

**Male friendship and homosexuality in Germany (1750-1940).
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It is almost a truism to point out the historical difference between what, into the nineteenth century, was called 'sodomy' and what we now know as 'homosexuality'. Sodomy referred to same-sex acts, in particular anal intercourse, which were considered sinful and often criminal, and which were not restricted to a separate category of men. The term homosexuality and also 'uranism', which became current from around 1870, first in German-speaking central Europe, referred to the disposition of a minority of men with specific physical and mental attributes. Same-sex behavior was not considered any longer a temporary digression of the norm, but as the expression of a way of being. Physicians, psychiatrists and neurologist in particular, were interested in the life course and personality of such men, and published numerous case histories in their works about deviant sexualities. It is true that already in the eighteenth century some sodomites in urban centers such as London, Paris and Amsterdam showed a certain awareness of being different from 'normal' men, but what was new in the late nineteenth century medical and also emancipatory understanding of homosexuality was the emphasis on a deeply rooted disposition as its essence: same-sex desire and feeling were considered as more decisive than same-sex acts as such. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, some defenders of homosexuality argued that same-sex desire could be satisfied through platonic friendship, whereas physicians, sexologists and psychoanalysts began to subsume several forms of same-sex affection under the label of homosexuality. In that way the modern concept homosexuality included two aspects that previously had been viewed as distinct: the sexual acts associated with (criminal and sinful) sodomy and the (in general acceptable and often even praised) feeling of emotional friendship among men. Historical research into homosexuality has paid little attention to friendship.

Friendship is even more difficult to define than homosexuality; it assumed various historical forms. The term was used for a variety of feelings, ranging from loyalty and sympathy to deep emotional attachment. This paper is about the way how in Germany, where in the eighteenth and nineteenth century male friendships were cultivated in certain circles, the appreciation of close, passionate male friendship changed in relation to the rise of the modern notion of homosexuality. The increasing interest in homosexuality in terms of desires and feelings, entailed that intimate friendships were more and more questioned (and defamed) for their possible underlying sexual nature.

In certain religious and literary circles in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany, deep male friendships were celebrated. The personal and intimate character of such friendships was related to the modern awareness that one's true self was different from one's public role. In antirationalist movements such as protestant Pietism

and the literary *Sturm und Drang*, close friendship was considered as the private refuge for individual sincerity. The romantic notion of emotional friendship was different from the older tradition in which friendship was embedded in (often hierarchical) social relations of dependence, obligation and loyalty, and from the Enlightened ideal of friendship as an expression of social virtue that served general well-being.¹ Pietism, which drew many middle-class followers in Germany, centered on one's personal, introspective relationship with God apart from the institution of the church and it was cultivated in small intimate circles of kindred spirits. Friendship, which involved men as well as women, was the bond through which individuals, in an exclusive bond based on equality, could express their most personal convictions, musings, doubts and emotions.

In a more secular form, such close friendships were celebrated in literary *Sturm und Drang* and romantic circles. In the ideal of friendship as it was formulated around 1800 by the philosophers Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt, the purpose was not so much a deepening of faith as in Pietism, but *Bildung*, the realization of the unique self through knowledge and art.² This implied that true friendship was reserved for an intellectual and artistic elite of mainly men. Women could supposedly not meet the high ideals, for they would not be able to keep feelings of friendship apart from sexual needs, whereas for men such friendship was a purpose in itself. Referring to Plato, friendship between men was considered superior to the more excited and unpredictable love relationship between man and woman.

At the same time, however, true male friendship was associated with deep feelings and love. The typically German term *Freundesliebe* (love of friends) was coined during the *Sturm und Drang* period (1765-1785) when in some university towns literary societies of friends (*Freundschaftsbünde*) were established. In these circles men wrote each other passionate letters, dedicated love poems to each other, embraced and kissed each other, and shed tears when they had to take leave of one another or when they met again after a long absence.³ Friendship and love are lots from one tribe, stated the leading poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, who took friendship as one of the main themes for his poems. The passionate way the philosopher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and the novelist Jean Paul (Jean Paul Friedrich Richter) around 1800 gave expression to their affection for each other, was not exceptional in these circles. "My dear Heinrich, do tell me once again when the opportunity occurs that you love me", Jean Paul wrote.

¹ See I.S. Kon, *Freundschaft, Geschichte und Sozialpsychologie der Freundschaft als soziale Institution und individuelle Beziehung* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1979).

² J. Fentener van Vlissingen, *Een psychologische theorie van de vriendschap op grond van enige literaire exempla* (Arnhem, 1966), LX.

³ Such literary rhetoric should not be taken as a direct reflection of real behavior; the cultivation of friendship was rather a matter of literary style which modelled expressions of friendly affection.

