

The real predicament for the analytic clinician arises when the analysand brings his *mad* state and need to be alone to his session. The latter is often mistaken for resistance, and the analysand hides his true need, screening it with compliant guilt and acceptance.

But that is not the worst that we do as clinicians. We also try to make sense of the *non-sense* of the analysand's spoken madness in terms of our conceptual vocabulary, through which we are addicted to listening to the analysand's normal or pathological material, and interpreting it. Misguidedly, but from concern, we try to make sense of this *non-sense* by either reconstructing *the facts* of infancy (Winnicott) or its *fantasies* (Klein). Neither helps; the creative potential of the madness lapses back into oblivion and the analysand is no longer either mad or alone, but merely lonely and lost!

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On Lying Fallow

Writing to Countess M. on 10 March 1921, Rainer Maria Rilke expressed a sentiment which in a humbler way is true of us all: 'Ultimately each one of us experiences only *one* conflict in life which constantly reappears under a different guise.'

What for Rilke was '*one* conflict' has been, in my life experience, a preoccupation with a person's relation to himself. Here I shall focus on a rather private, nonconflictual and personalized area of self-experience, namely, *lying fallow*. The noun *fallow* is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'ground that is well-ploughed and harrowed, but left uncropped for a whole year or more'.

Through the metaphor of an active verb, I wish to indicate that the mood I am trying to discuss is not one of inertia, listless vacancy or idle quietism of soul; nor is it a flight from harassed purposiveness and pragmatic action. *Lying fallow* is a transitional state of experience, a mode of being that is alerted quietude and receptive wakeful lambent consciousness.

It is indeed difficult to define positive nonconflictual moods and affective emotional states. Language bears a very long and complex relation to conflictual states, be they vis-à-vis external reality or inner psychic reality. Over a long period of time, it has evolved an expertise and competence in defining these conflictual states of angst and fear, hope and despair, elation and depression.

For centuries, writers, sages and priests have cultivated and perfected the instrumentality of the spoken and written word as a way of regulating and organizing human experience, purposiveness and action. The latest arrivals on this scene are the psychoanalysts, and over some seventy years, guided by the researches of Freud, they have said and established a great deal about the human being in a state of conflict. What I shall discuss here is not a neurotic, conflictual or distress state, but an ego-capacity. By this I mean a healthy function of the ego in the service of the individual.

In recent years, both in psychoanalysis and in other disciplines, the need to view the whole human being as an existential entity has been stressed more frequently. Winnicott and Heinz Hartmann have

contributed a great deal towards an understanding of those intractably silent states which we associate with the healthy individual. The most effective and persuasive plea on this score, however, has been made by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. After accounting for the long and complex evaluation of human consciousness over thousands of years, he came to the conclusion: 'Is it not possible that in our theories and in our acts we have neglected to give due place to the person and the forces of *personalization*.'

My argument is that the capacity for lying fallow is a function of the process of personalization in the individual. This process of personalization achieves its sentient wholeness over a slow period of growth, development and acculturation, and its true matrix is a hierarchy of relationships: the mother looking after the infant; the father supporting the mother; the family nurturing the parents; and society maintaining the family in a living and nutrient ambience for the individuating person.

This is a long process and it is waylaid by many traumata – personal, familial and social. But if all goes well – and it does, more often than not – what crystallizes and differentiates into the separate status of adult selfhood is a personalized individual with his own privacy, inner reality and sense of relatedness to his social environment.

Today we live in excessively pragmatic and ruthlessly evangelical societies, where everything is being done for the *individual* through the instrumentality of the state and politicians, sociologists and psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and entertainers. In this excessive zeal to rescue and comfort the individual, we have perhaps overlooked some of the basic needs of the person to be private, unintegrated and to lie fallow. The welfare state, whether idealistically socialist, traditionally conservative or militantly Marxist, has evolved an intrusive concern for the individual's well-being which, instead of promoting his personal growth, is turning him into a depersonalized parasite, as well as a victim, with ready-to-hand rescue measures of skills and programmed endeavours.

I am not jeering at the true virtues of modern civilizations and that civic concern for the well-being of the individual which is one of the great achievements of the Christian cultures. Through my nurture I am able to evaluate the nihilism built into Eastern cultures by centuries of spiritual inertia, and by their obsession with rarified purity of the soul and their utter disregard for the human being as a civic organism. In my early years, I saw such body-misery, poverty

and destitution of existence in the Hindu-Muslim culture of India that I will never believe that a civilization is worth a bean if it does not look after the ordinary welfare of its citizens, no matter how excellent it is with the metaphysics of the soul. It is precisely because Western cultures and civilizations have firmly established the civic dignity, freedom and well-being of the individual that we should try to look at the more subtle aspects of the private and silent psychic experiences and their value for human existence.

Let me say outright that the soul has meaning only in a well-cared-for individual. In abject poverty, no person can lie fallow.

Let us try to make a phenomenological statement about lying fallow. To define it negatively, it is not a state of instinctual or environmental tension. We all experience it frequently in fleeting patches. Quite often we register consciously a mellow disinclination to apply ourselves to something that we should be doing. We nag at ourselves with admonitory rigour but somehow fail to move or harass our executive faculties to the task. We sense a need to be somewhat idle and to feel our way out of this benignly languid passive mood. If we are forced out of it, either by our own conscience or the environment, we feel irritable and grumpy. Quite often we are only too ready to blame some external factor for our incapacity to hold and sustain this fallow mood.

