Common Good and Civic Spirit in the Welfare State: Problems of Societal Self-Description

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The categories common good and civic spirit have loomed large within the centuries-long debate over the socio-moral qualities of citizenship. The common good signifies a normative orientation for action relating to the community. Civic spirit signifies the readiness of citizens, when engaged in activities that affect the community, to orient themselves toward such a normative ideal. Consequently, there is a linkage between common good and civic spirit. The latter, as a motivational premise for any normative orientation toward the former, represents a highly condensed socio-moral resource: one of those antecedent bases of political order, consumed within the political process, yet themselves not reproducible by it. The functioning of free and democratic societies—societies that do not try to manufacture civic spirit forcibly—rests crucially on this basis.

The derivative ideal of common good and the socio-moral resource constituted by civic spirit are not only mutually dependent but locked in a vicious circle. The normative ideal of common good tells us how much and what sort of civic spirit we are meant to summon; but the presence of civic spirit constitutes the provisional premise for action oriented toward the ideal of common good.

To establish this theorem's plausibility, we need to first (in Section I) consider the history of political ideas, in order to trace semantic changes and rhetorical functions at work in the concept of common good. This concept has been continuously discussed throughout the evolution of modern society. Its contemporary relevance will become evident, in Section II, through the example of the debate over the future of the welfare state (even if the evidence consists simply in the sense of a new lack of clarity within political semantics). Finally, in Section III, we return to the connection between common good and civic spirit, further discussing the theorem of socio-moral resources. In this regard, we will observe that the main problem in the case of the welfare state seems to involve an undertaking of civic spirit, whereas in the case of supranational integration-processes, such as that of European unification, the problem is the converse (an overtasking of civic spirit).

I. COMMON GOOD AND CIVIC SPIRIT IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL IDEAS

In advanced early non-European cultures, the common good already represented a central topic for the reflection upon political-social, legal, and economic order. In the framework of Western history, it played a similar role in both ancient Greece and republican Rome, and beyond that from Christian narratives to scholastics.

In the 6th century BC, Greece experienced a realignment of values in favor of a polis-centered ethics, as a consequence of tyrannical abuse of power, the legitimacy of political rule emerged as a central question. In the wake of such developments, Plato in his Politics tied his notion of common good to the idea of justice:

"We are not constructing our community with the intention of making one group within especially happy, but to maximize the happiness of the community as a whole. We thought we'd be most likely to find morality in a community like ours and also immorality in a community with the worst possible management... What we are doing at the moment, we think, is forming a community which is happy as a whole, without having left a few of its members and making them the happy ours." Plato sees the existence of the polis as depending on the socio-moral quality of its guardians. In that context, he appeals to the opposition between self-interest and common-interest. He is convinced that the general benefit reflected in the proper form and good condition of the polis is the same quas non of all individual fulfillment. It is this rejection of a direct orientation toward self-interest that is the basis for Plato's authoritarian understanding of the state's influence on the individual citizens.

Plato's student and critic Aristotle formulated a different understanding of the common good, one more compatible with principles of democracy and freedom. He saw the general benefit as a second basic mode of human socialization, placed...
alongside natural sociability—human beings having a natural leaning toward state-grounded social forms. But Aristotle does follow Plato in tying the concept of common good ("the general advantage," which he equates to "the good in the political field") to the norm of "justice."

In contrast to the authoritarian Florcix's top-down utopia, however, Aristotle's idea of the common good involves limiting the competence for political rule, in that it suggests a distinction between constitutional forms oriented toward the common good, on the one hand, and self-interest, on the other. The constitutional good is the criterion for the typological qualification of different forms of states.

It is clear then that those constitutional forms that aim at the common advantage are in effect rightly framed in accordance with absolute justice, while those that aim at the ruler's own advantage only are faulty, and are all of them deviations from the right constitutions.

Despite its many points in common with Greek and Roman thought, the Christian worldview initially marked a disjuncture with antique notions of the common good. It marked, in fact, their transcendence. The eminently political Greek consciousness of ability (agency-consciousness) had meant grasping all events from the vantage of intentional political action and its concrete consequences. In contrast, the salvational orientation of Christian patristics meant a depoliticization relativization of inner-worldly events. Through this process, a line was also fixed on the relevance of the political-juridical concept of the common good for generating the greatest possible accord between inner-worldly order and God's law and salvational plan. At the same time, we have here a radicalization of the gap between self-interest and intervention for the lex externa. Common good and self-interest here thus comprise asymmetrical counter-concepts in Reinhart Koselleck's sense of "prefigurative concepts with claims to universality ... involving a mutual recognition of the parties involved."

In the course of the Middle Ages, the common-good topos would experience a gradual repoliticization, hence a renewed significance: a development culminating in scholastics. Thomas Aquinas again sees the individual bonus as embedded by the bonus communis, in that both are determined by the transcendent sumnum bonus as the causa finalis of all events. Earthly bonus communis here forms the first step in partaking of the ordo divinus. In scholastics, however, the subordination of human social and spiritual existence to the divine order was given a role-limiting, hence eminently political, accent. With natural and past continuing to represent its most important manifestations, the explicit state goal of utopia publica could be related to spatially defined, politically organized units in an increasingly concrete manner. And it served not only as foundations for justifying a ruler's actions, but also as a legal limitation on them. Citing Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas in his Summa Theologiae defines a regime as "justif tyranny" when the ruler does not strive for the common good but for his private benefit.

Thus we can see that in late medieval political conflicts, the ideal of common good served as an oppositional guiding principle, and thus to a considerable extent, the struggle for power involved a struggle for monopoly in the definition of common good or common interest: the concept and situation of limited emergency and public interest were the levers used by monarchs to concentrate their power and realize sovereignty. But in discussions over whether an emergency was truly present and what the common good concretely required, the rulers could react against the royal prerogatives. In this manner, the struggle for competence in determining necessities and utilis publica was the formative principle in the struggle for the state.

Referring to Koselleck's theory of a "saddle-period," Heinz Scheling has described the phase of accelerated change in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the pre-saddle-period of modernity. Marked by the objectification of societal relations accompanied by social discipline and differentiation, this phase also allowed ample room for a confrontation with the "common good" topos. Namely, after the topos had increasingly come to designate the state's paramount purpose in the course of the sixteenth century, a normative shift from common interest to self-interest became apparent. The background to this shift was a general threat toward individualization within the estate society, in the wake of the religious peace inaugurated in Augsburg in 1555—a development affecting not only religious praxis but also the legal culture. Not only did this shift in norms look forward to the need of need to central to Hegel's legal philosophy. At the same time, it was a theoretical anticipation of the career of self-interest as a political-theoretical counter-concept to the old republicanism of ideal of political virtue: the voluntary readiness of the citizen to conceive of his private interest in relation to the common good. What was anticipated was the counter-concept's real, historical impact, running parallel to the differentiation of a realm of the state standing opposed to a bourgeois-societal sphere—a sphere inhabited by politically inactive maximizers of prosperity. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the ideal of common good became directly linked to the realm of administration and public welfare, and this development led to a pronounced tension between the ideal and the notion of justice: a notion with which it had previously been intimately related. For medieval scholastic thinking, bonus communis resulted from the rational

1Amelaud 1990, p. 212 (II, IV 4, 1, 1779 b 10 b), 213 (II, IV 4, 2, 1779 b 10 R).
2Ibid., p. 221 (II, IV 4, 7, 1779 b 17 R).
3Ibid., p. 240 (II, IV 4, 19, 1779 b 17 b).
exercise of rights; the idea of welfare was here contained, as it were, in the goal of justice, as was the welfare state in the past state. Thus, while the same time keeping in mind the justification henceforth demanded from Protestant laicized pessimism for all worldly justice—especially political justice. Welfare state became the object of a state activity that demanded foundation; and it became important to endorse an internal structure allowing a correspondence of individual welfare with the general good.

Bernard Mandeville’s Fable of the Bees (published first in 1706 as The Graving Hole or Political Merit)22 has a key place in the political-theoretical shift of paradigms from a discourse of virtue to a discourse of interest. To be sure, Mandeville’s text itself presents the asymmetrical conceptual opposition of self-interest and common good. But the moral of his fable of the unhappy hive turns the inherent meaning of this contrast straight on its head: “private voices, public benefits” is Mandeville’s credo. When every single individual egotistically pursues his private well-being according to his personal inclinations, the end effect is the public benefit: “The want of all the Multitude Did something for the Common Good.”23 Mandeville’s construction is based on the idea that citizens are in the position to rationally see to their own interests. To be sure, Mandeville himself remained skeptical vis-à-vis his theory’s implicit premise. He demanded massive state intervention to prevent the loss of civic spirit—what concerned him most was shortsightedness and ignorance regarding the needs of future generations.24 The basic assumption that the common good was a necessary outcome of well-understood self-interest maintained its hegemony above all in the realm of economic theory. It was judged in far more optimistic terms by Adam Smith than by Mandeville.

