Empty of What?
Imputational Natures
as Character-Non-Natures
Jam-yang-shay-pa’s
Great Exposition of the
Interpretable and the Definitive: 4

William Magee
In collaboration with Lo-sang-gyal-tshan
Editing and comments by Jeffrey Hopkins

UMA INSTITUTE
FOR TIBETAN STUDIES
Empty of What?

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Translating texts from the heritage of Tibetan and Inner Asian Buddhist systems, the project focuses on Great Indian Books and Tibetan commentaries from the Go-mang College syllabus as well as a related theme on the fundamental innate mind of clear light in Tantric traditions. A feature of the Project is the usage of consistent vocabulary and format throughout the translations.

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Preface

The text translated here is a portion of Jam-yang-shay-pa Ngag-wang-tsön-drü’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive / Decisional 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). The Great Exposition is a textbook (yig cha) of the decisional analysis debate-manual genre (mtha’ dpyod) for the study of Tsong-kha-pa Lo-sang-drag-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence at Go-mang Monastic College. This section explains character-non-natures.

This book treats the initial section in Tsong-kha-pa’s analysis of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought about the Buddha’s response to Bodhisattva Paramārtha’samudgata’s question regarding an apparent contradiction in Buddha’s sūtras in which he lays out the first of the three natures and three non-natures—that imputational natures are character-non-natures.

Readers interested in an even more detailed discussion of The Essence of Eloquence and an overview of Ge-lug-pa’s writings on interpretation of scripture should consult the three volumes of Jeffrey Hopkins’ Dynamic Responses to Dzong-ka-ba’s The Essence of Eloquence devoted to the section of the Mind-Only School:

- Emptiness in the Mind-Only School of Buddhism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999);
- Reflections on Reality: the Three Natures and Non-Natures in the Mind-Only School (Berkeley: University of California Press; 2002);

The present work is indebted to these three volumes.

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a ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa’i rdo rje ngag dbang brtson grus, 1648-1721/1722.
b Herein often called just Interpretable and Definitive.
c tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419.
d drang ba dang nges pa’i don rnam par phyed ba’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po; in gsung ’bum (tsong kha pa) BDRC W22109.21:486-722 (New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1975). This text, a photographic reprint of the old dkra shis lhun po edition, is referred to herein as “Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence”.
e dge lugs pa.
EDITIONS CONSULTED

Two basic editions of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive were consulted:


Also a codex edition based on the bla brang edition was used for convenience:


The digital Tibetan text of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive provided in this book was supplied by the Drepung Gomang Library of Go-mang College in Mundgod, Karnataka State, India, which was likely based on the 1999 Mundgod codex. It has been edited in accordance with the “2011 BDRC bla brang” and the “1987 Old Go-mang Lhasa.”
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 sh are used instead of the more usual c, ś, and ś 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;

• titles of added subsections are given in square brackets;

• definitions are in bold type.
The Collaborator

Lo-sang-gyal-tshan is a Ge-she at Go-mang College of Dre-pung Monastic University, Mundgod, Karnataka State, India, who also served a six-month term as Disciplinarian at the Tantric College of Lower Lhasa in Hunsur, India. In October, 2015, he assumed the position of Abbot of Go-mang College of Dre-pung Monastic University in Mundgod, India. He has worked with translators of the UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies since 2013. In particular, he provided crucial assistance with filling in the dialectical moves throughout the text and by responding to questions about the meaning.
Jam-yang-shay-pa’s
GREAT EXPOSITION
OF THE INTERPRETABLE
AND THE DEFINITIVE: 4
Character-non-natures

Decisive Analysis of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive”: Storehouse of White Vaidūrya of Scripture and Reasoning Free from Mistake, Fulfilling the Hopes of the Fortunate

Fourth in the series: 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. Empty of What? Imputational Natures as Character-Non-Natures

Jam-yang-shay-pa’s text is at the margin; comments by Jeffrey Hopkins are indented and in a three-sided box to clearly distinguish them from Jam-yang-shay-pa’s text. A table at the conclusion of each debate is provided to clarify Jam-yang-shay-pa’s positions.

Key to the colorization: In situations of debate the Tibetan text and the translation are highlighted in three colors: black, blue, and red. Blue colored statements present what Jam-yang-shay-pa considers to be right positions, while red colored statements represent what Jam-yang-shay-pa
considers to be wrong positions. Words in black are other information or function structurally. In the Tibetan, turquoise highlight indicates material added in place of ellipses, and magenta highlight sets off the ellipsis indicators when the elided part has been filled in.
B) EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION [OF THE MODES OF NON-NATURE IN CONSIDERATION OF WHICH BUDDHA SPOKE IN THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM SŪTRAS OF ALL PHENOMENA AS NATURELESS] {3 PARTS}

This\(^a\) has three parts: explaining character-non-natures, production-non-natures, and ultimate-non-natures.

1' Explaining character-non-natures

On the occasion of [Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence quoting] the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.\(^b\)

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena?
Those which are imputational characters.
Why? It is thus: They 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.”

\(^a\) The translation in this volume is only of the first part, covering the following pages: 2011 BDRC bla brang; 24a.6-34b.2; 1987 Old Go-mang Lhasa, 18b.7-47b.1; 2008 Taipei codex reprint, 32.26-47.2.

\(^b\) Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5a.3; the translation is from Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86.
1. Someone says: There is evidence for calling the subjects, imputational natures, “character-non-natures” because since from the positive side they are only posited by names and terminology and from the negative side they are not established by way of their own character, they are called thus [“character-non-natures.”]  

Comment: What are the imputational natures that do not subsist, that is, are not established, by way of their own character? Among the more renowned imputational natures are uncompounded

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 24b.2; 1987 Old Go-mang, 19a.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 33.2.  
space, analytical cessations, and non-analytical cessations. However, according to Gung-ru Chö-jung, a Jam-yang-shay-pa, b and others, even Proponents of Sūtra—rated below Proponents of Mind-Only—realize with valid cognition that such imputational phenomena are not established by way of their own character, for they understand that these are generally characterized phenomena—objects that do not have specific characteristics that can serve as appearing objects in direct perception. This is because Proponents of Sūtra understand that these exist but are not functioning things producing effects. Uncompounded space, for instance, cannot produce an effect since it is a mere absence of obstructive contact, and cessations (or, more properly, states of having ceased) cannot produce effects since they are mere absences of afflicting emotions, and so forth.

Because even the Proponents of Sūtra realize that generally characterized phenomena are not established by way of their own character, the Mind-Only School cannot merely be refuting that imputational phenomena—that is to say, any and all generally characterized phenomena—are established by way of their own character. Otherwise, there would be no way to rank the Mind-Only School as superior to the Sūtra School, and it is clear that the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, as well as the founder of the Mind-Only School, Asaṅga, sees this view as superior to any found in the Lesser Vehicle schools.

Thus, here in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought the term “imputational nature” (or “imputational character”) has a more restricted meaning than it does in more general usage, where it means any imputational factor—these being all permanent phenomena except emptinesses as well as non-existents. Tibetan scholars make the cogent point that a more restricted meaning must be identified in order to illuminate the meaning of the sūtra. Hence, when the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought says:

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a Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotuses / Decisive Analysis of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive, The Essence of Eloquence”* (drang ba dang nges pa’i rnam par ’byed pa legs bshad snying po zhes bya ba’i mtha’ dpyod padma dkar po’i phreng ba), [No BDRC data found], sku bum, Tibet: sku bum Monastery, n.d. [blockprint obtained by Hopkins in 1988], 19a.6-19b.5.

b Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, 2011 BDRC bla brang, 49.4-49.6.

c *spyi mtshan, sáṃnyalaksana.*
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”

it is not suitable to restate its meaning syllogistically as:

With respect to the subject, imputational factors, there is evidence for calling them “character-non-natures” because they are called such since (1) from the positive side they are only posited by names and terminology and (2) from the negative side they are not established by way of their own character.

For, this syllogistic reformulation merely repeats the words of the sūtra. So, some Tibetan scholars, finding justification in Tsong-kha-pa’s own words, a re-cast this statement syllogistically as:

With respect to the subject, forms and so forth being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses, there is evidence for calling this a “character-non-nature” because the evidence is that (1) from the positive side such is only posited by names and terminology and (2) from the negative side such is not established by way of its own character.

This formulation, which is made most clearly by Tshe-tan-Iha-ram-pa, b is highly evocative, but it is not without problems that need to be handled.

Specifically, A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho c says that the problem with identifying forms’ being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses as what is not established by way of its own character is that Proponents of Sūtra, a lower school, realize that forms’ being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses is not established by way of its own character, and thus realization of this cannot constitute realization of the selflessness of phenomena in the Mind-Only School. The emptiness described in the Mind-Only

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b As reported in 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”: Precious Lamp (drang ba dang nges pa’i don nam par ’byed pa’i bstan bcos legs lshad snying pa’i dka’ ’grel rin chen sgron me), BDRC W2CZ6655 (PDF of bla brang bka’ shis ’khyil par khang, republished by: N. Kanara, Karnataka State, India: Kesang Thabkhes, 1982), 75.6-77.4.

c A follower of Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me who made several criticisms of Je-tsün Chö-kyi-gyal-ishan, who, in turn, was defended by Tshe-tan-Iha-ram-pa.
School would absurdly be realized by proponents of a lower school, and thus emptiness as it is presented in the Mind-Only School would absurdly not be more subtle than it is in the Sūtra School. However, it must be more subtle since the four schools are posited in ascending order due to increasing subtlety in their views of emptiness, that is, selflessness, and the Mind-Only School is higher than the Sūtra School.

A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho holds that the Proponents of Sūtra do indeed realize that forms’ being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses is a non-effective, abstract phenomenon, and thus even they realize that it is not established by way of its own character. The background to his position is the common assertion among Ge-lug-pa scholars that in the Sūtra School although form is impermanent and hence established by way of its own character, form’s being impermanent or even form’s being form is an abstraction, appearing only to a conceptual consciousness, and thus a non-disintegrative phenomenon. Hence, according to A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, form’s being the referent of a conceptual consciousness is, even for a Proponent of Sūtra, an abstraction and a non-disintegrative phenomenon. It is a non-effective thing and not established by way of its own character even in the Sūtra School.

**Our response:** It [absurdly] follows that imputational natures not being established by way of their own character is the meaning of character-non-natures explicitly indicated on this occasion [of the Buddha saying in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought]:

[Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.]

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**Notes:**

a The reference throughout this discussion is the Sūtra School Following Reasoning.

b gzugs mi rtag pa yin pa.


d ’phags pa dgongs pa nges par ’grel pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo (ārya-saṅdhinirmocana-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra), in bka’ ’gyur (sde dge, 106), BDRC W22084.49:1b.1-55b.7 (Delhi, India: Delhi Karmapa choedhey, Gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1976-1979), 17a.1-17a.2. Following this first occurrence, which supplies in brackets material omitted by Jam-yang-shay-pa from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, the translation will say only, “indicated on this occasion.”

e “Imputational character” (kun btags kyi mthun nyid, parikalpita-laksana) and “imputational nature” (kun btags kyi rang bzhin / kun btags kyi ngo bo nyid, parikalpita-svabhāva) are synonymous.
Why? It is thus: Those (imputational characters) are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character. Therefore, they are called “character-non-natures.”

because [according to you] the syllogism:

[“There is evidence for calling the subjects, imputational natures because from the positive side they are only posited by names and terminology and from the negative side they are not established by way of their own character.”]

is logically feasible.

You cannot accept [that imputational natures not being established by way of their own character is the meaning of character-non-natures explicitly indicated on this occasion] because Proponents of Sūtra establish through valid cognition this [non-establishment of imputational natures by way of their own character]. It follows [that Proponents of Sūtra establish through valid cognition this non-establishment of imputational natures by way of their own character] because those [Proponents of Sūtra] realize that imputational natures are not specifically characterized phenomena.

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 5a.6-5b.1.
follows [that Proponents of Sūtra realize that imputational natures are not specifically characterized phenomena] because those [Proponents of Sūtra] realize that [imputational natures] are generally characterized phenomena. It follows [that Proponents of Sūtra realize that imputational natures are generally characterized phenomena] because those [Proponents of Sūtra] realize that [imputational natures] do not exist as functioning things, because Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* says:\(^a\)

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.

\(^a\) Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 31a.6-31b.1. Translation from Jeffrey Hopkins’ *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School of Buddhism. Dynamic Responses to Dzong-ka-ba’s The Essence of Eloquence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 198.
Comment: The above passage in Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* is from an opponent’s objection, but this part is a commonly held assertion. In general, the object of comprehension of an inferential cognition can be any phenomenon, impermanent or permanent, but here the reference is to the appearing objects of inferential cognition, these being generally characterized phenomena. Gung-ru Chö-jung specifies that the objects of comprehension of a conceptual consciousness are sound-generalities (*sgra spyi, śabdasāmānya*) and meaning-generalities (*don spyi, ar-thasāmānya*). However, A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, pursuing a different agenda, identifies the reference as the factor, for instance, of forms and so forth being objects of names and terminology (*gzugs sogs ming brda’i yul yin pa’i cha lta bu*).

Also, that Tsong-kha-pa holds that Proponents of Sūtra have realized that imputational natures are not established by way of their own character is evident in this passage. To reveal this, let us first discuss the terms used in this short, seemingly obtuse citation. The “conceived object of a conceptual consciousness” is the object that the conceptual consciousness is getting at; for instance, a conceptual consciousness apprehending a pot through the medium of an image (or, more technically, “meaning-generality”) of a pot is conceiving of a pot, not an image of a pot, and thus the pot itself is the conceived object of that consciousness. The image of the pot (or meaning-generality of the pot) is the appearing object of that consciousness but not its conceived object.

With respect to “the self-isolate of the conceived object of a conceptual consciousness,” let us first consider the “self-isolate of pot,” “meaning-isolate of pot,” and “illustration-isolate of pot”...
Refuting Mistakes about Imputational Natures

in the way that these terms are used in elementary logic and epistemology texts called “Collected Topics of Valid Cognition.” In that systemization, the “self-isolate of pot” is simply pot itself, not instances of pot, such as a copper pot, or the definition (that is, basic meaning) of pot—that which has a bulbous belly, is flat bottomed, and able to hold fluid. Similarly, the “meaning-isolate of pot” is simply the basic meaning of pot—that which has a bulbous belly, is flat bottomed, and able to hold fluid—not pot itself and not instances or illustrations, such as a copper pot. Also, an “illustration-isolate of pot” is simply something that illustrates or characterizes what a pot is through possessing its full meaning—a copper pot, a gold pot, a bronze pot, and so forth—not pot itself or its meaning.

“Isolates” are ways of conceptually zeroing in on a particular aspect of an object to the exclusion of other aspects. They are abstractions and thus are considered to be existent imputational natures and hence permanent, not in the sense of existing forever but in the sense of not being produced by causes and conditions and not disintegrating moment by moment. Hence, the “self-isolate of pot” (or the self-isolate of anything) is an abstraction and not established by way of its own character even if that which is posited as being the self-isolate of pot is simply pot, which is not an abstraction and is established by way of its own character. Similarly, the “illustration-isolate of pot” is an abstraction and not established by way of its own character, but things, such as copper and gold pots, that are posited as illustration-isolates of pot are definitely impermanent and established by way of their own character.

In the citation that we are considering, Tsong-kha-pa uses the term “self-isolate” in a looser manner. For just prior to this passage, when he speaks of the illustration-isolate of a conceived object, he seemingly equates this with other-powered natures. In the stricter usage of the term, the illustration-isolate of anything is an abstraction and thus an existent imputational nature, but Tsong-kha-pa uses the term for those things that are illustrations—those things that are illustrations—of conceived objects. Since anything, either permanent or impermanent, can be a conceived object of a conceptual consciousness, other-powered na-

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tures are among the conceived objects of conceptual conscious-
nesses and thus are illustration-isolates of conceived objects. 
Since other-powered natures are not generally characterized phe-
nomena, they could not be the referent of Tsong-kha-pa’s “the 
self-isolate of the conceived object [of a conceptual conscious-
ness].”

Therefore, in my estimation, here the “self-isolate of the con-
ceived object [of a conceptual consciousness]” is the appearing 
object of a conceptual consciousness—a meaning-generality or 
sound-generality, that is, a conceptual image through the route of 
which a conceptual consciousness understands its object. My 
reading is buttressed by Gung-ru Chö-jung’s \( ^b \) cogent identifica-
tion of the “objects of comprehension of an inferential valid cog-
nition” as the appearing objects of inferential cognition, these be-
ing sound-generalities and meaning-generalities, \( ^c \) which are the 
appearing objects of conceptual consciousnesses.

A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, \( ^d \) however, says that when Tsong-kha-
pa speaks of “the self-isolate of a conceived object [of a concep-
tual consciousness],” he does not just mean the self-isolate but 
“the factor, for instance, of forms and so forth \textbf{being} objects of 
names and terminology.” Contrary to the copious evidence sug-
gesting that Tsong-kha-pa holds that Proponents of Sūtra do not 
realize that being the referent of a conceptual consciousness is not 
established by way of its own character, \( ^e \) A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho 
claims that the Proponents of Sūtra are capable of realizing that 
the factor, for instance, of forms and so forth \textbf{being} objects of 
names and terminology is an imputation and is not established by 
way of its own character. Indeed, Khay-drub makes a related point 
in the passage cited above from his \textit{Opening the Eyes of the For-
tunate} that gives credence to A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s opinion:

\( ^a \) sgra spyi, {\textsc{ś}abdasāmānya}.
\( ^b \) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s \textit{Garland of White Lotuses}, 19b.3.
\( ^c \) don spyi, {\textsc{artha}śāmānya}.
\( ^d \) A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s \textit{Precious Lamp}, 238.4: gzugs sogs ming brda’i yul yin pa’i cha lta bu. He draws this from Gung-thang (\textit{Difficult Points / Beginnings of a Commentary on the Difficult Points of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Defini-
tive”: Quintessence of “The Essence of Eloquence” drang nges rnam ‘byed kyi dka’ ‘grel rtsom ‘phro legs bshad snying po’i yang snying} (Collected Works of Guṅ-than Dkon-
Also: Sarnath, India: Guru Deva, 1965), 120.20.
\( ^e \) See Hopkins, \textit{Reflections on Reality}, 199.
The Proponents of Sūtra do not assert that space’s being the referent of a name for space is a functioning [impermanent] thing; hence it is not something established by way of its own character.

Moreover, it follows that with respect to the subject, the non-establishment of imputational natures by way of their own character, it is the subtle selflessness of phenomena because it is the meaning of character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion.

[Being the meaning of character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion] entails [being the subtle selflessness of phenomena] because:

1. that [meaning of the character-non-nature] explicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as the subtle selflessness of phenomena and
2. the meaning of character-non-nature done in terms of the selflessness of persons implicitly indicated [on this occasion] is posited as the subtle selflessness of persons.

Comment: As Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa say, the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought—when it speaks of imputational natures as not being established by way of their own character—

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\(^a\) 2011 BDRC bla brang, 24b.6; 1987 Old Go-mang, 19a.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 33.11.
cannot be referring just to any imputational natures:

• because the Proponents of Sūtra realize that imputational natures are not established by way of their own character, since they realize that imputational natures are just imputed by conceptuality, for they are persons who realize imputational natures to be imputational natures.

