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From *Geschlechtstrieb* to *Sexualtrieb*: The Originality of Freud's Conception of Sexuality

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Discussions of Freud's relation to the history of philosophy have tended to focus on the demonstration of parallels between Freud's thought and that of his various philosophical forbears, notably Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. This dovetails with the question of the often-unacknowledged influence of various philosophers, but especially Schopenhauer, on Freud. This might be part of a defence of the historical importance and modern relevance of the philosopher concerned; it might be part of a deflationary discourse concerning Freud's alleged originality; or, on the contrary, it might be a reassertion of Freud's originality in relation to his alleged sources.¹ Overall, however, it is not always clear whether the demonstration of some philosophical influence constitutes a claim for the philosophical nature of Freud's work, or whether the assertion of Freud's properly psychoanalytic originality on various questions mitigates against its having any philosophical import. Freud's work is frequently said to be such as to raise questions for philosophy or philosophers; but is it itself philosophical?

This chapter will discuss one such claimed parallel: the apparent proximity between Schopenhauer's and Freud's views on the nature and importance of what is called, amongst other things, 'sexuality', the 'sexual impulse', the 'sexual instinct' or 'the 'sexual drive'. It will argue, against this view, for the originality of Freud's early theory of sexuality and suggest that the significance of this theory, apart from its obvious psychiatric and social import, lies in its possible contribution to a philosophical anthropology. That is, Freud's early theory of sexuality, which is in

¹ See, for example, Janaway 2010; Gardner 1999; Gödde 2010; and, this volume, Gardner, Brook & Young, MacDonald, and Gemes.

crucial respects quite the opposite of Schopenhauer's views, bears upon the general question of the being of human being.

These claims concern Freud's *early* conception of the sexual drive and theory of sexuality. Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* appears in the German, French and English versions of his collected works in the 1905 volume, but in all cases the published text is the final, heavily revised edition of 1924. However, the first, 1905 edition is markedly different to its final articulation and to the received view of the *Three Essays*.² The standard view, based on the 1924 version of the *Three Essays*, is that of a developmental theory (progress in infancy and childhood through oral, anal and phallic stages; latency period; achievement in adulthood of genital sexuality), revolving around the Oedipus complex and its more-or-less successful resolution, with the attendant phenomena of castration anxiety and penis envy. In this view, the theory of sexuality is articulated around human sex difference; *mutatis mutandis* this becomes the theoretical core of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, where sexual difference is the axis on which human subjectivity tilts. But most of this (oral, anal and phallic phases; Oedipal complex; castration anxiety; penis envy) plays no part in the first edition of the *Three Essays* and sex difference plays no fundamental part in Freud's early theory of sexuality – quite to the contrary. For Van Haute and Westerink (2016, xiv) these later additions or alterations, far from developing or clarifying the basic position of the first edition, tend rather to clash with it: 'The inserted elements contain new theoretical material fundamentally disrupting the original ideas and perspectives.' Although the 1924 edition may represent Freud's mature view, a reader more interested in texts and ideas than intellectual biography may well decide that the first edition is superior, both in terms of its consistency and its philosophical insight.

This chapter will return to the first, 1905 edition of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* to argue for the originality of Freud's conception of the sexual drive (*Sexualtrieb*), in relation to both his philosophical and his psychiatric

² The 1905 version of the *Three Essays* has been republished in a new edition edited by Philippe Van Haute and Hermann Westerink. (Freud 2015) In the English edition Freud's *Three Essays* are translated by Ulrike Kistner (Freud 2016). Unless otherwise stated, references to the *Three Essays* throughout refer to this new English edition.

predecessors. It will argue that Freud's terminological shift in the *Three Essays* from the *Geschlechtstrieb* to the *Sexualtrieb*, both of which Strachey translates as 'sexual instinct' is evidence of a theoretical shift. (Both *Geschlechtstrieb* and *Sexualtrieb* will remain untranslated in this chapter until such point as we can distinguish between their meanings). Examining the notion of the *Geschlechtstrieb* in Freud's predecessors and its relation to presumptions about the difference between the sexes (*Geschlechter*) allows the distinctiveness of Freud's conception of the *Sexualtrieb* and thus his theory of sexuality to stand out. The conclusions here contest the claim concerning the proximity between Schopenhauer's and Freud's views on sexuality, which, it is argued, is based on a conflation of Freud's conception of the *Sexualtrieb* with his predecessors' conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* and on a failure to acknowledge the specificity of Freud's theory of sexuality.

This chapter first looks at the claims in the literature concerning the relation between Schopenhauer and Kant on the question of sexuality. It then lays out the conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* in Freud's immediate psychiatric predecessors (particularly Krafft-Ebing and Moll) and (after a brief consideration of the multiple meanings of the word *Geschlecht*) its connection to the treatment of the same topic in Kant, Schopenhauer and Hartmann. The next sections demonstrate, with reference to Freud's shift to the use of the term *Sexualtrieb*, how Freud develops a conception of the sexual drive and of sexuality that is quite different to the conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* in Schopenhauer et al. The chapter ends by suggesting how Freud's theory of sexuality is a contribution to a philosophical anthropology based on considerations quite foreign to his predecessors.

1. Schopenhauer and Freud?

Readers of Schopenhauer and Freud are often struck by resemblances between certain aspects of the two thinkers' works, and particularly by the seeming similarity between Schopenhauer's conception of the will and Freud's conception of the unconscious. Here, though, we are concerned with claims such as R.K. Gupta's, that there is 'a remarkable similarity of view between [Schopenhauer and Freud] on the subject of sex.' (1975, 723) Given that the precise nature of Schopenhauer's

influence on Freud is unknown, commentators tend to cast the relation as one in which Schopenhauer 'anticipated' Freud and restrict their claims in this area to the identification of textual-theoretical parallels. Christopher Young and Andrew Brook perhaps go furthest with the claim that 'the general shape of much of Freud's psychology was first articulated by Schopenhauer ... Most significantly, Freud's views on sexuality are extremely similar to those of Schopenhauer.' (1994, 117)³ Bryan Magee (1997, 308) agrees: 'Whatever the truth about when Freud read Schopenhauer, there is no doubt whatever that from the beginning he had imbibed some of Schopenhauer's fundamental ideas via the writings of others. This is most conspicuously true on the subject of sex.'⁴

In fact, it is with respect to two specific aspects of Freud's theory of sexuality that the similarities are noted. First, as Gupta puts it: 'Both Schopenhauer and Freud consider sex as of overriding importance in determining human behavior, and emphasize the enormous influence of unconscious sex motives in human conduct and action.' (Gupta 1975, 723)⁵ Second, both recognized the contribution of the sublimated (as Freud would say) sexual drive in the construction of the human social order – in culture, art, religion, morality and so on.⁶ These points of similarity were noted by Freud himself. In 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis' (1917) he credits Schopenhauer with having 'admonished mankind of the importance, still so greatly under-estimated by it, of its sexual craving [*Sexualstrebens*].' (SE XVII, 144) In the Preface to the fourth edition (1920) of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* Freud reminds those who object to the *Three Essays*' insistence on 'the importance of sexuality [*der Bedeutung des Sexuallebens*] in all human

³ See also Young & Brook 1994, 104–5; Grimwade 2011, 152–4; and Brook & Young in this volume, pp. xx–xx.

⁴ See also Zentner 1995, 112 ff.; Assoun 1995, 238 ff.; Gardner 1999, 378–9. Janaway (1994, 46) is more circumspect: 'Schopenhauer is in some respects a forerunner of twentieth-century views about the unconscious mind and the influence of sexuality on our behaviour, both of which emerge from his considerations of the opposition between intellect and will.'

⁵ See also Magee 1997, 307.

⁶ See, for example, Zentner 1995, 115.

achievements' that Schopenhauer had already 'showed mankind the extent to which their activities are determined by sexual impulses [*sexuelle Strebungen*]' – in the ordinary sense of the word. (Freud 1924; SE VII, 134) In both cases, in the context of what he calls 'affective' difficulties in the acceptance of psychoanalytic theory (SE XVII, 137), Freud's appeal to Schopenhauer has a largely legitimating function.⁷ In 1925, in 'An Autobiographical Study', Freud admits '[t]he large extent to which psycho-analysis coincides with the philosophy of Schopenhauer – not only did he assert the dominance of the emotions and the supreme importance of sexuality but he was even aware of the mechanism of repression'. (SE XX, 59) But in all these broad respects the comparison is superficial and, as I will argue, does not touch on the specificity of Freud's theory of sexuality; that is, on what distinguishes it from the claims of his predecessors.

Indeed, so general are the points that the same parallels could be drawn between, for example, Richard von Krafft-Ebing or Albert Moll and Schopenhauer concerning the importance of sexual life and the role of 'sublimated sexuality' in the formations of human culture. And on closer inspection these psychiatric thinkers in fact have more in common with Schopenhauer *as concerns their basic conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb** than does Freud. This being the case, Freud's distance from Schopenhauer on this point can be shown by working back through some of his psychiatric and other medical predecessors first, concentrating on the various determinations of the meaning of the *Geschlechtstrieb* in these authors' works. This shows not only that Freud's conception of what he called the *Sexualtrieb* was quite different to his predecessors' conceptions of the *Geschlechtstrieb*, but also that the former had a role to play in the construction of a general theory of the human being – a philosophical anthropology – that is simply not on his predecessors' intellectual agendas.

⁷ In the same paragraph in the Preface to the fourth edition the 'stretching' of the concept of sexuality – that is, any conceptual innovation in relation to the concept – is said to coincide closely with 'the Eros of the divine Plato'. As Schopenhauer's conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* is not the same as Plato's conception of Eros, it seems that Freud's claims are to be taken rather loosely.

2. The *Geschlechtstrieb* in Krafft-Ebing and Moll

Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1886, begins with 'A Fragment of a Psychology of the Sexual Life': 'The propagation of the human species [*Die Fortpflanzung des Menschengeschlechts*] is not committed to accident or to the caprice of the individual, but made secure in a natural instinct [*einen Naturtrieb*], which, with all-conquering force and might, demands fulfillment.' (1924, 1) Krafft-Ebing presupposed that this natural drive, if developed normally, asserted itself only at puberty in the form of an attraction to its natural object, a person of the opposite sex. He thus *presupposed* a functional conception of sexuality, subordinated to the end of reproduction; there is no *analysis* of the nature of the *Geschlechtstrieb* in *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Krafft-Ebing's view of sexual pathology follows from this presupposition. In the subsection on 'Perversion of the Sexual Instinct [*Geschlechtstrieb*]' he writes: 'With opportunity for the natural satisfaction of the sexual instinct [*Geschlechtstrieb*], every expression of it that does not correspond with the purpose of nature, – i.e. propagation [*Der Fortpflanzung*], – must be regarded as perverse.' (1924, 56)⁸

Albert Moll's work on sexuality and sexual pathology is based on the same functional conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb*. His best-known work, first published in 1891, is *Die konträre Sexualempfindung*, translated into English as *Perversions of the Sex Instinct* and into French as *Les Perversions de L'Instinct Génital*. The second edition (1893) begins with general remarks on the differences between the sexes: 'Humanity is composed of two sexes [*Geschlechtern*]: masculine and feminine, differing from each other physically as well as psychically [*geistiger*] ... Among these psychic [*seelischen*] properties, which differentiate the two sexes, the sexual instinct [*der Geschlechtstrieb*] does not occupy the last place.' (Moll 1931, 11)⁹ Moll refers his readers to Krafft-Ebing's discussion of the importance of the *Geschlechtstrieb* for the social order, affirms its normally heterosexual aim (1893,

⁸ Krafft-Ebing tended to see these 'abnormalities' as 'functional anomalies' which were 'often the signs of an abnormal constitution of the central nervous system, which is, for the most part, hereditary ("functional signs of degeneration").' (1924, 34; 1887, 23)

⁹ The English translation does not indicate which edition it follows. This passage follows the second edition (1893, 1)

5),¹⁰ and endorses Krafft-Ebing's definition of perversion: 'The urge [*Geschlechtstrieb*] which attracts man to man [*Mann zum Mann*] ought to be called *perversion* in the sense that Krafft-Ebing gives to that word. He believes that a perversion is any manifestation of the sexual instinct [*Geschlechtstrieb*] which is not in accordance with the biological purpose of reproduction.' (Moll 1931, 14)¹¹

But Moll also attempted to analyse the concept of the *Geschlechtstrieb* itself. His *Untersuchungen über die Libido Sexualis (Investigations into the Libido Sexualis)* (1897/8), which Freud studied closely,¹² begins with an analysis of the concept of the *Geschlechtstrieb* which, he argues, is necessary if we are to distinguish between the normal and abnormal, the healthy and pathological expressions of the drive. Moll finds that the word is used by different researchers to mean different things, and is particularly concerned to distinguish between two different drives covered by the same word: *der Begattungstrieb* (the 'copulative drive') and *der Fortpflanzungstrieb* (the 'reproductive drive') (Moll 1898, 3), a distinction which he takes from Alfred Hegar's 1894 book *Der Geschlechtstrieb*.¹³ A short review of Hegar's book attributed to Freud suggests that the title is somewhat misleading; and indeed there is no serious analysis of the *Geschlechtstrieb* itself in it.¹⁴ Pursuing such an analysis Moll

¹⁰ This passage does not appear in the English translation.

¹¹ 'Der Geschlechtstrieb, der den Mann zum Mann führt, muss als eine Perversion in v. Krafft-Ebing's Sinne bezeichnet werden. Perversion nennt dieser Autor jede Äusserung des Geschlechtstriebes, die nicht dem Zwecke der Natur, d.h. der Fortpflanzung dient'. (1893, 11)

¹² Freud's copy of the book in the Freud Museum archive has 'many marginal markings and underlinings'; Freud Museum catalogue of Freud's library: <https://www.freud.org.uk/archive/55764/detail/>

¹³ Hegar 1894, 1: 'Unter Geschlechtstrieb fast man zwei verschiedene Dinge zusammen, den Begattungstrieb, als Verlangen nach fleischlicher Vereinigung mit einer Person des anderen Geschlechts und den Fortpflanzungstrieb, das Verlangen nach Kindern.' Hegar also calls der Begattungstrieb 'der Copulationstrieb' (for example, Hegar 1894, 3).

