

Exposing the Self: A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Biopic, *a Beautiful Mind*

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ABSTRACT

The paper entitled, **EXPOSING THE SELF: PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF THE BIOPIC, A BEAUTIFUL MIND**, deals with the Psychoanalytic Theory by Sigmund Freud and focuses on the objective study and findings on the topic. It is an attempt to psychoanalyze the character, John Nash along with the reading of the movie psychoanalytically. As the story and characters are real, it becomes a strenuous task to read and analyze these characters in terms of psychoanalysis. The living characters are being fictionalized in the movie. As per the concept of sublimation and both reality and pleasure principle, Nash had converted his inner conflicts into being an intellectual. He was a love wolf and that made his behavior strange. The repressed desires within him, of not being loved by anyone, made him more concentrated in his studies. Thus he becomes a professor with new theories and thus he won the Nobel Prize. Teachers described him as a man with half-a-heart and two brains. The paper analyses how every characters, incidents, unresolved conflicts, traumatic past residing in his unconscious mind and result in to being an intellectual and honourable man and examines the impact of continuous feeding of dreams and nightmares in his self.

Key words : Psychoanalysis, Freudian theories, Biopic, Trauma, Sublimation, Repression

INTRODUCTION

Though John Nash is a genius, his behavior seems to be abnormal. He tries to find mathematical explanation on whatever he sees in front of his eyes. Some of it was acceptable but many others made fun of him. Everyone find his behaviour strange. His teacher had described him as a man with two brains and half-a- heart. He doesn't like people much because he feels that they don't like him. He believes that classes are a waste of time; they will dull the mind and destroy the potential for authentic creativity. Through his project he wants to distinguish himself, for that he tries to find an innovative topic. The means he accepts for it creates fun in others. For a day's long struggle, without food and rest.

The three mysterious characters represent unfulfilled desires which are been repressed. As these wishes cannot be directly expressed they seek expression in disguise. They create pleasure in him but don't exist in reality. He had condensed his wishes and needs into these characters and they symbolize his desires. Charles represent an intimate friend. Parcher represents his potential and Marcee the love and care. When Nash was a student, he had jotted down many things and reached nowhere and was not comprehensible. His jottings, gestures and speech, which are accidental revealed something that has been repressed in his unconscious mind. During these days his prodigal roommate, Charles Herman enters the room of Nash without permission and to his life too. Charles is different in his appearance. He was drunk and was in a shabby dress. Entry of a student in the University in an indecent manner creates curiosity. Nash is not been introduced to Charles but he behaves as if he know Nash before. He shares every worries and problems that he has in his mind with Charles. He reminds Nash about food when he is hungry. He encourages Nash to do his work when he gets deviated and when his professor scolds him for not presenting the paper.

Charles is the self-reflection of Nash. Charles is one who makes him aware of himself and of his basic needs. Nash is only conversing with Charles when they are alone. No one other than Nash is talking to him. Nash is not mentioning him in any of his conversation with others. There is no description on Charles, his work and its presentation. Nash creates him because he knows that no other man could understand him. Nash is not suggesting the name of Charles when he gets his placement at Wheeler Defense MIT. This is because his conscious mind is aware that Charles is not a human being with flesh and blood. No other student can see Charles but they could only see Nash's response to him. This makes his character absurd. Charles had continuously motivated Nash to complete his work. While celebrating the

victory of Nash, there is no presence of Charles in the function. He only sees Charles when his mind is disturbed and when he is alone.

After few years, he again meets Charles and has his niece along with him. He has a doubt whether to propose Alicia or not. Charles asks, is she a human girl to love him. This is the question that he asks to himself and this shows his understanding on his self. He knows that no one will love his weird character. He thus after discussion reaches to a conclusion to marry her. It's a personal decision. His consciousness and unconsciousness is conversing in the form of him and Charles respectively. Nash has no intimate friend or any other relatives to whom he can share everything. Charles acts as a family whole in Nash's life. He supported, encouraged, loved, cared and listened Nash. He became his good friend. This is what he lacked in his life and accomplished through an imaginary character within him. Nash is not inviting Charles for his marriage and that precious moment of his life occur in the absence of his intimate friend. He again meets Charles at National Mathematical Conference held in Harvard University. Marcee is along with him. He recalls Charles because at that time he needs someone to open his mind and needs consolation. He just wants a trustworthy person to share the top secret of deciphering codes. He chooses Charles because his conscious mind is aware that no human with flesh and blood can understand him and his world. Thus he will be satisfied in two ways; he gets a relief by sharing it with someone and no human will know about the secret work that is assigned to him. No audience could see them but Nash could see and converse with them. Charles is not telling a word and shows his helplessness, when he is been taken by Dr. Rosen. His presence in hospital makes Nash to believe that he is a Russian. Dr. Rosen is the first person to tell that there is no man with the name Charles.

