Eileen Lamb
Nice.

Andrew M. Komarow

Eileen Lamb
Hey everyone. In this podcast, we want to highlight the real vices of autistic adults, not just inspirational stories, but people like us talking about their day to day life, basically want to give a voice to a variety of autistic people.

Andrew M. Komarow
Today, our guest is Jenna D'Ottavio. Jenna is a metahistograpical philosopher. This means she investigates how violence is reproduced over time, like decades, and in spaces, particularly hospitals, schools and other spaces of captivity. She uses existentialism as a trend central condition to quantify reality and forges a path between the paper and the place where phantasms of the mind exists. So that is, so that we can discuss it reality together. And you might need a dictionary for some of the words in her biography. But thanks for joining us, Jenna.

Jenna D'Ottavio
Yes, I will happily define some of those. So to make it easier. Hi, everyone.

Eileen Lamb
Hey Jenna, thank you so much for joining us today. We start by asking our guests how they like to identify. And I'm talking about pronouns, but also your identity as an autistic person, like person with autism, autistic, on the spectrum, tell us your preference.

Jenna D'Ottavio
Hi, so my name is Jenna D'Ottavio, my pronouns are she/her. And I personally like the term autistic, I say that I am autistic. I say autistics as a group. And I like to claim that word. I think a lot of times the image of a spectrum is, you know, three points. It's linear. And I think that doesn't encapsulate autism. So I still say, Oh, I'm on the spectrum. But I definitely like to reimagine the way that we discuss what a spectrum looks like.

Andrew M. Komarow
Can you tell us about your diagnosis, what led to it and how your life changed afterwards? Assuming it did?

Jenna D'Ottavio
It absolutely did. I think that when I learned what autism was, I don't think I've stopped thinking about it since since then. So throughout my whole life, people were like, Oh, you're definitely autistic. And because I had a very limited understanding of what autism was typically a really smart little boy, who
was great at math. And I didn't feel that I was being represented by this group that I didn't really know anything about. And so I, when I was like, 27, 26, I was sitting in my apartment, and I was discussing splitting utilities with someone else who lived in the building. And she asked me, she goes, do you move things around in your head when you think, like, do you put things into place? And I was like, Yes, I do. And then that like split instance, I realized that there's no way that what I see in my brain is what everyone sees in their brain. And so I started to figure out, okay, how can I ask better questions about how people think. And then I started doing more research on synesthesia, which was this overlap of this visual thinking, and I started to see there was a large overlap with synesthesia, which is this merging of two senses, maybe a colorful smell or a bright sound. And I started to realize, okay, maybe I am the way that I am because I'm autistic. And I just never knew enough about the word and, or the definition or the history to understand that that actually represents me. And that gives me an answer to why I am the way that I am. So it took me about two years to get my formal diagnosis. I think that a pandemic definitely makes it difficult to you know, to access maybe the process the same way and so I don't know if it typically takes that long. But I met with a my primary care doctor, my primary care doctor asked me why I thought I had autism. I said I'm very sensitive to light and I'm very sensitive to sound and sounds typically take on color, so I'm distracted and she was like, Okay, I'll I'll refer you so then I was referred to a an autism specialist. And she thought I had ADHD and autism. She referred me then I went to a psychiatrist I met with Dr. Gallow at Kaiser who is an adult autism specialist in Los Angeles. And he told me, yes, I am autistic, and but he doesn't think that I have ADHD. And he asked me, this was why he said, Do you have a hard time concentrating? And I said, No, I have the opposite. I have to set alarms to stop concentrating. And he was like, Okay, so that's you don't have ADHD, you have autism. And they do, they are often comorbid. But in my exact case, I, that is how I came to my diagnosis.

Andrew M. Komarow
Thank you for for sharing that. And can you elaborate? What is synesthesia? How do you say about again?

Jenna D'Ottavio
Synesthesia.

Andrew M. Komarow
And can you elaborate on what that is, and give a couple more examples?

