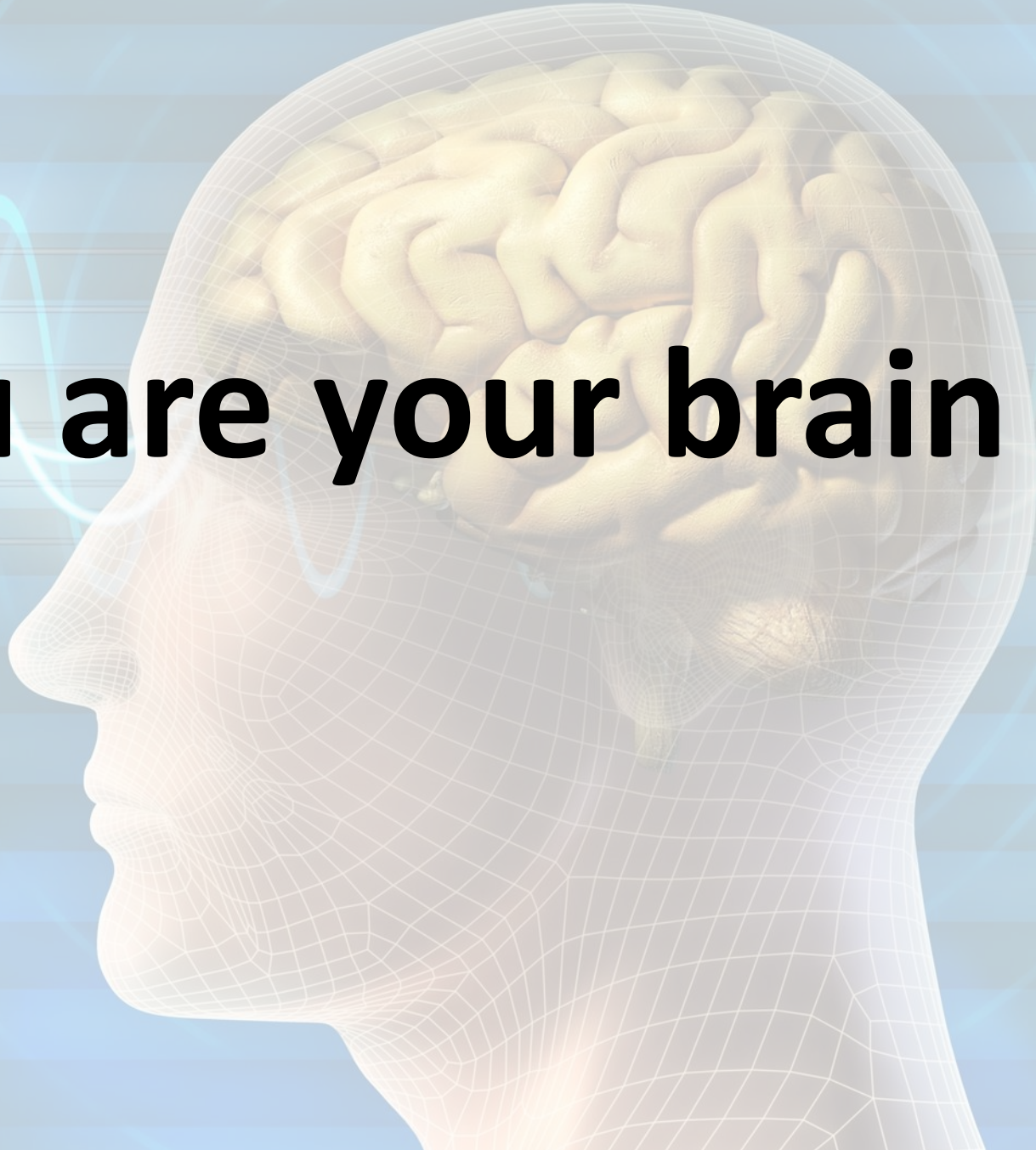


What is a human being?

Different views on minds, brains and souls

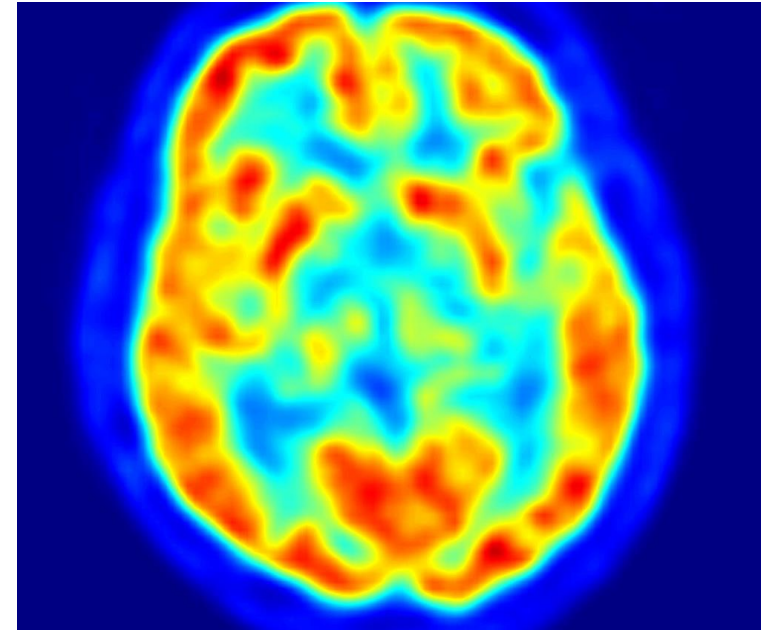
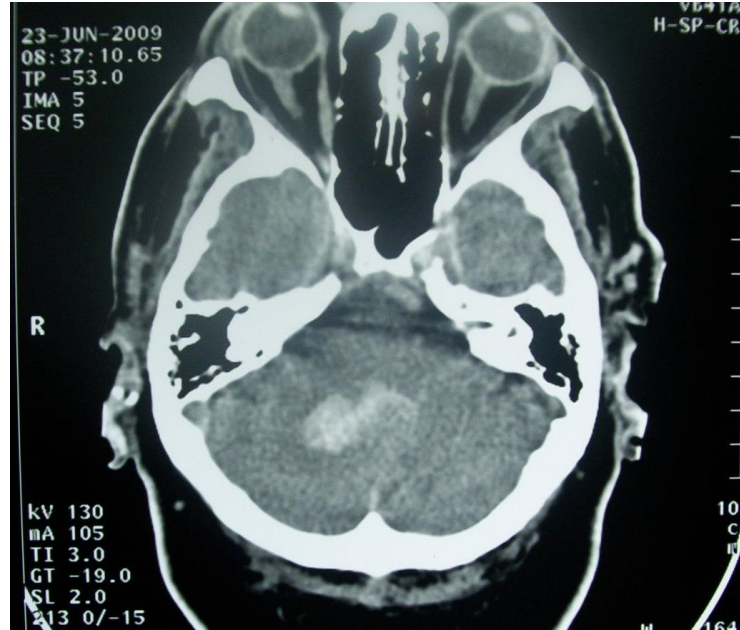
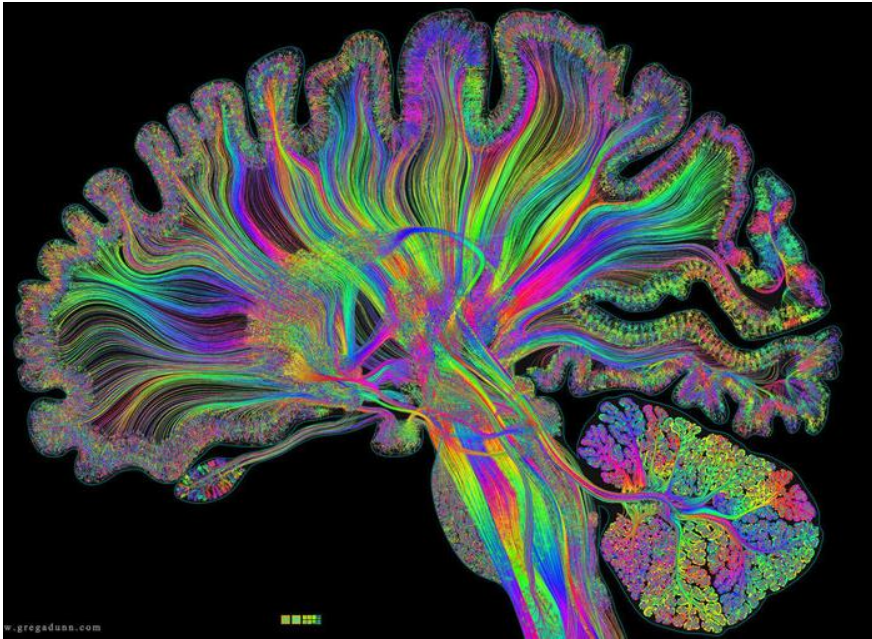
Dr. Sharon Dirckx
@sharondirckx

1) You are your brain



Am
I just
my
brain?

SHARON DIRCKX



The Incredible Brain



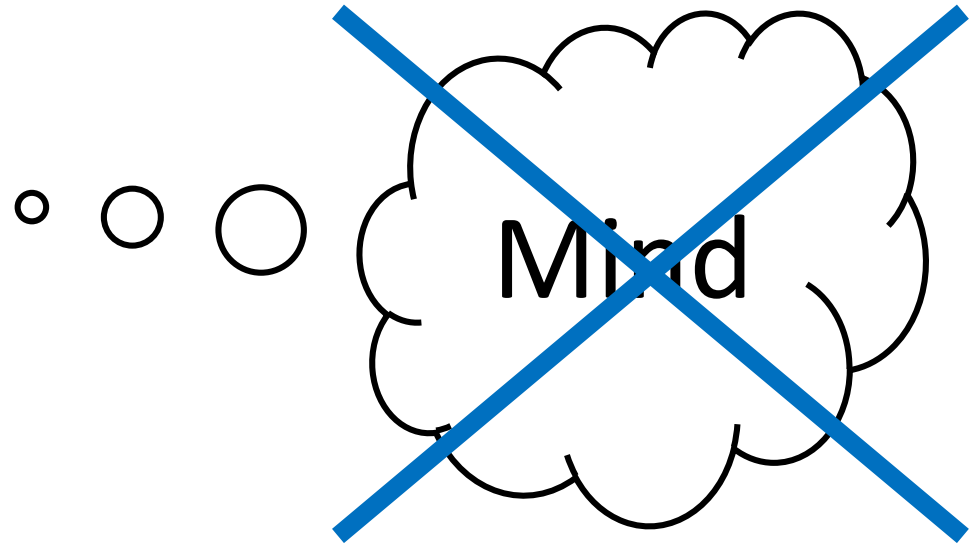
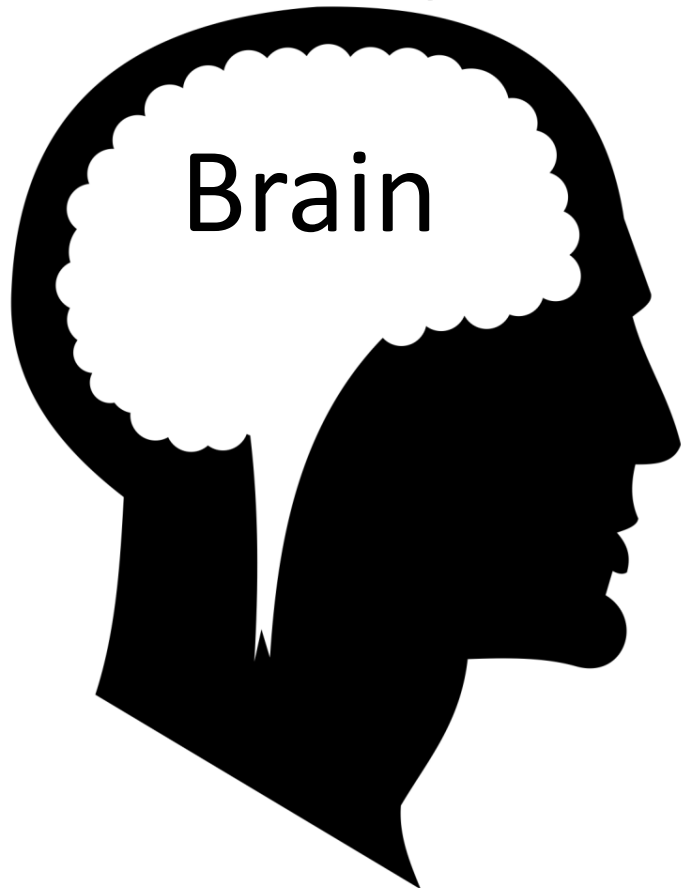
‘You are your brain’

