



RESEARCH ARTICLE

VOLTAIRE AT THE HEART OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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ABSTRACT

Ten years after the tragic terrorist events of 2015 in France, Voltaire's "Treaty on Tolerance" is out of stock in many bookstores. Voltaire's indictment against religious fanaticism is more than ever relevant, it shows everyone's desire to understand the workings of extremism. Voltaire more modern than ever.

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INTRODUCTION

My extraordinary Voltaire: My first literary emotion, it is indeed to Voltaire that I owe it. I was twelve years old; it was then the first time that I read one of his works, and chance made me unearth a book in the attic titled *Zadig or Destiny*. And instantly, I had a kind of love at first sight for this tale that made me travel in the maze of possibilities of an orientalism comparable to that of the *Arabian Nights*. Oneirism, wonderful and ingenuity of a writing all in form and prose aroused my admiration for this famous writer that I still only knew by name but I already knew he was the greatest philosopher of the Enlightenment.

ESSAY

Zadig or the Destiny, an Eastern Story: *Zadig or the Destiny* is a philosophical tale by Voltaire, first published in 1747 under the name of Memnon. Extended by a few chapters, it was published once again in 1748 under its current title. This work is inspired by a Persian tale entitled *Journey and adventures of the three princes of Serendip*. *Zadig's* narrative device is endowed with two detonating elements: first of all, the hero's happiness is broken by the betrayal of Sémire and Azora (chapters I and II), which encourages him to look for another way than love to remain happy. Then, *Zadig* is attached to the queen, hence the jealousy of the king who

bursts and causes the hero to flee from Babylon. In addition to a perfectly constructed plot, what catches the reader's attention and sticks to his memory is the portrait of the main character. *Zadig* has "a beautiful natural strengthened by education". He is young, rich, in perfect health. He behaves with wisdom in the world. His righteous mind was developed by the sciences he cultivates. With so much perfection, *Zadig* therefore believes that he could be happy. He will not be, and initially by the fault of women. What prevents him from accessing happiness makes him reason about his fate. Perfect hero, he is carried away in an incoherent sequence of misfortunes and joys, trials and encounters serving the learning of life.

A source of inspiration for my essay, Treatise on actants and spaces: It is because of his plots and characters that Voltaire deserved a doctoral student to take an interest in this novel, and more generally in his *Romans et contes* (read in the Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, 1979). It is partly from these studies that I drew my essay, recently published in a university publishing house. Instrument of pleasure and weapon of intellectual combat, the philosophical tale uses all the springs of the tale and the novel: simplistic heroes but strongly symbolic, actancial schemes, theatricalisation, realism, exoticism, marvellous, utopia and picaresque. The heroes and characters of this philosophical tale are therefore evoked in the first part of my collection, composed of essays on actors, and intended precisely to position the reader in relation to the drama and its actors. Realism is at the source of Voltaire's

philosophical tale, which aims to be both a parody and a political, social, and religious satire.

A particular philosopher in the collective memory of all: François-Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire (1694-1778) is a French writer and philosopher who marked the XVIII^e Century, this famous 'Age of Enlightenment' at the time of the splendor of the reign of Louis XIV. Emblematic figure of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, leader of the philosophical party, his name remains attached to his fight against religious fanaticism, which he calls "the Infamous", for tolerance and freedom of thought. Deist outside of constituted religions, its political objective is that of a moderate and liberal monarchy, enlightened by the "philosophers". Intellectual committed to the service of truth and justice, he takes up, late, alone and using his immense notoriety, the defense of victims of religious intolerance and arbitrariness in cases that he has made famous: Jean Calas, Pierre-Paul Rockefeller, knight of La Barre, count of Lally. He will have left to posterity a rich and incomparable work that is indisputably part of the cultural heritage of France. This literary work is indeed varied: its theater, its epic poems, its philosophical letters, the philosophical dictionary and an important correspondence formed by more than 21,000 letters found. His historical works are wonderfully combined with his tales and novels.

CONCLUSION

Indeed, it is to the Voltairian tale that the author of *Treatise on actants and spaces* succumbed, very young. Its narrative form, short and almost lapidary, delivers concise messages, instantaneous, always effective. Voltaire, "a pot in which he fell" very small. He thus delivered here "his" relationship to the author of the Enlightenment.

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