



The Architecture of the Void: A Psychodynamic Reading of the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21)

Babu Sebastian*

Abstract:

This article reframes the *Parable of the Rich Fool* (Luke 12:16–21) by shifting the analytical focus from a traditional moral critique of *greed* and *practical atheism* to a structural investigation of “the damaged core” and “psychic inertia”. Utilising a heuristic dialogue between theology and psychodynamic theory, the author synthesises the frameworks of Ogden, Bollas, Anzieu, Bick, Spotnitz, Akhtar, Khan and Green to decode the narrative into three specific psychic “architectures”. The protagonist’s retreat into “bigger barns” is reframed not as simple greed, but as a desperate struggle for “boundedness” against a “sensory inundation” that threatens his fragile ego. By constructing a “Skin-Ego” or “Second Skin” of masonry and grain, the man attempts to replace a missing internal psychological membrane with a rigid material envelope to prevent the “leakage” of his self into the void of the “Other”. This “Narcissistic Closed Loop” effectively mummifies his internal life, creating a “Static Perfection” that bypasses the transience of human existence and the “anxiety of Lack”. Ultimately, the “requirement” of his soul represents the inevitable collapse of this “architecture of the void,” proving that a self-imposed sarcophagus of total security results in total psychological annihilation.

Keyword: Psychodynamic exegesis, skin-ego, autistic-contiguous position, perversion of desire, narcissistic closed loop, damaged core

* Institute of Psychology, Centre Saint Peter Favre for Formators to the Priesthood and Religious Life
Corresponding author: Babu Sebastian, babucmf@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Traditional biblical scholarship often warns against over-analysing the Gospel parables because of their deliberate narrative economy, noting that these stories usually lack specific details about the characters' motives, feelings, or developmental backgrounds, leaving the story's ending unresolved and provocative (Donahue, 1988, p. 21). However, this very lack of detail creates a valuable gateway to uncover the hidden "psychic structure" beneath the text. By utilising the "blank spaces" inherent in the Lukan narrative, we can approach the parable of the Rich Fool not through clinical labelling but through a heuristic dialogue in which psychodynamic theory serves as an analytical extension of theology. Rather than replacing the original theological intent, this expanded reading treats the parable as a magnifying glass, revealing the deep "psychic inertia" that pulls a human being into complete self-isolation. By shifting the focus from moral judgment to a structural investigation, the protagonist's actions are reframed as a desperate strategy for psychological survival in the face of universal, unbearable anxieties.

The parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21) opens with an irony often noted by biblical commentators: a "blessing" that becomes a catastrophe. Biblical scholar Bock (2018) emphasises that the "abundance" or *εὐφώρησεν* (*euphorēsen*) of the land is a sign of God's providential care – a gift intended to reinforce the man's dependence on the Divine and his responsibility to the community. Yet, as Bock observes, the Rich Fool's response is a radical turn inward. He fails to acknowledge any source for his wealth other than his own management. In his internal monologue, the pronouns "I" and "my" appear eleven times in just three verses. It is a closed circle of self-reference, where the pronouns "I" and "my" systematically erase any acknowledgement of Divine providence or the "blessing" of the land's abundance. He is, in Bock's terms, a man suffering from "practical atheism" – living as if God does not exist and as if his life is his own achievement.

Bible commentator Hultgren (2000) further decodes the man's folly by highlighting the sociocultural violation. In the ancient Mediterranean world, wealth was viewed as a "limited good". To hoard a surplus of this magnitude was not merely a personal choice; it was a violation of the communal social contract. In such a cultural context, by enclosing the grain, the man is not just being "thrifty"; he is effectively "choking" the lifeblood of

the village. Hultgren notes that the man's invitation to his soul to "relax, eat, drink, be merry" is the ultimate expression of a "self-contained life". By building larger barns, the man attempts to create a buffer against the unpredictability of the future, effectively trying to "buy" security and bypass the human condition of contingency. In this exegetical view, the "folly" is moral: the man has mistaken his possessions for his life, choosing the security of the warehouse over the relational vitality of the Kingdom.

2. The Argument for an Expanded Psychodynamic Reading of the Parable

Theological inquiry accurately identifies the Rich Fool's "folly" as a moral and social failure – a "practical atheism" and the violation of the communal ethics of the ancient Mediterranean. Yet, while authors like Bock (2018) and Hultgren (2000) diagnose the rich man's refusal to acknowledge Divine providence and social dependency, they leave a haunting structural question unanswered: *what is the specific psychic inertia that pulls a human being into such a profound, airtight state of self-isolation?* To address this, we must pivot from a critique of the man's *moral character* to an investigation of the *structural fragility* of the human self by using a psychoanalytic framework.

To ground the heuristic dialogue between scripture and psychodynamic theory, we must reconcile the theological indictment of "folly" with the psychological diagnosis of "pathology". The convergence of the Rich Fool's "folly" and his "pathology" reveals they are not competing interpretations, but rather two sides of a single coin that describe a unified psychic and moral collapse. While theological inquiry accurately identifies the man's "folly" as a moral failure – a "practical atheism" that violates the communal ethics of the ancient Mediterranean – a psychodynamic lens reframes this same behaviour as a desperate strategy for psychological survival in the face of structural fragility. In this light, his moral refusal to acknowledge Divine providence or social dependency is indistinguishable from his psychological inability to do so; his "folly" is the choice of the warehouse over relational vitality, but his "pathology" is the underlying psychic inertia that pulls him into a state of total self-isolation to avoid the unbearable anxieties of lack and dependency. By substituting a material shell of "bigger barns" for a spiritual and relational core, the man commits a series of existential "suicides", proving that his attempt to achieve absolute security through hoarding was, in reality, a pathological defence that transformed his home into a sepulchre. In this "psychic landscape", the barns, the land,

the crop, the soul, and the Rich Fool's monologue in the parable represent the dynamics of a closed-loop system – a response to the universal, unbearable anxieties of dependency, fear of lack, and the inevitability of death. We attempt to treat the parable as a lens for biblical truth, revealing the “psychic inertia” that makes the man's folly so hauntingly familiar and deeply human. Ultimately, this reading seeks to reposition the Rich Fool as a mirror for the latent tragic potential within all of us to enclose the self when faced with the terrifying vulnerability of being human, rather than remain open to the “Other” (the person, the community, the divine Other).

3. Structural Formations of the Closed Self: Convergent Analytic Inquiries

To streamline this analysis, we will synthesise the views of a wide array of analysts into *three core psychic “architectures”* that map directly to the narrative progression of Luke 12:16–21, enabling a cohesive structural decoding of the parable's psychological depth. We can divide the narrative progression into the following steps:

3.1. The Architecture of the Sensory Shield

Lukan Verse: *Ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου εὐφώρησεν ἡ χώρα (Anthrōpou tinos plousiou euphorēsen hē chōra)*¹ “*The land of a rich man produced abundantly*”. (v. 16)

The Rich Fool's “folly” represents a profound convergence of moral failure and structural pathology, where the Lukan “blessing” of an abundant harvest (*euphoresen*) begins with a *sensorial inundation* that triggers a catastrophic regression into what Ogden (1989) identifies as the *autistic-contiguous retreat*. Lacking an internal “maternal container” or a stable holding environment to metabolise this sudden sensory inundation, the man experiences his wealth not as a social resource, but as a “tactile sensory floor” essential for his psychological survival. The act of hoarding is not at the service of the greed for value, but it is a struggle for *boundedness*; he uses the material presence of the crops to feel that he exists and to plug the “internal hole” of a damaged core. For our analysis, we will employ the conceptual frameworks of Ogden (1989) and Bollas (1987).

¹ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-16.htm>

3.2. *The Architecture of the Second Skin*

Lukan Verse: καθελῶ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας καὶ μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω (*kathelō mou tas apothēkas kai meizonas oikodomēsō*)² “I will tear down my barns and build larger ones..”. (v. 18)

The man’s decision to build is not a matter of logistics, but a *defensive morphology* aimed at creating an artificial boundary as he experiences a crisis of fragmentation. The act of “tearing down” (*kathelō*) signifies a moment of catastrophic anxiety in which his old, porous boundaries fail to contain the pressure of his success. The “larger barns” function as a *Skin-Ego* or *Second Skin* – a “double wall” of masonry and grain designed to replace a missing internal psychological membrane. Sharing the grain with a neighbour would create a social “gap” in this shell, which the man perceives not as a choice, but as a “perforation in the psychological skin” leading to a terrifying “leakage” of his vital substance. He chooses to “choke” the communal lifeblood of the village rather than risk the “leakage” and annihilation of his own fragile, uncontained self. For our analysis, we will use the conceptual aid of Anzieu (2016) and Bick (1968, pp. 484-486).

3.3. *The Architecture of the Narcissistic Loop*

Lukan Verse: “καὶ ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου Ψυχὴ ἔχεις ... ἀναπαύου φάγε πίε εὐφραίνου” (*kai erō tē psychē mou, Psychē ... anapauou phage pie euphrainou*)³ “And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul... relax, eat, drink, be merry’”. (v. 19)

The man’s monologue (*διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ / diealogizeto en heauto*) signals the total abolition of the “Other” (God and neighbour) to preserve a state of non-tension. This is a *narcissistic closed loop* where the man acts as a “Narcissistic Parent” commanding his soul, the “Compliant Child”, to be happy. Within this “echo chamber of the ego”, the man enacts a “negative hallucination” of reality, treating his soul as a machine to be stimulated through the perverse ritual of forced merriment (*euphrainou*) rather than a living entity capable of desire or growth. By attempting to achieve a state of “Static Perfection” and

² <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-18.htm>

³ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-19.htm>

“omnipotent self-sufficiency”, he effectively “mummifies” his internal life to bypass the transience of human existence and the “anxiety of Lack”. This is a psyche that has become encysted, to use the language of Abraham & Torok (1994, 157-159), a *crypt* in which the vulnerable, needy self is buried alive behind a wall of grain. For our analysis, we will employ the conceptual elaborations of several analysts, including Spotnitz (2005), Green (1999, 2023), Akhtar (2009) and Khan (1989).

3.4. *The Collapse: Return of the Reality Principle*

Lukan Verse: “Ἀφρων ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν” (*Aphrōn tautē tē nykti tēn psychēn sou apaitousin*)⁴ “Fool! This night your soul is required of you...”. (v. 20)

Ultimately, the “Requirement” of his soul (*apaitousin*) is not an arbitrary judgment but the inevitable collapse of this closed system. When the external material envelope is stripped away, he is left with a hollow internal reality, proving that his pursuit of absolute comfort was merely the “architecture of the void” – a gilded sarcophagus for a soul that had already suffered psychic death. Because he never developed a “psychic skin” underneath the “barn skin”, the removal of his material goods results in total annihilation. This structural decoding reveals that the parable is a progression from *internal inundation* to *defensive containment*, to an attempt at *static perfection* and total *abolition of the other*, ending in catastrophic *disintegration*. Thus, this is not merely a story about a man who has too much; it is a story about a man who, in the face of an “abundant harvest”, suffers a total collapse of the internal capacity to relate to anything other than his own reflection. Here is a diagrammatic view that could help navigate the complex overlaps between the biblical text and psychological frameworks.

⁴ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-20.htm>

Table 1, Diagrammatic view of the overlaps

Biblical Element	Psychodynamic Concept	Primary Function
Abundant Harvest	Sensory Inundation / Transformational Object	Sense of self generated through sensory surfaces
Bigger Barns	Second Skin / Skin-Ego	Rigid material envelope to prevent fragmentation
Monologue (“I/My”)	Narcissistic Closed Loop	Defence against object-related frustration/the “Other”
“Eat, Drink, Be Merry”	Perverse Self-Stimulation	Manufacturing happiness to bypass the “anxiety of Lack”
The “Requirement”	Return of the Reality Principle	The violent shattering of the self-constructed echo chamber

We shall now proceed to uncover the different layers of this narrative progression through the analytic lenses of various psychoanalysts.

4. *The Architecture of the Sensory Shield*

4.1 *From Social Transgression to Hoarding as a Sensory Shield*

Hultgren (2000) correctly identifies that the Rich Fool’s decision to store his surplus is a transgression of the “limited goods” – a social contract where one’s excess belongs to the neighbour’s need. In the ancient Mediterranean context, by enclosing the grain within the barns, the man is not just being “thrifty”; he is effectively “choking” the lifeblood of the village. Yet what appears to be a calculated social theft may also be viewed as a desperate psychological retreat. We shall now attempt to decode the tactile, sensory experience of the “abundant harvest”. To understand why the Rich Fool is psychologically unable to share or let go, we must look at his regression into what Ogden (1989) calls the *autistic-contiguous position*. The *autistic-contiguous position* is a primitive psychological state where the sense of self is generated through tactile rhythms and sensory surfaces. To

“see” and “touch” the vastness of the harvest is thus to receive a sensory confirmation that “I am here”.

