost *claritatis causa particulas aliquas* (Mayer 1989, 74). A clear understanding of the problem allowed to figure out the causes, but making the connection between those and the effects required a profound knowledge of the actions and the constitution of the body. According to Thomas Mayer, Galen came very close to the opinion of the humanists from XVth and XVIth century Padua, according to which observation divided a phenomenon in his composing parts, and reason led to its reassembling. This operation could easily lead to medical intervention or knowledge of the cosmos, and their intersection inside the human being and the commonwealth (Mayer 1989, 74). We have to specify though that the meaning of this term during the XVIth century was different from the modern one, which refers mainly to a community of nation: for Starkey, but not just him, this notion had the meaning of common good and designated a political entity.

2. The political disease and its causes

In *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, Thomas Starkey individualizes for the first time the sources of the maladies and malfunctions which afflict the body politic. If, until then, these sources were either the lack of unity among the body parts, the uneven distribution of „goods and honors” or the weakness of the main part, the prince, this time Starkey connects the causes of the political afflictions to the intellectual and moral shortcomings of the community, at each individual's level: „But now were as many blyndyd wyth the love of themselfe regard theyr particular wele overmuch, hyt ys necessary by polytyke personys havynge regard of the commyn wele to correct & amend such blyndnes & oversight growne in to many mennys myndys by the inordynat love of themselfe, lyke as physycyonys now be necessary in cytes & townys seeing that men commynly give themselfe to such inordynat dyat, wheras yf men would governe themselfe soburly by temperat dyat, then physycyonys were not to be requyryd, «of necessity in no common

welth nor pollycy» and so I say yf every man would governe on wel «nothyng blyndyd wyth the love of hymselfe», you schold then see a «true» commyn wele & and thys hyt ys true, «that even» lyke as overmuch regard of partycular wele destroyth the common” (Starkey 1989, 23). In order to prevent the dangers generated by the weakness of the human nature, an idea which Starkey repeatedly insists upon in his work – going as far as stating that human makes the establishment of a perfect commonwealth impossible –, it is necessary for certain wise persons to exist, which should overtake some of the thaumaturgical attributes reserved until then only for the prince.

Starkey’s idea about the origin and the forming of the human body is obviously inspired by Aristotle, granting a fundamental place to nature. Both for Aristotle and for Starkey, the state represented a natural entity, because „it arose ultimately from a biological impulse to sexual union between a man and a woman” (Mayer 1989, 151). According to David George Hale, *A Dialogue* is the one putting the most emphasis on political disease and political therapeutic among all the treatises he encountered making use of the organic analogy (Hale 1971, 63), as Starkey diagnoses the afflictions of his imaginary commonwealth by comparing them with specific diseases of the human body. He identifies three elements which he considers necessary for the ideal commonwealth suggested in his treatise: health, strength and beauty, whose roles within the body politic was described by using the analogy with the human body. Among them, the former is the most important one for the political organism, as its absence would make the other two completely useless. Accordingly, Starkey would focus the most part of his work on analyzing this truly indispensable factor, paying the utmost attention to the afflictions attacking the body politic, in regard to both their causes and the necessary remedies to restore health, which are intrinsically linked. But, even though health is regarded as the main element which makes sure the commonwealth is functioning properly, Starkey insists that all the three factors are indispensable, his opinion including a reiteration of the unity principle so dear to all medieval authors. Not just all the body parts have to be in a close and harmonious joining - idea which Starkey emphasizes repeatedly -, but also the three elements which must be combined in order for the perfect commonwealth to emerge: „Wherfor to the perfayt state of the body & veray wele therof they must run all iij joyntely togydur both helth strength & beuty, to the wych al other vertues of the body as to the pryncypallys & chefe lyghtly ensue” (Starkey 1989, 24).

Thomas Starkey sees within this body politic the existence of two distinct but, at the same time, closely joined entities, following the Christian model of the duality between body and soul: the body politic defined as „the multitude of people, the number of citizens in each community, city or country” and the soul, which is „the civil order and political law administered by officers and rulers”. This formula was considered by Fritz Caspari as being crucially important for his concept of constitutional government: law within the state equates with the divine reason from the human soul, is based upon natural law

and it is implemented within each state through a natural body of laws which meets its particular needs and circumstances (Caspari 1968, 226). The same idea was previously expressed by John Fortescue, in his famous work *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*: the king cannot change the law without the consent of his subjects, which generates the theory of the double majesty, *dominium politicum et regale*. What distinguishes it from the concept of mixed constitution is the fact that, for the former, as it was imagined by the ancient authors and first and foremost by Polybius, the authority was divided among the constitutive elements of the state. *Dominium politicum et regale* does not mean dividing the authority, but limiting it: it still belongs entirely to the king, but its enforcements in some cases depends on the consent of the subjects. We cannot know whether Fortescue influenced Starkey directly, but the latter draws a series of concepts which can be found as well at his predecessor, under a quite similar shape: the primacy of the law within the political template, rejecting the unlimited authority of the king, particularizing the concept of body politic by applying this metaphor to English realities. This „civil and political order” is the element which makes the very existence of the body politic possible. For John Fortescue, the consent of the law was necessary in order for the body politic to take life and also the law was the one which was maintaining the body, fulfilling a task similar to that of the nerves. Starkey grants this element the same importance by associating it with the soul, which, according to medieval tradition, was always ranked on a superior level to the body, having the task to rule it: „To note also & aftur the maner begun schortly to touch the mysordurys & yl governance, wych we schal «fynd» in ordur & rule of the state of our cuntrey, the wych ordur & rule we before have declaryd to resembyl the soule in mannys body, for even lyke as the soule gyvyth lyfe governyth & rulyth the body of man, so doth cyvyle ordur & polytyke rule «as we sayd before» governe and stabyl the polytyk body in every cuntrey city & towne” (Starkey 1989, 67).

The main concern of Thomas Starkey is the way to build the perfect commonwealth, a political model similar to the one constructed by Thomas More in *Utopia*, but which, unlike the latter, was not located in a fictional world – implying as such the impossibility of its practical creation –, but it is focused upon the specifics of the English kingdom, although many of Starkey’s recommendations are rather broad². Starkey links the well-functioning of the commonwealth to demography, taking a more pragmatic approach than his predecessors, with the exception of John Fortescue, which used this organic analogy. This „economical” perspective of his vision fundamentally distinguishes him from someone like John of Salisbury, for instance, and makes that the diseases afflicting this body politic to be, at least partially, corporal illnesses, not just some diseases of the soul, attacking the body due to its connection to the

² Fritz Caspari appreciates that Starkey must have known *Utopia*, whose author, Thomas More, was a friend of Reginald Pole, Starkey’s own friend and protector, which would explain the similarities between the political model described in both works (Caspari 1968, 214-216).

latter. It is extremely interesting that this demographical factor assumes the main role inside the template imagined by Starkey, prevailing over all the others, including the afflictions of the soul, which, until then, had priority within the medieval pyramid of the importance/gravity of the diseases : „For yf the cuntrey be never so rych «fertyl» & plentyful of al thyngys necessary & plesaunt to mannys life, yet yf therbe of pepul other to few, or to many or yf they be as hyt were etyn «away» dayly devouryd & consumyd by commyn syknes & dysease, ther can be no ymage nor schadow of any commyn wele. [...] for where as ther be other to many pepul in the cuntrey, in so much that the cuntrey by no dyligence nor labour of man «may» be suffycient to nurysch them & mynyster them fode ther without dowte can be no commyn wele, but ever myserabul penury & wrechyd poverty, lyke as yf ther be of pepul over few in so much that «the» cuntrey may not be wel tylyd & occupyd, nor craftys wel & dyligently exercysyd, ther schal also sprynge therof grete penury & scaseness of al thyngys necessary for mannys lyfe, & so then cyvyle lyfe & true commyn wele can in no case be «ther» maynteynyd” (Starkey 1989, 31).

