THE ONTOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PROBLEM OF THE VIRTUE-HAPPINESS CONCORD:

ON THE TRIPARTITE IDENTITY OF DÉ-FÚ-JIÉ

Feng Lin

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to provide a novel ontological solution to the ancient problem of the virtue-happiness concord. Traditional solutions have reached an impasse because they have consistently sought answers within an ethical or theological framework. This paper argues that the root of the problem is not ethical, but ontological. To this end, it proposes and defends the theory of the tripartite identity of *Dé-Fú-Jié*. This theory reveals that our gifted potentiality (*Dé*), phenomenal fulfillment and happiness (*Fú*), and the possibility of annihilation as the immanent limit of being (*Jié*) are not three conflicting, independent elements, but are identical at the ontological root. The core thesis of this paper is that it is precisely this deep ontological unity that necessarily causes the disunity of virtue and happiness that we experience in the phenomenal world. This conclusion not only reinterprets the problem of evil and suffering but also lays the foundation for a new ethics based on an "asymmetrical responsibility" to "Life" itself.

KEYWORDS: Virtue-happiness concord; Ontology; Tripartite identity of Dé-Fú-Jié; Gifted potentiality; Phenomenal fulfillment; Immanent limit of being; asymmetrical responsibility

INTRODUCTION: FROM AN ETHICAL DILEMMA TO AN ONTOLOGICAL INQUIRY

The problem of the unity of virtue and happiness is not a mere philosophical abstraction but originates from the primordial human experience of tragedy and

contingency. This dilemma manifests when the subject, attempting to escape the arbitrary dictates of fate through its own power, cannot reconcile itself to its inherent fragility and incompleteness. Human self-realization, much like a seed growing into a great tree, depends not only on its intrinsic potential but also on external circumstances beyond its control—soil, water, sunlight, and other contingent factors. This fundamental tension has given rise to various philosophical solutions throughout history. However, the ultimate failure of these solutions reveals a categorical error in the very framing of the problem. This tension extends into three distinct, yet interrelated, dilemmas:

1. External Conflict: The subject, in striving for self-realization, must contend with the contingent factors of its external situation, background, and historical context.
2. Internal Conflict: The subject must come to terms with its own internal landscape of desires, deficiencies, and emotions.
3. The Conflict of Conflicts: The subject must determine its attitude toward conflict itself—whether to reject, subsume, or acknowledge it.

Ultimately, these three conflicts converge into a single, fundamental struggle: the human endeavor to persevere within a process defined by uncertainty and fragility. This struggle is the inaugural question of the "unity of virtue and happiness." Here, "virtue" (*Dé*,

concluding the *Phaedo*, the unjust are punished in the underworld, while the pure souls of philosophers dwell with the gods in a state of supreme bliss. The essence of this solution is not resolution but *displacement*. It bypasses the brutality of worldly contingency by constructing a dualistic reality, postponing the final reckoning of justice to a transcendent beyond. The Aristotelian Solution of Immanence: In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle brings the inquiry back from the beyond to the here-and-now, defining happiness (*eudaimonia*) as "activity in accordance with virtue." He emphasizes the role of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which navigates specific situations by adhering to the principle of the mean (*mesotes*) to harmonize virtue and happiness. Yet, Aristotle himself concedes that the best life requires external goods (e.g., wealth, health, friends) as necessary supplements, meaning that happiness can never fully escape the dominion of luck (*tyche*). His solution is thus a form of masterful navigation; it instructs us on how to pilot our course on the sea of contingency but cannot guarantee a safe arrival at the port of necessary happiness. It acknowledges and attempts to reconcile the conflict but cannot fundamentally dissolve it.

The Kantian Solution of Postulation: Kant pushes the contradiction between virtue and happiness to its absolute limit. He rigorously separates the moral law, which is followed out of duty, from the principle of happiness, which arises from inclination, arguing that there is no necessary connection between them in the empirical world. This discord constitutes an "antinomy of practical reason." To resolve this antinomy and ensure the possibility of the "highest good" (*summum bonum*)—the precise correspondence of virtue and happiness—Kant resorts to three "postulates" of moral theology: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. God, as an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent judge, guarantees that the virtuous are ultimately rendered "worthy" of happiness. The profundity of this solution lies in its exposure of the conflict's irreconcilability, but its resolution is a "forced" postulation. Kant's own struggles with the explanatory power of this theory are evident in works like *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and his essays on theodicy. This introduction of utilitarian considerations for the sake of the moral practice of "ordinary people" deviates from his deontological principles, exposing the impotence of reason itself when confronted with this dilemma.

The Kierkegaardian Solution of Suspension: Through the figure of Abraham

in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard proposes a "leap of faith" and a "teleological suspension of the ethical." He distinguishes between the universal domain of the ethical and the absolute, individual domain of faith. In the face of God's absolute command, universal ethical laws become void. The problem of virtue and happiness is thereby suspended. The individual no longer seeks worldly happiness or ethical perfection but, as a solitary individual, stands in a direct, absolute relation to the Absolute, assuming his own "sin." Kierkegaard astutely identifies the core of the problem (sin and individual finitude) but distorts it into a private relationship between the individual and God, thereby forgetting the problem's universal and ontological roots. The conflict, far from being resolved, is infinitely amplified at the level of faith. The shared failure of these four solutions points to a fundamental "category mistake": they all attempt to answer a question concerning what *is* (the ontological) at the level of what *ought to be* (the normative). The impasse of the virtue-happiness concord is ethical in its appearance, but existential in its substance, and ultimately points toward a more profound ontological enigma. The exhaustion of these approaches does not signal the end of philosophy but demands a Copernican turn. These strategies represent the full spectrum of possible responses from within the Western metaphysical framework: Plato's dualism, Aristotle's teleological unity, Kant's transcendental mediation, and Kierkegaard's existential decision. When all these foundational paths prove to be dead ends, we have reason to suspect that the fault lies not in the paths themselves, but in the ground upon which they are built—namely, the core presuppositions of Western metaphysics regarding being, contingency, and value. This paper, therefore, advocates a return to the foundations (*ad fontes*) to re-examine this problem. It proposes a central thesis: the experienced incongruity of virtue and happiness in the phenomenal world is the necessary manifestation of a deeper, tripartite ontological identity—the unity of "Dé-Fú-Jié" (- -). To comprehensively investigate this dilemma, this paper will proceed as follows:

First, we will examine the problem of the unity of virtue and happiness from an ontological perspective, which necessitates a preliminary investigation into the question of Being and Nothingness.

Second, we will argue that the problem originates from a bifurcated understanding of contingency, which we will elucidate through an analysis of the theological debates of Marcionism.

Third, we will demonstrate that the problem is a variant of theodicy and its secularized form, which revolves around the question of how to account for the place of "evil."

Fourth, we will propose a novel theoretical solution, arguing for the ontological identity of the triad "Dé-Fú-Jié," and demonstrating how this very identity necessitates their non-identity at the empirical level.

Finally, we will address the question of how, in light of this tripartite identity, we are to confront historical suffering and injustice, thereby deriving a practical wisdom for living.

II. THE GROUND OF BEING: RETHINKING POSSIBILITY AND CRISIS IN THE DIALECTIC OF BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

To ontologize the problem of virtue and happiness, we must begin with philosophy's primordial question, posed by Leibniz: "Why is there something rather than nothing?" This inquiry compels us to confront the ontological status of Nothingness.

From its inception, the logical characterization of Nothingness has been fraught with paradox. Parmenides's dictum, "what is, is, and what is not, is not," sought to expel Nothingness from the domains of being and thought by negating the possibility that "what-is-not" could *be*. Hidden behind this prohibition lies a profound logical impasse. If we assume that Nothingness can be spoken of logically, it must obey the law of identity ($a = a$). Yet, the very definition of Nothingness is that which has "no part that overlaps with anything, including itself." This implies that Nothingness is not equal to itself, causing the law of identity to fail. To preserve logical order, we are seemingly forced to accept Parmenides's insight: "what is not, is not." Nothingness is that which eludes logical determination.

Let us formalize this through a *reductio ad absurdum*. Assume that Nothingness can be spoken of logically. It must then satisfy the following premises:

1.For something to be "Nothing," it must overlap with Nothingness, at least in some minimal part.

2.If Nothingness overlaps with itself, it must, according to premise 1, have at least some minimal part that overlaps with itself.

3.The principle of identity holds: $a = a$.

However, according to the Parmenidean ontology that "whatever is, is," it

follows that Nothingness cannot overlap with anything, not even minimally. From this, we can deduce that Nothingness does not overlap with itself, which means it has no parts. Consequently, Nothingness cannot relate to itself and is not equal to itself. The principle of identity is thus invalidated in the case of Nothingness. It cannot be equated with any object, not even itself. It is, therefore, that which cannot *be* (i.e., cannot be logically determined); it is an escape. Faced with this result, we must either concede that the law of identity has an exception or abolish it. To abolish it would be to collapse all order and contradict the axiom that "whatever is, is." The only path forward is to return to the Parmenidean insight—"what is not, is not," rather than "what is not, is"—which astutely acknowledges both Being and Nothingness without placing them in conflict. This insight, however, has been largely obscured in the history of philosophy.

Philosophical history did not rest here; it has persistently attempted to reintegrate Nothingness into thought. Hegel, Heidegger, and Žižek represent three crucial attempts whose confrontation provides the key to unlocking the true meaning of the identity of Being and Nothingness.

Hegel's Conceptualization of Nothingness: At the beginning of his *Science of Logic*, Hegel defines "pure Being" as pure indeterminacy and famously declares its immediate identity with "pure Nothing." For Hegel, Nothingness is understood as a potential concept, yet to be determined, serving as the inaugural moment of the dialectical movement. This formulation, though elegant, still grasps Nothingness from the ground of Being and through the operation of conceptualization. It presupposes the identity of Being and Nothingness as a necessary axiom for the system's initiation but fails to prove it logically.

Heidegger's Phenomenology of Nothingness: Heidegger takes the opposite approach. For him, Nothingness is by no means a concept or an object but a primordial event of opening, "the nothing nothings" (*das Nichts nichtet*). This "nihilation" is not a simple negation but the "withdrawal" of beings as a whole, which reveals itself to Dasein in the authentic mood of *Angst*. Here, Nothingness discloses the fundamental ontological difference: Being itself *is not* a being, and thus its mode of presence is as Nothing. Through his phenomenological description, Heidegger profoundly reveals the presencing of Nothingness, but he too fails to provide a logically necessary argument for the grounds of the identity of Being and Nothingness. His critique of Hegel—that the latter thinks negation

from the standpoint of consciousness and its distinctions, whereas he himself begins from the ontological difference—reveals both the advance and the limitation of his own path.

Žižek's Traumatic Nothingness: Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek injects a new dimension into this dialectic. He interprets Nothingness as a structural failure internal to the system, a crack or an unassimilable traumatic remainder—the Real. It is not the Heideggerian "clearing that grants possibility" but the trace left by the rupture of the symbolic order itself. Žižek allows us to see that Nothingness is not only the background against which Being appears but also the traumatic core of Being itself.

By synthesizing these three paths, we can formulate a crucial ontological axiom. Heidegger perceived in Nothingness the clearing of Being; Žižek perceived in it the trauma of Being. These are not contradictory but are the dual characterizations of Nothingness. It is at once the condition for disclosure and the kernel of failure. From this, we can provide a solid logical basis for the identity of Being and Nothingness:

Being (*y u*,) is to be understood as Possibility-as-Manifestation.

Nothingness (*wú*,) is to be understood as Crisis-as-Failure.

Their identity means that the manifestation of any possibility is, in itself, the enactment of a structural crisis. Possibility and crisis are two sides of the same coin; they flourish and perish together. The operation of being is not, as classical philosophy conceived it, a teleological process toward a complete end (*telos*). Rather, it is a non-teleological process that perpetuates itself *by means of failure.* The attachment to Being necessarily intensifies its immanent crisis; the unfolding of existence is itself the forging of its own fate toward annihilation. This ontological fact constitutes the cornerstone for all subsequent arguments in this paper. This conclusion is not a fabrication but a re-reading of the history of metaphysics: the entire tradition has attempted to ground existence in a positive principle (the Forms, God, Spirit), whereas this paper reveals that it is the repressed Nothingness—structural failure and trauma—that is the true engine of being's movement.

III. A GENEALOGY OF CONTINGENCY: FROM THE SPLIT GOD TO THE GROUNDLESS SUBJECT

If the cornerstone of ontology is the identity of "possibility as crisis," then the materialization of this abstract principle within the human experiential world is our apprehension of contingency. It is the internal split in this very apprehension that gives rise to the impasse of theodicy and ultimately evolves into the spiritual crisis of modernity. The theoretical dilemma of the doctrine of divine justice lies in the expression of the problem of the unity of virtue and blessing within religious forms. The Christian theological conundrum of why evil exists manifests precisely through the intensification of God as the most perfect being, thereby revealing itself as the challenge of reconciling virtue and blessing. To address this, we must first examine its historical intellectual research, which has already revealed the answer within this genealogical inquiry.

THE BIFURCATION OF CONTINGENCY

Based on the preceding ontological principle, contingency presents itself to us in a dual aspect:

Absolute Contingency: This is the contingency of existence "in-itself," the aimless, amoral force that can both create and destroy. It corresponds to the ontological fact of "possibility/crisis" discussed in the previous section. It requires no inquiry because it is the background of all inquiry.

Thrown Contingency: This is the contingency of existence "for-us." As finite beings, we are "thrown" into a situation not of our own choosing and are compelled to take responsibility for this "thrown-being." The essence of this experiential contingency is one of "incompleteness" and "dissipation." It becomes a problem, a burden, precisely because we must project our own meaning from a ground we cannot ourselves secure. It always unfolds by way of a question: "Why am I here?"

A simple example can illustrate this distinction. A flower that grows and dies of its own accord exemplifies an external, absolute contingency—a singular and self-contained event. For a finite being, however, the experience of contingency is a profound sense of its own thrownness; we are cast into this world and must project our being based on this very thrownness. These two modes of contingency are entirely different. Thrown contingency is characterized by

incompleteness because contingency *in-itself* is not incomplete—on the contrary, it is solid and requires no justification. But for a being that experiences contingency as thrownness, it is compelled to question its own being. This compulsion arises only because the being that questions is itself incomplete. Furthermore, this thrownness is dissipative, manifesting as both a deepening of this incompleteness and an intense, non-equilibrium generativity, a dual operation of openness and crisis. This "incompleteness" is not an objective property of contingency itself, but a structural tension that arises when consciousness is forced to bear it. It is a "burdensome contingency," one that becomes painful only when the "I" must answer for a state of being it did not choose.

This ontological schism in contingency finds its most profound (albeit "repressed") expression in the thought of Heidegger. Heidegger's famous distinction between "facticity" (Faktizität) and "factuality" (Tatsächlichkeit) is key to understanding how Western metaphysics has handled the "crisis" of contingency.1Scholars have clarified this distinction: Heidegger assigns Faktizität (facticity) exclusively to "Dasein," using it to characterize Dasein's unique existential state, which is "in each case mine" (eigenen), "thrown" (thrownness), and oriented toward "possibility" (possibility) in a meaningful way. In contrast, Tatsächlichkeit (factuality) is assigned to "non-Dasein," universal entities, which he calls "present-at-hand" (present-at-hand, Vorhandenheit). Heidegger is explicit in Being and Time: "Facticity is not the factuality of the factum brutum of something present-at-hand". This paper argues that this distinction constitutes a profound philosophical "repression". Heidegger's entire philosophical stance is to firmly anchor philosophy in the existential analysis of "facticity" (Faktizität), while demeaning "factuality" (Tatsächlichkeit) as (what natural science studies) "present-at-hand entities," believing that attention to such "factuality" obscures the understanding of "Being" itself. However, as the author of 1 keenly observes, Heidegger himself, when discussing the "ground," is forced to admit that the "ground" of the "factical" meaning-network is precisely the "abyss of meaninglessness." This means that Dasein's "meaningful" contingency (Faktizität) is grounded in the very "non-Dasein," "blind" "factuality" (Tatsächlichkeit) that he demeans. Heidegger became aware of this "abyss," but he immediately "closed off" the inquiry into this "factual" abyss, turning all his

energy to the "care" (Sorge) structure of "facticity," attempting to outline a "meaningful" world of "readiness-to-hand" (ready-to-hand, Zuhandenheit).1The analysis of the "broken hammer" (failure) in 1 becomes crucial here. Heidegger treats "readiness-to-hand" (Zuhandenheit) (e.g., the seamless use of a tool) as the norm, and "presence-at-hand" (Vorhandenheit) (e.g., the hammer breaks, and we "notice" it) as a "derivative," secondary state.1However, as the scholarship we cited earlier confirms 1, Heidegger equates the Tatsächlichkeit (factuality) he demeans with Vorhandenheit (presence-at-hand). This equation confirms the critique in 1: by defining "presence-at-hand" (the state of failure) as "derivative" and "secondary," Heidegger systematically "represses" Tatsächlichkeit (factuality)—that blind, contingent abyss. If we reverse Heidegger's value judgment and insist on the logic he himself discovered—that Faktizität (meaning) is grounded in Tatsächlichkeit (the abyss)—then the conclusion is the opposite: that "meaningless abyss" (Tatsächlichkeit) is logically prior to the "meaningful world" (Faktizität). The "ready-to-hand" meaning-network Heidegger sketches (Faktizität) is not the normal state of Being; rather, it is a fragile, temporary "island" that must constantly resist the erosion of that more primordial, repressed, blindly contingent "factual" abyss. Therefore, "failure" (such as a hammer breaking) is by no means a "derivative" phenomenon. It is precisely the "intrusion" and "return of the repressed" of that more primordial "factual" abyss. "Failure" is the moment when the "thing" breaks free from the "meaning" (Faktizität) bestowed upon it by Dasein and throws its pure, blind, meaningless "existence" (Tatsächlichkeit) back at Dasein.

This ontological schism first appeared in the history of Western thought in the form of theological conflict. Theological discourse should be read not as truth about God, but as a *symptomatic* expression of humanity's attempt to grasp its own existential situation.

Marcionism's Dual God: The second-century Marcionite heresy acutely captured this division. The Marcionites distinguished between two gods: the capricious, evil-condoning "Demiurge" of the Old Testament, and the good and loving "Stranger God" of the New Testament. This is not a simple moral dualism but a theological personification of the two contingencies. The Demiurge is the incarnation of Absolute Contingency: he creates but does not take responsibility; he is the cold, non-ethical face of existence. The Stranger God (Christ),

conversely, is the bearer of Thrown Contingency. He enters this incomplete world in the name of "love" to redeem the suffering of the thrown. Marcion astutely recognized that "God," as the Other, manifests a dual nature—both creative and destructive—and that the existing world is an incomplete one, suffused with suffering and evil. His error was to interpret this through a dualistic metaphysics that cleaved spirit from matter, seeking an escape from the material prison. Yet, he grasped the essential point: the "divine" plays a dual role, maintaining the world's order through goodness and love on the one hand, and threatening it with destruction on the other. This duality is not merely ethical but ontological. The Demiurge is not the devil, but he is the face of contingency un-borne, of ignorant substantiality; the Stranger God bears contingency and becomes the self fractured in love.

The insight in to juxtapose Marcionism with Heidegger's dilemma is powerfully corroborated by the seminal research of Hans Jonas. It was Jonas who linked ancient "Gnosticism" (of which Marcion was a representative) with "modern nihilism" and "existentialism" (especially Heidegger). Jonas points out that both Gnosticism and existentialism arise from a "sense of estrangement between humanity and the natural world".18 Both affirm that there are "no moral laws in the cosmos or in nature to which human beings are responsible" Gnosticism, because the world is "evil"; existentialism (like Heidegger's), because Dasein's meaning (Faktizität) must be "projected" in opposition to "nature" (Tatsächlichkeit).

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Nominalism's Arbitrary God: In the late Middle Ages, the Nominalist movement, by emphasizing God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*), resurrected the specter of Absolute Contingency. This was a capricious God, unbound by any law of reason or goodness, who could at any moment annihilate the order he had created. This omnipotent God was less the "most solid being" of Aquinas than the very principle of nothingness, a potential "demon." The theological impetus for this shift lies in a deep contradiction within Christianity between the principles of "love" (self-affirmation) and "grace" (the gift of the Other). When the arbitrary nature of grace is pushed to its extreme, the order of love is

jeopardized, and the image of God splits. The figure of Jesus represents the sublation of the scapegoat mechanism, assuming sin upon himself in a personal, self-actualizing act. The figure of God the Father, however, retains the dual meaning of creation and destruction. The traditional divine attributes—omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence—form a contradictory set. Omniscience and omnibenevolence point toward a harmonious, ordered world. But omnipotence implies that this order is merely a temporary gift, which God is under no obligation to maintain. By stressing God's omnipotence, the Nominalists threatened his goodness and undermined the stability of the cosmos. Their God was not a God of love, but of destruction and the void. This conflict between love and grace, self-affirmation and dependence on the Other, gives rise to the "Unhappy Consciousness"—a consciousness that can neither fully accept the cruelty of the Other nor escape its own incompleteness.

The dawn of modern philosophy can be read as a defensive war against the threat of nihilism posed by the Nominalist God. When Descartes engages in universal doubt in his *Meditations*, the "evil genius" (*malin génie*) he hypothesizes is none other than the philosophical avatar of this arbitrary God. To re-establish certainty, Descartes must postulate a "good God" as his guarantor. This reveals a profound truth: the entire edifice of modern reason was, from its very inception, built upon a fragile foundation, contingent upon divine sanction.

With the "death of God," this theological conflict did not vanish; instead, it was fully *internalized* within the human subject. The attributes once belonging to God and the demon—creation and destruction, ethics and cruelty—were now united in "Man." The modern subject is at once creator and destroyer, lawgiver and abyss. This leads to a terrible, secret formula for modernity: Destruction = Creation. "Evil" is no longer seen as a privation of the good or its opposite, but as a necessary component for the affirmation of the subject's power and the realization of its creativity—an "affirmative evil."

This process of secularization, which saw the retreat of the Christian God, also saw the legitimation of a previously repressed individuality. The humanist turn, while empowering the creative self, simultaneously fused creation with destruction within that same self. The subject who creates is also the subject who destroys. The category of "evil" is transformed from a negation to an affirmation, a necessary step in the forging of the individual.

We thus witness a strange loop. The Nominalist God spurred philosophers to establish metaphysics within the *cogito*. Yet this God, Descartes's demon, remains as a persistent shadow, expressing the groundlessness of the subject itself. The subject is not a being in whom goodness is deficient; on the contrary, the subject establishes its small enclave of "good" from within a state of groundless, deficient "evil." This "good" can only be the subject's own ideal of authenticity, externalized. The problem is now inverted: whereas for Christianity, evil was the absence of good, for modernity, good is the unfolding of evil. The subject's pursuit of the good begins from, and is made possible by, this primordial, groundless state of evil. This grants the subject immense dynamism but also a hubristic license to reject all external constraints and follow only its inner voice.

This internal contradiction gives rise to two extreme political paths:

The Totalitarian Path of Good: The attempt to completely eradicate "evil" and expand the domain of the subject's good. This is impossible; the result is that evil reappears in the name of good, as sacred violence. This is the path of Rousseau's General Will, which, in the name of reason and the good, tramples rights and famously "forces men to be free." The French Revolution, which began with radical claims for liberty and ended in the Terror, is no accident; it reflects the groundless nature of the modern project.

The Nihilist Path of Evil: The full embrace of "evil," cloaking it in the guise of good. This leads to a pure, active nihilism. When the "I" becomes the sole standard, all else can be negated, leading to a self-consuming void. Once evil is rationalized, violence can be justified in the name of "progress" or "freedom."

Thus, the problem of theodicy ("Why does God permit evil?") transforms into a more acute secular theodicy: "Why, when acting for a good end, do I continuously produce unintended destruction and suffering?" When "historical progress," "national security," or "technological development" are used to justify "necessary sacrifices," it is merely a rationalization for the modern subject's own internal schism. From the split God to the groundless subject, we are witnessing the incessant mutation of the same ontological trauma. The nihilistic nightmare of the modern world is rooted not in a loss of cultural values, but in this profound ontological fissure, which has yet to be properly confronted and thought.

