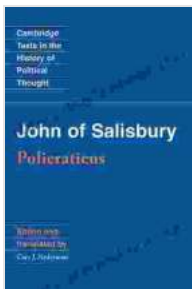# Policraticus: A 12th-Century Treatise on Statecraft and the Role of the Prince

Policraticus, written by John of Salisbury (circa 1115-1180),is a seminal work of political thought from the High Middle Ages. Composed in Latin around 1159, it is a comprehensive treatise on statecraft and the role of the prince. Policraticus offers valuable insights into the political thought and practices of the 12th century, providing a rich source of information for scholars and historians.

John of Salisbury: Policraticus (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) by Barry A. Crouch

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language   : English
File size   : 32639 KB
Screen Reader   : Supported
Print length   : 272 pages

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The Author: John of Salisbury

John of Salisbury was an English scholar, churchman, and diplomat who played a prominent role in the intellectual and political life of the 12th century. Born in Old Sarum, Wiltshire, he studied in Paris and Chartres, where he came into contact with some of the leading thinkers of his time, including Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux.

John of Salisbury served as secretary to Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury and later to Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. He was

a close advisor to King Henry II of England and played a key role in the negotiations between the king and Becket during the Investiture Controversy. In 1176, John of Salisbury was appointed Bishop of Chartres, a position he held until his death in 1180.

Policraticus: An Overview

Policraticus is divided into eight books, each of which deals with a different aspect of statecraft. The first book provides a general to the work, while the remaining seven books cover topics such as the nature of government, the duties of the prince, the role of law and justice, and the importance of education.

Throughout Policraticus, John of Salisbury draws on a wide range of sources, including the Bible, classical philosophy, and Roman law. He argues that the ideal state is one that is ruled by a just and virtuous prince who is guided by the principles of Christian morality.

The Role of the Prince

John of Salisbury believed that the prince played a crucial role in the well-being of the state. He argued that the prince should be a model of virtue and justice, and that he should always act in the best interests of his people. The prince should be wise, prudent, and courageous, and he should be able to inspire loyalty and obedience from his subjects.

John of Salisbury also emphasized the importance of education for the prince. He believed that the prince should be well-versed in the liberal arts and sciences, and that he should have a deep understanding of history and philosophy. This knowledge would help the prince to make wise decisions and to avoid the pitfalls that can lead to tyranny.

The Importance of Law and Justice

John of Salisbury believed that law and justice were essential for the well-being of the state. He argued that the prince should uphold the law and ensure that justice is administered fairly and impartially. The law should be based on the principles of natural law and should be designed to protect the rights of all citizens.

John of Salisbury also emphasized the importance of mercy in the administration of justice. He believed that the prince should be willing to show mercy to those who have committed crimes, but only when it is consistent with the principles of justice.

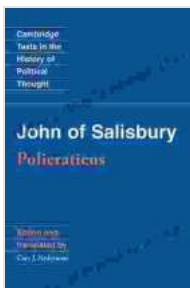## The Influence of Policraticus

Policraticus was a widely read and influential work in the Middle Ages. It was translated into several languages, including French, English, and German, and it was used as a textbook in universities and schools. Policraticus had a profound impact on the development of political thought in the West, and it continues to be studied and admired by scholars today.

Policraticus is a seminal work of political thought that offers valuable insights into the political thought and practices of the High Middle Ages. John of Salisbury's treatise provides a comprehensive overview of statecraft and the role of the prince, and it emphasizes the importance of justice, law, and education. Policraticus is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of political thought and the development of Western civilization.

Further Reading

- John of Salisbury, Policraticus, translated by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

- C. N. L. Brooke, The Medieval Idea of Marriage (Oxford University Press, 1989).

- R. W. Southern, Saint Anselm and His Biographer (Cambridge University Press, 1963).

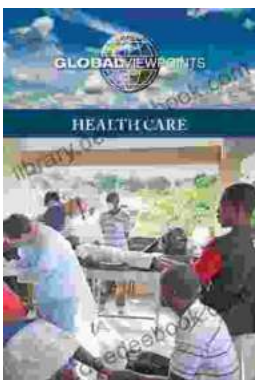### John of Salisbury: Policraticus (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) by Barry A. Crouch

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