

express an almost uncritically positive judgment on psychoanalysis, which is celebrated as "something enormous and grand" because it unmasks the sexual morality propagated by state and church.

In the interwar period Vogel was close to the **Scientific-Humanitarian Committee** (he was briefly an officer) and a member of Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science. He left Germany in 1931, and via Switzerland, Paris, and Norway he reached South Africa in 1937. There he did exactly what Felix praised his deceased friend for having done at the end of the novel: he fought against "baseness and stupidity," this time against apartheid. So in the early 1950s it was time to turn his back on South Africa. He settled in London, where—not even noticed by the Exile-PEN club residing there—he led a hand-to-mouth existence. In 1987 his work *Ein junger Rebell—Erzählungen und Skizzen aus der Weimarer Republik* was published in East Germany.

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### **VOLTAIRE, FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET, KNOWN AS (1694–1778)**

French philosopher, dramatist, essayist, and critic.

*Life.* Born in Paris as the son of a well-to-do notary, Voltaire, as he came to be known from the very beginning of the French Enlightenment, was educated by the Jesuits of the Collège de Clermont, then became a member of the libertine society of the Temple and devoted himself to the study of jurisprudence. Some disrespectful verses directed at the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, and a quarrel with the

Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot led to his imprisonment (1716–18, 1726), followed by exile in England. In a country whose language and literature were still little known on the continent, Voltaire was influenced by the empiricism of Locke, Newtonian physics, and English deism, which had virtually replaced Christianity among the educated classes. Upon his return to France in 1729, Voltaire criticized the literature of the day in *Le Temple du goût* (1732), polemicized against the notion of divine goodness (*Épître à Uranie*), and without authorization published the *Lettres philosophiques* (1734), to which he added the *Remarques sur les "Pensées" de Pascal*. This criticism of the regime in France led to criminal proceedings which he escaped by taking refuge on the estate of the Marquise du Châtelet in Lorraine (1734–49). Here he composed most of the fifty comedies and tragedies that founded his literary reputation, and in 1746 he was named historiographer of the king and a member of the French Academy.

On the death of Madame du Châtelet, Voltaire accepted the invitation of Frederick II of Prussia, with whom he had corresponded since 1736, to reside at the court of Potsdam. Here he pursued his literary, historical, and philosophical work, but quarrels with Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, and with Frederick himself made him seek refuge in Geneva, where he began his collaboration on the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert (1755). But his writings scandalized the Calvinist theologians of Geneva as much as they had the Catholics. In 1759, while writing the novel *Candide*, directed in part against the optimism of Leibnitz and Pope, Voltaire found his definitive retreat at Ferney (1760–78). During this period, the intellectual and political elites of European society maintained close relations with Voltaire, whose influence grew steadily thanks to his many writings, for which—because of the risks which their challenge to the established order entailed—he employed 160 different pseudo-

nym. In addition to the many thousands of letters from Voltaire to his numerous correspondents, among them the "enlightened despots" of the late eighteenth century, he wrote satires, philosophical tales, and pamphlets against political, clerical, and legal abuses. In the Paris that had received him in triumph for the performance of his last tragedy, *Irène*, Voltaire died on May 30, 1778. Refused burial by the hatred of the Catholic clergy, his body was transported to the Abbey of Scellières, near Troyes. The French Revolution, recognizing in him one of its immortal predecessors, thirteen years later gave him the honors of the Pantheon.

*Outlook.* Voltaire's attitude toward homosexuality was complex and nuanced by the vicissitudes of his lifetime. There is no evidence that he ever had any homosexual experiences, even in adolescence; his judgment of the homosexuals whom he encountered during his long career was colored mainly by his estimate of their character and by their conduct in his regard. The ambivalence of his attitude may be gauged from the fact that his slogan "*Ecrasez l'infâme!*," aimed at the Church and its penumbra of influence under the Old Regime, employed the very word which in the dossiers of the French police designated those given to "unnatural vice," *les infâmes*. His hatred of the Catholic Church and of the superstition and intolerance which it had fostered was countered by his firm rejection of atheism, so that by leaving the sphere of private morality to the church he therefore allowed the intolerance of homosexuality on ascetic grounds—and with it the social ostracism of homosexuals—to be perpetuated for two full centuries after the legal sanctions had been stricken from the books. But he is rightly remembered as one of the foremost enemies of the Church, as one whose eloquent voice sounded the call for toleration in the spirit of the Enlightenment.

