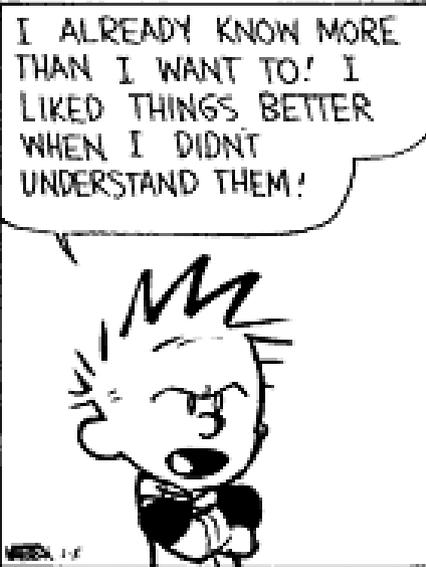


- **ignorance** (*avijjā*)
- willed acts
- consciousness
- mental aspects and form
- the six senses
- sense impressions
- sensations
- craving
- fuel / taking up
- life
- birth
- old age and death & suffering



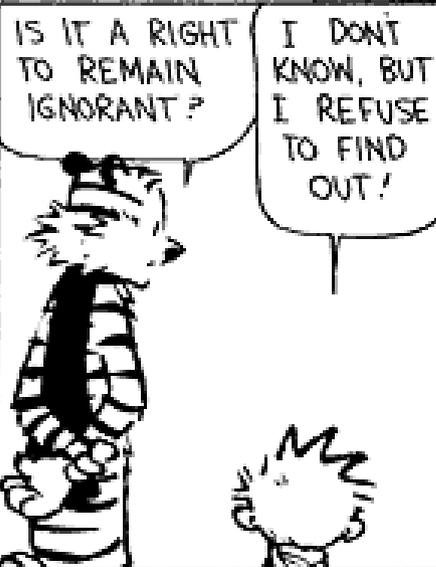
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL. I DON'T WANT TO KNOW ANYTHING NEW.



I ALREADY KNOW MORE THAN I WANT TO! I LIKED THINGS BETTER WHEN I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THEM!



THE FACT IS, I'M BEING EDUCATED AGAINST MY WILL! MY RIGHTS ARE BEING TRAMPLED!



IS IT A RIGHT TO REMAIN IGNORANT?

I DON'T KNOW, BUT I REFUSE TO FIND OUT!

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vijjā: knowledge (or 'insight')

a-vijjā: “not-knowledge”, ignorance, unknowing
(or 'delusion')

Topics

- Knowledge in Jainism and Brahmanism
- What is unknowing?
- Similes for unknowing
- Abandoning unknowing

Knowledge in Jainism

The Buddha: “I asked the Jains: ‘Venerables, why do you stand for long times, don't sit, and submit yourself to pain?’

They replied: ‘Our leader [Mahāvīra] says: “Jains, you did bad deeds in past lives. Wear them away with those austerities. And when you also don't do bad deeds in this life, you won't create anything for future lives. That's how suffering will end.” We accept his teaching and are satisfied with it.’

I then asked: ‘But do you really know you existed in past lives?’

They replied: ‘No, we don't.’

‘Do you know you did bad deeds in past lives?’

‘We don't.’

‘Do you know how much suffering has already been worn away and how much still remains?’

‘We don't.’

‘So it seems you don't know any of these things.’” (MN14, abbrev.)

Knowledge in Brahmanism

Once the brahmin Tikanna ('Three-Ears') went to the Lord Buddha and ... praised the brahmins who know the three Vedas, saying: "Such are the brahmins, triple knowledge masters!"

"But when do brahmins call somebody a triple knowledge master?"

"Sir Gotama, he is of pure birth, having brahmin parents. He comes from a pure line which goes back at least seven generations. He knows and recites the hymns, and has mastered the three Vedas [Rig, Yajur, and Sāma Veda], along with their vocabularies, rituals, pronunciation, word analysis, and histories. He knows linguistics and grammar, and is learned in cosmology and the marks of a great man. Him we call a triple knowledge master." (AN3.58)

Knowledge in Brahmanism



Video: “The Tradition of Vedic Chanting”

Knowledge in Buddhism

The Buddha: “Brahmin [Tikanna], a triple knowledge master in the Noble One's training is quite different from a brahmin triple knowledge master.”

Tikanna: “Then how do you become a triple knowledge master in the Noble One's training, sir Gotama?” ...

... “Then, after you fully withdraw from the physical senses and unskillful states, you enter the first jhāna. [Followed by the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th jhāna.]

When your mind has attained samadhi like that [...] you direct it to remembering past lives. You recall many past lives: one life, or two, three, four, five lives; ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty lives; a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand lives; many eons of moving up in samsara, many eons of moving down, and many eons of moving both up and down. You remember your name, your clan, appearance, and food, what pleasure and suffering you experienced, and how you died. You remember passing away, and taking rebirth somewhere else. You remember your name there too, your clan, appearance, and food, what pleasure and suffering you experienced, and how you died. You remember passing away from there, and taking rebirth here. In such a way you recall many kinds of past lives in detail. That is the *first* knowledge you obtain. ...

... When your mind has attained samadhi like that [...] you direct it to knowing the deaths and rebirths of beings. You see beings passing on and taking rebirth, having high or low births, in good or bad places, becoming beautiful or ugly. You understand beings move on according to their deeds (karma). Those with bad bodily, verbal, and mental conduct ... get reborn in the lower plane, in a bad place, a netherworld, or a hell. But the ones with good bodily, verbal, and mental conduct ... get reborn in a good place, in a heaven. In such a way how you see beings passing on and taking rebirth, and understand that they move on according to their deeds. That is the *second* knowledge you obtain.

When your mind has attained samadhi like that [...] you direct it to the ending of the defilements (*āsavas*). You know as they really are suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the practice that makes it cease. You know as they really are the defilements, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that makes them cease. ... You will understand that the holy life has been lived, that the task has been done, that rebirth has ended so there won't be a hereafter. That is the *third* knowledge you obtain. ...

... If you know (*veda*) your past lives, (1st knowledge) see the heavens and lower planes, (2nd knowledge) and have reached the end of rebirth, (3rd knowledge) with the full knowledges, then you are a sage.

True brahmins, true triple knowledge masters, are they who have these three knowledges (*te-vijjā*). Them I call triple knowledge masters, not those who mutter recitations.” (AN3.58)

Knowledge in Buddhism

“Not by matted locks, nor by lineage,
nor by birth do you become a Brahmin.
If you have truth and Dhamma in you,
then you are pure, only then a true Brahmin.”
(Dhammapada 393)

“If you understand for yourself
the ending of suffering,
if you laid down the burden,
free from bonds,
then I call you a true Brahmin.”
(Dhammapada 402)

What is unknowing?

“What is unknowing? Not knowing suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the practice that makes it cease.” (SN12.2)

Arahant = full understanding

“What is right view? Knowing suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the practice that makes it cease.” (SN45.8)

Stream winning = partial understanding

Delusion

“Salha, is there delusion (*moha*)?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

