

The Sexologist and the Poet: On Magnus Hirschfeld, Rabindranath Tagore, and the Critique of Sexual Binariness

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Abstract

Between 1930 and 1932, German-Jewish sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) undertook a world journey that he eventually reported in *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers* (1933), arguably the first non-Eurocentric, anti-colonialist critique of Asian cultures from a sexological perspective. Saluted as "the modern Vatsyayana of the West," Hirschfeld met during his stay in India personalities such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Jagadish Chandra Bose, and Rabindranath Tagore, whom he visited at his family residence in Calcutta. Against the backdrop of Hirschfeld's "doctrine of sexual intermediaries" and his general postulate that truly creative artists have mostly "united in themselves both sexes in especially pronounced form," the study analyzes and assesses his reference to Tagore's femininity. While acknowledging the correspondences between the sexologist's universalization of sexual intermediariness and the poet's premise that "[t]he Creator must be conscious of both the male and female principles without which there can be no Creation," the elaborations focus on their divergent conceptualizations of sexual difference, womanhood, and the erotic life.

[Keywords: Artistic creativity; Baul; bisexuality; Confucius; Darwin, Woman; femininity; finitude/Infinite; Geheeb, Herkomer, Hirschfeld, homoeroticism, Kabir; Lao Tzu; mysticism; sexual binarity; Vatsyayana]

"[...] the only quality which all human beings without exception possess is uniqueness [...]."
W.H. Auden: "C.P. Cavafy."¹

1. Prelusion: Magnus Hirschfeld in India

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935), the most renowned sexologist before Alfred Kinsey, undertook between November 1930 and March 1932 a world trip that eventually led him to a ten-week stay in India, where he was cordially received by Indian intellectuals and public figures, including Jawaharlal Nehru. India's future Prime Minister was cognizant and appreciative of Hirschfeld's theoretical and emancipatory endeavors in the area of sexology, since he had visited a couple of years earlier the *Institute of Sexual Science* in Berlin that Hirschfeld had founded in 1919. When the German-Jewish guest, who was well

known for his advocacy of anti-colonialist policies and sexual minority rights, visited Nehru in his Ahmedabad residence, he certainly felt honored when his Indian host offered him the rooms normally reserved for Mahatma Gandhi.² Before meeting Nehru, Hirschfeld had sojourned in Calcutta, where he called on Rabindranath Tagore in the mansion that had been built by his great-great-grandfather in the Black Town, the non-European quarter of the city.³ Hirschfeld's pregnant depiction of his brief encounter with India's greatest living poet is included in *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers (The World Journey of a Sex Researcher)*, the sexologist's travel report published in Switzerland in 1933, in a time when he had already decided not to return to Germany in order to avoid Nazi persecution and two years before his unexpected death as a stateless person in the south of France.⁴ The following elaborations take Hirschfeld's depiction of his encounter with Tagore as a point of departure for scrutinizing their respective assumptions about sexual binarity and the nature of sexual difference. As will eventually become apparent, the issues at stake evince a special relevancy in light of India's current political and juridical efforts to overcome the ideological pervasiveness and societal entailments of the Victorian sexual prejudices inherited from the colonial legal system.⁵

2. Hirschfeld's depiction of a tête-à-tête with Rabindranath Tagore

Upon consideration of Hirschfeld's well-known socialist, humanitarian, non-Eurocentric and anti-imperialist positions, his succinct narrative concerning his visit to Tagore seems to run counter to what may be expected of an encounter between two prominent figures with theo-political affinities and a pronounced interest in overcoming the mutual misperceptions and misrepresentations of East and West.⁶ The actual subject matter of the conversation as described by Hirschfeld could be easily discarded as rather immaterial, if it did not offer the occasion for the sexologist's subtle commentary on the personality and surroundings of the aging poet.⁷ Hirschfeld's report on his cursory tête-à-tête with Tagore reads as follows:

"We were asked to arrive at around eight o'clock in the morning. As he was sitting in his armchair, his face and gown gave the effect of a painting exhaled in silver and white by Hubert Herkomer. He was feeling badly, and spoke in a fatigued and low voice; so we said good-bye after a short visit. During our conversation mention was made of our common friend Paulus Geheeb, whose Odenwald school, in its views of life and the world, pursues aims very similar to those of Tagore's school at Santiniketan."⁸

In assessing this depiction of the encounter, it should be borne in mind that it constitutes only the first part—and certainly not the most revealing or relevant—of Hirschfeld's narrative concerning his morning visit to the poet's ancestral residence.

3. A comparison with mezzotint printings

In Hirschfeld's characterization, Tagore appears as an old man afflicted by unnamed ailments that, in light of later precisions, could well have amounted to be merely imaginary, despite visibly taking their toll on the oversensitive artist. Although Hirschfeld's senior by only seven years, Tagore features a spectral semblance in sharp contrast with the liveliness and alertness behind the visitor's observations. Hirschfeld's state of mind is all the more astounding, as, during his trip, very real malaria symptoms, tropical temperatures, and the stress resulting from his many undertakings undermined his well-being.⁹ As Hirschfeld points out, the gloominess surrounding the encounter reminded him of the depictions by social-realist painter Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914). Although Hirschfeld uses the word *Gemälde* (i.e., *painting*) in this connection, the further specification "in silver and white" suggests that he was actually recalling the printings the celebrated German-English artist produced using the technique of mezzotint. As the root of the word suggests, this kind of printmaking enables to produce mid-tones between black and white of extraordinary quality. Against this backdrop, Hirschfeld's mental association of Herkomer's mezzotint depictions with the impression Tagore made on him underscores the atmosphere of grayish lifelessness Hirschfeld perceived. Although there is no extant textual evidence conveying Hirschfeld's estimate of Tagore's literary production, it seems safe to assume that, on the whole, the strained mystical resolutions and abstract speculations that at times permeate Tagore's plays and essays could hardly appeal to the literary tastes of Hirschfeld, whose staunch realistic worldview and scientific training predisposed him to linger on the aesthetic appraisal of life's concretions and contingencies. Tagore's books, into which Hirschfeld—a voracious reader—had certainly delved, could well have reinforced his perception of Tagore's aloofness. However, since Hirschfeld's library, papers and archives were destroyed by the Nazis in 1933, there is no way of effectively knowing the details of his perusal of Tagore's oeuvre. For all that is known about his literary tastes and predilections, Hirschfeld assuredly resented that Tagore's pervasive metaphysical preoccupations at times tend to blur the contrasting variegations of life for the sake of a masterfully articulated monotony of monochromatic gradations.

4. The views of a Santiniketan teacher on Tagore

Although the conversation between the poet and the sexologist was of short duration, it did touch upon one of Tagore's foremost concerns: his new vision of education and Santiniketan, the reform school he started in 1901 to implement his ideals. The reference to their common friend Paul Geheeb (1870-1961) is insofar significant, as it possibly helped Tagore situate Hirschfeld's work and endeavors within the intricate intellectual landscape of the *Lebensreformbewegung* [i.e., life reform movement] in Germany, whose scope

included the educational and cultural ideals of a libertarian like Geheeb, as well as the aims of theosophical and proto-Nazi ideologues.¹⁰ The mention of Santiniketan closes the paragraph depicting the encounter with Tagore, and at the same time puts into perspective the following citation of a Santiniketan teacher stating his views on the personality of the school founder. Indicatively, the second segment of Hirschfeld's report on his visit constitutes a rather prosaic, down-to-earth pendant of the precedent allusion to Tagore's educational ideals, inasmuch as the teacher's statement betrays a practical acquaintance of Tagore's personality and mores. In order to better assess why Hirschfeld deemed convenient to integrate in his narrative the teacher's seemingly unflattering comments on India's great national poet, it seems apposite to outline in due conciseness Hirschfeld's core sexological insights. Read against the backdrop of Hirschfeld's core contentions, the teacher's views gradually reveal a level of significance beyond the merely anecdotal.

