

Competition: Life Itself

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Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* defines competition as "a mutual striving after." *Oxford English Dictionary* also defines competition as "a mutual striving after that which both cannot have." Against whom does a competitor compete? Why is what we do competition? For what do we compete? More perplexing, perhaps, is *how* do we compete? If we were not competitors, who would we be? What would we do? Who would be the other and how would we know the other? Am I a competitor because I intend to have the object of my desire and I act on that intention? Are two subjects competitors if and only if each acts against the other, driven by the need to have what the other will then be excluded from having? If, in any single moment, you and I compete for an object, does that moment contain all that there is to competition? If that were so, why then would we compete in every other moment, already and always?

We strive after power, not power in the abstract, but power in every moment to be for self and against another. If we understand power as the power to prevail over, to dominate or control, then we also understand that if we do not have power we cannot impose our projections, our will, or our subjective selves, on another, on another subject that we would have then transformed into our object. So we compete, each with every other, for power to be exercised against the others who mutually strive for that power, again and again and always, making competition a continuing, continuous, everywhere present striving to be.

William Faulkner said in his Stockholm Speech, "Man will not only endure, he will prevail." If we accept *endure* as prior to *prevail*, then we must expect that competition, as the struggle to endure, is already and always the *sine qua non* of every beings continuous struggle to be. To compete is to be and to be is to compete. The self endures because the self competes.

Jung suggests that in the beginning there is an *act* and that the *act* creates the *self*, is the self. The *act* must then continuously recreate the *self*, and the *act* was and is *competition*. I

mean this, the identification of competition with being, in the same sense as modern rhetoricians use in asserting that "*all communication is argument.*" If *argument* is the act of two subjects mutually striving against each other in order to impose one subject's sense of meaning upon another, to control, to have power over, to dominate the other's sense of meaning, then all communication, verbal and nonverbal, all *argument* is competition, the constant struggle to endure that requires that each subject struggle to prevail.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson use "*Argument is war*" to make their case for "*All communication is argument.*" If we substitute *competition is argument* for *argument is war*, the entailments of argument and, more importantly, the entailments of war are then the essence how we *know* competition. In comprehending competition we see the relationship between the subject and the object as the relationship essential to all our efforts to endure, our struggling constantly to prevail.

Put differently, competition entails striving for, fighting for congruence. We compete for agreement or the power to secure from another or impose on another agreement, be it agreement about something as obvious as that you will buy my product at the price I set rather than a another's product, or something as *subjective* as that you will experience me as I wished to be experienced, rather than in the way you *would have* experienced me or would have had me experienced for your benefit, as you understood your benefit, in the moment before I prevailed. From the beginning, we experience life as a competition for control over an *object*, for the power to use that *object* for our benefit by making the other *an object*, our *object*.

In *Fear of Flying*, the heroine searches constantly for a "*zip-less fuck.*" That is, I assert, the search for a *union of two* that diminished neither, yet rewards both because each participates in the union, even though neither *surrenders* to the other. It is this sought after *mythic* union that is the archetype of life without competition, life where the distinction between subject and

object has no place, life in which one human being and another come together in a "*will-less union*," an existence where it is possible for two to act together without diminishing the free will of either. And it is thus in searching for the negation of competition that we find, I assert, the ineffable reality of the identity between self and competition.

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