

IDEAS 40

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



CONTENTS

THE 40TH INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

MATERIALISM I MATERIALISM – TOTAL SATISFACTION DENIED I Marian Baltazar I	2
MATERIALISM I MATERIALISM - AN “INCOGNITO” I Marian Baltazar I	3
MATERIALISM I COPING IN A MATERIALISTIC WORLD I Kathlyn Barrozo I	4
MATERIALISM I WHEN MATERIALISM BECOMES IMMATERIAL I Kathlyn Barrozo I	5
MATERIALISM I TOUCHED BY ENVY---MAYBE, MORBIDLY I Kathlyn Barrozo I	6
MATERIALISM I DIAMONDS ARE A GIRL’S BEST FRIEND, MADONNA SAYS I Kathlyn Barrozo I	7
MATERIALISM I LIVING OUTSIDE THE MATERIAL WORLD I Marian Baltazar I	8



MATERIALISM – TOTAL SATISFACTION DENIED

Marian Baltazar
Class of 1980, University of the Philippines College of Manila
AB Political Science

In this material world that we live in, people have a lot of possessions that can be substituted for happiness but in reality these things don't make them a complete person, and therefore we can actually conclude that materialism is total satisfaction denied. You may think that the rich and the famous are living a hell of a life but in fact, they don't get any satisfaction from whatever material possessions they own. They do get some but it's only for a while and it doesn't even last too long. Happiness for them is just fleeting, in passing fancy and is apparently short-lived. Every item they purchased turns out to be less than the satisfying object that they thought would really make them happy. Then they discover what the real score is, "There is more to it than meets the eye."

To pursue satisfaction would mean going out of your way and doing all the best that you could to finally be contented. The twist lies in the fact that "Is there any point and time that a person could reach total satisfaction through materialism and wealth?" We pretty well know what the answer is; definitely it's a no, no thing. Well, that my friend is an honest answer. Up to what extent have we gone or would go through just for us to get what we want which is very much opposed to what we need for us to truly live a satisfying life? Wouldn't it just be trying to satisfy our ego that we experience all of these in life?

What really causes man to be materialistic is the misconception that you can increase your happiness by acquiring more money and more material wealth. Come to think of it, "What profits a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?" Unfortunately, some people don't realize that they are just pawns used by their own weaknesses, especially by their pride driven selfishness. Then it's rather too late for them to realize that in no time at all, they have just wasted their time and the better part of their lives chasing and going after their goals based on artificial rewards and man's own ideals. More often than not, some have been blessed by God to come into the realization that they have been looking at the wrong place for success, satisfaction and happiness.

Then they would be aware of the emptiness in their heart that will lead them to the direction of God. More often than not, others may return as the "Prodigal Son" but for some they will not realize it until their time has come to an end and they are left with only the man-made objects that they possess to show in their life. Things that they believe are of value will no longer hold its value for you simply cannot bring them with you to the next life and worst of all is that they do not truly know our Lord. Now you will no longer wonder why some of the poorest people monetarily can find such satisfaction, happiness and fulfillment with nothing more than their knowledge and love of God and their family. After all, the fact remains that materialism is actually total satisfaction denied for us to be truly happy and contented in life.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you agree that materialism is total satisfaction denied? Why or why not?
2. Can being so materialistic make you truly happy in life? Explain your answer.
3. Do you believe that there is far greater value than being a materialistic person? Justify your answer.
4. What are the things that can satisfy a person aside from materialism? Explain further.
5. How can you truly live a satisfying life apart from materialism? Explain how.



MATERIALISM - AN "INCOGNITO"

Marian Baltazar
Class of 1980, University of the Philippines College of Manila
AB Political Science

Materialism can have many disguises and it can be found in many other ways, therefore materialism can be termed as an "incognito" because its identity can be concealed in our life through a lot of things and a lot of ways too. Why do we say so? Sometimes we can mistake it as a natural feeling or reaction to the basic needs that we need. Although there are times that without knowing it, we become too materialistic over a matter or a thing. Take for instance, the high technology gadgets or appliances that we have at present. When you feel that it is out of style or has been used for a long period of time, there's a tendency to acquire a new and more modern one.

Let us just try to be practical nowadays, when you want to own a cellphone but instead of buying a cheaper one, you would prefer to purchase the newest model, which is being materialistic. The desire of an individual to have the latest hand phone and the newest gadgets in town can actually create a false sense that one would be highly looked up to by means of having these items. When all the things around you are not badly needed, when anything or any object poses to become a luxury more than a need, we can clearly define it as materialism. People who are rich and wealthy acquire a lot of investments by purchasing more properties, be it in real estate or any other luxuries in life. Others go to the extent of using their material wealth to measure their success or it is even used as a reward for achievement or effort of an individual. Some persons are hoarding consumable resources which mean that materialism causes unfair differences in income and wealth among the people.

