
SUMMARIES

► *Julie Carlier*

Men, masculinity and women's rights in the Belgian belle époque

The feminism of Louis Frank (1846-1917)

In line with the growing awareness that women's emancipation is also a men's issue, this article argues that feminist theory and practice might be enriched by a historical perspective. The historical study of the – largely forgotten – involvement of a significant minority of men in first-wave feminism allows for the integration of feminist history and masculinity studies in a truly relational gender analysis. This article presents such an historical analysis of the construction of male feminist identities through the case study of Louis Frank (1864-1917), a lawyer, publicist and leading women's rights activist of the Belgian *belle époque*. The exploration of Frank's personal and intellectual trajectory reveals a specifically male feminist commitment rooted in his professional identity as a lawyer and motivated by traditional notions of chivalry. Embedded in a variety of social reform movements at the turn of the nineteenth century, Frank developed an increasingly maternalist feminist discourse, which considered women's (supposedly natural) caring qualities as instrumental in solving social questions. Consequently, instead of challenging the prevailing gendered division of labour head-on, he appropriated traditional notions of femininity and turned them into arguments in favour of women's rights. In this respect, Frank's feminism did not differ fundamentally from the views of many of his female colleagues, but the intersection of gender and class does highlight the limits of

his project, which was at least partially aimed at disciplining working-class men, rather than reforming his own middle-class masculinity.

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► *Philippe De Wolf*

Theoretical and practical problems of male feminism

The mobilisation for abortion rights in France (1970-1975)

While most autonomous feminist movements of the 1970s excluded men from their ranks, the French social mass movement for contraception and abortion rights enabled male feminists to engage in political activism. However, between 1970 and the legalisation of abortion by the Simone Veil law of 1975, strong ideological divisions existed between the various pro choice activists (feminists, doctors, extreme left groups) with respect to the political definition of abortion. Some considered it as a gendered issue of male domination over women and/or as a tool of social power of physicians over non-physicians. On the one hand, some activists struggled for access to abortion as a way of women's emancipation against male hegemony and/or in order to fight against a perceived illegitimate social and moral control of doctors over their patients. On the other hand, other pro choice activists didn't share a feminist view on the issue and/or didn't seek to restrain medical power: their mobilisation for abortion rights was part of a larger struggle against social inequalities, religious authorities and state control. This article tries to make clear that both types of antagonism (abortion rights from a gender versus a non-gender perspective, and

abortion rights from a medical versus a non-medical perspective) are not to be reduced to an opposition between men and women or between physicians and non-physicians. Finally, the feminist convictions of some male activists are more easily identified if feminism is defined as a political ideology that is not based on biological sex.

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► *Marianne Grunell*
Caring men revisited

Caring by men has changed, but remains ambivalent

I revisit my 2002 Phd on men's changing contribution to everyday care and the new social appeal being made to them. A decade on I am sceptical on my conclusion as to whether a major historical change has had occurred. The feeling of urgency in social organisations and at the authorities has diminished. Men themselves – in particular the focus group, fathers with young children – remain ambivalent. Although stating that they would like to work less to care more, only relatively few work part-time. This small group, mostly highly educated men, working as civil servants or in the social sector remains a privileged group, with a pro-care culture and paid care arrangements. Far more widespread are the full-time working fathers, whose attitude to care has changed their free time activities. Their choice fits well with the Dutch one-and-a-half-earning model, in which mothers work part-time and men full-time. The interests of both are served well in this model which will probably dominate the coming years.

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► *Maarten J. Verkerk, Nienke Verkerk-Vegter en Hillie van de Streek*

Herman Bavinck and the women issue
Religion as motivation and inspiration

In this article we analyze the ideas of the 'male feminist' Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). Bavinck was professor of theology in Kampen and Amsterdam (The Netherlands). He was one of the leaders of the so-called neo-calvinism that states that the person of Jesus Christ has to leave its mark on all areas of society. In 1918 Bavinck published a remarkable book about the position of women in society. In his view, the emancipation of women was even more important than the social question of the labour movement. Bavinck confronted himself extensively with the Christian, liberal and socialistic feminist movement. Based on the religious idea of the order of creation, he made room for female suffrage and participation of women in society by a theological legitimization.