

Coyle, Diane. The soulful science: what economists really do and why it matters. Princeton, 2007. 279p bibl index afp ISBN 0691125139, \$27.95 Author of *Sex, Drugs and Economics* (CH, Mar'03, 40-4105) and other popular volumes, economist Coyle offers compelling arguments for why economics--and economists--matter. She skillfully and objectively treats the theories, current controversies, and frontiers of the discipline. The first section, "The Mysteries of Wealth and Poverty," traces the thinking, research, and policy proposals of economic historians and contemporary contributors to what is known in this era of globalization about why economies grow or stagnate and how best to attack the vexing problem of world poverty. In part 2 she turns to the underlying "human nature" assumptions of economics: the end goal of the rational, well-informed actor--income, happiness, or something perhaps more nuanced and complex? This takes Coyle on side trips into psychology, neurology, and the world of imperfect information. Part 3 begins with the treatment of the individual in part 2 thrown into society at large, one with cultures and institutions, networks and organizations, governments and special interest groups. It concludes with Coyle's return to and affection for the mainstream views and strengths of economics--holding onto its underlying assumptions, its modeling and scientific methods, its reliance on quantification and data, and public policy prescriptions. For thoughtful, insightful, interesting narrative, Coyle is hard to top. *Summing Up: Essential. All economics collections.* -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago