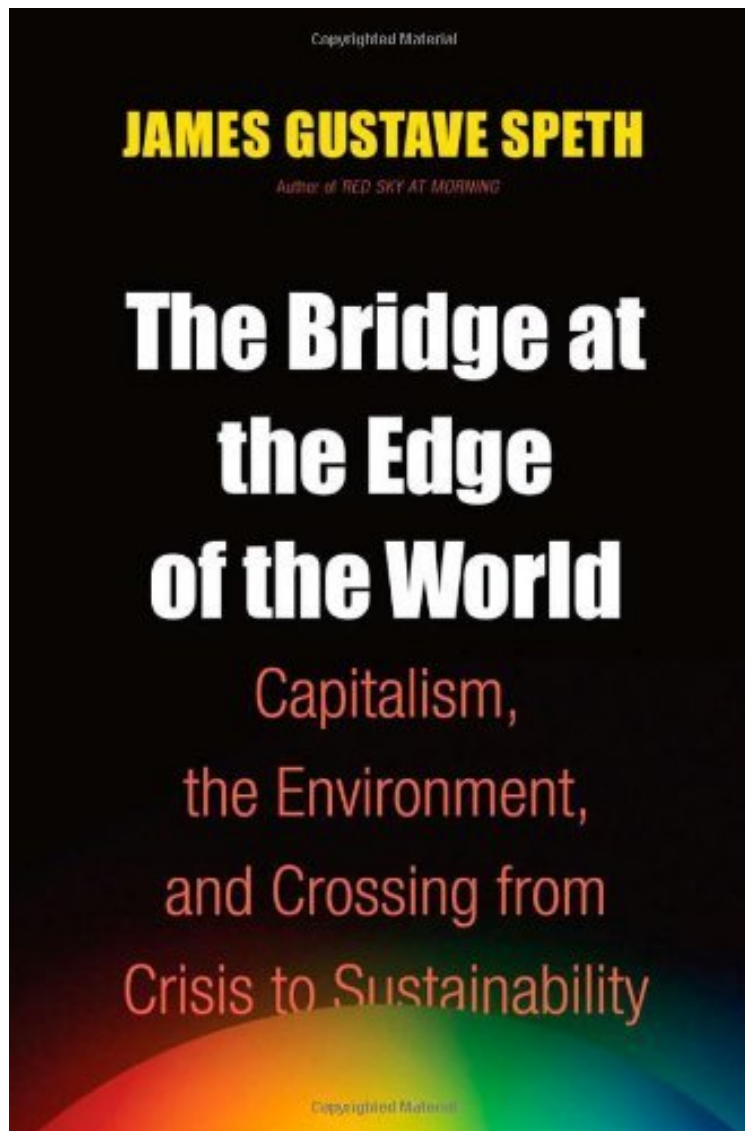


(Library ebook) The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability

The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability

James Gustave Speth

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James Gustave Speth : The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The view on this bridge is inspiring. By Philip Henderson The view from the Bridge at the Edge of the World is inspiring. Dean Speth offers hope if you are willing to work hard to make