The second element which the body politic described by Thomas Starkey depends upon is „strength”, depicted as the capacity of each body part to fulfill its tasks. The relation of interdependency manifesting itself for the body parts, but between the body as a whole and its parts as well, emerges in the same manner for these factors defining the proper functioning of the commonwealth. The example of the heart is used by Thomas Starkey in order to justify his option: that organ plays a main role within the body politic, according to the template drawn by Aegidius Romanus almost three century before, as distributor of goods and honors: „thys strength stondyth in thys «poynt» chefely, «strenght of the pepul», so to kepe and maynteyne every parte of thys body that they promptly & and redily may dow that thyng wych is requyryd to the helthe of the hole, lyke as we say then every mannys body to be strong, when every parte can execute quykly & wel hys offyce determyd by the ordur of nature, as the hart then ys strong when he as fountayn of al natural powarys, mynystryth them wyth dew ordur to all other, & they then be strong when they be apte to receyve ther powar of they hart & can use hyt accordyng to the ordur of nature, as the ye to se the yere to here the fote to go & hand to hold & rech & so lyke wyse of the rest, aftur such manner the strength of thys polytyke body stondyth in every parte beyng abul to dow hys offyce and duty” (Starkey 1989, 32). An inadequate distribution destroys the body harmony, because it can give birth to those dissensions so dangerous that Starkey will associate them with „pestilence”. The „strength” imagined by Starkey reveals as such two aspects: capacity, but also will. In other words, an element of the body, even though it is capable to properly fulfill its task, it would still be considered deficient in terms of „strength” if it is not willing to do so. „Strength” means to respect the natural order, both in cosmological terms, but also as standard of moral excellence. John Fortescue was cautioning several decades prior, in *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, against the mistaken idea that an arbitrary government, based exclusively on

dominium regale, could lead to the increase of royal power. On the contrary, the consequence was its self-limitation, because the royal power, *potestas regis*, had to be used for the good of the realm, defending it from its foreign enemies and protecting the subjects and their assets: as such, a king who cannot fulfill this task „is adjudged impotent”, but a king tempted by the allure of tyranny becomes „impotence itself” (Fortescue 1949, 89-91).

The last element identified by Thomas Starkey as necessary for the proper functioning of the body politic and the establishment of the model proposed in *A Dialogue* is its „beauty”. It is to be remarked though that it is not about the ancient principle of aesthetical beauty, so common in Greek and Roman culture, but about the medieval-Christian one of the „normality” of the body, which has to mirror the natural order. For Starkey, deformity is a danger which dangles above the political organism, and its counterweight is „the harmony of the proportions”: the former destroys the prosperity of the whole, by crippling the knots between its parts, the second keeps the same prosperity alive, ensuring that the body politic works well: „Ferthermore yet though thys polytyke body be helthy & strong, yet yf hyt be not beutyful but foule deformyd hyt lakyth a parte of hys wele & prosperouse state, thys beuty also stondyth in the dew proportyon of the «same» partys togyddur, «so» that one parte «ever» be agreabul to a nother, «in forme & fastyon quantyte & nombur» as craftys men and plow men in dew nombur «& proportyon wyth other partys accordyng to the place cyty or «towne», for yf ther be other to many or to few of one or of the other, ther ys in the commynalty a grete deformyte, & so lyke wyse of the other partys, wherfor the dew proportyon of one parte to a nother must be observyd & therin stondyth the «corporal» beuy chefely of thys polytyke body” (Starkey 1989, 33). What mainly distinguishes this factor from the other two is the fact that „beauty” does not represent any longer a characteristic of the body parts as well, but only of the whole.

The role of preserving or restoring health within the body politic fell upon the rulers, following the template assumed by every medieval author, since John of Salisbury to John Fortescue. But the finality is not an eschatological one anymore, becoming much more temporal. The salvation of the soul is no longer mentioned as the only objective of princely actions, material wealth being now granted a much more important position: „As «by exampul» they hedys & rularys both spyrytual & temporal to dow theyr duty, provydyng alway that fyrst & above al the pepul may be instruct wyth the doctryne of chryst, fede & nuryshyd wyth the spyrytual fode of hys celestyal word, ever dyrectyd therto by al gud pollycy so that consequently they may also quietly labur, «both» wythout utward impedymnt & hurt of ennemys & also wythout inward injury among themselfe, one oppresyng a nother wyth wrongys, «& injury» but dylygently to labut procuryng fode & thyngys necessary for the hole politike body” (Starkey 1989, 37). Protecting the faith results directly now in the material prosperity of the kingdom, and this new concept will reflect as well upon the metaphorical

afflictions of the body politic, which undergo a change from spiritual afflictions into material ones.

For Thomas Starkey, health does not depend only on a specific part – although it can influence, well or not, the general state of the body politic –, but on the harmony and order which have to exist within it, an extremely old idea, reiterated since Plato by all theorists of the body politic: „For lyke as the helth of mannys body stondyth not in the helth of one partycular parte therof, but in the gud & natural affecte & dysposytyon of every parte couplyd to other, so thys true commyn «wele» in thys polityke body, stondyth not in the wele & prosperouse state of any partycular parte separat from other, but in every parte couplyd togyddur unyte & knyte as membrys of one body by love as by the commyn bande of al polytyke ordur & gud cyvylyte” (Starkey 1989, 39). Starkey compares the types of constitution existing in the medieval political theory with human „complexions”: those are not equated neither with the disease, neither with health, but which can have a positive or negative effect and, as such, the types of government listed by Thomas Starkey allow each the possibility to establish a commonwealth as close as possible to the ideal one: „And lyke as the helth of the body determyth no partycular complexyon, but in every one of the iij by physycyonys determyd as in sanguyn melancolyk phlegmatyk & coleryke, may be found perfayt, so thys commyn wele determyth to hyt no partycular state, wych by polytyke men have byn devysyd & reducyd to iij, nother «the rule» of a prynce nother of a «certayn» numbur of wyse men nother yet «of» the hole multytyde & body of the pepul, but in every one of thes, hyt may be found perfayt and stabul” (Starkey 1989, 39)³.

Unlike his predecessors, for whom the principle of the interdependency of the body parts and of the necessity that they work together for the good of the whole is expressed at abstract level only, Starkey offers a specific example of the way in which this principle can be applied to an existing political structure: „in a cuntrey cyte or towne when every man regardyth only hys owne profyte «welth» & plesure wythout respecte of the profyt of the hole, they schortly fal in dekey ruyne & destructyon” (Starkey 1989, 44-45). This example anticipates the manner in which the author explores in his treatise the analogy of the metaphorical diseases which afflict the body politic and of the remedies needed

³ We notice here a small difference between the three modern editions of the *A Dialogue* in regard to the number of the „particular states” devised by the „polytyke men”: Sydney Herrtage’s first edition from 1878 indicates four constitutions by using the symbol „iiij” and Kathleen Burton’s second edition (using a modernized spelling) also specifies them to be four; but, in the last one, edited by Thomas Mayer, the symbol used is „iij”. As I did not have access to the original manuscript from London, it is impossible for us to tell which one is correct with 100% certainty, and even consulting the original would not exclude a spelling mistake of the original author. Having in mind that, after naming the first three constitutions, rule by the „prince”, by „certain wise men” and by „the whole multitude of people, Starkey goes to name something which seems to be a fourth one, „the state of a prince which is chosen by free election as most worthy to rule”, analogous to the „sanguine complexion” and „judged to be best for maintenance of health”, we are inclined to believe that the number „four” is correct.

to be applied, by referring directly to the economical and social realities of the state, more precisely of the English kingdom, whose political and social reformation Starkey seems to wish for.

The reason for this „medical” analysis of the body politic is brought up by Thomas Starkey himself, in a very direct manner. Proposing a political model which can be applied in reality, the author considers that this would be completely useless without an exact knowledge of the afflictions endangering his functioning. The medical metaphor appears as such in order to justify the long exposition of the social and political „diseases” of Tudor England. The human body needing a physician, the same necessity can be extended to the body politic as well, and this physician was, within the prior forms of the body metaphor, the prince – head or heart of the political organism. Here, though, the role of physician seems to be extended further than the royal person: „For lyke, as to physycyonys lytyl hyt awaylyth to know the body, complexyon therof & most perfayt state, except they also can dyscerne & juge al kynd of syknes & dysseasys wych commynly destroy the same, so to us now thys unyversal & phylosophycal consyderatyon of a veray & true commyn wele, lytyl schal profyte & lytyl schal avayle, except we also truly serch out al commyn fautys & general mysordurys, wych as «sykenes &» dyseas be manyfest impedymenty & utturyly repugne to the mayntenance of the same” (Starkey 1989, 47). This occurrence could be accidental, but we need to keep in mind that, for Starkey, the restoration of political health is not entrusted exclusively to the prince, but also to his „officers”, and the purpose of this treatise was also to ensure the political ascension of his author.

A Dialogue identified no less than 8 political and social diseases, and Thomas Starkey resort to a medical terminology in order to designate them. These diseases had internal causes, and the concern of medieval therapeutics mainly with the elimination of the endogenic factors of the malady (regarded by far as the most dangerous ones) gives weight to Starkey’s insistence that the economical, political and social system of England had to be restructured in order to secure the health of the country. Second, each corporal disease implied a certain violation of the ideals of harmony, order and proportion. In the same manner, social disease meant too many or too few from the elements essential for the bodily health (Gil Harris 1998, 30-35). For each of these afflictions, Thomas Starkey was proposing – through the words of Reginald Pole – a series of remedies, most of the times projects which could have been put into practice by the prince.

Four of the diseases identified by Starkey are linked to „health”, one to strength, another to beauty and the last two are depicted as being specific to certain parts of the body, which were the head and the hands/feet. The first metaphorical disease identified by Starkey in his treatise is „slenderness, debility and weakness”, associated with a low density of population. Demographical issues were common during Middle Ages after all, and England was no exception, more so as their population was greatly inferior to that of France, its

traditional rival: „Fyrst thys is certayn that in thys «polytyke» ther ys a certayn sklendurnes, debylyte & wekenes «therof» (...) the wych I cal «& note to be grondyd in» the lake of pepul, skarsenes of men for lyke as mannys body then doth not florysch «then doth not increse» when hyt ys sklendur febul & weke, but by lake of flesch fallyth in to sikenes & debylyte so every cuntrey cyte or towne then doth not flourysch «then doth not prosper, when ther ys lake of pepul & skarsenes of men, by reson wherof hyt fallyth in to ruyn & dekey, slyppyng from al gud cyvlyte, the experyence therof we see in late days now «in our cuntrey» the wych chefely I attrIBUTE to the lake of inhabytans” (Starkey 1989, 48). In relation to the medical metaphor, this „slenderness” is regarded by Starkey as being analogous, within the human body, to the tuberculosis or „consumptyon”: the author uses here different terms in order to designate the political malady and the bodily disease, establishing an equivalence between them only through their described effects, appreciated by Starkey as being similar. It is to be remarked though that this effects are not specific to a certain disease, as „lack of strength and power to maintain the health of the body” can be associated to any serious affliction. „Consumption” was an extremely frequent disease and responsible for the greatest number of death after the plague pandemics, so it can be asked why this association between the „slenderness” identified by Starkey – formula used to name England’s demographical problems – and tuberculosis. In this regard, we need to consider the seriousness of the disease – and the smaller population of England at that time, compared to France, was a major concern for Starkey, being mentioned first among the political afflictions. The most obvious reason though, in my opinion, consists of the specific symptoms of the tuberculosis, more precisely the loss of weight of those afflicted by this illness, symptom which also gave birth to the more colloquial terms, used by Starkey, of „consumptyon”.

The second disease described by Thomas Starkey is „dropsy” (characterized by excess liquid inside the body, either under the skin, or inside different organs), where the number of inactive persons is exceedingly high, equated with some destructive humors which make the proper functioning of the body more difficult: „Wel then» «let us consydur & behold how that» beside thys lake of pepul there ys «also» in thys polytyke body a nother dysease & syknes more grevus then thys, & that ys thys «schortly to say» a grete parte of thes pepul wych we have «here in our cuntrey», ys other ydul or yl occupyd & a small numbur of them exercysyth them «selfe» in dowyng theyr offyce & duty perteynyng to the meyntenance of the commyn wele, by the reson wherof thys body is replenyschyd & over fullfyllid wyth many yl humorys” (Starkey 1989, 52). To the argument brought up by Thomas Lupset in this imaginary dialogue, according to which it is not necessary that all the inhabitants of a state carry out a certain activity, Starkey answers (through the words of Reginald Pole) that the man is created for this exact purpose, opinion which he justifies by appealing to Antiquity, a permanent source of authority for medieval authors. What Starkey points out by this was a serious problem of England during that period, that of

„vagrancy”, how it was called during the respective age: in modern terms, we are talking about lack of employment for a large part of the population. The main fields where the English workforce was employed during the reign of Henry VIII were agriculture and crafts: curing this „economical affliction” was done by restoring the lands turned into pastures for agriculture and by stimulating the cloth industry (Elton 1973, 99-107). It is not at all a coincidence that Starkey pays attention to this issue, as he was close to Thomas Cromwell, who intended to use his connections to Pole and his political abilities to support the royal policy: Cromwell will be the one to put into practice, either during the period when *A Dialogue* was written, or immediately afterwards, a series of measures meant to fix this aspects, through some acts of the Parliament.

Next in the list of afflictions named by Thomas Starkey as having taken residence within the body politic of England was paralysis, characterized by an excess of activity bringing no practical gain. Starkey takes care to emphasize the difference between this one and the previous one, explaining that it was not about those people which he named „idle”, but about those whose trade was not useful for the commonwealth he envisioned. The existence of the political model depicted in *A Dialogue* depends on respecting an almost stoical template of austerity and virtue: „Ther ys a nother dysease «mastur lup» also wych ys not much les grevus then thys, wych restyth in them whom I callyd yl occupyd, I mean not thos wych be occupyd in vyce for of that sorte chefely be they wych I notyd to be idul before, but all such I cal yl occupyd, wych besy themselfe in makyng & procuryng thyngys for the vayne pastyme & plesure of other” (Starkey 1989, 54).

