

Shared Perspectives: The Common Language of Body Politic and Political Therapy in Sixteenth-Century English and French Political Discourse

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Abstract: The metaphor of the body politic and its subsidiaries, those of political disease and of the king as symbolic physician of his realm, have been extensively used in medieval political literature, usually with the purpose of providing models of governance for the rulers of the day. The sixteenth century though, due to the effects of the Reformation and the religious struggles it caused, marked a transition from this pattern to works of a much more polemical character, which aimed not just to provide advice to the political establishment, but sometimes to radically alter it – and this shift was also reflected in the manner corporal analogies were used. France and England represent the geographical area chosen for this study, two countries which underwent significantly different political evolutions during the sixteenth century. The metaphor of the body politic is employed by both English and French writers and pamphleteers and common features can be identified, but, at the same time, many and important divergences occur between its uses in England and France. This paper aims to provide an analysis of this transition, while identifying and explaining the differences between the rhetorical expressions of the metaphor in both countries.

Keywords: France, England, body politic, political disease, royal power

1. Introduction

The concept of "body politic" is a metaphor with a solid medieval tradition, which was employed for the first time in medieval political literature in John of Salisbury's work, *Policraticus*: it consists of establishing an equivalence between the human body, with respect to its structure and functions, and the polities of that era. After *Policraticus*, this analogy was a recurrent theme in many theological and political treatises: it is significant because it occupied an important place in medieval political theory, as an argument used to strengthen legitimacy and in order to justify certain constitutions. In particular, this analogy was used to support certain key tenets of medieval political thought, such as the concept of unicity of rulership or the principle of interdependency between the parts of the state. If such a relationship of similarity was established between the human body and the polity (or parts thereof), then one could draw conclusions regarding the way certain elements of the "body politic" had to function, on the basis of the examples provided by the human body. This analogy between the medieval state and the human body generated an equivalence between social-political afflictions and bodily diseases, a so-called "medical metaphor" which is included in the metaphor of the body politic from its very beginning. This medical metaphor gravitates around two main concepts: that of "political disease", where political, economic or social-religious troubles which could afflict a certain state were described with a medical terminology, and that of "political physician", a role ascribed to the medieval prince, in his capacity as main part of the body politic, which has to ensure the proper functioning of the latter, by preventing or curing the diseases which might endanger it. What characterizes this metaphor is its versatility: it provides a powerful image for the arguer, but it can be twisted to fit all kind of rhetorical strategies and political purposes. During the Middle Ages it was used to justify the pretensions of the papacy of not just spiritual, but also of temporal supremacy, as universal head of the Christendom. But it was also used to justify the increased independence of the national monarchies, by emphasizing the role of the king as heart of the body politic, a distributor of "good and honors" within his kingdom. Such versatility was the most obvious though during the sixteenth century, when the analogy between the human body and the state saw a widespread use in the most diverse political strategies.

In one of the pioneering studies on the metaphor of the body politic, Paul Archambault describes the analogy as "habitually meant to

illustrate the author's conception of the society he is describing, and more specifically – since the works in question deal without exception with the government of princes – to show what the relation of the Prince to his subjects is, or should be, in that society" (Archambault 1967, 21). Paul Archambault refers here to late medieval and Renaissance political treatises, which he covers in his article, stopping his analysis shortly after the beginning of Reformation, without engaging with the polemical literature of the second half of the sixteenth century, born out of the struggle between Catholics and Protestants. This literature differs significantly from the kind of treatises which preceded: we are no longer looking at humanist tracts, inspired from the medieval genre of the "mirrors of the princes", but at a corpus of tracts and political pamphlets containing truly revolutionary political programs, invectives against one's religious opponents or (something which had been unthinkable before) even calls to tyrannicide. It is the purpose of this study to provide an analysis of this literature over the entire sixteenth century, in two of the countries where political thought was amongst the most prolific during that time, namely England and France, in the light of the intellectual transformations which occurred over the period.

2. The Structure of the Body Politic

The first aspect of the metaphor of the body politic was to emphasize on order and well regulation: the human body was regarded as a *minor mundi*, a mirror of the larger universe and God's own handiwork. A healthy and well-proportioned human body was supposed to represent the ideal system: a biological system, first and foremost, but, through extrapolation, it provided the model for the political system as well. The body, in the view of the political theorists of the sixteenth century, was comprised of a main organ, either the head or the heart, which was supposed to rule over the entire body while at the same time providing for the other parts, and other inferior members, which were in a relationship of strict subordination to the respective main organ. By analogy, for many of the authors of political tracts which employed this metaphor, in the body politic there could be only one ruling part, namely, the king, while the other segments of the society formed the respective "inferior parts". This is the scheme which we encounter in the most elaborate tract on this metaphor, *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, written by an English humanist, Thomas Starkey, sometime between 1529 and 1536. Unlike his medieval predecessors, Starkey concerns

