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

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

Jeffrey Hopkins

UMA INSTITUTE FOR TIBETAN STUDIES
Two Puzzles
Two Puzzles: 
What do “Own-Character” and “Imputational Nature” Mean?

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

Jeffrey Hopkins

UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies
uma-tibet.org
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.

Publications are available online without cost under a Creative Commons License with the understanding that downloaded material must be distributed for free: http://uma-tibet.org. UMA stands for Union of the Modern and the Ancient (gsar rnying zung 'jug khang). The UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies
Mailing address: 629 Jefferson Dr., East, Palmyra, VA 22963
USA

Version: November, 2018
Library of Congress Control Number:

Hopkins, Jeffrey (1940-)
Two puzzles: what do “own-character” and “imputational nature” mean? jam-yang-shay-pa’s great exposition of the interpretable and the definitive: 5/ by Jeffrey Hopkins.
Includes bibliographical references.

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

Preface 7

Technical Notes ........................................................................................................... 9

1. Finding Consistency ................................................................................... 11
   Techniques of Analysis ................................................................................ 12

2. The First Puzzle: Own-character ................................................................ 17

3. The Second Puzzle: Imputational Natures .................................................. 31
   The Import ................................................................................................... 48

Bibliography ..................................................................................................... 51

1. Sūtras  51
2. Other Sanskrit and Tibetan Works ........................................................... 51
Preface

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

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

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

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

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

1. *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School of Buddhism*
2. *Reflections on Reality: the Three Natures and Non-Natures in the Mind-Only School*

---

*a Ḍam dbyangs bzhad pa’i rdo rje ngag dbang brtson grus, 1648-1721/1722.*
here in this short treatment I am mainly drawing from the third volume.
Jeffrey Hopkins
Technical Notes

It is important to recognize that:

• translations and editions of texts are given in the Bibliography;
• the names of Indian Buddhist schools of thought are translated into English in a wish to increase accessibility for non-specialists;
• for the names of Indian scholars and systems used in the body of the text, ch, sh, and $h$ 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.
1. Finding Consistency

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

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

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

\(^a\) *drang ba dang nges pa ’i don rnam par phye ba’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po*; Peking 6142, vol. 153.
\(^b\) *tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, 1357-1419.
\(^c\) *lcags mda’ lcags gzhu*; or even “iron bow and iron arrow.”
\(^d\) *dge legs pa*.
\(^e\) *dgongs pa bzhag pa*.
of a text; the only way for the reader to adjust to this environment is to form the worldview.

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

**TECHNIQUES OF ANALYSIS**

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

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

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

Texts are not viewed in isolation as if they live outside of the situation of their culture; they are related to a body of literature and knowledge in such a way that the study of a text is a study of the world. Also, the context provided is not just that of the culture contemporary to or preceding an author’s text; often, views of scholars subsequent to the text are similarly juxtaposed because the aim is to provide a worldview relevant to the reader’s present situation, a comprehensive perspective that makes use of whatever is available. Even points peripheral to central topics often take center stage such that they provide a wide cultural context for more important issues—the context imbedding the user in an all-encompassing
worldview. These scholars, even when working on small issues, draw on a reserve of knowledge of larger issues, the basic principles of which are the culture’s. When they unravel an author’s words, the exercise of exegesis imbeds the participants even more in the architecture of a living philosophy.

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

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

Disagreement with statements by the founder of the sect is promoted within the bounds of not openly criticizing his works but doing so under various polite facades, such as positing the meaning of his thought, that is, creatively adjusting Tsong-kha-pa’s statements so that they do not contradict each other. Through such maneuvers, much room is made for discriminative expansion that is critical but does not assume the outward form of fault-finding. Exegetes, upon exposing seeming discrepancies, seek to explain these away through refinement, creatively adjusting his thought, pretending that his words make perfect sense, even making such bold and creative defenses of the founder that their own ingenuity becomes the focus. Once we recognize the format of exposition as often a mask required in a culture of allegiance to exalted personages, we see that often these
scholars really do not think that Tsong-kha-pa meant what they claim; critical acumen is indeed highly encouraged. If it is not noticed that these scholars are operating within only a facade of non-criticism, their “refinements” often appear to be inexplicably and even ridiculously at odds with what Tsong-kha-pa said.

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

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

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

The sheer variety of invitingly provocative explanations of a single issue sometimes makes it seem that a conclusion cannot be reached, enmeshing the reader in a web of intriguing and even bewildering issues of fundamental importance. These scholars’ attempts to correct these problems sometimes embroil them in almost unimaginable complexities, the issue becoming so complex that the mind is fractured into unusable bits of information. It becomes possible to miss the woods for the trees, but when one steps back and surveys the wider scene, basic and undisputed principles of Tsong-kha-pa’s outlook emerge with considerable clarity. The style of monastic textbooks—which calls for embroilment in crucial as well as ancillary issues—causes central issues to become the floor of inquiry
without our noticing it, resulting in the transformation of it into part of a topic of vibrant concern in the vast context of a worldview.

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

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

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

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

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

   If the statements in some sūtras [that is, in the middle wheel of the teaching] that all phenomena are natureless, and so forth, and the statements in some sūtras [in the first wheel of the teaching] that the aggregates and so forth have an own-character, and so forth, were left as they are verbally, they would be contradictory.
and (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 127):

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

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

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

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


\(^c\) By claiming that what Tsong-kha-pa means is that only the words “Phenomena ranging from forms through to the harmonies with enlightenment have the nature of being established by way of their own character,” are equally present throughout the first wheel, they can make the further claim that what those words mean is that the first wheel teaches that these phenomena are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses. This division into words and meaning allows them to leave Tsong-kha-pa’s statement as is and yet read a different meaning into it.
Furthermore, in the first wheel the aggregates and so forth are said to be equally **existent by way of their own character**, and in the middle wheel all are said to be equally **without inherent existence**. [In both cases Buddha] did not speak within explicitly differentiating whether [the aggregates and so forth] **inherently exist or not**; hence, [the first two wheels of doctrine] require interpretation.

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

   In the Chinese *Great Commentary*[^1] [on the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* by the Korean scholar Wonch’uk], and so forth, “**own-character**” here [in this passage in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*] is explained as the unique character [of the aggregates and so forth], but this is not right. For the sūtra itself at the point of [speaking about] imputational factors clearly speaks of **establishment by way of [the object’s] own character** [and does not speak of the unique character], and since even imputational factors have a unique characterization, there would be the fallacy that the character-non-nature could not be explained with respect to imputational factors.

2. Two Puzzles

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

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

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

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

\(^a\) See Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #104.
\(^b\) See Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #83.
\(^c\) See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #29 and 94.
\(^d\) bstan tshod; see Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #96.
\(^e\) See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #105-109.
7. The character-non-nature explicitly mentioned at the point of the topic sentence in this section of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 82-83):

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

**ANSWER OF THE GO-MANG TRADITION**

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

a. the unique character (of an object)

b. establishment by way of its own character

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

d. true establishment

e. establishment from its own side

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

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

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

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

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

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

and (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 127):

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

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

a See Hopkins, Absorption, Issue #108.
Furthermore, in the first wheel the aggregates and so forth are said to be equally existent by way of their own character \[c: \text{are established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses}\], and in the middle wheel all are said to be equally without inherent existence \[b: \text{establishment by way of their own character and} e: \text{existence from their own side}\]. [In both cases Buddha] did not speak within explicitly differentiating whether [the aggregates and so forth] inherently exist or not \[b: \text{exist by way of their own character or not}\]; hence, [the first two wheels of doctrine] require interpretation.

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

In the Chinese Great Commentary [on the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought by the Korean scholar Wonch’uk], and so forth, “own-character” \[c: \text{establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses}\] here [in this passage in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] is explained as the unique character [of the aggregates and so forth], but this is not right. For, the sūtra itself at the point of [speaking about] imputational factors clearly speaks of establishment by way of [the object’s] own character \[c: \text{establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses}\] [and does not speak of the
unique character], and since even imputational factors have a unique characterization, there would be the fallacy that the character-non-nature could not be explained with respect to imputational factors.

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

It is thus: Those [imputational characters] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not **subsist by way of their own character** [b: exist by way of their own character]. Therefore, they are said to be “character-non-natures” [b: establishment by way of their own character].
The distinction must be made that “character-nature,” or “nature of character,” itself means \textit{b: establishment by way of its own character and not being posited by name and term}, but that which is the nature of character is primarily \textit{f: the superimposed factor or appearance of objects as established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and secondarily \textit{c: the establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses}. (Those two are also non-natures of character, that is to say, the natures of character that are not established by way of their own character.) The distinction is between the \textit{meaning} of “nature of character” and the \textit{illustrations} of “nature of character.”

