

Theorising Human

Dinah Murray

Speaking of autism...people say things like

- “the nightmare of not somehow being 'fully' human.” (Stuart Murray 2008: 5)
- “For Hobson, the autistic person is outside the moral community, biologically human but not a person in the moral sense” (Barnbaum, 2008)

(I think we must forgive Hobson for this mistake: he just got carried away with the value of an idea – a very human thing to do.)

“A person in
the moral
sense...”

**...eats the tree
of knowledge
and knows sin ?**





RATIONAL

FEATHERLESS

BIPED

description: PLATO

animation: Sonya Hallett

www.oolong.co.uk/sonya/flip/

- Aristotle: The animal that seeks to know
- Descartes: The animal that thinks: *cogito ergo sum*
 - actually not really an animal at-all...
 - animals are hardly better than automata

knowing we will die

- “Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery, he...



cometh up like a flower



One of many human traits we used to
think were exclusive to our species,
awareness of death



There are examples of all the below from the animal kingdom?

- language
 - social
 - referential
 - manipulative
- empathy and love
 - incl cross-species empathy
- cooperation
 - gift exchange
 - reciprocal obligations
- hierarchies
- awareness of death

what humans add:

lasting inscription

- record keeping
- art
- laws, scriptures
- religious devotion
- a concept of transcendent values
- multiplication

go forth and multiply...

- Don't just count, don't just add, take a shortcut – multiplication
- make much from little
- defy scarcity by doing that, engage in toil to maximum effect
- use words, multiply effect
- use writing, multiply word effect repeatedly and extensively
- make art, multiply effect
- make technology - multiply the multiplication

we humans scale up everything:

values

emotions

passions

variation

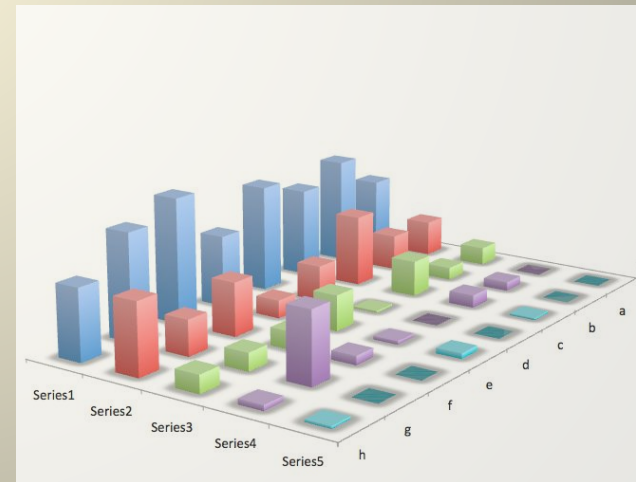
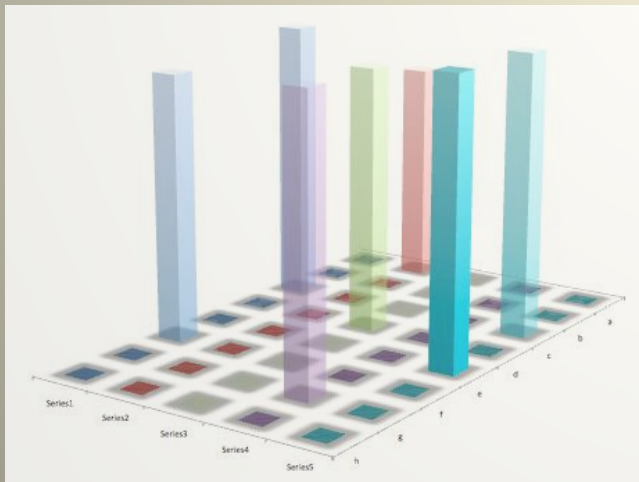
dissemination

scope

What autism adds: a monotropic disposition.

We tend to put our all into everything we do.
We don't do half-hearted.

Wasted effort is catastrophic.



