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**EVIL PLEASURE**

**Presented to the Washington Ethical Society**

**March 7, 1982**

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Dr. Montagna: One morning in the jungle, the tiger woke up and told his mate that he was the king of beasts. "Leo the Lion is king of beasts," she said. "We need a change," said the tiger. "The creatures are crying for a change. I can hear it." The tigress listened, but she could only hear her cubs crying.

The tiger prowled through the jungle until he came to the lion's den. "Come out" he roared, "and greet the king of beasts." Inside the den, the lioness woke her mate. "The king is here to see you," she said. "What king?" he inquired sleepily. "The king of beasts" she said. "I'm the king of beasts," roared Leo, and he charged out of the den to defend his crown against the pretender.

All of the animals of the jungle, from the aardvark

to the zebra took part in the struggle to overthrow the lion, or to repulse the tiger. Some didn't know which way they were fighting. Some fought for both and some fought for whoever was nearest, and some fought for the sake of fighting.

When the moon rose, it shown upon a jungle in which nothing stirred except a cockatoo, screaming in horror. All the beasts were dead except the tiger, and his time was ticking away. But he was the monarch of all whom he surveyed.

Thinking about and talking with people about Evil Pleasure. I have a feeling that people are leering at me.

[Laughter]

Some people think I'm going to be talking about evil pleasure in the sense of Devon Whiskey, or I've had requests, at least, that I be talking about evil pleasure in a sense of kind of a catalog of evil pleasures. In fact, I had a note left in my box that said that I should do this address suited in leather, carrying a whip.

[Laughter]

But none of those are my intention. All of these perceptive guesses are incorrect. My thesis is in fact that

by experiencing the pleasure in evil we may choose to transcend our harmful habits and experience pleasure more fully.

Before I begin, I have two apologies to make: One is that as Don announced, I must leave promptly here at noon, and I have my coat set aside there, and I will disappear out of that back door. Rose Albert, as most of you know, died two weeks ago and there are memorial services this afternoon in New York, and so I have a 1 o'clock plane to catch. So I am sorry about my early departure.

The second apology is for the use of the word evil, in a way. I know that evil triggers a rather visceral reaction that's unpleasant. It conjures up in the mind a fearsome image of a parental, a hand out, finger waving; saying to the effect of: "You are a sinner. You're wrong, you're bad. You're no good." Shudder, shudder.

Since we are all doing what we can in our life, and probably judging ourselves rather harshly already for whatever pride or willfulness or whatever failures we have, this kind of judgmental voice finds an ally within us, and the other part of us becomes rather a vulnerable victim.

Well I mean no such evil. I see no judgmental

parent lording over us. I see a world which works by basic principles. The principals of ethics, of human relations, are as natural as any of the principles in the natural world of science.

The question: Why do we do evil? for me is equivalent to the question: Why not put sand in your crankcase? I know that sand in my crankcase ruins my engine, and doing evil harms human life. My life doesn't work when I put evil in my crankcase. If harmful pleasures, if evil is this simple and basic, the question is: If it's so illogical, why hasn't it disappeared? My thesis addresses this question.

Human beings are so obviously seekers of pleasure, how is it that we do so much that is harmful? Ultimately unpleasurable to ourselves and others. Now the answer that sometimes seems quite clear, we might choose a short term pleasure or we might lack the discipline to deny an immediate gratification for some long range pleasure. We indulge our passions and our appetites.

But we are also people of enormous discipline. We are very civilized. Often we are full of understanding about the harmfulness of this behavior and that. Why do we do it

anyway? What motivates us?

I recall the story of a mother who is agonizing over the fact that she had struck her child. She decided to have a conversation with her child in which she expressed, "I'm so sorry that I hit you." In fact she was hitting her child because her child kept hitting her brother, and she wanted her to stop, and out of frustration she hit.

She said "I'm sorry I hit you. I feel real bad about it, and I want to stop hitting you." The little girl said, "Yes, it's fun to hit, isn't it?"

