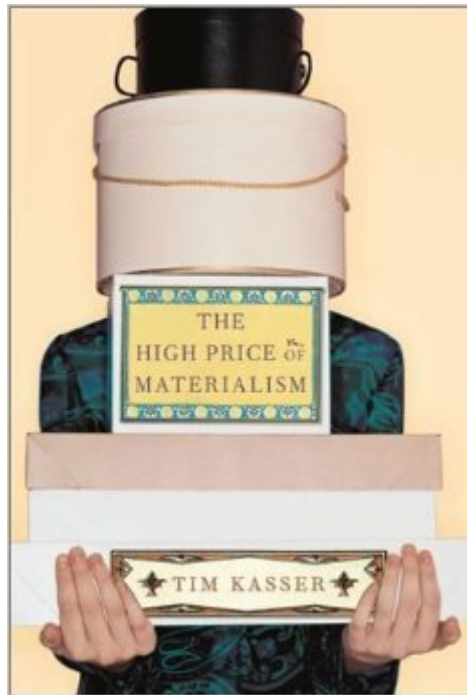


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The High Price Of Materialism



Synopsis

In *The High Price of Materialism*, Tim Kasser offers a scientific explanation of how our contemporary culture of consumerism and materialism affects our everyday happiness and psychological health. Other writers have shown that once we have sufficient food, shelter, and clothing, further material gains do little to improve our well-being. Kasser goes beyond these findings to investigate how people's materialistic desires relate to their well-being. He shows that people whose values center on the accumulation of wealth or material possessions face a greater risk of unhappiness, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and problems with intimacy -- regardless of age, income, or culture. Drawing on a decade's worth of empirical data, Kasser examines what happens when we organize our lives around materialistic pursuits. He looks at the effects on our internal experience and interpersonal relationships, as well as on our communities and the world at large. He shows that materialistic values actually undermine our well-being, as they perpetuate feelings of insecurity, weaken the ties that bind us, and make us feel less free. Kasser not only defines the problem but proposes ways we can change ourselves, our families, and society to become less materialistic.

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Customer Reviews

The High Cost of Materialism is an interesting subject, but the author isn't up to the challenge he sets for himself. The Preface and Introduction are excellent. Both are succinct expressions of the problems that a market-driven economy creates within an individual looking for happiness. But the method the author uses to accomplish his goal falls short. First of all, the author tries to make the claim that "If a person is aware of the effect of materialism in their life, they will probably become

happy." This claim is weak at best. There are many people who are happy accumulating stuff. (I don't happen to be one of them, but I don't claim to represent all consumers in the world).2nd, the author uses questionnaires to determine what makes people happy.He develops an 'Aspiration Index' with questions like:1) 'Your image will be one others find appealing'2) 'You will be famous'.There are 15 of these questions.He gives this questionnaire to 350 people. And then he assumes these responses are an accurate portrayal of all consumers.But, the sampling technique is terrible. I'm surprised the colleagues who reviewed this article didn't point this out.For the 350 people, he chooses ONLY(a) college students(b) from one or two universities.Holy cow! A book on the psychological effects of materialism, seen through the eyes of college students.What subset of America is represented by "18-22 years olds in University"?To me, that makes all the conclusions based on his questionnaire responses invalid, or spurious at best.The book sets up many arguments of why people find materialism frustrating, and then refutes each of these. Sometimes finding some psychological 'causes'.

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