

Experience, Knowing

These words are frequently used interchangeably by many people, either in speaking or writing. But as similar as they may appear in the meaning given to them today, they are quite different concepts. As such, they hold different consequences and potential for the growth of a human being.

Let us start by looking at their common dictionary definition. For this we shall refer to the Oxford Dictionary

Experience: (1) actual observation or practical acquaintance with something,
(2) to undergo or encounter a situation.

Knowing: (1) in possession of knowledge about something
(2) having skill or competence in, or about something

We can see from these definitions that there is a conceptual difference between the two words. Experience paints a *passive* picture of one observing or undergoing something. While Knowing paints an *active* picture of applying something (knowledge) to use. Since knowledge is usually derived from experience, it is understandable that many automatically equate Experience with Knowing.

But we also recognize that different people will extract different lessons from the same experience. And, what we distill or extract (i.e. learn) from the experience becomes the knowledge that we have gained, to be put into skillful use at a later time.

The type of knowledge derived gives evidence to the degree of our knowing.

So, what do we mean by the phrase “*degree of our knowing*”? Perhaps it will be better understood with the following illustrative parable:

Three prodigal sons left the comfort of their parental home to explore and experience life on the outside. Being children from a wealthy home, they were used to having servants to take care of all their needs. All they knew was how to spend and make demands.

The brothers however felt the need to stick together as they ventured into their new life, loaded with as much money as they could extract from their parents. As they left, their parents made them promise that they would return home whenever they felt the need to do so.

The young men breezed into the nearest big city with the gusto and self-assurance of the inexperienced. And it did not take long for the “right” kind of people to notice them, and to warm up to them. Thinking that they were indeed the toast of the town, the brothers spent their money

with reckless abandon. Soon they ran out of money, and their erstwhile “friends” and compadres abandoned them, one by one. In time they were thrown out of their luxurious quarters because they had no money to pay the rent. Their feeding and drinking patterns changed drastically, and very quickly bordered on starvation.

After a few months of living in this deplorable condition they decided it was time to return home to the safety of their parental home.

But each returned extracting his own lesson from their common experience.

The first was embittered by the disappointment he experienced at the hands of people he thought were friends. He became suspicious of people and did not wish again to have dealings with people in general.

The second was disappointed in people too. But he was able to see that many of his compadres in the city were young people like him, who had become ensnared in an unsavory life style that they too would have liked to escape, if they only had a way out. For him, the lesson learned was that there are sharks out there, ever ready to prey on the weak. And he now felt a need to do something to protect the weak from these sharks.

Like his brothers, the third also experienced disappointment and saw too that indeed there are sharks out there waiting to take advantage of the weak. But he did not stop at that. He sought for a deeper understanding of **why** he and the people he interacted with had to experience the fates that he witnessed.

And what better place to start on that reflection than with himself, who also had experienced that fate.

As he did so, he slowly came to see and accept that his own actions preceded and paved the path to the fate that he experienced in the city. By leaving the safety of his parental home without a clear purpose or goal, he opened himself to currents or possibilities that he might have avoided, had he been clear as to what he was seeking. True, there were sharks out there, but it dawned on him that, with better preparation, he would have recognized and avoided them.

With this fundamental recognition, he started to reflect on when the time would come for him to eventually leave the safety of his parental home to live his own life. Would he be ready, this time around, to better face the world with its perils and promises?

One thing he was now sure of was that he needed to spend the time to seek clarity on the purpose or goal for his life. Because this would determine the pathways that he would follow, and the nature of the people that he would likely to be more intimately involved with.

Though he had learned the painful effect of being taken advantage of, his experience had triggered in him, not the resolve for vengeance or withdrawal into brooding isolation. Rather he resolved to be mindful not to consciously or carelessly inflict a similar suffering on another human being. But where and how was he to prepare for his journey of life?

This parable illustrates the three basic ways in which most people deal with experiences, and the knowledge that they extract from them. That is, the knowledge that they then *apply to other situations*. Also, it is the breadth or scope of knowledge gained that determines the breath or scope of its application. This is what we have described as *degree of a person's Knowing*.

So, "Why these different extractions from the same experience?" Could it be indicative of the tools that we use in analyzing or trying to understand an experience? By tools, we mean the perspective from which we experience life, i.e., emotional, rational-analytical or a deeper philosophical perspective.

