

John Nash's Homosexuality and Schizophrenia

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John Nash (1928-2015) won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1994. However, his world fame is just as much due to the book by Sylvia Nasar entitled *A Beautiful Mind* and the film based on it, with the same title, starring Russel Crowe, both of which portray his struggle with schizophrenia, which lasted from 1957 until his death. The book also reveals his homosexuality, which the film ignores. The purpose of this article is to advance the hypothesis that Nash's schizophrenia was caused by the repression of his homosexuality, thus confirming Freud's theory that sexual repression is the most common cause of psychosis.

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Introduction

Nash tried to pick up a young man for sexual favours in a public men's room in Santa Monica, California, in 1954, at 2 a.m. The man turned out to be a police officer dressed in civilian clothes. Nash was arrested and immediately lost his high-security job at the RAND corporation. In the police station, Nash declared to his tormentors: "I'm not a homosexual" (Nasar, 1998, p. 186). He told the policemen that he liked women and showed them a picture of his fiancée and their son to prove the point. It would have been more truthful of Nash to say: "I do not want to be a homosexual." But no one wants to be a homosexual. This pathetic situation represents the life-long struggle between what Nash called his "merciless superego" (ibid, p. 232), which wanted him to be a heterosexual, and his libido, which quite clearly had a homosexual orientation. His constant war of himself against himself resulted in schizophrenia.

Nash's Homosexuality

Like Friedrich Nietzsche and so many other male homosexuals, Nash grew up in a household dominated by women: his mother, grandmother, aunts, sister and female cousins (p. 30). It was thus natural that he should develop a feminine sensitivity and outlook.

The first recorded instance of Nash trying to seduce a boy occurred in 1945 when he was 17 years old: "Nash climbed into Zweifel's bed when the latter was sleeping and made a pass at him" (p. 43). The second such incident happened in 1954: "Milnor says now that Nash made a sexual overture toward him" (p. 151). According to Nasar (1998), "Between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-nine, Nash became emotionally involved with at least three other men" (p. 167).

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Nash had a relationship with a young man named Jack Bricker, which lasted five years and ended when Nash married Alicia Larde in 1957. It is easy to surmise that Nash married a woman in order to appease his superego, that he was what could be called a make-believe heterosexual.

His wife obviously suffered horribly from her relationship with Nash. For two years, he refused to make love with her although they were living together (p. 302). We will never know if she was aware of her husband's real sexual orientation. She certainly had enough hardship trying to deal with his schizophrenia.

Even if he told other people that he was not a homosexual, Nash must have known what his true nature was. At least twice during his life, he made an effort to talk to people about homosexuality. In 1964, when he was learning French, he asked his French teacher for the addresses of Jean Cocteau and André Gide, saying: "I have to send them letters" (Nasar, 1998, p. 310). Cocteau and Gide were France's most famous homosexual authors and that is why Nash wanted to write to them. His French instructor replied that he could not help Nash, since both Cocteau and Gide were dead.

In 1973, Nash hoped to make a confession of his homosexuality to his son. We will never know if this ever really happened, but he did write to a friend that the planned meeting with his son would play "an essential and significant personal role in my personal long-awaited 'gay liberation'" (Nasar, 1998, p. 345). This is the closest that Nash ever came to revealing to anyone that he considered himself to be homosexual.

Nash's Schizophrenia

The symptoms of Nash's schizophrenia first became apparent after his marriage in 1957. He was hospitalized in three psychiatric hospitals: McLean Hospital in Massachusetts in 1959, Trenton State Hospital in New Jersey in 1961, and the Carrier Clinic in New Jersey from 1963 until 1965. All psychiatrists agreed that his diagnosis should be paranoid schizophrenia (p. 258). Nash was committed to these institutions against his will.

At McLean, he was given Thorazine every day and psychoanalysis five times a week.

At Trenton State Hospital, Nash was given insulin shock treatments five times a week, which he later described as being "torture" (Nasar, 1998 p. 292). At the Carrier Clinic, he was given antipsychotic drugs, including Thorazine (p. 313).

Like most other paranoid schizophrenics, Nash had delusions of grandeur and delusions of persecution. Nasar tells us: "He secretly felt that he was the left foot of God and that God was walking on the earth" (Nasar, 1998, p. 258). At one point, he thought that he was destined to become "the emperor of Antarctica" (p. 244).

In his paranoia, he thought that he was being persecuted by a Jewish conspiracy: "The root of all evil, as far as my personal life is concerned are Jews, in particular Jack Bricker, who is Hitler" (Nasar, 1998, p. 326). In reality, Bricker was the last man with whom Nash had had an intimate relationship before his marriage.

The Origin of Nash's Schizophrenia

The etiology or genesis of Nash's schizophrenia is quite obviously the repression of his homosexuality. The continual war between his superego, which wanted him to appear to be heterosexual, and his libido, which had strong sexual desires for other men, drove him insane. This hypothesis is totally in agreement with Freud's theory that sexual repression is the principal cause of psychosis.

Nasar, however, says that Freud's theory linking schizophrenia to repressed homosexuality is now "discredited" (Nasar, 1998, p. 259). It is discredited in America because the pharmaceutical industry does not want to lose money by no longer being able to sell antipsychotic medicines. The horrible truth about Nash's schizophrenia is that it could have been totally avoided if he had had the courage to accept his homosexuality and live as a homosexual openly, without fear and without apology. But for a respectable American man in the fifties and sixties such a lifestyle was totally unimaginable. If psychiatrists had the courage to deal with paranoid schizophrenia so as to help their patients, they would not give them electroshock treatments, insulin shock therapy, psychoanalysis, lobotomies, or any form of medication. Instead, they would encourage them to accept their homosexual identity and develop homosexual relations. At the end of the day, a handsome male sex worker would be much more successful in curing a homosexual's schizophrenia than all the psychiatrists in the world put together. Psychiatrists, with their characteristic hebetude, have never understood this.

Conclusion

Psychiatrists are also mistaken in saying that schizophrenia is "incurable" (Nasar, 1998, p. 351).

My own life story is the proof that they are wrong. I was also a patient at McLean Hospital. I spent thirteen months there in 1965 and 1966. My diagnosis was also paranoid schizophrenia. The only reason that I was released is that my parents' money ran out. What saved me was the absolute certainty that I had been driven insane by a psychiatrist who had been given the Herculean task of curing me of my homosexuality when I was sixteen years old and living in an all boys' school, the Phillips Exeter Academy, without any girl in sight.

When I was released, I fell in love with Mark, who had just escaped from another insane asylum. He was 18 and I was 20. His love cured my schizophrenia. I have had an absolutely wonderful life for the past fifty-four years without ever consulting a psychiatrist or taking psychiatric medicine. You can read my story in my two books: *Comment réussir sa schizophrénie* and *What Rough Beast*.

In the sixties, American psychiatrists were wrong in saying that homosexuality was a mental illness. Now they are wrong in saying that the repression of homosexuality does not cause schizophrenia, and they are wrong in saying that schizophrenia is incurable.

References

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