

Mind within Matter

Tim Bollands



In Chalmers' view...

“Consciousness fits uneasily into our conception of the natural world. On the most common conception of nature, the natural world is the physical world. But on the most common conception of consciousness, it is not easy to see how it could be part of the physical world. So, it seems that to find a place for consciousness within the natural order, **we must either revise our conception of consciousness, or revise our conception of nature.**”

David Chalmers (2002), *Consciousness and its Place in Nature*

Objective

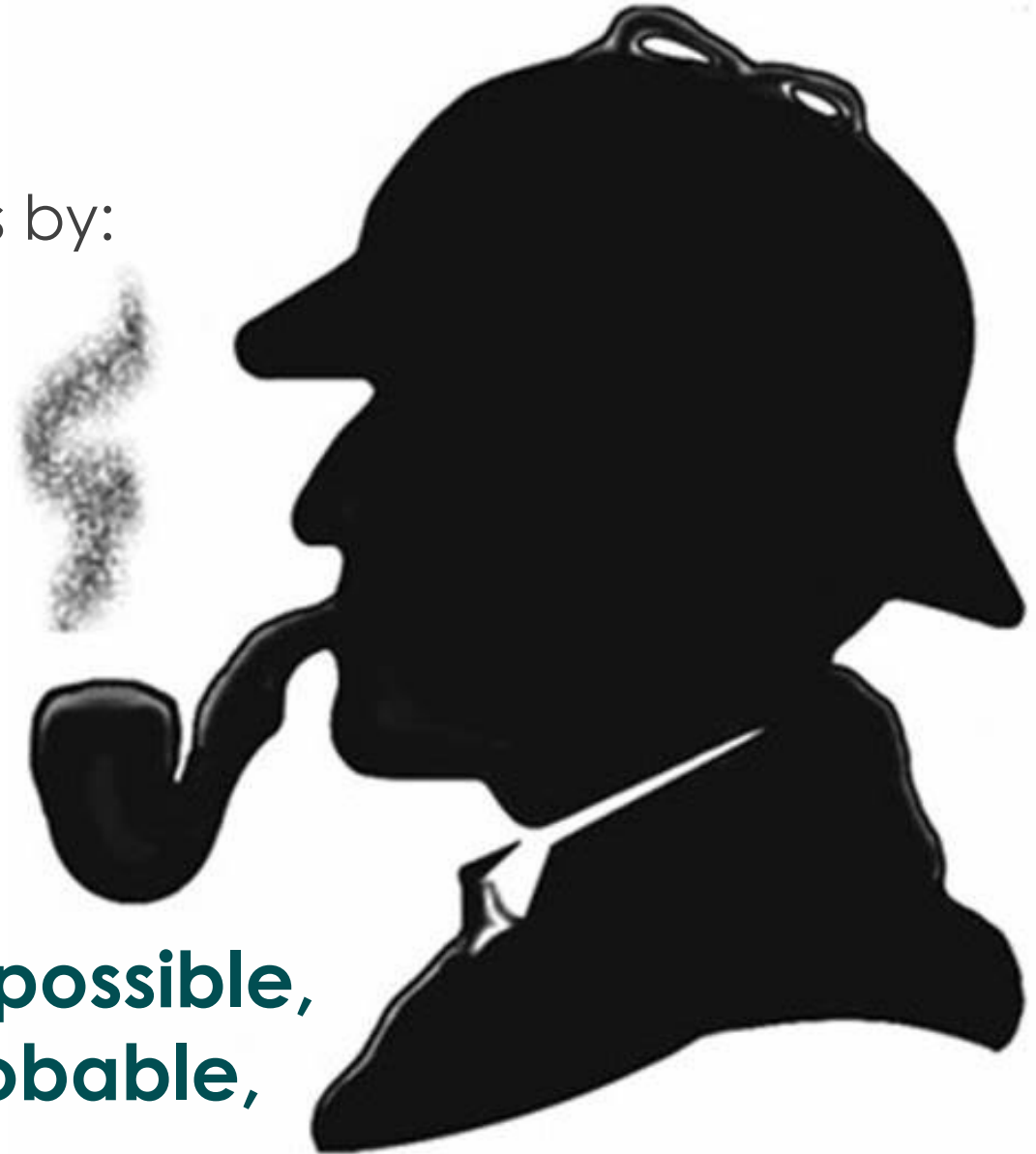
To solve the Hard Problem of Consciousness by:

1. Making the Case for Panpsychism
2. Solving the Combination Problem of Panpsychism

while

3. Employing the reasoning of Sherlock Holmes

**“When you have eliminated the impossible,
whatever remains, however improbable,
must be true”**



A riddle ...



Q: What do you get if you take one non-conscious material object and combine it with a second non-conscious material object?

A: You get a third non-conscious material object.



+



=



A riddle ...



Q: What do you get if you take one non-conscious material object and combine it with a second non-conscious material object?

A: You get a third non-conscious material object.



Hence:

For all integers N, any combination of N non-conscious material objects will itself be a non-conscious material object

But, hang on! We have a problem ...



1. A human being is a combination of N non-conscious material objects, where N is some finite integer ...
2. For all integers N , any combination of N non-conscious material objects will itself be a non-conscious material object
 $\Rightarrow$ A human being must be a non-conscious material object

And yet:

3. I am a human being, and I am conscious...!

A mystery ...