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

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

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

Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of three non-natures of phenomena—character-non-nature \textit{[b: establishment of objects by way of their own character]}, production-
non-nature, and ultimate-non-nature—I taught [in the middle wheel of the teaching], “All phenomena are natureless.”

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

\section*{A Few Comments}

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

The bases being posited as interpretable or definitive are the three—the statements [in the first wheel] that phenomena equally have \textit{nature in the sense of being established by way of their own character} \textit{[c: establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses]}, the statements [in the middle wheel] that phenomena equally do not have \textit{such} \textit{[b: establishment by way of their own character and e: establishment from their own side]}, and the good differentiation [in the final wheel] of those [phenomena] that have \textit{[such establishment]} \textit{[b: establishment by way of their own character]} and those that do not.\footnote{See Hopkins, \textit{Absorption}, Issue #108.}
The first quote in number two is similar but deals with only the first two wheels of doctrine:

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

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

Supramundane Victor, in the first wheel of the teaching, as indicated here [in my question], you pronounced many times the words of sūtra:
The entities of compounded phenomena\(^a\) ranging from forms through the thirty-seven harmonies with enlightenment as well as [their attributes of] production, cessation, and so forth that are established by way of their own character [\(c\): establishment by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses] exist, exist.

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

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

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

---

\(^a\) Jam-yang-shay-pa makes what seems to be an unnecessary specification of “compounded phenomena” which A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s Commentary on the Difficult Points of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “Treatise Differentiating Interpretable and the Definitive Meanings, The Essence of Eloquence”: A Precious Lamp (59.6) changes to “phenomena.”
Jam-yang-shay-pa speaks of “the first wheel of the teaching, as indicated here in my question” because there are presentations of the three wheels of doctrine other than what is found in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. Also, he specifies the different lists of phenomena about which Buddha was speaking in the first and second wheels of doctrine within stressing the aspects of entity and attributes—“the entities of phenomena ranging from forms through the thirty-seven harmonies with enlightenment as well as [their attributes of] production, cessation, and so forth” for the first wheel of doctrine and “phenomena ranging from forms through omniscient consciousnesses” for the second wheel of doctrine.

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

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

1. The imputational natures that the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought says (Emptyness in Mind-Only, 86) are character-non-natures:
   
   Those [imputational characters] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character. Therefore, they are said to be “character-non-natures.”

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

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

   and:

   Apprehending the imputational character in other-pow-ered characters should be viewed as like wrongly

---


\[b\] As cited in Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me’s Difficult Points, 109.17.
apprehending a very clear crystal as precious jewels—
sapphire, the blue gem, ruby, emerald, or gold.

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

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

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

Although among imputational factors in general there
are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena,
space, and so forth, the reason why these are not [explicitly] mentioned in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought is
that they are not relevant on the occasion of the imputa-
tional factor the emptiness of which is posited as the
thoroughly established nature. Although many of those
are existents that cannot be posited by names and termi-
nology, they are not established by way of their own char-
acter because of being only imputed by conceptuality.
4. The imputational natures that Tsong-kha-pa has in mind when he (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 195) says that they must be identified in order to know the selflessness of phenomena well:

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

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

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

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

Thus, form and so forth being the referents of conceptual consciousnesses is an **imputational factor** posited by name and terminology, but, since it is established by valid cognition, it cannot be refuted. However, that it is established by way of the thing’s own character is an **imputational factor** posited only nominally that does not occur among objects of knowledge [that is, does not exist]. Hence, among what are posited by names and terminology there are two [types], those established by valid cognition and those not established by valid cognition. Still, this system asserts that once something is only posited by names and terminology, cause and effect are not suitable to occur in it.
7. The Sūtra Unraveling the Thought’s usage (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 93) of a flower in the sky as an example for imputational natures:

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

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

   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, among existents].

