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APA 117TH ANNUAL CONVENTION • AUGUST 6-9

2009

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THE PERSON AND EVIL

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August 7, 2009



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Unde malum? **Whence the evil?**

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Agenda

- I. **Two basic philosophical positions**
and how May and Rogers fit into them.
- II. **Consequences for therapy**
- III. **Being-centered or person-centered ?**
- IV. **A personal-dialogic position**



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I. Two basic philosophical positions

- (1) Good versus evil (dualism).
- (2) All being is good (one sole source).



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(1) Dualism: Good versus Evil

- **Zoroastrianism**
creation vs. destruction
- **Manichaeism**
soul vs. body
- **Gnosticism**
light vs. darkness; *σομα σημα*
- **Freud**
eros vs. thanatos



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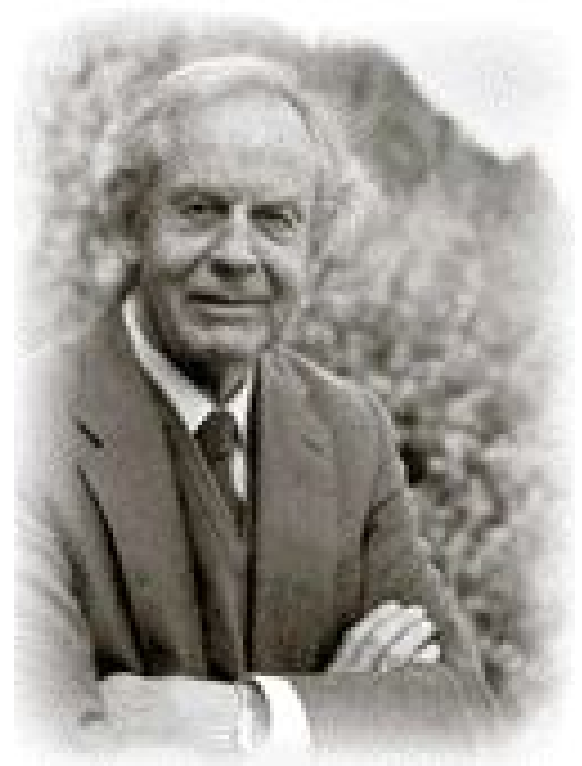
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Rollo May

“... the source *both*
of our **constructive**
and our **destructive**
impulses ...”

(1982)



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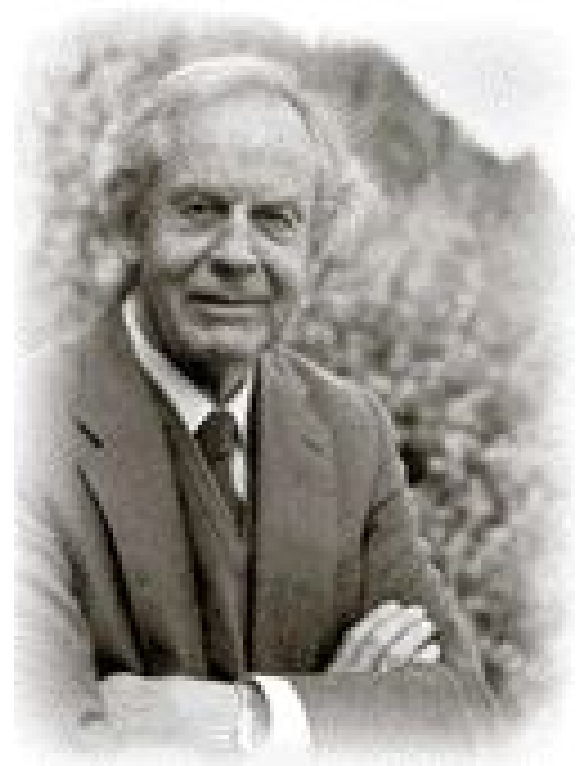
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Rollo May

“... potentialities,
driven by the
daimonic urge ...”

