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## The Spatiotemporal Cyclicity of the Circular Narrative of *The Good Place*

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**Abstract** – The paper aims to pay attention to the cyclicity of space and time representation of the afterlife in *The Good Place*. Here the protagonists are stuck in an infernal loop and every time they discover they are in a particularly elaborate infernal circle, their memory is erased and the narration restarts. When the story starts over, the demonic narrative is always slightly different from the previous one. The cyclical nature of the narration at a space-time level would seem to perfect the storytelling: through the alteration of the narrative structure, traditional expectations relating to the afterlife are demolished and a dystopian afterlife is narrated.

**Keywords** – Storytelling; Spacetime; Seriality; Ethics; *The Good Place*.

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# The Spatiotemporal Cyclicity of the Circular Narrative of *The Good Place*

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## 1. Introduction

This essay will examine the portrayal of the afterlife in the television series *The Good Place* from a spacetime perspective, with a focus on its ethical dimension. The series challenges traditional expectations associated with the afterlife by presenting a dystopian afterlife that diverges significantly from the commonly held beliefs.

In the era of metamodernity, television series have emerged as the dominant form of storytelling whose value lies in their being cultural products. They have become increasingly complicated; although it is important to note that this does not imply that television series before the 1990s lacked complexity. Rather, the term “complexity” here refers to the specific characteristics outlined by television theorist Mittell in 2017 (Mittell 47 ff.), which we will delve into later. For now, it suffices to say that television, considering contemporary innovations and revolutions, has proven to be the ideal *medium* for narratives spanning extended periods, allowing characters to evolve and emotionally connect with viewers.

This *medium* provides an opportunity to challenge the traditional spatiotemporal representation of the dominant ethical framework, which often relies on simplified binary choices. *The Good Place* serves as an exemplary case study in exploring the moral complexity of contemporary life. While, like many other series, it entertains its audience, it also serves an educational purpose by prompting viewers to reflect on the meaning of life. Each episode introduces a different ethical dilemma, making ethics and its various gradations the central theme of the entire series. Here, the human experience no longer revolves around a stark divide between good and evil; rather, individuals must navigate the intricacies of the contemporary ethical framework within a spacetime dimension characterized by an unconventional and dystopian portrayal of the afterlife.

## 2. The New Media and the TV Series Revolution

Before delving into the analysis, it is essential to provide some theoretical context regarding the current international media landscape. The series of transformations that have shaped this landscape, especially since the 1990s, can be seen as a television revolution of sorts.

Throughout history, the interpretation of a new *medium* and all its implications has always posed a challenge. However, as we entered the 20th century, the pace of change accelerated, and the world underwent profound transformations. These changes have become increasingly rapid, making it difficult to comprehensively examine and theorize about them, especially as convergence processes have blurred the lines between various media forms, making it challenging to analytically identify their diverse components and conceptualize them thoroughly.

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As articulated by Jenkins, there are now eight fundamental characteristics defining the contemporary media landscape, which must be considered: *innovative; convergent; everyday; appropriate; networked; global; generational; unequal* (Jenkins, “Eight Traits of the New Media Landscape”). Convergence lies at the heart of every shift and transformation within the new media landscape to such an extent that Jenkins characterizes the current state as a “convergent culture” (Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*). Even before Jenkins, de Sola Pool had discussed convergence processes that were erasing the distinctions between various media forms (de Sola Pool 23). In this context, cultural convergence emerges as a comprehensive and all-encompassing process: “There will be no single black box that controls the flow of media into our homes. Thanks to the proliferation of channels and the portability of new computing and telecommunications technologies, we are entering an era where media will be everywhere” (*Convergence Culture* 16).

Convergence is, therefore, a process that is achieved thanks to two forces coming from opposite sides: “Convergence, as we can see, is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence” (18). In the realm of media, the concept of convergence is complemented by that of remediation. Within contemporary culture, no single *medium* operates in isolation; instead, it assimilates techniques, forms, and meanings from other media and reshapes them. Bolter and Grusin note that traditional media, both electronic and print, have, over time, felt threatened by new technologies and have sought to reaffirm their relevance within today’s cultural landscape (Bolter and Grusin 5).