• A person who, with valid cognition, ascertains imputational natures as imputational natures necessarily is a person who ascertains imputational natures as just imputed by conceptuality because that which is just imputed by conceptuality is the definition of an imputational nature. To realize something, one must know its meaning, its definition, the nature that defines it.

Gung-ru Chö-jungb and Jam-yang-shay-pac add that, furthermore, imputational phenomena such as uncompounded space could not be the “imputational natures” explicitly indicated in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought at the point when in answer to the rhetorical question, “Paramārthasamudgata, concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena?” Buddha says, “Those which are imputational characters.” For, such imputational phenomena are not the imputational factor, the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature, and thus are not the imputational nature that is relevant on the occasion of positing the thoroughly established nature. As Tsong-kha-pa (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 85) says:

Although among imputational factors in general there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena and space, and so forth, the reason why these are not [explicitly ] mentioned in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thoughtd is that they

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a Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 20a.4-20b.1; Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive, 51.4-52.1.
c Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive, 52.1-52.5.
d Tsong-kha-pa says that space is “not mentioned in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought,” but Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho (Port of Entry, 620.6, 625.4-625.6) points out that space is indeed mentioned in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought (see Issue #139, for six occurrences in the sūtra) as an example for the thoroughly established nature. Thus he cogently interprets Tsong-kha-pa as meaning that the sūtra at the point of the extensive indication identifying imputational natures does not explicitly say that space, and so forth, are imputational natures since, except for imputational natures in the manner of entity and attribute,
are not relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor, the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature.\(^a\)

Here Tsong-kha-pa clearly says that imputational natures in this context are not just any imputational phenomena but have to be relevant to the positing of emptiness, the thoroughly established nature.

However, on another occasion (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 239) he seems to imply elsewise:\(^b\)

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].

On the surface, it seems that Tsong-kha-pa is saying that imputational phenomena (which include uncompounded space and so forth) are the imputational natures explicitly indicated at this point and that their not being established by way of their own character is the meaning of the character-non-nature. Gung-ru Chö-jung\(^c\) and Jam-yang-shay-pa,\(^d\) however, adjust Tsong-kha-pa’s statement so that it reads “Since the phenomena that are the basis of imputing the imputational nature are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses ….” They creatively adjust Tsong-kha-pa’s statement so that it does not contradict the earlier one.

Thus, according to Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, on this occasion the imputational natures explicitly indicated are not imputational phenomena in general but:

1. establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as

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\(^a\) See Issues #89-#92.

\(^b\) The Tibetan (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 447) is: kun btags kyi chos rnams rang gi mtshan nyid kyis ma grub pas don dam par ngo bo med pa dang. Both Gung-ru Chö-jung (20b.5) and Jam-yang-shay-pa (52.5) misquote the passage as kun btags kyi chos rnams rang gi mtshan nyid kyis ma grub pas mtshan nyid ngo bo med pa dang.

\(^c\) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 21a.1.

\(^d\) Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive, 53.1: kun btags 'dogs gzhir gyur pa'i chos rnam rang 'dzin rtog pa'i zhen gzhir rang gi mtshan nyid kyis grub pa...; he is following Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 21a.1.
the referents of a conceptual consciousness, those phenomena being the bases of imputation of that imputational nature

2. the superimposed factor—that is, the image—of such that appears to the mind.

Hence, the meaning of the **character-non-nature** explicitly indicated on this occasion comes to involve the emptiness of objects’ being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and the emptiness of being established in accordance with such a superimposed factor. Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa claim that this is what Tsong-kha-pa’s latter statement means even if it blatantly seems to say otherwise. (More likely, Tsong-kha-pa just slipped up.)

Their re-reading is appropriate in the context of Tsong-kha-pa’s general system because it fits with another statement (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 110):

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 reason for this later.

Tsong-kha-pa later (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 217) explains:

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.

Again, according to Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, the imputational natures relevant to the positing of emptiness are not uncompounded space and so forth but (1) establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and (2) the appearance of such.

It follows [that the meaning of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as the subtle selflessness of phenomena and the meaning of character-non-nature done in terms of the selflessness of persons implicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as the subtle selflessness of persons] because this Sūtra [*Unraveling the Thought*] explicitly comments on the subtle selflessness of phenomena and implicitly
comments on the subtle selflessness of persons.

It follows [that this Sūtra [Unraveling the Thought] explicitly comments on the subtle selflessness of phenomena and implicitly comments on the subtle selflessness of persons] because:

1. this Sūtra [Unraveling the Thought] explicitly comments on the three natures in terms of the selflessness of phenomena as the thought of the middle wheel and
2. implicitly comments on the three natures in terms of the selflessness of persons as the thought of the first wheel.

It follows [that this Sūtra Unraveling the Thought explicitly comments on the three natures in terms of the selflessness of phenomena as the thought of the middle wheel and implicitly comments on the three natures in terms of the selflessness of persons as the thought of the first wheel] because in that [Sūtra Unraveling the Thought]:

1. it implicitly comments—as the thought of the first wheel—that those having the lineage of the Lesser Vehicle attain their own enlightenment through meditating on the thoroughly established nature in terms of the selflessness of persons, and
2. it explicitly comments—as the thought of the middle wheel—that those having the lineage of the Great Vehicle attain their own enlightenment through meditating on the subtle selflessness of phenomena because all three lineage possessors are said to attain their own enlightenments through a path of meditation realizing other-powered natures as empty of the imputational nature as explained in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought,

because Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* says: \(^\text{a}\)

the three—Hearers, Solitary Realizers, and Bodhisattvas—through just this path and just this achieving attain nirvāṇa.

and the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* says: \(^\text{b}\)

Paramārthaśamudgata, concerning that, even sentient beings having the lineage of those of the Hearer Vehicle attain a nirvāṇa of

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\(^\text{a}\) Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 36a.1; adapted from Hopkins, *Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 221.

\(^\text{b}\) *samdhinirmocanasūtra*, 19b.1-19b.3.
unsurpassed achievement and bliss through just this path and just this achievement. Also, sentient beings having the lineage of those of the Solitary Realizer Vehicle and those having the lineage of Ones-Gone-Thus attain a nirvāṇa of unsurpassed achievement and bliss through just this path and just this achievement. Therefore, this is the sole path of purification of Hearers, Solitary Realizers, and Bodhisattvas, and the purification is also one.

Comment: What do the intended trainees of the implicit teaching of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, the Great Exposition School and the Sūtra School, understand about the three natures? Though the sūtra itself does not address the issue, it must be addressed for the differences of the path structures of the Lesser and Great Vehicles to make sense. Most Ge-lug-pa commentators say that Lesser Vehicle understanding of the three natures in terms of the selflessness of persons means that they realize that:
1. other-powered natures are things produced, not by themselves, but by causes and conditions
2. imputational natures are the falsely ascribed sense of a substantially existent, self-sufficient person or objects of use of such a person
3. the thoroughly established nature is the absence of such a substantially existent, self-sufficient person or objects of use of such a person.

Taking the three natures this way, practitioners of Lesser Vehicle tenets cultivate the path and achieve their respective enlightenments.

Jam-yang-shay-pa, however, takes imputational natures (in terms of the selflessness of persons) in a way parallel to that presented for Great Vehicle practitioners. Just as imputational natures in terms of the selflessness of phenomena are the twofold superimposed factors of an object, such as a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid, as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term for its entity “pot” and as the referent of the term for its attribute “beautiful,” so imputational natures in terms of the selflessness of persons are the twofold superimposition of an object, such as a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold water, as established substantially or self-sufficiently as the referent of the term “pot” and as the referent of the term “beautiful.” Thus, in terms of the selflessness of persons, the imputational natures to which the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought refers are establishment of objects substantially or self-sufficiently as the referents of terms or conceptual consciousnesses and the superimposed factor (that is, appearance) of objects as established substantially or self-sufficiently as the referents of terms or conceptual consciousnesses. Jam-yang-shay-pa considers an awareness that conceives objects to be established this way as a consciousness conceiving a self of persons, even though it does not necessarily have a person as its object of observation. Hence, he also considers the emptiness of being established in this way to be a thoroughly established nature in terms of the subtle selflessness of persons.

Jam-yang-shay-pa claims that between the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena there is a great difference

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a Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive, 54.1-54.5.
in terms of the subtlety of the object of negation because establishment of objects **substantially** or **self-sufficiently** as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses differ considerably in subtlety.

Furthermore,\(^a\) it follows that Proponents of Sūtra realize [imputational natures] as not established by way of their own character because those [Proponents of Sūtra] realize imputational [natures] as only imputed by conceptuality, because those [Proponents of Sūtra] are persons who realize imputational [natures] as imputational [natures].

If you [incorrectly] say [that being a person who realizes imputational (natures) as imputational (natures)] does not entail [realizing imputational (natures) as only imputed by conceptuality], then [we respond that] it follows that with respect to the subject, only imputed by conceptuality, being a person who has ascertained through valid cognition imputational [natures] as imputational [natures] entails being a person who has ascertained through valid cognition imputational [natures] as it [that is, as only imputed by conceptuality] because it [that is, only imputed by conceptuality] is the imputational character.

\(^a\) 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 25b.4; 1987 Old Go-mang, 19b.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 34.13.
The earlier reason [which is that Proponents of Sūtra realize imputational natures to be imputational natures] is established because [Proponents of Sūtra] are persons who realize imputational natures. [Being a person who realizes imputational natures] entails [being a person who realizes imputational natures as imputational natures] because being a person who has ascertained specifically characterized phenomena through valid cognition entails being a person who has ascertained specifically characterized phenomena as specifically characterized through valid cognition, because being a person who has ascertained impermanence through valid cognition entails being a person who has ascertained impermanence as impermanence through valid cognition.

Furthermore, it [absurdly] follows that imputational phenomena are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on the occasion [of the Buddha saying in the Sutra Unraveling the Thought:]

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

Why? It is thus: 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.”

because [according to you] the imputational natures [explicitly indicated on the occasion of:]

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\(^{a}\) Hopkins, *Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86.
Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

If you [incorrectly] accept [that imputational phenomena are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on the occasion of:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.]

it [absurdly] follows that uncompounded space, generally-characterized phenomena, and so forth, are those [imputational natures explicitly indicated on the occasion of:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.]

because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputational phenomena are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on the occasion of:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.]
Imputational Natures as Character-Non-Natures

If you [incorrectly] accept [that uncompounded space, generally-characterized phenomena, and so forth, are those imputational natures explicitly indicated on the occasion of:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.]
it [absurdly] follows that the subjects [uncompounded space, generally-characterized phenomena, and so forth] are imputational natures relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature because [according to you] they are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on the occasion of that sūtra passage:

[Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.]
[Being the imputational nature explicitly indicated on the occasion of that sūtra passage] entails [being the imputational nature relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature] because Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence says:^[a]

Although among imputational factors in general there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena and 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.

Unpacking Debate 1 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [16]

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Are imputational phenomena—such as uncompounded space, analytical cessations, and non-analytical cessations—the “imputational natures” that are called “character-non-natures” in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought? No, because Proponents of Sūtra, lower than Proponents of Mind-Only, establish through valid cognition that imputational natures are not established by way of their own character.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Are imputational natures called character-non-natures because imputational natures are not established by way of their own</td>
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character? No, because Proponents of Sūtra establish through valid cognition that imputational natures are not established by way of their own character.

3 The Sūtra Unraveling the Thought:
1. implicitly comments—as the thought of the first wheel—that those having the lineage of the Lesser Vehicle attain their own enlightenment through meditating on the thoroughly established nature in terms of the selflessness of persons, and
2. explicitly comments—as the thought of the middle wheel—that those having the lineage of the Great Vehicle attain their own enlightenment through meditating on the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

4 Thus, all three lineage possessors (Hearers, Solitary Victors, and Bodhisattvas) are said to attain their own enlightenments through a path of meditation realizing other-powered natures as empty of the imputational nature as explained in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.

5 Therefore,
1. the meaning of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as the subtle selflessness of phenomena, and
2. the meaning of the character-non-nature done in terms of the selflessness of persons implicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as the subtle selflessness of persons.

6 Uncompounded space, generally-characterized phenomena, and so forth are not the imputational natures relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature. Therefore, being the imputational nature explicitly indicated on the occasion of the passage in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

entails being the imputational nature relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature. [Hence, as is shown in the next debate, the meaning of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion comes to involve the emptiness of objects’ being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and the emptiness of being established in
2. *About this formulation, someone says:*\(^a\) It [absurdly] follows that the meaning of the statement in this very text [Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*].\(^b\)

Since imputational phenomena are not established by way of their own character, they are character-non-natures.

is not established because imputational phenomena are not the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion and their not being established by way of their own character is not the meaning of character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion.

\(^a\) 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 26a.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20a.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.9.

\(^b\) Jam-yang-shay-pa may have constructively reframed this passage from another in Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*:

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].

Hopkins, *Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 239 (see 236-239 for Tsong-kha-pa’s actual explanation which is in a different context); Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 40a.3-4. Nevertheless, I have not corrected the three editions of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s text here (BDRC *bla brang*, 26a.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20a.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.9) in accordance with it since in this form with don dam par it is not appropriate to Jam-yang-shay-pa’s topic at this point.

In *Absorption In No External World, Issue #85*, Hopkins (without mentioning that Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa omit don dam par) presents Gung-ru Chö-jung’s and Jam-yang-shay-pa’s creative revision of this passage in Tsong-kha-pa’s text to make it accord with Tsong-kha-pa’s overall opinion by taking “imputational phenomena” to mean “the phenomena that are the basis of imputing the imputational nature” and thus reform the first clause to mean “Since the *phenomena that are the basis of imputing the imputational nature* are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses”.

\(^c\) Correcting ma grub pa’i in BDRC *bla brang*, 26a.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20a.7; and 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.9, to ma grub *pas*. 
Our response: [That imputational phenomena are not the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion and their not being established by way of their own character is not the meaning of character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion] does not entail [that the meaning of the statement in Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*:

> Since imputational phenomena are not established by way of their own character, they are character-non-natures.

is not established] because the meaning of that passage is:

1. the establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness, those phenomena being the bases of imputation of that imputational nature, and
2. the superimposed [factor, that is, the image] of establishment as such [that appears to the mind]

are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion, and:

1. the emptiness of [objects’ being] established in that way [as established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses], and
2. the emptiness of being established in accordance with a superimposed [factor] of establishment as such

are the meaning of character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion.
Refuting Mistakes about Imputational Natures

Comment: On the surface, it seems that the passage is saying that imputational phenomena (which include uncompounded space and so forth) are the imputational natures explicitly indicated at this point and that their not being established by way of their own character is the meaning of the character-non-nature. Gung-ru Chö-jung\(^b\) and Jam-yang-shay-pa\(^c\), however, adjust the statement so that it reads “Since the phenomena that are the basis of imputing the imputational nature are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses….” They creatively adjust the statement so that it does not contradict the earlier one.

Thus, according to Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, on this occasion the imputational natures explicitly indicated are not imputational phenomena in general but:

1. establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness, those phenomena being the bases of imputation of that imputational nature
2. the superimposed factor—that is, the image—of such that appears to the mind.

Hence, the meaning of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion comes to involve the emptiness of objects’

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\(^{a}\) Drawn from Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #85, 204-206.

\(^{b}\) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotuses*, 21a.1.

\(^{c}\) Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, 53.1: kun btags ’dogs gzhir gyur pa‘i chos rnam rang ’dzin rtog pa‘i zhen gzhir rang gi mtshan nyid kyi grub pa…; he is following Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotuses*, 21a.1.
being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and the emptiness of being established in accordance with such a superimposed factor. Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa claim that this is what Tsong-kha-pa’s latter statement means even if it seems to say otherwise. Their re-reading is appropriate in the context of Tsong-kha-pa’s general system because it fits with another statement (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 110):

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 reason for this later.

Tsong-kha-pa later (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 217) explains:

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.

Again, according to Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, the imputational natures relevant to the positing of emptiness are not uncompounded space and so forth but (1) establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and (2) the appearance of such.
Unpacking Debate 2 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [39]

1. Jam-yang-shay-pa and his predecessor as the textbook author for the interpretable and definitive, Gung-ru Chö-jung, explain away this seemingly inappropriate statement [actually not in The Essence of Eloquence]:

   Since imputational phenomena are not established by way of their own character, they are character-non-natures.

   They take it as meaning:
   1. the establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness, those phenomena being the bases of imputation of that imputational nature, and
   2. the superimposed [factor, that is, the image] of establishment as such [that appears to the mind]

   are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion, and:
   1. the emptiness of [objects’ being] established in that way [as established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses], and
   2. the emptiness of being established in accordance with a superimposed [factor] of establishment as such

   are the meaning of character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion.

3. Also someone says: a It follows that imputational phenomena are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion because imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion, because imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute of forms are those imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion, because imputational natures that are imputations of entity—as in “This is form”—and attribute—as in “This is the production of form”—are those imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion b because:

   a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 26b.2; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20b.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.20.
   b See Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #93.
1. the superimposed factor of that-which-is-suitable-as-form as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term “form,” and
2. the superimposed factor about that-which-is-suitable-as-form as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term “the production of form”

are those [imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion].

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\[a\] That-which-is-suitable-as-form (gzugs rung/ gzugs su rung ba) is the definition of form, the meaning of form. About this, Jeffrey Hopkins (Nāgārjuna’s Precious Garland: Buddhist Advice for Living and Liberation [Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1998], 61 note a) says:

“Suitability as form” (rūpāna, gzugs su rung ba) is cogently rendered by J. W. De Jong in his Cinq Chapitres De La Prasannapada (Paris: Libraire Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1949, 4) as “le pouvoir d’être brisé,” “capable of being broken.” The latter is how Ajitamitra takes the term in his commentary on Nāgārjuna’s Precious Garland (notation lost). Therefore, it appears that the translators into Tibetan were aware of both meanings and chose “suitability as form” here. However, according to Lati Jang-chub-tshul-trim (oral explanation) “capable of being broken” is not appropriate as a definition of form at least in those schools that assert partless particles as these cannot be broken down either physically or mentally. Perhaps this is the reason why the translation as “that which is suitable as form,” meaning whatever one points to when asked what form is, was preferred. Still, according to Ge-dun-lo-drö (oral explanation) partless particles [asserted by lower schools] could not be further reduced without disappearing; thus, if we take their physical disappearance as their susceptibility to being broken, this explanation of rūpāna as that which is susceptible to being broken would indeed be an appropriate definition of form.

“That which is suitable as form” (gzugs su rung ba) appears to be uninformative since it repeats the very term being defined, form; however, it does illustrate the notion that reasoning meets back to common experience in that with form we are at a level of common experience with little else to come up with as a definition other than saying that it is what we point to when we identify a form.

\[b\] gzugs zhes pa’i sgra’ jug pa’i jug gzhi: literally, the engaged-basis that the term “form” engages.
Comment: a Just what is the imputational nature whose emptiness of being established by way of its own character is posited as the thoroughly established nature? The Sūtra Unraveling the Thought itself speaks of factors imputed in the manner of entities and attributes, but what does this mean? Jam-yang-shay-pa’s predecessor as textbook author of Go-mang College, Gung-ru Chö-jung, b cites a possibly misleading statement by Tsong-kha-pa (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 195) and then clarifies it:

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.

From this statement, it might seem that the imputational factors in question are constituted by merely saying or thinking, “This is a pot,” c and, “This is the production of a pot,” the first concerning

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a Quoting Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #93.
b Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 23b.3-24a.2.
c I am switching from “form” to “pot” since the definition of the latter is much more evocative than the definition of form, that is, that which is suitable as form (gzugs su rung ba).
an entity, pot, and the second concerning an attribute, pot’s production. However, Gung-ru Chö-jung makes the important point that the mere imputation of such with respect to that which is bulbous, flat-based, and able to hold fluid does not fulfill the import of the imputational nature the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature. Rather, the issue revolves around whether that which is bulbous, and so forth, is established by way of its own character as an entity that is the referent of the term “pot” and is established by way of its own character as an entity that is the referent of the attributional term “production of pot” (or “beautiful”). He sees this as the import of Tsong-kha-pa’s immediately subsequent statement:

Since the aggregates and so forth do exist as just those [entities of such nominal and terminological imputation], the [mere] conception that they exist as those [entities of nominal and terminological imputation] is not a superimposition; rather, the conception that the aggregates and so forth exist by way of their own character as those entities [of nominal and terminological imputation] is a superimposition.

Our response: [That imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion] does not entail [that imputational phenomena are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion], and it is not reasonable to accept [that imputational phenomena are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion] because Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence says:

on both occasions of identifying the imputational factor in the sutra 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.

[ངོ་བོ་དང་ཁྱད་པར་ལ་ཀུན་བཏགས་པའི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ȷམས་ǰབས་འདིའི་དངོས་བȪན་གྱི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཡིན་ན་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཀྱི་ཆོས་ȷམས་ǰབས་འདིའི་དངོས་བȪན་གྱི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཡིན་པས་]
[མ་ཁྱབ་ཅིང་། [ཀུན་བཏགས་ཀྱི་ཆོས་ȷམས་ǰབས་འདིའི་དངོས་བȪན་གྱི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཡིན་པར་]
[འདོད་མི་རིགས་ཏེ། [འདི་]

a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 11a.5. See Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 110 and footnote.
Comment: With respect to Tsong-kha-pa’s saying “both occasions of identifying the imputational factor in the sūtra,” according to Pan-chen Sō-nam-drag-pa and Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho, the first of the two occasions is Buddha’s answer to Paramārthaśamudgata:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

Why? It is thus: 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.”

The second is:

That which is posited by names and terminology—with respect to [other-powered natures which are] (1) the objects of activity of conceptuality, (2) the foundations of imputational characters, and (3) those which have the signs of compositional phenomena—in the character of entities [such as, “This is] a form aggregate,” or the character of particulars [that is, attributes, such as] “the production of the form aggregate,” “the cessation of the form aggregate,” “the abandonment and thorough knowledge of the form aggregate” are imputational characters.

When Tsong-kha-pa says, “I will explain the evidence for this

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a Garland of Blue Lotuses, 28a.4.
b Port of Entry, 232.6.
c 'phags pa dgon gs par 'grel pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (ārya-saṃdhinirmocana-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra), in bka’ 'gyur (sde dge, 106), BDRC W22084.49:1b.1-55b.7 (Delhi, India: Delhi Karmapae choedhey, Gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1976-1979), 17a.1-17a.2. Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86.
d Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 104.
later,” Pan-chen Sō-nam-drāg-pa\textsuperscript{a} and Jig-me-dam-chō-gya-tsho\textsuperscript{b} identify the later explanation as:\textsuperscript{c}

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.

These three passages give the impression that in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought the only type of imputational nature the emptiness of which constitutes thoroughly established nature in terms of a selflessness phenomena explicitly set forth is the establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness. However, the other type of imputational nature of which phenomena are empty is a difference of entity between subject and object. In Chapter 10 of Emptiness in Mind-Only, Tsong-kha-pa explains the connection between these two types of objects of negation and their emptiness. At the beginning of that discussion he says:\textsuperscript{d}

In many texts of this [system] there is no explanation of a consciousness conceiving a self of phenomena other than that a consciousness conceiving apprehended-object and apprehending-subject as other substantial entities is a consciousness conceiving a self of phenomena. However, the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought explains that other-powered natures are not established by way of their own character as factors imputed in the manner of entity and of attribute and that, therefore, the absence of [such] a nature of character is the selflessness of phenomena. Thus, implicitly it teaches that a consciousness conceiving that factors imputed in the manner of entity and

\textsuperscript{a} Garland of Blue Lotuses, 28b.2.
\textsuperscript{b} Port of Entry, 233.2.
\textsuperscript{c} Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 35a.3-35a.4; Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 217-218.
\textsuperscript{d} Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 194-195.
attribute are established by way of their own character in other-powered natures is a consciousness conceiving a self of phenomena.

Concluding that section, he says:

Therefore, it is also not that a negation of an otherness of substantial entity between apprehended-object and apprehending-subject is absent in the statements in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought that the emptiness of imputational factors imputed in the manner of entities and attributes is the thoroughly established nature. [Not only that, but also] in that sūtra on the occasion of [discussing] calm abiding [in the “Questions of Maitreya Chapter”], a refutation of external objects is clearly set forth.
Unpacking Debate 3 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [43]

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<tr>
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<th>When it is said that “imputational natures that are imputations of entity—as in “This is form”—and attribute—as in “This is the production of form”—are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion,” this means that:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>the superimposed factor of a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term “pot,” and</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>the superimposed factor about a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term “the production of a pot”</td>
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are those [imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion].

4. Also someone says: Imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion.

Comment: Arguing against textbook author of Lo-sel-ling College Pan-chen Sö-nam-drag-pa’s and the textbook author of Se-ra Je College Je-tsun Chö-kyi-gyal-tshan’s identification of the imputational nature relevant here as “factors imputed in the manner of entity and attribute,” Jam-yang-shay-pa complains that since this identification does not specify whether the reference is to what is explicitly or implicitly indicated in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, it is mistaken to hold that “factors imputed in the manner of entity and attribute” is the imputational nature to which the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought explicitly refers. For “factors imputed in the manner of entity and attribute” relevant to the pos-

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 26b.6; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20b.6; 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.19.
b Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #87 and #86.
iting of emptiness could be either relevant to positing the selflessness of persons or the selflessness of phenomena or both, and the only type of selflessness that is explicitly indicated here is that in terms of the self of phenomena.

Jam-yang-shay-pa’s criticism is that the term is too broad to describe what Buddha explicitly indicates since “factors imputed in the manner of entities and attributes” include imputational natures in the imputation of entity and attribute in terms of the selflessness of persons. However, Tsong-kha-pa himself never qualifies the phrase with either the self of persons or the self of phenomena, such as when he (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 110) says:

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.

For all of these scholars, the two selflessnesses are mutually exclusive—whatever is a selflessness of persons is not a selflessness of phenomena and whatever is a selflessness of phenomena is not a selflessness of persons (although whatever is without a self of persons is without a self of phenomena and vice versa). Hence, the thoroughly established nature in terms of the selflessness of persons and the thoroughly established nature in terms of the selflessness of phenomena are also mutually exclusive, the latter being what is explicitly indicated in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought at this point of discussing the middle wheel.

Still, let us consider what the intended trainees of the implicit teaching of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, the Great Exposition School and the Sūtra School, understand about the three natures. Though the sūtra itself does not address the issue, it must be addressed for the differences of the path structures of the Lesser and Great Vehicles to make sense. Most Ge-lug-pa commentators say that Lesser Vehicle understanding of the three natures in terms of the selflessness of persons means that they realize that:

1. other-powered natures are things produced, not by themselves, but by causes and conditions
2. imputational natures are the falsely ascribed sense of a substantially existent, self-sufficient person or objects of use of such a person
3. the thoroughly established nature is the absence of such a substantially existent, self-sufficient person or objects of use of such a person.

Taking the three natures this way, practitioners of Lesser Vehicle tenets cultivate the path and achieve their respective enlightenments.

Jam-yang-shay-pa, however, takes imputational natures (in terms of the selflessness of persons) in a way parallel to that presented for Great Vehicle practitioners. Just as imputational natures in terms of the selflessness of phenomena are the twofold superimposed factors of an object, such as a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid, as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term for its entity “pot” and as the referent of the term for its attribute “beautiful,” so imputational natures in terms of the selflessness of persons are the twofold superimposition of an object, such as a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold water, as established substantially or self-sufficiently as the referent of the term “pot” and as the referent of the term “beautiful.” Thus, in terms of the selflessness of persons, the imputational natures to which the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought refers are establishment of objects substantially or self-sufficiently as the referents of terms or conceptual consciousnesses and the superimposed factor (that is, appearance) of objects as established substantially or self-sufficiently as the referents of terms or conceptual consciousnesses. Jam-yang-shay-pa considers an awareness that conceives objects to be established this way as a consciousness conceiving a self of persons, even though it does not necessarily have a person as its object of observation. Hence, he also considers the emptiness of being established in this way to be a thoroughly established nature in terms of the subtle selflessness of persons.

Our response: It [absurdly] follows that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion].

a Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive, 54.1-54.5.
That imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion entails that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion because these two done in terms of the selflessness of persons exist, because they are posited as:

1. the establishment of that-which-is-suitable-as-form as substantially existent in the sense of being self-sufficient as the referent the term “form” and
2. the superimposed factor about that-which-is-suitable-as-form as established as substantially existent in the sense of being self-sufficient as the referent of the term “production of form,”

because an awareness conceiving establishment in that way is an apprehension of a self of persons, because the emptiness of establishment in that way is the thoroughly established nature done in terms of the subtle selflessness of persons.
If you [incorrectly] accept [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are the imputations explicitly indicated on this occasion], it [absurdly] follows that this is an imputation done in terms of the selflessness of phenomena because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion]. You cannot accept [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are imputational natures done in terms of the selflessness of phenomena] because the two subtle selflessnesses [of persons and phenomena] are mutually exclusive.

If you [incorrectly] accept [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are the imputations explicitly indicated on this occasion], it [absurdly] follows that this is an imputation done in terms of the selflessness of phenomena because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion]. You cannot accept [that imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are imputational natures done in terms of the selflessness of phenomena] because the two subtle selflessnesses [of persons and phenomena] are mutually exclusive.

### Unpacking Debate 4 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [50]

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The emptiness of establishment of a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid as substantially existent in the</td>
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sense of being self-sufficient as the referent the term “pot” is the thoroughly established nature done in terms of the subtle selflessness of persons.

2 An awareness conceiving establishment in that way is an apprehension of a self of persons of a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid as substantially existent in the sense of being self-sufficient as the referent the term “pot”.

3 Imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are posited as:

1. the establishment of a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid as substantially existent in the sense of being self-sufficient as the referent the term “pot,” and
2. the superimposed factor about a bulbous-bellied, flat-bottomed thing able to hold fluid as substantially existent in the sense of being self-sufficient as the referent of the term “beautiful.”

4 Imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute are the imputational natures explicitly indicated on this occasion in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.

5 The only type of selflessness that is explicitly indicated here is that in terms of the self of phenomena, but the selflessness of persons is implicitly indicated.

6 The two subtle selflessnesses—the selflessness of persons and the selflessness phenomena—are mutually exclusive.

7 Therefore, imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are not imputational natures done in terms of the selflessness of phenomena.

8 Therefore, imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of persons are not the imputations explicitly indicated on this occasion; rather, imputational natures that are imputations of entity and attribute done in terms of the selflessness of phenomena are the imputations explicitly indicated on this occasion.

5. Also someone says: a Whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily nonexistent.

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 27a.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 21a.3; 2008 Taipei reprint, 36.21.
Some one else says: Whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent.\(^a\)

Comment:\(^b\) As we have seen, for Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, the explicit reference of “imputational natures” is to:

1. the establishment of that which has a bulbous belly, is flat bottomed, and able to hold fluid, for instance, by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it as “pot” or as the referent of the term “pot,” and
2. the superimposed factor (that is, the appearance) of that which has a bulbous belly, is flat bottomed, and able to hold fluid as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it as “pot” or as the referent of the term “pot.”

Gung-ru Chö-jung\(^c\) and Jam-yang-shay-pa make the point that since the first of those two is non-existent but the second exists, it cannot be said that the imputational natures explicitly indicated at this point in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought either necessarily exist or necessarily do not exist. Although the general category—imputational natures explicitly indicated at this point in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought—exists, whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated at this point in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought does not either necessarily exist or necessarily not exist, since one class does and the other class does not. Jam-yang-shay-pa says that this is what Tsong-kha-pa (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 195) has in mind when, later, he says:

Therefore, if you do not know what this imputational factor that is a superimposed factor\(^d\) of a self of phenomena on other-powered natures is, you will not know in a decisive way

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\(^a\) For these two positions see Hopkins, Absorption In No External World, Issue #88, 209.
\(^b\) Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5a.6-5b.1.
\(^c\) Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #88.
\(^d\) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 21b.1-22b.1.
\(^d\) See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #96-#98 and #100.
the conception of a self of phenomena and the selflessness of phenomena in this [Mind-Only] system.

According to Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, in order to make sense of Tsong-kha-pa’s referring to “superimposed factor,” an existent imputational nature—specifically the superimposed factor (that is, appearance) of an object as established by way of its own character as the referent of its respective conceptual consciousness—must be posited. (Thus, when Buddha, in answer to his rhetorical question, says, “Those which are imputational characters,” they hold that he is explicitly referring to two types of imputational natures, one existent and the other non-existent.) Jam-yang-shay-pa sees Tsong-kha-pa as saying that if one does not know the **mode of superimposition** of the self of phenomena on other-powered natures, one will not have a decisive understanding of the selflessness of phenomena in this system. In order to make this point Jam-yang-shay-pa switches from “superimposed factor” to “mode of superimposition,” whereas his predecessor Gung-ru Chö-jung gives a different, but similarly inventive, reading—according to him Tsong-kha-pa’s point is that one will not have a decisive understanding of the **apprehension of a self of phenomena**—this meaning a consciousness apprehending a self of phenomena—and of the selflessness of phenomena in the Mind-Only School.

They point to the further evidence that when Tsong-kha-pa describes the usage, in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, of a flower in the sky as an example for imputational natures, he makes it clear that imputational natures are of two types. The sūtra (*Emp- tiness in Mind-Only*, 93) says:

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

Tsong-kha-pa explains that the example of a flower in the sky (which, like a pie in the sky, is totally non-existent) is used to indicate not that just as a flower in the sky is non-existent so are imputational natures, but that just as a flower in the sky is only

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**a** *gzhan dbang la chos bdag sgro btags pa'i kun brtags.*

imputed by conceptuality, so imputational natures are only imputed by conceptuality. He (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 93) says:

> The similarity of imputational factors 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].

Jam-yang-shay-pa cogently assumes that Tsong-kha-pa in this passage is using the term “imputational factors” in its strict sense, which is limited to those relevant on the occasion of positing emptiness and thus does not include uncompounded space, and so forth; hence, he draws the conclusion that for Tsong-kha-pa the imputational natures mentioned in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*—when Buddha says that imputational natures are character-non-natures—include both existent and non-existent varieties. (Another not so likely possibility is that Tsong-kha-pa moves back and forth between speaking about the imputational natures specifically discussed in the *sūtra* and speaking about imputational natures in general.)

Also, Jam-yang-shay-pa cogently holds that it is clear that with regard to Buddha’s statement, “Those [imputational characters] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character,” Tsong-kha-pa makes the distinction that there are two types, those established and those not established by valid cognition. For he (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 210) says:

> 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.

From this, Jam-yang-shay-pa concludes that the distinction of

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a See Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #78–#82.
there being both existent and non-existent imputational natures must be made even with respect to the limited meaning of imputational natures on the occasion of this discussion in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. It should be noted that Jam-yang-shay-pa repeatedly takes the existent one as the superimposed factor (or appearance) of objects as established by way of their own character as the referents of their respective conceptual consciousnesses, whereas Tsong-kha-pa here and elsewhere speaks of “form and so forth being the referents of a conceptual consciousness.” As detailed above, Jam-yang-shay-pa is trying to avoid the fault that proponents of a lower view, the Sūtra School, would absurdly be able to realize emptiness as it is described in the Mind-Only School if Tsong-kha-pa’s identification were left as it is.

Our response: It [absurdly] follows that Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence is not logically feasible when it says:

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.

because [according to you] not knowing how the mode of superimposition superimposing a self of phenomena on other-powered natures explicitly indicated by “imputational characters” is does not entail not knowing decisively the selflessness of phenomena.

It [absurdly] follows [not knowing how the mode of superimposition superimposing a self of phenomena on other-powered natures explicitly indicated by “imputational characters” is does not entail not knowing decisively the selflessness of phenomena] because [according to you] the two:

1. establishment of other-powered natures in accordance with superimposition as a self of phenomena, and

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 31a.1. See Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 195.

b See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #79, #96-98, and #100.

c The reference is to Buddha’s answer in the question and answer in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought:

What are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.
2. the superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on those [other-powered natures]

are not posited as the imputational characters explicitly indicated on this occasion [in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought].

It follows that the two:

1. establishment of other-powered natures in accordance with superimposition as a self of phenomena, and
2. the superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on those [other-powered natures]

are posited as the imputational characters explicitly indicated on this occasion [in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] because:

- those two [(1) establishment of other-powered natures in accordance with superimposition as a self of phenomena, and (2) the superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on those other-powered natures] are posited as the imputational characters explicitly indicated on this occasion.
Refuting Mistakes about Imputational Natures

occasion

- and [according to you] the distinction that the first [establishment of other-powered natures in accordance with superimposition as a self of phenomena] does not exist and the latter [the superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on those other-powered natures] exists is not logically feasible because the two theses individually [which are that “Whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily nonexistent” and according to some others “Whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent”] are logically feasible.

Moreover, it [absurdly] follows that in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.\(^a\)

It is thus: for example, character-non-natures\(^b\) are to be viewed as like a flower in the sky.

this sūtra passage indicates that just as sky-flowers are nonexistent, so also imputational natures are nonexistent because you [incorrectly] accepted [that whatever is an imputation explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily nonexistent].

\(^a\) *samdhinirmocanasūtra*, 17b.2-17b.3. See Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 93.

\(^b\) That is, imputational natures.
It is not reasonable to accept [that this sūtra passage indicates that just as sky-flowers are nonexistent, so also imputational natures are nonexistent], because the distinction that without indicating such, [the sūtra] indicates that just as flowers in the sky are only imputed by conceptuality, imputational natures also are only imputed by conceptuality is logically feasible, because Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence says:

The similarity of imputational factors with a flower in the sky is an example of their being only imputed by conceptuality and is not an example of their not occurring among objects of knowledge [that is, existents; hence, the exemplification does not indicate that all imputational factors do not exist].

Moreover, it [absurdly] follows that [according to your two theses that

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 7a.6-7b.2. See Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 94.
all imputational natures are (1) existent or (2) nonexistent] it is not logically feasible for Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* to say.\(^a\)

Thus, form and so forth being the referents of conceptual consciousesses 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.

because [according to you] the imputational natures only posited by name and terminology that are explicitly indicated on the occasion of the statement,\(^b\) “They are posited by name and terminology,” are not taken as two—those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition.