In this parable, we can see that the first brother applied his emotions and derived "knowledge" built upon an emotional foundation. The second rationalized his experience and extracted a logical response or knowledge. The third brother's reflection presents a more philosophical "analysis" of his experience. His conclusions or knowledge were thus based on a much wider philosophical foundation.

Emotions, as we know, is tied to our feelings, and the rational to our thinking faculty which is tied to our brain. Both tools are clearly linked to our physical body; the emotions being our finer bodily sensations, for example, the ego, fear, etc., and the intellect being our rational thinking faculty. But the philosophical, though also graspable (understandable), is clearly not bound by these constraints.

In this article, we shall attribute the philosophical to that component of our being that we ALL sense, but which some, especially the materialists, still dispute. We shall call this Spirit, the independent, yet connected, composite of what constitutes a human being. Spirit is not the same as what is commonly described as *life or existence*. Rather, it is the presence of a unique entity (the Spirit), that brings life to the body, and through that, also to the emotions.

When enlivened by association with the Spirit, the body learns from experiences, through the exercise of its tools, i.e., its nervous system, emotions and the brain's thinking ability. But the knowledge extracted by the body's tools are generally focused on protecting the body.

For the Spirit to learn the necessary lessons embedded for it in life's experiences, it too needs to apply the tool with which it is endowed for this. That tool is the ability for deeper reflection, triggered by a flitting but, powerful burst of insight that may suddenly emerge if one immerses themselves in deep contemplation. Especially, contemplations that look beyond the immediate

pains, gains, or losses from an experience, like the third brother in the parable. Let us call this burst of insight the activity of the *intuition*, a tool of the Spirit.

The pathway to this deeper contemplation and reflection, that can lead to a higher degree of knowing, is what most sacred books have tried, over millennia, to point to, or teach mankind. Unfortunately. It appears that many are still stuck at the level of experiencing life through the emotions. A few are able to use their rational thinking faculty to extract lessons from experiences. But this too is subject to limitations, as evident in the second brother's conclusions. He saw the sharks, but misses out on the deeper lesson of purpose and preparation for life, as well as one's responsibility towards a fellow human being. For therein lies the lessons for the protection(i.e. growth and maturity) of his Spirit. The third brother was able to penetrate to this level of knowing.

Today, most people pay little or no heed to their Spirit, even when they confess a belief in an independent life after death.

Just as in the parable, there are sharks in the spiritual field who prey on the unwary who venture out full of spiritual goodwill. Many venture out in total ignorance, and lack of preparation. Like the brothers, their abundance of spiritual good is in time consumed by these sharks. In their emotional recoil, many withdraw from spiritual life, disappointed and suspicious. Others turn their focus on bringing down the sharks, and even the notion of the spiritual, as an opiate used by the sharks to control the masses. Only a few are able to bring up the deeper level of contemplation to learn the lessons contained in life's experiences for their Spirit. This is regardless of their awareness that sharks still exist in life.

Although we make reference to sacred books, we also have to acknowledge that the interpretations from many of these teachings are today so confusing that it is difficult for even the serious-minded person to try to decipher the kernel of wisdom embedded in them. Yet, without uncovering the kernels of truth or wisdom, the lessons that one extracts from life's experiences are likely to remain limited, and so too one's degree of knowing.

Perhaps the conclusion below, based on this writer's grasp of "In The Light of Truth" (The Grail Message) by Abdrushin, may prompt one to examine this source for themselves. This book is directed to the Spirit in you. With its clear and simple explanations, it explains why, what and how the Spirit needs to do to reawaken and invigorate itself. Otherwise, like everything in nature/life, without movement, (i.e. growth) the Spirit will also expire. But, growth entails activity. And activity involves the application of knowledge gained from experience.; which brings us back to the essence of this article, namely; the importance of the degree of one's knowing, because only the highest degree of knowing can pave the way to Spiritual growth. Indeed, the highest degree of knowing for a human being takes place in the Spirit. Also, a person's degree of knowing becomes evident in the product of their applied knowledge. If correct, it will promote peace and

harmony among mankind, as promised by the sacred books. Therefore, regardless of the claim, or who is making the claim, any activity that results in disharmony is a clear mark of a restricted and inferior degree of knowing, and thus their Spiritual maturity. From this it becomes clear that practically all of mankind still has much to accomplish in terms of our Spiritual development. Starting first with learning the spiritual lessons embedded in our everyday experiences, and from that extracting the kind of spiritual knowledge that, in applying, will lead to the growth of our Spirit.