

Nenad Polgar

Understanding Homosexuality

An Integral Approach to a Study
of Homosexuality in the Perspective
of Church Teaching, Moral Theology,
and Sciences

**STUDIEN DER
MORALTHEOLOGIE**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	11
Part One – Homosexuality and the Sciences	15
1 Historical Perspective	18
1.1 The Development of Sexual Studies: Principal Figures	21
1.1.1 Johann Ludwig Casper	24
1.1.2 Karl Heinrich Ulrichs	25
1.1.3 Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal	26
1.1.4 Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing.....	28
1.1.5 Havelock Ellis.....	33
1.1.6 Magnus Hirschfeld.....	36
1.1.7 Sigmund Freud.....	39
1.1.8 Alfred Kinsey.....	45
1.1.9 Evelyn Hooker	49
1.2 Concluding Remarks.....	51
2 Cultural Perspective.....	54
2.1 Cross-Cultural Studies.....	55
2.1.1 Ancient Greece.....	55
2.1.2 New Guinean Tribes.....	66
2.1.3 Berdache Phenomenon.....	72
2.1.4 The Middle Ages	76
2.2 Same-Sex Sexuality and Other Categories	87
2.3 Concluding Remarks.....	96
3 Biological Perspective	99
3.1 Methodological Issues.....	101
3.1.1 Sex, Gender, and Homosexuality	101
3.1.2 Definitions of Sexual Orientation	107
3.1.3 Methods of Measuring Sexual Orientation	111
3.1.4 Models of Relation between Biology and Sexual Orientation.....	114

Table of Contents

3.2	Studies.....	116
3.2.1	Studies on Animals	117
3.2.2	Evolutionary Studies.....	124
3.2.3	Hormonal Studies.....	128
3.2.4	Neuro-anatomical Studies	131
3.2.5	Genetic Studies	133
3.2.6	A Critique of the Neuro-Anatomical and Genetic Studies	139
3.3	Concluding Remarks	143
4	Psychological Perspective.....	147
4.1	Key Figures.....	148
4.1.1	Sigmund Freud	148
4.1.2	Sandor Rado.....	152
4.2	Psychology-Society-Homosexuality Triangle.....	156
4.2.1	The American Psychiatric Association and Homosexuality..	157
4.2.2	New Directions	160
4.2.3	The Treatment of Homosexuality.....	161
4.3	Psychological Theories on Aetiology of Homosexuality	170
4.3.1	Early Sexual Experience Theories.....	171
4.3.2	Family Dynamics Theories	172
4.3.3	Childhood Gender Roles Theories.....	173
4.3.4	The Scientific Value of Psychological Theories of Aetiology of Homosexuality	174
4.4	Concluding Remarks	184
	Conclusion to Part One.....	186
Part Two – Homosexuality in the Documents of the Teaching Office of the Catholic Church		189
5	Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics (1975).....	192
5.1	The Context of the Document.....	192
5.1.1	Background.....	192
5.1.2	Significance	194
5.1.3	Main Points	196
5.2	Analysis of the Document	200
5.2.1	Use of Scripture	200
5.2.2	Appeal to Tradition.....	202
5.2.3	Use of Scientific Data.....	206
5.2.4	Appeal to Experience	211

Table of Contents

5.2.5 Pastoral Implications.....	212
5.2.6 Other Problematic Points	216
6 Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986)	219
6.1 The Context of the Document.....	219
6.1.1 Background.....	219
6.1.2 Significance	222
6.1.3 Main Points	225
6.2 Analysis of the Document	229
6.2.1 Use of Scripture.....	229
6.2.2 Appeal to Tradition	257
6.2.3 Use of Scientific Data	261
6.2.4 Appeal to Experience.....	265
6.2.5 Pastoral Implications.....	272
6.2.6 Toward Identifying the Impasse in Sexual Ethics: The Case of the Concept of 'Objective Disorder'.....	276
7 Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons (1992)	282
7.1 The Context of the Document.....	282
7.1.1 Background.....	282
7.1.2 Significance	285
7.1.3 Main Points	288
7.2 Analysis of the Document	290
7.2.1 'Protected qualities' and Sexual Orientation – Entirely Different or Analogical Categories?	290
7.2.2 No Right to Homosexuality	297
7.2.3 Limiting Basic Human Rights for the Common Good	301
7.3 Alternative Positions	307
7.3.1 John Tuohey.....	308
7.3.2 James Hanigan	310
7.3.3 Charles Curran.....	312
7.3.4 Margaret Farley	314
Conclusion to Part Two	318

Table of Contents

Part Three – Homosexuality and Theological Ethics	321
8 Alternative Theological Positions on Homosexuality	323
8.1 Position One – Homosexual Acts Are Intrinsically Evil (the Traditional Position)	324
8.1.1 John Harvey.....	324
8.1.2 James Hanigan	328
8.1.3 Germain Grisez	333
8.2 Position Two – Homosexual Acts Are Less Than Ideal.....	338
8.2.1 Lisa Sowle Cahill	338
8.2.2 Charles Curran.....	342
8.2.3 Richard McCormick.....	346
8.3 Position Three – Homosexual Acts Should Be Judged in Their Relational Significance.....	350
8.3.1 Gareth Moore	350
8.3.2 Margaret Farley.....	359
8.3.3 André Guindon	363
8.4 Concluding Remarks	371
9 Authority of the Teaching Office of the Catholic Church in Moral Matters.....	374
9.1 The Humanae Vitae Event	376
9.2 Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics and Morality	382
9.2.1 Autonomous Ethics Position	383
9.2.2 Faith-Ethics Position.....	389
9.3 Insights from Ecclesiology.....	394
9.3.1 Infallibility.....	395
9.3.2 Faith and Morals	396
9.4 Revealed Morality Versus Natural Morality.....	400
9.4.1 Ford-Grisez’s Thesis.....	400
9.4.2 Critique of Ford-Grisez’s Thesis.....	401
9.5 Theological Dissent.....	410
9.5.1 Assistance of the Holy Spirit.....	412
9.5.2 Obsequium Religiosum.....	413
9.5.3 Opposition to Dissent.....	417
9.5.4 CDF Documents on Dissent.....	425
9.6 Notions of Church.....	431
9.7 Concluding remarks	438

Table of Contents

10 Ethical Theory – Methodology and Anthropology	441
10.1 The Objective Meaning of Sexual Acts.....	443
10.1.1 Two Examples.....	449
10.1.2 Complementarity.....	456
10.2 Intrinsically Evil Acts.....	470
10.3 Social Ethics Versus Sexual Ethics	473
10.3.1 Charles Curran’s Thesis	473
10.3.2 Critique of Charles Curran’s Thesis	479
10.4 Divergent Notions of ‘the Good’	492
10.4.1 Basic Goods Theory	493
10.4.2 Revisionists’ Approach to the Human Good	506
10.5 Moral Norms.....	517
10.5.1 Basic Goods Theory	517
10.5.2 Revisionists’ Position.....	522
10.6 Intervention from Above: Veritatis Splendor	530
10.6.1 Revisionist Reaction.....	534
10.7 Concluding Remarks	552
Conclusion to Part Three	555
Conclusion.....	559
Bibliography.....	567

Introduction

An awareness of the status of the debate on homosexuality¹ in Catholic sexual ethics reveals several anomalies and inconsistencies that surround this issue and that appear to be symptomatic of the general discontent in the larger arena of sexual ethics.² This observation comes through even if one lacks an in-depth understanding of the field of Catholic sexual ethics and its recent history. As such, it served as a motivation for undertaking this study that inquires into the nature and causes of these anomalies and inconsistencies in hope of reaching a diagnosis of the field of sexual ethics as a necessary prerequisite of its further development.

Establishing such a diagnosis has to take note of the fact that the teaching office of the Catholic Church took a position on homosexuality and yet theologians continue to debate every aspect of the issue, almost as if the teaching office's position does not exist. A possible clue as to how that situation developed can be gleaned by paying attention to the so-called four sources of ethical wisdom (Scripture, tradition, reason/scientific knowledge, and contemporary experience) to which theologians appeal in constructing and presenting their positions. On the other hand, the position of the teaching office is largely based upon a specific form of natural law thinking that has been confronted with serious problems indicated by theologians over the course of the last sixty

- ¹ The term "homosexuality" has fallen in disrepute in scholarship and general usage in the last few decades for a host of reasons of which some will be explored in the course of this study. While I acknowledge these reasons and generally agreeing with the trend of not only theoretical but also linguistic distancing from the term "homosexuality", I do not avoid it in this study. The main reason for this terminological decision is the fact that the Catholic ethical discourse and the documents of the teaching authority of the Catholic Church – two of the three main discourses on which this study focuses – still use it, sometimes even exclusively. Thus, to facilitate the ease of access to my own text for the reader and at the same time remaining aware of the issues surrounding the usage of the term "homosexuality" (as well as of what the exclusive usage of the term "homosexuality" might suggest), I will not avoid using the term "homosexuality", but will also not limit myself to it.
- ² See Nenad POLGAR, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place. The Impasse in Sexual Ethics and the 'Problem' of Homosexuality*, in: *INTAMS Review* 17/1 (2011), 69–83, 69. This article presented some of the results of the current study.

years. Apart from having a potential to explain the current situation concerning the debate on homosexuality within the Catholic Church, this observation points to two very different tendencies concerning the position of the teaching office on homosexuality.

On the one hand, the position has fairly recently undergone a process of relatively small, but nonetheless significant change and, on the other hand, the present formulation of the position is defended by its supporters as if it is final and beyond discussion. These two tendencies are perplexing for anyone who would engage with the debate on homosexuality since they might be taken as an indication of two entirely different future scenarios. The first tendency raises an expectation that the development of the teaching office's position on homosexuality will continue and that it is in itself a sign of a more fundamental change in the Church's understanding of human sexuality. The second creates an impression that the development on this particular issue has reached its final point insofar as the teaching office refuses to allow any critique of its position posed by theologians.

At this point where the possible implications of the debate on homosexuality for the whole field of sexual ethics begin to emerge, the current study begins by inquiring whether the official position of the teaching office on homosexuality has created an impasse for theological ethics. As the reader will notice, this research trajectory focuses on the second tendency mentioned above. However, this does not mean that the first tendency has been forgotten or discarded. On the contrary, it will become obvious in the course of this study that the first tendency is antithetical to the second and that the future shape of theological ethics largely depends on which of these two tendencies will finally prevail.

