

**Gerard Heymans and women's psychology of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

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### **Abstract**

Sex differences in psychology is a topic that has retained a status of interest for as long as psychology has existed. Oftentimes, especially the psychology of women has been nothing short of stereotypical and exaggerated. Dutch psychologist Gerard Heymans has written the book *Die Psychologie der Frauen* on this topic and even though it was completed during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time that would have easily allowed for the previously mentioned prejudices, he still managed to keep an atmosphere of objectivity. While not wholly without fault, especially in the theory underlying his conclusions, Heymans still represents a rather progressive and sympathetic voice on the topic.

In this paper, Heymans' view on women's psychology is analyzed by directly investigating the aforementioned book. The analysis is embedded in the historical context through secondary literature on women's lives and society at the time. The reception of *Die Psychologie der Frauen* is also investigated through a contemporary review.

Conducting this research could help deepen the understanding of the history of psychological sex differences.

*Keywords:* sex differences, women's psychology, Gerard Heymans

### **Gerard Heymans and women's psychology of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

“Volgens sommige tegenstanders beschikte de vrouw niet over de verstandelijke capaciteiten om bijvoorbeeld een academische studie te volbrengen. Anderen achtten het mogelijk dat vrouwen, die gingen studeren of een maatschappelijke positie bekleedden, minder vruchtbaar zouden worden“ (de Wilde, 1998, p. 162).

This is how some anti-feminist academics described their view on women's psychology around the year 1900. This view of women not being equal to men was shared by some well-known social and behavioral scientists such as C. Winkler or S. R. Steinmetz (de Wilde, 1998). Although it is of the more extreme variety, this quote gives a taste of the way many, if not most viewed women and their place in society during this time.

Evidently, the role of housekeeper and mother was still seen as the natural role of women during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (de Wilde, 1998). In the Netherlands, women's voting rights were still being discussed until about a decade later and although secondary education for women had gotten much more common since the end of the last century, many people still disagreed with the female sex being given this opportunity (de Wilde, 1998). While talk along the lines of women being inherently less intelligent than men was common even in scientific disciplines such as psychology, there were also people that held very different beliefs. The rise of the feminist movement at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave way to a more open-minded and objective perspective. "Ethical feminists" thought, that society could indeed benefit from women and their participation and that equal rights and opportunities should therefore be introduced (de Wilde, 1998). They agreed that there are innate differences between men and women, which was also supported by recent findings in biology and genetics (de Wilde, 1998). However, they determined this meant that women could contribute something that men have so far not been able to.

Although not explicitly calling himself a feminist, Dutch philosopher and psychologist Gerard Heymans (1857-1930) shared a good part of these views. Heymans published both in German and Dutch and operated as the first psychology professor at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen from 1890 until 1927. This is also where he founded the first psychological laboratory in the Netherlands in 1909 (Brugmans, 1948). Heymans was widely known as an objective and scientific academic and he put a lot of emphasis on empirical methods (de Wilde, 1998).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, psychology began to move from general psychology, which focused more on what people and their minds have in common, towards differential psychology, which is more about the differences one can find between individuals (Heymans, 1910). Due to the advancement of this new field of psychology, Heymans was eventually asked by two German academics, to write a monograph about the psychology of women for one of their publications (de Wilde, 1998). This was not just motivated by the scientific advances in differential psychology, but also by the debate in Germany at the time, on whether girls would be allowed to enter secondary education (in addition to the ongoing debate about women's voting rights all over Europe). Another motivating factor for the very objective Heymans, was the existing literature on the topic being, as mentioned, unsatisfactory and unscientific at best (Heymans, 1910). As American psychologist Helen Bradford Thompson Woolley stated in 1910 agreeing with Heymans: "no field aspiring to be scientific where flagrant personal bias, logic martyred in the cause of supporting a prejudice, unfounded assertion, and even sentimental rot and drivel, have run riot to such an extent as here" (de Wilde, 1998, p.165).

With the request made and fueled by the prospect of contributing something new to the literature, Heymans published *Die Psychologie der Frauen*, the first complete book on women's psychology that was based on scientific methods, in 1910.

