

# The Quest for Unification

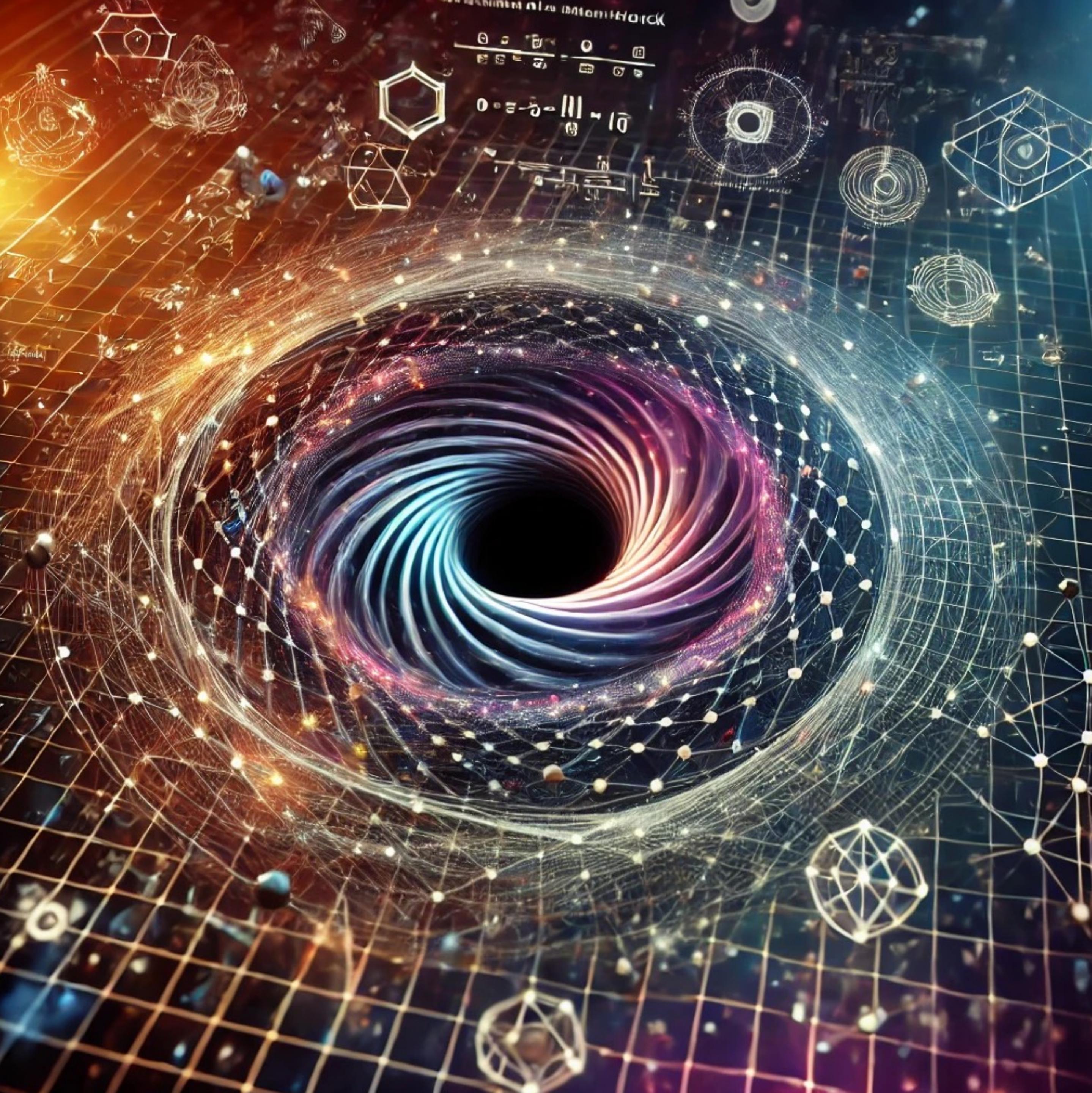
- Intersecting Mathematics, Physics and AI -

**Daniel Persson**

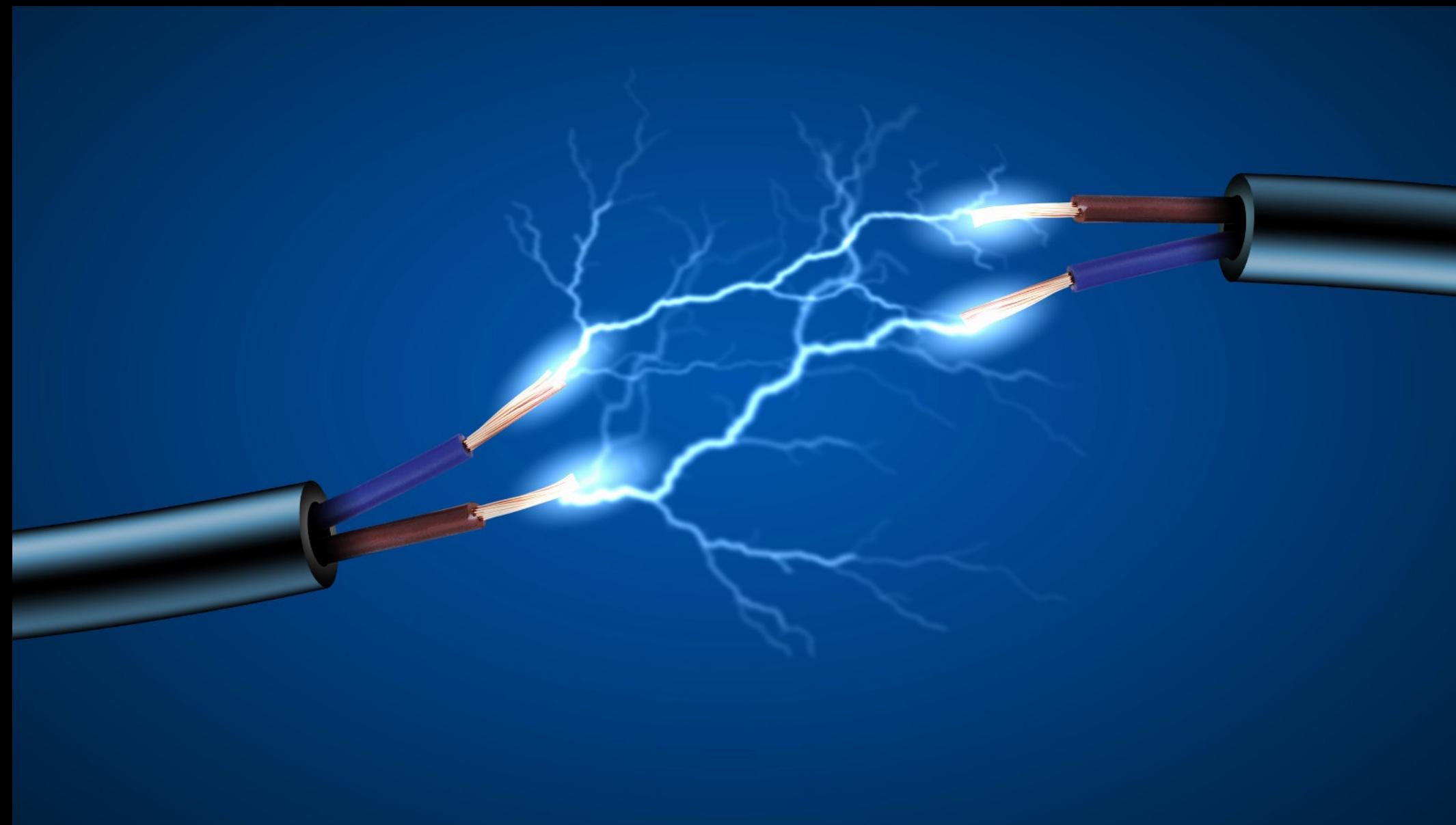
Department of Mathematical Sciences  
Chalmers University of Technology  
University of Gothenburg

**Inauguration lecture**

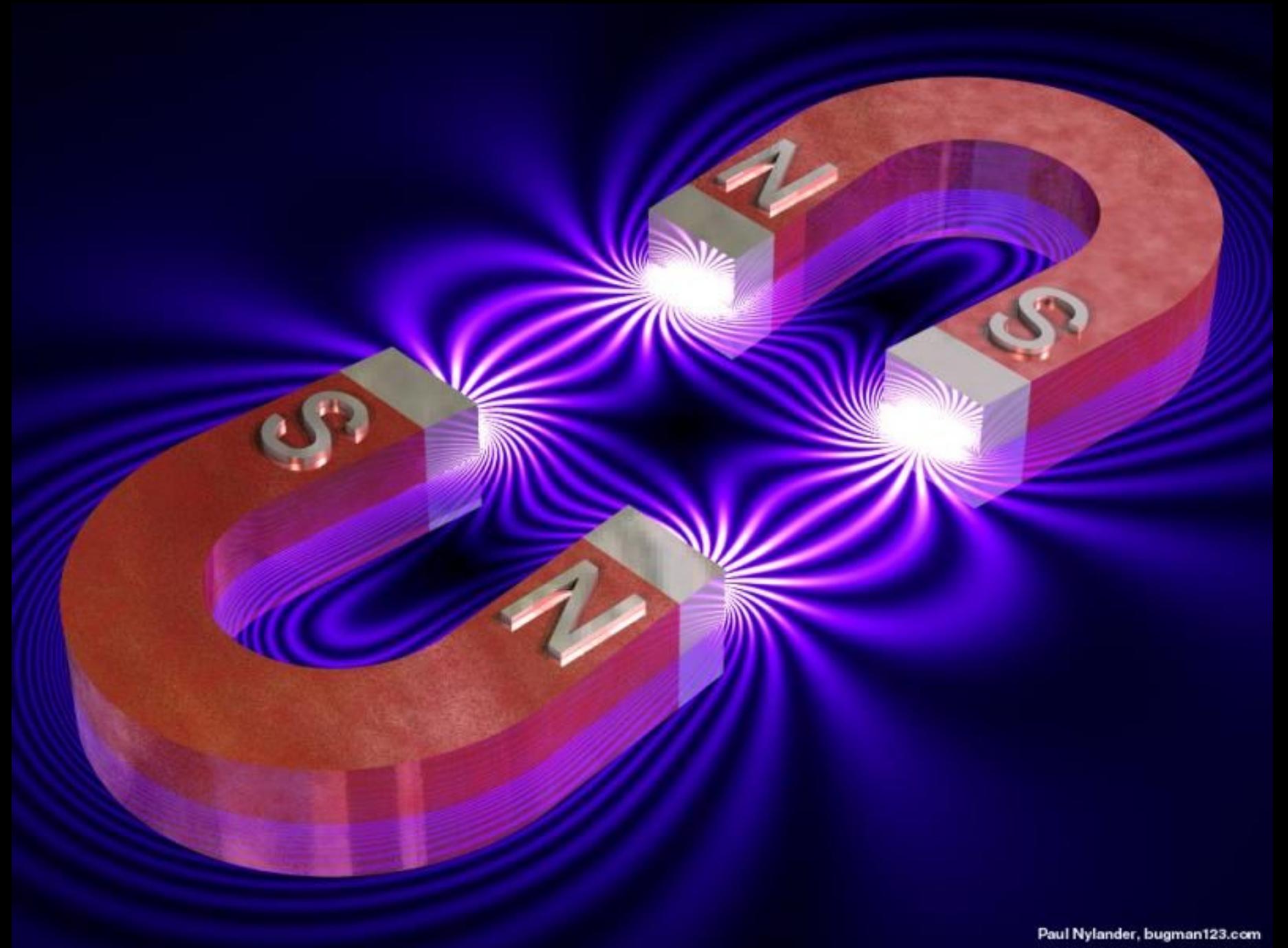
November 22, 2024



# Unification



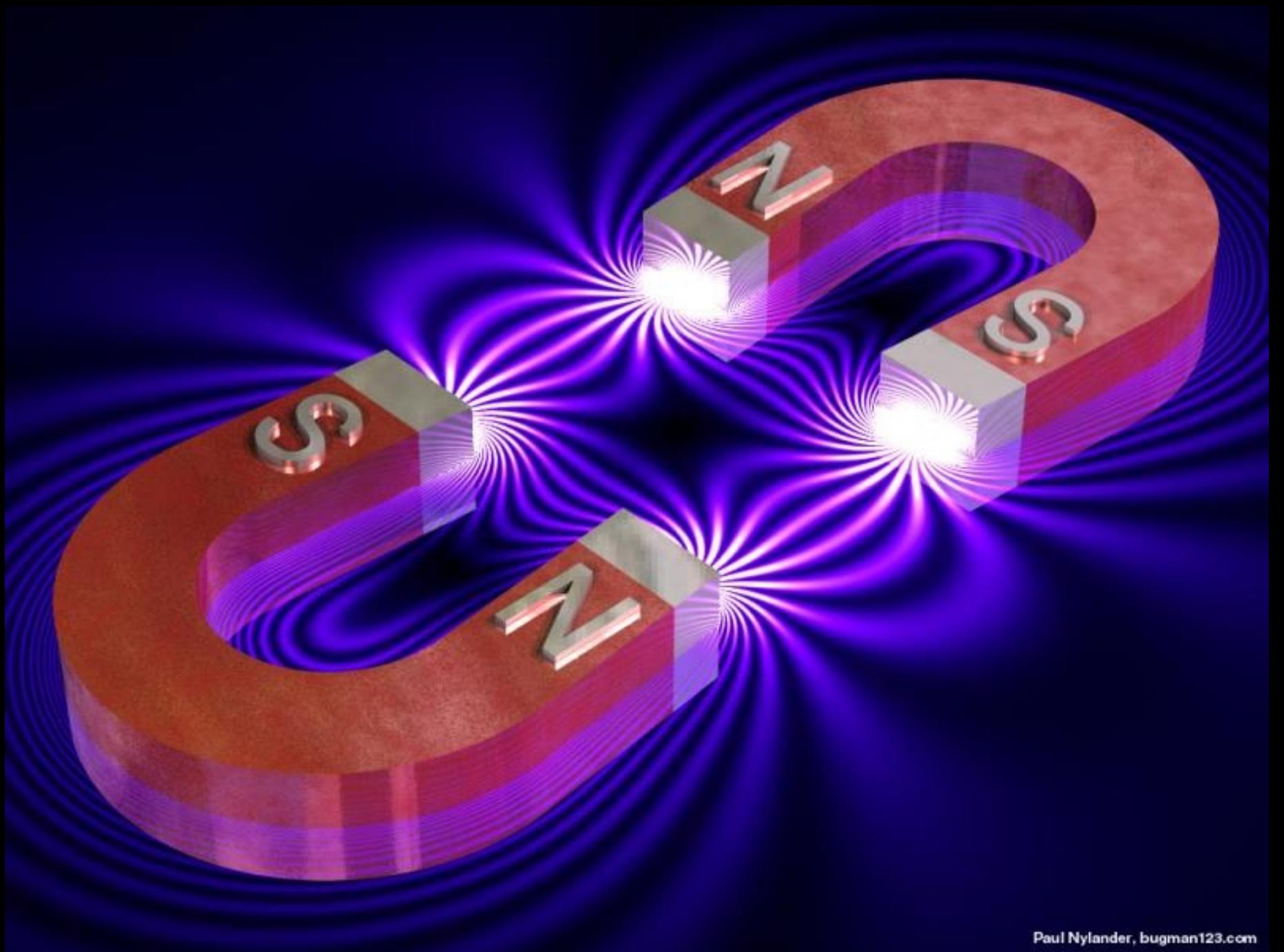
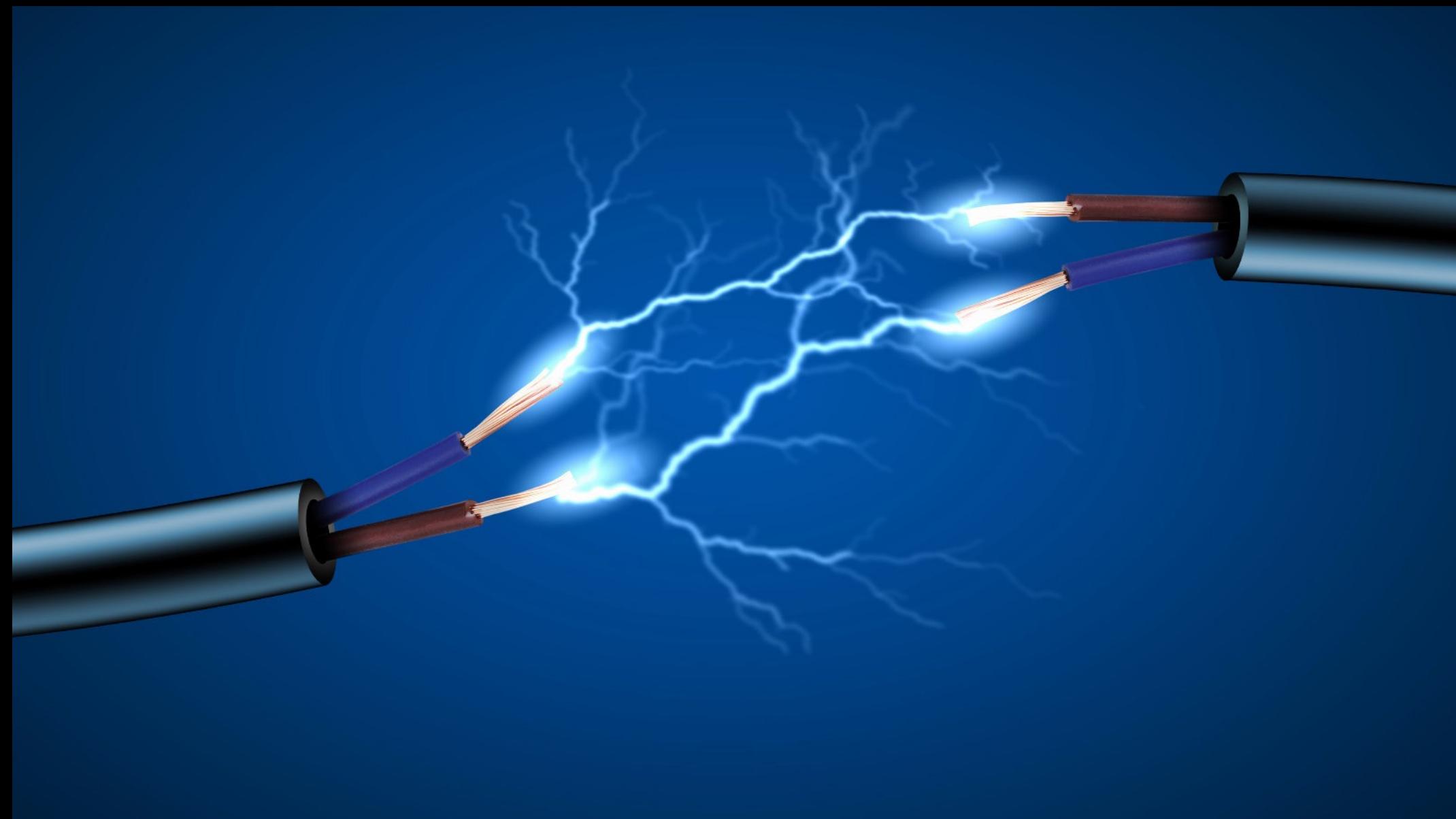
electricity



magnetism

Paul Nylander, bugman123.com

# Unification



Paul Nylander, bugman123.com

## electromagnetism

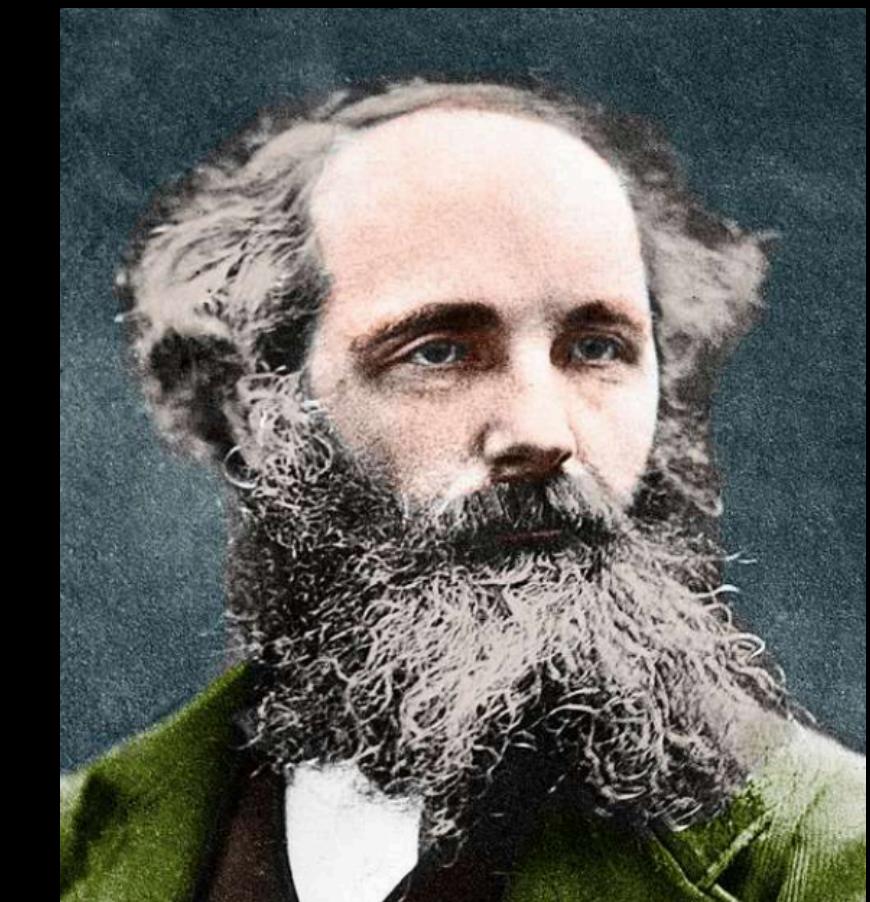
$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = 0,$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} + \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} = 0$$

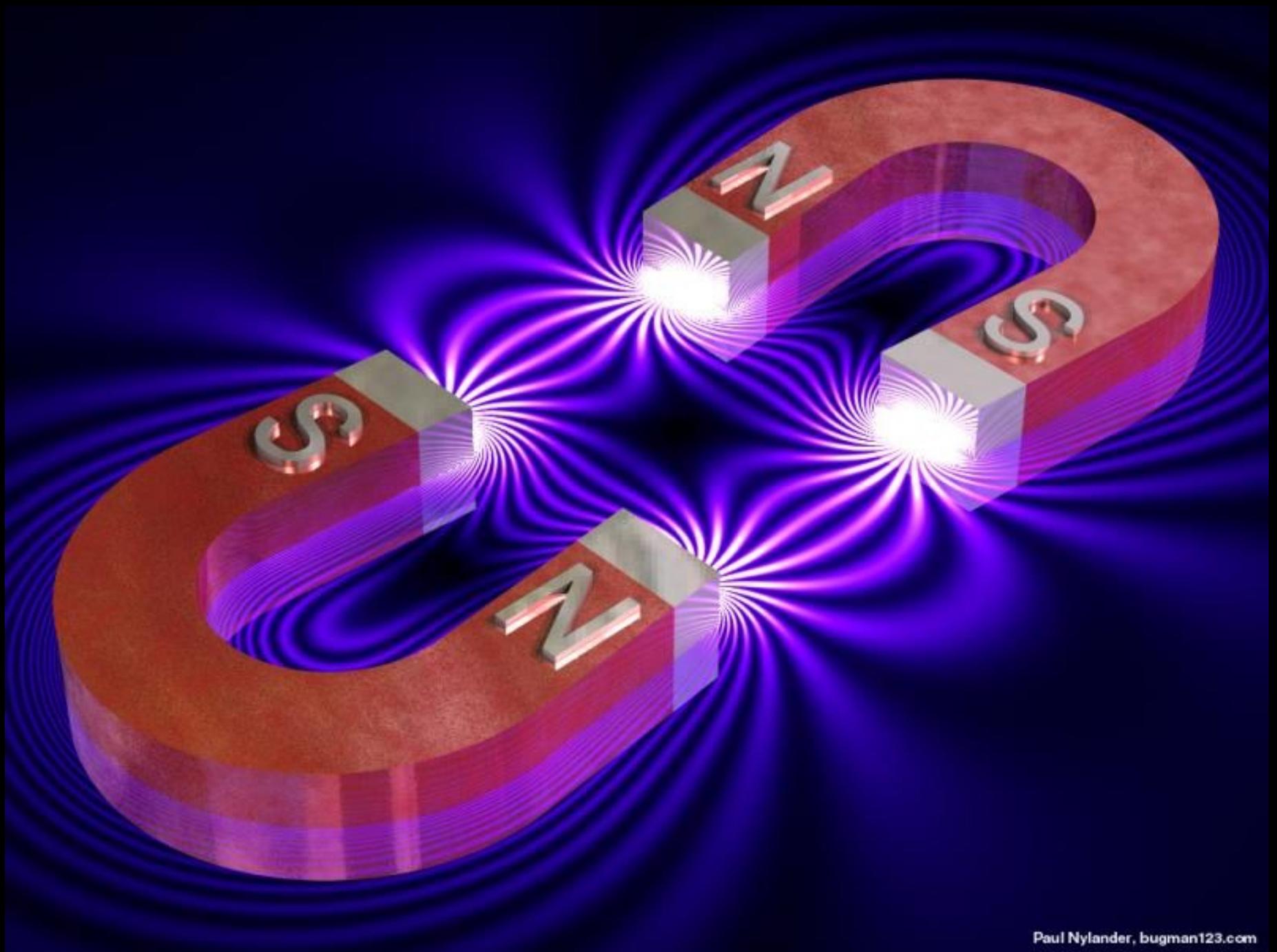
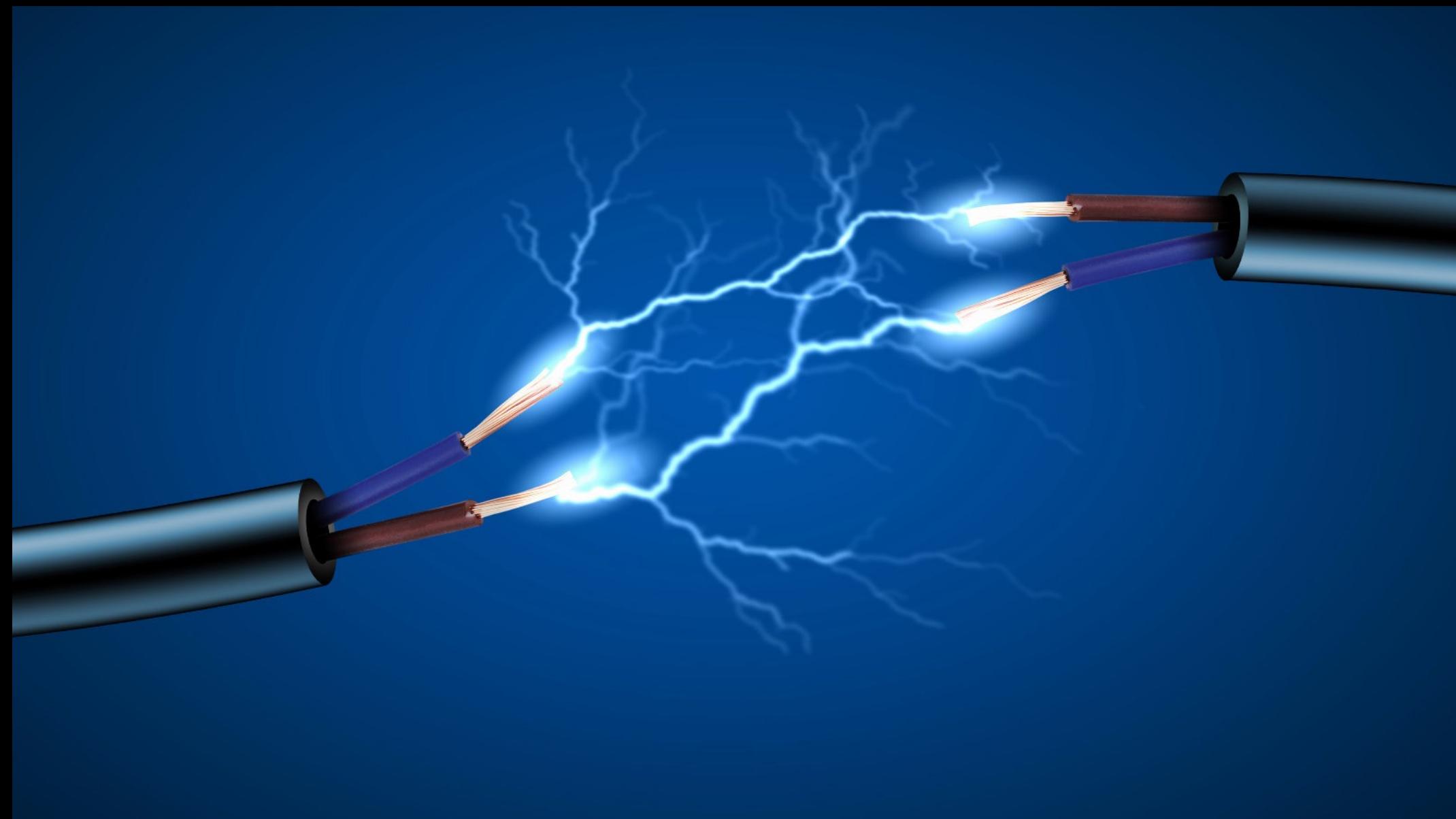
$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0,$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{B} - \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \frac{\partial \mathbf{E}}{\partial t} = 0$$

Maxwell's equations



# Unification



Paul Nylander, bugman123.com

## electromagnetism

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = 0,$$

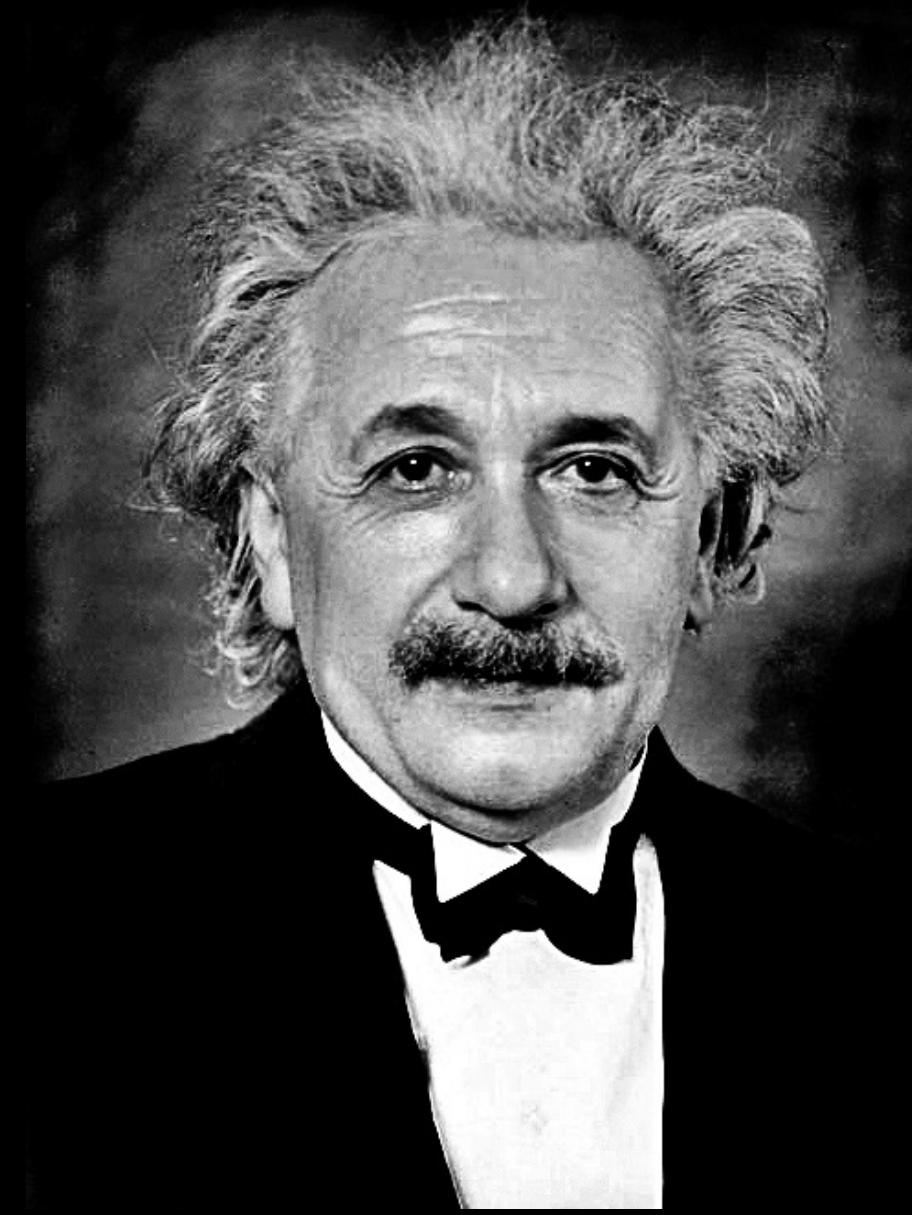
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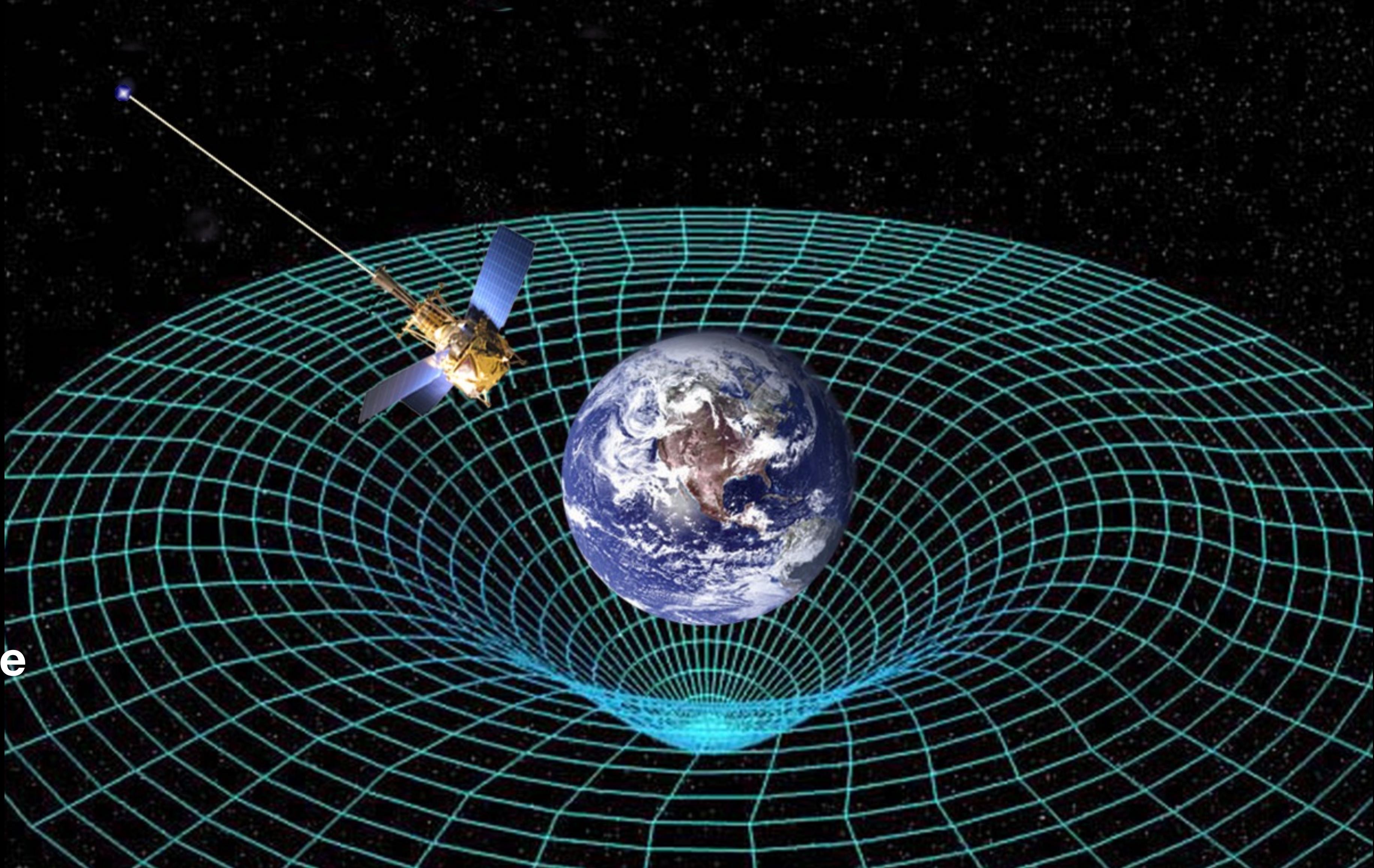
Electric-magnetic duality

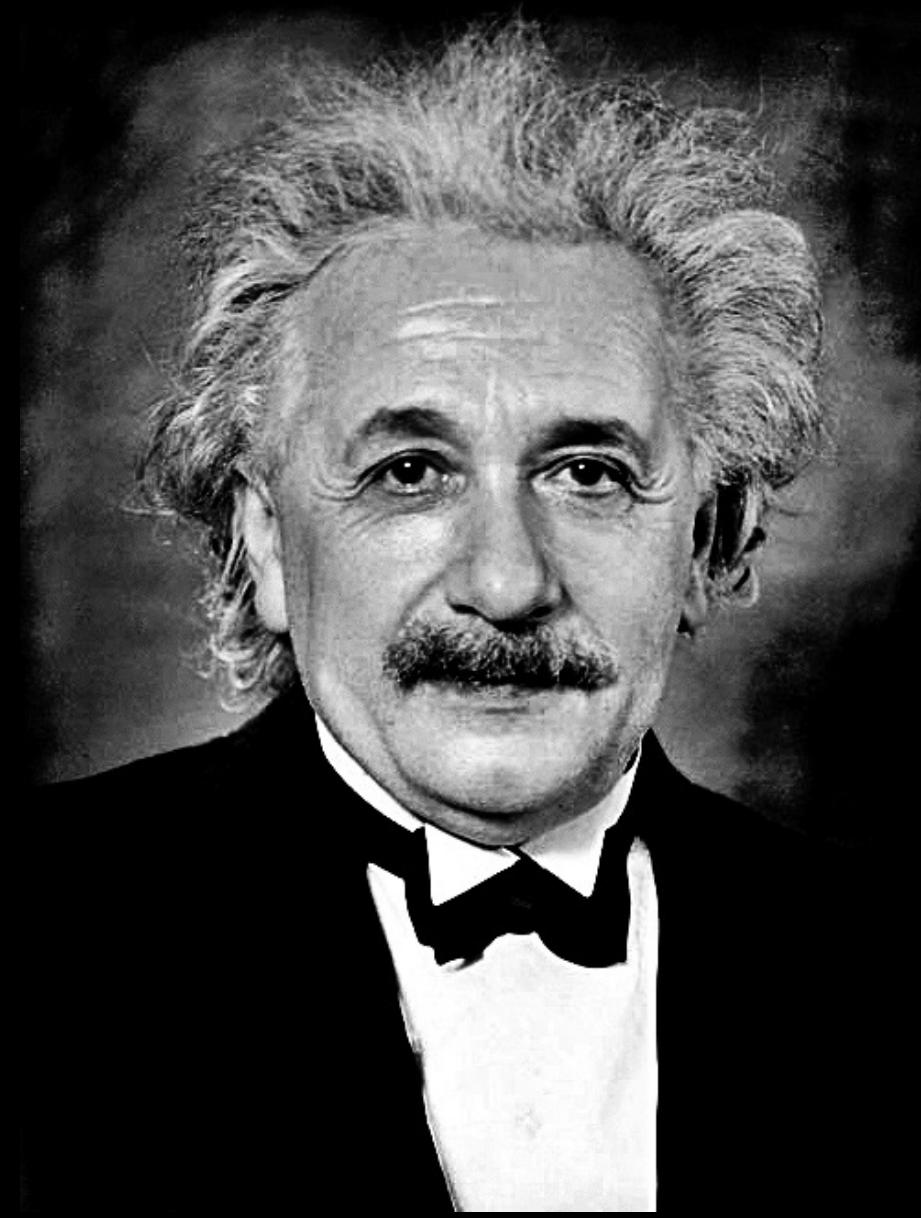
$$E \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad B$$



**space + time = spacetime**

**gravity:  
mass curves spacetime**



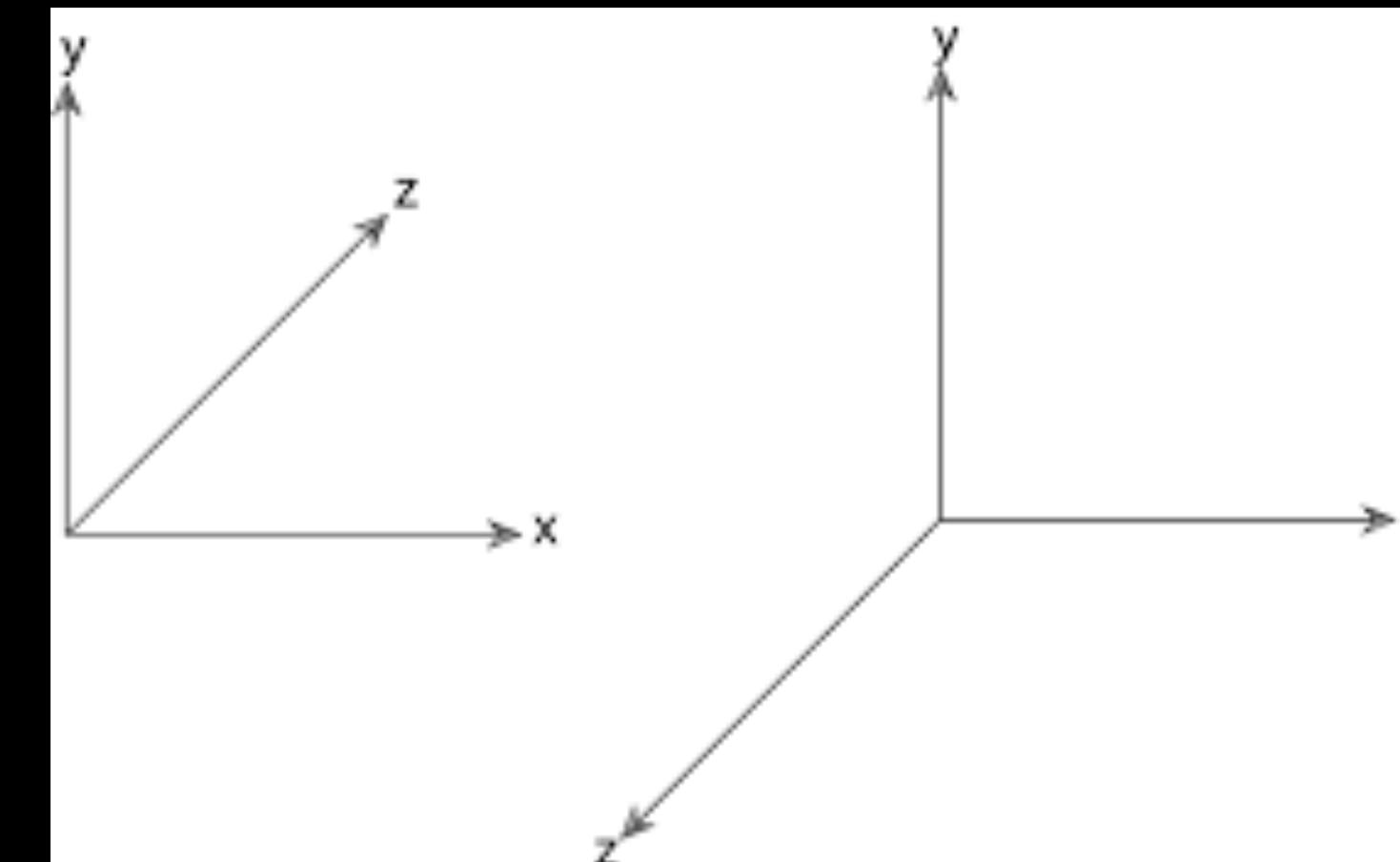


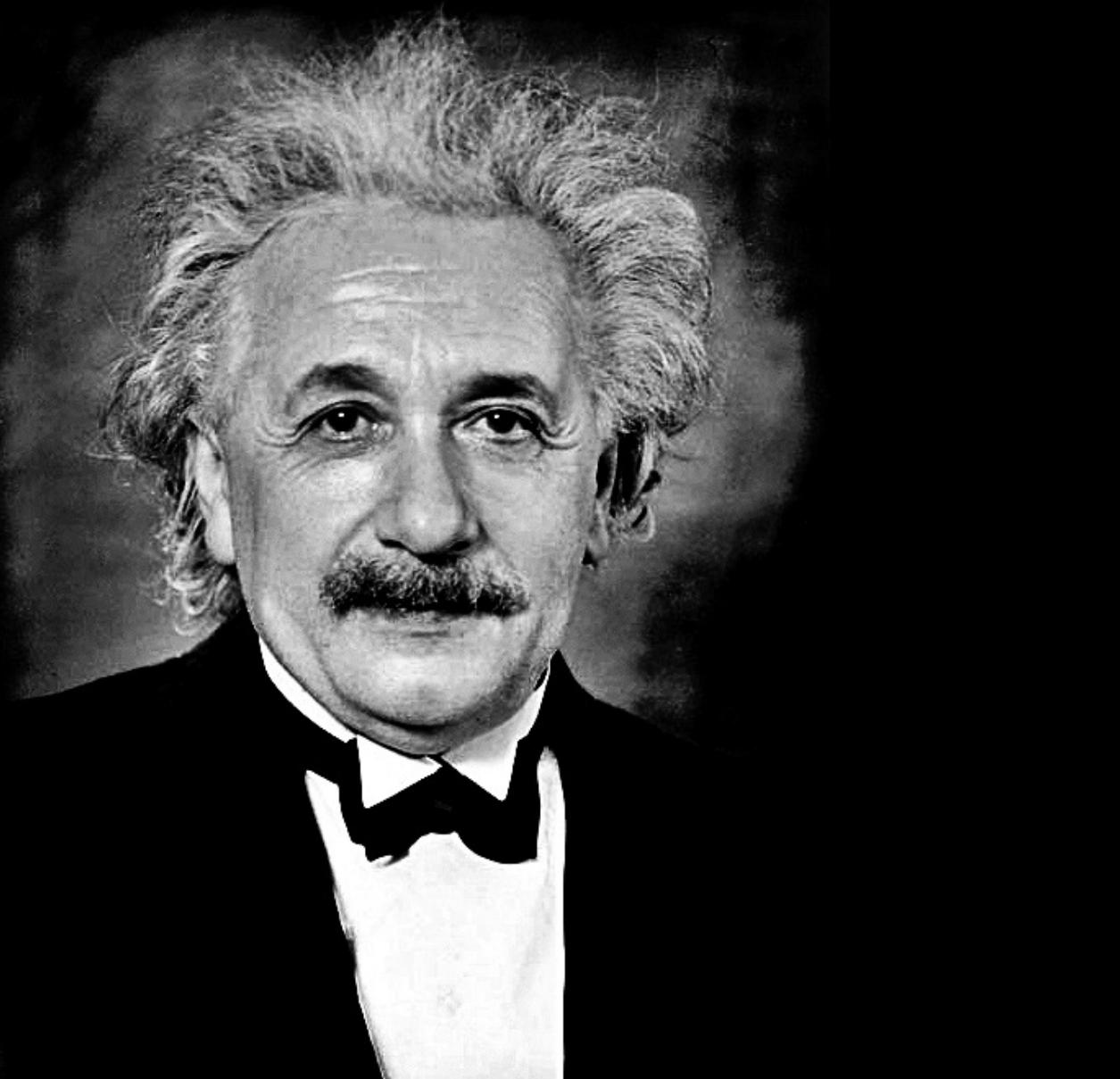
Einstein's general theory of relativity connected differential geometry and physics

***Principle of general covariance:***

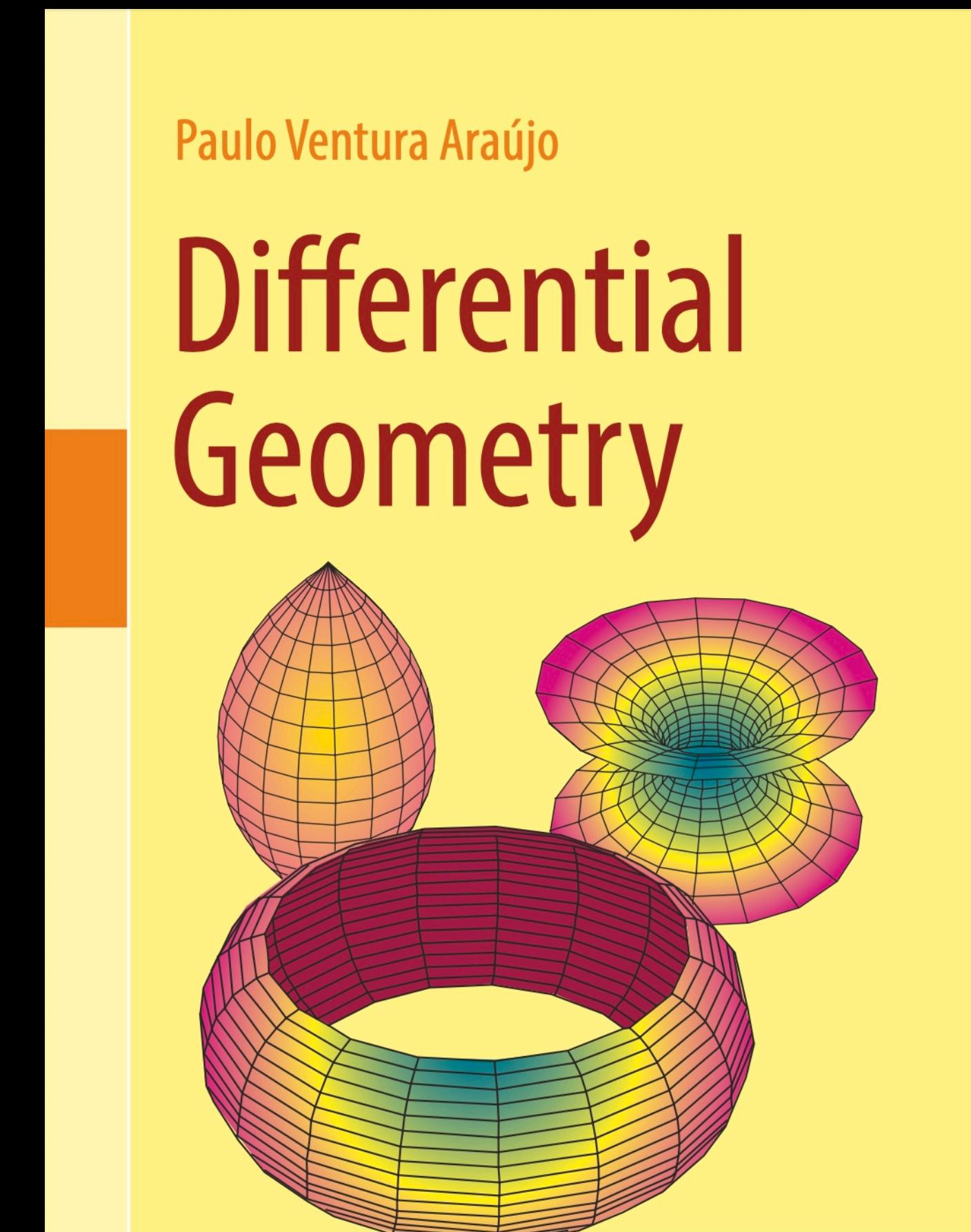
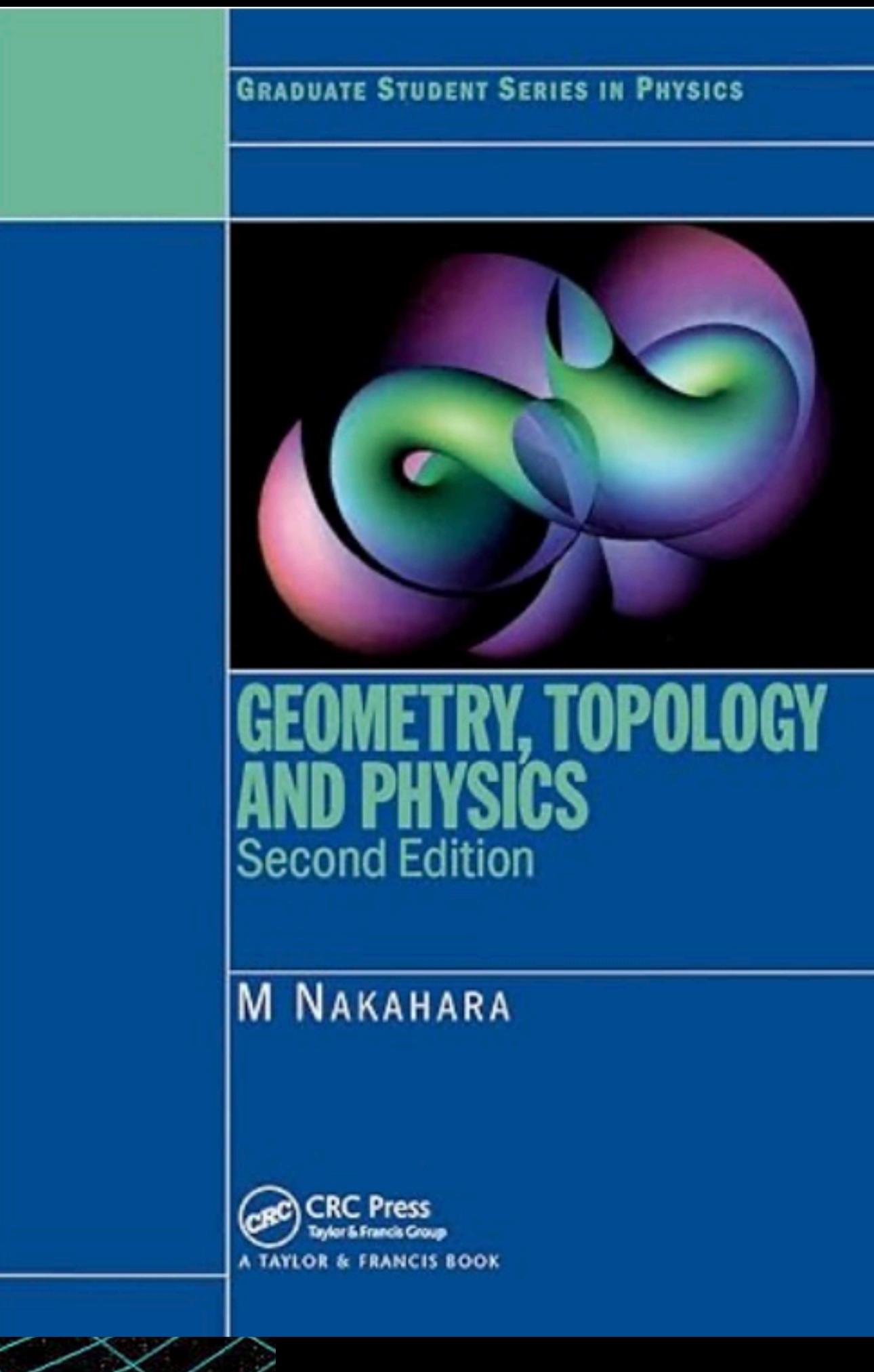
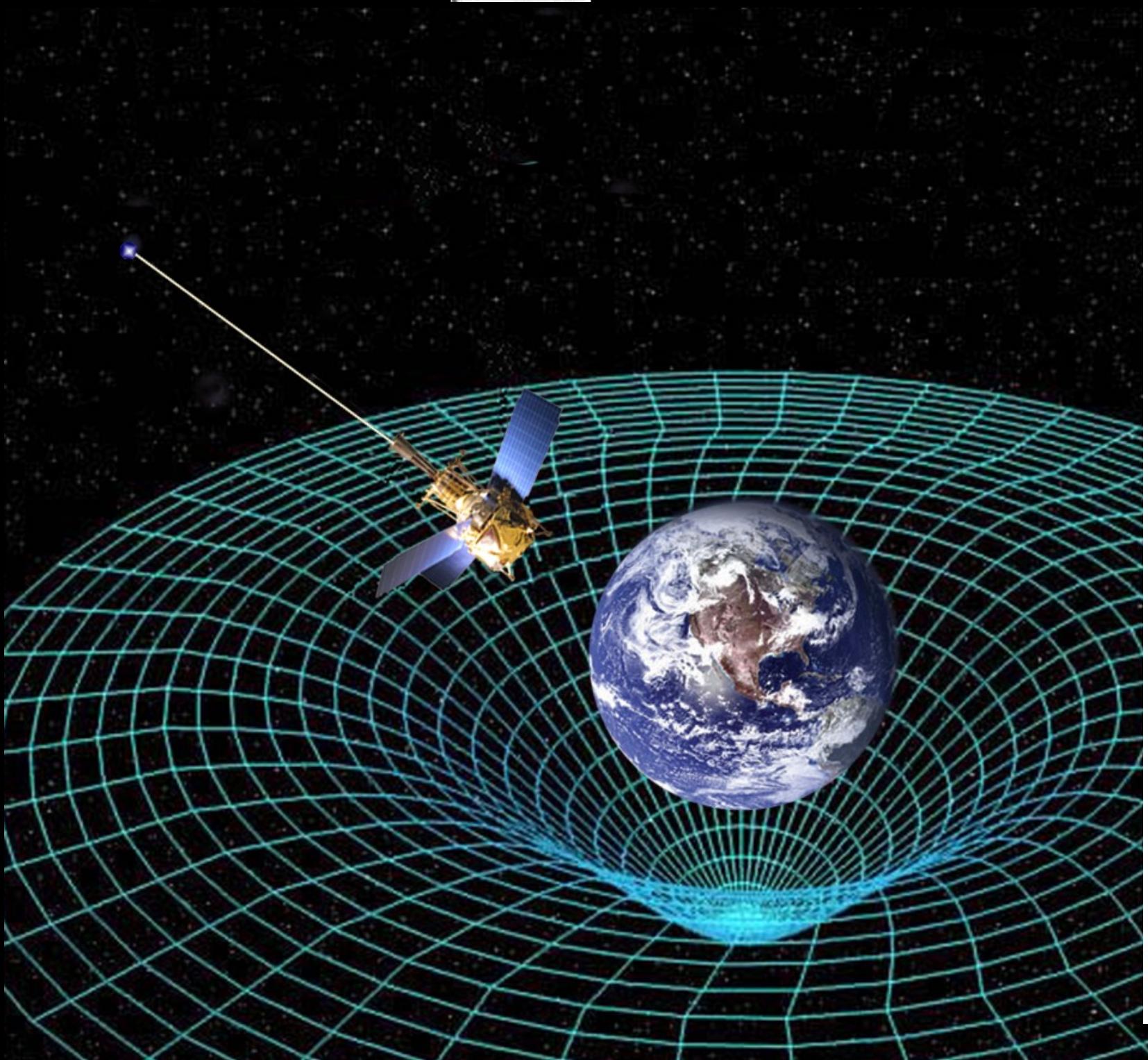
The laws of physics should take the same form independently of which coordinate system we use to represent them

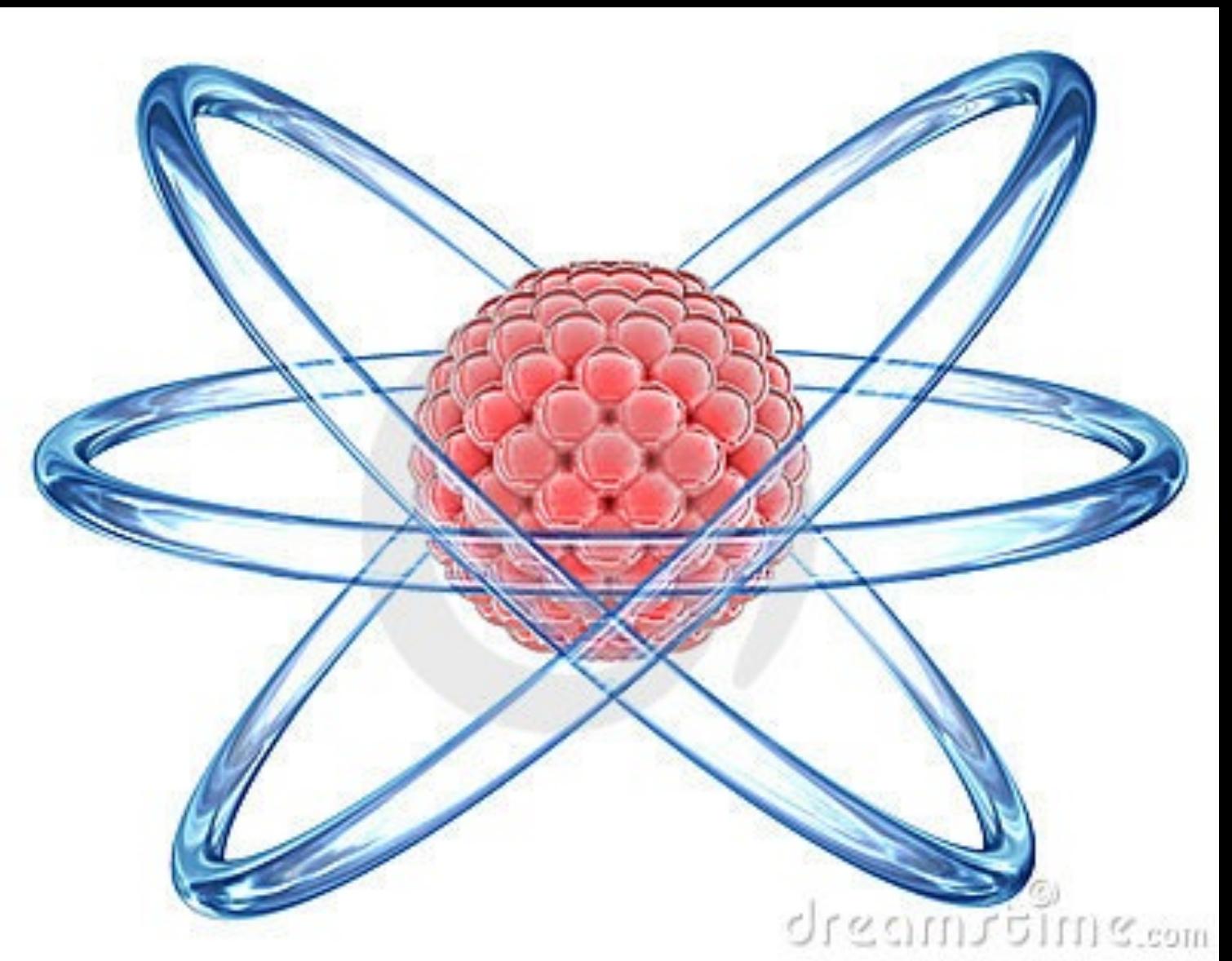
$$R_{\mu\nu}(g) - \frac{1}{2}g_{\mu\nu}R(g) = T_{\mu\nu}(g, F, \dots)$$



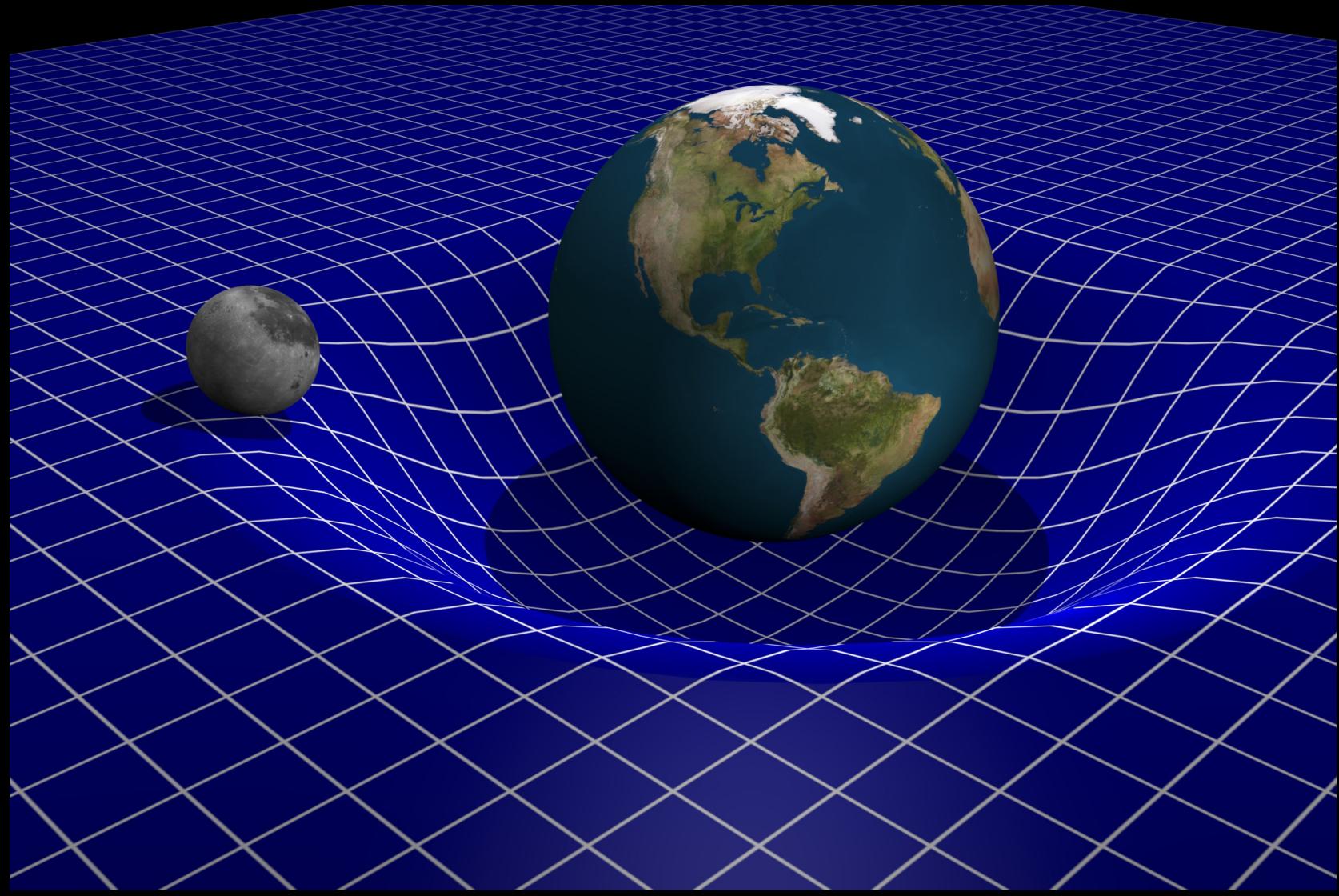


Einstein's general theory of relativity connected  
differential geometry and physics



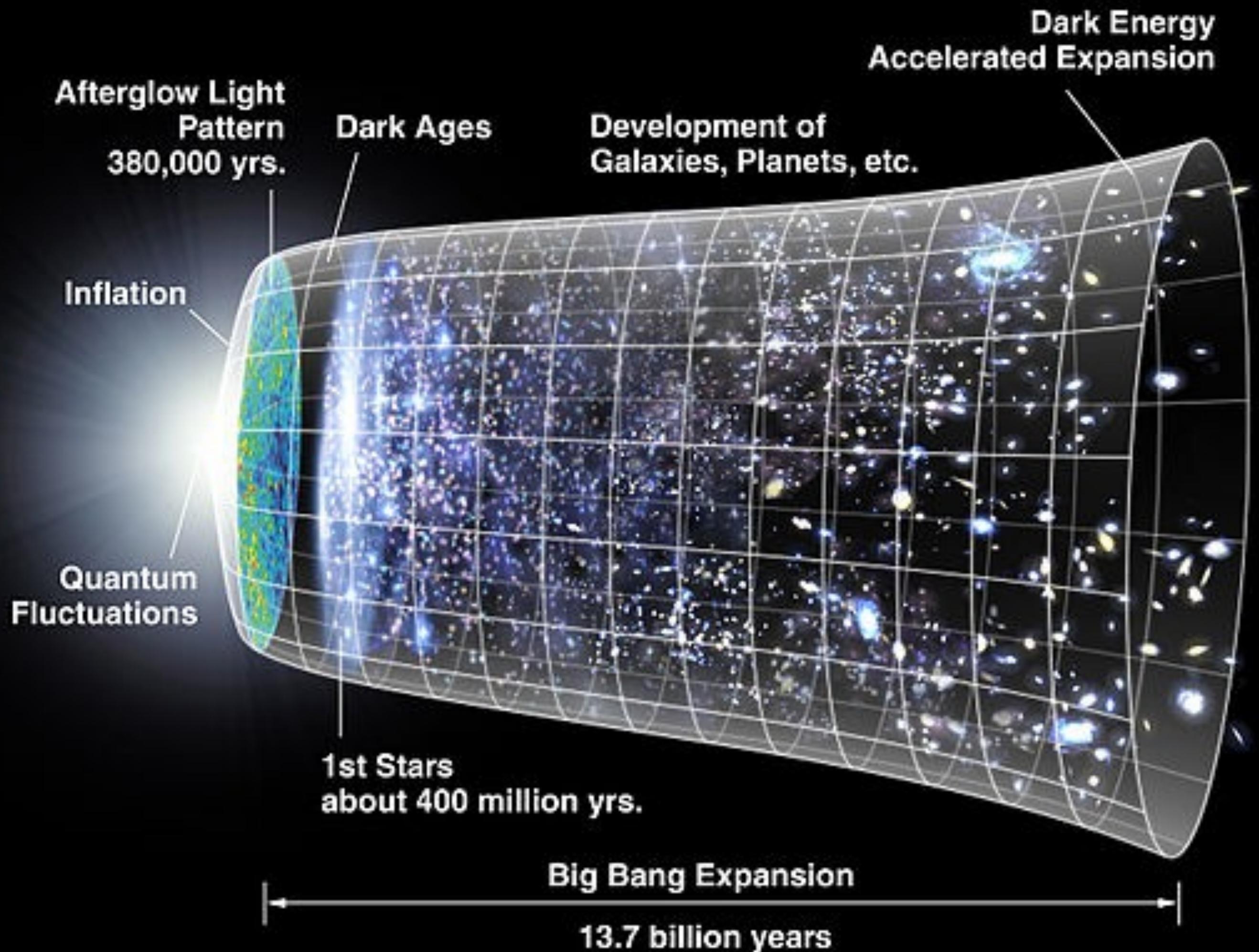


quantum mechanics

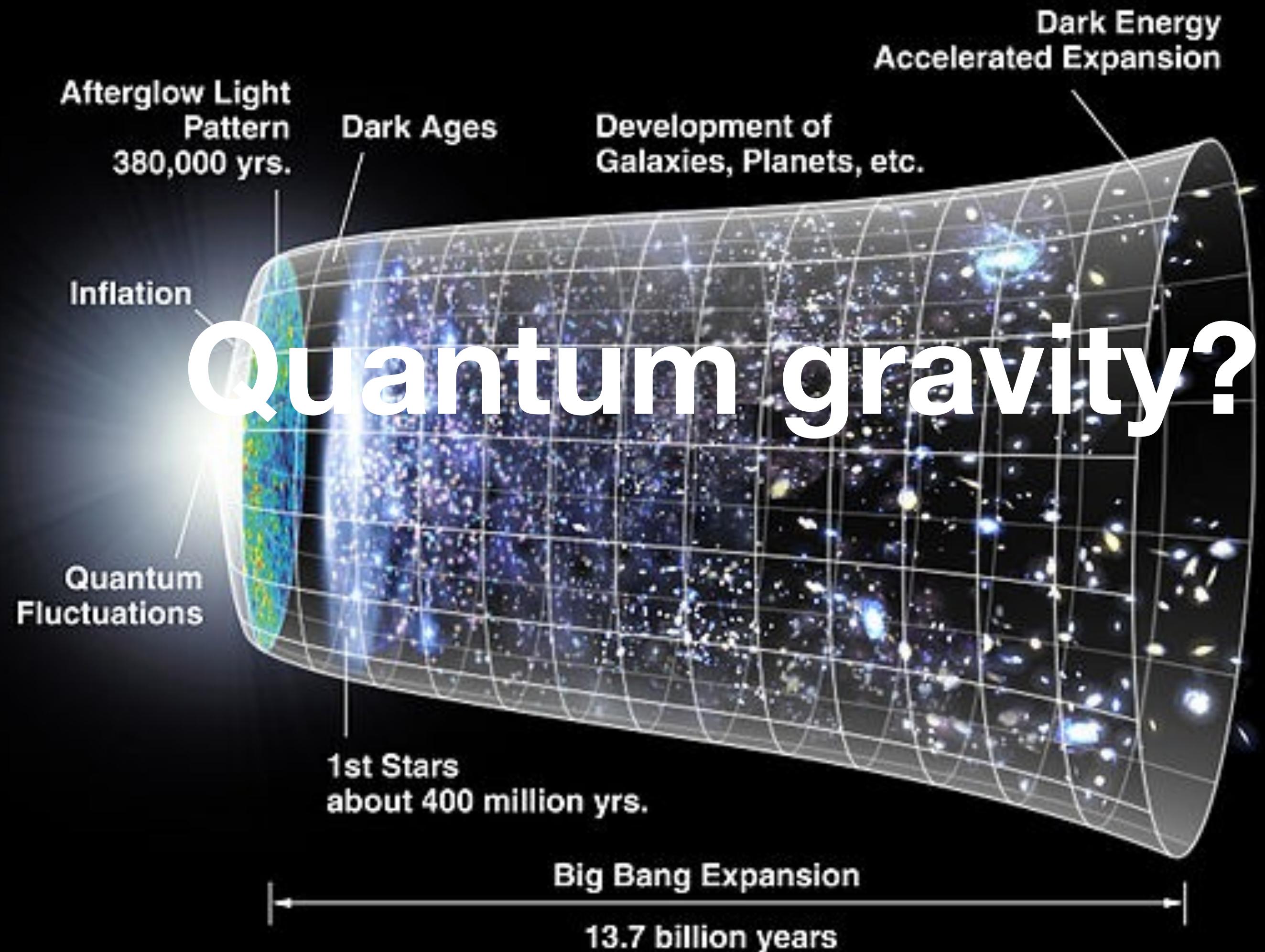


general relativity

There are regions in the universe where we need both **quantum mechanics** and **general relativity**, or rather some **unification** thereof

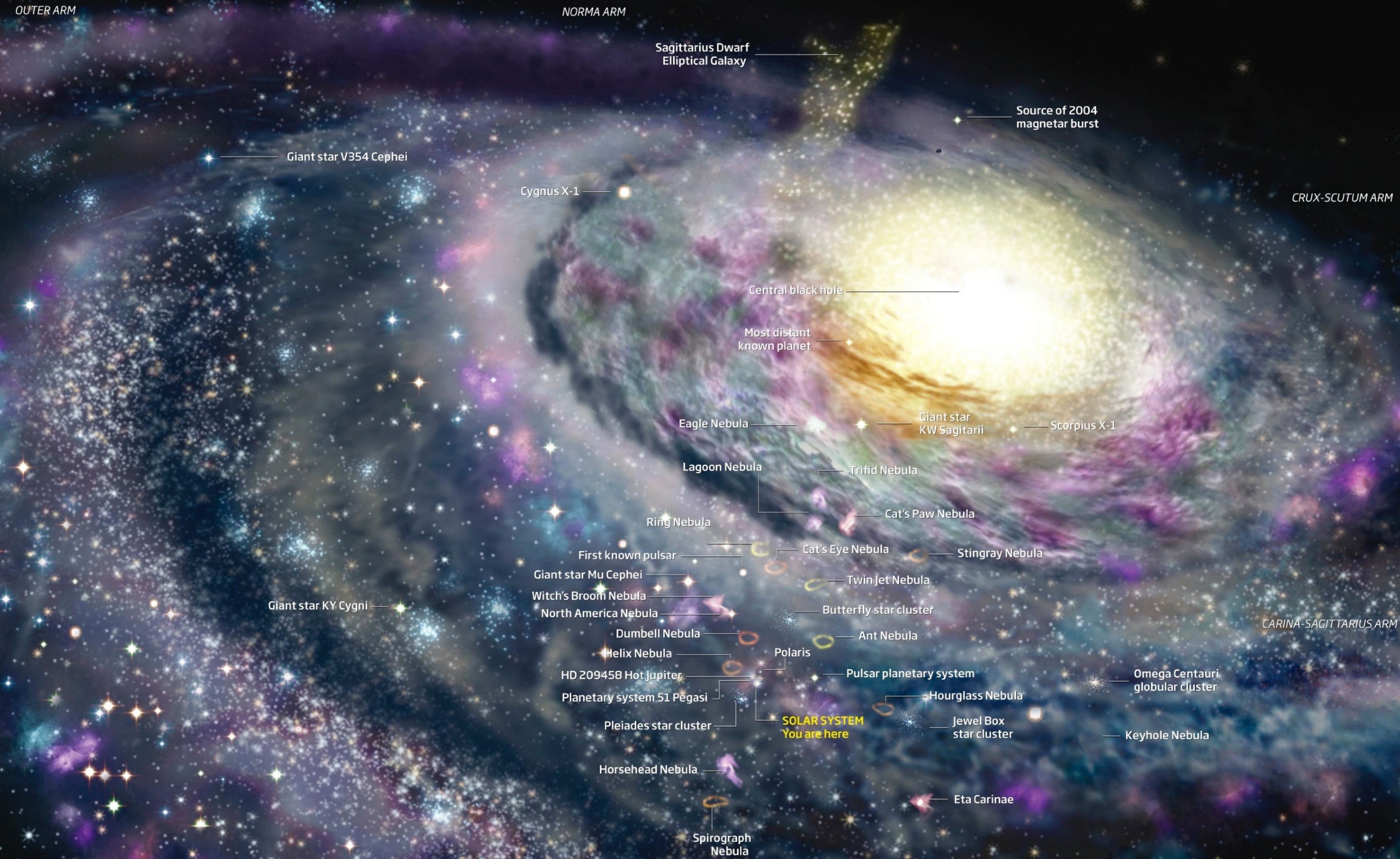


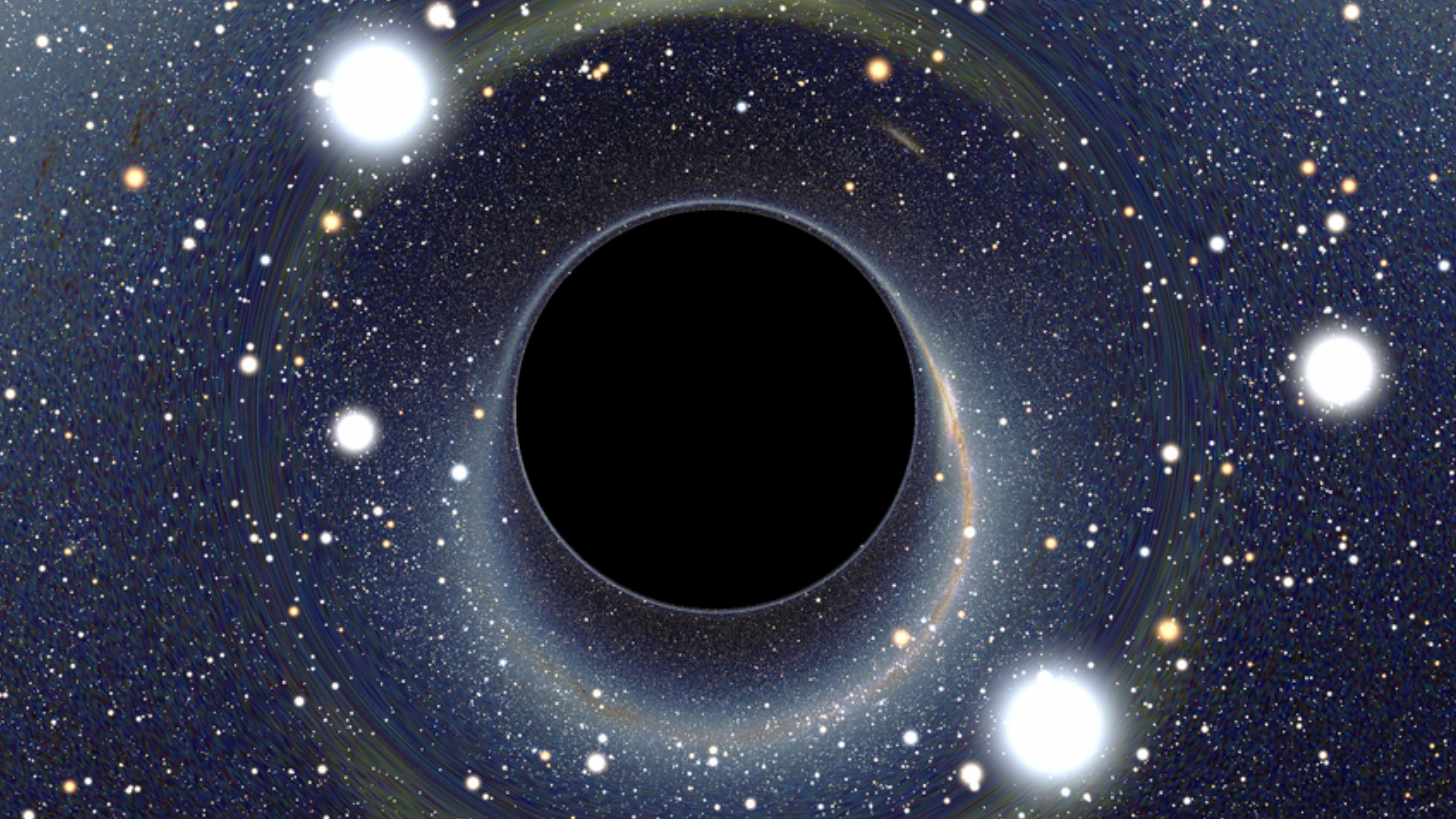
There are regions in the universe where we need both **quantum mechanics** and **general relativity**, or rather some **unification** thereof



# The Milky Way

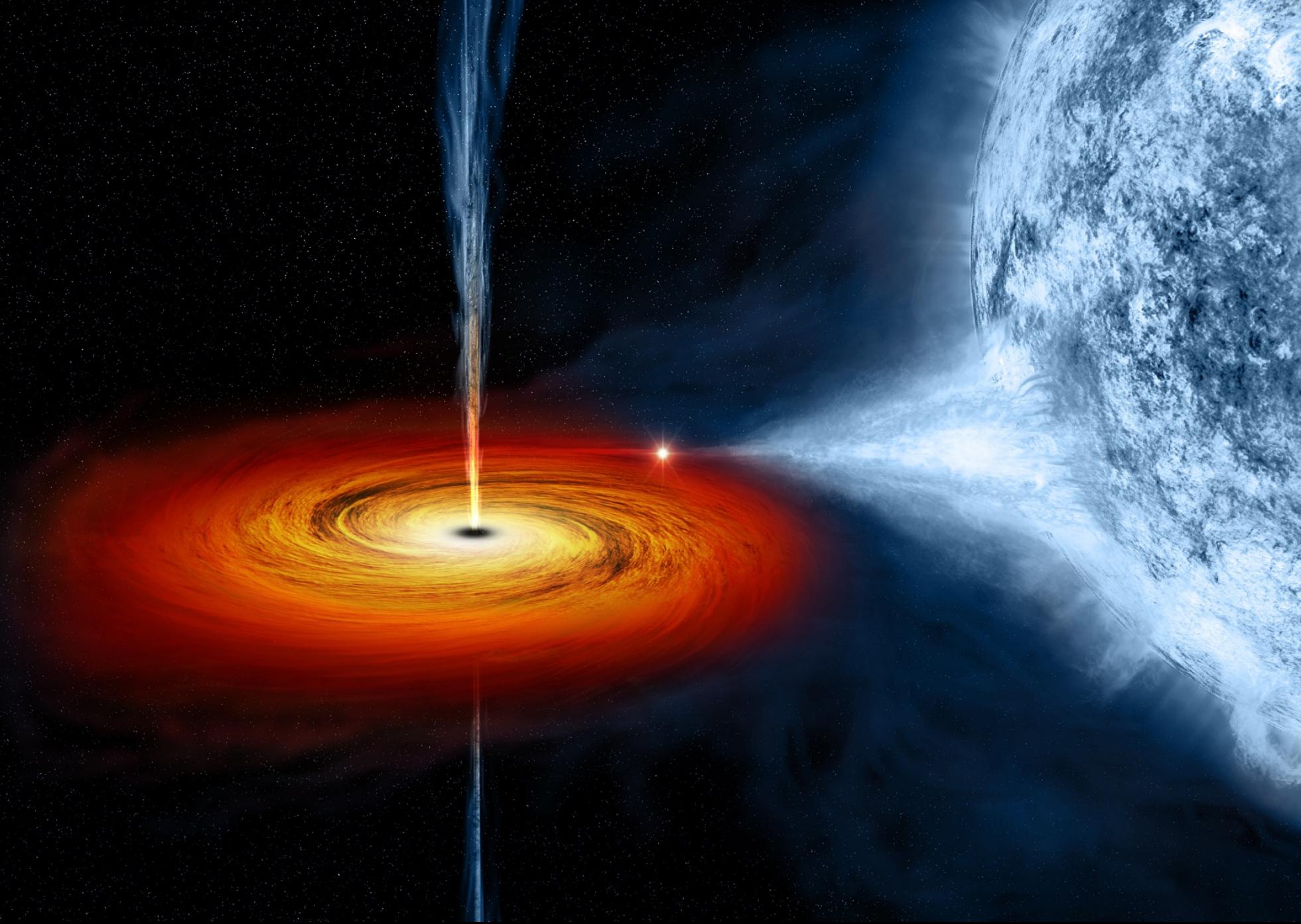
DIGITAL IMAGE OF THE MILKY WAY BY PIKAIA IMAGING (WWW.PIKAIA-IMAGING.CO.UK)



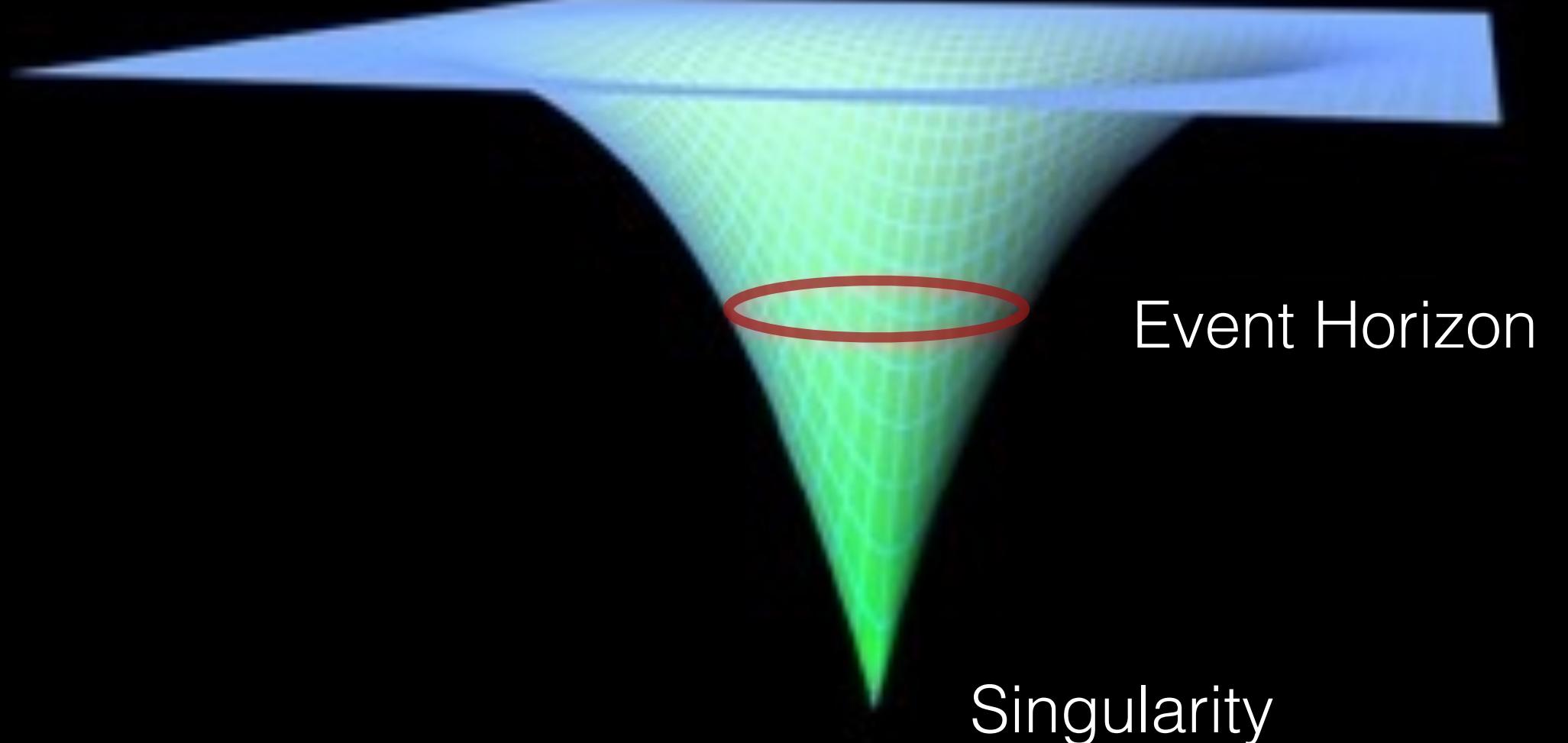




A black hole forms when a sufficiently massive star collapses



Einstein's equations break down at the center of a black hole



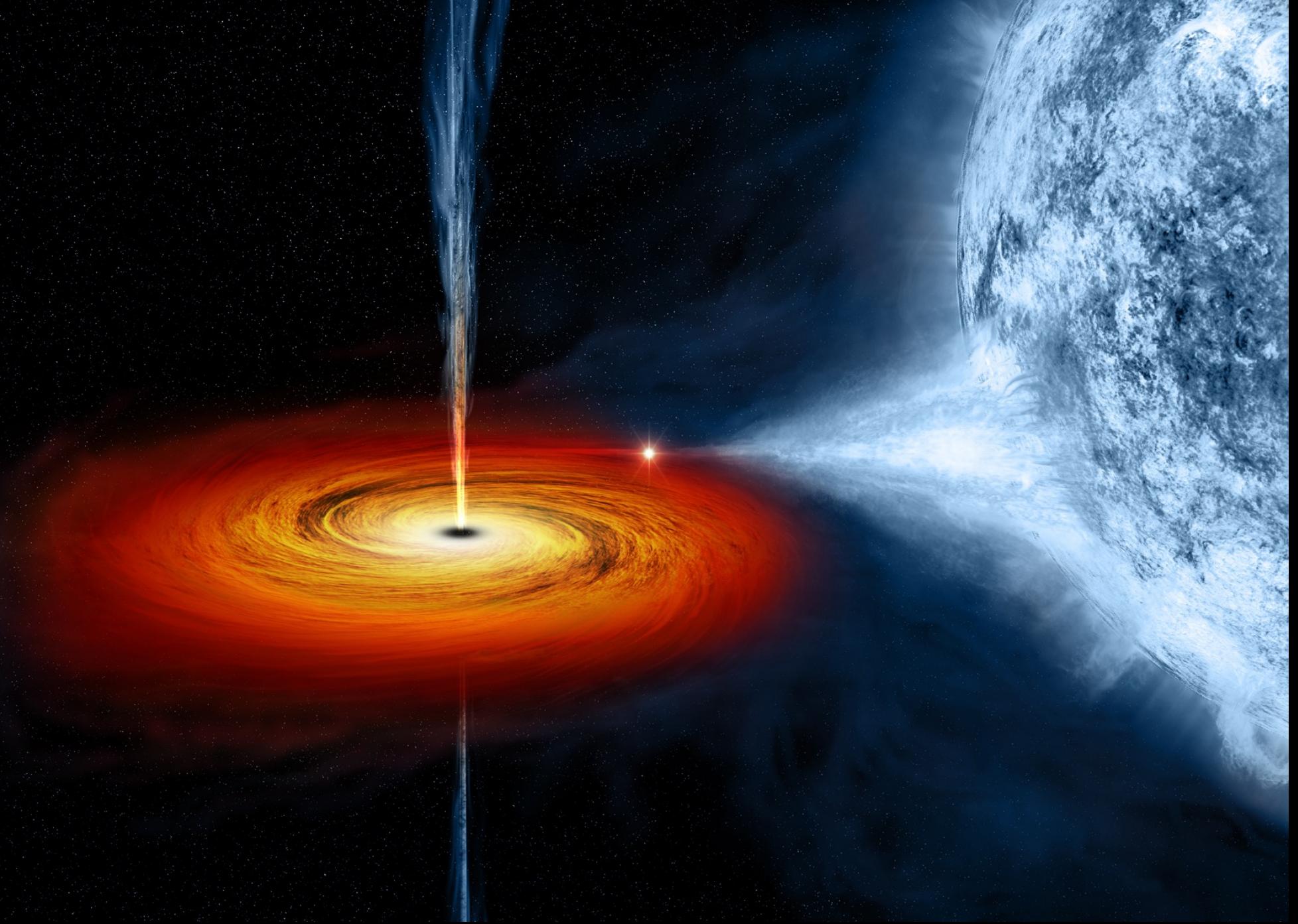
Event Horizon

Singularity

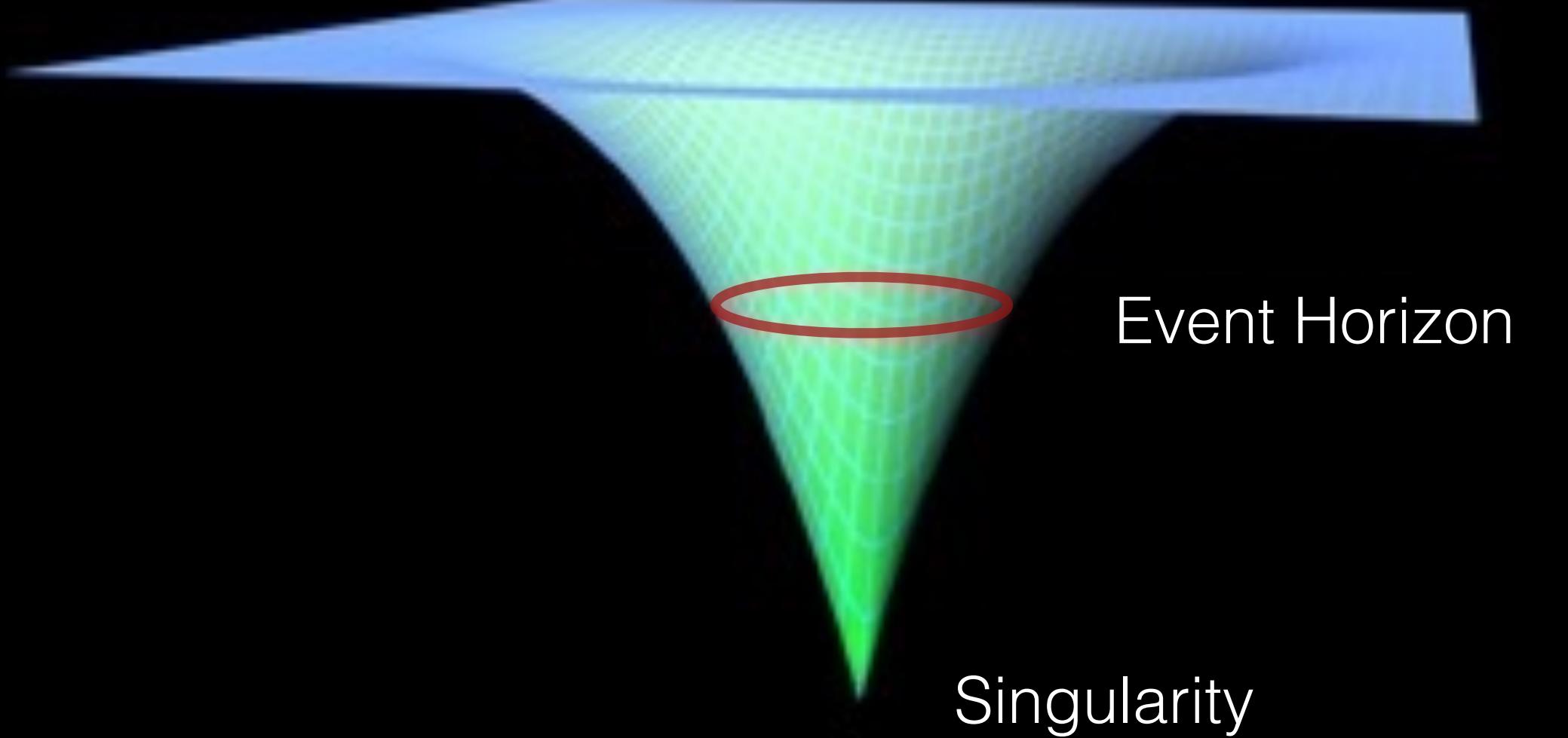
**What happens inside the horizon?**

**Need quantum gravity!**

A black hole forms when a sufficiently massive star collapses



Einstein's equations break down at the center of a black hole

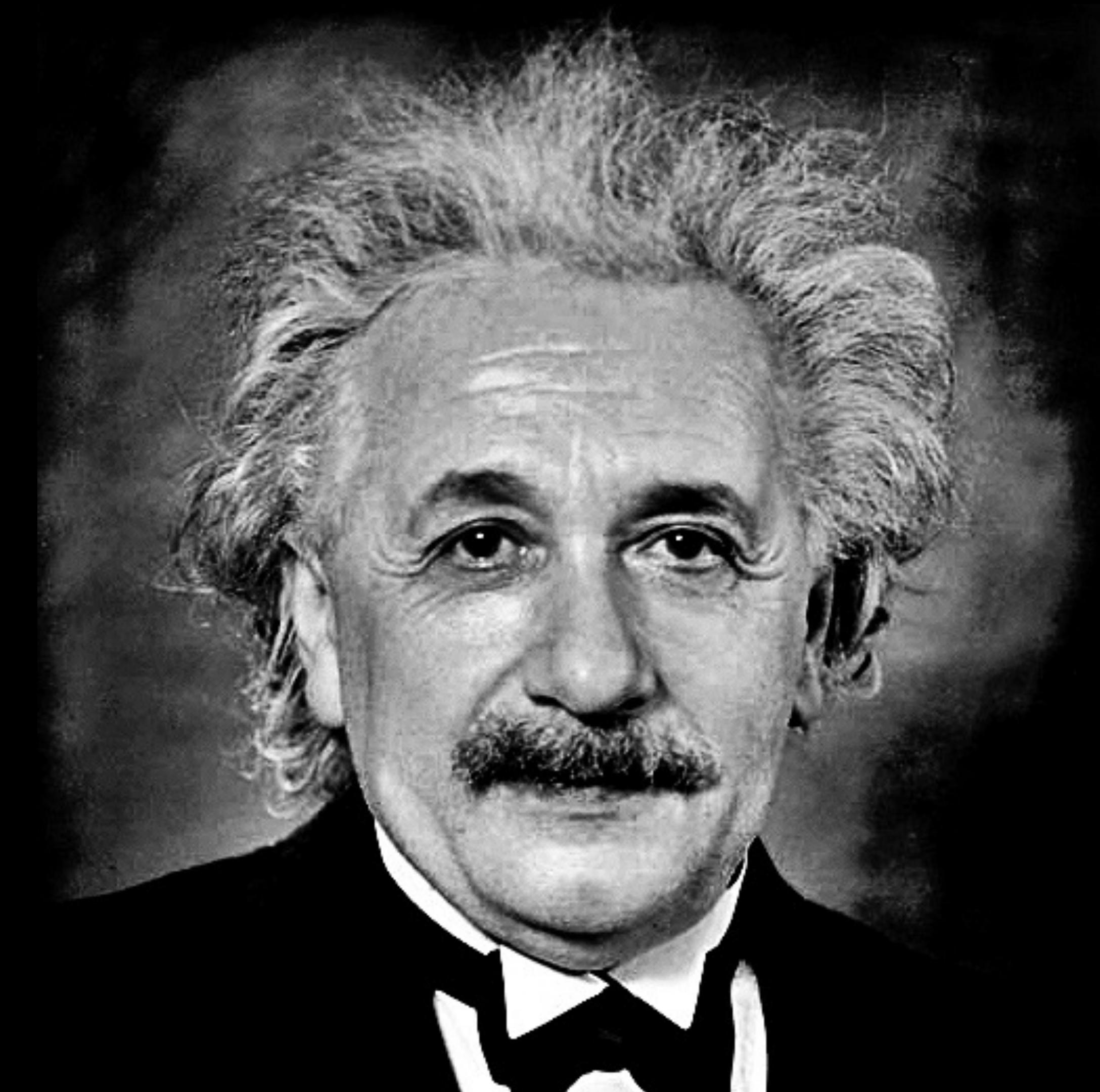


**String theory?**



*How can it be that mathematics, being after all a product of human thought which is independent of experience, is so admirably appropriate to the objects of reality?*

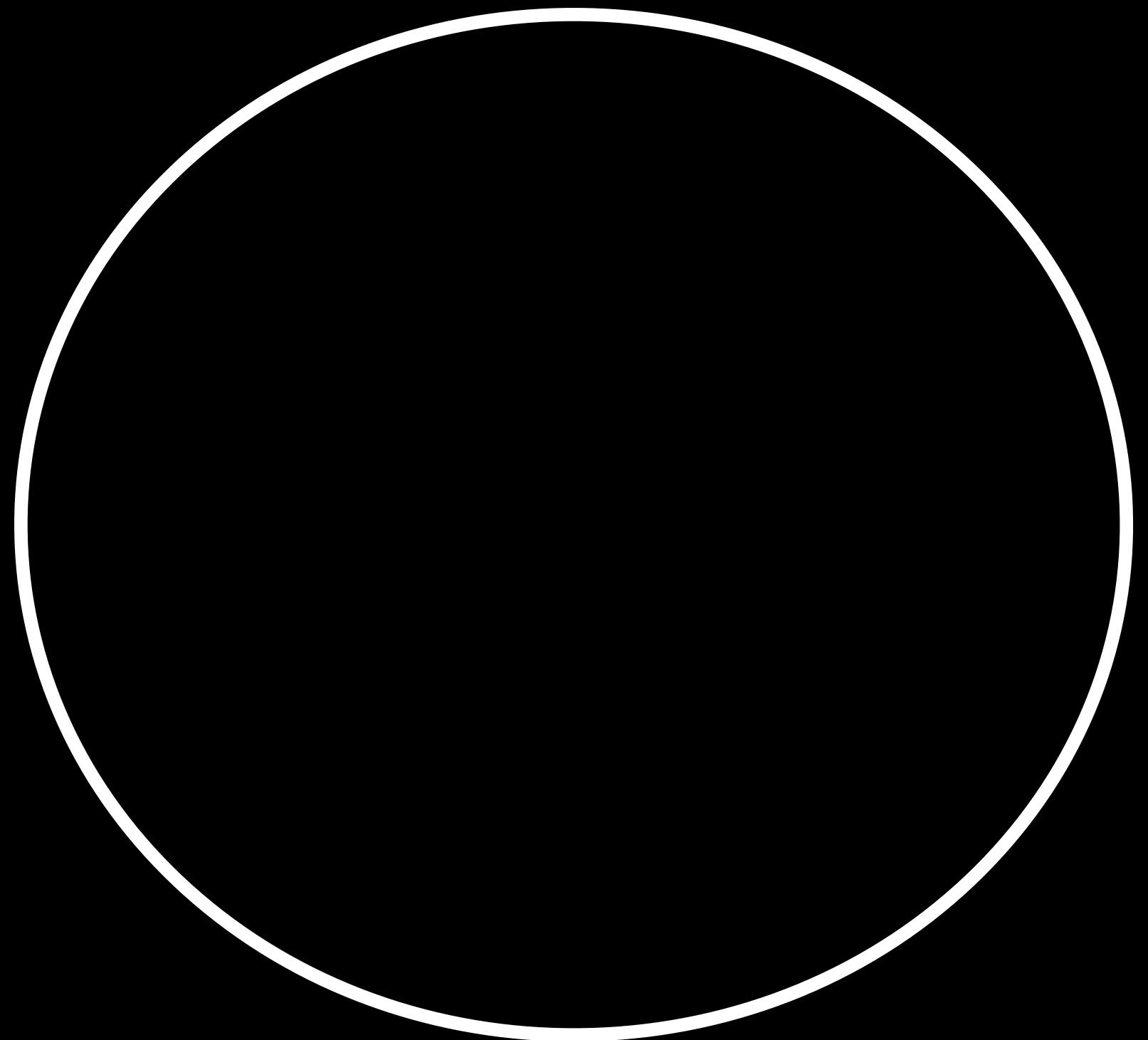
- A. Einstein



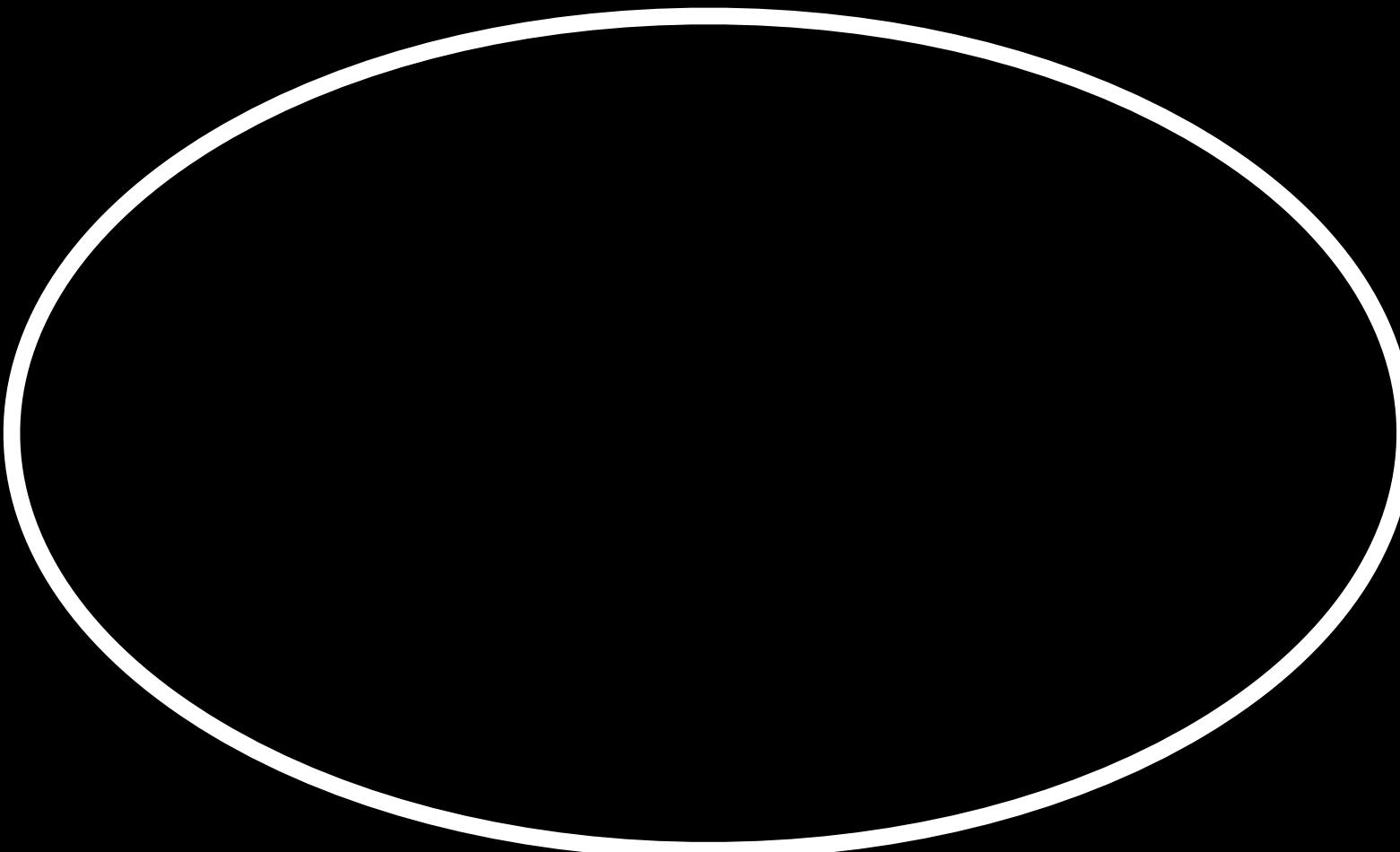
The study of **symmetries** is foundational for the intimate connection between mathematics and physics



# What do we mean by symmetries?

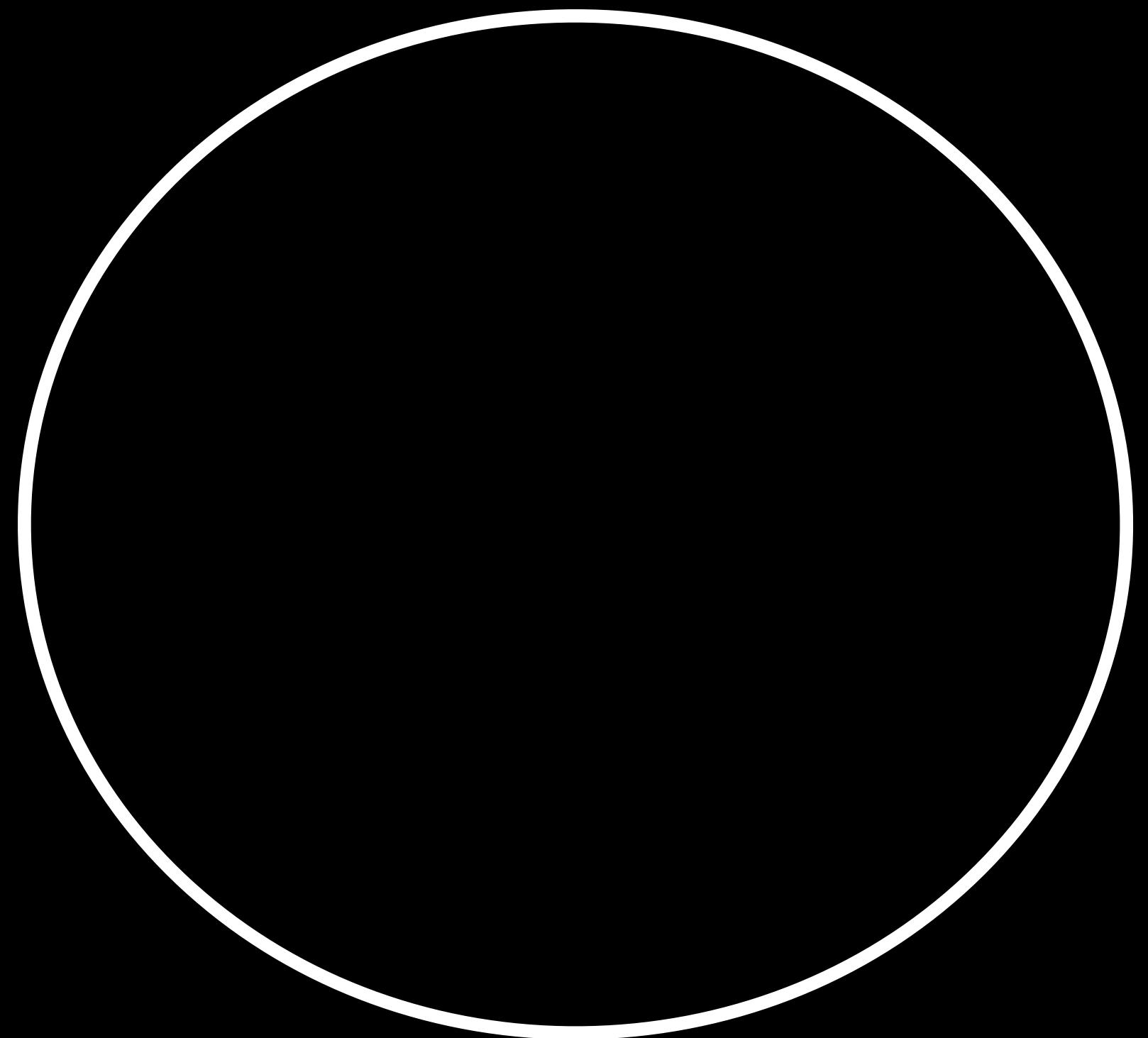


infinite rotational symmetry

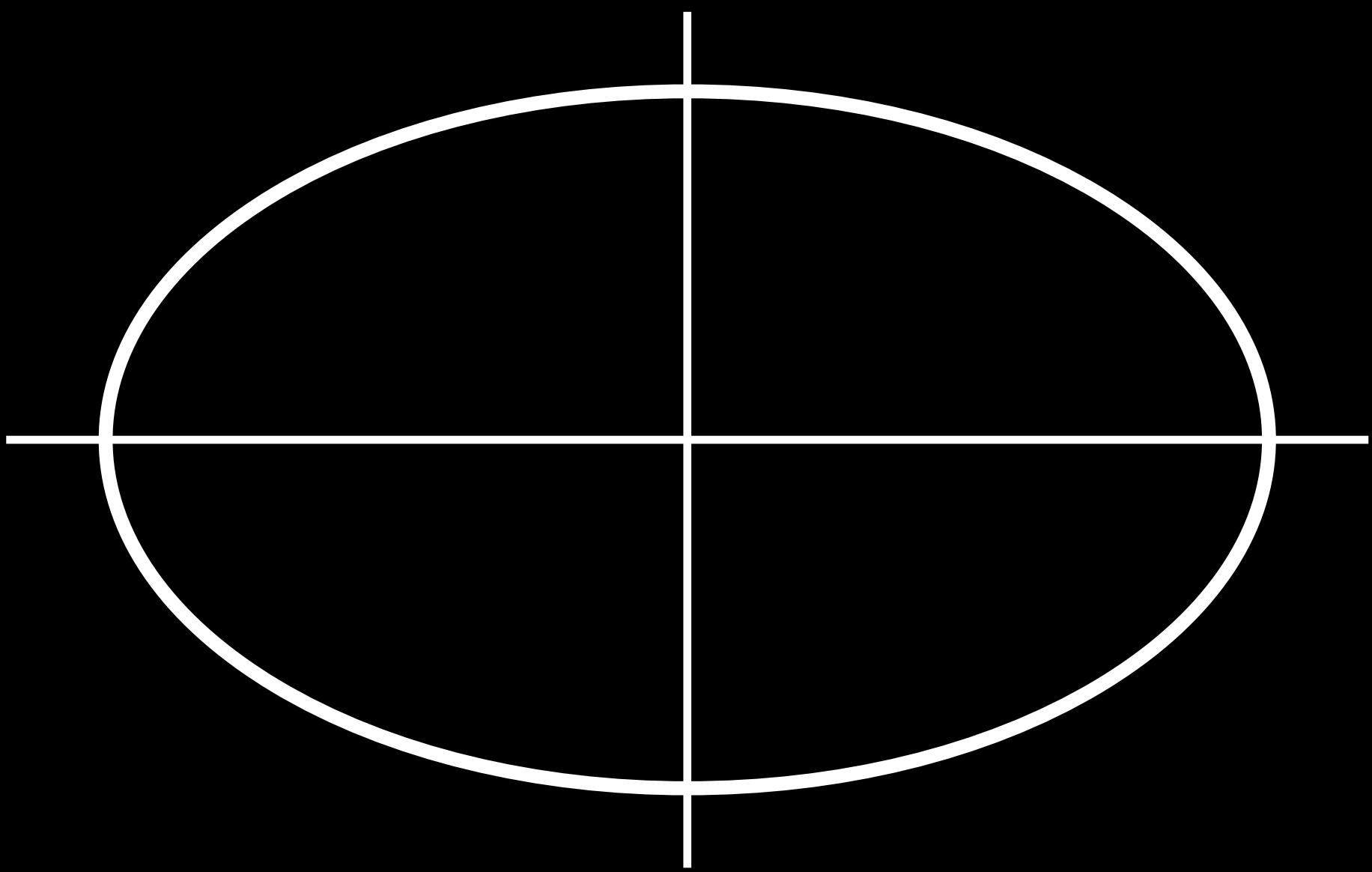


finite reflection symmetry

# What do we mean by symmetries?



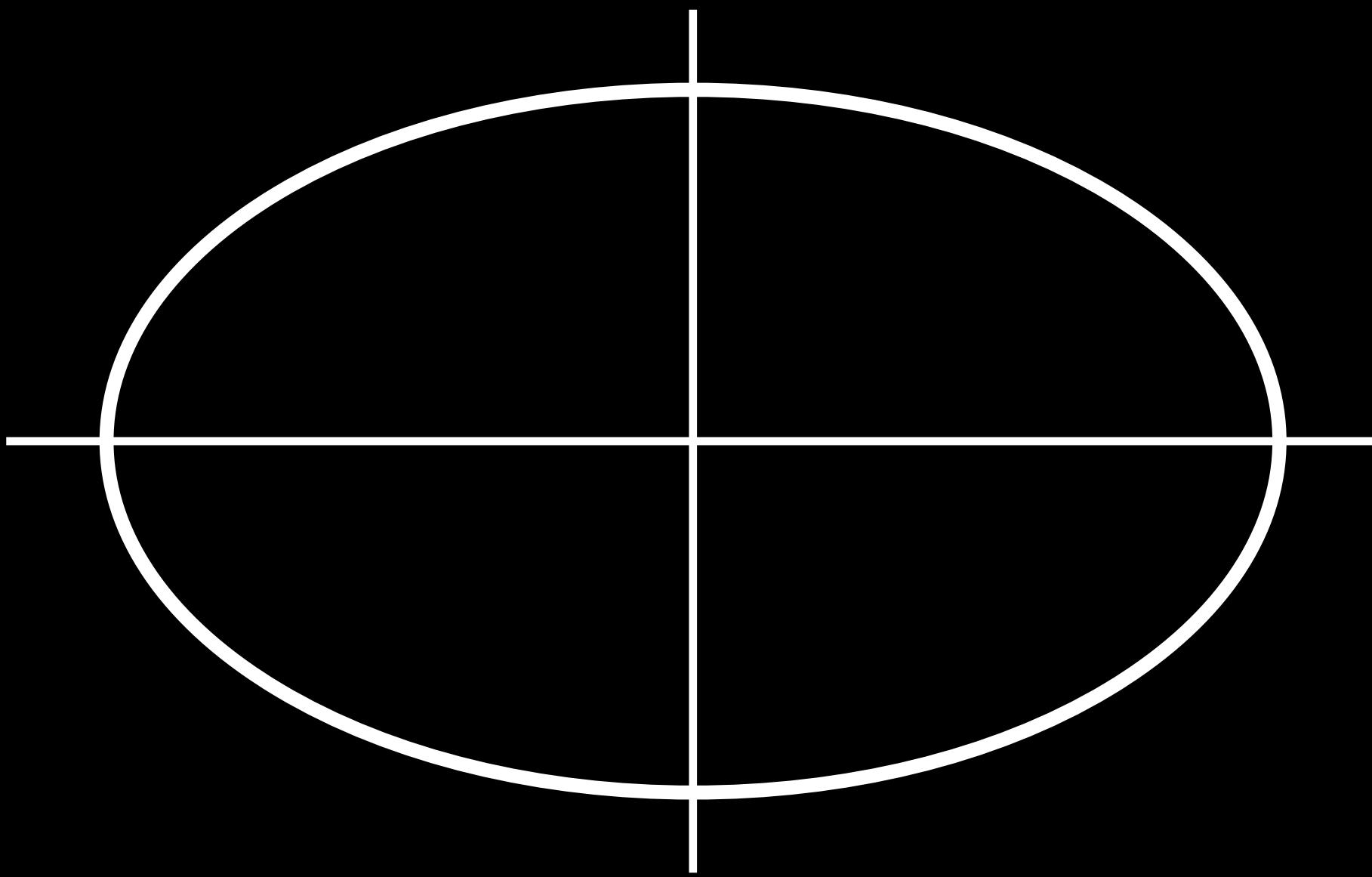
infinite rotational symmetry



finite reflection symmetry

# What do we mean by symmetries?

Symmetry transformations  
form a mathematical object  
called a *group*



finite reflection symmetry

# Finite simple groups

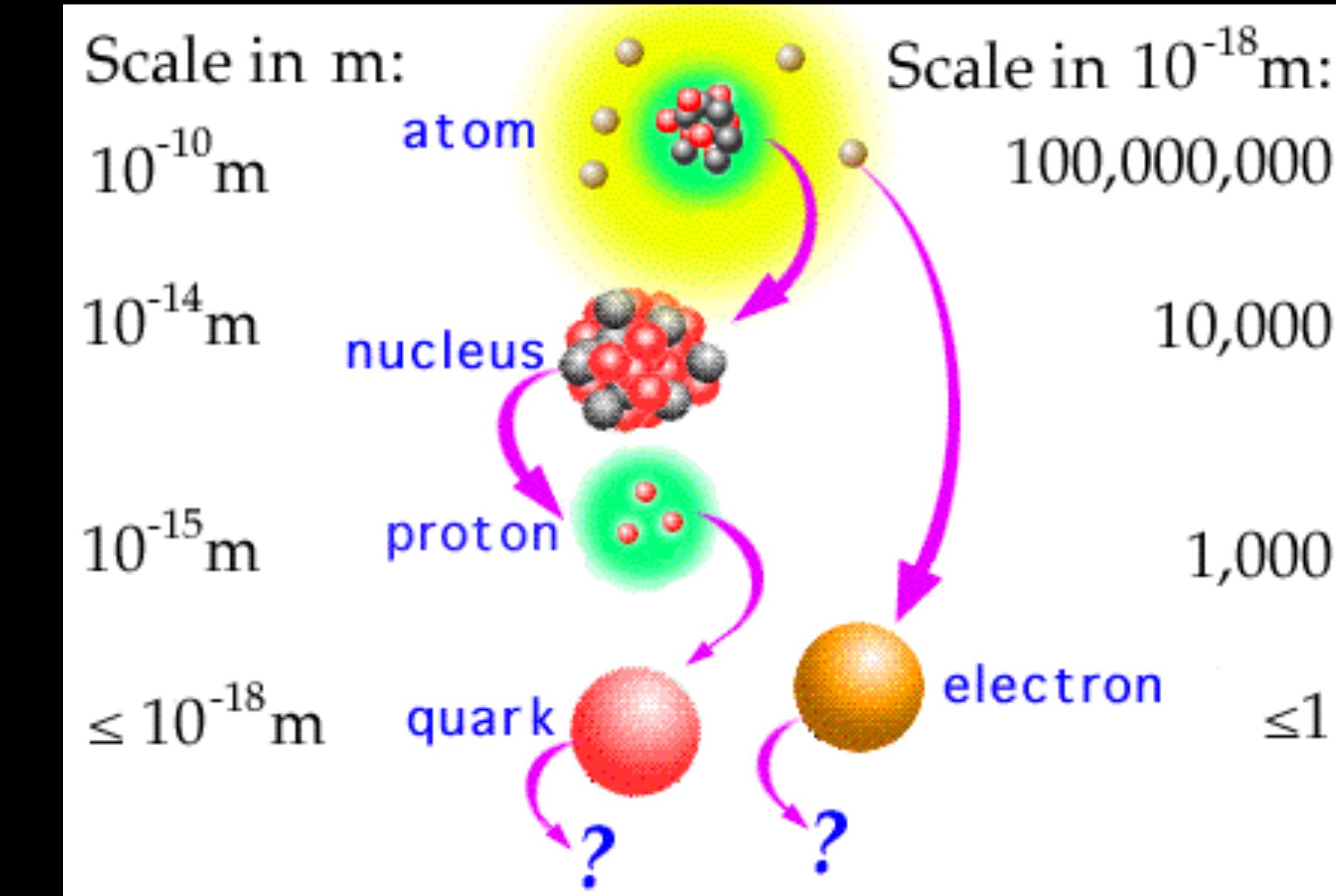
Finite groups that cannot be divided into smaller pieces are called **simple**

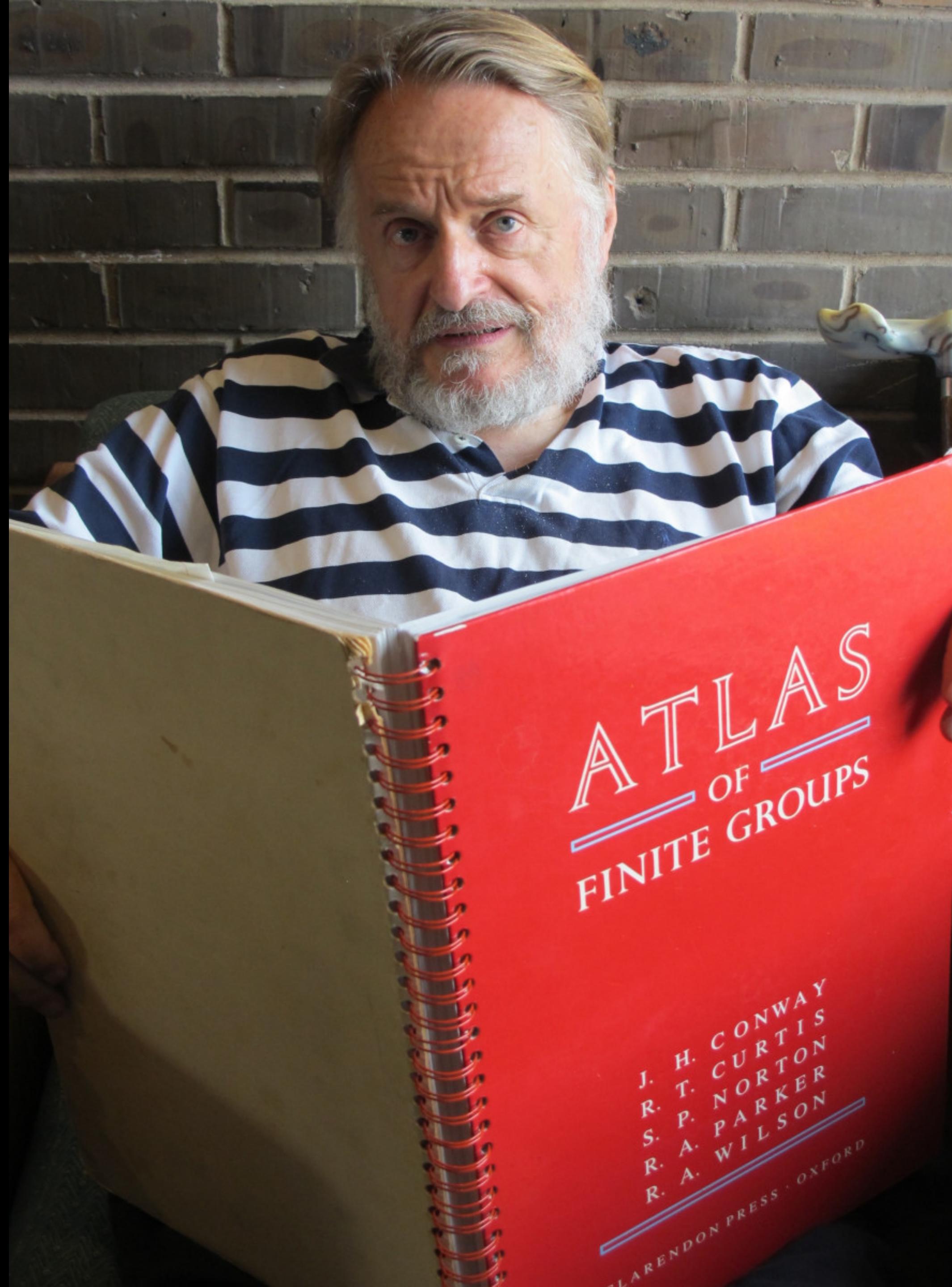


They are like **building blocks of symmetries**

## Prime numbers

2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13,  
17, 19, 23, 29, 31,  
37, 41, 43, 47, 53,  
59, 61, 67, 71, 73,  
79, 83, 89, 97





The **classification** of finite simple groups  
is one of the most extensive projects in mathematics

**Complete proof consists of:**

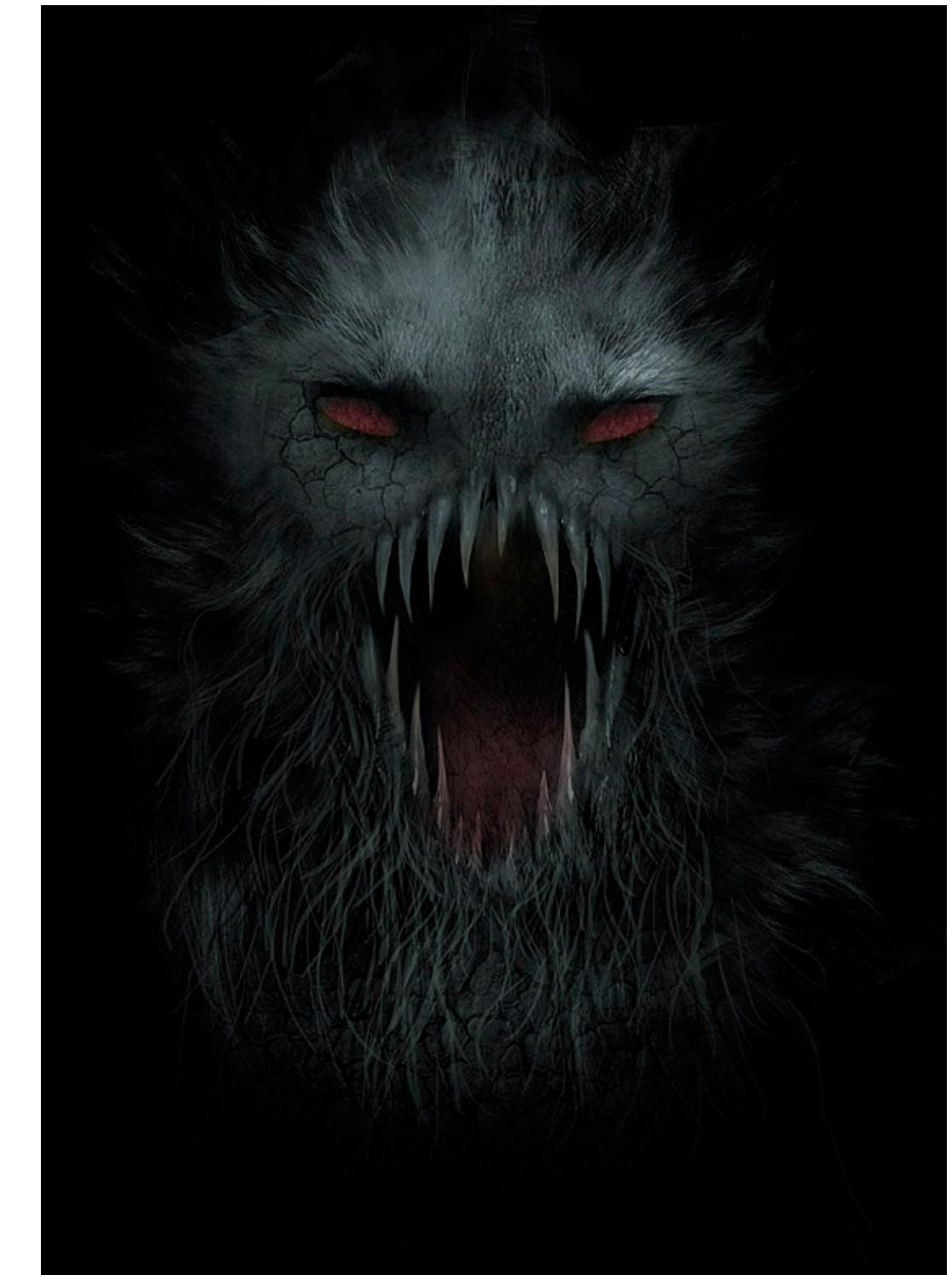
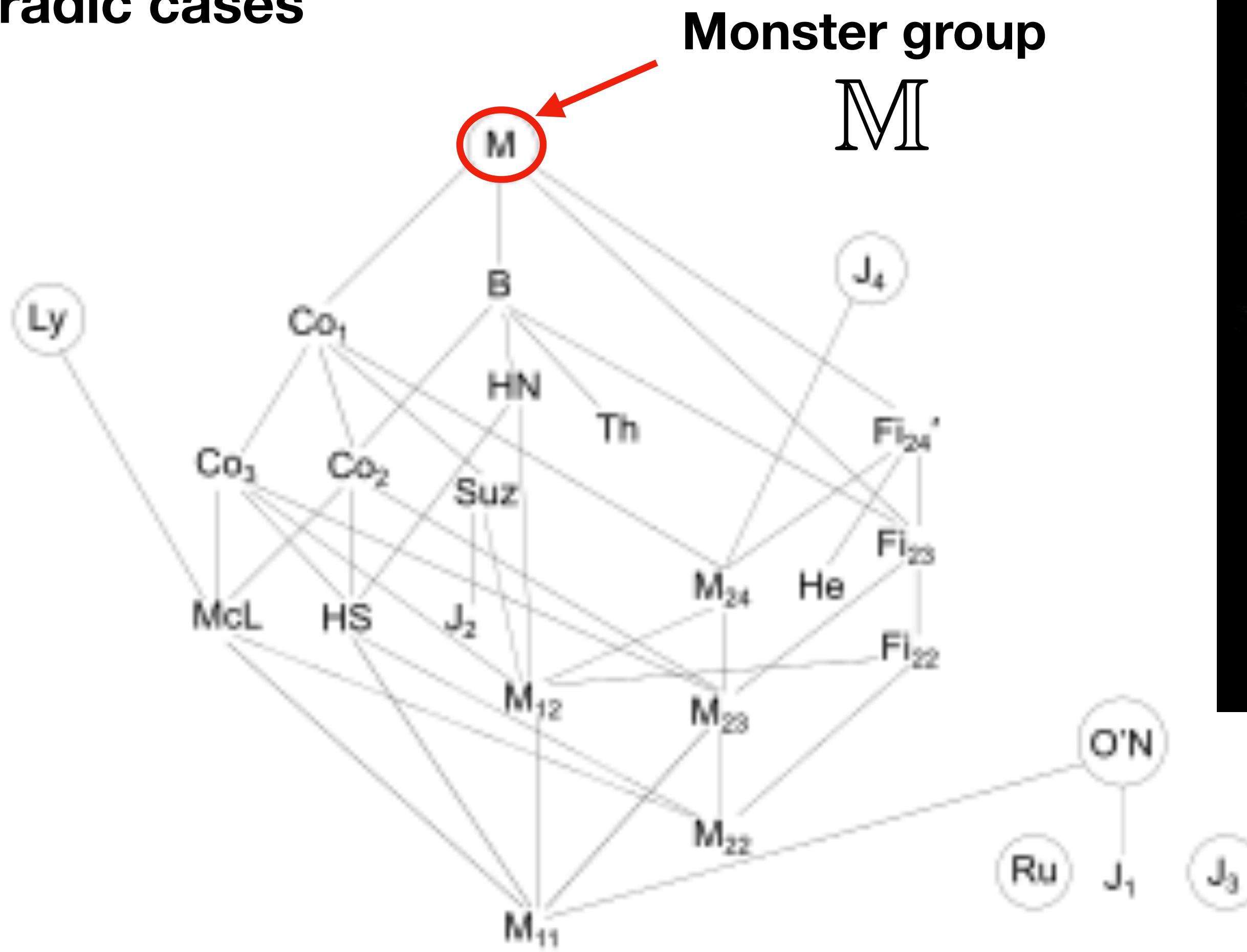
**10 000+ pages**

**100+ journals**

**100+ mathematicians**

# Classification

- Several infinite families: cyclic, alternating, Lie type
- 26 sporadic cases





In 1978 **John McKay** was taking a break from the classification program of finite groups and was doing some recreational reading in number theory.

He then stumbled upon the following series expansion:

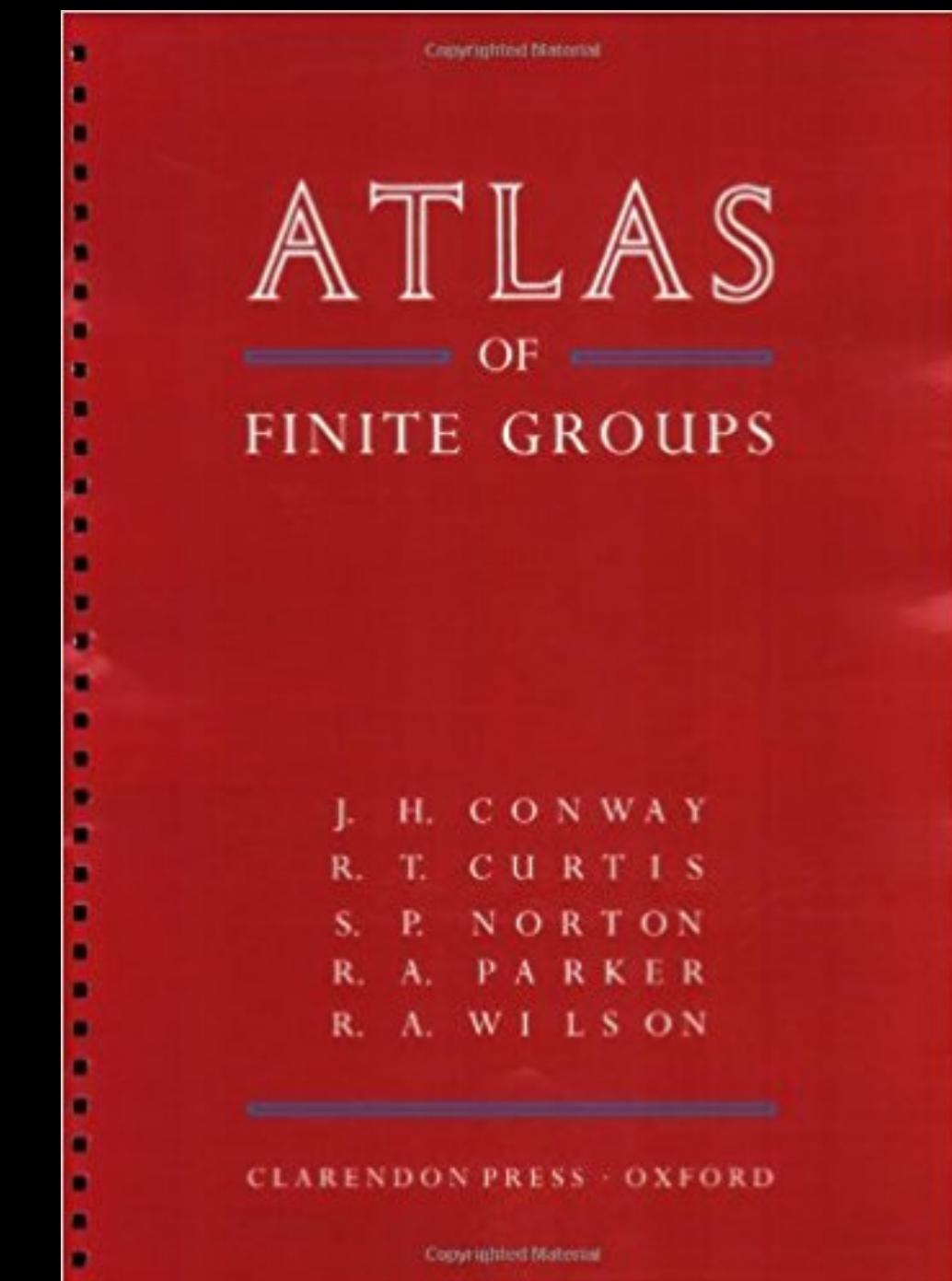
$$J(q) = \frac{1}{q} + 196884q + 21493760q^2 + 864299970q^3 + 20245856256q^4 + \dots$$



In 1978 **John McKay** was taking a break from the classification program of finite groups and was doing some recreational reading in number theory.

