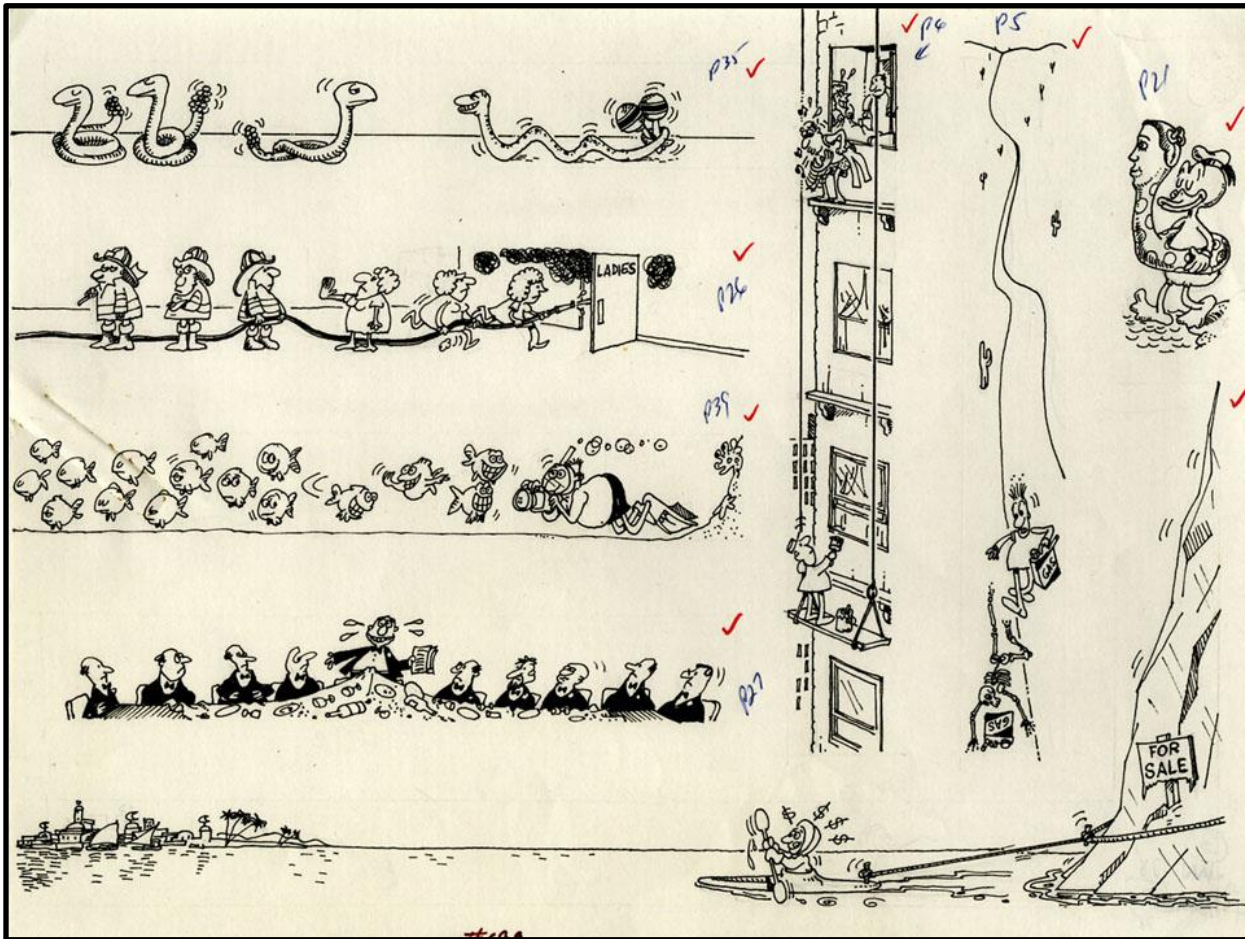


❖ ‘Marginal’ cartoons by Sergio Aragones



Sergio Aragones is best known for his work for ‘Mad’ magazine. ‘Marginals’ – are the linear (horizontal or vertical) cartoons he draws to fit in the margins between the panels. The most interesting aspects of his cartoons are that they are often ‘single scene’ (not a 2-3 part series) and almost always ‘silent’ – he just creates a ridiculously funny situation and captures it like a snapshot without using a single word. His cartoons often need to be solved like a puzzle – the reader often taking some time to figure out exactly what is happening – and then getting the ‘aha’ moment !

The picture above has 8 (Eight) independent cartoons – have fun’ cracking’ them!