William Parcher is the man who assigns Nash to decipher the hidden codes to thwart a soviet plot. A radium diode is been implanted in Nash. After his marriage to Alicia, his mind becomes disturbed. He feels disheartened as a spy. But Parcher haunts him and threatens him to continue the work assigned to him. Sick in his mind reflected in his appearance. His inner conflicts made his character weird. Nash cut magazines and newspapers to find the hidden codes and to deliver it in the letterbox of government. His struggle and his pathetic condition evoke pity in viewers. His condition becomes more dangerous after he and Parcher face a fight with soviet. This will make him more erratic in behavior.

William Parcher is not entering into the room where Nash and other officers discuss about his assignment. He only peeps through the windows. No other officer sees Parcher but he sees. Parcher meets him when he is lonely walking through the MIT Campus. The guard is not enquiring about Parcher's entrance pass. At office, both of them converse in a closed room. No officer is showing the expression that they had seen Parcher. He is the only person who discusses about the thwart of soviet plot. No one interrupt and interfere in their conversation. Parcher tortures and threatens him, when he lacks interest in doing the assigned work. No one could see Parcher's presence but can only see his attitude towards him. This creates disgust in students and colleagues at Princeton University. As his work is not secure, he hides everything from others and do work secretly. The house where he delivers the letters are far off from reality. Actually it's a ruined house where no one leaves but in his imagination it's a mysterious place.

Nash was very much interested in doing the work assigned by Parcher than taking class. He was confined to his work. His marriage, Alicia's pregnancy, burdens in his shoulder, his desires, mind set, discomfort ability as a spy- everything made his condition more vulnerable. He was over confident in his potential. He believed in his intellectual power. This might have paved path to create William Parcher. He believed he can do any dough impossible task that no normal human can do. He accomplished his belief through an imaginary character and through the work that he assigned. Later his inner conflicts made him deviate from the task. As the circumstances changed, his behavior became strange and reluctant.

Marcee, the niece of Charles, is another imaginary character in the world of Nash. He gave life to this character because she represents childish innocent love. She becomes an entertainment for Nash. He loved her and enjoyed her presence. He was not a man who love and care others, because he knows no human will like him. She is the character whom he loved and who loved him. She was always in her immature world. She weeps when Nash avoids her. This symbolizes that he don't want to miss her and what he gets from her. He finds it hard to not respond to her. When he realized that she only exists in his hallucination, she became less active and only gave a smile. This is his self realization.

Alicia came to know that her husband is a paranoid schizophrenic patient. She was unable to believe and investigated on that. She found that it was true. His department office was fully mess with paper cuttings. Sol and Bender told her about the impossible work that was assigned to him. His behavior during those days was weird and much more agitated. She visited the place where he delivered the classified letters. It was not even opened. She had never seen Charles, talked to him. She had not seen him at the marriage ceremony and not even seen a picture of him. Thus she concluded that Charles is an imaginary character in Nash's own world. Nash is not ready to accept the truth when she shared all her findings with him. He believes that they all are Russians and he is under their control. He feels that they find his profile too high and that's the reason they haunt him. They are keeping him in hospital and thus try to stop him from doing the work. She reveals that there is no Charles, Parcher, Russians and no conspiracy. After a while consciousness strikes him. He checks whether the diode in his hand. He can't find it. After shock treatment and continuous meditation,

he regains his consciousness. He realizes that he is losing his grip on reality. Alicia stays along with him. She feels obligation and guilt over wanting to leave. She feels rage against God and her husband, but their baby is making her to stay along with Nash and to lead the life with love.