the world a better place for humans and all other life. He challenges the cultural values that lead us to avarice and greed and insists that we can do better, we can do much better. We can rise up to become proper stewards of the Earth. As a four decade environmentalist he is disappointed with the limited successes of the environmental movement. The movement has not even held its ground though it has won a few hard-fought battles. Dean Speth is a lawyer and educator who is dedicated to keeping humans from fouling the planet so that it is no longer viable to life as we know it. His foes have been greedy capitalists and corrupt politicians. He raises an important question about America, are we more in love with democracy or more in love with capitalism. The United States Constitution honors democratic rule but does not place the capitalist dogma above democracy. I agree with Dean Speth that this is a tough battle facing those who desire to change our values so we again love democracy as much as we did during the Revolutionary War. Speth suggests that those who cannot see the view from his imaginary bridge are unable to see the best future available for humanity. Those who cannot see this view are destined to continue along the path that is now destroying the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the soil that grows our food. Those without the vision to see from this bridge are taking us down a dangerous path that spells catastrophic results. Purchase this book. Study the extensive footnotes. Give a copy to a friend who also loves democracy more than capitalism. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. observationally precise and perscriptive By A. Menon This is one of the best books i have read in a long time. These days most environmentally focused literature tends to focus on the pending doom of our seeming disregard for the environment a judged through our actions. Its obviously easy to forget about the big picture consequences of the sum of our societal actions and easy to dismiss our personal impacts due to our relative smallness, so literature that hits on the major unintended consequences is always a somewhat welcomed wake up call to the most of us who tend to forget about our personal carbon imprints. This book however takes the much needed step further. After the sensationalism fades and the reality of our predicament settles in more thoroughly we find the next (and more important) step a lot less clear. How do we enact policy that will either directly or indirectly affect our actions to alleviate the mounting problems. This book does not take the naive approach of hoping that people will invariably join together and consciously act in more costly fashions for the sake of the planet- it is too easy to act locally for individuals and that is taken more as an axiom. It describes environmental problems as arising as a mixture of fixable economic phenonenon. In particular the concept of trying to measure the price of negative externalities is discussed in detail to try to force a repricing of polluting industries to take this into account such that goods and services are priced on a fully inclusive basis rather than excluding externalities. He also addresses tragedy of the commons type situation. He concludes many of the environmental issues as being market failures based on local incentives being the guiding ones versus national and global, and this lack of accountability for externalities fundamentally needs to be adressed. This can also be a coordination problem with corporations jumping jurisdiction so that the solution might require global over national policy solutions. Obviously solutions are not simple but the origin of the incentive problems are quite well explained and subsquently can be fairly easily understood, then the framework for potential solutions is outlined. The other aspect that is discussed is overconsumption. I agree in spirit with a lot of this, and clearly overconsumption has taken the US to a very difficult place, but this aspect of the book is more of a call for re-alignemnt of values. This is approachable through policy (consumption tax etc) but harder than trying to fix market failures as its more subjective and harder to convince those without that anticonsumption is in their global interest. Furthermore approaching anticonsumption on a graduated framework would be exceptionally difficult to monitor. All in all this is the sort of book that should be read by all (in particular policy makers) and I hope that more literature approaches the issues the way this book does. Namely looking at it from first- articulating all the risks, then the reasons for the evolution of the problem, finally, means to fix the problems on a sustainable basis via realignment of incentives. This is one of the books that for me has made me rethink a lot of very foundational issues both personal and political (after reading much environmentalist literature which did not have nearly the same effect), and I would expect this to have the same effect on most. For all of that, I highly recommend. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer I am reading this book and finding that it is very informative and look forward to completing it.

How serious are the threats to our environment? Here is one measure of the problem: if we continue to do exactly what we are doing, with no growth in the human population or the world economy, the world in the latter part of this century will be unfit to live in. Of course human activities are not holding at current levels—they are accelerating, dramatically—and so, too, is the pace of climate disruption, biotic impoverishment, and toxification. In this book Gus Speth, author of *Red Sky at Morning* and a widely respected environmentalist, begins with the observation that the environmental community has grown in strength and sophistication, but the environment has continued to decline, to the point that we are now at the edge of catastrophe. Speth contends that this situation is a severe indictment of the economic and political system we call modern capitalism. Our vital task is now to change the operating instructions for today's destructive world economy before it is too late. The book is about how to do that.

From Booklist Acclaimed environmentalist Speth asserts that our capitalist economy, with its emphasis on continuous robust growth, is at loggerheads with the environment. He minces no words as he writes that to

destroy life as we know it, all we have to do is keep doing exactly what we are doing today. Observations from nineteenth-century naturalists, such as Audubon writing about the passenger pigeon, reveal humanity's failure to understand the repercussions of environmental destruction, a lack of foresight now exacerbated by the whirlwind demands of modern consumerism. Quotes from economists, political philosophers, and technology experts offer erudite analyses of a realization set out in Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy* (2007) and now gaining momentum: society's slavish devotion to economic growth does not allow for critical environmental protections. We need look no further than the controversial Kyoto Protocol, Speth reminds us, as evidence. If Americans do not rein in spending, only one result is assured: If we do not learn to consume less, we will consume the biosphere itself in one binge. -- Colleen Mondor "Contemporary capitalism and a habitable planet cannot coexist. That is the core message of *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, by Gus Speth, a prominent environmentalist who, in this book, has turned sharply critical of the U.S. environmental movement. . . . This book is an extremely probing and thoughtful diagnosis of the root causes of planetary distress." Ross Gelbspan, *Washington Post Book World*