

BEYOND PERVERSION: THE RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF FREUD'S
DECONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY.

Philip Browning Helsel, Princeton Theological Seminary¹

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Introduction.

In the first part of his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud deconstructs the perversion-homosexuality-degeneracy complex assumed by nineteenth century psychiatry. These physicians had constructed the pervert, the representative case being the homosexual, as afflicted with a psychological disease. While nineteenth century sexologists assumed that sexual instinct inevitably led to heterosexual genital intercourse, Freud showed that a wide range of seemingly perverse pleasures were indicated in all sexuality. Freud effectively declassified homosexuality as a perversion, but his radical stance was not appreciated in North America, where psychiatrists argued that sublimation of homosexuality was a necessary and an achievable psychoanalytic goal (Hale, 1971). These arguments were repeated and elaborated by Christians establishing psychological evidence to back up their naturalistic arguments (Nicolosi and Nicolosi, 2002; Seutter and Rovers, 2004). By returning to the *Three Essays*, this paper shows the radical challenge to normative sexuality in Freud's earliest work, a challenge that Freud continued to grapple with and which was often misunderstood by his followers.

In the first part of the paper we will establish how the homosexual was constructed in the nineteenth century from concepts of normative sexuality—the functional sexual instinct. Once we understand this logic, we will be in a better position to appreciate the power of Freud's critique of the perversion-degeneracy complex in the first part of his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. In the final part of the paper, we will explore the reception of Freud in North America, arguing that his deconstruction of perversion was almost immediately rejected, and tools from Freud's work were used to construct the homosexual as a pervert, this time with psychoanalytic terminology. Freud may have not recognized the full impact of his work or developed its consequences completely, but his deconstruction of perversion, especially in relationship to same-sex sexuality, has the potential to illuminate what we say about pleasure and allow for a more liberative discourse.

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Nineteenth Century Consensus: The Sexual Instinct.

In his collection of essays *The Emergence of Sexuality*, Arnold I. Davidson (2001) demonstrates that the nineteenth century pervert was constructed as concepts of perversion shifted from an anatomical to functional basis.² A pervert became a particular kind of person when sexuality became an “instinct” that could be studied (4). In the late eighteenth century an “anatomy-pathological” style of reasoning prevailed in which sexual perversion was either a disease of the reproductive organs or of the brain (6). The search for an anatomical basis for sexual deviance can be noted in the case of nineteenth century French hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin (Barbin and Foucault, 1980). The autopsy of Barbin, who had chosen to live as a woman, showed that she had masculine sexual organs, and this was enough for the presiding doctor to conclude that he had found the “*real proofs of sex*,” and that Barbin was a man (34). In order to show the distinction between eighteenth and nineteenth century medical views of sexuality and those operative in medieval Europe, Foucault argued that in the Middle Ages the person was able at the time of marriage to decide their preferred gender. By contrast, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, the medico-legal establishment determined sex by examining genitals (Davidson, 2001).

Anatomical explanations shifted from the genitals to the brain, which was a more difficult area to examine and therefore more open to speculation. The search for genital lesions that would explain sexual behavior was given up when autopsies were inconclusive. As the psychiatrists “closed up the corpses,” they began to posit brain lesions, a manifestation of an anatomic logic that was equally difficult to prove (Davidson, 2001). If a person engaged in deviant sexualities, the doctors/jurists hypothesized “morbid action of [the brain].” (8). In this style of reasoning, any cause of sexual deviance apart from an anatomical basis would have been unthinkable, a “palpable absurdity, something beyond falsity” (10). These early psychiatrists were all neurologists, and Freud (1888/1990), a neurologist by training, wrote early well-received essays about brain pathology.

Davidson notes that, while anatomical sexual explanations were predominant in the early nineteenth century, the middle of the nineteenth century saw the advent of psychiatric explanations. At this moment, sexologists began functioning as psychiatrists. Psychiatric explanations were based on a hypothesized “sexual instinct,” a seemingly universal “physiological phenomenon...a need of a general order” that cannot be localized in a particular part of the body (Davidson, 2001, 13). Because it was “everywhere and nowhere,” described by Moreau as a sixth sense, it became subject to the psychiatric gaze without being localizable in a particular part of the body. In his *Diseases of Women*, published in 1879, J. M. Duncan coined the term sexuality: “In removing the ovaries, you do not necessarily destroy sexuality in a woman,” a statement that would have been impossible in the eighteenth century (37). The shift to a psychiatric style of reasoning did not preclude the ongoing search for a physiological basis for perversion, but the new emphasis made conclusive anatomical evidence unnecessary.

