



we hear it all the time. we obsess about it. strength. independence. the ability to resist. *ability*, however, can be as much a blinder as inability, if we are not careful.

i have often heard (*citation needed*) that many of the more extreme positions on the political spectrum are held by highly educated people - essentially that the first thing we learn is how to find information that supports our case, and the second thing is how to refute the arguments most often used to challenge our ideas.

it is good to remember that no good deed goes unpunished. training yourself to resist, to overcome, to hold fast in the face of outside pressures increases your tactical *effectiveness*, but does not directly increase your tactical *awareness*. more directly, the longer you can go, the longer you can go in the wrong direction. the more independent you are, the more self referential your logic becomes...

i am smart, i am critical and research ideas. so if i believe this it must have merit...

or even worse:

i am a logical person, and this thing/person/event makes me angry. i am not an overly emotional person, i am in control of my feelings, i train, so if i feel this way it must be for a reason...

the internet is a wonderful and horrible place. it is so easy to get caught up in the fray, the excitement of the news and "facts" that support our narratives. the unspoken reality that we are all the heroes of our own stories, we are not just right but righteous - and the implication that those who disagree are unenlightened or simply the enemy of that righteousness.

definitions matter. strength without sensitivity is a liability. a focused assault exposes your flank and

a hardened defense will hamper mobility. we always say "don't be lazy, don't be stupid" - the following statement is just as important: " realize that in learning to not be lazy, you have made yourself stupid"

if you can agree that definitions matter, then you must be responsible for their accuracy. the idea of applied mathematics is the understanding that solving the equation is not the same as solving a problem. every equation has an author who brings their biases, who edits and simplifies reality into a set of definitions in order to process them. a bad equation can still, on occasion, get us the right answer - that does not mean the formula must be protected.

self-actualization is a beautiful process. the act of pitting your strength and thoughts against peers and challengers is what creates many of our personalities. but defining yourself as "dangerous" or controversial is going to prime you to see others as threatening or challenging you. resisting outside pressure assumes that outside pressure actually exists. richard morgan stated that "a preoccupation with the next world shows an inability to cope credibly with this one" - in the same way a constant refrain to abandon the victim mentality starts to sound a lot like performative martyrdom.

this is not an attack, just an observation.

how you see yourself makes you see the world in a specific way. in a way that justifies your stance. preparing for the worst case scenario requires us to imagine the worst of humanity and calculate a defense against it. we are creating a formula and solving it. zenos paradox of motion states that when traveling from point A to point B we first must travel half way. then we travel half of what is left. then half of that. if you agree with those statements then the paradox states that we can never actually reach our destination, just get closer and closer but never actually arrive. the problem here is that the paradox only exists within a mathematical simulation of the observed action. the formula created breaks down at some point and paints a picture of reality inconsistent with experience. there is no paradox, only poor models.

so interrogate your model. update it often. use your strength. challenge your definitions. recognize when you are getting angry about a media pundits characterization of **their** opponents argument. use the internet (or better yet the real world) to actually talk to someone who disagrees with you. ask them why they believe what they do. what their objective is in supporting certain policies. realize that we are all variables in someone else equation - modeled and primed and generalized to explain and mobilize. that we are sold formula-as-truth by those who's profits are the sum. we all do it.

we can do better.

-the station