What motivates us is the hidden pleasure. The secret pleasure, secret even to ourselves sometimes that evil pleasure which motivates us to destructive behavior. By learning to experience our evil pleasure we have the option to choose to transform the evil pleasure into a life enhancing pleasure, and that's my thesis.

I come here not to disparage evil pleasure nor to praise it. But to demonstrate how by experiencing our evil pleasure we can choose to transform it into a life-enhancing pleasure.

Now before developing this idea more fully, let me set the scene by some brief reference to the history of the

search for this answer to the question about evil, for the question is about as ancient as it is timely. Particularly, I want to point out that there have been two theories about the nature of evil which sometimes were held in opposition and sometimes were integrated.

These two theories I think can be compared to the two theories of light; that light can be demonstrated through experiment to be wavelike and light can be demonstrated to be particle-like. Well, evil is sometimes seen as no more than the absence of good; it's ignorance of the good. It's as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of good.

But at other times, evil is seen to have its own force, its own nature, its own power. If we look at the Old Testament, we have the ancient Hebrews, who have no concept of devil, no concept of the evil force. In the story of Adam and Eve we see that humanity's disobedience to the basic laws is what causes their expulsion from the Garden of Eden for their suffering and their labor. The serpent is not depicted as a devil, but as a serpent, an animal. Perhaps it's the humans' appetites, their animal nature, that motivates Adam and Eve to disobey. And it is human pride, the promise that

you will be like unto the gods if you eat the apple.

So the animal nature and the pride of human doing is what brings the negativity, and the negativity, the problem of suffering, the labor is something that's brought by God. God is the punisher. In the Tower of Babel#, again, it's human pride which is punished by God.

So God is the deliverer of harmful consequences in the form of punishments for human disobedience and pride. No devil. And in about 400 B.C. we have Plato's conception; and in Plato's conceptions also, goodness is the only force. Evil is ignorance of the good. Lack of enough knowledge.

If you wanted to know what course of action your life should take, you would travel to the Oracle at Delphi. It meant traveling from Athens along the top of windy mountain trails; when you finally reached the final mountain, you'd be standing on the top of a large cliff, dropping almost straight into the sea stretched before you. If you turned around to the right or left you would see just rolling plains of dark green olive trees; and as you walked down the face of the cliff you'd come to a temple, and a temple was spanned across this gorge that dropped deep into the earth out of which smoke came, and that was the umbilical cord

between our world and the world of the spirits. That's how messages passed.

Above this temple there were two great commandments, two sentences carved in stone. One said: **Nothing in Excess.** And the other: **Know Thyself.**

At almost the same period, beginning about 500 B.C., in Persia the religion of Zurasturism# begins the concept of the second force in life. As there is an urge to do good that must be obeyed, there is an urge to do bad. It must be overcome. The god is the god of truth. The devil is called lies.

The Zurastin idea that there is a devil competing with God was adopted by Manichiesm# and carried into the Third, Fourth and Fifth Centuries, A.D. where it affected Christianity and was integrated by St. Augustine.

During the middle ages, the story of the devil as being both separate and part of the good forces explained in Christian theology through the story of Lucifer, and there were many interpretations and stories, but they mostly all go similar to this:

That Lucifer was the chief angel of God. He used his free will to choose himself over all others; decided to



make himself the god, himself the center. And by choosing this lie, by choosing pride in his will, Lucifer places himself in opposition to goodness.

Now God is a problem: He has to allow evil, because if he does not, if he uses force, his power to bring Lucifer to heel, then God himself will be acting in a prideful, willful manner, denying Lucifer his free will.

Thus goodness is the true force but humanity and angels have the choice to live by the good principals or to willfully swim upstream and suffer the consequences. Evil here is both ignorance of the good and yet in the form of Lucifer, it has its own energy, its own force.

Today I want to examine this active force that motivates evil, that motivates us to be harmful. The impulse, in effect to put sand in our crankcase even though we know our engine won't work, the desire in fact to cheat life, to have an edge, the continuation of patterns which are harmful to ourselves and people close to us, but that we do them anyway.

My thesis, as you recall, is that by experiencing the pleasure in evil we can transform the pleasure into life-enhancing forms.

Now I'd like you to take a minute to yourself to recall a time when you have felt evil pleasure. Doing something that you know was harmful or not right in a different frame of mind or if it was another person, you looked back and said that won't work or that's not going to work out. But as you recall it, you just loved doing it. I mean, I wouldn't trade doing that for anything.

Or maybe it was something you didn't do but something that you thought "Boy, I could do this, and I would love it. Wouldn't I love to get them that way?" See if you can find some --

[Laughter]

Oh, you're finding them. That's it.

See if you can find those instances where you really -- and there ought to be some glee just bubbling to the surface, if you find it.

I'd like to give an example that someone gave me permission to use. It's an example of a young woman who is recalling when she was an adolescent. Her family had the habit, the tradition, of spending Sundays at home; fairly dressed up, the house was just right, anticipating company; occasionally might go out to visit someone else but you had

to be home and ready. It was kind of a boring afternoon; no one kind of did much but sat around and maybe read.

It was all right; she played with her brothers and sisters, until she became adolescent and she started having some special friends and wanting to go out; she began resenting it more and more. One day she presented to her parents on a Sunday afternoon "I don't want to be here. I'd rather be out with my friends. I don't like it here; I want to go out."

Her mother and father said "No, you're going to stay here with the family. This is Sunday, we spend Sundays together." Well, she stayed. She stayed and she sulked. She stayed and she was hostile. She stayed and she aggravated everybody in the house. She stayed and she communicated, not by being totally outrageous but quietly-withdrawn outrageous.

She communicated, "I don't love you all. I hate being here. I'd rather be out with my friends. I don't like being with my family. I hate it here."

Before long, her mother, the passion of her mother and father started getting unleashed, until her mother had been driven to a rage, quite uncharacteristic of her and she

picked up a candy dish and just smashed it to the floor. Never before had her mother ever done anything like this. And she could feel the glee coming up, and she didn't even yell and scream, and she had her mother jumping up and down and smashing candy dishes; and her father didn't know what to do. He said "Get out." She went out the door. She was free. He had given her permission to leave. She felt wonderful, absolutely ecstatic.

Evil pleasure. Twenty years later she tells me the story and is still filled with joy, still filled with excitement about the achievement. She loved the power of eliciting on a boring Sunday afternoon all of that passion. She treasures the memory of a candy dish splattering. She loves her father screaming at her "Get out." The feeling of running downstairs, having been freed.

The power of doing all of this while just withholding; just being cold and withholding, keeping her composure such that they didn't even have a case against her when she got home. She loved getting her way.

Now as she looks back she could also see the harm, the harm in having humiliated her mother, of having not appreciated how difficult it was for them to give her

independence, to let her go, and how that Sunday afternoon had symbolized that. How they had cared about her, and that their Sunday afternoons was their symbolic love time.

She didn't see this, and she didn't see the harm that was in that. She didn't see that it was possible for her to increase the passion by communicating her love and acknowledgement to them and to negotiate for her independence; that all was not par for her repertoire of what she knew how to do.

The vice the underlies all vices is that people hold one another cheaply; and far worse, that in our innermost soul, we think cheaply of ourselves. Felix Adler.

When we enter the paradigm of a world in which we feel good about ourselves by not caring equally about others, by holding them cheaply, we live in a world where there is no one we respect. No one we respect enough to allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to be taken care of.

Now to choose the pleasure of pride and willfulness while hurting others is to pollute our environment. It's to create an environment where we fear retaliation and distrust caring. Seeing all of this, seeing the evil pleasure, we have the feeling still of that momentary power, and the

negotiation and acknowledging of a loving is so much more difficult, so much more difficult.

The feeling of that momentary power and glee is addicting. The pleasure, of course, came from the passion; if her parents didn't care they would not have put out that much passion, the passion that was there and the freedom that she got and the freedom that she needed.

Those pleasures were real and necessary; the pleasure of the passion and the pleasure of the freedom. Both of them could have been reached in a less harmful way. But because she was ignorant of a less harmful way, there was this way, and this way had such glee, had such reward, that it becomes addictive and it is likely to be repeated.

I want to turn attention now to another example, an example in which one is not aware of any evil pleasure at all. Where we feel, in fact, just victimized by life or when we feel somehow justified or compelled to defend ourselves, or to be more assertive than we've been, more aggressive. Or where we don't see ourselves as aggressive or assertive at all, we're just part of some harmful events in life, maybe at home or at workplace, or friendships; there's no evil pleasure. We don't even feel like we're a major participant

in it. It's just some harm.

In the first example, where the evil pleasure is felt, the goal there is to recognize that there are ways to get that pleasure without the unpleasant, harmful consequences. In the second example, the goal is to experience the hidden pleasure, or to understand why we do not experience the pleasure. The thesis is that all harm has a hidden pleasure.

Let's then search for some clues to the hidden pleasure of doing harm or allowing one's self to be harmed. The first clue is that the pleasure of choice, the choice has pleasure in itself. Certainly many of our pleasures are bodily pleasures; food, warmth, touching, sex, but even here the choice of food, the choice of decor, the choice of clothing, the choice of partner -- choice plays a lot in the pleasure.

The pleasure of choice is so strong that when we can't choose what's good for us, we can enjoy just choosing; what we can choose. Toddlers exhibit it in the extreme because toddlers first discover the glee of being able to make a choice. Of course their first choice is to recognize that they can say no. "No" individuates them. And with

every No -- they can't say No without that glee in their faces. It just goes together, being able to experience themselves as separate from the parent.

"I am me," the No says. Then they also learn to say Yes. "I can create. I can bring you my shoe" and with that there is also glee. There is glee in the choice.

The ability to choose is the foundation of personality. It's the beginning of individuating yourself from the other, the more situations and the more people with whom you can say No to or say Yes to, the more places then you can be yourself, assert yourself. The stronger your personality is the more you can actually make ethical choices; you don't have to go along with the social current.

Yet as wonderful as choice is, and as thrilling as it is for children, children can't be given unlimited choice. Keys can't be allowed to go into electric plugs; diapers must be worn, at least in my house; you can't walk on the table and dump the food out, even though they manage to do that at least once.

Children are forever being limited. At first they cry and get fed, and then it's required that they say bottle or something in a close facsimile to that. We shape them



and we limit them, and children must deal with parents who have the power to physically control them if they don't obey.

How does a person cope with these limits on free choice? We are free to choose whatever we want, but will we opt for our way against the parent, even when the limits are the best way.

I'd like you to remember for yourselves again another memory. The incidents where you most severely tested your limits as a child, where you felt most strongly your parents' strength against you. In a minute I'm going to give an example, and I'm going to give an example of spanking. Because it's such a physical confrontation, spanking is a very concrete manifestation of a parent asserting his strength; and it's a way in which the child's will just cannot avoid the confrontation.

So you may have an example of hitting or spanking or it may be some other kind of limit; but find the place where you felt the strongest struggle with your parent.

May I have your attention again. Thank you.

This is a story a young told me about his spanking, spanking by his father. He recalled himself to be about 9; he was a young boy, and his image of himself is his father

sitting in the living room chair, and over his father's knees he was draped, his pants were down by his ankle and his bare bottom was up. His head was down near the floor, and most all he could see was his father's feet and the couch nearby and some of the floor. This was not a characteristic position; in fact, he recalled this was the only time his father had ever strapped him.

At first when he found himself over his father's knees he didn't believe it was going to happen because it had never happened before, and he just didn't believe it. But as his father ripped off his belt and folded it in half and held it above him, he began to feel great fear.

The first hit was not so bad. In fact he thought: "I can bear this." The second hit hurt. "I'm not going to let him know it. I'm not going to yell and I'm not going to cry. I won't be humiliated and I won't give in."

The third hit was acutely painful. He began to change his strategy: "If I yell very loud, he'll feel bad for hurting me, and he'll stop." With the fourth flow, he began to scream. The screaming actually dissipated the pain, and he realized, "By screaming, I can hold out for a long time."

With the fifth and sixth and seventh blows, he went deep into his mind and he began to think and to plot. "I'm going to get him back. He's going to pay for this. I don't know how I'm going to get him, but I'm going to get him, ten times. I'm not going to forget this, and I'm not going to forget it."

I asked the young man, "How did you get him back?" He said "Well, I was cold and withdrawn and unfriendly. I ignored him, I didn't give him any respect or attention, I didn't let him love me and I didn't love him. And to tell you the truth, it became such a habit that I kept it up most of his life."

Let's review this example and find out what happened to the hidden evil pleasure which motivated the boy's harmful unloving relationship with his father. The story begins with the son choosing, choosing not to feel the father's strength; to disbelieve in it. Choosing not to feel the pain: "I can withhold from it." Choosing not to acknowledge any wrongdoing and guilt -- there's not even a memory of what he did that instigated this one beating of his life. From the father's point of view, it was probably outrageous; he doesn't remember it.

Not acknowledging, not to feel any guilt or wrongdoing. He choose not to feel his father's limits or even his own rage about his father's imposing limits. He refused to feel his own humiliation, his own fear, his own vulnerability; and all the chaotic thoughts about who his father is and why he was doing this and who he was and all the chaos that must have been in there -- cut it off.

The first harm done here is a violation to self, to one's own feelings which are denied, to one's own natural animal reaction, self-expression. These, through an act of will, are denied. If we can just back away from the numbness that that denial is and find in ourselves an observer who can observe ourselves who did the numbing, I certainly find great pleasure in the power of knowing that I could keep myself from feeling those feelings. I don't have to feel my guilt, I don't have to feel my fear, I don't have to acknowledge his strength; in that there's a small victory of power. And if I give it to myself, there's pleasure in it. If I don't give it to myself, I feel only numb.

Am I the only one, or do you give it to yourself?  
Yes? Three people do.

The evil pleasure here, by denying the evil

pleasure, by denying all those feelings is how we perpetuate or perpetrate the harmful behavior. The act of denial allows us to be unaware of the consequences to the father, to ourselves, unaware of our own guilt and what we did. We can ignore all of this and focus on the fact that we had the power to numb our reactions, and that sets us up for the second step of unconscious pleasure.

That's when we choose to use our feelings to manipulate the father. "Not feeling feelings because they hurt and I want to scream and it's dissipating the pain," but feeling the feelings in order to affect the father so that he would stop hitting. Using our feelings as an act of will.

When we get to the stage of manipulating our feelings, we become insensitive to who the father really is, as imperfect and perhaps as wrong as spanking might be; he, too, is doing his best. He, too, has complex feelings. There must have been some kind of caring or passion for him to choose on this one occasion to spank his son.

How does a father feel and what does a father need? Well, in this act of self-denial and choosing to manipulate, the father ceases to be a multi-dimensional person, becomes the object of the rage; to be manipulated.

And there's a hidden pleasure here, too: Here, in this scenario, the little boy can manipulate and control his big father by withholding from him. He can be David slaying Goliath, he can be Superboy.

Now the cost of winning this battle of wills is to deny the softer feelings; the fear, the hurt, the love and even the guilt. Without these feelings, life begins to feel boring, flowerless, meaningless, gray, passionless. People don't matter, life doesn't matter. There are no choices because nothing matters much.

The only time when one feels alive is in conflict. In this return to the battle of wills, a power fight. The will calls to the feelings, to the battle stations: Hold down the hurt, hold down the humiliation, cover up the guilt, man the cruelty, we're in for a conflict. Here there are choices to be made, and so doing the evil becomes like a drama; the harm, the hurt, the trouble in our life proves to us that we truly are alive. The choices we make make a difference, and it overcomes the numbness. So therefore the harm marches on.

Evil pleasure is denied and perpetuated in three steps: The numbing of the self, the denial of the other, and

the cruelty as an act of pleasurable choice.

I have a final thought, and I want to begin by recalling back to a few months ago when I spoke about unnecessary pain and began with the Buddhist idea that life is suffering and that unless we were willing to recognize and experience the necessary pains in life, we would feel a lot of unnecessary anxiety, worry and pain.

Today I seem to be making the opposite point, that life is fundamentally associated with pleasure. As inevitable as suffering is, the reward of our being is pleasure; living is pleasurable. When we hear or see of a human being who is suffering from poverty or oppression or disease or empathy with them, they're denied the pleasure in life which is so basic to it, it affects us.

Now, it is a common moralistic belief, however, pushed by religions, that pleasure is evil, that pleasure is harmful. Now, I want to be clear that that's not my message. My message is that in all harm there is pleasure. In all hurting, there is pleasure. I like my overeating, overspending, cigarette-smoking negativity, gossiping, feeling superior. I get a kick out of them. But as much as I should give them up, there's a kick in them. There's

pleasure in hurting.

Every hurtful act has pleasure, and therefore is addicting. We can't repress pleasure. What we must do is look to how we can separate the harmful ways from the pleasure.

I remember a man telling me once about why he was so extremely monogamous. He said "I'll never have an affair in my whole life and neither will my wife." I said "Why? And how would you be so sure?" He said "Because in the early part of our marriage we had affairs all the time. It was wonderful. We enjoyed it, both did well from it; I think our marriage even prospered from it." "But you know, it started to get complicated. We had all these important relationships with people, and they were always meeting each other and we had to figure out, since I was married and they may not have been, or maybe they were, and what are we going to do with their husband and their wife? Life became real complicated."

"And even at home there was always an agitation, you know? She was jealous of this one but not that one."

"Some of my best relationships became friends with her. In fact, they were closer than I was. We were always either



getting over or getting in to some new jealousy, and our life at home was very agitated." "In fact it was hard sometimes to even get together because we never could keep track of who had a date when and who was using the bedroom where. Life was real complicated."

"So we tried to do something that felt certainly strange, and most of our friends thought it was fairly kinky: that we decided that for six months we wouldn't have any outside relationships at all."

"An interesting thing happened: Things started to suddenly get very peaceful and tranquil. And a lot of the things that we were enjoying with other people, the ways of being together and going out and sexual experimentation and kind of intensity of being together we started doing with each other because we kind of missed it." "And it was great. It was a lot more convenient, too."

"We started that six month experiment ten years ago. We haven't even renegotiated it. It just never came up again."

They separated here the pleasure from the harm they were doing. Their monogamy was not based on any moralistic self-denial of pleasure, but was recognizing that they were

putting sand in their crankcase, and they found a better way to have that pleasure.

I want to end with a statement of commitment in which I invite you to join me. First, I commit myself to noticing things harmful in my life and seeking the pleasure in it. Second, I trust that my pleasure-seeking impulses will seek forever greater pleasures, ones that don't violate others, ones that bring me both immediate and lasting joy.

Thank you.

The closing words are from an official news release from the People's Republic of China, on February 24, 1982, about a week or so ago: The United States is the only nation who does not understand that all nations in the world depend upon one another. The intention to become supreme among nations is a dangerous course for the United States and for the world. Only conflict and misery can be expected.

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