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论政治体

The Book of the Body Politic

Christine de Pizan

克里斯蒂勒·德·比赞

Edited by

KATE

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中国政法大学出版社

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Introduction

Considered to be the first woman of letters of France, Christine de Pizan (c.1364–c.1430) was born in Venice. She was the daughter of Thomas de Pizan, medical doctor and astrologer, whose training at the prestigious University of Bologna brought him an appointment to the court of Charles V of France. In 1369 he settled his young family in Paris which became their permanent home. Christine was encouraged in her education both by her father and her young husband, Etienne du Castel, whom she married in 1380. Christine's love of learning and familiarity with court life brought their reward when she was suddenly left a young widow at the age of twenty-five, with three young children, a widowed mother, and an orphaned niece to support. Christine turned to a life of letters at first for consolation and later for income, writing a series of remarkable books that included works of poetry, biography, politics, chivalry, warfare, religion and philosophy for a variety of wealthy and noble patrons.

When *The Book of the Body Politic* was written between late 1404 and 1407, France was hovering on the brink of civil war. The intricate and complicated struggle between the French and the English commonly called the Hundred Years War (1337–1453) was an extension of the conflict between these two developing nations that had begun in the twelfth century. Complicated by family rivalries and changing ideas about property, inheritance, sovereignty, and the feudal relationship, France had “won” the first round, ending with the Treaty of Paris in 1259, although England had retained its possession of Aquitaine, held as a fief from the French kings. As the French economy

strengthened, English economic and political interests in Aquitaine were threatened. In 1337, Edward III of England announced that he was claiming the French throne, on the grounds of superior hereditary right. Since he was a grandson of Philip IV through his mother, and the present king, Philip VI, was only a nephew, Edward claimed to be in the direct line of succession.

Philip responded by confiscating Aquitaine as punishment for this rebellion against an overlord. This second phase of the war was a disaster for France. The French nobility was decimated at the battles of Crecy (1346) and Poitiers (1356), and ultimately humiliated when King John of France (1350–1364) was captured and carried off to England. The ensuing crisis and confusion included a peasant revolt against high taxes and the losses of war, marauding bands of soldiers terrorizing the people, greedy nobles trying to extend their privileges, as well as attempts by the Estates General to control abuses and reform taxes – all of which threatened the authority of the regent, John's son Charles. John finally negotiated his release in 1360 in exchange for Aquitaine and three million gold ecus, but complications returned him to English hands and he died in 1364 with the final steps of the treaty not taken.

The intelligent and responsible rule of Charles V (r.1364–1380) allowed a brief recovery, but was followed by confusion and struggle for power when he died in September 1380, leaving his heir, Charles VI (r.1380–1422) not quite twelve years old. The king had named his own brother, Louis, duke of Anjou, (d.1384) to be regent for the young king with two of the boy's other relatives, the dukes of Burgundy and Bourbon, to be his guardians. Duke John of Berry, with no official role as regent or guardian, nonetheless controlled about a third of France through his own estates. Although the young prince managed to escape the legal control of his uncles once he became an adult, he could not elude their machinations and ambitions, and was very much under the influence of his younger and more able brother, Louis of Orleans. The chaos was compounded when, in 1392, the twenty-four-year-old king suffered his first attack of insanity, which afflicted him periodically for the rest of his life. The growing disability of Charles VI trapped France between the two powerful personalities of the king's younger brother, Louis, duke of Orleans and his uncle, Philip "the Bold," duke of Burgundy, and after Philip's death in 1404, that of his son, John, "the Fearless." The gap between

the royal houses widened until on November 23, 1407, Louis of Orleans was murdered by an assassin, Raoul d'Anquetonville, who had been hired by John the Fearless. The duke fled for his safety, but in an attempt to obtain pardon from the king, a defence of his actions was written and proclaimed at court by Master Jean Petit of the University of Paris, justifying the assassination of Louis on the grounds of tyrannicide. Jean Petit's argument, that tyrannicide is not only justified but meritorious, was taken from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*. The widowed duchess of Orleans found support and protection for her young son, Charles of Orleans, in Bernard, count of Armagnac, who was now the leader of the opposition to Duke John of Burgundy.

Things were not much better in England. The murder of Richard II in 1400, the adventurous spirit of Henry IV and his need for additional revenue, clashed with French attempts at aggrandizement and protection of commercial interests. The papal schism from 1378 to 1417 left Europe without an acceptable mediator, and in fact each of the papal rivals encouraged the nation supporting him – Urban VI the English and Clement VII the French.

In France, the quarrels, ambitions, greed, and self-interest exhibited by the members of the royal family over the next thirty years brought the nation to civil war and impoverished it with heavy taxation. The political bankruptcy of the nobility was further demonstrated when the Burgundians and the Armagnacs each made overtures to the English, hoping to have their help to destroy the other. The English king, Henry V (r. 1413–1422) had his own agenda – to seize the throne of France – and invaded in 1415, crushing the French army at Agincourt. Rather than rallying to defend the kingdom, the Burgundians continued to fight the Armagnacs, openly allying themselves with the English in 1420. The alliance allowed the English to impose the Treaty of Troyes on Charles VI, which made Henry V Regent of France whenever the king was incapacitated by his mental illness, as well as making Henry heir to the throne. This effectively disinherited the Dauphin, Charles of Guyenne, third and only living son of Charles VI. But both Henry V and Charles VI died in 1422, leaving Henry's infant son, Henry VI, nominally king of France and England.

In the meantime, the son of Charles VI had been a virtual prisoner of the Armagnacs in the south of France, without a hope of rule. But

the inspiration of a young girl, Joan of Arc, rallied the dispirited French to win the battle of Orleans in 1429, the first French victory for many years. Soon afterwards, the Dauphin was crowned Charles VII and the French were encouraged to retake their cities. Joan's capture by the Burgundians, and her subsequent trial and execution for heresy at the hands of the English in 1431, further inspired the French to continue until final victory in 1453.

Christine de Pizan was far more than a spectator of these events. Several of her works were directly inspired by them and were intended to ameliorate or rectify the situation of the French people by recalling their rulers to what she believed were their proper duties. For example, the misfortunes of the French as well as personal experience inspired her work entitled *The Mutability of Fortune*, presented to the duke of Burgundy on January 4, 1404. The contrast of the present with the wise rule of the former king is apparent in her biography of Charles V, *The Book of the Deeds and Good Customs of King Charles V*, which was commissioned by the duke of Burgundy in 1404. *The Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry* was a handbook on warfare and military ethics written for the Dauphin, Louis of Guyenne, a few years later. In 1410, she wrote *Lamentation on the Troubles of France*, in the form of a letter to John, duke of Berry. This letter, which may have been written at the request of John the Fearless, Berry's nephew and duke of Burgundy after the death of his father Philip in 1404, addresses all the princes of France, describing vividly the devastation of civil war and the horrors to come if there is no peace. In 1412, she began *The Book of Peace*, which was also dedicated to the Dauphin. It was finished in 1413, its theme horribly relevant, and a copy was presented to the duke of Berry in January 1414.

After the battle of Agincourt, Christine wrote *The Letter Concerning the Prison of Human Life*, dedicated to Marie of Berry, duchess of Bourbon, whose husband was a prisoner of war in England. The work was written to console the women of France mourning the dead and prisoners of Agincourt. Her last known work is *The Story of Joan of Arc* written at the time of Joan's greatest glory before her trial and execution.

This was the context within which the *The Book of the Body Politic* made its appearance between 1404 and 1407, shortly before the assassination of Louis of Orleans. Although it was dedicated to Charles VI and the princes of the royal family, Christine mentions

in *The Book of Peace* that *The Book of the Body Politic* was written for the particular benefit of the Dauphin, Louis of Guyenne. The political situation was so violent and explosive that aspects of the work, especially the *exempla*, which might otherwise seem conservative or even commonplace, are revealed as quite shrewd and daring. They include accounts of a prince deposed from office for disrespect to the church, of several rulers whose devotion to the law demanded the execution or punishment of their own sons, of princes who are rewarded for their commitment to the public good to their personal cost, as well as warnings about the dangers faced by tyrants, i.e., "the higher the tower, the greater the risk from a small stone." Christine uses a conventional genre to deliver a warning to princes about the consequences of misrule. In a time of civil war, her position was delicate and her advice discreet, but there is, nonetheless, a warning to tyrants.

