

**Excellence and Effectiveness:
Ordering the Common Goods of Business**

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Abstract:

The common good is often construed in a way that is too broad or too moralistic to be effective in practical deliberation. It is theoretically unclear how specific and mundane business objectives fit in to a scheme of moral virtue, or how much value we should put upon them. This paper builds on the more precise tradition of Simon, Hittinger, and MacIntyre, according to which a common good is the flourishing of any community as a community, in which good the members participate. We develop this view to reflect the multiple dimensions of common goods that constitute overall organizational flourishing, thus enhancing the practical contribution of the common good in questions of business and economy.

We argue that any community's flourishing is internally articulated by four different types of common goods. Aristotelian ethics has recognized a distinction between goods of efficiency and of excellence, as well as that common goods may be intrinsic or extrinsic to a social form. We combine these distinctions to create a new typology, from which we posit an internally ordered, fourfold theory of a community's goods. For an economic community such as a business, the four resulting dimensions of common flourishing are, roughly: profit, organization, shared practice, and productivity. None of these goods simply *is* the common good of the community, which requires all the dimensions. Contrariwise none is merely instrumental, as each expresses some excellence of the community. The goods are internally ordered to one another, with shared practice (the intrinsic good of excellence) as the core value; this order aids prudence in ranking and relating the goods.