Jenna D'Ottavio
Totally. You guys, synesthesia has been studied as an overlap with mental health. Since Aristotle. Aristotle called it synesthesia. And it was when senses merge when senses come together. And so an example most commonly spoken about is called grapheme–color synesthesia where an individual letter or number takes on a color. So for me, the number four is orange, and it is like sort of furry like a lion's mane, and it smells like oranges and cinnamon. But the number two is navy blue, and smells like bananas at midnight. The number four is directly across from me. And then number two is off somewhere far to the left. And so I this is a combination of grapheme–color synesthesia, and then time and space synesthesia. Time and Space Synesthesia is where numbers letters, so graphemes, or dates, like history, take on a physical location in relation to the body. So for me, the year 1991 is gold
and high up and to the right. And so those are two types of synesthesia. And a lot of times synesthesias overlap. There is many potentials to overlap as potentials overlap for senses.

**Eileen Lamb**
That's super interesting. I know Andrew has aphantasia?

**Andrew M. Komarow**
Yeah.

**Eileen Lamb**
How do you say it?

**Andrew M. Komarow**
Aphantasia, probably like the complete other opposite in a lot of words? Yeah. I can't visualize anything at all so.

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
There was a study done that hypothesized that aphantasiacs were not as likely to have synesthesia, but they were totally still is likely. And in fact, instead of visualizing it, they maybe are thinking of a texture and they can feel it on their skin. Or maybe they're replaying loud sounds in their head. Or, you know, there were so many different layers of a Fantasia synesthesia and autism, because synesthesia is not just mental imagery, though it is commonly depicted as, as, as mental imagery, because I think that's probably the easiest to like, write about. But there are so many different types of synesthesia that non visual thinkers absolutely still have shown synesthesia. And since we're on the topic of difficult words, you your bio made me question life itself. Can you tell us what is X existentialism? Yeah, so existentialism is the study of existence. So I use transcendental transcendentalism as an object. So Kant in his book "Dreams of a Spirit Seer," he talks about logical illusions and transcendental illusions. Logical illusions were colorful sounds so something that's fleeting, so if someone has chromesthesia, and they hear a really loud door slam, and maybe that loud door slam, causes them to imagine bright lights. It's fleeting, it disappears. A transcendental illusion is you can't make it go away. It follows you. So for me like the number four is orange, I can't make it go away. It is an illusion that is fixed. So it's in philosophy philosophical terms it is a fixed object, rather than a non-fixed object.

**Eileen Lamb**
Do you think autism and synesthesia are strengths in a in the workplace, and especially in the startup world, which you're involved with, are there any negatives you can think of?

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
So, I work for two startup organizations, and one of them. They're both in the tech world. So I am a Business Development Research Analyst for Binti, and we develop software to improve outcomes for young people, children, families experiencing the foster care system. So part of what my job is, is to keep track of trends and effects of bills and see how we can fill needs gaps for young people who are experiencing foster care. Because children in foster care are most likely to become homeless, they are most likely to end up in a space of captivity, like prison or jail. And so children in these spaces have
less access to an equal chance at life. And so we develop software to improve and elevate, disproportionately punished and disadvantaged communities that are experiencing foster care. So I think being autistic helps me keep track of 17 different states and trends happening in those states better. I'm able to visually separate information and project it. In relation to my body, though, I might be kind of awkward and paste a lot and flap my hands. None of those supposedly negative things negatively impact me from doing my job. And I also think that so I do Social Media Coordination for the Social Cipher, we are an autistic gaming company that develops social emotional learning games for autistic neurodivergent use of all neuro types to explore the universe, and the professionals who support them and work with them. And I have been developing a lot of our content for social media. And as an autistic person, I really like to think about how people think. And I think when we create spaces where people feel safe and learning feel safe and thinking they're no longer surveilling for threats, and they can contribute, they can think about their own consciousness, their own thinking processes, and find ways to, to give language to them.

Andrew M. Komarow
So, and we had Vanessa from Social Cipher, actually, about a year ago now, Eileen. I think it's been a while. And so it's great that you're creating social media content and track trying to create a safe space. But as Eileen and I were talking about just before the podcast, you know, social media seems like almost anything but a safe place. Right? And have you done any work on trends on that? Are things getting worse? Or are we just more in a bubble surrounded by people who are, you know, even more like us, you know, politically, etc? Are we just interpreting things getting worse? Or are they actually getting worse? And is a safe space online, even possible?

