



Meditation on Suchness

By Ben Alterman

Every thing depends upon the causes that produce it, the conditions that support its existence, the parts that comprise it, the sequential continuum of which it is an instance, and, for it to be parsed and known, the consciousness that designates and attends to it. These are some of its dependencies. This is its “dependent truth”.

The “profound truth” of any thing is that the thing is devoid of existence apart from dependencies, and those dependencies are devoid of existence apart from the dependencies of which they are comprised, and so on. Therefore, the profound truth of each and every thing is emptiness, and this voidness of own being is none other than the dependent nature of reality. As the Heart Sutra succinctly avers: “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form.”

Thus, the object of this meditation is reality, as such; that is to say, “Suchness,” beyond existence and nonexistence, at the intersection of the two truths, dependent and profound. Yet how might this meditation be practiced? For example, after getting up in the morning, I often sit with a cup of tea and contemplate the dependencies of matters that are important and/or of interest to me. After finding an adaptive orientation toward them, I settle my attention on their profound truth, and, for that matter, the profound truth of every thing and no thing in particular. In such wise, I balance my attention between sinking and scattering.

Eventually, the activities of daily living call on me to rise, and as I engage in my everyday activities and work, my meditation continues as such, alternating between immersion in tasks, immersion in my bare sensorium, adaptive contemplation of matters that come to mind, and quieting my thoughts and emotions when they stray into disutility. Thus, my meditation becomes all inclusive, except when it does not, allowing my mind to stumble into suffering, which reminds me to return to my meditation, such as it is.