How do the combined material objects that make up a human being go from a state of being non-conscious to a state of being conscious?

There are 3 possible answers:

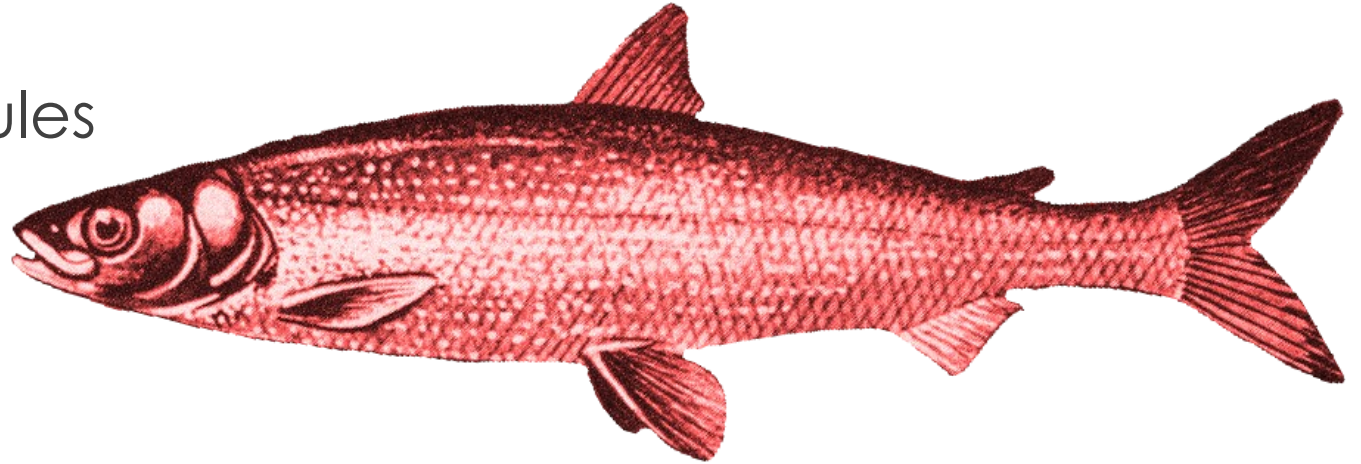
- i. They don't. Human beings are not conscious.
- ii. A miracle happens! A conscious state “emerges” from non-conscious matter.
- iii. They don't. Consciousness already exists within the matter we are made from.

(i) Is evidently false ; (ii) is impossible ; therefore the answer must be (iii)

The argument for option (ii)



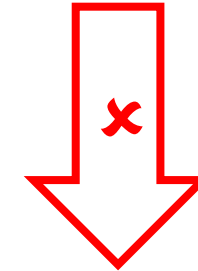
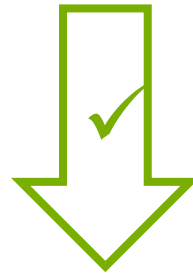
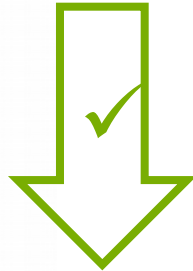
- Not all properties of complex material objects can be predicted or explained with reference to Physics, e.g.:
 - the liquidity of water
 - folding of organic molecules
 - cell division
 - the path of a hurricane
 - human behaviour
- Such complex material objects exhibit novel, unpredictable properties which emerge spontaneously and inexplicably
 - **Consciousness is simply one of those novel properties**



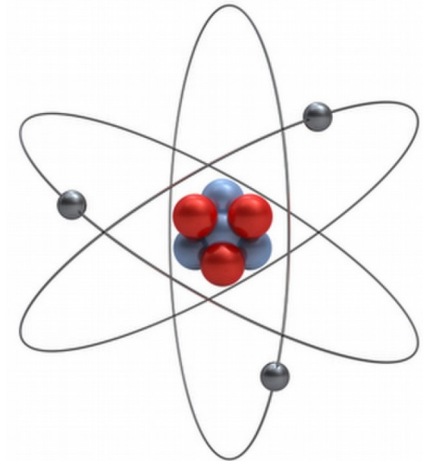
Describing a human being in physical terms



- “is 6 ft tall”
- “has 2 legs”
- “weighs 15 stones”
- “smiles”
- “moves his arm”
- “says hello”
- “sees red”
- “hears a sound”
- “feels pain”



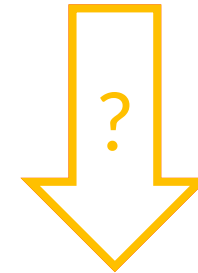
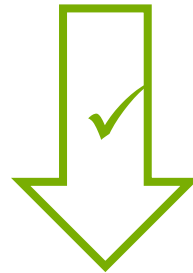
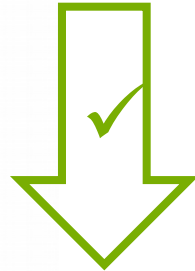
- length
- breadth
- location
- velocity
- acceleration
- force
- mass
- charge
- spin



