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CHAPTER 2 / Hans Asperger's theory of autistic psychopathy (1), with a focus on the social symptoms of autism

Hans Asperger was the Austrian paediatrician who, in 1938, was the first to propose an *autistic* contact disorder. Like Frankl, he did not think of contact disorders as being necessarily autistic. Rather, Asperger proposed a larger class of disorders, which he dubbed *psychopathies*. In Asperger's view, all psychopathies involve a triad of three (lower-level) disorders: not only a contact disorder, but also an activity disorder and a personality disorder. In other words, he believed that psychopathies affect unconscious non-verbal contact, purposeful and conscious speech, and the development of personality functions such as instinct and intelligence.

The flag ship of this class of psychopathies was a new disease entity which he called *autistic psychopathy*. In this conceptual combination, the noun 'psychopathy' indicated that the disorder involved *any* impairment in contact, activity and the inner personality; the adjective 'autistic' specified that it concerned a *particular* impairment in these three domains. The autistic contact and activity disorder were defined by a lack of unity with the external environment, as evidenced by a lack of interest in other people and difficulty communicating with others. The personality disorder was defined by a lack of unity between the child's personality functions, as evidenced an over-intellectual approach of things paired with a lack of instinctive learning.

In keeping with the contemporary German language theories of the personality, Asperger defined autistic psychopathy as a type.¹⁵⁷ As a *developmental type*, it steered a middle course between being unique to a single individual and being a universal pattern of human behaviour. He considered autistic psychopathy a stable biological structure that was shared by a group of individuals and that manifested itself in a diversity of behaviours. It is important to recognize that for Asperger the autistic type was not defined by a class of behaviours but rather by a difference *on the level of the whole organism*, namely a lack of unity.

¹⁵⁷ See the next chapter, section 3.3.2

This lack of unity would manifest itself in different and even contradictory behaviours. He therefore argued that clinicians diagnosing *autistic psychopathy* should not confine themselves to a child's observable behaviour, but should rather use their observations of their behaviour to develop an understanding of the underlying impairment, namely a lack of unity, harmony or integration.

The DSM-5 now defines autism spectrum disorders as involving both social and non-social symptoms. It clusters the social symptoms as “persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts” and it clusters the non-social symptoms as “restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities”.¹⁵⁸ Both symptom clusters were already observed by Hans Asperger between 1938 and 1944 and continued to be central to his concept of autistic psychopathy until his last lecture in 1977. The current chapter will focus on the social peculiarities of autistic children, as observed by Asperger, the next chapter on the non-social ones.

My aim in this chapter is threefold. First, I will introduce English readers to Asperger's central concept of ‘psychopathy’. This concept can only be fully understood from his original German publications, which remain largely untranslated. Second, I will clarify this concept, as several German texts by Asperger are not readily available, even in Europe, so that his concept of psychopathy remains unclear even to German readers. Third, I will clarify his conceptions of ‘contact disorder’ and ‘activity disorder’, and their relationship to the personality disorder. This should answer a question posed by my overall project: how did Asperger integrate the concept of contact (as introduced by Frankl, see chapter one) into the higher-order idea of autistic psychopathy?

The chapter will start with a biography, in section one. Section two will discuss the problems and experiences to which Asperger's idea of autistic psychopathy was a response, showing that he considered understanding autistic children a special case of understanding the human personality. Section three will then clarify his concept of ‘psychopathy’, which is a neglected part of his theory. His concept of especially *autistic* psychopathy will be discussed in

¹⁵⁸ American Psychiatric association, *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5* (2013)

section four. In the final section, this concept will be applied to the social peculiarities of children with autism, as observed by Asperger.

For the reader it is important to know that essential aspects of my discussion of Asperger will be in the next chapter. I have already indicated that Asperger's theory of autistic psychopathy was broader than just *social* contact, however, the non-social domain will not be taken into account until the next chapter. In addition, the history of his theory of autism, and especially his concept of contact, will also have to wait until the next chapter, when we have a complete understanding of his theory. Further, I will not yet discuss Asperger's debt to Eugen Bleuler, who coined the term 'autism', Asperger's relationship to George Frankl and Leo Kanner, or the influence of German language topologists. Discussion of the recent reception of Asperger's concepts will also have to wait to the next chapter, as will my conclusion.

2.1 Biography

'Hans' was born Johann Friedrich Karl Asperger on 18 February 1906 in Vienna, Austria, the first son of Johann Asperger and Sophie Messinger, who both came from the small agricultural town of Hausbrunn.¹⁵⁹ He had two younger brothers; the middle died early and the youngest died in his 30's in the Second World War, on the Russian front.¹⁶⁰ Hans' father had a business degree and worked as an independent merchant; he raised Hans "with great strictness" and determined to give him the opportunities for higher education he himself had been denied.¹⁶¹ The Aspergers were Catholics.

Ever since primary school, Hans was a "ferocious reader".¹⁶² He would read all afternoon, to realize with a shock when the evening had come that he had homework to do. In his early teens he started reading the classics, even though at that early age much of what he read escaped him.

At that time, in secondary school, he joined the youth movement, which he would later describe as the "the most noble phenomenon, the greatest

¹⁵⁹ "Geburts und Taufbuch Altlerchenfeld", p. 17, <http://data.matricula-online.eu/de/oesterreich/wien/07-altlerchenfeld/01-73/?pg=19>, accessed at 20 August 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Geschichten und Geschichte - Autobiographische Aussagen von Hans Asperger" (1978).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

phenomenon of the entire German intellectual history".¹⁶³ Hans felt so because he recognized in the youth movement an "integration of vital, instinctive life and higher spirituality", and also of personal life and the people.¹⁶⁴ Hans' participation in the youth movement was a particularly formative experience. He later said that it was "the decisive experience of my youth, of my life in general".¹⁶⁵ In the view of one of his friends from this period, that Hans, as adult, would specialize in Curative Pedagogy "was very much in the spirit of youthful ideas".¹⁶⁶

In April 1923, Hans, his brother Karl and other boys founded the *Wandering Scholars*. The *Wandering Scholars* would take walking or hiking trips for weeks, and Hans continued to do so throughout his life. This immersion in nature made a lasting impression on Hans: "The love of nature, living in nature, that is essential to me. I have always remained a mountain climber. [...] I was instinctively close to nature, where one needs sense, not just knowledge."¹⁶⁷ Their attitude to life was never narrowly intellectual, was not "dereistic" (Bleuler's synonym for 'autistic') but "close to instinct". This attitude expressed itself in immersion in nature, but also in a "deep contact with people, not just an intellectual, but also an emotional and instinctual understanding" of other people.¹⁶⁸ The *Wandering Scholars* developed this instinctive relation to the world into more spiritual practices. They "read, sang, played and discussed".¹⁶⁹ They sought "everything that was grand and real" and they wanted to take responsibility for shaping their lives out of the forces of their own personality; they wanted to live autonomously.¹⁷⁰

According to Asperger, his scientific views were deeply influenced by his experience with the Youth Movement. It taught him to "see nature as it really is" rather than approaching it "from a system, a pre-given scientific method",

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Asperger, "Die Jugendgemeinschaften als Erziehungsfaktor" (1959).

¹⁶⁵ Geschichten und Geschichte - Autobiographische Aussagen von Hans Asperger (1978)

¹⁶⁶ Franz M. Kapfhammer, *Neuland: Erlebnis einder Jugendbewegung* (1987), p. 180, quoting a eulogy by Herman Abmayer.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁶⁸ "Geschichten und Geschichte - Autobiographische Aussagen von Hans Asperger (1978)

¹⁶⁹ Franz M. Kapfhammer, *Neuland: Erlebnis einder Jugendbewegung* (1987), p. 180.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 103-107, 180.

specifically to see “the total reality of a human being, a child”.¹⁷¹ Seeing the whole child would become his profession.

Hans attended a Humanistic Gymnasium, which he passed in 1925. As he had intended since second class, he went on to study medicine at the University of Vienna. Asperger obtained his medical doctorate in March 1931. On 8 October 1943, Asperger handed in his *Habilitationsschrift* describing his idea of autism.¹⁷² It was published a year later in *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten*.

In May 1931, Asperger started as a general paediatrician at the *Children's Clinic* of the *University of Vienna*, under Franz Hamburger. From him he learned paediatrics. In the 1930's, Asperger published several articles on general paediatric topics, and he would continue to do so throughout his career. In 1932, he joined the *Heilpädagogische Abteilung (Hp)*, which was close to its 20th anniversary, and became its head in 1935. Between 1932 and 1937 he was a direct colleague of Georg Frankl.

In April and May 1934, Asperger did an internship in Leipzig and Potsdam.¹⁷³ Here he met several holistic psychologists who would influence his work on autism: Ludwig Klages, Paul Schröder and Hans Heinze. (Schröder and Heinze would later become central figures in Nazi psychiatry.)¹⁷⁴ In his journal of that 1934 trip Asperger mentions for the first time the term “autistic”, reflecting on the difference in jargon between the *Hp* and the Leipzig school.¹⁷⁵ Another clue that the terms ‘autistic’ was already used at the *Hp* years before Asperger first publicly talked about ‘autistic psychopaths’ is in the remark by an American psychiatrist who visited the *Hp* in 1935 that “artistic children” received “special personal guidance” – historian Edith Sheffer has argued

¹⁷¹ Geschichten und Geschichte - Autobiographische Aussagen von Hans Asperger (1978)

¹⁷² I.B.M. Frye, *Fremde unter uns: autisten, ihre erziehung, ihre lebenslauf* (1968), p. 8.

