

## **Better Satisfaction of Human Needs by Coordinating Material and Spiritual Values**

**Pál Tomcsányi**

Research Professor Emeritus  
outposted chair for methodology of Szent István University  
Gödöllő-Budapest (Hungary)

### **Abstract**

The quality of human life and its future outlook are based on a different approach to life-style needs enabling satisfaction, a distinction between and a well-balanced consumption of *material and experience goods*. The purpose of human life and the possibility of survival are approached from the perspective of faith using the *dual model of the material and spiritual world*. By conceiving man as currently the only *spiritual creating* being on Earth, the essence of human survival and existence, in addition to fulfilling its spiritual creative function, is in reducing the dominance of self-interest and possessiveness and in a massive increase of humanitarian solidarity.

**Keywords:** material/spiritual values, experience goods, human needs, satisfaction, model of-being, increase of spirituality, createdness of the world, future of mankind, danger of famine

At the meeting of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences held on the occasion of my 90th birthday and summing up my work done in the areas of theoretical marketing and plant variety research, I thought back on my forays into domains, extending beyond the boundaries of science, which have urged me to meditate – and thus stay alive in the past few years. Because if a natural scientist no longer has space for experiment, a laboratory, or an assistant, he only has his thinking left for research, upon which no disciplinary restrictions can be set. Thus he roams on the territory of other disciplines, which I myself have done, I hope only to a “pardonable” extent. Because citing the words of Ádám (the eternal man) in the *Tragedy of Man* (Az ember tragédiája) from the Hungarian Imre Madách: “Our thirst for learning never has been bound To one branch only, but have pleasure found The whole field to view we long for all.” Of course, the starting point is always one’s range of professional interests – for me this was marketing and research methodology.

Scientists, artists, poets, craftsmen, i.e. every creator and **all** believers understand more of the world through their greater spiritual sense than from what they see or already know: this is a “spiritual surplus” that can be formed, expanded and increased in every mind. This process can be facilitated by the methods of *creativity*. Therefore, I sought to teach this in the PhD courses through my book *General research methodology* (Tomcsányi 2000) which supplemented researcher training, strictly focused on natural sciences, with knowledge of the human and social sciences that is necessary for spiritual creation. As I had found no ready-made and teachable course material, I collected, supplemented and published the methods myself. (Tomcsányi 2011b) I was thus forced to stray into other disciplines, which is therefore excusable.

But I warned researcher candidates that what they create as “something new” would be just temporary, and even if it cannot be refuted, it may inevitably be further developed, because there will be “something newer”. Strictly speaking, all our present knowledge may become outdated over time. And this “temporariness” or change of knowledge requires research done through *sceptical* development. What I want to speak about today was also rooted in scepticism.

I have organised my doubts and thoughts into two closely interrelated themes.

### ***I. The Quality of Human Life and its Future Outlook***

#### **Understanding Human Needs**

*Lastingness and transitoriness* pose a problem not only with knowledge but in using objects and exercising habits as well. The continuous persuasion to something new and fashionable might be a distortion caused by my domain, i.e. marketing. If profit is the only objective, then it is understandable, or even forgivable, as a predator is not guilty of capturing its prey, either.

But, in addition to their usefulness, old objects and habits have an “experiential” spiritual value as well. Just think of the worth of old furniture, pictures and paintings, or buildings, but we are also attached to many of our old objects and love our old tools very much. We preserve our traditional customs as well, although the Christmas tree and Easter eggs as a marketing topic also represent a source of income.

Contrary to general belief, I myself have always regarded and pursued *marketing* as the economics of *satisfied consumption* rather than market-based profit-making. I found private and community *undertaking* and the necessary market initiative to be the best possible outlets of economic creativity; and in my view, the viability of businesses is dependent on renewable competitiveness based on social utility, i.e. on the *capacity to survive* in terms of quality (assortment) and productivity (efficiency) rather than quantitative growth. (Tomcsányi, 1994)

Assuming that lastingness and transitoriness are just dimensions of *change*, I am going to outline some approaches that I believe to be *new*:

Not only is *marketing* responsible for increasing profits, but for identifying human needs and their changes and influencability as well.

As a former marketing instructor looking for the door to *human satisfaction* – the antechamber of happiness – and approaching it from the point of view of human needs, I made a distinction in lifestyle economics between *material goods* and the more spiritual *positive experience goods* (experiencing joy, a nice general mood and similar sensations). I am convinced that by consuming proportionately more experience goods, *satisfaction* can be reached more economically with the same purchasing power.

Therefore – with a changed approach – we need to make the consumption of experience goods more desirable as opposed to striving for material possessions. In other words: we should desire *infinite* goods instead of *finite* ones.

### **Material and Experience Goods**

My hypothesis is that people who have a certain *minimum* of material resources can enjoy an almost unlimited wealth of *experiences* within the limits of the time available to them.

But what is a person’s minimum need in terms of material resources? He or she should not feel *hungry, thirsty, ill, or fear* and *cold* with no shelter.

This is close to the lowest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A useful activity of this value can be expected of every healthy person, and society must make it possible for them. Services too can be regarded as “goods”: these are either rather material or rather experience goods (yet experience goods may not lack the material conditions either which are required for experiencing them).

Compared to the great scarcity of food, fresh water, energy, etc., the possibility to *live experience goods* seems almost unlimited even under unfavourable economic conditions.

I have published the imaginary “palette” of experience goods several times, but it cannot be complete, since it can be expanded without limitation. (Tomcsányi 2011a and 2012) **I.** The factors of culture and cult, the cultivation of science, and the pleasure from literature and art are well-known experiences. Many people say that the cult of the body and doing or watching sports are experiences, as is the admiration of nature and landscapes. Eating and drinking not only serve the purpose of nutrition and satisfying a physiological need, but may also be an experience, similarly to other physical pleasures. Successful work can be an experience in many ways and it might give one of the greatest pleasures.

As for the joy at knowledge and the utilization of knowledge, we can see a resemblance to the text of the Hungarian János Bolyai’s (1802-1860) incomplete *Üdvitan* (Study of Happiness) which survived only in manuscript. Besides Lobachevsky and Rieman, Bolyai is one of the founders of non-Euclidean geometry. Bolyai claimed that the time remaining after meeting the basic needs should be devoted to “study” (the spiritual). He finds it necessary to regulate education and even to lead a correct lifestyle. He recommends appreciating “pleasant sensations” that stem from the joy at nice music, the beautiful countryside, walking and the like. In this respect, I endeavour to continue Bolyai’s great ideas.

Experience goods should not take up too much human labour or effort, but their usefulness and effect should be relatively large, which can be mostly independent from their “costs”. “Remembering”, narration and handing something down can also be an experience. This is confirmed by such activities as keeping a diary, taking photos and shooting videos, family events in general, but even *religious* experiences.

I would like to deal with the latter in more detail, because I believe that spiritual and psychical experiences are essential to people's acceptable general mood. The "supernatural" nature of these calls for an explanation.

In the "cult of the soul" group of experience goods, satisfaction could be increased through "spirituality". This concept is rooted in the Christian tradition, but it manifests not only as religious spirituality, but non-religious or *natural spirituality* as well, thus it also includes experiencing an inspired work of art, beauty and harmony found in nature, which bring joy into our lives.

Faith in the Creator is more than the above: it has a strengthening and calming effect on people. For what in addition to their teachings and rituals can the world's major religions offer as a main psychical experience:

- a composure (balance of mood) stemming from a peace of mind, the experience of the resulting delight in life and the accompanying gratitude and hope;
- strength to endure trials and suffering;
- peaceful and brave resignation to accept death.

By increasing the consumption of spiritual experience goods, the *quality of life* and people's *satisfaction* may improve, and by avoiding social catastrophes there is a possibility for the survival of mankind. For what could be the future of humanity?

