

Alice's Evidence:
A New Look at Autism



by Robert B. Waltz

copyright ©2013 by Robert B. Waltz
new afterword copyright ©2014 by Robert B. Waltz

To

Elizabeth Rosenberg

Catie Jo Pidel

Patricia Rosenberg

Who showed me where I was wrong

and to

Sarah Jane and her son

wherever you are

in hopes it may help make a better world for them

*Eyes so wide with wonder
Looking for the key,
In the tongues of others
Zealously she sees
A tale with hidden meaning
Battling to be free.*

*Ears will hear the story
Told where'er she goes;
How many other hearers
Rejoice in what she knows!
Oh, can we ever match
Such a blooming rose?*

*Ever may she tell the tale,
New words for the old,
Bearing on her journey
Each precious word untold,
Roving the world over
Giving gifts like gold.*

*Passing minstrels tell a tale,
A tale of joy and love,
That is carried on the wind
Rung down from high above.
I would tell you this story,
Carried by flying birds,
It is a tale of treasure —
A treasure beyond words.*

*Read to me this story,
Oh, may it come to you!
Send this joy upon her;
Ever may it come true.
Now may your heart be joyful,
By land and sea and air,
Even amid the sorrows
Real folk ever must share,
Guard her from every care!*

*Can you hear the music
Afar upon the wind?
The lonesome fiddle playing
In the newgrass string band?*

*Every note is perfect;
Joy in every tune —
Old songs, new songs, stories,
Played under sun and moon.*

*Inspired is the music —
Dreams are in her hands;
Ever may they come true,
Like songs of many lands.*

My trouth: An Autistic's Pledge to a Special Friend

To be honest with you, and to strive to be honest with myself.

Not to try to be more than I am, but neither to be less.

To always behave with gentleness.

To forgive, and learn by forgiving.

To be silent and listen when you need someone to hear.

To speak when you need someone to speak.

To trust you, and to be trustworthy.

To never do less for you than I can do.

To ask no more of you than you can give.

To think of you as well as myself.

To respect you as well as myself.

To admit my mistakes, and make amends, and strive to do better.

To help when you need help.

To be there when you need me.

To be a true friend to you in every way I can.

This is who I strive to be. This is my pledge. This is my life. This is my trouth.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Preface..... | 3 |
| A note on terminology and titles..... | 5 |
| Introduction: My World Is Not Your World..... | 6 |
| What Is Autism? A Personal Perspective..... | 9 |
| The Writer: Charles Lutwidge Dodgson..... | 11 |
| Who He Was..... | 11 |
| The Case for Autism..... | 14 |
| The Linguist: John Ronald Reuel Tolkien..... | 35 |
| Who He Was..... | 35 |
| The Case for Autism..... | 43 |
| The Scientist: Sir Isaac Newton..... | 57 |
| Who He Was..... | 57 |
| The Case for Autism..... | 63 |
| The Composer: Stephen Collins Foster..... | 67 |
| Who He Was..... | 67 |
| The Case for Autism..... | 74 |
| The Polymath Politician: James A. Garfield..... | 76 |
| Who He Was..... | 76 |
| The Case for Autism..... | 83 |
| The Barrier-Breaking Woman: Marie Curie..... | 86 |
| Who She Was..... | 86 |
| The Case for Autism..... | 96 |
| Emotional Effects of Autism, or “A secret, kept from all the rest, Between yourself and me”.. | 106 |
| “It’s as large as life, and twice as natural”: Alice Liddell..... | 108 |
| “He stole those tarts, And took them right away”: The Accusation..... | 121 |
| “That’s what the name is called. The name really is...”: Which Alice?..... | 130 |
| “He had softly and suddenly vanished away”: So What Happened?..... | 134 |
| “A thought so dread, he faintly said, Extinguishes All Hope”: Why the Problem?..... | 147 |
| “For I’m sure it is nothing but love,” or “Unless you leave this house,’ he said, ‘I’ll send for the Police””: The Emotion in Question..... | 149 |
| “Sentence first — verdict afterwards”: Conclusion..... | 158 |
| Epilogue: Bringing It Home to Today..... | 161 |
| Appendix: Summary of Characteristics of Autistic Friendships..... | 163 |
| Appendix: Chronology of the Lives of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Alice Liddell..... | 164 |
| April 2014 Afterword..... | 167 |
| What Is This Thing Called... Friendship?..... | 168 |
| Where Does Autism Come From?..... | 171 |
| Bibliography..... | 176 |
| Printed Sources..... | 176 |
| Web Sites..... | 184 |
| Index..... | 186 |

