Right Knowledge & Right Liberation

In

Early Buddhism

Clarify: right view & right knowledge

"There is right view that is accompanied by defilements, has the attributes of good deeds, and ripens in attachment. And there is right view that is **noble**, undefiled, transcendent, a factor of the [noble eightfold] path."

(MN 117, Sujato)

Mundane path

Mundane right view
Mundane right intention
…
Mundane right samādhi
"Mundane" right knowledge =

Noble path

Right view (stream entry)
Right intention
…
Right samādhi
Right knowledge (awakening)
Right liberation

What is right knowledge?

- Four noble truths (*ariyasacca*)
- Dependent origination (*paṭicca samupāda*)
- Three insights (*tevijjā*)
- Six senses (*saḷāyatana*)
- Five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)
- Three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)

Right knowledge (1/6)

The four noble truths

The four noble truths (*ariyasacca*)

- Noble truth of suffering
- Noble truth of the origin of suffering
- Noble truth of the end of suffering
- Noble truth of the path leading to the end of suffering

Understanding 4NT depends on stillness

"Mendicants, develop stillness (*samādhi*). A mendicant who has stillness truly understands.

What do they truly understand?

They truly understand: 'This is suffering' … 'This is the origin of suffering' … 'This is the cessation of suffering' … 'This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering'." (SN56.1)

The noble truth of suffering

“Rebirth is suffering; old age is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering; association with the disliked is suffering; separation from the liked is suffering; not getting what you wish for is suffering. In brief, the five grasped aspects of experience are suffering.” (SN56.11)

It's about insight.

The noble truth of suffering

- Rebirth is suffering
- Old age is suffering
- Illness is suffering
- Death is suffering
- Association with the disliked is suffering; separation from the liked is suffering; not getting what you wish for is suffering.
- In brief, the five grasped aspects of experience are suffering.

The noble truth of the origin of suffering

> “It’s the craving that leads to future lives, mixed up with relishing and greed, chasing pleasure in various realms. That is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving to continue existence, and craving to end existence.” (SN56.11)

The noble truth of the origin of suffering

It's the craving that leads
to future lives,
mixed up with relishing
and greed,
chasing pleasure in
various realms.
That is, craving for sensual
pleasures, craving to
continue existence, and
craving to end existence.

The noble truth of the origin of suffering

Craving > future lives > suffering

= dependent origination

The noble truth of the end of suffering

"It's the fading away and cessation of that very same craving with nothing left over; giving it away, letting it go, releasing it, and not clinging to it." (SN56.11)

The noble truth of the path leading to the end of suffering

"It is simply this noble eightfold path, that is:

right view, right thought,
right speech, right action,
right livelihood, right effort,
right mindfulness, and
right stillness." (SN56.11)

Right knowledge (2/6)

Dependent origination (& cessation)

Second truth

“This is the truth, seen by the noble one, (*ariya-sacca*) of the origin of suffering:

it is the craving that leads to a next life, which, along with enjoyment and desire, looks for happiness in all sorts of realms.”

(SN 56.11, Sunyo)

craving →
next life (*puna-bhava*) →
suffering

Sāriputta: “The Buddha said: ‘If you see the dependent arising of things, you see the Dhamma. If you see the Dhamma, you see the dependent arising of things.’

And what has dependently arisen are these five taken up aspects of existence (*upādāna-khandhas)*.

Wanting them and holding on to them, being attracted and attached to them, will make suffering originate.” (MN 28, Sunyo)

wanting →
origination of khandhas (= rebirth) →
suffering

Twelve factors of Dependent Origination

	Ignorance sequence	Craving sequence	Second truth
Causes of rebirth	1. Ignorance 2. Willful actions	8. Craving 9. Fuel/taking up	• Craving
Rebirth	3. Consciousness 4. Inner aspects & body	10. Continued existence 11. Birth	• A next life ("re-existence")
Results of rebirth	5. The six senses 6. Sense impressions 7. Sensations	12. Suffering, incl. old age and death	• Suffering

Table 2. The two parallel sequences in Dependent Arising

From upcoming book:

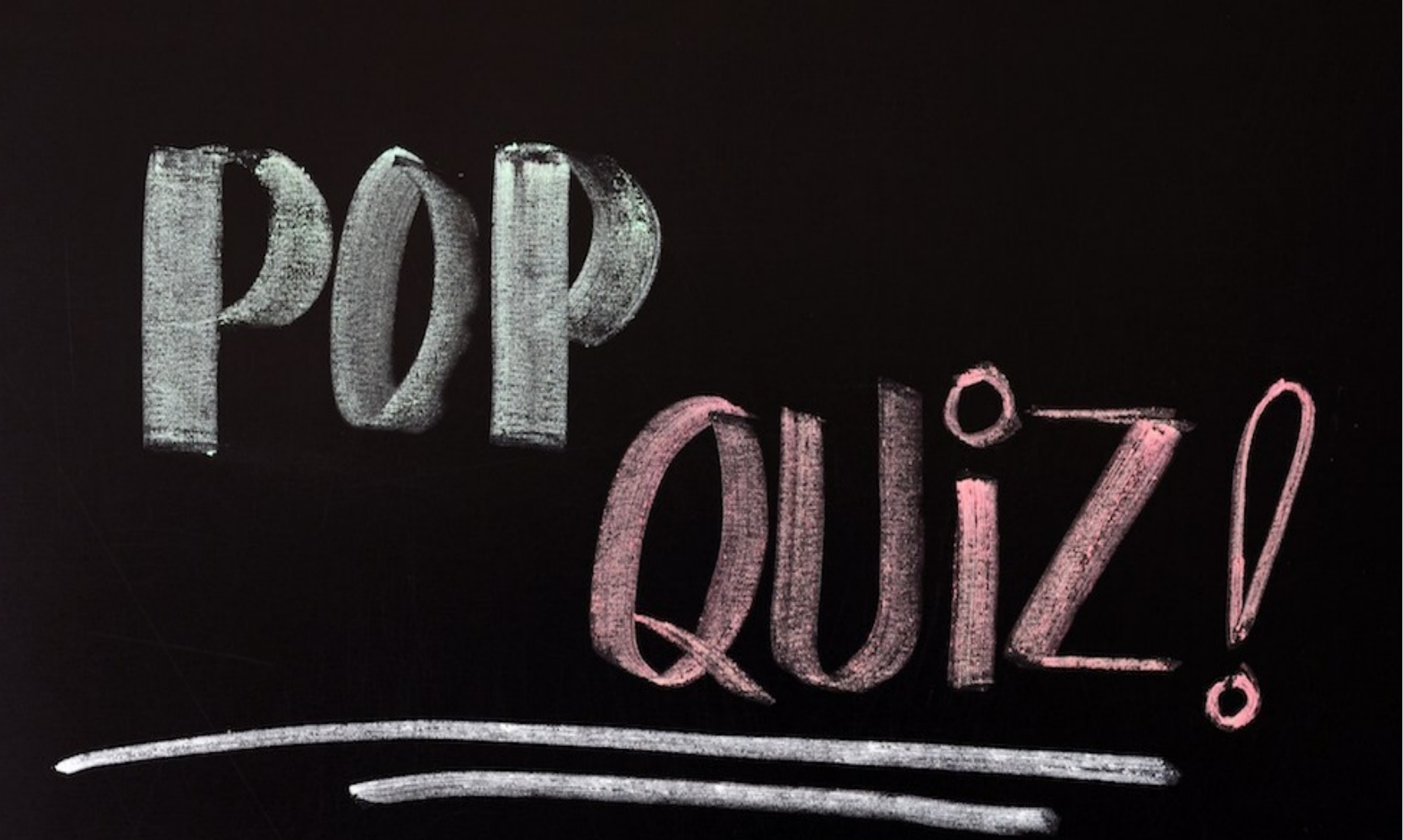
Seeds, Paintings, and a Beam of Light: Similes for consciousness in Dependent Arising

SN 12.19: Discourse on the Foolish and the Wise

"The current body of the fool has originated by them having been blinded by ignorance and chained by craving [in a past life]. … There are just the six senses, and when impinged by sense impressions (*phassa*) at one or more of them, the fool feels pleasure and pain.

The current body of the wise person has ***also*** originated by them having been blinded by ignorance and chained by craving. … There are just the six senses, and when impinged by sense impressions at one or more of them, the wise person ***also*** feels pleasure and pain.

What then is the difference between the foolish and the wise?



What then is the difference between the foolish and the wise?

The Buddha then said: “The current body of the fool has originated by them being blinded by ignorance and chained by craving. And they have ***not*** abandoned that ignorance nor fully ended that craving.