The works for which Christine is best known today were written to defend and instruct women: *The Book of the City of Ladies* and *The Book of the Three Virtues* (also called *The Treasury of the City of Ladies*). *The Book of the Body Politic*, however, was written for a young man, the fourteen-year-old heir to the throne, Louis of Guyenne. This political treatise is an example of a "mirror for princes." Its purpose was to instruct as well as entertain the prince, with the goal of transforming him into a model king.

The "mirror for princes," or prince's handbook, was an important genre for the development of political thought throughout the Middle Ages. It served as a transmitter of many classical Greek and Roman ideas about politics, but also altered them, giving them Christian rhetorical and political significance. As a genre, the mirror for princes follows certain conventions. It typically begins with a "humility topos." The author disclaims any particular linguistic or political ability to advise the prince, but accepts the responsibility either because his work was commissioned by him, or because the author believes it to be in the best interests of the kingdom. The substantive discussion of political ideas is organized around a narrative order – the transformation of the prince into an ideal king. In some works this is presented in part as a physical transformation, and the advice includes principles of nutrition, hygiene, and instruction in a variety of subjects. In others the transformation is metaphorical; the prince's moral

and intellectual infancy is gradually exchanged for a mature wisdom and virtue. The text is characteristically enlivened by *exempla* from Scriptural and classical stories of good and bad rulers. All political mirrors emphasize the development of character, good judgment, and the classical virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and prudence, as well as the princely qualities of liberality, magnificence, generosity, and authority. The differences in mirrors stem from their authors' disagreements about the essential nature of kingship and the problems of ruling as well as the differences brought about by political culture and context.

Exempla provide a fascinating window onto medieval political ideas. To modern readers, *exempla* seem to be tedious stories interspersed between the "real" political ideas. But this is to misunderstand important aspects of medieval political culture. These books were meant to entertain and were often read aloud to an audience that wanted to hear a good adventure story with an emphatic moral. *Exempla* fulfilled that need, providing heroic stories from Roman or Greek history of admirable military and political leaders – or their evil counterparts. But *exempla* also provided a vehicle for political ideas and thus illuminate medieval political thought in a number of interesting ways. First, the "moral" of the story may be different from the one we would draw today. Some of Christine's stories of trickery in part II would seem to us unethical, yet Christine's audience might not have found them inconsistent with honor. Secondly, details of the story may have been changed from the classical source, so as to make the moral the medieval writer intends more pointed and explicit, or even radically different. For example, Christine's retelling in part I of the fable of the revolt of the limbs against the belly is a case in point. Originally found in Livy, this story was retold by many authors, such as Marie de France and John of Salisbury, but each draws a different political lesson. Thirdly, the writer's attempt to make the story intelligible to a particular audience may educate us about medieval customs or beliefs. Christine de Pizan's explanation of the Roman custom of the triumph, or the role of the consul in Roman political life, tells us not only about contrasting French practices, but also underline her themes, that noble behavior should be rewarded, or that military leaders should be responsible to others. Fourthly, *exempla* provide an application of abstract political principles; illustrating concepts such as justice or good rule. Stories of good and bad

rulers are parables in a sense, making theoretical lessons concrete. Christine's stories of rulers who put the public good before their own, or who insist on the maintenance of justice even at personal cost, are very revealing about what she saw as the problems of her age.

For the medieval reader, *exempla* also provided a link with the Golden Age of the past, and a sense of historical continuity in a world that sometimes seemed in the process of disintegration. The Romans and Greeks were great warriors, wise in government and law, and yet they too experienced defeat, capture, suffering, betrayal, injustice, and death as did their counterparts in the Middle Ages. These stories brought a sense of being part of a great tradition. As a consequence, many medieval writers felt a real sense of kinship with Aristotle, Seneca, or Cicero, and accorded them great reverence. Like other writers, Christine de Pizan showed this by referring to Aristotle by the title "the Philosopher" rather than by name.

Finally, *exempla* were authoritative. Authoritative writing was the primary kind of evidence considered as proof of an argument. In Christine's case, if she – an insignificant woman – says that "justice is rendering to each his due," this assertion may carry little weight, but if she quotes from Aristotle, she has proved her point. Certain writers were considered to be particularly authoritative in politics. In *Body Politic*, Christine de Pizan cites (pseudo-)Plutarch and Aristotle. In *Book of Wisdom*, she cites extensively a work attributed to Seneca, *Formula for an Honest Life* (in fact the work of Martin of Braga). All three were known as philosophers who had instructed princes, in these cases Trajan, Alexander the Great, and Nero respectively. The Roman Emperor Trajan in particular, whose story Christine tells in *The Book of Peace*, was considered throughout the Middle Ages as the ideal king, so good that St. Gregory prayed for his soul and Dante placed him in Paradise even though Trajan was a pagan. Cicero and Boethius were also significant sources in the tradition because of their authority as philosopher-statesmen who suffered as a consequence of their politics. The choice of these particular authorities gave additional weight to the writer's message.

For the medieval reader or listener, *exempla* were not merely illustrative but were the whole point of the book, the pearls of wisdom strung together by the author's prose. Today, we ought to take them

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very seriously, asking ourselves about the story's moral and what its protagonist is intended to illustrate, or what kind of behavior he or she models. This entails a kind of reading between the lines that is both unfamiliar and difficult since we lack the shared non-written culture to which medieval writers often allude. We can get a glimpse of that shared culture if we are familiar enough with the literature of the period to pick up references to Scripture, mystery plays, songs, liturgy and saints' lives that were part of common parlance.

The Book of the Body Politic makes use of all the traditions of the mirror genre to adapt the authoritative ideas of antiquity to the needs of practical politics. It addresses a central problem for those involved in an active life in the world in any age – how to conjoin a life of practical politics with the desire for the Good, for the love of wisdom. It is this use of the tradition itself that marks the work most profoundly.

The Book of the Body Politic takes its name and organizing theme from John of Salisbury's twelfth-century work, *Policraticus*, in which the political community is described as a body, with king as head, soldiers and administrative officers as the hands, and the peasants as the feet. While John of Salisbury attributes the metaphor to a letter from Plutarch to his pupil Trajan, most contemporary scholars see this as a polite fiction, and think this use of the image to be John's own. The human body had been used by other authors since the twelfth century to express interdependence and hierarchy, depending on the author's political views. But the *Policraticus* is more than just the source of an interesting political metaphor. It is a compendium of moral and political philosophy, and includes discussions on a variety of diverse but interrelated themes: on the vices peculiar to court life and their corresponding virtues, on the idea of justice and the nature of good government, on tyranny and the possible legitimacy of tyrannicide, and on the responsibility of kings and courtiers to become lovers of wisdom. By the late fourteenth century, the work was widely known and revered. Charles V, a noted bibliophile, had commissioned for his own library not only a new copy of the *Policraticus*, but a French translation as well. By the early fifteenth century, the selections on tyranny and tyrannicide assumed a new importance in the defense of the assassins of Louis of Orleans.

In Christine's work the metaphor is used primarily as an organizing theme, and is attributed directly to Plutarch without reference to John of Salisbury. This of course fulfills the need for an authoritative classical source for her work. The text suggests, however, that she knew the *Policraticus* well, especially John of Salisbury's discussions of flattery, astrology, and tyranny.

The Book of the Body Politic is arranged in three parts, corresponding to the major classes or "estates" of French society. Part I considers the education of the prince in detail – what he should eat, how he should dress, as well as the books, experiences, and ideas to which he should be exposed. Much of this discussion relies heavily on Giles of Rome's mirror for princes, *De regimine principum*.

