

## **Clinical Traits of Temporal Lobe Personality in the Inhabitants of North Siberia**

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### **Abstract**

*The clients with the traits of temporal lobe personality were assessed in relatively isolated regions of North Siberia. The traits of temporal lobe personality included vivid imagination, immersion in fancies, daydreaming and dreams with the experience of flying, nightmares, oversensitivity to smell, fascination with the fire, night enuresis, dissociation, sticky emotional states in the forms of dreamy depression and dysphoria, narcissistic traits, and high creativity with tendency to express themselves in art activities (composing verses or short stories, drawing and inventing emotionally exciting narratives). Alone Time addictive behavior was revealed. The possibility of a mistaken diagnosis of schizophrenia is emphasized, especially, in periods of temporary appearance of pathological beliefs with delusion-like contents.*

**Key words:** dissociation, vivid imagination, fascination with fire, oversensitivity to smells, dreams of flying, self-fulfilling prophecies

### **Introduction**

This paper describes the constellation of traits the presence of which allows revealing the psychological phenomenon that we define as the temporal lobe personality. This personality type was observed among inhabitants of relatively isolated areas of North Siberia where until now many elements of traditional culture have been preserved. The persons with traits typical for the temporal lobe personality experienced serious troubles with adjustment to challenges of modern and especially postmodern society. Nevertheless, traditional psychiatry with its predominantly biologically oriented therapeutic approaches occurred to us as not the best tool for helping clients that did not suffer from organic brain damages that degrade one's psychological capacities at the biological level and call for pharmacological intervention. Furthermore, the response to the use of psychopharmacological drugs in persons with temporal lobe characteristics is usually unpredictable. These clients need, first of all, utilization of psychodynamic psychotherapy aimed to the establishment of empathic attunement, mutual trust and understanding with the therapist that included the deciphering of encoded messages from the deep unconscious wisdom system.

### **Material and methods**

32 clients, 26 females and 6 males, aged 18-46 were observed. Their mental status was characterized by the presence of the constellation of some common psychological traits that can be consider as the components of the personal peculiarity coined by authors as "temporal lobe personality".

The psychiatric and psychological interviewing of the clients was provided. EEG and tomography were carrying out. The clients with the data of epileptic disorders were excluded from the study.

### ***Results and discussion***

The constellation of observed traits included vivid imagination, expressed tendency to fantasize, the presence of daydreams and reveries. The clients revealed the fascination with the fire, oversensitivity and fascination of the smells. The tendency to the development of the dissociation in the stressful situation, the experience of the derealization and the occurrence of often déjà vu phenomenon was established. The periodical appearance of the feelings of the premonition and the self-fulfilling prophecies was registered. All clients displayed a pattern of grandiosity that was more expressed implicitly in the contents of their fantasies than explicitly in their behaviors. This constellation of traits has defined both the style of the clients' thinking, and the type and the dynamic of their emotional states. It has formed the general system of values and their predominant social approaches and behaviors. The clients had the expressed capacity to become absorbed in inner sensory stimuli and to lose a degree of external awareness. The clients' appeal for psychological or psychiatric help was connected usually with the occurrence of the states of atypical depression that proceeded without the feeling of guilt typical for classic depression, but with the presence of the experience of such symptoms as gloomy mood, the feeling of an inner emptiness, hopelessness and helplessness.

These depressive symptoms coincided with the activation of the imagination that was expressed in the forms of daydreaming, producing a fantasies, the aspiring to invent the narratives and the scripts of extremely negative dramatic or tragic contents with the topics of the catastrophes, the traffic accidents, the drowning, the burning in a fire, the persecutions, human sacrifices, the executions, the massacres. The clients revealed strong desire both to form such narratives in their imagination, as their final creative solution, and to amplify constantly step by step the basic plot of their imaginary scripts. As a result, the invented narratives or scripts became more and more complicated and enriched with new details and new lines of development. In many cases it was possible to find concrete external events with their trigger's effect that induced the occurrence of guided associations to the basic imaginary topics.

In some observed cases the general depressive condition of the clients has improved during the process of the verbal expression of their invented narratives. Unfortunately, this improvement has preserved only for the short period of time, remaining usually no more than during few hours. All clients have reported of an experience of the dreams with flying and "living in the clouds". They estimated these experiences in many cases as exclusively relaxing and joyful events.

Approximately one third of the clients have reported that they have seen also the dreams with the experience of sad horrific events, for instance, the scenes of their own funerals, burning on the stake, perishing in the air crash, being sexually abused, tortured and killed.