¹⁴ The review in the *Weiner klinische Rundschau* (3 February 1895), signed only 'F', is most likely by Freud, as Oswald Kästle (1983) shows. (It appears in Freud's *Gesammelte Werke*, Nachtragsband; Kästle's article reproduces the review.) Hegar's book contains statistics on population growth, childhood mortality, and the like. F notes that a marginal comment by a previous reader in his copy of the book reads 'Herr Hegar vergißt eben – den Geschlechtstrieb'; 'Herr Hegar simply forgets – the *Geschlechtstrieb*.' (Kästle 1983, 811) The

claims that the conflation of the two concepts of the *Begattungstrieb* and the *Fortpflanzungstrieb* in the idea of the *Geschlechtstrieb* is the result of a confusion of the conscious aim (*Ziel*) of the drive with its unconscious purpose (*Zweck*). 'The drive is in the service of reproduction; reproduction is, so to speak, its objective aspect, while the subjective aspect of the *Geschlechtstrieb* is what Hegar calls the copulative drive [*Begattungstrieb*]; that is, the copulative drive serves the end of reproduction [*Fortpflanzungszweck*].' (Moll 1898, 6)

To avoid this confusion it is first necessary, according to Moll, to agree on what is meant by 'instinct' (*Instinkt*), and it is Eduard von Hartmann who provides the relevant definition: 'Instinctive actions [are] purposive actions without consciousness of the purpose.' (Moll 1898, 6)¹⁵ Although Moll denies that instinctive action must always lack consciousness of the purpose, with Hartmann's basic definition Moll specifies that the *Geschlechtstrieb* is in the service of an instinct, the reproductive instinct (*Fortpflanzungsinstinkt*); together these are the subjective and objective aspects of the same thing.¹⁶ (Moll 1898, 6) Referring back to this discussion later in the book he says that the *Geschlechtstrieb* arises from the reproductive instinct, and that it would be good – in the context of the question of whether heterosexuality is an innate aspect of the drive – to examine it from the standpoint of the instincts. (Moll

copy of Hegar's book in the Freud Library at the Freud Museum in London contains this marginal comment. See Davies and Fichtner 2006.

¹⁵ In Hartmann's own words: '*Instinct is purposive behaviour without consciousness.*' (Hartmann 2000, 79) 'Instinct ist zweckmässiges Handeln ohne Bewusst.' (Hartmann 1923, 68)

¹⁶ Hartmann himself identifies the *Geschlechtstrieb* as an instinct in a more forthright manner: 'That the impulse to sexual union is an instinct [*der Trieb zur geschlechtlichen Verbindung ein Instinct ist*] which manifests itself spontaneously ... appears from the fact that the sexual impulse as instinct [*der Geschlechtstrieb als Instinct*] is universal in the animal and the vegetable kingdom.' (Hartmann 2000, 221; 1923, 190). See also 223;194: 'Having perceived the sexual impulse [*Geschlechtstrieb*] in general to be of the nature of an instinct ...' For Hartmann the unconscious nature of the instinct explains how it can be that it is a reproductive instinct even if people desire intercourse with the infertile or take pains to avoid conception: 'knowledge or intention of consciousness has no direct influence on the instinct [*Instinct*], since the design of procreation [*der Zweck der Zeugung*] lies *outside* consciousness, and only the willing of the *means* to the unconscious end (as in all instincts) appears in consciousness.' (Hartman 2000, 221; 1923, 190)

1898, 116) Indeed the header for this discussion is 'The *Geschlechtstrieb* regarded as reproductive instinct'.

It is true, as Sigusch (2012, 189) argues, that Moll refuses to accept that the innateness of heterosexuality can be taken for granted as a presupposition before investigating the matter; but in the end, all things considered, it is his opinion that heterosexuality is innate (1897, 304–5), and that (as in Krafft-Ebing's view) this is how nature ensures that reproduction is not left to chance. (1897, 245) It is also true that Moll, unlike Krafft-Ebing, refuses to identify the *Geschlechtstrieb* with the *Fortpflanzungstrieb*, the very existence of which, qua drive (*Trieb*), is dubitable; but this is because he rethinks the latter as an instinct, not a drive, and sees the *Geschlechtstrieb* as an expression of the *Fortpflanzungsinstinkt*, arising from it. Thus, although his later *Untersuchungen über die Libido Sexualis* is in many respects a more sophisticated and questioning analysis of the *Geschlechtstrieb* than one finds in his *Perversions of the Sex Instinct*, the fact remains that in Moll's discussions of the *Geschlechtstrieb* the question of reproduction is always either explicitly evoked or looms large in the background. This relation to reproduction is the implicit key to the determination of what is normal, and the conclusions of the later *Untersuchungen* do not contradict the definition of perversion from the earlier book.

3. 'Geschlecht' and 'Geschlechtstrieb' in Kant and Schopenhauer

The next major step back in the line of intellectual descent from Moll to Hartmann leads to Schopenhauer, and from him to Kant. A brief examination of the discussion of the difference between the sexes (*Geschlechter*) in Kant and the *Geschlechtstrieb* in Schopenhauer shows that Krafft-Ebing's and Moll's functional, teleological conceptions of the *Geschlechtstrieb*, albeit more self-consciously scientific, chime with their philosophical predecessors. For Kant (in his *Lectures on Anthropology* and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*) the sexual

passion,¹⁷ together with the differences between the sexes (*Geschlechter*) themselves, are one of the clearest expressions of purposiveness in nature. For Schopenhauer, the *Geschlechtstrieb* (translated by Payne as 'sexual love' or 'sexual impulse' in Book II of *The World as Will and Representation*) and the difference between the sexes is to be understood in terms of the metaphysics of the will-to-live. For both, then, sex difference and the *Geschlechtstrieb* are not merely natural empirical facts to be understood biologically (to use a modern term) but phenomena to be explained philosophically, with reference either to the principle of purposiveness (Kant) or metaphysically (Schopenhauer).

But before looking at these discussions it is necessary to dwell on the word *Geschlecht* itself. What does '*Geschlecht*' mean? Or more specifically, what does '*Geschlecht*' mean in this context? In his entry on '*Geschlecht*' in the *Dictionary of Untranslatableables* Marc Crépon lays out the various meanings of the word: paternal or maternal lineage; race, or a people; generation (i.e. a collection of individuals born at the same time); genus (a logical or classificatory category); and sex. (Crépon 2014, 394–5) Grammatical gender, the confluence of the classificatory category with 'sex', can also be added to this list. Crépon claims that the translation of *Geschlecht* is not problematic in relation to the two 'easily identifiable' senses of 'sex' and of the logical sense of 'genus' (Crépon 2014, 395); but, as the translation of the *Three Essays* shows this is not true in the case of 'sex'. According to Susanne Lettow (2014, 38), before the end of eighteenth century the dominant meaning of *Geschlecht* was 'line of ancestry' (paternal or maternal lineage). Only after the late-eighteenth century does the sense of 'sex' or 'gender' gain any prominence in relation to the other meanings of the word. But when *Geschlecht* comes to mean 'sex' (that is, sex difference) its meaning is not historically isolated from the other meanings. Indeed, *Geschlecht* only means 'sex' in the context of the other meanings, and in particular of the meanings of kinship and generation.

As Crépon points out, efforts were made to disambiguate these meanings in the late-eighteenth century, with the aim of 'constricting the uncontrollable breadth of meanings of *Geschlecht* and substituting for it new, univocal concepts, such as *Stamm* and *Rasse*.' (Crépon 2014, 395) Certainly Kant attempted this. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic*

¹⁷ Kant does not use the word '*Geschlechtstrieb*', but speaks of the 'drive for the preservation of one's kind' ('*der Trieb seine Art zu erhalten*') or the drive for propagating the species. (Kant, 2012, 162)

Point of View, in the section 'On the Way of Cognizing the Interior of the Human Being from the Exterior',¹⁸ Kant distinguishes the characteristics of the person (*die Person*), the sexes (but singular in German, *der Charakter des Geschlechts*), the people (*Volk*) and the species (*Gattung*); although a fifth, very brief, division of the character of race (*Rasse*) also appears in the ensuing text. Apart from the first (*die Person*), these different categories are all possible meanings of *Geschlecht*; Kant's aim here is, in part, to limit the meaning of *Geschlecht* to 'sex'.