The fourth disease on Starkey’s list is „pestilence”, associated with the internal squabbles which can make a state rot away. It’s worth noticing that the lack of harmony between the body parts is equated with the most dangerous pandemic of the Middle Ages, whose threatening shadow always hung over the medieval mindset. The anxieties triggered by even the most remote possibility of a „pestilence” pandemic, due to its fast spreading and high mortality, are well known. By using this analogy, Starkey basically expresses his full agreement with the dominant idea during the Middle Ages, according to which the discord of the body parts was its most dangerous flaw, capable to trigger the destruction of the whole: „Yet ther ys a nother dysease remenyng behynd wych gretely trowblyth the state of the hole body the wych though I somewhat stond in dowte whether I may wel cal hyt a dysease of the body or no, yet because as physycyonys say the body & mynd are so knyrt togyddur by nature that al sykenes & dysease be commyn to them both I wyl not now stond to reson much herin, but boldly cal hyt a bodyly dysease, & brevely to say thys hyt ys they partys of thys body agre not togyddur, «the hed agreth not to the fete not fete to the handys» no one parte agreth to other the temperalty grugyth agayn the spyrytualty, the commyns agayne the nobullys «subyectys agayn they rularys», one hath envy at a nother, one bearyth malice agayn a nother, one complaynyth of a nother” (Starkey 1989, 55). Describing in this manner the symptoms of this

affliction of the body politic, when Lupset asks which corporal disease this political affliction can be associated with, Starkey (through the words of Pole) uses the term of „pestilence”. The meaning of this word deserves a special analysis, as there is no consensus during the Middle Ages for its usage. „Pestilence” was a generic term which covered a great number of epidemics, but, at the same time, if a detailed description of the symptoms is missing, it is almost impossible to discover the true nature of a disease, as people of that age were not able to clearly distinguish between them, particularly when they displayed similar symptoms. In the English writings of that time, the epidemic diseases were mentioned as „epidemiae pestem”, „a gret pestelens”, „a grete dysease”, „pestilence” or „morbi pestiferi”, among which „pestilence” was the most common and was used for plague with a greater frequency than for any other epidemic (Gottfried 1978, 58). As such, in 1449, in a document of the English parliament, it was mentioned an epidemic afflicting London and its neighbourhoods with the next formula: „Aeres corruptas et infectas evitantes et fugientes. Quapropter dictus Dominus Rex, de Aeris corruptione ac pestilentia, ad tunc in diversis locis infra Civitatem suam London, ac etiam in Villa” (Gottfried 1978, 40). The description of the pandemic in this particular case is quite brief, but the idea of corrupted air as source of the disease was one usually associated with the plague. As well, two medical treatises belonging to Jean la Barba and Jean de Bourgogne, French authors from the XIVth century, whose works enjoyed a great popularity in XVth century England, approach this subject of the disease called „pestilentia”, which Robert Gottfried firmly identifies as the plague (Gottfried 1978, 63). Regarding La Barba, his observations about the symptoms of this „pestilentia” leave little doubt that it is the plague. The same conclusion can be drawn as well in regard to the treatise of Thomas Forestier, *Tractus contra Pestilentium, Thenasmonium et Dissinterium*, published around 1490, where „pestilentia” is, without any doubt, the plague (Gottfried 1978, 68). The particularity of Starkey’s own medical options when choosing the diseases he uses for his analogies supports the same equivalence between pestilence and plague: Starkey is, within the limits of his time, extremely specific when he selects and describes a disease, which are identified with great precision. At the same time though, neither the medical knowledge of the XVIth century does not help the author (nor the historian), because the medical world from that period simply did not know to clearly distinguish between plague and other pandemics.

Those are the most common diseases endangering the „health” of the body politic. The next ones manifest themselves upon the other two elements necessary for the existence of the commonwealth described by Thomas Starkey. As we already mentioned, for Starkey „beauty” means harmonious proportions, which occur by a judicious distribution of each body member within each activity niche: „Ther ys a grete mysordur as touchyng the beuty «of thys same body», wych fyrst you schal see, the partys of thys body be nor proporcyonabul one to a nother, one parte ys to grete, a nother to lytyl, one parte hath in hyt over many pepul, a nother over few” (Starkey 1989, 56). In this case, the disease is

„dysproportion”, characterized through an unequal distribution of people within the body politic. In order to justify his opinion, Starkey resorts to naming all the professions where there was such a disparity. The outcome is the deformation of this body politic, „a great and monstrous deformity” so obvious that no objection arises.

Talking about the sixth disease, which is the „weakness” or „feebleness”, where the military strength does not meet the needs of the state, Starkey expresses feelings of regret for England’s successes from the past centuries, by alluding to the conquests managed in France and Scotland: „Ther ys also in the strenght of thys «body» perceyvvyd no smal faute hyt ys weke & febul no thyng so strong as hyt hath byn in tyme past, we are now at thys tyme nother so abul to defend our selfe from injurys of ennemys, nother of other by featys of armys to recover our ryght agayn as we have byn here before” (Starkey 1989, 57). Starkey does not specify directly which military events he is referring to, but we can reasonably suspect that it is about England’s involvement in the wars between France and the many coalitions organized against it in the first half of the XVIth century. It is perfectly true that England found itself under a real threat of invasion during the reign of Elisabeth I and the disparity between the military strength of England and Spain was not one to calm the English anxieties, but, at the time when Starkey was making these comments, his concerns were not completely justified. The previous English intervention in France was not at all a military disaster, resulting in a victory earned together with the imperial forces at Guinegatte, in 1513, and the taking of Tournai. At the same time, a Scottish invasion in support of France, taking place simultaneously with the mentioned events, was repelled by an English Army during the battle at Flodden Fields – which was a major military success for the latter. Despite this, Tournai was given back to France in 1519, and, by comparison with the conquest of Edward III or Henry V, the results achieved by Starkey’s contemporaries seemed pretty small. This discrepancy and the fact that England’s status as a first rank power was in doubt, can be suspected to be the reason which makes Starkey to have a rather negative opinion about English military strength. Also, Starkey’s propensity to see „diseases” in every aspect of the kingdom’s life was, without any doubt, augmented by the fact that he himself wanted to be a political reformer - the sick commonwealth had to receive a rescuing hand.

The second disease was madness, characterized by weak rulers: the term Starkey uses is actually „frenzy”. The symptoms which Starkey attributes to it were lack of reason and good judgment. Just like „pestilence” before, the meaning of the term „frenzy” is quite vague, as the Middle Ages had serious difficulties in identifying mental afflictions – which were often blamed on supernatural causes, first and foremost the demonic possession. It is remarkable for Starkey’s modern vision the way in which he avoids the old paradigm about the causes of mental afflictions – the supernatural is missing from his explanations, Starkey limiting himself to describing the effects of this disease,

which seem to identify this „frenzy” as an afflictions characterized by the lack of reason from the patient. At the same time, we need to consider that the translation of XVIth century terms by using modern words will always be met by difficulties, as often we are faced with an evolution of the meaning, which change quite a lot the initial signification. This „frenzy” was a disease of the head, according to the author’s own statement, and, from the perspective of the political metaphor, the ones afflicted by it are the ruling elements of the body politic, „princes and lords”, „bishops and prelates”, „judges and law officers”. The idea was not at all particularly new, being frequently repeated during a Middle Age which established a clear link between the virtues/health of the sovereign and that of his kingdom. The idea has origins dating in the Late Antiquity, when the decline of the Roman Empire was blamed on the poor performances of the emperors. During Middle Ages, this idea emerges within the context of the body metaphor, the link between the prince and the proper functioning of the body politic being justified through the crucial position of the former within the latter. At John of Salisbury, Aegidius Romanus, Marsiglio of Padua, Thomas Starkey and many others, the sovereign was associated with the most important organs, either the head, or the heard, having the role of preserving and restoring the health of the body politic. For Thomas Starkey, though, the responsibility for the health of this body politic does not fall only upon the prince, but is a collective one, being shared by the prince and his officers. This opinion can be justified due to the fact that the „frenzy” Starkey talks about is first and foremost a disease of the head, and this head consists of „the officers named by the prince, as they always observe and take care of the well being of the body”: „Thys fautys you may see offycerys & rularys both spyrytual & temporal «wherby you may most playnly perceyve» how lytyl they regard theyr offyce & duty, by reson wherof in the hede of thys commynalty ther ys «reynyng» a grete dysease, the wych as me semyth may wel be comparyd to a frenzy, «frenecy» for lyke as in a frenzy man consyderyth not hymselfe nor can not tel what ys gud nother for hymselfe nor «yet» for other, but every thyng doth that cumyth to hys fancy wythout any ordur or rule of ryght reson, so dow our offycerys & rularys of our cuntrey, wythout regard other of theyr owne true profyt or of the commyn, forgettyng al thyng wych perteynyth to theyr offyce & duty, apply them selfe to the fulfylling of theyr vayn plesurys & folysch fantasye” (Starkey 1989, 58).