Why? Because they have ***not*** lived the holy life for the complete ending of suffering. Therefore, after their body breaks down, the fool will travel on to another body. Traveling on to another body, they ***won’t*** get liberated from birth, old age and death, and sorrow, grief, pain, sadness, and distress. They won’t get liberated from suffering, I tell you.

The current body of the wise person has also originated by them being blinded by ignorance and chained by craving. But they have abandoned that ignorance and fully ended that craving.

Why? Because they have lived the holy life for the complete ending of suffering. Therefore, after their body breaks down, the wise will not travel on to another body. Not traveling on to another body, they get liberated from birth, old age and death, and sorrow, grief, pain, sadness, and distress. They get liberated from suffering, I tell you.

That is the difference between the foolish and the wise."

(SN 12.19, Sunyo)

Knowledge of cessation (1/3)

[The Buddha:] “I, being subject to rebirth, and seeing the problem with that, sought the ultimate relief from the yoke, extinguishment, which free from birth (*ajāta*), and I found it.

I, being subject to aging, sickness, and death, and seeing the problems with that, sought the ultimate relief from the yoke, extinguishment, which is free from aging, free from sickness, and free from death (*amata*), and I found it. …

I knew and saw that my liberation is irreversible, and that this is my last life, that there won’t be another.

(MN 26, Sunyo)

Knowledge of cessation (2/3)

“Mendicants, form, sensation (*vedāna*), perception, will, and consciousness burn.

As a learned noble disciple, when you see this, you get disillusioned with these things. Being disillusioned, you lose desire. By losing desire the mind gets liberated. When it is liberated, you will know it (*ñāṇa*). You will understand that rebirth has ended, that the holy life is finished, that the work is done, so there won’t be another life.”

(SN 22.61, Sunyo)

Seeing things as they are > Disillusionment > Losing desire > Knowledge & Liberation

Knowledge of cessation (3/3)

Arahant Samidatta:

> "I fully understand the five aspects of existence.
> They still exist, but their roots are cut off.
> Transmigration through births is over,
> now there won't be a next life."

(Thag 1.90)

HAVE
A
BREAK
MACCHIATO
MACCHIATO

Right knowledge (3/6)

Threefold knowledge/insight (tevijjā)

Three insights (*tevijjā*)

- Recollection of past lives
- Understanding *kamma*
- Full awakening

Three insights

"When my mind had become stilled (= *jhānas*)—purified, bright, flawless, rid of corruptions, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable ...

Three insights

“I extended it toward recollection of past lives. I recollected many kinds of past lives. That is: one, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand rebirths; many eons of the world contracting, many eons of the world expanding, many eons of the world contracting and expanding. I remembered: ‘There, I was named this, my clan was that, I looked like this, and that was my food. This was how I felt pleasure and pain, and that was how my life ended. When I passed away from that place I was reborn somewhere else. There, too, I was named this, my clan was that, I looked like this, and that was my food. This was how I felt pleasure and pain, and that was how my life ended. When I passed away from that place I was reborn here.’” (MN4)

Three insights

"When my mind had become stilled (= *jhānas*)—purified, bright, flawless, rid of corruptions, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable ...

Three insights

“I extended it toward knowledge of the death and rebirth of sentient beings. With clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman, I saw sentient beings passing away and being reborn—inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, in a good place or a bad place. I understood how sentient beings are reborn according to their deeds: ‘These beings did bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. They spoke ill of the noble ones; they had wrong view; and they chose to act out of that wrong view. When their body breaks up, after death, they’re reborn in a place of loss, a bad place, the underworld, hell. These beings, however, did good things by way of body, speech, and mind. They never spoke ill of the noble ones; they had right view; and they chose to act out of that right view. When their body breaks up, after death, they’re reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm.’” (MN4)

