



Ralph Matthew Leck. *Vita Sexualis: Karl Ulrichs and the Origins of Sexual Science.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016. 304 pp. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-04000-9.

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Published on H-Ideas (November, 2018)

Commissioned by Eliah Bures

Politics and the Study of Sexual Science? An Exchange Between Harry Oosterhuis and Ralph Leck

Editor's note: The following exchange was initiated by Harry Oosterhuis, who was asked to review Ralph Leck's *Vita Sexualis* for H-Ideas. After reading the book, Oosterhuis believed that a longer review was called for, one that could rebut central claims put forward in *Vita Sexualis* and address fundamental issues about the role of presentist political concerns in writing the history of sexual science. Professor Oosterhuis proposed that the author be given the chance to respond formally, and Ralph Leck graciously accepted the offer. The following is their exchange.

The Pitfalls of Political Correctness in Writing Sexual History

Harry Oosterhuis (Maastricht University)

Ralph Leck's book about the historical origins of "modernist" sexual science and the related ideal of a liberated "vital sexualis" has a neatly arranged plot. There is the pioneering hero mentioned in the book's title, the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-95), who was the first public advocate of equal rights, not only for "urnings," or homosexuals, but also for other minorities whose gender identity or sexual preference did not conform to the established heterosexual and reproductive norm. Then there are a number of German and British disciples of Leck's idol who bravely continued his rebel-

lion against the oppressive legacy of Christian doctrines, Victorian prudery, and bourgeois hypocrisy: Karl Maria Kertbeny, Johanna Elberskirchen, Magnus Hirschfeld, Iwan Bloch, Auguste Forel, Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, John Addington Symonds, Havelock Ellis, and Edward Carpenter. These courageous and democratically minded luminaries distinguished themselves from the elitist and conservative—if not reactionary—defenders of the patriarchal and "heterosexist" status quo as well as of bourgeois-capitalist hegemony (pp. 29, 68). These prejudiced villains include leading medical sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Albert Moll, Albert Schrenck-Notzing, Albert Eulenburg, Paul Mantegazza, Jean Martin Charcot, Valentin Magnan, and Cesare Lombroso, who systematically demonized all irregular sexual behavior and fully supported "compulsory heterosexuality" (p. 29). According to Leck, the pioneering scholarship and sexual politics of Ulrichs has been forgotten because he was overshadowed and disregarded by these mainstream sexologists, as well as by Sigmund Freud. Whether Freud also belonged to the conservative camp remains unclear, because Leck does not discuss psychoanalysis in relation to sexual modernism.

The objective of sexual modernism, as Leck defines it, was the social and legal recognition of a variety of sexual desires and gender identities as natural and equal. Several strategies were employed to advance this ideal: the introduction of neologisms such as "urning" and "homo-

sexual,” “dioning” and “heterosexual,” sexual “intermediaries,” “third sex” and “psychosexual hermaphroditism,” all of which contributed to “a complete new epistemology of human sexuality” (p. 41); the redefinition of nature in empirical, quantitative, and inclusionary terms against the view of nature as a normative standard implying the branding of deviance as unnatural; the framing of sexual rights as a fundamental sociopolitical issue and the linking of such rights with human and civil rights; and the replacement of the procreative norm with the free expression of consensual sexual pleasure. This agenda was inspired by an empathic and compassionate attitude that was rooted in the personal experiences of its main proponents, most of whom—Ulrichs, Symonds, Carpenter, Hirschfeld, Karsch-Haack, and Elberskirchen—were homosexual. Their subjective involvement played a crucial role in their scholarship and emancipatory outlook.

Leck’s historical account of these sexual modernists appears to be inspired by a particular political commitment as well. His intention, which he almost formulates as a moral imperative for scholars of sexuality, is clear: “any history of the sexual science movement,” he writes, “must delineate between those who described the protean sexuality found in human history as natural from those who inserted a preemptory moral division between natural and unnatural sexuality into the study of sexual variance. Classificatory-epistemological differences often correspond to political differences” (p. 18). Leck claims that there is a fundamental distinction between the medicalizing and stigmatizing science of *psychopathia sexualis*, which affirmed the oppressive status quo, and critical scholarship that celebrated the free expression of sexual diversity.

Leck admits that modernist thought was not without contradictions and that at the time it was still entangled with established notions of gender, sexuality, and politics. The intellectual elitism and political liberalism of Ulrichs, Kertbeny, and Symonds did not include any consideration of class and feminist issues and, as Leck phrases it, “tended to perpetuate an exclusionary tradition of civic fraternity” (p. 54). Also, modernist explanations of sexuality, in particular those of Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, hinged on biological determinism. They adopted the dominant view of sexual desire as a magnetic attraction between male and female opposites. Their conflation of sexual desire and gender identity, which implied that a same-sex preference was equated with gender inversion (homosexual men and women were supposedly born with a soul of the opposite sex), confirmed gender stereotypes and the hierarchy of active (masculine)

and passive (effeminate) roles. The model of sexuality as magnetism between gendered opposites barred an understanding of sexuality as an attraction between the like-minded. This perspective complicated their defense of homosexual rights, as pointed out by one of the leading German medical authorities, Rudolf Virchow. Virchow, who corresponded with Ulrichs and chaired a commission that advised the Prussian government in 1869 to abolish the penalization of “unnatural” intercourse between men, criticized Ulrichs’s approach. According to Virchow, Ulrich’s assumption that effeminate urnings were attracted to masculine “dionings” (heterosexuals), together with his claim that they were entitled to sexual gratification, implied that heterosexual men should engage in same-sex behavior and thus act against their own inborn sexual nature. This perspective tended to confirm the widespread prejudice and fear that urnings would seduce heterosexuals into homosexuality.

One of the most problematic aspects of sexual modernism was its reliance on the moral authority of naturalistic discourse, positing that a wide variety of sexual behaviors should be accepted because they are supposedly given in nature and therefore cannot be wrong. In fact this contention mimicked the age-old naturalistic fallacy, current in both Christian doctrine and enlightened thinking: the confusion of nature as empirical reality beyond good and evil and its definition as a moral standard and prescription for what is supposedly acceptable or not. The suggestion of Ulrichs and other sexual modernists up to Alfred Kinsey that what is natural cannot be immoral, was disputed by Ulrichs’s fellow-traveler, the Hungarian writer and journalist Karl Maria Kertbeny (1824–82), who coined the term “homosexuality.” He insisted that the legitimacy of sexual acts could not be based on the argument that sexual diversity is rooted in nature, because this would imply that enforced and violent sexuality, including rape, sadism, incest, and abuse of children, should also be endorsed. This radical view, expressed earlier by Marquis de Sade, was not maintained by Ulrichs and his followers. Moreover, employing a discourse of nature could prove to be counterproductive (as it also was), because the opponents of sexual modernity used a similar naturalist rhetoric in order to disqualify what they branded as “unnatural” sexualities. According to Kertbeny, the (un)naturalness of any sexual conduct was irrelevant for its legitimacy; the moral, legal, or social validity of sexual acts could only be based on the liberal definition of individual rights, including the need for mutual consent and the prevention of harm to others. Interestingly, Leck suggests that the arguments put forward

by the heterosexual Kertbeny were part of his allegation that Ulrichs was too subjective—in other words, the self-interested logic put forward by Ulrichs in his fight for legal equality was not necessarily the best one. The divergent perspectives and involvement of these two protagonists also showed up in their different understanding of the essence of homosexuality: whereas Ulrichs defined it in terms of a mental and emotional constitution and gender identity, Kertbeny prioritized physical impulse and bodily contact.

Ulrichs's (disputable) argument that natural categories of sexual desire are given and fixed served as a major tenet of the twentieth-century homosexual rights movement, even though time and again some of its leaders—who, I would suggest, were more “modern” than those relying on biological arguments—would articulate Kertbeny's viewpoint. Although Leck acknowledges that naturalization as an emancipatory strategy has its weak spots, he still defends it—not very convincingly, I believe—as an intrinsic part of the humanistic values in sexual modernism. In his view there is a crucial difference between, on the one hand, deductive and dualist discourses of nature that confirm the (unjust) status quo and exclude what is stamped as “unnatural,” and, on the other hand, the inductive and monistic understanding of nature which is inclusionary and undermines the normative purport of the first approach. Regrettably, Leck does not explain how this would solve the problem of differentiating between “good” (consensual) and “bad” (enforced) sex *within* the inclusionary modernist framework.

