



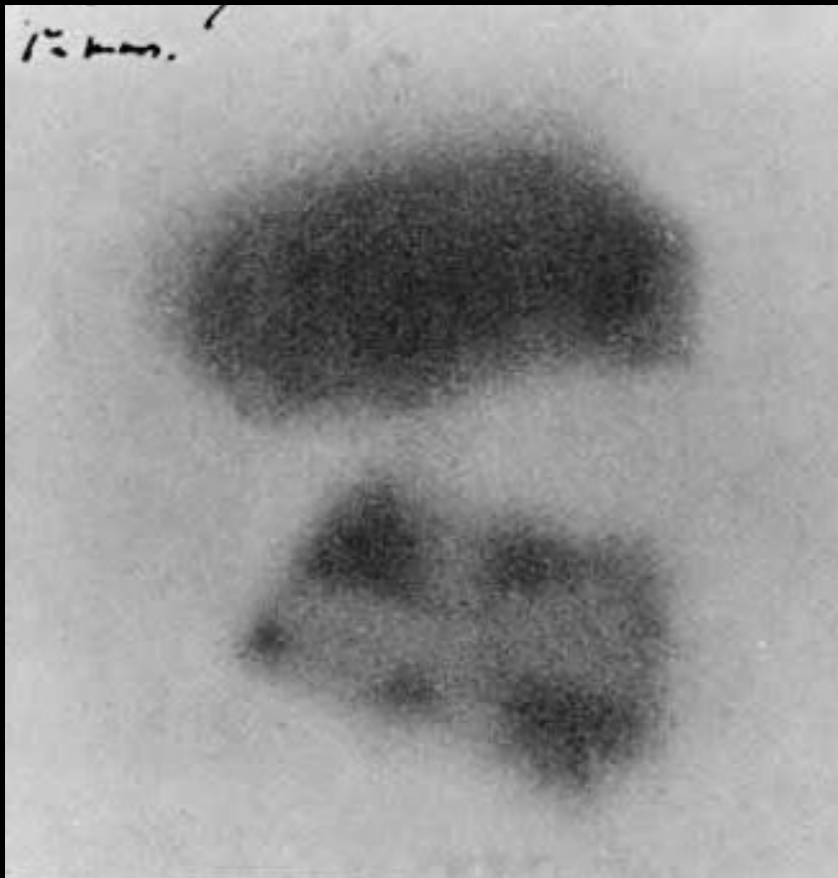
HOW FUNDAMENTAL SCIENCE HAS CHANGED THE WORLD

A STORY OF INVENTION AND DISCOVERY

Philipp Windischhofer
November 18, 2023

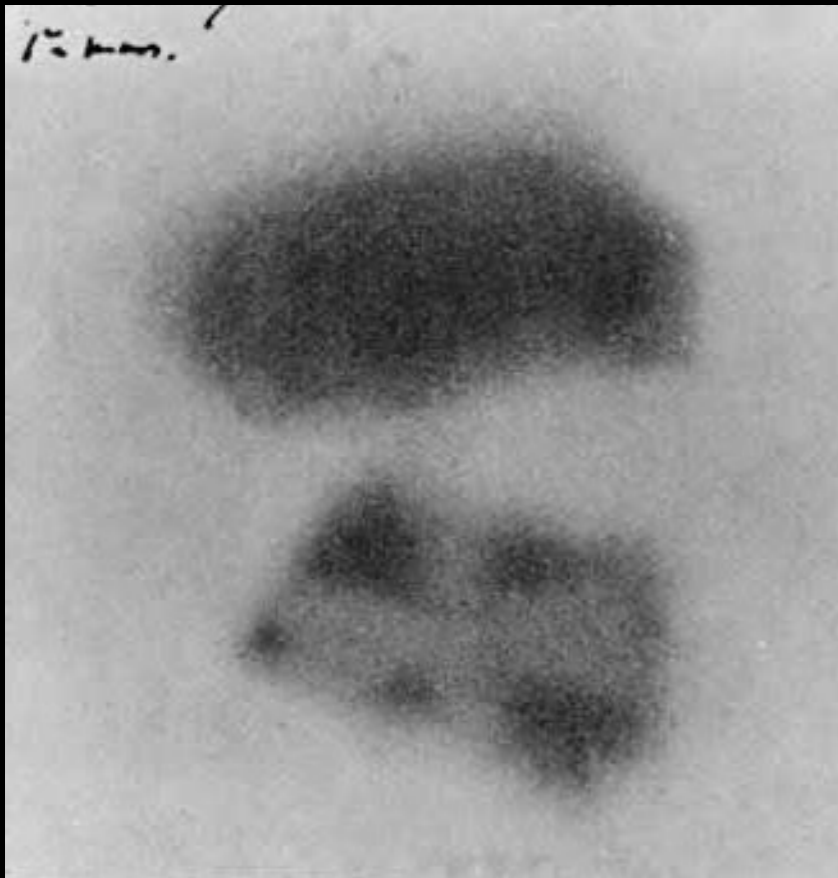
The discovery of radioactivity

The discovery of radioactivity

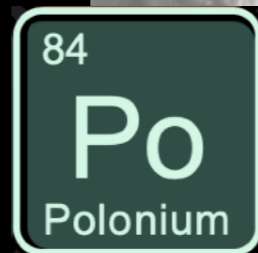
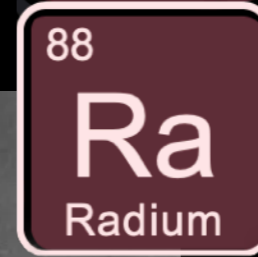


Henri Becquerel (1896)

The discovery of radioactivity



Henri Becquerel (1896)

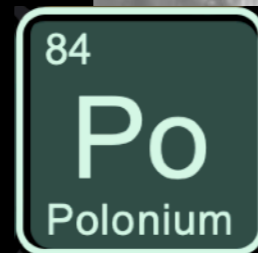


**Marie Skłodowska-Curie
Pierre Curie
(1898)**

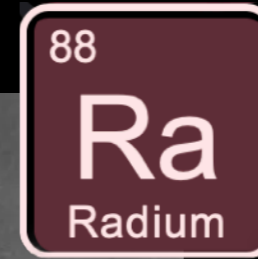
The discovery of radioactivity



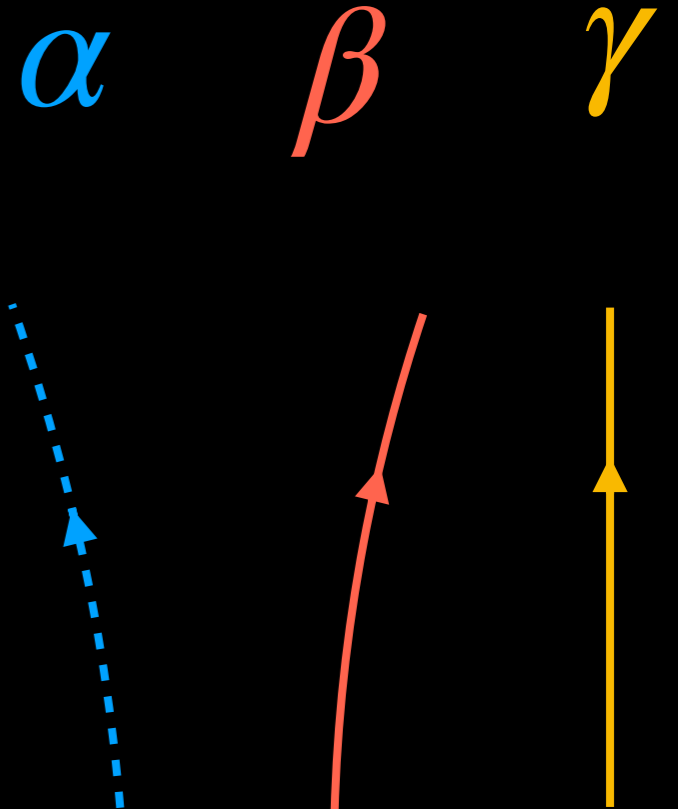
Henri Becquerel (1896)



Marie Skłodowska-Curie
Pierre Curie
(1898)

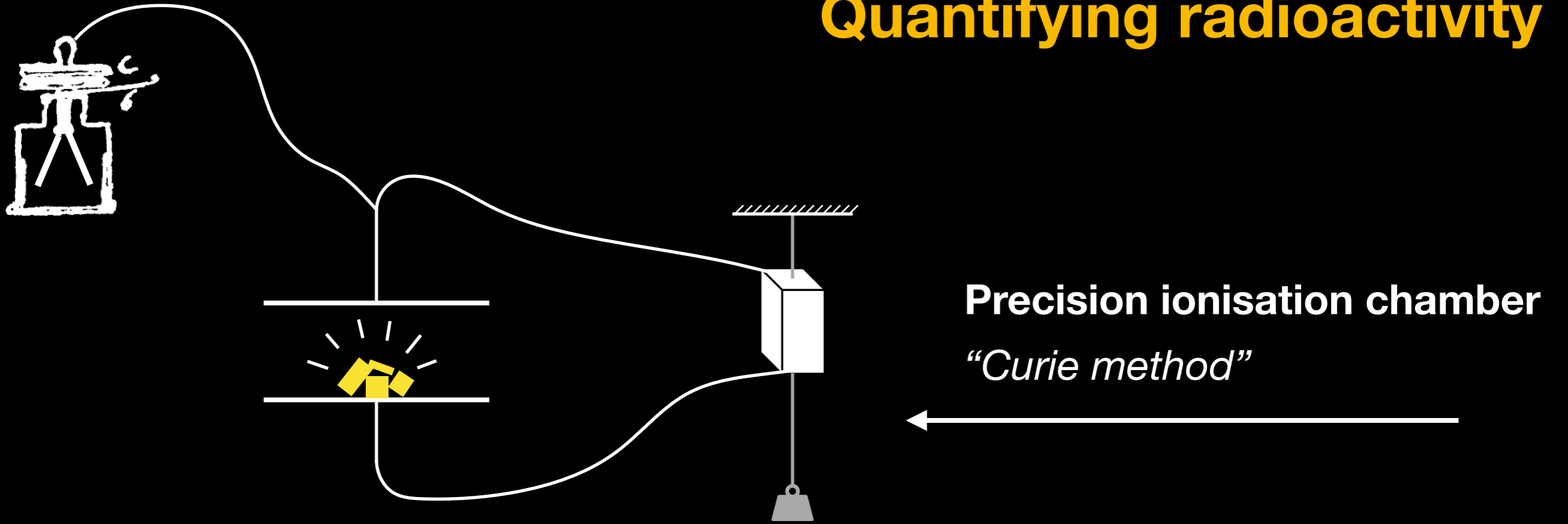


Ernest Rutherford
Paul Villard
(1903)

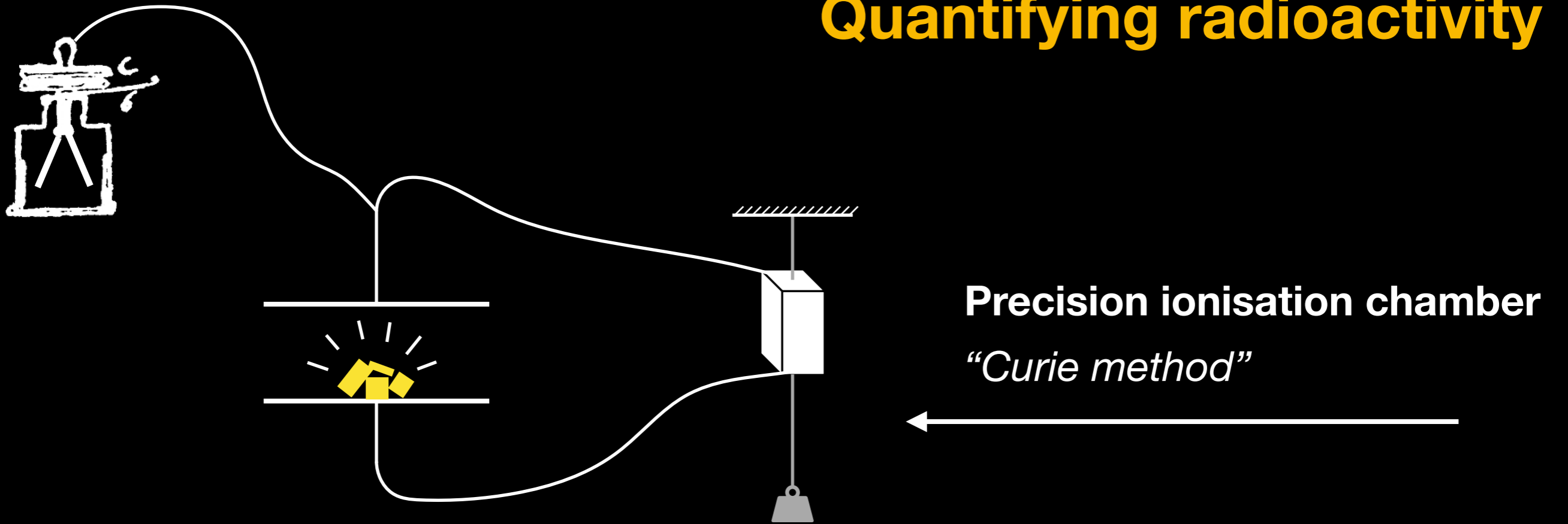


Quantifying radioactivity

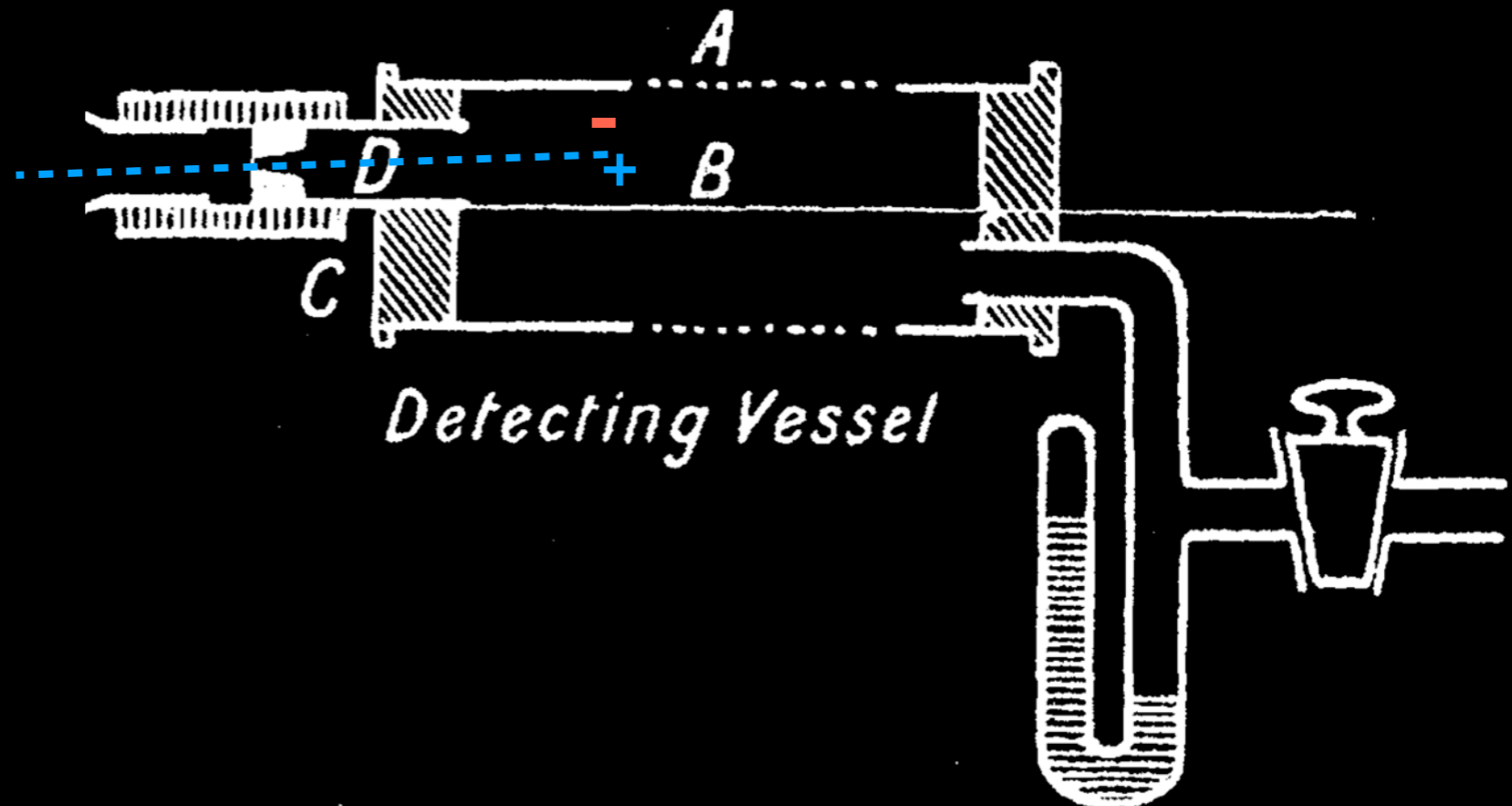
Quantifying radioactivity



Quantifying radioactivity



α -particle counter
Geiger and Rutherford

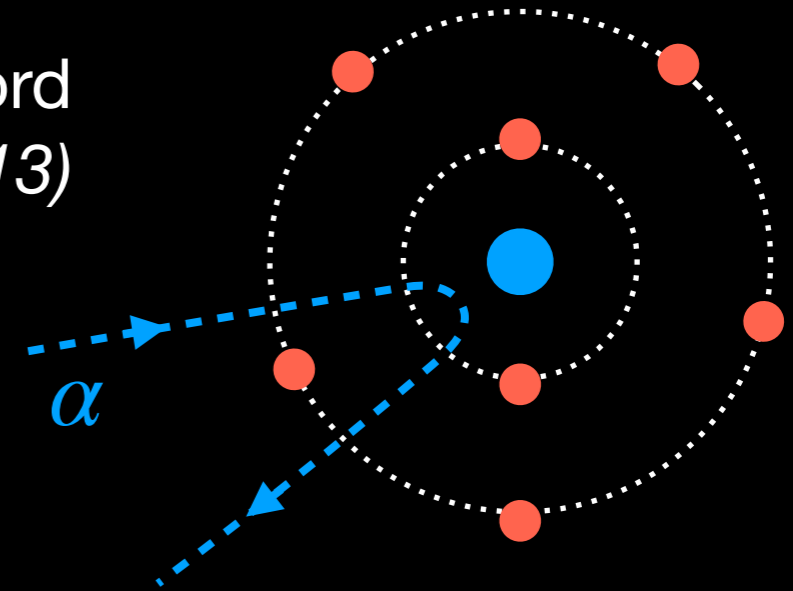
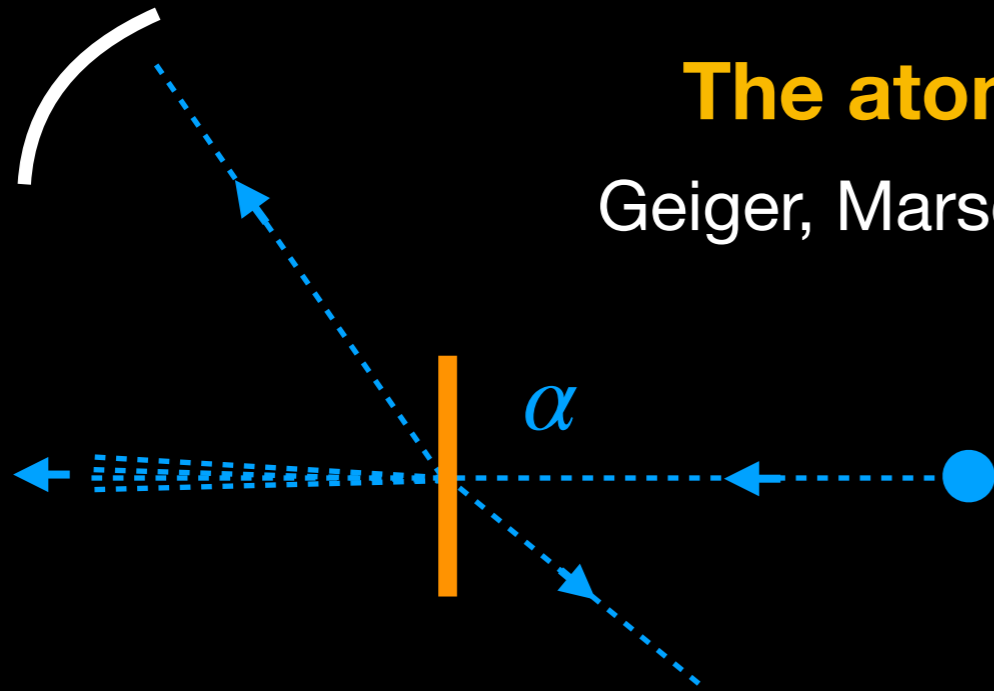


A tool for discovery

A tool for discovery

The atom has a nucleus!

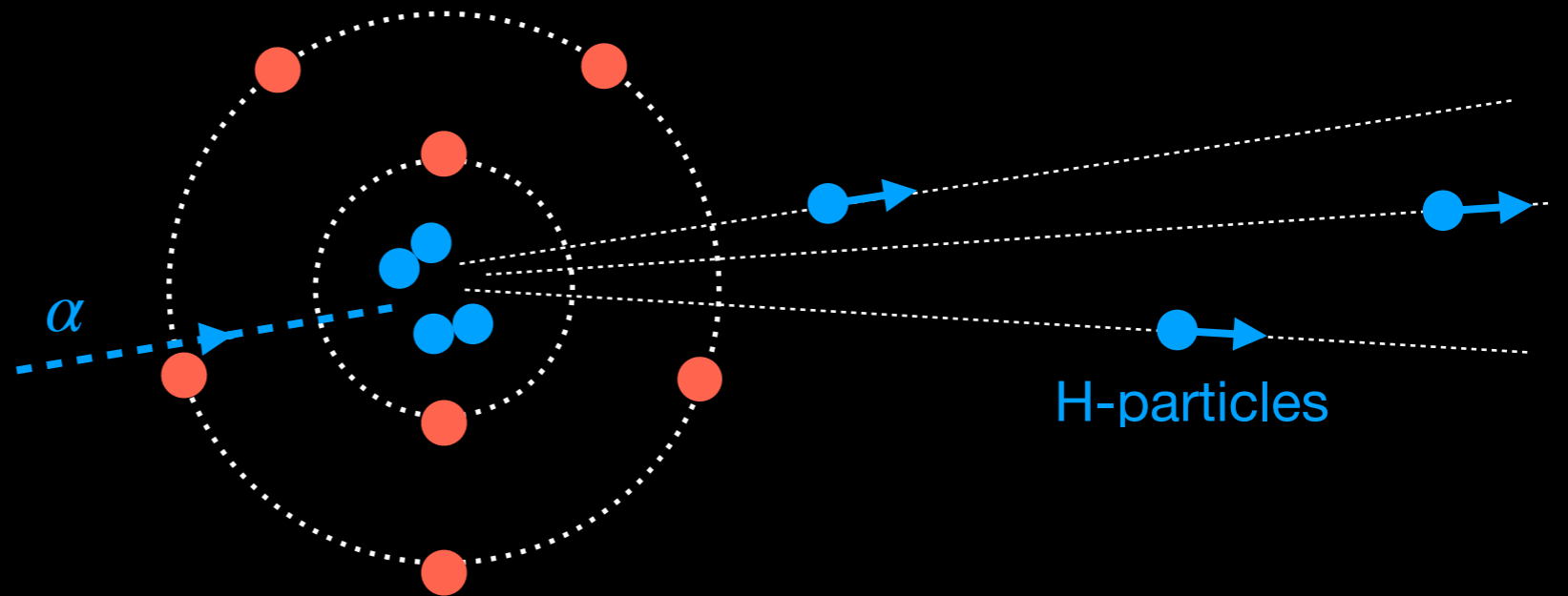
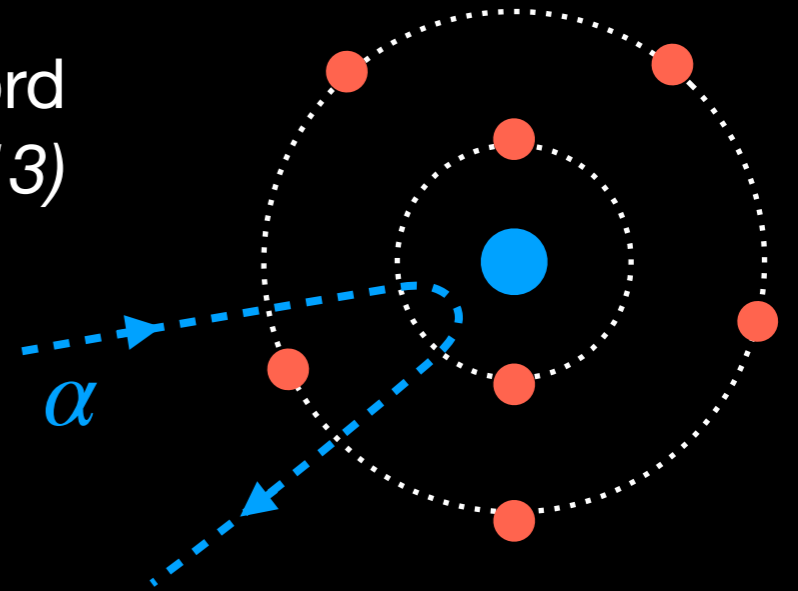
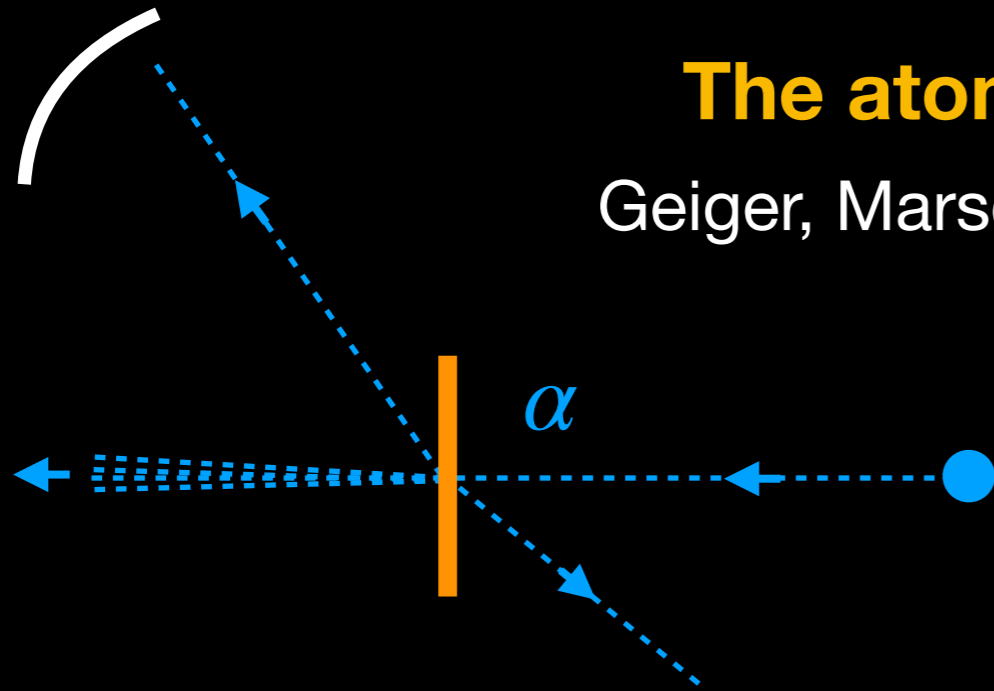
Geiger, Marsden, and Rutherford
(1913)



A tool for discovery

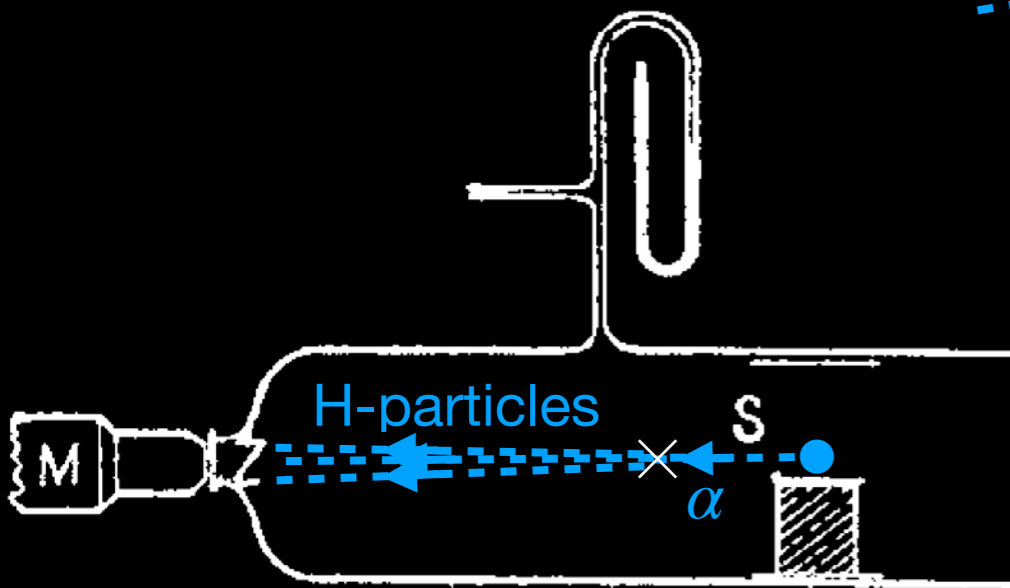
The atom has a nucleus!

Geiger, Marsden, and Rutherford
(1913)



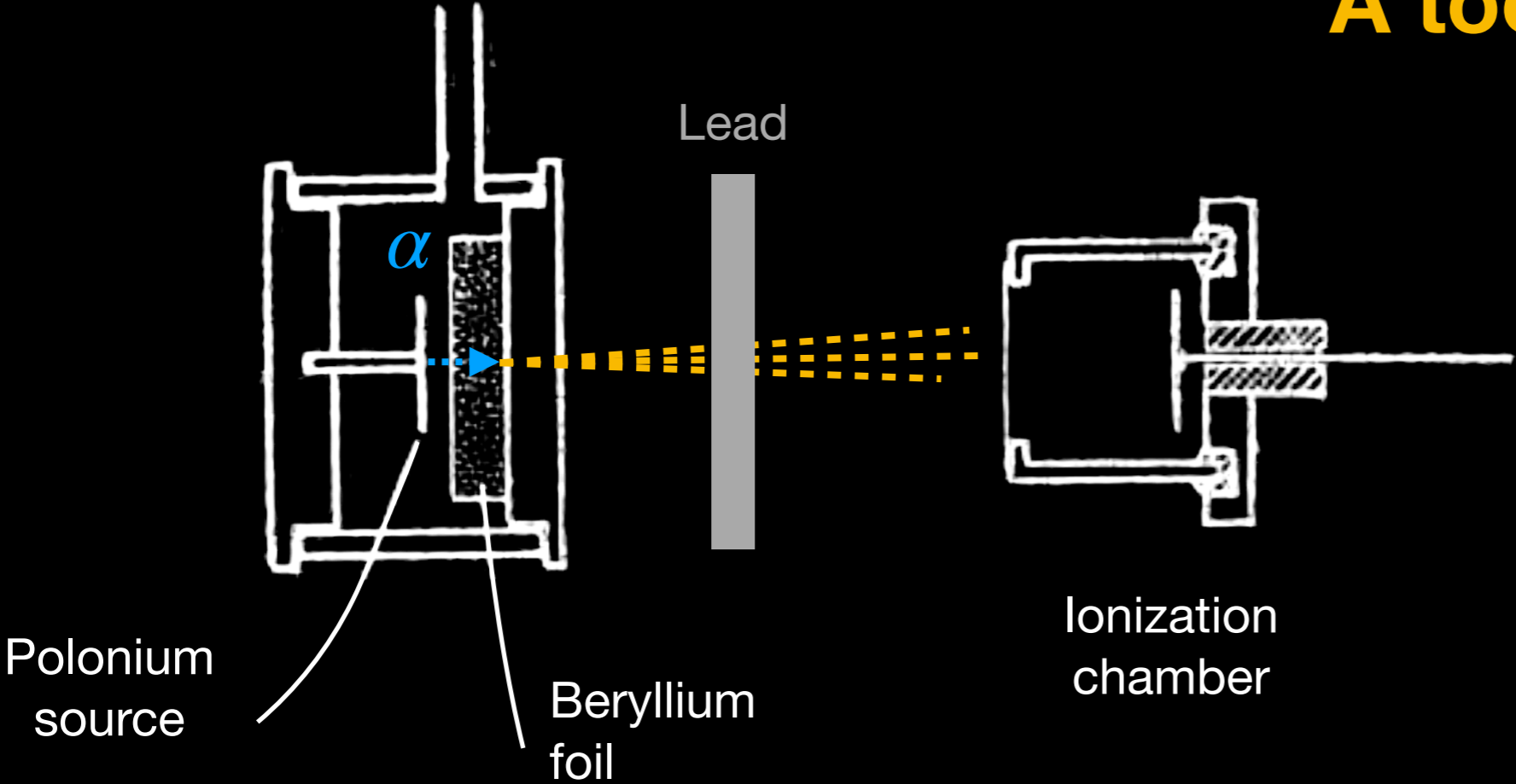
The nucleus consists of protons!

Marsden and Rutherford (1919)



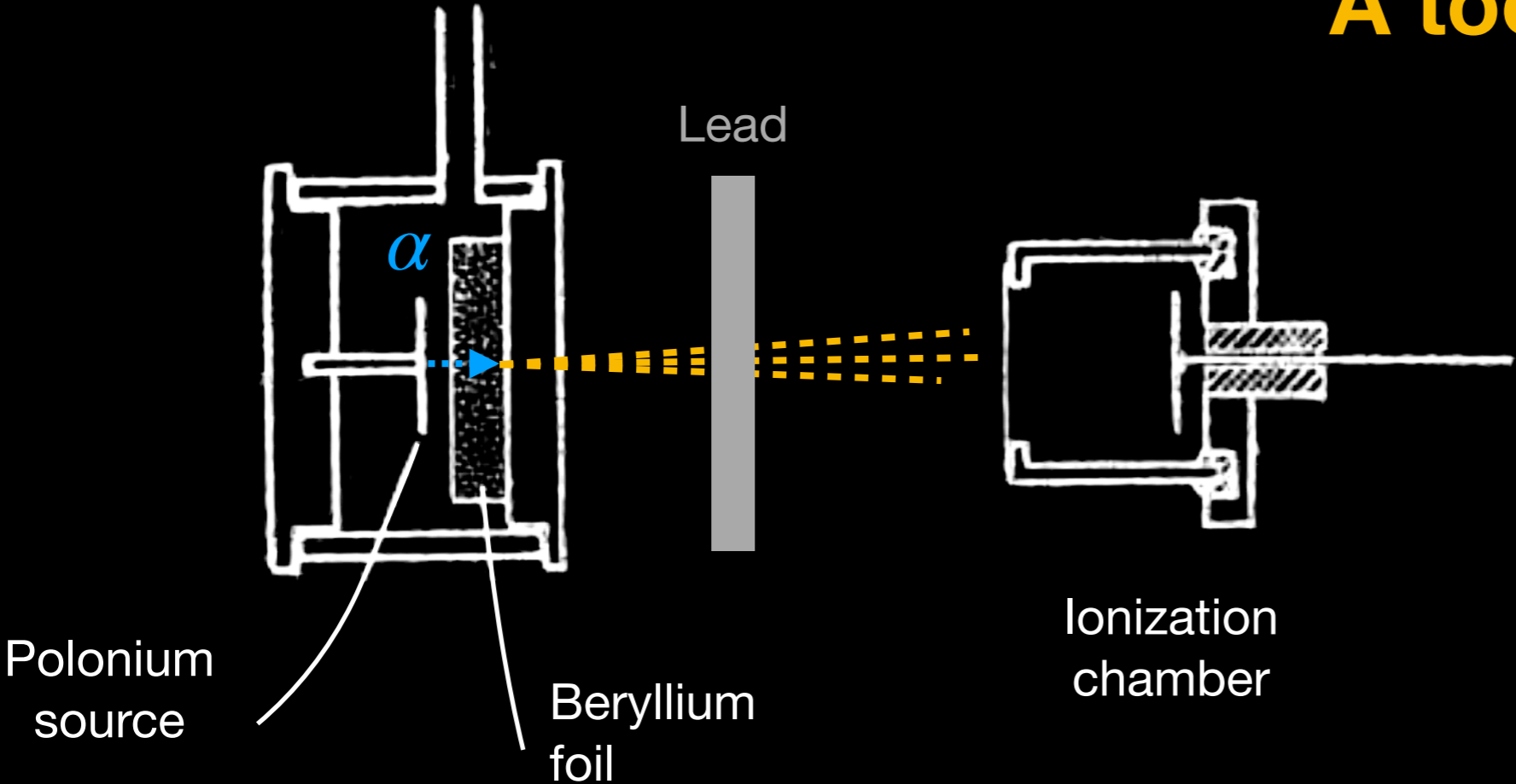
A tool for discovery

A tool for discovery



James Chadwick
(1932)

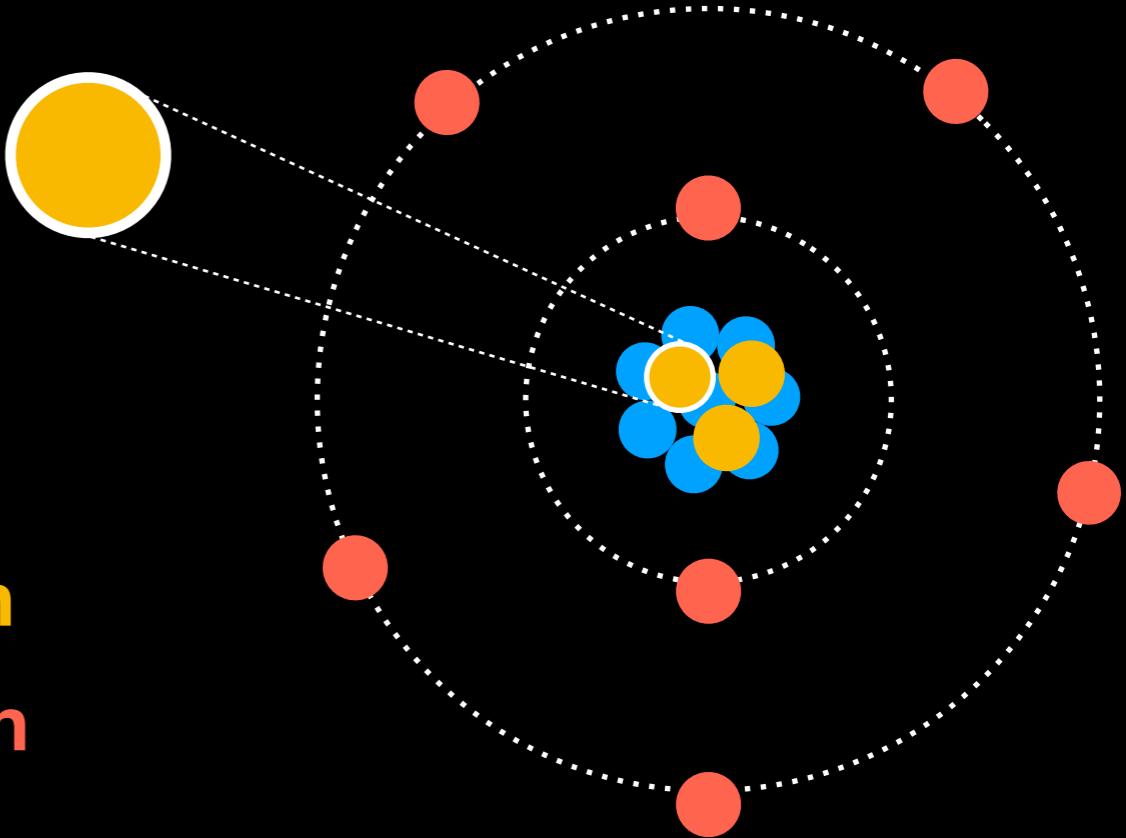
A tool for discovery



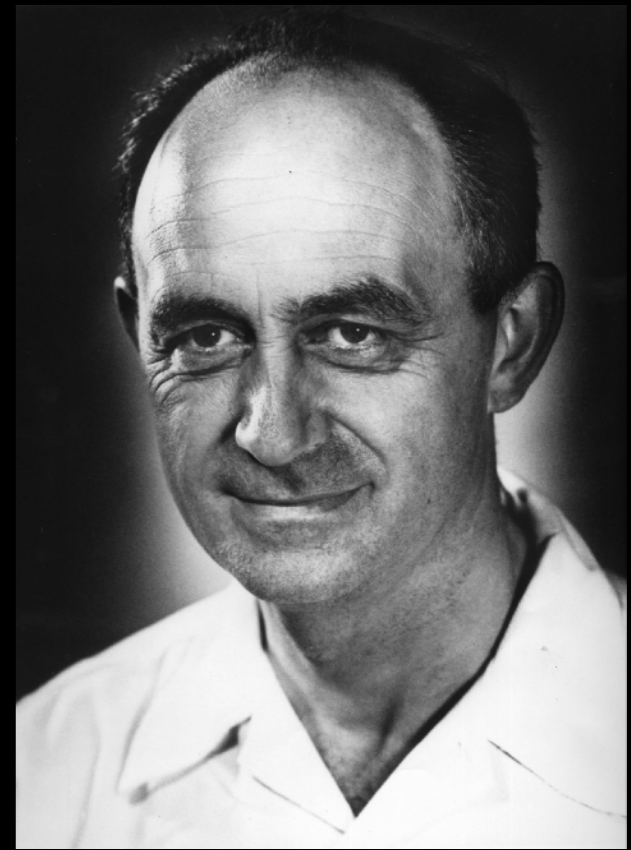
James Chadwick
(1932)

The nucleus consists of protons and neutrons!