The existing literature on Heymans' ideas regarding women's psychology is sparse. There is a notable amount about him and his other theories, however, reviews of his ideas relating specifically to sex differences are scarce. Most of the literature is written by the same people, such as Inge de Wilde, who has published multiple texts regarding Heymans' view on women's psychology. This lack of diverse literature is the reason why the current research is of great relevance. It can add to the small existing pool of publications by investigating deeper on the original text that is *Die Psychologie der Frauen*. Furthermore, the majority of the literature has been published before the year 2000. A more recent look can give an impression of how the same text would be analyzed and interpreted more than twenty years later.

To perform said analysis, different sources need to be investigated. The primary sources will be Heymans' *Psychologie der Frauen*, but also the chapter on sex differences *de Geslachten* in his book *Inleiding tot de speciale psychologie* which was published in 1929. Due to the later publishing time and because the general order of the chapters is identical, including an almost identical introduction, there are strong reasons to believe that the chapter in *Inleiding tot de speciale Psychologie* is a shortened, slightly adapted version of the book. Using both texts is beneficial as the book gives a very detailed look while the chapter is more precise and easier to sort through. For comprehension purposes, both the German as well as the original Dutch version of *Inleiding tot de speciale Psychologie* were used.

Besides Heymans' original texts, attention will also be given to the before-mentioned reviews regarding my primary sources. These were written around the time of Heymans' publications and they are being used to investigate how *Die Psychologie der Frauen* was received by his contemporaries, especially women. These evaluations include a text by English social theorist Helen Bosanquet from 1911, in which she summarizes Heymans' paper and gives some (positive and negative) feedback. This review is beneficial since it is

written by a woman of the time, however, it is quite short and missing a few in-depth criticisms (and praises).

To place the analysis in its historical context, knowledge about the typical role of women at the time and society's view of them are necessary. This will be described with the help of *Nieuwe deelgenoten in de Wetenschap. Vrouwelijke Studenten en Docenten aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 1871-1919* by Inge de Wilde. In this book from 1998, de Wilde offers an extensive view of the typical situation of women at the time of Heymans' publication but she also includes material about more atypical women's circumstances, such as the first female students/professors in Groningen, who studied/taught around the time of Heymans' employment there. Included in *Nieuwe deelgenoten in de Wetenschap* is also a chapter explicitly about *Die Psychologie der Frauen*. Here a multitude of (contemporary) reviews and comments are presented, including critique and praise from a variety of perspectives, such as early feminists as well as their opposition.

Besides the societal setting, context on Heymans himself can also aid in analyzing and interpreting his research. For this purpose, the 1948 publication *Gerard Heymans, professor of philosophy and psychology at the University of Groningen from 1890 to 1927* by Henri Johan Franz Willem Brugmans will be utilized. The text was requested by the Heymans-Genootschap, of which Brugmans was the president at the time, for the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> International congress of Philosophy at Amsterdam. In his publication, Brugmans, who went from being one of Heymans' students to his assistant and finally colleague, describes the psychologist's work but also gives details about him as a person. This non-scientific information about his life was not often discussed, especially by Heymans himself, since he desired the attention to be on his work, not his person (Brugmans, 1948).

The methods used to answer the research question of this paper are qualitative, more precisely they are part of historical research. This entails a lot of reading of texts on the

subject and for context information. Mainly it is investigating the original sources, in order to get the most authentic view of the material possible, as well as the most reliable texts to base arguments on.

Choosing to use historical methods was easy in this instance, as I am pursuing a historical topic, however, there are some clear advantages of using these types of qualitative methods versus using quantitative ones such as statistics. Statistics arguably are better for more generalized research, where there is a lot of data that needs to be standardized and averaged, which is essentially detaching it from its source, to allow for statements that go beyond the sample of participants gathered. Using historical methods works well for contextualizing specific topics, which is an important aspect of this analysis. The sources used in this paper are not just to be taken as they are, they need to be interpreted and analyzed. This certainly does not make them any less real than statistical data. This type of research is looking at real documents of history that were influenced by the societal and scientific situation at the time, and that themselves have made an impact on many different parts of life after their publication.