(1982)

* *δαιμονιον*
divine power, little god



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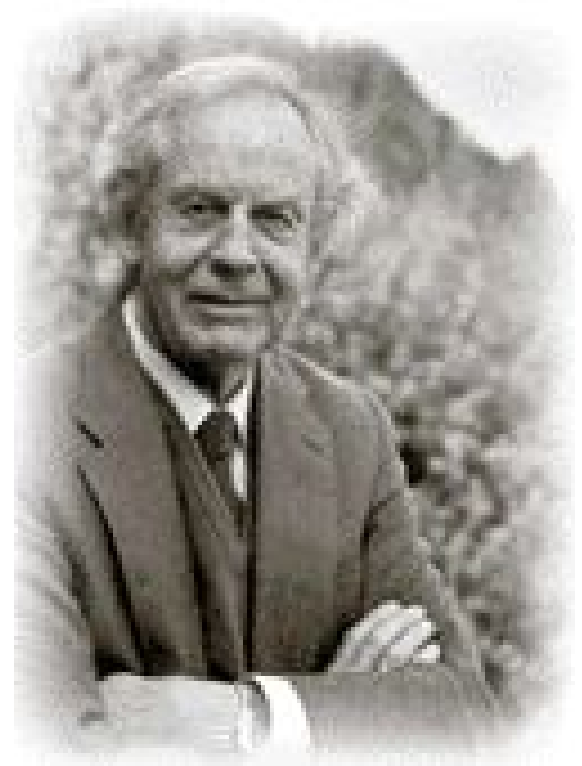
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Rollo May

“... urge in every being to affirm itself ... that is **not directionally set.**”

It could be expressed either constructively or destructively ...”

(1969)



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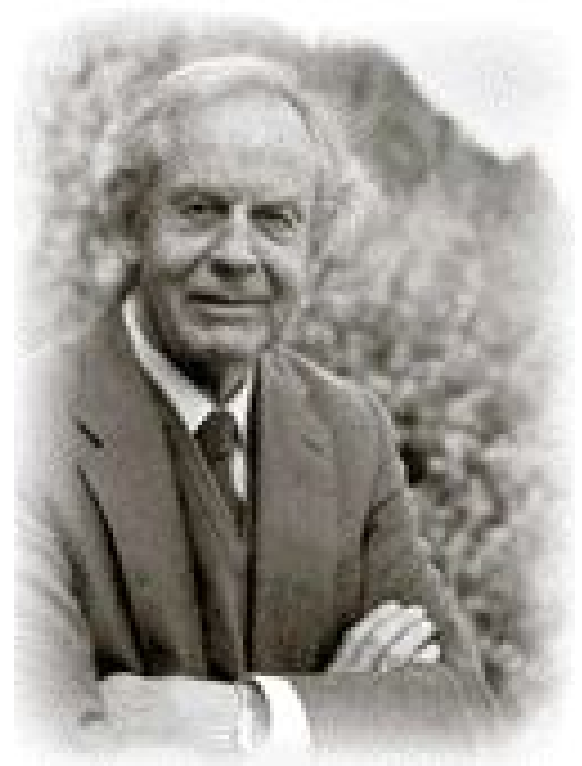
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Rollo May

“... If the daimonic urge is integrated into the personality it results in **creativity**.

If not, **destructive** activity is the result ...“

(1982)



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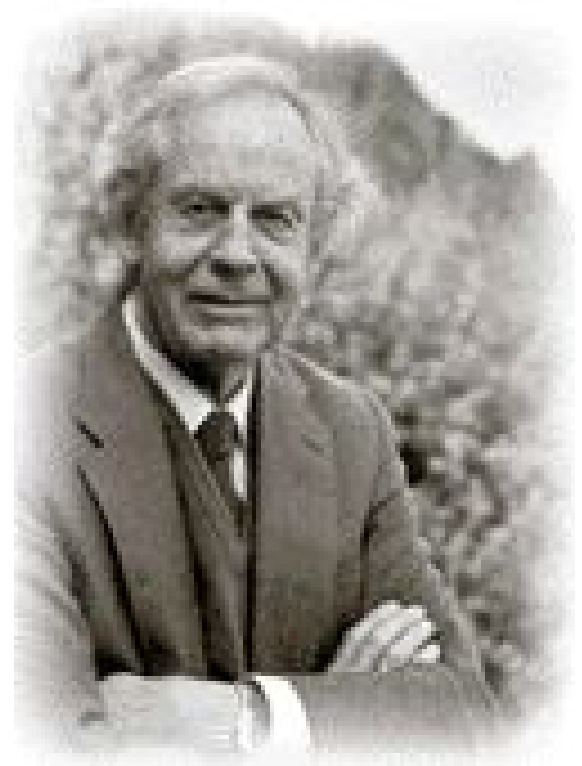
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Rollo May

