

The Devil Debates an Angel
Course Three—Ultimate Meditation
Class One: The Two Me's (verses 55-59)

1) *The Angel describes two ways in which we can check to see if we are who we always thought we were. What are these two?*

[The Angel says that we can look for ourselves in two different places: in the parts of us, considered in a single moment of time; and in the instants of us, as we stream through time.

The first of these relates most easily to the parts of our body: arms, legs, head and chest. The second relates most easily to our mind, as our thoughts stream ahead through the day.

If someone asked us whether we were the parts of our body, or the instants of our mind, we would naturally think that we are: I am all the parts of my body put together; I am the sum total of all of the thoughts that I've had over the course of the day.

But in truth the situation is, as we will see, a little more complicated than that!]

2) *His Holiness the First Panchen Lama describes how we are neither any one of the parts of us (especially of our body), nor are we all of these parts put together. Then he gives us a clue to understand this puzzle. Explain the clue and the solution, and what this has to do with our life.*

[It's not at all difficult to understand that we are not any one part of us: of course I am not my left arm, for example. It's a little harder though to see why I am not the sum total of all the parts of me put together: arms, legs, head, torso, thoughts and all the rest.

Maybe it helps to think of how a car might look to a caveman who had never seen one. They would see the tires, the sides, the bumpers, and the steering wheel—all the parts of the car.

The Devil Debates an Angel
Course Two: How to Meditate, How Not to Meditate
Master, Class Two

But they wouldn't know how to tie it all together. Their mind might even "lump" things together wrong, and not even see the whole car as a single thing. Perhaps they would see a pattern in all the chrome parts together—almost as a piece of silver art—and not much notice the other parts that didn't shine, such as the wheels.

We are the same with the things around us that we do not yet understand. A computer technician might be aware of all the latest advances in technology, but may lack the ability to tie them all together into a new invention like the iPhone.

*We need to understand then that an iPhone is not just a collection of many separate technologies: it is a collection of all these technologies **plus** the vision of the inventor who ties all of these technologies together. Without this vision, there is no iPhone yet—and so we need to consider this unifying vision of all the parts as the final and most essential part.*

So how does all this relate to us? What use is there of understanding how the parts make the whole only if we can conceptualize them as this whole?

The point is that there is no "natural" or pre-set way of looking at all of the parts of us together. We can for example see our body as something altogether normal—I wish I could lose ten pounds. Or we could look at exactly the same set of parts as a miraculous chariot for saving the world: an infinitely precious and sophisticated machine for good.

There is in fact no body there until we think of it as a body. And whether we are capable of thinking of it this way all depends upon the seeds in our mind: seeds which we have planted there by our kindness shown to others. This dependence is mentioned by His Holiness in this verse (#58) as the clue to understanding why we are neither a part or all the parts of us.]

3) About checking to see if we can be found in our parts, His Holiness makes a difficult statement that "it goes both ways." Explain.

[When someone comes along and asks me whether I can find "me" in my parts, I of course look down at "me" as I see myself in a photograph or in a mirror, and begin to check whether I am any one of my parts (just my leg for example, which is of course ridiculous) or

The Devil Debates an Angel
Course Two: How to Meditate, How Not to Meditate
Master, Class Two

all my parts together. Again, the impossibility of the second choice is the difficult one to grasp.

I look down at my body for example (all the parts of my body, together) and check to see if that's what I feel "me" is. So I have a "me" that I'm feeling that I am over here, and I'm looking at my body down there and seeing if the "me" I feel that I am is the same as that body. Is that (along with my mind and the rest of me, of course) who Michael is?

The trick of course is that we are already thinking of the body (and the rest) as Michael; if we didn't, then it wouldn't be our body that we looked down at to see if it was me—we'd look at someone else's body to see if it was Michael.

Which means of course that there's already a seed opening up in our mind that ties all those parts together and sees them as "Michael." If I didn't have that seed, then I wouldn't think of those parts as Michael in the first place, any more than I think of the floor or the wall as Michael.

My parts, even all of them together, are not Michael until I think of them as Michael—and if I do think of them that way, that's because one more part has gotten involved: the seed that makes me think that way.

And that seed comes from how I have treated others. Given that a human body and mind are absolutely priceless for reaching enlightenment and creating a perfect world, this seed probably has come from countless deeds of kindness towards others, in my past lives.

So we've established that the parts of my body down there are not Michael.

But the point here is that it goes both ways: Michael is not them either.

To say this, as we just noted, I have to already have a picture of "me" or "Michael" in my mind. This is the Michael that I compare to my parts to see if they are the same thing.

Now where has this Michael, the one that I compare to my body, come from?

It too—the Michael that I feel is me—has come from similar seeds. In a way, it is more close than my body and other parts to the little perfect image or picture called "Michael" that is produced within my mind when a karmic seed opens.

The Devil Debates an Angel
Course Two: How to Meditate, How Not to Meditate
Master, Class Two

I am not my body, and all my other parts, put together. And neither are they me. At least, not without the seeds to see them as me—seeds that I need to keep planting, if I want to escape death and the gradual pain of aging in this life.]

4) It's probably important at this point to pause, and ask ourselves what His Holiness the First Panchen Lama is saying about "me." Does "me" exist or not? How might this be a "bad" question?

[It's very important—as we look into the parts of "me" to see if they are, even all together, me—to realize that there are really two me's.

*The Tibetans have a special name for each of these two me's. The first one is called the *megyuy dak*: "the me that was never there." The second is called the *yugyuy dak*: "the me that really is there."*

The me that was never there is the one that we've been trying to get ahold of by looking into our parts, to see if they are me. What we've learned is that what we always considered all the parts to Michael are still not yet Michael.

There is a final "part" which I need to consider, or else Michael can't be Michael.

Without this thought to see the parts as Michael, there never would be a Michael. I would look at all the pieces of Michael and never think of them as Michael.

A baby for example can look at all the parts of a fan and not perceive them as something potentially dangerous. They are potentially dangerous, which the baby finds out if they stick their fingers in the fan. The baby doesn't yet have a picture in their mind of all the parts together as being something potentially dangerous. The moral of the story is that—to the baby—the fan is not something potentially dangerous, until they learn to think of it that way.

And so we can say that—before the baby sticks their fingers in the fan—there is no potentially dangerous fan there, to them.

The Devil Debates an Angel
Course Two: How to Meditate, How Not to Meditate
Master, Class Two

The potentially dangerous fan that the baby sees out there before they stick their fingers in the fan is a potentially dangerous fan that was never there. (Which by the way is why there's no justice in getting angry at the child before they know that the fan is potentially dangerous.)

This fan is just like the "me" that could be out there without a mental seed making me see it there—that is, there's no such thing.

There is though a potentially dangerous fan out there after the baby learns to see it that way. This is like the "me" that my mind glues together out of parts of me as a karmic seed to see "me" opens inside my own mind.

And this "me" really does exist.

It's a bad question then to ask whether the "me" exists or not. There is one version of "me" that doesn't exist, and another which does exist.]

5) In a practical way, how would it help us to discover that "me" is not who I always thought he or she was?

[Suppose that we're having trouble in our relationship with our partner. They tend to boss us around all the time. We see ourselves as being perfectly capable of making out own decisions about what to do during the day, but they don't seem to be able to understand this when we tell them.

In short, we feel that our partner is being bossy from their own side, and that we are capable from our own side.

But a partner who was bossy from their own side doesn't exist. As we know, we are only seeing them as bossy because we have seeds in our mind that force us to see them that way. And we planted those seeds by being bossy ourselves, perhaps at someone in our office, last week.

So the bossy partner does really exist, but not from their own side. They exist from my side: I am creating them, out there, right now.

The Devil Debates an Angel
Course Two: How to Meditate, How Not to Meditate
Master, Class Two

The “me” that we think is capable from their own side also doesn’t exist. If we see ourselves as capable, that might for example come from a seed that we have of praising others as being capable. But we can’t assume that our partner has the same seed.

And we also must have a seed to see our partner see us as not being capable. Which means we haven’t praised others enough! In either case, the me who doesn’t deserve to be bossed around never did exist, so there’s no sense in getting upset about them. Just stop bossing other people around.]

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, think about someone that you’re having a problem with, and try to see some way in which they don’t exist the way you thought they did. (They don’t exist from their side.)

Please write here the two times that you started these meditations (homeworks without these times will not be accepted):