

---

ANNALES  
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA  
LUBLIN – POLONIA

VOL. LXV, 1

SECTIO G

2018

---

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin  
lechdu@gmail.com

LECH DUBEL

---

*Princeps educatus* in the Thought of John of Salisbury

---

*Princeps educatus* w myśli Jana z Salisbury

*I hate stupid people, stupid works and philosophical aphorisms.*  
John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*

The terms “rationality” and “rationalism” have many meanings in the linguistic tradition.<sup>1</sup> They are not synonymous. They derive from the word “ration” (*ratio*).<sup>2</sup> However, it is the word “rationalisation” (*rationalis*) understood as: “activities intended to achieve the intended purpose in a more perfect manner than previously used; improvement in a given field”<sup>3</sup> that seems more useful for the purposes of this text. I assume that in the process of authority the ultimate verifier is the factor of effectiveness, and if so, its appraisal often (though not exclusively) refers to rational arguments (actually rational or recognised as such). They will manifest both in the critical, apologetic or conformist approach. It is reasonable to distinguish the rationality of the aims and the rationality of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Tokarski (red.), *Słownik Wyrazów Obcych PWN*, Warszawa 1980, p. 620, 621. Also: G.L. Seidler, *Notatki o racjonalizmie*, Lublin 1998, p. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Although the term “rationalism” refers to modern times, Grzegorz L. Seidler rightly says, “Rationalism, this significant and important word in the culture of the West, may be defined, as many other words, in different ways. In our discussion, it refers to a wide range of ideas which express the belief that the universe functions in the same way as the man’s mind when he thinks in a logical and objective way. Thus, the man can eventually understand everything he comes across (...). A rationalist is sure that what he understands is natural and that there is nothing that is supernatural”, *ibidem*, p. 9. In this sense, rationalism is to be linked with the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Enlightenment, in particular.

<sup>3</sup> *Słownik Wyrazów Obcych...*, p. 620. Similarly: *Słownik języka polskiego*, t. III, H. Szkiłdź, S. Bik, B. Pakosz, C. Szkiłdź (red.), Warszawa 1989, p. 7.

measures for achieving them. This applies both to the rationality of the man and social groups or the society as a whole, including the rationalisation of the State. The commonly known definition of politics formulated by Aristotle strongly emphasises rationalism and rationalisation of the public activities. Politics belongs in the category of practical science. The man's highest good, that is happiness, is achieved through activities that are in accordance with the reason and a virtuous life. Thus, the man's most important task is to train his mind and to explore the world in more depth. It is significant that he distinguished, among others, the intellectual virtues, i.e. knowledge and wisdom. Anyway, they are never fully attainable. In the relation between the ruled and the ruling, the latter were attributed only the virtue of understanding by him.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of rationalisation of power is in some ways a reflection of the question of accepting or rejecting the rationality of man as a subject of the relation of power. Therefore, it assumes a minimum level of the discernment of the relation of power, and the perception of its subjectivity, or the lack of it, or restrictions. The rationality of man appears to be primary to the rationality of power, or at least is its practical and necessary prerequisite. This does not mean that there is no reciprocal impact of authority back on the rationality of the behaviour of the other party, that is the subordinates. We are dealing here with the mutual effects of both subjects of power, though the motive of behaviour is different. On the part of the ruling, these are all measures to retain and broaden the authority, and on the part of the ruled, to ensure the predictability of authority to, at least, keep the desired goods.<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasised that traditionally, in political and legal thought, the vast majority of postulates to the authority which expose the idea of its rationality are formulated by the ruled. They want to arrange the relations with the ruler in a fair manner (according to their understanding of the concept), based on even simple rules of reason, while others refer to much more complex rational arguments by supporting their postulates with recognised rules of thinking and the principle of basing them on truth. The extent and strength of such arguments are historically variable and are linked not only with the development of the civilisation in the sense of the ever newer techniques and measures of ruling, but also, and perhaps above all, with the sphere of the worldview. Their degree of rational sophistication is firmly grounded in the realities of the era and its underlying ideas. Particularly strong distortions of the proportion of the rationality of the rulers and the ruled, occur in all historical totalitarian systems.<sup>6</sup> Rationalism

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III 2, 4–10.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. K.A. Wittfogel, *Władza totalna*, Toruń 2002, p. 155 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Karl A. Wittfogel says: "It is obvious that ruling duties may be performed in a manner that satisfies the interests of the rulers at the expense of the non-governmental social powers. They may also be performed in a manner that satisfies the needs of the people, and brings few, if any, benefits to the government. The intermediate solutions boil down to a compromise between these two extremes.

is traditionally opposed to actions based on emotional reasons. The latter cannot be underestimated. Sometimes, or even very often, they surpass the national arguments which demand a completely different behaviour (action or omission).<sup>7</sup>

The problem of the rationality of power is multidimensional. These dimensions include, in general sense: 1. The issues of the origins and essence of the State and other forms of authority (the philosophical aspect), 2. The question of the legitimacy of power (the political and legal aspect and the psychological aspect), 3. Specifying the aims and methods of their implementation as formulated and proposed by the rulers (the praxeological and political aspect), 4. The assessment and the demand for the efficiency of the State's functioning and the effectiveness of its action seen both from the perspective of the ruled, but also from the perspective of the rulers (the socio-economic and political aspect). In the detailed understanding, the rationality of the authority in relation to the State can be reduced to the issue of the reason of the State.