**“... not confronting
evil is the most
important error
in the humanistic
movement ...”**

(1982)



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(2) „All Being as Being is Good“

- **Augustine**
“Esse qua esse bonum est.”
- **Thomas Aquinas**
“Malum privatio essendi et boni.”
- **Origenes**
“Το ουκ ον.”
- **Bible**
Turning away from God, *the good*.



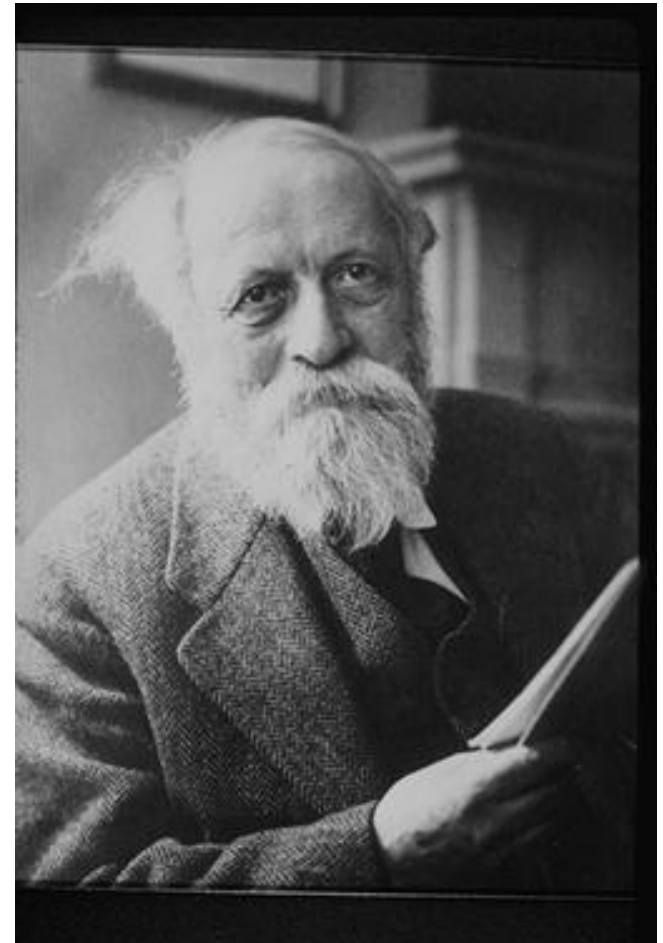
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(2) „All Being as Being is Good“

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Turning away from God, *the good*.
- **Martin Buber**
„The evil cannot be done wholeheartedly.“



(2) „All Being as Being is Good“

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- **Bible**
Turning away from God, *the good*.
- **Martin Buber**
„The evil cannot be done wholeheartedly.“
- **Pythagoras**
- **Plato**
- **Epiktet**
- **Boethius**
- **Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagita**
- **Christian metaphysics**
- **Leibnitz**
- **Spinosa**
- **Hegel**
- **Goethe**
- **Heidegger**