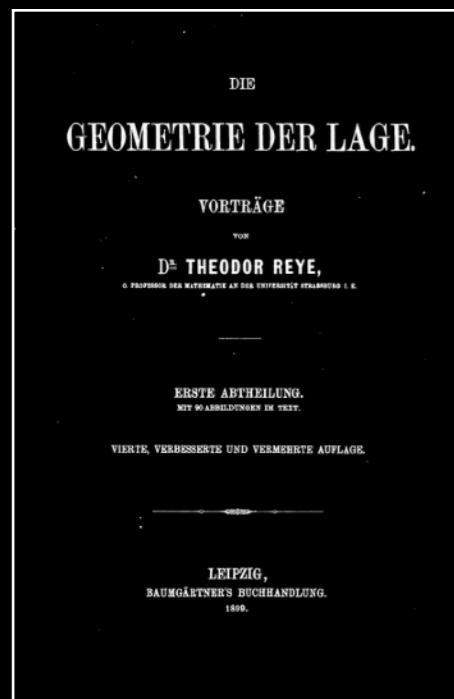
- Proton
- Neutron
- Electron



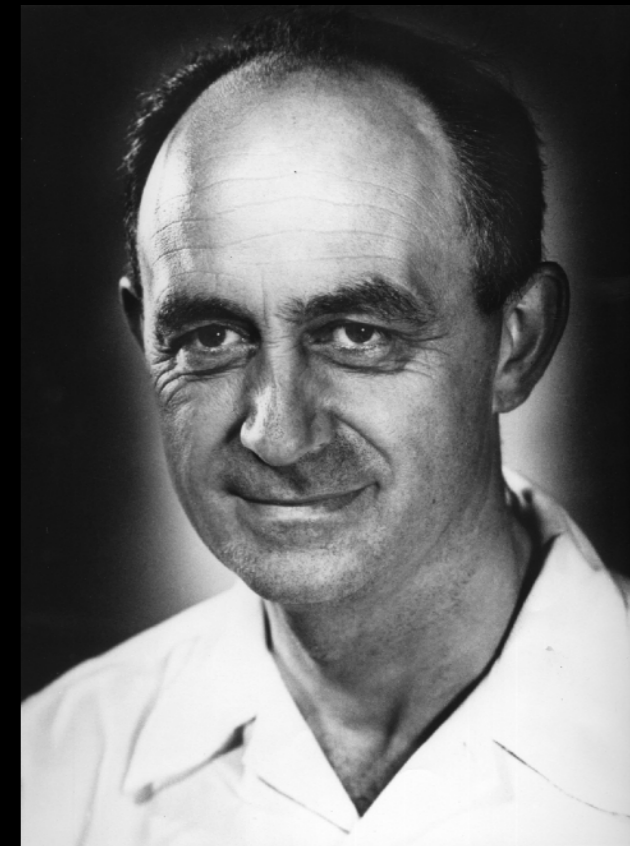
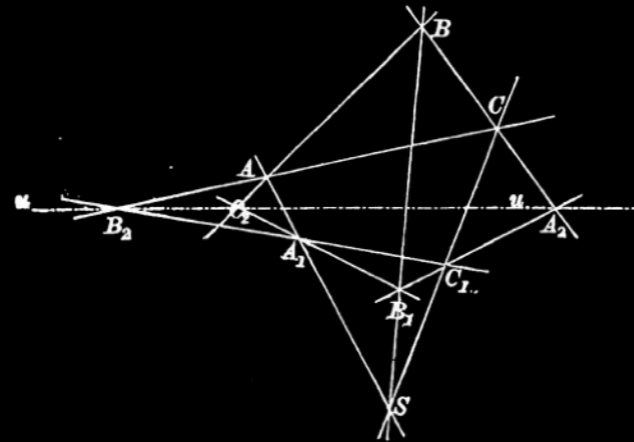
Enrico Fermi



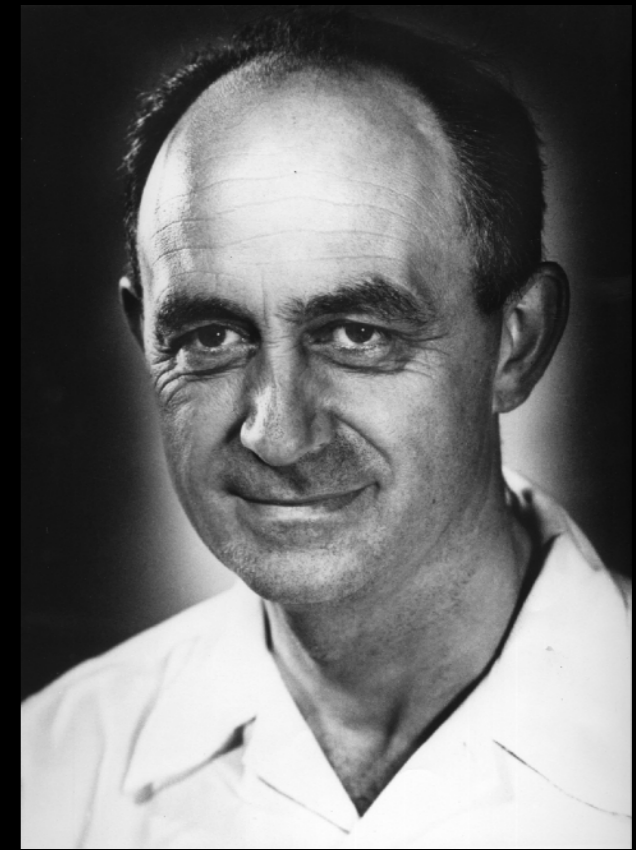
Enrico Fermi



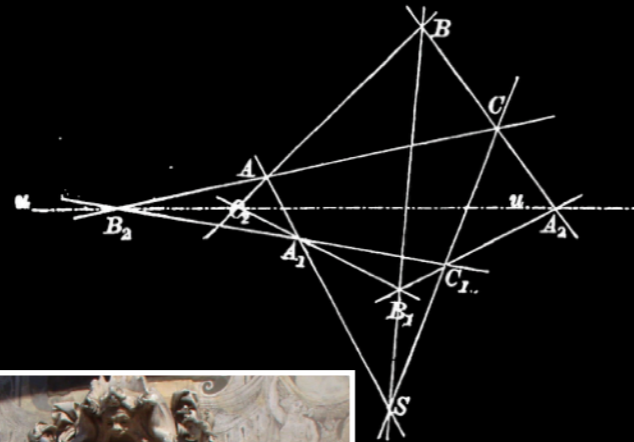
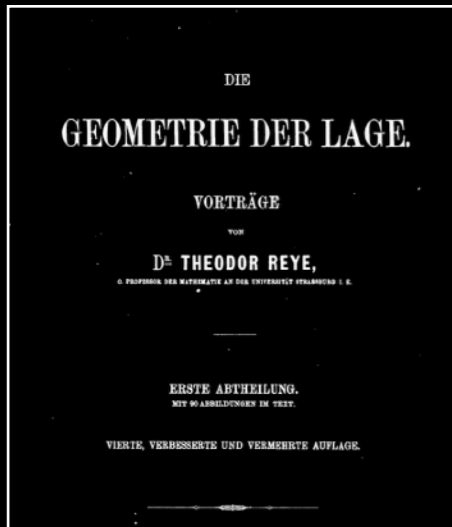
Geometry: his gateway into science



Enrico Fermi

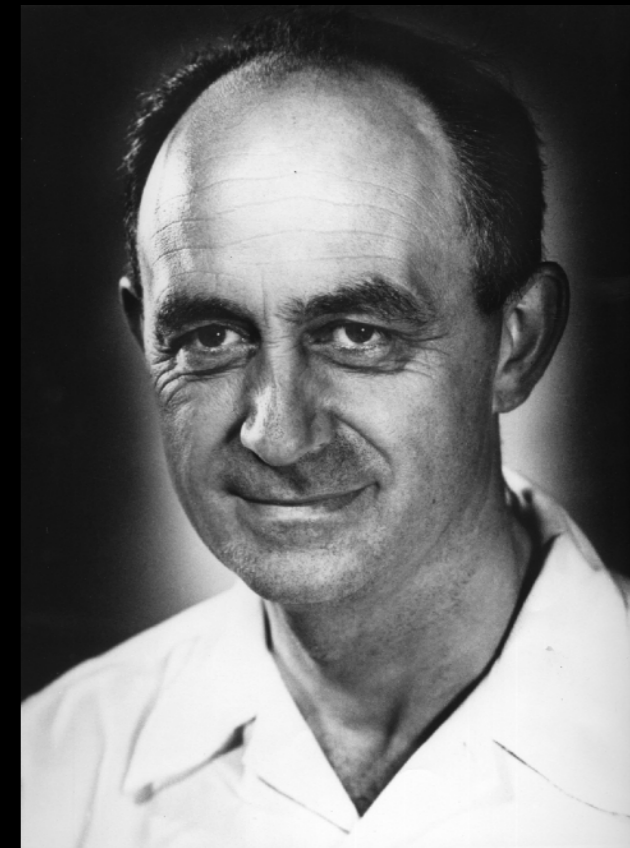


Geometry: his gateway into science

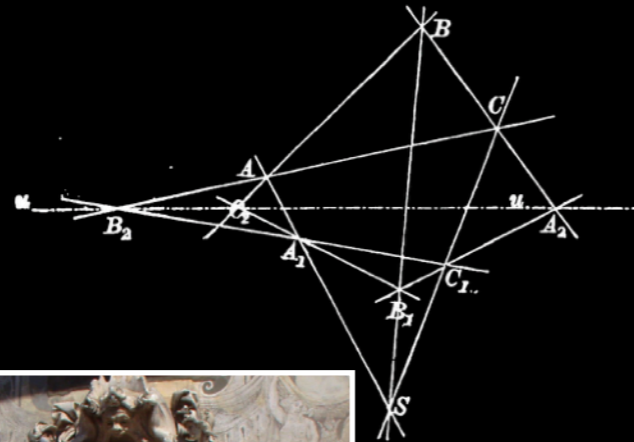
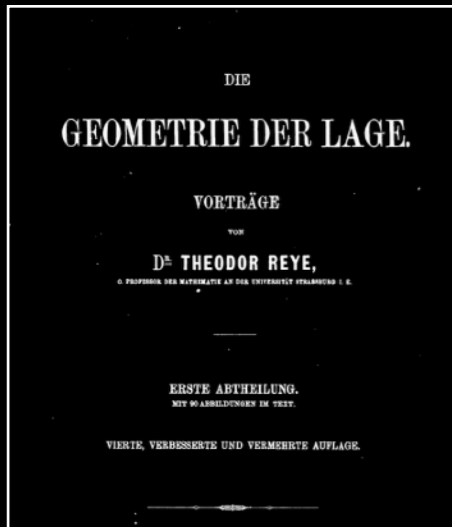


Pisa

Enrico Fermi



Geometry: his gateway into science

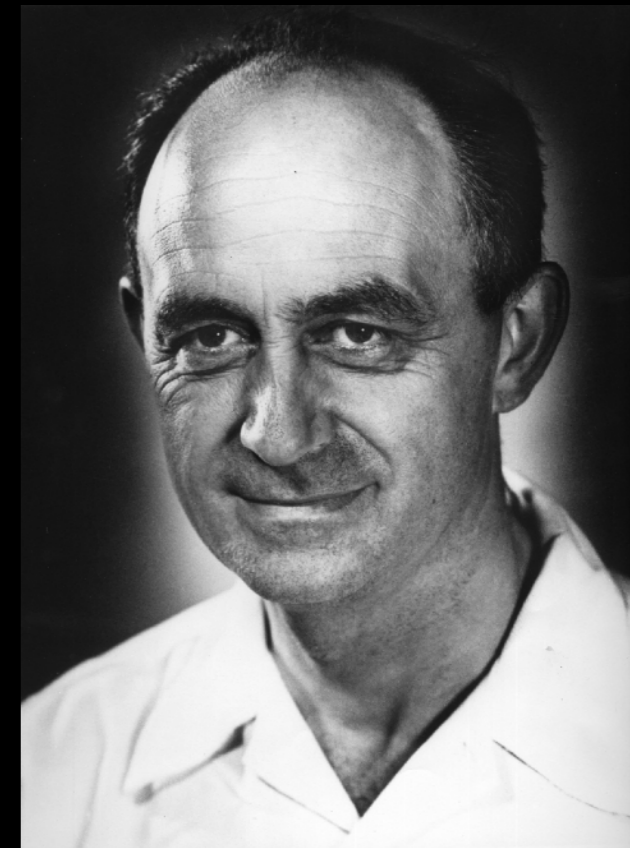


Goettingen

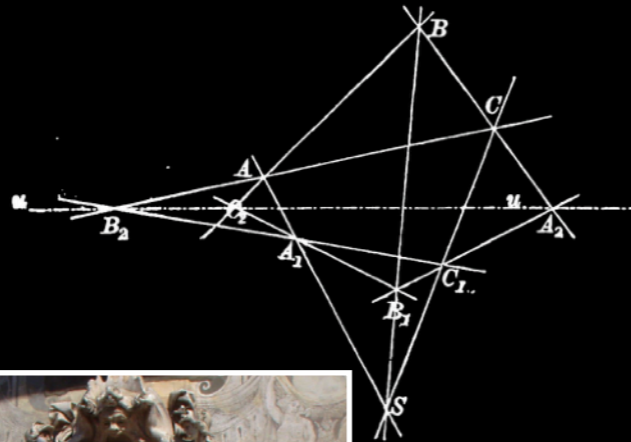
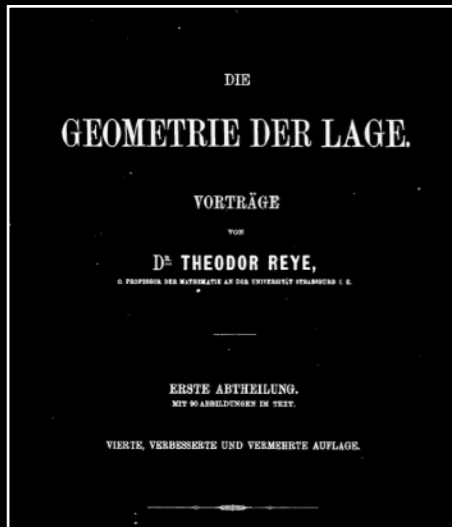


Pisa

Enrico Fermi



Geometry: his gateway into science



Leiden

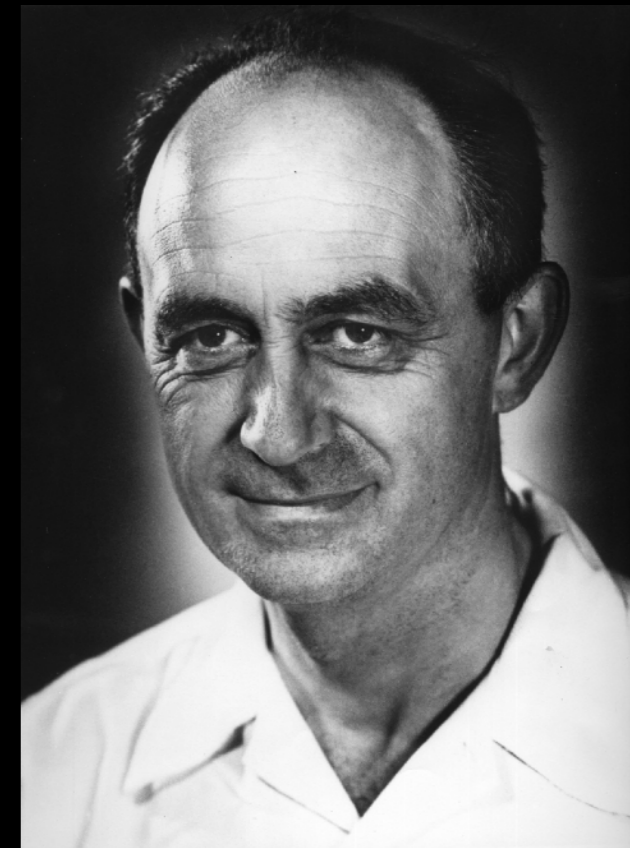


Leiden

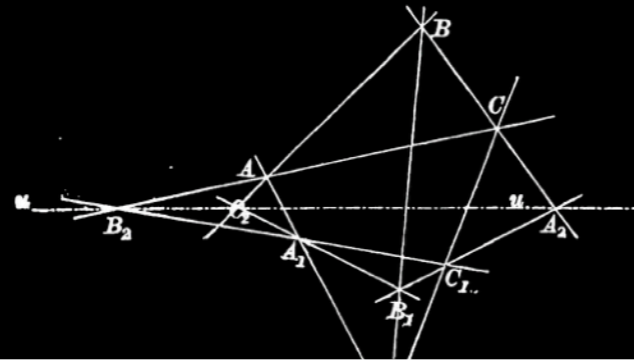
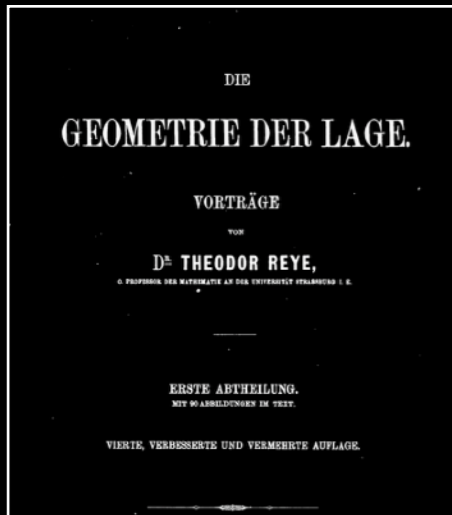
Pisa



Enrico Fermi



Geometry: his gateway into science



Leiden



Florence



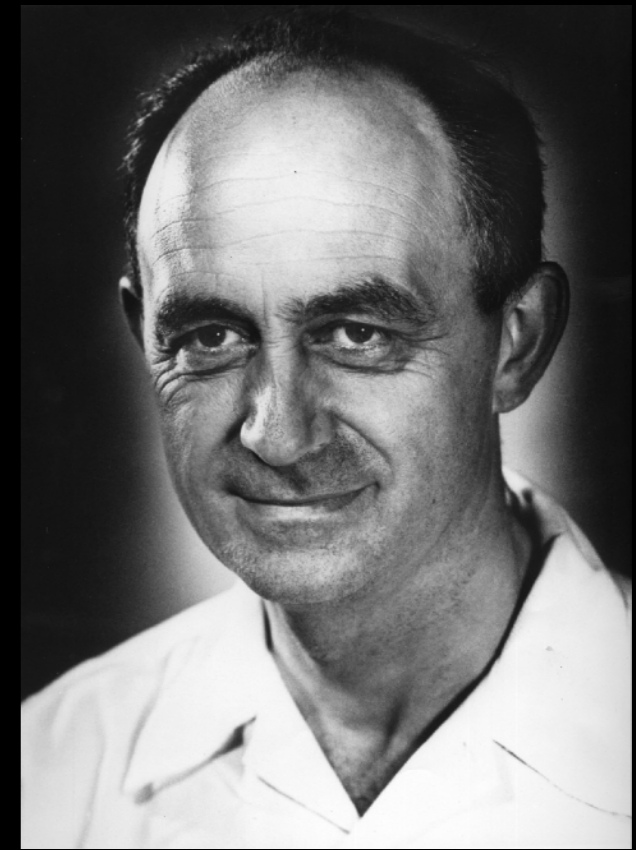
Göttingen



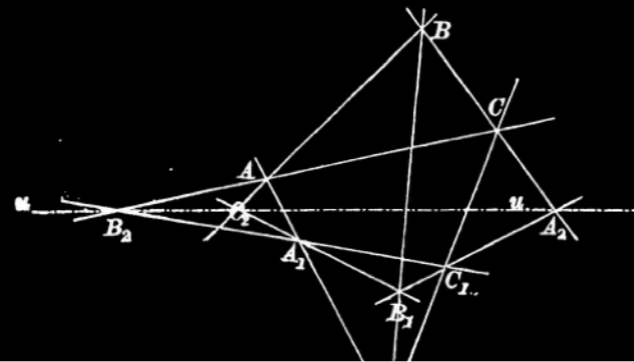
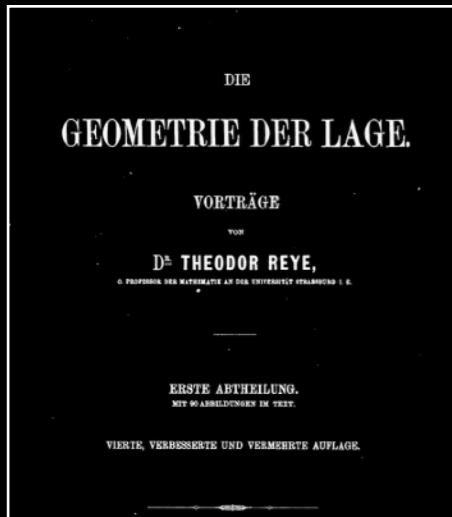
Pisa



Enrico Fermi



Geometry: his gateway into science



Florence



Leiden



Heidelberg



“I can calculate anything in physics within a factor 2 on a few sheets; to get it fully right may well take a physicist a year, but I am not interested in that.”

Pisa



Back in Rome: the Via Panisperna boys



Back in Rome: the Via Panisperna boys

“The pope”



Back in Rome: the Via Panisperna boys

Franco Rasetti
“The Cardinal Vicar”

“The pope”



Back in Rome: the Via Panisperna boys

Edoardo Amaldi
"The Young Boy"

Franco Rasetti
"The Cardinal Vicar"

"The pope"



Back in Rome: the Via Panisperna boys

Edoardo Amaldi
“The Young Boy”

Franco Rasetti
“The Cardinal Vicar”

“The pope”



Orso Corbino
“God almighty”



News from Paris: artificial radioactivity

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity



Frédéric and
Irène Joliot-Curie

1934

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity



Frédéric and
Irène Joliot-Curie

1934

***“Our latest experiments have shown
a very striking fact.”***

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity

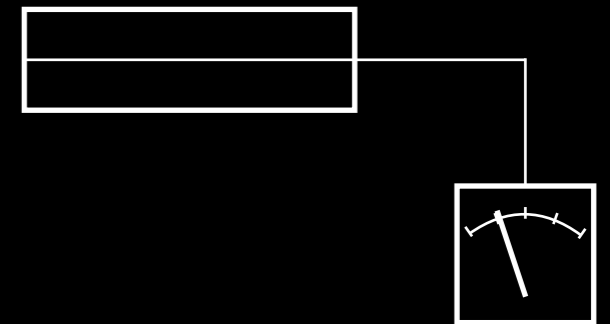


Frédéric and
Irène Joliot-Curie

1934

***“Our latest experiments have shown
a very striking fact.”***

Geiger counter



Aluminium
foil



Polonium
 α -source

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity

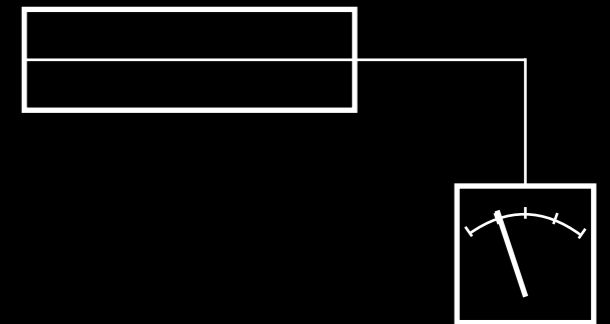


Frédéric and
Irène Joliot-Curie

1934

*“Our latest experiments have shown
a very striking fact.”*

Geiger counter



Aluminium
foil



Polonium
 α -source

*“When an aluminium foil is irradiated on a
polonium preparation ...”*

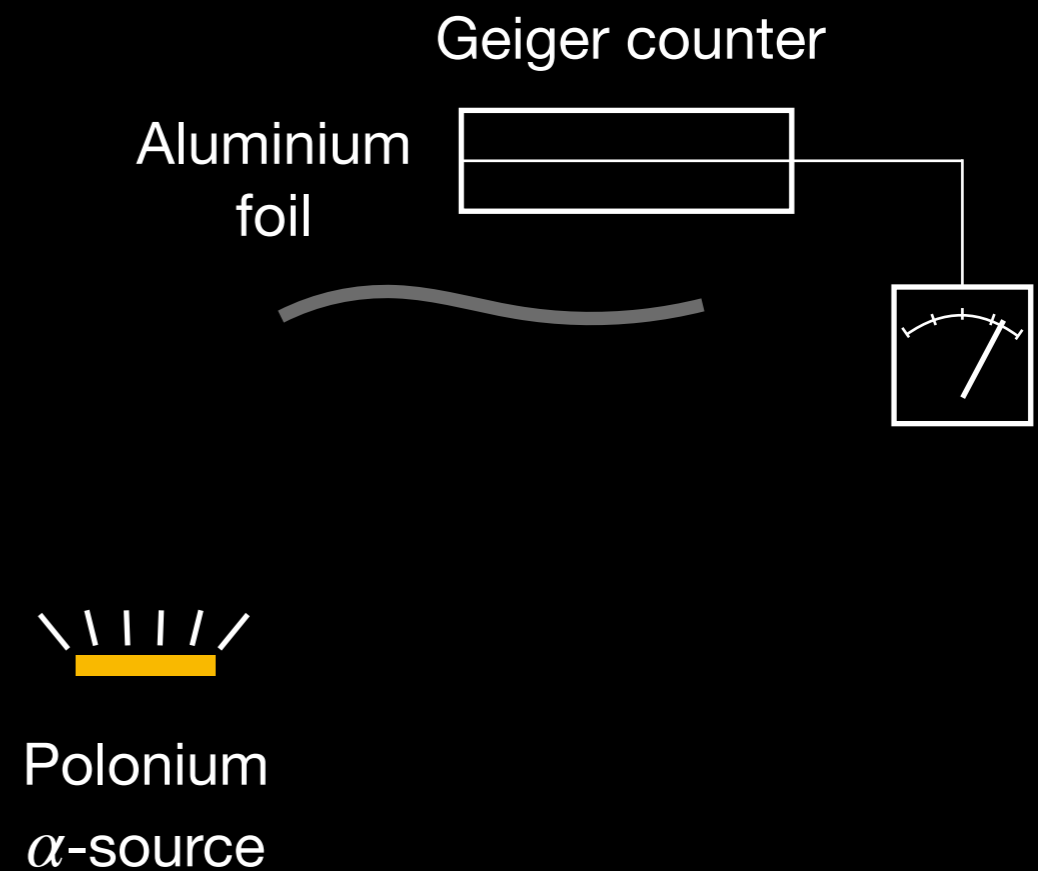
News from Paris: artificial radioactivity



Frédéric and
Irène Joliot-Curie

1934

***“Our latest experiments have shown
a very striking fact.”***



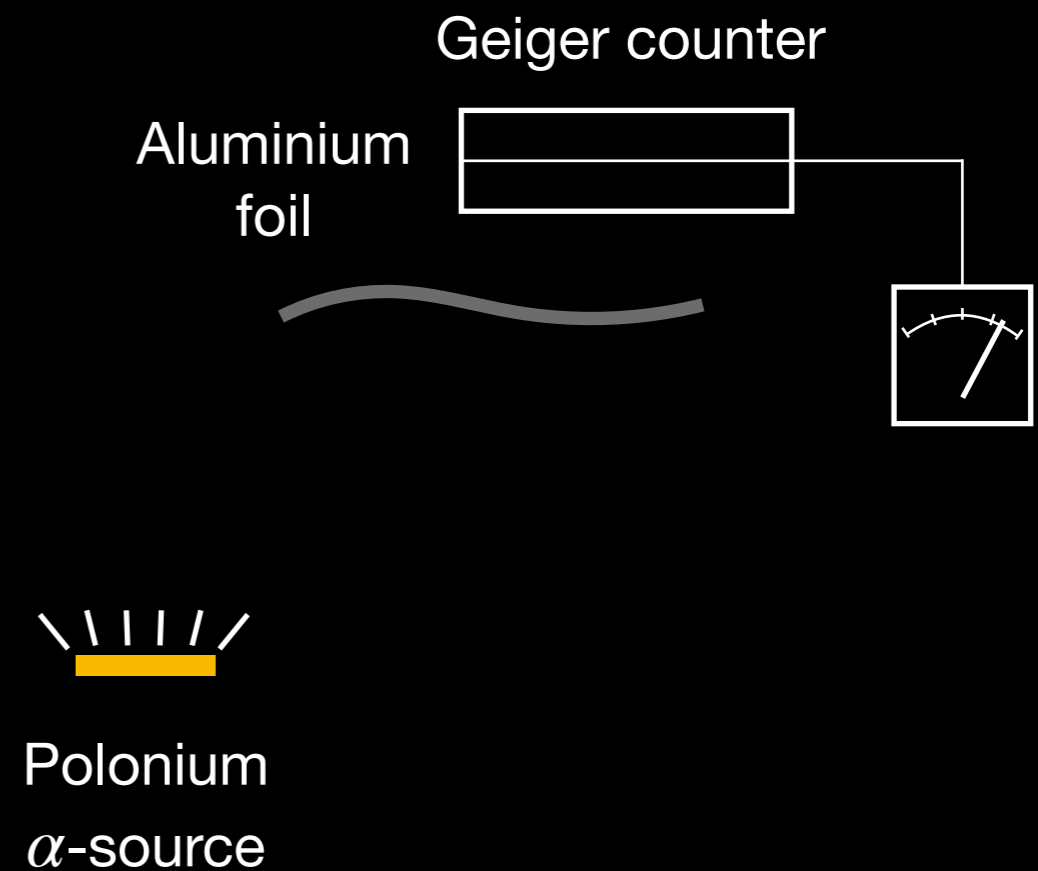
*“... the emission of radiation does not cease
immediately when the active preparation is removed.”*

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity



Frédéric and
Irène Joliot-Curie

***“Our latest experiments have shown
a very striking fact.”***



***“The foil remains radioactive and the emission of
radiation decays exponentially as for an ordinary
radio-element.”***

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity

5^e 02 12 Janvier 1934 1

Drum 17500 (11/1)

M^l propae 8₁/minute

4847
4880
27

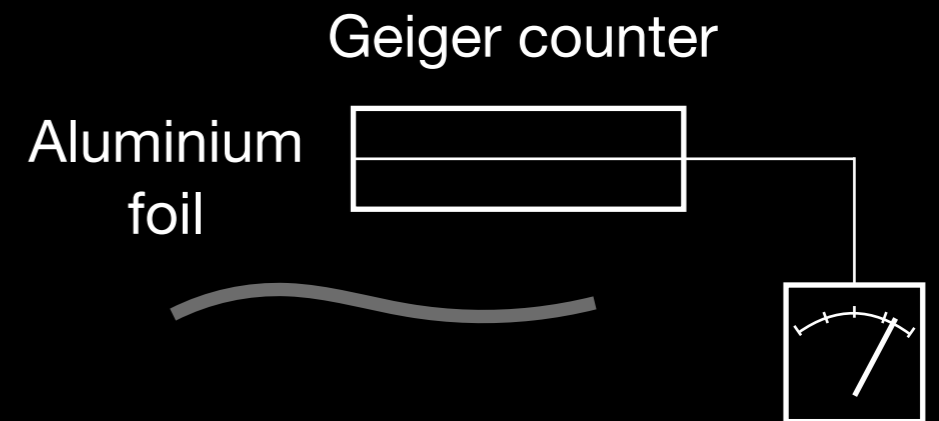
2' $\frac{27}{3} = 9$ /minute M^l propae

Exp. Al $\frac{3}{100}$ 7' $\frac{1}{2}$ mm au-dessus de la source

M^l propae 4895
4847 5' 9,6/minute M^l f.

4980	51204		5601	55	110
5021			5656		
5082	51204		5698	82	84
5127	45 180	1/2 minute	5731	33	66
5172	45 180	1/2	5769	37	74
5215	43 172	1/2	5804	35	70
5256	41 166	1/2	5829	25	50
5292	36 144	1/2			
5330	38 152	1/2			
5366	36 144	1/2			
5400	44 176	1/2			
5440	30 120	1/2			
5480	40 160				
5509	29 116 1'		5880		61
5539	30 120 1'		5916		36
5570	31 124 1'		5951		35
5601	31 124 1'		5985		34
			6002		1

“Our latest experiments have shown a very striking fact.”



Polonium
 α -source

“The foil remains radioactive and the emission of radiation decays exponentially as for an ordinary radio-element.”

