

The Limits of Deductive Logic

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Frank: I've been studying Advaita Vedanta through the work of James Swartz and a few other teachers and am at a point where I'd love to have some real communication with a qualified teacher. I hope you will consider my questions below, thank you if you can find the time!

Is an enlightened one actually free and limitless? They have realized the true nature of the Self as limitless Awareness but from the perspective of the *jiva* are they not still as limited as anyone else?

Sundari: Yes. *Moksa* means you have full, complete and permanent knowledge that you are and always have been, free and limitless consciousness and not the small and limited *jiva*. The true meaning of "unlimited" does not condition to anything. Though the *jiva* remains with its particular identity as a person, you know that you are not the person, that it is an object known to you. *Moksa* is the ability to discriminate between your Self and the *jiva*/objects 100% of the time.

There is no such thing as "an enlightened one" in reality, because everyone is the already enlightened, i.e. already free as the limitless Self. The only problem is most do not know this or if they do are still under the erroneous belief that to be the Self/enlightened is a "special state" or something to achieve. Or they have indirect knowledge of the Self and know what it is, but do not understand what this means for the *jiva*.

Limitation is a state of mind, not an actual fact. It is the orientation of a mind under the hypnosis of duality, which is not real, "real" being defined by "that which is always present and unchanging," which only applies to the Self. Once *moksa* obtains, the *jiva* remains as it is made, as said above. The *jiva* is always limited and lives in a field, which is also always limited. But you as the Self are unlimited and not "in the field." You the knower of it. *Moksa* is not about changing or perfecting the *jiva*, though it will improve as a side effect of Self-knowledge because it is freed from dependence on objects for happiness. Existential worry and anxiety are over as binding *vasanas* are rendered non-binding and the doer negated. So the *jiva* does change for the better over time, becoming much more *sattvic* and happy.

But you are still the unlimited Self even if the *jiva* is not experiencing a *sattvic* happy mind. Unlimited means just that - not limited by anything the mind is experiencing. *Moksa* means the mind no longer conditions to the *gunas*, though they still play out as before. The mind/*gunas* are managed with Self-knowledge.

Frank: It seems the most concrete and simple difference is that the enlightened one now sees the limitations in controlling the material world and therefore stops stressing to control it.

Sundari: Basically, yes.

Frank: Advaita Vedanta teaches the concept of oneness, so when I say limitations in controlling the “material world,” this “material world” is synonymous with the Self.

Sundari: Vedanta reveals the undeniable truth that this reality is a non-duality, not a duality, and that your true nature is the non-dual Self. That is not a concept, it is a fact, though you may not be aware of it or understand what that means, which is why we have the scripture. The material world is not synonymous with the Self. The world is the Self, but the Self is not the world. There is no world (experience/objects) for the Self, because there is only the Self. *Moksa* is not about controlling anything, because it is freedom from THE CONTROLLER, i.e. the limited *jiva* identity who thinks it must get what it wants the way it wants it when it wants it. The teaching central to *moksa* that makes it possible to negate the doer is *karma yoga*. Do you understand what it entails? If you do not, you have work to do. See attached *satsang*.

Frank: If we acknowledge limitations in controlling this “material world,” then aren’t we also accepting that the Self is limited because there isn’t actually a separation between the two? At the very least, the Self is limited to control the apparent objects within *Maya*. In other words, if the Self is limited to control the objects, even if the objects are not real, isn’t this showing a limitation? The objects are the Self (even if dependent on the Self as *mithya*), yet the Self can’t control the objects; this sounds like a limitation to me.

Sundari: You are confusing *satya* with *mithya*, imposing *satya* onto *mithya*. Your thinking is from the *jiva*’s perspective, trying to work out *satya* as a *jiva*. The *jiva* does not control anything, nor does the Self. There is nothing for the Self to control if everything is it. The *jiva*/ego wants to control everything, but it can’t, because the only controller is *Isvara* – the Creator of the *jiva* and the field. *Isvara* in the role of the Creator is the Self in association with *Maya*, ignorance. That which appears to control the Self, but it is only an apparent control. The *jiva* is controlled by *Isvara* (the *gunas*) until such time as it understands its true nature as the Self. Then the mind is managed (NOT controlled) through Self-knowledge, and all control is surrendered to *Isvara* in an attitude of gratitude – *karma yoga*.

Frank: Again, I want to be clear; I get that the objects are neither truly existent nor non-existent, that they depend on *satya* for its seeming existence. Yet despite that, the Self can’t control the objects. Limitless literally means without ANY limits. I don’t see how we get around this point that the Self is indeed limited in this way.