Preface

In the summer of 2011, at the age of forty-nine, I began to suspect I was autistic. In December 2012, I was formally diagnosed. And as I began to realize that I really wasn't quite like other people, I started to research autism (Asperger's Syndrome).

It was mere coincidence that I picked up a biography of Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) at that time. After all, many people with mathematical inclinations have been drawn to his whimsical yet logical worlds, and I wanted to learn more. But as I simultaneously read about Dodgson and about autism, I noticed that Dodgson had many traits typical of those on the autism spectrum.

More: I noticed that Dodgson shared many traits with *me*. It isn't just a matter of autism — autistics are no more alike than are ordinary people; if anything, they are *less* alike. I speak not of his autism but of the nature of his friendships and his emotions. As I read Dodgson's words, and his biographers' tales, I feel it more and more: More than anyone else I have ever known or read about, I feel as if I *understand* Dodgson — understand those strange friendships he had which brought him so much trouble. I understand his self-hate that comes from rejection. That endless desire to *make things right*, even when the other person is not interested. Autistics are a very diverse population. But Charles Dodgson, in some deep way, was like me. Damaged. A misfit. A man who, despite his great successes, probably never really fulfilled his potential.

This is not to claim that I am a genius such as Dodgson was; he was both a greater mathematician and a greater writer than I. But in the century and more since his death, I think Dodgson has come to be deeply misunderstood. I have faced that same misunderstanding; it has cost me deeply. This is my small attempt to reclaim the greatness of a great man. It is also, even more so, an attempt to justify the peculiarities of modern autistics, who face many of the same challenges Dodgson did and suffer much the same misunderstanding and mistrust.

Nor was he the only one. Dodgson needed the most explanation, but I found much that seemed familiar in J. R. R. Tolkien, and later, in both Pierre and Marie Curie. They are like me in a way most people are not. A way which most people don't understand.

This book began as two separate items, one a journal article, "Alice's Evidence," about Dodgson, Alice Liddell, and autistic friendships; the other, "The Hidden Hall of Fame," a book of famous examples of a particular sort of autistic. Unfortunately, the journal article grew out of control, and the book, although it contained material on Tolkien, Isaac Newton, and Stephen Foster, was hampered by the fact that I couldn't learn enough about one person I wanted to include (Francis James Child). So I had one item too long to be a journal article, and another too short to be a book, both about autism. What could be more logical than combining them in one package?

There was a complication: the two items contained common material. Because reading about Charles Dodgson had led me to understand much about my own autism, Dodgson, and my material on him, was central to both books. Finally I decided that I had to disentangle the result. This book is the consequence. To try to justify the new publication, I have also added looks at two more past autistics, Marie Curie and James A. Garfield. I have also tried to link the parts together more closely. Still, this began as two different items. It shows. There are repetitions, and

some parts go on too long. My only excuse is that I have too much of the autistic drive for perfection; I needed to *finish* this book, and so I finally made myself stop editing.

There is an interesting challenge here: It's hard enough to know if someone is autistic. How do I tell if someone long dead is an autistic "like me"? Although there is objective evidence in some cases, the honest truth is, I go by feeling. Reading about Charles Dodgson, I almost felt I *was* him. Tolkien's emotions seemed almost as familiar. The relationship of Pierre and Marie Curie seemed hauntingly familiar — Pierre's courting of Marie was much like a friendship I once had (and lost because of my autism). Reading the biography of James A. Garfield was unlike that of any other President; if he wasn't as much like me as Dodgson or Curie, he still clearly leaned in my direction. Not all autistics are like this; although Albert Einstein showed a lot of autistic traits, and was a noted scientist, his method of thinking seems more like Temple Grandin's "Thinking in Pictures" type; I have omitted him. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was certainly odd, but he doesn't feel autistic to me. The subjects of most biographies feel somewhat alien to me; when someone feels like me, I have taken this as evidence. In the case of Stephen Foster, I am not so sure I am right. For Dodgson and Tolkien and Curie, by contrast, I am close to certain.