**One sets an exceptionally, distinctively –
atypically - high value to avoiding wasted
effort, on one's own terms***

This can be...

personally and culturally, **highly productive**

OR

If there is no way to avoid wasting effort, it can bring
one to a **complete halt**

***ie the current state of one's interests**

AUTISM ALERT!!!

Attention! Attention!

Be aware

I am intensely, and incurably, human.

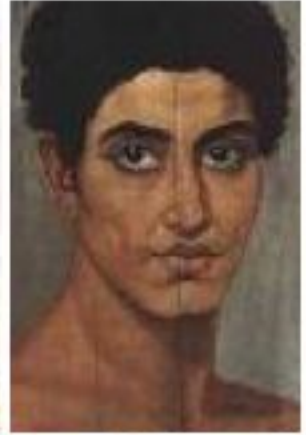
(tips hat to Micheline Mason, author of Incurably Human, 2000)



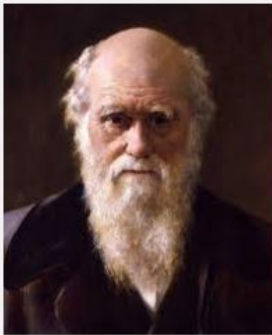
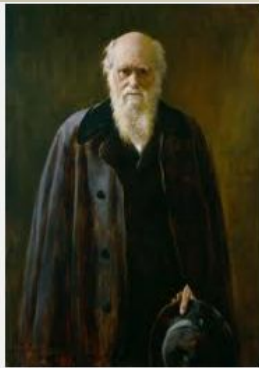


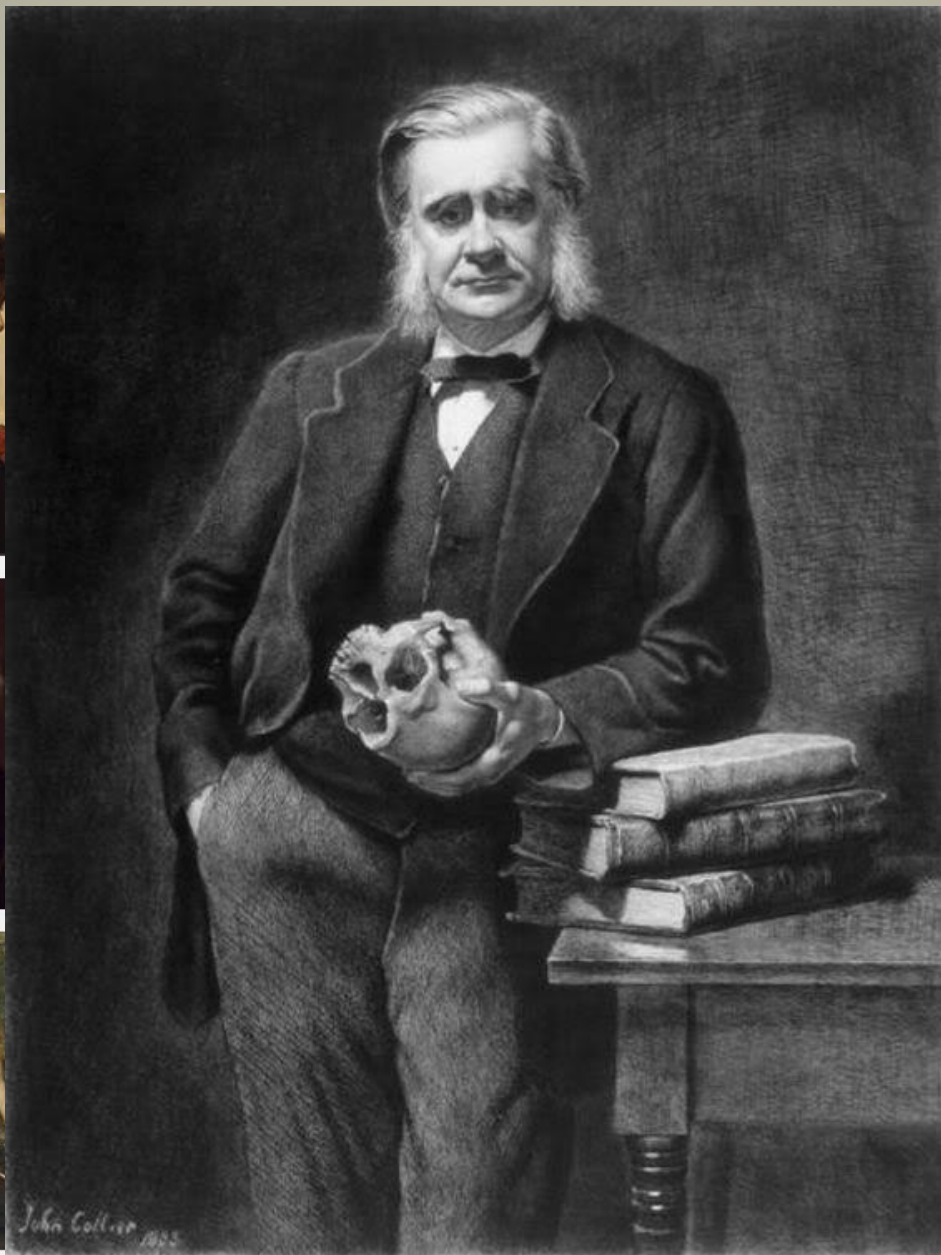
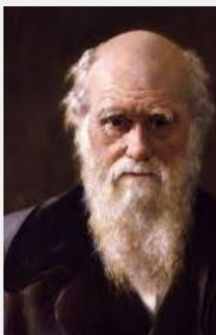
Pages 1-3 from
The Autistic Adults
Picture Project,
now on its 11th
page