The Rich Fool stands as a subject who has successfully abolished the “Object” (the person, the community, the divine Other) and retreated into a world of *sensory over-feeding*. He does not inhabit his life; he archives it. The man is not merely greedy; he is a subject inundated by a “sensorial over-feeding” that he lacks the internal capacity to process. The “many goods laid up” (κεῖμενα / *keimena*⁵) provide him with a rhythmic, tactile sense of *boundedness*. The man isn’t hoarding wealth for its value; he is hoarding it for its *solidity*. He needs the “weight” of the grain to press against his fragile ego to feel that he exists. The Rich Fool is not simply a ‘social deviant’; he is a subject regressing into an *autistic-contiguous* shell. His desire for ‘bigger barns’ is a defence against the terror of a world he can no longer ‘feel’ or control. He trades the warmth of the ‘Other’ for the cold, tactile pressure of the ‘stored grain’ in his expanded barns.

In the absence of a “containing” object, he externalises his fragile ego into masonry, creating a rigid material envelope to prevent his fragmented self from “leaking” into the void of the “Other”. To interact with a neighbour is to enter a relationship that cannot be strictly controlled or “warehoused”. If the barns are opened to feed the neighbour, a “gap” is created. In the *autistic-contiguous* state, a gap is not seen as a social choice; it is felt as a *perforation in the skin*. Sharing the grain would cause his “self” to “leak” out through that social gap, leading to a terrifying sense of depletion and eventual annihilation. For the Rich Fool, the “Other” (the neighbour) is not merely a social obligation; the Other is a source of unpredictability and potential “leaking”. In the Rich Fool’s world, there is no “porousness” – no windows for the Other to look in, and no doors for the self to go out. The barn/skin becomes a fortress of the *autistic-contiguous position*, in which the subject is “encapsulated” in a sensory-material shell. He is not living within his skin; he is hiding behind a masonry defence, confusing the sturdiness of the barn with the strength of the soul.

We can also identify in the Rich Fool signs of a *failure of symbolisation*. In the social sphere, grain symbolises sustenance and community sharing. In the primitive sphere, the grain *de-symbolises*. It ceases to be “food” or “limited resource” to be shared and becomes

⁵ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-19.htm>

a “thing-in-itself” – a physical barrier against the “unthinkable anxiety” of the void. The “Folly” is specifically the loss of the meaning of the symbol. To the community, grain is a symbol of God’s grace (signification); to the Rich Fool, it is a literal plug for a psychic hole (concreteness). In this parable, we encounter a psyche that has replaced the “living Other” with a “static warehouse”. The abundance of the harvest triggers a regression in the man to a state where the only “security” is the feeling of being “surrounded” by one’s own substance (abundant grain in the large barns) (Green, 1987).⁶ In Bion’s (1962) psychoanalytic thought, an individual requires a “container” (the mother or a functional ego) to process raw sensory data (beta-elements). When the land produces “abundantly” (*euphoresen*),⁷ the Rich Fool is flooded with sensory stimulation that he is unable to metabolise. Because he lacks an internal “holding environment” (Winnicott, 1960/2006), this abundance is experienced as a *sensorial inundation*. Without a psychic container to digest this sensory “over-feeding”, the harvest becomes a threat. The man is not enjoying his wealth; he is struggling to “manage” a mass of objects that threaten to overwhelm him unless they are strictly bound, and he has decided to build bigger barns.

4.2. Christopher Bollas: *The Transformational Object and the Seed*

While Ogden (1989) focuses on the *boundary* in the *autistic contiguous* state, Bollas (1987) helps us understand the *function* of the objects within that *boundary*. Bollas describes the *Transformational Object* (1987, pp. 13-29) – an object (originally the mother) that is sought not for “relating”, but for its ability to alter the subject’s internal state. The Rich Fool treats the barn and the seed as a “Transformational Object”. He looks to the harvest to perform a miracle: to transform his internal anxiety into “rest”. When he says, “*Soul... relax, eat, drink, be merry*” (Luke 12:19), he is demanding that the material goods “process” his soul for him. Because the man is stuck using objects for transformation rather than for representation, the grain never becomes “wealth” in a social sense. It remains a “thing-in-itself”. He cannot use the grain to feed others because, to

⁶ J.B. Green explains that in the world of the text, a bountiful harvest is an unmistakable sign of God’s blessing and providential care. He notes that the man’s error lies in his immediate pivot to “self-deliberation”, where he ignores the Divine source of the abundance and instead frames the surplus as a problem of personal logistics and autonomy. Rather than seeing the land’s productivity as a call to communal responsibility or gratitude, the man views it strictly through the lens of his own individualised consumption.

⁷ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-16.htm>

him, the grain *is* his own stability. To give a bag of seed away would be to give away a piece of his own *psychic floor*.

Bollas (1987) speaks of the “shadow of the object” falling on the ego. The Rich Fool has become a shadow of his own barn. He has surrendered his human agency to a cycle of accumulation, becoming an appendage of the very “things” he claims to own. Bollas’s perspective shows that the man has outsourced his emotional regulation to the “harvest”. The Rich Fool is essentially trying to crawl back into a material “womb” of his own making. He has replaced the human breast (the primary source of nourishment and containment) with the grain silo. This is the ultimate “Developmental Arrest”: he has reached the height of material success only to regress to the most primitive, sensory level of psychic survival. He does not “have” many goods; he is “possessed” by the need for their *tactile presence* to keep his world from falling apart.

5. *The Architecture of the Second Skin*

5.1. *The Bigger Barns as a “Second Skin” / “Skin-Ego” Defence*

The “bigger barns” the Rich Fool proposes to build can be seen not only as storage but also as a “Second-Skin” defence, in the tradition of Bick (1968), and as “Skin-Ego”, according to Anzieu (2016), a rigid, material ego-shell constructed to contain a fragmented internal world that lacks cohesive boundaries. In the absence of an internal “maternal container” that facilitates the healthy processing of life’s abundance, the man experiences psychic “leakage” or fragmentation. He instinctively reaches for a physical boundary – stone and mortar – to replace the missing psychological boundary that should have been developed through relational holding and emotional metabolism.

