

Through Alleys and “Innerscapes”: The City and the Psyche

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I thank the organizers of THAAP for this truly enriching opportunity to share my thoughts on the “City as an Evolving Organism” from a peripheral and rather unusual standpoint of being a psychotherapist and meeting people in the space of psychotherapeutic encounters. It is only of late that persons from the middle and upper middle classes in cities, especially in the southern part of the world, have begun to visit a counsellor or psychologist with the hope that some emotional processes in their life could be restored by the sharing of grief, sorrow, losses, conflicts, shame and guilt laden parts. In effect, people belonging to the middle and upper classes of society have started to seek relief by finding connection with hitherto repressed, dissociated, traumatic and/or secret aspects of their self in the presence of a non-judgmental and embracing co-traveller - the psychotherapist. In a paradoxical sense, both partners in this journey- the person who seeks help and the psychotherapist who is there to receive and listen, have an ancient history and are also relatively new and emerging transitional identities¹ of our contemporary times.

As a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst, along with teaching and training psychologists, a considerable part of my work life revolves around attending to grief and emotional suffering (the “unknowable” and unutterable aspects) in the life of those who visit me for assistance in the psychotherapy clinic at Ambedkar University Delhi where I work, teach and practice. We run a free and low cost psychoanalytic psychotherapy clinic called Ehsaas (which itself is a sub-unit of the Centre of Psychotherapy and Clinical Research) at our University. At most times, the clinic has a long waiting list – once again testifying to the dire necessity for relational engagement in people of all ages, class and gender backgrounds.

As part of our psychological vision, we also work in community contexts where street dwellers seek temporary refuge in makeshift shelter homes. It is from these intimate human encounters that I will be offering some reflections on the “psyche in the city”. I hope to take you through an unusual tour across psychic alleys (both conscious and

unconscious) in the life of the city's residents. These alleys open into inner landscapes suggesting a few crucial themes of value to human life in our times. Though specifically speaking, my work is with Indian people living in the city of Delhi, the themes that are brought up have an appeal which transcends the spatial borders and indeed create a psychic geography of their own.

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While thinking about the psyche and city, my mind kept going back to Anton Chekhov's short but poignant and powerful story, *Grief*. The story is set in the context of a severe winter evening in the then modernizing city of Saint Petersburg, Russia in the early 20th century. As the narrative unfolds, we learn about the sudden death of the young son of an ageing, poor cab driver Iona. The entire city is covered with snow and so is the bent grieving body of Iona. The stillness in the environment speaks of death's aura in which humans, animals and nature are all engulfed together. As the story progresses, Iona picks up passenger after passenger and while struggling to pull the carriage with his old tired limbs, each time he tries to tell his audience about his son's death. However, none of them are interested in listening to him. He, in turn, wants to respect and do justice to the death of the young boy by telling about his child's illness and eventual passing on in a slow, measured and detailed manner. In the absence of a receptive and involved listener, as readers we find his grief spilling over in an uncontrollable manner. The night in the city with its fast-paced demands leaves him lonelier and more isolated each time he tries to share the tragedy which has befallen him- the tragedy of an old father to survive and live beyond his young son's short life. Almost pre-empting the predicament of life in the 21st century, Chekhov sketches the imagination of an indifferent and cold city, a society in which progress and personal concern predominate. In this fast-paced city, there is no listener who may empathetically connect to and help the grieving one to slowly mourn his losses in the way that death and ultimate separation deserve. In the end, disappointed in the ability of humans to relate, Iona goes to his mare and speaks to her about the death of his son. He conveys to her his state by asking her how she would feel if her little colt were to die. The mare softly rubs her face with that of her master. The story ends with an image of mutuality and understanding between the two living beings-man and horse- even as in the backdrop, life in the alienating city continues at its own pace.

I live in a metropolitan city, New Delhi, India where I am struck by the quality of coincidental human encounters that come my way once in a while. On my way to work and back, while travelling in a rickshaw, auto or on the metro, or while going to the market for shopping, at times I have come across people like Iona who are overwhelmed with the emotions they are carrying within themselves. They need an attuned listener to register their pain and sorrow. In a few minutes, our casual conversations acquire intensity, such that they begin to open up and tell me about the death of their parents, children, spouses or other close ones; some talk about separations from family, others speak of the lingering pain of migration from the village (which in their imagination may still remain saturated with nostalgia) to the city.