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\(^a\) Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 33a.6-33b.2. See *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School*, 210.

\(^b\) This is statement in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, cited for the first time above, 15:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

Why? It is thus: *They 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.”*
It [absurdly] follows [that the imputational natures only posited by name and terminology that are explicitly indicated on the occasion of the statement, “They are posited by name and terminology,” are not taken as two—those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition] because [according to you] the imputational natures that are explicitly indicated in the sūtra passage, “Those which are imputational natures” are this [that is, are not taken as two—those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition]. It [absurdly] follows [that the imputational natures that are explicitly indicated in the sūtra passage, “Those which are imputational natures” are not taken as two—those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition] because [according to you] both theses individually [which are that “whatever is an imputation explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily nonexistent” and according to some “whatever is an imputation explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent”] are logically feasible.

Moreover, it [absurdly] follows that the meaning in this passage in

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\(^{a}\) 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 28a.3; 1987 Old Go-mang, 21b.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 38.12.
Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence:*\(^a\)

*Implicit* to the commentary by the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* on the meaning of the Great Vehicle sūtras, that:

- the positing of the aggregates and so forth as other-powered natures
- the positing of the self of phenomena superimposed on those as the imputational factor
- the positing of their emptiness of that [imputational nature] as the thoroughly established nature that is the selflessness of phenomena

[one can understand that the meaning of the Low Vehicle sūtras is just the presentation of the three natures in which the emptiness of the imputational factor—a self of persons—in other-powered natures, the aggregates, is posited as the thoroughly established nature that is the selflessness of persons].

is not established because [according to you]:

1. the passage [in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* beginning with “What are] production-non-natures of phenomena?”\(^b\) does not *explicitly* indicate how other-powered natures such as the aggregates and so forth are production-non-natures.
2. the passage [in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* beginning with] “What are character-non-natures of phenomena?”\(^c\) does not *explicitly* indicate the imputational nature that is the superimposed self of phenomena onto the aggregates and so forth

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\(^a\) Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 36b.3-36b.4. Hopkins’ revised translation, *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School*, 224, in accordance with his *Absorption*, Issue #153; see also Issues #154-#157.

\(^b\) The full passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* is:

> What are production-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are the other-powered characters of phenomena.

> Why? It is thus: Those [other-powered characters] arise through the force of other conditions and not by themselves. Therefore, they are said to be “production-non-natures.”

\(^c\) The full passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* is:

> Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

> Why? It is thus: 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.”
3. the passage [in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought beginning with] “What are ultimate-non-natures of phenomena?” does not explicitly indicate that the emptiness of the aggregates and so forth being established in accordance with the superimposed self of phenomena is the thoroughly established nature.

It [absurdly] follows [that]:

1. the passage (in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought beginning with

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a The full passage in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is:

What are ultimate-non-natures? Those dependently arisen phenomena—which are natureless due to being natureless in terms of production—are also natureless due to being natureless in terms of the ultimate.

Why? Paramārthasamudgata, that which is an object of observation of purification in phenomena I teach to be the ultimate, and other-powered characters are not the object of observation of purification. Therefore, they are said to be “ultimate-non-natures.”
“What are) production-non-natures of phenomena?” does not explicitly indicate how other-powered natures such as the aggregates and so forth are production-non-natures

2. the passage (in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought beginning with)

“What are character-non-natures of phenomena?” does not explicitly indicate the imputational nature that is the superimposed self of phenomena onto the aggregates and so forth

3. the passage (in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought beginning with)

“What are ultimate-non-natures of phenomena?” does not explicitly indicate that the emptiness of the aggregates and so forth being established in accordance with the superimposed self of phenomena is the thoroughly established nature]

because [according to you] the middle [wheel of doctrine] explicitly teaches this way. It [absurdly] follows [that the middle (wheel of doctrine) explicitly teaches this way] because [according to you] the imputational nature explicitly taught on this occasion—the superimposed factor of a self of phenomena of the aggregates and so forth—does not exist, because [according to you] your first thesis [which is that whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily nonexistent] is logically feasible.

Unpacking Debate 5 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [55]
1. The two:
   1. establishment of other-powered natures in accordance with superimposition as a self of phenomena, and
   2. the superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on those other-powered natures

are posited as the imputational characters explicitly indicated on this occasion in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*.

2. Therefore, since the imputational characters, or natures, explicitly indicated on this occasion in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* are two, it is not logically feasible that “whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily nonexistent” or that “whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent.”

3. In the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* this sūtra passage:
   
   It is thus: for example, character-non-natures [that is, imputational natures] are to be viewed as like a flower in the sky.

indicates that just as flowers in the sky are only imputed by conceptuality, so imputational natures also are only imputed by conceptuality, and thus this is not an example of their not occurring among existents; hence, the exemplification does not indicate that all imputational factors do not exist.

4. The imputational natures only posited by name and terminology that are explicitly indicated on the occasion of the statement in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, “They are posited by name and terminology,” are taken as two—those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition.
The middle wheel of doctrine explicitly teaches this way:

1. the passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* beginning with “What are production-non-natures of phenomena?” *explicitly* indicates how other-powered natures such as the aggregates and so forth are production-non-natures;
2. the passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* beginning with “What are character-non-natures of phenomena?” *explicitly* indicates the imputational nature that is the superimposed self of phenomena onto the aggregates and so forth;
3. the passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* beginning with “What are ultimate-non-natures of phenomena?” *explicitly* indicates that the emptiness of the aggregates and so forth being established in accordance with the superimposed self of phenomena is the thoroughly established nature.

Therefore, Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* says:

*Implicit* to the commentary by the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* on the meaning of the Great Vehicle sūtras, that:

- the positing of the aggregates and so forth as other-powered natures,
- the positing of the self of phenomena superimposed on those as the imputational factor, and
- the positing of their emptiness of that [imputational nature] as the thoroughly established nature that is the selflessness of phenomena

[one can understand that the meaning of the Low Vehicle sūtras is just the presentation of the three natures in which the emptiness of the imputational factor—a self of persons—in other-powered natures, the aggregates, is posited as the thoroughly established nature that is the selflessness of persons].

6. *Also someone says:* It follows that whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion [of the Buddha saying in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*:

What are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters]

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a 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 28b.2; 1987 Old Go-mang, 22a.1; 2008 Taipei reprint, 38.12.
necessarily is existent because being that [imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion] necessitates being the imputational nature that is relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor, the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature.\textsuperscript{a}

Comment:\textsuperscript{b} Gung-ru Chö-jung\textsuperscript{c} and Jam-yang-shay-pa examine the far-fetched notion that what is relevant to positing emptiness would have to exist. The qualm they are countering is that something non-existent could not be relevant to anything, in which case the imputational natures explicitly indicated at this point would have to exist, simply because they have to be relevant to the positing of the thoroughly established nature. When Tsong-kha-pa (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 85) says:

> Although among imputational factors in general there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena and 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.

one (who did not know that an emptiness is the non-existence of something that never did or will exist) might become confused due to thinking that to be relevant something must exist, since it might

\textsuperscript{b} Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #91.
\textsuperscript{c} Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Loutuses, 23a.3-23b.1.
seem that relevance and irrelevance could not be posited with respect to the non-existent.

Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa answer that although the non-existent cannot be comprehended—\(a\)—the unstated reason being that object of comprehension—\(b\) and existent—\(c\) are equivalent—this does not entail that the vocabulary of relevance cannot be used with respect to the non-existent. Thus the non-existent (specifically, the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses) can be relevant with respect to positing the thoroughly established nature, for the thoroughly established nature is the emptiness of the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses.

**Our response:** [That being the imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion of “What are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters” necessitates being the imputational nature that is relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor, the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature] does not entail [that whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent].

**The opponent’s rejoinder:** [That being the imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion of “What are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters” necessitates being the imputational nature that is relevant on the occasion of the imputational factor, the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature] does entail [that whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent] because [being nonexistent entails not

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\(a\) ma gzhal ba.

\(b\) gzhal bya.

\(c\) yod pa.
being relevant on the occasion of positing the thoroughly established nature].

It follows [that being nonexistent entails not being relevant on the occasion of positing the thoroughly established nature] because being nonexistent entails not being suitable for affixing the convention “relevant” or “not relevant.” It follows [that being nonexistent entails not being suitable for affixing the convention “relevant” or “not relevant”] because being nonexistent entails not being comprehended.

Our response: [That being nonexistent entails not being comprehended] does not entail [that being nonexistent entails not being suitable for affixing the convention “relevant” or “not relevant”] because in order to ascertain the selflessness of phenomena a generality of the self of phenomena—the object of negation—must dawn as an object of awareness, and since for this [generality of the self of phenomena, the object of negation, to dawn as an object of awareness] the mode of superimposition of a self of phenomena must appear as an object of awareness, it is explained that the two imputations—(1) the self of phenomena which is the object of negation and (2) the superimposed factor [that is, the appearance] of the self of phenomena—are relevant on the occasion of positing the emptiness of the item\(^a\) [that is, the establishment of objects by way of their own character.

\(^a\) *rang nyid*, literally, “itself”; given that “itself” leads to looking for a grammatical antecedent *rang nyid* also could be translated here as “x”.
as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses,] as the thoroughly established nature, because without a meaning-generality of an object of negation appearing as an object of awareness, it is not possible for a non-affirming negative that negates this object of negation to dawn as an object of awareness, because Shāntideva’s *Engaging in Bodhisattva Deeds* (IX.140) says:a

Without contacting the superimposed actuality
Its nonactuality is not apprehended.b

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b Or:

Without contacting the imagined existent
Its non-existence is not apprehended.
### Unpacking Debate 6 to reveal Go-mang's Positions [69]

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| 1 | Without a meaning-generality of an object of negation appearing as an object of awareness, it is not possible for a non-affirming negative that negates this object of negation to dawn as an object of awareness, because as Shāntideva’s *Engaging in Bodhisattva Deeds* (IX.140) says:\(^a\)  
Without contacting the superimposed actuality  
Its nonactuality is not apprehended.\(^b\) |

2 | Therefore, it is explained that there are two imputations involved here—(1) the nonexistent self of phenomena which is the object of negation and (2) the existent superimposed factor, that is, the appearance or meaning-generality, of the self of phenomena. |

3 | The thoroughly established nature is the emptiness of the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. Hence, a nonexistent—the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses—is relevant on the occasion of positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature. Thus it is clear that being nonexistent does not entail not being relevant on the occasion of positing the thoroughly established nature. Something nonexistent is relevant, is even central, to positing emptiness. |

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7. *Also someone says:*\(^c\) It follows that whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion (*skabs su mkho ba*) of positing the emptiness of the item\(^d\) [that is, the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses,] as the thoroughly established nature must be the imputational nature of the occasion (*skabs kyi*) of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established

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\(^a\) Shāntideva, byang chub sems dpa’i spyod pa la ’jug pa (bodhisattvacaryāvatāra), in bstan ’gyur (sde dge, 3871), BDRC W23703.105:84-578 (Delhi, India: Delhi Karmapa chodhey, Gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1982-1985), 36a.6.

\(^b\) Or:  
Without contacting the imagined existent  
Its non-existence is not apprehended.

\(^c\) 2011 BDRC bla brang, 28b.6; 1987 Old Go-mang, 22a.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 39.3. For this debate see Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issues #90–#92.

\(^d\) rang nyid, literally, “itself”; given that “itself” leads to looking for a grammatical antecedent rang nyid also could be translated here as “x”.
nature because whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of [positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature] must be the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of the item. It follows that whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature) must be the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of the item because whatever is that imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature) does not have to be not the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of the item.

Comment: When Tsong-kha-pa (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 85) says:

Although among imputational factors in general there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena and space, and so forth, the reason why these are not [explicitly] mentioned in the Sutra 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.

\[\text{a} \text{ Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #90, 212-214.}\]
he does not appear to allow that there are two varieties—nonexistent and existent—of the imputational factor the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature, just nonexistent.

Gung-ru Chö-jung\(^a\) and Jam-yang-shay-pa\(^b\) admit that the imputational nature the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature must be just the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousneses\(^c\) and not the appearance of such. That of which phenomena are empty when it is said that they are empty of a self of phenomena is necessarily nonexistent, whereas the appearance of establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousneses exists. Tsong-kha-pa’s seemingly clear statement poses a problem for Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa since they are forced by their own assertions into holding that the imputational natures relevant here do not have to be the imputational factor the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature but also include this existent appearance, since, as was made clear in the last debate, it also is relevant.

To undo the problem, they make a distinction between (1) the imputational nature the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature and (2) the imputational natures relevant on the occasion of positing the emptiness of a particular imputational nature as the thoroughly established nature. Therefore, they re-read Tsong-kha-pa’s pivotal statement as:

Although among imputational factors in general there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena and 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 positing the emptiness of whatsoever [that is, a particular] imputational nature as the thoroughly established nature.

To repeat: they admit that the imputational nature the emptiness

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\(^a\) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotus*, 24a.2-24a.5.

\(^b\) Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, 57.6-58.4; *Brief Decisive Analysis*, 500.3-501.2.

\(^c\) The discussion here is restricted to what is explicitly presented in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. Otherwise, it is necessary to include the difference of entity between subject and object as well as the object of negation in the selflessness of persons.
of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature is just the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses, but they hold that the imputational natures relevant on the occasion of positing the thoroughly established nature are not restricted to this, for there is also the appearance of the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. Still, in Tsong-kha-pa’s statement the impression is conveyed that the relevant imputational nature is just the imputational nature of which other-powered natures are empty, namely, the imputational nature the emptiness of which is posited as the thoroughly established nature. That is just the object of negation in the selflessness of phenomena. Gung-ru Chō-jung’s and Jam-yang-shay-pa’s reading is a creative effort to achieve consistency among Tsong-kha-pa’s statements that:

1. Other imputational natures are not mentioned in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought at this point.
2. Only those relevant to the positing of emptiness as the thoroughly established nature are mentioned.
3. Among the imputational natures that are mentioned there are existent and non-existent types.

When they identified the existent type as the superimposed factor, that is, appearance, of the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses, they, as in the previous debate, show its relevance to identifying the object of negation in the process of meditating on selflessness.

Thus, the point is that it is helpful to make a distinction between (1) the imputational natures relevant on the occasion (skabs su mkho ba) and (2) the imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature. The first, the imputational natures relevant on the occasion (skabs su mkho ba) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature, are twofold:

a. the (nonexistent) establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness: this is relevant because its emptiness is the thoroughly established nature explicitly indicated in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought at this juncture, and
b. the (existent) superimposed factor, that is, the image that appears to the mind, of establishment of phenomena by way of
their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness. This is relevant because the image of misimagined status of phenomena has to appear to mind in order to identify what has to be negated.a

The imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature, on the other hand, is just the establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness.

Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa introduce this by raising the above initial objection in this seventh debate from an opponent who mistakenly sees these two terms as equivalent (1) the imputational natures relevant on the occasion (skabs su mkho ba) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature and (2) the imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature.

Our response: [That whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature)] does not have to be not the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of the item] does not entail [that whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature) must be the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of the item].

If you say [that the sign which is that whatever is the imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature)] does not have to be not the thoroughly established nature which is the emptiness of the item] is not established, it follows that the subject, establishment by way of own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending it, is that [emptiness of the item which must be the thoroughly established nature] because of

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a Therefore, an imputational nature relevant on the occasion (skabs su mkho ba) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature does not have to be not “a.” just above, it could be “a.”
being [an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature].

If you [incorrectly] accept the root [consequence which is that whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion (skabs su mkho ba) of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature must be the imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature], then it [absurdly] follows that the subject, the superimposed factor [of forms and so forth] as established by way of their own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending them, is the imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature because of being an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of [positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature]. You [incorrectly] asserted [that being an imputational nature relevant on the occasion (skabs su mkho ba) of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature] entails being an imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature].
If you [incorrectly] accept [that the subject, the superimposed factor (of forms and so forth) as established by way of own character as the referents of the conceptual consciousness apprehending them is the imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature], it [absurdly] follows [that the superimposed factor (of forms and so forth) as established by way of their own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending them] does not exist because of being the imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature. You have asserted [that being the imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of the item as the thoroughly established nature] entails [being nonexistent].
### Unpacking Debate 7 to reveal Go-mang's Positions

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<td>1</td>
<td>Imputational natures <strong>relevant on the occasion</strong> (<em>skabs su mkho ba</em>) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature are twofold:</td>
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<td>a. the <em>(nonexistent)</em> establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness: this is relevant because its emptiness is the thoroughly established nature explicitly indicated in the <em>Sūtra Unraveling the Thought</em> at this juncture, and</td>
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<td>b. the <em>(existent)</em> superimposed factor, that is, the image that appears to the mind, of establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness. This is relevant because the image of misimagined status of phenomena has to appear to mind in order to identify what has to be negated,</td>
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<td>whereas the imputational nature <strong>of the occasion</strong> (<em>skabs kyi</em>) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature, on the other hand, is just the establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness.</td>
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<td>An imputational nature <strong>relevant on the occasion</strong> (<em>skabs su mkho ba</em>) of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature does not have to be not “a” in the list just above; thus, it does not have to be “b” and could be “a.”</td>
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<td>Therefore: establishment by way of own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending it is an imputational nature <strong>relevant on the occasion</strong> of positing the emptiness of establishment by way of own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending it as the thoroughly established nature, and</td>
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<td>the superimposed factor—that is, appearance—of forms and so forth as established by way of their own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending them is also an imputational nature <strong>relevant on the occasion</strong> of positing the emptiness of establishment by way of own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending it as the thoroughly established nature, but</td>
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|   | the superimposed factor—that is, appearance—of forms and so
forth as established by way of their own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending them is not an imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of establishment by way of own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending it as the thoroughly established nature.

8. Also, someone says: The nonestablishment—by way of their own character—of imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes is a subtle selflessness of phenomena.\(^b\)

Comment: As Gung-ru Chö-jung\(^d\) and Jam-yang-shay-pa say, it is necessary to understand that what is being refuted is that objects are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and not just that an appearance to a conceptual consciousness that objects are established this way is itself established by way of its own character. For, to conceive that such an appearance to a conceptual consciousness is established by way of its own character is not a subtle apprehension of a self of phenomena because even Proponents of Sūtra ascertain with valid cognition that a conceptual consciousness apprehending that a form, for instance, is established this way is mistaken with respect to such an appearance but in an entirely different way:

Proponents of Sūtra understand that a conceptual consciousness is mistaken with respect to its appearing object since they realize that even a correct inferential consciousness realizing subtle impermanence, for instance, has a mistaken factor in that its appearing object—an image, or meaning-generality, of

\(^a\) 2011 BDRC bla brang, 20a.4; 1987 Old Go-mang, 22b.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 39.12.
\(^b\) See Hopkins, Reflections on Reality, 474 passim.
\(^c\) Quoting Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #92, 215-216.
\(^d\) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 24a.5-25a.1.
Refuting Mistakes about Imputational Natures

subtle impermanence—appears to be subtle impermanence itself whereas it is not.

The consciousness is not wrong in the sense of conceiving the image to be the actual thing, but it does have the mistaken factor of the image’s seeming to be the actual thing, like the image of a face in a mirror seeming to be a face. Since Proponents of Sūtra realize that this sort of image is a superimposed factor that is not established by way of its own character, they realize that the image—of a form’s being established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness—which appears to such a conceptual consciousness to be a form established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness is a mere superimposed factor not established by way of its own character. In this vein, Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang’s *Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* says:

Concerning that, 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. 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].

Through citing Khay-drub, Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa back up their points:

1. that the imputational natures relevant here are of two varieties, the object of negation in selflessness and the appearance of

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a Superimposed factors (*sgro btags*), in general, are either non-existent, as is the case with the horns of a rabbit, or existent, as is the case with uncompounded space. The mere appearance that is being discussed here is an existent superimposed factor.

b 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.
such, since why else would Khay-drub bother to mention the latter;
2. neither of these is established by way of its own character;
3. but the fact that the latter is not established by way of its own character does not constitute a subtle selflessness of phenomena, since a lower school, the Proponents of Sūtra, can realize that such an appearance is not established by way of its own character.

From these facts, they make the terminological point that even though at first blush one might think that the subtle selflessness of phenomena is constituted by the non-establishment—by way of their own character—of imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes, such is not the case, since imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes are of two varieties—(1) the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and (2) the appearance of such. The subtle selflessness of phenomena is constituted by the non-establishment only of the first of these.

Our response: It follows that [saying that the non-establishment—by way of their own character—of imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes is the subtle selflessness of phenomena] is not logically feasible because the apprehension of establishment in that way [that is, the apprehension of imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes as established by way of their own character] is not a subtle apprehension of the self of phenomena. It follows [that the apprehension of imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes as established by way of their own character is not a subtle apprehension of a self of phenomena] because the non-establishment—by way of its own character—of the appearance of form as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending form is not the subtle selflessness of phenomena. It follows [that the non-establishment—by way of own character—of the appearance of form as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending form is not the subtle selflessness of phenomena] because the realization that the appearance to a conceptual consciousness apprehending that [form] as established in that way [by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending form] is not established by way of its own character in accordance with appearance does not fulfill the meaning of realizing the subtle selflessness of phenomena.
It follows [that the realization that the appearance to a conceptual consciousness apprehending that form as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending form is not established by way of its own character in accordance with appearance does not fulfill the meaning of realizing the subtle selflessness of phenomena] because Proponents of Sūtra ascertain through valid cognition that this conceptual consciousness—which apprehends that such appearance as established by way of its own character—is a consciousness mistaken with respect to such appearance. It follows [that Proponents of Sūtra ascertain through valid cognition that this conceptual appearance as established by way of its own character—is a consciousness mistaken with respect to such appearance] because Proponents of Sūtra ascertain such appearances as superimposed
factors which are not established by way of their own character.

It follows [that Proponents of Sūtra ascertain such appearances as superimposed factors which are not established by way of their own character] because they ascertain with valid cognition that those [appearances to conceptual consciousnesses] are not established by way of their own character, because Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang’s Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate says:

Concerning that, 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. 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

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a Khay-drub-ge-leg-pal-sang (mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, 1385-1438), zab mo stong pa nyid kyi de kho na nyid rab tu gsal bar byed pa’i bstan bcos skal bzang mig ’byed, in gsung ’bum (mkhas grub rje), BDRC W1KG10279.1:185-708 (bla brang bkra shis ’khyil, [199?]), 22a.2-22a.5.
conceptual consciousness could constitute realization of the selflessness of phenomena [in the Mind-Only School].

Unpacking Debate 8 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [82]

1. Though it might look like the nonestablishment—by way of their own character—of imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, it is not because even a lower school such as Proponents of Sūtra ascertain through valid cognition that a conceptual consciousness—which apprehends that the appearance to a conceptual consciousness apprehending that form as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending form—is a consciousness mistaken with respect to such appearance.

2. This is because Proponents of Sūtra ascertain such appearances as superimposed factors which are not established by way of their own character.

3. Therefore, since imputational factors in the imputation of entities and attributes are of two varieties—(1) the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual
consciousnesses and (2) the appearance of such, the subtle selflessness of phenomena is constituted only by the nonestablishment of the first: the nonestablishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses.

9. Also, someone says: It follows that the meaning of this passage in this very text [Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence]:

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 necessarily being only imputed by conceptuality. is not established because the distinction that whatever is an imputational nature necessarily is “only imputed by conceptuality” (rtog pas btags tsam) but are not necessarily “only posited by names and terminology” (ming brdas bzhag tsam) is not logically feasible.

\begin{itemize}
\item[a] 2011 BDRC bla brang, 29b.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 22b.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 40.7.
\item[b] Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 35a.4-35a.5, and 1987 Old Go-mang, 23a.1, lack dgos, whereas the edition at the monastery Jam-yang-shay-pa founded later in his life, BDRC bla brang, 29b.5, does indeed have an added dgos. The translation is from Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 218, which also lacks “necessarily” (dgos) but which I have included in the translation here in an attempt to accord with Jam-yang-shay-pa’s version at this point with the added dgos. None of the five editions exhaustively used in Hopkins’ edition of Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 355-356) has dgos; it appears that Jam-yang-shay-pa added it to the quotation in the bla brang edition; the meaning is not affected by the addition.
\item[c] This statement seems to contradict an earlier statement by Tsong-kha-pa that equates being posited by names and terminology with being only imputed by conceptuality (Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86):

‘Here, the measure indicated 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.

Comment: Jam-yang-shay-pa gets around the problems seemingly posed by Tsong-kha-pa’s statement by making a distinction between being “only posited by names and terminology” (ming brdas bzhag tsam) and “posited by only names and terminology” (ming brda tsam gyis bzhag pa). By taking Tsong-kha-pa’s “only posited by names and terminology” (ming brdas bzhag tsam) as “posited by only names and terminology” (ming brda tsam gyis bzhag pa) Jam-yang-shay-pa can accept the reason clause. As delineated by the Khalkha Mongolian Ngag-wang-pal-dan, Jamyang-shay-pa’s position is that existent imputational natures are “only posited by names and terminology” but not “posited by only names and terminology,” and hence when Tsong-kha-pa says that “many of those are existents that cannot be posited by names and terminology,” he means that they cannot be “posited by only names and terminology,” even though they are “only posited by names and terminology.”

Given what Tsong-kha-pa says on the surface, it is understandable that scholars such as Pañ-chen Sö-nam-drag-pa hold that uncompounded space, sound’s emptiness of permanence, and so forth are “not posited by names and terminology,” since Pañ-chen Sö-nam-drag-pa does not make the distinction that Jamyang-shay-pa does and, instead, simply are left with holding that uncompounded space and sound’s emptiness of permanence are “not posited by names and terminology.”

Our response: [That the distinction that whatever is an imputational nature necessarily is “only imputed by conceptuality” but are not necessarily “only posited by names and terminology” is not logically feasible] does not entail [that the meaning of this passage in The Essence of Eloquence

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a See two notes above.
b Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #107, 279-282.
c pañ chen bsod nams grags pa, Garland of Blue Lotuses, 29a.4-29b.5.
is not established] because:

The likes of sound’s emptiness of permanence, although it cannot be posited by only names and terminology (ming brda tsam gyis bzhag pa), is not established by way of its own character because it is only imputed by conceptuality (rtog pas btags tsam).

is the meaning of this passage [from Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence:

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 necessarily being only imputed by conceptuality.] because [the Second Dalai Lama] Gen-dun-gya-tsho’s Commentary on the Difficult Points [of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive”: Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Meaning of the Thought] immediately at the point of having cited that passage [from Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence] says: a

because [that passage] says that sound’s emptiness of permanence, the aggregates’ selflessness, and so forth cannot be posited by only the words (tshig tsam gyis 'jog mi nus pa) “sound is empty of permanence” and “the aggregates are selfless.”

[་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཡིན་ན་Ȧོག་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་ཡིན་པས་ཁྱབ་ཅིང་། མིང་བȰས་བཞག་ཙམ་ཡིན་པས་མ་ཁྱབ་པའི་ཁྱད་པར་མི་འཐད་པ་ཡིན་ན་འདི་ཉིད་ལས། དེ་དག་གི་མང་པོ་ཞིག་མིང་དང་འཇོག་མི་ȶས་པའི་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་ཡང་། རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ǿབ་པ་མིན་ཏེ། ཆིབས་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་ཡིན་དགོས་པའི་ɾང་དོན་མ་ǿབ་Ȫེ། Ȍ་Ȧག་Ȫོང་Ȩ་ɍ་ཡང་མིང་[L30a]

[a Gen-dun-gya-tsho, Second Dalai Lama, drang nges rnam 'byed kyi dka’ 'grel dgongs pa'i don rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i sgron me, in gsung 'bum (dge 'dun rgya misho), BDRC W861.2:607-817 (dkar mdzes par ma: [s.n.], [199-]), 7b.4-7b.5, and later (44b.1-44b.2) refers to this explanation. Jam-yang-shay-pa’s citation begins with the close quote zhes of Second Dalai Lama’s citation of Tsong-kha-pa’s passage.]
Comment: It is not contradictory for sound’s emptiness of permanence to be “only imputed by conceptuality” (rtog pas btags tsam) and “only posited by names and terminology” (ming brdas bzhag tsam) and yet not be “posited by only names and terminology” (ming brda tsam gyis bzhag pa). The term “only” in “only posited by names and terminology” eliminates that sound’s emptiness of permanence is established by way of its own character, and indeed it must be asserted that sound’s emptiness of permanence is not established by way of its own character, since it is a mere negation of permanence. However, the term “only” in “posited by only names and terminology” would indicate that sound’s emptiness of permanence could be posited by the mere phrase, “Sound is empty of permanence,” and could be posited only by the arbitrary force of conceiving it to be empty of permanence rather than being posited by way of reasoning by the forceful power of facts.

It is unsuitable to assert that sound’s emptiness of permanence is posited only arbitrarily since, unlike arbitrarily calling the round orb in the sky with a big rabbit in it “rabbit one” (Indians see a rabbit, not a man) or calling it “mate” (Tibetans see the moon as the equal of the sun), sound’s emptiness of permanence must be established by reasoning through the force of facts (dngos stobs kyi rigs pa), specifically, for instance, through the fact of its being a product. Sound’s emptiness of permanence, therefore, is assigned as an object of inference through the force of facts, whereas the suitability of calling the orb in the sky with a rabbit in it “rabbit one” is assigned as an object of inference through renown, since its being called “rabbit-one” is established only arbitrarily through the wish to call it this.

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a Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #107, 281.
### Unpacking Debate 9 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [88]

| 1 | Jam-yang-shay-pa makes a distinction between being “only posited by names and terminology” (ming brdas bzhag tsam) and “posited by only names and terminology” (ming brda tsam gyis bzhag pa). |
| 2 | Hence when Tsong-kha-pa says that “many of those are existents that cannot be posited by names and terminology,” he means that they cannot be “posited by only names and terminology,” even though they are “only posited by names and terminology.” Otherwise, sound’s emptiness of permanence, the aggregates’ selflessness, and so forth could be posited by only the words (tshig tsam gyis ’jog nus pa) “sound is empty of permanence” and “the aggregates are selfless.” |

#### 10. About this, someone says: 

**a** It [absurdly] follows that the subject, sound’s emptiness of permanence, is posited by only names and terminology (ming brda tsam gyis bzhag pa) because of being only posited by names and terminology (ming brdas bzhag tsam).**b**

Our response: [Being only posited by names and terminology] does not entail [being posited by only names and terminology]. The sign [which is that sound’s emptiness of permanence is only posited by names and terminology] is established because of (1) being only posited by the two, the term expressing the item and the conceptual consciousness apprehending the item, and (2) “names” in the phrase “names and terminology” are taken as terms that are means of expression, and “terminology” [in the phrase “names and terminology”] is taken as conceptual consciousnesses.

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**a** 2011 BDRC bla brang, 30a.3; 1987 Old Go-mang, 23a.3; 2008 Taipei reprint, 40.17.

**b** See Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #105, 273ff.
The first [part of the reason which is that sound’s emptiness of permanence is only posited by the two, the term expressing the item and the conceptual consciousness apprehending the item] is established because of being only posited by the conceptual consciousness apprehending it.

The two signs [which are that “names” in the phrase “names and terminology” are taken as terms that are means of expression, and “terminology” [in the phrase “names and terminology”] is taken as conceptual consciousnesses] are individually established because the two—the term expressing [sound’s emptiness of permanence] and the conceptual consciousness apprehending [sound’s emptiness of permanence]—similarly engage their objects and because [sound’s emptiness of permanence] is only imputed by conceptuality.

It is not reasonable to accept [that sound’s emptiness of permanence is posited by only names and terminology] because there exists a purpose in engaging in correct signs and inference proving sound empty of permanence.
At the point above where [we answered that being only posited by names and terminology does not entail being posited by only (tsam) names and terminology]: To him/her it [absurdly] follows that the subject, the teaching of the Buddha, is held by just (kho na) Proponents of Sūtra because of being just held by Proponents of Sūtra, because those [Proponents of Sūtra] hold it, because all four proponents of tenets hold it.

It is not reasonable to accept the root [consequence which is that the teaching of the Buddha is held by only Proponents of Sūtra] because it is also held by Proponents of Mind-Only.

Furthermore, it [absurdly] follows that being solely (‘ba’ zhig) a superimposition of the Hearer Schools necessitates being a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools because being only posited by names and terminology necessitates being posited by only names and terminology. You asserted the sign [which is that being only posited by names and terminology necessitates being posited by only names and terminology].

\[\text{[L30b]}\]
If you [incorrectly] accept [that being solely a superimposition of the Hearer Schools necessitates being a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools], it [absurdly] follows that the subject, the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder is [a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools] because of [being solely a superimposition of the Hearer Schools]. You [incorrectly] asserted [that being solely a superimposition of the Hearer Schools] entails [necessarily being a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools]. The sign [which is that the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder is solely a superimposition of the Hearer Schools] is established because Gyal-tshab-dar-ma-rin-chen’s Ornament for the Essence says:a

Here it is unreasonable to assert the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder because it is solely a superimposition of the Hearer Schools.

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a Gyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen (rgyal tshab dar ma rin chen, 1364-1432), rnam bshad snying po i rgyan, in gsung 'bum (rgyal tshab rje), BDRC W29194.2:3-710 (Dharamsala: Sherig Parkhang, 1997), 16a.2-16a.3.
If you [incorrectly] accept [that the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder is a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools], it [absurdly] follows [that the subject, the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder,] is asserted by just \((kho\ nas)\) the Hearer Schools because you [incorrectly] accepted [that it is a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools]. It is not reasonable to accept [that the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder is accepted by solely the Hearer Schools] because it is asserted also by most Proponents of Mind-Only Following Scripture.

Furthermore, it [absurdly] follows that the subject, external objects, are a superimposition of solely the Hearer Schools because of being solely superimposed in Hearer Schools. It follows [that external objects are solely superimposed in Hearer Schools] because [external objects] are just \((kho\ nas)\) superimposed by them [the Hearer Schools] because of being superimposed by them [the Hearer Schools].
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[Being superimposed by the Hearer Schools] entails [being just (kho nas) superimposed by the Hearer Schools] because whatever is asserted by them must be just (kho nas) asserted by them because whatever exists must be just existent because pots are just existent because (1) [pots] exist and (2) are not nonexistent.

It is not reasonable to accept the root [consequence which is that external objects are a superimposition of only the Hearer Schools] because [external objects] are also superimposed by the Consequentialists, because those [Consequentialists] assert external objects.

### Unpacking Debate 10 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [92]

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Names” (ming) in the phrase “names and terminology” (ming brda) are taken as terms that are means of expression (rjod byed kyi sgra), and “terminology” (brda) is taken as conceptual consciousness (rtag pa).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The two—the term expressing sound’s emptiness of permanence and the conceptual consciousness apprehending sound’s emptiness of permanence—similarly engage their objects.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>There is a purpose in engaging in correct signs and inference proving sound empty of permanence; hence, sound’s emptiness of permanence cannot be posited by only (tsam) names and terminology although sound’s emptiness of permanence is only posited by names and terminology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>For instance, the teaching of the Buddha is just (<em>kho na</em>) held by Proponents of Sūtra but is not held by just Proponents of Sūtra because all four proponents of tenets hold it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Similarly, the severance of the continuum of matter and mind on the occasion of a nirvāṇa without remainder is solely (<em>'ba' zhig</em>) a superimposition of the Hearer Schools, but it is not a superimposition by solely the Hearer Schools because it is asserted also by most Proponents of Mind-Only Following Scripture, that is, following Asaṅga.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>And similarly, although external objects are solely superimposed by Hearer Schools and are just (<em>kho nas</em>) superimposed by Hearer Schools, external objects are not superimposed by solely the Hearer Schools or by just the Hearer Schools because external objects are also superimposed by the Consequentialists.</td>
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</table>
b' Presentation of our own system

With respect to the subject, the superimposed factor of forms and so forth as established by way of their own character as the referent of the conceptual consciousness apprehending them, there is evidence for calling it “character-non-nature” because it is called such by the evidence that (1) from the positive side it is only posited by names and terminology and (2) from the negative side it is not established by way of its own character.

c' Dispelling objections

11. Someone says: It follows that it is not reasonable to take the meaning of the character non-nature explicitly indicated in [the statement in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought], “Therefore, those [imputational characters] are said to be ‘character-non-natures,’” as the subtle selflessness of phenomena because the meaning of not subsisting by way of their own character explicitly indicated in [the same statement in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] “do not subsist by way of their own character” is not taken as the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

Comment: Jam-yang-shay-pa accepts that in this statement in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought the meaning of the character non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena. This is surprising because if the meaning of the character non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, then the meaning of the character non-

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 31a.2; 1987 Old Go-mang, 23b.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 42.5. See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #95-#97, 222-230.

b Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence quoting the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86; Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5a.3. The complete passage is:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena?

“Those which are imputational characters. Why? It is thus: They 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.’”

c The comment is drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #95 and #96, 222-229.
nature is emptiness, and the meaning of the character non-nature is the thoroughly established nature and hence also the ultimate-non-nature! If that is so, then here in the brief indication of the three non-natures, the ultimate-non-nature would be given twice, and the character-non-nature would not at all be separately described!

Jam-yang-shay-pa’s own reincarnation, Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po, raises the issue, and his student, Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me, spells it out in the detail just given. Gung-thang adds that it would absurdly be inappropriate for Buddha, when giving an example of character-non-natures, to say that they are like a sky-flower (a pie in the sky) in the sense that they are only imputed by conceptuality, because the thoroughly established nature, emptiness, is established by way of its own character and is not just imputed by conceptuality according to the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought!

Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po and Gung-thang thereby pose a question fundamental to the difference between the three natures (other-powered, imputational, and thoroughly established) and fundamental to the difference between the three non-natures (production-non-nature, character-non-nature, and ultimate-non-nature). The upshot is that although it may look dangerously like Jam-yang-shay-pa is saying that the character-non-nature is emptiness, it cannot be.

