

**Benedict Friedländer. / Oosterhuis, Harry. Who's who in gay and lesbian history: From antiquity to World War II. ed. / R Alderich; G Wotherspoon. London [etc.]: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2000. p. 170-171.**

Friedländer, Benedict (1866-1908), German biologist and philosopher. The son of a professor of economics, Friedländer studied natural sciences and graduated as a zoologist. He also published on political theory. Influenced by the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, he advocated a combination of socialism and individual freedom, but he strongly rejected Marxism. Conducting biological and geological research, Friedländer travelled in Italy, the Pacific, India and Ceylon for many years. During the last period of his life he became involved in the homosexual movement and wrote several works on homosexuality.

A co-founder of Adolf Brand's *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, Friedländer was at the same time a prominent member of Hirschfeld's *Wissenschaft-humanitäres Komitee*, until he headed a secession from the Committee in 1906. He planned to found a 'movement for a male culture', which was not realised, however, because, suffering from an incurable disease, he committed suicide in 1908. The main cause of the dramatic rupture in the early German homosexual movement was, according to Friedländer, Hirschfeld's biomedical theory of homosexuality. Friedländer refuted two important presuppositions in medical thinking: the existence of a natural homosexual category, independent of morals and culture, and the biological identification of male homosexuality with femininity in men. His reasoning, reminiscent of the Kinsey scale (according to which exclusive homosexuality and heterosexuality are mere abstractions), pointed to eroticism in male friendships and male bonding in general, since he believed men to be essential bisexual. Friedländer argued that homosexuality in men, and masculinity, were in many cases inextricably connected.

In his main work, *Renaissance des Eros Uranios* (1904), Friedländer explained that medical interference with homosexuality was rooted in Christianity: the feeling of being sick and aberrant, the sense of belonging to a different human species originated in the Christian condemnation of homoeroticism as sinful and criminal. Supported by women, Friedländer maintained, priests had imposed an ascetic morality upon males, forcing them to suppress their omnipresent homoerotic leanings. Christian matrimonial morals, which were also supported by biomedical science, established the idea that only heterosexual love was natural and, consequently, 'physiological friendship' – a fundamental human passion, according to Friedländer – was no longer respected and cultivated. He stressed the social and cultural value of homoeroticism. In addition to examples taken from literature and history, Friedländer referred to Heinrich Schurtz's ethnological study *Alterklassen und Männerbünde: Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (1902). Schurtz maintained that the 'instinctive sympathy' between

men was the precondition for social life and political institutions. Although Schurtz did not interpret this sympathy as erotic, Friedländer invoked his findings to assert that social organisations beyond the family could not exist if men restricted their emotional and erotic relations to women. He considered homoeroticism not only as fundamental for the unfolding of man's creative and intellectual qualities, but also for instilling in men patriotism and military virtues. He believed that in bourgeois society the female sphere of the family had become so predominant that it suffocated male aspirations.

Like Otto Weininger, Friedländer was obsessed by the notion that women exerted too much influence in modern society. Women's emancipation was the most objectionable consequence of democratisation, and since they thwarted male bonding, he held women, being materialistic and superstitious, responsible for cultural decline. For Friedländer, a healthy culture was inherently masculine, and also aristocratic and militaristic. Although he was a Jew himself, he gave voice to racism in general and anti-Semitism in particular. He argued that countries such as the United States, Britain and France had already fallen victim to 'feminisation' and '*Verjüdung*', which he considered dangerous for the supremacy of the white race. It was clear to Friedländer that the German nation had to stop further feminisation of Western culture by making the *Männerbund* the core of the state, thus safeguarding the exalted goals of male friendship including moral strength, self-sacrifice and *esprit*.

B. Friedländer, *Renaissance des Eros Uranios: Die physiologische Freundschaft, ein normaler Grundtrieb des Menschen und eine Frage der männlichen Gesellungsfreiheit*. Berlin, 1904.

B. Friedländer, *Die Liebe Platons im Lichte der modernen Biologie*. Berlin, 1909.