Another thorny issue was the penchant for taking ancient Greek culture as a model for modern sexual mores in general and the social shaping of homosexuality in particular—an approach that was cultural and historical rather than naturalistic and that had been introduced by Heinrich Hössli in the 1830s. Hössli emphasized the relational dimension of sexuality in order to bestow moral value on and incite a sympathetic understanding for same-sex relations. The ideal of durable amatory attraction of the like-minded on the basis of free choice and common cultural, aesthetic, and civic values was an alternative for an understanding of sexuality in terms of gender polarization, biological necessity, and the passing impulsiveness of physical urges. Leck devotes a chapter to the adoption of the Greek ideal of *agape* in modernist sexual science, which in his view broadened *psychopathia sexualis* into “a science of love” (p. xiii), even though the classics scholar John Addington Symonds, who admired Ulrichs, demystified Greek erotic culture as an example for modern sexual relationships. Whereas other sex-

ual modernists rather uncritically embraced Greek erotic culture, Symonds pointed out that Greek homosexuality, or *paiderastia*, in military, athletic, and educational settings should not be idealized. More often than not, it was rooted in differences of age and power, social inequalities, and misogyny. This was in line neither with a modern liberal approach toward sexuality in general, nor with the consensual egalitarianism of modern intimate relationships along romantic lines in particular. Ulrichs, who stressed that urnings were similar to dionings in their craving for romantic love, tended to agree with Symonds, although he also used the Greek example in order to bestow dignity on homoeroticism. Leck contrasts Symonds, Ulrichs, and also some feminist thinkers to the antimodernist masculine branch of the German homosexual movement represented by, among others, Adolf Brand, Elisár von Kupffer, Benedikt Friedländer, and Hans Blüher, who fully embraced the Greek model and largely adopted its elitist, masculine—“male homosexualist” (p. 24), in Leck's words—and antifeminist elements. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on these outspoken critics of Ulrichs's and Hirschfeld's approach. Their cultural and homosocial perspective allowed them to question the liberating potential of sexual modernism and its epistemic and normative assumptions. They rejected biological determinism and the related assumption of a fixed boundary between exclusive homo- and heterosexuality (one is either straight or gay) in particular. For them, the struggle for acceptance of homosexuality as a fixed minority category was restrictive because it would rule out any sexual ambiguity or a more general “bisexuality,” while also tabooing sex between adults and minors.

Although Leck acknowledges, mostly only in passing, that there was quite some overlap between “modernist” and “conservative” sexual science and politics, and that the complexity of historical reality does not always allow for a black-and-white picture, his presentation of the first is far more nuanced than that of the second. He briefly refers to the autobiographical case studies in the works of Krafft-Ebing, Moll, and several other medical authors, which enabled “perverts” to express themselves, even when their views were not in line with medical theories. Rejecting Michel Foucault's well-known depiction of medical sexology as an instrument of control and discipline, Leck adds that these psychiatric experts were not “medical tyrants” and that not all of their patients “were passive victims of the medicalization of deviance” (pp. 223-24). But he does not elaborate on this any further, while he also ignores the broader significance of the prominent role of homosexuals, fetishists,

masochists, and other “perverts” in the development of sexological knowledge—an issue to which I return below.

In fact, Leck steadily downplays the many similarities between progressive and mainstream sexual scholars, building his repetitive and insistent narrative on their alleged “monumental dissimilarity” (p. 26). He claims that there was a deep-seated cultural conflict between the two groups, which “was historically real,” adding that “the sexology of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing can be treated as ideal types of sexual modernism and conservative sexual science” (pp. xv, 187). But Leck fails to support this claim by a close reading and thorough analysis of the work of the so-called conservative thinkers, nor does he assimilate other, widely available historical studies about medical sexology. For example, my *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (2000), a study about the various interactions of “perverts” with psychiatry and the ambivalences and innovations in Krafft-Ebing’s consideration of sexual deviance, is listed in Leck’s bibliography and is occasionally cited, but he has chosen to ignore my argument and similar ones by other historians, such as Klaus Müller’s *Aber in meinem Herzen sprach eine Stimme so laut: Homosexuelle Autobiographien und medizinische Pathographien im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (1991), which is cited briefly only once, and Philippe Weber’s *Der Trieb zum Erzählen: Sexualpathologie und Homosexualität, 1852-1914* (2008), which is not mentioned at all. Many other important studies are missing in Leck’s references, such as Jonathan Katz’s *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (1995), Marita Keilson-Lauritz’s *Die Geschichte der Eigenen Geschichte* (1997), Arnold Davidson’s *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and The Formation of Concepts* (2001), Robert Beachy’s *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (2014), Edward Ross Dickinson’s *Sex, Freedom, and Power in Imperial Germany, 1880-1914* (2014), and Robert Tobin’s *Peripheral Desires: The German Discovery of Sex* (2015).

Whereas Leck’s presentation of the sexual modernists is rather nuanced and therefore interesting, his picture of their alleged opponents is simplistic and selective, even close to outright caricature. This misrepresentation, it seems, helps him to forge a false contrast between the two groups, with the progressives paving the way for the recognition of sexual variance and egalitarianism and the conventional medical experts holding on to established patterns of thought, merely replicating all irrational and unfounded prejudices of the day. Apart from some other influential “conservative” thinkers on sexuality, such as the renowned criminol-

ogist Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau (author of an influential best-seller about cultural degeneration from 1892), two prominent pioneers of sexology, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) and Albert Moll (1862-1939), seem to function as Leck’s main phantom enemies of sexual modernism. Again and again he refers to them as the prototypical doctors who stood for a stigmatizing sexual science that relied on the sociobiological theory of degeneration, bolstered the repressive sexual and gender order of bourgeois society, and suppressed Ulrichs’s legacy. Their pathologizing perspective, according to Leck, was in fact nothing more than “a medicalization of sin” and a replication, in scientific guise, of Christian and Victorian prejudices (p. 147).

All these various assessments are misguided and not based on any evidence whatsoever. Leck refers to the first edition (1886) and a supplementary edition (1890) of *Psychopathia sexualis*, but he does not mention its other eleven editions published between 1887 and 1903, or any other work by Krafft-Ebing apart from a book review. With regard to Moll, Leck does refer to his main works, *Die konträre Sexualempfindung* (the third edition of 1899, not the first one of 1891) and *Untersuchungen über die Libido sexualis* (1897-98), but only in a succinct, fragmented, and selective way that does not do justice to their manifold and complex contents. He appears to have ignored the most recent historical publications about Moll in the special issue of *Medical History* (2012), edited by Andreas-Holger Maehle and Lutz Sauerteig, in which the issue of sexual modernity is also addressed.

My key point is that Krafft-Ebing and Moll cannot be labeled sexual conformists. Their work also challenged the status quo, and they were innovators, too, and at least as radical as Leck’s modernist heroes, if in slightly different ways. At the same time, both the modernist and conservative groups grappled with established notions about sexuality and still echoed time-honored stereotypes. The theoretical differences between, on the one hand, Krafft-Ebing and Moll, and, on the other hand, Ulrichs, Kertbeny, Hirschfeld, Bloch, and some others were in no way larger than such differences among the members of the last group.

It would take up too much space to discuss in detail all of Leck’s unfounded and arbitrary generalizations, partisan claims, and failures to mention crucial facts about Krafft-Ebing and Moll, but I will briefly address the main flaws in his argument. For one thing, it is just not true that Krafft-Ebing and Moll, as Leck claims, “drew sharp distinctions between normal and abnormal sexual de-

sires" (p. 182) on the basis of the procreative norm; that their explanation of perversion was completely molded by pathologization, biological determinism, and degeneration theory; that Moll "simply branded homosexuality as carnal madness" (p. 112); that they were blinded by cultural ethnocentrism; that they hardly addressed "the injustice of existing penal codes" (p. 187) and systematically denied human rights to sexual minorities; that they did not empathize with their homosexual and otherwise sexually deviant patients or clients; that they banned discussions of love and affection from their, in Leck's words, "anti-Greek science" (p. 111); that they fully discredited Ulrichs's ideas because of his subjective involvement in the issue as a homosexual; that they highlighted the acquired and immoral character of homosexuality and tended to deny its innate and permanent nature; or that Hirschfeld, instead of Krafft-Ebing and Moll, was the "undisputed leader of the Central European sexual science movement by 1900" (p. 64).

Already in the second edition of his *Psychopathia sexualis* (1887) and also in his laudatory preface to Moll's book about homosexuality (1891), Krafft-Ebing referred to homosexuals and other deviants as "stepchildren of nature," and this ambiguous characterization was all but an outright denigration: it expressed the feeling that the criminalization of their behavior was cruel and unjust, and that they deserved compassion and humanitarian treatment.[1] Whereas Krafft-Ebing first explained homosexuality in terms of immorality and pathological degeneration, in the 1890s he developed a more psychological and sympathetic perspective. Around 1900 he admitted that his earlier views had been one-sided and that Ulrichs had a point with his plea for homosexual marriage: same-sex love was comparable to heterosexual love and therefore legitimate. He had come to believe that homosexuality was not so much a disease as a biological and psychological condition that had to be accepted as a more or less deplorable but natural fate. From the early 1890s on, both Krafft-Ebing and Moll criticized traditional moral-religious and legal denunciations of homosexuality (with arguments similar to those of Ulrichs and Kertbeny), and they were among the first to sign Hirschfeld's petition (1897) against Section 175 of the German penal code that made particular sexual acts between men punishable. Around 1900, Krafft-Ebing and Moll were, together with Hirschfeld, at the forefront of a liberal and humanitarian approach to homosexuality.

The works of Krafft-Ebing and Moll contain a wide range of case histories, including (auto)biographical accounts, letters, and intimate confessions of patients and

correspondents. The prominent role of the individual case study model opened a space for "perverts," in particular homosexual men but also others such as fetishists and masochists, to express feelings and experiences that so far had been largely silenced in public. Using the forum of medical science, upper- and middle-class men contacted Krafft-Ebing and Moll of their own accord as private patients or informants, and they would analyze themselves, speak for themselves, and tell their personal life stories. These articulate individuals hoped to find acceptance and support; for several of them Krafft-Ebing's and Moll's work was an eye-opener and it even brought them some relief. They capitalized on it in order to part with the charge of immorality and illegality and, by appealing to the naturalness and authenticity of their feelings, to explain and justify themselves. Their stories certainly touched a nerve in Krafft-Ebing and Moll, and both referred to such cases as an empirical basis for their theoretical considerations, which, rather than being static, changed in response to information and insights from some of their patients and informants.

Building on the work of Krafft-Ebing, Moll, in his monographs about homosexuality (1891) and *libido sexualis* (1897-98), elaborated the most comprehensive and sophisticated sexual theory before Freud wrote his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905) and Havelock Ellis completed his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897-1928). Moll's perspective shared many elements with those of the sexual modernists, and some aspects were perhaps even more innovative than the approach of Leck's prototypical sexual progressives. Although Moll's views on homosexuality would regress after 1900 to a more judgmental position, though without renouncing his basic theoretical assumptions, in the 1890s he was the modernist sexologist par excellence.

In his book about homosexuality, Moll questioned several of the prevailing notions about it. He doubted that a same-sex preference could be acquired through mere behavioral influences, such as moral corruption, seduction, or masturbation. His central tenet was that in most cases homosexuality involved a deep-seated innate feeling and that as such it should not be considered immoral and illegal: same-sex acts between consenting individuals above the age of sixteen or eighteen should not be punishable. Echoing Krafft-Ebing's "stepchildren of nature," Moll talked about "unfortunate human beings" who deserved compassion and fair treatment. He also acknowledged the importance of Ulrichs's writings, even though in his eyes his appeal for the right of "urnings" to marry was bizarre.

Moll did not doubt that homosexuality was a medical issue, but his evaluation of its pathological nature and the associated physical causes was cautious. Like other physiological and psychological functions, sexuality, he explained, showed considerable variation without absolute boundaries between normal and abnormal. Although numerous homosexuals came from neuropathic families and suffered from hereditary taints and nervous troubles, he also found that many of them were healthy, without any degenerative or other pathological symptoms. There was no sufficient ground for considering inborn homosexuality to be full-blown psycho- or neuropathy. Using the qualification “morbid-like” and occasionally also “variation,” Moll’s comparison of it to more elusive disturbances was not very different from Hirschfeld’s equation of this orientation with harmless malformations, such as color-blindness or a harelip.[2] Mental and nervous distress among homosexuals, Moll added, could be caused by the social pressure they endured or by sexual frustration.

Tacitly Moll undermined the labeling of homosexuality as pathology even further by putting it on a par with heterosexuality, which he defined as attraction and intercourse between males and females without any procreative intention—behavior which according to traditional norms deviated from nature’s purpose. Both orientations, Moll suggested, were of the same kind. The close connection between the sexual drive and the love impulse toward a specific individual, which distinguished humans from lower animals, was as prevalent among homosexuals as among heterosexuals. In line with what some of his patients made clear—that partnership was as important to them as sexual gratification—he noticed that the manner in which they experienced sexual passion, as well as dating and love, was in no way different from how heterosexuals felt these things. Neither did homosexuals distinguish themselves from heterosexuals through a particular preference for youngsters; in both groups only a minority showed such desires and therefore there was no reason to equate homosexuality with “pederasty” or pedophilia. Another, even more consequential finding of Moll was that (other) sexual perversions occurred in the same way and to the same degree among homo- and heterosexuals. Ten years before Krafft-Ebing, Moll thus underlined the dichotomy of hetero- and homosexuality as the fundamental sexual categorization, while bisexuality would be their stepchild, and perversions were to be considered as derived subvariations.

Moll’s frequent use of the term “heterosexuality” next to homosexuality implied a separation between sexuality

and reproduction. Without ruling out procreation as the underlying natural aim of sexuality, he shifted the focus to its subjective, experiential dimension. He made a crucial distinction between the sexual *drive*, of which people are subjectively aware, and the unconscious, goal-oriented reproductive *instinct*. This instinct, merely a biomedical matter according to Moll, was not relevant for sexual science’s task to work out a joint physiological, psychological, and cultural understanding of the sexual drive. In his work the traditional moral distinction between procreative and nonprocreative acts clearly gave way to the modern focus on the differentiation of sexual desires. This also marked a shift from the medical-psychiatric understanding of deviant sexuality as a derived, episodic, and more or less singular symptom of an underlying physical or mental disorder to viewing it as an integral part of an autonomous and continuous sexual drive.

In his *Untersuchungen über die Libido sexualis* (1897-98), Moll argued that perversions were nothing more and nothing less than modifications of the sexual drive, which, he added, was not inherently and exclusively heterosexual. Thus he cast doubt on the self-evidence of heterosexuality as the standard of normality. The diversity of individual preferences, he noticed, was boundless—a complete catalogue of all existing sexual urges basically being unfeasible, an assertion that resembled Ulrichs’s claim, cited by Leck, that nature had created “thousands of gradations” (p. 74). Regular and deviant sexualities were interconnected, Moll stressed, and could only be understood in their reciprocal relation. His study of homosexuality fueled his thinking about heterosexuality, but his consideration of fetishism, sadism, masochism, and other perversions raised his understanding of normal sexuality as well. Fetishism, for example, was an intrinsic feature of it, because the specific individual preferences in sexual attraction and, connected to that, monogamous love were grounded in a distinct penchant for particular physical and mental characteristics of one’s partner.

The blurring of clear boundaries between the normal and the abnormal showed itself in particular in Moll’s analysis of childhood sexuality, which in his view also clarified the nature of adult sexuality. Infantile sexual manifestations, including masturbation, homosexual leanings, and even fetishist and sadomasochistic tendencies, were far from exceptional and in themselves not necessarily symptoms of perversion caused by either degeneration or immorality, as many believed. The wide range of sexual impulses and activities found among children and adolescents were, according to Moll, part of a

transitory stage from undifferentiated and erratic sexuality to a differentiated and constant drive in adulthood. Eventually, the majority of adults would show a heterosexual desire, while a minority of them would exhibit a homosexual or bisexual one, and all of them possibly with specific perverse leanings.

If the largely random sexual drive had a built-in natural aim at all, Moll stressed, it was not reproduction but physical as well as mental pleasure and satisfaction. He distinguished two dimensions of the sexual drive: physical discharge (*Detumescenztrieb*) and physical as well as psychological attraction (*Contractationstrieb*). The first manifested itself in physical arousal and centered on the sexual act, whether with someone else or alone, as a means for the release of sensual energy and tension in orgasm. The attraction drive incited love of a real or imagined partner and expressions of affection, which were linked to social feelings. Moll's discussion of the attraction drive underlined the decisive role of mental factors in the development of relational sexuality. Physiological processes and abilities were not more than necessary preconditions for sexual functioning. Mental stimuli, such as imagination and fantasies, were crucial, and the satisfaction of the sexual urge was not only made up of physical release but also of emotional fulfilment. In Moll's analysis, sexuality emerged as an intricate complex of physical functions, reflexes, bodily sensations, behaviors, experiences, feelings, thoughts, memories, mental associations, desires, imagination, fantasies, and dreams. Therefore, sexuality as a field of research did not belong to biology and medicine only, but should also, in Moll's view, involve psychology and cultural analysis.

This approach to sexuality indeed initiated a shift from a biological and physiological to a more psychological approach. Moll distanced himself from the medical endeavor to locate the causal factors of sexual aberrations in hereditary and degenerative defects of the body. There was no definite proof that the sexual drive could be reduced to the physiological process of the brain, nervous system, gonads, or hormones. Since the physiological functioning of homosexuals and other deviants was in many ways similar to that of heterosexuals, the difference in their desire was to be found in psychic processes and emotional arousal. Subjective inner life and personal history, not the body or behavior as such, were the decisive criteria for the diagnosis of sexual orientation. Mental processes affected the sexual organs rather than the other way around. Moll was one of the first to adopt a new style of reasoning, before Freud would do so, about perversions as functional disorders of a sexual drive that

was situated in the personality instead of the body.

