

# Analysis on the Film *A Beautiful Mind*

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## ABSTRACT

In the history of film, most biographical films are based on businessmen or artists, rather than scholars, but in 2001, a film called *A Beautiful Mind* changed this situation. It won the Academy Award for Best picture that year. The film is based on John Nash, a Nobel Prize-winning economist who developed the Nash equilibrium theory and made major breakthroughs in the field of game theory. At the same time, the content of the film is also based on the personal experience of mental illness, giving the audience a different perspective on this population. This paper will analyze the film from 2 dimensions: external and internal, including box office, characterization, shooting techniques, etc. The film not only makes a breakthrough in the subject matter, but also shows the beauty of the soul and humanistic feelings, which are very beneficial to the growth of the audience's spiritual world.

**Keywords:** film art, photography, music, *A beautiful mind*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*A Beautiful Mind* won almost all the awards in 2002, including the Academy Award for Best picture. *A Beautiful Mind* tells the story of genius mathematician John Nash, who made a breakthrough in the famous game theory in the 1940s, and who suffers from schizophrenia while in graduate school: a mental disorder of genius. Daily lonely he imagines, he has an understanding and support their roommate Charles. Five years later, he become a professor in the institute of wheeler, meet his students, and his future wife Alicia, at the same time, he had another illusion, the pentagon's palmer to find him, asked him to do some secret work for the U.S. military. His illusion become increasingly serious, that affected the real life. In the end, he is Alicia and two friends were sent to a mental hospital, after a year of treatment, John become better, due to the drug, however, he could no longer work, to succeed, John secretly stoped medication, which made him the illusion of again, Even Charles and Parcher in his hallucinations were told him to kill Alicia. When John secretly stoped taking his medication, it is discovered that Alicia gently encouraged him and told him that love can overcome it all. Determined to blend in, John returned to his beloved Alma mater, Princeton, where hanson, whom he has clashed with as a student, has kept him there for more than twenty years, during which time his hallucinations has never disappeared, but he has learned to live with them. He slowly can communicated with people who are

normal, even that Alicia and his friends so much relief, in 1994, John Nash equilibrium theory won the Nobel Prize in economics, the rest of his theory is widely used in the field of the major. John, on the podium, to thank his wife, his life over the devastating disease, and become a person with a truly beautiful heart.

## 2. ANALYSIS

### 2.1 External features

This part will be analyzed from 2 dimensions: award and comments.

Film literature has commented that the most powerful feature of the film, which won the Academy Award and almost swept the world's top awards in 2002, is that it offers a unique way to recognize the luck and misfortune of genius. In a sense, Nash was lucky, both by worldly standards and Nash's own - great career success, a beautiful wife, a handsome, promising son at Harvard. The happiest people in the world are as successful as ever. It was such a genius and such a lucky man who still encountered all the misfortunes of the common people. This misfortune did not result from the material poverty of the physical world, nor from the human struggle to which genius most often suffers, but from the deep loneliness of his soul.

In 2002, *A Beautiful Mind* won the Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress

and Best Adapted Screenplay. In addition, it also won the Golden Globe Awards for Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Picture and Best Screenplay.

## **2.2. Internal features**

This part will analyze the film from 3 dimensions: character, photography and music.

### **2.2.1 Character**

*A Beautiful Mind*, the title seems to have little to do with game theory, this title more reflects the quality of the character. Not only is the protagonist John's determination to overcome a devastating disease, courage, perseverance in game theory research. John's wife Alicia to accompany her husband to overcome the disease, never abandon the care of him, in his most painful time with love to influence him, she also has a beautiful heart. And John's real friends, like Hansen, who allowed him to stay at Princeton and do his research, had beautiful minds. Therefore, the title tells us that the first step to success is often to have a good heart.

First, the main character John Nash, from his perspective, the film shows the audience genius and a madman that thin, fragile of one wall lie between, Nash mentioned his teacher said he was "have two brains, but only half a heart", so the Nash's image has been initially appeared serious social disorder, but human social life, social networking is an indispensable part of life. Just because you cannot socialize, which does not mean you do not need to socialize or crave relationships. Therefore, John's inner world is extremely vacant and lonely. According to Satir's iceberg theory, people are like an iceberg, only about one eighth of which is exposed on the surface. The fifth and sixth layers of the iceberg are respectively expectations - expectations for oneself and others - and desires - for love, acceptance and belonging. The causes of John's illness stem from the desire to love, to belong, to succeed, to expect nothing, and to desire something deeper. That's why, in graduate school, he started hallucinating, and although it might seem unreasonable to the average person, from John's point of view, it was the consistent world he was creating to satisfy his spiritual needs. In this world, John has friends who understand him, a career he dreams of, and even family. Fortunately, in reality, John has the support of his wife and friends, which enables him to distinguish illusion from fantasy and truly understand that the way to realize his dream is to change himself in reality, rather than escape in the spiritual world. After returning to Princeton, John gradually distinguished between reality and illusion, learned to ignore illusion, and learned to get along with people in reality. In addition to the love of others, he was able to overcome mental illness because of his own kindness and courage. It can be said that John is

a man with a beautiful heart. But his beautiful mind needs to be slowly displayed, is a dark line of the film.

Then, the heroine of the film, Alicia, John's wife. This film reflects Alicia's beautiful heart as a bright line. Her image embodies the greatness of humanity before the disaster -- tolerance, understanding and never abandoning. Despite the time of want to retreat, but Alicia perseverance care for decades, John tell him when he was on the verge of collapse, although the disease from his brain, but his mind - he was filled with the beautiful mind of love can overcome all of this, this also is the main idea of the movie: love cannot use the rational explanation, love has a unique power. Love conquers all things, even destruction, in an inclusive way. Cruel insulin therapy never cured John of schizophrenia, but Alicia with kind love tolerance and understanding John, and let John also learned to tolerate their own, so that all his hallucinations come to an end.

In addition, some of the other supporting roles, such as Martin Hansen, and John to his friend Saul, also reflect their beautiful hearts, once all enemies Hansen gardening sheltered sick John, Saul and other people never leave John.

### **2.2.2. Photography**

The use of camera language is very clever. Starting from the perspective of the protagonist John, the film shows the contrast between John's spiritual world and the real world. Illusory spirit with entity, brought more powerful visual impact. Give the audience the experience of schizophrenic symptoms. The scene in which John enters the Pentagon uses a rotating camera to create a sense of vertigo while also highlighting John's experience.

In the film, the image of the white handkerchief appears many times. As a token of love for John and his wife, John held it in his hand when John won the Nobel Prize and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. It not only reflects the great love between John and his wife, but also reflects John's mental process, such as his contradictions, hesitations and changes. White symbolizes purity and goodness, which also reflects the greatness of John and his wife. In addition, the film also uses excellent colors.

Cold colors represent John's spiritual world, such as the secret personnel in black and the laboratory in gray tone. The background color is cold and cruel, symbolizing John's suffering from mental illness and black John's struggle in reality and fantasy. And warm colors represent the real world, warm, soft, full of inclusive power. Two kinds of main tone are making strong contrast, enhancing the visual impact, highlighting the contradiction.

Similarly, the film uses a side setting in the picture, reflecting the change of John from the reactions of

Princeton students. At the beginning, John was imitated and ridiculed by students for his strange walking style. Later, students were not surprised to see the professor swearing at the air and drawing infinite symbols on his bicycle. Finally, he started to communicate with him and gave him a pen to acknowledge his achievements. These reactions are indicative of John's admirable strength of character.

In addition, yellow permeates almost the whole film, from the classical yellow tone when John defeats graduate school at the beginning, to warm yellow when he falls in love with Alicia, to pale yellow when he has hallucinations, and the glorious golden yellow when he finally wins the Nobel Prize, implying John's experience [1].

There are three interactive scenes in the film. The first one is that young John is full of contempt and disdain when teaching students and thinks it is the most meaningless and waste of time [2]. However, at the end of the film, the old John takes the initiative to teach and explain to students. Second, young John saw accomplished professors receiving pens from young people, and after winning the Nobel Prize, he also received pens from people in recognition of his academic achievements. Third, John played chess with Hansen twice, and both times the same question and answer came up. These scenes, in contrast, reflect John's journey from fear and disdain towards society to love and tolerance.

### 2.2.3 Music

The soundtrack divides John's life into three phases: "Digital world", "Fighting disease" and "Brilliant humanity." In the first stage, the female voice, triangular iron and orchestral strings interlace, reflecting a colorful digital world, leading to the opening, at 21 minutes and 32 seconds of the film, is the turning point of the story, of course [3]. In addition, John Nash completed the most important research of his college years and entered a new phase of his life. At this time, the digital-themed music stayed here for as long as one minute, and it got the maximum play and display in both plot and music. In the second stage, the suspense plot is increased, and the narrative technique of combining the virtual and the real also changes the music style, which is well reflected in John's two letters. In the first letter, there is only music in the picture, just like a broken string, and the tension atmosphere reaches the extreme. In the second letter, lighting is used to amplify the panic of the characters. In this case, there are no strings, only the sound of piano strengthens the sense of immersion of the audience. The third stage uses the question-and-answer melody, hesitant, slow, full of philosophical meaning, reflecting the strong humanistic feelings. The power of music increases with the strong love, and also reflects the great love between John and Alicia.

