



# The Birth of Pleasure

*Carol Gilligan*

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## **The Birth of Pleasure** Carol Gilligan

The long-awaited new book by the world-renowned psychologist whose *In a Different Voice*, published two decades ago, started an intellectual revolution by showing that theories of human psychology, based on studies of men, had overlooked and distorted basic aspects of the human experience.

Now, in *The Birth of Pleasure*, Carol Gilligan, once again breaking through imprisoning tradition, writes about love and the forces that stand in the way of pleasure. She shows us why love between a man and a woman is so often burdened by a history of loss and how it can be freed and opened to the pursuit of happiness. Tracing a lineage from Greek mythology to our own most intimate relationships, she asks why we relive tragic stories of loss and betrayal; drawing on her own research, she offers a radical new map of love.

Within the sweep of this adventurous book, Gilligan becomes our guide on a journey that takes us through novels and dreams, ancient legends and contemporary research, to an illumination of modern couples in crisis. She shows us how, although the liberation movements of the twentieth century have challenged old patriarchal structures, the underlying patterns remain: the early channeling of boys into "masculinity," the double consciousness of girls in adolescence, the silences between men and women, the split between our social and inner selves. In the haunting love story of Psyche and Cupid, Gilligan discovers a crucial tale of resistance—letting us see how a path leading toward tragedy can be turned into a road leading to pleasure.

Open, accessible, and rich with emotion, the book rings with the voices of girls and boys, mothers, fathers, and lovers. Gilligan draws on Shakespeare's plays, Freud's case histories, and the novels of Hawthorne, Proust, Toni Morrison, Michael Ondaatje, and Arundhati Roy to illuminate critical points on the map. Her pioneering scholarship, superb writing, revolutionary argument, and stunning conclusion will make *The Birth of Pleasure* one of the important and enduring books of our time.

"Why has the love story in Western culture long assumed that pleasure leads to death, that love leads to loss? Carol Gilligan, in this brilliantly written book, explores the history of these associations, then traces the roots of an alternative narrative and draws a map to send us on our way. This is a wonderful book!" —Henry Louis Gates, Jr., W.E.B. DuBois Professor of the Humanities and Chair of the Afro-American Studies Department, Harvard University

"**The Birth of Pleasure** is a revolutionary book that will transform our beliefs about love, pleasure, human possibility, and ourselves. Carol Gilligan is a thinker and prophet of luminous grace, courage, and compassion." —Catharine Stimpson, University Professor and Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, New York University

"With poetic eloquence and fiery passion, Carol Gilligan may well be on the way to wresting pleasure from the brutal heart of patriarchy. Her book does no less than reconfigure what it might mean to love and be loved, a revolutionary act in itself." —Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues*

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