



Pre-BA assignment feedback form

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An Essay of Analysing the Difference Between Having and Occupying

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Chapter 1: The Introduction

Life is full of ups and downs. As time flies, one who resides in one's Mother Earth will experience love and loss throughout one's life. In general, the truth is one will feel pleasant when one obtains a thing, a position or even a relationship that one has been hankering for a long time. On the other hand, one will also be sorrowful, indignant, or even suffering from some psychological problems when one loses something, which one has possessed before. Nonetheless, since things will not always be grasped on one's hands permanently, is there any means to diminish these emotions?

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

According to *The Governing Principles of Ancient China 360*, there is a paragraph:

「夫榮公好專利而不知大難。夫利，百物之所生也，天地之所載也，而有專之，其害多矣！天地百物皆將取焉，何可專也？所怒甚多，而不備大難，以是教王，王能久乎？」¹

Based on one of the historical books in China, *史記 [Shiji]*, the paragraph above is a remonstrance from a faithful courtier, *Rui Liangfu* 芮良夫 to his Emperor, *King Li of Zhou* 周厲王 who was the tenth Emperor of the Chinese Zhou Dynasty. Since the Emperor, *King Li of Zhou* 周厲王 was partial to a courtier, *Duke Yi of*

¹ 魏徵 [Wei Zheng], 褚遂良 [Chu Suiliang], 虞世南 [Yu Shinan], 群書治要 [*The Governing Principles of Ancient China 360*] (Taipei: Shijie shuju, August 2012), p. 2.

Rong 榮夷公 and always followed his words blindly, *Rui Liangfu* 芮良夫 stated to his Emperor that: ‘*Duke Yi of Rong* 榮夷公 was a possessive person who was always keen to keep great resources to Your Majesty and himself. However, he never understood that this tendency would take its toll on the country and himself. In fact, those sources were produced and cultivated by everyone on Mother Earth. If one held on to those benefits high-handedly, grudges would come along enormously. As a matter of fact, everyone really requires those natural resources for their daily lives. Thus, how could one monopolise those profits? Furthermore, since possessing those perks would evoke grievance from others as well as cause catastrophe to himself, would this propensity be able to assist Your Majesty in retaining lasting stability and peace in the country?’²

At that time, *Duke Yi of Rong* 榮夷公 was trying to persuade his Emperor, *King Li of Zhou* 周厲王 to implement a ‘monarch patents’ system on the properties of the mountains, forests, and rivers. He suggested to his Emperor that he should directly control those resources and did not allow his civilians to get the natural resources from Mother Nature to earn a living. Subsequently, every citizen in the country, especially the residents who absolutely relied on those resources were annoyed with his decision because they had lost their livelihoods forthwith. Meanwhile, *Rui Liangfu* 芮良夫 had advised his Emperor not to do so, but to no avail. Since those nationals were dissatisfied with *King Li of Zhou*’s tyranny, they eventually gathered at the capital city, *Haojing* 鎬京 to remonstrate their Emperor’s barbarous deeds. As a result, the Emperor, *King Li of Zhou* 周厲王 was constrained to escape from his palace and live in another place in order to save his life from the revolt.

From this story, I have learnt a lesson that everything on Mother Earth is owned by everyone, and we should not prohibit others’ opportunities to possess them. If we attempt to keep something to ourselves, we will easily get into trouble. However, as an ordinary person, we are accustomed to regard things as our own parts, especially our personal things. As explained by Venerable Master Chin Kung, if we consider an object or a relationship as our belonging, we will always be hoping

² 司馬遷 [Sima Qian], 史記 [Shiji] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, August 2014), pp. 179-180.

that it will not go away from us forever. Nevertheless, this circumstance will not bring any benefits to our lives rather than make us feel uncomfortable when we are at loss. Thus, rather than searching for a way to retain anything we are fond of, we should change our mindsets on the definition of having instead.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In the era of today, most people feel that ‘having’ is to own an object, a position, or a relationship solely or even forever. They even consider that the thing or that person belongs to them alone. However, when something or someone disappears from their lives, negative feelings will definitely come along. Therefore, to solve this problem, we must have clear definitions between having and occupying.

Based on the teachings of Venerable Master Chin Kung, he always educates us that we only obtain the opportunity to use the things in the world, but not the occupying authority of the things. In my opinion, ‘having’ is to possess something as well as obtain the chance to use it, but not hold on high-handedly in our hands. In truth, we should be able to share or even give out things to others when they need them. As Venerable Master Hsing Yun said: ‘Everything could not stay put eternally.’³ For instance, water needs to flow from one place to another, so that the water will not become sewage; goods need to be transported from one area to another, so as to support humans’ daily supplies. As well as money, we also need to cash in and out in order to earn more in our daily lives. In short, everything does not remain in the same condition for a long time.

In addition, the definition of ‘having’ is to have a mental preparation that things will not always be at our side since they will obtain their own lifespans and they are individual. As a human, we will undergo birth and death throughout our lives alone. Equally important, all things will be indicated for their manufacturing as well as effective dates. Hence, everything including people on the planet will obtain

³ 星雲大師 [Venerable Master Hsing Yun], 人間萬事 10 – 怎樣活下去 [Renjian wanshi 10 – Zenyang huoxiaqu], <
<http://www.masterhsingyun.org.tw/article/article.jsp?index=40&item=91&bookid=2c907d49496057d001499dcab0f90147&ch=3&se=19&f=1>> [accessed 21 March 2022]

its cause and effect throughout its life. As long as individuals have a clear definition of ‘having’, they will feel at ease or even in a cheerful mood every moment because they do not have strong control over them. In fact, they will not vex the things when they go away or the person who has left or defied them. In the nutshell, people who are broad-minded and always put others in their shoes will obtain this manner since they can empathise with others’ plights as well as understand the rules of nature.

In contrast, people who are selfish or even autocratic will simply occupy a thing or a person, especially their favourites. Indeed, they will have strong control authority over the things or even keep the things for themselves instead of sharing them with others. They even attempt to seek a way to keep things for themselves in order not to allow them to disappear from their lives. As the old saying goes: ‘Possessiveness reflects the fear of losing.’ As the example above, *Duke Yi of Rong* 榮夷公 convinced his Emperor, *King Li of Zhou* 周厲王 to monopolise those resources. Perhaps, they felt that they should have gained some benefits from the policy beforehand. However, this situation would not bring any prosperity to the country as well as the Emperor because the nations in the country were pissed off at his arrangement and a protest broke out in the country ultimately. It was a disastrous outcome for everyone because the harmony of the country came to an end.

Aside from that, possessive people will also regularly dominate others to follow their ideas or instructions for the sake of their lusts. They hope that they can always be the supreme persons among others. However, as we know, this tendency is not a proper attitude for all humankind. According to *The Works of Mencius*, there was a conversation about *King Wen of Zhou’s* park between *King Xuan of Qi* 齊宣王 and Mencius. During the Spring and Autumn seasons in China, every Duke in all states attempted to become a hegemon among others as to substitute for the Emperor of Zhou in order to govern the world.

One day, *King Xuan of Qi* 齊宣王 asked Mencius about the dimension of *King Wen of Zhou’s* park. He was curious that although *King Wen of Zhou’s* park was extremely large, which was about seventy miles, the citizens of the country never felt the same at all. On the contrary, his park was only about forty miles, but the citizens of his country claimed that his park was too large. In the meantime, Mencius responded that the main different reaction from the citizens of the two

countries was the rules implemented by the two Emperors for their parks. In fact, *King Wen of Zhou* 周文王 was generous enough to allow his citizens to collect some resources from the park such as water, woods, animals and so on, while *King Xuan of Qi* 齊宣王 prevented his from doing so. He punished and even beheaded a man who had killed a deer in the park. Therefore, the residents of *King Wen of Zhou* would consider that the park was rather small because they could even obtain great resources and protection from the park. While the residents of *King Xuan of Qi* would think that the park was huge for them since they were prohibited to earn a living there. Indeed, they felt anxious whenever passing through *King Xuan of Qi's* park, for fear that they might damage or harm the park. ⁴

Moreover, this restriction would not only incur wrath from others to the Emperor as well as the country, but also would irritate the ruler of the country when others disobeyed his rules. Since individuals would normally try to figure out a way to acquire a livelihood, they would even attempt to escape from their guilt of not receiving punishments from the law enforcement officers when they committed a crime. This situation would definitely give rise to a chaotic society and as a result, the governor would be concerned and enraged as well. In this case, being concerned and enraged continually will indirectly cause some health problems in the long run, such as headaches, heart attacks and the like. Therefore, is it a wise decision for us to occupy a thing?

Chapter 4: Methods

Owing to the above situation, we should consider that we only have the opportunity of using things rather than keeping them alone for ourselves. Therefore, from my point of view, there are two methods to retain the definition of having.

All in all, things will have their own lifespans and they are individual. In fact, nobody can control the stay and leave of things or persons as they have their own karmas. As the old saying goes: 'Never be possessive about anything or anyone. You are born alone, and you will die alone. Indeed, you will be left alone sooner or later.

⁴ James Legge, *The Works of Mencius* (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, January 2014) pp. 29-30.

Nothing stays with anyone forever except your soul and your beliefs.’ If any of us has a mental preparation as mentioned above, we will absolutely not keep things or even a person to ourselves selfishly. On the contrary, we will appreciate as well as cherish our belongings now. Moreover, we will also respect others’ views instead of forcing others to heed our notions. Aside from that, we will not be emotional when we own or give up a thing.

Here is a good example from my previous experience. When I was studying at our learning centre, I was told to shift to another bedroom or learning area several times owing to some reasons. Honestly, I was a bit annoyed and reluctant to carry my things here and there because I always had to rearrange or relocate them again. Not only that, I was also forced to adapt to a new environment as well. However, since I have managed to simplify my things and remind myself that nothing is mine, I gradually could accept any arrangements assigned by my teacher. In fact, I will also treasure and make good use of the things as well as the facilities around. Nowadays, I even hope for any shifts in order to strengthen my adaptability and flexibility.

Besides, life is impermanent, so we have to be broad-minded as well as kind-hearted to others in order to improve our good disposition. Indeed, the best practice to become an open-minded person is to contribute to others. As the old saying goes: ‘Sharing is caring.’ In fact, there is no joy in possession without sharing. Based on the important teaching from the Changkya Khutukhtu to Venerable Master Chin Kung, giving is a vital manner in our spiritual practice as we can gain good consequences in the future as well as boost the relationships among others. If we lend a hand to people who need our assistance, we will definitely feel thrilled and satisfied with our deeds. Other than that, giving help to others will make them to be kind-hearted as well after all they have been given things they require in their lives. In short, giving provides us with numerous advantages throughout our lives. Thus, why do we need to tightly hold on to things for ourselves instead of giving others the opportunity to possess them?

As I am the elder sister in our centre, some of my younger brothers and sisters will approach me for my advice and guidance in their learning and working fields. Certainly, since I had realised the feeling of helplessness in the past and understood the pros of sharing, I will always be enthusiastic to assist them when they

encounter problems. Indeed, by sharing my knowledge and experiences with them, I feel that they even render me an invaluable chance to widen my horizon as well as sustain my encouragement in my learning journey. In addition, my father always advises me that: ‘The more we share, the more we will obtain.’ In a nutshell, to be able to share with others, in return we will receive more than before, whereas to occupy selfishly will lead to the reduction of owing.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As we know, things will not always be in our hands for long. In fact, they will disappear or even separate from us unexpectedly. Hence, the tendency of having is better than occupying as this will not only diminish our bad feelings, but also make us feel at ease and harmonious. As the old saying goes: ‘Love is not possessive. To possess somebody is to destroy the possibility of love.’ Therefore, sharing or even contributing is a great means for us to own a thing as we will not have strong control over everything in our lives. In fact, we could even create a loving, warm, and harmonious environment for humankind.

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