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Karl Heinrich Ulrichs
First Theorist of Homosexuality

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Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was the first to formulate a scientific theory of homosexuality.¹ Indeed, his theory implicated, as Klaus Müller has emphasized, “the first scientific theory of sexuality altogether” (1990, 100). It was set forth and elaborated in five writings published in 1864 to 1865. The series of writings was continued—there were twelve in all, the last appearing in 1879—but with only slight revisions in the theory, Ulrichs’s intention in his writings was not merely explanatory, but also—and especially—emancipatory. This was based on his view that the condition of being homosexual is inborn. This was a major departure from previous and subsequent theories that saw the practice of homosexuality/“sodomy” as an acquired vice. In this Ulrichs was the first in a long and continuing line of researchers who believe that a proof of the “naturaless” of homosexuality, that is, the discovery of a biological basis for it, will lead to equal legal and social treatment of hetero- and homosexuals. If this attempt seems quixotic, it is nevertheless of historical importance to investigate its origins in the writings of Ulrichs. We shall see that Ulrichs’s influence goes beyond any “emancipatory” intent.

The son of an architect in the service of the Kingdom of Hannover, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was born on August 28, 1825, on his father’s estate of Westerfeld near Aurich. Following his father’s death in 1835, Ulrichs moved with his mother to Burgdorf, to live with her father, a Lutheran superintendent. Ulrichs studied law in Göttingen (1844 to 1846) and Berlin (1846 to 1847) and, after the official examination in 1848, was in the civil service of Hannover until December 1854, when he resigned in order to avoid being

1. Homosexuality is, of course, a complex phenomenon, much more complex than Ulrichs—and many others up to the present—imagined. It includes, but is not limited to, erotic attraction to someone of the same sex. But it is precisely this element that Ulrichs’s “Urning theory” of homosexuality principally seeks to explain scientifically.

disciplined. His homosexual activity had come to the attention of his superiors, and although homosexual acts were not then illegal in Hannover, as a civil servant he could be dismissed. For the next few years, Ulrichs earned his living as a reporter for the important *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Augsburg) and as secretary to one of the representatives to the German Confederation in Frankfurt am Main. He also received an inheritance from his mother on her death in 1856.

The first five of his writings on the riddle of “man-manly” love (as Ulrichs’s translator has rendered Ulrichs’s coinage *mannmännlich*) were written in the years 1863 to 1865, and published under the pseudonym Numa Numantius. This series was later continued under his real name; the twelfth and last volume appeared in 1879. Ulrichs’s activism for the homosexual cause was hampered in part by a lack of money and was interrupted by his engagement in another political cause. A trained lawyer and administrator, he was hindered from using his abilities to earn a living by the mean-spirited vindictiveness of the authorities in Hannover, who refused him any certification of service, thus barring him from practicing as a lawyer and forestalling his candidacy for mayor of Uslar in 1865. But even this did not stem his patriotic feelings, for when Prussia invaded and annexed Hannover in 1866, Ulrichs protested publicly, and was twice imprisoned for it. As an activist Ulrichs fought not only for the equal rights of homosexuals, but also for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, as well as the rights of women, including unwed mothers and their children (see *Prometheus*, 9.).² In 1880, Ulrichs left Germany to spend the last fifteen years of his life in exile in Italy, where he earned his living by tutoring foreign languages and publishing a journal that was written entirely by him in Latin; its goal was to revive Latin as an international language. He died in Aquila, Italy, on July 14, 1895.³

In his published writings on homosexuality, Ulrichs posited the existence of a “third sex” whose nature is inborn. The essential point in his theory of homosexuality is the doctrine that the male homosexual has a female psyche, which he summed up in the Latin

2. Unless otherwise specified, citations of Ulrichs’s work refer to titles collected in *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mann männlichen Liebe* (Ulrichs 1994a). His complete writings are available in English translation in Ulrichs (1994b).

3. For a complete biography, see Kennedy (1988 and 1990).

phrase: *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa* (a female psyche confined in a male body). In his attempt to understand himself and others he thought were like him, however, he did not immediately arrive at this theory. An autobiographical manuscript of 1861 shows that he had still not arrived at this concept. In it, he mentioned his good health and added: “A physical-mental characteristic of mine is a certain passive magnetism of the animal world,” and he attached an outline of this “Animal Magnetism,” beginning:

The mental-physical passive animal magnetism mentioned is passive, not active, for the reason that the person for whom it is a characteristic does not attract, but rather feels himself attracted, just as a passive magnetism dwells in a piece of soft iron, since it does not attract, but is attracted by the steel magnet, whereas active magnetism is in the attracting steel magnet (perhaps a passive magnetism as well, but at least an active is there). (Cited in Kennedy 1988, 44)

The existence of animal magnetism had been postulated in the eighteenth century by Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), but interest in it fell off after a commission appointed by the medical faculty of Paris (which included Benjamin Franklin) concluded in 1784 that this magnetic fluid did not exist.⁴ But a generation later, Alexandre Bertrand (1795–1831) revived it, and in 1831 a committee of the Academy of Medicine of Paris reported favorably upon “magnetism” as a therapeutic agent. In Germany its acceptance as a scientific theory was strengthened in 1845, when Karl Ludwig Freiherr von Reichenbach (1788–1869), who was already known for his investigation of paraffin (1830) and creosote (1832), announced the discovery of a magnetic force he called Od. Ulrichs was clearly acquainted with Reichenbach’s theory of “odylic force,” as it was called in English, but gave no indication of other sources of his own theory.⁵ At any rate, he soon

4. The story is actually more complex. The secret report explained that it actually did work and, therefore, was really dangerous (see Darnton 1968).