Yes, it can be a concealed hidden desire that you are caught unaware of, that of having an excessive desire to consume and acquire material goods. Oftentimes we buy things that we don't really need but it is simply because we want them. Then you tend to be less satisfied with life and less happy. You are more likely to become depressed, more likely to become paranoid, even to the point of becoming narcissistic. Worst that could happen is you become indifferent to the plight of others that you become selfish and vain. We crave for something more than what we already have making us unsatisfied with what we have right now.

This materialistic society that we live in is about getting or acquiring more and more with no end in sight. People tend to get more stuff but have they ever wondered when to stop or when will they ever have enough? Most people don't ever know, hence they keep on buying more. It's a never-ending cycle that we are caught unconsciously, trapped in our own whims and desires. Try to get off that cycle by figuring out how much is enough. Try to beat it and stop when you get there. Don't let materialism remain an incognito in your life.

Questions for discussion:

1. Can you measure your happiness by being a materialistic person? Why or why not?
2. Are you being a practical person nowadays or are you also caught in the world of materialism? Justify your answer.
3. When was the last time you stopped being materialistic in life? Elaborate on your answer.
4. Are you being practical in life considering that we are experiencing economic crisis at present? Explain your answer.
5. Is materialism prevalent in your homes and at your work? Why do you say so?



COPING IN A MATERIALISTIC WORLD

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the way people often misjudge others based on what they have? Have you ever felt unjustly considered because you were at a distinct point of not having as much as what others have or expect?

We have to live in a consistently materialistic world, a world where the worth of people is judged according to what they have to show. Success is measured with certain parameters and yardsticks, so woe to those who have less in life or those who sadly fall short. Although man has been blessed with technology and science to enable him to see things in a much broader perspective, the effects of such modern advances have brought about a more or less tainted view of achievement: what type of car you drive; which exclusive enclave you have built your home in; which school you attend; what company you work for; and the list goes on endlessly.

A man's value is not measured by the amount of dough he makes in his career or how many trips abroad he makes in a year. It is not measured by the number of the latest gadgets he has in his possession, or the groups of letters he affixes to his name. It should never be measured by the signature clothes he wears, the branded accessories he has in his wardrobe, or the exclusive resorts he can afford to go to on holidays.

Sadly, the human spirit is heavily weighed down by thoughts on materialism. The spiritual is constantly laughed at, mocked, and considered taboo. Sensitive issues like religion and beliefs are often ignored and replaced with 'more comfortable' topics: people, places and events. Religion, they say, will not save you. What happens when we find out eventually that it does? Or it will?

It is only natural that we all wish to succeed. We go for the best education that money can buy, we want to have a sense of belonging in our corner of the world, we want to see and be seen. Taking pride in one's achievements is fine, but there are still such things as genuinely tasteful pride and awfully tasteless boastfulness. If we are out only to put others way below us while ceaselessly elevating ourselves, that is wrong. If we wish to mark certain things as mediocre while those that are associated with ourselves we only wish to put in precedence, then that is wrong. Whatever we have is ours only because a Higher Power is generous enough to give it to us. We should not for a minute believe that self-worth is attributable only to our own efforts. We, after all, should always do our best, but it is the Almighty that does all the rest.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do people demonstrate materialism?
2. Can a man's value be truly measured by what he has? Explain your answer.
3. How can we all make the world an ultimately better place?
4. What do you think of people like the Dalai Lama? Nuns and priests?
5. Why is it difficult to measure up to materialistic parameters?



WHEN MATERIALISM BECOMES IMMATERIAL

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

I recall, though not very distinctly, a time in the distant past when a certain actress was heavily maligned for bringing her various home gadgets and conveniences and a selection of get-ups to the shooting of a certain movie (or was it a TV commercial?). As you can see, I have said 'distant' simply because the details escape me now. But I do remember at least two of the people involved, but for my own personal safety, I shall not name names. Anyway, the incident did end well for all concerned, and the furor and idle talk about it all soon died down.

One can't blame the lovely actress for bringing almost her entire kitchen, and maybe a sixteenth of her undoubtedly large wardrobe for one shoot: she's acknowledged as one of the most fashionable personalities in the biz, with the face that could rival even Helen of Troy's. Any woman would give anything to have what she has: beauty; fame; wealth; and a possibly cavernous walk-in closet that gets regularly refreshed. And anyone can see she's happy, tremendously happy. I guess happiness and fulfillment do come in uncommon packages.