¹⁷³ Maria Asperger Felder, " 'Zum Sehen geboren, zum Schauen bestellt' Hans Asperger (1906–1980): Leben und Werk" (2008); Edith Sheffer, *Asperger's Children: The Origins of Autism in Nazi Vienna* (2018), pp. 69-74

¹⁷⁴ Edith Sheffer, *Asperger's Children: The Origins of Autism in Nazi Vienna* (2018), p. 68.

¹⁷⁵ Maria Asperger Felder, " 'Zum Sehem geboren, zum Schauen bestellt', Hans Asperger 1906-1980: Leben und Werk" (2015), p. 102. Autism in Bleuler's sense was a generally known concept, and would not have been regarded by Asperger as specific to the Viennese jargon. See §1.5 above.

convincingly that this is a mistranslation of ‘*autistic children*’.¹⁷⁶ Finally, Anni Weiss wrote in the same year, just after she had left the Hp and moved to the States, in a private letter to Asperger that a certain child was “very autistic”.¹⁷⁷ That the term ‘autistic’ in these three instances was already applied to *children* was very significant, as outside the Hp the term ‘autistic’ at that time was only used to describe adults.

This means that Asperger most likely first encountered children with autism between May 1931, when he started working at the Hp, and April 1934, when he first mentioned the term. This is at least four years earlier than Kan-ner met his first patient with autism, in October 1938 (see chapter 4).

On the first of July 1935, Asperger married Hanna Kalmon (born 1 April 1909). Hans and Hannah would have five children.¹⁷⁸

Between March 1938 and October 1942 Asperger practiced within the context of Nazi psychiatry. It is clear that while doing his job, Asperger cooperated with Nazi psychiatrists, even though he was not himself member of the Nazi party. It is further clear that a few children he referred to the so-called *Spiegelgrund* complex were killed there by the Nazi’s; however, there is an ongoing debate whether Asperger did or did not know that referring these children to *Spiegelgrund* would lead to them being killed by the Nazi’s.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶Joseph J. Michaels, "The Heilpädagogical Station of the Children's Clinic at the University of Vienna" (1935), p. 270. Edith Sheffer, *Asperger's Children: The Origins of Autism in Nazi Vienna* (2018), p. 55.

¹⁷⁷ “sehr autistisch”. Letter from Anni Wiess to Hans Asperger dated November 2nd, 1935, in possession of Dr. Maria Asperger Felder and cited in Samantha Leigh Druzak, "The Forgotten Pioneers: The Life and Work of Anni Weiss and Georg Frankl", p. 4, note 12.

¹⁷⁸ Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), Landesarchiv, Selbstverwaltungskörper, Bestand 2.10.2 - Ärztekammer Wien, Serie 2.10.2.A1 - Personalakten: Ärztinnen und Ärzte. Personalakt Ärztekammer: Dr. Johann Asperger, geboren 18.02.1906.

¹⁷⁹ A short biography is not the place to discuss this ongoing controversy at length. I have given an overview of the controversy in my Dutch paper "Hans Asperger en de nazi-ideologie" (2021). Here, I will merely list its most recent contenders.

Spiegelgrund was founded by the city of Vienna in 1941, and we know that it was responsible for the killing (euphemistically called ‘child euthanasia’) of at least 789 children. Edith Sheffer has recently made a case that two children who were referred to Spiegelgrund by Asperger died there. Moreover, she claims that since he worked closely together with the men overseeing these killings, he must have been aware that these referrals amounted to death sentences. Cf. Edith Sheffer, *Asperger's Children: The Origins of Autism in Nazi Vienna* (2018). Similarly, Herwig Czech found that six children referred to Spiegelgrund by Asperger were killed there and he claims that at the time Asperger made these referrals, it was already widely known that psychiatric patients were killed there. Cf. Herwig Czech, "Hans Asperger und die »Kindereuthanasie« (in Wien–mögliche Verbindungen)" (2015); idem, "Hans Asperger, national socialism, and “race hygiene” in Nazi-

It is in this grim context that Asperger first presented his concept of ‘autistic psychopaths’. He first used the term in public in a lecture on what he called ‘mentally abnormal children’, at the *Children’s Clinic* of the *University of Vienna*, on 3 October 1938, a half year after the Anschluss.¹⁸⁰ The idea was first fully developed in the fall of 1943, when he completed his post-doctoral dissertation. It was published in the next year as *Die ‘Autistischen Psychopathen’ im Kindesalter*. This thesis would become his best-known and most widely cited publication on autism, especially after it was partly translated in English in 1991.¹⁸¹

The fact that Asperger’s first writings on autism developed in a Nazi context, has been assessed in different ways. Some have argued that he defended children with autism against the Nazis¹⁸², whereas others argue that his view of autism reflected the values of the Nazi context in which he worked.¹⁸³ As we will see in the next chapter, my own conceptual analysis suggests that his theory of autism was less influenced by Nazi psychiatry than critics suggest. I tend to agree with Herwig Czech’s assessment that there is “no reason to consider the validity of Asperger’s scholarship as tainted per se by its historical context and Asperger’s concessions towards the Nazi regime”.¹⁸⁴ As conceptual historian, I will focus on Asperger’s ideas, not on his actions.

era Vienna" (2018); idem, "Response to ‘Non-complicit: Revisiting Hans Asperger’s Career in Nazi-era Vienna’" (2019).

This critical view is contested by Dean Falk, who contends that of the 44 children sent to Spiegelgrund, only one was directly referred by Asperger. Moreover, she argues that when this happened, in July or August 1941, the child killing program at Spiegelgrund was not public knowledge, so that Asperger most likely would not have known about it. Cf. Dean Falk, "Non-complicit: Revisiting Hans Asperger’s Career in Nazi-era Vienna" (2019); idem, "More on Asperger’s Career: A Reply to Czech" (2019)

For the most recent contributions to the debate, see the September issue of Volume 168 (2020) of the *Monatsschrift Kinderheilkunde*. Ina Friedmann agrees with Czech that Asperger probably knew that a referral to *Spiegelgrund* might be a death sentence. Friedmann, "Die Heilpädagogische Abteilung der Wiener Universitätskinderklinik zwischen 1911 und 1977" (2020). In contrast, Werner Maleczek, et al. argue that Asperger only learned about the child euthanasia program after the war. See their "Hans Asperger, Leben und Wirken 1931 bis 1946" (2020).

¹⁸⁰ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938), p. 1316. Dean Falk has recently published an English translation of this lecture (made using online translation tools) in the online supplement to her paper "Non-complicit: Revisiting Hans Asperger’s Career in Nazi-era Vienna" (2019). Asperger did not mention autism in a lecture in 1937 with the same title.

¹⁸¹ Asperger, "'Autistic psychopathy' in childhood" (1991). Translated by Uta Frith.

¹⁸² E.g. Brita Schirmer, "Autismus und NS-Rassengesetze in Österreich 1938: Hans Aspergers Verteidigung der ‘autistischen Psychopathen’ gegen die NS-Eugenik" (2002).

¹⁸³ Edith Sheffer, *Asperger's Children: The Origins of Autism in Nazi Vienna* (2018), chapter 3.

¹⁸⁴ Herwig Czech, "Response to ‘Non-complicit: Revisiting Hans Asperger’s Career in Nazi-era Vienna’" (2019).

In October 1942, Asperger joined the medical division of the German army, and in December 1943 he was sent to the front in Croatia as part of the 392nd Infantry Division, tasked with controlling the occupied territories in Yugoslavia and defending them against the Yugoslav communist Partisans.¹⁸⁵ Asperger later said that he considered himself lucky that he never had to shoot anyone.¹⁸⁶ After Germany's surrender he was a prisoner of war for a few months, after which he safely returned to Vienna, in September 1945.¹⁸⁷ Before going to the front he had become *Privatdozent* in paediatrics at Vienna University.¹⁸⁸ After the war he resumed his position as *Privatdozent*, as well as his work at the *Hp*. He had lost many of his former colleagues: Anni Weiss and Georg Frankl had fled to the United States and Viktorine Zak, the department nurse, who Asperger held in high regard, was killed during a bomb raid.¹⁸⁹

In January 1946 Asperger opened a private practice for paediatrics in Vienna (district Burggasse).¹⁹⁰ Between 1951 and 1980 Asperger would see 9800 patients here, 130 of whom were diagnosed with autistic psychopathy (2,17%).¹⁹¹ In the same period, 6459 children were admitted to the *Hp*; 74 were diagnosed with autistic psychopathy. They were all “children with very high intellectual functioning, specific circumscribed interests and talents but impaired social, communication and motor skills”.¹⁹²

In 1946 Asperger returned to paediatrics at large, as interim director of the *Children's Clinic* in Vienna, a position he held until 1949. Between 1957 and 1962 he was director of the *Children's Clinic* in Innsbruck. In 1962 he returned as director of the *Children's Clinic* in Vienna, a position he held until his retirement.

¹⁸⁵ Herwig Czech, "Hans Asperger, national socialism, and “race hygiene” in Nazi-era Vienna" (2018), p. 28.

¹⁸⁶ Maria Asperger Felder, " 'Zum Sehen geboren, zum Schauen bestellt' Hans Asperger (1906–1980): Leben und Werk" (2008), p. 108.

¹⁸⁷ Herwig Czech, "Hans Asperger, national socialism, and “race hygiene” in Nazi-era Vienna" (2018), p. 39n137.

¹⁸⁸ Roxane Sousek, "Hans Asperger (1906-1908) – Versuch einer Annäherung" (2015).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), Landesarchiv, Selbstverwaltungskörper, Bestand 2.10.2 - Ärztekammer Wien, Serie 2.10.2.A1 - Personalakten: Ärztinnen und Ärzte. Personalakt Ärztekammer: Dr. Johann Asperger, geboren 18.02.1906.