Gung-thang tackles the problem head-on. He does it by making a difference between “character-non-nature” and “the meaning of the character non-nature” which could also be translated also as “the import or impact of the character non-nature.” Gung-thang examine the ramifications of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s framing of Buddha’s (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86) statement:

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.”

as:

With respect to the subject, the superimposed factor [or appearance] of forms and so forth as established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses,

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a Gung-thang’s Difficult Points, 109.1ff.
there are reasons for calling this a “character-non-nature” because the reasons are that (1) from the positive side it is only posited by names and terminology and (2) from the negative side it is not established by way of its own character.

Gung-thang explains that a special understanding arises when this superimposed factor, or false appearance, is taken as the subject and the reason is left as non-establishment by way of its own character:

If the superimposed factor or appearance of the establishment [of objects] by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses were established by way of its own character, then it would not be merely imputed to there [that is, from the subject’s side to the object] by conceptuality but would be truly established right with the object. If it were so established, then when one analyzes whether or not it is established in accordance with its mode of appearance, it would come to be a final object found under such analysis, able to bear such analysis. However, in this Mind-Only system, something that is established as able to bear analysis at the end of analyzing whether it is established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness is posited as a self of phenomena, and non-establishment as such is posited as the selflessness of phenomena.

Therefore, when just this relevant imputational nature—and not just imputational natures in general—is taken as the basis [for understanding an absence of being established by way of its own character], the character-non-nature that is merely on the level of literal indication does not come to be emptiness, but the meaning of the mode of naturelessness established through the pressure of reasoning goes as [or involves] emptiness. This is why Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence says that there is a measure [that is, level] indicated by the words and a measure [that is, level] of meaning gotten at, [this distinction being the intent of Tsong-kha-pa’s (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86) saying]:

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a 109.9: rigs pas 'phul gyis sgrubs pa'i don de stong nyid du 'gro ba.
b tshig gis bstan tshod.
c don gyi thob tshod.
Here, the measure indicated\(^a\) 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.\(^b\)

This is also why in the textbook [that is, the *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, Jam-yang-shay-pa] again and again says, “The **meaning** of the character-non-nature”.

Gung-thang’s explanation is brilliant! Jam-yang-shay-pa himself goes on to explain what “do not subsist by way of their own character” means.

*Our response:* [That the meaning of not subsisting by way of their own character explicitly indicated in “do not subsist by way of their own character” is not taken as the subtle selflessness of phenomena] does not entail [that it is not reasonable to take the meaning of the character non-nature explicitly indicated in “those [imputational characters] are said to be ‘character-non-natures’” as the subtle selflessness of phenomena] because the nonexistent in the former [“Therefore, those (imputational characters) are said to be ‘character-non-natures,”’] does not occur among objects of knowledge, [whereas] the nonexistent in the latter [“do not subsist by way of their own character”] exists.

The first [part of the sign which is that the nonexistent in “Therefore,

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\(^a\) *bstan tshod*.

those (imputational characters) are said to be ‘character-non-natures,’” does not occur among objects of knowledge] is established because hypothetically, whatever is a character-nature explicitly indicated in “those [imputational characters] are said to be ‘character-non-natures’” is necessarily established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it and established from its own side as this [that is, as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it].

The second root sign [which is that the nonexistent in “do not subsist by way of their own character” exists] is established because the meaning of subsisting by way of their own character explicitly indicated in “do not subsist by way of their own character” is established in the two—other-powered natures and thoroughly established natures. It follows [that the meaning of subsisting by way of their own character explicitly indicated in “do not subsist by way of their own character” is established in the two—other-powered natures and thoroughly established natures] because “establishment by way of its own character without being only posited by conceptuality” is the meaning of the “not subsisting own-character” on that occasion of [“do not subsist by way of their own character”]. It follows [that “establishment by way of its own character without being only posited by conceptuality” is the meaning of the “not subsisting own-character” on that occasion of “do not subsist by way of their own character”] because “only posited by names and terminology” is the meaning of the “not subsisting own-character” on that occasion of [“do not subsist by way of their own character”], because Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* says:a

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a Hopkins, *Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 86; Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 5a.6-5b.1.
Here, the measure indicated\textsuperscript{a} 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.\textsuperscript{b}

and it is reasonable to explain “here” as “on this occasion [of the statement in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] ‘those [imputational characters] do not subsist by way of their own character’”\textsuperscript{c} because only posited by names and terminology on this occasion does not entail being existent, and [those only posited by names and terminology] are differentiated into the two—existent and nonexistent—because Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence says:\textsuperscript{c}

Furthermore, that which is posited [in dependence upon names and terminology] is not necessarily existent [since, for instance, the horns of a rabbit or a difference of entity between subject and object are posited in dependence upon names and terminology but do not exist].

\textsuperscript{a} bstan tshod; see Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #96.
\textsuperscript{b} See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #105-#109.
\textsuperscript{c} Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86; Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5b.1.
\textsuperscript{d} Correcting rtogs pas btags tsam in the 1987 Old Go-mang (24a.3) to rtog pas btags tsam in accordance with the BDRC bla brang (31b.1).
Dispelling Objections about Imputational Natures
### Unpacking Debate 11 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [101]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Since imputational natures are character-non-natures, other-powered natures are production-non-natures, and thoroughly established natures are ultimate-non-natures, just as there are three natures there are three non-natures. Since Tsong-kha-pa (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 217) explains:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, the imputational natures relevant to the positing of emptiness are (1) establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and (2) the appearance of such. If the meaning of the character non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, it looks as if the character-non-nature is the ultimate-non-nature, whereby the three non-natures would be reduced to two!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me rescues the situation by making a difference between “character-non-nature” and “the meaning (maybe better translated as import or impact) of the character non-nature,” as is hinted at by Tsong-kha-pa’s speaking about a measure (or level) indicated by the words (tshig gis bstan tshod) and hence a measure (or level) of meaning gotten at (don gyi thob tshod) 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.</td>
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</table>

### 12. Concerning this, someone says:

It follows that both the Consequentialists and the Proponents of Mind-Only agree in the way to posit imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology because both these [Consequentialists and Proponents of Mind-Only] agree in positing [imputational natures] as only posited by names and terminology.

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 31b.4; 1987 Old Go-mang, 24a.6; 2008 Taipei reprint, 42.2.
Our response: [That both Consequentialists and Proponents of Mind-Only agree in positing imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology] does not entail [that both the Consequentialists and the Proponents of Mind-Only agree in the way to posit imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology].

The sign [which is that both Consequentialists and Proponents of Mind-Only agree in positing imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology] is established because both these [Consequentialists and Proponents of Mind-Only] assert [imputational natures] as that [—only posited by names and terminology]. It follows [that both these assert imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology] because the Mind-Only School asserts [imputational natures] as that [—only posited by names and terminology] and the Consequence School asserts [imputational natures] as that [—only posited by names and terminology].

\[\text{Correcting } \text{ming \textit{brda} sa bzhag tsam in the digital Unicode file to m\textit{ing} br\textit{das} bzhag tsam in accordance with the BDRC \textit{bla brang} (31b.4), the 1987 Old Go-mang (24a.6), and the 2008 Taipei reprint (42.3).}\]
It is not reasonable to accept the root [consequence which is that both
the Consequentialists and the Proponents of Mind-Only agree in the way
to posit imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology] because although both the Consequentialists and the Proponents of Mind-Only agree in the names for positing [imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology], they do not agree about the meaning. It follows [that although both the Consequentialists and the Proponents of Mind-Only agree in the names for positing [imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology], they do not agree about the meaning] because:

1. Proponents of Mind-Only assert that establishment from its own side is not eliminated by the phrase “only posited by names and terminology” and
2. Consequentialists explain that [establishment from its own side] is eliminated [by the term “only” of “only posited by names and terminology”].

The first [part of the reason which is that Proponents of Mind-Only assert that establishment from its own side is not eliminated by the phrase
“only posited by names and terminology”) is established because Proponents of Mind-Only assert imputational natures as being:

1. only imputed by conceptuality,
2. established from their own side,
3. inherently established,
4. established through the force of their own measure of subsistence,a

because these [Proponents of Mind-Only assert that] those [imputational natures being] “not established by way of their own character” means “not truly existent” but does not mean “not inherently existent” and so forth.

If you say [that the sign which is that Proponents of Mind-Only assert that imputational natures being “not established by way of their own character” means “not truly existent” but does not mean “not inherently existent” and so forth] is not established, it [absurdly] follows that imputational natures are not inherently existent because of not being established by way of their own character. If you [incorrectly] accept [that imputational natures are not inherently existent, it [absurdly] follows that [the subjects, imputational natures,] are utterly nonexistent because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputational natures are not inherently existent]. If you [incorrectly] accept [that imputational natures are utterly nonexistent], it [absurdly] follows that imputed existents that are imputed by names do not occur among objects of knowledge because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputational natures are utterly nonexistent].

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a rang gi gnas tshod kyi dbang gis grub pa. Notice that the list does not include “truly established.”
If you [incorrectly] accept [that imputed existents that are imputed by names do not occur among objects of knowledge], it [absurdly] follows that whatever is an established base [that is, whatever exists] is necessarily substantially existent in the sense of being truly established because you [incorrectly] accepted [that imputed existents that are imputed by names do not occur among objects of knowledge] because Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang’s Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate says:

Concerning that, the meaning of the statement that “Imputational natures do not exist by way of their own character” is that they do not truly exist. If that were not so, it would have to be explained as meaning that they utterly do not exist, in which case imputational natures would not occur among objects of knowledge, whereby it would very absurdly follow that whatever is an established base [that is, an existent] would necessarily be substantially existent!

a Khay-drub-ge-leg-pal-sang, zab mo stong pa nyid kyi de kho na nyid rab tu gsal bar byed pa’i bstan bcos skal bzang mig ’byed, 13b.1-13b.2; see also the translations in Hopkins, Reflections on Reality, 232, and 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), 42.
The second root sign [which is that Consequentialists explain that establishment from its own side is eliminated by the term “only” of “only posited by names and terminology”] is established because of the feasibility of the distinction that:

- since Consequentialists assert that existents are not found at the end of analysis that analyzes as to whether they are established or not established if one is not satisfied with only the imputation of the conventions of names from [the subject’s side] to there, Consequentialists do not differentiate between establishment by way of its own character and inherent establishment and so forth,
- however, since Proponents of Mind-Only assert that existents are found at the end of analysis that analyzes as to whether [something] is established or not established as an illustration [of that object] by only that [imputation of the conventions of names from (the subject’s side) to there], Proponents of Mind-Only assert that without difference all phenomena are inherently established, but do not assert that the meaning of establishment by way of its own character is constituted by merely this [inherent establishment],
- because the measures of establishment by way of its own character in the systems of these two [the Consequence School and the Mind-Only School] are to be individually posited.
If you say [that the sign which is that the measures of establishment by way of its own character in the systems of the two, the Consequence School and the Mind-Only School, are to be individually posited] is not established, it very absurdly follows that in the Consequence School if the imputational nature of Mind-Only School as not established by way of its own character is realized, emptiness would necessarily be realized! For, Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* says:

Moreover, the mode of positing [something in dependence upon names and terminology in this Mind-Only system] is very different from the Consequence School’s positing existents through the force of the conventions of names [even if the terminology is similar]. Therefore, the meaning of existing and not existing by way of [the object’s] own character [here in the Mind-Only School] also does not agree [with the explanation of the Consequence School].

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According to Gung-thang Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s distillation of the issue, in the Autonomy and Consequence Schools the meaning of something’s being established by way of its own character is that it is findable when the object imputed is sought—the Consequence School refuting this in each and every phenomenon and the Autonomy School affirming such a status in all phenomena. He says that in the Mind-Only School, the term means that the object is established without being only posited by names and terminology.

### Unpacking Debate 12 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [108]

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Both Consequentialists and Proponents of Mind-Only posit imputational natures as only posited by names and terminology but disagree about the meaning of positing them thusly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>For:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Proponents of Mind-Only assert that establishment from its own side is not eliminated by “only posited by names and terminology,” but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Consequentialists assert that establishment from its own side is eliminated by the term “only” of “only posited by names and terminology.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\( ^a \) Drawn from Hopkins, *Reflections on Reality*, 232.

\( ^b \) *Precious Lamp*, 83.5ff.
Proponents of Mind-Only assert imputational natures as being:
1. only imputed by conceptuality,
2. established from their own side,
3. inherently established,
4. established through the force of their own measure of subsistence (rang gi gnas tshod kyi dbang gis grub pa),
but not established by way of their own character, not truly established, and not ultimately established.

However, since Consequentialists assert that existents are not found at the end of analysis that analyzes as to whether they are established or not established if one is not satisfied with only the imputation of the conventions of names from the subject’s side to there, Consequentialists do not differentiate between establishment by way of its own character and inherent establishment and so forth.

Since Proponents of Mind-Only assert that existents are found at the end of analysis that analyzes as to whether something is established as that object, Proponents of Mind-Only assert that without difference all phenomena are inherently established, but do not assert that inherent establishment constitutes the meaning of establishment by way of its own character.

13. About this formulation someone says: It follows that established through the force of their own measure of subsistence (rang gi gnas tshod kyi dbang gis grub pa) is the meaning of established by way of its own character (rang gi gnas mtshan nyid kyis grub pa) because having come to be established through the force of its own measure of subsistence as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it is the meaning of having come to be established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it.

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* 2011 BDRC bla brang, 32b.4; 1987 Old Go-mang, 25a.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 44.10. See Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #51, 128-130, and Issue #115, 299-300.
Comment: Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa have made the distinction that the literal level of the first wheel of the teaching (as described here by Paramārthasamudgata in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought) explicitly teaches that phenomena ranging from forms through the thirty-seven harmonies with enlightenment are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. This means that the intended trainees of the first wheel must assert such, in which case the Great Exposition School and the Sūtra School must do so. However, there is a problem: According to these scholars, it is clear that at least the Sūtra School Following Reasoning does not assert that permanent phenomena are established by way of their own character, and if permanent phenomena, such as uncompounded space and nirvāṇa, are not asserted to be established by way of their own character, there does not seem to be any way that this school could assert them to be established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses.

In answer to this, Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa make the distinction that the Sūtra School Following Reasoning asserts that such non-disintegrating permanent phenomena are established through the force of their own measure of subsistence as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. This is because for this school if any phenomenon minimally is not established through the force of its own mode of subsistence, they cannot posit it as even existing. Thus, although the Sūtra School Following Reasoning does not use the term “established by way of its own character” to depict existent imputational natures, in the eyes of the Mind-Only School the Sūtra School Following Reasoning comes to assert that all phenomena are established by way of

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\[a\] Drawn from Hopkins, *Absorption*, Issue #51, 128-130.
\[c\] Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, 38.1-40.2.
\[d\] *rang gi gnas tshod kyi dbang gis grub pa*.
their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses.

Therefore, even though Proponents of the Great Exposition and Proponents of Sūtra who are the intended trainees of the first wheel assert that permanent phenomena are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses, according to the Mind-Only School they have not realized such and thus still need to be taught it.

Our response: [That having come to be established through the force of their own measure of subsistence as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it is the meaning of having come to be established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it] does not entail [that established through the force of its own measure of subsistence is the meaning of established by way of its own character].

The sign [which is that having come to be established through the force of their own measure of subsistence as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it is the meaning of having come to be established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it] is established because this very text [Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence] says:a

The two Proponents of [Truly Existent External] Objects [that is, the Great Exposition and the Sūtra Schools] do not know how to posit forms and so forth as existing if their being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and as the foundations of imputing terminology is negated. This is not the own-character that is renowned to the Epistemologists.

and Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang’s Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 33b.2-33b.4. Translation from Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 210.
The Proponents of Sūtra themselves do not use the name “own-character” [that is, “established by way of their own character”] in their assertion that space, nirvāṇa, and so forth are established through the force of space’s, nirvāṇa’s, and so forth’s own measure of subsistence as the foundations of reference of the names for space, the extinguishment of contamination, and so forth. However, according to the Proponents of Mind-Only, this has the import of the Proponents of Sūtra having come to assert the meaning of own-character with respect to these. Realizing this has very great import.

\[\text{of the Fortunate says:}\]

\[\text{Khay-drub-ge-leg-pal-sang, zab mo stong pa nyid kyi de kho na nyid rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i bstan bcos skal bzang mig 'byed, 29b.1-29b.2; see also the translation in Cabezón, A Dose of Emptiness, 66.}\]

Unpacking Debate 13 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [116]

1. Although the Sūtra School Following Reasoning does not use the term “established by way of its own character” to depict existent imputational natures, in the eyes of the Mind-Only School the Sūtra School Following Reasoning comes to assert that all phenomena are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. Therefore, having come to be established through the force of its own measure of subsistence as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it is the meaning of having come to be established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness apprehending it.

2. Nevertheless, established through the force of its own measure of subsistence is not the meaning of established by way of its own character.

3. Hence, even though Proponents of the Great Exposition and Proponents of Sūtra who are the intended trainees of the first wheel assert that permanent phenomena are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses, according to the Mind-Only School they have not realized such and thus still need to be taught it.

14. Also someone says: Being an awareness apprehending establishment by way of its own character [as described] in the Mind-Only School entails being an awareness apprehending establishment by way of its own character [as described] in the Consequence School is the meaning of the passage in Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence:

However, if one has the conception of [an object as] existing by way of its own character [as described] in this Mind-Only system, gya-tsho’s citation of it in his Commentary on the Difficult Points of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Treatise Differentiating Interpretatable and the Definitive Meanings, The Essence of Eloquence”: A Precious Lamp (drang ba dang nges pa ’i don rnam par ’byed pa ’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po ’i dka ’grel rin chen sgron me), BDRC W2CZ6655, 42b.6.

a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 33a.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 25a.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 44.20.
c Delhi NG drka shis lhun po Essence, 5b.2. Translation from Hopkins, Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 87.
one also has the conception of its being established by way of its own character [as described] in the Consequence School.

Comment: a Tsong-kha-pa first indicates that the meanings of “established by way of its own character” in the Mind-Only School and the Consequence School differ. b

Moreover, the mode of positing [something in dependence upon names and terminology in this Mind-Only system] is very different from the Consequence School’s positing existents through the force of nominal conventions [even if the terminology is similar]. Therefore, the meaning of existing and not existing by way of [the object’s] own character c [here in the Mind-Only School] also does not agree [with the explanation of the Consequence School].

Immediately thereafter, he indicates that the two types of conception are somehow related:

However, if one has the conception of [an object as] existing by way of its own character [as described] in this Mind-Only system, one also has the conception of its being established by way of its own character [as described] in the Consequence School. Nevertheless, there are cases in which, though [Proponents of Mind-Only] did not conceive certain bases [that is, imputational natures] in accordance with the former [description], they would be conceiving such in accordance with the latter [description by the Consequence School, since the

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a Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #109-#110, 285ff.
b Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86-87.
c See Absorption, Issues #113-#116.
Mind-Only School, for instance, holds that anything existent is findable when the object imputed is sought and this is the meaning of “establishment of an object by way of its own character” for the Consequence School.

His point must be that the grosser, Mind-Only School version of the conception somehow has within it the subtler, Consequence School version, but the subtler does not have within it the grosser.