Smith did base his argument on the conventional assumption that all human beings depend on mutual help and support, and to this extent he maintained a faith in natural sociability. But he viewed the goal of mutual readiness for cooperation as being best attained by acknowledging every person’s self-love—by deliberately applying the economic reasoning to individual actions. As Smith explained in “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.”

In thus postulating an invisible hand, signifying a direct increase of general good in proportion to efforts in the inverse direction, Smith’s theory represents something like liberalisms’s “semantic coup” in relation to the idea of common good. Through the idea’s definition as a producer of clearly perceived self-interest—the egotistic maximization of individual advantage—the asymmetric conceptual opposition between self-interest and the common good, already relativized by Mandeville, was finally extinguished.25

Immanuel Kant was no less optimistic regarding both this opposition and the possibility of identifying the calculation of political action with a rational calculation of interest. Compared with the notion of human justice in Kant’s rational state within the opposition between pursuit of common good and pursuit of private well-being, essential for classical politics in its distinction of just from unjust rule, becomes unimportant. For Kant, situus publicus takes on the meaning of institut publicus and the central notion of the material welfare-state is exchanged for the central notion of the formal legal state.26

But this Kantian dissolution of the idea of common good marked neither the end-point nor decisive moment in the political-theoretical and social-philosophical controversy over the priority of public or private interest. Hegel did not follow “Kant’s transcendent formula of public good” and its equally obscure progeny.”27 Rather, he raised the ante with a dialectic notion of civic spirit.28 According to this notion, the general is no longer seen by individuals in unmediated fashion as another, as something strange; instead, individuals know that the common good also stands for their own interests. Such knowledge defines the citizen’s socio-moral qualities or civic spirit.

The controversy between Kant and Hegel clarifies the key role that has always been played by the “common good” topos in the founding of juridical, political, and social order. With political virtue representing a central political idea in prerevolutionary Europe, an orientation toward the common good was considered a basic element of rational political action. In this manner, the socio-moral disposition and intentionality of political-social agents—their civic spirit—took center stage.

Montesquieu, for example, emphasized that more than in any other type of state, citizens in a democracy were meant to identify with the common good. Montesquieu in any event saw the efficacy of an invisible hand at work, not in democratic societies as would Adam Smith, but in monarchies. There honor had an integrative value, meaning that “each person works for the common good, believing he works for his individual interest.”29 But he considered a society of purely egoistic maximizers of interest impossible in a democratic body politic. For, he argued, a republic requires “a continuous preference of the public interest

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23Smith, p. 320.
24Smith, 1881, pp. 2 & 1; J. Smith 1941 (p. 434): “[The individual] generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest . . . He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.”
25Ch. Hirsch 1977, p. 11: “Adam Smith’s invisible hand has failed individual self-interest with social good. But the condition in which this link has been achieved over a wide area can now be seen not as a mere condition that can be acted on to prevent. to be ruined, and efforts to resist this condition to be possible through different actions. Rather, they can be seen in important respects to social effects that associated with a transition from an earlier socioeconomic system. The generally benign invisible hand was a favorable impact of liberal capitalism.”
27Montesquieu 1809, p. 27.
over one's own — and indeed without this being realized through the state's concurrence, as in Maasdorp.

In contrast, modern contractual theory is centered around the paradigm of informed self-interests. Its premise is that the institution of the market can produce an interlinkage of individual trade calculations resulting, in turn, in the greater general good. In the political-theoretical focus of contractualism, we thus find institutional mechanisms and historical-pragmatic roles of economic process replacing the socio-moral disposition and intentionality of the citizen. Instead of such socio-moral qualitative improvement through self-improvement, what is aimed at are institutional mechanisms for qualitative improvement without self-improvement.22 "The attempt has been made to erect an increasingly explicit social organization without a supporting social morality. The result has been a structural strain on both the market mechanism and the political mechanism designed to regulate and supplement it..." The deeper irony... resides in the success of the market system in its initial phase, on the shoulders of a pre-market social ethos.23 But no matter whether, on the one hand, there is an effort to found a body politic on the citizenry's readiness to show solidarity or, on the other hand, there is an expression of trust in rationally selected means setting in play the invisible hand. In both cases, we have a reliance on (in the broader sense) socio-moral premises of political and economic processes — the existence of such premises neither being assured nor (more categorically) capable of being reproduced within these processes.

