

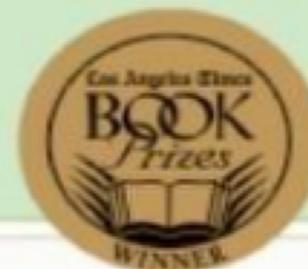
I am a Strange Loop

by DOUGLAS HOFSTADTER

Outline, Highlights, & Discussion Topics

"Brilliant... the most gripping 400 pages I've read in years." —*The Times* (London)

I AM A STRANGE LOOP



DOUGLAS HOFSTADTER

AUTHOR OF *GÖDEL, ESCHER, BACH*

Judging a Book by its Cover (or dust jacket)

What do we mean when we say “I”?

**Can a self, a soul, a consciousness, an “I”
arise out of mere matter?**

**If it cannot, then how can you or I be
here?**

**If it can, then how can we understand this
baffling emergence?**

Deep down, a human brain is

- a chaotic seething soup of particles,**
- on a higher level it is a jungle of neurons,**
- and on a yet higher level it is a network of abstractions that we call "symbols".**

The most central and complex symbol in your brain or mine is the one we both call "I". An "I" is a strange loop in a brain where symbolic and physical levels feed back into each other and flip causality upside down, with symbols seeming to have free will and to have gained the paradoxical ability to push particles around, rather than the reverse.

For each human being, this “I” seems to be the realest thing in the world.

But how can such a mysterious abstraction be real — or is our “I” merely a convenient fiction?

Does an “I” exert genuine power over the particles in our brain,

or is it helplessly pushed around by the all-powerful laws of physics?

**How do we mirror other beings
inside our mind?**

**Can many strange loops of
different “strengths” inhabit one
brain? If so, then a hallowed
tenet of our culture — that one
human brain houses one human
soul — is an illusion.**

These are among the mysteries tackled in *I Am a Strange Loop*, Douglas Hofstadter's first book-length journey into philosophy since *Gödel, Escher, Bach*.

It is a tale crisply told, rife with anecdotes, analogies, and metaphors. It is cutting-edge philosophy that any strange loop can understand. Clear, compelling, and provocative, this is the book Hofstadter's many readers have long been waiting for.

These are among the mysteries tackled in *I Am a Strange Loop*, Douglas Hofstadter's first book-length journey into philosophy since *Gödel, Escher, Bach*.

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Praise for earlier works from its dust jacket

For Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid:

“A brilliant, creative, and very personal synthesis without precedent or peer in modern literature.” —*The American Mathematical Monthly*

**“Every few decades an unknown author brings out a book of such depth, clarity, range, wit, beauty, and originality that it is recognized at once as a major literary event. This is such a work.”
MARTIN GARDNER in *Scientific American***

“I have never seen anything quite like this book. It has a youthful vitality and a wonderful brilliance, and I think that it may become something of a classic.”

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

Praise for earlier works from its dust jacket

For *Metamagical Themas*:

“Enormously ambitious and hugely interesting.” -New York Times Book Review

“Douglas Hofstadter is a scientist with the inspired madness of a poet.” -New Republic

Praise for earlier works from its dust jacket

For *Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies*:

“Terrific — deep, wise, provocative and profound.” -Los Angeles Times

**“It will change your idea of what it is to be creative and even what it is to be human.”
—New York Times Book Review**

Praise for earlier works from its dust jacket

For *Le Ton beau de Marot*: In Praise of the Music of Language

“Hofstadter has triumphantly returned with a companion volume to his youthful masterwork, an inquiry into the nature of language and translation, an exhilarating blend of autobiography, analysis, wordplay and elegy. . .a source of myriad delights.”

-Washington Post

“This book is worthy of the author of *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, being just as intelligent and unexpected. . .a book like no other — odd, personal, polyglot, and above all, accessibly intelligent.” —SIR FRANK KERMODE

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

**“[F]ascinating . . . original and thought-provoking . . .
[T]here are many pleasures in *I Am a Strange Loop*.”**

— *Wall Street Journal*

“*I Am a Strange Loop* scales some lofty conceptual heights, but it remains very personal, and it’s deeply colored by the facts of Hofstadter’s later life. In 1993 Hofstadter’s wife Carol died suddenly of a brain tumor at only 42, leaving him with two young children to care for . . . *I Am a Strange Loop* is a work of rigorous thinking.”

— *Time*

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“Almost thirty years after the publication of his well-loved *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, Hofstadter revisits some of the same themes. The purpose of the new book is to make inroads into the nexus of self, self-awareness and consciousness by examining self-referential structures in areas as diverse as art and mathematics. Hofstadter is the man for the job. His treatment of issues is approachable and personal, you might even say subjective. His discussion is never overtechnical and his prose never over-bearing. He stays close to the surface of real life at all times, even as he discusses matters of the highest level of abstraction, and his book is full of fresh and rich real-life examples that give texture and authenticity to the discussion.”

— *Times Literary Supplement*, London

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“[P]leasant and intriguing . . . Hofstadter is a supremely skillful master of an educational alchemy that can, at the turn of the page, transform the most abstract and complex of thoughts into a digestible idea that is both fun and interesting . . . Hofstadter’s good humor and easygoing style make it a real pleasure to read from start to finish.”

— *Times Higher Education Supplement*, London

“*I Am a Strange Loop* contains many profound and unique insights on the question of who we are. In addition, it is a delightful read.”

— *Physics Today*

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“*I Am a Strange Loop* is vintage Hofstadter: earnest, deep, overflowing with ideas, building its argument into the experience of reading it — for if our souls can incorporate those of others, then *I Am a Strange Loop* can transmit Hofstadter’s into ours. And indeed, it is impossible to come away from this book without having introduced elements of his point of view into our own. It may not make us kinder or more compassionate, but we will never look at the world, inside or out, in the same way again.”

— *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“Nearly thirty years after his best-selling book *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, cognitive scientist and polymath Douglas Hofstadter has returned to his extraordinary theory of self.”

— *New Scientist*

“*I Am a Strange Loop* is thoughtful, amusing and infectiously enthusiastic.”

— *Bloomberg News*

“[Hofstadter’s] new book, as brilliant and provocative as earlier ones, is a colorful mix of speculations with passages of autobiography.”

— Martin Gardner in *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“[P]rovocative and heroically humane . . . it’s impossible not to experience this book as a tender, remarkably personal and poignant effort to understand the death of his wife from cancer in 1993 — and to grasp how consciousness mediates our otherwise ineffable relationships. In the end, Hofstadter’s view is deeply philosophical rather than scientific. It’s hopeful and romantic as well, as his model allows one consciousness to create and maintain within itself true representations of the essence of another.”

— *Publishers Weekly* Starred Review

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“Why am I inside this body and not in a different one? This is among the most irresistible and fascinating questions humanity has ever asked, according to Douglas Hofstadter. His latest book *I Am a Strange Loop* asks many more challenging questions: Are our thoughts made of molecules? Could a machine be confused? Could a machine *know* it was confused? — until it ties you in loops. If you enjoy such brain-bending questions and are willing to struggle with some deep mathematical ideas along the way, then you’ll certainly enjoy this book . . . (I)f this book works its magic on you, you will no longer want to ask ‘why am I inside this body and not a different one?’ because you’ll know what it means to be just a strange loop.”

— *BBC Focus*

Praise not from its dust jacket

For *I Am a Strange Loop*:

“Hofstadter introduces new ideas about the self-referential structure of consciousness and offers a multifaceted examination of what an ‘I’ is. He conveys abstract, complicated ideas in a relaxed, conversational manner and uses many first-person stories and personal examples as well as two Platonic dialogs. Though Hofstadter admits he writes for the general educated public, he also hopes to reach professional philosophers interested in the epistemological implications of selfhood.”

— *Library Journal*

“Hofstadter explains the dynamics of [the] reflective self in refreshingly lucid language, enlivened with personal anecdotes that translate arcane formulas into the wagging tail on a golden retriever or the smile on Hopalong Cassidy. Nonspecialists are thus able to assess the divide between human and animal minds, and even to plumb the mental links binding the living to the dead . . . [E]ven skeptics will appreciate the way he forces us to think deeper thoughts about thought.”

— *Booklist Starred Review*

— *BBC Focus*

And who is Douglas Hofstadter?

from the dust jacket

DOUGLAS HOFSTADTER is College of Arts and Sciences Professor of Cognitive Science at Indiana University. His previous books, all published by Basic Books, are: *Gödel, Escher, Bach* (1979, Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction), *The Mind's: I* (1981, with Daniel Dennett), *Metamagical Themas* (1985), *Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies* (1995), *Le Ton beau de Marot* (1997), and a novel versification of Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1999).

**And who is
Douglas Hofstadter?** find out more...

**[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Douglas_Hofstadter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Hofstadter)**

And who is Douglas Hofstadter? [find out more...](#)

**Watch a few moments of him in
virtual person, speaking on
EINSTEIN'S REVOLUTIONARY
LIGHT-QUANTUM HYPOTHESIS**

(Albert Einstein signed his light-quantum paper, "Concerning a Heuristic Point of View about the Creation and Transformation of Light" [1], in Bern, Switzerland, on March 17, 1905, three days after his twenty-sixth birthday. It was the only one of his great papers of 1905 that he himself called "very revolutionary")

And who is Douglas Hofstadter? find out more...

Remember to read his “Words of Thanks” to find out about him from the company he has kept.

Preface

An Author and His Book

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Preface

An Author and His Book

Facing the Physicality of Consciousness

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- **his early pondering:**
- **puns,**
- **mathematical ideas,**
- **speech errors,**
- **curious analogies**

I wondered what it would be like to be a girl, to be a native speaker of another language, to be Einstein, to be a dog, to be an eagle, even to be a mosquito.

Preface

An Author and His Book

Facing the Physicality of Consciousness

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MOLLY

DH read several lay-level books about the human brain.

“Doing so had a huge impact on my life, since it forced me to consider, for the first time, the physical basis of consciousness and of being — or of having — an “I”, which I found disorienting, dizzying, and profoundly eerie.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

Facing the Physicality of Consciousness

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High School years

DH encountered

- the mysterious metamathematical revelations of the great Austrian logician Kurt Gödel
- also Stanford's Burroughs 220 computer
- symbolic logic

“As a result of these relentlessly churning thoughts about symbols and meanings, patterns and ideas, machines and mentality, neural impulses and mortal souls, all hell broke loose in my adolescent mind/brain.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

The Mirage

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“One day when I was around sixteen or seventeen, musing intensely on these swirling clouds of ideas that gripped me emotionally no less than intellectually, it dawned on me — and it has ever since seemed to me — that what we call “consciousness” was a kind of mirage.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

The Mirage

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DH's "dialogue between two hypothetical contemporary philosophers whom I flippantly named "Plato" and "Socrates" (I knew almost nothing about the real Plato and Socrates)."

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Shout into a Chasm

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10 years later (at 34) GEB!

20 years later (at 54): "I described my frustration with its reception, ending with the following plaint: "It sometimes feels as if I had shouted a deeply cherished message out into an empty chasm and nobody heard me.""

Preface

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A Shout into a Chasm

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Spring, 2003 (at 58): “email message from two young philosophers named Ken Williford and Uriah Kriegel, inviting me to contribute a chapter to an anthology they were putting together on what they called “the self-referentialist theory (or theories)” of consciousness.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

From the Majestic Dolomites to Gentle Bloomington xiv

Spring, 2006 (at 61): Following "Hofstadter's Law, which states, "It always takes longer than you think it will take, even when you take into account Hofstadter's Law""

Ken Williford and Uriah Kriegel's anthology, *Self-Representational Approaches to Consciousness*, with DHs essay placed at the very end, in a two-chapter section entitled "Beyond Philosophy"

But DH realizes he needs a book to express his updated ideas.

Preface

An Author and His Book

From the Majestic Dolomites to Gentle Bloomington xiv

“And so, after just about forty-five years (good grief!), I’ve come full circle, writing once again about souls, selves, and consciousness, banging up against the same mysteriousness and eeriness that I first experienced when I was a teen-ager horrified and yet riveted by the awful and awesome physicality of that which makes us be what we are.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

An Author and His Audience

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“I Am a Strange Loop”

“You Are a Strange Loop”

“‘I’ Is a Strange Loop”

Preface

An Author and His Book

An Author and His Audience

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“...this book is about the venerable topic of what an “I” is. And what is its audience?”

“... I have spent nearly thirty years working with my graduate students on computational models of analogy- making and creativity, observing and cataloguing cognitive errors of all sorts, collecting examples of categorization and analogy, studying the centrality of analogies in physics and math, musing on the mechanisms of humor, pondering how concepts are created and memories are retrieved, exploring all sorts of aspects of words, idioms, languages, and translation, and so on – and over these three decades I have taught seminars on many aspects of thinking and how we perceive the world.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

An Author and His Audience

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“And one of my firmest conclusions is that we always think by seeking and drawing parallels to things we know from our past, and that we therefore communicate best when we exploit examples, analogies, and metaphors galore*, when we avoid abstract generalities, when we use very down-to-earth, concrete, and simple language, and when we talk directly about our own experiences.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

An Author and His Audience
see also slides 43-45

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“metaphors galore*” I’m not sure why DH doesn’t refer to George Lakoff, but they seem so ‘similar’ in their ‘thinking’ Lakoff & Johnson’s landmark work, *Philosophy in the Flesh: THE EMBODIED MIND AND ITS CHALLENGE TO WESTERN THOUGHT* is based, I believe, on very similar principles as this book:

Preface

An Author and His Book

An Author and His Audience
see also slides 43-45

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Philosophy in the Flesh: THE EMBODIED MIND AND ITS CHALLENGE TO WESTERN THOUGHT begins:

Part I How THE EMBODIED MIND CHALLENGES THE WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

I Introduction: Who Are We?

How Cognitive Science Reopens Central Philosophical Questions

The mind is inherently embodied.

Thought is mostly unconscious.

Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical.

Preface

An Author and His Book

An Author and His Audience
see also slides 43-45

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"These are three major findings of cognitive science. More than two millennia of a priori philosophical speculation about these aspects of reason are over. Because of these discoveries, philosophy can never be the same again.

When taken together and considered in detail, these three findings from the science of the mind are inconsistent with central parts of Western philosophy. They require a thorough rethinking of the most popular current approaches, namely, Anglo-American analytic philosophy and postmodernist philosophy.

