





ALICE MILLER CRITIQUES MY ESSAY ON HER WEBSITE

January 2007

Author	Message
<p>Daniel Mackler Site Admin</p> <p>Joined: 03 Aug 2006 Posts: 524 Location: New York City</p>	<p>Posted: Mon Jan 22, 2007 5:16 pm Post subject: alice miller critiques my essay on her website    </p> <hr/> <p>msz,</p> <p>Thanks for clueing me (and the rest of us) in to the note on Alice Miller's website. I took the liberty of starting a new thread on this subject, continuing from the old one Austerlitz started about "how to get Alice Miller to read Daniel's essay":</p> <p style="text-align: center;">msz wrote:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>I guess she read it... http://www.alice-miller.com/readersmail_en.php?lang=en&nid=1037&grp=0107 at least the quote from Daniel's essay that she chose not to cite.</p> </div> <p>I read the letter on the link provided, and I found it interesting – though dismissive and disheartening. I'd like to quote it in full here and then analyze it briefly.</p> <p>But first, a little background: Apparently, someone named J.W. from the Netherlands wrote Alice Miller an email asking for clarification about whether she still thought it was "hubris" to consider that we might be able to fully resolve all of our childhood conflicts, or if I, Daniel, was right that in that it is possible to fully heal. J.W. provided a quotation of a work of mine – perhaps my essay, or perhaps one of my amazon.com book reviews, because I talk about her "hubris" quotation in some of them, too.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Quote:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>[FROM ALICE MILLER'S WEBSITE:]</p> <p>Confusing Monday January 22, 2007</p> <p>Dear Alice Miller,</p> <p>I would like to ask you if you are aware of the criticism on you by Mr.X.....(we don't publish this quotation because it is highly confusing).</p> <p>I have always been a great admirer of you and your work. I am a 45-year old man from the Netherlands and I first came into contact with your books in 1981, through my mother, who was herself badly abused, physically and psychologically, but who repeated this to some extent with me, her youngest child. I have read all your books.</p> <p>Unfortunately my intelligent and wise mother is in almost complete denial of her own actions towards me during my childhood, although she fully agrees with your books and she admires you enormously (as I do).</p> <p>I have been in the psychiatric system for many years in the past, but was unable to find any healing there, as I should have expected. I am very much aware that the unhealed traumas now often manifest themselves pathologically. I am looking for ways to overcome my traumas, and I would like to believe I am not fighting a losing battle.</p> <p>So I would like to ask you if you think Mr. Mackler is right, namely that total exploration of my child history is possible (and therefore total healing), or if you are right, that total exploration is 'hubris' ?</p> <p>With best wishes, J. W.</p> </div>

[THE FOLLOWING PART IN BOLD IS ALICE MILLER'S REPLY:]

AM [Alice Miller writes]: Usually, I don't respond to people who don't really know my books and got confused by people who WANT to confuse them. But as you say you know my books and want to understand my meaning of the word hubris, I will try to respond. In your quotation, the word hubris is taken out off context. You can find the context in the DRAMA 1997 and read the whole text on your own. Around 1997, I heard of some people who became addicted to primals in the hope to eventually liberate themselves from their past and empty the "pool of pain." They tried to do their best, they cried and cried, without any solution. They felt not good enough if they didn't succeed in healing. At the same time they were unable to question even the cruelest behavior of their parents. To me, this was exactly the reason of why they were blocked.

I do think that you don't need to recall every traumatic event if you deeply felt the devastating effect that your mother's or father's hatred for you created in your soul. It is not only a hubris, but it doesn't make much sense to mistreat oneself. Of course, flashbacks may come again and again and will help us to understand our feelings (of the past and of today) once we are open to our feelings.

You can find my concept of effective therapy in my recent articles on this website.

Now I will analyze the posting from her website line by line.

J.W. wrote:

I would like to ask you if you are aware of the criticism on you by Mr.X.....

