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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UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies
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Education in Compassion and Wisdom
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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 / Decisive Analysis of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive”: Storehouse of White Vaiḍūrya of Scripture and Reasoning Free from Mistake, Fulfiling the Hopes of the Fortunate (c. 1686). The Great Exposition is a textbook (yig cha) of the decisive 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 Paramārthaśásamudgata’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 phyec 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:

1. *drang ba dang nges pa’i don rnam par ’byed pa’i mtha’ dpyod ’khrul bral lung rigs bai dур dkar pa’i ngan mdzod skal bzang re ba kun skong*, BDRC W22186.10: 1-288, which is a PDF of: bla brang bkra shis ’khyil, bla brang brka shis ’khyil dgon, publishing date unknown. Interlinear reference in the Tibetan text “[L###a/b].” Abbreviated reference: “2011 BDRC bla brang.”


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 Vaiḍūrya of Scripture and Reasoning Free from Mistake, Fulfiling 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. Buddha’s Answer Dispelling Contradiction in the Sūtras: Extensive Explanation of 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.

*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; 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, Jam-yang-shay-pa, 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 afflictive 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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c spyi mtshan, sāmānyalaksana.
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, 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-lha-ram-pa, is highly evocative, but it is not without problems that need to be handled.

Specifically, A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho 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 bkra 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-lha-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.]
Why? It is thus: Those (imputational characters) are charac-
ters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way
of their own character. Therefore, they are called “character-non-
atures.”]
because [according to you] the syllogism:
[“There is evidence for calling the subjects, imputational natures,
character-non-natures because from the positive side they are only
possed 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 explic-
itly indicated on this occasion] because Proponents of Sūtra establish
through valid cognition this [non-establishment of imputational natures by
way of their own character].\textsuperscript{a} 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. It

\textsuperscript{a} See Hopkins, \textit{Absorption In No External World}, Issues #78-82, 191ff.
\textsuperscript{a} Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po \textit{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.

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\(^a\) 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, śabdasāmānta*) and meaning-generalities (*don spyi, arthasāmānta*). 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.”

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a Drawn from Hopkins, *Absorption In No External World*, Issue #125.
b Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotuses*, 19b.3.
c A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s *Precious Lamp*, 238.4.
d *rtog pa’i* zhen yul.
e *don spyi, arthasāmānta*.
f *snang yul*.
g *bum pa’i rang ldog*.
h *bum pa’i don ldog*.
i *bum pa’i gzhi ldog*. 

in the way that these terms are used in elementary logic and epistemology texts called “Collected Topics of Valid Cognition.”8 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 consciousnesses and thus are illustration-isolates of conceived objects. Since other-powered natures are not generally characterized phenomena, they could not be the referent of Tsong-kha-pa’s “the self-isolate of the conceived object [of a conceptual consciousness].”

Therefore, in my estimation, here the “self-isolate of the conceived 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 cogent identification of the “objects of comprehension of an inferential valid cognition” as the appearing objects of inferential cognition, these being sound-generalities and meaning-generalities, which are the appearing objects of conceptual consciousnesses.

A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho, however, says that when Tsong-kha-pa speaks of “the self-isolate of a conceived object [of a conceptual consciousness],” he does not just mean the self-isolate but “the factor, for instance, of forms and so forth being objects of names and terminology.” Contrary to the copious evidence suggesting 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, 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 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 Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate that gives credence to A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s opinion:

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a sgṛa spyi, śabdasāmāṇya.
b Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 19b.3.
c don spyi, arthasāmāṇya.
e See Hopkins, 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,\(^a\) it [absurdly] 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 [according to you] 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 [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.

It follows [that 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

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\(^a\) 2011 BDRC \textit{bla brang}, 24b.6; 1987 Old Go-mang, 19a.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 33.11.
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 to be empty of the imputational nature as explained in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought,

because Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence says: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:b

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 36a.1; adapted from Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 221.

b saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, 19b.1-19b.3.
Paramārthasamudgata, concerning that, even sentient beings having the lineage of those of the Hearer Vehicle attain a nirvāṇa of 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.

Furthermore, 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].

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\(^a\) 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 25b.4; 1987 Old Go-mang, 19b.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 34.13.
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.