*Works.* In 1714 Voltaire wrote a poem entitled *L'Anti-Giton* for the purpose of persuading his friend, the Marquis

de Courcillon, to "sacrifice to the true love." If the Marquis was a "heretic in the flesh," he was a brave soldier without the slightest trace of effeminacy; wounded twice at the battle of Malplaquet, he endured the amputation of his leg from the thigh downward while laughing and joking with those around him. The "philosophical sin" did not seem hateful to Voltaire if "it has taken the features of a handsome marquis." On the other hand, the long established notion of homosexuality as a moral failing of the Catholic clergy fueled his hatred, in later life, for the clerical foes whom he despised as sodomites: the ex-Jesuit Desfontaines, the Abbe Larcher and the Reverend Father Polycarpe, a barefoot Carmelite. Their vice then struck him as a consequence of clerical celibacy, and friend of toleration that Voltaire was, he became fanatical in his opposition to it.

Voltaire's friendship with Frederick the Great was decidedly influenced by the feelings of both in regard to homosexuality. It began with a correspondence in which each flattered the other, comparing him to the great thinkers of Greece and Rome. Then after visiting Frederick at Potsdam in 1740 and observing him on his home turf, Voltaire began to write to him in explicitly sexual terms in addition to the usual courtly language, but Frederick was never able to overcome the affection which Voltaire cherished for Emilie du Châtelet, his mistress—and therefore was bitterly jealous of her. Both men acted manipulatively, Voltaire more so, because he hoped that by obtaining from Frederick information that he could relay to French intelligence he could ingratiate himself with Louis XV, while Frederick did everything in his power to lure Voltaire to his court. When he did settle in Potsdam, the authoritarian, militaristic, and unobtrusively homoerotic atmosphere proved not to his liking. Moreover, when Voltaire left Prussia, he took with him a copy of a tiny, privately printed edition of Frederick's poems in French, including *Le Palladion*,

with its defense of homosexuality. Alarmed by the potential for harm which disclosure of the book might bring, Frederick attempted to retrieve it by having the Prussian resident in Frankfurt am Main stop Voltaire and search his luggage as he passed through that city. The incident developed into a comic-opera affair before it ended. Voltaire retaliated by publishing anonymously a little book entitled *The Private Life of the King of Prussia*, in which with his inimitable wit he exposed the erotic side of Frederick's personality.

The *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (1764), the fruit of twelve years of reflection and a by-product of his work on the *Encyclopédie*, was an alphabetically arranged series of essays in free thought aimed at the beliefs and superstitions of Christianity. It included an article entitled "Amour nommé Socratique" (So-called Socratic Love), which shows Voltaire inclined to skepticism in regard to the supposed toleration which the ancients accorded to the "vice." He begins by asking: "How is it that a vice destructive of the human race if it became universal, that an infamous crime against nature is nevertheless so natural? It appears to be the last degree of premeditated corruption, yet it is ordinarily the lot of those who have not yet had the time to be corrupted." Later he explains that "often a young boy by the freshness of his looks, by the glow of his skin color, and by the softness of his eyes for two or three years resembles a beautiful girl; if he is loved, it is because nature has made the mistake" of bestowing feminine beauty on a youth. Nowhere in the article did Voltaire mention the Judeo-Christian origins of the taboo on homosexual expression, yet in a footnote added in 1769 he alluded to how narrowly the Abbé Desfontaines had escaped burning at the stake, and said that Deschafours was executed in his place, but only because the word *bougre* in the *Etablissements de Saint Louis* had been misinterpreted as "sodomite" and not as "heretic," the meaning which it had in the fifteenth century.

At this time Voltaire took up the campaign for reform of the criminal law that had been launched by Cesare Beccaria with the publication of *Dei delitti e delle pene* (1764). His own contribution to the theory was not great, and the essential ideas did not come from him. Rather he supported and vigorously publicized Beccaria's principles, and used all his polemic talent to call the attention of European society to the features of the existing law and practice that had become intolerable. Only with the French Revolution of 1789 did arguments of the two reformers triumph, because they had convinced the vast majority of the people that revision of the criminal law was an urgent issue. The principle that offenses against religion and morality, when they do not harm third parties or the interests of society, do not belong within the purview of the criminal law, has been a backbone of the demand for legal toleration of homosexual expression.

So Voltaire as a heterosexual may have been personally ambivalent toward homosexuality in others, and not inclined to promote sympathy for it, but his lifetime struggle against superstition and cruelty and his pleas for toleration created a climate of opinion in which the forces of reason could continue the campaign for the abolition of laws and beliefs sanctioned by religious authority and tradition.

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