Chapter 5

Varieties of tulpa experiences

The hypnotic nature of human sociality, personhood, and interphenomenality

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Abstract

This chapter outlines a cultural neurophenomenology of sociality—the tendency to form cooperative groups and experience shared ways of being and representing experience. It introduces the notion of *interphenomenality* to describe the sensory, "what it feels like" aspects of lived experience for humans who come to develop similar ways of feeling and narrativizing their selves. The chapter presents the argument that personhood is shaped, induced, and automatized in ontogeny through selective processes of joint attention that are best described as *hypnotic*. It includes discussion of the emerging culture of tulpamancy as a case in point to theorize these mechanisms. Tulpas (a term borrowed from Tibetan Buddhism) are sentient imaginary companions conjured through "thoughtform" meditative practice. Tulpamancy, the author of this chapter suggests, sheds light on fundamentally human cultural-neurophenomenal mechanisms through which transient, hypnotic, asymmetrically collective, but somatically grounded experiences of personhood invariably arise—and can be altered!

Introduction

This chapter sketches the outline of a cultural neurophenomenology of sociality—the tendency of humans and other social animals to form cooperative groups and experience shared ways of being in the world and representing experience. I introduce the notion of *interphenomenality* to describe the sensory, "what it feels like" aspects of intersubjectively mediated lived experience for humans who come to develop similar ways of feeling and narrativizing their selves. In doing so, I argue that personhood is shaped, induced, and automatized in ontogeny through largely unconscious selective processes of joint attention that are best described as *hypnotic*. I discuss the emerging culture of tulpamancy as a case in point to theorize these mechanisms.

Tulpas (a term reportedly borrowed from Tibetan Buddhism) are imaginary companions who are said to have achieved full sentience after being conjured through "thoughtform" meditative practice. Human "hosts," or tulpamancers, mediate their practice through open-ended, how-to

guides and discussion forums on the internet and experience their tulpas as semi-permanent auditory and somatic non-pathological hallucinations.

Drawing on my findings from cognitive, phenomenological, and neuroanthropological fieldwork with tulpamancers, I examine how jointly mediated absorption and meditation techniques can be harnessed to de-automatize and re-automatize narrative and phenomenal dimensions of consciousness.

Tulpamancy, I offer, presents us with more than a fascinating case of non-pathological multiple re-wiring of the self. I claim, rather, that the practice sheds light on fundamentally human, cultural-neurophenomenal mechanisms through which highly transient, hypnotic, asymmetrically collective, but somatically grounded experiences of personhood invariably arise—and can be altered. Thus, along with colleagues contributing to this exciting volume, I hope to add social, cultural, neurophenomenal, and ontogenetic perspectives to the role of hypnosis and meditation in the "continuous remoulding of our bodies, brains, [. . .] minds," and selves (Chapter 1; see also Cardeña, 2014; Davidson & McEwen, 2012; Kirmayer, 2009; Laughlin & Troop, 2009; Lende & Downey, 2012; Lifshitz, Cusumano, & Raz, 2013; Raz, 2011; Varela, 1996).

Studying tulpas and their hosts is fascinating on many counts, not least because it provides an opportunity to observe an emerging culture and the mediation of new kinds of persons—in this case, that of multiple humanoid and non-human persons "hosted" in single bodies and a large-scale sociocultural matrix of "healing" generated without physical interaction between members. As an anthropologist who underwent retraining in cognitive science, however, I am less concerned with the seemingly "strange" and "exotic" aspects of tulpamancy and am most interested in what the practice can reveal about fundamentally human mechanisms and processes. Thus, I seek to investigate how neurocognitive, attentional, and narrative processes invariably shape all forms of sociality and experiences of personhood on the one hand, but also how social, political, and technological processes invariably shape mechanisms of attention, cognition, and perception. I gravitate toward sociocognitive, enactive models of hypnosis as ways of mediating sociality and personhood.

My investigation is grounded in the study of interactions between environment, cognition, and culture. In this model, mind is understood as embedded, embodied (Csordas & Masquelier, 1997; Kirmayer, 1992a), enactive (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991), and extended (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) to an organism's whole interactive environment. Just like, as Evan Thompson elegantly puts it, the flight of a bird is not an intrinsic property of its wings but exists as a relation between the organism and its whole environment, thinking is not "inside" the brain, but distributed in a broader ecology of interacting sense modalities and environmental matrices (Bateson, 1972, 1980; Thompson, 2015). Here, I opt for a working definition of "culture" borrowed from the natural sciences: when clusters of individuals within a similar species engage in cumulative social learning and develop relatively stable ways of doing things that differ from the ways of other groups, we can speak of culture (see Tomasello, 2009). I add interphenomenality, joint attention, and hypnosis as key pieces in the set of cumulative, iterative, differentiated phenomena that arise through social learning and give us forms of life we call "culture."

Before presenting aspects of tulpamancy practice in greater detail, I begin by grounding an old question in the study of sociality in the body: how can highly similar sets of embodied mental representations, experiences, and behaviors come to be shared by large groups of individuals who never interact physically with one another? Are socialities mediated online paradigmatically different from "physical" ones, or is a fundamentally similar process at work?

The language of invisibility and the invisibility of language

> Sometimes people get logically conscience-stricken [. . .] and like to have some criteria of 'real' things, e.g. entities occupying space, and will then say things like 'boundaries are imaginary lines'. They seem to think that countries occupying territory are real but the lines separating them are somehow imaginary.
>
> Ernest Gellner, *Language and solitude*, 1998, p. 54

> No one, wise Kubla, knows better than you that the city must never be confused with the words that describe it.
>
> Marco Polo, addressing the great Kubla Khan

> "Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased," Polo said, "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little."
>
> Italo Calvino, *Invisible cities*, 1974, Harvest Books

"I wonder if the internet is like a city," Ian Gold told me one morning, over our third round of double espressos. Ian is a philosopher of psychiatry and neuroscience who is investigating why certain migrant and minority groups living in cities experience higher rates of psychosis than they do in their home communities (Gold & Gold, 2014). Discrimination, adversity, stigmatization, and living in fragmented polities are increasingly understood as important causal variables in the mediation of mental illness (Heinz, Deserno, & Reinighaus, 2013), but the question of how such differentiated trends become distributed and experienced with such violent stability and precision remains open. Large cities and their polities, after all, like "societies," are difficult entities to handle physically and cognitively. "What kind of imagined community is a city," Ian went on, "when most people's daily routines are limited to bounded spheres like home and work, or impersonal interaction with strangers and a few shop owners?"

This is an old question: how can societies be understood, "internalized," or embodied—how can societies hold—when the vast majority of the people, ideas, and infrastructure that make up these totalities are invisible to individual members? One might as well propose that, given the non-physicality of interaction between members, it is cities and societies that are like the internet. Invisibility and physical non-interaction, I argue, are important pieces in this puzzle.

For Erving Goffman, who championed studies of face-to-face interaction in modern societies, the "anonymized," "surface character" of life in cities is routinized through what he called "civic inattention" (Goffman, 1971, p. 385)—that is, through the many ways in which strangers avert their gazes, avoid conversations or physical contact, and reinforce private boundaries in the public sphere. Loneliness and invisibility, as Goffman saw it, are logical outcomes of civic inattention as a "mode of personal territoriality" (Goffman, 1971, p. 359). As a theoretician of sociality, I am particularly interested in how different regimes of joint attention mediate lived experiences of personhood with distinct sensory, somatic, embodied qualities—what I term "interphenomenality" for short. Civil inattention, for example, is a specific regime of attention, but it is certainly not an absence of attention. In Goffman's "invisible city," attentional resources are being mobilized to *block off* certain features of the world—particularly people caught in a symbolically marked game of allegiances. Thus, those that feel most generally unattended to will embody their invisibility in physically unbearable ways. This is a terrible problem, but the general question remains: given the infinitesimally narrow possibilities of horizontal interaction between members of

any given polity, how can joint-attentional regimes hold at all with such violently predictable experiential quality? What is the minimal physical requirement for any scheme of sociality, for any imagined community, to be embodied? What is the maximal spatial and cognitive capacity for joint attention—usually understood as being limited to dyadic, or spatially bounded, interaction between two or a few actors? Could it be that Calvino got "the city" wrong in his anti-representationalist fable? Is it not, rather, that language does not so much fail to capture the city, but instead brings it into being?

Steven Levinson at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics has taken this hypothesis seriously, and has led a series of elegant experiments to revise our current understanding of linguistic relativity, first proposed by Benjamin Whorf in the early twentieth century and subsequently dismissed by most social and cognitive scientists. In an experimental study of the senses in language and culture, Levinson and colleagues attempted to correlate the richness and diversity of sensory experiences across cultures with the grammatical categories and specific terms attributed to the sensorium in different languages (Majid & Levinson, 2011). They found that speakers of languages (like American English) that lack gradient olfactory terms, for example, performed very poorly at identifying common scents from their environment (like cinnamon) when presented with scratch-and-sniff cards. The Jahai of the Malay Peninsula, conversely, possess a very rich olfactory vocabulary and could identify an equal amount of smells and shapes.

Could it be, then, that immersion in new narrative practices (with terms like "tulpa forcing," "possession," or "wonderland" spreading via the internet) is a sufficient condition for the mediation of new ways of experiencing touch, voice, pleasure, and synesthesia, to name but a few of the "senses" mobilized by tulpamancy?

Varieties of tulpa experiences

Tulpamancy explained

Origins

A tulpa, as presently understood in the tulpamancer community, is a sentient being who becomes incarnate, or embodied, through thoughtform. Thoughtform has likely been practiced in Tibet for over a thousand years, but in ways that differ considerably from current tulpamancy. In traditional Tibetan Buddhism, tulpa incarnations were typically used to work with a fear or desire in the pursuit of emptiness. Practitioners would create, for example, a tulpa in the form of a fear (e.g., a rat or sprider) and the thoughtform would go away once the issue was resolved. In the early twentieth century, the Theosophical Society started examining thoughtform in relation to consciousness, but made no explicit mentions of tulpas (Besant & Leadbeater, 1901).

The term "tulpa" began circulating in the West in 1929, following the publication of *Magic and mystery in Tibet* by the Belgian-French explorer Alexandra David-Néel (1932). The author, who reported observing the practice in Tibet, claimed to have created a tulpa of her own in the image of Friar Tuck. Often fully transcribed as *sprul pa'i sku* from the Tibetan སྤྲུལ་པའི་སྐུ the term can be translated as "emanation" or "incarnation," and is associated with the physical body (*Dharmakaya*: mind body; *Sambhogakaya*: speech body, and *Nirmanakaya*: physical body).

The subject of tulpas reappeared in 2012 on 4Chan Internet forum dedicated to the *My Little Pony* TV show. In a discussion on lucid dreaming, adult male fans of *My Little Pony* (so-called "bronies") began to think of ways to combine meditation and lucid dreaming techniques to conjure sentient imaginary companions in the form of ponies. The idea soon spread to other websites

and discussion forums, which culminated in the creation of Tulpa.info and the Reddit page, through which most current tulpamancers discuss their practice.

Tulpas and the senses

Drawn from primarily urban, middle-class, Euro-American adolescent and young adult demographics, most tulpamancers cite loneliness and social anxiety as an incentive to beginning the practice, and they report overwhelmingly positive changes in their individual and offline social lives, in addition to an array of new, "unusual," but largely positive sensory experiences. These include (in order of frequency) auditory, tactile, visual, and olfactory sensations. "Raw thought," "intuitive thinking," "speaking with no words," and "communicating with images, feelings and music" are also reported, along with other non-verbal, non-narrative forms of interaction. For example, one informant, a Caucasian-American young woman majoring in Cognitive Science at Midwestern University, reports being underdressed and cold as she was walking to class one morning. She explains that upon sensing that her host was cold, the tulpa took off his (tulpa) coat to place it on her (the host's) shoulders, producing a feeling of warmth and the distinct sensation that she was wearing another layer of clothing. Such reports of spontaneous help from tulpas in social, environmental, and professional situations abound and, indeed, seem to characterize the practice.

Sexual and romantic interactions are controversial topics in the community, although there is growing consensus that should experience are taboo. Because tulpas are imagined, experienced, interacted with, and collectively validated as sentient persons with mental states, propositional attitudes, feelings, bodily sensations, biases, and preferences of their own, the issue of mutual consent is deemed crucial. Creating a tulpa for one's selfish enjoyment, as such, is understood to be just as unethical as seeking a one-sided, power-imbalanced relationship of any kind. Tactile and multi-sensory experiences inherent in the practice, however, indicate that the "taboo" was put in place to establish norms around a common or, at the very least, possible practice.

In addition to imagined agents, tulpamancers' mental constructs include spaces for tulpa–host interaction, usually termed "mindscape" or "wonderland." Tulpas often assume human form, but many are imagined within a continuum of humanoid variations with gender-fluid, gender-neutral, or pan-ethnic traits. Fandom culture drawn from fantasy-oriented genres also frequently prompts the forcing of non-human tulpas such as elves, dragons, or "imaginary creatures." A sizeable section of the community seems to have emerged from internet forums dedicated to bronies (see the section "Origins"), with many tulpamancers reporting the creation of one or more pony tulpa.

Tulpa folk theory

The community is primarily divided between so-called "psychological" and "metaphysical" explanatory principles. In the psychological community, neuroscience (or folk neuroscience) is the explanation of choice. Tulpas are understood as mental constructs that have achieved sentience. The metaphysical explanation holds that tulpas are agents of supernatural origins that exist outside the hosts' minds, and who come to communicate with them. Of 118 respondents queried on the question, 76.5% identified with the psychological explanation, 8.5% with the metaphysical, and 14% with a variety of "other" explanations, such as a mixture of psychological and metaphysical.

Several tulpamancers (from both psychological and metaphysical communities) report having had sentient imaginary friends for up to several years before finding out about tulpamancy. For one informant, the practice had been established in her family for several generations. Many

tulpas from the psychological tradition, when interviewed separately from their hosts, also claim to have "been around" in their hosts' consciousness before their hosts became aware of them through tulpamancy.

Of 73 tulpamancers tested on this question, 37% reported that their tulpas felt "as real as a physical person," while 50.6% described their mental companions as "somewhat real—distinct from physical persons, but distinct from [their] own thoughts" and 4.6% claimed "extremely real" phenomena, where tulpas were "indistinguisable from any other agent or person." Only those 4.6% claimed to hear and see their tulpas "outside" their heads. The median length of tulpamancy experience for these respondents was one year. Tulpamancers with more than two years' experience reported higher degrees of somatic experience.

Demographic, social, and psychological profiles

The age range of interviewed tulpamancers in another survey (n = 141) was 14 to 34 years, with most being between 19 and 23 years old. The male to female ratio is approximately 75:25 (male:female), though up to 10% identify as gender-fluid, and explore further "creative" gender and ethnic variations through their humanoid tulpas.

Tulpamancers are predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class urban youth. Of 141 respondents surveyed in September 2014, only two described themselves as "African American," with two more reporting being "half black." Four respondents described themselves as Asian, four more as "half Asian," and one as "one quarter Asian." All others described themselves as "white," or by a variety of Euro-American ethnic labels (Irish, German, Russian, etc.). One was identified as "Siberian." Most are undergraduate university students, but up to a third are fully employed. The IT field is the most commonly reported sector of employment.

The majority of tulpamancers are located in urban areas in the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, Western Europe, and Russia. The geographic location of the 141 tulpamancers surveyed in September 2014 is shown in Figure 5.1 and Plate 1. The only known groups of tulpamancers to meet in person at the time of this survey were located in Moscow and Omsk, where weekly gatherings were held, with Skype conferencing used by other Russian-speaking tulpamancers located outside these locations. Other group meetings have since emerged in St. Petersburg, Volgograd, and other parts of Siberia. English and Russian seem to be the two dominant languages for the

Fig. 5.1 The geographic location of 163 tulpamancers according to a survey conducted in September 2014 (see also Plate 1).

diffusion of tulpa culture. As of February 2015, the Reddit forum, which carries most of the tulpamancy conversations in English, had 7740 members, but less than 200 active posters. The Russian social networking site Vkontakte listed more than 6000 members, with a smaller ratio of active posters.

From coding of qualitative interviews collected in large surveys, the most common tulpamancer profile to emerge is one of a highly cerebral, imaginative, articulate, upper-middle-class, formally educated person with many consistently pursued interests, talents, and hobbies, but limited channels of physical social interaction. Typical tulpamancers are confident about their talents, but are quite modest and socially shy. They possess (or have cultivated) a high propensity for concentration, absorption, hypnotizability, and non-psychotic sensory hallucinations. Their limited social life and social anxieties, however, are not correlated with impaired levels of empathy and interest in other people. They score average or above average on empathy and theory of mind tests, indicating that their ability to relate to other humans is either optimal or enhanced. (Note: I used my own revised version of Baron-Cohen's empathy and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) quotients tests (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright 2004).)

Loneliness is overwhelmingly reported as a common factor for creating tulpas, who are described as "most loyal" and "perfect" kinds of companions. Of 74 tulpamancers tested, the majority scored higher than average on shyness scales and lower than average on sociability scales for comparable population sets. (Note: I used my own scales, revised from Aken and Asendorpf (1996).) Most respondents reported some degrees of social anxiety. Their "happiness" levels were assessed through a variety of qualitative interview tools and correlated with the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Scale (Watson et al., 1988), on which all scored very highly (n = 74, m = 35.5, sd = 7.5, r14–49).

High scores (n = 74, m = 21.35, sd = 6.7, r1–33) on the Tellegen Absorption Scale (to measure capacity for hypnotizability, synesthesia, and "trance" states) seem to reflect practice as much as proclivity. In other words, respondents reported improvements on their ability to concentrate, visualize, and experience sensory "hallucinations" since taking up tulpamancy. Among the most interesting results is the negative correlation between low sociability and high empathy. Further ethnographic findings from forum discussions and interview data also indicate a moderate to high prevalence of tulpamancers who identify with, or have been diagnosed with, Asperger's syndrome. No significant findings of impairment were found for either of the two respondents who took theory of mind tests in the first survey.

Relationship with mental illness

A subsequent survey was designed to target tulpamancers who had been diagnosed or identified with mental illnesses or DSM-type psychopathologies. The most common "conditions" reported by respondents (n = 24), excluding social anxiety, were, in order of frequency, Asperger's syndrome (25%), attention deficit disorders (21.4%), general anxiety (17.8%), depression (14.4%), and obsessive compulsive disorders (10.7%). The survey revealed a similar trend of overall improvement: 93.7% of respondents (n = 33) expressed that taking up tulpamancy had "made their condition better;" 54.5% of the respondents identified with Asperger's or autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) (n = 11) claimed that their ability to read physical humans had improved with tulpamancy; while 45.5% reported being unsure about changes in mindreading, despite overall positive changes in their social lives. "I would say that it [my ability to read other humans] has improved quite a lot since I have been with my tulpa," claimed one informant. "Although, at this point, its [sic] difficult to say if it's my ability that is improving, or if I am relying on my tulpa to recognize things that I miss."

