

| Tsongkhapa | Gorampa |
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| Source: The Two Truths Debate: Tsongkhapa and Gorampa on the Middle Way by Sonam Thakchoe (Introduction) | |
| Buddha | |
| Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 C.E.) | |
| Āryadeva (ca. 170–270 C.E.) | |
| Candrakīrti (ca. 570–650 C.E.) | |
| Tsongkhapa | Gorampa |
| 1357–1419 | 1429–89 |
| Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas | |
| Tsongkhapa as a pluralist | Gorampa is a monist |
| Two truths are actual truths. Conventional and Ultimate truths are mutually interlocking, with no hierarchical relation between them. Both truths are equal in their ontological, epistemological, and even soteriological importance. | Conventional truth is not actual truth. Ultimate truth alone is the truth. Thus the two truths are distinct, hierarchically ordered, and mutually exclusive. Ultimate truth precedes conventional truth in its ontological, epistemological, and soteriological importance. |
| Definitions of the two truths are based on the two natures that are verified by, respectively, empirically valid and ultimately valid cognition. He does not simply reduce the two truths to these two modes of cognition; ultimate truth in particular, cannot be metaphysically unconditioned – reducible to an independent and ultimate mode of cognition – even though it may be unconditioned epistemologically. | Ignorance and wisdom respectively determine the character, and therefore the definition, of each of the two truths. The two truths are thus underlaid by, and reducible to two conflicting modes of cognition. Ultimate truth is therefore unconditioned metaphysically – it is defined by an independent and ultimate mode of cognition. |
| Ultimate truth is, to a certain extent, both effable and conceptually unknowable. He argues for the possibility of valid conceptual cognition. | He argues against the possibility of valid conceptual cognition. |
| <p>Regarding the three principal modes of knowing ultimate truth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By way of not seeing it 2. By way of transcending conceptual elaborations 3. By way of ascending to nonduality | |

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| <p>Mobilizes all three of these modes of knowing ultimate truth to establish that empirically given phenomena (those accessible to the senses) are without essence and thus dependently arisen. He then proceeds to argue that transcendent knowledge is equivalent to knowledge of empirical phenomena in being dependently arisen.</p> | <p>Mobilizes the three modes of knowing ultimate truth as epistemological scaffolding that allows one to ascend to a metaphysical nonduality. Transcendent knowledge is utterly distinct from conventional knowledge. Thus the knowledge of empirically given phenomena is dependently arisen and the knowledge of transcendent ultimate truth as nondual must be distinct and contradictory.</p> |
| <p>Enlightenment is the perfection of knowledge of empirically given phenomena from both empirical and ultimate standpoints. Thus the two truths – and there two modes of knowing – are united in a perfect equilibrium.</p> | <p>Enlightenment represents a breach between the two truths, for with enlightenment the conventional world and conventional knowledge disappear, and one is conscious only of a transcendent absolute.</p> |
| founder of the Gelug | pillar of the Sakya |
| <p>Defended Tsongkhapa's interpretation while rejecting that of Gorampa:</p> <p>Gyaltsab Jé (1364-1432) [Gelug] Khedrub Jé (1385-1438) [Gelug] Gendün Drub (1391-1474) [Gelug] Sera Jetsün Chökyi Gyaltsen (1469-1544) [Gelug] Panchen Sönam Dragpa (1478-1554) [Gelug] Panchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen (1567-1662) [Gelug] Jamyang Shepai Dorje (1648-1722) [Gelug] Changkya Rölpai Dorje (1717-86) [Gelug] Könchog Jigmé Wangpo (1728-91) [Gelug]</p> | <p>Raised serious and fierce objections against Tsongkhapa's position on the doctrine of the two truths:</p> <p>Rongtön Shakya Gyaltsen (1367-1449) [Sakya] Taksang Lotsawa (1405 - ?) [Sakya] Shakya Chogden (1428-1509) [Sakya] Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje (1504-57) [Kagyu] Mipham Rinpoche (1846-1912) [Nyingma] Gendün Chöpel (1903-51) [Nyigma/Gelug]</p> |