The Necessary Good and the Genuine Evil

Goran Vranešević

There are two common ways to approach and examine the idea of the good, which follows from the fact that this idea seems so clear and self-evident that people can unconsciously orient themselves according to it. The idea exhibits the universal characteristics of a moral compass that motivates subjects to conduct themselves according to their desire for the good. But although it is a vital existential category, since it acts as the condition of the possibility of existence, there is also an eternal issue attached to it. The capacity to act according to good manners, to do something in good faith, to have good reasons, all depend on being able to demonstrate what is good. The manner in which philosophers deal with this idea can be either to take it as the foundation of ethical life and examine its fundaments to their core, or, to make use of its shadowy other side in the form of evil as a reference point to conceptually ground a broader horizon of possible ways of leading our lives and considering our choices and regrets. The decision to relate a concept to its other can have undesirable consequences, at worst overwhelming the concept under discussion, or at best confronting us with an impasse in such a concept that orients us to its truth. What can be said of the good also depends on how one defines the good.

Perhaps the reference to the idea of the good merely tells us something about the general state of things, but the insight into the underbelly of the good in itself is only possible through a reflection of its conceptual other, conjoined idea of the evil. But far from being an obstacle to understanding the essence of

an idea, this is actually its added value, for it reveals the internal tensions and contradictions inherent in what should be the purest form of actualization.

To define good things thus does not make them exclusively good as there are other properties belonging to it that are often of interest to philosophers; however, once a thing is characterized as good, it becomes antithetical to evil. If taken dogmatically, the pure opposition between good and evil produces innumerable contradictions. Let us take the most convenient example that appears in religious discourse, namely the problem arising from the omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence associated with God's being. It quickly becomes clear that either God is flawed, his status as a pure being put into question, or, a more commonly used logic, a concession must be made regarding the relationship to evil, and thus the logic structuring good becomes internally coupled with evil. However, even a small dose of evil contaminates the purity of the good, but also opens up the possibility that evil simply does not exist.

Such a skeptical approach would mean compromising the traditional premise of religion. A logical programme for the abolition of religion may carry little practical weight, since love and worship of God is a reciprocal relationship in which the choice to abdicate his power is more or less a path presented to believers and not really their own will. In this way, the question of the good becomes self-perpetuating, since the reasons for the good are embedded in the idea of the good, which is God himself. In this sense, the good is not only a matter of judgement, namely the most appropriate conception of the good in relation to the effects it produces, but also a matter of the necessity of belief, so as to ensure any possibility of goodness as such. The theological route, though absolutely productive in itself, leaves the question regarding the status of the good wide open, because with each answer it necessarily produces new contradictions and difficulties, which are the most fertile ground for philosophical inquiry.

The idea of the good has been a focus of philosophers since the dawn of thought. Since Plato, the good has been imbued with a greater value than that of a mere ethical measure, with moral virtue being only its particular instance. Being "greater than justice and the other virtues" (Rep. 504d), the idea can be regarded as an absolute principle, but also as an end and cause, the good is "a surmise and only God knows if it be true" (Rep. 517b). Thus, the good includes everything within itself and there is no external reference to it beyond itself.

In its most basic definition, which is still commonly used in religious, philosophical, political, and other discourses, the good, according to Plato, is that

which is desired, self-sufficient, and complete (Phil. 60c-61a). This is true for all rational beings, that is, all created beings. And this desire for the good becomes an impetus for actions that are regarded as good and thus present a universal character. The good is therefore not a particular want for individual satisfaction, but rather the "norm for Being" (Demos 1937, 249) or even the "source of all being" (Rep. 509d). To be good, then, is to be determined by oneself, to create one's own destiny, one's own formal conditions, and to strive for perfection. This formal aspect also unites opposite determinations, reconciling diversity and contrast within the community (e.g. the most prudent sovereign is good because he is capable of reconciling all his subjects). Most importantly, the good is expressed as a general principle of appropriateness tied to a specific nature (e.g. the virtue of a guillotine is beheading), and as such it is the end of all human action (Rep. 505e). Hence Aristotle's objection that Plato's good is essentially nothing, since it is both the most general and the most particular (EN I 6). Upon these assumptions regarding the status of the good, which seem to disregard actual experience, Plato builds his whole philosophical system. We must remember, however, that there is a gap between actual action and the good life, which must be bridged by the individual's "struggle with one's self, even a sacrifice of one's life" (Gorg. 513d). But while we seek the good through reason and preserve it through discourse, the insight into the good is beyond our knowledge, because it functions as form, and can only be obtained through revelation (it is *epekeina tes ousias*).

It is well known that this transcendence of the good was the main object of Aristotle's criticism, since the transcendence of the good "precludes thinking of it as an idea" (Gadamer 1986, 124). This observation is related to Aristotle's general criticism of Plato's use of ideas, which operate as empty abstractions,[1] but in doing so, he overlooks that the existence of the good is only an appearance of the structural order of the idea of the good. But in Aristotle's reading, such an idea of the good is of no use at all in regards to the good life (EE 1217b23). For him, the good is rather embedded in the maxim that every man should strive for a single end:

> Everyone who has the power to live according to his own choice (προαίρεσις) should dwell on these points and set up for himself some object for the good life to aim at, whether honour or reputation or wealth or culture, by reference to which he will do all that he does, since not to have one's life organised in view of some end is a sign of great folly. Now

1 "We say first, then, that to say there is an idea not only of the good, but of anything else whatever, is to say something abstract and empty" (EE 1217b20).

> above all we must first define to ourselves without hurry or carelessness in which of our possessions the good life consists, and what for men are the conditions of its attainment. (EE 1214b 6-14)

This life is not a life of self-sufficiency for a man by himself, but "an active life of the element that has a rational principle" (EN 1098a 3-4), a life in accordance with virtue, a life for his friends and fellow citizens. Such a life is not imposed on the citizens from the outside as all men have the power and the duty to reflect on their own abilities and desires and to conceive and choose for themselves a satisfactory way of life that is truly good. Both Plato (Rep. 491e) and Aristotle (Pol. 1.2,1252a33-5) presuppose that the striving for the good is more suited to some people than others, but that these natural inclinations towards goodness by themselves also contain the greatest potential for evil. This inclination is linked to the error that even the most well-intentioned deed can be based on desires that go against natural needs.

The good, the highest good, has since been apparently equated with virtuous action, and most philosophical systems are based on it.

> The association of the idea of the good with the idea of a functional system goes back at least to Plato (e.g. Rep. I 352d-354b) and Aristotle (EN I 7). To say that something is a good X, they believed, is to say that it has the properties that enable it to perform its function well. (Korsgaard 2015, 145)

Despite a common reading that sees Kant's ethical stance as diametrically opposed to that of Aristotle's (and Plato's and essentially the entire Greek tradition's), there are clear influences present, especially with regard to the highest good, which in the hands of both Aristotle and Kant is a cause of good and the object of hope, since it thus functions as "the condition of the goodness of other goods" (Aufderheide and Bader 2015, 3). Nevertheless, Kant has acquired a privileged place in philosophy, most notably through his ethical theory, which was so far-reaching in its influence that it was referred to as the Copernican revolution in thought. He does indeed, true to tradition, make the good a central concept, but in a way that inverts the relationship between the idea of the good and the moral law, which thus becomes the fundamental principle. The moral ground is therefore not based on pure moral examples, since moral laws cannot be derived from experience, but on a priori principles of morality, even if there is not a single actual case in the world to substantiate them. After all, until Kant, it was considered standard reading that ethical inquiry should begin with the definition of the good, from which the moral law and the concept of obligation should be derived: "all the confusions of philosophers concerning the supreme principle of morals. For

they sought an object of the will in order to make it into the material and the foundation of a law; […] instead they should have looked for a law which directly determined the will a priori and only then sought the object suitable to it" (KpV, AA 5, 64).

Furthermore, Kant's uncompromising ethical stance is that every imputable act and morally responsible agent must be characterized as either good or evil. However, these rigid formal requirements soon came under pressure. Critiques emerged as early as Kant's time, for instance, Pistorius, who, in his review of Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, asked a naïve question: What is good anyway? (*Was ist überhaupt gut?*) Without having a clear idea of whether a will is good, we cannot know what good actually is and this question will remain open.

> In this regard I wish the author had liked to discuss first of all the general concept of what is good, and to determine more precisely what he understands by it; because obviously, we would first have to agree on this before we can make out anything concerning the absolute value of a good will. Therefore, I am entitled to ask first: What is good anyway, and what is a good will in particular? Is it possible to conceive of a will that is good in itself and regarded without relation to any object? If one says: good is that which is generally approved and valued, then I am permitted to ask further why it is approved and valued, does that happen rightly (*mit Recht*) and with reason (*mit Grunde*) or not? General unanimous approval, if this would occur or be possible on anything, would never be able to count as the ultimate decisive reason for a philosophical researcher. (Pistorius 1786, 449)

If laws' existence were sufficient for claiming their moral high ground, then even the most perverse laws could be seen to have some good in them. The only thing that can prevent such arbitrariness in formal morality, according to Pistorius, is a material trace of the good that would ground actions in actual criteria. As is well known, Kant did not seek to provide people with gratification and satisfaction through morality, since an act is good only as a sufficient reason for acting in a certain way. The paradigmatic example given by Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is surgery, which produces no pleasure other than the good of its success. Kant's moral standards are therefore of a different nature. This is precisely why the ethical imperative does not require a how and why justification, because the principle of morality is a formal a priori principle of pure practical reason itself. Only once the principles are determined can we introduce the good, but as that which "we have reason to do" (Kleingeld 2016, 37).

In spite of the categorical demand of reason to follow our duty, a willing subject must freely will the good as its object, and, more importantly, it becomes clear that behind rational activity there may lie "evil reason and hence [is] all the more dangerous" (AA 6, 57). The misfortune it brings is not in the form of certain undesirable practices, but the subordination of our actions to what pleases us. All human beings without exception have a radical, innate, and inextirpable propensity to place the rationally inferior incentives of inclination or self-love ahead of the rationally supreme incentive of morality.[2] In its most drastic form, it appears as the radical evil that Kant introduces in *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793), where he seems to seek to mitigate the radical discomfort of the first part of the book by introducing the idea of the good in the second. It is a completely undefinable conception of evil, with little in common with the Enlightenment or religious traditions, for which he was criticized soon after the book's publication for explaining nothing and leaving even more questions unanswered.[3] The radicality of such evil lies not in its perverse nature or in the intensity of its violations of law, but in the fact that it constitutes itself as law and thus interferes with God's affairs. While evil seems to emerge as a sharp contrast to man's free being, which Kant takes as the starting point of the theory of the ethical subject, radical evil is precisely the free act of choosing evil: the possibility of freely choosing one's own unfreedom. At the heart of malice is the act by which "an ethical act is already here, 'realised' – yet always only in a perverted, 'perverse' form" (Zupančič 2000, 86).[4] An even greater scandal is the emancipation of evil from its pairing with good, since the decision to embrace evil is removed from our particular choices, since it operates on a transcendental level. The motive for choosing such an odious possibility remains unresolved. Thus, while the paradigm of transcending the relationship between good and evil has become a permanent feature of contemporary consciousness, the more relevant issue at hand has always been what makes them a fitting pair of radical positions. Without going into detail at this point, the highest of goods and the most radical of evils are nonetheless both expressions of the principle of reason.

2 "Genuine evil consists in our will not to resist the inclinations when they invite transgression" (ibid.).

3 See, for example, Bernstein (2002), and Michalson, Jr. (1990).

4 "It can also be called the perversity (*perversitas*) of the human heart, for it reverses the ethical order as regards the incentives of a free power of choice; and although with this reversal there can still be legally good (legale)actions, yet the mind's attitude is thereby corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), and hence the human being is designated as evil" (AA 6 / RGV, 6:31, 54).

Just to recapitulate. For Kant, morality is namely a special duty that obliges finite rational beings to act morally simply because they are rational. His idea of autonomy, his insistence that the good cannot be faithful to the pleasant or the useful, even his second Copernican turn, according to which the good must obey the moral law – and not vice versa – can be understood as a corollary of Kant's peculiar association of moral duty with the unity of reason. However, when he descends to the level of action, he runs into problems of how to demonstrate accurately the determinism of his idea of the good, or how to explain convincingly why a moral subject can act evilly. Hegel, on the other hand, attributed this difficulty to the fact that Kant's conception of reason was abstract, formal, impoverished, and ultimately quite inadequate. In order not to renounce Kant's legacy, he had to formulate a much richer conception of the reason, in which thinking and willing, the particular and the universal, subject and substance, are involved in the free, self-determining activity of the concept. This, according to Hegel, is the minimum if we are to adequately encapsulate the idea of the good.

> [It] happens not infrequently in practical matters that evil will and inertia hide behind the category of possibility, in order to avoid definite obligations in that way; what we said earlier about the use of the principle of "grounding" holds good here, too. Rational, practical people do not let themselves be impressed by what is possible, precisely because it is only possible; instead they hold onto what is actual - and, of course, it is not just what is immediately there that should be understood as actual. (GW 20, §143, Addition)

The process of *actualization* that drives Hegel's philosophy is conceptually related to Aristotle's notion of the human good, which can be understood as "life actualising the human essence in accordance with its proper excellences" (Wood 1990, 17). Nevertheless, whereas the final aim of the ancient self-actualization nature was human good in the form of happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*), i.e., the rationality that pervades and organizes individual action's, Hegel ties his ethical stance to a particular arrangement of freedom. Rather than relying on a structure of freedom as the universal capacity to perform particular actions, he sees freedom rather as the detachment from the subject's particular needs and desires in a kind of a deviation from oneself. While the actualization of freedom does not simply befall us, since it requires engagement in the rational practices that shape and determine it, the central moment of actualization, as presented in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, is ultimately the idea of the good, which is "the realised freedom" and as such "the absolute final end and aim of the world (*der absolute Endzweck der Welt*)" (GW 14, §129).

Every action in itself has its own particular finite end, willed by subjects who obtain certain satisfactions from it. All these finite ends are willed by subjects and ideally strive to converge in the demands of the universal end, which is freedom. This is the only path that leads to happiness, but because of their finitude, they come into conflict along the way, where the well-being (or satisfaction) of one subject collides with the well-being of others. And persisting in our own satisfaction to the detriment of others, is tantamount to inviting in evil.[5]

The particular instances of morality, the singular subjective manifestations of morality, free will as such, the contingent world stage and the knowledge of it all, converge in the idea of the good. What drives them to do so? Since the good is "that which is and ought to be" (GW 26,1, §65, 68), and as such is free from evil, without any attachment to particular needs and desires, the good is that which it ought to be, since the world has always already been fundamentally good by virtue of reason. So what is it that propels us into the embrace of the good? You have to will it, but it also has to will you.

> It is only in the subjective will that the good has the mediation through which it enters into actuality (Ilt 4, 348, § 131). It is the necessity to be actual and is actual only through the particular will [...] The *Dasein* of the good thus depends on the particular will; it has no other executors. To this extent the particular will is the accomplisher, the power, the master; on the other hand, the good is its substance and thus the power over the particular will. (ibid., 348-347)

Individuals in their free will can suffer in terms of their well-being or deprivation of property, but these are not facets that concern the good, because they are subordinate to it in every way. Since every action is determined through the will, the knowledge of whether the action is good or evil is also attributable to that will, with some exceptions of course (e.g. children). Hegel illustrates this knowledge of the good with the most self-explanatory example, that of the laws of the state. The same is true of the divine laws, which is why Antigone speaks of God's eternal laws, of which no one knows where they came from: "they are and people obey them" (ibid., 351). Hegel seems to be operating from an exceptionally conservative standpoint, but the goodness of laws, as already mentioned, depends on their actualization. As Hegel puts it: "actuality is mightier than dry understanding and therefore destroys its patchwork (*Lattenwerk*), since it is the concept that lives in the actuality" (GW 26, 1010). For it takes time to change laws and consequently to change what is

5 Evil consists in "the carrying out of one's own particularity against the determination of the universal" (GW 26,1, §65, 282), against the well-being of others.

good, and all the more so when it comes to revolutions: "The great revolution has happened, the rest is to be left to time, God has time enough, what is to happen will happen" (GW 26, 765).

The ambition of this collection of critical essays and the hope of its contributors is to begin to explore this possibility of reading the idea of the good as it appears in Kant and Hegel as a central concept of classical German philosophy, while at the same time contributing novel perspectives to contemporary philosophical discussions on ethical and political issues. The work moves between Kant and Hegel in order to embrace the radicality with which the former converted the ethical order and the systematicity of the latter, which deprived radicality of its formal sharpness, but in doing so unfolded a world that would one day be good.

The first part of the book examines the structural conditions under which the idea of the good emerges in classical German philosophy. The volume's first chapters, which are committed to a detailed analysis of the inner workings of the idea of the good as presented by Hegel and its relation to morality, address this directly. Armando Manchisi opens the volume with a chapter on the meaning of the concept of "good" in Hegel's philosophy. He makes an important distinction in analysing the idea of the good, separating the idea of the good in *Logic* from that found in the *Philosophy of Right*. This leads him to propose the main thesis that argues that the good in *Logic*, unlike the good in the *Philosophy of Right*, fulfils a structural function, i.e. it is relevant to Hegel's whole system, and not only to his practical philosophy, since it is the condition for ascribing to reality and knowledge a practical nature as well as a teleological-evaluative structure. To support his argument, he introduces a pointed distinction between substantive (freedom of speech is a fundamental good), predicative (this book is good), and attributive (this is a good carriage) uses of the notion of the good and demonstrates that the only attributive feature present in *Logic* provides references to specific objects, without which we would be dealing with empty abstractions. Conversely it contains the good impulse to realise itself and give itself the world and purpose. This account of the birth of the world out of the "realm of darkness", which gives rise to a rational and good reality, is followed in the second chapter, written by Florian Ganzinger, an inquiry into Hegel's confrontation with Kant's aforementioned moral formalism.

Ganzinger points to a discrepancy in the way in which the determination of the good is secured in common readings of Hegel's critique of Kant's moral philosophy, which overly focus on the perceived emptiness, while remaining

blind to Kant's abstention from concrete action, which reflects the tension between acting out of pure duty and acting for a particular, obligatory end. For Hegel, Kant's moral philosophy thus dialectically requires conscience as the form of moral consciousness that is certain about how to determine what the good is. The reason for his critical stance is that moral consciousness in both of its forms (judging and acting) is only capable of determining actions in terms of a purely formal choice between good and evil. The chapter points out that Hegel abolishes this moral purity through reconciliation understood as a mutual relation of confessing and forgiving, in which the good is known negatively by renouncing one's particular conception of what ought to be done in case of moral conflict.

In the third chapter, Goran Vranešević widens the scope of the analysis and follows the arduous task of showing that the will subjects itself in order to justify its own goodness. In the pursuit of the good, however, we don't simply follow a predetermined path. It is an idea, and as such it actually presupposes the world as well as being its ultimate end. That is why there is a drive for the good, which propels the simple individual will to be active and pursue this end. But a simple formal decision of free will is needed to set things in motion in much the same sense as the role of the monarch in a modern state is merely to sign into law that which has already been decided. Yet it is precisely this hollow signature that is crucial for its inscription in the symbolic order. Just as there is no final signature, there is no final end of the good; on the contrary, it is something realised that has no end. The chapter concludes that there is a necessary imagination of the good world to come. It appears as such because it is realised by emptying out the substantiality with which it comes into being, thereby dissolving it and negating even the drive that sustained it.

In the fourth and last chapter of the first part Sebastian Rödl shows us the nature of the natural and the significance of the unnatural good. Rödl develops a sequence of forms in which goodness is thought. The logical form in which "good" first appears is the representation of means (consequentialism). This form is quickly seen to be subordinate to one that represents an end in itself; that is life. The idea of the good as the idea of life is then developed in the forms of inner process, outer process (utilitarianism and Hobbes), and genus process (Anscombe and Thompson). In understanding the good as a genus process, it is thought of as a natural life. However, it will emerge that the goodness thought to exist in practical thought is no natural goodness, and that human life is no natural life but the life. The good, in Rödl's elaboration, is the life of the spirit and as such is *the* life.

The second part of the book turns to the other side of the good in the form of evil. In the fifth chapter, Zdravko Kobe begins with an explanation of morality in Kant. It seems that within the limits of reason alone there is no place for unconditional practical necessity, and that morality is but a word. In Kant's *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, reason and freedom are bound together in a way that morality is nothing but the causality of pure reason and its autonomy. As a consequence, however, Kant was unable to explain the possibility of amoral, let alone evil, deeds. The chapter presents the counter-proposals of Schmid and Reinhold, the solution contained in the completely modified theory that Kant presented in *Religion*, together with the reason for their failures. Based on this, Kobe finally exposes Hegel's positive conception of the evil. For there to be a logical place for the evil, he argues, two elements are needed: the subject must be considered absolute, and there must be an incongruity within the absolute (or reason). The chapter also makes the important point that in Hegel, the evil constitutes the most intimate form of the subject, and irony its most extreme form.

This explication of evil in Hegel is continued in chapter six by Giulia La Rocca. In her chapter, she proposes a reading of the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion through an interpretation of Hegel's figure of the evil conscience. The main point of the chapter is thus to reveal the dialectic underlying the opposition of the good and the evil, according to which the so-called universal good itself turns out to be evil, and therefore must be redetermined. Although the chapter focuses on the dialectical movement between the good in itself and the evil conscience in the philosophy of spirit, she opens with a reconstruction of its logical form in order to understand Hegel's account of evil as thought-determination. Accordingly, the chapter proposes an *excursus* through some of the occurrences of the concept of "evil" in Hegel's *Science of Logic* in order to make clear which logical structure underlies the figure of the evil conscience. Secondly, the chapter deals with this figure in the realm of the spirit. By pushing Hegel's argument further, it tries to draw some consequences concerning the dialectic of good and evil as a dialectic of exclusion and inclusion.

In the last chapter of the second part of the volume, Bojana Jovićević continues with the analysis of the idea of evil in Hegel's philosophy, albeit from the opposite perspective. She argues that evil, far from being a mere privation or absence of the good, has a positive ontological function. Moreover, she demonstrates that it constitutes that which is most peculiar and particular to the individual – and can be grasped as their subjectivity. To support this claim, we she turns to Augustine's theory of sin, through which, similarly to Hegel, the sinful individual

constitutes themselves as individuals. Finally, she delves into a specific chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on Evil and its Forgiveness, to expound upon the idea of two evil individuals in the nexus of mutual forgiveness.

The last part of the volume presents interpretations that are implicitly rooted in reflections on the good and that highlight the relevance of this idea for our contemporary thought. The eighth chapter attempts to shed new light on Hegel's attitude regarding Kant's ethical thought by focusing on Hegel's sporadic but significant use of the term *Eigensinn*, "obstinacy". To illustrate this, Martin Hergouth establishes the link between ethical thought and obstinacy, and uses two points of encounter between these ideas. First, the fact that Hegel's characterization of the principle of modernity as *Eigensinn*, the unwillingness to accept anything that is not justified through reason, does bear some resemblance to the idea of Kantian autonomy. Secondly, the struggle for recognition, which can be related to the "Kantian paradox" of autonomy (at least according to Terry Pinkard), and ends with the often overlooked figure of the *obstinate bondsman*. From this premise, we attempt to construct a concise image of the relation between the titular notions of autonomy and *Eigensinn*, and hence Kant's and Hegel's ethics.

In chapter nine, Marcus Quent makes an important connection between the abstractness of the idea of the good in classical German philosophy and the contemporary reflection on the total annihilation of the world by the atomic bomb. He points out that when we think about the good, we adopt a perspective of the end. In the present, however, action is no longer regarded as a potential articulation or realization of the good, but rather as a means of preventing an end: an ultimate catastrophe that can no longer be integrated into the perspective of the good. This reveals the problematic character of the relation between the good, the perspective of the end, and the operation of negation in our contemporary world. The chapter examines this relation by focusing on the two event horizons of a nuclear threat and climate change with their different temporalities. Drawing on Maurice Blanchot's intriguing critique of Karl Jasper's book on the atom bomb, the article elaborates how the idea of humanity – as a self-generating whole and an absolute good – is at the heart of this problematic relationship. Finally, the chapter questions the status of the idea of humanity in the discourse on the ecological transformation of our times.

Finally, in the last chapter of the volume, Lena Weyand reflects on the idea of the good by linking it to the contemporary problem of alienation as introduced by Marx. In his early writings, Marx seems to give four different

descriptions of his concept of alienation. In her text, Weyand presents all four and discusses different ways of understanding them. She shows that they can only be understood by reading them all together. Alienation describes a relation between humans that has gone wrong, becoming a poor way of establishing a relationship with others. After explaining how Marx's term alienation is connected to the idea of a human life-form, she finally shows that Marx's term alienation implicitly shows that seeking the good means seeking the good of humans as *Gattungswesen*, as humans living together. Alienation is therefore not only a tool for criticizing living conditions under capitalism, but also a vital way of reflecting on the good.

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Abbreviations

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