News from Paris: artificial radioactivity

5^e 02 12 Janvier 1934 1

Drum 17500 (11/1)

M^t propre 8,1/minute

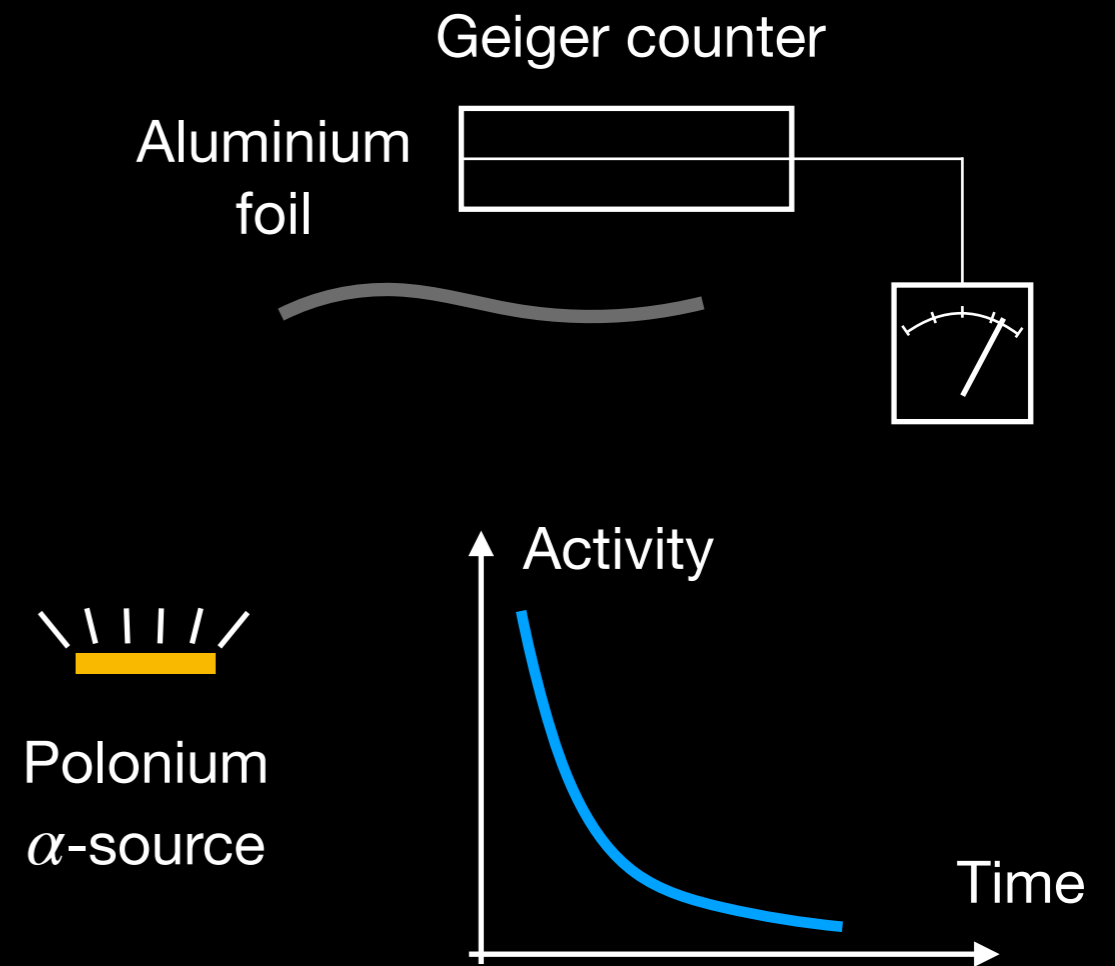
$\frac{4847}{4880} \approx \frac{27}{27} = 9/minute$ M^t propre

Exp. Al $\frac{3}{100}$ 7' $\frac{1}{2}$ mm au-dessus de la source

M^t propre $\frac{4895}{48}$ 9,6/minute M^t f.

4980	51204		5601	55	110
5021			5656		
5082	51204		5698	82	84
5127	45 180	1/2 minute	5731	33	66
5172	45 180	1/2	5769	37	74
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5539	30 120 1'		5951		35
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“Our latest experiments have shown a very striking fact.”



“The foil remains radioactive and the emission of radiation decays exponentially as for an ordinary radio-element.”

Back to Rome

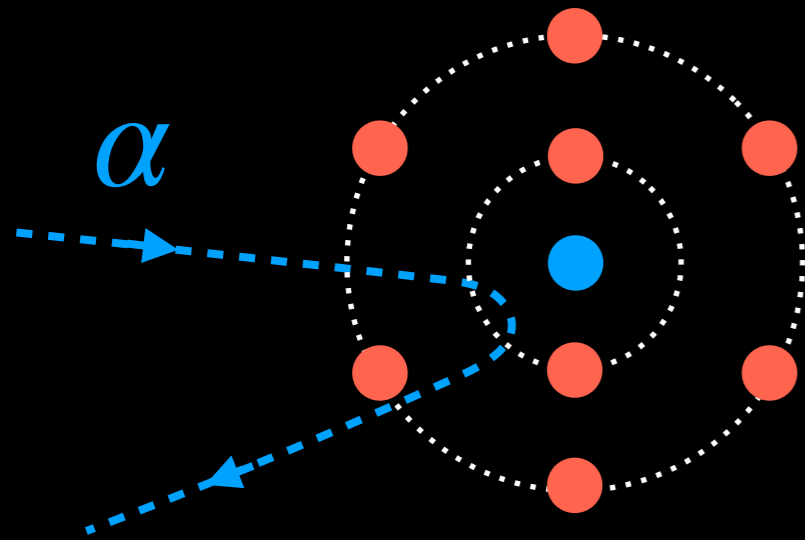
Back to Rome

Artificial Production of a New Kind of Radio-Element

By F. JOLIOT and I. CURIE, Institut du Radium, Paris

Back to Rome

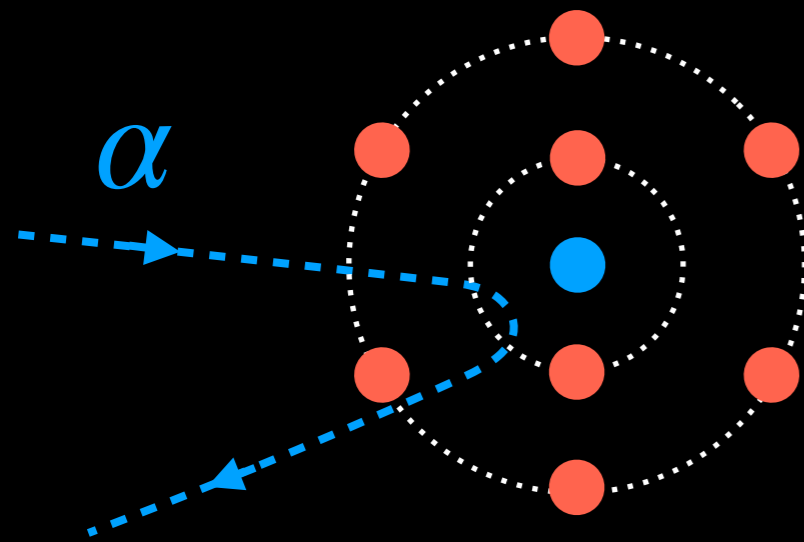
Artificial Production of a New Kind of Radio-Element
By F. JOLIOT and I. CURIE, Institut du Radium, Paris



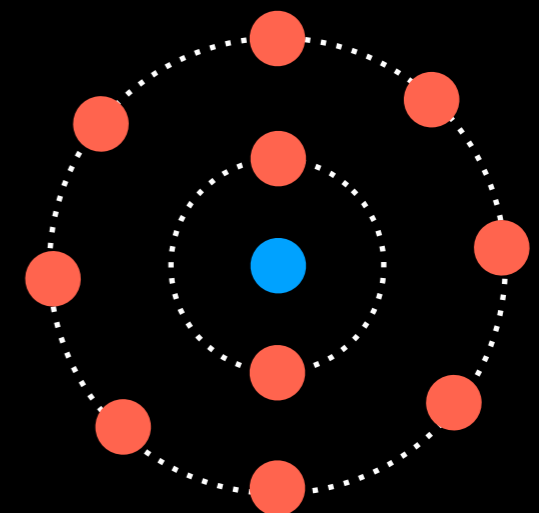
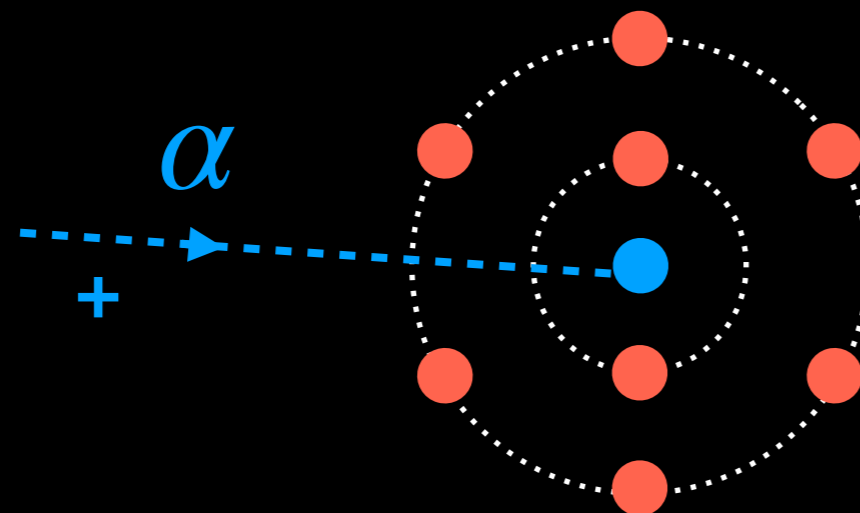
Back to Rome

Artificial Production of a New Kind of Radio-Element

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Aluminium atom

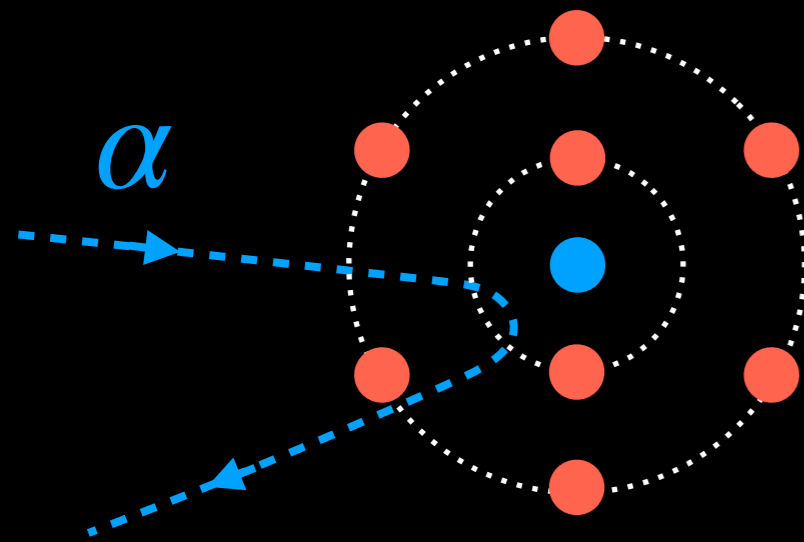


Phosphorus atom

Back to Rome

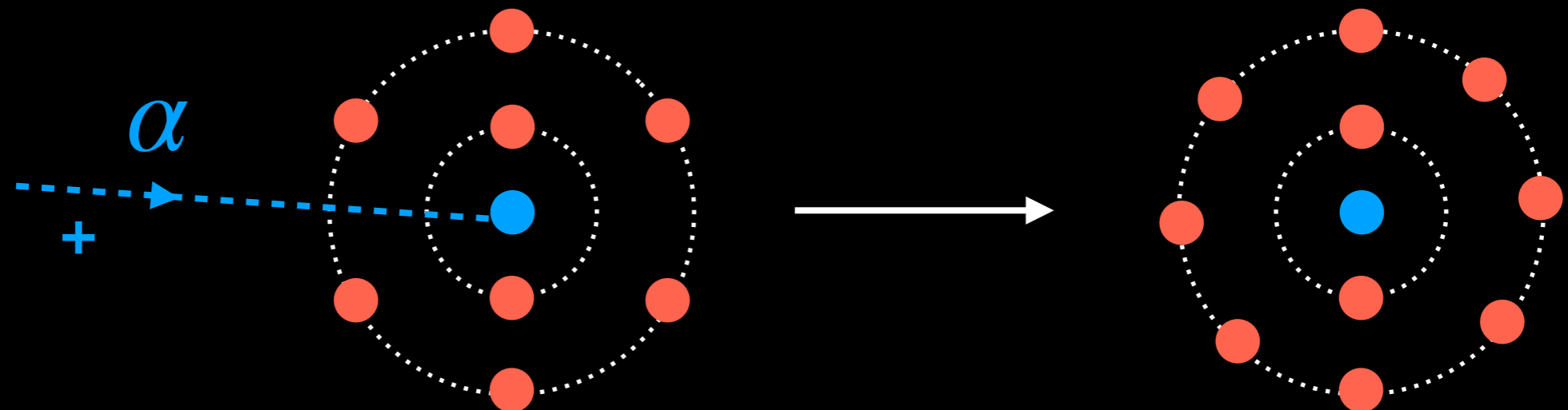
Artificial Production of a New Kind of Radio-Element

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Aluminium atom

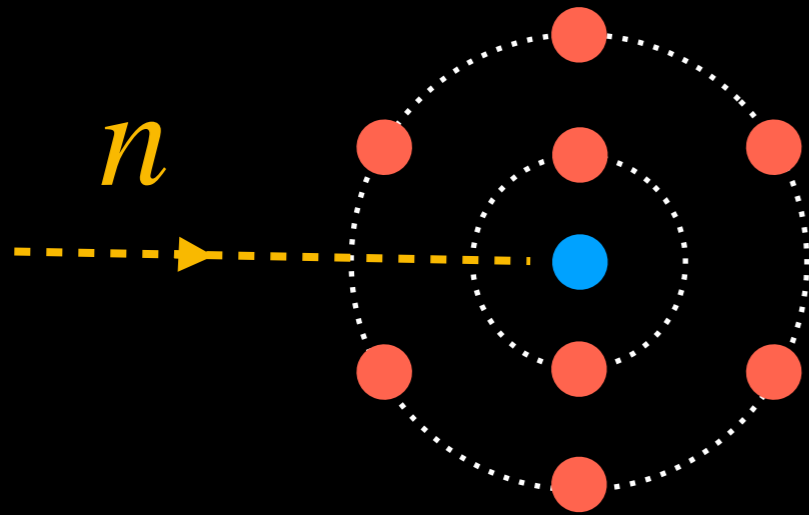
Fermi: High-intensity α -source,
but most α -particles do not reach the nucleus!



Phosphorus atom

What about neutrons?

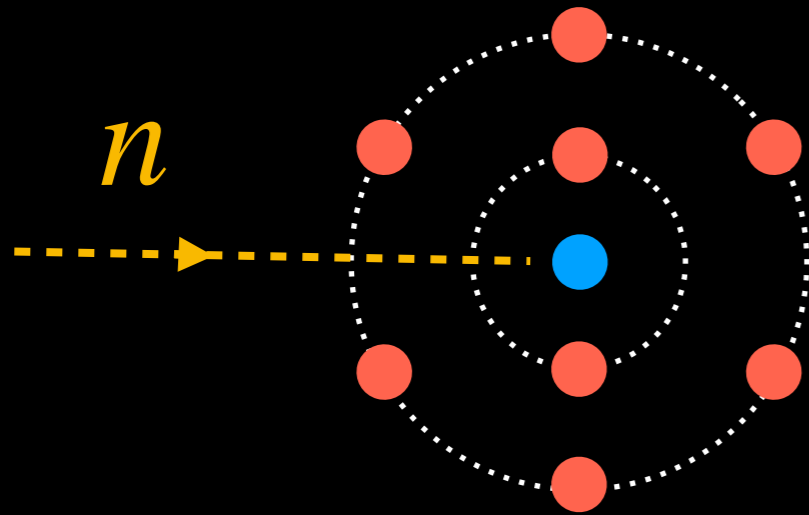
What about neutrons?



Fermi: Uncharged neutrons would not get deflected!

But: available neutron sources much weaker
(*Chadwick and Rutherford also in the game!*)

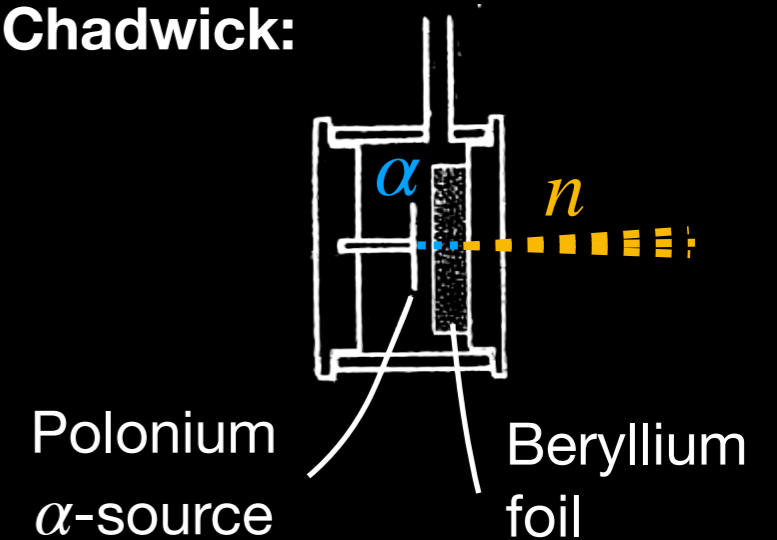
What about neutrons?



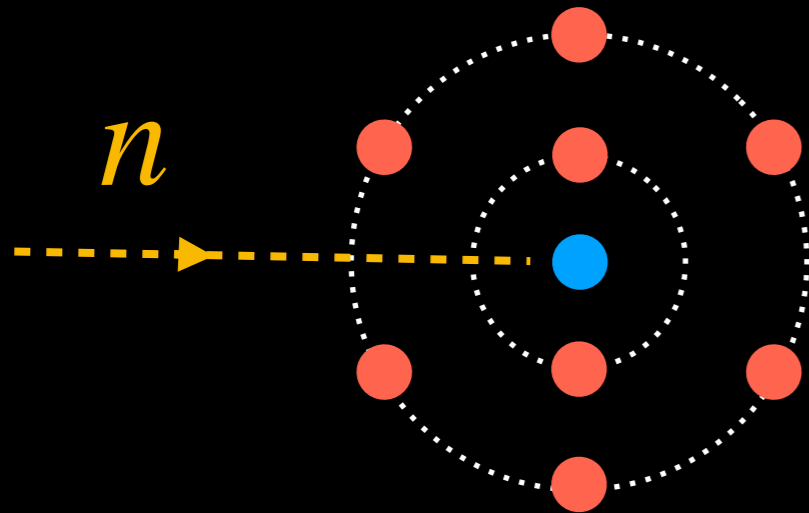
Fermi: Uncharged neutrons would not get deflected!

But: available neutron sources much weaker
(*Chadwick and Rutherford also in the game!*)

Chadwick:

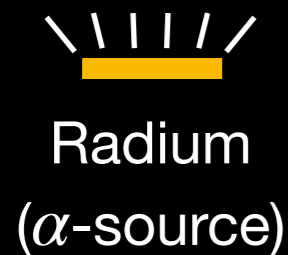


What about neutrons?



Fermi: Uncharged neutrons would not get deflected!

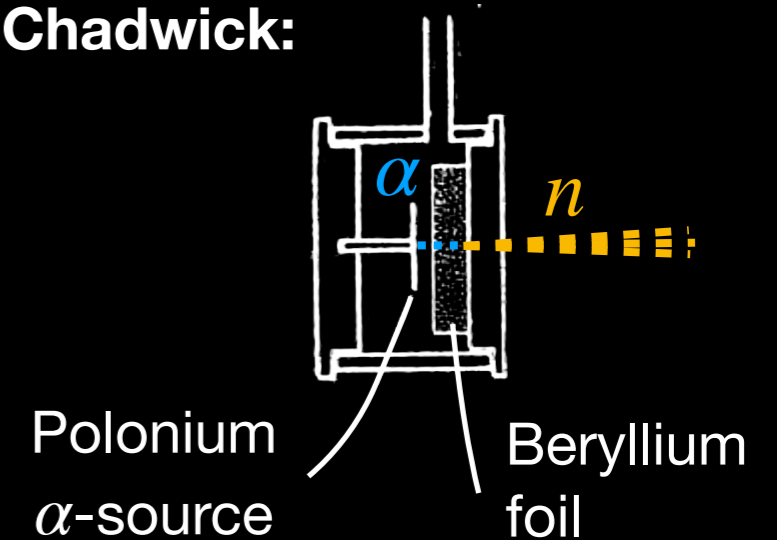
But: available neutron sources much weaker
(*Chadwick and Rutherford also in the game!*)



Radium
(α -source)

(*Institute of Public Health,
Via Panisperna basement*)

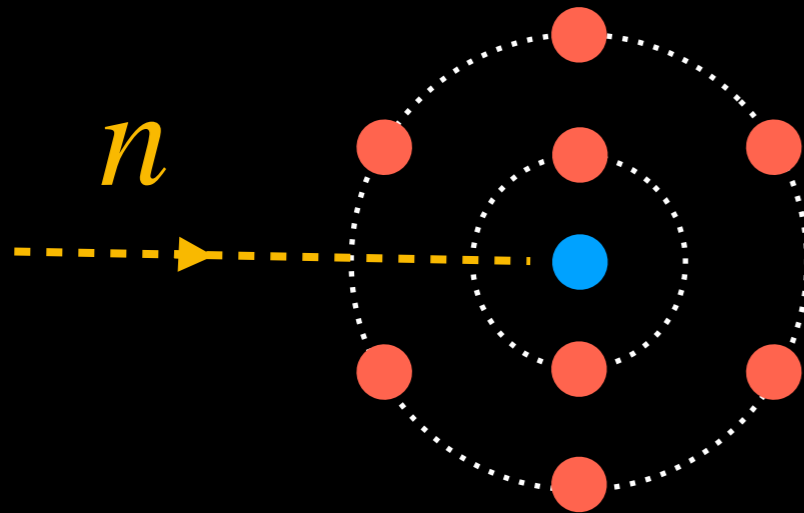
Chadwick:



Polonium
 α -source

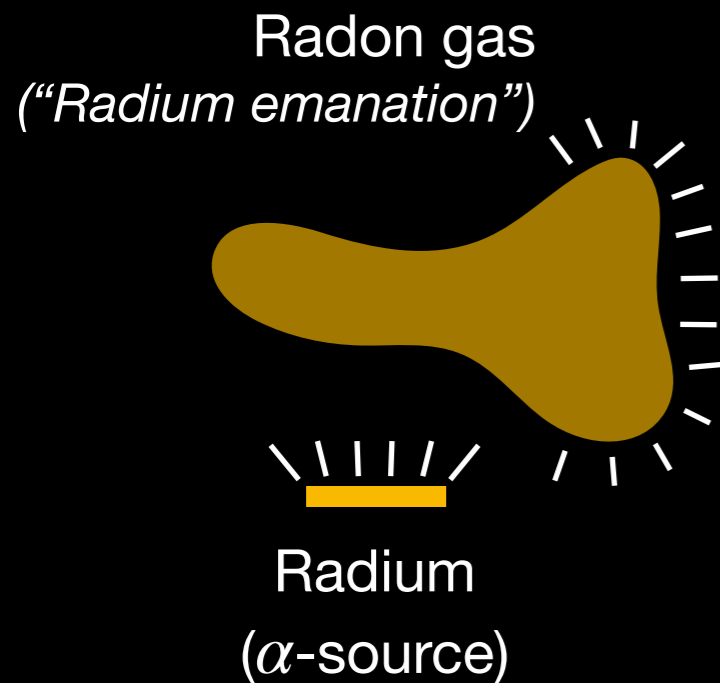
Beryllium
foil

What about neutrons?

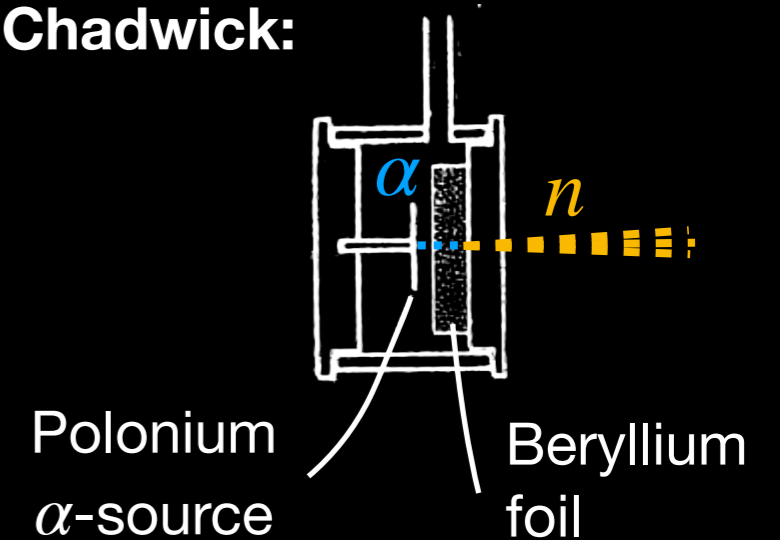


Fermi: Uncharged neutrons would not get deflected!

But: available neutron sources much weaker
(*Chadwick and Rutherford also in the game!*)

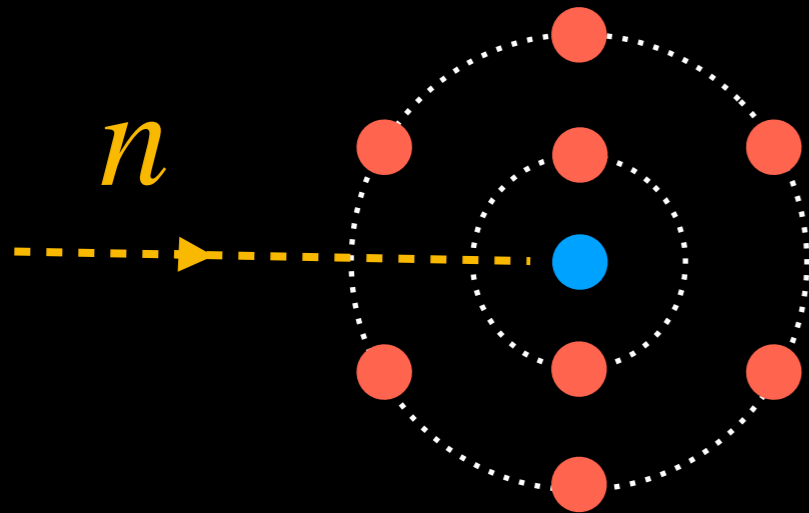


Chadwick:



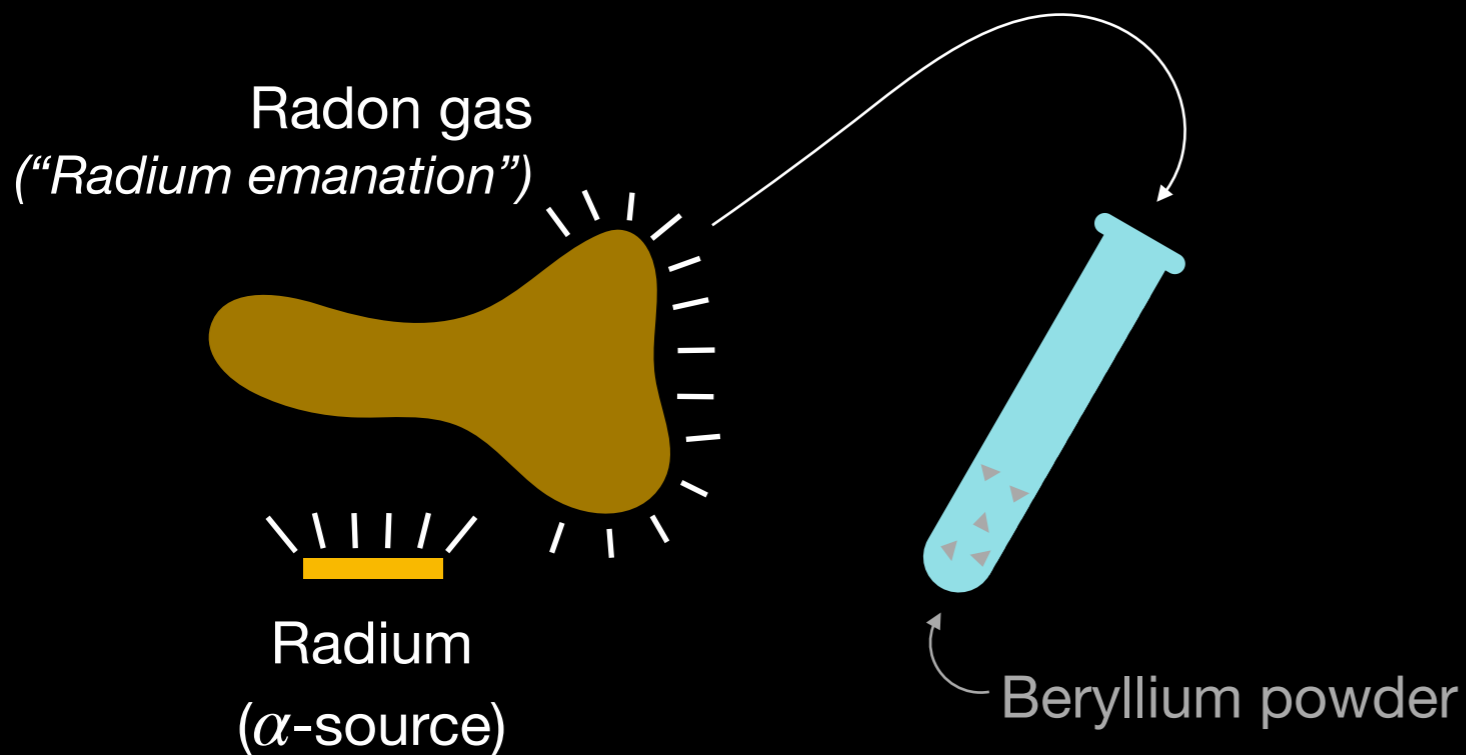
(*Institute of Public Health,
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What about neutrons?

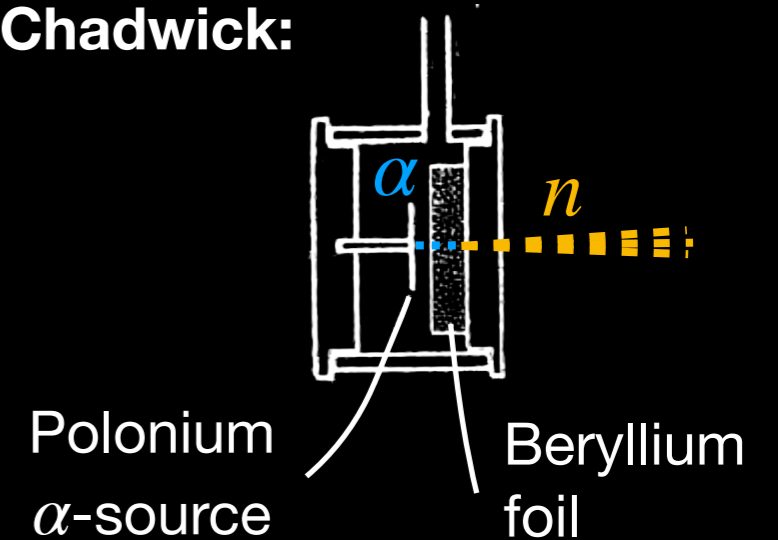


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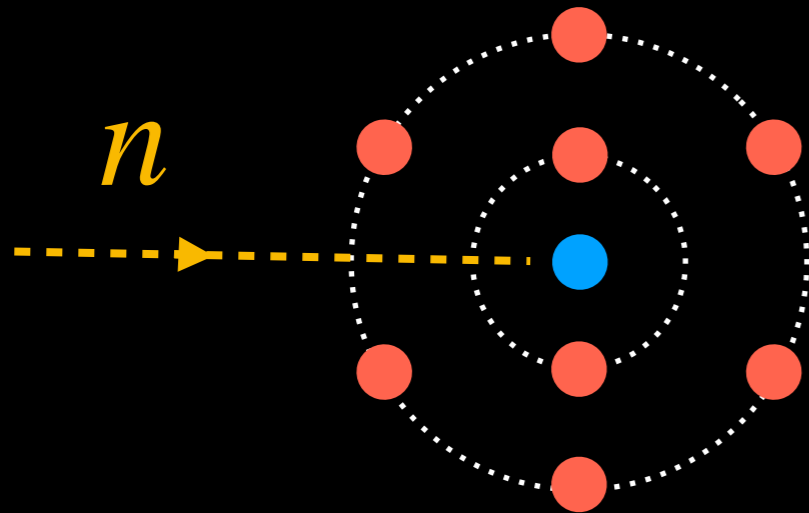


Chadwick:



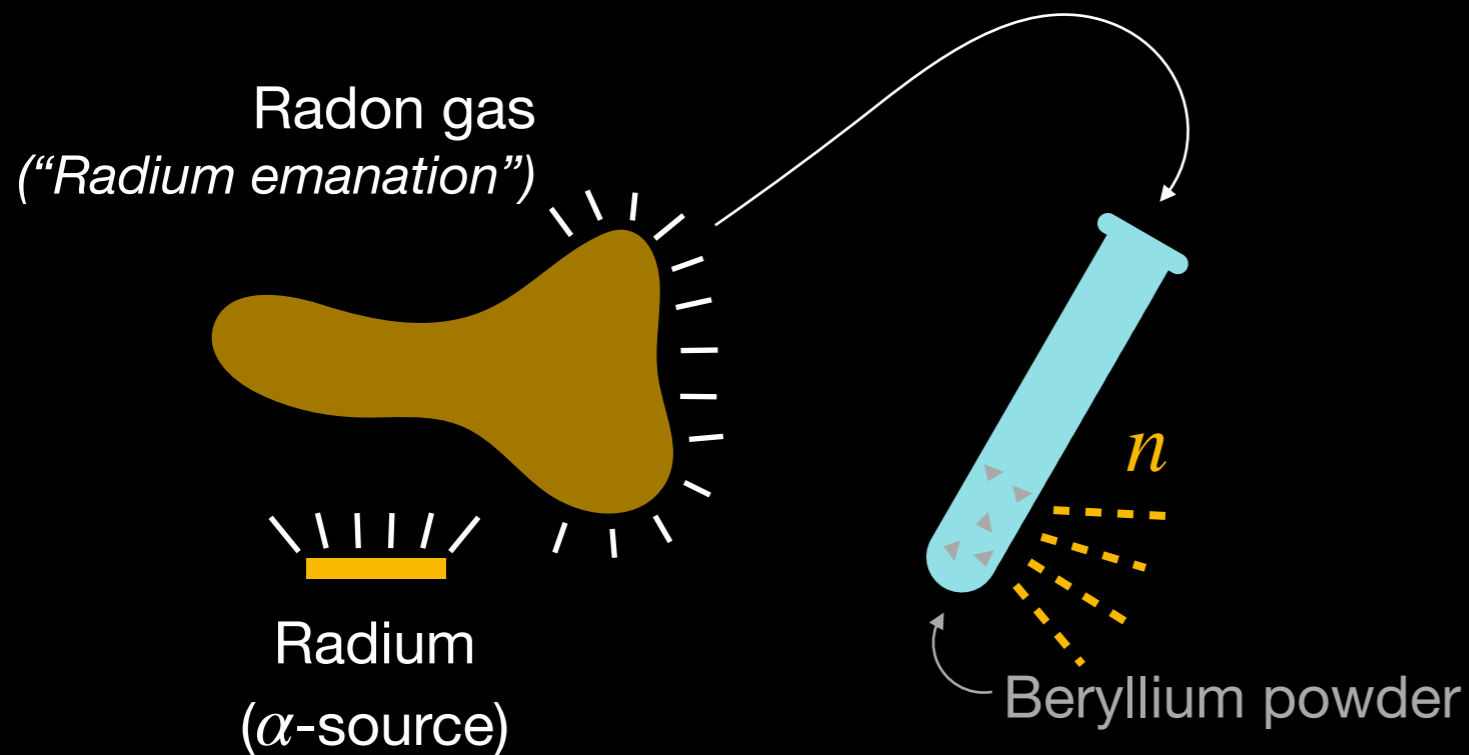
(*Institute of Public Health,
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What about neutrons?

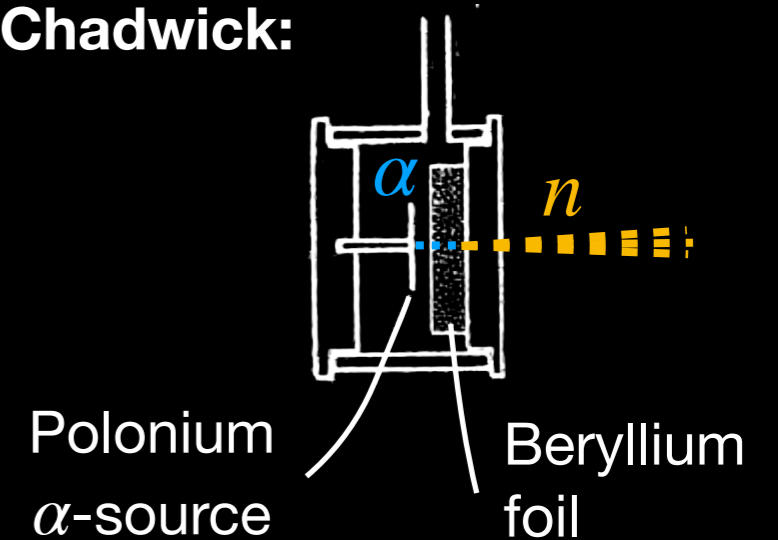


Fermi: Uncharged neutrons would not get deflected!

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(*Chadwick and Rutherford also in the game!*)



Chadwick:



(*Institute of Public Health,
Via Panisperna basement*)

Neutron-induced radioactivity

Neutron-induced radioactivity

So far, we have obtained an effect with the following elements :

Phosphorus—Strong effect. Half-period about 3 hours. The disintegration electrons could be photographed in the Wilson chamber. Chemical separation of the active product showed that the unstable element formed under the bombardment is probably silicon.

