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Thermodynamics of Life

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Técnico – Lisbon University

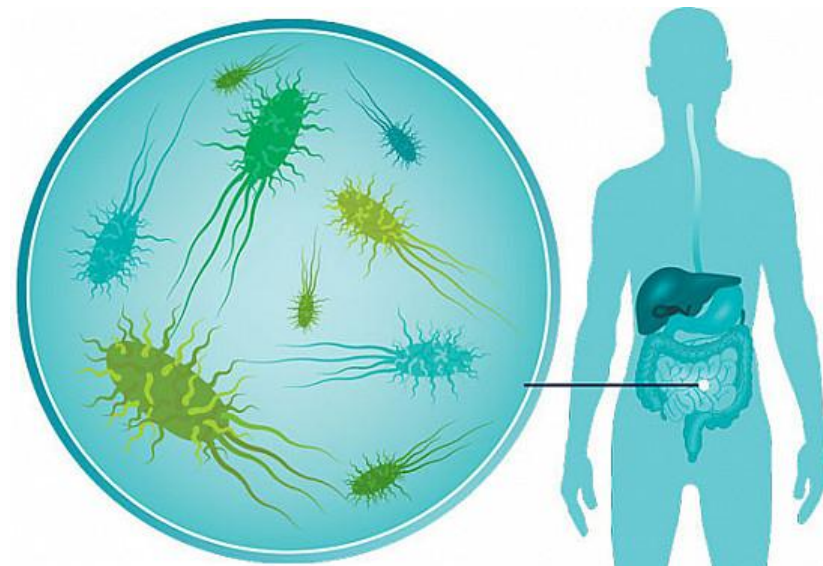
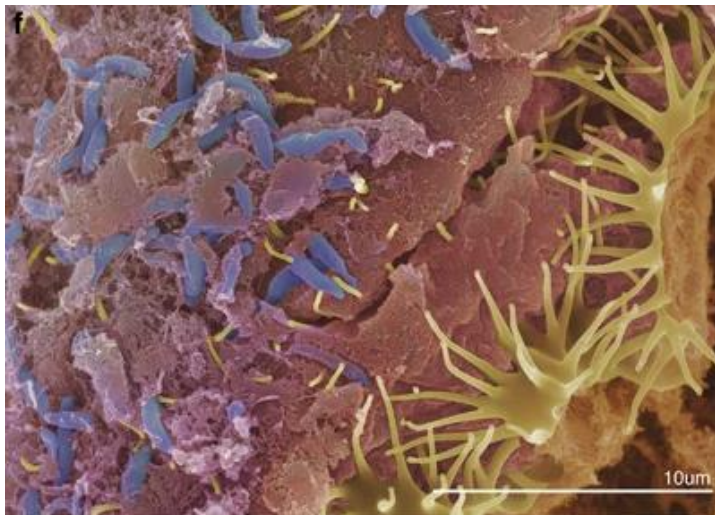
School: 26 May - 3 Jun 2025

University of Crete, Heraklion, Greece



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Boundaries





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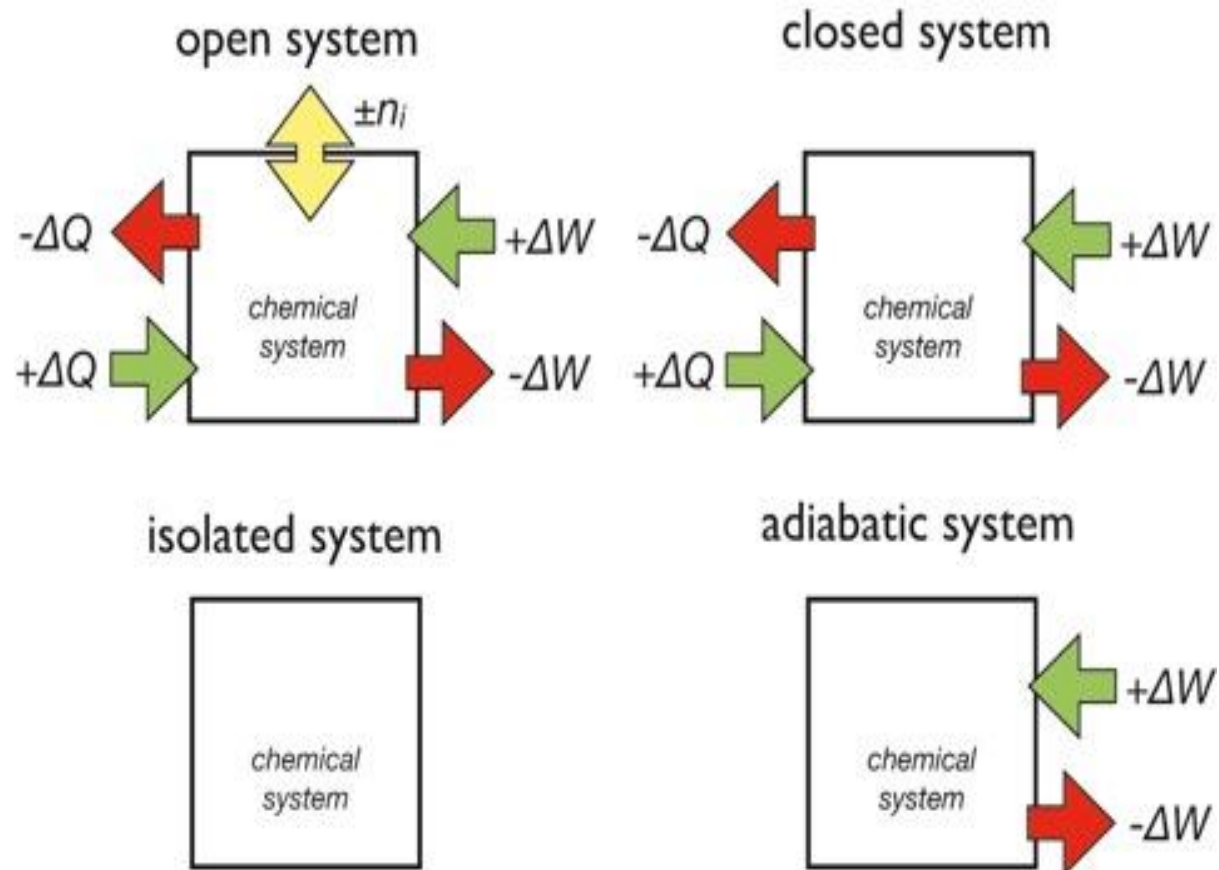
Boundaries



- Open, closed, adiabatic and isolated systems

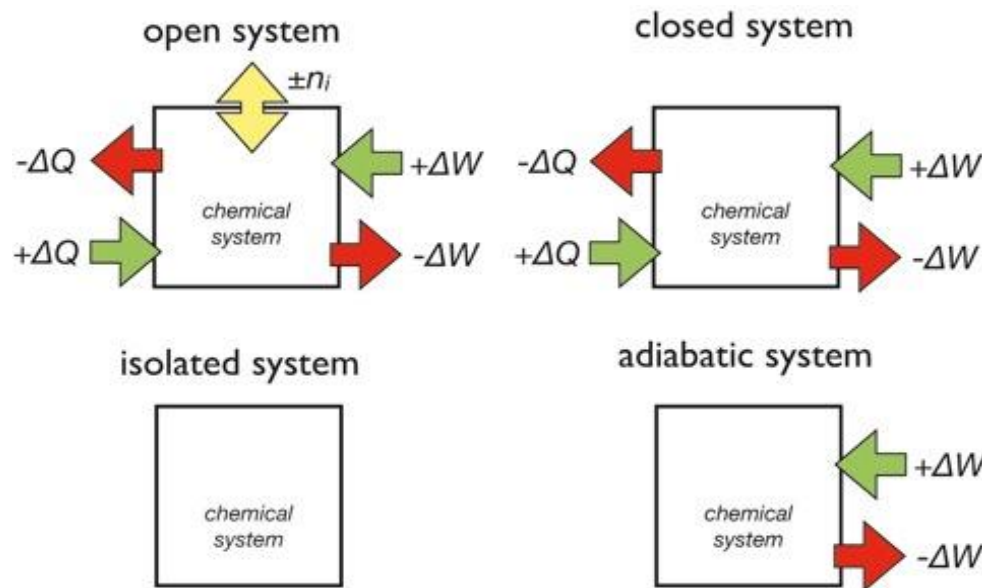
Boundaries

- Open, closed, adiabatic and isolated systems



Boundaries

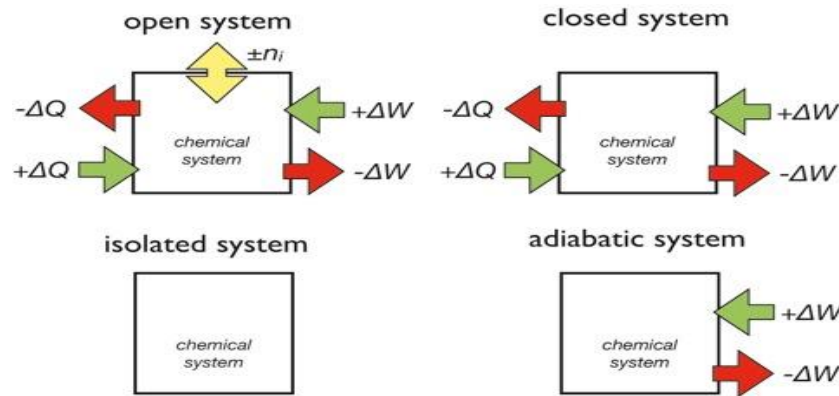
- Open, closed, adiabatic and isolated systems



- What should be the criteria to define boundaries?

Boundaries

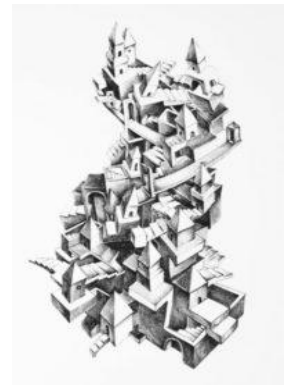
- Open, closed, adiabatic and isolated systems



- What should be the criteria to define boundaries?

“Penthesilea is different. You advance for hours and it is not clear to you whether you are already in the city's midst or still outside it. Like a lake with low shores lost in swamps, so Penthesilea spreads for miles around, a soupy city diluted in the plain; pale buildings back to back in mangy fields, among plank fences and corrugated iron sheds.”

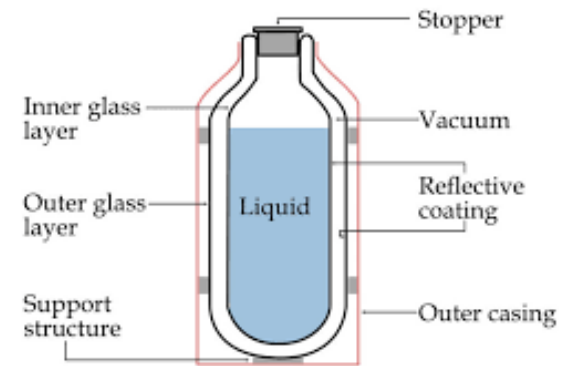
Invisible cities, Italo Calvino





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Isolated Systems





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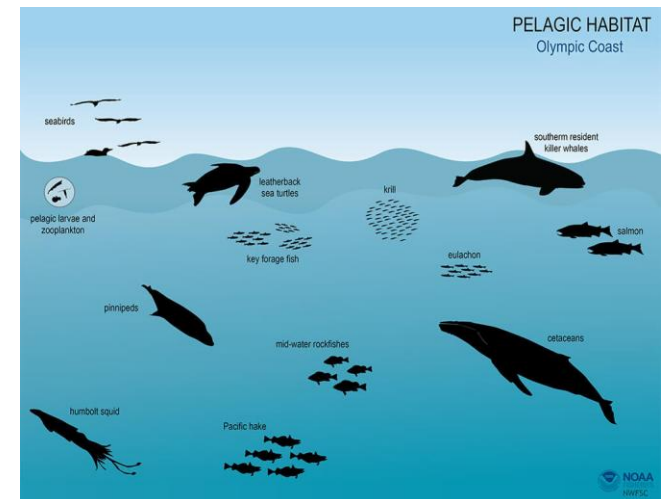
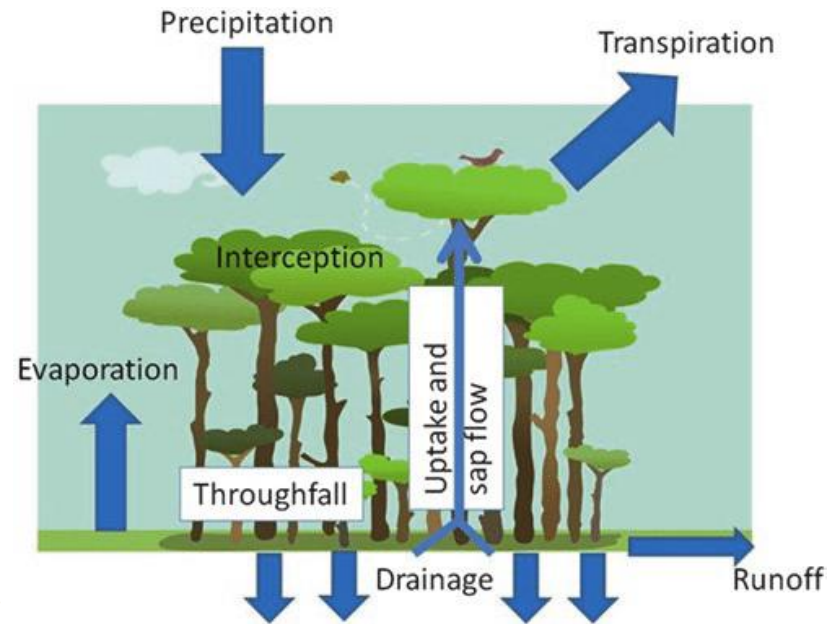
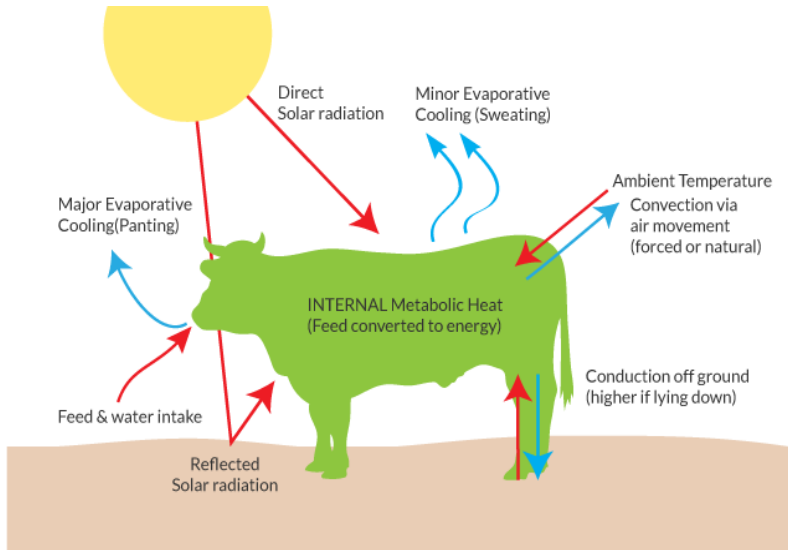
Closed Systems





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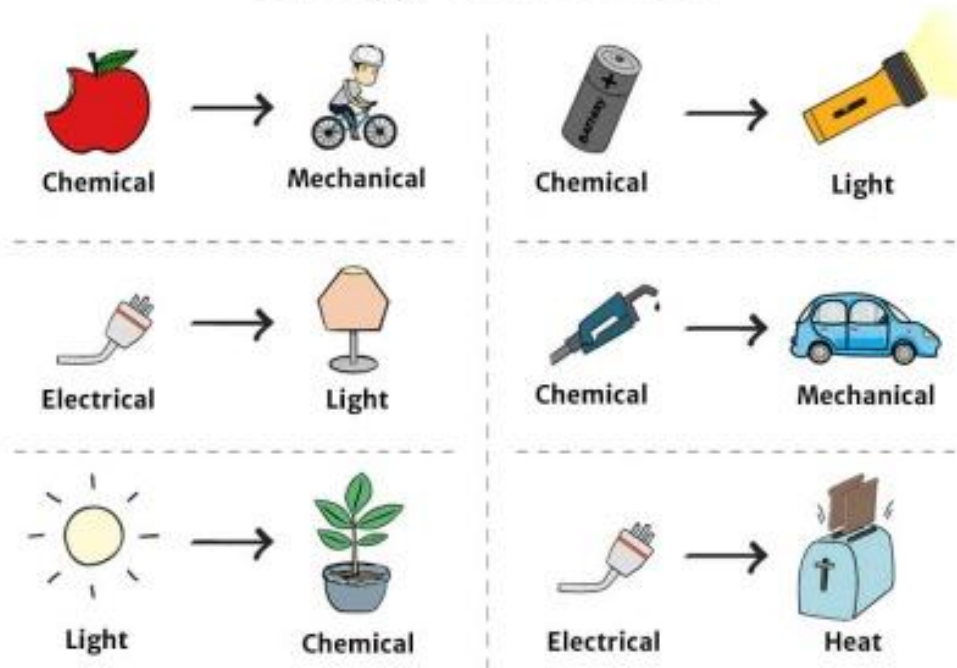
Open Systems



First Law of Thermodynamics

- Energy is always conserved. Energy cannot be destroyed nor created. Energy can only be transformed

Energy Conversion



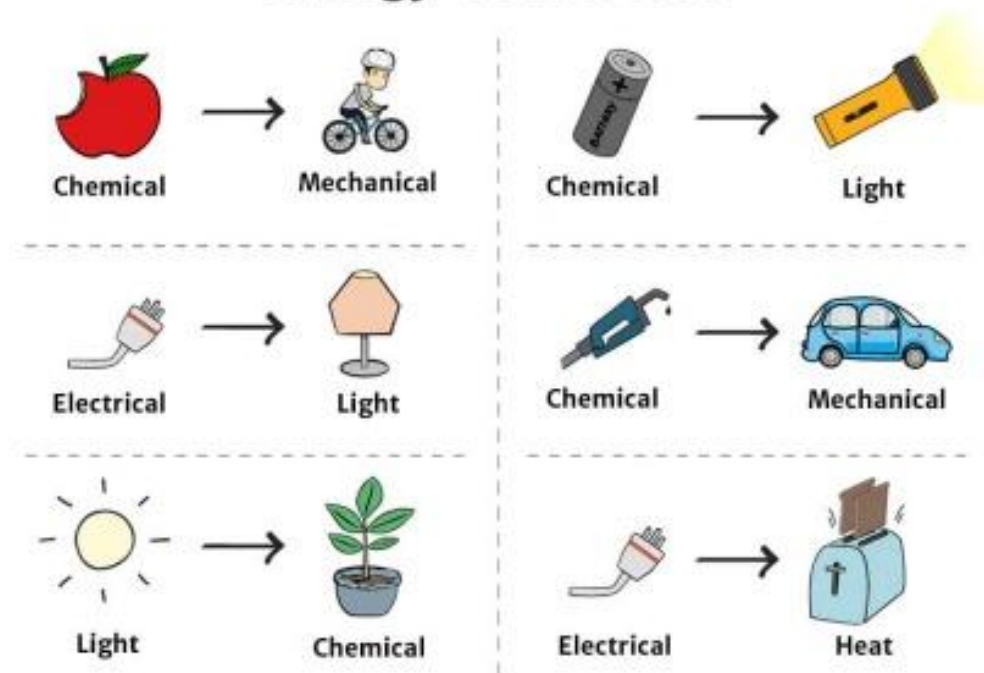
First Law of Thermodynamics

- Energy efficiency: not all input energy is transformed into useful output



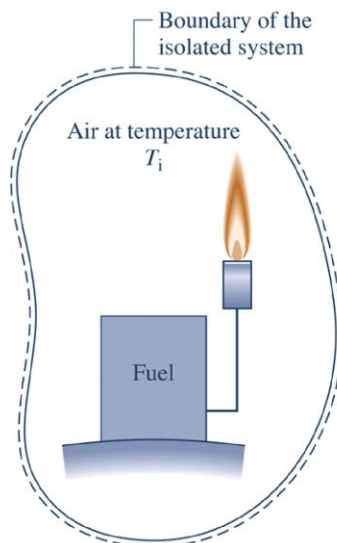
$$\eta = \frac{\dot{Q}}{\dot{W}}$$

Energy Conversion

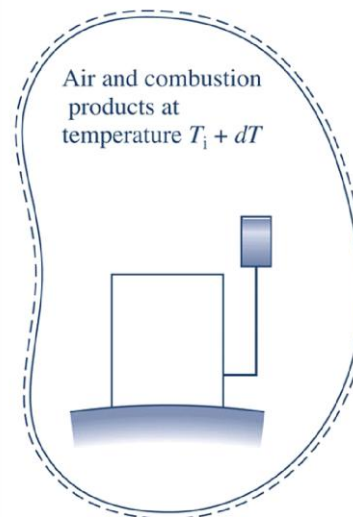


Energy Balance in Isolated Systems

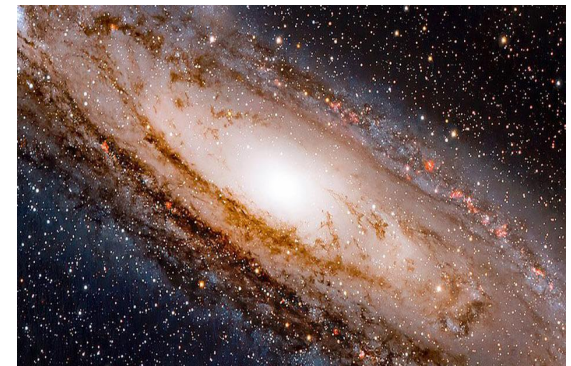
- Energy is always conserved. Energy cannot be destroyed nor created. Energy can only be transformed.
- Energy change?



Fuel-air combination

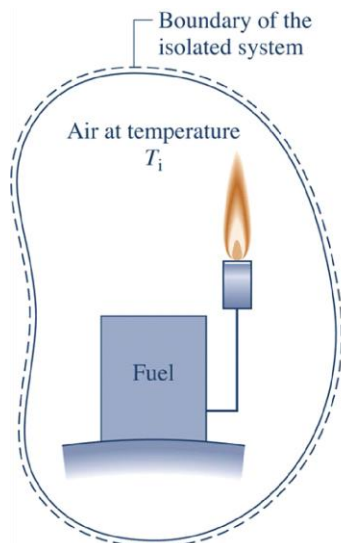


Warm air mixture

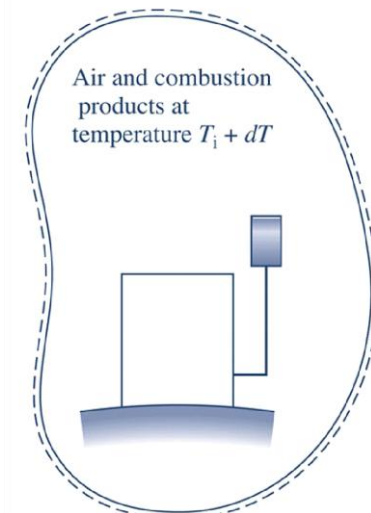


Energy Balance in Isolated Systems

- Energy is always conserved. Energy cannot be destroyed nor created. Energy can only be transformed.
- Energy change = 0



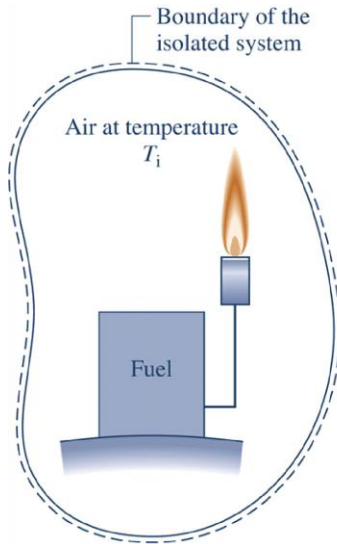
Fuel-air combination



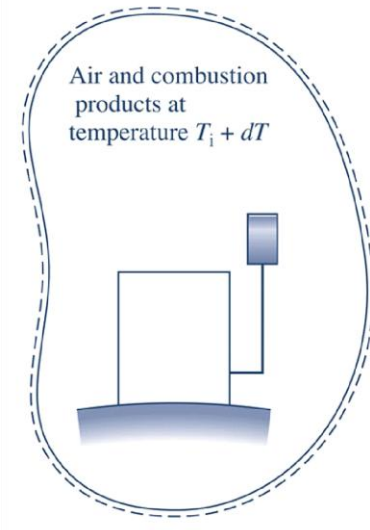
Warm air mixture

First Law of Thermodynamics

- Energy alone is not enough to distinguish two different states in this system



Fuel-air combination

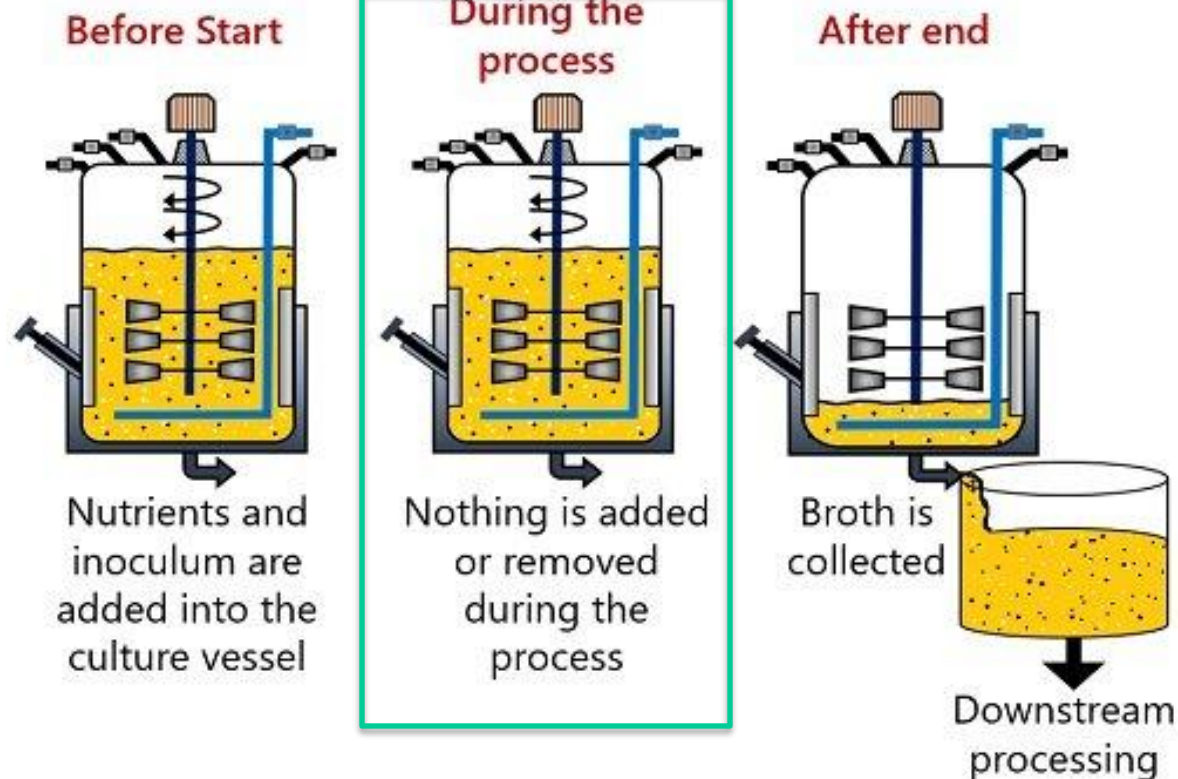


Warm air mixture

Energy Balance in Closed Systems

- Energy change?

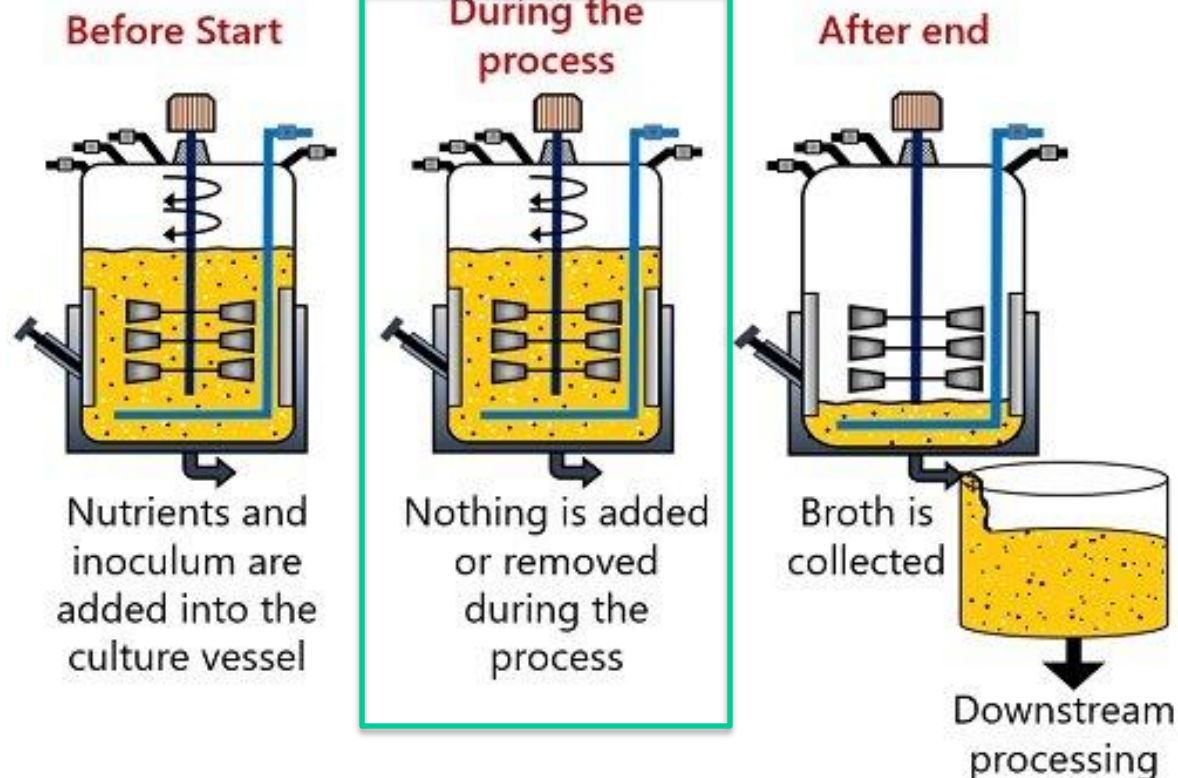
Batch Culture Fermentation Process



Energy Balance in Closed Systems

- Energy change = Heat + Work

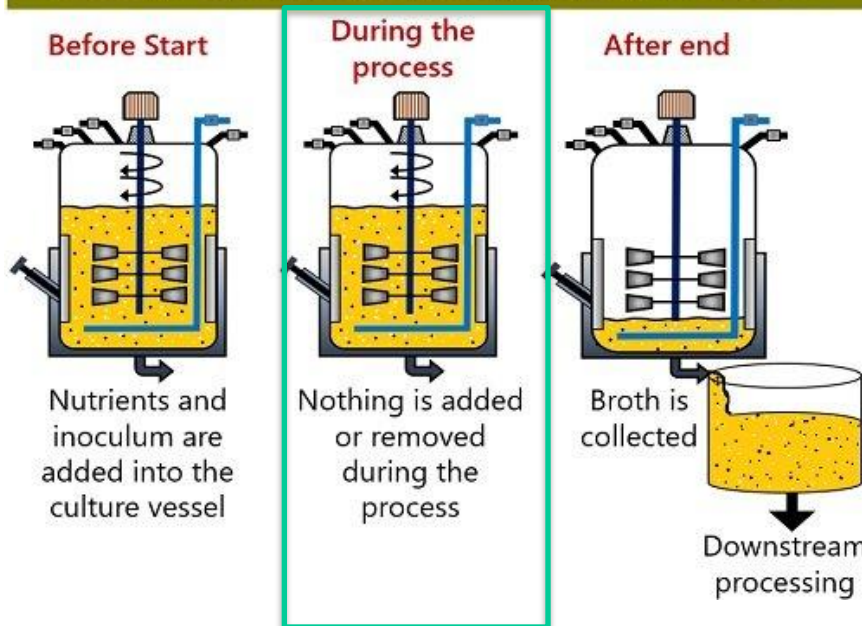
Batch Culture Fermentation Process



Energy Balance in Closed Systems

- Energy change = Heat + Work

Batch Culture Fermentation Process

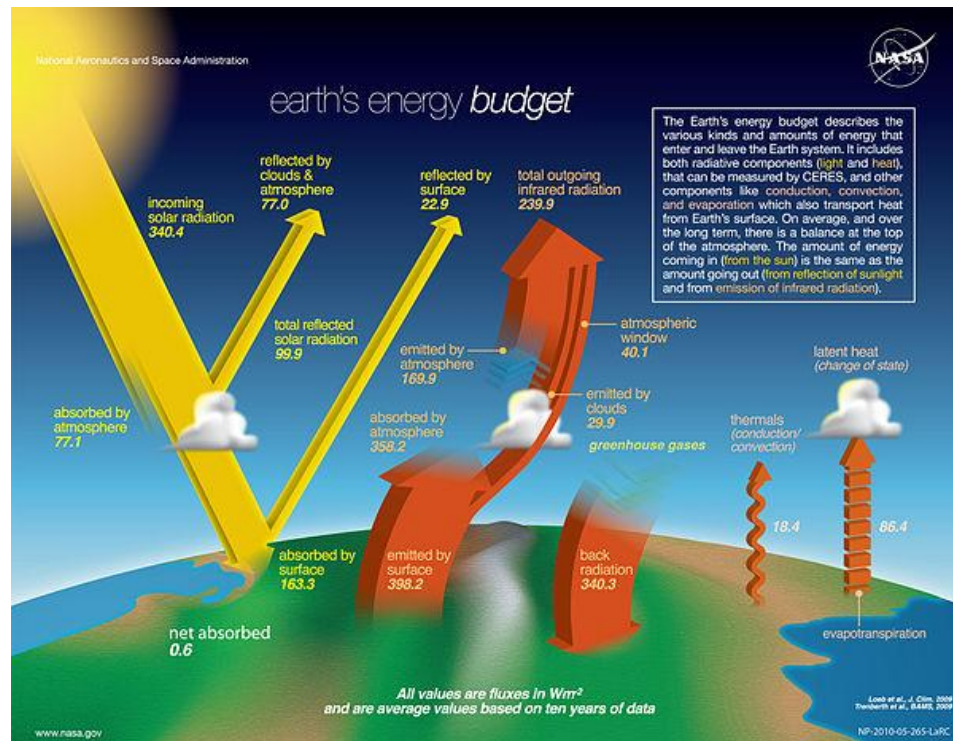


$$\Delta E = \Delta(U + E_p + E_c) = Q + W$$

- **1st Law: Energy Conservation**
- Forms of E: U, E_c and E_p
- Energy transfer by Q and W
- Sign of heat and work fluxes
- Steady state vs. Transient

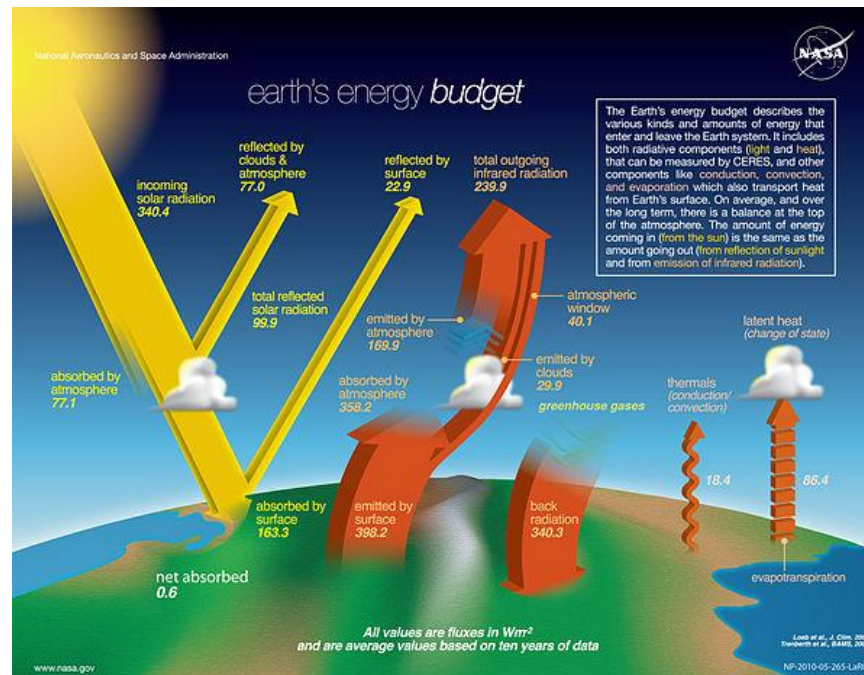
Energy Balance in Closed Systems

- Energy balance?



Energy Balance in Closed Systems

- Energy change = heat_in + heat_out ≈ 0



$T_{\text{Sun}} = 5778 \text{ K}$; $\text{Radius}_{\text{Sun}} = 696\,340 \text{ km}$
 $\text{Distance}_{\text{Sun}_{\text{Earth}}} = 151\,000\,000 \text{ km}$; $\text{Albedo} = 30\%$
 $T_{\text{Earth}} = 255 \text{ K}$



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Second Law of Thermodynamics



- Not all energy forms are the same. Some are better than others 😊



Second Law of Thermodynamics

- Energy is degraded in any real transformation process.

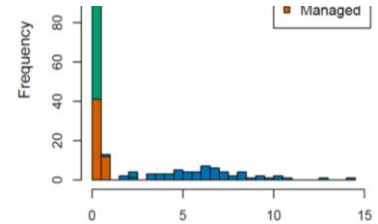
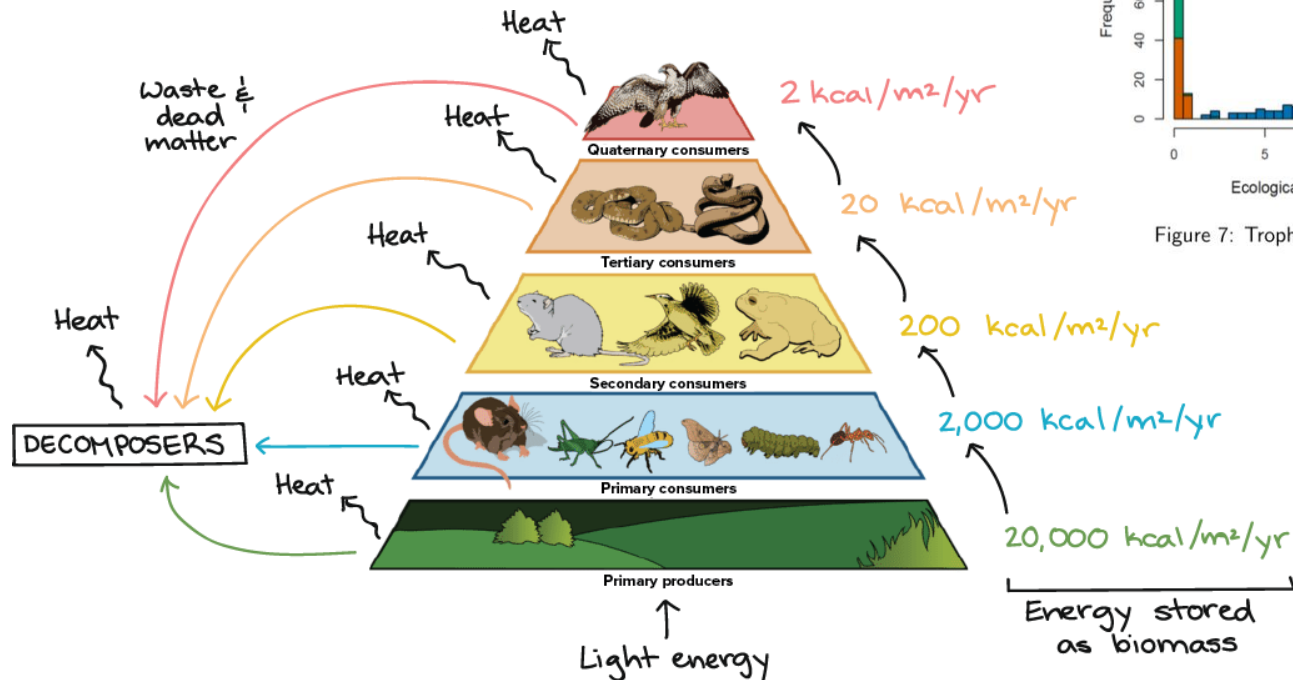
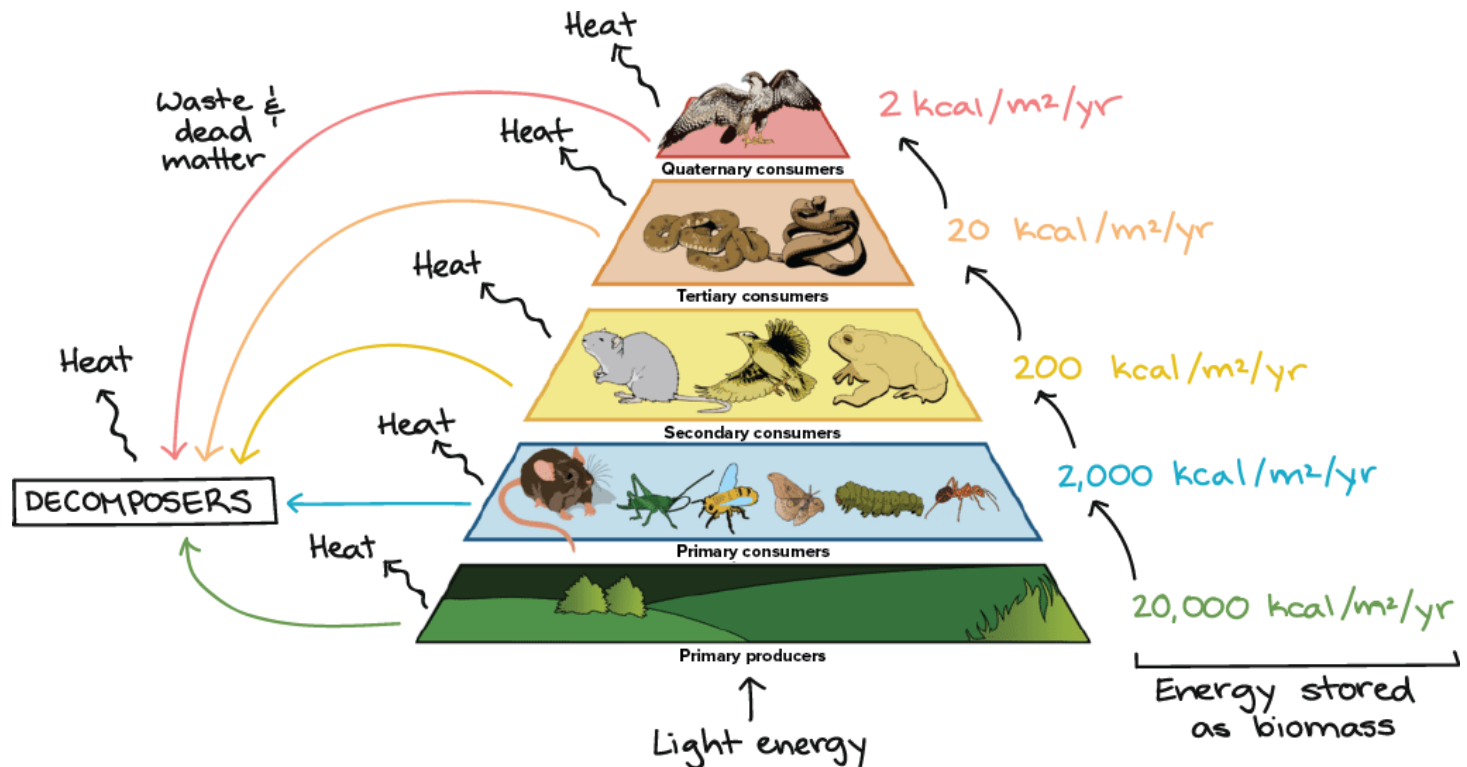


Figure 7: Trophic efficiency.

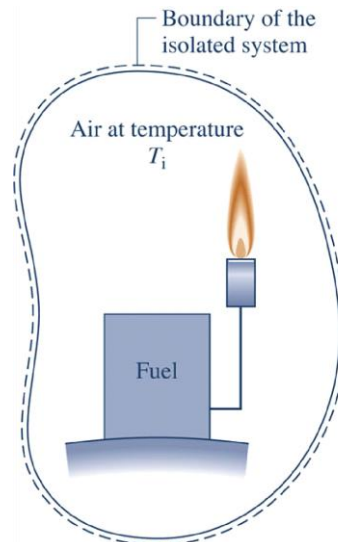
Second Law of Thermodynamics

- Entropy measures energy degradation. Entropy cannot be destroyed; it can only be created.

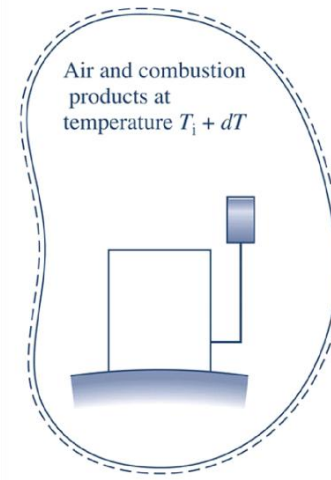


Entropy Balance in Isolated Systems

- Entropy cannot be destroyed; it can only be created.
- Entropy change?



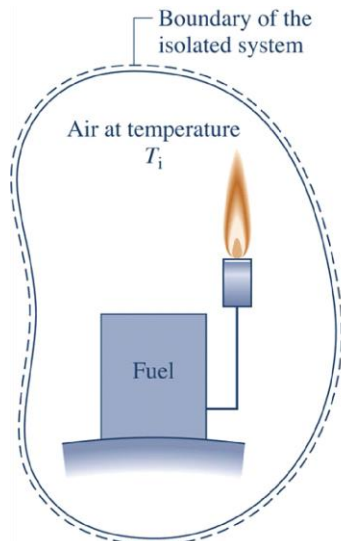
Fuel-air combination



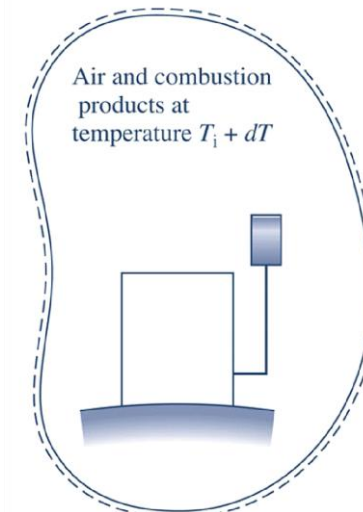
Warm air mixture

Entropy Balance in isolated Systems

- Entropy cannot be destroyed; it can only be created.
- Entropy change = entropy production ≥ 0



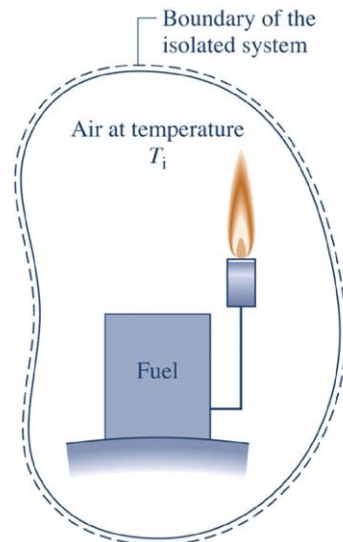
Fuel-air combination



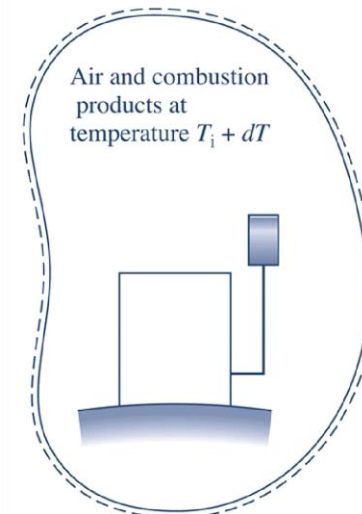
Warm air mixture

Second Law of Thermodynamics

- Entropy (not energy) distinguishes these two states of the system



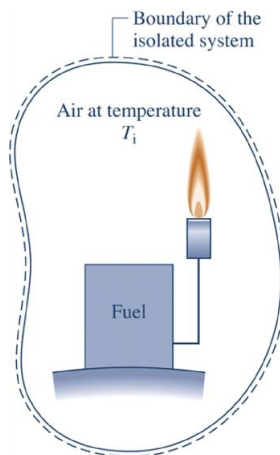
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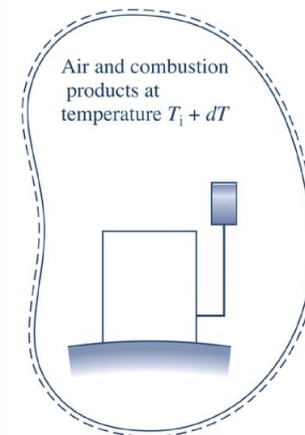
Warm air mixture

Entropy Balance in isolated Systems

- Entropy cannot be destroyed; it can only be created.
- Entropy change = entropy production ≥ 0
- Processes that occur naturally in isolated systems move the system to equilibrium



Fuel-air combination



Warm air mixture

Spontaneous Processes

- **Spontaneous process** - a process that occurs “naturally” in isolated systems
- Hot coffee in a cold room gets colder and not hotter
- Ice on top of a boiling pan melts; it does not get cooler





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Someday, the opposite will happen,
and on that day, I shall mock the
laws of thermodynamics.





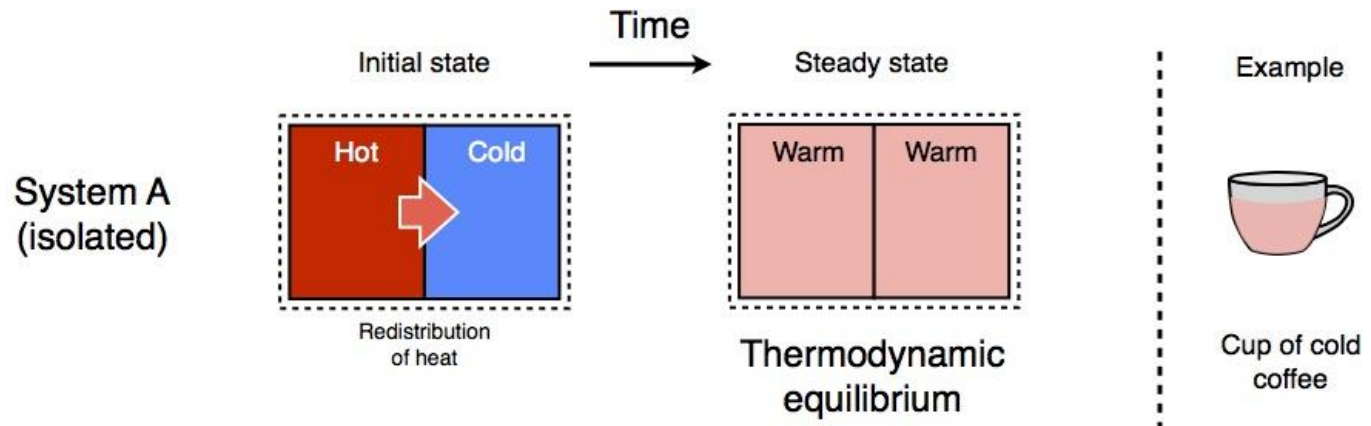
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Second Law of Thermodynamics



- The entropy of an isolated system increases as it tends to equilibrium, where it achieves its maximum value