IV. THE UNIFIED OPERATION OF BEING AND NOTHINGNESS: ON THE TRIPARTITE IDENTITY OF *DÉ-FÚ-ƷIÉ*

Through tracing the history of ideas, we have uncovered the secret behind the dilemma of virtue and fortune: that good and evil appear in an inverted state. What does this inversion signify? And has it already provided us with a corresponding solution? We contend that the inversion of good and evil in intellectual history precisely offers an answer: the unity of virtue, fortune, and calamity. This unity aligns with the ontology we propose the integrated operation of being and non-being.

At this juncture, we have successfully shifted the problem of the unity of virtue and happiness from the domain of ethics to its ontological ground and have traced its genealogy in the history of thought as a variant of theodicy. We are now in a position to propose a theoretical framework designed to resolve this dilemma at its root: the theory of the tripartite identity of (

but to the immanent, structural "possibility of annihilation" within existence itself. It is "Nothingness" or "Crisis-as-Failure" in the sense of Section II. Any projection of potential is, by its very nature, oriented toward *Jié* as its ultimate limit—failure, dissipation, and the impossibility of possession, which finds its final expression in death. *Jié* is the *a priori* ground and the immanent shadow that makes both *Dé* and *Fú* possible.

Based on these definitions, we can clearly demonstrate the strict ontological identity of *Dé, Fú,* and *Jié*. They are not three independent entities but three different perspectives on the single ontological process of a finite being's generation and annihilation:

Dé is *Jié*: Potentiality (*Dé*) is "gifted" precisely because it can at any moment be "forfeited." "Giftedness" and "forfeitability" are two faces of the same ontological event. A potentiality that could not be lost would no longer be a potentiality but an eternal actuality. The essence of *Dé*, therefore, contains *Jié*.

Fú depends on *Jié*: The entire meaning and value of actualization (*Fú*) derive from the fact that it is briefly won from the shadow of annihilation (*Jié*). In a world without failure, finitude, or death, any success would be rendered meaningless. The manifestation of *Fú*, therefore, is predicated on the antecedent dominion of *Jié*.

Dé is for the sake of *Fú*, and *Fú* moves toward *Jié*: The entire impetus of potentiality (*Dé*) is its drive toward actualization (*Fú*). Yet, any act of actualization is an expenditure of potential, a step toward ultimate annihilation (*Jié*).

Therefore, the "unity of virtue and happiness" is, at the deepest ontological level, absolutely true. But this is no cause for celebration. The true "unity" must be understood as the identity of the triad . It reveals the profound fact that a gifted life (*Dé*), the striving for fulfillment (*Fú*), and the unavoidable end (*Jié*) are three indivisible aspects of the same existential process.

It is precisely this strict ontological identity of *Dé-Fú-Jié* that necessarily leads to the disunity of virtue and happiness that we experience at the phenomenal level. The conventional view of virtue and happiness (i.e., that good deeds are rewarded) is an epistemological occlusion. It perceives only the linear, positive correlation from *Dé* to *Fú* while systematically repressing *Jié*, which is the foundation of the entire structure. However, the dislocations of virtue and fortune in the real world, the futility of good deeds, the transience of happiness, and the arbitrary advent of disaster—these phenomena, which appear to be "unjust," in

fact serve as negative proof, testifying to the concealed, deeper, and tragic unity of *Dé-Fú-Jié*. We perceive a "disunity" because we have mistakenly fractured what is an integrated structure into three separate elements and then expected an external, causal relationship of reward and punishment to hold between them.

Acknowledging the meaning of *Jié* does not lead to nihilism; rather, it provides ethics with its authentic ground. The "sublime" quality of morality arises precisely from the recognition of this annihilating possibility. The unity of the triad is by no means a harmonious consummation but a dance upon the abyss. The subject's "happiness" (*Fú*) is reconceived as a finite yet resilient projection and possession, undertaken with a lucid appropriation of its own *Dé* (its gifted potential and limits) and its own *Jié* (its fundamental finitude and annihilation). This "unity" is a tragic lucidity, an existential honesty achieved after penetrating the illusions of the phenomenal world. The true unity of virtue and happiness is thus transformed into a stance of clarity: the individual, by confronting and "claiming" these three dimensions—accepting its thrown nature (*Dê*), projecting possible possessions within its finitude (*Fû*), and embracing the unavoidable limit and loss (*Jiê*)—practices life with a tragic honesty, dissolving any dogmatic opposition between the three in the ordinary flux of living.

The conventional view exhorts us to act from virtue (*Dê*), pursue happiness (*Fû*), and flee from calamity (*Jiê*). This perspective treats *Jié* as an independent, external force to be avoided. Our argument, on the contrary, is that *Jié* is simply another expression of *Dé* and *Fú*. In our pursuit of them, we are constantly faced with the task of reconciling ourselves to *Jié*. Only by acknowledging *Jié* can *Dé* and *Fú* be realized at all. Thus, the identity of the triad is staunchly anti-cynical, anti-fatalistic, and anti-nihilistic. Cynicism, fatalism, and nihilism all arise from treating *Jié* as an external force that one tries, and fails, to repel. When we correctly see the identity of *Jié* with *Dé* and *Fú*, we have already overcome these stances. *Jié* is not external to us; it is within *Dé* and *Fú*. There is no external object to which we can either flee or surrender. The only choice is to bear this trinity as a whole.

"Life": The Non-Teleological Background that Dissolves Tension

This tragic ontological structure, without a buffer, would lead to absolute nihilism. At this point, we must introduce a final, crucial concept: "Life" (*shēnghuó*,

). The "Life" we speak of here is fundamentally different from the pejorative state of "everyday falling" (*Alltäglichkeit*) in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Heidegger's "everydayness" is an inauthentic mode of being lost in the "they" (*das Man*). "Life," as we define it, is a more primordial ontological background. It possesses the following characteristics:

Ordinariness and Insipidity: Life itself does not produce grand meaning; it simply "lets things grow." It is poor, but it is never lacking, for it requires no meaning to fill it.

Resilience and Capacity: Through its day-to-day repetition, senselessness, and necessity, Life constitutes a sufficiently solid background that bears and ultimately dissolves the sharp tension of the *Dé-Fú-Jié* triad.

Non-teleological Nature: Life has no ultimate purpose; its operation is its own end. It is a pre-reflective, silent rhythm.

Ultimately, the ontological tragedy is homogenized in the mundane flux of Life. This does not lead to cynicism or fatalism. On the contrary, precisely because *Jié* is immanent within *Dé* and *Fú*, we cannot escape into or surrender to an external "fate." The only option is to bear this tripartite whole and, upon the solid stage of "Life," to engage in finite but resilient projects. This is an ontological realism that transcends existentialist heroism, shifting the ground of being from the subject's decision to the ordinary tenacity of the world itself.

V. A WAY FORWARD AND A BURDEN TO BEAR: "ASYMMETRICAL RESPONSIBILITY" BASED ON THE RHYTHM OF "ORDINARY LIFE"

Although we have ontologically "solved" the problem of the unity of virtue and happiness by demonstrating that its phenomenal disunity is a manifestation of a deeper identity, this does not dissolve the ethical question. How are we to confront the concrete suffering and injustice of history and of the present? How is justice possible for the souls of the unjustly dead? Without a mechanism for compensation, is the coherence of this theory not a form of cold complicity?

The demand for redress for the dead has existed since the dawn of philosophy. A fragment from Anaximander states that all things "pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time." "Injustice" here can be understood as the state of a being's deviation from its proper order, and "retribution" is the force that draws it back. Historically, this corrective force

has been entrusted to three grand narratives:

God: As postulated in Kant's moral theology, a transcendent, omnipotent God will ultimately dispense justice in the hereafter, ensuring the alignment of virtue and happiness. In a secular age, however, this solution has lost its universal persuasive power.

The Übermensch: Nietzsche's answer is grounded in the theory of the Eternal Recurrence. This doctrine presents the brutal fact that every event is a necessary and indispensable part of an eternally recurring whole, enabling a shift from nihilistic despair to an absolute affirmation of life—*amor fati*. For the will to overcome its resentment of the past, it must be able to will backwards. Since it can only will forwards, the only possibility is that the past is also the future, so that in willing the future, one simultaneously wills the entire past. This demands the affirmation not only of life's peaks but also of its most horrific and painful aspects, without recourse to a transcendent realm. Through the affirmation of this cycle, the Übermensch is born—a mature, diamond-hard individual who transcends good and evil by willing everything. This demands that we face life's cruelty without seeking compensation beyond life itself.

Ghosts (History): In traditions such as Chinese culture, "History" itself is cast in the role of the ultimate judge, forming a kind of historical piety. The dead are transformed into "ghosts" whose unfinished business and unredressed grievances are to be settled by the verdict of history. The peril of this path, however, is that history is easily ideologized, becoming a tool for the victors, as Orwell warned: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." This deification of history as a secular substitute for God risks creating new forms of totalitarianism, and even in its ideal form, the silent and interpretable nature of history offers insufficient power to constrain tyranny or guarantee justice.

The failure of these three solutions compels us to seek a compensatory mechanism that is neither a transcendent theology, nor a heroic act of will, nor an ideological construct. We propose that the ground of this mechanism lies nowhere else but in the compulsory rhythm of "Ordinary Life" itself. We can thus appeal to a minimal justice, one founded not on a divine being but on the discovery of the ordinariness and historicity of "things," which stabilizes our faith in justice. Any act of injustice, no matter how violent, is a deviation that cannot

ultimately escape being dissolved and corrected by the overwhelming force of Life. This "inevitability of being corrected" is the deepest guarantee of compensation.

Correspondingly, the ethical commitment of the individual must be redefined. Its core concept is Asymmetrical Responsibility.

This concept is deeply inspired by the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. For Levinas, the primordial ethical scene is the "face-to-face" encounter. The face of the Other issues the absolute command, "You shall not kill," imposing upon me an infinite and inescapable responsibility. This responsibility is "asymmetrical": it precedes my freedom of choice and demands no reciprocity.

However, we perform a crucial "de-humanizing" modification of Levinas's thought. We argue that the "Absolute Other" who issues this unconditional command is, in the final instance, not another human being but "Life" itself. We are compelled to be responsible *to* Life because it is this anonymous, impersonal process that has gifted us our being (*Dê*) while simultaneously stipulating our finitude (*Jiê*). Our notions of justice and compensation are thus not tied to any single traditional solution but are a confluence of all three under the power of Life: a hope directed toward a transcendent horizon, an affirmation of our own lives in their resilient ordinariness, and an acknowledgment of the ghosts of history that call our present into question. The ground for this is not a transcendent God, an immanent will to power, or a manipulated History, but the mundane yet powerful rhythm of being itself.

The very concept of responsibility (from *respondere*, to respond) entails a paradox. On the one hand, it is a one-way, asymmetrical duty to this Absolute Other (Life). As we have argued, the Other gazes at me, but I cannot see the Other; we are compelled to be responsible without expectation of return. On the other hand, responsibility requires a subject who is conscious of this duty and "wills" it for itself. This tension between submission to the Other and the self-willing of the subject gives rise to the concept of "sin" (*zuì*,

Life but also an immanent demand within each individual, who must respond to the "giftedness" and "forfeitability" of their own being. This response is the very core of the corrective nature of Life; giftedness provides the "ought" dimension, while forfeitability provides the "is." They are unified at the ontological level but split in our experience, and it is in responding to the tension of this split that the individual participates in the corrective rhythm.

This framework also offers an ontological solution to Hume's is-ought problem. At the deepest ontological level, "is" and "ought" are unified. The ontological fact (*is*) of our "giftedness" (*Dê*) inherently contains a normative demand (*ought*) that we respond to it. The empirical gap between is and ought is, like the phenomenal disunity of the *Dé-Fú-Jié* triad, a necessary manifestation of this deeper unity. Our asymmetrical responsibility is the very activity of living within the tension between this ontological unity and its phenomenal split. It is through the individual's constant "responding" and "bearing" within this tension that the "ordinary rhythm of Life" is driven, dynamically correcting the division between what is and what ought to be.

We receive the gift of existence, which makes us subjects who can will and project. This is the source of our freedom. We must simultaneously acknowledge that this gift is received by way of a "loss"—we can never fully grasp the source. In accepting this, we take up our "sin" and our responsibility to Life.

Ultimately, Hope is no longer a fantasy of a world beyond but is transfigured into a practical stance of moderation and experimentation. Moderation is the sober recognition of life's fragility and incompleteness, leading to a prudent application of one's potential. Experimentation is the courage to affirm Life and to create and try anew, even with the full acknowledgment of its tragic structure. The ground of this hope is a trust in the ultimate resilience of "Life" itself.

CONCLUSION

This paper began with a re-examination of the ancient problem of the unity of virtue and happiness, but it has ultimately transcended the traditional boundaries of ethics. By situating the discussion on an ontological ground, we have found that the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between virtue and happiness is not a flaw in the cosmic order, nor an unresolved case awaiting compensation in a world beyond, but is rather a necessary manifestation of the very structure of

being itself.

The core of the argument lies in the disclosure of the tripartite ontological fact of *Dé-Fú-Jié*. Our gifted potentiality for life (*Dê*), our pursuit and actualization of fulfillment (*Fû*), and our inescapable, ultimate annihilation (*Jiê*) are three inseparable aspects of a single reality. The possibility of existence and the crisis of existence are one and the same. The tragedy and, indeed, the perfection of this deep structure is this: it is precisely the ontological unity of this triad that forges their phenomenal division and conflict. Therefore, the injustice we witness in the world is not a violation of this deeper order, but is, in fact, its most faithful proof.

This conclusion liberates us from the endless inquiry into "why the good suffer" and illuminates a new ethical path. Since the mechanism for compensation can be sought neither from God nor in a heroic Übermensch, the true burden we must bear is to confront this existential truth directly. The starting point for ethics is no longer the search for an external system of just reward and punishment, but a turn toward an asymmetrical responsibility to "Life" itself. This means that we must bear our *Dé* and project our *Fú* with a lucid awareness of the immanence of *Jié*. This ethical posture is tragic, for it relinquishes the fantasy of an ultimate, harmonious fulfillment. Yet, it is also resilient, for it is rooted in the ordinary, indifferent, yet all-dissolving and powerful rhythm of Life.

Ultimately, the true unity of virtue and happiness is perhaps not a promised result, but rather a mode of being: a way of maintaining lucidity and courageous bearing upon the abyss.

wahibto577@126.com

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