I believe that there is no contradiction in searching for the criterion of rationality, both in the metaphysical (in the sense of the metaphysics in St. Thomas' approach) concepts of authority and in a purely empirical and pragmatic approach. One just needs to remember about the appropriate methodological consequence of these approaches. Especially about the fact that in this case, the faith is, assumably, ahead of the reason (science). There is no reason for the assumptions of faith, in the sense of its dogmas, and the essence of religion not to be rationalised. Their rational implementation, if only in terms of the attempt to determine the essence of Deity, the function of faith in its various aspects, including the functional one in the sense of the measures used to carry out the worship is most possible. Or even obvious.<sup>8</sup> However, "In its beginnings, rationalism attempted to remove from the human vision of the world the thought of God and the supernatural phenomena, assuming that the latter will be able to be gradually cognisable thanks to scientific research methods".<sup>9</sup>

---

As a means of exercising the power, these three alternatives are seriously considered only if actual conditions allow an actual choice. (...) However, in all these areas of national responsibility, the interest of the people is sacrificed for the optimal rationality of the rulers", *ibidem*, pp. 155–156.

<sup>7</sup> Here, one may and should refer already to the thought of Aristotle. He writes: "The weak deliberate, but then are prevented by passion from keeping to their resolution; the impetuous are led by passion because they do not stop to deliberate: since some people withstand the attacks of passion, whether pleasant or painful, by feeling or seeing them coming, and rousing themselves, that is, their reasoning faculty, in advance, just as one is proof against tickling if one has just been tickled already", Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1150 b, 20. Also cf. E. Nowak, *O uczuciach i emocjach na poważnie (nie tylko dla nauczycieli etyki)*, „Filozofia Publiczna i Edukacja Demokratyczna” 2012, t. I, p. 27 ff.

<sup>8</sup> The manifestation of this approach is the attempt to define the concept of religion. Arguments involved in defining this concept manifest the rationalisation of faith. Cf. P. Szymaniec, *Koncepcje wolności religijnej. Rozwój historyczny i współczesny stan debaty w zachodniej myśli polityczno-prawnej*, Wrocław 2017, pp. 11–45.

<sup>9</sup> G.L. Seidler, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

Rationality is only one method of exercising the relation of the authority which is determined by the doctrine that specifies the essence and functions of the State. Sometimes the authority can even act irrationally. To a greater or lesser extent, rationalising arguments occur in each doctrine. However, all doctrines also refer, in varying degrees, to non-rational arguments.

The evolution of political systems is characterised by the increasing subjectivisation of the ruled, which, in turn, leads to the blurring of differences in the expectations of both parties. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt aptly writes: “In historical bureaucratic systems rulers had a monopoly when it comes to making authoritative political decisions. The political aspirations of the subordinates manifested only in potential, but not fully institutionalised requests posed towards the rulers-requests that only the rulers could turn into political aims”.<sup>10</sup>

This issue is constantly present in thinkers and politicians’ discussion on authority, governance and the State. Jan Malarczyk emphasises: “The qualities of the ruler governing the State and the principles of politics which he should follow, have for centuries aroused the interest of thinkers and politicians. This problem particularly attracted the attention of the philosophers of the ancient Greece (...)”.<sup>11</sup>

Before the numerous texts in the Renaissance era relating to the problem of good authority or rational authority, which typically would be treated as synonymous, a kind of preparation for this explosion of texts devoted to the issue, is seen in the Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup>

The Middle Ages was the era of the duality of power. The concept and understanding of authority was dynamic at that time. In the early Middle

---

<sup>10</sup> Shmuel N. Eisenstadt further states that “In the modern systems, the formal political difference between rulers and ruled becomes continually obliterated; both develop as relatively direct holders or representatives of political power, orientation, and demands. The process of political decision-making becomes largely vested in a somewhat new type of ruling elite – an elite whose foremost claim to legitimation is that its members represent different groups of the society, their values and orientations. This new kind of elite attempts to incorporate these values and aspirations in the political process and to translate them into the ultimate goals of the polity”, S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires*, New York 1969, p. 370.

<sup>11</sup> J. Malarczyk, *Wizerunek renesansowego władcy*, „Annales UMCS. Sectio G” 1974, vol. XXI, nr 4, p. 67. Among others: Socrates, Plato Aristotle, Isocrates, Xenophon, “or particularly Plutarch, whose *Parallel Lives* has been widely read”, *ibidem*, p. 68. This issue would also interest the Roman Stoics, particularly Polybius, Cicero, Seneca or Marcus Aurelius.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Malarczyk notices: “The victory of the Catholic Church and its teachings in the medieval Europe added a new problem to the issues of authority and the State, that is the relation of secular authority to the ecclesiastical authority and religious principles. The commonly prevailing monarchic form of governing would still, despite a partial change, validate the problem of the qualities and competences of the monarch and the character, aim and the assumptions of its politics. Among the numerous treatises devoted to the issue, two of them have been eternally renown – Thomas Aquinas’ unfinished treatise *De regimine principum* and Dante Alighieri’s *De Monarchia*”, *ibidem*, p. 68.

Ages, the issue was approached differently than in the medieval period of “the Enlightenment”.<sup>13</sup> In this situation, the rational or rationalising arguments were referred to by both the proponents of the papalistic vision of the State, as well as the supporters of the concept of the autonomous secular authority. It needs to be remembered that at the time of John of Salisbury (c. 1115–1180), the State was confessional, the difference between *the sacred* and *the profane* is just intuitively perceived and is part of a long and complex process, which in some ways will be completed with Niccolò Machiavelli’s definition of the State.