himself with a specific, "national" body politic (the universal character of the previous "body politic" model being thus abandoned), where the ruler is the heart, "for lyke as al <wyt, reson &> sens felyng lyfe & al other natural powar spryngyth out of the hart, so from the pryncys & rularys of the state commyth al lawys ordur & pollycy, al justyce vertue & honesty to the rest of thys polytyke body" (Starkey 1989, 33). In the work of the Bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, *De Vera Obedientia*, published in 1535, the king, whose power derived from God, is presented as the supreme head of his subjects, both in their capacity as members of the kingdom, and of the Church, and, therefore, the king bears the responsibility for the defense and the preservation of the whole body politic. Both Starkey and Gardiner were part of the English establishment: the first had been a minor associate of Reginald Pole (before Pole fell into King Henry VIII's disfavor) and Thomas Cromwell, while the second had been one of the most prominent personalities of the Henrician Reformation, deeply involved in the king's religious policy and the governance of England. The different positions occupied by the two men might explain a significant difference in their corporal scheme: both exalt royal power, but Starkey does so with some reservations. There is an impersonal element in the body politic described by Starkey, namely, the laws, which form the "soul" of this body and, thus, according to the mindset of the age, would have been considered superior to the king (Starkey 1989, 31). In addition, the king's power is limited by a council. For Gardiner, such precautions are not necessary: it could be said that, much more under the eye of Henry VIII, the Bishop of Winchester had to prove his loyalty beyond any doubt. But the structure of the body politic was not described only in these terms, of princes, magistrates and other social groups linked with specific parts of the biological body. The political literature could make use of the corporal analogy in order to depict sophisticated systems of government as well. Thus, the English politician Thomas Smith draws, in his work *De Republica Anglorum* (written between 1562 and 1565, albeit published for the first time only in 1583), a direct analogy between the sixteenth-century medical conceptions about the principle of temperaments and elements (and, therefore, about the humors) and the system of government, which is seen as mixed: just like the human body is composed of all four elements, a government represents the combination of the influences of several types of constitutions (Smith 1982, 52). The constitutions identified by Smith are those present as well in the political treatises of the Antiquity: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, and their negative counterparts, tyranny, oligarchy and

anarchy, the latter being the final stage of the process of political involution¹. In the opinion of Geoffrey Elton, Smith was a strong adept of the doctrine of the king-in-Parliament, a sovereign body in the real sense, because it has absolute discretion in the making and unmaking of law, which consisted of king, Lords, and Commons, and whose acts were "the prince's and whole realm's deeds" (Elton 2002, 32-34).

In France, Claude de Seyssel used the metaphor of the body politic, in his work *La Grande Monarchie de France*, published in 1519, not as much to associate each element of the state with corresponding parts of the body, but to illustrate his idea of what the best constitution should be and how it should work: a monarchy, but one where royal power is restrained by three "bridles", religion, justice and "la police" – the latter referring to the laws and ordinances of the kingdom (Seyssel 1558, fol. 9–10r). When describing Seyssel's constitutional scheme, Quentin Skinner asserts that "a pyramidal structure of society has grown up over the centuries which serves to assign each stratum of society its proper status and its accompanying rights and obligations", and "the king has a duty not to oppress or alter any aspect of this established social hierarchy" (Skinner 2004, 261). Quentin Skinner's statement is too definitive, though, because it could imply a social rigidity which Seyssel does not actually espouse: in fact, it was one of Seyssel innovative ideas that the king was allowed and even expected to perform modifications within this established social hierarchy. In this, Seyssel distances himself from the strict compartmentalization associated with the medieval version of the metaphor of the body politic, according to which each part of the body had its own specific role and place it must not step out of. Nicole Hochner asserts that Seyssel "totally abandons the organic metaphor and espouses a purely physiological vision of the body made of four contrary elements and humours" (Hochner 2012, 619). If the corporal analogy changes its focus from organs to humors, then shifts within the body politic become doctrinally possible and the image of a monstrous body, which was traditionally associated with attempts by some parts of the body to supplant others, fades away. Seyssel's inspiration is taken from the Galenic theory of humors, according to which anything in excess can negatively impact the body and lead to disease. Seyssel does not associate a specific part of the body to the king, although he ascribes to him an

¹ Thomas Smith does not always use the same terminology as the authors of Antiquity, but the text leaves no doubt about the types of constitution which he had in mind. For a more thorough analysis of Smith's use of corporal analogies, see Sălăvăstru 2012, 216-221.

essential role in the economy of the body politic, and that is a pattern which those French political writers who made use of the corporal analogy after Seyssel followed. The French writers insisted much less on the specific corporal structure of the body politic than their English counterparts (especially Thomas Starkey), but instead they will focus their attention on the metaphor of disease, the remedies it required and the mission the king was supposed to carry out.

3. The Diseases of the Body Politic

The dominant feature of the sixteenth-century metaphor of the body politic is the overwhelming attention paid to the concept of disease. Whether they provide a more elaborate description of the structure of the state or not, what all political writers employing this metaphor have in common is that they all address the issues troubling the polity in terms of a disease. Thomas Starkey, the English humanist of Henry VIII's reign, provides the most extensive example of this kind. Starkey has a much more pragmatic approach of the issues which can trouble the body politic than the medieval writers, these issues being mostly economic in nature. What distinguishes Starkey, though, ensuring him a special place in the study of the body politic, is the almost clinical analysis of the problems which afflicted England during the writing of his treatise. The analogy between the problems a state could be confronted with and a metaphorical disease was not a particularly new idea, but until then there had not been a clear differentiation of the specific illnesses. The *regnum* could be diseased, but the affliction was a generic one. Starkey, on the other hand, identifies no less than eight social-political "diseases" which troubled England during early sixteenth century, employing a medical terminology to nominate them with a precision which had no precedent. Starkey's outlook was one dominated by apprehension: as an alternative to an England struggling with diseases, Starkey proposes a perfect commonwealth, in a rather similar manner to Thomas More's *Utopia*, but with the difference that, in *A Dialogue*, this commonwealth is not located in a fictional geographical area, but it represents an idealized version of the English kingdom. The notion of a diseased body politic is reiterated by the writers of the Elizabethan era. In his *De Republica Anglorum*, Thomas Smith projects the notion of the degradability of the human body upon the body politic. In such a context, diseases could be considered not a cataclysmic event, but a predictable phase in the body politic's process of degradation.

