

Book of the Year 2006-2007

Related Titles

Arntz, William. *What the Bleep Do We Know!?: Discovering the Endless Endless Possibilities For Altering Your Everyday Reality.* Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2005.

"...it asks such questions as: Are we seeing the world as it really is? What are thoughts made of? What is the relationship between our thoughts and our world? Are we biologically addicted to certain emotions? How can I create my day every day? The answer to the last question is a resounding yes: you are an infinite set of possibilities, and you can choose every day which reality you want to create for yourself. This book shows you how."

-*Publisher*

Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress. Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, eds. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

"Why do some cultures achieve economic success while others languish? Why do some countries develop successful democracies while others continue to undergo political upheavals? Are these discrepancies because of the cultural values of a people and their country? How important are these values, and can they be modified? These questions and others are discussed within the wide-ranging, thought-provoking, and sometimes quite controversial essays presented here. Drawn from a symposium sponsored by the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, essays by David Landes, Lucien Pye, Barbara Crossette, and others cover a wide variety of topics, from the effect of culture on various countries throughout the world to a discussion of culture and its role in gender issues. Also of interest are essays on how cultural issues may be the root cause of African American underachievement in the United States. Those interested in economics, cultural studies, international studies, and political science will find much to think about in this challenging collection."

-Danna Bell-Russel, Library of Congress for *Library Journal*

Diamond, Jared M. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

"Most of this work deals with non-Europeans, but Diamond's thesis sheds light on why Western civilization became hegemonic: "History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples' environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves." Those who domesticated plants and animals early got a head start on developing writing, government, technology, weapons of war, and immunity to deadly germs."

-*Library Journal*

Diamond, Jared M. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed.* New York: Viking, 2005.

"In his Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, geographer Diamond laid out a grand view of the organic roots of human civilizations in flora, fauna, climate and geology. That vision takes on apocalyptic overtones in this fascinating comparative study of societies that have, sometimes fatally, undermined their own ecological foundations. Diamond examines storied examples of human economic and social collapse, and even extinction, including Easter Island, classical Mayan civilization and the Greenland Norse. He explores patterns of population growth, overfarming, overgrazing and overhunting, often abetted by drought, cold, rigid social mores and

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warfare, that lead inexorably to vicious circles of deforestation, erosion and starvation prompted by the disappearance of plant and animal food sources. Extending his treatment to contemporary environmental trouble spots, from Montana to China to Australia, he finds today's global, technologically advanced civilization very far from solving the problems that plagued primitive, isolated communities in the remote past. At times Diamond comes close to a counsel of despair when contemplating the environmental havoc engulfing our rapidly industrializing planet, but he holds out hope at examples of sustainability from highland New Guinea's age-old but highly diverse and efficient agriculture to Japan's rigorous program of forest protection and, less convincingly, in recent green consumerism initiatives. Diamond is a brilliant expositor of everything from anthropology to zoology, providing a lucid background of scientific lore to support a stimulating, incisive historical account of these many declines and falls. Readers will find his book an enthralling, and disturbing, reminder of the indissoluble links that bind humans to nature."

--*Publisher's Weekly*

Fishman, Charles. *The Wal-Mart Effect: How the World's Most Powerful Company Really Works—and How It's Transforming the American Economy.* New York: Penguin, 2006.

"Fishman shops at Wal-Mart and has obvious affection for its price-cutting, hard-nosed ethos. He also understands that the story of Wal-Mart is really the story of the transformation of the American economy over the past 20 years. He's careful to present the consumer benefits of Wal-Mart's staggering growth and to place Wal-Mart in the larger context of globalization and the rise of mega-corporations. But he also presents the case against Wal-Mart in arresting detail, and his carefully balanced approach only makes the downside of Wal-Mart's market dominance more vivid. Through interviews with former Wal-Mart insiders and current suppliers, Fishman puts readers inside the company's penny-pinching mindset and shows how Wal-Mart's mania to reduce prices has driven suppliers into bankruptcy and sent factory jobs overseas. He surveys the research on Wal-Mart's effects on local retailers, details the environmental impact of its farm-raised salmon and exposes the abuse of workers in a supplier's Bangladesh factory. In Fishman's view, the "Wal-Mart effect" is double-edged: consumers benefit from lower prices, even if they don't shop at Wal-Mart, but Wal-Mart has the power of life and death over its suppliers. Wal-Mart, he suggests, is too big to be subject to market forces or traditional rules. In the end, Fishman sees Wal-Mart as neither good nor evil, but simply a fact of modern life that can barely be comprehended, let alone controlled."