The newly-positing sexual instinct was normatively directed towards procreative sexuality between men and women; it was imagined that instinct naturally gravitated in

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this direction, and all other sexual activity had to be explained as an anomaly, either a form of excess or deviance. In this sense it was a teleological concept (Dollimore, 1991). No longer isolated events, sexual acts that deviated from this norm inscribed individuals as particular kinds of persons. In this sense, a person was a pervert because of a disorder in their hypothesized 'sexual instinct,' and once they became a pervert they were diagnosably different. Since the sexual instinct, understood here as heterosexual sex for the purposes of procreation, exerted the force of a normative aim, disparate activities such as sadism, masochism, fetishism, and homosexuality were classified together as perversions since they did not lead to heterosexual intercourse.

If the hermaphrodite was the representative sexual deviant of the eighteenth century, the 'invert,' with his disordered instincts, became the representative deviant for nineteenth century styles of reasoning. In 1870 Carl Westphal gave the first psychological definition of homosexuality, what he called "contrary sexual instinct": "A woman who is physically a woman and psychologically a man, and, on the other hand, a man who is physically a man and psychologically a woman" (16). The invert was the pathological cornerstone of Krafft-Ebing's (1892/1993) influential *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which was the definitive statement on late nineteenth century medical views of sexuality. In this text, inversion was explained as an aspect of degeneracy, a conceptual grid that continues to influence the way that gender and sexuality are constructed and maintained in Western societies. In this logic, heterosexuality for procreation was the result of an evolutionary process, and degeneracy was reverse evolution, a devolution that could lead to monstrosities, what Krafft-Ebing called "step-children of nature" (Oosterhuis, 2000, 52). Both the teleological view of the sexual instinct and the perversion-degeneracy complex allowed psychiatrists to treat persons as diseased without needing to find an anatomical basis for the perversion (Davidson, 2001, 27).

The sexual instinct and its pathologies became such a feature of our conceptual landscape that it is difficult to imagine a time before these concepts worked in this particular way. In order to demonstrate how differently people conceptualized sex before the dawn of psychiatry, I turn to the example of the seventeenth century physician Meibomius who, after dispensing with both astrological and psychological explanations, explained the need for sexual stimulation by flogging as a result of insufficient heat in the loins. The physician actually treated his patient's sexual dysfunction by whipping him, and defended his practice to fellow physicians (Davidson, 2001). By contrast, nineteenth century sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing unequivocally asserted that sexual beatings are a "psychopathological disorder," maintaining that such a disorder is perpetrated by a masochist who is a particular kind of person (60). In the middle ages there was no such thing as a pervert, because the functional view of the sexual instinct, the idea that normal sexuality definitively leads to sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, had not been invented yet. For example, both Aquinas and Kant made distinctions about different types of lust, but these distinctions did not establish different types of people. An antonym to convert, the word pervert simply reflected the will bent away from the purposes of God, not the "new [kind] of person" of nineteenth century sexology (63).

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Freud's Deconstruction of Perversion.

Five years after his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud (1905/2000) published *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, a volume most controversially associated with his theory of infantile sexuality (Marcus, 2000).³ Freud's deconstruction of nineteenth century notions of normative sexuality and the perversions defined in the first part of the book is among his most important conceptual innovations. Freud approached the study of perversions from his work with neurotics, inhibited persons for whom symptoms were the expression of their sexual life. Freud is now famously associated with his concept of the instinctual life, but Davidson argues that when Freud uses the word *Sexualtrieb*, or sexual instinct, he means something fundamentally different from the nineteenth century functional view of sexuality and its perversions. His use of the term differs in a fundamental way from Krafft-Ebing's (Davidson, 2001, 163).