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] imputational natures are those imputational natures [explicitly indicated on the occasion of:]

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

\[\text{Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86.}\]
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.]

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.

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 35a.3-35a.4; Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 217-218.
2. About this formulation, someone says: It [absurdly] follows that the meaning of the statement in this very text [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 imputational phenomena are not the imputa-

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*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 constructed 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; Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 40a.3-4. Nevertheless, the three source texts—BDRC *bla brang*, 26a.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20a.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.9—have not been corrected in accordance with it since this other passage is not relevant to the topic in question which is concerned with the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion of Buddha’s answering Paramārthasamudgata’s question. In Hopkins, *Absorption In No External World*, Issue #85, Hopkins revises Gung-ru Chö-jung’s and Jam-yang-shay-pa’s quotation to accord with Tsong-kha-pa’s actual text, most likely because imputational phenomena being non-natures ultimately is taken to mean imputational phenomena without the nature of existing by way of their own character.
tional natures explicitly indicated on this occasion and their not being established by way of their own character is not the meaning of character-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion.

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-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

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

3. Also someone says: 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 because:

\[\text{See Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #93.}\]
1. the superimposed factor of that-which-is-suitable-as-form\textsuperscript{a} as established by way of its own character as the referent of the term “form,”\textsuperscript{b} 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].

\textsuperscript{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” (rūpaṇa, 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 rūpaṇa as that which is susceptible to being broken would 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.

\textsuperscript{b} gzugs zhes pa’i sgra’ jug pa’i ’jug gzhi: literally, the engaged-basis that the term “form” engages.
Comment: 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 and the second concerning an attribute. 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
attributio nal 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 [enti-
ties of such nominal and terminological imputation], the
[mere] conception that they exist as those [entities of nominal
and terminological imputation] is not a superimposition; ra-
ther, 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 indi-
cated on this occasion] because Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*
says:

> 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 ex-
plain the evidence for this later.

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*a* Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po *Essence*, 11a.5. See *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School*, 110
and footnote.
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-tsün 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” could be either 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

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 26b.6; 1987 Old Go-mang, 20b.6; 2008 Taipei reprint, 35.19. For more on the material in this debate see Hopkins, Absorption In No External World, Issues #86 and #87.

b See Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #87, 208.

c Quotung Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #87.
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.

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].

[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.

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

Someone else says: Whatever is an imputational nature explicitly indicated on this occasion is necessarily existent. b

Comment: c As we have seen, for Gung-ru Chö-jung and Jamyang-shay-pa, the explicit reference of “imputational natures” is to:

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 27a.5; 1987 Old Go-mang, 21a.3; 2008 Taipei reprint, 36.21.
b For these two positions see Hopkins, Absorption In No External World, Issue #88, 209.
c Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5a.6-5b.1.

d Quoting Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #88.
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 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 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.

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

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b See Hopkins, Absorption In No External World, Issues #96-98 and 100.
c gzhan dbang la chos bdag sgro brtags pa’i kun brtags.
does not know the **mode of superimposition**\(^a\) 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 slippery, 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* (*Emptiness 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 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

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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 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\(^a\) is an imputational factor posited by name and terminology, but, since it is established by valid cognition, it cannot be refuted.\(^b\) However, that it is established \textit{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 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 \textit{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.

\(^a\) See Hopkins, Absorption In No External World, Issues #78-82.
\(^b\) See Hopkins, Absorption In No External World, Issue #108.
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
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*].

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b See *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.

According to Gung-ru Chō-jung and Jam-yang-shay-pa, in order to make sense of Tsong-kha-pa’s referring to “superimposed factor” (*gzan dbang la chos bdag sgro btags pa’i kun btags*), 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 nonexistent). Jam-yang-shay-pa sees Tsong-kha-pa as saying that if one does not know the
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:

**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 slippery, 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.
• 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

• 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.

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a samdhinirmocanasūtra, 17b.2-17b.3. See Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 93.

b That is, imputational natures.
this sûtra 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].

It is not reasonable to accept [that this sûtra passage indicates that just as sky-flowers are nonexistent, so also imputational natures are nonexistent], because the distinction that without indicating such, [the sûtra] 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].

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*a* Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 7a.6-7b.2. See Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 94.
Moreover, it [absurdly] follows that [according to your two theses that 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 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.

