

FOURIER, CHARLES
(1772-1837)

French utopian philosopher and sexual radical. Fourier spent much of his

life in Lyon, trapped in a business world which he hated with a passion. Disillusioned in childhood by the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the people around him, he gradually formulated an elaborate theory of how totally to transform society in a utopian world of the future known as Harmony, in which mankind would live in large communes called Phalansteries.

Fourier hid his sexual beliefs from his contemporaries, and it was more than a century after his death before his main erotic work, *Le nouveau monde amoureux*, was first published. He was "modern" in many of his sexual attitudes, believing in the overthrow of traditional morality and universal replacement of this morality with a restrained and elegant promiscuity for everyone over the age of sixteen. He did not believe that anyone under sixteen had any sexual feelings, nor did he understand the psychology of sadism, pedophilia, or rape, so that his sexual theories are not entirely suitable for modern experimentation. Moreover, he had a bizarre belief that planets were androgynous beings that could and did copulate. He was attracted heterosexually to lesbians, and although he called pederasty "a depraved taste," he was tolerant of male homosexuals and ephrophiles. He recognized male homosexuals and lesbians as biological categories long before Krafft-Ebing created the modern concept of immutable sexual "perversions."

Fourier called for a "sexual minimum," the right of everyone to constant sexual gratification by means of teaching young people of both sexes to commit the "saintly" act of sexually sacrificing themselves to older people, rather like Lars Ullerstam's modern call for providing the poor with free prostitutes at the taxpayers' expense.

Fourier, however, had no sympathy for "gutter" sex or for promiscuity in the face of the threat of venereal diseases. He wanted these diseases to be done away with before sexual liberation would be allowed. He wrote some fictional episodes

in the vein of William Beckford, one of which describes the seduction of a beautiful youth by an older man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu, trans. and ed., *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

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