¹⁹¹ Kathrin Hippler and Christian Klicpera, "A retrospective analysis of the clinical case records of 'autistic psychopaths' diagnosed by Hans Asperger and his team at the University Children's Hospital, Vienna" (2003)

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

In 1952 he published the first edition of his monograph on *Heilpädagogik*. It first presented his views on psychopathy in general. The first edition was followed by a second in 1956 and a third in 1961.

Between 1944 and 1960 Asperger wrote about general paediatrics rather than Curative Education, but in 1960 he started writing again about autistic psychopathy. Between 1960 and 1977 he wrote several articles and held a few lectures about autistic psychopathy. His views during this period do not fundamentally differ from his earlier views on autism. New was his proposal that autism is a possibility of human existence that can be found in any person but becomes pathological in autistic psychopathy.

In 1977 Asperger retired, but continued to come to the Hp once a week to give a lecture on *Heilpädagogik*.¹⁹³

Hans Asperger died on 21 October 1980 in Vienna, at the age of 74.

2.2 Experiences and problems

Hans Asperger's post-doctoral thesis *Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen' im Kindesalter*, which he completed in fall 1943 and published in 1944, was long considered his first public statement on children with autism. We now know that Asperger publicly spoke about children with autism at four occasions before that. He already described a child with autism in a talk on 'the mentally abnormal child', in 1938, and publicly referred to autistic 'psychopaths' again in 1939, 1940, and 1942.¹⁹⁴ Focussing, in this section, on these four early texts, and on retrospective accounts of this early stage, will help clarify the problems Asperger was working on when he first started writing about 'autistic psychopaths', as he called children with autism.

At this stage, Asperger described two problems, which I believe to be essential to his work on autism. The first, general problem, was how to know other people. The second, more specific problem was knowing a particular *type* of individuals, namely children who were 'autistic'.

¹⁹³ Adam Feinstein, *A History of Autism: Conversations with the Pioneers* (2010), p. 18.

¹⁹⁴ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938); idem, "Pädagogische Therapie bei abnormen Kinder" (1939); idem, "Zur Erziehungstherapie in der Jugendfürsorge" (1941); idem, "Jugendpsychiatrie' und 'Heilpädagogik'" (1942).

2.2.1 *The problem of knowing other people in general (Menschenkenntnis)*

Asperger's first problem was understanding the human personality. This problem was shaped by his experience of working with children with all kinds of personalities. As paediatrician, Asperger did get to know a larger group of children than for example parents would, and these children had all kinds of personalities, and were of all ages. In addition, he was confronted with varying degrees of health and disorder. Looking back, he said that in his work with children he was struck by two experiences. On the one hand, he experienced that individual differences are the result of the interplay between the inner forces in the personality and exogenous forces such as upbringing. On the other hand, he experienced that individual differences are a result of the stage of development, as the primitive drives and reflexes of new-borns are different from the more developed personality of older children.¹⁹⁵ In understanding the human personality, Asperger sought to give both these experiences their due.

For Asperger, this was not a mere academic exercise. In his day-to-day work as a paediatrician, it was his task to know other people, especially children, in order to properly diagnose and treat their problems. Asperger deemed insight in other people the "first essential precondition" of his daily psychiatric and pedagogical work with children.¹⁹⁶ More specifically, he wanted to understand the human *personality*, in the sense of inborn traits that are relatively independent from parental and other social influences. In pursuing this aim, Asperger insisted that knowledge of another person must do justice to the full complexity of living human beings. This general maxim gave rise to four more specific epistemological requirements.

We encounter the first requirement when Hans Asperger, for the first time, publicly described a child with autism – in his talk on 'the mentally abnormal child', delivered at the Children's Hospital of the University of Vienna, on 3 October 1938.¹⁹⁷ The child, a seven-year-old boy, must have been seen by Asperger sometime between 1932, when he joined the staff of the *Hp*, and 1938,

¹⁹⁵ Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ Asperger, "'Jugendpsychiatrie' und 'Heilpädagogik'" (1942), p. 354: "erste wesentliche Voraussetzung".

¹⁹⁷ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938). Not to be confused with the shorter lecture with the same title that Asperger gave a year earlier; where he did not mention autism

when he held his lecture. Asperger emphasized that the knowledge of his behaviour was “the key to his personality”.¹⁹⁸ In this metaphor, differences in the behaviour of the boy are the key to unlocking other, deeper, differences in the boy’s personality. Asperger believed that behavioural differences cannot be explained without reference to the inner personality, and that a good understanding of another person shows how both are always *related*. I shall call this *the interiority requirement*, a term not used by Asperger.

We learn of the second epistemological requirement when Asperger observed in the behaviour and personality of the boy a striking “contrast between abnormalities and in a sense highly developed characteristics”.¹⁹⁹ In other words, he was struck by the duality of his personality: it had positive *and* negative consequences – for the child and his milieu. Asperger did not present this duality as unique to autistic children. To the contrary, he discussed the boy, among a few other children, to illustrate his general thesis that the problematic symptoms of abnormal children are often the flip side of (exceptional) abilities. In this respect, the seven-year-old boy with autism was certainly no exception but proved the rule. Knowledge of the personality of other human beings, then, first of all has to meet what I call *the duality requirement*: knowledge of other people must do justice to the experience that personality traits have positive *and* negative consequences.²⁰⁰

The third epistemological requirement concerned the relation between different sides of the personality. Asperger insisted that knowledge of human beings must be true to the experience that their behaviours and traits *belong to an organic whole*.²⁰¹ Personality traits are not like parts of a machine that can be added one by one, but are aspects of a *living* whole which has developed

¹⁹⁸ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938), p. 1315: “den Schlüssel zu seiner Persönlichkeit”.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. On the problematic side, the boy had several social problems: he did not bend to the will of others, acted malicious towards other children, and did not respect authority. On the side of abilities, the boy was very smart and a good learner.

²⁰⁰ Asperger revisited the duality requirement in a lecture on therapy with children, published in 1939. In this lecture he repeated his observation that the human personality always has a positive and a negative side. Again, he described an autistic boy to illustrate this general observation. On the negative side, the eleven-year-old boy talked to other people “as a machine”, had no sense for the demands of his social environment, and no sense for what is allowed and what is not. On the positive side, the autistic boy had the ability “to describe his feelings in an unchildlike, professional parlance, which not only involves a rich vocabulary, but also original and often eccentric phrases”. Cf. Hans Asperger, "Pädagogische Therapie bei abnormen Kinder" (1939), p. 943.

²⁰¹ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind", p. 1315.

organically and in which every trait is related to all other traits.²⁰² This goes further than recognizing duality: Asperger believed that the “good and the bad in a human being, his abilities and his failures, his possibilities and his dangers” do not merely coincide, but “are cut from the same cloth, presuppose each other”.²⁰³ In Asperger’s experience problems and abilities do not accidentally coincide, but are *related* to each other. The positive personality traits of normal and ‘abnormal’ children alike “are inevitably connected to their pathological characteristics”.²⁰⁴ For example, in Asperger’s view it was no accident that the autistic boy (negatively) had no sense for what a social situation demands but (positively) was better in describing his feelings – these opposites are two sides of the same coin.

This gives rise to what I call *the totality requirement*: to know another person one has to know his or her behaviour and personality *as a whole*, not an isolated part or function. In Asperger’s terms, not only their positive and negative consequences, but also the traits of a personality themselves are “in every moment interconnected, each receives from all others a particular colouring, and in turn throws a particular light on all others”.²⁰⁵ Asperger believed that a person can only be understood by how the different parts of his personality ‘sound together’ (*Zusammenklang*) – harmoniously or disharmoniously. To understand social contact, for example, we must not look at an isolated personality trait, such as empathy, but look at how all parts of a personality illuminate each other. Asperger insisted that you cannot understand a personality by starting from parts and then combining them into a whole; to the contrary, insight in people must *start* from the whole. In 1938, he already described this whole as a single holistic quality that organizes the personality *durchaus* (throughout). Later he used similar terms to refer to this holistic quality: *durchorganisiert* and *durchstrukturiert* (organized/structured through and through).²⁰⁶ These terms highlight that it concerns a single quality that

²⁰² Asperger, “Jugendpsychiatrie’ und ‘Heilpädagogik” (1942), p. 354.

²⁰³ Asperger, “*Das psychisch abnorme Kind*”, p. 1315: “Dag Gute und das Schlechte in einem Menschen, seine Fähigkeiten und sein Versagen, seine Möglichkeiten und seine Gefahren werden aus denselben Quelle gespiest, bedingen einander”..

²⁰⁴ Asperger, “Pädagogische Therapie bei abnormen Kinder” (1939), p. 943: “Es können [...] positive Seiten aufweisen, die naturnotwendig mit ihren krankhaften Wezenszügen in Verbindung stehen.”

²⁰⁵ Asperger, “Jugendpsychiatrie’ und ‘Heilpädagogik” (1942), p. 354.

