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The Case for Competition

 Sharing means that one must commit himself to the concept of compromise -- giving something in exchange for something received. The process of sharing means that all parties must often grapple with the desire to be selfish. Sharing is an important part of a community as it has been taught to most people as a basic manner and is used in a variety of different ways; sharing emotions, knowledge or material objects. One way I participate in the act of sharing is by being a waitress. I provide an enjoyable dining experience for the customers by sharing my time and expertise, being attentive to their needs and answering questions that will facilitate the customer’s comfort. If they are satisfied with the service they share a nice review or even leave a good tip. Competing is the act of an individual attempting to excel beyond the benchmark set previously by him or other individuals. Competition provides a channel for a society to continually improve and set higher standards. Competing has enabled individuals around the world to continuously feel motivated to better themselves and the community that surrounds them. I compete with myself and other students by attending school and attempting to earn the highest possible grades. Although many may argue that both sharing and competing contribute to the creation of a strong society, I believe that competition is the key to a more prosperous and advanced society.

 The competition of fellow humans has been more beneficial than the act of sharing because it has incentivized excellence, encouraged responsibility, and championed individualism. Given these three factors, competition has been integral to the development of the advanced world. Whether an individual competes to be admitted to a certain school or program, strives win an Olympic swimming race, or contends with others in the free market to gain economic superiority, competition is inevitable. This is significant because if there was no obligation for someone to earn something by challenging the basic standard, then an individual’s motivation to improve would not exist. Thus, the reward system that is often tied to a competitive environment has incentivized people to work harder and smarter in anticipation of the prize. Further, competition has encouraged responsibility because those who have worked hard to acquire more money are more inclined to be averse to unnecessarily wasting it. Finally, a competitive environment nurtures the concept of “individualism” because it allows anyone and everyone to embrace their strengths, hone them, and use them to differentiate themselves.

Competition is ingrained in most people at an early age. From birth, people are quite often taught the difference between what is deemed bad or good by their parents. When a young child exhibits desirable behaviors, he or she may be rewarded with a sweet treat and positive reinforcement. However, when this child acts poorly, he or she may face undesired consequences. Over time, an observant child may become increasingly interested in competing with himself or his siblings to continue to reap plentiful rewards. Later in life this reward system only slightly changes. Often times an individual’s prize for his or her performance comes in the form of money, services, or other items of value. Those who compete and succeed have earned their prize by withstanding countless hours of hard work and adversity. Thus, their appreciation for their own achievement—gained through competition in the free market—has reinforced the idea that hard work pays off.

While the act of competing, achieving success, and gaining a reward are integral to a competitive environment, those who are successful are also motivated to maintain the fruits of their labor. This maintenance is also known as “responsibility.” Those who have gained success through hard work may often have a superior understanding of the value of the money they have acquired from years of work. Many of these individuals are motivated to set aside a portion of this money to earn interest in a bank account or invest it in the stock market. Others may choose to buy a house, a car, or other products that will enhance their quality of life. For instance, a successful businessman who has beat the odds and established a successful business may buy a vehicle along the way. This vehicle is the manifestation of countless hours dedicated to a task that may have very well gone unrewarded if he did not diversify his products from those of others. Therefore, this individual is far more likely to take care of his property in hopes of extending its life to the fullest. Moreover, an individual has control over his own destiny. This means that he is well within his means to nurture his own property and maintain it as he sees fit. However, shared or communal property is often reduced to the lowest common denominator. Because this property is not tied to one person or another, the general public may feel disconnected and disregard its upkeep. Akin to bureaucracy, there is no specific individual to take the blame or responsibility for an action. Instead, this responsibility is parsed out to thousands.

Perhaps most importantly, competition has naturally enabled individuals to unveil their strengths, put them to the test, and differentiate themselves from the crowd. In fact, the development of the western world and the United States can arguably be attributed to the fact that the competitive environment has emboldened clever individuals to benefit themselves and also enrich others at the same time. For instance, Henry Ford’s genius in pioneering the car industry with the introduction of assembly line production not only established his own name but also allowed others to build upon his idea. Further, the entrepreneurial spirit unique to the United States has granted even those from the lower echelons of society to dream big and achieve greatness. Forged through the hardship and difficulty encountered as a college dropout raised by working-class parents, Steve Jobs is a testament to this concept. Despite the setbacks he faced, he embraced his strength as a master of marketing, developed his persona, and started one of the most successful technology companies the world has ever seen. Even after death, there is no mistaking the demeanor of Steve Jobs for any other businessman or the format of his presentations for any other business demonstration.

Ultimately, competition has very successfully defined itself as a more fruitful means to a better-rounded, affluent civilization than sharing. As demonstrated by the vast success and opportunity in countries with highly competitive economies like the United States; when an individual is able to visualize and harness his or her potential, he or she is likely to be rewarded. Still, there is no guarantee that a person will always defeat every challenge. Though the path to being ultra-rich or becoming an Olympian may not be a guarantee, motivated people have routinely proven why the competitive landscape will continue to overshadow the constraints in a society based on sharing. This is precisely because those who have achieved a higher standard of living are not willing to abandon their work ethic or strengths. Such is the natural proliferation of responsibility. Further, competition has provided an outlet for people to showcase their abilities and has encouraged individuals to embrace their innermost thoughts and quirks and use them as a method to become successful in various disciplines of work. Thus, innovators and inventors have been able to hold onto the characteristics that define them, often building a brand out of their personality or style. As Steve Jobs once poignantly explained, “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.” Undoubtedly, this concept has been facilitated by competition for thousands of years and demonstrates the inherent benefit that spawns from a competitive environment.