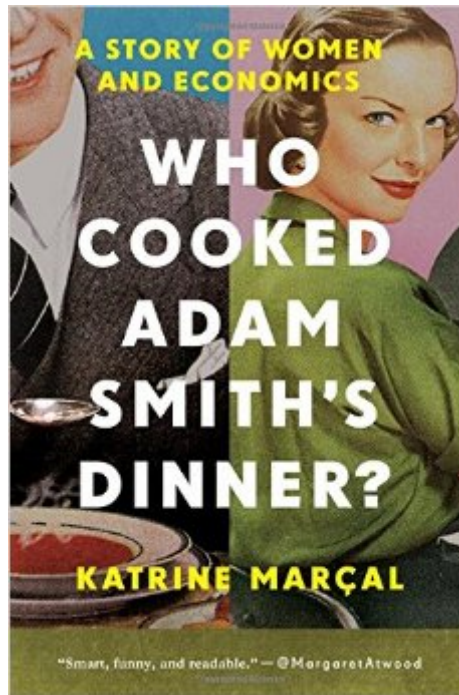


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# Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner?: A Story Of Women And Economics



## Synopsis

A funny, clever, and thought-provoking examination of the myth of the "economic man" and its impact on the global economy. How do you get your dinner? That is the basic question of economics. When economist and philosopher Adam Smith proclaimed that all our actions were motivated by self-interest, he used the example of the baker and the butcher as he laid the foundations for 'economic man.' He argued that the baker and butcher didn't give bread and meat out of the goodness of their hearts. It's an ironic point of view coming from a bachelor who lived with his mother for most of his life • a woman who cooked his dinner every night. Nevertheless, the economic man has dominated our understanding of modern-day capitalism, with a focus on self-interest and the exclusion of all other motivations. Such a view point disregards the unpaid work of mothering, caring, cleaning and cooking. It insists that if women are paid less, then that's because their labor is worth less. Economics has told us a story about how the world works and we have swallowed it, hook, line and sinker. This story has not served women well. Now it's time to change it. A kind of feminist Freakonomics, *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner?* charts the myth of economic man • from its origins at Adam Smith's dinner table, its adaptation by the Chicago School, and its disastrous role in the 2008 Global Financial Crisis • in a witty and courageous dismantling of one of the biggest myths of our time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a pretty heavy-handed indictment of the modern view of economics. Rightfully, Marcal criticizes the exclusion of unpaid and caregiving work from economic modeling, and makes a strong

case for why the concept of an economic man who is unaffected by the trials and tribulations of the world around him is outmoded at best, and misogynistic at worst. Marcal's main failing is that she inadequately visions an alternate reality. She employs effective rhetoric in explaining the flaws in the current system, however does little if anything to explain what might change, or how that change might begin. This book is absolutely worth a read (it is very short) whether you not are comfortable with the invisible hand controlling your world.

Can this reviewer butcher the phrase or idiom "No man is an island" and shoehorn it to state that there is also the female of the species to consider too? This book provides a wonderfully serious, yet light-hearted and incredibly informative look at the role women have in society, as viewed through the lens of an economist, going deep back in history and moving forward to the present-day. The title is based around economist Adam Smith and one of his claims about self-interest and the "economic man" whilst forgetting that often it was an "economic woman" doing the work, providing the womanpower (sic) and supporting the male machine at the same time. Yet this is not a barbed, sour-faced book that goes overboard on equality and feminist issues; it is cleverer than that and you can, after all, catch more flies with sugar than salt. [This is more than just a book about economics. It mixes so many disciplines together and makes for an excellent read. This could be an ideal "commuting companion" when you want to mix light-relief and learn something at the same time. It will have you certainly thinking, unless you have a mind of concrete. Despite it being a light-read, it is not a humour book and the content is of a high calibre and standard. Some of the reported information may shock you and even sadden you. Ignore it at your peril! Buy it at your earliest convenience! Read it, learn it and share its contents!]

Well-written discussion of the invisible hand doctrine; erudite but direct and even humorous; quite an accomplishment for an economics book.--William M. Dugger, Professor of Economics, University of Tulsa

If you are frustrated by (deepening) inequality or the insanity of expecting economic theories to guide us to straighten out society (the markets will solve everything...), this book is for you. I read a blurb that suggested the book was humorous, and I didn't find it humorous. Not sure what the author intended, but I read it with an edge to her tone. I also thought it would be more focused on women's (and specifically women of color and immigrant women's) unpaid labor, but that comes in more in the last fourth of the book. Much time is spent presenting the notion of the "economic man" and how

economic theory has become so infused into modern society that it is hard to think outside of it. The hyper rational "economic man" complete ignores, disowns, or ultimately flees from what doesn't fit in his model: what is associated with the feminine, the actual total work of caring that is not factored into the economy, and the impact of a "rational system" that ignores the impacts of decision making on rising inequality and environmental degradation. But despite all of this, the "economic man" is entrenched... explaining that, rather than focusing on the consequences, is the focus of the book.

A good eye opener into the obfuscation of women's work. All mothering - the daily physical labor, the constant monitoring and anguish, the loss sleep; the life time of care - let alone the housework NOT PAID, NOT RECOGNIZED BY 'ECONOMIC MAN'...And those who are poor and stupid and lazy and shiftless. That is what Marcal brings to the front...Wish I knew more about economics as she draws on economic theory. Only complaint, she maligns Freud and she was wrong about that. I give her a pass as her other areas are very vital.

I read it to the end and could not figure out the theme or thesis of the book, other than that women did all the housework (in the background) while the men of history gained the fame. It really doesn't take a whole book to develop that theme.

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