Tsong-kha-pa seems to be saying that a consciousness conceiving that an object is established by way of its own character in accordance with the description in the Mind-Only School also conceives that the object is established by way of its own character in accordance with the description in the Consequence School. However, Je-tsun Chö-kyi-gyal-tshan, Gung-ru Chö-jung, and Jam-yang-shay-pa suggest that Tsong-kha-pa could (or should) not have intended this. They hold that his statement does not mean (even if it seems so) that whatever is a consciousness conceiving something to be established by way of its own character in accordance with the description by the Mind-Only School also is a consciousness conceiving such in accordance with the description by the Consequence School. For, from the viewpoint of the Mind-Only School:

- a consciousness that conceives imputational natures to be established by way of their own character (in accordance with its description in their own system) is a wrong consciousness, since, indeed, imputational natures are not established by way of their own character
- but a consciousness that conceives imputational natures to be established by way of their own character (in accordance with the description in the Consequence School) is a factually concordant consciousness in that it is merely conceiving imputational natures to be established from their own side.

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b Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 27b.3-29b.4; for this point see 28a.5ff.
c Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive, 2011 BDRC bla brang 63a.3-67a.5; for this point see 65.6ff.
d log shes.
e blo don mthun.
As Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me\(^a\) adds, there is no way that one consciousness could be both a wrong consciousness and a factually concordant consciousness, and thus Tsong-kha-pa’s meaning could not possibly be that a consciousness conceiving something to be established by way of its own character in accordance with the description by the Mind-Only School also is a consciousness conceiving such in accordance with the description by the Consequence School.

Rather, Gung-ru Chö-jung—with Jam-yang-shay-pa and Gung-thang following him—makes a difficult-to-comprehend distinction:

- What Tsong-kha-pa means is that the mode of conception of any consciousness that conceives something to be established by way of its own character in accordance with the description by the Mind-Only School also contains within it such a mode of conception\(^b\) in accordance with the description by the Consequence School—it does not actually conceive the latter.

Though Tsong-kha-pa’s passage might seem to suggest that one consciousness is both, his thought must be posited. According to their re-writing, he is saying:

The mode of conception of a consciousness conceiving something to be established by way of its own character in accordance with the description in the Mind-Only School also contains within it the mode of conception of such as described by the Consequence School. However, the mode of conception of a consciousness conceiving something to be established by way of its own character in accordance with the description in the Consequence School does not necessarily contain within it that described by the Mind-Only School, as is

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\(^a\) Gung-thang’s *Difficult Points*, 122.12-123.5.

\(^b\) ‘dzin tshul tshang ba. This distinction is found also in Wal-mang Kön-chog-gyal-tshan (*dbal mang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan*, 1764-1853) *Notes on (Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po’s) Lectures*, 401.2. Ser-shül Lo-sang-pün-tshog (*blo bzang phun tshogs, ser shul dge bshes*; fl. early twentieth century), *Notes on (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive”: Lamp Illuminating the Profound Meaning* (*drang nges rnam ’byed kyi zin bris zab don gsal ba’i sgron me*), (Delhi, 1974, n.p., 18b.1-18b.5) cites a passage from Khay-drub Ge-leg-pal-sang’s *Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* that supports the Go-mang position.
the case with the Mind-Only School’s assertion that it is correct to conceive imputational natures to be established from their own side but mistaken to view them as being established by way of their own character.

Gung-thang\textsuperscript{a} proceeds to bring into considerable relief the implications of the distinction that a consciousness could contain within it the mode of apprehension of another consciousness and yet not be an instance of that consciousness. He does this by considering the issue of a consciousness that seems, on the surface, to be half right and half wrong—one that conceives imputational natures to be established from their own side (which is true) and not to be posited by names and terminology (which is untrue). In the Mind-Only School, imputational natures are both established from their own side and only posited by names and terminology; hence, a mind that conceives imputational natures to be established from their own side \textbf{without} depending upon being posited by names and terminology is a wrong consciousness. Still, it contains within it the mode of conceiving imputational natures to be established from their own side, and since imputational natures are indeed established from their own side, this \textbf{mode of conception} is factually concordant. Despite this, in order to avoid having to hold that this consciousness is right (or both right and wrong), Gung-thang refuses to say that it conceives imputational natures to be established from their own side, because the object of the mode of apprehension of this consciousness—this being imputational natures that are established from their own side without depending upon being posited by names and terminology—does not exist. The object of the mode of apprehension of a wrong consciousness simply does not exist, and thus this consciousness, despite \textbf{containing within it} the mode of apprehension of imputational natures as established from their own side (which indeed is true), does not conceive such. This is how he tries to have his cake and eat it too. As Gung-ru Chö-jung\textsuperscript{b} and Jam-yang-shay-pa say, a mind that conceives imputational natures to be established from their own side without depending upon being posited by names and terminology is not a mind that conceives imputational natures to be established from their own side.

\textsuperscript{a} Ibid., 123.5.
\textsuperscript{b} Gung-ru Chö-jung’s \textit{Garland of White Lotuses}, 29a.3.
Our response: Well then, it [absurdly] follows that being an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology entails being an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side because [according to you] the thesis [that being an awareness apprehending establishment by way of its own character (as described) in the Mind-Only School entails being an awareness apprehending establishment by way of its own character (as described) in the Consequence School] is logically feasible.

It is not reasonable to accept [that being an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology entails being an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side] because [according to the Mind-Only School] the former awareness [apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology] is a wrong consciousness and the latter awareness [apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side] is an awareness concordant with the fact.
The first [part of the sign which is that the former awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology is a wrong consciousness] is established because imputational natures are not “established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology” and the second [part of the sign which is that the latter awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side is an awareness concordant with the fact] is established because those [imputational natures] are established from their own side.

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d' Presentation of our own system

When any consciousness apprehends the establishment by way of its own character [as described] in this Mind-Only School, the mode of apprehension of that consciousness contains within it the mode of apprehension apprehending establishment by way of its own character [as described] in the Consequence School system. This is the meaning of the passage [in Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*].

However, if one has the conception of [an object as] existing by way of its own character [as described] in this Mind-Only system, one also has the conception of its being established by way of its own character [as described] in the Consequence School.

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15. Someone says: It follows that the mode of apprehension of an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology contains within it the mode of apprehension apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side because [your] meaning of the passage [“However, if one has the conception of an object as existing by way of its own character as described in this Mind-Only system, one also has the conception of its being established by way of its own character as described in the Consequence School”] is logically feasible. If you accept [that the mode of apprehension of an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology contains within it the mode of apprehension apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side], then it follows that an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being imputed by conceptuality is an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side because you accepted [that the mode of apprehension of an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology contains within it the mode of apprehension apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side].

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 33b.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 25b.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 45.11.
Our response: [That the mode of apprehension of an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology contains within it the mode of apprehension apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side] does not entail [that an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side while not being imputed by conceptuality is an awareness apprehending imputational natures as established from their own side].

To you it [absurdly] follows that an awareness apprehending the person to be established as permanent, unitary, and under its own power is an awareness apprehending the person as permanent because from the viewpoint of this awareness containing—within its mode of apprehension—the three modes of apprehension in which the person is apprehended as (1) permanent, (2) unitary in the sense of not having parts, and (3) under its own power in the sense of being non-reliant, the conceived object of the mode of apprehension of this awareness is described as “the triply qualified self.” [The opponent] has gained crude understanding.
Using an illustration provided by Gung-ru Chö-jung, his predecessor as textbook author of Go-mang College, Jamyang-shay-pa shows how a consciousness can contain within it a mode of apprehension without itself apprehending such. They point to a meaningful classificatory problem if one accepted the opposite opinion. A consciousness apprehending the person to be permanent, unitary, and under its own power contains within its mode of apprehension the conception of the person as (1) permanent in the sense of not disintegrating, (2) unitary in the sense of not having parts, and (3) being self-powered such that it does not depend on anything else, and thus its conceived object is called a “triply qualified self.” Nevertheless, it is not, for instance, a consciousness conceiving the person as permanent, for it is not a “view holding to an extreme” but a coarse conception of a self of persons and thus a false view of the transitory collection. Among the five types of afflicted views, a view holding to an extreme and a false view of the transitory collection are mutually exclusive—whatever is the one is not the other. Hence, a consciousness conceiving the person to be permanent, unitary, and under its own power contains within its mode of apprehension the conception of the person as permanent, the conception of the person as unitary, and the conception of the person as being under its own power but it does not conceive these three individually.

Gung-thang König-chog-tan-pay-drön-me offers an evocative illustration that focuses on a basic problem. He says that a (wrong)
conceptual consciousness that conceives form and a valid cognition apprehending form to exist as other substantial entities contains within it a (right) mode of apprehension apprehending that form exists, but it does not apprehend that form exists. Rather, it apprehends subject and object within superimposing a difference of substantial entity beyond and on top of the mode of apprehension of existence; hence, it is called a view of an extreme of existence and is said to have fallen to an extreme of existence. However, the existence of form is not any type of object of that consciousness. Thus, even though a consciousness that conceives a form and a valid cognition apprehending a form to exist as other substantial entities contains within it a mode of apprehension of a consciousness that is factually concordant (that is, contains within it the mode of apprehension that form exists), it itself is a factually discordant, wrong consciousness. Gung-thang cogently says that within its mode of apprehension there is not the slightest factually concordant factor that is not polluted with wrongness.

If you [incorrectly] accept the root [consequence which is that an awareness apprehending the person to be established as permanent, unitary, and under its own power is an awareness apprehending the person as permanent], it [absurdly] follows that such [an awareness apprehending the person to be established as permanent, unitary, and under its own power] is a view apprehending an extreme because you accepted [that an awareness apprehending the person to be established as permanent, unitary, and under its own power is an awareness apprehending the person as permanent]. It is not reasonable to accept [that an awareness apprehending the person to be established as permanent, unitary, and under its own power is an awareness apprehending the person as permanent] because [an awareness apprehending the person to be established as permanent, unitary, and under its own power] is a coarse apprehension of a self of persons.
Therefore, although an apprehension of some bases—imputational phenomena—as established by way of their own character in accordance with the assertions of the former, the Proponents of the Mind-Only themselves, does not exist in the [mental] continuum of a Proponent of Mind-Only, an apprehension [of imputational natures] as established by way of their own character in accordance with the assertions of the latter, the Consequentialists, exists because although Proponents of Mind-Only do not assert that imputational natures are established from their own side while not being only posited by names and terminology, they assert imputational natures to be established from their own side, because this very text [Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*] says:\(^a\)

### Unpacking Debate 15 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [129]

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| **1** | As Ngag-wang-pal-dan’s *Word Commentary on (Jam-yang-shay-pa’s) Root Text of Tenets* says: a  
The proponents of Outer [non-Buddhist] tenets arose from the perspective of their affirming that the object conceived by a view of a permanent, unitary, independent self is logically feasible. Proponents of Inner [Buddhist] tenets arose from the perspective of their refuting such. Such a permanent, unitary, independent self is called a “triply qualified self.” |

| **2** | A consciousness apprehending the person as permanent, unitary, and under its own power contains within its mode of apprehension the conception of the person as (1) permanent in the sense of not disintegrating, (2) unitary in the sense of not having parts, and (3) being self-powered such that it does not depend on anything else, but it does not individually apprehend the person as permanent, as unitary, and as self-powered. |

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Similarly, according to the Mind-Only School a (wrong) conceptual consciousness that conceives form and a valid cognition apprehending form to exist as other substantial entities contains within it a (right) mode of apprehension apprehending that form exists, but it does not apprehend that form exists. Even though a consciousness that conceives a form and a valid cognition apprehending a form to exist as other substantial entities contains within it a mode of apprehension of a consciousness that is factually concordant (that is, contains within it the mode of apprehension that form exists), it itself is a factually discordant, wrong consciousness.

Thus, Proponents of Mind-Only do not conceive imputational phenomena to be established by way of their own character in accordance with their own assertion of such, but they do conceive this in accordance with the assertion of the Consequence School. They assert that imputational natures are established from their own side while being only imputed by conceptuality, for they assert that existent imputational natures are indeed established from their own side simply because they do not distinguish between existence and existence from its own side.

16. Also someone says: It follows it is not reasonable that any of the three non-natures explicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as a thoroughly established nature because (1) character non-natures are not [thoroughly established natures] and (2) the other two [production-non-natures and ultimate-non-natures] are not [thoroughly established natures].

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\[125 \text{BDRC bla brang, 34a.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 26a.1; 2008 Taipei reprint, 46.17.}\]
Our response: The first sign [which is that character non-natures are not thoroughly established natures] is not established.a

Comment: b Jam-yang-shay-pa openly says that the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is the thoroughly established nature. Also, in the next debate, he presents the similarly counter-intuitive view that the three non-natures and the three natures are not equivalent. Simply put, many of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s prominent followers do not accept what these positions seem, on the surface, to say.

Jam-yang-shay-pa’s own reincarnation, Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po, points out that Jam-yang-shay-pa’s predecessor as textbook author for Go-mang College, Gung-ru Chö-jung, identifies the non-existent character-nature as the imputational nature that is relevant on the occasion of positing its emptiness as the thoroughly established nature—this being establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of their respective conceptual consciousnesses. c Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po adds that, for Gung-ru Chö-jung, a consequence of this is that the meaningd of the character-non-nature that is explicitly mentioned in the brief indication is the thoroughly established nature. e Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me reports that Jam-yang-shay-paf cribbed the same from Gung-ru Chö-jung and that such also even was held in an oral transmission of Go-mang positions. g However, Gung-thang raises the qualm that if the character-non-nature mentioned

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a See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #95-#103, 222-245.
b Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #95, #99, and #100, pp.222 passim.
c Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotusas, 27a.2.
d don.
e Gung-ru Chö-jung (Garland of White Lotusas, 26b.5) openly accepts that the character-non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.
g Jeffrey Hopkins relayed Ge-dun-lo-drö’s report that during his era at Go-mang College there were six oral transmissions of positions.
in the brief indication is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, it would have to be the ultimate-non-nature, in which case here in the brief indication of the three non-natures, the ultimate-non-nature would be given twice, and the character-non-nature would not at all be described.

Gung-thang cogently explains that this portion (in bold print) of Buddha’s brief answer:

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.”

should be setting forth the imputational nature, not the ultimate-non-nature that negates it. Also, in Buddha’s extensive explanation, it would absurdly be inappropriate when he poses the rhetorical question, “Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena?” for him to answer, “Those which are imputational characters,” since he, according to this mis-reading, should have said, “Those which are thoroughly established characters.” Moreover, it would absurdly be inappropriate for Buddha, when giving an example (or analogue) of character-non-natures, to say that they are like a flower in the sky, in the sense that they are only imputed by conceptuality, since the ultimate-non-nature, or thoroughly established nature, is established by way of its own character and is not only imputed by conceptuality.

Although Gung-thang, in general, is mainly carrying out the implications of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s elaborate presentation, both he and A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho must also posit Jam-yang-shay-pa’s thought by explaining away seemingly contradictory statements in his commentary. Some contradictory statements seem simple at first but then become more complex and even intriguing. For instance, about the character-non-nature, Jam-yang-shay-pa says (in paraphrase):

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a Gung-thang’s Difficult Points, 104.12ff.
b Jam-yang-shay-pa’s Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive (2011 BDRC bla brang, 49.6-50.1), which is a re-casting of a similar presentation by Gung-ru Chö-jung (Garland of White Lotuses, 26b.5ff). Literally, Jam-yang-shay-pa says:

It follows with respect to the subject, the imputational nature’s non-establishment by way of its own character, that it is the subtle selflessness of phenomena because of being the meaning/import of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion. [Being the meaning/import of the character-non-nature
Whatever is the meaning of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion necessarily is a subtle selflessness of phenomena.

Though this statement seems to indicate that the character-non-nature is emptiness and thus is just what gives rise to Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po’s qualm with which we began this discussion, Gung-thang, responding to his teacher’s call to find a way to undo his qualm, claims that Jam-yang-shay-pa’s reference is to the meaning of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion and not just to the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion, since the former arrives at emptiness, whereas the latter is not emptiness. By making this distinction Gung-thang avoids (1) the unwanted consequence that the character-non-nature is the ultimate-non-nature and hence the thoroughly established nature and (2) the resultant redundancy of one of the three non-natures. Gung-thang’s explanation is brilliant apologetic in that his justification for this maneuver is founded in the fact that Jam-yang-shay-pa uses “meaning” (don) not only in this clause but also throughout this section.

However, is the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point emptiness? Given Gung-thang’s commentary, we certainly would have thought that those in his tradition would hold such, but A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, repeating Gung-thang’s own choice of words, makes the distinction that the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point goes as or (perhaps this would be rendered better in English as) arrives at or involves emptiness, but that

explicitly indicated on this occasion] entails [being a subtle selflessness of phenomena] because the meaning/import of the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as the subtle selflessness of phenomena and the meaning/import of the character-non-nature in terms of the selflessness of persons that is implicitly indicated is posited as the subtle selflessness of persons.

Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho (Port of Entry [drang ba dang nges pa ’i don rnam par phye ba gsal bar byed pa legs bshad snying po ’i don mtha’ dag rnam par ’byed pa ’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po ’i jug ngoqs], Tibetan digital reprint edition: BDRC W3621. 1 vol. [Pe Cin: krong go’i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1999, 167.2]) reports that in Shamar Ge-dun-tan-dzin-gya-tsho’s (zhwa dmar dge ’dun bstan ’dzin rgya mtsho) Clearing Away Mental Darkness Gung-thang’s apologetic is not accepted.

a Gung-thang’s Difficult Points, 104.13.
b skabs ’dir dngos su bstan pa ’i mislan nyid ngo bo nyid med pa ’i don.
c don stong nyid du ’gro ba: Precious Lamp, 80.1.
“being only posited by names and terminology and not being established by way of own character”\(^a\) must be posited as the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point. A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho holds that, therefore, a distinction is to be made between an illustration of—that is, something that is—the character-non-nature at this point (primarily the superimposed factor or appearance of objects as being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and secondarily such establishment) and that which is posited as the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point (that is, “being only posited by names and terminology and not being established by way of own character”).

A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s point is well taken since the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought itself says that imputational natures are character-non-natures because they “are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character.”

Indeed, the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, as has been shown, does not intend to discourse on emptiness when it speaks of the character-non-nature since it (1) identifies imputational natures (and not thoroughly established natures) as character-non-natures, (2) says that imputational natures are “posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character” (whereas thoroughly established natures are the opposite) and (3) compares character-non-natures with a flower in the sky, which is only imputed by conceptuality, whereas thoroughly established natures are established by way of their own character. Therefore, when Buddha declares that imputational natures “are said to be ‘character-non-natures,’” he is saying that imputational natures are those which are character-non-natures. “Non-nature” is significantly read as “that which lacks nature.” Buddha is not teaching emptiness at this point; rather, he is identifying that of which other-powered natures are empty.

\(^a\) Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho (Port of Entry, 170.5-171.2, 172.3) identifies the non-existent nature in terms of character this way.
### Unpacking Debate 16 to reveal Go-mang’s Positions [135]

1. Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa openly say that the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is the thoroughly established nature.

2. Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me, renowned as one of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s two great students although they were not contemporaneous, raises the qualm that if the character-non-nature mentioned in the brief indication is the subtle selflessness of phenomena, it would have to be the ultimate-non-nature, in which case here in the brief indication of the three non-natures, the ultimate-non-nature would be given twice, and the character-non-nature would not at all be described.