### 2.2.4 The meaning of John's three illusions

In this paper, John's hallucinations are comprised of three people, Charles, his roommate during graduate school. Herman, pentagon military officer William. Parcher and Charles' niece Marcy, these three imaginary characters have different meanings, and their appearance satisfies John's shortcomings and needs in reality. First of all, on behalf of the John Charles to friendship, empathy and understanding his desire, John at Princeton, and more people around to look at "geek" look at him, John knew nothing about the law of survival in the society, he doesn't know how to make friends, as a result, Charles in his phantom appear satisfy his desire for the friend, The image of Charles as a prodigal son, who does not care about his studies, also shows John's dissatisfaction with the rules and regulations on campus, including classes and exams. Second, Parcher represents John's desire to succeed. Ever since John's breakthrough in game theory, he has been eager to use his theory to great effect, yet after graduation, he only takes jobs he hates, like teaching students. At this time, the appearance of Pachter just met his psychological needs for success, and a series of actions such as playing radium tubes on his body also symbolized John's desire to be valued, to be able to play a big use. Finally, the little girl Marcy represents the pure nature of John, John socially even pure than a child, he to secular rule, common sense can be said to be completely do not understand, this has created his special and lonely, when in reality no one understand him, illusion occurs in the corresponding personality, and Marcy started with Charles niece identity appearances. The loss of his mother also shows that John's desire for friendship is closely related to his innocence, and in the real world, he is just as sad and lonely as Marcy.

But were all three of John's hallucinations negative? Obviously not. John's schizophrenia was essentially his self-motivation mechanism for himself, if it had not been for Charles to show up during graduate school, to encourage him to abandon his worldly gaze and help him push his desk down the stairs. John will not be able to vent, and he may be in a more serious situation. But later in life, John's hallucinations began to work against him, and he began to lose his temper and hurt his wife. This also represents that he is more and more disappointed with the reality, the idea of giving up the reality is more and more serious. In the later period, his process of fighting against his hallucinations is essentially a process of fighting against his emotions. He must learn to control his emotions and integrate into society. But the illusion will not disappear, just as the emotional foundation will not be eliminated, all of us have frustrated, lonely moments, but we need to properly deal with such negative emotions. In the end, John managed to ignore his delusion and declare victory in the war.

*A Beautiful Mind* has many foibles. For example, when John was just suffering from schizophrenia, he played chess with Hansen, who did not like him, and left angrily after losing. At this moment, Hansen laughed loudly, "See, this is the great Nash". On his return to Princeton, Parcher and Charles told him to give up reality and return to secret work in his hallucinations, as they did after Nash forced him away from them. John has been visible on this sentence have great fear, he has been eager to himself as a great man, but the journey bumpy, environmental factors also not recognized him, for example, two films begin to an old professor John in the lobby to see people on your own pen, in token of recognition of his academic achievement, when John won the Nobel Prize, The younger generation also presents him with pencils, and the scene also tells the audience that John has become everything he wanted to be and has a truly beautiful heart.

### 2.2.5 *The main ideas of the film*

When Nash knew that he was ill, that all he had was a mirage, that the cause for which he had given his life did not exist, he could have given up on himself and continued to dwell in his fantasy. "Disease" is a reasonable excuse, can let he no longer face the reality, but Nash chose to face the challenge, he walked out of the arrogance of paranoia as a young and in the campus of Princeton university, the same sentence, "the head of a few immature" as a youth he thinks teaching creative destruction will only waste time, and at this time is knowledge for students to reassure actively, loneliness when I was young Lonely to old age into society, lonely hong also return to their geese. The three phantoms never disappeared, but Nash never ignored the temptation. He kept the balance between brain and mind with his will and reason, constantly overcoming and surpassing himself. "I just got used to ignoring them." "They are all the past, and everyone is haunted by the past." Over the past few decades, Nash game equilibrium theory has become the foundation of modern economics, he also found a balance in with their own game, with the help of his wife, friends, and Princeton university, he won the Nobel Prize in economics's highest honor, although the phantom cannot eliminate, but Nash has already can coexist with them. In Nash's inner world, we can also learn a lot of enlightenment to better ourselves. Life is a process made up of constant choices. Everyone has his own needs and faces many temptations and difficulties. Only sincere emotions can build a balance between the heart and the outside world, get close to each other and feel life, which is the essence of life [4].

### 2.2.6 *Why it is worth to watch*

Different from the style of many commercial films, *A Beautiful Mind* shows the humanistic feelings and the beauty of human nature. The humanistic feelings are

demonstrated by describing the love between the hero Nash and his wife, the friendship between him and his friends, and the tolerance and respect between him and the social environment. Although Nash was plagued by illness and pain throughout his life, he could always feel the care from people around him, which lit up his life journey like a beacon in the night. In our mundane reality, John's experience may give us a way to grow. Whether it's friendship, whether it's love, whether it's the value of acceptance, whether it's the acceptance that we can give to others [5]. Likewise, society should have more room for "freaks," even if many of them don't achieve as much as John.

## 3. CONCLUSION

Hegel said, "Man cannot settle down from pure inner life, from pure thinking, from the world of laws and universals. He still needs to have perceptual existence, emotions and so on" [6]. In the real world, people are people in the society, and individuals cannot be separated from the society. They need to have contact with other individuals in the society and cannot be isolated and static. Therefore, interpersonal communication is an essential part of life for a person with a sound and complete personality.

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