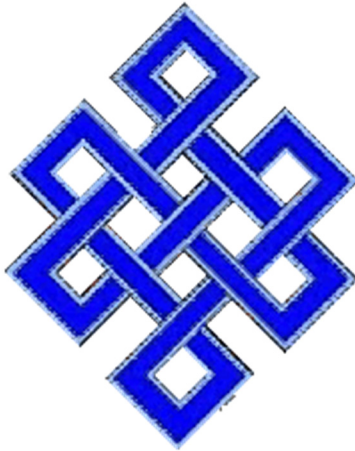


*Two Puzzles:
What do “Own-Character” and
“Imputational Nature” Mean?*

*Jam-yang-shay-pa’s
Great Exposition of the
Interpretable and the Definitive: 5*



Jeffrey Hopkins

UMA INSTITUTE
FOR TIBETAN STUDIES

Two Puzzles

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Education in Compassion and Wisdom

UMA Great Books Translation Project

*Supported by generous grants from
the Pierre and Pamela Omidyar Fund,
the Silicon Valley Community Foundation,
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UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies
Mailing address: 629 Jefferson Dr., East,
Palmyra, VA 22963
USA

Version: November, 2018

ISBN: 978-1-941381-40-3

Library of Congress Control Number:

Hopkins, Jeffrey (1940-)

Two puzzles: what do “own-character” and “imputational nature” mean? jam-yang-shay-pa’s great exposition of the interpretable and the definitive: 5/ by Jeffrey Hopkins.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN: 978-1-941381-40-3

1. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson grus, 1648-1722. Drang ba dang nges pa'i don nam par 'byed pa'i mtha' dpyod 'khrul bral lung rigs bai dūr dkar po'i ngan mdzod skal bzang re ba kun skong. 2. Dge-lugs-pa (Sect)--Doctrines. 3. Drang nges chen mo. 4. Wisdom—Religious aspects--Buddhism.

I. Title.

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Preface

In this series of translations by Williams Magee of Jam-yang-shay-pa Ngag-wang-tśön-drü's^a *Decisive Analysis of (Tsong-kha-pa's) "Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive"*: *Storehouse of White Vaiḍūrya of Scripture and Reasoning Free from Mistake, Fulfilling the Hopes of the Fortunate* (c. 1686), also called the *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, it has become apparent with the publication of his fourth volume on how imputational natures are character-non-natures that due to the welter of meanings surrounding the two terms "imputational nature" and "own-character" it might be helpful to provide a short treatment on these two terms. My three volumes draw from twenty-two commentaries on Tsong-kha-pa's *Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive*, also called *The Essence of Eloquence*, and Magee's fourth volume exemplifies a focal point of many of these commentaries because of issues needing further clarity in Tsong-kha-pa's text.

Magee's fourth volume in his series on Jam-yang-shay-pa's *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*:

1. *Principles for Practice: The Four Reliances*
2. *Questioning the Buddha about Contradictions in his Teachings*
3. *Buddha's Answer Dispelling Contradiction in the Sūtras: Brief Indication*
4. *Buddha's Answer Dispelling Contradiction in the Sūtras: Extensive Explanation of Character-non-natures*

treats the initial section in Tsong-kha-pa's analysis of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* about the Buddha's response to Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata's question regarding an apparent contradiction in Buddha's sūtras. In this response the Buddha initially lays out the first of the three natures and three non-natures—that imputational natures are character-non-natures.

From my trilogy on the section of the Mind-Only School titled *Dynamic Responses to Dzong-ka-ba's The Essence of Eloquence*:

1. *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School of Buddhism*
2. *Reflections on Reality: the Three Natures and Non-Natures in the Mind-Only School*
3. *Absorption In No External World: 170 Issues in Mind-Only Buddhism.*

^a 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje ngag dbang brtson grus, 1648-1721/1722.

here in this short treatment I am mainly drawing from the third volume.

Jeffrey Hopkins

Technical Notes

It is important to recognize that:

- translations and editions of texts are given in the Bibliography;
- the names of Indian Buddhist schools of thought are translated into English in a wish to increase accessibility for non-specialists;
- for the names of Indian scholars and systems used in the body of the text, *ch*, *sh*, and *ṣh* are used instead of the more usual *c*, *ś*, and *ṣ* for the sake of easy pronunciation by non-specialists; however, *cch* is used for *cch*, not *chchh*. Within parentheses the usual transliteration system for Sanskrit is used;
- transliteration of Tibetan is done in accordance with a system devised by Turrell Wylie; see “A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 22 (1959): 261-267;
- the names of Tibetan authors and orders are given in “essay phonetics” for the sake of easy pronunciation; the system is aimed at internet searchability.

1. Finding Consistency

The Essence of Eloquence^a by the late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century Tibetan scholar-yogi Tsong-kha-pa^b is considered by his followers to be so challenging that it is called his steel bow and steel arrow^c in that just as it is hard to pull a steel bow to its full extent but when one does, the arrow will course over a great area, so even the words of this text are difficult to understand but, when understood, yield great insight. The martial challenge conveyed by this metaphor was accepted by many brilliant Tibetan and Mongolian scholars over the last six centuries with the result that a plethora of issues in Tsong-kha-pa's text have received careful analysis, providing an avenue into patterns of thought that came to constitute the environment of the text over this long period of intense interest.

Tsong-kha-pa was a genius at creating consistency in systems of thought, but sometimes he provided only brief expositions and at other times only suggested his views. Scholars of the Ge-lug-pa^d sect—like others following a founder's words—have been drawn into the complex problems of extending his thought into those areas that he did not clearly explicate and into re-thinking what was clear but did not manifest the presumed consistency. The working premise is that Tsong-kha-pa's *The Essence of Eloquence*, though carefully crafted, is subject to the highly creative strategy of “positing his thought”^e as long as consonance with the corpus of his work is maintained. The attempt at resolving apparent contradictions itself fuels increasing interest in the topics, this being a central reason why the Ge-lug-pa system of education, centered around scholastic debate, has been so influential throughout Inner Asia.

Although the plethora of issues raised in *The Essence of Eloquence* is susceptible to being laid out in a linear run like a table of contents, the only way a reader can react to the multi-sided style of confronting these points is to be within the perspective of the system being considered. Juxtaposing different parts of a treatise and examining their cross-implications, these monastic textbooks manifest a basic procedure of bringing the whole treatise to bear on a single part, thereby coaxing the participant into developing the worldview of the system. In this way, the overriding context of exposition involves the ramifications of every part (or at least many parts)

^a *drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par phye ba'i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po*; Peking 6142, vol. 153.

^b *tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, 1357-1419.

^c *lcags mda' lcags gzhu*; or even “iron bow and iron arrow.”

^d *dge lugs pa*.

^e *dgongs pa bzhag pa*.

of a text; the only way for the reader to adjust to this environment is to form the worldview.

Because the exposition moves from issue to issue in a format of confrontational challenges that are episodic, it can at times seem even disjointed, but monastic students learn to live from within a system by being led—in twice-daily debates—to react inside its viewpoint to a plethora of problems. The center of the process, never communicable in words, is the wholeness of a worldview from within which the student learns to live. Like debaters in a monastic college, we also can experience this only by confronting issue after issue, major and minor, in lively embroilment and with hope that the larger perspective will dawn.

TECHNIQUES OF ANALYSIS

Tibetan and Mongolian commentators employ various strategies for getting at the meaning of a text by:

- dividing the text into sections and providing a synopsis of the topics through an elaborate outline
- exploring the range of meanings of particular words
- placing an issue in a larger context
- extracting issues for extended analysis
- juxtaposing seemingly conflicting assertions
- finding internal and external evidence to resolve contradictions
- manipulating meanings so as to create coherence
- raising a parallel concern from another context
- exposing terminology hardened over centuries of use to analysis of historical development.

These modes of analysis, like those employed by scholars throughout the world, expose knotty problems and resolve seeming or actual contradictions.