The eighth and the last disease is gout, which emerges when people capable to work do not fulfill their duties in an effective manner. It is to be noted that Starkey attributes at least one disease to each social group: obviously, the responsibility for the proper functioning of the body is distributed between all its elements and, even though some have a greater weight, no one can be entirely absent. Similarly, the many afflictions are divided according to the same principle. If the „frenzy” was a disease of the head of this body politic, determined by the rulers’ flaws, either laymen or clerics, the gout is also a disease which Starkey grants to an extremely obvious social trait: „Ther ys also

«lykewyse» in the fete & in the handys wych susteyn the body & procure by labur thyngys necessary for the same as hyt were a commyn dysease for bothe the fete & and the handys to whome I resemblyd plowmen & laburarys of the ground, wyth craftys men & artyfycerys, «in procuryng of thyngys necessary» are neclygent & slo to the exercyse therof» (Starkey 1989, 58). On this occasion, Starkey expresses some harsh criticism against the English people, stating that it was „more prone to idle pleasures” than others: from this point of view, we can say that Starkey’s opinion was faithfully mirroring the attitude of the English legal system during the XVIth century, for which the unemployment of the physically able was regarded as a crime (Youings 1984, 281). Starkey does not talk here about unemployed people though; for him, an inadequate fulfillment of one’s own duties was an equivalent of „idleness”. The consequences for the body politic were extremely dangerous, resulting in shortages and want, and, for this reason, this affliction had to be eradicated. This problem, of the body politic’s therapeutics in order for all these diseases to disappear, will be the subject of the second part of Starkey’s treatise, where the author proposes a series of remedies in a galenic manner.

3. Prophylaxis and cures within the body politic imagined by Thomas Starkey

The description of the main political and social diseases it is followed by an equally thorough analysis of the remedies needed for their removal. Starkey always blamed what he called the „frenzy” of the body politic for the flaws of the English kingdom, and this could be fixed through a proper education of the aristocracy. This way, the latter could take its place within the councils designed by Starkey in order to limit the princely power, to avoid falling prey to tyranny. Starkey’s remedies, just like the metaphorical afflictions he described, are interconnected: the positive effect of one, although focused on a specific disease, extends as well to the other afflictions which could have taken over the body politic. The most dangerous ones, though, are the „sicknesses of the mind”, because their discovery is much more difficult than it was for the bodily diseases: „For lyke as hyt ys easyar also to spy the syknes in mannys body then the syknes of mynd, wych many men perceyve no thyng at al, wych then be indede most grevusly dyseasyd when the lest perceyve hyt, so I feare me that we have many dysease or mysorduryscal them as you wyl, here in the ordur & governance of our cuntrey, wych no thyng at al «are» perceyvvd nor felt” (Starkey 1989, 67).

The lack of harmony between the body parts can trigger one of the most dangerous diseases, the frenzy, and the consequences brought by it are used as an argument in the imaginary dialogue between Thomas Lupset and Reginald Pole in order to support the system of succession existing in England during that period. The purpose of that system was to avoid exactly that danger, just as „the laws and political order” had as their purpose to keep the internal peace and the

unity of the body. If this harmony was destroyed, the outcome could have been deadly for the commonwealth: „For in no cuntrey may be any grettur pestylens «or more» pernycouse then cyvyle warre sedycyon & dyscordys among the partys of the polytyke body, thys ys the thyng that hathe destroyd al commyn wellys” (Starkey 1989, 71). Forestalling this affliction has priority even over the author’s own political preferences, Starkey admitting, through the words of Reginald Pole, that the elective model of choosing a prince could be sacrificed for this reason. Starkey points out though that the solution resorted to was not perfect and, in that perfect commonwealth which he aspires to, choosing such a palliative, of hereditary succession, would not be needed.

The cures recommended by Starkey are not universal, but they always depend on circumstances or the particularities of the body politic the author refers to. He justifies his option by referring to the medical model, frequently reiterated within the text of the *Dialogue*: just as the treatment depend on each person’s traits, so to the cures applied for the body politic are specific to the commonwealth described by Thomas Starkey. The innovation of a „national” body politic, proposed by John Fortescue several decades earlier in *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, finds an application in this curing aspect of the body metaphor: „But forbycause the multytude of men, be «so corrupt» frayle & blyndyd wyth pestylent affectys, we must consydyr the imbecyllite of them «& wekenes of mynd» & apply our remedys accordyng therto folowyng the exampul of experte physycyonys, wych are constraynyd to worke in theyr scyence, accordyng to the nature of theyr patyentys” (Starkey 1989, 98).

The way Starkey imagines the healing of the body politic is by removing the causes of the afflictions. For instance, since „dropsy” is caused by the existence of an important part of the population having no productive activity, the solution is the imposition of a compulsory educational system, which would force the families to provide an adequate education for their children: „Then, Master Lupset, now, consequently, we must seke remedy to the second dysease that we spake of before, wych we resemblyd to a dropcy; for though thys body be weke, sklendur and lakkyth natural strength, yet hyt ys bollen and swollen out wyth yl humorya, the wych we callyd before, by a symylytude, al idul personys. Thys dysease, yf we wyl cure, we must, as you know, remove the cause, or els hyt wyl ever multiply and increse agayn. And, schortly to say, the cause pryncypal therof, aftur my mynd, ys the yl and idul bryngyng up of youth here in our cuntrey, wych are mouyd therto wyth the hope of plesant lyvyng in servyce wyth the nobylyte, spiritual and temporal; for man naturally ever desyryth plesure and quyetnes. Wherfor an ordinance wold be made, that every man, under a certayn payn, aftur he hathe brought hys chyldur to vij yere of age, schold set them forth other to letterys or to a craft, accordyng as theyr nature requyryth” (Starkey 1989, 100-101).

The cure of the third affliction, paralysis, is closely linked to the remedy of the second, as both afflictions are interconnected: the „paralysis” described by Thomas Starkey emerges from „dropsy”, because the useless activities criticized

by the author arise from the necessity to fulfill the needs of that part of the population which was idle: „The remedy wherof in general hangyth much of the remedy of the dysease before last rehersed, for «as much as» the cause of the yl occupyng of al such before notyd, ys to satysfye the appetyte of the idul route wherfore yf they were wel brought up wythout idulnes the rote of thys dysease scholbe cut away wythal so they hange togydur” (Starkey 1989, 102).