It was observed that most of the patients, in periods after the sleep when they could not remember their dreams, intensely wanted to see them after awakening. It was proposed for them in these cases to try to contemplate about what they would like to see in their dreams after awakening before standing up. In all cases the clients expressed positive approach to this proposition, and, as the result, produced the imaginary contents that were also usually saturated with predominantly depressive matters. Psychodynamic mechanism of the positive approach to the producing of such scripts can be explained as the realization of unconscious desire for verbal projection of depressive experiences as a form of psychological defense of the expulsion of the "bad" part of the self. In this way it was possible to sublimate the absence of the dreams (or the absence of the memory of them). This psychic activity had also timely therapeutic effect without longer emotional improvement.

The dissociative states occurred in the clients usually in the condition of the change of their habitual environment, outside their homes, during meetings with unknown people in psychologically stressful social situations. In most typical cases it was connected with the interpersonal conflicts, in the situations that induce emotional suffering. Their dissociated observing self only witnessed the traumatic events but was not involved in those events without desires or actions of its own. The clients had developed possibility to do not experience emotional distress or social impairment in stressful situations by taking escape in dissociation, to experience the traumas as if they were happening to someone else, "like a movie".

In five cases it was observed the development of the dissociation that was expressed in the form of dissociation identity disorder with total autobiographic amnesia. These patients totally lost their previous personal identity. They did not know who they are, how they got into a place where they found themselves. They did not know from what place and where they were coming. The memory of all their biographical data and the events was absent. The clients did not remember their own names, the existence of their closest family members, the parents, their marital status, the place of their birth and the address of their living.

However, the information of the most important facts that were not connected with personal data and were related to historical facts, to the knowledge of the geography, the names of popular movie stars, the data of the current and the past political events was generally preserved. On the conscious level the patients wanted and tried to return to their previous mental state and, first of all, to recall and to restore their previous identity. However, in the most of the observed cases the recovering did not appear, as yet. In all cases the disorder of autobiographic amnesia developed when the clients were outside of their homes, on the long trips in the trains, buses or airplanes. They found themselves often in others towns, near a railway or a bus stations. As a matter of fact, we observed also the clients with autobiographic amnesia who did not reveal significantly expressed traits that would be satisfactorily for the temporal lobe personality assessment. In the last years, the number of such observed cases had the tendency to increase.

The oversensitivity to the smell in majority of the clients was present already at an early age. The clients liked strongly the scent of some flowers or flower-scent perfumes or candles. There was a fascination with smelling like food, candies, confections, things you might find in a bakery, coffee shop (vanilla, mint, coffee). The smell played significant role in their adult life. It was expressed in different ways. The smell activated the imagination that had always very special personal meaning and was linked with the memories of their meetings with the persons which were included in their quality world. There were the persons with whom the clients have experienced the feelings of empathic attunement and strong emotional ties. The experience of some smells revived the occurrence of the emotional states associated with some significant happening in their past which was impossible to recall consciously.

The clients usually could not remember exactly what kind of person or event was associated with concrete smell, but, nevertheless, they experienced a feeling that something especially significant connected with this smell has sometimes happened. This partial memory's revival resembled the display an activation of the "shadow of the object" (according to Christopher Bollas, 1987). In three clients the perception of specific smell, as the lily of the valley, the lilac and the roses, induced the appearance of the state of emotional excitement that increased sharply and resulted in the development of the condition of psychic relaxation linked with the experience of the languor. This state was accompanied with the desire to escape from all interpersonal contacts, social and personal responsibilities, and to be immersed in the state of the reveries. The clients compared the effect of the smell of these flowers with the narcotic one, but did not demonstrate the active wish to repeat this experience voluntarily. The absence of such desire they explained as connected with an unpleasant feeling of a distortion of some natural law, like the violation of the taboo: "it happens sometimes suddenly in a natural way, and it fully satisfy me, more experience would be artificial and unnaturally forced". One female patient was obsessed about whether or not her body smell was bad and if her clothes smelled unclean: "if anyone in the crowd ever gives me an odd look, I immediately assume it must be because I smell".

