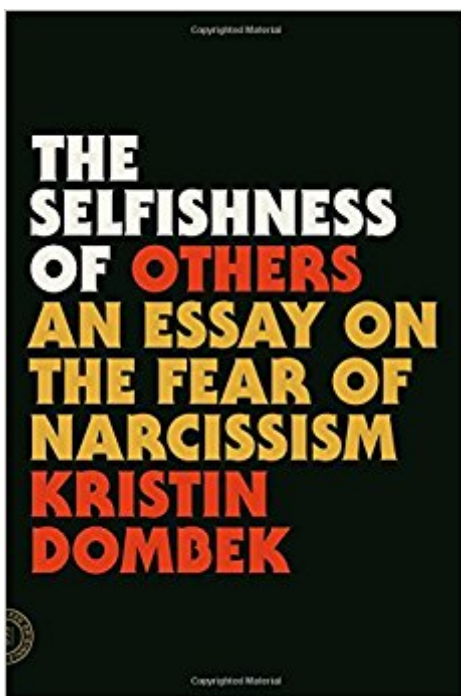


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The Selfishness Of Others: An Essay On The Fear Of Narcissism



Synopsis

They're among us, but they are not like us. They manipulate, lie, cheat, and steal. They are irresistibly charming and accomplished, appearing to live in a radiance beyond what we are capable of. But narcissists are empty. No one knows exactly what everyone else is full of--some kind of a soul, or personhood--but whatever it is, experts agree that narcissists do not have it. So goes the popular understanding of narcissism, or NPD (narcissistic personality disorder). And it's more prevalent than ever, according to recent articles in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *Time*. In bestsellers like *The Narcissism Epidemic*, *Narcissists Exposed*, and *The Narcissist Next Door*, pop psychologists have armed the normal with tools to identify and combat the vampiric influence of this rising population, while on websites like *narcissismsurvivor.com*, thousands of people congregate to swap horror stories about relationships with "narcs." In *The Selfishness of Others*, the essayist Kristin Dombek provides a clear-sighted account of how a rare clinical diagnosis became a fluid cultural phenomenon, a repository for our deepest fears about love, friendship, and family. She cuts through hysteria in search of the razor-thin line between pathology and common selfishness, writing with robust skepticism toward the prophets of NPD and genuine empathy for those who see themselves as its victims. And finally, she shares her own story in a candid effort to find a path away from the cycle of fear and blame and toward a more forgiving and rewarding life.

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Customer Reviews

“[The Narcissism of Others] is dense with information, but light on its feet. In seven

chapters, Dombek turns over a topic that is big and slippery, trendy and hoary, thorny and funny: the charge of narcissism, as it appears in literature (Ovid, Freud) and the Literature (Alice Miller, Donald Winnicott, Otto Kernberg); on reality television (MTV's *My Super Sweet 16*) and the internet (soupy self-help sites) . . . [Dombek's] stories really land. Gemma Sieff, *The New York Times Book Review* "Sharply argued, knottily intelligent, darkly funny" Jennifer Schuessler, *The New York Times* "Is excessive self-love a scourge of the 21st century? Dombek, a wonderfully nuanced essayist, takes on our collective egotism in this piercing and surprisingly funny book. O, *The Oprah magazine* "I read this book in a day spellbound, blinded even to my own reflection in the darkened subway windows and I was grateful it was so compelling, because I was already impatient for everyone else I knew to read it, too. Kristin Dombek's soul-stethoscope is wholly her own, an instrument of precision and tender curiosity. Leslie Jamison, author of *The Empathy Exams* "When it comes to the vital essayistic subject of *What It's Like to Be Alive in Our Time*, Kristin Dombek is one of the smartest and most thoughtful writers out there. Her work is always considered, erudite, savvy, personal, and wide-ranging. She really took one for the team by doing a whole book on narcissism an occasion for gratitude and celebration. Elif Batuman, author of *The Possessed* "The Selfishness of Others is the strangest and most wonderful book I've read this year. It sees with visionary clarity in muddy waters. Love, hatred, the Internet, psychology, egotism it plunges us into their mysteries. A tour de force and a masterpiece of comic intellect. Dombek's Mark Greif, author of *The Age of the Crisis of Man*

Kristin Dombek is an essayist and a cultural journalist. She has published essays in *The New York Times Magazine*, *London Review of Books*, *n+1*, and *The Paris Review*. She received a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award for Nonfiction in 2013.

This essay is a mash-up of social psychology, psychoanalysis, pop-culture, internet subculture, philosophy, personal storytelling, and poetry. So I'm not sure how much it will appeal to people outside those who subscribe to *N+1* and the *Paris review*. But if you are stumbling on this book because you are interested in the subject, I want to urge you to read it and surrender to its unconventional form. I did, and it blew my mind. It is mysterious and wise, and it gives the reader "dazzling opportunities for a slower and more complex empathy."

There's a great balance to this brief book, the essays make problematic out own egoism & projection. However, there are a bit too many easy out or lazy reasoning moments (myopic attacks on Millennials & a general pop-psychology feel). However, going into the Trump years, this is required reading.

Really interesting book. One that I even want to re-read.

Had some good points. Not exactly the writing style I enjoyed but it was interesting.

Occasionally interesting reading about a subject that could have been fascinating in the hands of another writer. But this book meanders with no obvious destination in mind.

I find this topic intriguing and agree the term narcissism may now be overused and misunderstood. Still, I think we would be wise to stop and think about how we and future generations will fight the excessive self-love that often morphs into narcissism.

I highly recommend this entertaining and informative essay. The author provides a thorough-going history of the moralizing obsession with narcissism. She includes the essential introductions from Ovid to Freud, the critical disagreement point between Kernberg and Kohut, and even the excellent dissenting voice of the late great Rene Girard. She touches on some of the complexities of modern intersubjectivity, and leaves only marginalia unturned (such as affective and attentional theories). This work is essential reading to anyone concerned with a narcissism epidemic or "the kids today." However, expect mixed reviews since in all things psychoanalytical - it is bound to trigger defenses. Hopefully her easily grasped everyman's language and compelling exploration will win out with other readers.

very helpful

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