First, Freud complicates the notion of perversion by examining the varieties of sexual behavior. Like a biological scientist, he complicates the phenomenon of inversion or "contrary sexual feelings" (2). He highlights the varieties of these behaviors, describing *absolute* inverts who exclusively seek same-sex relationships, *amphigenic* inverts who switch back and forth between desiring men and women, and *contingent* inverts, whose experiences with same-sex sexuality are sporadic and sometimes linked to a particular stage in their developmental. The absolute invert experiences these feelings "from a very early age" and "[feels] at one with his peculiarity" (3). Since homosexuality is not characterized by any single activity, but consists of composite behaviors—anal sex, masturbation, fellatio, and a range of other intermediate aims, it could be said that there are multiple homosexualities that exist on a continuum with multiple heterosexualities. Freud depicts these categories with a dispassionate and open-minded tone, not the tone of pity that characterizes sexology manuals of the nineteenth century (Oosterhuis, 2000).

Second, Freud deconstructs commonly held prejudices about same-sex sexuality. He argues that inversion is not a sign of degeneracy since inverts are normal (in all other ways) and have had an important place in society since antiquity. He rejects a traumatological root of inversion in early childhood since many who are subjected to sexual abuse, "seduction," in his terms, are not homosexual. Finally, he distinguishes between hermaphroditism and inversion, trying to put to rest the notion that there is a physiological basis for homosexuality. Since homosexual men do not necessarily display feminine characteristics, Freud rejects the supposition of a "psychical hermaphroditism" (8). Freud also discredits any connection between inversion and pedophilia. In an important footnote, he describes how he has followed the lead of Ernest Bloch, who rejected the "pathological approach to the study of inversion" in favor of "the anthropological" (5).⁴ Thus, in two significant steps, Freud shows the diversity of homosexualities and removes the damaging stigmas associated with them. Freud laid conceptual groundwork that has strong similarities with later discoveries by scientists such as Kinsey, and anthropologists Malinowski, and Mead (Bayer, 1981).

Freud capitalizes on his demythologizing of inversion to make what he considers his most important point—the assumed unity between the sexual object and sexual aim is

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illusory. No longer could the sexual instinct be construed as pointing inevitably towards heterosexual intercourse. In one blow Freud dismantled the foundation of the nineteenth century system of sexual pathology, since the sexual instinct, what the nineteenth century psychiatrists considered the normal drive towards intercourse with someone of the opposite sex, was not a unified entity but composed of 'perverse' building blocks made up of multiple variations. He deconstructed commonly held notions of the sexual instinct by dividing it into its *object*—the person of attraction, and its *aim*—the act in which such sexuality is manifested, and argued that the two do not necessarily belong together. What the nineteenth century scientists took for granted, indeed made the basis of a complex medical/penal asylum system, was, in Freud's rendering, not a monolithic unitary drive, but a composite of perverse objects and aims. "Numerous deviations occur in respect of both...the sexual object and the sexual aim" (2). He argues that the sexual object and aim "are merely soldered together" and that the reader should "loosen the bond that exists in our thoughts between instinct and object" (14). Indeed, since such a great variety of sexual aims persists in even 'normal' sexuality, the uniformity of the sexual instinct is no longer valid. By showing how the traditional themes of sexual pathology such as inversion, sadism, and masochism are connected on a continuum with behaviors such as kissing, touching, and looking, Freud showed how everyone was 'perverted.' As a result, everyone is more normal than they had been before: forms of sexuality that had previously been stigmatized share the basic character of all sexuality. Freud argues that sex is built from 'perverse' building blocks, the stimulation of erogenous zones of the body in the regular care encounters of early childhood. By breaking what had been traditionally construed as normative heterosexuality into components, Freud is able to show that even purported deviations from the sexual aim are part of 'normal' sexuality.

All sexual expressions contain rudiments of what had previously been considered perverse. Freud argues, "no healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim" (15, 37). He concludes, "We have quite remarkably increased the number of people who might be regarded as perverts" (37). Freud seems aware that he is being provocative by undermining the conceptual structure of perversion. Rather than framing sexual expressions as deviant he places them on a continuum with a wide range of 'normal' behaviors: "an unbroken chain bridges the gap between the neurosis in all their manifestations and normality" (37). This insight formed the basis of Freud's later psychoanalytic theorizing, as he demonstrated the unconscious as a universally destabilizing force. Even if there are echoes of earlier forms of thinking within *The Three Essays*, Freud introduced a radically new discursive space around the issue of perversion.