In four persons of the sample (all females) unidentified smells were responsible for the outbreak of the disorder in the form of multiple chemical sensitivities syndrome (MCS). MCS is severe allergic reactions and emotional distress that are elicited in the presence of ambient aromas. The symptoms MCS include fatigue, difficulty concentrating, dizziness, weakness, pondering heart, and shortness of breath, anxiety, and muscle tension or pain. The smells that produce these symptoms are completely individual. They are scents that non-MCS sufferer usually finds benign. The fascination with fire (condition emphasized by Wiklund (1978), Wax, Haddox (1974) was expressed in the form of a wish to observe burning candles, a fireplace or a bonfire. It began also at an early age. Fire involvement included playing with matches or lighters, playing with toaster, stove or furnace. Children experienced satisfaction burning the items, such as toys, paper or garbage. Matches or lighters went missing and were found among children's belonging. The observation of a fire induced the state of reverie that was expressed in the willingness to explore any number of mental territories and incorporate them all in the creative process.

In most cases the clients could not verbalize the content of their experiences that appeared during the observation of fire. If the clients attempted to describe their experiences, these descriptions were very brief, lacking in details, as, "it was gorgeous, exciting, nirvana-like". In some clients the observation of a fire was accompanied with development of erotic fantasies of sadistic character, as, "to drown somebody in the flow of their urine". The clients have experienced already in their childhood active interest to flying. Five of them became as teenagers the members of the air pilots' and parachutists' clubs. Many clients informed about their ambivalent desire to jump from bridges, balconies, and other high places. They connected this desire with irrational feeling that they can fly in the air like the birds and do not fall and be killed. Their presence on the high places was linked practically always with a feeling of excitement and was accompanied with ambiguous desire to jump and fly and simultaneously with the fear of catastrophic fall. The mixture of these contrasting feelings resulted in the occurrence of a state of "existential joy" (according to one client's expression).

Déjà vu phenomenon was connected with the experience of derealization, The surrounding environment was conceived as strange, resembling some previously somewhere and sometime already experienced before. The feeling of special significance of this happening was associated with the wish to disclose what stay behind this experience was present. In some cases the clients have experienced déjà vu phenomenon in their dreams. The sensation emerged that the content of the actual dream they already had seen in their previous dream, and they knew in advance what will be happen in the actual dream's script. These dream scripts, accompanied with déjà vu experience, contained often anxious elements, and the dream that in its beginning was emotionally neutral has developed gradually in a nightmare. The clients tried to awake knowing that what they are dreaming will have horrible end.

All clients revealed the tendency to preserve during long time their tense feeling states, especially the states of anger and dysphoria.

Most typical feeling states included:

- (1) depressive mood with irritability and high sensitivity to all critical remarks, and to the attempt to communicate with them on the base of small talks without the experience of empathic attunement.
- (2) states of reverie with the immersion in the inner psychic experiences and the isolation from external environmental stimuli with the wish to be fixated on a "Alone Time" experience.

In usual condition the clients' behavior reflected the presence of the traits that are typical for introverted persons. They feel themselves safe only in the familiar surrounding, during communication with their relatives, close friends, and persons whom they did know during a long time. The meeting with new situations and especially with strangers elicited the state of uncertainty, a feeling of psychological discomfort that was transformed in the occurrence of the state of non-psychotic anxiety. The clients came easily from their beaten track when it was necessary to express their own opinion, or to answer on the unexpected questions from the unknown before persons.

Four clients with the signs of more expressed depression that corresponded to the psychotic level of mental disorder were observed. Their depressive mood was combined with the increase of the imagination that is non typical for the classic depression when all mental functions including the imagination are reduced and slow down. The content of the imagination's images reflected the content of depressive mood. The clients expressed the wish to describe their experiences in their notes or the diaries or draw them usually in symbolic forms where black, brown and dark red colors prevailed. One female client has drawn herself as a person in black long dress staying on the edge of the cliff in the front of an open abyss. This client attempted to commit the suicide at one stoke after the ending this drawing through the swallowing big dose of antidepressants she collected during her previous and present pharmacological treatment,

In many cases the clients displayed the possession of creative skills that was expressed particularly in their capability to describe artistically their own mental condition and in the possibility to utilize the impressive metaphorical and symbolic language. The creativeness was often expressed in the composition of verses, short stories, and in the description of their experiences in the special notes, the scripts and the diaries. The tendency to keep the diary was rather typical for these clients.

The desire to be in a period alone was expressed also in their habitual trips to the nearby forests, at the banks of the lakes and the rivers as the places suitable for relax and meditation. Some clients have reported that sometimes in the solitude they can reach the ecstatic state with a feeling of Unity with Nature when they felt themselves as a part of It, and the Nature as a part of them. The clients who identified themselves as believers, reported that this feeling have had spiritual character and was much stronger and was incomparable in its intensity and quality with other experiences including their participation in traditional religious ceremonies. The clients emphasized that their feeling was impossible to express verbally because the words for this description did not exist at all. Nevertheless, the clients displayed the strong desire to express their ecstatic experiences in some artistic form.

