

I lived life like a Warrior. I was Alice Miller. And now I'm ... here ... Where am I?

I'm in the bardo, the space between life and death.

And by god I know a few things about life, and what really goes on — and as Warriors, we are the protectors. We take risks.

In Poland, my parents were so terrified by the Nazis, they took us as kids to the Warsaw Ghetto. I saw it as a death sentence and, as a teenager, I escaped, alone. I had a calling, but it meant paying a price. The first payment was renouncing my Jewish heritage.

I won a scholarship to Basel University in Switzerland and earned a PhD in psychology, sociology and philosophy. I thought I was on my way. I became a psychoanalyst.

Now I'm telling you, that was a damn hard road. Like Pandora, I was snookered literally or psychologically, no matter what I did. All went along well, until a most shocking revelation to me. Everything pointed to one dreadful truth: parenting was a systematic abuse of children.

Oh no, you say, that is not so. Well, let me tell you my patients - Anna, Karl, Lena, Joris, Gerard - in fact, *all* my patients, told me the same thing. As children, their abuse masqueraded as 'discipline' and 'teaching good from bad'. I mean, corporeal punishments, shaming, exclusion, withholding love and food - these were all the norm.

But do you know who fascinated me the most? ... Hitler.

Hitler who unleashed vast hatred and trauma. As a child, his father constantly mistreated him, so he learnt only cruelty, and was trained to *repress* that truth and his feelings; to see his parents as good or right.

We all know the outcome and his adult revenge.

Not everyone becomes a Hitler, but many become cruel, violent, or manipulative. Imagine if they can be healed!

Then sometimes I think, what makes me so sure ...?

Well - I listened. Carefully. With a trained and finely-tuned ear. I learnt from my patients, and I believed them.

And, hang on - I know through my own psychoanalysis. When I recalled regular beatings by my father, my analyst said, 'But your father was a good man.'

That's when I first thought, 'Now wait on, something doesn't smell right here.'

I thought a lot about it. Then I took a stand.

My stand was to be the ally of the child and not the ally of the parent. Because my theories contradicted the learned teachings of Dr Freud, the psychoanalytic community became outraged. But take the Oedipus complex, for instance: it protects the parent and blames the child. Well, I wasn't having any of it!

Psychoanalysis *reinforced the repression* of what happens as children. And I told them: 'It is poisonous pedagogy, along with education. Poisonous pedagogy.'

... Was that statement too harsh? Was it abusive?!

Well, in this drawer beside me here, I have emails from 1,873 adults abused as children.

I have regrets, like with my son Martin. He remains scathing and angry about me as a mother. Well, I wasn't chosen to be a Good Mother!

I was a Warrior. I had the grit to stand up for children's rights and for reforming education - and to bring some healing to the world.

Alice Miller, psychoanalyst and author, 1923 - 2010

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