5. Hirschfeld's universalization of sexual intermediariness

To understand Hirschfeld's motivation and strategy in citing the Santiniketan teacher, it should be borne in mind that Hirschfeld's sexological thought challenged of the age-old assumption of the male/female disjunction, contending that a human being is neither man nor woman, but at the same time man and woman in unique and therefore unrepeatably proportions. Within the new scheme of sexual distribution Hirschfeld propounded, there is no postulation of a "third sex" forming a closed supplement to the traditional binary in the way foreseen, for instance, in Plato's *Symposium*,¹¹ in Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra*,¹² or even in the scholarly treatises on same-sex love penned by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in the 19th century.¹³ Although Sigmund Freud,¹⁴ and even many of Hirschfeld's admirers attributed to him such a suppletive conception,¹⁵ he was keen to stress throughout his oeuvre that the so-called third sex constitutes only a fictional, but indispensable "makeshift"¹⁶ added to the already fictitious categories of the sexual binary¹⁷ in order to overcome the "extremely superficial scheme of classification into man or woman."¹⁸ On these premises, people who identify themselves as belonging to a third sexual alternative, as well as those who deem themselves in conformity with the traditional sexual binarism of the alleged majority prove to be, in the last resort, just individual instantiations of sexual intermediariness brought about by ever-varying Nature.¹⁹

6. Hirschfeld's reconceptualization of sexual difference

The scope and implications of Hirschfeld's groundbreaking reconceptualization of sexual difference are already announced by the motto he chose to open the programmatic treatise he published in 1905 under the title *Geschlechts-Übergänge (Sexual Transitions)*.²⁰ The quote in question is a

dictum by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz that runs: "Tout va par degrés dans la nature et rien par sauts."²¹ Applying this general principle to sexuality, Hirschfeld concludes that all purportedly distinct sexual groups are actually transitions within the pervasiveness of natural continuity. Contrary to the either/or scheme of traditional assignation to one of two sexes, the idea of sexual gradation allows in principle for infinite variations of sexual constitutions depending on the way the poles of the masculine and the feminine combine at each of the different layers of sexual description. In Hirschfeld's time, such layers were assumed to range from the sexual organs and the secondary sexual characteristics, to the sexual drive and the way psychological traits are articulated in culture.²² Given that in Hirschfeld's new distributional scheme sexual difference is not determined in relation to one single excluded alternative (male or female), but in relation to an open-ended series of as yet only partially realized combinations of the masculine and the feminine at the different descriptive levels, sexualities are characterized by a unique complexity, and their number is co-extensive with the number of sexed individuals.²³

7. Tagore as an "old prima donna"

As already suggested, Hirschfeld's sexological premises should be taken into consideration when gauging the specific relevancy of the teacher's comments on Tagore to Hirschfeld's depiction of the visit. The passage that includes the observations on the artist runs:

"Later on, I [i.e. Hirschfeld] talked occasionally with teachers from Tagore's school. One said: 'Tagore is like a famous old prima donna; just a while ago sick to death and so miserable that all of us are extremely worried, shortly after he gives lectures, sings and dances to his own compositions with a truly astonishing freshness for one of his years. It seems to me that R. N. Tagore shares his elastic lability with most feminine artists – and which artist is not feminine.'"²⁴

Conveying from the start the sarcastic-critical intent of his remarks, the teacher chooses to characterize Tagore as "old prima donna," well aware of the incisiveness of the term if applied to an eminent male artist who "sings and dances." As the further elaborations show, however, the comparison does not merely draw on the descriptive sense of "prima donna" as "a distinguished female operatic singer,"²⁵ but suggests that Tagore's personality corresponds to that of a "prima donna" in the metaphoric sense of a "vain and overly sensitive person who is temperamental and difficult to work with."²⁶ Thus, when the teacher refers to Tagore's "elastic lability," he is actually corroborating the derisiveness implied in the character of an "old prima donna." That his statement was far from being exclusively derogatory or arbitrary is brought home by a pregnant assessment of Tagore by his life-long friend and first western biographer of note, the Wesleyan missionary Edward J. Thompson. In a letter

written in 1920, he tellingly describes Tagore as "a restless, versatile spirit, of feminine contradictoriness."²⁷

8. Tagore and the accusation of effeminacy

Accordant with the remarks on Tagore's lability and versatility, Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson underscore in their standard biography²⁸ that "[m]ore than most men, Rabindranath Tagore was a *chameleon*."²⁹ Furthermore, they refer to "Tagore's *mercurial* complexity"³⁰ when assessing the depictions of faces and self-portrayals Tagore began to paint in 1928. Undoubtedly, these same traits proved advantageous in configuring the rich psychological texture of his fictional characters, or in his work as a performing artist. But they also informed his social habitudes and public persona. Not by chance, an obviously discerning, but not necessarily admiring observer of Tagore dubbed him in 1920 a "dramatic saint."³¹ It seems safe to assume that Tagore would not have taken the phrase as a compliment, since in an article of 1926 explaining the reasons for renouncing his knighthood, he asserted: "I greatly abhor to make any public gesture which may have the least suggestion of a *theatrical character*."³² As an acclaimed public figure and moral lodestar of his country, Tagore could obviously not condone encroachments of the moral or psychological complexities of his art on the earnestness of his humanitarian stance and political resolution. As is well known, potent cultural prejudices were inherent in the Indian kind of post-Victorianism that underpinned Tagore's accession to world fame. Among these was the association of the "theatrical character" not only with lacking seriousness, but, perhaps more importantly in this context, with lacking virility. Tagore had good reasons for being sensitized in this regard, since a couple of years before the publication of the "Knighthood" article he had been publicly accused of embodying an "*effeminate* feeling of defeat, [a] pacifistic waiting by the roadside and puddling in sentiment" – all traits that counter what Tagore himself described as the "*manly* call to battle in the everlasting fight of life."³³ Such vilifications—undergirded by the core objection of not evincing the serious resolution of a "man"—were all the more effective in reaching their target, as Tagore himself shared not only the "manly" ideals of his detractors, but also the misogynist bias implied in the accusation of effeminacy. On these assumptions, the Santiniketan teacher's nearly caricatural depiction of Tagore as a prima donna epitomizes the widespread focus on that vulnerable aspect of Tagore's public persona, which was nonetheless anchored in the intra-psychic sources of his greatness.

