Can thought arise out of matter? Can self, soul, consciousness, “I” arise out of mere matter? If it cannot, then how can you or I be here? I Am a Strange Loop argues that the key to understanding selves and consciousness is the “strange loop”—a special kind of abstract feedback loop inhabiting our brains. The most central and complex symbol in your brain is the one called “I.” The “I” is the nexus in our brain, one of many symbols seeming to have free will and to have gained the paradoxical ability to push particles around, rather than the reverse. How can 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 laws of physics? These are the mysteries tackled in I Am a Strange Loop, Douglas Hofstadter’s first book-length journey into philosophy since Gödel, Escher, Bach. Compulsively readable and endlessly thought-provoking, this is a moving and profound inquiry into the nature of mind.

I have read the first two chapters of this amazingly profound book and am sure to re-read it again and again. The metaphors, especially ~synonyms that Douglas talks so eloquently about are the mystery. The miracle is that we can decipher it!

I think a poem-ita that came to me sometime ago is something akin...

Spheres caged in a Sphere: An allegory for research

Research always seeks to excavate the roots of a problem to expose the hidden and the unknown by the light of rational thought and construct. Invariably, this is a deep process in which we seek to expand the limitations of human frailties, both physical and mental.
We have achieved phenomenal progress in understanding the world. Not only can we now explain and model fundamental processes of the physical world; we can also predict the behavior of moderately complex systems.

Our method of unraveling the secrets of the space-time and even nature has been wonderfully reductionist. The success of the method has been beyond one's imagination and has resulted in many small new worlds of knowledge.

In these small new worlds (Spheres) immediate and local knowledge and understanding can explain everything or nearly everything. In each of these worlds a perceptible boundary exists which needs to be transcended so that the Spheres can add up to a universe (Sphere).

The allegorical tale of Spheres caged in a Sphere begins from this dilemma: Can the understanding of parts make the whole fathomable?

Spheres, those little universes have no spark that is not known. We have known them all, in their splendor and in their static indolence.

We have fret over the end of knowledge and the end of the world.

But, now the whole beckons:

My friends, the Sphere, the One (or the many ones) has caged these spheres (universes) in its belly and once again there is a pale color of darkness around our cups of wisdom.

Our spheres don't unmask the Sphere - they don't add, multiply upto the Sphere.

We have the void of the interstices to deal with and an undefined boundary of the new world to contend with.

The Sphere is elusive. Despite our efforts that have been successful in some dimension, we are still poor and cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel of its never-ending knowledge.

We must try to chart out the path of the Sphere as it moves in the new (and last) heavens as only then can we discover if there is any hope in this murderous little world of ours.

Will we be able to persevere and try to grasp the ineffable? One hopes not.

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I Am a Strange Loop by Douglas R. Hofstadter - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!