

[Dr. G. Weber's Report to the Court on the Case of Daniel Paul Schreber.]

OI 128/01 at C.J.J. 64/99².

Sonnenstein, 9th December 1899. p. 379

A. MEDICAL EXPERT'S REPORT TO THE COURT ¹³³

The returned *Senatspräsident* Daniel Paul Schreber, Doctor of Law, of Dresden, was admitted to this Country Asylum on 29th June 1894 for treatment and has been here ever since.

According to the formal certificate of Professor Flechsig of Leipzig issued for the transfer of the patient to this Asylum, President Schreber had already had a serious attack of hypochondria in 1884-1885; he recovered from it and was admitted for the second time to the University Psychiatric Clinic in Leipzig on 21st November 1893. At the beginning of his stay there he mentioned mostly hypochondriacal ideas, complained that he was suffering from softening of the brain, would soon die, etc.; but ideas of persecution soon appeared in the disease picture, based on hallucinations, which at first occurred sporadically, while simultaneously marked hyperaesthesia, great sensitivity to light and noise made their appearance. Later the visual and auditory hallucinations multiplied and, in conjunction with disturbances of common sensation, ruled his whole feeling and thinking; he thought he was dead and rotten, suffering from the plague, mentioned that all sorts of horrible manipulations were being performed on his body, and that he was going through more terrible states than anybody had ever known. All that for a holy purpose, as indeed he still maintains. These morbid ideas gained so great an influence over the patient that he was inaccessible to any other impression, sat for hours completely stiff and immobile (hallucinatory

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¹³³ The Reports A, B and D follow without any comment (apart from footnotes 134 and 135). The comparison with the corresponding accounts in the Memoirs and in my grounds for appeal will show immediately that the reports contain some factual mistakes, inexactitudes and misconceptions. But I have no doubt that the reason lies to some extent in unreliable reports furnished by third persons (attendants, etc.).

stupor); at other times they tortured him so much that he wished for death, repeatedly made attempts at drowning himself in the bath and demanded the "cyanide destined for him". Gradually the delusions took on a mystical and religious character, he communicated directly with God, devils were playing their games with him, he saw "miracles," heard "holy music," and finally even believed that he was living in another world.

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In this Asylum, to which President Schreber was transferred after a short stay in the private establishment of Dr. Pierson, he showed at first mainly the same picture as in Leipzig. This physically strong man, in whom frequent jerkings of the face musculature and marked tremor of the hands were noticeable, was at first completely inaccessible and shut off in himself, lay or stood immobile and stared with frightened eyes straight ahead of himself into space; he did not answer questions at all or only very briefly and protestingly; but clearly this rigid demeanor was far removed from indifference, rather the patient's whole state seemed tense, irritable, caused by inner uneasiness and there could be no doubt that he was continually influenced by vivid and painful hallucinations, which he elaborated in a delusional manner. In the same way the patient abruptly rejected every communication and continually demanded to be left alone, indeed even that the whole house be cleared because God's omnipotence was being obstructed by the presence of attendants and others, while he himself wanted "divine peace". For the same reason he refused nourishment so that he had to be forcibly fed, or only took a few light dishes, refusing meat completely, and it was only with great difficulty that he was gradually made to eat regularly again. At the same time he retained his stool apparently deliberately, as far as he possibly could; he was therefore even incontinent at times.¹³⁴ Similarly for a long time it was impossible to persuade him to any activity such as reading, which he rejected because every word he read was being shouted out through the whole world. He frequently complained that there was a "loss of rays," that the doctor had "negligently emitted rays," without explaining more closely what he meant.

In November 1894 the patient's stiff posture loosened a little, he came out of himself more, became more mobile, started to speak

¹³⁴ These reported soiling find their true explanation in my statements at the end of Chapter XVI of the Memoirs.

coherently although in an abrupt and somewhat staccato manner; there now emerged undisguised, the fantastic delusional elaboration of his continual hallucinations; he felt himself adversely influenced by certain persons previously known to him (Flechsig, v. W...), whom he believed to be present here, thought that the world had been changed by them, God's omnipotence destroyed, he himself struck by their curses; maintained that they pulled thoughts out of his body and suchlike. While he continued to refuse to read, he sometimes wrote stenographic signs on paper, occupied himself occasionally with a game of patience, and appeared to give a little more attention to events in his environment. p. 382

Very gradually the patient's excitement mounted further, disturbed his, up till then, moderate sleep and manifested itself externally, particularly by loud persistent laughter occurring to a certain extent in attacks (by day as well as by night), and by heavy hammering on the piano in a most disturbing manner. That this very striking behaviour had to be looked upon as a reaction to hallucinations, particularly to delusional ideas springing from them, became evident from some of the patient's statements, such as that the world had come to an end, that everything he saw round himself was only a sham, he himself and the persons around him only lifeless shadows. At the same time he still had hypochondriacal ideas, mentioned among others that his body was completely changed, one lung had disappeared altogether, and he could hardly breathe sufficiently to remain alive.