9. The creative artist as a challenge to sexual binarity

As Tagore conveys in his autobiographical account *My Boyhood Days*,³⁴ he grew up in an atmosphere where singing and playing music was an essential

part of family life. His later opera compositions and the dance-dramas he personally rehearsed thus appear to be in seamless continuity with his formative years. Tagore's earnestness in dealing with music is reflected in his comments on a visit to Brighton and London as a teenager, where he heard the cadenzas of a true prima donna capable of imitating bird cries with extraordinary skill.³⁵ However, despite the merits of the displayed artistry, Tagore found the performance comic and pointless. With the hindsight of maturity, he could have possibly considered such a performance an instance of the trivialization to which, in his view, Western music is generally prone.³⁶ On these assumptions, it becomes apparent that the Santiniketan teacher's mention that Tagore "sings and dances to his own compositions" was based on indisputable facts, but also that he subliminally adduces those facts to support his comparison of Tagore with an "old prima donna." Needless to say, such a comparison could hardly do justice to Tagore's claims that the music he wrote and performed was meant to convey intimations of transcendent aims. However, notwithstanding the inappropriateness and anecdotal undertone of the comparison, it introduces a line of thought that becomes clear only in the last sentence of the teacher's testimony. Although the derisive design behind the passage is unmistakable, the final rhetorical question draws attention to the fact that Tagore's artistic creativity was related to sexual or gender-related intricacies that subtly challenge the pervasive patterns of binomial sexual distribution. Therewith, the teacher sets the deranging perplexities caused by Tagore's sexual persona within a deeper ambit of signification. As a result, the assessment not just hints at the rather idiosyncratic traits of Tagore's personality, but also insinuates that the femininity attributable to Tagore transcends the trivial ambit of derision, inasmuch as the artist's sexual and gender complexities are lastly a token of humanity's sexual condition. On this account, the teacher's rhetorical question is not only accordant with Hirschfeld's core contentions regarding universal sexual intermediariness, but could have been enunciated by Hirschfeld himself.

10. The feminine complexities of the male artist

By citing an insider's view on Tagore, Hirschfeld conveniently exempts himself from making any sexological comments on "one of India's greatest nation-builders."³⁷ Hirschfeld's ostensible reserve, however, can hardly conceal the fact that the rhetorical question at the end of the teacher's statement conveys by proxy the core of Hirschfeld's own expert estimate of the sexological makeup of artists in general, and thereby reinforces Hirschfeld's premise regarding the universal scope of sexual intermediariness. Such a discreet strategy becomes all the more apparent, if one considers that Hirschfeld hypothesizes in *Geschlechtskunde*—his five-volume opus magnum—that most religious grounders, philosophers and poets "united in themselves both sexes in especially pronounced form."³⁸ Thus, far from being an exception to how human sexuality constellates, Tagore's femininity instantiates the heightened degree in which the

male/female polarity that inheres in every individual informs the sexual configuration of artistic creators. In this connection it should be underscored however, that owing to the non-repeatable sexual constitution of every individual postulated by Hirschfeld, estimates of the concrete sexual behavior of individuals are not warranted in the absence of biographical or historical data. Thus, the fact that Tagore's femininity did not go unnoticed by at least some of his acquaintances, cannot be taken to entail necessarily, for instance, a dispositional or behavioral a-normativity as regards sexuality.³⁹ Perhaps not coincidentally, the way the teacher attributes femininity to Tagore resonates with a telling phrase written by the poet himself in which he depicts as "laughably feminine"⁴⁰ the helplessness of the gigantic "monsters" of past eras that were forced to give way to physically feeblers creatures. The femininity that Tagore ascribes to the presumably *male* dinosaurs despite their prodigious muscular might, is obviously not a statement on their sexual disposition or "mores."

11. Tagore's views on sexual binarity and the problem of power

Although Tagore's foregoing statement and the teacher's citation Hirschfeld reports with tacit approval seem to concur in implying that the femininity of males is derisory, the two assessments are subservient, in the last resort, of very different claims. While femininity for Tagore is on principle negatively connoted when it qualifies an organism categorized as male according to the dimorphic pattern of sexual distribution, from Hirschfeld's perspective femininity is an essential co-determinant of any purportedly "male" individual, so that its societal exclusion or psychic repression can lead to its reemergence, for instance, in the form of caricatural distortions of the individual's personality. In contrast to the Hirschfeldian premises, the pervasiveness of the binomial sexual scheme in Tagore's thought is ascertainable even when he castigates the "almost exclusively masculine [...] civilization of power,"⁴¹ where women are "pushed back for good into the mere region of the decorative."⁴² Never questioning the theoretical cogency of the male/female dichotomy as organizing principle of civilization, Tagore contents himself with the critique and rejection of the inequitable power distribution grafted onto the binary distinction. Being "the feeblers creatures [...] always left under the shadow of those huge creatures, the men,"⁴³ women appear in Tagore's depictions as a biologically marked collective, subdued by an asymmetric pattern of empowerment that correlates with the binomial scheme of sexuality, but is not identical with it. On these assumptions, Tagore envisages the superseding of the present-day power inequality as the pre-eminent task of the coming "spiritual civilization."⁴⁴ In this Utopian framework, "[t]he future Eve will lure away the future Adam from the wilderness of a masculine dispensation and mingle her talents with those of her partner in a joint creation of a paradise of their own."⁴⁵ However, according to Tagore, the advent of a new balance of power between man and woman is dependent on the radical reassertion of "the difference inherent in their respective natures."⁴⁶ Following

this line of thought, Tagore underscores, for instance, that the domestic world constitutes "the gift of God to woman,"⁴⁷ and rejects downright the monotonous superfluity that would occur "if Eve were a mere tautology of Adam."⁴⁸ Furthermore, he is vehement in his castigation of the type of woman who "refuses to acknowledge the distinction between her life and that of man,"⁴⁹ and, more specifically, of Western women who are keen on stressing that their "difference from men is unimportant."⁵⁰ As a decided advocate of "[t]he gulf of separation, which Nature has contrived between the sexes,"⁵¹ Tagore not only endorses the current validity of the immemorial binomial scheme, but uses it as the categorial basis for the division of tasks indispensable to the realization of "the golden age to come in future."⁵² Thus, from Tagore's perspective, questioning the historical regime of dichotomous sexuality would be equivalent to the hopeless presumption of undermining the self-evident facts of "nature."

12. Tagore's asymmetrical male/female topology

Although women, according to Tagore, are called "to restore the spiritual supremacy of all that is human in the world of humanity,"⁵³ their contribution towards that goal is effectuated only indirectly, by offering inspiration to men as the actual creators of civilization. Since the advantage of "man" over women resides "in a comparative freedom from biological obligations,"⁵⁴ he is destined to find accomplishment in the exercise of unhampered creativity, while women's inspirational nature is meant to be deployed within the intensely personal ambit of the home. On the basis of this asymmetrical topology, Tagore—qua author—appropriates masculinity as the locus from which he can enjoy the prerogatives of the truly free creator indebted only to the charm women exercise over "our minds."⁵⁵ Thus, despite his assuredly well-intended support of women's emancipatory struggles,⁵⁶ Tagore does not explore the problematic correlation he establishes between sexual binarity and the socio-cultural functions that sustain his visionary claims. As a consequence, he avoids any critical scrutiny of the male positionality that marks the authorial prerogatives he assumes throughout. On the contrary, the creative preeminence of masculinity in the allegedly nature-based distribution of civilizational roles is emblematically consolidated in the very titles of books such as *Man* or *The Religion of Man*, where the term "man" can be read as an index of the pervasively male focus of the treatises, and of the subsequent relegation of women to the subordinate roles of inspiring the male creative powers that emanate from the divine principle: the Eternal Man. While Tagore's theoretical moves and wording counterproductively stabilizes female dependency from the supposed agents of civilization, some of his most salient elaborations on the culturally creative (and thus presumably non-feminine) males paradoxically tend to de-stabilize his own notion of masculinity conceptualized according to the binomial pattern. Thus, his occasional digressions on the lofty states of nuptial mysticism where mention is made of "the wedding of the man with Man"⁵⁷ or of the "marriage party" celebrating the union between the

"Supreme man" as bridegroom and an apparently male bride,⁵⁸ are apt to have unexpected, self-unsettling effects on the foundational function he assigns to the binary principle of sexual distribution. The ambiguities of Tagore's sexual semantics at the core of his mystical indagations suggest that his overall argumentative strategies regarding sexual binarity are grounded, lastly, in an insufficient and uncritical understanding of the complexities inherent in what Hirschfeld might have termed the male/female "man."

