

Notes for *Candide*

Chapter 1

For some weeks after its publication, Voltaire denied authorship of *Candide*, as he often did with works potentially dangerous to himself.

“*everything is best*”: Throughout *Candide*, Voltaire ridicules Leibniz’s philosophy; caricaturing and oversimplifying Leibniz’s optimism and terminology and presenting obviously comical, trivial, and grotesque examples. Voltaire scoffs at the doctrine that everything in this world exists for a specific and excellent reason.

Westphalia	province in western Germany
quarterings	genealogical divisions on a coat of arms indicating degrees of nobility (sixty-four was considered the maximum)
Pangloss	Greek. “all-tongue”
cosmolo	indicates “cosmology,” a term invented by Christian Wolff, a disciple of Leibniz; “nigo” calls to mind “nincompoop” in French

Chapter 2

the Bulgarians: The Bulgarians represent Prussian troops of Frederick the Great in the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). Voltaire wishes to insinuate that both the soldiers and their leaders are homosexuals; the French word *bougre*, like the English *bugger*, derives from the word *Bulgarian*, because of the association of Bulgaria with the medieval sect the Bogomils, who were accused of sodomy.

the Abares: The name refers allegorically to the French, who were aligned with the Austrians and Russians against the Prussians and British in the Seven Years’ War. Actually, “Abares” designates a tribe of Scythians, who lived in the steppes near the Black Sea and who therefore might be at war with the Bulgars

“dressed in blue”	Frederick the Great’s recruiting officers wore blue uniforms
Dioscorides	Greek physician of the first century A.D. who traveled with the Roman army as a surgeon and wrote a treatise on medical remedies

Chapter 3

<i>sufficient reason</i>	phrase employed to ridicule the Leibnizian terminology of <i>deterministic optimism</i> .
“Te Deum”	satirical reference to the custom of warring nations to invoke the blessing of the Almighty and to ask Him for victory.
“to a person”	what follows makes clear that this is a Protestant minister who is fanatical in his hatred of the Catholic religion
Anabaptist	Christian sect that opposed infant baptism in favor of baptism on confession of faith; in Holland, the Anabaptists were granted religious tolerance and refuge against religion.
“unfledged being”	refers to Aristotle’s definition of man as a featherless biped

Chapter 4

“*the law which seizes on the effects of the bankrupts, only to cheat the creditors*”: Voltaire had recently sustained a significant financial loss through the bankruptcy proceedings against one of his brokers.

disease	sypphilis (an STD)
cochineal	scarlet dye made from the dried bodies of female cochineal (small, red, cactus-feeding) insects, imported from Mexico and Peru.
hirelings	mercenaries, professional soldiers hired to serve in foreign armies