There are some disadvantages to using historical methods, such as the challenge of dealing with text that is both outdated and partially in a foreign language. Additionally, there is subjectivity, that is necessarily involved in the interpretation of written sources. Although I am trying to minimize this by staying close to the source material, subjectivity I believe will always take some part in an analysis/interpretation of any kind.

To conclude, while statistical datasets afford some level of abstraction, and with that, allow for generalization, the downsides are complementary to the historical method. Because a quantitative approach does not allow us to ask *why* something happened or make sense of the reactions that followed events or theories, which as mentioned is essential for an inquiry such as this one.



Using these historical methods will aid me in answering the question: What were Gerard Heymans' ideas on women's psychology and how were they received at the time?

The approach to answering this question as well as the answer itself can be a source of knowledge and inspiration for a wide range of audiences. People with a general interest in history can benefit from the application of historical methods. Besides historical value, the subject of this paper demonstrates how (personality) psychology can be connected to ideas of sex and how the (scientific) views on women were not much more than a hundred years ago.

This paper does not aim to present the exact impact these theories have had on society outside of the reviews it got, nor does it aim to explain sex differences in psychology itself and how they would be explained today. It is strictly about Gerard Heymans' theory and how it was received, as this will give insight into how a specific scientist thought about women's psychology within the context of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since there is a lot to say on this topic alone, anything further would have been outside of the scope of a Bachelor's thesis. The focus lies on the situation in the Netherlands/Germany since that is where Heymans operated, however, included will also be some comments from scholars outside of this area.

With this in mind, we can move on to the analysis of Heymans' work

### **Heymans' psychology of women**

Having discussed the general state of society, psychology, and feminism at the time of Heymans' publication, it is now important to get an overview of his theory, the method and results so that the analysis can have a good base to work with.

The data Heymans is using includes two *enquêtes* (surveys), one of which was done for hereditary research and one which tested developmental factors. For the hereditary research, Heymans and his colleague Wiersma requested about 3.000 Dutch family doctors to fill out the questionnaires asking about personality traits of families that they know. They

gathered data on 458 families, of which 1.310 members were male and 1.209 female. The developmental research was done by handing out questionnaires to teachers from 54 Dutch schools, resulting in data on about 3.500 students, of which 2.757 were male and 701 were female of ages twelve to eighteen. Heymans also uses data from official statistics on criminal behavior and psychopathology.

Besides these enquêtes, Heymans includes some biographies as well as proverbs, however, he notes that these are not scientific enough to be used as evidence, so they are utilized as examples to illustrate and support already demonstrated arguments. The results from this pool of information are then used to discuss several aspects of psychology, mainly emotionality, consciousness, observation and imagination, intelligence as well as aspirations and behavior.

The clearest difference found between the sexes was in emotionality. Due to this being the main focus of Heymans' research, it is beneficial to explain the basic concepts to do with this factor and its influences.

In order to fully comprehend what the aspect of emotionality means, Heymans' personality theory needs to be defined. Heymans does so in detail in *De Inleiding tot de speciale Psychologie*. According to him, personality exists within three dimensions, visualized by a cube. The three dimensions include activity, emotionality, and secondary functioning. From these three dimensions, you can make out specific personality types. In this book, he also includes *natuurlijke groepen*. Within these natural groups, the sexes are included. Since emotionality functions as the basis of explanation for most sex differences found within the data, the focus will lie on explaining this dimension.

In *Die Psychologie der Frauen*, Heymans' definition of the dimension of emotionality can be found in the chapter called *Die Gefühle*.

