

Distinctions, Comparisons, & Judgments

July 24, 2015

One of the factors of awakening is what the Buddha calls analysis of qualities.

What does that mean? It means you learn how to compare things: what's skillful, what's not skillful; what's better, what's worse.

In other words, you use your judgment. You see things as different and then you compare them.

A lot of people understand that Buddha doesn't compare things, doesn't judge things, and doesn't see them as different, but sees them all as One.

But that's not what the Buddha taught. You actually have to make distinctions.

There are a lot of distinctions you could be making right now, a lot of comparisons and judgments you could be making right now. But the ones that are relevant to the meditation are: How well is your mind settled down? How comfortable is the breath? If you're not sure, try different ways of breathing and see what impact they have on the body. Breathe slowly for a while, then breathe more quickly, and then decide which is better right now. Then you can make it deeper, more shallow, heavier, lighter.

As for the focus of your mind, you could ask yourself, "Am I focused on the right spot? Am I putting too much pressure on things? Am I putting too little pressure on things?" Make comparisons.

It's only by making comparisons and using our judgment that our discernment gets more and more refined. That way, we can actually see what's causing suffering and what's not. There are these dualities in the world. What we're trying to do is to make the best use of them.

The mind has this tendency to compare things, so compare the right things and compare them intelligently. Don't abandon your powers of judgment, don't abandon your sense that *this* is different from *that*. Try to see where they're different, why they're different, what the effect is, what different effects they have. If there's no difference in the effect, then it's something irrelevant.

We're trying to explore our awareness from within. So much of our culture looks at us from outside, but we want to explore things from inside. Because inside is where the suffering is, but inside is also where the path to the end of suffering is. You have to be able to make the distinction.

After all, there are four noble truths. That's two times two. Two dualities. You want to be right here and learn how to make comparisons so you can figure out

which of your experiences belong to which category and then you can figure out the right thing to do.

Some ways of thinking are actually a part of the path. Other ways of thinking are not. Some judgements are part of the path, others are not. So you have to learn how to make the distinction.

This is what improves not only your concentration but also your discernment. And the two of them help each other along.