

EVEN AGAINST INJUSTICE ¹

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.²

¹ 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*

² 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.