Presumably this "criticism" refers to my essay... And one would suppose that Alice Miller has read it – or at least read parts of it. Interesting that Alice Miller took out my name here – and turned me into "Mr. X." How curious – to blot out the name of a critic. Who is she protecting here – me...or herself? I suspect the latter...

Alice Miller wrote:

(we don't publish this quotation because it is highly confusing).

I can only wonder what she wouldn't publish here – again, presumably a line of mine. I wonder to whom it is confusing. I have never thought of my writing as particularly confusing, so perhaps it confuses Alice Miller...or Alice Miller's denial.

I will leave out much of the rest of J.W.'s email, and then skip to the end.

J.W. wrote:

So I would like to ask you if you think Mr. Mackler is right, namely that total exploration of my child history is possible (and therefore total healing), or if you are right, that total exploration is 'hubris' ?

So here she left in my name – but then I just went back and checked and saw that she removed it and changed it to "Mr. X." I'll leave it as I first found it, though...Mr. Mackler.

I like J.W.'s question. He gets right to the heart of it. Very clear question, and a very important one – one that is a theme throughout my essay on Alice Miller.

And just so you know, I still believe full exploration of one's childhood is possible...not hubris!

Alice Miller wrote:

Usually, I don't respond to people who don't really know my books and got confused by people who WANT to confuse them.

So she first says that she doesn't usually respond to people like J.W. "who don't really know her books" (despite the fact that she responds to many people who don't know her books very well, and that J.W. says he's read them all and is a great admirer of hers), and secondly, she says J.W. became confused by me and that my motive (my desire!) is to confuse people.

My motives are quite the opposite, thank you very much! The whole point of my writing my essay about Alice Miller is to uncover her limitations...and confusions.

Seems to me that she just doesn't like a criticism being leveled against her – and she's wriggling out of it, and dismissing my critique entirely, by pathologizing my motives.

Alice Miller wrote:

But as you say you know my books and want to understand my meaning of the word hubris, I will try to respond. In your quotation, the word hubris is taken out off context.

Talk about confusing – and keeping all the power to herself. She refers to my quotation, but makes it impossible for the reader to judge for him or herself what the quotation even is – or how to find it, because she has rendered me anonymous! So she pressures the reader to trust her on faith alone. Not fair!

This backs up the thrust of my essay about her – that she was no peach of a mother, because she can't handle criticism. And yet she tells her readers to beware of therapists who can't handle criticism? Who is she really talking about here?

Alice Miller wrote:

You can find the context in the DRAMA 1997 and read the whole text on your own.

I went back and reread the section in which she wrote her line about full healing being "hubris," and I don't think I took her words out of context at all. In fact, I made a point of being fair and quoting her IN context. There were many other quotations from her writings that I could have included in my paper about her (and was tempted to insert), but did not because they might have SEEMED out of context.

Alice Miller wrote:

Around 1997, I heard of some people who became addicted to primals in the hope to eventually liberate themselves from their past and empty the "pool of pain." They tried to do their best, they cried and cried, without any solution. They felt not good enough if they didn't succeed in healing. At the same time they were unable to question even the cruelest behavior of their parents. To me, this was exactly the reason of why they were blocked.

I suppose this is more of the context in which she intended her line about "hubris." I see what she's getting at, and I suspect she's also writing about her own previous experience here (from when she was a follower of Stettbacher and primal therapy). But here she's adding context in later. Note also: once she stopped following Stettbacher she blotted him out of all her books...

And just so people know, I'm not a primal therapist and don't consider my form of self-therapy to be primal. Yes, ultimately any deep form of therapy has to get to "primal" material, but I think all good forms of therapy ultimately lead there anyway, on their own...

Alice Miller wrote:

I do think that you don't need to recall every traumatic event if you deeply felt the devastating effect that your mother's or father's hatred for you created in your soul. It is not only a hubris, but it doesn't make much sense to mistreat oneself.

Unfortunately, her words read better in translation, because I find these two sentences confusing. But I think I get where she's heading, and to some degree I agree with her. I agree that you (probably) don't have to remember every traumatic event in order to heal, but again, I think Alice Miller radically underestimates the damage that parents do to their children – herself being one of those parents.

Alice Miller wrote:

Of course, flashbacks may come again and again and will help us to understand our feelings (of the past and of today) once we are open to our feelings.

Sounds good, but she's missing the point of my essay.

Alice Miller wrote:

You can find my concept of effective therapy in my recent articles on this website.









Her concept of how to find an effective therapist is not bad – but my sense is that Alice Miller herself never was and still would not be a therapist who lives up to the ideals she presents.








That said, this is very interesting stuff, and I thank you again, msz, for clueing me in to her letter.

Best,
Daniel Mackler (aka "Mr. X")

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

msz Joined: 28 Dec 2006 Posts: 12	<p>Posted: Mon Jan 22, 2007 10:14 pm Post subject:    </p> <hr/> <p>Hi Daniel, She really did change your name. I couldn't believe it. No way for anyone to find out about your essay or you. Quite revealing...</p>
Austerlitz Joined: 10 Aug 2006 Posts: 511 Location: on the way	<p>Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 3:27 am Post subject:    </p> <hr/> <p>Good morning,</p> <p>let me put a question, it is somehow connected with what Alice Miller wrote and what you write that you didn't understand.</p> <p>Why do you have to watch a video about circumcision of a little boy in order to cry? Aren't there enough experiences in your own life you can cry about?</p> <p>Or do you feel that it is more easy to cry about other's suffering than about your own? Or is it "your own", too?</p> <p>Or does it help you to find arguments in your discussion with physicians (medical doctors) why they should NOT do this operation?</p>

<p>Daniel Mackler Site Admin</p> <p>Joined: 03 Aug 2006 Posts: 524 Location: New York City</p>	<p>Best wishes, Austerlitz</p> <p>Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 12:55 pm Post subject:   </p> <hr/> <p>msz wrote:</p> <div data-bbox="444 394 1333 510" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p>Hi Daniel, She really did change your name. I couldn't believe it. No way for anyone to find out about your essay or you. Quite revealing...</p> </div> <p>Yes, she blotted out my name alright – fascinating!</p> <p>That strikes me as...totalitarian...which, incidentally, is the very word she used to describe her parents when she was growing up. So again, it seems she hasn't evolved as much out of her childhood family system as she thinks she has.</p> <p>I still love much of her point of view, but I don't love her limitations in applying it to herself.</p> <p>I think she gave up growing, and will rationalize and dismiss anything that provokes her to face this reality.</p> <hr/> <p>Daniel Mackler</p> <p>http://iraresoul.com</p>
<p>Daniel Mackler Site Admin</p> <p>Joined: 03 Aug 2006 Posts: 524 Location: New York City</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 1:01 pm Post subject:   </p> <hr/> <p>Austerlitz wrote:</p> <div data-bbox="444 1016 1333 1184" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p>I've read your post in Daniel's thread on Miller's Enlightenment, too, and I've seen that were had been written Mr. Mackler yesterday, today one can read Mr. X.</p> <p>cheers, Austerlitz</p> </div> <p>Thanks for the support. I'm glad you and msz read it before Alice Miller changed my name!</p> <p>Perhaps she was threatened that people would read my criticisms against her and not find them as confusing as she did...</p> <p>Oh well, in the end the truth will out...</p> <p>Best, Daniel</p> <hr/> <p>Daniel Mackler</p> <p>http://iraresoul.com</p>
<p>msz</p> <p>Joined: 28 Dec 2006 Posts: 12</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 2:02 pm Post subject:   </p> <hr/> <p>Daniel wrote:</p> <div data-bbox="444 1667 1333 1709" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p>That strikes me as...totalitarian...</p> </div> <p>Yes, I have the same impression.</p> <p>For someone, a German, born in 1923 in Poland (what is now Poland, but then a German populated place) and perhaps indoctrinated with the ideology of that time (Fascism), plus brought up in the famous harsh Prussian discipline, living through atrocities of the IIWW (actually, right in the midst of it), there must be a lot to deal with. Then starting a new life at 23, in a new country (Switzerland) - wow, a lot of upheaval. Going into psychoanalysis</p>

must had seem like a promise of sanity or a key to make sense of that cruel and mad world. And yet another disappointment - Freud lied, psychoanalysis did not unlock the life within. So now, that her lonely journey brought this incredible insight she had courage to share with the world in comes Daniel with his critique and challenges her with these very insights. The guy has a nerve, doesn't he? 😊
So seven valleys and seven mountains later the dragon is still there... well and alive.

