



# Micromegas

*Voltaire , Theo Cuff (Preface)*

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## Micromegas Details

Date : Published May 1st 1995 by Penguin Classics (first published May 25th 1752)

ISBN : 9780140389029

Author : Voltaire , Theo Cuff (Preface)

Format : Paperback 38 pages

Genre : Classics, Philosophy, Fiction, Science Fiction, Cultural, France, Short Stories

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M. says

**...ama çok iyi bilirsiniz ki, bedenin unsurlar?na ayr??arak, bir ba?ka biçim alt?nda do?ay? canland?rmas? gerekti?inde, buna ölüm denir, bu ba?kala??m an? geldi?inde, sonsuz uzun ya?amakla, bir gün ya?amak aras?nda hiçbir fark kalmaz. " (s.16)**

Ölüm'ü bundan daha bilgece anlatan hiçbir ?ey okumad?m! 1694 y?l?nda do?an *Voltaire*, size de acaba bende oldu?u gibi; sanki günümüzden geçmi?e yolculuk yapm?? bir insan gibi gelmiyor mu? Zaman?n?n geli?meleri, olaylar? onun için öyle saçma ki; adeta bütün dünyay? kö?esinden kakhaha atarak izliyor gibi.

Bu sivri dili yüzünden hapis dahi yatm?? olsa da; okurken o kadar çok e?leniyorum ki.

Örnek vereyim:

**"?sfahan'a vard???mda kara koyunun mu ak koyunun mu taraf?n? tuttu?umu sordular. Etinin yumu?ak olmas? ?art?yla benim için fark etmeyece?ini söyledim. ?ranl?lar?n o s?ralar Akkoyunlu ve Karakoyunlu diye ikiye ayr?ld???n? bilmek gerekiyordu. ?ki tarafla da alay edildi?im san?ld?. " (s.53)**

*Frans?z Devrimi*'ni en çok etkileyen isimlerden birisi olan *Voltaire* ayn? zamanda dönemin geri kafal? pek çok uygulamalar?n?n da amans?z dü?man?. Zaten bu kitapta da bunun örneklerini sat?r aralar?nda okuyabilirsiniz.

2008 y?l?nda *Candide* ile iyimserli?i ala?a?? eden; insan?n yüzüne tokat gibi inen kitab?yla tan??m??t?m. Bundan be? y?l sonra 2013'te de *Zadig* ile yeniden ziyaretine gitti?im *Voltaire*'i ile 4 y?l sonra tekrar bu sat?rlarla okumak beni tekrar o duygulara götürdü.

*Micromegas*'a dönelim. Bu uzun öykü *Jonathan Swift*'in 1726 y?l?nda tamamlad??? *Gulliver*'in *Gezileri*'nden yakla??k 26 y?l sonra yaz?lm??, insan merkezci alg?y? derinden sarsacak denli güçlü bir satirik eser. Bu eserinde hicvini daha çok insan?n kendisini çok önemli bulmas? üzerinde yapm??;

**"Dünyay? ellerinde tutabilen ve organlar?n?n orant?s? bizimkiyle ayn? olan bir madde biçimi tasavvur ediniz, üstelik bu maddeden pekala çok say?da bulunabilir. Bu durumda, daha sonra kaybetmek zorunda kalaca??m?z iki köy kazanmak için girdi?imiz ?u sava?lar hakk?nda bu varl?klar?n ne dü?ünece?ini lütfen bir dü?ünün. " (s.28)**

Devasa canl?lar?n, atom boyutundaki insanlar? inceledi?ini dü?ündü?ümüzde, girdi?imiz sava?lar?n, ya?ad???m?z ço?u ?eyin ne kadar anlams?z olaca??n? hayal edin. ??te *Voltaire* bu eserinde en çok bu konuyu vurgulamak istemi?. *Swift*'in (henüz okuma ?erefine nail olamad???m lakin konu olarak bildi?im) *Gulliver*'in *Gezileri* kitab?nda oldu?u gibi ölçüleri astronomik farkl?l?klar? olan insanlar? kar??la?t?r?rken belki fark etmeden ça?da? bilim kurgunun ilk ve güçlü örneklerinden birini ortaya ç?karm?? Bu kitapta yine ça?da? bilim kurgunun ilk örneklerinden birisi kabul edilen *Platon*'un *Dü?ü* de bulunuyor. Bu eser, haf?zam beni yan?ltm?yor ise *Platon*'un *Symposium*'undaki insan?n çift nitelikli oldu?u yönündeki diyaloguna gönderme yaparak ba?lar. K?sac?k olmas?na ra?men *Candide* kitab?nda da ortaya ataca?? fikirlerin nüvelerini bar?nd?rmaktad?r.

