

one of this book's functions is to assist supervisors of MBT-G in rating therapists on quality of technique and adherence to the MBT-G guidelines. So, at first sight, you might not be drawn to this publication unless you are a group therapist – and trained in MBT-G.

However, I encourage people who are not psychotherapists or trained in MBT to consider this manual as a useful introduction to the concept of mentalising. Mentalisation is an old concept in psychology and refers to our human ability to understand ourselves as agents who make choices and form intentions. This ability includes an understanding and perception of *other* people as having minds that form intentions, which are real and distinct from our own.

All psychiatrists need a valid and reliable model of mind with which to work clinically, and the concept of mentalisation fits the bill. Mentalising capacities are crucial to our social existence, across the lifespan; failure to mentalise successfully is a feature of all mental disorders. The healthy mind is constantly mentalising, with odd lapses in reasoning and dialogue that are neither too severe nor too frequent. When the mind is disordered – through any cause – mentalising fails and immature modes of thinking dominate, often with catastrophic results in terms of social identity and function. The restoration of mentalising then becomes a crucial aspect of all psychiatric treatment.

There are several books on mentalising and mentalisation-based therapy by Karterud's collaborators in the UK (Peter Fonagy and Anthony Bateman) and the USA (Jon Allen). I found this particular book of interest because it approaches mentalising from a philosophical perspective: that of hermeneutics and how we interpret the world. Karterud suggests that the way we interact with and interpret others comes before our experience of our own minds; that the social self is primary in developmental terms. Such a relational approach to mind is a vital complement to models of mind that are either atomistic or mechanical. We have no evidence that the mind works like a machine, but there is growing evidence that the mind is organic and dynamic, responding, developing and evolving in response to the environment – which, for human beings, is the experience of other minds.

MBT is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for the treatment of borderline personality disorder and treatment trials of MBT for antisocial personality disorder are ongoing. But understanding mentalising is a broader objective which all psychiatrists need to achieve. This work is obviously essential reading for trained MBT-G therapists, but it is a useful introduction to mentalising in its own right.

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doi: 10.1192/pb.bp.115.053116



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The Narcissist Next Door. Understanding the Monster in Your Family, in Your Office, in Your Bed – in Your World

By Jeffrey Kluger

Riverhead Books, 2015, \$16.00, pb, 288 pp.

ISBN: 9781594633911

I find myself split in my thinking about this book. On the one hand, I can see its appeal as an airport read; requiring little effort to get through, and full of celebrity and political commentary as well as easily digestible chunks of scientific evidence.

At that level, it's enjoyable. Especially so when it allowed me to neatly project all my ugly narcissism into reports about Kanye West and Sarah Palin. Perhaps a first for them to be mentioned in the *Bulletin*, no doubt adding to their narcissistic satisfaction, should they or their agents be subscribers.

At another level – and this is where I'm split – it is an exercise in quite contemptuous character assassination. Kluger's portrayal of his example subjects is cold and sneering at times. Furthermore, he often seems to conflate the concepts of narcissism and psychopathy, leading to a sense that the more narcissistic of us are one step away from becoming serial killers or workplace tyrants.

There are only brief mentions of how the presentation of narcissism might be related to inner vulnerability, and this left me wondering if Kluger might have been looking at the mirror crack'd. Even as I write this I wonder if I too am succumbing to the narcissistic appeal to feel superior to what we read – this is hard to contain when I am a UK reader and the author mentions former prime minister 'Malcolm Browne' (referring to Gordon) and the football team 'Aston Vista'. Such mistakes feel sloppy, arousing my narcissistic contempt; perhaps a response to feeling as though the author does not care enough about the UK to check facts properly.

Coming from a psychoanalytic tradition, where this subject has been a preoccupation of clinicians since Freud's 1914 *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, Kluger's view on the dilemma of the narcissist saddened me. We are all narcissists to some degree; it's what allows us to get out of bed in the morning and feel like we are good people who might be loved. The pathological narcissist is someone who has found their early experiences to be lacking and who has lost their trust in acceptance by others. To manage this insufferable situation, they create an outer self that is contemptuous of need and full of itself, and project away their dependent, vulnerable selves onto others. Sometimes, they are contemptuous and dismissive of needy people. Sometimes, if society is lucky, and the person more creative, they will look after others who are vulnerable – to repair the damage they feel inside themselves.

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doi: 10.1192/pb.bp.115.053124



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