

**Ubel, Peter A. Free market madness: why human nature is at odds with economics--and why it matters. Harvard Business School Press, 2009. 257p index ISBN 9781422126097, \$26.95**

The intersection of economics and psychology--aka behavioral economics--has spawned a cottage industry in recent years, and both economists and psychologists have leapt into the fray to bash free market economics, point out the frailties of human nature and people's irrational behaviors, and propose various public actions to improve decision making. Predictably Irrational by Dan Ariely (CH, Oct'08, 46-0969), Nudge by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (CH, Oct'08, 46-0977), and Animal Spirits by George Akerloff and Robert Shiller (CH, Jul'09, 46-6301) are three of the better-known volumes. With Free Market Madness, Ubel (academic physician and behavioral scientist, Univ. of Michigan) jumps in, though his focus is narrower--health issues such as obesity, exercise, smoking, and other lifestyle issues--and his proposed remedies much more antimarket and progovernment. Ubel contends government could not only improve on free but harmful choices, but also must restrict some personal liberties to improve health and well-being (whether it also increases happiness is another matter, which the author does not touch with a fork). While a doctor might not encourage ingesting salt, with enough grains and frequent wincing, this volume is probably better for potential intelligent lay readers than a doughnut and cup of coffee. Summing Up: Recommended. General readers; all levels of students; faculty; professionals. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago