

# Experiential Thinking, a Leading Error

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**Arnold:** Dear Sundari, of course I cannot remove what I am, awareness. But my technique was useful to experience the knowledge that I was everything. My mistake was in thinking that I had “finally” discovered something new, something different than the scripture or book necessarily talked about; instead it was the truth in both that is so hard to actually explain.

**Sundari:** No, you cannot remove awareness, and if that is what your technique established then it took you to the right place. The fact that you thought you discovered “something new” indicates that you do not know what it means to be awareness. There is no difference between the scripture and James’ book; they unfold the same truth about you, which is what Vedanta is all about.

**Arnold:** In my humble opinion, Vedanta should not remain a theoretical understanding but if understood provides a complete shift in perspective. As awareness, I am not just aware of everything, I am everything.

**Sundari:** Vedanta is not theory in practice, it is not graduate school, it is not something you can learn, it is not a bunch of concepts and it is not philosophy. It is simply a means of knowledge that reveals your true nature to be awareness. You have correctly concluded above: you, awareness, are everything and the knower of everything and if you understand that your perspective has permanently shifted from that of the apparent self to that of the self.

Now, how does this knowledge translate into your life? If the knowledge is not firm, meaning if the binding *vasanas* have not been rendered non-binding and the doer negated, you are tied to the Arnold-identity and not free, at least not for long.

Let me summarise what I see as the main issue: experience and knowledge. What I noticed from the beginning of your writing to me was the experiential overlay, the sense of doership and the need to “learn” Vedanta as fast as possible. This is why I was quite hard on you. You are extremely bright and very eager but this can be a danger and could be an impediment to *moksa*, which is being permanently free of the identification with the person called Arnold. The language you use and the methods you employ are almost entirely experiential, which is why understanding non-duality has been a struggle for you. It is also what has made it difficult to reply to your emails because Vedanta is about knowledge and uses extremely precise words. As teachers we are trained to spot ignorance by the language which is used by the inquirer. It is always a very clear indicator of what he or she knows and does not know.

For *moksa*, liberation, there has to be a shift from thinking experientially to thinking in terms of knowledge which is why I suggested that you read Chapter II of *How to Attain Enlightenment* as it supplies the logic necessary for you to make that shift. If you have not read it, please do. Or read it again if you have. This chapter has made a huge impact on the thinking of most of the people who have had the good fortune to

read James' book. It is at the very heart of Vedanta and therefore non-duality.

What is most important is to extract from experience is the knowledge "I am non-dual awareness" by whatever methods one uses. However, knowledge that comes through an experience, if not fully assimilated and firm, will very likely be short-lived because the experience will end. Vedanta says that it is okay to conduct one's own experiments, providing the result, i.e. the knowledge they produce, is in harmony with scripture and is conducive to self-knowledge.

Thinking of *moksa* experientially is what Vedanta calls a "leading error." Even though the thinking may be faulty it still eventually takes one to the right place. The problem with uninformed thinking is that the chances are that the experience will be interpreted according to one's own ignorance, or conditioning, instead of the scripture; there is an uninformed doer involved.

A proper *sadhana* requires exposing the mind to scripture until you can see experience from its point of view and compare it to your personal point of view. And it requires the courage to relinquish your point of view about the meaning of experience - if it is contradicted by scripture - and accept scripture's point of view. Why? Because it is THE truth, not YOUR truth.

**Arnold:** It would take a very long time to go over all the details but I am happy to discuss anything in detail via phone/Skype that is desired.

**Sundari:** It is not me that needs to talk to you, Arnold. If you are happy with where you are and feel you have understood what it means to be awareness, there is nothing I or James needs to say to you or you to us. Just continue your *sadhana* and be happy. If you are really free of Arnold then you have cracked the code.

**Arnold:** Thank you for your thoughtful response.

**Sundari:** You are very welcome, Arnold.

~ *Namaste*, Sundari