‘You’, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll might have phrased it: “You’re nothing but a pack of neurons”.’

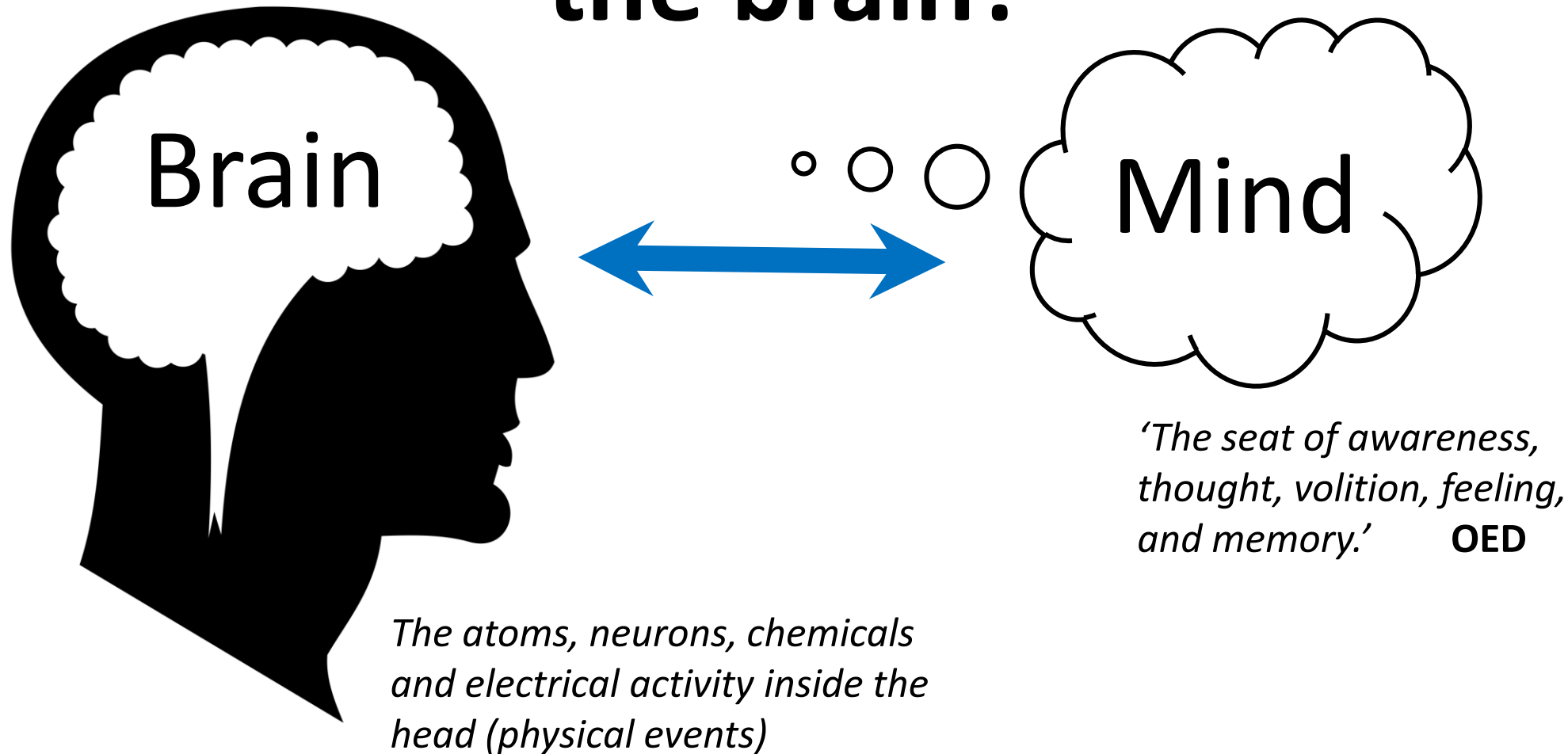
Francis Crick, The Astonishing Hypothesis 1994

You are your brain

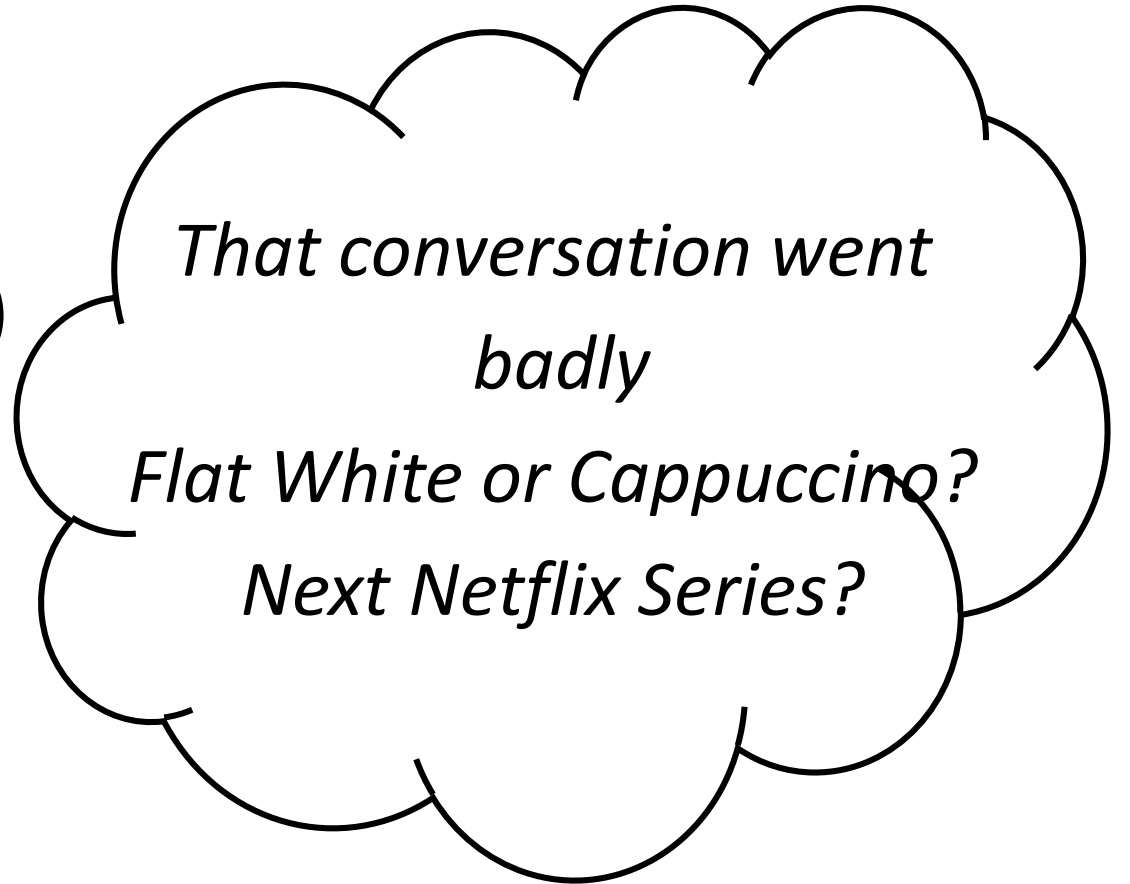
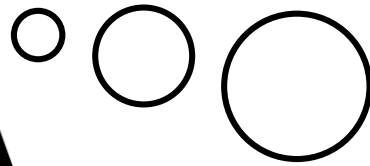
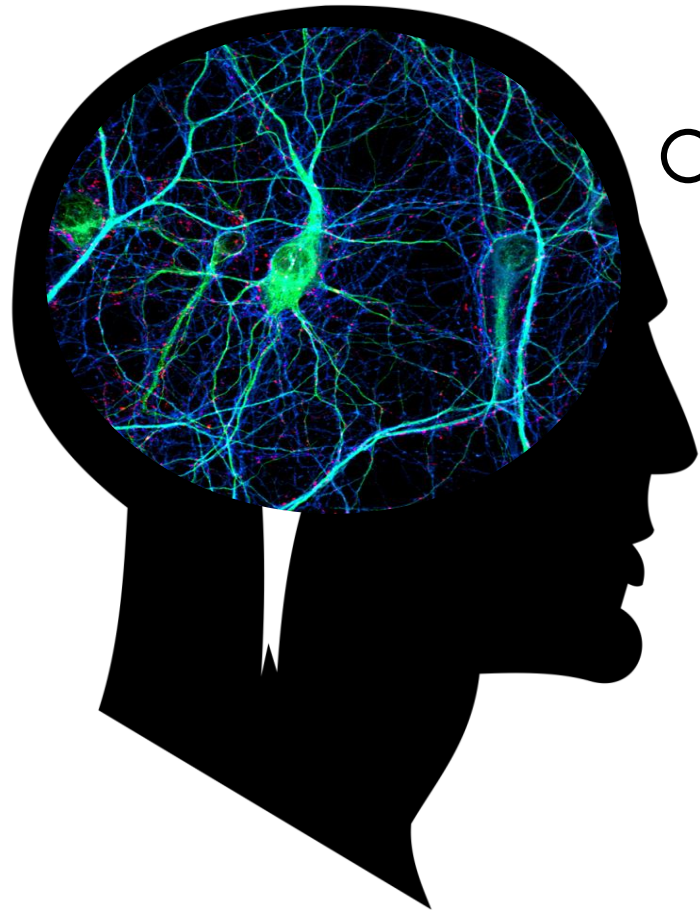
(reductive physicalism)



But there is a conscious mind. So, what is the relationship between the mind and the brain?



The Mind-Brain Problem



The Mind-Brain Problem

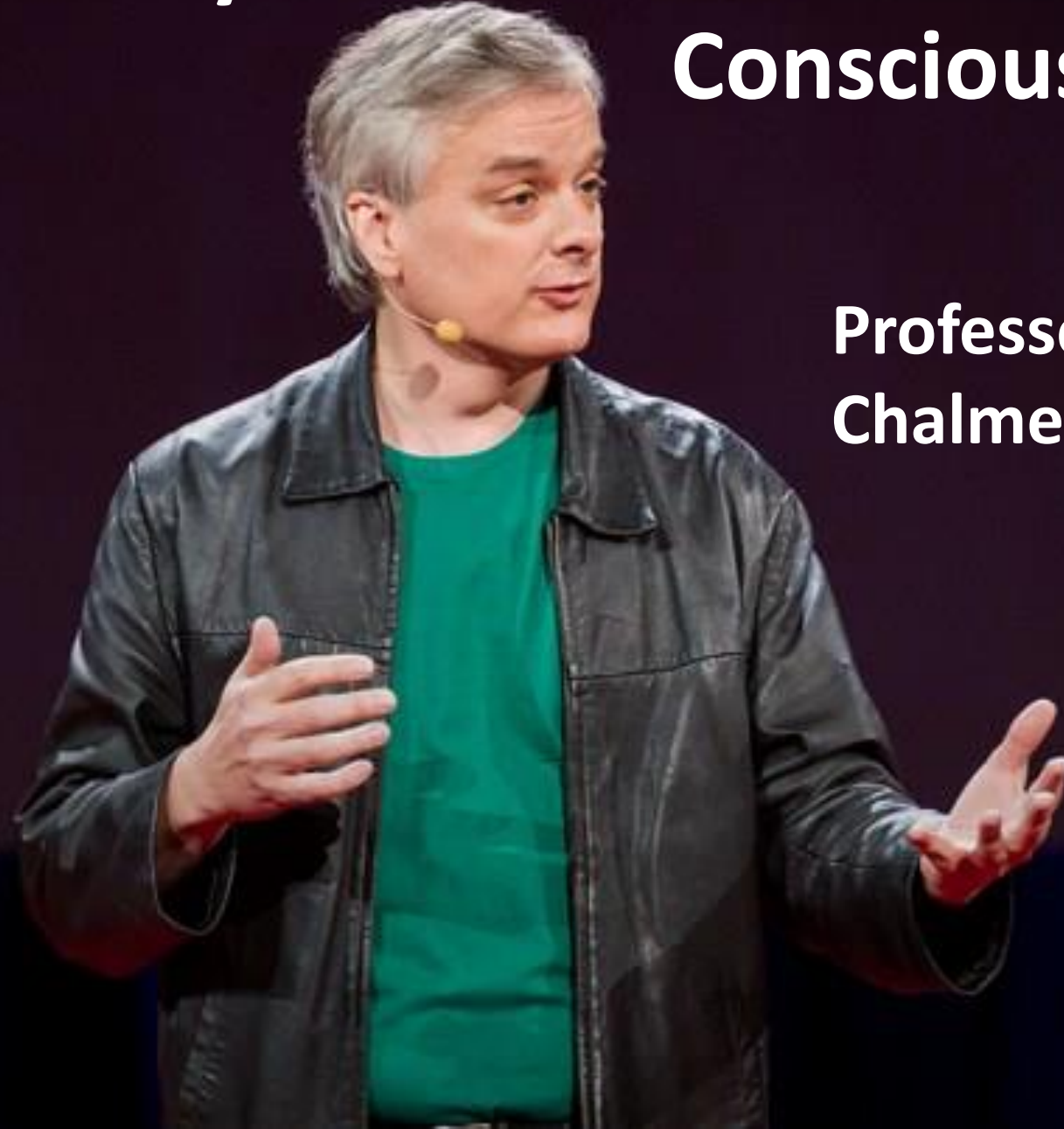


“How does the ‘water’ of boring old brain cells and sludgy stuff translate into the ‘wine’ of phenomenological subjective experience?”

**Baroness Susan Greenfield,
Professor of Physiology, Oxford
University.**

The 'Easy' and 'Hard' Problems of Consciousness

Professor David
Chalmers

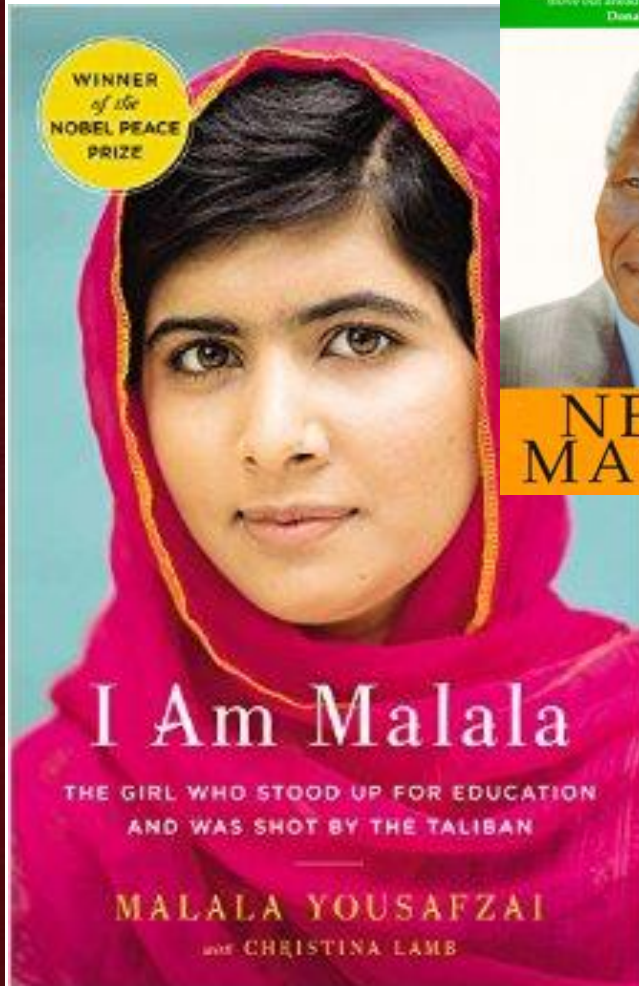
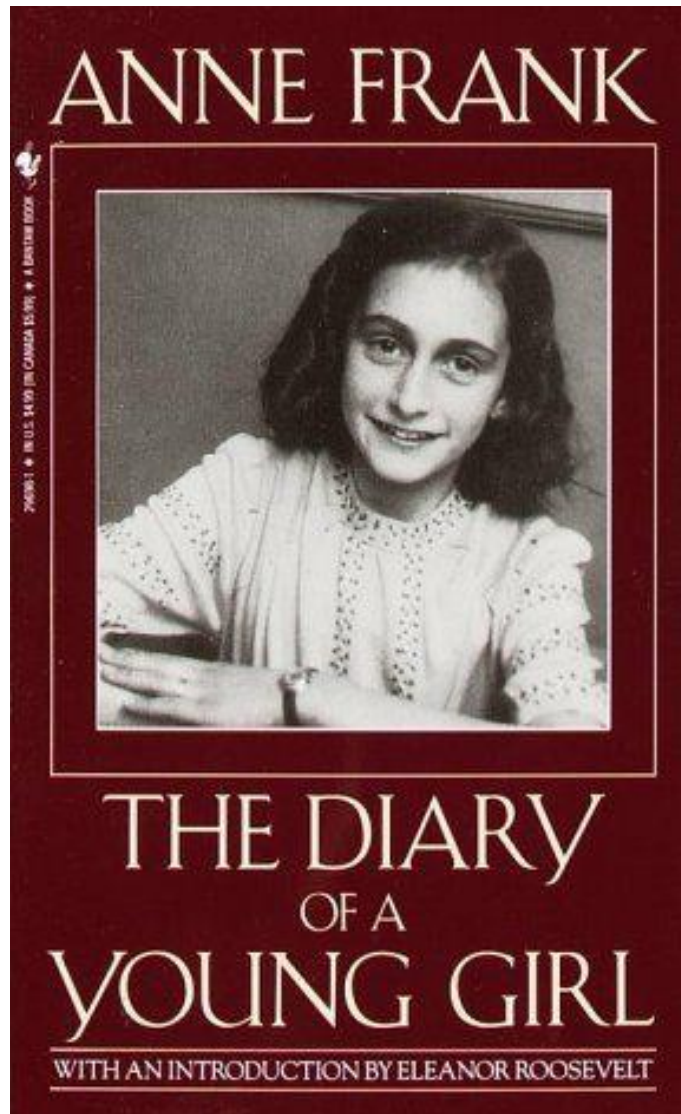


'Easy' - explaining
structures
and processes

'Hard' – explaining
conscious
experience

'what something is like'

We do not & cannot live without assuming there is something it is like to be us

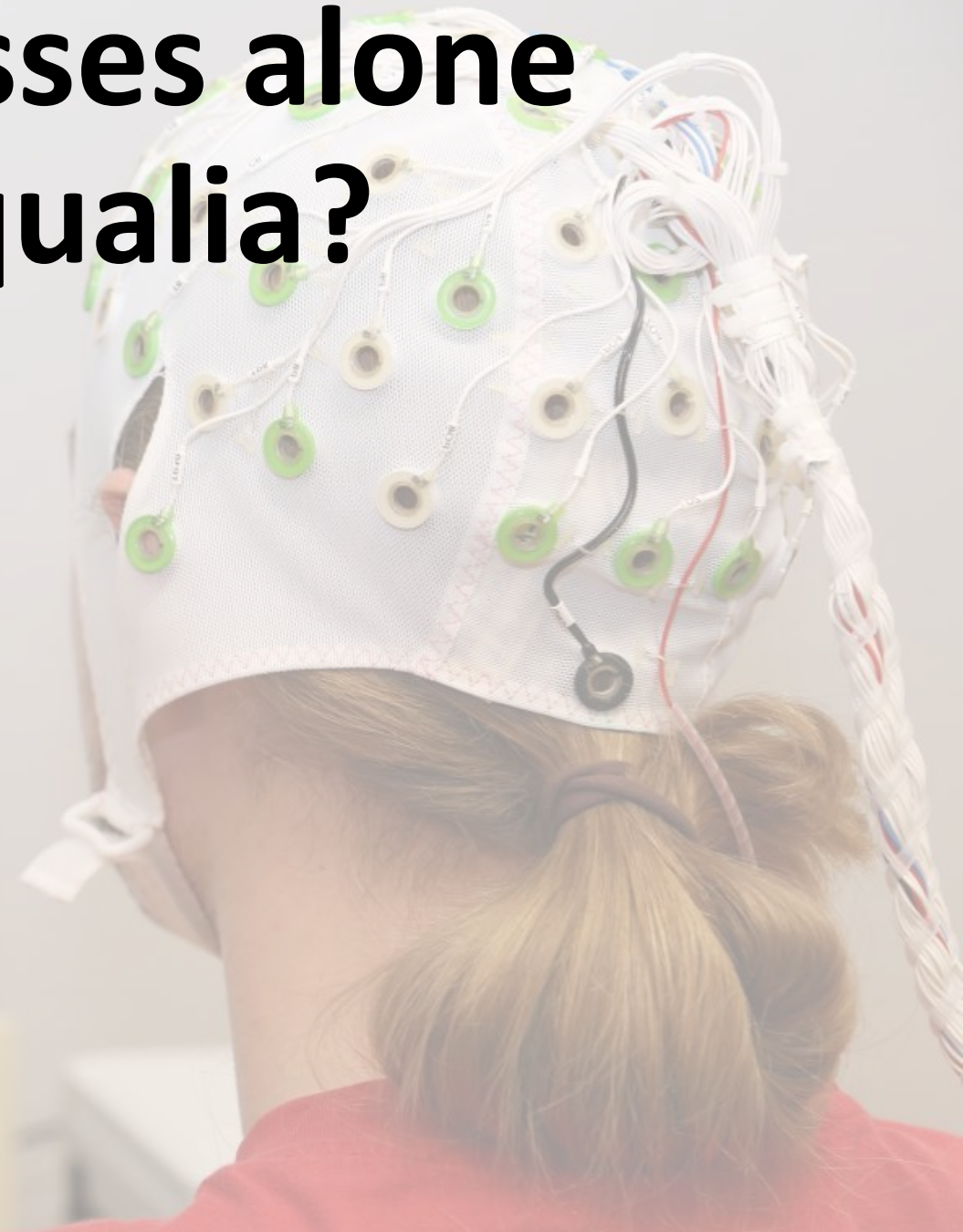




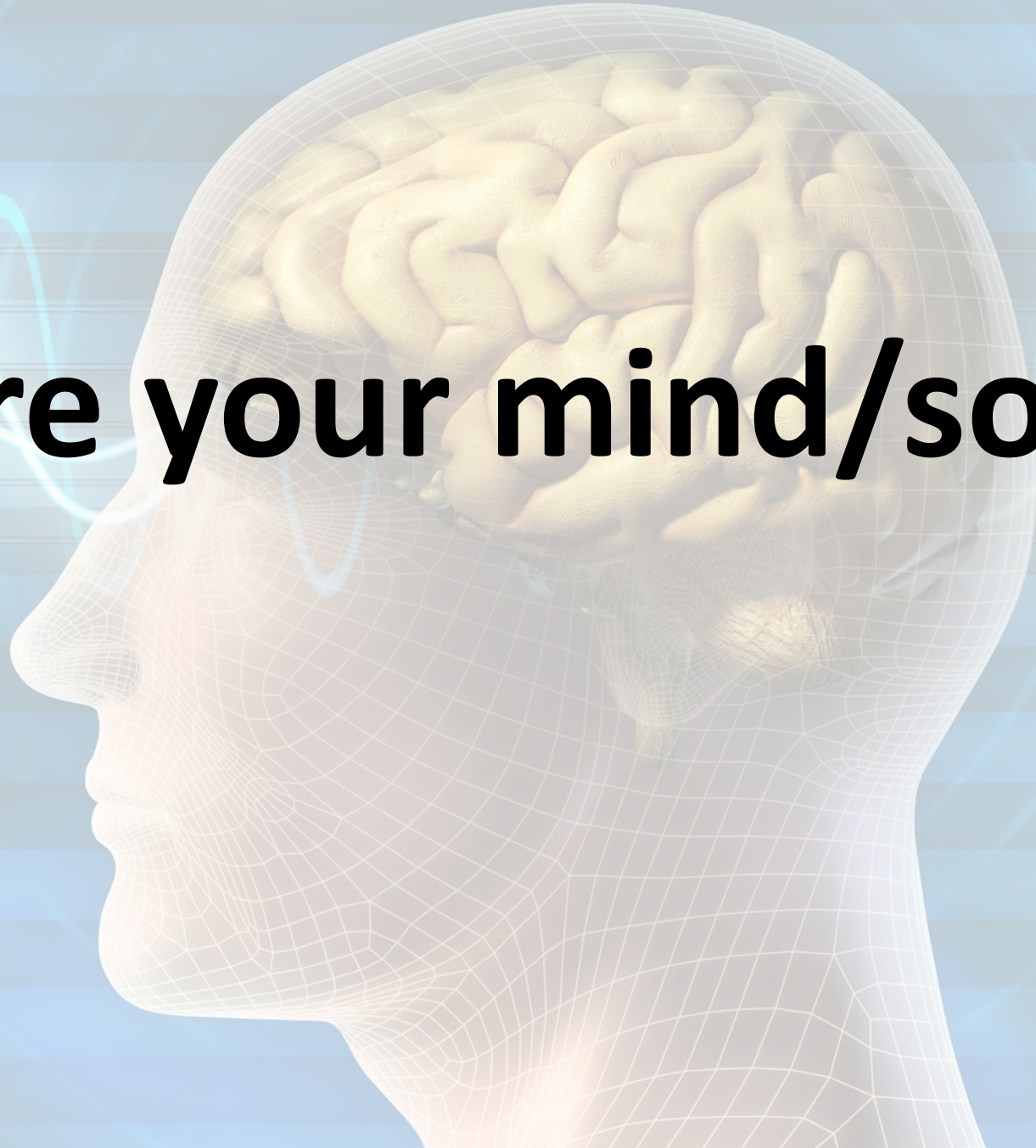
Qualia

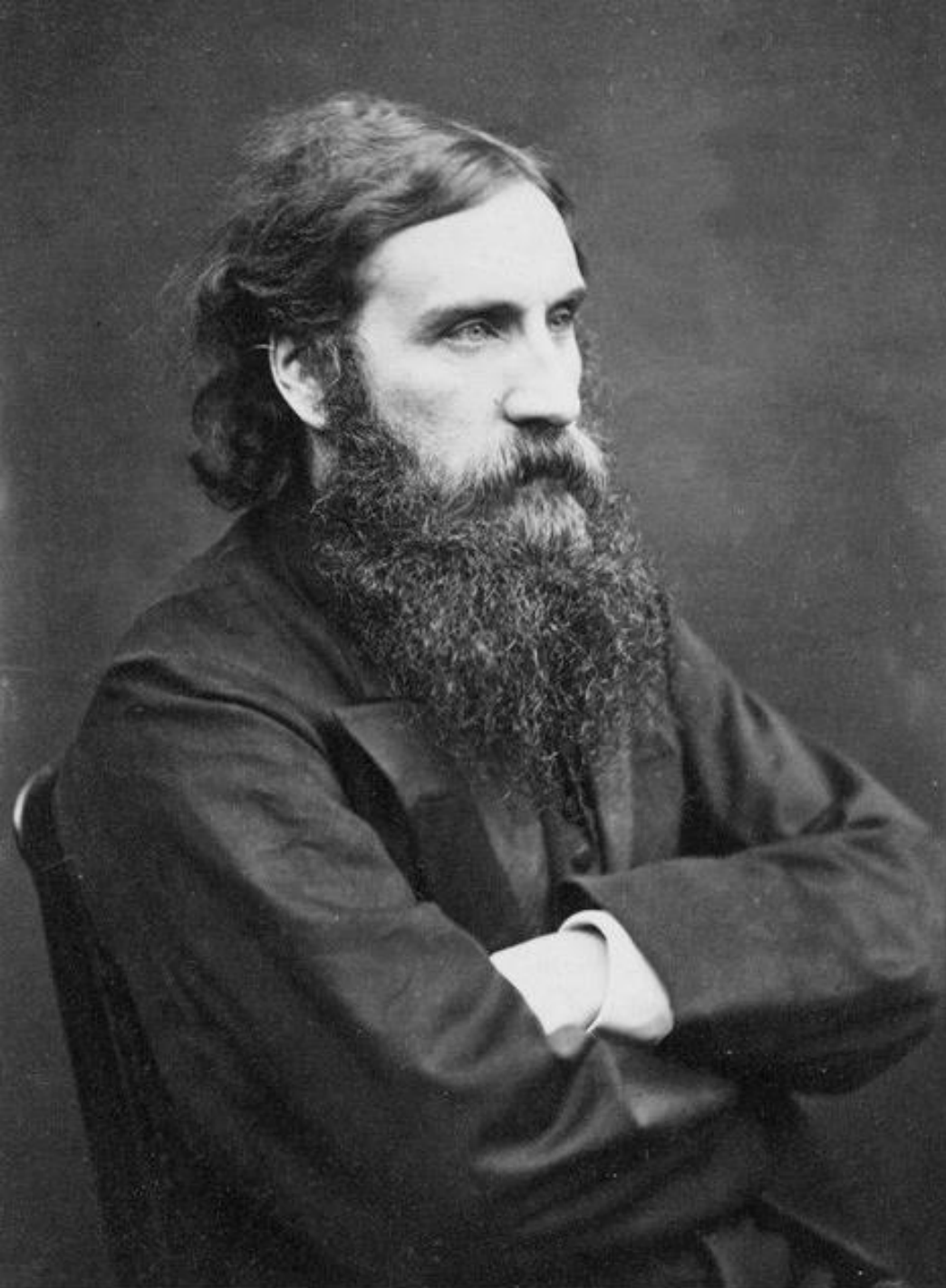
Qualitative experiences that are impossible to describe physically

Can brain processes alone account for qualia?



2) You are your mind/soul





You don't have a soul.
You are a soul.
You have a body.