In order to bring the current conflict between these two tendencies into a sharper focus we will use homosexuality as a case study. This approach might seem strange in light of the fact that we already postulated the existence of an impasse in sexual ethics. Therefore, one might object, why not skip what seems to be a longer path that includes a case study in order to arrive at the impasse which might have been studied directly. Or, if a case study is essential, why are we using homosexuality and not some other issue in sexual ethics? Both of these questions are legitimate and suggest different research trajectories that might have been followed. However, despite these possible objections, we still believe that the methodological decision we made to proceed in the above mentioned way has been fruitful and justified. Namely, the direct engagement with the impasse would risk confining this study entirely to

the discipline of theological ethics and, thus, forgetting the broader context in which the discipline operates, as well as adding an additional premise that the impasse is entirely explainable within the limits of this single theological discipline. As the reader will notice further on, this would go directly against the methodological presuppositions of this study, which we discovered to be indispensable for understanding the impasse.

The second objection raises a possibility to study the impasse by using a different issue in sexual ethics as a case study. We believe this to be possible, but we nevertheless preferred using homosexuality because of its potential to bring out the nature of the impasse, based (the potential) on its specific epistemological status in almost any field of inquiry we explored in the first part of this study.

An in-depth study of homosexuality will eventually lead us to back to the field of theological ethics. There, we will discover that the two aforementioned tendencies related to the debate on homosexuality correspond to the two sides that have formed in this debate. The so-called traditionalists strongly endorse the status quo of the debate on homosexuality, while the so-called revisionists assert that the debate should continue. Instead of simply opting for one of these views and proceeding by arguing for it, we assume that there are reasons for holding each of these views and that to those who hold them they seem important enough to risk the further polarisation of the discipline of theological ethics. By exploring these reasons that, as will become evident, do not concern only the debate on homosexuality but go much further to some fundamental issues in sexual ethics, it will become evident what divides the two sides and causes much misunderstanding that adds to the impasse, especially when these differences remain concealed and the problems are presumed to be elsewhere. Apart from that, the inquiry into these fundamental issues will reveal why we ultimately do hold that the teaching office's position on homosexuality has created an impasse in theological ethics which (the impasse) has become apparent now when different approaches to sexuality and to the theological enterprise in general have become possible or even necessary.

Since our analysis of the impasse in sexual ethics will took us through three very different fields of inquiry (various scientific disciplines, the teaching office's documents and theological ethics), it was impossible to approach these three fields in the same way. Therefore, we will not elaborate at this point on any methodological specifications that guided

Introduction

our approach. Instead, we will give both, a detailed introduction and methodological specifications at the beginning of each part of this study.

Part One – Homosexuality and the Sciences

The first part of this study aims to provide an overview of most important scientific research into homosexuality. The various scientific disciplines have been struggling for almost two hundred years to understand and properly conceptualise homosexuality, but even today it seems that these disciplines are merely edging closer to the right questions rather than providing final additions to concluding answers. Nevertheless, even at this stage they do offer a huge amount of data and theoretical interpretations of the phenomenon under study that marks a progress in knowledge and a development of crucial insights. As such, they pose a challenge to any discourse that wants to engage with homosexuality in a serious and plausible manner. The developing nature of scientific knowledge does not and cannot claim an all-encompassing and absolute position in either scientific discourse, or in dialogue with other discourses (social, philosophical, ethical, etc.). On the other hand, when it comes to theological ethics, not many would claim that ethical discourse can proceed in ignorance of the research into homosexuality in the scientific field. This, in itself, has numerous implications for how theological ethics and the teaching office's doctrine should approach the results of scientific disciplines or, at least, acknowledge their existence.

Of course, one cannot force ethicists or the teaching office to be informed by scientific knowledge. However, since every ethical issue is an issue because it appears on the horizon of the world mediated by meaning and since scientific knowledge has become an indispensable element of that world today, a part of ethical analysis should consist in attaining to scientific knowledge about the issue one wants to analyse and, ultimately, evaluate. Furthermore, if ethics, in the first instance, does not deal with abstractions (norms, rules, and guidelines) but with concrete and embodied human behaviour, attitudes, goals, and so on¹, then its task

¹ Logic dictates that the need for the former (rules, norms, guidelines) is based on the existence of the latter (behaviour, attitudes, goals). The need for this distinction is further justified by a constant threat in any discipline (including ethics) to subsume the concrete and particular (behaviour, attitudes, goals) into the abstract and universal (not only rules, norms, and guidelines, but also

cannot be achieved without a careful scrutiny of what is known (and, perhaps, even more importantly, what is unknown) about a phenomenon it wants to qualify ethically. For this reason, it was imperative for us to begin this study by articulating questions such as: What is actually being discussed in the debate on homosexuality? How can one (and can one at all, and if so, to what extent) define this phenomenon or categorise it? Is one discussing just one phenomenon or a number of them and, if the latter, is this insight not usually lost if only one term (homosexuality) is used to point to them?² Without this step, we would miss an important element of situating (and, if needed, for criticising) claims made in other discourses (i.e., in theological ethics and the teaching office's doctrine) pertaining to the aforementioned questions. It is surprising how much can be achieved by following this simple epistemological rule that advises a thorough descriptive approach to a subject, before addressing it in a normative way, and it is equally surprising how often this rule is ignored.

But beyond just being faithful to that rule, there is also another reason why we choose to proceed by first consulting scientific research on homosexuality. Namely, a thorough overview of the studies into homosexuality in other scientific disciplines reveals that the causes of the impasse in sexual ethics also emerge to some degree from these various disciplines. An obvious reason for this is the advance of knowledge in terms of new data and insights that necessarily demands a fresh theoretical engagement with an issue, not only in scientific disciplines but in theological ethics as well. A less obvious reason goes beyond the new data and insights, as well as theories that follow them, towards emerging

unsubstantiated ideas about behaviour, attitudes, goals that are not a result of a careful, empirical study but, nevertheless, fit neatly with those rules, norms and guidelines and are, thus, kept as proven 'truths' based, among other things, on 'facts'). This is a point where ethics has to necessarily enter into a dialogue with other discourses, especially with other scientific disciplines, lest it end up in an ideology. Bernard Lonergan is very clear on this when he states his empirical principle that "there are no true factual judgements without a foundation in relevant data." See Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Moral Theology and the Human Sciences*, in: *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 15/1 (1997), 5–18, 6.

- ² For instance, Michael Bailey *et al.* argue that homosexuality designates four distinguishable phenomena: (1) sexual behaviour, (2) sexual identity, (3) sexual attraction, (4) physiological sexual arousal. See Michael J. BAILEY *et al.*, *Sexual Orientation, Controversy, and Science*, in: *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 17/2 (2016), 45–101, 48 Although we will show later on that even more than these four phenomena has often been situated under one umbrella term – homosexuality – Bailey *et al.*'s point already suggests the need to study homosexuality interdisciplinary and warns of dangers associated with indiscriminate use of the term "homosexuality".

new discourses on sexuality that inescapably enter into conflict with older, but still quite dominant, discourses. In theological ethics we see these different discourses on sexuality simultaneously present on several levels; in debates, in the documents of the teaching office of the Church, among theologians, and sometimes even in the work of a single theologian. So, without addressing the elements of these various discourses on sexuality that often unconsciously influence the debates in theological ethics, there is little chance that the nature of the impasse will be understood. In this attempt, one needs all the resources one can get, because these elements often influence the debate on the level of premises and, thus, might be detected most clearly when various disciplines challenge each other.

In congruence with the aforementioned methodological points, we will proceed in this part by surveying and critically engaging with historical, cultural, biological, and psychological research into homosexuality. All of these scientific disciplines have had an interest in homosexuality for at least a number of decades and, in the process, they became a goldmine of insights for anyone who wishes to study the phenomenon. In fact, the interest of these disciplines in homosexuality has managed to produce so much literature that it is not possible anymore for a single individual to follow everything published on the issue at this point. Nevertheless, even the small sample of research we surveyed in this part of the study has proved its worth in terms of the challenges it sets that will not only 'haunt' us throughout the rest of the study, but that go well beyond what can be engaged with or answered within its pages.

Since these disciplines vary so much in their methodological presuppositions and the delineation of their object of study, it is important to point out that it was impossible to choose a single and systematically coherent way of approaching their results in our study. Instead, we were guided by an attempt to detect the major directions of their research and the most important theories that dominate each discipline. Furthermore, we tried to explore in which way(s) they challenge each other and reveal inadequacies in each other's methodologies that, it seems to us, cannot be entirely justified by the fact that one is dealing with very different disciplines. Despite this, we are still quite convinced that each of these disciplines provides theological ethics with plenty of reasons to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue with them.

1 Historical Perspective

Any number of individual, social, intellectual and even biological entities have a history. That history is usually marked by certain foundational moments and subsequent events that marked the entity in question and gave it a more or less coherent identity that provides us with a logical and reasonable explanation of why the things are as they are in the present. Such a vague descriptive definition is what one usually has in mind when faced with a task to give a historical overview of any subject. However, convenient definitions, no matter how vague or precise they might be, are often found wanting when applied to the history of sexuality for a number of reasons.

In which sense can one write a history of sexuality¹ and of what precisely would this history be? A response to this question would depend largely on whether one perceives sexuality as primarily a psychological, social, intellectual, or biological reality, because the method of inquiry must be appropriate to the nature of the subject. However, in order to categorise sexuality and to find an appropriate method of investigation, one would first need to ask which method is appropriate for which category; a seemingly vicious circle, but without doubt not the only one when it comes to the history of sexuality. On top of that, it seems that sexuality resists a simple categorisation and possesses features of all the aforementioned realities and is, as such, a complex phenomenon. Categorising sexuality as a complex phenomenon does not provide us with a clue on how to proceed clearly with a historical

¹ See Estelle B. FREEDMAN/John D'EMILIO, *Problems Encountered in Writing the History of Sexuality. Sources, Theory and Interpretation*, in: Jennifer ROBERTSON (ed.), *Same-Sex Cultures and Sexualities. An Anthropological Reader*, Malden, MA 2005, 162–173, 162–163. It should be noted immediately that we will not try to give a history of sexuality as such in chapter one. Instead, our goal is to survey the early scientific attempts to understand and position conceptually homosexuality. There are three reasons why we start with the notion of history of sexuality in general in this introduction; (1) to contextualise one aspect of it (homosexuality) in a wider frame, (2) to draw out some theoretical problems present in this field of inquiry that then necessarily pertain to the question we are dealing with here, and (3) to implicitly emphasise the fact that the early scientific attempts to understand 'perversions' (homosexuality often being the most interesting one) constituted the most important object of study of early sexology and, consequently, theories proposed here had a major influence on how 'normal' sexuality has been envisioned; usually as directly opposite of what was considered perverted.

survey, but at least it guards against futile attempts to simplify the issues involved.