Greetings from the Fairyland,
msz

PS. Daniel, I copied both versions of that post (with and without your name in it).

Austerlitz

📄 Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 4:44 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 10
Aug 2006
Posts: 511
Location: on
the way

Daniel Mackler wrote:

I think she gave up growing, and will rationalize and dismiss anything that provokes her to face this reality.

Hi Daniel,

she has not given up growing, according to my judgement. Apart from the fact that she has deleted your name, she HAS quoted a letter putting YOUR judgement about her previous "hubris" statement in the shape of a question, AND, she has answered this question.

Do you want to know her answer, too, or do you want to stick to the other circumstances only?

A real "totalitarian" would not have even mentioned a letter talking about your judgement.

A totalitarian like her mother has been , referring to her writings, would not have answered that question.

Best,
Austerlitz

Maybe our understanding differs of what "totalitarian" is.

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

📄 Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 5:11 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 03
Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location:
New York
City

msz wrote:

For someone, a German, born in 1923 in Poland (what is now Poland, but then a German populated place) and perhaps indoctrinated with the ideology of that time (Fascism), plus brought up in the famous harsh Prussian discipline, living through atrocities of the IIWW (actually, right in the midst of it), there must be a lot to deal with.

All probably quite true – that and having totalitarian parents to boot!

msz wrote:

Then starting a new life at 23, in a new country (Switzerland) - wow, a lot of upheaval. Going into psychoanalysis must had seem like a promise of sanity or a key to make sense of that cruel and mad world. And yet another disappointment - Freud lied, psychoanalysis did not unlock the life within.

Again, well said.

msz wrote:

So now, that her lonely journey brought this incredible insight she had courage to share with the world in comes Daniel with his critique and challenges her with these very insights

The guy has a nerve, doesn't he? 😊

If my perception of what's going on is correct, then you are right here. Well said, again.

msz wrote:

So seven valleys and seven mountains later the dragon is still there... well and alive.

Yup.

msz wrote:

PS. Daniel, I copied both versions of that post (with and without your name in it).

Would you mind emailing these to me – or sending them to me via private message. I read both versions but I only copied the second one, and just changed my name back to Mr. X (from Mr. Mackler), because that's the only change she made that I remembered. So maybe other things were changed as well.

Best,
Daniel

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Joined: 03
Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location:
New York
City

Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 5:24 pm Post subject:



Austerlitz wrote:

Hi Daniel, she has not given up growing, according to my judgement.

My impression is that she's pretty stuck. Maybe growing a little, but not much – and she certainly doesn't like being criticized or critiqued. To me this avoidance of critique is a hallmark of a stuck, non-growing person.

Austerlitz wrote:

Apart from the fact that she has deleted your name, she HAS quoted a letter putting YOUR judgement about her previous "hubris" statement in the shape of a question, AND, she has answered this question.

Yes, but she never even states what my assessment was, or even made it clear what my arguments were – let alone whose they were. And her roundabout answer to the question doesn't lead me to believe she's growing much. I find this unfortunate, but not entirely unexpected.

Austerlitz wrote:

Do you want to know her answer, too, or do you want to stick to the other circumstances only?

I'd prefer both.

Austerlitz wrote:

A real "totalitarian" would not have even mentioned a letter talking about your judgement.

I see all different levels of extremes in totalitarian behavior. A 100% pure totalitarian might even hunt me down and have me arrested for criticizing her. I don't see her at this extreme, but I see her behavior as having definite signs of totalitarianism – especially given the context of her other authoritarian behavior (such as her handling of her web forum with Dennis, etc.).

Austerlitz wrote:

A totalitarian like her mother has been, referring to her writings, would not have answered that question.

Perhaps so – and probably quite true.

All this said, Austerlitz, please keep in mind that I still have great respect for Alice Miller and her work, even if I critique her. One wonders how similar my respect for her is to her past respect for Freud, to whom she dedicated "Thou Shalt Not Be Aware," the same book in which she blasted him from here to tomorrow.

Best,
Daniel

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

msz

Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 6:06 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 28
Dec 2006
Posts: 12

Austerlitz wrote:

Maybe our understanding differs of what "totalitarian" is.

Hi Austerlitz,
I am quite curious about that. Would you mind sharing your view on "totalitarian" type?
msz

Dennis

Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 6:52 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 20
Oct 2006
Posts: 140
Location:
Sweden

Daniel, at least you didn't get threatened or publicly prosecuted like she did with me. Miller never knows how to deal with critique. Because that way she has to let go of her intellectual defenses. Maybe you can start calling yourself Daniel X from now on.










To me the part that's more shocking is:

Quote:

I have always been a great admirer of you and your work. I am a 45-year old man from the Netherlands and I first came into contact with your books in 1981, through my mother, who was herself badly abused, physically and psychologically, but who repeated this to some extent with me, her youngest child. I have read all your books.

Unfortunately my intelligent and wise mother is in almost complete denial of her own actions towards me during my childhood, although she fully agrees with your books and she admires you enormously (as I do).

Here you have it in a nutshell. Here's the irony of it all. We have a mother who is called intelligent and wise and has read all her books but is in **almost complete denial** about the hurt she inflicted on her child. I wonder why someone like this man would have admiration for that. Miller somehow refers to Primal Therapy as being a bottomless pit when it comes to healing but doesn't say a word about these people who admire her and read all her books (since 1981!) AND at least one of them not being able to question the cruelest behavior. Not even after 25 years.

	<p>Dennis</p> <p>Yes, there's another forum dealing with Alice Miller's findings... www.wallsofsilence.com</p>
<p>John</p> <p>Joined: 22 Oct 2006 Posts: 269</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 8:25 pm Post subject:   </p> <hr/> <p>Dennis wrote:</p> <p>Quote:</p> <div data-bbox="444 495 1333 764" style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px;"> <p>Here you have it in a nutshell. Here's the irony of it all. We have a mother who is called intelligent and wise and has read all her books but is in almost complete denial about the hurt she inflicted on her child. I wonder why someone like this man would have admiration for that. Miller somehow refers to Primal Therapy as being a bottomless pit when it comes to healing but doesn't say a word about these people who admire her and read all her books (since 1981!) AND at least one of them not being able to question the cruelest behavior. Not even after 25 years.</p> </div> <p>Oh what a great example of what even the greatest intellect will do for childhood traumas. I think of Thomas Stone who could only read a page an hour before he got better.....and now has read hundreds of books. With his book containing dozens of errors and lots of "aw shucks" style writing. But the guy IS substantially healed and it WAS possible to go right into the deepest traumas and heal them. It IS possible. Alice Miller is wrong. I will say something hugely in her favour. She's great to give a template to the problem during and after healing. That's the way I see her. I just see her stuff as an amazing tool. Insights or a healing nature come with pain release. Her understanding of primal therapy seems to be very poor. Pain is not bottomless and becoming "addicted" to primalling? I don't know what that means or if it's even possible. If a person was "addicted" to it, it wouldn't be primalling. Addiction is mood-altering to avoid primal feelings. Primalling deals with primal feelings!</p> <p>I guess my point is that Alice Miller is one kind of toola hammer isn't a saw.</p> <p>John</p>
<p>Phil</p> <p>Joined: 10 Nov 2006 Posts: 44</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Jan 23, 2007 9:23 pm Post subject:   </p> <hr/> <p>What I think is that Miller mistakenly uses her own experience with primal and generalizes it.</p> <p>No doubt there are people who may be stuck in their primal healing with out making much progress and obsessed with therapy. I think a good therapist of any kind keeps a large part of the focus on current life. That is the same for primal as well.</p> <p>But it is still the responsibility of the individual to try to move on in life. Noone can do that for him or her.</p> <p>A good therapist may need to bring therapy to an end when it is hopeless and not going anywhere. I have seen that happen.</p> <p>But the progress can come after a lot of crying. Years and years of it.</p> <p>So I think Miller is wrong about that.</p> <p>Phil</p>
<p>Austerlitz</p> <p>Joined: 10 Aug 2006 Posts: 511 Location: on the way</p>	<p>Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 5:25 am Post subject:   </p> <hr/> <p>Dennis,</p> <p>I had the idea that this letter might have been written by her son, in irony. Because it is possible and perhaps quite common that a person who is able to write quite enlightening books is not able to practice what she/he has written, or only parts of it. As it is of course possible that reading quite enlightening books never intrigues people to applying what they have read unto themselves.</p>