Freud continued to destabilize normative notions of sexuality as he developed a theory of constitutional bisexuality. While he had alluded to universal bisexuality in his original version of *Three Essays*, he continually rewrote and added sections to the book, and in a 1915 revision, he added an allusive footnote in which he maintained "all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious" (Freud, 1905/2000, 81, 11). He later maintained that he never went through a single analysis "without having to take into account a very considerable

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current of homosexuality,” and that the repression of this homosexuality leads to “lasting disadvantages” (quoted in Dollimore, 1991, 177, 172). Freud’s (1923/1961) formulation of the negative Oedipus complex, quickly repressed both in his own writings and in those of his followers, presented a quite different theory of psychosexual development in which the same sex parent was the original object of desire. Freud also noted that repression of the negative Oedipus complex resulted in a homophobia, a “vigorous counter-attitude” that was almost unanalyzable (Dollimore, 178-179; Freud, xiv, 191). In Jonathan Dollimore’s (1991) terms, “Freud is unrelenting in finding perversion, especially homosexuality, in those places where it is conventionally thought to be most absent and where identity is dependent on that supposed absence” (174).

Freud did not “accept these conclusions...unhesitatingly” but instead returned in the third essay to describe “appropriate zones” of sexual activity and “the normal sexual aim” (Davidson, 2001, 86). *Three Essays* is a mixed text in which one encounters both the normative language of heterosexual sex and the disruptive force of his distinction between the sexual object and aim. The rest of Freud’s corpus is full of mixed texts as well, as he both endorses a universal bisexuality and connects homosexuality with character traits such as anality and jealousy (Freud, 1918/2002; Freud, 1922). Freud acknowledges the role of a normative sexuality in heterosexual coitus, at least in principle. It may seem as though Freud gives the ‘perversions’ the same role as foreplay, and he can be read as arguing that normative heterosexual intercourse is still the primary goal of sexuality. Nevertheless, the deconstruction that he accomplished on the basis of perversion is in fact a fundamental shift that introduced current ways of thinking about the difference between sex and gender, and thereby has wide ranging consequences.

On a personal level, Freud spoke out against the persecution of homosexuals (Abelove, 2003). In a now-famous letter to an American mother who was distressed about her son’s homosexuality, Freud told his mother that it was unlikely her son could change his sexual behavior through psychoanalysis. Indeed, psychoanalysis could not influence homosexuality at all. Instead, psychoanalysis could be helpful if he was “unhappy, neurotic, torn by conflicts, [or] inhibited in his social life” (quoted in Abelove, 2003, 2). Freud appeared before the Austrian court and spoke to the press in support of homosexuals, arguing that they do not belong in a court of law and “must not be treated as sick people” (Abelove, 2003, 3). In the 1920s he argued that homosexual analysts be admitted to psychoanalytic training, a stance which was only supported by Otto Rank, Isidor Sadger, and Victor Tausk (Abelove, 2003, 7). Freud regarded the moralizing trend of the United States particularly dangerous, and in correspondence with James Jackson Putnam, argued that psychoanalysis was not appropriate as tool for sublimating homosexual impulses (Hale, 1971).

Psychoanalytic Approaches in North America

Freud’s radical deconstruction of the perversion-degeneracy complex was reversed almost immediately on the North American continent. The North American

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response to Freud's views on homosexuality reflected the identity crisis of psychoanalysis as it sought accreditation with the medical establishment of the American Psychiatric Association. The homosexual was a pathological type for these thinkers, and they arguably never took Freud's thesis of universal bisexuality seriously as a clinical theory. Instead, they developed complex psychodynamic explanations for the causes of homosexuality that took the place of the evolutionary arguments of the nineteenth century. One year after Freud's death, at Columbia University's psychoanalytic clinic, Sandor Rado published a paper entitled "A Critical Examination of the Concept of Bisexuality" arguing that homosexuality resulted from "a pathological fear of the opposite sex and that it could—and should—be cured" (Dean and Lane, 2001, 13).⁵ Rado profoundly influenced the prominent spokesmen for homosexuality as pathology in the postwar period: Irving Bieber, Edmund Bergler, and Charles Socarides. The blame for homosexuality ranged from a close-binding mother to an absent father, sexual abuse in childhood to jealousy. Socarides developed an intricate schema "pre-oedipal type I, pre-oedipal type II, and oedipal," along with the "schizo-homosexual" influenced by Freud's report of the Schreber case (Cohler and Galatzer-Levy, 2000, p. 348; Freud, 1918/2002). North American psychiatrists dismissed the negative Oedipus complex as merely a "regressive defense" (Dean and Lane, 2001, 14). In this sense, psychoanalysis in the United States "merged, almost imperceptibly, with the very psychiatric and medical model from which Freud had broken at the end of the nineteenth century" (Dean and Lane, 2001, 13).