Jenna D'Ottavio
So I think that, okay, so, Pyotr Ouspenskii said in like, 1921 "The only way we can reach new levels of consciousness is if we have new ideas, the only way we can have new ideas is by reaching new levels of consciousness." I think a lot of times people agree. And they don't even realize they agree, because they don't use the same language. And so I think that social media can be dangerous, it can be violent, it can be hurtful, it can increase anxiety and increase depression. And, you know, autistic people are more likely to attempt suicide and to commit suicide. And so I do think that there is that the trend is there, it needs to be a part of the conversation. But I do think that in this world where we have this constant access to others constant access to information, I think it is up to people who have platforms to carve out saving places. And I have to be honest, in my own social media, you know, there's been a couple of comments or someone's like, "You're annoying", or like, "You're wrong", and like, that's fine. Like it's that doesn't hurt my feelings. Um, it does a little but not really, you know, but I do know that like, in these spaces where if we can get everyone thinking, I think that and we're Everyone feels represented, we can sort of challenge this negative, ongoing trend that is social media. But I think we can also carve out spaces where genuine dialogue happens where people learn something, and they pass it on to six people, and they pass it on to 60 people. And by the end of the week 360, people are talking about something that one person said, haphazardly. In a 15 second video, there's this power of dissemination that hasn't quite existed before. So we also need to remind ourselves that we're probably not used to seeing so many things in one day, horrible things, traumatizing things, sad things. We're not supposed to sort of see all of that. And so we have this, like, kind of collective community trauma that
we are also enduring. And that social media, again, can can be both, I think, a safe haven where people feel represented, or a place that makes people feel worse. And it can be both.

Eileen Lamb
I can see both sides of it, you know, there’s the side where, like, I can find support with parents and other autistic who understand what I’m going through. And then there’s the ugly part where like you said, it’s like, we have the same goal, the same message, but maybe the way we’re trying to get our message across is different. I don’t know, something gets lost somewhere. And it just turns into this big fights on social media and insults and threats, and it’s just, it’s ugly, when in the end, I feel like we all want the same thing we want, like, you know, acceptance awarness for autistic people, and it just looks like we’re on completely different teams when we’re not. Speaking of different cultures have different violence. And I was, I was struck to learn about how feew gun deaths Japan has. And then coming from France to America, I mean Texas. Everyone owns a gun here. I mean, you know, it's a big change.

What are your thoughts on the pretty recent shooting in in Texas and the response that that followed?

Jenna D'Ottavio
So, drawing on what you said, I think that there the gun reform in Japan, I think in order to have a gun, you have to shoot it, like, I was at a 95%, like, not even our like the American military training is required to be shooting at, you know, 95%. So the average community member who has access to a gun based on certain laws, and you know, it’s not just about like, How well can a person shoot, should they be able to have a gun, but there’s all these different things put in place to protect communities? And, you know, I think that there’s a ongoing discussion, you know, people think that they’re worried that guns are going to be taken away. And I think that, that makes people buy more guns. And so it’s, you know, I think lobbying has a say in that, too. I mean, I think it is like The Hooker Act, something like 1996, The Hooker Act or something like that, where, like, we’re not really allowed to do research on like gun violence. And I think that’s a problem. And we can’t use federal funding to do research on gun violence. And I just think that, like, when we limit information, nobody has the whole story. And we’re fighting about things that we’re not that aren’t even really going on, we have like a half message. And we’re like, trying to, like fill in the gaps when you know, Australia after the one shooting in 1996, where it was a mass shooting, they said, hey, we’ll buy back all your guns, you know, no questions asked. And obviously, there would have to be some like gigantic leaps in like governmental transparency before like, you know, maybe Americans would be willing to give up their guns without fear that they’d be on some list. But I think if there really was this like potentiality for a buyback program, where hey, we will buy the government will buy your guns at triple the price. We'll pay you three times what it's worth, no questions asked. And I bet they'd get a lot of guns back.

Andrew M. Komarow
Well we have done gun buybacks from municipality level right? Like even Chicago which is known for having you know, horrible, you know, gun violence that statistically. Like they've done some gun buybacks, right? Most like larger cities have but are you talking about on a national level then?