Miller writes about this procedure herself, when she notes that famous writers, philosophers and so on are telling their truths, but nonetheless fail to recognize this truth as their own, consciously. Daniel has mentioned this process to, referring to Alice Miller.

Austerlitz

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Joined: 03
Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location:
New York
City

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 11:45 am Post subject:



Dennis wrote:

Daniel, at least you didn't get threatened or publicly prosecuted like she did with me.

True. I think that would have been horrible.

Dennis wrote:

Miller never knows how to deal with critique. Because that way she has to let go of her intellectual defenses.

True. I remember reading in some of her books, even *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, I believe, in which she spoke about having been criticized by others.

Granted, most of her critics are in terrible denial, but once in a while people level a fair criticism against her. I think your criticisms against her, Dennis, were fair, and I think mine (or at least most of mine) are fair as well.

Regarding fair criticisms of her, I have rarely seen her admit any flaws in her arguments as the result of a critique, and my sense is that she belittles her critics, and if she doesn't win them over to her side (that is, pummel them into submission), she just ignores them entirely.

Dennis wrote:

To me the part that's more shocking is:

Quote:

...Unfortunately my intelligent and wise mother is in almost complete denial of her own actions towards me during my childhood, although she fully agrees with your books and she admires you enormously (as I do).

Here you have it in a nutshell. Here's the irony of it all. We have a mother who is called intelligent and wise and has read all her books but is in **almost complete denial** about the hurt she inflicted on her child.

Yes, I agree fully. Shows you how split-off people can be – loving a theory but being radically unable to apply it to their lives.

Dennis wrote:

I wonder why someone like this man would have admiration for that. Miller somehow refers to Primal Therapy as being a bottomless pit when it comes to healing but doesn't say a word about these people who admire her and read all her books (since 1981!) AND at least one of them not being able to question the cruelest behavior. Not even after 25 years.

Yep. Thanks for pointing out the irony here. Shows you how limited she is. Also, I think she really sets up primal therapy as a straw man to attack. How convenient.

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 11:55 am Post subject:



John wrote:

I think of Thomas Stone who could only read a page an hour before he got better.....and now has read hundreds of books. ... the guy IS substantially healed and it WAS possible to go right into the deepest traumas and heal them. It IS possible. Alice Miller is wrong.

Agreed. She gave up because she couldn't handle the pain of it all, but that doesn't mean that healing is also similarly impossible for everyone. I see my own life as testament to that – perhaps because I'm younger than Alice Miller, perhaps because I have fewer traumas to resolve, and perhaps who knows what...

John wrote:

I will say something hugely in her favour. She's great to give a template to the problem during and after healing. That's the way I see her. I just see her stuff as an amazing tool.

I agree. She helped me incredibly. She gave me a ball and I took it and ran with it.

John wrote:

Her understanding of primal therapy seems to be very poor. Pain is not bottomless and becoming "addicted" to primalling? I don't know what that means or if it's even possible.

