



Beyond the Reflection

Paulina F. Kernberg

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An analysis of the use of the mirror as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool for children and adolescents.

Dr. Paulina F. Kernberg, the founder of a clinical program for children of divorced families at New York Presbyterian/Westchester Hospital, was an authority on personality disorders and on the emotional effects of divorce on children. She was one of the experts appointed to evaluate the custody case of Elián González in 2000.

Beyond the Reflection is the result of her extensive research on a new diagnostic technique in child development: a child's behavior in front of a mirror. Kernberg convincingly demonstrates that this behavior is paradigmatic of the mother – child relationship. The pleasure of self-recognition, or the discomfort and anxiety a child experiences in front of a mirror, is directly linked to the ways he relates to his original looking glass — the mother — and in turn determines his subsequent sense of self-worth.

This fascinating study explores Lacan's pioneering theory of the mirror stage; the correlation between theory, clinical observation, and systematic developmental studies; and recent advances in neuroscience and ethology, which contribute to ongoing research in the field of child development and its clinical application.

The Kernberg Mirror Behavior Checklist and the Kernberg- Buhl-Nielsen Mirror Behavior Interview, the diagnostic tools utilized in these clinical observations, will be of particular interest to researchers eager to find a concrete basis for studying the origin of selfhood.

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