Three insights

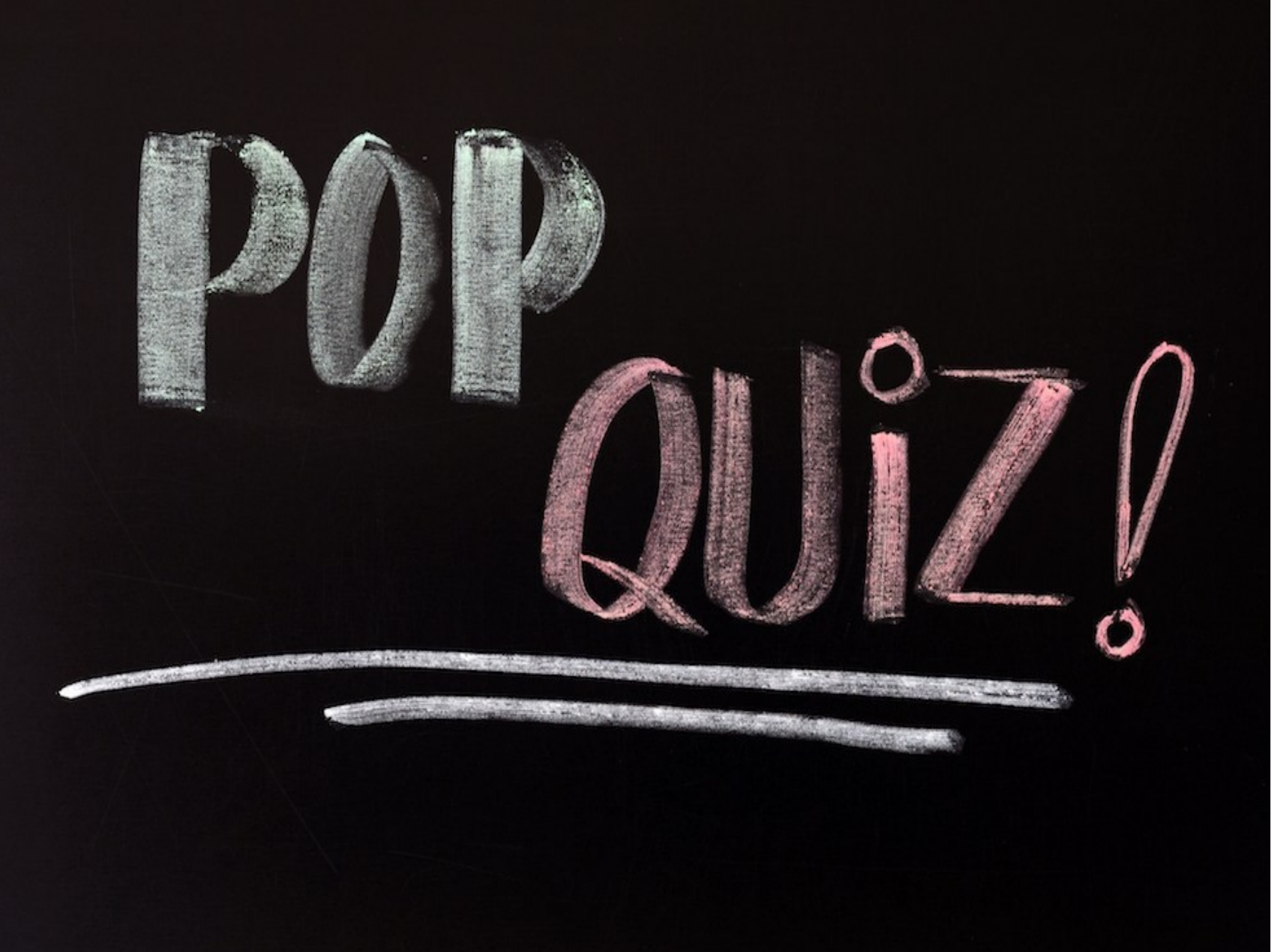
"When my mind had become stilled (= *jhānas*)—purified, bright, flawless, rid of corruptions, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable ...

Three insights

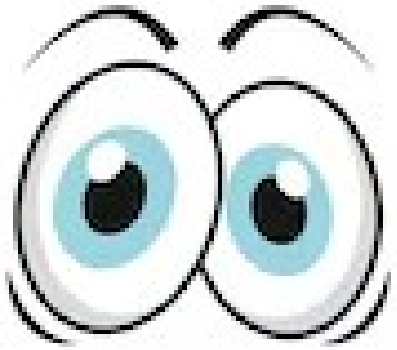
“I extended it toward knowledge of the ending of defilements. I truly understood: ‘This is suffering’ … ‘This is the origin of suffering’ … ‘This is the cessation of suffering’ … ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering’. I truly understood: ‘These are defilements’ … ‘This is the origin of defilements’ … ‘This is the cessation of defilements’ … ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of defilements’.” (MN4)