Elsewhere in the world, one can find pictures of happiness in other people's faces. We see people having a wonderful time at events considered to be the coolest ones on earth. We see people getting enamored with the hippest clothes available online, the glitziest jewelry, the costliest perfumes, or the newest technological advancement. Despite the diminished buying power people have had, realty companies continue to market state-of-the-art condos and real property while auto companies regularly come out with their latest car models loaded with the most revolutionary components that have ranged from on-board DVD players (airlines have had them for a time), to GPS, auto-navigation systems and WiFi. The wonders of the modern era will surely continue to bombard the senses, and for a long time yet to come.

However, in the midst of all the materialistic noise there is, let us all pause for a minute and think of those elsewhere in the world who are unable to enjoy the benefits of clean, potable water. Somewhere around the globe, even in the streets of the most powerful nation in the world, are homeless people who rely on the generosity of others to get by. Somewhere out there is a child who can't enjoy exchanging text messages with his friends simply because there isn't any development for electricity in his area. Somewhere, there's always someone who has to struggle just to survive daily.

Somehow, for these people, happiness is nowhere to be found, and all the material things that the rest of the world enjoys are immaterial.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can rich nations help poorer nations more profoundly? Do loans and donations really work?
2. Why do many succeed where others fail? What is the most important component of success?
3. If you won the lottery, what would be the first thing you would do? Is sharing one of your options?
4. Is there an obligation that exists for powerful people to ease the burden of their less fortunate fellowmen? Elaborate on your answer.
5. Is it always easy to be generous? Why or why not?



TOUCHED BY ENVY---MAYBE, MORBIDLY

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

They say that the root of all evil is money. But a wise writer somewhere chose to correct that wrong notion by declaring that it is the greed for money that ultimately makes it evil. I find that as the most definitive justification for the real value of money. Yes, we need money to buy us earthly goods, and in these difficult times, earthly necessities. But it is the extreme thirst for money that can not be easily slaked. That definitely needs supreme transcendence and a tremendous amount of self-control. Even angels among us can sometimes fall victim to the temptation of getting more money.

Money endows us with the purchasing power we need to get what we need, not what we want. Have you ever wondered why a Greater Power always seems to know just how much we really need and always provides it in the most opportune moments? There have been numerous times in my personal life when I have experienced money problems and concerns. Yet, miraculously, there's always an opportunity that comes along, like a new assignment or an unexpected windfall that would come just in the nick of time. Those moments often leave me breathless for their sheer miracle of grace. It is then that I remember the biblical verse: Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? That's from Matthew 6:26, English Standard Version 2001. Those very words have comforted me through endless nights of worry and hopelessness. Yes, there is Someone who takes care of our needs, knows them completely even before we come to Him.

Therein, I also see much hope for all the homeless, hopeless ones out there who seem to see nothing but darkness and more darkness. Seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened unto you. When we persevere long enough and find ways to ease our burdens, we will prevail. No amount of worldly concern should ever pull us down. We must never give up, even when others have already thrown in the towel. Whatever great things the more fortunate ones possess, when we die, we all become equal. Maybe the more affluent ones will have mausoleums built for them, complete with air conditioning and WiFi and piped-in music, but we would all still be buried six feet under.

No amount of personal wealth and not even the latest gadgets can save us from death, the great equalizer. For in the end, only two things are certain: death and taxes.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you think the writer is being morbid for bringing up the issue of materialism and death together? Why or why not?
2. Do you think the writer is justifying envy by using death? Why or why not?
3. If you knew when your death will happen, what would you have in your *bucket list?
4. How important is money to you? Elaborate on your answer/s.
5. Is materialism inherently wrong? Why or why not?

*bucket list-a list of things to do before you die.
(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bucket%20list>)



DIAMONDS ARE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND, MADONNA SAYS

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

American singer-songwriter Madonna's January 1985 song Material Girl rides on the concept of the world being a highly-materialistic place. Somehow, possessions make the man, so Madonna is heard asking for wealth and an affluent life in place of loving relationships and romance. Despite the song having been a phenomenal success in the commercial music industry, the concept it upholds on materialism being the yardstick for love must never in any way be held as gospel truth. Although it is often true that the mark of a successful man is the type and enormity of possessions he has, that is not what genuinely defines a man at all.

