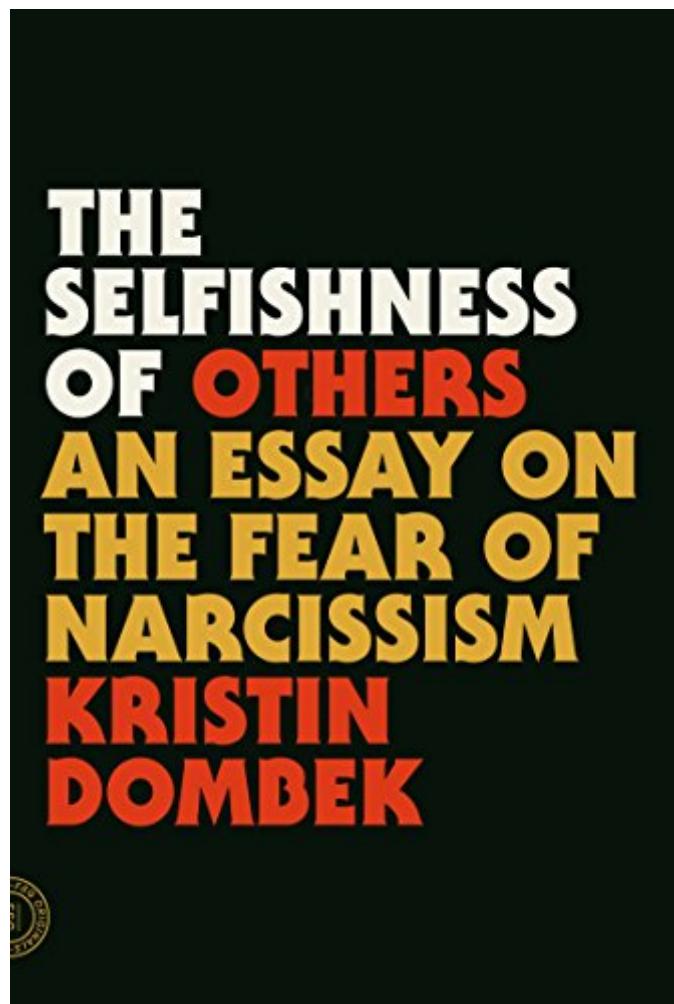


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The Selfishness Of Others: An Essay On The Fear Of Narcissism



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

In a world where terms such as "narcissist" are bandied about by every man and woman on the street, this essay brings a needed dose of reality, both as to the difficulty (and rarity) of an accurate DSM V diagnosis and to the thin and contradictory ice upon which the entire constellation of "scientific" subsets is based. It is also a vivid reminder of the industries that grow up around the pop psychology of the day and a window into what we gain for ourselves when we blithely label others in such a manner. Dombek lays out this cautionary tale by examining the theories, research, and behaviors that gave rise to the category of disorder, without glibly discarding them. My only criticism is that either Dombek or the proofreading of the kindle version was lax in attribution of some of the content. Was this Dombek's opinion? Was it a quote that was printed without quotation marks? Did I just miss a paragraph? A few more transitional sentences would have added clarity. Am I, perhaps, so smart and sensitive that I understood it anyway and anyone who doesn't is a whining narcissists?

This is the first book of a major American essayist and thinker and the prose is pure poetry. You get to the end of a passage and a line hits you and you think, "yes, life is like that." There's something for everyone here. If you want to understand why your ex or your parent didn't live up to your expectations, you will not be disappointed (and you may find yourself asking new questions). If you wonder why the culture is so obsessed with narcissism as a diagnosis for all our ills, she investigates and finds compelling and interesting answers. But mostly, like all great essayists, you will both recognize yourself and feel at least 20% smarter and more sane by the end. I would read anything Kristin Dombek writes. For fans of The Empathy Exams or Dear Sugar or Rebecca Solnit.

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 finished this book last week and highly recommend it. Kristin Dombek is timely, astute, and unassuming. Hold whatever thoughts you have on the endemic of the narcissphere in 2016, because

Dombek grants that thought, and piles on with a pleasant s***storm of analysis. This book is RIPE.

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