“Like the young girl I want to hear that repeated, if not trillions than millions of times.”⁴
An in a letter of Jacobi to Jean Paul one can read: “I feel that exactly the same as you, that a friend should love his friend as the woman loves the man, the lover the loved one.”⁵

To many of the romantics, love between men and women seemed to be comparable with male friendship. The philosopher and poet Friedrich von Schlegel stated that friendship in love and love in friendship made both perfect. Both romantic love and friendship included spirituality as well as sensuality. The poet Heinrich von Kleist, who confided to a friend: “... you have restored the age of the Greeks in my heart. I could have slept with you, dearest boy”, was not the only one who expressed the feeling that true friendship was sensual.⁶ Jean Paul held the view that “all our feelings must retain something physical, and the Greek fire of friendship would be more frequent among us, if it were still to feed itself on physical beauty...”⁷ In the middle of the eighteenth century the philosopher and theologian Johann Georg Hamann had already argued in his *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (Socratic Memorabilia, 1759) that physical contact was a natural expression of friendship. “One cannot feel any vital friendship without sensuality and a metaphysical love possibly does more harm to the nerves than a beastly love to flesh and blood.”⁸ Hamann, who criticized the one-sided prevalence of rationality in the Enlightenment and stressed that thinking and feeling were inseparable, referred to the subject of Greek pederasty. The interest in ancient Greek culture and art in the second half of the eighteenth century contributed to the appreciation of the physical dimension of male friendship. The famous art historian Johann Winckelmann claimed that Greek sculpture, showing male beauty, was unsurpassable. Under his influence several writers and poets, including Goethe, Herder, Schiller and Hölderlin, expressed more or less positive views about Greek male love and the so-called pedagogical Eros.⁹

The Platonic model which until the mid-nineteenth century was used to praise male friendship as a bond between kindred spirits, emphasized the importance of

⁴ “Mein guter Heinrich, sage mir doch einmal bei Gelegenheit wieder, dass Du mich lieb hast. Ich will gleich den Mädchen dasselbe wenn nicht Trillionen doch Millionen mal wiederholt hören...” Cited in: W. Rasch, *Die Freundschaft bei Jean Paul* (Breslau, 1929), 31.

⁵ “Ich fühle das ganz wie Du, dass der Freund den Freund so lieben sollte, wie die Frau den Mann, die Geliebte den Geliebten”. Cited in: H.D. Hellbach, *Die Freundesliebe in der deutschen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1931), 33.

⁶ Cited in: G. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York, 1985), 74.

⁷ “An etwas körperliches müssen all unsere Empfindungen sich halten, und das Griechische Feuer der Freundschaft wurde gewiss bei uns noch häufiger sein, wenn es sich noch von der körperlichen Schönheit mitnährte...” Cited in: Rasch, *Die Freundschaft bei Jean Paul*, 97-98.

⁸ “Man kann keine lebhaft Freundschaft ohne Sinnlichkeit fühlen, und eine metaphysische Liebe sündigt vielleicht gröber am Nervensaft, als eine thierische an Fleisch und Blut.” J.G. Hamann, *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (Gütersloh, 1959), 114-115.

⁹ See E.M. Butler, *The tyranny of Greece over Germany: A study of the influence exercised by Greek art and poetry over the great German writers of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Cambridge, 1935).

intellectual, spiritual and moral sympathy, but emotion, passion and sensuality were not excluded. The dramatist Friedrich Schiller, who associated male friendship with sublime ethical values, wrote in a comment on his draft for the play *Die Maltheser* about the relationship between two knights that it should be “utterly beautiful, but also real passion, with all its symptoms”, or “true sexual love” which found its expression in “tender care, recognizable by raging jealousy, by sensual adoration of the body, by other sensual symptoms.”¹⁰

Although some literary figures were criticized for being too sentimental and carried away by the unruly passion of friendship at the expense of morals, friendship could be sensual until far into the nineteenth century, without entailing suspicions of sodomy. Apparently, in the middle of the nineteenth century the difference between sensual friendship and sodomite lust was still so self-evident that the composer Richard Wagner, speaking of his friendship with Franz Liszt, could say, without concern, that he could not imagine any friendship without love. In his *Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1850), in which he wrote about Greek art, he claimed that friendship was sensual because it sprang from sensitivity to physical beauty – a view which can also be found in Friedrich Nietzsche’s work.¹¹ At the same time, however, doubts about the possibility and appropriateness of such feelings of friendship, were growing. Typical is for example the comment of the writer Gottfried Keller on intimate friendship: “I must frankly express that friendship does not occupy any great place in my life ... There may have been a time when the great passionate and ideal friendships were justified; but I don’t believe they are any longer. It seems to me that at least among men it is becoming more and more improper for two beings to want something so very special and exquisite between them; it is not social and it is impolite ... In relations with women it is rather different...”¹² Keller clearly hinted that the emotions which once had been felt in close friendship had shifted to heterosexual romantic love.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, such opinions could be increasingly heard: since in modern competitive society economic interests and utilitarian considerations took the upper hand, friendship would inevitably wither away. The sociologist Georg Simmel for example asserted that ‘total’ friendship absorbing the entire personalities of

¹⁰ “vollkommen schön, dabei aber wirklich Leidenschaft mit allen ihren Symptomen ... wahre Geschlechtsliebe”; “zärtliche Sorge, durch wütende Eifersucht, durch sinnliche Anbetung der Gestalt, durch andere sinnliche Symptome kenntlich.” Cited in: Hellbach, *Die Freundesliebe in der deutschen Literatur*, 41.

