Chapter 12. Personality

Major Points

• The vast differences in personality between people are primarily due to the interaction of hardwired brain circuits and Big Three strengths.

• Describes eminent psychiatric researcher C. Robert Cloninger's Big Three personality model, as well as the popular Enneagram model.

• Strength of ser is related to one's sense of identity.

• Artists have strong nore and weak ser systems—as is the case with many people—and this may explain the increased prevalence of bipolar disorder in artists.

• Describes a personality type exemplified by Clint Eastwood, Bill Belichick, and the author.

What makes one person enjoy working in a flower shop and another enjoy driving a dump truck? People are vastly different—why? In general, men are vastly different than women, and there's huge variability within a sex, too. Behavior is certainly vastly different, both between and within sexes. And due to Big Three differences, people are not only vastly different from one another but may also, as stated earlier, experience vastly different quality of life, and actually perceive the world very differently. The current theory hypothesizes that these personality differences are due to the interaction of Big Three strength differences and hardwired circuitry differences. In other words, two people can have the same Big Three strengths and still have vastly different personalities due to hardwired circuitry differences. I see these personality differences as largely genetic and largely invariant throughout life, particularly throughout adulthood. Indeed, personality may be a reliable indirect measure of Big Three strengths, particularly if hardwired differences are considered. Therefore, personality traits should be considered when prescribing drugs for the various mental illnesses, as well as for expanded dysthymia.

So, as described in Chapter 7, altering the strengths of the Big Three with drugs should alter personality traits, a phenomenon that Peter Kramer discusses in his landmark book, *Listening to Prozac*. Moreover, I think personality is intimately intertwined with mental illness, since most personality traits are affected by the Big Three, and the Big Three also intimately affect mental illness. Personality and mental illness are intimately related since they may both be produced by the same Big Three brain circuits.

Cloninger's Big Three Model

About twenty years ago, eminent psychiatric researcher C. Robert Cloninger created a personality model to explain the roles of the Big Three neurotransmitters in affecting behavior—though, unlike in The Triangle (see Chapter 5), Cloninger believed

that the strengths of the Big Three are independent of each other, and that the Big Three presumably act on independent circuits. To ser he ascribed the role of "harm avoidance", which means ser causes the individual to act more boldly when faced with threatening or otherwise stressful situations. To nore he ascribed the role of "reward dependence", which means nore causes the individual to seek praise or acknowledgement from others. To dop he ascribed the role of "novelty seeking", which means dop causes the individual to seek new types of stimuli.

I think Cloninger is correct about the Big Three affecting these three traits, but I also think the Big Three interact in these roles, and as stated in Chapter 7, affect other traits as well. And as mentioned in Chapter 3, Cloninger's three traits may represent a form of pattern recognition mediated by the Big Three and their circuits that shapes behavior. In other words, the Big Three and their respective circuits allow the individual to recognize situations in the world relevant to harm avoidance, reward dependence, and novelty.

In spite of the obvious importance of Cloninger's ideas to psychiatry, I'm not sure Cloninger himself appreciated the full implications of his personality model, particularly the concept that the Big Three do more than just affect mood, and that the Big Three may be affecting personality traits in addition to the ones in his model. In one sense—especially when combined with the current theory—Cloninger's model may render all types of mental illnesses 'personality disorders', where abnormal strengths of the Big Three predispose one to or cause these illnesses.

In support of Cloninger's model, it has been shown experimentally that adjusting ser affects the harm avoidance trait. And perhaps being strong in nore causes a type of depression that is transiently relieved in a reward dependent manner, by acknowledgement from others.

I propose two variations on Cloninger's model that may make it more accurate: 1) both weak ser and strong ser may produce harm avoidance (to use the term very loosely), the latter because dominant individuals do not tend to recklessly endanger themselves; 2) both weak dop and strong dop may produce novelty seeking, the former because people with hypofrontality/ADHD tend to seek stimulation.