All clients revealed the intense need in some periods of time to be maximally isolated from social communication. They have defined these states as special significant components of their life, in a case when the possibility of such isolation does not exist a general psychological discomfort rapidly increased and quickly transformed in the state of dysphoria with aggressiveness against the persons who intervened and disturbed the experienced social deprivation. As yet, it is impossible to understand more or less fully the nuances of inner psychic experiences of the clients in the periods of deprivation. Some clients declared that in these periods they did not experience special wishes but simply have had a need for mental relaxation as an escape from an overloading and an oversaturation with everyday responsibilities and necessities to make significant choices and decisions in their personal and social life. In other cases the clients have informed that these periods of social isolation were associated with a desire for creative expression. This desire was blocked in the condition of the too high level of stimulation that was present in their everyday existence.

The clients have experienced a specific intensive need, that can be define in the frame of an aspiration, for the meeting with some especially strong event that can substantially change their life through opening new way of their self-expression. This aspiration resembled the search for the "transformation object", according to Ch. Bollas (1987). The creative insights have occurred practically only in the state of deprivation in the condition of the isolation. The clients' general motto was, "I'm a creative person, and the creativity is the essence of my life, and all interfered obstacles must be eliminated". In family relationships empathic understanding of these persons is absolutely necessary as a factor that enables their psychological well-being. Empathic attunements for the persons with temporal lobe personality become especially meaningful in their marital relationships. The tolerance and the understanding of the significance of Alone Time periods (the lengths of these periods oscillated usually between hours and days) guarantee the preservation of mutual trust and the coexistence.

It would be incorrect to conclude that these persons can be assessed as individuals with asocial or autistic behavior. The periods when the desire to communicate with others was intensively expressed were also often present. Moreover, in these periods of social interest and an activity they presented the expressed tendency to form an object relation and have demonstrated a need to be very close to their trustful persons. The clients displayed the neediness to be cared, loved, and empathically comprehended. They seek an assurance, wanted hand holding, and, most of all, they wanted to be immersed in the condition of psychological comfort with a feeling of symbiosis with persons psychologically close to them. They revealed the neediness to love, and in the state of love they were a soul mate of loved person. However, in the relationship with them the patience is absolutely needed and every attempt to accelerate the development of the trust leads inevitable to the occurrence of the opposite results.

In the dynamic of the relations with the clients it was possible to observe the state when during the process of the emotional communication with others they were centered predominantly on their lower or higher selves. In the first case the experience of obsessive emotions, the fixation on ego's interest prevails. Self-destructive and denial mechanisms are activated. The clients refuse to hear or receive anything other than what they believe to be true. Their ego and their feelings want to be spoon-fed, every thing already believed as gospel truth turn right back to them with no ifs, ands, or buts about it. On the other hand, there are states when they operate on the level of their higher spiritual self, with a feeling of connection to high infinite wisdom. In such states the persons with temporal lobe personality are looking for the achievement of psychological relaxation, clarity, and the peace of mind. They listen at what comes through from spiritual zone, and they grow out of negative patterns. These persons can become addicted to the imaginative goals, especially to the virtual persons from their daydreaming contents. This addiction leads often to a strengthening of the situation when they have a hard time connecting their affections to real living humans.

This involuntary social isolation does precipitate them to the development of dreamy form depression without typical for classic depression the feeling of the self-accusation and the feeling of guilt. The professional psychological and psychiatric help for the clients with the traits of the temporal lobe personality, according to authors' experience is seriously limited by the necessity of the immersion of specialist in the field of the experience of the patient's mental state. Empathic attunement (Rowe, Isaac (1999) is, as a matter of fact, condition sine qua non of effective communication and treatment. It provides opportunities for the client to feel immediately understood by the analyst. The clients who do not feel in mutual communication with therapist already at the first psychotherapeutic meeting carry over their negative impression of being misunderstood throughout the next sessions. The clients feel themselves disappointed, disillusioned, and distant from the helper. Empathic understanding and empathic explaining are the two separate and simultaneously interdependent steps of the process of the psychotherapy (Kohut, 1977,1984). Sensitivity of the professionals to the nuances of clients' mental experiences and continuous empathic immersion into the clients' states of thinking and feeling seems to be the basic factor that provides the success of the treatment. During the psychodynamic psychotherapy of the clients with temporal lobe personality the professionals steady take in account that it is not only a matter of hearing of what the client says, but is also an attunement to *how* she/he experiences what he/she says (Bash, 1980).