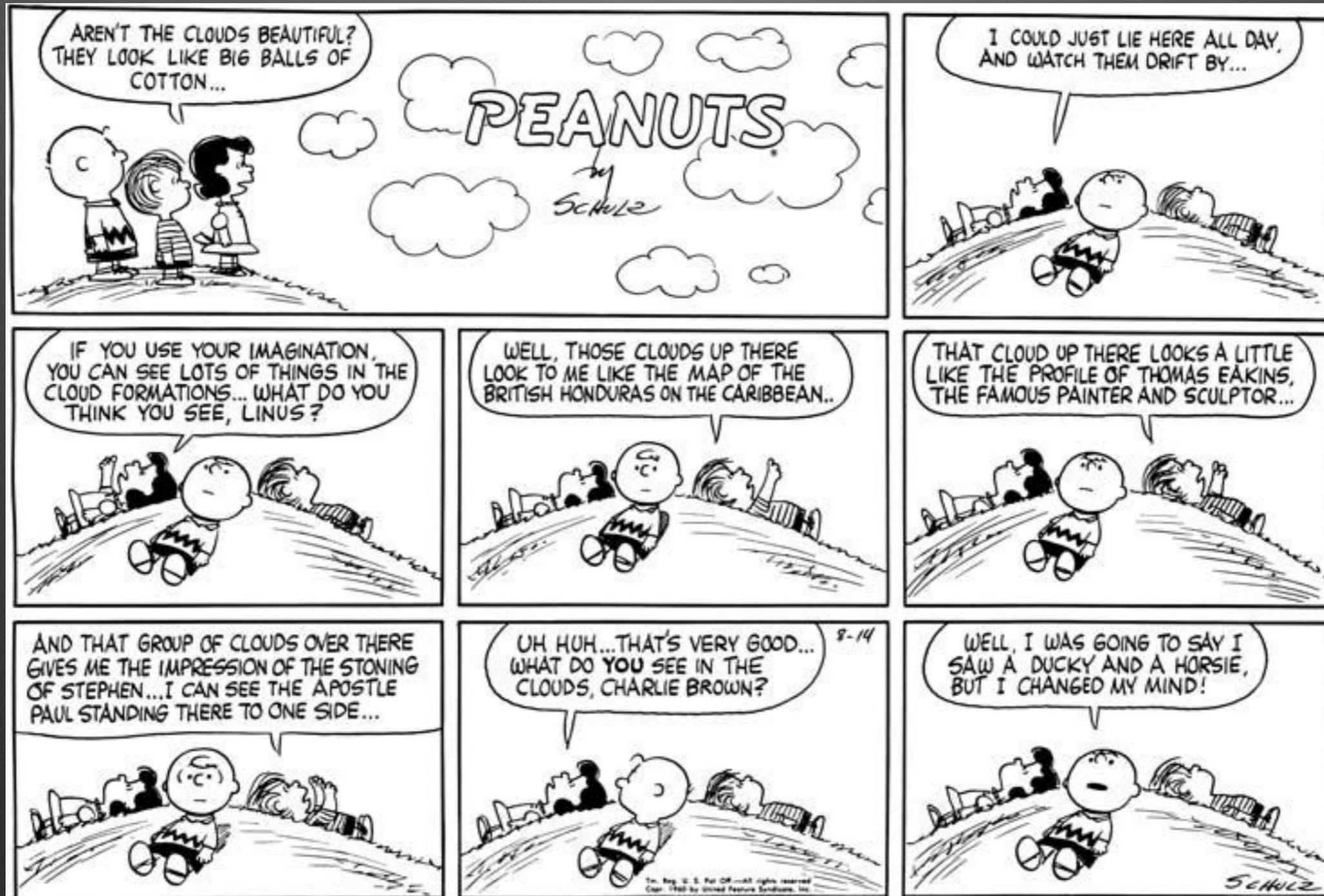
This book asks: What would happen if we started with these empirical discoveries about the nature of mind and constructed philosophy anew? The answer is that an empirically responsible philosophy would require our culture to abandon some of its deepest philosophical assumptions. This book is an extensive study of what many of those changes would be in detail."

Preface

An Author and His Book

The Horsies-and-Doggies Religion

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Preface

An Author and His Book

The Horsies-and-Doggies Religion

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“Clarity, simplicity, and concreteness have coalesced into a kind of religion for me — a set of never-forgotten guiding principles. Fortunately, a large number of thoughtful people appreciate analogies, metaphors, and examples, as well as a relative lack of jargon, and last but not least, accounts from a first-person stance.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Few Last Random Observations

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"I take analogies very seriously, so much so that I went to a great deal of trouble to index a large number of the analogies in my "salad". There are thus two main headings in the index for my lists of examples.

- One is "analogies, serious examples of";**
- the other is "throwaway analogies, random examples of".**

I made this droll distinction because whereas many of my analogies play key roles in conveying ideas, some are there just to add spice."

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analogies, serious examples of: between Alfbert and Whitehead/Russell, 196–199; between audio and video feedback, 56; between Aurélie and Pomponnette, 152–153, 154, 157, 244; between the author’s mind and others’ minds, *xi*; between the author’s view of “I” and quantum mechanics, 239; between beer cans and neurons, 29–30, 366; between brain and oil refinery, 194; between brains and countries, 272–273; between brains and *PM* as substrates for strange loops, *xii*, 193–194; between brain structures and genes or atoms, 27; between butterfly swarms and souls, 373–374; between careenium and brain, 45–51, 195–196; between careenium and pinball machine, 48; between cars and dogs, 368–369; between Chantal looking at movie and Russell looking at Gödel’s formula, 154; between children with muddy boots, 150; between cookies on same plate, 149; between couples, 151–154; between crystal and orchard, 373–374; between death and eclipse, 227, 258, 274, 316–317; between decision-making and political elections, 340–341; between dedicated machines and music boxes, 243; between dog looking at pixels and Russell looking at Gödel’s formula, 153–154, 202; between domino chainium and traffic jam, 39; between donning piece of clothing and identifying with someone else, 236; between Doug and Carol, 228; between edibility and provability, 196–199, 201, 202; between electron clouds and human souls, 373–374; between entwined video loops and entwined souls, 210–211, 253–254; between epiphenomena in brain and in mineral, 30; between formula containing own Gödel number and elephant in matchbox, 139, 140, 143; between gems in Caspian Sea and powers in Fibonacci sequence, 126–127; between genes and novels, 224; between Gödel’s construction and black-belt judo maneuver, 167; between Gödel number *k* and Morton Salt can, 299; between Gödel’s strange loop and video feedback, 161; between grapplings with death and beautiful sailboat, 230; between growing soul and accreting planetoid, 250–251; between Guru and Göru, 136; between heart and brain, 27–28; between heart-shaped bread and heart on collar, 152; between human soul and train, 315–316; between “I” and dollar bill, 315; between “I” and either “i” or “Twe”, 218; between “I” and “Epi”, 95, 180, 188, 205; between “I” and video-feedback galaxy, 205; between Imp and KG, 170–171; between K. Gödel’s article on *Principia Mathematica* and G. Külöt’s review of *Prince Hyppia: Math Dramatica*, 159; between Klüdgerot and Kurt Gödel, 196–199; between Leafpilishness and Consciousness, 326–327; between learning to be someone else and learning a foreign language, 234; between leg-tingles and ants (and ginger ale), 362; between life and hedge maze, 339–341; between listener not relating to Bartók and magnetic field not penetrating superconductor, 249; between mosquito and flush toilet, 189; between mosquito and heat-seeking missile, 348, 353; between mosquito and red spot, 79; between naïve careenium and young Doug, 98–99; between Newtonian physics and naïve view of self, 267; between oneself and others, 91; between pairsons and persons, 214–220; between Parfit and Einstein, 309–310; between picket lines in play and outside theater, 155; between pieces of cake, 149; between pixel patterns and events, 153; between *PM* and sinking boat, 167; between prim numbers and prime numbers, 136–138; between *Principia Mathematica* and invaded fortress, 147; between quoted phrases and Gödel numbers, 139–143; between recursion and plant growth, 125, 129; between recursive sequences of numbers and *PM* theorems, 127–128, 130–131, 132–133, 135; between robot vehicle and an ant, 190; between Rosalyn Wadhead and Russell and Whitehead, 158; between salt box and picture of salt box, 145; between salt-box picture and Gödel’s self-referential trick, 144–145; between saucy numbers and unpennable lines in plays, 156–159; between self-reference and self-replication, 299; between self-symbol and video feedback, 74, 186–187; between Sluggo dreaming of himself and self-quoting sentence, 144; between “soap digest rack” spelled out in Sanskrit and Gödel’s formula spelled out in *PM* notation, 200–201; between souledness and tallness, 21; between Sperry’s and Gödel’s balancing acts, 206; between strange loops and selves, 99, 103–104, 145, 193, 202–206, 296; between symbols in brain and books in library, 276, 278; between uninteresting number and Berry’s number, 106; between universal machines and chameleonic integers, 242–243; between universal machines and people, 245–246; between unpennable lines and unprovable strings, 156–159; between unscalability of KJ and unprovability of KG, 168–171; between video feedback and iteration in complex plane, 69–70; between windmill and thoughtmill, 50; between Xerxes’ breath and Yolanda’s breath, 150; between Y. Ted Enrustle and Whitehead and Russell, 158