The life of the Earth is long and, compared to it, that of the species is short. For this reason, palaeontologists think in terms of the time elapsed from the emergence and the extinction of a species, which may be 1 to 10 million years. Our planet is 5 billion years old and has two to three times as much time left in a slightly varying form. The existence of humanity has always been threatened by asteroids hitting the Earth, but by now the Earth can destroy itself through its own nuclear devices as well – or might even prevent this from happening. The biggest danger, one that is the most difficult to avoid, is that as a result of overpopulation, the *lack of food and fresh water* may put an end to the lives of large masses of people in the foreseeable future. This might induce a human disaster or self-destruction, which will mean the end of human civilization.

To avoid this, satisfied and healthy humans are required. To this end, the social problems of the world – the poverty line and *food supply*, in particular – need to be solved for everybody and the destruction of nature and wasting of resources need to be stopped.

However, all surviving vertebrates, even mammals, can create a species that evolves into a thinking being within a few tens of millions of years, which based on our example may evolve to our spirit-creating successor and a current "top creature". This cannot happen while man is still here, and if we do our spirit-creating job well, it will still not occur for a long time.

A lesson we can learn is that *food production* will be the most important branch of world economy. Owing to its excellent conditions, Hungary is in a favourable position in this respect. But we must grasp the opportunity everywhere: we must strive to create the most value on each "square meter" (from foods of plant and animal origin, and from raw materials). Economic policy needs to find a solution that is economical for the producers, throughout the world, even at the expense of sacrifices.

Many, including the Hungarian The Intellectual Circle on Survival, formed of scientists, have called attention to a real danger that mankind may meet its end due to food shortage in the foreseeable future. (Láng and Kerekes 2013) To supplement this – and upon their request – I have tried to elaborate the psychical-spiritual aspects of this problem.

This is necessary, because *feeding the world* requires a sacrifice or a shift in attitudes which is only possible through a significant *moral-psychical* change: by replacing (giving up) *selfishness* (self-interest) as the main life principle and setting a higher esteem on *helping others*.

This brings us to another issue in my meditation:

## II. The purpose of Human Existence and the Possibilities of Survival

### The Most Important Element in the Cult of the Soul is Faith

In addition to the above-mentioned effects, there is a deeper reason for faith in the **Creator (God)** without Him, the world would make no sense. Should the Universe just be there, without a beginning or an end? In this way, it could of course have no purpose, and then life on Earth would have no purpose either.

Neither would our life. People find it very difficult to accept this idea. Our ancestors could not do so, either. There had to be a Creator who had some goal in creation. People's prosperity may depend on how much they serve this goal. And because our ancestors soon realized that an individual's prosperity is basically dependent on the prosperity of the whole *community*, community-forming and community-preserving rules being "divine commandments" began to determine their lives, providing the moral conditions for the development of civilization. This is thanks to man's susceptibility to transcendence.

The transcendence of *experiences* takes places in religion and beyond. In my opinion, to *strengthen* the essential religious life, Material and Spiritual values need to be harmonized in an acceptable *explanation of the world view*. I will now make a layman's attempt at this:

Due to its attractive, scientific plausibility, I have accepted the result of creation as reasonable. On the basis of current knowledge, all physical and biological processes after the Big Bang can more or less be explained. But for the preceding first step, i.e. creation, it is necessary to assume the existence of spiritual knowledge (information): i.e. knowledge (or creation) of the laws of nature in addition to the energy forming the material. But there was something that created this *physical energy*, which is we can mostly conceive as the Creator's "spiritual energy" with a high information content.

In my view, the purpose of this "*creative spiritual energy*" is to extend and become perfect. The material world, in which the *human consciousness* was created, is there to increase the information content of the spiritual.

Looking for the generalizable explanation for transcendence, I have tried to mentally model a *joint metaphysics* that is imaginable for the belief systems and to be able to coordinate the spiritual-psychical needs (wants) beyond the material:

- with a modern scientific explanation for the world and
- with a global ecumenical approach to all large belief systems.

### **The Material and Spiritual World**

My assumption was the following:

1. Existence has two types or forms: the material and the spiritual that form two associated but independent "impact systems".
2. These are present together everywhere in the Universe.
3. The huge transcendental mass or set (*God, Universal Spirit*) of the spiritual power ("energy") creates the material world (sometimes in large *cosmic* and constantly (**in**) small *living units*).
4. The expansion of the spiritual value is created by the human mind in the material world.