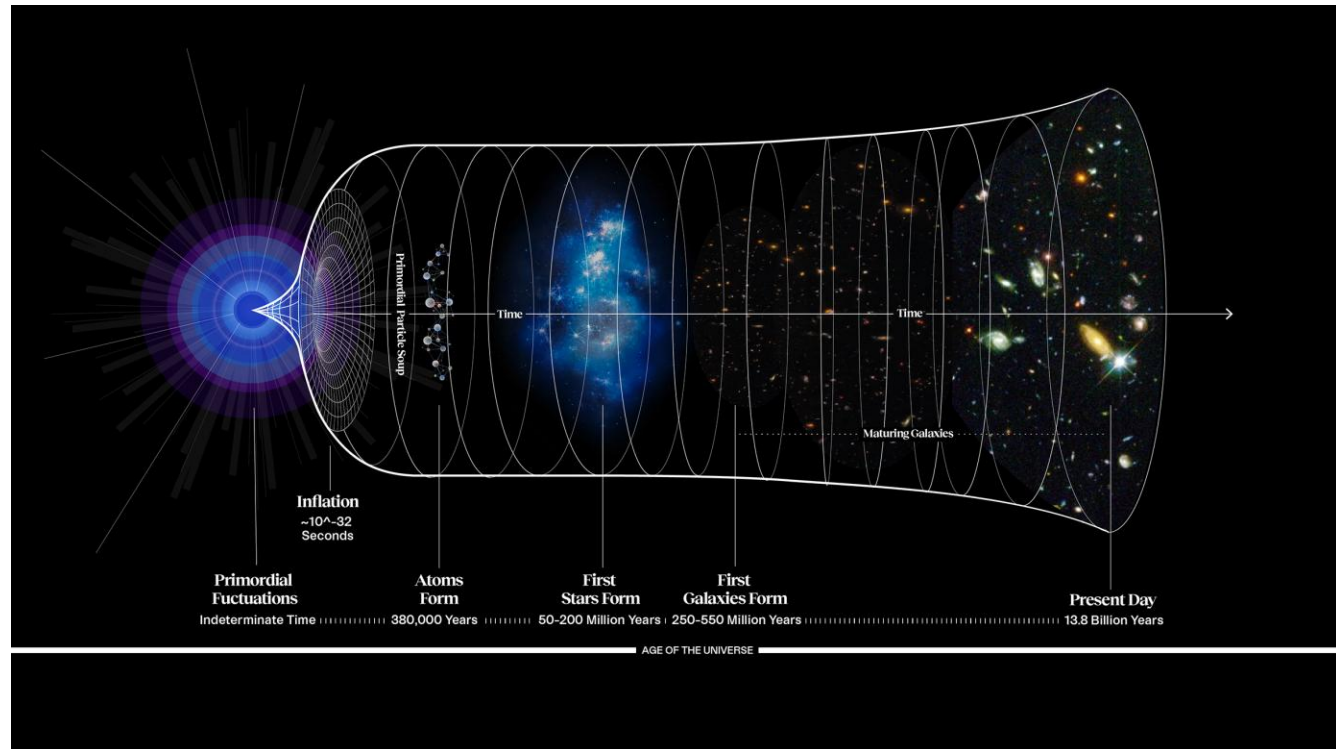


<https://thermodynamicearth.org/materials/chapter-1-figures/>



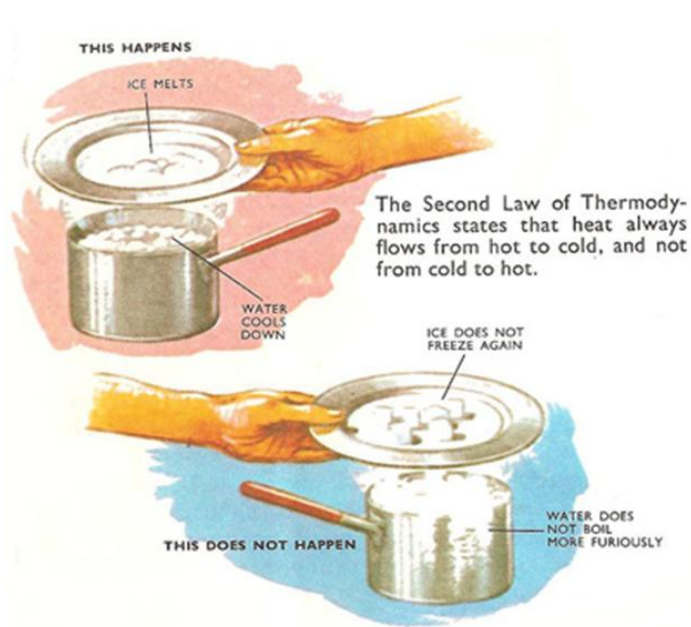
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Second Law of Thermodynamics



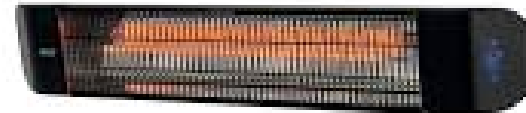
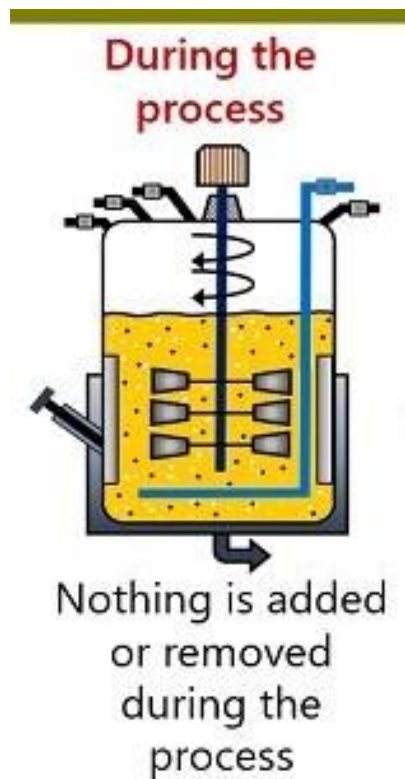
The state variable: Entropy

- Entropy is the state variable that gives unidirectionality to time in physical processes occurring in isolated & **adiabatic** systems.



Entropy Balance in Closed Systems

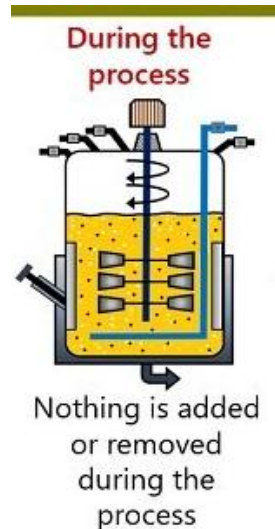
- Entropy change = Entropy transfer in the form of heat + entropy production



Entropy Balance in Closed Systems

- Entropy change = Entropy transfer in the form of heat + entropy production

$$\Delta S = \frac{Q}{T} + \sigma$$



- The entropy of the heat flow decreases with increasing temperature
- Entropy flows with heat but not with work



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Entropy Balance in Closed Systems

- Entropy change = Entropy transfer in the form of heat + entropy production

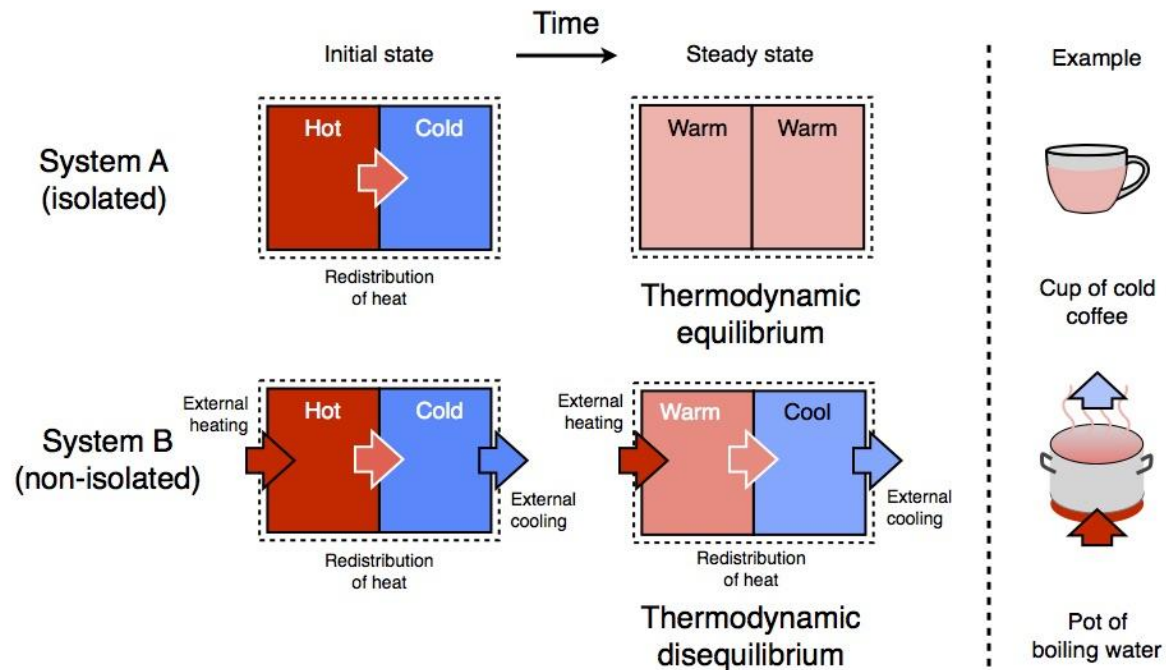
$$\Delta S = \frac{Q}{T} + \sigma$$



- **2nd Law: Energy Degradation**
- Entropy transfer by Q
- Sign of entropy flows
- Steady state vs. Transient

Second Law of Thermodynamics

- The entropy of a closed system can stay constant – a closed system can remain in non-equilibrium





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Second Law of Thermodynamics



- Why is Life possible in a closed system in steady-state?





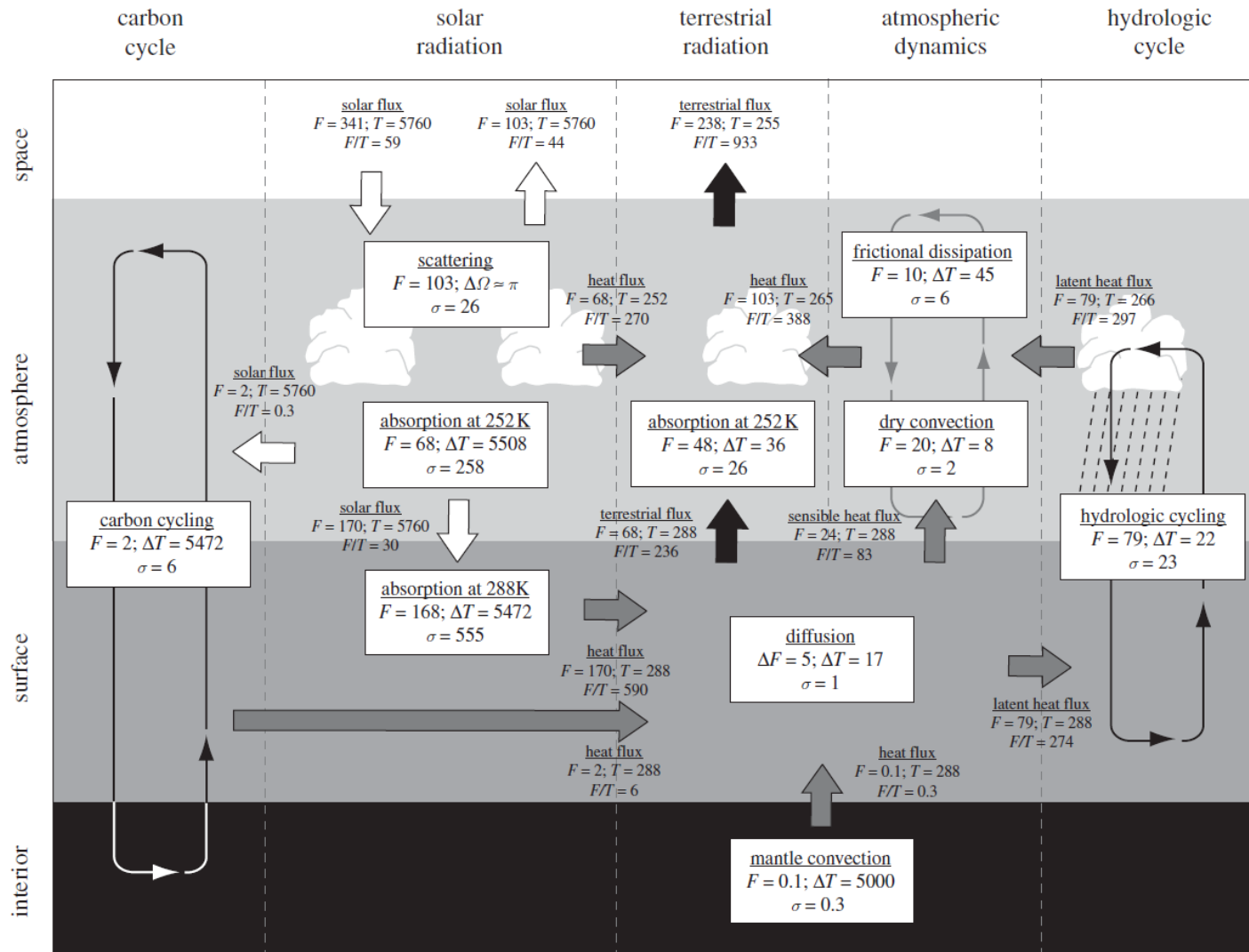
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Second Law of Thermodynamics



- Entropy Change = $\text{Heat}_{\text{in}}/T_{\text{sun}} + \text{Heat}_{\text{out}}/T_{\text{Earth}} + \text{entropy production} \approx 0$
- $T_{\text{Sun}} = 5778 \text{ K}$; $T_{\text{Earth}} = 255 \text{ K}$

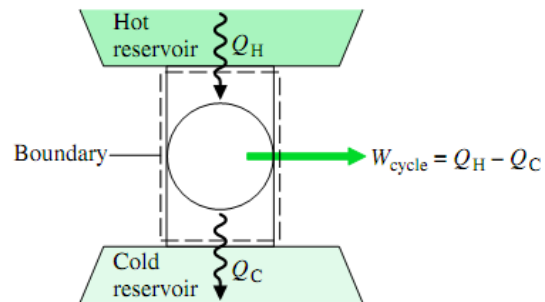
Entropy Production on Earth



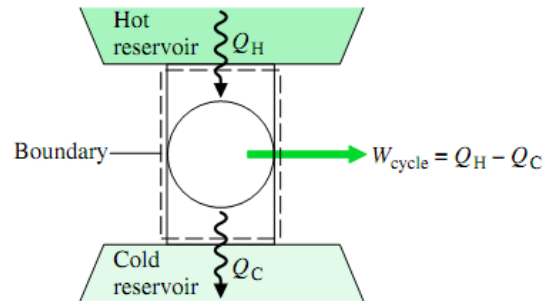


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Closed System – Power Cycle

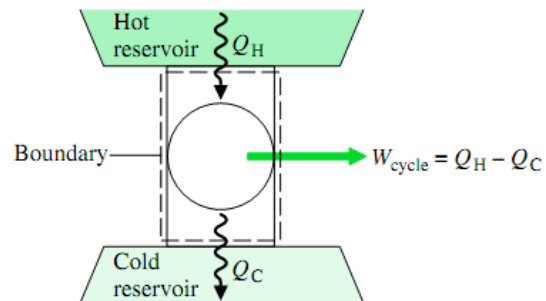


Closed System – Power Cycle



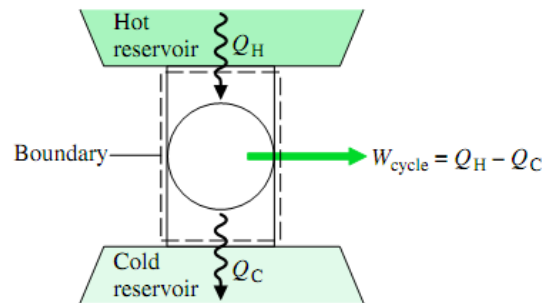
- First law?

Closed System – Power Cycle



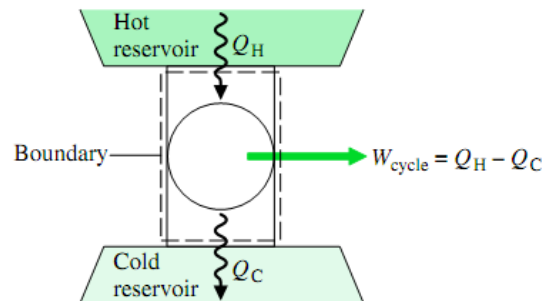
- First law: $\Delta E = Q_H - Q_C - W_{cycle} = 0 \Rightarrow W_{cycle} = Q_H - Q_C$

Closed System – Power Cycle



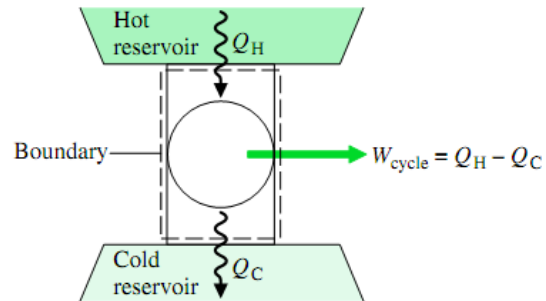
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Closed System – Power Cycle



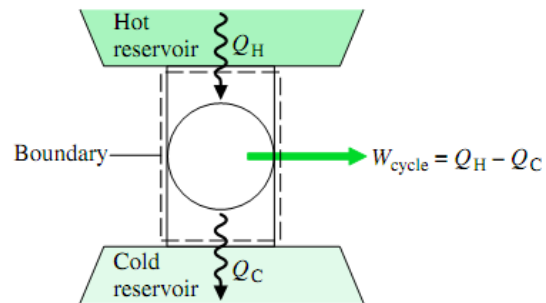
- First law: $\Delta E = Q_H - Q_C - W_{cycle} = 0 \Rightarrow W_{cycle} = Q_H - Q_C$
- Second law: $\Delta S = \frac{Q_H}{T_H} - \frac{Q_C}{T_C} + \sigma = 0 \Rightarrow Q_C \neq 0$

Closed System – Power Cycle



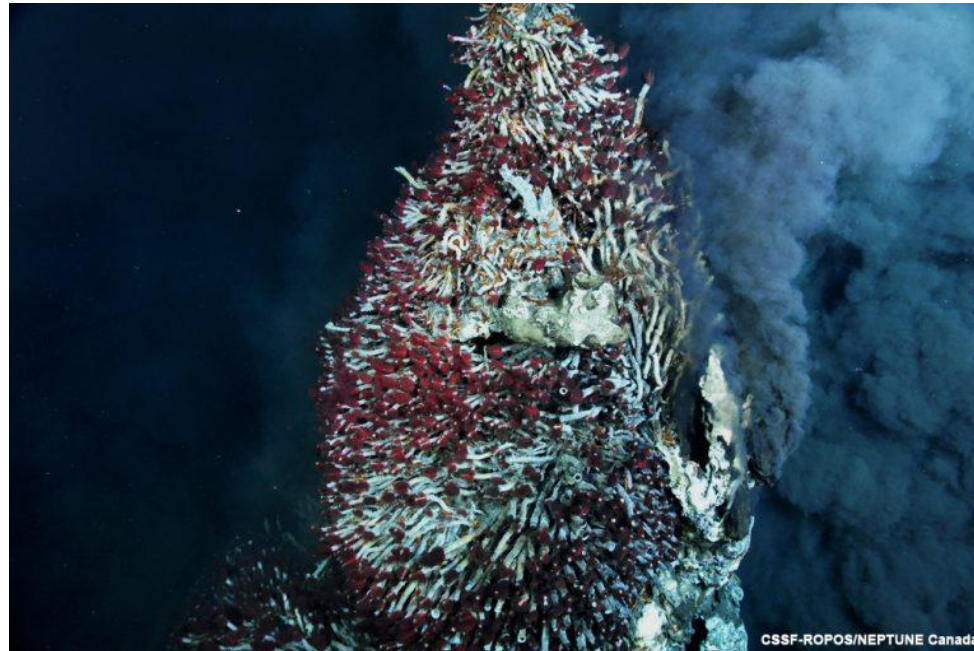
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- Second law: $\Delta S = \frac{Q_H}{T_H} - \frac{Q_C}{T_C} + \sigma = 0 \Rightarrow Q_C \neq 0$
- Not all available energy can be used to produce work

Closed System – Power Cycle



- First law: $\Delta E = Q_H - Q_C - W_{cycle} = 0 \Rightarrow W_{cycle} = Q_H - Q_C$
- Second law: $\Delta S = \frac{Q_H}{T_H} - \frac{Q_C}{T_C} + \sigma = 0 \Rightarrow Q_C \neq 0$
- Not all available energy can be used to produce work
- Amount of work decreases with entropy production

Temperature gradients in Life



- Giant tube worms in a hydrothermal vent (temperatures in water can range from 350°C to 2°C)
- Organisms do not have the apparatus to convert heat into work as closed systems



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Thermodynamics in Open Systems

- First Law of Thermodynamics
Mass and energy are conserved



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Mass Balance in Open Systems



Mass Change = Σ Mass Flows



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Mass Balance in DEB Organisms



$$M_V \dot{J}_V + M_E \dot{J}_E = M_X \dot{J}_X - M_P \dot{J}_P + M_O \dot{J}_O - M_C \dot{J}_C - M_H \dot{J}_H - M_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Conservation of mass (and number of moles) of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen

$$0 = n_M \dot{J}_M + n_O \dot{J}_O$$

- Strong homeostasis?



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Mass Balance in DEB Organisms



$$M_V \dot{J}_V + M_E \dot{J}_E = M_X \dot{J}_X - M_P \dot{J}_P + M_O \dot{J}_O - M_C \dot{J}_C - M_H \dot{J}_H - M_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Conservation of mass (and number of moles) of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen

$$0 = n_M \dot{J}_M + n_O \dot{J}_O$$

- Strong homeostasis: chemical compositions are constant



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Mass Balance in DEB Organisms



$$M_V \dot{J}_V + M_E \dot{J}_E = M_X \dot{J}_X - M_P \dot{J}_P + M_O \dot{J}_O - M_C \dot{J}_C - M_H \dot{J}_H - M_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Conservation of mass (and number of moles) of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen

$$0 = n_M \dot{J}_M + n_O \dot{J}_O$$

- Do mass balances completely specify aggregated chemical reactions?



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Mass Balance in DEB Organisms



$$M_V \dot{J}_V + M_E \dot{J}_E = M_X \dot{J}_X - M_P \dot{J}_P + M_O \dot{J}_O - M_C \dot{J}_C - M_H \dot{J}_H - M_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Conservation of mass (and number of moles) of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen

$$0 = n_M \dot{J}_M + n_O \dot{J}_O$$

- Degrees of freedom – yEX, yVE and yPX.



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Mass Balance in DEB Organisms



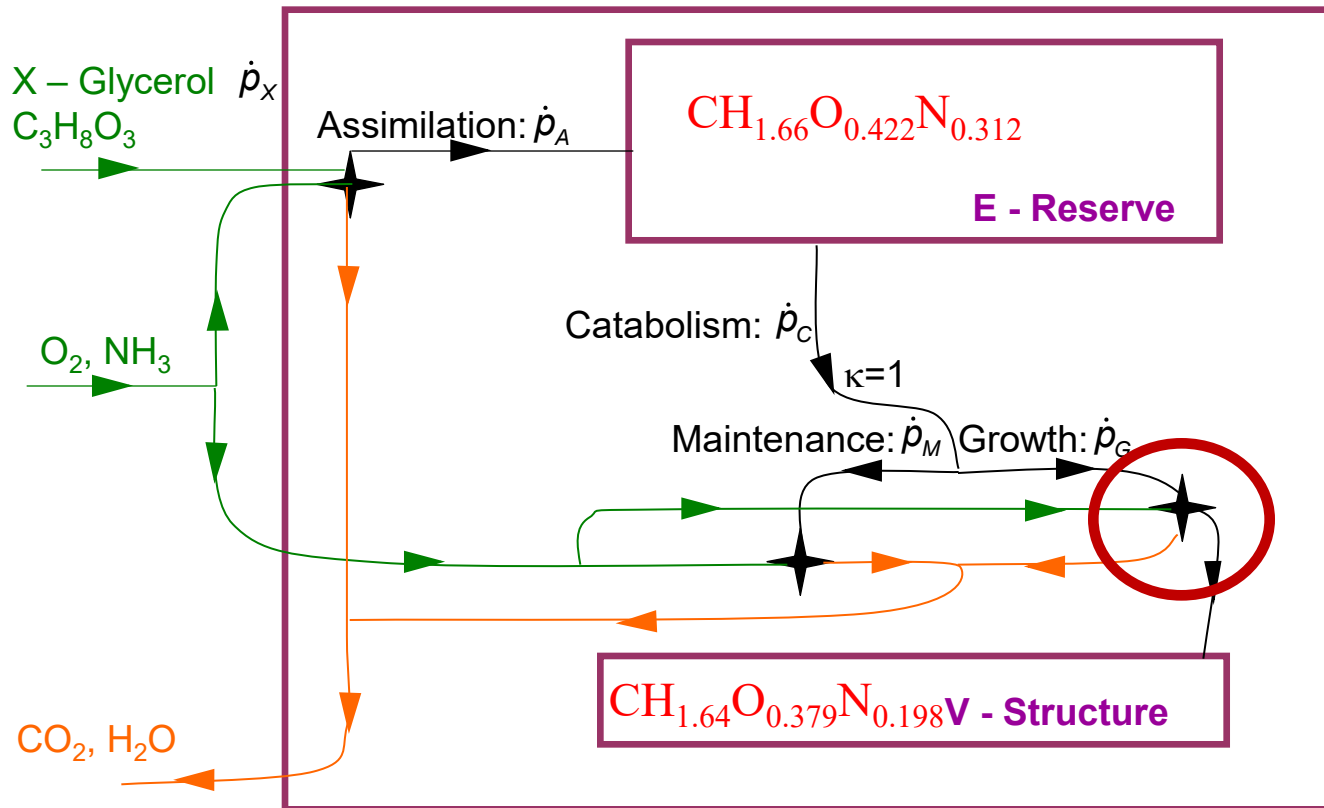
$$0 = M_X \dot{J}_X - M_P \dot{J}_P + M_O \dot{J}_O - M_C \dot{J}_C - M_H \dot{J}_H - M_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Steady-state

Assimilation, Dissipation and Growth

$$\text{Mass Change} = \Sigma \text{ Mass Flows} = 0$$



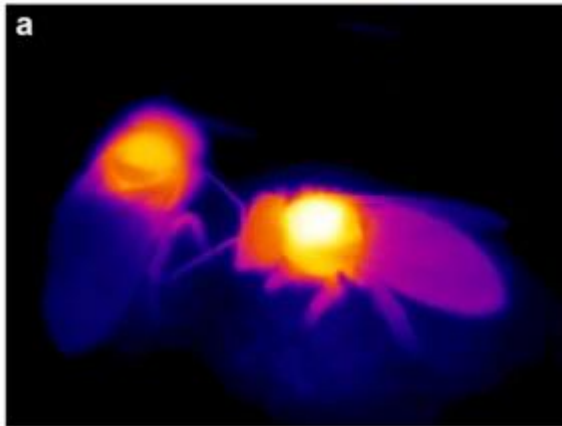
$T=35^\circ\text{C}$
 $\text{pH: } 6.8$

- *Klebsiella Aerogenes* (V1-morph)

Energy Balance in Open Systems

Energy Change = Heat + Work + Energy in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(\bar{U} + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



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- Internal energy
 - State variable
 - Extensive variable

Energy Balance in Open Systems

Energy Change = Heat + Work + Energy in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(U + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}.$$



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- Kinetic and potential energy



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Energy Balance in Open Systems

Energy Change = Heat + Work + Energy in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(U + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}.$$



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- Heat (signs)



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Energy Balance in Open Systems



Energy Change = Heat + **Work** + Energy in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(U + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}.$$

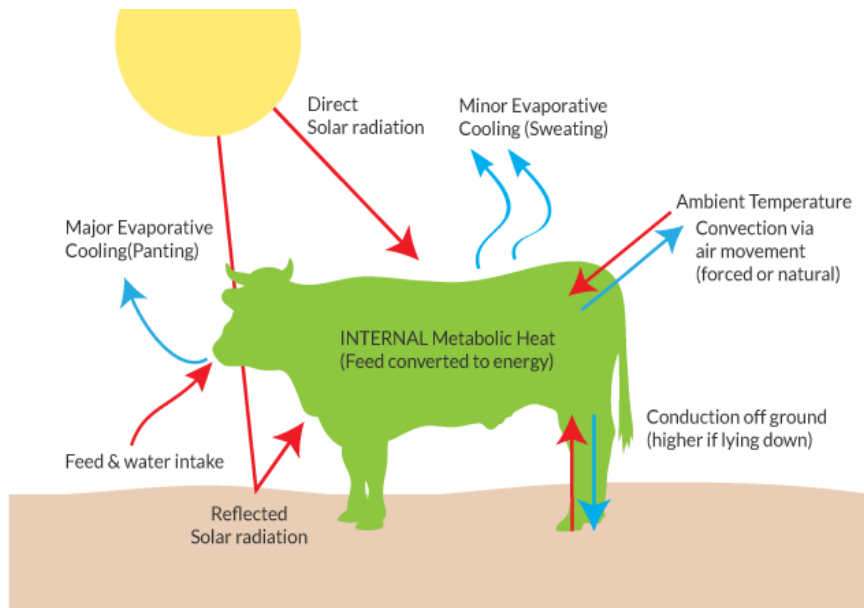
- Work (signs)



Energy Balance in Open Systems

Energy Change = Heat + Work + Energy in Mass Flow

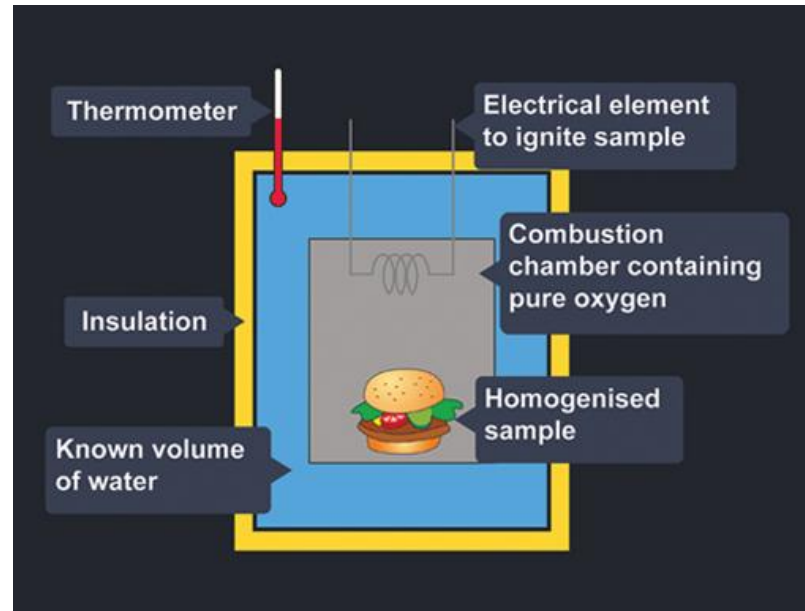
$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(U + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



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- Enthalpy $h_i = u_i + p_i v_i$

Heating values



- Amount of heat released in complete combustion

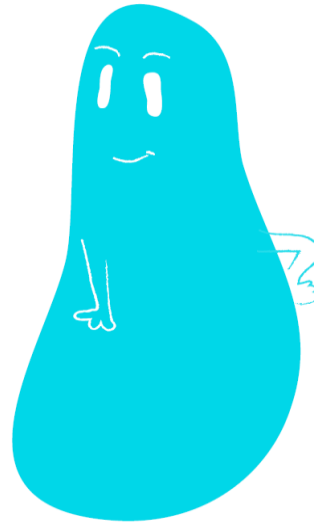


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Energy Balance in DEB organisms



$$\bar{h}_V \dot{J}_V + \bar{h}_E \dot{J}_E = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \bar{h}_X \dot{J}_X - \bar{h}_P \dot{J}_P + \bar{h}_O \dot{J}_O - \bar{h}_C \dot{J}_C - \bar{h}_H \dot{J}_H - \bar{h}_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Strong homeostasis: specific enthalpies are constant at constant T



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Energy Balance in DEB organisms



$$0 = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \bar{h}_X \dot{J}_X - \bar{h}_P \dot{J}_P + \bar{h}_O \dot{J}_O - \bar{h}_C \dot{J}_C - \bar{h}_H \dot{J}_H - \bar{h}_N \dot{J}_N$$



- Strong homeostasis: specific enthalpies are constant at constant T
- Steady-state

Structure and Reserve Enthalpies

- The energy balance equation applied to the chemostat to many steady-states:

$$0 = \bar{h}_{\mathcal{M}}^T \dot{J}_{\mathcal{M}} + \bar{h}_{\mathcal{O}}^T \dot{J}_{\mathcal{O}} + \dot{P}_T + \dots \quad \mathcal{M} : CO_2, H_2O, O_2, NH_3$$

$$\mathcal{O} : X, E, V$$

- The formation enthalpies (at 35°C) are:

$$\bar{h}_V = -107 \text{ kJ.C}^{-1} \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ (structure)}$$

$$\bar{h}_E = -33 \text{ kJ.C}^{-1} \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ (reserve)}$$

- The formation enthalpy of biomass (at 35°C) varies from:
-76 kJ.C-mol to -105 kJ C-mol

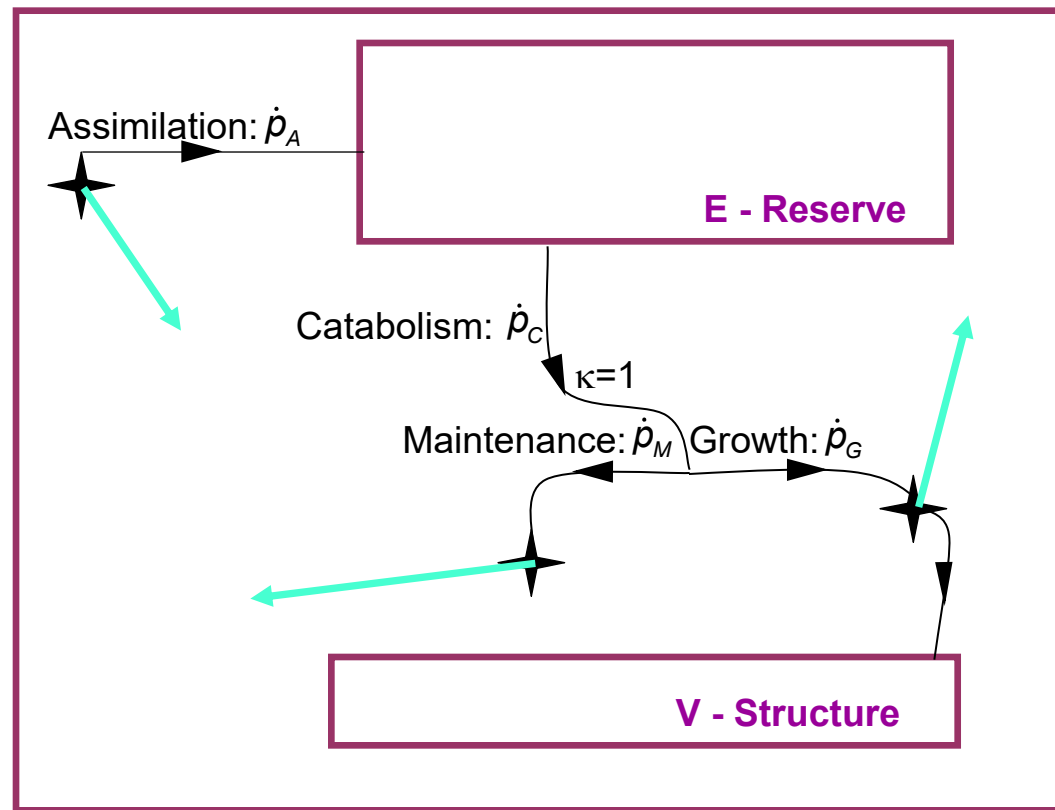


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Assimilation, Dissipation and Growth



$$0 = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}.$$

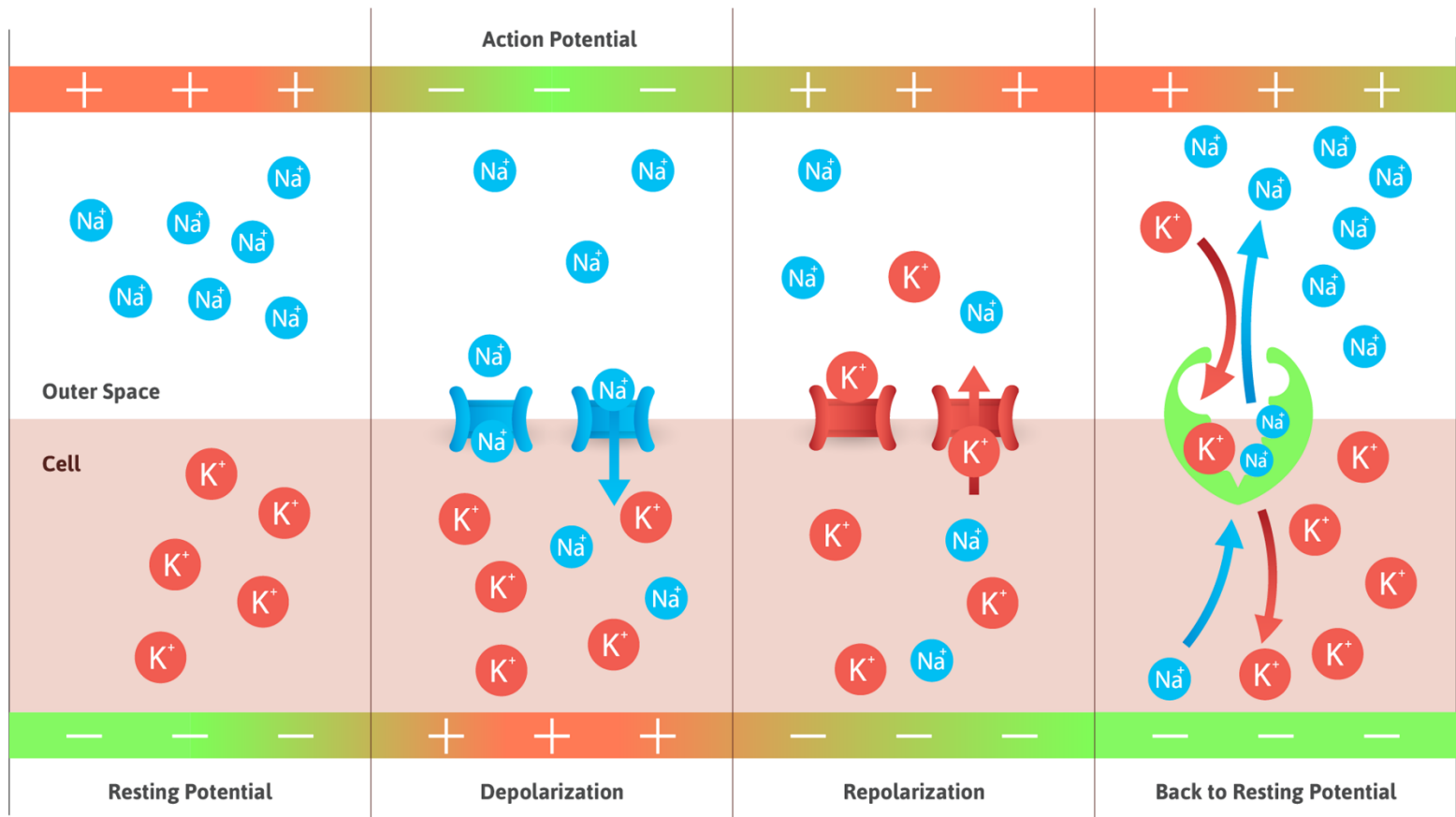


T=35°C
pH: 6.8

**Internal
Work**

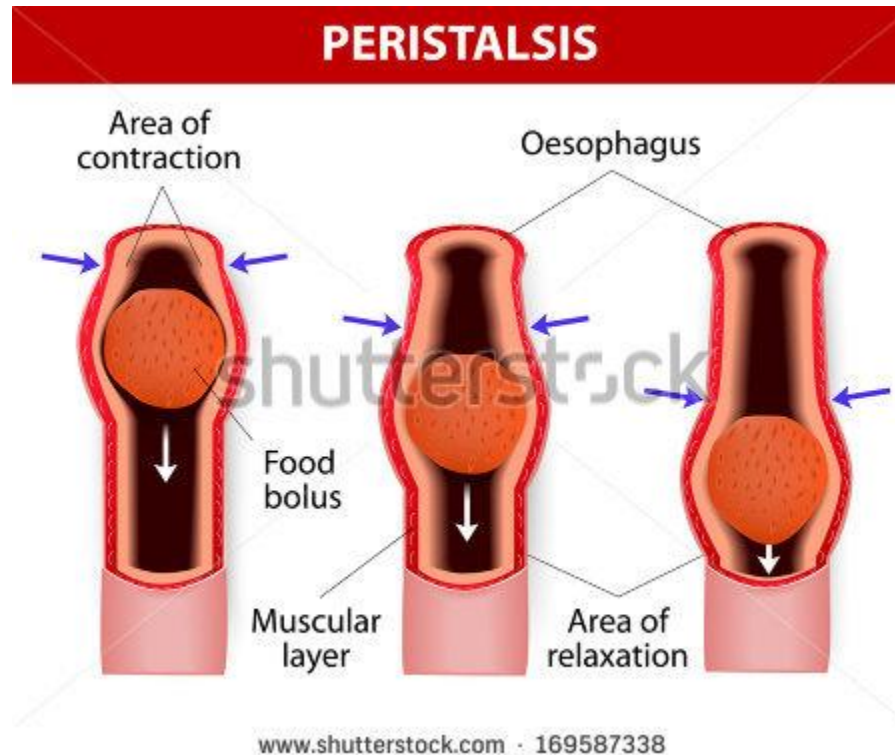
Internal Chemical Work

- Maintaining concentration gradients across membranes



Internal Muscle Work

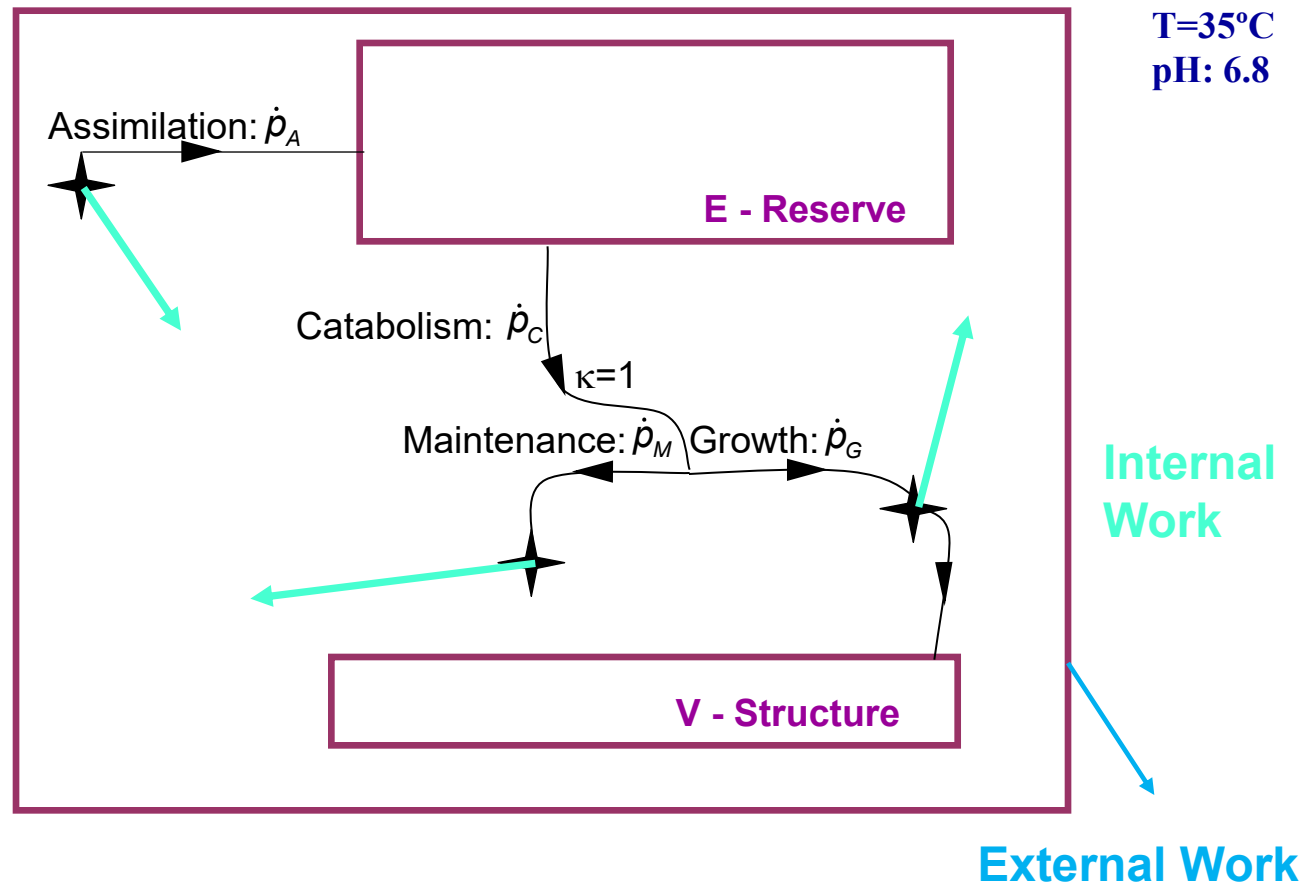
- Peristaltic movements by the oesophagus



Energy Balance in DEB Organisms



$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(U + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}.$$





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External Work

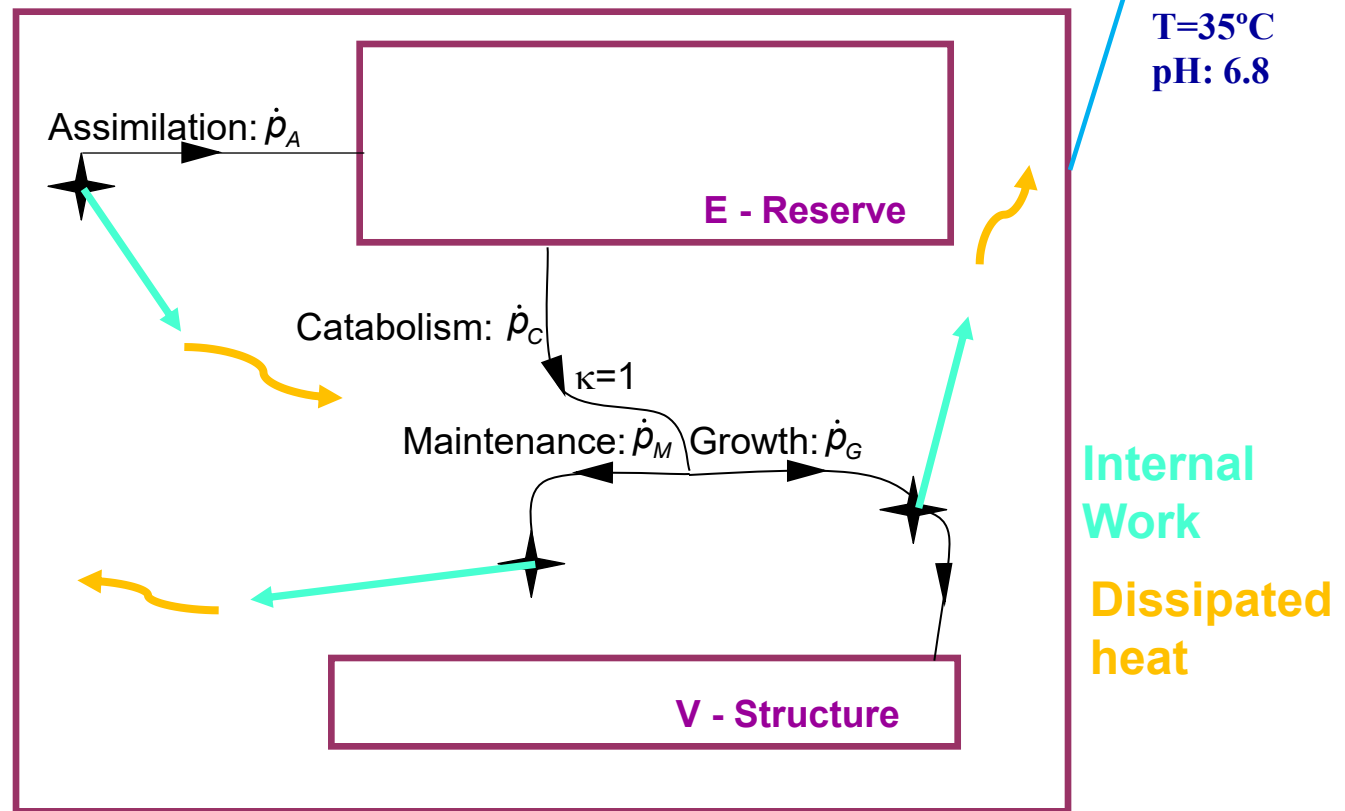
- Movement



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Assimilation, Dissipation and Growth

$$0 = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



- Internal work \neq external work!!



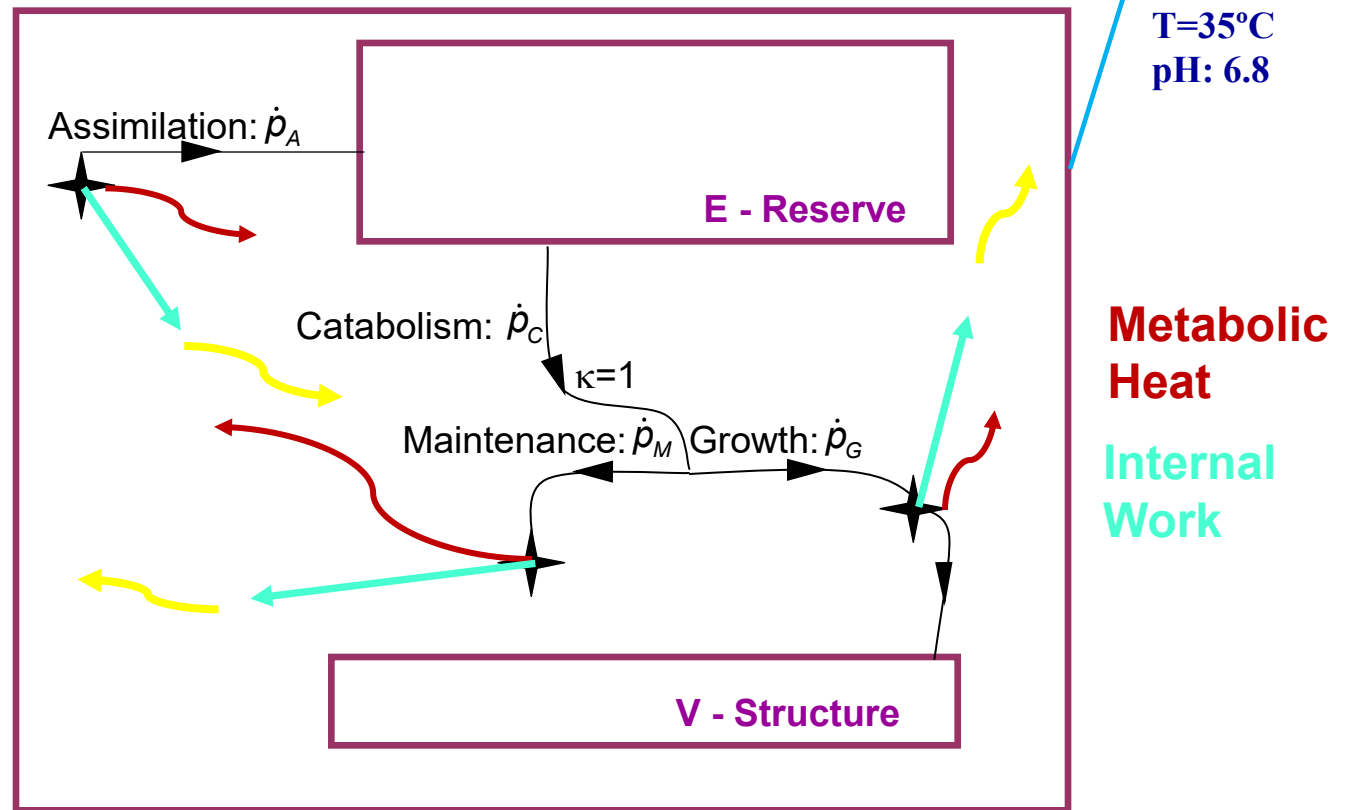
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Internal Work dissipated as heat



