



Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity (New Directions in Critical Theory)

By Hartmut Rosa

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Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity (New Directions in Critical Theory) By Hartmut Rosa

Hartmut Rosa advances an account of the temporal structure of society from the perspective of critical theory. He identifies three categories of change in the tempo of modern social life: technological acceleration, evident in transportation, communication, and production; the acceleration of social change, reflected in cultural knowledge, social institutions, and personal relationships; and acceleration in the pace of life, which happens despite the expectation that technological change should increase an individual's free time.

According to Rosa, both the structural and cultural aspects of our institutions and practices are marked by the "shrinking of the present," a decreasing time period during which expectations based on past experience reliably match the future. When this phenomenon combines with technological acceleration and the increasing pace of life, time seems to flow ever faster, making our relationships to each other and the world fluid and problematic. It is as if we are standing on "slipping slopes," a steep social terrain that is itself in motion and in turn demands faster lives and technology. As Rosa deftly shows, this self-reinforcing feedback loop fundamentally determines the character of modern life.

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Editorial Review

Review

When I first picked up this book, I was looking forward to a leisurely reading on obscurantist Heideggerian bullshit. I was wrong. But once I got over my deep disappointment that the book was, in fact, intelligible and not littered with ramblings about Dasein, I began to appreciate the book for what it was.

(*Critical Theory Blog*)

Review

Hartmut Rosa has put forward the most developed and most important social theoretical analysis of the acceleration of time from the perspective of critical theory. His theory of social acceleration is of great importance, since it explains how our social lives are speeding up, and extends critical theory into a new and fruitful avenue of inquiry?and maybe even into a new generation of social theorizing and critique.

(Jerald Wallulis, University of South Carolina)

Ours is a high-speed society: we need a proper conceptual and theoretical framework for making sense of it. As Hartmut Rosa shows in this ambitious and wide-ranging work, the concept of social acceleration offers a rich starting point for doing so.

(William E. Scheuerman, Indiana University, Bloomington)

Hartmut Rosa, a rising star in the field of German sociology, proposes a new critical theory that explains and explores the narrative of 'run-away-modernity' conceptually, empirically, and normatively. In the second half of the twentieth century, most giants of social thought focused on the reproduction of the social and political order in late capitalism, class society, social systems, and structures of power, but Rosa does the opposite: he reassembles the focus of his theory on the transformation of order.

(Ulrich Beck, University of Munich)

About the Author

Hartmut Rosa is professor of sociology and political science at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. He is the author of *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* and coeditor, with William E. Scheuerman, *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*.

Jonathan Trejo-Mathys (1979–2014) was assistant professor of philosophy at Boston College.

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