During these chance meetings I am gripped by the wisdom and depth about the human condition that my one-time-fellow companions carry—the man who pulls my rickshaw or the one who drives me home in an auto or taxi. These chance encounters and the rich stories of life which unfurl therein have also left a lingering resonance and realization about the need to be understood and responded to with empathy and the potential which such qualitatively rich interactions offer for deepening certain axes of human life. This is one angle which most former writings and reflections on the city have missed out.

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There have been some efforts to think about life in the city and its relationship with capitalism (Benjamin, 1969). The work at the psychological level here is very scarce though. Benjamin (1969) and Altman (2010) have spoken about the living arrangements in the city. From the angle of the psyche, I may add that the city justifies inequality and injustice through its special spatial configurations, such as the segregation between gated colonies, bungalows and dwellings of the elite and the slums on the outside but always in close proximity to the houses of the rich. Such a spatial arrangement suggests that “we” segregate “ourselves” from the economically and socially marginalized and disadvantaged and convert them into outsiders, yet retain them within the peripheries of our vicinity so that our everyday needs of running the households are taken care of. At the unconscious level, this spatial arrangement must also be serving our narcissistic need to feel rich and worthy by having the “poor”, the outsiders of society, in such close but distinctively demarcated proximity. Perhaps, their disadvantaged and poverty-stricken existence serves a symbolic

function of making us feel worthy. By juxtaposing our rich dwellings with their bare minimal rundown existence, we the upper classes must be feeling invulnerable and sturdier. Instead of feeling guilty for the unjust system of which we are a collaborating part, we use them as a projective screen to deposit our negativity, anger and hate by converting them into “inverted containers” and thinking of them as being dirty, filthy, violent, crime-oriented, unruly sexual, in effect, unworthy and thus deserving their place in the social order. Then there are girls and boys from economically impoverished backgrounds who work in posh and upper class shopping malls, call centres and other apparently “glittering spaces”. They cross the “borders of identity” on a daily basis (Johri and Menon, 2014). Within the city, theirs remains a distinctive kind of struggle.

The multiple displacements, accompanied by the everyday hazards of existence for the urban poor and the socio-economically marginalized in cities are only too well known to be detailed here (Simmel, 1903; Jacobs, 1961; Altman, 2010). We might also think of the city as an alienating domain challenging the capacity of humans (and all other living beings) to sustain emotional connections and bonds. On the converse side, there are works which uphold the dream for freedom which the city offers, the emancipation it promises and the opportunities for economic success/betterment with which it subtly beckons migrations and allures more into its folds. While there are anthropological, sociological, cultural and spatial reflections on how life is impacted by the spatial and socio-political contours of city life (especially the works from the Chicago School of Sociology and Anthropology), there is very little which has ever been said on the “seekings” of the psyche; on how the city alienates as well as simultaneously serves as a psychic container. There is also a paucity of writings on how the city enables an intergenerational articulation of continuity and discontinuity, of subjectivity and emotional needs, and also the birthing of newer forms of desire.

I now go on to dwell on observations which highlight the intersection of the psyche and the city in the life of two men, one whom I met briefly in a homeless shelter in old Delhi and the other a young man, a university student, who has been visiting me once a week for psychotherapy for the last two years. Hereafter, I will talk about some “innerscapes” and psychic alleys which my patients have been taking me into in recent years. I will conclude this brief writing with thoughts on some psycho-

social themes which are of pre-eminent value and which are of recent emergence in the life of city dwellers in India.

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From village to city, the search continues...

"I left the village as I felt lonely and alienated and not because we did not have sufficient to eat. My father owned a shop there and we had enough but since my childhood I felt misunderstood and alone there". Sitting under a tree on the side of the dried up Yamuna river, as Babu spoke I felt shaken and challenged about my romantic imagination, nay projection, of close bonds between people living in villages as well as the idea that economic poverty was the reason behind widespread migration in my country. Babu, a resident of the homeless shelter for men at Yamuna Pusta, was telling me that it was the dream for relational closeness and fulfilment which had brought him to the city and not the need to earn and send money back home each month. The fantasy behind leaving his home was fuelled with the imagination that someone in the city of Delhi would care and thus cure him of his alienated and disconnected life. This was not to happen. While the city provided him with freedom and anonymity, there were even fewer connections to sustain him here. He soon began to slide downhill. He ended up becoming a rickshaw puller. In a few years, he lost most of the friendships he had made. The city felt like a place where none could be trusted. He felt duped and cheated. This brought up hopelessness and dejection. Drugs, *ganja*, alcohol and sporadic visits to red light areas—these became his evening companions. These could not deafen the voice of the inner sadness and anger he had carried since his childhood. The city could not heal his ailing self. It converted it into oozing wounds. He developed recurrent episodes of tuberculosis and depression.

Listening to him and watching the shallow water of the dried up river, symbolising his shrivelled body and emotional being, I drifted into associations, reveries and memories of speaking to many children and adults who had left their homes and arrived in the city in search of a better and fulfilling life; a life in which they would be sustained by close relational bonds and where ultimately happiness would come their way as they would acquire a distinctive and recognizable face- an identity of their own.

Babu coughed and I returned to the present moment - the myth of both the “holding and enchanting village” and the “rich, dazzling and glittering city” being interrupted for me. For a long time I have been thinking of the need to include the psychosocial and emotional motivations impelling widespread migrations to cities rather than to think of it only as an economic phenomenon. Babu’s journey from the village to the city and the manner in which his body became the site of his psychological struggles made me think of the unspeakability of the self that yearns for closeness inspite of changing locales- villages or cities.

Sitting with Babu, I thought of the unending migrations that slum dwellers go through in my city. The city of Delhi, like most other big cities, alienates with its vastness, pace of life, unfamiliar spaces and the endless displacements which it enforces on its marginalized populations, under the justification of “development” and lopsided progress. As I think of the multiple times that the poor leave their home, I recall Christopher Bollas as he writes, “To leave a home, even when the contents go with us, is to lose its nooks and crannies of parts of ourselves, nestling places of our imagination. Our belief in ghosts will always be at least unconsciously authorized by the fact that we shall always linger on in our former houses, just as we assume that upon moving into the new dwelling, its former inhabitants will also be there” (2009, p. 49).

Across classes, people in this city of all class backgrounds are thrown into a frantic search for survival even as they grapple with the collapse of relations between generations and the loss of sustaining symbols that could impart continuity in their inner world.

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A tapestry of dreams: Knitting together the small town and the “BIG CITY”

I have been meeting Ajay for once-a-week insight oriented therapy since February 2016. He came in feeling lost and listless. Below the surface he suffered from an underlying chronic depression. At that time, he was a 27 year-old doctoral student at our university. On meeting him I felt I was seeing a much older person who was weighed down by life. He walked with a stoop. He barely ever maintained eye contact. In the

initial few months of our work, I don't remember seeing him smile, laugh or share any feeling with spontaneity and openness. He looked dazed and directionless. He shared feeling alienated from almost everyone in his immediate world. He spoke in sentences which were so obscure and knotted that I wondered at the purpose of his speech. Was he attempting to reveal or conceal his emotional state from himself and me? Through his speech and body language, was he intending to keep me out of his emotional world or share his difficulties in a bid for me to be able to help him?

His self-perception was of a person who was easily misunderstood by most people in his immediate context. He lived with his younger sister, two older brothers and father in Delhi. His father was a businessman. His mother was a government school teacher who lived back in his home town, in the upper regions of the Himalayan ranges. In the therapy sessions, he came across as considerate and philosophically well-evolved. In the recent past he had turned to spirituality and was experimenting with different forms of Buddhist meditation to seek solace from his inner anguish. By himself, he had little if any sense of differentiated feeling states, including a capacity for grief, anger, rage, joyfulness or happiness. He did not feel he had a stable sense of self, nor an inner awareness of his emotional life.

Amongst the several life themes which we have explored in the last two years of our work together, for the limited purpose of this paper, let me take you to Ajay's recurrent experiences of and projections onto the city. He had grown up in a small town in the Himalayas. Coming from an economically comfortable family, Ajay was a high achiever in the local school he attended as a child and a distinguished playmate amongst boys and girls of his age. He was especially attached to his maternal grandparents, both of whom were remembered in therapy as nurturing, loving and benevolent figures. Both had died some years back and their death had left a huge vacuum in Ajay's life. He did not have close bonds with either of his parents but longed for emotional support and understanding. Unable to process and/or communicate his authentic feelings, he withdrew from everyone, including his parents. Mostly complaining about others, in the initial months of the therapy, he could rarely come to an understanding of how he himself was now creating conditions by way of which people were drifting away from him.

The following are a few of the relevant details from his life story of significance to this writing. When he was thirteen years old, his father decided to shift to the city. There were financial losses in the family of such a magnitude that half of their land and the rear portion of the house in which they lived had to be sold. He resented this shift with vehemence and became difficult with opposing behavioral patterns. In the meantime, his father was totally absorbed with trying to make good his earlier losses; he rarely had the time to attend to the three children who had accompanied him to the city. His mother had stayed back as she was the only one with a stable government job there. Ajay's distress went unnoticed for the larger part. After he completed tenth standard, his family encouraged him to go to a hostel in another nearby city to pursue his last two years of schooling³. As he had so far been doing well in school, the family had the ambition of his becoming a doctor. For the next four years, he lived in a hostel. He felt out of place and could not connect with the boys in his class, or in his hostel. He experienced some of them to be very ambitious. Others were as lost as himself. In the overall milieu of the city, relationships carried much less importance than the fact that each boy and girl had to make it "big in life". Ajay felt out of rhythm with the pace of the city; he wanted to return to the magnificent quietude of the tall mountains. He started to fail. He could not sustain friendships. It was during this time that he received the news of his grandfather's death. A year later his beloved grandmother died. Then there were losses of three of the sheep that he used to tend as a growing adolescent. He felt betrayed by his parents for pulling him out of the safety of the joint family. He resented them. Somewhere at the back of his mind, he also believed that it was he who had betrayed his grandparents and his beloved animals. He wondered whether their death had been occasioned due to his moving out of home and abandoning them all. Abandoning and being abandoned- this became the preoccupation of his young life.

He withdrew into a shell. His older sister tried to reach out to him but he refused her access to his inner troubled life. He did not know the extent of the anger he carried vis-à-vis everyone back home who had pulled him out of the safety of his home amidst nature. He wanted his parents to pick up his emotional moods without having to explain anything. When the actual time came, he did not appear for the entrance exams for two consecutive years. He would go to the examination hall and come back without attempting anything in the papers. This induced a sense of acute shame, failure and rage in him. He started eating so much

as a way to fill the inner vacuum within that he put on 15-18 kilos of weight in a year's time. He could not understand what was happening to him but he identified with some of his classmates who too seemed to be cracking under tremendous stress and performance anxiety. Young and bright girls and boys were on a downslide. Yet, there was so little communication between them about what was plaguing each person. Ajay lost the motivation to study or work hard. After going through a prolonged depression, he eventually gave up the idea of pursuing medicine and started to think about arts and humanities. It is only now that in therapy he is gradually able to emotionally process his past as memories from childhood and adolescence onwards are returning in bits and pieces. Very slowly he is beginning to find a story of his self.

Ajay has capacity for insight and reflection. He is dedicated to the work we do week after week in the clinic. He recalls his dreams in graphic detail and they serve as powerful expressions of his unconscious. Let me recall one of his dreams.

“There is a young artist. He lives alone in a small room. He paints but his hands shake so much that the images he draws become all smudged and spoilt. There is a structure with walls he keeps on drawing but the painting can never be completed. Instead of amounting to anything in particular, the lines develop into vague shapes. The artist wonders what he wants to paint. A storm comes and all of his paintings are lost. Only a paper survives the storm. The artist is holding the paper which has a sketch of an outline in his hands. He cannot make out what it really is. Is it a human figure, a house, a square or something else?”

This dream was brought up in therapy in the wake of Ajay's recent breakdown of a relationship with a young woman. As he associated with the dream, he identified himself as the dream's artist. He wondered whether the unfinished painting of the artist with walls could have been the lost home of his childhood. The home amidst nature and mountains, the home in which he had felt confident and self-assured, the home of his relationships (as he was now facing a breakdown), the home of his self. The dream spoke of the anxiety which engulfed his present. There was indeed no home to go back to, neither in his relational world, nor in the depths of his self or in the actuality of the homeland. The artist in the dream has lost much, only a single paper with an obscure outline is left in his possession.

The dream opened up a way for us to talk about his losses and his overwhelming feelings as suggested by the trembling hands (the trembling of his self behind the exterior of withdrawal and rigid disconnection). We also started to talk about the specific shape he wanted to give to his “incomplete paintings” so that the structure with half drawn walls could become a safe home for him.