The main factor that differs between individuals, is intensity. People that fall on the high end of the emotionality dimension tend to experience their own emotions more intensely than individuals that score lower (Heymans, 1932a). Other factors that differ between individuals are the directionality as well the time frame that they ensue in. For some, emotional reactions occur quickly after a stimulus and for some this emotional reaction arises slower, sometimes retrospectively, and then often tends to persist for a longer period of time. The differences in directionality are referring to the tendency of an individual's emotions to be either predominantly positive or negative (Heymans, 1932a). Lastly, the origins of one's emotions also come in different varieties. Heymans gives many examples of this, for instance, some individuals' emotions mostly arise from sensory triggers, and others get more emotional when mental stimuli are involved (Heymans, 1910). Heymans continues to explain next, in what ways women are different on this personality dimension and how this affects other parts of their character.

According to the data, the average woman<sup>1</sup> tends to be more emotional than the average man. This appears to be already present during childhood, as the female students on average scored higher on items measuring emotionality, such as being nervous before a test or being easily provoked (Heymans, 1910). High emotionality is still notable later in life, as the hereditary-enquête data shows, that about 60-71% of women were considered emotional versus only 46-49% of men. The result of women being more emotional was also supported by the psychopathology statistics, which show that women tend to be more prone to neurological or psychological disturbances. According to Heymans, being highly emotional and psychopathology correlate (Heymans, 1932a).

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<sup>1</sup> While the female students that participated in the developmental study would probably be best described as “girls” for simplicity they will also be addressed when talking about “women” from this point on.

In what ways does this higher average emotionality affect other factors of life?

According to Heymans, high levels of emotionality act as a sort of amplifier for mental connections. It guides the connections being made. This means that strong emotional content leads to easier connections with other mental content and associations. Due to these connections being stronger than others, recall of these tends to be easier and they tend to be used more often than weaker ones. This tendency also connects to memory, with emotional content being memorized more easily. When considering decision-making, the strength of the associations resulting from emotional content tends to narrow down the variety of considerations one takes into account before making a decision. This leads to less deliberation time being needed, as decisions are being made quicker the stronger the associations are. This can be seen in Heymans' developmental data, wherein the female students were on average about 10% more likely to answer questions quicker (Heymans, 1910).

Higher emotionality also relates to an individual's consciousness. Heymans describes women's consciousness as *narrow-deep* and men's as *broad-shallow*. This correlates with emotionality, in the way that women's consciousness tends to be limited due to the stronger emotional connections being prioritized. However, especially if they are occupied with something appealing to their emotional tendencies, such as fictional novels or social interactions, they are able to pay attention in a deeper way than men. Due to the lack of emotionality in the sciences, women also tend to not be as interested in these types of activities (Heymans, 1910). Men tend to think more broadly and consider different options when making decisions or paying attention, due to their lack of emotionality. This makes them, according to Heymans, more interested and successful at objective thinking and therefore subjects such as sciences. This divide in interest can be seen as part of the developmental study with male students preferring subjects such as physics, while the female students preferred ones like languages and literature (Heymans, 1910). However, Heymans

also acknowledges that women's emotional side gives them a richer, deeper imagination. Additionally, he applauds the other sexes' ability to use their intuition. As stated by him, women are able to weigh rational as well as subconscious factors under favorable conditions. They can almost sense things that men are not able to perceive, since men are more focused on the rational and graspable. Furthermore, the unconscious that women are able to access, has no limit to it, while the conscious very much does, which means women can access a more complete (but unanalyzed) picture of a situation than men (Heymans, 1910). This can be connected to women having stronger mental connections for emotional subjects and them making faster decisions due to these stronger mental connections.

Having summarized Heymans' work and the necessary underlying constructs of his theory, the actual analysis can commence

### **Analysis**

The analysis of Heymans' work entails a closer look at the source, specifically how Heymans uses the data to explain his interpretations and how he expresses his opinion on the found differences.

The first sign of Heymans having sympathy for women in general but notably female academics, can already be found in the introduction to *Die Psychologie der Frauen*. Here Heymans says: „Eine richtige Frauenpsychologie haben wir wohl erst von einer Frau zu erwarten, welche genug Frau ist, um den ganzen Reichtum der weiblichen Psyche in sich erlebt zu haben, und gleichzeitig genug sich der männlichen Geistesart annähert, um jenen Reichtum analytisch bewältigen zu können“ (Heymans, 1910, p.12). With this he implies, that the ideal book on women's psychology would be written by a woman, who is able to deeply understand the female psyche, but who is also able to take on the masculine form of analytical thinking.