²⁰⁶ E.g. Asperger, “Bild und soziale Wertigkeit der autistischen Psychopaten” (1950), p. 257.

illuminates the various traits of a personality by showing how contradictory traits can all belong to the same personality. Asperger claimed that this holistic quality defines a certain *type* of personality:

Clearly, in many cases it is fruitful to think of a personality, so to speak, as organized through and through by a singular essential trait, which gives the person as a whole its character, and which *throws a decisive light* on all other traits. In this way, singular well-defined *types* are formed, which are similar to an astounding degree of detail: in external appearances, in expressive phenomena, and in numerous mental behaviours (we intend to show the usefulness of the concept of ‘type’ especially for particular forms of contact disorders, e.g. for ‘autistic psychopaths’).²⁰⁷

Asperger emphasized that the ‘organizing idea’ is multidimensional: it cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional opposition between two contrasting personality traits (such as introvert and extravert). Rather, it is a holistic quality of the personality as a whole that affects *all* personality traits, so that ‘introvert’ does not mean the same thing in different types.²⁰⁸ Asperger compared bringing out this holistic quality to the ability of an artist to paint a lively portrait of a person, by repressing what is average and bringing to the fore what is essential.²⁰⁹

The last requirement is what I call *the individuality requirement*: to know someone one must know his or her individual and unique personality. In the words of Asperger, he had experienced that every child who came to the *Hp* was a “singular, unrepeatable, undividable being”.²¹⁰ The fact that we all have a unique character makes the human being “the most enigmatic creature on

²⁰⁷ Asperger, “‘Jugendpsychiatrie’ und ‘Heilpädagogik’” (1942), p. 354, emphasis added: “Zweifellos ist es in vielen Fällen fruchtbar, sich eine Persönlichkeit sozusagen von einem Wesenszug her ‘durchorganisiert’ zu denken, welcher dem ganzen Menschen das Gepräge gibt, welcher auf alle anderen Züge ein bezeichnendes Licht wirft. So entstehen einzelne wohlcharakterterisierte Typen, welche in erstaunlich vielen Einzelheiten, im äußeren Erscheinungsbild, in den Ausdruckerscheinungen und in zahlreichen seelischen Verhaltensweisen übereinstimmen (wir haben die Absicht; die Brauchbarkeit des Typenbegriffes vor allem für bestimmte Formen von Kontaktstörungen, z. B. für die ‘autistischen Psychopathen’ darzulegen.”

²⁰⁸ Asperger, “Die „Autistischen Psychopathen“ im Kindesalter” (1944), p. 77.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²¹⁰ Asperger, “‘Jugendpsychiatrie’ und ‘Heilpädagogik’” (1942), p. 354: “ein einmaliges, unwiederholbares, unteilbares Wesen (‘In-dividuum’).” To apply Wilhelm Windelband’s distinction, Asperger’s approach to knowledge was idiographic rather than nomothetic.

earth”.²¹¹ Asperger suggested that knowing people is different in this regard than knowing other animals: to understand the behaviour of a dog or a horse you only need to understand a few instincts, common to the species, but this is not nearly enough to understand a human being.²¹² One needs to understand his or her *individual* personality. This means that describing an ‘autistic type’ must not only help to see that autistic children have a certain kind of psychopathy in common, but also that it manifests itself in different ways. Every child of a certain type still has its unique individuality. The essential trait that defines the type must be general enough to allow for individual differences as well, and these unique characteristics matter as much as the type.

In sum, in Asperger’s view, the problem of knowing other people is not unique for autistic children. Knowing the personality of *any* person in its duality, totality and individuality is difficult. For Asperger every human being is an enigma, and knowing ‘abnormal’ children, such as children with autism, is merely a special case of knowing human beings in general. For this reason, Asperger’s approach to the general problem of knowing other people shaped his approach to the more specific problem of knowing children with autism. Then again, that does not mean that autistic children did not also pose a unique problem, as we will see next.

2.2.2 The problem of knowing the ‘autistic’ type in particular

Looking back, Asperger remembered his experience that autistic children “were totally different from those he had gotten to know through previous pedagogical experiences: highly intelligent (with interesting peculiarities) and still so difficult in their overall behaviour that they could barely be handled in their family and/or their school”.²¹³ He also remembered that he first experienced this

²¹¹ Asperger, “Jugendpsychiatrie’ und ‘Heilpädagogik” (1942), p. 354: “das rätselhafteste Geschöpf auf Erden”

²¹² Asperger later wrote that human beings are unique in that they are not enclosed in pre-given schemata of instincts, but are ‘open to the world’. He believed that because the body of animals are better developed and adapted than the body of human beings, humans have no choice but to dominate the world with their mind. Cf. Hans Asperger, “Die Jugendgemeinschaften als Erziehungsfactor” (1959), pp. 122/132.

²¹³ Asperger, “Probleme des kindlichen Autismus” (1977), p. 2: “Kinder [...] die ganz anders waren, als er in seinen bisherigen pädagogischen Erfahrungen kennengelernt hatte: hochintelligent (mit interessanten Besonderheiten) und trotzdem so schwierig in ihrem gesamten Verhalten daß sie in der Familie und/oder der Schule kaum zu halten waren.”

difference, not when they were subject to standardized tests, but when they acted spontaneously in naturalistic situations. It was a general policy of the *Hp* to place children in situations that were as naturalistic as possible and to live with them as total human beings, not just as professionals, and this allowed Asperger to experience these children in quasi-natural situations.

In his early work, we see Asperger draw two problems from this experience. To describe the first problem Asperger used the metaphor of ‘hypertrophy’.²¹⁴ Hypertrophy is the “enlargement of a part or organ of an animal or plant, produced by excessive nutrition” (OED). Asperger used the term to refer the overdevelopment of certain functions of an organism – like a foot may grow out of proportion with the rest of the body. I use the more accessible term ‘enlargement’ to designate this problem.

Asperger first formulated *the enlargement problem* in a book review, which he wrote with Josef Feldner.²¹⁵ They critically reviewed *Practical Child Psychology*, a book by the German developmental psychologist Charlotte Bühler.²¹⁶ Their main critique at the time was she relied too much on tests and statistics. In their view, she relied, at least in this book, excessively on pre-determined intelligence tests and the verbal answers children gave in response.²¹⁷ As we will see, in the next chapter, Asperger did value her work in general and relied on her ideas about social development. Here, however, Asperger and Feldner pointed out (like George Frankl) that not only the *content* of what children say matters.

I want to stress that Asperger had no problem with intelligence tests *per se*. For example, in his own monograph, he later also offered a chapter on test methodology. His point was that even though there is nothing intrinsically

²¹⁴ Asperger already used this term in 1938, but then only applied it to a specific symptom of autism, namely special interests. Cf. Hans Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938), p. 1316. Its broader application first appeared in Hans Asperger, "Pädagogische Therapie bei abnormen Kinder" (1939), p. 945.

²¹⁵ Hans Asperger and Josef Feldner, "Bemerkungen zu dem Buche 'Praktische Kinderpsychologie' von Prof. Charlotte Bühler" (1938).

²¹⁶ Charlotte Bühler, *Praktische Kinderpsychologie* (1937). Like Frankl, Bühler was Jewish, and fled to the USA in 1938.

²¹⁷ The results were displayed in her book as graphs and numbers about children in general. For example, she presented pie charts and tables specifying for different age groups which percentage of an infant's behaviour involved sleeping, spontaneous reactions, etc. For older children, Bühler offered tables specifying the populational distribution of for example intelligence. Asperger and Feldner criticized this approach as a one-sided 'probability psychology'.

wrong about testing the intelligence of a child, it does not allow professionals to obtain all necessary knowledge about that child and really understand it. An excessive and one-sided reliance on intelligence tests, although not without fruits, has important downsides.

Asperger and Feldner regarded such an excessive reliance on intelligence tests detrimental for knowing children: they believed that because of it “pathological cases remain unrecognized”.²¹⁸ That ‘autistic psychopaths’ were such unrecognized cases is clear from a lecture Asperger gave in 1977, in which he looked back at how he had first come to recognize autism as a distinct disorder.²¹⁹ In the early 1930’s Asperger realized that the child psychology of that time did not help at all in describing the behaviour of certain children. Although developmental psychologists did attend to the psychological problems of children, their one-sided way of doing so made it impossible to see the problems of autistic children²²⁰: they focussed on the intellectual domain, but here autistic children did not lag behind, rather, their answers to predetermined intelligence questions were more mature than those of other children. They were exceptionally good at abstract thinking they had original ideas.

The flip side of this enlargement was a “restriction” (*Eingeengtheit*). This term ‘restriction’ draws attention to what is lacking rather than excessively present. As Asperger remembered it, the problems of children with autism “lay not so much in thinking, but in interpersonal relationships, in – contact”.²²¹ Such relationships, in his view, requires instinct and feeling, more than intellectual understanding.

If the problems of ‘autistic’ children did not manifest in their verbal responses to intelligence tests, they did manifest in their reactions to social situations and demands. They had not learned how to behave well in such situations, and they did not instinctively sense what the concrete situation required. The first time he mentioned ‘autistic psychopaths’, Asperger already

²¹⁸ Hans Asperger and Josef Feldner, "Bemerkungen zu dem Buche 'Praktische Kinderpsychologie' von Prof. Charlotte Bühler" (1938), p. 99: "pathologische Fälle unerkannt bleiben"

²¹⁹ Asperger, "Probleme des kindlichen Autismus" (1977).

²²⁰ In addition to Charlotte Bühler, Asperger referred to Hildegard Hetzer and Jean Piaget, in "Probleme des kindlichen Autismus" (1977), p. 2.