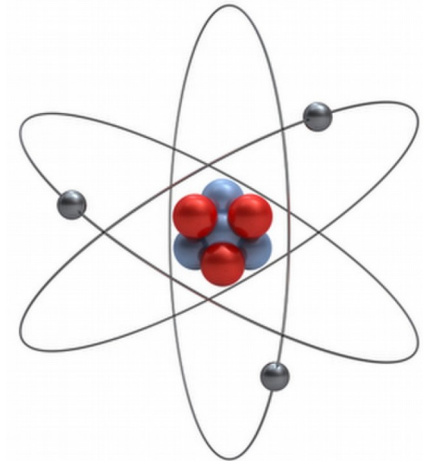
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Supporters of Panpsychism

Thales

Anaxagoras

Empedocles

Baruch Spinoza

G. W. Leibnitz

Arthur Schopenhauer

Gustav Fechner

Rudolf Lotze

William James

Josiah Royce

William Clifford

A. N. Whitehead

Bertrand Russell

Timothy Sprigge

Thomas Nagel

David Griffin

Gregg Rosenberg

David Skrbina

Galen Strawson

William Seager

Philip Goff

David Chalmers

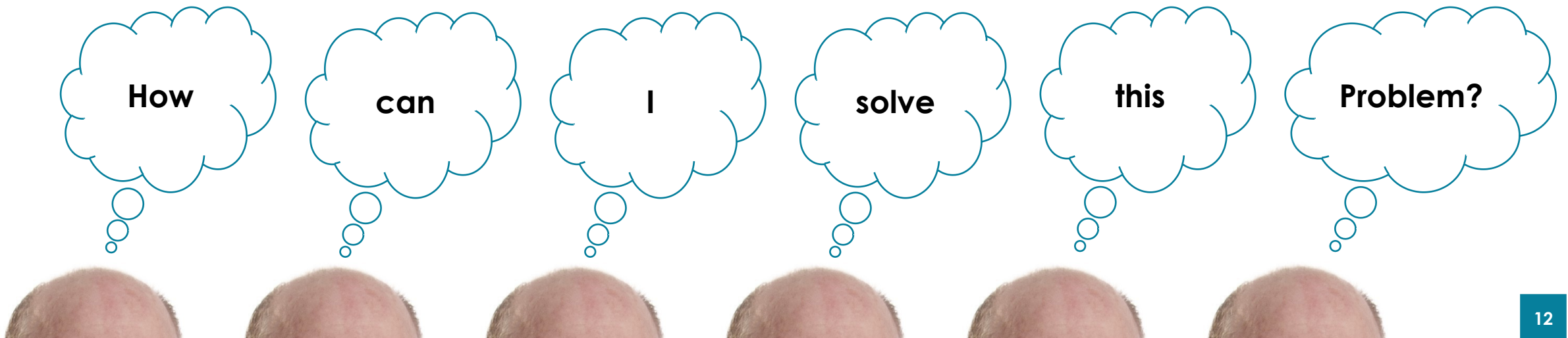


The Combination Problem of Panpsychism



“Take a sentence of a dozen words, and take twelve men and tell to each one word. Then stand the men in a row or jam them in a bunch, and let each think of his word as intently as he will; nowhere will there be a consciousness of the whole sentence”

William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1890



The Hard Problem vs The Combination Problem



A **physicalist** might ask

How is it possible for the cells, molecules, atoms or particles in our brains combine to create the complex conscious states of a human being ?

when:

For all integers N , any combination of N **non-conscious** material objects will itself be a non-conscious material object

NO POSSIBLE SOLUTION !

A **panpsychist** might ask

How is it possible for the cells, molecules, atoms or particles in our brains combine to create the complex conscious states of a human being ?

when:

For all integers N , any combination of N **conscious** material objects will itself be a non-conscious material object

ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION : $N = 1$

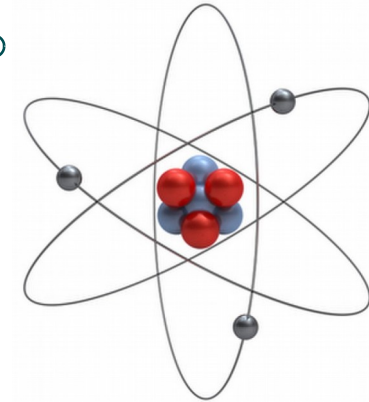
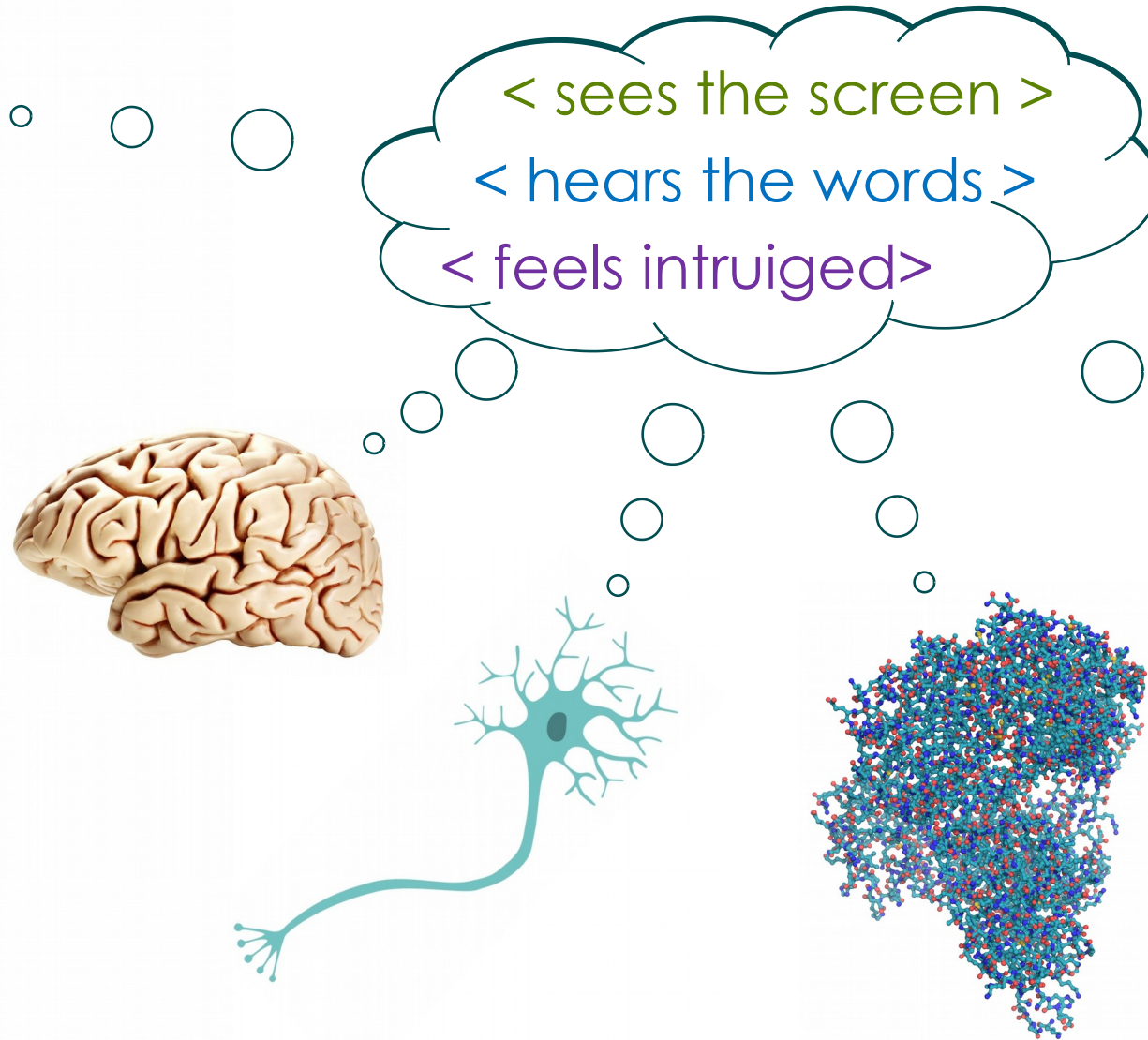
Interpreting the solution “N=1”



“Most of the brain and its activity may not relate to consciousness at all ... Perhaps only a thin neural lace of long-range neurons ... is responsible for conscious content. If pressed for a number, I would say that only a small percentage of neuronal activity at any given time is directly involved in constructing a conscious percept.”

(neuroscientist) Christof Koch, *Consciousness*, 2012

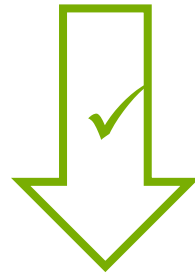
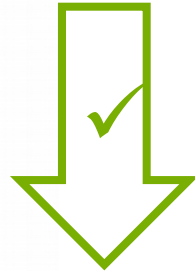
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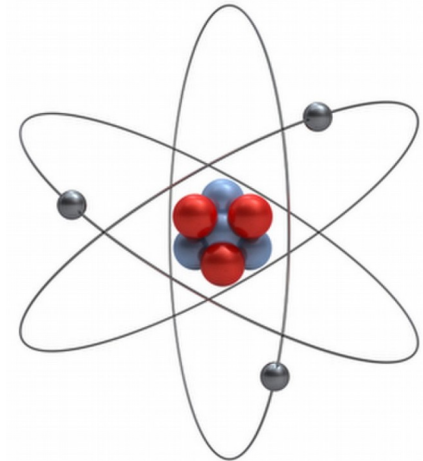
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- length
- breadth
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But, hang on! We had a problem...



1. A human being is a combination of N **conscious particles of matter**, where N is some finite integer ...
2. For all integers $N > 1$, any combination of N **conscious** material objects will itself be a non-conscious material object
 $\Rightarrow$ A human being must be a non-conscious material object

However:

3. I am **not** a human being, I am a **conscious particle of matter that believes it is a human being !**

$\Rightarrow$ We have a solution !!

Conclusion

This view of the world, and this solution to the Hard Problem, may sound crazy and implausible, but, being consistent with modern science, is certainly possible. And since we can eliminate all other proposed solutions as impossible, then whatever remains, however hard it is to believe, must be true.

