Stanford students possess an intellectual vitality. Reflect on an idea or experience that has been important to your intellectual development. (250 words limit)

I used to believe that only through purely rational reasoning can we get to know the truth in science. I would memorize every theorem on math textbooks, occasionally contemplating every little piece of derivation between one and another so that I could have a “solid” and flawless way of thinking and solving problems. I worked hard on myriad algebra problems to collaborate the impregnable math system in my mind, even though many I had known by heart, but I still felt this kind of practice worthwhile...

...until I engaged in Olympiad in Informatics. Most of the knowledge in OI is undergraduate-level, some even beyond. At first, I tried my old reliable methodology, studied college books from basic, and did every exercise dutifully. But the amount of information turned out to be too large that I could not gulp down totally. Occasionally I would forget some key conceptions in the previous context, or could not catch up with the progress as planned. It was obvious I could no longer be that “greedy”, but should focus on points more valuable, more essential to hold the whole system of knowledge.

But how to decide which is more important than another? In fact, I didn't even need to worry: although I did not know the criterion, but my mind did the selection process automatically – with the help of so-called intuition. The initial intuition may be full of errors, but it would revise itself every time I made wrongs or found a day's learning futile, and it would be reinforced if I passed the practice tests. Gradually, I found my “compass” become more and more accurate, and I knew quite well the crucial vertices on the web of knowledge, neglecting all the other trivial facts, and may come back only when I need to. This magical trick of brain helped me too much via lessening the pressure but also increasing the efficiency of study OI. And it can be readily expanded into other fields of learning. I tested this method on learning Calculus, and I had only spent a week and passed the final exam of the course set to be taught in a whole semester.

Gradually, apart from learning, I find myself more independent of thinking and more confident of decision making, thanks to the power of emotion. Sometimes I choose to follow my heart to make choices that may seem not so reasonable or even crazy. (put in example as dropping off Tsinghua?) After all, decisions cannot be judged by the expected results in other's eyes. So long as one follow his faith, gut and passion, instead of purely rationality constrained by current circumstances, there's never a wrong road taken.