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Sandra Fluke, Anna Gristina, and Why Business Is Like Sex

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For a moment, it seemed like the best encapsulation of the culture wars this month was [Rush Limbaugh's description of Sandra Fluke](#) as a prostitute who wants to be paid to have sex.

Then came Anna Gristina, [the soccer madam](#): an Ugg-wearing, upstate married mother of four who (allegedly) ran a big-time Upper East Side brothel for millionaires and billionaires. Perhaps ironically, Fluke is the more controversial figure.

But Gristina is more interesting.

For some, she's just another sign that we're slipping deeper yet into cultural decadence. It's true that any culture war worth the price of admission is going to make time for fights about prostitution. After all, those who think of culture as something elevating or purifying often look down their nose at sex and business, not just when they're mixed together but on their own terms. Yet no culture can safely segregate sex and business. The two have too much in common. Whether you think that's good news or not, it's a great corrective to the stifling policies we get when health and safety become an obsession. The



Anna Gristina: totally busted, unlike our culture

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culture war we ought to pay more attention to is the one being waged by those who want to use legislation and regulation to eliminate risk, conflict, and discomfort from life's common transactions. Comparing sex and business shows that those busybodies are cutting against the grain of our nature and our culture. Here are three big examples.

1. Sex and business are natural. Adam Smith famously described a unique and innately human “propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another.” The earliest classical liberals — like some today — thought of commerce as one of civilization’s sweeteners, spreading gentle mores and guiding the world out of the age of conquest and scarcity. That was probably a view that only could have arisen from Europe. Alexis de Tocqueville explained that, in the New World, commerce better revealed its true character. The Americans, he wrote, “put something heroic into their way of trading.”

“ The universal movement prevailing in the United States, the frequent reversals of fortune, and the unexpected shifts in public and private wealth all unite to keep the mind in a sort of feverish agitation which wonderfully disposes it toward every time of exertion and keeps it, so to say, above the common level of humanity. For an American the whole of life is treated like a game of chance, a time of revolution, or the day of a battle. These same causes working simultaneously on every individual finally give an irresistible impulse to the national character. Choose any American at random, and he should be a man of burning desires, enterprising, adventurous, and, above all, an innovator.

What’s natural about business, in other words, isn’t that it calms the passions. It’s that it excites them. The future very likely won’t bequeath us a nation of Sandra Flukes whose most notable ambition is to ensure that the government subsidize and guarantee the safest possible sex. Human nature suggests the future will look more like the past than progressives or reactionaries might wish — like a nation of more or less feverishly agitated sexually active people, wonderfully disposed to exertion and productivity by their lust, their love, and their sense that youth, beauty, and time are always fleeting and never enough.

2. Sex and business are theatrical. We’ll periodically hear conclusive-sounding claims that beauty and marketing are a science. We’ve all seen the ten-easy-steps list applied to marketing — whether you’re putting your enterprise or yourself on the market. The magazines on the grocery store checkout rack are a testament to how mechanically sex and business can operate, especially in conjunction. ([John Fugelsang](#): “In this month’s COSMO: Why All Men Are Slime, and Things You Must Do To Desperately Attract Them!”)

But, ironically, it’s Catholic moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre who sees past the paint-by-numbers approach, to the theater that animates sex and business alike. MacIntyre points out that our range of choices for expressing ourselves is controlled by an elite. They even control, he says, how those alternatives are presented. Our ruling elites therefore highly value “competence in the persuasive presentation of alternatives” or, put simply, “in the cosmetic arts.” Many conservatives can see this as a problem. And many liberals can worry that so many people will be enchanted by the artistry of the self that they’ll stop caring enough about things like the quest for social justice.

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Sandra Fluke, Anna Gristina, and Why Business Is Like Sex

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Tough news for both camps: sex and business are showbiz. And since the one thing all Americans hate — even if they use different standards — is bad entertainment, great work in the “cosmetic arts” will continue to be appreciated, celebrated, and rewarded.

3. Sex and business bring us together. Contrary to the claims of some ads, technology doesn’t manufacture desire. Desire creates technology. We dream of new ways to satisfy new desires and then we go to work making that happen. Politically-minded people right and left have a problem with this. Conservatives as well as liberals harbor the fear that we’ll be distracted from their high-minded ideological projects if we get wrapped up in the frenzy of sex and business. They fear that citizenship will become irrelevant. There’s some evidence to feed that fear, but there’s even more evidence that the best way to take your stake in political life seriously is to succeed in carving out a meaningful social role that’s tied to your personal property.

This is as true of [Mark Zuckerberg](#) as it is of the hipster entrepreneurs down the hill from my house, who are revitalizing their neighborhood from the ground up. They’re creating businesses that bring people together in constructive ways by offering to realize important desires. They’re not running brothels, of course; they’re running bars and restaurants and tattoo parlors, and they’re refurbishing houses and opening and stocking art galleries. All those businesses deliver on promises in which our loftier and our more carnal desires are pretty intertwined. But instead of leading the locals to care less about how their community looks and functions, it’s leading them to care more. They sit on neighborhood councils. They participate in charitable ventures. They help push gangs out of town. Without romanticizing things, it’s not too much to say that they help allay our fears that a society captivated by innovation will stop caring about good governance.

In sum? Unlike Sandra Fluke, Anna Gristina gives us the chance to think about what’s happening to American culture from a perspective that’s liberated from our hardened political battle positions. What we discover is that the messy frenzy of sex and business that flourishes in a free society is more of a feature than a bug.

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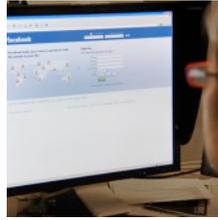
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normajeana Just posted

Thank you for that positive article! Of course sex and business go hand in hand and always have. Sexual release is the best form of stress management there is... which is why businessmen and politicians alike avail themselves of the services of those in the sex industry. But instead of punishing those who provide that stress release, we as a society should allow it to flourish- safely, of course, and without coercion, and stop putting our noses in the air in a snit. If we decriminalize consenting ADULT commercial sex so that there is no need to ask for protection from the cops and politicians, the corruption which allegedly led to this investigation would be minimal at best, leaving law enforcement free to pursue those who actually commit real crimes in which there are real victims who ask for help- not the non-existent 'victims' touted by the radical feminists and religious conservatives- the 'victims' who need to be rescued for their own good!