Another quite elaborate version of the metaphor of the body politic and of the consequences which can arise as a result of discord between its members is provided in William Averell's tract, *A Marvellous Combat of Contraries*. If a specific affliction infects an element of the body, then the effects are felt by the whole organism (Averell 1588, D1) – and the discord caused by a rebel organ enfeebles the whole body. Jonathan Gil Harris points out that Averell suggests "that only specific organs are disorderly *loci* of disease" (Gil Harris 1998, 42). Therefore, in a healthy body, natural harmony is an indispensable condition. For Averell, unlike his other predecessors, the political disease is much more personalized: it was not the outcome of some long-term social, political or economical developments, but the specific action of England's enemies. It was a model quite similar with the medieval version, where the disease was also the result of some specific actions, but the difference lies in the fact these actions were carried out by the "corrupt" parts of the body politic, not by a foreign enemy, which operated openly or covertly, and they had a strong moral nature. The "vices" of the subjects gave birth to the disease of the realm, which the prince had to cure by appropriate measures, but now the destructive factors no longer belong to the body impacted by them. The idea of political therapy appears in *A Marvellous Combat* as well, but now it is more about a prophylactic action, rather than eliminating the disease *after* it took hold of the body. Obviously, it is preferable to prevent the disease by removing the causes: in this respect, Averell does not differentiate himself from his predecessors. His innovation is about the source of the danger which looms over the body, which now comes from outside².

During the 1590s, the English churchman Richard Hooker published an extremely influential theological tract, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, where the metaphor of the body appears again, in an analysis of the state and the Church of England. For Hooker, because the body politic is a visible one, unlike the *corpus mysticum* which is only partially perceptible, this body politic is subject to the danger of falling prey to disease. Although the author does not use this term too much, preferring to refer to the perceived imperfections of the Church as "corruptions", the meaning is the same (Hooker, 184). The strong symbol of leprosy, which had been employed by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages against the heresies it had to confront so many times, is appropriated now by Protestantism and turned against its opponent:

² See Sălăvăstru 2012, 226-229

"Those Romish ceremonies wherof we have hetherto spoken are like leproous clothes, infectious unto the Church, or like soft and gentle poysons, the venom whereof being insensibly pernicious, worketh death, and yet is never felt working" (Hooker, 188). Regarding the degree of danger posed by the maladies which afflicted the body politic, Hooker concurs with the general opinion of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, which considered the diseases with an endogenous origin to be a greater threat than those originating outside the body politic. Until then, it was more about the disharmony of the body politic, which prevented its proper functioning and led to its disappearance, without the intervention of the physician prince. Hooker offers a new explanation for this phenomenon, blaming it on the lack of vigilance from the body with respect to internal dangers, which seem to be under control and be eradicated at any moment. Basically, one can say that Hooker ascribes this situation not to a greater innate dangerousness of the internal disease, as his predecessor had done, but to a tendency of self-mystification on the part of the body politic, which did not pay enough attention to the threat until it was too late. Hence, the insidious action of an internal disease could pass unnoticed in comparison with an external threat, which was not only obvious, but it also determined the mobilization of the entire defence capability of the body, and the unity of its parts³.

In France, the use of the metaphor body politic was shaped by the Wars of Religion which broke out in 1562: the humanist tracts of the first half of the first century, with their moral exhortations addressed to the prince and calm musings about the best polity, made way for unadulterated war propaganda, with the rhetorical strategies shaped by the goals of the parties in conflict. For the Huguenots, the main purpose was, at least for the moment, to earn a respite from the persecution which was unleashed against them under Francis I and especially under Henry II, and which the radical Catholics hoped to re-enact. The most important in the development of Huguenot political ideology was the massacre from the night of Saint-Bartholomew, on 23-24 August 1572: the Huguenots considered the French monarchy as having directed the event, or at least being complicit in it, and they answered with a theory of popular sovereignty which justified resistance against tyrannical rulers. In their works, we encounter references to what they regard the most dangerous

³ For a more detailed analysis on Hooker's use of corporal analogies, see Sălăvăstru, "Corporal Metaphors in Richard Hooker's Political Thought: Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie", in *Cahiers de Psychologie Politique*, 28. See also Sălăvăstru 2012, 231-242.

political disease, namely tyranny. In 1573, the Huguenot author François Hotman published his tract *Francogallia*, where he stated the idea of the state's finitude, justified through the same comparison with the human body: "Just like our body decays and dissolves when it is stricken from outside by too violent blows, or by deadly wounds, or when the humours change and become corrupted in their composition, from within, or when it is hit and destroyed by old age: so can the state be ruined by many accidents" (Hotman 1574, pref. fol. 5v). According to Hotman, tyranny can survive and flourish only where internal discord exists – an original interpretation of the old theme of disharmony within the body politic, which had always been regarded as extremely dangerous, but never linked to other political diseases. Another case is that of Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas, a Huguenot jurist at the court of Henry of Navarre, who authored a poem called *La sepmaine ou la création du monde*, in 1578. Bartas resorts, in order to build his argument, to the theory of the four humors from Greek medicine and which had been appropriated by medieval medicine, becoming by that time its dominant paradigm: according to this theory, the source of disease was the excess of one or more humors, which had to be in balance in order for the health of the body not to be endangered (Bartas 1578, 29-30). In this medical and corporal analogy employed by Du Bartas, the monarchy itself is considered one of the humors of the body politic. And, on the basis of this analogy with medical theory, the conclusion drawn by Bartas is obvious: just like an excessive humor is harmful to the physical body, so a monarchy where the king's power is unlimited would have damaging effects on the body politic and, therefore, solutions must be looked for in order to prevent such a situation (Banks 2009, 208-209; Platon 2013, 211).

Unlike their Huguenot adversaries, for the Catholics the main disease was, obviously, heresy. According to the mindset of the day, religious unity was crucial for the well-being of the kingdom: after all, political theory constantly insisted upon the necessity of a harmonious relationship between all the parts of the body politic and, as the theory of that age argued, there was no greater cause for conflict than religious differences. In this context, the king was the physician of his kingdom and was compelled by his coronation oath to defend the Catholic faith. During the reign of Charles IX, there were constant references to heresy as a "leprosy" or a "plague", in an effort by radical Catholic preachers to persuade the monarchy to take the lead in the fight against Protestantism. In the opinion of Anne-Marie Brenot, "the Reformed, by creating what the sixteenth century called a party or, worse, sects, attacked the unity of

the Church", therefore "what was at stake in the imaginary was the integrity of the body mystical of the Church" – "leper and heresy joined together to corrupt not just the individual body, but, worse, the body of the Church" (Brenot 1992, 559). This association had a long medieval tradition and there was nothing new in the use of such analogies by the Catholics who advocated suppression of the Huguenots. The purpose of the former was clear, namely, to prove that accommodation with the Protestants, which seemed to be on the table for the first two years of the reign of Charles IX, 1560-1562, was impossible. The analogies between heresy and disease had two addressees: the king, whose resolve to eradicate Protestantism had to be nurtured and strengthened, and the people, nobles and commoners alike, who had to be persuaded to shun the heretics and take part in the religious struggle for the Catholic Church. There was an authentic war for the hearts and minds of the Frenchmen in the late 1550s and the 1560s between Protestantism and Catholicism, when the former registered significant successes by converting an important percent of the French nobility to the new religion. The conversion of the whole France to the Reform in the early 1560s did not seem like an impossibility for the contemporaries, – although, in hindsight, its likelihood was extremely remote – and that explain the rhetorical violence of many Catholics who could not accept a *modus vivendi* with Protestantism. A colloquium was organized on the initiative of Catherine de Medicis, at the time regent of France for her son Charles IX, at Poissy, in 1561: the declared purpose was to find a solution to the religious differences, with an eye to a possible reconciliation of the two faiths. Even though there were some moderate voices hoping for an agreement, major figures of the French Catholic Church, such as cardinals of Lorraine and Tournon, took a firm stand against Protestantism. In the words of Donald Kelley, "theologians such as Rene Benoist, Gentien Hervet and Claude de Saintes carried on the campaign against Calvinism and any idea of making concessions at Poissy. They lamented the fashionable indulgence in iconoclasm, and De Saintes in particular recalled the old canonist doctrine that there was no salvation outside the Catholic Church" (Kelley 1983, 273-274). According to Barbara Diefendorf, "the Catholic preachers built their defense on the powerful idea of the Church united in the body of Christ", where "hatred and division amongst Christians, the inevitable products of heresy, consequently represent a rupture of the body of Christ" (Diefendorf 1991, 150). Pierre Dyvolé, for example, employed this metaphor in one of his sermons on the Mass, when he likened sin to disease, which had to be

cured by the medicine of the priests and the Sacraments, and explained that, more serious than other sins, heresy was like a cancerous limb that had to be amputated in order for the rest of the body to be saved (Diefendorf 1991, 150).

Heresy had been long associated with sedition and that was an accusation which the Catholic polemicists happily exploited: to pervert the faith was, in Catholic opinion, treason against God and, therefore, it naturally followed that it was also treason against the king, who was God's anointed and compelled to defend the faith. This link was even easier to establish in the case of the French monarchy, whose rituals were enmeshed in Catholic symbolism. If the heretics threatened the Church, then they automatically threatened the kingdom as well. In the opinion of most Catholics, to ignore this menace was dangerous not only to the spiritual well-being of the king, as it could cause him to lose God's favor and endanger his salvation, but also to his more worldly interests, since heresy would tear the realm apart. As pointed out by Barbara Diefendorf, in a treatise from August 1562, the theologian René Benoist (who, ironically, will fall out of favor with the Catholic League later and become the confessor of none other than Henry IV after his conversion to Catholicism) included an implicit warning in the example of King Ahab, who allowed his country to be given over to idolatry until his people rose up to overturn the idols, but the intent was not to threaten the king but rather to enlist his aid in the holy war. Benoist concluded with the corporal metaphor, addressing the king directly and telling him that he need not fear to remove and destroy the corrupt elements in order to cure the body of his kingdom, because heresy was a pernicious and contagious cancer for which there was no remedy but the knife (Diefendorf 1991, 151-152). The key problem identified by the Catholic polemicists and which made possible the resort to such corporal analogies was the fact that Protestants were a part of the French body politic – they were not an outside threat, but one which acted from within: the Catholic theologian Gentien Hervet, an associate of cardinal Charles de Lorraine, the most prominent French Catholic churchman of that period, argued that, unlike the Jews, the Protestants were able to mix freely among the Catholic population and spread their heresies as they would the plague (Racaut 2002, 57). The same analogies remained a constant for the radical Catholics throughout the period of the French Wars of Religion. Jean Boucher, for instance, one of the fiercest preachers of the League during the final phase of the religious conflict, made use of language which included equating heresy with disease. In referring to the idea of two