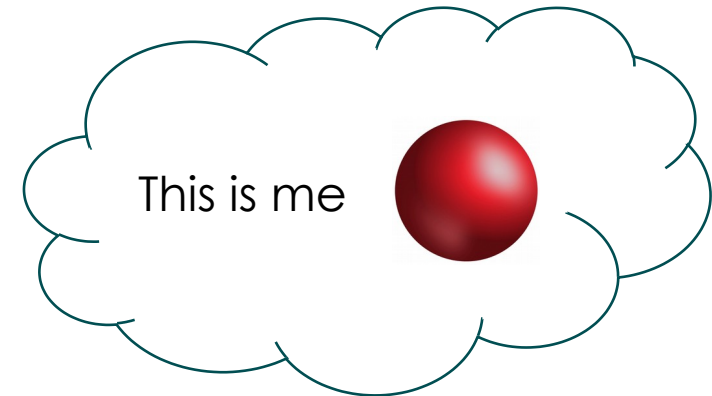
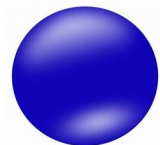
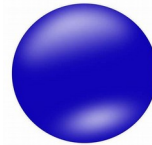
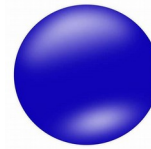
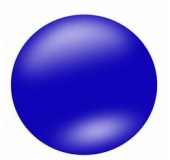


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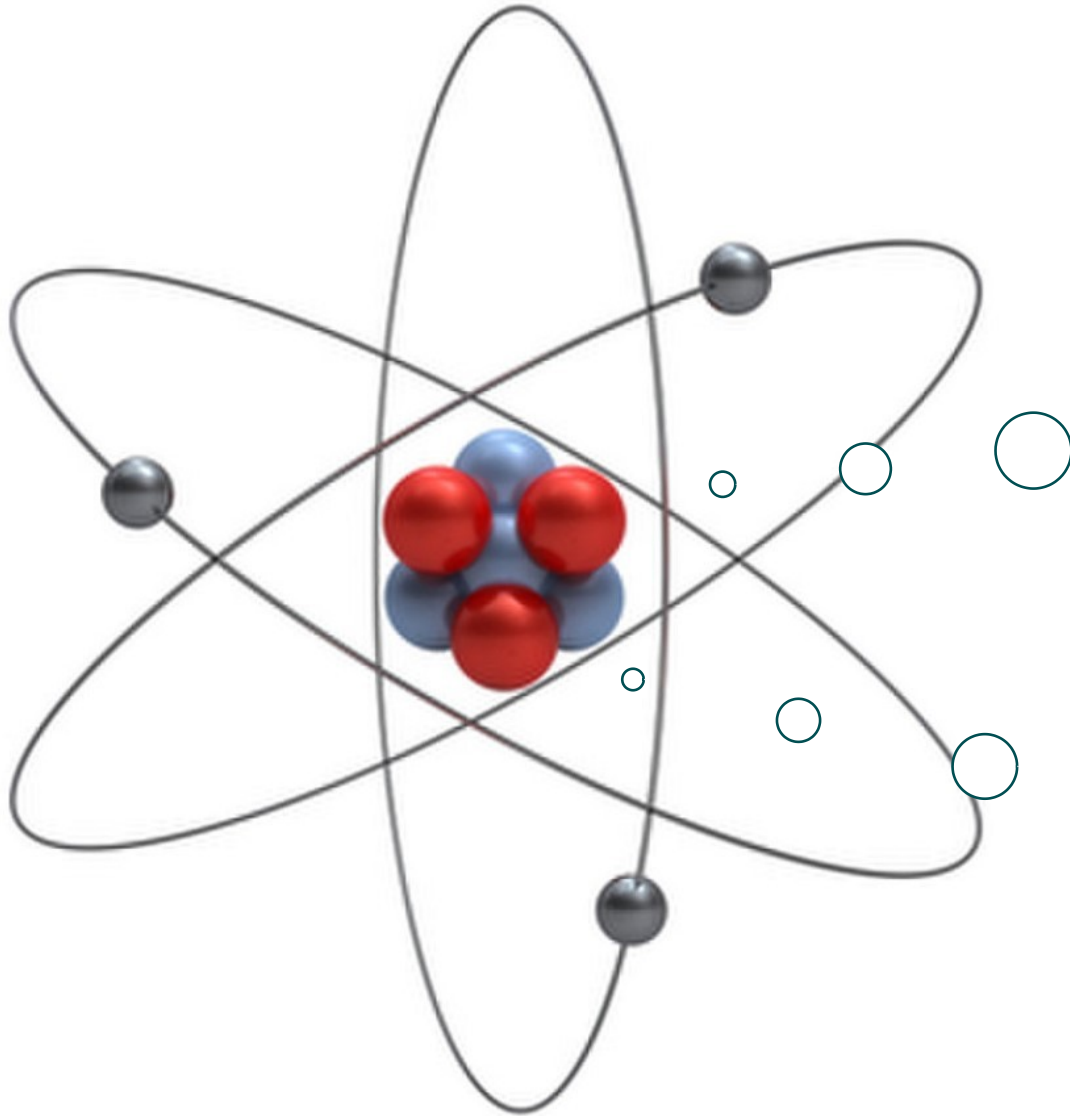
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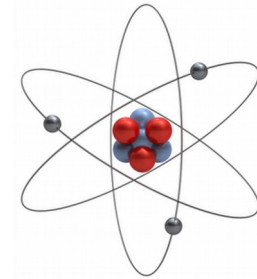
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Interpreting the solution “ $N=1$ ”