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

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

---

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

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

---

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

*b* See also the translation in José Ignacio Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the stong thun chen mo of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), *A Dose of Emptiness*, 55.
10. Tsong-kha-pa’s reference (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 239) to imputational phenomena as if these are the imputational natures being considered:

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

\[\text{ཀུན་བȦགས་ཀྱི་ཆོས་ȷམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་ǿབ་པས་} \\
\text{དོན་དམ་པར་ངོ་བོ་མེད་པ་} \text{དང༌།} \]

**ANSWER OF THE GO-MANG TRADITION**

The following thirteen meanings are needed:

a. being the referent of a conceptual consciousness

\[\text{ཐོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་} \text{or} \text{ཐང་ལེན་ཐོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པོ་} \]

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

\[\text{ཐང་ལེན་ཐོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ǿབ་པ།} \]

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

\[\text{ཐང་ལེན་ཐོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ǿབ་པར་Ȍོ་བཏགས་པའམ་ȹང་བ།} \]

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

\[\text{དབང་ཤེས་ལ་ཡང་ཐང་ལེན་ཐོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིའི་རང་གི་} \text{མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ǿབ་པར་Ȍོ་བཏགས་པའམ་ȹང་བ།} \]

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

\[\text{ཐང་ལེན་ཐོག་པའི་ཞེན་གཞིའི་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་} \text{ǿབ་པར་Ȍོ་བཏགས་པའམ་ȹང་བ་} \]
f. imputational natures in general (including existent imputational natures such as uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses)

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

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

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

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

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

l. the superimposed factor or appearance to a conceptual consciousness as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness
As before, according to the tradition of Gung-ru Chö-jung, Jam-yang-shay-pa, Gung-thang Kōn-chog-tan-pay-drōn-me, and A-khu Lo-drö-gyatsho, there is no one answer, flexibility being required. As I (with more trepidation than with the first puzzle) read their explanation, the references to “imputational natures,” or the like, in those ten passages are:

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

   Those [imputational characters] \( b: \) establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and \( c: \) the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] are characters posited by names and terminology and do not subsist by way of their own character. Therefore, those \( b: \) establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and \( c: \) the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] are said to be “character-non-natures.”
2. The sixth chapter of the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, the “Questions of Guṇākara,” where it says that imputational natures are to be identified in terms of a factor of appearance wrongly superimposed by a mistaken awareness:

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

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

---

*a* As cited in Gung-thang Kön-chog-tan-pay-drön-me’s *Difficult Points*, 109.16.
very clear crystal as precious jewels—sapphire, the blue gem, ruby, emerald, or gold.

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

With respect to that imputational factor \( b \): establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness of which \{other-powered natures\} are empty, on both occasions of identifying the imputational factor \( b \): establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and \( c \): the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness in the sūtra it does not speak of any other imputational factor than just factors imputed in the manner of entities and attributes \( b \): establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and \( c \): the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness. I will explain the reason for this later.
and his later explanation (*Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 217) of the evidence:

Although among *imputational factors* in general ([f: imputational natures in general, including uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses]) there are many, such as all generally characterized phenomena, space, and so forth, the reason why these are not [explicitly] mentioned in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* is that they ([f: imputational natures in general, including uncompounded space and so forth as well as non-existent imputational natures such as the horns of a rabbit or establishment of objects by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses]) are not relevant on the occasion of the *imputational factor* ([b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] the emptiness of which [b: establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] is posited as the thoroughly established nature. Although many of those are existents that cannot be posited by names and terminology, they are not established by way of their own character because of being only imputed by conceptuality.
The imputational natures that Tsong-kha-pa has in mind when he (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 195) says that they must be identified in order to know the selflessness of phenomena well:

If you do not know what this imputational factor ([c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness]) that is a superimposed factor of a self of phenomena on other-powered natures is, you will not know in a decisive way the conception of a self of phenomena and the selflessness of phenomena of this [Mind-Only] system.
5. Tsong-kha-pa’s identification (Emptiness in Mind-Only, 195) of the imputational nature that, when conceived to be established by way of its own character, is the self of phenomena, saying it is not just imputational natures in general but a specific one:

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

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

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

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

It is thus: for example, character-non-natures \([\text{that is, imputational natures}]\) \([b]: \text{establishment by way of its} \)
own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness and c: the superimposed factor or appearance as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness] are to be viewed as like a flower in the sky, for example.