He then stumbled upon the following series expansion:

$$J(q) = \frac{1}{q} + 196884q + 21493760q^2 + 864299970q^3 + 20245856256q^4 + \dots$$



Being a group theorist he immediately opened up the Atlas





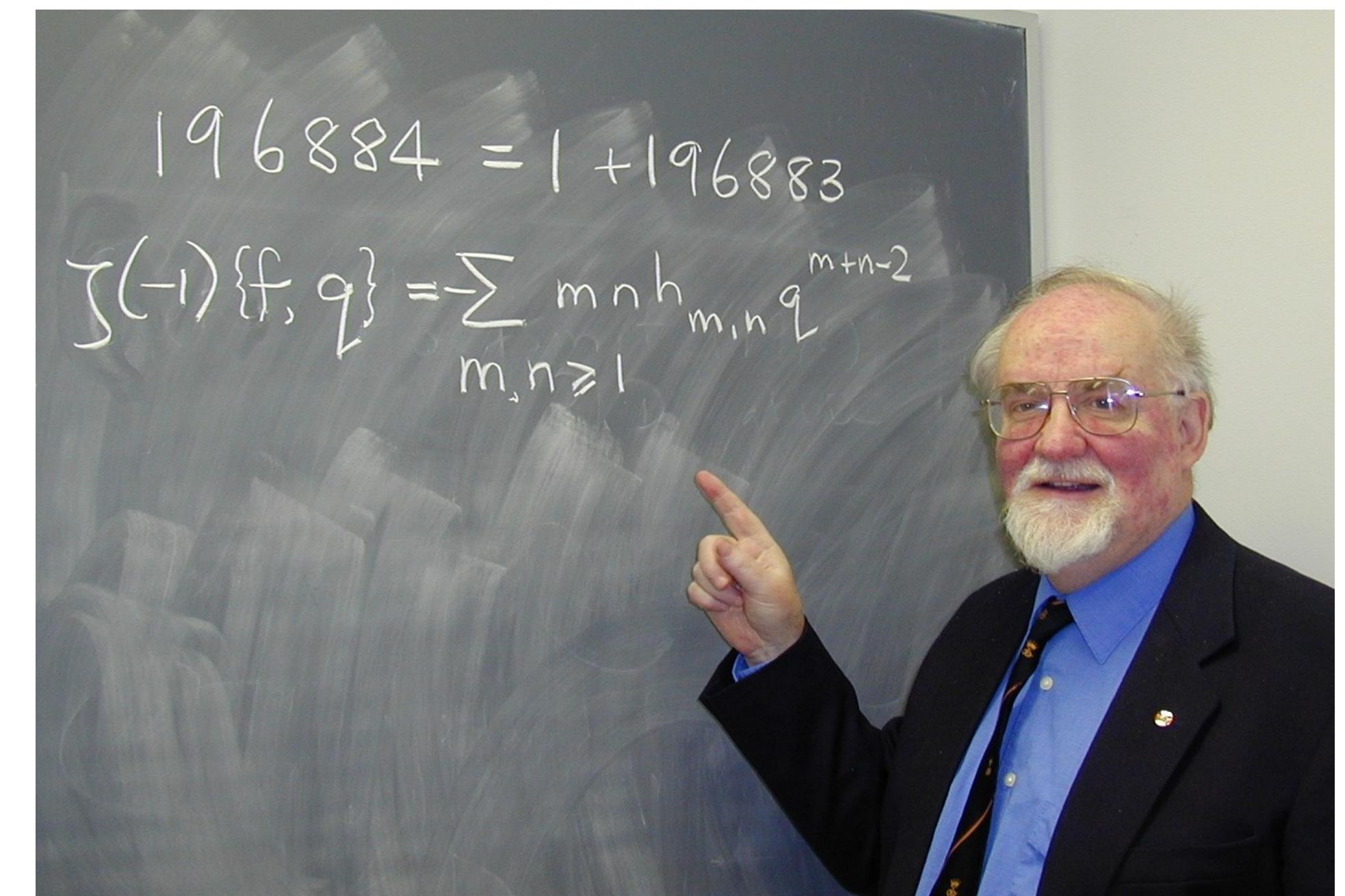
ind		1A	2A	2B	3A
$x_1$	+	1	1	1	1
$x_2$	+	196883	4371	275	782
$x_3$	+	21296876	91884	-2324	7889
$x_4$	+	842609326	1139374	12974	55912
$x_5$	+	18538750076	8507516	123004	249458
$x_6$	+	19360062527	9362495	-58305	297482
$x_7$	+	293553734298	53981850	98970	1055310
$x_8$	+	3879214937598	337044990	-690690	4751823
$x_9$	+	36173193327999	1354188159	2864511	12616074
$x_{10}$	+	125510727015275	3215883115	1219435	24688454
$x_{11}$	+	190292345709543	2814161895	10249191	17144568
$x_{12}$	+	222879856734249	3864186921	-7196631	26057022
$x_{13}$	+	1044868466775133	9223504989	-15756195	47292301
$x_{14}$	+	1309944460516150	9697078070	26155830	40851749
$x_{15}$	+	2374124840062976	22509162496	4100096	110509112
$x_{16}$	o	8980616927734375	-2720265625	39414375	1603525

$$J(\tau) = \frac{1}{q} + 196884q + 21493760q^2 + 864299970q^3 + 20245856256q^4 + \dots$$

$$196884 = 1 + 196883$$

**McKay's equation**

1  
196883



ind		1A	2A	2B	3A
$x_1$	+	1	1	1	1
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$x_{10}$	+	125510727015275	3215883115	1219435	24688454
$x_{11}$	+	190292345709543	2814161895	10249191	17144568
$x_{12}$	+	222879856734249	3864186921	-7196631	26057022
$x_{13}$	+	1044868466775133	9223504989	-15756195	47292301
$x_{14}$	+	1309944460516150	9697078070	26155830	40851749
$x_{15}$	+	2374124840062976	22509162496	4100096	110509112
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$$J(\tau) = \frac{1}{q} + 196884q + 21493760q^2 + 864299970q^3 + 20245856256q^4 + \dots$$

$$\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 196883 \\ 21296876 \end{matrix}$$

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$$196884 = 1 + 196883 \quad \textbf{McKay's equation}$$

$$21493760 = 1 + 196883 + 21296876 \quad \textbf{Thompson's equation}$$

$$J(\tau) = \frac{1}{q} + 196884q + 21493760q^2 + 864299970q^3 + 20245856256q^4 + \dots$$

$$\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 196883 \\ 21296876 \end{matrix}$$

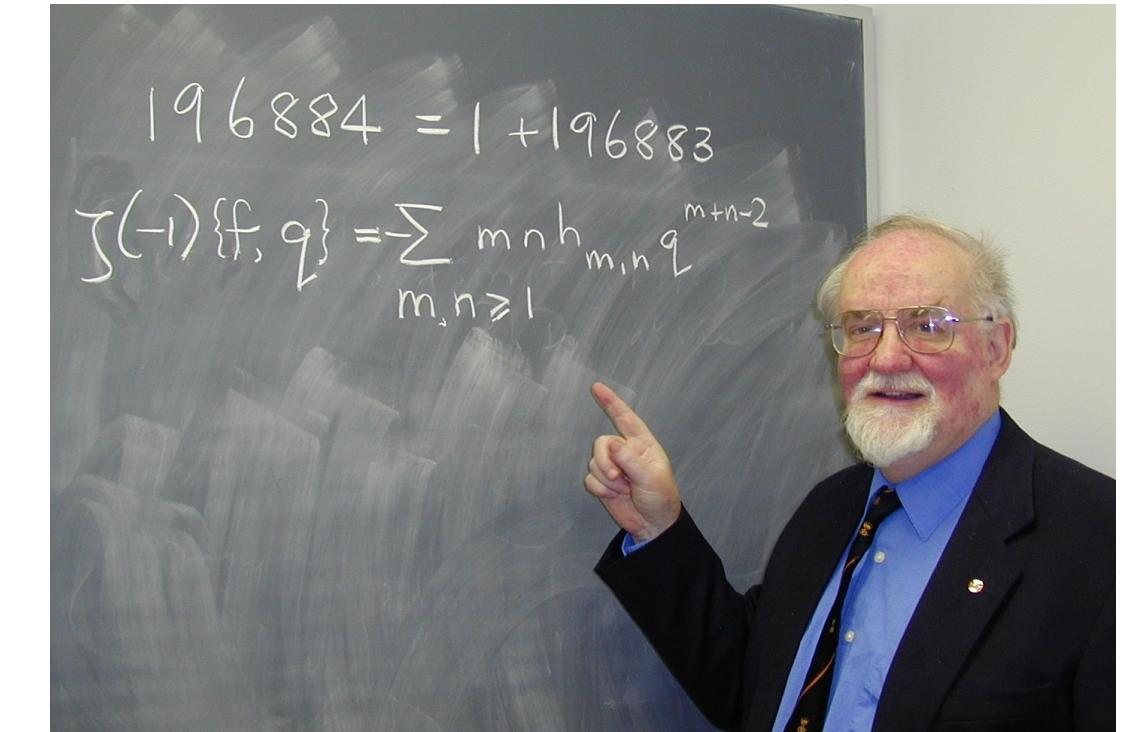
$$\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 196883 \end{matrix}$$

$$196884 = 1 + 196883$$

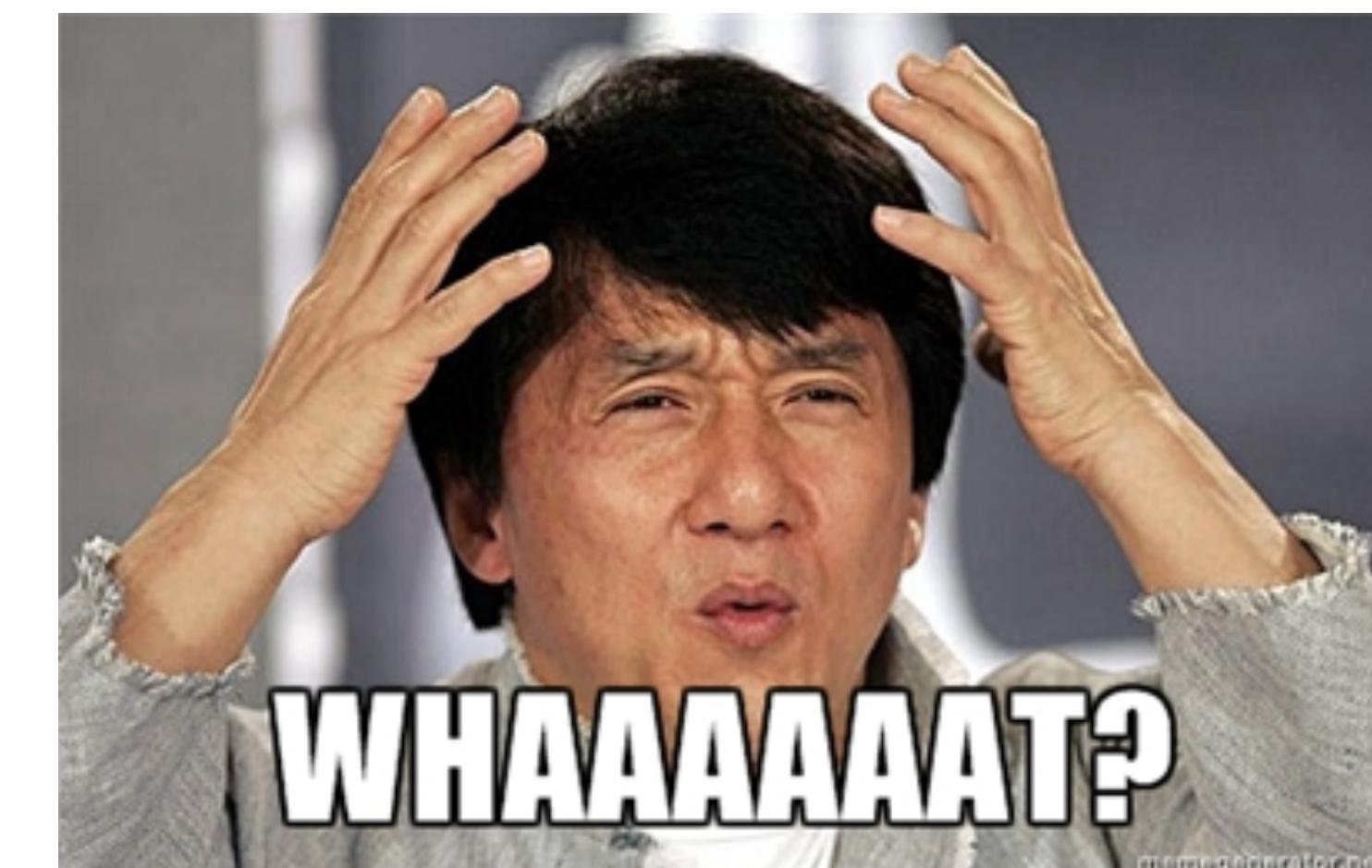
**McKay's equation**

$$21493760 = 1 + 196883 + 21296876$$

**Thompson's equation**



**What does this really mean?**

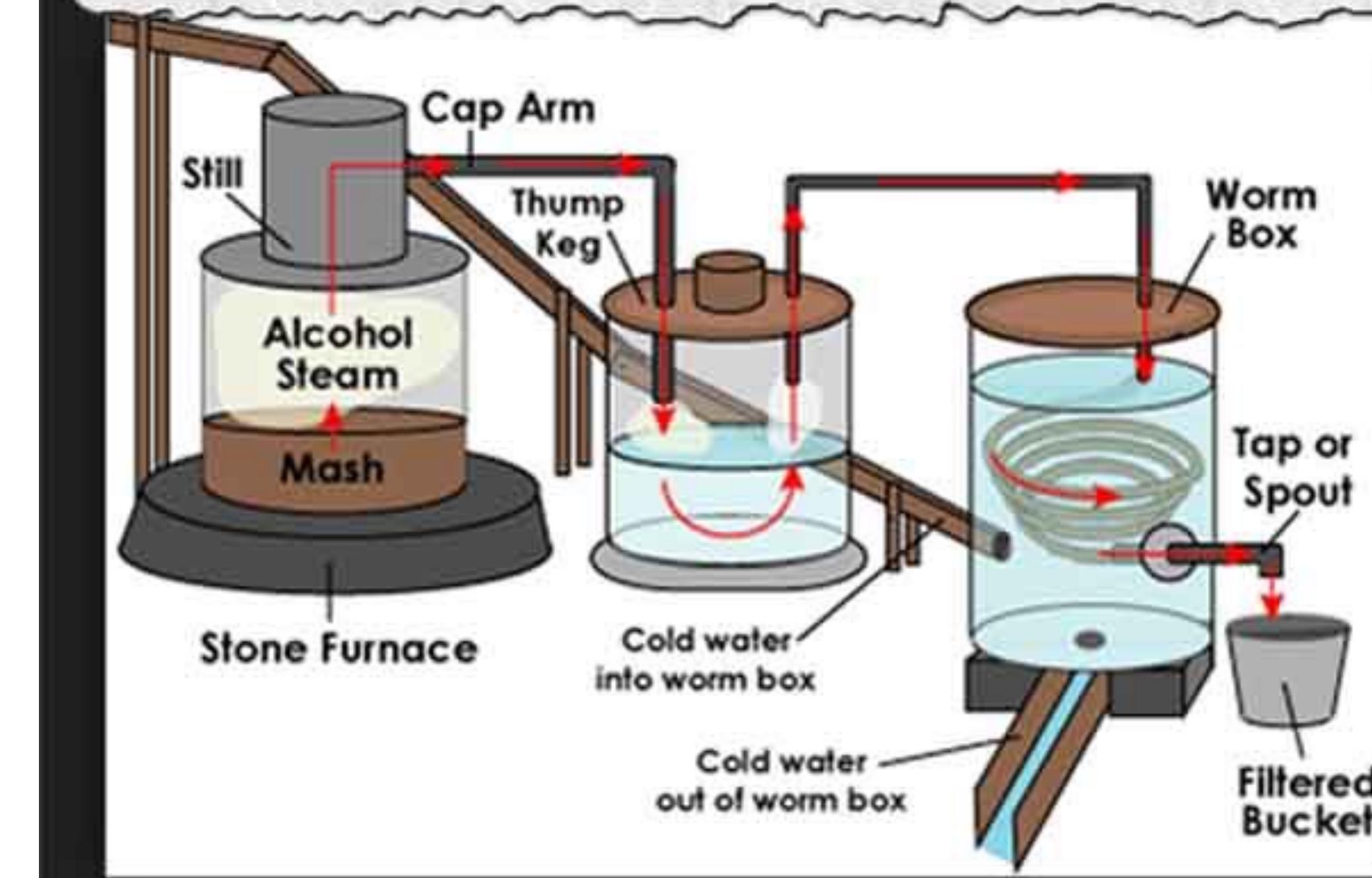


*"The stuff we were getting was not supported by logical argument. It had the feeling of mysterious moonbeams lighting up dancing Irish leprechauns. Moonshine can also refer to illicitly distilled spirits, and it seemed almost illicit to be working on this stuff."*

- John Conway



## Step By Step Guide To Making Moonshine



# **Monster group**

**M**



???

# **Modular function**

$J(\tau)$

# Monster group

Enter physics!

M



**2d conformal field theory**  
(vertex operator algebra)

[Frenkel, Lepowsky,  
Meurman]

# Modular function

$J(\tau)$

# Monster group

M



Borcherds

Fields medal in 1998

**2d conformal field theory**  
(vertex operator algebra)

[Frenkel, Lepowsky,  
Meurman]

# Modular function

$J(\tau)$

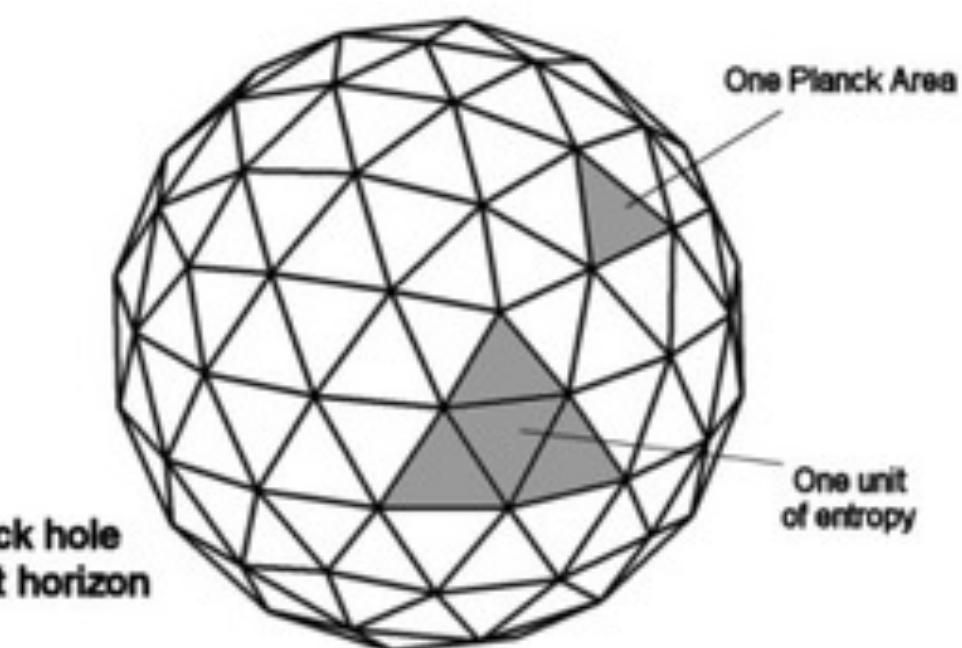
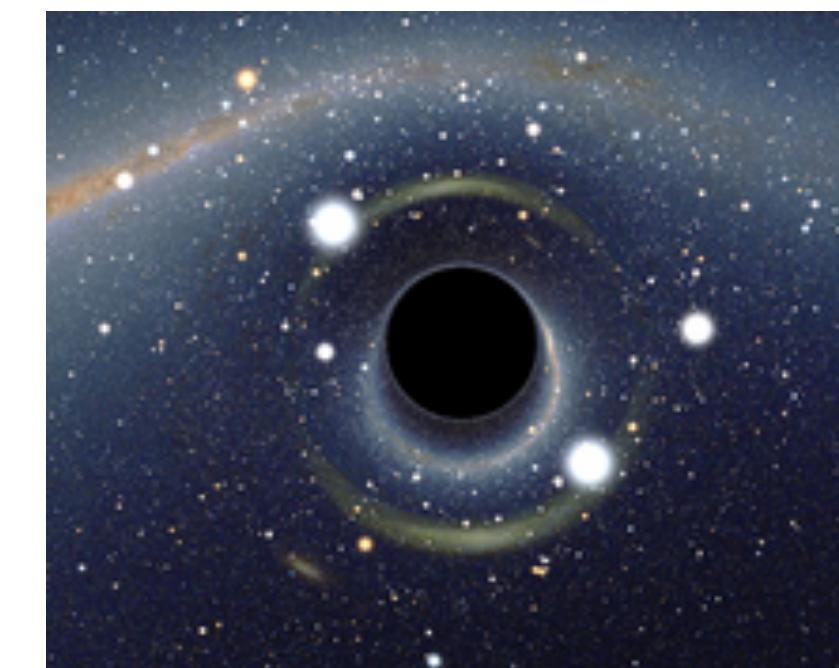
# Monster group

M



# Modular function

$J(\tau)$

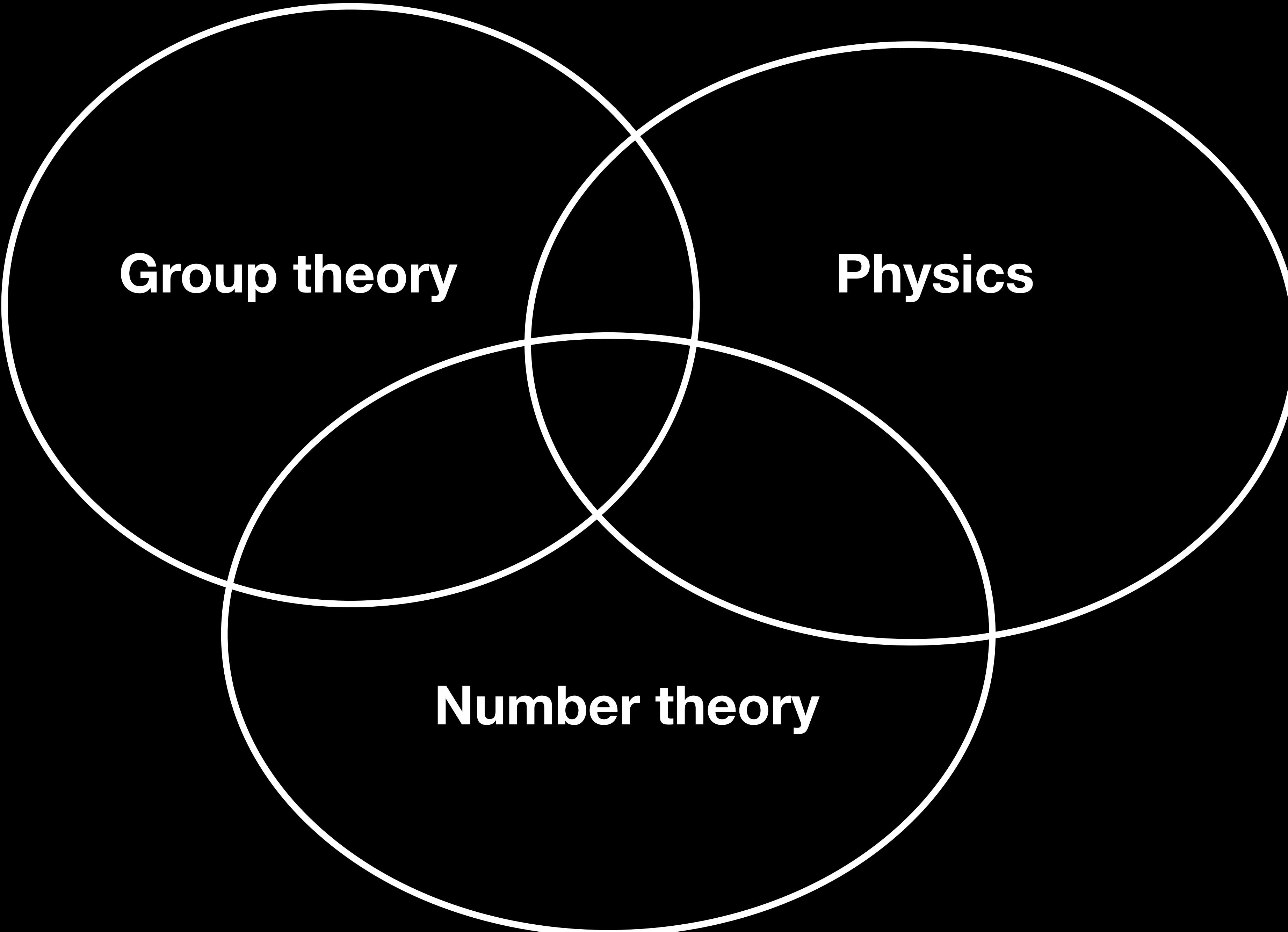


# Borcherds

Fields medal in 1998

## 2d conformal field theory (vertex operator algebra)

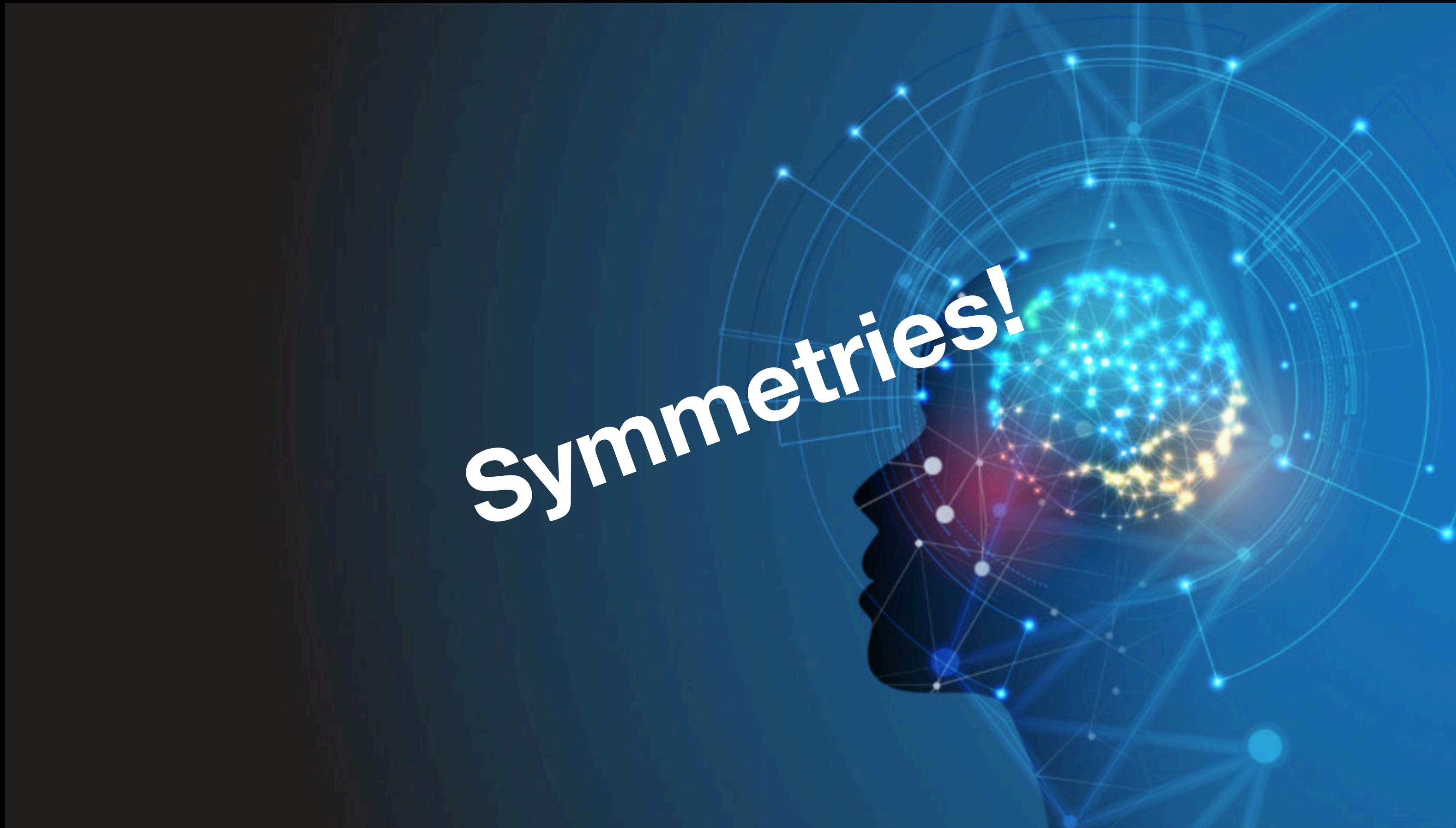
[Frenkel, Lepowsky,  
Meurman]



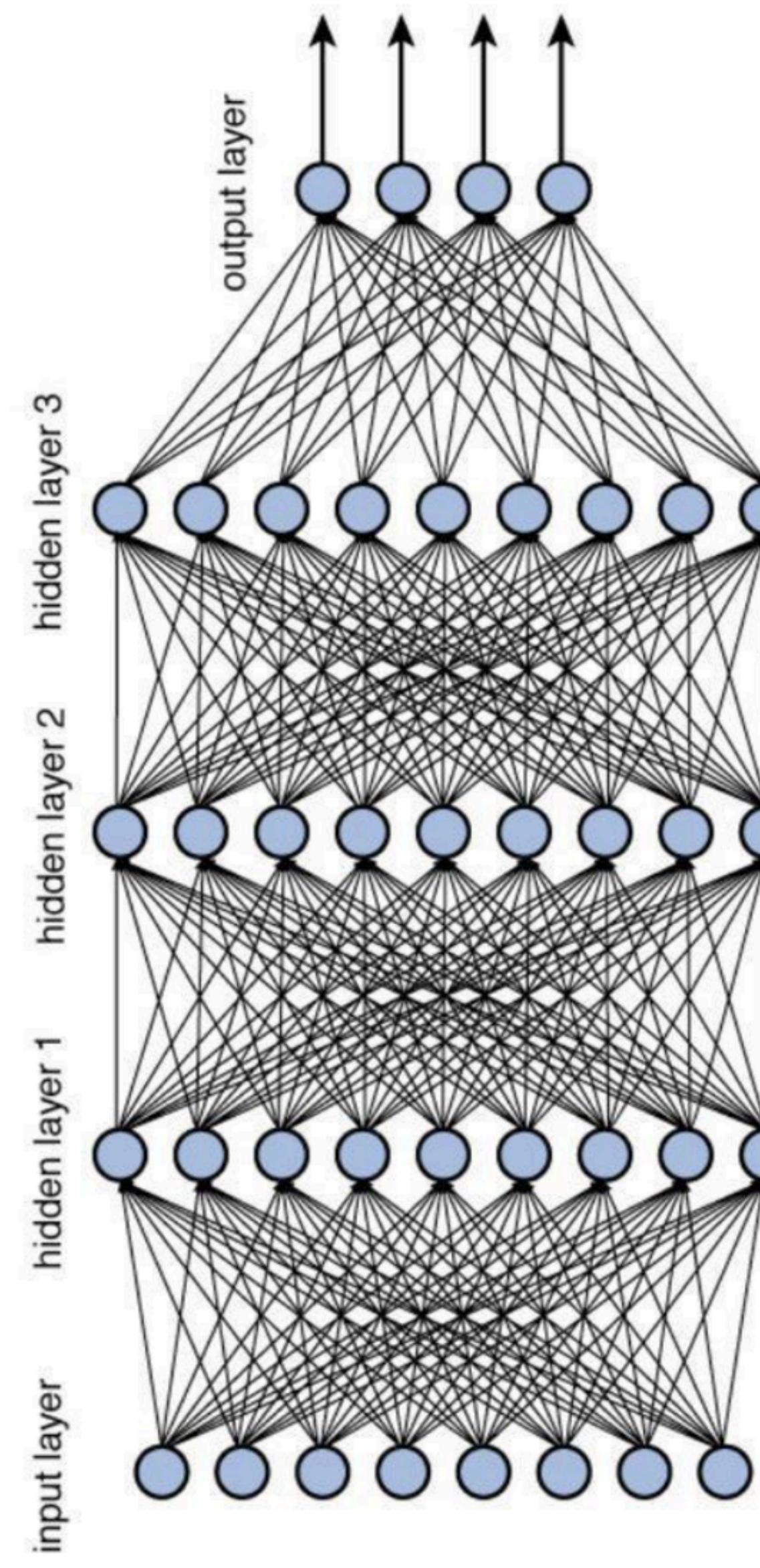
# What does all this have to do with AI?



# What does all this have to do with AI?



## Deep Neural Network



## Artificial Intelligence:

Mimicking the intelligence or behavioural pattern of humans or any other living entity.

### Machine Learning:

A technique by which a computer can “learn” from data, without using a complex set of different rules. This approach is mainly based on training a model from datasets.

### Deep Learning:

A technique to perform machine learning inspired by our brain’s own network of neurons.



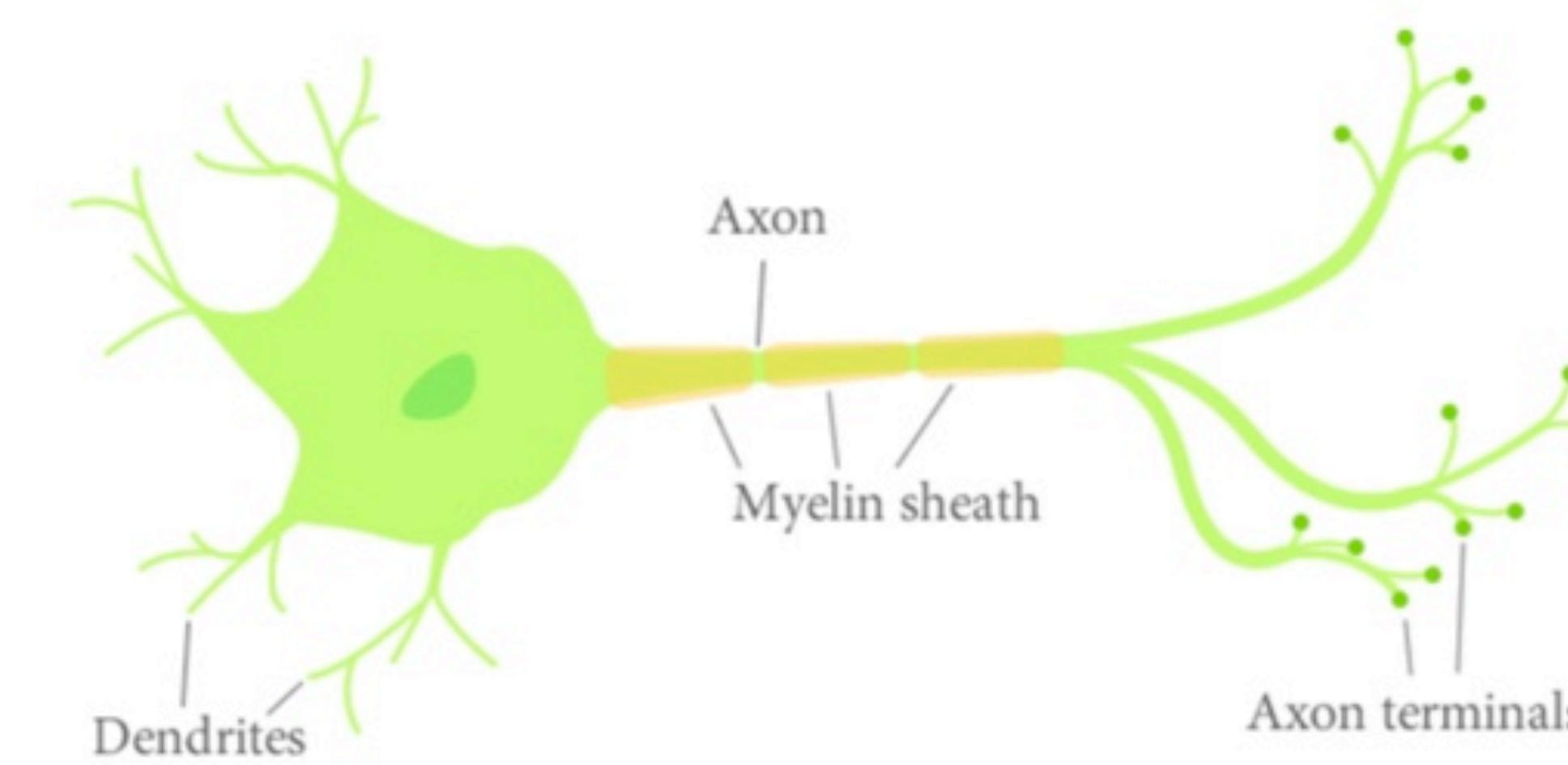




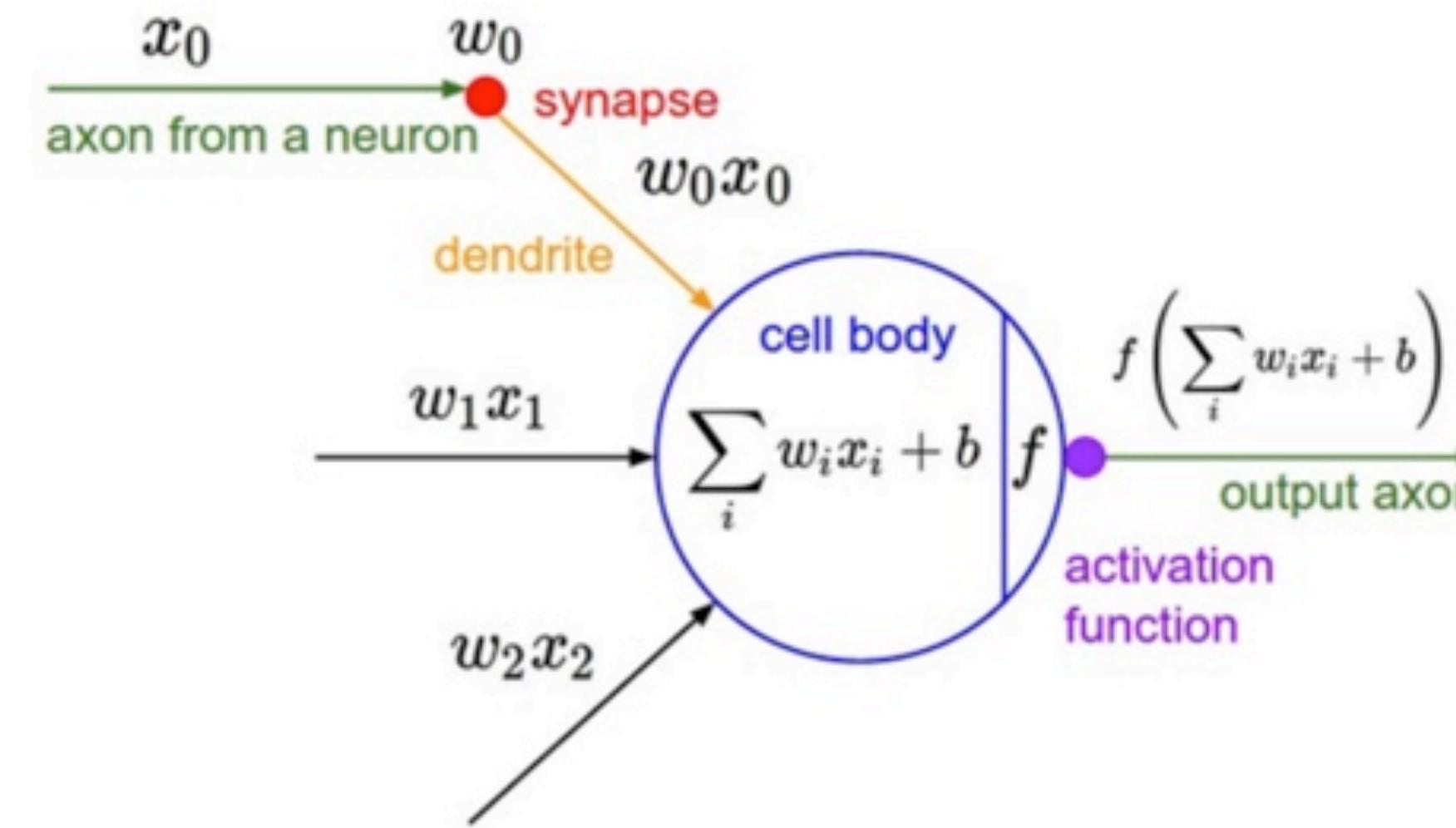
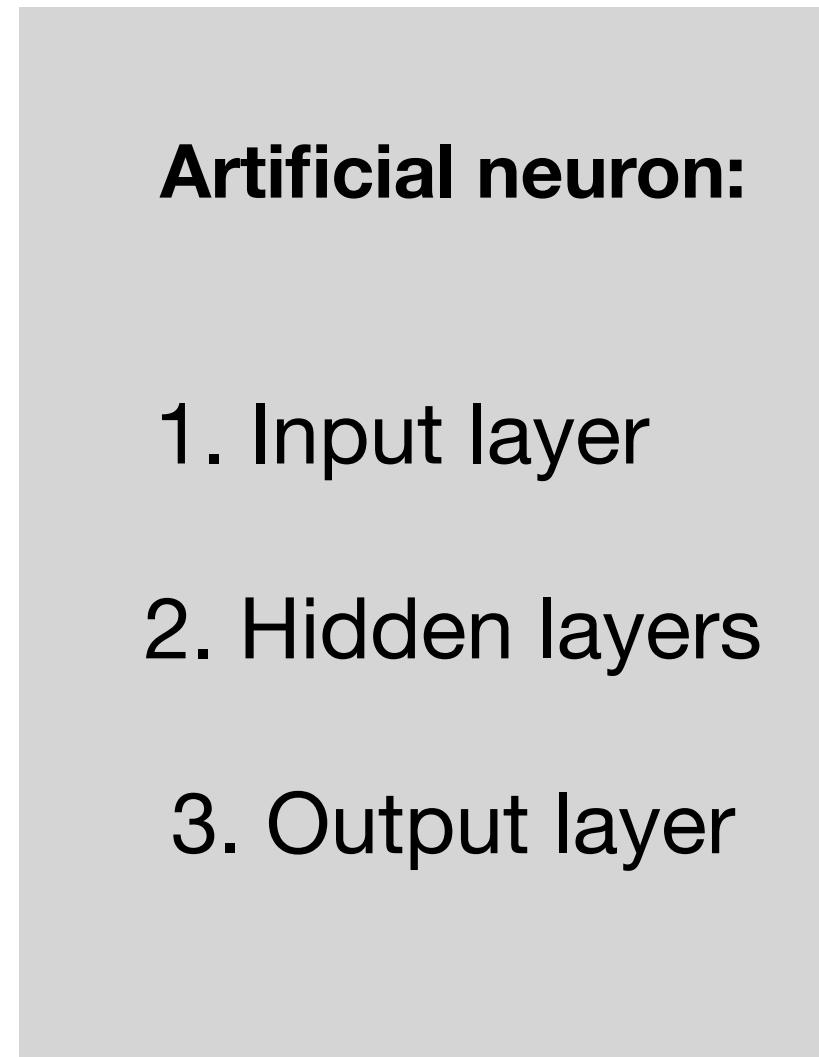


[Pic from [thispersondoesnotexist.com](http://thispersondoesnotexist.com)]

Real Neuron



Artificial Neuron

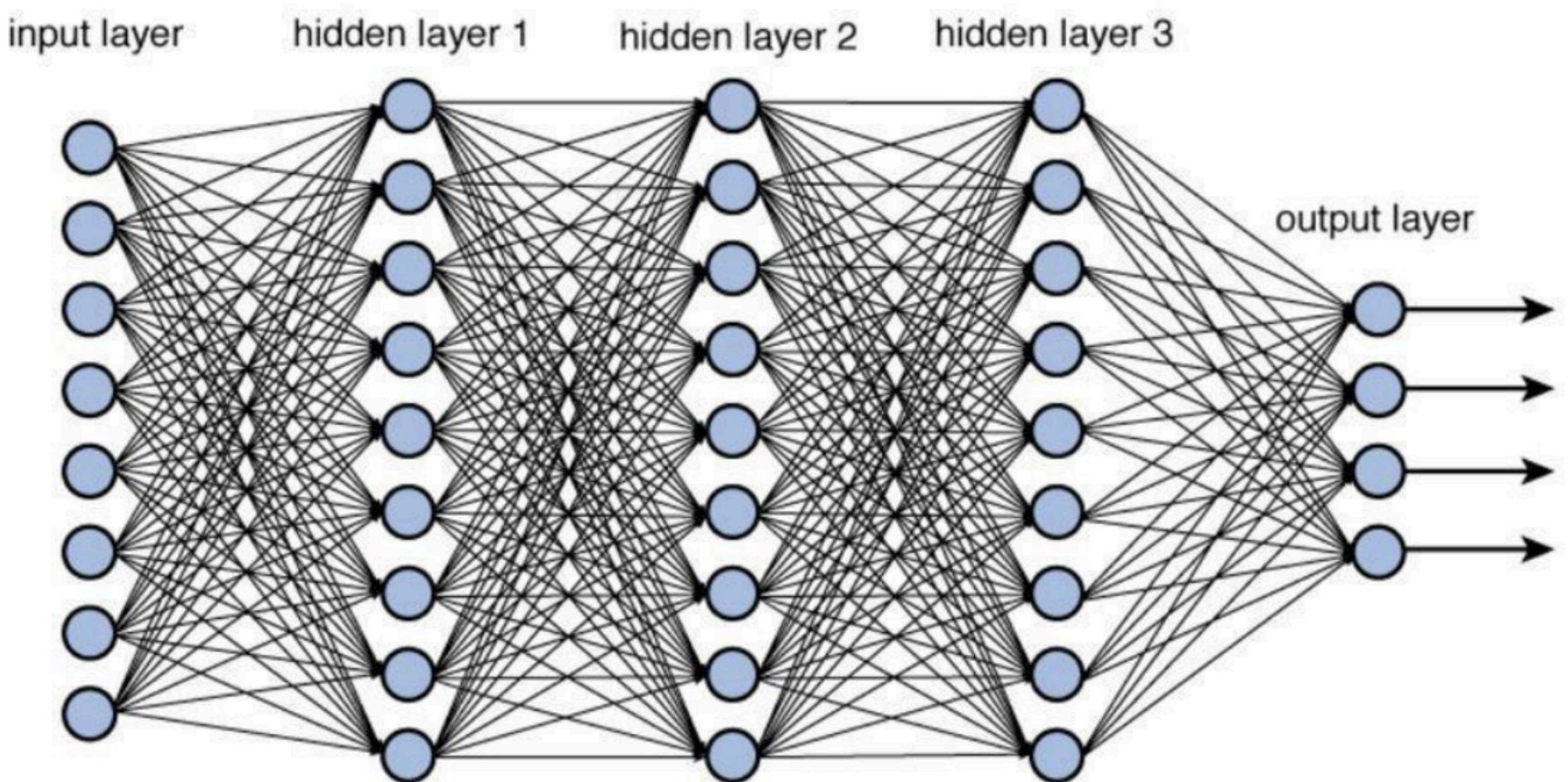




### Artificial neuron:

1. Input layer
2. Hidden layers
3. Output layer

**Deep Neural Network**



# Image classification

# Image classification

“skateboard”



“ribs”



“boxing gloves”





chatGPT's  
proposal

# Reflection symmetry



reflect



classify

classify

“boxing glove”

# Reflection symmetry



# reflect



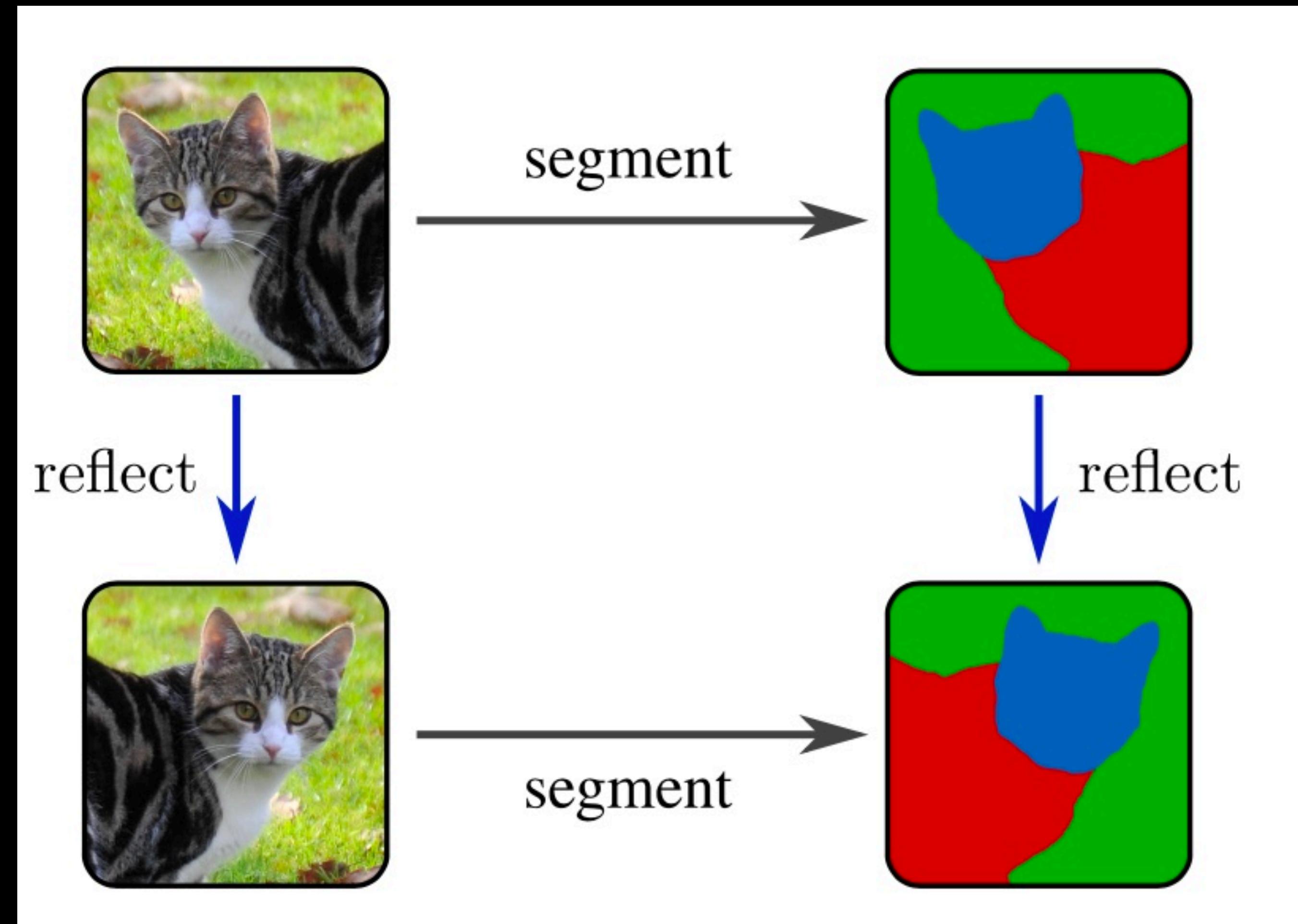
# *Invariance:*

# classify

# classify

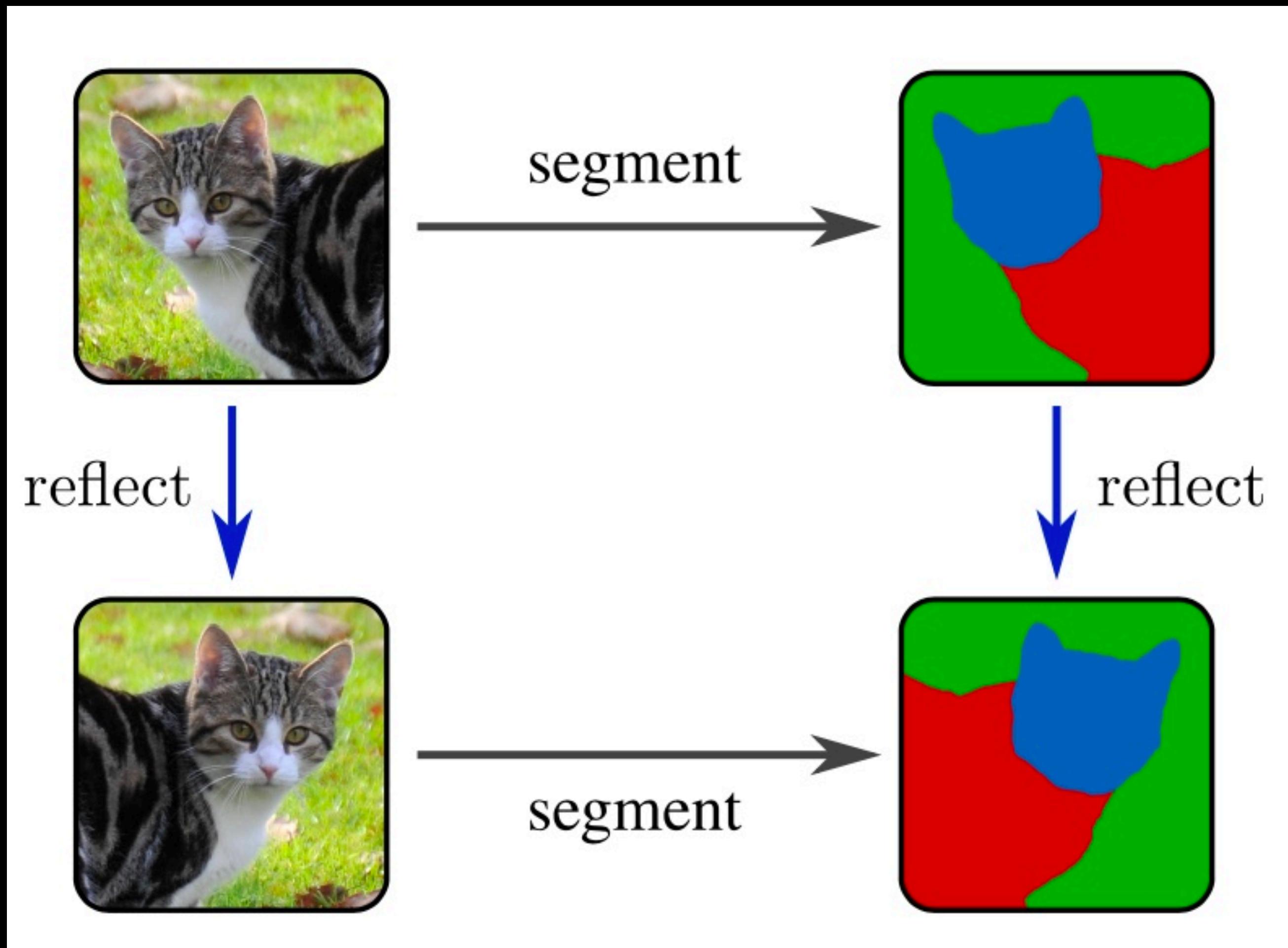
# “boxing glove”

# Segmentation



[Image from: Weiler, Forré, Verlinde, Welling (2023)]

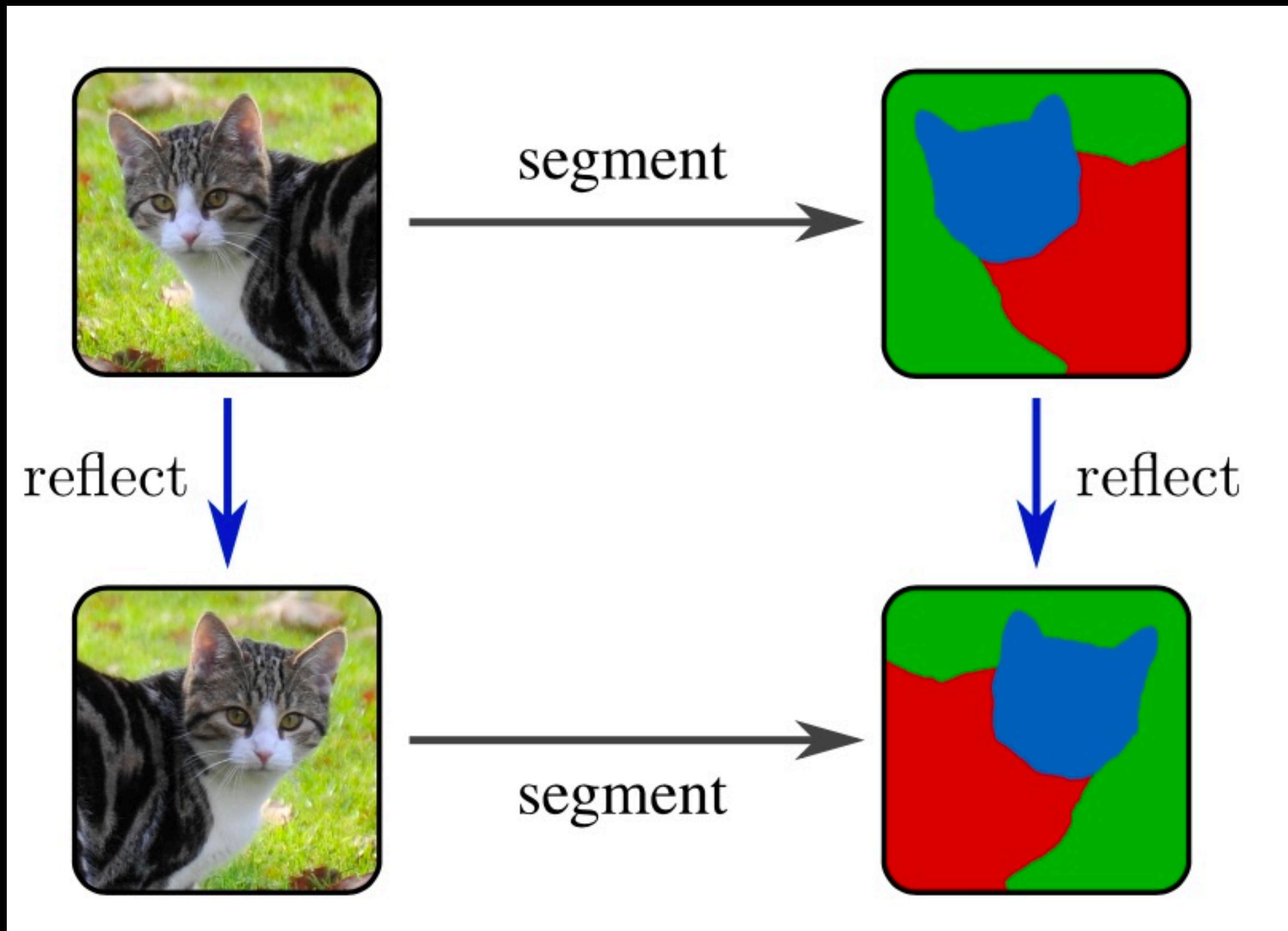
# Segmentation



## ***Equivariance:***

The output *transforms* according to the transformation of the input

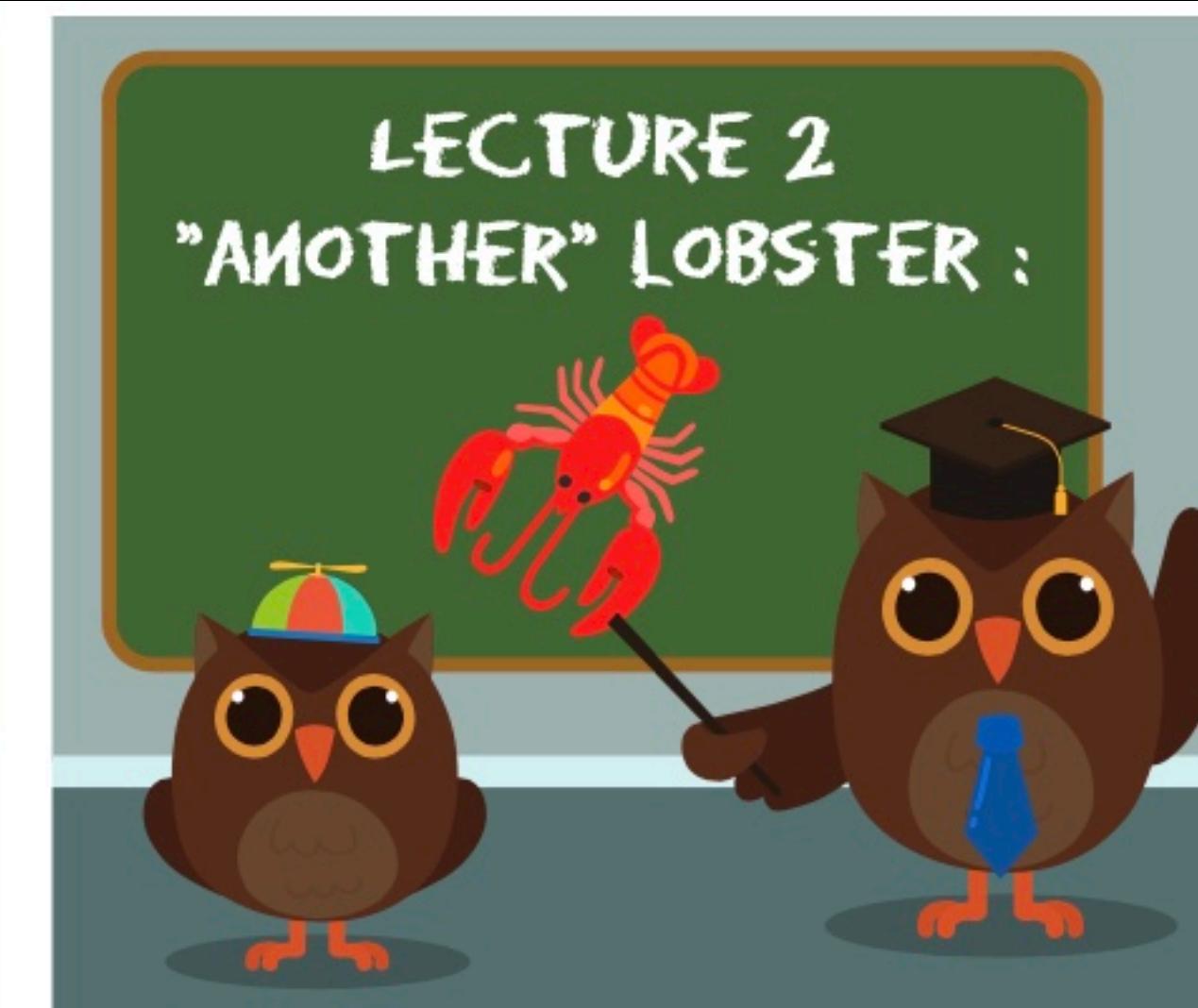
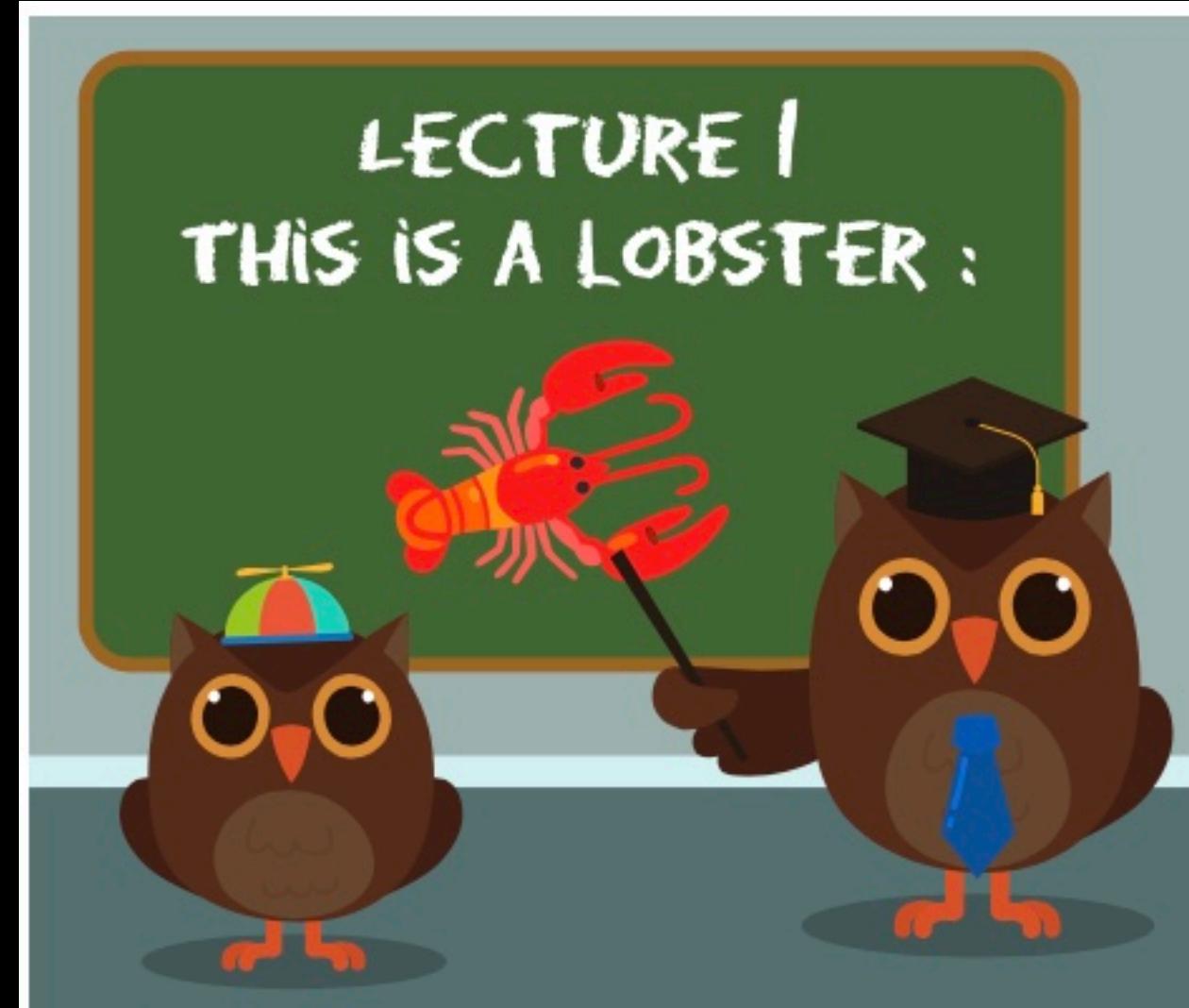
# Segmentation



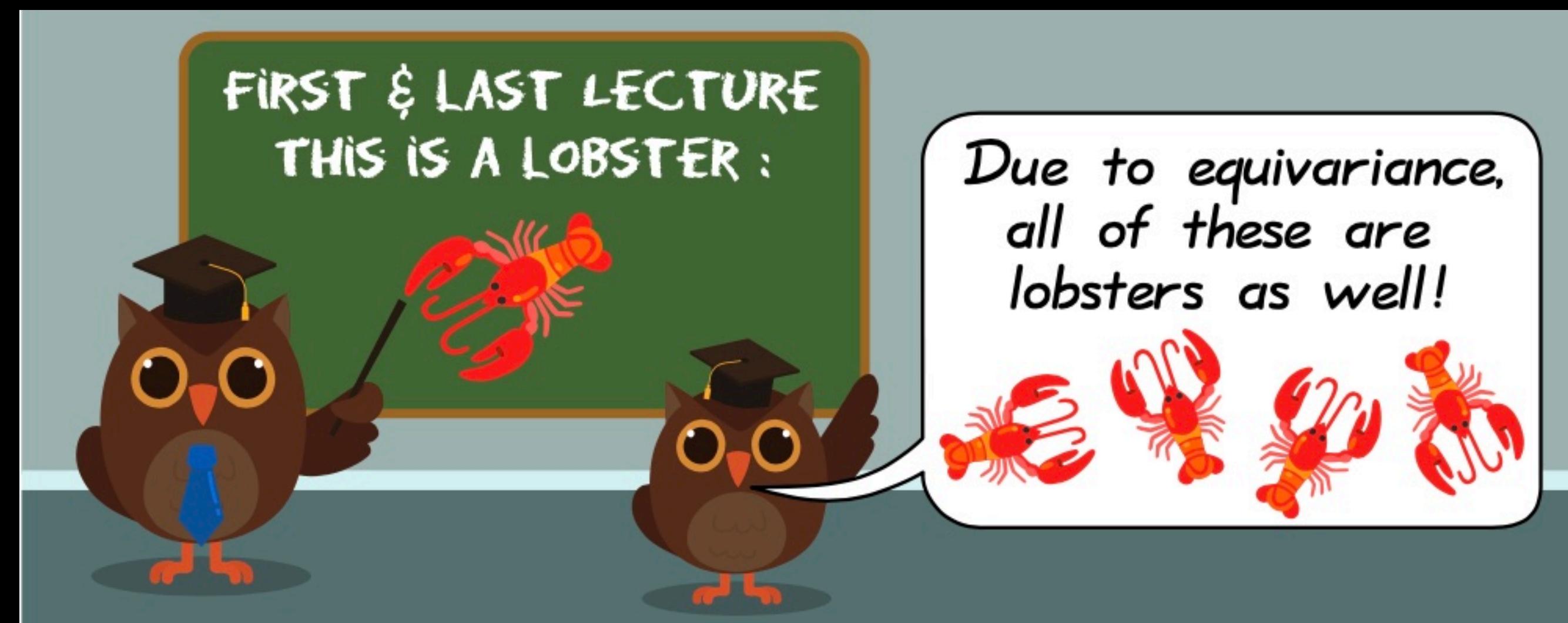
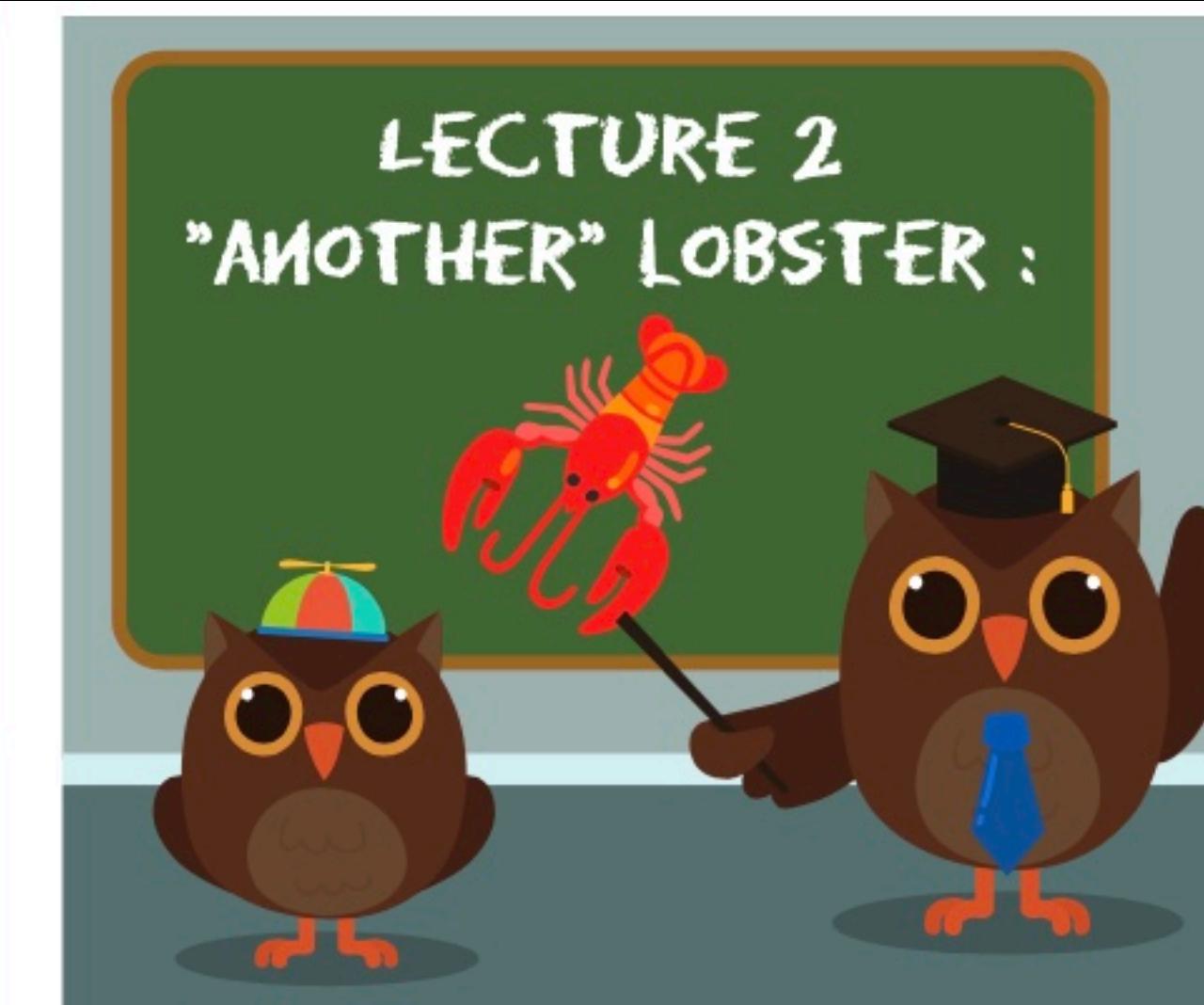
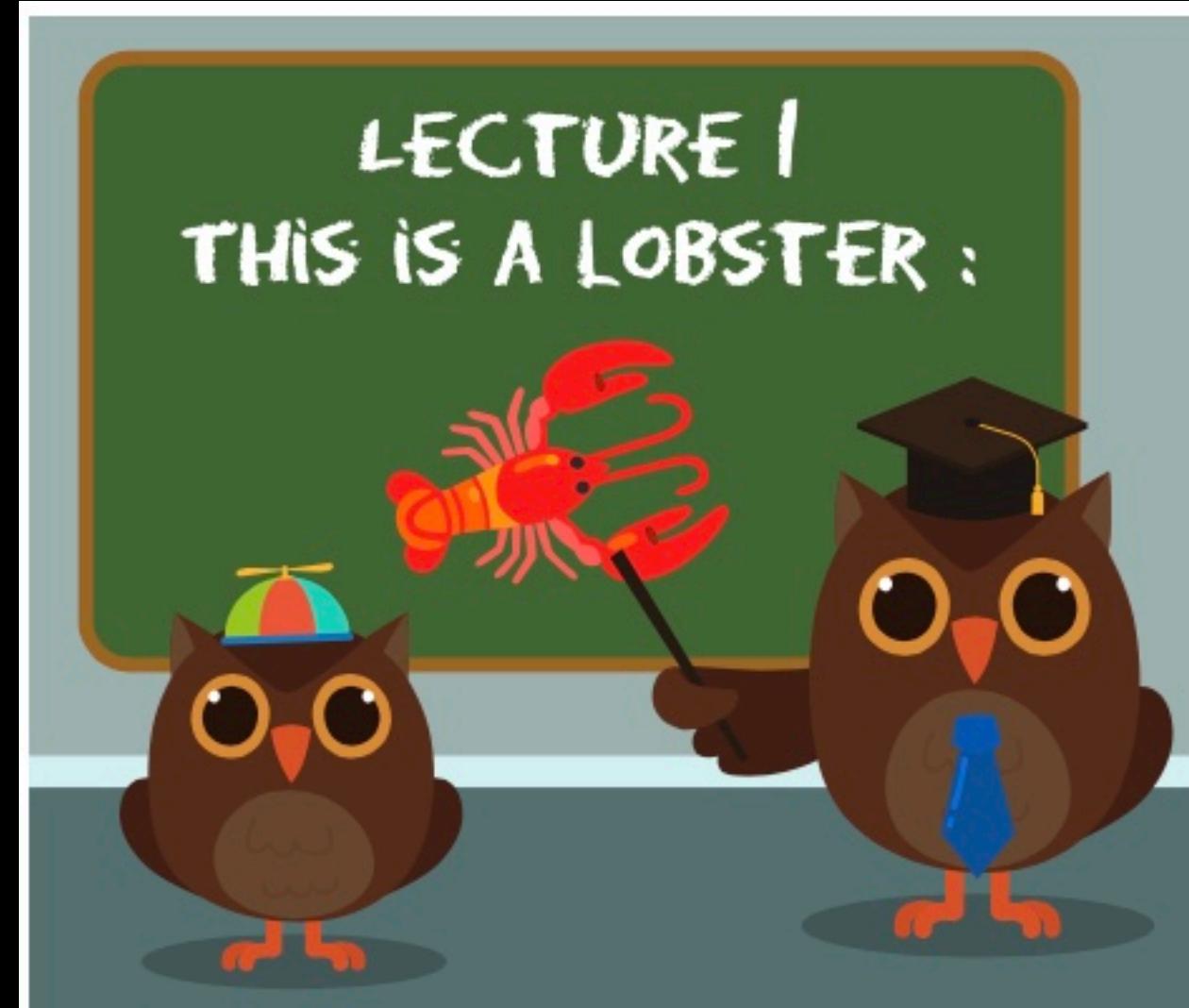
commutative  
diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \\ \downarrow T & & \downarrow T \\ X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \end{array}$$

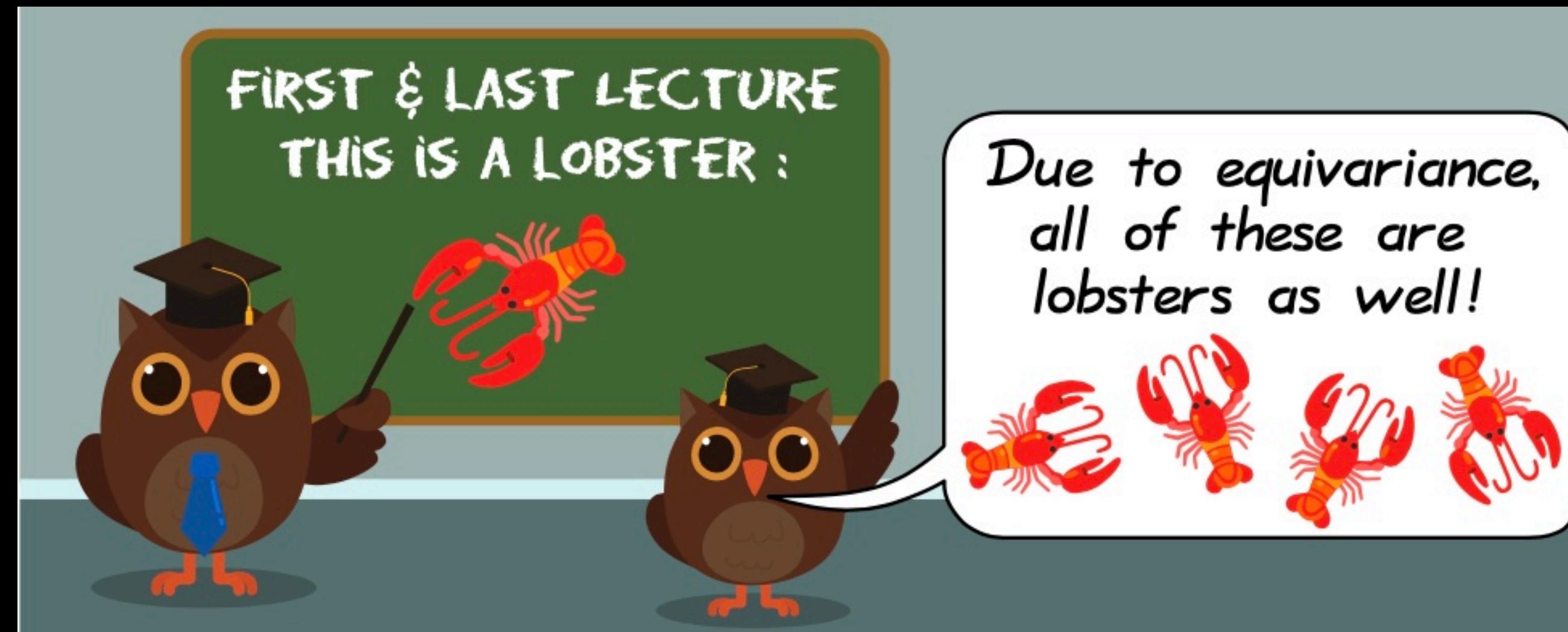
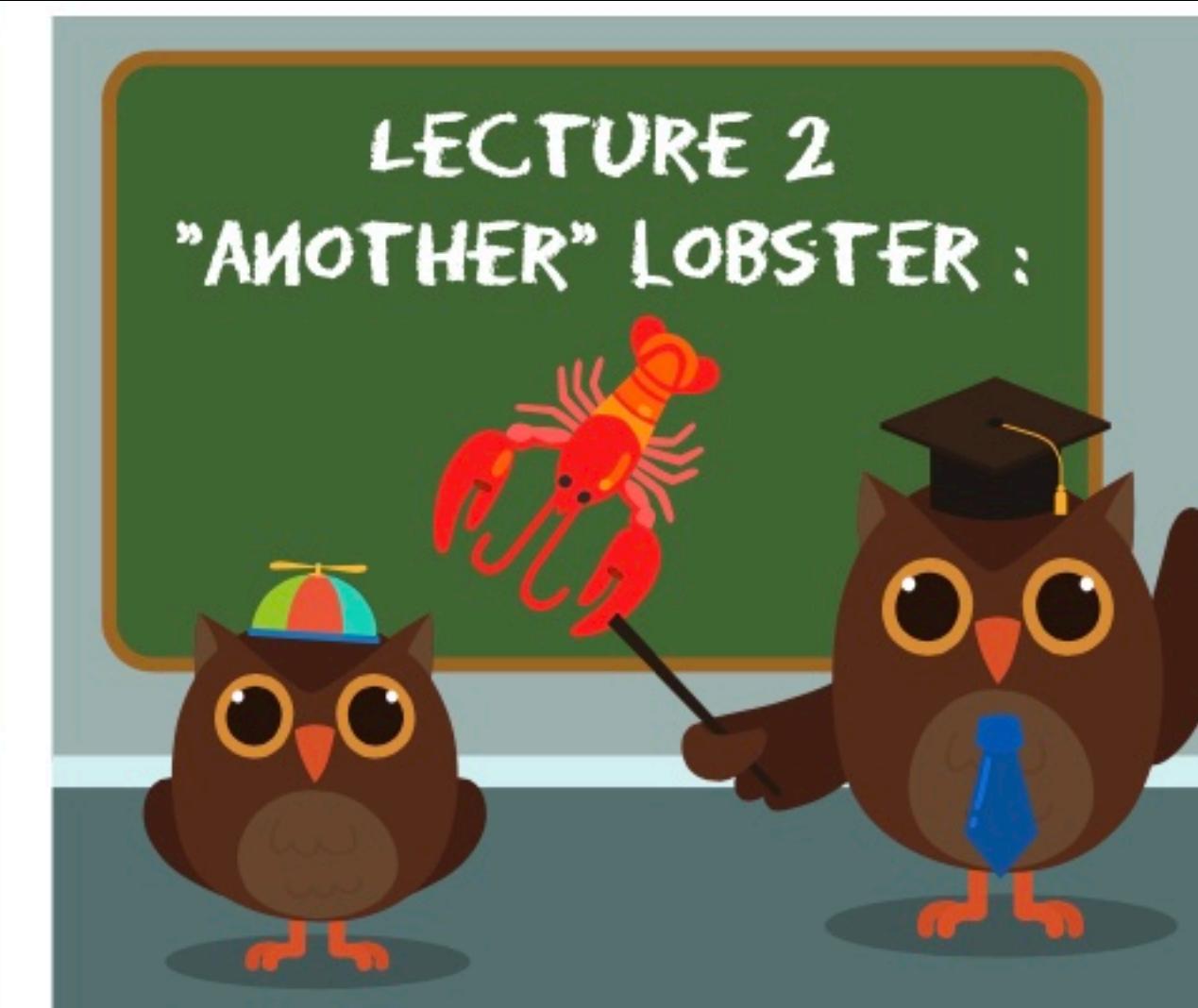
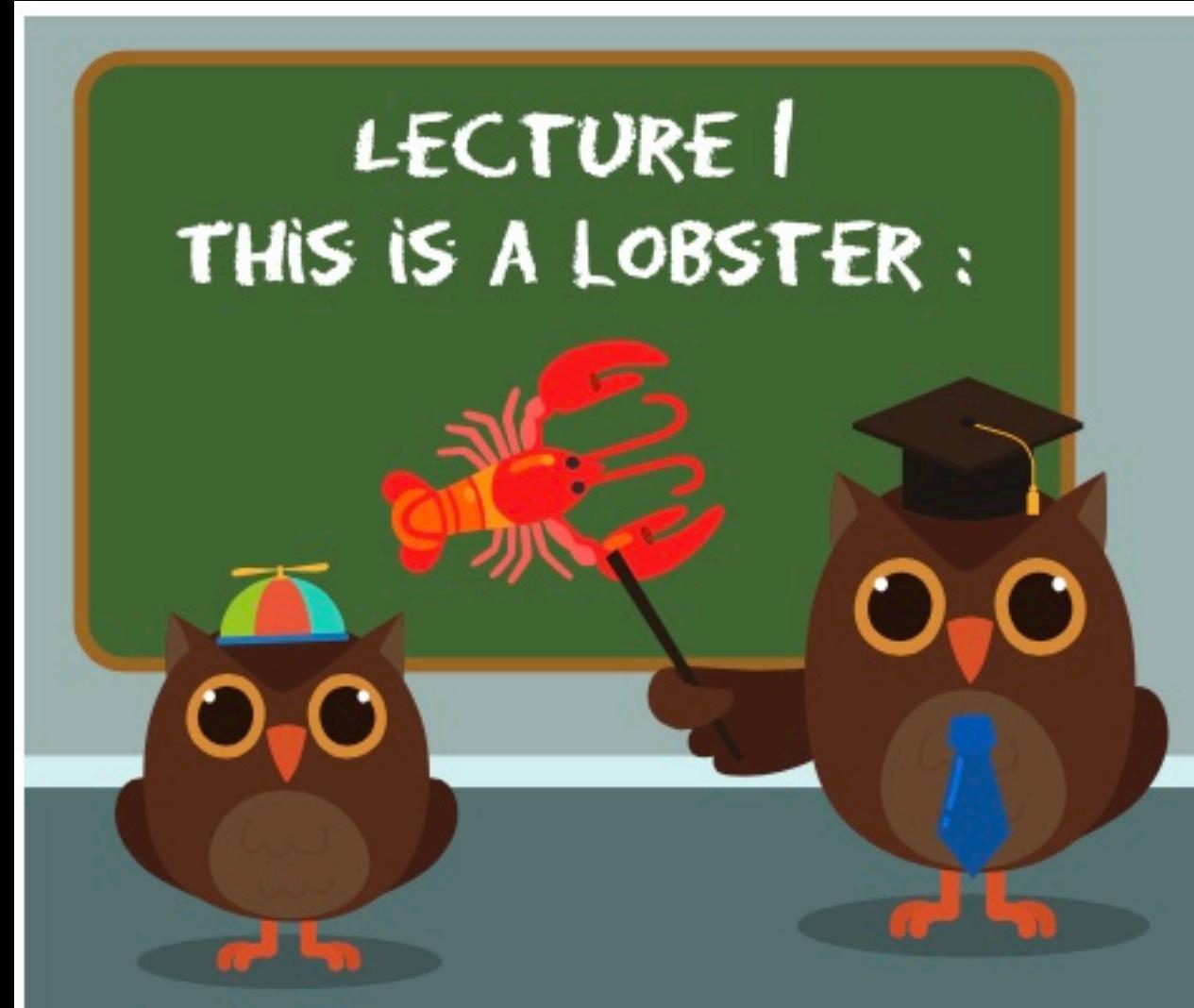
$$f(Tx) = Tf(x)$$



[Images from: Weiler, Forré, Verlinde, Welling (2023)]

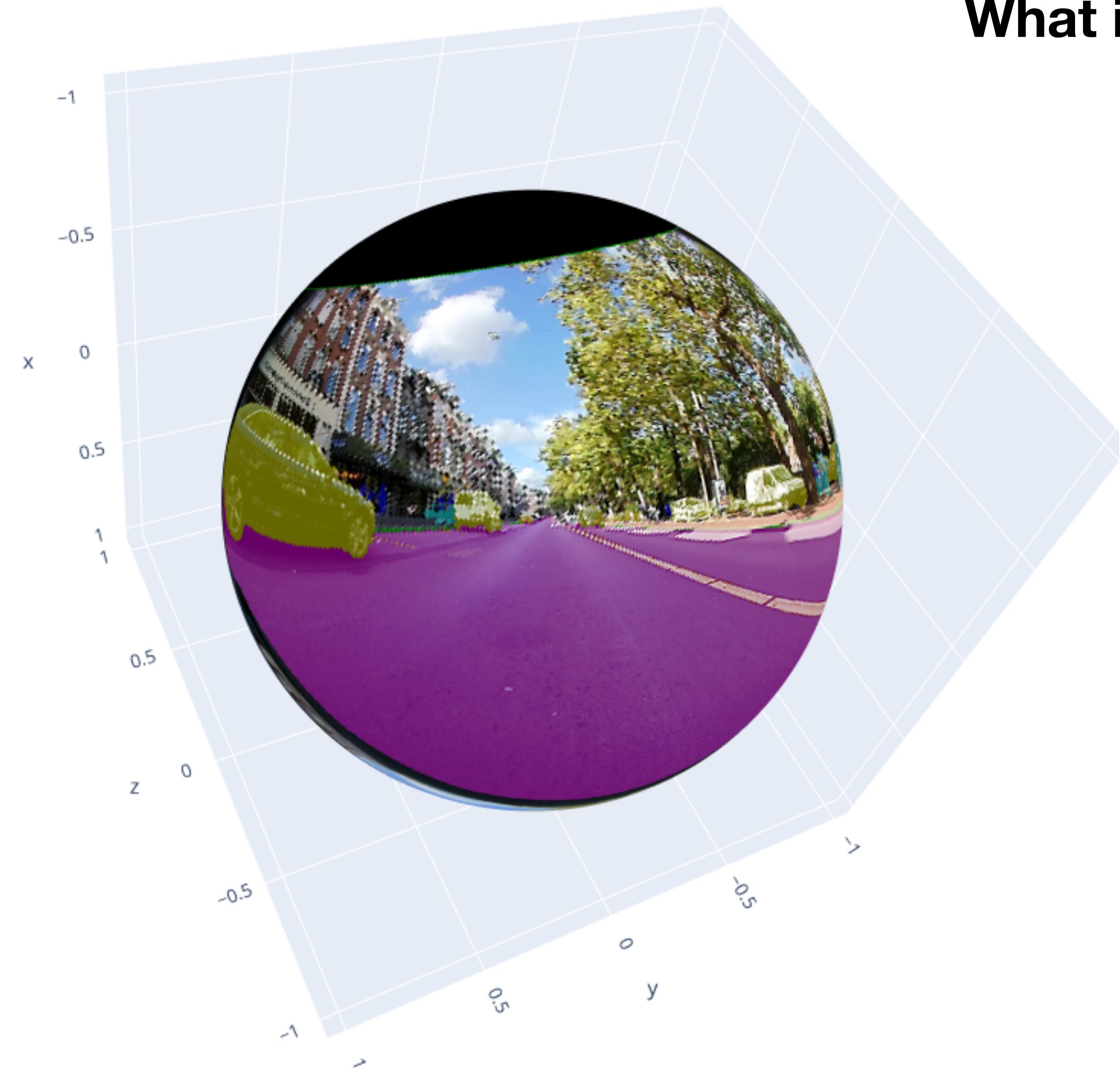


[Images from: Weiler, Forré, Verlinde, Welling (2023)]

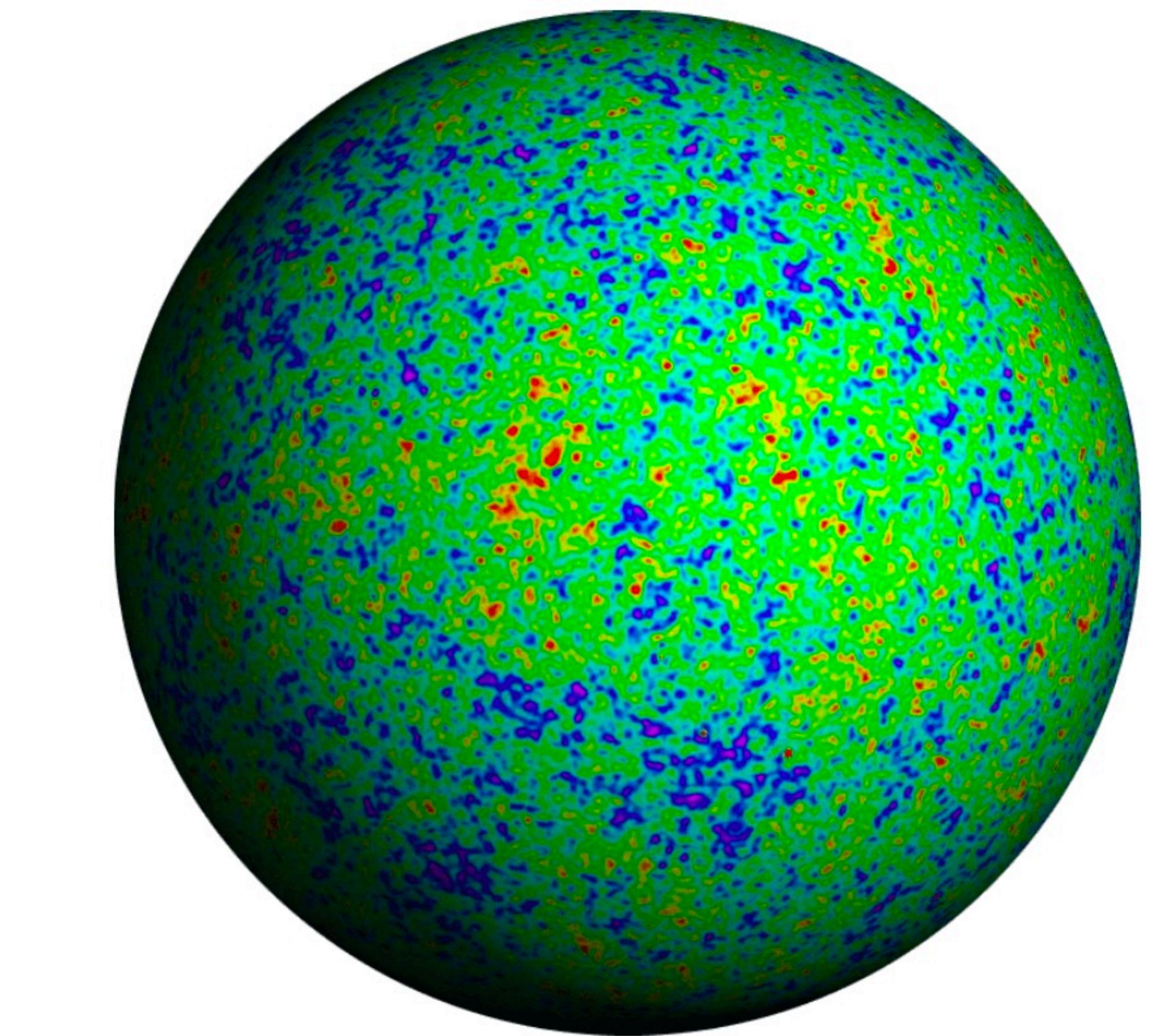


Design neural networks  
that have **intrinsic** symmetries  
(equivariance)

# What if the input data is curved?



[Image from the Woodscape dataset, projected onto a sphere]