This is remarkable especially when considering a lot of his contemporaries did not even see the potential for women to be able to participate in academia (de Wilde, 1998). Moreover, it sets the tone for the rest of the paper, wherein Heymans shows a lot more understanding and objectivity than most researchers before him, as demonstrated by.

Heymans was himself not really involved in the topic of gender psychology and as mentioned he did not see himself, but rather a woman, as the ideal candidate to write something on women's psychology. Therefore, the motivator for Heymans to write *Die Psychologie der Frauen* was mostly to offer a better alternative to the unscientific publications by his contemporaries and to implement the new methods used in differential psychology. He also mentions this in the introduction of his work. Heymans, however, also continues, that it was not as beneficial as it might have seemed to write this book at the present moment since these new methods had not been verified enough yet at that point, and that new research will probably come in the near future that will be even more suitable. Indeed, his methods were not without fault and some things can be and have been criticized.

The first thing to mention is that the data used for this research was not gathered specifically for this purpose. It was re-used from previous studies that did not deal explicitly with sex differences but with heredity and the development of personality traits. On one side this can be regarded as a disadvantage since the actual sex differences being tested were not central to this research. However, it is understandable that they did. It took the team of statisticians a few years to complete all the calculations and starting a completely new data collection would have delayed the publications, which were eagerly awaited due to the /current developments in the women's rights debate.

Another factor that could be criticized about Heymans' (and Wiersma's for that matter) methods is that the overwhelming majority of doctors in the heredity study were male. Originally only 14 out of the 3000 contacted were women. Before the book was written this

was criticized by one of Heymans' female students, who offered to send their questionnaire to several female doctors (de Wilde, 1998). Heymans and Wiersma agreed and she managed to acquire 21 additional female-completed questionnaires. Now it is striking that Heymans and Wiersma even took a student's, and at that a female student's, advice. This demonstrates again the sympathy that Heymans had for female academics. He also made an effort to make use of this new data, comparing the female-gathered data with the male's in order to test, whether there were different inclinations between them (Heymans, 1910). He found that they were mostly consistent. Some factors, like emotionality, were even more pronounced in the data that the women collected. Heymans therefore concluded that the judgments made by the male doctors were relatively free of prejudice. There are some problems with this. For one, there were still only 35 female doctors that participated so the sample size between the sexes is vastly different. Additionally, Heymans could not have ensured that the women did not also have (the same) prejudices that influenced the data.

This flows into another critical point that can be made, which is that the doctors gathering data were not trained to do research like this. Heymans goes against this by saying, that there would not be enough psychologists to do research in this amount and that doctors are themselves trained observers and should bring accurate results. While it might be true that medical professionals are trained in observation, the kind of observation these doctors made use of can be presumed to differ from that of a scientist. The typical observations medical professionals have to make are related to assessing illness, so they might have only met their participants while they were unwell. This could easily influence someone's (emotional) state. Moreover, it is unclear how well these doctors actually knew the patients, whom they were collecting the data from.

Mentioning these drawbacks gives a slightly different picture of the methods used, however, it should also be kept in mind, that at the time this research was some of the best and

most scientific ever done. Sample sizes were usually not this big for one, even Heymans' first research in differential psychology had only about 45 participants (de Wilde, 1998).

In addition to sample size one of the main advantages that Heymans had with his methods, was that he had a lot more scientific and impartial basis for his claims than his contemporaries, who would often use their own experiences with women to support their prejudiced arguments. Heymans jokingly quotes English J.S. Mills "one can, to an almost laughable degree, infer what a man's wife is like, from his opinions about women in general", demonstrating how much a lot of researcher's private experiences influenced their opinion and therefore most definitely also the results of their work. A lot of the previous research was also based on physical attributes, as one researcher said that the reason women cannot be as intelligent as men is that their brains are smaller (de Wilde, 1998). Even more reasonable physical attributes, like the womb and women's ability to bear children, for example, are not addressed by Heymans. This decision got good and bad reviews. Some women thought that the ability to bear children was so inherent to women that it should be considered and some agreed it was beneficial to leave it out to focus on the solely mental aspects (de Wilde, 1998).