In slightly more detail:

The *impact systems* operate so that when a new human life is born, a "dose" of spiritual ("Soul") is assigned to the embodied material, which accompanies it throughout its lifetime. This combination of spirit&material (thinking person) can create spiritual value and further develop this ability (its creative "Soul"). At the end of its life, this developed "Soul" returns to the Creating Universal Spirit.

(I use the word „Soul" (in Greek: *pneuma*) to denote in my imagined model the thought-creating spiritual creativity of a human person, because the "soul", as it is called in colloquial language, can find salvation or incarnate several times ("transmigration of souls, repeating cycle of birth, life and death, in Sanskrit Samsara). I endeavour to use the word "spiritual" as the opposite of "material". This is not meant to be some terminological initiative, but only serves the purposes of better understanding.)

The co-existing material&spiritual world is dual: the material is created by the sum of the spiritual (God) and the spirit is formed by *the material (the human brain)*. These switches between the spiritual and the material require and take up a great deal of creative force. God, our Creator, created the material globally and in one go (cf. the Big Bang) and life in coherent groups (species etc.) by continuously developing it in the form of individuals living on a more advanced (human) level and by "breathing life" into them.

Thought (information, knowledge) is a "primary" condition for the emerging (existing) reality: of the familiar material and suspected spiritual world. The material could only come into life through the defined character and knowledge of the laws of nature and based on a spiritual value.

The material is a form of manifestation of physical energy. To create the world of the material, this energy and familiarity with the laws of nature were needed. (For example, Einstein's  $E = mc^2$  formula, where  $E$  stands for energy,  $m$  for mass and  $c$  for the speed of light.) In the possession of this and similar knowledge, the Universal Spirit (God) created the material and the physical energy *necessary* to it on a global scale.

And what may the *spiritual value* be like? I repeat it, consciously, in a somewhat refined way: poets, scientists and every other creator and believer understand more of the world through their spiritual sensitivity (spiritual sense) than what they can see, hear or know: similar to this surplus is the “spiritual value” that can be formed and multiplied by every thought.

The purpose of fauna and flora and the responsibility of the current "top creature" (here and now it is the human being) to form the intellect and knowledge and spread it throughout the Universe.

The (world?) creating and maintaining Universal Spirit (God) is the sum of every knowledge and creative force, or using Linnaeus's words: “*infinitem ens*”. The right explanations for the world and life may be inspired by Him or inherited from previous great thinkers.

My hypothesis is that the things already conceived (invented) can be realized with a probability higher than “chance”. The spread and survival of the idea was made acceptable by the ancient Vedic concept of “*akasha*”, but it is close to certain modern assumptions of quantum physics as well.

When you come to think of it, my model does not deny materialism, moreover, I consider it as a starting point and regard the *material* human brain as the creator or originator of the Spiritual.

These ideas remind me of Hinduism, which I studied in my youth, and of Dubravsky's (2003) explanations based on Rudolf Steiner's theory: It is possible that one of the objectives of the creation of the material world is to develop the knowledge (experience) – through thinking living beings – that “the spiritual needs for further development”, because it cannot develop it by itself.

### **The Spirit-Creating being and its Existence on Earth**

The created man becomes a creator in his or her creations. This statement is the apotheosis of the creative man in the presence: he or she should not think of him- or herself as a god, and should be aware that after the extinction of our species, some other spirit-creating “top creature” will probably emerge and live on this planet.

### **How can the Creation of the spiritual be Interpreted as the aim of man and how is this in Connection with the Prolongation of the Survival of Mankind?**

The individual soul, man's spiritual part, lives in a body with a thinking brain. Its *creative spirit* (SOUL) develops further throughout its life, and then returns to its Creator. Let us believe that this will be the most wonderful and happiest experience. The impact of good and bad deeds will level off and only the perfectly purified Soul, improved in its creative ability, can finally melt into the Universal Spirit. With this, its human identity and personality are terminated.

The ability to distinguish between “good and bad” makes us *conscious* of man's “original” guilt and it is possible to be released from this burden – according to the karmic dogma – through reparation or by way of the redeeming grace of God.