5. The term “odylic force” had a vogue in Britain following the translation in 1850 of Reichenbach’s *Untersuchungen über Dinamide des Magnetismus, der Elektrizität, der Wärme, des Lichtes, . . . in ihren Beziehungen zur Lebenskraft* (1849), as *Researches on Magnetism . . . in Relation to Vital Force*, by Dr. Gregory, professor of chemistry at the University of Edinburgh. See the entry on “Odylic Force” in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911) 20: 10–11.

abandoned this explanation, which appears to have had no connection with his later study of hermaphroditism.

Although Ulrichs continued to use the language of animal magnetism in describing sexual attraction, he believed that he had discovered a scientifically more acceptable theory of the cause of homosexuality. Nevertheless, he published in 1864 a report from a correspondent, who wrote that he saw a spark on his penis when it was touched by his young soldier friend while they were sitting on a park bench and he was also touching his friend's penis. Ulrichs asked: "Was this spark Reichenbach's Od? Was it positive animal electricity?" (*Formatrix*, 64). When Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) published a somewhat truncated edition of Ulrichs's writings in 1898, he left out this passage. By then the theory of animal magnetism was out of favor.

Noteworthy in Ulrichs's 1861 manuscript is his sense of himself as a pioneer in the scientific study of the phenomenon. He also castigates scientists and others for their neglect:

Until now science has not sought to investigate this passive animal magnetism (by no means an isolated phenomenon), although the doctor, the anthropologist and physiologist, the jurist, the psychologist, and the moralist could cultivate an entirely new field. In fact they have made not the slightest effort to investigate its nature: rather (misled by poorly understood Bible passages and by laws based on such Bible passages—laws whose moral value stands on the same level as those against witchcraft and heresy in the Middle Ages) they have believed they should ignore or disdain it with hatred and scorn, examples of which are in scientific books. (Cited in Kennedy 1988, 44)

Ulrichs's confidence in the logical and liberating possibilities of science was inherited from the eighteenth century, of which Wolfgang Breidert writes; "There appeared to be no limits set to the technical-scientific command of nature; one had indeed in Newton's theory of gravitation a theory that was extended to the whole cosmos, even its farthest parts. The rational penetration of phenomenal fields became the Enlightenment goal

of an epistemologically optimistic time” (1994, 3). And Ulrichs saw himself in this tradition of the Enlightenment.

Ulrichs, however, must have felt the inadequacy of the theory of animal magnetism as a scientific explanation.⁶ At any rate, when he next wrote about the subject in letters to a circle of close relatives in 1862, he made no mention of magnetism. Instead, through observing others like himself, he wrote, he perceived a “female element” that is part of their nature, and he stated that the principal part of this female element is their erotic attraction to men. A member of this “third sex” he called a *Uranier*, as opposed to the “true” man, the *Dionäer* (“Vier Briefe,” 45). (In his published writings, from 1864, these terms became *Urning* and *Dioning*, respectively.) The term “third sex” (*drittes Geschlecht*) had been used earlier, from Plato (*Symposium*) to Théophile Gautier (*Mademoiselle de Maupin*, 1835), with very diverse meanings. What they all have in common is that “sex” is not viewed solely from the aspect of reproduction.⁷ The term’s blending of sex, sex role, and gender (and the confusions produced) continues today.⁸

Ulrichs arrived at his new theory as a result of his study of the literature on hermaphrodites. He assumed it to be a rule of nature that human beings were born with either male or female sexual organs. At times, however, there were exceptions to this rule of nature that he found described in the scientific literature, namely, physical hermaphrodites. Correspondingly, Ulrichs accepted it as a rule of nature that persons with male sexual organs are sexually attracted to women, and he assumed that there could also be exceptions to this rule, namely that some persons with normal male sexual organs could be attracted not to women, but to men. But what could cause this? It could not be the body with its male sexual organs, for if the body determined the direction of the sex drive, it would obviously be directed toward women. Hence, the direction of sexual attraction

6. Ulrichs seems to have abandoned his theory of animal magnetism after 1861. His later descriptions in terms of magnetism are probably best seen as a popular, figurative usage that continues today when, for example, we speak of the erotic “attraction” that “radiates” from certain persons.

7. The possibility of an organism that requires more than two sexes in order to reproduce has been investigated by Kennedy and Cull (1970). They showed that, if the sexes are to be reproduced in approximately equal numbers and are determined by a “Mendelian” mechanism (like the human X,Y chromosomes), then an organism with more than two sexes is mathematically impossible.

8. This has been investigated from several viewpoints in Herdt (1994).

must be caused by the person's psyche. But since, according to Ulrichs, sexual attraction to men is always of a female nature, it follows that the psyche of those who are attracted to men must be female.

In reviewing Ulrichs's ideas. Jonathan Ned Katz comments:

In Ulrichs's eroticized update of the early Victorian true man, the real man possessed a male body and a male sex-love for women. The Urning was a true man with the feelings of a true woman. The Urning possessed a male body and the female's sex-love for men.

As we've seen, the Victorian concept of the "true" mechanically linked biology with psychology. Feelings were thought of as female or male in exactly the same sense as penis or clitoris: anatomy equaled psychology, sex physiology determined the sex of feelings, Sex-love for a female was a male feeling, sex-love for a male was a female feeling. A female sex-love could inhabit a male body, a male sex-love could inhabit a female body.

According to this theory there existed only one sexual desire, focused on the other sex. . . . Their desire was therefore "contrary" to the one, normative "sexual instinct." Ulrichs accepted this one-instinct idea. (Katz 1995, 51–52)

But to explain this attraction scientifically, Ulrichs needed to find a substrate for it. We may recall that the chromosomal basis of sexual differentiation was discovered only in the twentieth century. Since the sexual organs are not differentiated in the early stages of the embryo, Ulrichs argued that there was a possibility of developing either way, and saw this view confirmed by the existence of hermaphrodites with both types of sexual organs.⁹ He postulated the existence of a germ (*Keim*) of development that would determine whether the sexual organs developed as male or female. To explain the possibility

9. Ulrichs notes only a few cases of hermaphrodites, citing the *Prager Vierteljahrsschrift für praktische Heilkunde* (Prague Quarterly for Practical Medicine) of 1855, Casper's *Vierteljahrsschrift für gerichtliche Medicin* (Quarterly for Forensic Medicine) of 1856, and Casper's *Wochenschrift* (Weekly) of 1833 (see Ulrichs 1994a, *Inclusa*, 5). He may have obtained further information about hermaphrodites and embryology from personal correspondence; he notes that in 1862 he was already in correspondence with "a German physician well known in medical science" (*Inclusa*, 11).

of a sexual drive in apparent disharmony with the individual's sexual organs, he likewise postulated the existence of a germ that determines the direction of the sexual drive. Thus, Ulrichs argued, while the rule of nature was that these two germs in an individual give the same direction of development, male or female, there could be occasional exceptions that would produce people like himself who were neither fully men nor fully women, but rather, as he called it in his first publication on the subject in 1864, a "third sex." From this also followed the theoretical possibility of a "fourth sex," with a female body and a male psyche, but he was unacquainted with any at that time.¹⁰

Ulrichs's goal was to free people like himself from the legal, religious, and social condemnation of homosexual acts as unnatural. For this, he invented a new terminology that would refer to the nature of the individual, and not to the acts performed. The forensic medical expert Johann Ludwig Casper (1796–1864), for example, had earlier used the term "pederasty" from the classic Greek for "boy-love."¹¹ Yet the meaning of this term had been confused with the Latin *paedicatio* (anal intercourse), so that the two had become synonymous.¹² Ulrichs's most important coinage, in an attempt to counteract the previously used pejorative terms, was *Urning* (the subject of man-manly love), in contrast to *Dioning* (the real man). The term "homosexuality" (*Homosexualität*) was first published (anonymously) by Karl Maria Kertbeny (1824–1882) in 1869, but was used by him the year before in correspondence with Ulrichs.¹³ Ulrichs never used "homosexual," pre-

10. Ulrichs (*Inclusa*, 50). But later that year he could write: "Of women with male love-drive . . . so numerous and so attested examples are available to me that the factual, existence of female as well as male Uranismus thus appears completely warranted" (*Formatrix*, 40).

11. It is in the title of his 1852 article "Ueber Nothzucht und Päderastie und deren Ermittlung seitens des Gerichtsarztes" (On rape and pederasty and their investigation on the part of the forensic doctor).

12. For example, in a forensic medicine textbook of 1867: "Unnatural lust is that satisfaction of the sexual drive which deviates from intercourse according to nature. The most decisive form of this is *com-masculatio* or pederasty, the insertion of the member through the anus from man to man" (Buchner 1867, 182).

13. On Kertbeny and his coinages, including "heterosexual," see Herzer (1985) and Herzer and Féray (1993). On Kertbeny's contact with Ulrichs, see Herzer (1987 and 1992b).

ferring Urning and the positive connotations it had for him.¹⁴ By the turn of the century both terms—and others besides (contrary sexual, homogenic, invert, sexual intermediate, similisexual)—were used for this phenomenon; by the mid-1900s “homosexual” had become the commonly used term.

Ulrichs later recalled that he had noticed signs of his homosexuality at the age of fifteen, but it was only when he was twenty-one, as a student in Berlin, that he became convinced of the inborn nature of his sexual orientation. Ulrichs wrote to his sister Ulrike in 1862:

But everything else [that you wrote], dear sister, rests on false assumptions. With great love you admonish me to make the decision now to turn myself around. You admit that this will be very difficult. But God will help.

That sounds very beautiful—and would be quite correctly said, if my inclination were a habituation or an aberration. But, dear sister, to love even the most beautiful woman is *absolutely impossible* for me, and indeed solely because no woman instills even a trace of love feelings in me; no one, however, can instill love toward certain persons or sexes through his own strength of will. This has also always been so with me. (“Vier Briefe,” 40–41)

Casper (1852, 62) had already stated that “pederasty” was inborn in some cases, but Ulrichs learned of this only in 1864. Ulrichs also appears to have been unaware of an article of 1849 by Claude François Michéa in which, according to Gert Hekma, Michéa

14. There were probably several reasons why Ulrichs never used Kertbeny’s term, “homosexual.” First, as a classical scholar, he would have objected to the “impure” combination of Greek and Latin elements in “homosexual.” In contrast, his own terms, *Urning* and *Dioning*, were “pure” Greek derivatives from a classical passage in Plato’s *Symposium* (the speech of Pausanias). Second, “homosexual” pointed directly to the sexual and could be given a negative connotation, whereas Ulrichs’s terms were intimately bound up with his theory of the Urning’s (and Dioning’s) inborn nature and thus had, for Ulrichs, positive connotations. Third, there was probably also a personal factor involved. The brief contact between Ulrichs and Kertbeny apparently ended in 1868 in conflict. In an unpublished manuscript of 1869, Kertbeny mentions “Urnings—which name was invented by one of the most unclear heads from their set” and referred to Ulrichs as “the thoroughly crazy author of *Incubus*” (Herzer 1992 b, 73–74).