Subsequently, the nights in particular became increasingly restless, while simultaneously a change occurred in him in so far as the earlier continuously stiff rejecting and negativistic attitude gave place, so to speak, to a certain dualism. On the one hand the reaction against the hallucinations became increasingly noisy and intense, in the garden the patient used to stand for a long time motionless in one place, staring into the sun, at the same time grimacing in an extraordinary way or bellowing very loudly at the sun with threats and imprecations, usually repeating endlessly one and the same phrase, shouting at her, that she was afraid of him, and that she had to hide from him the *Senatspräsident* Schreber, and also called himself Ormuzd. Or he raved in his room to such an extent, harangued for some time the "soul-murderer" Flechsig, repeated endlessly "little Flechsig," putting heavy accent on the first word, or shouted abuse and suchlike out of his window with such tremendous force even at night, that the p. 383

townspeople gathered and complained of the disturbance. On the other hand he was in many respects more polite and accessible towards the doctors and other persons, even if they surprised him during such noisy scenes, even answered simple questions about his condition, etc., though in a somewhat reserved and patronising manner, said nothing of his troubles and was able to control himself for a little while quite well; he also started to read, play chess and piano as he had done before.

In the meantime the nightly scenes became increasingly noisy unchecked by the sleeping drugs given in ever increasing doses, so that, as the medicines could not be increased without fear of causing harm, and as the whole department suffered considerably through the continual nightly disturbances, one was forced in June 1896 to segregate the patient at night in a more isolated room and carry this *out for a number of months*.¹³⁵ The patient, of course, was somewhat irritated by this, but permitted it without marked resistance, apparently realizing that his actions were pathological and causing extraordinary almost unbearable annoyance to his environment.

p. 384 For some time the physical behaviour of the patient showed only little change, the peculiar very loud forced laughter and the monotonous uttering in endless repetition of incomprehensible abusive language (for instance "the sun is a whore," and suchlike), which served apparently to a certain extent as counter-action against the hallucinations and disturbances of feeling (pain in the back, etc.), continued as before, sleep remained very deficient but nourishment was taken more adequately and he was gaining weight; even then there were early signs of a peculiar delusion which developed later: the patient was frequently found in his room half undressed, declared that he already had feminine breasts, liked to occupy himself by looking at pictures of naked women, even drew them and had his moustache removed.

However, perhaps since the spring of 1897 a change was noticed in the patient; he entered into a lively correspondence with his wife and other relatives; and it must be admitted that the letters were correctly and deftly written, and hardly showed anything pathological, but rather a certain insight, when for instance he revealed that he had been very frightened, had not been able to get himself to do anything, but that

¹³⁵ As regards the duration, compare pages 197, 198, 201 (two and a half years).

things were now much better and he was grateful to be able to find so much stimulating conversation, etc., while nevertheless the former insulting, laughing and shouting continued, and nightly isolation could not be discontinued.

Even while the patient continued to show himself little inclined to more serious conversation, and soon became restless and impatient when this was attempted, started to grimace, utter peculiar short interjections and one could see that he wished the conversation quickly finished, nevertheless the patient's occupations became more varied and more continuous; frequently it was difficult to understand how he could achieve sufficient peace and concentration for such intellectual work during the continuous obviously intensive hallucinatory burden, to talk about the most varied matters in a relevant manner and moreover to control himself in a way which at times hid his illness. Gradually even the nightly noisy outbursts diminished, so that the patient could again use his usual bedroom and remain in it with only little support from drugs.

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Without going further into all the details of the course of his illness, attention is drawn to the way in which from the early more acute psychosis which influenced all psychic processes and which could be called hallucinatory insanity, the paranoid form of illness became more and more marked, crystallized out so to speak, into its present picture.

This kind of illness is, as is well known, characterized by the fact that next to a more or less fixed elaborate delusional system there is complete possession of mental faculties and orientation, formal logic is retained, marked affective reactions are missing, neither intelligence nor memory are particularly affected and the conception and judgment of indifferent matters, that is to say matters far removed from the delusional ideas, appear not to be particularly affected, although naturally because of the unity of all psychic events they are not untouched by them.

Thus President Schreber now appears neither confused, nor psychically inhibited, nor markedly affected in his intelligence, apart from the psychomotor symptoms which stand out clearly as pathological even to the casual observer: he is circumspect, his memory excellent, he commands a great deal of knowledge, not only in matters of law but in many other fields, and is able to reproduce it in an orderly manner, he is interested in political, scientific and artistic

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events, etc., and occupies himself with them continuously (although recently he seems to have been distracted from them a little more again), and little would be noticeable in these directions to an observer not informed of his total state. Nevertheless, the patient is filled with pathological ideas, which are woven into a complete system, more or less fixed, and not amenable to correction by objective evidence and judgment of circumstances as they really are; the latter still less so as hallucinatory and delusory processes continue to be of importance to him and hinder normal evaluation of sensory impressions. As a rule the patient does not mention these pathological ideas or only hints at them, but it is evident how much he is occupied by them, partly from some of his writings (extracts of some are added), partly it is easily seen from his whole bearing.

p. 387 The patient's delusional system amounts to this: he is called to redeem the world and to bring back to mankind the lost state of Blessedness. He maintains he has been given this task by direct divine inspiration, similar to that taught by the prophets; he maintains that nerves in a state of excitation, as his have been for a long time, have the property of attracting God, but it is a question of things which are either not at all expressible in human language or only with great difficulty, because he maintains they lie outside all human experience and have only been revealed to him. The most essential part of his mission of redemption is that it is necessary for him first of all to be *transformed into a woman*. Not, however, that he *wishes* to be transformed into a woman, it is much more a "must" according to the Order of the World, which he simply cannot escape, even though he would personally very much prefer to remain in his honourable manly position in life. But the beyond was not to be gained again for himself and the whole of mankind other than by this future transformation into a woman by way of divine miracle in the course of years or decades. He maintains that he is the exclusive object of divine miracles, and with it the most remarkable human being that ever lived on earth. For years at every hour and every minute he experiences these miracles in his body, has them confirmed also by voices that speak to him. He maintains that in the earlier years of his illness he suffered destruction of individual organs of his body, of a kind which would have brought death to every other human being, that he lived for a long time without stomach, without intestines, bladder, almost without lungs, with smashed ribs, torn gullet, that he had at times eaten part of his own

larynx with his food, etc.; but divine miracles ("rays") had always restored the destroyed organs, and therefore, as long as he remained a man, he was absolutely immortal. These threatening phenomena have long ago disappeared, and in their place his "femaleness" had come to the fore; it is a question of an evolutionary process which in all probability will take decades if not centuries for its completion and the end of which is unlikely to be witnessed by any human being now alive. He has the feeling that already masses of "female nerves" have been transferred into his body, from which through immediate fertilization by God new human beings would come forth. Only then would he be able to die a natural death and have gained for himself as for all other human beings the state of Blessedness. In the meantime not only the sun but also the trees and the birds, which he thinks are something like "remains of previous human souls transformed by miracles," speak to him in human tones and everywhere around him miracles are enacted.

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It is not really necessary to go further into all the details of these delusional ideas, which by the way are developed and motivated with remarkable clarity and logical precision—the description given should suffice to give an idea of the content of the patient's delusional system and of his pathologically altered conception of the world, and it only remains to mention that also in the patient's behaviour, in the clean shaving of his face, in his pleasure in feminine toilet articles, in small feminine occupations, in the tendency to undress more or less and to look at himself in the mirror, to decorate himself with gay ribbons and bows, etc., in a feminine way, the pathological direction of his fantasy is manifested continually. At the same time the hallucinatory processes, as already mentioned above, continue in unaltered intensity and they as well as certain pathological motor impulses are shown by very noticeable involuntary automatic actions. As the patient himself declares, he is very frequently forced by day and night to utter "unnatural bellowing sounds"; he affirms that he cannot control them, that it is a matter of divine miracles, of supernatural happenings, which cannot be understood by other human beings, and these vociferations, based on physical compulsion, and very annoying also for his environment, occur so unremittingly that they disturb the patient's nightly rest in the most painful way and necessitate the use of sleeping drugs.

Only in one connection has the patient in recent times shown a change in attitude; whereas previously, perhaps because of a more marked feeling of being ill, he was to a certain extent resigned to his fate, although protesting here and there against some measures, did not give any external sign of wishing to change his situation and appeared to have little interest in his legal and social affairs, he now demands energetically the lifting of his tutelage, wishes for freer movement and more active contact with the outer world and expects definitely to return to his home in the not too distant future. These plans exercise him a good deal and have apparently even pushed the mentioned pathological ideas to a certain extent into the background. p. 389

Whether President Schreber is to be considered deprived of the use of reason in terms of the law by virtue of the above exposition of his pathological mental state, which must be labelled paranoia, is a question for the Court to decide. If, however, what has been said gives the impression, far removed from medical opinion, that the patient is prevented by mental illness from understanding *all* events objectively and correctly, from judging them by circumstances as they really are, and from taking his decisions after unimpaired sensible consideration and with free will, then clearly in this case the existing hallucinations, the delusions connected with them and built up into a system, and the irresistible impulses which rule the patient, amount to a considerable degree of impairment and continue to do so.

There is no medical objection to President Schreber being examined by the Court.

The aforementioned is attested by the undersigned acting under his oath of office.

L.S.

(Signed) Dr. Weber,
Superintendent of the Asylum,
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Adviser to the Court.

[Dr. G. Weber, Superintendent of the Sonnenstein Asylum, in *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, by Daniel Paul Schreber, Wm. Dawson & Sons Ltd., London, 1955, pp. 267-274 * Translated, Edited, with Introduction, Notes and Discussion by Ida Macalpine, M.D. and Richard A. Hunter, M.D., M.R.C.P., D.P.M.]