

THE REAL BIG TWIST ON

THE GOOD PLACE?

THEY WERE ON

FACEBOOK

THE WHOLE TIME.*

Spoilers through season three of *The Good Place*.

FROZEN YOGURT.

It's everywhere in season one of *The Good Place*. In fact, in the "Good Place"—a charming neighborhood where we're told all the "good people" end up after they die—fro-yo appears to be the only kind of food available. Recently deceased Eleanor Shellstrop thinks that's a little strange, so she asks the Good Place's deity architect Michael what's up—after all, Michael is the guy who "designed" all these exotic frozen yogurt flavors into the neighborhood.

“Yeah. That’s the one thing we put in all the neighborhoods. People love frozen yogurt. I don’t know what to tell you.”

Michael in The Good Place, episode 101: “Everything is Fine” written by Michael Schur (2016)

But Eleanor is too busy forkin' freaking out to push any further—because she knows she doesn't belong in the Good Place. A native of Phoenix, Arizona, Eleanor Shellstrop was a total jerkwad back on Earth, scaring old people into buying chalk medicine over the phone, betraying her "friends," and buying up all the tabloids—things that

should have sent her straight to the Bad Place. But once Eleanor gets a brief audio clip of what's going on down in the Bad Place, she grabs herself a tiny plastic spoon and digs into a dish of that cold slush-treat just like the rest of the Good Placers... While something should have bumped us all about this from day one, alas, like Eleanor, we were too distracted to push any further. We all now know that this bump—or glitch, if you will—was hiding *The Good Place's* icy core all along.

“What’s a food that people think they enjoy but that’s also kind of a bummer?”

Michael in The Good Place, episode 207: “Janet and Michael” written by Kate Gersten (2017)

Yep—in the bonkers season one finale, we uncover that what appears to be the Good Place is in fact the Bad Place—hell. That reassuring Michael is no angel—he’s a demon who designed a neighborhood full of situations to quite literally torture our main characters, all in the guise of eternal bliss. But this isn’t the way the Bad Place usually does things. See, Michael is no ordinary demon—he’s a demon on an innovative kick. This neighborhood was his first-and-only shot to show his old-world evil bosses that there’s a better way to torture humans other than just raking them over the coals (or plaguing them with butthole spiders). No, this is a more fundamental torture—mental torture. And while our human characters do eventually figure it all out thanks to some variables Michael couldn’t plan for, at first he gets us all—hook, line, and sinker.

Part of what makes the whole plan work is the subsequent reveal that everyone in the Good Place other than our four main characters is not human but in fact, in on the ruse. They’re all fucking demons, yo. While all these demons were pretending to be perfectly content, exemplary humans, the actual humans were suffering. The trick here was that since our humans were told from the beginning that they were in the Good Place, they bought in. Eleanor may be the only one to know that she’s not a good person like the others (her own unique form of torture, to be surrounded by do-gooders), but Chidi and Tahani go on believing they deserve to be here, and Jason is, well, too oblivious to really get what’s going on anyway. Perfect is viral in this afterlife. So our humans really have no choice here but to go on pretending—because when everyone seems perfect, shouldn’t they seem perfect, too? This, of course, is exactly what Michael wants his humans to do. If they didn’t pretend, the whole thing would fall apart... Because Michael’s “innovative” idea here is that when you’re the

only one who feels imperfect in a town full of perfect-seeming people, that can be fucking hell, too.

Creator Mike Schur (not demon Michael) and the team behind *The Good Place* may have given us the most effective balm for our social media anxiety to date—the power to imagine all those perfectly-interesting-appearing people on Facebook as a bunch of demons. I submit to you that this is what the show is about—in its themes, aesthetic, and pretty much everything else—and why it’s struck a nerve with its late 2010s audience. But *The Good Place* goes much deeper than just being a show about comparing our lives to the lives of others on Facebook (or Instagram. Or Twitter. Or pretty much any other internet platform that requires we participate, share, and profile ourselves):

CHIDI: No. This doesn’t make any sense. This is paradise!

ELEANOR: Oh, it looks like paradise. But it’s actually a filthy dumpster full of our worst anxieties.

Chidi and Eleanor in The Good Place, episode 113: “Michael’s Gambit” written by Michael Schur (2017)

In an age of growing awareness as to how these “giant internet organisms” (as tech writer Paul Ford has called them) push all of our buttons, the mind-bendy weirdness of *The Good Place* equips us to sense the bitter aftertaste of that “food we think we enjoy,” and it’s not frozen yogurt. It’s social media.

