
In Price of Civilization, well-known economist Sachs (Columbia Univ.) strays from his usual development-related themes (e.g., in The End of Poverty, CH, Jul'05, 42-6608, and Common Wealth, CH, Jul'09, 46-6318). In this new book, he focuses his attention on America in two sections: the causes and costs of "The Great Crash," and his suggested "Path to Prosperity." Eight chapters in part 1 present the familiar litany of markets rigged by Big Oil, Wall Street, and the rich, with an added diatribe against couch potatoes—Americans distracted by excessive TV watching and mall shopping. Part 2 offers Sachs's policy prescriptions, which are to the left of Clinton and Obama, e.g., reducing poverty and improving education, cutting the defense budget and spending more on environmental amenities, raising the level of happiness and life satisfaction with more meaningful employment, soaking the wealthy. Excellent figures, tables, graphs, and references, though the book's data-filled paragraphs are mind-numbing. An accessible, timely work but one with a clear ideological slant. Summing Up: Recommended. General readers; undergraduate students at all levels; practitioners.