Besides Heymans setting out to not rely on prejudice thanks to his scientific objectivity, another lead advantage he had over his contemporaries was that he used data on both men and women. Previously, it was common to just do research on women and assume that the opposite of that would be the norm, the man. Heymans describes this as not inherently wrong, since there are only two sexes (this could also be debated from a modern standpoint), however, he does criticize that these opposite characteristics for men and women often have negative values attached, in most cases for the women. He therefore emphasizes that not only are the characteristics and the differences within them on a scale and not absolute but there are also no inherent values attached to them.



Besides these methods using a significantly higher standard of scientific impartiality than anything written on the topic of women's psychology before, Heymans also, as mentioned previously, was aware that soon these methods would not be sufficient anymore. “Von diesen Methoden, welche also zwar der späteren Nachprüfung an einem besseren Materiale dringend bedürfen, für eine erste Orientierung jedoch vollauf genügen (...)“ (Heymans, 1910, p. 24). This insight he gives is another point that promotes a positive picture of Heymans and is a valuable attribute in a researcher. He was very much focused on doing the best work he can but he was also aware of his own/science's limitations at the time.

A major point of critique can be made on the factor that shows the biggest difference found in Heymans' data: Emotionality. Firstly, emotionality is measured by only a single question in the heredity enquête and not explicitly measured in the developmental one. Emotionality being measured explicitly by a single item is arguably not sufficient if this difference is then also used to explain every other distinction between the sexes.

Besides this, emotionality is also insufficiently defined. In the heredity questionnaire, the item for emotionality is explained as “Nimmt sich auch Kleinigkeiten mehr als Andere zu Herzen, aus geringem Anlass entzückt oder in Tränen” (Heymans, 1932a, p. 337), which relates to an individual reacting proportionally more emotional to a stimulus than the average person. This definition leaves much room for subjectivity. What one might seem inappropriately emotional, another might see as normal. Heymans mentions that these sorts of errors tend to go in either direction and so they cancel each other out however this is not very reliable. While these kinds of statistics are still used today, items and concepts tend to be much more strictly defined to prevent major differences within the data. Besides being poorly defined, the fact that emotionality is used to explain every other difference by Heymans is compromising how seriously this correlation can be taken. The analysis would be more convincing if there were other factors supporting his arguments as well. Additionally, the

differences in emotionality that are shown in the results are not as significant as Heymans makes them out to be. There is only a difference of about 14% for the item *emotional*, which is meager when considering it is being presented as a fundamental difference that is simultaneously responsible for most other sex differences.

As previously discussed, a big part of Heymans' research in general and in this case, is based on scientific method and objectivity. Additionally, some personal factors could be considered an influence on this particular work of his. Many of Heymans' friends and immediate circle were sympathetic to the feminist movement of the time. His wife Antonia B Th. Barkey (1857-1910) was active in the women's movement and visited many of her husband's lectures herself (de Wilde, 1998). The couple also remained childless (Brugmans, 1948), which could very well have influenced Heymans' views on the typical "mother role" of women at the time. Taking into consideration the quote by J.S. Mills from a previous paragraph, his wife being so independent and involved in the movement probably influenced his view on women and therefore his research as well.

Besides his wife, de Wilde (1998) also describes some of the rest of his inner circle of friends and their involvement during the time. She says, that a lot of them were liberals and feminists, such as the biologist J.W. Moll who urged that one of his female students be awarded an honorary doctor and become a professor. Others were active in the women's voting rights movement or hosted events for the female student organizations at their houses. Many of Heymans' friends also had daughters that were enrolled at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Moreover, Heymans himself was a donor to the Groningsche vrouwelijke studenten club (de Wilde, 1998).

