THE PERSON AND EVIL

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Unde malum?
Whence the evil?
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
I. Two basic philosophical positions

(1) Good versus evil (dualism).
(2) All being is good (one sole source).
Unde malum?
Whence the evil?
(1) Dualism: Good versus Evil

- **Zoroastrianism**  
  creation vs. destruction

- **Manichaeism**  
  soul vs. body

- **Gnosticism**  
  light vs. darkness; σομα σημα

- **Freud**  
  eros vs. thanatos
“… the source both of our constructive and our destructive impulses …”

(1982)
Rollo May

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

(1982)

*δαιμονιον
divine power, little god
Rollo May

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

It could be expressed either constructively or destructively …”

(1969)
“... If the daimonic urge is integrated into the personality it results in creativity. If not, destructive activity is the result ...”

(1982)
“… not confronting evil is the most important error in the humanistic movement …“

(1982)
(2) „All Being as Being is Good“

• **Augustine**
  “Esse qua esse bonum est.”

• **Thomas Aquinas**
  “Malum *privatio* essendi et boni.”

• **Origenes**
  “Το οὐκ οὖν.”

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

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

(1965)
There is only one motivational force, the actualizing tendency.

(1951; 1963)
“... 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)
American Psychological Association

Carl Rogers

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

These elements are a climate of psychological attitudes.“

(1982)
“…Your viewpoint is devilishly innocent.”

Warren Bennis to Carl Rogers (1976)
“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)
“Yet … man, when you know him deeply, in his worst and most troubled states, is not evil.”

(1958)
Unde malum?
Whence the evil?
“Whether I, or anyone, will translate these impulses into behavior depends on two elements:

- social conditioning
- and voluntary choice.”

(1982)
“The evil is misuse of freedom.”

Kant

“Evil is the price of freedom.”

Safranski
II. Consequences for therapeutic practice
“Personal autonomy occurs not by avoiding evil, but by **directly confronting it.**”
(1982)

“… The daimonic needs to be directed and channeled … and integrated …”
(1969)
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.
III. Being-centered or person-centered?
Evil: “… a disparging definition”

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

(Mearns & Thorne, 2000)
ontological or dialogical?
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*
“Person”

- substantial – relational
- autonomous & interdependent
- independence & interconnectedness
- self-responsibility & solidarity
“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
Unde malum?
Whence the evil?
privatio amoris:

deprivation of love (agape)
i.e. conditionality of positive regard

... individually, socially and politically
Thank You

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