Texts are not viewed in isolation as if they live outside of the situation of their culture; they are related to a body of literature and knowledge in such a way that the study of a text is a study of the world. Also, the context provided is not just that of the culture contemporary to or preceding an author's text; often, views of scholars subsequent to the text are similarly juxtaposed because the aim is to provide a worldview relevant to the reader's present situation, a comprehensive perspective that makes use of whatever is available. Even points peripheral to central topics often take center stage such that they provide a wide cultural context for more important issues—the context imbedding the user in an all-encompassing

worldview. These scholars, even when working on small issues, draw on a reserve of knowledge of larger issues, the basic principles of which are the culture's. When they unravel an author's words, the exercise of exegesis imbeds the participants even more in the architecture of a living philosophy.

Issues are treated not just by citing Indian treatises; rather, the dynamics of the architecture of a system suggested by Indian texts takes over. The system is a living phenomenon only suggested by Indian texts. Speculation carrying out its implications is a primary technique; to avoid speculating on such issues merely because clarification is not available in Indian texts would miss the primary intention of these analytic traditions—to stimulate the metaphysical imagination. In the same vein, later terminology from India and Tibet is often used as a device to convey subtleties considered to be embedded, for instance, in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* and in Asaṅga's works.

Difficult issues are presented in a genre of literature used in monastic colleges called “general meaning,”^a which are often supplemented with “decisive analyses.”^b These college textbooks on seminal Indian or Tibetan texts, such as Tsong-kha-pa's *The Essence of Eloquence*, stimulate the intellect through juxtaposing assertions that are, or appear to be, contradictory and through making often highly elaborate and esthetically attractive reformulations of assertions in order to reveal, or create, coherence. These textbooks are authored by prominent figures in the monastic colleges, who become so focal that the local leader, modeled on the paradigm of the grand over-all leader—whether Buddha or Tsong-kha-pa—often come to assume more importance.

Disagreement with statements by the founder of the sect is promoted within the bounds of not openly criticizing his works but doing so under various polite facades, such as positing the meaning of his thought, that is, creatively adjusting Tsong-kha-pa's statements so that they do not contradict each other. Through such maneuvers, much room is made for discriminative expansion that is critical but does not assume the outward form of fault-finding. Exegetes, upon exposing seeming discrepancies, seek to explain these away through refinement, creatively adjusting his thought, pretending that his words make perfect sense, even making such bold and creative defenses of the founder that their own ingenuity becomes the focus. Once we recognize the format of exposition as often a mask required in a culture of allegiance to exalted personages, we see that often these

^a *spyi don.*

^b *mtha' dpyod.*

scholars really do not think that Tsong-kha-pa meant what they claim; critical acumen is indeed highly encouraged. If it is not noticed that these scholars are operating within only a facade of non-criticism, their “refinements” often appear to be inexplicably and even ridiculously at odds with what Tsong-kha-pa said.

What on the surface appears to be apologetic is actually critical analysis—explanation becoming a re-casting of the founder’s position. The process causes Tsong-kha-pa’s followers to step into his shoes by using his principles of organization to extend his thought further, such that they come to know his pivotal concepts in an active and creative way, rather than just repeating what he said. Since the principles of his system are put to active use, these come to life in a way otherwise impossible. Examination of problems in debate and in literary composition becomes a method of profound internalization.

For this reason, here I identify these maneuvers in order to reveal the drama. Otherwise, the tension and conflict of such dramatic re-writing in the guise of explaining the founder’s words when they obviously do not say such is dumbfounding—as long as one thinks that all they intend to do is to clarify what is already basically coherent.

Monastic authors even apply a principle enunciated in their system against another point in their own system. This unabashed honesty raises the level of inquiry far beyond mere explication. Sometimes, slippery distinctions are the means by which the exegetical project adapts itself to the seeming rigidity of insistence on consistency, and at other times a perplexing peripheral issue is left with a call for more analysis. Regardless of the format of explaining away, or even covering up, earlier masters’ inconsistencies, scholars uncover the flimsiness of the favored position. Such admissions of the tenuousness of their own positions reveal how these scholars use rational inquiry to indicate weaknesses in their own systems despite their allegiance to founding figures.

The sheer variety of invitingly provocative explanations of a single issue sometimes makes it seem that a conclusion cannot be reached, enmeshing the reader in a web of intriguing and even bewildering issues of fundamental importance. These scholars’ attempts to correct these problems sometimes embroil them in almost unimaginable complexities, the issue becoming so complex that the mind is fractured into unusable bits of information. It becomes possible to miss the woods for the trees, but when one steps back and surveys the wider scene, basic and undisputed principles of Tsong-kha-pa’s outlook emerge with considerable clarity. The style of monastic textbooks—which calls for embroilment in crucial as well as ancillary issues—causes central issues to become the floor of inquiry

without our noticing it, resulting in the transformation of it into part of a topic of vibrant concern in the vast context of a worldview.

As has been shown in copious detail in the previous four volumes, the Go-mang tradition offers intriguing and highly convoluted explanations that have led us into a maze of terms, and therefore in this short book let us review its readings of (1) seven passages in which “own-character” or its variants appear and (2) nine passages where the term “imputational nature” or its variants appear.

2. The First Puzzle: Own-character

What is the consistent reading of “own-character” (and its possible variants in this context, “nature of character,” “inherent existence,” “establishment by way of its own character,” and so forth) that could satisfy all the following references? This turns into the mystery, “Is there such a consistent reading?” and, when the multiple meanings needed are located, turns into a maze of possibilities.

1. Paramārthasamudgata’s statement in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 75)* that in the first wheel Buddha taught that the aggregates have their own character:

The Supramundane Victor spoke, in many ways, of the **own-character** of the aggregates. He also spoke of [their] character of production, character of disintegration, abandonment, and thorough knowledge.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་རྣམ་གྲངས་དུ་མར་ཕྱང་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྩལ། རྗེ་བའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་། འཇིག་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་། སྤང་བ་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་པ་ཡང་བཀའ་སྩལ།

2. Tsong-kha-pa’s statements (*Emptiness in Mind-Only, 78*) about what is taught in the three wheels of doctrine:

If the statements in some sūtras [that is, in the middle wheel of the teaching] that all phenomena are **natureless**, and so forth, and the statements in some sūtras [in the first wheel of the teaching] that the aggregates and so forth have an **own-character**, and so forth, were left as they are verbally, they would be contradictory.

མདོ་ལྗེ་ཁ་ཅིག་ཏུ་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། ཁ་ཅིག་ཏུ་ཕྱང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་སོགས་པ་ཡོད་པར་གསུངས་པ་གཉིས་སྒྲ་སོར་བཞག་ན་འགལ།

and (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 127):

The bases being posited as interpretable or definitive are the three—the statements [in the first wheel] that phenomena equally^a have **nature in the sense of being established by way of their own character**, the statements [in the middle wheel] that phenomena equally do not have **such**, and the good differentiation [in the final wheel] of those [phenomena] that have [**such establishment**] and those that do not.^b

ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐབ་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཡོད་
མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། མིད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་ཡོད་
མིད་ལེགས་པར་སྐྱེ་བ་གསུམ་ཡིན་པ།

Translated into English in accordance with how Jam-yang-shay-pa understands its meaning:

The bases being posited as interpretable or definitive are the three—the statements equally [**present throughout the sūtras of the first wheel**^c] that phenomena have **nature in the sense of being established by way of their own character**, the statements equally [**present throughout the sūtras of the middle wheel**] that phenomena do not have **such**, and the good differentiation [in the final wheel] of those [phenomena] that have [**such establishment**] and those that do not.

3. Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang's statement in his *Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* about what is taught in the three wheels of doctrine:

^a See Jeffrey Hopkins, *Absorption In No External World: 170 Issues in Mind-Only Buddhism. Dynamic Responses to Dzong-ka-ba's The Essence of Eloquence*, Volume 3 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2005), Issues #44 and 55.

^b See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #108.

^c By claiming that what Tsong-kha-pa means is that only the **words** “Phenomena ranging from forms through to the harmonies with enlightenment have the nature of being established by way of their own character,” are equally present throughout the first wheel, they can make the further claim that what those words mean is that the first wheel teaches that these phenomena are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. This division into words and meaning allows them to leave Tsong-kha-pa's statement as is and yet read a different meaning into it.

Furthermore, in the first wheel the aggregates and so forth are said to be equally **existent by way of their own character**, and in the middle wheel all are said to be equally **without inherent existence**. [In both cases Buddha] did not speak within explicitly differentiating whether [the aggregates and so forth] **inherently exist or not**; hence, [the first two wheels of doctrine] require interpretation.

དེ་ཡང་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོར་སྤྱད་སོགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་
 ཡོད་མཉམ་དང་། བར་པ་ལས་ཐམས་ཅད་རང་བཞིན་མེད་
 མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་ཀྱི། རང་བཞིན་ཡོད་མེད་དངོས་སུ་སྤྲེལ་ས་མ་
 གསུངས་པས་དྲང་དོན།

4. Tsong-kha-pa's refutation (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 78-79) of Woodchuck's explanation in which Tsong-kha-pa says that "own-character" could not possibly refer to the unique character of phenomena:

In the Chinese *Great Commentary*^a [on the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* by the Korean scholar Wonch'uk], and so forth, "**own-character**"^b here [in this passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*] is explained as the unique character [of the aggregates and so forth], but this is not right.^c For the sūtra itself at the point of [speaking about] imputational factors^d clearly speaks of **establishment by way of [the object's] own character** [and does not speak of the unique character], and since even imputational factors have a unique characterization, there would be the fallacy that the character-non-nature could not be explained with respect to imputational factors.^e

འདིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཅེས་པ་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་སོགས་
 ལས་སྤུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་བཤད་པ་ནི་རིགས་པ་
 མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། མདོ་ཉིད་ལས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་སྐབས་སུ་རང་གི་

^a See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #8.

^b See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #27-55 and 94.

^c See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #48 and 39.

^d See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #50.

^e See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #48.

མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པ་ལ་གསལ་བར་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར་
 དང་། ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལའང་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་མཚན་བྱེད་
 ཡོད་པས་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་བཤད་
 ཏུ་མི་རུང་བའི་སློན་དུ་འགྱུར་བའི་ཕྱིར་རོ། །

5. The passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* to which Tsong-kha-pa (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86) must be referring in the statement just cited:

It is thus: Those [imputational characters] are characters posited by names and terminology^a and do not **subsist by way of their own character**. Therefore, they are said to be “character-non-natures.”

འདི་ལྟར་དེ་ནི་མིང་དང་བརྟགས་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་
 ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་རྣམ་པར་གནས་པ་ནི་མ་ཡིན་
 པས་དེའི་ཕྱིར་དེ་ནི་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱའོ།

6. Tsong-kha-pa’s spelling out (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86) the type of nature that imputational natures do not have:

The **nature of character** that imputational factors^b do not have is to be taken as **establishment, or subsisting, by way of their own character**.^c Here, the measure indicated^d with respect to existing or not **existing by way of [an object’s] own character** is: not to be posited or to be posited in dependence upon names and terminology.^e

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་མེད་སྐྱའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ནི་རང་གི་
 མཚན་ཉིད་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པའམ་གནས་པ་ལ་བྱའོ། ། འདིར་རང་གི་

^a See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #104.

^b See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #83.

^c See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #29 and 94.

^d *bstan tshod*; see Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #96.

^e See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #105-109.

མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཡོད་མེད་བསྟན་ཚད་ནི་མིང་དང་བདེ་ལ་སྟོས་
ནས་བཞག་མ་བཞག་ཡིན་ལ།

7. The character-non-nature explicitly mentioned at the point of the topic sentence in this section of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 82-83)*:

Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of three non-natures of phenomena—character-non-nature, production-non-nature, and ultimate-non-nature—I taught [in the middle wheel of the teaching], “All phenomena are natureless.”

ངས་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ་པོ་འདི་
ལྟ་སྟེ། མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་དང་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་
མེད་པ་ཉིད་དང་དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ལ་དགོངས་
ནས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པའོ། ། ཞེས་བསྟན་ཏོ།

ANSWER OF THE GO-MANG TRADITION

Six meanings for “own-character” and so forth are needed:

- a. the unique character (of an object)

སྟུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་

- b. establishment by way of its own character

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་

- c. established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness

རང་འཇིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་

- d. true establishment

བདེན་པར་གྲུབ་པ་

- e. establishment from its own side

རང་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ་

- f. the superimposed factor (or appearance) of an object as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness.

རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་
པའི་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པ་

According to the tradition of Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa and their followers, Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me and A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, there is no one answer for identifying the meaning of “own-character.” Rather, a variety of identifications is required. As I (with trepidation) read their explanations, the references to “own-character” in those seven passages are to be taken this way:

1. Paramārthasamudgata’s statement in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 75)* that in the first wheel Buddha taught that the aggregates have their own character:

The Supramundane Victor spoke, in many ways, of the **own-character** of the aggregates [**c: establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**]. He also spoke of [their] character of production, character of disintegration, abandonment, and thorough knowledge.

བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱིས་རྣམ་གྲངས་དུ་མར་ལུང་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རང་
གི་མཚན་ཉིད་[**c:** རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ཀྱང་བཀའ་སྤྱུལ། རྐྱེ་བའི་མཚན་ཉིད་
དང་། འཛིན་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་། སྤང་བ་དང་ཡོངས་སུ་ཤེས་
པ་ཡང་བཀའ་སྤྱུལ།

2. Tsong-kha-pa’s statements (*Emptiness in Mind-Only, 78*) about what is taught in the three wheels of doctrine:

If the statements in some sūtras [that is, in the middle wheel of the teaching] that all phenomena are **natureless** [**b: without establishment by way of their own character** and **e: without establishment from their own side**], and so forth, and the statements in some sūtras [in the first wheel of the teaching] that the aggregates and so forth have an **own-character** [**c: establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**], and so forth, were left as they are verbally,

they would be contradictory.

མདོ་ལྡེ་ཁ་ཅིག་དུ་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་[*b*: རང་གི་
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། ཁ་ཅིག་དུ་
སྤང་བོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་[*c*: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་
པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ལ་སོགས་པ་
ཡོད་པར་གསུངས་པ་གཉིས་སྐྱོ་སོར་བཞག་ན་འགལ།

and (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 127):

The bases being posited as interpretable or definitive are the three—the statements [in the first wheel] that phenomena equally have **nature in the sense of being established by way of their own character** [*c*: establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses], the statements [in the middle wheel] that phenomena equally do not have **such** [*b*: establishment by way of their own character and *e*: establishment from their own side], and the good differentiation [in the final wheel] of those [phenomena] that have [**such establishment**] [*b*: establishment by way of their own character] and those that do not.^a

ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་[*c*:
རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་
པ་]ཡོད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། [*b*: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་
གྲུབ་པ་དང་*e*: རང་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ་]མེད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་
དང་[*b*: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ཡོད་མེད་ལེགས་པར་
སྐྱེ་བ་གསུམ་ཡིན་པ།

3. Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang's statement in his *Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* about what is taught in the three wheels of doctrine:

^a See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #108.

Furthermore, in the first wheel the aggregates and so forth are said to be equally **existent by way of their own character** [*c*: are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses], and in the middle wheel all are said to be equally without **inherent existence** [*b*: establishment by way of their own character and *e*: existence from their own side]. [In both cases Buddha] did not speak within explicitly differentiating whether [the aggregates and so forth] **inherently exist or not** [*b*: exist by way of their own character or not]; hence, [the first two wheels of doctrine] require interpretation.