This prompted further research on how tulpas perceive and transcend their hosts' limitations. When queried individually, via email or specific questionnaires, tulpas reported overall cognitive and affective difference from their hosts' "baseline" and often claimed relative or total independence from the hosts' conditions. Mixed tulpa responses on ASD-type conditions, however, indicated that most, but not all, tulpas shared some aspects of their hosts' autism, but were generally able to benefit from their position of "observer" free of "participant" obligation (see Appendix 2 for the tulpas' full responses).

Inner voices: language, narrativity, and episodicity

The role of narrative in the mediation of tulpa experiences—and by extension, to any experience of what it is like to be conscious—demands careful examination. Tulpamancy, as we have seen, entails explicit efforts (but only in the forcing stage, which typically lasts up to four months) at narrating the self, in addition to initially conscious cognitive costs in the harnessing of absorption and the training of hypnotizable proclivity. The "self" in this case is initially narrated as "different" kinds of multiple selves within single bodies, and subsequently operates automatically once the practice is successfully mastered.

This raises specific and general questions about the role of language and inner narration in the mediation of conscious experiences. In "Against narrativity," an important essay in the philosophy of mind and language, Galen Strawson (2004) challenged what he took to be the naïve celebration of narrative as a linchpin of conscious experience. How literally, he asked, should we take the trope that we become the autobiographical stories we tell ourselves (Bruner, 1989) or perceive our lives as an explicitly unfolding narrative through which our sense of self is constructed (Taylor, 1989)? Some people, he argued, are not particularly drawn to inner narration, and do not perceive their "self" as a continuous unit that persists over time and change. These types of selves, which he termed "episodics," tend to think of themselves as different persons in different moments and stages of their lives. He contrasted episodics with "diachronic" selves, who tend to actively narrate the authorship of their life as a unified, continuous project. Strawson identified diachronicity and episodicity as personality types, and hypothesized that while both modes can coexist and fluctuate within a single person, diachronicity seemed to be dominant in most contemporary experiences of selfhood. Anthropologist Maurice Bloch (2014a), in turn, recently proposed that while core neurophenomenal elements of sentience are universally shared by humans and other animals, cultural and historical differences were likely to be found at the level of narrative aspects of consciousness. He concluded, building on Strawson, that diachronicity might have become dominant in the West, and may be the locus of a superficial difference that is too often extrapolated to the clichéd anthropological notion that the self is an exclusively Western, post-reformation construct.

Tulpamancy offers an interesting case study to verify Strawson and Bloch's claims, particularly in light of the central role of narrative in the practice. If a strong emphasis on inner monologue is thought to lead to continuity and diachronicity, what should we make of multiple selves enacted through narrative? Could different modes of narrativity be conducive to episodicity? Could episodic proclivities remain dominant in spite of the narratively intensive modes of alphabetic literacy that shape our subjectivities? (See Collins, 1995, for a review of the debates on literacy and cognition.) How much do we know about these differences within and across populations?

The distribution of diachronicity and episodicity, as it turns out, has yet to be empirically examined on any large scale. Expanding on the rare experimental tools devised to assess this question (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Hertler, Krauss, & Ward, 2015), I designed

a questionnaire that weights people's experience and intensity of inner narration with their perceived continuity of conscious experience (see Appendix 1). Respondents were matched with one of four points on a diachronic-to-episodic scale, and were later grouped as belonging to either one of two spectrums. The same questionnaire was given to tulpamancers (n = 113) and a group of non-tulpamancers (n = 93). While 59% of non-tulpamancers fell in the diachronic spectrum, 70.8% of tulpamancers tended toward episodocity (see Figure 5.2 and Plate 2). In debriefing sessions with both control groups (a tulpamancer forum, and two groups of undergraduate and graduate students), many informants reported feeling a strong sense of multiplicity and discontinuity in their lives, against the otherwise strong presence of an inner narrative voice. We concluded that episodic proclivities may be more prevalent than previously assumed, and that more comparative data from non-academic, less hyper-verbal population sets were required to make better arguments.

Overall, questions remained on the place of narration in "thinking" (see Bloch, 2014b, for arguments on how thinking is not "language-like.") As a trilingual, triliterate person with strong episodic tendencies, for example, I am rarely aware of the language (if any) I am thinking in, unless I am working on an explicitly narrative task like rehearsing arguments for a lecture, talk, imaginary conversation, or paper. Neurolinguists and clinicians, however, have found that psychotic manifestations in multilingual patients can occur in any of the patients' languages (Paradis, 2008). When queried on the question, several multilingual tulpamancers explained that different tulpas within a single host could display distinct linguistic identities (e.g., one Spanish-speaking tulpa, and one English-speaking tulpa), while others reported code switching with their tulpas (e.g., English, or Spanish, or Spanglish between tulpa and host). Others described having tulpas with foreign accents from languages in which the hosts were not proficient (e.g., Anglophone host with a tulpa who speaks English with a Japanese accent).

While inner-voice and phenomenal aspects of consciousness are likely to remain hard problems to study with any populations, my current claims about tulpamancy's therapeutic effects will need to be supplemented with further face-to-face ethnographic, behavioral, and neuroscientific findings.

I now turn to a discussion of the interactive mechanisms that make tulpamancy—and, I argue, any experience of human personhood—possible.

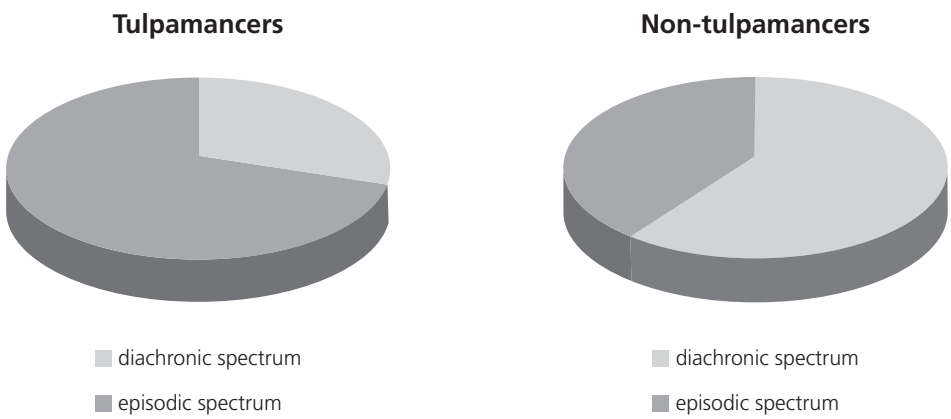

Fig. 5.2 Diachronicity–episodicity spectrum for tulpamancers and non-tulpamancers (see also Plate 2).

