

The First of the Thirteen Sacred Stages

“So, tell me: who are you?”

“Eh, I’m Edward!”

“Are you sure? Is that really who you are – Edward? Just Edward?”

“Well, I’m a computer programmer, as I was saying earlier. Sometimes people call me Mr. Kelly, but that’s rare! I usually prefer Eddie, though”

“So you’re a computer programmer named Edward or Eddie and sometimes Mr. Kelly?”

“Yeah! Pretty much.”

“And that’s it? This is who you are? Always, you’re a programmer named Edward or Eddie and sometimes Mr. Kelly? Even when you go home after work – a programmer named Edward or Eddie and sometimes Mr. Kelly?”

“No! After work I’m just Eddie!”

“So that’s who you are? Just Eddie?”

“No! I see what you mean. Well, I suppose I’m a person – a human. A human male.”

“And everything you do, you’re a human male – is that right?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“When you take a bath – a human male. Eat the food – a human male. All the time – a human male.”

“Well, it sounds funny when you say it like that, but yeah – everything I do, I’m a human male! How could I not be a human male, I suppose? Wow, I’ve never used the phrase ‘human male’ so much!”

“And when you were a baby, feeding from your mother’s breast – were you a human male then?”

“I – I don’t know. I suppose I was, but I didn’t know I was. I don’t remember that far back – I was a baby!”

“So, you *were* a baby, but now you’re a human male?”

“Eh, well, yeah, obviously I used to be a baby!”

“And were you not yourself when you were a baby?”

“Well, I was but... Yeah, I see... Eh, who am I then? Well, I’m definitely an animal!”

“Definitely?”

“Well, I’m not so sure when you use that tone! You’re saying I’m not an animal? Hmm. No, I think that’s right –even when I was a baby I was an animal!”

“Always an animal?”

“Yeah!”

“Like a dog or a cat?”

“Yeah, well, not *exactly* like a dog or a cat.”

“How so?”

“Like, I’m much more intelligent for starters. Humans are like intelligent animals.”

“An intelligent cat.”

“No! An intelligent animal!”

“So always an intelligent animal? Go walking – intelligent animal. Talk to mother – intelligent animal. Eat a biscuit – intelligent animal. ”

“Technically... yes?”

“Always technically an intelligent animal?”

“Haha! Well, I know you don’t have to be an intelligent animal to eat a biscuit, but you know what I mean! It’s what I am! I don’t know. I’m just a… thing. Just like… a thing?”

“Just a thing?”

“I don’t see how I couldn’t be.”

“What is a thing?”

“Like an object. A thing. Like a bit of something.”

“A bit of something aside from other bits of other somethings?”

“Yeah!? Kinda makes sense.”

“And when you breath, you breath air?”

“Yes.”

“And this air is something else? Something other than you?”

“I’d say so.”

“And when the air goes into your lungs, is it still something else?”

“Yeah, well, it’s just air in my lungs, then.”

“And when your lungs absorb the oxygen from the air into your blood, is it still something else?”

“No, then I make it part of myself. It was part of the air and then it goes into my blood, and it becomes part of me.”

“When the air, which was something else, goes into your blood, it becomes part of you? Not when it entered your lungs or passed your lips. Only in the blood?”

“Yeah well your mouth and lungs are just empty, they’re not really part of you.”

“Just empty?”

“Yeah, well it’s complicated. I’m not a biologist, so I can’t really describe it properly.”

“So you must become a biologist to find out who you are?”

“Probably! Well, no. It’s just that: when the air crosses from outside of me to inside, then it’s me.

Does that not make sense?”

“And the same with food?”

“Yeah, exactly the same!”

“And that becomes you when it touches what part of your body? Your hand? Your mouth? Your tongue? Your stomach?

“Hmm? I’m not sure. But when it goes into my blood, then it’s part of me.”

“So not in the stomach, but in the blood it’s definitely you?”

“Yeah. Well, maybe in the stomach acid for food.”

“And when you poop out the excrement, it is no longer you, even though it once was you?”

“Well, the poo part never goes into my blood.”

“So, back to the blood? Are you the blood?”

“In a way. It’s kind of hard to put into words.”

“And your bones and your skin, they are not your blood, so they are not part of you?”

“Yeah, well, they are, of course, but the blood feeds them. All the cells in my body are fed by the blood, so there’s something special about it. It’s like my life force or something.”

“And you have thoughts?”

“Yes.”

“And they are part of you?”

“Yeah, that would make sense.”

“But they are not fed by the blood.”

“No, but they are made by brain signals between neurons and those neurons are fed by the blood.”

“So, when someone speaks to you and you have a thought, this is because of the blood and not because of the speaker?”

“Oh! Yeah, I see. Woh! Well, maybe I am made up of my blood, which feeds my body and my mind – and my thoughts?”

“You sleep?”

“I do.”

“And when you sleep, you sometimes dream?”

“That’s right.”

“Tell me one of your dreams.”

“Well, last night I was swimming in an ocean and it went on for miles around me. Eh, there were huge waves tossing me all around and I was trying to get out but I couldn’t swim properly and the waves were getting bigger and bigger and just as I was going down into the water and I couldn’t breath anymore, I woke up!”

“And when you woke up, were you wet from swimming in the water?”

“No, I just woke up in my bed!”

“So where were you when you dreamed? In the water or in your bed?”

“Wow, I don’t know. I guess I was in my bed. Well, I *was* in my bed!”

“And where was the ocean?”

“Just in my mind, I suppose. I’m just trying to think: was ‘I’ in the ocean or was ‘I’ in my bed.”

“Yes, please, think.”

“I felt like I was in the ocean. Maybe I *was* in the ocean? Like, am I just thoughts?”

“So, not in your bed?”

“God, well, I definitely was in my bed though. Am I just a brain? Like a bunch of signals flying around in my brain making thoughts?”

“When you program your computers, electrical signals fly all around between the different parts, yes?”

“Yes.”

“And this is like your neurons and brain signals, no?”

“It is. I suppose a brain is a lot more complicated though.”

“So, when electrical signals get complicated, they become thoughts?”

“Hmm, no. That doesn’t make sense. Eh, can I be thoughts without a brain? Like is everything just a thought?”

“So am I one of your thoughts or are you one of mine?”

“Damn! Good one! Well, you’d have to be mine. But then everyone probably feels that way, so it’s probably not right. I did hear something about thoughts being the fundamental basis of reality before. I’m just trying to think is there anything to it?”

“Say, on your way here, you see a snake. You go out of your way to walk around it carefully, so as not to get bitten, but as you approach the snake you see it was just a coiled up rope, discarded on the side of the road. Do you believe it was a snake and became a rope or was it always a rope?”

“Well, it was always a rope. I just thought it was a snake because my mind was filling in details that weren’t really there.”

“So your thoughts were mistaken?”

“Yeah.”

“So, if the world can correct your thoughts, how could your thoughts be the basis of reality?”

“Yeah, I guess they can’t! Look – I don’t know who I am. My brain is fried! Can you just tell me?”

“No, I cannot. For if I point at the moon, there is a chance you will mistake my finger for the moon. When you see the moon for yourself, you will know it, and you will wonder how it was you had not seen it before.”

“Amazing! So what now?”

“You have made wonderful progress today and I thank you for speaking with me. It can sometimes take many many conversations to get as far as you have, but you are very curious student and willing to change your mind quickly. This is very important skill. Please, meditate on all we have discussed and next time we meet, I want you to show me who you really are. No words, just show. Meditate on this and go in peace.”

The Guru struck a small ceremonial gong and closed his eyes indicating that the conversation was over.