❖ Foreword by Richard Ryan to the book ‘ The High Price of Materialism’

Tim Kasser is an American scholar who studies psychology of materialism. In his book ‘The High Price of Materialism’ he comprehensively synthesizes various strands of research to make the case that single minded pursuit of materialistic goals often arises from and also results in diminished psychological well-being. The insights that he presents are important in so many different ways: first, at an individual level, they can guide all of us in thinking about ‘what should we seek from life’. Second , at a societal level , they raise a question that whether developing nations like ours need to go through the entire cycle , make all the mistakes that Western nations made to learn the important link between blind materialistic pursuit and ecological and societal imbalance. What follows is the forward written by Richard Ryan (University of Rochester) to this book

At this point in human history we have enough material resources to feed, clothe, shelter, and educate every living individual on Earth. Not only that: we have at the same time the global capacity to enhance health care, fight major diseases, and considerably clean up the environment. That such resources exist is not merely a utopian fantasy, it is a reality about which there is little serious debate. Nonetheless, a quick look around most any part of this warming globe tells us just how far we are from achieving any of these goals. If we hold our eyes wide open we can see that the human community is instead dividing itself into two distinct worlds: a “first” world filled with opulence, luxury, and material excess; and a “third” world characterized by deprivation, poverty, and struggle. Whereas first and third worlds could formerly be distinguished along national boundaries, increasingly, and in most countries, one finds relatively insulated pockets of wealth surrounded by ever widening fields of impoverishment. Most of the world’s population is now growing up in winner-take-all economies, where the main goal of individuals is to get whatever they can for themselves: to each according to his greed. Within this economic landscape, selfishness and materialism are no longer being seen as moral problems, but as cardinal goals of life.

This global reality exists, however, only because people, and I mean each one of us, can so readily be converted to the religions of consumerism and materialism. Indeed, such mass conversion seems already to have occurred. Vast numbers of us have been seduced into believing that having more wealth and material possessions is essential to the good life. **We have swallowed the idea that, to be well, one first has to be well-off. And many of us, consciously or unconsciously, have learned to evaluate our own well-being and accomplishment not by looking inward at our spirit or integrity, but by looking outward at what we have and what we can buy. Similarly, we have adopted a world view in which the worth and success of others is judged not by their apparent wisdom, kindness, or community contributions, but in terms of whether they possess the right clothes, the right car, and more generally, the right “stuff.”**

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of this modern measure of worth is that it is not simply about having *enough*, but about having *more* than others do. **That is, feelings of personal worth are based on how one’s pile of money and possessions compares with that of others; both those who surround us in real life and those seen only in the pseudo-realities of television and movies.** In this context, no one can ever have enough because, aside from Bill Gates, there are always others who have more. Accordingly, at all levels of wealth one can find individuals who crave ever more expensive toys, status symbols, and image builders, and

who subjectively feel that they need more than they currently have. As advertising executives have known for decades, we become good consumers only when we experience mere “desires” as urgent “needs,” and when our conception of the “necessities” of life becomes ever more blurry and bloated. Clearly, by these criteria, most of us have become good consumers. It would be one thing if the promises of the consumer society were real, but they are not. And this is where this succinct, but important, book by Tim Kasser comes in. Kasser reviews a formidable body of research that highlights what for most of us is a quite counter-intuitive fact: even when people obtain more money and material goods, they do not become more satisfied with their lives, or more psychologically healthy because of it. More specifically, once people are above poverty levels of income, gains in wealth have little to no incremental payoff in terms of happiness or well-being. **However, the central focus of Kasser’s treatise, and what makes it new and different, is that merely *aspiring* to have greater wealth or more material possessions is likely to be associated with increased personal unhappiness. He documents that people with strong materialistic values and desires report more symptoms of anxiety, are at greater risk for depression, and experience more frequent somatic irritations than those who are less materialistic. They watch more television, use more alcohol and drugs, and have more impoverished personal relationships.** Even in sleep, their dreams seem to be infected with anxiety and distress. Thus, insofar as people have adopted the “American dream” of stuffing their pockets, they seem to that extent to be emptier of self and soul.