According to Anzieu,⁸ the “Skin-Ego” (*Le Moi-Peau*) is the mental image of the body’s surface that protects the psyche from external stimuli and internal disintegration. “Human beings have the unconscious feeling of a border between their psychical Ego and their bodily Ego” (Anzieu, 2016, p. 99). For Anzieu, the “Skin-Ego” is a psychic envelope that

⁸ Anzieu discusses how the Skin-ego fulfils the function of maintaining the psyche, modelled on the mother’s “holding”. If internal holding fails, the subject may seek a “support object” to find a centre of gravity. In our analysis, the “bigger barns” function as an externalised support-object, or “solid body ridge”, that the man uses to prevent his psyche from collapsing into a “horror of the inner void”.

performs several vital functions: it contains the “good” internal contents, protects against external “intrusion”, and provides a surface for communication with others. For the Rich Fool, his original psychic “envelope” is facing the threat of failure under the pressure of the “abundant crop”, leading to a state where his internal world feels uncontained. Anzieu (2016, pp. 43-44) notes that when the primary “Skin-Ego” is porous or inadequate, the individual may construct a “rigid, shell-like” substitute. The man’s declaration in Luke 12:18 – “*I will tear down my barns and build larger ones*” – is a textbook example of this; the “tearing down” is a moment of total fragmentation, while the “building larger” acts as the donning of an artificial, impenetrable armour intended to hold his fragmented self together.

Anzieu (2016, pp.106-110) outlines the “supporting” and “containing” functions of the psychic envelope. The Rich Fool’s crisis begins because his internal “envelope” is too thin to manage the massive harvest. Anzieu (2016, pp. 44,85,105) argues that a healthy “Skin-Ego” acts as a filter; however, the Rich Fool in the parable suffers from a “porous” or “sieve Skin-Ego” (2016, pp. 42,110,204) where the psychic wrapping is pitted with holes, leading to a terror of “vital substance flowing out” or “emptying itself out”. That is being flooded by external stimuli. When he says, “What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?” (Luke 12:17), he is expressing a psychic emergency: his current boundaries are bursting. To prevent a total “leakage” of the self, he resorts to what Anzieu calls the “film-wrap” defence – an attempt to shrink-wrap his identity in material wealth. The barns are not just buildings; they are a substitute for a missing mental membrane that should have filtered his greed and contained his anxiety.

The act of “tearing down” the old barns (καθελῶ / *kathelo*⁹) is particularly significant when viewed through Anzieu’s lens of psychic fragmentation. Anzieu suggests that before a new, more rigid defence can form, there is often a moment of “catastrophic anxiety” (2016, p. 9) in which the old boundaries are destroyed. The Rich Fool willingly induces this fragmentation – tearing down his existing structures – because he is so desperate to build a more “totalizing” defence. He is trading a functional, albeit small, reality for a grandiose, “maximalist” shell. This mirrors Anzieu’s (2016, pp.135,141,143) description of the *phantasy of the double wall* in narcissistically vulnerable personalities.

⁹ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-18.htm>

He explains that these subjects eliminate the “space between” the internal and external faces of the “Skin-Ego”, causing the wrapping to become “solid” and “cemented”. This “reinforced, invulnerable skin” allows the narcissistically vulnerable persons to feel they do not need an “Other”. The “bigger barns” are the literal manifestation of this “cemented” double wall designed to withstand “narcissistic wounds”.

Building on this, we can use the British Kleinian analyst Bick’s (1968, pp.484-486) concept of the “Second Skin” defence, as detailed in her seminal paper, “The Experience of the Skin in Early Object-Relations”. It describes a psychic state in which the individual uses external rigidities to create a sense of cohesion. For Bick, the “Second Skin” is a desperate defensive replacement for a “maternal skin” that failed to provide a sense of “holding”. It is a compensation for a structural failure. When a person lacks a primary “skin” formed through early emotional bonding, they may rely on “muscularity, or a rigid environment” to feel safe. While Anzieu (2016, pp. 133-148) defines the structural failure of the psychic envelope, we find the specific defensive morphology of this crisis in Bick’s work. When the primary skin fails to hold, the subject resorts to what Bick calls a “Second Skin” – a rigid, muscular, or material substitute for emotional containment. The man identifies “adhesively” with his possessions. He does not have a relationship *with* his crops; he clings to them as a means of holding his fragmented self together.

For the Rich Fool, the land’s abundance becomes a terrifying “uncontained” force. In Bick’s framework, when an individual cannot rely on an internal sense of being held, they build a “muscular” or “material” shell to hold their parts together. The Rich Fool’s move to build “bigger barns” is a move towards a “hardened” exterior. By literalising his security in stone and grain, he creates a “pseudo-independence”. The barns are not built for utility or communal sharing, but to serve as a *sensory floor* that prevents him from falling into the “unthinkable anxiety” of emptiness. By surrounding himself with massive, static structures, he creates a false sense of containment that mimics the internal stability he never achieved. He isn’t actually strong; he is just encased. This “Second Skin” allows him to say to his soul, “Rest, eat, drink”, because he has finally built a shell thick enough to drown out the terrifying silence of his own internal void.

Both authors agree that these externalised defences are “pathological” because they are static. As Bick (1968, p.486) notes, the “Second Skin” defence prevents the very growth it seeks to protect because it is “inflexible”. The “bigger barns” provide a sense of

containment, but they also ensure that the man remains a “Closed Loop”. He has created a perfect environment for his grain, but a tomb for his psyche. The man’s attempt to find security in his “larger barns” is a move toward total “self-sufficiency”, which the parable exposes as a delusion. By substituting a material shell for a spiritual and relational core, the man becomes a prisoner of his own defence. The “Second Skin” of the barns may hold his grain, but it cannot hold his soul when the “Return of the Real” occurs in the voice of God. He has successfully built a container that holds everything except the one thing that matters: *a self that can exist without the shell*. His tragedy is that he perfected the *container* while neglecting the *contents*, leaving him with a rigid external world and a hollow, uncontained internal reality.

The “Second Skin” of wealth is a psychological paradox: a shield that ultimately becomes a sarcophagus. By opting for a rigid, material shell of “bigger barns”, the man effectively insulated himself from the very vulnerabilities required to build a “maternal container” of community or faith. The concept of the “breathable boundary” is essential to understanding the man’s failure. In a healthy psychological state, the “skin” of the ego acts as a semi-permeable membrane – much like the physical skin – allowing the exchange of nutrients (love, grace, and community) while protecting against toxins. The Rich Fool, however, mistook protection for closure. By trading a living, breathing container for a static stone shell, he committed four “*suicides*” of the self:

5.2. The Relational Suicide: “Holding” vs. “Hoarding”

A person only feels “real” when they are “held” within the mind of another. In psychoanalytic theory, the *maternal container* is an internal space formed through the experience of being held, heard, and mirrored by another. This container is flexible and porous; it allows a healthy exchange between the “I” and the “Thou”. By building “bigger barns”, the man attempted to replace this relational *holding* with material *hoarding*. Faith and community require a “skin” that can breathe – a boundary that allows the inflow of grace and the outflow of generosity. His “Second Skin”, however, was designed for total impermeability. By building bigger barns, the man replaced the *holding environment* of his village and his God with a *hoarding environment*. You cannot be “held” by a community if you have armoured yourself against the possibility of being needed. He traded the soft, living warmth of human connection for the cold, static security of a stone

wall. He chose to be surrounded by “things” that could never look back at him or recognise his humanity. He essentially attempted to be his own mother, his own neighbour, and his own god, but, as Bick (1968, p. 485) notes, a “Second Skin” created by the self is always a poor and brittle imitation of the warmth provided by an external “Other”.

5.3. The Spiritual Suicide Through Static Perfection

Spirituality and the need for community are fuelled by *desire* – the humble acknowledgement that we are incomplete and need something outside ourselves to survive and be whole. Desire can only exist where there is a shortage or lack. If we have everything, we need no one. The Rich Fool’s “Second Skin” was an attempt to achieve a state of total, suffocating fullness. By attempting to eliminate his needs, he inadvertently eliminated his capacity for connection. While the maternal container of faith says, “I am empty, fill me”, the man’s barns said, “I am full, leave me”. As Anzieu (2016) suggests, the healthy “Skin-Ego” is a site of exchange. It is a semi-permeable membrane. Its primary health is found in its ability to facilitate “exchange” – allowing the “Good” to enter (nourishment, love, community) and the “Bad” to be expelled. However, the Rich Fool’s “Skin-Ego” was designed to eliminate the experience of lack entirely.

As A. Green (2023) notes, when a system reaches a state of total stasis – where there is no more tension and no more need – it has reached a state of psychic death before the body even stops breathing. By “laying up” his goods for “many years”, the man is attempting to freeze time. He wants a “Still Life” existence. In a healthy psyche, energy (libido) must flow. His static perfection is the rigor mortis of the ego. By creating a world of static perfection, he effectively killed his own desire. When your barns are your “saviours”, God becomes redundant. His wealth served as a *sensory floor* so thick it muffled the “cry of the other”. He didn’t just store grain; he stored his capacity for empathy, locking it away in a dark room where it could no longer see the sunlight of social or spiritual obligation. This is the architecture of *narcissistic grandiosity*: a world where the sun never sets, nothing ever changes, and no one else exists. It is a defence against the “reality principle” – the terrifying truth that life involves change, loss, and eventually, an end. He has built a monument to himself, but in doing so, he has created a tomb for his own humanity.

5.4. The Psychological Suicide: the Echo Chamber of the Ego

Because his “Second Skin” was made of material wealth, it reflected his own internal grandiosity back at him with no distortion, like an *echo chamber of the ego*. Real human contact acts as a mirror that reflects our flaws and our beauty, whereas a stone wall only casts our shadow. This prevented him from “metabolising” his experiences. Because the man’s wealth allowed him to bypass the “object-related anxiety” of dealing with real people, he never had to face the parts of himself that were small, frightened, or lonely. He mistook the echoing of his own grandiosity for a conversation with his soul, failing to realise that a soul cannot grow in a barn with no windows or openings.

5.5. The Existential Suicide of the Calcified Ego: from Protective Shell to Psychic Tomb

Another insight from this reading is that *comfort is the enemy of growth, because growth requires stretching the psychic skin*. The “maternal container” of faith is forged in the fires of trial and in the heart’s stretching through love – both inherently uncomfortable. By pursuing “comfort” and telling his soul “take your rest” (*ἀναπαύου* / *anapauou*), the man effectively chose calcification. He became so well-protected that he became unreachable – not just to his neighbours or to God, but to his own potential for transformation. Just as a cast left on a healthy limb causes the muscle to waste away, his wealth caused his soul to atrophy. He became a prisoner of his own comfort. The “maternal container” of faith is more like a womb – it is tight, it is a struggle, and it eventually pushes you out into a larger world. The man’s barns were not a womb; they were a tomb he decorated with grain.

6. The Architecture of the Narcissistic Loop

6.1. The Narcissistic Closed Loop: Through the Lens of Hyman Spotnitz

The internal crisis of the man in the parable begins with the phrase “he thought to himself” (Luke: 12:17), rendered in Greek as *διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ*¹⁰ (*dielogizeto en heauto*), which signals a profound psychological collapse. While the root verb *dialogizomai*¹¹ typically

¹⁰ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-17.htm>

¹¹ <https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/dialogizomai>

implies a dialogue between distinct individuals, the man's reasoning, *diealogizeto*, is trapped entirely within himself, signalling the "Narcissistic Closed Loop"¹² described by psychoanalyst Spotnitz (2005, pp.170,174). In Spotnitz's clinical framework, the Rich Fool's internal monologue is a textbook illustration of the narcissistic defence (2005, pp. 56-58), a structural retreat designed to protect the ego from the perceived impact and frustration of the "Other" (2005, pp. 39,150). Spotnitz posits that narcissism is not merely self-love, but a protective insulation against object-related frustration (2005, pp. 37,182). By talking only to himself, the Rich Fool ensures that no external object (neighbour or God) can introduce a demand or a "frustration" that might disrupt his fragile equilibrium. For Spotnitz, this closed loop is a way of "bottling up" aggression to prevent it from destroying the object. Using Spotnitz's framework, we can see the Rich Fool as a *split entity*. He acts as the "Narcissistic Parent" – the one who provides, commands, and plans – and his soul acts as the "Compliant Child" – the one told to "relax, eat, and drink". The Rich Fool can be said to be attempting to create here a "*self-parenting*" ritual for himself because he lacks a primary "maternal container".

By stripping away the "Other" – whether that be God or his neighbours – he transforms what should be a communal conversation into an isolated monologue. This serves as a narcissistic defence mechanism; by turning all communication inward, he avoids the "object-related anxiety" that comes with acknowledging a world outside of his own control, effectively sealing himself in a mental vacuum. Spotnitz specialised in "pre-objective" states (2005, p.37) – primitive levels of development where the distinction between self and other has not yet fully developed and stabilised. In this state, the individual treats the world as an extension of the self. Spotnitz describes this "like a phonograph record going around and around in the same groove" (2005, p.86), where the subject only hears his own voice. The man's monologue is, therefore, a "pseudo-dialogue"; he is not seeking truth but rather "sensory confirmation" of his own existence through his material goods.

¹² On page 170, he notes that this state occurs when the patient is "talking to himself or to the therapist as part of his mind." On page 174, he describes a patient who "may act with the analyst as though he were alone in the room" and even "report that he feels he is talking to himself".

7. The Sterile Surplus and a Harvest of Human Absence: Through the Lens of André Green

To expand on the insights into the Rich Fool's psychological retreat, we can draw on A. Green's theories of the "work of the negative" (1999, pp.161-214), "negative hallucination", and the "disobjectalising function".

7.1. The Negative Hallucination of the Neighbour¹³

The Rich Fool's internal landscape is governed by what André Green calls a *negative hallucination*, a psychic operation in which an object or person is not merely ignored but actively made "not to exist" (1999, pp. 171, 196). Unlike a positive hallucination, which adds a false perception, this mechanism creates a "blank space" or a "hole" in reality, where the "Other" (the neighbour) should be recognised. By focusing his entire psychic energy on the "many goods laid up", the man effectively "un-sees" the social and moral world outside his barns to preserve an internal state of non-tension. This radical withdrawal, or decathexis, is a defensive manoeuvre intended to protect the self from the "anxiety of Lack" – the uncomfortable realisation that he is incomplete and dependent on a community.

7.2. The Inhibition of Symbolic Representation

The Rich Fool's "folly" can be understood as an *inhibition of the symbolic function* (A. Green, 1986, pp.40-41,55)¹⁴ where surplus wealth is no longer a symbol for life or relationship but is reduced to a raw, material barrier. Green describes this as a "paralysis of thought". Instead of transforming his harvest into a symbolically "represented" social good (such as charity or shared joy), the man treats it as a purely physical extension of his own skin – a "tactile sensory floor". By replacing the internal "work" of thinking and relating with the external "masonry" of the barns, he achieves what A. Green calls a "Static Perfection", a state of non-life where everything is "fixed" and "laid up" (*κείμενα* / *keimena*)¹⁵. In this state, the soul is no longer a site of growth but becomes a sterile warehouse, reflecting a "death-like quietus" that precedes physical demise.

¹³ See also A. GREEN, *On Private Madness*, 40-41, 55.

¹⁴ See also A. GREEN, *On the Destruction and the Death Drives*.

¹⁵ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-19.htm>

7.3. *The Disobjectalising Function and Psychic Stasis*

The man's solitary reasoning is a manifestation of the *disobjectalising function* (A. Green, 1999, pp. 81-88; 2001, pp. 176-200) of the death drive. This function does not necessarily aim at violent destruction, but rather at the unbinding of the self from its objects, making the "Other" indifferent and eventually non-existent. By speaking only to his "soul" as if it were another piece of inventory, the man's internal world is revealed as characterised by what A. Green calls a sterile, echo-chamber existence where the "Other" (the neighbour, the Divine, the worker) has been systematically abolished to protect the self from the "anxiety of Lack" and to maintain a hallucination of fullness. By sealing himself within a mental and material "Closed Loop", the man bypasses the "object-related anxiety" inherent in human existence. This creates a "Narcissistic Double Wall" where his grandiosity is merely reflected to him, magnified by the material shell of his wealth. In the work *Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism*, A. Green (2001, pp. 176-200) describes the "dead mother" complex not as a physical death, but as the mother's psychic withdrawal, which leaves the child in a state of "psychic desolation". This seems to mirror the Rich Fool's state: by sealing himself in a "closed loop", he creates a self-imposed version of this desolation, where the "Other" is rendered toneless and inanimate. Green notes that to survive the loss of the mother's vitality, the subject "mummifies" the object within themselves. This "mummification" is a form of *psychic stasis* – a way to preserve a state of "rest" by stopping the flow of life and desire.

The Rich Fool's quest for rest (*ἀναπαύου* / *anapauou*)¹⁶ can be seen as a literal attempt to achieve this mummification, turning his internal life into a "living fossil" to avoid the pain of loss or interference. Green argues that this state leads to a "narcissistic capitalisation" where the subject seeks "sameness" to avoid the "anxiety of Lack". The Rich Fool's "Narcissistic Double Wall" (Anzieu, 2016, pp. 133-148) of wealth seems to serve this exact function: it ensures that he only encounters reflections of himself (his goods, his barns), bypassing the "object-related anxiety" of dealing with a distinct, living Other. By seeking a state of total "rest" (*anapauou*), the man is striving for a "blankness of self". He is attempting to reach a state of "Static Perfection" where there is no tension, no need, and no "Other" to disturb his peace. As Green (2001, 81-90; 2023) notes, this

¹⁶ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-19.htm>

“abolition of all tension” is the ultimate work of the death drive, leading to a “psychic death” long before the body fails.

The psychological decoding of the phrase “the land produced abundantly” reveals a profound disconnect between external prosperity and internal capacity. While the Greek term *εὐφόρησεν* / *euphoresen*¹⁷ suggests that the earth is “bearing well”, the individual in the text suffers from an “over-feeding” of the self because he lacks the mental framework – or “maternal container” – to process this windfall. In Bionian (1962) terms, this abundance remains a “Beta-element”: raw, sensory data that the mind cannot metabolise into meaningful thought.

8. C. O.F. Kernberg: *Pathological Grandiosity and the Swallowed Object*

Kernberg’s theory of *Pathological Narcissism* (Kernberg, 2004) provides the structural explanation for the man’s “omnipotent self-sufficiency”. According to Kernberg, the “Grandiose Self” is an agglomeration formed by fusing the “Real Self”, the “Ideal Self”, and the “Ideal Object”. The Rich Fool does not look to the Divine or the community as a source of “Good”. Instead, his Grandiose Self “swallows” the “Ideal Object”. In other words, he becomes his own God. Kernberg argues that the narcissist accumulates “goods” to prove he has no shortage or lack. If there is no lack, there is no need to depend on anyone. By having “many goods laid up”, the Rich Fool neutralises the need for the “Other”.

Kernberg posits that pathological narcissists are often plagued by deep-seated oral-aggressive envy. In the case of the Rich Fool, his massive barns and “many goods laid up” serve as a psychological barrier. By convincing himself he has an absolute surplus, he shields himself from the painful experience of needing anything from others, which would otherwise trigger his envy of their “goodness” or vitality. Even the Divine presence is neutralised. In his monologue, there is no prayer, only a report. He has replaced the “Source of Life” with a “Source of Grain”. A core Kernbergian insight here is that the narcissist maintains their grandiose self by systematically devaluing others. The Rich Fool’s monologue reveals a complete absence of other people; he mentions no family, workers, or God, but only the soul as an entity he owns and controls. This isn’t just

¹⁷ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-16.htm>

accidental – it is a defensive “emptying” of the external world so that no one can compete with his internal sense of self-sufficiency.

