

**Review: *Whole Life Economics: revaluing daily life.***

By Barbara Brandt

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Brandt, Barbara. *Whole Life Economics: revaluing daily life*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1995. 243pp. US \$14.95 paper ISBN: 0-86571-266-2.

*Whole Life Economics* presents an ecofeminist view that the modern economy in the U.S. and other developed nations is destructive because its hierarchical models emphasize spending and profits and de-emphasize personal, family, and community life. To state her case, author Barbara Brandt describes how the modern economic paradigm is failing as society relinquishes control to big business, and people are increasingly addicted to money, jobs, and profit.

Drawing from the literature of psychology and sociology, Brandt outlines ways in which current economic structures ignore and undervalue activities that improve quality of life. One focus of the book is the traditional role of women as caregivers. Brandt believes society has trivialized the importance of activities associated with caretaking, e.g. maintaining the home and a family, thereby relegating them to low-pay status. Yet, she says, the unpaid, invisible economy that women's work traditionally supports is necessary to meeting people's emotional, psychological, and physical needs. Arguing that the stability of current hierarchical systems is threatened by the emphasis on jobs, money, and spending, Brandt proposes the idea of "economism", a belief that the economy is separate from the rest of life. People should work to adopt an attitude of wholeness, which recognizes that human needs are integrated and universal, regardless of gender or cultural tradition. Full expression of the human, caring side of all people is a requirement, Brandt suggests, for improvement in society.

Brandt does not address economists' views on the failure of gross economic measures (i.e. the GDP and GNP) to account for many things people value such as services and natural environments. She advocates greater self-reliance, spending less money on manufactured products, and working fewer hours, without fully exploring the effects such

changes would have on society.

*Whole Life Economics* is an appropriate addition to women's studies collections and social science collections which offer balanced coverage of economics.

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