religions co-existing in one state, he argued in 1587: "If we have to put up with this contagion [heresy] that stinks everywhere, this canker that invades everything, this gangrene that devours all, this leprosy that infects everything, at least it will be useful and profitable to us [the Catholics] ... since so many [Protestants] will be sent to the lakes of eternal damnation" (Finley-Croswhite 2003, 134).

4. The Healing of the Body Politic

If the idea of "political disease" was such a common denominator in both the English and the French expressions of the metaphor of the body politic, then it was only natural that the problems of prophylaxis and of the necessary treatment appeared with a similar frequency in the political tracts of both countries. All the treatises under discussion wanted to propose political guidelines, either for the prince or for specific social, political or religious communities. If diseases were identified, the authors would have been remiss in their task if they did not try to discover and propose a remedy – which was, in the end, the main motivation for their efforts in writing their works in the first place. It is in the discussion of the cures for the diseases of the body politic that the role of the king was most emphasized. But it is a role which was, overall, very ambivalent, illustrating the flexibility of the corporal metaphor and its capacity to twist in order to serve rhetorical goals which could be diametrically opposed. There is a line of thought, which follows the traditional medieval paradigm, which sees the king as a healing factor: in his capacity as the most important part of the body politic or simply depicted as a metaphorical physician of his realm, it is the task of the king to see that diseases are eliminated, by whatever means necessary, up to removing from the body politic the afflicted parts in order to save the whole. A first example is Claude de Seyssel, who exploits the humoral theory developed by Galen fourteenth centuries before in order to explain the defects of the body politic and to propose a solution for their elimination, through an innovative concept of "social mobility" which aimed to restore their balance. Seyssel asserts the idea of the state's finitude, whose decline and dissolution inevitably takes place at a certain moment, because, just like all created things, is subjected to corruption and mutation (Seyssel 1558, fol. 1v, 9r.). This dissolution cannot be stopped, Seyssel points out, but it can be delayed, and the author explains his option through an analogy with the human body: just like humans live longer and enjoy a better health when they benefit from a "meilleure

complexion" (understood as a balance of the humors in the body as good as possible, according to the medical paradigm of that age), the states which have the best foundations and rulership enjoy a longer existence and are stronger (Platon 2013, 202-203).

In England, during Henry VIII, Stephen Gardiner aligned himself with this trend. In his opinion, the head, in this case the king, is ruler, controller and moderator, Gardiner not being far from granting it a healing role as well – something which will happen on another occasion, when the Bishop of Winchester argued that, by Fisher's execution on the king's order (sent to the scaffold for refusing to accept the break with Rome and Henry VIII's assumption of the headship of the English Church), the Church "was healed" (Gardiner 1968, 31). Obviously, Gardiner's assertion constitutes a reflexion of the conception according to which the ruler must remove those members of the body politic which had been contaminated by all kinds of afflictions, so that the spread of disease could be avoided and the healing of the body politic be assured. The harshness of the applied cure depended on the seriousness of the disease which afflicted the body politic – and, in this regard, we can notice a perfect concordance between political and corporal medicine: Gardiner asserts himself, in *Contemptum humanae legis*, that "the prince did not always use his sword [...] unless a crime is of such nature that it tends to tear apart the body of the Church and overthrow human society" (Gardiner 1968, 179). The medical theory of contagion, of the healthy members of the body being "corrupted" by the diseases ones, is the main argument used by Gardiner in order to justify the punitive measures which the prince can and should resort to. Disobedience is for Gardiner the most serious of all diseases which can impair the body politic and, consequently, the one repressed the most harshly (Sălăvăstru 2012, 216). Starkey, on the other hand, in the humanist tradition, focuses more on the maintenance of peace and unity through the pursuit of virtue and, in particular, through obedience to reason: in the opinion of Howell Lloyd, "this line of discussion led, as in the case of the monarchical administrator, to the conclusion that political life and government with it must be conducted under the law" (Lloyd 2008, 264). For Starkey, law was the soul of this body politic, therefore the corporal logic of his analogy led him to move away from Gardiner's absolutism. Starkey even mentioned at one point the possibility of deposing a king, when discussing the issue of tyranny. David Hale argues that, over this matter, "the organic analogy disappears" because "Starkey was doubtless well aware of the fact that the doctrine of nonresistance to the king was being

preached in terms of the body politic and did not, therefore, elaborate on his logically absurd suggestion that if the head of the body became diseased, it had to be amputated just like any other diseased member" (Hale 1971, 66). But how flexible this metaphor could be is illustrated by the fact there actually was an author who did go to such lengths, absurd as they seemed: John Ponet, bishop of Winchester with obvious Protestant inclinations, who had been forced to go into exile after the ascent of Mary Tudor. In his work *A Short Treatise on Politike Power*, Ponet uses corporal analogies to argue that excessive obedience was not advisable – "But as if the sinewes be to much racked ad stretched out, or to much shrinked together, it briedeth wonderfull paynes and deformitie in manes body: so if Obediece be to mucche or to litell in a common wealthe, it causeth mucche evil and disordre" (Ponet 1972, C8) – and to assert that the overthrow of a tyrannical king was actually possible, without destroying the whole body politic: "Common wealthes and realmes may live, when the head is cut off, and may put on a newe head, that is, make them a newe governour" (Ponet 1972, D7). But the episode of the Marian exile was cut short by the death of Mary Tudor and the ascension to the throne of England of the Protestant Elizabeth and it did not give birth to a resistance literature comparable to that which emerged on the continent. The reign of Elizabeth marked a return of the mainstream English political ideology to the previous respectful attitude towards the monarchy, albeit with an emphasis on a more constitutional, moderate form of rulership in the manner of Thomas Starkey, instead of Gardiner's absolutism. In this reconstructed picture of a benevolent and caring monarchy, the notion of the monarch as physician of the realm reappears. In his *De Republica Anglorum*, the already-mentioned Thomas Smith describes the prince as a distributor of "power and authority" (Smith 1982, 88), and this role automatically implies a thaumaturgic responsibility. The action of the king makes the body politic to be full of vigor, as opposed to the feebleness which could affect it if such a ruling part did not exist in the body politic.

Near the end of the century, in his work *A Marvelous Combat*, Averell recommends the everpresent principle of unity, but it must be pointed out that "discord" is no longer designated as clearly as before as a disease per se, but rather it is depicted as an impediment for the body's resistance and capacity to defend against attacks from outside - not a destructive factor, but rather a factor of vulnerabilization (Averell 1588, D3). According to Jonathan Gil Harris, Averell's tract "enacts a crucial shift in the articulation of organic political metaphor", by creating the

model of a body which "involves less the harmonious concord of the diverse members, than the vigilant surveillance of the body's limits in the face of potential infiltration" (Gil Harris 1998, 44). Theological influence is visible in Averell's case as well, as he does not limit himself to political advices: unity must be accompanied by a life in accordance with Christian tenets. The connection between virtue and health is, therefore, reaffirmed: this even more since the threat against England was of a religious nature as well, in the form of heresy charges coming from the papacy, from Spain and English Catholics who sympathized with them. In the sixteenth century, a secularization of politics, a rejection of theological interferences in government was not possible: theological blame could not be ignored, but instead it had to be rebutted. Against Catholic arguments that Queen Elizabeth was a "servant of crime", an own example of piety had to be provided (Sălăvăstru 2012, 227-228). Richard Hooker, in his turn, is concerned more with the health of "mystical" body of the Church of England, to which he applies the same medical analogies. If maladies exist, then remedies for healing the body of the Church are also necessary. According to Hooker, Puritanism justified its opinion that a radical elimination of *all* rituals and structures of a Catholic type was necessary by appealing to a medical conception common at that time, according to which a disease was removed by applying a cure with opposing characteristics (Hooker 1969, 183). Hooker considers this opinion to be mistaken, though, even dangerous for the health and the existence of the political organism, because the result is an excess of a fundamental quality which finally leads to destruction (Hooker 1969, 183). Rather surprisingly for a Protestant cleric in late sixteenth-century England, Hooker considers that all Churches have a common root, namely the Church of Christ, and some of the Catholic rituals which Protestantism was so opposed to had their origin in the respective Church, therefore they could not be removed without endangering the spiritual health of the organism which the Reform wanted to save from "Rome's corruptions". The reproaches addressed by Hooker to Puritanism use a medical terminology: the Reform had for purpose to heal the "body of the Church", but those who have taken upon themselves the task of administering the necessary cures did not comply at all with the Galenic precepts, which recommended a thorough knowledge of the afflicted part and of the disease which took hold of it.

But there is another trend, which manifested itself in the second half of the sixteenth century, when the religious conflicts became the most acute especially in France – a trend which saw the king himself as a

possible source of disease and argued for a treatment by way of his removal from the throne. Medieval expressions of the metaphor did see the king, on occasion, in such terms, as a possible source of disease, establishing a link even between the physical health of the king and the metaphorical health of his kingdom, but no clear solution was provided. Such restraints were abandoned by the polemicists of the second half of the sixteenth century, most of whom, with the exception of John Ponet, were French Huguenot or Catholic writers. Unlike England, where the existing regime enjoyed greater stability and, consequently, the majority of the authors of political treatises spoke in its favor, France slipped, during the second half of the sixteenth century, in a religious civil war: in this context, the authority of the monarchy became more and more discredited, and the politic literature tended to reflect more and more the passions and the interests of the parties in conflict. For the Huguenots, the main goal was justifying the resistance against the attempts of suppressing the Protestant movement, first and foremost, by the French monarchy, which, in the context of Saint Bartholomew massacre, was declared tyrannical. Consequently, if English political theory approached a wider range of possible political diseases, the Huguenot discourse focuses upon just one, tyranny, and it tried to propose possible remedied through various constitutional schemes. In one of the first political works published after 1572, François Hotman's *Francogallia*, the author „perceives the violence of the civil wars as an attack against the bodies of all Frenchmen and against the order of the state itself" (Soll 2002, 1260) and proposes political history as a remedy, because, in his opinion, old France had been much better governed: basically, by learning the history of the French government, it can reach to a restoration of the old harmonious constitutional model (Soll 2002, 1260). Several years later, in 1579, in the anonymous treatise *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, tyranny is compared to a fever, which is difficult to discover in its incipient phase, when it could be easily remedied, and, when its presence becomes obvious, it had already become incurable (*Vindiciae* 2003, 134). For the anonymous author of this tract, resistance against tyrants was possible or even advisable (*Vindiciae* 2003, 57, 140), and even their killing (*Vindiciae* 2003, 50-51). Such an opinion was legally justified by the argument that the whole body of the people was above the king (*Vindiciae* 2003, 64-65), and if the latter did not obey the laws, it became a simple outlaw (*Vindiciae* 2003, 97). Still, the principle of active resistance, which the anonymous author argues for, presented the latent danger of slipping into anarchy. If it was considered acceptable, then any

