

## Chapter 12

# Little Harmonic Labyrinth

*This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill - the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill - you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes. – Morpheus*

### 12.1 Hofstadter Enters/Exits The Matrix

This is one of my favorite dialogues in the entire book and I hope that you get as much out of it as I do! It is a great story that fills one with an intuitive sense of **recursion**, **self-reference** and **paradox**. I think if you explore some of the following questions you will be well on your way to grokking Hofstadter's message.

### 12.2 Questions

1. On the first page the Tortoise says "This is my favorite ride. One seems to move so far, and yet in reality one gets nowhere." In what ways is this like recursion, fractals, strange loops?
2. When Hexachlorophene J. Goodfortune introduces himself, there are a lot of Random Capitalizations. Can you detect any patterns?
3. Define "djinn".
4. Define "tonic".
5. What would it be like to live in a perfectly consistent world? How about an inconsistent one? What is our world like?
6. What do you think happened to the Weasel (pp. 106) who took the popping-potion in our reality? Why did Hofstadter choose a weasel? What connotations does the weasel have?
7. Both in the Matrix and the Little Harmonic Labyrinth, blue and red are used as archetypal colors for chemical escapism. What is the deal?
8. What is the "Tunnel of Love" (pp. 108)? Why is it sinister?

9. The Tortoise claims that once you're in one Escher drawing you can access them all (pp. 108). What does this have to do with the idea that in formal logic any well-formed formula is derivable from a contradiction?
10. Why does the lamp have an "L" on it? What role does it end up serving in the story?
11. Relate what happens with wishes and the genies to pushing and popping stacks in a computer program.
12. How does the dialogue illustrate the object-language/meta-language divide?
13. What is GOD? What is its gender?
14. Why does each Meta-Genie perform its task "twice as quickly" as the Genie before it?
15. Detail the "meta-agnostic" position.
16. What did Achilles typeless wish do (pp. 115)?
17. Carry out the metaphor between the version of the Little Harmonic Labyrinth that Achilles and the Tortoise are listening to on page 122. What's wrong with it? How does it talk about itself?
18. How is the Majotaur like Goodfortune? How is this like a strange loop?

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Gödel, Escher, Bach: A Mental Space Odyssey  
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