John of Salisbury’s ideas concerning good authority precede the ones of St. Thomas Aquinas’ and Dante’s by about one hundred years.<sup>14</sup> It is a long period, only at the end of which there appears the previously unknown to the then Latin culture, *Politics* by Aristotle. This is not the only argument which stimulates to investigate the problem. The significance of John of Salisbury’s views stems from the fact that he discussed the issue of the authority of the prince *in abstracto*, by describing the qualities of every ruler and not by assigning his observations and conclusions solely to one particular ruler (as much later Callimachus did in relation to Jan Olbracht). The treatise on the prince is a treatise on the original understanding of the essence of public authority and a proposal of a kind of a socio-technique derived from the contemporary understanding of Christianity.

<sup>13</sup> Jan Baszkiewicz writes: “The early medieval king considered himself to be the secular deputy of God on earth; in his kingdom he was »second after God« and participated in God’s reign of the world. Thus, some part of God’s power streamed down on his untouchable and sacred person. Out of God’s mercy, the monarch enjoys superhuman power, sometimes even miracle power. Such royal religion would increase the authority of the ruler, protect from plots and increase the loyalty of great lords. Yet, since the time of the reform of the Church, rulers began to lose even this; popes and theologians fervently began to »de-sacralise kings«”, J. Baszkiewicz, *Władza*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1999, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> In this paper, I omit Dante’s ideas. I limit the discussion to two authors. It needs to be noted that “What both medieval thinkers (John of Salisbury and St. Thomas – L.D.) mean by »authority« is the social relation where one party (the ruler), by means of his actions that are independent of the will of the other party (the ruled), has the power to create given aims, phenomena and duties in the sphere of spiritual or physical life, as well as to shape the other party’s relations with the external world. According to John of Salisbury and Thomas Aquinas, the state is a natural creation. The man cannot, in principle, function on his own, as he is naturally destined to befriend other individuals of the same species: *homo homini amicus et familiaris*”, L. Dubel, M. Łuszczynska, *Jan z Salisburii i św. Tomasz z Akwinu o władzy godnej i niegodnej*, [in:] Z. Władek et al. (red.), *Księga życia i twórczości. Prawo*, t. V, *Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesorowi Romanowi A. Tokarczykowski*, Lublin 2013, p. 45. St. Thomas defines monarchy as the best political system. Earlier, the same idea appears in John of Salisbury. Andrzej Sylwestrzak writes that in Thomas Aquinas’ monarchy “the State’s aims are reduced to national actions that order the life of the individual and the community in a fair manner. It is the »light of the reason« that makes the citizen and the society act towards the fulfilment of own good, thus good understood in the categories of the broadest communisation”, A. Sylwestrzak, *Akwinyt cypryjski „monarcha chrześcijański”*, [in:] A. Madeja (red.), *Nam hoc natura aequum est...: Księga Jubileuszowa ku czci Profesora Janusza Justyńskiego w siedemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, Toruń 2012, p. 98.

The postulates for the rationalisation of authority are determined by John of Salisbury's worldview. His views are expressed by the boundless recognition of Christianity as the only absolute and universal value and a system that completely explains the essence of the world subordinated to God. Hence, also humanity. The issue of authority is consistently discussed in this context. His concept of rationality and the rationalisation of authority derives mainly from this prerequisite and is justified with arguments derived from both a solid education, extraordinary reason and absolute fidelity to the Church.

The issue of rational authority is preceded by a more general issue, the prerequisite of the reasonable human nature. He emphasises:

Recognition connotes certitude and applies either to learning or to faith. Let the rule of faith be deferred however, as it will be discussed in its own time and place. Learning then involves knowledge of self, which cannot be attained if it fails to measure its own strength or if it be ignorant of the strength of others. Consciousness consists of having self-confidence either in knowledge, or in the faith. [...] A man with a certain knowledge has knowledge about himself, which may not take place if man does not appreciate his own strength or is ignorant when it comes to others.<sup>15</sup>

This knowledge is revealed, either by reason or by the revelation of grace. This truth applies to everyone, as every man carries in his heart "a book open for those dedicated to the reason". Hence, the man should live a life based on truth and virtue, it is the obligation of every single rational person. While "its contrary is ignorance and her hateful and hostile offspring, vice".<sup>16</sup>

John of Salisbury assumes, however, that it is not the autonomous reason itself, but the natural law inscribed, "imprinted" in the heart of every man, and hence also in the heart of the ruler (and in all other members of the body), and reminding of this law by constant studies on it that is the source of his sound use.<sup>17</sup>

Based on these assumptions he forms the following opinions on the essence of authority: Firstly, it is a vision of a sinless monarch. In his opinion, it is basically

---

<sup>15</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus albo o paplaninie dworaków i przekazach filozofów*, Lublin 2008, p. 49. He explains that: "This life fills every created thing because without it there is no substance for its creation. For all that is exists by reason of sharing in it. But, though it be by nature in all things, by grace it dwells only in the rational. They exist therefore because truth is in them; they are enlightened because wisdom is in them; they love the good because the source of goodness and charity is in them (...). Knowledge precedes the cultivation of virtue, for no one can truly seek that of which he is ignorant; nor can evil be effectively shunned unless it be known", *ibidem*, p. 48, 49.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> It is emphasised by Bogdan Szlachta: "Rulers using reason, used God's gift for the sake of everybody's good, thus fulfilling the Creator-made models imprinted in the secondary nature, which also were the criteria of the correctness of their actions, recognised by means of the inherent reason in the nature of communities which they ruled, yet which they did not create but only looked after its »behaviour« and »well-being«", B. Szlachta, *Monarchia prawa. Szkice z historii angielskiej myśli politycznej do końca epoki Plantagenetów*, Kraków 2001, pp. 105–106.