¹¹ H. Fuchs, *Richard Wagner und die Homosexualität* (Berlin, 1903), 133-135.

¹² “Ich muss wirklich offen gestehen, dass mir die Freundschaft keine große Lücke in meinem Leben ausfüllt. ... Es mag eine Zeit gegeben haben, wo die großen leidenschaftlichen und idealen Freundschaften gerechtfertigt waren; jetzt aber, glaube ich, sind sie es nicht mehr. Unter den Männern wenigstens schein es mir je länger je mehr unpassend zu werden, wenn zwei so etwas recht Besonderes und Exquisites unter sich haben wollen; es ist unbürgerlich und unpolitisch ... In Beziehung auf Frauen ist es etwas anderes ...” Cited in: L. Jung, *Dichterefreundschaft und ihr romantisches Eigengepräge* (Saalfeld, 1934), 11.

friends, was hampered by the increasing functional differentiation of social roles in modern society. Although others pointed out that close friendship was one of the social relationships still providing the feeling of personal security and emotional embeddedness which the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies had associated with *Gemeinschaft* in contrast with the large-scale and anonymous *Gesellschaft*, in fact the family – and therefore the love-bond between man and woman – was increasingly seen as such a haven in a heartless world. Same-sex intimacy was superseded by heterosexual relations and the privacy of the middle-class family.¹³

The increasing medical interest in homosexuality contributed to the problematization of intimate same-sex friendship. Until the mid-nineteenth century close friendships hardly ran the risk of being associated with sexual relations. What counted as sexuality – acts involving genital contact and associated with reproduction – was fairly clearly demarcated and did not necessarily overlap with close emotional bonds. The ideal of romantic love was an important step towards linking affection and sexuality.¹⁴ The second development which advanced the expansion of the meaning of sexuality, was the growing impact, from the 1860s and 1870s on, of medical explanations of deviant sexualities, in particular same-sex behavior. The reader of the works by psychiatrists and neurologist such as Carl Westphal, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Albert Moll, Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, Iwan Bloch, Magnus Hirschfeld and Sigmund Freud was overwhelmed by an avalanche of symptoms which betrayed underlying sexual drives.¹⁵ Not only the body, but also the mind was, as it were, sexualized. The new biomedical and psychological concept of homosexuality, which was not only propagated by doctors and sexologists but also by the first homosexual activists such as the lawyer Heinrich Ulrichs, incorporated several physical leanings and drives, behaviors, desires, feelings, moods, and preferences, all of which previously had not been closely connected. One of the consequences was that what formerly had been seen as an expression of close friendship was now increasingly associated with homosexuality.

Illustrative of the growing uneasiness which intimate relations between men evoked, is a study about the friendship between Goethe and Schiller, published in 1894 by the literary scholar Gustav Portig. He asked himself anxiously to what extent the contemporary decline of close friendship was a consequence of the lack of a clear distinction between love and friendship. In ancient Greece, he explained, male

¹³ H. Möller, *Die kleinbürgerliche Familie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1969); E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975); Ph. Ariès, “Réflexions sur l’histoire de l’homosexualité”, *Communications École des Hautes études en Sciences Sociale*, 35 (1982), 56-67.

¹⁴ See P. Robinson, *The Modernization of Sexuality* (New York etc., 1976) for the difference between the romantic and medical understanding of sexuality.

¹⁵ G. Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit, een medische reputatie: De uitdoktering van de homoseksueel in negentiende-eeuws Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1987); see in particular: M. Hirschfeld, “Die objektive Diagnose der Homosexualität”, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, I (1899), 4-35; M. Hirschfeld, “Ursachen und Wesen des Uranismus”, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, V (1903), 1-193.

friendship, under the influence of figures such as Plato and Socrates, had degenerated into pederasty. Although romantic friendship in Germany, he added, fulfilled an important cultural function and was on an altogether higher level than the 'polluted' Greek friendship, expressions of friendly love from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century – the “effeminate period” according to Portig – were, in the eyes of his generation, somewhat ridiculous and objectionable.¹⁶ He still saw an important role to be played by male friendship in modern society, but its range should also be limited in order to protect marriage and family. Whereas the Greeks had used the same word for love and friendship, Portig believed that a clear distinction between them was required in modern society.

This literary scholar was not the only one who aspired to protect the purity of friendship from the stain of (immoral) sexuality. At the same time, the distinction between friendship and homo-eroticism was repeatedly questioned as a consequence of the public discussion about homosexuality initiated by sexologists as well as homosexual activists. Between 1898 and 1908 alone around one thousand publications appeared on the subject in German-speaking central Europe. Also, the activities of the homosexual movement and a number of scandals involving homosexuality attracted much attention in the press. In the ongoing discussion about the nature, explanation and prevalence of homosexuality, the issue of the either or not sexual nature of intimate male friendship was a recurring topic for debate. A branch of the homosexual movement, the group around the journal *Der Eigene* edited by Adolf Brand, endeavored to defend homo-eroticism by pointing out its overlap with close male friendships and by emphasizing the crucial social, political and cultural functions same-sex relations had fulfilled in the past and also could fulfill in the present and in the future. Opposing Hirschfeld's theory of intermediate sexual stages or the 'third sex', according to which homosexuality was the exclusive inborn nature of a minority and it was characterized by effeminate characteristics of such men, Brand and his followers, denying a clear boundary between a heterosexual majority and homosexual minority, advocated the possibility of homo-erotic friendships for all men, which would enhance rather than diminish their masculinity.¹⁷ The association of friendship with homosexuality was boosted by the writings of Hans Blüher, who would become one of the proponents of nationalist male bonding (the so-called *Männerbund*). In his widely-read *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen* (1912), he explained the popularity of the youth movement on the basis of the close friendly bonds between adolescent boys and the erotic appeal of charismatic youth leaders. Blüher's controversial work, which