Jenna D'Ottavio
I think that there were again goes back to transparency. I think people are afraid they'll end up on some list. I think that they also it is, you know, maybe it's one and a half times and maybe 300 bucks isn't
really worth it. You know, you’d rather have your gun or you know, I think that there if if we have examples case studies of what we've done in the past, we should overlap them all and see where we can improve them and see where okay, you know, Chicago there's not a lot of trust going on here. How can we increase trust in this program? Or you know, whatever it is.

Eileen Lamb
Where can we find you on on social media? Because you said you do a lot on social media? Where can people find you Instagram, Facebook, anything?

Jenna D’Ottavio
Yeah, my personal Tiktok is, my personal Tiktok is Jenna Clementines. JENNALEMENTINES, jennaclementines. And then at the Social Cipher and our we’re on LinkedIn, we're on Tik Tok. We're on Instagram. And it's at SOCIALCIPHER, Social Cipher

Eileen Lamb
Well, okay, to wrap this up, I'm going to ask you some quickfire questions. So you just tell me the first thing that comes to your mind. It's going to be especially more interesting with you. (All Laugh) What is your favorite type of music or your favorite band?

Jenna D’Ottavio
My favorite type of music. I love Sahday. I listened to her probably just about every day, but I really liked The Smiths. I like music that screams. I like music without words. I love music.

Eileen Lamb
What's your favorite drink?

Jenna D’Ottavio
Coffee.

Eileen Lamb
What's your favorite portrayal of autism in the media?

Jenna D’Ottavio
I, okay, so I don't I don't know if that's hard. That's okay. So I love Temperance Brennan. I love her brain. And I like that she is quirky. And like an encyclopedia. I like Jane the Virgin from Jane the Virgin. I think that she’s actually totally schizophrenic. And I love her show for it. Like she likes to see she projects versions of herself in front of her and talks to them. You know, and she knows that her family can't see them. But she like knows that she can I feel she is so relatable. Um those are my two favorites.

Eileen Lamb
What was your dream job as a child? What did you want to be?

Jenna D’Ottavio
A forensic pathologist. I know I wanted to be a coroner, and I even named my cat Coroner. And everyone thought I named him "Corner". And so now he's like baby cat or little cow.

**Eileen Lamb**
That's good. Okay, so this is the question we were really looking forward to asking you that we ask all our guests and Andrew is going to show you is glow in the dark: a color, property or both?

**Andrew M. Komarow**
Like the glow in the dark. You see like the dark stars with the lights on?

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
Is it a property? Like did you paint it on there?

**Andrew M. Komarow**
Well is it a color or is it? Is it like? Is it, does something glow in the dark? Or is it a color?

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
I would say it's a color that has a film over it that makes it glow? Because glow in the dark is not exclusively like melted yellow, greenish gray. It is can be pink, it

**Andrew M. Komarow**
But can it be preserved as color? What do you think?

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
Well, I can feel the texture on my fingertips. But then I also imagine it's like sort of a pink texture. So I see pink.

**Eileen Lamb**
Pink?

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
Yeah, it's pink. No texture is pink to me.

**Eileen Lamb**
Oh, right.

**Andrew M. Komarow**
The texture is pink not

**Jenna D'Ottavio**
Right

**Andrew M. Komarow**
Okay.
Eileen Lamb
So would you say a color then? Would you say its a color?

Jenna D'Ottavio
I feel like the stickers are a certain color and then they have a property painted over them that makes that color glow.

Eileen Lamb
Maybe both?

Andrew M. Komarow
Yeah, yeah, we're gonna go with both.

Eileen Lamb
It's a trick question. Yeah. Awesome. Well, thank you for joining us today. It was really great, interesting and different in a good way.

Andrew M. Komarow
To go question life itself. You know, so?

Jenna D'Ottavio
Please. And just so we're clear, I'm a metahistory graphical philosopher. That's the whole word.

Andrew M. Komarow
How bad did I get it?

Jenna D'Ottavio
It was fine.

Andrew M. Komarow
Okay. So well, thank you for coming.

Jenna D'Ottavio
Thank you for having me. I had a delightful time.