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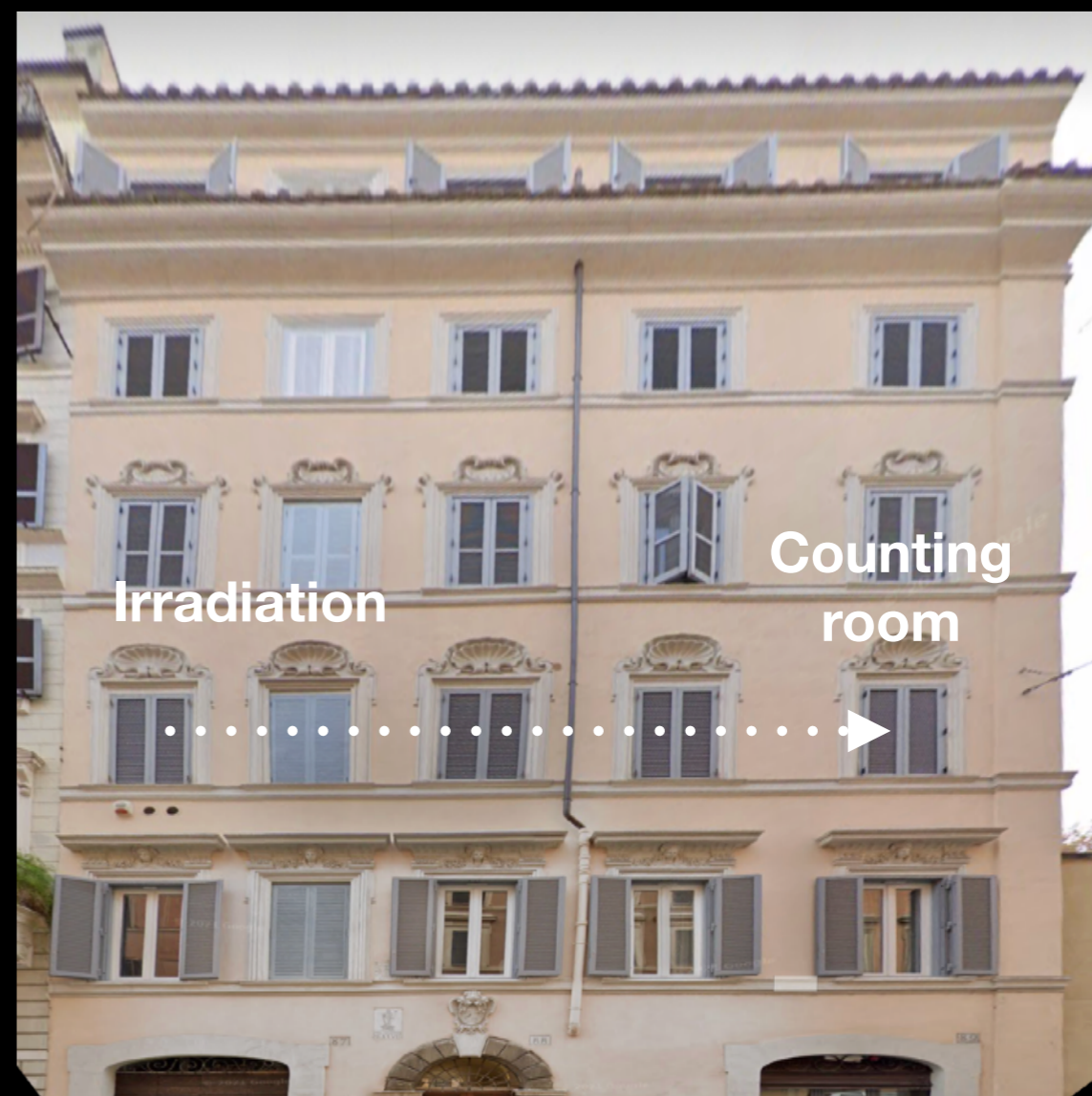
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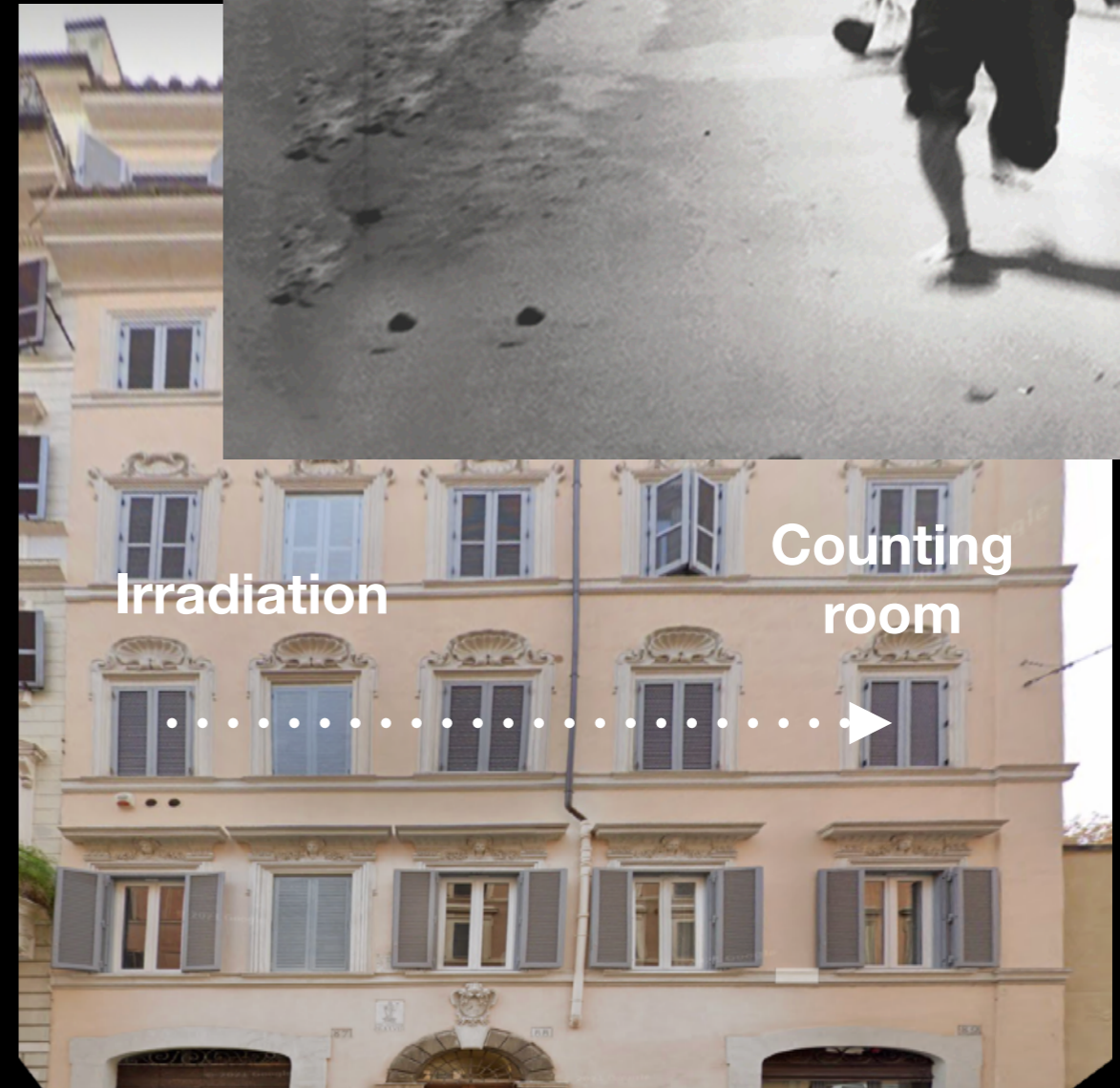
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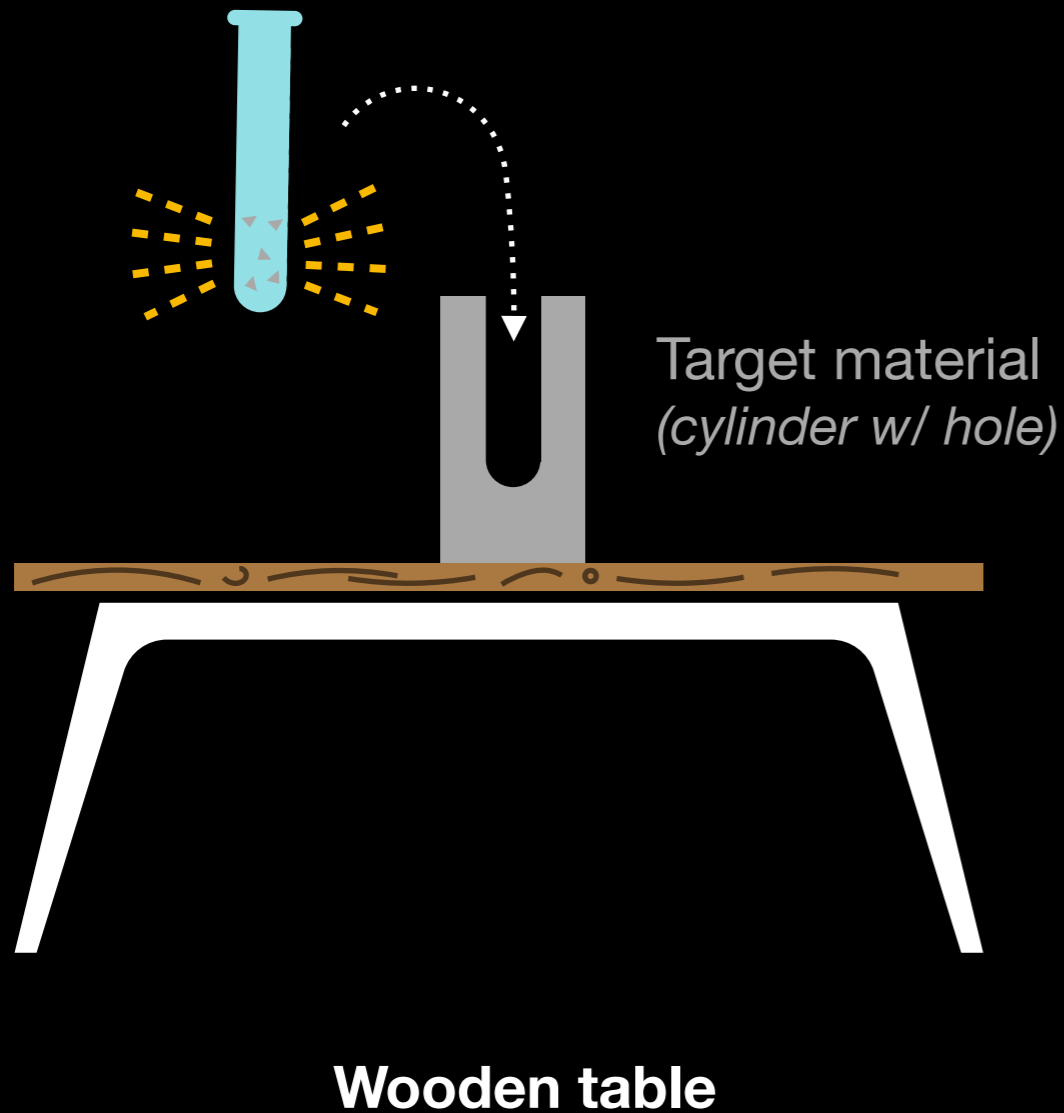
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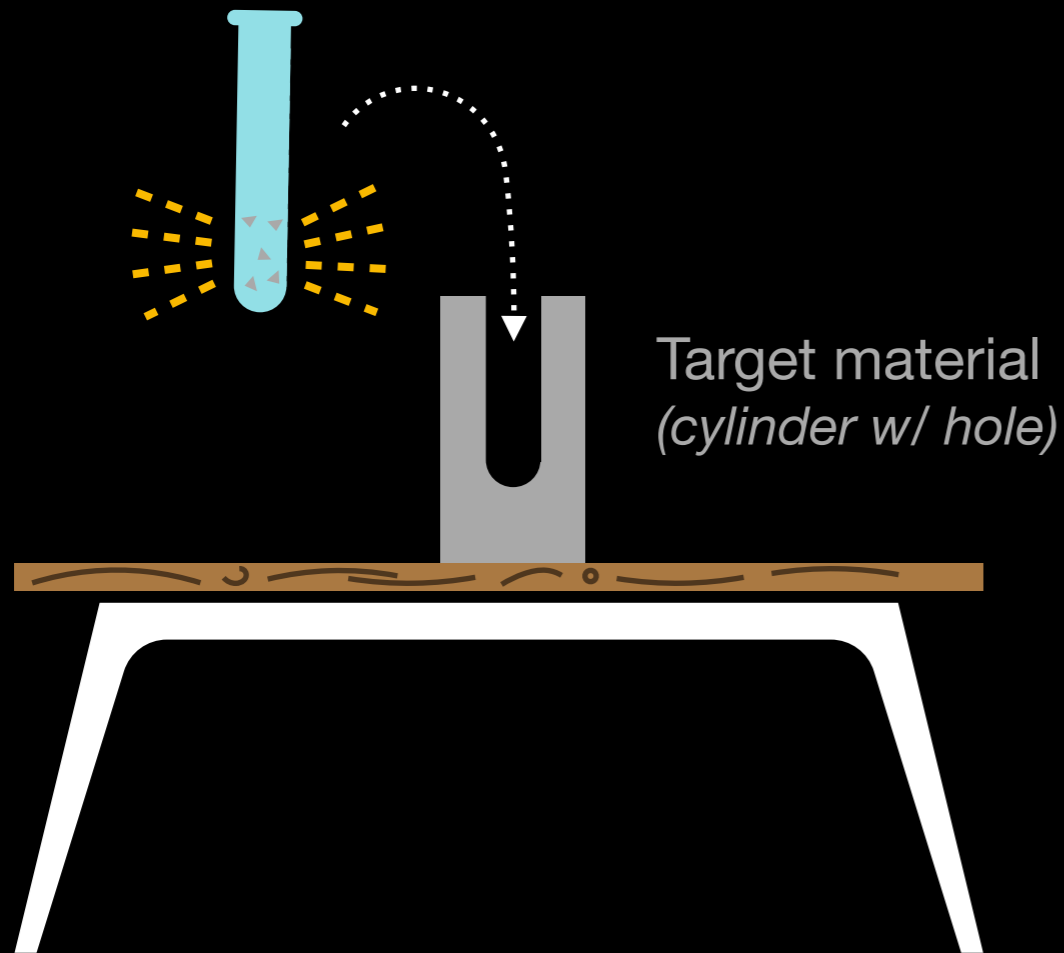
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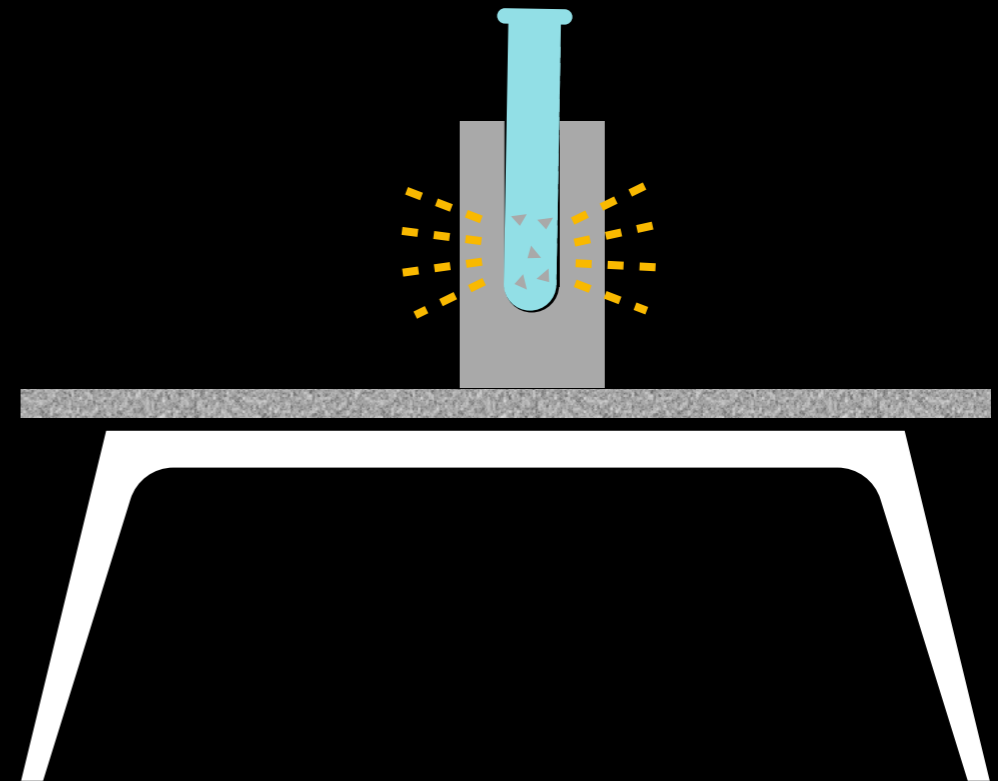


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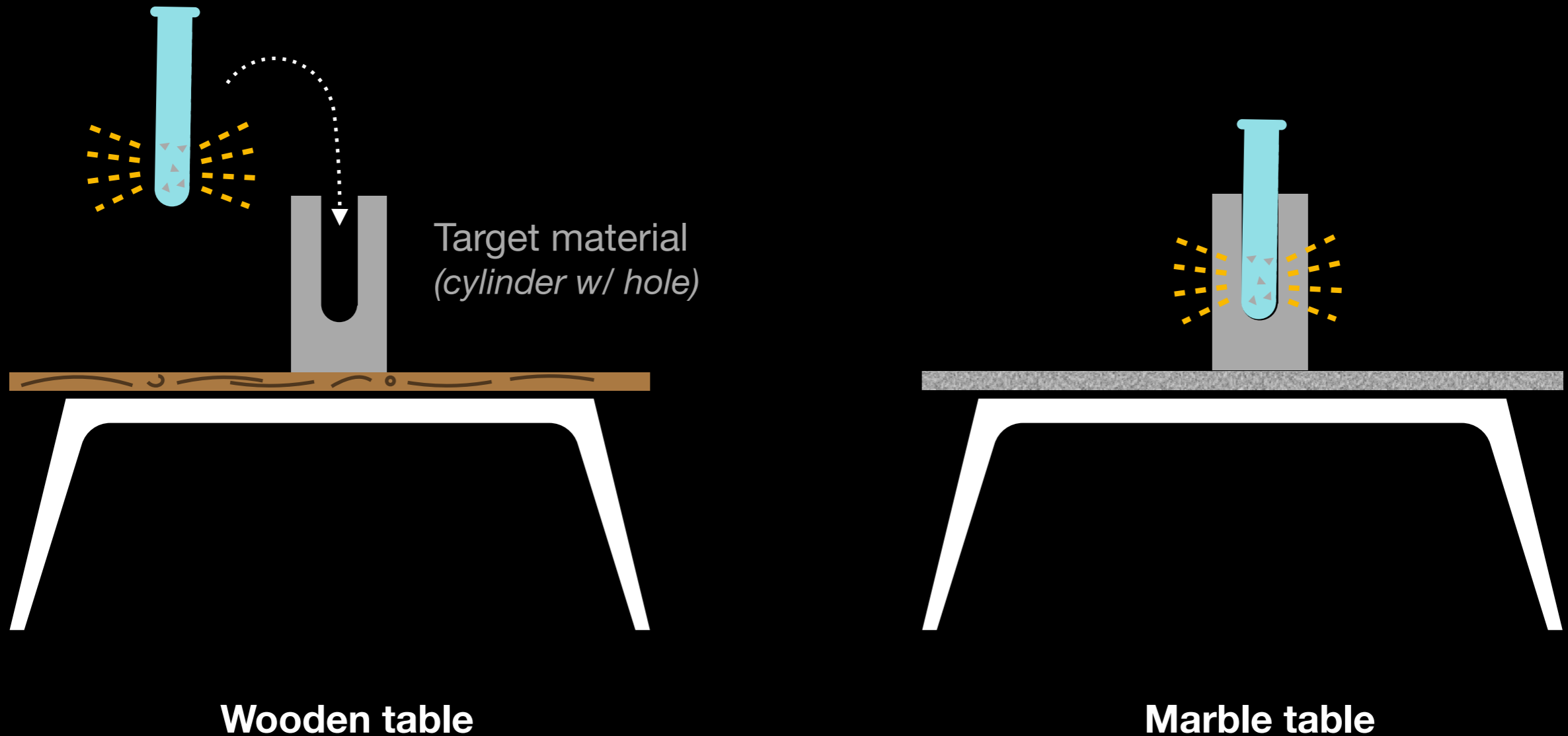
Wooden table



Marble table

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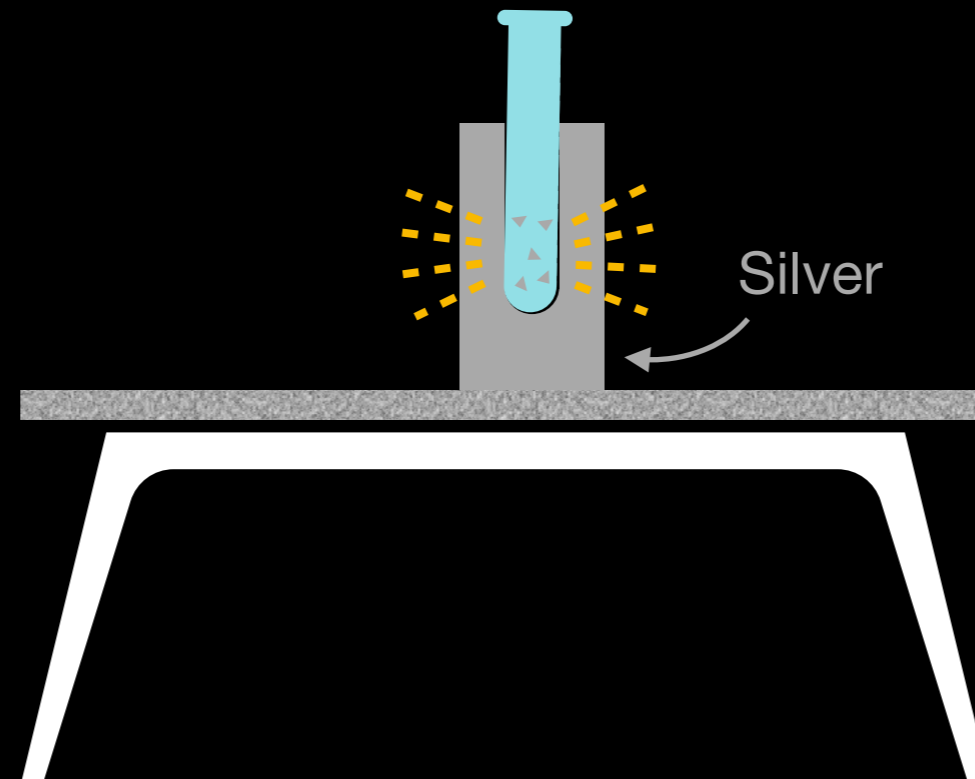
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Much stronger effect for wood!

Fermi's discovery

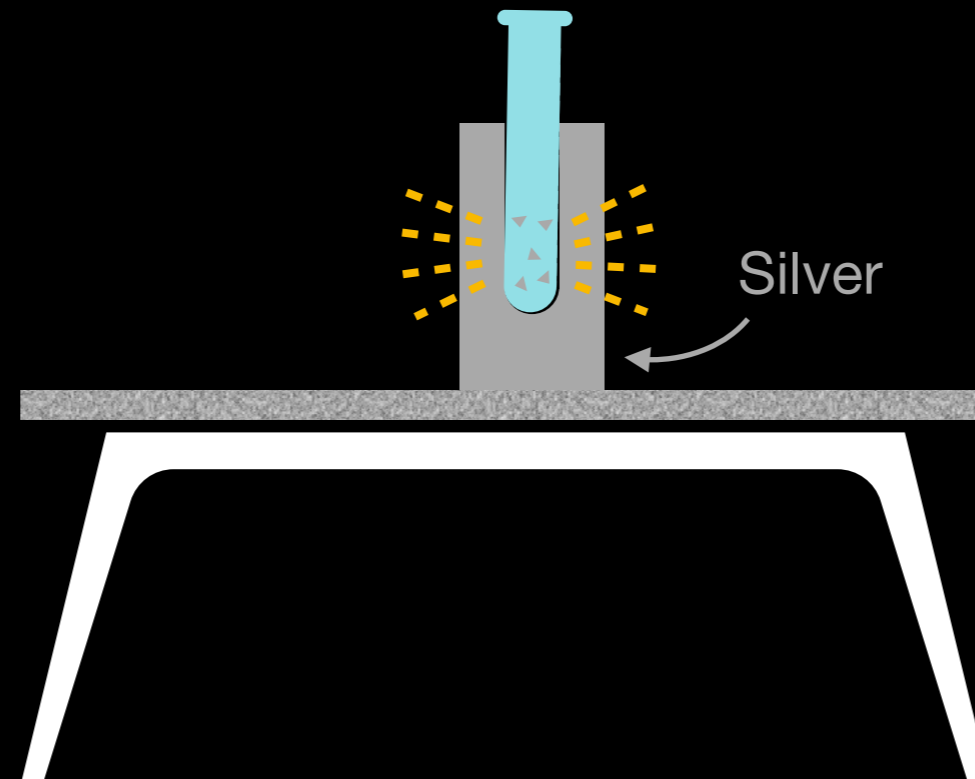
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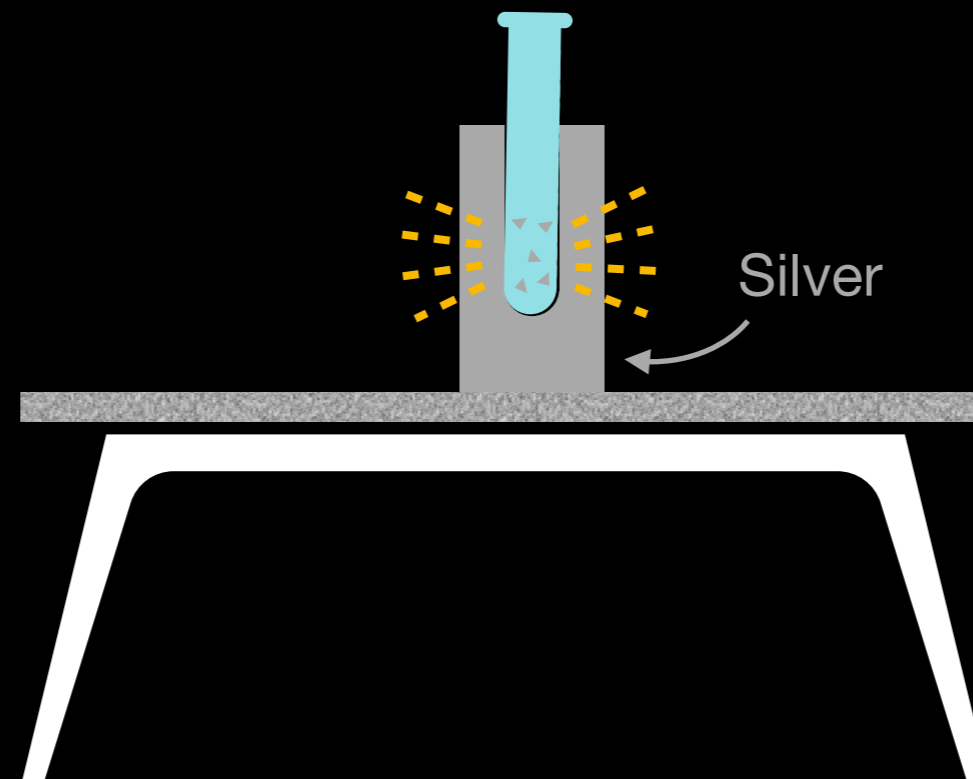


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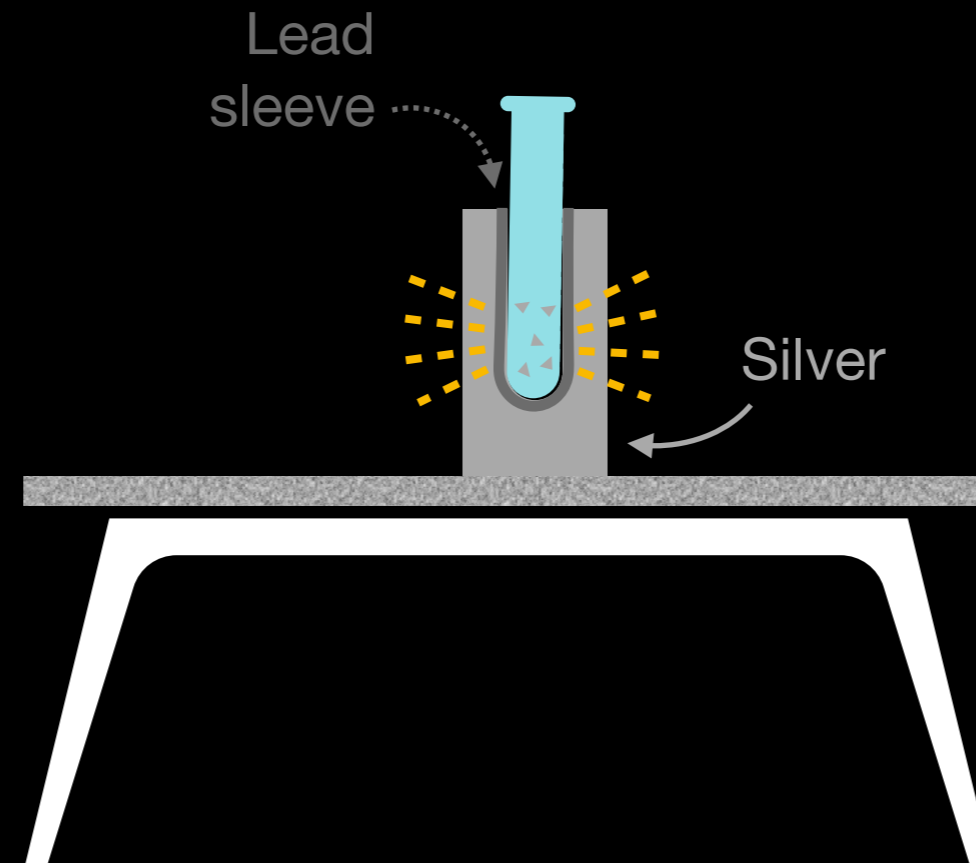


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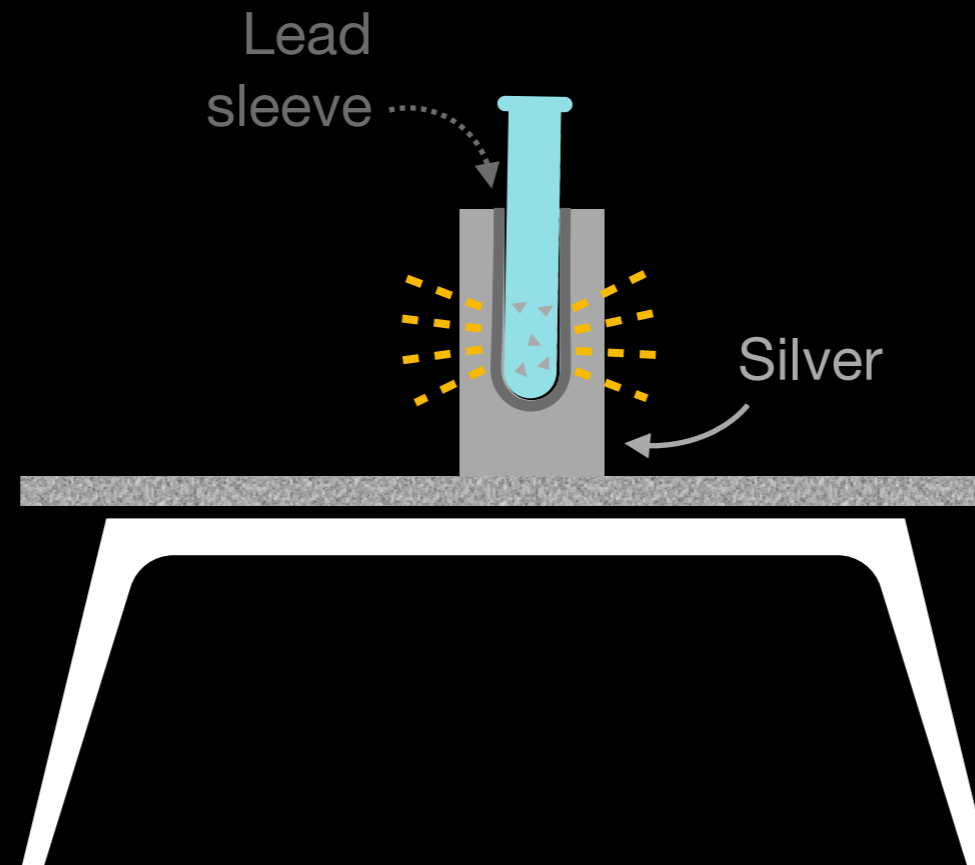
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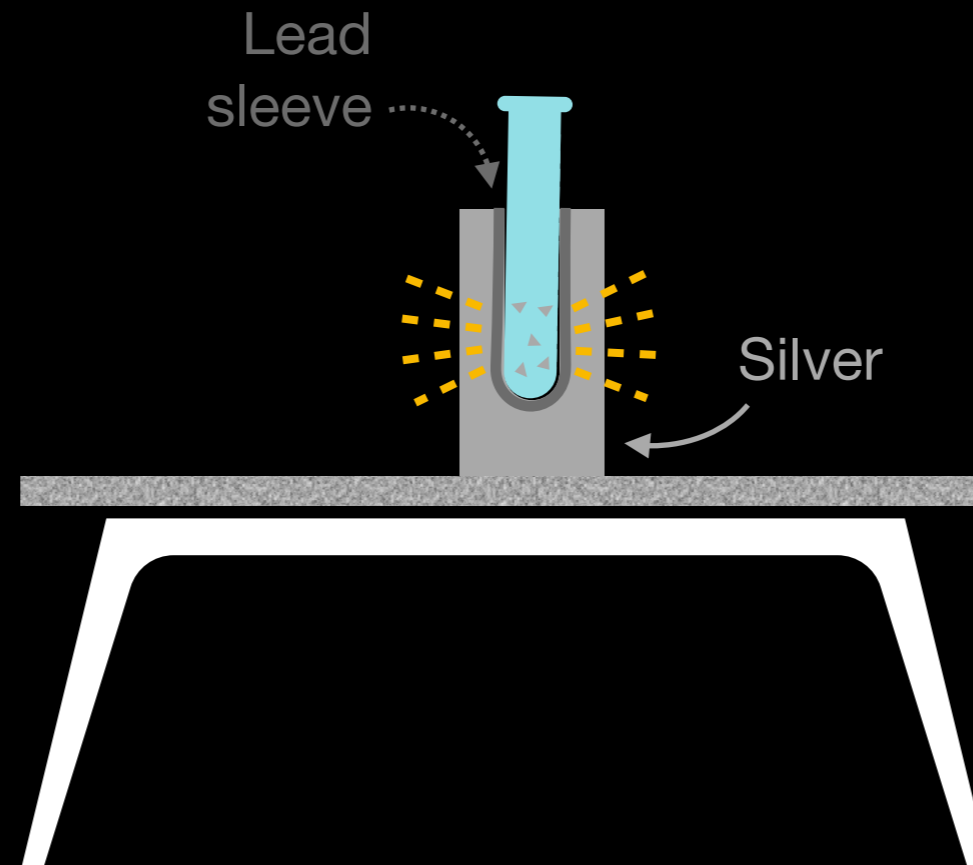
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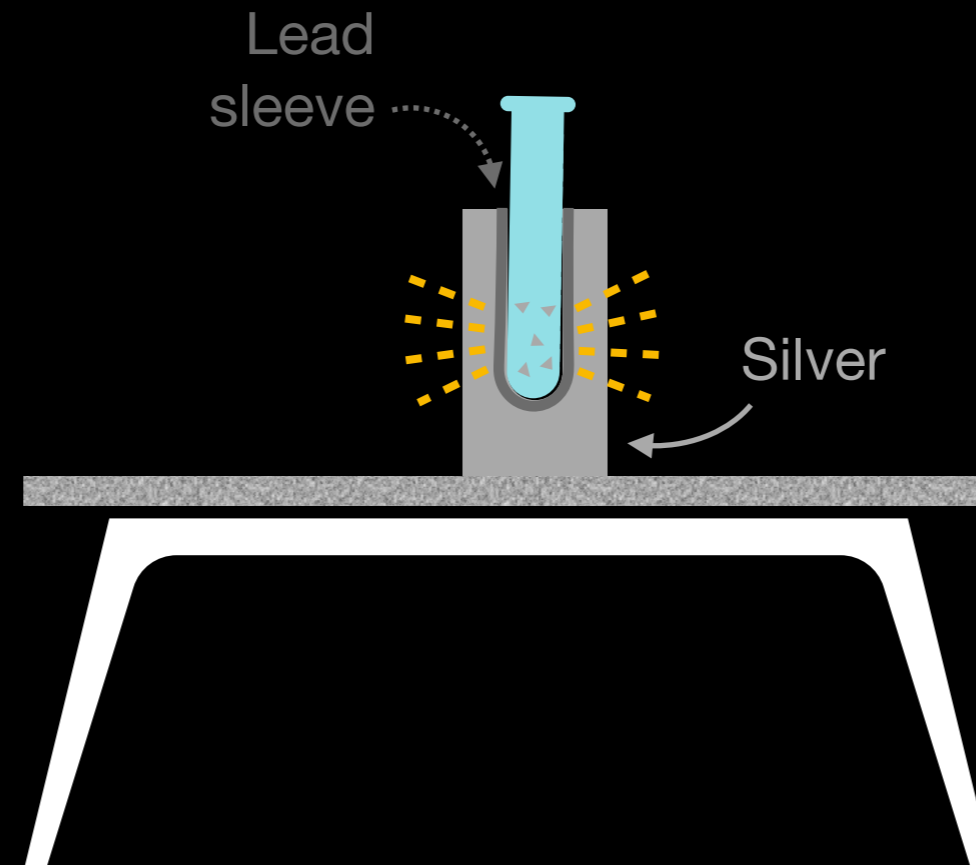


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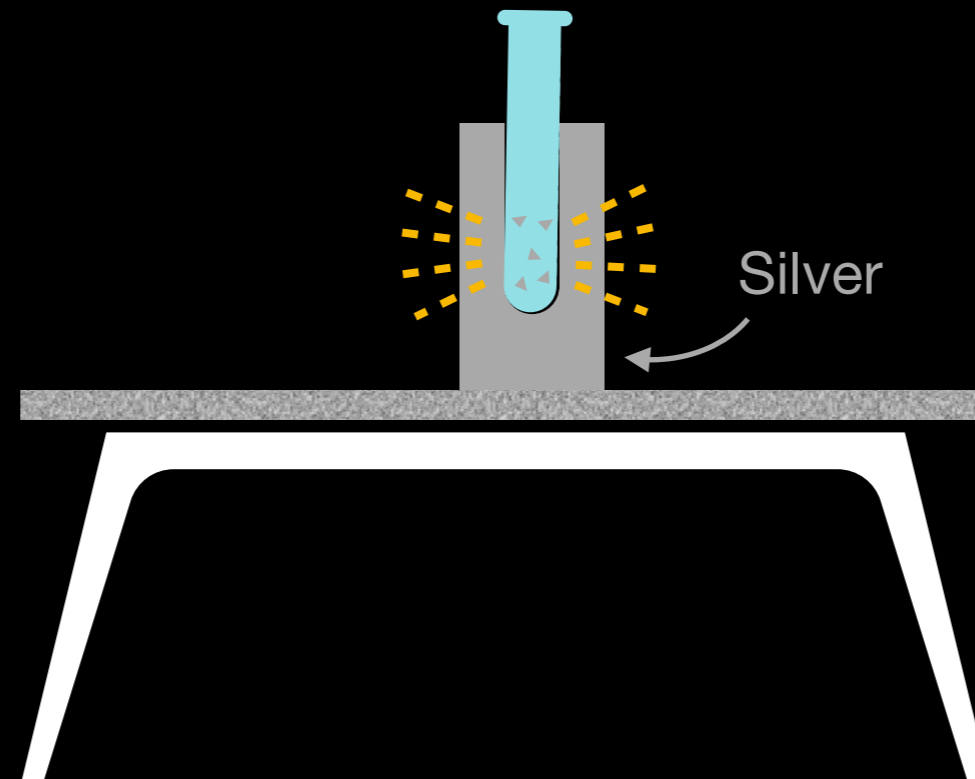


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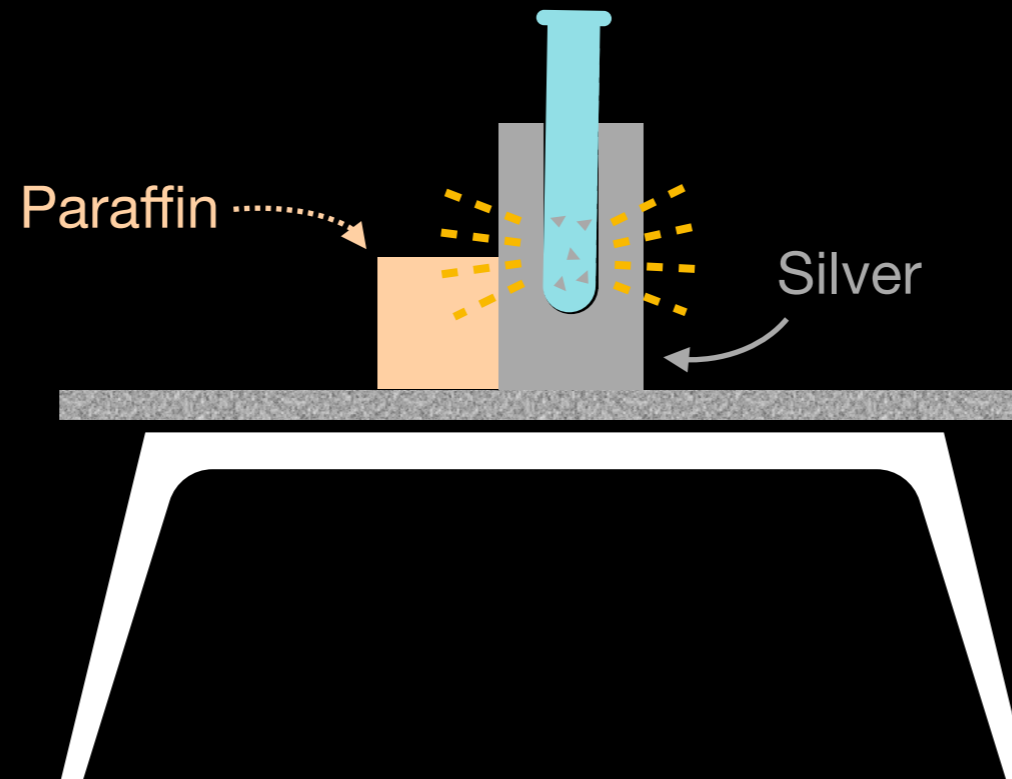


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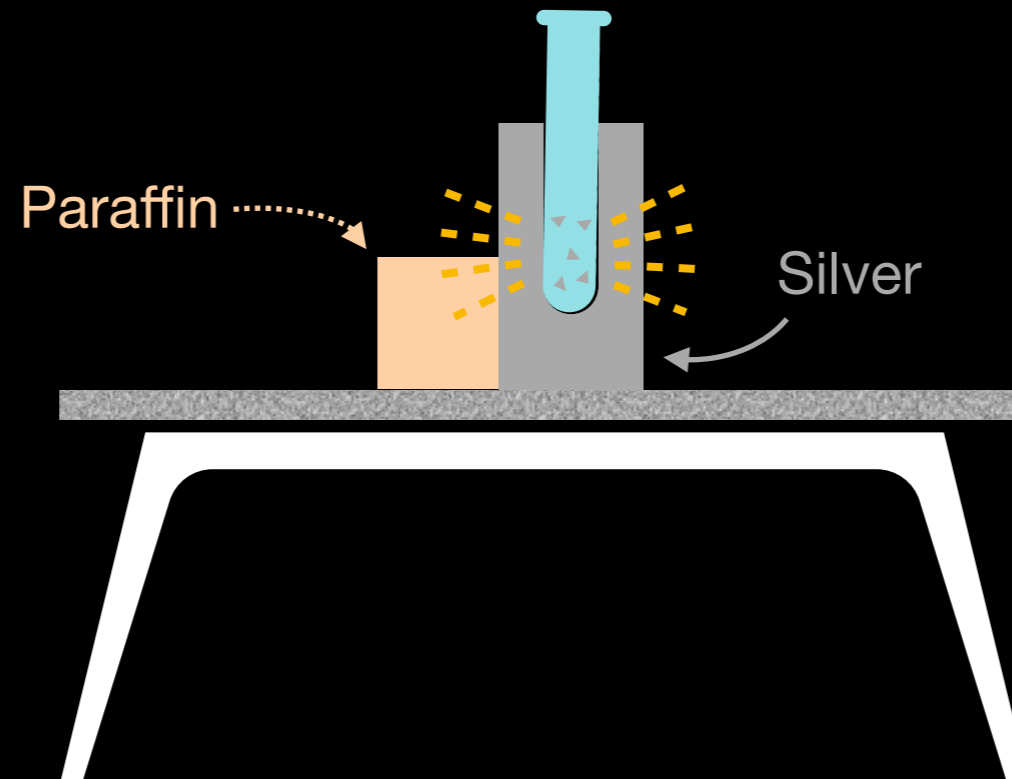
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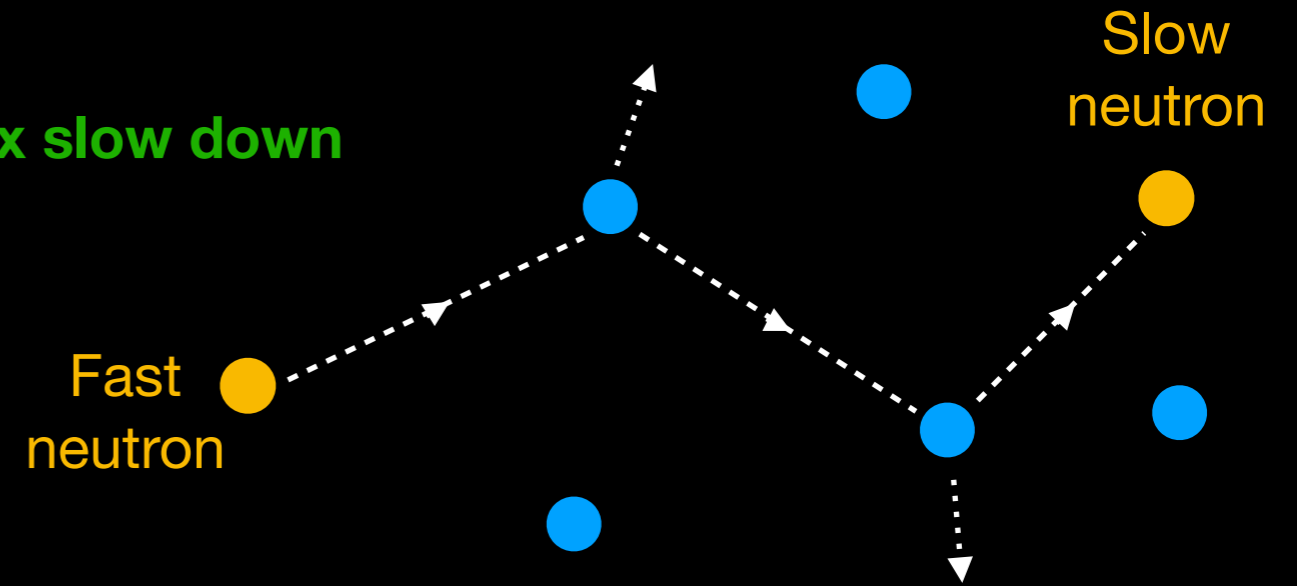
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**The activation became
a lot stronger!**



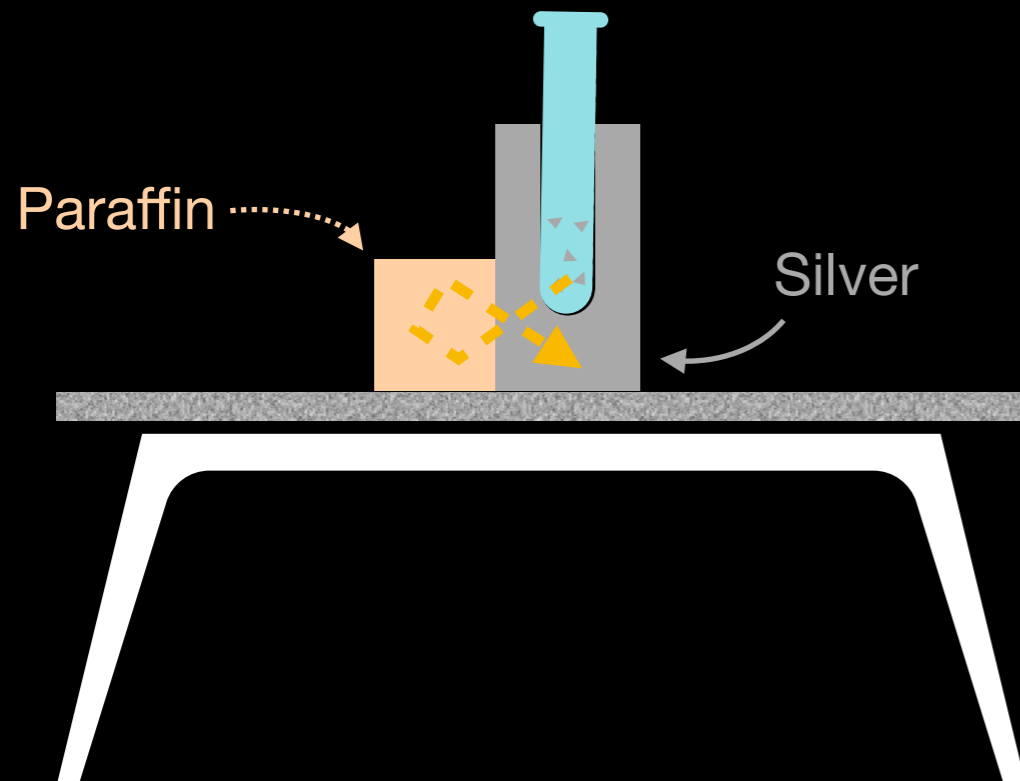
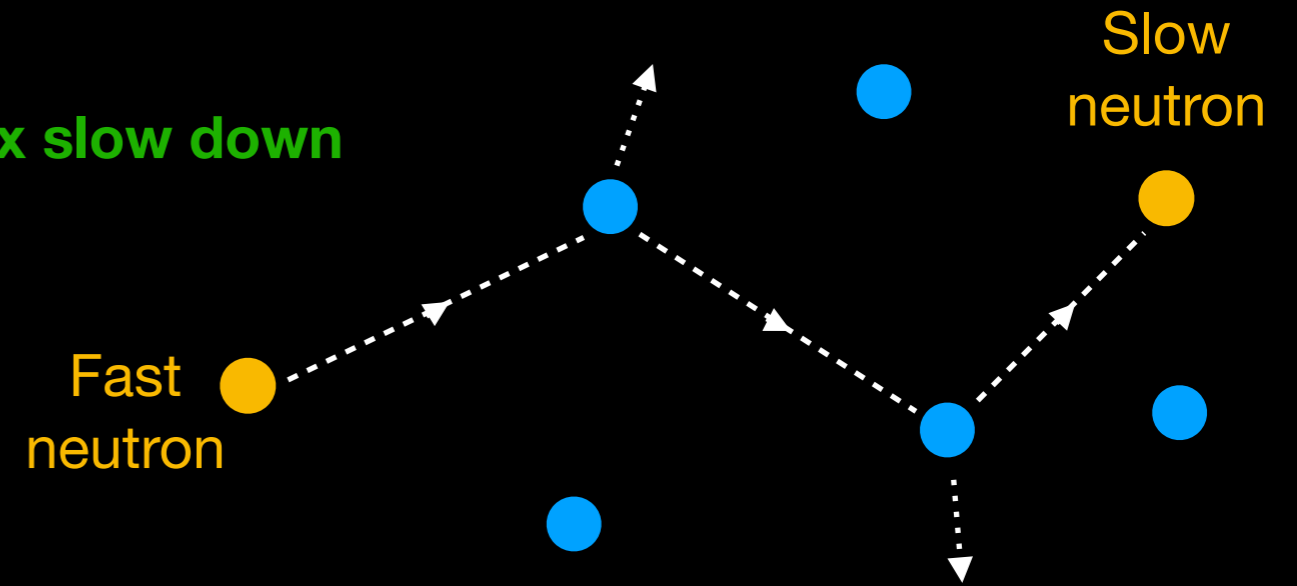
Slowing down neutrons

Collisions with hydrogen atoms in paraffin wax slow down (initially fast) neutrons



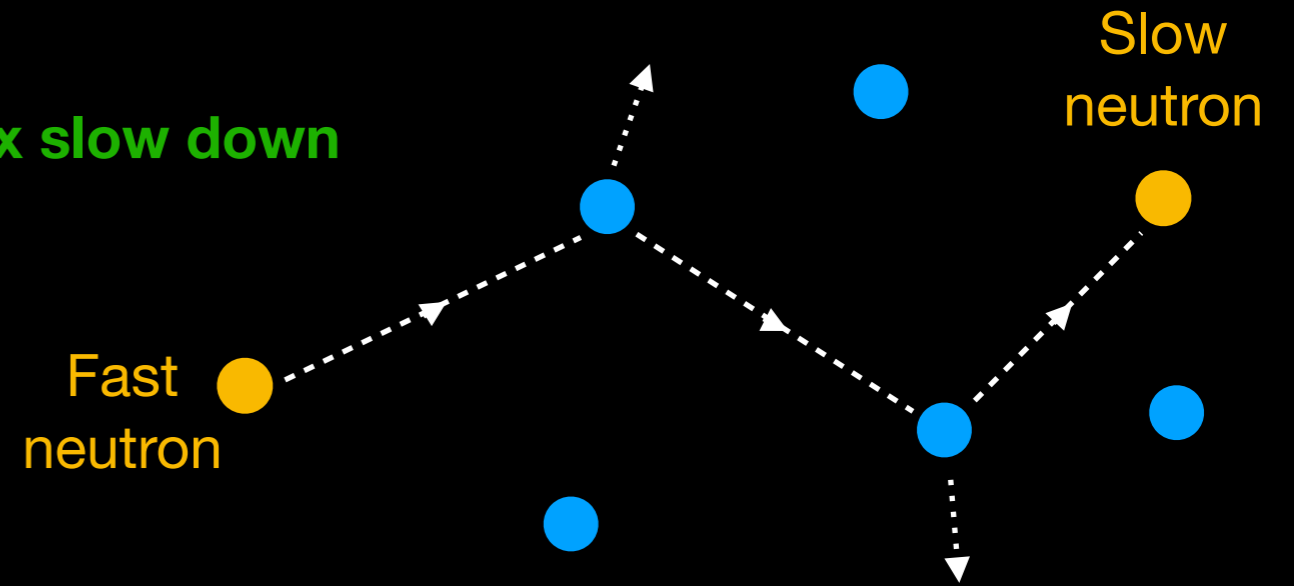
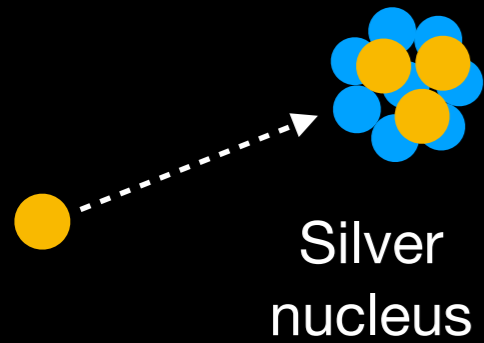
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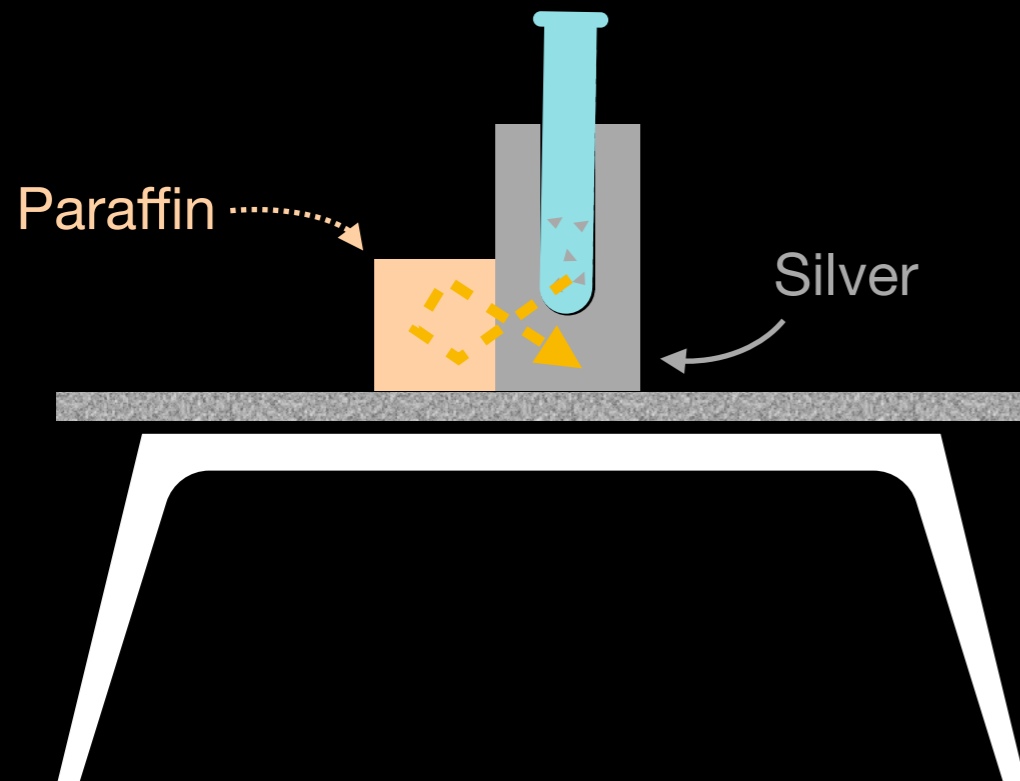


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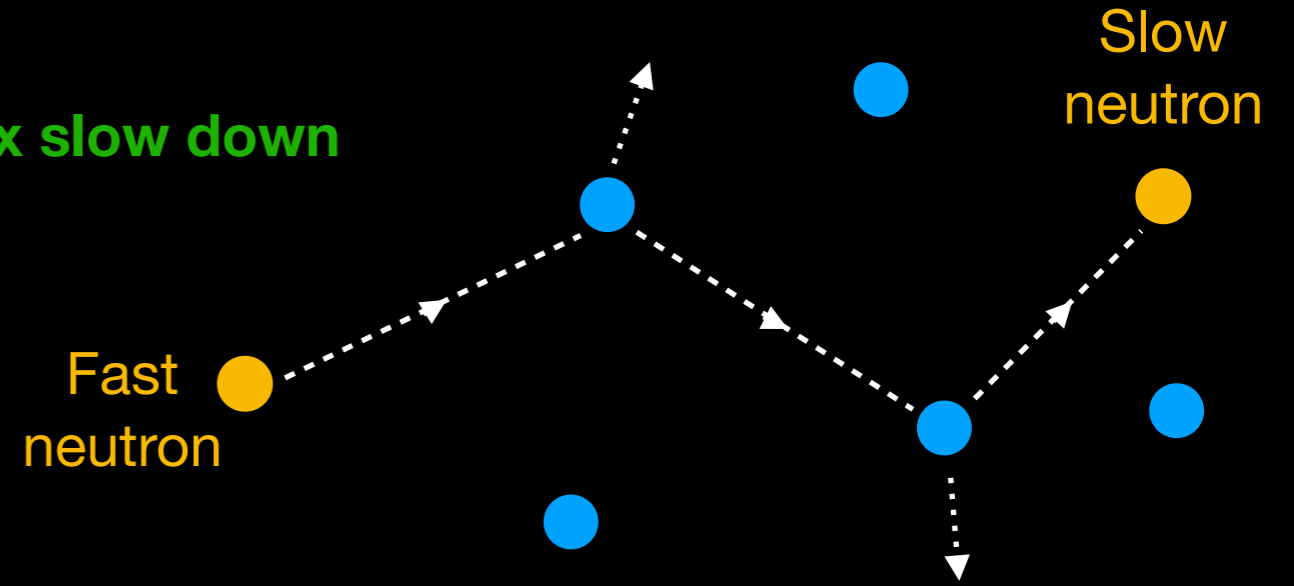
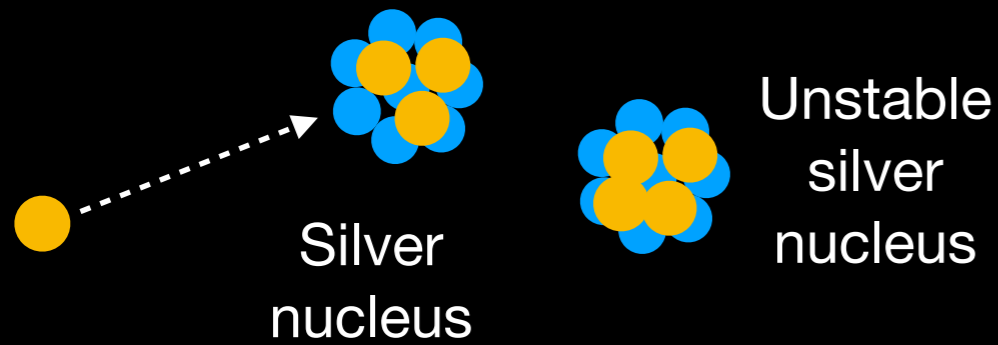


Slow neutrons more easily enter the target nucleus

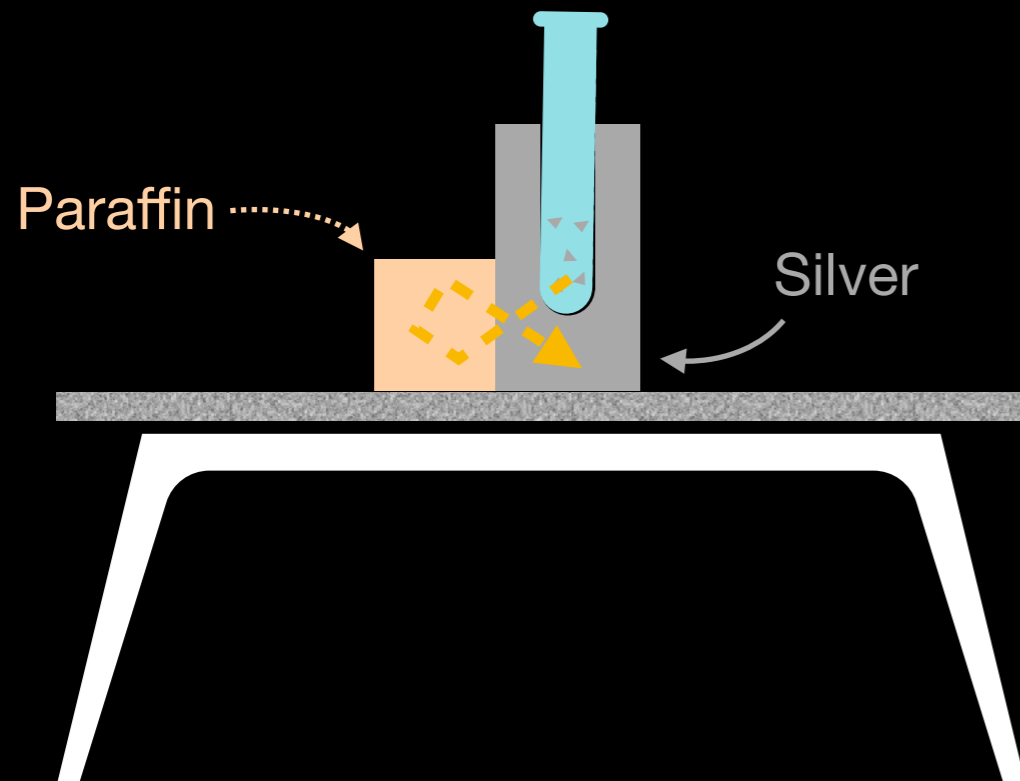


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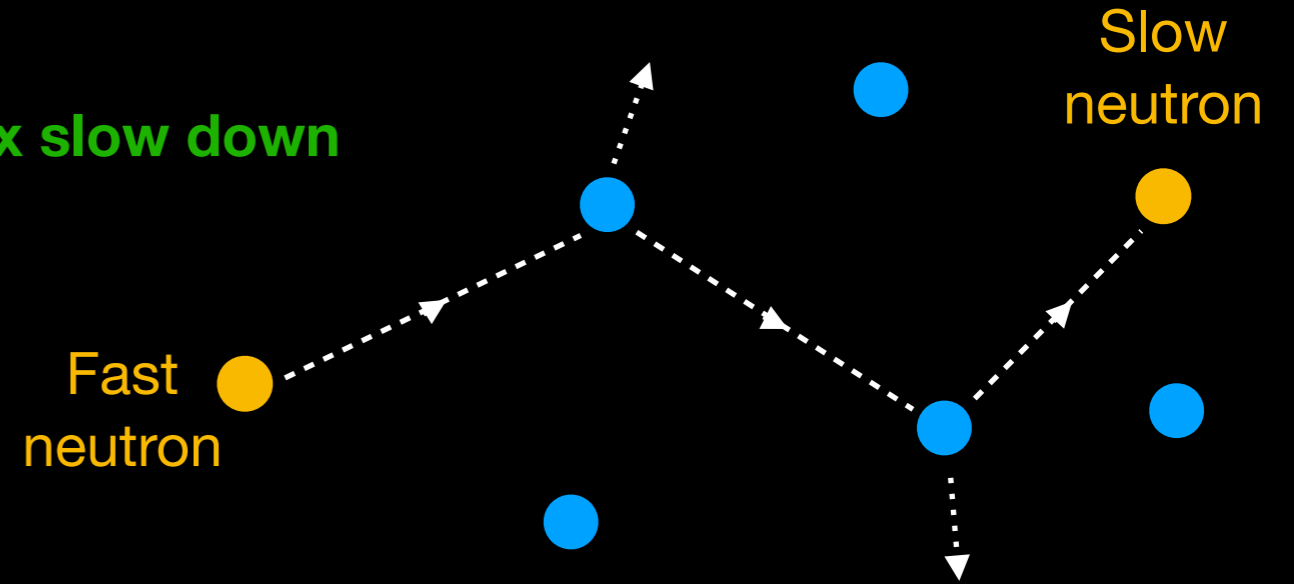
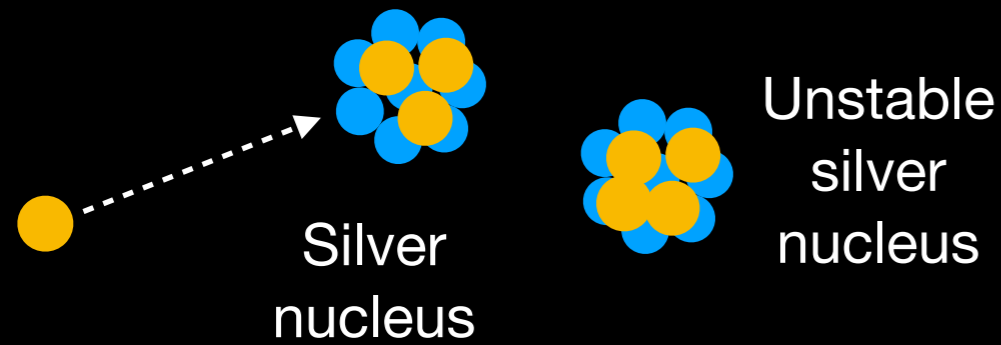


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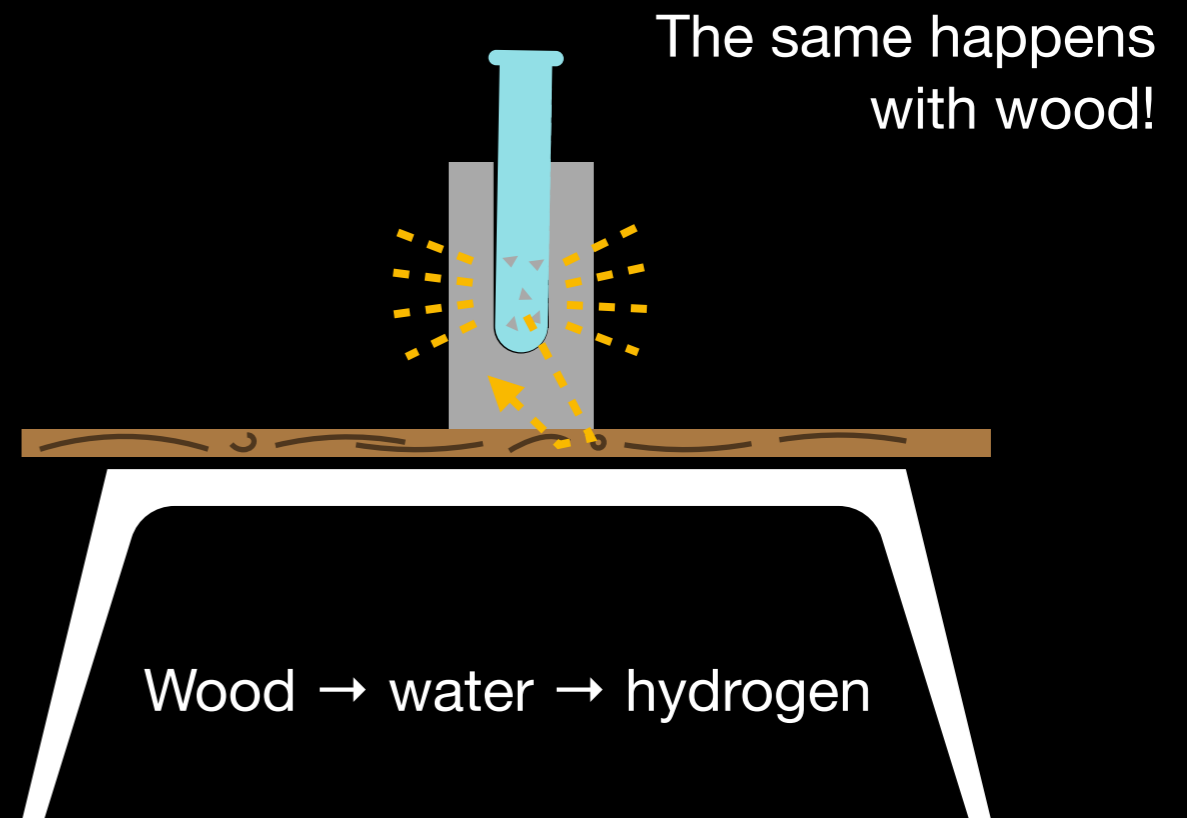
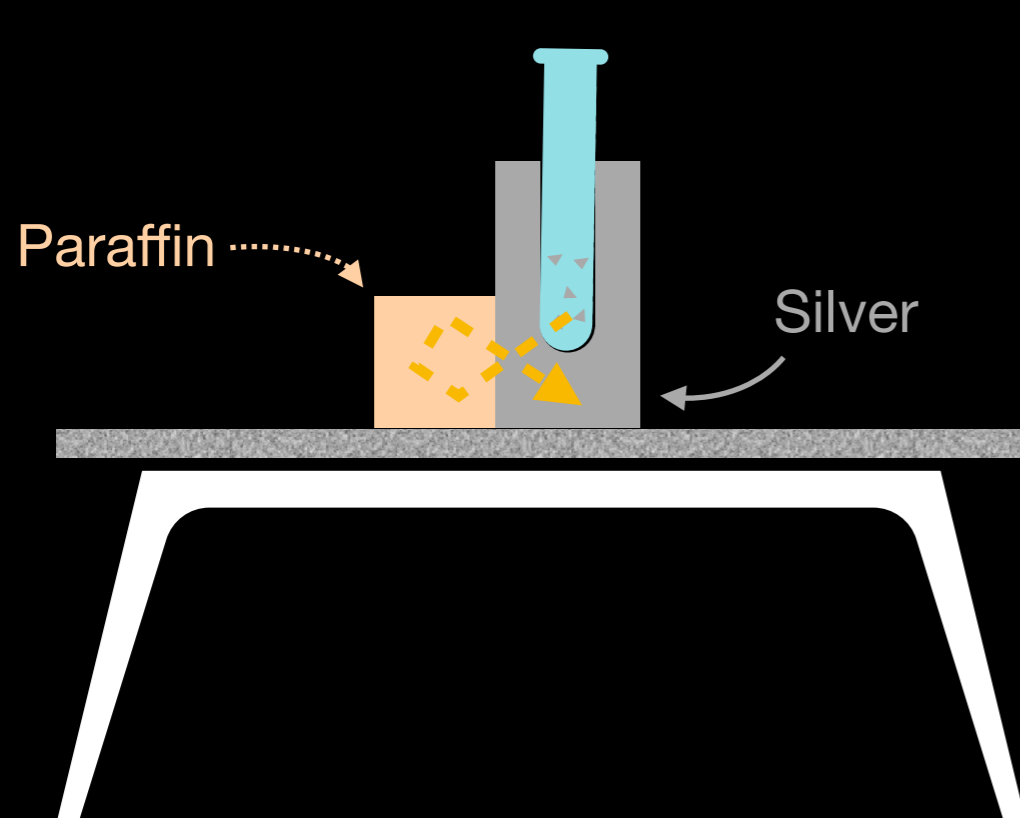


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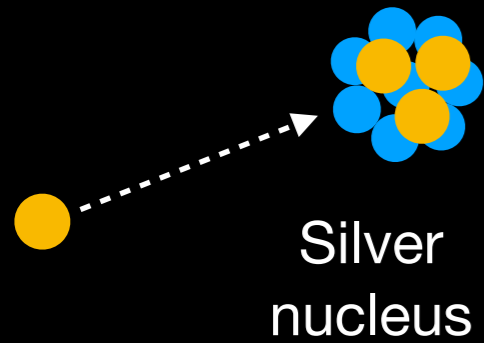


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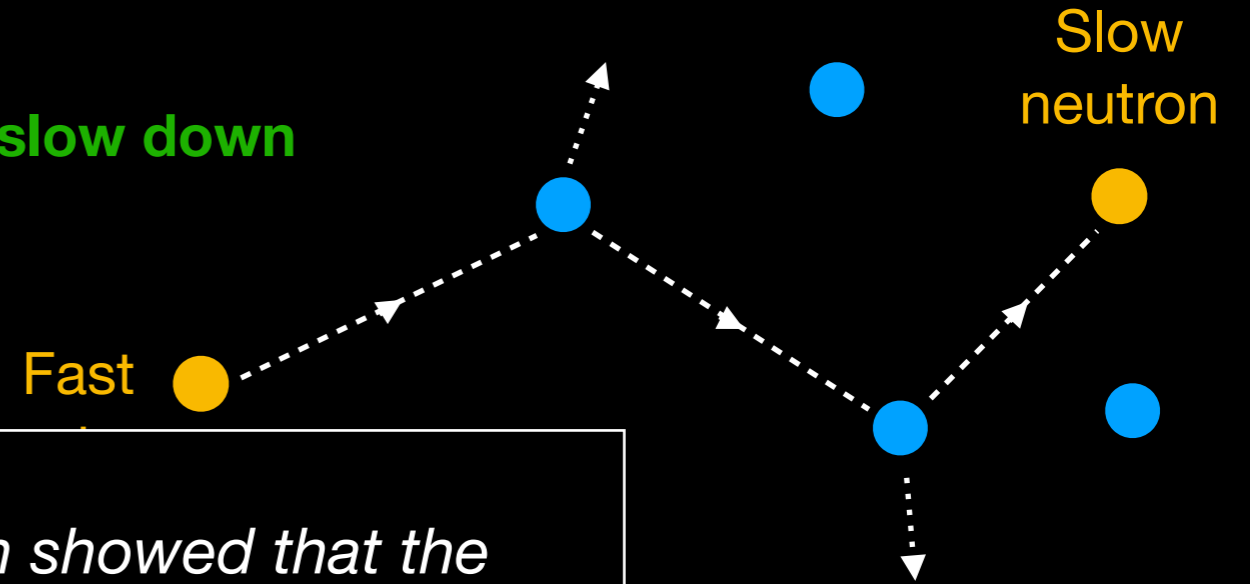


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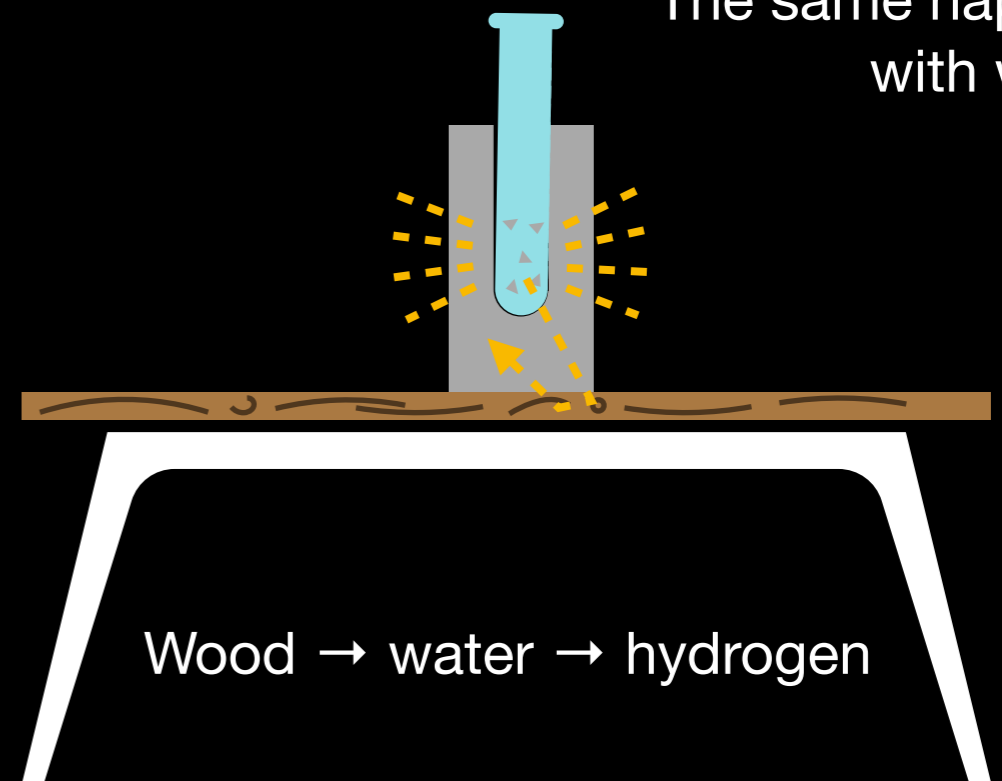
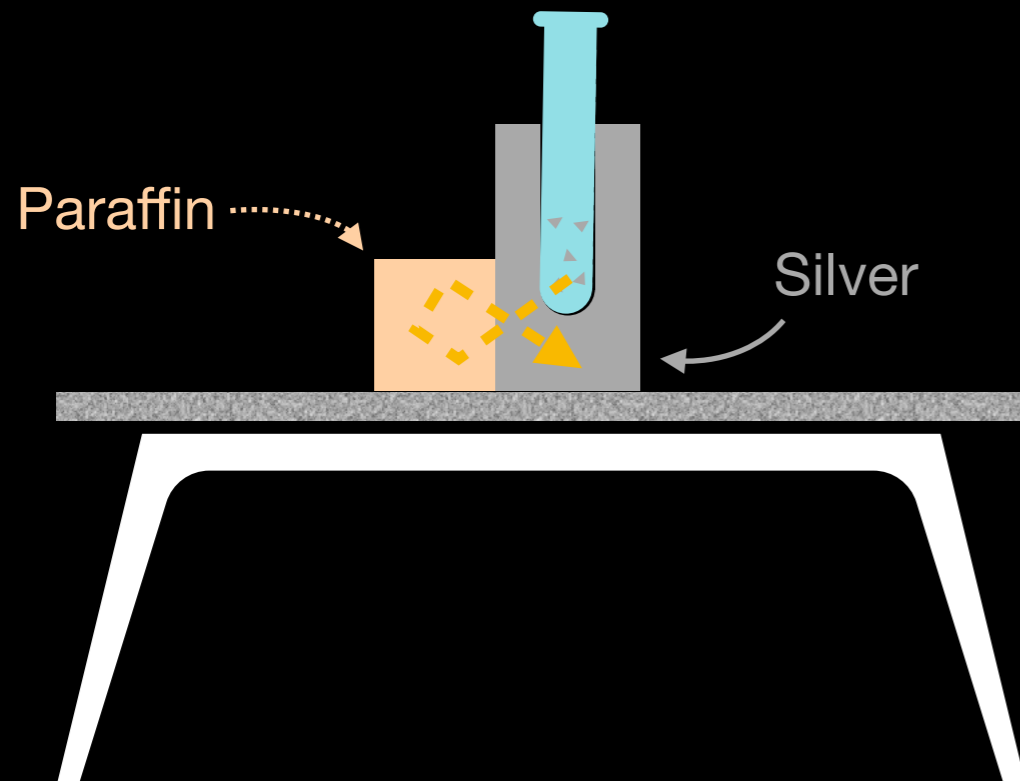


"Further investigation showed that the activation could be enormously increased by surrounding the source and the activated substance with a large amount of water or paraffin wax."



the target nucleus

The same happens with wood!



