In the early 1970s, Alvin Toffler predicted that soon “we shall become the first culture in history to employ high technology to manufacture that most transient, yet lasting of products: the human experience.” This new experience technology has been a long time coming. Even though heralded for decades, it has yet to make its hoped-for grand appearance; its promise to surpass the industrial and information ages and usher in a new age of experiences has yet to be realized. With this book, I provide an update on the progress of the new technology and the coming of the new age, suggest theoretical and practical ways to hasten their arrival, and reveal some of the hazards as well as promises already apparent.

The reason for the long delay has been the absence of some vital preconditions, prerequisites that have been met by three remarkable twenty-first-century developments: the dawn of the experience and transformation economies (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), the advent of the new sciences of happiness (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6), and the coming of postmaterialist culture (discussed later in the Introduction). However, these three developments have been slow coming together.

What I do in this book is help speed their convergence by showing how the free marketplace may support a new eudaimonic technology by more deliberate application of the findings of the new sciences of happiness to the design of experience products—products that will support the growth of the new experience and transformation economies and find ready markets in a growing postmaterialist culture.
This project entails a lengthy cataloging of the empirical findings of the positive psychologists and neurobiologists (Chapters 5 and 6) that may be applicable to the design of new experiences (Chapter 7) as well as an analysis of the economic consequences of the turn from consumption of tangible goods to experiences (Chapter 8).

Faith in and reliance on the market have their critics (Chapter 4). Some see the new economies strengthening the worst tendencies of capitalism, further alienating and enslaving workers and consumers. Because I share these concerns, I review these critiques in some detail. However, I maintain that the free market offers the potential for liberation that should be recognized, encouraged, and given a chance (Chapter 9).

Thus, in addition to the lengthy catalog of scientific findings, this project entails a careful analysis of the pitfalls of consumerism (Chapter 4) and warnings about the dangers of the “value capturers” and “branders,” those who would block the liberating potential of the eudaimonic technology (Chapter 3).

I also provide historical contexts for these developments (Chapters 1, 4, and 9), arguing that, in addition to the findings of the new sciences of happiness, history provides valuable examples that may guide the design and creation of experience products that will support and give direction to the experience and transformation economies.

Visionaries and economic theorists such as John Maynard Keynes outlined the specifics of what “liberation capitalism” looks like. Their vision provides a guide for the coming of the age of experiences (Chapter 9). Salient in such guides is the realization that, increasingly, free time will be more in demand. As Keynes noted (and as I argue in Chapter 8), the migration of value, moving as time rather than capital from older economic sectors to the experience and transformation economies, offers the potential for liberation through shorter working hours as well as greater equality and sustainability.

Convergence

Considered separately, the coming of experience and transformation economies, the arrival of the new sciences of happiness, and the development of postmaterialist culture are remarkable enough, exciting large numbers of futurists, economists, businesspeople, and journalists and representing fundamental changes in society and the economy as well as significant advances in the sciences. However, seen together as converging, they are quite possibly epochal, propelling the experience technology onto the world stage and signaling the renaissance of a categorically different, postmaterialist progress.
Over a century ago Walt Whitman foresaw this possibility, calling it “higher progress,” his term for what was once a widely held hope for “humane and moral progress” beyond the marketplace and politics. This centuries-long hope has been largely obscured for most of the twentieth century by consumerism and the information age but now is reawakening in a new age of experiences.

Quite simply, over the last two decades, the new sciences of happiness have identified fundamental elements and principles of human well-being, discoveries essential for the development of the experience technology. This new technology is being given impetus by the experience economy that is already serving an emerging postmaterialist culture’s growing demand for new kinds of intangible experience products. Thus, the conditions necessary for the advance of any new technology have been met: the laying of a scientific-knowledge foundation, an emergent social demand base for its products, and a responsive economy.

The result will be the coming of a long-awaited age of experiences in which how to live becomes a more important concern than how to make a living or even what to buy or how much to own—a possibility that the free marketplace, with its promise of liberation capitalism, is capable of realizing.

