

Background on CPG (1860-1935) from Lengermann and Neibrugge-Brantley

- In her autobiography, CPG summarized her life: "The one predominant duty is to find one's work and do it, and I have striven mightily at that" (1935). Her sociology came from "the tension between her wish to pursue her own agency" and her need for approval "by a conventional world that felt women should not want agency." The tension precipitated a crisis/breakdown due to her misery being a wife and mother: "I lay on that lounge and wept all day ... I went to bed crying, woke in the night crying, sat on the edge of the bed in the morning and cried". A "nerve" specialist prescribed complete rest and avoidance of all mental activity: "Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time ... And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live." This basically put her over the edge, but she recovered and went on to be an incredibly productive thinker and writer.

The different purposes of sociological theory:

- As a guide to social diagnosis
- Serve as frame to empirical inquiry
- "clarify" concepts
- Conduct textual exegesis

{ Gilman clarifies the concept of over-sexed society and its relation to the economy. **She also engages in social diagnosis** }

- ⇒ gender polarization is **viewing masculinity as**
  - exhaustive
  - mutually exclusive
  - complementary
- ⇒ Gilman's claim is that **humans are over-sexed (more gender polarized) than other animals** and women are **even more** over sexed than men (see p-137).
  - And this leads to a "morbid" sex distinction.
- ⇒ What causes this excessive sex distinction?
  - women's economic dependence
  - sexuo- economic relation
- ⇒ The central thesis
  - Human society has been systematically distorted by the fused sexuo-economic relation.

- ⇒ Is the work women do comparable to the work men do?
- ⇒ Why are women staying home?
- ⇒ Is it b/c it's economically rational?
- ⇒ What would it be like if men stayed home and women supplied food???????
  
- ⇒ The argument Gilman made
  - The challenges of the lived environment channels human evolution
  - Man is woman's food supply, and the food supply mechanism is the strongest evolutionary factor ----→ fusion of sexuo-economic relation--→ gender polarization.
- ⇒ Her critique
  - The distortion created by the fusion of sexuo-economic should be straightened out and sex distinction shouldn't interfere with the means of our livelihood.
- ⇒ Gilman has evolutionary theory (see p-139), and the logic of her theory is as the following:
 

We all face economic necessity (Especially food) -- -→ natural selection ---→ self preservation and race preservation <<----→social custom and law <<-----→ accumulation of precedent ----→species survival in general, but specifically this leads to gender and economic dysfunctions.

	CAUSE	PROBLEM	CONSEQUENCE
Engels	Exclusion from social production	Women's subordination & domestication	Loss to working class?
Mill	Socialization, men's selfishness, powerful cultural patterns	Women's bondage, subjection, & lack of personhood	Moral loss in progress toward liberalism
Gilman	Dependence, exclusion, fusing of the sexual & economic relations	Women's subordinate status & distortion of human development & society	All humanity loses women's contribution & suffers from systematic distortion of human society