In this phase of therapy, Ajay started bringing up several other dreams too. The dreams evolved around buildings, open spaces, almond and fruit trees. The recurrent motif was of the small hometown becoming an alien space, which he could no longer recognize or return to. Accidents, floods, gushing winds and storms in dreams were energy systems symbolizing the broken connection with the once familiar landscape of his childhood world. In these dreams too, he experienced himself as an “alien being” with no safe abode to protect him. The dream content and symbols suggested that on return to his once familiar small town, he envisioned himself as an unfamiliar stranger. In one of the dreams on returning to the Himalayas, the door of the house was locked. Everyone else but him had migrated to an unknown place of which he had no idea; neither did he have the key to open the locked door at which he kept staring.

In some of these dreams, the city surfaced as a “harsh” and alienating presence. It was symbolised by huge concrete buildings which obstructed his breathing. Another recurrent symbol in Ajay’s dreams was the chopped off apple tree lying dead on the ground. After bringing up this image, he cried in despair as if the tree in the back yard of his home had actually been cut. He mourned the loss of the once familiar landscape in which his deceased grandparents had roamed around freely. He mourned for the simplicity of a way of life of which he was once a part. His dreams tended to suggest that the small town and the city were divorced from one another. While in the dreams there was active pain related to his past, there was also a need to use the city as a repository of the unacknowledged themes of his life. The city becomes a projective symbol of loneliness and isolation- that loneliness and isolation which he had carried in his psyche since childhood but of which he did not have a sense till the critical phase when he had to appear for the medical entrance examination.

We worked on the interplay of fact and fantasy, of present and past themes in his psychological life. The apple tree had a special significance for him. His grandfather would nurture their apple orchard and the

tree stood for his relationship with his granddad. I encouraged him to bring up his feelings and memories from that time of his life. One day he brought an old broken biscuit box. We spoke about the importance of the box for him. It was the same box from which his maternal grandmother would give biscuits to all the children. After a few days he spoke of having found an old worn-out book of stories. This was the book from which his grandfather often read them stories when they were little children. Today both of these are amongst Ajay's most important belongings. I think a crucial milestone has been achieved in therapy as Ajay has been able to reclaim the old biscuit box and torn story book. Instead of fighting against his sorrows, he is becoming open to feeling his pain and also to continuity with his past.

As we move ahead in the therapy, we speak more about finding the strength to complete his "half drawn sketches" (as suggested by the artist's unfinished paintings) in the dream. Ajay can now, not only recognize his diverse emotional states but he has also started to acknowledge his responsibility for the complications in his interpersonal relationships. I am hopeful that the vague outline of the artist's sketch will eventually take the form of a home with strong walls within whose safety Ajay will be able to live.

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City, psyche and self: re-emphasizing a few notations from the city's song

Despite the fact that in his dreams and conscious projections onto the city, Ajay is overwhelmed with powerful and compelling feelings of a negative kind, yet as stated above, it is in the city that he is finding himself anew. It is the city which has offered opportunities for higher education for him. Placed as he is today in a relatively liberal city-based university from where he is pursuing his PhD in the humanities (or through the psychotherapeutic space that this university provides where he returns week after week to reflexively feel and think about his life), Ajay is experiencing a widening and deepening of his intellectual and emotional world. He is finding himself in ways hitherto unimaginable for himself, be it vis-à-vis his father, mother, siblings, Muslim and Sikh friends who are a minority in India, his commitments and values or fears, anxieties, desires and wishes. Week after week he returns to his psychotherapist to think about "who" he is and the issues that his life is posing before him.

As Babu and Ajay's narrations highlight, all humans (and if I may be permitted to add, animals and plants) carry a powerful, preverbal wish-the desire to be intuitively sensed and recognized/related to. One of the deeper unconscious psychological fantasies that each person carries is that without having to explain or justify, without using words or language, the significant other would sense, feel and respond to one's needs; know oneself so thoroughly that explanation and speech would be irrelevant in a relationship. This desire to be "seen" and recognized for who one is, is undisputedly a universal psychological one. In this sense, the psychological clinic acquires a fascinating role in modern times as city dwellers turn to its secure confines in search for identity. The work domain of the psychotherapist (be it in the open, under a tree, by the side of a footpath as with Babu and others like him or in a clinic with the promise of confidentiality) becomes a place where the vicissitudes of life, experience, family and self can all be rethought. In some instances, it is in the presence of the therapist that one's emotional life is experienced with full intensity for the first time. The pair, the psychotherapist- *a vulnerable expert* and the patient – *the suffering one*, attend together to care for that part of the latter which is under siege from conflicts, secrets, anxieties, shame, that is, the unspeakable and the intolerable in the self.