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Preface

An Author and His Book

A Few Last Random Observations

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“... I thought I had already fully stated in *GEB* and my other books what I intended to (re)state here, but to my surprise, as I started to write, I saw new ideas sprouting everywhere under foot. That was a relief, and made me feel that my new book was more than just a rehash of an earlier book (or books).”

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Few Last Random Observations

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the two dialogues in this book

An Affable Locking of Horns



[As I stated in the Preface, I wrote this dialogue when I was a teen-ager, and it was my first, youthful attempt at grappling with these difficult ideas.]

Dramatis personæ:

Plato: a seeker of truth who suspects consciousness is an illusion

Socrates: a seeker of truth who believes in consciousness' reality

A Courteous Crossing of Words



Dramatis personæ:

Strange Loop #641: a believer in the ideas of *I Am a Strange Loop*

Strange Loop #642: a doubter of the ideas of *I Am a Strange Loop*

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Few Last Random Observations

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“I am a lifelong lover of form–content interplay, and this book is no exception. As with several of my previous books, I have had the chance to typeset it down to the finest level of detail, and my quest for visual elegance on each page has had countless repercussions on how I phrase my ideas. To some this may sound like the tail wagging the dog, but I think that attention to form improves anyone’s writing. I hope that reading this book not only is stimulating intellectually but also is a pleasant visual experience.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Useful Youthfulness

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DH reflects on writing then at 27 and now at 61.

“I have long been struck by the poetic title of André Malraux’s famous novel *La Condition humaine*. I guess each of us has a personal sense of what this evocative phrase means, and I would characterize *I Am a Strange Loop* as being my own best shot at describing what “the human condition” is.”

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Useful Youthfulness

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Lloyd suggests the book offers possible answers to some of our most basic questions, serious and facetious:

- **Who am I?**
- **What am I doing here?**
- **Why me?**

Preface

An Author and His Book

A Useful Youthfulness

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DH suggests:

“And so now I will stop talking about my book, and will let my book talk for itself. In it I hope you will discover messages imbued with interest and novelty, and even with a useful, if no longer youthful, vitality. I hope that reading this book will make you reflect in fresh ways on what being human is all about — in fact, on what just-plain *being* is all about. And I hope that when you put the book down, you will perhaps be able to imagine that you, too, are a strange loop. Now that would please me no end.”

— Bloomington, Indiana December, MMVI.

Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns

[As I stated in the Preface, I wrote this dialogue when I was a teen-ager, and it was my first, youthful attempt at grappling with these difficult ideas.]

Dramatis personæ:

Plato: a seeker of truth who suspects consciousness is an illusion

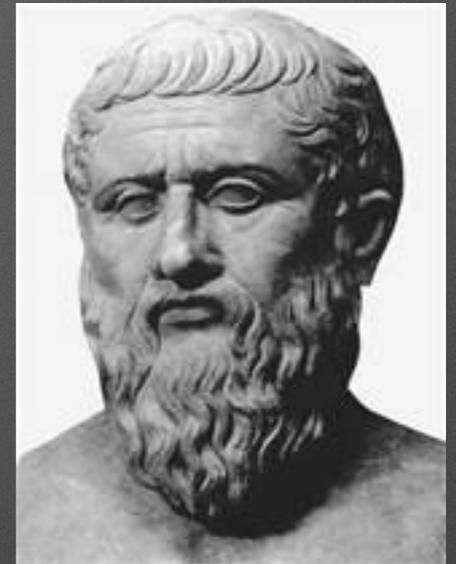
Socrates: a seeker of truth who believes in consciousness' reality

Prologue

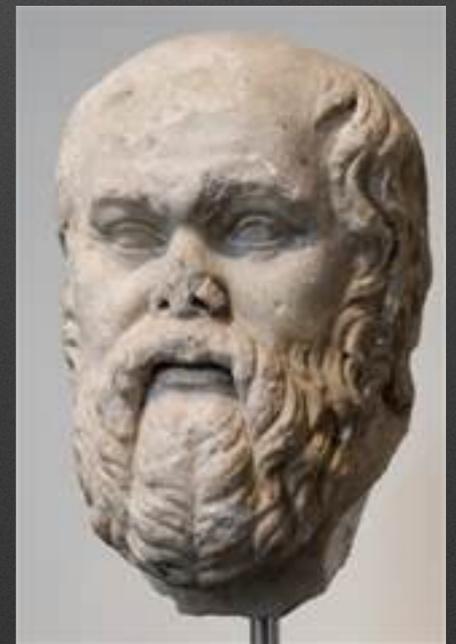
An Affable Locking of Horns

Dramatis personæ:

**Plato: a seeker of truth who
suspects consciousness
is an illusion**



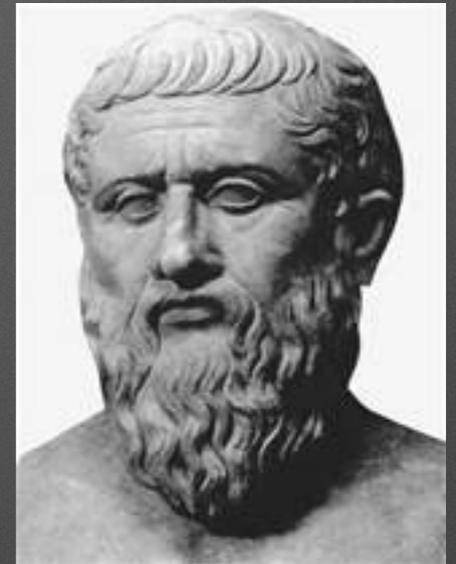
**Socrates: a seeker of truth
who believes in
consciousness' reality**



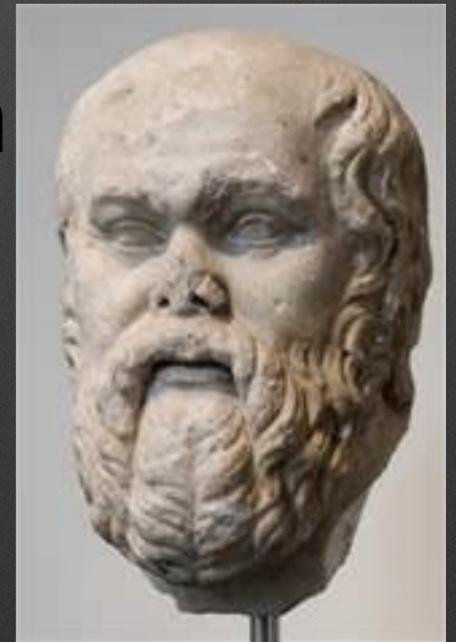
Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns

**Plato: asks, then tells S
what life means**



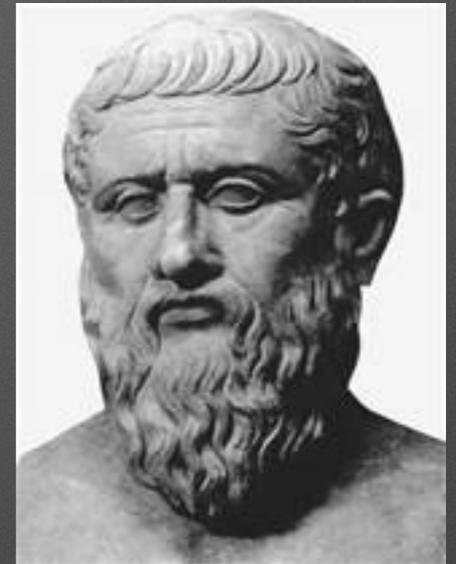
**Socrates: answers P's descriptive
definition of life with an indirection
referring to P's idealism and the
soul as having a body**



Prologue

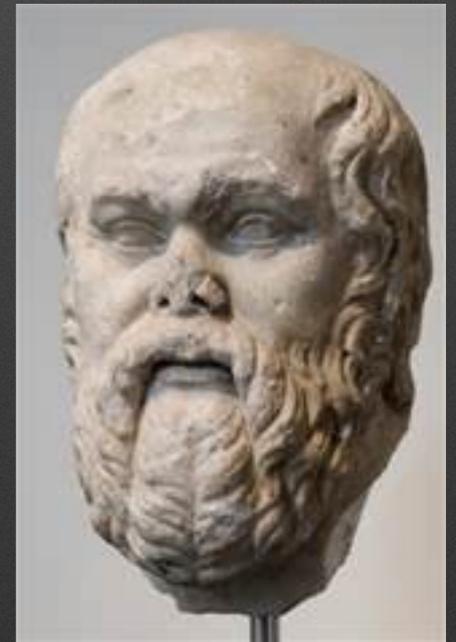
An Affable Locking of Horns

Plato: agrees



**Socrates: pushes the definition
to include fleas and mice**

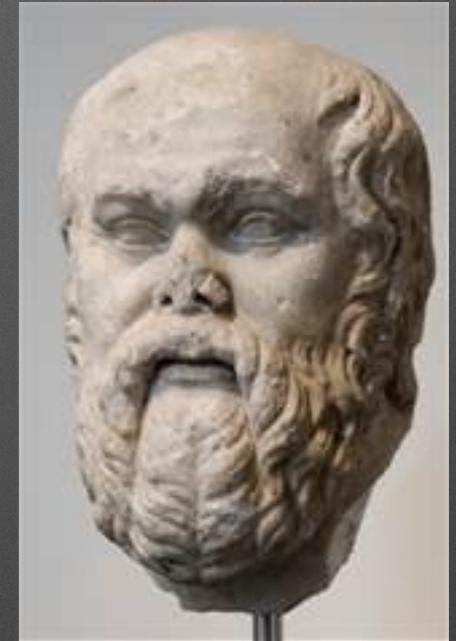
Plato: agrees



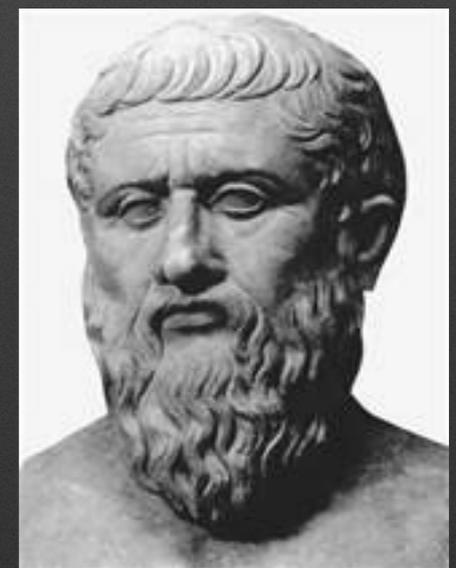
Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns

Socrates: keeps pushing the conflation of life and soul



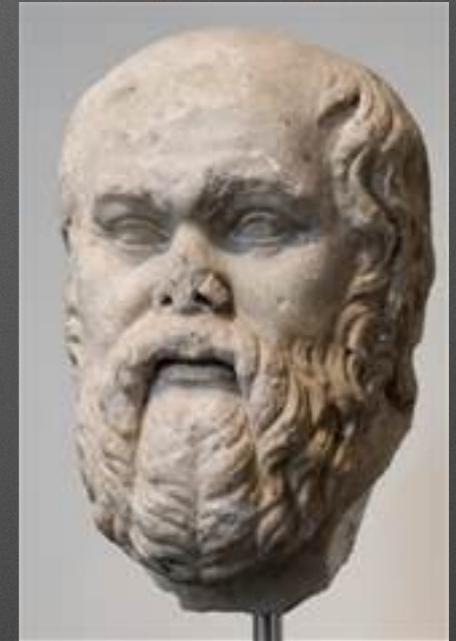
Plato: keeps modifying



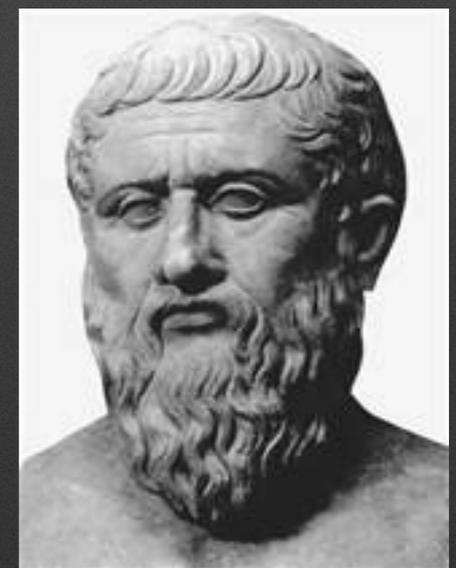
Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns

**Socrates: pushes P into the corner
of the conflation of life and soul
and thinking**



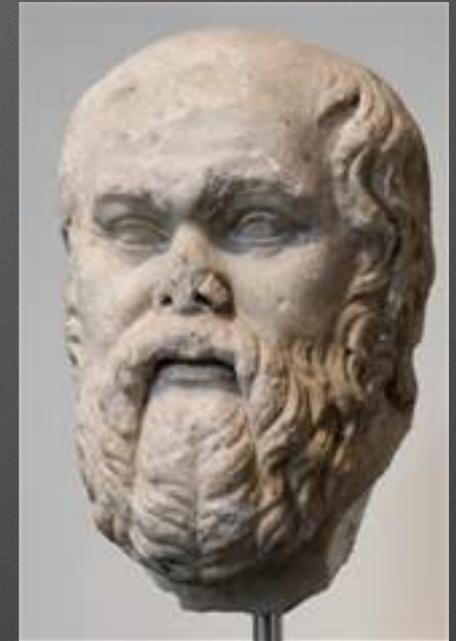
Plato: keeps modifying



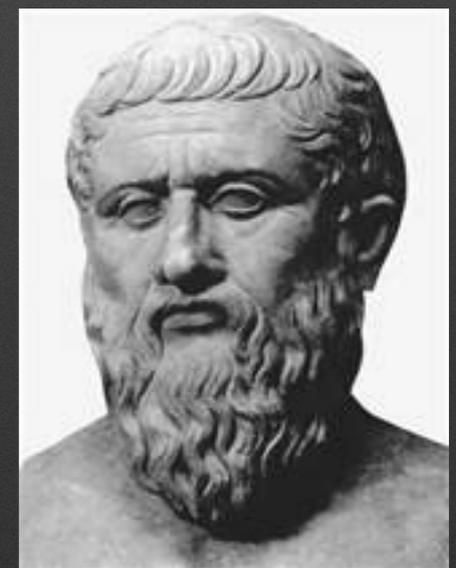
Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns

Socrates: shows P that he, S, is just showing P the logical conclusions of P's thinking

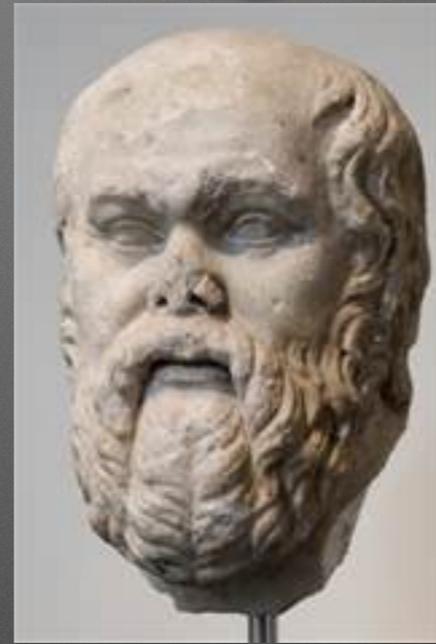
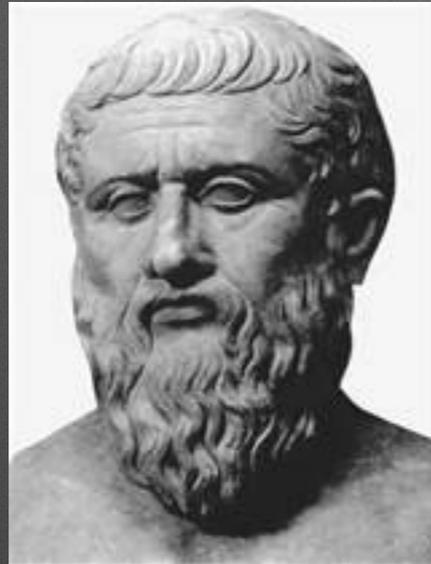


Plato: "I find it beyond me to understand what knowing is, S."



Prologue

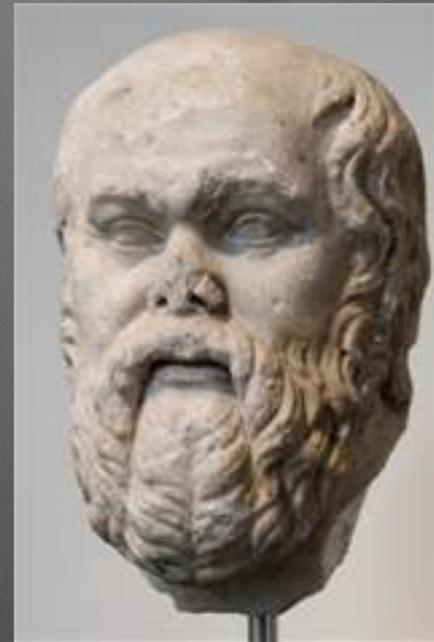
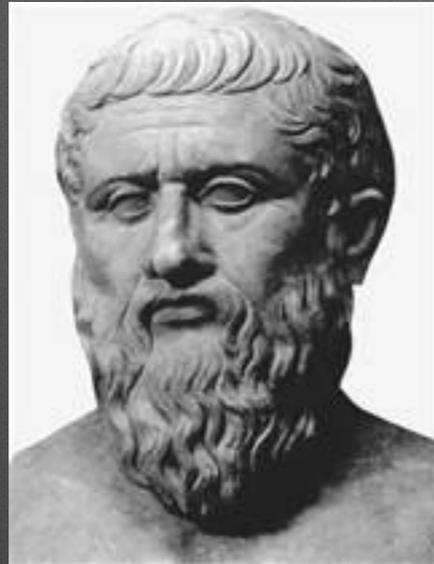
An Affable Locking of Horns



On p 5, P & S continue to mull over what thinking and living is all about.

Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns



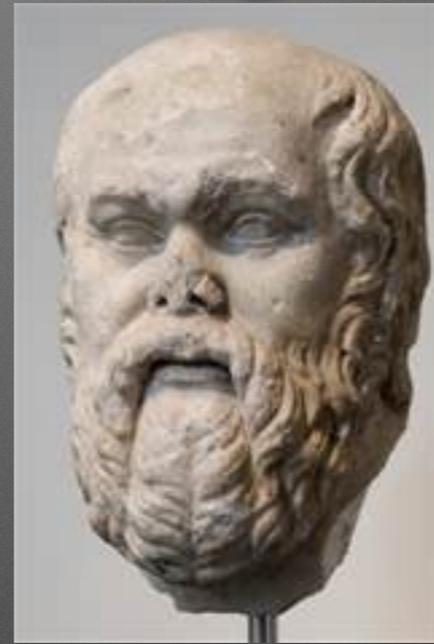
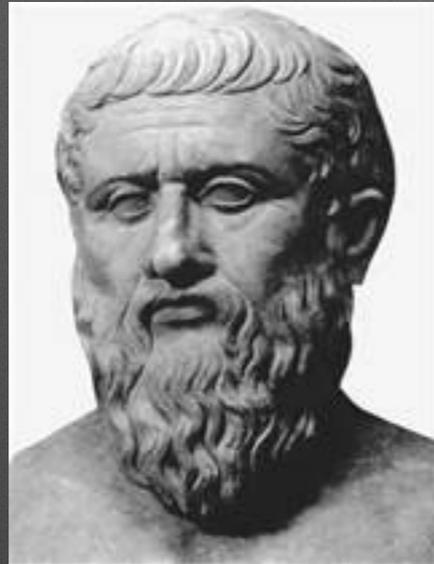
On p 6, S leads P to explore the roles of language, experience, reflex action, thinking:

SOCRATES: "It becomes interesting to see how one's mind fails when working in new channels. Do you see how little you understand of that sentence "I am alive"?"

PLATO: "Yes, it is truly a sentence which, I must admit, is not so obvious to understand."

Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns



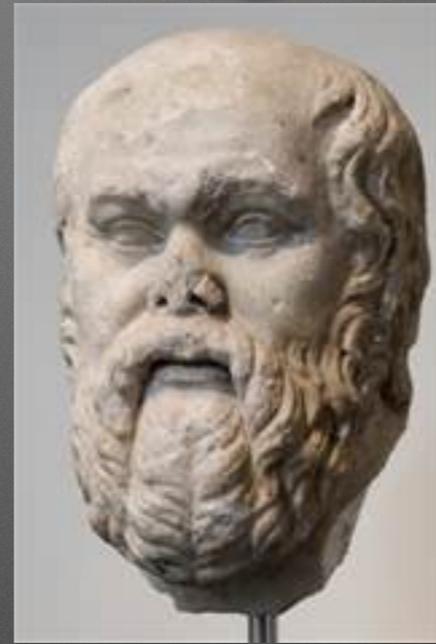
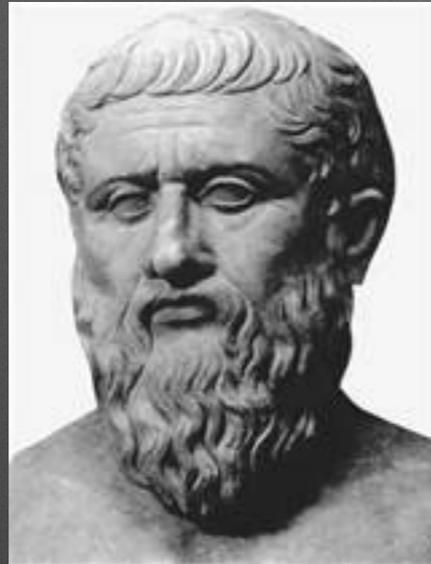
Concluding:

SOCRATES: I think it is in the same way as you fashioned that sentence that many of our actions come about — we think they arise through conscious thought, yet, on careful analysis, each bit of that thought is seen to be automatic and without consciousness.