Another set of problems related to categorising sexuality as a complex phenomenon is delineating the sources for inquiry. Should the history of sexuality try to recover buried experiences² of individuals or groups silenced throughout history by predominant experiences that were carried on to the next generation?³ Alternatively, should it concentrate on precisely the socially dominant experiences to uncover how they became the acceptable and dominant experiences, how they retained their position, influence the subsequent generations and whether they were changed in the process? But perhaps both of these approaches would rely too much on a postulated premise of the decisive role of ‘experiences’ in shaping the history of sexuality. A more fundamental question would then be what shaped these experiences that, presumably, shaped the history of sexuality?⁴ From this point of view, a way is opened to a number of theoretical suggestions that can each serve as a starting point for writing a history of sexuality. For instance, some would emphasise the role of specific discourses that developed in the 18th century under an all-powerful science that had a profound influence on the way a subject and, indeed, society constructed their identities and their understanding of themselves.⁵ According to this approach, often linked to the French

² The category of experience in this context refers to individual experiences recounted by ordinary people in the first person and is being perceived (within the field of history of sexuality) as an authoritative, authentic and irreducible form of evidence. Hence, the access to this kind of historical testimony is not attainable from police or medical records, scientific publications, etc., but from diaries, letters, novels, and so on. See Harry G. COCKS/Matt HOULBROOK, Introduction, in: Harry G. COCKS/Matt HOULBROOK (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality*, Houndmills, UK 2006, 1–18, 5; FREEDMAN/D’EMILIO, *Problems Encountered in Writing the History of Sexuality*, 163–166.

³ For such an approach, see Martin B. DUBERMAN/Martha VICINIUS/George CHAUNCEY (eds.), *Hidden from History*, Markham, CA 1989, or a number of other publications that came out of gay liberation movement and focused on solidifying gay identity by recovering gay past; that is, individuals in the past that were gay. In that way, gay community in the present would attain a certain tradition which is much valued in any kind of minority group.

⁴ What is hinted at here is not some kind of unidimensional process of influence in which something necessarily shaped something else so that the task of historian is to discover what influence is the most foundational. The point is quite the opposite: one needs to pay attention to multiple factors of influence (or, better yet, a net of influences) to account for complex historical processes and to avoid harnessing history for purely ideological reasons.

⁵ For such an approach, see Michel FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. An Introduction, Harmondsworth, UK 1981.

philosopher, Michel Foucault,⁶ the task of a history of sexuality would then be to investigate how this process takes place and how it generates particular ways of understanding, controlling, and specifying sexuality.⁷

An opposing theoretical suggestion offered by John Boswell, suggests that the role of 'Foucauldian discourses' is much overstated, claiming that the historical records show how distinct categories of behaviour, namely straight, gay, and bisexual, stubbornly resisted being completely wiped out or re-arranged in any way that would legitimise claims of discontinuity.⁸ Boswell's approach would then suggest that the biological component of sexuality is decisive for creating a set of parameters within which the freedom of the individual and the discursive power of society can progress.

For now, it will be enough to merely keep these opposing approaches in mind, because some historical and cross-cultural ground needs to be covered in the first and second chapters before a better overview of what is at stake in these debates will be available, especially as they pertain to how homosexuality has been dealt with in the modern era. However, one needs to decide what historical lens should help bring the essentials of this subject into focus in order to, firstly, do justice to the complex nature of the subject and, secondly, make it manageable in the study that does not want to make the historical approach to the subject its sole purpose, but intends to use the resulting insights as stepping stones for other purposes.⁹ With these two concerns in mind, this chapter will offer an overview of the discipline of sexology during the 19th and early 20th century through a survey of key figures widely recognized for their

⁶ While the so-called social constructionism approach is often associated with the figure of Michel Foucault, Carole Vance points out that the approach was initially developed by a host of pioneering authors whose work was not supported by the academia. Vance also sketches a brief history of the development of social constructionism and the various ways in which the term is understood by different authors. See Carol S. VANCE, *Anthropology Rediscovered Sexuality. A Theoretical Comment*, in: ROBERTSON (ed.), *Same-Sex Cultures and Sexualities*, 15–32.

⁷ See COCKS/HOULBROOK, *Introduction*, 9.

⁸ See John BOSWELL, *Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories*, in: DUBERMAN/VICINIUS/CHAUNCEY (eds.), *Hidden from History*, 17–36.

⁹ These 'other purposes' have been explained in the *Introduction* to the study. To recount, what is meant is that this study is not ultimately about a historical approach to scientific conceptualisations of homosexuality, but about an ethical approach to homosexuality (broadly stated). However, we believe that the insights coming from other scientific disciplines (including history) cannot be ignored even if one does not want to make these insights the sole purpose of a study, but intends to go further, while acknowledging them.

importance in both the development of the field of sexology and the wider influence they had on social and popular views of sexuality.¹⁰ Even more specifically, these key figures and their ideas will be scrutinised in terms of their contribution to the early scientific attempts to understand and conceptually position homosexuality. Moreover, the depicted key figures are presented in a way that makes them seem more like the bearers and foci of ideas rather than as historical persons embedded in their particular situations that influenced them to a degree (certainly enough to make their particular situations historically relevant), which (the ideas) are in this context more important than the figures themselves.

Such a particular approach is necessary for the purposes of this chapter; first, to situate it within this part of the study as a historical insight into the scientific attempts to understand homosexuality; second, to emphasise the rising awareness within sexology of the complexity of homosexuality that aroused curiosity of other scientific disciplines and so prompted their own contributions to the issue of homosexuality; third, to draw out the concepts being used almost universally today in the Western world both in science and in society when discussing homosexuality as an individual experience, social phenomenon (problem?), or as an ethical issue. Furthermore, these concepts will then be used as a tool to see, at the end of the second chapter, whether homosexuality represents an entirely new (Western) phenomenon that stands in discontinuity with what was before and what one can find in different cultures, or whether one needs to admit that despite differences, there is an even more fundamental continuity between these different ways of talking about the same phenomenon.

1.1 The Development of Sexual Studies: Principal Figures

Every society and every culture throughout the history had its mechanisms, laws and conventions to regulate human behaviour, including sexual behaviour. However, historians of sexuality have been

¹⁰ Of course, anyone familiar with the field of historical studies of homosexuality might argue that the list of key figures (Johan Casper, Karl Ulrich, Karl Westphal, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey, and Evelyn Hooker) we decided to include in this chapter is to an extent arbitrary and that there are certainly other figures who would deserve to be included here. We would agree with this assessment, but add that our choice was guided by opting for those authors who were most prominent in the early scientific attempts to conceptualise homosexuality, which is why they are most frequently mentioned in historical studies we consulted.

relentless in pointing out that sexuality as we know it and define it today, the concept itself, and perhaps even the reality and experience of it, only began to develop during the late 18th and early 19th century. This development is not only linked to a newly found interest of science in sexuality, but also with a host of other social and cultural shifts occurring around the same time, that enabled a new organisation of Western societies and a different balance of power relations in them; in a word, the developments that gave birth to the modern age. Among other things, these new power relations were caused by events such as the birth of modern nations, industrialisation, urbanisation, individualisation, the rise of the bourgeois and the working class, a loosening of the grip of religion on society, the Enlightenment and a rapid development of science, followed by a belief in unlimited progress, to name but a few. All of this created a need to find alternative ways of regulating these restructured societies that could no longer depend on the old systems invented to regulate agrarian and strong community-based societies of pre-modern Europe.

As a response, a whole range of new scientific disciplines emerged such as demography, criminology, sexology, psychiatry, and later on psychoanalysis, creating a need of their own to establish their fields and, more importantly, especially in the case of sexology and psychiatry, to find clientele that would keep them in business. In this effort, sexology and psychiatry inevitably came into conflict with established religion, since the area that they wanted to re-map was the one that was traditionally considered a domain of religion. In other words, what was until then handled by religion under the regime of faith (sin, vice, discipline, demonic possession, and redemption) was to be reinterpreted under the regime of science (health, illness, identity, and cure).¹¹ Hence, the quest to invent the modern self had begun.

It is not surprising to see a close link, almost an overlapping, between psychiatry and sexology at this time. One of the first tasks of psychiatry was to develop a nomenclature of mental illnesses based on the biomedical theory of degeneracy in which a special place was reserved for sexual perversions. The theory of degeneracy, developed in the 1850s by a French asylum doctor, Bénédict-Augustin Morel and explained in his work *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés malades* (1857), fitted well with the cultural obsessions and myths of the day.

¹¹ See Robert A. NYE, The Discovery of 'Sexuality' at the Turn of the Century, in: Robert A. NYE (ed.), *Sexuality*, Oxford, UK 1999, 114–115, 115.

Morel's work drew on Hegel's model of history, in which each age succeeds and replaces, on a higher level, the one that preceded it and being the opposite and regressive pole of progressive evolution.¹² As such, it served to detect and isolate the individuals that seemed to be on a course against human progress and so had the potential to corrupt society.

The scope of hereditary physical conditions and moral and social habits explained in Morel's vision by the theory of degeneration was almost all encompassing:

"[F]rom hernias, goitres, pointed ears, absence of secondary teeth, stunted growth, cranial deviations, deaf and dumbness, blindness, albinism, club-feet, elephantitis, scrophula, tuberculosis, rickets and sterility to the effects of toxins like alcohol, tobacco, and opium; he explored disturbances of the intellectual faculties and the noxious tendencies of certain forms of romanticism which resulted in languorous desires, effeteness, reveries, impotence, suicidal tendencies, inertia, melancholy and apathy."¹³

Furthermore, in the field of sexuality, the theory of degeneracy served as a theoretical background to explain everything that did not follow a teleologically envisioned norm of sexuality (procreation); namely, masturbation, prostitution, venereal diseases, same-sex desires and behaviour, promiscuity, and so on.¹⁴

Before we start with a survey of the conceptual space in which ways of understanding homosexuality were being developed, let us introduce a distinction that points to how this conceptual space was framed. In his influential study, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, Arnold Davidson claims that between 1870 and 1905 psychiatry was caught between two conceptual grids – anatomo-pathological style of reasoning and psychiatric style of reasoning, or between neurology and psychology.¹⁵ He explains this division further by identifying three stages of the development of psychiatry in those early days. In the first stage, sexual perversions were understood as diseases of the reproductive or genital organs based on anatomical abnormality of these organs; in the second stage, sexual perversions were thought of as abnormalities of the sexual instinct, which

¹² See Sander L. GILMAN, *Degenerate Sexuality*, in: NYE (ed.), *Sexuality*, 120–121, 120.

¹³ Daniel PICK, *Degeneration*, in: NYE (ed.), *Sexuality*, 117–118.

¹⁴ See GILMAN, *Degenerate Sexuality*, 120–121.

¹⁵ See Arnold I. DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality. Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts*, Cambridge, MA 2001, 3. However, it seems that anatomo-pathological style of reasoning was present even before 1870, as will be shown further on in the text.

nevertheless, at a later stage would be localised in neurophysiology, and neuroanatomy of the brain. In the third stage, sexual perversions were explained as pure functional deviations of the sexual instinct, without any reference to cerebral pathology.¹⁶ However, Davidson, clearly a student of Michel Foucault, points out that this division should not be understood chronologically but conceptually, as a clash of different discourses and although a functional explanation or psychiatric style of reasoning will eventually become dominant, all three understandings influenced the same authors¹⁷ of that time. The reason for this, as Davidson explains, is to be found in the fact that most psychiatrists back then were first trained as neurologists and, more importantly, no one actually knew, at first, what it would mean to understand deviations of sexual instinct in purely functional terms without reference to a specific organ.