--*Publisher's Weekly*

Friedman, Thomas. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization.* New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

"One day in 1992, Thomas Friedman toured a Lexus factory in Japan and marveled at the robots that put the luxury cars together. That evening, as he ate sushi on a Japanese bullet train, he read a story about yet another Middle East squabble between Palestinians and Israelis. And it hit him: Half the world was lusting after those Lexuses, or at least the brilliant technology that made them possible, and the other half was fighting over who owned which olive tree.

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Friedman, the well-traveled *New York Times* foreign-affairs columnist, peppers *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* with stories that illustrate his central theme: that globalization--the Lexus--is the central organizing principle of the post-cold war world, even though many individuals and nations resist by holding onto what has traditionally mattered to them--the olive tree.

Problem is, few of us understand what exactly globalization means. As Friedman sees it, the concept, at first glance, is all about American hegemony, about Disneyfication of all corners of the earth. But the reality, thank goodness, is far more complex than that, involving international relations, global markets, and the rise of the power of individuals (Bill Gates, Osama Bin Laden) relative to the power of nations.

No one knows how all this will shake out, but *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* is as good an overview of this sometimes brave, sometimes fearful new world as you'll find."

--Lou Schuler

Gladwell, Malcom. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown and Company: 2005.

"*Blink* is about the first two seconds of looking--the decisive glance that knows in an instant. Gladwell, the best-selling author of *The Tipping Point*, campaigns for snap judgments and mind reading with a gift for translating research into splendid storytelling. Building his case with scenes from a marriage, heart attack triage, speed dating, choking on the golf course, selling cars, and military maneuvers, he persuades readers to think small and focus on the meaning of "thin slices" of behavior. The key is to rely on our "adaptive unconscious"--a 24/7 mental valet--that provides us with instant and sophisticated information to warn of danger, read a stranger, or react to a new idea.

Gladwell includes caveats about leaping to conclusions: marketers can manipulate our first impressions, high arousal moments make us "mind blind," focusing on the wrong cue leaves us vulnerable to "the Warren Harding Effect" (i.e., voting for a handsome but hapless president). In a provocative chapter that exposes the "dark side of blink," he illuminates the failure of rapid cognition in the tragic stakeout and murder of Amadou Diallo in the Bronx. He underlines studies about autism, facial reading and cardio uptick to urge training that enhances high-stakes decision-making. In this brilliant, cage-rattling book, one can only wish for a thicker slice of Gladwell's ideas about what Blink Camp might look like."

--Barbara Mackoff

Gladwell, Malcom. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002.

"This genial book by New Yorker contributor Gladwell considers the elements needed to make a particular idea take hold. The "tipping point" (not a new phrase) occurs when something that began small (e.g., a few funky kids in New York's East Village wearing Hush Puppies) turns into something very large indeed (millions of Hush Puppies are sold). It depends on three rules: the Law of the Few, the Stickiness Factor, and the Power of Context. Episodes subjected to this paradigm here include Paul Revere's ride, the creation of the children's TV program Sesame Street, and the influence of subway

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shooter Bernie Goetz. The book has something of a pieced-together feel (reflecting, perhaps, the author's experience writing shorter pieces) and is definitely not the stuff of deep sociological thought. It is, however, an entertaining read that promises to be well publicized."

—Ellen Gilbert, Rutgers Univ. Lib., New Brunswick, NJ for *Library Journal*

Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order 1998.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

"This book attracted attention because of its thesis that the "clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace." However, Huntington's work is important here for his second chapter on the nature and study of civilizations (with its excellent bibliographic sources), and his last chapter on the future of the West and other "core" civilizations."

—*Library Journal*

Korten, David C. *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2006.

