



Autism: Explaining the Enigma

Uta Frith

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The updated edition of this classic account of autism includes a new chapter outlining recent developments in neuropsychological research, and overviews one of the most important theoretical and practical consequences of Frith's original insights into this puzzling condition.

Updated edition of this classic account of autism.

Includes new sections covering practical and theoretical developments, and a chapter on recent investigations of the neurological basis of psychological impairments in autism.

Accessible to a broad general readership.

Autism: Explaining the Enigma Details

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From Reader Review Autism: Explaining the Enigma for online ebook

Jonas Gehrlein says

A bit short but comprehensive overview over autism.

Quite good description of the handicaps with Theory of Mind and weak central coherence.

It focuses maybe a bit too much on cases but absolutely recommendable for anyone who wants to know more about the disorder,

Maia says

Bought old edition cheap. Diagnosed at 43 with severe autism, of which have the usual vague background knowledge (Rain Man, children rocking in corners, Emergence: Labelled Autistic (good autobiography, worth reading on its own merits)). Having been told 'by definition, if you have autism you can't understand what it is so it's not worth explaining' and, peeved, looking for more. This is essentially a whodunnit looking for the String Theory or Universal Explanation of autism. Autistic individuals in history; current myths; genetic explanations? no, it's not them; longitudinal trials? they give us a clue; etc. On page 90 of 180 pages it's beginning to get down to business. Written for the non-scientific, it uses the lengthy prose of fiction and the lengthy arguments of persuasion, not the terse assertions and brief jargon of science, which would be hard but quick. But who would be that ignorant of the topic yet interested enough to hear one model explaining it in that detail? Parents? But no practical advice and use of "tragic mental retardation" on page one - no. In fact, there is one group who may find this useful: undergraduate students in psychology or linguistics thinking of a final year project/thesis. You can get good detailed information from the e-magazine articles you pdf download, but as I discovered to my cost, remain ignorant of important background detail. The second half of this could fill you in roughly and give you ideas, and it might be on the shelf. Note, this is a review of the earliest edition (the modern-er will certainly have more PC language, and more up to date science). I am currently reading Francesca Happé's more up to date book with more up to date science, better discussion of rival views, and written very fast-to-read. A brief tiny book for parents of children with, by a Vermeulen, in the library, actually told me a lot, if only in scraps, and amusingly; actually worth reading even for adults with. So, don't bother.

Sarah Steinbrenner says

Packed with information, but super readable. Enjoyed every chapter. Wish there was an updated edition since the author used language that isn't accepted today. Lack of people-first wording.

Linda says

This book provided information on autism in the past and present, such as suggesting that "changelings" of the past might have been children with certain disorders. It was one of the books used in a class I took on autism spectrum disorders.

swalterich says

Very interesting. Discusses how autism is a true disability, though not necessarily in terms of IQ. Everything is backed up with scientific research. For example it discusses how autistic children lack theory of mind, or the ability to guess what other people are thinking, and back it up with an interesting experiment that compared reactions between 'normal' children, Down syndrome children (who came to the same conclusions), and autistic children. Informative read that tells exactly how autistic people think and see the world differently.

Miranda Manzione says

A simple reading for those who want to know more about Autism.

Rosa says

Alas, I only had enough time to get halfway through the book before I left Austin, but I loved what I read. Frith discusses autism in interesting, accessible terms, and the section about possible historic cases of autism was quite engaging.

Ed Hatfield says

Following the recommendation in *An Anthropologist on Mars* by Oliver Sacks I bought this book to gain a more detailed and scientific understanding of autism. Though I have no contrasting evidence, this book seems to hold up well since it's original publication in 1989 and my copy dating to 1994. It is a measured, interesting and readable bit of work which works from typical autistic presentation and aims to draw together the many disparate features of autism underneath one theoretical developmental defect. Quite a mouthful, but then so much of this type of writing is! That said, overall this book was well written and did not confuse or deliberately favour jargon or medicalisation.

The final theory expounded in 'Autism' is that the disorder is developmental and is most simply expressed, cognitively, as a problem in developing a theory of mind. Theory of mind is the idea that I as a person have one mind and other people surrounding me have different minds, with different aims and different information to act from. The way it is presented makes it convincing that this is something that those with nuclear autism struggle with, even when they are not comorbidly mentally retarded (as very many autistic people are). There is a fascinating analysis of language in autistic people and it contrasts with analysis of normal language and communication. Analysing why autistic people communicate in an unusual way made me reflect on how we normally communicate, and that was very interesting. There is such a huge divide between the plain information of the words we say and what we intend to communicate that I am only now appreciating.

Overall this was an enjoyable, interesting and educating read. I have only given it a moderate review because I am skeptical of how well it has held up into the present day, as so often scientific findings are overturned

by later findings. This notwithstanding this is a good book in its own right and I recommend it.

drTee says

This book was a first-read for me in graduate school studying clinical psychology. There was so much research on the market, in the papers, and in journal articles on autism spectrum disorders and the origin of autism. Uta Frith takes the research and condenses it into an organized gestalt (or whole) and helps the reader to conceptualize autism in a more organized and systematic way. The book is stimulating for students (undergraduate and graduate psychology and biology) and parents or grandparents of children with autism spectrum disorders. The book is both scientific and personal and it is also quite engaging. I recommend this book to parents and grandparents especially.

DrReshma Purohit says

Autism spectrum disorder, refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. Uta Frith takes the research and condenses it into an organized manner thereby letting the reader understand it in a simpler, systemized, organized and easier manner. The book is a very good resource book for the psychology students and inclusive educators as it is both scientific with personal touch keeping the reader engaged throughout. Everything is backed up with scientific research. It discusses how autistic children lack theory of mind, or the ability to guess what other people are thinking, and back it up with an interesting experiment that compared reactions between 'normal' children and autistic children.

The book explains autism in interesting and 'reader hooked-up' way and certain sections are quite engaging. Quite good description of the handicaps with 'theory of mind' and 'weak central coherence'. It discusses the key problems for autistic people who has an inability to recognize and think about thoughts, and an inability to integrate pieces of information into coherent wholes; also outlines neuropsychological research on autism.

Autism is much more common than most people think. Autistic people may wonder why they are 'different' and feel their social differences mean people don't understand them. Autistic people often do not 'look' disabled.

Uta Frith has done justice in explaining the enigma of the parents and the children of autism.

Debby says

The best book on Autism I've read. Helps with understanding the history and research as well as information that can be used in practical application with individuals in your life.

Cristina says

I found this book super interesting. It takes a look at the enigmas of Autism from historical/literary figures throughout history to what is being found by modern brain scanning. Uta Frith goes over some of the more

interesting theories and tests. If one theory doesn't excite you, skip ahead to the next one. If Autism makes you curious, this is a great book!

Alina says

Best available text on the subject, particularly as it doesn't feel like a textbook. Relatively short, one can easily read the whole thing and gain an accumulative understanding of the condition. Key points and arguments are reiterated and contrasted throughout, in an accessible manner with an almost narrative-like tone, in simple jargon-free language. Certainly aids comprehension far more than a clinical 'dip in, dip out' standard psychology textbook.

Lukerik says

A highly interesting book that ranges from biography to philosophy in its search for questions. I doubt anyone could read this without disagreeing with something. I'm not sure her theories about the engines that drive the brain are correct. Neither am I convinced that autism is a dysfunction. But this is not a book of answers but of questions and it invites you to ask them. The most interesting part for me was the section on autistic types from history. It added a number of books to Mount Tabor.

Ry? Nagafuji says

A very good resource for research into autism, especially with its links and contrasts with mental disorders.
