



Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities

Jeffrey Weeks

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Few topics evoke so much anxiety and pleasure, pain and hope, discussion and silence as sexuality. Throughout the Christian era it has been a major moral preoccupation. Since the eighteenth century it has also been the focus of 'scientific' exploration and political activity. But, despite this obsessive concern, we are still as baffled as our predecessors about the 'true' meaning of sex. In this book Jeffrey Weeks unravels the dense web of historical, theoretical and political forces that have culminated in the contemporary crisis of sexual meanings and values.

The book begins with a powerful evocation of our present discontents and their potent signs: the rise of the New Right, the retreat of progressive forces and a wave of moral panics around sex. It argues that this crisis is rooted in a tradition which has ascribed an inflated importance to sexuality, whilst claiming a privileged access to truth. The author then examines radical debates of recent years, and asks whether they contain the potentiality for taking us beyond the existing boundaries of sexuality. From this analysis emerges a controversial 'radical pluralist' approach to sexuality built on an acceptance of diversity and choice.

By linking our present discontents to a clear understanding of the past, Jeffrey Weeks presents a rational, optimistic and challenging vision of a realizable future.

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