

# Autism from Within

## Hilde De Clercq

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**The different conceptual  
development in Autism and its  
influence on each aspect of daily  
life.**

**Hilde De Clercq**

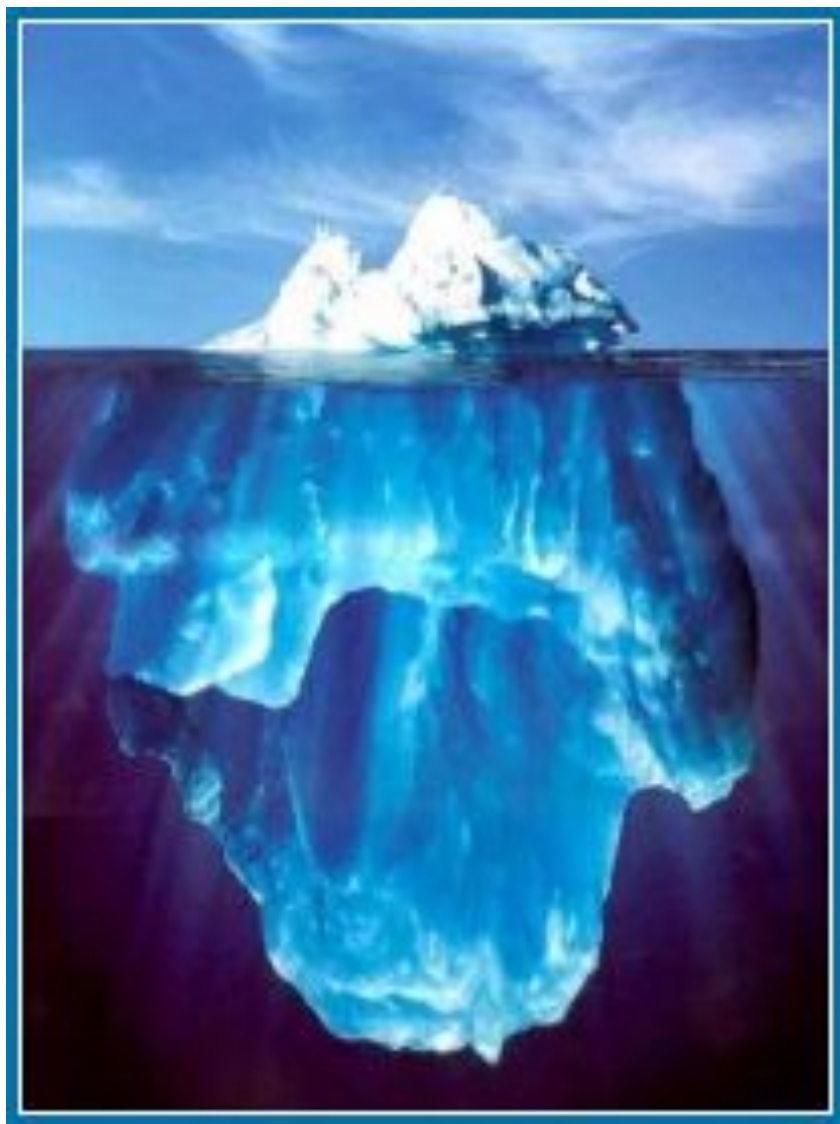
‘Autism from Within. A practical guide’

Hilde De Clercq

‘Mum, is that a human begin or an animal ?’  
About Detailed thinking

Hilde De Clercq

“If you have seen a person  
with autism, you have seen  
a person with autism.  
(Stephen Shore)



# “THE ICEBERG-PHILOSOPHY”

- STANDARD ? NORMAL?
- NEUROTYPICAL?
- NEURODIVERSITY
- PDD ? Culture ?
- What do we (want to) see ?

# 'Pervasive' developmental disorder

## “AUTISM FROM WITHIN” : THE DIFFERENT CHAPTERS

- Play and imagination
- Language and communication
- Emotions
- Relationship and sexuality
- Eating
- Sleeping
- Toilet training
- Selfhelp and every day living skills

# Development of play

## The bricks for the building

- Simple manipulation
  - Combination play
  - Social play
  - Functional play
  - Symbolic play
  - Role play, carnival, pretend play...
  - Imitation
- 
- The importance of meaning
  - “The breakthrough towards symbolism” (Piaget)



Idiosyncrasies in Autism : to give one's own  
meaning to perceptions

hearing

seeing

smelling

feeling

tasting

...

