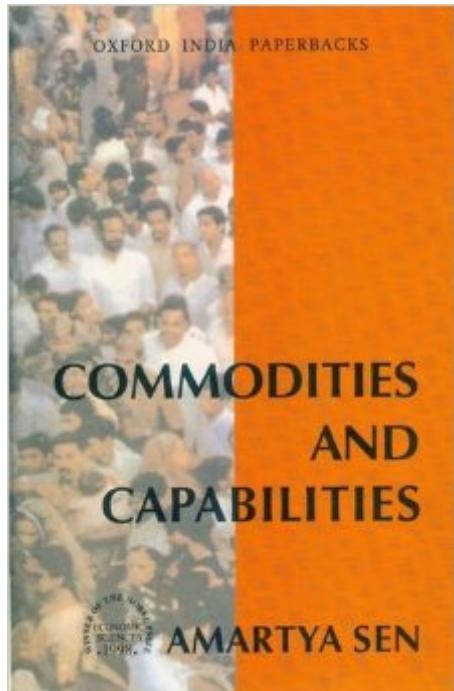


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# Commodities And Capabilities



## **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**

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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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