It sounds like she's rationalizing her reasons for giving up – that she was terrified to go deeper into her pain. Remember, she herself claimed to have become almost psychotic (I can't remember the exact quotation) in the primal therapy she was in. And it sounded like a very disrespectful form of primal therapy to me – and she has just generalized it to all forms of primal therapy.

John wrote:

If a person was "addicted" to it, it wouldn't be primalling. Addiction is mood-altering to avoid primal feelings. Primalling deals with primal feelings!

I would agree. Well-said.

John wrote:

I guess my point is that Alice Miller is one kind of toola hammer isn't a saw.

For me Alice Miller's writing formed a blueprint for how to make a hammer. That doesn't mean she knows how to hammer anything all that well, though. Leonardo Da Vinci created the blueprint for a helicopter centuries before anyone actually built one, but that doesn't mean I'd trust Leonardo to fly me around in a helicopter!

Daniel Mackler

Joined: 03
Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location:
New York
City

<http://iraresoul.com>

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 12:01 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  ip

Phil wrote:

What I think is that Miller mistakenly uses her own experience with primal and generalizes it.

Exactly what I think.

Phil wrote:

No doubt there are people who may be stuck in their primal healing with out making much progress and obsessed with therapy. I think a good therapist of any kind keeps a large part of the focus on current life. That is the same for primal as well.

I agree. But to some degree I think it has to go on a case by case basis. Good therapy can be different things for different people – and different things for the same person at different times. Same thing with self-therapy, in my opinion.

Phil wrote:

A good therapist may need to bring therapy to an end when it is hopeless and not going anywhere. I have seen that happen.

But is therapy really ever hopeless? If so, I think it's only hopeless if either a patient or therapist completely gives up, or if either simply cannot handle growing anymore. All too often I have seen therapists say that the therapy is stuck and hopeless and the ethical thing to do is to end it, when really the patient is not stuck at all – and it's the therapist who is stuck!

Phil wrote:

But the progress can come after a lot of crying. Years and years of it. So I think Miller is wrong about that.

Yes, she trivializes grieving...because she hasn't really done enough of it, and thus doesn't really understand it. She's still protecting her parents.

How convenient of her to label me "highly confusing"...

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 12:05 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  ip

Austerlitz wrote:

I had the idea that this letter might have been written by her son, in irony.

That's a funny thought, and it never crossed my mind. Although I highly doubt her son wrote it, what J.W. wrote about his mother probably does apply to Alice Miller quite well!

Good point, Austerlitz.

Joined: 03 Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location: New York City

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Joined: 03 Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location: New York City

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 12:18 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Phil wrote:

My complaint about Miller is I have never seen a detailed description of a therapy based on her ideas and how it would be different from primal. She has ideas, she doesn't have a therapy.

In all fairness, I have written a ton about psychology and therapy and yet I've never provided any description of a therapy. Yes, I've written some about self-therapy, but not about how to do therapy or what happens in a therapy session with me.

My main reason, I would say, is that I have so many different "techniques" – if you call them that – and use so many different creative and novel approaches, and come from so many different angles, that it would be impossible for me describe "exactly what I do." I could present case studies that would give some idea of how I work, but would violate patient confidentiality.

What I do instead is present the underlying theory behind my point of view, and leave it to the reader to do what he or she will with my ideas. I myself have never gotten much from reading about other therapist's techniques. I prefer to feed myself on the theoretical building blocks and channel these through my own creative process.

Also, even with therapists who do present detailed descriptions of their own methods of therapy, I often don't believe them. I think they often present idealized versions of what they do – or what they wish they could do, or what they do SOME of the time – and I suspect they leave out basic realities of what goes on.

Phil wrote:

For example: How does one decide to question the cruel behavior of parents. Deciding to do that does not automatically lead to healing. If that is where people are blocked, how do they become unblocked? She doesn't say.

Good questions – and not necessarily ones with simple answers, and certainly not a one-size-fits-all.

Phil wrote:

I have been in contact with a lot of primallers and since the therapy is about childhood trauma, there is a lot of awareness that questions around parents behavior are essential. But intellectual questioning is different than getting to the deep feelings.