²²¹ E.g. Asperger, "Probleme des kindlichen Autismus", p. 3: "Die Störung lag nicht so sehr im denken, sondern in den mitmenschlichen Beziehungen, im - Kontakt."

said that their “instinctive understanding” is “severely disturbed”.²²² He believed that this restriction of their instinctive functioning affected their reactions to other people. Asperger concluded that in these children, “relations to the world are restricted, especially those relations that depend on instinctive rather than intellectual understanding”.²²³

The opposition between instinct and intellect Asperger first encountered in the youth movement; in his professional work he maintained the ideal of relating to the world not just intellectually but also, and foremost, instinctively.²²⁴ It was in contrast to his own youthful and professional ideas that Asperger found a restriction of instinct and an enlargement of intellect in other professionals. The psychology of that time did not deal with the instinctive reactions of children to social situations, this simply “was not part of its vocabulary”.²²⁵

That Asperger observed the enlargement and restriction problem in children *and* professionals indicates that he did not see these problems as unique to autism; they were part of a more general reflection on rationality and technology. As he would later make explicit, Asperger held that in the 20th century “life as a whole” has become “intellectualized and restricted”, as the instinctive trust in the organic body is replaced by an overreliance on technology.²²⁶

Nonetheless, there is a difference between professionals and children with autism. Psychologists would have been able to relate instinctively to other people: we can safely assume that in their private life they could relate to others in an instinctive way and could react appropriately to situations. They chose to

²²² Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938), p. 1316: "Eben dieses instinktive Verstehen ist nun bei jenen Kindern schwer gestört."

²²³ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938), p. 1315: "Und das is auch das Wesentliche seiner Störung: seine Beziehungen zur Welt sind eingeengt, or allem jene Beziehungen die sich nicht über das Intellektuelle, sonder über das instinktive Verstehen abspielen."

²²⁴ E.g. Asperger, "Probleme des kindlichen Autismus" (1977), p. 2.

²²⁵ Asperger, "Probleme des kindlichen Autismus" (1977), p. 3: "das kam in ihrem Vokabulär überhaupt nicht vor". See also his "Autistisches Verhalten im Kindesalter" (1960), p. 53. That Asperger found *instinctive* reactions lacking from the vocabulary of psychologists, and not all forms of social reactions, is suggested by Asperger's remark that much of what he meant by 'contact' could already be found in Bühler's work on "social behaviour" – missing was attention to *instinctive* reactions. Cf. Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), p. 62.

²²⁶ Hans Asperger, "Psychotherapie in der Pädiatrie." (1948), p. 19: "das ganze Leben wird intellektualisiert und eingeengt". See also his "Das Leibesbewußtsein des Menschen in der technischen Welt" (1965).

relate to children only through intelligence tests for professional reasons. In contrast, autistic children relied on the intellect in any domain and not out of choice. They would approach *everything* intellectually and were at a remove from social life. This suggests that in this type of children *the enlargement and restriction problem is a problem of the personality*.

The problem of knowing other people and the enlargement/restriction problem came together in Asperger's focal problem: understanding *the autistic type*. To live up to his own ideals, Asperger would have to show how the autistic *type* of personality can be described in a way that satisfies his four epistemological requirements.

Consider first the duality requirement. In describing the autistic personality, Asperger would have to do justice to both its positive and its negative consequences. Specifically, he must explain that restriction and enlargement have both positive and negative consequences.

Second, to satisfy his interiority requirement Asperger must show that their unexpected behaviour is related to their personality type. He will have to show how the enlargement of intellect and the restriction of instinct not only affect a person's outward behaviour but also his or her inner personality.

The third requirement was to describe the personality *as an organic whole*. Asperger would have to explain how an enlargement of intelligence and a restriction of instinct do not happen to occur together in the autistic type by accident, but are related to each other, and are aspects of a single holistic quality that organizes the personality through and through.

The final requirement was that the personality of every person be described in its individuality. This means that the holistic quality that binds the enlargement and restriction together should not blind Asperger to the unique individuality of each child with autism. Autistic psychopathy is essentially just a type, that is, a characterization based on what these children have in common; in addition, it should remain in view what makes them unique.

2.3 Asperger's conception of psychopathy

The experiences and problems discussed in the previous section determined how Hans Asperger attempted to understand autistic children. We now move

on to the concepts Asperger introduced in response to these problems. In this section I shall discuss his conception of ‘psychopathy’, in the next section, I will turn to the special case of *autistic* psychopathy.

Although Asperger already used the term ‘psychopathy’ since 1938, especially in connection to ‘autism’, he did not properly explain the idea until 1952. He first did so in two texts that he made public in that year. The first text was the initial edition of his monograph *Heilpädagogik*, the second text was a paper on psychopathy, which he delivered at a conference in 1952, and which was published in print a year later.²²⁷

In these texts, we learn that for Asperger, the term ‘psychopathy’ did not refer to an *antisocial* disorder: it was an umbrella term including *any* disorder involving the triad of personality disorder, contact disorder, and activity disorder. For example, in his monograph, Asperger discussed several kinds of psychopathies: *autistic* psychopathy, but also ‘hysterical’ and ‘compulsive neurotic’ psychopathy.

For Asperger, psychopathies are always *hereditary* disorders that are relatively independent from the child’s milieu. In his work with identical twins, Asperger had shown that influences from the social environment do not have as much effect on the personality of children as the previous generation had thought.²²⁸ That does not mean, however, that psychopathies are manifest from birth. Asperger actually believed that they begin to manifest later in life, especially when the personality typically begins to differentiate, around the age of three. This means that psychopathies in Asperger’s sense are developmental disorders, but expressly disorders in which the development of *the organism as a whole* is disturbed, not just a few functions, or even one.²²⁹

²²⁷ Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), especially the chapter on general symptomatology and the chapter on functional disorders; idem, "Psychopathie: Begriff, Diagnostik, Therapie" (1953).

²²⁸ Hans Asperger and Heribert Goll, "Über einen Fall von Hemichorea bei einem eineiigen Zwillingpaar" (1939).

²²⁹ Hans Asperger, "Probleme des kindlichen Autismus" (1977), p. 9.

2.3.1 Psychopathy as developmental disorder

In 1952, Asperger began to describe psychopathy as a disturbance of the development of a person's inner personality functions and of a person's relationship with his or her external environment. The idea that the personality and contact-and-activity develop in mutual interaction was central to his conception of psychopathy: "Any disturbance of the inner personality structure also involves an outward one, that is, a disturbance of one's relations to the environment".²³⁰ In his view, the biological self-organisation of the person develops dialectically – in three stages.

The first stage is *the stage of integration*. The child and his or her environment are not yet distinct but form a unity. Asperger implied that at this stage, subject and object not only form a single whole (they still can later) but are not even differentiated from each other. Young children only have a pictorial understanding of the world and only relate to the concrete demands and impulses of their immediate surroundings, in an instinctive and emotional way. They do not yet have a fully distinct self and their personality has not yet differentiated into different layers.

Second is *the stage of differentiation*. This stage involves two substages. First, the child begins to develop a self as something distinct from its environment. The child learns to distance itself from the demands of his immediate environment and relate to it in a more abstract way. Second, this external differentiation of the self from its environment makes possible an internal differentiation: the development of distinct personality parts within the self. This differentiation of the inner personality occurs around three years of age. At this point, children begin to develop new functions such as reason and intellect, which involve an abstract relationship to the world. These new functions allow the child to develop, in addition to the older pictorial understanding, a conceptual understanding of the environment.

Neurologically, the stage of differentiation involves the development of cerebral regulation of impulses (*Großhirnregulationen*), in addition to the earlier subcortical regulation of impulses that dominates the first stage. In

²³⁰ Asperger, "Psychopathie: Begriff, Diagnostik, Therapie" (1953), p. 27: "Aus jeder Störung des inneren Persönlichkeitsgefüges ergibt sich ja auch eine solche nach außen, eine Störung der Beziehungen zur Umwelt".

metaphorical terms, Asperger described this as the development of a ‘distance’ towards people and things:

The normal child, especially the little one, who properly sits in the environmental situation, responds to it in the right way and moves along with it, does so out of his healthy instincts, but mostly does not arrive at a conscious judgment; the latter would include abstraction from concrete things, and distance from singular things is a precondition for abstraction, for conscious reflection, and for concept formation.²³¹

The personality, then, is differentiated into two layers: the layer of the older and more primitive functions, such as instinct and emotion, and the layer of the newer and more mature functions such as intellect and abstraction.

Third is the stage of *re-integration*. As soon as the self and the world become different parts, and the personality begins to differentiate in distinct parts, it becomes a major developmental task to develop a harmonious relation between these distinct parts that re-integrates them into a single whole. The challenge for children at this stage is to continue to function as a single organism, while retaining the differences between self and environment and between personality functions. In other words, a new harmony must be established that is not a return to the primitive integration of the first stage, but that is a re-integration that preserves the second stage as it forms a unity at a higher level of functioning. Essential to Asperger’s view of this third stage is that he considered internal re-integration a precondition for external re-integration:

[O]nly the human being who can establish harmony between the tensions within his personality, can respond (re-act) in the right way to stimuli and demands from his environment – this is always an interplay. One also can only then be properly creative and shape the world, that is, be

²³¹ Asperger, "Die „Autistischen Psychopathen“ im Kindesalter" (1944), p. 117: "Das normale Kind, besonders das kleinere, welches richtig in der Umweltsituation steht, richtig darauf reagiert und mitschwingt, tut das aus seinen gesunden Instinkten, kommt aber meist nicht zu bewußter Beurteilung; dazu gehört ein Abstand von den konkreten Dingen. Der Abstand vom Einzelding ist die Voraussetzung zur Abstraktion, zur Bewußtwerdung, zur Begriffsbildung."

spontaneously active in the right way – as a free being – when one is healthy even in the deepest layer.²³²

In Asperger's view, the development of the early layer and the more mature layer of the personality and their interrelationship, determine a person's personality type. On the one hand, I think he would agree that as finite human beings, no person will ever be fully re-integrated. This is an ideal to aspire to, but in awareness that it is an ideal, not an attainable reality. On the other hand, Asperger's point is that there nonetheless is a meaningful distinction to make between a development that falls within the range of what is healthy and a development that falls within the range of 'psychopathy'.