PLATO: Then feeling one is alive is merely an illusion propagated by a reflex that urges one to utter, without understanding, such a sentence, and a truly living creature is reduced to a collection of complex reflexes. Then you have told me, Socrates, what you think life is.

Prologue

An Affable Locking of Horns



SOCRATES is an original skeptic, saying: "I know that I know nothing"



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On Souls and Their Sizes

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Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Soul-Shards

9

How photos are like sheet music - “The marks on those sheets of paper are no less than soul-shards...”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

What Is It Like to Be a Tomato?

10

On “vegetarian leanings”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Guinea Pig

11

DH's personal lab experience

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Pig

11

“But one day when I was twenty-one, I read a short story called “Pig” by the Norwegian–English writer Roald Dahl, and this story had a profound effect on my life — and through me, on the lives of other creatures as well.”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Revulsion, Revelation, Revolution

13

**DH tells his life progress with revulsion,
through revelation to revolution.**

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Reversion, Re-evolution

13

“Over the next several years there came a few more oscillations, but by my late thirties I had finally settled into a stable state – a compromise representing my evolving intuition that there are souls of different sizes. Though it was anything but crystal-clear to me, I was willing to accept the vague idea that some souls, provided they were “small enough”, could legitimately be sacrificed for the sake of the desires of “larger” souls, such as mine and those of other human beings. Although drawing the dividing line at mammals was clearly somewhat arbitrary (as any such dividing line must be), that became my new credo and I stuck with it for two more decades.”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

The Mystery of Inanimate Flesh

14

DH shares more life experiences, the sum of which lead to:

“And indeed, the reason I have raised all these grim images is not in order to crusade for a cause to which probably most of my readers have already given considerable thought; it is, rather, to raise the burning issue of what a “soul” is, and who or what possesses one. It is an issue that concerns everyone throughout their life – implicitly at the very least, and for many people quite explicitly – and it is the core issue of this book.”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Give Me Some Men Who Are Stouter-souled Men

16

The American critic James Huneker's striking remark: "Small-souled men, no matter how agile their fingers, should not attempt it." ... leading to

DH's: "...I can't help wondering if we don't all of us implicitly believe in the validity of something vaguely like the idea of "small-souled" and "large-souled" human beings. In fact, I can't help suggesting that this is indeed the belief of almost all of us, no matter how egalitarian we publicly profess to be."

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Small-souled and Large-souled Humans

17

DH begins this section, saying “Some of us believe ...”

followed by a range of opinions on the notion of what constitutes a human life and allows the taking of it.

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Hattie the Chocolate Labrador
Ollie the Golden Retriever

17
18

**DH presents two doggie tales,
rather dialogues.**

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Where to Draw that Fateful, Fatal Line?

18

“The world imposes large and small moral dilemmas on us all the time — at the very least, meal after meal — and we are all forced to take a stand.”

“Do grasshoppers and mosquitoes and even bacteria have a tiny little “light on” inside, no matter how dim, or is it all dark “in there”? (In *where*?)”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Where to Draw that Fateful, Fatal Line?

19

“What gives us word-users the right to make life-and-death decisions concerning other living creatures that have no words?

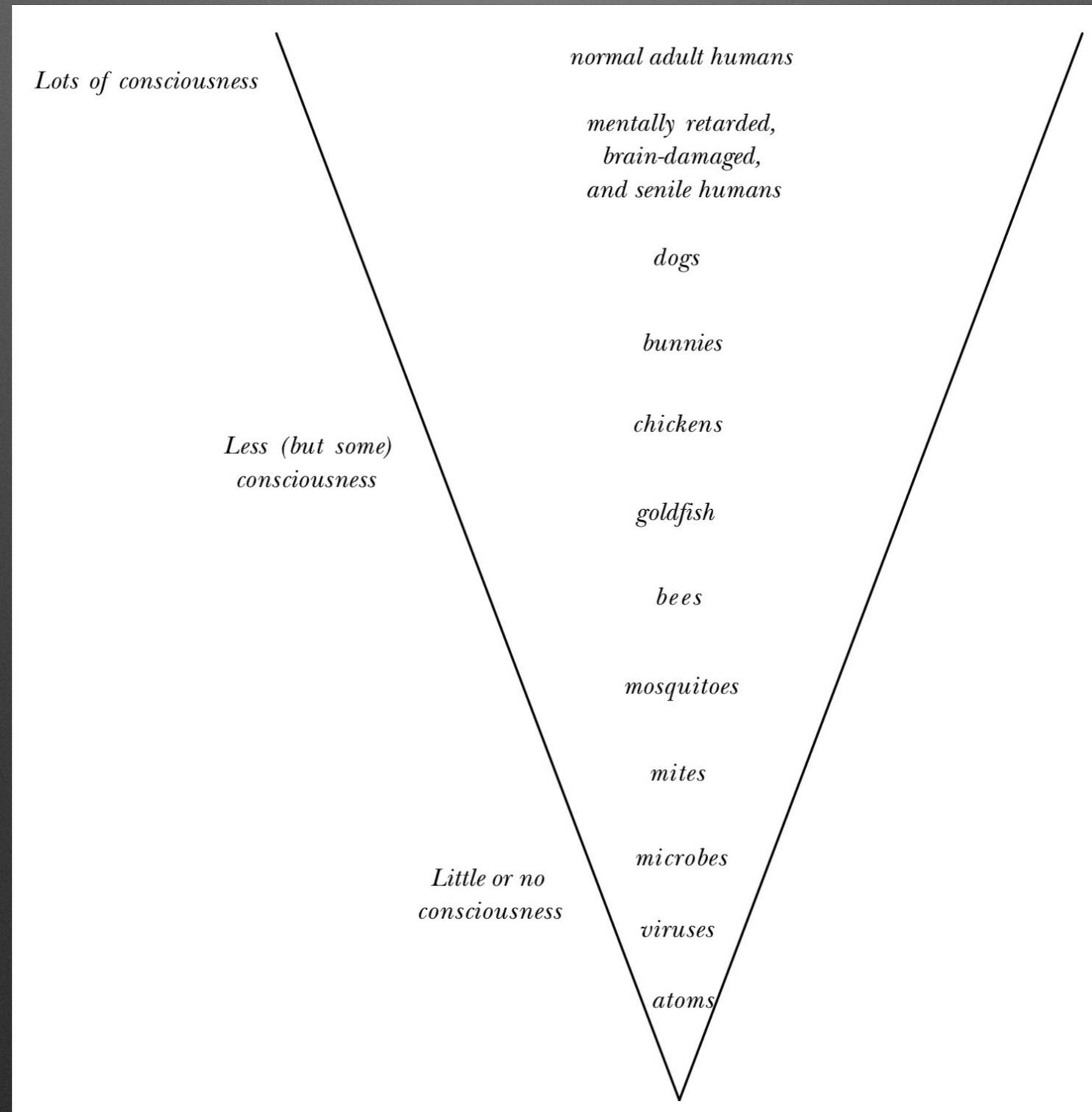
“Below, I have inserted my own personal “consciousness cone”. It is not meant to be exact; it is merely suggestive, but I submit that some comparable structure exists inside your head, as well as in the head of each language-endowed human being, although in most cases it is seldom if ever subjected to intense scrutiny, because it is not even explicitly formulated.

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Where to Draw that Fateful, Fatal Line?

19



Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Interiority — What Has it, and to What Degree?

