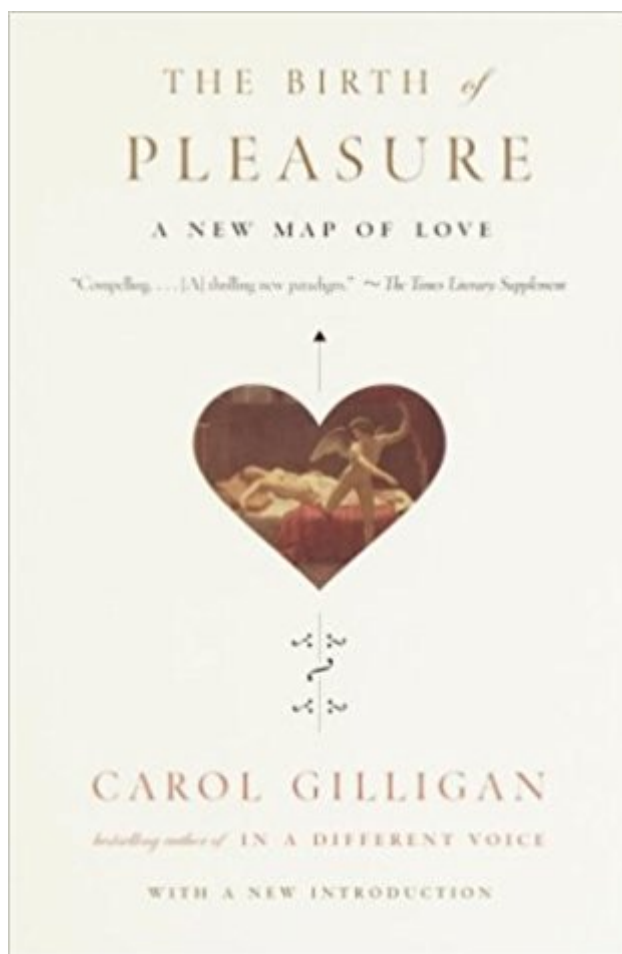


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The Birth Of Pleasure: A New Map Of Love



Synopsis

Carol Gilligan, whose classic *In a Different Voice* revolutionized the study of human psychology, now offers a brilliant, provocative book about love. Why is love so often associated with tragedy, she asks. Why are our experiences of pleasure so often shadowed by loss? And can we change these patterns? Gilligan observes children at play and adult couples in therapy and discovers that the roots of a more hopeful view of love are all around us. She finds evidence in new psychological research and traces a path leading from the myth of Psyche and Cupid through Shakespeare's plays and Freud's case histories, to Anne Frank's diaries and contemporary novels. Groundbreaking and immensely readable, *The Birth of Pleasure* has powerful implications for the way we live and love.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A psychologist's fine-tuned ear and a scholar's penchant for illuminating key ideas with precise literary citations enable Carol Gilligan to trace love's path in *The Birth of Pleasure*. Her extensive research on children's communications and couples in crisis has revealed a rather disturbing truism: a child's inborn ability to love freely and live authentically gets thoroughly squelched by patriarchal structures. She shows how daughters' voices are systematically quieted, sons are shamed into masculinity, and those who pursue "inappropriate" knowledge or rapacious expressions are punished. At the core of her study lies the timeless myth of Psyche and Cupid, a richly allegorical tale of passion and resistance to patriarchal norms. By meticulously interpreting this triumph, Gilligan challenges the standard "foundational stories" embraced by Western civilization (including

the Book of Genesis, Oedipus Tyrannus, and The Orestia). Satisfying excerpts from dozens of authors flow easily alongside Gilligan's dialogues with couples, adolescent girls, and preschool boys. Clearly, her analysis of Anne Frank's diary--all three editions--provides Gilligan's best illustration of one's initiation into patriarchal tunnel vision. She credits many colleagues, students, and seminar and symposium attendees for fleshing out all parts of this lovingly crafted text; but her own ear for truth makes its message resonate. --Liane Thomas --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Called psychology yet drawing on literature from Greek mythology to Shakespeare to Toni Morrison, this book by gender scholar Gilligan considers the path of love and pleasure through time. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is one of the most beautiful books I have ever read. The other reviewers have expressed the basic idea of what she is up to. I found it to be an incredible strength of the book that Gilligan moves through such very different sources to develop her ideas: studies of children and couples in crisis, her experience in a theater/voice group, her reading of Psyche and Cupid, Anne Frank's diaries, there are just so many different pieces of the web she weaves. And she connects them together so beautifully (it helps that her writing is so beautiful-- read it just for her writing). One of the effect of all these different sources is that the reader ends up very supported in looking for the way these traumatic and tragic stories are revealed in cultural materials of very different origins, and in the cultural materials that we produce with our own lives. I have become much more careful about the stories of love I am willing to accept, and the stories of love that I want to resist or scrutinize, no matter what their origin (movie, novel, boyfriend, my own mind). Also much more careful about the stories of love that I live and tell. This book really changed me . . it helps you trust yourself in orienting yourself towards pleasure as a road out from the domination system . . and what a beautiful strategy of resistance following pleasure and delight can be.

It might be unfair for me to be giving this book 3 stars as I only made it 100 pages in, but Gilligan started repeating herself and I'm a firm believer in putting books down after 80 pages if the author hasn't grabbed me yet. Gilligan defines patriarchy as, "...a hierarchy or priesthood in which a father or some fathers control access to truth or power or God or knowledge - to salvation in whatever form it takes. As such, patriarchy is an order of domination, privileging some men over others and

subordinating women. But in dividing men from men and from women, in splitting fathers from mothers and daughters and sons, patriarchy also creates a rift in the psyche, dividing everyone from parts of themselves." This is a borderline nebulous definition of something that seems more like systematic and societal oppression and is a good bellwether for the rest of the book. It's hard to disagree with anything Gilligan says because she doesn't really say that much. The book spends as much or more time analyzing the Diary of Anne Frank (even getting into textual criticism) and the Psyche myth as it does discussing some case studies. What conclusions about adult dissociation Gilligan does come to, in my opinion, are worrisome. Dissociation is real and Western culture is very dissociated, but sometimes it seems like Gilligan is railing against patterns of introverted personalities rather than actual dissociation. Perhaps Gilligan's most worrying assertion or assumption (it really seems like more of an assumption) is that all childhood desires before the postulated dissociation occurs are good and integrated. I don't know that this is a self-evident assumption. Human beings are mammals with higher brain functions and children have to be taught how to be guided more by their non-animalistic brain (and yes neurological research is showing us that our lower, animal brain and our higher cognitive functions are surprisingly disintegrated, i.e. have very few connections). I've seen children, at very young ages, do and say things that are immensely self-absorbed, but come out of desires that *appear* completely natural to them. Sometimes it feels like Gilligan is bemoaning that children have to come into Society and relates their socialization to all societal oppression. This would be an immense, shocking, and news worthy leap if it could be proved, but I get the feeling that Gilligan doesn't have the goods. I'm not trying to say that our culture is perfect or the children's socialization can't mess them up, or that it isn't even the cause of some systemic problems (America's education system can have half it's dysfunction blamed on bad childhood socialization). That is a different animal than her, frankly conspiratorial, definition of patriarchy. I guess I will close by saying I fundamentally disagree with some of the assumptions in her definition of patriarchy. Not all parts of the human psyche are good; there is definitely some chaos and darkness that lies beneath. Part of socialization is about teaching people how to manage and suppress their darker side. If that is dissociation, then sign me up.

This is a deep and profound look at many of the vital issues that affect our lives and relationships. Carol Gilligan takes a long view through childhood and developmental psychology and brings a new light to the issues faced by men and women as they struggled to relate and love one another. A dazzling piece of work.

I picked this up in London and read it during the disintegration of my marriage. I must say parts of it challenged me, even though I am a feminist and very aware of gender theory and literary criticism. I disagree with the reviewer who said there is more to love than pleasure... more to life, yes, but the point of having a relationship with someone is to discover joy in and with each other, no? To take pleasure in and have pleasure with the other person? Gilligan makes this point eloquently. I found the book refreshingly sympathetic toward what happens to make lively little boys into uptight and uncommunicative men. The point is, despite patriarchy, I personally like men and want to find a way to have a real connection with them even in an imperfect world. Reading this book was transformative for me in that respect, even if I skipped through all of the later literary references. This book is popular psychiatry, not meant to rival big texts in gender theory, and so, in its genre, is very effective. In fact, it changed the lives of several friends of mine that live in a culture even more patriarchal than ours; it lent them courage to try to seek a different sort of relationship with men other than just a traditional one. I have also given this book as a gift to four people, one of them a man, who all found it useful, though not perfect. Having some room for imperfection, even in a book, is a useful thing, I think. I found the book very useful despite its flaws.

excellent

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