དེ་ཡང་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོར་ཡུང་སོགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་
 ཡོད་[*c*: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་
 ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]མཉམ་དང་། བར་པ་ལས་ཐམས་ཅད་རང་བཞིན་
 [*b*: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་ *e*: རང་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་
 པ་] མེད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་ཀྱི་རང་བཞིན་[*b*: རང་གི་མཚན་
 ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ཡོད་མེད་དངོས་སུ་སྟེ་ནས་མ་གསུངས་པས་
 དང་དོན།

4. Tsong-kha-pa's refutation (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 78-79) of Wonch'uk's explanation in which Tsong-kha-pa says that "own-character" could not possibly refer to the unique character of phenomena:

In the Chinese *Great Commentary* [on the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* by the Korean scholar Wonch'uk], and so forth, "**own-character**" [*c*: establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses] here [in this passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*] is explained as the unique character [of the aggregates and so forth], but this is not right. For, the sūtra itself at the point of [speaking about] imputational factors clearly speaks of **establishment by way of [the object's] own character** [*c*: establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses] [and does not speak of the

unique character], and since even imputational factors have a unique characterization, there would be the fallacy that the character-non-nature could not be explained with respect to imputational factors.

འདིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་[c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་
 རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ཅེས་པ་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་
 སོགས་ལས་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་བཤད་པ་ནི་
 རིགས་པ་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། མདོ་ཉིད་ལས་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཀྱི་སྐབས་སུ་
 རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་[c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་
 གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ལ་གསལ་བར་གསུངས་
 པའི་སྟེར་དང་། ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལའང་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་
 མཚན་བྱེད་ཡོད་པས་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཀུན་བརྟགས་
 ལ་བཤད་དུ་མི་རུང་བའི་སྟོན་དུ་འགྱུར་བའི་སྟེར་རོ།

5. The passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* to which Tsong-kha-pa (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86) must be referring in the statement just cited:

It is thus: Those [imputational characters] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not **subsist by way of their own character** [*b: exist by way of their own character*]. Therefore, they are said to be “character-non-natures” [*b: establishment by way of their own character*].

འདི་ལྟར་དེ་ནི་མིང་དང་བརྟགས་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་
 ཡིན་ཀྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་རྣམ་པར་གནས་པ་[b: རང་གི་
 མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ནི་མ་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་སྟེར་དེ་ནི་མཚན་
 ཉིད་[b: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་
 ཅེས་བྱའོ།

The distinction must be made that “character-nature,” or “nature of character,” itself means ***b*: establishment by way of its own character and not being posited by name and term**, but that which is the nature of character is primarily ***f*: the superimposed factor or appearance of objects as established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses** and secondarily ***c*: the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**. (Those two are also non-natures of character, that is to say, the natures of character that are not established by way of their own character.) The distinction is between the *meaning* of “nature of character” and the *illustrations* of “nature of character.”

6. Tsong-kha-pa’s spelling out (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86) the type of nature that imputational natures do not have:

The **nature in terms of character [*b*: establishment by way of their own character]** that imputational factors do not have is to be taken as **establishment, or subsisting, by way of their own character [*b*: establishment by way of their own character]**. Here, the measure indicated with respect to **existing or not existing by way of [the object’s] own character [*b*: establishment or not by way of its own character]** is: not to be posited or to be posited in dependence upon names and terminology.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ལ་མེད་རྒྱུའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ [*b*: རང་གི་
 མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]འི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པའམ་
 གནས་པ་ [*b*: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ལ་བྱུང་། ། འདིར་
 རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་ཡོད་མེད་ [*b*: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་
 གྲུབ་པ་ཡོད་མེད་]བརྟན་ཚེད་འི་མིང་དང་བརྟན་ལ་སྟོས་ནས་
 བཞག་མ་བཞག་ཡིན་ལ།

7. The character-non-nature explicitly mentioned at the point of the topic sentence in this section of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 82-83):

Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of three non-natures of phenomena—character-non-nature [***b*: establishment of objects by way of their own character**], production-

non-nature, and ultimate-non-nature—I taught [in the middle wheel of the teaching], “All phenomena are natureless.”

ངས་ཚོས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ་པོ་འདི་
 ལྟ་སྟེ། **མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་** [**b**: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་
 པ་]མེད་པ་ཉིད་དང་སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་དང་དོན་དམ་
 པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ལ་དགོངས་ནས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་
 ཉིད་མེད་པའོ། ། ཞེས་བསྟན་ཏོ།

It is important to make the distinction that “character-nature,” or “nature of character,” itself means **b: objects’ establishment by way of their own character** and its counterpart, not being posited by names and terminology; however, that which is the nature of character is primarily **f: the superimposed factor or appearance of objects as established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses** and secondarily **c: the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**.

A Few Comments

The way Jam-yang-shay-pa takes the second quote in number two above is unusual, three different identifications being required:

The bases being posited as interpretable or definitive are the three—the statements [in the first wheel] that phenomena equally have **nature in the sense of being established by way of their own character** [**c: establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**], the statements [in the middle wheel] that phenomena equally do not have **such** [**b: establishment by way of their own character** and **e: establishment from their own side**], and the good differentiation [in the final wheel] of those [phenomena] that have [**such establishment**] [**b: establishment by way of their own character**] and those that do not.^a

^a See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #108.

ཚོས་རྒྱམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ [c:
 རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་
 པ་]ཡོད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། [b: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་
 གྲུབ་པ་དང་e: རང་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ་]མེད་མཉམ་དུ་གསུངས་པ་
 དང་། [b: རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ཡོད་མེད་ལེགས་པར་
 གྲུབ་གསུམ་ཡིན་པ།

The first quote in number two is similar but deals with only the first two wheels of doctrine:

If the statements in some sūtras [that is, in the middle wheel of the teaching] that all phenomena are **natureless** [b: **without establishment by way of their own character** and e: **without establishment from their own side**], and so forth, and the statements in some sūtras [in the first wheel of the teaching] that the aggregates and so forth have an **own-character** [c: **establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**], and so forth, were left as they are verbally, they would be contradictory.

མདོ་ལྡེ་ཁ་ཅིག་ཏུ་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ [b: རང་གི་
 མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]སོགས་སུ་གསུངས་པ་དང་། ཁ་ཅིག་ཏུ་
 ཡུང་བོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ [c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་
 པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ལ་སོགས་པ་
 ཡོད་པར་གསུངས་པ་གཉིས་སྐྱོ་སོར་བཞག་ན་འགལ།

When the necessary switches in reference are seen, Jam-yang-shay-pa's rendition in his textbook of Paramārthasamudgata's question is seen in its subtlety:

Supramundane Victor, in the first wheel of the teaching, as indicated here [in my question], you pronounced many times the words of sūtra:

The entities of compounded phenomena^a ranging from forms through the thirty-seven harmonies with enlightenment as well as [their attributes of] production, cessation, and so forth that are **established by way of their own character** [*c*: establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses] exist, exist.

In the middle wheel of the teaching, as indicated here [in my question], you pronounced many times the words of sūtra:

Production, cessation, and so forth that are **established by way of their own character** [*b*: without establishment by way of their own character and *e*: without establishment from their own side] do not exist, do not exist, in phenomena ranging from forms through omniscient consciousnesses.

If those two were left literally as they are, they would be contradictory, but since the Teacher does not have contradiction, of what were you thinking when in the middle wheel indicated here you spoke in that way?

འདིར་བསྟན་འཁོར་ལོ་དང་པོར་གཟུགས་ནས་བྱང་ཕྱོགས་སོ་
 བདུན་གྱི་བར་གྱི་འདུས་བྱས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་**རང་གི་མཚན་**
ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་ངོ་བོ་ [*c*: **རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་**
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]དང་སྐྱེ་འགག་སོགས་ཡོད་
 ཡོད་ཅེས་པའི་མདོ་ཚིག་ལན་གྲངས་མང་པོར་བཀའ་སྩལ།
 འདིར་བསྟན་འཁོར་ལོ་བར་བར་གཟུགས་^[19a]ནས་རྣམ་མཁུན་
 གྱི་བར་གྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་**རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་** [*b*:
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་*e*: **རང་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་**

^a Jam-yang-shay-pa makes what seems to be an unnecessary specification of “compounded phenomena” which A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s *Commentary on the Difficult Points of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Treatise Differentiating Interpretable and the Definitive Meanings, The Essence of Eloquence”*: *A Precious Lamp* (59.6) changes to “phenomena.”