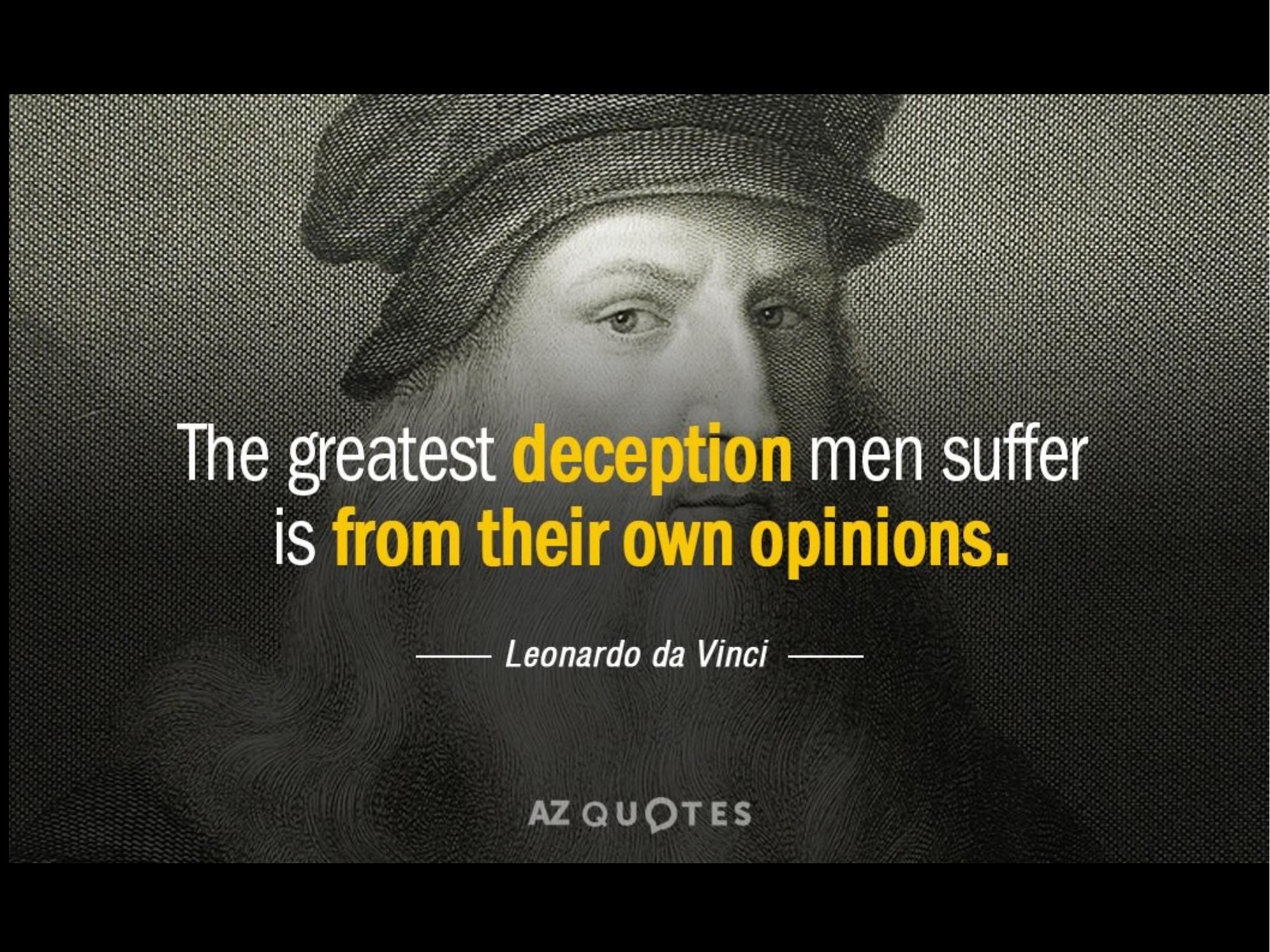
“That is what I meant by unknowing.” (AN3.66)

Delusion

“There are four kinds of distorted perceptions, thoughts, and views. What four?

- 1) Perceptions, thoughts and views which take what is temporary (*anicca*) to be permanent.
- 2) Those which take what is suffering (*dukkha*) to be pleasant.
- 3) Those which take what has no self (*anatta*) to have a self.
- 4) Those which take what is unattractive (*asubha*) to be attractive.” (AN4.49)





The greatest **deception** men suffer
is **from their own opinions.**

— *Leonardo da Vinci* —

AZ QUOTES

Blindness & darkness

“May you see the Truth, so hard to understand,
which unknowing (*avijjā*) people are deluded (*moha*) about.
For the obstructed it is in darkness.
Blinded, they do not see.
But to the good it is uncovered;
illuminated for those who see.” (SN35.136)



Blindness & darkness

“In a world immersed in unknowing, as if completely enclosed inside an egg, I pierced through the eggshell of unknowing. [...]

When your mind has attained samadhi [4th jhāna] like that [...] I recalled many past lives. [...] This was the first knowledge I attained. Unknowing was dispelled and knowledge arose; darkness was dispelled and illumination arose. This was my *first* breaking out, like a chick breaking out of an egg. ...



Blindness & darkness

... I saw beings passing on and taking rebirth, having high or low births [...] I understood beings move on according to their deeds. This was the second knowledge I attained. Unknowing was dispelled and knowledge arose; darkness was dispelled and illumination arose. This was my *second* breaking out, like a chick breaking out of an egg.