A fuller study would have included more autistics. But these six seemed to include everything I wanted to demonstrate. It seemed repetitive to add more; rest assured, there are others.

I should emphasize that none of this is based on any original research I have done; it is all from published biographies. I am not bringing new facts, merely (I hope) a new perspective.

The previous version of this book was relatively impersonal; I used myself as an example only when absolutely necessary. In this edition, I have included far more of myself, including descriptions of the sorrow and pain that comes with autism. This is not because I want to talk about me; I'm a very private person. But by opening up to a degree, I hope that those who do not experience autistic emotions may understand a little better. This is my appeal, on behalf of all autistics of my sort, for understanding. Of our strange, strong, permanent friendships. Of our extreme loyalty (what I call *trouthe*). Of our loneliness. Of how we are both like and unlike you.

In addition to the dedicatees, I owe many other thanks. Like many autistics, I'm a lone wolf, so I didn't get much research help, but I owe thanks to my parents, Dorothy and Frederick Waltz, for reference materials (among other things). Paul Stamler is most responsible for getting me to *finish* the earlier version. Ed Cray and David Engle also deserve credit for that. Don Nichols made suggestions about *Alice's Evidence*. Benji Flaming gave me another perspective on autism. Dr. Barbara Luskin helped me make sense out of some strange aspects of autism. And then there are the special friends from whom I learned so many lessons. Many of the lessons I learned were painful. But maybe you can learn them from me and be spared the pain. In the order I met them: Sally Amundson, Carol Anway, Barbara Edson, Mathea Erickson Bulander, Catie Jo Pidel, Elizabeth Rosenberg, Patricia Rosenberg, and "Sarah Jane."

May they live in a world in which all people find their skills and gifts fully appreciated!

Robert B. Waltz
October, 2013

April 2014 Note

Since this book was finished, I have of course gained more information about the autistics described herein, and about autism itself. I have not attempted to update the book, but I have added an Afterword with additional autism information — it's another attempt at explaining just what is going on. This also offers some evidence that C. S. Lewis felt autistic friendships.

A note on terminology and titles

My sources have used the terms “Asperger’s Syndrome,” “autism,” “high-functioning autism,” and “autism spectrum disorder” somewhat interchangeably. When I began writing, “Asperger’s Syndrome” was still considered a proper clinical diagnosis. By the time I was done, “Asperger’s” had been deprecated and all who displayed certain traits were placed on the “autism spectrum.” Those who were formerly diagnosed as “Aspies,” or sufferers from “Asperger’s Syndrome,” are autistics who have fairly high intelligence but suffer social defects which often limit their success in society. When I write in my own voice, I will refer to “autism.” Other sources will use other terms, usually “Asperger” or “Asperger’s.” But it should be understood that all these conditions are essentially the same, the distinction being in the severity and the detailed expression of the condition.

The headings of the later chapters are, of course, derived from the writings of Lewis Carroll:

- A secret, kept from all the rest, Between yourself and me.”: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, chapter 12, “Alice’s Evidence.”
- “It’s as large as life, and twice as natural”: *Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 7, “the Lion and the Unicorn.”
- “He stole those tarts, And took them right away”: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, chapter 11, “Who Stole the Tarts?”
- “That’s what the name is called. The name really is...”: *Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 8, “It’s My Own Invention”
- “He had softly and suddenly vanished away”: *The Hunting of the Snark*, Fit the Eighth, next to last line
- “A thought so dread, he faintly said, Extinguishes All Hope”: *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, chapter 20, “Gammon and Spinach.”
- “For I’m sure it is nothing but love”: *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, chapter 19, “A Fairy-Duet.”
- “Unless you leave this house,” he said, “I’ll send for the Police”: *Sylvie and Bruno*, chapter 6, “The Magic Locket.”
- “Sentence first — verdict afterwards”: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, chapter 12, “Alice’s Evidence.”

Introduction: My World Is Not Your World

It was clear from infancy that I was different. I was slow to start to talk. I had trouble learning to tie my shoes, and to tell left from right. In elementary school, I had no friends. My parents were advised that it was not safe for me to go to a public junior high school; I simply did not have the defenses to deal with the bullies. My first time in college, I flunked out, despite what was, by every other measure, extremely high intelligence.

My parents persisted. They pushed me back into college, and this time, in a slightly different environment and surrounded by different people, I was able to earn my degree and go on to gainful, if not lucrative, work. But I still wasn't really right. In my thirties and forties, my life stagnated; I had lost my college friends, and had no ambitions, no plans — really, no life. My health deteriorated, but I did nothing. I did not find my own home until my parents forced me to. I watched as my income slowly fell.

It was not until I was forty-nine that circumstances changed. I met a person who caused me to try to take more control of my life — and I heard a story about Asperger's Syndrome (high-functioning autism, as it is now called) that described a condition very like mine.

I investigated, and it became quite clear that I did indeed suffer from Asperger's or something like it. So it was that, at the age of fifty-one, I was formally diagnosed as autistic.

Finally I had a name for what I suffered. But I had no cure. There is no cure for autism. All we can do is try to alleviate the effects. Hard to do, in my case — in the process of learning who and what I was, I had lost my job, and had formed and destroyed two friendships that meant a great deal to me. As a matter of fact, the only two close friendships I had.

As I fought through these problems, I sought to find people who were more like me. The obvious place to seek them was among other autistics. And yet, when I met them at autism support groups, I found that I was no more like most autistics than I was like “neurotypicals” — ordinary people. If anything, I was *less* like them.

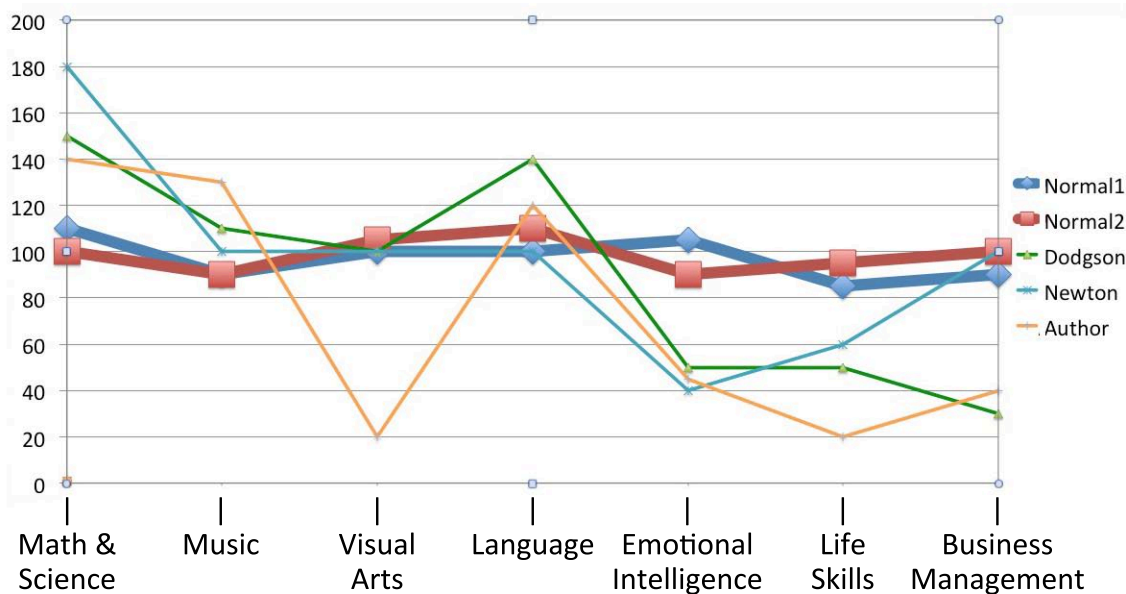
Which is extraordinarily odd, because the people I liked best — the handful of “special friends” who reshaped my life — had strong autistic traits themselves. In other words, my favorite people were autistics, and yet I didn't care for most autistics.

