Fuat Ulus:

... Evil is a part of our human psyche... we all have it!

It makes good looks good :-)

Without this polarization of good and evil dimensions, we cannot appreciate the good ...

Some of us may not even be aware of having it ...

Some of us would be aware of it and do not do anything ...

Some of us neutralize it with the good we have ...

My problem is many people's equating "the good" with the Maker and "the evil" with the Satan!

In my book, this may not be the case ...

The movie, "Dark Crystal" perhaps is the best example for this thought ...

In this movie, which has originally thought to be "a kid movie," was later on produced for the adults as the scenes' were presenting a lot of violent interactions among the characters.

Michael Kalm:

... I believe evil exists. It cannot be medicalized away.

... I agree with Hermann Hesse in "Steppenwolf," (anticipating Gestalt theory) that we all have the capacity in us, though we may choose not to act on it. As Hesse ponders, does the Judge about to pronounce sentence on the ax-murderer, in the moment just before he is about to cast the ax=murder beyond the realm of humanity, in that moment, does he recognize his own ax-murderer side.

... My uncle and I have had a running argument about who is the

most evil character in all of opera. I maintain that it is Leonora's brother Carlo, who in his dying breath, stabs his sister to death in Verdi's "La Forza del Destino." My uncle says it is the Grand Inquisitor from Verdi's Don Carlo, who in his quiet, pious manner plots murder, mayhem and betrayal.

... I offer the 2005 film from India, "Water."

Fuat Ulus:

... "Water - 2005" was a fascinating movie, the completion of Lady Indian Film Director Deepa Mehta's "trilogy," Fire - 1996 and Earth - 1998 ... Unfortunately, we missed her during Pittsburgh Film Festival couple of years ago ...

While I am not necessarily a critique of the operas, except few, there has always been an evil character in them ...

Regarding the Weinberg ... How about the last quadrant, i.e., for evil people to do good things, that takes ... what? Perhaps, the best example to that would be the remake of "3:10 to Yuma - 2007" Ben Wade [Russell Crowe] character ... The leader of his wild bunch, actually killing people without blinking an eye, helps his captor Dan Evans [Christian Bale] to regain the respect of Dan's teenage boy ... regretting his not having a family life like what Dan has while Ben was little... a bit jealous of Dan but shows this envy through his helping out Dan following his plea!

Michael Kalm:

I also like your reference to "3:10 to Yuma" as it brings up the vital concept of redemption. As healers, we should always be open to that possibility, no matter how difficult it might be. I suppose the greatest incidence of redemption in film that I can think of is that of Darth Vader in Return of the Jedi. (Star Wars VI.) It is Darth Vader and only could be Darth Vader that saves the fate of all sentient life forms in that galaxy far, far away.
Also, now that I am thinking about it: Darth Vader also proves

Steven Weinberg wrong. Anakin Skywalker is a good man who becomes evil, not because of religion, but in fact, because of LOVE. (He forgot to read his Othello and never learned about loving "not wisely, but too well."

Fuat Ulus:

Mike, are we going to scratch the mile, i.e., Darth Vader's turning into evil because of LOVE, to the Devil Himself/Herself/Itself? :-)))

After all, the Satan turned out to be "evil" because of His/Her/Its "love" for "the Maker...hence jealousy and you know the rest of the story..."

Speaking of Darth Vader, while technically his "good Jedi - bad Jedi - good Jedi, again" transformations are applicable, from esthetic point of view, I somewhat thought that his turning back to good Jedi again, in redemption, at the end of the trilogy's third movie was a bit ... cheesy!

Happy ending did not seem to be reflective of the essence of the evil, at all ...

Perhaps I reflect the human beings' need of identifying somebody with evil so I see myself being "good" - Tony Montana [Al Pacino] "Scarface - 1983" has been the one emphasized it in one of the scenes, "...you need me... so, you can finger pointing at me, saying, this is a bad guy... so the rest feels good about themselves..."

Michael Kalm:

... A great recent cinematic portrayal of the nuances of evil is the 2006 German Film, "The Lives of Others." At the beginning of the movie, the Stasi officer, Captain Gerd Wiesler, is the personification of evil, destroying people's lives without a trace of remorse. Given your distinction, Fuat, between a psychopath and a sociopath, he is a cultural psychopath, because he believes he is serving the state. As the movie progresses, and we see him listening to the lives of the

young couple he is persecuting, we see his transformation as he develops genuine empathy and then is compelled to act accordingly. In contrast to his character is that of the government minister, Bruno Hempf who is unremittingly evil, and who not surprisingly, according to the director, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, after the fall of East Germany, immediately bounces back and is in a position of corrupt power in the "new" Germany. Much of the cast of the Lives of Others were victims of the Stasi themselves, including the man who plays Bruno Hempf, Thomas Thieme. According to the director, when he approached Thieme about how he wanted him to play the part, Thieme said, "You don't have to tell me anything. I know these guys." ...

Fuat Ulus:

... Perhaps one of the most interesting "evil characters" displayed on silver screen in our contemporary time has been Heath Ledger's Joker in "The Dark Knight - 2008" although in comparison to your Captain Wiesler's cultural sociopathic cultivation, he is more like a first class intelligent psychopath...

First, I pre-judged him and dismissed his portrayal before even seeing the movie as I have been quite impressed by Jack Nicholson's Joker in "Batman - 1999" years ago in which Jack did not even act but played himself :-) [I also liked Cesare Romero's "cartoon-esque Joker" in "kiddy" TV Batman series in the sixties...] Despite the dark deeds he has been carried out I cannot help "liking" his character! Especially in the scene in which Batman [Michael Keaton] springing up one of his toys, stringed out to points between the cave walls, sliding on it, saves not only himself but Vicki Vale [Kim Basinger] from the joker's trap... Joker, rather than being frustrated and angry missing Batman in that way, shows an admiration of his said gadget, verbalizing "... I want that toy ..." :-) in almost mischievous & jealous little kid rather than a scary villain.

One cannot help laughing at this; he IS a joker, all right!

Heath, on the other hand, presents more darker, sinister and disturbing character ... The vignette I shared with the groups, to

show how impulsivity may be a powerful destructive force at the hand of intelligent characters, is the scene where he visits Harvey Dent in the hospital. Despite "would be two-face's" initial hatred for him, the joker starts talking very low, smooth and "friendly" voice:

"You know what is your problem" he says, "making plan ... Batman makes plan ... Commissioner Gordon makes plan... Cops make plan ... me? I just go and DO things! I upset their little schemes they come up with to control their environment ... for example if I let them know that I am to be blowing up some place or a convoy tomorrow, they are not surprised, because it is in their plan but ... if I announce that somebody unimportant is going to be shot ... they squirm and get panicky ... because it is not in their plans ..."

I swallowed my previous dismissal and highly admired his "new features" of the Joker after I saw the movie for many times ... while each times felt the chills in my spine! ...

Fuat Ulus, M.D. oversees the Mental Health Courts based Behavioral Health Forensic Psychiatry Services operated by Stairways Behavioral Health as the clinical program coordinator, at the Pennsylvania Erie County Prison and Forensic Outpatient Program. He wrote "Movie Therapy, Moving Therapy!"

Michael A. Kalm, M.D. is a board-certified psychiatrist in private practice in Salt Lake City, Utah and wrote "The Healing Movie Book".