



The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where all of Life is a Paid-For Experience

By Jeremy Rifkin

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

He's been called the postmodern Chicken Little, but it happens that the sky really is falling. Jeremy Rifkin pulls the plug on the trend away from property ownership and free public life in *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism Where All of Life Is a Paid-For Experience*. As usual, he's a bit ahead of the curve--most of us aren't fully immersed yet in the sea of leased products and packaged experiences that he sees awaiting us. Still, his eerie vision of a world of gatekeepers paying each other for access to nearly every aspect of human life brings a chilling new meaning to the phrase "pay to play" and should spark some debate over our new cultural revolution.

Using examples from business and government experiments with just-in-time access to goods and services and resource sharing, Rifkin defines a new society of renters who are too busy breaking the shackles of material possessions to mourn the passing of public property. Are we encouraging alienation or participation? Can we trust corporations with stewardship of our social lives? True to form, the author asks more questions than he answers--a sign of an open mind. If property is theft, leased access is extortion, and *The Age of Access* warns us of the complex changes coming in our relationships with our homes, our communities, and our world. --*Rob Lightner*

From Publishers Weekly

In his latest synthesis of business analysis and academic philosophizing, Rifkin (*The End of Work*, *The Biotech Century*, etc.) argues that we are in the midst of a new age in which "concepts, ideas and images--not things--are the real items of value" and where "the purchase of lived experiences becomes the consummate commodity." In the book's first half, Rifkin contends that ownership of property has become increasingly devalued. Today's companies avoid amassing physical capital, which can later prove "an albatross" that prevents them from keeping up with rapid technological advances. Instead, they prefer to "outsource ownership," contracting third parties to provide and maintain equipment. This trend combines with others, such as the proliferation of service relationships, to put more emphasis on access than ownership, heralding a time when what companies sell will be human experience itself and all cultural activities will be commodified. In the book's second half, Rifkin shows how "experience industries"--such as travel and entertainment--are coming to dominate the new global economy. "More and more of the global cultural sphere--its natural wonders, cathedrals, museums, palaces, parks, rituals, festivals--is being siphoned off into the marketplace," he says, where it serves as a backdrop "for enacting paid-for cultural experiences" that is divorced from historical context. As in Rifkin's earlier works, the author asserts the truth of his ideas in considerable detail without offering much supporting evidence, leaving readers either to believe him or not. Even so, his larger historical and social perspective and lack of technological boosterism is refreshing.

Agent: Jim Stein. (May)

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From Library Journal

The author of 14 previous books, including *The End of Work* and *The Biotech Century*, Rifkin is a noted social critic and president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, DC. In this important work, he examines the trends that underlie our transition from a service-based economy to one based on the convergence of commerce and culture. Specifically, he notes a broad range of structural changes, including the shift from markets to networks and from ownership to access, the reduced value of physical property and the rise of intellectual property, and the increased marketing of human relationships where culture has

become the ultimate commercial resource. His most riveting assertion is that these developments are in sharp contrast to the situation in the rest of the world, in which, as Rifkin states, over 50 percent of the people have never made a phone call, much less been connected to the emerging global information network.

Recommended for both public and academic libraries.

-Norman B. Hutcherson, Kern Cty. Lib., Bakersfield, CA

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Users Review

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