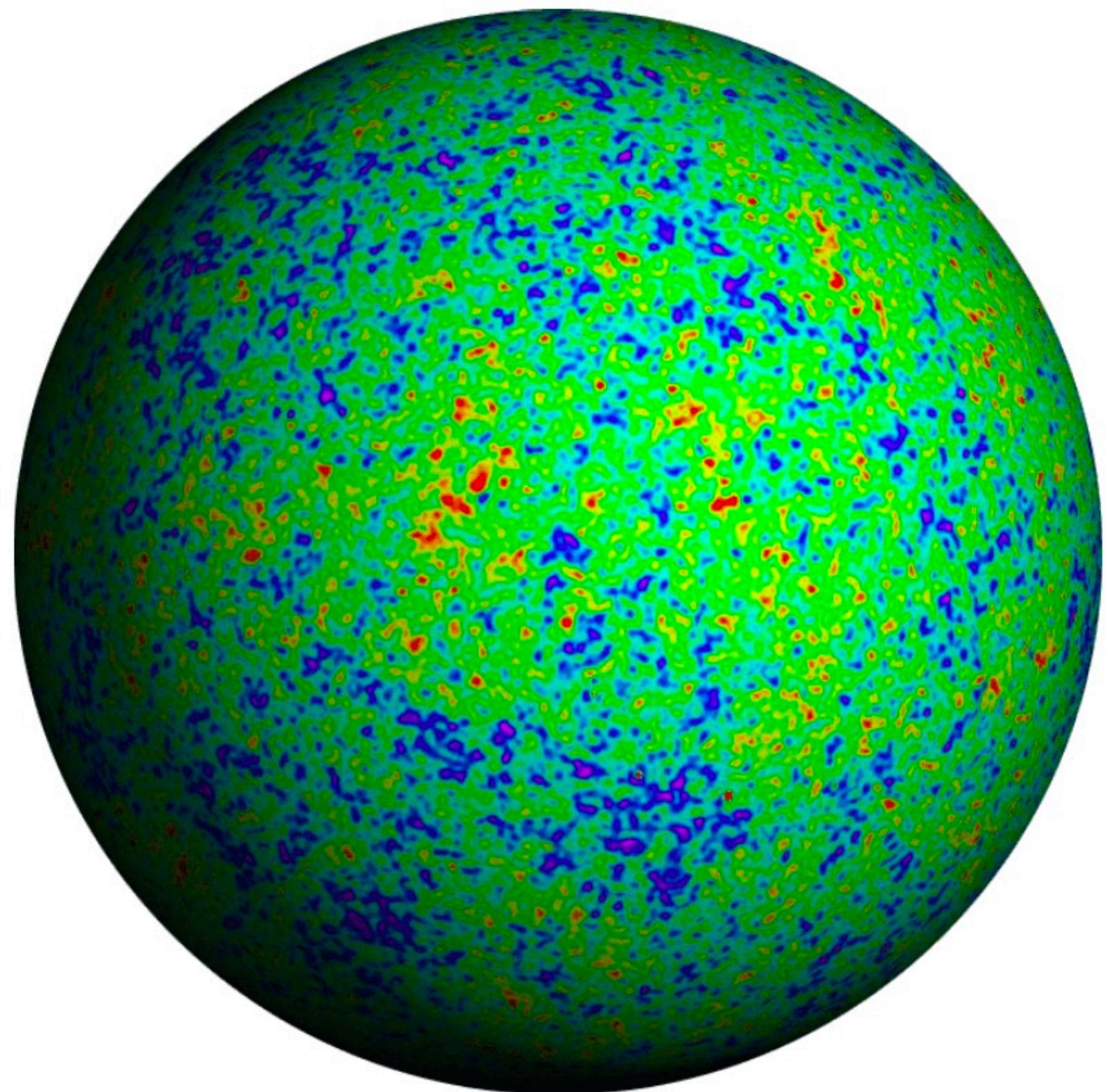


## Cosmic microwave background radiation

# What if the input data is curved?

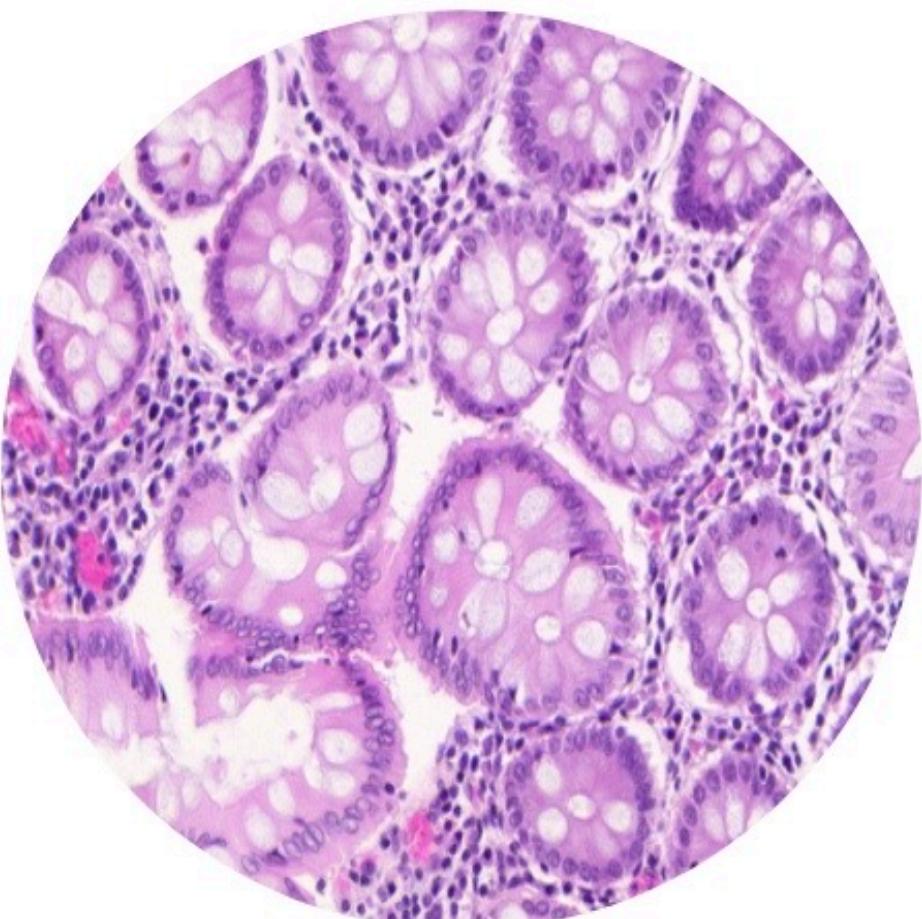
Want an AI with intrinsic

**ROTATIONAL SYMMETRY**

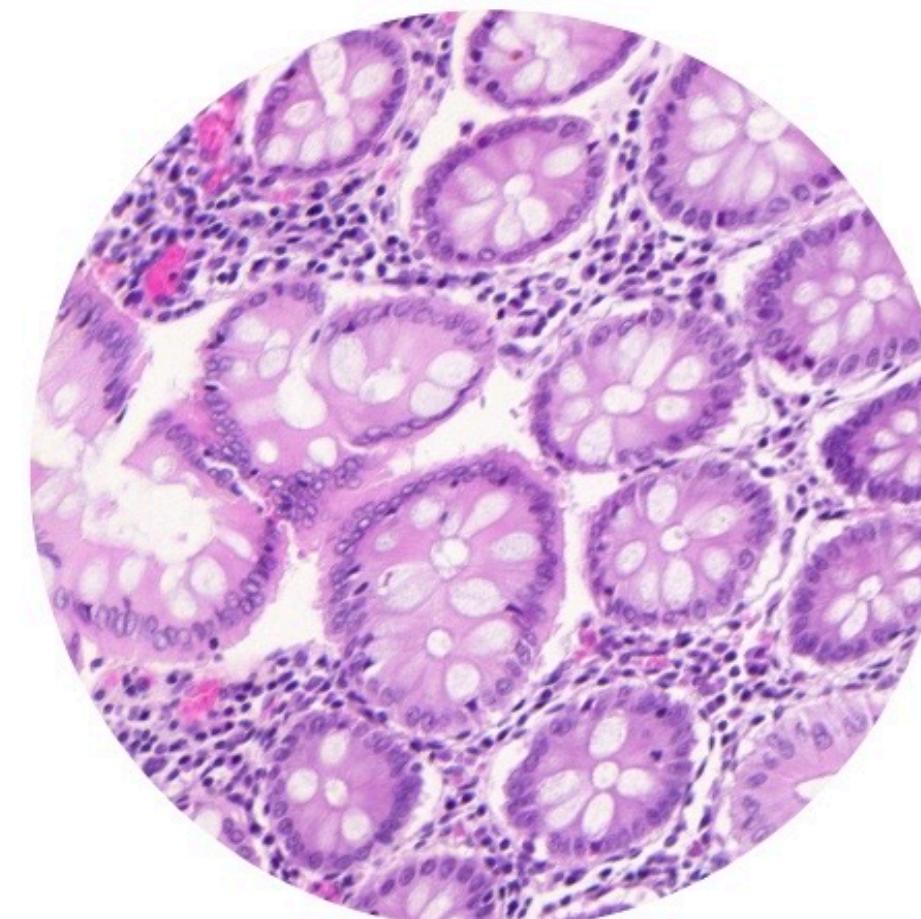


Cosmic microwave background radiation

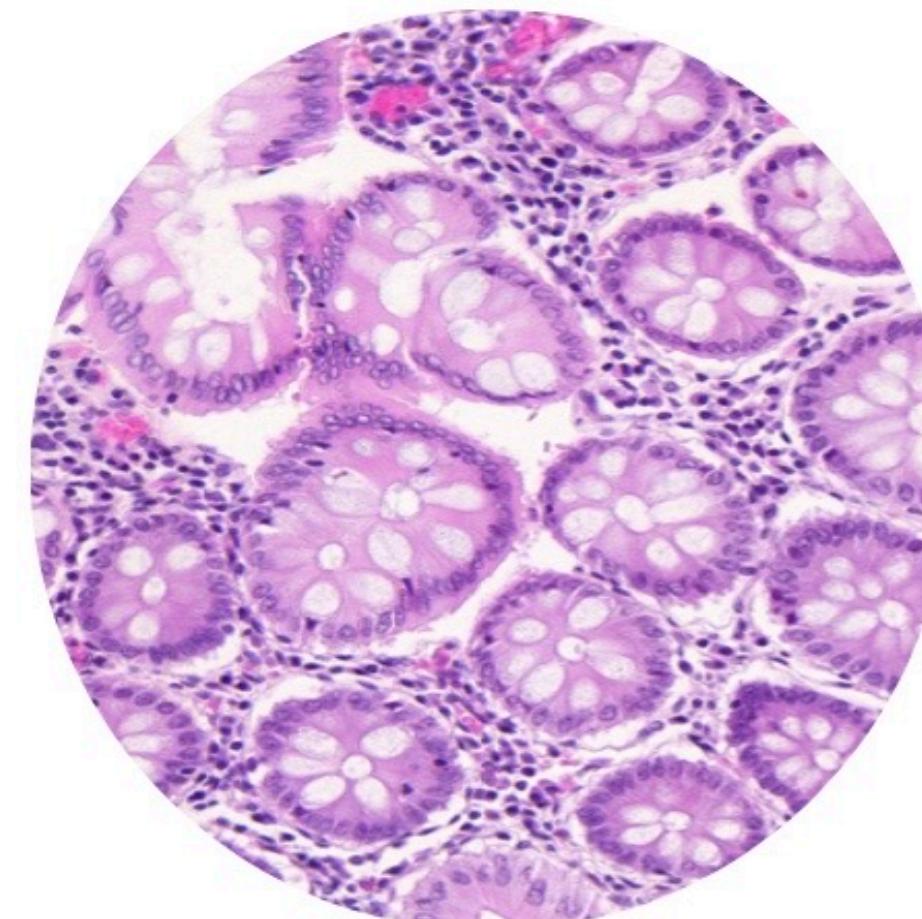
# Medical images - tumors



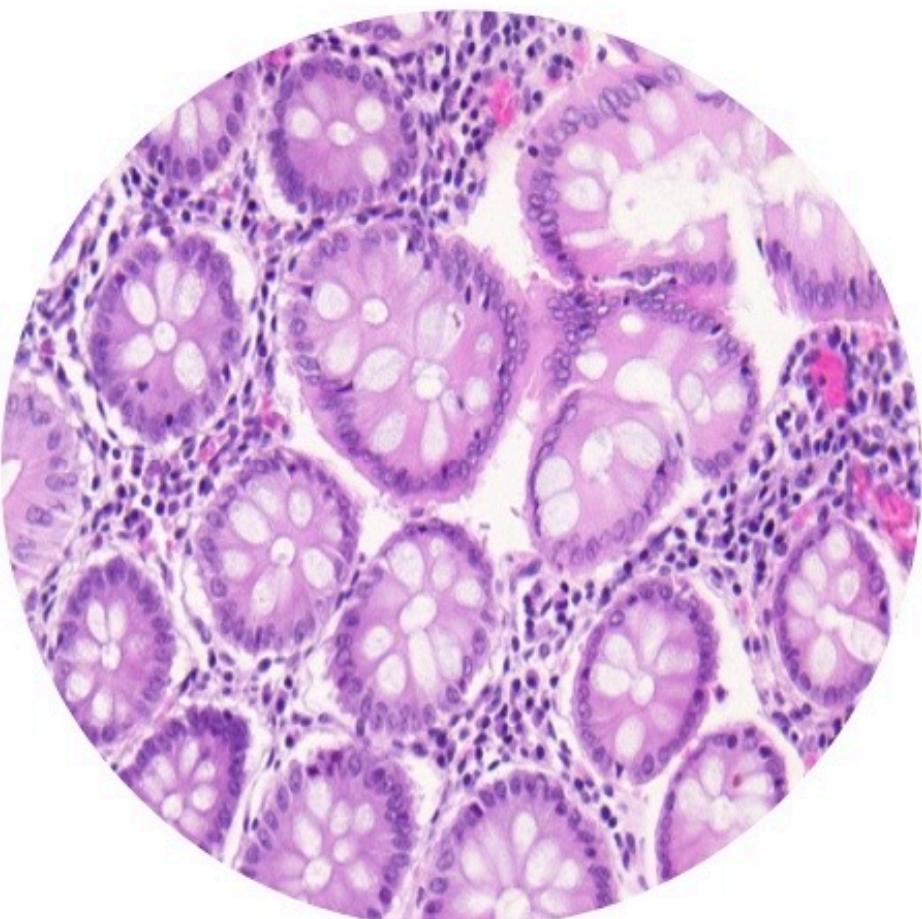
Original



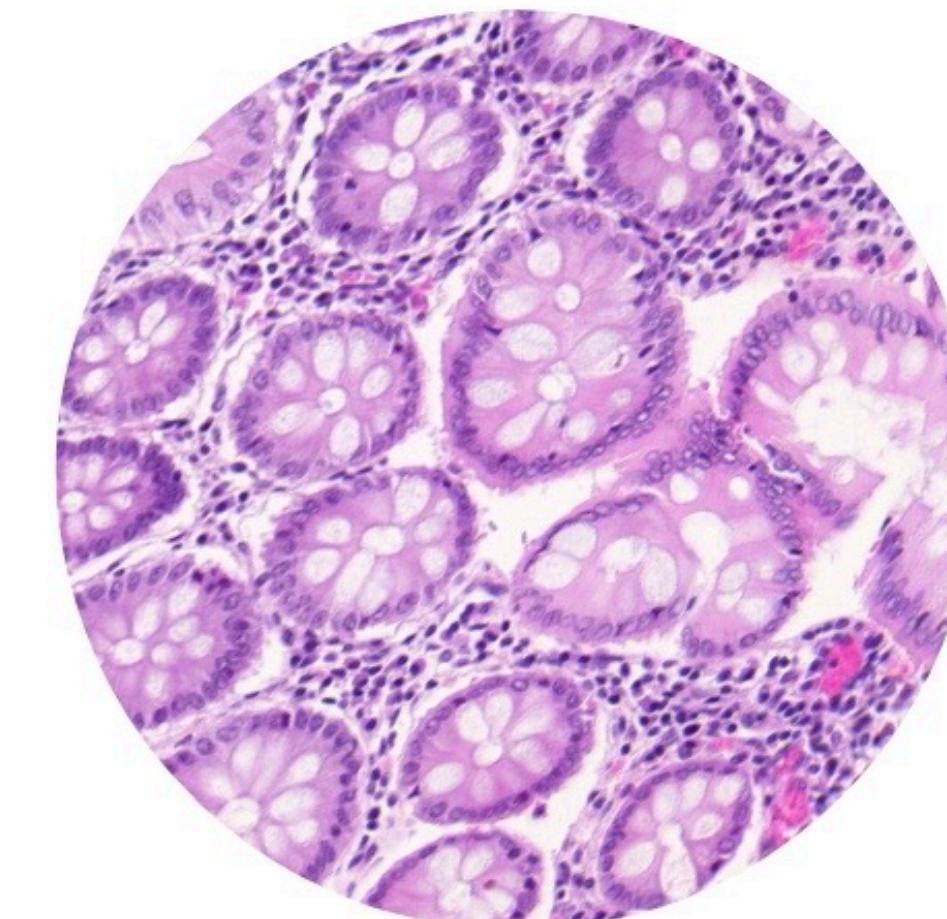
45° rotation



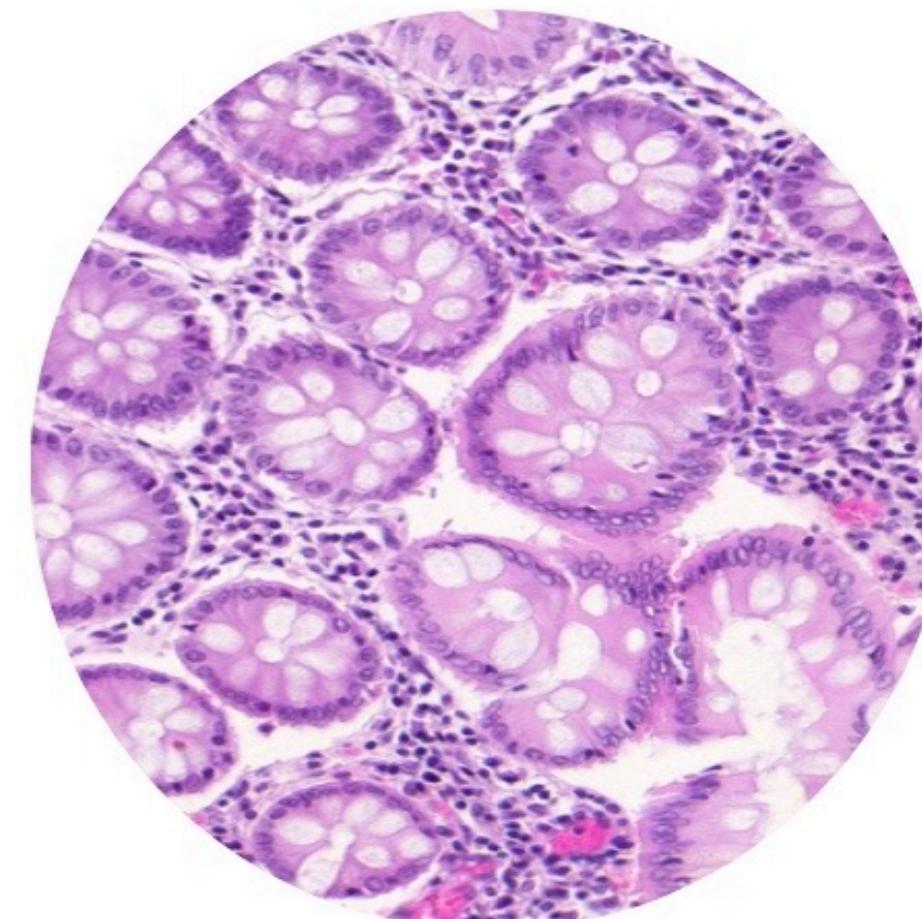
90° rotation



180° rotation



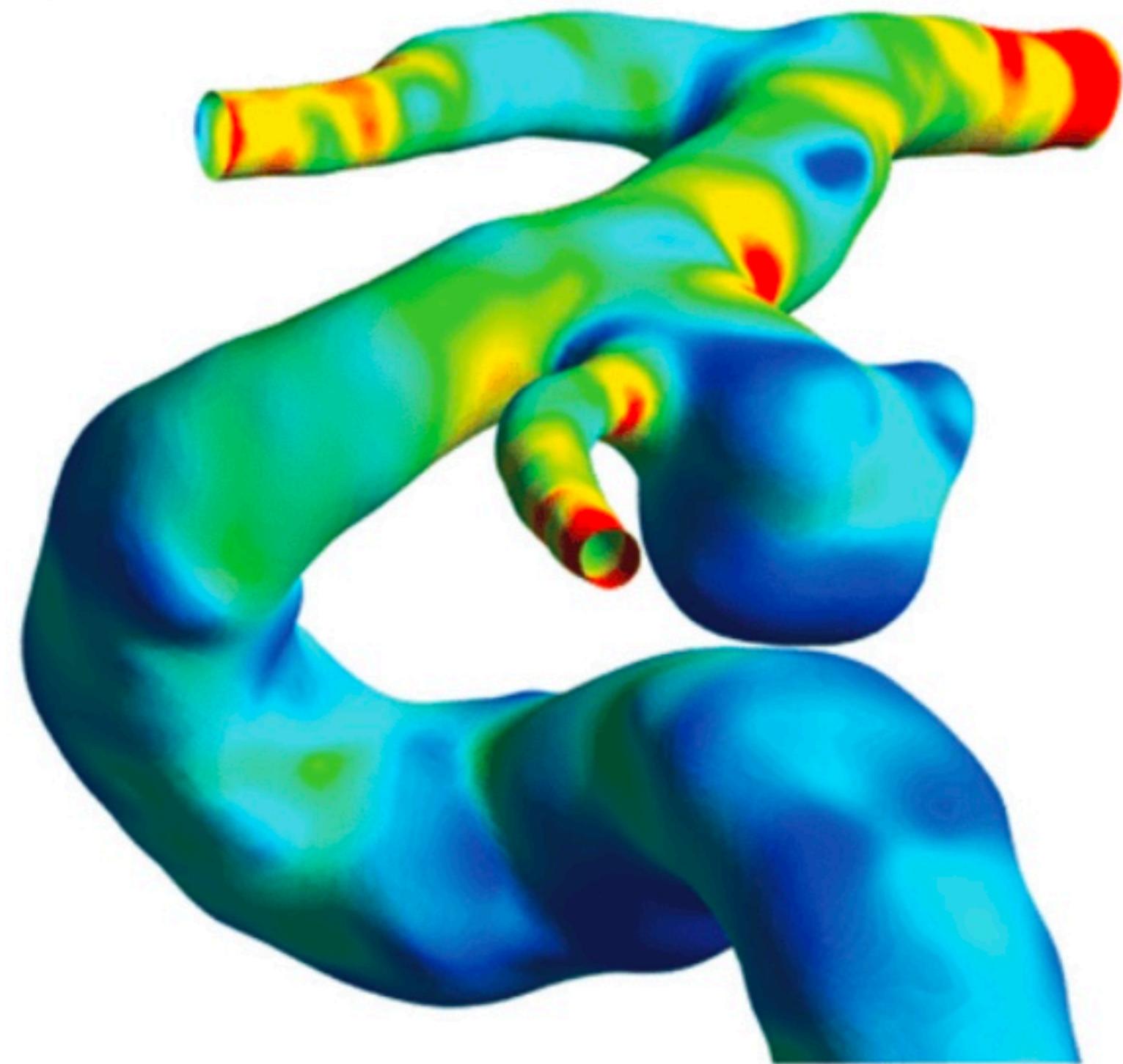
225° rotation



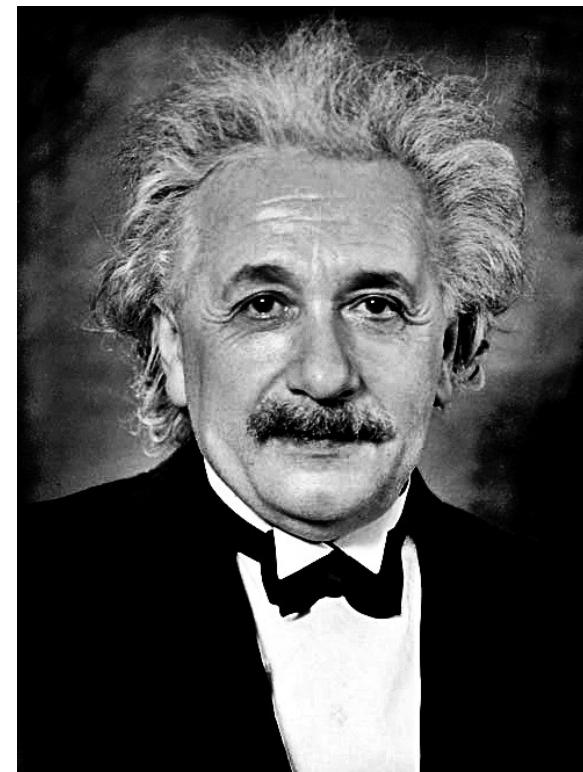
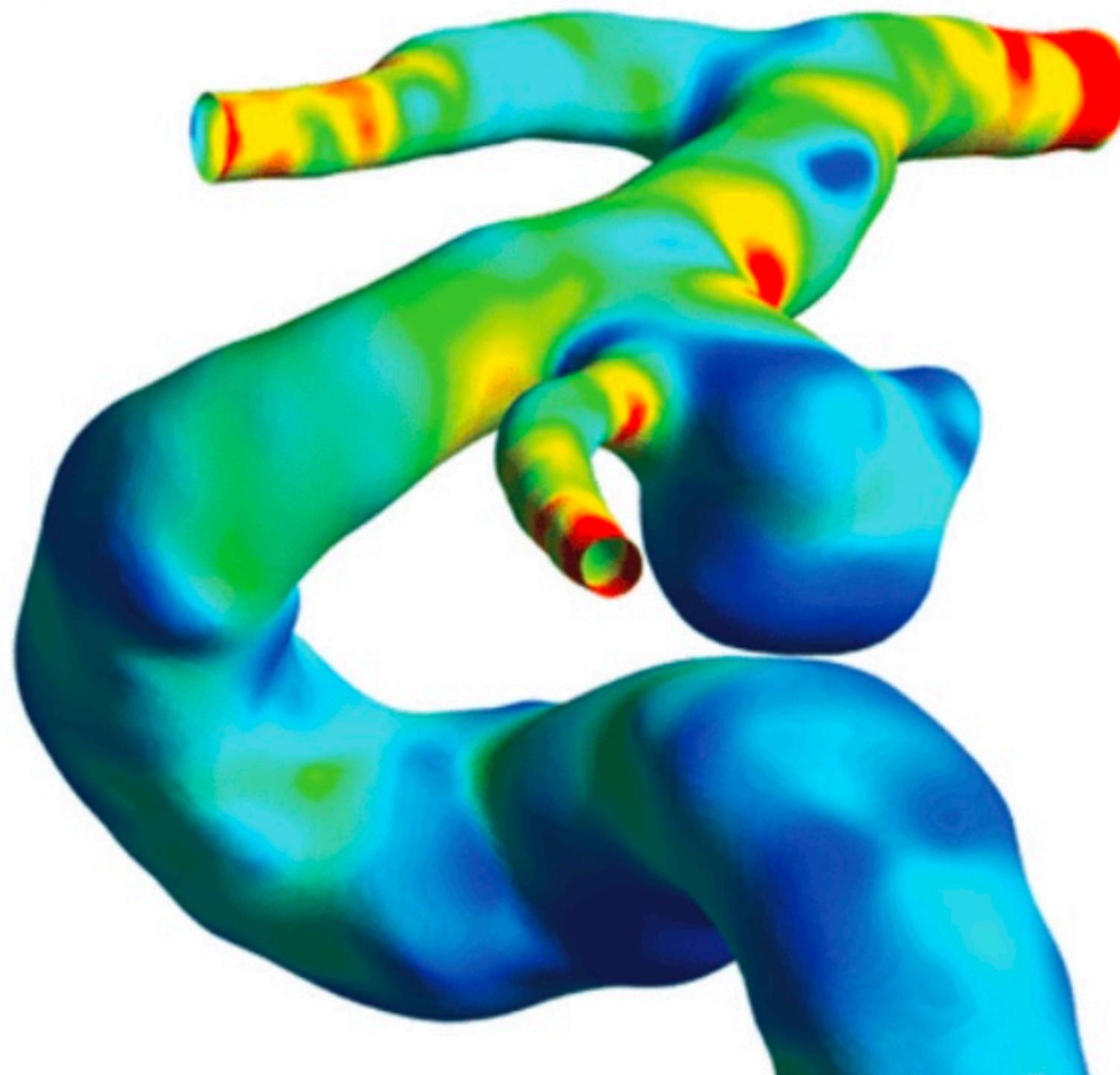
270° rotation

[Pic from Graham, Epstein, Rajpoot, 2020]

# Geometric deep learning



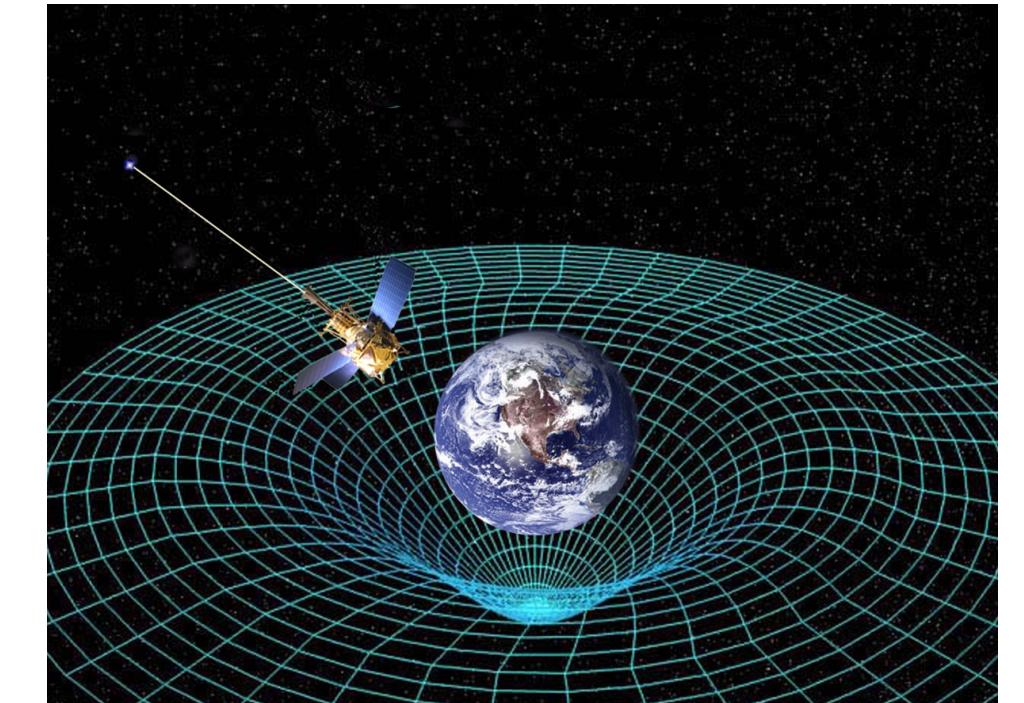
# Geometric deep learning



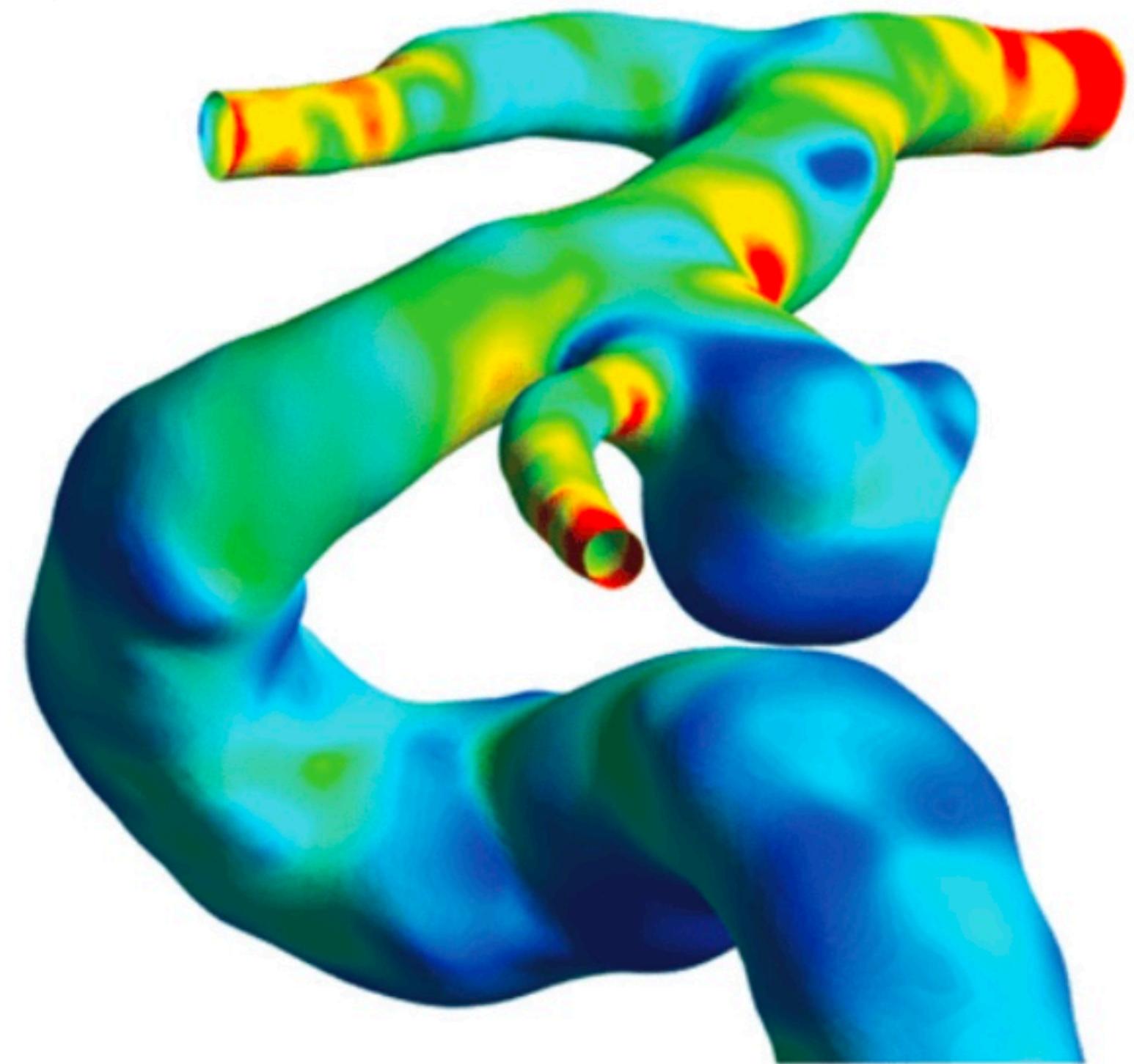
Recall Einstein's

***Principle of general covariance:***

The laws of physics should take the same form independently of which coordinate system we use to represent them

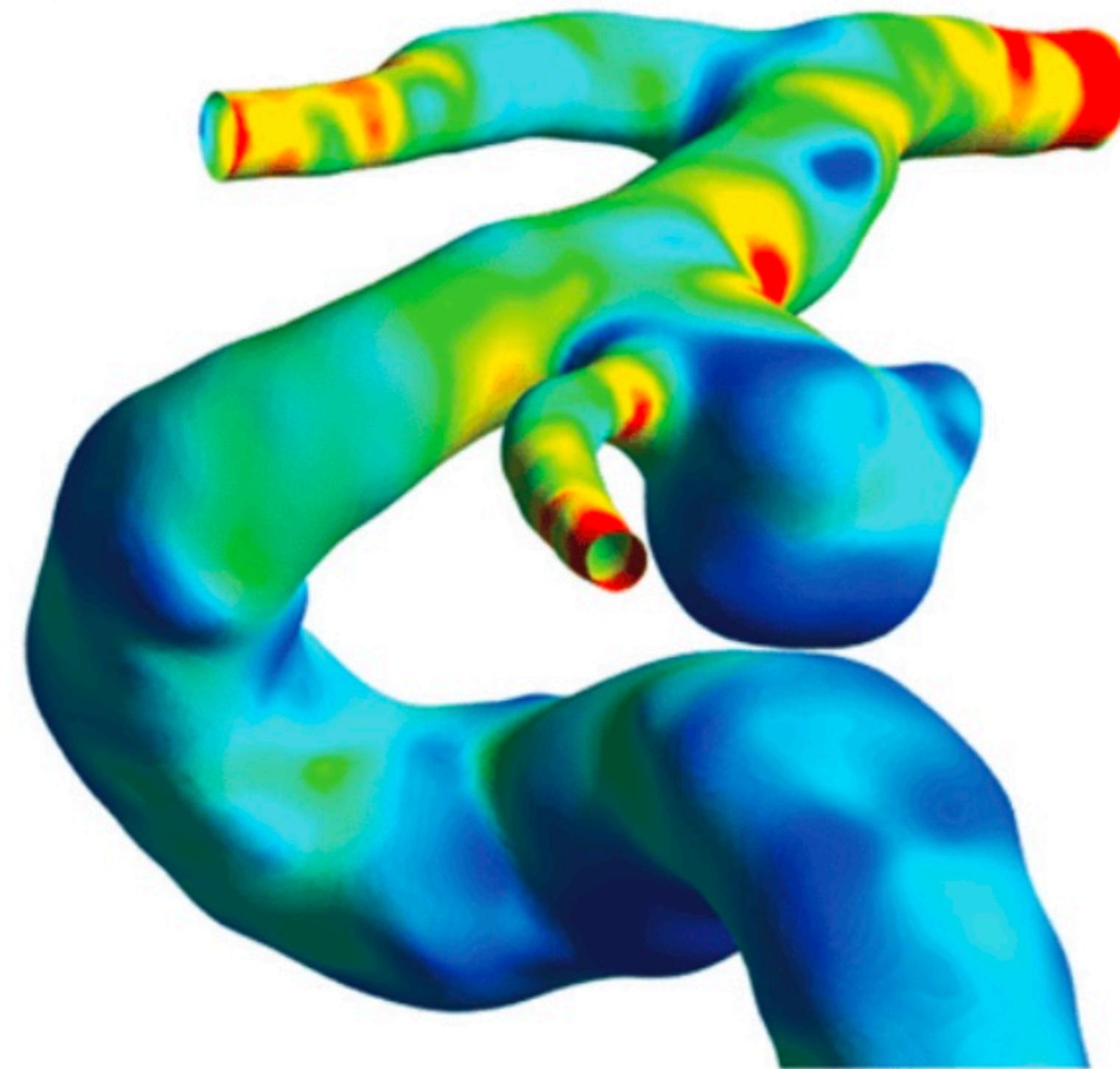


# Geometric deep learning

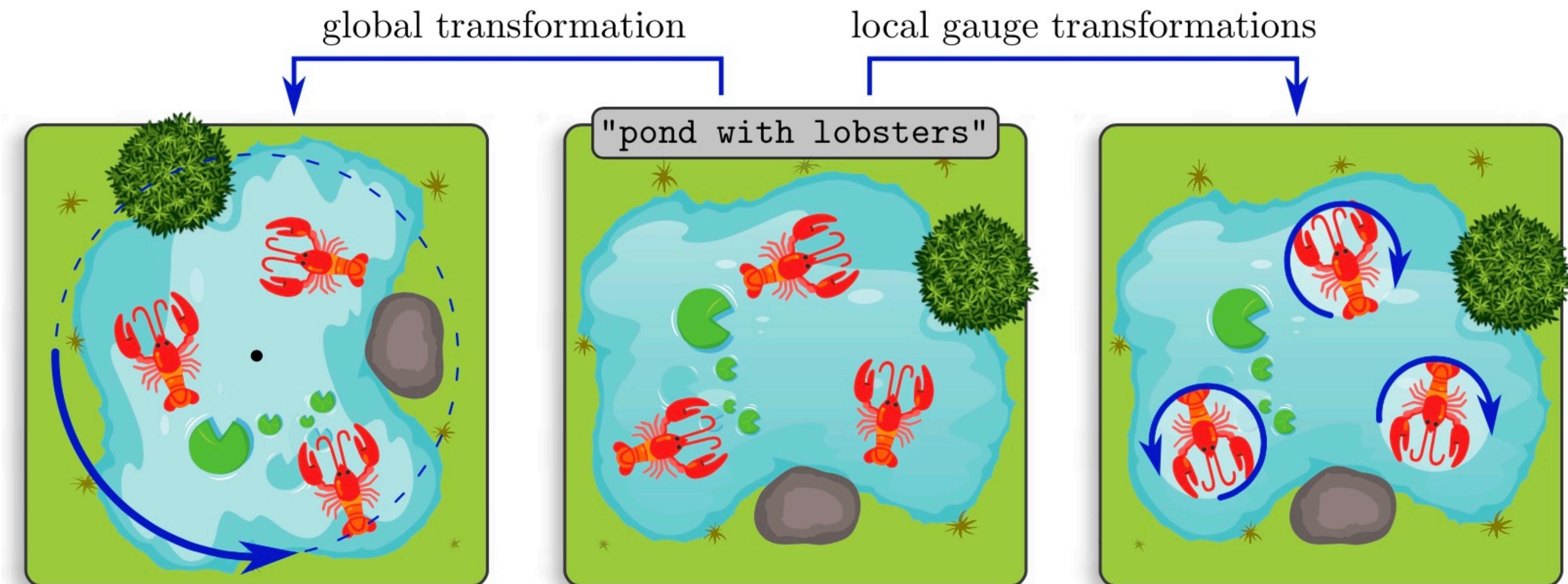


***Principle of geometric deep learning:***  
The equations governing neural networks  
should be equivariant with respect to  
all **local** and **global** symmetries of  
the input data

# Geometric deep learning

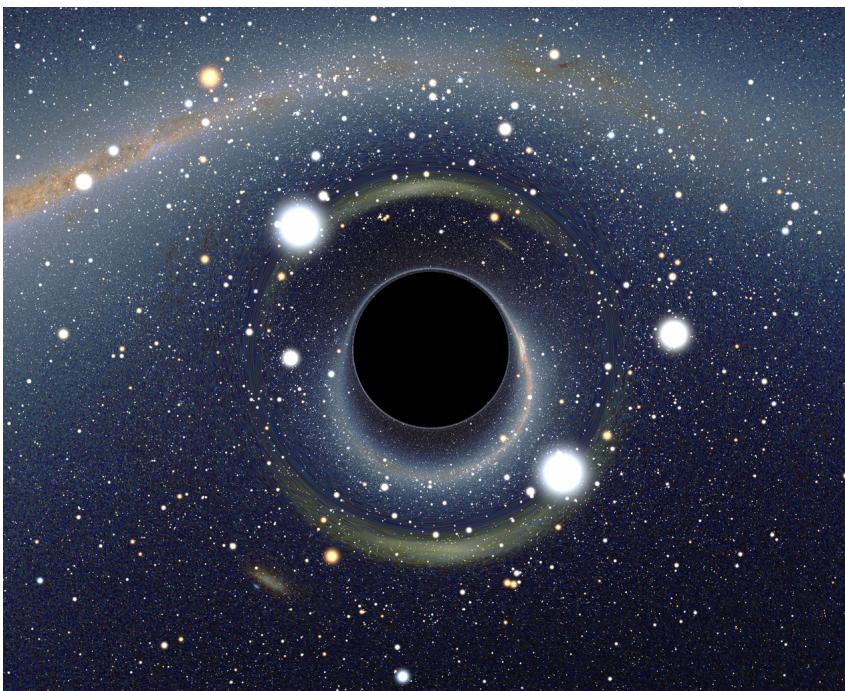


***Principle of geometric deep learning:***  
The equations governing neural networks  
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the input data

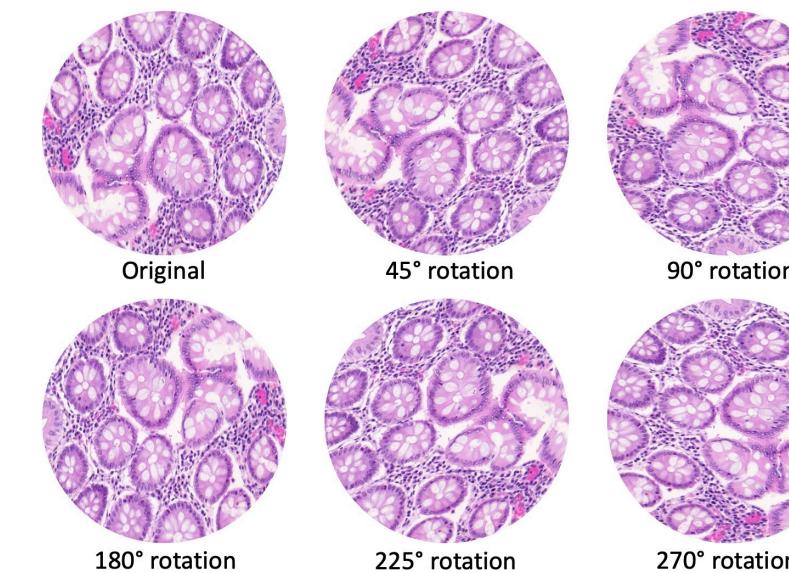


[Images from: Weiler, Forré, Verlinde, Welling (2023)]

# Physics



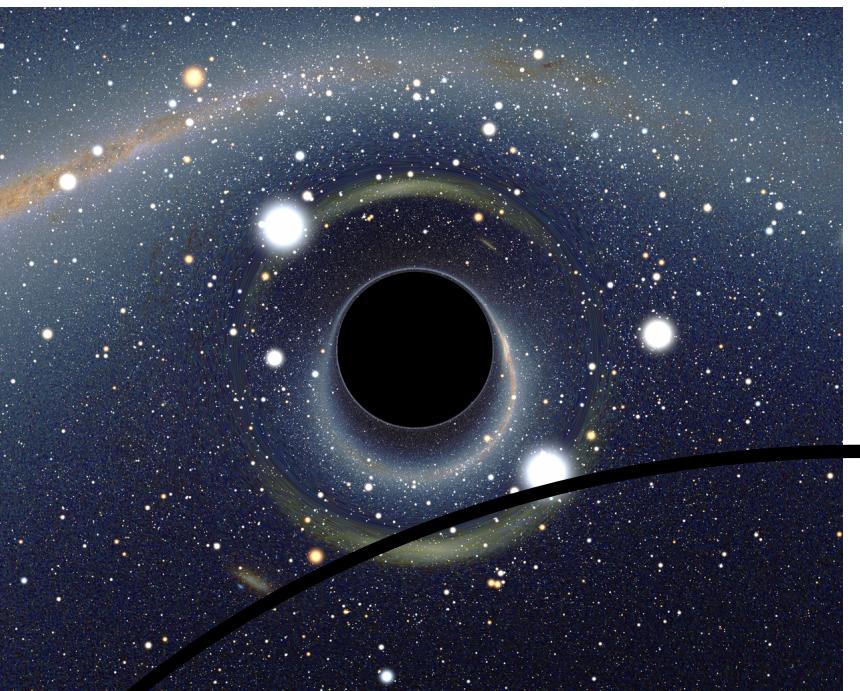
# AI



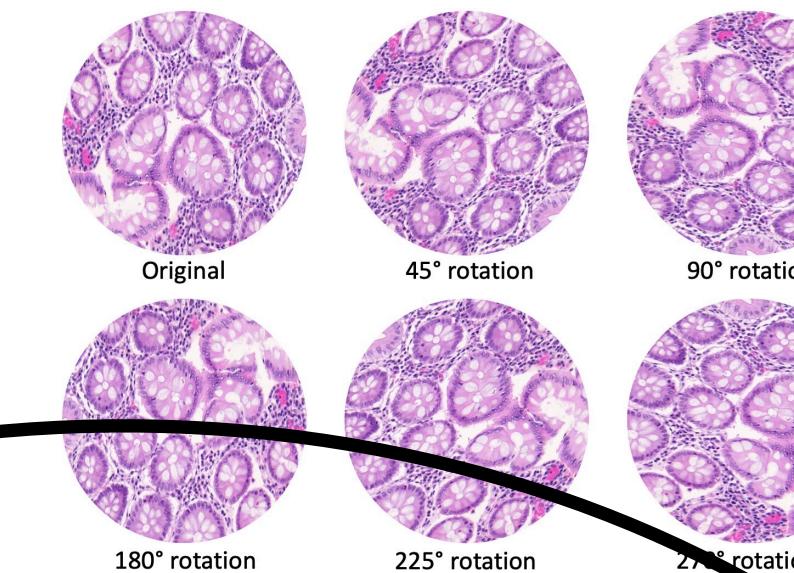
A dense page filled with mathematical calculations, diagrams, and formulas. It includes various equations such as  $x^2 + y^2 + z^2 + xy + yz + zx = 0$ ,  $\frac{\partial f}{\partial x} = \left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial x}, \frac{\partial f}{\partial y}\right)$ , and  $\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \sin^2 x dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} (1 - \cos 2x) dx = \pi$ . There are also diagrams of 3D shapes like spheres and ellipsoids, and several hand-drawn geometric sketches and calculations.

# Mathematics

# Physics

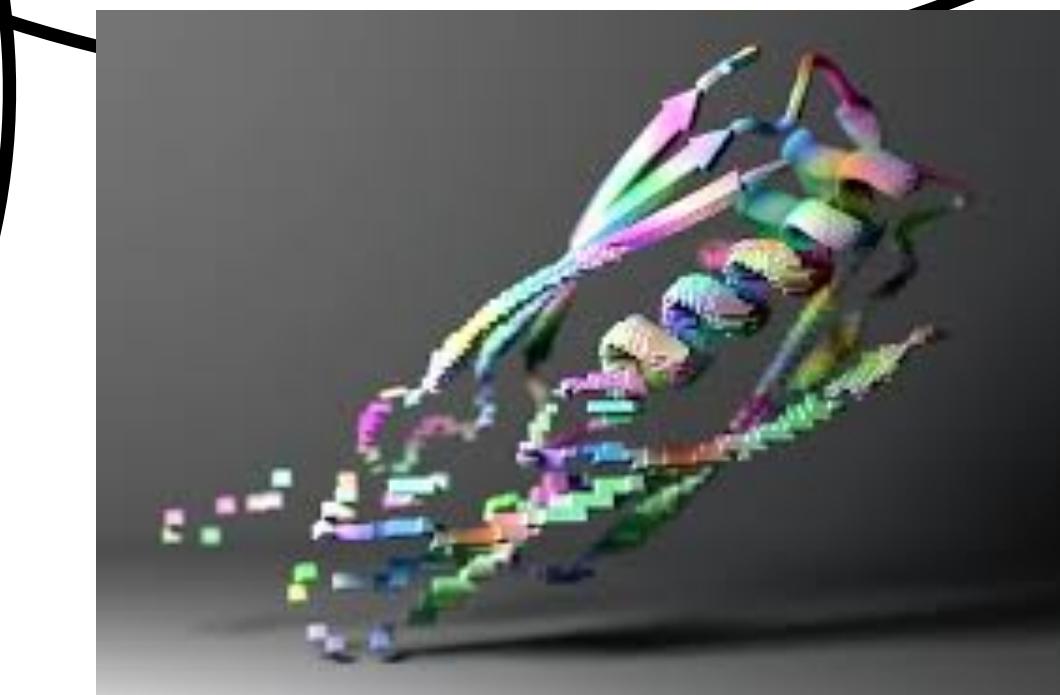


# AI



A dense grid of mathematical equations and diagrams, including:  
- A 3D plot of a surface with a saddle point.  
- Equations for partial derivatives:  $\frac{\partial f}{\partial x}$ ,  $\frac{\partial f}{\partial y}$ ,  $\frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x^2}$ ,  $\frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial y^2}$ ,  $\frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x \partial y}$ .  
- A diagram of a vector field with arrows indicating direction and magnitude.  
- Equations for double and triple integrals:  $\iint_D f(x,y) dxdy$ ,  $\iiint_D f(x,y,z) dx dy dz$ .  
- A diagram of a coordinate system with axes x, y, z.  
- Equations for trigonometric identities:  $\sin^2 x + \cos^2 x = 1$ ,  $\sin 2x = 2 \sin x \cos x$ ,  $\cos 2x = \cos^2 x - \sin^2 x$ .  
- A diagram of a unit circle with points labeled by angle  $\theta$ .

# Mathematics



# Biology/Chemistry



**TACK!**