The Rich Fool addresses his soul directly (“Soul, you have ample goods...”). Kernberg would view this as a clear clinical manifestation of the *pathological grandiose self*. The “Real Self”, “Ideal Self”, and “Ideal Object” have merged so completely that the Fool can provide himself with the love, security, and nourishment that usually come from an external source (God or community). He has effectively created a closed-loop system of internal “feeding”. Kernberg emphasises that underneath pathological grandiosity lies an intense fear of dependency and, ultimately, of annihilation or death. The Rich Fool’s command to “relax, eat, and drink” is a desperate attempt to use material wealth to anaesthetise this underlying dread. His abundance is a “psychological fortress” intended to make him immortal and invulnerable to the “exigencies of life”.

9. Plugging the Psychic Hole: The Barn as a Defence against the Damaged Core

To deepen the analysis of the Rich Fool’s “bigger barns”, we must move from *structural containment* to the *perversion of relating* and *of desire*. The works of Salman Akhtar (2009) and Masud R. Khan (1989) provide a framework for understanding how the man’s relationship with his harvest is not merely “greedy” but constitutes a perverse clinical structure that replaces human intimacy with material manipulation. To truly grasp the tragedy of the Rich Fool, we must look beyond the stacks of grain and peer into the structural wreckage of his inner world. Why would someone with “ample goods” still feel the need to build even bigger walls? Through the lens of Salman Akhtar’s *The Damaged Core* (2009), we discover that this isn’t just a story about greed – it is a haunting portrait of a man trying to “plug” a hole in his soul with masonry and grain.

Akhtar’s clinical framework offers profound insights into viewing the Rich Fool’s “folly” as a defensive struggle rather than simple greed. His work focuses on individuals who suffer from structural deficits and “holes” in the psyche – a “damaged core” – and the frantic manoeuvres they employ to repair an impoverished internal world and maintain psychic equilibrium. The Rich Fool’s barns are not just buildings; they are monuments to a *vacant internal world*. As we peel back the layers of this parable, we find a modern warning: the soul that is treated as a warehouse eventually becomes its own tomb!

9.1. *The Material “Plug” for the Damaged Core*

Akhtar describes the “damaged core” (2009, pp. 33,35,48) as a deep-seated internal sense of “defectiveness, ugliness, and worthlessness” that often originates from early developmental failures. The Rich Fool’s frantic construction of larger barns can be read as a desperate attempt at self-repair, seeking to create a “material skin” to hold together a fragmenting self. In Akhtar’s view, when the internal core is damaged, the subject replaces “being” with “having”. The harvest is not just wealth; it is a psychic “plug” intended to fill an “internal hole”. By accumulating “ample goods”, the man is attempting to self-soothe a core anxiety that he is fundamentally empty and vulnerable to the “leakage” of his own vitality.

9.2. *The false self of grandiosity and self-sufficiency*

Akhtar notes that individuals with a damaged core often develop a “manic defence” to ward off underlying depressive anxiety. The Rich Fool’s monologue (*Soul, you have ample goods, laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry*) is a textbook manic defence from the perspective of Akhtar. By commanding himself to be happy, the man is executing what we might call an “omnipotent self-repair”. He is trying to bypass the “Other” – both God and his community – because a real relationship would force him to acknowledge his own vulnerability and “internal holes”. He creates a “theatrical” reality of plenty to distract himself from the “backstage” terror of his own mortality.

9.3. *The “Inanimate Transition”: when the Soul Becomes a Thing*

Perhaps the most heartbreaking insight Akhtar offers is the concept of “de-animation”. To avoid the pain and unpredictability of human relationships, the *damaged core* turns toward inanimate objects, which, unlike neighbours, are controllable and never leave (2009, pp. 20-22). The Rich Fool’s tragedy is that he has “objectified” his own soul, treating it as a warehouse to be filled rather than a living entity to be nurtured. Akhtar suggests that this reliance on “thing-representations” leads to a “psychic death” (2009, pp. 54-55) or a “malignant alienation” where the person is physically alive but internally “petrified”. When God calls him a “Fool” and demands his soul that night, He is simply naming the reality the man had already created: a soul that had become as inanimate and “dead” as the stones of his barns. Akhtar discusses how narcissistic individuals struggle

with the “Reality of Time”. The Rich Fool’s decree to “relax, eat, drink, be merry for many years” is what Akhtar identifies as a defence against the “transience of life”. He attempts to transform his life (crops, barns, soul) into a “Still Life” painting, where no decay can occur, or into a collage that mimics vitality while remaining essentially dead.

9.4. The Perversion of Forced Merriment: Through the Lens of M. Khan

The man’s monologue: “And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry” warrants an analytic reading through the construct of *perversion* (Khan, 1989), which marks the transition from *mere hoarding* to *forced merriment*. The perversion involves using external objects or rituals to bypass internal emotional reality and force a state of “merriment”. In this state, the harvest is no longer a source of sustenance, but a tool used to bypass the soul’s genuine needs and to force a specific, manufactured emotional state. The Greek term *εὐφραίνω*¹⁸ (*euphrainou* / be merry) is stripped of its traditional communal or spiritual context; instead of joy arising naturally from relationship or gratitude, it becomes a clinical instruction for self-stimulation. The Rich Fool does not experience joy; he “manufactures” it through a controlled ritual of consumption. By using consumption to “manufacture” happiness, the man treats his own psyche as a machine to be manipulated. This is the essence of the perverse defence: using an object to colonise the self, ensuring that “merriment” is a solitary, controlled product rather than a vulnerable, shared experience resulting in joy. The Rich Fool’s ultimate pathology lies in his *perversion of desire*. True desire is inherently relational; it reaches out toward an “Other” and acknowledges a shortage. To desire is to admit that one is incomplete. The Rich Fool, however, seeks to abolish the experience of shortage entirely. His goal is the *static perfection of a closed system* – a psychic retreat where time is effectively frozen. When he says to his soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry”, he is attempting to execute a “totalitarian takeover” of his own future. It is a “monologue” rather than a “dialogue”, echoing the man’s solitary speech to his own soul. Khan argued that the perverse subject “colludes” with an inanimate object to achieve a sense of ego-mastery. The Rich Fool treats his “abundant crops” as a fetishised part-object. By focusing entirely

¹⁸ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-19.htm>

on the grain and the storage, he bypasses the “anxiety of the encounter” with the Other (the Divine or the community). Khan noted that the perverse subject seeks to control the object’s response entirely. The barn is the perfect partner: it does not demand, it does not leave, and it reflects only the man’s power. In his mind, the soul is simply an “internal barn”. It is not a site of feeling, relating, or transcendence, but a warehouse where “goods” are deposited. This is the ultimate alienation; he has become an accountant of his own interiority.