“hypothesized that the feminine habits and preferences of same-sex lovers were perhaps rooted in biology” (Hekma 1994, 215). Most probably it was his own experience and feelings that led Ulrichs to this conviction; in his writings he often used himself as an illustration for his arguments. As a confirmation of his theory, Ulrichs cited the “female characteristics” that he found in himself and other Urnings. (He saw the “female characteristics” as a necessary result of having a “female” psyche.) Thus, whereas Casper and other forensic experts, for example, Ambroise Tardieu (1818–1879) in Paris, identified the “pederast” by telltale signs, such as a funnel-shaped anus in the receptive partner and a pointed penis in the penetrator—signs presumably resulting from their forbidden activity—Ulrichs looked for signs that indicated the female nature of the Urning, which he would possess whether he engaged in any sexual activity or not.¹⁵ He described many of them in his writings, including indications in young children. This particularly confirmed his theory of the inborn nature of homosexuality, since they occurred before the age of puberty when, as he thought, the sex drive first awakens. In one of his first publications, Ulrichs stated:

This outwardly recognizable female essence I call the female habitus of the Urning. . . . The female habitus is quite particularly in us in our childhood, before we have been reared into an artificial masculinity, and before we have had the depressing experience that every expression of our female essence will be ascribed to us as a disgrace (!) by our playmates as well as adults, before, that is, suffering under this external pressure, we began to carefully hide that female trait.

The Urning shows as a child a quite unmistakable partiality for girlish activities, for interaction with girls, for playing with girls’ playthings, namely also with dolls. (*Inclusa*, 13–14)

By the end of 1864, his increasing contacts with other Urnings—both direct contact and through correspondence with readers of his first publications—had convinced Ulrichs that things were not as simple as he had originally thought. Thus, there were men who loved women and men alike, there were men who loved other men “tenderly and senti-

15. See Casper (1812), Tardieu ([1857] 1878), Aron and Kempf (1978).

mentally” but desired women sensually, and so on. To accommodate these possibilities, he expanded his theory and assumed that there was not one germ for the sexual drive (as he had at first assumed), but two: one for “tender-sentimental” love and one for sensual love. The terminology for these new varieties likewise expanded to include the terms “*Uranodioning*,” “*konjunktiver Uranodioning*,” “*disjunktiver Uranodioning*,” and others. Rolf Gindorf has schematized sixteen distinct sexual natures that are implied by Ulrichs’s system (1977, 132–133). Eventually, this system became so complicated that it began to resemble the epicycles of the later Ptolemaic system of the universe. Ulrichs was aware of this, writing in 1867:

I suppose a future researcher will discover an underlying law for this apparent chaos of varieties, a law according to which the seeming arbitrariness of the mixture becomes a necessity of nature. Needed for this is a comprehensive observation of individuals who belong to the particular varieties and, of course, a bit of talent for gaining new insight by taking a synoptic view of the variety. One must find a formula for this law, I might say, just as exact as that formula Kepler once found for the laws of the motions of the planets and comets. (*Memnon* 2, 116; modified translation from Ulrichs 1994b, 419)

The complexities in Ptolemy’s system were brought about in part by his unquestioning assumption that all celestial motion must be circular. Just so were the complexities in Ulrichs’s theory caused in part by his unquestioning assumption that sexual love for a man must be feminine. Although this assumption has often been questioned (already before the end of the nineteenth century by, for example, James Mills Peirce [1834–1906], mathematics professor and first dean of the Graduate School of Harvard University), it has continued until today to be a leitmotif in the search for physical characteristics of homosexuals, both in the popular mind and in the scientific community. In a letter of 1891 to John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), Peirce pointed out the circularity in Ulrichs’s argument:

There is an error in the view that feminine love is that which is directed to a man, and masculine love that which is directed to a woman. That doctrine involves a begging of the whole question. . . . The two directions are equally natural to unperverted man, and the *abnormal* form of love is that which has lost the power of excitability in either the one or the other of these directions. It is *unisexual* love (a love for one sexuality) which is a perversion. The normal men love both. . . .

I clearly believe . . . that we ought to think and speak of homosexual love, not as “inverted” or “abnormal,” as a sort of colour-blindness of the genital sense, as a lamentable mark of inferior development, or as an unhappy fault, a “masculine body with a feminine soul,” but as being in itself a natural, pure and sound passion, as worthy of the reverence of all fine natures as the honourable devotion of husband and wife, or the ardour of bride and groom.¹⁶

The originality of Ulrichs’s theory has occasionally been questioned, and sometimes connections have been drawn that do not exist. That Casper stated earlier that homosexuality was inborn in some cases has led some to draw the conclusion that Ulrichs adopted this idea from him, and Warren Johansson has stated, regarding Ulrichs’s idea that the Urning has an *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa*: “He took the notion from *Eros: die Männerliebe der Griechen* . . . by Heinrich Hoessli” (Johansson 1990, 580). Indeed, Ulrichs mentioned both Casper and Hössli (1784–1864), but expressly stated, that he arrived at these notions before reading those authors. I think there is no reason to doubt Ulrichs’s honesty in this matter. He cites them only as confirmation of his own views. Ulrichs quite carefully reported his sources of information and, while his intent was obviously to change the opinions of others, this was more in the spirit of the Enlightenment (and here Ulrichs was perhaps somewhat behind his times) and not in the propagandistic

16. Peirce’s letter was published anonymously; see Peirce (1897). Jonathan Ned Katz reprinted the letter (1976, 374–376) and suggested that the author was James Mills Peirce. This was confirmed by Hubert Kennedy (1982). For Peirce as a mathematician, see Kennedy (1979).

way that later became the fashion, such as that practiced by his successor Magnus Hirschfeld, who was a master of the half-truth.¹⁷

Although Ulrichs's theory was original, it was certainly influenced by the scientific discourses of the time and reflected "the perceptual interest in the new science of the human being" that, around 1800, as Claudia Honegger has pointed out, "was directly concerned with determining more closely the connection between the bodily disposition and psychological capacity" (1991, 56). Ulrichs was influenced above all by nineteenth-century advances in biology, especially in embryology. And on one point he was very much a man of his time. Thomas Laqueur's statement, "Sexuality as a singular and all-important attribute with a specific object—the opposite sex—is the product of the late eighteenth century. There is nothing natural about it" (1990, 13), would have had no meaning for Ulrichs. It is precisely its "naturalness" of which he was most convinced. Laqueur speaks of the "new slogan" (new in 1800) that "opposites attract" (152); for Ulrichs the principle that "opposites attract" was an assumption of his theory that caused him great difficulty, but which he never questioned.

Ulrichs's views were often dismissed by the medical establishment since he was not one of the guild, and especially since, as a self-declared Urning, he was arguing *pro domo*. What medical researchers did not say—as was repeatedly asserted by Ulrichs—was that he was able to make many more observations than they of homosexuals, especially of "ordinary" homosexuals. As Ulrichs pointed out: "My scientific opponents are mostly psychiatrists. They are, for example, Westphal, Krafft-Ebing, Stark. They made their observations on Urnings who were in institutions for the mentally ill. They appear not to have seen mentally healthy Urnings. The rest follow the published views of the psychiatrists" (*Critische Pfeile*, 96; 1994b, 688).

When Ulrichs noted that his "scientific opponents" had not seen healthy Urnings, he omitted, as Günter Dworek has pointed out, "that the doctors were far distant from ac-

17. For example, in discussing the case of Johann Baptist von Schweitzer (the first Social Democrat to be elected to a European parliament), who was arrested in a park in Mannheim in 1852 and convicted of causing "public offense," Hirschfeld invented an adult occupation for Schweitzer's companion (who had managed to run away), namely that of bricklayer. But the available evidence suggests that he was, rather, a boy of fourteen. Hirschfeld's petition to the German Reichstag, urging a revision of the antisodomy law, suggested setting an age of consent at sixteen. For Schweitzer, see Kennedy (1995).

cepting him as a scientific opponent of equal rank. For them, Ulrichs's arguments were those of a sick man, a potential patient" (1990, 42). Dworek's article reproduces two reviews of Ulrichs's *Inclusa* of 1864, in which he first spelled out the biological basis of his theory. Since these were not taken into consideration in my biography of Ulrichs and have not before appeared in English, they may be quoted at length to illustrate the early reception of Ulrichs's theory. Both were published, in 1864 and 1865 respectively, in *Der Irrenfreund* (Heilbronn), which Dworek describes as "a small, reform-psychiatric oriented journal." The first, signed only "Dr. F.," begins with the book's title, "Anthropological Studies of Man-Manly Sexual Love," to which, typically the author added in parentheses, as if it were part of the title, "Pederasty" (which, we recall, meant anal intercourse), and he continued to use the term in what he presents as quotations from Ulrichs. For him, Ulrichs is another "case," for which, as Dworek pointed out, "to his question, 'Is this sickness curable?' he grotesquely announces for the author of *Inclusa* a reservedly optimistic prognosis" (43).

N[uma] N[urnantius] wants to justify pederasty. He is of the opinion: the law and morality condemn pederasty because it is not recognized that it is inborn in certain men. . . .

He seeks to correct public opinion through all kinds of mostly irrelevant observations, quotations, anecdotes, outpourings of his heart. . . .

He is so full of his feelings that he writes books about it. The actual physical arousal stands in the foreground with him; the whole circle of his imagination is constantly filled with it.

About the personal circumstances, the occupation, the way of life, the biography of N. N., we indeed learn nothing. But we may assume that his efforts are directed to maintaining and promoting physical arousal, which plays such a role in his imagination.

The healthy, vigorous life does not conduct itself thus. . . .

How does such a condition of sick lust develop?

N. N. is at pains to furnish all kinds of things in order to show that "nature has created pederastic lust." What could he be thinking of with the word "nature"? His

statements want to be scientific. So we would remind him that the so-called natural sciences constantly have to do with the determination of certain facts and with their conditions. The conditions of his state can be called his disposition.

Without it, without the germ, nothing arises. Because of the lack of information from the earlier life of N. N., nothing may be said about how this disposition came about.

Is this sickness curable?

It depends on how far all the other emotions have suffered and how far the circumstances are in a position to promote healthy efforts.

It is a good sign that he feels uncomfortable in his condition, that he is making an effort to justify it.

To his lack of courage (he believes that what nature has given him he cannot change), may be objected that sick tendencies dissolve if their nourishment is lacking, that even slightly healthy dispositions come to development through teaching; he should remember that his teachers have developed for him so much knowledge and skill, for which he had just a weak disposition, that there is also a training that will teach him to be vigorous and manly, that law and morally are such teachers, which are continually trying to develop the good in the individual. (Cited in Dworek 1990, 44–45)

It is not clear here whether this reviewer accepted the inborn nature of the condition. Even if he did, it still remained a sickness for him, a view that was strengthened by his inability to see it as anything other than “pederasty.” The second reviewer, who avoided the term “pederasty,” decisively rejected the view that it is inborn.