II. SELF-DECLARATION OF COMMON GOOD IN THE WELFARE STATE

A backward glance at the history of political thought shows that, according to both context of application and semantic authority, the "common good" tropes can offer a foundation for either legitimating or limiting power. In our present period, the functional, formal concepts can be used correspondingly to justify both extending and restricting the scope of the welfare state. Let us therefore now consider the process of societal self-description through socio-moral tropes. It will become clear that any problematizing of the welfare state's prospects is largely possible only through discourse deploying a specific rhetoric centered on the common good.

Niklas Luhmann has compared the effort to define the public interests — the most prominent terminological substitute for common good — with climbing the Eiger's northern face. "Again and again, dasedevle make it... They are observed and talked about, render both idle tourists and rescue groups breathless, and it is thus difficult to recognize the senselessness of the enterprise." But Luhmann himself stresses the possibility of treating public interest as a theme for empirical investigative investigation of who proposes what the public interest is, and when, and what functions specific ideas of public interest have for specific social systems.24 Such a reformulation of this classical theme does justice to the impossibility, in the modern period, of formulating a unified purpose for the system. A binding, essentialist definition of common good in regard to the state thus becomes invalid.

In consequence of the process of societal differentiation, it has become pointless to speak of common good in a directly normative sense, as a fixed goal of the state. Rather, the concept functions more or less as a means of transport for a discourse of free public-opinion formation. If state administration views itself as democratic and concerned with social welfare — something presently self-evident — then it must consider every value-relevant consequence of its action, as far as its capacity for making decisions allows. In order to achieve the necessary support through its goals, the political system must first formulate the goals we broadly and reproducibly understand as an internal structure of rationalization, work-distortions, and control. For this reason, the political system needs secondary criteria for making decisions... The necessary guidelines for decisions cannot be found through an analysis of goals remaining purely internal to the system. They are constructed outside the state bureaucracy, but still inside the political system in the broader sense — namely, in that threshold-zone defined by the political processes structuring both power and opinion. The state's goal of common good here serves... as both a rule for representation and a facilitator of foundation.25

Common good thus allows us to explicate a principle of political legitimacy overarching the codification of political power. It does so by linking the application of power to the criterion of general good (or of public interest, republican responsibility or other substantive concepts). In this respect, it is important to note that since the eighteenth century the differentiation of bourgeoisie society has produced "a decomposition of common good through its positioning in relation to opinions... that can be expressed in political elections." As the result of democratization, the common good "has become politically inseparable."26

Understood in this framework, the notion of common good marks a distinction between system and environment. By being tied to a (or indeed, the) common good, a society's functional systems categorize the entire society as "environment." When, for instance, the functional system of the economy claims a relation to the common good, what is designated — along with the society...

22[Note]: p. 36.
23[Note]: p. 25.
24[Note]: p. 12.
25[Note]: p. 375.
26[Note]: p. 19 f.
was in contrast with the rational self-interest (producing a maximisation of general welfare through market-driven property) of modern contractual theory. For its part, the neo-liberal argument against present Western European massification of the welfare state proceeds as follows: a false, distributively-oriented understanding of the idea of common good as the state's guarantee of welfare has led to a situation in which the epitome maximisation of interest can no longer constructively promote the general good; rather, enclosed within an illusory system of administrative soliciitate, it has led to a destructive exploitation of social expenditures, inimical to any society's real achievement. Pitting this argument somewhat differently: such welfare states, guided by a false ideal of common good, in effect amputate Adam Smith's invisible hand. They paternalistically limit the unfolding of the active and productive self-interest that furthers the common good, leaving only the kind of self-interest that is passive, unproductive and menacing in it.

III. CIVIC SPIRIT AS A SOCIO-MORAL RESOURCE

As was already the case with arguments for political power in the Middle Ages, the debate over the welfare state at the close of the twentieth century is largely comprised of a struggle for a monopoly over the definition of the common good. It appears incumbent to impose a consistent semantically constructed upon this historically persistent rhetoric of the common good.