For Christian believers, redemption occurs via the “blood sacrifice” of God's incarnated Son. The Eastern “Samsara” and redemption are parallel paths with the same goal. The Bible (Mark 11:23, Matthew 21:21) tells us that the power of faith is “supernatural”: if we believe it, the mountain will go and throw itself into the sea. Consequently, the unlimited power of *faith* can achieve anything, but sent up as a *prayer* – according to my metaphor – it can only exert its effect when reflected from the “heavenly mirror” in an approved manner. That is by the power of the Almighty.

The path of psychical development towards perfection can lead through repeated incarnation – *identity* is completely dimmed during transition –, or an *individual's soul* can reach redemption through faith and mercy already after one life. The latter is a teaching of our Christian faith.

The characteristics of religions linked to certain cultures conform to the geographic-ethnographic environment, but natural spirituality is independent of the cultural environment. The innate human desire for the supernatural is present in both.

In terms of the prosperity of mankind, every transcendent relationship that takes us forward is good. Therefore, we need to show understanding and support to the autochthonous religions and belief systems that evolved there and are adapted to their cultural environment. In fact, I have tried to contribute to the increase of their vitality by describing the mental model of the joint metaphysics that is imaginable to theist religions.

The Creator is eternal and the same, but the belief in god of human cultures and peoples goes through a typical evolution. The world's major religions are advanced and, apparently, they took shape through the Creator's blessing.

The God of the Christians, Yahweh and Allah are probably the same, just like the risen Christ and the Infant Jesus associated with the Christmas tree are obviously also the same – although their spiritual meaning is different. Is perhaps the ecumenism of all the religions leading to transcendence the common strategy to be followed? Vishnu as a creator goddess and the incarnated Krishna are also analogous to Christian belief. The roads of Buddha believing in the soul and the Tao are probably seeking to lead to the same place. According to former president of the Catholic Academy of Sciences in the USA, Julian L. Ambrus, the basis of the ecumenical approach may be that we find more similarities than differences among the world's major religions, if we compare their “whole teaching” rather than their details.

By assuming two kinds of “worlds”, our model envisages two kinds of god images and two kinds of transcendent relationships: the God of the man living in the material world is the loving, helping, protecting, “personal” heavenly Father; and for those perceiving the spiritual world, it is the Universal Spirit that is always present everywhere. The Lord's Prayer that we learnt from Jesus Christ sums up our most important questions. But we could also say: "Our Father, who art HERE WITH ME" Because the psalm says: “...it is good to be near God.” (Book of Psalms, 73:28)

Emotionally, we relate to our Creator as a dog to its beloved master, as Luther once said, or as a Hungarian poet wrote about his dog.

If we could accept and believe in this approach, we could be happy knowing that our Creator is always with us and next to us, also in nature which we are a part of. Or to put it more poetically: the endless sea of the spirit is God, and the transitory World is only a changing foam of its surge. And the perceived reality of the Universe adapts to the always different and changing human needs.

Please think of my meditation as “mental poetry”, which is similar to real research: it starts from assumptions or the imagination, and then it examines, and if possible, it verifies. But even the “proven” results of research are only just temporarily valid truths: they leave room for further research. But I was able to give only imaginary answers to the questions I had raised today, without the possibility of proof.

These questions were inspired by two current problems: humanity is approaching the boundary of famine and self-destruction, and by researching the essence and the formation of material, physical science is approaching the boundary of transcendence.

If you have been following my thoughts, then you have been taking part with me in a joint “imaginary” meditation or reflection, which may teach us the following lesson:

1. The desirable path of human consumption (lifestyle) would be to shift from the one-sided desire for material possessions to wanting more experience goods.
2. This would help to balance the large differences between individuals in terms of the level of supply and to curb wasting natural resources and the destruction of our environment.
3. Spirit-creating thinking is a privilege of the human being and also a cosmic mission: the completion of this mission and keeping humanity together in selfless love is the only way to mankind's long-term survival.

