

**STATEMENT
BY THE
DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARLY BOOK AWARD COMMITTEE
AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
SECTION ON THE HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY
AUGUST 15, 2005**

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We are pleased to announce that this year we received several fine nominations for this award, all of which attest to the continuing vibrancy of the history of sociology as a field. In addition, it is clear that our section is becoming recognized as the sponsor of the premier award for the recognition of outstanding books in the history of sociology.

Each of us carefully reviewed all of the books we received, and much to our surprise, but also gratification, we individually had chosen one book that each of us felt stood out above all the other very fine submissions. The 2005 Distinguished Scholarly Book Award for the History of Sociology Section goes to Michael R. Hill and Mary Jo Deegan for their edition of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Social Ethics: Sociology and the Future of Society*.

The difficulty in judging an edited version of a classic such as Gilman's is that one is in danger of being unfairly seduced by the quality and importance of the original work. However, we all took careful steps to avoid falling victim to such seduction, and first and foremost paid careful attention to the quality of scholarship and editing that went into producing this work. Originally, the work was not published as a monograph, but rather as a series of articles published between 1914 and 1916 in Gilman's journal *The Forerunner*. Based on years of archival and library work, Hill and Deegan discovered, recovered and recognized the importance of the work. They then carefully edited and assembled it into monograph form. Their monograph is distinguished by its analytical introduction, which places Gilman's work in its proper place among similar much more well known works exploring social ethics, i.e., of the likes of Jane Addams, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, George Herbert Mead, and Max Weber. More importantly, and perhaps the major justification for our choice of this book, Hill and Deegan have provided exhaustive and detailed annotation and endnotes which explain Gilman's vocabulary and sociological references, making it easily accessible and understandable to those who have not yet discovered and are not already familiar with her work. The assembly and preparation of this volume is clearly a major work of scholarship in its own right.

The issue of seduction notwithstanding, we also do want to overtly acknowledge that part of our decision was based on the sheer importance of this discovery and the contribution making it available has made to the discipline as a whole. It is not an overstatement to say that this work should soon take its rightful place amidst the classical cannon. In this clearly and compellingly written work, Gilman addresses issues such as the origins of consciousness, patterns of human behavior, religious belief, socialization, the relation of science and religion, and more. Most significantly, in opposition to an individualist ethics, she proposes a social and humanistic ethics. Writes Gilman:

Consciousness came before knowledge. Man felt his soul, but did not recognize it. He became aware of the other people around him, perforce; his relations with them

and theirs with him thickened. Conduct, human behavior, grew steadily in importance. At first the natural environment was the main factor; how man behaved was not of so much consequence as how the weather behaved, or the wild beasts. But very soon how man behaved was recognized as the one most important fact to human life,—which it is. That is why ethics is the most important study—and should be the commonest. (23).

In presenting this award to Michael R. Hill and Mary Jo Deegan, we recognize our debt to them for their enormous scholarly efforts in bringing this lost classic to our attention, as well as the significance of its scholarly contribution to the history of sociology.