Patenting slow neutrons

Patenting slow neutrons

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,206,634

PROCESS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

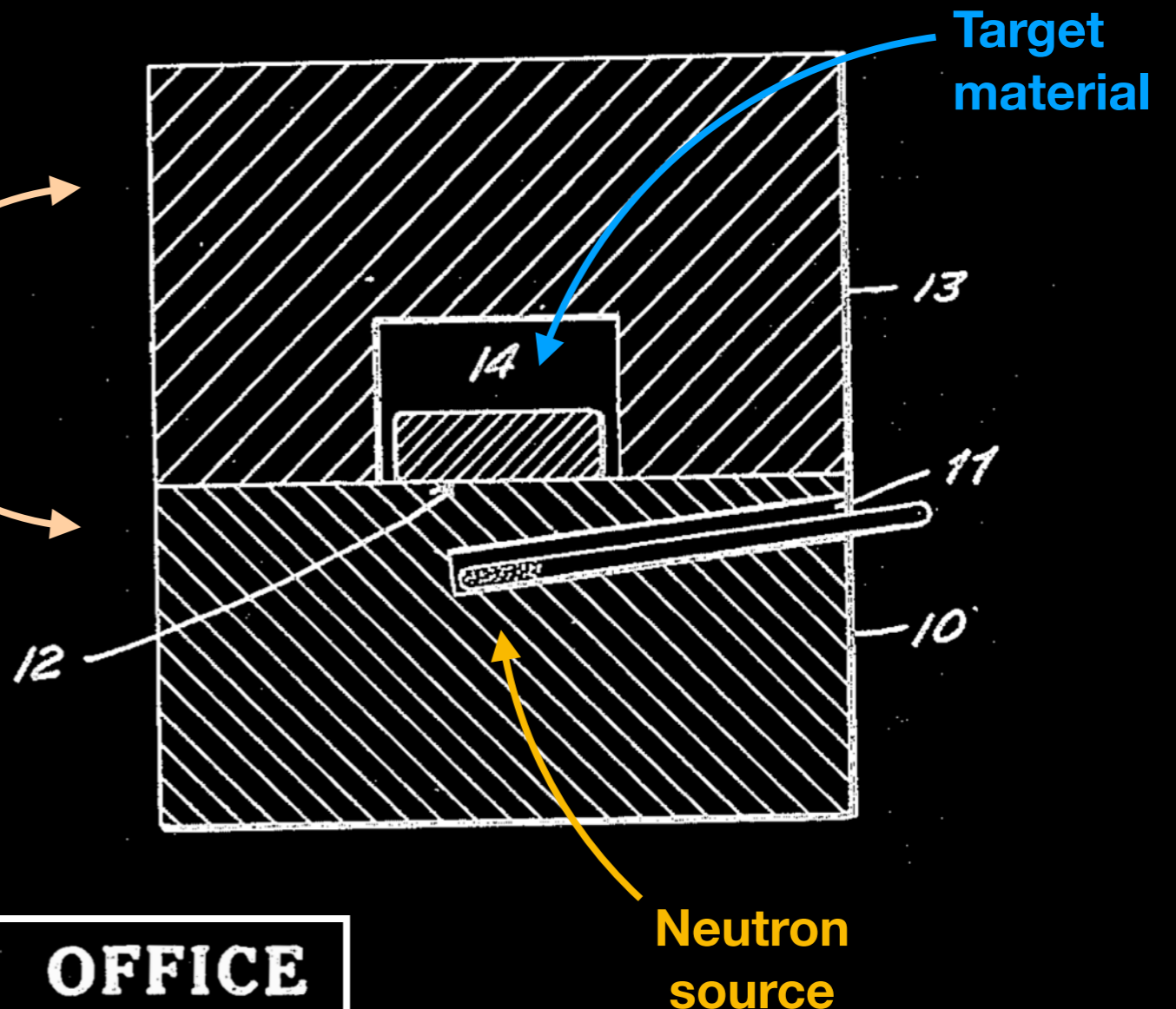
Enrico Fermi, Edoardo Amaldi, Bruno Pontecorvo, Franco Rasetti, and Emilio Segre, Rome, Italy, assignors to G. M. Giannini & Co., Inc., New York, N. Y., a corporation of New York

Application October 3, 1935, Serial No. 43,462
In Italy October 26, 1934

7 Claims. (Cl. 204—31)

Patenting slow neutrons

Paraffin blocks



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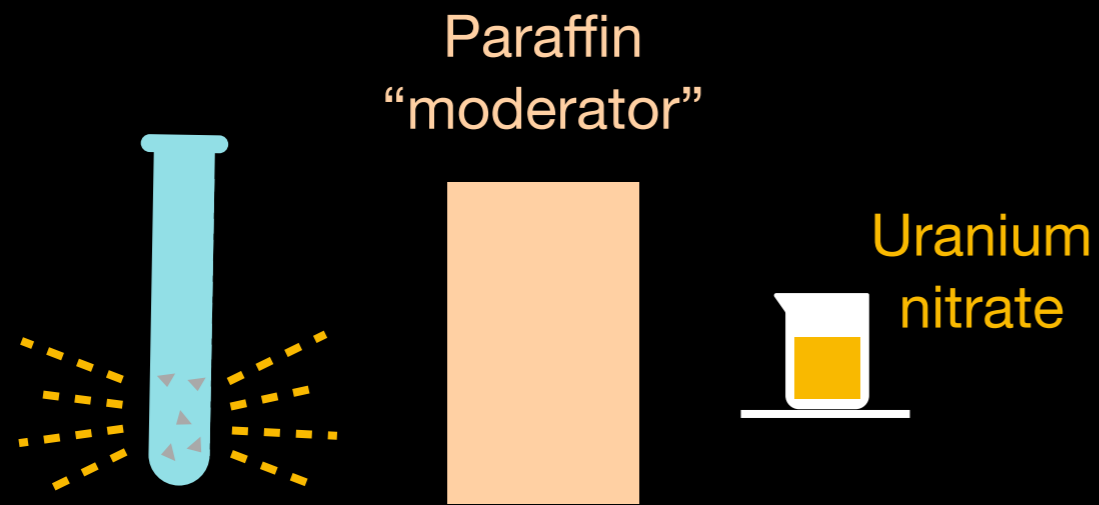
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Fermi's blunder

Exposing uranium to "thermal" neutrons



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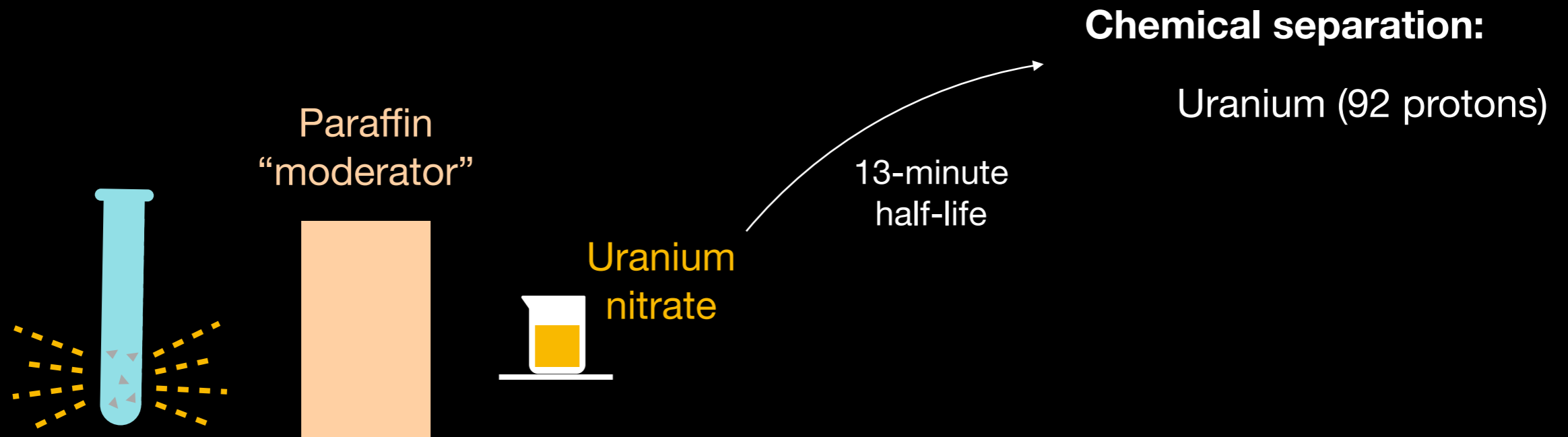
Exposing uranium to "thermal" neutrons

Chemical separation:



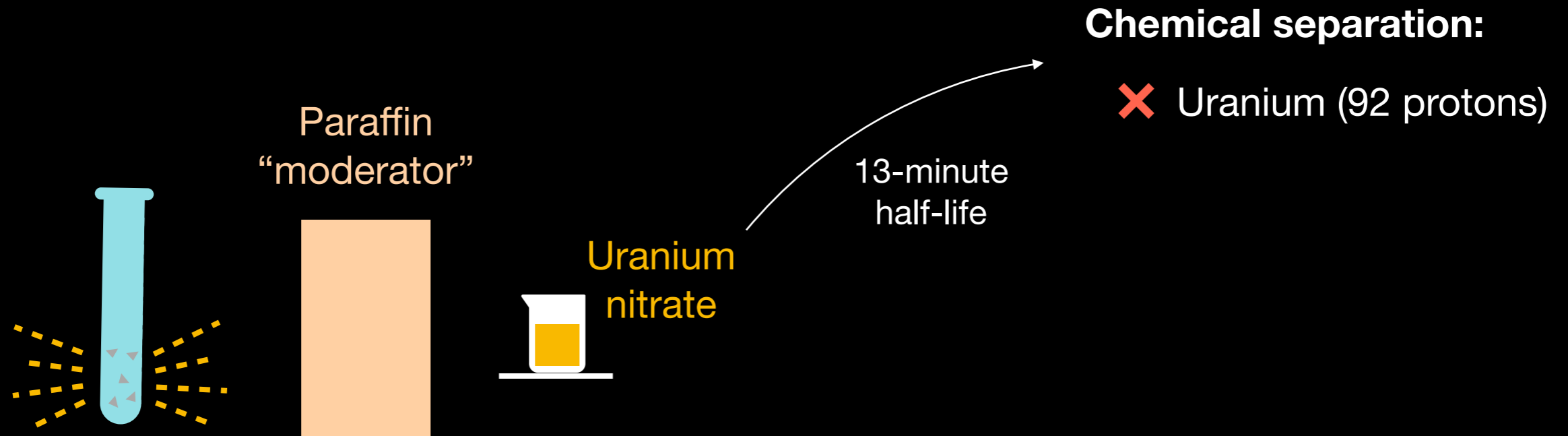
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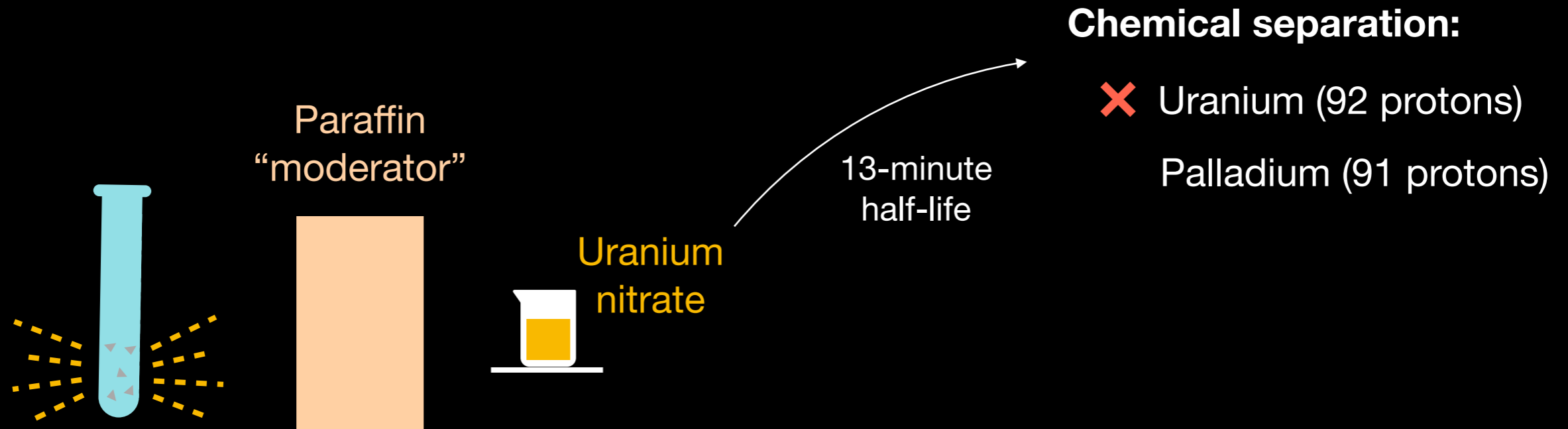
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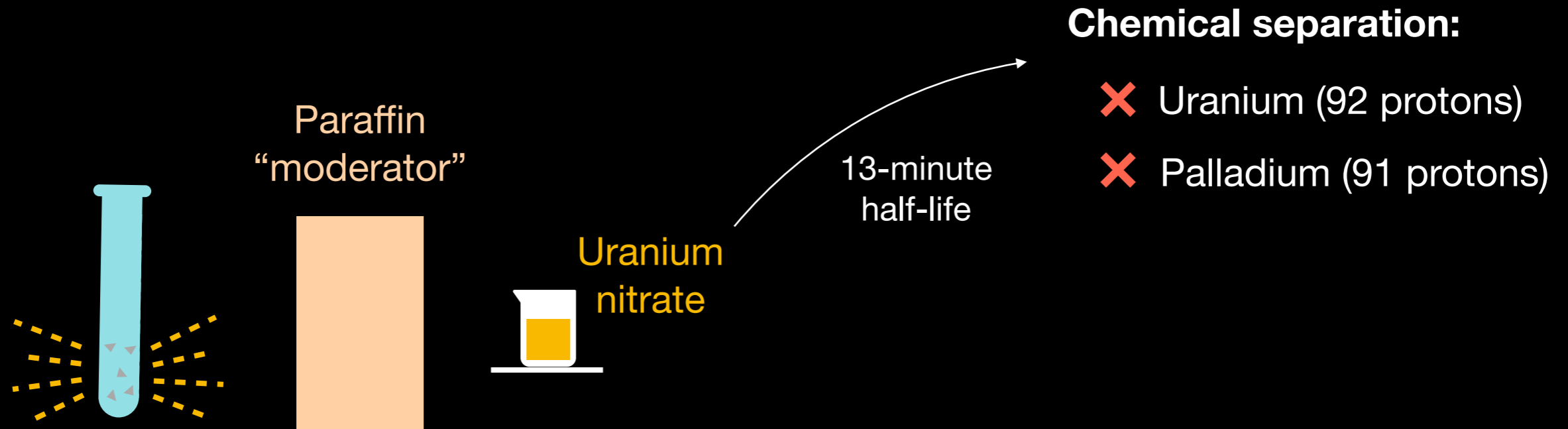
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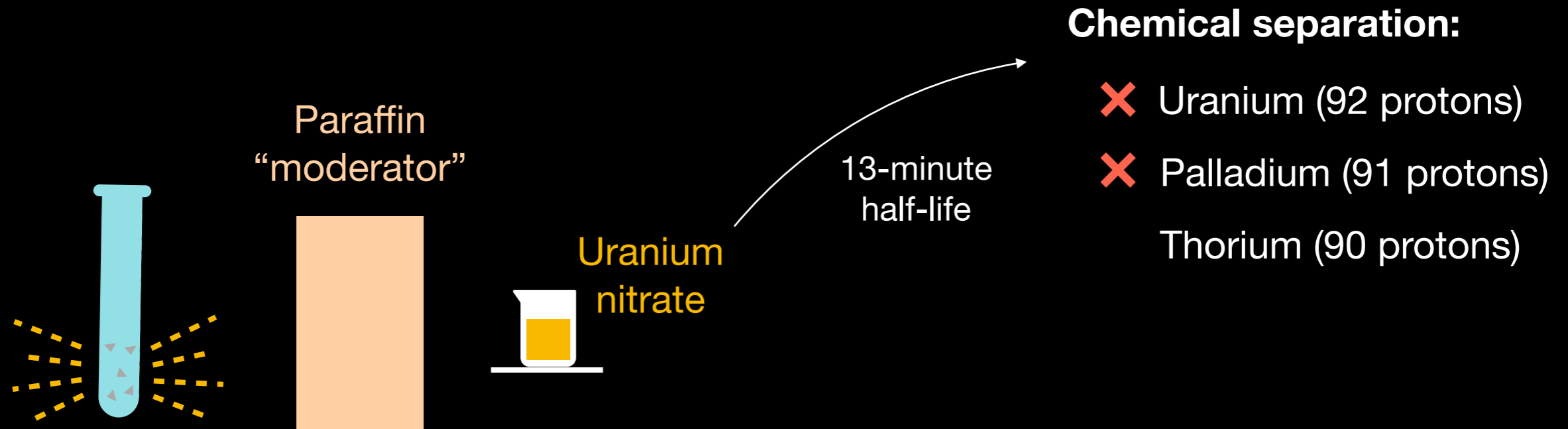
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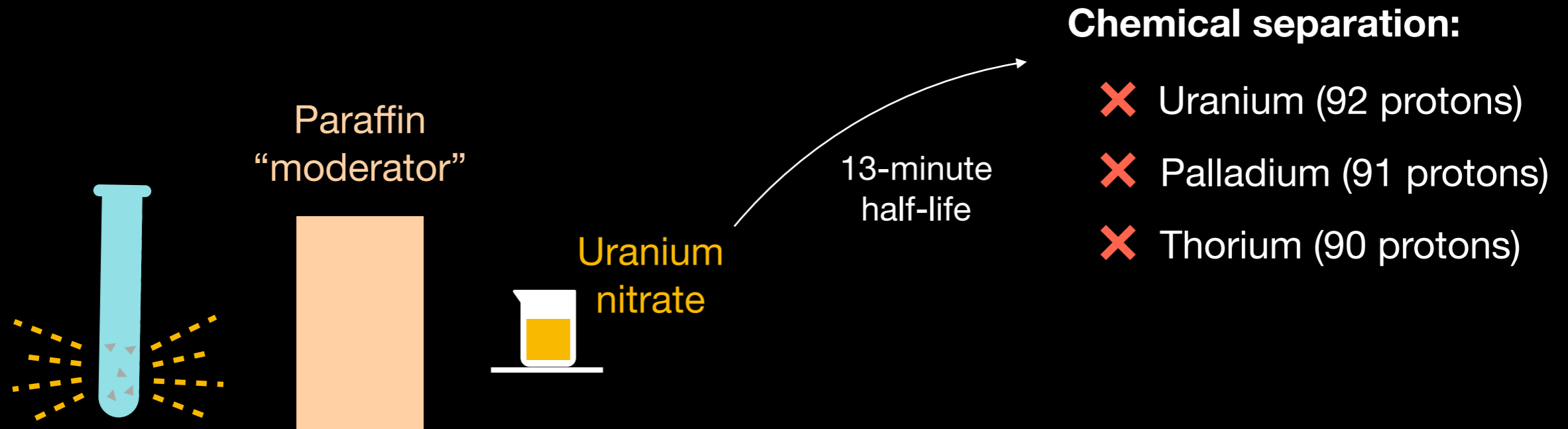
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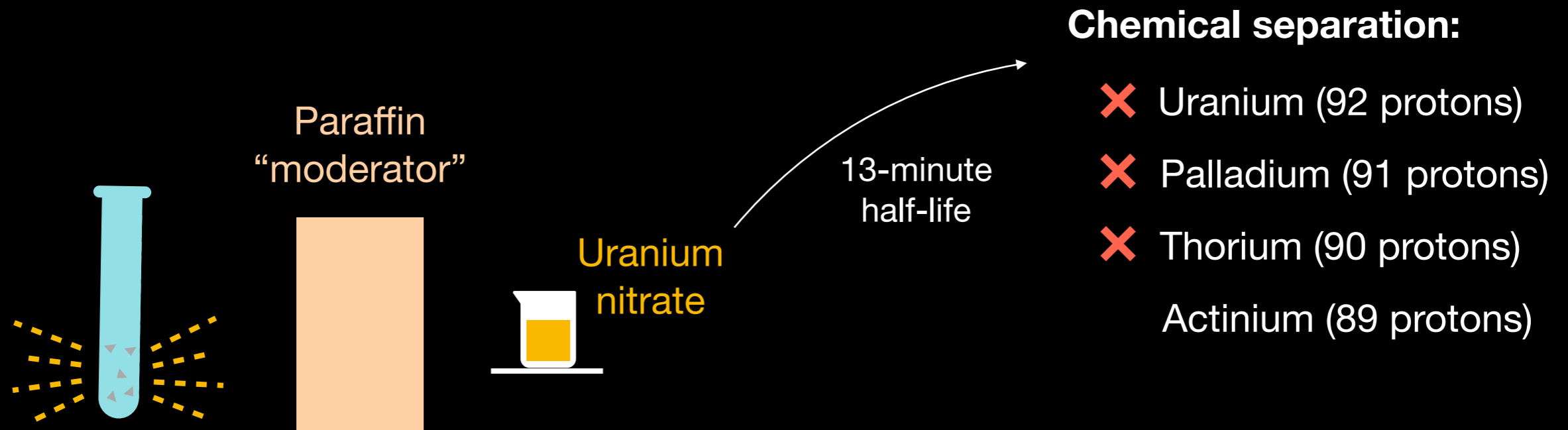
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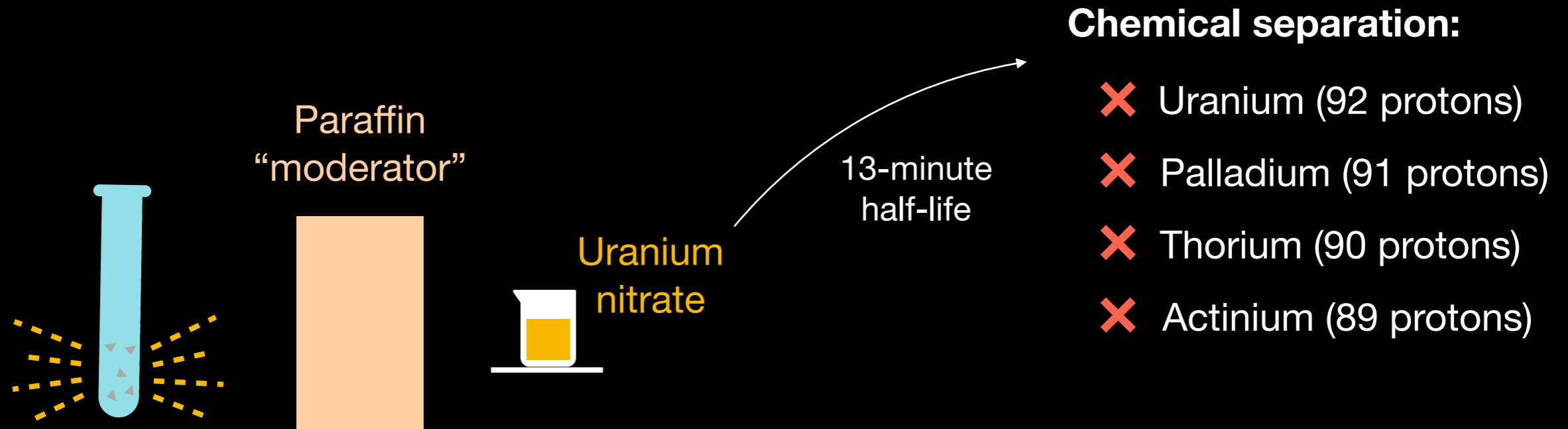
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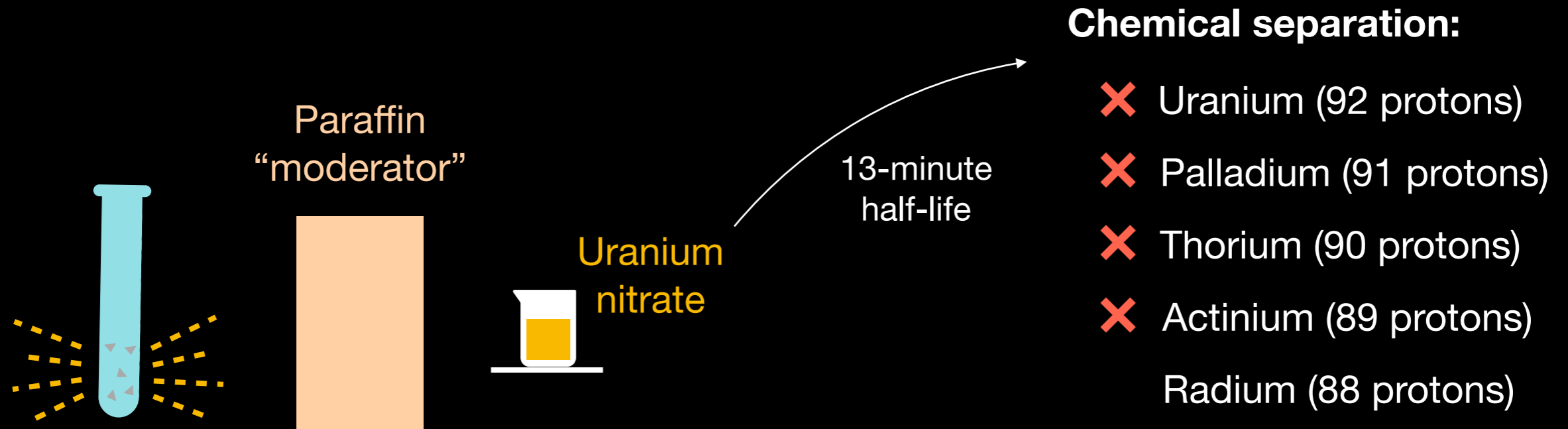
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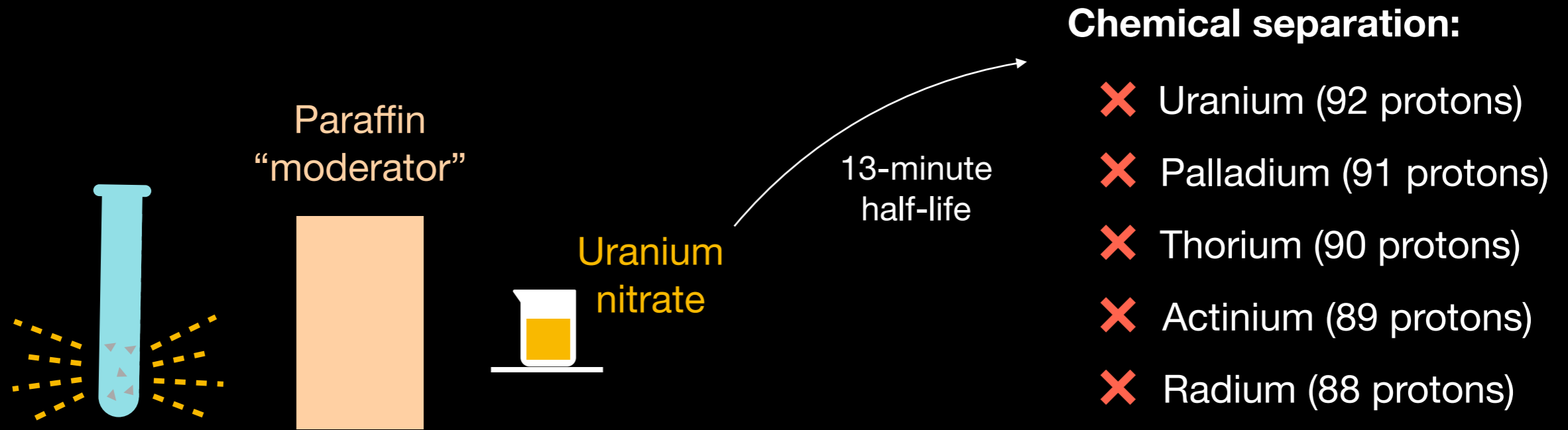
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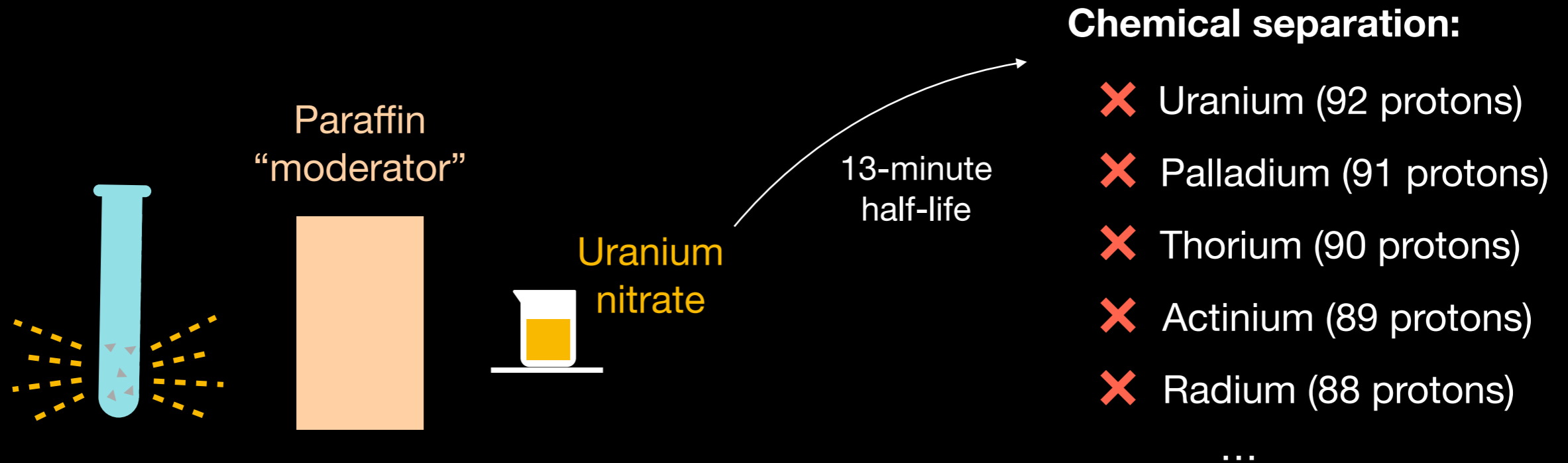
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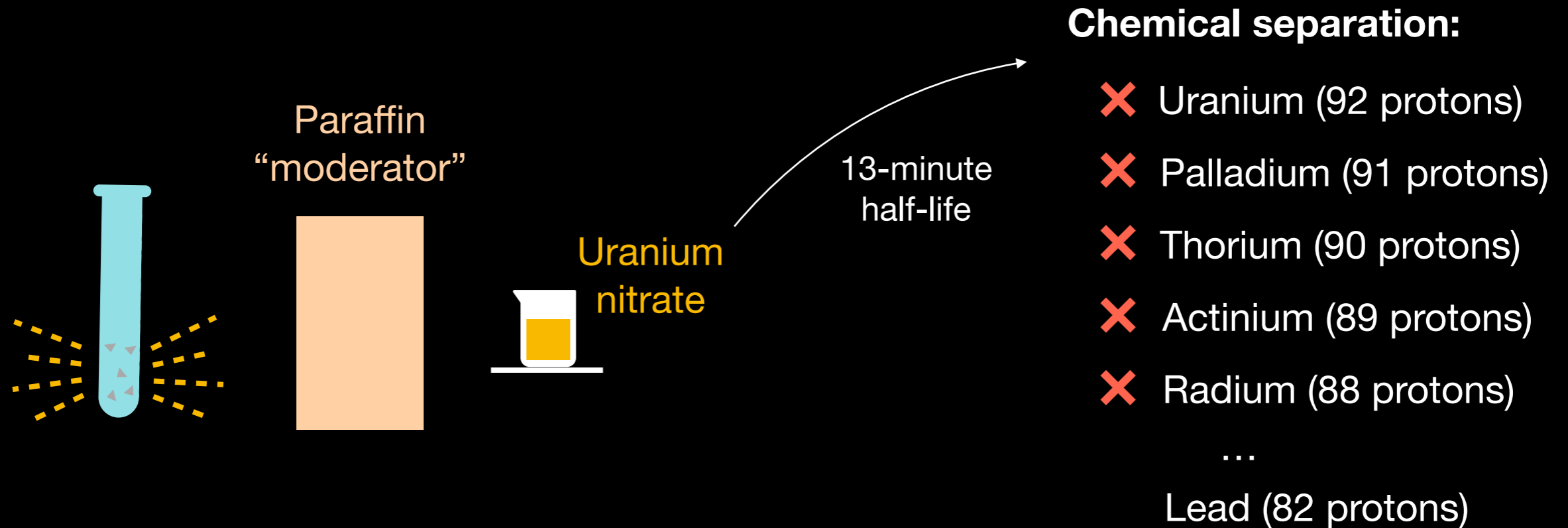
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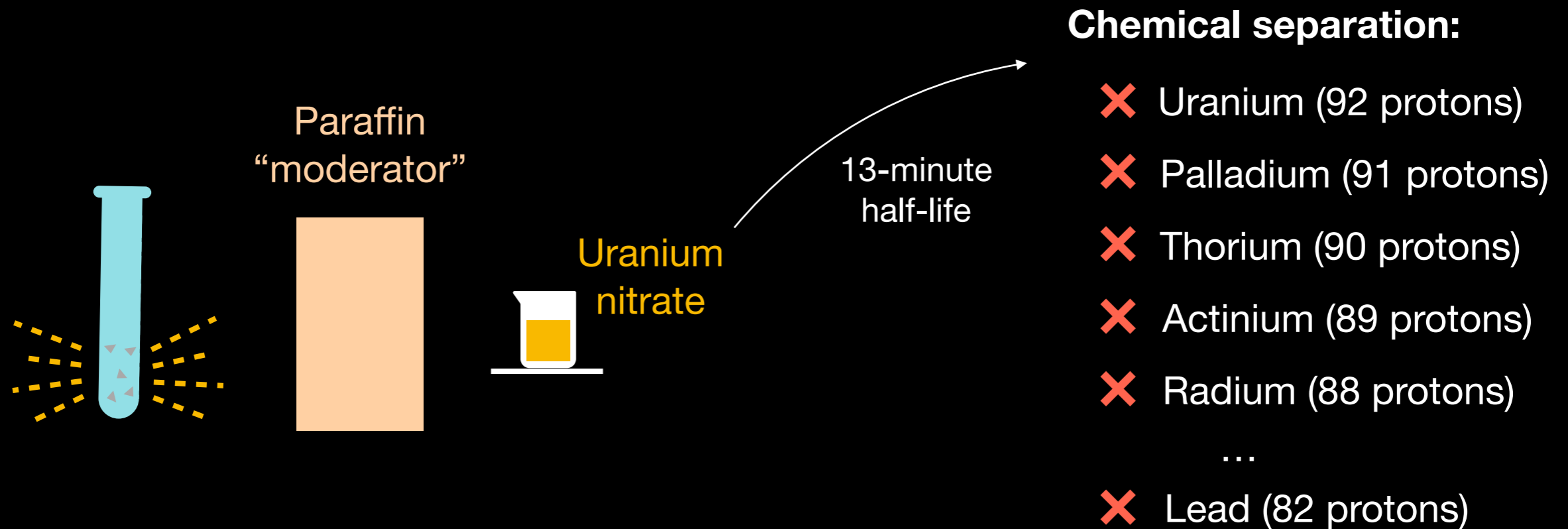
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Exposing uranium to "thermal" neutrons



Chemical separation:

- ✗ Uranium (92 protons)
- ✗ Palladium (91 protons)
- ✗ Thorium (90 protons)
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- ...
- ✗ Lead (82 protons)

Is it a heavier element with more than 92 protons?