Assimilation, Dissipation and Growth

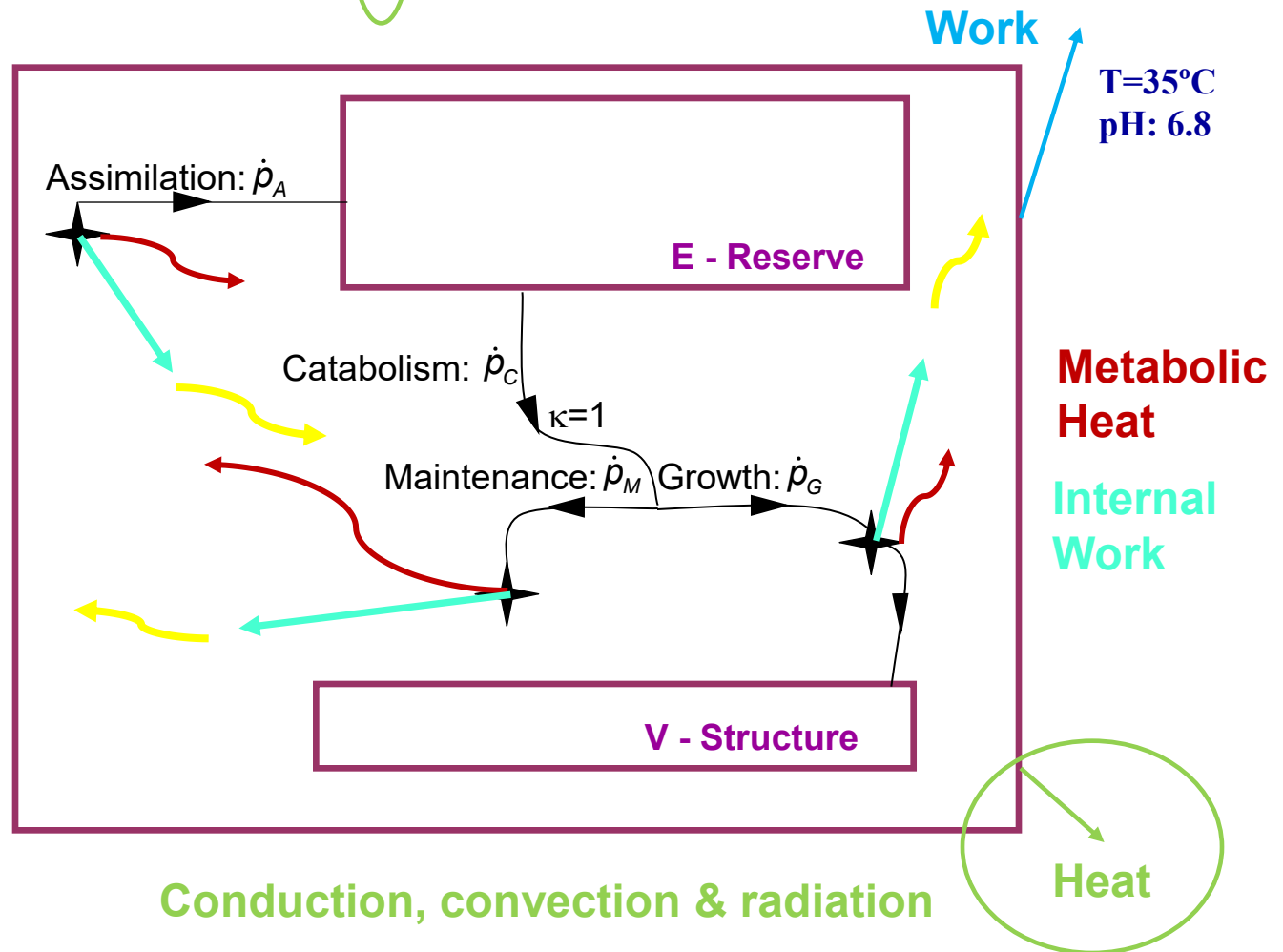
$$0 = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



Energy Balance in DEB Organisms



$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \frac{d(U + KE + PE)}{dt} = \dot{Q} + \dot{W} + \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{h}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



Endotherms

- Thermal homeostasis
- Somatic maintenance needs (p_T)
- Behaviour
- Insulation



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Poikilotherms

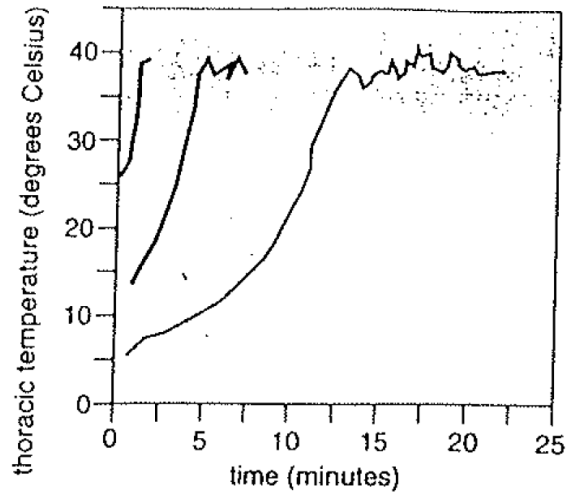


Figure 2. Bee warms up by contracting its flight muscles. A bumblebee in an ambient temperature of 24 (blue), 13 (red) or 7 (yellow) degrees Celsius can quickly increase its thoracic temperature to a flight-ready level near 40 degrees. Warm-up may take several minutes in cold temperatures.



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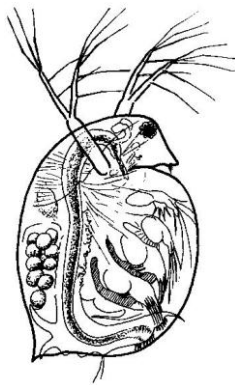
IMAGE ID: 545093821
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Metabolic rates: the effect of temperature

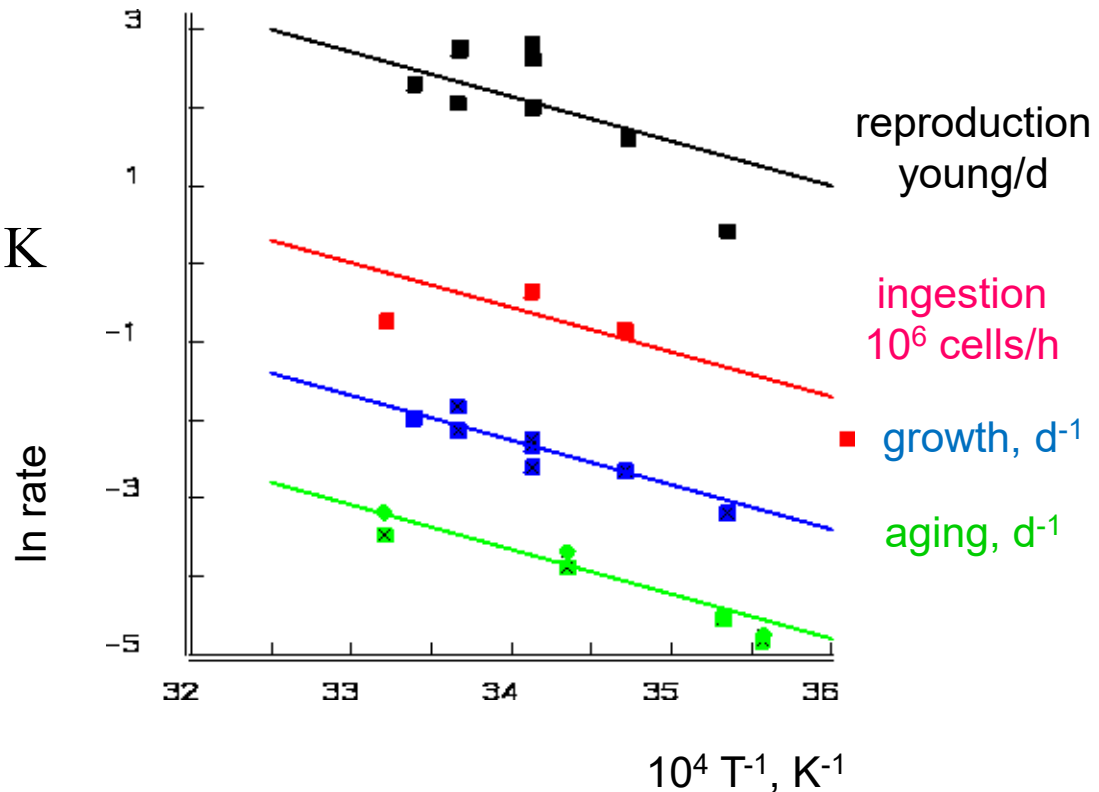
Arrhenius relationship

$$\ln k(T) = \ln k_1 + \frac{T_A}{T_1} - \frac{T_A}{T}$$

$$T_A = 6400 \text{ K}; \quad T_1 = 293 \text{ K}$$



Daphnia magna





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Entropy Balance in Open Systems

Entropy Change = S in heat + S production + S in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \frac{\dot{Q}}{T} + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



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- Entropy
 - Extensive variable
 - State-variable

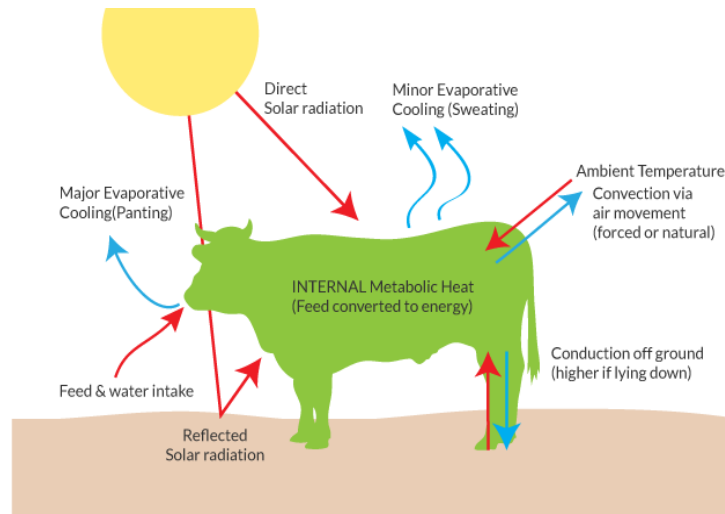
Entropy Balance in Open Systems



Entropy Change = S in heat + S production + S in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \frac{\dot{Q}}{T} + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$

- “Organisms feed on negentropy” (Shrondinger)



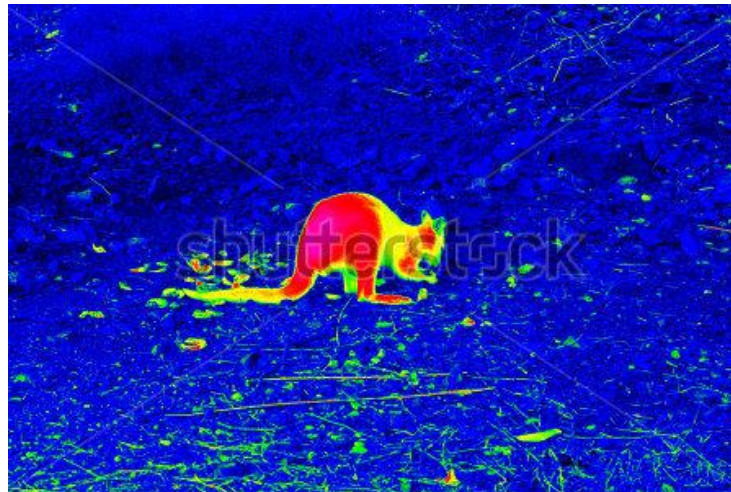


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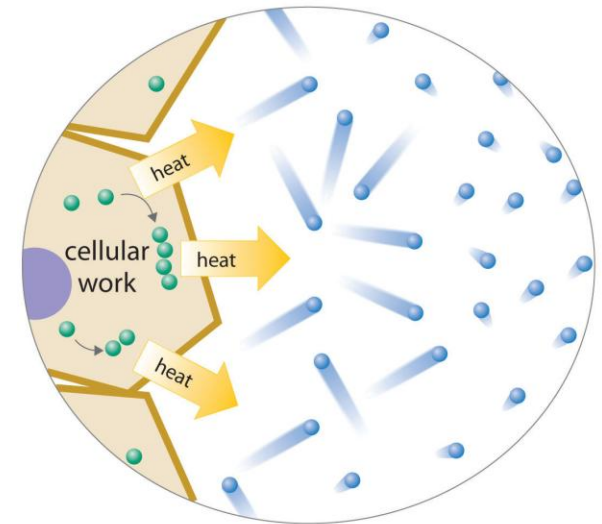
Entropy Balance in Open Systems

Entropy Change = S in heat + S production + S in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \left(\frac{\dot{Q}}{T} \right) + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



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- Entropy flows with heat (but not with work)



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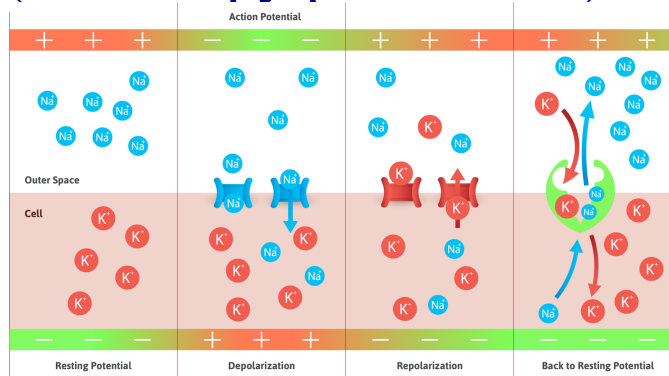
Entropy Balance in Open Systems

Entropy Change = S in heat + S production + S in Mass Flow

$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \frac{\dot{Q}}{T} + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$

- Energy and mass conversion leads to dissipation (or entropy production)

$$\dot{\sigma} \geq 0$$



- For fully-grown aerobic organisms in steady-state entropy production is exported in the form of heat



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Entropy Balance in DEB organisms



$$\bar{s}_V \dot{J}_V + \bar{s}_E \dot{J}_E = \frac{\dot{Q}}{T} + \dot{\sigma} + \bar{s}_X \dot{J}_X + \bar{s}_O \dot{J}_O - \bar{s}_P \dot{J}_P - \bar{s}_C \dot{J}_C - \bar{s}_H \dot{J}_H - \bar{s}_N \dot{J}_N.$$



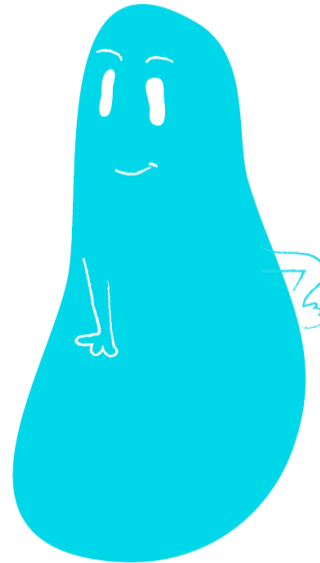
- Strong homeostasis: specific entropies are constant at constant T



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Entropy Balance in DEB organisms

$$0 = \frac{\dot{Q}}{T} + \dot{\sigma} + \bar{s}_X \dot{J}_X + \bar{s}_O \dot{J}_O - \bar{s}_P \dot{J}_P - \bar{s}_C \dot{J}_C - \bar{s}_H \dot{J}_H - \bar{s}_N \dot{J}_N.$$



- Steady-state

Structure and Reserve Entropies

- The entropy balance equation applied to the chemostat to many dilution rates:

$$0 = \underbrace{\bar{s}_{\mathcal{M}}^T \dot{J}_{\mathcal{M}} + \bar{s}_{\mathcal{O}}^T \dot{J}_{\mathcal{O}}}_{\text{Valid for an aerobic, ectothermic organism}}$$

$\mathcal{M} : CO_2, H_2O, O_2, NH_3$
 $\mathcal{O} : X, E, V$

Unknowns: s_V, s_E

because $\Delta \bar{g} = \Delta \bar{h} - T \Delta \bar{s} \simeq \Delta \bar{h}$

- The entropies are:

(structure)

