A reflection on Competition

Week 2, Semester 3/8 – 10 Sept 2021

- Started trading again after analyzed the market and learned how to prevent losses amid market crash
- Thought of skipping certain lessons/ learning materials from other classes to enhance efficiency

- Sought initiatives to collaborative with peers out of my current circle
- Challenged by the fact that I should balance the interactions with new connections that I acquire, and those closer friends I had in the past

Something is draining me.

I have this thought of me wanting to do more 'crazy' things, acting crazy every day, and being the crazy me from the bottom of my heart. But some forces are pulling me towards this stage of undesirable 'stability'.

This week, I tried out lots of initiatives: trading amid the market crash, trying to further network with peers and being more proactive in class. As I navigated through this week of stress early into the semester, I had the feeling that I am becoming a bit less authentic, despite knowing that I should be at all costs.

Every day, I'm just repeating the same process of "recharging myself on my home's bed, having some painful waiting on commute, acting proactive in class, and draining my energy with further social initiatives. Although things 'changes bit by bit' as I loop through this recurring set-up every day, things are not going very organic in terms of mutual growth.

Makes me think of the consequences of not having proper first-year interactions with peers, both local and non-locals, within the same major, especially in a highly competitive major like ours. Stranded in zoom lessons and meetings, we were stripped off the opportunity to interact face-to-face and expand our circles, and given our mostly introverted traits, we're confined to interacting on solely academic purposes. We did not have opportunities to get familiarised until assignments in certain business core courses popped up, when we attempted to reach out awkwardly.

We had few opportunities to know each other beyond academics and our superficial faces – a lack of base for 'friendship' that is most likely unable to offset the negative sentiments resulted from fear and competition. We lacked initiatives for collaboration and understanding at the level of our whole batch, which is unhealthy. As a result, when we resume back face-to-face this semester, all of us were already in the respective 'groups' they've formed previously, and lacked the motive and passion to know each other out of our 'tribes' more. The rigidity of our respective social fronts stifled further interaction of those out of our original groups, because doing so might be perceived as "betraying against your original sub-group's good", or we might also sound being overly aggressive that you sound too different from your peers to be properly accepted within the batch.

I tried to align my interests with everyone's, but it seems that this brings a greater sense of threat, rather than company for my peers. I tried to diversify my academic load

to lessen direct academic competition with them. I start to feel like we are just in a typical prisoner's dilemma, despite either deliberately or reluctantly, choosing the worse option:

Prisoner B ⟍ Prisoner A	Prisoner B stays silent (*cooperates*)	Prisoner B betrays (*defects*)
Prisoner A stays silent (*cooperates*)	Each serves 1 year	Prisoner A: 3 years Prisoner B: goes free
Prisoner A betrays (*defects*)	Prisoner A: goes free Prisoner B: 3 years	Each serves 2 years

The ultimate result

Reasoning:
- Regardless of what the other decides, each prisoner gets a higher reward by betraying the other ("defecting").
- Defecting is the best response regardless of others' strategy.
  If B cooperates, A should defect, (free > serving a year)
  If B defects, A should also defect (serving 2 years > 3)
- Parallel reasoning will show that B should defect.
  Consequently, both will defect, or in my case, not collaborate.

We all know the textbook situations of Prisoner's Dilemma when there is no trust and collaboration – yet we still desire to walk on the same path. Isn't that pitiful?

I wish to leverage on my limited social prowess to make the environment within the cohort more united, more constructive, and closer by making our collaboration and competition healthier – although I know I am mostly incapable of **doing so** (不自量力).

I was kinda a social outcast, being many standard deviations away from the norm when I was in secondary school. But what about now? Will things change favourably? Will I be able to stick to my initiatives and bring any changes within and out of myself? I am still trying and I think time will tell...