19

DH considers whether STUFF matters ... living in an age of automated materials...

we “realize that whenever we look at an entity made of metal or plastic, we are not inherently destined to jump reflexively to the dogmatic conclusion, “That thing is necessarily an inanimate object since it is made of ‘the wrong stuff’.” Rather, we find, perhaps to our own surprise, that we are easily able to imagine a thinking, feeling entity made of cold, rigid, unfleshlike stuff.”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Interiority — What Has it, and to What Degree?

19

“Where does our undeniable sense of their “I”s come from? And contrariwise, what was it that was *lacking* in former President Reagan in his last years and in that mass of identical blown-up soldier robots, and what is it that is *not* lacking in Hattie the chocolate labrador and in R2-D2 the robot, that makes all the difference to us?”

”

”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

The Gradual Growth of a Soul

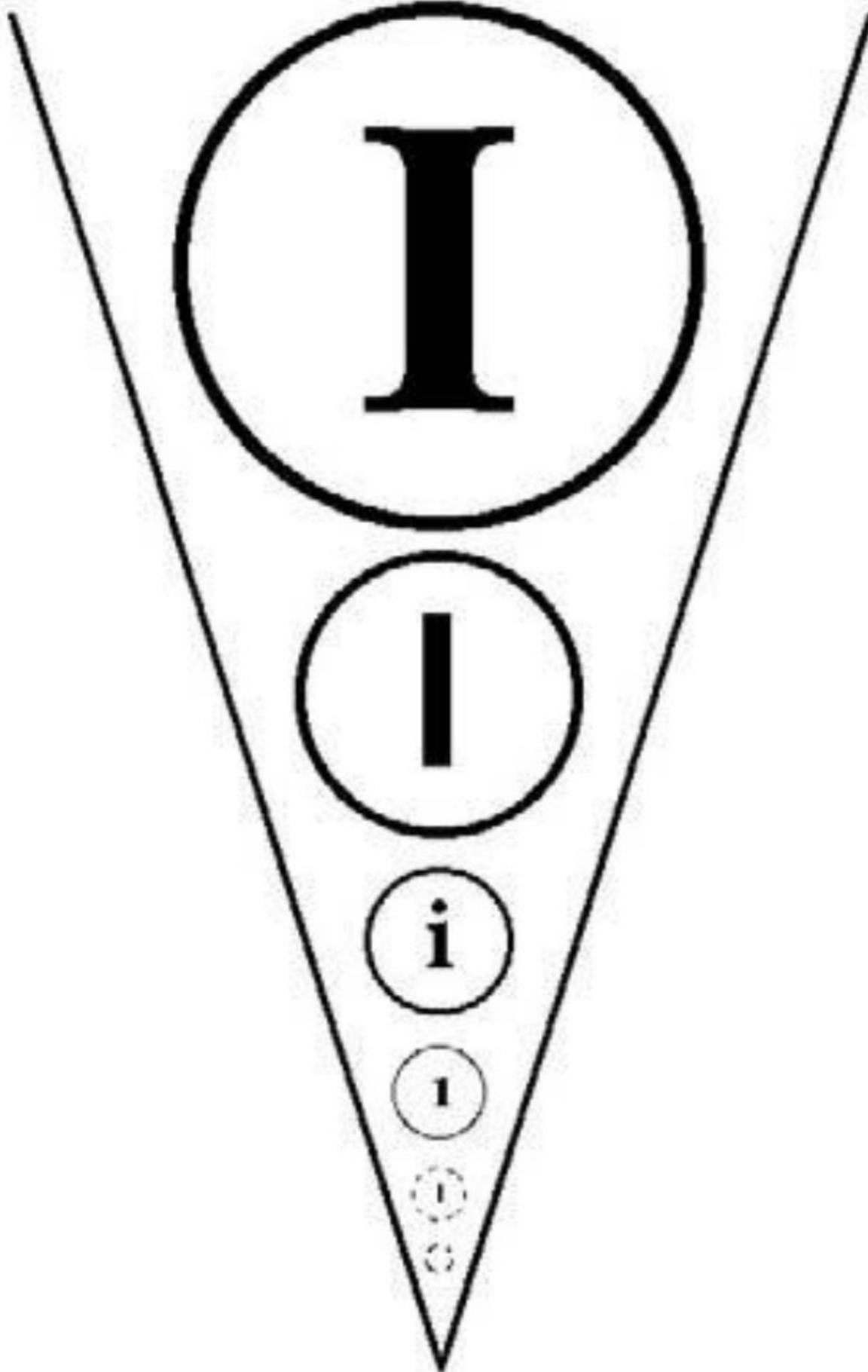
20

DH considers how many “hunekers of souledness” we each have. On the next slide:

“The cone shown on the following page gives a crude but vivid sense of how I might attach huneker values to human beings of ages from zero to twenty (or alternatively, to just one human being, but at different stages).”

”

”



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Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Lights On?

23

“The central aim of this book is to try to pinpoint the nature of that “special kind of subtle pattern” that I have come to believe underlies, or gives rise to, what I have here been calling a “soul” or an “I”. I could just as well have spoken of “having a light on inside”, “possessing interiority”, or that old standby, “being conscious”.”

”

”

”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Lights On?

23

“Philosophers of mind often use the terms “possessing intentionality” (which means having beliefs and desires and fears and so forth) or “having semantics” (which means the ability to genuinely think *about* things, as contrasted with the “mere” ability to juggle meaningless tokens in complicated patterns — a distinction that I raised in the dialogue between my versions of Socrates and Plato).”

”

”

”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Lights On?

23

“Although each of these terms puts the focus on a slightly different aspect of the elusive abstraction that concerns us, they are all, from my perspective, pretty much interchangeable. And for all of these terms, I reiterate that they have to be understood as coming in *degrees* along a sliding scale, rather than as on/off, black/white, yes/no switches.”

”

”

”

Chapter 1

On Souls and Their Sizes

Post Scriptum

23

After DH recounts his experience in returning to vegetarianism, he states:

“Writing this chapter thus gave rise to a totally unexpected boomerang effect on its author — and as we shall see in later chapters, such an unpredictable bouncing-back of choices one has just made, followed by the incorporation of their repercussions into one’s self-model, serves as an excellent example of the meaning of the motto “I am a strange loop.”

”

”

”

”

Beginning next Friday!

Chapter 2

This Teetering Bulb of Dread and Dream

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SPOILER ALERT!

The Conclusion: from the last section of the Epilogue

I Am a Strange Loop 343

“In the end, we self-perceiving, self-inventing, locked-in mirages are little miracles of self-reference. We believe in marbles that disintegrate when we search for them but that are as real as any genuine marble when we’re not looking for them. Our very nature is such as to prevent us from fully understanding its very nature. Poised midway between the unvisualizable cosmic vastness of curved spacetime and the dubious, shadowy flickerings of charged quanta, we human beings, more like rainbows and mirages than like raindrops or boulders, are unpredictable self-writing poems – vague, metaphorical, ambiguous, and sometimes exceedingly beautiful.”

SPOILER ALERT!

The Conclusion: from the last section of the Epilogue

I Am a Strange Loop 343

“To see ourselves this way is probably not as comforting as believing in ineffable other-worldly wisps endowed with eternal existence, but it has its compensations. What one gives up on is a childlike sense that things are exactly as they appear, and that our solid-seeming, marble-like “I” is the realest thing in the world; what one acquires is an appreciation of how tenuous we are at our cores, and how wildly different we are from what we seem to be. As Kurt Gödel with his unexpected strange loops gave us a deeper and subtler vision of what mathematics is all about, so the strange-loop characterization of our essences gives us a deeper and subtler vision of what it is to be human. And to my mind, the loss is worth the gain.”