

The Actual and the Good

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My topic is the good. More precisely, it is the idea of the good as it is discussed in the eponymous section in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The topic lends itself to two sorts of enquiry, one aiming to get clear about logic the other about Hegel's views on ethics. If the main puzzle is about the presence of a discussion of the good in a book about logic, then it makes sense to focus on issues such as the nature of Hegel's logic and its internal structure. If one takes the section as programmatic for Hegel's ethics, then the context of the enquiry will have to broaden to encompass his discussion of morality, ethical life and relation to his proximate interlocutors. While these broader enquiries are obviously relevant to my topic, I want to hold them at arm's length, in order to focus on the claims Hegel makes about the good in this short section of the *Logic*.

I will argue that the idea of the good is best understood in terms of a rather unorthodox thesis concerning actuality, namely that what is actual -as opposed to what just is, either spatio-temporally or abstractly- is properly identified as actual if it embodies a value, the value of maximal determinateness.

So my aim in what follows is to examine (i) what maximal determinates is and, relatedly, (ii) why one might hold that maximal determinateness is a value; (iii) why the actual is distinguishable from relevant contrast classes in terms of a value and specifically *this* value; and finally (d) what it means to say that the good is actual, or perhaps what it takes for the good to become actual.

1. The Idea of the Good and will. At the start of the section in the *Science of Logic* (SL from now on), Hegel states that the good is the goal of the will (SL 675, WL 12.178). This bears a striking resemblance to claims in the 'Morality' section of the *Philosophy of Right* (PR from now on). Here is are some of these claims: 'the absolute end of the will, [is] the Good' (PR §114, p. 79); 'For the subjective will the good and the good alone is essential' (PR §131, p. 87); 'The particular subject is related to the good as the essence of his will' (PR §133, p. 89). Even though they occur at different stages of the argument, there is a clear continuity of thought here, stemming from the idea that the will is connected to the good. I think the case can be made that Hegel in PR engages with and defends his own version of the thesis that willing is under the guise of the good, but this is not directly relevant to the

present paper. What matters in that claims such as those quoted from PR can also be found in SL. This is puzzling because one obvious difference between the two works is while it is appropriate to speak of agency and willing in the PR, it is rather more awkward to do so in SL. Still Hegel speaks of 'will' quite freely in this section (see e.g. SL 730, WL 12.231 and also SL 730, WL 12.232, where he describes it as 'self-determining').

Without entering into the debate about who is the subject of the SL – or indeed whether it is permissible to think of SL as having a subject, it is possible to make sense of these references to 'will' if we start with the interpretative hypothesis that the section on the idea of the good is centrally concerned with the *realization* of this idea. Although the topic does not invite a discussion of human psychology, as does the 'Morality' section of PR, it does relate to how ideas become real. The will has a place then in this discussion because it provides a placeholder concept for the nexus between the idea of the good and good realized; if we then further accept that ideas aim at their own realization -that they possess powers or tendencies towards some end- then the concept 'will' shall have earned a more substantive role than that of a mere placeholder.

2. Theoretical and practical. Hegel introduces the topic of this section by contrasting the theoretical and practical idea. He is not specifying what ideas he is talking about, what these ideas are ideas of. The difference he has in his sights is in the manner of the presentation of such ideas rather than their content. Even to grant this, however, it is far from clear what theoretical and practical presentation could mean. How can the genus 'idea' be differentiated into 'theoretical' and 'practical'?

Hegel's use of the determinate singular article 'the' to talk about the theoretical idea and the practical idea, as if they are two distinct entities, strongly suggests that ideas can be categorized into theoretical and practical without reference to content or what they are of or about. They have, Hegel claims, different relation they have to what he calls 'the objective world'. The theoretical idea is a universal (*Allgemeine*), it is subjective and also 'lacks determination' *as such* it 'stands opposed to the objective world' and derives from it 'content and filling' (SL 729, WL 12.231). The practical idea 'stands against' the actual. The relation to substantial being is different: the practical idea has an active relation to the objective world; the (objective) world is *denied* actuality, the practical is to become actual (as opposed to gaining content from the world).