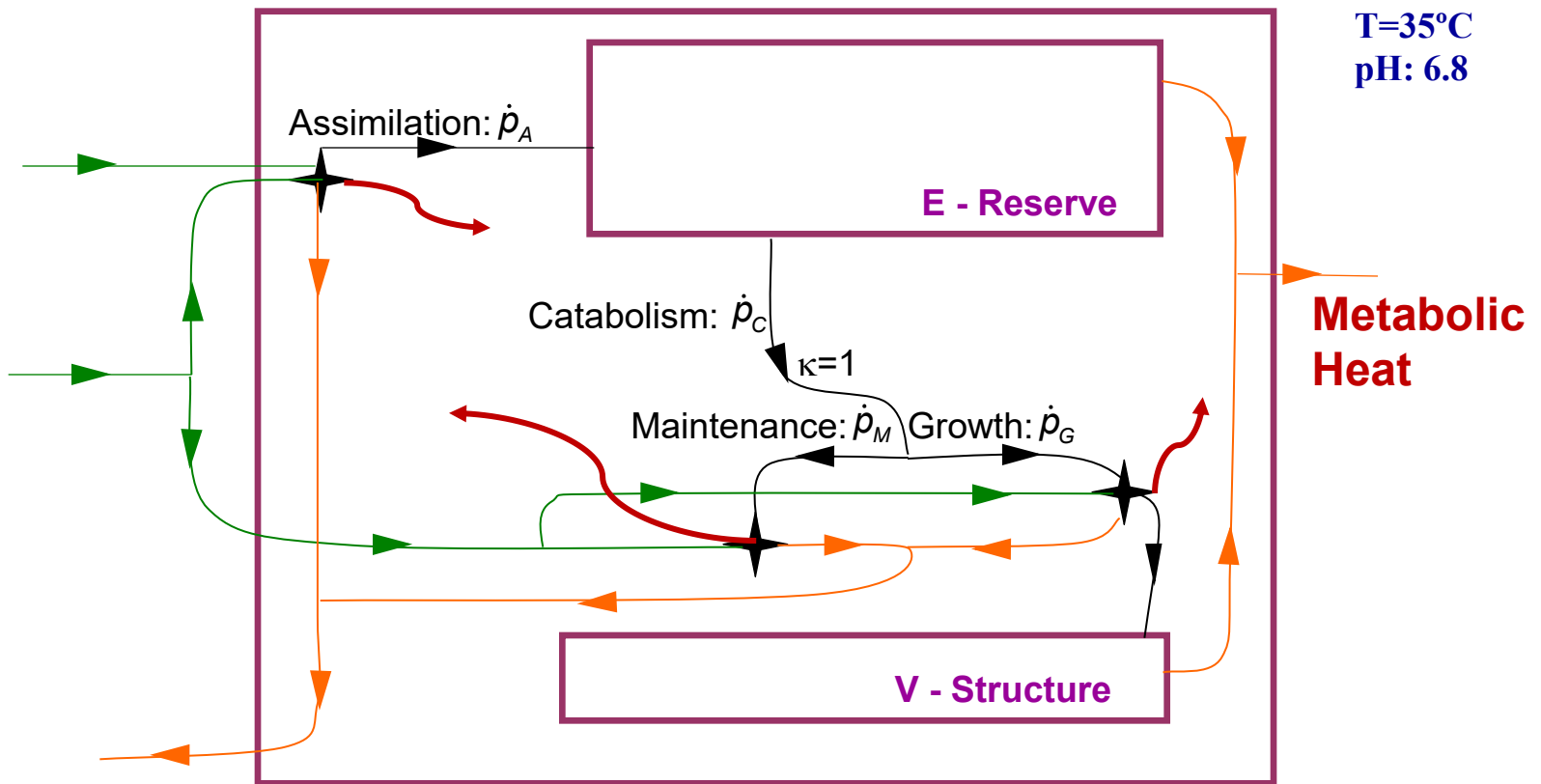
$$\bar{s}_V = 52.0 J.C - mol^{-1}.K^{-1} \quad \text{(reserve)}$$

$$\bar{s}_E = 74.8 J.C - mol^{-1}.K^{-1}$$

- The entropy of biomass varies from: 52.4 J.C-mol to 61.4 J C-mol
- It is different from the entropy of organic compounds with the same chemical composition

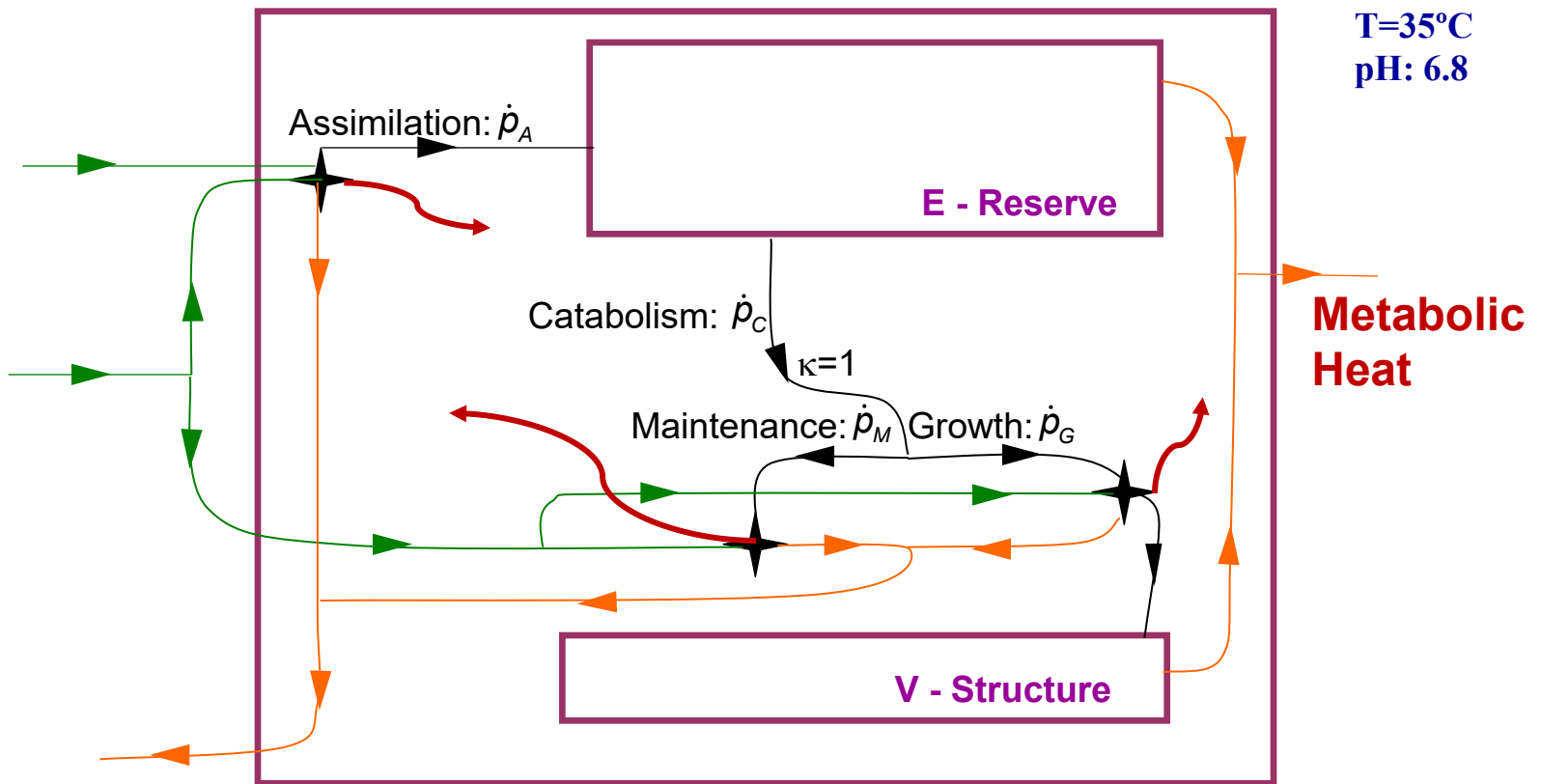
Assimilation, Dissipation and Growth

$$0 = \left(\frac{\dot{Q}}{T} \right) + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



Assimilation, Dissipation and Growth

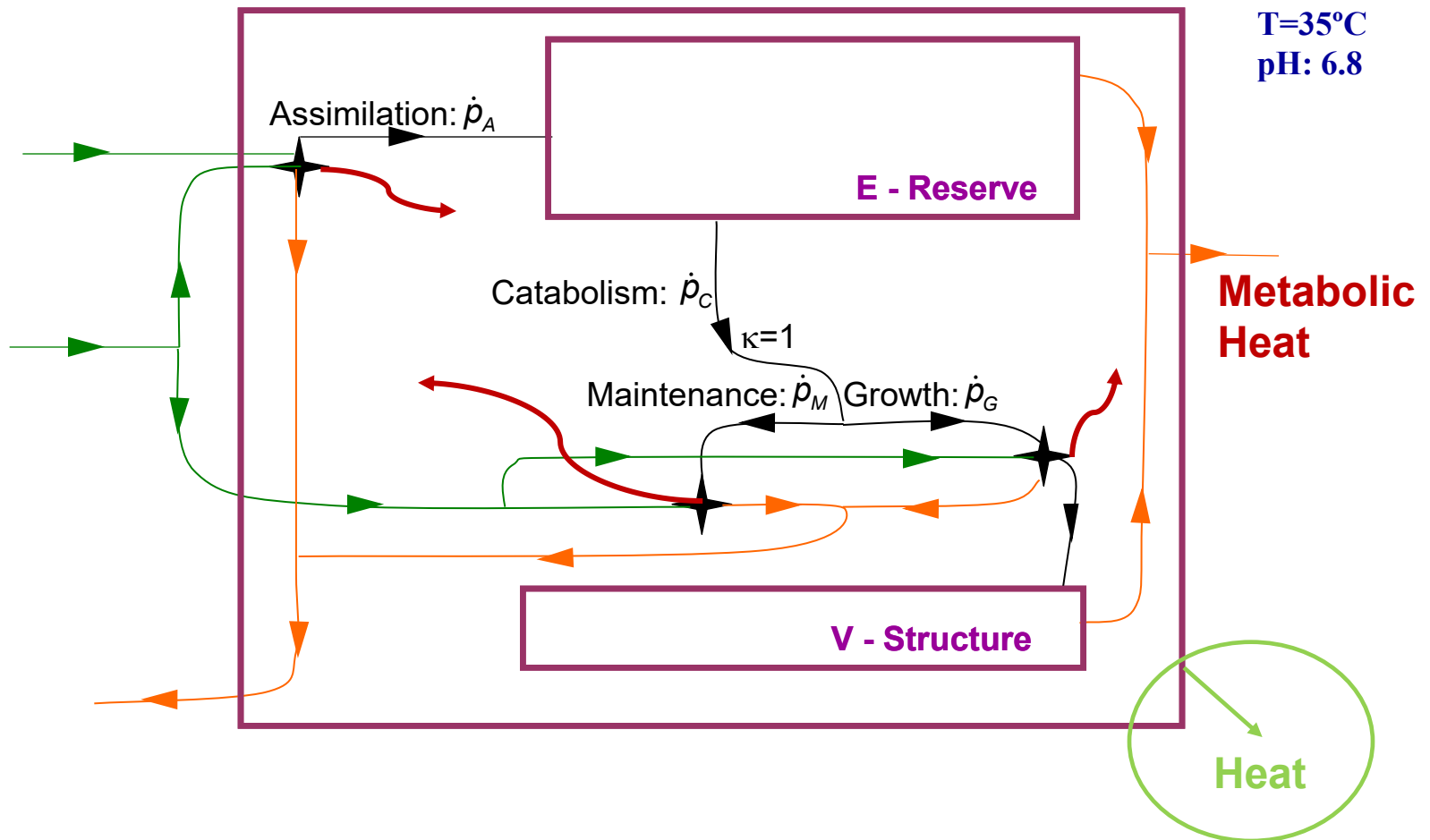
$$0 = \frac{\dot{Q}}{T} + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



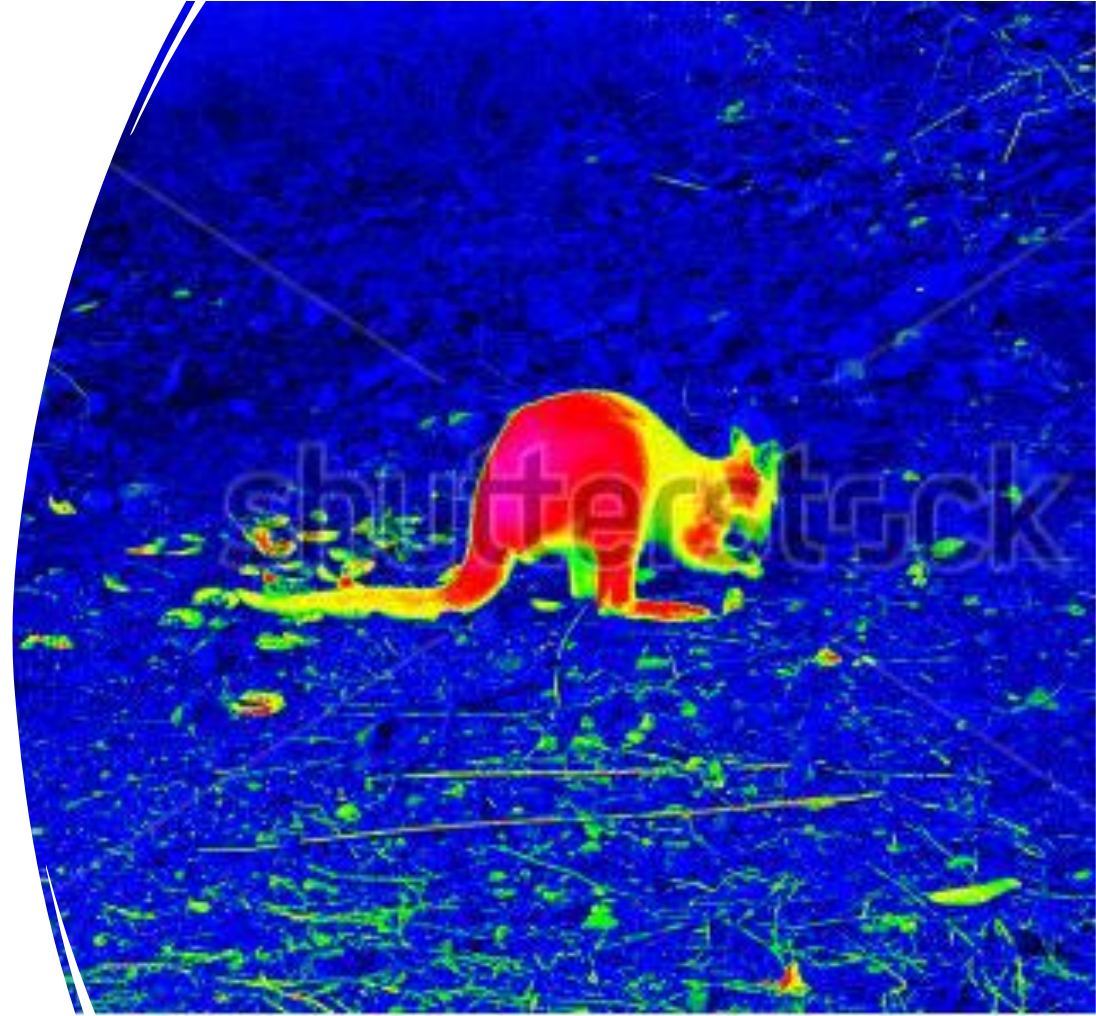
Entropy Balance in DEB Organisms



$$\frac{dS}{dt} = \left(\frac{\dot{Q}}{T} \right) + \dot{\sigma} + \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{in} - \sum_i \bar{s}_i \left. \frac{dM_i}{dt} \right|_{out}$$



Activity Thermodynamics of Life



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Activity Thermodynamics of Life

✓ **What?**

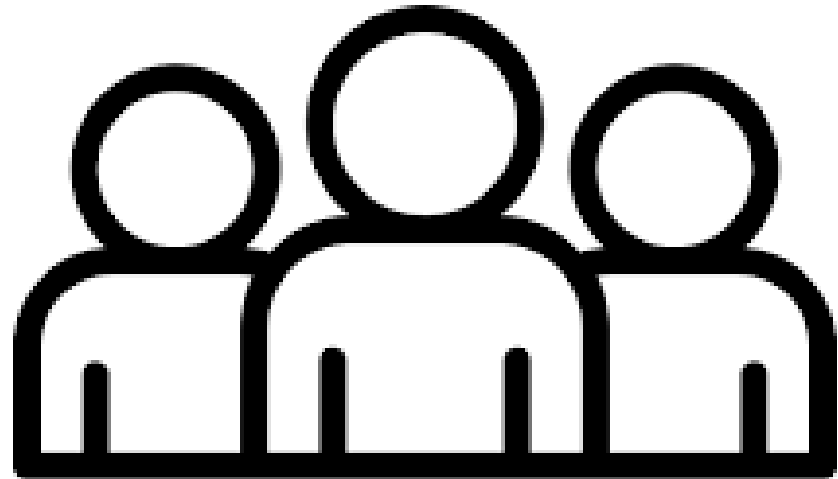
Answer some questions for your pet



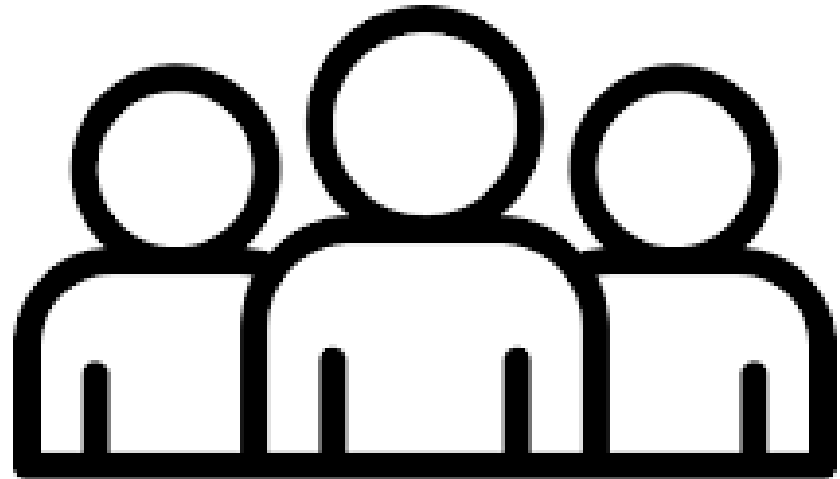
Who?

Groups of three students

Please create
groups of
three
students



Please create
groups of
three
students



02:00

Activity Thermodynamics of Life

✓ **What?** Answer some questions for your pet

👤 **Who?** Groups of three students

💬 **How?** Using what you learned here 😊

⌚ **When?** During 15 minutes

📄 **Where?** Google slides

Activity Thermodynamics of Life

✓ **What?** Answer some questions for your pet

👤 **Who?** Groups of three students

💬 **How?** Using what you learned here 😊

🕒 **When?** During **15:00**

📄 **Where?** <https://tinyurl.com/thermodynamicslife>