13. The mystical destabilization of masculinity

Based on the metaphysically grounded ascertainment that the "variedness of individuality [is] ceaseless and unending,"⁵⁹ Tagore declares on principle: "Our nature being complex, it is unsafe to generalize about things that are human."⁶⁰ These principled insights notwithstanding, Tagore makes no sustained effort to grasp sexual diversity beyond the binary scheme and the traditional male/female combinatory that permeates the most visible aspects of Indian cultural history. Questioning such conventional patterns would have been all the more justified, as it would have allowed Tagore a more perceptive approach, for instance, of the already mentioned man/Man nuptial mysticism, a core leitmotif of the Baul worldview so often invoked by the poet throughout his oeuvre. Signally, in the seventh chapter of *The Religion of Man* titled *The Man of My Heart*, Tagore quotes several poet-saints of medieval India whose ecstatic homoeroticism can hardly be overlooked. One of them exclaims without subterfuge:

"Thou seest me, O Divine Man (narahari), and I see thee, and our love becomes mutual."⁶¹

Another Baul mystic quoted by Tagore writes along the same vein:

"Man seeks the man in me and I lose myself and run out."⁶²

Equally noteworthy in this regard is the unsettling, sapiential advice offered by Kabir, a poet whom Tagore diligently translated into English. In the twentieth poem of Tagore's translation, Kabir seems to lay out the epistemic grounding of the subsequent mystical-motivated self-exposure when he urges:

"Be strong, and enter into your own body: for there your foothold is firm. Consider it well, O my heart! go not elsewhere."⁶³

Shortly after, Kabir utters his unconditional surrender as *wife* to the exalted male Beloved:

"I meet my husband, and leave at His feet the offering of my body and my mind."⁶⁴

More importantly, Kabir reasserts his rapturous sex-crossing when acknowledging the shortcomings of "her" bridal love:

"When people say I am Thy bride, I am ashamed; for I have not touched Thy heart with my heart."⁶⁵

Ignoring the evident, however, Tagore avoids attesting in his commentary any psychological literalness or auto/biographical embedment to such poetry, preferring to dwell on an exclusively spiritualistic exegesis that neglects even the most basic psychoanalytical insights into the mechanisms of sublimation. Since the "Man" of Tagore's "heart" is de-sexualized from the start in order to present a conventional and reassuring reading of the potentially highly disruptive poetry he cites, no evidence to the contrary seems capable of overturning the poet's unwarranted assumption of sexuality's disjunctive organization that fosters the trivializing neglect of all forms of non-heterosexual love. Regardless of his principled enunciations concerning the irreducible diversity of individuals, Tagore deems apposite to reduce potentially infinite variegation to a binary when it comes to the theoretical grasp and societal configuration of sexuality. Contrasting with the poet's convenient silences and obliterations, Hirschfeld, despite the brevity of his stay in India, promptly acknowledged the sexological relevancy of what he terms "the mystical-erotic sect" of the Baul from Bengal. Keenly aware of an aspect of their lives that Tagore apparently decided to overlook or leave unmentioned, Hirschfeld pithily points out that among the Baul "religious devotion ends in sexual devotion, but of a kind that follows the method of carezza."⁶⁶

14. "Pananthropy" and the individual's bisexual nature

In a letter to a friend, Tagore wrote in 1921:

"My father cherished a synthesis of Hafiz and the Upanishads in his heart. The creation of beauty inspires such a union of opposite elements. The Creator must be conscious of both the male and the female principles without which there can be no Creation."⁶⁷

Although the text leaves undecided whether "Creator" is meant to designate god or man, there is hardly any need to assume a disjunctive alternative, since Tagore conceptualized his "religion of Man" as one "in which the infinite became defined in humanity."⁶⁸ According to Tagore's "pananthropy,"⁶⁹ the "Supreme Man [...] is infinite in his essence, [...] finite in his manifestation in us the individuals."⁷⁰ Thus, the assumed male/female polarity inherent in the Supreme Man as a condition of his creative potency implies that concrete "individuals" necessarily share his bisexual nature. Interestingly enough, this implicit consequence of Tagore's premises clearly resonates with Hirschfeld's understanding of the core sapiential teachings propounded by Lao Tzu and Confucius.⁷¹ As Hirschfeld explains, the Chinese sages regarded divinity to be male and female simultaneously, thus becoming classical forerunners of "the ur-idea of human double sexuality,"⁷² a conception that in the West had lain buried under "the rubble of Hellas and Rome"⁷³ and was revitalized by Charles Darwin

in the context of his evolution theory.⁷⁴ Although Tagore's subliminally challenging insights did not lead him to revise his own postulation of a "gulf of separation [...] between the sexes,"⁷⁵ he at times seems to envision an advent of profound historical transformations in human nature that, in principle, could embrace and develop the entailments of his timid intimations of sexual complexities beyond the ideology of dichotomous sexuality. Thus, Tagore seems to endorse an expectant and potentially transformative vision of historical open-endedness when he notes in a pregnant passage of his essay on *Man*:

"The major aspects of the Supreme man are yet unrevealed. The hope of revealing him extends continually to the future."⁷⁶

Furthermore, in one of his *Thoughts* Tagore hypothesizes what appears to be an ever deeper historicization of human nature, which—perhaps under the influence of Karl Marx's philosophy of history—⁷⁷ leads to the assertion: "man is not yet born, his history is the history of birth-throes."⁷⁸ Despite the undeniable critical tendency of these aperçus, however, Tagore circumvents the possibility of drawing from a radicalized conception of historicity consequences relevant to his grasp of sexual difference. Such a move would have possibly betrayed theoretical interests and introspective insights he was obviously not prepared to acknowledge.

15. The sexual hiatus and the continuities of nature

In *Construction Versus Creation*, arguably one of Tagore's most relevant theoretical pieces, he contends from the outset:

"Construction is for a purpose, it expresses our wants; but creation is for itself, it expresses our very being."⁷⁹

Elaborating on the ontological consequences of this assertion, Tagore states that "the world is a movement, and this movement must not be retarded in any of its parts by a break of cadence."⁸⁰ Insights of this kind throughout Tagore's oeuvre seem to be Hindu-underpinned correspondences to the Latin-formulated phrase "natura non facit saltum," which Charles Darwin cites six times in *The Origin of Species*⁸¹ and designates as the "old canon in natural history."⁸² From 1896 on,⁸³ Magnus Hirschfeld consistently resorts to the principle as the epistemic blueprint sustaining his universalization of sexual intermediariness.⁸⁴ Taking into account Tagore's outspoken interest in biology and its history, there seems to be no cogent reason as to why his postulation of a harmonious movement pervading the structure of the universe did not lead him to a thorough revision and dismantlement of binary sexuality, which—needless to say—clearly constitutes a flagrant "break of cadence" that counters his overarching ontology of natural continuities. In light of Tagore's further elaborations, such a contradiction appears to result from a shortsighted, mechanistic view of the body incapable of

acknowledging its thorough embedment in the creative deployments of universal life. As Tagore himself explains,

"the body is more than [its physiological] mechanism, it is divine. An exhaustive list of all its functions fails to give us its definiteness. It is a creation and not a mere construction, rising far above its purposes and composition. Creation is infinitely in excess of all measurements, it is the immaterial in matter."⁸⁵