“We were going to live online. It was going to be extraordinary. Yet what kind of living is this? Step back from your Facebook Wall for a moment: Doesn’t it, suddenly, look a little ridiculous? Your life in this format?”

Zadie Smith in Feel Free (2018)

What does it know about us? Does it have our best interests in mind? Does it make us happy or miserable? Who’s in charge? Whom does it benefit? Whom does it hurt? What does it believe in? What silent havoc is it wreaking? Why does it have to be this way? These are all questions we find ourselves asking about the afterlife system on *The Good Place*. But we could also ask these questions about the many big internet companies slowly reaching into every corner of our lives, corners we’re feeling a little

queasy about giving up. Thing is, when you're trapped in a system that's very good at pretending it's awesome, it's hard to ask these questions.

“In the book, the Emerald City is a fake. It's made out of white plaster, and it looks like emeralds because you're required to wear green spectacles, and as you look through the green lenses, this plaster city looks like an Emerald City.”

Peter Norton on On the Media, episode: “Whose Streets?” (2018)

For the humans of *The Good Place*, it's impossible. They need their green-colored glasses to shatter in the season one finale so that they can eventually start asking these questions and—throughout the course of the rest of the show—do something about them.

“It took me a while to figure it out, but just now as we were all fighting and yelling at each other... I thought to myself, ‘Man, this is torture.’ And then it hit me... [W]e're already here. This is the Bad Place.”

Eleanor in The Good Place, episode 113: “Michael's Gambit” written by Michael Schur (2017)

It's a reckoning that feels similar to our culture's own reckoning here in the late 2010s: that, as a society, even while social media continues to pwn us, we are coming to trust it less and less. Like Eleanor, Chidi, Tahani, and Jason, we're beginning to realize that the heavenly-appearing platform that's been built around us may be, in fact, some sort of hell.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM.

Let's kick off with this: Michael's Bad-Place-neighborhood-masquerading-as-a-Good-Place-neighborhood has all the traits of a successful social media platform like Facebook.

The Good Place's first episode begins with Eleanor in a waiting room, finding some welcoming letters on a wall before her: “Welcome! Everything is fine.” A door opens, and Michael reassuringly welcomes Eleanor into his office. He smoothly guides

Eleanor through why she's here, how things work, and who he is—the architect of this neighborhood—before taking her for a walk and dropping her off at her new house. During this, Michael conveniently leaves out that he's a demon. He also flat-out lies, telling Eleanor that she's in the Good Place. These first few scenes are a guided orientation for Eleanor made to acquaint her with the “platform” of this neighborhood. It's a sign-up procedure, where the thing Eleanor is signing up for already has all the information about her that it needs. But like you and I when we reach the terms and conditions page, Eleanor doesn't really have a choice. She's already here, isn't she? Where else is she going to go? Well, she's dead, so... She can't really go anywhere.

Especially since she has a soulmate—the other trope you need for a perfect life here in the Good Place. Michael immediately introduces Eleanor to her soulmate, Chidi, a moral philosophy professor who has led an ethics-obsessed life in the pursuit of being a good person. The pressure cranks up—not only is Eleanor haunted by her life of being human garbage, but Michael has tied her down with a reminder of that for eternity. Here is the first instance of *The Good Place* using what I like to refer to as the “Soulmate Organization System” (or S.O.S.) as an engine for story. Because a soulmate is the other thing you need for a perfect life, right? And then you take to the internet to tell absolutely everyone about it, right?

In the first season, humble-braggadocio Tahani finds herself soulmate-saddled with a Taiwanese monk who took a vow of silence—not exactly the Hemsworth brother she was picturing. While Tahani tries to convince herself that opposites attract, she can't help but envy how public everyone else is with their soulmates—so happy and fulfilled together... like walking relationship statuses. It's rare to see the townspeople of the neighborhood doing anything without their soulmate, and it's only the real humans who wander off on their own adventures. Of course, we'll come to learn that all these soulmate pairs are demon actors—just like we come to learn that every great relationship posted all over Facebook has its nuances, flaws, and hidden pain. We're all a bit demon-ish underneath our human skins, aren't we? But despite Tahani's sadness over being unable to connect with her soulmate, Tahani can't question the platform. The platform chose her soulmate for her, and the platform doesn't make mistakes.