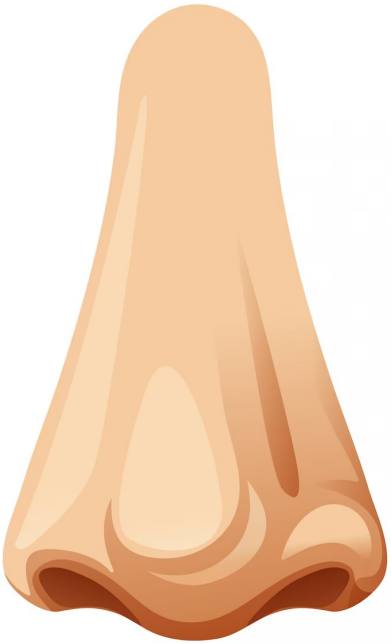
Right knowledge (4/6)

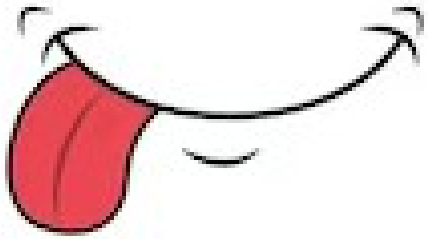
The six senses

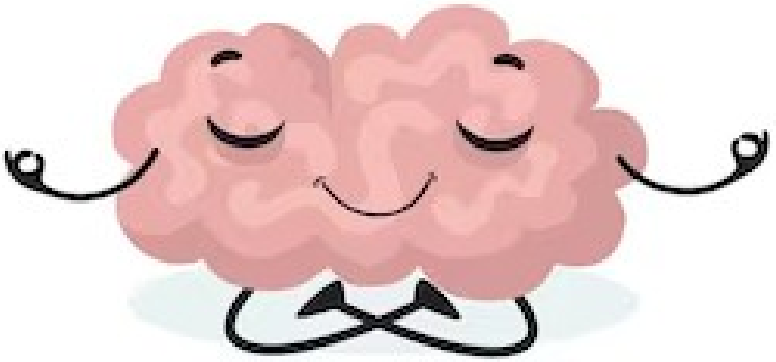

POP QUIZ!

What are the six senses?









“And what is the truth, seen by the noble one, of suffering?

The six senses, you should answer. What six? The sense of sight, sense of hearing, sense of smell, sense of taste, sense of touch, and the mind *(cakkhu, sota, ghāna, jivhā, kāya, mano)*.”

(SN 56.14, Sunyo)

“The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue …” (?)

“In dealing with sight and hearing, and to some extent also in the case of the other faculties, [the Upaniṣads] distinguish the ***power*** […] of seeing and hearing from the respective external ***organs***: the eyes and the ears. They consistently use different Sanskrit terms for the two—*cakṣus* and *śrotra* for sight and hearing, and *akṣan* and *karṇa* for eye and ear.” — Olivelle

“And what is everything?

It is *just* the sense of sight and sights,
the sense of hearing and sounds,
the sense of smell and smells,
the sense of taste and flavors,
the sense of touch and tangibles,
the mind and mental phenomena.

That is what is meant by everything.

If someone would say they reject this as the all and defined the all as something else, their words would just be groundless.”

(SN 35.23, Sunyo)

sabbaṃ ādittaṃ
everything burns

“Mendicants, everything burns. And what is everything that burns?

1) The sense of sight burns. Sights burn. Sight-consciousness burns. Sense impressions (*phassa*) of sight burn. Any sensation (*vedāna*) coming from sense impression of sight—whether pleasant, painful, or neutral—also burns.

2) The sense of hearing burns. Sounds burn. …
3) The sense of smell burns. Smells burn. …
4) The sense of taste burns. Flavors burn. …
5) The sense of touch burns. Tangibles burn. …
6) The mind burns. Mental phenomena burn. …

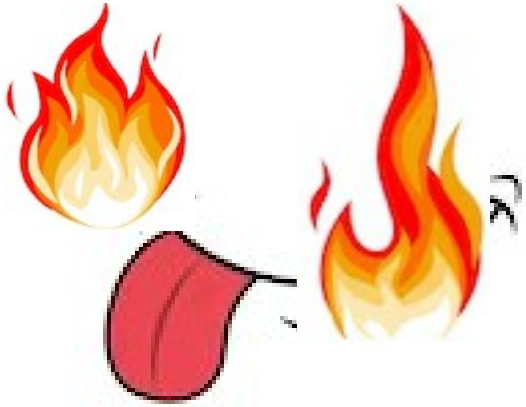
(SN 35.28, suttas.github.io)

They burn with what?

(a) They burn with the fire of desire, the fire of anger, and the fire of delusion.
(b) They burn with birth, old age and death, and sorrow, grief, pain (*dukkha*), sadness, and distress, I tell you."

Mendicants, as a learned noble disciple, when you see this, you get disillusioned with [these things]. Being disillusioned, you lose desire. By losing desire, the mind gets liberated. When it is liberated, you will know it. You will understand that the holy life is finished, that the work is done, that rebirth has ended, so there won't be another life."

(SN 35.28, suttas.github.io)



Anicca and anattā

"If someone said the sense of sight … hearing … smell … taste … touch is one's self, then that is not tenable. The arising and vanishing of [these senses] is seen (=*anicca*), and from that it follows that one's self would arise and vanish. So it is not tenable to say that the [these senses] are one's self. And so [these senses] are without a self (*anattā*).

If someone said the mind is one's self, then that is not tenable. The arising and vanishing of the mind is seen, and from that it follows that one's self would arise and vanish. So it is not tenable to say that the mind is one's self. And so the mind is without a self." (MN 148, Sunyo)

Right knowledge (5/6)

The five aggregates or 'aspects of existence'

The five grasped aspects of experience (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)

- Form as a grasped aspect of experience
- Feeling as a grasped aspect of experience
- Perception as a grasped aspect of experience
- The will as a grasped aspect of experience
- Consciousness as a grasped aspects of experience

The five grasped aspects of experience (*khandha*)

"Mendicants, develop stillness.

A mendicant who has stillness truly understands.

What do they truly understand?

The origin (*samudaya*) and ending (*atthaṅgama*) of form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness." (SN 22.5)

The three characteristics

“They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing impermanence.’

They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing fading away.’

They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing cessation.’

They practice like this: ‘I’ll breathe in/out observing letting go.’”
(MN118)

Right knowledge of the *khandhas*
Form as a grasped aspect of experience

“Breathing heavily they know: ‘I’m breathing heavily.’
Breathing lightly they know: ‘I’m breathing lightly.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing the whole breath.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling the physical process.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing rapture.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing bliss.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breath experiencing mental processes.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling mental processes.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe gladdening the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe freeing the mind (*jhāna*).’”
(MN118)

Right knowledge of the *khandhas*

Feeling as a grasped aspect of experience

“Breathing heavily they know: ‘I’m breathing heavily.’
Breathing lightly they know: ‘I’m breathing lightly.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing the whole breath.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling the physical process.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing rapture.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing bliss.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breath experiencing mental processes.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling mental processes.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe gladdening the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe freeing the mind.’” (MN118)

Right knowledge of the *khandhas*

The will as a grasped aspect of experience

“Breathing heavily they know: ‘I’m breathing heavily.’
Breathing lightly they know: ‘I’m breathing lightly.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing the whole breath.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling the physical process.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing rapture.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing bliss.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breath experiencing mental processes.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling mental processes.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe experiencing the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe gladdening the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe stilling the mind.’
They practice: ‘I’ll breathe freeing the mind.’” (MN118)

Right knowledge (6/6)

The three characteristics (anicca, dukkha, anattā)

“Mendicants, form is without a self. If form were one’s self, you could control it, thinking, ‘My form won’t be like this; it'll be like that!’ and it would not result in affliction. But because form is without a self, you can’t control it, and it results in affliction.

Sensation … perception … will … consciousness is without a self. ***(anattā)*** If consciousness were one’s self, you could control it, thinking, ‘My consciousness won’t be like this; it'll be like that!’ and it would not result in affliction. But because consciousness is without a self, you can’t control it, and it results in affliction.” ***(= dukkha)*** ***(≈ anicca)***

(SN 22.59, suttas.github.io)

“What is temporary is suffering.

What is suffering is without a self.

What is without a self, by correctly understanding it as it really is, you should look at it as, ‘it’s not me, it’s not mine, it’s no self of mine’.”

(SN 22.15, Sunyo)

“All that is created is temporary.
(sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā)
When you see that with understanding,
you get disillusioned with suffering.
That is the way to purification.”

All that is created is suffering.
(sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā)
When you see that with understanding,
you get disillusioned with suffering.
That is the way to purification.”

Everything is without a self.
(sabbe dhammā anattā)
When you see that with understanding,
you get disillusioned with suffering.
That is the way to purification.” (Dhp 277–279, Sunyo)

See you next week!