The high level of abstraction of this description leaves a lot of scope for interpretation. The description of the theoretical idea for example can fit a number of form/content schemata, from some version of Kant's

concept/intuition dualism to modified Aristotelianism to the effect that 'form' is abstract -in the sense that it is not spatiotemporally replicable- but also not ontologically independent of spatiotemporally located components of the 'objective world'. If we follow that line, however, there is no symmetrical equivalent for the practical idea. To allow for the sort of symmetrical treatment Hegel gives the two, it is tempting to understand the basic contrast in terms of the metaphor of the direction of fit. That is, we can understand theoretical and practical to stand for a different relation to truth: the theoretical idea is true, when the content of cognition is adequate to what is, the 'objective world', the practical idea *becomes* true, when it is realized in the objective world.

While I think that the relation to truth is not irrelevant to the distinction Hegel is drawing here -truth is in fact explicitly discussed in this section- there is a further element that needs to be taken into account to make sense of the basic question that concerns him. The context for the theoretical practical discussion is a relation between subject and world, and the relation is of a subject which takes itself to be the source of objectivity claims -the 'subject has ...vindicated *objectivity* for itself'- and a world that looks by implication to lack determinateness in itself - 'in itself [the world] eludes the unity of the concept and is of itself a nullity' (SL 729, WL 12.231). This is an impositionist picture of conceptual activity: to think about worldly things, subjects need to impose conceptual structure on what subjects call 'world' but which is just a name for something that is intrinsically devoid of conceptual form. Hegel does not present this picture directly as a problem, it becomes a problem with the concept 'good'.

3. A problem with 'good'. Here are the steps leading to the problem that will eventually lead to the modal claim that Hegel presents as a solution. He starts by describing the determinateness of the concept as the good (ibid.), which means both that determinateness is a value and that there is something distinctive about the concept 'good'. It is a concept, Hegel says, that 'entails a demand for external actuality' (ibid.). The theoretical/practical distinction makes sense in this context as focusing on the nature of this demand and how it can be met; in other words how the concept is transformed *from* theoretical *to* practical. It seems then that Hegel is asking a familiar question about the relation between theory and practice. The difference is this, that he aims to show just how difficult this question is and how the impositionist picture of concept use contributes to the difficulty.

The analysis of the problem takes the form of a dialectic between three features of the idea of the good.

(1) First, and rather obviously but importantly for the dialectic, the idea we are discussing is *of* the good.

(2) Secondly, the idea of the good has some 'content' (SL 730, WL 12.232). Hegel is not interested in providing any specific content, for this reason it might be advisable to keep an open mind about whether the good in question is moral or non-moral.¹ The point here is rather that this an idea *of* something, in other words, *something* is good.

(3) Third, the idea of the good is a *practical* idea.

This last may seem innocuous but it stands for a set of rather controversial, or at least non-obvious, claims. Practicality is part of the idea of the good, it is internal to it. Hegel's use of dynamic vocabulary underlines this feature of the idea though it does not explain what it amounts to. One implication however is that even if we were to arrive at a full definition of the good, perhaps in the form of a fully developed theory, we'd still be short of the idea of the good. The good is not fully the good unless it is realized. So it cannot be true that such and such determination of goodness is indeed good, unless such and such determination is predicable of the 'external' world (see eps. SL 729, WL 12.231). The point is not that it is better to have five thalers in your pocket rather than five thalers in thought, nor that 'here's five thalers' is true just in case here's five thalers. Rather the point is that you can't think properly about the good unless it is realized. Here are the two controversial claims: (a) that the good is not fully good unless it is fully real, and (b) that the idea of the good aims at its realization.

Claim (a) functions as a premise in the following argument. The idea of the good can only be true if the good is fully real. The idea of the good can be true. So it follows that the good can be real fully. But, as we shall see, both premises on which this conclusion depends can be questioned.

