

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/news/conference/adorno/>

Adorno's "Sexual Taboos and Law Today" – *Sixty Years On*

Saturday, 25 February 2023

10:00–18:00





Programme

All sessions in S0.20 (Social Sciences).

All breaks just outside of S0.20.

- 10:00–10:30 Registration and coffee
10:30–10:45 Introduction by organisers
10:45–12:15 Panel 1: **Sex and Taboo**

Christine Kirchhoff
Julia König

- 12:15–13:30 Lunch break
13:30–15:00 Panel 2: **Sex and Society**

Marcel Stoetzler
Craig Reeves

- 15:00–15:15 Coffee break
15:15–16:45 Panel 3: **Sex and Crime**

Iris Dankemeyer
Nicola Lacey

- 16:45–17:00 Break
17:00–18:00 **Roundtable with all speakers**
19:00 Dinner at Thai Kitchen in Kenilworth

Christine Kirchhoff (IPU, Berlin): Taboos and Law Today? Reflections from the Perspective of Psychoanalysis

Examining the relevance of Adorno's essay from the perspective of psychoanalysis and dealing with the problem of *Zeitdiagnosen*.

Julia König (U of Mainz): Reflections on the 'Minors-Complex' in Adorno's 'Sexual Taboos and Law Today' and in Current Moral Panics

Exploring the role of infantile sexuality in contemporary contexts and investigating to what extent Adorno's considerations can be made productive for understanding current moral panics.

Marcel Stoetzler (Bangor U): Law, Lust, and Otherness in the Society of Total Domination: On Adorno's Essay 'Sexual Taboos and Law Today'

Establishing how the concept of society determines Adorno's critique of jurisprudence and his use of psychoanalysis in the discussion of sexuality.

Craig Reeves (Birkbeck): Persecution, Punishment, and the Potential for Freedom: Reactualising Adorno's Critical Moral Psychology

Reconstructing Adorno's distinctive psychosocial account of the persecutory urge to punish 'otherness as such' by analysing the unconscious rage fostered by a coercive society.

Iris Dankemeyer (U of Art and Design, Halle): Presumption of Innocence: The Topicality of Adorno's Lines of Enquiry in 'Sexual Taboos and Law Today'

Looking at the tension between sexual taboos and codified law, with special attention to the prosecution of sexual offences against children and norms surrounding the voluntary castration of sex offenders.

Nicola Lacey (LSE): A Feminist Criminal Lawyer's Retrospective on Adorno's Text

Arguing that sexual taboos have survived decades of 'liberalisation' and diversification of legally recognised forms of sexuality, with examples from case law, legislation, and debates about sexual practices and 'identities.'



On “Sexual Taboos and Law Today” (1963)

In ‘Sexual Taboos and Law Today,’ Theodor W. Adorno critiques repressive morality and progressive sexual values alike. The essay’s most famous line – ‘It is a nice bit of sexual utopia not to be yourself’ – locates the



promise of sexuality in the momentary dissolution of identity. It meets with Adorno’s claim that without its anarchical and transgressive aspects sexuality becomes neutralised and inert. ‘Sexual Taboos and Law Today’ sheds light on the dynamics of desire and

disdain, freedom and punishment, losing oneself and finding oneself that characterise the ‘brittle integration’ of sexuality into modern society.

Today, in times of #MeToo, identity politics, and heightened public concern for gender equality and transgender rights, ‘Sexual Taboos and Law Today’ invites renewed scrutiny.



The conference has been organised by Antonia Hofstätter and Simon Gansinger with the support of the University of Warwick’s Department of Philosophy, the Warwick Humanities Research Centre, the Aristotelian Society, the British Society for the History of Philosophy, and the Society for Applied Philosophy. The paintings used for this booklet – Kazimir Malevich’s *Sportsmen* (1931) and *Black and Red Square* (1915) – are in the public domain.