"Welcome to the Experience Economy"

In the nearly two decades since it was first identified, the experience economy has been expanding. As growth in the traditional sectors of the economy slows, businesspeople and economists have been turning their attention and hopes for the future to the creation and marketing of experiences. Some now predict that the future of modern economies depends on the success of the experience economy—the next economic wave surging ahead, building on and surpassing cell phones, computers, and the Internet. Jon Sundbo and Flemming Sørensen, prominent Danish researchers, describe “a fundamental shift in the very fabric of the global economy” with the coming of the experience economy, an assessment they continue to reiterate and that many now share.

Among the first to discern the coming of the new economy were Joseph Pine and James Gilmore with the 1998 publication of their article “Welcome to the Experience Economy” in the Harvard Business Review. Publication of their book The Experience Economy followed the next year, and James Harkin welcomed it as one of the most important business publications in decades. Later, Tom Kelley, general manager of IDEO, agreed that it is “one of the best business books of the twentieth century.”
Futurist Brian Solis observes that “the future of business is experiences” and that “experience is everything.” In the Forbes list of the top business books of 2015, Shep Hyken concluded the list with his “all-time favorite business book,” The Experience Economy: It is “one of the most powerful books ever written about customer service and customer experience.” The senior vice president of marketing and communications for Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Elizabeth Pizzinato, observes, “The experience economy is what’s driving everything.”

The Columbia University professor of marketing Bernd Schmitt’s comments expressed some of the excitement of the time: “We are in the middle of a revolution . . . that will render the principles and models of traditional marketing obsolete. A revolution that will change the face of marketing forever.” Pine and Gilmore argue that, just as the manufacturing sector of the economy superseded agriculture and the service economy has outpaced manufacturing, the experience economy is now gaining ascendancy as the last, best hope for continued economic growth.

For an illustration, they began their book with the story of a friend who visited Venice, found an outdoor café in Saint Mark’s Square, and ordered coffee. While he drank his coffee, he enjoyed the city and the people coming and going for a good while. When the check arrived, he found that he owed three to four times the regular price, but he reported that he did not feel overcharged at all because the experience was worth it—the café’s business was booming.

Pine and Gilmore offer numerous examples of thriving businesses that have discovered the possibility, and profitability, of designing and selling experiences: Walt Disney World, Starbucks, Hard Rock Café, Chuck E. Cheese, Gameworks, Build-a-Bear Workshops. More recent examples include Airbnb, Comic-Con, the host of amusement parks following Disney World’s model, escape rooms, Pilates and hot yoga classes, and Secret Cinema. Other examples are easy to find: struggling malls throughout the nation are rebranding themselves as lifestyle centers; bookstores are upgrading their spaces to hold community events and promote customer interaction; professional sports teams are building fan experiences on the tradition of family nights; Arthur Murray studios and a myriad of local dance studios are finding new markets for their experience products; vending machines are offering various interactive features; and Best Buy and other retailers are improving and even selling the experience of shopping. Following the lead of other retail chains such as Home Depot, the nationwide outdoor and sporting goods cooperative REI offers hands-on classes in cycling, hiking, camping, snow sports, and rock climbing to build customer skills and interest and thus the demand for their more traditional, tangible products—their Seattle and Columbus,
Ohio, affiliates erected climbing walls at their stores for customers to try out products.

Architects, city planners, and hoteliers are among the professions most interested in the design of, and provision for, experiences. For example, early in 2016, Hilton Worldwide introduced its “revolutionary” brand, Tru by Hilton, redesigning some of its hotels to include a large central lobby, with spaces for eating, working, meeting, playing, and lounging. Explicitly catering to the millennial generation’s preferences for simplicity and experiences, Tru by Hilton advertises that it is “embracing travelers’ desire for human connection, creating an experience that is playful, energetic, and engaging—a sense of place unlike anything in our space.”

Museums and other exhibition venues are turning from inert displays to hands-on, interactive exhibits. Architects and planners designed the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York City so that visitors might reexperience the images and drama of that fateful day. Distressed farms in the Midwest, with the help of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Ames, Iowa, are transforming themselves into tourist destinations, offering a sanitized experience of farm life to city folks, from planting to harvest, animal care to petting zoos, hayrides to cider making. Nurses and other therapists and counselors have discovered the value of active and enjoyable experiences and are prescribing them for their health-restoring and health-promoting benefits that help develop interpersonal skills and healthy lifestyles.