Looking through one's high school yearbook, an individual might come across photos of classmates and peers that appear untouched and unaffected by the world's cares. Going through one's Facebook friends' pages would prove exactly the opposite: many show friends having meals at expensive restaurants, enjoying vacations in well-appointed places, taking pictures in various places of the globe, or showing off their latest acquired vehicles, gadgets or accessories. My Facebook account is often bombarded with Friend Requests from sellers and advertisers whom I don't even personally know of. I ignore such requests totally, especially since I'm neither the buy-me-now-I'm-on-sale type of person nor the diehard fashionista that those advertisers probably have the mistaken notion that I am. Far from it in fact: give me a comfortable, loose shirt and a decent pair of pants and I can go anywhere with them, no sweat. I guess my days as a fashion victim have long been over.

I am deeply concerned with the way my own kids sometimes salivate over the latest cellular phone models or the fancy clothes they see on television and various other forms of media. Although I often gently (!) remind them that such things are absolutely unnecessary, I also have to acknowledge that our children have definitely been exposed to more media that encourages them to acquire, well, more expensive tastes. No matter how hard a parent tries to curb his kids' appetite for worldly goods, the world is not all that cooperative, unfortunately. I therefore just guarantee them that if they succeed sufficiently in their future careers, they will be able to afford getting those things for themselves. Count on motherly wisdom to put an end to all the pining and salivating.

I have seven kids, so the future world will have seven willing patrons in various industries to parade its goods by. Hopefully, though I plan on still being around when that particular time comes, I will be unable to fully focus on the eyesores that glitzy thingamajigs would have become. Enough said for now, just got a text from an old friend on my trusty Nokia.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do you think the whole world has become so generally materialistic?
2. Would you consider yourself a truly materialistic person? Why or why not?
3. Is there any particular person you think is entirely materialistic? How is this person so?
4. Is there a particular place in the world which you think has more materialistic people than anywhere else? Why do you believe so?
5. Is materialism entirely bad? Why or why not?



LIVING OUTSIDE THE MATERIAL WORLD

Marian Baltazar
Class of 1980, University of the Philippines College of Manila
AB Political Science

It is obvious that money is very important to us but have you tried doing without it and tried living outside the material world? Yes, we do talk a lot about money and what it can give us but is it really all that matters to us? Definitely we live ...in this world and we work for a living because we need money to buy us our basic needs but it doesn't necessarily mean that we would do anything just to acquire a heap of it. There are far more important things that money cannot just give us. Although it is a means to an end, there are also a few things that we cannot have with money alone.

Let us cite for instance a house ablaze with fire wherein people try to save things that are really important for them, the things that they run back too are not their valuables like their Rolex or their expensive jewelries. What is far more important for them (as far as other people are concerned) is their family photo album, the stuff toy that your grandmother gave you 20 years ago or maybe the love letters from your sweetheart, who is now your loving partner. Yes, I believe that a lot of people are living outside the material world that we live in, for they don't really have the love of money in their hearts. Even if you have millions of dollars, there are some things you'll never have with money alone. There are things that money can't buy and it's worthwhile to pursue them even as you worry about money.

Love comes first and foremost for there is no amount of money and "stuff" that can fill the void left by a lack of real love. It's the love of your partner that makes you feel safe and secure. It's another cliché, money can't buy us love but a true one. Love at its best functions regardless of whether you have a lot money or very little. Neither can money buy us respect for it can't be bought, you have to earn it. It can't even buy us our health nor can't it even buy us back our youth. Money can buy healthcare and medicine but it cannot replace health once it's lost for you cannot rely on money to save you once your body has started to fail you.

We cannot buy success for it comes from hard work, applying your gifts and talents in the best way possible. Speaking about talent, money can definitely nurture talent but you cannot buy it for people are actually born with certain talents. The same way goes with manners and classy behavior for money doesn't confer good behavior. It cannot even buy us peace for it comes from contentment alone. Consequentially, money can't buy happiness for if it does a lot of rich people should have been happier.

The bottom line of all these is that money isn't everything in life. As the saying goes, "Money can buy a house but not a home; it can buy bed but not a sleep; it can buy clock but not time; it can buy you a book but not knowledge; it can buy you a position but not respect; it can buy you a medicine but not health; it can even buy you blood but not life." Hitherto, the biggest and the best things in your life don't have to cost you a penny. It's just that this is what living large on a small budget is all about and that's living outside the material world.

Questions for discussion:

1. Can real happiness be found in being too materialistic? Why or why not?
2. In this material world that we live in, what really matters the most to you? Explain your answer.
3. Is it worthwhile to be materialistic? Justify your answer.
4. Do you truly believe that money can't buy you true happiness? Why or why not.
5. Have you tried living outside this material world that we live in? Explain further.



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