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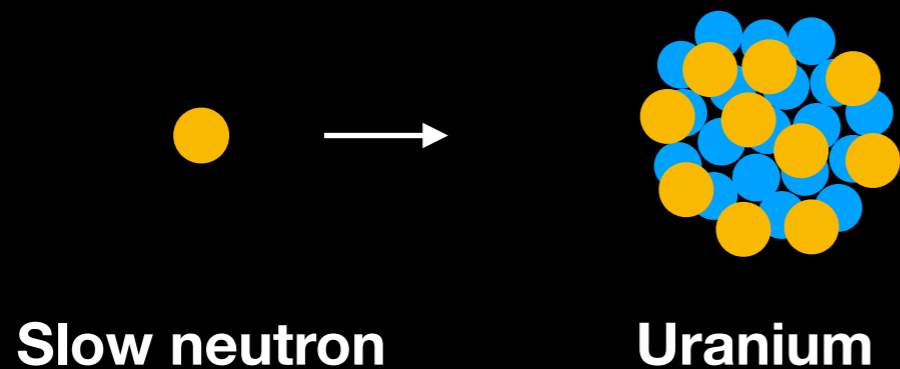
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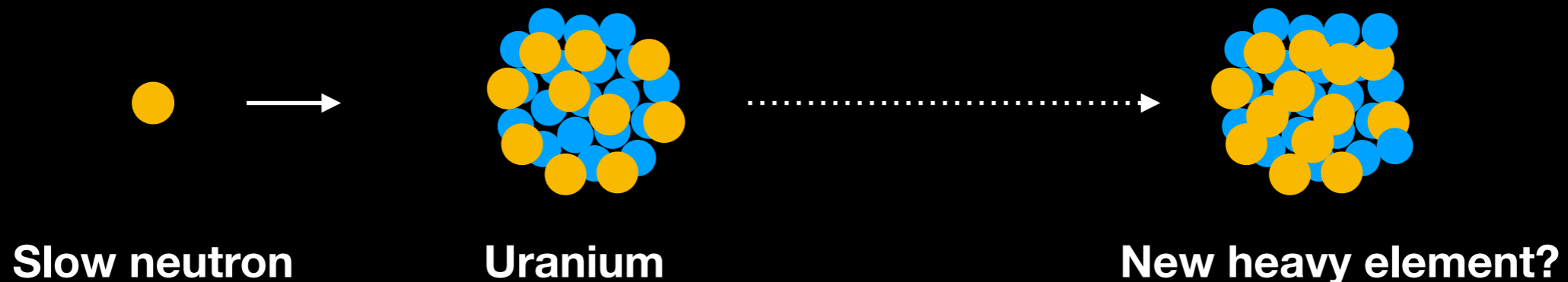
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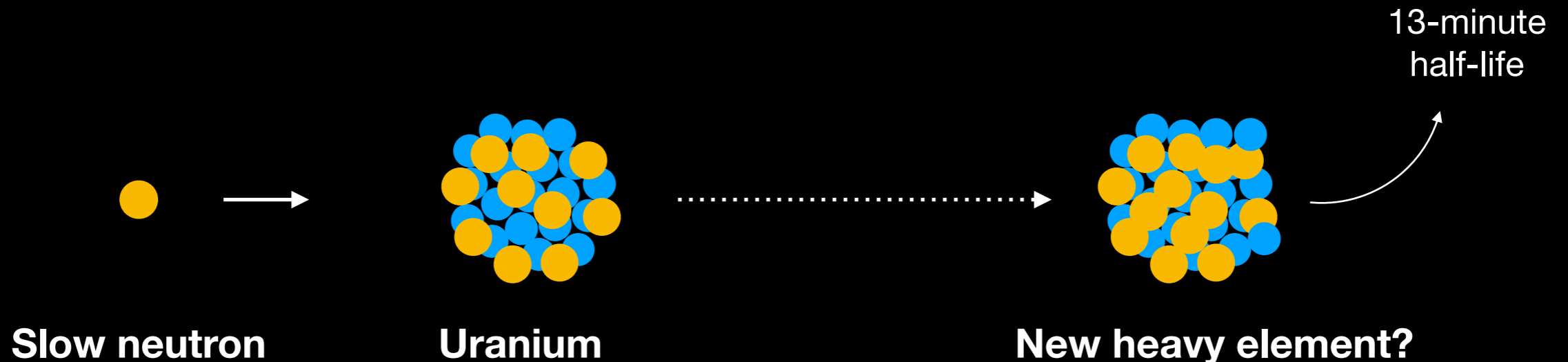
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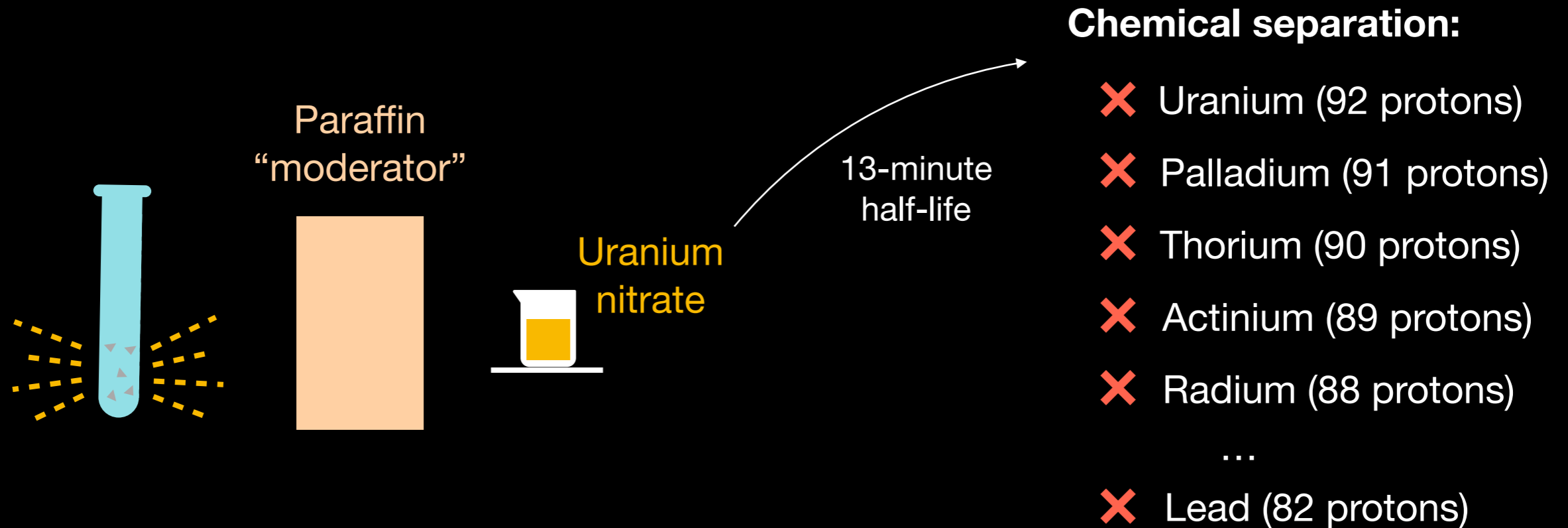
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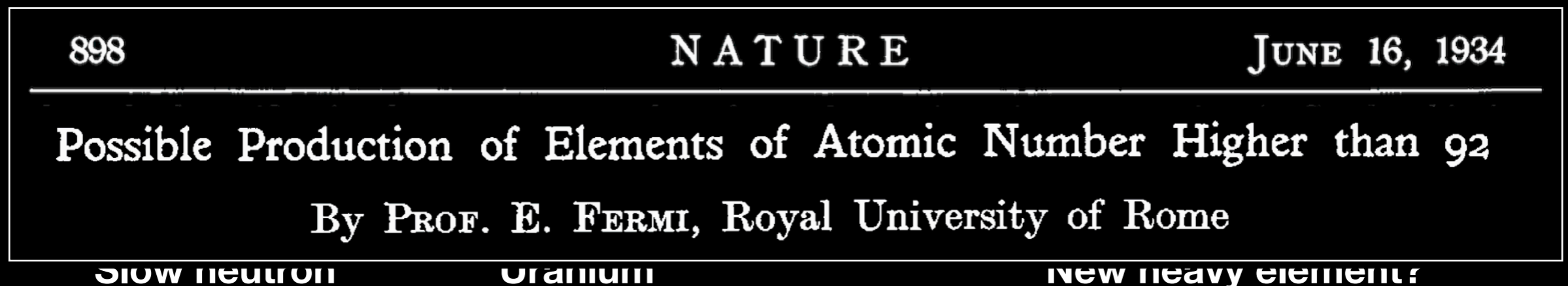
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Is it a heavier element with more than 92 protons?

13-minute



Fascists take over Italy

Fascists take over Italy



Fascists take over Italy



At the Nobel Prize ceremony
in Sweden (*December 1938*)

Fascists take over Italy

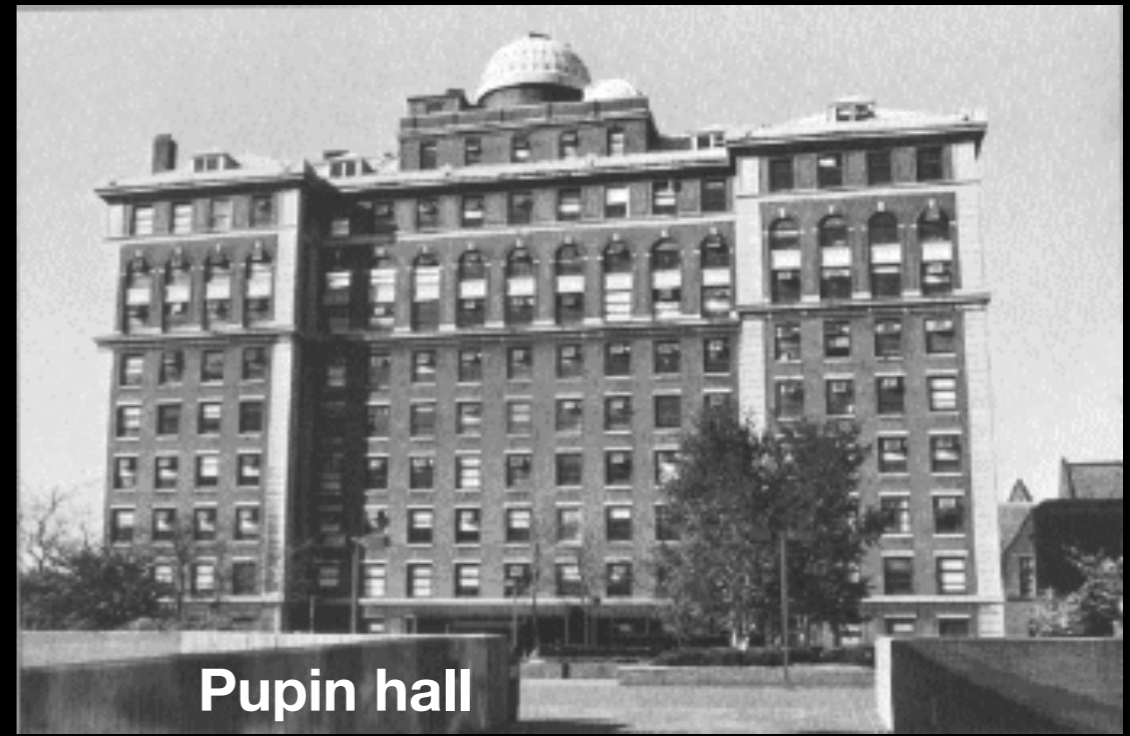


At the Nobel Prize ceremony
in Sweden (*December 1938*)



Safely arrived
in New York
(*January 2, 1939*)

Fermi at Columbia

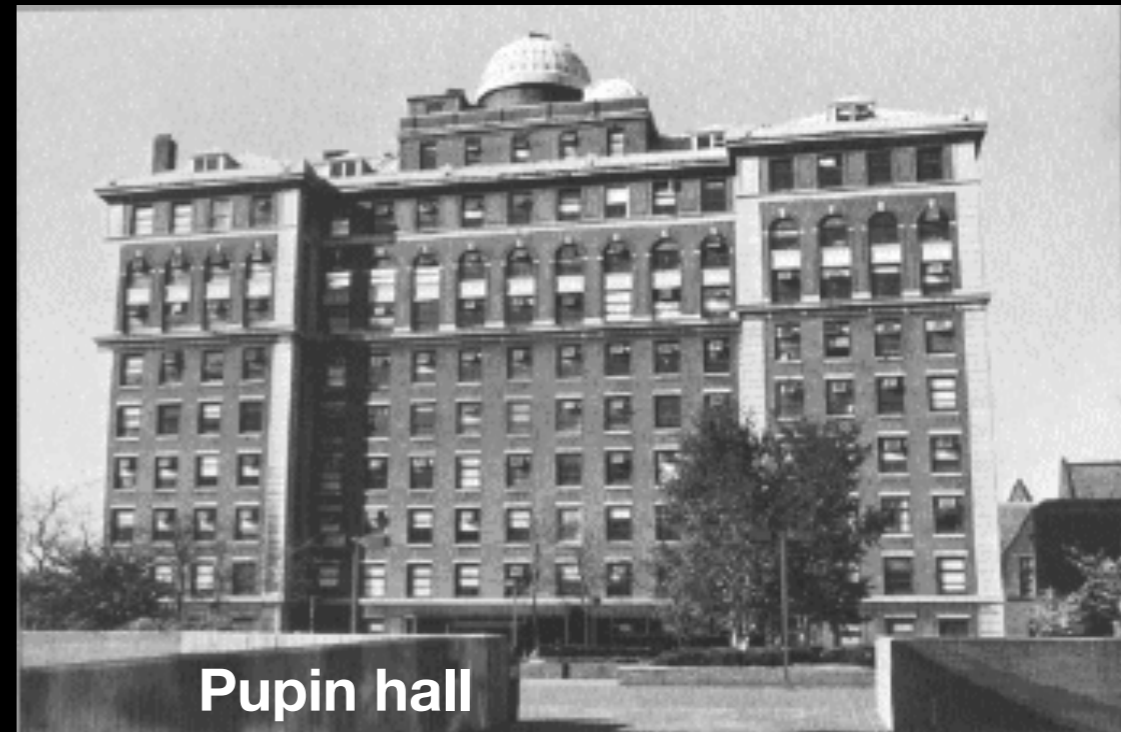


Pupin hall

Fermi at Columbia

**The uranium nucleus has been
split in Berlin!**

Results made public on January 6, 1939

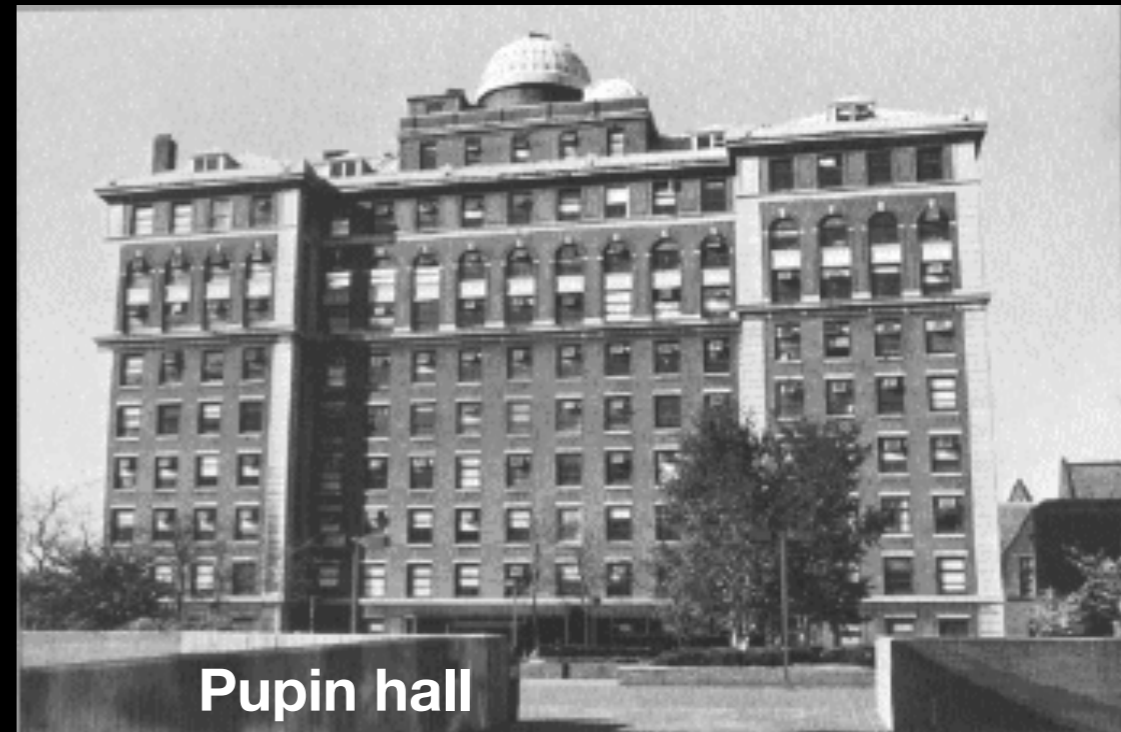


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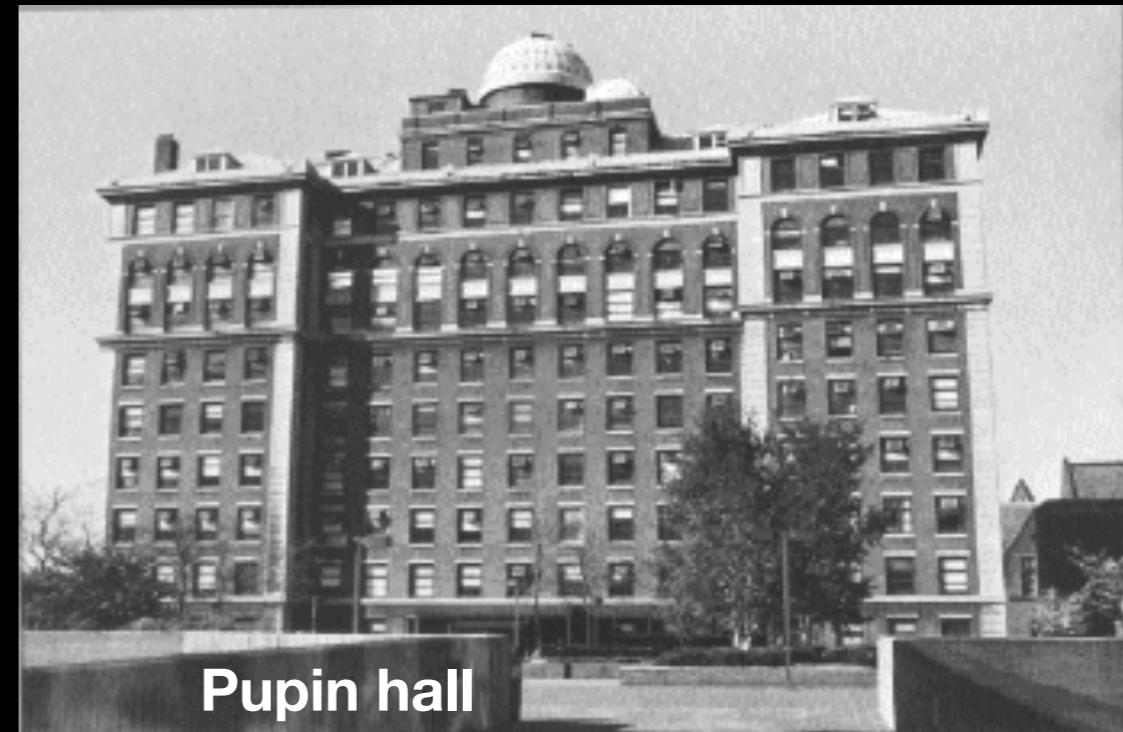
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Heft 1.]
6. 1. 1939]

HAHN u. STRASSMANN: Über den Nachweis und das Verhalten der Erdalkalimetalle.

11

Über den Nachweis und das Verhalten der bei der Bestrahlung des Urans mittels Neutronen entstehenden Erdalkalimetalle¹.

Von O. HAHN und F. STRASSMANN, Berlin-Dahlem.



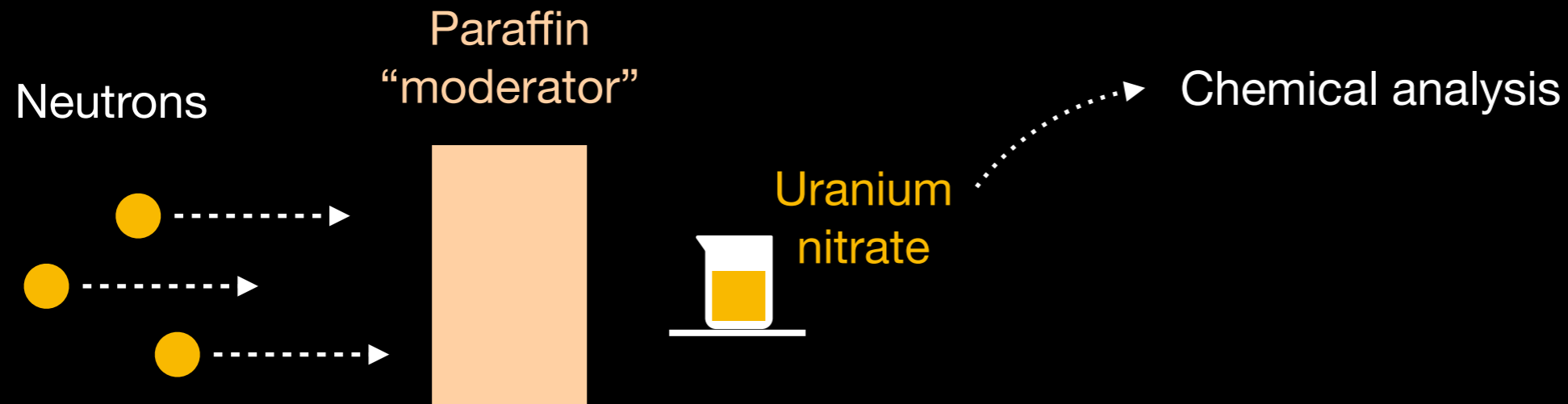
What happened in Berlin?

What happened in Berlin?

Virtually the same experiment as in Fermi's Via Panisperna!

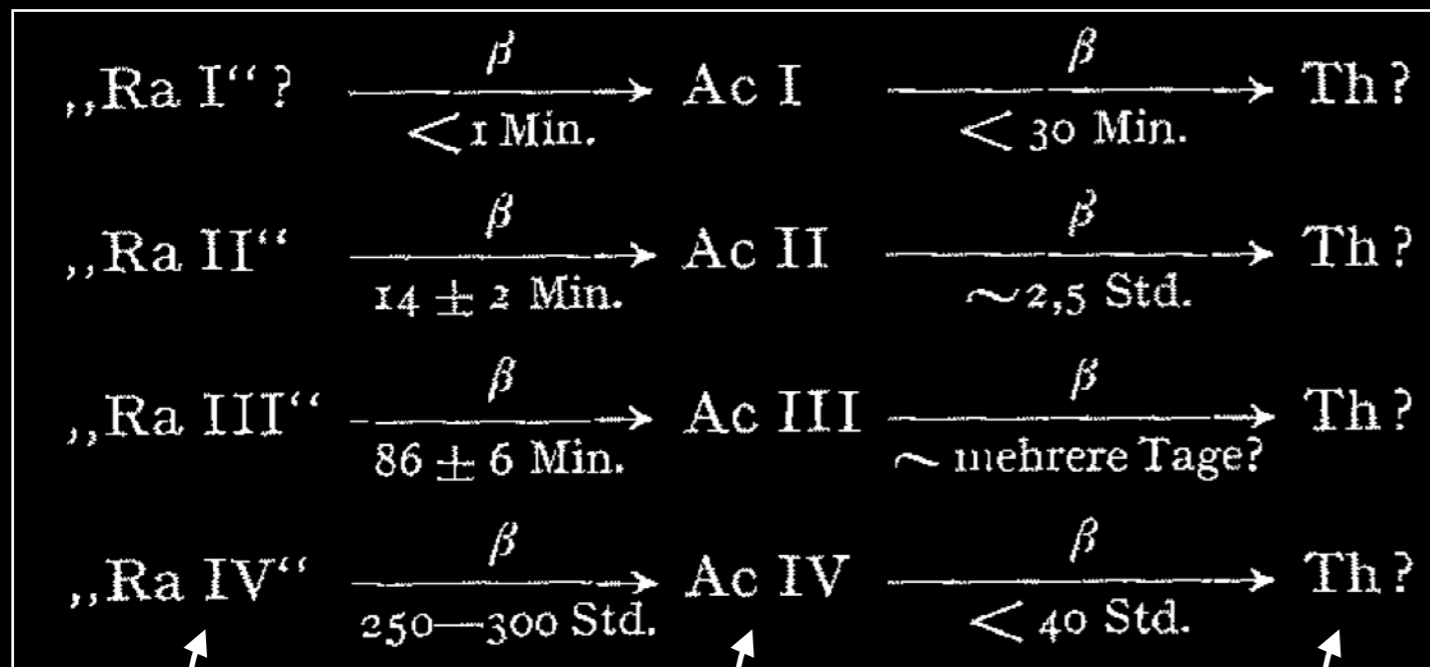
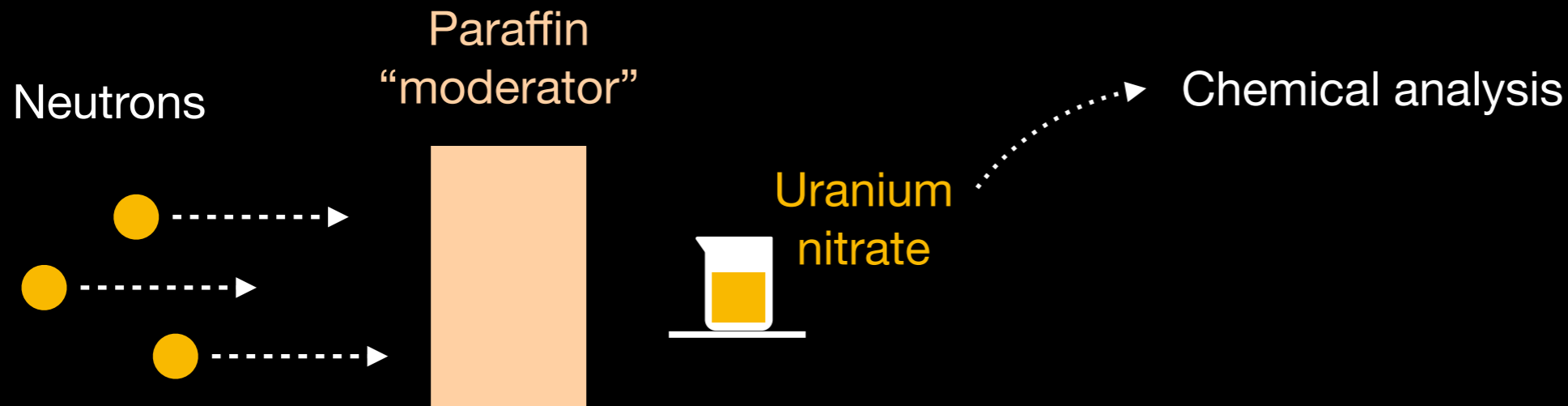
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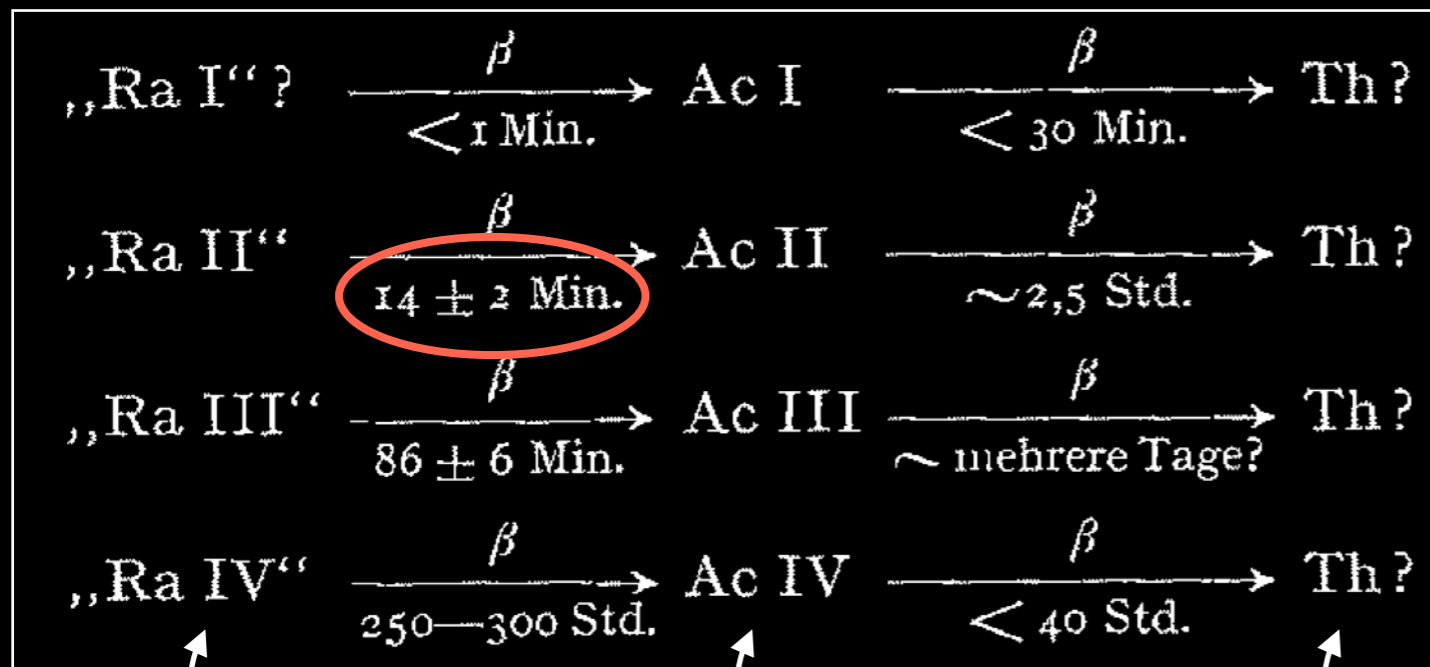
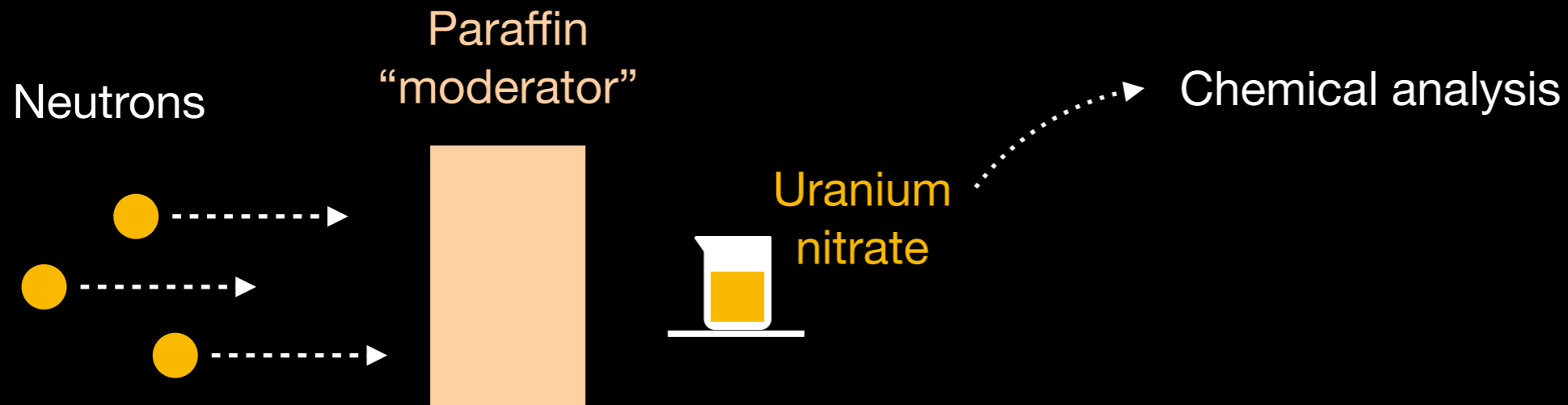
“Radium”

“Actinium”

“Thorium”

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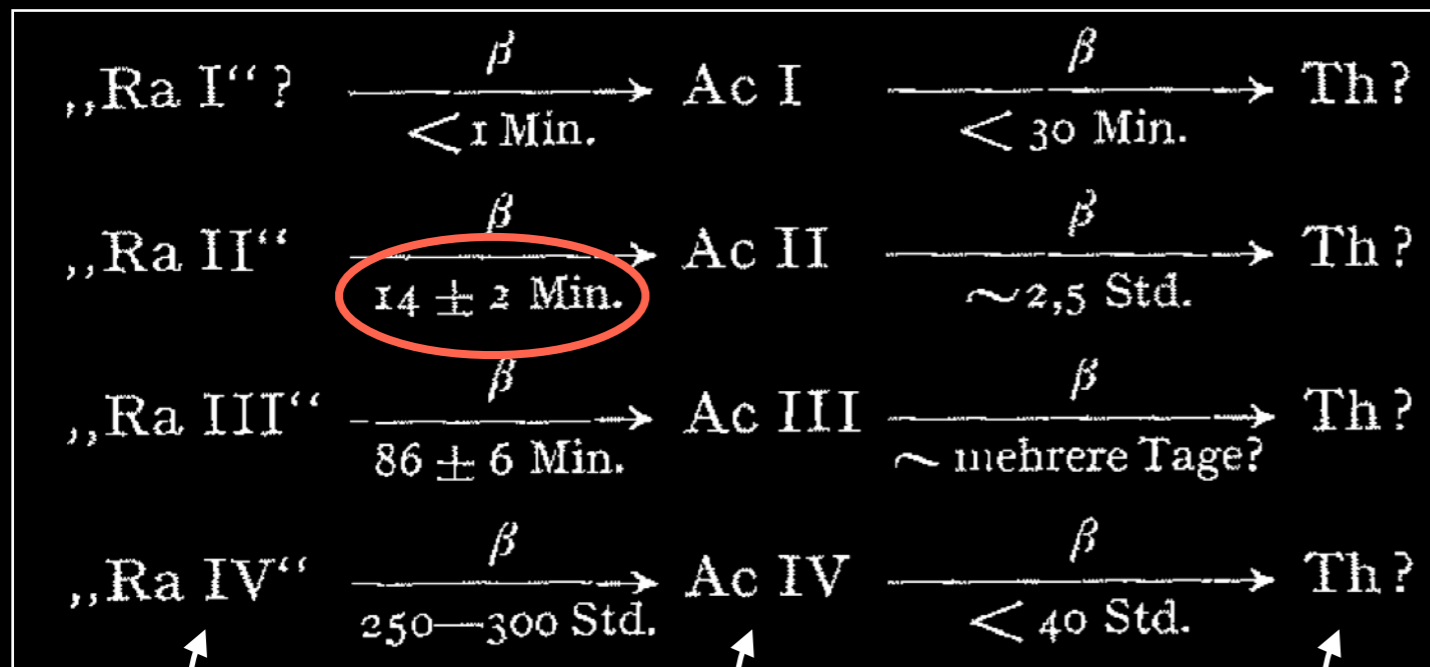
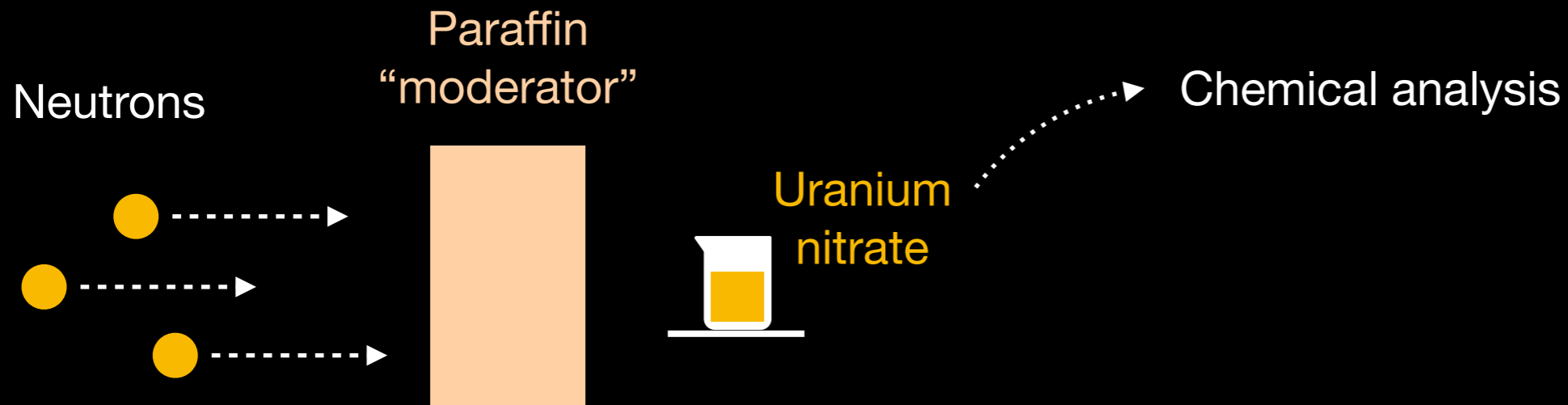
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“Radium”

