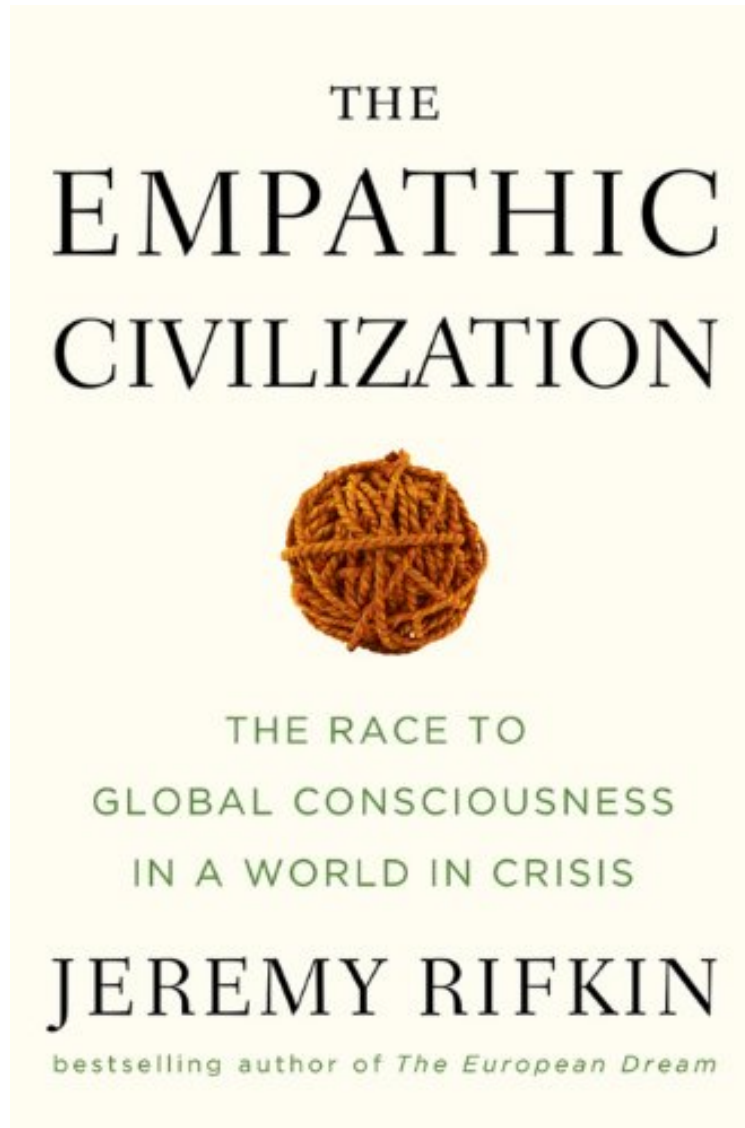


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The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis

Jeremy Rifkin

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"One of the leading big-picture thinkers of our day" (Utne Reader) delivers his boldest work in this erudite, tough-minded, and far-reaching manifesto. Never has the world seemed so completely united-in the form of communication, commerce, and culture-and so savagely torn apart-in the form of war, financial meltdown, global warming, and even the migration of diseases. No matter how much we put our minds to the task of meeting the challenges of a rapidly globalizing world, the human race seems to continually come up short, unable to muster the collective mental resources to truly "think globally and act locally." In his most ambitious book to date, bestselling social critic Jeremy Rifkin shows that this disconnect between our vision for the world and our ability to realize that vision lies in the current state of human consciousness. The very way our brains are structured disposes us to a way of feeling, thinking, and acting in the world that is no longer entirely relevant to the new environments we have created for ourselves. The human-made environment is rapidly morphing into a global space, yet our existing modes of consciousness are structured for earlier eras of history, which are just as quickly fading away. Humanity, Rifkin argues, finds itself on the cusp of its greatest experiment to date: refashioning human consciousness so that human beings can mutually live and flourish in the new globalizing society. In essence, this shift in consciousness is based upon reaching out to others. But to resist this change in human relations and modes of thinking, Rifkin contends, would spell ineptness and disaster in facing the new challenges around us. As the forces of globalization accelerate, deepen, and become ever more complex, the older faith-based and rational forms of consciousness are likely to become stressed, and even dangerous, as they attempt to navigate a world increasingly beyond their reach and control. Indeed, the emergence of this empathetic consciousness has implications for the future that will likely be as profound and far-reaching as when Enlightenment philosophers upended faith-based consciousness with the canon of reason.

From Publishers Weekly For author and social thinker Rifkin (The European Dream, The Hydrogen Economy), an E.U. advisor and senior lecturer at Wharton's Executive Education Program, the central paradox of human existence is, and has always been, the conflict between empathy and entropy: while globalization brings together diverse people, the very good-a rise in "empathic awareness"-is counterbalanced by the very bad-"dramatic deterioration of the health of the planet," by way of the technology that drives progress. Though wordy, Rifkin provides a thorough, lucid overview of mankind's history along the "empathy/entropy" spectrum: Spencer's mischaracterization of "nature red in tooth and claw," replaced by a more sensitive understanding of the biological and sociological evolution; the progression of socio-economic communities-civilizations-from the Neolithic to the "Modern Market Economy"; the current "Age of Empathy," in which the dominance of one language (English), "backyard" energies (wind, solar, etc.), the biosphere education in classrooms, and other developments, shine the way forward. Despite windiness and occasional hyperbole, this is the kind of reading fans of Jared Diamond and Richard Dawkins can sink their teeth into, with a contagious sense of urgency over whether we can "reach biosphere consciousness and global empathy in time to avert planetary collapse." Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A brilliant read ... that boldly challenges the conventional view of human nature embedded in our educational systems, business practices, and political culture." Huffington Post "The kind of reading fans of Jared Diamond and Richard Dawkins can sink their teeth into, with a contagious sense of urgency over whether we can 'reach biosphere consciousness and global empathy in time to avert planetary collapse.'" Publishers Weekly "A thoroughly entertaining read." Socialist Unity "Many in the scholarly, religious, and political fields praise Jeremy Rifkin for a willingness to think big, raise controversial questions, and serve as a social and ethical prophet." New York Times Rifkin is "one of the leading big-picture thinkers of our day." Utne Reader "Rifkin poses real questions that we've spent too little time thinking about." Washington Post About the Author One of the most popular social thinkers of our time, Jeremy Rifkin is the bestselling author of The European Dream, The Hydrogen Economy, The Age of Access, The Biotech Century, and The End of Work. A fellow at the Wharton School's Executive Education Program and an adviser to several European Union heads of state, he is the president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Bethesda, Maryland.