In the section on the character of sex (*Geschlecht*), rife with sexist cliché, the central concern is with woman. The main themes concern 'the provision of nature' in its organisation of the female and nature's most important end, 'the preservation of the species' ('*der Erhaltung der Art*'). (2007b, 399)¹⁹ Thus although, as Crépon says, in these sections Kant distinguishes between what might otherwise be the several meanings of *Geschlecht* (*Gattung, Rasse, Volk*), reserving *Geschlecht* for sex, *Geschlecht* as sex is still not thought independently of the other meanings; indeed, it is only given its 'sexual' specification through its relation to generation, procreation or preservation of the species. In his *Lectures on Anthropology* Kant further connects the comments on nature's most important end with the *Geschlechtstrieb*. He identifies two essential human drives: for self-preservation and for the preservation of one's kind. The drive 'which is laid in us by nature is the instinct for propagating the species [*der Trieb, der von der Natur in uns gelegt ist, ist das Geschlecht fortzupflanzen*].' (Kant 2012, 162) Parental and sexual love are said to arise as 'a consequence of this sex drive [*eine Folge des Geschlechts Triebes*]' (2012,163) and thus to be in accord with nature's purpose.

This teleological understanding of sexual passion and of the division of sex (*Geschlecht*) forms the basis of Schopenhauer's extensive chapter in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* entitled '*Metaphysik der Geschlechtstriebe*' (translated as 'The Metaphysics of Sexual Love'). Schopenhauer overlays the metaphysical principle of the will on Kant's natural teleology and explains the *Geschlechtstrieb* as a manifestation of the will-to-live. Despite these differences, the *Geschlechtstrieb* is essentially understood in the same way, in terms of the reproduction of the species. The contents page describes this chapter as an appendix to the one that precedes it, 'Life of the Species'. Here the subordination of the individual to the species, or the 'deep-seated consciousness' that

¹⁸ But see also Kant, 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race' (2007a) [1785] and the *Lectures on Anthropology* (2012) [1772–89].

¹⁹ See also Kant 2007b [1798], 402.

the individual attains their true being in the species (1966, II, 510) is recognised in the fact that everything to do with *die Geschlechtsverhältnisse*, sexual relations, and *die Zeugung*, procreation, is incomparably more important to the human individual than anything else. In the *Geschlechtstrieb* ('sexual impulse', in the standard translation by Payne) 'the will-to-live becomes to a certain extent transcendent' extending beyond the individual to the species. (1966, II, 515) All amorousness is to be traced back to 'sexual love [*Geschlechtstrieb*], i.e. the interest of the species', (1966, II, 552), which is itself to be traced back to the will-to-live. Indeed, individualised *Geschlechtstrieb* is a delusion in which what is good for the species appears as what is good for the individual (1966, II, 538-9): 'Since ... the will wills life absolutely and for all time, it exhibits itself at the same time as sexual impulse [*Geschlechtstrieb*] which has an endless series of generations in view.' (1966, II, 568) Although the individual is subordinated to the species in the will-to-live manifested as the *Geschlechtstrieb* in general, 'what appears in consciousness as sexual impulse [*Geschlechtstrieb*], directed to a definite individual, is in itself the will-to-live as a precisely determined individual.' That is, although the sexual impulse [*Geschlechtstrieb*] skilfully assumes the mask of objective admiration for another individual ('love')

what alone is aimed at is the generation of an individual of a definite disposition. ... The true end of the whole love-story, though the parties concerned are unaware of it, is that this particular child may be begotten ... The growing attachment of two lovers is in itself in reality the will-to-live of the new individual, an individual they can and want to produce. (1966, II, 535–6)

Schopenhauer also explains the delusion of the *Geschlechtstrieb* as the working of an instinct: 'In the great majority of cases, instinct [*Instinkt*] is to be regarded as the sense of the *species* which presents to the will [here, as *Geschlechtstrieb*] what is useful to *it*.' (538) This instinct 'directed absolutely to what is to be produced, underlies all sexual love [*Geschlechtsliebe*] ... the purpose that unconsciously guides us is clearly the possibility of procreation in general.' (542)

4. Freud: The Specificity of the *Sexualtrieb*

If Krafft-Ebing and Moll affirm a functional and thus heterosexual conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* which is inseparable, conceptually and biologically, from reproduction, as the characterisation of its diverse, non-reproductive forms as

'perversion' shows, the continuity with their philosophical predecessors, but particularly Schopenhauer (perhaps via Hartmann), is clear. Indeed, in a later edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis* Krafft-Ebing appeals to Schopenhauer as an authority on the *Geschlechtstrieb*.²⁰ Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Krafft-Ebing and Moll, to different degrees, take the functional conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* more-or-less for granted;²¹ the latter two then deal with the perversions precisely as a perversion of this drive.

Freud, on the other hand, begins the *Three Essays* with the diverse manifestations of sexual life and moves to a characterization of the sexual drive that is adequate to them.²² If Kant's and Schopenhauer's aim is to explain the *Geschlechtstrieb* by way of independently determined philosophical commitments (the principle of purposiveness and the metaphysics of the will, respectively), Freud's aim in the *Three Essays* – and most particularly in the first two; he is less successful in the third – seems rather to be to examine the matter, as far as possible, on its own terms, through the discussion of empirical phenomena, and to extract from that any general claims about the sexual drive. Frequently reiterating that the nature of sexual excitation itself remains unknown, the basic features of the drive are extracted from, precisely, non-procreative aspects of the drive: perversions and infantile sexuality. When Freud says in his first footnote to the First Essay that the 'details' contained in it are drawn from the work of Krafft-Ebing, Moll et al, he is referring to his brief presentation of various earlier assessments of, for example, the nature and origin of inversion (homosexuality) and the empirical information from the cases that his predecessors present.²³ What he then does with the material in the construction of a

²⁰ Krafft-Ebing 1924, 41. Moll (1931, 170 ff) also includes a brief, critical section on Schopenhauer in a literature survey on the topic of homosexuality.

²¹ Moll claims that Schopenhauer's specific explanation for homosexuality is wrong (Moll 1931, 170–171); but this does not alter the fact that they share a functional conception of the 'normal' *Geschlechtstrieb*.

²² See Van Haute and Westerink 2016, xxiv–xxv.

²³ It is notable that the *Three Essays* contains no discussion of individual cases or examples. In this respect, it differs significantly from its 'companion' works, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901).

theory of sexuality is quite different. The single most important result of Freud's methodological reversal is the detachment of sexuality from reproduction and the definition of sexuality as, precisely, non-functional, or the definition of sexuality primarily in terms of pleasure. This necessitates a radically different view of what Krafft-Ebing and Moll call 'perversion'.²⁴

The opening of the *Three Essays* refers critically to the popular view of sexuality, by which Freud seems to mean both the lay-person's view and the agreement of the dominant scientific-clinical view with it. In Strachey's Standard Edition translation:

The fact of the existence of sexual needs [*geschlechtlicher Befürdnisse*] in human beings [*bei Mensch*] and animals is expressed in biology by the assumption of a 'sexual instinct' [*Geschlechtstrieb*], on the analogy of the instinct [*Trieb*] of nutrition, that is of hunger. Everyday language possesses no counterpart to the word 'hunger', but science makes use of the word 'libido' for that purpose.

Popular opinion has quite definite ideas about the nature and characteristics of this sexual instinct [*Geschlechtstriebes*]. It is generally understood to be absent in childhood, to set in at the time of puberty in connection with the process of coming to maturity and to be revealed in the manifestations of an irresistible attraction exerted by one sex [*Geschlecht*] upon the other; while its aim is presumed to be sexual union [*geschlechtliche Vereinigung*], or at all events actions leading in that direction.

We have every reason to believe, however, that these views give a very false picture of the true situation. (SE VII, 135)²⁵

²⁴ Oosterhuis (2000) argues that 'Krafft-Ebing's approach foreshadowed Freud's (64) to the extent that one would have to say that 'Freud was not a radical pioneer [...] he built on psychiatric theories of sexuality formulated by others in the 1880s and 1890s.' (67) But if we concentrate on the two thinkers' specific conceptions of the drive this is not true.

²⁵ Strachey's decision to translate '*Trieb*' as 'instinct' has become controversial, and today many people prefer 'drive'. The instinct/drive distinction in psychoanalysis is important, but for the purposes of the argument here it is enough to make just one point. Translating

Van Haute and Westerink argue that Freud signals his break with his sexological predecessors by introducing a ‘fundamental distinction’ between the *Geschlechtstrieb* and the *Sexualtrieb*. (Van Haute and Westerink 2016, xxvii) That there is at least a shift in terminology in the *Three Essays* is undeniable. Freud uses ‘*Geschlechtstrieb*’ rather rarely in comparison with the use of ‘*Sexualtrieb*’. The former tends to be used in the context of discussions of popular opinion; it is noticeable that, after the first section of the first Essay, it is effectively replaced with numerous uses of the latter such that Freud’s preferred word, here and elsewhere, is definitively ‘*Sexualtrieb*’.²⁶ As previously mentioned, Strachey’s Standard Edition translation does not distinguish between *Geschlechtstrieb* and *Sexualtrieb*, usually translating both as ‘sexual instinct’. Similarly, the most widely used French translations – for example that in the *Oeuvres complètes* – translate both as ‘*pulsion sexué*’.²⁷ However, as Van Haute and Westerink argue, the distinction is significant in distinguishing Freud’s conception of the drive from that of his predecessors. The *Geshlechtstrieb* of his predecessors is a functional, normally heterosexual drive that is always understood implicitly or explicitly in the context of reproduction. The *Sexualtrieb* as conceived by Freud is, in contrast, i) essentially indifferent as to its object and ii) quite independent of reproduction – which is to say, non-functional and non-purposive or non-teleological. We can now translate *Sexualtrieb* as ‘sexual drive’, in distinction from the *Geschlechtstrieb*.

Freud’s use of ‘*Trieb*’ as ‘drive’ connects his work to the history of the concept in German philosophy – particularly the *Naturphilosophie* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – and to contemporary debates in psychiatry and medicine. It is now conventional to use ‘drive’ for *Trieb* in translations of, for example, Schelling, Fichte, Blumenbach and Kant. Freud was party to arguments in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries over the concept of the *Trieb* or drive itself (see Cotti 2008 and David-Ménard 2002).

²⁶ Freud (2016) uses ‘*Geschlechtstrieb*’ on pp. 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 35, 80, 84. He uses ‘*Sexualtrieb*’ on pp. 5, 11, 13, 15 (twice), 16 (twice), 20, 22 (twice) 23 (five times), 24, 26 (three times), 29, 30, 35, 38, 41, 43, 48, 51, 53, 57, 61, 65, 72, 74, 75, 81, 86.

²⁷ Further, in the translation of the passage just quoted, ‘*geschlechtlicher Befürdnisse*’ and ‘*geschlechtliche Vereinigung*’ are, respectively, ‘*besoins sexuels*’ and ‘*l’union sexué*’. (Freud 2006, 68)

The first of these two aspects²⁸ of Freud's conception of the sexual drive determines his conclusions on the nature of the so-called 'perversions'. The first conclusions of the *Three Essays*, at the end of the opening section on 'Inversion', do not offer an answer to the question of the origin of inversion, which had preoccupied Freud's predecessors. Rather, they shift the ground of investigation:

While we find ourselves unable to satisfactorily explain the origin of inversion on the basis of the material gathered so far and presented here, we feel that in the course of this investigation we have reached an insight that could attain greater significance than the solution to the problem set out above. Our attention is drawn to the fact that we imagined too close a connection between the sexual drive [*Sexualtrieb*] and the sexual object. In cases that have been considered abnormal, our experience teaches us that the sexual drive [*Sexualtrieb*] and sexual object are merely soldered together [...] We are thus instructed to loosen the bond that we had imagined between drive and object. The *Geschlechtstrieb* is probably independent of its object initially, and its origin is likely not owed to the object's attractions. (Freud 2016, 10–11)

The use of the preferred term '*Sexualtrieb*' (sexual drive) is closely connected to the introduction of the new technical terms (on the first page of the *Three Essays*) of the 'sexual aim' and the 'sexual object' (Freud 2016, 1). Whereas the *Geschlechtstrieb* of Freud's predecessors is presumed to have a natural object – a member of the opposite sex (*Geschlecht*) – the sexual drive does not. Whereas the aim or purpose of the *Geschlechtstrieb* is ultimately thought to be reproduction, the only aim of the sexual drive is pleasure and/or satisfaction. This means that whereas the *Geschlechtstrieb* is conceptually tied to and understood in terms of the difference between the sexes (*Geschlechter*), sex difference is irrelevant to the conception of the nature of the sexual drive.²⁹

²⁸ I do not claim that these two aspects exhaust what is specific to Freud's conception of the sexual drive; but these are the two relevant features for the purposes of the argument here.

²⁹ See David-Ménard 2002. It is true that Freud writes, infamously, that 'the sexuality of little girls is entirely masculine in character ... libido is regularly and invariably masculine in nature, whether it occurs in men or in women, and irrespective of whether its object is a man or a woman.' (Freud 2016, 71) To understand what it means to say that the libido is

The conclusion at the end of the first Essay, made possible by Freud's methodological reversal, is then that 'there is indeed something innate lying at the basis of the perversions, but that it is *something innate in all human beings*, though as a disposition it may vary in its intensity and may lie dormant, waiting to be brought to the fore by life experiences. It concerns the innate, constitutional roots of the sexual drive [*Sexualtrieb*].' (Freud 2016, 32) These 'roots' are not simple but multiple, leading to the idea of the sexual drive being made up of 'various components that have become detached from it again in the perversions.' (Freud 2016, 23) Before life experiences, the relative weight of individuals' sexual constitutions, organic and other forms of repression and social expectations determine the expression of the sexual drive into specific forms – of which adult heterosexuality is but one example – a 'polymorphously perverse disposition' (Freud 2016, 50) is common to all human beings. As Monique David-Ménard has argued (2002, 203), it is central to Freud's conception of the sexual drive that its 'fate' is undetermined. The sexual drive thus serves no instinct, as Moll had claimed, and it has no one 'natural' fate.³⁰ In stark contrast to the pathological conception of perversion that is part and parcel of his predecessors' conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb*, Freud's *Three Essays* mostly characterise 'perversion' (for example active inversion, sexual sadism and masochism) as a good, healthy outcome for the human sexual drive, to the extent that 'neurosis is the negative of perversion'. 'Perversions' are not symptoms that develop 'only at the expense of the so-called normal sexual drive', but neurotic symptoms do develop 'at the expense of abnormal sexuality.' (Freud 2016, 26)³¹ However, the fundamental point is that in this

'masculine' we must understand Freud's stipulative definition of 'masculinity', according to which 'masculinity' is not an essentially 'male' attribute. This does not conflict with the claim that, in essence, sex difference is irrelevant to the sexual drive, but it has had a part in obfuscating that position and is regrettable (to say the least) for several reasons. However, that is not the topic of this essay.

³⁰ Freud later specified the four possible fates of the drives more generally: reversal into its opposite, turning round upon the subject's own self, repression and sublimation. (1915, 126 SE XIV)

³¹ See also Freud 2016, 80.

discussion of the sexual drive as such, no distinction between normality and perversion is at first possible.

It is in the section on 'The Sexual Aim of Infantile Sexuality' that the second aspect of Freud's conception of the sexual drive is clearest, or where the argument against any teleological interpretation of the sexual drive is strongest. But here there is also, simultaneously, an unexpected eruption of talk of nature's purposes. In the section on the period of sexual latency in childhood, discussing sublimation, Freud considers the possibility that the diversion of the 'sexual stirrings' in childhood is explained through the immaturity of the reproductive function, but on the other hand (and this is the more compelling claim, in the context of the attempt to think sexuality beginning with infantile phenomena) 'these impulses would seem in themselves to be perverse' and thus candidates for repression. (Freud 2016, 39) The 'essence' of the sexual drive is, if anything, primarily connected with pleasure, which is or comes to be located in the erogenous zones, some of which are 'predestined' although 'any other random part of the skin or mucous membranes can take over the functions [*die Dienste*] of an erogenous zone' (Freud 2016, 44) It is interesting that Freud uses the word *Dienste*, meaning 'service' or 'duties', here. Like the abstract form of labour which is exchangeable, sexuality itself has become abstract, severed from any particular function when 'any random body part' can take over the 'function' of an erogenous zone. The terminological shift from *Geschlechtstrieb* to *Sexualtrieb* that marks this new conception of the sexual drive is accompanied by a proliferation of terms constructed with the prefix 'Sexual-', which admits of more combinations than *Geschlecht-*. Terms including sexual abuse, sexual activity, sexual behaviour, sexual disturbances, sexual rejection, sexual latency, sexual overvaluation, sexual pleasure, sexual precocity, sexual role, sexual symbolism and so on, which occur extremely frequently throughout the *Three Essays*, seem to indicate that the idea of the sexual that emerges from this conception of the sexual drive breaches the bounds of traditional psychology and physiology, becoming as much a cultural as a biological or psychical phenomenon.

Continuing the discussion of infantile sexuality Freud writes that the aim of infantile sexuality is satisfaction by means of stimulation of the erogenous zone:

The satisfaction must have been previously experienced in order to leave behind a need for its repetition, and we may expect that nature would have made sure not to leave this experience of satisfaction to chance. We have already learned about the arrangement that fulfils this purpose [*Zweck*] in the case of the zone of the lips: it is the simultaneous connection of this part of the body with the function of food intake.

We shall come across other, similar arrangements as sources of sexuality. (Freud 2016, 45)

In these surprising sentences Freud does indeed appeal to nature's purposes, but nature's aim is sexual excitation and satisfaction. Nature ensures that this 'subsidiary gain' in pleasure is not left to chance by so arranging things that essential functions (here, the functions of nourishment) will also give rise to a satisfaction detached from those functions. In the next section he seems to say much the same of the anal zone: 'Like the labial zone, the anal zone is, by its position, to act as intermediary for the attachment of sexuality to other bodily functions.' (Freud 2016, 46) Nature's purpose is only invoked, explicitly or implicitly, to the extent that its purpose is to ensure sexual excitation.

Is it possible that Freud here plays with the language of purpose that dominates his philosophical and psychiatric predecessors' understanding of sexuality? Pleasurable as it would be to believe so, probably not. A few pages later, in the section on the activity of the genital zones, Freud considers the connection of the genital apparatus with urinary function and its proximity to the anal zone. In the various secretions from the genitals and anus, and the accidental excitations arising from the washing and rubbing involved in personal hygiene, 'it is difficult to overlook nature's purpose: to establish, through early infantile masturbation ... the future primacy of the erogenous zones for genital activity.' (Freud 2016, 48) Freud goes on to say that, with the arrival of puberty, in men at least, 'the sexual drive now puts itself at the service of the reproductive function' [*Fortpflanzungsfunktion*] and he begins to speak of *Geschlechtsprodukte*, the *Geschlechtsapparat* and *Geschlechtstoffe*. (Freud 2016, 61, 64, 67, 68)

The reversion, in the third of the *Three Essays*, to the presuppositions of the idea of the *Geschlechtstrieb* as in service to the reproductive function has no basis in the preceding discussion; indeed, the opposite is the case. Certainly this is a contradiction in the first edition of the *Three Essays*; most likely it is, as Arnold Davidson (2001, 92) says, 'the consequence of the dynamics of fundamental change'. Freud could not keep up with himself; or, as Van Haute and Westerink put it, in the divergent temporality of an old paradigm disappearing and the emergence of the new concepts that undermined it, Freud has difficulty in grasping and seeing through to its end the radical character of his own thinking. (Van Haute and Westerink 2016, lxxi)

Making sense of this contradiction, with the aim of recovering Freud's early, original conception of the sexual drive, Van Haute and Westerink (2017, 116) propose that we speak

of two 'regimes' of sexuality in Freud's thought: the inherently perverse, auto-erotic, pleasure-seeking, infantile regime on the one hand, and the socially conditioned, genitally-organised, adult regime – the understanding of which is dominated by the idea of the 'the reproductive function' – on the other. The first regime, we can now say, *is the regime of the sexual drive as such*. The second is what Freud's predecessors – including Schopenhauer – understood under the name of the '*Geschlechtstrieb*'. This latter is, of course, one 'fate' of the first, but also either suffers or enjoys the irruption of the infantile regime into it in the form of perversions, regressions and sexual peculiarities of all kinds. What becomes adult sexuality has been corralled (by organic and other forms of repression and by societal norms) in such a way as to privilege the genital zone and the reproductive function of the genitals; historically, this has been expressed as the social norm of heterosexuality. But the sexual drive is essentially perfectly indifferent to sexual difference; or, sexual difference does not belong to this regime of sexuality. On the other hand, the second, 'genital' regime of sexuality is tied up with sexual difference, as the word ***Geschlechtstrieb*** suggests. It belongs to 'civilisation' and accounts for many of its discontents, according to Freud. As a descriptive term for a normative, cultural regime of sexuality the idea of the *Geschlechtstrieb* has its analytical and critical merits; as an a priori theoretical principle it is metaphysical residue. The distinction between the sexual drive (*Sexualtrieb*) and the *Geschlechtstrieb* is thus the very heart of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. It is the textual mark of Freud's break with his predecessors, and there is nothing in Schopenhauer's specific conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* that anticipates this.