Each of the three types of constitutions could have led to the emergence of perfect laws, depending on the nature of the people subjected to them, but all had the purpose to guide the commonwealth towards virtue through the help of „political rule, civil order and just politic” (Mayer 1989, 153). Just like many of his predecessors, Thomas Starkey was fascinated by the roman model. John of Salisbury, for instance, in his famous treatise *Policraticus*, uses a series of roman inspired terms in order to designate institutions – such as the senate – of the body politic he imagined, institutions which did not exist anymore and, from a practical perspective, would have been completely anachronistic in the feudal world dominated by personal relationships. Starkey proposes such a roman institution – the Censor’s office – in the template he depicted in *A Dialogue* and grants it the role of „antibody” of the commonwealth, with the purpose of fighting and fixing its flaws. The activity of the censors was considered to be a kind of social sanitizing of the English kingdom – not very different from the ones it had during republican Rome –, which should have led to the removal of the main cause of some of the most dangerous afflictions described by Starkey, dropsy and paralysis. Since Starkey gave such an importance, in order to prevent the rise of diseases, to education, this fictional censors were granted this exact task: „And ferther, for the takyng away of thys yl occupyd «personys & in vayn» craftys, the same offycerys in every towne wych schal see [th]at ther be no idul personys wythout crafte or mean to get theyr lyvyng, schal also take hede that they occupye no vayn and unprofytabel craft to the commyn wele. Thes offucerys schalbe as the Censorys were in the old tyme at Rome, wyche schal see to thes materys, as well as to the nombur and the substance of pepul. To them hyt schal perteyne also, to overse the education of uthe. To theyr cure schal be commyttyd the redresse of many grete dyseasys in thys polytyke body” (Starkey 1989, 103). Attaching such importance to these officers, Thomas Starkey clearly shows that the healing task does not fall exclusively upon the prince anymore – but upon some specific parts of the body, which can be directed by the latter, without the healing process being carried out directly by the sovereign, as it was the case at Aegidius Romanus or Christine de Pizan. The responsibility of the prince – albeit he still plays a significant role – was as such diminished. Within this context, Starkey will put forward arguments in favor of limiting the royal power. It is not about some proto-constitutionalism though: the justification of these ideas it is realized by using the same metaphor of the body politic. If the king has such preponderance within the commonwealth, then any afflictions attacking the king create the danger that the entire body politic be destroyed. Designing some additional instruments, such as the censors, the

constable of that „council of wise men” serves the purpose to diminish this possibility.

For Thomas Starkey, „pestilence” represents without any doubt a capital disease, because it arises from the most important part of the body politic, „political rule and civil order”. What it should have played a healing role, in order to eradicate the diseases of the body and restore its health, becomes now the origin of its possible destruction. For the medieval medicine it was impossible to efficiently fight the plague, whose effects had been devastating, and Starkey himself voices this frustration by stating that there was no „perfect cure” for that affliction, the remedy depending on the general health of the body. During Middle Ages, plague was equated with death, which, in such circumstances, was no longer a passage, but a finality and decomposition (Grmek 1995, 173), particularly since that age did not possess an adequate understanding of that pandemic, of its causes and the way it passed from person to person. Its origin had been regarded as supernatural, but, at the same time, divinity was perceived as acting through secondary causes, according to the natural law, the explanations offered by the galenic theory being part of the same argument (Grell 1993, 132-133): „Master Lupset, here you must understand, that even as in the body of man many diseases, as physicians do say, spring of the mind & of the affects thereof, so, in this polityke body, a great parte of the misorderys therein consist of that thing which we resemble to the mind in man, – that is, polityke rule and civyle order; among the misorderys wherof this pestilens ys one of the chefe. Wherfor this ys certayne, here ys not the place of this perfect cure; but rather, to say the truth, the cure thereof ys sparklyd in the cure of all other” (Starkey 1989, 104). For Starkey, the cause of this affliction was the lack of harmony between the body parts, offering the example of Italy in order to illustrate the consequences which this disease can give birth to. The whole essence of the social organism relied on the principle of unity, and Middle Ages insisted heavily that this unity could be reached only if the governing part was itself a single will, *unitas in voluntatibus* (Chroust 1947, 448). In order for this harmony to be maintained and for that situation generating uprising and discontent – following the model from the famous fable of Menenius Agrippa – not to occur, it was essential that the „goods and honors” were fairly distributed. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the activity of the prince – and not only him, Starkey specifying that this task could have been entrusted to anyone being „in office and authority”: „First for this place saying the cause of this disease consist chiefly for lack of common justice & equity that one parte hath too much & another too little of all such things as equally should be distributed according to the dignity of all the citizens, therefore above all things regard must be had of the prince & of them which be in office & authority to see that all such things may be distributed with a certain equality” (Starkey 1989, 104). We can see here that Starkey’s opinion about the role of the prince shows some similarities with that of Aegidius Romanus, regarding his function of distributor of what Aegidius called „goods and honors”. The task is crucial and, because

some of the afflictions of the body politic attack exactly those elements entrusted with eliminating this disease, the author's statement that the remedy for the „pestilence” depends on the remedies for the other diseases can be as such easily understood. Its contagious nature posed such a danger, that Starkey prescribes the total removal of the afflicted member, through life exile or death, in order not to contaminate the body.

„Pestilence” is the one which closes the list of diseases afflicting the „health” of the body politic, Starkey going next to describe the cures for those illnesses attacking its „beauty” and „strength”. For him, deformity was a disease whose emergence was due to bad proportions of the parts and the cure consisted of restoring their balance. We found here both platonic influences, according to which each part has to strictly respect the limits of their tasks entrusted to them, but also aristotelian ones, namely the idea of balancing the elements existing within the body. The main idea for Plato was that each member of the body politic should concern itself with his own duty, resulting in a harmonious functioning of the whole. For Starkey, the solution was the allocation of individuals to certain trades: „Yf you remembyr, Mastur Lupset, we found in thys body «a» grete deformyte, the wych, as we notyd, rysyth of the yl proporyon of the partys, some beyng to grete and some to lytyl. [...] Wherfor, to correcte thys faute, brevely to say, thys must be, as nhyt apperyth to me, a chefe meane in every craft, arte, and scyence, some to appoynt, expert in the same, to admyt youth to the exercyse therof; not «suffryng» every man wythout respecte «to» apply themselfe to every craft «& faculty». Thys remedy ys in few wordys spoken; but, truly, yf hyt were put in use, hyt schold not only bryng in «the» beuty of thys polytyke body, but also almost perfaut felycyte” (Starkey 1989, 105-106). At the same time, in order to counter the effects of the weakness due to which, according to Starkey, the commonwealth was not capable to defend itself from attacks and neither to recover its „lost rights”, the author resorts to the example of ancient Rome and of medieval Switzerland, whose military successes seem to have fascinated him (Starkey 1948, 148-149). We have to specify though that this power Starkey talks about when he describes the sickness called „weakness” is not that factor included at the very beginning among the three elements which define the proper functioning of the body. That initial „strength” represented a much more complex notion, with multiple meanings, relating both to a „biological” state of the political organism, and to the ethical one of its components. „Weakness” attacks only one aspect of this „strength”, more precisely the capability to defend the kingdom. The moral aspect of the „strength” falls though under the shadow of the „frenzy”.