George MacDonald, (1892-1905)

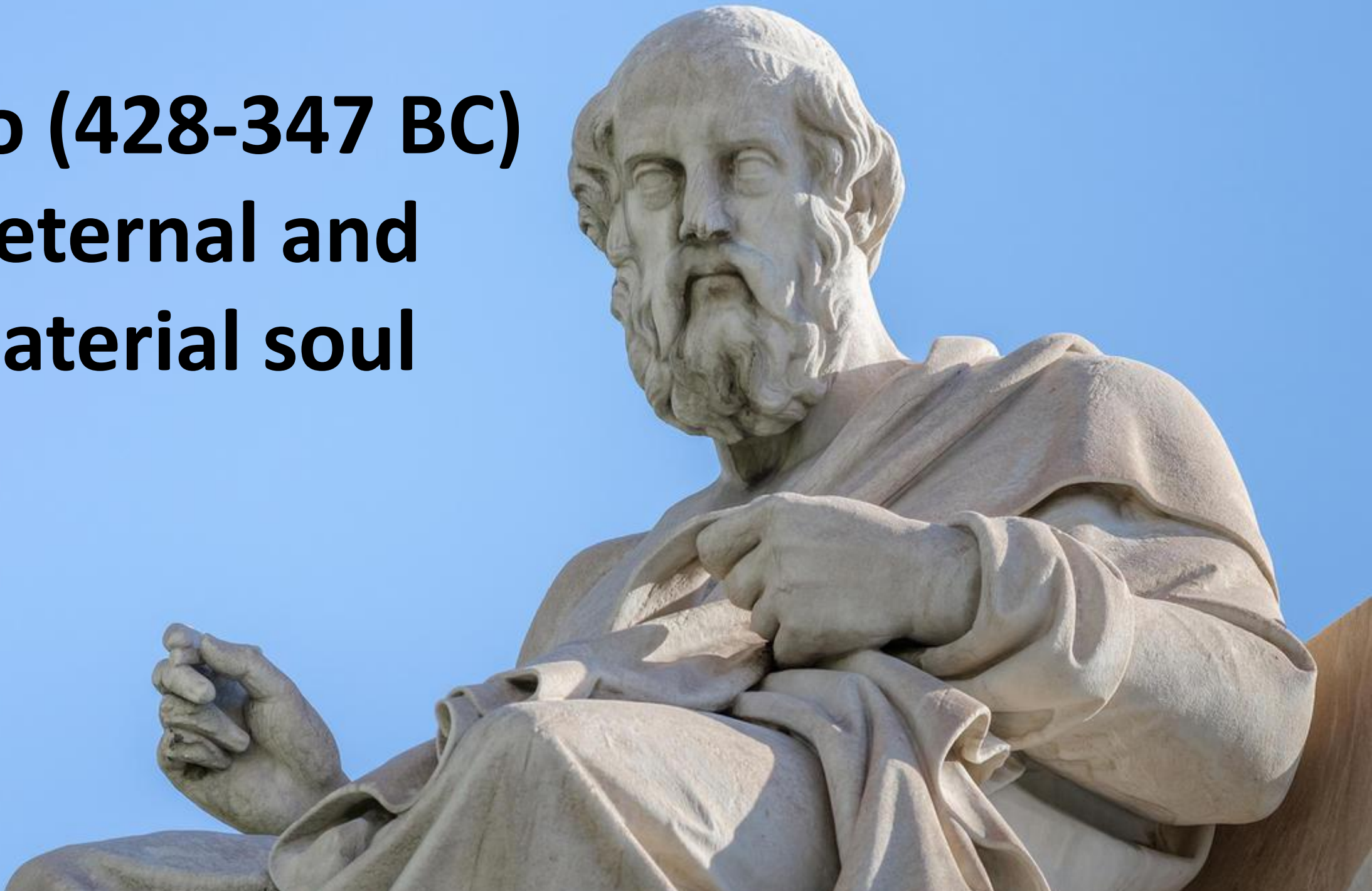
Cogito Ergo Sum

I think therefore I am

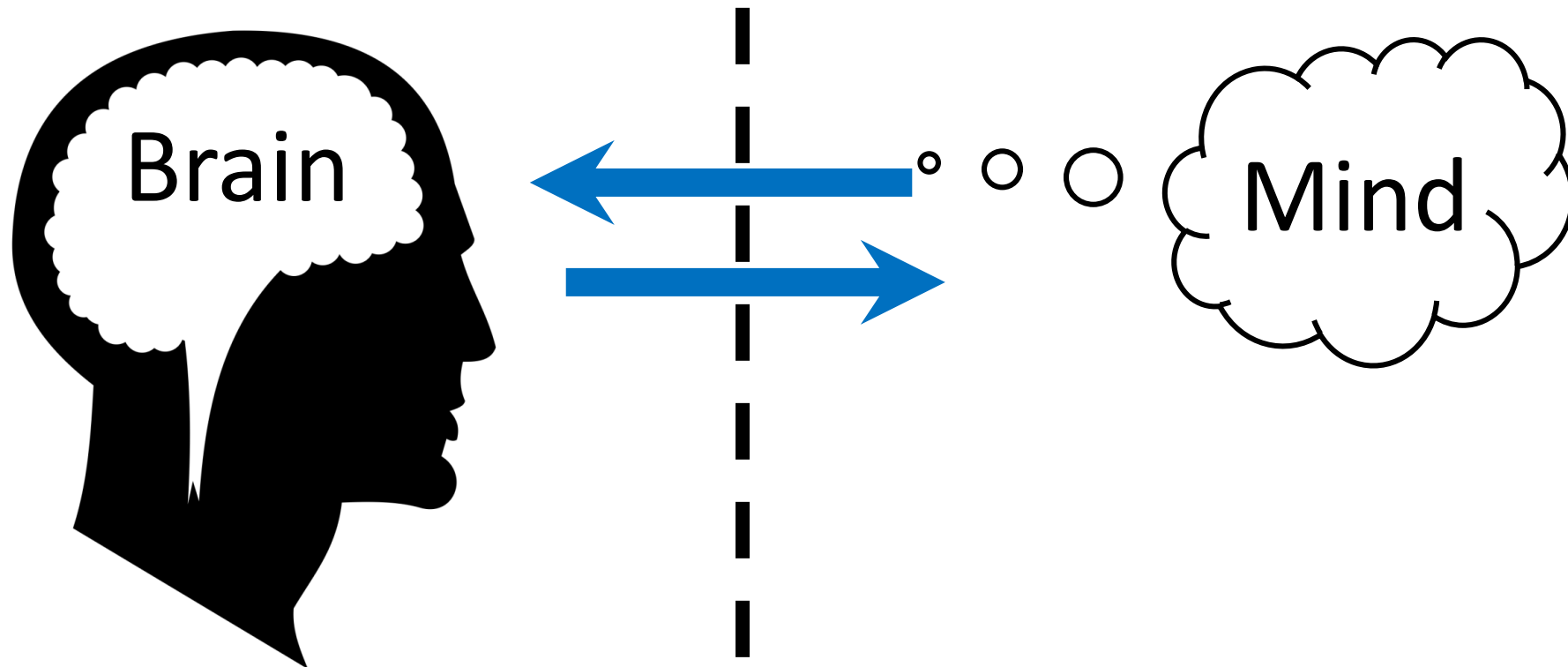
Rene Descartes (1596-1650)



Plato (428-347 BC)
**The eternal and
immaterial soul**



The mind is beyond the brain (Substance/Radical Dualism)



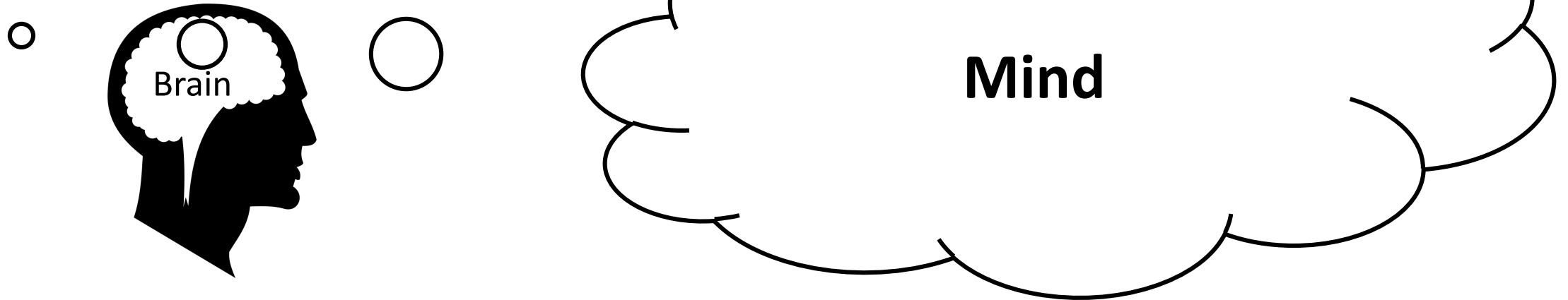
Substance Dualism

“...we have to recognize that we are spiritual beings with souls existing in a spiritual world as well as material beings with bodies and brains existing in a material world?”

Neurophysiologist, Philosopher & Nobel Laureate Sir John Eccles (1903-1997)



You are a soul/mind (Mentalism/Idealism)





Mentalism/Idealism

“...mind, rather than emerging as a late outgrowth in the evolution of life, has existed always as the matrix, the source and condition of physical reality – that the stuff of which physical reality is constructed is mind-stuff. It is mind that has composed a physical universe..”

George Wald – Nobel Laureate in Physiology & medicine 1967. *Life and Mind in the Universe*, 1984

Hebrew concept of 'soul' predates Greek

Holism

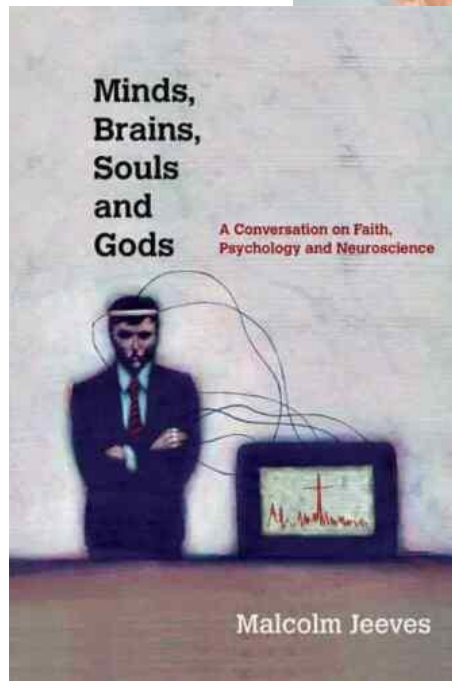
*The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being [nephesh]. **Genesis 2:7***

Praise the Lord, my soul [nephesh]

Psalm 103

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul [nephesh] and with all your mind. **Deuteronomy 6:5***

Jesus' Resurrection was embodied and ours will be too. We will be embodied people not disembodied souls.



“So, watch this space! In the meantime, we shall continue to affirm, as in the Apostles’ Creed, our belief in resurrection: that as our human essence – our identity and consciousness – is embodied now, so in the resurrection we shall still be embodied, which is variously referred to as our ‘glorified’ bodies or our ‘spiritual’ bodies. But embodied. Not disembodied something-or-others drifting around in limbo. Not dependent on the dualisms of parapsychology and near-death experiences.”