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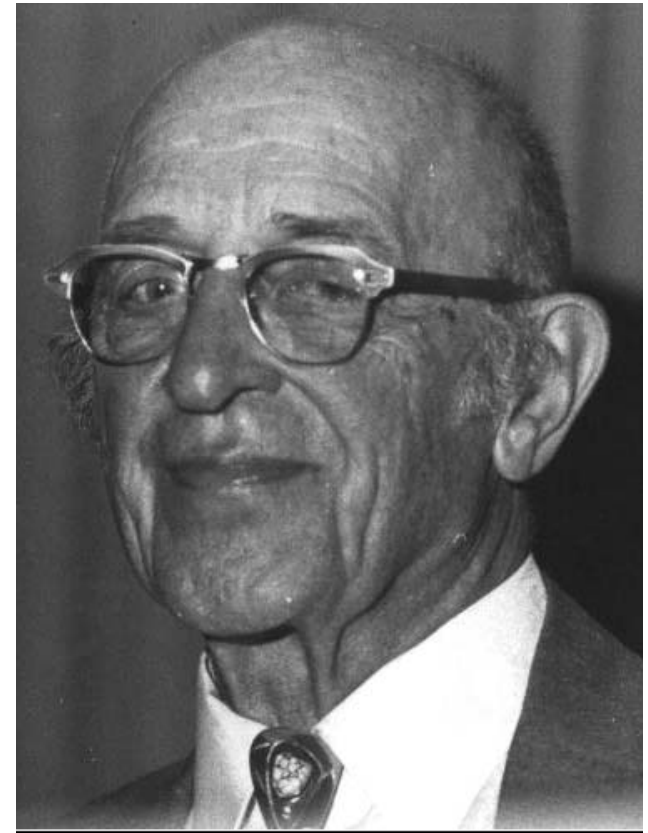
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Carl Rogers

“... I am influenced
by the Judeo-Christian
stream of thought ...”

(1965)



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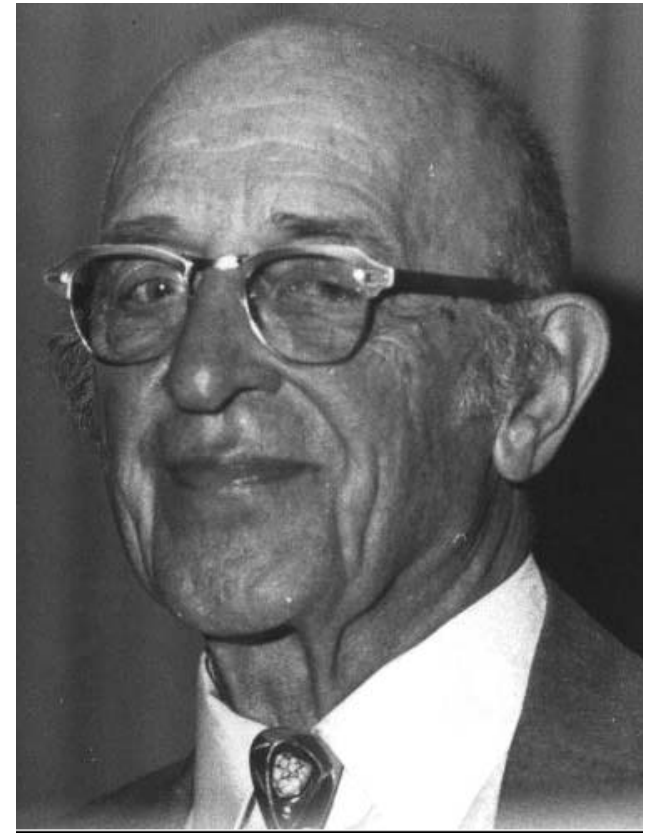
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Carl Rogers

There is **only one motivational force**, the actualizing tendency.

(1951; 1963)