Dworek notes that the second reviewer, who used his complete name (Dr. D. Lis-sauer), does not otherwise appear to have published in the field of sexual pathology, and so “all the more remarkable for the process of the medicalization of homosexuality is the way he, several years before the fundamental works of Westphal and Krafft-Ebing, self-evidently classifies male-male sexuality in the sphere of responsibility of the doctors” (43). This may be seen in the first half of the review:

The present booklet furnishes no proof of the naturalness of that immorality, but rather is a contribution to the literature of partial mental disturbances. According to the natural idea that coupling should take place only for the goal of reproduction of human beings, this other release of the sexual drive, which immorality, refinement, or inverted direction of thought calls forth, is abnormal and for a human being is in the highest degree unworthy or morbid. That the latter is the case more often than one believes, is shown by the kind of description of man-manly sexual love in the brochure mentioned. Therefore, in cases before the courts, the medical experts should investigate the mental condition of the party concerned and decide whether immorality or mental illness is present; then perhaps many who are now put into a prison or penitentiary would through an appropriate treatment in a reformatory or mental institution gain insight into the direction of their love and return to living with views of the satisfaction of the sexual drive in accordance with nature.

Now, to also comment, unnecessarily, on several views of the author, I first stress that his inborn sexual love exists just as little as inborn ideas; the former develops only little by little with the development of sexual conditions. (Cited in Dworek 1990, 46)

There were, however, those who, following Casper, believed that homosexuality was inborn, at least in some cases, and they may have also been influenced to some extent by Ulrichs. Ironically, the man who became the major proponent of the sickness model of homosexuality, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), became interested in studying the subject precisely as a result of reading Ulrichs’s writings, as he explicitly stated in a letter to Ulrichs of January 29, 1879 (*Critische Pfeile*, 92). Already in 1877, Krafft-Ebing had written that Ulrichs was “afflicted with this perverse drive” and that Ulrichs “still has not furnished proof that he, as an inborn phenomenon, is eo ipso a physiological and not perhaps a pathological one” (Krafft-Ebing 1877, 305–306). With only a slight change in the wording, this statement was included in his *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886, 58) and it remained in all later editions of this perennial bestseller.

Although Krafft-Ebing became interested in the subject because of Ulrichs, his understanding of it was rather along the lines of the degeneration theory of Bénédict Au-

guste Morel (1809–1873), as presented by Morel in 1857. This is shown already in the title of Krafft-Ebing's 1877 work, which may be translated: "On certain anomalies of the moral drive and the clinical-forensic evaluation of them as a probable functional sign of degeneration of the central nervous system." Nevertheless, Giovanni Dall'Orto sees a positive influence of Ulrichs on Krafft-Ebing, in that Krafft-Ebing "softened, thanks to him, the original premise, which saw in the homosexual a serious degenerate, and a criminal for life" (Dall'Orto 1985, 66).

Ulrichs's impact on sexology was more significant for directing medical researchers' attention to the subject of homosexuality than in changing their view of it. This is evident in a five-page entry on "contrary sexual feeling" in a medical encyclopedia of 1885, where only Ulrichs's name and pseudonym, Numa Numantius) are printed in boldface. After noting that Casper had divided "those peculiar individuals who are sexually inclined to persons of their same sex into two categories: those whose inclination is *acquired* and a consequence of a surfeit of the natural sexual pleasures, and those in whom it is *inborn* and a symptom of a *psychopathic* condition," the author continues:

If the view of Casper was now challenged, it was by the anonymous author who hid under the name "Nunia Numantius" and through a series of years in numerous, strange-sounding pamphlets [Blumenstok names the seven published up to then] has been at pains to justify the existence and contest the criminality of a large class of individuals that one was rather used to characterizing as depraved libertines. But his behavior was all the less suited to shake the belief in the moral depravity of his protégés. Numa Numantius, who later turned out to be the "private scholar and former Hannoverian official" K. H. Ulrichs, brought too much system in and deprived the same of a basis, not so much through his repulsive declamation as much more through the fact that he rolled out a whole tableau of sexes, on which, according to his custom, he conferred poetic sounding, but in fact meaningless names (Urnings, Dionings, Uranodionings), Since the time, however, when at the assembly of jurists in Munich (1867) he called forth universal indignation with his proposal for a revision of the German criminal code in favor of sexual satisfaction contrary to nature,

his muse became silent and with it the question defended by him appeared to be removed from the order of the day once and for all. (Blumenstok 1885, 513–516)

Blumenstok then notes that only two years later the subject was taken up by Karl Westphal (1833–1890) and others, and he briefly reviews the cases discussed by them. Although he does not accept Ulrichs’s explanations, it does appear that he has been impressed enough by him not to accept entirely the reported results of the others. He writes;

There can be no doubt, for daily experience teaches it, that aberrations of the sexual feeling appear not only in the case of nervous and mental illness, but also in individuals for whom neither any kind of disturbance of the psychic functions nor any anomaly in the nerve center may be demonstrated. It is further certain that in the ranks of the latter those aberrations are more often met with than among the former. . . . In the large cities we have to deal with the clan of active and passive pederasts, whose behavior we would like to attribute to every other cause, only not conceive of as a neuropathic or psychopathic phenomenon. . . . Casper, therefore, goes too far when he views the abnormal sexual direction in most individuals as a symptom of a psychopathic condition: for even if it may be assumed that the number of those suffering from contrary sexual feelings is much greater than the small number of cases described up to now lets one suppose, . . . it is still vanishingly small in comparison with the greater number of pederasts. (Blumenstok 1885, 517)

By the time this was written, Ulrichs had published his estimate that one adult man in five hundred in Germany was an Urning. No doubt most readers thought this figure too high, but it probably had an influence, as appears here, especially since Ulrichs seemed to be acquainted with many Urnings. By the end of the nineteenth century, Ulrichs’s theories had also reached English readers, primarily through the writings of Symonds, who became personally acquainted with Ulrichs in 1891 on a visit to Aquila.¹⁸

18. Symonds published a summary of Ulrichs’s theory in 1891 in his privately printed *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (included in Symonds 1964) and expanded the summary for his collaboration with Havelock Ellis (see Ellis and Symonds 1897, 258–272).