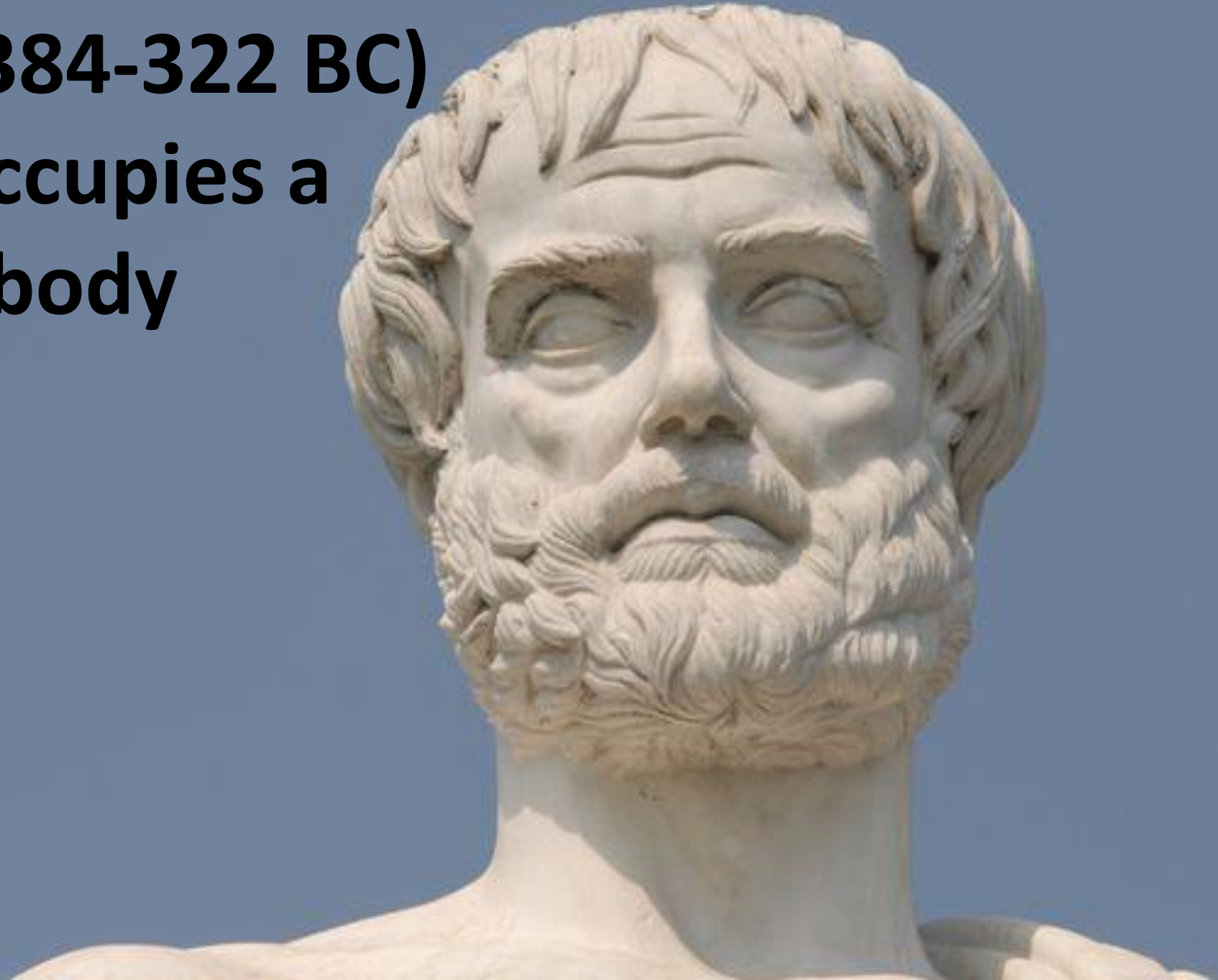
Malcolm Jeeves, Minds, brains, souls and Gods.



3) Integrating mind/brain or body/soul

Aristotle (384-322 BC)

The soul occupies a particular body





Holistic forms of Dualism

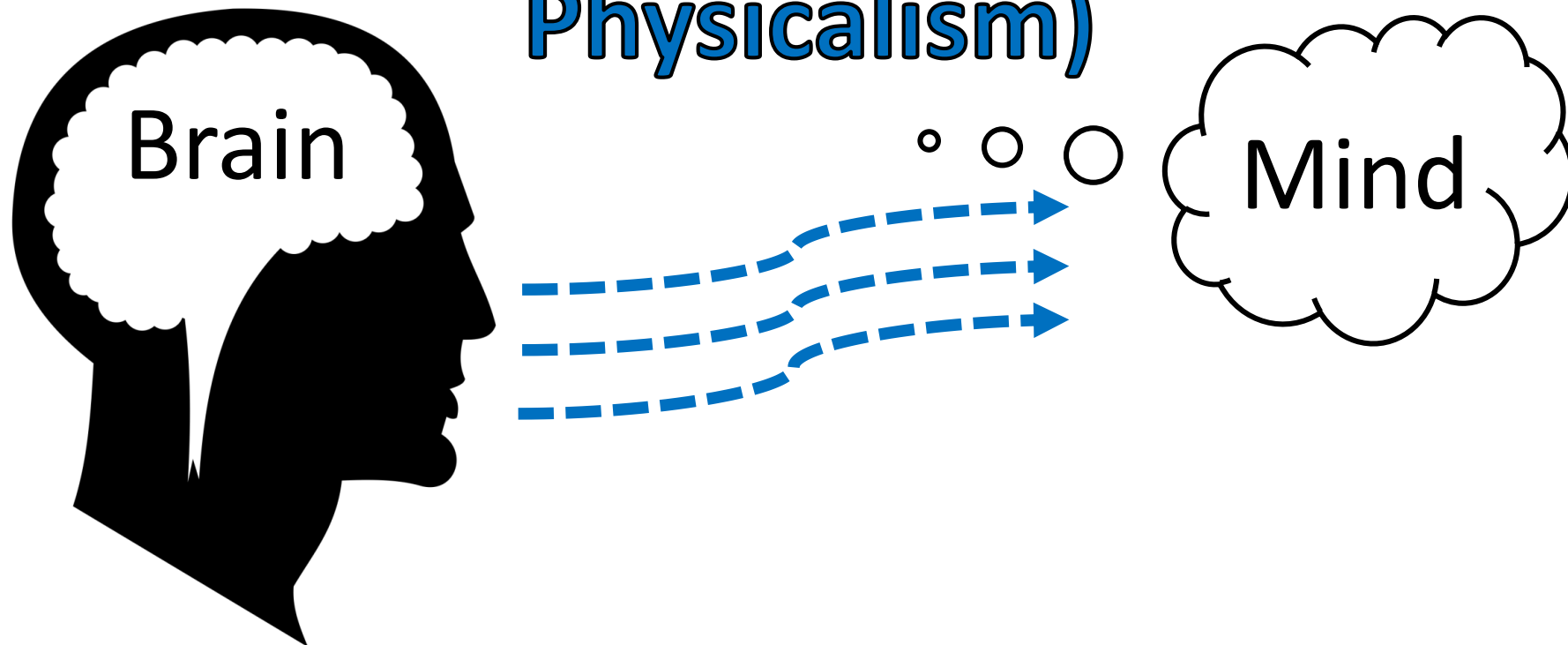
“... the brain is a physical substance that has physical properties, and the mind or soul is a mental substance that has mental properties the soul and brain can interact with each other, but they are different substances with different properties.”

JP Moreland, Beyond Death

The mind *emerges from*

the brain (Non-Reductive

Physicalism)