Strachey's decision not to mark the distinction between *Geschlechtstrieb* and *Sexualtrieb* in his translation of the *Three Essays* no doubt partly accounts for its invisibility in the English-language reception of Freud. Different and inconsistent translations of the word '*Geschlechtstrieb*' in Freud's philosophical and psychiatric predecessors have further obscured the continuity between their accounts. Payne usually translates Schopenhauer's use of the word with 'sexual impulse'; the same is true in Coupland's translation of Hartmann. Chaddock's translation of Krafft-Ebing favours 'sexual instinct' as the translation of *Geschlechtstrieb*, as does Popkin's translation of Moll, although the latter also sometimes uses 'genital instinct', and *Trieb* often becomes 'urge'. As already noted, *Perversions of the Sex Instinct* is the translation of Moll's *Die konträre Sexualempfindung*; the French translation (1897) is entitled *Les perversions de l'instinct génital*, although 'instinct sexuel' is used within the book. (This was perhaps influenced by the – at that time – well-known 1883 work by Paul Moreau de Tours, *Des Aberrations du Sens Génésique*, concerned with what Moreau more frequently called the '*sens génital*'.) Thus, although Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Krafft-Ebing and Moll share a common concern with the *Geschlechtstrieb*, which

for all of them is essentially related to reproduction, the English and French translations give little or no sense of this. At the same time, the standard translations of Freud prevent a true appreciation of his break with the *Geschlechtstrieb* tradition. The first English translation of Freud's *Three Essays*, by A.A. Brill – the only available translation until 1949 – translates both *Geschlechtstrieb* and *Sexualtrieb* as 'sexual impulse' (Freud 1918); Strachey, as we know, translates both as 'sexual instinct'. In this way Freud's terminological and conceptual innovation remains hidden, in favour of a misleading suggestion of continuity with the *Geschlechtstrieb* tradition.

It is also possible that the sheer ubiquity of the idea of sexuality since the second half of the twentieth century – in great part thanks to Freud – has influenced how readers interpret Kant and Schopenhauer, for example. Neither Kant nor Schopenhauer ever use the word *Sexualität*, but commentators speak freely of their respective views on 'sexuality'.³² Commentators often also speak of Schopenhauer 'anticipating' Freud.³³ The notion of the anticipation of ideas supposes the direction of intellectual travel to be from the past into the future. The case of 'sexuality' in Schopenhauer and Freud perhaps suggests the opposite. Aided by the lack of distinction in translation, Freud's conception of sexuality is in fact read back into Schopenhauer, and the specificity of Schopenhauer's conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* – and particularly its relation to reproduction – is missed.³⁴

³² See, for example, Zentner 1995, 116. In contrast, Davidson (2001) is largely concerned with the emergence of the specific concept of sexuality. Distinguishing Freud from Krafft-Ebing and Moll, amongst others, he notes that 'Freud operates with a concept of the sexual instinct different from that of his contemporaries, or, better yet, [...] he does not employ the concept of the sexual instinct in his theory of sexuality.' (79–80)

³³ See, for example, Young & Brook 1994.

³⁴ Given that the translation of *Sexualtrieb* as 'sexual drive' now seems to be the obvious choice, how should we, if we want to maintain Freud's terminological distinction, translate *Geschlechtstrieb*? In the 2016 republication of the 1905 edition of the *Three Essays* Ulrike Kistner uses 'genital drive', to signal that the functional conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* against which Freud positioned himself is focused on the 'genitally organized sexual attraction between two [adult or sexually mature] individuals' (Van Haute and Westerink 2016, xvi, fn 3) – the second 'regime' of sexuality. (See also Kistner 2016, lxxxii–lxxxiii.) Although this perhaps makes sense in the context of the interpretation of Freud in terms of the two regimes of sexuality, it would not be appropriate as a translation of the use of the word by Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Krafft-Ebing and Moll. For these thinkers, the distinctive characteristic of the *Geschlechtstrieb* is its relation to reproduction; it is the phenomenal experience of a generative drive (*Zeugungstrieb*) or procreative drive (*Fortpflanzungstrieb*). Although translating *Geschlechtstrieb* as 'generative drive' would slide over these different German words, it would at least allow for the specificity of Freud's

5. The Philosophical Anthropology of the *Three Essays*

To the extent that the first edition of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* rejects the metaphysical and teleological baggage of the conception of the *Geschlechtstrieb* shared by Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Krafft-Ebing and Moll,³⁵ it is tempting to conclude that Freud attempts to replace the philosophical presuppositions in the discussion of the *Geschlechtstrieb* with a purely 'scientific' account of the sexual drive. But this is not entirely correct, because what is innovative is not scientific *rather than* philosophical. The *Three Essays* is (amongst other things) a contribution to philosophical anthropology.

Here 'philosophical anthropology' refers very broadly to the investigation of the specificity of the being of the human, or of the meaning of human being. It is not the search for the essence of the human; it does not attempt a definition of the human; and although it may be related to the history of philosophies of 'human nature', the problematisation of the idea of 'human nature' and more especially of 'man' is a central feature of any history of philosophical anthropology in the last two centuries. This is to construe philosophical anthropology sufficiently broadly to include the early Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre, for example, even though none of them conceived of their works in that way.³⁶ Freud was, as it were, an accidental philosophical anthropologist. Famously dismissive of philosophy and never to be drawn on the philosophical implications of his own work, he nevertheless reached conclusions in his studies of psychopathology and in his metapsychological works that could not but redraw, for many, the way that fundamental aspects of

Sexualtrieb to stand out. However, the multiple meanings of the word '*Geschlecht*', including 'sex', seem to be an essential part of the concept of the *Geschlechtstrieb*, and 'generative drive' does not capture that. This may mean that – like Heidegger's *Dasein* – it may be best left in German for the time being.

³⁵ Many more could be added to this list, for example Schelling.

³⁶ Heidegger (1962, 38) describes his analytic of *Dasein* as part of the 'complete ontology of *Dasein*, which assuredly must be constructed if anything like a "philosophical anthropology" is to have a philosophically adequate basis.'

human existence are understood – not least with his conception of the unconscious. It is thus for Freud's readers, through interpretation, to extrapolate the anthropological philosophical significance of his work. So, for example, although Freud could not himself be said to have explicitly developed a theory of the subject (the philosophical concept of the subject is quite absent in his writings) readers are at liberty to attempt to construct such a theory as an interpretation of his work.³⁷

The *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* may be interpreted as a philosophical anthropology in a quite general sense. They do not discuss a contingent, episodic aspect of human experience; they deal with the being-sexual of human being. 'Sexuality' is not a separable quality predicated of human being; it is integral to the specificity of human being itself. This seems to have grown out of Freud's earlier identification of the importance of sexuality in the aetiology of the neuroses, but the theory quickly overflows the '*neurotica*'.³⁸ Similarly, the *Three Essays* may begin with an essay on the 'sexual aberrations', but it is not a *Psychopathia Sexualis*. It is an account of *homo sexualis*, which does not mean sexed human being (it does not concern sex difference) but the marking of specifically human being through sexuality. Unlike the *Geschlechtstrieb* tradition, which tends to identify a drive or instinct that is common to all animals (including humans) and even plants,³⁹ Freud is concerned with the psycho-physical and psycho-social specificity of human sexuality, or perhaps with what a more general phenomenon (*Geschlechtstrieb*?) has *always already become* in and for the human. Of course, Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Kant and Schopenhauer all identified what they thought of as uniquely human responses to the *Geschlechtstrieb* – primarily, its

³⁷ See, for example, Borch-Jacobson 1988, and the whole of Lacan's work.