Just as Ulrichs was forced to modify his first, oversimple biological explanation of the Urning because of contact with an increasing variety of sexual types, so too he had to modify the strict division of male body/female psyche. Allowing that the body influenced the psyche, and vice versa, he was better able to account for the variety he saw. His search for physical characteristics that distinguish Urnings from “real” men was the beginning of a flood of similar investigations that continues unabated today, whether done by those with an emancipatory intent like Ulrichs (for instance, Magnus Hirschfeld in the early twentieth century and Simon LeVay near its end) or by those with less benevolent intentions (for instance, the Nazi doctor Carl Vaernet and, since about 1967, Günter Dörner).¹⁹

Rainer Herrn has noted that “the most comprehensive constitutional investigation” was carried out at the Prague Institute for Sexual Science around 1960.

They compared weight, stature, length of trunk, shoulder and hip width, size of the skeleton and the muscular apparatus, the laying on of fat, as well as hairiness on the four regions of the body. The diameter of the areola of nipple was noted and the prostate examined by hand and classified. In addition the length of the flaccid penis and the longitudinal axis of the testicles were measured. Even the voice and the vocal apparatus were evaluated. Those tested were divided into three groups: feminine homosexuals, non-feminine homosexuals, and heterosexuals. This exhaustive investigation concluded that no differences in the bodily measures could be found among the three groups. What was established was merely that homosexuals are somewhat lighter and have a significantly “larger penis” than heterosexuals. If we ignore the possible implication of the longer penis, then it becomes clear that there were obviously no constitutional differences. Since then the premise has not been pursued further; the theory of bodily differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals has finally been abandoned. (Herrn 1995, 43–44)

19. See LeVay (1993). Regarding LeVay’s research, Gilbert Herdt notes: “The ‘gay brain’ theory is but the latest form of anatomical reductionism, however well intentioned the theory” (1994, 498 n.124). For Vaernet, see Plant (1986, 175–178). For Dörner, see Herrn (1995).

Herrn's concluding statement is a bit too strong, however. Even as I write, an Associated Press report comes to my attention, with the headlines: "Genetic Link to Male Homosexuality—Unusual Pattern of Fingerprints Is Focus of Study" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 Dec. 1994). Pudd'nhead Wilson strikes again!²⁰

If Ulrichs's ideas were dismissed by the medical establishment as those of a "potential patient" who was far from being their scientific equal, his fellow lawyers found their own way of dealing with him. When Ulrichs spoke at the Congress of German Jurists in Munich on August 29, 1867, to support his proposal to repeal the antisodomy laws of Germany and Austria, he was simply shouted down and not allowed to speak. His treatment in Frankfurt two years earlier was even more bizarre.

When Ulrichs moved to Frankfurt in 1859 he immediately joined the *Freies Deutsches Hochstift für Wissenschaften, Künste und Allgemeine Bildung* (Free German Foundation for Science, Art, and General Culture), which had been founded there earlier that year. (The Hochstift still exists today. Goethe's birth house with its museum belongs to the Hochstift.) When Ulrichs began to discuss his idea, the Hochstift removed his membership on the rumor that a criminal prosecution was pending against him, Ulrichs showed that this was not the case and, in 1865, sent copies of his first publications for their consideration. The leaders of the Hochstift then read just enough to find another excuse to expel him: since Ulrichs asserted that, in addition to the two previously recognized sexes, there was a third sex which he called *Urnings*, and he declared that he belonged to it, then Ulrichs could not be a member of the Hochstift, whose statute made no mention of admitting such a being to membership (see Kennedy 1988, 64–66).

Ulrichs was a pioneer in many ways. For example, he anticipated Freud in his assertion of the importance of dreams for sexology, stating in 1865: "Very unjustly, therefore, the importance for sexual science of those dream phenomena has been entirely overlooked until now, unfortunately: certainly to the great detriment of [sexual science]" (*Formatrix*, 12). But the impulse he gave to the study of homosexuality did not go in the direction he wished. Nor were his efforts to repeal the antisodomy laws successful. In-

20. Mark Twain's fictional character Pudd'nhead Wilson used fingerprints to convict a criminal in a novel of that name published in 1894, several years before fingerprints became part of the official means of identifying criminals by the police.

deed, in his lifetime the harsh Prussian law was extended to all parts of Germany with the foundation of the German empire in 1870, and the law was not relaxed until 1968 (East Germany) and 1969 (West Germany), with a further reform in 1994 (in the united Germany) that set a gender-neutral age of consent of sixteen, thus making no distinction (in theory) between homo- and heterosexual activity.