In his explanation of the genesis of the sexual drive, Moll shunned monocausality and reductionism. He questioned the causal role of hereditary degeneration as well as the idea that perversion was merely acquired by psychological association. Shades of both perspectives can be found in his argument, but he foregrounded the interaction of nature and nurture. The inherited biological basis of sexuality should not be understood as a pre-termining cause, but as a potential. The sexual drive was the result of possible "reaction-capacities" or "reaction-modes" that had to be incited by external stimuli and attachments to particular love objects.[3] In general the sexual potential would eventually tend towards the opposite sex, but if this inclination was fragile or hampered, a susceptibility to homosexuality possibly emerged. Environmental, behavioral, psychological, and sociocultural factors played a seminal role in the formation of the more specific, possibly perverse, contents of hetero- and homosexual desires. Moll's basic idea was that sexual desire is neither natural, definite, and inevitable nor made-up, accidental, or shaped by conscious will. Sensorial stimuli, mental association, education, and habit formation during childhood and adolescence were crucial on the individual level, whereas the broader cultural and historical dimension also mattered. Not just people's moral and social attitudes, including their openness or feelings of shame toward sexuality, were shaped by culture and history; the same was also true of the substance of the sexual drive itself.

Several of Moll's insights foreshadowed central tenets of Freud's psychoanalysis: the importance of the psychic and infantile components of sexuality; the libido as a fragmented pleasure drive; and the explanation of normal heterosexuality as the result of a conversion of polymorphous perversity. Moll also shared with Freud a more or less pessimistic assessment of the unsolvable tension between sexuality and civilization. His evaluation of sexuality—on the one hand believing that it is beneficial as a relational force and that sexual restraint may turn into unhealthy repression, while on the other hand viewing it as a destructive threat to the social and moral order—was perhaps more true to life than the sexual modernists' wishful assumption of some sort of unspoiled "natural" sexuality.

Moll's consideration of the historical and cultural shaping of sexuality was somewhat akin to that of Iwan Bloch and at least as sophisticated. Leck glorifies Bloch as a brilliant sexual innovator because he supposedly

cleared away “the old views” (p. 182) of Krafft-Ebing and Moll and, through his historical interpretation of the work of Marquis de Sade (published in 1900 and 1904), because he paved the way for a social and cultural analysis of sexuality. That may be true, but the views of Bloch were not as unique as Leck claims, for in the previous decade Moll had already explained sexuality in terms of an interplay of biological, psychological, and cultural factors. Neither was Bloch a proponent of sexual modernism in other aspects. Just like Moll and Krafft-Ebing, he envisioned the connection of sexual pleasure with egalitarian romantic love as a central tenet of the modern sexual ethos, but whereas the first two cautiously suggested that homosexual relationships could be included in this model, Bloch marginalized nonheterosexual preferences in terms of social abnormality and “cultural degeneracy” (p. 210). So, who is the sexual modernist and the sexual conservative here? Leck’s claim that Bloch’s prioritization of heterosexuality was “less judgmental” (p. 215) than the interrelated views of Krafft-Ebing and Moll is highly disputable. The same applies to his assessment of the Swiss psychiatrist Auguste Forel as modernist because he advocated “sexually frank, free, and egalitarian relations” between heterosexuals (p. 140). But how should we evaluate Forel’s exclusion of “nonheterosexuals” (p. 140), as acknowledged by Leck, his pathologization of homosexuality, and his social-hygienic, eugenic, and even racist perspectives? Why should Forel be viewed as progressive and Moll, who also favored relational sexuality and a social-hygienic approach but who explicitly rejected eugenics and racism, be considered conservative?

Similar questions can be asked if we compare the views of Moll and those of Hirschfeld, the two leading sexologists who were continually involved in bitter conflicts between the early 1900s and the 1930s. Following Ulrichs, Hirschfeld basically adopted the current understanding of sexual desire as a secondary gender characteristic and as attraction between contrasting male and female elements. Evolution had supposedly advanced an increasing distinction between males and females and their mutual polar magnetism, but at the same time nature continued to produce a range of intermediate genders. According to Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, and other sexual scientists, sexual diversity was the result of a range of random variations in the differentiation of the physical and mental characteristics of men and women: homosexuals, characterized by a female soul in a male body (or vice versa with regard to lesbians) belonged to an intermediate “third sex,” which also included bisexuality,

androgyny, transvestitism, and transsexuality.

Moll did not completely rule out this explanation, but at the same time he cast doubt on the correlation between same-sex desire and physical, mental, and behavioral features of the opposite sex. Many homosexuals were entirely masculine in their thinking, appearance, and behavior, he noticed, whereas effeminate men could be found among heterosexuals. His observations signaled a shift away from the understanding of same-sex desire as gender inversion to the (more modern) idea of sexual orientation in terms of same-sex partner-choice only. Moll also fundamentally questioned Hirschfeld’s notion of a clear-cut and fixed homosexual identity and his emancipatory strategy that was based on biological determinism. Hirschfeld’s fight for acceptance of homosexuality and against legal discrimination was intrinsically linked to his biogenetic explanation in terms of a deep-seated innate disposition, implying that those concerned generally bore no responsibility for their condition and sexual behavior. Moll, on the other hand, pointed out that whatever its causes might be—whether inborn or acquired or a combination—these were not relevant for the legal and political assessment of homosexuality and individual responsibility. Hirschfeld’s biological model was also entangled with eugenic assumptions, and he would accept drastic experiments such as Eugen Steinach’s transplantation of testicles, because the underlying endocrine research appeared to underpin his biological theory. In this connection, Hirschfeld suggested that homosexuals should not propagate because of the considerable risk that their offspring would suffer from degenerative disorders. Arguing that the natural purpose of homosexuality was in fact the prevention of degeneration, Hirschfeld was willing to link the decriminalization of homosexual intercourse with a legal ban for homosexuals to have children. Moll remained skeptical about such arguments and all biological explanations of homosexuality, including Steinach’s endocrine theory.

To be sure, for several reasons, including his social-conservative and nationalist leanings, Moll increasingly opposed Hirschfeld’s emancipatory sexual politics (without withdrawing his support for legal reform), but that does not imply that we can explain the differences between them simply in terms of progressiveness versus conservatism. If Moll was not as pro-gay as Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, overall his level-headed and pragmatic views overlapped with those of other sexual scholars whom Leck foregrounds as modernists such as Bloch, Forel, and Havelock Ellis. All of them shared an enlightened and liberal trust in rationality and science, as well as in the

ideal of sexual egalitarianism, reciprocity, and relational intimacy. The means for ensuring and promoting sexual health had to rely not so much on penal law or religious authority, but on medicine, psychology, education, social hygiene and reform, and responsible citizenship. This reformist approach implied liberating as well as restrictive consequences; sexual modernism is much more ambiguous than Leck's rather one-dimensional picture suggests.

All of this indicates the arbitrary nature of Leck's judgment of sexual progressiveness and conservatism. More troublesome, his systematic disregard of the modernist elements in the sexology of Krafft-Ebing and Moll comes close to historical falsification. Although I do not dispute the author's pro-gay or "queer," feminist, anti-bourgeois, anticapitalist, or whatever political position as such, what I find disturbing is that it seems to fully dictate his interpretation, which, aside from being selective, grossly misrepresents the thinking of Krafft-Ebing and Moll. Neither do I want to trash Leck's entire study. Many parts of it are informative and stimulating, such as his discussion of the interaction between Ulrichs and Kertbeny; the (un)suitability of Greek models for a liberal defense of sexual rights; the relevance of philosophies of love for sexual science; the difficulties that anal sex posed for the acceptance of homosexuality and the modernists' troubled relation to "pederasty"; the significance of Bloch's cultural-historical interpretation of de Sade; and the ways in which beliefs about sexual deviance and degeneration were entangled with deeply engrained bourgeois fears about social upheaval and political subversion.

Unfortunately, these merits can only in part compensate for the book's basic flaw, which touches on a historian's fundamental task to present sources and facts in an open-minded and balanced way, and also to do justice to earlier and canonical historical contributions to the subject. Leck is not the first American historian of sexuality who has tended to ignore the earlier work of European historians about the development of sexual science in central Europe or read it in a selective way. Overall his book is arbitrary and contradictory; it is also often biased and misleading. Leck's claim that there are close affinities among, on the one hand, sexual modernity and gay emancipation, feminism, and socialism, and, on the other hand, among mainstream sexual science and the repressive sexual politics of bourgeois conservatism, fascism, and Nazism, is untenable. Such a crude scheme overlooks the ambiguities and dilemmas in the development of the modern science and politics of sexuality. Leck's book exemplifies the dubious trend among scholars in the his-

tory of sexuality and gay and lesbian studies to smuggle a presentist and politically correct agenda into their interpretation and assessment of the past. The fabrication of such a "usable" history may serve the identity politics that nowadays sways (and poisons) the political and cultural agenda in the United States (and increasingly in Europe as well), but it comes with the risk of hampering our historical understanding.

Notes

[1]. Albert Moll, *Die Conträre Sexualempfindung: Mit Benutzung amtlichen Materials* (Berlin: Fischers Medicinische Buchhandlung H. Kornfeld, 1891), v-vi.

[2]. Moll, *Die Conträre Sexualempfindung*, 131, 189-190, 202-204; Albert Moll, *Untersuchungen über die Libido sexualis* (Berlin: Fischers Medicinische Buchhandlung H. Kornfeld, 1898), 543-546, 555-556, 626, 635, 644; Albert Moll and Henry Havelock Ellis, "Die Funktionsstörungen des Sexuallebens," in *Handbuch der Sexualwissenschaften: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Kulturgeschichtlichen Beziehungen*, ed. Albert Moll (Leipzig: Verlag von F. C. W. Vogel), 603-740; quote on 652.

[3]. Moll, *Untersuchungen über die Libido sexualis*, 306-308, 497, 505.

Karl Ulrichs's Threat to the Canon of Sexual Science: Quotation Marks and the Unbiased History of Gender

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As part of the methodological preamble to *Vita Sexualis*, I cite and praise Harry Oosterhuis's scholarship. We have much in common historiographically. We both reject the Foucaultian contention that early sexual science was exclusively disciplinary and conservative. Moreover, we have both published on homosexuality and the Left. Anyway, please imagine my deep appreciation of his willingness to write a review of my book, *Vita Sexualis*. What I set out to offer in *Vita Sexualis* was a contribution to a growing awareness of the central importance, both scientific and political, of Karl Ulrichs's life and works. He was, I argue, a leading figure in the emergence of sexual modernism. Oosterhuis graciously gives me high praise in this regard: "Leck's presentation of sexual modernists is rather nuanced and therefore interesting." He readily admits that my principle scholarly goal, the depiction of sexual modernism as multifaceted, was accomplished.

However, along with praise and acknowledgments, comes a variety of imprecations as to both my motives and methodology. There are, in fact, pivotal differences between Oosterhuis's and my definition of sexual modernity. Furthermore, our historical methodologies, what I call the politics before politics, are poles apart. I welcome and appreciate the opportunity to enumerate those differences here.

I. Theoretical Quotations Marks

Some years ago, I taught comparative religion, and now I teach a course entitled "Eastern Philosophy in the Axial Age." As part of my pedagogical preparation, I alighted upon a text—namely, *The Diamond Sutra*—that fascinated and confused me. What puzzled me was this: throughout the translation of the text, crucial passages were cited twice, first with and then without quotation marks. This seemed redundant. What did the quotation marks mean? Why say the exact same thing twice? The answer that I cobbled together from several sources was rather startling to me. The quotation marks circumscribe religious truth claims by denoting their provisional character. Buddhist truth claims are skillful means of thinking, but ultimately they refuse to claim universal or transcendent authority. My academic training in modern European intellectual history (commencing with the Enlightenment) and critical theory made me familiar with the sociological implications of reification and false universals. I was fascinated to find similar critiques of conceptual reification in much older, non-Western traditions. Like these two traditions of Enlightenment, I am devoted to theoretical self-consciousness. In fact, *Vita Sexualis* places my principle methodologies, truth claims, and organizing principles in so-to-speak quotation marks. My goal was to reveal biases and avoid inflated generalizations. I lay out the methodological line of *Vita Sexualis* on pp. xiv-xv in the book's introduction, "Post-Victorians and Sexual Science":

This study articulates the philosophical and cultural differences between modernists and traditional sexologists by way of a distinction between vita sexualis and psychopathia sexualis. In The Sexual Life of Our Time in Relation to Culture (1907), the Berlin sexologist Iwan Bloch defined "the great field of so-called psychopathia sexualis" as a scholarly fascination with "sexual aberrations, degenerations, anomalies, perversities, and perversions."[1] *The term psychopathia sexualis dates to the early nineteenth century, but scholars generally associated it with Richard von Krafft-Ebing's canonical Psychopathia Sexualis (1886). Krafft-Ebing used psychopathia sexualis as an organiz-*

ing principle for explaining the legal, moral, and scientific meanings of erotic heterogeneity. Through the use of this term, he essentially secularized long-standing theological orthodoxies. He did this by criminalizing and pathologizing sexual behaviors that, from the perspective of compulsory heterosexuality, were aberrant and abnormal. As a regulative concept of scientific explanation, then, psychopathia sexualis expressed a largely conservative and censorial Victorian attitude toward sexual variance and one that affirmed dominant heterosexual and religious mores.

Still, a word of caution is offered in regards to vita sexualis and psychopathia sexualis as ideal types, that is, as symbols of dichotomous scholarly and civic approaches to sexual variance. The contrast between vita sexualis and psychopathia sexualis is analytically valid and cognitively useful, but readers should keep in mind that many sexual scientists cannot easily be assigned to one cultural rubric or the other. For example, all practitioners of psychopathia sexualis experienced the frisson of sexual scholarship and advanced the study of sexual diversity. Yes, sexologists like Krafft-Ebing greatly constricted the transformative potential of knowledge about sexual variability by discussing it under the umbrella of morally derisive nomenclature. Nonetheless, Krafft-Ebing also greatly expanded the empirical knowledge of sexual heterogeneity, and this had positive, if unintended, consequences for sexual minorities. Furthermore, the scientific apprehensions and civic conclusions of sexual scientists often changed over time. Krafft-Ebing's intellectual biography illustrates this point. His Psychopathia Sexualis medicalized homosexuality as pathological and degenerate. In line with the sentiments of this discourse, Krafft-Ebing predictably opposed the decriminalization and de-stigmatization of homosexuality in the late 1880s. Years later, however, he reversed his initial political convictions and came out publicly in support of decriminalization and de-stigmatization. Similar complexities resided in the life and works of Swiss sexologist August Forel. While Forel's scholarship stigmatized homosexuality as pathological, he ultimately joined Hirschfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee and thereby became a public advocate for homosexual rights.

Similarly, modernists often were unable to free themselves from suppositions of their historical horizon. The traditional ascription of sexual activity to males and sexual passivity to females is a case in point. This was true of Ulrichs, the paragon of modernist vita sexualis. Ulrichs invented a new science of sexual variance, yet, his conceptual stockroom retained some traditional conjectures. This cognitive cargo erected barriers to the realization of his scholarly goal: the articulation of sexual diversity. In light of

*these complexities, this study seeks to use analytical concepts in a way that does not simplify the convoluted coexistence of modernist *vita sexualis* and traditional psychopathia sexualis in the scholarship of individual sexologists.*

Oosterhuis labels my methodology a “crude scheme [that] overlooks ambiguities and dilemmas in the development of the modern science and politics of sexuality.” His introductory paragraph similarly asserts that *Vita Sexualis* is an unsophisticated story of heroes and villains. In fact, my use of Max Weber’s concept of ideal types articulates and anticipates numerous ambiguities and interpretive dilemmas in the history of sexual science. Note that my quintessential modernist, Ulrichs, is not treated in a hagiographic fashion as Oosterhuis alleges. Here and elsewhere, my articulation of complexity leads to a critical and balanced presentation of numerous figures in the history of sexology, including John Addington Symonds, Max Nordau, and the Marquis de Sade.

By emphasizing the social construction of analytical categories, the methodology of ideal types plays an important interpretive role in history-writing. It humbly and self-consciously denies the validity of older traditions of social analysis (such as universal histories and positivist claims). Unlike these traditions, Weber does not seek to establish the validity of sociology via the proclamation of transcendent authority or universal truth. Rather, the authority and value of an ideal type can be ascertained only in terms of its explanatory potential or truth-value (to borrow a concept from William James). My invocation of Weberian ideal types was intended as theoretical quotation marks. This level of circumspection and self-consciousness is an example of best practices in the discipline of intellectual history.