Claim (b) explains how the good can be real by stating that it is somehow a dynamic idea (which explains the sense in which it is practical). The theoretical idea can give us the concept of the good. If the job is done well, then we will have grasped that the good is a practical concept; it is part of the determination of the good 'the impulse [drive/ *Trieb*] to realise itself' (see too: the 'activity of purpose [*Zweck*]' SL 730, WL 12.231).

¹ I suspect but have no means to show here that at this level things like gingerbread, puppies, or survival, are not going to past muster. But this is an unresolved question I have and it concerns the overall structure of the *Logic*, that is, although some of what Hegel says here, at least the views I attribute to him, can be thought to be general points about how we recognize a good x, or about the unavailability of non stipulative full definitions, I believe that he is concerned with moral goodness here.

There are two ways of making sense of this claim psychologically, neither of which is problem free. The first is Hume's practicality requirement and is a thesis about motivation: very basically it states that there is an internal connection between believing that something is good and wanting to do it. The second is the doctrine of the guise of the good; it concerns itself with the basic form of willing and states that there is a connection between trying to bring something about and thinking it is in some way good.²

Neither doctrine is of much help in the present context because however we take the references to 'will' and to 'subject' in this section, Hegel is not doing psychology here. Getting to grips with (ii) relates to what I said earlier: the assertion of the truth of the idea of goodness entails certain ontological commitments. Such a move is not entirely new of course, Leibniz's God on some interpretations at least is limited in what he can create because of conceptual constraints, the concept of a world sets the limits for the world. Compared to Leibniz however Hegel does not appear to have explicitly identified a creative agent, with intellect and a will, to support this view.

With the basic materials for the argument clearly identified we can now follow its steps.

4. Why the problem with 'good' is a problem. The 'activity of purpose' of the idea, as Hegel calls it, consists in 'positing ... its own determination and by means of sublating the determinations of the external world giving itself reality in the form of external actuality' (SL 730, WL 12.231). The basic activity described is of an idea that is being realized. The problem, Hegel claims, is that what is being realised is 'finite and *restricted*' (SL 730, WL 12.232), and a few lines later, he explains that the problem is with the 'finitude of the content in the practical idea' (ibid.).

I think these are different claims and that depending on what we predicate finitude we get a different problem of finitude. One thing Hegel may be saying here is that the content of the idea of the good is *itself* finite and restricted, or he might be saying that what is being *realized* is finite and restricted (*beschränketes*).³ I'll take each in turn, explain what the finitude problem might be in each case and what the relation between these problems is.

² There is evidence that Hegel subscribes to this doctrine, in PR for example. I discuss this in 'Hegel on Addiction', *Hegel Bulletin* (2018, forthcoming).

³ I think the relevant passage admits of both readings: 'self-determination is essentially *particularization*, since the reflection of the will is in itself, as negative unity as such, also singularity in the sense that it excludes an other while presupposing it' (WL 12.232, SL 730)

Starting with the content problem it is important to note that Hegel is not claiming that the content we call 'good' is not in fact good; he is not making a skeptical point. He describes the problem as a restriction. One way of understanding this is that the idea of goodness, the form of the concept of goodness, is infinite (SL730, WL 12.232) whereas the content of the idea is finite, it is restricted to 'determinate content' (SL 730, WL 12.231). The problem is this: what is it about the content we call good in virtue of which it is good, i.e. earns the designation 'good'? The question is about the relation of the second and third elements of the idea of the good identified previously.

If the content is just anything you like and we just name it 'good' then the idea is arbitrary ('just something posited arbitrary or accidental' SL 730, WL 12.232) -call this the nominalist option. What we want to say is that *this* content, this *something*, is good. But here is the problem: the form of the concept is infinite, whereas the content is 'restricted' because the predicate 'good' always exceeds whatever content it is predicated of.⁴

A way out is to say that this problem stems from a philosophically naive conception of the logic of goodness. The problem dissipates if we understand 'good' to have an attributive function so that content changes according to context. Something is good *for* something or with respect to something. Opting for this interpretation, we certainly avoid the criticism that the content is arbitrary and accidental, it is still subject to the restriction problem, because goodness of the thing relates to some end that limits the goodness, restricts it to the end in question. Hegel sums the finitude problem affecting content thus: 'if the good is again also fixed as *something finite*, and is essentially such, then, notwithstanding its inner infinity, it too cannot escape the fate of finitude' (SL 731, WL 12.232).

