**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

“How is it that customs in a culture have no impact on your identity?” my Affirmative counterpart bewilderedly probed.

“Well, I believe that multiple aspects in my life, if not all, checked the boxes that justifies the weak causality between tradition and personality development. Let me break it down for you,” my miss independent stance miserably failed to clarify.

A supposedly 5-minute quick briefing for a presentation on the significance of cultural customs in society led to a heated, personal debate that took longer than needed. Chaotic, loud, and non-sensical are how I would describe my ineffectively immature, competitive side. Winning in the general sense would mean that I was able to prove my points right until the parley has substantially ended, a sense of satisfaction I do not find valid anymore. At least that was how I used to view two-way exchanges – allies or opponents, winning or losing.

About fifteen minutes has passed and I could feel the heat on my face as I charged on like a blind bull. Only after my ceaseless spouting of arguments drained my energy to a critically low level that she started blatantly cackling as her curled fist and emotional build-up relaxed and simmered down. The spotlight hit me as I was brought to a humiliating silence. I realized that my incessant, hard-headed blabber has made what was a friend now a lowly animal, for which I have stooped down to that of the latter.

However, this is where her argument became a watershed that changed my viewpoint on the issue. She explained that my perspective of culture is myopic because I only focus on aspects of culture that were at the forefront of my mind. She further elucidated that cultural customs shape people’s identity and values as it forms their opinions and ideas in their daily lives.

“If you were raised in a different country without your family, friends, or even your teachers, do you still think you would still be who you are today? Because I believe you have some values you truly kept due to them” she uttered bluntly.

I paused, blinded by wanting to prove her wrong but I couldn’t deny some truth to her statement. In retrospect, it is true how practicing certain cultural traditions became part of how my values align with the people who I grew up with. Her statement affected me the more I thought about it, and I could not deny it. It was at this point that I realized that I shouldn’t let my ego get the best of me just because I wanted to win the argument. It defeated the whole purpose of discussion.

I realized that winning is not everything, in fact, it means nothing in a discussion. If I feel like I win an argument, yes, it may make me feel satisfied. However, at the end of the day, it doesn’t come down to dignity and pride, but it comes down to how I can integrate my ideas with the other person’s ideas. Pushing myself to be better than the “opponent” doesn’t mean that I am better, even if my points are stronger. Like the debate with my friend, I do have a strong opinion, but others have their own beneficial perspectives that actually make me think twice about my argument.

It’s not a debate from MUN, World’s Scholars Cup or any debating competition that allowed me to acknowledge my mistakes and always consider both perspectives. I view debate as more of an exchange of an argument where both parties will walk away gaining more knowledge than before. My changed perspective on debate has allowed me to grow to be more open-minded in all aspects when making major decisions in my life, especially when transforming into adulthood. I would plan ahead by considering details from different aspects and points of view to make sure I would make a wise decision, no matter what it is. Many might argue that debating will lead to bad outcomes, I have switched the gears and see debate in a positive light.

*Hi Kelly,*

*This piece is a personal – even sensitive – one and I respect it.*

*However, I think this essay has multi-layered, conceptual flaws and I couldn’t seem to comprehend the question on debate in the first place. I think it’s like saying, “my parents were not influential on me growing up,” basically. Which is why I started out the whole assumptive concept of you being this independent woman who has her life values and principles imprinted by her social circle and experiences outside of her immediate family. Only in that case, I feel that your argument can make logical sense. If this is true, please feel free to use the first half of this essay’s edit as a direction for your second half.*

*Otherwise, if the story’s simply about you trying to contradict your opponent’s point of view regardless of whether your argument made logical sense or not, then just stick with what you have already written.*

*- Matthew*