

IDEAS 27

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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OWNERSHIP = WEALTH?

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With the world's human inhabitants commonly taken up with having worldly possessions of immeasurable worth, the gap between the rich and the poor seems to be ever-widening. It has come to a point where the top 15 richest countries are way ahead of their neighbors by leaps and bounds.

The latest compilation for the world's richest countries based on per capita figures, according to US-based Forbes magazine has the following countries listed in descending order: Qatar, with the third largest natural gas reserves in the world; Luxembourg, with a per capita Gross Domestic product of \$81,466; Singapore, with GDP of \$56,694 brought about by its being a finance, manufacturing and technology hub; Norway, with GDP of \$51,959; the oil-rich sultanate of Brunei; UAE, also oil-rich and possessing one of the world's most developed economies; the USA, unsurprisingly; Hong Kong, with its major capitalist service economy, low taxation, free trade and currency; Switzerland, with one of world's largest account balances as a percentage of GDP; the Netherlands, now enjoying an elected parliament and the blessings of democracy; Australia, with its impressive national performance in aspects such as quality of life, education, health, economic freedom, protection of civil liberties and political rights; Austria, known for its remarkably-high standard of living; Ireland, with its friendly people, beautiful scenery, Guinness, and traditional Irish pubs; Canada, with its diversified economy and rich natural resources; and Kuwait, with the world's fifth largest oil reserves. (Source: <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/photos/the-richest-countries-in-the-world-1330405787-slideshow/richest-countries-photo-1330405430.html>)

Those of us who barely eke out a living in countries which have not been so-ranked can only read in awe and amazement, and yes, envy. The world hasn't been created in equal terms, as such rankings show. The most beautiful countries seem to be the richest, too.

However, this should not be a cause for despair. Although the richest countries stay up there with their exceptional GDP's and abundant resources, the fact remains that majority of the world's nations are still of the average, if not gutter-level, GDP's. The financial stability enjoyed by a very small minority has not really trickled down to the world's majority.

This does not mean that poorer nations have worse economies because of poor national performance. Economic performance is dictated by numerous factors. It doesn't mean that the nation's citizens are lazy and squander much of what they earn.

Government has much to do with a nation's economy, just as its people's commitment to improving themselves will always factor in as a special component of economic success. I have seen fellow citizens work themselves stiff and still earn meager income, mainly because of the ineptitude, corruption and plain stupidity and selfishness of those in power.

What we have is relative, what we are is relevant, what we become will be a revelation of our present actions. Let us not waste what we have and what we are, so that what we become will be full of immense pride and joyous celebration.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In what aspects are countries of the world commonly ranked aside from GDP?
2. Do you sometimes wish you lived in a different country? Why or why not?
3. What are the causes of hardships experienced by poor countries? Explain your answer.
4. Have you ever experienced desperation and total wretchedness? How did you address the problem?
5. What are your views on the way your country is going nowadays?



THE "I OWN YOU" RELATIONSHIP

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How much are we willing to give and give up for love? Does loving someone entitle one person to have exclusive rights over another? Does love allow you to dictate how your loved one should live his life?

In marriage, we pledge our loyalty and fidelity to our spouse. We pledge to give the other our 'troth'. Honestly speaking, I heard this word for the first time while viewing the exchange of marriage vows between Prince William and Kate Middleton (Sigh!). I had to listen to that specific part of their vow about five times on YouTube; then, I looked for the meaning of the word online, searching for the word as I had heard it. Anyway, enough said about it; the word is simply an Archaic, Old English word which means "belief, faith, loyalty".

I also read somewhere that the elegant Kate Middleton had stricken out the word "obey" from her own vows, like her mother-in-law had done in her own marriage vows to Prince Charles. In Miss Middleton's vows, she had chosen to promise "to love, comfort, honor and keep" her husband instead. It was an appropriate choice, for in marriage, the woman should be an equal and not a loyal subject who will obey the husband, not even if he happens to be the heir to the throne. I greatly admire Kate Middleton for her strong, independent spirit.

Marriage is a partnership of souls, a relationship that takes the spouse as an equal. The oft-repeated cliché, "I own you and you own me" (Sounds better in Filipino, though) has become cheesy and smacks of simple ownership of a pet dog or cat. "I own a pet, it's a so-and-so dog specie" has a more justifiable ring to it. We can never "own a partner", unless we happen to keep our partner on a leash and feed her/him Whiskas or Pedigree.

Others might argue that saying the expression is just that, an expression, nothing literal. Why say something if you don't really mean it in the literal sense? Maybe, the relationship is just a figure of speech, after all.

When we are in a relationship, there are certain privileges that we are entitled to. Marriage, in particular, makes us privileged to have the other's complete fidelity. But it does not entitle us to dictate to our partner how they should live each and every aspect of his/her life. We don't have a right to change the other's wardrobe choices, for instance. Respect the partner's choices, make suggestions when asked, don't go about invading the others' privacy unless there is absolutely a reason to do so.

