

preyed, and whom they in turn resented because their own superiors used discretion in proceeding against those guilty of the "crime against nature." At the same time homosexuals who were victimized by common criminals feared to turn to the police for help because they would encounter no sympathy and even expose themselves to investigation or worse. So the absence of great numbers of prosecutions for sodomy attests to an ambiguous situation: comparatively few individuals were ever caught "in the act" and prosecuted for the maximal offense, but many were entrapped or subjected to semi-legal forms of harassment such as raids on gay bars in which the patrons would be arrested and their identity—and the motive for the arrest—made known to family members, employers and the like, so that, even though they were charged with a misdemeanor at most, their careers and lives could be ruined by the simple act of disclosure. The police themselves could engage in "shakedowns" or outright blackmail.

The police thus functioned in three ways to embitter the existence of participants in the homosexual subculture: (1) by harassing patrons of establishments known to be frequented by homosexuals, or individuals simply observed in cruising areas, (2) by allowing criminals, or private persons hostile to homosexuals, to victimize and assault them with impunity, and (3) by conducting campaigns of repression at the behest of politicians who wanted to impress the electorate with their zeal in "upholding morality." When an establishment failed to pay the sums demanded by the police for protection, or a crusading mayor or district attorney wanted the newspapers to report that he had "cracked down on vice," the arm of the law would descend in full fury. So long as the gay community was unorganized, powerless, and itself a "fugitive from justice," nothing could be done to minimize or halt these practices. While the United States saw national waves of repression,

especially in the 1940s and 50s, local variations were considerable. A city with an energetically homophobic police chief (as was repeatedly the case in Los Angeles) could make life difficult for homosexuals, in contrast with one in which the authorities were more lax—and more susceptible to bribery.

Improved Relations. In the latter part of the twentieth century, with the rise of the homosexual liberation movement, gay and lesbian organizations have made efforts at establishing liaisons with urban police forces and at cultivating better relations with the local police. Enlightened district attorneys and their counterparts in major European cities have been persuaded to halt the practice of entrapment and to restrict their repressive activity to sexual behavior that caused public scandal or entailed corruption or abuse of a minor, and also to educate the members of the police force in a spirit of toleration for the gay subculture. In such cities as San Francisco and New York the police have actually begun to recruit gay and lesbian candidates for the force, while homosexuals who already belong have formed benevolent organizations of their own.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. John J. Gallo, et al., "The Consenting Adult Homosexual and the Law: An Empirical Study of Enforcement and Administration in Los Angeles County," *UCLA Law Review*, 13 (1966), 643-832; Gustave Macé, *Mes lundis en prison*, Paris: Charpentier, 1889; Michel Rey, "Police et sodomie à Paris au XVIIIe siècle: du péché au désordre," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 29 (1983), 113-24; Steven A. Rosen, "Police Harassment of Homosexual Women and Men in New York City 1960-1980," *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 12 (1980-81), 159-90.

Warren Johansson

POLITICAL THEORY, HISTORY OF

Political theory seeks to analyze and envision things political, originally of the *polis* or city-state of ancient Greece. Thus the subject begins with the Greeks of

Athens at the end of the fifth century B.C. in close association with **philosophy**.

As institutions and modes of thought have changed, so has political theory. While it may aspire to universality, it is, among theories, particularly dependent on context. What counts as political is subject to continuing controversy. Thus **pederasty** was politically important in classical Athens, where it was a basic aspect of educating male citizens, while contemporary **libertarians** view it as politically neutral. What is political is not restricted to affairs of state; it extends to embrace all matters of legitimate public concern. Thus issues of morals, education, custom, language, and culture are politically germane.

Homosexuality as a Topic for Political Theory. That **homosexuality** is a term of the second half of the nineteenth century is well known. To what extent it can be applied to earlier periods is an issue rightly debated. As with all phenomena over time and space, which are complex both conceptually and evidentially, so with erotic same-sex bonding: there are similarities and differences. Practices, norms, conceptualizations, and consciousness vary significantly. What is now taken to be homosexuality was not so viewed in earlier periods. No effort is here made to resolve the essentialist–social constructionist dispute, which has addressed the issue of similarity vs. difference. It is assumed only that from the current vantage point a sufficient family resemblance can be described in discussions by major political theorists of pederasty, **sodomy**, the crime against **nature**, and so forth to yield some coherence.

The main course of political theoretical discussion of homosexuality can be periodized: (1) the subtle discussion of pederasty in fourth-century-B.C. Athens; (2) the long period of Christian condemnation; and (3) the **Enlightenment** critique of received ideas. The extant writings are all by male authors, and they devote virtually all their attention to male homosexuality.

Greek Thinkers. **Plato** (427–347 B.C.), a student of **Socrates**, is the first great writer of political philosophy, notably in the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and the *Laws*. The *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* are his major dialogues on eros. The Greek practice of pederasty—courtship and love of an adolescent (never child) by a somewhat older man—was the form of homosexuality on which he reflected. He viewed this not as a distinct category or problem in itself but rather in the context of discussions of appetite, desire, temperance, education, and law. Given Plato's use of dramatic dialogues, the difficulty in determining which of the views that he attributes to Socrates are his own, and the differences between early and late dialogues, it is difficult to state Plato's views concisely. He clearly assumes that male homoerotic desire is ubiquitous.

The *Symposium* is less a dialogue than an account of a banquet at which successive speakers praise and explain the nature of love, that is, eros. In the discussion Pausanias distinguishes between two loves, the heavenly, Uranian Aphrodite and the younger, earthly Pandemian Aphrodite. The latter is the common love which seeks bodily pleasure only and pertains to both sexes. Uranian love is entirely male and involves cultivation of the mind and spirit. Indeed, Uranian love is associated with political freedom and resistance to tyranny. Pausanias also notes a tension between Athenian support for the lover's (*erastes*) ardent pursuit as well as for resistance on the part of the beloved (*eremenos*). This he explains as supporting his distinction between noble and base love, which means that a youth should not yield too readily or for a reason other than gaining virtue. The nineteenth-century usage of "Uranian" (stemming from K. H. Ulrichs) to denote a male homosexual derives from this speech.

In the *Symposium* Plato makes **Aristophanes**, the celebrated writer of Old Comedy, give a remarkable speech in which he develops the compelling myth that once

there had been three "sexes," who were spherical beings, solar double men, lunar double women, and earthly fused men-women. Zeus, angered at these creatures' arrogance, severed them in two; later, he rearranged their genitals. Ever after, each creature seeks wholeness in coupling with the lost half of its own kind. The women drawn to women are clearly lesbians, and this is one of the rare references to lesbianism in the political-theory canon. The males attracted to males, the most virile, are as youths drawn to men and as men love youths; they marry and beget children only in response to social custom.

Socrates, however, in the concluding speech in which he recounts what the priestess Diotima had told him of love, rejects Aristophanes' view. Love is that which one lacks; love is not a god but a *daimon*, a being halfway between a god and a man and also between wisdom and ignorance. It is an intermediary. Love begins with attraction to one particular body, but the truest love ascends a ladder, as it were, and culminates in a vision of beauty itself. Since beauty and goodness are the same, love is a longing for possession of goodness eternally. Indeed, love's association with propagation reveals that love is really a longing for immortality. At the conclusion of this famous speech of Socrates, the drunken Alcibiades bursts into the party and tells the revealing story of how Socrates, his sometime lover, had resisted any physical gratification despite Alcibiades' best efforts.

The effect of the *Symposium* on the western mind, a great one, has been deeply equivocal. While what is recognizably homosexual desire is unforgettably celebrated, only a chaste, idealized expression of it is finally permitted.

In the late dialogue, the *Laws*, Plato proposed outlawing physical homosexual relations, readily acknowledging that such a proposal was contrary to practice and opinion. Indulgence in such practice, it is held, leads to intemperance and effeminacy. It is suggested that a custom

whereby the sanctions against incest would be extended to all "unnatural" sex would do untold good. Plato here uses unsound arguments from animal behavior and fatefully introduces the idea that sex between men is "against nature" (*para physin*).

While there are several scattered references to homosexuality in the prodigiously learned Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), they convey no strong view. The existence of pederastic attraction is taken for granted; there are several nonjudging references to such love affairs. Aristotle shares a common Greek concern about the tension between friendship, which requires equality, and the pederastic relationship, characteristically an unequal one. Reciprocity and constancy, though, can be attained through the mutual love of character.

A text from the Aristotelian school (*Problemata*, IV, 26) engages the question, most puzzling to the Greeks, of how the sexually passive male could enjoy the sexual act. The somewhat confused discussion concludes that though such a pathic (*kinaidos*) acts contrary to nature, habit can become nature. Clearly the ancient Greek view of nature was ambiguous, and the arguments from nature were problematic, as they continue to be.

Christian Thinking. In the next period of political theory, that dominated by Christian thinkers, the figures of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas stand out. While each was deeply influenced by the classical heritage, what distinguishes them is the presence of Christian revelation as the decisive criterion for truth and rightness.

St. Augustine (354–430), after his conversion to Christianity, took a dark view of sexual activity generally. Lust, concupiscence was the shameful result of original sin. He viewed involuntary sexual arousal as a consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Only intercourse for procreation was justified and that solely within marriage. In a famous passage in his *Confessions* (III, 8, 15), he refers to detestable crimes against nature, such as

those of the Sodomites, which "even if all nations should commit them" are contrary to divine law. In Augustine we find a mixture, characteristic in Christian discussions, of reference to the Bible, to nature, and to divine law.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), most influential and authoritative of Roman Catholic theorists, developed a complex, architectonic philosophic and theological system which included significant treatment of politics and morals. These are regulated by a structure in which four kinds of law intermingle: eternal, natural, divine, and human (or positive). The universe is an ordered whole carrying out a special plan; each entity within it is to carry out its appropriate ends within that plan. Each naturally seeks its own good: preservation for all substance, procreation for animals, an orderly social life and knowledge of God for human beings. "All things have a natural tendency toward activity befitting their natures." To seek good and avoid evil is the first principle of natural law. To sin is either to offend God or to injure men.

Sexual matters are discussed under the general category of temperance and that applied to matters of touch. *Sodomiticum vitium*, the vice of sodomy, of which one form is intercourse between persons of the same sex, is carefully distinguished from related sexual sins (*Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae.154.11–12). Sodomy is peculiarly a sin against nature in that it is contrary not only to man's uniquely human nature but also to that which he shares with animals. Further, this sin against nature, the plan of which comes from God, is a sin against God: it is an affront to God, the ordainer of nature. On a scale of gravity, masturbation and non-missionary-position intercourse are lesser sins than sodomy, only bestiality is worse. Unnatural vice is worse than incest.

While the 1986 Vatican pronouncement on homosexuality (*Letter to the World's Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, by the Congrega-

tion for the Doctrine of the Faith) relies more on biblical citation, the view developed by Thomas Aquinas remains that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Early Enlightenment Thought.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the next great period of political thought with figures such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke addressing issues central to the emergent modern state: action, sovereignty, legitimacy, and consent. While they appear in law and literature, references to homosexuality in political theory in this period are scant.

In a characteristic remark, modern, derisive, and reductive, the caustic Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), commenting on Socrates, suspects that platonic love was sensual, "but with an honorable pretence of the old to haunt the company of the young and beautiful" (*Human Nature*, 17). Since multitude, increase of population, is a temporal good, the law of nature obliges the sovereign to forbid "unnatural copulation."

It is with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, a broad movement of opinion rather than a doctrine, that the possibility of new views emerged. Enlightenment thinkers subjected received ideas and established authority, political, cultural, and especially religious, to scrutiny. They raised doubt about existing categories, principles, and judgments, suggested new ones, and promoted practical reform of laws, institutions, and taste.

The sage Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) exemplifies the cautious humanity of the early phase of the Enlightenment. Montesquieu's attempt both to respect general principles of justice (natural law) and to understand the needs of particular peoples in particular circumstances led to confusion but also to creative insight.

In his major work, *The Spirit of the Laws* (XII, 6), he professes abhorrence of the crime against nature which "religion, morality, and civil government equally condemn." He suggests that it

gives to one sex "the weakness of the other," and he avers that where social custom does not promote it, the crime against nature will make "no great progress."

Yet he also expresses concern over "the tyranny that may abuse the very horror" that ought to be felt for the vice. He is distressed that in prosecuting the crime, the deposition of a single witness, a child, a slave, opens the door to calumny. Most tellingly, he notes the oddity that in contemporary France three crimes are "punished with fire": witchcraft, which does not exist; heresy, which is susceptible to infinite interpretation; and the crime against nature, which is "often obscure and uncertain." Despite the continuing muddle of the concept of crime against nature, a cool scepticism begins to subvert it.

Bentham. Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) represents at once the later, more radical phase of the Enlightenment and also the founding of nineteenth-century British philosophical radicalism. With Bentham the cautious questioning of received views, still couched in natural-law language, is replaced by the slashing critique of utilitarianism. This influential doctrine posits judgment of morals and legislation by the consequentialist criterion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, happiness considered as pleasure and calculable in terms of probability, duration, and so forth. Whatever its defects as philosophy, which are considerable, this doctrine directed to the question of the crime against nature had the great merit of instantly demystifying it. Why is this crime (punished in England by hanging until 1861) treated so severely? Wherein lies the offense? Is this even a crime?

Given the few, brief, and oblique references to this topic in centuries of previous political theory, it is stunning to find that Bentham wrote over 600 manuscript pages on the subject, at several times during his long career. Yet none of these were published in his lifetime and most

still have not been. (See J. Bentham, "Essay on Paederasty," Louis Crompton, ed., *Journal of Homosexuality*, 3:4, Summer 1978, and 4:1, Fall 1978, written ca. 1785. The best discussion of all Bentham's writings on the subject is in Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love*, Berkeley, 1985.)

While Bentham expresses his own disapproval of homosexual practices ("preposterous," "unnatural," "odious"), he can find no basis in reason for the severity with which they are treated. "Let us be unjust to no man: not even to a paederast." With his accustomed thoroughness, Bentham marches forth arguments against private consenting homosexual acts and finds them wanting.

They produce no primary mischief, only pleasure. It is not a crime against peace, nor an offense against security. If it is debilitating, as Montesquieu said, then it is an offense against oneself, but there is no physiological evidence that this is so, and historical evidence reveals the vigor of ancient Greek and Roman soldiers who practiced it. It cannot be argued that it is prejudicial to population (at this time Bentham assumed as did most that population growth was desirable), since "prolific venery" is quite adequate to that end. If this were a reason, why is not monkish celibacy outlawed? Nor can it be argued that it robs women; marriage remains popular.

Bentham goes on to explore "the ground of antipathy." He finds it to lie in the propensity "to confound physical impurity with moral," in "philosophical pride" against pleasure, and in religion. In his later unpublished nineteenth-century writings on this subject, Bentham goes even further. He abandons the conventional language of disapproval that he had used earlier; he saw actual merit in non-procreative sex.

With Bentham's effort to demystify this subject by rational instrumental and normative analysis, his considered arguments for decriminalization, and his pioneering attempt to explore the sources

of hostility to homosexuality, one reaches, at last, a turning point in political reflection. Yet this writing remained unpublished until recently, and the nineteenth century saw no further sustained, serious discussion of the subject by a major political theorist.

Conclusions. It has been remarked that the European philosophical tradition simply fails in its discussion of women, not just in the falseness of its conclusions but in the collapse of its usual standards of thought. The same is true for political theory's treatment of homosexuality. It is scarcely accidental that with Plato and, if not with Bentham, then with his intellectual grandson, John Stuart Mill, the treatment of women is considerably more intelligent. Between Plato and Bentham there is scarcely a discussion of homosexuality instructive for other than historical purposes. Even here, the account focuses on the classical Greek male practice of pederasty, only a small part of what is now thought of as homosexuality. From the late Plato of the *Laws* through Montesquieu, much of the intellectual confusion is rooted in the tortuous ambiguities of the concepts of nature, natural law, and the crime against nature. With Bentham's eventually effective assault on this mode of theorizing, largely a negative achievement, the way was cleared for more searching views to be developed. In the twentieth century, the quest for an adequate account of that aspect of homosexuality which is of legitimate public concern remains far from complete.

See also Conservatism; Left, Gay; Liberalism; Liberation, Gay; Libertarianism; Marxism; Movement, Gay.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Richard D. Mohr, *Gays/Justice: A Study of Ethics, Society and Law*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988; Laurence J. Rosán, "Philosophies of Homophobia and Homophilia," in L. Crew, ed., *The Gay Academic*, Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1978, pp. 255-81; George H. Sabine and Thomas L. Thorson, A

History of Political Theory, Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1973.

David J. Thomas

**POLIZIANO (POLITIAN),
ANGELO AMBROGINI
KNOWN AS (1454-1494)**

Italian Humanist and poet. Born at Montepulciano, he was taken to Florence at a tender age, where he received instruction from outstanding teachers, including Marsilio Ficino. While still quite young he undertook a partial translation of Homer's *Iliad* into Latin (1469-73), which attracted the attention of Lorenzo de' Medici, who gave him free run of the private library of the Medici family. In 1475 Lorenzo made Poliziano tutor of his children. Two years later he became prior of San Paolo, giving him the leisure and prestige he deserved.

Then friction with the Medici family, brought on partly by questions having to do with the education of the children, led him to abandon Florence in 1479, though he returned the following year. Henceforth he dedicated himself to teaching and to the philological study of the ancient classics.

In addition to his works in Italian, Poliziano wrote with ease in Latin and in classical Greek. Among his chief texts are the *Sylvae*, the *Stanze per la giostra di Giuliano* (1475-78), the *Detti piacevoli* (1477-79), the secular drama *La Favola di Orfeo* (1480), as well as historical works, translations from the Greek, and works of philology.

The theme of homosexual love emerged on at least three occasions in Poliziano's oeuvre. The best known is the above-mentioned *Orfeo*, a theatre composition which marks the transition in Italy from sacred to secular drama. In this play **Orpheus**, having lost Eurydice forever, swears that he will love no other woman and that he will turn to boys instead. He meets his death at the hands of a vengeful group of maenads. The story was culled from ancient **mythology**, which Poliziano simply clothed in elegant Italian words.