1.1.1 Johann Ludwig Casper

One of the first psychologists to work on the premise of Morel's theory and apply it to his study of 'homosexuality' was a German physician Johann Ludwig Casper. In 1856, he published *Practisches Handbuch der gerichtlichen Medicin (Handbook of the Practice of Forensic Medicine)* in which, among other things, he tried to find corporeal traces of 'unnatural gratification of the sexual appetite' as something that could be used as legal evidence.¹⁸ His search for corporeal traces was inspired by Ambrose Tardieu's idea that the practice of sodomy would leave traceable marks on a person's genitalia (thin penises or funnel-shaped anuses) although his own forensic research produced no results that would back up this theory.¹⁹ Nevertheless, his research did lead him to the insight that the usual term *paederastia* used to describe those he was studying, was not sufficient for the range of cases on which he was working. Hence, in his later editions of the *Handbook* he introduced a distinction between two

¹⁶ See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 3.

¹⁷ Davidson gives examples in which he shows how different styles of reasoning were present even in the same article or a book. See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 4–8.

¹⁸ See Chris BRICKELL, *Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History*, in: *Sexualities* 9/4 (2006), 423–447, 428.

¹⁹ See Hubert KENNEDY, *Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. First Theorist of Homosexuality*, in: Vernon A. ROSARIO (ed.), *Science and Homosexualities*, New York, NY 1997, 26–45, 31.

forms of *paederastia* – innate and acquired.²⁰ The innate version of *paederastia* was ascribable to flawed heredity or a form of mental hermaphroditism that influenced their preferred role during a sex act – *pathicus* (passive) or *paederastus* (active). On the other hand, the acquired *paederastia* was not, in his opinion, a result of flawed heredity, but of sexual laxity of a particular kind of ‘sensual’ man who grew tired of sexual relations with women and in pursuit of a novelty, engaged in sexual contact with men.²¹

1.1.2 Karl Heinrich Ulrichs

Although the theory of degeneracy was widely accepted by sexologists, there were also those who strongly opposed it. One of them was Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–95), German lawyer and activist for the abolition of anti-sodomy laws, and one of the first to coin a set of terms to describe persons with the same-sex sexual orientation. Although such anti-sodomy laws were part of juridical systems of almost every European country for centuries, Ulrichs saw the theory of degeneracy and the new discourses on perversion as only strengthening those laws, while labelling same-sex behaviour or orientation, abnormal. Instead, drawing on his own experience, he became convinced that sexual orientation was a stable, inherent human characteristic and same-sex desire a valid and natural form of human sexual expression.²²

Between 1864 and 1869, Ulrichs published a series of monographs entitled *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mann männlichen Liebe* (*Research on the Riddle of Love between Men*) in which he laid out his theories on the nature and aetiology of same-sex desire.²³ Since, at that time, the chromosomal basis of sexual differentiation was unknown,

²⁰ See Vern BULLOUGH, *The Kinsey Scale in Historical Perspective*, in: David P. McWHIRTER/Stephanie A. SANDERS/June M. REINISCH (eds.), *Homosexuality/Heterosexuality. Concepts of Sexual Orientation*, Oxford, UK 1990, 3–14, 9.

²¹ See BRICKELL, *Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History*, 429.

²² See BULLOUGH, *The Kinsey Scale in Historical Perspective*, 9–10; Jennifer TERRY, *An American Obsession. Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society*, Chicago, IL 1999, 42–45. For his particular approach to the phenomenon of homosexuality, Hubert Kennedy credits him as the inventor of a first scientific theory of homosexuality whose impact can be felt even today through biological research into the aetiology of homosexuality. See KENNEDY, *Karl Heinrich Ulrichs*, 39.

²³ See Francis M. MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, Baltimore, MD 1996, 28–29.

Ulrichs hypothesised from the existence of hermaphrodites that male and female sexual organs develop from the same tissue in a sexually unformed embryo. Furthermore, he theorised from there that a human 'spirit' must be undergoing the same development.²⁴ Hence, he believed it is possible that in some cases somatic and 'spiritual' development do not go hand in hand and that the result would be *anima muliebris virili corpora inclusa* (a female soul in a male body) or something he referred to as the 'third sex'.²⁵ Since there was still no terminology that would enable him to explain what he meant, he coined a new set of terms himself. Finding the inspiration in Plato's *Symposium* he first made a distinction between *Uranier* (man-loving) and *Dionäer* (sexually ordinary man).²⁶ As he expanded his theory, he added new terms to cover the whole range of possible variations in sexual orientation, namely, terms like *Urningin* (female correlate of *Urning*), *Urano-Dioning* (a person attracted to both women and men), *Uraniaster* (a male person who turned to men because of a temporary lack of female partners), *Mannling* (a masculine *Urning*), and *Weibling* (an effeminate *Urning*).²⁷

Apart from Ulrichs's attempts to initiate a legal reform that would lead to the abolishment of anti-sodomy laws in newly formed Germany in which his pleas were outrageously decried, he also tried to influence the medical establishment of his time. His list of correspondences includes some of the most prominent figures working in the field of sexual studies at the time; names like Rudolf Virchow, Karl Westphal, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, John Addington Symonds, and Magnus Hirschfeld.²⁸ However, he did not have much success with them in his attempts to convince them of his theories either as he was not a medical doctor and his theories were in conflict with the already widespread theory of degeneracy. Nevertheless, some of his insights on the development of a fixed sexual identity will become gradually accepted in writings of sexologists after him and up until today.

1.1.3 Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal

Despite these early attempts to develop a conceptual understanding of same-sex orientation, some historians of sexuality claim that it was only

²⁴ See KENNEDY, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, 29–30.

²⁵ See KENNEDY, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, 30.

²⁶ Later on, he changed this terminology to *Urning* and *Dioning*. See MONDIMORE, A Natural History of Homosexuality, 29.

²⁷ See MONDIMORE, A Natural History of Homosexuality, 30–31.

²⁸ See KENNEDY, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, 31–37.

in 1870 that the new medical category of homosexuality²⁹ was constituted. The significance of this event, no matter whether one credits it to German neurologist and psychiatrist Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal or if one refuses to pinpoint it, ascribing it to a particular historic epoch instead, is well described by Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality*:

“As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away [...]. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.”³⁰

Although Foucault also singled out Westphal as a key figure in inventing the medical category of homosexuality, we have already seen how some previously mentioned authors at least hinted to some of the elements of this newly coined concept. In that sense, what Westphal did was gather these previous insights under a new term *conträre Sexualempfindung* (contrary sexual instinct)³¹, which he used in a case

²⁹ The term itself was coined in 1869 by Karoly Maria Benkert (pseudonym Kertbeny), a Hungarian journalist and a political activist. However, for the next twenty years or so, it merely coexisted with a number of other terms, before it became widely accepted. These other terms (uranianism, psychical hermaphroditism, sexual intermediacy, tribadism, sapphism, pederasty, pure homosexuality, tardy homosexuality, viraginity, psychosexual hermaphroditism, gynandrim, etc.) demonstrate that there was a good deal of confusion and discursive complexity surrounding the phenomenon they were meant to label. See TERRY, *An American Obsession*, 410–411.

³⁰ FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, 43. It is important to note in this context Paul Johnson’s comment that, for Foucault, history “was not a means by which to understand the past, but a method which could show how human beings had come to understand themselves; how we had come to construct a knowledge of our being-in-the-world.” Paul J. JOHNSON, *The Histories of Sexuality. The Future of Debate*, in: *Social Epistemology* 15/2 (2001), 127–137, 133.

³¹ “Those manifesting this perverse instinct”, Jennifer Terry explains, “were described as *contrary* primarily because they defied the expectations and conventions of a sex/gender regime that not only presumed the mutual exclusivity of the two sexes but also held that these sexes were naturally

history of a lesbian, published in the journal, *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten*.³² Westphal also believed that *conträre Sexualempfindung* is an inborn perversion of the sexual instinct and described it as a woman being physically a woman and psychologically a man, and a man being physically a man and psychologically a woman.³³ At first glance, there does not seem to be anything revolutionary in Westphal's term and subsequent definition when compared to the already mentioned authors. However, this observation stands in an unexplainable relation to the fact that it was exactly Westphal's concept of *conträre Sexualempfindung* that was used to designate any kind of sexual perversion in almost all of the subsequent medical literature. We will leave this question of the significance of Westphal's term unanswered for now because it is through the works of the next author that a possible answer might be offered.

1.1.4 Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing

There is not a single article or a book on the modern history of sexuality that would not mention at least in passing the name of Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, a German psychiatrist and sexologist. His influence on the subsequent development of sexology up until today stands in curious disproportion to unoriginality and dependency of his work on the abovementioned figures. However, this disproportion is easily explained by Krafft-Ebing's ability to read the *zeitgeist* and offer to his audience and medical establishment exactly what interested them and was acceptable to them.³⁴ In 1886, Krafft-Ebing published *Psychopathia sexualis*, a compendium of over two hundred case histories of individuals who manifested some kind of psychopathological sexual disorders.³⁵ The popularity of his compendium was so huge that he became one of the greatest authorities in the field of sexual studies.³⁶ The success of his work

organized into reproductive heterosexual couplings." TERRY, *An American Obsession*, 35.

³² See Carl F. O. WESTPHAL, *Die conträre Sexualempfindung. Symptom eines neuropathischen (psychopathischen) Zustandes*, in: *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten* 2/1 (1869), 73–108.

³³ See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 16.

³⁴ In that sense, a parallel could be drawn between the popularity of Krafft-Ebing's work and Alfred Kinsey's work in the United States approximately sixty years later.

³⁵ See Richard F. von KRAFFT-EBING, *Psychopathia sexualis. Eine klinisch-forensische Studie*, Stuttgart 1886.

³⁶ His initial intention was to offer a reference text to doctors and lawyers who were discussing cases of sexual crimes in court. See TERRY, *An American Obsession*, 45.

prompted him to print twelve subsequent editions in which he almost annually added new case histories.