Well, except for Eleanor—or, at least, this is what we're led to believe is the main

dilemma for the first few episodes of the show. Somehow, Eleanor ended up in the Good Place by mistake. But Eleanor quickly discovers that Tahani's soulmate, that silent monk? He's actually Jason, a dullard dirtbag from Jacksonville just pretending to be a monk because that's who Michael said he was when he got here. He's just trying not to get caught... And let's not leave out Chidi, the moral philosophy professor who has agreed to help Eleanor become a better person. He seems conveniently unable to face how his own moral failures have deeply hurt others in his life (the most comical of which being his inability to make decisions).

So, everyone is pretending to be someone they aren't. But humans and demons aren't the only pretenders here. Upon rewatch, the show's very aesthetic seems just as menacing as Ted Danson's sly performance of Michael the architect. Take the entry point into the show itself: "Welcome! Everything is fine." You can almost hear the demons cackling in the background. But the typeface—which is very close to Brandon Text Black, if you're googling—evokes Facebook's logo typeface (Facebook Letter Faces). A spring green title card welcomes us to the show using the same typeface, our own version of the "Welcome!" wall, deceptively telling us we're in the Good Place. Even the show's cheery main title theme, composed by David Schwartz, peaks with a ping—eerily similar to the Facebook Messenger notification sound (give it a re-listen, tell me I'm wrong). The reassuring tone of the show's entire opening sequence embodies the "We're your friends, trust us" aesthetic of social media platforms—that soft, blocky font, easy-going dialogue, and look-how-wonderful-this-is—without stepping into overdoing it. Perceptive viewers will find that the overall aesthetics of the show's universe are lifted from Facebook, from graphics to sound design to props. We already know how Facebook's design and marketing choices slowly became the aesthetic direction of the entire online platform market.

MICHAEL IS A TECH BRO.

Maybe a suit and bow tie isn't what you think of when you think of Mark Zuckerberg, but Michael is just as much of a young disrupter among his demon colleagues. He wants to move fast and break things, as the Silicon Valley saying goes, and this

**Adam D. I. Kramer, Jamie E. Guillory, and Jeffrey T. Hancock in "Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion Through Social Networks," The Journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (2014)*

neighborhood is his chance. Yes, Michael's neighborhood isn't tried-and-true—it's a "gambit." He doesn't know if it's going to work; he can only hope it will. Like a developer deploying code on the masses (sometimes picking and choosing populations without those users' knowledge), Michael deploys his torture system on real, unsuspecting humans in real time—even if it's eons. Using our four humans, Michael is committed to making his idea work. This humans-as-subjects/world-as-laboratory approach is something that's become numbingly familiar to us, whether Silicon Valley is seeing if it can manipulate our emotions (with the help of Cornell University*), tracking what we click, or probing through our private messages to sell us products.

But if everything seems overwhelming in the Good Place, don't worry! Michael can always pull an interface out of thin air to explain something important about how his neighborhood works. Not to mention, he already knows everything about his subjects before they arrive through some sort of cosmic data collection. In *"The Good Place Isn't About Hell, It's About the Internet,"* Lara Zarum can't help but picture us all being greeted by Netflix in a similar dynamic:

"When he tells his crew of demons of his plan, he's essentially describing how he'll collect data on Eleanor, unbeknownst to her, while showering her with benefits, and use that data to make her miserable—which sounds not unlike the inescapable process of data mining that allows behemoth streaming services to cater to our perceived whims. (Whoever decided that what Netflix users really want is for each title to autoplay a trailer when you hover over it for a split second definitely got his training from Michael.)"

Lara Zarum in "The Good Place Isn't About Heaven and Hell, it's About the Internet," Vulture (2018)

Unbeknownst to our four humans, the real point of this data isn't to serve them better as users in the afterlife, but rather to know exactly which of their buttons to push.

In season two, Michael finally breaks things. He breaks everything. When the realization hits that "This is the Bad Place!", Michael takes off his reassuring mask and laughs his evil laugh. Then he snaps his fingers, resetting everything—because torture lasts forever. We start season two in this second "version" of the neighborhood—the "Welcome!" on the wall is only slightly different, Janet's got a new outfit, and most

importantly, Michael has rearranged the soulmates so that our four humans are separated amongst the “townspeople” (S.O.S. OS version two). Memories have been wiped, of course—because Michael’s very goal is to prevent the humans from realizing that what they’re going through can’t possibly be amazing because it actually sucks so bad. Michael must arrange the perfect set of variables in his neighborhood to ensure that outcome.

I don’t think it’s a big leap here to picture Facebook launching its infinite scroll feature so many years ago (do you remember when the page just ended?) or Instagram pasting its Story feature at the top of our feeds (beckoning us to absent-mindedly tap) or Twitter adjusting its character limitations. These companies make gradual changes that only slightly adjust the platform in the moment—but drastically change it over time. In *The Good Place*, Michael changes his platform’s features to keep his subjects from catching wise to what the platform truly “is”—a form of torture. The platform in this case quite specifically requires us not to know what it truly “is” for it to work. And as some of us have come to realize, Facebook/Instagram/etc. are not really social media services.

“I mean, Google is, ultimately, at its root, an advertising company. So is Tumblr. So is Facebook. We are the product that these companies are selling. So, all of our contributions, be they just our conversations with our friends or films that we’ve worked on for a long time are being fed into this advertising machine.”

Astra Taylor on Benjamin Walker’s Theory of Everything, episode: “Paying for It (the Dislike Club Part II)” (2014)

But these companies will do anything they can—including an all-out media blitz in 2018 reminding us that we’re all “Here Together” (Facebook)—to keep us from thinking that.

In *The Good Place*, there’s a frustrating power-play between Michael and the humans. For Michael, no matter what he tries, he can’t plan for Team Human. While they may play right into his hands for a while, eventually they screw up his goals, co-opt his platform’s functionality, and ultimately realize they’re being played. Good Place Version Two is only the first of many versions—802, to be exact—that the first few episodes of season two chronicle. The episode “Dance Dance Resolution” covers a

mindboggling gamut of these resets, revealing Michael's platform to be in a constant state of flux. For the humans, no matter how many times they try to escape the vicious cycle that is the platform, every time they wake up to it, Michael can just snap his fingers—and they're right back to being trapped and oblivious.

How many times have you told yourself that you're for sure going to quit Facebook this time, and somehow you end up right back there, scrolling the hours away?

When Michael snaps his fingers, he makes a change—hoping to find the fatal flaw causing his users to game the system. He is a programmer of the truest nature—adding new features, taking them away, and shifting the variables all while his users don't even notice.

JANET IS THE ALGORITHM.

But like the algorithm, Janet is many things—she is A.I., she is the search bar, she is Siri, she is that shiny new tech that will solve everything, the Google/Apple/Amazon endgame. To summon Janet, you call her by name and she instantly “bings” onto the scene with her own sing-songy tone reminiscent of Siri's. But like our Siri and our algorithms, Janet has limits. And she malfunctions. A lot.

Who can blame her—the emotions that our humans bring to the Good Place have her reeling. Jason falls in love with her, and it's not until after Janet has been rebooted that she starts to feel the same confusing feelings (a la *Her*). But since she's the core that keeps this whole neighborhood stable, being lovesick kinda threatens the neighborhood's total collapse (consider the sweeping outages on Facebook/Instagram/etc. upon the deployment of new, updated algorithms that aren't quite up to the task yet). When Michael asks Janet to retrieve a file for him in “Most Improved Player,” she just keeps bringing him cacti. Even when—after multiple tries—she insists that no, really, this time, she promises she found the file—it's still just a cactus. This scene sounds and looks like the many frustrating conversations I've had with Siri—where we're both stuck in a loop of misunderstanding, even though Siri seems to think it understands exactly what I want.

“To illustrate how useless these devices are without a server connection, consider this: if your Google Home or Alexa speaker loses connection to the internet, any alarm you set on them will not go off (I know this from personal experience). These things cannot even function as a clock without access to the mother ship.”

Brian Feldman in “This is Why Alexa is Laughing at You,” Intelligencer (2018)

When the gang gets themselves trapped back on Earth in season three, Janet can’t get her powers to work anymore. Like an Alexa speaker without a wifi connection, Janet can’t even make her soothing “bing” sound. And also like smart speakers, we come to learn that Janet is an actual product—something kept in a real Good Place warehouse, developed explicitly for use in the real Good Place. There are other models of Janet, just like there are updates and models of Siri and Alexa. There are even Bad Janets.

But what makes Janet malfunction is exactly what makes our real-life Janets malfunction: the human stuff. Like the many algorithms deployed on the masses by their creators, Janet is something that no one quite understands—or can totally control. She was created with good intentions by beings that didn’t quite realize how easily she could be co-opted. Helping good people in the real Good Place was supposed to be her main purpose—but the fact that Michael steals Janet to run his evil torture machine shows us how malleable our tech can be, and how naïve we can be in deploying it. In fact, when Michael first activates his Janet, he introduces himself as a Good Place architect, “one of the best.” Michael lies—one of thorniest, human-iest things someone can do. As soon as Janet is introduced to humanity and its subsequent trolley problems, things start to go haywire under her hood.

“Machine learning, as any expert in it will tell you, is basically what we’ve started to call software that we don’t really understand how it works.”

James Bridle in “The Nightmare Videos of Children’s YouTube—and What’s Wrong with the Internet Today,” TED (2018)

After 802 reboots, Janet gains the ability to lie, too.

THE MEDIUM PLACE IS 1982 (A TIME BEFORE THE INTERNET, WHICH WAS KINDA SORTA INVENTED IN 1983).

We can't forget about Mindy St. Clair, who famously resides in the "Medium Place," a long train ride away from Michael's neighborhood. Our characters discover it when trying to find a way to save Eleanor from the antiquated Good/Bad system that will surely send her to the Bad Place in season one. Notably, the Medium Place is stuck in a time before the internet, and Mindy is completely alone in a house in the middle of some kind of wilderness. Sure, the Medium Place doesn't have all the problems of Michael's neighborhood, and demon programmers can't seem to reach it—but it's also fucking boring.

THE REAL GOOD PLACE?

Most of the power of *The Good Place's* metaphor lies in its examination of how big internet companies use us all, providing a framework to help us understand why they have become our own torment. These themes are no stranger to Mike Schur and his creative team, as we can see in *Parks and Recreation* (also created by Schur). The show's imaginative final season (one that feels like it has the tonal DNA for *The Good Place*) culminates in a battle between a local government and a massive internet/everything company, Gryzzl, which feels like a Google/Amazon hybrid. In it, City Manager Ben Wyatt delivers an impassioned speech highlighting the ever-increasing need for transparency and responsibility from these monsters of industry, all the while acknowledging their necessity in society.

What makes *The Good Place's* metaphor so rich and pervasive is its human element. Like all of Schur's imaginings, *The Good Place* is about what makes us human, yes, but it's also about what makes us human even when we're on Facebook. So, a show about whether it's possible to become good in the afterlife becomes about the relationship between powerless humans and their insanely unfair overlords—internet companies.

But we're not powerless—we're *messy*.

When first watching *The Good Place*, we see Eleanor as a glitch amongst a community of morally superior humans, but as we fall deeper into the show, we realize that humans themselves are the glitch, and we always will be. Humans cause Janet to malfunction, humans figure out the Bad Place's ruse, and humans always get our fingers stuck in the tech (intentional or otherwise). But outside of *The Good Place*, the dominant ideology of platform developers seems insistent on ignoring the messiness of humans, in purporting that their models can objectively organize things, in insisting that their product can categorize people and content—all the while pretending that their platforms are awesome places to be spending our time that totally aren't selling our data and privacy to third parties. Put differently: it is the dominant ideology of tech companies to ignore and deny this human messiness so that they can continue to profit.

While moral philosophy runs *The Good Place*, its main idea may be that no matter the system, humans will always mess it up.

The point system that's been chugging away at evaluating humans for eons thinks it knows what Eleanor is: just plain bad. Using this data, so, too do Michael and his platform. And yet, while Eleanor knows she is not "good," she wants to be. The show takes us on a journey where even Michael, a clear-cut demon, is susceptible to a moral change, and eventually, a sense of rebellion. When Michael needs to save his own skin, he turns to his users—the humans—for help. Reluctant but compelled, he joins the humans for some moral philosophy lessons of his own. These human lessons start changing his demon self so much, that by the end of season two, Michael goes rogue from his Bad Place bosses and sets off a chain of events to try to get the four humans (whom he was originally assigned to torture) into the real Good Place. Michael's arc instills hope that if we tap into that human quality of things a little more, we may be able to redeem the demons of our social platforms—our social infrastructure—so that they can architect something different.

This becomes the focus of the third season, which reaches a pivotal turn when Team Human/Michael uncover that the holy point system of the afterlife hasn't admitted a human into the Good Place in over five hundred years. It seems that some time around 1497 (around the time Columbus started pillaging the "New World"?), the

world became so complex and full of unintended consequences that the point system couldn't adjust. But the accountants who manage that system are just as much coders as Michael—paper-pushers without the wherewithal or desire to bring consideration of the human element into their process, because it'll just muck it all up. Their number machines are unable to process the complexity of human beings. Their system doesn't work.

“This idea that you can just come up with an automated, robotic way of dealing with the messy complexities of human life... This idea that we can find the perfect scientific solution to things sometimes just gives too much power to people who are in charge of the system—they like to say they're running things in the name of science, but really, they're running a company to make a profit, and I think that's part of the Zuckerberg delusion, was that he presented himself as somebody who was governing his system in the name of reason, but in fact, he was really trying to make us addicted to his platform and make as much money as possible.”

Franklin Foer on On the Media, episode: “Big, if True” (2018)

“These algorithms, they don't show up randomly. They show up when there's a really difficult conversation that people want to avoid.”

Cathy O'Neil on 99% Invisible, episode 274: “The Age of the Algorithm” (2017)

But when Team Human/Michael tries to argue for an update to the system, their only way is to head to an outdated government building (the real Good Place's Post Office) to meet with an outdated and ineffectual Federal Communications Committee (the Good Place Committee). After getting nowhere there, we leave the team running to the Judge of the Universe so that they can play out their own experiment. Can they build a neighborhood to help bad people become good? If they can, it won't be because of their neighborhood or their Janet—it will be because of their involvement as humans with their minds on serving community.

As for whether there are really soulmates outside Michael's design, the show is a bit cagey. It seems to me that Michael invented the concept of soulmates as a way to organize his humans and keep them distracted from what he's up to (I smell Foucault). But as the show continues to play out the fates of its humans, the true nuances of

loving another person seem to be playing out, too. Rather than true soulmates, there are messy life companions, triangles, and a lot of flip-flopping. Eleanor and Chidi continually stumble on a bond that comforts and scares them at different points in their timeline, but eventually congeals into something all-encompassing. Jason once fell in love with Janet, but finds something unexpected with Tahani in the show's second season (and Tahani once had a big crush on Chidi). Let's not forget Eleanor's raging lust for Tahani...

In "Michael's Gambit," Eleanor pinpoints the exact moment when Michael's plan went all wrong: when she confessed to the whole town that she wasn't supposed to be in the supposed "Good Place." The thing that Michael couldn't predict about her, about all humans, was their capacity to be honest. Because another messy thing about humans? We're not bad or good, we're both—and that messiness will always bring a system like Facebook to its knees. *The Good Place* reminds us through metaphor that technology is never the solution, but it's also never the problem. Technology is just us, because we built it. It isn't immutable, and it isn't unbiased. And like *Parks and Recreation*, *The Good Place* operates from a hopeful angle—that humans are in control if they want to be, and there's always a way to be better than we are.

“We need to stop thinking about technology as a solution to all of our problems, but think of it as a guide to what those problems actually are...”

James Bridle in "The Nightmare Videos of Children's YouTube—and What's Wrong with the Internet Today," TED (2018)

In the season three finale, "Pandemonium," Eleanor has to wipe her now-soulmate Chidi's memory in order to prove that their new neighborhood can really help bad people be good. It's her own torture. *The Good Place* continues to return to the idea that you have to go through hell in order to be good. And going through hell is what we messy humans excel most at.

“See? We've been torturing each other since the moment we arrived.”

Eleanor in The Good Place, episode 113: "Michael's Gambit" written by Michael Schur (2017)

So what is the real Good Place at the end of this tunnel, the one that we still can't get into? Maybe it's Google Plus—impossible, utopic, and something we gave up on a long

time ago. But I think the elusive nature of the real Good Place is truly what the show is after—the humanism, the heart, the stuff that can't be quantified by binary code. If we ever see it, the real Good Place will be a place that embraces this human messiness in service of community.

It may be the Facebook we never thought to dream of.

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THEY WERE ON FACEBOOK THE WHOLE TIME.
(AN ESSAY)**

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