Perhaps even more important, Kasser provides one of the fullest explanations available of how these empty promises of consumerism can become deeply anchored in our psyches. His explanation focuses not on the play of macroeconomic forces that drive market consumerism, but on a closer-up view of what leads people to so persistently try psychologically to feed off of material goods and status symbols, **even though they do not nourish.** Kasser highlights two reasons why materialism is associated with unhappiness. **The first concerns the burdens that materialism places on the human soul.** Desires to have more and more material goods drive us into an ever more frantic pace of life. Not only must we work harder, but, once possessing the goods, we have to maintain, upgrade, replace, insure, and constantly manage them. Thus, in the journey of life, materialists end up carrying an ever-heavier load, one that expends the energy necessary for living, loving, and learning—the really satisfying aspects of that journey. Thus materialism, although promising happiness, actually creates strain and stress. Yet if materialism causes unhappiness, it is also the case that unhappiness “causes” materialism. **Kasser shows how enhanced desires or “needs” to have more or consume more are deeply and dynamically connected with feelings of personal insecurity. Materialism, it appears, tends to ripen best among people who feel uncertain about matters of love, self-esteem, competence, or control.** Indeed, to many people it appears to offer a solution to these common insecurities and anxieties. Our consumer culture persistently teaches that we can counter insecurity by buying our way to self-esteem and loveworthiness. The pervasive message, passed on in popular media, advertisements, and celebrity modeling, is that we will feel better about ourselves if we are surrounded by symbols of worth—toys that others can admire, clothes and adornments that convey attractiveness, or image products that communicate self-importance and aliveness. Kasser suggests that it is because our psychological insecurities are so easily connected with the promise of self-esteem through buying that the fires of consumption are hotly fueled. Remarkably, economies focused on consumption appear, in turn, to foster conditions that heighten psychological insecurities, and in this sense

they fuel themselves. Children grow up in homes where their parents crave products and possessions. Parents today work more hours outside the home than ever, many to acquire the buying power to obtain yet more and more of the goods that they have been taught they and their children “need.” In the meantime, attention to children, intimate time with spouses, availability to be in touch with extended family, and other satisfactions that cannot be bought are pushed to the periphery. Not much time for living remains after the working, spending, and consuming are completed. Yet during this free time, children and adults occupy themselves with mass media bulging with advertisements that entice and promise good feelings ahead. Thus, the cultural climate of consumerism creates the very circumstance where love, control, and esteem are not securely experienced, and in which an ever-present tendency to compare oneself with others is fostered. In this climate, almost everyone is vulnerable to “affluenza,” an infectious disease in which one becomes addicted to having. This is of course the tragic tale of modernity—we are the snakes eating our own tails. Yet, in telling the tale, Kasser not only gathers together hard data to confirm what folk wisdom has always told us—that one cannot buy happiness or well-being—he also addresses how we have so easily been hooked by an opposing belief. He provides a quite compelling and yet succinct **psychology of materialism—its inward causes in insecurities regarding basic needs, and its personal consequences in terms of empty, alienated, and misdirected lives.**

It is for this reason that this engaging text is also extremely timely. For if we are ever to get a handle on our runaway consumerism and marketeering, the starting place is none other than raised consciousness concerning what we value and work for in this worldly existence. The research Kasser compiles raises serious questions about the benefits of materialistic success for both individuals and society, and he uses it to underscore the hidden costs of the American dream in ways that any reader can apply to his or her own life. Although one can find a plethora of books containing diatribes on the evils of materialism, Kasser places this discussion on a more compelling plane by focusing on what the empirical evidence truly shows about materialism and happiness, and by interpreting that evidence in a way that relates it to everyday experience. He uses extant research to inform, to highlight available choices before us, and to provoke us to choose wisely. **Amid the infectious spread of affluenza, Kasser’s work promotes mindfulness, which, ultimately, may be the most powerful vaccine of all.**

❖ **Celebrate Humanity : Theme video for the Sydney Olympics 2000**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbG4cGsfB6o>



'Celebrate Humanity' was the theme chosen for Sydney Olympics that was held in year 2000. Use the link above to watch the wonderful set of videos that cover the following sub- themes: **Courage, Bronze, Giant, Silver, Rhymes, Smile, and Adversary.**

The script for 'adversary' reads as follows:

*To an opponent in the game:
You are my adversary, but you are not my enemy.
For your resistance gives me strength.
Your will gives me courage.
Your spirit ennobles me.
And though I aim to defeat you, should I succeed, I will not humiliate you.
Instead, I will honor you.
For without you, I am a lesser man.*

• • •

About 'Treasures'

It's a compilation that I put together every once in a while, of things that I have found to be beautiful and meaningful.

Do share it with others who you think will enjoy it.

Drop me an email at shaileshd.email@gmail.com if you want to add someone to the circulation list.

Ownership and copyright of all material belongs to original artists and/or publishers. This compilation has no commercial objective