This kind of divinized corporeality is a salient instantiation of Tagore's far-reaching reception of the poetical wisdom of the Baul,⁸⁶ who—as the artist underlines—"have no images, temples, scriptures, or ceremonies," but just "declare in their songs the divinity of Man, and express for him an intense feeling of love."⁸⁷ Tagore's avowed admiration for the Baul, however, should not blur the fact that the "constructed" fixities of two mutually exclusive sexes Tagore was so prone to maintain contradict the Baul openness in articulating sexual and erotic complexities as well as their resulting disregard for ideological and behavioral correctness. That the oftentimes strikingly complex feminine characters of his plays at times seem to embody moral characteristics that popular lore normally attributes to the male sex—as in the case of *Chitra*: "They say that in valour she is a man, and a woman in tenderness"⁸⁸—does not indicate in the least an unsettling of the contours of their biological or psychological sexuality. On account of what Tagore terms the Baul "mystic philosophy of the body"⁸⁹ it can be surmised that if the Baul had had Tagore's sophisticate analytical tools at their disposal, they might well have articulated what the poet and philosopher—for reasons of his own—had desisted from thinking through: that sexualities are as diverse as the potentially infinite number of the individuals they mark.

16. *Per scientiam ad justitiam*

Hirschfeld was by no means a typical Western intellectual.⁹⁰ However, from Tagore's Indian perspective, his Jewish-European guest certainly could have appeared as a representative of "[t]he powerful races" which—as he wrote in 1920— "have the scientific mind and [...] have taken upon themselves the immense responsibility of the present age."⁹¹ Hirschfeld could have possibly agreed with the assertion, for he declared in his later years: "'My field is the world' – not Germany, not Europe alone."⁹² At the antipodes of imperialism, Hirschfeld's internationalism was marked by an unambiguous anti-colonialist and anti-racist stance that allowed him to perceive and acknowledge the deep commonalities between his theoretical and emancipatory endeavors and India's age-old sexological tradition. During his trip, his Indian colleagues must have had a sense of Hirschfeld's stance on the issue, as they hailed him as "the modern Vatsyayana of the West."⁹³ It seems however safe to assume that in view of Hirschfeld's sexology, Tagore would have been prone to insist on the same principled objections and caveats that he had against Western science in general. In *Construction Versus Creation*, Tagore encapsulates the main reason

for his general skepticism in this respect when he asserts that "science does not show any sign of vacating her seat in favor of humanity or submit to any curtailment of jurisdiction after her own proper work has been finished."⁹⁴ Had Tagore been familiar with Hirschfeld's life and work, he would have readily acknowledged that the sexologist was also asking the question enunciated in the title of his 1933 article: *Can Science Be Humanized?*⁹⁵ Indeed, in accordance with his life motto: *per scientiam ad justitiam*,⁹⁶ Hirschfeld was keen on stressing the limits imposed by sexual individuality on sexual knowledge, contending that a transition was needed from sexology to the field of ethics and its emancipatory political implementation. Since from Hirschfeld's perspective the sexological understanding as well as the processes of sexual self-identity and self-identification of a human being are dependent on an asymptotic demarche assuming the perfectibility (and thus provisoriness) of any set of sexual categories under which individuals are subsumed, the individual's irreducible uniqueness limits the applicability of sexual categorialities, and necessitates, in the last resort, the passage from sexual taxonomy and the scientific grasp of sexual difference to a libertarian empowerment that entitles human individuals to deploy, in the concretion of history, the—literally—unutterable sexual specificity resulting from their inborn potentialities. Regardless of his descriptive and systematic work on the variability and diversification of sexuality within the continuities of nature, Hirschfeld's overarching critical assessment of sexology's epistemic boundaries shows the way from an enlightened sexual discourse to a historico-political ambit in which the individual's concrete liberation from categorial constrictions and their ensuing socio-cultural manifestations comes to fruition. On these assumptions, it becomes apparent that Hirschfeld could have fully concurred with Tagore when he noted in 1924: "[o]nly individuals matter."⁹⁷

17. Critique and the overcoming of finitude

As his poetry and fiction intimates to the careful reader, Tagore, like Hirschfeld, was acutely aware of the irreducible complexities that haunt sexuality. Unlike Hirschfeld, however, Tagore "reads" nature and the history of culture taking for granted the theoretical cogency of binary sexuality and the simplistic combinatories it foresees. By avoiding the theoretical confrontation of the individual's irreducible sexual intricacies, Tagore failed to acknowledge the universal clue that reconciles sexual difference. Driven by a metaphysical élan to transcend the finitude of sexual determination, Tagore overhastily envisages a cultural framework for the conciliatory fusion of the binary sexes, without first scrutinizing the cogency of dichotomous sexuality. Contravening some of his most profound intuitions regarding the unique configuration of the individual's finitude, Tagore overlooks that the dividing cleft of the sexual is not located between two mutually exclusive sexual groups, but between unrepeatable sexual constitutions as numerous as the open-ended series of human individuals they inform. Although Tagore unambiguously contends that the "general idea of Man

[...] persistently manifests itself in every particular human being, who is different from all other individuals,"⁹⁸ he was not prepared to acknowledge that the infinity of the *Supreme Human Being*—i.e., of the idea of a de-patriarchalized "Supreme Man" in his indistinctness from the "Eternal Woman"⁹⁹—can only consummate the realization of *its* bisexual essence in the potentially endless number of individuals embodying a unique form of sexual intermediariness. Since femininity, according to Tagore's binary pattern, is a trait that can only be properly attributed to the ontologically fixed group he terms "women," the unavowed and repressed femininity in the alternate group of alleged "men" can at times inflict its nemesis in the subtleness of stultification. In the case of the artist Rabindranath Tagore, femininity manifests itself, but only in a dissonant and unintended mode, which the Santiniketan teacher perceived as that of an "aging prima donna." *In sexualibus*, as in any other ambit of finitude, Sādhanā—"the realization of life"¹⁰⁰—fails to achieve its aims, whenever the workings of critical reason do not thoroughly prepare the path for what the thinker Rabindranath Tagore might have called the temporal deployments of the Infinite.

¹ Auden, W.H.: "C.P. Cavafy." In: Auden, W.H.: *Forewords and Afterwords*. Selected by Edward Mendelson. New York: Vintage International, 1989, p. 335.

² See Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*. Brugg (Switzerland): Bözberg-Verlag, 1933, p. 250.

³ See Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore. The Myriad-Minded Man*. New Delhi: Rupa et Co., 2006, pp. 18-19.

⁴ The standard biography of Hirschfeld is: Herzer, Manfred: *Magnus Hirschfeld. Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen*. Zweite, überarbeitete Auflage. Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript Verlag, 2001. For a biography in English, see: Wolff, Charlotte: *Magnus Hirschfeld. A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology*. London / Melbourne / New York: Quartet Books, 1986. A brief presentation of Hirschfeld's life and work can be accessed at: Bauer, J. Edgar: "Magnus Hirschfeld," *glbtq. An encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender & queer culture*. General Editor: Claude J. Summers, 2004: www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/hirschfeld_m.html.

⁵ In this regard, see: Bhaskaran, Suparna: "The Politics of Penetration: Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code." In: Vanita, Ruth (ed.): *Queering India. Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 15-29; Chatterjee, Indrani: "Alienation, Intimacy, and Gender: Problems for a History of Love in South Asia." In: Vanita, Ruth (ed.): *Queering India. Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 61-76. Of interest in this connection are also the following: Vanita, Ruth: "Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa." In: Vanita, Ruth and Saleem Kidvai: *Same-Sex Love in India. Readings from Literature and History*. New York: St. Martin's Press,

2000, pp. 229-232; [Gandhi, M.K.:] "M.K. Gandhi: Reply to a Query (English). Introduced by Ruth Vanita." In: Vanita, Ruth and Saleem Kidvai: *Same-Sex Love in India. Readings from Literature and History*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 252-256.