the only condition to recognise the ruler as a real prince (*princeps*). The opposite of such legitimate authority is a tyrant. It is to be served by the requirement of appropriate education. He should be a *princeps educatus* (*litteratus*). Secondly, this is the organic vision of the state in which the political body is ruled by the head, that is the habitat of reason, which is subject only to the conscience, that is the clergy.<sup>18</sup> The structure of the State reflects the wisdom of God, who created man “in his own image and likeness”. Hence, the State is the reflection (expression) of humanity and its rational part. Thirdly, the various parts of the State (its members) imitate the man and cooperate with one another. The two values previously raised by Augustine: *ordinis* and *pax* are possible to ensure with rationally acting and thus fair authority of the prince, already named by John of Salisbury as public authority.<sup>19</sup> Fourthly, the authority of the prince is realised in protecting the law of God both by him and by his subjects, and its objective is the realisation of the common good. The public authority and the public body serve not only to punish those guilty of the violation of law in all its dimensions, but they also have positive tasks to do.<sup>20</sup>

First of all, the postulate for the reign of the prince, and thus not a tyrant, is derived from the idea of sinlessness of the ruler. This is the main assumption made by John of Salisbury, and the following suggestions (e.g. the rationality of authority) are only its derivatives.

The implementation of the above objectives in practice is to be the result of certain rational guarantees which John of Salisbury demands from the authority of the prince. Hence, it should be noted that a priority for him was God’s law written in the intimate self of the prince, in his heart. He is close here to Augustine’s concept of the law of nature. However, the factor of reason is already much more noticed and appreciated. Only St. Thomas recognises the important place of reason by writing: “What man obtains by way of reasoning, is at the same time in accordance with reason, while what is known by revelation does not contain anything that would be contrary to reason”.<sup>21</sup>

John of Salisbury only permits such rationalisation of authority that directly serves to ensure the integrity of the prince and his fair reign and is derived from the law of God. The prince is a public authority because he implements the general interest. Thus, in fact, the prince serves out of the will of and for the natural law.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 119.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. L. Dubel, *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Policraticus...*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Szlachta writes that in this approach the authority “was already also recognised as the power helping the weak, the ability to direct everybody’s action towards the aim of people living in a community, not by coercion, and not at the ruler’s order, but out of a natural inclination to subordinate to people leading them towards the proper aim”, B. Szlachta, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–102.

<sup>21</sup> M. Łuszczynska, *Ubi ratio, ibi ius. Doktryna prawna świętego Tomasza z Akwinu*, Lublin 2013, p. 58.

Not only formally, but also actually, his behaviour has to be not only an expression of the knowledge of this law, but also the result of its acceptance by “inscribing in the heart”. This intimate adoption of God’s law by the prince is even more important than the letter of the law. And it is to be, first and foremost, the only internal imperative guiding the prince on the right path to a fair reign.<sup>22</sup> In this case, the rational element is less important than emotional factors. The reason must be subjected, without any doubt, to the voice of conscience. So it seems that it is difficult to find straightforward rationality in the concept of authority in this description like later in St. Thomas’ approach, or as we understand it today.

Let us remember, however, that this thesis is the paradigm of John of Salisbury’s further discussions. This paradigm is based on the dogmas of Christianity. And those do not submit to the judgment of reason but derive directly from the truths of the faith and shall not be subject to questioning. They specify the ultimate boundaries of the human reason. While the foundation of meeting the paradigm of the authority of the prince as a public authority is the whole system of guarantees of rational behaviour that is derived by John of Salisbury from the rules of logical thinking and life experience, underlined by the authority of eminent philosophers of antiquity.

He especially postulates for the rationality of statutory law, which he, however, strictly refers to the sovereignty of God’s law, writing that “a statute or ordinance (*constitutio*) of the prince is a thing of nought if not in conformity with the teaching of the Church. This did not escape the notice of that most Christian prince, who required of his laws that they should not disdain to imitate the sacred canons”.<sup>23</sup> The prince is to be, as mentioned before, the servant of God’s law. He writes:

It is added: He shall keep it with him, and read therein all the days of his life”. Observe how great should be the diligence of the prince in keeping the law of God. He is enjoined always to have it, read it, and turn it over in his mind, even as the King of kings, born of woman, born under the law, fulfilled the whole justice of the law, though He was subject to it not of necessity but of His own free will; because His will was embodied in the law, and on the law of God He meditated day and night.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> “And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom that he shall write him a copy of this law of the Deuteronomy in a book. Let us notice that the prince cannot ignore the law and, although he enjoys many privileges, he cannot disregard God’s laws under the pretext of the military spirit. This is the Repeated Law (Deuteronomic Law), that is the second law, and thus it is to be written in the book of his heart, so that the first law that is written on paper is in accordance with the second law that is recognised by the mystic mind. The first law could be written on stone tables; but the second law was inscribed nowhere but in the pure mind of the spirit. And the prince acts rightly in writing the Deuteronomic Law in the book of his mind as he can thus reflect on this Law in his mind without letters that can disappear from before his eyes. And hence, the letter of law is observed in such a way that there is no discrepancy with the integrity of his soul”, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*..., pp. 74–75.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.