3. A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, also called Gung-thang Lo-drö-gya-tsho, repeats Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me’s own choice of words, but makes the distinction that the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point goes as emptiness (don stong nyid du ’gro ba), but that “being only posited by names and terminology and not being established by way of own character” must be posited as the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point. A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho holds that, therefore, a distinction is to be made between an illustration of—that is, something that is—the character-non-nature at this point (primarily the superimposed factor or appearance of objects as being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and secondarily such establishment) and that which is posited as the meaning of the character-non-nature at this point (that is, “being only posited by names and terminology and not being established by way of own character”).

17. **About this formulation, someone says:**

   It follows that [character-natures] are not the imputational nature because you assert that [character-non-natures are the thoroughly established nature]. You cannot accept [that character-non-natures are not the imputational nature] because [the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] says, “Those which are imputational characters.”

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**a** 2011 BDRC bla brang, 34a.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 26a.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 46.9.

**b** The passage in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is:

Concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which
Our response: [That the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought says, “Those which are imputational characters,”] does not entail [that it is not reasonable that any of the three non-natures explicitly indicated on this occasion is posited as a thoroughly established nature] because the scripture [“Those which are imputational characters”] is only an indication that those imputational natures are those whose entity is nonexistent or those possessing an entity.

Comment: a Jam-yang-shay-pa re-affirms the position that character-non-natures are the thoroughly established nature and explains away the statement in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought:

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.”

as merely indicating that those imputational natures are of two types, nonexistent and existent. His Go-mang commentators do
not pick up this point but Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho Reports that Tshe-tan-lha-ram-pa, a Mongolian scholar and follower of the textbook author of Se-ra-jey College, Je-tsün Chö-kyi-gyal-tshan, holds that this extensive explanation of imputational natures’ character-non-nature does indeed delineate the thoroughly established nature.

Tshe-tan-lha-ram-pa, well aware of Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po’s and Gung-thang’s criticism that then there would be no need for Buddha to speak of the ultimate-non-nature, says that the sutra goes on to show that the thoroughly established nature is the ultimate-non-nature in order to make known that the thoroughly established nature is posited as a mere negative of its object of negation, the self of phenomena. He admits that the section on the thoroughly established nature as the ultimate-non-nature does not newly delineate the thoroughly established nature but holds that it is not purposeless, for it emphasizes that the thoroughly established nature is the mere elimination of its object of negation.

Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho reports that another scholar holds that:

- the character-non-nature taught on the occasion of the brief indication is indeed emptiness,
- but the character-non-nature explicitly taught on the occasion of the extensive explanation is an imputational nature.

No reason is given for this seemingly odd assertion, but it seems to me that a likely reason is that:

1. In the brief indication the character-non-nature, which looks like a mere absence of establishment by way of its own character, is only implicitly understood to be taken in terms of the imputational nature, and thus the reference is to the non-establishment of the imputational nature by way of its own character, which is emptiness.
2. However, the extensive explanation explicitly mentions the imputational nature, putting the focus not on its mere absence but on itself, that is to say, the imputational nature that is without nature in terms of character.

In answer to this position, Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho makes the

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\(^a\) Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho’s *Port of Entry*, 167.6-168.2.
\(^b\) Ibid., 168.2-168.3.
cogent objection that except for the fact that the brief indication does not associate the character-non-nature with illustrations (that is, imputational natures), it teaches in a brief way what is delineated in the extensive explanation and thus what they both teach has to be similar.\(^a\) He adds that since the sūtra indicates that the character-non-nature is just posited by terms and conceptuality and is not something established from its own side without depending on imputation by terms and conceptuality (as emptiness is), it is best to take the character-non-nature of both the brief and extensive explanations in the sūtra as being an imputational nature and thus not an emptiness.

Therefore, the three natures and the three non-natures are not the same because:

1. the three natures are as said in the “Questions of Guṇākara Chapter” [of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought]:\(^b\)

   Guṇākara, there are three characters of phenomena. What are these three? They are the imputational character, the other-powered character, and the thoroughly established character. Guṇākara, what is the imputational character of phenomena? It is that which is posited by nominal terminology as the entities and attributes of phenomena due to imputing whatsoever conventions.

   and:

   Guṇākara, what is the other-powered character of phenomena? It is just the dependent arising of phenomena.\(^c\)

   and:

   Guṇākara, what is the thoroughly established character of phenomena? It is that which is the suchness of phenomena.\(^d\)

\(^a\) Pan-chen Sō-nam-drag-pa (Garland of Blue Lotuses, 13b.2-13b.5) makes the similar point that the brief indication implicitly indicates the reasons for the three non-natures simply because the extensive explanation extensively explains just what the brief indication implicitly indicates.


\(^c\) *samdhinirmocanasūtra*, 22a.5.

\(^d\) *samdhinirmocanasūtra*, 22a.7.
and the three non-natures are as said in “Questions of Paramārthasamudgata Chapter” [of the Śūtra Unraveling the Thought]:

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.”

Paramārthasamudgata, concerning that, what are character-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are imputational characters.

Why? It is thus: 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.”

What are production-non-natures of phenomena? Those which are the other-powered characters of phenomena.

Why? It is thus: Those [other-powered characters] arise through the force of other conditions and not by themselves. Therefore, they are said to be “production-non-natures.”

What are ultimate-non-natures? Those dependently arisen phenomena—which are natureless due to being natureless in terms of production—are also natureless due to being natureless in terms of the ultimate.

Why? Paramārthasamudgata, that which is an object of observation of purification in phenomena I teach to be the ultimate, and other-powered characters are not the object of observation of purification. Therefore, they are said to be “ultimate-non-natures.”

Moreover, that which is the thoroughly established character of phenomena is also called “the ultimate-non-nature.” Why? Paramārthasamudgata, that which in phenomena is the selflessness of phenomena is called their “non-nature.” It is the ultimate, and the ultimate is distinguished by just the naturelessness of all phenomena; therefore, it is called the “ultimate-non-nature.”

and so forth. In Asaṅga’s Actuality of the Grounds also these [three natures and three non-natures] are explained separately.

\[\text{and so forth.} \]

\[^a\text{samdhinirmocanasūtra, 26a.6-26b.1.}\]
Dispelling Objections about Imputational Natures


correction: pas chos in 2011 BDRC bla brang, 34b.2, to ngas chos in accordance with 1987 Old Go-mang, 26a.6.
Imputational Natures as Character-Non-Natures

Comment: Through making a host of distinctions Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me and A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho have answered Kön-chog-jig-me-wang-po’s qualm about Jam-yang-shay-pa’s textbook which says that the character-non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena and hence might incur the fault that the teaching of the ultimate-non-nature is redundant. It seems to me that Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa did not appreciate that the term “character-non-nature” actually means the “non-existent nature in terms of character” and thus were led into holding that the character-non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena. Specifically, in the above passage when Jam-yang-shay-pa dispels objections to his own position, he openly responds that the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is the thoroughly established

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*a These remarks are drawn from Hopkins’ personal reflections in Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #101, 239 and 241, and Chapter 14, 271-272.*
nature, and then he goes on to present the counter-intuitive view that the three natures and the three non-natures are not co-extensive. He gives no reasoning for this position except to cite the passages on the three natures in Chapter Six of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, the “Questions of Guṇākara Chapter,” and the passages on the three non-natures in Chapter Seven, as if the fact that these are explained separately clinches that these two sets are not co-extensive! He similarly adds that Asaṅga also treats the three non-natures and the three natures separately in his Actuality of the Grounds, also known as the Grounds of Yogic Practice, but says no more.

It is interesting that Jam-yang-shay-pa did not copy this point of the non-equivalence of the three natures and the three non-natures from his predecessor Gung-ru Chö-jung and that neither Gung-thang nor A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho ever tries to fill out Jam-yang-shay-pa’s point. Perhaps this is because it differs so radically from the attempt to rewrite the other statements from Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, treated above, so that they would seem not to indicate that the character-non-nature is to be posited as the thoroughly established nature. My own opinion is that the three non-natures and the three natures are respectively equivalent—whatever is an imputational nature is a character-non-nature, and whatever is a character-non-nature is an imputational nature, and so on.

In conclusion, the examination of Tsong-kha-pa’s, Jam-yang-shay-pa’s, and others’ usage of terminology evokes considerable interest in identifying the meaning terms in particular contexts 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 these scholars’ perspectives in an active, creative way. The scholars thereby make the these modes of thought their own in a way that far surpasses mere repetition.

Despite the difficulties involved in trying even to determine what such complex traditions of exegesis take to be the interworkings of these terms, basic and undisputed principles of topics 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 afflicting 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 afflicting obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience.
Abbreviations


“1987 Old Go-mang Lhasa” = drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par 'byed pa'i mtha' dpyod 'khrul bral lung rigs bai dūr dkar po'i gan mdzod skal bzang re ba kun skong. Named “1987” because of being acquired in Lha-sa, Tibet, at Go-mang College in 1987; published at Go-mang College, date unknown. (Complete edition, available at UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies, uma-tibet.org.)


“2011 TBRC bla brang” = drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par 'byed pa'i mtha' dpyod 'khrul bral lung rigs bai dūr dkar po'i gan mdzod skal bzang re ba kun skong, TBRC W22186.10: 1-288, which is a PDF of: bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, bla brang brka shis 'khyil dgon, publishing date unknown.

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“TBRC” = Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (http://www.tbrc.org).

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2. Grounds of Hearers
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phar phyin spyi don skal bzang klu dbang gi rol mtsho


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*Compendium of Sūtra sūtrasamaucaya*

mdo kun las btsus pa

Tibetan digital reprint edition: In *bstan ’gyur (sde dge, 3934)*. BDRC W23703.110:298-431 (PDF of Delhi, India: Delhi Karmapae choedhey, Gyalwae sun-grab partun khang, 1982-
Six Collections of Reasoning

1. Treatise on the Middle / Fundamental Treatise on the Middle, Called “Wisdom”

\[ \text{madhyamakaśāstra / prajñānāmārūnāmādhyamakārikā} \]

dbu ma’i bstan bcos / dbu ma rtsa ba’i tshig le’ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba


Peking 5224, vol. 95.


2. Refutation of Objections

\[ \text{vigrha-vārtanākārikā} \]

rtsod pa bzlog pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa


Peking 5228, vol. 95


3. Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness

\[ \text{sūnyātā-saptatikārikā} \]

stong pa nyid bdun cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa


Peking 5227, vol. 95.


4. Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning

\[ \text{yukti-ṭikārikā} \]

rgis pa drug cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa


Peking 5225, vol. 95.


5. Precious Garland of Advice for the King  

rgyal po la gtam bya ba rin po che'i phreng ba  
(PDF of Delhi, India: Del-hi Karmapae choedhey, gyalwae su-ngrab partun khang, 1982-1985).


6. Treatise Called the Finely Woven  

vaidalayaśūtrānāma  

English translations:


**Explanation of the Obscure and the Ultimate in the Four Systems of Tenets**


**Ngag-wang-lo-sang-gya-tsho (ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Fifth Dalai Lama, 1617-1682)**

*Instructions on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment: Sacred Word of Mañjushrī* byang chub lam gyi rin pa’i ‘khrid yig ‘jam pa’i dbyangs kyi zhal lung


**English translation of the “Perfection of Wisdom Chapter”: Jeffrey Hopkins. “Practice of Empi-**

**ness.”** Dharmaloka: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1974.

**Pa-bong-kha-pa Jam-pa-tan-dzin-trin-lay-gya-tsho (pha bong kha pa byams pa bstan ’dzin ’phrin las rgya mtsho, 1878-1941)**

*Presentation of the Interpretable and the Definitive, Brief Notes on the Occasion of Receiving Pro-**

found [Instruction from Jo-ne Paṇḍita Lo-sang-gya-tsho in 1927] on (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “The**

*Essence of Eloquence”* drang ba dang nges pa’i don mam par bzhag pa legs par bshad pa’i snying po’i zab nos skabs kyi zin bris mdo tsam du bkod pa


**Pan-chen Sö-nam-drag-pa (pan chen bsod nams grags pa, 1478-1554)**

*Distinguishing through Objections and Answers (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and Definitive Meanings of All the Scriptures, The Essence of Eloquence”: Garland of Blue**

*Lotuses* byang lan kun gyi drang ba dang nges pa’i don mam par ‘byed pa legs par bshad pa’i snying po’i phe phrang ba


**General-Meaning Commentary on the Perfection of Wisdom/ Good Explanation of the Meaning of**

*(Gyal-tshab’s) “Explanation Illuminating the Meaning of the Commentaries on (Maitreya’s) ‘Treatise of Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom, Ornament for the Clear Realizations: Ornament for the Essence’: Lamp Illuminating the Meaning of the Mother”* phar phyin spyi don/ shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rogs pa’i rgyan ’grel pa dang bcas pa’i mam bshad snying po rgyan gyi don legs par bshad pa yum
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bslab pa kun las btus pa


Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds
bodhi[sattva]caryāvatāra
byang chub sens dpa'i sphyod pa la 'jug pa


English translations:


Contemporary commentary:


Tsong-kha-pa Lo-sang-drup-pa (tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419)
Explanation of (Nāgārjuna’s) “Treatise on the Middle”: Ocean of Reasoning / Great Commentary on (Nāgārjuna’s) “Treatise on the Middle”
dbu ma rtsa ba’i tshig le’ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba’i rnam bshad rigs pa’i rgya mtsho / rtsa shes tik chen
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Peking 6153, vol. 156.


**Extensive Explanation of (Chandrakīrti’s) “Supplement to (Nāgārjuna’s) ‘Treatise on the Middle’”: Illumination of the Extensive Explanation of (Chandrakīrti’s) “Supplement to (Nāgārjuna’s) ‘Treatise on the Middle’”: Illumination of the Thought dbu ma la ‘jug pa’i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal**


**Four Interwoven Annotations on (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path” / The Lam rim chen mo of the incomparable Tsong-kha-pa, with the interlinear notes of Ba-so Choṣ-kyi-rgyal-mtshan, Sde-drug Mkhan-ch'en Ngag-dbang-rab-rtan, Jam-dbyangs- lhag-dpa'i-rdo-rje, and Bra-sti Dge-bshes Rin-chen-don-grub**

lam rim mchan bzhi sbrags ma’ mnyam med rje btsun tsong kha pa chen pos mdzad pa’i byang chub lam rim chen mo’i dka’ ba’i gnad mams mchan bu behi’i sgo nas legs par bshad pa theg chen lam gyi gsal gshadow

Tibetan digital reprint edition: In lam rim mchan bzhi sbrags ma (bla brang bkra shis ’khyil par ma). BDRC W29037.13- 978 (PDF of bla brang bkra shis ’khyil edition printed from the 1807 bla brang bkra shis ’khyil blocks in 1999?).

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**Great Exposition of Secret Mantra / The Stages of the Path to a Conqueror and Pervasive Master, a Great Vajradhara: Revealing All Secret Topics**

sngags rim chen mo / rgyal ba khyab bdag rdo rje ’chang chen po’i lam gyi rim pa gsang ba kun gyi gnad mams par phy ba


Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path / Stages of the Path to Enlightenment Thoroughly Teaching All the Stages of Practice of the Three Types of Beings

lam rim chen mo / skyes bu gsum gyi nyams su blang ba’i rim pa thams cad tshang bar ston pa’i byang chub lam gyi rim pa


Treatise Differentiating Interpretable and Definitive Meanings: The Essence of Eloquence

drang ba dang nges pa’i don mam par phye ba’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po


Ye shes thabs mkhas. *shar tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pas mdzad pa’i drang ba dang nges pa’i don mam par ‘byed pa’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po (The Eastern Tsong-kha-pa*

Commentary on (Aṣaṅga’s) “Summary of the Great Vehicle”
mahāyānasaṃgrahabhāṣya
theṅ pa chen po bsdus pa’i ’grel pa

Commentary on (Maitreya’s) “Differentiation of the Middle and the Extremes”
madhyāntavibhāgaṃkārakā
dbus dang mtha’ ’rnam par ’byed pa’i ’grel pa / dbus mtha’i ’grel pa

Commentary on the “Sūtra on Dependent-Arising”
pratītyasamutpadāvibhāgaṃkā
ṛten ‘brel mdo ’grel / ṛten cing ’brel par ’byung ba dang po dang ṛnam par ḏbye ba bshad pa

Commentary on the “Sūtra on the Ten Grounds”
dasabhūmīvyākhyāna
sa bcu’i ’rnam par bshad pa

Commentary on the “Teachings of Akṣhayamati Sūtra”
āryākṣaya-matirnirdesatīkā
’phags pa blo gros mi zad pa bstan pa rgya cher ’grel pa

Explanation of (Maitreya’s) “Ornament for the Great Vehicle Sūtras”
sūtraśāstraṃkārabhāṣya
mdo sde’i ’rgyan gyi bshad pa
The Thirty / Treatise on Cognition-Only in Thirty Stanzas
triṃśikākārikā / sarvavijñānamātraśākatrimśākārikā
sum cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa / thams cad mam rig tsam du ston pa sum cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa
pek 5556, vol. 113


The Twenty
viṃṣatikā / viṃśikākārikā
nyi shu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa
pek 5557, vol. 113


Treasury of Manifest Knowledge
abhidharmakośa
chos mngon pa’i mdzod
pek 5590, vol. 115


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WILLIAM MAGEE, PH.D., Vice President of the UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies and Associate Professor, taught for eight years at the Dharma Drum Buddhist College in Jinshan, Taiwan. Author of Paths to Omniscience: the Geluk Hermeneutics of Nga-wang-bel-den and The Nature of Things: Emptiness and Essence in the Geluk World and co-author of Fluent Tibetan: A Proficiency-Oriented Learning System, he also published a novel about Tibet She Still Lives and a detective novel Colombo and the Samurai Sword.
Empty of What? The text translated here is from the fourth section of Jam-yang-shay-pa Ngag-wang-tsön-drü’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive*, more formally called *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*, a commentary on Tsong-kha-pa Lo-sang-drag-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*. Published in 1686, the *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive* is used at Go-mang Monastic College and related institutions throughout Inner Asia as a textbook for the study of interpretation of scripture. Although *The Essence of Eloquence* is considered to be Tsong-kha-pa’s most difficult treatise, Jam-yang-shay-pa’s penetrating analysis clarifies his discussion of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* on the Mind-Only School. Through logical debates and prose exposition, Jam-yang-shay-pa explores Tsong-kha-pa’s analysis of a Bodhisattva’s question to Buddha about an apparent contradiction in Buddha’s sutras and then Buddha’s reply to that question.

The first volume in this series as *Principles for Practice*—all volumes available for download on the UMA Institute website—treats the topic of the Four Reliances. The second volume focuses on Paramārthaśamudgata’s question about the apparent crucial contradiction in the Buddha’s teachings. The third volume is the brief discussion of the Buddha’s reply, avoiding contradiction by revealing the purpose and thought behind his statements. This fourth volume begins the extensive discussion of Buddha’s reply, focusing on falsely imaginary, or imputational, factors of experience. The main thrust is to identify the imagined nature of which phenomena are empty. By falsely imputing to persons and other phenomena a status they do not have, we are drawn into a mire of problems that prevent full compassionate effectiveness.

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