⁶ Signally, both authors were adamant opponents of what they termed "barbarism." While Tagore wrote in 1913: "All civilizations are mixed products. Only barbarism is simple, monadic and unalloyed," ([Tagore, Rabindranath]: "Race Conflict." In: Tagore, Rabindranath: *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. VI: Essays, Lectures, Addresses, p. 471), Hirschfelds underscored toward the end of his life that "culture is the result of racial mixings, and only this mixing saves from barbarity." (Hirschfeld, Magnus: "Phantom Rasse. Ein Hirngespinnst als Weltgefahr" (14 [actually: 15.] Fortsetzung). In: *Die Wahrheit* (Prague) 14, 9 (1935) [Caption of the paragraph: *Zoologischer Rasseglauben [sic]*: "Die Kultur ist ein Ergebnis der rassischen Vermischungen, und nur diese Vermischung rettet vor der Barbarei.") All translations from the German are by the author of the present study.

⁷ At the request of the author, Dr. Amrit Sen (Visva-Bharati) kindly carried out at Rabindra Bhavana (Memorial Museum and Research Center for Tagore Studies) a search for possible references to Hirschfeld's visit in Tagore's unpublished papers. No mention was found.

⁸ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*, op. cit., p. 211: "Wir waren früh gegen 8 Uhr bestellt. In seinem Sessel hingelagert, wirkt sein Gesicht und Gewand wie ein hingehauchtes Gemälde von Hubert Herkomer in Silber und Weiß. Er fühlte sich leidend, sprach müde und leise, so daß wir uns nach kurzem Besuch verabschiedeten. Unser Gespräch knüpfte an unsern gemeinsamen Freund Paulus Geheeb an, dessen Odenwaldschule welt- und lebensanschaulich ganz ähnliche Ziele verfolgt wie Tagores Schule in Santiniketan." The translation offered here differs in important respects from the rendering in: Magnus Hirschfeld, *Women East and West: Impressions of a Sex Expert*, trans. O.P. Green, London: W. Heinemann, 1935, p. 156. Two further editions of *Weltreise* have been published in English: Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Men and Women: The World Journey of a Sexologist*. With an introduction by A.A. Brill. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935 (Reprint: New York: AMS, 1974); and Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Curious Sex Customs in the Far East*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1935 (Reprint: New York: Capricorn, 1965). The text of the British and American editions is a considerably abridged "English version by O.P. Green." Thus, all quotations from *Weltreise* are referenced according to the first German edition of 1933. For a more recent German edition, see: Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Weltreise eines Sexualforschers im Jahre 1931/32*. Vorgestellt und mit einem Vorwort versehen von Hans Christoph Buch. Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 2006. For a French translation, see: Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Le Tour du monde d'un sexologue*. Translation by L. Gara. Paris: Gallimard, 1938.

⁹ Characteristically, during his world journey Hirschfeld held conferences and lectures at universities, hospitals, ministries, women's clubs and Christian associations, on radio stations and even on board the ships on which he traveled.(See Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*, op. cit., pp. 87-89, 93, 138-39, 145, 196, 215-17, 238-39, 311-12, 366-67.)

¹⁰ As Hirschfeld points out, Paul Geheeb was the founder of the famous Odenwaldschule, which he ran from 1910 until he was forced to flee Nazi Germany in 1934. For a recent, brief introduction to the movement, see: Krabbe, Wolfgang R.: "Die Lebensreformbewegung." In: Buchholz, Kai, Rita Latocha, Hilke Peckmann and Klaus Wolbert (Eds.): *Die Lebensreform. Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kultur um 1900*. Two volumes. Darmstadt: haeusser-media/Verlag Häusser, 2001, Vol. I, pp. 25-29.

¹¹ For Plato's treatment of the *triton genos*, see Platon: *Werke in acht Bänden. Griechisch und Deutsch*. Sonderausgabe. Herausgegeben von Gunther Eigler. Dritter Band: *Phaidon – Das Gastmahl – Kratylus*. Bearbeitet von Dietrich Kurz. Griechischer Text von Léon Robin und Louis Méridier. Deutsche Übersetzung von Friedrich Schleiermacher. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990, pp. 266-269 [= *Symposion* 189 d-e].

¹² For Vatsyayana elaborations on the *tritja prakrit*, see Vatsyayana Mallanaga: *Kamasutra*. A new, complete English translation of the Sanskrit text with excerpts from the Sanskrit *Jayamangala* commentary of Yashodhara Indrapada, the Hindi *Jaya* commentary of Devadatta Shastri, and explanatory notes by the translators Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 25, 38, 65-67, 78 [= 1.5.27; 2.1.42; 2.9.1-24; 3.2.3].

¹³ See, in this connection, Ulrichs's classic definition of the (male) hermaphroditism of body and soul: "Anima muliebris virile corpore inclusa." (Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich. *Memnon. Die Geschlechtsnatur des mannliebenden Urnings. Eine naturwissenschaftliche Darstellung [...]* Abtheilung II. [1868]. In: Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich: *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mann männlichen Liebe*. Ed. Hubert Kennedy. Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1994, Part VII, title page.)

¹⁴ Indicatively, Sigmund Freud wrote in a passage targeting primarily Hirschfeld: "Die homosexuellen Männer, die in unseren Tagen eine energische Aktion gegen die gesetzliche Einschränkung ihrer Sexualbetätigung unternommen haben, lieben es, sich durch ihre theoretischen Wortführer als eine von Anfang an gesonderte geschlechtliche Abart, als sexuelle Zwischenstufen, als ein 'drittes Geschlecht' hinstellen zu lassen." (Freud, Sigmund: *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci*. In: Freud, Sigmund: *Studienausgabe. Band X: Bildende Kunst und Literatur*. Hrsg. von Alexander Mitscherlich u.a. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969, p. 124). / "The homosexual men who have undertaken an energetic action against the legal restriction of their sexual activities, like to be exhibited by their theoretical spokesmen as a sexual deviation that is separate from the beginning, as sexual intermediary stages, as a 'third sex.'"

¹⁵ See Bauer, J. Edgar: "Die Devise und ihr Nachklang. Zur allerneuesten Fortsetzung der Nicht-Rezeption von Magnus Hirschfelds *sexueller Zwischenstufenlehre*." In: *Capri*. 39 (Oktober 2006), pp. 7-26. The study can also be accessed at: Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/devise.htm>, 2009; and Bauer, J. Edgar: "INDIVIDUUM INEFFABILE: ΣΤΟΧΑΣΜΟΙ ΠΑΝΩ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΒΡΑΑΜΙΚΗ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΗ ΑΝΤΙΛΗΨΗ ΤΩΝ ΣΕΞΟΥΑΛΙΚΟΤΗΤΩΝ." In: *Celestia*. ΕΞΑΜΗΝΙΑΙΑ ΕΠΙΘΕΩΡΗΣΗ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ, ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ, 3 (2009), pp. 28-39.

¹⁶ Hirschfeld, Magnus: "Die intersexuelle Konstitution." In: *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 23 (1923), p. 5: "[...] Notbehelf [...]."

