A CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW OF ECONOMICS: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

BY PARTHA DASGUPTA

by Your Name

student’s number

Course code+name

Professor’s name

University name

City, state

Date

*Economics: a very short introduction* is a work written by Frank Ramsey Professor Emeritus of Economics Partha Dasgupta. It was published in 2007 by Oxford University Press. The print edition with ISBN 0192853457 explains major economic concepts and notions on 193 pages through the paradigm of life examples. This makes the book interesting for both experts in this field of science, and the ordinary readers. Moreover, the perception of the material revealed in writing is eased by photographs and comparing tables applied by the author.

Dasgupta’s initial purpose of writing his monograph was offering “an overview of economics as it appears in leading economics journals and textbooks” (Dasgupta 2007, p. 5). However, the scholar’s goal changed because most contemporary economics’ approaches pay little or no attention to Nature as an active component of this field of science. As a result, the main aim of reviewed book is – “to understand the social world around us and then deploy that reasoning to some of the most urgent problems Humanity faces today” (Dasgupta 2007, p. 6).

The theme of the work can be defined as an economic inquiry of well-being and destitution. Whereas its thesis is exploring modern economics processes in terms of environmental, natural, and political conditions that surround an ordinary person in day-to-day life.

The analysed writing is well-organised. It is composed of eight chapters that trace history and reveal the essence of the course chronologically and topically. Additionally, the author’s aim and motivation of his writing are reflected in ‘Preface.’ What is more, the structure of the book involves the lists of illustrations and tables used by the economist, as well as ‘Index,’ and ‘Further reading’ chapter that aids in searching the sources for increasing readers’ knowledge of the topic.
Even though it is an academic writing of seemingly complicated discipline, it is created by using a simple language to explain complex notions that are combined by the masterful author skilfully. Through the formal style, which is not overloaded with an excessive use of terminology and specialised language, Dasgupta makes the book easy-readable for adolescents and adults who are interested in understanding the economics processes. The general field of the work “written by expert for the newcomer” (Goodreads 2012) is economic science. To explain the economic theory, the researcher uses an individual approach. He writes his theorised explanation in light of life of his literary grandchildren – Becky and Desta – who represent two different economic worlds, richer and poorer ones respectively, and details how the economic policies are applied and developed in these worlds. To my mind, the above approach is the main original feature of this book. The whole author’s almost literary narrative – an unusual technique for economics – is focused on two girls of the same age, but of different living conditions. For instance, Dasgupta writes, “Desta knows that she will be married . . . five years from now and will live in her husband’s land in a neighbouring village” (2007, p. 6). Using these characters in his book, the scholar develops his major idea – trying to understand today’s social world. This way he combines history, politics, sociology, and other related to the issue studies in one work.

The scientist uses description (description of living conditions in Ethiopia and America’s Midwest), narration (revealing the girls’ stories), exposition (confirming everything with photos, tables, facts), and argument methods. The latter is really convincing since Dasgupta illustrates and asserts “dry” economic theory with bright life examples. For example, he states, “One argument goes that the accumulation of physical capital in Becky’s world has been a significant contributor to the high standard of living people enjoy there” (Dasgupta 2007, p. 18). However, it does not make the monograph less valuable in terms of credibility or content. On the contrary, such author’s approach broadens the intended
audience of the book: it can be equally informative to the student studying economics as well as some housewife interested in the subject. Consequently, Dasgupta applies scholarly explanation of economic concepts through the prism of life of ten-year-old girls from different parts of the globe skilfully combining scientific theory and life practice. This makes the book closer to the ordinary reader since the economy of any country can be traced through the living circumstances of any child and one’s family. What is more, this way the author not only achieves his main goal, but also creates an economics book on the edge of popular science.

Therefore, in my opinion, the work written by a person with a number of titles and scientific merits who spent “most of his professional life working on poverty and inequality issues” (IHDP 2012) cannot be useless or not credible. It is full of great knowledge to gain. Hence, I completely agree with the comment of the reader on Goodreads.com who called this writing “one of the best introductions to economics one can find” (2012).
Reference List