"Empire is not inevitable, not the natural order of things. Korten draws on evidence from sources as varied as evolutionary theory, developmental psychology, and religious teachings to make the case that "Earth Community" — a life-centered, egalitarian, sustainable way of ordering human society based on democratic principles of partnership — is indeed possible. He details a practical strategy for advancing a turning toward a future of as-yet-unrealized human potential."

—*Publisher*

Lane, Robert. *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies.* New Haven: Yale University, 2000

"Why in prosperous market democracies today do so many people regard themselves as unhappy? Robert E. Lane draws on extensive research in many fields to show that the main sources of well-being in advanced economies are friendships and a good family life; income has little to do with happiness once a person rises above the poverty level. Lane urges us to alter priorities and emphasize companionship over higher income."

—*Publisher*

Layard, Richard: *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science.* New York: Penguin, 2005.

"There is a paradox at the heart of our lives. We all want more money, but as societies become richer, they do not become happier. This is not speculation: It's the story told by countless pieces of scientific research. We now have sophisticated ways of measuring how happy people are, and all the evidence shows that on average people have grown no happier in the last fifty years, even as average incomes have more than doubled.

The central question the great economist Richard Layard asks in *Happiness* is this: If we really wanted to be happier, what would we do differently? First we'd have to see clearly what conditions generate happiness and then bend all our efforts toward producing them. That is what this book is about—the causes of happiness and the means we have to effect it.

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Until recently there was too little evidence to give a good answer to this essential question, but, Layard shows us, thanks to the integrated insights of psychology, sociology, applied economics, and other fields, we can now reach some firm conclusions, conclusions that will surprise you. Happiness is an illuminating road map, grounded in hard research, to a better, happier life for us all.

From one of the leading voices in the new field of happiness studies comes a groundbreaking statement of the case: what happiness is, exactly, and how to get more of it, as individuals and as a society.”

—*Publisher*

Levinson, Marc. *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

“Published on the fiftieth anniversary of the first container voyage, this is the first comprehensive history of the shipping container. It recounts how the drive and imagination of an iconoclastic entrepreneur, Malcom McLean, turned containerization from an impractical idea into a massive industry that slashed the cost of transporting goods around the world...Drawing on previously neglected sources, economist Marc Levinson shows how the container transformed economic geography, devastating traditional ports such as New York and London and fueling the growth of previously obscure ones, such as Oakland. By making shipping so cheap that industry could locate factories far from its customers, the container paved the way for Asia to become the world's workshop and brought consumers a previously unimaginable variety of low-cost products from around the globe.”

—*Publisher*

Levitt, Steven D. and Stephen J. Dubner. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything.* New York: William Morrow, 2005.

“Forget your image of an economist as a crusty professor worried about fluctuating interest rates: Levitt focuses his attention on more intimate real-world issues, like whether reading to your baby will make her a better student. Recognition by fellow economists as one of the best young minds in his field led to a profile in the New York Times, written by Dubner, and that original article serves as a broad outline for an expanded look at Levitt's search for the hidden incentives behind all sorts of behavior. There isn't really a grand theory of everything here, except perhaps the suggestion that self-styled experts have a vested interest in promoting conventional wisdom even when it's wrong. Instead, Dubner and Levitt deconstruct everything from the organizational structure of drug-dealing gangs to baby-naming patterns. While some chapters might seem frivolous, others touch on more serious issues, including a detailed look at Levitt's controversial linkage between the legalization of abortion and a reduced crime rate two decades later. Underlying all these research subjects is a belief that complex phenomena can be understood if we find the right perspective. Levitt has a knack for making that principle relevant to our daily lives, which could make this book a hit. Malcolm Gladwell blurbs that Levitt "has the most interesting mind in America," an invitation Gladwell's own substantial fan base will find hard to resist. 50-city radio campaign.”

—*Publisher's Weekly*

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O'Harrow Jr., Robert. *No Place to Hide*. New York: Free Press, 2006

"The amount of personal data collected on ordinary citizens has grown steadily over the decades, and, after 9/11, corporations that had been amassing this information largely for marketing purposes saw an opportunity to strengthen their ties with the government. But what do we really know about these data collectors, and are they trustworthy?" —*Publisher's Weekly*

Perkins, John. *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2004.