Despite differences in how they constructed the precise etiology of homosexuality, psychoanalysts in North America during the postwar era believed it exemplified pathology. Bieber, Bergler, and Socarides remained optimistic about the positive treatment of homosexuals, arguing that they could "adapt" to sexual requirements, but they offered self-contradictory data (Cohler and Galatzer-Levy, 2000). In the theory and political activism of these authors, nineteenth century strategies of diagnosis and treatment returned, but under the umbrella of psychoanalysis, an occurrence that would have certainly been abhorrent to Freud. In Christopher Lasch's terms, these physicians "sacrificed Freud" for a doctrine of sublimation *as cure* (Conrad and Schneider, 1992, 187). The homosexual became a pathological character of a particular type and the medical doctors who represented psychoanalysis in North America were the certified experts for treating them. Not surprisingly, homosexuality expanded to include not only one's actions, but also one's thoughts, "including unconscious desires only the trained psychiatrist could identify" (Conrad and Schneider, 1992, 187). Psychoanalytic language was used to considerably extend the conceptual reach of the tools available to analyze and manage same-sex desire. Conrad and Schneider (1992) review the literature of significant spokesmen of this revision of Freudian psychoanalysis, showing how their rhetoric displayed the diagnostic strategies of control, depicting the 'typical homosexual' and insisting that homosexuals could be cured if they expressed "a degree of guilt for unconscious wishes and [came] to therapy voluntarily" (191-192). Treatment frequently included hormone and shock therapy, "lobotomy," and "therapeutic castration" (Conrad and Schneider, 1992, 187).⁶

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There was not an explicit connection between these psychoanalysts and religious organizations during the postwar period. In fact, for many of these psychoanalysts, established religion was a repressive force that contributed to the guilt and shame that created homosexuality (Frosch, 1991; Siegel, 1991). Nevertheless, the pathological explanations fostered by theorists like Socarides became an important resource in the Christian Right's antigay rhetoric. For example, psychologist and Christian right activist Joseph Nicolosi, who James Dobson quotes extensively in his popular *Bringing Up Boys*, depended extensively on Charles Socarides' diagnostic schema and optimism for treating homosexuality (Burack, 2008).⁷ Although Rado, Bieber, and Socarides articulated their perspective in the language of arrested development and Nicolosi in the language of what is "natural," the two rhetorics share a preoccupation with the influence of appropriate parental sex role modeling that was an important feature of the psychological approaches of postwar America (Lamb, 2000).

Shifting psychiatric opinion about homosexuality is reflected in the changing definitions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and the activism from both within and outside the discipline to change pathological categories of homosexuality. In volume 1, printed in 1952, homosexuals were characterized as ill "in terms of society and conformity with the prevailing cultural milieu" (Dean and Lane, 2001, 16). However, by 1968 homosexuality had been placed again with non-psychotic disorders such as "pedophilia and sadism" returning again to take its place among the nineteenth century classifications of perversions (Dean and Lane, 2001, 16). Even when gay activists lobbied the American Psychiatric Association to change this disease category, the resulting diagnosis of "ego-dystonic homosexuality" in 1980 reflected the attitude that the homosexual simply needed to adapt to the culture (Dean and Lane, 2001). While the results of the activism were far reaching, psychoanalysts have been the most resistant of all the therapeutic disciplines to accepting same-sex sexuality as a non-pathological form of sex. Even the A.P.A.'s final definition lacked any of the deeper psychoanalytic critique of sexuality, including the necessary critique of the dominance of heterosexuality (Chodorow, 1999).

Conclusion

Freud's pioneering work, based more on research than actual clinical material, deconstructed a repressive logic that allowed for a new analysis of our sexualities that both participated in earlier forms of medicalized language and also transcended them (Marcus, 2000). Freud showed how each person's sexuality was a composite, built from elements that would be considered perverse in a more normative system. Freud destabilized our given notions of hetero- and homosexualities, invoking questions about the normative nature of heterosexuality—why shouldn't heterosexuality, the exclusive preoccupation with someone of the opposite gender—be the subject of analysis? (Freud, 1905/2000; Chodorow, 1999) With this close examination of Freud's deconstruction of perversion, we may be compelled to be more thoughtful in our speech about sexualities, bodies, and pleasures in our religious communities.