person could have declared his legitimate sovereign a tyrant and could have opposed him legally, the outcome being an unending series of disorders. In order to avoid such an accusation, that he was pushing France in a state of total anarchy, the anonymous author imposed certain limits to this right of resistance: not every particular can make use of it, but only the magistrates of the state, whose role was to ease or remove the troubles of the state (*Vindiciae* 2003, 140), in their capacity as symbolic physicians (*Vindiciae* 2003, 33). Therefore, these magistrates could not be charged with rebellion if they defended the laws of the state against the monarch turned tyrant, because, in such a case, the king itself was in a state of rebellion against the majesty of the people, which was the source of royal authority. Of course, even after setting such a limit, a conflict between the monarch and his subjects, represented by the magistrates, had obvious negative consequences for the realm, but the anonymous author points out, resorting to a medical analogy, that evil "cannot be remedied without suffering, nor good attained without pain", like a good physician, in order to heal, is compelled to resort to many painful remedies (*Vindiciae* 2003, 147).

Unlike the Huguenots, the French radical catholics followed a reversed course: originally, they pinned their hopes on the Valois monarchy taking the lead in the campaign to suppress Protestantism in France. For this purpose, the Catholic political writers, pamphleteers or preachers constantly reminded the king, at the time Charles IX (1560-1574), of his coronation oath to protect the Catholic religion and eradicate heresy from his kingdom. In this discourse, the image of the king as the physician of the realm is often made use of in order to point out to the king both his duty and the danger which threatened him and the realm if he did not fulfill it. The most ardent employer of this metaphor during the reign of Charles IX was the Catholic preacher (and future bishop of Narbonne) Simon Vigor, who resorted to corporal images in order to argue that the king of France must not tolerate the "putrid infection of heresy", which threatened the whole social order (Diefendorf 1991, 153). In 1586, Louis Dorléans, in his work *Advertissement des Catholiques Anglois aux François Catholiques*, used the same medical terminology, arguing that "the heretic, being a putrid member and corrupted by cangrene, which destroys the neighbouring members and pursues the ruin of the whole body" had to be removed: the one who had to carry out this task was the king, in whose hands God placed the sword, just as He placed the knife in the hands of the surgeon (Dorléans 1586, 21). In the words of Nicolas Le Roux, "the zelous Catholics were animated by a

spirit of demand" and, in their opinion, "the king's sacral character did not relieve him of his duties, but rather the opposite", with personalities such as Louis Dorléans "addressing the king like a prophet who spoke in the name of God" (Le Roux 2006, 229) It was a rhetorical strategy which paired well with the traditional view of heresy as seditious, a fact which the respective Catholic writers did not hesitate to constantly point out. Yet, during the reign of Henry III, it became more and more obvious that the expectations of the radical Catholics of a ruthless war against heresy led by the monarchy were not going to be fulfilled and this gradually led to a gradual change of political strategy, which was accompanied by a similar change of discourse. Denis Crouzet points out that, as early as the 1560s, the opinion that the king who tolerated heresy was not just a punishment sent by God, but a being actually damned by God, starts to emerge: preachers arguing against the frequent edicts of pacification from the reign of Charles IX asserted the people was not bound to obey unjust laws, thus implying that obedience could be conditional (Crouzet 250). On the other hand, Frederic Baumgartner argues that "even though there were some Catholics who preached that a king who favoured the heretics could be deposed, the majority accused the Huguenots of conspiring against the monarchy and argued that obedience towards the Crown was the one distinguishing mark between Catholics and heretics: for them, the king was God's instrument for purifying the realm of heresy" (Baumgartner 1975, 53-55). Yet this an assertion which should be nuanced: it is valid in particular for the reign of Charles IX, but even during that period a cautionary undertone can be noticed in the urgings addressed to the king to persecute heresy. During the reign of Henry III (1574-1589), the decline of the king's personal prestige is more than obvious: open calls to rebellion and for the deposition of the king did not emerge until 1589, but direct criticism of Henry III was expressed more and more often.