¹⁶ G. Portig, *Schiller in seinem Verhältnis zur Freundschaft und Liebe sowie seinem inneren Verhältnis zu Goethe* (Hamburg and Leipzig, 1894), 13-42.

¹⁷ See for example: 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).

drew on Freudian insights, stirred the discussion about the possible sexual nature of friendship, not only among youth leaders¹⁸, sexologists¹⁹ and homosexual activists, but also among pedagogues²⁰ and in literary²¹ and political circles.

The group around *Der Eigene* (the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*) and Blüher reproached sexologists, Hirschfeld in particular, that with their focus on the sexual nature of same-sex intimacy they had stigmatized male friendship in general. All the same the advocates of homo-erotic male bonding also encouraged the association of close friendship with homosexuality or at least homo-eroticism. They emphasized that friendship had a physical basis, and that physical attraction and friendship's mental and social dimension could not be separated. Their approach, in which all kinds of relations between men were explained as more or less rooted in homo-erotic attraction, was in fact much more disturbing for heterosexual men than Hirschfeld's approach, which held that in its essence homosexuality was the exclusive disposition of a minority of men. Since Hirschfeld and his organisation, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaft-humanitäres Komitee*), defined homosexual emancipation in terms of justice and equal rights for a minority – in particular with regard to the goal of the decriminalisation of so-called 'unnatural vice' in article 175 of the German penal code – the heterosexual norm for the majority could remain intact and self-evident. A clear distinction between homosexuality and friendship was required in order to avoid any worries among potential heterosexual supporters of the Committee that the boundary of homo- and heterosexuality would be blurred. Heterosexual men rightly feared, wrote a representative of Hirschfeld's Committee in its journal that their friendly feelings for other men would be equated with the sexual desire of homosexuals.²²

In the same journal, the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, Hirschfeld gave the floor to a heterosexual man in order to oppose of what he saw as the "homosexual propaganda for friendship". "As a student, I lived for three years inseparable from my dear, old friend. ... In those days we had not the slightest notion that any suspicion

¹⁸ H. Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Berlin, 1912); H. Blüher, *Werke und Tage* (Jena 1920/1953); A. Weil, "Hans Blüher und die Homosexualität", *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, XXI (1921), 3-39; Numa Praetorius in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, XIV (1914), 343-348; J. Plenge, *Antiblüher: Affenbund oder Männerbund? Ein Brief* (s.l., 1921); H. Starke, *Unmöglichkeiten der Jugendbewegung: Eine Kritik des Falles 'Plenge-Blüher' mit einem Anhang: Das Urteil der Jugendbewegung* (Hamburg, 1921); S. Sturm, *Das Wesen der Jugend und ihre Stellung zu Blüher und Plenge, zu Sexualtheorie und Psychoanalyse* (Wurzburg, 1921); F. Graetzer, "Eine erotische Staatsphilosophie: Gedanken zu H. Blühers System", *Die neue Generation*, 3/4 (1918), 71-77.

¹⁹ See in particular: *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, VI (1917/1918), 109-112; VIII (1921/1922), 66-70, 382-388; XIV (1927/1928), 426-328; *Sexual-Probleme*, June (1913); August (1913), 586-591.

²⁰ See K. Zeidler, *Vom erziehenden Eros* (Hamburg, 1919); G. Wyneken, *Eros* (Lauenburg, 1921); E. Spranger, *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Leipzig, 1924).

²¹ For example in the circle of Stefan George, see *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* (1912), vi-vii; see also Thomas Mann, "Von deutscher Republik", in: *Gesammelte Werke XI*, 809-852.

²² *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, IX (1908), 503.

could stain such a relationship. ... The assumption that true, devoted friendship between two of the same sex, that ideal, which is rightly valued so highly ... that friendship must always have a 'sexual emphasis', this assumption I must therefore reject out of my own experience and feelings as false. It seems to me that the champions of 'love of boys' have, by generalizing their own anomalous sentiments, themselves created the mistrust with which youthful friendships are now, unfortunately, regarded. ... In my youth we knew nothing of this ... One spoke of such things as though they were remote matters, which went on somewhere abroad or in far off days, as one speaks of cannibalism: such things do happen, but it doesn't concern any of us, thank God. If this quiet trust is to return to the benefit of our sons, whom we heartily wish a similar innocence with their friends, then the propaganda of 'the others' in word and deed must, above all, be brought to a halt."²³