The second version of the finitude problem appears at first an odd problem to have; it looks as if Hegel is saying that any realization of the good that falls short of realizing the full infinite idea is restricted and as such flawed. While it is true that no single instance can exhaust all there is to goodness, it

⁴ The passage is: 'The mentioned finitude of the content ... does not yet have the form of the being-in-itself' 730. The thought here can be illuminated with reference to Moore's open question argument without needing to follow Moore to his conclusion about the irreducibility of the good. But something like this insight about the form of goodness exceeding its expression in a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, exceeding definition (*horismos*, from *horizein* which also means to mark a boundary) is a classical Platonic problem.

seems odd to expect this; it looks like a misunderstanding of how general concepts relate to particular things.⁵

But this is exactly what Hegel is asking: how *do* they relate to particular things so that we can answer with confidence the question: is *this* any good? By virtue of what is *this* any good? If we answer, by virtue of its matching somehow the content of the idea of the good, we have not just a recurrence of the earlier problem but also an obligation to make clear the relation of this matching: does it resemble it? if so, how?⁶

Both problems (or ways of interpreting the finitude problem) are about the ontological commitments of the idea of the good. Irrespective of whether one spells out the content of the good in a set of propositions or looks at concrete states of affairs in the world worthy of being called 'good', it remains unclear what it takes for the idea of the good to be 'for itself already the true' (SL 730; WL 12.232).

5. The realisation of the good. One common assumption in the discussion so far is that something is a form and something is content and that there ought to be a match between the two that can be recognized so that we can truthfully say that some content is good. This way of thinking about form and content is fine if we think of some forms, for example, mathematical shapes, a square can be realized in a drawing or in marzipan. This relation does not fit the good because, unlike squares, it is a practical idea, it entails a *demand* for actuality (SL 729, WL 12.231). So it is possible that the ontological commitments question will look different if we take into account this demand. Taking this into account is not easy however since we have not yet seriously examined what I called earlier the nexus between idea and its realization. Concessive talk about 'will' is simply not doing the job. What does and is moreover logically interesting and relevant is practical syllogism, what Hegel calls the syllogism of realisation.

The third feature of the idea of the good, its practicality contains two claims (a) that the good is not fully good unless it is fully real, and (b) that the idea

⁵ This can be illuminated by a Platonic point that the good is the last form to be seen and is multiply realisable in the world; see 'in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and the author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this' (Rep VII 517c-d).

⁶ The relevant passage is 'The realized good is good by virtue of ... not a realization corresponding to the idea' SL 731, WL 12.232)

of the good aims at its realisation. The syllogism of realization allows us to make a first pass at grasping the latter claim.

For reasons that will become clear shortly, I think it is useful to have as context at least the idea of practical syllogism in Aristotle. Practical syllogism is thought directed towards doing. Given some end, the agent thinks about how the end can be realized, and because the end of the action is already being pursued in the thinking, the gap between thought and action closes.⁷ For many who have grappled with this issue, there remains a problem about what exactly the conclusion of a practical syllogism is and what constitutes a valid practical inference. Although the issue is of concern in the present context given that Hegel too wants to close the gap between thought and being, this is not his immediate concern here. His concern rather is this: the advantage of a practical form of thought, the syllogism of realisation, is that it promises to offer an orderly and unmysterious way to connect whatever is to be our major premise, containing the idea of the good, with something that realises the good. This is why the relevant shape of thought is the syllogism of external purposiveness (SL 730, WL 12.232).

6. Problems with a practical form of thought. The syllogism of external purposiveness, however, presents with a problem namely that the end stated in the conclusion is not readily distinguishable from the *means* to some good, rather than the good.

