
Expressive Objections to Markets: Normative, Not Symbolic

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A COMMENTARY ON Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski (2015), “Markets without Symbolic Limits,” *Ethics* 125(4): 1053–1077, <http://doi.org/10.1086/680907>

ABSTRACT

Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski reject expressive objections to markets on the grounds that (1) market symbolism is culturally contingent, and (2) contingent cultural symbols are less important than the benefits markets offer. I grant (1) and (2), but I deny that these points suffice as grounds to dismiss expressive critiques of markets. For many plausible expressive critiques of markets are not symbolic critiques at all. Rather, they are critiques grounded in the idea that some market transactions embody morally inappropriate normative stances toward the goods or services on offer.

Two Kinds of Expressive Critiques of Markets

JASON BRENNAN AND Peter Jaworski (2015) argue that we should reject semiotic moral objections to markets. By ‘semiotic objections,’ they mean objections with the following character, which they take to be very common in the anti-commodification literature (see, e.g., Anderson 1995, Satz 2010, Sandel 2012).

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