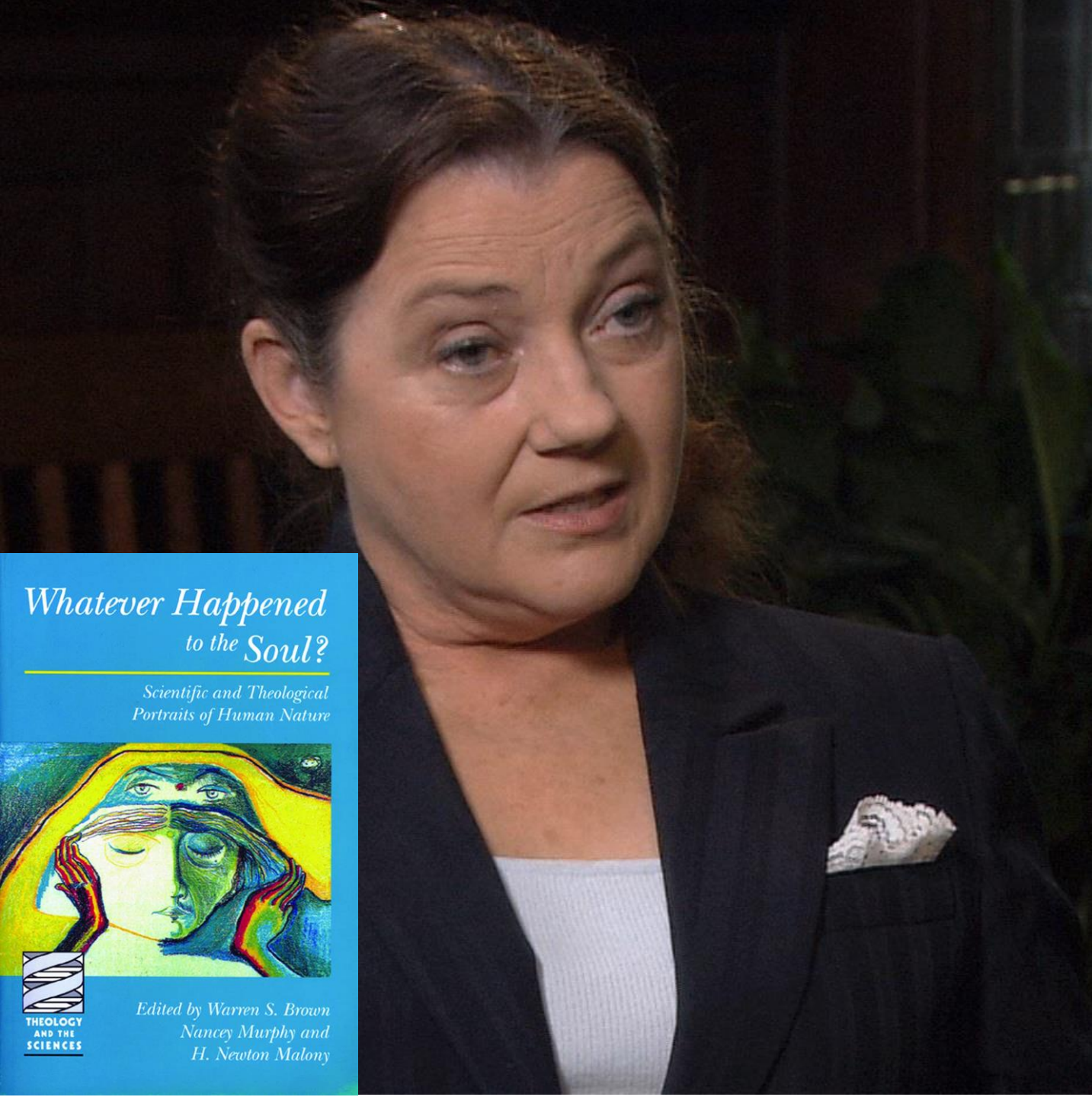




MARVEL STUDIOS

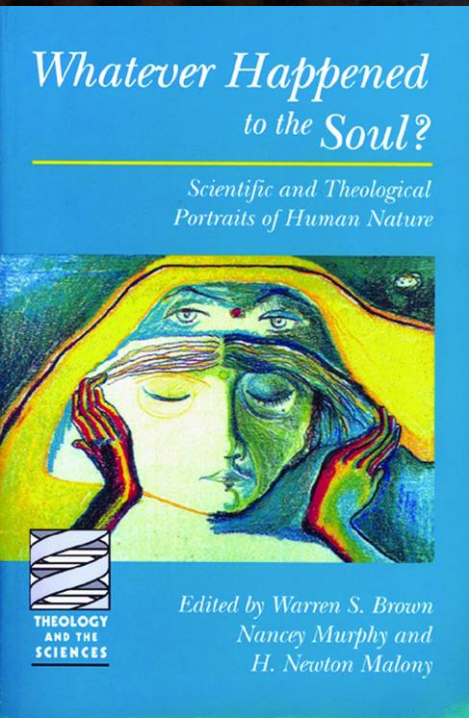
AVENGERS

ENDGAME



“... an attempt to establish a perspective on human nature that would allow for greater resonance between science and faith. Our core theme ...is a monistic or holistic view of humans...we have chosen the label “ nonreductive physicalism...thus statements about the physical nature of human beings made from the perspective of biology or neuroscience are about exactly the same entity as statements made about the spiritual nature of persons from the point of view of theology or religious traditions.”

**Nancy Murphy,
Whatever Happened to the Soul?**



*Whatever Happened
to the Soul?*

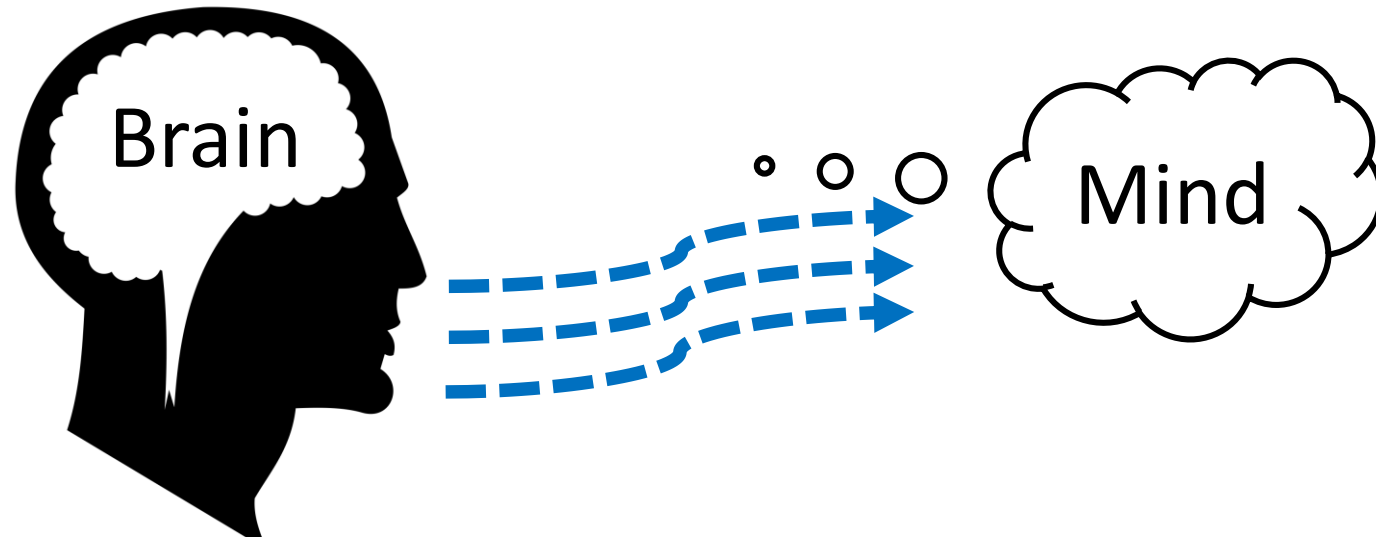
*Scientific and Theological
Portraits of Human Nature*



*Edited by Warren S. Brown
Nancy Murphy and
H. Newton Malony*



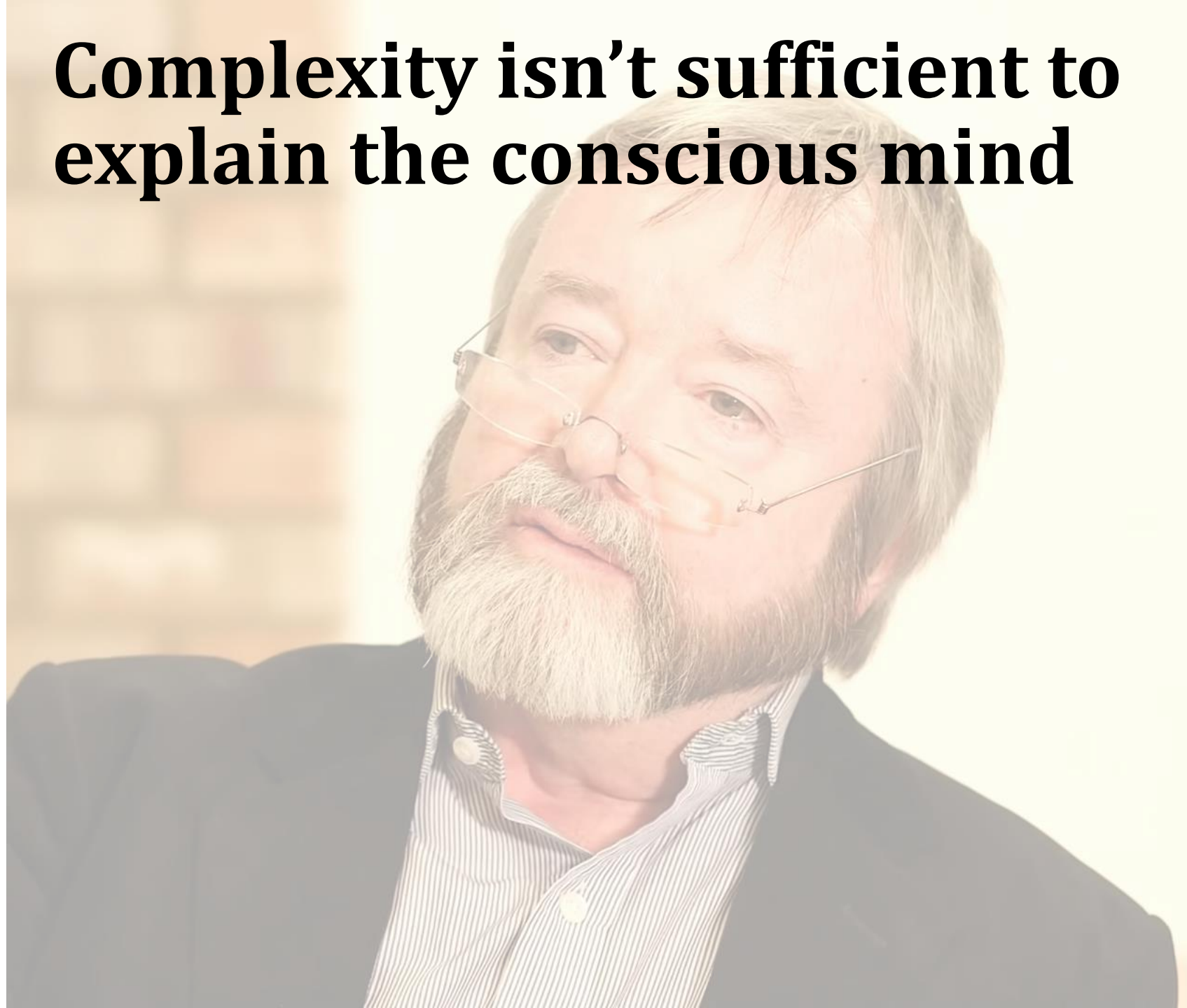
But *how exactly* do physical processes generate experience? The hard problem remains hard – unless ‘the system’ isn’t closed



'For example, there are thought to be an astonishing 16-26 billion neurons in the cerebral cortex; but there are a staggering 69-101 billion neurons...in the cerebellum. These include Purkinje cells, some of the largest and most profusely connected cells in the nervous system. Yet the cerebellum is completely incapable of supporting self-awareness.

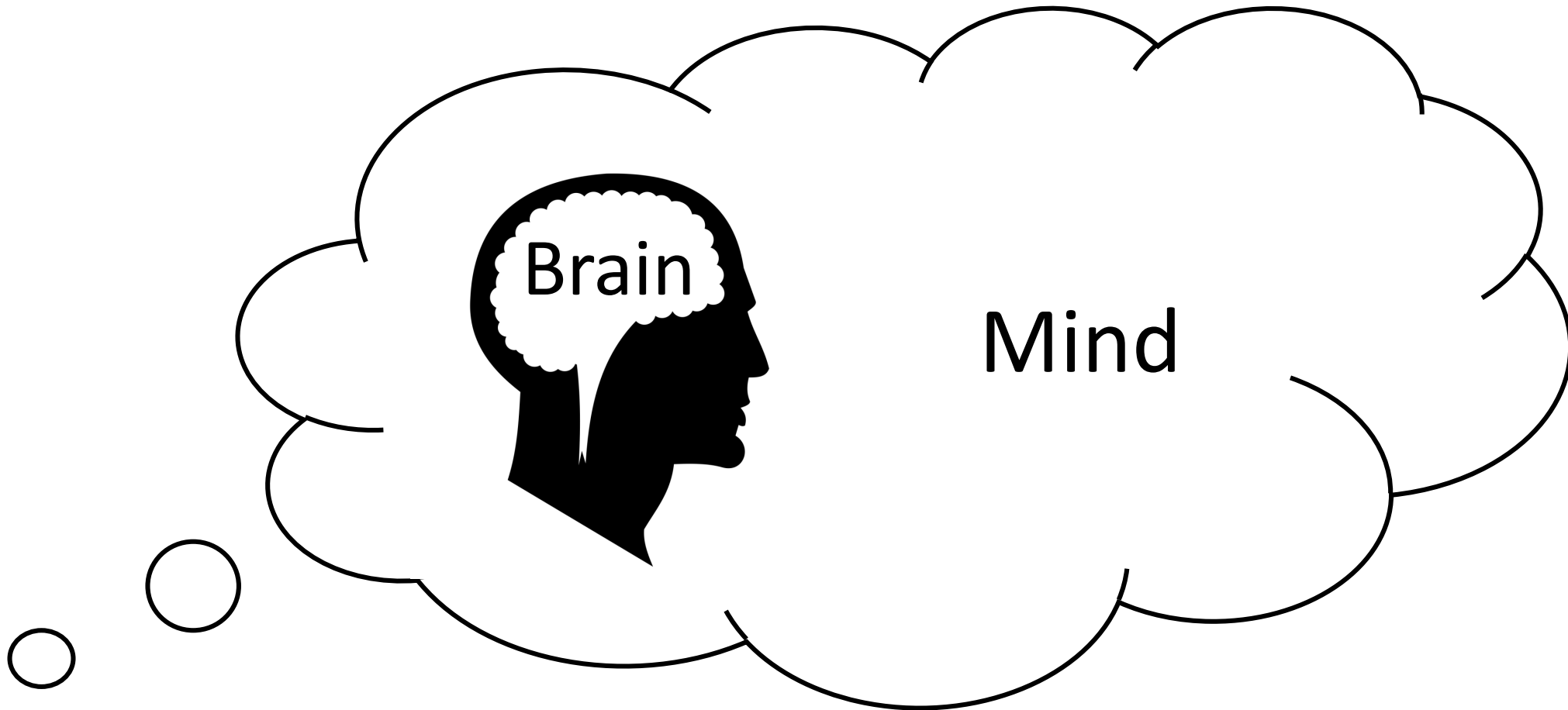
**Iain McGilchrist,
The Matter With Things**

**Complexity isn't sufficient to
explain the conscious mind**



Mind is *fundamental*

(Panpsychism)



Panpsychism – *‘Everything is Conscious’*

“...a theory of consciousness should take experience as fundamental ... and construct a theory of experience”.

David Chalmers

**The Character of
Consciousness**



'Electrons and quarks have unimaginably simple forms of experience.'

Philip Goff, Galileo's Error



'Suddenly the universe appears in a new and much more revealing perspective. A splendid introduction to this fascinating idea' PHILIP PULLMAN



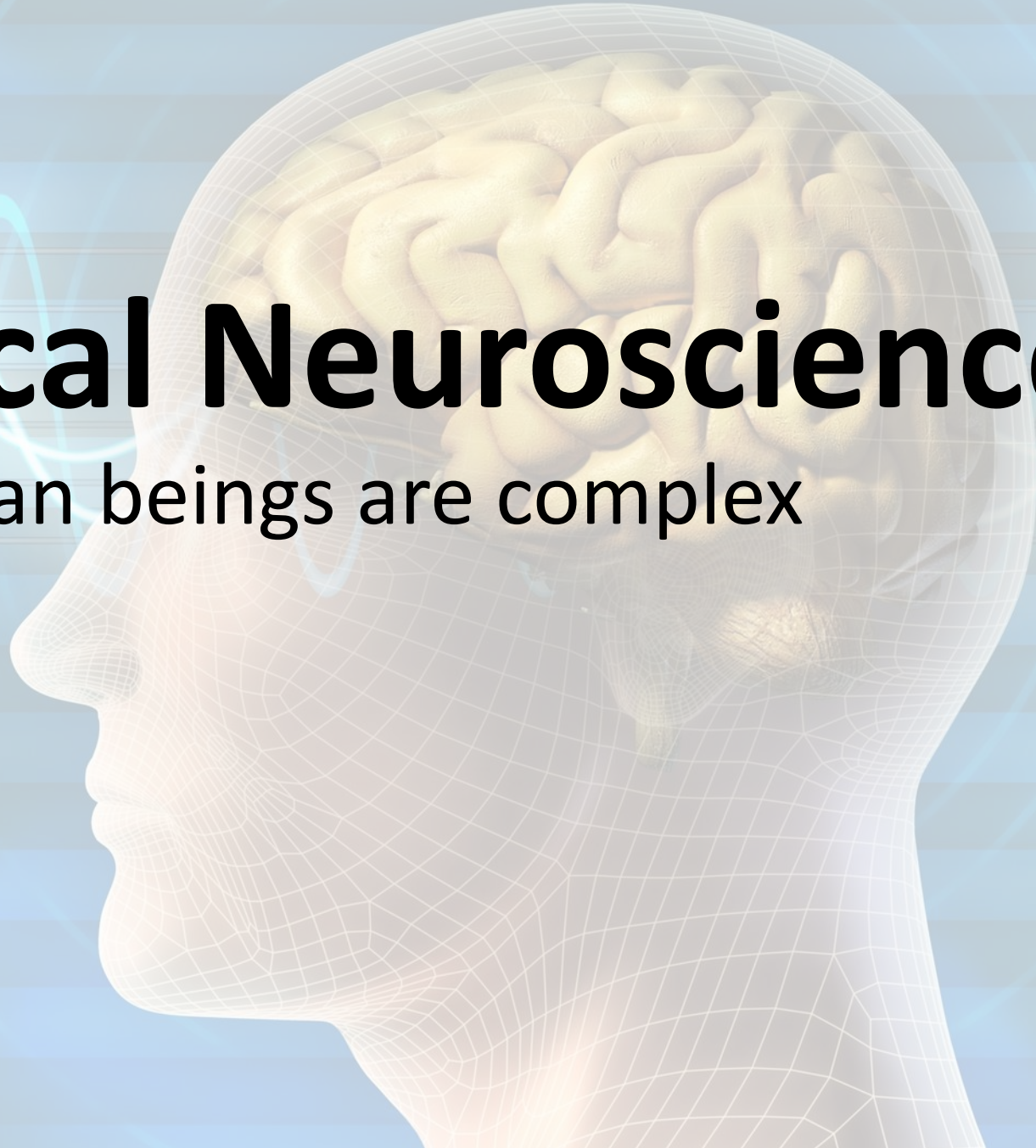
Galileo's *ERROR*

Foundations for a
New Science of Consciousness

PHILIP GOFF

4) Clinical Neuroscience

Human beings are complex



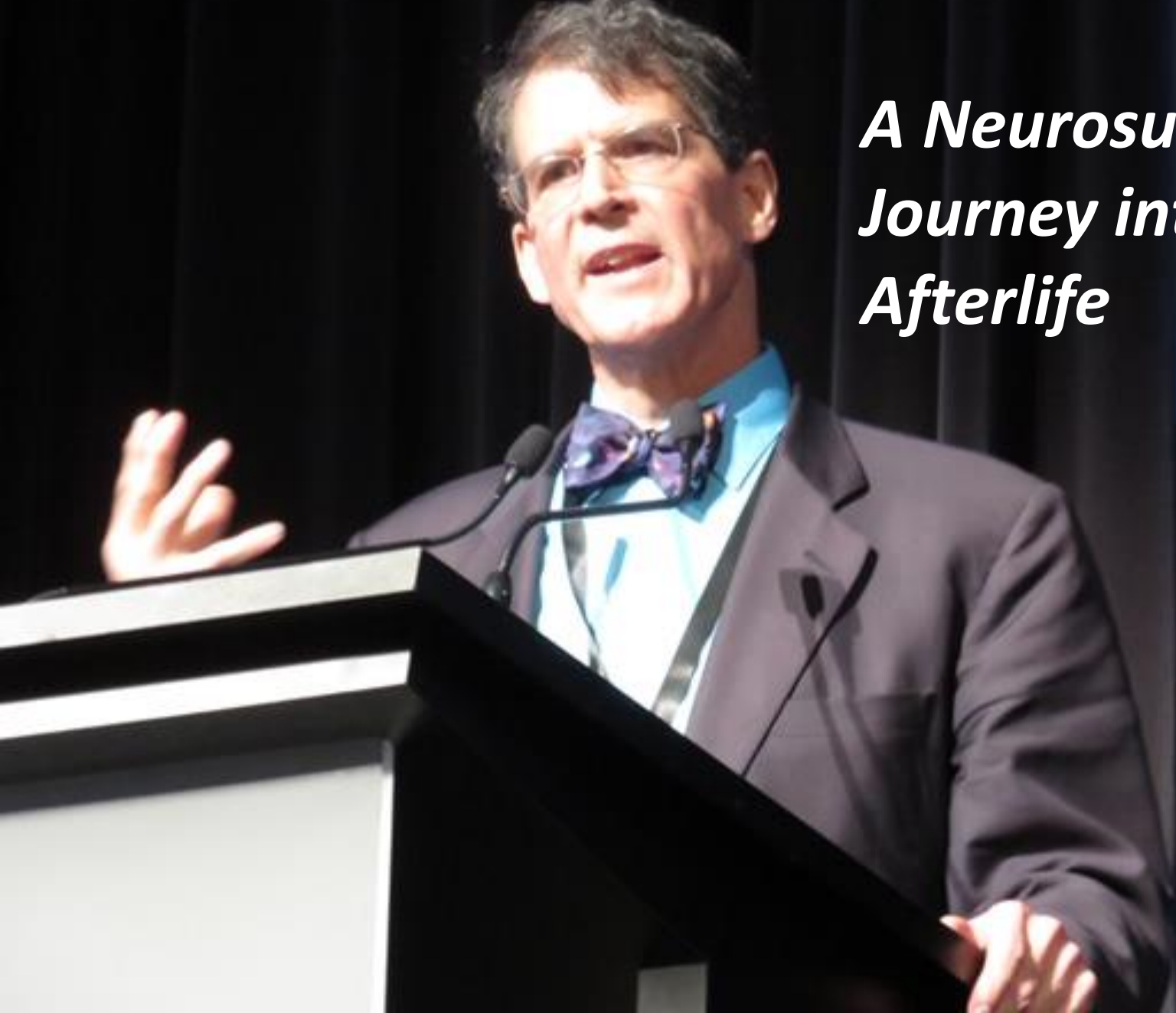
Near Death Experiences

A person's silhouette is centered in a brightly lit tunnel, standing with their back to the viewer. The tunnel's walls and floor are white, and the light source at the far end creates a strong lens flare effect, radiating light across the scene. The overall atmosphere is ethereal and contemplative.

Dr. Eben Alexander – Proof of Heaven

A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife

'My experience showed me that the death of the body and the brain are not the end of consciousness, that human experience continues beyond the grave.'





...God's sphere and our sphere ... are not thought of as detached or separate. They overlap and interlock. God is always at work in the world, and God is always at work in, and addressing, human beings, not only through one faculty such as the soul or spirit but through every fibre of our beings, not least our bodies. That is why I am not afraid that one day the neuroscientists might come up with a complete account of exactly which neurons fire under which circumstances, including that might indicate the person as responding to God and his love in worship, prayer and adoration. Why should the creator not relate to his creation in a thousand different ways? Why should brain, heart and body not all be wonderfully interrelated in so many ways that we need the rich language of mind, soul and spirit to begin to do justice to it all?

NT Wright - Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body, 2011

What is a human?



So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.... Therefore, we do not lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:16