PERCEPTUAL THINKING

# Autism from Within

- Different thinking style of persons with ASD
- A.o. 'Lack' of Central Coherence
- Strong point : Detailed Thinking
- Sensory issues !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Brain
- Difficulties with generalisation

“...Each step of these successive integration-phases does pose a considerable effort upon me, it’s a type of effort that can best be described as ‘thinking in the background’  
(Van Dalen)

“For me, to perceive something is equivalent with constructing an object using explicit trains of thought”

(Van Dalen)

“In fact, it should all be done in a fully automatic way without conscious effort and in rapid progression”  
(Van Dalen)

Donna Williams

# Consequences for Education

- Lazy ???
- More time to process information !!!
- No interruption !
- Exhausted in social situations

# Thinking through details in the triad

- Verbal and non-verbal communication
- Understanding of social interaction
- Imagination and play

Daily Menu

My Brand

The Milkshake

The Farthest





- “... The appearance of the first generalised concept, such as ‘furniture’ or ‘clothes’, is as significant a symptom of progress as the first meaningful word”

Vygotsky



A BICYCLE



A WHEELS IN MUD



A TRACTOR



A WHEELS ON GRASS



A SMALL FEET ON PEDALS

# Detailed thinking, Concrete Associations, Echolalia...

“Echolalia is the typical language of a person who has a literal memory, good articulation and a less developed sense of ‘meaning’

Schuler & Prizant (1986)

# Perception versus Concepts

“ ... Unlike those of most people, my thoughts move from video-like specific images to generalisation and concepts. For example, my concept of dogs is inextricably linked to every dog I have ever known. It’s as if I have a card catalogue of dogs I have seen, complete with pictures, which continually grows as I add more examples to my video library.”

Temple Grandin

# Resistance to changes ! ?

Conceptualisation difficulties (energy ! Shop...)

The dialect of objects, pictures, drawings...

Visual help ... individualisation !

# Mono-treatment of information

I always had to think of one thing at a time. It was enough that someone near me started coughing for me to lose a part of the idea. And when I lost one part of the idea, everything collapsed and I had to start all over again.

(Gunilla Gerland)

# Semantics

## Conceptualization

- Functionality as the last step  
Meaning vs detail, perception
- Concept vs catalogue (library)
- Word semantics
  - Shoes vs caterpillars, casual shoes, trainers, sneakers, sports shoes, leisure time shoes
  - Narrow understanding



# Consequences

## Resistance to changes ?

- “... First of all, autistic persons have difficulties with familiarisations because everything always looks anew for them. In other words they feel little whatsoever to change something in their environment or they even don't want to change anything because, for them, variation exists in abundance...”

Van Dalen 1995

# Social Understanding

“For a long time, I also felt very uncertain about what was meant by food when you thanked someone for it. Was everything you ate food ? Should you say the same when someone offered you an apple? What was food ? “There were many things that certainly were food-sausages were food and meat was food. Was soup food? Soup was liquid. If soup was food, then perhaps tea also was food ? Though there were solid bits in soup and there weren’t any in tea. But what about porridge ? How could you use that phrase when you weren’t certain what food was ?”

Gunilla Gerland

# Concepts : social understanding, emotions

# Gestures

- Different context, different meaning
- How to react ?
- How do we know ?
- “PEOPLE WITH AUTISM HAVE TO UNDERSTAND SCIENTIFICALLY WHAT ORDINARY PEOPLE KNOW INTUITIVELY” (Marc Segar)

# 'Meaning'

- Imagination
- Concrete associations
- Idiosyncratic understanding and expression
- Echo-treatment
- Thinking in details
- Concepts
- Generalisation
- Inner language
- Visual thinking
- Mono-treatment
- Theory of Mind

# Meaning

*'There's also a difference between having feelings and having automatic connections between feelings and expressions'*

*(Jim Sinclair)*

# Synchronise your language

“he broke the cup”

- Start from the experiences of someone with ASD

# To name emotions

- Photos, drawings...
- Limits (context and generalization)
- The dynamic reality
- Slow processing : Pause button ?
- Mono-treatment : feelings expressed with body,  
posture, hands, mimics...  
non-verbal communication .



- Naming, understanding and communicating emotions
- Understanding the concept versus understanding fragments
  - The catalogue
  - Putting the details together

# Problems with generalisation

- Thinking in Compartments
- Detective work !
- In all aspects of daily life

- ‘...The supper was baked beans and broccoli and two slices of ham and they were laid out on the plate so that they were not touching...  
Father banged the table with his fist really hard so that the plates and his knife and fork jumped around and my ham jumped sideways so that it touched the broccoli, so I couldn’t eat the ham and the broccoli anymore.  
(Mark Haddon)

# Pervasiveness of Autism in daily life situations

- Pervasive problems with meaning and conceptualisation
- TEACH meaning!
- E.g. Drying-machine

“...I like to compare autistical eyes with the facet-eye of an insect. There are many subtle different details but they are unintegrated”

Van Dalen (1995)

# Handicap ? Genius ?

- Einstein, Wittgenstein, Bartok, Satie, Darwin, Yeats, Newton, Kant, Beethoven...

“ It seems that for success in science and art, a dash of Autism is essential”

Hans Asperger

**The Creativity of the artist or the scientist results in abstract objects like pictures, sculptures or consistent scientific theories, etc.**

**The creativity of someone with autism however results in the meaningful perception of a physical object, like a hammer.**

**(Someone with autism is therefore continuously involved in creative work, most efforts producing incomplete pieces of art but occasionally producing a piece of masterwork).**

(Van Dalen)