

Speech of Ora Goldschmidt during the laying of the STOLPERSTEIN

It is a very special thing happening here today, and I am excited and happy to be a part of it.

Throughout my and my sister and brother's childhood, our mother's hometown and the house she had grown up in, were a constant presence. Her stories about her childhood in the big house on Hauptstrasse 6, which she had lovingly called "villa Isserlin"; Her best friend Hilde Christian, who lived next door; Mina and Liesel, who worked in the house and were an important part of her childhood; Her father's clinic where he saw his patients; The patients, some of whom became family friends; Her mother's grand piano and the singing and playing which went on all the time; The kurpark, the sanatorium, the forest. My mother's memories remained warm and beautiful, unspoiled by the horrors that followed.

I am not going to talk about the holocaust. But I do want to say something about human nature. As a psychoanalyst, it is my belief that lack of empathy to another human being can only occur as a deviation from normal development. On a small scale and for short periods of time, we all dissociate ourselves from other people's suffering, or do ourselves inflict suffering on others. On a large scale, a wide and prolonged such dissociation, of one group of humans from another, enabled the holocaust and other atrocities around the globe to happen. I do not have any pretences to understand how it was, and is, possible for such things to happen, but I do want to say that I see this project of the stolpersteine, and the exhibition, and your hospitality extended to us here today, as a counter-dissociative act, as an act of joining together of parts of the soul which are so often easier kept apart. Wrongs that had been done cannot be undone, but this does not mean that we as humans are exempt from trying to do a sort of reparation. I think that the striving to repair, to do and be better, and to include the wrongs of the past in who we are today and who we want and can become, is such an important part of being a whole human being.