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

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

---

a See Hopkins, Absorption, Issues #125 and 126.
Also, even if it were being refuted that the self-isolate of the conceived object [of a conceptual consciousness] \( m \): the appearing objects of inferential cognition (these being sound-generalities and meaning-generalities)\(^a\) and \( a \): being the referent of a conceptual consciousness\(^b\) is established by way of its own character, since it is established even for the Sūtra School that the objects of comprehension of an inferential valid cognition are generally characterized phenomena [and] do not exist as [functioning] things, this is not feasible.

\[ \text{ཞེན་ལེགས་པ།} m: སེམས་ཅན་ོབ་པ། ཆིག་པ་པོ་ དང་ a: སེམས་ཅན་ོབ་པ་ སློབ་པ་པོ་ དངོས་པོ་མེད་པ་རང་མཚན་གྱིས་ởབ་པའི་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་ དང་Tsེས་དཔག་ཚད་མའི་གཞལ་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་རང་མཚན་ཀྱིས་ོབ་པ་འགོག་ནའང་Tsེས་དཔག་ཚད་མའི་གཞལ་ཞེན་གཞི་ཡིན་པ་རང་མཚན་དངོས་པོ་མེད་པར་མདོ་ཐེ་པས་ཀྱང་ོབ་ཟིན་པས་མི་འཐད་དོ། \]

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

Concerning this, even Proponents of Sūtra have established that the mere appearance that is the appearance to a conceptual consciousness that form and so forth are established by way of their own character as referents of the conventions of entity and attribute \( l \): the superimposed factor or appearance to a conceptual consciousness as established by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness is a superimposed factor \( k \): something only posited by conceptuality and not established by way of its own character\(^c\) 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.


\(^b\) A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho’s Precious Lamp, 238.4: gzugs sogs ming brda’i yul yin pa’i cha lta bu. He draws this from Gung-thang (Difficult Points, 120.20).
of being established by way of its own character in accordance with how it appears to a conceptual consciousness could constitute realization of the selflessness of phenomena [in the Mind-Only School].

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

THE IMPORT

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

Thus, despite the difficulties involved in trying even to determine what such complex traditions of exegesis take to be the referents of these terms, basic and undisputed principles of Tsong-kha-pa’s presentation of the topic emerge with considerable clarity. It is possible to miss the woods for the trees, but when one steps back and surveys the wider scene, it is clear that:
1. Phenomena are referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms.
2. However, they falsely appear to both sense consciousnesses and conceptual consciousnesses to be established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms.
3. Assent to this false appearance constitutes the obstructions of omniscience and underlies all afflictive emotions.
4. Objects’ emptiness of being established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses and of terms is a subtle selflessness of phenomena.
5. Realization of this emptiness and prolonged meditation on it in the manner of direct perception remove both the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience.
Bibliography

1. SŪTRAS

Sūtra Unraveling the Thought
saṃdhinirmocanasūtra
dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa'i mdo

2. OTHER SANSKRIT AND TIBETAN WORKS

A-khu Lo-drö-gya-tsho / Gung-thang Lo-drö-gya-tsho (a khu blo gros rgya mtsho / gung thang blo gros rgya mtsho, 1851-1928/1930)
drang ba dang nges pa'i don mam par 'byed pa'i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po'i dka' 'grel rin chen sgron me
Gung-ru Chö-jung / Gung-ru Chö-kyi-jung-nay (gung ru chos 'byung / gung ru chos kyi 'byung gnas; fl. mid 16th to early 17th centuries)
drang ba dang nges pa'i mam par 'byed pa legs bshad snying po zhés bya ba'i mtha' dpyod padma dkar po'i phreng ba
No BDRC data found.
sku bum, Tibet: sku bum Monastery, n.d. [blockprint obtained by Hopkins in 1988].
Gung-thang Kón-chöng-tay-pay-drón-me (gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, 1762-1823 the 21st abbot of Tra-shi-khyil: Smith, vol. 1, p.81; by birth a Mongol; rebirth of the Throne-Holder of Gan-dan)
drang nges mam 'byed kyi dka' 'grel rtsom 'phro legs bshad snying po'i yang snying
Jam-yang-shay-pa Ngag-wang-tsön-drü ('jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje ngag dbang brtson grus, 1648-1721/1722)
drang ba dang nges pa'i don mam par 'byed pa'i mtha' dpyod 'khrul bral lung rigs bai dūr dkar
pa'i ngan mdzod skal bzang re ba kun skong
Edition cited: BDRC W22186.10: 1-288, which is a PDF of: bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, bla brang bkra shis 'khyil dgon, publishing date unknown.
Jig-me-dam-chö-gya-tsho ('jigs med dam chos rgya mtsho); poetic name Mi-pam-yang-yan-gye-pay-dor-je (mi pham dbyangs can dgyes [or dges] pa'i rdo rje; 1898-1946)