[...] I knew suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the practice that makes it cease as they really are. I knew the defilements [...] I understood that the holy life has been lived, that the task has been done [...] Unknowing was dispelled and knowledge arose; darkness was dispelled and illumination arose. This was my *third* breaking out, like a chick breaking out of an egg.” (AN8.11)

Abandoning unknowing

Once a certain mendicant approached the Buddha and asked: “Venerable, is there a thing we should abandon in order to abandon unknowing and give rise to knowledge?” [...]

“Unknowing is the thing you should abandon in order to abandon unknowing and give rise to knowledge.”



unknowing

willed acts

consciousness

“name and form”

six senses

sense impressions

sensations

craving

fuel / taking up

life

birth

old age & death

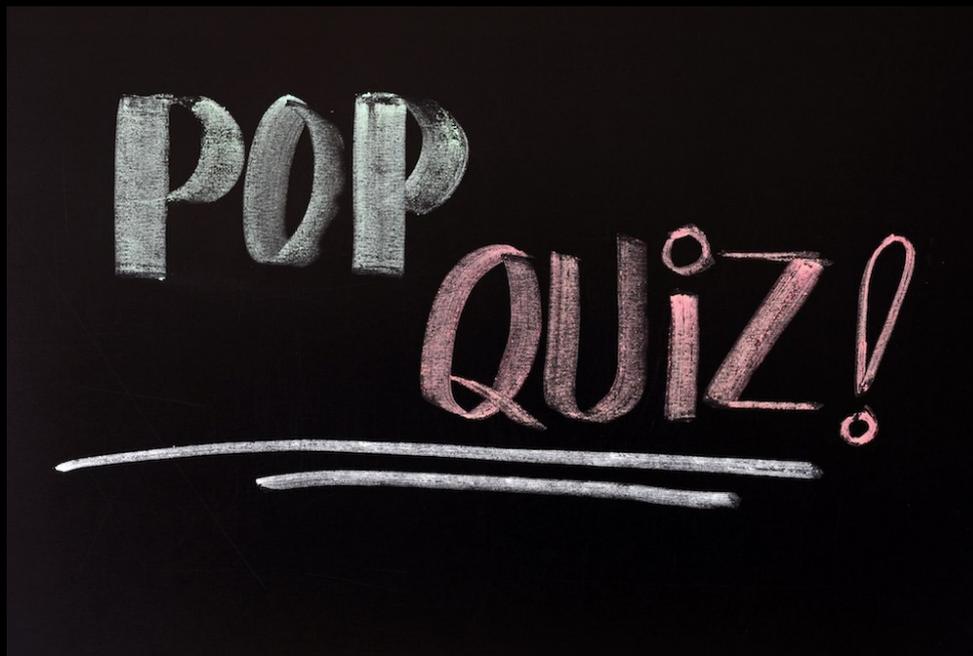
Abandoning unknowing

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“Unknowing is the thing you should abandon in order to abandon unknowing and give rise to knowledge.”

“But what should we know and see in order to abandon unknowing?”

“You abandon unknowing and give rise to knowledge when you know and see the sense of sight as temporary ... the sense of hearing ... the sense of smell ... the sense of taste ... the sense of touch ... the mind as temporary.” (SN 35.79)



Jambukhadaka: “Venerable, is there a path of practice to abandon unknowing?”

Sariputta: “There is such a path of practice.”

“But what is that path of practice?”

“It is the noble eightfold path, which consists of right view, right intentions, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi.” (SN 38.9)

Why is there *avijjā*? (AN 10.61)

‘A first point of ignorance, bhikkhus, is not seen such that before this there was no ignorance and afterwards it came into being.’

Still, ignorance is seen to have a specific condition.

“I say, bhikkhus, that ignorance has a nutriment; it is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for ignorance?

It should be said: the five hindrances.

The three kinds of misconduct > five hindrances

Non-restraint of the sense faculties > the three kinds of misconduct

Lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension > non-restraint of the sense faculties

Careless attention > lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension

Lack of faith > careless attention

Not hearing the good Dhamma > lack of faith

Not associating with
good persons > not
hearing the good
Dhamma

Associating with good
persons > ...

The three kinds of
good conduct >

The four mindfulness
meditations >

The seven awakening
factors >

True knowledge (*vijjā*)
and liberation

Not associating with
good persons > ...

The three kinds of
bad conduct >

The five hindrances >

Ignorance/delusion
(*avijjā*)