Although this call for keeping friendship free from sexuality was clearly published with Hirschfeld's assent or even his encouragement, he himself nourished the confusion between friendship and homosexuality, in particular when he got involved in the sensational Moltke-Eulenburg scandal (1907-09), which drew a lot of publicity. After the journalist Maximilian Harden had hinted that two of Kaiser Wilhelm's confidants, Count Kuno von Moltke and Prince Philipp zu Eulenburg, were homosexuals, Moltke charged Harden with slander. In this trial Hirschfeld appeared as an expert-witness on the side of Harden. Basing himself on the testimony of Moltke's disaffected ex-wife, Hirschfeld declared that her former husband showed many mental features that were typical of homosexual men, such as feminine affinities, sentimentality, artistic sense, and an inclination to mysticism. On the basis of Hirschfeld's diagnosis that Moltke was "mentally homosexual", the court decided that his homosexual orientation was proven and it discharged Harden of slander.

This verdict was annihilated, however, and a new trial followed. The testimony of Moltke's ex-wife was disqualified because she supposedly suffered from hysteria, and Moltke and Eulenburg declared under oath that they were not homosexual and that their close friendship had always been completely pure. Eulenburg took the opportunity to

²³ "Ich habe als Student drei Jahre lang mit meinem lieben, alten Freund ... unzertrennlich gelebt ... Damals ahnten wir nichts von irgend einem Verdacht, der ein solches Verhältnis beflecken könnte. ... Die Annahme, dass wahre, hingebende Freundschaft zwischen Gleichgeschlechtigen, jene ideale, mit Recht so hoch bewertete ... Freundschaft stets 'sexuell betont' sein müsse ... diese Annahme muss ich also aus eigener Erfahrung und Empfindung als irrig abweisen. Mit will scheinen, durch Verallgemeinerung ihres anomalen Empfindens haben die Vertreter der 'Jünglingsliebe' erst das Misstrauen geschaffen, unter das jetzt leider die Jugendfreundschaften geraten sind. ... In meiner Jugend wusste man nichts davon. ... Man sprach wohl von dergleichen wie von einer entlegenen Sache, die irgendwo in der Fremde oder in fernen Zeiten ihr Unwesen trieb, wie man etwa von Kannibalismus spricht: so was gibt's zwar, aber es geht einen gottlob nichts an. Soll dieses ruhige Vertrauen wieder zurückkehren zum Wohle unserer Söhne, denen wir gleiche Harmlosigkeit im Verkehr mit ihren Freunden von Herzen wünschen, dann müsste vor allem doch wohl die Propaganda der 'anderen' in Wort und Tat einhalten." *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, IX, 742-745.

question Hirschfeld's testimony: "I have been an enthusiastic friend in my youth and I am proud of it. But if I had known that twenty-five years later a man would think out a system, according to which every friendship is under suspicion of 'dirty' sex acts, I would not have dared to look out for friends. One of the finest German virtues is the capacity for friendship. And I had deep bonds with men, to whom I wrote enthusiastic letters. I don't regret this at all. We know that our great heroes, like Goethe and others, corresponded with their friends in terms of endearments."²⁴

Moltke's attorneys stroke back by calling upon another medical expert on homosexuality as a new expert-witness: the neurologist Albert Moll who was a rival of Hirschfeld in the new field of sexology. Moll not only confirmed that Hirschfeld's report drew upon the unreliable statement of a hysterical woman; he also reproached him and other homosexual activists, such as Adolf Brand, for their eagerness to diagnose homosexuality in cases where it was dubious. In his report, he discarded Hirschfeld's conclusions as biased and arbitrary: "One should not derive a person's homosexuality or even homosexual disposition from some artificially assembled fragments or particularly eye-catching psychic peculiarities." Hirschfeld had confused sentimental friendship, indulging in poetry and music, and effeminate behavior among men, which were part of the usual mores in aristocratic circles, with homosexuality. "Which right do we then have," Moll continued, "to draw conclusions about some sort of unconscious homosexuality rather than speak of friendship?"²⁵ After he thus cleared Moltke of being homosexual, Harden was sentenced for libel and Hirschfeld withdrew his earlier diagnosis, admitting that intimate friendship did not necessarily indicate a homosexual orientation. The press now vilified him and public opinion turned against the homosexual movement.²⁶

Although in his publications Hirschfeld repeatedly claimed that there were 'objective criteria' for distinguishing friendship and 'real', constitutional homosexuality, in public he was castigated for mixing up the two. The confusion was more or less inherent in the way Hirschfeld tended to diagnose inborn homosexuality: it was not sexual behavior in itself that for him was the decisive factor, but the presence of a deep-seated disposition in the body as well as in the mind. Homosexual behavior by males who showed no trace of a homosexual disposition, should be qualified, according to Hirschfeld, as 'pseudo-homosexuality' and homo-erotic attraction could, to a certain extent, also play a role in friendships between 'normal' men. "It is often just as difficult to distinguish psychic

²⁴ Cited by C. Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* (London etc., 1986), 72-73.

