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

Intuition, ideas come from nowhere, is a taboo in scientific world, which would often be marked as illogicality, absurdity, and anti-science. Like other children who took math as the only perfection, I disparaged anything that was not supposed to be under the supervision of pure rationality...

...until I engaged in Olympiad in Informatics. Most of the knowledge in OI is undergraduate-level, some even beyond. Since the amount of information is so large that I had to work extremely hard to understand every concept. Even so, when facing a problem, I found nowhere to start. There was something missing, a trigger, an “aha!”. After struggling for a long time, I eventually found the trick: practice. At first every problem was hard and confusing without a clear direction. But gradually, I began to observe patterns – patterns that certainly exists but were hard to delineate in language. I found that when facing new problems, some ideas would come out naturally from “nowhere” - certainly originated in some of those patterns, but how do brain know if not having paid conscious attention to? That's when I realized human brains have the ability of unconsciously quick assessing situation based on experiences. From then on, I kept practicing a lot of OI problems, and my intuition, or in a more gorgeous word, insight, became more and more reliable.

Apart from solving scientific problems, I find intuition can still be used in life circumstances. Sometimes when reasoning cannot give the obviously right choice, I chose to follow my heart. Many of the decisions I had made proved to be futile and might even lead to bad results, but those became valuable experiences that might beget better decisions in the future. I believe in the unexploited power of intuition, and thus look forward to taking more challenges – since every experience is a fortune.