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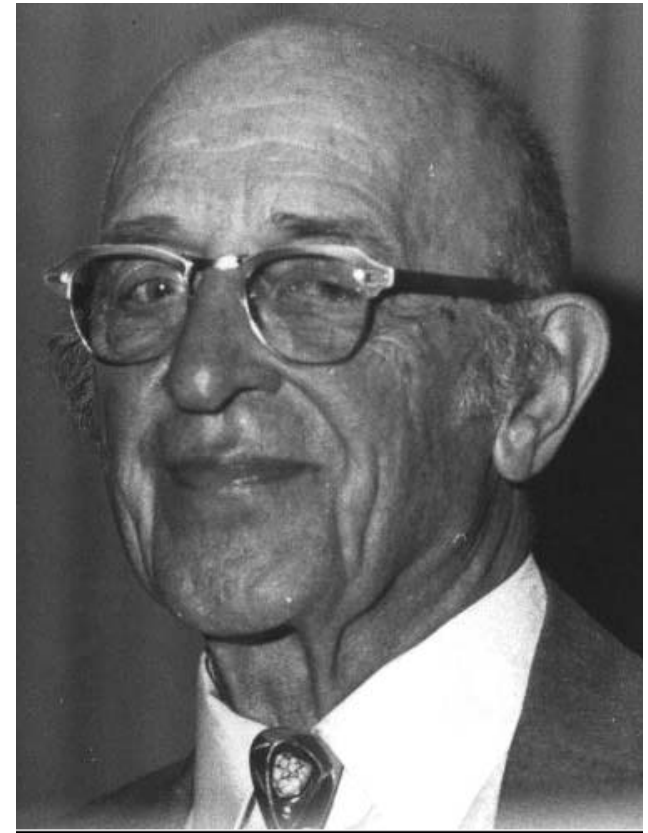


“... **every person** has the **capacity for evil** behavior.

I, and others, have had murderous and cruel impulses, desires to impose our will on others ... “

(1982)

Carl Rogers



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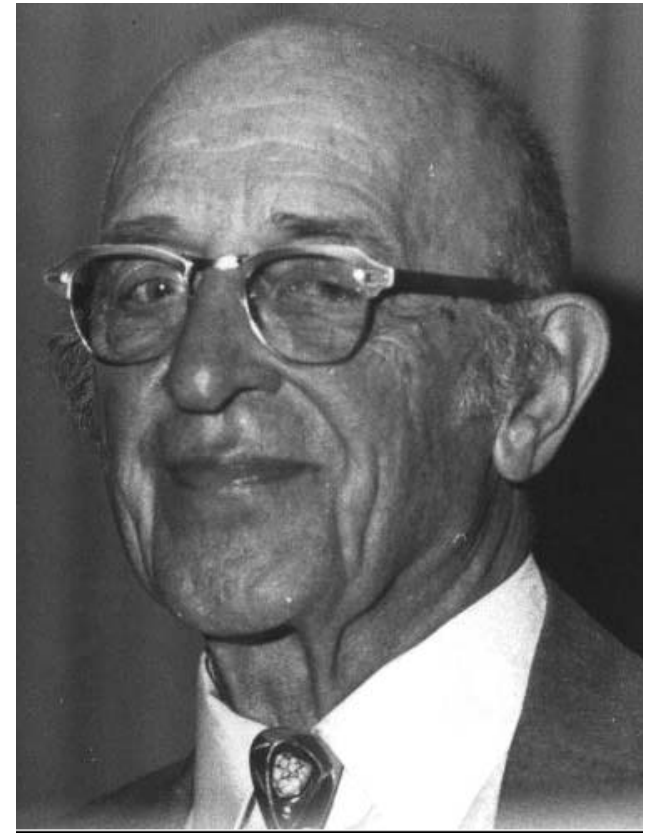


“...If the elements making for growth are present, the actualizing tendency develops in positive ways.

These elements are a climate of psychological attitudes.”

(1982)

