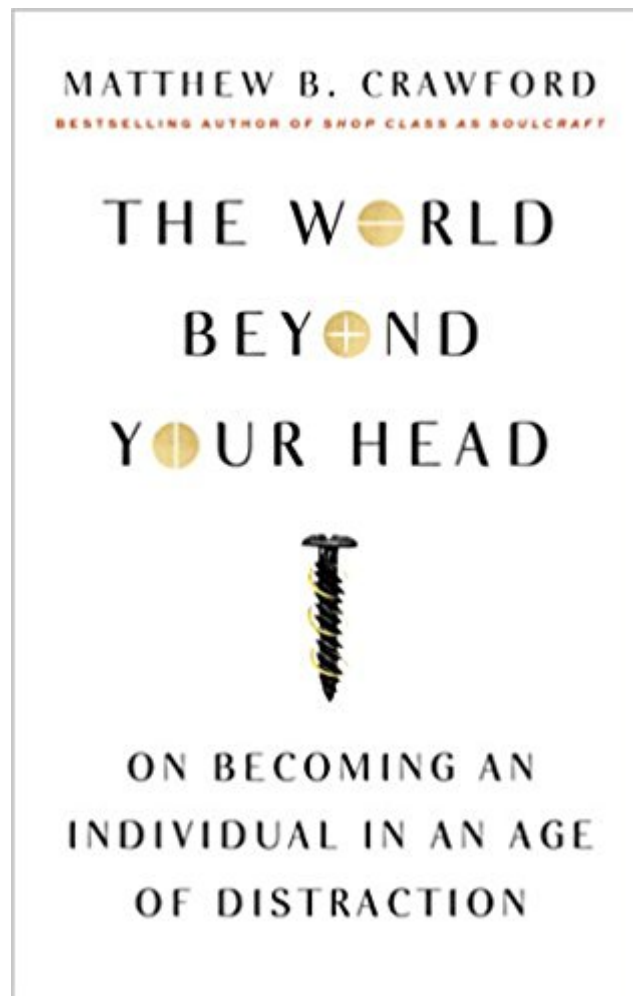




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The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming An Individual In An Age Of Distraction



Synopsis

A groundbreaking new book from the bestselling author of *Shop Class as Soulcraft*! In his bestselling book *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, Matthew B. Crawford explored the ethical and practical importance of manual competence, as expressed through mastery of our physical environment. In his brilliant follow-up, *The World Beyond Your Head*, Crawford investigates the challenge of mastering one's own mind. We often complain about our fractured mental lives and feel beset by outside forces that destroy our focus and disrupt our peace of mind. Any defense against this, Crawford argues, requires that we reckon with the way attention sculpts the self. Crawford investigates the intense focus of ice hockey players and short-order chefs, the quasi-autistic behavior of gambling addicts, the familiar hassles of daily life, and the deep, slow craft of building pipe organs. He shows that our current crisis of attention is only superficially the result of digital technology, and becomes more comprehensible when understood as the coming to fruition of certain assumptions at the root of Western culture that are profoundly at odds with human nature. *The World Beyond Your Head* makes sense of an astonishing array of common experience, from the frustrations of airport security to the rise of the hipster. With implications for the way we raise our children, the design of public spaces, and democracy itself, this is a book of urgent relevance to contemporary life.

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Customer Reviews

In *The World Beyond Your Head*, Matthew B. Crawford examines the American culture of disembodied work and disembodied electronic communication and finds it shallow and distracting.

He constructs his arguments from his own observations, but he supports his positions with ideas from the likes of Emmanuel Kant and Soren Kierkegaard. He argues for the value of work that brings body and mind together. This is not, however, Alan Watts giving a "Buddha light" homily on watching your breath and tuning in to the senses. While he wants these parts of the self brought together, Crawford's vision comes from the more active pursuits of cooking, motor cycle racing, and pipe organ restoration - active physical pursuits that require training, experience, and active intelligence at work for visible, worldly results. Crawford's first engaging argument is one for what he calls the "attention commons," public spaces that must be left free from advertising for the sake of our independent minds. I worked at a college where I sometimes needed to get away to a quiet place to grade a stack of papers, and I had a favorite student study lab in another department where nobody knew me. I would work anonymously, facing a large, unbroken gray wall at the room's front. But imagine my dismay when one day I went for the calm lab and the cool, gray wall and found it had been repainted with the school mascot. Glorious red and gold. I hated it, and along with the soothing gray wall went the calm of my own mind as I sat and tried to work. The new mascot felt really intrusive!

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