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Gilman, Charlotte Perkins (1860-1935)

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the same: gifts, above and beyond any economic value they may have, are elements of a social exchange. Thus, to engage in a gift relationship is, at the same time, to engage in a social one as well.

SEE ALSO: Bataille, Georges; Gift

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


Charlotte Perkins Gilman was an influential and sometimes controversial contributor to early American sociology. Her *Women and Economics* (1898) launched a searching feminist sociological critique of the economic position of women in patriarchal societies. The primary site for Gilman's continuing sociological work was the *Forerunner* (1909–16), a monthly journal that Gilman wrote and self-published. The socially problematic issues that Gilman explored in her works echo theoretical proposals of Lester F. Ward (1841–1913), a founding American sociologist who admired Gilman and vice versa. Ward's concept of gynecocentric (i.e., woman-centered) social theory reinforced Gilman's strong belief in the fundamental rationality of women's values and social contributions. Gilman developed this perspective at length in her non-fiction works. Gilman was an early member of the American Sociological Society, published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, was respected by contemporary sociologists, and was widely known by lay readers in the public generally.

Gilman shared the feminist pragmatist tenet, that women's values make for better societies, in common with American sociologist Jane Addams (1860–1935). Antecedent to Gilman's sprightly *Herland* saga is Addams's witty and biting essay, "If Men Were Seeking the Franchise" (1913). Addams, a friend and colleague of Gilman, described a hypothetical society of men and women in which women dominate the populace and have the political power to deny men the right to vote. Addams whimsically concluded that men cannot be allowed to share in government until they abandon their selfish and destructive ideas.

Gilman's *Herland* (1915), set in a fictional utopia populated only by women, is the first half of an accessible sociological critique of American life. *Ourland* (1916) continues and completes the *Herland* saga. In *Ourland*, Ellador (a native of Herland) and Vandyke Jennings (an American sociologist who discovered the remote Herland and subsequently married Ellador) leave the all-woman paradise so that Ellador can tour and see the "real world" for herself. Suffice it to say, Ellador is appalled and aghast at the waste, wars, and patriarchal injustices that men have perpetrated around the globe.

In addition to *Woman and Economics*, Gilman's major non-fiction sociological treatises, some serially published in the *Forerunner*, include: *Concerning Children* (1900), *Human Work* (1904), *The Dress of Women* (1915), and *Social Ethics* (1916), among others. In sum, wrote Gilman in *Social Ethics*, we have failed to teach even "a simple, child-convincing ethics based on social interactions, because we have not understood sociology."

SEE ALSO: Addams, Jane; American Sociological Association; Ward, Lester Frank

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

The Gini coefficient is the most commonly used measure of inequality. The coefficient is named after the Italian statistician and demographer Corrado Gini (1884-1965), who invented the measure in 1912. While the Gini coefficient is often used to measure income and wealth inequality, it is also widely employed to indicate uneven distribution in other social issues, such as industrial location and development, health care, and racial segregation. The coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 representing perfect equality (i.e., everyone has the same income) and 1 perfect inequality (i.e., a single person has all the income). An extension of the Gini coefficient is the Gini index, which equals the Gini coefficient multiplied by 100.

The Gini coefficient is calculated based on the Lorenz curve (Lorenz 1905) of income distribution. The graphical depiction of the Gini coefficient is shown in Figure 1. The Lorenz curve is plotted showing the relationship between the cumulative percentage of population and the cumulative percentage of income. The diagonal or 45 degree line indicates a perfect distribution of population and income (e.g., 30 percent of the population earns 30 percent of the income and 80 percent of the population earns 80 percent of the income). The Gini coefficient is the ratio of the area between the Lorenz curve of income distribution and the diagonal line of perfect equality (the shaded area or area A in Fig. 1) to the total area.