

## EVEN AGAINST INJUSTICE <sup>1</sup>

It is 1968 and I am sitting in the garden talking with my mother. It is a beautiful spring day, the sun is shining and everything feels still as if it is holding its breath waiting to hear what we are going to say. And I am angry.

*“I don’t know how you can sit there and not be furious about racial injustice, global poverty, the atom bomb. The least we can do is shout and make ourselves heard.”*

*“I grew up under fascism – the suffering I witnessed is indescribable – but you can’t fight anger with anger, you have to try your best to meet anger with understanding and compassion.”*

*“But then evil triumphs whilst you do nothing. How can you justify that?”*

*“Because I believe that the only power we have is the power inside ourselves – if that is clear and strong, the rest will follow.”*

Sometime after this conversation my mother had a severe mental breakdown as a result of the persecution she had suffered – her stance on compassion meant she never vented her rage at man’s inhumanity to man. Whilst I, who still finds it hard to quiet my angry heart, have discovered that I can sometimes provide wise counsel rather than angry words.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The title is taken from a poem by Bertolt Brecht written in exile in 1940 entitled **To Those Born Later**. The full quote is: *Yet we know, that anger, even against injustice, makes the voice hoarse*

<sup>2</sup> This was written as an exercise for a course on **Storytelling for Social Change**. In no more than 250 words, the task was to explore the role of ‘protagonist’ and ‘antagonist’ in a story about belief systems. I am never very convinced that things are quite so simple, so here I try to convey two belief systems in which either party can be viewed as protagonist or antagonist – depending on the belief system of the reader / listener.