¹⁷ See Hirschfeld, Magnus: "Die intersexuelle Konstitution," op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁸ Hirschfeld, Magnus: "Die intersexuelle Konstitution," op. cit., p. 23: "[...] allzu oberflächliche Einteilungsschema der Sexualkonstitution in Mann und Weib [...]."

¹⁹ See Bauer, J. Edgar: "Der Tod Adams. Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen zur Sexualemanzipation im Werk Magnus Hirschfelds." In: *100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung. Dokumentation einer Vortragsreihe in der Akademie der Künste*. Ausgewählt und herausgegeben von Manfred Herzer. Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1998, pp. 15-45. The essay

has been reissued in: Bauer, J. Edgar. "Der Tod Adams. Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen zur Sexualemanzipation im Werk Magnus Hirschfelds." In: *Durch Wissenschaft zur Gerechtigkeit? Textsammlung zur kritischen Rezeption des Schaffens von Magnus Hirschfeld*. Ed. Andreas Seeck. Münster / Hamburg / London: Lit Verlag, 2003, pp. 133-155. A revised version can be accessed at: Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/bauer10.htm>. 2009.

²⁰ See Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechts-Übergänge. Mischungen männlicher und weiblicher Geschlechtscharaktere. (Sexuelle Zwischenstufen.)* Erweiterte Ausgabe eines auf der 76. Naturforscherversammlung zu Breslau gehaltenen Vortrages. 2. Auflage. Leipzig: Verlag von Max Spohr (Inh. Ferd. Spohr), 1913, title page. As the complete title suggests, the term "sexual transitions" refers to "Sexuelle Zwischenstufen," i.e. "sexual intermediary degrees."

²¹ Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm: *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement*. In: Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Die philosophischen Schriften*. Herausgegeben von C. J. Gerhardt. Vol. 5. Hildesheim-New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1978, p. 155 [= IV,16,12]: "In nature everything happens by degrees, and nothing by leaps."

²² See Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*. Nachdruck der Erstauflage von 1914 mit einer kommentierenden Einleitung von E.J. Haeberle. Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984, pp. 547-548.

²³ For elaborations on this central issue, see Bauer, J. Edgar: "'43 046 721 Sexualtypen.' Anmerkungen zu Magnus Hirschfelds Zwischenstufenlehre und der Unendlichkeit der Geschlechter." In: *Capri* 33 (Dezember 2002), pp. 23-30; Bauer, J. Edgar. "Geschlechtliche Einzigkeit. Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Konnex eines sexualkritischen Gedankens." In: *Capri* 34 (November 2003), pp. 22-36. These essays can be accessed at: Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/bauer18.htm>, 2009 (Revidierte Fassung); and Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/bauer19.htm>, 2009.

²⁴ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*, op. cit., p. 211: "Später unterhielt ich mich noch verschiedentlich mit Lehrern von Tagores Schule. Einer sagte: "Tagore ist wie eine berühmte alte Primadonna; eben noch sterbenskrank und so elend, daß wir alle äußerst beunruhigt sind, hält er kurz darauf Vorlesungen und singt und tanzt seine Kompositionen mit einer für seine Jahre geradezu erstaunliche Frische. Es scheint mir, daß R. N. Tagore diese elastische Labilität mit den meisten femininen Künstlern – und welcher Künstler wäre nicht feminin – teilt."

²⁵ Dictionary.com, LLC © 2010: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/prima_donna, sub verbo "prima donna" (accessed September 19, 2010).

²⁶ Dictionary.com, LLC © 2010: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/prima_donna, sub verbo "prima donna" (accessed September 19, 2010).

²⁷ Quoted in: Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 7. The reference is to: "Letter to Prasanta Mahalanobis, November 6, 1920, in: Thompson, E.P.: *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 49."

²⁸ The idea for the subtitle goes back to the phrase "the myriad-minded poet and writer" used by the chief justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, in his speech read during the ceremony conferring

Tagore an honorary doctorate by Oxford University. (See Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., pp. 352-353.)

²⁹ Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 172. Emphasis added.

³⁰ Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 356. Emphasis added.

³¹ Quoted in: Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 227.

³² Tagore, Rabindranath: "Knighthood." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. VIII: *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 1045. Emphasis added.

³³ Quoted in: Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 207. The citation is from a long critical article by Paul Elmer More published in the *Nation* on November 30, 1916. Emphasis added.

³⁴ See Tagore, Rabindranath: *My Boyhood Days*. Translated by Marjorie Sykes. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1945, pp. 33-38; 58; 71; 73; 82.

³⁵ See Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 69.

³⁶ See Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., pp. 359-360.

³⁷ Thus the assessment of Tagore in the biography commemorating his birth centenary: Kripalani, Krishna: *Rabindranath Tagore. A Biography*. New Delhi: UBSPD, 2008, p. XVII

³⁸ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet*. Vol. I: *Die körperseelischen Grundlagen*. Stuttgart: Julius Püttmann, Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1926, p. 336: "[...] meist beide Geschlechter besonders stark in sich vereinigenden [...]."

³⁹ Generally, Tagore scholarship has cautiously avoided focusing on his sexuality. As can be ascertained even in the latest encompassing biography by Dutta and Robinson, the way Tagore organized his sexual life, for example, before his marriage and after his relatively early widowhood remains a non-issue. This omission is rather surprising, since the book was first published in 1995, that is, once gender studies were already established as an academic discipline.

⁴⁰ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Women's Place in the World." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. VII: *Lectures, Addresses*, p. 922.

⁴¹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Personality" [Chapter: "Woman."]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. IV: *Essays*, p. 431.

⁴² Tagore, Rabindranath: "Personality" [Chapter: "Woman."]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 436.

⁴³ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Personality" [Chapter: "Woman."]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 438.

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- ⁴⁴ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Indian Ideal of Marriage." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 727.
- ⁴⁵ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Women's Place in the World." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 922.
- ⁴⁶ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Creative Unity" [Chapter: "Woman and Home"]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 634.
- ⁴⁷ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Personality" [Chapter: "Woman"]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 434.
- ⁴⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Creative Unity" [Chapter: "Woman and Home"]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 633.
- ⁴⁹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Creative Unity" [Chapter: "Woman and Home"]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 635.
- ⁵⁰ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Creative Unity" [Chapter: "Woman and Home"]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 633.
- ⁵¹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Indian Ideal of Marriage." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 724.
- ⁵² Tagore, Rabindranath: "Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. V: *Essays*, p. 237.
- ⁵³ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Creative Unity" [Chapter: "Woman and Home."]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 638.
- ⁵⁴ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Women's Place in the World." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 919.
- ⁵⁵ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Personality" [Chapter: "Woman."]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 433.
- ⁵⁶ See, for instance: Tagore, Rabindranath: "Women's Place in the World." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, pp. 918-922; Tagore, Rabindranath: "Birth Control Movement." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 1044; Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Women's International League." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, 1081.
- ⁵⁷ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 49.
- ⁵⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 238.

⁵⁹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 47.

⁶¹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 162.

⁶² Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 162.

⁶³ Tagore, Rabindranath: "One Hundred Poems of Kabir." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. II: *Poems*, p. 500.

⁶⁴ Tagore, Rabindranath: "One Hundred Poems of Kabir." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 504.

⁶⁵ Tagore, Rabindranath: "One Hundred Poems of Kabir." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 506.

⁶⁶ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexuallforschers*, op. cit., p. 213: "Auch hier endet die religiöse Hingabe in einer sexuellen, jedoch nach der Karezza-Methode."

⁶⁷ Tagore, Rabindranath: *My Life in My Words*. Selected and edited with an introduction by Uma Das Gupta. New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2006, p. 33. The passage that includes the cited sentence is referenced as follows: "Rabindranath to Brajendranath Seal, 31 October 1921, Bengali Letters, File: Seal, Brajendranath. Translated by UDG. (RBA.) Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938), friend of Rabindranath, was George V Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Calcutta University, 1912-21."

⁶⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 152.

⁶⁹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 156.

⁷⁰ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 166.

⁷¹ See Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet*. Vol. I: *Die körperseelischen Grundlagen*, op. cit., p. 485.

⁷² Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet*. Vol. I: *Die körperseelischen Grundlagen*, op. cit., p. 485: "[...] die Uridee der menschlichen Doppelgeschlechtlichkeit [...]."

⁷³ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet*. Band I: *Die körperseelischen Grundlagen*, op. cit., p. 485: "Die Trümmer von Hellas und Rom [...]."

⁷⁴ On Hirschfeld's sexological interpretation of Charles Darwin, see: Bauer, J. Edgar: "Der androgyne Vorfahr. Notate zur frühen sexologischen Rezeption von Charles Darwin Evolutionslehre." In: *Capri* 43 (April 2010), pp. 35-44.

⁷⁵ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Indian Ideal of Marriage." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 724.

⁷⁶ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 238.

⁷⁷ See in this connection Marx's pregnant formulation that with the bourgeois-capitalist social order ends "die Vorgeschichte der menschlichen Gesellschaft" [i.e., the prehistory of human society] (Marx, Karl: *Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* [1859]. In: Marx, Karl [and] Friedrich Engels: *Werke*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1978, Volume 13, p. 9).

⁷⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 40.

⁷⁹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Construction Versus Creation." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. VI: *Essays, Lectures, Addresses*, p. 531.

⁸⁰ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Construction Versus Creation." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 532.

⁸¹ See Darwin, Charles: *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Edited with an Introduction by J.W. Burrow. London: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 223, 233, 236, 263, 435, 445.

⁸² See Darwin, Charles: *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Edited with an Introduction by J.W. Burrow. London: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 223, 233, 263.

⁸³ In 1896, Hirschfeld published his first sexological treatise under a pseudonym: Ramien Th. [=Magnus M.], *Sappho und Sokrates oder Wie erklärt sich die Liebe der Männer und Frauen zu Personen des eigenen Geschlechts?* [i.e., *Sappho and Socrates. Or How to Explain the Love of Men and Women to Persons of Their Own Sex*] Verlag von Max Spohr, Leipzig 1896. (Second edition: 1902 under Hirschfeld's own name.) In this treatise, Hirschfeld adopted a Darwinian-inspired, phylogenetic standpoint that allowed him to dismantle fictional sets of ideology-based gender pretending to be real compartmentations of sex.

⁸⁴ In correspondence with Darwin's recourse to the "old canon" of natural history, Magnus Hirschfeld assumes that the pervasive continuity of nature constitutes the actual ontological backdrop against which the sexual varieties that have been artificially disconnected from one another appear to be what they actually are: transitions of the sexual. The relevancy of this assumption becomes apparent when Hirschfeld sets as motto of his 1905 conference titled "Geschlechtsübergänge" (i.e. Sexual Transitions) a sentence taken from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's *Nouveaux essais* that reads: "Tout va par degrés dans la nature et rien par sauts." -- "Everything goes by degrees in nature, nothing by leaps." [Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechts-Übergänge. Mischungen männlicher und weiblicher Geschlechtscharaktere (Sexuelle Zwischenstufen)*. Leipzig: Verlag der Monatsschrift für Harnkrankheiten und sexuelle Hygiene, W. Melende. 2. edition: Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1913, title page. The sentence is included in: Leibniz, Gottfried

Wilhelm: "Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement" [IV,16,12]. In: Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm: *Die philosophischen Schriften*. Herausgegeben von C.J. Gerhardt, Bd 5, Hildesheim and New York: Olms Verlag, 1978, p. 155.] On the title page of the text, Hirschfeld attributes the French sentence not only to Leibniz, but also—not quite correctly—to Czech philosopher, theologian and pedagogue John Amos Comenius (1592–1670) and to Swedish botanist and zoologist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778). In a footnote of the text, however, Hirschfeld goes on to explain that the axiom "natura non fecit saltus" does not come from antiquity, but was formulated for the first time in this form in Linné's *Philosophia botanica* (1751). Furthermore, Hirschfeld states that Leibniz sentence remits lastly to Comenius 1613 dictum: "Natura in operibus suis non facit saltum." [See Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechts-Übergänge. Mischungen männlicher und weiblicher Geschlechtscharaktere (Sexuelle Zwischenstufen)*, op. cit., pp. 17-18.] More importantly, Hirschfeld underscores that "the most eminent meaning [of this natural principle] has not yet been fully assessed even in the present." [Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Geschlechts-Übergänge. Mischungen männlicher und weiblicher Geschlechtscharaktere (Sexuelle Zwischenstufen)*, op. cit., p. 18: "[...] ganz eminente Bedeutung [dieses Naturprinzips] auch zurzeit noch nicht voll gewürdigt ist."]

⁸⁵ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Construction Versus Creation." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 533-534.

⁸⁶ See, in particular, his depiction of his first encounter with Baul singers: Tagore, Rabindranath: "An Indian Folk Religion." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 593.

⁸⁷ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 102.

⁸⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Chitra. A Play In One Act." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Introduction by Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007, Vol. III: *Plays. Stories*, p. 20.

⁸⁹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "An Indian Folk Religion" [Chapter of: "Creative Unity"]. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 598.

⁹⁰ On the issue see: Bauer, J. Edgar: "'Ahasverische Unruhe' und 'Menscheitsassimilation': Zu Magnus Hirschfelds Auffassung vom Judentum." In: Kotowski, Elke-Vera und Julius H. Schoeps (Eds.): *Der Sexualreformer Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935). Ein Leben im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft*. Berlin: Be.Bra Verlag, 2004, pp. 271-291.

⁹¹ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Construction Versus Creation." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 542.

⁹² Quoted in: Dose, Ralf: *Magnus Hirschfeld. Deutscher – Jude – Weltbürger*. Teetz (Germany): Verlag Hentrich & Hentrich, 2005, p. 83. The reference given is: "Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Mein Testament*. Heft II, p. [47] (Archiv der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft)." The sentence reads in German: "'Mein Feld ist die Welt' – nicht Deutschland, nicht Europa allein."

⁹³ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*, op. cit., p. 5. In English in the original.

⁹⁴ Tagore, Rabindranath: "Construction Versus Creation." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 542.

⁹⁵ See Tagore, Rabindranath: "Can Science Be Humanized?" In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. VII, pp. 904-905.

⁹⁶ Hirschfeld, Magnus: *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*, op. cit., p. 239. Literally: "Through science to justice."

⁹⁷ Thus a comment to Leonard Elmhirst in December 1924 quoted as epigraph in: Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson: *Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., p. 253. The bibliographical reference remits to: [Elmhirst, Leonard:] "The Importance of the individual in the history of India." In: *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* 2 (1962-1963), p. 97.

⁹⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Religion of Man." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 156.

⁹⁹ Interestingly, in a story with the pregnant title of "The Victory," Tagore refers to the "Eternal Woman," who counterpoises the "Eternal Man," and correlates with Radha in her mythological complementarity to Krishna. Tagore, Rabindranath: "The Victory." In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 310.

¹⁰⁰ See [Tagore, Rabindranath]: *Sādhana. The Realization of Life*. In: [Tagore, Rabindranath:] *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Volume Two: *Plays, Stories, Essays*. Edited by Sisir Kumar Das. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2004, p. [277]-345, especially the chapter "The Realization of the Infinite," pp. 338-345.

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