The travel and tourism industry, however, makes Pine and Gilmore’s best case. Not only is travel and tourism already one of the world’s largest industries (many argue that it is by far the largest); it is also the fastest growing, creating an array of hyphenated experience products such as cultural/heritage-, film-, culinary-, volunteer-, medical-, disaster-, climate-change-, and eco-tourism. Scholars in the new, thriving discipline of travel and tourism now lead the way in research and theory. Hoping to revitalize dying local economies, cities around the world, particularly in Scandinavia and China, are redesigning their public spaces, prohibiting motor traffic to attract visitors who want to experience their unique cultures and places in more personal, customized ways, off the beaten tourist paths. Cities in the United States’ Rustbelt, such as Cincinnati, Saint Louis, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore, rely on tourism to shore up their sagging economies. Cittaslow, a slow-cities movement, begun in Italy, is now well underway in Europe, following on the heels of the popular slow-food movement that transformed restaurants around the Continent—proponents of both movements claim to have improved the experience of places and foods by slowing the pace; adding cultural and personal, interactive components; and most importantly, increasing the amount of time used to enjoy them.
In the revised edition of their book, published in 2011, Pine and Gilmore report the rapid growth of the experience economy compared to other sectors of the economy (see Table I.1). Pine and Gilmore conclude that the experience economy has accounted for the lion’s share of economic growth and nearly three-quarters of new jobs in the United States for years.\textsuperscript{17} Research confirms their prediction that the experience economy will continue to grow—McKinsey and Company reported in 2017 that spending on experiences had grown nearly four times as much as spending on goods between 2014 and 2016 (see Table I.2).\textsuperscript{18}

Around the world, management and marketing experts and researchers, together with the travel and tourism industry, now recognize the importance and potential of the experience economy.\textsuperscript{19} According to Hélder Ferreira and Aurora Teixeira at the Research Center in Economics and Finance at the University of Porto (Portugal), there is widespread agreement among such experts worldwide that the experience economy is the essential next step, without which prospects for the future of modern economies are dim indeed.\textsuperscript{20} Gary Ellis and J. Robert Rossman see in such developments the beginnings of a new technology.\textsuperscript{21}
The New Sciences of Happiness: Positive Psychology

The same year (1998) that the Harvard Business Review published Pine and Gilmore’s article, Martin Seligman began his term as president of the American Psychological Association. For his presidential theme, he challenged his profession to begin “exploring what makes life worth living and building the enabling conditions of a life worth living.” With this challenge, he helped initiate what is now widely seen as a “tectonic upheaval in psychology”—what has come to be known as “positive psychology.”

Seligman pointed out that, up until his presidency, “[his] profession was half-baked.” From their beginnings, psychologists had focused most of their attention and research on human ills: neuroses, depression, delusions, and the like. The best they had hoped for was therapeutic—restoring some function, some normalcy. However, Seligman argued, “It wasn’t enough for us to nullify disabling conditions and get to zero.” A life cured of psychological miseries is no guarantee of happiness: “We needed to ask, What are the enabling conditions that make human beings flourish? How do we get from zero to plus five?”

Time magazine reported that what followed was “an explosion of research on happiness, optimism, positive emotions and healthy character traits. Seldom has an academic field been brought so quickly and deliberately to life.” Stephen Joseph concludes, “It is beyond doubt that positive psychology [has become] a major force in contemporary psychology.” Reviewing research published in peer-reviewed journals, Stewart Donaldson, Maren Dollwet, and Meghana Rao agreed in 2015 with Time’s earlier appraisal: “There has been an explosion of activity in, acclaim for, and criticism of positive psychology” over the last fifteen years.

For millennia, humans have been pursuing happiness, trying to unlock the riddle of human felicity. The Declaration of Independence lists such a pursuit as one of the fundamental, “self-evident” truths about human beings. Many and various solutions have been offered through the millennia. Now, at last, as leading researchers are quick to point out, empirical science has been brought directly to bear on this age-old question.

“Several thousand people around the world” investigating what makes life worth living for well over a decade have produced remarkable results. A broad consensus about the elements, the fundamental components, of human well-being has been reached. As a consequence of their discoveries and agreement about fundamentals, psychologists claim to be having considerable success developing experiences that deliver happiness, helping individuals flourish, as Seligman claims. Looking back in 2011, Seligman concluded, “Positive psychology makes people happier.” The Harvard psychologist
Daniel Gilbert agrees: “There is no doubt that the research has helped and will continue to help us increase our happiness.”