Carl Rogers



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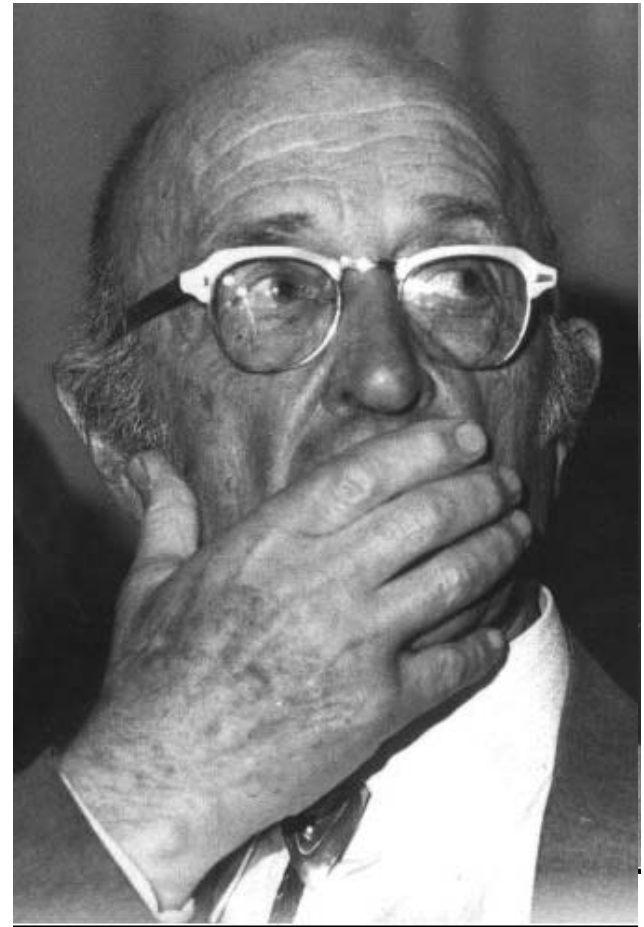
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Carl Rogers

“...Your viewpoint is devilishly innocent.”

*Warren Bennis
to Carl Rogers
(1976)*



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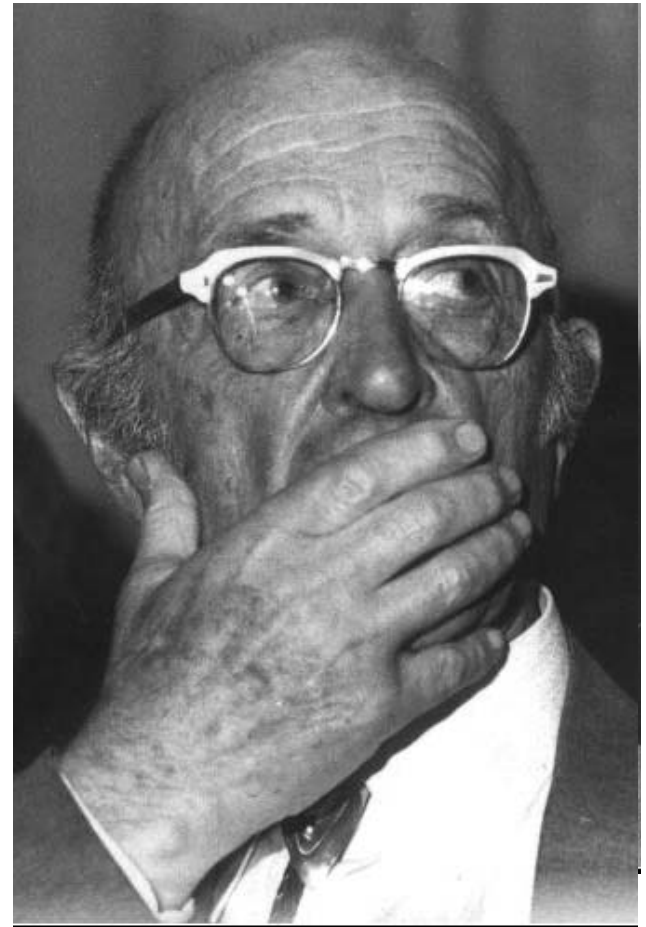
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“It disturbs me to be thought of as an optimist.

My whole professional experience has been with the dark and often sordid side of life.

I know the **incredibly destructive behavior** of which man is capable.”
(1958)

