



Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence

Rollo May

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Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence Rollo May

Stressing the positive, creative aspects of power and innocence, Rollo May offers a way of thinking about the problems of contemporary society.

Rollo May defines power as the ability to cause or prevent change; innocence, on the other hand, is the conscious divesting of one's power to make it seem a virtuous form of powerlessness that Dr. May sees as particularly American in nature. From these basic concepts he suggests a new ethic that sees power as the basis for both human goodness and evil.

Dr. May discusses five levels of power's potential in each of us: the infant's power to be; self-affirmation, the ability to survive with self-esteem; self-assertion, which develops when self-affirmation is blocked; aggression, a reaction to thwarted assertion; and, finally, violence, when reason and persuasion are ineffective.

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