In his first edition, Krafft-Ebing divided psychopathological disorders (or simply perversions) into sadism, masochism, fetishism, and antipathic or contrary sexual instinct.³⁷ It might appear strange to a modern reader to see these four phenomena with very little in common put into the category of perversion, until one considers an underlying and implicitly accepted theory of 19th century sexology that Krafft-Ebing fully endorsed. Namely, as it has been noted earlier, the category of function started to be related to the notion of sexual instinct, which was also compared to the instinct for self-preservation. Bearing that in mind, it becomes apparent that there is an essential characteristic shared by all perversions that justified placing them together in one category. Arnold Davidson explains: "Once one offers a functional characterization of the sexual instinct, perversions become a natural class of diseases; and without this characterization there is no conceptual room for this kind of disease."³⁸

In that regard, Krafft-Ebing did not leave any room for speculation when it comes to what exactly is the function of the sexual instinct to which perversions are opposed:

"During the time of the maturation of physiological processes in the reproductive glands, desires arise in the consciousness of the individual, which have for their purpose the perpetuation of the species (sexual instinct) [...]. With opportunity for the natural satisfaction of the sexual instinct, every expression of it that does not correspond with the purpose of nature – i.e., propagation – must be regarded as perverse."³⁹

This also answers the question raised earlier concerning the popularity of Westphal's term 'contrary sexual instinct', because in light of 'the functional theory' it finally became possible to categorise perversions in the 19th century discourse and to establish their place in 'the order of nature', which was exactly at the opposite side from the normal (or natural) sexual instinct.

A very important question that has to be raised at this point is whether this means that perversions did not exist prior to their entry into medical categories in the 19th century. Or, to be more explicit, does this mean that sadism, masochism, fetishism, and contrary sexual instinct did not exist

³⁷ See Harry OOSTERHUIS, Richard von Krafft-Ebing's 'Step-Children of Nature'. Psychiatry and the Making of Homosexual Identity, in: ROSARIO (ed.), *Science and Homosexualities*, 67–88, 72. In later editions he also used the term 'homosexual'.

³⁸ DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 14.

³⁹ Richard F. von KRAFFT-EBING, *Psychopathia sexualis*, New York, NY ¹²1965, 52–53.

prior to the 19th century? After all, is there really a significant difference between the 19th century medical category of function and perversion, and something that might be picked out of any medieval work on ethics? This question goes to the heart of one of the most enduring debates within the study of the history of sexuality; the one between essentialists and social constructionists. Because of its importance and complexity, this question will be postponed until the end of chapter two, when the scope of the question will be revealed and all the necessary data gathered to attempt an adequate response. For now, let us stick to the present task and try to gather some more clues from Krafft-Ebing's work.

It seems that even in Krafft-Ebing's mind there was a difference between what he and other sexologists at the time were talking about as opposed to the legal (or ethical) discourse on 'perversions' that marked previous eras. He tried to explain this difference by introducing a distinction between perversion and perversity:

"Perversion of the sexual instinct [...] is not to be confounded with perversity in the sexual act; since the latter may be induced by conditions other than psycho-pathological. The concrete perverse act, monstrous as it may be, is clinically not decisive. In order to differentiate between disease (perversion) and vice (perversity), one must investigate the whole personality of the individual and the original motive leading to the perverse act. Therein will be found the key to the diagnosis."⁴⁰

This quotation anticipates Michel Foucault's position, quoted earlier, in which he tries to explain how a new personality, identity or a subject gradually started to enter sexological literature of the 19th century and left a deep mark on how we understand these categories. In the light of these two quotations, one begins to grasp why it became so important (almost obsessively so) for these sexologists to map in the smallest detail the unexplored area of perversions. The driving reason behind this was a conviction that to discern the truth about one's sexuality was to discern the truth about who that person is; or, in Krafft-Ebing's words: "These anomalies are very important elementary disturbances, since upon the nature of sexual sensibility the mental individuality in greater part depends."⁴¹ Hence, upon 'the nature of sexual sensibility' or what one was sexually – a sadist, masochist, homosexual, fetishist – one became exactly that personality.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 53.

⁴¹ Richard von KRAFFT-EBING, *Textbook of Insanity*, Philadelphia, PA 1904, 81.

As opposed to such an understanding, Chris Brickell, on the other hand, argues that the new terms 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual', especially in Krafft-Ebing's case, did not refer to types of persons, but to the elements that can be found in every individual.⁴² However, while his argument does seem to have a point in showing that the boundary between homosexual and heterosexual are somewhat blurred, or that there were degrees in between, he does not explain why Krafft-Ebing, if he was just referring to the *elements* and not to the *persons*, drew a connection between the 'nature of sexual sensibility' and 'mental individuality'. What seemed to have been taking place in Krafft-Ebing's work and in the 19th century sexology in general was the development of gradual awareness of the complexity of the phenomenon of sexuality. Because of that, the whole discourse shifted back and forth between, on the one hand, the need to map the new area, define categories, and determine who goes into which one, and, on the other hand, an embarrassing after-thought about the resistance of sexuality⁴³ to fit neatly into these categories. Furthermore, if this was the case, one should expect that no implications of this second possibility could be drawn out by a single author or even by a single era. In other words, we need to be aware of cultural limitations; that is, the fact that one cannot see more than one can imagine and more than the categories in which one operates allow it. What all this means is that Krafft-Ebing might have hinted at the set of ideas Brickell is referring to; however, it will take some more time until these ideas will be explored in greater depth and their implications drawn out.

Up until now, not much has been said specifically on Krafft-Ebing's understanding of homosexuality. However, it has been noted that his role in sexology might well be described as one of a compiler rather than innovator; a point which comes across very clearly when one reads his case studies. In other words, there is a persistent impression throughout these cases that they have been selected very carefully and described in a

⁴² See BRICKELL, *Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History*, 429.

⁴³ This does not necessarily mean that when one invokes the notion of sexuality one refers to some natural category as opposed to socially or culturally constructed category. This issue does not concern us here, apart from maintaining the possibility for sexuality to fit in any of these categories, because if sexuality is resistant to categorisation, this could follow from it being a complex category of nature (however one explains this concept), or from the fact that the social or cultural forces that shape it are not to be found only in sexological manuals and clinical surroundings.

way that does not question any previously established theory on the nature of disorders being discussed. Consider, for example, Krafft-Ebing's constant reference to the theory of degeneracy in the following cases:⁴⁴

"CASE 148. C. age 28, gentleman of leisure; father neuropathic; mother very nervous [...]. C. was neuropathically tainted; slight convulsive tic.

CASE 134. Mr. Z., patient's father neuropathic, and suffered with nightmare and night-terrors. Grandfather also neuropathic; father's brother an idiot [...]. The patient had three sisters and one brother, the latter being subject to moral insanity.

CASE 143. Z. age 28; father very nervous and irritable; mother hysteropathic. He himself constitutionally nervous, suffered from enuresis to his 18th year, and was a frail boy."⁴⁵

The taint that Krafft-Ebing mentions in the first of these cases was, in his reasoning, the prime cause of congenital antipathic sexual instinct, as opposed to acquired antipathic sexual instinct that might be provoked by masturbation or seduction in untainted individuals.⁴⁶ However, in some of the cases that he presents, the distinction becomes quite blurred, apart from the fact that acquired homosexuals had some heterosexual experience and are, obviously, not presented as cases with a degenerate background. This becomes even more evident when one takes into consideration the four degrees of development of congenital homosexuality that Krafft-Ebing presents in his other work, *Textbook of Insanity*:

- "1. With the predominant homosexual feeling there are traces of heterosexual sensibility (psychosexual hermaphroditism)
2. Exclusive inclination to the same sex (homosexuality)
3. The whole psychic existence is altered to correspond with the abnormal sexual feeling (effemination and viraginity)

⁴⁴ The cases of homosexuality that Krafft-Ebing presents in his book were all derived from police records, mental asylums, and writings of other psychiatrists, which made it easy to draw a link between homosexuality and mental illness or theory of degeneracy.

⁴⁵ KRAFFT-EBING, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 232, 245, 255.

⁴⁶ See BRICKELL, *Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History*, 430.

4. The form of the body approaches that which is in harmony with the abnormal sexual feeling. However, there are never actual transition to hermaphrodites.”⁴⁷

Notice how in the first degree he acknowledges the existence of ‘heterosexual sensibility’ and, thus, blurs the distinction, at least on the level of manifestation, between congenital and acquired homosexuality.

1.1.5 Havelock Ellis

Some of the implications of the multi-faceted discourse on sexuality that Chris Brickell points to in Krafft-Ebing’s work, were beginning to get a much clearer expression in the work of Havelock Ellis, a British physician and sexologist. His monumental work, *Das konträre Geschlechtsgefühl* (*Sexual Inversion*), published in 1896 and co-authored by John Addington Symonds, tested the limits of the social toleration of sexological discourse and started to shift the whole field into a controversial relation to society that marked so much of the later history of sexual studies.⁴⁸ By the time the book was published, the clinical and other data on the cases in most of these studies had grown substantially which might explain, at least partially, the different tone of Ellis’s study in comparison with those published previously. Apart from that, the fact that Ellis worked on the book with Symonds, an English literary critic and a widely respected man in society who also happened to be homosexual, left a deep impact on some of the views presented by Ellis. Finally, Ellis’s approach to the field, which did not try to communicate its insights by merely reviewing the history of cases as had become almost a rule in sexological studies, but included surveys of history and literature, current sociological observations, and theoretical discussions, resulted in a much more scholarly, restrained, and one could almost say properly scientific study, even by contemporary standards.

By the time Ellis finished his study, not everyone was ready to consider his viewpoint; in fact, it took him some time before he managed to find a publisher in England who would be willing to work with him, and even after he published it, a bookstore that was selling it was charged with distributing obscene material.⁴⁹ However, the obscenity and controversy

⁴⁷ KRAFFT-EBING, *Textbook of Insanity*, 85.

⁴⁸ See Havelock ELLIS/John A. SYMONDS, *Das konträre Geschlechtsgefühl*, Leipzig 1896.

⁴⁹ In fact, Ellis managed to publish his study first in Germany almost a year before the English edition appeared. Although his study did not have much impact in

of Ellis's study was of a radically different kind than the one authors working in this field had to be aware of and against which one had to protect oneself by using the tricks of the trade; one of the most famous among them was to write controversial passages in Latin. Ellis's 'obscurity' was caused by the threat his book presented to the established social order and the subsequent fear that usually follows when such a threat is discovered. Consider, for example, one of the cases he presented in his study:

"CASE VI. – My parentage is very sound and healthy. Both my parents (who belong to the professional middle class) have good general health; nor can I trace any marked abnormal or diseased tendency, of mind or body, in any records of the family [...]. At the age of eight or nine, and long before distinct sexual feelings declared themselves, I felt a friendly attraction towards my own sex, and this developed after the age of puberty into a passionate sense of love, which, however, never found any expression for itself till I was fully 20 years of age [...]. The passion for my own sex developed itself gradually, utterly uninfluenced from the outside [...]. My own sexual nature was a mystery to me [...]. I thought about my male friends – sometimes boys my own age, sometimes elder boys, and once even a master – during the day and dreamed about them at night, but was too convinced that I was a hopeless monstrosity ever to make any effectual advances. Later on, it was much the same, but gradually, though slowly, I came to find that there were others like myself. I made a few special friends, and at last it came to me occasionally to sleep with them and to satisfy my imperious need by mutual embraces [...]. Before this happened, however, I was once or twice on the brink of despair and madness with repressed passion and torment."⁵⁰

The fundamental difference between Ellis's cases and the ones presented in Krafft-Ebing's book is more than obvious and well expressed by Francis Mondimore. "In contrast to reading through *Psychopathia sexualis*, at times not unlike picking up a rock and finding all sorts of slimy and grotesque creatures slithering and skittering for cover, the 'inverts' revealed by reading *Sexual Inversion* are notable for their normality."⁵¹ The reason for this difference, as Ellis himself explains, is the fact that he did not gather the material for his cases from the usual sources – asylums,

Germany, the fact that he was able to publish it there without any problems with authorities, testifies that Germany at that time had a different intellectual and social climate than the one in England. See MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 46.