Throughout the history of science, few comparable advances have been made so rapidly—it took scientists well over a century to identify and agree about the elements of the physical world described by the periodic table.

For the growing industry built around experiences, the findings of a new science dedicated to identifying factors that improve the human experience present a veritable gold mine of insight. Catalogs of the most useful of those insights (Chapters 5 and 6) provide guides to the ways the experience economy can and should evolve in the near future.

The New Sciences of Happiness: The Neurobiology of Well-Being

Early in 1999, the year after Seligman’s seminal presidency and Pine and Gilmore’s groundbreaking publication “welcoming” the experience economy, Daniel Siegel published The Developing Mind: Toward a Neurobiology of Interpersonal Experience. Emerging out of the beehive of neurobiological research in the 1990s (what some have called the “Decade of the Brain”), his book was the culmination of his and others’ attempts to define and initiate an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the mind and its healthy functioning.

Numerous writers, including Stefan Klein and Richard Layard, see positive psychology and advances in the neurosciences converging in a new science of happiness. The Harvard Business Review spotlighted the new sciences with its January–February 2012 issue, titled “The Value of Happiness,” noting that economists had joined psychologists and neurobiologists on this frontier, beginning to develop an “economics of well-being.” The journal quoted the well-known Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert as saying, “Having three separate disciplines all interested in a single topic has put that topic on the scientific map.”

The Economist, quoting the Princeton psychologist Daniel Kahneman, winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize for Economics, reported that economists such as Robert Frank had joined psychologists in asking people what made them happy rather than relying exclusively on marketplace data. Economists had also begun to offer sumptuary advice to consumers about how to spend their money and time—advice based on their empirical findings.

Looking back in 2010, Siegel reported the convergence of several scientific disciplines in the first decades of the twenty-first century, including psychopathology, emotions research, neurobiology, psychology, physics, systems theory, and mathematics. He called special attention to the convergence
of the neurosciences and positive psychology, noting that "positive psychology has offered an important corrective to the disease model by identifying the characteristics of happy people, such as gratitude, compassion, open-mindedness, and curiosity."\textsuperscript{38}

Moreover, Siegel explained that neuroscience and systems theory had exposed a deeper reality that "underlies all of these individual strengths [discovered by positive psychology]": a “key mechanism” at the heart of human happiness that has become the focus of the recent convergence, or “consilience,” of scientific evidence from various fields of research: “I’ve come to believe that integration is the key mechanism beneath . . . the presence of well-being. Integration—the linkage of differentiated elements of a system—illuminates a direct pathway towards health.”\textsuperscript{39} Thus have the neuroscientists and systems theorists progressed beyond positive psychology’s identification of the elements of human happiness, revealing “a relational and \textit{embodied process}”\textsuperscript{40} governed by basic laws of differentiation and integration common to all complex, open, and adaptive systems, including a healthy functioning mind, which determine human happiness and well-being at the most fundamental operational level: a scientific breakthrough with profound implications.

A Eudaimonic Technology

The new sciences of happiness have made few efforts, however, to reach beyond traditional professional delivery systems based on the old therapeutic and clinical models and out to the private sector.\textsuperscript{41} Few attempts have been made to guide the free market, assisting the entrepreneur and individual firms, helping them design and deliver profitable experiences. Similarly, those in the experience economy have made surprisingly little \textit{deliberate} use of these new sciences. This is the gap this book intends to bridge. To this end I have cataloged the most relevant findings of these convergent lines of inquiry to show how our economy can harness the research to the benefit of consumers and providers alike. Such a bridge is critical and, for the most part, missing. To this point, the marketplace has been able to move in the correct direction only by fits and starts.

There are important exceptions, individuals and groups that have made attempts to apply the sciences of happiness to the marketplace.\textsuperscript{42} Building on these initial efforts, I offer a more systematic approach in the pages of this book: identifying the advent of a new, eudaimonic technology, founded in the sciences of happiness; cataloging and analyzing its recent findings; and encouraging additional applications in the marketplace. In addition, I identify and analyze clinical, counseling, public, and pedagogical models and applications already existing within the new sciences of happiness.
professions that may be adapted to the free market by entrepreneurs and existing businesses.

By cataloging examples of the emergent, so far inchoate eudaimonic technology forming within the experience economy and building on these examples, I offer a more explicit guide to experience design; a guide grounded in the new principles of well-being advanced by positive psychology and the systems approach to human flourishing discovered by neuroscientists. By identifying and articulating the incipient new technology and outlining the scientific principles that might guide experience-product design in the future, I hope to promote a more deliberate development and dissemination of the new technology, looking ahead to the growth of a new range of experience industries.

It is not surprising that the marketplace has anticipated what scientists have been finding out about happiness. In theory, the market is the primary arena in which happiness is determined and sought. Economists have used the word “utility” for over a century and a half, struggling with an elusive concept in ways strikingly similar to the scientific discussions about happiness and well-being. In theory, as free-market advocates such as Milton Friedman would have it, the market resembles an enormous testing laboratory in which each dollar spent represents a data point. Social scientists’ data sets gathered from tens or hundreds of test cases, occasionally even millions, pale in comparison with the tens of billions of votes that take place in the marketplace every day when consumers chose to spend their dollars on this experience over that service or over this product. Economists have long argued that exchanges in the free market are the ultimate test of utility, more democratic and indicating far better than any other method what makes people happy.

Moreover, the history of technology offers numerous examples of science’s theoretical discoveries being applied to the marketplace ahead of scientific advances, often serendipitously, by men and women more active in the marketplace as inventors and entrepreneurs, or even as mechanics and tinkerers, than as researchers or clinicians. Historically, practical and intuitive invention anticipates the deliberate application of scientific principles by experts—the first practical use of steam power, the Newcomen engine, designed to pump water from mines and built by a British ironmonger and Baptist lay preacher, is a case in point. Such practical-minded folk may not be fully awake to the genius of their discoveries or conversant with the scientific principles behind it. Moreover, it is the response of the free market that legitimizes their inventions, not the disciplined research and peer-review procedures of the sciences and academia. Cultural changes, creating new kinds of demand in the marketplace, are the seedbed for new technologies.
Certainly, scientists and engineers have found a home in research and development departments of modern companies and corporations. However, the research and development professions are not yet reaching out to new sciences of happiness. Similarly, even though management experts and marketing researchers have been following the development of the experience economy, agreeing about its importance, one searches their journals, along with the research and development literature, in vain for mention of the new happiness research coming out of neurobiology and positive psychology.

This book is designed to help remedy these oversights, building bridges to the worlds of marketing and management by outlining ways that the research done by the new sciences of happiness may be applied to the design of experience products.

**The Coming of Postmaterialist Culture**

The third development, emerging since the 1990s and converging with the experience economy and the new sciences of happiness that is helping to spawn a eudaimonic technology, is the growth of postmaterialist culture—a development that is providing new demand for experience products.

In his February 14, 2011, article, “The Experience Economy,” David Brooks noted that “a shift in values” was well underway in the United States, signaling the advent of a “postmaterialist mind-set.” For the generations that grew up in the middle decades of the twentieth century, “income and living standards were synonymous.” Increasingly, however, “rich and meaningful experiences” are beginning to replace jobs and consumer goods as the definitions of success and well-being. This postmaterialist “shift in values” has profound economic consequences, according to Brooks, redirecting consumption patterns from material goods and toward experiences.

Research identifying the coming of a postmaterialist culture dates to the early 1970s, when Ronald Inglehart, a political scientist at the University of Michigan, documented a change in values from one generation to the next in the United States—a shift from concerns about wealth, safety, and consumerism to new aspirations: autonomy, quality of life, creativity, experiences, and self-expression. Since then, a generation of sociologists and political scientists have confirmed that postmaterialist values continue to spread across the industrial world and grow with the coming of age of the millennial generation (born between the mid-1980s and early 2000s).

Following Brooks’s lead, I suggest that this growth of postmaterialist values is indeed relevant to the experience economy. What the relation is, or should be, however, is debatable. On the surface, it appears that postmaterialism is expanding demand for experience products—just the fortuitous
cultural shift needed. The business press has stressed this possibility, empha-
sizing the wealth- and job-producing potential of the experience economy
energized by the influx of new consumers.