Carl Rogers



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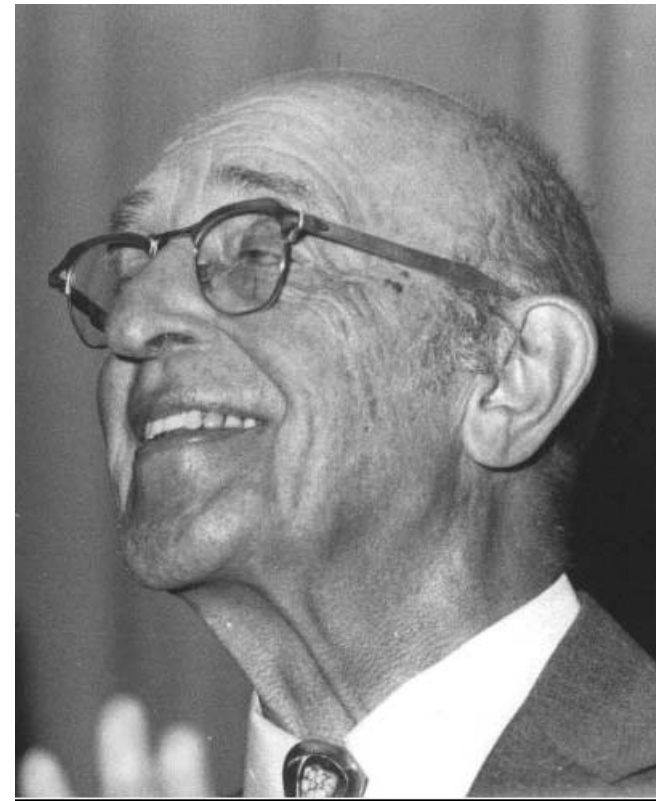
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Carl Rogers

“Yet ... man,
when you know him
deeply, in his worst and
most troubled states,
is not evil.”

(1958)



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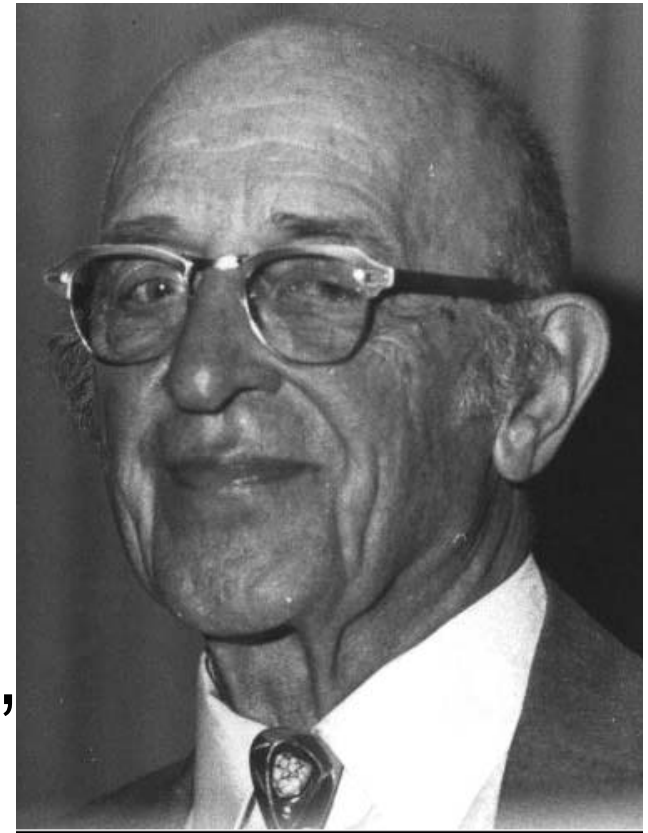
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“Whether I, or anyone, will translate these impulses into behavior depends on two elements:

- **social conditioning**
- **and voluntary choice.”**

(1982)



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“The evil is misuse of freedom.”
Kant

“Evil is the price of freedom.”
Safranski

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II. Consequences for therapeutic practice

