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Levinas on the Relationship between Pleasure and the Good

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Abstract: The article discusses the relationship between pleasure and the Good in Levinas's ethics. Firstly, the paper points out that, for Levinas, pleasure and the Good are both essentially related to sensibility, except that pleasure is concerned with the self-affection of sensibility, and the Good is concerned with the hetero-affection of sensibility. The self-affection of pleasure and enjoyment enables the subject to locate and contract itself, and thus to establish an inner and separated self. Meanwhile, the Good is originated from the hetero-affection of the call of the transcendent Other, and is embodied in an involuntary suffering for the other's suffering, weakness, and needs. Secondly, the paper argues that the relationship between pleasure and the Good is highly tensional. On the one hand, the Good does interrupt the egoism of life and its pleasure. On the other hand, pleasure actually constitutes a necessary condition for the Good, rather than something that must be rejected. The intersection of pleasure and the Good constitutes an insurmountable and irreducible tension within subjectivity. Finally, the paper places Levinas's ethics in a dialogue with hedonism, virtue ethics, asceticism, and deontology, and regards Levinas's ethics as a new paradigm for understanding the relationship between pleasure and the Good in the history of Western ethics.

Keywords: Levinas; pleasure; the Good; sensibility; enjoyment; ethics; the Other; subjectivity

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1. Introduction

The relationship between pleasure and the Good is an enduring question in the history of Western ethics. Broadly speaking, there are several representative paradigms for answering this question. The first is the paradigm proposed by Hedonism, which asserts that there is a direct and affirmative correlation between pleasure and the Good (Plato 1975, p. 1). The second is the paradigm proposed by Aristotle's virtue ethics. For Aristotle, pleasure is not the primary constituent of the Good, but a concomitant one, and the pursuit of the good will be more perfect if it is accompanied by pleasure (Aristotle 2009, p. 191). The third is the paradigm proposed by asceticism, which asserts that pleasure is evil. An ascetic is always wary of the self-indulgence of life in the spontaneous pursuit of pleasure, hoping to achieve the purification and sublimation of life through austere self-discipline and conscious self-renunciation (Foucault 1988, p. 22). The fourth is the paradigm proposed by Kantian deontology. For Kant, it is the good will that constitutes the essence of a good action. Generally speaking, the Good has nothing to do with pleasure. However, the indirect relevance of pleasure to the Good lies in the fact that human beings are rational but finite beings whose choices and actions often have two determining grounds, the moral law and the principle of self-love. The moral law is concerned with the moral obligation arising from the universal legislation of the will for the will itself, while the principle of self-love is concerned with the innate tendency of sensibility to seek pleasure or to escape from pain. Good occurs when one's choices and actions follow the moral law unconditionally; evil occurs when one places the principle of self-love above the moral law as the preferred motive for his will and action (Kant 1998, pp. 58–59).

In contrast to the four classical formulations of the relationship between pleasure and the Good, Levinas's discussion of the relationship between pleasure and the Good has

attracted little attention, let alone being regarded as a new paradigm that is quite different from the four above-mentioned paradigms. Unlike the above-mentioned philosophers, Levinas does not seem to directly propose the question of the relationship between pleasure and the Good, and his direct discussion of the concept of pleasure appears to be fragmented and unsystematic. Thus, the question of the relationship between pleasure and the Good does not seem to play an important role in Levinas's ethics. Naturally, it is also a highly neglected issue in the many studies of Levinas's ethics. Although the direct discussion of the relationship between pleasure and the Good is a blind spot in the study of Levinas, some relevant studies have respectively focused on the categories of "pleasure", "enjoyment", "happiness", "the Good", "vulnerability", "trauma", "suffering", and so on. By comparing the different attitudes toward hedonism by Plato and Levinas, Tanja Staehler and Alexander Kozin point out that for Levinas, the pleasure plays an important role for our embodied existence (Staehler and Kozin 2021). Joachim Duyndam has a further perspective, arguing that enjoyment is the very condition of my openness to the appeal of the Other (Duyndam 2009). Scholars such as Per Nortvedt, Dorothée Legrand, and Ruud Welten regard the suffering, vulnerability, and trauma as the core of Levinas's ethics (Nortvedt 2003; Legrand 2018; Welten 2020). Similarly, scholars such as John E. Drabinski, Richard A. Cohen, and Jolanta Saldukaitytė underline the character of materiality and corporeality of Levinas's ethics (Drabinski 2001; Cohen 2016; Saldukaitytė 2021). As Cohen points out, "Morality is carnal rather than ethereal. The demands of the other are concrete, real, particular. The other's suffering becomes my own suffering: a suffering for the other's suffering" (Cohen 2016, p. 54). Catherine Chalier compares Kantian ethics and Levinasian ethics around the question of the relationship between virtue and happiness (Chalier 2002). However, a systematic study of the relationship between pleasure and the Good in Levinas's philosophy is necessary.

In my opinion, the inquiry into this issue will produce the following results. Firstly, it can demonstrate that there is actually a systematic view on the relationship between pleasure and the Good in Levinas's philosophy. Secondly, it can provide a unique approach to understand the Levinas's philosophy of the Other. Thirdly, through a dialogue with the history of Western ethics, it is possible to regard Levinas's ethics as a new paradigm for understanding the relationship between pleasure and the Good.

2. Levinas's Phenomenological Examination of Pleasure

In his discussion of pleasure, Levinas does not distinguish between "good pleasure" and "bad pleasure", as Plato and Aristotle did, nor between "higher pleasure" and "lower pleasure", as Mill did. Nor did he invent a set of "felicific calculus" to measure the value of pleasure in terms of "intensity", "duration", "certainty or uncertainty", "propinquity or remoteness", "fecundity", "purity", and "extent", as Bentham did (Bentham 2000, pp. 31–33). Conversely, from a phenomenological approach and perspective, Levinas presents an intentional analysis of the phenomena of "sensibility" and "enjoyment", which are essentially related to pleasure.

For Levinas, as a sensitive experience and a state of feeling, pleasure is essentially related to sensibility. According to Husserl's analysis of sensation in *Ideas II*, when we touch a table we are able to experience it as something hard, cold, and smooth on the one hand, and on the other hand we are able to experience the sensations of hardness, coldness, and smoothness by keeping our attention on our own hands. Therefore, as Husserl emphasizes, "so here we have that double apprehension: the same touch-sensation is apprehended as a feature of the 'external' Object and is apprehended as a sensation of the Body as Object" (Husserl 2000, p. 155). However, this analysis has in fact placed sensation within the act of perception, limiting it to the function of providing sensory material for the act of apprehension of perception. Sensation here is already subordinate to the act of objectifying cognition. Thus, on the one hand, the sensible qualities of the object are reduced to its various experienced contents, and on the other hand, the experienced multiplicity is condensed and subordinated to the universal idea. In this regard, Levinas

has the following criticism: "……the image in sensible intuition has already lost the immediacy of the sensible……As discovery and knowing, sensible intuition is already of the order of the said; it is an ideality. An idea is not a simple sublimation of the sensible. The difference between the sensible and an idea is not the difference between more or less exact cognitions or between cognitions of the individual and of the universal. An individual inasmuch as it is known is already desensibilized and referred to the universal in intuition. The signification proper to the sensible has to be described in terms of enjoyment and wounding" (Levinas 2011, pp. 62–63). It is clear that Levinas distinguishes between two elements in the act of sensation: "the representational content" and "the affective content" (Levinas 2007, p. 187). The latter is independent of representation and ideality and has its own original meaning. For example, when we eat, in addition to the perception and representation of food and the aim of satiation through food, there is actually a sentimental content of the pleasurable tasting. The latter is precisely beyond the teleological order constructed by cognition and does not serve as the primary stage of cognition. As Levinas points out, "to fill, to satisfy, is the sense of the savor, and it is precisely to leap over the images, aspects, reflections or silhouettes, phantoms, phantasms, the hides of things that are enough for the consciousness of…" (Levinas 2011, p. 72). In Lingis's opinion, this difference between Husserl and Levinas in their understanding of the function of sensation stems from the ambiguity of the concept of "sensation" and the phenomenon of sensation itself. When we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, the sensible is always already a form, a "gestalt", instead of "pure matter". The perceived object is always intentionally constituted and endowed with meaning. However, the perception of things "is also sensuous", as Lingis underlines, "it is not only grasp of sense, it is also affectivity—contact, immersion of the form in a medium of pleasure and displeasure" (Lingis 2018, p. 3). "The phenomenology of the sensible" that Levinas wants to develop is precisely focused on the discovery of the dimension of "affectivity" or "sentiment", which is embedded in the concept of "sensibility" (Levinas 2007, p. 136). As Levinas underlines, "The sensibility we are describing starting with enjoyment of the element does not belong to the order of thought but to that of sentiment, that is, the affectivity wherein the egoism of the I pulsates. One does not know, one lives sensible qualities: the green of these leaves, the red of this sunset" (Levinas 2007, p. 135). To associate sensibility primarily with cognition in fact fails to "recognize the plane on which the sensible life is lived as enjoyment" (Levinas 2007, p. 187). Therefore, it is necessary to exert an intentional analysis of the phenomenon of "enjoyment".

Just like Husserl's analysis of the double apprehension in perception, enjoyment also has "twofold reference" (Levinas 2011, p. 73).

On the one hand, enjoyment refers to the object, but this reference is not a cognitive grasp or an instrumental use, but a kind of satisfaction and savor. Enjoyment is first and foremost a bodily phenomenon, and "is concretized in corporeal existence" (Levinas 2007, p. 164). The first thing of the corporeal existence is to satisfy the need of eating and drinking, that is, to satisfy the "the emptiness of hunger" (Levinas 2011, p. 66). In the tasting of food, the sensory body is nourished and feels satisfied and happy. Here, the dependence on food is a "happy dependence" (Levinas 2007, p. 165). As Levinas says, "The human being thrives on his needs; he is happy for his needs" (Levinas 2007, p. 114). This satisfaction with the given constitutes the central characteristic of sensitive enjoyment. It is because of the lack that the body has the possibility to be satisfied. Tasting food in the lack of the body and obtaining satisfaction constitute the most simple and direct pleasure. As Levinas puts it, "Happiness, in its relation with the 'other' of nutriments, suffices to itself; it even suffices to itself because of this relation with the other: it consists in satisfying its needs and not in suppressing them. Happiness suffices to itself through the 'not sufficing to oneself' proper to need" (Levinas 2007, p. 118). However, it should be noted that the so-called "food" as the object of enjoyment is not actually an entity as a synthesis of form and material, nor is it a conceptual identity or a sensory multiplicity to be given form, but rather is dismantled into elements in the enjoyment of food. The term "element" refers to the purely

material content that delights the sensitive experience, overflowing out of the world of representations. Levinas also refers to the element as "pure quality" or "a quality without substance" (Levinas 2007, pp. 135–36). In fact, all kinds of things and activities can become objects of enjoyment, and thus enrich, nourish, and delight my existence. "The blue of the sky above my head, the breath of the wind, the undulation of the sea, the sparkle of the light" (Levinas 2007, p. 141), can also become elements to be savored. All those activities such as labor, reading, and thinking can become elements to be enjoyed. As Levinas says, "I live from the whole content of life—even from the labor which ensures the future; I live from my labor as I live from air, light, and bread" (Levinas 2007, p. 146). In other words, the whole world can be the "nutriment" that nourishes me, and this nourishment constitutes the prerequisite and condition for my corporeal existence. "The world I live in is not simply the counterpart or the contemporary of thought and its constitutive freedom, but a conditioning and an antecedence. The world I constitute nourishes me and bathes me. It is aliment and 'medium'" (Levinas 2007, p. 129). To exist in a sensuous way is "to bathe in the element" (Levinas 2007, p. 132) through the body, to be immersed in the pleasurable enjoyment of the elements. This is not the Heideggerian "being-in-the-world" ("the world" as the associated guidance system of the tools, "in" as the ready-to-hand of the tools), but "to-be-in-the-element" (Levinas 2007, p. 135) ("the element" as sensory qualities that nourish and delight the mind and body, overflowing the cognitive structures of form-material and means-end, "in" as the pleasurable immersion in the element).

On the other hand, enjoyment is always self-relevant. Just as feeling is always a feeling of the self, and experience is always an experience of the self, enjoyment is always an enjoying of itself while at the same time enjoying various objects and activities. As Levinas underlines, "Life enjoys its very life, as though it nourishes itself with life as much as with what makes it live" (Levinas 2011, p. 73). Thus, enjoyment is an enjoying of the sensible quality, and meanwhile an enjoying of "its own appetite" (Levinas 2011, p. 73). In other words, enjoyment is an enjoying of enjoyment (Levinas 2011, p. 73), which means that enjoyment has a self-reflexive structure. This self-reference of enjoyment comes from a transcendental capacity of life, namely "auto-affection" or self-affection (Levinas 2011, p. 123). The so-called self-affection of sensitivity is not a reflexive self-perception or an internal intuition, but a capacity of being affected by sensitivity itself. Based on this, Levinas argues that enjoyment has a unique intentional structure. "Enjoyment is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution. What is termed an affective state does not have the dull monotony of a state but is a vibrant exaltation in which dawns the self. For the I is not the support of enjoyment. The 'intentional' structure is here wholly different; the I is the very contraction of sentiment, the pole of a spiral whose coiling and involution is drawn by enjoyment: the focus of the curve is a part of the curve. It is precisely as a 'coiling,' as a movement toward oneself" (Levinas 2007, p. 118). In this passage, Levinas actually points out that the intentionality of enjoyment is not the representational intentionality that focuses on the objectified things, nor is it the horizonal intentionality that constitutes the meaning at the bottom, but rather the movement of "involution" that allows the "self" to emerge. It is this movement of "involution" that separates the subject from the anonymous elemental stream, and finally constitutes an inner self. Therefore, although enjoyment is dependent on the elemental other, which is a non-ego, it is precisely from this pleasurable dependence that an inner ego can emerge, through the very self-affection and self-reference of enjoyment. As Levinas puts it, "to be oneself while living from something other than oneself" (Levinas 2007, p. 164). This self-affection and self-reference constitute the most original "patterns of…my coincidence with myself" (Levinas 2007, p. 138) and fulfill the most important function of self-certification and self-location. It is in the self-affection and self-reference of each enjoying moment that I originally locate myself: this is my "here", this is my "Da". As Bernasconi says, enjoyment is not some kind of attribute added to life, but rather the original moment that structures life itself at the bottom (Bernasconi 2005, p. 37). Because of the essential relevance of pleasure to enjoyment, an intentional analysis of the "twofold reference" of enjoyment allows us to discover the role of pleasure in the

existential constitution of Dasein. Undoubtedly, we can distinguish between the ontic pleasure and the ontological pleasure, following Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein. On the one hand, the ontic pleasure is always contingent, just a matter of "a chance and a stroke of luck" (Levinas 2007, p. 144). On the other hand, the ontological pleasure means that the enjoyment of all the contents and acts of life is the most basic and original structure in the existential constitution of Dasein. On the one hand, the ontic pleasure belongs to an empirical ego, a certain emotional state that an empirical ego can acquire or lose; on the other hand, the ontological pleasure "constitutes the very contentment of existence" (Levinas 2007, p. 135) and thus forms an inner entity that is embodied and sentimental. The ego is internalized and embodied through its self-affection and self-reference, and thus individualized. Therefore, the ego is no longer subordinated to the category of the species, nor can it be equated with the Aristotelian "this", but a personal existent capable of feeling pleasure and happiness. The pleasure of life brought about by enjoyment makes life wonderful and desirable. Only when life is desirable, that makes sense to talk about the right to life and property as a political right.

By examining the existential function of enjoyment and pleasure, Levinas answers the question of the original position and orientation of the self, or the question of how the "Da" of "Dasein" emerges. We locate ourselves and understand ourselves in our identity, social relations, personality, habits, preferences, language, memory, history, place, and so on, but the most original orientation and position is actually the self-affection of sensitivity. Nancy expresses this insight in a very similar way. "To speak of self-affection is to speak of what does not arise only as an incidental and accidental affection. It is to speak of what in effect arises (as incident and/or accident) to the subject as that which makes it subject, which relates the subject to itself. It is by affecting oneself, desiring or withdrawing from oneself, or pleasing oneself in this desire or displeasing oneself in this refusal, that the "self" is formed or the 'self' is made. . . "(Nancy 2013, pp. 27–28). Only a self that is already gathered in itself can go out into the world from the original "Da" which is constituted by enjoyment and the self-affection of sensitivity. Therefore, Levinasian "being in the element" is more original than the plane of the Heideggerian "being-in-the-world". The latter is actually based on the former.

Clearly, when Levinas elevates pleasure to the ontological position of constituting an inner ego, he is incarnating the subject. The subject is no longer the trascendental consciousness thinking about the being of beings, but a sensible existent bound in its own flesh, capable of enjoying all the contents of life. For Levinas, we exist originally in the manner of the body. It is through the "body" that I am able to locate myself, to place myself. At the same time, an existent who has a body and is thus able to enjoy and suffer, is also an existent who is able to be affected by the pleasure and pain of the Other, and is thus an existent who is able to be happy for the pleasure of the Other, and to suffer for the suffering of the Other.

3. The Other Side of Sensibility: Suffering, the Good, and the Transcendent Other

As he does in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas devotes a great deal of attention to the category of sensibility in *Otherwise than Being*, and also develops "the phenomenology of the sensible". However, these two books focus on completely different aspects of sensibility. The sensibility discussed in *Totality and Infinity* is primarily concerned with a centripetal movement, the establishment of a self with immanence and identity, and the original position of an enjoyable subject in the world. The sensibility discussed in *Otherwise than Being* is primarily concerned with a centrifugal movement, the breaking down and reversal of the structure of "for oneself" of the ego, and the emergence of an ethical subject toward and for the Other. The function of sensibility in *Totality and Infinity* is "auto-affection" or being affected by oneself, while the function of sensibility in *Otherwise than Being* is "hetero-affection" or "being affected by the other" (Levinas 2011, pp. 84, 121). The basic mood of sensibility in *Totality and Infinity* is pleasure, contentment, related to happiness; the basic mood of sensibility in *Otherwise than Being* is pain, unease, unrelated to happiness,

but related to the Good. It seems that there are two different sides of sensibility in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*.[1] In my view, the clarification of these two sides of sensibility is the key to understanding the relationship between pleasure and the Good in Levinas's philosophy. As the discussion of pleasure is linked to the first side of sensibility, it is necessary to link the discussion of the Good to the second side of sensibility.

In our discussion of pleasure, we have pointed out that the relevant term of sensibility is the elemental other, as pure sensory qualities that nourish and delight the egoistic ego. The sensibility enjoys the element and also enjoys enjoying itself. In contrast, for the second side of sensibility, which is the focus of *Otherwise than Being*, the relevant term is no longer the elemental other, but the ethical Other who possesses the face. The revelation of the face is fundamentally distinct from the phenomenon of things in the external perception, and from the phenomenon of the element in its amorphous overflow. Nevertheless, in the perception of the other person, the other can be intentionally constituted as various graspable images. Generally speaking, the other can be experienced as the following three types of object: (1) as a physical object in the world, a natural body with a visible appearance; (2) as a psycho-physical unity, a body with an inner soul; (3) as a subject like me, experiencing the world as I do. These three dimensions of the other correspond precisely to Husserl's order of inquiry into how the experience of the other is possible in his book *Cartesian Meditations*. How is the other constituted as a body? How is the other constituted as a body-mind unity? How is the other constituted as another transcendental subject? (Husserl 1999, pp. 90–91). However, these dimensions in which the others are perceived remain subordinate to the intentional constitutive achievements of the ego. In Levinas's view, "Despite the extension which phenomenology gives the word intention, intentionality bears the trace of the voluntary and the teleological. Signification is signifying out of a lack, a certain negativity, an aspiration which aims emptily, like a hunger, but in a determinate way, at the presence which is to satisfy it. Whether it be an expectation for a representation or a listening for a message, the intuitive fulfillment is the accomplishing of a teleological intention" (Levinas 2011, p. 96). This passage clearly specifies the "voluntary" and "teleological" character of the phenomenological concept of intentionality. Consciousness is always consciousness of something and is always already involved in the constitution of the intended object through its intentional act. Intention seeks its own fulfillment, which is always already anticipated and constituted. As Husserl puts it, "This means that what affects us from the current passively pregiven background is not a completely empty something, some datum or other (we have no really exact word for it) as yet entirely without sense, a datum absolutely unfamiliar to us. On the contrary, unfamiliarity is at the same time always a mode of familiarity. What affects us is known in advance at least insofar as it is in general a something with determinations; we are conscious of it in the empty form of determinability, that is, it is equipped with an empty horizon of determinations ('certain,' or undetermined, unknown)" (Husserl 1973, pp. 37–38). For Husserl, any sensory stimulus that may be given is already anticipated and constituted in the subject's horizon of intentional correlation, and thus cannot be truly alien. In this sense, the correlation between thought and being discussed in the Western philosophical tradition is in fact a constitutive correlation. Husserl's question of how the perception of the other is possible also falls within the framework of the constitutive correlation between thought and being. Husserl thus fails to discover the absolute alterity of the Other that is revealed in the revelation of the face of the Other.

The true uniqueness of the revelation of the face of the Other lies in the fact that it expresses itself based on itself. The face is not just the appearance, the outline, the micro-expression of what is seen; the face is simultaneously a gaze and a call. It is in this sense that Levinas repeatedly uses "light" as a metaphor for the face. In front of the revelation of the face, I find that I am not only the emitter of an intentional act, but that I am also passively undergoing an intention from elsewhere. In other words, I am gazed at and called upon. In this sense, Merold Westphal points out that Levinas, together with Sartre, pioneered the idea of "inverted intentionality" in the phenomenological tradition, thus going beyond

the classical phenomenological analysis of the correlation or parallelism between noesis and noema. Both Levinas and Sartre attribute this inverted meaning-endowment to the phenomenon of the call and gaze of the Other, thus introducing into phenomenology a phenomenon of the inverted meaning-endowment that overflows the constitutive power of the transcendental subject (Westphal 2009).

It is the emergence of this "inverted intentionality" which places me in the position of being seen and summoned, that prevents the revelation of the face from being framed in any visible and petrified form. The face is not any ready-made being, but rather a happening and ongoing event, just like "an abyss" (Levinas 2011, p. 93). Endless gazes and calls constantly emerge from the abyss of the face. The attempt to fix the gaze and the call of the face into some visible form always misses the face, just as the concrete contents of speech grasped by the listener are always a translation of the original "saying" of the face and are always to be negated and transcended by the further expression of the face. In fact, our understanding of the gaze and the call of the Other is always already based on some kind of imagination, always based on the encoding of the chain of signifier. Thus, the revelation of the face has the unique character of duality or ambiguity. The face is both revealed and unrevealed, present and absent, visible and invisible. All that is revealed, present and visible is but a trace of the face itself. The ambiguity of the revelation of the face is "the ambiguity of a phenomenon and its defect" (Levinas 2011, p. 90), that is, the ambiguity between the meaning and the alternation of meaning and the ambiguity between the presence and absence. Nevertheless, the dimension of invisibility and absence is precisely fundamental. In fact, the face is never really present as it is, always having been missed. As Levinas says, "A face approached, a contact with a skin. . . are already absent from themselves, fallen into the past with an unrecuperable lapse. The skin caressed is not the protection of an organism, simply the surface of an entity; it is the divergency between the visible and the invisible" (Levinas 2011, p. 89). For Levinas, this "divergency" is an "absolute distance" (Levinas 1998, p. 149) which is insurmountable. It is in this sense that the proximity of the face is not a fulfillment of my intention, but always an overflow of my intention, independent of all conceptual constitution. In terms of the temporal structure, the revelation of the face cannot be absorbed into the self-integrated horizon of the Retention-Urimpression-Protention of the transcendental time-consciousness. As Levinas says, the face "can not be recuperated by reminiscence not because of its remoteness, but because of its incommensurability with the present. The present is essence that begins and ends, beginning and end assembled in a thematizable conjunction; it is the finite in correlation with a freedom" (Levinas 2011, p. 11). On the contrast, the face "is the refusal of conjunction, the non-totalizable, and in this sense, infinite" (Levinas 2011, p. 11). As a result, the face is thus infinite, transcendent, and absolutely Other.

However, for Levinas, the face as transcendence is not simply reflected in a negative way, such as the overflowing of the horizon of intentional correlation of the transcendental subject, and the rejection of all intentional constitutions and conceptualizations. It also has a positive aspect. Actually, the transcendence of the face is not only shown as an infinite distance, but also as a traversal of this infinite distance, that is, the provocation of an ethical subject that responds to the appeal of the face. This traversal of the "distance" between the self and the Other is possible because the gaze and the call of the face of the Other has an affective and transmissive power which can provoke an involuntary "response" from me. This is the true meaning of the so-called "inverted intentionality" of the revelation of the face of the Other. Because of the absolute otherness and transcendence of the face of the Other, my response to the heteronomous call of the face is a genuine hetero-affection. It is true that the other can be both objectified and enjoyed, that is, the other can be seen as both an object-phenomenon and an elemental phenomenon. Nevertheless, there is always an involuntary response behind the perception and enjoyment of the face, there is always the gaze and call of the face that provokes my response behind the object-phenomenon and the elemental phenomenon of the face. There is nothing in the world that can haunt me so much as the face of another person. For me, the face of the Other is an enigma, an

abyss of strangeness. When I am confronted with the face of another person, the following questions always come to mind: What is he thinking? What does he need? What does he desire? What is it that he is asking of me? But once I am thinking these questions, I am already provoked by the call and already responding. I am already exposing myself to the call and the gaze of the other's face. The Other don't even need to say anything, just a look at me and then my response is already evoked, already offered to the Other. It is true that I can choose to refuse to respond to the call of the face, to ignore the appeal, but this refusal and indifference already presupposes my being affected. This "being affected" precedes my consciousness and initiative, precedes my own self-affection and self-consciousness, and is always realized afterwards. As Levinas says, "the oneself cannot form itself; it is already formed with absolute passivity…This passivity is that of an attachment that has already been made, as something irreversibly past, prior to all memory and all recall. It was made in an irrecuperable time" (Levinas 2011, p. 104). In his commentary on Levinas, Weston has noted this "already" or "have been": "This summons, as always having taken place no matter what actual response I make, is without limit, infinite, and so summons me to infinite responsibility for the Other. Such a summons can only come from 'an absolutely heteronomous call,' one which commands me, and so comes from a height, and before which I am absolutely responsible, unable to be replaced by anyone else" (Weston 1994, p. 163). In terms of tense, "already" indicates that my response is actually in the perfect tense. I have already been affected by the Other, and have already been devoted to the Other. In other words, the response is actually an original event that occurs in the prehistory of the self, prior to all cognition and action. According to Levinas, this extreme passivity is more passive than the receptivity of Husserl's "empty horizon", and more passive than "the radical receptivity" that is mentioned by Heidegger in his discussion of Kantian transcendental imagination. For Husserl, any novelty to be received is already potentially anticipated and determined in the subject's preceding horizon. Thus, "Unfamiliarity is at the same time always a mode of familiarity" (Husserl 1973, p. 37). Similarly, "the radical receptivity" of "the transcendental imagination" "offers the subject an alcove of nothingness so as to precede the given and assume it" (Levinas 2011, p. 192). Conversely, in the hetero-affection of the sensibility, the subject is not prior, but posterior. The subject does not play the role of a receptive synthesis but is originally evoked and created by the call of the Other. "In responsibility for another, the fact that the 'me' [moi] is already a self [soi], obsessed by the neighbor, signifies this anachronistic election. The 'me' does not begin in the self-affection of a sovereign I, susceptible in a second moment to feeling compassion for the other; instead, it begins through the trauma without beginning, prior to every self-affection, of the upsurge of another. Here, the one is affected by the other. There is an inspiration of the one by the other that cannot be thought in terms of causality" (Levinas 2000, p. 178). Thus, the passivity of hetero-affection is more passive than all passivity which is still correlated with any kind of act.

It is in this correlative state of call-response that Levinas reveals the other side of sensibility: "vulnerability". As Levinas writes, "The subjectivity of a subject is vulnerability, exposure to affection, sensibility, a passivity more passive still than any passivity, an irrecuperable time, an unassemblable diachrony of patience, an exposedness always to be exposed the more, an exposure to expressing, and thus to saying, thus to giving" (Levinas 2011, p. 50). Obviously, the sensibility of facing another person's face has a completely different character to the sensibility of being bathed in the elements. When tasting a delicacy, one's body tingles with a thrill of sensual enjoyment and pleasure. As mentioned above, the self-affection of sensibility makes enjoyment enjoy the enjoyment itself—the self-reference of life. This self-affection of sensibility enables the subject to locate and condense itself in the pleasure of enjoyment, and thus to establish its own interiority. However, when confronted with the hetero-affection of the face of the Other, the sensitive trembling is no longer exciting, pleasurable, but restless, disturbed, unable to rest peacefully in itself. The call of the other's face evokes an exigency to which I am compelled to respond. This exigency is no longer based on one's own lack, but on a desire that is evoked and implanted

from the outside in. As Levinas puts it, "Such a response cannot be converted into an 'inward need' or a natural tendency. This response answers, but with no eroticism, to an absolutely heteronomous call" (Levinas 2011, p. 53). If the self-affection of the sensibility builds up a self-condensed inner self, then the hetero-affection of the sensibility exposes the self to the call of the Other, to the striking and stirring of the abyss of otherness, to a totally centrifugal movement toward and for the Other.

This response and exposure to the call of the other's face manifests itself in the fact that I cannot be indifferent to the suffering, hunger and appeal of the Other. For Levinas, the response to the Other "has meaning only as a 'taking care of the other's need,' of his misfortunes and his faults, that is, as a giving" (Levinas 2011, p. 74). That means "to give, to-be-for-another, despite oneself, but in interrupting the for-oneself, is to take the bread out of one's own mouth, to nourish the hunger of another with one's own fasting" (Levinas 2011, p. 56). Toward another is no longer an intentional constitution, but precisely "for another": "toward another culminates in a for another, a suffering for his suffering" (Levinas 2011, p. 18). Obviously, the supposed vulnerability of sensibility is expressed in the uneasiness and suffering for the Other. In front of the appeal of the other's face, the complacency within oneself that the enjoying subject possesses will be interrupted, and the immanence of the self achieved by the self-reference of enjoyment will be broke up. Levinas uses a wonderful metaphor to describe this uneasiness: "the thorn in the flesh of reason" (Levinas 2011, p. 84). In this sense, the call of the Other is an original violence for my egoism. "For pain comes to interrupt an enjoyment in its very isolation, and thus tears me from myself" (Levinas 2011, p. 55). However, as Ruud Welten points out, beyond the total violence that destroys the identity of each individual, there is also the traumatic violence that is constitutive of human subjectivity. The latter is "one that forms the very notion of humanity itself" (Welten 2020, p. 355). We know that Levinas understands the word "being" (esse) in the verbal sense: to be means to constantly maintain and strengthen one's own existence, to possess, to seize, to assimilate. To be is a will to be. The strive for his own existence constitutes the natural tendency and the essential prescription of one's being, which is called "conatus" by Spinoza. Thus, the human subject is at first a subject "in itself and for itself" (Levinas 2011, p. 57). The subject of enjoyment is essentially a subject for itself, since enjoyment constitutes "the very egoism of life" (Levinas 2007, p. 112). The involuntary response to the call of the Other shakes the spontaneous tendency to strive for one's own existence and interrupts the very egoism of life. Nevertheless, this interruption is not a dissolution or alienation of the subject, but rather a triggering and opening of the original dimension of "being-for-the-other" outside the egoism of the ego. As a result, the subject becomes a subject that is "through the other and for the other" (Levinas 2011, p. 114). The responsive subject called upon by the appeal of the Other is what Levinas calls the "ethical subject", and the uneasiness, suffering and gratuitous giving of the responsive subject is what Levinas calls "the Good". As already mentioned, the response to the call of the Other is an original event that has always already happened in the prehistory of the subject, which is involuntary and extremely passive. Similarly, the emergence of the Good is involuntary, radically passive, and prior to my will, choice, and action. As Levinas says, "This is also not to conceive of it as a decision of the will, an act of consciousness beginning in the present of a choice, having an origin in consciousness. . . Goodness in the subject is anarchy itself. As a responsibility for the freedom of the other, it is prior to any freedom in me, but it also precedes violence in me, which would be the contrary of freedom. . . The plot of goodness and of the Good, outside of consciousness, outside of essence, is the exceptional plot of substitution. . . The I approached in responsibility is for-the-other, is a denuding, an exposure to being affected, a pure susceptiveness" (Levinas 2011, p. 138).

For Aristotle, the Good is related to the purposeful activity of the inherent faculty of life. However, for Levinas, the Good is not some appropriate activity of the inherent faculty of human nature, but is an absolutely passive product, which is awakened by the Other and implanted from the outside in. The emergence of the Good is precisely painful and traumatic for the ego. Such a suffering does not stem from one's own lack, but is

evoked by the hunger, suffering and death of the Other. Jolanta Saldukaitytė defines the character of Levinasian ethics as "ethical materialism" (Saldukaitytė 2021). For Saldukaitytė, Levinas's ethics is highly embodied and material. I agree with her. It should be noted that, materialism cannot be directly equated with the recognition of the primacy of the neutral in the context of Levinas. For Levinas, the ethical relation is both material and personal rather than neutral and anonymous. On the one hand, the Good is based on the hetero-affection of sensitivity, manifesting itself in physical uneasiness and suffering which is for the Other. On the other hand, the involuntary and gratuitous response to the call of the Other "has meaning only as a 'taking care of the other's need,' of his misfortunes and his faults, that is, as a giving" (Levinas 2011, p. 74). Through the discovery of the original dimension of "being-for-the-other", Levinas opens up the dimension of transcendence and otherness within the interiority of the ego, implanting transcendence and otherness into the innermost depths of the subject. Thus, there is an irreducible otherness in the subject, beyond the identical kernel constructed by the movements of enjoyment, labor, economy, and representation. This is what Levinas calls "the other in the same" (Levinas 2011, p. 25).

4. The Tensional Connection between Pleasure and the Good

At the beginning of the sixth chapter of his representative work, *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas quotes a line from Goethe's *Faust*, spoken through the mouth of Faust: "But I don't seek my happiness in numbness; Shudder is the best part of humanity" (Doch im Erstarren such' ich nicht mein Heil; Das Schaudern ist der Menschheit bestes Teil) (Levinas 2011, p. 175). There are two key words in this sentence: happiness and shudder. In the context of Levinas's thought, the search for happiness is concerned with a subject of enjoyment that is complacent in itself and condensed in itself, while shudder is concerned with the ethical subject that is in the suffering and disquietude for the appeal of the Other. The focus of Faust's statement falls on the shudder as the best part of humanity, and likewise, for Levinas, the emergence of the Good is what really constitutes one's humanity. However, we also need to note that Faust's statement actually also places the human subject in a tensional relationship between happiness and shudder, between pleasure and goodness.[2] The discussion of human nature cannot ignore the concern for happiness, and the discussion of goodness cannot ignore the tension between pleasure and the Good. In fact, through the previous analysis of the two sides of sensibility, it can be found that the emergence of the subject actually has two different motivations, namely the self-affection and hetero-affection of sensibility. The former establishes the enjoying subject, which condense itself and rotates inward, while the latter establishes the ethical subject, which renounces itself and rotates outward. These two dimensions of the subject are irreducible to each other. Thus, these two sides of sensibility put the subject in an irreducible tension, that is, the tension between pleasure motivation and ethical motivation, or egoism and ethics.

There are two opposing views on the relationship between pleasure and the Good in Levinas's philosophy. Adriaan Peperzak regards the instinctive search for the enjoyment as the "self-centered hedonism" and an excessive "addiction", while the encounter with the face of the Other opens up a new dimension which is "no longer hedonistic" (Peperzak 2009, p. 59). As Peperzak says, "Openness to a new, no longer hedonistic, dimension of human existence presupposes that my participation in the economy of pleasures and pains be shattered by the revelation of a new meaning, that is, a hitherto unobserved but more meaningful mode of existence that urges me to adopt another attitude. This revelation draws me out of a merely 'economic' way of life and converts me—in my homely complacency in the world—to a more demanding existence" (Peperzak 2009, p. 59). Joachim Duyndam rejects Peperzak's view of Levinasian enjoyment as an excessive addiction in pleasure and the opposite of ethics. Unlike Peperzak, Duyndam argues that enjoyment allows the subject to separate from the anonymous existence and become a separated, inner and independent ego, which is necessary for encountering the Other. As Duyndam says, "enjoyment does not so much conflict with the other's appeal to me; it is the very condition of my openness to the appeal" (Duyndam 2009, p. 67). In other words, "Enjoyment in

Totality and Infinity therefore prefigures sensibility in *Otherwise than Being*" (Duyndam 2009, p. 67). In short, Peperzak regards ethics as an interruption and crushing of enjoyment, whereas Duyndam regards enjoyment as a necessary condition for ethics. In my opinion, the two researchers have respectively revealed one aspect of the association between the enjoying subject and the ethical subject, or between pleasure and the Good, while the two aspects are in fact coexistent and irreducible to each other.

In *Time and the Other*, Levinas already pointed out that, "the morality of 'earthly nourishments' is the first morality. . . It is not the last, but one must pass through it" (Levinas 1987, p. 64). The "earthly nourishments" is the name of a novel which is borrowed by Levinas from André Gide. In contrast to the metaphysical tradition, Levinas places particular emphasis on the fundamental position of the material dimension of the existence of life. For Levinas, the ethical subject capable of responding to the Other is first and foremost a corporeal being dependent on food and at the same time immersed in enjoyment. In this context, "the morality of 'earthly nourishments' is the first morality" has a double connotation. Firstly, the pleasurable enjoyment of the "earthly nourishments" allows the subject to escape from the anonymous existence. As Simon Critchley says, "From the beginning of his work to the end, Levinas' problem is that of escape" (Critchley 2015, p. 134). To "escape" means to escape from the impersonal and anonymous existence. For that, the emergence of selfhood and the intrusion of otherness are necessary. The acquisition of "selfhood" is linked to the pleasurable enjoyment of the elements, and the intrusion of "otherness" is linked to the call of the face of the Other. Since Levinas defines the Good as "a de-neutralization of being" (*une dé-neutralization de l'être*) (Levinas 2004, p. 12), the internalization and individualization of the self through enjoyment is clearly a necessary part of the achievement of the Good. Secondly, although the true humanity, the last morality, lies in the shudder for the Other, the emergence of the Good must be conditioned by the emergence of the enjoying subject. If there isn't enjoyment that makes my existence worth desiring, then there isn't weight in giving up the pleasure of my life for the sake of the Other. If there isn't enjoyment that makes an inner ego be possible, then there can be no response and gift to the Other. As Levinas underlines, "Enjoyment in its ability to be complacent in itself, exempt from dialectical tensions, is the condition of the for-the-other involved in sensibility, and in its vulnerability as an exposure to the other" (Levinas 2011, pp. 73–74). In this sense, pleasure and enjoyment not only cannot be placed in mere opposition to goodness and ethics, but even constitute a necessary component of the path to goodness and ethics.

However, although enjoyment is a necessary condition for ethics, pleasure cannot be equated with the Good, nor is pleasure an emotion that directly accompanies the Good. On the contrary, the emotion that directly accompanies the Good is pain. For Levinas, the self-affection of enjoyment leads to "the movement of interiorization" (Levinas 2007, p. 149) which can allow the subject to be separated from the anonymous existence. On the contrary, the hetero-affection in the ethical relation leads to "the movement of transcendence" (Levinas 2007, p. 149) which can allow the subject to be seized by the gaze of the Other and to be pulled out of one's own inner castle. On the one hand, "the movement of interiorization" and "the movement of transcendence" are not opposed to each other on the same plane. As Levinas puts it, "just as the interiority of enjoyment is not deducible from the transcendental relation, the transcendental relation is not deducible from the separated being as a dialectical antithesis" (Levinas 2007, p. 148). On the other hand, the movement of transcendence does constitute an invasion and interruption for the movement of interiorization. Tanja Staehler and Alexander Kozin point out that the interruption of my egoistic enjoyment takes two forms: the first interruption comes from the uncertainty and unavailability of the elements, and the second interruption is the ethical interruption, coming from the call and appeal of the Other (Staehler and Kozin 2021, p. 142). Unlike the subject of enjoyment who is complacent in itself, the ethical subject is a traumatic subject, imposed with endless responsibilities, unable to rest in its own inner life any longer, and thus deprived of the natural right of self-preservation. As

Levinas says, "Ethics is, therefore, against nature because it forbids the murderousness of my natural will to put my own existence first" (Cohen 1986, p. 24). However, the intrusion of ethics into enjoyment, or the interruption of goodness into pleasure, does not mean that the dimension of "for oneself" is abolished in the subject. Rather, the intrusion of ethics into enjoyment means that a new dimension of "being-for-the-other" is implanted into the subject, in addition to the natural dimension of "for oneself". The intersection of these two dimensions constitutes an insurmountable and irreducible tension within subjectivity. Accordingly, we can talk about the asymmetry of pleasure and pain in two different senses. At the level of the movement of interiorization of the enjoying subject, pleasure is directly related to the establishment of the inner identity of the self, while pain is a deprivation of pleasure and thus subordinate to pleasure. In the context of the irreducible tension between the movement of interiorization and the movement of transcendence within subjectivity, pleasure is on the side of the movement of interiorization, and pain is on the side of the movement of transcendence. Just as the movement of internalization and the movement of transcendence are not opposing and symmetrical movements at the same level, pleasure and pain are not two opposing terms at the same level. Just as the movement of interiorization and the movement of transcendence are irreducible to each other, pleasure and pain are irreducible to each other.

Moreover, when examining the relationship between pleasure and the Good in Levinas's philosophy, there is another point that needs to be drawn out. Goodness and ethics originate in an involuntary and gratuitous response to the call of the Other, and the response is highly material, taking the form of giving hands. In other words, although goodness begins before the will and intention of the subject, we can still say that the specific ethical response to the Other is the will to relieve the suffering of the Other, to satisfy the needs of the Other. For Levinas, goodness means the interruption of one's own pleasure, but which is precisely for the sake of the relief of the other's suffering and the realization of the other's pleasure. In fact, the simplest expression of "substitution"—the key concept of *Otherwise than Being*—is to suffer for the Other, to substitute my suffering for the suffering of the Other. It is in this sense that Levinas defines the basic disposition of the ethical subject as "disinterestedness" (Levinas 2011, p. 50), that is, the renunciation of the spontaneous tendency to strive for one's own being. As Levinas says, "There is a Jewish proverb which says that 'the other's material needs are my spiritual needs'; it is this disproportion, or asymmetry, that characterizes the ethical refusal: of the first truth of ontology—the struggle to be" (Cohen 1986, p. 24). It can be seen that in Levinas's context, the needs and pleasures of the Other take ethical priority over my needs and pleasures. Goodness is reflected in the gratuitous orientation towards the needs and pleasures of the Other, regardless of one's own needs and pleasures. It is also worth noting that when the needs of the Other are expressed through the face of the Other, what I encounter is no longer just the needs of the Other, but the desires of the Other. D. Legrand points out that a need is a demand for something, which is transitive, having a definite object and can be satisfied, whereas a desire is a demand for someone, which is intransitive, having no definite object and cannot be satisfied. When encountering the demand of the Other, the phenomenological reduction has to be carried out precisely by reducing the other's transitive demand (the need for something) to the intransitive demand (the appeal to me—desire). Nevertheless, the response to the other's intransitive demands must in turn fall back on the concrete response to the other's transitive demands, that is, the material and actual needs of the Other (Legrand 2018, pp. 54–56).

5. Levinas's Dialogue with the History of Western Ethics

5.1. A Dialogue with Hedonism

Philosophers such as Democritus, Epicurus, Bentham, and Mill are all associated with hedonism, but there are significant differences in their specific views of pleasure. Nevertheless, the common claim of these philosophers is that there is a direct, affirmative connection between pleasure and the Good. Unlike hedonism, Levinas argues that not only

that there is not direct and affirmative correlation between pleasure and the Good, but that the Good emerges precisely as an interruption to enjoyment. Nevertheless, Levinas still affirms the positive meaning of hedonism. For Levinas, "the permanent truth of hedonist moralities" lies precisely in that: "to not seek, behind the satisfaction of need, an order relative to which alone satisfaction would acquire a value; to take satisfaction, which is the very meaning of pleasure, as a term" (Levinas 2007, p. 134). This means that the satisfaction of need does not need to be placed in a larger teleological order in order to define the meaning and value of that satisfaction. Plato subordinates pleasure to the grand order of the recovery of the natural balance of life, ignoring the self-sufficiency of enjoyment itself. This is precisely wherein Levinas's criticism of Plato lies. For Levinas, the complacency and self-sufficiency of enjoyment does not point to some kind of final end, but rather occurs in each moment of enjoyment. Each moment of enjoyment is an end for the enjoyment itself. As Levinas says, "sensibility is enjoyment; it is satisfied with the given, it is contented. . . It finds itself immediately at the term; it concludes, it finishes without referring to the infinite" (Levinas 2007, p. 136).

5.2. A Dialogue with Virtue Ethics

Levinas's discussion of pleasure was inspired by the discussion of pleasure in *The Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle. For Aristotle, the representative figure of virtue ethics, pleasure is actually a concomitant phenomenon of activity, but pleasure is not an activity in itself. As Aristotle says, "for to each activity there is a proper pleasure" (Aristotle 2009, p. 191). We can see that Levinas's view on the relationship between enjoyment (or "living from. . . ") and activity is similar to Aristotle's. On the one hand, Levinas points out that, "'living from. . . ' also does not fit into the categories of activity and potency, determinative for Aristotelian ontology" (Levinas 2007, p. 112). Which means that enjoyment is not a kind of activity. On the other hand, he argues that "Action itself, which unfolds on the plane of being, enters into our happiness. We live from acts—and from the very act of being, just as we live from ideas and sentiments" (Levinas 2007, p. 113). Which means that the activity will be accompanied by enjoyment and pleasure.

However, Levinas differs remarkably from Aristotle on the question of the relationship between pleasure and the Good. This is mainly due to the fact that Levinas's understanding of the Good is very different from Aristotle's. Aristotle's virtue ethics relates the concept of "good" to the concept of "end". The human good consists in the full realization of the ends to which human nature is directed. While refuting that pleasure is the chief good, Aristotle acknowledges that pleasure can be some good. On the one hand, the goodness or badness of pleasure depends on the goodness or badness of the activity: "the pleasure proper to a worthy activity is good and that proper to an unworthy activity bad" (Aristotle 2009, p. 191). On the other hand, as a concomitant phenomenon of the activity, pleasure makes the activity more desirable. In this sense, although pleasure is not the chief good, it can be a concomitant element of the chief good, and therefore can be some good. Clearly, in the context of Levinas's thought, the worthy activity of the essential faculty of human beings is highly egoistic. For Aristotle, the Good is the ultimate object of desire. Conversely, for Levinas, the Good derives from the call of the transcendent Other, manifesting itself as an involuntary response to the other's appeal, which is an interruption of the egoism of the ego. The Good is not accompanied by pleasure, but by pain and uneasiness. As Critchley has pointed out that, "Levinas makes the extreme claim that my relation to the other is not some benign benevolence, compassionate care, or respect for the other's autonomy, but is the obsessive experience of a responsibility that persecutes me with its sheer weight. I am the other's hostage, taken by them and prepared to substitute myself for any suffering and humiliation that they may undergo" (Critchley 2008, pp. 60–61). In this case, the Good is not an object of desire, but an obligatory and inescapable requirement.

5.3. A Dialogue with Asceticism

Levinas's understanding of the relationship between pleasure and the Good is also different from asceticism. Asceticism understands the Good as conscious self-restraint and self-abnegation. The ascetic tries to refine and sharpen his will by abstaining from the temptation of desire and avoiding indulging in pleasure. As Foucault has already pointed out, "Our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject" (Foucault 1988, p. 22). However, the rejection of the self is precisely for the purpose of reinforcing, purifying, and rebuilding the self. The presupposition of asceticism lies in that, "The stronger the self, the better the subject can stand firm against the things it wants to keep free from" (Duyndam 2009, p. 76). Asceticism opposes pleasure to the Good and establishes a direct, affirmative link between the Good and suffering. This seems similar to Levinas's view. However, for Levinas, firstly, pleasure actually constitutes a necessary condition for the Good. Pleasure is a necessary component of the path to the Good, rather than something that must be rejected. Secondly, the genesis of the Good is absolutely passive. Goodness does not come from the active self-discipline that the will imposes on the will itself. Finally, while the Good in asceticism points to the purification and reinforcement of the self, the Levinasian good points to the extremely passive and unconditional response to the call of the Other, and has nothing to do with the egoistic purification and reinforcement of the self.

5.4. A Dialogue with Deontology

On the question of the relationship between pleasure and the Good, Kant's deontology represents a paradigm that is very different from Aristotle's virtue ethics. For Kant, the only concern of ethics is with the obligations imposed by the moral law. However, as a rational but finite being, man is also influenced by the principle of self-love in addition to the moral law. Thus, to judge whether an act is good depends on whether the will prioritizes the moral law over the principle of self-love, or whether the will prioritizes ethical motives over sensible motives (Kant 1998, pp. 58–59).

Similar to Kant, Levinas places the subject in an intertwined relationship between ethical motives and sensible motives. As Lingis points out that, "we find Levinas's texts taking on some of the pathos of the Kantian moral philosophy, for which the inclination to obey the moral imperative is always received as a humiliation and a pain by the sensuous nature of man" (Lingis 2018, p. 23). However, there are still essential differences between Levinas and Kant.

Firstly, for Kant, pleasure is related to sensibility and the principle of self-love, while the Good is related to reason, to the universal law that reason prescribes for itself. According to Chalier, the doctrine of happiness "is founded on empirical principles", and the moral doctrine, "relies exclusively on a formal universal law" (Chalier 2002, p. 135). For Levinas, pleasure and goodness are both essentially related to sensibility, except that pleasure is concerned with the self-affection of sensibility, and the Good is concerned with the hetero-affection of sensibility. The Kantian moral imperative is highly formal, and the Levinasian moral imperative is highly material.

Secondly, for Kant, the Good is concerned with the autonomy of the will and is therefore an active act imposed by the will upon itself. For Levinas, the Good occurs in the prehistory of the subject, as an absolute passivity intruded from the outside in, rather than as an action initiated and originated by the subject itself. According to Ferreira, Levinas's ethics is descriptive and indicative, rather than imperative (Ferreira 2006, p. 482). For Levinas, the subject is already in the midst of an involuntary response to the Other.

Thirdly, by distinguishing between the principle of self-love and the moral law, Kant places pleasure and the Good in opposition to each other. For Levinas, on the contrary, pleasure is a necessary condition for the Good. It is through the self-affection of pleasure that one forms his or her inner life and finds one's own existence to be desirable. Furthermore, it is because pleasure is so fundamental to me that giving up one's own enjoyment and

responding to appeal of the Other regardless of one's own suffering can be regarded as the emergence of true humanity.

Finally, both Kant and Levinas talk about the endless movement towards the Good. For Kant, the moral imperative cannot be fully reached, but can only be infinitely approached in a temporal process. Every rational but finite being cannot completely exclude the influence of the principle of self-love and act in complete conformity with the moral law. As Kant underlines, "To be happy is necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being and therefore an unavoidable determining ground of its faculty of desire" (Kant 2015, p. 21). In order to ensure that the realization of the Good is ultimately possible, Kant postulates "the immortality of the soul" (Kant 2015, p. 98) and "the existence of God" (Kant 2015, p. 100), and at the same time holds that those who follow the moral law "are worthy of happiness" (Kant 2015, p. 104). For Levinas, the endless obligation to the Other comes from the enigmatic abyss and infinite depth of the face of the Other, from the extreme asymmetry between the self and the Other. The call of the Other constantly provokes new responses, and each response is not sufficient for the appeal of the Other. As a result, there is no end to which the response can arrive. As Levinas puts it, "the more I answer the more I am responsible; the more I approach the neighbor with which I am encharged the further away I am. This debit which increases is infinity as an infinition of the infinite" (Levinas 2011, p. 93). Clearly, for Levinas, the movement towards the Good is an endless journey provoked by the call of the face of the Other, with no end to reach, and thus there is not the coincidence of virtue and happiness. For the enjoying subject, the Good always means an inextinguishable trauma within the subject, an endless suffering and restlessness for the Other.

Through the preliminary comparisons with hedonism, virtue ethics, asceticism, and deontology, we can conclude that Levinas offers a new paradigm for understanding the relationship between pleasure and the Good in the history of Western ethics.

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Notes

1 Tanja Staehler and Alexander Kozin remind us that although the book *Totality and Infinity* focuses on the discussion of enjoyment and the book *Otherwise than Being* focuses on the discussion of suffering, it is important to note that these two dimensions of sensibility actually appear in both books (Staehler and Kozin 2021, p. 137).

2 This reminds us of Mencius' assertion of human nature: "That wherein human beings differ from the birds and beasts is but slight" (Mencius 2009, p. 89). This statement also speaks of the tension within human existence. On the one hand, the difference between human beings and animals is very slight, that is to say, the animal's nature of seeking benefits and avoiding harm constitutes an important and even primary part of the human existence; on the other hand, it is not the animal's nature that really makes one human, but the very slight part that distinguishes human beings from animals. The very slight part is named "four sprouts" [*siduan* 四端] by Mencius. "The mind's feeling of pity and compassion is the sprout of humaneness [*ren* 仁]; the mind's feeling of shame and aversion is the sprout of rightness [*yi* 義]; the mind's feeling of modesty and compliance is the sprout of propriety [*li* 禮]; and the mind's sense of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom [*zhi* 智]" (Mencius 2009, p. 35) As Mencius emphasizes, it is these four sprouts that make one human, but we also need to be aware that the human existence is actually posited in the tension between the animal's nature and the four sprouts.

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