

Is the drive to be better always desirable?

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Improvement, development and progression have always been goals of humanity. As humans, we always feel that doing better is a good thing, and have taken many measures to achieve that. Hence, having the drive to be better is naturally seen as desirable and something we should all possess. While I believe that this drive is essential for oneself and for the development of the world, I feel that it is not always desirable due to the unintended consequences it may bring when one is too fixated on being better.

Of course, without this drive to be better, our world would not have been as technologically advanced as it is today. For these spectacular inventions, we can credit people such as the Wright Brothers, Alan Turing and Thomas Edison who displayed resilience and perseverance in the face of adversities. The Wright Brothers, who invented the first airplane, were told by countless numbers of people that what they wanted to create was fundamentally impossible. However, they did not give up and eventually succeeded. Alan Turing spent many days and nights in order to break the Enigma code during World War II even though there were millions of arbitrary combinations. This resulted in him saving millions of lives. And we all know Thomas Edison's famous quote, "I have not failed. I have just discovered ten thousand ways that do not work." All these people have something in common – that is the drive to do better. They formed the stepping stones that guided our world forward toward reaching the high levels of technology we now have, from which we have reaped endless benefits, due to their efforts. Therefore, the drive to do better is desirable as it helps us humans achieve amazing feats and reach beyond what we thought were our limits.

However, the world is made up of different shades of grey; it is not black and white. Hence, the absolute "always" does not hold. Unfortunately, the drive to do better can sometimes lead to unintended consequences when people get too fixated on improving. These consequences can be damaging and bring about harm to society, which counters the initial intention of doing better. A prevalent problem of this is faced by many governments in this world, as they strive for economic growth. In theory, the benefits of economic growth are always desired as they ensure higher levels of income and a better standard of living. Hence, governments always prioritise economic growth due to its many advantages. This, however, can result in them neglecting other aspects of the country such as citizens from low income groups. As the economy grows, those enjoying the benefits are naturally the rich as they are the ones who own companies and businesses, while the low income groups receive wages that remain depressed and stagnant. As a result, there is a widening income gap which leads to a worsening income inequality. A country that faces this problem is Singapore. Singapore is said by many to have progressed from "a third world country to a first world country". While this may be true, Singapore has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world. This is a result of the trade-off between taking care of the poor and striving for economic growth. Thus, at times, the desire to do better can result in narrow mindedness and eventually a failure to consider a situation holistically, which can bring about negative impacts.

The drive to do better can also cause people to go astray and breach their morals. This happens when the drive is so strong that it overpowers people's conscience, leading to them prioritise the result of improvement over what is morally correct. This is a common occurrence in competitive sports. Through the many years of competitive sports, there have always been cases of doping and match fixing

in order for sportsmen to achieve the goals they desire. This totally goes against the Athletes' Oath that every sportsman takes, in which they vow to always play fair regardless of the outcome of their competitions. By taking illegal drugs to boost their performance or bribing an opposing team to win, these sportsmen are basically flouting the fundamentals of sportsmanship. Some examples are Lance Armstrong, who took performance enhancing drugs when he competed in the Tour de France, and the Russian women's swim team who were banned from the 2016 Summer Olympics. This also applies to other aspects of life apart from sports. Students who desperately want to improve on their academics may cheat during examinations, and people who wish to get rich can end up embezzling their company's funds. Hence, if the drive to do better is so prominent that it clouds one's moral compass, it can cause one to commit unforgivable acts, even ones that go against the law.

"It is not about the end result but the journey." This is a well-known saying that addresses this problem appropriately. Whether the drive to do better is good or not all boils down to where that drive originated from. If one's drive arises merely from achieving the end result, one is more likely to be blinded by the desire to succeed, making one more vulnerable to being led astray and failing to take into account the bigger picture. On the other hand, if one is able to learn from the process of improvement and accept that life is not smooth sailing, one will not succumb to immoral acts just to reach one's goals. At the end of the day, we must not let the concept of ideals and perfection get in our way of being "good". Nobody is perfect and hence if we learn to be satisfied with what we already have instead of beating ourselves up over certain flaws, we will be able to enjoy the process of doing and being better, by not letting the drive to be better make us resort to underhanded means that may potentially harm others and even ourselves.

Comments:

Generally well-written. Could have analysed/developed some of your points a bit more though. Good use of words and phrases. Perhaps you could have given another example of how unintended consequences may arise from the drive to do better besides the impact on the economy.