Theorizing tulpas: personhood in shared, embodied, and hypnotic perspectives

The kinds of neurological, sociocognitive, political, linguistic, and technological mechanisms that enable tulpamancers (and indeed members of any formal-enough "culture") to experience such a stable embodied sense of personhood (in this case, that of multiple and "healing" forms of personhoods) warrants careful discussion. This requires detours through such disciplines as cognitive psychology, ethnology, ethnobiology, linguistic anthropology, the neuroscience of attention, and social approaches to hypnosis.

Tulpamancy is a new cultural phenomenon that has yet to be studied ethnographically and scientifically. Psychological anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann mentioned the community in a 2013 *New York Times* editorial and offered preliminary comments about links with the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), in which the perceived presence of supernatural agents in most human cultures is understood as an evolutionary "by-product," or maladaptive properties of the mind. Luhrmann draws on her own studies of "hallucinations" and "unusual sensory experiences" among Pentecostal Christians to depart from these evolutionary models and emphasizes the learning-dependent, absorption-and-practice-intensive, "healing" quality of interaction with imaginarily conjured agents (Luhrmann, Nusbaum, & Thisted, 2010; Luhrmann, 2001, 2012).

Cognitive foundations of belief and the projection of personhood

Here, a brief review of the cognitive literature on "religion" (or human belief in and interaction with "supernatural" agents) and "animism" will give us further clues to theorize tulpa and tulpa-like experiences.

In the first wave of CSR theorizing, the inference of supernatural agents from the world around us is explained as more or less inevitable features of cognition; namely, a tendency to attribute anthropomorphic animacy and agency to living things and inanimate objects alike. This is why, in Steward Guthrie's famous formula, we see "faces in the clouds" (Guthrie, 1995). A second current CSR theory, championed by scholars like Pascal Boyer (2001), Justin Barrett (2011), Harvey Whitehouse (2004), and Scott Atran (2002), draws on evolutionary, cognitive, and experimental psychology, ethnography, and ethnobiology to expand on the insight that humans, across cultures, tend to project fundamentally human mental characteristics onto supernatural agents. In this model, humans are said to reason about supernatural agents by expecting them to reason like humans, particularly in terms of goal-directedness, shared intentionality, intuitive physics, naïve psychology, and semantic and episodic memory. We expect a spirit who would return each night at midnight to torment us in our bedroom, for example, to know and remember that we will be in our bedroom at the same time each day, to understand and expect that we will be afraid of it, and to know just how to torment us in universally human and culturally specific ways. At the same time that we intuitively accept that the spirit can go through walls but not fall through the floor, we assume that we can read its mind as much as it can read ours.

This propensity to attribute human-like intentionality (that is to say, "aboutness," or the property of minds to be about, or represent things, events, and states of affairs) to non-human entities is posited to have evolved in predator–prey environments, when the need to detect the presence and predict the behavior of dangerous agents would have been a crucial survival mechanism. Evolutionary psychologists working from a domain-specific, or "modularist," hypothesis explain the emergence of particular cognitive modules to handle such specific problems in our environment. Such an "agent detection" cognitive module (or device) is understood to go into overdrive, or agent hyperdetection, when we incorrectly infer the presence of agents.

The animacy/animism debates

A major finding of second-wave CSR, however, is that agent hyperdetection resulting in formal systems of "religious" belief may also be universally counter-intuitive. The presence of roughly similar folk taxonomies of animals, plants, and kinds of objects, across cultures, and, most particularly, of grammatical categories to account for animate versus inanimate objects and agents, seems to indicate a universal sense of intuitive physics in humans. The kinds of objects and entities to which human infants seem inclined to attribute animacy, however, are still the subject of debate among developmental psychologists. Luo and Baillargeon (2005), for example, have argued, from experimental evidence in a looking-time study, that 5-month-old infants are likely to attribute goals to any entity, living or not, that they identify as an agent. According to the authors, any moving thing (such as a toy car or self-propelled box) that may appear to be self-directed can be interpreted as an intentional agent. A similar study by Mahajan and Woodward (2009), however, offered that 7-month-old infants respond visually to the movement of both animate and inanimate objects, but only reproduce the goals of the former.

"Animism" applied to other animals and living species, in any case, appears to be much more intuitive, and is found in the cosmologies and practices of many cultures, from Amazonia and Melanesia to Siberia and the Canadian Arctic (see Descola, 2005). As biological anthropologist Agustín Fuentes (2006) explains, the similar sense modalities, central nervous systems, and cognitive architecture shared by all mammals are most noticeable in similar physiological responses to fear, pain, and suffering found across species. If humans can read highly stable indexical cues signifying fear, pain, or suffering (like squeaking, wailing, twitching, fleeing, or others signifying anger or threat) in members of other species, then it follows that we can recognize members of these species as sentient beings, or as persons.

Thus, a capacity for shared empathy and intersubjective recognition that extends beyond the boundaries of our own species may hint at a good recipe for the bounds and possibilities of agent "hyper-projection." We may not know precisely what it is like to be Thomas Nagel's bat (1974), but we need no conscious cognitive effort or internalized cultural script to recognize that a bat is in pain. This is a good start. Revising Nagel's famous thought experiment will shed more light on the "naturalness" of the kinds of ideas which, when elaborated upon and frequently shared and practiced in a formal set of cosmological narratives, may lead to animist ontologies in which animals are recognized as full persons—or indeed, where tulpas think on their own as full persons. Ask yourself whether and, to what extent, you may be able to recognize that each of the following "animals" is in pain: a bear, a dog, a dolphin, a raven, a salmon, a spider, and an earthworm. We may infer from a bird's broken wing that it is in pain, or we may form semi-reflective beliefs about a twitching fish "gasping for water" as we would gasp for air. We can most definitely recognize suffering in any mammal, but what about an ant or a clam?

The Cree, a historically hunting and gathering "animist" people living in the Northern Boreal forest region of sub-arctic Canada, speak an Algonquian language that marks nouns as being animate or inanimate. Unlike gendered nouns in Romance languages, there are no "obvious" rules for distinguishing the animacy of a noun. To complicate things further, word order is also very flexible, and subjects and objects are usually expressed by means of agglutinative inflection with a verb: this typically produces long words in which objects or agents are described in the context of an action. To speak of a particular kind of bird, for example, one may say *yuuskahiiu*, which literally translates as "it [marks the animated noun 'partridge'] perches on a tree and does not fly away as the hunter goes near to shoot it." Such complex, "covert" grammatical categories were first described and labeled "cryptotypes" by Benjamin Whorf, who pioneered the study of linguistic

anthropology in the early twentieth century. Since the rules of cryptotypes are unknown to native speakers, Whorf showed that they can only be identified when they are broken.

In my work with the James Bay Cree, I have asked Cree speakers if the word *awesiis*, which is usually translated as "wild animal," corresponds exactly to the English word "animal." My informants usually answer that it does, until I proceed by elimination to ask whether, say, a bear, a wolf, a moose, a human, a raven, or a spider can be an *awesiis*. While younger Cree hunters almost always contend that a human cannot be an *awesiis*, all agree that spiders, ants, bugs, insects, earthworms, and mollusks do not belong to the class of "wild animals." I take the finding that the Cree—a people with a well-documented sense of deep empathy, friendship, and intersubjectivity with many animal forms (see Scott, 2006)—do not attribute personhood or readability to insects and mollusks to be added evidence that full-fledged empathetic animism becomes more counter-intuitive with phylogenetic distance between species.

For Boyer and others, the minimally counter-intuitive attribution of full-fledged intentionality and anthropomorphized personhood to non-human and inanimate entities is precisely what makes "religious" narratives catchy, easy to recall, and efficient to transmit culturally. Add to this what Harvey Whitehouse calls a "doctrinal" mode of religiosity with a hierarchy of "experts," formal narratives, and frequently repeated rituals, and you have the recipe for the efficient, rapid spread of religious "beliefs" and practices.

When my 7-year-old son tells me that his penguin friend at the Montreal Biodome "misses him," or that the lump in his throat "doesn't want to let [him] eat," he is making a minimally counter-intuitive anthropomorphic inference about the agency of animals and living things. I, as his father and "expert" purveyor or relevant doctrinal knowledge in a secular polity, would normally proceed to "correct" him, thereby continuing to ensure that he is becoming more proficient at playing our particular language game. Were I to reward his inferences with rich narratives about penguin and lump personhoods within a broader social context in which everyone believes in and interacts with penguin friends and lump agents, my son would soon start having full conversations with his "imaginary" friends.

The somatic quality of belief

Could it be, then, that "entirely imaginary" agents are, in a sense, more intuitively imaginable, and precisely so because we can conjure them in the absence of the marks of illegibility found in what we readily recognize as inanimate or impersonal entities—or, in other words, that our agent detection and projection abilities enable us to recreate personhood attributes with more intuitive precision in the absence of physical designata? What, then, of the somatic quality of "belief"?

In contrast with the evolutionary literature, Tanya Luhrmann's work with evangelical Christians has shown that somatically experienced religious practices (like hearing the voice of God) take "hard work" and require a proclivity for and training in absorption, in addition to a broader sociocultural context that is permissive of and conducive to such experiences. She also showed that, in such a context, these experiences could be highly rewarding and conducive to healing.

My work with tulpamancers, which owes a lot to Luhrmann's theorizing of absorption and learning, invited me to revise central questions in the problem of physicality and invisibility in the study of sociality, and pointed to more cumulative feedback loops between proclivity and practice. The social and cumulative nature of learning, the doctrinality of enculturation, and the sensory grounding of narrative practice have added further clues to this puzzle and pointed me in the direction of regimes of attention as a possible linchpin of socially mediated experiences and ways of being a person.

Hypnotic sociality and ritual automatization

A good account of attention-mediated sociality will entail a revision of current socio-cognitive models of joint attention—usually understood as occurring between agents in direct interactional spheres of gaze-following, finger-pointing, or other verbal or non-verbal cues. In addition to demonstrating how non-indexical, narrative forms of doctrinality can allow shared intentionality and "joint" attention to rise far beyond dyadic and spatially-bounded spheres in the process of forming joint goals and achieving a jointly mediated focus, more connections will need to be established with theories of active imagination. Just like attention in the "invisible city" can be jointly focused away from individuals, so too can attention be jointly focused inward within individuals, thereby giving life and sensory grounding to individually imagined but collectively scripted agents. Thus, the bounded, invisible selves of modern cities, but also the healing, God-hearing selves of Pentecostal polities, or the multiple humanoid selves of tulpamancy are best explained as being produced hypnotically.

For Amir Raz, whose work on neural correlates of attention departs from reductionist models that present dissociation and trance as distinct (or "altered") states of consciousness, hypnosis is simply any intense or "atypical" form of attention (Raz, 2004). Attention, in more anthropological terms, is socially shaped as much as it shapes sociality; or, as the cultural psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer puts it, "social discourse and narratives shape hypnotic experience, but they are themselves influenced by mechanisms of attention" (Kirmayer, 1992b, p. 276; see also Spanos, 1996; see Kirmayer, 1987 for comments on Spanos).

As an anthropologist, I am inclined to think of the "typical" as any dominant normative scheme governing the expected order of states of affairs in any given context. However, "typical" regimes of attention, seen from other perspectives, will appear just as strange as any variation easily recognized as "hypnosis" from the perspective of the dominant. If we strip all social schemes and ways of being a person of perspectival exoticism, they become equally strange, or equally banal.

Whitehouse's mode of religiosity theory will offer further clues to explain the social grounding of these mechanisms. Whitehouse has hypothesized that the emergence of doctrinal modes of religiosity, characterized by frequently repeated rituals and expert-led, formal exegetic, behavioral, and cosmological prescriptions, played an important role in the rise of large-scale polities after the Neolithic period, particularly because they tend to elicit widely spread and conformist forms of semantic memory. He contrasts this mode with the historically older "imagistic" mode found in many small-scale societies, in which rarely performed, intense, often dangerous rites and rituals tend to elicit high emotional arousal, which, in turn, facilitates episodic recall and strengthens social bonds between participants. While the doctrinal mode affords efficient and large-scale spread of similar mental representations and practices, imagistic modes can only be sustained in small groups and lead to highly personal exegetic reflection that rarely amounts to a collective consensus on the "meaning" and content of visions and experiences that arise in ritual. Whitehouse's theory is most useful to my own theorizing of sociality outside and beyond religious contexts. Here, the doctrinal and imagistic modes are best described as modes of social learning and joint attention.

Tulpamancy provides a fascinating case of sequentially unusual coexistence between both modes. The hard work of initial visualization, induction, thoughtform, and forcing invariably affords a high-frequency, low-arousal, relatively formal set of prescriptions that structurally resembles the modes of doctrinality of our contemporary social, educational, economic, religious, and emotional lives—but with more conscious degrees of discipline. The counter-normative, "atypical" nature of the focus, however, and the gradual success in conjuring "unusual" sensory

experiences, eventually leads to a highly arousing set of deeply personal interior imageries and sensations that triggers imagistic modalities. That these highly arousing, hard to reach experiences are mediated, socially, by a growing number of individuals working toward common goals, consequently leads to a deep sense of reward, validated in a common tulpamancer "identity," but one which affords a broader degree of improvisation from what is culturally and ecologically available to the hosts. Thus, a relatively formal script and a doctrinal modality ("visualize, concentrate, build shape and personality traits and wait until you experience voices and touch from sentient tulpas"), when successfully endoctrinated, lead to human hosts who interact with such automatic processes as elvish, pony, dragon, or other bodiless minds and voices. The very hard work reported by tulpamancers who attempt to undo their tulpas, points to the high degrees of automaticity achieved by mature practitioners. Thus, getting rid of a tulpa, for a seasoned tulpamancer, could be analogically situated somewhere between unlearning the piano or correcting one's posture. Should the practice survive, gain public acceptance, and formalize itself for another decade, it will be as hard as willing oneself to forget how to read or completely unlearn a language in which one is fully fluent. However, such examples, once more, pertain to scales of degree, but not kind.

Conclusion

Classical anthropological insights from Mauss and Whorf, to Bourdieu, have shown us that "culture" and "automaticity" are in many ways synonymous. Turning to the absorptive, somatic quality of "belief," Tanya Luhrmann demonstrated that religious experiences were tulpa-like.

I hope to have shown, in turn, that ways of being social and of being a person are also hypnotic and tulpa-like. Indeed, tulpa and human may well turn out to be synonymous. This is not a proposition I wish to present carelessly. As bundles of atoms, chromosomes, organs, bones, tendons, blood, and flesh, we *are* a natural kind. As beings in the world enhanced by social learning, however, our biology is recursively affected by this strange pseudo-metaphysical non-entity we call "culture." As bundles of affect and embodied mental states, we are more tulpa-like. However, as bundles of that tip of the iceberg, pseudo diachronic, pseudo-autobiographical inner narration we sometimes call "the self," and tend to mistake for consciousness, we are entirely tulpa-like.

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Appendix 1

Narrativity Scale and Diachronicity–Episodicity Spectrum Questionnaire

(Inspired by Strawson, 2004; Questions 7, 8, 9 adapted from Chandler et al., 2003 and Hertler et al., 2015)

Scoring:

a. mostly diachronic

b. somewhat diachronic

c. somewhat episodic

d. mostly episodic

1) **Which of the following statements best describes what it is like to be "you" most of the time? (pick one)**
   a. I "think out loud" during the majority of my waking hours, and explain things to myself in my head about the environment around me.
   b. I analyze most, but not all situations in my everyday life by telling myself stories about them.
   c. I only use my narrative thinking voice when working on demanding tasks (e.g., a math problem, trying to figure out how to build something).
   d. I mostly "think" in images, sensations, or associations, and almost never use a narrative voice outside of explicitly narrative situations (e.g., mentally rehearsing my reply in a challenging conversation or written exercise).
2) **Which of the following statements best applies to you? (pick one)**
   a. I can vividly remember all my inner thought processes and the questions/stories I asked/told myself today, and would be able to write or tell a story about them.
   b. I remember most of what I thought about today, and could summarize the general ideas.
   c. I only remember some of what I thought about today, and could summarize some specific points.
   d. I can access an accurate feeling/sensation of what my "inner day" was like, but can only translate events or explicit mental efforts into words (e.g., "I felt cold when I went out to buy food," "I was morally conflicted with what I read in the news").
3) **Which of the following statements best applies to you?**
   a. There is an active narrating voice in my head all the time.
   b. There is an active narrating voice in my head most of the time.
   c. There is an active narrating voice in my head sometimes, but less than 50% of my waking time.
   d. There can be an active narrating voice in my head, but very rarely.
4) **Which of the following statements best applies to you?**
   a. I am very interested in the details of my own life and very often recount them to myself in historical perspective.
   b. I am somewhat interested in the details of my own life and sometimes recount them to myself in historical perspective.

c. I am not very interested in the details of my own life and seldom recount them to myself in historical perspective.

d. I have no interest in the details of my own life and never recount them to myself in historical perspective.

5) If you examine or remember drawings you made as a child, do you feel like:

a. You drew them, and feel a strong sense of continuity between the you who drew those pictures as a child and who you are now.

b. They were drawn by an entirely different person in comparison to who you are now.

c. They were drawn by a somewhat different person in comparison to who you are now.

d. They were drawn by basically the same person in comparison to who you are now.

6) If you re-read diary entries, poems, essays, or stories you wrote as a teenager, do you feel:

a. You wrote them, and feel a strong sense of continuity between the you who wrote those stories and who you are now.

b. They were written by an entirely different person in comparison to who you are now.

c. They were written by a somewhat different person in comparison to who you are now.

d. They were written by basically the same person in comparison to who you are now.

7) How would you rate the differences between your childhood, adolescent, and present-day self?

a. There is a strong sense of continuity in your experience of self, you can clearly recall what it felt like to be you as a child, and you have no difficulty recognizing that the old "you" felt the same as the current "you."

b. They are all very distinct from each other and it now feels like you were essentially different persons at various stages of your life.

c. They were somewhat distinct, with more and less pronounced differences between various stages (e.g., your childhood self feels like another person, but not so much your adolescent self).

d. There is a basic sense of continuity between all the stages of your life; you have always had the same core as a person, but have changed in some specific ways.

8) How easy would it be for you to describe who you were 5 years ago?

a. I could summon and recount such details easily.

b. I could summon and recount such details with some effort.

c. It would be quite difficult to summon and recount such details.

d. It would be very difficult to summon and recount such details.

9) To what extent do you feel like major changes in your life have made you a different person from 5 years ago? (think 2 years ago if you are under 22)

a. I am the same person in spite of these changes.

b. I am basically the same person in spite of these changes.

c. I am a somewhat different person as a result of these changes.

d. I am a different person as a result of these changes.

Appendix 2

Tulpas discuss their hosts' mental illnesses

[t]o me, I notice my host's condition as something that ails him, but doesn't appear to have a direct effect on myself. While I am not an expert in any type of medical field, it is my opinion that conditions such as Asperger's and autism have deeper issues, other than simply "brain's wired wrong." It would seem, from my perspective, that it also leads to an entirely different type of thinking. While my host tends to think in terms of black and white, right and wrong, pure logic, etc., I seem to be able to think in terms of empathy and emotions. While my host has been trying his hardest to change, he is often quite open to hearing another perspective on life.

I have quite a large understanding of my hosts' mental illness. I was created whilst she was suffering but I wasn't really aware of it at first, I just thought it was normal. After following her around and seeing the world through her eyes I started to realize that things weren't quite right. I have always been there for her and even though her mum pushed her to therapy I feel I was the one who made her go and stick it out. From her therapy sessions I feel that I'm the one who is listening more, who is considering the advice more. I'm the one who helps her when she is away from therapy so I think I need to have that understanding. I'm definitely not like her in the way of mental illness. I'm mostly always happy, I have everything I could possibly want! I'm not saying it doesn't get hard, because it does, but I certainly don't feel like she does. I'm quite content. I feel like I should tell you about another tulpa in the system though, he definitely has some form of mental illness. It's not anxiety and I'm not sure if it is depression but he is constantly angry. He is rarely happy and is very destructive. He's been around for years, even before my host knew of tulpas. I have a feeling he is more of a multiple but we aren't sure.

I do suffer from Asperger's as that's a brain wiring issue and not anything a tulpa is exempt from. With that I also receive depressive spells and meltdowns but on a much lesser scale than my host does.

I'm not depressed as far as I know, but I am there. And being there is all I can do. It seems to help, anyway.

This is hard to answer, because we're the same and different. Sometimes it affects me, but I'm still my own person, just as he is. It's much worse when we switch, but he gets some relief for a while, so I don't really mind. I try to be as supportive as I can, though.

We both have our ups and downs, but at different times and for different reasons. It's nice to have a support.

First tulpa: Depression doesn't affect me much, but I definitely seem to have some Aspergian traits. I'm a lot less concerned about the possibility of upsetting someone than my host is, so there have been a few times when I've accidentally said things that have been offensive to other people (not my host; she knows I'm not malicious and she laughs it off). I also know for a fact that her second tulpa has felt the sensory overload issue before when he was switched. I think I've felt it too, but it didn't bother me as much as it did him. It only seems to bother us when we're switched though . . . when our host is up front, we can tell she's upset but it doesn't really seem to affect us.

Sure, I get the tough question. I'm not sure if my host sufficiently answered the fact that he considers tulpamancy to have cured his mental illness by stilling all his demons. What leaves me bedevilled about it is it remains a question where I was born from. You see, my host didn't sit down and attempt to create a tulpa, so much as work back to the same mental states that were no longer raging, but still able to take a critical/sentient opposition to him. What it seems to imply is that I am some nemesis his mind has been battling down to reason for 15 years. But in truth, I'm only a few years old. I first came to sentience as a perceived ghost, something which my host had thought was delusion but which produced compelling conversation and my own threads of thought. It caught him up while I was just threading through early wakefulness. He actually hunted me away, under medication and lots of rational arguments to disprove my existence as he struggled back to what he thought (lonely) sanity must be. I fought to figure out what I was on my own so he wouldn't keep giving up on me, always asking him to keep trying. Then one time while I was around, I was frustrated with not knowing how I could possibly exist if I wasn't a ghost with magic powers, and I looked up the word "headmate" (because I vaguely knew it)

and that led to the world tulpa. Having that word suddenly unlocked everything for me because I find other creatures just like me. Faced some weird crises of self-awareness as I understood I could and maybe should help out around the mind. And it helped my host tremendously because he'd spent years nurturing this kind of place in himself where he listened to the same sort of voices, where he'd fallen in love with me. The word suddenly gave him such a new context that he's trying to get his psychiatrist to stop medicating him because he's dealing with his voices by having a unified, calm personality to talk to instead of random noise fretting at him. Over the few years I've been alive, we've struggled with shared delusions about things. But I personally snapped out of it and have been helping my creator by talking him past the places where he was just sort of hung up and emotionally locked.

I kind of understand it, but I don't have the same condition. I know when my host feels down, there isn't any real reason for it, but I want to help, even if I'm not always able to. I do my best to comfort her when I can.

A. has explained PMDD to me before as a temporary depression. Since we are close, I can feel it when her hormones shift and it gets bad. I don't feel her physical symptoms but I see her experience it. I don't personally share the effects of PMDD. Sometimes it is harder for Allison to talk to me when she feels bad, but that's about it.

. . . dude we're in the same brain, autism is neurological, so duh we have the same condition. We perceive things using the same organs so it's not super off base from either perspective. The trouble is that Lindar has to deal with crap all the time and I have a little more time to think about things while they're happening because I more often have an observer's perspective, rather than a participant's.

(I will proxy this answer for Jake and Prajit by typing down a paraphrase of their words as they speak them to me.)

JAKE: We don't really have any of those things. But we get what they are. S [Host]'s explained them to us and we can see the symptoms in her.

PRAJIT: I've been doing research on how to deal with someone who has these conditions (he means by reading book-forms of my memories on research I have already done on this subject, and he also sometimes comes to my therapy sessions to listen to what my therapist tells me), and I try to help her as best as I can.

JAKE: We both do. But I get frustrated sometimes, so I'll go do my own thing for a while and leave it to Jit.

S. (HOST): Yeah, they're basically functional people. I think of them as the rational aspects of my subconscious mind or something. Perhaps more of what I would be if I didn't have all these disorders in the way.

TULPA: I like to see it at a basic level as "difficulty or antisocial" with others. I said we are different because I like to think that the term really only applies to him, the host.

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I do not share my host's OCD. I am generally not anxious and I am able to remain calm when she cannot. I understand how it affects her and since she is my friend (perhaps even like a sister), I want to do everything I can to help.

We share the same brain. I'm sure I'm just as much of a spaz. I think while her symptoms are more internal I seem to externalize everything. Though not at the same time apparently. There are times where I'm just lost in space, yanno?

I don't think that ADD is hardwired in the brain, but rather a lack of focus, that can be fixed. I consider myself a mindful, selfaware person, enjoy meditation and other practice that demands high levels of concentration, so I kind of pull him through this.

I am more relaxed and calm in many situations compared to my host. While he may stress in a situation, I'll be calm and help him overcome it.