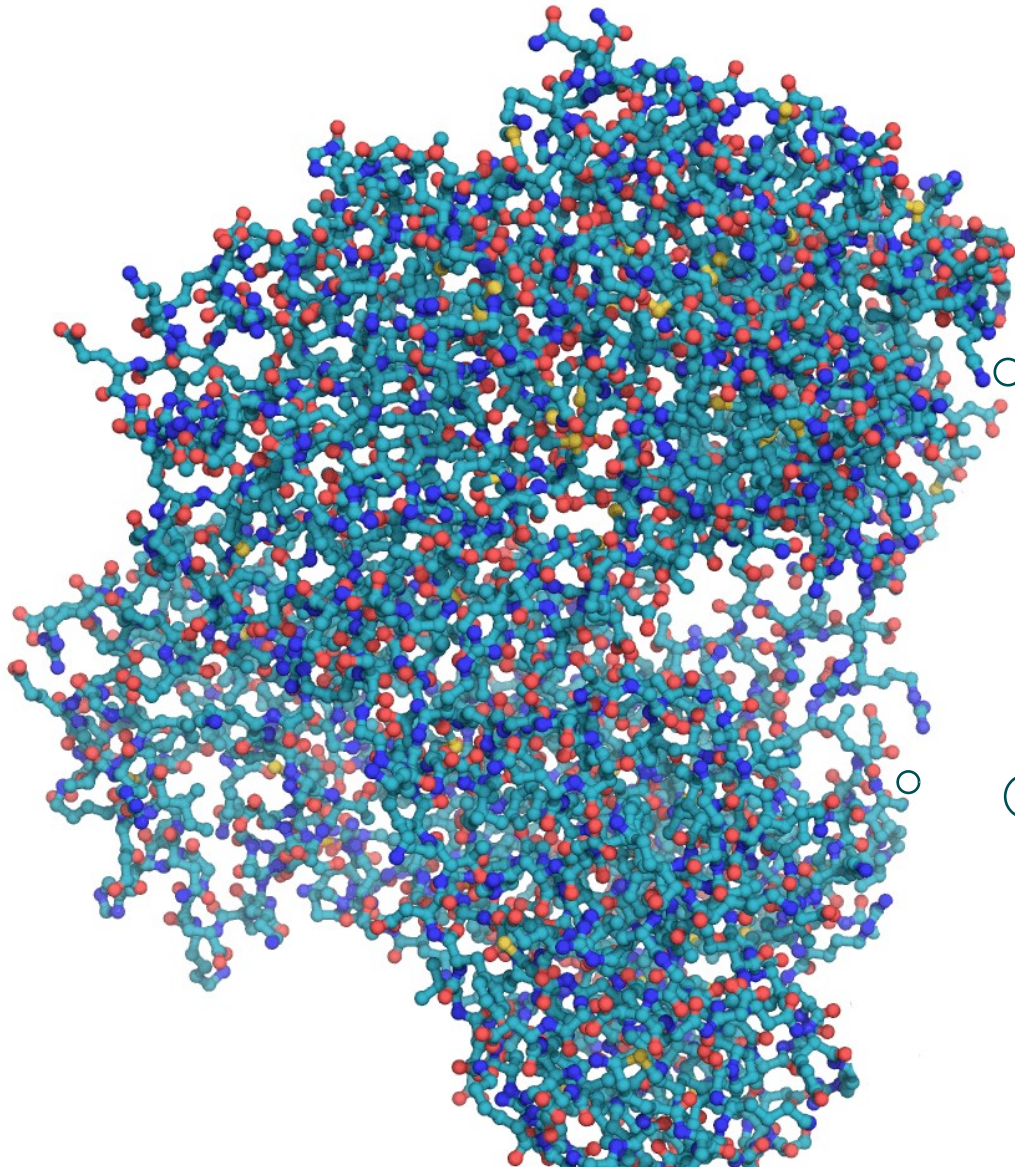
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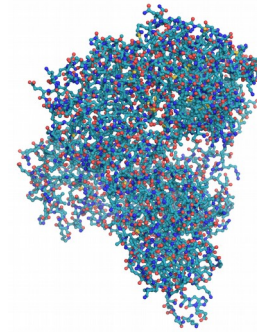
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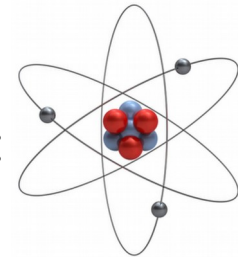
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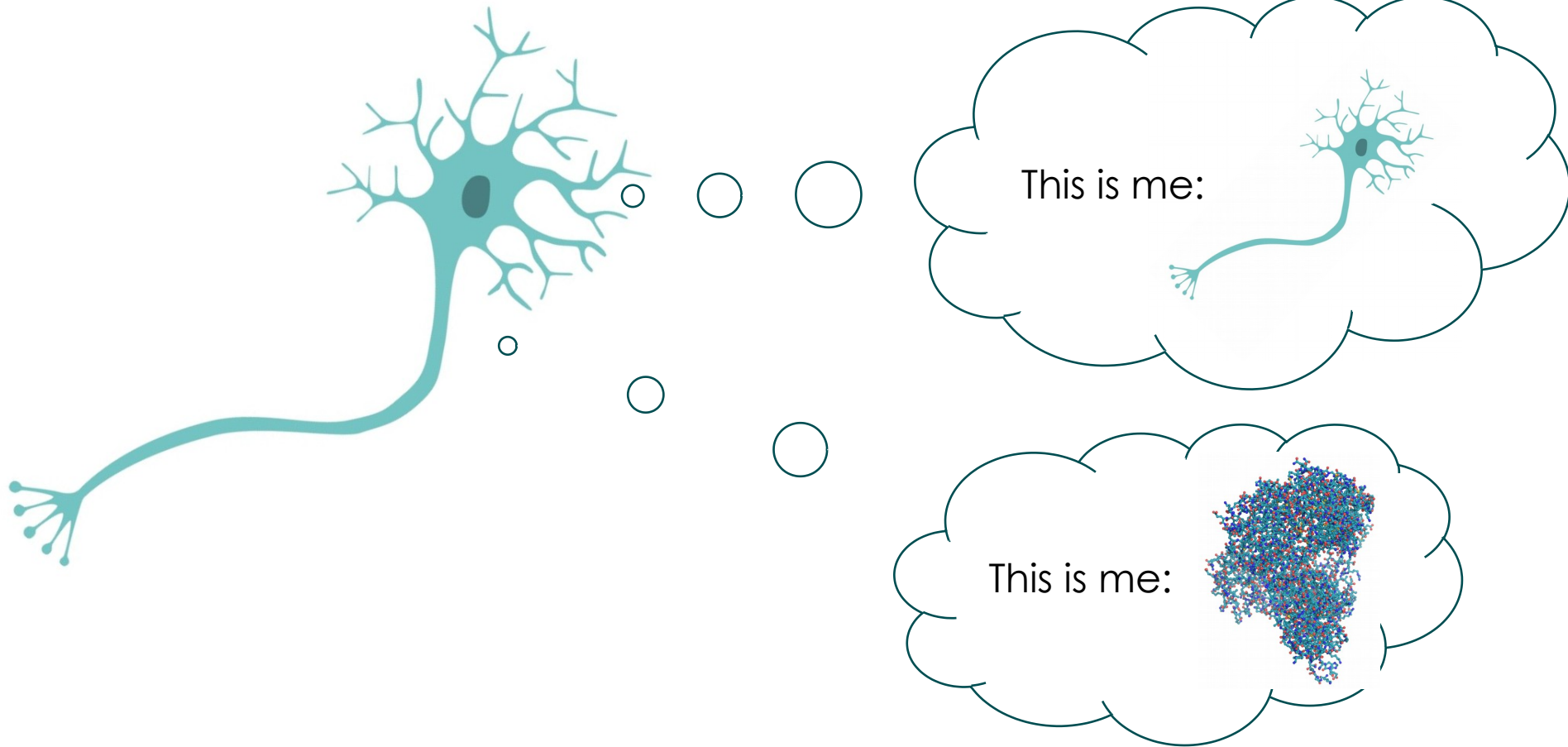
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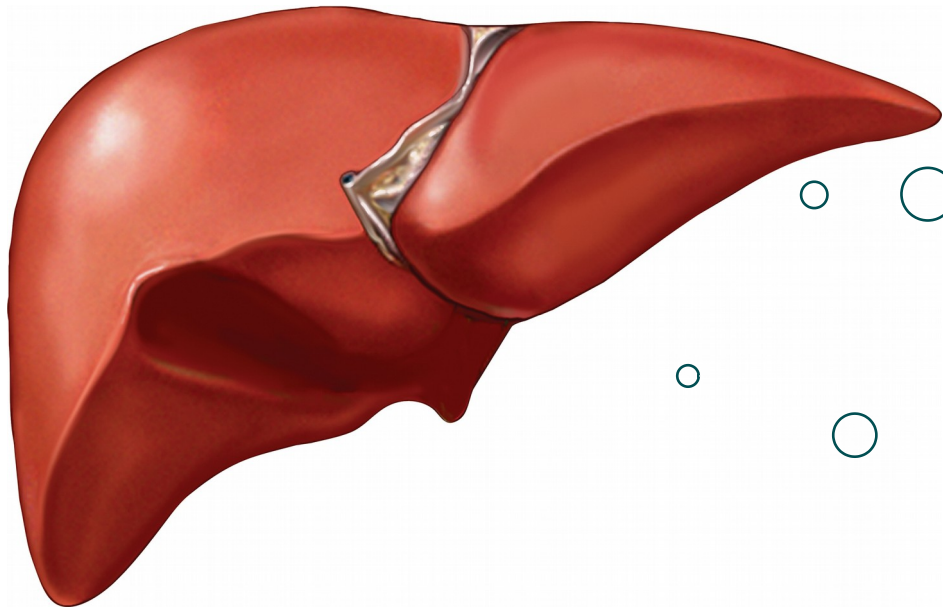