Sundari: The Self is not limited. You do not understand the meaning of unlimited and you do not understand *Isvara*. See above.

Frank: Doesn’t Advaita Vedanta teach that this limitless awareness was and is always our true nature, regardless of if we realize it or not? If so, the only difference for the enlightened one is this realization, and literally nothing else about “reality” changes, thus the only loss of limitation is the loss of the sense of limitation, but the limitation still is as prevalent as ever. Again, just because one’s perspective has changed on viewing the limitation doesn’t change the fact that the limitation is still

there. And on the other side, one who has yet to realize the Self is still just as much the Self as the enlightened one, even though not aware of it.

Sundari: You are wrong, and you are right. Nothing changes and everything changes for the individual, the *jiva*, once Self-knowledge is firm. Yes, the *jiva* is still limited and so is the field it lives in, but as the *jiva* and the field are objects known to you, all fear, worry, loneliness, anxiety over results or gaining losing/objects is gone for good. As the Self, you experience permanent peace of mind, the bliss of Self-knowledge never dims, as it is not experiential but known to BE you. You are free of the *jiva* and free AS the *jiva*. The difference in the experience of the *jiva* is immeasurable – IF all stages of Self-inquiry have been completed and Self-actualization has obtained.

Frank: Of course the teachings say the enlightened one's *vasanas* become non-binding and won't collect more *karma*, therefore not creating the conditions to reincarnate again, but must we all not accept and acknowledge that we can't know this with certainty?

Sundari: Who cannot know this with certainty? If you are thinking as a *jiva*, which you are, then yes, there is no proof that you do or don't incarnate. If you are the Self, you do not need proof. The only "proof" that there is a "before and after" is that there had to be something there to know "before and after," which could only be consciousness, you, the Self, always present, never changing. All experiences are objects known to consciousness. As consciousness you are unborn and you never die, so how can you "reincarnate" when you never incarnated in the first place? The whole issue of reincarnation is a *mithya* topic – meaning it is duality. The subtle body, or mind, gets subsumed into the macrocosmic causal body when the body dies – and, as *Isvara* is *karma phala datta*, the giver of *karma*, and the field of existence exists for *jivas* to work out their *karma*, the particular *vasana* load that incarnated as a seeming individual may or may not return as another *jiva*. But you, consciousness, never incarnate, because there is no "world" for you. There is only yourself, the Self.

Frank: It seems to me that the teachings can be split into two groups, one group of teachings that have immediate practical and positive use regardless of truth (*karma yoga*, meditation, *vasana* awareness, developing the four qualifications and *dharmic* values, seeing the limitations in controlling the material world, etc.) and the second group that deals with the "truths" of how reality was/is created and works (mostly referring to the law of *karma*, reincarnation, creation, casual -> subtle -> gross, etc.).

Sundari: The *yoga* aspect of the teachings can be used practically to great effect for secular people and *karma yogis*, or doers, those not fully qualified for inquiry and who still believe they can make the world work for them. But they also have a practical application for all inquirers, *karma yogis* and *jnana yogis*. The latter are those who are on their way to or have assimilated the meaning of all stages of the teachings and are committed to *nididhyasana*, Self-actualization, the final stage of Self-inquiry. I have attached a teaching on the levels of Self-inquiry for you.

Frank: Can anything in that second group actually be known with certainty? Do enlightened beings think that Self-realization has proven the truth of the second-group teachings? Even if they were derived from reasonable logical deductions, as honest and objective minds seeking the truth, we must accept that a logical argument is not proof, at best is it not merely a reasonable theory, in the same manner that “the theory of evolution” will remain considered a theory, despite being based on an enormous amount of concrete fact-based analysis? And if we are being completely honest, the evidence for evolution far surpasses what evidence the *Vedas* give for causal bodies, yet the biologist still has the maturity to call it a theory, should modern Vedantists not also be willing to say when something is clearly a theory? Or am I missing something? Can you honestly tell me these parts of the teachings are more than theories?

Sundari: Yes, you are missing quite a bit. I fully understand your dilemma, and you have a good mind. But Vedanta is not a theory or a theory in practise, it is the undeniable truth of your true identity. Can you deny that you exist and are conscious? Just ask yourself: “How do I know what I know?” Can you ever say you don’t know or are not conscious? So if you can’t, who is it that knows/is conscious – and what does it know? If you know something, can it be you? No, it can’t. Everything is known to you, consciousness, all the time. If you say there is no proof that you are consciousness, you would have to be there as consciousness to make that statement. Where is the proof that you are not consciousness? If you say you don’t know when you are in deep sleep or in a coma, how do you know that you slept or were unconscious? Clearly, there was something there that knew or you would not know you slept and would never have awoken or you would no longer be here to ask the question.