Autism is a very complex condition. The definition is of a disorder involving the emotions and social interactions — people with autism have a lot of trouble understanding other people. But the way to think about it is that the brain has been rearranged. In autistics, much of the processing power that normally is devoted to social interactions is devoted to — something else. *And that something else varies from autistic to autistic.* Most autistics have some area in which they are particularly good, even though they are likely to be very bad at life skills and areas outside their specialization: “[I]f we are not very, very good at something we tend to do it very poorly. Little comes naturally — except for whatever random, inexplicable, and often uncontrollable gifts we may have.”¹ This not only causes the autistic to have trouble understanding others, it also

¹ Page; full citation data lost.

makes it hard for others to understand the autistic — starting at a very early age. “Teachers and others often take a child’s language skill to give an estimate of overall ability; for children who are typically developing, this is often reasonable. However, for children with [autism], there are some pitfalls.”¹

It was Dr. Barbara Luskin who pointed out to me the logical consequence of this. Most people have similar abilities in most “typical” areas — that is, someone with average intelligence will have roughly average abilities in writing, mathematics, or art. It is not so for me; I am good at mathematics, and I hope you will find me a decent writer — but I can’t draw for beans, and I hate small talk, and some forms of fiction are incomprehensible for me. Is there a pattern to this?



The “unbalanced graph”: a chart showing personal strengths and weaknesses in various areas. The heavy lines, blue and red, show two typical people: They center about the average value of 100 in all areas measured. The other three, thinner, lines show three autistics and their skills profiles. Isaac Newton had immense scientific skills but limited emotional skills. Charles Dodgson was strong in math and language but very poor in business. I am well above average in math and music, but am completely incompetent in the visual arts and life skills. Normal people have flat graphs; autistics tend to have wild fluctuations.

It was a comment of Temple Grandin’s that resolved this contradiction for me. Grandin, who has met more autistics than almost anyone alive, believes that there are several common types. One of them is a group with particular skills in music and mathematics.

That is the key. *My* type of autistic is the “music and math” type.

Grandin does not mention language skills as a characteristic of this type. And yet, my close friends have included at least two very gifted writers and at least three highly gifted linguists.

¹ Coplan, p. 242.

So perhaps there is a music-math-and-language type. Or perhaps the boundaries of the type are a little vague. The crucial point is that there is a kind of autistic to which I belong. (And, conversely, a lot of types to which I *don't* belong.) What's more, many other autistics have belonged to this type — and some have accomplished very great things in their time. There is no hard-and-fast test for autism, so it is not possible to prove that a dead person was autistic. But all the people profiled in this book had many autistic traits, and skills of the sort associated with my own music-math-and-language type. What sorts of work would you expect from people who naturally have special skills in music, mathematics, science, and language? Surely they would be musicians, scientists or mathematicians, linguists, or writers. I chose historical examples of each type for an extensive profile. So the first part of this book is an attempt to show what autistics can do. The second is more specific, about the problems specifically of Lewis Carroll, and a plea for understanding for those of us who try so hard and make so many mistakes. Perhaps, with a little help, we too can do great things....

Some of my examples are more important than others. Most of the lessons I draw come from the cases of Charles Dodgson, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Marie Curie. If you wish, you can skip the biographies of Newton, Foster, and Garfield. I'm not even absolutely sure that one of my examples (Foster) was autistic. A performer like Glenn Gould might be a better example of an autistic musician — but Foster shows, better than most, what can happen when an autistic does not get the help he needs.

Sadly, most of my examples are male. There are a number of noteworthy women who have been suspected of autism — from Emily Dickinson to the great mathematician Julia Robinson to none other than the *other* great fantasist of modern times, J. K. Rowling — but I simply don't have a "feel" for any of them. Fortunately, Marie Curie gave me at least one good example.

There are two very deep lessons here. One is for the "neurotypicals" of the world — the non-autistics. It is that autistics are different — they have unusual emotions, and form very deep friendships, and deserve understanding and sympathy. The other is for the autistics themselves: That your friends probably *won't* have the same feelings as you do, and you need to respect that, and *ask* how to behave, so that the friendships can remain friendships. In the long run, this will be better for both of you.

