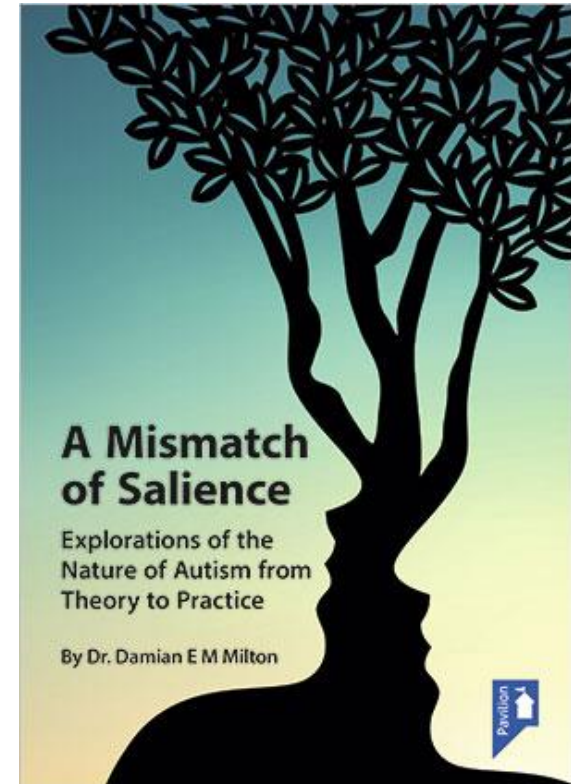


Toward an autistic neurophenomenology

Damian Milton



An interest model of autism

- “We suggest that the uneven skills profile in autism depends on which interests have been fired into monotropic superdrive and which have been left unstimulated by any felt experience.” (Murray et al. 2005: 143).

“Filling in the gaps” – a crossover

- “We suggest specifically that attenuated Bayesian priors - 'hypo-priors' - may be responsible for the unique perceptual experience of autistic people, leading to a tendency to perceive the world more accurately rather than modulated by prior experience.” (Pellicano and Burr, 2012)
- “Due to differences in the way autistic people process information, this filling of gaps tends not to occur (at least to the same extent). Autistic people have a tendency to be more literal, and work upon what is tangible and present, thus conclusions are reached through available information (without filling in the gaps).” (Milton, 2013)
- We now think it is not as simple as this...

Misattunement and dealignment

- The dialectical misattunement hypothesis:
“...views psychopathology not merely as disordered function within single brains but also as a dynamic interpersonal mismatch that encompasses various levels of description.”
(Bolis, 2017).

- “There have been numerous attempts to explain the enigma of autism, but existing neurocognitive theories often provide merely a refined description of 1 cluster of symptoms. Here we argue that deficits in executive functioning, theory of mind, and central coherence can all be understood as the consequence of a core deficit in the flexibility with which people with autism spectrum disorder can process violations to their expectations.” (Van de Cruys et al., 2014).

Areas of concern / opportunity

- Resisting the assumption of pathology
- Difficulties in autism not only due to errors from not making predictions
- Distress experienced can also be due to things that are predictable
- Accounting for dissonance, particularly within social interaction
- Impact on learning theory and social psychological theory

Autistic patterns that need explaining (among others)

- 1. Uneven abilities - spiky skills
- 2. Total absorption in current interest
- 3. Extreme variety between people re polarisation of likes and dislikes, and knowledge and ignorance
- 4. Slow topic switching
- 5. Motor coordination problems (eg toe walking)
- 6. Enhanced processing
- 7. Sensory hyper and hypo experiences
- 8. Flow states and 'repetitive behaviours'
- 9. Stuckness (inertia and autistic catatonia)
- 10. Perseverance / perseveration
- 11. Discombobulation/ meltdown - need for recovery time
- 12. All or nothing feelings, Alexithymia
- 13. Decisions based on exactitude without emotional valence in mind
- 14. Actions based on emotion rather than decision
- 15. Higher level integration ('executive function' issues)
- 16. Atypical recourse to context
- 17. Patchy relating with others
- 18. Diversity in use of language

References

- Bolis, D. (2017). Beyond Autism: Introducing the Dialectical Misattunement Hypothesis and a Bayesian Account of Intersubjectivity. *Psychopathology*. Vol. 50(6): 355-372.
- Milton, D. (1999) *The Rise of Psychopharmacology [Masters Essay – unpublished]*. University of London.
- Milton, D. (2012) On the Ontological Status of Autism: the 'Double Empathy Problem'. *Disability and Society*. Vol. 27(6): 883-887.
- Milton, D. (2013). Filling in the Gaps: A Micro-Sociological Analysis of Autism. *Autonomy*. Vol. 1(2): 1-8.
- Milton, D. (2016). Disposable Dispositions: reflections on the work of Iris Marion Young in relation to the social oppression of autistic people. *Disability and Society*. Vol. 31(10): 1403-1407.
- Murray, D., Lesser, M. and Lawson, W. (2005) Attention, monotropism and the diagnostic criteria for autism. *Autism*. Vol. 9(2): 136-156.
- Pellicano, E. and Burr, D. (2012). When the world becomes 'too real': a Bayesian explanation of autistic perception. *Trends in Cognitive Neuroscience*. Vol. 16(10): 504-510.
- Shamay-Tsoory, S., Saporta, N., Marton-Alper, I. and Gvirts, H. (2019). Herding Brains: A Core Neural Mechanism for Social Alignment. *Trends in Cognitive Neuroscience*. Vol. 23(3): 174-186.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In D. Langbridge and S. Taylor (ed's) *Critical Readings in Social Psychology*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Van de Cruys, S., Evers, K., Van de Hallen, R., Van Eylen, L., Boets, B., de-Wit, L. and Wagemans, J. (2014). Precise Minds in Uncertain Worlds: Predictive Coding in Autism. *Psychological Review*. Vol. 121: 649-675.

THE UK'S EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY



www.kent.ac.uk

University of
Kent