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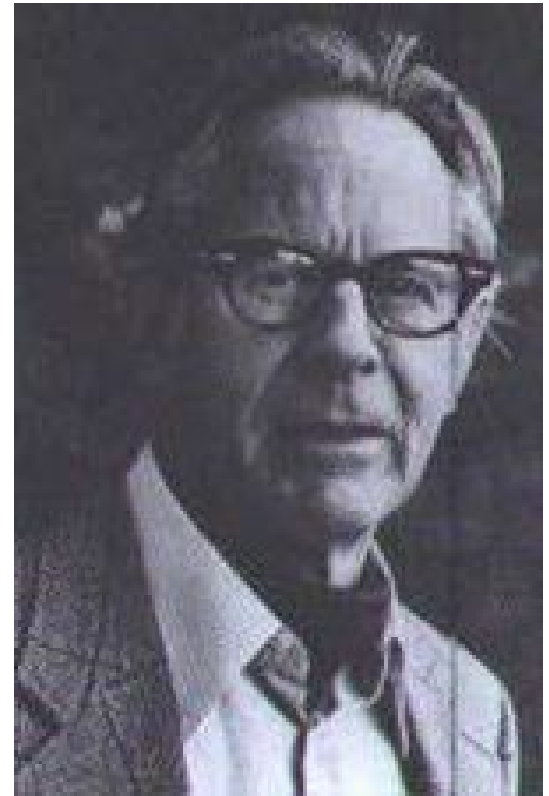
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“Personal autonomy occurs not by avoiding evil, but by **directly confronting it.**”
(1982)

“... The daimonic **needs to be directed** and channeled ... and integrated ...”
(1969)

Rollo May



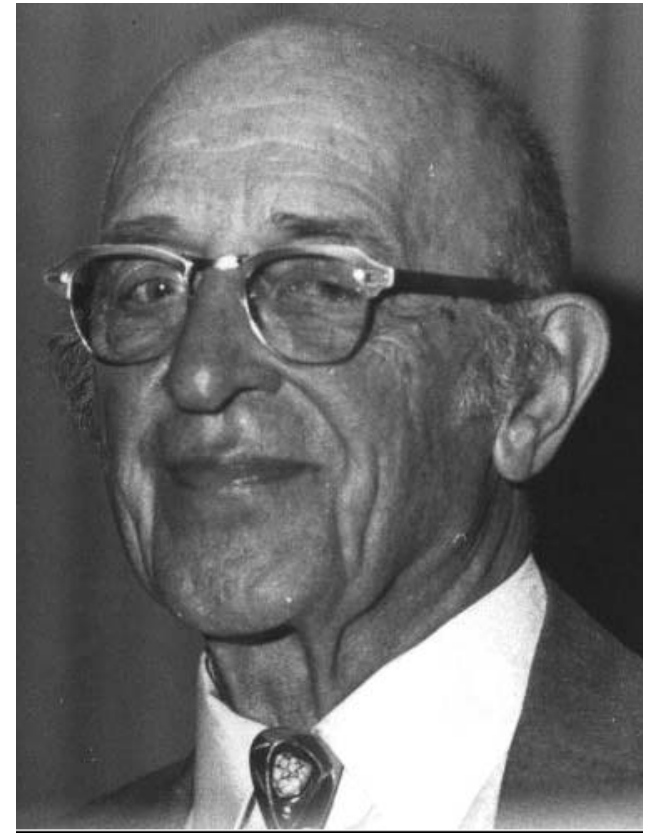
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In a facilitative, safe climate the therapist can trust the client and follow its lead to whatever the client decides to be on the agenda.



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III. Being-centered or person-centered ?



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Evil: “... a disparaging definition”

“... a hypothetical construct used to describe someone whom we fear and whom we do not understand ...”

(Mearns & Thorne, 2000)



Dave Mearns



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ontological
or
dialogical ?

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IV. A personal-dialogic view

Being-centered

- Metaphysics / ontology
- About substance, essence, nature
- Ontology
- Being as such
- What is the human being?
- Quid?* What? → Thing

Person-centered

- Existentialism & phenomenology
- About the person and their relationship
- Dialogue
- Personal being
- Who are you?
- Quis?* Who? → Person



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„Person“

- substantial – relational
- autonomous & interdependent
- independence & interconnectedness
- self-responsibility & solidarity



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„Evil“

- avoid personalization
 - avoid authenticity & solidarity
 - avoid self-realization & encounter
 - ignore dialogue & the fundamental human We
 - escape from genuinely being & becoming a person
 - avoid being-for (as being-with & being-counter)
 - inauthentic responding to the preceding dialogue
- oppose personal being**



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„Evil“

privatio amoris:

deprivation of love (agape)

i.e. **conditionality of positive regard**

... individually, socially and politically



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Thank You

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The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid