Exploring the Human Good: A Learning Project

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Week I: Introduction to the Idea of the Good
Ideas of the good, from “God’s Commands”, Plato and Aristotle, economic and political theories, to rights and law. Note particularly the easier political and social agreement on the good in local communities and specific projects. Identification of some key writings on the human good.
Discussion and agreement on the style and method of the course as an adult learning project.

Week II-Hebrew and Christian Scriptures
Discussion, and reports on the experience and understandings of participants.

Week III-Greek and Roman Ideas
Aristotle and Plato, and the development of “natural law”. The examples of Athens and Rome (e.g. The Athenian Oath). Evolution of the natural law tradition in Catholic thought.
Discussion, and reports on the experience and understandings of participants.

Week IV-Philosophical Ideas of the Good
Enlightenment thinking; theories of human nature, Kant and Mill. Economic and political theory, and the idea of commerce and “the market”. Marx and socialist ideas.
Discussion, and reports on the experience and understandings of participants.

Week V-The Neighborhood and the City
The work of Jane Jacobs with the city and urban development and planning. The “neighborhood” as a small enough unit to contain social agreement on the good.
Discussion, and reports on the experience and understandings of participants.

Week VI-American Society and “Rights”
Summary and Reflection on insights generated by the group. The question of how “the good” might once again become a goal of our current society.