

## CHAPTER 1

# The Birth of Homosexual Politics

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examines the emergence of the early LGBTQ rights movement in Germany, in which Magnus Hirschfeld played an important role. It also considers the complicated interplay that developed among science, same-sex identities, and LGBTQ politics at the end of the nineteenth century.

### OVERVIEW

The world's first homosexual movement was launched in Germany in the 1890s. Magnus Hirschfeld organized the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (WhK). The committee's goals were to use the latest scientific research to repeal the country's sodomy law, Paragraph 175, and to promote wider tolerance for homosexuals. A magazine founded in the same decade by the anarchist and independent publisher Adolf Brand advocated for a revival of "Greek love." This magazine served as the focal point for a group of men who championed a return to the "manly culture" of the classical era, which the group's chief intellectual, Benedict Friedlaender, believed would revitalize all of Western civilization. This chapter discusses the history of this homosexual movement: Enlightenment-era criticism of the sodomy laws; writers such as Heinrich Hössli and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who paved the way; and nineteenth-century scientific research that gave Hirschfeld and others ideas about how Paragraph 175 could be challenged. This chapter also considers the complicated interplay that developed among science, same-sex identities, and LGBTQ politics at the end of the nineteenth century. It relates the emergence of the homosexual movement to the wider political context, considering its connection with the socialist politics of the 1890s and the appearance of the life reform movement.

### KEY TERMS

Magnus Hirschfeld; Adolf Brand; Scientific-Humanitarian Committee; *Der Eigene*; Karl Heinrich Ulrichs; Richard von Krafft-Ebing; Paragraph 175

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**FIGURE 2 MAGNUS HIRSCHFELD**

The German-Jewish physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld emerged as the most important face of homosexual activism in the early twentieth century. From 1897 until 1929 he served as the chair of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (WhK). This chapter examines the emergence of the early LGBTQ rights movement in Germany, in which Hirschfeld played an important role. It also considers the complicated interplay that developed among science, same-sex identities, and LGBTQ politics at the end of the nineteenth century. Source: Schwules Museum, Berlin

In 1897 Magnus Hirschfeld (Figure 2) was a twenty-nine-year-old physician, himself the son of another physician, born and raised “on the shores of the Baltic.” Both of his parents were Jewish, and if Hirschfeld’s memories are any indication, they were prime examples of the modern, assimilated Jewish population that had emerged in the country by the second half of the nineteenth century. Little is known about his mother except that Hirschfeld remembered her as forgiving and affectionate. About his father, though, Hirschfeld had a great deal to say. In 1848 his father had been chosen by his fellow citizens of Kolberg as “the man for freedom and progress.” He worked very hard for his patients, often taking no fee from those who could not afford it. He was politically engaged, writing a weekly column for the local newspaper for nearly thirty years, and working to push through a modernization of the local sewage and water supply system. In short, Hirschfeld’s father left a lasting mark on his son, who would later remember, “My father was a doctor of high reputation, to whom we children looked up as to a higher being.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1887 Hirschfeld began his university studies, soon committing to medicine. As one of his biographers notes, however, he was “possessed by an inner restlessness,” becoming quickly “frustrated by the routine of academic life.”<sup>2</sup> He studied in Breslau, moved to Strasbourg and then on to Berlin, only to end up in Munich, where he finally passed his intermediate exams in medicine. In Munich, which at the turn of the century was the artistic focus for the country, he made the acquaintance of the writers Henrik Ibsen and Frank Wedekind. But Munich could not keep him. Soon he was off to Heidelberg to do his six months of military service, and then back to Berlin at the end of 1891, where he would finally write his thesis for his medical degree. Next he went to Würzburg, where he successfully passed his final medical examination. And after all this work, he decided to try journalism! With a friend, he took a ship from Hamburg to New York, eventually ending up in Chicago to report on the Columbian World Exhibition in 1893. He loved traveling and writing, but journalism ultimately proved not to his taste. So by 1896 he found himself back in Berlin, ready to take up a new medical practice.

It is not clear when exactly Hirschfeld realized that he was homosexual. He never publicly admitted it, though his eventual political involvement for the cause would make it an open secret by the turn of the century. It is probably safe to say that he understood his sexual orientation by the time he arrived in Berlin, since he was clearly deeply affected by the suicide of one of his new patients. The young man, an officer in the German army, had been pressured to get married, but at the last minute, on the eve of his wedding, he shot himself in the head. The day after the young man’s death Hirschfeld received a letter from the man relating the story leading up to his suicide. The strain

of living a double life had proved to be too much for the man, who lived, in his own words, under this “curse” against human nature. The letter provoked Hirschfeld to write his first work about homosexuality, a thirty-four-page booklet entitled *Sappho and Socrates: How Can One Explain the Love of Men and Women for People of Their Own Sex?* It was published with the help of Max Spohr, the owner of a publishing house in Leipzig who originally specialized in the subjects of homeopathic medicine and the occult, but who had also started to explore the market for material on homosexuality beginning in 1893.<sup>3</sup>

The appearance of the booklet was timely. Only a year beforehand, Oscar Wilde had been sentenced to two years in prison because of his homosexuality. This infamous trial had provoked a great deal of public discussion about the “love that dares not speak its name,” and Hirschfeld hoped injecting science into the debate might finally lead to some progress in popular attitudes and legal treatment. As one recent study of Hirschfeld notes, “Hirschfeld did not believe in practicing science for science’s sake. For Hirschfeld, science not only increased knowledge but was a tool against injustice.”<sup>4</sup> In this early work, he relied heavily on a theory of homosexuality developed by psychiatrists and a few other writers since the 1850s that argued that homosexuality was rooted in an individual’s biological makeup. He supported this theory with more recent evidence presented by the embryologist and early Darwinian supporter Ernst Haeckel. Hirschfeld added his own ingredient to the theory, namely an emphasis on the strength of the sex drive. This strength played a large role, Hirschfeld argued, in explaining certain character differences that inevitably emerge among homosexuals. More important, though, it was further evidence of the congenital nature of sexuality. It could “neither be acquired through environmental factors or suggestions, nor extinguished through medical treatment or psychological conditioning.”<sup>5</sup> Legally and morally, then, the only rational conclusion was to repeal all the laws against homosexuality.

His first book was published under a pseudonym, but by the following year Hirschfeld was ready to take a more public stance. On May 15, 1897, he invited Max Spohr and Eduard Oberg, a railroad official from the northern city of Hannover, to his home in the fashionable, middle-class Berlin suburb of Charlottenburg. Together, the three of them wrote the articles of association for the world’s first homosexual organization, the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (WhK).<sup>6</sup> Relying initially on the financial support of several wealthy donors, the WhK gradually picked up members and supporters, including doctors, lawyers, writers, and other professionals. The group met initially in Hirschfeld’s apartment, but within a few years it had grown enough to justify renting rooms in the Prinz Albrecht, one of the city’s

fanciest hotels. The WhK drew on both enlightenment ideas and scientific perspectives in its campaign against Paragraph 175, Germany's sodomy law. It also pursued a wide range of related activities, from promoting scientific research on homosexuality to combating prevailing social prejudices against the "vice."

