



# Rethinking Materialism

Enrico Giraudi

We sat and interviewed one of the speakers at ebbf's annual conference where we will be Rethinking Materialism, here's what long term #ebbfmember Enrico Giraudi had to say about materialism and our transition to healthier people and organizations:

The problem with a materialistic focus is that it is self-fulfilling, it deprives you of the ability to change, as you build around yourself a configuration of reality that makes us believe that it is the only way to be that takes away a wider sense of perception and exploration.

Materialism is very reassuring: I have a great salary, a beautiful home, all the things that advertising tells you that a successful person should have. So my ability to change is inhibited, I am no longer able to move in uncertainty, everything becomes repetitive, a habit. I only develop limited skills to reinforce the current status that makes me feel safe.

Change instead requires courage, trust, the development of a sixth sense, intuition. You start to feel comfortable without knowing the final destination but with a new developed sense that you are on the right track.

The key issue that slows the transition from a materialistic society and life is that materialism creates scared human beings, who gradually lose their survival instinct as they accommodate themselves into an easy routine where they do not need to question anything.

*Materialism seems to fill you but actually it creates emptiness*

Taking away materialism helps us develop free will and make our lives what we really want them to be.

The path goes towards experimentation, change, towards new horizons, on the organizational level it is innovation that moves you to develop even if you are very attached to the certainties of today—at the level of community and society it is difficult to change it, difficult to make it sustainable with behaviors that give things or objects that seem more tangible.

It is therefore important to develop the skills that lead you to conceive your life made up of both values, intangibles and materialistic tangibles.

A case comes to mind of a friend of mine who is a top CEO, but in his heart he wanted to be a nature photographer. He is a very capable individual who always achieves the professional results he promises but—I personally feel—someone who has lost touch with the fact that this is not his life. We had several conversations about his struggle and suffering and the option of trying a new way, more in line with his heart, but the conversation always moves towards concepts like “my life costs too much to afford that.”

And my personal question has always been: “is that true or is that a justification that makes that

suffering more sustainable?” Like a castle of cards built with internal certainties...that will never stop knocking at your soul

He already has everything he needs, could have fun and live his true life, what would make him happy, but he does not and is depressive about this incoherence.

*If we let go of materialism, the whole construction collapses, so we tend to cling to it.*

The other extreme is the ascetic and totally spiritual individual, who lives with nothing material at all. The problem with this state is that it is fine per se, in isolation, but the risk is for purely spiritual people to surround themselves with other spiritual individuals and to never be able to impact the wider society.

Hence the need to have more challenging interactions, to cross divides and challenge each other. That is where the best evolution arises.

It is not necessary to go from materialism to asceticism: the pleasure of buying something we like is fine, but we should ideally purchase because it is a conscious choice and a sincere pleasure that we really live and fully enjoy.

*It is not an addiction, we are people with free will who can renounce if they want, without suffering for this.*

## A Painful evolution?

When you evolve from materialism, you have to abandon your materialistic dimension, and this always asks for some kind of sacrifice, the evolutionary change requires effort, giving up something, sometimes accepting that the people around you will not understand you.

Very often the suffering is due to how attached we are to our identity, the way you live becomes your skin. It is necessary to evolve and to commit what is akin to a progressive suicide of that identity of CEO of the Great Company behind which you felt fulfilled in the opinion of others.

*Because it is easy to be materialistic – it's easy to make an easy story about yourself, it is more difficult to decide who you are if you are not material, it requires effort and does not remain stable but requires uncertainty.*

The transition can start by listing your qualities, your real value and your values. All of them are attributes you often do not even know about or are not fully aware of.

*You shift your identity from what you do to what you are*

Suffering is not so much linked to uncertainty, to the situation of “I do not change because I will not have money to live”, most of us do not really need more, we already have enough to live. Instead the true suffering is the emptiness, you lack palettes and references. What others think and how they view you.

## Are there ways to measure your progress from materialism to a balanced life?

The fundamental KPI is your level of happiness, of physical and emotional wellbeing.

**Congruence**, a term often confused with but different from coherence.

We constantly evolve and so does what surrounds us so our coherence changes accordingly but congruence instead refers to

what am I doing?

how does it makes me feel?

It tells you at any given time if you feel well or bad.

The congruence thermometer is how you can measure your progress:

*“how good do I feel when I wake up in the morning?”*

*“is what I am doing accompanied by a sense of wellbeing?”*

This is a sense that you have to develop, both mentally and physically reconnecting with the threads, with your feelings.

From congruence comes the trust that what you do is right even if you have not yet achieved measurable results.

The problem is that materialism gives you immediate proof and proof is very important for human beings so the first mile is important.

You reach that first mile when you can start to say “I am living well and I have also obtained the first customer with my new lifestyle” getting that first commercial success shows you that you are not alone but that others support and buy this, your new way of being.

## How can you make this transition together with the other people you work with?

With a newly gained congruence the strength of authenticity develops.

People see a person who knows their place, who feels good, you like being with them. A serene person transmits positivity and an absence of compromise; it is easier to create a connection.

You like to have them as a customer, as a business partner, you have faith in them.

Everything starts from the non-verbal way of being, how you behave and what you bring to others.

As a CEO you make need to make a brave choice, you are challenging short term shareholder value risks etc.

But you know you're there to innovate, to bring new things, and you know you do not want to destroy your congruence so you create that strength where others see you and you feel solid like a rock.

Every time you say NO it adds a lot to your credibility.

Ideally it should be a “no”, accompanied by an explanation and an alternative action: this thing I cannot do because it's not good for you, but I can do this other thing to satisfy what you are looking to achieve.

As a consequence of this you can also develop a non-threatening awakening in others, you also start a journey where they start asking questions and not accept materialistic status.

## **Ah if only we had the time to make this transition happen! Does lack of time sustain materialism?**

We have the time that we have.

The problem is with our agendas, with perceptions of what a good agenda looks like: you see a full agenda and you're a successful person.

But intuition arrives when you leave, you have to leave the house and enter a different space. Doing, actions only connects with your hardware.

You need to connect with your software, creating room for boredom and oblivion. Play the guitar, do what you really want to do.

Leisure derives from the Latin word "otium"—it is the empty space between inhaling (receiving) and exhaling (action). So you need to find the right cycle for you to stay still in between those two states. The more you can stay in that state of leisure, the easier it will be for you to see what you really need to do next, what your next congruent step should be.

So instead of being busy, you and your team should lay on the sofa, read a book with a ray of sunshine that touches you from the window in a quiet place at two o'clock in the afternoon.

## **Work, a job what's the difference?**

As you review your agenda—a new concept of work enters:

*The difference between a job and work. A job forces you to a pace that is not yours instead work helps you to reflect more on what you actually need to develop to master a trade and the consequences of what you do.*

In a job you grow in your executive power but miss the reflective part.

Work instead helps you develop all your activities, even manual ones, the sense of your work, social responsibility for what you do and create, and the consequences it will have on who will use what you create.

When I personally decided to leave my materialistic and certain career and moved into this more balances place of working and not having a job I have become much more efficient : the other week I did in two days a planning project for a communication campaign that in the past I would have struggled one week to deliver.

And the result surprised, positively my client who told me "this is really great work, you are really working well these days"

I am doing my trade, I am in my work, not in a job anymore.

## How spiritual should I be to help the transition?

To allow ourselves to let go, to go to a space that develops the ability to receive, to allow what should be to emerge in the end is a prayer. It is a re-connection with your spiritual essence.

But I would not talk about spiritual things in a mental way, it makes it too distant, it does not create change. We need to express it with attitudes and behaviours as well as talking about it.

We need to replace words with actions, with a visible transition:

*Move from I am a materialistic person, to materialism is fundamental but it is not the source.*

*Rehabilitate the ability to value one's life, to materialize it.*

*The materialization of spirituality is necessary.*