The sociologist Juliet Schor tells us that most Americans, when asked, express some measure of deep reservation about market systems. But we fail to put these in a way that “coheres into a persuasive, well-articulated critique.” The philosopher Michael Sandel has recently published a book titled *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* that suggests markets “crowd out morality.” In interviews he explains that he would like to shutter economics departments (Sandel 2011). The philosopher and economist Elizabeth Anderson has begun arguing that our standard approaches in political philosophy, all manner of egalitarian accounts of justice, rest on a “myth” about the market shared by conservatives: the idea that it responds to merit (Anderson 2012). And, of course, we still listen to CEO’s who insist that what we find nefarious is indeed “God’s work” (Blankfein 2009).

There are some justifications that we might or might not have available that make nary a difference to anyone. The justification of the market, I’d suggest, is unlike this. Our concerns about the market, our inarticulateness about the market, our misdescriptions of it: these things, if addressed, could impact our political perspectives and our moral assessments. We have, I mean to argue, so obscure an understanding of the market that this actually interferes with and hinders our being able to hold aspects of it, including even our own behavior, up for assessment. In this paper I argue for a remedy. I suggest that the justification of the market that we need is of a certain type, with features I will try to list, and that it will need to work at this, rather unusual, level of specificity: the specific moral norms that account for acceptable market behavior. The reason for our need for such a norm (and I will suggest one, in conclusion) is because our confusion about the market is so deep. We do not just have no ideas about the purpose and function of the market. We have a host of bad ones.


**Tuesday, April 16 2013—3:15 p.m.**

**Levin Library**

(Yaschik Jewish Studies Center, 96 Wentworth)

Reception to follow at 14 Glebe Street