This reference to the character of the "common good" topic as a functional formal concept is by no means a rejection of normative political-philosophical interest in the topic. Rather, the abandonment of a substantial definition of the common good—its definition necessarily connected with strong practical validity claims—is not only an outcome of modernity's political semantics. It is also an outcome necessarily called for by the concept's continuous abuse in the twentieth century, particularly under the Nazi dictatorship, with its slogan of "common interest preceding self-interest" (Gemeinwohl geht vor Eigennützig). This slogan served collective ideological purposes ("you're nothing, your Volk is everything") that were as far from the reality of liberal contractual theory (this neglect, grounded in trust in the idea of the invisible hand, be it in the laws of economic process or in the functioning of political institutions) as it was from the state to the societal realm.19

If a paternalistic fixing of the common good by the state is no longer possible, it would appear that the readiness of citizens to enter a discussion aimed at consensus over a broad understanding of the concept is all the more important. And this is the first, fundamental demand placed on civic spirit. We need here recall the vicious circle between common good and civic spirit mentioned at the beginning of our discussion: the normative ideal of common good tells us how much and what sort of civic spirit we are meant to summon; accordingly, the presence of civic spirit is the provisional premise allowing any readiness for orientation toward the ideal of common good.

In consequence, one particular question regarding public life in free democracies needs to be considered: how to avoid damage to freedom itself when promoting (along with increased interest in moral questions) a willingness to subsume self-interest to a common-good orientation, at least when society as a whole would otherwise suffer. As already pointed to in the start, this question has led former Constitutional Court judge Erwin-Baldauf to suggest that free societies live on socio-moral cooperative fundamentals that cannot be reproduced by politics, which must refrain from examining the consciousness of citizens and steering their behavior.20

This is the sense in which—to agree with Montesquieu and return to our opening theorem—the citizen's socio-moral qualities form a prepolitical basis for the political. To reiterate the terms of that theorem: the concept of the prepolitical is not basically temporal, or even ethnic, as argued. Rather, it suggests a voluntary acceptance of socio-moral norms and voluntary engagement for political affairs, both of which civic humanism recognizes as important for a republic. And grasping civic spirit as the socio-moral resource per excellence requires a first insight into our vicious circle; that a minimal degree of civic spirit is the premise for any societal consensus regarding the common good.

The term "resources" is here not meant to imply that the consumption of socio-moral qualities is both compulsory and irreversible—something that would lead to a thesis of cultural decline—that it is neither theoretically nor empirically sensible. Rather, we mean simply to underscore the need for us (as people) to end up to the fashionable concept of "sustainability" as it is and to reject any kind of automation. Such durability is precisely not realized when the problem of the socio-moral qualities of citizens in free and democratic societies is neglected by the realization of liberal contractual theory; this neglect, grounded in trust in the idea of the invisible hand, be it in the laws of economic process or in the functioning of political institutions (the latter grasped either as a replacement for the citizens' internationality or as a model of it). Either alternative might well place great stress on the selfish socio-moral resources—not through making excessive demands on them but, on the contrary, by understanding them. In the end, empirical research has pointed to the welfare state's institutions as an appropriate response to the emergence of one or another socio-moral perspective, and not as their sources, which is instead located in "rare moments of deep and widespread


uncertainty." Such moments "provide a motivational basis of moral behavior... Welfare states and such like consume the appropriate institutional response. These responses become frozen and persist well beyond the moment of uncertainty that gave rise to them."

From this perspective, two apparently contradictory positions are in fact entirely reconcilable. First, we must acknowledge that the attempts, essayed in the spirit of liberal contractualism, "to erect an increasingly explicit social organization, without a supposing social morality" causes "a structural strain on both the market mechanism and the political mechanism designed to regulate and supplement it." The problem thus arises "that the pursuit of private and essentially individualistic economic goals by enterprises, consumers, and workers in their market choices—the distinctive capitalist values that give the system its drive—must be gritted at key points by a strict social morality which the system endures rather than sustains."

Second, the problem does not consist of the socio-moral resources inevitably eroding through usage. Rather, it involves threat in the effect of the invisible hand and the disciplinary force of political institutions leading to the socio-moral qualities—goods that "are not finite, are not divisible and do not diminish with use, but, on the contrary, grow with their exercise"—being threatened with dissolution through lack of demands being made of them. If "an individual's capacity for moral behavior is, from the social point of view, a resource to be exploited," then the flaw at work in defining the welfare state in terms of a "political theory of possessive individualism" consists in viewing the need for a chance to express moral capacities as inconsistent with the welfare state. The Aristotelian model of "morally keeping in practice" does not contradict the model of "moral character-building." Rather, it is the model's complement. It should in fact be quite self-evident that "one of the most fundamental moral tasks before the state" involves "protecting people's self-images" as morally behaving, responsible citizens. This can be clarified by once again citing an observation of Luhmann, who encapsulates the basic condition of modern humanity in the following formula: "everything could be different, and I can change basically anything." In fact of contemporary society's steadily increasing complexity, this condition needs to be regarded in the direction of autonomous responsibility for one's actions all the more so in that, as a result of their specific promise of freedom, modern societies can no longer venture on an authoritarian production of meaning and values, which is one facet of the general hopelessness of such efforts.

