

Eulenburg scandals in Germany in 1903–08, journalists of the socialist press did their best to inflame their readership against the unnatural vices of the aristocracy, which were bringing the nation to the brink of ruin.

During the late nineteenth century, homosexual vanguard writers such as Edward Carpenter and John Addington Symonds advanced an opposing thesis. They held that it was precisely the fact that homosexual contacts tended to link the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, that made them suited to advancing democracy and the social integration of previously antagonistic classes. Class and homosexuality are sensitive issues for modern society, and the zone of their intersection is fraught with emotion.

See also **Working Class, Eroticism of.**

Wayne R. Dynes

### ARISTOPHANES (CA. 450–CA. 385 B.C.)

The greatest of the comic playwrights of ancient Athens. Aristophanes composed a series of plays performed between 427 and 388 B.C. The texts of eleven comedies have survived, together with fragments from others. Little is known of his life other than what can be learned from the plays, which reveal a much-read and educated personality, fond of nature and of country life, and conservative by inclination.

His plays satirize contemporary Athenian society, with a verbal dexterity and wordplay that are difficult to convey in translation. The object of his wit is often the real or alleged **effeminacy**, passive homosexuality, or prostitution of the male characters—failings if not vices in the eyes of his fellow Athenians—in which the resources of Attic colloquial speech are exploited to the full. Aristophanes gives effeminate men feminine names, Sostrate instead of Sostratos, Cleonyme instead of Cleonymos (*Clouds*, 678, 680), or uses

nicknames that allude to their “swishy” gestures and manner of walking, and especially the feminine dress which they affected. Similarly reproached are boys who sell their bodies for gifts or payment. In the *Plutus*, 153, a character declares: “And they say that the boys do this very thing, not for their lovers, but for the sake of money. Not the better types, but the catamites, since the better types do not ask for money.”

The positive side of Greek pederasty is mentioned only in passing: the praise of boyish beauty, the wall inscriptions with the boy’s name and the word *kalos*, “handsome,” and the memory of the heroism of the past inspired by male comradeship and fidelity. The world of lust and venality which the comedians depict is the baser side of Greek pederasty, not the nobler, though it is the aristocrat who is depicted as the boy-lover par excellence. The allusions and innuendoes in regard to the institution are legion. An element of jealousy is present, provoked by the preference which a boy would naturally show to a nobleman over a middle-class burgher, but the significant phenomenon is the role which pederasty played in the life of the upper class in the Golden Age of Athens. Nowhere do the plays suggest that an Athenian gentleman would find intercourse with a handsome boy anything but agreeable, and even the opportunity to scrutinize boyish beauty is a source of delight (*Wasps*, 568).

The ideal cherished by the conservative Aristophanes is the smooth-skinned, muscular, shy, serious boy of the past, not the avaricious hustler or effeminate youth of the present. There is a longing for values that have been lost or submerged in the Athens of the playwright’s own day. So while humor is an essential component of the treatment of homosexuality in Aristophanes, it serves to set in relief the idealized *paidēasteia* that served an educational function in Greek civilization; never does Aristophanes express indignation or disgust at the institution,

he rather criticizes the debased form to which (in his view) it had sunk in his day. It is as satire of the lower and ignobler manifestations of boy-love that the humorous and sarcastic passages in his plays are to be interpreted, not as condemnation in the vein that Christianity was to adopt in later centuries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, London: B. T. Batsford, 1972; Hans Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932.

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### ARISTOTLE (384–322 B.C.)

Major ancient Greek philosopher.

Aristotle's thinking was formed at the Academy in Athens, where in 366–347 he studied under Plato. Aristotle tutored the bisexual Alexander the Great in Macedonia (343–336), and then returned to Athens, where he opened a school. His habit of lecturing in the covered walking place (*peripatos*) of the Lyceum gave his school the name of Peripatetic. As a thinker Aristotle is outstanding for the breadth of his interests, which encompassed the entire panorama of the ancient sciences, and for his efforts to make sense of the world through applying an organic and developmental approach. In this way he departed from the essentialist, deductive emphasis of Plato. Unfortunately, Aristotle's polished essays, which were noted for their style, are lost, and the massive corpus of surviving works derives largely from lecture notes. In these the wording of the Greek presents many uncertainties: hence the differences in the various translations, which in sexual matters are often marred by euphemistic evasion or anachronistic modernization. Dubious points can only be settled by wrestling with the Greek.

Although Aristotle is known to have had several male lovers, in his writings he tended to follow Plato's lead in favoring restraints on overt expression of homoerotic feelings. He differs, however, from Plato's ethical and idealizing approach

to male same-sex love by his stress on biological factors. In a brief, but important treatment in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (7:5) he was the first to distinguish clearly between innate and acquired homosexuality. This dichotomy corresponds to a standard Greek distinction between processes which are determined by nature (*physis*) and those which are conditioned by culture or custom (*nomos*). The approach set forth in this text was to be echoed a millennium and a half later in the Christian Scholastic treatments of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIa, 31:7). In *The History of Animals* (9:8), Aristotle anticipates modern ethology by showing that homosexual behavior among birds is linked to patterns of domination and submission. In various passages he speaks of homosexual relations among noted Athenian men and boys as a matter of course. His treatment of friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics*, books 8 and 9) emphasizes its mutual character, based on the equality of the parties, which requires time for full consolidation. He takes it as given that true friendship can occur only between two free males of equal status, excluding slaves and women. Aristotle's ideas on friendship were to be echoed by Cicero, Erasmus, Michel de Montaigne, and Sir Francis Bacon.

The *Problems* (4:26), a work attributed to Aristotle but probably compiled by a follower, attributes desire for anal intercourse in men to the accumulation of semen in the fundament. This notion derives from the common Greek medical view that semen is produced in the region of the brain and then transferred by a series of conduits to the lower body.

In England and America a spurious compilation of sexual and generative knowledge, *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, enjoyed a long run of popularity. Compiled from a variety of sources, including the Hippocratic and Galenic medical traditions, the medieval writings of Albertus Magnus, and folklore of all kinds, this farrago was apparently first published in