

## Neurotypic Spectrum Disorder: NSD

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I recently spoke at the brain-science festival in Deventer about exploring insights from modern physics and neuroscience in understanding falling in love and other forms of (temporary) radicalization. From a neurotypic ("normal") perspective, one has affirmed, it is far from easy to understand the formal systems explanation for something as seemingly commonplace as being in love.

During my lecture I think about a parallel lecture about autism by a psychiatrist in another room. Ironical. From time to time I am asked as "experience expert" to tell something about "our" other way of thinking, in which I always tell that autism spectrum or rather, neuro-atypical is not apriori a disorder. It's a different way of thinking/being. Many inventions/out of the box insights require such a different way of thinking. In my speech I hope to demonstrate such insights, while at the very same time a psychiatrist talks about autism. Does he assume a disorder or a differentness, I think. Does my audience listen to a disturbed person or not? For a moment I think of Schrödinger's cat (dead and alive at the same time) and I smile.

My lecture continues. With humor that is happily laughed at, I try to focus my attention on my lecture, but again my head floats to the other room. As a carpenter sees nails and connections, a psychiatrist mainly sees disorders, I think. A matter of framing; to a great extent the frame determines the value of the painting. When I talk about dynamic systems and coupled differential equations, I see the people startled. I hurry joking that they don't have to be nerds or autistic to follow my argument, and thus integrating the other room's subject into the here and now. Suddenly it shoots through my head: NSD! Neurotypic Spectrum Disorder. Again I smile, realising that to my audience those inexplicable smiles probably make a clown of me. But the parallel session in my head continues, as I'm eagerly looking for the imaginary DSM5 criteria:

NSD, incidence 5 out of 10 persons, only 3 out of 100 are completely excluded (they have ASD, autistic spectrum disorder). Fear of formal reasoning, preference for smalltalk; reduced capacity to obtain one or more preoccupations, let alone losing themselves in fascinations; illusion of normality; collective framing of different as abnormal or pathological; illusion of control ...

Then the chairman raises his hand: five minutes to finish my lecture. Now I must ensure that I make my point, bringing all lines together. After receiving a big applause I realize that the audience has actually been very tolerant. People tell me they find my way of analyzing, though different, very inspiring. Come on, I tell myself, let's stop the labeling! Crossing right: I do not have ASD, they do not have NSD. A diverse world is beautiful, a world without framing.

I think of the public's fear of formal reasoning. Incomprehensible. I experience comfort in formal systems myself. If, on the other hand, an aspect (eg unregulated interaction with strangers) is only frightening for a small group of people (ASD), logically it hasn't been made manageable collectively. That person has to handle it autonomously, at the risk that such fear becomes self-reinforcing instead of recognized and understood by the others, resulting in an Autistic Spectrum Handicap. In that case, appropriate diagnostics and help is required, especially in childhood and education because otherwise dysfunctional cognitive and behavioral patterns may be deeply established, with lifelong consequences.

At 22:15 I drive back home to Groningen through the rain. Can a person be helped by a neuroscientist to overlook his freedom or responsibility? Contrary to professor Swaab - We are our brain - my answer is absolutely no! But sometimes it feels comfortable to be able to lean on the shoulders of the neurotypical fellow man, who instinctively manages relationships where sometimes I feel like a stranger without a map. Schrödinger's cat happily spins in my head with the sound of the wiper on the deserted road. A condition, or talent, can never dismiss us from our own responsibility for our lives. Just after midnight I come home, realising that labels do not help; there is even less reason to speak of ASD than NSD, while NSD even doesn't exist...