As an “activist,” Ulrichs was ahead of his time. He was the first self-declared homosexual to speak out publicly for the civil and legal rights of homosexuals; he published the first homosexual journal, but it had only one issue (1870); he even wrote by-laws for a proposed homosexual organization in 1865—all ideas that were not revived until the turn of the century, when Hirschfeld, and others founded the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific Humanitarian Committee) in 1897, and the journal *Der Eigene* (The Self-Owner)—which began publishing in Berlin in 1896 as an anarchist journal under the direction of the egoist philosopher Max Stirner (1806–1856)—became openly homosexual in 1898.

Although Ulrichs’s “third sex” theory of homosexuality was superficially dismissed by the medical establishment of his day, it nonetheless appears to have had an influence—best seen, perhaps, in the continuing search by biological determinists for a bodily substrate for homosexuality.²¹ A century after Ulrichs’s death, we may not be entirely comfortable with the development of ideas that followed Ulrichs’s introduction of a “third sex,” but it was the first scientific theory of homosexuality, and he deserves credit for it. On the other hand, we can unreservedly admire the courage and integrity of the man who fought so hard against impossible odds for the equal rights of all: women, religious and ethnic minorities, and homosexual and other sexual varieties.

In 1869, Karl Westphal had introduced the term “contrary sexual feeling,” and defined it as an illness in the title of his article: “The Contrary Sexual Feeling: Symptom of a Neuropathic (Psychopathic) Condition.” Since that time, for more than a century, most psychiatrists represented homosexuality as an illness by definition. Nor was the vote in 1973 to remove homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association’s official diagnostic manual of mental disorders overwhelming (58 percent of the membership ratified the recommendation of the APA Board of Trustees). But survey after survey has

21. For a critique of biological determinism, see De Cecco and Parker (1995).

been done, each trying to be more comprehensive than the other, so that today there is a vast, relatively objective literature on the subject of homosexuality in general. Along with this has come a change in the public perception. In order to gain an insight into the earlier view of homosexuality, let us consider the current “expert” and popular view of pedophilia. The parallels are striking.

There is first of all the term itself: whereas in nineteenth-century Germany the term “pederasty” (from the classic Greek for “boy-love”) was equated with anal intercourse, the current term “pedophilia” (a more general Greek term for “boy-love”) is equated with child sexual molestation. Like nineteenth-century homosexuality, pedophilia is considered by definition an illness, and little effort has been made to learn about the “ordinary” pedophile. (We recall Ulrichs’s complaint that the psychiatrists “appear not to have seen mentally healthy Urnings.”) In the United States, the literature continues to be dominated by psychiatry and, more recently, victimology. Indeed, as a result of the popular misidentification of child sexual molestation with intergenerational sex, any scientific survey of ordinary pedophiles has become impossible due to the legal requirement to report any suspected cases. Some research in the Netherlands has been reported (for example, Sandfort 1981; Bernard 1985). And in Germany, sixty pedophile men were interviewed by a team led by Rüdiger Lautmann of the University of Bremen, who described his report as “the first German-language project to empirically research the socio-sexual sides of pedophilia” (Lautmann 1994, 12). Among those adults who had sexual contact with children, Lautmann distinguished three types:

- (1) the true pedophile, who is in general interested in social contacts with children, including the sexual side;
- (2) the substitute-object perpetrator, who satisfies himself sexually on a child because he does not gain access to an adult;
- (3) the aggressive-sadistic perpetrator, who resorts to force from pathological grounds. (Lautmann 1994, 10)

For their report, Lautmann's team interviewed only men of type one, the true pedophile. Their report paints a rather different picture from that usually seen in the United States.

So long as research in the United States is by necessity limited to populations such as patients and those institutionalized or threatened by legal punishment, we will not have a clear picture of true pedophiles—a situation that in some ways parallels an earlier situation in Berlin regarding homosexuality in general. In 1903 Magnus Hirschfeld distributed three thousand questionnaires to university students, asking about their sexual orientation. Five students denounced Hirschfeld for offending them “through the distribution of obscene writings,” and in fact Hirschfeld was found guilty and sentenced to pay a fine (Herzer 1992a, 63).

In California, for example, such research is forbidden with regard to those who are interested in “children” below the age of eighteen, since sex is legally forbidden to them and suspected sexual contacts are required to be reported. One wonders what Ulrichs would have thought about this situation. That research could not be done would likely have offended his Enlightenment views. Certainly he thought the age of consent too high. Although he had pretty much abandoned his cause during the last fifteen years of his life in Italy, he nevertheless wrote one last plea to the Austrian Minister of Justice on June 18, 1894, apparently prompted by a monograph of Richard von Krafft-Ebing that year, which he refers to in his letter. In it he says that he will send in a few days two short discussions concerning points in Krafft-Ebing's work, one “about an unjustifiable age limit, i.e., aimed too high; eighteenth year, proposed by Krafft-Ebing.”²² Krafft-Ebing had written: “Regarding [homosexual] sodomy, the completed eighteenth year appears to me to be the correct limit, since from there up, according to experience, the ability to judge and the ability to make moral distinctions is already sufficiently developed to determine for oneself the question of morality and to no longer need the protection of the law” (1894, 33).

I have suggested that we may gain insight into the situation of homosexuality in the nineteenth century by a comparison with the current situation of pedophilia. The comparison may also be telling the other way around. It may be that the current confusion of

22. Ulrichs's letter is reproduced in Sulzenbacher (1994, 26–29); the two discussions mentioned are not in the Austrian file.

pedophilia with child sexual molestation will disappear the way nineteenth-century pathologization of masturbation has.²³ When it does, hopefully, we will have a more sane and rational view not only of homosexuality, but of other sexual variations as well.

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23. For a comparison of the child sexual molestation and masturbation hysterias, see Kennedy (1992).

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