The most perplexing aspect of Oosterhuis’s review is its simultaneous recognition and denial of my intention to “not simplify the convoluted coexistence of modernist *vita sexualis* and traditional *psychopathia sexualis* in the scholarship of individual sexologists.” He writes: “Leck acknowledges ... that there was quite some overlap between ‘modernist’ and ‘conservative’ sexual science and politics and that the complexity of historical reality does not always allow for the presentation of a black-and-white answer.” By the end of his review, however, Oosterhuis writes as though he has no notion of my methodological propaedeutic. This creates an absurd situation: Oosterhuis cites my scholarly revelations of complexity as an argument against my thesis of complexity. Let me explain. For instance, in chapter 6, “Normalizing

the Marquis de Sade” (pp. 182-83), I write:

Bloch’s first sustained critique of degenerative theory appeared in Contributions to the Etiology of Psychopathia Sexualis (1902). The first chapter of this book read like an avant-garde manifesto announcing the passing of previous intellectual titans into the nether world of scientific insignificance. Bloch spoke of himself as the “advocate of a new sexology” and contrasted himself to the “the supporters of the old views.”[2] The supporters of older views were none other than Krafft-Ebing and Moll.[3] By 1900, Bloch explained, hereditary degeneration had become the etiology ushering forth from nearly every authoritative publication, and no etiological treatments of sexuality were more important than Krafft-Ebing’s Psychopathia Sexualis (1886) and Moll’s Examinations of Libido Sexualis (1898). Bloch savaged Krafft-Ebing and Moll’s general propositions concerning the hereditary nature of sexual anomalies. He especially rejected the monolithic character of degenerative explanations and noted the “uncritical spirit ... of Krafft-Ebing’s method”: “In the area of etiological inquiry handled here, the theoretical one-sidedness [of degenerative theory] leads more readily to the obfuscation than the clarification of the essential question of causation.... There are a great number of external factors which have nothing to do with ... degeneration, or degenerative heredity.”[4]

While Oosterhuis suggests that my dichotomy between modernists and conservatives is a tendentious fabrication, time after time my narrative makes insightful and important distinctions between modernists and conservatives. For example, Bloch’s critique of Krafft-Ebing’s method—as an “uncritical” science typical of “old views”—linked Krafft-Ebing to the hegemonic episteme of degeneration. By organizing the study of sexual diversity around the concept of psychopathology and the theory of degeneration, Krafft-Ebing thwarted the development of new methods of inquiry. According to Bloch, scholars immersed in the degenerative episteme impeded the exploration of cultural and historical determinants, that is, “external factors.” Krafft-Ebing’s “old view” of sexual etiology ignored these sociological factors. In *The Sexual Life of Our Time* (1909), Bloch recalled the methodological shift to cultural sexology that he initiated with his *Contributions to the Etiology of Psychopathia Sexualis* (1902). I quote Bloch’s views on pp. 182-83:

In my Contributions to the Etiology of Psychopathia Sexualis, which appeared in 1902 and 1903, I for the first time attempted to systematically analyze the great field of so-called “psychopathia sexualis”—sexual aberrations, de-

generations, anomalies, perversities and perversions—from the perspective of anthropologists and ethnographers. Consequently, I started from the perspective that, in order to (1) obtain new perspectives concerning the nature of psychopathia, and (2) correct and modify old interpretations, we must not begin with the one-sided view of sexual differences as evidence of “sick humanity”; rather, we must keep in mind the multi-sided idea of “man as man,” both as civilized [Kultur Mensch] and uncivilized [Natur Mensch] man. Until now, the science of psychopathia sexualis has been totally dominated by the clinical, purely medical interpretation ... wherein sexual anomalies are described as symptoms of degeneration. From the 1820s to the 1840s, Hermann Joseph Loewenstein, Joseph Hausler and Heinrich Kaan initiated this medicalization of sexual aberrations; then, in the last quarter of the same century, Richard von Krafft-Ebing transformed modern sexual pathology into a comprehensive scientific system that stands or falls with the concept of degeneration.[5]

By asserting that Krafft-Ebing and Moll were politically radical modernists, Oosterhuis would have one believe that the political and epistemic differences between modernists, like Ulrichs and Bloch, and theorists of sexual degeneracy, like Krafft-Ebing and Eduard Reich, were nonexistent. In fact, my scholarship highlights meaningful differences. One of those differences had to do with the acceptance or rejection of the disciplinary trope of degeneration. Bloch interpreted Krafft-Ebing’s brand of sexual science as outdated and as a narrow-minded replication of the degenerative episteme. In chapter 5, “Sexual Degeneration and Bourgeois Culture,” I explained the significance of the trope of degeneration to the history of sexual science: “The present moribund status of degeneration as a diagnostic concept belies its colossal significance to European scientific and civic culture. Degeneration was the conceptual scaffolding around which fin-de-siècle Central European sexual science originally was constructed.[6] While it no longer holds scientific validity, degeneration was one of the most important power-languages of the late nineteenth century, and therefore consideration of its various deployments is indispensable for a study sexual modernism” (p. 141).

In his review, Oosterhuis never mentions that I devote a large section—entitled “Krafft-Ebing and the Cultivated Pervert”—of chapter 5 to an examination of Krafft-Ebing’s stigmatizing discourse, opposition to homosexual rights, and devotion to degenerative theory. Here and elsewhere, I make clear and illuminating distinctions between modernists and mainstream sexologists. My chapter on degeneration investigated the civic and moral im-

plications of dominant tropes within the discipline of sexual science. My point was simple. The affirmation or denunciation of degenerative theory was an epistemic dividing line between Ulrichs and Bloch, on the one hand, and mainline sexologists like Eduard Reich and Krafft-Ebing, on the other.

However, in keeping to my methodology of ideal types, I also noted that Bloch—although a modernist from the perspective of degenerative theory—opposed homosexual rights, and in this regard, betrayed the modernist ideal of sexual equality. Indeed, Bloch continued to use the stigmatizing language in reference to homosexuals. My scholarship reveals moral and civic ambiguities and composes a multifaceted portrait of sexologists like Ulrichs and Bloch. Oosterhuis, however, discusses my uncovering of civic ambiguity not as a logical outcome of my stated scholarly aspirations, but as a defect. Here is how he interprets my revelation that the modernist Bloch simultaneously expressed political views that contradicted the modernist ideal type: “Bloch marginalized nonheterosexual preferences in terms of social abnormality and ‘cultural degeneracy’ (p. 210). So, who is the sexual modernist and conservative here?”

My narrative provides a nuanced answer to Oosterhuis’s question about Bloch. If opposition to degenerative theory and support for homosexual rights signify two aspects of the modernist ideal type, then Bloch should be seen as an interesting liminal figure who traverses the boundaries of sexual modernism and *psychopathia sexualis*. In short, my text provides an answer to Oosterhuis’s presumably unanswerable question. Oosterhuis’s question implicitly confirms my thesis about the moral undecidability and civic ambiguity of individual sexologists. Far from ignoring the polyvalent character of individual sexologists, my study of Ulrichs and the sexual science movement self-consciously constructs polychrome portraits of leading sexologists.

Oosterhuis applies the same line of argumentation to my reading of the Swiss sexologist Auguste Forel. Because of his support for women’s equality, economic equality, and the amatory code of Agape, I treated Forel as an example of a modernist. However, in keeping with my methodology and interpretive goals, I foreground Forel’s political ambiguities and contradictions on pages 209-10. Readers of *Vita Sexualis* will learn something that is very instructive. Although we typically think of “equality for all,” historical evidence reveals that people confer equality very selectively. Forel was a staunch feminist and socialist, but his devotion to equality stopped

there. He was also a racist and medical doctor who used stigmatizing language (such as *Perversionen*, that is, “perversions”) to describe homosexuality. His medical language carried a much different meaning than the classificatory neologisms Ulrichs invented to remove stigma from the scientific lexicon of sexual diversity. To get to the point, this intricate analysis of Forel achieved my methodological goal of, first, avoiding rigid dichotomies (modernist versus conservative) and, second, articulating the political undecidability of many sexologists. Here is Oosterhuis’s appraisal: “The same applies to his [i.e., my] assessment of the Swiss psychiatrist Auguste Forel as a modernist because he advocated ‘scientifically frank, free, and egalitarian relations’ between heterosexuals (p. 140). But how should we evaluate Forel’s exclusion of nonheterosexuals (p. 140), as acknowledged by Leck, his pathologization of homosexuality, and his social-hygienic, eugenic, and even racist perspectives? Why should Forel be viewed as a progressive ... ?”

Repeatedly, Oosterhuis takes evidence of complexity uncovered by my research, fashions it into a question, and then presents this question as biting evidence of the deficiency of my line of reasoning. He repeatedly ignores my methodological quotation marks. The methodology of ideal types enables us to see that any sexual scientist—or human being for that matter—is not a monodimensional stereotype but an intricate matrix of multiple social identities. Ideal types articulate *both* similarities to and deviations from themselves. In practice, this means any sexologist can simultaneously possess elements of modernism and conservatism. By spotlighting the civic undecidability of so many sexologists, Oosterhuis’s review accomplishes a goal that was not part of his intention: he presents indisputable proof that *Vita Sexualis* achieved its scholarly aims. My methodology and narrative evoked from Oosterhuis clear recognition of the moral and civic polyvalence of Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Bloch, Forel, and Hirschfeld’s legacies. My unearthing of perplexing and complicated civic legacies is not, as Oosterhuis suggests, a shortcoming, but the expressed and fully realized objective of my research.

II. Unbiased and Antipolitical History

Professor Oosterhuis would have us believe that a neat and orderly disjuncture exists between social science and politics and that an unwillingness to recognize this represents a biased and contaminated scholarship. I disagree. As an organizing system, the methodology of ideal types possesses the merit of avoiding simplistic political binaries. Some binaries function differently,

however. Oosterhuis deploys three disparaging binaries in his review: American/European, biased/unbiased, and political/objective. Much of his critique of *Vita Sexualis* turns on accusations that my scholarship is “biased” and tarnished by “a particular political commitment.” Oosterhuis’s binaries are not nuanced and pliable like ideal types. They are rigid and annihilative. What follows is a reflection on Oosterhuis’s sponsorship of a so-called unbiased and value-free history-writing. As you shall see, he and I agree. My work is biased. Instead of denying bias, I will elaborate upon it.

Here is my first confession of interpretive partiality. The scholars who trained me in intellectual history, philosophy, and critical theory denounced the idea of an unbiased and value-free production of knowledge. For too long, similar claims to objective truth—via the European doctrine of Divine Right and the transcendental authority of the Mandate from Heaven in the case of China, for example—legitimized brutal absolutist monarchies. The oldest major transcendent religion, Hinduism, still legitimizes the injustices of the caste system. Religious cultures are not the only cultural factories of false universals. Both the natural and social sciences have a long history of universal truth claims. For instance, in the late nineteenth century, the objective science of social Darwinism legitimized racial slavery, patriarchy, and imperialism. In light of this history, my mentors jettisoned theological and positivistic truth claims like poisonous ballast of a bygone academic age. If we must speak of objectivity, then, it is best to acknowledge that any approximation of scholarly objectivity requires revelations about methodologies, subjectivities, and civic values. Indeed, best practices within my academic episteme require methodological self-consciousness and the exhibition of biases to the reader. Biases and value judgements are unavoidable, necessary, and productive.

As I demonstrated above with the methodology of ideal types, methodologies are the politics before politics. Methodological frameworks have decisive interpretive consequences. The methodology of ideal types produces the possibility of seeing individuals as a matrix of identities. Several contemporary social theories reflect this approach to understanding social identity. I have been particularly influenced by the sociological theory of a matrix of domination and privilege (Patricia Hill Collins, Estelle Disch, and Allan Johnson) and by the gender theory of intersectionality. Both of these methodologies enable social theorist to grasp the individual as a polyvalent pastiche, not as a monodimensional identity. How does this influence the writing of *Vita Sexualis*? I define sexual

modernism as an egalitarian ideal. Far from being a tendentious politics, this definition reflects the impact of the 1848 Revolution upon Ulrichs and his lifelong devotion to the fight for the political and social equality of sexual minorities. However, if I had merely praised Ulrichs's sexual politics, my study would have been a hagiographic failure. My appreciation of intersectional theory led me to ask about Ulrichs's support for other movements for equality. My answer reveals something very important: unlike many other Europeans in the nineteenth century, Ulrichs did not advocate for women's or workers' rights. By emphasizing this intersectional social dimension, *Vita Sexualis* shuns an exclusively heroic portrait, and instead Ulrichs comes to life as a multifaceted historical figure who often contradicted his own ideal of equality.

Intersectional theory, too, is a politics before politics; methodologically, it prescribes a compound rendering of social and political identity. Oosterhuis fails to comprehend this methodological dimension of gender history. According to Oosterhuis, "Leck's claim that there are close affinities among ... sexual modernity and gay emancipation, feminism and socialism ... is untenable." First, this statement is false. Sexual modernists like Max Hoddan, Helene Stöcker, and Hirschfeld simultaneously supported homosexual, women's, and workers' rights. Their politics constituted a much more inclusive and expansive conception of social equality than one finds in the sexology of Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll. Second, Oosterhuis has not accurately reproduced my argument. I define sexual modernism as a movement for social equality. However, through the use of an intersectional perspective, *Vita Sexualis* demarcates the boundaries of sexologists' devotion to this ideal. As the history of American feminism shows, movements for women's equality can simultaneously naturalize the injustices and inequalities of slavery. Following the reasoning of intersectional thought, I show that Ulrichs's devotion to a democratic *Rechtsstaat*, a state based on equal rights, had limits. Women and workers were excluded. To my mind, intersectional analyses—especially when one is writing about movements for equality—enrich historical narratives. Intersectional theory places the self-righteousness of activists and revolutionaries in quotation marks. Their claims of liberation are not blindly affirmed but instead are critically evaluated. This is done by asking about devotion to equality beyond the domain of activists' particular concerns.

My use of an intersectional methodology produced political conclusions about the masculinist branch of the German homosexual movement that Oosterhuis dis-

agreed with. Let me set the scene. Ulrichs heavily influenced the late-nineteenth-century English classicist John Addington Symonds. Using Ulrichs's nomenclature, Symonds produced a fascinating sexological analysis of ancient Greece. Although Symonds hoped to find a justification for his own homosexuality in Greek gender relations, what he found was something else. Ancient Greece was a slave society and a patriarchal civilization that oppressed both young boys and women. Too often, Symonds suggested, young boys, especially those who were poor, were susceptible to the power and prestige of predatory males. Women were largely sequestered and society was aggressively patriarchal. Retrospectively, we might say that Symonds pioneered a type of intersectional thinking. While ancient Greece offered him an approving model of homosocial culture and male-male love, it violated the egalitarian civic ideal of modernity by subjugating women and boys. In the early twentieth century, some German homosexual activists revived the Greek model. They were predictably misogynistic and antifeminist. As Symonds's scholarship predicted, the revival of Greek gender relations facilitated the homosocial needs of gay men but at the expense of the rights of women and boys.

Oosterhuis takes special umbrage at my intersectional reading of this subsection of the German homosexual rights movement. He writes: "Their cultural and homosocial perspective allowed them to question the liberating potential of sexual modernism and its epistemic and normative assumptions. They rejected biological determinism and the related assumption of a fixed boundary between exclusive homo- and heterosexuality.... For them, the struggle for acceptance of homosexuality as a fixed minority category was restrictive because it would rule out any sexual ambiguity or a more general 'bisexuality,' while also tabooing sex between adults and minors."

We need to unpack this. Sexual modernists like Ulrichs, Symonds, and Hirschfeld completely affirmed the rights of homosexuals and bisexuals. Why, then, does Oosterhuis suggest that sexual modernism limits sexual liberation? To answer this question, let's examine the "liberating potential" of Oosterhuis's version of bisexuality. Masculinists in the homosexual movement defended *male* bisexuality. Women obviously did not participate in male-bonding culture. As masculinists were antifeminist, there was no expectation of women's amatory freedom. Symonds reasoned that a liberatory focus only on the rights of male homosexuals violated the highest principle of democratic society: equality for all. Seen from

this perspective, the “liberating potential” Oosterhuis defends is not only antifeminist; it also sanctioned sex between male adults and prepubescence boys. Oosterhuis, for instance, identifies “tabooing sex between adults and minors”—a practice celebrated in the masculinist branch of the German homosexual movement—as an unwanted byproduct of the modernist (i.e., egalitarian) model of sexual liberty. Unlike Symonds, Oosterhuis does not problematize the asymmetries of authority and age found in sex between adult males and prepubescent boys. Recall that most societies criminalize sex between adults and minors, because it is assumed that minors cannot give consent. Oosterhuis’s defense of the liberating potential of bisexuality and homosocial bonding entirely overlooks intersectional consequences.

III. Language and Politics

Oosterhuis, an overtly political scholar, objects to my narrative history of the sexual science movement, because, via a focus on Ulrichs, it displaces Krafft-Ebing and the male-bonding subsection of the homosexual rights movement from the protagonist role of gender history. For instance, in “Commencing with Ulrichs,” a subsection of chapter 1, I place Ulrichs at the headwaters of modernism. Comparatively, I portray Krafft-Ebing as a conservative and mainstream sexual scientist. In his turgid and profuse vindication of Krafft-Ebing and Moll, Oosterhuis says little about the differences between Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing, so I will mention them as a conclusion. *Vita Sexualis* emphasizes three differences between modernists and mainstream sexologists.

1. The Political Difference

At a national convention of German jurists in 1865, Ulrichs called for his colleagues to condemn the criminalization of homosexuality. More than three decades later, late in life, Krafft-Ebing endorsed homosexual rights. Unlike Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, Krafft-Ebing was not a pioneering sexual activist.

In 2013, homosexual rights activists in Berlin demanded that Einem Street be renamed Ulrichs Street. In the early twentieth century, General Karl von Einem, as Prussian minister of war, purged homosexuals from the officer corps and later celebrated the Nazis destruction of democracy. When he died in 1934, the Nazi regime honored his public legacy by renaming a street in his honor. Contemporary human rights activists experienced Einem Street as an unwanted heirloom of Nazism, and in 2013 they succeeded in having the street name changed. As internet photos can attest, human rights demonstrations

now regularly parade to and through Ulrichs Street. Ulrichs’s legacy is appreciated as an antidote to fascist sexual politics. By contrast, a dusty sculpture of Krafft-Ebing reposes in a medical building of Vienna University. Not far from Vienna’s Baumgarten Cemetery there is also a street named in his honor, Krafft-Ebing Lane. To my knowledge, activists have never gathered there.

