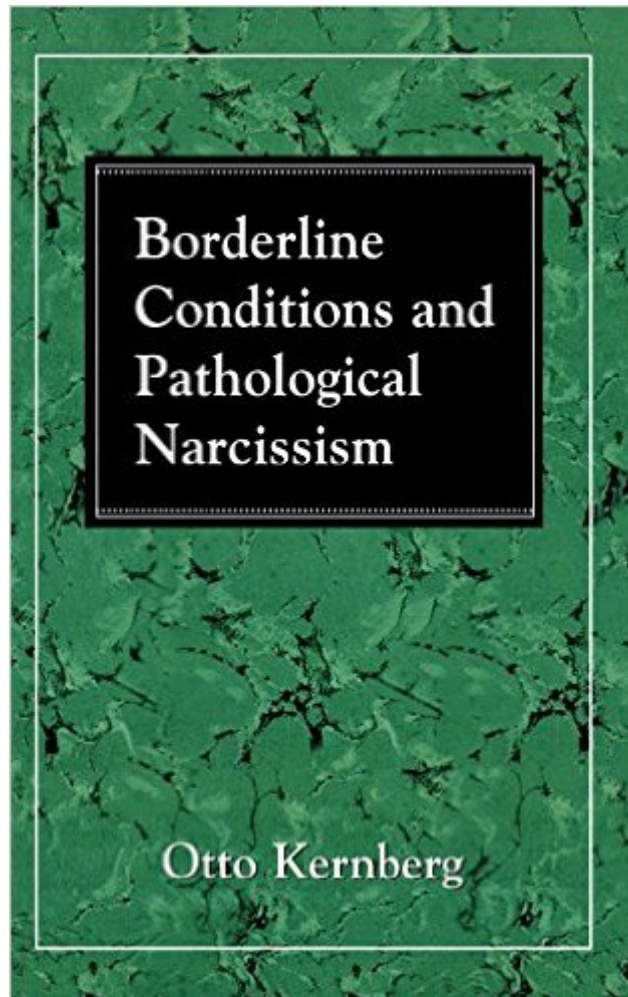


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# Borderline Conditions And Pathological Narcissism (The Master Work Series)



## Synopsis

The basic text for the understanding of patients with pathological narcissism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are reading about narcissism, you will see Otto Kernberg's name cited as a reference more than any other. Dr. Kernberg is THE expert on the subject. Dr. Kernberg's book "Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism" was obviously written for professionals and serious students of psychology, but since he does not have to rely on obfuscation to impress anyone with his credentials, he has written a book that is amazingly clear even to the layman. In our times, personality disorders have overtaken neurosis as the big problem causer for individuals, families, and society. Personality disorders are complex, with layers like an onion, but they are also interesting to research. My interest in Narcissistic Personality Disorder began with the epiphany that this disorder was what I was dealing with in a problematic significant other. Defining the problem helped a lot with my frustration and anger at having been devalued, lied to and stolen from by someone who was supposed to love me. Once I knew "what" I had encountered, I next found myself driven to find out "why". What causes the narcissist to form the false identity shell of feigned superiority, scorn for and devaluation of others, lies, cheating, and constant use of defense mechanisms? If you want to delve deeper than the pop-psyche or self help books on this subject, try reading this book. My copy is filled with highlighted paragraphs, paperclips, and notations in the

margins. Here is a quote from page 81 of the paperback edition: "...

When I first heard Dr. Kernberg speak, I thought he deserved his reputation as a brilliant but intimidating psychiatrist. After reading this book I came away with a very different understanding-- that he is not simply a master theoretician on personality disorder, but also a gifted healer, with deep understanding and wisdom in his approach to his patients. First written in 1975, this book remains the definitive comprehensive work on Borderline Personality Disorder and on Narcissistic pathology. Early in his text, Dr. Kernberg summarizes the salient contributions to his evolving understanding of personality development, made by prior leading pioneers: Anna Freud (on the understanding of defense mechanisms, their essential hierarchical ordering, from primitive to most mature, based on their order of appearance in the developing child), Melanie Klein (on the origin and the nature of the infantile oral aggression which is the fundamental disturbance from which spring the hallmark symptoms of splitting, idealization, overvaluation, and their vicissitudes), Helene Deutsch (on the concept of the "as if" personality, which beautifully explains the nature of the identity disturbance and emptiness of the BPD). He follows his literature review with what I believe is the best chapter (and one whose reading alone makes owning this book worthwhile) "The Syndrome". Here is found perhaps his greatest contribution into the elucidation of the condition (the seeds of which he gives credit to Dr. Karl Menninger): the idea of mental illness as a unitary process, and personality pathology as organized on a dimensional continuum.

In response to Vaknin's review: Dr. Kernberg doesn't unequivocally suggest that narcissism is always a mere "fixation on an early developmental phase". In fact, this is one of the differences between his theory of narcissism and that of Heinz Kohut, which he expounds on in his book. According to Kernberg circa this book's publication, narcissism comes in more than a few variations, ranging from infantile narcissism to healthy adult narcissism to the pathological variety. Even a personality of higher organization can possess remnants of infantile grandiosity, which can become more pronounced if a person regresses (in crises, e.g.). Kernberg does not suggest that pathological narcissism is invariably the product of developmental arrest. Vaknin is right to note that borderline conditions and narcissism do look quite similar in this book, but Kernberg acknowledges that the two are somewhat similar insofar as similar defenses are often used in both (Kernberg refers to the a "narcissistic personality functioning on a borderline level" often to draw attention to cases of heterogeneous pathology). However, narcissistic and borderline personalities employ these defenses for different reasons; in BPD, splitting is predominately used to keep aggression and "bad"

self and object representations from contaminating libido-driven "good" self and object representations, whereas those with NPD have diametrically opposed object relationships that alternate between idealization and devaluation vis-a-vis frustration, typically. Devaluation (treating a person like trash AND defiling their internal object representation) spares the narcissist an unbearable mixture of envy, rage, grief and righteous indignation when they can't obtain "narcissistic supplies" from him/her.

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