Prostitution: Yay or nay?

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**Alex:** Wow I heard prostitutes can make up to $500,000 a year. That’s a hefty business.

**Barbara:** Eugh, I can’t believe anyone would try and sell their body like that.

**Alex**: Isn’t it the same as boxers destroying their body for their profession for allowing themselves to get brutalized on a scale like that. I can’t see why it is still an illegal profession.

**Barbara:** If we legalize prostitution it will make it seem as though prostitution is an accepted and noble profession. The already unbalanced power relations between men and women will only be reinforced. Prostitution just strengthens the already strong stereotypical views of women in the current patriarchal society. It leads the public to believe women as sex objects just for the enjoyment of men. Prostitution is just the exploitation of the male dominance over women.

**Alex:** Well of course you would think that, feminists will follow any belief that shames the so called patriarchy. If the woman makes the informed decision to become a sex-worker then that is their choice in the matter and blah. Prostitution can also be seen as a form of overpowering the patriarchy anyway. It empowers women not weakens them.

**Barbara:** You are abhorrently wrong, prostitution is not some life decision that someone will suddenly decide to move into. It is based on a lack of opportunity, extreme poverty and more often than not, an unaffordable drug addiction.

**Alex:** Then if prostitution is their only opportunity to gain wealth and stay alive, then legalizing the profession seems like an obvious option, otherwise they will be forced to work via back alleys and in dangerous conditions.

**Barbara**: God has said that prostitution is a sin anyway. So legalizing prostitution will only defy the will of God.

**Alex:** Oh yeah, I guess you are right.

**Analysis:**

Both arguers in this situation use logical fallacies which depreciate the validity of their arguments.

1. Barbara puts forth that because God says that prostitution is wrong, Alex should also think that prostitution is wrong. This is an “Appeal to Authority” because she is using the fact that someone of authority (god) believes it is wrong as an argument for why it is wrong.

This would have been easily remedied if she had elaborated and produced additional argument as to why god believes in that view. Such as by saying that if the public does not follow god’s beliefs then they would go to hell and so by keeping prostitution illegalized, many would be theoretically saved from sinning and going to hell. This would have been enough evidence to make her argument valid instead of a fallacy.

2. Alex firstly disputes Barbara’s argument based on the fact that she is a feminist. This is the “Ad Hominem” fallacy as well as committing “Guilt by Association”. Alex is attacking Barbara based on the fact that she is a feminist as a basis for his argument instead of attacking her argument by itself. There is no point to include this in his argument as it only increases the fallacies in his argument and does not validate it any further.

3. When Barbara says that legalizing prostitution will lead the public to believe that it is an acceptable profession, she is subtly inferring the conclusion (That prostitution is not an acceptable profession) in said premise. She is saying that legalizing will mislead the public which assumes that her conclusion is true without arguing why it would be misleading. This is the “Begging the question” fallacy.

Her argument would be improved if the premise was instead changed to “Prostitution is not an acceptable profession.” And then continued to provide argument to for why it is not instead of assuming it was not in the first place.