Hegel does not give examples but here is a technical practical syllogism that can be used to illustrate the problem he identifies:

1. I want the hut to be habitable.
2. If I want the hut to be habitable, I must heat it.
3. So I must heat it [valid inference]

Or:

- 3'. I heat it [possibly controversial practical inference].⁸

Premise 1 states some good, the end in view, premise 2 states some fact about the means to the end, and the action is the real world determinations that result from the thinking, the good realized in other words. The problem for Hegel is that the good realized can easily be thought of as a means for attaining the good stated in the major premise.

⁷ I follow Price (2008).

⁸ I adapt this from von Wright (1983) who uses it to discuss Aristotle and argue that for first person deliberation in this form the agent is the cause and therefore there is no problem with closing the gap between thought and action.

Here is another example of the same form of practical syllogism, but this time with recognizably moral content to help illustrate why there may be a problem here:

1. I want to be moral.
2. If I want to be moral, I should keep my promise.
2. You want to be moral.
3. So I must keep my promise [valid inference]
- 3'. I keep my promise [controversial practical inference].

The promise keeping, the good realised in the conclusion, can easily be seen as a means to further the good of the major premise. This is a problem because it does not capture the way in which the conclusion is internally connected to the goodness of the premise.

One way to avoid this problem is to treat the good in the conclusion as part of the good of the major premise. A part/whole relation can help preserve the goodness of the conclusion as an intrinsic property of what is done. To do this, however, we need to have a way of ascertaining by virtue of what this good is good. We re-encounter then the form content problem from earlier. So the part/whole solution will not do.

Instead, Hegel invites us to look at the very structure of the syllogism we are using. The problem is that there is a gap between the first premise, which states some infinite good 'absolute purpose' 'in and for itself' (SL 731, WL 12.233) and the restricted good that is the realized -or to be realized- good. The problem is not as Hegel says 'due to external contingency and to evil' but because of 'collision and conflict in the good itself' (SL 731, WL 12.232). The good remains an 'ought' (ibid.). The traditional problem of the odd metaphysical status of the practical syllogism is, Hegel seems to be saying, already incipient in the move from the general (the idea of the good) to the particular (whatever good falls under it in specific circumstances). Hegel describes this problem as two worlds in opposition to one another, thought and external being (SL 731, WL 12.233).

Although it does not look as if we have advanced at all, the discussion of the syllogism does offer a clue about the basic form of thought of the good, it is just a matter of rethinking the premises. Hegel proposes to do just that with what he calls the syllogism of action (SL 732, WL 12.233).

7. The syllogism of action. The discussion of the action syllogism is extremely dense. Hegel describes and analyses the two premises, spending roughly a page per premise, and then gives the conclusion.

Here are the two premises:

I. The first premise contains an 'immediate reference of the good purpose [*Zweck*] to the actuality which it appropriates' (SL 732, WL 12.233-4).

II. The second premise contains again a reference to actuality as something appropriated and directed as a 'means against the external actuality' (SL 732, WL 12.234); which he also glosses as 'immediate existence' (ibid.).

The vocabulary, major premise containing the purpose and minor premise (middle term or *mesos oros*) the means, fits the Aristotelian conception of practical syllogism while narrowing down the gap between them so that the means are no longer external but somehow intrinsic to the goodness of the premise, which in turn should help establish an internal relation to the good realized in the conclusion. Hegel devotes two very dense paragraphs to discussing each premise. In order to unpack the basic claims, I propose to reconstruct the argument backwards and start from the conclusion. This is because the conclusion is known: it is the good realized without residue.

Hegel puts this conclusion in two different ways; the first, just before he introduces the syllogism of action, sounds a promissory note:

III. The idea of the good can therefore find its completion only in the idea of the true. (SL 732, WL 12.233).

This is a restatement of one of the two claims contained in the practicality feature of the idea of the good, namely that the idea of the good is true if the good is fully realized. I said earlier it is not obvious so the task now is to make sense of it.

Here is how Hegel presents the conclusion of the syllogism after discussing its second premise:

IV. The idea of the concept that is determined in and for itself is thereby posited no longer just in the active subject but equally as immediate actuality; and conversely this actuality is posited as it is in cognition, as an objectivity that truly exists (SL 733, WL 12.235).

