



The Devil Debates an Angel  
Course One—The Fight Begins  
Class One: Names from Their Own Side

- 1) What is the traditional brief name for the extraordinary classic that we are learning as “The Devil Debates an Angel”? Who wrote this extended poem; when did he live; and how might we summarize his life?
- 2) What is the genre of the work that we will be learning; what basic practice does it follow; and how does it reflect three periods of our life?
- 3) How does the Panchen Lama bridge from his description of the three stages of Mahamudra to the fight between the Angel and the Devil within one person’s mind?

The Devil Debates an Angel  
Course One: The Fight Begins  
Homework, Class One

4) How does the Tendency to Think that Things are Themselves respond to Wisdom's first salvo? What do you think of his answer?

5) How does Wisdom answer the claim that misunderstanding and the mind have been constant companions forever? What clever reply does Misunderstanding give, and how can we justify the Angel's radical rejoinder?

*Coffee shop assignment:* Please meet with at least one other person—or better, a group of people—whom you didn't know well before this teaching; do your homework together and discuss together any questions you have. Please write here where, when, and with whom you did your homework:

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes early in the day, and 15 minutes later in the day, trying to recreate the opening blows between Wisdom and Misunderstanding inside your own mind. Then identify this Misunderstanding in your own mind and try to perceive the role it is playing in the greatest challenge in your life right now. Please write here the two times that you started these meditations:

The Devil Debates an Angel  
Course One—The Fight Begins  
Class Two: This Town Ain't Big Enough  
for Both of Us (verses 29-42)

1) Describe the realm over which the Devil of Misunderstanding claims to reign, and why he thinks that he does so.

2) The Angel of Wisdom is trying to tell us that we are looking at everything around us in the wrong way. What are two problems that the Angel says come up with things if we believe that they are coming from their own side—if they are, in fact, themselves?

3) In verse 34, the Angel presents a very important idea which will become a theme throughout the entire battle. This is the idea of “two incompatible things, like a single thing hot and cold.” Discuss what this incompatibility refers to in the present verse, and relate it to a popular saying from cowboy movies.

The Devil Debates and Angel  
Course One: The Fight Begins  
Homework, Class Two

4) His Holiness the First Panchen Lama interrupts the flow of his poem to quote a line of prose from Master Chandrakirti's extensive commentary to Master Aryadeva's *400 Verses on the Deeds of Bodhisattva Yogis*. This line is actually an excellent explanation of the word "emptiness," and its relationship to how we behave towards others. Explain why.

5) In verse 42, the Tendency to Think that Things are Themselves claims that if the mind did manage to expel him, then the mind would "lose its oldest friend," and then become unable to find any more friends after that. Why is he saying this, and why is he very, very wrong, especially in terms of our personal relationships?

*Coffee shop assignment:* Please meet with at least one other person—or better, a group of people—whom you didn't know well before this teaching; do your homework together and discuss together any questions you have. Please write here where, when, and with whom you did your homework:

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes early in the day, and 15 minutes later in the day, thinking of people or events in our life right now that we might be seeing in the wrong way: as coming from their own side, rather than from the seeds in our mind. That is, getting used to what a thing that comes from its own side (which is impossible) looks like. Please write here the two times that you started these meditations:

The Devil Debates an Angel  
Course One—The Fight Begins  
Class Three: Truth Will Prevail (verses 43-54)

- 1) The Devil of Misunderstanding profanes a word which is normally used to describe a boon from a holy being—*jinlab*, or “blessing”—by saying to the Angel, “I have granted to this mind my own most holy blessing.” How does the Devil describe this blessing, and what consequences does he say it will have?
  
- 2) The Devil of Misunderstanding boasts of having a number of assistants who, for the mind, are bosses that control it, all the time. Speak about four of these assistants, describing their nature and why they come from this Devil. How does the Devil see the future of these assistants?
  
- 3) At one point in the debate, the Devil tells Wisdom that she simply cannot drive him from the mind, because it is Karma that has put him there, and nothing in the world—not even all the power of all the Buddhas—can reverse Karma. How do you rate this argument, and how does it lead to the determination to become a teacher ourselves?

The Devil Debates and Angel  
Course One: The Fight Begins  
Master, Class Three

4) What does Wisdom mean when she says that Misunderstanding is “riding out on the donkey to look for the donkey you think you lost”? And how do you explain her next statement that “the very fact that Misunderstanding has appeared in the mind makes it impossible for him to stay there”?

5) How does the Angel compare the Devil to a veil, and what lies below the veil?

*Coffee shop assignment:* Please meet with at least one other person—or better, a group of people—whom you didn’t know well before this teaching; do your homework together and discuss together any questions you have. Please write here where, when, and with whom you did your homework:

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes early in the day, and 15 minutes later in the day, reflecting on the story of the mannequin and relating it to our own life, to see the inevitability of our own enlightenment, to see that truth will always prevail. Please write here the two times that you started these meditations: