

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 Yet this writing remained unpublished until recently, and the nineteenth century saw no further sustained, serious discussion of the subject by a major political theorist.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.

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**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.

More extended is the treatment in the love poetry that Poliziano wrote in Latin and Greek (significantly, this sensitive theme does not occur in his Italian verse). In these poems he talks of a certain Chrysocomus ("golden locks") and a Corydon, extolling his love in the manner of prestigious Greek and Latin models.

Finally, a lighter note appears in the *Deti piacevoli*, the attribution of which has been disputed for some time, though recently the scholar Gianfranco Folena has restored them to Poliziano. This collection consists of jokes involving various Florentine figures, including homosexual motifs involving the artists Botticelli and Donatello.

Today it is difficult to say to what extent Poliziano's interest in homoeroticism went beyond that of the imitation of the antique, which was a common feature of the period. According to a story spread by some contemporaries (including Paolo Giovio, 1483–1552), Poliziano died of strain after having played the lute one night underneath the window of a Greek youth named Argo. Isidoro Del Lungo has collected several versions of the tale.

In any event, even during his lifetime Poliziano was accused of harboring homosexual tastes, as shown by the poems of Andrea Dazzi (which belong, however, to a vein of invective cultivated by the Humanists, and cannot be simply taken at face value). Some attestations, like those reported by Gustavo Uzielli, make Poliziano's position suspect, but do not take us out of the realm of speculation. Further uncertainty is cast on the subject by positions such as that maintained by Giovanni Semerano, who condemns all the homosexual poetry as being somehow unworthy of "Poliziano's true nature."

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Giovanni Dall'Orto

POLYMORPHOUS PERVERSE

This expression for a disposition toward multifarious sexual experience stems from psychoanalysis. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) Sigmund Freud states: "[U]nder the influence of seduction children can become polymorphously perverse, and can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities. This shows that an aptitude for them is innately present in their disposition." Children have not yet built up the mental dams that would guard them against such sexual excess. They also do not yet know to focus their sexuality on their genitals, but allow it to roam, as it were, over the entire body. Some adults, such as prostitutes, may deliberately revert to this infantilism for their own purposes. Thus, in Freud's view, the inclination to the polymorphous perverse is built into the plan of human development, and a more mature sexuality must be created out of it as a result of organic growth and the introjection of psychic inhibitions. In a like manner, psychoanalysis tends to assume that the adult homosexual orientation is a relic of an early bisexual disposition, and therefore amounts to an arrest of development. This notion implicitly reinforced the ascetic belief that sexuality had only a reproductive function and that mere pleasure-seeking fell short of the goal which "mature" individuals should attain.

In the 1960s, owing in part to Freudian revisionists such as Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse, a more positive version of the idea came into circulation. The internalization of repressive mechanisms was no longer regarded as essential for the maintenance of civilization. Hence there was room for sexual experimentation, even for excursions into the polymorphous perverse. Yet orthodox