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Since Freud argued for universal psychic phenomena, his theory has often been critiqued as another form of colonialism. Freud argued against the political identity of the homosexual, as articulated by Hirschfeld and others in the category of the “third sex” (Freud, 1905/2001, 13). Instead, in his later theory he preferred to suggest a universal bisexuality in which the energetic repression of anything resembling a homosexual wish was manifested as a vigorous phobic reaction, a deeply entrenched homophobia (Freud, 1937/1964). Dean and Lane (2001) argue that this psychoanalytic approach is a kind “universalizing” discourse (Dean and Lane, 2001, 11). At the same time, it is helpful to consider Freud’s subject position as a Jew in fin-de-siècle Vienna, as Freud was, in Jay Geller’s (2003) terms “a post-colonial subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire” (36). If Freud’s discourse is indeed “a hybrid formation that mimics [the modes of Euroamerican hegemonic culture] to the point of subverting their authority,” then it will relativize even the normative aspects of *Three Essays* and reveal the significant challenge that this text presented as a form of marginal discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century (Geller, 2003).

The strategies that Freud employed to debunk popular prejudices about homosexuality serve as a model to scholars of religion working on the frontlines of sex, gender, and sexualities. Drawing from the sexual rhetoric of his time, in *Three Essays* he used open-ended argumentation to craft a picture of the variety and fluidity of pleasure. Freud clearly distinguished psychoanalysis from ethics, but the introspective turn that he provoked in his deconstruction of perversion has an ethical aspect. The manner in which Freud separated the sexual object from its aim allows for a deconstruction of naturalistic theories of sexuality as they appear in the popular culture and religious rhetoric of our time. Freud is by no means the only theorist we should employ for these purposes. However, his work does contribute to this project, and the fact that he has been used for the opposite purposes within the North American context for so long is unfortunate. “Freud’s Americanization remains a serious obstacle to articulating his theory of sexuality with a radically antihomophobic politics...truly psychoanalytic arguments about sexuality have had a very limited audience in the United States” (Dean and Lane, 2001, 17). Psychoanalysis enables recognition of the otherness within us and thereby provides an ethical basis for a more tolerant society. As Kristeva (1997) suggests, the acknowledgment of one’s own unconscious may “allow [us] to put up with one another as irredicable, because [we] are desiring, desirable, mortal, and death-bearing” (182). Even if it does not provide complete resources for a sexual politics—here some form of identity politics of the strategically-essentialist kind may still be necessary—Freud’s work deconstructs normative notions of sexuality that are our heritage from nineteenth century sexology, and thus continue to be a valuable resource to those of us who argue against these same normative notions in the twenty-first century.

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¹ Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton Theological Seminary, 303 Emmons Dr 8b, Princeton, NJ 08540; Email: helselphil@hotmail.com

² The quotes in this section will be from Davidson's (2001) *Emergence of Sexuality* unless otherwise noted.

³ The quotations in this section will all be from Freud's (1905/2000) *Three Essays*, unless otherwise noted.

⁴ The anthropological trend continued to be an important corrective to psychiatry. For examples, the research of anthropologists such as Mead and Malinowski helped deconstruct notions of normative sexuality and sex roles in post-war United States.

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⁵ Adler had dissented with Freud's opinion on homosexuality, arguing that it was a compensation for "*inferiority feelings*" (Dean and Lane, 2001, 12). Jung agreed with Adler, describing the homosexual as a particular type of person "with a predictable relationship to the world" (12).

⁶ Conrad and Schneider (1992) argue that Freud's "work strengthened considerably medical dominance over the definition and treatment of this 'condition'" (185). They argue that he "expanded and clarified the medical definition of homosexuality, but it became a considerably different condition than it had been before" (185). While these were the historical consequences of the medicalization of Freud's psychoanalytic project in the North American context, Freud's own ideas were much more progressive.

⁷ Burack (2008) notes the close connection between Joseph Nicolosi and reparative therapy advocacy groups such as the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) (81).