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 Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence*: 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?”] 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

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a 2011 BDRC bla brang, 28a.3; 1987 Old Go-mang, 21b.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 38.12.  
c 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.”

d 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.”
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.

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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.”
1. the passage (in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* beginning with “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.
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]

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.\(^b\)

Comment: C Gung-ru Chö-jung\(^d\) 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

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\(^{a}\) 2011 BDRC bla brang, 28b.2; 1987 Old Go-mang, 22a.1; 2008 Taipei reprint, 38.12.


\(^{c}\) Quoting Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #91.

\(^{d}\) Gung-ru Chö-jung’s Garland of White Lotuses, 23a.3-23b.1.
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 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—the unstated reason being that object of comprehension and existent 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

\[\text{ma gzhald ba.}\]
\[\text{gzhald bya.}\]
\[\text{yod pa.}\]
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 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 itself (rang nyid) 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:*

Without contacting the superimposed actuality
Its nonactuality is not apprehended.\(^b\)

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


\(^b\) 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.
itself as the thoroughly established nature must be the imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature because whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of [positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature] must be the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of itself. It follows [that whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature)] must be the thoroughly established nature that is the emptiness of itself.

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

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\(^a\) See Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #90, 212-214.
Comment: The imputational natures relevant on the occasion of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature are two-fold:

1. the establishment of phenomena by way of their own character as the referents of a conceptual consciousness: this one is relevant because its emptiness is the thoroughly established nature explicitly indicated in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* at this juncture

2. the superimposed factor, that is, the image of establishment as such that appears to the mind: this one is relevant because the image of misimagined status of phenomena has to appear to mind in order to identify what has to be negated.

Since there are these two imputational natures relevant on the occasion of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature, whatever is an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of positing emptiness as the thoroughly established nature must be one or the other but is not necessarily the first and is not necessarily the second.

If you say [that the sign which is that whatever is the imputational nature relevant on the occasion of (positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature)] must not be not the thoroughly established nature which is the emptiness of itself] 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 itself which must be the thoroughly established nature] because of being [an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of positing the emptiness of itself 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 itself as the thoroughly established nature must be the imputational nature of the occasion (skabs kyi) of positing the emptiness of itself 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 itself as the thoroughly established nature because of being an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of [positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature].

You [incorrectly] asserted [that being an imputational nature relevant on the occasion of positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature] entails being an imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of those 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 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 as the thoroughly established nature.

You asserted [that being the imputational nature of the occasion of positing the emptiness of itself as the thoroughly established nature] entails [being nonexistent].

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

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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 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’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

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\[ a \] Superimposed factors (sgro htags), 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.
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 Chō-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 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 nonestablishment—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

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

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].

\(^a\) 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.
10. 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” but are not necessarily “only posited by names and terminology” is not logically feasible.

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\[G23a\] Delhi NG *dkr shis lhun po Essence*, 35a.4-35a.5, which lacks *dgos pa*. The 1987 Old Go-mang, 23a.1, lacks *dgos pa*, whereas at the monastery Jam-yang-shay-pa founded later in his life the BDRC *bla brang*, 29b.5, does indeed have *dgos pa*. The translation is from Hopkins, *Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 218, which also lacks “necessarily” (dgos pa); 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 pa*. It appears that Jam-yang-shay-pa added it to the quotation and to the *bla brang* edition of his text.

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” and “posited by only names and terminology.” By taking Tsong-kha-pa’s “only posited by names and terminology” as “posited by only names and terminology” Jam-yang-shay-pa can accept the reason clause. As delineated by the Khalkha Mongolian Ngag-wang-paldan, Jam-yang-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 Paṇ-chen Sō-nam-drag-pa hold that uncompounded space, sound’s emptiness of permanence, and so forth are “not posited by names and terminology.” Paṇ-chen Sō-nam-drag-pa does not make the distinction that Jam-yang-shay-pa does and, instead, simply holds 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 is not established] because:

The likes of sound’s emptiness of permanence, although it cannot be posited by only names and terminology, is not established by way of its own character because it is only imputed by conceptuality.

