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SINCE THE "DISMAL SCIENCE" of Economies was developed, there has been a powerful tendency among intellectuals to attribute both the vagaries and the violence of economic life to a set of incontestable laws which determine constantly and continuously the fate of humankind. *The Soul of Economies* written by the husband/wife team of Denise Breton and Christopher Largent not only challenges this viewpoint, but demonstrates clearly and convincingly that economies are the products of freely made decisions. Indeed, as the authors argue, because they should serve our needs, economies should not control us; we should control them.

In a readable yet thought-provoking style, Breton and Largent suggest that there are two approaches to economies. The first is the "Billiard Ball" approach. Materialistic and limited, this approach creates the atmosphere for scarcity and competition. The second is the "Whole-seeking" approach. It "opens us to reality as it is wholly, not just in bits and pieces. . . . Whole-seeking maps point to the realities that transcend us, so that our philosophies confront the wider contexts (the whole forests) in which we exist." (p. 17). The latter approach provides the environment for creative solutions and eliminates greed and ruthless competition by encouraging communal responses rather than individual reactions.

The authors want their readers to think carefully about the

underlying assumptions which give rise to economies, because it is these first assumptions that determine what strategies will be used to make sense of reality and what responses to individual situations will result. They are also intimately connected with goals or purposes which help us to determine what assumptions, strategies and responses are appropriate and necessary. Most of Breton's and Largent's work revolves around an examination of these four "tools."

Of particular interest is the way the authors make use of Christian examples in their quest for a more spiritual vision of economy. For example, they use the creation accounts in Genesis in their examination of assumptions. They argue that the first creation account (Gen. 1:1), rather than the Adam and Eve story (Gen. 2:6-5:24), provides a vision that is whole-seeking and encourages us to be more creative. According to Breton and Largent, "Assuming that we aren't the origin of creativity—that true creativity comes from the whole and pervades the universe—makes us truly creative, because it opens us to a source that's unlimited. . . . The assumption allows us to become a channel for a greater creative power." (p. 143)

Following this established pattern, the authors also use the commandments to discuss strategies that liberate rather than confine us, suggest the Beatitudes as examples of responses that empower us, and examine the Lord's Prayer as a source of purpose and goals. Indeed, their approach is unique.

Although Christian sources are used, the authors do not try to proselytize. In fact, they refer to teachings and sources from many other cultures that offer a similar perspective. Their intent is to argue—which they do quite convincingly—that there can be and should be a spiritual dimension to the thought behind the construction and organization of our economies.

In addition to helpful charts which summarize main points of argument, Breton and Largent provide the reader with an excellent set of resources in twenty pages of appendices. They not only make the suggestion that we should rethink our economies, but they also

provide the most helpful resources to begin that process.

The Soul of Economics will most likely offend a few readers who may call it the work of religious fanatics. However, it is a truly unique and refreshing approach to the subject of economics that just may help to make the "Dismal Science" of Economics the bearer of joyful news rather than the voice of impending doom.

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