

There Is Still Time: To Look at the Big Picture...and Act

Peter Seidel

Gary Gardner

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There Is Still Time intentionally raises discomfiting questions about the state of humanity and the planet.

Architect, author, and environmentalist Peter Seidel and Gary Gardner of the Worldwatch Institute bring an impassioned view to *There Is Still Time*, which depicts society on a collision course. *There Is Still Time* is a biting commentary on modern habits that emphasizes evolutionary psychology from a layman's perspective.

Written in brief, topical sections, the book summarizes the world's problems in terms of human nature and environmental damage. The first part, written by Seidel, focuses on traits—such as greed, competitiveness, failure of imagination, and narrow interests—that have led people to ignore the ailing planet. In the text's second half, Gardner discusses the challenges Earth is faced with in an academic tone that informs without overwhelming.

Numerous chapters examine the public, who are regarded as a self-interested mass intrigued by local concerns and entertainment rather than climate change. Using examples from history, sociology, and ethics, and including observations on politics, corporations, and the media, the book highlights a tendency to favor easy decisions over those driven by scientific data.

The unvarnished tone is pessimistic, but turns surprisingly idealistic in its call for people to “become more than what they are” and change their way of life. Looking at root causes to find solutions may prove a tough sell; brief profiles of individuals across disciplines who come close to exemplifying the values set out in the book would strengthen the argument. A focus on self-exploration distinguishes the book from volumes that focus on reducing, recycling, and similar actions that appease people's consciences without slowing the problem.

Despite the disclaimer that trends are pointed out “in general terms,” the generalizations dilute the writing. Several lines reveal assumptions, particularly about the wealthy—who are painted as trying “to outdo each other by buying ever more extravagant yachts they rarely use, and purchasing gold and diamonds to show off”—that could come across as provoking rather than as honest attempts to hold a mirror up to society. Additionally, there are moments when complex issues like terrorism are reduced in rapid strokes, and controversial suggestions, such as selective breeding to lessen overpopulation, are left as passing remarks. The main message, however, remains cogent: humanity's vast potential is going to waste.

There Is Still Time intentionally raises discomfiting questions and does not aim to provide definitive answers. It successfully invites reflection on the less savory side of human behaviors.

KAREN RIGBY (November 16, 2015)

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