

Mind of Action (Assertion Journal 1)

I see it in flashes. Pain racking my body. Panting, ragged and toilsome. Sweat on the trampled grass. Falling into a stampede of spiked feet. I'm already on the starting line, warmed up and dressed in uniform, but the phantom pains I foresee are almost too great to handle. I want to freeze, to avoid as much as possible, to ensure my own safety. But the whistle sounds. *Go*.

Staring at the piano, at the sheet music for Chopin's Étude op. 10 no. 5 "Black Keys," at my fingers ambivalent on what to practice, I feel queasy. In a month, I would perform at Carnegie Hall, a dizzying expectation. What to practice? But my sister yells at me to practice, so I start playing from the beginning.

The my teammates are asleep now, but I sit there with the dim, flickering light across my face. I haven't slept for almost twenty-four hours. I'm stumped and weary—my mind screams to stop. But despite the drooping of my eyes, I continue to add, debug, refactor, test, upload; I repeat these tasks for the next few hours, dragging through dawn, nearing those precious hours when I can finally nap.

The mind is a glorious ally and a frightful enemy. A character in the world of the mind named Misgiving is a cunning nemesis that can slide past Reason's defenses with little problem; soon it eases itself into the throne of the mind, and its advisor Doubt brings the system to a grinding halt. Either the mind has to leave the degrading city or let itself to its destruction. Either way, the damage is done.

Action, on the other hand, has a radical approach to this problem: build a new city free of corruption beforehand and move out on any skittish impulse. It is proactive, predictive, promotive of a lifestyle that keeps one on his feet—the very opposite of doubt and its effects. Corruption can take the cities of old, but where the mind is will never be lost to doubt or suspicion.

Every time I begin to run, my mind flees from the "can'ts" and "don'ts" and "nos"—it is at the destination already, waiting for me to finish triumphantly. When I play piano, the "what's" and "how's" disintegrate into the truths of the moment; what were worries seconds ago are worries of the past. At the hackathon, my mind sits on the prospect of the shiny prizes, the heap of gadgets at the finish line. Each of these situations could easily have been halted instead had I not taken the initiative to continue, to persevere. The nagging of Doubt is tossed into the dungeons of the forgotten by its archfiend Action.

The method of loci, a memorization technique based on the visualization in the mind of a recognizable place as a reference point, has shown its efficiency from the speeches of Cicero of the Classical Age to the mind-palace of detective Sherlock Holmes in the BBC show. My mind is always active, always situating itself away and away. Like the method of loci, it is a form of "mind-forcing" in that it compels the mind—and, in effect, the body—towards definitive action, but it is different in that it is also incited by decisive action. The maxim by philosopher Laozi goes, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"—here the "step" is not ineffectual. It is, to say the least, a clear movement forwards and away from the start that catalyzes the other "thousand miles" of journey. No amount of contemplating, of pacing, of reasoning will be able to bring the mind that physical distance, that material motivation; often, from the assailment of an AP Language class' on one's nerves to the perilous decisions of a midlife-crisis, something, *anything* should be done to get that first step in.

As Nike or Shia LaBeouf would say, *Just do it!*

It seems ridiculous to assert that to place the mind somewhere and recklessly plod along towards it—mindlessly, in its most literal sense—is the best instruction, especially if there exist grave consequences. However, especially for the scholar or philosopher who has mind enveloped in sophistications of thought, perhaps it is the best solution to gain some space away, some breathing space. In "The American Scholar," Emerson states that "the final value of action, like that of books, and better than books, is, that it is a resource." A resource for inspiration. Every act in and of itself is a miracle, if one should choose to consider it so. And action gives an alternate venue in perceiving it differently.

Most every adversity in life comes from some sort of indecision or halt; a barrier blocking the way to success. But one needs simply act, and the rest will fall in place. My mind waits at the goal past every obstacle—of education, family, life—and I have to rummage around to locate it.

And all I have to do is try.