Though it seems that for John of Salisbury the most important thing is the adoption of the standards of God's law and anchoring them in his heart, practically the ruler should constantly study this law. Such constant studies ensure that he can never forget about it.<sup>25</sup> A condition for the implementation of such an assumption for princes (because of the obligation of daily studies of the text of God's law) is to be literate.<sup>26</sup>

Rationality is inscribed in the heart of the monarch by God, and, therefore, it is something more than just having formal education. Naturally, the study of God's law requires an ongoing intellectual effort. At the same time, he notes that in practice there are some illiterate rulers. In this situation, only due to the exceptional integrity and virtue of the illiterate prince, he may be granted a dispensation from the requirement of education, yet he has to be surrounded by literate (educated) people. Thanks to his council, he will be able to carry out his duties properly. The guarantee of his proper actions is especially the consultation of the advice of priests who are experts in writing. It is through them: "Thus let the mind of the prince read through the medium of the priest's tongue, and whatever of excellence he sees in their lives, let him revere it as the law of the Lord. For the life and tongue of priests are like a book of life before the face of peoples".<sup>27</sup> There is

---

<sup>25</sup> Cf. L. Dubel, M. Łuszczynska; *Jan z Salisburii i św. Tomasz z Akwinu o władzy godnej i niegodnej...*, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> "And perchance you will not often find that priests are bidden to read the law daily. But the prince is to read it daily, and all the days of his life; because the day on which he does not read the law is for him a day not of life but of death. But plainly he will hardly be able to do this if he is illiterate. Wherefore in the letter which I remember that the king of the Romans sent to the king of the Franks, urging him to have his children educated in liberal studies, he added tastefully to his other arguments that an illiterate king is like an ass who wears a crown", *ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>27</sup> In the *Attic Nights* I remember to have read when the notable traits and habits of Philip of Macedon were treated, that among other things his love of letters coloured as it were the business of war and the triumphs of victory, the liberality of his table, the offices of humanity and whatever he did or said gracefully or elegantly. He recognised that in this quality he excelled others, and was anxious to transmit it as the basis of his inheritance to the only son who he hoped would be the heir of his kingdom and good fortune. For this reason he thought fit to write his famous letter to Aristotle, who he hoped would become the teacher of the newly born Alexander. It is substantially in the following words: "Philip sends greetings to Aristotle. Know that a son has been born to me, for which I give thanks to the Gods not more because he has been born than because his birth has chanced in your life-time. For I hope that it will come to pass that, educated and trained by you, he will grow up worthy of ourselves and of taking over such great affairs". I do not remember that the Roman emperors or commanders, so long as their commonwealth flourished, were illiterate. And I do not know how it chances, but since the merit of letters has languished among princes, the strength of their military arm has become enfeebled and the princely power itself has been as it were cut off at the root. But no wonder, since without wisdom no government can be strong enough to endure or even to exist. Socrates, who was pronounced by the oracle of Apollo to be the wisest of men, and who without contradiction excelled incomparably, not only in reputation for wisdom but also in virtue, those who are called the seven sages, asserted that commonwealths would only be

a clearly formulated political postulate for subordinating the authority of *princeps* to the wisdom of priests, particularly if his own wisdom is not sufficient. When his formal knowledge of God's law is incomplete due to the lack of education. What is more important in this case, however, is the sense of the law of God written in the heart of the ruler, though, yet it is insufficient.

The wisdom of the ruler is a prerequisite for the success of the kingdom, and especially the durability of his reign, and the ruler is not able to ensure the stability and the durability of the state if he himself is not a priest of it. This value is important not only for the Christian ruler. It is a kind of a universal truth. In his opinion, the ancient people, though they were not the followers of the religion of Moses, considered education and knowledge as great values.<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly, wisdom was the guidance in life for the ancient people. John of Salisbury particularly reminds of the fundamental importance of virtue (that is wisdom) in Socrates' approach. But he also cites other arguments, particularly by referring to the *Book of Proverbs*. Thus, the postulate for the rational authority is underlined by specific conditions. One of them is knowledge in the natural and formal dimensions. The latter is to be possessed, if not by the prince himself, then by the priests who are his advisors. The postulate for the prince to use their knowledge is firmly formed. The prince must listen to the priests, as what they communicate is "as if divine".

Other members of the State are to carry out their tasks while always bearing in mind they are only an extension of the prince's will. The prince is the head of the political body, and the head is, indeed, the habitat of the reason.<sup>29</sup>

The doctrine of John of Salisbury, relating the essence of the accepted authority of the prince to justice mainly, while emphasising its public dimension, also raises some specific issues, such as, for example, the issue of the activities of the prince's officials. John's comments, observations and conclusions concern all officials, both lay and clerical. However, he separately discusses the position of nobles, who "are allowed more", which does not mean everything. He discusses the problem of officials in several contexts: the authority of the prince, the

---

happy if they were governed by philosophers or if their rulers at least became students and lovers of wisdom, John of Salisbury, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> He emphasised that "Wherefore the ancient philosophers thought fit that the likeness of wisdom should be depicted before the doors of all temples and that these words should be inscribed thereon: I am begotten by Experience, born of Memory; »Sophia« the Greeks call me, you »Sapientia«", *ibidem*, p. 79.

<sup>29</sup> Szlachta indicates: "Hence the growing importance of the organic concept of the political community, which manifested in nature, and was the actual being, if caused by the reason of an educated prince that is free from particular passions, and thus disinterested; as only the community ruled by a rational ruler who recognised the principle of existence and thus participating in the divine act of norm-making, was legitimised by God and reflected the natural model", B. Szlachta, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–102.

governors of provinces, proconsuls – that is travelling judges, fiscal collectors and officials, other judiciary officers, and also generally, as a category, "nobles". However, it should be pointed out that all these considerations are derived from John of Salisbury's analysis which was carried out at a much higher degree of abstraction and related to the essence of the authority of *princeps*. Hence, in the discussion of the relation the prince – officials, comments on officials are carried out from the perspective of the importance of this group for the prosperity of the prince, and this only leads in consequence to the good of the people (*respublic*). In this regard, he recognises the following cause and effect relations: the prince who is the servant of the law is also potentially a good clerical apparatus and retention of justice. A tyrant is both the actual selection of the worst personalities to the clerical state and, as a result, the destruction of justice.

John extensively discusses specific clerical categories, to which he devotes several chapters of his work. These texts constitute an interesting contribution, mainly in terms of clerical ethics. The ethics of officials in the normative sense is to be an expression of the rationalisation of the authority of the prince. John of Salisbury dedicates quite extensive excerpts of his work to this subject. He does not, however, deal with the formal problems of the clerical structure, but exactly with the quality of the officials; he identifies their attitudes, makes critical comments and represents quite clearly a certain outline of the system of normative ethics. Subjectively, he most often refers to the generally defined category of "officials", which he called "the unarmed hand", paying a lot of attention particularly to tax collectors and tax officials, judges, military men and priests. This issue is mainly discussed in Book IV and Chapter I of Book VI of *Policraticus*. It needs to be noted, however, that these issues very often appear in other books and chapters of this work, which proves that he was keenly interested in these issues both a theoretician and a chronicler of the customs of his time. Of course, he did not consciously make a proposal of the code of clerical ethics, although his discussion is extensive, structured and systematic. No less important category of officials is "the armed hand", that is the army.<sup>30</sup> Both "hands" can act rightly or wrongly. However, although both can be used, it is "the armed" one that is employed against the enemies, and the unarmed may be stretched out "against the citizen also".<sup>31</sup>

The arguments of his normative ethics are comprehensive. First of all, he resorts to theological justifications, historical and contemporary examples, the remarks by great authorities, and, finally, his own opinions and "common-reason" knowledge. He often refers to the Bible. John of Salisbury's normative ethics is,

---

<sup>30</sup> Cf. L. Dubel, *Deontologia urzędnicza w ujęciu Jana z Salisburys*, [in:] J. Justyński, A. Madeja (red.), *Moralność i władza jako kategorie myśli politycznej*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 172–189.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. John of Salisbury, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–141.

to a certain extent, at times “softened” by the writer’s past life experiences or even other authorities’ opinions. This can be seen, for example, in the issue of the ban to bribe officials.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of the assessment of the functioning of the principality, he strongly emphasises the need to perceive different possibilities of the *princeps*’s behaviour. The basic directive specifying the manner of behaviour is, first and foremost, proper human behaviour of a man whose responsibilities directly derive from nature and who must act towards it properly. He writes that the justification of this absolute “appropriateness” of behaviours is the fact that this law applies to any entity in the same way. Therefore, it is a kind of obligation towards the laws of nature. No one is exempt from it. Even the prince. Besides, there are also legal obligations which apply to individual subjects. They may in practice aim at legitimate and illegitimate purposes. The illegitimate purposes are those that derive from the rejection of everything that is not “dictated by the innate reason or obligation”. Then, we have to deal with the violation of conflict of the laws of nature. However, these other obligations are clear and important for all and receive the dimension of fairness just when they arise from the reason and the honest intention.

The primary role of the prince is making and applying law. By making judgements he protects the common good, and hence deserves to be called a public authority.<sup>33</sup> Although, in fact, he is the law for himself, this does not imply the permission to commit acts of iniquity. The law which he makes applies to everyone. What is vastly desirable is the practice of activities of the prince who is obliged to act in accordance with the law in force.<sup>34</sup> Everyone is obliged to accept the restrictions resulting from this hierarchical system of laws. Thus, making sure that the laws are obeyed in the state, the prince should obey them himself. Formally, he stands above its own law. In practice, though, he should not break it. Thus, he writes:

However, it is said that the prince is absolved from the obligations of the law; but this is not true in the sense that it is lawful for him to do unjust acts, but only in the sense that his character should be such as to cause him to practice equity not through fear of the penalties of the law but through love of justice; and should also be such as to cause him from the same motive to promote the advantage of the commonwealth, and in all things to prefer the good of others before his own private will.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 180–182.

<sup>33</sup> John of Salisbury explains: “Public welfare which fosters the state and its individual citizens consists in sanctity of life, for life is man’s most cherished possession and its sanctity his greatest blessing”, John of Salisbury, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> He writes: “Need I ask whether one whom this law binds is restrained by no law? Surely this law is divine and cannot be broken with impunity. Every word thereof is a thunderclap in the ears of princes if they would be wise”, *ibidem*, p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 63.

The description of the position and the role of the prince intuitively expresses the later idea of the theory of the two Petrine swords. In his opinion, the Church wields the sword of power and the prince wields as if part of the sword that he obtained from the Church. He uses it to punish the guilty, as the Church may not defile by oppressing others. Although: “For every office existing under, and concerned with the execution of, the sacred laws is really a religious office, but that is inferior which consists in punishing crimes, and which therefore seems to be typified in the person of the hangman”.<sup>36</sup> The power of the prince is, in fact, lower than the power of the Church. Under specific conditions, the prince may pass his rights onto an official, however, he still remains the executor of the law *in spe*.

In the application of the law, though he is mainly the executor of it, the prince must be impartial and judge a case objectively in accordance with the letter, and the spirit, of the law.

Truly the sword of princely power is as the sword of a dove, which contends without gall, smites without wrath, and when it fights, yet conceives no bitterness at all. For as the law pursues guilt without any hatred of persons, so the prince most justly punishes offenders from no motive of wrath but at the behest, and in accordance with the decision, of the passionless law.<sup>37</sup>

That is a clearly formulated idea of impartial judgement relating directly to the prince, but through him also to all his officials. In addition, the monarch is the symbol of judicial independence, since he is only subordinated to God’s law. Such a strong opinion does not apply to officials of justice who act on his behalf. They are only “an extension of the hand of justice” of the prince. Other postulates for the prince formulated by John of Salisbury, express a kind of political realism – its weaker version as compared to, for example, Marsilius of Padua. They include:

1. The prince should be rich. However, it should not be selfishly treated as his treasure. In fact, the wealth of the ruler is to serve the people, or even be considered as the wealth of the people.<sup>38</sup>
2. The prince should be able to reconcile his majesty with the majesty of the people, and he should show respect to the people by treating them according to their social position. However, this directive applies when he acts as a private person. Neither the prince nor his officials should allow the fraternisation of the subjects with the authority. Hence, in practice, a certain degree of haughtiness of the authority is necessary, because any disregard and contempt are born out

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> He wrote: “He will therefore not regard as his own the wealth of which he has the custody for the account of others, nor will he treat as private the property of the fisc, which is acknowledged to be public. Nor is this any ground for wonder since he is not even his own man, but belongs wholly to his subjects”, *ibidem*, p. 74.

of equal social relations. The prince should constantly remember to retain his grandeur and public splendour, and ensure that his personal situation does not undermine the dignity of his public rank. This especially concerns judges *in corpore*.<sup>39</sup> He also needs to make sure that his personal dignity does not violate the dignity of others and, thus, the public authority is not harmed.

The actions of the prince should be moderate. This should be expressed both in the content and the form of his activity. He should especially maintain consistency in punishment, but he also must show the ability to pardon and show mercy. Showing mercy is especially important, as “This, however, is certain, that it is safer for the cords to be relaxed than to be stretched too tautly”.<sup>40</sup> This promotes respect for the prince and justice itself. In fact, the justice of the prince is more important than a judgment: “For the honour of a king delights in judgment and represses the faults of offenders with tranquil moderation of mind”.<sup>41</sup> In general, any precipitation and “violent passion” is not good, it is simply harmful to the reign and the salvation of the ruler. But also any excess and exaggeration in the behaviour of the prince are a mistake. It needs to be stressed that the view of John of Salisbury that especially the excess of goodness and actions considered to be good, is not just a mistake, but it is actually very bad for the ruler.

3. Although the prince is the head of a political body, in practice his justice requires the cooperation of officials. He must give them a sense of security. Then, the power of justice will not fade in himself. The justice of the prince determines the virtuous behaviour of other members of the political body.<sup>42</sup>

When the prince follows these rules, he may expect an award both in the earthly life and after death. This is supposed to ensure the long reign both of him and his successors. However, the essence of this award is that “»a long reign« means a reign for the life-time of the unfailing soul who will be crowned with the glory of eternal blessedness for a kingdom well administered”.<sup>43</sup> Any injustice eventually destroys kingdoms.<sup>44</sup> It is legitimate to say that rulers of states should have honour and respect for God, inner discipline, educated officials and people

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 83.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85, he further explains: “For while justice is one thing and godliness another, still both are so necessary to the prince that whoever without them attains, not necessarily to princely power, but even to any magistracy whatever, mocks himself in vain but will surely provoke against himself the mockery and scorn and hatred of others”, *ibidem*, p. 86.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 86.

<sup>42</sup> He concludes his discussion: “But when through the negligence or concealment of the prince as regards the members there is loss of strength or good reputation, then diseases and blemishes come upon his own members. Nor does the well-being of the head long continue when sickness attacks the members”, *ibidem*, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> John of Salisbury explains: “Injustice, the Stoics think, is a frame of mind which banishes equity from the realm of the habits”, *ibidem*, p. 96.

in power, and the love and care for his subjects.<sup>45</sup> These general ideas rationalising the authority of the prince are the obvious result of the Christian worldview of John of Salisbury, the Archbishop of Canterbury. They also have a clear political dimension. With his sophisticated intellect, the author of *Policraticus* supports the authority of the Church (the papacy), its sovereignty over the secular authority, in fact, after all, “the inferior” ecclesiastical authority. These are the boundaries of his projection of the rationalisation of the authority. Among others, these ideas will find their expression in later hierocratic concepts and in the political disputes between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, and in the subsequent achievements of popes Gregory VII, Innocent III, and Boniface VIII.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Warszawa 1956.  
Aristotle, *Politics*, Warszawa 2002.  
Baszkiewicz, J., *Władza*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1999.  
Dubel, L., Łuszczynska, M., *Jan z Salisburys i św. Tomasz z Akwinu o władzy godnej i niegodnej*, [in:] Z. Władek et al. (red.), *Księga życia i twórczości. Prawo*, t. V, *Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesorowi Romanowi A. Tokarczykowi*, Lublin 2013.  
Dubel, L., *Deontologia urzędnicza w ujęciu Jana z Salisburys*, [in:] J. Justyński, A. Madeja (red.), *Moralność i władza jako kategorie myśli politycznej*, Warszawa 2011.  
Dubel, L., *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Policraticus albo o paplaninie dworaków i przekazach filozofów*, Jan z Salisburys, Lublin 2008.  
Eisenstadt, S.N., *The Political System of Empires*, New York 1969.  
John of Salisbury, *Policraticus albo o paplaninie dworaków i przekazach filozofów*, Lublin 2008.  
Łuszczynska, M., *Ubi ratio, ibi ius. Doktryna prawna św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, Lublin 2013.  
Malarczyk, J., *Wizerunek renesansowego władcy*, „Annales UMCS. Sectio G” 1974, vol. XXI, nr 4.  
Seidler, G.L., *Notatki o racjonalizmie*, Lublin 1998.  
Szkliładź, H., Bik, S., Pakosz, B., Szkliładź, C. (red.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, t. III, Warszawa 1989.  
Szlachta, B., *Monarchia prawa. Szkice z historii angielskiej myśli prawnej do końca epoki Plantagenetów*, Kraków 2001.  
Sylwestrzak, A., *Akwinyaty cypryjski „monarcha chrześcijański”*, [in:] A. Madeja (red.), *Nam hoc natura aequum est... Księga Jubileuszowa ku czci Profesora Janusza Justyńskiego w siedemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, Toruń 2012.  
Szymaniec, P., *Koncepcje wolności religijnej. Rozwój historyczny i współczesny stan debaty w Zachodniej myśli polityczno-prawnej*, Wrocław 2017.  
Tokarski, J., (red.), *Słownik Wyrazów Obcych PWN*, Warszawa 1980.  
Wittfogell, K.A., *Władza totalna*, Toruń 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. L. Dubel, *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Policraticus...*, p. 29.

## SUMMARY

The Middle Ages was the era of the duality of power. The concept and understanding of power was dynamic at that time. The issue looked different in the early Middle Ages and different in the medieval period of “the enlightenment”. In this situation, the rational or rationalizing arguments were supported by both proponents of the papalistic vision of the state, as well as the supporters of the concept of autonomous secular authority. It must be borne in mind that at the time of John of Salisbury (c. 1115–1180), the State was confessional, the difference between *the sacred* and *the profane* was only just intuitively perceived and was part of a long and complex process, which in a sense, ended upon the arrival of Niccolò Machiavelli’s definition of the State. John of Salisbury formulates the following opinions on the essence of power: Firstly, it is a vision of a sinless monarch. According to him, it is basically the only condition of the recognition of the ruler as a real prince (*princeps*). The opposite of this legitimate authority is a tyrant. The requirements there is appropriate education. It has to be *princeps educatus (litteratus)*. Secondly, it is the organic vision of the state in which the political body is governed by the head, which is the habitat of reason, which is only subject to the conscience or the clergy. The construction of the State reflects the wisdom of God, who created man “in his own image and likeness”. Therefore, the State is the reflection (expression) of humanity and its reasonable part. Thirdly, the particular parts of the State (its members) imitate the man and interact with one another. The two values which were earlier raised by St. Augustine: *ordinis* and *pax* can be ensured by reasonable and thus fair authority of a prince, which was already named as public authority by John of Salisbury. Fourthly, the authority of prince is exercised in protecting the law of God both by him and by his subjects, and its objective is the realisation of the common good. The implementation of the above objectives in practice is to be the result of certain rational guarantees which are formulated by John of Salisbury towards the authority of prince.

**Keywords:** *princeps*; tyrant; law of nature; education of prince; counselling of priests; common good; independence of prince’s judgement; loyalty of officials

## STRESZCZENIE

Średniowiecze było epoką dualizmu władzy. Ujęcie i rozumienie władzy było wówczas dynamiczne. Inaczej problem ten kształtował się we wczesnym średniowieczu, a inaczej w średniowiecznym okresie „oświecenia”. W takiej sytuacji po argumenty racjonalne, czy racjonalizujące, sięgali zarówno zwolennicy papalistycznej wizji państwa, jak i koncepcji autonomicznej władzy świeckiej. Pamiętać należy o tym, że w czasach Jana z Salisburii (ok. 1115–1180) państwo miało charakter wyznaniowy, różnica pomiędzy *sacrum* i *profanum* była dopiero intuicyjnie postrzegana, będąc fragmentem długiego i złożonego procesu, który w pewnym sensie zakończy dopiero definicja państwa Niccolò Machiavellego. Jan z Salisburii formułuje następujące opinie dotyczące istoty władzy. Po pierwsze, jest to wizja bezgrzesznego monarchy. To jest w zasadzie jedyny jego zdaniem warunek uznania panującego za prawdziwego księcia (*princepsa*). Przeciwnością takiej prawowitej władzy jest tyran. Służyć temu ma wymóg odpowiedniego wykształcenia. Ma to być *princeps educatus (litteratus)*. Po drugie, organiczna wizja państwa, w którym ciałem politycznym zarządza głowa, czyli siedlisko rozumu, poddana jedynie zwierzchności sumienia, czyli klerowi. Budowa państwa odzwierciedla mądrość Boga, który stworzył człowieka „na swój obraz i podobieństwo”. Stąd państwo jest odbiciem (wyrazem) człowieczeństwa i jego rozumnej części. Po trzecie, poszczególne części państwa (jego członki) imitują człowieka i współdziałają ze sobą. Dwie wartości podnoszone wcześniej przez świętego Augustyna: *ordinis* i *pax* są możliwe do zapewnienia dzięki racjonalnie działającej i w efekcie sprawiedliwej władzy księcia nazwanej przez Jana z Salisburii



---

władzą publiczną. Po czwarte, władza księcia realizuje się w strzeżeniu prawa Bożego zarówno przez niego, jak i przez poddanych, a jej celem jest realizacja dobra wspólnego. Realizacja powyższych założeń w praktyce ma być efektem pewnych rozumowych gwarancji, które wobec władzy księcia formułuje Jan z Salisbury.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *princeps*; tyran; prawo natury; wykształcenie; doradztwo kapłanów; dobro wspólne; niezawisłość sądu księcia; lojalność urzędników