⁵⁰ Havelock ELLIS/John A. SYMONDS, *Sexual Inversion*, New York, NY 1975, 46–47.

⁵¹ MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 49.

criminal records, etc. – but obtained them privately from persons that, in most cases, never consulted a psychiatrist.⁵²

Ellis's controversial approach to the subject, displayed in the method he used to obtain his case studies, is also evident in his original contribution to the field of sexology manifested in the theoretical part of his study. There it seems that he did not take anything for granted but was determined to rethink the presuppositions on which much of the work before him relied so heavily. In that sense, he completely discarded the aetiological explanations of inversion based on the theory of degeneracy, the role of masturbation, and the connection between inversion and mental illnesses.⁵³ He also refuted Krafft-Ebing's distinction between acquired and congenital contrary sexual instinct, finding it to be useless, while instead proposing a new one between inversion and homosexuality and taking more interest in what has previously been only an implicitly present idea in writings of other sexologists; namely, that the line between homosexuality and heterosexuality is not a clear one and it definitely does not put persons in two separate categories.⁵⁴

In his classification, the term inversion refers to those people in whom "the sexual impulse is organically and innately turned toward individuals of the same sex"⁵⁵, meaning that inverts had a distinct congenital predisposition or an inborn nature. Homosexuality, on the other hand, refers to "all sexual attractions between persons of the same sex, even when seemingly due to the accidental absence of the natural objects of sexual attraction"⁵⁶. The conceptual connection between these two forms of same-sex desire was envisioned by Ellis through reference to latent homosexual tendency that, he thought, is shared in some degree by everyone. Thus, for him "[t]he real distinction would seem, therefore, to be between a homosexual impulse so strong that it subsists even in the presence of the heterosexual object, and a homosexual impulse so weak that it is eclipsed by the presence of the heterosexual object."⁵⁷ At the same time he claimed that while "the division into heterosexual, bisexual,

⁵² See ELLIS/SYMONDS, *Sexual Inversion*, 68.

⁵³ See Stephen GARTON, *Histories of Sexuality. Antiquity to Sexual Revolution*, New York, NY 2004, 181.

⁵⁴ See Stephanie H. KENEN, *Who Counts when You're Counting Homosexuals? Hormones and Homosexuality in Mid-Twentieth-Century America*, in: ROSARIO (ed.), *Science and Homosexualities*, 197–218, 202.

⁵⁵ BRICKELL, *Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History*, 432.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

and homosexual is a useful superficial classification, it is scarcely a scientific classification.”⁵⁸

1.1.6 Magnus Hirschfeld

A completely different kind of argumentation than that which Ellis displayed in his study found its way into another work, also published in 1896 in Germany. A pamphlet entitled *Sappho und Sokrates* (*Sappho and Socrates*), published by a Jewish physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, tried to combine a professional and scientific approach with a specific agenda, the abolishment of the anti-sodomy laws in Germany.⁵⁹ In the latter, Hirschfeld was a successor of the previously mentioned activist and author Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who’s work heavily influenced Hirschfeld to the extent that he actually used, although not exclusively, Ulrichs’s terminology. However, unlike Ulrichs who was much criticised and discredited for the fact that he was not a physician or a psychiatrist and thus lacked the proper training to propose medical theories, Hirschfeld was already well established in the field, while also coming from a highly respected family of physicians.

Hirschfeld based his aetiological account of homosexuality on premises similar to Ulrichs. He believed that the diversity in sexual orientation could be traced back to the bisexual nature of the developing foetus that has centres for attraction to both males and females.⁶⁰ Roughly speaking, depending on the development and regress of these centres, one would turn out to be heterosexual or homosexual.⁶¹ Of course, the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 434.

⁵⁹ See Magnus HIRSCHFELD, *Sappho und Sokrates*, Leipzig 1896.

⁶⁰ In these claims, Hirschfeld was influenced by a Viennese endocrinologist Eugen Steinbach who was at that time performing transplantations of testes and ovaries in rats and guinea pigs which influenced animals’ physical characteristics and their sexual behaviour. Although Steinbach’s research was ground-breaking and inspired a lot of further research in the 20th century, the link between his results and human homosexuality was drawn too fast and led to some bad clinical applications. See Simon LEVAY, *Queer Science. The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality*, Cambridge, MA 1996, 31–33; Florence TAMAGNE, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe*, Vol. 1 & 2. Berlin, London, Paris 1919–1939, New York, NY 2006, 60.

⁶¹ What Hirschfeld actually meant with this hypothesis was not very clear. More precisely, it could have meant that a foetus is sexually undifferentiated and might, depending on some other factors, develop either way in terms of sexual orientation, or it could have meant that a foetus is originally hermaphroditic, with equal attraction to both men and women. It seems that Hirschfeld himself never made a clear distinction between these two possibilities. See LEVAY, *Queer Science*, 20.

embryology of the time was not anywhere near refuting or proving this kind of theory, so Hirschfeld tried to fill in that gap by considering the usual explanation of the day – the theory of degeneracy. He thought that in a good number of cases an abnormal development of an embryo could be explained by an influence of hereditary factors, such as alcoholism, syphilis, etc., present in the family line of a homosexual. However, he did not believe that every case could be explained by reference to the theory of degeneracy, since there were homosexuals that came from healthy families; a group in which, no doubt, he included himself.

In an attempt to further substantiate his claims and to establish a clear ‘phenomenology’ of sexual desires, Hirschfeld developed, much like Kinsey did later on, a 10-point multidimensional scale that would measure sexual desire. Although, from a contemporary point of view, his scale was based on suspicious scientific data coupled with a rudimentary theoretical framework, it turned out nevertheless, to be more encompassing than Kinsey’s would later on be. Its multidimensionality (10-point scale + AB) allowed it to position individuals according to not only the strength of desire, but also a direction (A-heterosexual, B-homosexual, A+ B-bisexual). Hence, an individual could range from A (or B) 0 to A (or B) 10, including all sorts of other combinations in between; again, from A0, B0 (asexual) to A10, B10 (strong sexual desire for both women and men).⁶²

The implications Hirschfeld drew from his theories for legislation and the social position of homosexuals were equally interesting. His position was well captured in a dictum he came up with later; ‘justice through science’ (*per scientiam ad justitiam*). For him, it was beyond doubt that sexual orientation has biological origins that extend not only to sexual desires but also determine, to some extent and in some cases, sexual behaviour (as indicated through his scale). Accordingly, he strongly opposed the famous *Paragraph 175* of the German Penal Code that dealt with sodomy, although he also believed that those that can repress their homosexual drive (especially bisexual people) should do so. In order to fight what he believed to be an unjust piece of legislation, Hirschfeld founded in 1897 the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific-humanitarian Committee), an organisation that promoted scientific understanding of homosexuality⁶³ for the purpose of eliminating hostility

⁶² See LEVAY, *Queer Science*, 22.

⁶³ See James D. STEAKLEY, *Per scientiam ad justitiam*. Magnus Hirschfeld and the Sexual Politics of Innate Homosexuality, in: ROSARIO (ed.), *Science and*

towards homosexuals. The organisation also initiated a petition that would later be sent a couple of times to the two German legislative bodies (*Bundesrat* and *Reichstag*).⁶⁴

Since his attempts to refute *Paragraph 175* did not produce expected results, Hirschfeld and his supporters decided to launch a wider campaign to gain public support for their goals. The campaign was envisioned as a research and educational activity that would shift the public view of homosexuality as a psychopathological state. For the purposes of the campaign, Hirschfeld founded in 1899 a journal, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook of Sexual Intermediaries) and in 1919 the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sex Research) that were supposed to develop and carry out strategies for gaining a better insight into homosexuality and to make that knowledge available for educational and clinical purposes.⁶⁵

In his studies of homosexuality, Hirschfeld used 'psychobiological questionnaires' and statistical surveys; the purpose of the former was to gather information about the respondent's childhood traits, parental relationships, sexual development, adult sexuality, health, personality, and interests; while the purpose of the latter was to determine the prevalence of male homosexuality in nonclinical populations.⁶⁶ While exploring these new methods of research, Hirschfeld also conducted individual consultation, which he used not only as a source of new data, but also as a means to developing a new therapeutical approach to his clients (mostly male homosexuals); an earlier version of what would today be called a 'gay affirmative' approach. Although he still encouraged some of his clients to seek a therapist that might help them change their sexual orientation if they wished, his new approach was oriented towards helping his clients to cope with their sexual orientation and life in, for them, a hostile society.

Homosexualities, 133–154, 139. Needless to say, the scientific arguments offered by the petition were not as nearly conclusive as Hirschfeld made them sound. For the text of the petition, see LEVAY, *Queer Science*, 24.

⁶⁴ In its final edition, the petition was signed by more than 3000 jurists, physicians, and other prominent figures. Among others, Albert Einstein, Hermann Hesse, Käthe Kollwitz, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, August Bebel, Max Brod, Karl Kautsky, Stefan Zweig, Gerhart Hauptmann, Martin Buber, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Eduard Bernstein signed it. See LEVAY, *Queer Science*, 24.

⁶⁵ See TERRY, *An American Obsession*, 53–54.

⁶⁶ See STEAKLEY, *Per scientiam ad justitiam*, 147–148.

1.1.7 Sigmund Freud

One of the authors who published some of his papers in Hirschfeld's journal, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* was a Viennese physician and psychiatrist Sigmund Freud; a man that left probably the most profound impact on how people thought about sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular throughout the 20th century and even today. Strangely enough, Freud never attempted to explore or present his ideas on homosexuality in a systematic way, but only referred to it episodically, in various publications, when it served his main purpose, to present his ideas on development of normal sexuality or to show another application of his theory of psychoanalysis. Hence, in order to understand his ideas on homosexuality, one needs to have at least a basic insight into the theory of psychoanalysis.

