

Reflecting on neurodiversity

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I did something I did not expect to do this week. [I confirmed](#), for the first time on this blog or anywhere else, that I think I have both autism and ADHD.

I suspect that this surprised very few regular readers of this blog. I have been expressing my concern about the treatment of these conditions for some time. That has not just been for myself; it has also been for others I know who have these diagnoses, and for friends who are involved in the teaching of special educational needs, many, but not all of which, are related to autism and ADHD.

I have also been very aware of the link between these issues and the so-called problem of the NEETs, meaning those who are “not in employment, education or training”, but who should actually be called the SSEETs, meaning “seeking suitable employment, education or training”. I do, then, see this as both a micro and macroeconomic issue, as well as one concerning personal capacity and the ability to thrive, which are issues intimately involved with economic achievement. This is an issue which does, then, fall into the realm of those this blog is concerned about, and which should be at the epicentre of a politics of care.

That said, my motivation for my revelation was [the treatment afforded to Chris Packham by The Times newspaper](#). I should have anticipated some of the responses. Many did not appear here, but there was a range of hostile ones, most of which were, to be polite, incredibly small-minded.

The range of reactions, including an invitation to debate this issue and its connections, if any, to neoliberalism, has, however, given me much to think about, and I need this weekend to pause and reflect.

One reflection will be on whether to seek a diagnosis. I suspect I will: this issue matters too much to me to leave the question of whether I have these conditions open to question. Saying that, I have to accept that this is not a straightforward or emotionally easy process.

A second reflection will be on the links, if any, between autism, ADHD, neurodiversity,

neurocomplexity, and neoliberalism. I have already done a lot of reading on that issue, but suspect there is more to do.

And third, there is an emotional element to process. Let me use a metaphor to explain that. Autistic people, contrary to popular perception, can be good with metaphors.

Over the last two years, I have lost two stone in weight. I have had to rethink who I am. I am no longer an extra-large fit. I now need medium-sized clothing. And that has other implications. I no longer worry about my appearance when a camera appears. I do not need to pose at the right angle. My perception of myself has changed, but saying I am autistic and have ADHD requires about 1,000 times more reframing than that, and just saying so publicly demands that I appreciate that this is the case. And if I am going to be involved in discussion on this issue, I have a lot of "priors" to work out.

This is definitely a day for a long walk with binoculars in hand, with coffee stops on the way.