

VIRTUE ETHICS AS SOCIAL ETHICS

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RESOURCES

The Aristotelian Tradition

“Every community is established with a view to some good” —*Politics I.1*

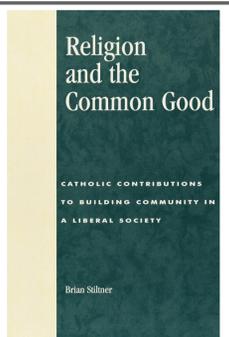
“Friendship seems to hold cities together”—*Ethics VIII.1*

Human flourishing: In mind, body, character, and relationships

The Thomistic Tradition

Moral and intellectual virtues complemented by theological virtues

Jacques Maritain: The common good is a moral good; “justice and civic friendship are its cement.”



The Tocquevillean Tradition

Justice and benevolence as social virtues

“The art of association”

Social capital: both bonding and bridging forms are needed



The Catholic Social Tradition

Five uses of “social virtues” in the 2004 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, e.g.:

- Solidarity is “a fundamental social virtue since it places itself in the sphere of justice. It is a virtue directed *par excellence* to the common good” (19)
- The family “contributes to the common good and constitutes the first school of social virtue” (238).

THEORY

TWO MEANINGS OF “SOCIAL VIRTUES”

1. Communally focused, other-regarding virtues (e.g., justice, solidarity, concern for the environment) that help people contribute to the common good
2. Application of any virtue trait to a social purpose



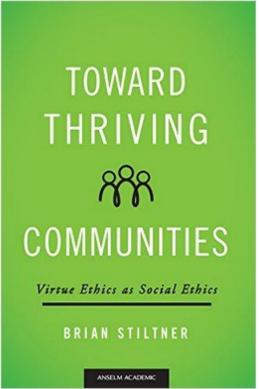
VIRTUE AS A SOCIAL ETHICAL METHOD

Using the above resources and other tools of ethical analysis to recommend habits and practices that will help persons, groups, and societies to flourish. Intermediary groups are essential, for they contribute to the character and the flourishing of both their individual members and of their society.

PROJECTS

Toward Thriving Communities

My 2016 book develops the theory/method described above and examines challenges and opportunities for four groups: families, schools, businesses, and charities.



Next project: Spirituality for a Good Society

- Aim: To develop spiritual and theology expressions of the social virtues methods. To develop spiritual practices that help people promote flourishing communities (with focus on the U.S.)
- Challenges: Social fragmentation, partisanship, social media, distrust of institutions and of religion. Core problem: Deficits of happiness, meaning, and connection.
- Strategies: Nurturing virtues of relationality, hospitality, mindfulness, and willingness to dialogue.



Future project: Social Virtues for the Global Common Good

- Aim: To “scale up” social virtues that are developed in our intimate communities, so the global community is more capable of addressing climate change, refugee crises, war, arms control, etc.
- Challenges: Social fragmentation, divisive politics, economic inequality, difficulty of cooperation for long-term goals.
- Strategies might center on: Interreligious cooperation, education, “smart” philanthropy, “happiness”-based development methods and metrics.

