

mine. I see a lot of where their attention is focused, and what they are perceiving. They see all of this too. Communication is instant and nonverbal. We may not be picking things up the same way non-Autistic people do, but we are nonetheless communicating easily and nonverbally.

This is wonderful to me, because it's otherwise so hard to communicate. Words are hard to correlate to experiences that are entirely out of the realm of ideas. It's hard to understand language. My whole natural way of experiencing the world is beneath words, beneath ideas, beneath the things most people call thought and experience.

And to meet someone who has that awareness beneath typical awareness means that we can communicate very well beneath all that. And that's a joy, and a relief, that I'd already given up on hoping for, long before it happened.

When the ground falls out from under me, which it does often, I can fall so far under the ground that things are very different.

The world can disappear. Even the most basic sensory modes of thought vanish. And I can't control my body at all. I must be aware of something, because I remember these times. But what I'm aware of, I don't know.

So my range of skills is very broad. From the abilities I'm using to write this, to absolutely nothing. And they're constantly in flux within those ranges.

You'll notice that I haven't mentioned social skills. That's because I don't think autism is fundamentally about that. It's about differences in sensory perception, cognition, and movement. And the way they interact and blend together. The social problems are out on the periphery — either distant outgrowths of the three areas I mentioned, or the result of two people meeting up, who have incompatible ways of understanding and interacting with the world. The place where their patterns of understanding and reacting meet is the exact location of any social skills difficulty. Neither one can read the other very well, yet if you listen to the “experts” it's solely the autistic person's problem. I do have big social problems, I just don't consider that the main part of autism.

And always remember. Autism is not a thing. It's an abstraction. The only concrete reality is the existence of the people who get called Autistic. So when I say what autism is, I mean how my particular brain, that is called Autistic, works.

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