Yukar?da mizahi yönünü örnek verdi?im metnin de geçti?i *Scarmentado*'nun *Seyahatlerinin Öyküsü* sanki *Candide* kitab?nda ortaya koyaca?? fikirlerin nüvelerini olu?turabilecek mesajlar içeren bir di?er öyküsü. Bu

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## Nour Moheb says

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## Fabio says

### L'ironia, innanzitutto

Del multiforme genio di Voltaire, volendo e potendo, si potrebbe scrivere a lungo. Personalmente non ne sono in grado, mi limito a godermi le sue opere e ad ammirarlo. Borges, lettore migliore del sottoscritto, sottolinea tra l'altro che "i lucidi racconti di Voltaire sono puri ed elevati giochi che non esigono credulità ma una volontaria e gioiosa partecipazione": riassunto perfetto degli aspetti fondamentali di gran parte dell'opera del francese (a cui va aggiunta "la miglior prosa della lingua francese e forse del mondo" - qui J.L.B. esagera, ma è perdonabile).

Giusto due estratti, tanto per stimolar l'appetito...

"Raconterò ingenuamente come la cosa andò, senza metterci nulla del mio, che per uno storico non è piccolo sforzo."

"Bisogna pur citare, quello che non si capisce per niente, nella lingua che meno si intende."

- *Micromegas* -

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## Veronique says

3.5

"I see more than ever that one must not judge anything by its apparent size."

A being from a planet circling the star Sirius visits the Earth with his companion from the planet Saturn, both of gargantuan size. This scifi short story deals with perception and point of view, but also allowed the philosopher Voltaire to comment on his contemporary society.

Amazing to think it was written so long ago.

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## **Fabian says**

A LETTER to a favorite TEACHER

Dear Mrs. Flick:

I love reading long long books. This one is Gera's favorite and his worldview stems from it: a very short but meaty metaphysical poem. Well, it reads like a poem (since I think short stories are more related to them than to actual novels). Without a doubt the one effect it has on the reader is (because everyone that has the chance to read it will surely feel the same way:) dumbfoundment at the scale of things--especially our relationship to the enormous globe. In less than twenty pages, Voltaire shows our insignificance, presents it so beautifully and with such majesty (which is of paramount importance when undertaking the difficult task of building something completely outside of ourselves). This is why **YOU MUST MAKE YOUR STUDENTS GET THEIR HANDS ON THIS, or BETTER YET, MAKE THEM READ MICROMEGAS, a REQUIREMENT.** Only to teach humility; only to expand their acknowledgement of the entire world in relation to their own personal journeys. It is a lesson that no one learns too soon: we are but spots, maybe a parasitic disease upon the earth. **MEDIOCRITY AND ITS ACCEPTANCE OF IT MUST BE STOPPED!!!!**

This work could be very well forgotten. **MAKE THE KIDS READ IT!!** (It would take but less than one whole school period!) When MICROMEGAS falsely labels the earth as the "World of the whales" is probably the most masterful touch in this work of art. Encourage your students to pinpoint when their life-view is completely altered by this.

Yours,  
Fabian M.

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## **Emad (TheBookCritic) says**

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## Bradley says

18th century SF. :) Gotta love it just for that.

Otherwise, my estimation of Voltaire continues to rise! I always loved his stuff before and while this doesn't have quite the social impact that something like *Candide* had, it certainly puts the rod to the church with its "blow your mind" idea of turning all us ants into something even more insignificant. :)

I see your enormous cathedral and raise you a thousand-league footprint. :)

Short and sweet and so scientific... these giants are giants of erudition and learning! Of course, they laugh at the idea that us little ants mean crap because we only live for mere dozens of years while they live for thousands. I mean, seriously.

Very impressive for its time and message. I know it's not entirely all about SF but it IS still an SF tale and one of the very first.

I'm so glad that Ada Palmer turned me on to it. :)

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## sabisteb aka callisto says

Voltaire ist nicht gerade ein Name, den man normalerweise mit Science-Fiction in Verbindung bringen würde. Er selber hätte sich sicherlich auch nicht als Sci-Fi Autor beschrieben. Nun ist es aber so, dass das Decodieren eines Textes nicht vom Text oder vom Autor bestimmt wird und von den Erfahrungen des Lesers abhängt, der einen Text durchaus anders als intendiert interpretieren kann.

Ich lese Sci-Fi und keine philosophischen Texte, es ist also nur natürlich, dass ich Voltaires *Micromégas* als frühe Sci-Fi decodiere (genau wie Bacons *New Atlantis* als Sci-Fi whistleblower story).

Worum geht es in *Micromégas*? Ein hochbegabter Außerirdischer vom Sirius, hat sich mit seinen fortgeschrittenen Ideen bei der Obrigkeit sagen wir mal... unbeliebt gemacht. Er wird verbannt. Das ist einen Wissenschaftler relativ egal, er macht sich halt auf die Reise durchs Universum, um seine Forschung zu betreiben. Riesig wie er ist (Voltaire rechnet einfach die Körpergröße im Verhältnis zum Planeten hoch. Sirius ist riesig, folglich ist *Micromégas* auch ein Gigant) ist er sozusagen ein lebendes Raumschiff und kann durch das Universum fliegen. Sein erster Zwischenstopp ist Saturn. Da trifft er eine verwandte Seele in einem Philosophen, der für seine Verhältnisse bereits ein Zwerg ist. Die beiden beschließen auf *grande tour* zu gehen und sich ein paar Planeten anzuschauen. Auf der Erde finden sie mit ihren Mikroskopen zunächst einen Wal, später ein Schiff mit Wissenschaftlern, mit denen sie Wissenschaft diskutieren.