8. Actuality. The newly prominent notion, also prominent in the two premises, is the notion of actuality. The question now then is: how can we understand actuality such that it accommodates the good fully, without restriction? If we can answer this, then we will have understood how the syllogism of action works, or at least it is supposed to work, and so we will

have understood Hegel's solution to the problems of ontological commitments and of practicality.

A clue is given when Hegel says the problem is with our presuppositions about the thought of the good, the limitation is the concept's view of itself, it is this view that stands in the way. This is a point I illustrated earlier with the example of mathematical shapes. The discussion of actuality allows us to get more precise about the nature of the limitation regarding the good.

To understand 'actual', we need first to get the right contrast class for the context. Here are some senses of 'actual' and their contrast concepts Hegel uses in the *Logic*.

(i) actual v 'empty possibility' (SL 66, WL 21.76). This is a contrast between possibility and being. The concept, here 100 dollars, is the 'determinateness of the content' as 'empty possibility'. The content is pretty determinate not one more or less dollar, but it is determinate as empty possibility, which can be understood to mean it's just not instantiated.

Support for this unexceptional interpretation can be found in the discussion of finitude: finite things 'are', they have a determinateness, and that non-being is part of their nature, not just a 'mere possibility' (SL 101, WL 21.116; see also the start of the section on actuality SL 478, 11.381). This contrast invites us to think of actual as concrete or spatiotemporally existing.

But that is not the actuality of the good we get here. The reason for this that all the problems so far were with particular spatiotemporal entities or states of affairs which failed to match the good or at least their relation to the good as infinite remained a question. Terminologically Hegel marks the difference in this section by calling this type of actuality 'external' (SL 732, WL 12.234). This external actuality, or the instantiation relation is precisely the source of our problem, since instantiation in any particular is a restriction by Hegel's lights.

(ii) actual v abstract that which exists in 'pure thought'.

If this is how we understand the contrast and transfer this to the thought of the good, then the gap between thought and spatiotemporal items will never close. It is indeed two different worlds we are talking about, to put it differently, the actions we talk about are types, the actions we perform are particulars (SL 733, WL 12.235). This is a perfectly general problem, it is not just a problem if you have a commitment to the good as residing outside the world of spatiotemporal particulars. The generality can be seen if we ask not just how universals relate to particulars, but why any of those (categories,

spatiality, temporality) be features of *reality*. We have no reason, unless we assume literalism, to think of reality as other than 'realm of darkness' (SL 732, WL 12.233). This problem is encapsulated in the impositionist picture of concept use we encountered earlier, in the opening discussion about the theoretical and the practical idea. To consider the ontological commitments of our thought about the good is to get out of the 'repetition' (SL 733, WL 12.234) of assuming an actuality that is 'in and for itself worthless' (ibid.).

(iii) actual v insufficiently determinate.

The idea of the good presents various ways in which a certain way of thinking about the good makes the question 'how can the good be actual?' - where actual is understood simply as this -thing event state of affairs - all but impossible to answer. Hegel turns the question on its head 'what makes the *actual* good?' Thinking outside the Hegelian context we can say because it is there, it is real, and what we mean is also that it is connected with other things that hold it in place (as opposed to fantasies, dreams, utopias). And one reason for the practical motivation of realizing the good is because we want the good to be there, real and connected with other things that hold it in place and do not contradict it.

9. Actuality as a value. With this preliminary in place here is the sense of actual that can show actuality as embodying a value. One of the contrasts Hegel draws in this passage is between actuality and 'abstract reality' (SL 733, WL 12.234) and 'abstract immediacy' (SL 731, WL 12.233). Rather than trying to understand what the terms 'abstract reality' and 'abstract immediacy' mean, I suggest we take them at face value and try to find what their contraries might be so as to get some sense of actuality. A reality that is not abstract is one that has definition, and in parallel with that, an immediacy that is not abstract is determinate. Definiteness and determinateness can be more or less, they come in degrees; full or 'complete' (SL 731, WL 12.233) determinateness can be thought of as maximal determinateness. If we think now of reality as possessing the virtue of maximal determinates we think of a maximal set of properties that are true of some region (say a world). Usually these will include spatiotemporal properties, natural properties and so on. But given our topic, the properties that concern us are *value* properties. So we are looking for a maximal set of value properties that are true of some region. But the discussion so far has taught us that any region we pick will have value properties that are restricted somehow. In the new vocabulary we can say that the good in any region will be less than fully determinate, so it will have less actuality.

Maximal determinateness is a definition of actuality that allows us to distinguish the actual axiologically from that which is not actual. Why would

we want to distinguish the actual from the non-actual axiologically? Because the aim from the outset is to figure out how the idea of the good is true, which prompted the original question 'in virtue of what is the good good?' The dialectic undermined our confidence in our grasp of the good as a static form that relates to some given content, and pushed us to consider its practical form. Continuing with the assumption that the good can be true, we were then led to the idea that the good realized without residue. Although it looks as if we are running in circles, we have at this point obtained a logical-metaphysical definition of the good. The axiological conception of actuality gives us the notion of maximal determinateness. The good that is actual has this value. And the actuality that can be termed 'good' cannot have any determinations that allow local contradictions about whether something is good or not; in other words, it is a perfectly consistent set. The good that has this value is actual and also true because this perfectly consistent set can be re-described as a conjunctive fact of all the true propositions that make up the good. So the good is truly good by virtue of being actual, i.e. attaining maximal determinateness.

10. The Actual and the Good. The obvious question now is: how is the value of actuality distinguishable from the value of goodness? If we end up affirming that the good just is, we may have sufficient grounds to backtrack and check the plausibility of the assumption that the good can be fully realized, and that the good is not fully good unless it is fully real. These assumptions, which can be easily challenged from non-Hegelian perspectives, e.g. by those who have relative, context-based, or particularistic conceptions of goodness, may also now be shown to cause trouble for Hegel's own position.

The trouble consists in this. The Kantian transcendent conception of goodness, and its metaphysical setting, appears from a Hegelian perspective problematic, for the familiar reasons, which are also present in the analysis of the idea of the good in the *Logic*, namely the good we can get hold of is always restricted and finite, so we are in an unenviable situation as agents, striving and not attaining the good. The Hegelian picture I just presented and defended, allows for the good to be actual, with this one caveat that the fully determinate good, that is, the conjunct of all that is good can attain maximal determinateness, but in a way that is also beyond the reach of any individual, or set of individuals, or collectives, or specific historical ethical communities, nations and so on. The nature of the relation between the good and the actual means that we as located individuals in specific spatiotemporal contexts can only at best have partial goods in view.

I think that this problem may well turn to an advantage at least for those who are troubled by the incipient complacency or quietism of Hegel's

ethical view. In addition, because the argument is not skeptical it does not imply that at the local level, one would be wrong to assert that such and such is good, or this action is good, or that person is good. This is the level at which disagreements and conflicts arise and at which revision of our views takes place. Also it is the level at which we come to change our mind about specific judgments, say when we find out about consequences we had not anticipated and so on. In all these contexts, the good has some content (even if we get our guidance from formalist ethics). If we follow Hegel, reflecting on this content would -should, or might- lead us to realize that we don't fully grasp what is good. And the source of the problem is that the good is not fully realized, or more technically, it is not yet actual. So 'good' and 'actual' are usefully differentiated when we think of partial or individual or spatiotemporally indexed goods, goods, that is, which, for these very reasons, are deficient in actuality, i.e. they produce contradictions somewhere down the line either because the content is revised (i.e. such and such is no longer acceptable as good) or because of consequences that make us revise our original judgment of goodness. The correction of the deficiency in actuality also results in a goodness that is perfect, and so actual and good become effectively indistinguishable.⁹ As a result, the two value terms 'good' and 'actual' to be predicable of each other.

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⁹ The point is made by Hegel in the final section of the Logic as follows: 'The idea of the concept that is determined in and for itself is thereby posited no longer just in the active subject but equally as an immediate actuality; and conversely this actuality is posited as it is in cognition, as an objectivity that truly exists' (SL 733, WL 12.235).

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