

Autism: A Very Short Introduction  
Uta Frith

What causes autism? Is it a genetic disorder, or due to some unknown environmental hazard? Are we facing an epidemic? What are the main symptoms, and how does it relate to Asperger syndrome? This *Very Short Introduction* answers the key questions and offers a clear statement on what is currently known about autism and Asperger syndrome.

Questions for thought and discussion

- Has autism always been there, even though it was only identified in the 1940s?
- How would people with autism have been perceived a long time ago?
- Is there an autism epidemic? Can we see an end of the rise in cases?
- If autism has a genetic basis why is it not possible to spot it at birth?
- Are most men a bit autistic?
- Is the art produced by autistic savants comparable to art produced by other artists?
- In what way is it correct to say that we can mind-read and in what way does it make sense to say autistic people don't mind-read?
- What advantages are associated with a detail focussed strategy as often seen in autism?
- How can we imagine a Self in the brain?
- Can we assume that autism is caused by a neurological abnormality, or is it simply a personality type?
- Autism and Asperger syndrome are portrayed in films and novels. How realistic are these portrayals?
- Without a biological marker for autism, what can experimental psychology contribute to the understanding of the condition?
- Will psychological research be at an end once the biological causes of autism are known?
- What would you do if you met a person with autism or Asperger syndrome?
- How does understanding of the autistic mind contribute to understanding of our own mind?

Other books by Uta Frith

Frith, U. *Autism: Explaining the enigma*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003)

Frith, U. and Hill, E. eds. *Autism: Brain and Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Frith, U. ed. *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Houston and Frith, U. *Autism in History*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002)

Further reading

Morton, J. *Understanding Developmental Disorders: A Cognitive Modelling Approach*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)

Blastland, M. *Joe: The only boy in the world*. (London: Profile Books, 2006)

Sigman, M. and Capps, L. *Children with Autism: A Developmental Perspective*. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997)