
ADORNO'S CRITICAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND BUSINESS ETHICS

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A COMMENTARY ON Craig Reeves and Matthew Sinnicks (2021), “Business Ethics from the Standpoint of Redemption: Adorno on the Possibility of Good Work,” *Bus Ethics Q* [first online 19 February]: 1–24,
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ABSTRACT

Reeves and Sinnicks present Theodor Adorno as a philosopher with a sombre message to business ethics. Capitalist markets distort our needs and work in business organisations stultifies our moral capacities. Thus, the discipline's self-understanding must be revised, and supplemented with reflections on what would be good work: free creative activity. After raising some questions about their interpretation of Adorno's writings on human needs, I argue that the paper does not contain all the necessary resources to support its ferociously critical claims. Once such resources are made available, however, the appeal to a notion of good work is no longer viable.

BUSINESS ETHICS TYPICALLY asks questions about how to ethically evaluate the behaviour of companies and the conduct of their key personnel. Frankfurt School critical theory asks questions about how, in light of the experiences of the first half of the twentieth century, we are to understand the manner in which capitalist market societies organise the satisfaction of needs. Reeves and Sinnicks (2021) provide a timely contribution by introducing Theodor Adorno's thought as relevant to the intersection of these questions. The paper can be summarised as follows:

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