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The Mystery of Non-Autism

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We all take non-autism to be the most normal state of the world. But it is probably a unique state found only on one planet even if there are millions of places with highly evolved biologies in our galaxy. Non-autism is one of those things which one does not see because it belongs to the set of things that are too close to one's eyes. Darwin taught us to look at biology from a foreign perspective. This look enabled eventually the discovery of the brain equation in a mathematically predictive approach to the necessary properties of brains including a description of what brains are for. Of course, no one needs to follow this approach but the asset is that one can in this context see that brains are not meant to do what we as persons are continually doing with our brains. My mathematical friend Robert Rosen discovered the "principle of function change" - that nonlinear systems can have several different functional regimes with hard bifurcations (switching-type transitions) being possible in between them. The brain is such a nonlinear dynamical system. But the specific way of functioning that we consider normal in society is not an easy-to-trigger state of functioning. Only if a certain condition is fulfilled will this trigger occur almost naturally while remaining the miracle that it represents. The brain is an optimizer, a so-called autonomous optimizer, which solves a certain optimum foraging problem. Eric Charnov has an unpublished 1973 book on it, in the same year in which I presented the brain equation at a meeting on the mathematics of the nervous system in Trieste. This sounds mathematical and is mathematical, but it is also maximally intuitive. The autonomous optimizers that nature predictably selects in "spatial Darwinism" (as the underlying deductive approach is called) are automatically autistic. Some animal brains are quite social - for example in the caring for offspring. But they nonetheless remain remote-controlled by evolution. So the caring shown is unilateral and autistic. Only one animal besides human beings - humankind's best friend - shows the same cross-caring coupling. But wolves and dogs are not mirror-competent. Therefore, a specific "creative misunderstanding" is prevented from occurring in them: the invention-out-of-nothing of the suspicion of being wanted to be happy by the other side. This function change is tantamount to the epigenetic shedding of physiological autism. There is an elaborate laughter-and-smile theory at this point about which a few more words will be said. I believe that they provide a maximally good hope in the causal therapy of childhood autism.

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