

University of Groningen

Autism's anatomy

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1. Understanding autism as a neurodevelopmental spectrum disorder is a sign of explanatory quandary rather than a sign of explanatory success.
2. A positivist and essentialist understanding of autism is assumed, reinforced and legitimized by the histories of autism written by autism experts themselves.
3. In the dense network of highly specialized and technical scientific knowledge about autism, those aspects of autism that are explicable in terms of history or culture tend to become invisible.
4. Ludwig Fleck's notion of thought styles allows autism to be both continuously in flux *and* a seemingly stable – albeit unknown – object with many true representations and consequences.
5. Despite the 'unifying' disease entity of autism, the different scientific and academic disciplines studying autism remain rather disconnected.
6. Even if psychiatry manages to vindicate its medical status, it cannot escape operating in a particular style.
7. Psychiatry should take the lead in developing new concepts and ways of thinking about psychiatric disease that put the troubles, impairments and adverse experiences of the entire human being in its surrounding world at center stage.
8. A new style of psychiatric thought that takes the intricate relationship between human life and the surrounding milieu seriously has a better chance of producing valuable translations from psychiatric research into clinical practice.