However, David Brooks cautions that the “postmaterialist mind-set”
raises the possibility that individuals and nations might “improve the quality
of life without actually producing more wealth. . . . Many of this era’s tech-
nological breakthroughs produce enormous happiness gains, but surprisingly
little additional economy activity.” As people devote “more of their energies to
postmaterial arenas and less and less . . . to the sheer production of wealth,”
the downside might be soaring unemployment numbers and anemic eco-
nomic growth.51

It may be, as Brooks suspects, that the new postmaterialist values are in-
imical to economic growth, leading people away from the marketplace, and
all told, bad for business. While expanding the desire for experiences, such
values may discourage economic activity in general.

Critiques of the Experience Economy:
Practical and Ideological

Others, with different ideological perspectives, are also disturbed by the com-
ing of the experience economy and doubtless will be dismayed by the prospect
of a eudaimonic technology and an age of experiences. But instead of worry-
ing with Brooks about the impact on jobs and wealth creation, writers such
as Jacques Ellul, Andre Gorz, and Jürgen Habermas have long questioned the
experience economy’s basic principles, arguing that the extension of the mar-
ketplace into previously free realms of human experience (commodification)
represents a quantum leap in the colonization of the “lifeworld”52 and the
beginning of a brave new world where human community and personalities
are made into products that are bought and sold—a world in which human
beings are increasing helpless and manipulated by corporations interested
primarily in converting human lives into profit. Dozens of dystopian films
and books based on such fears, such as Blade Runner and Brave New World—
even Wall-e—have raised such concerns over the last century.

In the United States, Jeremy Rifkin published The Age of Access: The
New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life Is a Paid-For Experience
in 2000, objecting to the alienation and exploitation that he believes are the
inevitable consequences of the experience economy and predicting that it will
soon enslave us all, rendering us helpless pawns in a dystopia of conformity,
growing inequality, false consciousness, and social chaos. Rather than freeing
humans by offering more choices, the experience economy is creating an era
of “hypercapitalism.”53
Because of the obvious appeal of such arguments, and because I share many of these concerns, I present the critics’ case sympathetically and in some depth in Chapter 4.

The Promise: A Renaissance of the Forgotten American Dream

Answering the critics and my own fears, I maintain that, while the experience economy may very well have tragic consequences, its expansion may just as easily address both the practical objections about anemic economic growth and unemployment made by people such as David Brooks and the ideological criticisms and ethical concerns presented by writers such as Gorz, Habermas, and Rifkin.

Whereas Brooks is disturbed by more people in the industrial nations devoting “more of their energies to postmaterial arenas and less and less . . . to the sheer production of wealth,” some welcome the coming of postmaterialism as representing a healthy turn from consumerism and the marketplace: a rejection of the commodification of life. I propose that the eudaimonic technology has the potential to free humans from corporations and the marketplace rather than re-enslave them to more work and in more alienated consumption.

Moreover, rather than driving unemployment as Brooks fears, the experience economy may instead provide a time-honored solution, work sharing, employed for decades by the industrialized nations—long championed by organized labor and supported by prominent economists for over a century. In Chapter 8, I discuss the broader economic implications of the age of experiences, explaining that consumers will need time as much as, or perhaps more than, money. Following the reasoning of economists such as Frank Knight, Staffan Linder, and John Owen, I maintain that value should transfer from the older economic sectors (commodities, goods, and services) to the newer ones as the spending of time as much as the spending of money. In the coming age of experiences, value will be determined more by how time is spent and less by how money is spent.

More than in any of the other sectors of the economy, the currency that supports the experience economy is the coin of time. It is reasonable to predict that the demand for free time will grow with the demand for experiences; total work time should naturally decline and unemployment pressure lessen as labor supply is drawn down. A kind of free-market-generated work sharing should then take place as more and more people make the rational choice to maximize utility by spending more of their time on experiences and less on making money—making choices similar to those made by generations of
employees in industrial nations who cut their working time virtually in half during the one hundred or so years after the Industrial Revolution.