Next, I will discuss the implications of Asperger's conception of psychopathy for his aim of understanding psychopathic children.

2.3.2 Diagnosing psychopathies: from external to internal disturbances

Asperger's ultimate aim was not to describe in general the development of the human personality and its failures, but to know the *individual* personalities of psychopathic children. Essential to his understanding of this task was his view that the internal integration of the personality and the external integration with the environment are co-dependent.²³³ If this is so, the psychiatrist who wants to know a child's personality can start from external disturbances, which are observable in behaviour, and then work back toward internal disturbances, which are not directly observable. Asperger proposed, in particular, that diagnosis should start from two observable realities most "closely related to the personality" – and work back from them towards the idea that organizes the

²³² Asperger, "Psychopathie: Begriff, Diagnostik, Therapie" (1953), p. 27-8: "[N]ur der Mensch, welcher die Spannungen innerhalb seiner Persönlichkeit zu einer Harmonie zu zwingen imstande ist, kann richtig

auf die Anregungen und Anforderungen der Umwelt antworten (re-agieren), was ja immer eine Wechselwirkung ist. Er kann aber auch nur dann richtig ur-hebend, gestaltend in die Welt eingreifen, in richtiger Weise spontan aktiv sein – freies Wesen, das er ist, – wenn er eben im Tiefsten gesund ist.

²³³ as we will see in the next chapter, section 3, this distinction draws on Erich Jaensch. Cf. Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), p. 66.

personality through and through.²³⁴ These two behaviours are *contact* and *activity*: “The difficulties of psychopathic children are particularly prominent in two areas: contact and activity”.²³⁵

In 1952, Asperger first publicly defined contact in contradistinction to activity, the main difference being that they involve different parts of the peripheral nervous system; he said that contact is a basic expression of life, which can already be observed in plants and which in human beings involves the autonomic nervous system.²³⁶ In contact, the organism seeks to find a balance between opening itself up to the world-as-it-is and distancing itself from it. In contrast, activity is a higher expression of life, which is only found in animals and which in humans involves the voluntary nervous system. In activity, the organism balances between seizing the affordances offered by the world and acting on its own spontaneous impulses, regardless of the demands of its environment. In spite of these differences, Asperger felt that contact and activity both express the same tension arc from the inner personality, that is, a tension between an emotional-instinctive “depth person” and a conceptual-abstract “thought person”.²³⁷

Now, in Asperger’s view, the process of understanding psychopathies involves moving from observable surface differences to an underlying depth structure that is not observable.²³⁸ To conceptualize this diagnostic process, Asperger

²³⁴ Asperger, "Psychopathie: Begriff, Diagnostik, Therapie" (1953), p. 35: “komplexen persönlichkeitsnahen Gegebenheiten, wie es der Kontakt und der Aktivität sind”.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 39: “Die Schwierigkeiten mit psychopathischen Kindern zeigen sich besonders stark auf zwei Gebieten: im Kontakt und in der Aktivität”.

²³⁶ Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), the chapter on “General symptomatology”, esp. pp. 62, 73, 76.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 76: “Tiefenperson’ und Denkpersion”

²³⁸ Asperger believed that you can only get a holistic impression of another person’s personality when you are in direct contact with that person. Understanding always takes place in a contact situation. His paradigmatic example was a contact situation involving two people, for example a boy who is talking to his parents, playing with a peer or attending to his teacher. In such dyadic contact situations, the interlocutors “together build a unity [...] in which an observer has no full insight”. (Cf. Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen*, 1952, p. 62: “bilden miteinander eine Einheit etwas irgendwie in sich Abgeschlossenens, in das ein Dritter, also etwas ein von außen Beobachtender, nicht vollen Einblick hat”.) This is why as a pedagogue or as a physician one can really only understand how a child relates to persons and situations by entering into contact with that child oneself. If contact is the key to unlocking the personality, this also means that understanding another person’s personality is only possible through contact with that person.

drew on the then influential German thinker Ludwig Klages. Ignoring his speculative metaphysics and his system of the human character, Asperger drew on a particular part of Klages work: his theory of the relationship between expression and impression.²³⁹ Here, he found confirmation of his view that the human personality becomes publicly observable in circumstances close to the personality. In a nutshell, Klages' idea was that people always express themselves, involuntarily, in phenomena such as mimicry, posture and handwriting.²⁴⁰ In people who observe them, these phenomena leave an impression behind, which can only be known subjectively by the observer, by looking inward to his impression of the other person's behaviour.

Asperger applied this idea to psychiatric diagnosis: only by looking inward to the total impression a patient leaves behind inside the physician, the latter can develop a holistic understanding of the total structure of the patient's inner personality.

What did Asperger mean by the inner structure of the personality? To explain his view of the personality he opposed it to Paul Schröder's, who claimed that every personality consists of a combination of 'mental sides' (*seelischen Seiten*), e.g. intellect, feeling, and fantasy. In Schröder's view, such sides are constants, which are qualitatively the same for any human personality, but differ in quantity: a child can have more or less intellect than other children, and have more or less of the other sides as well, but what intellect entails is the same in all children. For Schröder, 'psychopathy' was a quantitative *increase* of one of the sides of the personality.

In social contact, expressive phenomena facilitate the integration of a child with other people, so that they form "a living unity [*lebendige Einheit*] [...] of inter-reacting in countless conscious and even more unconscious relationships".

When children talk to other people, this social integration results in a 'unity of verbal contact' [*Einheit des Gesprächskontaktes*]. Asperger suggested that such verbal integration is a special case of a more general integration with the social environment, which allows children to find their "place in the organism of the social community". This social integration is disturbed in children with autism.

²³⁹ Ludwig Klages, *Grundlegung der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck* (1936). The title translates as *Foundations for the science of expression*; it was the fifth, reworked and expanded, edition of a text that first appeared in 1913. For an extensive discussion of Klages' influence on Asperger, see Haswell Todd, *The turn to the self: a history of autism, 1910-1944* (2015), chapter 3.

²⁴⁰ Klages' idea of expressive phenomena is broader than Frankl's concept of 'affective contact', in two ways. First, as it involves phenomena Frankl did not include, such as handwriting. Second, Frankl maintained that some children lack affective language, but Asperger maintained that a revealing and an opaque face are equally expressive, they only express different things.

Asperger was very critical of this quantitative approach, arguing that it is too colourless to capture the complexity of real living human beings; we have seen that he instead argued for a qualitative view of personality areas. When he talks about areas of the personality he does not mean isolated parts from which the whole is built up additively, but aspects *that are related to all other aspects* as they are integrated in the personality as a whole.

Asperger replaced Schröder's idea of an increase with his idea of 'hypertrophy', suggesting that personality parts can become overinvested with energy. On this view, when one personality area develops out of proportion with the rest of the personality, this comes at the expense of the other areas. Hence, in psychopathy the personality as a whole shows a different development, not just one part, and the overdeveloped part differs not just quantitatively, but also qualitatively, from the way it functions in other people. For example, according to Asperger there is no single intelligence.¹ Intelligence is not a quantity different people have more or less of. Rather, there are several *kinds* of intelligence, which are *qualitatively* different. In other words, he insisted that the nature of a person's intelligence depends on the other parts of his or her personality. He believed that there is a typically masculine and feminine intelligence, and that the intelligence of 'autistic psychopaths' is different in kind from the intelligence of other types.

To sum up, Asperger believed that in order to understand the psychopathic personality of a particular child you should observe how the child functions outwardly, in relation to the world, and use your total impression of this behaviour to grasp what disturbs the development of the child's personality. We will now see what, in Asperger's view, this overall disturbance was in children with autism. In so doing, we return to the enlargement and restriction problem.

2.4 Asperger's concept of autistic psychopathy

The preceding discussion of Asperger's conception of psychopathy helps clarify an apparent inconsistency in the way Asperger described autistic psychopathy.

On the one hand, Asperger said from the beginning that autistic psychopathy is defined by "a disorder of the harmony between intellect (*Verstand*) and

instinct".²⁴¹ In his thesis, Asperger repeated the same idea in different words, defining autism by a "disturbance of instinctive, emotional reactivity" but "increased personal distance".²⁴² Later formulations of the same idea are: "exaggerated intellectualism [...] by disturbed thymic instinctive functioning"²⁴³, and later, "a disturbance in feeling, in the thymic area" but "above average formal intelligence".²⁴⁴

On the other hand, Asperger also defined autistic psychopathy as a disorder of a person's relations to the environment. In another early lecture, he said that they are "autistically restricted to the self" as if "the rest does not exist" for them.²⁴⁵ Similarly, in his thesis, Asperger said that "the autistic [child] is only a self", thus defining autism as "a restriction to the self".²⁴⁶ In later papers, he repeated his idea that it belongs to the essence of autism that the child "is too much 'one self'"²⁴⁷ or "restricted to one's own self".²⁴⁸ This suggests a more behaviouristic understanding of autism, in the sense that it focuses on the behavioural interaction between an organism and its environment:

The difficulties of psychopathic children are particularly prominent in two areas: contact and activity. The contact disorder, the restriction of personal relations, is the essential determinant of autistic psychopaths [...]. The activity disturbance particularly characterizes the clinical picture of many psychopathic states: [e.g.] the over-spontaneity of the autistic, who has no regard for the demands of each respective situation [...].²⁴⁹

These two sets of descriptions of autism pose the question how a disharmony between intellect and instinct is the same as a restriction to the self. The

²⁴¹ Asperger, "Das psychisch abnorme Kind" (1938), p. 1317

²⁴² Asperger, "Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen' im Kindesalter" (1944), p. 117-118

²⁴³ Asperger, "Autistisches Verhalten im Kindesalter" (1960), p. 63

²⁴⁴ Asperger, "Das autistische Kind und seine Probleme" (1963), p. 247-8

²⁴⁵ Asperger, "Pädagogische Therapie bei abnormen Kinder" (1939), p. 944: "Er ist eben autistisch auf sein Selbst eingeengt, alles andere existiert nicht für ihn."

