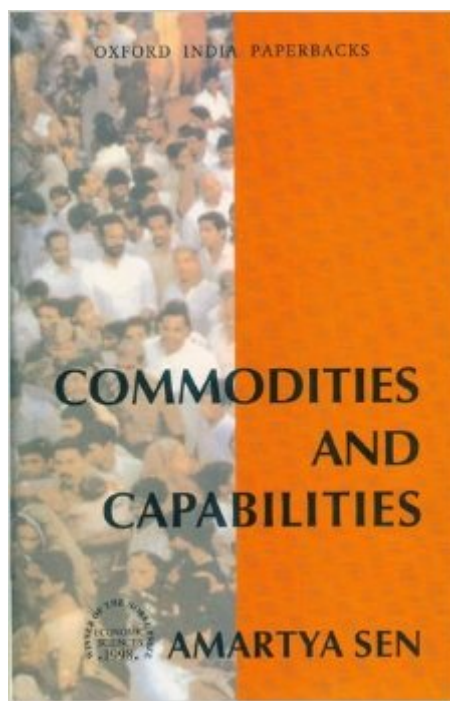


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Commodities And Capabilities



Synopsis

Commodities and Capabilities presents a set of inter-related theses concerning the foundations of welfare economics, and in particular about the assessment of personal well-being and advantage. The argument presented focuses on the capability to function, i.e. what a person can do or can be, questioning in the process the more standard emphasis on opulence or on utility. In fact, a person's motivation behind choice is treated here as a parametric variable which may or may not coincide with the pursuit of self-interest. Given the large number of practical problems arising from the roles and limitations of different concepts of interest and the judgement of advantage and well-being, this scholarly investigation is both of theoretical interest and practical import.

Book Information

Perfect Paperback: 104 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press (September 9, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195650387

ISBN-13: 978-0195650389

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 5.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Amartya Sen won the Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on the philosophy of economics. My own intellectual life was greatly influenced by the good fortune of attending a lecture Sen gave to my undergraduate department my sophomore year, and I spent the next few years working my way through as much of his writing as I could. Much of it was way over my head, but a few books really helped me understand his concepts. Of these, I personally considered *Commodities and Capabilities* to be the one that did the most to make Senist philosophy comprehensible to me, and it would be the starting point that I would point a student to if I were trying to introduce someone to Sen (this is not a hypothetical; I just ordered a replacement copy specifically for this purpose). If you cannot get *Commodities and Capabilities*, then you could also go with *The Standard of Living* as a decent introduction, especially if you want to approach his ideas from the standpoint of utility theory.

Sen pulls everything together in his masterwork, *Ideas of Justice*, but I wouldn't want to read that without an introductory book like *Commodities and Capabilities*. So I strongly recommend this book as a good point to start reading Sen. But what if you don't know yet whether you want to read Sen? I have tried many times throughout the years to give a short summary of Senist thought, and it is not easy. I am going to offer four basic points: 1) Sen is heavily influenced by Rawls, and much of his writing can be seen as a reaction to Rawls.

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