Ars longa, Vita brevis

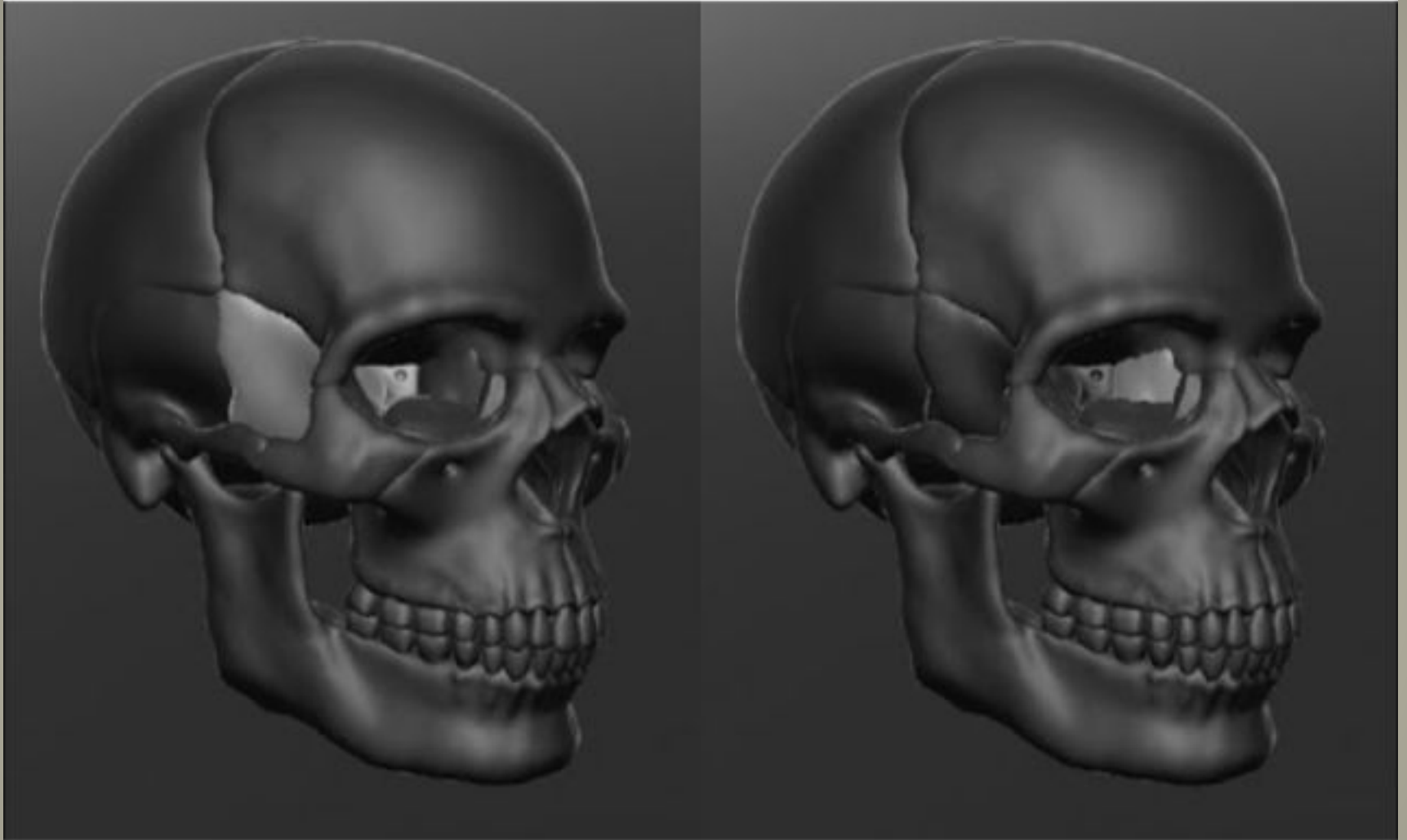


portraits – one of the ways we fight death









Art by Ralph Smith

Art can be brief too

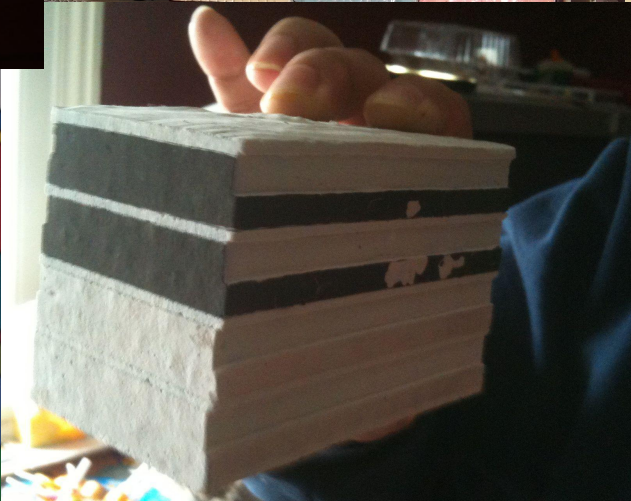
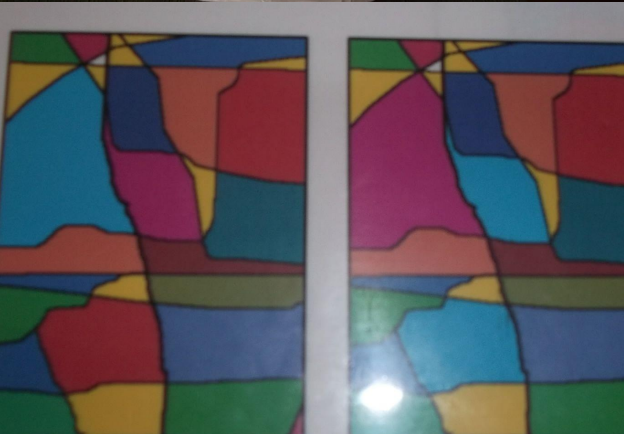
Go into the arts. I'm not kidding. The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something."

- Kurt Vonnegut

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“Art – an absolute necessity of life”

William Morris

also title of article by me about the artist on the last slide, Ferenc Virag - like Ralph Smith, a highly dedicated and productive autistic artist.

– *It is published in the journal **Autonomy, available free online**, the brainchild of Larry Arnold - yet another highly dedicated and productive autistic artist.*

ps we do need science too...