བ་]སྐྱེ་འགག་སོགས་མེད་མེད་ཅེས་པའི་མདོ་ཚིག་ལན་གྲངས་
 དུ་མར་བཀའ་སྡུལ། འདི་གཉིས་སྐྱ་སོར་བཞག་ན་འགལ་
 ནའང་སྟོན་པ་ལ་འགལ་བ་མི་མངའ་བས། འདིར་བསྟན་
 འཁོར་ལོ་བར་བར་དེ་སྟར་གསུངས་པ་དེ་གང་ལ་དགོངས་
 ནས་གསུངས་ཞེས་

Jam-yang-shay-pa speaks of “the first wheel of the teaching, **as indicated here in my question**” because there are presentations of the three wheels of doctrine other than what is found in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*. Also, he specifies the different lists of phenomena about which Buddha was speaking in the first and second wheels of doctrine within stressing the aspects of entity and attributes—“the **entities** of phenomena ranging from forms through the thirty-seven harmonies with enlightenment as well as [their **attributes** of] production, cessation, and so forth” for the first wheel of doctrine and “phenomena ranging from forms through omniscient consciousnesses” for the second wheel of doctrine.

He uses the phrase “pronounced the words of sūtra” of establishment and non-establishment of objects by way of their own character because the seeming contradiction rests, not in a teaching in the first wheel that phenomena are established by way of their own character and in a teaching in the middle wheel that phenomena are not so established, but in the face value of the words themselves as well as in the different meanings that those words have in their respective contexts.

3. The Second Puzzle: Imputational Natures

The second puzzle is even more challenging. It is: What is the consistent reading of “imputational natures” (or its variants) that could satisfy all of the following references? As before, this turns into the mystery, “Is there such a consistent reading?” and, when the multiple meanings needed are being located, turns into a maze of those multiple meanings.

1. The imputational natures that the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* says (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86) are character-non-natures:

Those [imputational characters] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character. Therefore, they are said to be “character-non-natures.”

[ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་]དེ་ནི་མིང་དང་བརྟམས་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་རྣམ་པར་གཏགས་པ་ནི་མ་ཡིན་པས་དེའི་ཕྱིར་[ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་]དེ་ནི་མཚན་ཉིད་འོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་ཅེས་བྱའོ།

2. The sixth chapter of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, the “Questions of Guṇākara,” where it says that imputational natures are to be identified in terms of a factor of appearance wrongly superimposed by a mistaken awareness:^a

The **imputational character** is to be viewed as like the flaws of dark spots that form in the eye[-sight] of one with the disease of dim-sightedness.

རབ་རིབ་ཅན་གྱི་མིག་ལ་རབ་རིབ་གྱི་སྦྱོན་ཆགས་པ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་ནི་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ། །

and:^b

Apprehending the **imputational character** in other-powered characters should be viewed as like wrongly

^a As cited in Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me’s *Beginnings of a Commentary on the Difficult Points of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive”*: *Quintessence of “The Essence of Eloquence,”* 109.16.
^b As cited in Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me’s *Difficult Points*, 109.17.

apprehending a very clear crystal as precious jewels—
sapphire, the blue gem, ruby, emerald, or gold.

ཤེལ་ཤིན་རྒྱ་དག་པ་ལ་ལོར་བྱ་རིན་པོ་ཆ་མིན་ཉི་ལ་དང་།
མཐོན་ཀ་ཆེན་པོ་དང་། མ་རྒྱད་དང་། གསེར་དུ་ལོག་པར་འཛིན་
པ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་ནི་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་
པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་དུ་འཛིན་པ་བལྟ་བར་བྱའོ། །

3. Tsong-kha-pa's remarks (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 110) restricting the scope of imputational natures here:

With respect to the **imputational factor** of which [other-powered natures] are empty, on both occasions of identifying the **imputational factor** in the sūtra it does not speak of any other imputational factor than just **factors imputed in the manner of entities and attributes**. I will explain the evidence for this later.

གང་གིས་སྣོད་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ནི་མདོ་འདིའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་
ངོས་བཟུང་བའི་སྐབས་གཉིས་ཀར་ངོ་བོ་དང་ལྷན་པར་དུ་
བཏགས་པ་ཙམ་མེན་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་གཞན་མ་གསུངས་པའི་
རྒྱ་མཚན་ནི་འཆད་པར་འགྱུར་རོ། །

and his later explanation (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 217) of the evidence:

Although among **imputational factors** in general there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena, space, and so forth, the reason why these are not [explicitly] mentioned in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* is that they are not relevant on the occasion of the **imputational factor** the emptiness of **which** is posited as the thoroughly established nature. Although many of those are existents that cannot be posited by names and terminology, they are not established by way of their own character because of being only imputed by conceptuality.

སྤྱིར་གུན་བཏགས་ལ་སྤྱི་མཚན་ཐམས་ཅད་དང་ནམ་མཁའ་ལ་
 སོགས་བ་དུ་མ་ཞིག་ཡོད་ཀྱང་དགོངས་འབྲེལ་ལས་མ་གསུངས་པ་
 རེ། གུན་བཏགས་གང་གིས་སྣང་བ་ཡོངས་ཟུབ་དུ་འཛོག་པའི་
 སྐབས་སུ་དེ་དག་མི་མཐོ་བས་སོ། ། དེ་དག་གི་མང་པོ་ཞིག་མིང་
 དང་བདས་འཛོག་མི་རྣམས་པའི་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་ཡང་རང་གི་མཚན་
 ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ཟུབ་པ་མིན་ཏེ་རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པའི་
 ཟུར།

4. The imputational natures that Tsong-kha-pa has in mind when he (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 195) says that they must be identified in order to know the selflessness of phenomena well:

Therefore, if you do not know what this **imputational factor** that is a superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on other-powered natures is, you will not know in a decisive way the conception of a self of phenomena and the selflessness of phenomena in this [Mind-Only] system.

གཞན་དབང་ལ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་དུ་སློབ་བཏགས་པའི་གུན་བཏགས་
 འདི་ཇི་སྟར་ཡིན་མི་ཤེས་ན་ལྷགས་འདིའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་འཛོན་
 དང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་མཐའ་ཚོད་པར་མི་ཤེས་སོ། །

5. Tsong-kha-pa's identification (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 195) of the imputational nature that, when conceived to be established by way of its own character, is the self of phenomena, saying it is not just imputational natures in general but a specific one:

Those **imputational factors**—which are such that a consciousness conceiving **imputational factors** to be established by way of their own character is asserted to be a consciousness conceiving a self of phenomena—are the nominally and terminologically imputed factors [in the imputation of] the aggregates and so forth as entities, “This is form,” and as attributes, “This is the production

of form,” and so forth.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐབ་པར་འཛིན་པ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་
བདག་འཛིན་དུ་འདོད་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ནི་མུང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་
ལ་འདི་གཟུགས་སོ་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་དང་འདི་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་བའོ་ཞེས་
སོགས་བྱུང་པར་དུ་མིང་དང་བདར་བརྟགས་པའི་ངོ་བོའོ། །

- 6. Tsong-kha-pa’s distinction (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 210) that there are two types of imputational natures, those established and those not established by valid cognition:

Thus, form and so forth being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses is an **imputational factor** posited by name and terminology, but, since it is established by valid cognition, it cannot be refuted. However, that it is established by way of the thing’s own character is an **imputational factor** posited only nominally that does not occur among objects of knowledge [that is, does not exist]. Hence, among **what are posited by names and terminology** there are two [types], those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition. Still, this system asserts that once something is only posited by names and terminology, cause and effect are not suitable to occur in it.

