

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The Commodification of Women

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Anderson, E. S. (1990, Winter). Is women's labor a commodity? *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 19(1), 71–92.

Anderson, E. S. (1993). [Section 7.4]. In *Value in Ethics and Economics* (pp. 150–158). Harvard University Press.

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. According to Elizabeth Anderson, what is a “commodity”?
2. Throughout, Anderson distinguishes between different modes of valuation: use, respect, aesthetic admiration, friendly appreciation, romantic intimacy, and loving commitment.
How are these modes different from each other? Which (if any) are appropriate for the valuation of commodities?
3. Anderson expresses concern with feminists who wish to correct patriarchal personal relationships by having them conform more to market norms, where women “acquire full property rights in their bodies... and the freedom to remake the marriage contract at will” (1993, p. 152).
Why does Anderson believe that the feminist appeal to market norms is (A) unnecessary and (B) a dangerous mistake. How are her examples of prostitution and marriage contracts supposed to illustrate claim (B)?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.