However, what is particularly noteworthy is how new media engage in remediation and reshape previous media precisely as the latter attempt to reinvent themselves to address the challenges posed by the contemporary world and emerging technologies. Scholars identify three types of remediation: firstly, mediation of mediation, where each act of mediation relies on others; secondly, the inseparability of mediation and reality, which suggests that all mediations are real artifacts within the mediated culture; and finally, reform, where the objective is to transform other media (55-56). As a result, according to Bolter and Grusin, a *medium* inherently tends towards remediation, absorbing the forms, techniques, and social meanings of other media and adapting to the demands of contemporary fluidity (65).

This phenomenon is evident in the evolution of television and serial storytelling, which, particularly since the 1980s, have engaged in remediation, appropriating increasingly complex narrative forms. Alongside convergence and remediation, the concepts of immediacy and hypermediation also play significant roles in defining the new media reality. While they may seem to oppose each other in certain aspects, they both characterize this new landscape.

Immediacy seeks to eliminate the act of representation, presenting a unified visual space akin to a window onto the world. Conversely, hypermediation highlights multiple acts of representation, making them visible and distinguishable. It offers a diverse visual space in which representation is viewed as a complex entity composed of different and multiple windows, each opening to additional representations and media. Hypermediation thus amplifies the sensory richness of human experience, contributing to the empathetic intensification that characterizes contemporary storytelling (34).

These two contrasting forces – immediacy and hypermediation – coexist within the media landscape, with hypermediation serving to highlight the necessity of immediacy. In fact, hypermediation can be viewed as the counterpart of immediacy, engaged in a coexistent and contested relationship (33-34). As McLuhan aptly points out, the content of a *medium* is invariably another *medium*; for instance, writing contains speech, just as print contains written words (McLuhan 14-17). In essence, metamodern narratives of seriality serve as a representation of the narratological complexity that characterizes our contemporary existence. This complexity is not only a result of mass media developments but also a response to the advent of new media, which has compelled narrative to undergo a reevaluation.

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This reevaluation is particularly challenging from a theoretical perspective, as the processes of convergence often appear overwhelming, making it difficult to analytically identify the individual components of these media systems. Additionally, visual communication has become an integral part of storytelling, as exemplified by television series. Consequently, within this evolving cultural landscape, storytelling becomes a “center of irradiation within the media sphere that generates it and is continually regenerated by it, a crossroads of intermedial relations that can take the form of transposition, combination, or reference” (Vittorini 201).

Contemporary serial storytelling possesses the capacity to narrate extended stories, allowing characters to evolve over prolonged periods. Unlike cinema, which requires viewers to visit theaters, television enters the viewers’ homes, establishing a sense of familiarity and intimacy (Sepinwall 461-475). Television becomes a “familiar” *medium* that viewers perceive as close and part of their daily lives, often maintaining a constant and continuous presence. As a result, television series have become a new avenue for learning and reflecting on the world around us.

In this reconfigured media landscape, which has triggered something of a revolution in the realm of television, Mittell delineates the defining characteristics of a complex television series, typical of the contemporary media environment. Such a series must be:

- Original: it should venture into uncharted narrative or linguistic territories, striving to break new ground.
- Narratively self-reflective: the narrative construction of the series should exhibit a self-awareness that references and recalls its own storyline and elements.
- Textually complex: it should incorporate metatextual and self-referential references, adding depth and layers to its storytelling.
- Engage an active audience: rather than passive spectators, the series should involve an audience that actively participates in shaping the series’ world through various means (Maio 16).
- Reject self-contained plots: it should eschew the need for neatly wrapped-up, self-contained plotlines.
- Sustain ongoing stories across genres: the series should give rise to enduring narratives that span different genres.
- Cumulative narrative: over time, it should build upon its own narrative foundation, expanding and evolving (Mittell 47).

While before 1990s, distinguishing between a series (with standalone episodes) and a serial (with a continuous storyline) was relatively clear-cut, today these distinctions are blurred, thanks to the proliferation of a complex model of narrative seriality (14).

In this context, storytelling begins with the premise that “a serial television program creates a lasting narrative world, inhabited by a coherent group of characters who experience a chain of events over a specific span of time” (24). The characters become an inseparable part of the viewers’ lives, owing to the *medium*’s omnipresence in daily life and its accessibility. This connection is so profound that it fosters a deep sense of empathy between the audience and the characters, a connection further intensified by the distinctive attributes of contemporary metamodern storytelling.

### 3. *The Good Place* and Ethical Cyclicity

Given these theoretical premises, it is now possible to turn our attention to the ethical reorganization and the spatiotemporal dimension in *The Good Place*, which represents a complex type of television series, according to the characteristics highlighted so far.

This television series, created by Michael Schur and produced by Universal Television, Fremulon and 3 Arts Entertainment, whose first trailer was made public on May 15, 2016, is

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broadcast from September 19, 2016 to January 30, 2020 on NBC: includes four seasons (each consisting of thirteen episodes) and many references to other tv series, including *Friends* and *Justified* in particular.

The plot, provided here to offer a better understanding of the themes and issues within the series, serves as a unifying thread for the overarching problems that will be explored. It unfolds as intricate and surreal right from the initial episodes. The protagonist, Eleanor Shellstrop, meets her untimely demise in a supermarket, crushed by a heap of shopping carts while reaching for a bottle of margarita. Upon her death, she awakens in an ostensibly idyllic paradise characterized by yogurt ice cream and perpetually cheerful and kind inhabitants.

Her first encounter in this realm is with Michael, her guide and the architect of this place, who informs her that she has been admitted to the “good part” due to her benevolent deeds, particularly her assistance in securing the release of innocent individuals from death row. However, Eleanor soon realizes that there has been a grave error; she has been admitted under mistaken identity and believes that she is someone else. To avoid being sent to the Hell, she understands that she must conceal her morally questionable behavior.

Eleanor’s inadvertent admission into paradise immediately places a spotlight on morality and ethics at the core of the story. She is determined to become a better person to avoid the hellish dimension. Joining her in this predicament are three other residents of *The Good Place*: Chidi Anagonye, Tahani Al-Jamil, and Jason Mendoza. They are assisted by Janet, a kind of superintelligent robot.

These four individuals, all of whom entered the “good side” through misunderstandings, face the challenge of concealing their less virtuous sides and adapting to the behavior expected of those who belong there in a dystopian space-time dimension. They must refrain from using profanity, consistently display kindness towards others, and offer assistance whenever possible<sup>1</sup>. Undoubtedly, the series is closely linked to the contemporary rise of political correctness, and it exposes certain ambiguities within this phenomenon. Its aim is to satirize what should be considered correct behavior, but it runs the risk of coming across as overly calculated and devoid of genuine underlying reasoning. Using its distinctive comedic style, the television series highlights the inconsistencies within an overly rigid ideological framework that sometimes characterizes the modern world.

The narrative structure is primarily centered on exploring the essence of ethics and what constitutes morally upright conduct. The plot serves as a catalyst for triggering profound philosophical contemplation in this alternative spatiotemporal dimension. Through the story of the four young protagonists, the series aligns itself with the transgression of seemingly correct norms, embracing an unconventional dimension characterized by humor and the grotesque, aimed at demystifying established beliefs through laughter. Officially, those residing in the “good part” are expected to be ethically flawless and politically correct. In this sense, absolute goodness appears to be the prerequisite for maintaining a place in the good part. However, as the series unfolds and a profound ethical reevaluation takes place in each episode, it becomes clear that being part of the good side does not demand perfection but rather the desire to improve and a commitment to doing so.

Towards the end of the second season, the four friends make a startling discovery: they are actually in a twisted and intricate bad part, meticulously designed by the demon Michael to torment them more effectively. This spatiotemporal nightmare is constructed based on their insecurities, worst fears, and, in some instances, their ethical shortcomings. For instance,

<sup>1</sup> From this arise a series of expressions that characterize the series to the point of becoming the slogans that stand out on the various merchandise items available on the tv series website ([https://www.nbcstore.com/collections/the-good-place?utm\\_campaign=new\\_arrivals&utm\\_medium=Banner&utm\\_source=NBC&utm\\_term=the\\_good\\_place](https://www.nbcstore.com/collections/the-good-place?utm_campaign=new_arrivals&utm_medium=Banner&utm_source=NBC&utm_term=the_good_place)), such as: “What the Fork”, “Holy Mother Forking Shirtballs” e “Nerfect”.

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Chidi's chronic indecision, Tahani's fear of never measuring up, Eleanor's laziness, and Jason's obliviousness play central roles. As Francesco Muzzioli also asserts, the significance of villain in storytelling cannot be denied. Some of Shakespeare's or Dostoevsky's antagonistic characters possess such profound complexity that they become more captivating than the virtuous protagonists. This is why even Terry Eagleton emphasizes how immoral characters within narratives can resonate more with the audience than morally upright figures, highlighting the limitations of a moral framework often reduced to mere moralism (Eagleton).

Between the conclusion of the first season and the commencement of the second, following the revelation that they are in the bad place, the four individuals find themselves with their memories wiped clean. Michael does this to attempt torturing them anew within *The Good Place*, in pursuit of the perfect torment. Eleanor, however, uncovers Michael's deceit once more, with the support of Chidi, Tahani, and Jason. Each time this happens, Michael erases their memories, and the nightmarish cycle restarts. It is from the second season onward that the ideas introduced in the first season become more pronounced, and the boundaries between good and evil begin to reveal their fragility and instability.

Initially, the ethical dimension is portrayed through simplistic moral dichotomies (such as good vs. evil, good vs. bad, and so on). As the narrative complexity deepens and the audience's connection with the characters intensifies through empathetic identification, traditional moral and ethical binaries are challenged. Good and evil are no longer in stark opposition; roles and perspectives often shift and interchange.

In addition to *The Good Place* and the more conventional Hell inhabited by tormenting demons with truly vile and often monstrous appearances, there is also the Medium Place, inhabited by Mindy St. Claire. Eleanor and Chidi are frequently brought there for various experiments, and it is in this place that they unexpectedly find themselves falling in love.

The Medium Place occupies a space that does not align with either extreme, and it becomes pivotal in the ethical reorientation of the series. In this somewhat nebulous setting, the protagonists finally find respite, far from the torments of demons and the pressures of *The Good Place*. It is here that they truly get to know each other and develop deep connections, leading to romantic love and genuine friendship. The subtleties of this place, where binary dichotomies are erased, enable them to embark on a path of reflection and personal growth, making them better individuals not only for themselves but also for others.

Such an ethical upheaval unfolds without the knowledge of Michael's superior, the fearsome and exceedingly malevolent demon Shawn, who is portrayed in such an exaggerated manner that he becomes more comical than intimidating. With each passing episode, those aligned with traditional ethical viewpoints appear overly exaggerated and ludicrous. Shawn is so wicked that he becomes a caricature and comes across as insincere, in stark contrast to the protagonists and Michael. These characters, however, represent the true complexities of human nature. Over the course of the series, even Michael himself aligns with Eleanor and her friends, pledging to assist them in keeping the secret about the failure of his experiment hidden from Shawn. In return, he promises to help them enter the genuinely good side<sup>2</sup>.

Much like the other four protagonists, Michael undergoes a profound transformation. He evolves from the malevolent demon he initially was into someone increasingly connected with human experiences, to the extent that he yearns to lead a human life on Earth, free from torment and extraordinary powers. This redeemed demon becomes the first to truly believe in the possibility of redemption for the protagonists. In a sense, he takes on a paternal role towards Eleanor and strives to protect and counsel them. He even personally risks exposure to save them.

<sup>2</sup> In reality, at the end of the series, this decision, after an infinite series of attempts and vicissitudes, will be placed back in the hands of the Supreme Judge, Maya Rudolph: she decides not to admit them to Heaven, but to give them a second chance on earth.

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This ethical transformation is so profound that the demon who originally designed the intricate torture mechanism ends up siding with the protagonists. Simultaneously, the protagonists themselves undergo improvement, accepting their imperfections. The realization that they do not need to uphold an impeccable and often unattainable code of ethics and morality underscores the importance of embracing nuances. In this sense, moral imperfection becomes a defining characteristic of humanity and diversity.

The world of *The Good Place* exists in parallel with, and simultaneously complements, our own reality. It serves as a reflection of the protagonists' fears and their aspirations for knowledge and self-improvement. This is evident in the series' adept use of philosophical concepts, which will be discussed in detail later, as well as in more everyday elements. *The Good Place* is a realm of contradictions, depicted right down to the minutest details. For instance, frozen yogurt, claimed to be a universally beloved food within the series, is readily available at every street corner in various establishments with names like "Let's All Eat Yogurt", "Yogurt Horizons", and "Yogurt Yoghurt Yogurté" offering an array of seemingly endless flavors. Paradoxically, though, ordinary ice cream is conspicuously absent—a characteristic quirk of *The Good Place*. This paradox is exemplified in an exchange between Eleanor and Michael in the sixth episode of the first season: "What is it with you and frozen yogurt? Have you not heard of ice cream?". 'Oh sure, but I have come to really like frozen yogurt. There's something so human about taking something and ruining it a little so you can have more of it'. Frozen yogurt, in being neither good nor obviously bad, becomes the symbol of *The Good Place*: ice cream cannot be found, just as there are no extremes present.

Even with elements like these frequently present in the series, it becomes evident that afterlife – as here portrayed – is remarkably tangible. This prompts us to contemplate the notion that the paradise is rather "narrativized", whereas, strictly speaking, nothing significant should occur in paradise.

At the outset of the series, within the apparent strictness that defines *The Good Place*, everything operates under a points system. This system determines who goes to the good side and who ends up on the bad side based on a meticulous calculation of every action—both good and bad—that a person has undertaken during their lifetime. Those with the highest number of points secure a place on the good side, while everyone else finds themselves relegated to the bad side. However, this system is revealed to be flawed, incapable of capturing the ethical nuances that are the focus of the moral reorganization undertaken by the protagonists throughout the narrative<sup>3</sup>.

In this regard, even Janet, the humanoid robot who consistently assists them and, in the process, falls in love with Jason, undergoes a kind of humanization (Braidotti 9-25). She becomes less extreme in her perfection, allowing the narrative to blur its boundaries and soften its contours. Janet, initially presented as a cold and emotionless robot due to her mechanical nature, evolves throughout the series. She begins to empathize with the protagonists, to the point of developing romantic feelings for one of them, Jason.

Janet and Jason are initially depicted as opposites: she comes across as a rational and emotionless robot endowed with superior intelligence and omniscience, while he is portrayed as a simple-minded individual with limited intellectual capabilities. However, it is precisely their profound differences that make them complementary and, consequently, close. Their diversity highlights the series' underlying message: the need to look beyond surface appearances and focus on the essence of individuals. In their opposition, they ultimately find equality. Janet represents rationality and knowledge, while Jason embodies physicality and instinct. Only

<sup>3</sup> To demonstrate this system error, Michael suggests that Eleanor, Chidi, Tahani and Jason should test four new arrivals in *The Good Place*. Shawn, who gets the right to choose them from the Giudice, makes sure that they are particularly difficult subjects to manage. In this sense, Chidi will be forced to sacrifice himself by having his memory erased again and forgetting the love he and Eleanor feel.

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together can they be truly complete, with each contributing unique dimensions to their partnership. She learns about the human essence in its immediate dimension from him, while he approaches logical reasoning. Separately, they represent problematic extremes that are challenging to appreciate, but together, they form a multi-dimensional and multifaceted entity.

With the assistance of Michael and Janet, the experiment continues, and Eleanor, with the support of her friends, attempts to administer *The Good Place*. Unfortunately, the endeavor fails, and it appears that the protagonists must resign themselves to a more traditional hell, as Shawn had originally intended. However, the transformed demon Michael, who now holds profound faith in the potential for human change, convinces the Judge not to obliterate all of humanity. Instead, he advocates for the creation of a new system rooted in the possibilities of self-improvement and the significance of interpersonal relationships. Roles between good and bad characters are reversed and exchanged, to the point where a demon who has “converted” to the side of good must instruct the Judge, who belongs to the sphere of “good” individuals, on the correct path and persuade her to take meaningful action. Roles have thus been reversed, and the nuanced distinctions that exist between the traditional dichotomous options of ethics have become the new focal point around which the otherworldly dimension is reconstructed.

To reach this point, the protagonists had to overcome various challenges and undergo personal growth through their experiences in *The Good Place*, internalizing valuable lessons. The series employs the character of Chidi to introduce viewers to various philosophers and their moral philosophies. Chidi’s moral philosophy lessons, drawn from his time as a professor at Fordham University, are woven throughout the series. The classroom board features the names of numerous philosophers, ranging from ancient thinkers like Aristotle to modern figures such as John Locke, Tim Scanlon (the originator of the moral theory of “contractualism”), Peter Singer (known for his contributions to modern animal liberation and effective altruism movements), and Derek Parfit (the Oxford moral philosopher renowned for his works *Reasons and Persons* and *On What Matters*). These lessons serve as a preparation for becoming better individuals, making philosophy the common thread of the series. Philosophy is portrayed as a tool for earning a place in heaven and a method for elevating one’s soul.

In addition to Chidi’s philosophy lessons, the series incorporates elements from various disciplines in its episodes, all connected to the need for reflection on concepts of good and evil, as well as free will. Specifically, during the second season, the experiment known as “The Trolley Problem” originally conceived by Philippa Foot in 1967, is revisited. This ethical dilemma revolves around the question of whether it is morally acceptable to sacrifice a few individuals to save a larger number. For instance, if a train is headed towards five people on the tracks, but by diverting its path, only one person would be harmed, would such an action be justified? Chidi attempts to grapple with this question not merely in theory but also in practice. Michael recreates a scenario based on the experiment, placing Chidi in the role of the decision-maker, forcing him to repeatedly confront the agonizing choice of what is the “right” course of action.

Chidi’s experience exemplifies the overarching theme of the series, where the four protagonists find themselves trapped in an endless infernal loop that gradually evolves and adapts through their interventions. Each time they discover that they are not yet in real Paradise but in a meticulously designed circle of hell, their memories are wiped, and the narrative restarts with slight variations. Each season finale offers a new perspective, focusing differently on the good part as the characters inhabiting it change. The series portrays an otherworldly utopian realm infused with the ancient wisdom theorized by Pierre Hadot, where theory and practice merge, and philosophy becomes a way of life. Initially, to remain in *The Good Place*, perfection was required. However, over time, greater importance is placed on the potential and capacity for improvement. The rigid and schematic point system, which ultimately proves to be flawed, transitions into a more humane system characterized by nuances and shades. What was initially



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presented as bad or imperfect at the beginning of the series gradually transforms into something ethically sound by the end of each episode.

In this context, the seriality emerging from the post-television revolution takes on a significant role as a favored form within *pop*-popular culture and its audience. It becomes the primary platform for depicting, pondering, and mirroring socially recognized and embraced values. While in the simplest cases, these narratives may depict the triumph of good over evil, in more intricate instances, such as the series under discussion in this analysis, they delve into a multifaceted ethical realm characterized by ambiguity and moral complexity.

### 4. Conclusion

Season after season, the circular nature of the storytelling and this continuous infernal loop at a space-time level seems to perfect the storytelling. At the center of the whole series there is a refined research on storytelling. In fact, this intricate and unique series centers entirely on the ethical dilemma of distinguishing right from wrong, understanding the true essence of goodness or badness, and recognizing the ripple effect of every action. *The Good Place*, with its humor and seemingly straightforward approach, reevaluates traditional ethical dichotomies through a complex philosophical lens that unfolds and deepens as the series progresses.

It is worth noting that this series transcends mere religious considerations, as the criteria for admission to the “good place” do not appear to be tied to any specific religion. Michael, as the architect of *The Good Place*, even mentions that no religion has ever been more than 5% correct about the afterlife. Instead, it focuses on ethics and morality in their most theoretical form, devoid of favoritism towards any religious doctrine. This approach simultaneously deconstructs Western notions of paradise, challenges the concept of eternal existence as monotonous, and satirizes the idea of predetermined soulmates. Moreover, it takes a critical stance on political correctness, exposing its ambiguities and inconsistencies, and highlighting the overzealous and rigid codification of contemporary ideological values.

According to Kristen Bell, who portrays the protagonist, the series serves the purpose of entertaining and educating the audience. Each episode prompts viewers to contemplate various ethical dilemmas and ponder the possibility of redemption for all.

Throughout this intricate narrative tapestry, Professor Chidi Anagonye’s moral philosophy lessons play a pivotal role. They encourage reflection on good and evil within the context of philosophical traditions. These lessons not only contribute to the growth and development of the four protagonists but also foster a deepening of their bond.

The series depicts a paradise with distinct features. It includes a point-based system and an inexplicable fascination with frozen yogurt. Additionally, the characters are closely tied to earthly concerns. This portrayal appears overly tangible and “narrativized”. It is the storytelling and its continuous refinement, occurring with each memory reset and restart of the story, that emerge as the true protagonists of the series.

At its core, the series embarks on a sophisticated exploration of storytelling. With each iteration, the narrative evolves slightly from the previous one. This continuous improvement in storytelling, along with the nuanced portrayal of the characters’ humanity, flaws, and their commitment to self-improvement, draws the audience closer to the characters, fostering empathy. Consequently, viewers begin to question the validity of traditional and simplistic ethical dichotomies. Through the deepening of the friendship among the four young characters and their mutual narratives, the series gradually leads to their ethical growth and strengthens the bond between the characters and the audience. As Ricoeur noted, through fictional characters, we learn to understand others, thereby enriching our own humanity.

In conclusion, with each story reset and subtle alteration, it becomes apparent that perfecting storytelling, emphasizing gradations over moral extremes, and enhancing character

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empathy can lead to ethical improvement in both the characters and the audience inside a dystopian spatiotemporal dimension. This metamodern storytelling skillfully highlights the nuances between good and evil, prompting viewers to engage in profound ethical reflections.

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