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# **The Ethical Value of Profit: A Personalist Ontology of Values, Human Dignity and Responsible Economic Action**

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## **Abstract**

This article develops a dignity-centred theory of profit grounded in personalist moral anthropology. It challenges the widespread assumption that profit maximisation constitutes the natural or necessary aim of the firm and argues that this view reflects an ideological reduction of the person to economic utility. Drawing on personalist thought, Catholic social teaching, behavioural economics, humanistic management, and economic sociology, the article shows that economic activity is always moral activity because it is performed by persons endowed with freedom, dignity, and responsibility. Profit possesses intrinsic ontological goodness as a resource that enables organisational continuity, innovation, and social contribution. But it becomes morally good only when generated through relationships and practices that respect human dignity and promote justice, solidarity, and the common good. Conversely, profit becomes morally defective when rooted in exploitation, coercion, domination, or environmental degradation. The article offers a reconstructed hierarchy of values in which instrumental goods such as profit remain subordinate to personal goods. It concludes by outlining implications for business ethics, management practice, corporate governance, and public policy. Profit emerges not as an end in itself, but as a material sign of well-ordered cooperation and a resource for human flourishing.

**Keywords:** behavioral economics; business ethics; dignity; humanistic management; moral economy