Although this fallow mood is essentially and inherently private and personal, it needs an ambience of companionship in order to be held and sustained. In isolation or deprivation one can neither arrive at this mood nor sustain it. Someone – a friend, a wife, a neighbour – sitting around unobtrusively, guarantees that the psychic process does not get out of hand, that is, become morbid, introspective or sullenly doleful. There are endless variations of the failure of the fallow mood. One extreme is the rigorous self-immolating bleakness of a mystical retreat from life and the imprisonment of self by a rationalized idealistic apologia for such states of being. There are also the exotic experiences that some persons strive after and achieve through narcotics, alcohol and other drugs.

What does the fallow mood achieve for us? The answer is a paradox: a great deal and nothing. It is a nutrient of the ego and a preparatory state. It supplies the energetic substratum for most of our creative efforts, and through its unintegrated, psychic suspended animation (which is the obverse of organized mentation) allows for that larval inner experience which distinguishes true psychic creativity from obsessional productiveness.

Thus the fallow state is:

1. A transitional and transient mood
2. A nonconflictual, noninstinctual, and intellectually uncritical state
3. A capacity of the ego
4. An alert wakeful mood – unintegrated, receptive and labile
5. A largely nonverbal and imagistic state, kinaesthetic in expression.

Furthermore, I would say that the fallow mood is largely experienced or expressed in silence, even with oneself. It is, however, more amenable to pictorial expression than verbal articulation – doodling, etcetera, can be quite an adequate vehicle for it.

It is perhaps one of the few genuine achievements of modern art between 1900 and 1940 that it divested the pictorial activity of painting of its too close alliance with thematic representation. The cubists (Picasso, Braque, Leger, Gris, etcetera) staked a claim for expressing transitional states of visual experience – a claim that derived from lying fallow rather than from dream states. The enchanting exponent of painting as a vehicle of the fallow mood is Miro, with his wayward somnambulant doodles and blotches of colour, which are so playful in their stillness.

By relating the fallow mood to creative artistic productions, I wish to establish an important value coefficient of this mood – its discipline and relation to *will*. It is not an idle moronic state of being. It is a cogent capacity in a well-established, disciplined and personalized individual. We may all make-believe that we can doodle like Miro, but the strength and vigour of sensibility needed to sustain that state of free-floating animation and to capture its innate aliveness through imagery is no small achievement of the ego. Compare to it the nostalgic escapist efforts of the Sunday painters, and it is not difficult to establish the difference. Lying fallow is, above all, the proof that a person can be with himself unpurposefully.

How does lying fallow relate to leisure? It is, in some ways, the obverse of leisure, particularly as it has become known today. It is a strange and uncanny result of urban civilization and the impact of technology on human experience that leisure has become a pursuit and an end in itself. It has gradually become an industry, a profession and an imperative social need of the individuals in modern societies. Everyone strives for more and more leisure and knows less and less what to do with it. Hence the emergence of a colossal trade in organizing people's leisure. This need is perhaps one of the real

absurdities of our existence today, and it reflects the decay of some crucial value-systems, which the wisdom of religions sponsored for ages, in all types and kinds of human beings. The pursuit of frantic leisure, with little capacity to make a personalized experience of it, is perhaps one of the most dissipating qualities of the technical cultures. The individual on whom leisure has been imposed in massive doses, and who has little capacity to deal with it, then searches for distractions that will fill this vacuum. A vast amount of the energy of modern man is spent searching for these distractions, and when he fails to be assuaged by distractions, he concocts states of ill-health and morbidity which then occupy his leisure. A great deal of the distress and psychic conflict that we see clinically today in our patients is the result of a warped and erroneous expectancy of human nature and existence. It is the omnipresent fallacy of our age that all life should be fun and that all time should be made available to enjoy this fun. The result is apathy, discontent and pseudo-neurosis. It may seem rather odd that a psychoanalyst should write about human conflict with such irony. But unless we are honest and distinguish between true conflict and illness, and illusory faked neuroses which derive from misconceptions of human nature, we only confuse our task as therapists and confuse our patients as well.

A craving for leisure, and the concomitant yearning for distractions to fill the void of given-leisure, is the result of our failure to understand the role and function of the need to lie fallow in the human psyche and personality. Over the past six or seven decades we have industriously misinformed ourselves about the essentials of human nature. We have confused the necessity to relieve human poverty and misery with the demand that all life should be fun and kicks. The entertainment media of modern cultures have further exploited this leisure void for commercial gain and flooded the citizens with ready-made switchable distractions, so that no awareness of the need to develop personal resources to cope with fallow states can actualize as private experience.

A pathetic consequence of this situation is that we have a style of personality development emerging that is overdemanding in its claims on the environment and others, and its need to be related to by others, but has little comprehension of the necessity of the responsibility for an inner relation to its own self. Even a superficial acquaintance with our contemporary theatre and literature will show how dramatically and vociferously the isolation, misery, loneliness, bereftness, etcetera, of the individual is portrayed, with no inkling of insight into

the person's primary human responsibility for a commitment to sustain and nourish himself.

It has often been said that the failure to find a true relation to the self is the major symptom of our times, and the blame for it has been overgenerously apportioned to parents, society and the scientific revolution. What has not been stressed enough is that very few individuals today regard it as their own responsibility to relate to themselves. We have replaced effort with labour, and lying fallow with idle leisure.

The capacity to lie fallow is dependent upon:

1. Acceptance of self as a separate person
2. Toleration of noncommunication
3. Putting up with reduced relatedness to and from the environment.

Lastly, I would like to say that one of my debts to Winnicott is that he taught me how to enable a patient as a person to find, when he needed to in the analytic situation, his own capacity to lie fallow, without feeling a silent coercive demand from my presence to fill the session with a debris of facts or to berate himself for not free associating. Language and relating are only creative when the person speaks from himself in order to relate both to himself and the other, and thus actualizes himself for himself and the other. For this to happen, the capacity to lie fallow in a quiescent aloneness with the other is an inevitable prerequisite.

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