Port of Entry / Treatise Distinguishing All the Meanings of (Tsong-kha-pa’s) “The Essence of Eloquence”: Illuminating the Differentiation of the Interpretable and the Definitive: Port of Entry to “The Essence of Eloquence”
drang ba dang nges pa'i don mam par phyie ba gsal bar byed pa legs bshad snying po'i don nthas’ dag mam par ’byed pa’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po'i jug ngogs
Beijing: krong go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1999.
Khay-drub-ge-leg-pal-sang (mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, 1385-1438)
Great Compilation: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate / Treatise Brilliantly Clarifying the Profound Emptiness: Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate
stong thun chen mo / zab mo stong pa nyid rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i bstan bcos skal bzang mig ’byed


Tsong-kha-pa Lo-sang-drag-pa (tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419)
Treatise Differentiating Interpretable and Definitive Meanings: The Essence of Eloquence
drang ba dang nges pa'i don mam par phyie ba'i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po

English translation of the introductory section on the Middle Way School: Jeffrey Hopkins. *Emp
tiness in the Middle Way School of Buddhism: Mutual Reinforcement of Understanding De
pendent-Arising and Emptiness. Dynamic Responses to Tsong-kha-pa’s The Essence of Elo

English translation of the entire text: Robert A. F. Thurman. *Tseng Khapa’s Speech of Gold in

Editions: see the preface to Hopkins’ critical edition of the Introduction and section on the Mind
Only School, *Emptiness in Mind-Only*, 355. Also:

Palden Drakpa and Damdul Namgyal. *drang nges legs bshad snying po: The Essence of Elo
quent Speech on the Definitive and Interpretable*, 84.16-103.5. Mundgod, India: SOKU,

Ye shes thabs mkhas. *shar tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pas mdzad pa’i drang ba dang nges
pa’i don rnam par ’byed pa’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po* (The Eastern Tsong-kha-pa
Lo-sang-drag-pa’s “Treatise Differentiating Interpretable and Definitive Meanings: The
Jeffrey Hopkins is Professor Emeritus of Tibetan Buddhist Studies at the University of Virginia where he taught Tibetan Buddhist Studies and Tibetan language for thirty-two years from 1973. He received a B.A. *magna cum laude* from Harvard University in 1963, trained for five years at the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America in Freewood Acres, New Jersey, USA (now the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center in Washington, New Jersey), and received a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin in 1973. He served as His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s chief interpreter into English on lecture tours for ten years, 1979-1989. At the University of Virginia he founded programs in Buddhist Studies and Tibetan Studies and served as Director of the Center for South Asian Studies for twelve years. He has published fifty-four books, some of which have been translated into a total of twenty-two languages. He published the first translation of the foundational text of the Jo-nang school of Tibetan Buddhism in *Mountain Doctrine: Tibet’s Fundamental Treatise on Other-Emptiness and the Buddha-Matrix*. He has translated and edited sixteen books from oral teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the last four being *How to See Yourself as You Really Are; Becoming Enlightened; How to Be Compassionate;* and *The Heart of Meditation: Discovering Innermost Awareness*. He is the Founder and President of the UMA Institute for Tibetan Studies.
In the series of translations by William Magee of Jam-yang-shay-pa’s *Great Exposition of the Interpretable and the Definitive* (c. 1686), it became apparent with the publication of the fourth volume on how imputational natures are character-non-natures that due to the many meanings of the two terms “imputational nature” and “own-character” it might be helpful to provide a short treatment on these two terms. Magee’s fourth volume treats the initial section in Tsong-kha-pa’s *The Essence of Eloquence* analyzing the depiction in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* of the Buddha’s response to Bodhisattva Paramārthaśamudgata’s question regarding an apparent contradiction in Buddha’s sūtras. In this response the Buddha initially lays out the first of the three natures and three non-natures—that imputational natures are character-non-natures.

Here in the present book Jeffrey Hopkins draws on his trilogy on the section of the Mind-Only School titled *Dynamic Responses to Dzong-ka-ba’s The Essence of Eloquence* to identify these many meanings along with making references to detailed exposition of the issues especially in the third volume, *Absorption In No External World: 170 Issues in Mind-Only Buddhism*. Through these multiple identifications, we come to see that Tsong-kha-pa’s followers step into his shoes by using his principles of organization to extend his thought further, such that they come to know his pivotal concepts in an active and creative way, rather than just repeating what he said. Since the principles of his system are put to active use, these come to life in a way otherwise impossible. Examination of problems in debate and in literary composition becomes a method of profound internalization.