In addition to these personal aspects that show his sympathies towards the women's movement and women in general, Heymans also shows in his sources that he reads papers not just written by men but also by women. There is literature in the bibliography of *Die*

*Psychologie der Frauen* from authors that are feminist or anti-feminist, with men as well as women on both sides (de Wilde, 1998). He evidently did not only support female students and researchers, which was already against the trend at the time, but he actually valued their work enough to use them for his own as well.

Having analysed Heymans' psychology of women it is of interest to now include a contemporary review written by a woman. Helen Bosanquet's text *Reviewed Work(s): Die Psychologie der Frauen. By G. Heymans* was published in an academic journal in 1911, one year after Heymans published his book. The English social theorist starts her review by pointing out the abundance of literature written by men on women's psychology, however she does not know of any by women (or even men) on men's psychology. In this point she agrees with Heymans, who also pointed out that men's psychology was mostly seen as the default at the time (Heymans, 1910). The woman's mind was what was *different*, and often seen as just the opposite of the typical man's.

Having pointed out the aspect of Heymans being another man writing about women's psychology, she follows up by emphasizing his impartialness by stating: "except for the fundamental presupposition just mentioned the work is eminently free from all trace of partisanship" (Bosanquet, 1911). This quote refers to the use of emotionality throughout *Die Psychologie der Frauen* and demonstrates the argument made before in the present research, that while Heymans' methods are scientific and objective, some of the underlying theories, especially the factor of emotionality, lack substance. Bosanquet further says, she is unsatisfied with the extent to which Heymans can even show that women are actually more emotional compared to men.

When considering the narrowing of the consciousness described by Heymans, Bosanquet goes on to describe how reading a novel (something Heymans also agrees is something that women are more interested in) does not restrict one's consciousness. It

actually opens up a new world, further than the reality of sitting in one's home. While this critique seems valid, it does also correlate with Heymans describing women's consciousness as deeper and more colorful than men's (Heymans, 1910). In reference to the prejudice and unscientific work of his contemporaries, Bosanquet points out that Heymans gives the impression of being sympathetic and understanding toward the other sex.

Overall, Bosanquet and Heymans seem to share a good amount of opinions. They are both focused on objectivity and point out the advantages of women's characteristics. While Bosanquet's judgment of the emotionality factor is valid, in a lot of her other critiques she actually also agrees with Heymans.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The research question this paper aimed to answer was: What were Gerard Heymans' ideas on women's psychology and how were they received at the time?

Heymans' results show that there are psychological differences between the sexes, most notably in their emotionality. According to him, women are on average more emotional than men and this factor influences all the other parts of women's character as well. Despite agreeing with his contemporaries on certain aspects, Heymans puts emphasis on using correct scientific methods and ensures to point out that differences do not mean differences in the value of character. Although he is more objective than previous researchers, there are still critique points for both his method as well as his interpretation of the results. Nevertheless, Heymans demonstrates a very sympathetic and understanding approach to a very dividing topic, especially for his time.

The conducted analysis allows judgment on how well Heymans worked as a scientist of the time and how he compared to his contemporaries in both methodology as well as personal bias. It however does not allow any judgment on whether what he claims is actually

true or not, since there are no recent theories included that could allow for such. Only an evaluation of how well Heymans explains his interpretations using his data can be made.

The findings from the conducted analysis are in agreement with the limited amount of prior research. The literature closest to the current project is *Nieuwe deelgenoten in de wetenschap* by Inge de Wilde (1998), which was predominantly used for context information, and which also includes an analysis and reviews on *Die Psychologie der Frauen*. The reviews and comments implemented in this paper and the book are partly concurring with each other, and the general conclusion of Heymans' theory being quite well-received is also in line with de Wilde (1998). Critique on concepts such as emotionality not being defined enough, although it is the cause of most differences described according to Heymans, can also be found in de Wilde's publication as well as Bosanquet's review. The current research being in support of previous results and reviews strengthens the arguments that can be made about Gerard Heymans being very focused on scientific method and objectivity, as was stated by himself and confirmed by people working closely with him such as Brugmans (1948). Additionally, on the topic of women's psychology, Heymans' sympathy towards women and their strengths has also been established once again. Reaching these conclusions in line with prior research demonstrates the temporal persistence of Heymans' paper being perceived as good, especially within the historical context.

When discussing the reception of *Die Psychologie der Frauen*, it does have to be considered, that reception depends on the general political stance/opinion of the reviewer. Individuals who are opposed to feminist theory or equal rights might disagree with Heymans' interpretation of the results and his emphasis on equal advantages of the sexes (de Wilde, 1998). Including such reviews explicitly in the present text would have extended the project outside of the appropriate limit of a bachelor thesis. However, for future research, including reviews written by individuals that were opposed to the results or that were anti-feminist,

could be beneficial. Other future research directions that could be of interest, could include what impact Heymans' research had on the women's movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although he did not want his paper to be used in debates around women's rights, people still did so (de Wilde, 1998) and investigating this further seems like an interesting project. An additional aspect found to be particularly fascinating is that Heymans talks about an ideal person, who seems to be almost androgynous, with womanly intuition and manly objectivity. Especially regarding today's tendency to approach androgyny more and more as well as the rise of the non-binary, it would also be intriguing to investigate if there is more literature on this topic from that time.

Regarding the applied methodology of this thesis, there are a few limitations such as language posing the risk of becoming a difficulty. Besides the language used by Heymans being from a different time period, their date of publishing now being around 100 years ago, both of his texts on women's psychology were either in German or Dutch. Comprehension of the original, German version of *Die Psychologie der Frauen* did not pose an issue, due to personal language skills. For *Inleiding tot de speciale Psychologie*, both the Dutch original as well as the translated German version were used. Making sure to read the original version aided in eliminating any major translation issues that could have come about when only reading the (personally easier to understand) German version. Likewise, de Wilde's book is written in Dutch and there is no translation into English or German available which poses a similar risk; However, this publication was also found to be written quite comprehensively. While direct comprehension issues from the original texts were decreased, there was still a risk of certain words losing their complete, intended meaning when translated into English. Words such as *Gefühle*, do sometimes have a little bit of a different feel than their translations (here: emotions). Despite these possible difficulties, it was made sure that the translations utilized throughout the text are as close to their original meaning as possible.

Aside from these more technical difficulties, conducting qualitative research also poses the risk of personal biases. As described when introducing the methods, there is the danger of subjectivity. This mostly arose in the sense of personal prejudices. As a woman who considers herself a feminist, hearing (old, white) men talk about women's issues, which Heymans is not doing explicitly but is implied in the nature of the topic, can be difficult. The issue of a lack of understanding is ever-present, simply because it is impossible for most men to fully experience what it is like to be a woman, especially during Heymans' time, when the divide was even bigger than it is today. The effort of staying as unbiased as possible was implemented. Additionally, Heymans displaying the recurrently indicated sympathy towards women and having been a sort of ally to the women's movement, made being objective and not dismissing his (arguably still not perfect) points much more effortless.

Aside from these limitations, the applied methods have proven to possess some major advantages. Researching historical topics using original documents almost evokes a feeling of time travel when you get immersed in the material. As the context fills out, one is able to understand to a much higher degree the motivations and associations that society and the people at the time had. This understanding of not just *what* but also *why* and *how* something happened is something that is not always possible when using other methods. There is value to the things that have happened in the past, just because it is from the past does not mean it is outdated. The way Heymans shows compassion and encouragement, going against what most of his contemporaries were promoting, while still staying objective is something desirable that has the potential to be adopted in the present, whether that is in science or other areas of life.

With gender equality not yet fully established, the women's movement remains majorly important in today's society. To move forward, the past must often be considered, so as to not repeat mistakes, or to celebrate accomplishments made. Therefore, it can be beneficial to learn about different perceptions of women throughout history, to gauge the full

extent of the development made since then. While the scope of this paper does not necessarily include the development of the feminist movement, Heymans can be used as an example, of the shift within science from women being seen as only mothers, to a more equal standing.



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