The first major signal to the Catholics favoring anti-Protestant war that they could not count on the king's support was the acceptance by Henry III of the peace of Beaulieu, in 1576, which granted significant concessions to the Huguenots. That treaty was soon replaced by one less favorable to the Protestants, but it still determined the emergence of the Catholic League, whose declared purpose was to oppose the Huguenots regardless of the king's wishes. The simmering tension between the Valois monarchy and the radical Catholic faction reached a boiling point after 1584, over the issue of the succession to the throne of France: after the death of the king's brother, the presumptive heir was Henry of

Navarre, the most important Huguenot prince and the League was determined to prevent his ascension at all costs. The texts produced by the League polemicists after 1584 tried all kind of strategies to solve the dilemma which emerged from the heir to the throne being a heretic, but all agreed upon one point: the so-called "law of catholicity" was considered to be a fundamental law of the kingdom and it required a Catholic king. Scott Manetsch convincingly points out that, in his already mentioned work, Louis Dorlèans harnessed the visceral strength of this "law" by describing the dangers of heretical rulers (drawing examples from England and Germany) and arguing that two religions could never coexist peaceably in the same kingdom. Heresy spreads through the body politic like gangrene, inevitably spawning rebellion and civil war. To prove his assertion, Dorleans pointed to the Calvinist leader Theodore Beza's (alleged) complicity in Poltrot's assassination of François of Guise in 1562 and to Calvin's harsh statements in his published sermons on Daniel, where he encouraged the Reformed to break the nose of Catholic kings rather than obey them (Manetsch, 153-154). During this rhetorical war, the attitudes of the League towards the king remained ambivalent: as late as 1587, a work called *Litéarchie contre percitieux esprits*, even though it was clearly pro-League, compared the king with the soul in man, giving life to the kingdom, thus showing it was possible to be both a member of the League and a royalist (Baumgartner 1975, 79-80). But, on the other hand, without attacking the king openly, the League tried more and more to restrain his actions and force him to act against the Huguenots, a policy which culminated with the Estates General at Blois taking measures seriously limiting royal powers.

Henry III reacted to these attempts of tutelage from the League by having its chiefs, the Duke of Guise and his brother, assassinated. In the context of the open conflict with Henry III which resulted from this event, a violent hostility towards the monarchy which did not meet the expectations emerged in the Catholic camp as well - a hostility which manifested itself, among others, through an avalanche of pamphlets which launched unprecedented attacks against the king. In his study of these pamphlets, David Bell points out that "the League needed to justify what soon became an act of unprecedented rebellion", because it now denied the legitimacy of a king which it had previously acknowledged, and he argued that one of the main thrust of the Leaguer rhetoric was the theme of the king's disguise and dissimulation: beneath an appearance of piety and dignity lied only perversity and malice (Bell 1989, 378-384). This propaganda literature did not reach the level of political insight

which the Huguenot antiroyalist works of the 1570s, like *Vindiciae*, achieved – nor were the corporal analogies deployed in most of them. But the metaphor of the body still found a place, beside other tools, in the League's rhetorical armoury, just as it did in the Huguenot tracts of a decade before. The occasional use of corporal analogies played the same role in exposing the dual nature of Henry III, contrasting the traditional image of the king as physician of the realm with the "true" character of Henry III as it revealed itself after the murders of December 1588. In an anonymous pamphlet from 1589, *Origine de la maladie de la France avec les remedes propres à la guarison d'icelle, avec une exhortation a l'entretienement de la guerre*, the author makes recommendations similar to those which we could have noticed in *Vindiciae*, based on similar reasonings. According to the author, the Huguenots were "the evil humors" of the kingdom and the obligation of the king, following his coronation oath, was to fight against them, in accordance with his traditional role of "physician" of the kingdom (Anon 1589). In the opinion of the Catholic League though, Henry III was not fulfilling his obligations and, consequently, he turned from an element which was supposed to protect the body politic into a threatening one. In such a case, the traditional medical analogy (going back as far as the fourth century, in the writings of some Church fathers such as Ambrose of Milan) argued for the removal of that part which had become dangerous for the body politic, in order to avoid the contamination of the whole. And the anonymous author of the respective pamphlet reiterated this idea, suggesting the removal of the king, which he justifies through the analogy with the widespread medical procedure of bloodletting (Anon. 1589, 9-10). In the words of the pamphleteers, Henri III has deceived his subjects unto believing that he was a just and pious king and now, that his mask was ripped off, had to be removed by any means necessary.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion we can draw is that the medical analogies from sixteenth-century England and France had a common source, Galenic medicine, and shared similar principles, such as those of corporal unity and of interdependence between the members of the body politic, which could not be given up without endangering the whole. Also, these tracts and pamphlets were not mere rhetorical exercises: they were either "manuals" for governance, humanistic versions of the medieval "mirrors of the princes", or polemical texts. This characteristic of the respective

texts make the concept of political disease and the necessity of remedies to be omnipresent: all of them acknowledged that the body politic could be afflicted by disease and tried to offer advices for a "cure". On the other hand, there are also fundamental differences, resulting from the different context of the political literature in the two countries: the English were more concerned about aspects related to the good governance of the kingdom or by external threats, and the main prophylactic factor was the king and his officials. On the other hand, French political theory focused on two main "political diseases", tyranny and heresy, and the position of the monarch was much more ambivalent: he could function in his traditional role as physician of the realm, but he could also be seen as an element of danger, which had to be resisted or even undergo "treatment", expressed through the medical analogies of amputation or bloodletting – the symbolic equivalent of deposing a king, by the magistrates of the kingdom (in Huguenot opinion) or even his physical elimination, through an act of tyrannicide, by an inspired individual, according to the Catholic League.

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