In considering the implications of Cloninger's model, there are several reasons why Big Three blood, urine, or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) level studies, mainly carried out since the 1980s, haven't been too useful for treating mental illness: 1) before Cloninger's model it was not widely hypothesized that the Big Three affect personality; 2) personality is more complex than in Cloninger's model; 3) no one knows if there's a relationship between personality (or the levels themselves) and mental illness (treatment). So in other words, there may be very important information contained in level studies, if they really do indicate Big Three strength in most cases, as this information is relevant to performing The Adjustment with and without the presence of overt mental illness, but no one could confirm the validity of the blood, urine, or CSF data with an assessment of personality…possibly until the current theory.

The Enneagram Model

The popular Enneagram personality model, described most eloquently by Don Riso in his various books, is also relevant to understanding the relationship between the Big Three and personality. Despite its merits, the Enneagram, and perhaps other

personality models, suffer from the same weaknesses as the disease models of the *DSM-IV-TR*: 1) failure to identify certain personality types, 2) unidentified subtypes within a type, and 3) incomplete descriptions of the existing types. So the Enneagram probably doesn't describe everyone well. For example, maybe people who aren't expanded dysthymic—who have mid-range, optimal strengths of the Big Three—don't have clear Enneagram personality types at all. But in its favor, the Enneagram personality types blend into one another, just as the mental illnesses blend into one another, and for most people the Enneagram provides a pretty good description.

What follows is not meant to be an exhaustive description of all Enneagram personality types, but instead mentions each one and subsequently elaborates upon a few of these types. Type 1: The Reformer (weak ser and possibly strong nore), Type 2: The Helper (weak ser and strong nore), Type 3: The Motivator (weak ser and strong nore), Type 4: The Individualist (weak ser and strong nore), Type 5: The Thinker (weak ser), Type 6: The Loyalist (weak ser and medium nore), Type 7: The Enthusiast (weak ser and strong nore), Type 8: The Leader (either strong ser or strong nore), and Type 9: The Peacemaker (weak ser and medium nore).

In other words, most personality types—and perhaps most of the population—have weak ser and/or strong nore. In addition, most of the types, except 8 and possibly 7, have weak or medium dop, which is to some degree consistent with The Triangle (see Chapter 5). Note: adjacent numbers on the Enneagram blend into one another. Here are some famous examples of each type: mixtures of 1 and 2 (Andy Rooney, Oprah Winfrey), mixtures of 2 and 3 (Bill and Hillary Clinton, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods), mixtures of 3 and 4 (Lance Armstrong, Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Arnold Schwarzenegger, John Kerry), mixture of 4 and 5 (Albert Einstein), mixtures of 5 and 6 (Stephen Hawking, Bill Gates), mixture of 6 and 7 (possibly Joan Rivers), mixtures of 7 and 8 (Donald Trump, George Steinbrenner, Hugh Hefner), mixtures of 8 and 9 (Ronald Reagan, Colin Powell, Shaquille O'Neal), mixture of 9 and 1 (possibly Nelson Mandela). The Enneagram also affords transitions—mixed personalities—between certain non-adjacent numbers. For example, the following people may be mixtures of 4 and 7: Robert Duvall, Tommy Lee Jones, Mark Cuban, Mick Jagger, Tom Green, and Mickey Rourke.

Maybe a tendency to view oneself in terms of how others regard one is related to one's sense of identity, and this may be related to the philosophical concept of weltschmerz ('world pain'). Enneagram types 2-4 can be described as lacking a strong sense of identity and having strong reward dependence. So a weak sense of identity may be encoded by weak ser and strong nore both interacting with particular hardwired circuits. While I was hypomanic on Zoloft and during bright light therapy, where both treatments may boost ser, I seemed to be more aware of myself.

The stereotypical artistic personality, in which the individual is sensitive, emotional, slightly depressed, and creative, is represented by the Enneagram type 4 personality—mixtures of types 3 and 4, or types 4 and 5—and has strong nore and weak ser. Artists also have acute senses, due to this high nore/ser ratio. Might they also have strong dop, where according to Cloninger's model, the desire for creativity could represent a type of novelty seeking? However, strong dop probably deadens the emotions, so it is unlikely to exist in most artists. Nonetheless, as discussed in the next chapter, strong nore may bestow a type of dominance, or at least prominence, much like strong ser, since many artists have achieved prominence and are widely revered. Weak ser and

strong nore may explain the slightly depressive trait, and can be viewed as a form of expanded dysthymia (see Chapter 11). For these reasons, artists may in many cases have low self-esteem. On the other hand, this neurotransmitter array may give artists a strong capacity for mood to brighten when good things happen and a greater capacity for love—which may be related to the reward dependence characteristic of nore. And creativity, if not related to strong dop, may be a complex form of emotional expression, or can be stimulated by mania or hypomania in the course of typical bipolar disorder (see Chapter 10).

The following famous people may be or may have been artistic in both temperament and Big Three array (in alphabetical order): Woody Allen, Drew Barrymore, Warren Beatty, Halle Berry, Bono, Jim Carrey, Kurt Cobain, Sheryl Crow, Tom Cruise, James Dean, Robert DeNiro, Robert Downey Jr., Michael Jackson, Kay Jamison, Scarlett Johansson, Stephen King, John Lennon, Jim Morrison, Joaquin Phoenix, Winona Ryder, Kevin Spacey, Steven Spielberg, Martha Stewart, Meryl Streep, and Steven Tyler. Kay Jamison, the eminent writer and psychiatric researcher, has gathered evidence that bipolar disorder is more common in artists than in the general population, and I think this is correct. However, the more general hypothesis is that the prevalence of (typical) bipolar disorder in artists is a special case of a more general phenomenon in that nearly all artists have strong or super strong nore.

The Enneagram also describes a prototypical hypomanic personality type—a mixture of types 7 and 8—who I think may be or may have been super strong in nore and dop, weak in ser (in alphabetical order): Alexander the Great, Muhammad Ali, Charles Barkley, Napoleon Bonaparte, George Custer, Jon Gruden, Rudy Guiliani, Hulk Hogan, Don King, Jack Nicholson, George Patton, Teddy Roosevelt, Lawrence Taylor, Ted Turner, Jesse Ventura, Mike Wallace, and Angus Young. Although this is not the classic 'alpha' personality type—which involves strong ser—it may nonetheless be the most common (typical) form of dominance (see Chapter 13). Note: I don't know if this personality type is necessarily more common in men than in women, especially since I believe men tend to be stronger in ser and weaker in nore than women. However, it could be that in our society, men of this personality type tend to become more prominent than women of this type.

The final personality type that I'll discuss does not fit well with the Enneagram model, though it is most closely related to the type 8 personality. This is what I call the atypical dominant individual, exemplified by Clint Eastwood, Bill Belichick, and myself. This type has super strong ser and dop, and weak nore. Eastwood and especially Belichick may not exhibit atypical bipolar disorder like myself, but they do at least exhibit atypical hypomania, in that they are very high in energy and very productive. Such a person will tend to be: masculine, somewhat asexual, aloof, usually skinny from lack of a strong appetite, not inclined to laugh or smile much, not easily excited, harm avoidant, interested in justice, poor at tolerating the cold, adept at explosive movements, deadened in senses and emotions (except for compassion), and somewhat low in mood. Since strong ser may be related to harm avoidance, it may cause preoccupation with one's own mortality—I experienced this more so while super strong in ser from Zoloft—and one can see it in some of Clint's movies, such as *Unforgiven*, though the effect may be confounded with standard depression; perhaps we weren't meant to ponder our own mortality excessively. This type may represent the classic alpha personality type, due to

strong ser, though it may be very uncommon (atypical). Note: I believe this personality type is more common in men than in women, since I believe men tend to be stronger in ser and weaker in nore than women.

On a more general note: are people skilled at identifying Big Three characteristics in others, since this may be important for social interaction? I think that the super strong ser person is a natural psychologist, since understanding people is critical for achieving and maintaining power. And I don't think most of our government and big business leaders are super strong in ser, partly because ser represents atypical dominance. Finally, I think physical appearance—especially facial structure and expressions—correlates with personality type (and Big Three strength array), and if so this is relevant to mental health treatment.