This process should also address Rifkin’s and other critics’ concerns about corporate tyranny and consumer helplessness. As entrepreneurs develop new experience products that build autonomy and promote competency and control (two of the prime determinants of happiness according to the new sciences of happiness and the logical culmination of customer empowerment), consumers are gradually finding their way beyond the marketplace, creating together and freely sharing experiences in what was once known as “the realm of freedom”55 (now popularly known as the sharing economy), no longer helpless or passive, and avoiding the corporate traps Rifkin and others see lurking ahead.56 Credence to such claims is added by a growing, robust scholarship stream that some have labeled “consumer culture theory.” This theory has confirmed the market’s healthy culture-creating ability and liberating potential and has identified the experience economy as a prime example of consumer agency and free expression in diverse democratic cultures (see Chapter 4).

As David Brooks explained, with the coming of postmaterialism, “wealth and living standards have diverged.” In the new competition for time, “rich and meaningful experiences”57 are likely to be increasingly preferred and time spent doing them understood more and more as the definition of success and seen as an alternative to traditional consumerism and the mere accumulation of material wealth. Consumers should begin to prefer experiences and the time required to enjoy them over possible work or income, finding in experiences better ways to maximize utility, or as the new happiness scientists say, to flourish.

Free time should then reemerge from its historical dormancy as a normal good and be in greater demand in the marketplace, as it was during what I have called “the century of shorter working hours.”58

A Promise Long Foretold

Long before the coming of modern consumer culture, a host of Americans assumed that, as the economy grew and technology improved, people’s time and free experiences would become more valuable to them than new goods and services they had never needed or even seen before. Proof of that assumption was ready to hand, in the steady reduction of working hours and in organized labor’s consistent, century-long commitment to the “progressive shortening of the hours of labor.”59 Americans were welcoming of, and seemed determined to continue to welcome, the opportunity to live more
of their lives beyond the marketplace. Observers hoped that such progress would lead to a host of fortunate outcomes, anticipating today’s discoveries of the new sciences of happiness.

Outside the marketplace, beyond getting, spending, and continually building material wealth, human beings, with the time of their lives liberated, might be expected to make more important kinds of progress: developing their potential to live together peacefully and agreeably; spending more of their lives and energy forming healthy families, neighborhoods, and cities; increasing their knowledge and appreciation of nature, history, and other peoples; creating their own beautiful things; freely investigating and delighting in the mysteries of the human spirit, exploring their beliefs and values together; finding common ground for agreement and conviviality; observing traditions and practicing their faiths; expanding their awareness of God; and wondering in creation.60

The flowering of Yiddish culture on the Lower East Side of New York City during the first decades of the twentieth century produced some of the most beautiful expressions of this forgotten dream. Writers such as Elizabeth Hasanovitz recognized the potential of America’s prosperity in the forms of her union’s demands for better wages and shorter work hours—the potential to free the human spirit and re-enliven her culture, in imminent danger of assimilation. Other prominent men and women such as Jonathan Edwards, Walt Whitman, John Maynard Keynes, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Fania Cohn, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Robert Maynard Hutchins and a host of ordinary people (from the Lowell “mill girls” in the 1840s to the determined women at Kellogg’s cereal plant in Battle Creek who fought to keep their six-hour day in the 1970s and 1980s) envisioned progress as increased freedom to pursue happiness—what David Brooks called “high quality-of-life gains”61 and what Jonathan Edwards, so long ago, foresaw as the realization of the kingdom of God in America.

Liberation Capitalism

Such sentiments were echoed by influential businesspeople who believed they were leading the way: W. K. Kellogg and his CEO, Lewis Brown, when they introduced the six-hour day to the cereal plants in Battle Creek, Michigan; Lord Leverhulme (founder of Lever Brothers) as he planned the future of his city, Port Sunlight, in England; Paul Litchfield at Goodyear Tire when he introduced and defended a six-hour day at his factory in Akron, Ohio; Henry Ford when he established the five-day week in his automobile plants. Ford reasoned that consumers would need more time as well as more money to be
reliable consumers of his cars. Ford, with other businesspeople, also claimed that shorter hours were essential to ward off chronic unemployment.62

Walter Gifford, president of AT&T for most of the second quarter of the twentieth century, the corporation’s heyday, believed that “industry . . . has gained a new and astonishing vision.” The final, best achievement of business and the free market would be “a new type of civilization,” in which “how to make a living becomes less important than how to live.” Gifford predicted:

Machinery will increasingly take the load off men’s shoulders. . . . Every one of us will have more chance to do what he wills, which means greater opportunity, both materially and spiritually. . . . [Steadily decreasing work hours] will give us time to cultivate the art of living, give us a better opportunity for . . . the arts, enlarge the comforts and satisfaction of the mind and spirit, as material well-being feeds the comforts of the body.63

According to Gifford, communism and socialism could not compete. Advocates of these systems promised liberation but delivered slavery and had recently embarked on a novel government project of make-work to provide everyone with a full-time job. True liberation from the shackles of material necessity and from the prison of perpetual economic worries was through the free market, not authoritarian government more interested in keeping people at work full time. The free market provided individuals with opportunities to “buy” back their time to live freely and to enjoy more fully the fruits of their labors. Even as the Great Depression struck the United States, his faith and vision remained firm:

We can . . . face the future with a confidence that not only will our standard of living become higher and higher so far as material needs and comforts are concerned, but that upon the foundation of this higher standard of material conditions will arise a spiritual and cultural development which will give our children and our children’s children the priceless heritage of a finer civilization.64

For more than a century before 1930, working hours had declined—nearly cut in half. Labor unions played a vital part in these reductions to be sure, as did businesspeople such as Kellogg and Gifford and managers and researchers such as Frederick Taylor. However, shorter working hours were largely a product of the free market, reflecting individuals’ choices to work less and live more.65 With the resurgence of postmaterialist values, the
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The economy may be expected to respond as it did before for so long. As Keynes and Gifford understood, the free market, delivering what really makes people happy, offers an exit. What I have called liberation capitalism can serve its customers by freeing them. By delivering new, more valuable experiences, an expanding experience economy may be expected to provide consumers with ever-greater incentives to “buy” back more of their life to have time for all the new experiences.

One of the possible outcomes of the experience economy, driven by a new eudaimonic technology, may be the renaissance of the forgotten American dream—a rebirth as postmaterialist progress out of the womb of capitalism. Liberation capitalism provides a conservative road leading to liberal values beyond the marketplace—to the cultivation of civic engagement and virtue and, as Gifford envisioned, a “finer civilization.”

The Challenge of Continuing Alienation and Enslavement

No doubt, the threat of capitalism’s increased exploitation and control still looms. Years ago, Herbert Marcuse warned:

Automation threatens to render possible the reversal of the relation between free time and working time: the possibility of working time becoming marginal and free time becoming full time. The result would be a radical transvaluation of values [compare Brooks’s “shift in values”], and a mode of existence incompatible with the traditional culture. Advanced industrial society is in permanent mobilization against this possibility.

Thus mobilized and doing battle against the tide of postmaterialist culture and its “transvaluation of values,” still struggling to maximize profits, corporations and the wealthy few may continue to promote helplessness and dependency, using the sciences of the mind to delude customers with commodified rather than liberating experiences. Time may continue to be trapped in an everlasting spiral of getting and spending, a process driven not by the customer’s increasing free choice and utility but capitalism’s insatiable need to convert human lives into profit.

The ultimate test of the experience economy is whether it grows more dependent on, versus liberated from, corporations and the marketplace. If experience products that deliver authentic well-being, in accord with the discoveries by the sciences of happiness about the importance of autonomy and
competence, are brought to market and if the marketplace performs as it should, ceteris paribus,\textsuperscript{69} with the better mousetrap outperforming inferior products, then the market might very well, on its own, provide the free time essential to usher in a new age of experiences.

We may expect to witness something of a historic experiment played out in the marketplace over the next few decades; an experiment in which scientists’ objective research and empirical discoveries about human happiness test traditional, competing claims about the free market: the economists’ long-standing claims that the marketplace best serves and delivers human happiness and utility in a democracy versus critics’ protests that capitalism, by its nature, exploits, benights, and enslaves in service to the profit and power of the few, capturing and perverting the democracies in which it is parasitically embedded. We may witness the flowering of capitalism in the dawn of a new age of experiences and abundant free time, or Karl Marx and Herbert Marcuse may prove to have been right.

I have written this book to promote and encourage the former possibility.