The strength of the theory of psychoanalysis and, without doubt, a vivid proof of Freud's ingenuity, is to be found in the fact that although his theory was a theory of the mind, it did not depend on the available knowledge of the brain.⁶⁷ Instead, Freud used a traditional method of individual consultation, giving it, however, an entirely new twist through the technique of free association that enabled him to access the unconscious; the source of his theory. Using the technique of free association and the interpretation of dreams with his patients, Freud became convinced that there is a strong link between a range of psychic and even somatic problems with which patients came to him, and the deep-seated traumas in their unconscious, often originating from childhood experiences.⁶⁸ This insight proved crucial in his development of a model for the normal maturational process or a model of psychosexual development. The model depended on further postulating the existence of diffuse, undifferentiated, but nonetheless powerful sexual feelings and desires in a child, which he called *libido*. During normal psychosexual development, he claimed, the libido would gradually be shaped into adult sexual desires and behaviour. However, the process of maturation was a complicated one, involving a series of critical phases where things can go wrong, fixing a person in a particular stage or even causing a regress to some previous stage.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ This brings to mind Davidson's second, that is psychiatric, style of reasoning and the third stage of development of psychiatry, discussed earlier, that needed no reference anymore to any physiological processes or organs. See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 3–8. With that in mind, one can already guess in which way Freud's thought is going to develop.

⁶⁸ See TERRY, *An American Obsession*, 56–58.

⁶⁹ See MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 71.

This, then, was one of the points where Freud ventured to speculate about homosexuality. In one of those critical phases a child has to go through, it needs to resolve what Freud called the 'Oedipus complex'. Although the details and the process of overcoming the Oedipus complex are different for a male and a female child, in both cases it signifies a subconscious sexual desire in a child for the parent of the opposite sex, accompanied by hostility to the parent of the same sex.⁷⁰ If unresolved the Oedipus complex would result in the inability of a child to form normal sexual relationships later on as an adult. Unfortunately, these highly speculative ideas inspired by Freud's conviction that psychoanalysis is not just a clinical theory, but almost a distinct worldview, capable of interpreting any segment of human experience, whose boundaries and applications are limited only by a practitioner's imagination and willingness to explore, were later misunderstood and distorted by these same practitioners who took Freud too authoritatively and saw scientific laws where Freud only posited a possibility of understanding.⁷¹ Thus, a conclusion was reached that homosexuality itself was an indication of mental illness, a connection Freud never drew.⁷²

Another set of ideas relevant for Freud's view on homosexuality can be found in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Although the *Three Essays* rely heavily on the contributions to sexology of previous authors and are a testament that Freud was, despite his genius, also a child of his time, surveying the ideas presented in this work is not without its merits, even when compared with the original interpretation of homosexuality he offered within his theory of psychoanalysis. In other words, what Freud offers in this work may be as revolutionary as the theory of psychoanalysis itself; in fact, it seems that it was so revolutionary that even Freud himself did not grasp the full implications of what he was writing.

Freud sets off in the *First Essay* by pointing to the heart of scientific beliefs of the time about sexual instinct calling, however, these beliefs 'popular opinion':

"Popular opinion has quite definitive ideas about the nature and characteristics of this sexual instinct. It is generally understood to be absent in childhood, to set in at the time of puberty in connection with the process of coming to maturity and to be revealed in the manifestations of an irresistible

⁷⁰ See MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 72.

⁷¹ See MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 74.

⁷² See Sigmund FREUD, Letter to an American Mother, in: *American Journal of Psychiatry* 107/10 (1951), 786-787.

attraction exercised by one sex upon the other; while its aim is supposed to be sexual union, or at all events actions leading in that direction. We have every reason to believe, however, that these views give a very false picture of the true situation. If we look into them more closely, we shall find that they contain a number of errors, inaccuracies and hasty conclusions.”⁷³

Against the background of this ‘opinion’, Freud lays out his theory by first introducing two important terms, sexual object and sexual aim. The former refers to the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds, and the latter refers to the act towards which the instinct tends.⁷⁴ Next, he goes on to discuss the deviations in respect of the sexual object, although he mostly focuses in this section on inversion. After he enumerates the degrees of inversion (*absolute* inverts, *amphigenic* inverts [psychosexual hermaphrodites], and *contingent* invert), he proceeds by denouncing the explanatory force of the two most summoned ideas when it comes to inversion. These are the theory of degeneracy and the distinction between innate and acquired inversion, claiming that at best, these two ideas do not give an adequate explanation of the nature of inversion.⁷⁵ Finally, Freud presents some remarks on the sexual aims of inverts and reaches a conclusion that sets the whole matter in such a radically different perspective that, as Arnold Davidson points out, he could not completely work out the implications of it in the rest of the book:

“It has been brought to our notice that we have been in the habit of regarding the connection between the sexual instinct and the sexual object as more intimate than it in fact is. Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together – a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thought between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object’s attractions.”⁷⁶

What is so remarkable in this text is that Freud went completely against the current of the 19th century sexology, and in the process, inflicted a devastating blow to the conceptual space that the discipline had created in order to explain sexual inversion. As already mentioned, 19th

⁷³ Sigmund FREUD, *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, London, UK 1977, 45.

⁷⁴ See FREUD, *On Sexuality*, 45–46.

⁷⁵ See FREUD, *On Sexuality*, 48–52.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 59–60.

century sexology was largely obsessed with the classification of sexual perversions, a task entirely dependent on a notion of normal sexual instinct that in return made it possible to trace an essential link between various sexual psychopathologies. Simply stated, what these psychopathologies had in common was their deviation from normal sexual instinct. However, as Freud has shown in the above text, such an insight was derived from a lack of distinction between sexual instinct and sexual object. Thus, according to Freud, if there was no intrinsic object to sexual instinct and if they are, as he claims, merely 'soldered together' in one conceptual leap that is more a result of cultural prejudice ('popular opinion') than a scientific fact, then, as Arnold Davidson argues, the grounds on which it was possible to perceive sexual inversion as psychopathology had been lost.⁷⁷

Since such a conclusion prevented Freud from agreeing with previous notions of sexual instinct, he had to find a new place to attach the whole discourse on perversions. Thus, instead of linking it to the conceptual pair, sexual instinct-sexual object, he linked it to sexual aim. For him, perversions are "sexual activities which either (a) *extend*, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or (b) *linger* over the intermediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim".⁷⁸ Whereas the normal sexual aim "is regarded as being the union of the genitals in the act known as copulation, which leads to a release of the sexual tension and a temporary extinction of the sexual instinct – a satisfaction analogous to the sating of hunger."⁷⁹

By envisioning sexual aim in such a way, Davidson argues, Freud created a new conceptual space capable of sustaining a structure of perversions in two distinguishable ways, in terms of anatomical extensions (oral-genital and anal-genital sexual activity, kissing, and fetishism) and in terms of fixation on an intermediate state (touching, looking, sadism, and masochism).⁸⁰ However, under such a definition of perversion, he came up with a different list of perversions and a one against which many would protest. Consider, for example, kissing which would constitute, for Freud, a perversion because "the parts of the body involved do not form part of the sexual apparatus but constitute the

⁷⁷ For a longer exposition of this argument, see DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 76–80.

⁷⁸ FREUD, *On Sexuality*, 62.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁸⁰ See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 82–83.

entrance to the digestive tract.”⁸¹ This problem and its implication did not escape Freud, admitting that “[n]o healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim; and the universality of this finding is in itself enough to show how inappropriate it is to use the word perversion as a term of reproach.”⁸²

However, despite this difficulty in drawing a clear line between perverse and normal and despite the fact that by admitting this difficulty Freud already undermined his categorisation of perversions, he still insisted on the legitimacy of the concept of perversion in the medical setting by stating:

“In the majority of instances, the pathological character in perversion is found to lie not in the *content* of the new sexual aim but in its relation to the normal. If a perversion, instead of appearing merely alongside the normal sexual aim and object [...] it ousts them completely and takes their place in all circumstances [...], then we shall usually be justified in regarding it as a pathological symptom.”⁸³

Now, since perversions render such an analysis impossible in the uniform sexual behaviour of “normal” persons, this serves as an indication to Freud that the sexual instinct itself has a component nature put together from various factors that fall apart in perversions.

Hence, it seems that Freud’s new concept of perversion pays lip service to an unattainable discourse, which he had already dismantled in his idea of the relation between sexual instinct and object. However, instead of merely masking the radical discontinuity between his understanding of sexuality and the understanding that has in its background what he called earlier ‘popular opinion’, Freud’s ‘lip service’ to the discourse on perversion widened the gap even further. According to Davidson, if one reads this section of the *First Essay* in the perspective of the previous section on sexual object, then the same conclusion is reached about sexual aim as with sexual object. More specifically, that there is no single sexual aim that would form a unity with or be internal to sexual instinct. Instead, taking the component nature of sexual instinct into consideration, Freud postulates multiple sources of sexual aim both in terms of anatomy (not only the genital zone but, for instance, the oral and anal zones as well) and in terms of the content (not only copulation, but scopophilia and cruelty as well).⁸⁴ Consequently, what happens in those instances Freud calls

⁸¹ FREUD, *On Sexuality*, 62.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸⁴ See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 84–85.

perversions (and why they seem to be important for him) is that they dismantle that apparent unity of sexual instinct with sexual object and sexual aim in 'normal' behaviour that does not allow us to see a distinction between them.⁸⁵

Of course, Freud's conclusions cannot be understood as establishing a new scientific fact by merely introducing a new distinction, because it is unclear why his claim that, for instance, 'the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object' should be more scientifically acceptable than the previous notion that sexual instinct and object are only conceptually, but not phenomenologically distinguishable? In other words, what is it that makes Freud's suggestion more scientific than the one silently accepted in most of the 19th century sexology? Perhaps the question is in itself misleading, because it seems that Freud's intention was not to claim scientific superiority of those parts of his theory described in the text above that would entirely depend on subsequent scientific findings. Instead, what he pointed at was a reconfiguration of the conceptual space in which sexology was moving and establishing a 'scientific vision' of sexuality by showing that it is naive to claim that this same conceptual space entirely depended on medical findings and discourse. For him, Davidson claims, equally important was an underlying anthropological (or perhaps one could also call it anthropological-ethical) discourse that influenced the medical one and allowed the whole structure of the 19th century sexology to stand and make sense.⁸⁶ This made Freud's suggestion more scientific, not in terms of specific claims he made, but in terms of pointing out and making others aware of an overarching element that influences (then, but also today) the way sexology and other disciplines think about sexuality.

⁸⁵ See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 85. Nevertheless, the fact that Freud is persistent in using the concepts like 'perversion', 'normal sexual aim (or object)', 'pathological', etc., that are being less and less qualified and more taken for granted as he moves along in the *Three Essays* shows that he was not fully aware of the implications of what he was saying in the *First Essay*, and a need to come up with a new way of conceptualising sexuality. In order to explain this inconsistency, Davidson invokes the concept of *mentalité* as a distinct aspect of system of thought (as opposed to the 'concept') that involves, apart from an intellectual component, various forms of experience and it does not, as such, change just because it cannot be sustained intellectually anymore. In Davidson's words: "Automatisms of attitude have a durability, a slow temporality, which does not match the sometimes rapid change of conceptual mutation." *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁶ See DAVIDSON, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 81.

1.1.8 Alfred Kinsey

Although most of the authors surveyed here were writing in the 19th century up until the early 20th century, the last two that will be presented here belong well into the middle of the 20th century. The reason why they are being included in this survey is because of the impact they had on contemporary sexology that match or even outmatch the previously mentioned authors. Furthermore, they also resemble the previously mentioned authors in the way their work is evaluated from the perspective of contemporary sexology. Namely, because of the rapid development of this scientific discipline and the progress made in the last forty years, their work should now be approached mostly from a historical perspective.

The first is Alfred Kinsey, an American entomologist who only gradually moved into the field of sexual studies and left an impact that went well beyond scientific circles, extending into the social, cultural, and even political spheres. His work, presented in the two studies, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* published in 1948, and *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* published in 1953, represented an entirely different approach to sexuality than the one that dominated the 19th century sexology, challenging the medical dominance of the field and opening it up to other disciplines.⁸⁷ Kinsey's approach was marked by an almost arrogant disregard for anyone writing on the subject before him. However, to understand it, one needs to be aware of the situation in which Kinsey found himself, or, better yet, how he interpreted that situation.

His interest in sexual studies sprang from the class he was asked to teach with a few colleagues in 1938 in which he was supposed to cover the biological aspects of sexuality. Challenged by his students who expected answers from him not only in terms of his expertise, but also in matters pertaining to their wider sexual curiosity or sexual problems, Kinsey undertook a wide survey of available studies in sexuality only to be disappointed by what he perceived as a lack of a scientific approach that marked the field. The two most acute problems he identified, no doubt influenced by his previous work as a taxonomist, were (1) a lack of serious sample studies that would include a sample large enough to legitimise any sort of generalisations and (2) what he perceived as a widespread confusion of moral values, philosophical theories, and scientific facts in studies aspiring to be recognised as purely scientific.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See GARTON, *Histories of Sexuality*, 203.

⁸⁸ See Alfred C. KINSEY/Wardell B. POMEROY/Clyde E. MARTIN, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia, PA 1948, 8.

Furthermore, like Freud before him, Kinsey was highly suspicious of the ease with which various sexual behaviours were classified into categories such as 'abnormal', 'pathological', and 'normal', without any inquiry into what actually constituted normal and the relation of these various categories to the factual sexual behaviour of people. In the introduction to his first study, he stated:

"An increasing number of persons would like to bring an educated intelligence in the consideration of such matters as sexual adjustment in marriage, the sexual guidance of children [...] sex education, sexual activities which are in conflict with the mores, and the problems confronting persons who are interested in the social control of behaviour through religion, custom [...] and the forces of the law. Before it is possible to think scientifically on any of these matters, more needs to be known about the actual behaviour of people."⁸⁹

In this manner, Kinsey pointed to the need for a proper scientific study of sexuality, which was in his mind a synonym for a study of human sexual behaviour. Kinsey started conducting a series of interviews first with his students and soon after with anyone willing to participate. The point of these in-depth interviews that ranged between 350 up to 500 questions, was to gather the data on sex histories of the subjects involved and to measure the prevalence of certain kinds of sexual behaviour in the general public, using a very simple (some would say reductive) definition of a sexual act as any act that leads to orgasm.⁹⁰

It would be an understatement to say that the public was shocked when Kinsey finally published his results for the male population in *Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male*. However, the reason for the shock was not because Kinsey unveiled, like Krafft-Ebing before him, a world of sexual pathologies and aberrations that induced both fear and excitement, not much different from going to the circus or the zoo and knowing that the incomprehensible world of the Other, although frightening but also entertaining, is at a safe distance or behind bars. Rather, it was because Kinsey's study was in one sense similar to Havelock Ellis's, destroying the social taboos, peaking behind the curtain of conventional morality, and uncovering the face of the Other amidst the familiar, the acceptable, and the normal. On the surface, Kinsey's study

⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁰ See GARTON, *Histories of Sexuality*, 204–205. On that point, André Guindon writes: "The equation of sexual behaviour with genital release is obviously a para-scientific view – and a very debatable one at that – which affects the whole methodology of the inquiry and the significance of its results." André GUINDON, *The Sexual Language. An Essay in Moral Theology*, Ottawa 1976, 17.

was not nearly as engaging as one would expect from a study on sex; one could even say it was boring, consisting of hundreds of pages of statistical data, charts, graphs, and explanations of methods. However, the disturbing part was to be found within these statistics. For instance, Kinsey claimed that between 27 to 37 percent of married men admitted to extramarital intercourse, more than 90 percent of men masturbated, 60 percent had had some kind of oral-genital sexual contact, 37 percent of the men had at least one homosexual contact leading to an orgasm during their lives, while the percentage went up to 50 percent in men who remained unmarried until age thirty-five, and 10 percent of men were more or less exclusively homosexual for at least a period of three years between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five, etc.⁹¹ Even Kinsey himself felt that the data was so mind-blowing that he added:

“We ourselves were totally unprepared to find such incidence data when this research was originally undertaken. Over a period of several years, we were repeatedly assailed with doubts as to whether we were getting a fair cross section of the total population or whether a selection of cases was biasing the results. It has been our experience [...] that each new group into which we have gone has provided substantially the same data.”⁹²

Another innovation Kinsey proposed in this study was a scale of sexual behaviour, the so-called Kinsey scale. The scale consisted of seven points (0–6) in which 0 stood for an individual whose sexual outlets were exclusively heterosexual, while 6 stood for exclusively homosexual outlets, and the other positions on the scale (1–5) accounted for various degrees in between. It needs to be pointed out again that the terms heterosexual and homosexual were understood exclusively in terms of sexual behaviour; for instance, Kinsey defined homosexuality as any homosexual contact. He claimed,

“Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behaviour the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex.”⁹³

⁹¹ See MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 83–84.

⁹² KINSEY/POMEROY/MARTIN, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 625.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 639.

Not excluding other reasons why Kinsey ignored a fuller appreciation of the phenomena he was studying, one needs to admit that posing the matter this way had clear political and social advantages. Namely, once he pointed out the prevalence of homosexual behaviour in the male population, and, thus, denounced the monopoly on sexual normalcy of those that would occupy the position 0 on his scale, then all the other positions on the scale, at least statistically speaking, became a matter of degree, not a matter of essential difference. The other implication of his method and results was that they broke the link between homosexuality, sexual psychopathology or mental illnesses, and crime; that is, unless anyone was ready to claim that up to 37 percent of men were mentally ill or should be in prison. For Kinsey, homosexual behaviour was simply a matter of choice more related to society and culture (customs, social constraints, convenience) than any biological or hereditary factors.⁹⁴

However, Kinsey's reasoning depended on the soundness of his arguments and the objectivity of his study, which is why this was precisely the point where he was attacked. The critics argued that his sample was biased and in no way representative, since it included a large population of prisoners and those affiliated with gay subculture.⁹⁵ Although pointing to biased and non-representative samples was and still is the most common way of discrediting the kind of studies Kinsey was doing, and taking into account that it is almost impossible to obtain a truly representative sample, which would be ideal, it is not a *conditio sine qua non* for a legitimate, scientific study.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, his critics did have a point. Another line of critique attacked Kinsey's self-proclaimed objectivity and disinterest for anything except what can be scientifically proven, demonstrating that his studies were doing far more than merely presenting statistical results. Neatly tied into the body of statistical data, Stephen Garton argues, were Kinsey's own interpretations of what was put in front of a reader and these interpretations went far ahead of what statistical data could back up.⁹⁷ A point in case is Kinsey's speculation on the element of choice in homosexual behaviour, the 'aetiology' of

⁹⁴ See KENEN, Who Counts when You're Counting Homosexuals?, 207.

⁹⁵ See John BANCROFT, Alfred C. Kinsey and the Politics of Sex Research, in: Annual Review of Sex Research 15/1 (2004), 1–39, 25; GARTON, Histories of Sexuality, 205.

⁹⁶ After all, that is why there are other criteria through which the objectivity of a study is being measured. When it comes to sample studies, one of the most important criterion is whether the results have been replicated in other independent studies.

⁹⁷ For a fuller critique of Kinsey's work, see GARTON, Histories of Sexuality, 205–207.

homosexuality, and, if one takes a previous critique into consideration, a non-existing link between homosexuality and psychopathology.

1.1.9 Evelyn Hooker

Ten years after Kinsey published his study, an article *The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual* appeared in the *Journal of Projective Techniques*, written by a young psychologist Evelyn Hooker, determined to pursue at least one aspect of Kinsey's work and to succeed where he had failed.⁹⁸ Convinced by a group of homosexual friends, Hooker decided to test the scientific grounds for the constantly evoked link between homosexuality and psychopathology.⁹⁹ For this purpose, she designed a simple study in which she distributed psychological tests to a group of homosexuals and a group of heterosexuals that would then be evaluated by the experts in the interpretation of results of these tests without knowing which belong to whom. The role of the experts was to efficiently determine the sexual orientation of these individuals from the results of the tests alone and to evaluate their levels of psychological and social (mal)adjustment. According to psychiatric theories of the time, this was supposed to be a simple task for the experts in the field since there was no doubt about the psychopathology associated with homosexuality; and if this indeed was the case, the theories predicted, then the evidence of psychopathology should be easy to detect from the test results alone.¹⁰⁰

In order to ensure the objectivity of the study, Hooker targeted a non-clinical population, recruiting thirty homosexuals and thirty heterosexuals who did not have a history of psychiatric treatment or any other form of psychiatric therapy. Next, she paired the individuals from both groups so that each pair would have as similar a background as possible, in terms of age, education, and IQ. After that, all the participants were supposed to be measured by using the two standard tests used in

⁹⁸ See Evelyn HOOKER, *The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual*, in: *Journal of Projective Techniques* 21/1 (1957), 18–31.

⁹⁹ These kind of studies are still being done even today. For a fairly recent example which demonstrates a positive correlation between depression and internalised homo-negativity and a negative correlation between depression and homosexuality, see Simon B. R. ROSSER et al., *The Relationship between Homosexuality, Internalized Homo-Negativity, and Mental Health in Men Who Have Sex with Men*, in: *Journal of Homosexuality* 55/2 (2008), 185–203.

¹⁰⁰ See Michael KIRBY, *Psychiatry, Psychology, Law, and Homosexuality – Uncomfortable Bedfellows*, in: *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law* 7/2 (2000), 139–149, 142; MONDIMORE, *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, 90.