Consciousness, the Self, is the non-negatable, fundamental substratum of reality. The word “fundamental” is not meant to have a comparative or a superlative. If something is fundamental, then surely there can be no deeper understanding, nothing more fundamental, yet in scientific discourse the bottom is always being taken out from under the world. We can never be sure that what we take to be fundamental qualities of the world will stay fundamental for very long. Truth in science is always provisional. In fact science can sidestep the idea of truth altogether. There is only what is truer rather than what is true. And there always is something truer. Today’s truth is tomorrow’s fallacy. Progress in science might even be understood as the certain knowledge that there is always some quality, as yet unsuspected, that is more fundamental.

Vedanta is called a “*brahma vidya*,” which means the “science of consciousness.” It is an objective and scientific analysis of the true nature of reality and your experience, based on the facts. Like any other science, it is not personal, and it has a methodology, which, if followed with great dedication and commitment, will provide irrefutable knowledge that results in freedom from limitation (*moksa*), if the student is qualified. Vedanta is simply the truth about you, not your truth or my truth or anyone’s truth: the Truth. Without all the necessary qualifications present in the mind, the mind, or ego, will be suspicious of the teachings or confused, as it will not have the requisite faith in them to put aside its own opinions, biases and beliefs.

We have no valid means of knowledge for consciousness other than the scripture – Self-knowledge, or Vedanta, which is why you must have qualifications – faith in the scripture being the starting point, a burning desire for freedom from dependence on

objects another, along with all the others. You cannot read your way to enlightenment and you cannot study or rationalize consciousness, because it is who you are. You must be taught because the mind is conditioned by *Maya*, beginningless ignorance, full of incorrect ideas and only ever understands anything through the filters of its conditioning. Therefore, without a valid means of knowledge wielded by a qualified teacher, the mind will interpret what it reads or hears and not assimilate the true meaning, so Self-knowledge cannot obtain. The doer, or ego, cannot free the mind. Highly intellectual people especially are very attached to their point of view and tend to be vain about their intellectual abilities. Only by subjecting the mind with great dedication and humility to the teachings can Self-knowledge itself remove ignorance, nothing else.

You are speaking here as a person who thinks they are a person, an ego, stuck in *Maya* trying to figure things out from within *Maya*. It cannot be done. You can only understand the true nature of non-duality by stepping out of *Maya*, duality, through Self-knowledge. Though it is true that you need a functioning and qualified intellect to understand the very subtle teachings of Vedanta, it is never the mind itself that figures it out, because it cannot. The mind is just subtle matter – it is only conscious by virtue of consciousness illuminating it. When the mind is purified, qualified and prepared for Self-inquiry, Self-knowledge can obtain, not before.

Self-knowledge, unlike object-knowledge, stands on its own and is always true because it is true to the Self, meaning it cannot be dismissed or negated by any other knowledge. Self-knowledge is different from knowledge of objects, which is object-based, not subject-based. Knowledge of objects is not knowledge unless it is true to the object. If I am looking at a dog and my eyes and mind are functional, I will not see a cat. If it is “my” knowledge, then it is my interpretation of an object (*pratibhasika* – subjective reality), which is not necessarily knowledge. Ignorance (or my point of view) causes me to see or experience objects in a certain way because of “my” conditioning. People believe that ignorance is knowledge because they believe that what they experience is knowledge. It may be knowledge, but it may not be. Self-knowledge is neither confirmed or negated by anyone’s opinions or experience.

Vedanta gives seems to give rise to many paradoxes/contradictions. The emergence of a paradox or contradiction is usually the signal informing us that we have established a faulty assumption or made an erroneous interpretation based on flawed logic or truth, and not the teaching that is flawed. Vedanta provides an iterative process through which, with proper teaching, the apparent paradoxes dissolve – or don’t arise at all. When they do arise, Vedanta shows that paradoxes/contradictions don’t actually exist other than in the mind as apparent, not real paradoxes or contradictions.

While the application of logic to our thinking is wise, it may not be if our logic is flawed. The acceptance of potentially flawed interpretations of any kind leads us to the dead-end from which paradoxes/contradictions arise. And they arise not because the teachings are inconsistent or wrong. They arise because our assumptions, interpretations and understanding are incorrect or some of the qualifications for *moksa* are lacking. The answers to all paradoxes are always there but ignorance keeps the mind from seeing what is right in front of it.