དེ་ལྟར་ན་གཟུགས་སོགས་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་དེ་མིང་
དང་བདར་བཞག་པའི་ཀུན་བརྟགས་ཡིན་མོད་ཀྱང་ཚད་མས་
སྐབ་པས་དགག་མི་རུས་ལ། དེ་ཉིད་དངོས་པོ་དེ་དག་གི་རང་གི་
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐབ་པ་ནི་མིང་ཅམ་གྱིས་བཞག་པའི་ཀུན་
བརྟགས་ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མི་སྲིད་པ་ཡིན་པས་མིང་དང་བདར་བཞག་པ་
ལ་ཚད་མས་སྐབ་མ་སྐབ་གཉིས་ཡོད་དོ། ། འོན་ཀྱང་མིང་དང་
བདར་བཞག་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་ཕྱིན་ཆད་དེ་ལ་རྒྱ་འབྲས་མི་རུང་བར་
འདི་པ་འདོད་དོ། །

7. The *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought's* usage (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 93) of a flower in the sky as an example for imputational natures:

It is thus: for example, character-non-natures [that is, imputational natures] are to be viewed as like a flower in the sky.

དེ་ལ་འདི་སྣ་སྟེ་དཔེར་ན། རྣམ་མཁའི་མེ་རྟོག་ཇི་སྣ་བ་དེ་སྣ་བྱུར་
ནི་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་སྣ་བར་བྱའོ། །

8. Tsong-kha-pa's commentary (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 94) on that:

The similarity of **imputational factors** with a flower in the sky^a is an example of their merely being imputed by conceptuality and is not an example of their not occurring among objects of knowledge [that is, among existents].

ཀྱན་བཏགས་རྣམ་མཁའི་མེ་རྟོག་དང་འདྲ་བ་ནི་རྟོག་པས་
བཏགས་ཙམ་གྱི་དཔེ་ཡིན་གྱི། ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མི་སྲིད་པའི་དཔེ་མ་
ཡིན་འོ། །

9. Tsong-kha-pa's and Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang's statements that Proponents of *Sūtra* cannot realize that such imputational natures are not established by way of their own character. Tsong-kha-pa (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 198) says:

Also, even if it were being refuted that the **self-isolate of the conceived object [of a conceptual consciousness]** is established by way of its own character, since it is confirmed even for Proponents of *Sūtra* that the objects of comprehension of an inferential valid cognition are generally characterized phenomena [and] do not exist as [functioning] things, this is not feasible.

ཞིན་ལྷལ་གྱི་རང་ལྗོན་རང་མཚན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་འགོག་ནའང་རྗེས་

^a As Jig-may-dam-chö-gya-tsho (*Treatise Distinguishing All the Meanings of (Tsong-kha-pa's) "The Essence of Eloquence"*: *Illuminating the Differentiation of the Interpretable and the Definitive: Port of Entry to "The Essence of Eloquence,"* 198.4) says, due to an eye disease (*rab rib*) the figure of a flower appears in the sky in the perspective of such a perception, but in fact there is no flower in the sky; just so, imputational natures are established as merely imputed by conceptuality. He identifies this explanation as from Wonch'uk's commentary (Golden Reprint, vol. 128, 820.1).

དཔག་ཚད་མའི་གཞལ་བྱ་སྤྱི་མཚན་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པར་མདོ་སྤེ
 བས་ཀྱང་གྲུབ་ཟེན་པས་མི་འབྲང་དོ། །

and Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang's *Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* says:

Concerning this, even Proponents of Sūtra have established that the **mere appearance that is the appearance to a conceptual consciousness that form and so forth are established by way of their own character** as referents of the conventions of entity and attribute is a **superimposed factor** that is not established by way of its own character. Furthermore, they have already established that such a conceptual consciousness is a consciousness mistaken with respect to that appearance.^a Hence, there is no way that realization that this conceptual appearance is empty of being established by way of its own character in accordance with how it appears to a conceptual consciousness could constitute realization of the selflessness of phenomena [in the Mind-Only School].^b

དེ་ལ་གཟུགས་སོགས་ངོ་བོ་དང་བྱུང་པར་གྱི་ཐ་སྙད་གྱི་གཞིར་
 རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་རྟོག་པ་ལ་སྤང་བའི་སྤང་བ་
 ཅམ་ནི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པའི་སྤོ་བཏགས་སུ་མདོ་
 སྤེ་བས་ཀྱང་གྲུབ་ཟེན་ཅིང་། རྟོག་པ་དེ་སྤང་བ་དེ་ལ་འབྲུལ་ཤེས་
 སུའང་དེས་གྲུབ་ཟེན་པས། རྟོག་པའི་སྤང་བ་དེ་རྟོག་པ་ལ་སྤང་བ་
 རྟུར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པས་སྤོང་པར་རྟོགས་པ་ཚོས་
 གྱི་བདག་མེད་རྟོགས་པར་འོང་དོན་མེད་དོ། །

^a It is mistaken in the sense that the appearing object (*snang yul*) of any conceptual consciousness, such as the image of a house that appears to a conceptual consciousness thinking of a house, appears to be a house, much as the image of a face in a mirror *appears* to be a face even if one does not assent to that appearance.

^b See also the translation in José Ignacio Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the stong thun chen mo of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), *A Dose of Emptiness*, 55.

10. Tsong-kha-pa's reference (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 239) to imputational phenomena as if these are the imputational natures being considered:

Since **imputational phenomena** are not established by way of their own character, they are non-natures ultimately [that is, are without the nature of existing ultimately or by way of their own character].

གྲུབ་བཏགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པས་
དོན་དམ་པར་ངོ་བོ་མེད་པ་དང་།

ANSWER OF THE GO-MANG TRADITION

The following thirteen meanings are needed:

- a. being the referent of a conceptual consciousness

རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་ or རང་འཇིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་
ཡིན་པ།

- b. establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness

རང་འཇིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

- c. the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness

རང་འཇིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་
པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྣང་བ།

- d. the superimposed factor or appearance of objects even to sense consciousnesses as established by way of their own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness

དབང་ཤེས་ལ་ཡང་རང་འཇིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྣང་བ།

- e. the appearance of objects even to sense consciousnesses as being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses

དབང་ཤེས་ལ་ཡང་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་ཡིན་པར་སྣང་བ་ also
 དབང་ཤེས་ལ་ཡང་རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་ཡིན་པར་
 སྣང་བ།

- f. imputational natures in general (including existent imputational natures such as uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses)

ཀུན་གཏགས་སྤྱིར་བཏང།

- g. imputational nature (just the general category, not its specific instances, technically called the generality-isolate or, more evocatively, the conceptually isolated generality)

ཀུན་གཏགས།

- h. establishment (of something) by way of its own character

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

- i. establishment (of something) in accordance with the superimposed factor (or appearance) of being established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness

རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་

པར་སྣོ་བཏགས་པར་སྣང་བ་ཀྱི་གྲུབ་པ།

- j. (all) existent imputational natures (including uncompounded space and so forth)

ཡོད་རྒྱུའི་ཀུན་གཏགས།

- k. something only posited by conceptuality and not established by way of its own character

རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་པ་ཅོམ་ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་

གྲུབ་པ།

- l. the superimposed factor or appearance to a conceptual consciousness as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness

རྟོག་པ་ལ་རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་
 གྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྤང་བ།

m. the appearing objects of inferential cognition.

རྗེས་དབག་གི་སྤང་ཡུལ།

As before, according to the tradition of Gung-ru Chö-jung, Jam-yang-shay-pa, Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me, and A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, there is no one answer, flexibility being required. As I (with more trepidation than with the first puzzle) read their explanation, the references to “imputational natures,” or the like, in those ten passages are:

1. The imputational natures that the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* says (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86) are character-non-natures:

Those [imputational characters] [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character. Therefore, those [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] are said to be “character-non-natures.”

[རྟོག་བཏགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་]དེ་[b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་
 རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་ c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་
 ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་
 སྤང་བ་]ནི་མིང་དང་བདམས་རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་
 ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་རྣམ་པར་གནས་པ་ནི་མ་ཡིན་
 པས་དེའི་ཕྱིར་[རྟོག་བཏགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་]དེ་[b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་
 པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་ c: རང་

འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་
 བཏགས་པའམ་སྤང་བ་]ནི་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ཉིད་
 ཅེས་བྱའོ།

- 2. The sixth chapter of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, the “Questions of Guṇākara,” where it says that imputational natures are to be identified in terms of a factor of appearance wrongly superimposed by a mistaken awareness:^a

The **imputational character** [*i*: establishment in accordance with the superimposed factor or appearance of being established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and *c*: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] is to be viewed as like the flaws of dark spots that form in the eye[-sight] of one with the disease of dim-sightedness.

རབ་རིབ་ཅན་གྱི་མིག་ལ་རབ་རིབ་གྱི་སྐྱོན་ཆགས་པ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་ནི་
ཀྱན་བཏགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ [*i*: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་
 གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པར་སྟར་དུ་
 གྲུབ་པ་དང་ *c*: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་
 ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྤང་བ་]བཟུང་བར་བྱའོ།།

and:

Apprehending the **imputational character** [*i*: establishment in accordance with the superimposed factor or appearance of being established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and *c*: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] in other-powered characters should be viewed as like wrongly apprehending a

^a As cited in Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me’s *Difficult Points*, 109.16.

very clear crystal as precious jewels—sapphire, the blue gem, ruby, emerald, or gold.

ཤེལ་ཤིན་རྒྱ་དག་པ་ལ་ལོར་བྱ་རིན་པོ་ཆ་ཨིན་ཏུ་ཉི་ལ་དང་།
 མཐོན་ཀ་ཆེན་པོ་དང་། མ་རྒྱད་དང་། གསེར་དུ་ལོག་པར་འཛིན་
 པ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་ནི་གཞན་གྱི་དབང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་**ཀུན་བཏགས་**
པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ [i: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་
 མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐབ་པར་སློབ་བཏགས་པར་ལྟར་དུ་སྐབ་པ་དང་ c:
 རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐབ་
 པར་སློབ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྣང་བ་]དུ་འཛིན་པ་བཟླ་བར་བྱའོ། །

3. Tsong-kha-pa’s remarks restricting the scope of imputational natures here:

With respect to **that imputational factor** [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] of which [other-powered natures] are empty, on both occasions of identifying **the imputational factor** [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] in the sūtra it does not speak of any other imputational factor than just **factors imputed in the manner of entities and attributes** [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness]. I will explain the reason for this later.

གང་གིས་སློང་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ནི་མདོ་འདིའི་**ཀུན་བཏགས་** [b:
 རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐབ་
 པ་]ངོས་བརྒྱུང་བའི་སྐབས་གཉིས་ཀར་**ངོ་བོ་དང་ལྷད་པར་དུ་**

བཏགས་པ་ [b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་
 ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་ དང་ c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་
 གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྒྲོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྤང་བ་] ཅམ་མིན་
 པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་གཞན་མ་གསུངས་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་ནི་འཆད་
 པར་འགྱུར་རོ།

and his later explanation (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 217) of the evidence:

Although among **imputational factors** in general [**f: imputational natures in general, including uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**)] there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena, space, and so forth, the reason why these are not [explicitly] mentioned in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* is that they [**f: imputational natures in general, including uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses**)] are not relevant on the occasion of the **imputational factor** [**b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness**] the emptiness of **which** [**b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness**] is posited as the thoroughly established nature. Although many of those are existents that cannot be posited by names and terminology, they are not established by way of their own character because of being only imputed by conceptuality.

ལྱིར་གུན་བཏགས་[f: གུན་གཏགས་སྱིར་བཏང་]ལ་སྱི་མཚན་
 ཐམས་ཅད་དང་ནམ་མཁའ་ལ་སོགས་བ་དུ་མ་ཞིག་ཡོད་ཀྱང་
 དགོངས་འགེལ་ལས་མ་གསུངས་པ་ནི། གུན་བཏགས་[b: རང་
 འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་
 c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་
 པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྣང་བ་]གང་[b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་
 ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]གིས་སྣང་བ་ཡོངས་
 གྲུབ་ཏུ་འཛོག་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་དེ་དག་[f: གུན་གཏགས་སྱིར་
 བཏང་]མི་མཐོ་བས་སོ། ། དེ་དག་གི་མང་པོ་ཞིག་མིང་དང་བཅས་
 འཛོག་མི་རུས་པའི་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་ཡང་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་
 གྲུབ་པ་མིན་ཏེ་རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར།

4. The imputational natures that Tsong-kha-pa has in mind when he (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 195) says that they must be identified in order to know the selflessness of phenomena well:

If you do not know what this **imputational factor** [c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] that is a superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on other-powered natures is, you will not know in a decisive way the conception of a self of phenomena and the selflessness of phenomena of this [Mind-Only] system.

གཞན་དབང་ལ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་ཏུ་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའི་གུན་བཏགས་
 [c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་
 གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྣང་བ་]འདི་ཇི་ལྟར་ཡིན་མི་ཤེས་ན་

ལྷགས་འདིའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་འཛིན་དང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད་
མཐའ་ཚད་པར་མི་ཤེས་སོ། །

5. Tsong-kha-pa's identification (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 195) of the imputational nature that, when conceived to be established by way of its own character, is the self of phenomena, saying it is not just imputational natures in general but a specific one:

Those **imputational factors** [**b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness**]**—**which are such that a consciousness conceiving **imputational factors** [**b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness**] to be established by way of their own character is asserted to be a consciousness conceiving a self of phenomena**—**are the nominally and terminologically imputed entities [in the imputation of] the aggregates and so forth as entities, “This is form,” and as attributes, “This is the production of form,” and so forth.

གུན་བརྟགས་ [**b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་**
ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་འཛིན་པ་
ཚོས་ཀྱི་བདག་འཛིན་དུ་འདོད་པའི་གུན་བརྟགས་ [**b: རང་**
འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་]ནི་
ཡུང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ལ་འདི་གཟུགས་སོ་ཞེས་ངོ་བོ་དང་འདི་
གཟུགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་བའོ་ཞེས་སོགས་བྱུང་པར་དུ་མིང་དང་བདར་
བརྟགས་པའི་ངོ་བོའོ། །

6. Tsong-kha-pa's distinction (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 210) that there are two types of imputational natures, those established and those not established by valid cognition:

Thus, form and so forth being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses is an **imputational factor** [**a: an object's being the referent of a conceptual consciousness**] posited through name and terminology, but, since it is

established by valid cognition, it cannot be refuted. However, that it is established by way of the thing's own character is an **imputational factor** [*k*: something only posited by conceptuality and not established by way of its own character] posited only nominally that does not occur among objects of knowledge [that is, does not exist]. Hence, among **what are posited by names and terminology** [*f*: imputational natures in general (including uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousness)] there are two [types], those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition. Still, this system asserts that once something is only posited by names and terminology, cause and effect are not suitable to occur in it.

དེ་སྣང་ན་གཟུགས་སོགས་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་དེ་མིང་
 དང་བདམས་བཞག་པའི་**ཀུན་བཏགས་**[*a*: རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་
 པ་]ཡིན་མོད་ཀྱང་ཚད་མས་སྐྱབ་པས་དགག་མི་རུས་ལ། དེ་ཉིད་
 དངོས་པོ་དེ་དག་གི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱབ་པ་ནི་མིང་ཅམ་
 གྱིས་བཞག་པའི་**ཀུན་བཏགས་**[*k*: རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་
 གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་སྐྱབ་པ་]ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མི་སྲིད་པ་ཡིན་
 པས་**མིང་དང་བདམས་བཞག་པ་**[*f*: ཀུན་གཏགས་སྐྱིར་བཏང་]ལ་
 ཚད་མས་སྐྱབ་མ་སྐྱབ་གཉིས་ཡོད་དོ། ། འོན་ཀྱང་མིང་དང་
 བདམས་བཞག་པ་ཅམ་ཡིན་སྲིན་ཚད་དེ་ལ་རྒྱ་འབྲས་མི་རུང་བར་
 འདི་པ་འདོད་དོ། །

7. The *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought's* usage (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 93) of a flower in the sky as an example for imputational natures:

It is thus: for example, **character-non-natures** [that is, **imputational natures**] [*b*: establishment by way of its

own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and *c*: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] are to be viewed as like a flower in the sky, for example.

