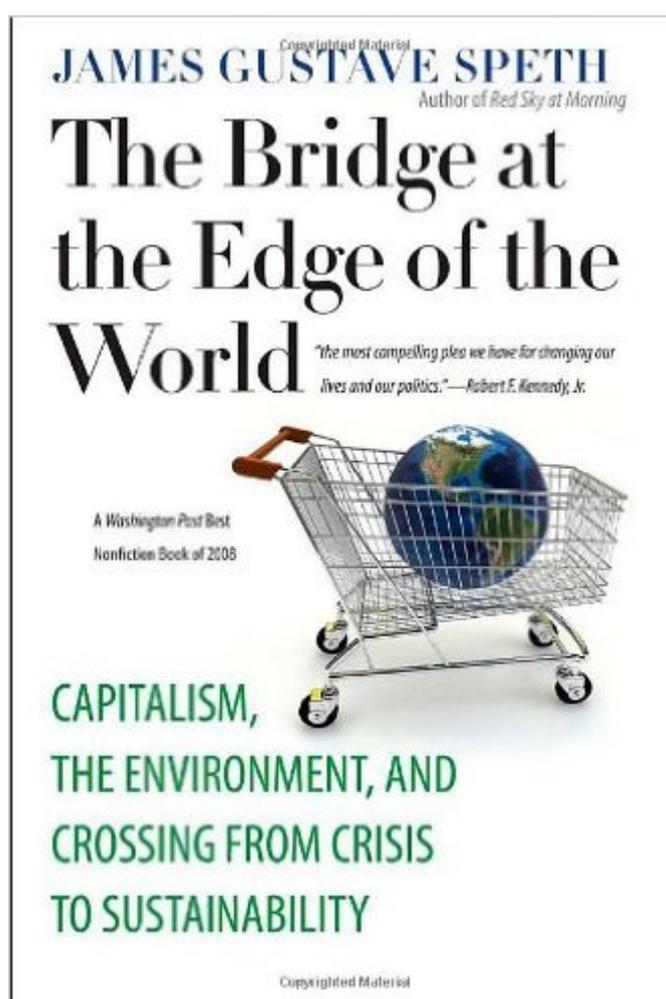


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# The Bridge At The Edge Of The World: Capitalism, The Environment, And Crossing From Crisis To Sustainability



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When dozens of major Southern Baptist leaders broke news in the spring of 2008 with a letter to the world about climate change, it was a major milestone in this era of global change. Their letter simply underlined what millions are coming to see, already. We all need to help forge a powerful new linkage between spiritual values and values concerning our natural world. The Southern Baptist leaders wrote, in part, "We believe our current denominational engagement with these issues has often been too timid, failing to produce a unified moral voice." Coming from this very traditional

American center of religious authority, this was an important prophetic voice in the conversation about where we're all heading in the tumbling and turning of cultural and social tidal waves these days. And, while phrases like these that may sound disturbing, Yale University's Dean of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies James Gustave Speth shows us - loud and clear toward the end of his new book - that this tumbling just might turn out to be good news. That's because his eloquent book about our environmental crisis begins by outlining "next steps" that we all need to consider in a whole range of sectors in our society: politics, business, education and so on. But then, he comes to his final section: "Seedbeds of Transformation." He writes: "Many of our deepest thinkers and many of those most familiar with the scale of the challenges we face have concluded that the transitions required can be achieved only in the context of what I will call the rise of a new consciousness. For some, it is a spiritual awakening - a transformation of the human heart.

James Speth, in *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, writes a book that lands somewhere between a scholarly treatise on the planetary environmental effects of supporting seven billion humans and an anti-capitalist, anti-growth, anti-multinational corporation rant. One can have the highest of ideals, and the wrongest of approaches, simultaneously. *The Bridge at the Edge of the World* may be the best example of this since Ralph Nader's run for the presidency in 2000 led, without a doubt, to Bush's victory in Florida. Nader, by getting ideologically sidetracked, led to an eight year stonewalling of any serious attempt to deal with the ongoing environmental catastrophe that Speth so clearly articulates. Speth's distracting focus on the highly debatable hypothesis that capitalism is the root of most environmental evil may deny him the very converts to the cause that are so urgently needed at this tipping point in human history. Point of view is important, and before any potential flamer turns his/her acetylene torch on this review, consider this: I became sold on the idea of global warming in 1971. I'm a lifetime Sierra Club member, monthly contributor to the Nature Conservancy, drive the most fuel efficient car on the planet (a 2001 Honda Insight that I bought used), am an all weather (neither sleet, nor snow, nor rain, etc.) bicycle commuter on my 18 mile round trip commute to work. Were you to visit my home, you'd sweat in the summer, shiver in the winter, as my heat pump worries about unemployment. I actively campaigned for (including, ugh, canvassing), and voted for, Obama. I eat organic oatmeal for breakfast, and I frickin' listen to NPR. In short, I have some creds. And yet I feel this book is a disappointment.

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