After some months, he secretly stops taking medicines because he is unable to respond to his wife and to do his work. This draws the unconscious to overlap on conscious. Thus he again enters into the world of hallucination. He then continues to do his spy work in a ruined outhouse. By seeing his abnormal behavior Alicia calls Dr. Rosen. Parcher and Charles insist to stop her from doing so. Parcher takes the gun to shoot Alicia. While attempting to save her, accidentally she and child fell on the ground. She feels Nash is hurting them. Consciousness strikes him. He admits that they are alive only in his hallucination, because Marcee is not getting old and they are not co-existing with Alicia. From their first meeting to the last, they are constant without any change in appearance.

Nash sees the three because he is slipping to his unconsciousness. He was then introvert and passive in his mannerisms. He was alone and confined to the four walls of home. The unconscious raised its head when he stops taking medicines. He needs love and care, wants to share his mind and wants to do his work. His idle mind rejuvenates the three. It paved an opportunity for him to realize that they are his hallucination. Thus he understands what his disease is and how he can cure it. The best way to cure is by avoiding them. He tells Alicia to leave him because he knows he is no more safe. He asks time to figure out everything by himself. He gets his treatment by making him aware of the difference between what is real and what is in his mind. She always believed that something extraordinary is possible with Nash.

Parcher is trying to kill Alicia because when she does so, Nash will be taken to the hospital. The attempt to kill Alicia and the struggle to save her, both came from his mind. The three represent the state of his mind. He fears that if he is again taken to hospital he won't be able to see the three and will miss them. At the same time he wants to cure his disease and wants to live in the present world with his family.

Nash regains his consciousness and joins the Princeton University. There too he is been haunted by the three characters. His conscious and unconscious is entangled together. He find difficult to distinguish both. He sees them but he knows that they are not real. Their continuous disturbance make Nash to respond. He becomes agitated and violent inside the campus. He feels disgusted when he realizes the reality. Nash starts to share everything with Alicia when he misses Charles and his world of hallucination.

With his conscious awareness he avoids the three imaginary characters. They continuously persuade him to speak and to be in their world. But he refuses. Slowly they too keep mum. Then he started to see them only when he remembers them. They stayed in the corner of his Superego but Ego controlled it and portrayed in Id. This was the evidence that he regained his world of reality. He started to concentrate on this profession and enjoyed it. He then replaced his honour as professor. He started to mingle with students and taught them his theories. He sees the three when he is reminded off. Nash says that he feed dreams and nightmares to stay alive. For staying alive and to be in conscious world, he accompanies the three fantasies along with him. Their haunting is all about his past. Everyone is haunted by their past. They make him aware that he has such a disease, his profession, his family, his fantasies and other realities.

In Sweden at Stockholm, on December 1994, Nash received Nobel Prize in Economics for revolutionary work on game theory. In that ceremony too, he sees three mysterious characters without getting old and unchanged. It symbolizes the presence of the in Superego. He thanks Alicia for all her support and love. He returns to their own world of love and understanding.

By applying Freudian concept in the character Nash, we can psychoanalyze him easily. As per the concept of sublimation and both reality and pleasure principles, he had converted his inner conflicts into being an intellectual. He was a love wolf and that made his behavior strange. The repressed desires within him, of not being loved by anyone, made him more concentrated on his studies. Thus he becomes a professor with new theories and thus he won the Nobel Prize. Every character, incidents, unresolved conflicts, traumatic past everything was residing in his unconscious mind. Continuous feeding of dreams and nightmares made him an honorable man. Thus, as Freud argues civilization occurred.

The three mysterious characters only exist in his fantasy world. They represent the unfulfilled desires which are been repressed. As these wishes of Nash cannot be directly expressed as such so they seek expression in disguise. They create pleasure in Nash but don't exist in reality. For getting pleasure he likes to be in his unconscious world. The deviation from it makes him more vulnerable and erratic. He had condensed his wishes and needs into these characters. They symbolize his desires. Charles represents a deep intimate friend. Parcher represents his potential and Marcee the love and care. Thus the mechanism to disguise forbidden wishes are been taken place.

Freud discussed the concept of parapraxes or slip of tongue. He dismisses the view that errors occurring in speech, writing and reading are accidental and argues that they reveal something that has been repressed into the unconscious. When Nash was a student at Princeton University, he had jotted down many things on window glass. But it reached nowhere and was not comprehensible. His jottings, gestures and speech which are accidental revealed something that



has been repressed into his unconscious. Teachers described him as a man with half-a-heart and two brains. This had influenced him a lot. Thus by applying the concepts by Sigmund Freud, Nash is been psychoanalytically read.

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