### ***Conclusion***

In general, observed clients have demonstrated the fascination with flights and dreams with flying, fascination with fire, oversensitivity of specific smells, dissociation with total autobiographic amnesia Alone Time addictive behavior, reveries, dreamy depressions saturated with destructive catastrophic fantasies, often occurred déjà vu experience. Equally with these signs presented by different way in every separate case, all observed clients revealed the phenomenon of "fantasy-proneness" (Rauschenberger, Lynn, 2003; Brennis, 1996) It is suggested that the content of the clients' fantasies has reflected an experiences that reflected a phantasmagorical activity of the archaic primordial self. The deeply repressed intimate secret images of the clients' internal aspiration were revived. In the periods of euphoric mood the clients processed with hallucinatory vividness in their imagination a play of pictures of themselves as an invincible heroic beings. The clients have had imaginary experience of merger with something fantasized as omnipotent and grandiose (archetypal image of herself/himself as an omnipotent giant).

In contrast, the states of negative feelings were accompanied with painful mortifying unbearable painful vivid images of a failure and humiliation. In these states the clients expressed the tendency to dehumanize others, imagine that other people are mere doll-like replica of real; human being. Nevertheless, any actions of the surrounding people that interfered with the clients' agenda provoked the appearance of the mischievous rage and extremely aggressive feelings. The rage was turned predominantly against themselves. The bipolarity of the content of fantasy and mood have had strong influence on the activation of the creativity of the clients. Contact with ideal images can, according to Eigen (1980) "nourish the ego", build supplies and restore hope, as well as stimulate an support the wish for meaningful work". Observed clients had a tendency to utilize the narcissistic experiences of grandiosity in the periods of apathy and inner deadness that preceded in some cases the intensification of fantasies with negative content..

Concerning gender differences, they were quite slippery. On average, men provided more competitiveness, dominance, and task orientation. Women tended to show more connectedness, more striving to empathic attunement, more sensitivity to the emotions and feelings of others. They revealed more sophisticated skills for the interpretation of nonverbal cues of information about a person's feelings. Women, in general, tend to be better on deciphering of these cues (Hall, 1984). For example, they more easily, compared to men , watching the video of the face of upset woman, judged whether the person is criticizing someone or discussing a painful personal problem.

### ***Summary***

The constellation of the traits and the behaviors defined as peculiar for the temporal lobe personality was observed in the sample of the inhabitants of the isolated communities, villages, and monasteries of North Siberia. The observed components included vivid imagination, expressed ability to fantasize, daydreaming that involved the dreams of flying.

The subject of flying was present also in the content of the night dreams. The clients revealed from an early age the fascination with fire, high sensitivity to smells that evoked often the reminiscence of unidentified clearly significant experience from the past. The clients have displayed the tendency to the development of dissociations. Their typical conditions included also the premonitions, the self-fulfilling prophecies, strong intuition, and often déjà vu phenomenon. The clients expressed developed creativity and spirituality. They manifested periodically the occurrence of both dysphoric reactions and sticky dreamy depression saturated with gloomy experiences with simultaneous desire to express them artistically. Authors suggest the necessity of additional education of clinical psychologists and psychiatrists in the field of psychodynamic assessment and treatment of this category of patients especially in the periods of psychotic exacerbation of their condition.

According to our clinical experience the empathic-introspective approach in the psychodynamic psychotherapy of the clients, which have revealed the presence of the traits typical for temporal lobe personality is stressed. Professionals should do not attempt to direct or persuade the clients, no matter, how convinced they are of their own understandings of the patients' experiences. The interpretations of professionals are subject to continuous correction by the clients. All arbitrary interpretations must be excluded in the process of psychodynamic treatment. Empathy is used as the main tool of mutual communication between the professional and the client. The process of treatment includes assessment, understanding, explaining, and analyzing the occurring in the clients ideal, mirroring, and twin transferences. The significance for the clients of the establishment of mutual emotional bond is accentuated. Effective psychodynamic psychotherapy allows the persons with temporal lobe personality for the development of the self-object transferences, and makes possible of the internalization of the new more adjusted social responses and the styles of living. Psychodynamic psychotherapy can be a method of choice for the clients with temporal lobe personality because the reaction of these persons on psychopharmacological drugs, according to authors' clinical experience, is usually unpredictable.

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