²⁴⁶ Asperger, "Die „Autistischen Psychopathen“ im Kindesalter" (1944), pp. 84, 136: "Der Autistische ist nur 'er selbst'"; "eine Einengung auf das eigene Selbst (Autismus)".

²⁴⁷ Asperger, "Bild und soziale Wertigkeit der autistischen Psychopaten" (1950), p. 25: "dass sie zu viel 'sie selbst' sind".

²⁴⁸ Asperger, "Diagnostische und heilpädagogische Probleme bei autistischen Kindern" (1946), p. 206: "die Einengung auf das eigene Selbst (autos)".

²⁴⁹ Asperger, "Psychopathie: Begriff, Diagnostik, Therapie" (1953).

foregoing discussion of Asperger’s concept of psychopathy helps us see this. The first group of descriptions defines autistic psychopathy on the level of inner personality structure, by describing the holistic quality that organizes the autistic personality through and through. The second group defines autistic psychopathy on the level of outward relations, pointing to a disturbance of contact and activity. In Asperger’s view, these two disturbances are two sides of the same coin since psychopathy by definition involves a disturbance of the inner personality structure and a disturbance of outward relations to the world. Autistic psychopathy is a particular example of such a psychopathy, and we will now see what set it apart, in Asperger’s view.

An enlargement of differentiation and a restriction of re-integration

For Asperger, autistic psychopathy was defined by what in most general terms can be described as an *enlargement of differentiation* and a *restriction of re-integration*. In his work, we see Asperger circle around this opposition, using different concepts to express this general idea (see table 2).

Table 2: different formulations of Asperger’s central opposition	
differentiation	(re-)integration
intellect	instinct
---	thymos
thought person	depth person(ality)
conceptual	visual
abstraction	being with
spontaneity	reactivity
self	being with others

Throughout Asperger’s career his formulations and emphases shifted. Roughly, three stages can be delineated, but in each subsequent stage formulations from the previous stage(s) are retained. Initially, starting in 1938, Asperger focussed on the opposition between an emotional-instinctive layer of the personality, enabling good contact with other people, and an intellectual-conceptual layer of the personality, enabling a good conceptual understanding. In 1952 he shifted his focus to the opposition between spontaneity and reactivity, introducing the

key phrase “increased spontaneity with disturbed reactivity”.²⁵⁰ At this time Asperger also introduced the opposition between ‘contact’ and ‘activity’ and suggested that in both there is an “increased spontaneity with disturbed reactivity”. The last phase started in 1974, when Asperger proposed that autism and its opposite are two possibilities of human existence that need not be pathological: healthy people too can both act as a “a self” and be “with other people”.²⁵¹

Throughout these shifting formulations and emphases, the chief idea remained the same: ‘autism’ is a particular development of the biological self-organisation of a human being, in which the differentiation of the inner personality functions and the differentiation of the self from the external environment are not (or less so) superseded by a more mature stage of development in which they again become integrated.

On conclusion, two oppositions were essential to Asperger: first, that autistic psychopathy involves an enlargement of ‘differentiation’ *and* a restriction of ‘re-integration’; second, that they affect two levels of functioning: the inner personality and relations to the outer environment. To clarify Asperger’s concept of autistic psychopathy, I describe it as a grid of four *quadrants* (a term not used by Asperger). Taken together, the two oppositions form a grid of four quadrants: (1) outer restriction, (2) outer enlargement, (3) inner restriction and (4) inner enlargement. In autistic psychopathy *all four quadrants are affected*.

2.5 The social symptoms of autistic psychopathy

We now turn to one cluster of symptoms within autistic psychopathy: those symptoms that fall in the domain of social interaction and communication. (I will discuss the non-social symptoms of autistic psychopathy in the next chapter.)

²⁵⁰ Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), p. 171: “gesteigerte Spontaneität bei gestörter Reaktivität”. The same phrase occurs in his “Autistisches Verhalten im Kindesalter” (1960), in his “Das autistische Kind und seine Probleme” (1963), p. 248, and in his “Formen des autismus bei kindern” (1974), p. 1012.

²⁵¹ Hans Asperger, “Probleme des kindlichen Autismus” (1977), pp. 9, 10: “‘mitmenschlich’ zu sein”, “Er ist auch ein ‘Selbst’”; idem, “Frühkindlicher Autismus” (1974), p. 2026. See also Hans Asperger and Franz Wurst, *Psychotherapie und Heilpädagogik bei Kindern* (1982), p. 301.

Mostly, Asperger subsumed peculiarities in the social interactions of autistic children under the heading of the *contact* disorder. For many of these peculiarities concerned unconscious and undeliberate expressive phenomena such as eye gazing, mimicry, intonation and posture (similar to what Frankl's called 'affective contact' but somewhat broader, see the next chapter). In autistic children these aspects of social interaction were characterized by a distance towards others and an intellectual even 'mechanical' approach. Then again, in social interactions the content of what is said matters as well. Since this aspect of speaking involves conscious and deliberate motor control, it would fall under the heading of the *activity* disorder. In this domain, autistic children stood out by their original ideas and even wordings, which were spontaneous productions rather than being reactions and adaptations to their social milieu.

In the remainder of this section, I will show how Asperger's framework of the four quadrants underlay description of the social symptoms of autistic psychopathy in his post-doctoral thesis. I focus on *Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen'* because it is Asperger's best known and most concrete publication, which offers rich case studies.

2.5.1 Quadrant 1: outer restriction

The first quadrant involves a restriction of outward relations to the environment, that is, of contact and activity. Asperger emphasized that "human beings normally live in uninterrupted interactions with the environment, constantly reacting to it [...] a living part of a larger organism, which constantly influences them and which they constantly influence".²⁵² Normally, the mimicry of newborns is "open to the world" and vivid.²⁵³ Their facial expression and other expressive phenomena facilitate contact with other people. This is why it is so easy to make contact with very young children. Especially with their mother, they are in constant interaction. Even new-borns already instinctively grasp a finger extended to them. This interaction with the world is a dual phenomenon:

²⁵² Asperger, "Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen'" (1944), p. 84: "Während der Mensch normaler Weise in ununterbrochenen Wechselbeziehungen mit der Umwelt lebt, ständig auf sie reagierend [...] ein lebendiger Teil eines größeren Organismus, von diesem ständig beeinflusst und ständig auf diesen wirkend."

²⁵³ Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), p. 59: "weltoffen"

it has the positive consequence of learning to adapt to the environment, but it also has the negative consequence of losing one's originality in the process.

For Asperger, the adjective 'autistic' first of all refers to a restriction of contact and activity: the term was derived from the Greek words *autos*, meaning 'self', and *ismos*, a suffix forming action nouns from verbs – together they mean 'acting like (only) a self'.²⁵⁴ For Asperger, a defining aspect of autism was a restriction 'to the self' – as if there simply is no relevant outer environment. As Asperger put it, "in 'autistics' these relations [to the environment] are severely disturbed, restricted".²⁵⁵ This is especially clear in their relations to the *social* environment. Asperger found that disturbances of contact led to conflicts in their family, and at school, where they disobeyed the orders given by educators and only followed their own will. In addition, they isolated autistic children from their siblings.

This outer restriction is evident in the case studies Asperger described in *Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen'*. His first case description was of Fritz, an autistic boy who was first brought to the *Hp* in the fall of 1939, when he was six years old. Asperger reported that Fritz "always plays alone, never gets along" and "has no real emotional relationships with anyone".²⁵⁶ He had an "insusceptibility to external commands".²⁵⁷ When other people showed affect, he mostly reacted with irritation. Fritz' own expressive phenomena did not afford contact: his gaze was empty and was not directed at other people, his intonation was flat. Still, Fritz did not show a *total* restriction of social contact. He did have an unerring feeling for who had his best interest at heart, and occasionally reciprocated this feeling, for example by embracing a nurse.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴Robert N. Proctor " "-Logos," "-Ismos," and "-Ikos" The Political Iconicity of Denominative Suffixes in Science (or, Phonesthemic Tints and Taints in the Coining of Science Domain Names)" (2007).

²⁵⁵ Asperger, "Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen'" (1944), p. 84.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 86: "Er spielt immer allein, nie hat er sieh mit anderen Kindern vertragen oder beschäftigt"; "Zu niemandem hat er richtige Gefühlsbeziehungen". Asperger observed that Fritz' mother, too, was "restricted in her relations to the world", and especially in her instinctive adaptation to situations (p. 87). When things got too much, she simply took off and left her family for a while.

²⁵⁷ Asperger, "Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen'" (1944), p. 89: "Unzugänglichkeit gegenüber Befehlen von außen

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 90

Harro, an eight-year-old boy, also did not play with other children, but was always “found in a corner, buried in a book, completely indifferent to the noise and movement around him”.²⁵⁹ He did not develop personal relationships to other children or adults. His gaze was absent, his mimicry and gestures were impoverished. He typically did not respond to questions. Asperger explicitly stated that all of Harro’s behavioural peculiarities “can be explained by the restriction of his relations to the environment.”²⁶⁰

2.5.2 Quadrant 2: outer enlargement

On their own, these remarks seem to suggest that autistic children have no contact with others at all. However, they must be seen within Asperger’s larger framework, which not only postulates an outer restriction but also an outer *enlargement*. His point is that whereas some kinds of outward behaviour are absent, they are replaced by other forms of outward behaviour. There is a restriction of reactivity to the world, but not of spontaneous activity. The actions of autistic children are not a re-action to their environment but are *original* and *spontaneous*: they originate in a self that maintains a distance from other people.