"Confessions of an Economic Hit Man reveals a game that, according to John Perkins, is as old as Empire but has taken on new and terrifying dimensions in an era of globalization. And Perkins should know. For many years he worked for an international consulting firm where his main job was to convince LDCs (less developed countries) around the world to accept multibillion-dollar loans for infrastructure projects and to see to it that most of this money ended up at Halliburton, Bechtel, Brown and Root, and other United States engineering and construction companies. This book, which many people warned Perkins not to write, is a blistering attack on a little-known phenomenon that has had dire consequences on both the victimized countries and the U.S." —*Publisher*

Quinn, Bill. *How Wal-Mart is Destroying America and the World and What You Can Do About It*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2000.

"After carving up the once lovingly cared-for downtowns of Small Town America, Wal-Mart launched a frontal assault on mom-and-pop businesses all over the globe. With 1.5 million employees operating more than 3,500 stores, Wal-Mart is now the world's largest private employer. In this third edition of *How Wal-Mart is Destroying America and the World and What You Can Do About It*, intrepid Texas newspaperman Bill Quinn continues the fight. Featuring detailed accounts of Wal-Mart's questionable business practices and the latest information on Wal-Mart lawsuits, vendor issues, and efforts to stop expansion, Quinn shows why Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., is arguably the most feared and despised corporation in the world. Whether you're a customer fed up with Wal-Mart's false claims, a vendor squeezed by strong-arm tactics, a worker pushed to increase the Waltons' bottom line, or a concerned citizen trying to save your hometown, this book will show you how to get Wal-Mart off your back and out of your backyard." —*Publisher*

Rivoli, Pietra. *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

"During a 1999 protest of the World Trade Organization, Rivoli, an economics professor at Georgetown, looked on as an activist seized the microphone and demanded, 'Who made your T-shirt?' Rivoli determined to find out. She interviewed cotton farmers in Texas, factory workers in China, labor champions in the American South and used-clothing vendors in Tanzania. Problems, Rivoli concludes, arise not with the market, but with the suppression of the market. Subsidized farmers, and manufacturers and importers with tax breaks, she argues, succeed because they avoid the risks and competition of unprotected global trade, which in turn forces poorer countries to lower

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their prices to below subsistence levels in order to compete. Rivoli seems surprised by her own conclusions, and while some chapters lapse into academic prose and tedious descriptions of bureaucratic maneuvering, her writing is at its best when it considers the social dimensions of a global economy, as in chapters on the social networks of African used-clothing entrepreneurs.”

–*Publisher’s Weekly*

Rowland, Wade. [Galileo’s Mistake: A New Look at the Epic Confrontation Between the Church.](#) New York: Arcade Publishers, 2003.

“Rowland seeks to dispel what he calls "the myth of Galileo": that he was attacked by an ignorant, closed-minded Church for having discovered the truth, which contradicted Church belief. Rowland (Ockham's Razor) argues that this traditional perspective on Galileo's 1633 trial is both simplistic and wide of the mark. Instead, he builds a compelling case that Galileo and the Church differed over something far more important than whether the earth revolved around the sun—they differed on the very nature of truth and how mortals can come to know it. Modeling the structure used by Galileo in his own book about Copernican theory, Rowland makes use of fictionalized dialogues to explore issues of epistemology and concludes that Galileo, by promoting the idea that scientific experiments alone can lead to a meaningful understanding of the natural world, was a very real threat to the coherence of the Church. Rowland does an impressive job of bringing the 17th century to life. It's important to note that, as he makes clear throughout, he believes that religion can allow for a comprehension of reality in ways that science cannot, and that many of the world's present ills are due to "the transition from the Age of Faith to the Age of Reason," which Galileo helped accomplish and the wisdom of which Rowland seriously questions. Still, his book will appeal to most readers interested in the current debate about the relation between science and religion, and particularly to those who, like him, posit limits to the reach of science.”

–*Publisher’s Weekly*

Sachs, Jeffrey. [The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time.](#) New York: Penguin, 2005.