This is followed by advice on how to govern: the choice of advisors and administrators, how to prevent corruption and bribery, the king's role with respect to the church, the importance of education and rhetorical skill. Here Christine's primary sources include John of Salisbury, Giles of Rome, and Brunetto Latini, and she refers to Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* as well as his *Rhetoric* and *Metaphysics*. Her other major classical sources are Cicero (*On Duties* and *On Old Age*), Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, with passing references to Seneca, Livy, Ovid, and Plato, and, among Christian authors, to Augustine, Anselm, and Ambrose. While the quotations are not always word-for-word, even if phrased as though they were, the references she cites tend to be accurate. However, they probably come from "florilegia," collections of excerpts from classical authors that were favourite source books for many medieval writers. The *exempla* in this part of the work come predominantly from Valerius Maximus' *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* (*Memorable Words and Deeds*). His work is a huge collection of stories and anecdotes arranged according to subject-matter in a kind of encyclopedia of material for public speakers. To modern tastes, it is pompous and artificial, but it enjoyed tremendous popularity in the Middle Ages as a source of *exempla*. Christine herself felt obliged to explain why she quoted from him so often in part I, chapter 13, entitled 'Why Valerius is cited so much in this work.'

For, as that same Valerius says, examples of virtue move one to desire honor and courage and to love of virtue more than simple words do, as Aristotle attests in the tenth book of the *Ethics*.

Therefore, in following the style of the noble author Valerius . . . I am moved to show diverse examples of things that happened to many magnificent men in the past, who are memorialized in this book for their merit.

Part I also reflects Christine's reading in the choice of virtues she believes important in the prince: piety, humility, kindness, mercy, and chastity reflect the Christian tradition, liberality, justice, and love of glory reveal the classical one. Her emphasis on learning and eloquence and her concern to differentiate the intelligent use of astrological principles from charlatanism and fatalism demonstrate her humanist values.

Part II treats knights and nobles, and considers the nature and behavior to be expected of this class. Although not explicitly stated as such, her subject is the nature and meaning of nobility, which she portrays as a quality of soul rather than of rank. She draws very heavily on the Aristotelian notion of *hexis*, in Latin *habitus*, often translated as "habit" or "disposition." Christine's term for this concept is "moeurs," which can be understood as habit, morals, manners, or even custom, depending on the context. For Christine, this concept has important theoretical implications because it combines public and private behavior, the world of morality with the world of law. If the correct habits of virtue are inculcated early, they will be reflected in the individual person's morals as well as in his or her manners. In a world where political institutions had been enfeebled by civil conflict and neglect, this reflects Christine's belief that personal responsibility is the cornerstone of political life. Part II cites Valerius extensively for *exempla*, but also draws upon the *Epitome of Military Topics* of Renatus Flavius Vegetius on Roman military customs and strategy.

Part III examines the common people: merchants, clergy, students, and artisans as well as peasants. To the modern reader this may appear unexceptional, but by comparison with John of Salisbury's political "physiology," it must have seemed shocking. In his work, the clergy are the soul of the body politic, without which the body is dead. The position of the clergy among the lower "limbs" by Christine reveals her view that the clergy's role is a functional one. They provide masses and prayers in the way that a baker provides bread – important to society but not essential. Her society, both real and ideal, has become much more secularized. Secondly, Christine's

"physiology" reveals changes in the political and economic structure of the medieval community. No longer is the traditional tripartite division into "those who pray, those who fight and those who work" sufficient to understand society. Merchants, students, and artisans do not fit easily into the three orders but are beginning to be recognized as having a separate political and economic role in society. Burghers are citizens who enjoy special privileges in their own right in their cities. Their leadership function is stressed by Christine when she describes them as protectors, advocates, and intercessors for the poorer members of their class.

While this is the shortest part of the book, it shows us a rare discussion of the responsibilities of common people – of whom Christine was one. It also shows most revealingly how much society had changed since the twelfth century use of the metaphor of the body politic. John of Salisbury can still hope that the institutional changes brought about by the codification of laws and legal institutions in the twelfth century will be sufficient in large part to guarantee good government. Christine has no such hope. Institutions have not been able to restrain the greed and pettiness of rulers and aristocrats, but perhaps the responsible burgher can. Hers is both the optimism and the pessimism of a newly educated and affluent class.

Part III also relies on material from Aristotle, Giles of Rome and John of Salisbury, but Christine often cites the Bible in part III as a guide to life for the common people. Here she explicitly uses quotations from the Pauline Epistles stressing obedience to civil authority, while at the same time, through her choice of *exempla*, making oblique references to political violence as a potential consequence of tyranny.

Christine de Pizan has been lavishly praised as the first female professional writer in France. Certainly she is of interest to historians for her detailed accounts of aspects of everyday life that are otherwise unavailable or only available through the eyes of male observers. Her mirrors for princesses illustrate the often invisible lives of women and children of every class. But as a political writer her significance has not been evaluated. She is sometimes dismissed as a mere compiler or as a conservative apologist for the ruling classes. Some might argue that she is not sufficiently philosophical, not distant enough from the immediate circumstances of early fifteenth-century France to be of lasting significance. Others might argue that she was not

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involved enough, not willing to seriously challenge the assumptions of her age. In fact, she has been described best by Charity Cannon Willard, her distinguished biographer and editor, in her introduction to *Le Livre de la Paix*:

The noble and generous spirit of the woman shines through the prolixity, the clumsy and profuse style. Although lacking in qualities of real genius, she unstintingly used the talents that she had in behalf of her country. (p. 54)

Like Boethius or Cicero or John of Salisbury, who inspired her, her work and ideas are not without flaws, but the flaws stem from the attempt to conjoin a life of practical politics with the desire for the Good, for the love of wisdom.

This appreciation for the inseparability of politics and philosophy, of life in the world from the life of the mind, is best expressed by Christine de Pizan herself. As she addresses Dame Philosophy, in *L'Avison Christine*, she says, "tu es politique, car tu aprens a bien vivre."

Note on the text

Christine's style in *Corps de Policie* is quite different from that of several of her other works. It is an example of the *style clergial*, a more formal kind of writing considered appropriate for her princely audience. To modern tastes, it is convoluted, redundant, and less lively than, for example, *City of Ladies*. Rather than attempting to render her style, my aim has been a lively rendition of her thought, and a sense of her appreciation of her sources, particularly her delight in *exempla*.

I have used the text edited by Robert Lucas, Christine de Pizan, *Livre de corps de policie* (Geneva, 1967), which is based on Bibliothèque Nationale f. fr. 12439, fols. 46v–225v. When a variant appears in other manuscripts that appears to make more sense in the context, I use the variant.

As an additional aid to the reader, a glossary has been included to provide brief biographical details (where available) of persons mentioned in the text as well as to elucidate concepts that may not be familiar to the reader. These words and names are marked with an asterisk (*) when they first appear in the text.

Principal events in Christine de Pizan's life

- c.1364 Birth of Christine de Pizan in Venice
- c.1367 Thomas de Pizan, her father, accepts a position at the court of Charles V of France
- 1368 Birth of the Dauphin Charles, eldest son of Charles V
- 1371 Birth of Charles V's second son Louis, duke of Orleans
- 1377 Death of King Edward III of England; Richard II reigns
- 1378 Beginning of the papal schism
- 1380 Christine marries Master Etienne du Castel, court secretary and notary
- September 16, death of Charles V, the Dauphin becomes Charles VI
- 1381 Peasant Revolt (England)
- c.1387 Death of Thomas de Pizan
- 1390 Death of Etienne du Castel
- 1392 Charles VI has first attack of mental illness
- 1394 Christine begins to write poetry
- 1396 Marriage of Richard II of England and Isabelle, daughter of Charles VI, brings treaty with England
- 1397 Christine's daughter, Marie, enters the royal Dominican convent of Poissy
- 1398 Christine's son, John, enters the service of the earl of Salisbury
- 1399 Murder of Richard II, Henry IV becomes king of England
- Beginning of Christine's public literary career