The logical approach to non-duality as a means to explain the Creation, while useful, breaks down (from the *jiva* perspective) when it comes to the analysis of the cause of the universe. Deductive reasoning will only get you so far because the only means

of knowledge available for it are the senses (perception and inference), which without Self-knowledge are *mithya* and are stuck in *mithya*. The difficulty modern science has in understanding the origin of the universe is a good example of this. It can reason up to the point where it understands that there must be a moment when the Creation began – but it cannot tell us what happened at the point of Creation or before it began.

Frank: James' definition of enlightenment is "the hard and fast knowledge that you are the Self, unlimited boundless awareness." This definition does not specify knowing anything about the Creation or causal bodies. Can't a *jiva* realize that they are non-dual, limitless awareness without "knowing" anything about how the Creation happens?

Sundari: That definition has a corollary – the hard and fast ability to discriminate you, the Self, from the objects that appear in you, that you alone are the source of all joy. It is true that the main aim of scripture is not to explain the Creation, nor is it necessary to know all the details of the scriptures for *moksa* to obtain. It seems clear to me that your fundamental problem and why you are stuck is that you have not understood *Isvara* (the causal body), and therefore you cannot understand the relationship between the *jiva*, *Isvara* and consciousness. There is no freedom from the Creation without understanding what it is, because the *jiva* is part and parcel of the field. This is what the Neo-Advaita teachings try to do – skip over *mithya* straight to the Self. And, though you do not need to know every fine detail of the scripture, all the qualifications for Self-inquiry must be present or Self-realization will not stick.

Frank: It makes more sense to me to say the Self is whole and complete instead of limitless. At this point in my journey, I feel hard and fast knowledge that I am whole and complete, but not limitless. I am whole and complete because I don't need anything, literally, whatever happens, can happen and no matter how the contents of consciousness change I remain free, unattached, whole and completely satisfied with existence/awareness exactly the way it is, and this doesn't change and seemingly can't change. However, this wholeness/completeness remains very limited indeed. Can the Self destroy itself? No. Can the Self witness any possible variation of dependent objects in *Maya*? No. Can the Self change the laws of Creation? No. Now obviously the Self as it is, being only pure awareness, has absolutely no desire to do any of these things, so the Self can't desire, another limitation. The Self can't DO anything, another limitation.

Sundari: Your thinking is still in duality, from the *jiva's* perspective, and from that perspective no ability to do or desire seems like a limitation, when it is actually the illusion of being a doer and binding desire which is the cause of all limitation and suffering. I think you need to start at the beginning of the teachings because you have not understood *karma yoga* at all. You still feel limited because you have only just realized you are the Self and that is where the work of Self-inquiry begins. You have a way to go for actualization – all inquirers do.

And, as I have said a few times now, you do not understand the meaning of "unlimited." It does not mean all-powerful or that nothing bad happens to the *jiva*. It means that as the Self you do not condition to anything. The *jiva* could be sick, jobless, loveless, etc. and that makes no difference to you as the Self. This is true

detachment and discrimination. You understand pretty well what the Self is, but your knowledge is indirect. Direct knowledge is the full understanding of what it means to be unlimited for the *jiva*. *Moksa* is only for the *jiva* because you as the Self have always been unlimited and free.

Frank: Yet it is fortunate that the Self is limited in this way because that's precisely why enlightenment is even possible and why wholeness and completeness is a readily available awakening.

Sundari: Completely incorrect. The Self is NEVER LIMITED IN ANY WAY. Enlightenment is possible because you are already enlightened as the non-dual Self. Duality is not real and can be removed by Self-knowledge. It is not an "awakening," because you never slept. *Moksa* is simply the removal of ignorance.

Frank: Now I imagine you think I'm quite confused about all this, and that's exactly why I'm writing these questions. What am I missing?

Sundari: Your understanding is quite sophisticated in some ways and you are open to teaching, which is very commendable. You seem to have missed quite a bit though, and probably because you have a good intellect you are interpreting the teachings through your own ideas. You are trying to make them fit into your understanding instead of the other way around.

As I said, I advise you to start at the beginning, either with *How to Attain Enlightenment* or *The Essence of Enlightenment*, and work through the teachings very slowly. You have an intellectual understanding of the teachings but a weak foundation because you have not developed all the qualifications for inquiry, so make sure you do. You have also not understood the identity between *Isvara* and *jiva*, which is where most of the teaching takes place. But most importantly, you have not understood and are not applying *karma yoga*.

~ Love, Sundari