We have seen that according to Asperger, around their third year, children begin to distance themselves from other people. This change is outwardly expressed in the child’s mimicry and posture. The child’s gaze becomes critical and distrustful. This distance has a positive and a negative side. Positively, Asperger observed that children with autism often actually have a more mature judgment of other people, due to their “heightened personal distance” from them.²⁶¹ The negative side of this distance is that their expressive phenomena often do not afford contact with other people. If some form of contact is established, it does not take social expectations into account and the interests of children with autism do not align with those of other children.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 101: “in einer Ecke, in ein Buch vergraben, völlig unbekümmert um Lärm oder Bewegung um ihn.”

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 101: “Auch bei Harro L. lassen sich alle Eigenheiten seines Verhaltens aus der Einnengung seiner Beziehungen zur Umwelt erklären.”

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 117-8: “verstärkte persönliche Distanz”.

Asperger did not mean that autistic children are *completely* shut off from the world, only that their relationship to the world is original rather than reactive. They do talk about their own original experiences and spontaneous interests; they are active just not reactive. They do not react to the concrete situation but keep a distance from what other people expect. Asperger believed that because of this their understanding of the world is actually more mature than that of other children.

This is clear in his case descriptions. Harro “tells long fantastic stories”, which “are becoming ever wilder and more incoherent”.²⁶² In the same vein, Ernst, “speaks incessantly and unsolicited” and “immediately tells the other person what he sees, whether this remark fits the situation or not”.²⁶³ Fritz regularly surprised his parents with unexpected remarks “which revealed an excellent observation of the situation, and a good judgment of people”.²⁶⁴

2.5.3 Quadrant 3: inner restriction

Asperger believed that the restriction of certain forms of contact and activity roots in a disturbance of the instinctive organisation of the personality. Asperger sometimes suggested that instinct is one among other personality areas, like drives and feelings – as in Schröder’s system. However, it seems to me that in addition he used ‘instinct’ metonymically to stand for the entire deeper layer of the personality that is there from birth, prior to the differentiation of the personality – including feeling, drives and *Gemüt*. Asperger often combines two or three of these terms and seems to use them interchangeably: each ‘part’ can stand for the whole.

To be concrete, Asperger believed that the absent gaze and flat intonation of autistic children, which itself are behavioural restrictions, point towards a restriction of the inner organisation of the personality. That is, it points to a holistic quality that organizes the autistic personality through and through: a

²⁶² Asperger, "Die 'Autistischen Psychopathen'" (1944), p. 97: "er erzählt lange phantastische Geschichten; wenn er einmal im Zug ist, steigert er sich immer mehr hinein, die märphenhaften Erzählungen werden immer wüster, immer unzusammenhängender."

²⁶³ Ibid. (1944), p. 105: "Der Knabe redet unentwegt und ungefragt [...] er muß alles, was er bemerkt, sofort den anderen mitteilen, ob diese Bemerkung jetzt in die Situation paßt oder nicht."

²⁶⁴ Ibid. (1944), p. 90: "'eine ausgezeichnete Erfassung der Situation, eine gute Beurteilung von Menschen"

“disturbance of instinctive, affective, responses”.²⁶⁵ He also described it as a restriction of drives, of feeling, and of the core of the personality.²⁶⁶ In Asperger’s view, this inner disturbance “must be regarded as the final cause for the disturbance of relations to the [external] environment”.²⁶⁷

Focussing on instinct, Asperger found that autistic children do not instinctively adapt to social situations, as other children do by imitating their parents. He described it as a lack of “susceptibility to mechanization”.²⁶⁸ One might think of the mechanical as the opposite of vital instinct, but for Asperger the two are the same: he meant by ‘mechanization’ the process of learning from others, and he meant by ‘mechanisms’ instinctive actions that involve no conscious thought.²⁶⁹ Non-autistic children learn to act ‘on autopilot’ through exercise and habituation, but children with autism cannot rely on unconscious mechanisms.²⁷⁰ This restriction shows itself in the circumstance that they need explicit instruction where other children would not.²⁷¹

In the case studies, Asperger described Fritz’ “affective life” as so “disturbed” and “abnormal”, that it was no wonder that he could not react appropriately to the feelings of adults.²⁷² He described Harro as “unpractical and instinctively disturbed”, an “autistic machine” unable to form real relationships to others.²⁷³

2.5.4 Quadrant 4: inner enlargement

The final quadrant entails that the restriction of instinctive inner organisation of the personality also has its dual: an enlargement of the intellectual organisation of the personality. Just as Asperger used the term ‘instinct’ to refer to

²⁶⁵ Ibid. (1944), pp. 118: “Störung des instinkthaften, gefüllsmäßigen Reagierens”.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. (1944), p. 123.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. (1944), p. 125: “den man als die letzte Ursache der Störung der Beziehung zur Umwelt ansehen mug”

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 108: “mangelnde Mechanisierbarkeit”

²⁶⁹ Asperger, *Heilpädagogik: Einführung in die Psychopathologie des Kindes für Ärzte, Lehrer, Psychologen, Richter und Fürsorgerinnen* (1952), pp. 40, 193.

²⁷⁰ Asperger, "Die ‘Autistischen Psychopathen’" (1944), p. 107.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 103.

²⁷² Ibid. (1944), pp. 92: “Ist so die eigene Affektivität des Knaben so abartig, daß man sich nur schwer einfühlen kann, so wird es nicht wunder nehmen daß auch die Reaktion auf die Affekte des Erziehers nicht die richtige ist.”

²⁷³ Ibid. (1944), p. 111: “der Jugendliche ist ein ‘autistischer Automat’, apraktisch und instinktgestört”.

the entire deeper layer of the personality, he used the term ‘intellect’ metonymically for the entire later layer of the personality that enables more mature functions, such as abstraction.

We have seen why Asperger believed that autistic ‘psychopaths’ do not rely on habits; we can now add that, positively, they “learn everything intellectually”.²⁷⁴ In his view, ‘autistic psychopaths’ are therefore more conscious of their bodily and mental processes. Whereas other children rarely reflect on themselves, autistic children often “think about themselves, and observe themselves”.²⁷⁵ They look at themselves as from a distance, and we already have seen that they have a similar distanced attitude to others. Asperger proposed that this greater distance to the concrete allows autistic children to develop a much higher degree of abstraction than their peers.²⁷⁶ They have “good logical thinking, and an especially good abstraction ability”.²⁷⁷ They are active, but their activity is spontaneous, not a response to the demands of their milieu.

In Asperger’s analysis, autistic ‘psychopaths’ have a special *kind* of intelligence, defined by that it is not integrated with the instinctive mode of functioning: they understand themselves and the world *only in a conceptual way*.²⁷⁸ By an enlargement or ‘hypertrophy’ of their intellect Asperger did not mean that they have a higher IQ. He knew autistic ‘psychopaths’ can be intellectually disabled as well as geniuses. Rather, he meant that on whatever intellectual level they function they are more prone to use concepts that are abstracted from concrete experience.

In the case descriptions, Asperger conveyed that Fritz had “exceptionally rich inner experience” and he added that, in general, this is due to increased distance from the (social) environment.²⁷⁹ He observed in Harro “mature, well-developed and adult-like expressions” that “sprang from his own unchildlike, mature, experience”.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 103: “sie müssen alles verstandesmäßig erlernen”.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 116: “denken diese Kinder über sich nach, stehen sich selber beobachtend gegenüber”

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 117.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 95: “ein gutes logisches Denken und eine besonders gute Abstraktionsfähigkeit”.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 95: “ein ungewöhnlich reiches inneres Erleben”.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 98. “ine ganz ungewöhnlich reife, fertige, erwachsene Ausdrucksweise”.

2.5.5 Did Asperger's theory meet his own requirements?

In this final section, I would like to consider whether this grid of quadrants satisfied Asperger's four epistemological requirements (see section 2.1).

First, by combining the idea of a contact disorder with the idea of a personality disorder, within a single overarching disease entity, Asperger showed that 'autism' is not merely a behavioural disorder, of a person's interaction with his environment, but *also an interior disorder*, of the personality. In this way the four quadrants satisfy his interiority requirement. Although Asperger considered a contact disorder essential to autistic psychopathy, it cannot be reduced to it, as it is also a personality disorder.

Second, describing autistic psychopathy as a disharmony between integration and differentiation satisfied his duality requirement. Asperger suggests that in autism two developmental tendencies are out of balance with each other. The result of this is precisely an unbalanced profile, with functions that depend on differentiation being overdeveloped, and functions that require re-integration being underdeveloped. This imbalance has both positive and negative consequences. Together, the four quadrants paint a picture of a person who has strengths as well as weaknesses.

The third requirement was to describe the personality as an organic whole. The disbalance between integration and differentiation described by Asperger is indeed a holistic quality that underlies a range of behaviours. The four quadrants all stem from the same kind of disbalance, which spans both the inner and the outer functioning of the person.

The final requirement was that the personality of every person be described in its individuality. This means that Asperger must attend to how the disturbance of the inner harmony within the personality plays out differently in the unique individuality of each autistic child. Indeed, Asperger did point to different symptoms in each case description and showed that inner disharmony has different consequences in different children.