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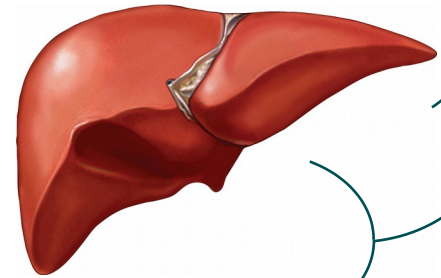
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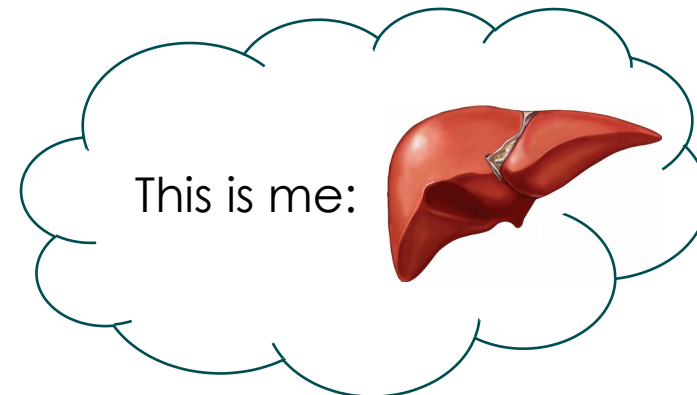
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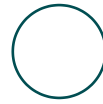
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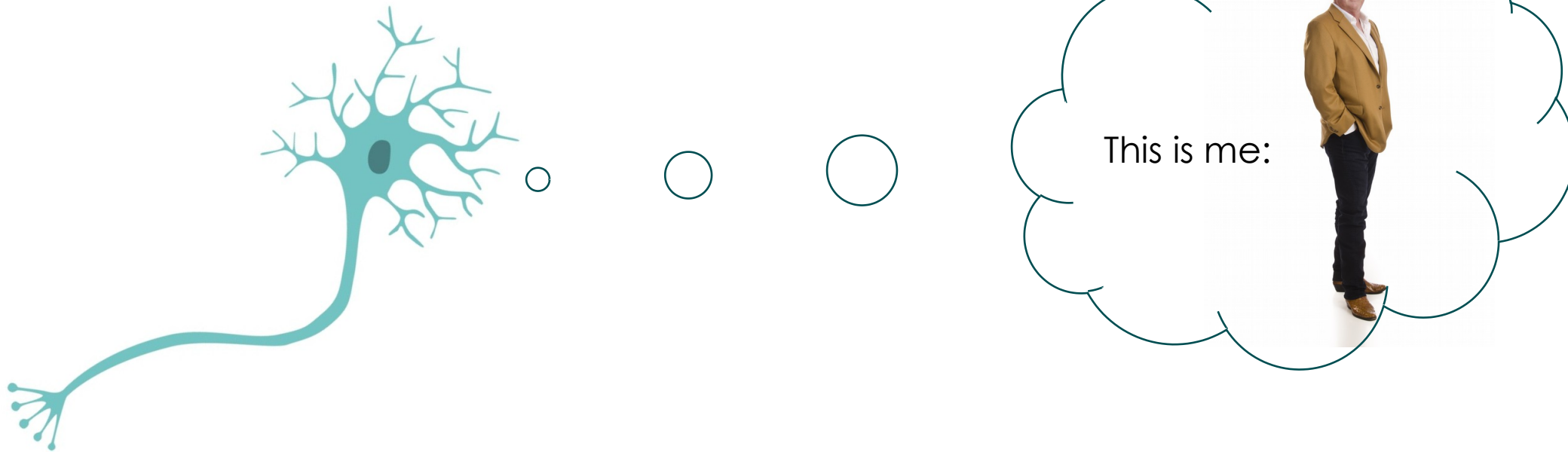