The WhK was soon joined by other individuals and groups that wanted to change the country's attitudes and perhaps in the process lay the groundwork for a more thorough transformation of German culture. Together, these many people, organizations, and publications formed a vibrant and dynamic movement. As in any political movement, there were disagreements and tensions, personality conflicts and power struggles. Nevertheless, the growth of the movement and, perhaps equally important, the way that the movement was able to interact with wider social and political transformations boded well for its future.

## EARLY HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVISTS

Although Paragraph 175 had been created only recently, the criminalization of male homosexuality in Germany dated back centuries. Several nineteenth-century writers traced a history of persecution stretching back to Roman tribes. According to Tacitus, the German tribes at the time punished sodomites by drowning them in swamps. The early Christian church repeatedly issued proclamations against male-male love. And the Roman emperors Justinian and Theodosius both wrote legal codes with strict punishments against adultery that were broadly defined to include homosexual acts. The death sentence for male homosexuality was then picked up by the first major criminal code of the Holy Roman Empire, the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* issued by Emperor Charles V in 1532, which called for such criminals to be burned at the stake.

We should point out that this story of unswerving persecution has been undermined over the years. More recent historians have raised doubts about how rigidly and consistently any of these laws were actually enforced. And, famously, John Boswell's book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* opened up questions about how unequivocal the early Christian condemnation of homosexuality actually was.<sup>7</sup> There were certainly moments of "moral panic" set off by epidemics or other disasters that sent the rulers looking for scapegoats; however, most same-sex acts probably never came to the attention of the authorities, and even Christian clerics gave out relatively minor penances when such acts were confessed to them. Still, the death sentence remained the official rule, and some historians have argued that the persecu-

tion of “sodomites” was stepped up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries—an effect of the growing power of state institutions and a growing obsession with social and sexual “pollution.”<sup>8</sup> Boswell also cited the possible influence of natural law theory, which was revived around this time and provided a justification for calling same-sex desire unnatural. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, in turn, created many opportunities to seek moral scapegoats and to brand many Catholic priests and monks as sodomites. Moral panics were rampant in this era of religious turbulence, creating the backdrop for the death penalty’s being maintained by the emerging absolutist states of seventeenth-century central Europe.<sup>9</sup>

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, several Enlightenment thinkers began to raise questions about criminalizing sexual behavior. The general admiration that philosophes felt for ancient Greek culture, as well as their suspicion of state and church involvement in private life, tended to push many of them in the direction of official toleration—even when the very same people could still express disgust toward this “unnatural” behavior.<sup>10</sup> The Napoleonic conquests of central Europe paved the way for a series of legal reforms in the first half of the nineteenth century that either decriminalized same-sex contact between men (in Bavaria, Hannover, Württemberg, and Brunswick) or more commonly lessened the penalty to imprisonment (most notably in Prussia). The decriminalization that occurred in a few cases was unfortunately undercut by public hostility to the reform as well as the continued existence of numerous police codes that, in contrast to the penal codes, could punish “sodomites” with prison sentences and fines.<sup>11</sup> Most important, though, the repeal of the laws against homosexuality did not last long. In 1871 Prussia united Germany under a single government, which caused its own sodomy law to become valid for the entire nation. Paragraph 175, as the law would be known from this point on, declared that “the unnatural vice [*widernatürliche Unzucht*] committed between men or between humans and animals” was to be punished by imprisonment.

Nevertheless, enlightenment criticisms of sodomy laws were not forgotten. Furthermore, science was raising new questions about the origins or same-sex desire, which itself caused some people to wonder if this sexual preference was really so unnatural after all. Even before 1871, several individuals had written works attacking the criminalization of sexual contact between men. One of the earliest was the Swiss author Heinrich Hössli, who in the course of the 1830s published two volumes of his work *Eros: The Greek Love of Men, Its Relationship to History, Education, Literature, and Legislation of All Ages* (*Eros: Die Männerliebe der Griechen, ihre Beziehung zur Geschichte, Erziehung, Literatur und Gesetzgebung aller Zeiten*). Inspired by French En-

lightenment thinkers such as Charles de Montesquieu and the liberal Swiss writer Heinrich Zschokke, Hössli fashioned a fascinating argument against the persecution of homosexuality out of anti-witch trial rhetoric, pleas for the legal emancipation of Jews, and the admiration for Greek society then fashionable among German literati.<sup>12</sup>

Another major writer was the Hungarian Karl Maria Kertbeny. From Austria, he lived much of his adult life in Germany. Reacting to the growing influence of Prussia in north Germany and the possibility that the Prussian law might become the law of the land, Kertbeny anonymously wrote two small political tracts. These works have attracted some attention over the years, since in them he coined the word *homosexual*, a term that by the mid-1880s would begin to circulate as a popular alternative to other, more pejorative terms widely used at the time. In other ways, though, his arguments drew on an older, Enlightenment tradition. He argued that modern notions of justice “necessarily proceeding from human justice through acknowledgment of the subjectivity of human nature” required a radical rethinking of old laws.<sup>13</sup> Modernization of social and political conditions called for a state that no longer played “the role of guardian, which is, anyhow, a thankless and irritating role.” Instead, it needed to recognize the right to “one’s own life, with which one may do as one pleases, fully free from the start to finish as long as the rights of other individuals of society or of the state are not injured by these actions.”<sup>14</sup> History, he argued, had proved that all efforts to suppress homosexuality had had little to no effect on its practice. Moreover, it was time to rectify the hypocrisy and logical contradiction of a state that imprisoned two consenting adult males for engaging in harmless sexual activity while at the same time doing little to stop public prostitution, solitary masturbation, or various “unnatural acts” that were committed between husband and wife.

Much more influential than either Hössli or Kertbeny was Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a lawyer from Hannover who emerged in the 1860s as the most prominent critic of the laws against homosexuality. Ulrichs was also a powerful voice in the emerging scientific debate about how same-sex desire should be understood. His studies of the topic began in 1850s, shortly after he resigned his position as a civil servant, perhaps forced out owing to a homosexual incident. In 1862 he began the process of what we would today call coming out by writing several letters to his family in which he revealed his sexual preferences. Although his family reacted hostilely to the news, he persisted on his course. He wrote five small booklets in 1864 and 1865 under the pseudonym Numa Numantius. In them he explored the laws of different eras and lands, speculated on the biological origins of “man-manly love,” discussed the various dilemmas of living with such desire amid persecution and

prejudice, and examined various philosophical problems connected with the issue. He then published seven more booklets under his own name, the final one in 1879. During these years he was extraordinarily active, giving public speeches on the topic and carrying on correspondence with doctors, scientists, lawyers, allies, and rivals. In Munich he even tried to present a petition to the national convention of the Association for German Jurists, only to be booed off the stage.<sup>15</sup>

Besides offering an early compendium of arguments against the German homosexuality laws, Ulrichs gradually developed a series of theories about the roots of same-sex desire. Beginning with a rather primitive idea based on Friedrich Anton Mesmer's theories of "animal magnetism," he gradually developed a much more complex construction rooted in classical philosophy but buttressed with recently acquired knowledge about human embryo development.<sup>16</sup> In his first published work, he introduced the term *Uranian* (*Urring*) to describe men who loved other men. The Uranian was "not a complete man" but, rather, should be called a "would-be man . . . a kind of feminine being when it concerns not only his entire organism, but also his sexual feelings of love, his entire natural temperament, and his talents."<sup>17</sup> In subsequent books, he argued that this hybrid could be traced to embryonic development: "Each person without exception is neither a boy nor a girl during the first three to four months of its life in the mother's body, but rather a hermaphroditic intermediate individual with sexual organs that are half male, half female."<sup>18</sup> In the case of heterosexuals (or *Dioninge*, as he called them), "Mother Nature" reshapes the "primitive hermaphrodite" into a boy or girl with the usual sexual markers. In the case of Uranians (or *Urninden*, which he used to describe women who loved other women), though, traces of the original hermaphroditic quality persist. Some Uranians will be mostly masculine, he noted, except for "the direction of the yearning toward the male sex." In many others, though, their "movements, gestures, manners, behavior, and gait are unmistakably feminine."<sup>19</sup> Such development was not an abnormality but simply a natural variation. Quoting the Roman writer Petronius, he observed, "Nature is not satisfied with only one rule; it favors alternatives much more."<sup>20</sup>

Ulrichs's concept of the Uranian was met initially by some skepticism. Even Kertbeny, who very early on had been inspired by Ulrichs's writings and during the 1860s entered into an excited letter exchange with the author, came to have doubts. Though Kertbeny never published his own study of sexuality, privately he developed a more complicated schema that would include not only the preferred sexual object but also the preferred mode of sexual interaction.<sup>21</sup> He accepted that sexual preferences were inborn but told



Ulrichs in a letter that he thought this particular argument would be ineffective at best with lawmakers and counterproductive at worst. "Legislators do not care a rap about the hereditary factors of a drive," he insisted, "but rather only about the drive's personal or social danger." And, what was more, insisting on homosexuality's hereditary nature might only reinforce popular prejudices: it potentially "makes them into special natures, into sinister, abnormal, unfortunate people, changeable creatures, into hermaphrodites, who are not organized as fully as other people."<sup>22</sup>

## **SCIENTIFIC DEBATE ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY**

Ulrichs's theory of the Uranian gradually gained ground, though, in part because his works were timely. By the 1860s a wider medical and scientific debate had started to emerge about the nature of same-sex desire. Historians usually trace this debate to the eighteenth century, when Enlightenment thinkers began to think in fundamentally different ways about the nature of sexual difference, the legitimacy of traditional sexual mores, and the foundations of human society. Enlightenment thinkers were by no means of a single mind when it came to deciding whether sexual pleasure was something to be valued as promoting procreation and harmonious family life or feared as an essentially irrational and egoistic drive. Nevertheless, debate on the topic helped spur medical research on sexuality in general.<sup>23</sup>

The Swiss physician Samuel-Auguste Tissot was the chief pioneer, famous for his 1760 work on masturbation, which argued that it weakened the nervous system and might lead to dangerous "antisocial" forms of sexuality such as "sodomy" and "tribadism."<sup>24</sup> Other contributions were made by less famous researchers doing biomedical work on ovulation, menstruation, fertilization, and eventually endocrinology in the mid-nineteenth century. Just as important for doctors, though, was the growing prestige that the field of medicine commanded socially. "More and more," notes the historian Harry Oosterhuis, "physicians, acting as mediators between science and the vexing problems of everyday life, succeeded in convincing the public of the indispensability of their expertise, and gradually they began to replace the clergy as authoritative personal consultants in the realm of sexuality."<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, not all doctors really understood very much about sexuality. The result was that many of them dispensed advice that was not much better than folk medicine. What medical literature was out there could give radically different opinions and information, but the main leitmotifs of the literature when it came to healthy sexual behavior were "ordered living, moderation, and willpower."<sup>26</sup>

Before the mid-nineteenth century, most of the doctors who dealt specifically with homosexuality and other “sexual disorders” were forensic experts whose main role was to give court testimony about physical evidence of anal intercourse or rape. In Germany most of them referred to a seventeenth-century book by Paul Zacchias that gave doctors instructions about how to examine the anuses of passive sodomites for signs of anal intercourse.<sup>27</sup> The French professor of forensic medicine Ambrose Tardieu was still working in this tradition in the 1850s, when he claimed that his own experience of giving medical examinations indicated that repeated anal intercourse caused the penises of sodomites to become tapered like a dog’s.<sup>28</sup> By this time, though, psychiatrists had started to deal with same-sex acts. When these medical practitioners had first turned to the subject of homosexuality in the 1820s, they generally linked it with masturbation. Influenced by Tissot, they argued that it could lead to physical weakness and mental insanity. Not until around 1850 did two doctors working independently—the psychiatrist Claude-François Michéa in France and the forensic doctor Johann Ludwig Casper in Germany—suggest that biological differences might actually be the *cause* of homosexuality. Although these doctors were not the first people in history to suggest that sexual taste was innate somehow, their work initiated a growing obsession in psychiatry with finding a somatic cause (that is, a physical, bodily origin) for same-sex desire.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, both linked male homosexuality to effeminate physical characteristics. This connection was later repeated by Carl Westphal in his 1869 study of the “contrary sexual feeling.”<sup>30</sup> By this time, a growing number of psychiatrists were also following Wilhelm Griesinger in believing that pederasty was at its root a constitutional nervous disease.

Not all medical experts went with such a diagnosis. A sizable section of the psychiatric profession still continued to be influenced by the older “philosophical-idealist” school, which saw homosexuality as the product of bad habits, seduction, or an immoral social environment.<sup>31</sup> By the 1860s, however, evolutionary theories were attracting a lot of public and professional attention, and humans’ advanced mental faculties were increasingly understood as merely a recent acquisition in the long march of evolution. In this context, it was easy to connect mental illness with ideas about hereditary degeneration. As early as 1857, two years before Darwin’s first book was published, the French psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel had argued that the demands of modern civilization were leading to strains on the nervous system, yielding a kind of retrograde evolution. Detrimental behaviors adopted as a response to a high-stress environment ultimately left their mark on heredity, sometimes leading to the reemergence of primitive or animal-like traits in families. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, degeneration theory

found many advocates, in part because it accounted for so much. The Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso used it to explain crime. The Austrian-Jewish physician Max Nordau blamed it for producing the warped perception of modern art. And the French psychiatrist Valentin Magnan argued that degeneration could be used to explain many sexual disturbances.<sup>32</sup>

Among German-speaking psychiatrists, one of the most influential advocates of degeneration theory was Richard von Krafft-Ebing, a towering figure in Austrian psychiatry and one of the founders of modern sexology. His life mirrors in many ways the growing professionalization of psychiatry in the last three decades of the century. Beginning his psychiatric training in the Illenau asylum in southwest Germany in 1864 and then receiving an adjunct position at the Austrian University of Graz in 1873, he eventually moved up to take a full professorship in psychiatry at the University of Vienna in 1889. He made a name for himself as an author of about ninety books (often in numerous editions) and even more articles. He was an effective lecturer, though he was sometimes criticized as “showy” and sensational. By reaching out beyond academia, he did much to expand the reputation of his field in the wider community and, he hoped, to fight ignorance and prejudice in the name of science and humanitarianism.<sup>33</sup> He also ran a private practice through which he gradually acquired a huge catalog of cases from which to draw his information. As many of these patients were not ill enough to be incarcerated in an asylum, his study of them did much to expand psychiatric understanding of the mind and to blur the once-strict divide between normal and abnormal.

In many ways, Krafft-Ebing embodied what might be called the biological (or somatic) school of psychiatry, a school that sought explanations for mental illnesses in the biological makeup of the individual. At the beginning of his career Krafft-Ebing, like Griesinger, traced mental disorder to problems of the nervous system, and especially of the brain. Krafft-Ebing was also inspired by Morel’s degeneration theory, publishing numerous papers on the influence of family and other hereditary factors on mental illness. In his works on neurasthenia and the neurological effects of syphilis, he highlighted the various risks and instabilities associated with modern society in either causing or accentuating these maladies. And in his magnum opus, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, his massive taxonomy of different kinds and varieties of sexual disorders, he traced everything from masochism to pedophilia to homosexuality to a degenerative disorder.<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, Krafft-Ebing has been demonized over the years as the chief contributor to the scientific pathologization of homosexuality in the nineteenth century. Recently, however, the historian Harry Oosterhuis has painted a much more complicated view of Krafft-Ebing’s work and legacy in

his book *The Stepchildren of Nature*. First of all, we need to acknowledge that Krafft-Ebing's views on homosexuality changed dramatically over the years. Though he began with a simple view of "contrary sexual feeling" influenced by Westphal's and Ulrich's theories of inverted gender identity, by the fourth edition of his book, published in 1889, he was differentiating between inborn and acquired forms of the "perversion," each of which was further subdivided into four forms on the basis of the level of gender inversion involved. He acknowledged that there were men and women who desired only members of the same sex but otherwise exhibited no signs of psychic or physical "inversion" (diagnosed as "simple reversal of sexual feeling" if it was acquired, "homosexuality" if it was congenital). He also had one category for bisexuals, which he called "psychic hermaphroditism."<sup>35</sup>

While consistently insisting that homosexuality had roots in the physical nervous system, he was forced to admit that examinations of the brain had failed to turn up any significant signs of sickness or even abnormality. He firmly believed that one day such evidence might be found, but in the meantime he developed a clinical practice based largely on a description and analysis of behavior and psychological symptoms. He listened to his patients, working up detailed histories of the men and women he worked with. He paid attention not only to physique and physiognomy but also to more subjective information such as moods, dreams, fantasies, moral awareness, and perceptions.<sup>36</sup> In developing a treatment plan for his patients, he was eclectic, using a range of options that included hydrotherapy, hypnosis, and "psychical therapy," which could resemble Freud's talking method.<sup>37</sup>

Krafft-Ebing's methods sometimes made him a target of criticism from other psychiatrists from the biological school who were focused on pure research. His response was both pragmatic and moral. Clinical practitioners needed some method of handling troubled patients until the biological side of the science could catch up. More important, though, the rigid materialism of some researchers was wrong-minded. Symptoms of mental illness, he argued, were not "mathematic variables, physical phenomena, or chemical solutions. On the contrary, appearing as feelings, perceptions, and aspirations, they form a class of their own."<sup>38</sup> Such an attitude toward the mind led him to conclude that willpower and moral judgment could play some role in treatment.

Krafft-Ebing's willingness to listen explains his popularity. He was sought out by many seeking help with various sexual disorders, and beyond that he received many letters from appreciative readers who hoped that by detailing their own sexual histories they might make some contribution to his scientific work. His *Psychopathia Sexualis* includes lengthy excerpts from these case his-

tories, drawn not only from existing work and legal sources, but also from a growing number of cases assembled on his own. Eventually 440 distinct case histories were used in one work or another.<sup>39</sup> For readers struggling with their sexuality, such stories could be invaluable. "By publishing his patients' letters and autobiographies and by quoting their statements verbatim," writes Oosterhuis, "Krafft-Ebing enabled voices to be heard that were usually silenced." Just to learn that they were not alone could be immensely comforting for many. And such voices sometimes left a real mark on Krafft-Ebing as well. He took what his patients said seriously and reported their accounts honestly, even when they contradicted his own ideas. Moreover, in several key respects his own theories were clearly changed as a response to listening to his patients talk about their own sexuality.

Perhaps the best example of this process of give-and-take can be seen in Krafft-Ebing's relationship with Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. Having sent copies of his pamphlets to Krafft-Ebing in 1866, when the psychiatrist was at the very beginning of his career, Ulrichs decided to visit Krafft-Ebing as a patient in 1869. They developed a long relationship. They wrote many letters to one another, and Ulrichs forwarded copies of his new works to Krafft-Ebing as they were published.<sup>40</sup> As we have seen, Ulrichs was not the only author in the 1860s and 1870s who was arguing that homosexuality was a form of hermaphroditism, so it is impossible to say that Krafft-Ebing's own belief that homosexuality represented a form of gender inversion was directly inspired by Ulrichs. The relationship, however, clearly stimulated Krafft-Ebing's interest in "contrary sexual feeling." Years later, Krafft-Ebing would tell Ulrichs in a letter that it was "knowledge of your writings alone which led to my studies of this highly important field."<sup>41</sup>

Just as important for Krafft-Ebing's changing notions of homosexuality was Ulrichs's insistence that his sexuality was a natural variation. Over time, as Krafft-Ebing listened to more and more men and women, this idea gradually took root. Ulrichs was not the only one of his patients who believed that his or her sexuality was not "painful or immoral." A few even suggested that their sexuality was not different in any substantial way from that of heterosexuals.<sup>42</sup> By the mid-1890s Krafft-Ebing was clearly coming around to the belief that homosexuality should not be legally penalized. By the end of his life, in 1902, he accepted that "contrary sexual feeling" was not even a psychic degeneracy or a disease but rather simply a biological and psychological condition.<sup>43</sup> As he backed away from degeneration theory, he increasingly relied on embryonic research that investigated how sexual differentiation takes places in the very early stages of life. By suggesting that masculinity and femininity were in fact malleable properties, this research potentially offered a very different

perspective on same-sex desire from that of degeneration theory. Instead of being a sign of modern illness and immorality, it might in fact be simply a natural variation produced by a complicated process of life that had many possible outcomes.<sup>44</sup>

Krafft-Ebing's influence at the turn of the century is hard to exaggerate. His *Textbook of Psychiatry (Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie)* was commonly used in university classes across Germany. His *Psychopathia Sexualis* was a best seller, and translations of it were published in French, Italian, English, Russian, Japanese, Hungarian, and Dutch. New editions continued to appear regularly even after Krafft-Ebing's death; the thirteenth came out in 1937. It popularized the notion of fetishism and coined the terms *sadism*, *masochism*, and *pedophilia*. More fundamentally, Oosterhuis argues, it was one of several books that during the 1890s transformed our notion of sexuality by suggesting that it could have other psychic and social purposes besides simply reproduction.<sup>45</sup>

Through his research, Krafft-Ebing laid the groundwork for the emerging field of sexology. Today we Americans tend to associate this field with Alfred Kinsey and the Masters and Johnson team. Around the turn of the century, this field was first being defined by names such as Albert Moll, Havelock Ellis, and Iwan Bloch. Moll's 1891 book, *Contrary Sexual Feeling (Conträre Sexualempfindung)*, was considered a definitive work on the topic, and his 1897 *Libido Sexualis (Untersuchungen über die Libido Sexualis)* was even more important for suggesting that sexuality was actually constructed from two discrete instincts, one for discharge and a second for physical contact. Only the first had anything to do with procreation: the second was the foundation for many social relationships.<sup>46</sup> Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (originally published in German in 1896 as *Conträre Sexualempfindung*) compiled a number of case histories to suggest that homosexuality was in most cases inborn.<sup>47</sup> Iwan Bloch's 1906 book, *The Sexual Life of Our Times and Its Relations to Modern Culture (Das Sexuelleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur)*, presented a social and cultural overview of modern sexuality. In this massive tome, he covered everything from sexuality in marriage and art to more illicit subjects such as pornography, prostitution, and homosexuality.<sup>48</sup>

## HIRSCHFELD'S THEORY OF SEXUAL INTERMEDIARIES

It was in this German world, with its growing academic debate about the nature of homosexuality, that Magnus Hirschfeld appeared, hoping that the debate might eventually lead to a major reconsideration of Paragraph 175. Although initially his work would borrow very heavily from Ulrich's publica-

tions, Hirschfeld's conceptualization of homosexuality would continue to develop over the years and would gradually become more refined and complex. In 1905 he published a new study, *Sexual Transitions* (*Geschlechtsübergänge*), which was based on his own observations as a physician of the differences between men and women.<sup>49</sup> Filled with clinical photographs and sketches, *Sexual Transitions* made the argument that "taken in very strong scientific terms, one is not able in this sense to speak of man and woman, but on the contrary only of people that are for the most part male or for the most part female."<sup>50</sup> The book gave visual examples of male bodies with rounded hips and female bodies with small breasts. It further developed Hirschfeld's guiding idea that we all began life as one asexual creature, only then to develop various sexual characteristics after being exposed to hormones and physical maturation. Everyone experiences this development in unique ways, though. Consequently, we all represent slightly different mixtures of these various sexual characteristics. In other words, we are all "sexual intermediaries." As the historian Elena Mancini put it, absolute male and absolute female were only "abstractions that occupied extreme positions on a male-female identity continuum."<sup>51</sup>

The notion of "sexual intermediaries" was apparently in the air at the turn of the century. Another important writer to develop this idea was the Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger. In his important 1903 book, *Sex and Character*, Weininger argued that "masculine" and "feminine" were psychological ideals, perhaps Platonic "forms," that became embodied as imbalanced mixtures in human beings. Femininity, he argued, was an unconscious force, saturated by sexuality and emotion and concerned only with reproduction; masculinity, on the other hand, was a rational agent, thoughtful and fully conscious of itself and the world around it.<sup>52</sup> The former was a principle of chaos, the root of all destructive tendencies in history, whereas the latter was the origin of all the positive achievements in human history. Connecting his view of the sexes with the Chinese yin and yang, he suggested that both are bound together intimately in history and in every single individual. Our psyche contains masculine and feminine aspects together—though some people (women, of course, but also Jews and homosexuals) are dominated by the feminine. In love, we seek individuals who will allow us to balance the two principles within our lives.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Weininger's and Hirschfeld's shared belief in intersexuality, there were many important differences between them. Hirschfeld did not share Weininger's anti-Semitism (which was complicated, since Weininger himself was an Austrian Jew), homophobia, or blatant misogyny. In addition, Weininger's conception of sexuality was metaphysical; he saw the two sexual

principles as affecting every turn of world history. And although the early portion of his study used language such as “intermediate forms” and suggested that everyone possessed a “permanent double sexuality,” the latter portion reestablished a much clearer gender division between men and women. In the end, the “spiritual” character of women overwhelmed them, suppressing the masculine within them.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, Hirschfeld’s understanding was rooted in the biological sciences. And when it came to the sexual intermediaries, he was interested mostly in the large and blurry range in the middle rather than the two abstractions at either end.

In a later work, *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress (Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb)*, Hirschfeld further refined his theory of sexual intermediaries. This 1910 book coined the term *transvestite* while offering the first major empirical study of the topic. Having befriended a number of cross-dressers during his study, he argued that transvestism was a sexual variation distinct from homosexuality. Around a third of the men and women that he studied were homosexual, but another third were clearly not. A smaller fraction of the sample exhibited bisexual characteristics, and the remainder appeared to get sexual satisfaction in a narcissistic fashion simply by dressing in clothes of the opposite sex.<sup>55</sup> He still insisted that all gender characteristics and sexual orientations had their root in biological development; in fact, in this book he went so far as to argue that sex character left a trace on every single cell of an organism’s body. Ultimately, however, it manifested itself in four distinct ways: the sex organs, sexual orientation, emotional characteristics, and secondary sexual characteristics such as voice and facial hair.<sup>56</sup> These four distinct levels of sexual characteristics supplied the theoretical basis for what is often considered his most important work, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, published in 1914. A large portion of this later book is dedicated to a discussion of how to diagnose homosexuality on the basis of these sexual characteristics and, most important, how to differentiate it from other kinds of sexual intermediaries.<sup>57</sup>

Hirschfeld’s research was just one facet of his life at this stage. In the early years of the twentieth century, he increasingly found himself called as an expert medical witness in trials involving homosexuality. The political culture and court system of Germany were changing rapidly at the time, which created an opening for more and more psychiatrists and criminologists to be called to give witness to the social environment or mental state that might serve as mitigating circumstances in a case. The German court system had long been highly dependent on expert witness testimony, and around the turn of the century, under pressure from the Social Democratic and left-liberal press, the courts increasingly listened seriously to the opinions of psy-



chiatrists.<sup>58</sup> Hirschfeld was happy to offer his opinion in any case involving homosexuality, and in many cases he managed at least to get reduced sentences for defendants, and occasionally even an acquittal.<sup>59</sup>

In other ways, he took on the role of defending the interests of “sexual intermediaries.” In 1909 Hirschfeld convinced local authorities in Berlin to experiment with “transvestite passes” (*Transvestitenschein*) that enabled men and women to cross-dress in public without worry of being arrested for disorderly conduct or being harassed by the police in other ways. In making his case, he discovered that there was some public sympathy for these individuals since a series of newspaper reports and books had recently reported on the difficulties that they faced.<sup>60</sup> When he was not in court or meeting with public representatives, he devoted much time to public speaking, seeking financial support for the WhK and serving as the organization’s first chairman. Under Hirschfeld’s leadership, the WhK gradually matured. It established an annual publication in 1899, *The Yearbook for Sexual Intermediaries* (*Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*), devoted to the study of homosexuality; in 1901 the group also began to put out a newsletter, *The Monthly Report* (*Monatsbericht des wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees*). Branch groups were established in a number of other cities, including Hamburg and Hannover, that helped organize activity in the local area. Back in Berlin, the committee developed a kind of club life that included not only scientific conferences but also more informal meetings on a regular basis. At these meetings discussions, scientific presentations, and art exhibits were held. To manage all these activities, the WhK developed a more formal organizational structure headed by a board of seven men.<sup>61</sup> One of the main goals of this committee was to draft and circulate a petition for the repeal of Paragraph 175, which attained over 900 signatures by the time it was first presented to the Reichstag (or parliament) in 1898. The petition found little support within the Reichstag, but it continued to circulate and by 1914 had received signatures from more than 3,000 doctors, 750 university professors, and thousands of others. The signatories included such prominent individuals as the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, the sexologist Krafft-Ebing, and several prominent leaders of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).<sup>62</sup>

## **HIRSCHFELD AND TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY POLITICS**

Hirschfeld’s lobbying effort was very much typical of what one influential historian has called the “politics in a new key” that emerged at the end of the century.<sup>63</sup> In fact, the WhK was just one of the many new political groups that emerged in this time of political ferment. The radical expansion of the franchise, the growing population of cities, advancements in literacy, and the

appearance of large-scale newspapers that addressed a mass audience all contributed to the middle and lower classes becoming involved in politics on a regular basis in ways that were unimaginable before these changes. The working class became organized into labor unions, the peasants into farmers' leagues. New political parties appeared, but even old ones were forced to change how they operated. Whereas politics had been rather "discreet and gentlemanly" before the appearance of mass suffrage—the preserve of men from the German aristocracy and upper middle class—the new style of politics became more dynamic and professional. As one historian observes, "Paid officials, party newspapers, auxiliary organizations and energetic campaigning became the norm."<sup>64</sup>

Economic interests and politics became intertwined as unions, monopoly cartels, businessmen's associations, local chambers of commerce, professional organizations, and other interest groups increasingly vied for influence over laws and policies.<sup>65</sup> And many other pressure groups appeared with quite a diverse range of goals and concerns. There were groups devoted to expanding women's rights and right-wing organizations like the racial hygiene movement and the Navy League. In between these extremes, there were numerous groups that aimed at the transformation of society and everyday life. This loose coalition was known as the life reform movement (*Lebensreformbewegung*) and included activists interested in natural health, natural living, nutritional reform, nudism, and even clothing reform.

Like many in the life reform movement, Hirschfeld embraced a broad philosophy that emphasized living in accordance with nature. According to this philosophy, exercise, healthy eating, and time spent outdoors could produce a better harmony between mind and body and ultimately heal many physical illnesses and mental ailments that were the result of modern living.<sup>66</sup> Although too scientific-minded to accept all the Romantic baggage that often came with naturalism, he still held an ideal of living according to certain natural standards. He was an advocate of natural healing medicine, and in the 1890s he edited a weekly magazine that championed healthy lifestyles and natural therapies. In particular he took on alcoholism and tobacco consumption, two practices that were common among the working class and accepted uncritically by most leaders of the labor movement.<sup>67</sup> During the 1920s he also took up nude sunbathing as a pastime.

The goal of eventually transforming the lifestyle and basic attitudes of the masses fitted in well with his socialist sympathies. Although Hirschfeld did not join the SPD until 1923, his socialist inclination dated to his student years. As a twenty-year-old medical student, he had encountered the book *Woman and Socialism* (*Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, 1879) by the towering

figure of German socialism and undisputed leader of the party, August Bebel. "I was very influenced by this book," Hirschfeld later remembered. Its tightly reasoned argument, its insight into the challenges that women faced, and above all its unswerving instinct for justice made Hirschfeld seek out the author when he eventually moved to Berlin in the 1890s. The two soon struck up a friendship. Although back in 1879 Bebel had denounced "boy- and male-love" as an unnatural by-product of the subjection of women in *Woman and Socialism*, in the course of the 1890s his position gradually changed. He became one of the first four individuals to sign the WhK's petition. In 1898—in the context of the considerable debate about the proposed *Lex Heinze*, a law that sharpened several provisions of the criminal code dealing with sexual vices—Bebel took the opportunity to denounce Paragraph 175 in the German Reichstag. The prevalence of homosexuality at every level of society, he argued, suggested how badly this law had failed in its basic goal. He guessed that even the number of homosexuals in Berlin alone would quickly fill the nation's prisons. The inconstancy and arbitrariness of Paragraph 175's enforcement was the only thing that allowed the law even to function. But this inconsistent application of the law allowed class bias to enter into the equation. The Berlin police, he had been told, tended to overlook the sexual predilections of many wealthy and powerful men in the city while simultaneously arresting less fortunate men.<sup>68</sup>

Bebel's turn against Paragraph 175 might have been influenced somewhat by his relationship with Hirschfeld, but the position taken by Eduard Bernstein was more decisive. Today Bernstein is remembered mostly as a socialist maverick—the most important advocate of revisionism within German Marxism and an opponent of those who thought that violent revolution was necessary to build a socialist world. Shortly before he wrote the book that earned him this reputation, though, Bernstein had been inspired by the Oscar Wilde trial in London to write two essays in 1895 that denounced the criminal persecution of homosexuality. Admittedly, he betrayed some real ambivalence about the matter. In fact, he seems to have seen homosexuality as a symptom of a defective modern world that he very much despised. Wilde's aestheticism was associated in his mind with French decadence, and his sexual activities might even reflect a pathological disturbance. He came down clearly against punishing homosexuals legally, however: they were just as much victims of social conditions as the working class was. Why punish homosexuality for being "unnatural," he asked, when there are so many deeper problems in the world to address? "Our entire cultural life," he wrote, "our way of life from morning until evening is a continual infraction against nature, against the original precondition of our very existence."<sup>69</sup>

Bernstein's arguments seem to have had an effect on many members of the SPD. Besides Bebel, Karl Kautsky—the founder and editor of an important journal of socialist theory—was also persuaded by these arguments, and in 1897 he agreed to sign Hirschfeld's petition. With three of the leading figures of the SPD publicly siding against Paragraph 175, many others in the party came around, though slowly and often without giving up their basic prejudices. Negative attitudes toward homosexuality were just as widespread in the working classes as among other classes, and even such radical thinkers as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had privately made disparaging remarks about "pederasts" and "warm brothers" during the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>70</sup> And not everyone in the party was won over by Bernstein's and Bebel's arguments. During a 1905 debate about Paragraph 175 in the Reichstag, one SPD representative rose to criticize another for suggesting all members of the party were of one mind on the issue. He implied that the homosexual question had nothing to do with Social Democracy. He and anyone he spoke for may very well have harbored anxiety that identification with the homosexual cause might make the SPD vulnerable come election time.<sup>71</sup>

As we will see in later chapters, the SPD would not necessarily be above playing off widespread homosexual prejudices when it came to attacking its own enemies. Still, the party would also prove itself to be the most consistent political ally of Hirschfeld's in his fight against Paragraph 175. And Hirschfeld would return the favor. His affinity for the party might have been grounded in the same factors that attracted many modern European Jews to socialism in the second half of the nineteenth century: the movement's universalism, secularism, and defense of social equality and social outsiders. Hirschfeld's own individual character—his "empathic concern for human physical and emotional well-being," his rational outlook, and his optimistic belief in progress—would have also steered him in this direction.<sup>72</sup>

## THE MASCULINISTS

Despite Hirschfeld's success with the WhK, he was not embraced as a leader by all gay men at the time. In fact, many homosexual men had issues with Hirschfeld's use of such language as "third sex" and "sexual intermediaries," which they insisted only perpetuated an inaccurate stereotype of the effeminate homosexual. This stereotype was becoming prevalent by the end of the nineteenth century thanks in no small part to the role of sexology in promoting it. Yet, throughout the nineteenth century, some men managed to distance themselves from the stereotype of the effeminate sodomite. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs himself had recognized that in addition to "womanly Uranians," there

were also “manly Uranians” (*Mannlings*): “Their physical characteristics, that is, the total expression of movements, gestures and mannerisms, character, the type of erotic yearnings and sexual desires, are completely masculine; only the bare mental sex, the direction of the yearning toward the male sex, is feminine.”<sup>73</sup> These men, Ulrichs noted, were generally attracted to “soft and gentle males, beardless, and smooth . . . not solid men, only youths, *pueri*.”

As this description suggests, many educated men of the nineteenth-century European nobility and upper middle class who felt attraction toward males often looked to the civilizations of Greece and Renaissance Italy as a way to understand same-sex desire.<sup>74</sup> Following the notion of “Greek love,” they tended to idealize an age-old tradition of sexual relationships between men of different ages, especially adult men and adolescent boys. This allowed them, at least in their own minds, to maintain a feeling of masculine power by putting themselves in a position of authority.

At the turn of the twentieth century, such men became emboldened by Magnus Hirschfeld’s efforts and by other groups within Germany’s life reform movement. They grew increasingly vocal about the possibility of dressing and behaving in the manner common to “respectable” males while at the same time having sexual desire for men. In effect they did two things. They challenged the notion that effeminacy had anything to do with a man’s experiencing love for another man. At the same time, they contested the norms of masculinity that lent credence to the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual. These masculinist homosexuals, as they are sometimes now called, attempted to change public perceptions about both men and homosexuals by demonstrating that dressing, speaking, gesturing, and walking like a “respectable” man of the upper classes did not necessarily mean desiring only women sexually.<sup>75</sup>

One of the earliest figures within this masculinist tradition was Gustav Jäger.<sup>76</sup> In several publications from the 1880s, this professor of zoology and anthropology argued that the primary purpose of sexual desire was not procreation but social bonding. Consequently, homosexuality among men was not simply healthy but also a virtue.<sup>77</sup> Another prominent masculinist was John Henry Mackay, a Scot who had been raised in Germany. Mackay is probably best remembered for his 1898 biography of Max Stirner, whose anarchist book *The Ego and Its Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 1845) was being rediscovered by many radicals at the end of the century. Beginning in 1905, though, Mackay turned his mind to sexual matters. In a series of books written under the pseudonym Sagitta, he explored the joys of the “nameless love,” his term for Greek-style man-boy love.<sup>78</sup>

By far the most influential masculinist was Benedict Friedlaender, a turn-of-the-century polymath who studied mathematics, physics, botany, and

physiology. His most important book, *The Renaissance of Uranian Love* (*Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios*, 1904), trumpeted his idealization of the classical world, openly promoting a revival of “chivalric love,” by which he meant the “close friendship between youths and even more particularly the bonds between men of unequal ages.”<sup>79</sup> He drew on the notion of the male-bonding community (*Männerbund*) proposed recently by the ethnologist Heinrich Schurtz. The male-bonding community, according to Schurtz, was responsible for nearly “all higher social development.”<sup>80</sup> Friedlaender agreed, simultaneously connecting it with Jäger’s suggestion that sexuality was fundamentally a social instinct. Sexuality formed the basis for “physiological friendships” between men, as Friedlaender described them. It was the emphasis on such friendships in Greek civilization that had supposedly allowed this culture to make such important achievements.

Unlike much of the medical world by this point, Friedlaender believed that all men had a bisexual potential. Men could therefore participate in families, doing their natural part by procreating, and at the same time engage in male-bonding societies, through which they could make social and cultural contributions to their nation and race.<sup>81</sup> Friedlaender was influenced by several writers of the day associated with social Darwinism, German Romantic nationalism, anti-Semitism, and nudism. In line with these intellectual trends, he argued that the neglect of male bonds in modern society had led to the endangerment of the “white race,” further threatened at the end of the nineteenth century by the persistent influence of the stifling effects of Christian morality and the appearance of the women’s movement. What was needed, Friedlaender insisted, was a revival of “manly culture” (*männliche Kultur*), which would then nourish the strength of the Aryan race. This change would be accompanied by a return to a natural form of society, in which “natural people (who are unclothed people) in a *natural* mood (which is unconstrained happiness) deal with each other in a natural way (which is harmless friendliness).”<sup>82</sup> The basic building block of this natural society would be not the family, which gave too much power to women, but the bond between older and younger males, as modeled by Greek society.<sup>83</sup>

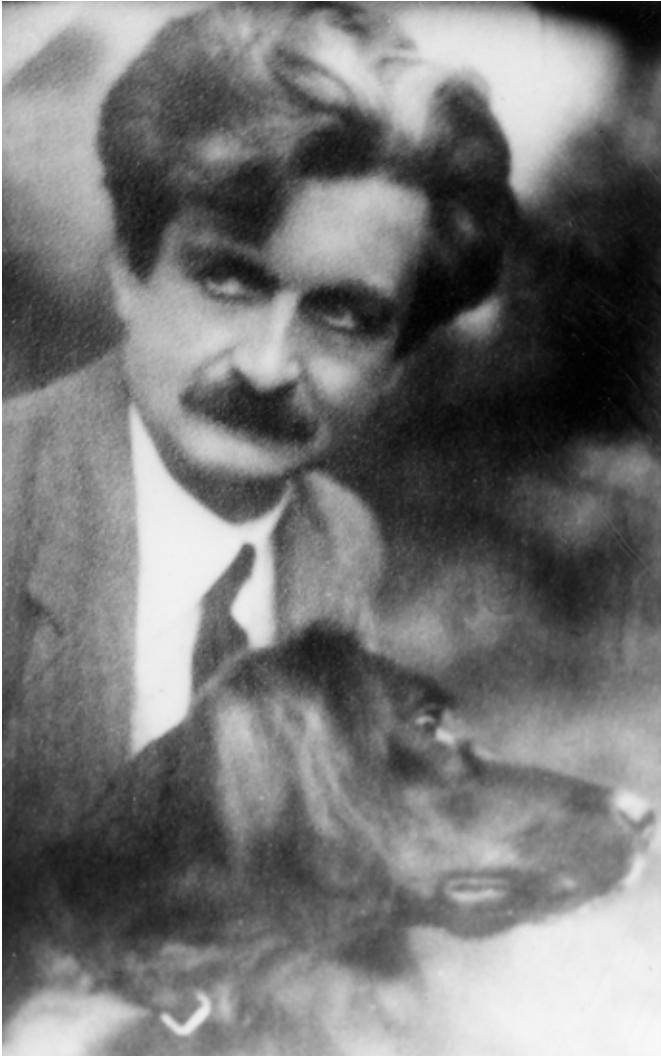
The publication of *The Renaissance of Uranian Love* turned Friedlaender into a person of some note. Having joined the WhK, he was elected to chair its advisory committee. He began to invite other writers interested in Greek man-boy love to have dinner with him at his home and to share their work. One of the regular attendees, Friedrich Dobe, compared these evenings to Plato’s *Symposium*. “Whoever had a young friend,” he recalled, “brought him along.”<sup>84</sup> John Henry Mackay, another person to frequent these dinners, offered his own portrait in his 1926 novel *The Hustler*:

He moved in closed circles of gentlemen who did not cruise the street in order to look for boys to have a good time with. . . . These circles were supplied—one did not exactly know how: one boy just brought another along and all were first carefully examined, to see if they were trustworthy, before they were granted the honor of being accepted. . . . The gentleman who already had a young friend brought him along. Those who had none hoped to find one here. . . . It was like a secret fraternity with unwritten laws, which, however, were all the more strictly observed.<sup>85</sup>

Besides Friedlaender, the other most important masculinist was Adolf Brand (Figure 3). Another fan of Max Stirner's anarchist philosophy, Brand had published since the mid-1890s a magazine called *The Special One*—in German, *Der Eigene*, a term that is difficult to translate because it also resonates with Stirner's anarchist ideas of "self-ownership" (*Eigentum*).<sup>86</sup> The magazine started as a literary publication with a vaguely anarchist slant. In 1896, though, Brand read Hirschfeld's *Sappho and Socrates* and shortly thereafter met Hirschfeld personally, which turned out to be a life-changing moment for him. Two years later, after briefly shutting down operations of *The Special One*, he started up the magazine again, but this time with an entirely different purpose: to promote homosexuality, or what *The Special One* generally called "the love of friends" or "manly culture." The journal appeared only irregularly because of insufficient funds and legal problems. Brand himself was convicted several times by the Berlin authorities for "disseminating immoral material," eventually spending several terms in prison. Brand proved tenacious, returning *The Special One* again and again to publication.<sup>87</sup>

One of Brand's biographers has described him as a "quick-tempered character." His writing was known for its use of abusive language. In person, he could be unpredictable: he once created a scandal by pulling out a dog whip in the German Reichstag and attacking one of the members with it.<sup>88</sup> He was very different from Hirschfeld. Their joint desire to repeal Paragraph 175 led Brand to join the WhK, but over time he became increasingly critical of Hirschfeld. Like Friedlaender, he disagreed from the beginning with Hirschfeld's theory of the Uranian "third sex." At meetings of the WhK, he and Friedlaender often raised questions about the direction that Hirschfeld was giving the group. Brand frequently tried to embolden the group to take aggressive political strategies, such as organizing a mass "self-outing" by prominent individuals; Friedlaender, for his part, raised questions about Hirschfeld's scientific methodology, which generally assumed in this early stage a strict division between homosexuals and heterosexuals.<sup>89</sup>

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**FIGURE 3 ADOLF BRAND**

Brand was editor of the pioneering gay magazine *The Special One* and one of the chief personalities among the gay masculinists.

Source: Schwules Museum, Berlin



In 1903 the two of them joined with a third masculinist, Wilhelm Jansen, to form a new organization called the Community of the Special (*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, or GdE). The GdE was not intended originally to be a rival to Hirschfeld's group. "It was in fact more of a literary circle," writes Harry Oosterhuis, an early historian of the group; it was comparable "to a masonic lodge or classical symposium." The all-male group met weekly at Brand's house in one of Berlin's suburbs to recite poems, listen to readings, and discuss matters important to the group. Brand also organized public lectures in Berlin and group excursions into the nearby countryside for enjoyment.<sup>90</sup> Like Brand, some in the group had connections to anarchism, but a much more important influence on the people who wrote for the journal was late nineteenth-century Romanticism, with its emphasis on living according to natural impulses, its embrace of emotion over reason, and its love of traditional national culture.

### **ACADEMIC VIEWS OF EARLY HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVISM**

Historians of the homosexual emancipation movement have been sharply divided over the masculinist wing of the movement associated with Brand and Friedlaender. The generation that came out of the gay liberation movement of the 1970s tended to see them as a reactionary group whose racism, antifeminism, and Romantic nationalism overlapped in dangerous ways with Nazi ideology. In the 1990s, though, a new generation of historians, influenced by critiques of science and modernity, began to view them more sympathetically. The French philosopher Michel Foucault was especially important for this cohort. Foucault had been very suspicious of modern science's tendencies to categorize people, to open our internal mental life to study, and to produce forms of self-identification that are conducive to external controls. With this perspective in mind, Harry Oosterhuis painted the masculinists as rebels who refused to accept the claims of modern medicine. "They criticized some very essential presuppositions," he wrote, "that have determined the conceptualization of homosexuality from the late nineteenth century until the present day."<sup>91</sup> In contrast to Hirschfeld's efforts to define homosexuality as a biological and physical type, masculinists defended an older tradition of "Romantic friendship" between men in which deep, intimate bonds might sometimes grow to involve "passionate and sensual" forms of expression, including long embraces and even kissing.<sup>92</sup> They refused to go along with a culture that tried to fit people firmly into neat boxes.

More recently, though, a third cohort has argued that both sides of the debate have tended to exaggerate the differences between the masculinists and

those men associated with Hirschfeld's WhK. Glenn Ramsey suggests that we have retroactively thrown present conceptions of "butch" and "femme" on a feud that perhaps was much more complicated and multifaceted than this.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Marita Keilson-Lauritz points out that a complicated network of relationships connected individuals from both camps. Authors associated with the WhK published in *The Special One*, just as individuals close to Brand published in Hirschfeld's major journal. And, most important, both camps often relied on a similar core group of literary figures to make their arguments, which suggests that they shared more in terms of their values and perspectives than is normally acknowledged. Perhaps, Keilson-Lauritz argues, the differences between the two had more to do with their opinions on the proper strategies for achieving legal reform.<sup>94</sup>

Academic debates over the masculinist wing should not cause us to overlook significant differences in how Magnus Hirschfeld has been seen over the years. Activists of the 1970s sometimes saw him as a heroic pioneer of their own struggle. The first major biography of him, though—a 1986 book by Charlotte Wolff—portrayed him as a well-meaning but perhaps naive reformer who, in both his hopes and delusions, embodied the tragic fate of the Weimar Republic. Harry Oosterhuis described him as a key contributor to the medicalization of homosexuality that ultimately displaced earlier, more fluid conceptualizations of male-male eroticism. Manfred Herzer portrayed him as a meek reformer: a Social Democrat who never really embraced the socialist cause; a German Jew who did everything he could to deny his heritage; and a sexual progressive whose attachment to biological explanations and Darwinian thinking made his ideas horribly outdated by the second half of the twentieth century. And most recently, Elena Mancini's biography has tried to salvage Hirschfeld's reputation by highlighting aspects of his work that remain relevant today. Hirschfeld's theory of intersexed categories was multifaceted enough, she argues, to point in the direction of modern-day queer theory. The sexual ethnographies of East Asia and the Middle East that he published in the 1930s exhibited "a conscious eschewal of a Euro-centric perspective" that resists "exploitative stances of exoticization or judgment."<sup>95</sup> Last, his attachment to the Enlightenment values of knowledge and freedom should not be written off as naive principles or expressions of middle-class values. Instead, the empiricism of his scientific research was intimately connected with his openness to other people and cultures, Mancini insists, while his commitment to freedom led him to stand up for the rights of homosexuals, women, the working class, and nonwhite people around the world.

Whatever you make of the differences between the two wings of the homosexual movement, what is certainly true is that they were exacerbated by

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the many homosexual scandals that broke out in Germany around the turn of the century. These scandals raised many substantive issues about the best strategy to achieve legal reform. How might reformers use the judicial system itself to gain needed publicity? How do the personal rights of individuals to some privacy weigh against the needs of the homosexual movement as a whole? What kinds of alliances might be fruitful in the movement's quest to change people's minds about sex between men and sex between women? And, most fundamentally, what behaviors, character traits, and predilections define someone as a homosexual to begin with?