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

\[^{a}\text{Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #107, 279-282.}\]

\[^{b}\text{paṇ chen bsod nams grags pa, Garland of Blue Lotuses, 29a.4-29b.5.}\]
own character because of necessarily being only imputed by con-
ceptuality.]

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 this passage [from
Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Eloquence] says:a

because [this passage] says that sound’s emptiness of permanence,
the aggregates’ selflessness, and so forth cannot be posited by only
the words “sound is empty of permanence” and “the aggregates
are selfless.”

a Gen-dun-gya-tsho, Second Dalai Lama, drang nges rnam ’byed kyi dka’ ’gre gong sbya’
ba’i don rab tu gsal bar byed pa’i sgron me, in gsung ’bum (dge ’dun rgya mtsa’o), BDRC
W861.2:607-817 (dkar mdzes par ma: [s.n.], [199-]), 7b.4-7b.5 and later (44b.1-44b.2) re-
fers to this explanation. Jam-yang-shay-pa’s citation is difficult to read since it begins with
the close quote zhes of Second Dalai Lama’s citation of Tsong-kha-pa’s passage in order
to emphasize how quickly the following items are mentioned by the Second Dalai Lama.
Comment: It is not contradictory for sound’s emptiness of permanence to be “only imputed by conceptuality” and “only posited by names and terminology” and yet not be “posited by only names and terminology.” 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 “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 put 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 put as an object of inference through renown, since its being called “rabbit one” is established only through wish.

11. About this, someone says: It [absurdly] follows that the subject, sound’s emptiness of permanence, is posited by only names and terminology because of being only posited by names and terminology.

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a Drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #107, 281.
c 2011 BDRC bla brang, 30a.3; 1987 Old Go-mang, 22a.7; 2008 Taipei reprint, 40.17.
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 (“sound’s emptiness of permanence”) and the conceptual consciousness apprehending [sound’s emptiness of permanence], 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”] are taken as conceptual consciousnesses.

The first [part of the reason which is that sound’s emptiness of permanence is only posited by the two, the term expressing “sound’s emptiness of permanence” and the conceptual consciousness apprehending sound’s emptiness of permanence] 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”] are 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 proving sound empty of permanence and inference.

At the point above where [we answered that being only posited by names and terminology does not entail being posited by only names and terminology]: To him/her it [absurdly] follows that the subject, the teaching of the Buddha, is held by only Proponents of Sūtra because of being only 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 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].

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].

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.
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.

12. 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

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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 Elocution 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.’”
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: a 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-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-mewang-po, raises the issue, and his student, Gung-thang Kön-chogtan-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-mewang-po and Gung-thang thereby pose a question fundamental to the difference between the three natures

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a The comment is drawn from Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #95 and 96, 222-229.
(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\(^a\) examines 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, 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,

\(^a\) Gung-thang’s *Difficult Points*, 109.1ff.
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]:

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.

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.

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*a* 109.9: *rigs pas ’phal gyis sgrubs pa’i don de stong nyid du ’gro ba.*

*b* *tshig gis bstan tshod.*

*c* *don gyi thob tshod.*

*d* *bstan tshod.*

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, 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

Here, the measure indicatedb 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.c 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’” 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:d

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].

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a Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86; Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5a.6-5b.1.
b Bstan tshod; see Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #96.
d Hopkins, Emptiness in Mind-Only, 86; Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5b.1.
པ་]

جملة: དེ་དེའི་ཞེས་བའི་དོན་ཡིན་པའི་ɉིར།

ཁུང་གི་ཆེན་བཅོས་ཀྱི་ལྡན་པར་དེ་ལ་ཡོད་མེད་གཉིས་འར་པའི་ɉིར་ཏེ། འདི་ཉིད་ལས། འདིར་ཡོད་མེད་བཞག་ཙམ་དེ་གྲོས་བཞག་མ་བཞག་ཡིན་ལ། ཞེས་གཟུང་པ་གང་ཞིག།

འདི་ཞེས་པ་དེ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ȷམ་པར་གནས་པ་ནི་མ་ཡིན་པས་ཞེས་པའི་ǰབས་འདིར་ཞེས་འཆད་རིགས་པའི་ɉིར་ཏེ། འདི་ཉིད་ལས། བཞག་པ་ལ་ཡང་ཡོད་པས་མ་ཁྱབ་ཅིང་། ཞེས་གཟུང་པ་གང་ཞིག།

a 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).
13. 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.

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].

\[\text{BDRC bla brang, 31b.4; 1987 Old Go-mang, 24a.6; 2008 Taipei reprint, 42.2.} \]
\[\text{Correcting } \text{ming brda sa bzhag tsam} \text{ in the digital Unicode file to } \text{ming brdas bzhag tsam} \text{ in accordance with the BDRC bla brang (31b.4), the 1987 Old Go-mang (24a.6), and the 2008 Taipei reprint (42.3).} \]
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,

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,

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a rang gi gnas tshod kyi dbang gis grub pa. Notice that the list does not include “truly established.”
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].

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

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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.

[ཐལ་འǽར་པས་མིང་བȰས་བཞག་ཙམ་གྱི་ཙམ་Ȍས་རང་ངོས་ནས་ǿབ་པ་གཅོད་]
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:\(^a\)

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]

14. About this formulation someone says: It follows that established through the force of their own measure of subsistence is the meaning of established by way of its own character because 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.

According to Gung-thang Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s distillation of the issue (Precious Lamp, 83.5ff.), 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 (as well as all other schools) 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.

b 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.
Our response: There is no entailment [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 their 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:

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 of the Fortunate* says:

The Proponents of Sūtra themselves do not use the name “own-

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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.

b 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.
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.

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15. 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, one also has the conception of its being established by way of its own character [as described] in the Consequence School.

**Comment:** 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:

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 [here in the Mind-Only School] also does not agree [with the explanation of the Consequence School].

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**Notes:**

a 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 33a.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 25a.5; 2008 Taipei reprint, 44.20.


f See *Absorption*, Issues #113-116.
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 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 one.

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-tsün Chö-kyi-gyal-tshan, a 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:

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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.
• 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**,\(^a\) 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**\(^b\) in that it is merely conceiving imputational natures to be established from their own side.

As Gung-thang\(^c\) 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**\(^d\) 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

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\(a\) log shes.

\(b\) blo don mthun.

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

\(d\) ’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 ’byed kyi zin bris zab don gyal ba’i sgron me*, (Delhi, 1974, n.p., 18b.1-18b.5) cites a passage from Khay-drub’s *Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate* that supports the Go-mang position.
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 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-thanga 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 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 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

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\(^a\) Ibid., 123.5.
does not exist, and thus this consciousness, despite 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 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.

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.

\[^a\] Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotuses*, 29a.3.
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 [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.

*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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**e' Dispelling objections**


16. **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].

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.

Comment: 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\(^a\) 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 Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me\(^b\) 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

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\(^a\) In Gung-ru Chö-jung’s *Garland of White Lotuses* (29b.1) read **bdag ’dzin rags pa** for **bdag ’dzin dgos pa** in accordance with Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive* (2011 BDRC **bla brang**, 67.3).

\(^b\) Gung-tang’s *Difficult Points*, 123.11.
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

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a Delhi NG dkra shis lhun po Essence, 5b.2. Translation from Hopkins, Emptiness in the Mind-Only School, 87.
there are cases in which, though [Proponents of Mind-Only] did not conceive certain bases [that is, imputational natures] in accordance with the former [that is, the conception of an object existing by way of its own character as described by the Mind-Only School], they would be conceiving such in accordance with the latter [that is, the conception of an object existing by way of its own character as described by the Consequence School].

17. **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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\[L34a\] "ཇབས་མེད་པར་ཞིག་Ȧོག་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་རང་ངོས་
ནས་ǿབ་པར་འདོད་ཀྱང་\[G26a\] "སེམས་ཙམ་པས་ཀུན་བཏགས་Ȧོག་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་རང་
ངོས་ནས་ǿབ་པར་འདོད་པའི་\[Dzེ་བ་\]"གཞི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཙམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་རང་][L34a]"ཇབས་མེད་པར་ཞིག
Ȧོག་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་རང་[G26a] "སེམས་ཙམ་པས་ཀུན་བཏགས་Ȧོག་པས་བཏགས་ཙམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་རང་
ངོས་ནས་ǿབ་པར་འདོད་ཀྱང་\[Dzེ་བ་\]"གཞི་ཀུན་བཏགས་ཙམ་མ་ཡིན་པར་རང་]

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\[a\] 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 34a.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 26a.1; 2008 Taipei reprint, 46.17.
Our response: The first reason [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-mewang-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 He 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-pa f cribbed the same from Gung-ru Chö-jung and that such also even held in an oral transmission of Go-mang positions.g However, he raises the qualm that if the

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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 Lotuses, 27a.2.
d don.
e Gung-ru Chö-jung (Garland of White Lotuses, 26b.5) openly accepts that the character-non-nature is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.
g Ge-dun-lo-drö reported that during his time at Go-mang College there were six oral transmissions of positions.
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.

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.a Some 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):b

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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, a 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 b 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) involves at or involves emptiness, c 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.

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a Gung-thang’s Difficult Points, 104.13.
b skabs 'dir dngos su bstsan pa'i mtshan nying ngo bo nying med pa'i don.
c don stong nying 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-gyatsho 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-gyatsho’s point is well taken since the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought itself says that imputational natures are called character-non-nature 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 meaning “that which lacks nature.” Buddha is not teaching emptiness at this point; rather, he is identifying that of which other-powered natures are empty.

\(^{18.}\) About this formulation, someone says:\(^b\) It follows that [character-non-natures] are not the imputational nature because you assert that [character-non-natures are the thoroughly established nature]. You cannot accept [that

\(^a\) Jig-may-dam-chö-gyatsho (Port of Entry, 170.5-171.2, 172.3) identifies the non-existent nature in terms of character this way.

\(^b\) 2011 BDRC bla brang, 34a.1; 1987 Old Go-mang, 26a.2; 2008 Taipei reprint, 46.9.
character-non-natures are not the imputational nature], because [the Śūtra Unraveling the Thought says, “Those which are imputational characters.”]

Our response: [That the Śūtra 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.

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 Śūtra Unraveling the Thought]:

   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.

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and:

Guṇākara, what is the other-powered character of phenomena? It is just the dependent arising of phenomena.a

and:

Guṇākara, what is the thoroughly established character of phenomena? It is that which is the suchness of phenomena.b

and the three non-natures are as said in “Questions of Paramārthasamudgata Chapter” [of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought]:c

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?

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a samdhinirmocanasūtra, 22a.5.
b samdhinirmocanasūtra, 22a.7.
c samdhinirmocanasūtra, 26a.6-26b.1.
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.

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a Correcting *pas chos* in 2011 BDRC *bla brang*, 34b.2, to *ngas chos* in accordance with 1987 Old Go-mang, 26a.6.
Comment: a 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-

a These remarks are drawn from Hopkins’ personal reflections in Hopkins, Absorption in No External World, Issue #101, 239 and 241, and Chapter 14, 271-272.
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 says that the character-non-nature explicitly indicated on this occasion in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is the thoroughly established 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 crib 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. They 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 referents 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 afflictive emotions.
4. Objects’ emptiness of being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms is a subtle selflessness of phenomena.
5. Realization of this emptiness and prolonged meditation on it in the manner of direct perception remove both the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience.
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_One Hundred Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra_

śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa


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saṃdhinirmocanasūtra
dgongs pa nges par ’grel pa’i mdo


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drang ba dang nges pa’i don mnam par phyed ba’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po


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rten ’brel mdo ’grel/ rten cing ’brel par ’byung ba dang po dang rnam par dbyes ba bshad pa
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‘phags pa blo gros mi zad pas bstan pa rgya cher ’grel pa

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mdo sde’i rgyan gyi bshad pa
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vyākyhayukti
rnam par bshad pa’i rigs pa

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triṃśikākārikā / sarvavijñānāvatāraśakatriṃśakārikā
sum cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa / thams cad rnam rig tsam du ston pa sum cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa
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nyi shu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa
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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 Vaiṁra 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 the Bodhisattva Paramārthaśamudgata’s question to Buddha regarding an apparent contradiction in Buddha’s sutras and then Buddha’s reply to that question.

The first volume in this series—available for download on the UMA Institute website as *Principles for Practice*—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 why imaginary, or imputational, factors of experience are not established by way of their own character. 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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