If you are wondering about the rather poor poems that precede this volume, I can only advise you to consider how Charles Dodgson dedicated his books. As for the description of *trouthe*, I can but say that it is an emotion I feel, and that this is what I would hope to do for those to whom it is given. Much of this book is about autistic friendships. *Trouthe* is the feeling I have toward these friends.

What Is Autism? A Personal Perspective

Autism is a psychological development disorder characterized by difficulties in communication and understanding. Most authors on the subject, starting from that, go on to explain some of the characteristics of the condition — but I would rather give a more “mechanical” description.

The human brain is an incredibly complex mechanism, with different parts serving different functions. For example, in most people, Broca’s Area and Wernicke’s Area are responsible for speech — talking and listening with comprehension. Each part of the brain has certain tasks which it performs, and for which it is tweaked. We can see this by watching which parts of the brain “light up” in brain scans when a person performs certain tasks.

Brain scans of autistics show that their brains *don’t* work this way. A job that, in an ordinary person, would activate a particular area of the brain may, in an autistic, be scattered all over the brain, or be redirected to a different area. *Which* area varies from autistic to autistic. If the ordinary brain is a finely-tuned mechanism for performing the role of being part of human society, the autistic brain seems almost to have been assembled from a kit by someone who was unable to understand the instructions.

But now imagine that you are assembling that kit just by trying to guess how the pieces work. Say it’s a prefabricated house. A lot of things will go wrong as you put it together. The roof might leak or have holes. The rooms will be the wrong sizes. If it’s electrified, you may not be able to make all the electrical connections. But *some* parts are very likely to end up bigger and better-furnished and more attractive than in the “standard” house.

That’s the way it is with autistics. A lot of parts are damaged or messed up — often these involve the emotions. But there is usually some special area that gets a whole lot of extra brain power and ability. It isn’t usually talked about, except as a sort of obsession (the “special interest”) or the rare “savant” ability, but almost all autistics have specializations — particular subject areas in which they are best. Often they will be exceptionally good at this one particular thing.

Temple Grandin has said that most of the autistics she meets fell into one of three categories. One of them, the music and mathematics category, is clearly the type I belong to. It seems pretty clear that most of my friends, even if they are not autistic, are also of this type — and while all of them have an interest in music (and most of them are skilled musicians), their other interests are not confined to mathematics and the sciences. The majority are also polyglots — one of them speaks six languages, mostly learned quite casually, and many of them are interested in linguistics. This particular type of autistic should really be the music/mathematics/science/language type.

Of Grandin’s other types I can say little. I hope they can find their voices, but I am not the one to speak for them.

There are some traits shared by most autistics. I am not going to go into detail here; I’ll bring them out by example as we look at various autistics of the past. But an overview is probably good.

The key aspect of autism is trouble with social relationships. Most humans have a strong sense of empathy — an innate ability to understand other people, and to sympathize with their emotions.

Autistics do not. Many have *some* sense of empathy, but it is much more limited than that of ordinary people. This means we find it hard to tell when we are boring people, or when we should offer sympathy or comfort — or when we are asking too much or applying too much pressure.

This produces social failures and insecurities; with them often comes a strong sense of anxiety. There is good reason to think that autistics are inherently more anxious than normal people — some people compare it to built-in post-traumatic stress disorder. But social failure makes the anxiety worse — and, often, the anxiety causes the social failures to be more severe, in an ever-worsening cycle. You can read about how this affected me personally in the [Epilogue](#).

There are two other failings associated with autism that I would especially highlight: trouble with decision-making and trouble with emotions.

The problems with decisions — part of a defect in “executive function” — perhaps have “mechanical” causes. The pre-frontal cortex of the brain is responsible for decision-making — and, in autistics, the cortex often shows significant abnormalities. And so autistics have trouble with making choices. Even trivial choices like picking a meal at a restaurant can be hard. But it’s life decisions that are really tricky. At least, that’s what neurotypicals say is happening. It doesn’t feel that way to me. It’s not that I have a hard time making decisions; it’s more a case of *not realizing decisions need to be made*. There is a *lack* — a lack of volition, of “get-up-and-go,” of the simple urge to say, “Something must be done about this.” The tendency is to simply plod on, not confronting the situation, until disaster strikes.