Or in short, using the Golden rule of the Holy Writ (Matthew 7:1 to 2, Luke 6:31): Do to others as you would have them do to you. This is formulated in different ways in the Zarathustran, the Vedic, the Buddhist, etc. moral teachings, or in the Koran and the Talmud. But, in my opinion, the meaning of loving our fellowmen as seen in Jesus' command is more than that: You should help your fellow-men to get what you desire to yourself, even through a sacrifice, or at least to an extent that is necessary for their subsistence. "Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered." (Proverbs 21:13)

The above were the *answers* to, or sometimes the doubts concerning my meditating reflections – please *reflect on them*.

I peeked into the future, which in terms of time means something short or little for me. I do not know what these thoughts are worth: even to me they are conditional, uncertain as most of the far-sighted hypotheses, but if any of my suspicions proved to be true, so please, remember me.

### **References**

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Ambrus J.L.. (2012): Ecumenical Meeting. Anthology of Papers of the Catholic Academy of Sciences in the USA. 95-96.p.

Dubravszky, L. (2003): A megismerés titka. (The secret of cognition.) ALTAIR, Budapest

Láng, I., Kerekes, S. (2013): Megalakult a Túlélés Szellemi Kör (The Intellectual Circle on Survival Wa Founded) , Magyar Tudomány. Nr. 1. 103 p.

Madách, Imre: The tragedy of man: dramatic poem. Transl. by William N. Loew. - New York: Arcadia Press, [1908]. p. 180)

Tomcsányi, P. (1994): Goods analysis and product strategy in marketing. Akadémiai Kiadó. Budapest, 283 p.

Tomcsányi, P. (2000): Általános kutatómódszertan. (General research methodology) Szent István Egyetem – OMMI, Budapest, Gödöllő. Egyetemi tankönyv. 473 p.

Tomcsányi, P. (2011a): Az életmód-gazdaságtan alapvonásai. (Principles of Lifestyle Economics) Magyar Tudomány.. Nr. 1. p. 94-103..

Tomcsányi P. (2011b) A kutatói és más szellemi munka segítése módszeres kreativitással. (Facilitating Research and Other Intellectual Work through Methodological Creativity) Polgári Szemle Nr.3. p. 6-29.

Tomcsányi P. (2012): Életmód, megelégedettség . és a lelki-szellemi élmények. (Lifestyle, Satisfaction and the Role of Mental and Spiritual Experiences) Polgári Szemle. Nr. 2-6. p. 202-235.

**Table 1: „Experience goods” Enhancing the Quality of Life (Satisfaction)**

	<b>Form of action</b>	<b>Utility of their “consumption”</b>
<u>1. Culture</u>		
1.1 Knowledge	Learning, cognition	Joy of utilizing knowledge
1.2 Science	Research, solution Knowledge development	The joy of creation and success
1.3 Literature	Poetry, prose Film, theatre	The joy of reading The joy of watching and experiencing
1.4 Art	Music  Visual arts (applied art, architecture, design, etc.)	The joy and calming effect of “cultivation”, knowledge and listening The joy of viewing, admiration and knowledge
<u>2. Cults</u>		
2.1 Cult of the body	Sports and performance, physical training and play  Body care, sleeping, relaxing, fashion Eating habits	The joy and health-preserving benefit of success Interest in sports as entertainment Comfort and joy of good general mood and hygiene Enjoyment and comfort
2.2 Cult of nature and the environment	Hiking Exploring the countryside Nature protection	Admiration of nature Enjoyment of the countryside and the world Results
2.3 Cult of the soul, spirituality	Emotions (towards people, the country, etc.) Practice of religion  “Transcending” of thinking	Active and passive joy of love Beneficial effect of faith and the <u>transcendental (spiritual, psychic) relationship</u> Induced and intuitive knowledge and effect
2.4 Cult of vocation and social integration	Non-creative (reproductive) “intellectual” (office) work  Physical work and social integration  Free time “work” (e.g. gardening, DIY, needlework) and “intellectual” games (e.g. cards, chess) Household and family activities	Joy of success at work and sense of vocation; good atmosphere at work Joy of fulfilled jobs, experienced quality of work relationship, the benefit of and satisfaction from social advancement Benefit and joy of free time play and work (hobby)  Benefit of performance and the joy of relationships and recognition