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Professor Steven L. Jordan
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RE: Response to Voltaire's *Micromegas*

Professor Jordan:

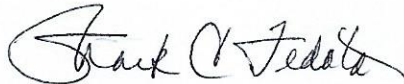
The formalities of written academic exchange are not at my fingertips. However, the concept of a written response is familiar to me in the legal milieu. Those of us with responsibility for teaching aspiring lawyers have frequently advocated a focused response rather than a blunderbuss attempt to counter every disagreeable statement by an opponent.

Because of the temper of his times, M. Voltaire should not be faulted for his effort to skewer philosophers with an epee rather than an Italian broadsword. Nevertheless he takes Coleridge's requirement of willing suspension of disbelief to a Saturnian degree by materializing a shipload of contrary philosophers in a whale-strewn, insignificant sea into which gargantuan protagonists fortuitously trip. Assuming as lawyers do *arguendo* some validity to or necessity for a ship of fools, finger nail ear trumpets, and toggle switch changes from anthropomorphic to supernatural characteristics for the giant and dwarf, at least get the proportions correct in a piece nominally devoted to proportions.

I do not dispute the author's computations of leagues or cubits or stadia. Such are beyond my comprehension. However, even a thumbnail large enough to cradle a full-masted sailing ship would not be large enough to form the aural end of a speaking trumpet if, as we are asked to believe, *Micromegas's* anthropomorphic attributes were in proportion to 18th Century or 21st Century humans. Even Monnet's illustration has *Micromegas* palming the ship and demonstrating the mis-proportions.

The effort at elaborating anthropomorphic physiognomy proportions also seem suspect. Certainly an 18th Century Frenchman might have looked suspiciously on the measurements and conclusions some time earlier by Signor da Vinci, albeit in Italian (and potentially in Veniziano), of the relative proportions of human body parts. But he would have been better served. Perhaps M. Voltaire would also have been better served to take the counsel of his Greek-quoting savant that "one should always cite what one does not understand at all in the language one understands the least."

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark C. Fedota".

Mark C. Fedota

AB Loyola University Chicago
JD Georgetown University Law Center

Mr. Fedota's formative years were under the tutelage of the Sisters of Charity B.V.M., where, in the seventh grade he was compelled to develop and defend a 12-based numbering system. Those efforts and his inability to comprehend even a rudimentary calculus text led to his development as a courtroom lawyer and managing partner of a law firm. He sadly misses Mr. Safire's Sunday columns in the NY Times.