The emotional difficulties may also stem from physical causes. Emotions are largely determined by the amygdala — one might think of this as the brain’s “emotion mixer,” responding to situations by sending out mood-causing hormones. And the autistic amygdala is again abnormal — meaning that it produces unusual emotions. Sometimes it’s just a normal emotion at an unusual time. Many autistics are subject to “meltdowns” — sudden bursts of anger for what seem like trivial reasons. These at least can be understood. The other emotions... are harder, perhaps because normal people don’t experience these emotional mixes. For instance, autistics form very strong, very permanent friendships — friendships so devoted that they are often interpreted as being in love, or being obsessed. To me, this is simply *friendship*, and it brings with it *trouthe*, the pledge I used as an opening to this work. *Trouthe* is a natural covenant I make with my close friends — not a pledge, although it sounds like one, but a state of being, a desire to be of help in any way I can. It seems like a noble emotion. And yet, I have repeatedly suffered from having my emotions misinterpreted — at the cost of jobs and friends and much of my life.

So the key to understanding autistics can often consist of admitting that we *can’t* understand their (our, my) emotions in ordinary terms, and accepting they are different. As the great people in the following pages were different....

Each of the parts that follows gives a brief sketch of the life of the person involved. This is not a full biography, and involves no original research. It’s just to give you a feeling for the person’s life. Then comes the evidence for autism. This will generally be fuller than the biography itself, because it involves a detailed look at who the person was. This is particularly true for the first part, about Charles Dodgson, because I am using him to illustrate many of the effects of autism.

The Writer: Charles Lutwidge Dodgson

You may call it nonsense if you like... but I've heard nonsense, compared with which that would be sensible as a dictionary.

Charles Dodgson ("Lewis Carroll"), *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 2.

Who He Was

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was born on January 27, 1832, the third child and first son of the Reverend Charles Dodgson (II) and his first cousin Francis Jane "Fanny" Lutwidge. Eight other children would follow. Dodgson's father had been an extremely gifted student at Oxford, but at this time was serving an impoverished parish in Daresbury, Cheshire.

In 1843, the Dodgson family moved to Croft Rectory in Yorkshire, a much better living. Soon after, young Charles left home for school for the first time; he attended the nearby Richmond School, where he was a successful student of classics. In 1846, he was transferred to Rugby School. This was a miserable experience for him; he seems to have suffered significant hazing. Still, he managed to do well academically.

In 1850, he was admitted to Christ Church College of Oxford University, his father's alma mater. As it turned out, he would spend the rest of his life on its premises. He continued to study classics — but also began to seriously study mathematics, at which he showed even greater aptitude. When he earned his bachelor's degree in 1854, it was with first class honors in mathematics but only second class in classics.

Shortly after that, the old Dean of Christ Church, Thomas Gaisford, died. His successor was Henry George Liddell, a distinguished scholar who, with Robert Scott, had published a *Greek-English Lexicon* which was so authoritative that it remains the standard reference for classical Greek to this day.

This event was to prove pivotal to Dodgson in two ways. For starters, in 1855 Dodgson was appointed the new Mathematical Lecturer at Christ Church. But it was the family of Dean Liddell which would influence him the most.

Dodgson was fascinated by gadgets and inventions, and in April 1856, he was studying the still fairly new, and difficult, art of photography. The Deanery of Christ Church was a handsome building, and Dodgson tried to photograph it with his friend Reginald Southey. Unfortunately, the photos did not turn out well — but Dodgson spent enough time there to meet the three daughters of the dean, Lorina, Alice, and Edith Liddell. It was a fateful meeting; they would, over the next seven years, become his very close friends.

Dodgson had always had the urge to write, and especially to write humor and nonsense. Even as a boy, he had hand-edited a series of "magazines" at the rectory. Now, as an adult with a steady job, he began writing for publication. In May 1856, he offered "The Path of Roses" to editor Edmund Yates — but he wanted to write under a pseudonym. After some negotiations, they

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