2. The Epistemic Difference

Ulrichs’s sexology was characterized by an epochal innovation in the science of induction. In contrast to the normal/abnormal binary that framed Krafft-Ebing’s classification of sexual variety, Ulrichs defined all examples of sexuality as natural. This classificatory difference reflected responses to degeneration as a master trope of sexology. Ulrichs rejected it; Krafft-Ebing’s scholarship, by comparison, reproduced the regulative assumptions and stigmatizations of the degenerative episteme.

3. Different Politics of Language

Many of my interpretive biases are connected to my educational lineage. As a student of Mark Poster, Bernd Witte, Samuel Weber, and Jean-François Lyotard, I have been educated to think deeply about the politics of language. Two chapters of *Vita Sexualis* are devoted to a history and sociology of medical languages and disciplinary tropes. The introduction to chapter 2 is entitled “Discourse and the History of Sexual Science.” Similarly, chapter 5 is devoted to an analysis of the medical and social meaning of degeneration. This is a tropic analysis. Moreover, a central argument of my book is that Ulrichs’s activism and scholarship were inextricably bound up with the politics of language. Prior to Ulrichs, for example, there was no way to refer to homosexuals without the use of a demeaning slur. In response, Ulrichs invented a new classificatory nomenclature that largely eliminated stigmatizing terminology. (Ulrichs’s new lexicon inspired his colleague, Karl Maria Kerbeny, to invent the words homosexual and heterosexual in the 1870s.) Because he classified all sexual variations as natural, Ulrichs rejected concepts like unnatural sexuality and perversion. In stark contrast to Ulrichs’s linguistic politics, Krafft-Ebing’s scholarship abounded in stigmatizing discourse. For this reason, I use Krafft-Ebing’s master concept *psychopathia sexualis* to denote antimodernist discourse. This contrast is linguistic and historical. According to Ulrichs, discourses that brand sexual minorities as pathological and mentally ill are prejudicial, harmful, and unscientific. Ulrichs’s pioneering political linguistics demonstrates that it is neither unbiased nor value-free to organize sexual variations under the classificatory

discourse of psychopathology.

Like the condemned man in Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" (1919), the corpus of Oosterhuis's sexological scholarship is imprinted with an antimodernist language whose meaning he cannot decipher. In *Stepchildren of Nature* and in his review of *Vita Sexualis*, Oosterhuis liberally uses the discourse of "perversions" as an organizing principle of sexual diversity. It speaks to the revolutionary character of Ulrichs's thought that, a hundred and fifty years after his linguistic breakthroughs, sexual scientists like Frank Sulloway and Oosterhuis use stigmatizing discourses with no regard to their civic implications. The discourses of psychopathology and perversion unconsciously bifurcate nature into natural and unnatural types of sexuality. Ulrichs's master concept, *Varietät* (variety), is ontological and inclusive. There is, Ulrichs argues, no such thing as an unnatural gender identity. Oosterhuis's use of the concept of "stepchildren of nature" is similarly problematic. Despite Oosterhuis's central argument that this language represents an empathetic attitude toward sexual minorities, Ulrichs would have denied the scientific validity of the notion of stepchildren of nature. Nature has no stepchildren; all varieties are natural. Furthermore, nature is not to blame for the persecution of sexual minorities. A heterosexual and unjust society is to blame. This is a crucial difference in the sociology and etiology of sexual heterogeneity. Oosterhuis goes on and on, page after page, seeking to defend the legacies of his primary subjects, Krafft-Ebing and Moll. He tells readers that *Vita Sexualis* "grossly misrepresents the thinking of Krafft-Ebing and Moll." But, while defending Krafft-Ebing and Moll as cultural radicals, Oosterhuis unconsciously offers evidence to the contrary by reproducing and imitating their antimodernist political linguistics.

In addition to comparisons between Ulrichs to Krafft-Ebing, *Vita Sexualis* also compares Hirschfeld to Moll. This makes sense chronologically and generationally. Unlike Moll, who disparaged Ulrichs's scholarship, Hirschfeld was the greatest champion of Ulrichs's legacy. He edited and published Ulrichs's collected works in 1899. By contrast, neither Krafft-Ebing nor Moll championed Ulrichs's sexual science. In the late nineteenth century, Hirschfeld worked closely, if unsuccessfully, with the leader of German socialism, Friedrich Ebert, to decriminalize homosexuality. In addition to the homosexual rights movement and social democracy, Hirschfeld was an ally of the feminist movement. Due to his support for egalitarian movements, I present him as an example of the modernist ideal type.

Although Oosterhuis claims that Moll was equally as radical as Hirschfeld, nothing could be further from the truth. Moll's *Die conträre Sexualempfindung* (The contrary sexual feeling, 1891) pathologized the sentiments of sexual minorities as contrary to nature. His sexual science contained hygienic seeds that blossomed into an open embrace of Nazism. Is it unbiased and impartial to omit mention of Moll's reactionary politics? Has not Oosterhuis forgotten the danger that pro-Nazi academics like Moll posed to people like Hirschfeld? As a Jew, a socialist sympathizer, a homosexual, and an ally of feminism, Hirschfeld was a multiheaded hydra of egalitarian politics. The Nazis were deadly enemies of feminism, social democracy, and homosexual rights. When Hitler came to power, Hirschfeld was outside of Germany, and fearing for his life, he never returned to his home in Berlin. In early 1933, the Nazis ransacked and destroyed the Institute of Sexual Science, which Hirschfeld founded in the early twenties. Hirschfeld died in exile. Had he returned to Germany, his Jewish heritage and homosexuality would have marked him for extermination. Due to the centrality of antifeminism and anti-homosexual rights to the Nazi cultural appeal, it seems ludicrous to suggest that Hirschfeld and Moll were equally "radical." Their differences in gender politics signify divergences of the most profound kind; they were a matter of life or death for millions of Europeans, including homosexuals, Jews, and so-called Jewish Bolsheviks.

Clearly, my work viscerally engaged Oosterhuis. However, his patronizing tone—positioning me in a class of typical "American historian[s]" whose scholarship pales in comparison with the vastly superior erudition of European historians—and his annihilative allegations (that leave no room for respectful differences of interpretation) surprised me. Let's not be too highfalutin, though. What we have here is an old-fashioned historiographical scrum. Readers should know that no scholar has a greater stake in criticizing my work than Oosterhuis, the author of "Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll."⁷ Because he is a highly political historian—gay men, fascism, the political Left, male bonding, homosexuality, and the political cultures of health are among his broad scholarly interests—Oosterhuis was horrified to find that my narrative positioned his heroes of sexual modernity as antimodernists. "My key point," he writes, "is that Krafft-Ebing and [Albert] Moll ... were at least as radical as Leck's modernist heroes." I have not, as Oosterhuis alleges, disparaged or misrepresented the contributions of sexologists whom he arduously seeks to valorize and de-

fend. Quite simply, via comparisons with Ulrichs, *Vita Sexualis* offers an alternative historical interpretation of early sexual science.

Notes

[1]. Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexuelleben unserer Zeit in Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1919), 481. [Cited in note 14 in the original.—Ed.]

[2]. Bloch, *Das Sexuelleben unserer Zeit*, vi. [Note 5 in the original.—Ed.]

[3]. As I write in note 6 (p. 255) in the book, “Bloch’s passionate rebuke of an older generation of sexual scientists was not merely scholarly. He especially loathed his Berlin contemporary and fellow sexologist Albert Moll. This disdain was so intense that Bloch would involuntarily tremble in disgust when Moll’s name was spoken. See Volkmar Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft*

(Frankfurt/M: Campus Verlag, 2009), 295.”

[4]. Iwan Bloch, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis I* (Dresden: H. R. Dohrn, 1902), 5-7. [Note 5 in the original.—Ed.]

[5]. Bloch, *Das Sexuelleben unserer Zeit*, 481-82. [Note 6 in the original.—Ed.] The emphasis is mine.

[6]. On the centrality of degeneration to sexuality, see Erwin Haeberle, “Iwan Bloch (1872-1922), und seine Wissenschaft des menschlichen Geschlechtslebens,” in “*Meinetwegen ist die Welt erschaffen*”: *Das intellektuelle Vermächtnis des deutschsprachigen Judentums*, ed. Hans Erler, Ernst Ehrlich, and Ludger Heid (Frankfurt/M: Campus, 1997), 167.

[7]. Harry Oosterhuis, “Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,” *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (2012): 133-55.

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Citation: Harry Oosterhuis. Review of Leck, Ralph Matthew, *Vita Sexualis: Karl Ulrichs and the Origins of Sexual Science*. H-Ideas, H-Net Reviews. November, 2018.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=51478>



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