Ich würde diese Geschichte als frühe Sci-Fi Kurzgeschichte bezeichnen, denn sie erfüllt alle Kriterien. Ausgehend von der zum Zeitpunkt der Entstehung der Geschichte bekannten Wissenschaft, die korrekt dargestellt wird, extrapoliert der Autor in eine mögliche Zukunft. Er verwendet dabei das klassische Sci-Fi Mittel der Entfremdung, indem bekannte Dinge in einer Art verfremdet werden, die einem zum Nachdenken anregt. Voltaire wählt die Vergrößerung. Indem er seine Protagonisten ins gigantische vergrößert, so dass der Mensch winzig wie ein Bakterium wird, regt er den Leser dazu an, über seine Position in der Natur nachzudenken. *Micromégas* weist den Wissenschaftler vom Saturn auch darauf hin, dass man nicht das als

Maß verwenden darf, was man kennt, sondern dass man immer frisch anhand dessen urteilen muss, was man sieht. Eine klassische Regel des Experimentierens im Labor.

Ein weiteres klassisches Werkzeug der hard Sci-Fi ist, Geschichten zu verwenden, um dem interessierten Laien den aktuellen Stand der Wissenschaft auf unterhaltsame Weise nahezubringen. Das macht Voltaire in den Gesprächen zwischen den Außerirdischen mit den Mathematikern an Bord des untersuchten Schiffes. Die verschiedenen Besatzungsmitglieder sind Anhänger verschiedener wissenschaftlicher Traditionen, die nacheinander kurz erklären. Ein sehr früher, sehr klassischer Infodump, ein klassisches Problem von Hard Sci-Fi, bis heute, leider.

Viel passiert nicht, das erinnert ein wenig an die hard Sci-Fi Geschichten von Greg Bear, bei denen die Philosophie teilweise auch mehr im Vordergrund steht als die Handlung.

Wirklich beeindruckend in Sachen predictive Sci-Fi ist jedoch diese Stelle: "they swung by two moons that cater to this planet but have escaped the notice of our astronomers. I know very well that Father Castel will write, perhaps even agreeably enough, against the existence of these two moons; but I rely on those who reason by analogy. These good philosophers know how unlikely it would be for Mars, so far from the sun, to have gotten by with less than two moons. Whatever the case may be, our explorers found it so small that they feared not being able to land on it, and they passed it by like two travelers disdainful of a bad village cabaret, pressing on towards a neighboring city. But the Sirian and his companion soon regretted it. " - Voltaire sagte anhand von Analogie die zwei Marsmonde voraus!!!

Fazit: Ja, diese Kurzgeschichte von Voltaire ist ein sehr frühes Beispiel für Hard Sci-Fi, die aber eher im Bereich Philosophie gelehrt wird. Würde man sie von der Sci-Fi Seite her angehen, würden Schüler und Studenten sicherlich mehr Spaß mit ihr haben und gleichzeitig etwas über die damalige Wissenschaft auf unterhaltsame Weise lernen.

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## Metin Yılmaz says

Bir çrp?da okunan Voltaire hikayeleri. Masals?, gerçekçi ve bol bol i?nelemeli. Okunmal? ve okutulmal? bir yazar Voltaire. Tavsiye ederim.

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## Azza says

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## Baran ????? says

Voltaire'den okudu?um ilk kitap. Farkl? bir deneyim oldu, daha çok Binbir Gece Masallar?, Borges'in de önsözünde alt?n? çizdi?i gibi, Gülliver'in Seyahatleri tad?nda öyküler bunlar. Kitab?n yaz?ld??? dönemi baz ald???m?zda, özellikle Babil Prensesi'nde geçen olaylar?n o dönemin olaylar?na bir gönderme olarak

okunmasın? tarih-edebiyat ilisi?kisi içerisinde anlamlı? bulsak da, ben dipnotlarla bu tarz zorlama bir okumayı itici buldum. Belki kitabın sonunda ?erh olarak yer alabilirdi. Sonuçta metnin kendi dinami?i, zaman? a?an bir yapı?ı? var.... Bu gerçekten de önemli bir nokta...

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## **Ana Rînceanu says**

*original read: 2006*

Micromégas, a giant exiled for trying to write scientific book examining the insects on his planet, travels the universe and befriends the secretary of the Academy of Saturn. They bond over their love of philosophy and examination of the natural world.

Eventually, they arrive on Earth, where they examine humans to determine whether they have any intelligence or spirit. The humans explain the philosophies of Aristotle, Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz and Locke to the travelers, but they laugh at them and promise to write a book about the point of everything, but that is where the book ends.

This was an interesting re-read and apparently this story and *Plato's Dream* are seminal works of science fiction so I'll be reading *Candide*, *Zadig* and *Selected Stories* next.

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