Like every living organism, the city, too, strives towards harmony and integration, while unpredictable conflicts and unforeseeable mutations mark its growth. The imagination of the city is founded on the dream that every city dweller will ultimately move towards a freer and better life (economically and relationally). At a psychological level, the city promises identity and a distinctive "face" or conversely the freedom to be and experiment with oneself. This is one of the core inner fantasies inviting us all to the city. At the same time, the city also provides comfort through the anonymity it extends to its inhabitants who are otherwise likely to be invaded by excessive stimulation.

The city alienates and so does the village. The forms of alienation and the experiences therein are different. In both spaces, individuals carry deep wishes and desires to be recognized and validated and at the same time they yearn for some space to be themselves. Unlike the village, which remains framed in nostalgic reminiscences, the city is more likely to be used as a projective screen onto which those who make a transition from the village/small town to the *big city* tend to inscribe their prior histories of loneliness and lack of connection. Thus, the psychic burden of living in the city is twofold. It challenges the

inner need for continuity and harmony by imposing upon individuals, a pace which is difficult to cope with. This is evident in the manner in which living spaces, geographical distances and work cultures are organized in large cities. Life in the city also provides for lesser time to nurture relationships and friendships, leaving people lonelier and more secluded, also far more dependent on nurture from the nuclear family set up. Human to nature and human to animal relationships are also scarcer in comparison to those in villages and the countryside. It also serves as a projective screen onto which past histories of alienation and loss can be inscribed afresh.

On the other hand, the living city enables reflection by encouraging a different form of inward looking self-relatedness. Articulation, expansion of language as a symbolic weave and relatedness with one's subjectivity may lead to an explorative relationship in which notions of love, sexuality, desire, family, father, mother and personhood become accessible for psychic reflection. Within this context, human beings are more liable to think of one's singularity as well as situatedness within their specific life contexts. The relationship with the psychotherapist becomes one such bond, wherein as unconscious processes are unravelled, the darker side of culture is examined and the play of generations reviewed from the standpoint of the psyche. The living city and the living psyche meet at this point of intersection.

Several of those who visit the city based psychotherapy clinic come to think of their lives in ways so far unimaginable for them. Just as we may say that the city's unconscious is preserved and revealed by its architectural history, similarly the psychotherapy clinic becomes a pertinent site where the unconscious of the city's inhabitants (who struggle for inner continuity despite massive social and historical change) is unfurled and renowned. Like the city's architecture, which speaks of life and death, restoration and preservation, and makes a place for past and present histories to co-exist, so do the psychic configurations of human encounters in the psychotherapy clinic bring together the live remains of generational histories as each person delves into one's personal biography. To elaborate, as the architectural arrangement of the city embodies a sense of its history, its present and past, its destruction and recreation, so do the psychic sojourns of the city's inhabitants preserve a history of their genealogies and their struggles to seek identity. They bring forth currents of identification and dis-identification with culture, collective imaginaries and traditions. The relationship with the psychotherapist may serve as a

potential link allowing for an exploration of the underside of culture, society and family. The city's psychotherapy clinic (especially if it is founded on a non-consumerist orientation), becomes a place of birthing new subjectivities, embraced as they are by the involved and attuned presence of the psychotherapist.

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Endnotes

1. Ever since life began on the planet, humans have offered support to one another in many diverse and rich ways by sharing and participating in each other's grief and emotional crises. It is only with the late 19th century that a professional identity of the psychoanalyst, counselor and psychotherapist came into existence. This took place following the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud. The therapist is, in this sense, an heir to the parent, teacher, friend, religious counselor, priest and

all other imaginably supporting figures. The difference between them and the therapist being that the latter is a guide who does not facilitate a life's journey by exerting moral authority as far as possible. The attempt is to free the clinical domain of moral inscriptions as far as possible. The therapist hopes to provide rich latitude within which the patient's actions, motivations and thoughts may be related to without considering them right or wrong, evil or good. The domain of psychotherapy is one in which freedom and the playful qualities of the mind and psyche are nurtured and any form of judgment is refrained from.

2. The story *Grief* is translated also as *Misery* or *Lament*.
3. I am also meeting two other young persons for therapy with similar psychological trajectories of feeling alienated in the city and in search of their home back in the village or small town where they had grown up. Each life journey is full of unprocessed intensities.