དེ་ལ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ་དཔེར་ན། རྣམ་མཁའི་མེ་རྟོག་ཇི་ལྟ་བུ་དེ་ལྟ་བུར་
 བྱི་མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ [b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་
 རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་ c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་
 ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་
 ལྷང་བ་]མེད་པ་ཉིད་ལྟ་བུར་བྱའོ། །

8. Tsong-kha-pa’s commentary (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 94) on that:

The similarity of **imputational factors** [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and *c*: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] with a flower in the sky is an example of their merely being imputed by conceptuality and is not an example of their not occurring among objects of knowledge [that is, existents]. (*b* does not exist, but *c* does.)

གཏུན་བཏགས་ [b: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་མཚན་
 ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་དང་ c: རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་
 གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་ལྷང་བ་]ནམ་
 མཁའི་མེ་རྟོག་དང་འབྲུ་བ་བྱི་རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་གྱི་དཔེ་
 ཡིན་གྱི། ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མི་སྲིད་པའི་དཔེ་མ་ཡིན་འོ། །

9. Tsong-kha-pa’s and Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang’s statements that Proponents of Sūtra cannot realize that such imputational natures are not established by way of their own character. Tsong-kha-pa (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 198) says:^a

^a See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #125 and 126.

Also, even if it were being refuted that the **self-isolate of the conceived object [of a conceptual consciousness] [m: the appearing objects of inferential cognition (these being sound-generalities and meaning-generalities)^a and a: being the referent of a conceptual consciousness^b]** is established by way of its own character, since it is established even for the Sūtra School that the objects of comprehension of an inferential valid cognition are generally characterized phenomena [and] do not exist as [functioning] things, this is not feasible.

ཞེན་ཡུལ་གྱི་རང་ལྗོན་གྱི་ [m: རྗེས་དཔག་གི་སྣང་ཡུལ་ དང་ a: རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་]རང་མཚན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་འགོག་ནའང་རྗེས་དཔག་ཚད་མའི་གཞུང་བྱ་སྤྱི་མཚན་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པར་མདོ་སྤེལ་སྲིད་ཀྱང་གྲུབ་ཟེན་པས་མི་འཐད་དོ། །

and Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang's *Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* says:

Concerning this, even Proponents of Sūtra have established that the **mere appearance that is the appearance to a conceptual consciousness that form and so forth are established by way of their own character as referents** of the conventions of entity and attribute [*l*: the superimposed factor or appearance to a conceptual consciousness as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] is a **superimposed factor** [*k*: something only posited by conceptuality and not established by way of its own character] that is not established by way of its own character. Furthermore, they have already established that such a conceptual consciousness is a consciousness mistaken with respect to that appearance. Hence, there is no way that realization that this conceptual appearance is empty

^a Gung-ru Chö-jung's *Decisive Analysis of (Tsong-kha-pa's) "Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive, The Essence of Eloquence"*: *Garland of White Lotus*, 19b.3.

^b A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho's *Precious Lamp*, 238.4: *gzugs sogs ming brda'i yul yin pa'i cha lta bu*. He draws this from Gung-thang (*Difficult Points*, 120.20).

of being established by way of its own character in accordance with how it appears to a conceptual consciousness could constitute realization of the selflessness of phenomena [in the Mind-Only School].

དེ་ལ་གཞུགས་སོགས་དོ་བོ་དང་བྱད་པར་གྱི་ཐ་སྐད་ཀྱི་གཞིར་
རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་རྟོག་པ་ལ་སྤང་བའི་སྤང་བ་
ཙམ་[l: རྟོག་པ་ལ་རང་འཛིན་རྟོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིར་རང་གི་
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པར་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་པའམ་སྤང་བ་]ནི་རང་གི་
མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པའི་སྐྱོ་བཏགས་[k: རྟོག་པས་བཏགས་
པ་ཙམ་ཡིན་གྱི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ་]སུ་མདོ་མྱེ་
པས་ཀྱང་གྲུབ་ཟེན་ཅིང་། རྟོག་པ་དེ་སྤང་བ་དེ་ལ་འབྱུལ་ཤེས་
སྤང་དེས་གྲུབ་ཟེན་པས། རྟོག་པའི་སྤང་བ་དེ་རྟོག་པ་ལ་སྤང་བ་
ལྟར་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པས་སྤོང་པར་རྟོགས་པ་ཚོས་
གྱི་བདག་མེད་རྟོགས་པར་འོང་དོན་མེད་དོ། །

That is how I read the explication by the Go-mang tradition.

THE IMPORT

Even though the technique of examining Tsong-kha-pa’s usage of terminology yields considerable doubt about the identification of terms in particular contexts, such qualms arise only by juxtaposing those particular usages to the principles of his system. The exercise of such juxtaposition is fundamental to scholastic debate in the monastic colleges, causing scholars to use the basic principles of Tsong-kha-pa’s perspective in an active, creative way. They thereby make the founder’s mode of thought their own in a way that far surpasses mere repetition.

Thus, despite the difficulties involved in trying even to determine what such complex traditions of exegesis take to be the referents of these terms, basic and undisputed principles of Tsong-kha-pa’s presentation of the topic emerge with considerable clarity. It is possible to miss the woods for the trees, but when one steps back and surveys the wider scene, it is clear that:

1. Phenomena are referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms.
2. However, they falsely appear to both sense consciousnesses and conceptual consciousnesses to be established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms.
3. Assent to this false appearance constitutes the obstructions of omniscience and underlies all afflictive emotions.
4. Objects' emptiness of being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms is a subtle selflessness of phenomena.
5. Realization of this emptiness and prolonged meditation on it in the manner of direct perception remove both the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience.

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Jeffrey Hopkins is Professor Emeritus of Tibetan Buddhist Studies at the University of Virginia where he taught Tibetan Buddhist Studies and Tibetan language for thirty-two years from 1973. He received a B.A. *magna cum laude* from Harvard University in 1963, trained for five years at the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America in Freewood Acres, New Jersey, USA (now the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center in Washington, New Jersey), and received a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin in 1973. He served as His Holiness the Dalai Lama's chief interpreter into English on lecture tours for ten years, 1979-1989. At the University of Virginia he founded programs in Buddhist Studies and Tibetan Studies and served as Director of the Center for South Asian Studies for twelve years. He has published fifty-four books, some of which have been translated into a total of twenty-two languages. He published the first translation of the foundational text of the Jo-nang school of Tibetan Buddhism in *Mountain Doctrine: Tibet's Fundamental Treatise on Other-Emptiness and the Buddha-Matrix*. He has translated and edited sixteen books from oral teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the last four being *How to See Yourself as You Really Are*; *Becoming Enlightened*; *How to Be Compassionate*; and *The Heart of Meditation: Discovering Innermost Awareness*. He is the Founder and President of the UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies.

In the series of translations by William Magee of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive* (c. 1686), it became apparent with the publication of the fourth volume on how imputational natures are character-non-natures that due to the many meanings of the two terms “imputational nature” and “own-character” it might be helpful to provide a short treatment on these two terms. Magee’s fourth volume treats the initial section in Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* analyzing the depiction in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* of the Buddha’s response to Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata’s question regarding an apparent contradiction in Buddha’s sūtras. In this response the Buddha initially lays out the first of the three natures and three non-natures—that imputational natures are character-non-natures.

Here in the present book Jeffrey Hopkins draws on his trilogy on the section of the Mind-Only School titled *Dynamic Responses to Dzong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence* to identify these many meanings along



with making references to detailed exposition of the issues especially in the third volume, *Absorption In No External World: 170 Issues in Mind-Only Buddhism*. Through these multiple identifications, we come to see that Tsong-kha-pa’s followers step into his shoes by using his principles of organization to extend his thought further, such that they come to know his pivotal concepts in an active and creative way, rather than just repeating what he said. Since the principles of his system are put to active use, these come to life in a way otherwise impossible. Examination of prob-

lems in debate and in literary composition becomes a method of profound internalization.

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