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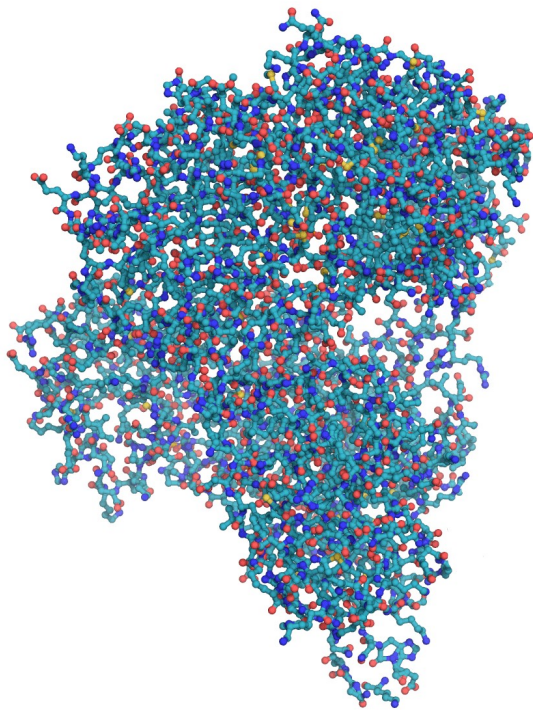
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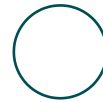
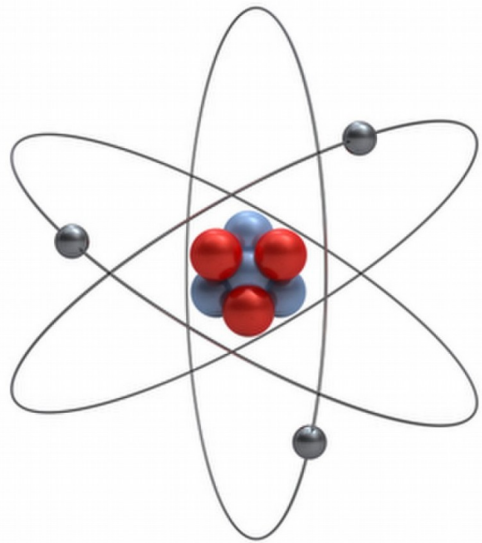
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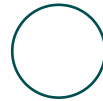
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