10. *The Collapse: Return of the Reality Principle*

10.1. *The Requirement of the Soul as the Collapse of the Closed Narcissistic Loop*

The final part of the parable shows the violent intervention of the *Reality Principle*. When the voice of God says, “This night your soul is required”, we witness the catastrophic failure of a self that never learned to mourn, never learned to share, and ultimately, never learned to exist as a separate, individuated being. By refusing to “mourn” the small losses of life – sharing, dependency, and vulnerability – he leaves himself psychologically defenceless against the final loss of his existence. The final intervention, “This night your soul is required” (Luke 12:20), serves as the violent shattering of the man’s self-constructed echo chamber. The use of the Greek verb ἀπαιτοῦσιν¹⁹ (*apaitousin/ is required*) – signals that the universe has come to collect on a debt the man ignored while playing the role of his own creator. This represents the sudden, inescapable return of the “Other”, forcing an individuation that the man spent his life avoiding through the accumulation of goods.

Thus, the sudden “requirement” of his soul at the end of the parable is not an arbitrary punishment, but the inevitable collapse of a *narcissistic closed loop* that, in its desperate attempt to freeze time and avoid the “risk of lack”, and abolish the “Other” (the neighbour, the Divine) in favour of a static, material perfection, has inadvertently built a sepulchre instead of a home. He has created a “perverse holding environment” where he is both the *mother* and the *infant*, the *storekeeper* and the *consumer*. It also stands for the inevitable collapse of a psyche that mistook a warehouse for a home and a “blank” ego

¹⁹ <https://biblehub.com/text/luke/12-20.htm>

for a living soul. Through the lens of Salman Akhtar, we could say he replaced the “breath of being” with the “stasis of having”, plugging the “internal hole” of his soul with inanimate grain until there was no room left for the “Other” to exist. Because no “psychic skin” developed beneath the “barn skin”, the man experiences death as *annihilation*. We notice here the paradox of boundaries. While a healthy skin is semi-permeable (breathable), the Rich Fool’s “barn skin” was a sarcophagus. When the external structure (the barns/goods) is removed, there is nothing to “hold” the self together. He does not just lose his things; he loses his “envelope”. By insulating himself against the friction of need and the vulnerability of relationship, he bypassed the very suffering required for the soul to expand. Now, the “Closed Loop” of his ego is forcibly pried open, proving that while one can build larger barns to contain grain, no wall is thick enough to withhold a soul from the reality that it was never truly its own.

11. The Desperate Effort to Outrun One’s Own Mortality

To add another layer of depth to our analysis, we can view it through the lens of the Rich Fool’s fear of death. This perspective shifts the focus from structural psychic deficits to a more existential, almost visceral struggle: the avoidance of death’s finality that drives both the material hoarding and the resulting psychic inertia. Author Pasolini (2023) reflects on how we often use the “mechanics” of life to insulate ourselves from the descent into the underworld of suffering and death. The Rich Fool’s “ample goods” serve as an existential buffer – a way to convince himself that his life is unchanging and imperturbable. We often declare our intentions in advance to avoid unmet expectations. The Rich Fool’s monologue is a pre-emptive strike against the unpredictability of death; he builds larger barns to ensure he never has to face life’s red traffic light that he cannot control.

Pasolini suggests that the soul is drenched in glory only when it accepts its own vulnerability, stumbles, and experiences the capacity for tears. By sealing himself within his “Closed Loop”, the Rich Fool avoids the “inter-subjective breathing” found in a crowded metro or a hospital ward. He seeks a monochromatic life to avoid the smell of rot that comes with real human relationships and their inevitable end. To protect himself from the “hole” of internal emptiness, the man treats his soul as a machine to be stimulated through consumption. This is a manic defence in which the subject is estranged

from himself, turning a living spirit into a living fossil. Ultimately, Pasolini highlights that stopping dying occurs only when we stop trying to control life and instead allow ourselves to be rescued after a great shipwreck. His tragedy was not his wealth, but his refusal to “derail into the territory of the divine” by acknowledging his own finitude. This suggests that the psychic inertia of the Rich Fool is a form of rigor mortis he chose for himself, hoping that if he stayed perfectly still and perfectly full, death would simply fail to notice him.

12. Conclusion

In the parable, the Rich Fool is not so named because he was wrong about the *timing* of his death, but because he was wrong about the *nature* of his life. He attempted to use the material means to solve a structural problem. By refusing the “small deaths” of sharing, relating, and mourning, he ensured that his actual death would be an absolute psychic catastrophe. He built “bigger barns” to hide from the Truth, only to find that the Truth was the very thing “requiring” his presence. When mapped through the analytic frameworks of Bick, Anzieu, Ogden, Bollas, Spotnitz, Kernberg, Akhtar, Khan and others, the parable of the Rich Fool reveals a profound paradox: *the man’s attempt to achieve total security resulted in total vulnerability*. The “cost” of his closed system was not just his life, but the very possibility of having a “Self” that could survive the loss of its surroundings. By replacing people with grain, the Rich Fool entered a state where he was technically alive but psychologically “extinct”. He built a world without objects, only to find that in such a vacuum, the Self becomes a hollow shell – a warehouse with no proprietor. The Rich Fool’s greatest “folly” was his attempt to *murder his own hunger* and *bankrupt his own desire*. By telling his soul to “relax, eat, and drink”, he was attempting to achieve a state of total, overwhelming satisfaction that bypasses the human experience of desire.

True psychological growth, as Bollas (1987) suggests, requires a “kinetic” movement toward the unknown. It requires the “courage to be hungry” – to acknowledge that we are incomplete and that we need the “Other” (the neighbour, the friend, the Transcendent) to become whole. The tragedy of the modern age – mirrored in our own “warehouses” of digital data, career accolades, and material hoarding – is the belief that we can avoid the “anxiety of the other” by building bigger barns. Psychoanalysis reminds us that the only

“goods” we truly take with us are those we were able to give away; the only “skin” that holds us in the end is the one we develop through the friction of relating to others. The Rich Fool died not because he was wealthy, but because he was “contained” by the wrong things. He was a man who succeeded in owning the world, only to discover that he had never actually inhabited it. The article was an attempt to look at the Rich Fool not as a “greedy villain”, but as a tragic, “blank” figure who hoards life because he is terrified of the “nothingness” at his core and of the inevitability of death.

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