This sounds like it applies closely to my own self-therapy experience. Yes, intellectual questioning has its value, but it cannot be an end in itself.

Phil wrote:

Also Miller seems to have no awareness of the effects of very early childhood traumas, what Janov calls 1st line. My own healing process accelerated greatly when I started getting to those feelings. Not getting to those is a place in therapy where many people are stuck.

I would say she has some awareness of the effects of very early childhood trauma, but

just not enough.

Also, I have known many people who wrote about accessing the feelings of their very early traumas – or prenatal traumas – and I was never convinced they had really accessed those early traumas at all. For example, perhaps they were accessing feelings surrounding unresolved traumas from when they were eight years old and just imagining that they were experiencing birth trauma, etc. I think it can be hard to sort these things out. I'd be curious to know your opinion on how or whether a person can be SURE, with certainty, that they are experiencing feelings from a VERY early childhood trauma. I have never been able to know with certainty.

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Joined: 03
Aug 2006
Posts: 524
Location:
New York
City

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 12:24 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Austerlitz wrote:

It was Daniel who stated that it is necessary to remember all the details and all traumatic events in order to heal.

Did I say that? Perhaps I did. I'll have to think about it more. I think though, what I stated, or at least what I meant, is that it's necessary to RESOLVE all of one's traumas in order to be able to HEAL FULLY.

Do you have to remember every detail of every trauma in order to be able to heal that trauma? Perhaps not. I think we can heal some traumas without even having full conscious awareness of what they are. Hopefully this doesn't contradict everything I've written!

I'm just thinking out loud here...

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

kaleo

Joined: 06
Oct 2006
Posts: 209

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 12:44 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Hi Daniel -

Just wanted to let you know I also saw your name appear momentarily on the AM site when I read the letter and response. 😊

I have to say I'm not at all impressed with any of her replies on that site. Maybe it's the format itself, or maybe it's because she's writing in English. The answers just seem trite and obvious to me, and also very self-serving in that they all direct the questioner to her books. That is totalitarian in itself or perhaps "grandiose", to use your word - you ask, she answers. If I were in her position, I don't know that I'd take on a task like that. I'd rather choose one letter a week and respond with an in-depth essay on that topic.

What do you think?

Kaleo

Daniel Mackler
Site Admin

Joined: 03
Aug 2006
Posts: 524

Posted: Wed Jan 24, 2007 12:56 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Hi Kaleo,

Nice to hear from you.

kaleo wrote:

Location:
New York
City

Just wanted to let you know I also saw your name appear momentarily on the AM site when I read the letter and response. 😊

Cool. I admit, part of me is glad that my name was on there for a second. Part of is probably just rejoicing over getting a crumb of (negative) attention from the grand parental figure...but on the other hand, I'm glad that at least a few people out there are looking at my criticisms more clearly.

It's hard, because I (like many, I suppose) have some degree of parental transference onto Alice Miller. Sounds screwy of me to admit, especially given my critiques of her, but she did help me very much, and was my best theoretical ally in my first years as a therapist. Some of that residue still remains, even if I've mostly grown out of her.

kaleo wrote:

I have to say I'm not at all impressed with any of her replies on that site. Maybe it's the format itself, or maybe it's because she's writing in English. The answers just seem trite and obvious to me, and also very self-serving in that they all direct the questioner to her books.

I agree. I don't get much out of it. Her books over the years have also become very self-referential. Boring! It's like she sees herself as the only theorist of value in the world. Yes, she's fantastic, especially compared with the norm, but she does push her books a lot - in ways that go over the top.

kaleo wrote:

That is totalitarian in itself or perhaps "grandiose", to use your word - you ask, she answers.

Yes, I'd agree...

kaleo wrote:

If I were in her position, I don't know that I'd take on a task like that. I'd rather choose one letter a week and respond with an in-depth essay on that topic.

Agreed! Why don't you write your suggestion to her in a letter? (Just kidding.) Maybe she's publish it with a quick, trite reply, along with a horde of others!

Daniel Mackler