

The Nature of Sexual Desire (Critical Perspectives on Culture and Society)

By James Giles

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Although there has been much discussion about things like the causes, loss, and maintenance of sexual desire, there has been little research into the nature of sexual desire itself. Consequently, most of the discussions on these topics have gone on without any clear idea about what it is that is being discussed. Readers will be interested that at last there is a full-length book that attempts to say what sexual desire is. Further, this book takes an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach, drawing on a wide range of texts and research.

Drawing on such diverse sources as psychology, philosophy, and biology, a thorough discussion of sexual desire is presented. Giles starts by showing why sexual desire is an existential problem and then follows with an examination of the nature of desire. From here the sexual process is examined and its relation to sexual desire is explored. This view of sexual desire is then used to explain the nature of romantic love, different orientations in love, and love's relation to sexual desire. It is argued that sexual desire has its roots in desires for vulnerability, care, and the experience of gender.

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Editorial Review

Review

Giles' spiritual understanding of sexual desire and his appreciation for the richness and exquisiteness of sexual interaction will be refreshing for those philosophers and sex therapists who believe that biological and physiological research dehumanize the joys of sexual desire and satisfaction. - **Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy**

This book certainly presents a thoughtful, thorough and critical exploration of the subject matter. The text is not a light read, and this is mainly because so much material is drawn upon and as many questions emerge from the discussion as are answered. The questions raised, however, challenge assumptions and propel the reader to explore right to the very corners of this fascinating subject. This text should be of value to anyone interested in learning more about the human experience. - **Sexual and Relationship Therapy**

The author supports his views and arguments with interesting examples and factual material, showing his knowledge of both Eastern and Western traditions of thought, and of such diverse sources as psychology, philosophy, anthropology, and biology. - **Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology**

[T]his book is highly recommendable for undergraduate students in psychology, anthropology, philosophy, communication studies, and women's studies, and an absolute must-read for all graduate students and researchers interested in sexuality and close relationships. - **Relationship Research News**

"I was impressed by Giles' exploration of the 'non-exclusivity of love' (p. 155). He disagrees with many past theorists to argue that it is perfectly possible to love more than one person at a time and states that jealousy is experienced in widely differing ways across time and culture. This perspective fits the stories of many of those in openly non-monogamous relationships better than many academic accounts." - **Culture, Health and Sexuality**

"Giles (philosophy, U. of Guam) undertakes a Husserlian phenomenological analysis of sexual desire, attempting to separate the universal from the culturally specific. After first attempting to place sexual desire within the 'sexual process' ('the sequence of various experiential, behavioral, and psychological events that often give rise to and accompany human sexual activity'), Giles seeks to identify the essential object of sexual desire. He then turns to an exploration of gender and the meaning it imparts to sexual desire and concludes with a discussion of the relationship between sexual desire and love." - **Book News**

Review

This thoroughly frank and ground-breaking work belongs in the libraries and workshops of all sex educators, therapists and church leaders--all who, in truth, may wish to raise the quality of human care and intimacy and, indeed, the spiritual consummation of sexual desire--that peak moment 'that equals all of time'--which I hope we all will discover in our lives. (Hale Sinclair, Chair (Ret.), Department of Psychology Langara College, Vancouver)

The receptive awareness that belongs to the nature of sexual desire according to James Giles belongs also to his phenomenological descriptions of that desire. Responsive both to what the founder of phenomenology calls the things themselves and to the extensive archive of scholarship on the subject, this book treats of the exquisite experience it studies so faithfully in a prose so elegant and direct that it has the makings of a classic

destined to seduce generations of specialist and non-specialist readers. (John Llewelyn, Professor, Retired Reader in Philosophy University of Edinburgh and Visiting Professor at the University of Memphis and Loyola University of Chicago, author of *The HypoCritical Imagination: Between Kant and Levinas*)

This readable and well-conceived book represents a lucid, synoptic assessment of a key and central feature of our humanity. Its approach is both comprehensive and systematic. It is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students in the social and behavioral sciences as well as philosophy, women's studies, and anthropology. The reader will find here a rich and creative synthesis of both intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects of sexual attraction, arousal, and response. A thoughtful selection of primary literature and important critical analysis of the methodology of human sexuality research enhance an explicitly humanistic agenda. (Sanford Lopater, Professor of Psychology, Christopher Newport University, author (with Ruth Westheimer) of *Human Sexuality: A Psychosocial Perspective*)

A delightful examination of the way in which cross-cultural theorists, philosophers, and psychologists have viewed the nature of sexual desire. Although James Giles is not afraid to tackle difficult theoretical questions, his discussions are lightened by a sprinkling of charming quotes and genuine insights into human sexuality, gender, and the experience of love. (Elaine Hatfield, Professor of Psychology, University of Hawaii, Past President for the Society of Scientific Study of Sex, co-author (with Richard Rapson) of *Love and Sex: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*)

About the Author

JAMES GILES is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Guam.

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