When describing the healing principle which had to eliminate one of the most dangerous diseases of the body politic, the frenzy, Thomas Starkey reiterates the concept of *lex animata* referring to the prince, but not only to him, but to those in his service, in order to govern the kingdom. The idea was not a new one, its origin going earlier than Middle Ages and being found in the Roman law. According to Ernst Kantorowicz, the influence of the latter led to

the extension of the symbolism of the sovereign, which does not appear anymore only as an *oraculum* of the divine power, but as „living law” and, finally, an „incarnation of justice” (Kantorowicz 1957, 126). This metaphor was used by Justinian in one of his *Novels*, but fell out of sight during the next centuries, in order to be brought back to life during the Hohenstaufen dynasty, when Godfrey of Viterbo states that Frederick Barbarossa was called using this title during the Diet of Roncaglia, in 1158 (Kantorowicz 1957, 128). Having in mind the roman nature of this metaphor, it’s not amazing that we can find it at Thomas Starkey as well: „We notyd «yf you cal to remembrance» in the chefe parte of the body that ys the hede, an appropryat dysease wych we callyd «then» a frencey, the wych dysease yf we could fynd the mean to cure all the mysordurys in the rest «of the partys» schold easily be helyd for al hange upon thys, therfor the wyse phylosophar plato in hys commyn welth chefely laburyd to set gud offycerys hedys & rularys, the wych schold be as hyt were lyvely lawes” (Starkey 1989, 108). The link which Starkey establishes on this occasion between the virtues of the rulers and the proper functioning of the body politic is probably the strongest one among all the medieval authors which approached the subject of the body metaphor from this perspective, of the symbolical afflictions. Someone like John of Salisbury, for instance, or Christine de Pizan were conditioning the proper functioning of the body to the activity of the prince (and, implicitly, of the officers in his service). For Starkey, though, the mere existence of some rulers „just and full of wisdom” is considered, at a certain moment, to be enough: in such a case, there would no need for any more laws.

The medieval concept of the organic unity of the community was dominated by the principle of the solidarity between the parts of this metaphorical body: the disease of one of them implies the disease of the other, the weakness of one part triggers the weakness of the entire body and the affliction could spread from one member to the whole. This principle works in the other direction as well, the curing of one affliction prompting the curing of the others, an idea original to Thomas Starkey: „Therfor, yf the offycerys in courtys & curatys also lokyd & studyd to the removynge of thos causys, dylygently, thys goute that we spake of schold be utturly taken away «surely», and then schold folow by & by also the cure of the other grete faute wych we found in exteryor thyngys wych we notyd consequently aftur the other, «penury» for even lyke as one dysease commyth of a nother in thys polytyke body, so the cure of one also folowyth a nother” (Starkey 1989, 114). When John of Salisbury or Aegidius Romanus talk about the afflictions of the body politic, the causal relationship is from the health to disease: the sick member influences the entire organism, either by direct contamination, or by hindering its proper functioning, according to the concept that the activity of each part is necessary for the body. The opposite direction is not examined: curing an element of the body does not necessarily bring the healing of another; rather this process had to be repeated, being granted to the prince, whose role was that of physician for the body politic. Starkey, though, proposes an innovating domino effect in regard to

restoring the health of the body. The idea of a well-articulated and uniform whole, the premises of the entire social and political thinking of the Middle Ages, presupposed an organic interrelation between the whole and its parts (Chroust 1947, 424). This interrelation manifests itself at Starkey within the context of the medical metaphor: „for even lyke as the syknes of the partys for the most sprynkyth of some mysurdur in the hole body, so they cure of the same must be taken out of the cure of the hole” (Starkey 1989, 107).

Following the medieval tradition, Starkey emphasizes the same permanent link between the body and the soul, where the sickness of one draws the suffering of the other, and during the process of restoring the health, we can see the same mutual influence. Without the health of the soul, the health of the body is impossible to attain. Plato had a similar opinion, but from the perspective of ancient Greek philosophy: an alteration of the soul affects equally the body, and without *sophrosyne* (full moral health of the soul), the full health of the body is impossible (Garcia-Ballester 2002, 119-122). In the Christian tradition, the body was a mirror for the soul: a sick body was equivalent of a sick soul. Previously to Starkey's time, the relationship between the church and the state was analogous to the one between the body and the soul, consisting in a constant emphasis being put on the idea that the soul could not act in the world without the intermediation of the body and neither the body could not exist without the support of the soul (Chroust 1947, 434): the Church was the soul of this Christian „whole”, the „state” was its body⁴. The consequence of the religious reforms from the period when Starkey writes his treatise was the exclusion of the Church from this equation, by merging it with the kingdom within a single whole. The soul becomes now „the civil order”, but, if the subject of the analogy is replaced, the relationship between them remains constant. Just like Bartolomeus of Lucca insisted during the XIIIth century that „the body depends on the soul for all his activities” (Chroust 1947, 435) – and, implicitly, the health of one mirrored the health of the other – this relationship of dependency is preserved at Thomas Starkey as well: „Syr, for as much as I remembyr the knot bewtyx the body & the soule, & «the» comunyon betwix them «also» to be of that sorte that «they» dyseasys of the one redunde to the other therfor I thynke such dyseasys of the body yf ther be any left behynd schalbe curyd by the correctyon & cure of such as pertheyne to the life & soule of the same” (Starkey 1989, 118-119).

According to Thomas Mayer, Starkey embraced the Aristotelian idea, claiming that those which limited their passion for acquiring earthly goods, developing their character and mind instead, will attain happiness (Mayer 1989, 148): „In helth & prosperouse state, mucche hangyth upon the temperance & soburnes of the mynd in so much that you schal see veray few of sobur &

⁴ See in this regard John of Salisbury's considerations in *Policraticus*, where the prince receives the „sword of justice” from the hands of the Church and the priests are given a position within the state comparable to that of the soul within the body: an element superior to the material ones and at the same time worthy of reverence.

temperat dyat, but they have helthy & welthy bodys” (Starkey 1989, 119). Just as Starkey himself emphasizes, the vision of the society described in *A Dialogue* is Aristotelian, but this had to be perfected by appealing to a Christian model (Zeeveld 1969, 144-145). Just like John Fortescue before, Starkey identifies a so called „natural law”, rooted within the human being, who had to be distinguished from the civil law, the latter being different from country to country according to their own customs: the latter originates in the former, the basis of the civil laws being this „natural law”. According to William Zeeveld, only on this naturalistic basis was it possible to reject the necessity to consider the ecclesiastical power as emerging from the Church, as such making way for „a theory of human prerogatives independent of clerical control” (Zeeveld 1969, 146-147).

Political virtues could best be ensured through a mixed constitution. The idea had ancient origins and the motivation for this choice consisted of countering the attributes of some parts of the body by the others. Starkey brings forward the same medical inspired justification in order to explain his option: „For thys cause the most wyse men consydering the nature of pryncys & the nature of man as he ys indede, affyrme a mixte state to be of al other the best, & most convenyent «to conserve» the hole out of tyranny, for when any one parte hath ful authoryte and yf that parte chaunce to be corrupt wyth affectys, «as oft we see in every «other» state hyt dothe» the rest schal sufur the tyranny therof, & be put in grete mysery” (Starkey 1989, 120). It is possible that Starkey had in mind, when recommending this cure, the unfortunate experiences of France during Charles VI and of England during Henry VI, when the afflictions these monarchs were suffering from were described, particularly for the former, as the main cause of the political disasters befalling the two kingdoms. The danger which Starkey warns against and which he wants to forestall through this measure has a different nature though: not that much the potential military defeats and social disorders – albeit he pays a lot of attention to those many times –, but slipping into tyranny. According to the author’s opinion which claims the existence of a main source of the „disorders” afflicting an organism, the establishment of this „disease” can trigger the emergence of the others. The solution is to moderate the royal power. Removing that main source would lead to a fast healing of the whole body. The origin of this concept could be found in the same organic metaphor and the privileged role granted to some organs due to their leading position within the body: „For as physycyonys say, when they have removyd the «chefe» cause of the malady «& dysease in the body» by lytyl and lytyl then nature hysulfe curyth the patyent, even so now in our purpos thys faute that we have before spoken of, «wych» was «& ys» the cause of many other onys perfaytly curyd schal mynystur unto ys the most convenyent mean for to procede to the cure of the rest” (Starkey 1989, 123).