For example, in order to motivate citizens to voluntary (and never verifiable) ecological responsibility, political parties and organizations now make use of advertising agencies. Against the superficial impression, the dialectic of societal complexity at work here means an increase in the significance of the individual citizen's responsible action, in direct proportion to the diminution of state controls and—connected to this—the state's purposive management of such responsibility. The dialectic, however, generates little trust in the notion at work in current contractual theory, taken over from neo-liberalism, that the welfare state might still retain control over the few societal realms not capable of sufficient self-regulation. Let us recall the (possibly well-grounded) suspicion, familiar from classical political theory, that institutions may face collapse through the self-induced erosion of their socio-moral premises. This suspicion is robbed of its sense by an institution that existential pressures simply strengthen the citizen's socio-moral fabric. Is the end, liberal-utilitarian economic theory maintained that it could actually dispense with socio-moral intentions altogether, trusting the structure of the invisible hand to convert egoism into the general good.

It is true, in any event, that the citizen's civic spirit and readiness for solidarity does not simply depend on the size of the political-social unit, as the classical republican thesis would have it. It also depends—as the communautarians are never tired of stressing—on supportive cussiniets, personal identification and individual experiences of solidarity that do not constitute the basic material of liberal market globalization. In this sense, even Adam Smith's trust in the self-interest of butchers, brewers and bakers was bound up with the premise of a limited market capable of easy oversight—a market thus guaranteeing that an egoistic maximization of interest achieved at the cost of the consumers is sanctioned by them as well.

We wish, then, to level a reproach at a specific tradition of liberal political theory. Against its own political support for maintaining the standards of the
to the irresponsibly social nature of our species, the possibility needs to be addressed: a more rational and comprehensive policy. To that end, we ought to adopt
the policy described in this discussion and perhaps modify it in the future as more information
becomes available. It is clear, however, that this policy requires the cooperation of all levels
of government, from local to national, as well as the active participation of citizens.

A final point: it is important to note that while the policy described in this discussion
may be effective at achieving the goals outlined, it may also have unintended consequences.
For example, the reduction in the number of food banks may lead to an increase in
poverty among certain segments of the population. It is therefore essential that we
continue to monitor the effects of our policy and be prepared to adjust it as needed.

In conclusion, while the challenges we face are significant, I believe that by working
cooperatively and with a clear understanding of the issues at hand, we can create a
more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all. The road may be long and
challenging, but I am confident that with the right approach, we can achieve our
goals and create a better world for generations to come.
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Another historical argument can also be leveled against such an overtaxation of socio-moral resources, namely that,

... Subsidarity thus appears a more-or-less basic condition for the sustainability of civic spirit. Like the normative ideal of the common good, the social-philosophical principle of subsidiarity must be conceived in relation to the problem of socio-moral resources: subsidiarity understood here both as the presumption of competence on a policy’s lowest possible institutional level and as the demand that problems and challenges be tackled at the closest proximity to their place of origin. To manifest itself successfully, subsidiarity depends on the prevalence of socio-moral conditions that it cannot itself produce or guarantee. It is incoercible without the readiness of citizens to intervene voluntarily for their society’s sake. At the same time, we may presume that subsidiarity makes possible a concrete experience of solidarity in social and political interaction. In doing so, it can contribute to stabilizing and regenerating the socio-moral resource of civic spirit—and hence the basis of its own existence.62

REFERENCES


62This reflects a more-comprehensive interpretation of subsidiarity. The concept of subsidiarity as a principle drawing on the subsidiarity principle of approval of the European Community is discussed in detail in my book. This book also discusses the development of subsidiarity as a principle drawing on the subsidiarity principle of approval of the European Community. See also J. R. 1994, 5, 195–201 (Addison) and W. 1984, and studies on the subsidiarity principle of approval of the European Community. (Buchner 1992).