Unmarried couples have even less privileges; this makes undue jealousy and restrictions both unwarranted and uncalled for. Imposing on someone you are not bound to by virtue of marriage is nothing but plain selfishness. Doing so only signifies pet ownership, not love.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is marriage a partnership and not an ownership?
2. What are the things that can make a spouse feel "suffocated" in marriage?
3. What are your views on marriage?
4. How can someone make sure of a partner's undying loyalty?
5. What would you do if you were married to a partner who feels he "owns" you? Why?



THE “I OWN YOU” RELATIONSHIP—REVISITED

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In a previous write-up, this writer expounded on the “I own you” cliché about relationships-how marriage is often mistaken to mean ownership instead of being considered what it is truly meant to be. Marriage is a partnership of souls, of minds. It should never be taken as a license to impose oneself on someone and infringe on that person’s rights. Although a spouse is entitled to the fidelity of his/her partner, it doesn’t give special privileges on the other’s entire life. There are limits, and the only thing that has to have no limits whatsoever is the respect for the partner.

Unmarried couples are entitled to even less, since they are not bound by any law, whether divinely or humanly ordained, to give exclusive rights to their partners on them. Granted, there are those who choose to live as married couples without the benefit of holy matrimony or civil wedding rites. They need not go through the complications of divorce, separation or annulment should they find themselves unwilling to stay married. The advantage is all theirs. However, it is the children born out of such relationships that eventually bear the consequences of relationship failure. But we are digressing here.

Relationships, whether within or outside the bounds of marriage, should not be the ownership type. In a relationship that says *I own you*, the partner seems to be considered a pet, a physical *thing* that one has exclusive rights to.

Instead of one spouse declaring ownership of the other, shouldn’t any typical loving relationship be one that declares *I OWE YOU*? I owe you my love, my respect, my admiration? I owe you my concern, my loyalty, genuine comfort in both good and bad times? And because I owe you so much for loving me as you do, I pledge to honor you with all I am capable of? Isn’t owing someone a lot more within the spirit of unselfish giving, as sincere love should be?

It is common for spouses to want to control their partner. It is natural to want to direct the partner. But marriage is not a movie where one directs while the other follows; it needs to be a movie where both are willing to play their part, and co-direct all the time. There is no such thing as a perfect marriage, I believe. Marriage, after all, is the union of two imperfect beings. It is only upon those imperfect beings to try to work on what make them imperfect and create a harmony between them, somehow.

In conclusion, relationships should allow the partner to thrive within them, find their own niche. A real loving relationship does not hold the other on a leash, but allows the other to walk with you shoulder-to-shoulder as you chart your own courses. And hopefully, your individual courses will eventually lead to the melding of something singular you can both call yours.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do marriages often fail?
2. Can you truly own your partner? Why or why not?
3. If you were to write your own marriage vows, what will it say?
4. If your married child told you he/she was intending to divorce, how would you help him/her?
5. Research on the law for conjugal ownership in your own country. Be ready to talk about what you learn in class.



TOO HUNG UP ABOUT MATERIAL OWNERSHIP

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I was watching a magazine program on Saturday night television a month or two ago, and one of the featured stories was of a house somewhere in Manila which looked like a junkyard. It wasn't actually a junkyard but the lady of the house (a widow) had a fondness for hoarding stuff—old clothes, appliances (working or not), books dating back to her children's days in school (her children are all married and living with their respective families), things which her long-departed husband had used in his trade, simply things she had no use for in the present. Her daughter and grandson lived with her; it turns out her daughter was also into hoarding stuff of her own—old receipts and bags, primarily.

I was laughing really hard when I was watching the show as a defense mechanism—I saw myself and my mother in the people featured there. It was then that I realized that that behavior had a name after all. Right then, I wished the show had featured us instead, so we'd get the clean-up service they had provided to that family to de-clutter and remove all the unnecessary things found in that house.

My daughter has had classmates coming over to visit and repeatedly asking her if we had just moved into the neighborhood. My mother's co-teachers who used to come over for celebrations back when she was still in active service would remark about how our house looked like a department store with lots of stuff hanging or lying here and there and everywhere— boxes filled with stuff, books, clothes, old albums.

Suffice it to say, mom and I have mild compulsive hoarding behavior.

My mother had been regularly doing business with the roving junk shop boys in our neighborhood before the show, and has been doing more after that segment was aired. I guess knowing that what we had was a mild disorder of some kind has made it easier for her to do that. Oh, but there's still so much more to be rid of, and the coming summer vacation might be a great chance to seriously hunker down and do the clean-up more intensively.

As for me, I have got to get rid of the receipts I still have from three weeks ago.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you or anyone you know ever hoard anything? Why do people do this?
2. How are the writer and her family trying to fix the mild behavior problem? Do you think they'll succeed?
3. What advise would you give to a compulsive hoarder?
4. Why do some people find it hard to let go of material possessions?
5. Are you a person who is sentimental about things? Expound on your answer.



OWNERSHIP – A STATUS QUO OR A RIGHT?

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Every individual is entitled to his own personal interests. Whether it is an individual, partnership or a corporation type of ownership, each to its own speaks not only of ownership or occupancy of a thing but it also ...talks about the control of a person. Then, we delve more on the thought or the fact if ownership serves as a right of an individual or does it show or imprint a status quo on a person. Almost always, when we talk of ownership, it deals with an ownership of a land or a personal property by an individual.

Nowadays, people seem to own a lot of things which do not really serve as primary concerns but are considered to be luxuries in life (excess). Considering the fact that the term ownership has a very broad scope, we could talk about our personal possessions to which one owner takes full control of. Therefore, we consider personal bank accounts, jewelries, appliances, automobiles, houses, land, buildings, and many more to be part of those things that a person owns. We arrive at the definition now of ownership as the exclusive right of possession. That is, you are referring to a property right of an individual who is the temporary holder or long-term holder of a property. Legally speaking, it is understood that the person with the right of possession has the right to occupy and use the property thereof.

At present, we seldom see families who possess not only one car, one house, one kind of various appliances, one bank account and many more. It is to this account that we arrive at a level of thinking that some families live not according to what they need but they actually live in extravagance. As an effect, personal possessions do not make a person rich in the real sense of the word itself. Instead, it creates or preserves a certain level or condition or rather a stable state which can be termed as status quo. A different perspective is now imbued in the mind of an individual, to possess not because he has a right over that thing or matter to the extent of ownership but because that person wants to maintain or preserve a certain state or condition on that of being a well-off person.

The rest follows and we come to a conclusion that people have a different level of mentality. So, it's up for us to decipher what ownership really means to us. Would you want to maintain and preserve that status quo or will ownership serve as mnemonic to the kind of life that we live right now making all of us aware of our true status and our exclusive right to possessions. Perhaps the question is for each one of us to answer, "Is ownership a status quo or a right?", or maybe we still have to deliberate on that matter. It's for you to decide.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do you personally define ownership?
2. Do you happen to own a number of things that you don't really need? Why?
3. Do you protect your self-interest by acquiring a lot of possessions? How would you explain your answer?
4. Is ownership a right or a status quo for you? Explain your answer.
5. Do you have the tendency to amass properties or a lot of possessions for that matter? Justify your answer.



THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF OWNERSHIP

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Which word is commonly heard - ownership or proprietorship? Which term is commonly used - owner or proprietor? Try to see the structure: ownership and owner, proprietorship and proprietor. What do you notice about it? Can we just simply say that ownership is the state or quality of being an owner? And can we just merely say that proprietorship is the state or quality of being a proprietor? Now, the absorption to this concept is narrowed and simplified. If you are the owner of something which you have is certainly called ownership and proprietorship on the other hand. But the point does not stop there. Ownership doesn't stand in one side. It has different directions to follow, different characteristics to distinguish, and different conditions to understand. No matter what angles does it have to show, we would like to clarify and analyze the true facets of what an ownership is. Because it has different features to think about which somehow could lead us into a sudden confusion or guide us into a better comprehension. Which one brings you to understand ownership?

Ownership tells us that every person owns directly a property. It is what we called personal ownership or individual ownership because it is a property belonging to an individual. In most societies both men and women can own property with no restrictions and limitations at all, Wikipedia says. However, properties that are held in common by all members of society have been regarded as non-ownership. It is a common ownership. Another model, assets and property that belong to a collective body of people who control their use and collect the proceeds of their operation is known as collective property. It can be a private or cooperative. The former stresses out that it is a subset of collective property whereby a collective group of owners (such as shareholders) own productive property that is used by employees, usually for the purpose of generating a profit while the latter points out property that is owned by those who operate and use it. It is also referred to as social ownership. But think and consider this aspect, an intellectual property is a term referring to a number of distinct types of creations of the mind for which a set of exclusive rights are recognized under the corresponding fields of law. Under intellectual property law, owners are granted certain exclusive rights to a variety of intangible assets, such as musical, literary, and artistic works; discoveries and inventions; and words, phrases, symbols, and designs. The common types of intellectual property rights include copyrights, trademarks, patents, industrial design rights and trade secrets in some jurisdictions. The term intellectual property is used to describe many very different, unrelated legal concepts according to Richard Raysman in his book "Intellectual property Licensing: Forms and Analysis". And one thing to think about is ownership society. It was a political slogan used by United States President George W. Bush to promote a series of policies aimed to increase the control of individual citizens over health care and social security payments and policies. Critics have claimed that slogan hid an agenda that sought to implement tax cuts and curtail the government's role in health care and retirement saving. This is another aspect to be aware of because, ownership follows different dimensions in this complex world.

Having these different principles and ideas regarding ownership can help us to be more aware of what an ownership is. They are tool guides to understand more how we are going to deal with the property that we have in our lives. Perhaps you would ask yourself, "Am I a good owner?" Do I legally own my property? It would also give a clearer picture of what this term brings us. Now, the question is, which aspect of ownership will you take?

Questions for discussion:

1. What is ownership? Give your own opinion.
2. How do you protect your intellectual property? Give an example.
3. What can you say about ownership society?
4. Compare and contrast private property from cooperative property.
5. Why non-ownership is called common ownership?



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