“...draws on his entire twenty-five-year body of experience to offer a thrilling and inspiring big-picture vision of the keys to economic success in the world today and the steps that are necessary to achieve prosperity for all.”

–*Publisher*

Saphiere, Dianne Hofner, Barbara Kappler Mikk, and Basma Ibrahim Devries. [Communication Highwire: Leveraging the Power of Diverse Communication Styles.](#) Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2005.

"An ultimate approach for discussing global diversity, using communication styles as the numerator for human capital."

–Curtis Mathews Jr., *CIGNA*

Schwartz, Barry. [The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less.](#) New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

“Like Thoreau and the band Devo, psychology professor Schwartz provides ample evidence that we are faced with far too many choices on a daily basis, providing an

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illusion of a multitude of options when few honestly different ones actually exist. The conclusions Schwartz draws will be familiar to anyone who has flipped through 900 eerily similar channels of cable television only to find that nothing good is on. Whether choosing a health-care plan, choosing a college class or even buying a pair of jeans, Schwartz, drawing extensively on his own work in the social sciences, shows that a bewildering array of choices floods our exhausted brains, ultimately restricting instead of freeing us. We normally assume in America that more options ("easy fit" or "relaxed fit"?) will make us happier, but Schwartz shows the opposite is true, arguing that having all these choices actually goes so far as to erode our psychological well-being. Part research summary, part introductory social sciences tutorial, part self-help guide, this book offers concrete steps on how to reduce stress in decision making. Some will find Schwartz's conclusions too obvious, and others may disagree with his points or find them too repetitive, but to the average lay reader, Schwartz's accessible style and helpful tone is likely to aid the quietly desperate."

--*Publisher's Weekly*

Stedman, Joseph B. *World Balance and Human Development: Progress or Decay--a Wake-Up Call.* iUniverse, Inc: 2006.

"This is a must-read book for concerned citizens throughout the world. It should be of particular interest to parents and grandparents, especially middle-class Americans. It is the first book of its kind to provide a global perspective of how the world works and has worked for over two thousand years through societies, governments, and businesses. Two new concepts are introduced—"The Character of Governments and Societies" and "Per Capita Income Distributed."

The research and writings of more than eighty scholars, as well as thirty-two years of data from ninety-three countries are used in the research and explanation of the fundamental factors that influence human behavior and human development. The facts suggest that human development requires a stable and relatively balanced environment. The world today is neither stable nor well balanced, and the trend is not encouraging. In fact, the trend for the world and for the United States is toward rich and poor.

While dependency has historically been discussed in terms of poor countries and poor citizens, this book discusses critical and growing dependencies of the United States. The author offers strong evidence that many of these dependencies have developed due to the neo-conservative agenda of the past quarter century. In addition to explaining the risks of dependencies to the security, the economy, and the very democracy of the United States, the author presents a rational business plan for America's future and for that of the world."

--*Publisher*

Surowiecki, James. *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations.* New York: Doubleday, 2004.

"While our culture generally trusts experts and distrusts the wisdom of the masses, *New Yorker* business columnist Surowiecki argues that "under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them." To support this almost counterintuitive proposition, Surowiecki explores

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problems involving cognition (we're all trying to identify a correct answer), coordination (we need to synchronize our individual activities with others) and cooperation (we have to act together despite our self-interest). His rubric, then, covers a range of problems, including driving in traffic, competing on TV game shows, maximizing stock market performance, voting for political candidates, navigating busy sidewalks, tracking SARS and designing Internet search engines like Google. If four basic conditions are met, a crowd's "collective intelligence" will produce better outcomes than a small group of experts, Surowiecki says, even if members of the crowd don't know all the facts or choose, individually, to act irrationally. "Wise crowds" need (1) diversity of opinion; (2) independence of members from one another; (3) decentralization; and (4) a good method for aggregating opinions. The diversity brings in different information; independence keeps people from being swayed by a single opinion leader; people's errors balance each other out; and including all opinions guarantees that the results are "smarter" than if a single expert had been in charge. Surowiecki's style is pleasantly informal, a tactical disguise for what might otherwise be rather dense material. He offers a great introduction to applied behavioral economics and game theory."

--*Publisher's Weekly*