For Starkey, two factors are crucial for the proper functioning of the commonwealth, namely a just government and an efficient aristocracy – which made Fritz Caspari talk about the aristocratic nature of the political model

imagined by Thomas Starkey (Caspari 1968, 228): „You schal see how yf thes ij thyngys that we have spoken of, that ys the takyng away «of al occasyon» of tyranny & ordeynyng of gud hedys, & now «thys» gud educatyon of the nobylyte had place & effecte that the remedys of al other mysordurys schold as I have oft syyd schortly be found «& put in effect», as al other mysordurys of our lawys «before notyd»” (Starkey 1989, 126). It is remarkable though that, for Starkey, it’s not about the existence of a „good prince” at the head of the kingdom, whom, as main organ, should have ensured its proper functioning, following the model of his predecessors, like John of Salisbury or Aegidius Romanus. For them, the virtues of the prince were crucial, but, if such virtues did not exist, the two hesitated in offering a clear solution, hesitation to be understood having in mind the period when they wrote their political treatises. In order to remove the danger of tyranny, though, Starkey proposes a series of measures surprisingly modern and which could be named almost „constitutional”: „Aftur the same forme the connestabul schold be hede of thys other conseyl wych schold represent the hole «body of the pepul wythout? Parlyament and commyn counseyl «geddryd» of the reame concernyng thys one poynt chefely, that ys «to say» to see «un» to the liberty of the hole body of the reame & to resyst al tyranny wych by any maner may grow upon all commynalty & «so» to cal parlyament of the hole when so ever they see any peryl of the losse of the liberty” (Starkey 1989, 121). For Starkey, though, limiting the princely power, in order to forestall tyranny due to possible ascension to the throne of an unworthy monarch, does not represent the main cure for the afflictions of the body politic. If, before, at Christine de Pizan, to give just this example, the role of the king was essential in this regard, at Thomas Starkey the healing process does not have such a strong individual character anymore, linked to a single man, the prince. The English author grants the healing process a stronger social emphasis: the elements which will ensure the removal of the afflictions described in this treatise are an improved legal system – talking even about the Roman law, which fascinated the medieval authors so much – and a better education for the English political elite, factor which he repeatedly insisted upon in this treatise: „Wherfor, Master Lupset, yf we myght bryng thys ij thyngys to effecte – that ys «to say», to have the cyvyle law of the Romaynys to be the commyn law «here» of Englund «wyth us»; and, secondary, that the nobylyte in theyr youth schold study «commynly» therin – I think we schold not nede to seke partycular remedys for such mysordurys as we «have» notyd before; for «surely» thys same publyke dyscplyne schold redresse them lyghtly; ye, and many «other» mow, the wych we spake not «yet» of «at al»” (Starkey 1989, 130).

Starkey does not limit his considerations regarding the corporal model of the state and the way to fix its flaws only to the secular institutions of the English kingdom. Following the politic of religious reforms initiated by Thomas Cromwell, Starkey criticizes the criteria for the selection of the priests, whom, in his opinion, should be admitted among the clergy only starting from the age of thirty, avoiding this way the danger which including among the clergy some

persons which virtue had not been sufficiently tested could have become. Just as for his considerations regarding the cures to be applied to the secular body politic, Starkey identifies this factor as the main source for the flaws of the „Church of Christ”, and its elimination would make the whole body healthy: „Wherfor, yf thys «hole» were stoppyd, surely the gretyst cause of al fautys in the Church of Chryst schold be taken away «wythal», the wych remedyd, schold be a grete occasion of the remedy of the hole body; for as much as they commyn pepul look chefely to the lyfe of prelatys & prestys, takyng theyr exampul of the ordur of theyr lyfe” (Starkey 1989, 135).

If the health of the body politic depends on the unity and the harmony of its parts, its restoration falls upon the ruling part, the prince, and his officers, which have an indestructible link with the rest of the body politic, the states of each part being dependent on each other. Extending this analogy to the model of the perfect commonwealth, which is impossible to be created by human efforts alone, divine intervention being required, Starkey thinks that implementing the divine doctrine – condition necessary for its emergence – depends on a certain social class which is entrusted with this task: „Wherfor, as the restoryng of the cyvyle lyfe standyth chefely in hedys & rularys as we have sayd before in so much that yf they be gud al the commynalty wyl folow the same, so the confyrmynge & stablyng of thys celestyal doctryne stondyth chefely in the offycerys therof, that ys to say in the precharys” (Starkey 1989, 139).

4. Conclusions

As we noticed on other occasion, Thomas Starkey is not a singular case within the English ideological frame: he takes his place within an ideological line of thinking, of „nationalizing” the body politic by applying this analogy to the political realities of the English kingdom in the XVIth century. This line of thinking had been started during the previous century by John Fortescue, with his works *De Natura Legis Naturae*, *On the Governance of England* and *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*. Fortescue is the first which abandons the general nature of the metaphor of the body politic from the previous period in order to apply this concept to some particular political entities and also the first which gives up on the excessive abstracting in order to examine the existing social and economical conditions. Thomas Starkey has a similar approach in this regard, but there is a fundamental difference: the English political model is no longer regarded exclusively through some positive lenses. If John Fortescue praised the political institutions of his country, the *dominium politicum et regale* which he considered superior to the *dominium regale* existing in France, Starkey refuses to let himself carried away by the same patriotism, and the result was a serious criticism of the English kingdom. This was a commonwealth eaten away by afflictions: it does not meet at all the galenic ideal of health. Some of the eight diseases described in *A Dialogue* are not hypothetical diseases, which *could*

have troubled the body politic, but, for Starkey, they are inside the body at that very moment. Applying the depicted remedies was a stringent necessity, and this task falls upon the king and his advisors. In this regard, *A Dialogue* ends by urging Reginald Pole (through the words of Thomas Lupset) to accept the responsibilities befalling him and take part to the government of the kingdom. The advice is, without any doubt, a self-seeking one: Starkey's own career depended on Pole's attitude towards Henry VIII but, at the same time, it cannot be excluded a genuine concern of the author towards the problem of kingdom's reformation along the suggestions offered in *A Dialogue*.

David George Hale considers that using such an organic analogy, of an almost clinical precision, is supported by the fact that, during the first half of the XVIth century, the natural world was mostly regarded as a living organism, and the interest of the humanist in Plato's work tended to strengthen the embrace of the idea of microcosm. The realism of Starkey points in a different direction though: the empirical observation of the kingdom's problems runs counter to considering it as a macrocosm and „investigating the miseries of England or the diseases of an Englishman regards as essentially irrelevant any correspondence between them or any higher form to which they might imperfectly conform” (Hale 1971, 68). Hale's observation probably concerns the fact that, usually, the macrocosm was regarded during Middle Ages as being organized and working in an ideal order. Flaws could appear only as a result of deviations from this natural order. From this point of view, we could say that Starkey's model was a hybrid between medieval and modern: seeing his commonwealth as a biological organism, analogous to the human one, Starkey follows the tradition of his predecessors, but, at the same, the existence of so many afflictions and deformities raises the question whether we could still talk in this case about the macrocosmical analogy. Usually, until then, the flaws of the body politic had been explained through what we could call „fall into error”, either from the ruler of this organism, or from its parts. Admitting though that this perfect commonwealth which he wishes for is unattainable, Starkey practically accepts the idea that some of these flaws are immanent to the body politic.

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