³⁸ See, for example, *Studies on Hysteria*, Part IV (1893); 'Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses' (1896a); 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' (1896b). Freud mentions his '*neurotica*' in Letter 69 to Fliess (August 14, 1897) (SE I, 259).

³⁹ Thus Hartmann (2000, 221): 'That the impulse to sexual union is an instinct [*der Trieb zur geschlechtlichen Verbindung ein Instinct ist*] which manifests itself spontaneously ... appears from the fact that the sexual impulse as instinct [*der Geschlechtstrieb als Instinct*] is universal in the animal and the vegetable kingdom'. The same presumption of the commonality of the *Geschlechtstrieb* in human and animal is evident in Moll's *Untersuchungen*.

sublimation or overcoming in the achievements of morality and culture.⁴⁰ But for Freud, sexuality itself (as opposed to the *Geschlechtstrieb*) is already the name for a specifically human conundrum. (This explains why Freud had so much trouble with the concept of sublimation, which could only be described as the conversion of the sexual into the non-sexual according to the 'old' popular understanding of the *Geschlechtstrieb*.⁴¹)

The *Three Essays* present sexuality as a specifically human *conundrum* to the extent that its conclusions arise from the complicated relation between 'normality' and 'pathology' in Freud's general method and in the genesis and detail of the work. Traditionally philosophical anthropology has tended to think the fundamental aspects of human being independently of pathology, regarding it as a secondary and contingent deviation.⁴² Freud, on the other hand, effectively reconceived the human being as, to a greater or lesser extent, a pathological being. What does this mean? This is not to say that we are not able to distinguish between relatively good and relatively poor mental health. It does not mean that we are not able to distinguish in ourselves and others between the psychopathology of everyday life and the suffering that interrupts everyday life or sometimes makes it unbearable and requires alleviation. It does not mean that there is no such thing as delusion or psychosis; but it does rule out a 'normal' psychic existence that is free of *any* trace of these.

This is the result of Freud's investigative method, according to which the study of pathological phenomena leads to a general psychology.⁴³ There are different

⁴⁰ See, for example, Krafft-Ebing (1924, 4): 'In coarse, sensual love, in the lustful impulse to satisfy this natural instinct, man stands on a level with the animal; but it is given to him to raise himself to a height where this natural instinct [*Naturtrieb*] no longer makes him a slave: higher, nobler feelings are awakened, which, notwithstanding their sensual origin, expand into a world of beauty, sublimity, and morality.'

⁴¹ See Gemes (this volume).

⁴² See Van Haute and Geyskens 2004, xv.

⁴³ In fact it is in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that Freud first develops a significant general psychology. The final chapter, 'Psychology of Dream-Processes', is the response to the fact that 'there is at the present time no established psychological knowledge under which we could subsume what the psychological examination of dreams enables us to infer as a basis

ways of interpreting this. It could mean that 'normality' and 'pathology' are to be understood as points along a continuum; it could also suggest that pathological phenomena are normal phenomena writ large. However, in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, where the issue of the normality-pathology couplet first really comes to the fore, its specific recasting in the opposition normality/perversion, together with the general primacy afforded sexuality in psychic life, gives rise to a philosophical anthropological claim that is rather more specific.

The central features of this lie in the implications of the claim that 'the disposition to perversions of every kind is a universal and primary human characteristic' (Freud 2016, 51) – but a human characteristic that must be, to some extent, repressed. There are various versions of this claim in Freud. First, there is what Freud calls 'organic repression'. In the *Three Essays* this idea arises in the context of the discussion of the latency period, during which 'those psychical forces are built up which later appear as obstacles in the path of the sexual drive and, like dams, restrict its flow – disgust, feelings of shame, and the claims of aesthetic and moral ideals.' (Freud 2016, 38) We tend to think of the construction of these dams as the work of education or upbringing, but 'in reality' Freud says

this development is organically conditioned, and can occasionally generate itself without any help at all from education. Education will remain perfectly within its mandated domain if it limits itself to following the lines previously drawn organically, and imprinting them somewhat more clearly and deeply. (Freud 2016, 39)

Perhaps because of the difficulty of explaining or justifying the idea of organic repression any further, in Freud's later work (particularly *Totem and Taboo*, 1912–13) the fundamental moment of repression is related to the incest taboo and then

for their explanation. On the contrary, we shall be obliged to set up a number of fresh hypotheses which touch tentatively upon the structure of the apparatus of the mind and upon the play of forces operating in it.' (SE V, 511) Freud equivocates in *The Interpretation of Dreams* on the question of whether dreams count as psychopathological phenomena. But the philosophical interest in this book concerns the relation between dream-work and waking thought, which Freud is unable to separate as firmly as his ostensible conclusions suggest; see Sandford (2017).

with the prohibitive role of the father in the Oedipus complex.⁴⁴ In each case, though, primal repression is still not explained. However, to make the general philosophical anthropological point it matters little *how* primal repression is conceptualised; what is important is simply that some version of it functions as a speculative postulate expressing the perceived fact that something splits the psyche, such that the ‘other scene’ of the unconscious *is*. Freud’s clinical experience taught him that this ‘something’ had to do with sexuality. Further, the question of whether the origins of primal repression are biological or cultural is rendered otiose in a philosophical anthropology, both because it is inescapable in either case and because the conception of human being (or existence) at issue here is in any case bio-cultural. As Van Haute and Westerink put it: ‘no culture can escape from imposing concrete regulations on sexuality’; to some extent human culture thus consists in repressing something ‘essential’ in *homo sexualis*. But this does not pit human nature (represented as the sexual drive) against human culture (repression); because the human being – as opposed to what Althusser (1996, 23) called a ‘mammalian larva’ – is, ontologically, a cultural being.

We can thus understand the ‘pathological’ conception of human being without having to think of humans as ‘first and foremost “sick animals”.’ (Van Haute 2014, 42) In Plato’s *Symposium* (189d5) Alcibiades says that we cannot understand eros without first learning about ‘the nature of human being and what has happened to it’ (Plato 1998, 51) – ‘*tēn anthrōpinēn phusin kai ta pathēmata autēs*’. The human *pathos* is what befalls us, what we ‘suffer’ or undergo to become human. This pathos has its everydayness – *das Unbehagen in der Kultur* – and is also perhaps the condition of possibility for the clinical pathologies that lead people to the couch. If Freud traces both back to sexuality, it not just because sexual thoughts and feelings are repressed, but because human sexuality itself – in distinction from anything like a generic animal *Geschlechtstrieb* – is ‘pathetic’. As Freud later says (in ‘Civilization and its Discontents’, 1930): ‘Sometimes one seems to perceive that it is not only the pressure of civilization but something in the nature of the [sexual] function itself

⁴⁴ See Kerslake 2007.

which denies us full satisfaction and urges us along other paths.’ (SEXSI, 105)⁴⁵ Thus the *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* not only advance an original, non-reproductive, non-teleological conception of sexuality that is quite foreign to Freud’s philosophical and psychiatric predecessors, it also opens out into a philosophical anthropology that finds no precedent there. In this respect the subsequent theories of, for example, Lacan and Laplanche are truly ‘Freudian’, and it is possible to speak not just of philosophy *and* psychoanalysis, but also, meaningfully, of philosophical psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic philosophy.

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⁴⁵ The continuation of the paragraph expresses Freud’s own *Unbehagen*: ‘This may be wrong; it is hard to decide.’ A footnote immediately afterwards refers, obliquely, to Aristophanes’ speech in the *Symposium*.

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