

# POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

## 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 premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations 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 and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

### Reading

Anderson, E. S. (1990, Winter). Is Women's Labor a Commodity? *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 19(1), 71–92.

Anderson, E. S. (1993). Personal Relations and the Market. In *Value in Ethics and Economics* (pp. 150–158). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

### Questions

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 (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.