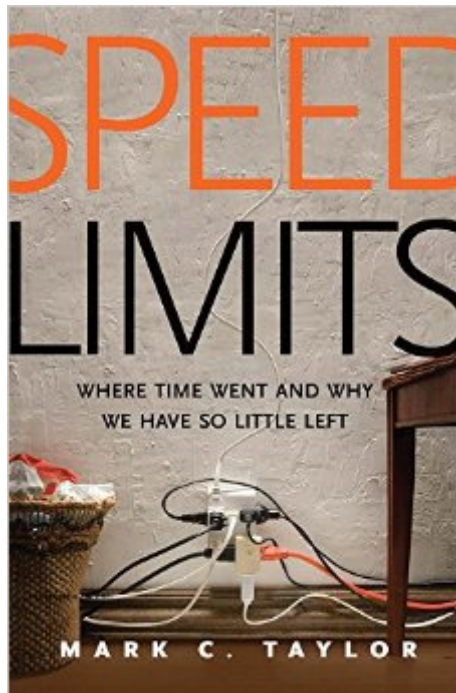


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Speed Limits: Where Time Went And Why We Have So Little Left



Synopsis

A leading thinker asks why "faster" is synonymous with "better" in our hurried world and suggests how to take control of our runaway lives. We live in an ever-accelerating world: faster computers, markets, food, fashion, product cycles, minds, bodies, kids, lives. When did everything start moving so fast? Why does speed seem so inevitable? Is faster always better? Drawing together developments in religion, philosophy, art, technology, fashion, and finance, Mark C. Taylor presents an original and rich account of a great paradox of our times: how the very forces and technologies that were supposed to free us by saving time and labor now trap us in a race we can never win. The faster we go, the less time we have, and the more we try to catch up, the farther behind we fall. Connecting our speed-obsession with today's global capitalism, he composes a grand narrative showing how commitments to economic growth and extreme competition, combined with accelerating technological innovation, have brought us close to disaster. Psychologically, environmentally, economically, and culturally, speed is taking a profound toll on our lives. By showing how the phenomenon of speed has emerged, Taylor offers us a chance to see our pace of life as the product of specific ideas, practices, and policies. It's not inevitable or irreversible. He courageously and movingly invites us to imagine how we might patiently work towards a more deliberative life and sustainable world.

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Customer Reviews

This is a weak overall effort. The book strangely resembles the world the author is attempting to

explain: fast-paced, fragmented, and unsatisfying. To be sure, there is a lot of information in this book. So much in fact that a good editor, in my opinion, should have really gone to town reducing it by at least a third. But the information is superficial, disjointed and does not add up to a coherent whole. It's my personal bias to always expect more from a book written by a professor than by a reporter. This one feels like a reporter's book (and at times more like a blog): surface research, hit-and-run citations of other people's work, a few "fun" facts and figures for entertainment value, a barrage of topics, personal anecdotes that go nowhere. Chapter 10 - Meltdowns; started out promisingly with something that resembled a synthesis but quickly faded into another mandatory cautionary tale on climate change and other randomness. My biggest gripe is that short of the part I just mentioned, there are no insights in this book. And having read it, I've gained no new perspectives on "where time went and why we have so little left". P.S. The author has an annoying habit of inserting himself into the narrative for no reason. There is a photo of him with Dennis Hopper (?) at the grand opening of another Las Vegas monstrosity and a painful to read story that goes along with it. There is a photo of his granddaughter displayed on the Times Square Kodak sign (?). His overviews of Iceland's natural beauty, its financial crisis in mid 2000's, and its encounters with climate change are obviously incomplete without mentioning the author's trip there and a modest reminder that he had learned Danish in the 70's to study Kierkegaard's original work. Except we already know by that point that the author had lived and studied in Denmark because he already told us that too!

I don't agree with everything in this book but it is really an outstanding work. It is a philosophical reflection on how a number of aspects of modern life have come together in networks of speed and change. These systems feed on each other and themselves and are speeding us towards disaster or so that is the author's thesis anyway. There is a lot of history in this book that doesn't seem absolutely necessary to the argument but helps the reader understand how we got to this point. I don't share all of the author's pessimism as virtually all doom and gloom predictions have turned out to be baseless. However, he does make an impressive case. Regardless I do agree strongly with his characterization of the current state and why it is not conducive to human thriving. This is definitely a thinking person's book and if you are looking for time management this is not for you. Highly recommended.

What a sensational book! I took about six months to read this book. No, not because it is a long book (it isn't: 350 pages). I took my time reading this book because the thoughts and analyses that the

author puts forth are often so profound and unexpected that I needed to put down the book and give my mind some time to consider what I had read. This book's discussion of time is shockingly far reaching and inclusive to a completely unexpected degree. The author starts off with Calvin and religion and over the next 300+ pages covers economics, networks (technology ones and others), the environment, finance, sociology, ad infinitum. I have never read a book of this kind. I highly recommend it, however, I lament that the great majority of potential readers are likely simply too undisciplined to stick with a book that demands the reader to not merely read, but to THINK. In an era when most people are deeply addicted to their smart phones and distracted and self-absorbed to degrees probably never before seen in human history, I doubt most people have what it takes to handle the author's tour de force. Sure, there were times that I thought about the book: Ok, okay, the intensity of this is about as much as I can take. But I kept with it and, perhaps predictably, I came to dread the end of the book coming as I approached page 350. This book is one of the best books that I have read in many years.

The book manages to be quirky and banal at the same time, which I suppose is an accomplishment of sorts, but I don't recommend this to anyone looking for insight or authority on the subject of speed and time in modern life. The book rehashes and simplifies stories on the basis of outdated scholarship, it's riddled with errors, and has nothing original to say. As a storyteller, Taylor alternately rambles and plods, and the book is no fun to read.

An altogether infuriating book: infuriating because the author asks big questions but settles for simplistic answers. He never digs deep enough to discover why we are so addicted to speed and what makes us this way, blaming it all instead on the Protestant Reformation. By proudly declaring that his book virtually wrote itself, Taylor may be unconsciously admitting, despite his claims to the contrary, that he never really took the time to do his homework, to read and reflect on the extensive literature that has existed for decades on the complex subject of social acceleration (see, for example, the works of Paul Virilio and Robert Hassan, and my own *Hyperculture: The Human Cost of Speed*).

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