²⁵ "Man soll nicht aus einigen künstlich zusammengestellten Fragmenten oder aus einzelnen besonders hervortretenden psychische Eigenschaften die Homosexualität oder gar die homosexuelle Veranlagung einer Person herleiten. ... welches Recht haben wir dann, hier von einer unbewussten Homosexualität, statt von einer Freundschaft zu sprechen?" A. Moll, "Einige Lehren des Harden-Prozesses," *Zeitschrift für ärztliche Fortbildung* 5 (1908): 60-3 (quotes on 61-2).

²⁶ M. Herzer & J. Steakley (eds.), *Magnus Hirschfeld, Von einst bis jetzt: Geschichte einer homosexuellen Bewegung (1897-1922)* (Berlin, 1986), 89; Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 72-3, 80.

homosexuality from friendship, as it is to differentiate same-sexual acts without and with psychic homosexuality. Only if the physical is an expression of spiritual, one can speak of real homosexuality ...”²⁷

Other leading sexologists, such as Albert Moll, Iwan Bloch and Siegfried Placzek also examined the relation between friendship, love and homosexuality, and what they wrote about it was at least as ambivalent as Hirschfeld’s rather confusing views. Moll, Bloch and Placzek shared Hirschfeld’s basic point that friendship was essentially a spiritual relationship, whereas on the other hand love was both spiritual and physical, and as such intrinsically linked to sexual passion. According to Hirschfeld, however, Moll’s testimony in one of the Moltke-Eulenburg trials was not in line with what he had written in his main work about homosexuality, *Die Conträre Sexualempfindung* (1891, expanded editions 1893 and 1899). In this book, one of the first monographs exclusively devoted to homosexuality, Moll acknowledged that there was an overlap between same-sex love and friendship; that homosexuality could exist as a ‘latent’, ‘spiritual’, and ‘unconscious’ inclination; and that homosexuals could deceive themselves by confusing sexual love and friendship. Moreover, Moll mentioned many historical personalities who were homosexual without blaming them for their leanings.²⁸

Moll’s arguments about the relation between, on the one hand, homosexuality and, on the other, intimate friendship and a more spiritual eroticism, were indeed contradictory. A few years after he testified in the Moltke-trial, Moll published a book about ‘famous homosexuals’, in which he stressed that close friendships between men in eighteenth-century literary circles were not necessarily homosexual relations and that such intimate bonds should be understood in their particular cultural-historical context.²⁹ In an article about the physical and psychological dimensions of love and friendship, Moll also elaborated on several forms of sensuality between men, such as a sensibility for male physical beauty and the urge to embrace and kiss other men. Such feelings, according to Moll, were not necessary homosexual.³⁰ A class prejudice is noticeable here: whereas Moll warned time and again against the danger of diffuse and casual forms of homosexual behavior, which he associated with the urban homosexual subculture and sex-segregated institutions, in which members of different classes mixed, he argued that close friendships between men in the upper echelons of society were different from homosexual relations. At the same time, he repeatedly suggested

²⁷ “Fast ebenso schwierig, wie psychische Homosexualität von der Freundschaft, sind manchmal gleichgeschlechtliche Akte ohne und mit psychischer Homosexualität von einander zu unterscheiden. Nur wo das körperliche ein Ausdruck des Seelischen ist, kann von echter Homosexualität die Rede sein...” M. Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin, 1914), 187.

²⁸ M. Hirschfeld, *Sexualpsychologie und Volkspsychologie: Eine epikritische Studie zum Harden-Prozess* (Leipzig, 1908), 4, 10, 15, 23, 28.

²⁹ A. Moll, *Berühmte Homosexuelle* (Wiesbaden, 1910), 1-16.

³⁰ A. Moll, “Physiologisches und Psychologisches über Liebe und Freundschaft”, *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und medizinische Psychologie*, IV (1912), 257-278.

that the cultivation of intimate friendship was exploited by homosexuals as a cover-up for their sexual leanings and behavior. Also, Moll sharply criticized some well-known educators and psychologists, such as Eduard Spranger and Gustav Wyneken, as well as homosexual activists like Brand, whom he ironically characterized as 'Edeluranier', for misusing the concept of 'Eros'. Their talk about Eros in order to highlight the spiritual, cultural, and pedagogical dimension of same-sex relations, in particular those between adult men and adolescents, was, according to Moll, utterly misleading and even dangerous. Eros was far from nonphysical, it was not different from what he had described as the attraction drive, which was a component of the sex-drive and could not be separated from its genital part. "For many homosexuals", Moll smirked, "it is an extraordinary pleasure that Eros is publicly presented as something which is distinct from sexuality," but that was far from the reality that he witnessed in his neurological and psychotherapeutic practice. "I had the opportunity to speak to several 'Edeluranier' and to ask them: 'What about your erection and your ejaculation?' They cannot evade an answer to such questions, and then they admit: yes, these are there. So why speak about Eros here, instead of sexuality?"³¹

Iwan Bloch, who in his encyclopedic work *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (1907) stated that love between men should be possible without being labelled as homosexual, believed at the same time that friendship included a physical component. Like Hirschfeld and Moll, he distinguished friendship from 'true' homosexuality, which was supposedly rooted in the personality, but not from other same-sex relations and situations such as 'pseudo'-homosexual or 'bisexual' behavior in sex-segregated institutions and organizations as well as experimental physical intimacy between adolescents and close friendships. The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century romantic cult of friendship could be explained, according to Bloch, on the basis of widespread bisexuality at that time.

Such interpretations were criticized by the neurologist and psychiatrist Siegfried Placzek in his bestselling book *Freundschaft und Sexualität* (1917). In his view, many sexologists and psychoanalysts were too eager to find sexual urges in intimate friendships, but at the same time Placzek admitted that it was sometimes difficult to indicate exactly how to separate feelings of friendship and sexual desire. The issue had to be investigated further. After the First World War, however, medical and other experts on sexuality

³¹ "Für manche Homosexuelle ist es außerordentlich angenehm, das der Eros als etwas vom sexuellen getrenntes in der Öffentlichkeit hingestellt wird. ... Ich habe Gelegenheit gehabt, mit einer Reihe 'Edeluranier' zu sprechen und sie zu fragen: Wie steht es eigentlich mit der Erektion und Ejakulation bei Ihnen? Auf solche Fragen können sie einer Antwort nicht gut ausweichen, und diese lautet dann: 'Ja, die sind da'. Warum also hier von einem Eros sprechen, statt von der Sexualität? Worin unterscheidet sich dieser Eros von dem, was wir bisher unter die Erscheinungen der Liebe oder des Geschlechtstriebes eingereiht haben?" A. Moll, "Homosexualität und sogenannter Eros," in *Verhandlungen des internationalen Kongresses für Sexulforschung, Berlin vom 10. bis 16. Oktober 1926*, vol. 4, ed. M. Marcuse (Berlin, 1928), 136-46 (quote on 143-144).

hardly threw new light on the matter; the discussion about friendship and homosexuality shifted to literary scholars and even more to political circles – eventually with ill-fated consequences for homosexuals.

Bloch and Placzek were not the only ones who regretted the decline of romantic friendship. Around the First World war and around 1930 some cultural-philosophical and literary-historical studies appeared about friendship as it had supposedly existed in the past, but which could not be practiced any more in modern times.³² What was left of friendship in modern civil society, was not more than superficial sympathy motivated by more or less utilitarian goals – shared commonplace interests and activities – rather than a deeper spiritual union. Moreover, as a result of the growing impact of nationalism and the experience of war, a male comradeship guided by collective values had replaced intimate personal friendship.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the idealization of male solidarity and comradeship played an important role in the militaristic nationalism which gained momentum in opposition to Weimar democracy. The *Freikorpsen* (rightwing militias fighting against the political left and revolutionary agitation after the First World War) and the influential organizations of war-veterans kept alive an (idealized) memory of the life in the trenches and propagated an alternative politics based on charismatic leadership, esprit de corps, loyalty and male solidarity. Such sentiments were exploited by the National Socialists.³³

To a large extent the Nazis realized the German right-wing nationalist ideal of the *Männerbund*, according to which a militarist élite of men, firmly united among themselves, formed the core of the state. While the National Socialists glorified the family, but mainly as the breeding ground of many children and as a female sphere, the strict division of male and female roles as well as the total politicization of social and private life undermined the bond between husband and wife, and between parents and children. The Nazi-movement and -state required a great deal of time, energy, loyalty and sacrifice of males. A strong emotional attachment to one's family did not suit the role men were supposed to fulfill in the National Socialist order, in particular in the army and other (para)militaristic organizations such as the SA, the SS and the *Hitlerjugend*. Liberal-bourgeois society was, in the Nazi view, decadent and effeminate, and it hampered male solidarity and the masculine fighting spirit.

³² See for example A. von Gleichen-Russwurm, *Freundschaft: Eine psychologische Forschungsreise* (Stuttgart, 1912); E. Thaer, *Die Freundschaft im deutschen Roman des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg, 1917); S. Kracauer, *Über die Freundschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980, first edition 1917/1918); Rasch, *Die Freundschaft bei Jean Paul* (1929); Hellbach, *Die Freundesliebe in der deutschen Literatur* (1931); Jung, *Dichterfreundschaft und ihr romantisches Eigengepräge* (1934).

³³ G. Mosse, "Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (1986), 491-513; R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge MA, 1979), 42-84; N. Sombart, *Jugend in Berlin 1933-1943* (München, 1984), 21-25, 108-11, 178-191.

Some Nazi leaders, such as the party ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, drew attention to the significance of friendship and comradeship between men as the basis of collective political action.³⁴ Alfred Bäumler, the professor of ‘political pedagogy’ who promoted the revival of heroic ‘Hellenic values’ and commended Nietzsche as the philosopher of Nazidom, stated, for example, that German males were born for friendship and should become political soldiers. Friendship as basic social union served collective values: “there is no friendship without a fatherland, but no fatherland either without friendship”.³⁵ Referring to the trenches of the First World War, the wars of liberation against Napoleonic France and even the ancient Germans, other National Socialist spokesmen also regarded such male friendships as the germ-cell of the German nation and state. Thus the legal scholar Rudolf Klare stated that the severe penalties which he proposed for homosexuality should not hamper the spiritual love of males for other males, for which the ancient Greeks had set the example.³⁶

At the same time several Nazi officials were acutely aware of and worried about the possible homosexual implications of male bonding, the more so because friendship and the nationalist *Männerbund* had also been glorified in homosexual circles, such as those around Brand and Blüher. In his widely read book *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft* (1917) Blüher, who applauded Hitler’s takeover in 1933, advocated the same kind of nationalist *Männerbund* as groundwork for the state as prominent Nazi’s did; the only, but of course crucial difference was that Blüher, referring to psychoanalytic theory, openly emphasized the homo-erotic roots of such political male bonding.³⁷ Moreover, again and again, National Socialist organizations, in particular the SA under the leadership of Ernst Röhm and the *Hitlerjugend*, were accused of fostering homosexuality. In the early 1930s, German Social Democrats and Communists seized upon the homosexual orientation of Röhm and other SA-officers with the aim of discrediting the entire National Socialist movement. In Western Europe as well as the Soviet Union, there was a general tendency among the left and in freudomarxist theory to identify homosexuality with fascism and Nazism. Antifascist leftist journalists, politicians and scholars created the impression that homosexuality was widespread in National Socialist organizations.³⁸

Although the nazis emphasized that their ideal of male bonding was free from sensuality, the association with homosexuality was inevitable and recurring, and some of them took this very seriously. In various military organizations as well as the youth

³⁴ A. Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München, 1934), 485-493.

³⁵ “Es gibt keine Freundschaft ohne Vaterland, aber auch kein Vaterland ohne Freundschaft.” A. Bäumler, *Männerbund und Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1934), 38.

³⁶ R. Klare, *Homosexualität und Strafrecht* (Hamburg, 1935).

³⁷ H. Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert* (Jena, 1917/1919); cf. G.P. Pfeiffer, *Männerheldentum und Kameradenliebe im Krieg* (Berlin, 1925).

³⁸ H. Oosterhuis, “The Guilty Conscience of the Left”, *The Gay European Review* (1989), 72-81.

movement particular directives were introduced to counter the possible spread of homosexuality. Strikingly, the focus of these directives was very much on the factors which supposedly unleashed homosexual behavior and its rapid spread in all-male communities.³⁹ The SS-leader Heinrich Himmler, for example, who strongly supported the idea of a state based on elitist male bonding, at the same time warned that “super masculine militarism” and too much separation between men and women could result in breeding grounds of homosexuality.⁴⁰ A Nazi official charged with youth matters, K.W. Gauhl, argued along the same lines in his study about the formation of homosexual groups among boys, in which he repeatedly, as a warning, referred to Blüher’s work. Gauhl, who did not question the ideal of male bonding, emphasized that suspicion of close friendships between males was appropriate and urgent because such relationships often disguised homosexual debauchery. Therefore, it was necessary to distinguish such dangerous “clammy” friendships from healthy comradeship. In this context he associated friendship with individualism, personal pleasure, secrecy and cliques, whereas comradeship, the guiding norm for the *Hitlerjugend*, was oriented towards solidarity, loyalty, militancy and collective goals.⁴¹

It is remarkable to what extent the Nazis believed that all German men were susceptible to homosexual behavior, in particular as a consequence of seduction and their participation in all-male organizations and environments. Apparently, homosexuality was not only seen as a biological feature of an identifiable minority of racially inferior men, but even more as some kind of social plague which could spread like an epidemic, also among males who were, in the National Socialist view, undoubtedly “Aryans”. Racism cannot explain the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich.

In 1935, the criminalization of so-called “vice against nature” (anal intercourse) was extended to all forms of physical contact and even expressions of friendly affection between men which were considered as “lustful in intent”.⁴² The underlying rationale for the very broad definition of punishable homosexual behavior was the fear that it concerned all German men and that male bonding might trigger such feelings and behavior. The strict law and other specific regulations served as a deterrent against the danger that the male solidarity which was crucial in the National Socialist order, would degenerate into homosexuality. In this context the Nazis faced the challenge of drawing a clear boundary between on the one hand solid comradeship and on the other the

³⁹ F. Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung: Probleme der deutschen Sanitätsführung 1939-1945* (Neckargemünd, 1977).

⁴⁰ H. Himmler, “Bevölkerungspolitische Rede vor SS-Gruppenführern über die ‘Frage der Homosexualität’ und ein ‘natürliches Verhältnis der Geschlechter zueinander’, in: B.F. Smith (Hrsg.), *Heinrich Himmler, Geheimreden 1933-1945 und andere Ansprachen*. (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), 93-104.

⁴¹ K.W. Gauhl, *Statistische Untersuchungen über Gruppenbildung bei Jugendlichen mit gleichgeschlechtlicher Neigung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Struktur dieser Gruppen und der Ursache ihrer Entstehung* (Marburg, 1940).

⁴² Klare, *Homosexualität und Strafrecht*.

slippery slope of dubious friendship and pernicious homosexuality. The fear that the male comradeship which was required for the cohesion of militaristic homosocial organizations would degenerate into disruptive homosexuality, contributed strongly to the persecution of same-sex behavior in the Third Reich. The German history of friendship and male bonding and the associated involvement of the homosexual movement intensified the nazi preoccupation with homosexuality.