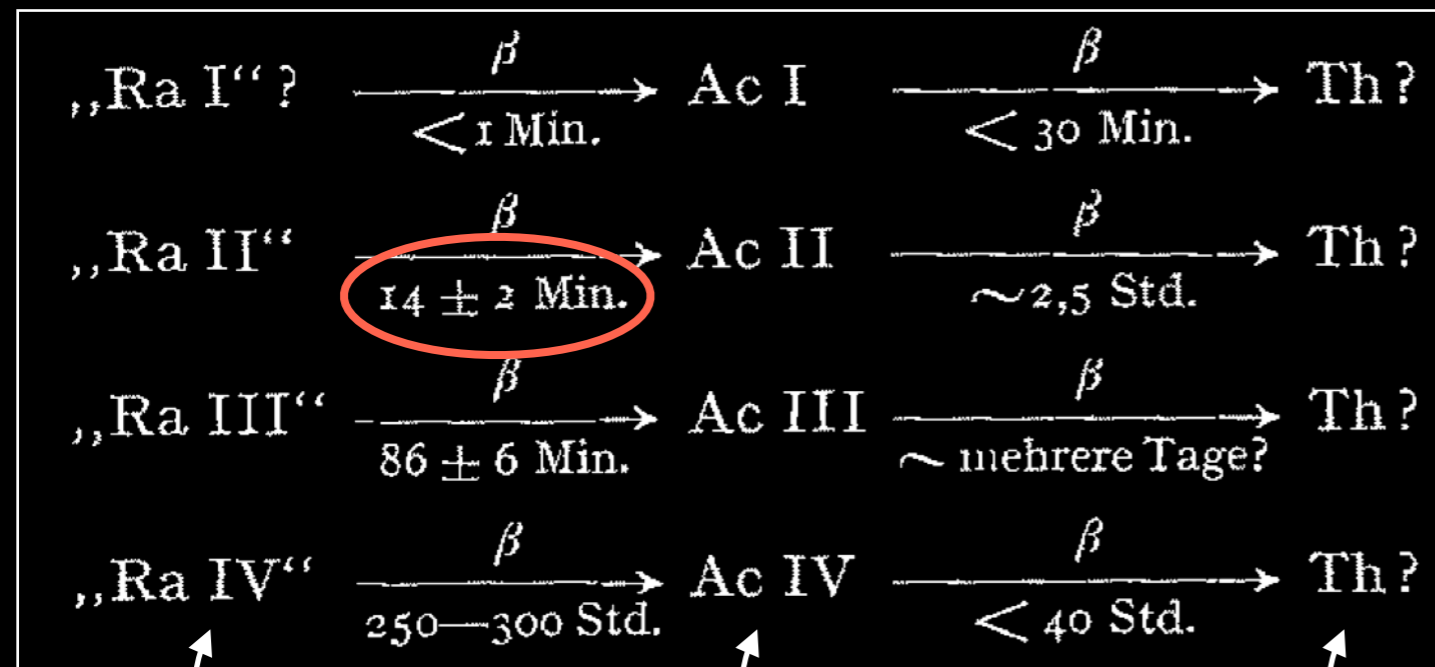
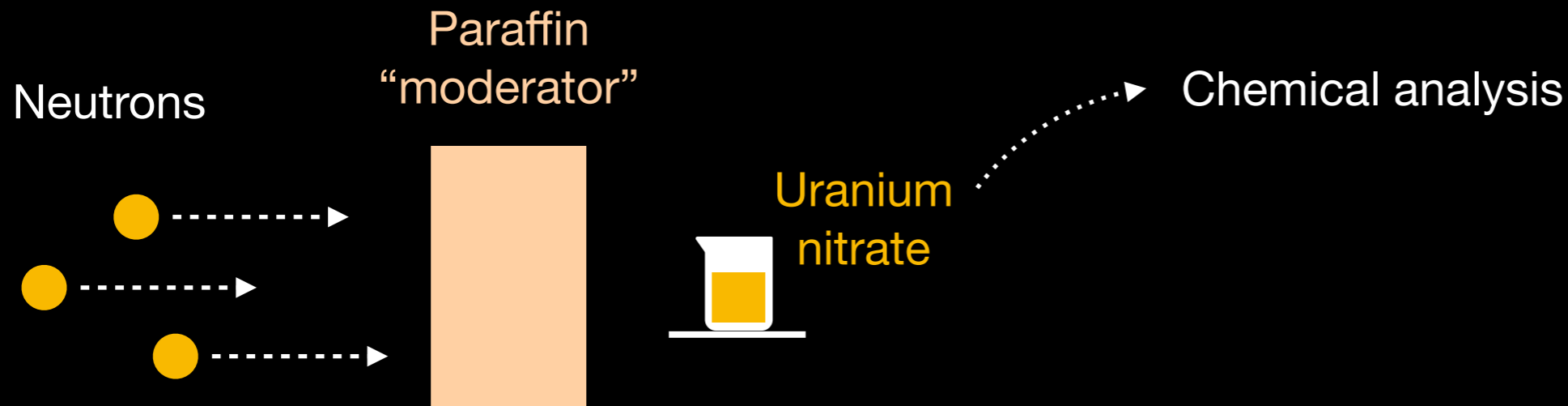
“Actinium”

“Thorium”

“As chemists, we would actually have to say that the new elements are not radium, but barium.”

What happened in Berlin?

Virtually the same experiment as in Fermi's Via Panisperna!



“Radium”

“Actinium”

“Thorium”

“As chemists, we would actually have to say that the new elements are not radium, but barium.”

“If our ‘radium isotopes’ are not radium, then our ‘actinium isotopes’ are not actinium, but lanthanum.”

What happened in Berlin?

What happened in Berlin?

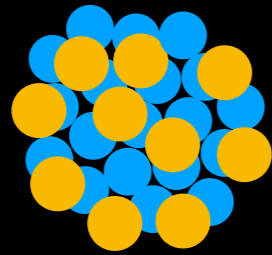
The nucleus is highly dynamic!

A droplet of water instead of a bowling ball.

What happened in Berlin?

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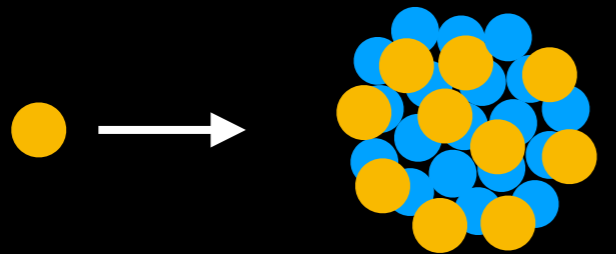


Uranium
(92 protons)

What happened in Berlin?

The nucleus is highly dynamic!

A droplet of water instead of a bowling ball.

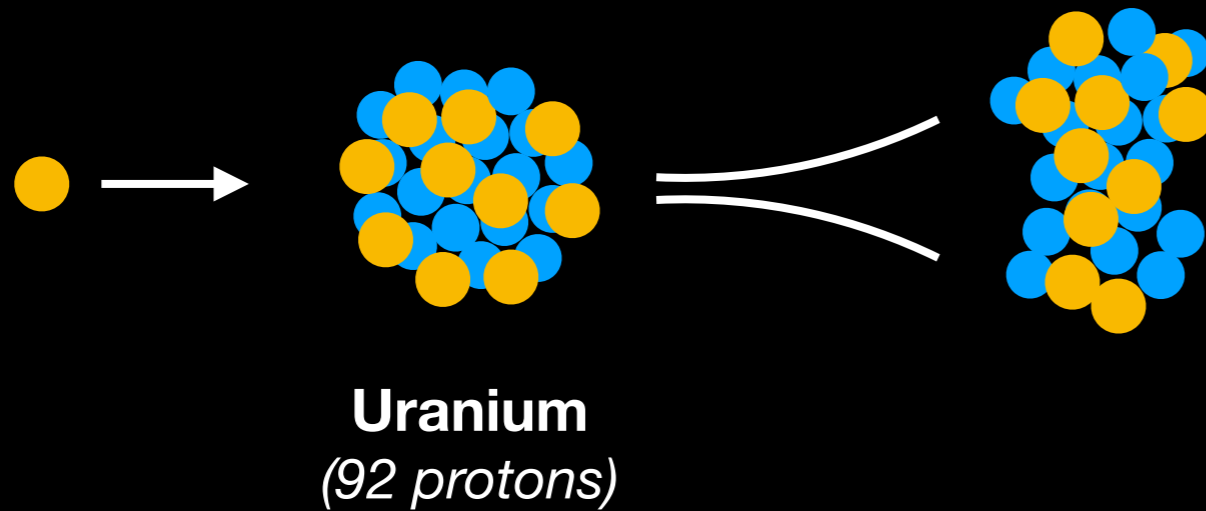


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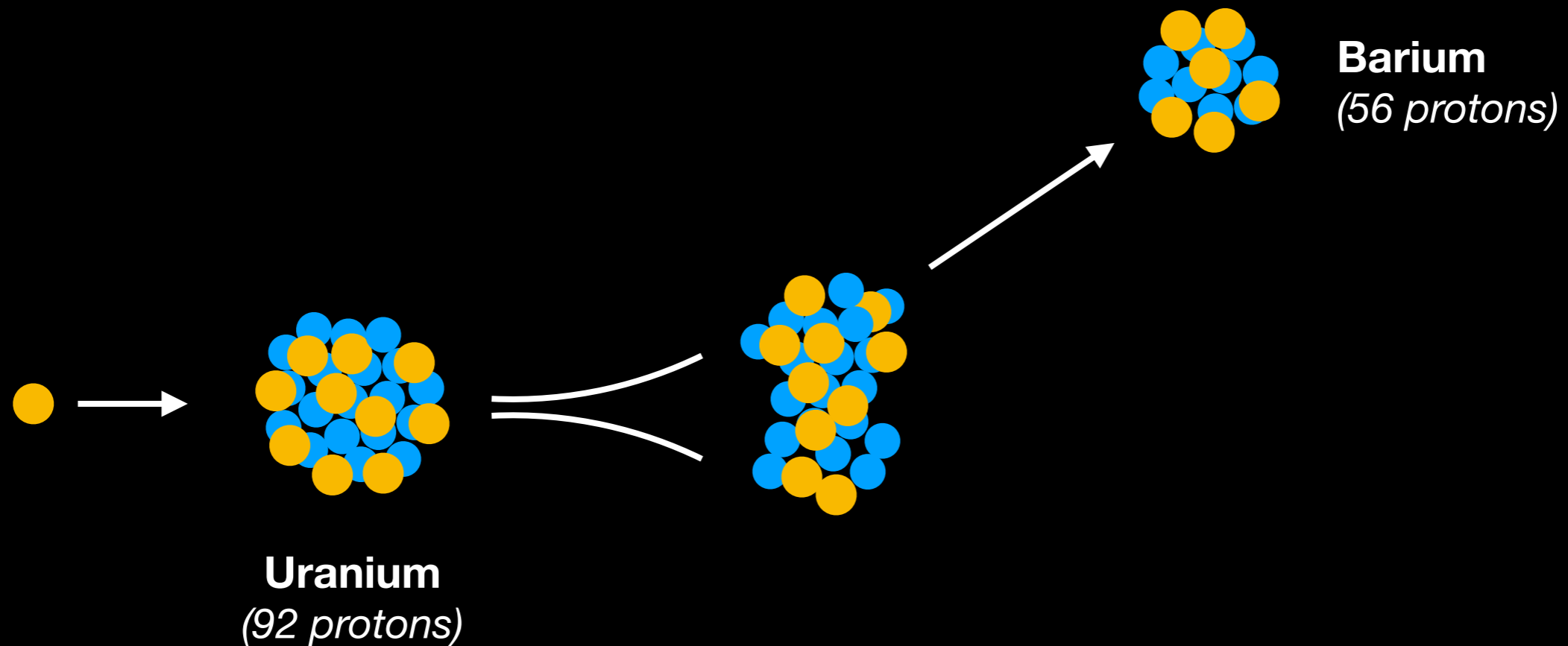
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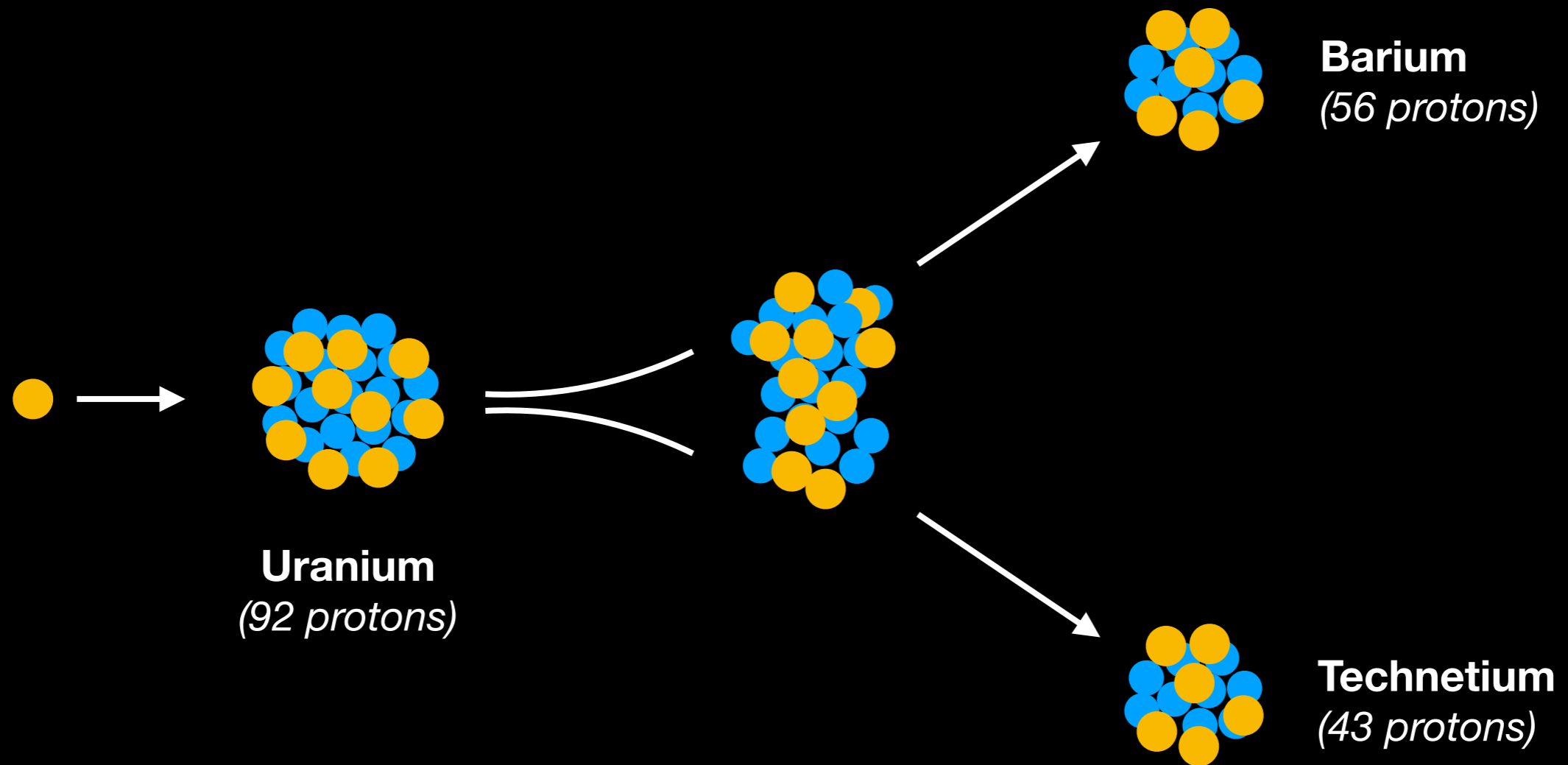
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What happened in Berlin?

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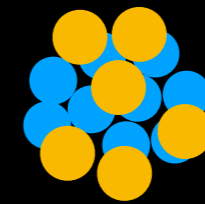
A droplet of water instead of a bowling ball.



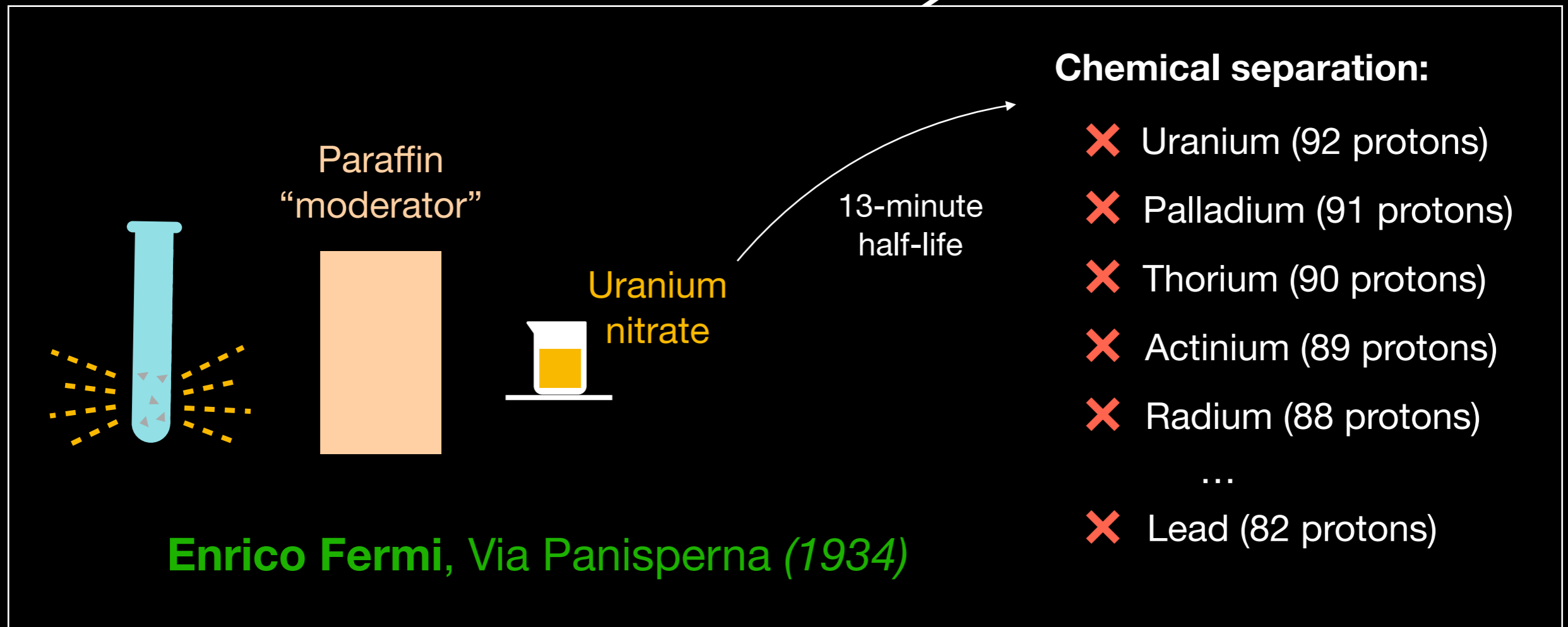
What happened in Berlin?

The nucleus is highly dynamic!

A droplet of water instead of a bowling ball.



Barium
(56 protons)



Fermi's reaction

Fermi's reaction

"I want to see this for myself!"

Fermi's reaction

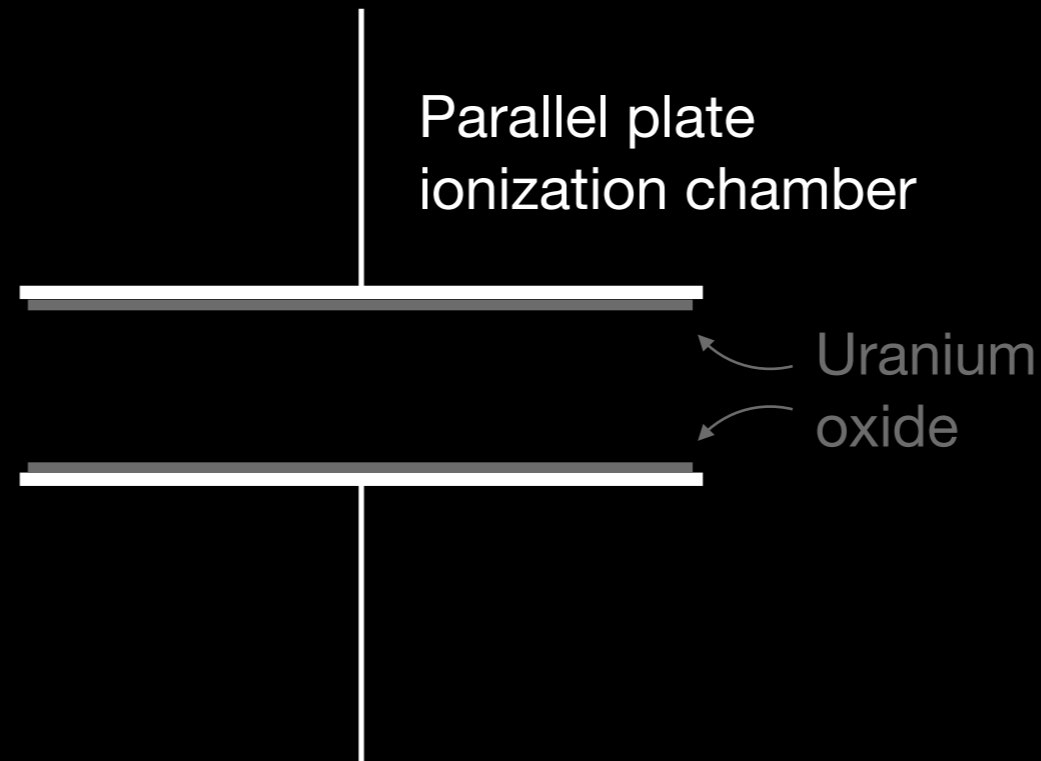
"I want to see this for myself!"



Herbert Anderson

Fermi's reaction

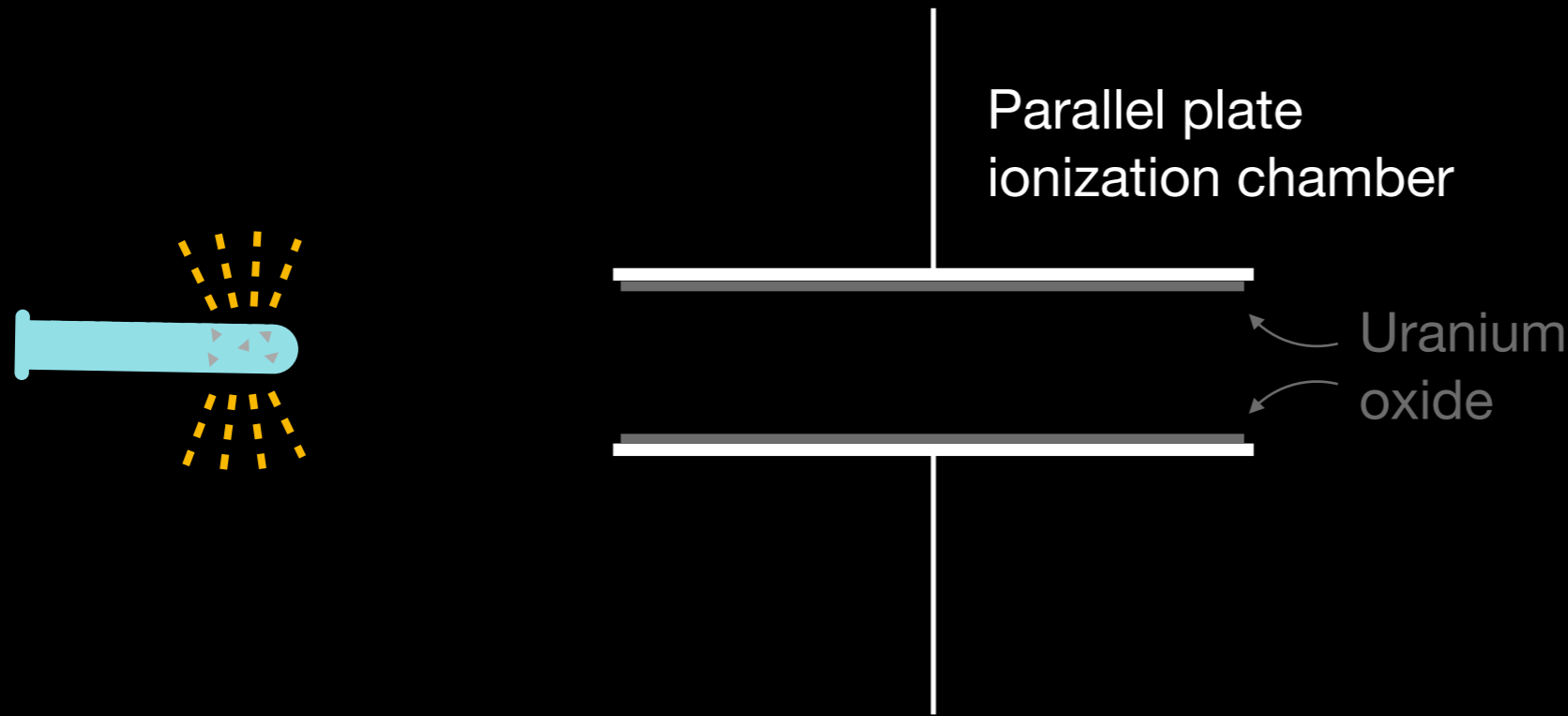
"I want to see this for myself!"



Herbert Anderson

Fermi's reaction

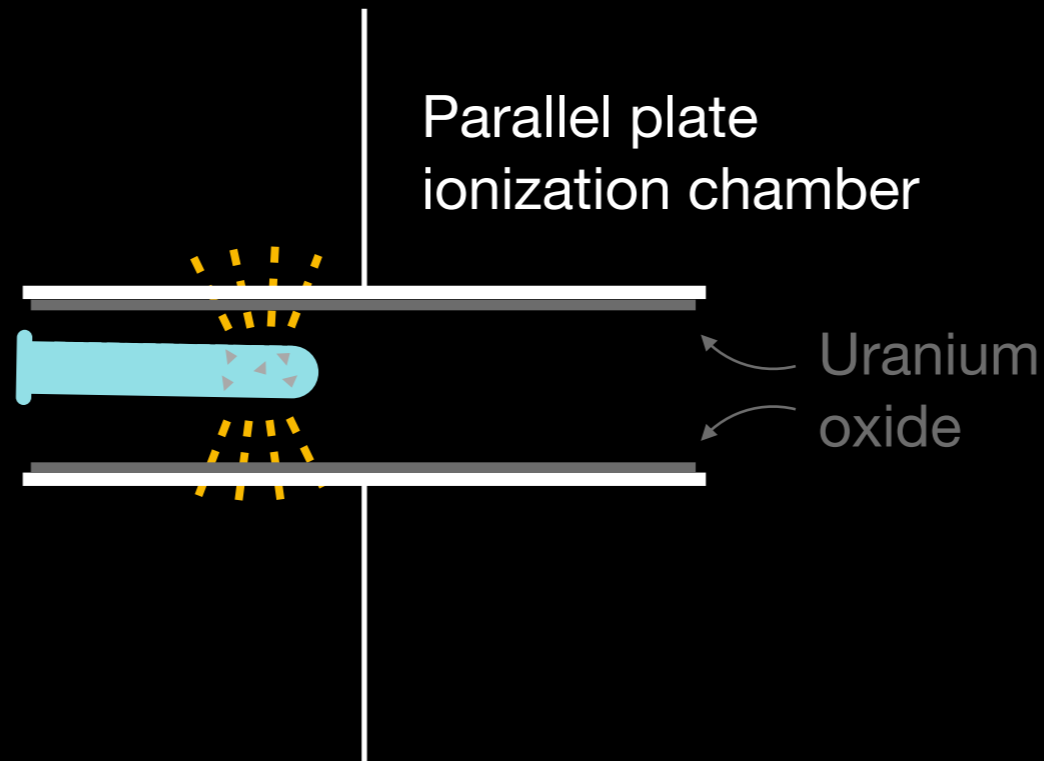
"I want to see this for myself!"



Herbert Anderson

Fermi's reaction

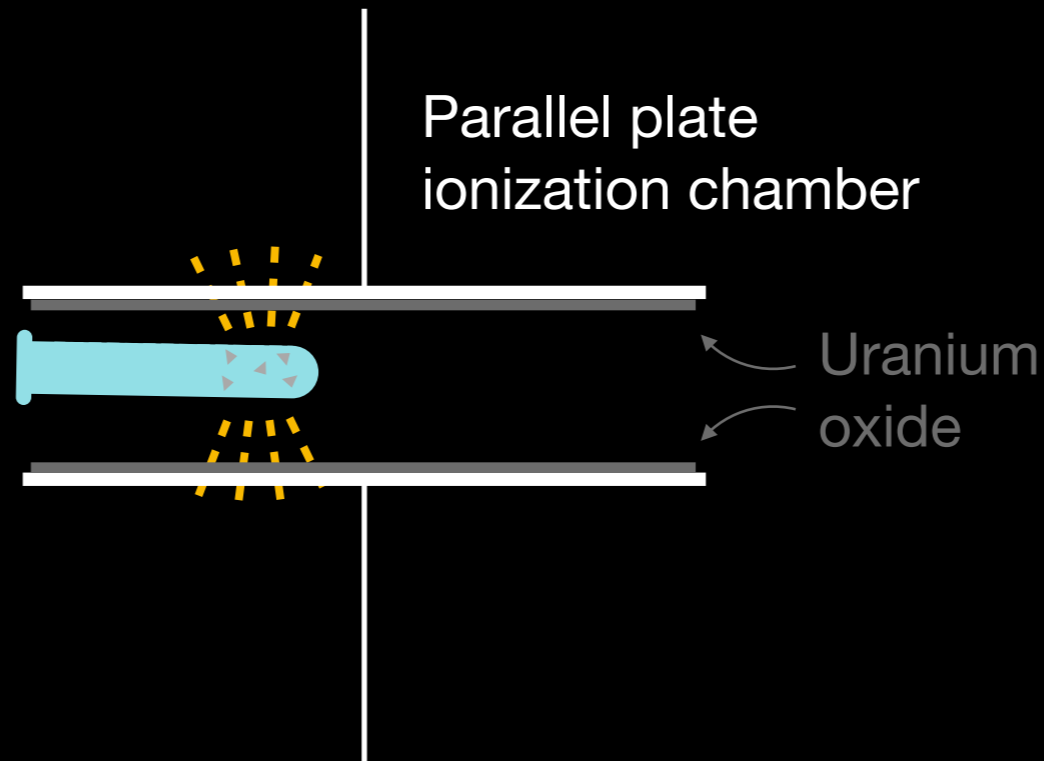
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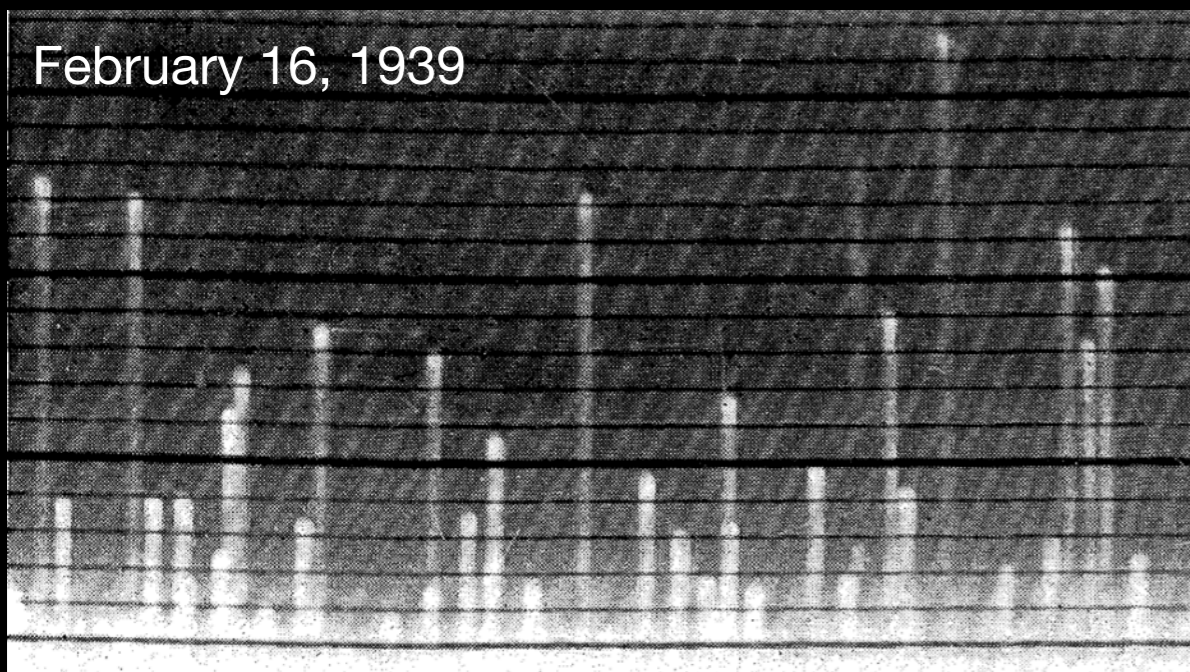
Herbert Anderson

Fermi's reaction

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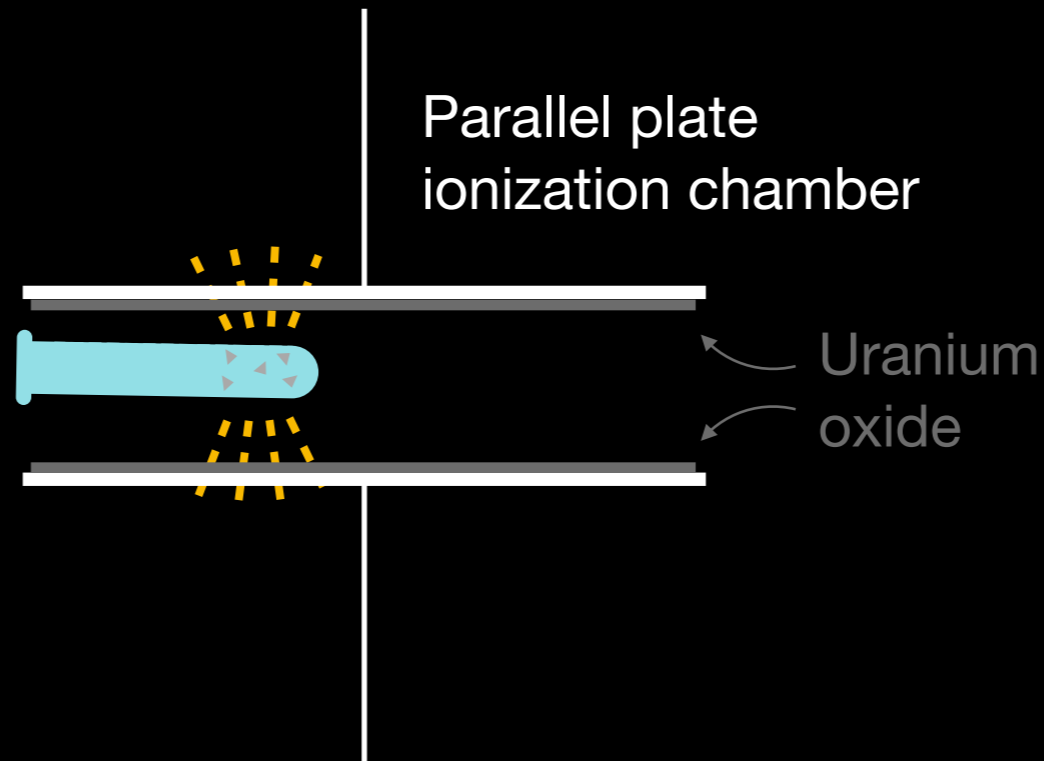


Herbert Anderson



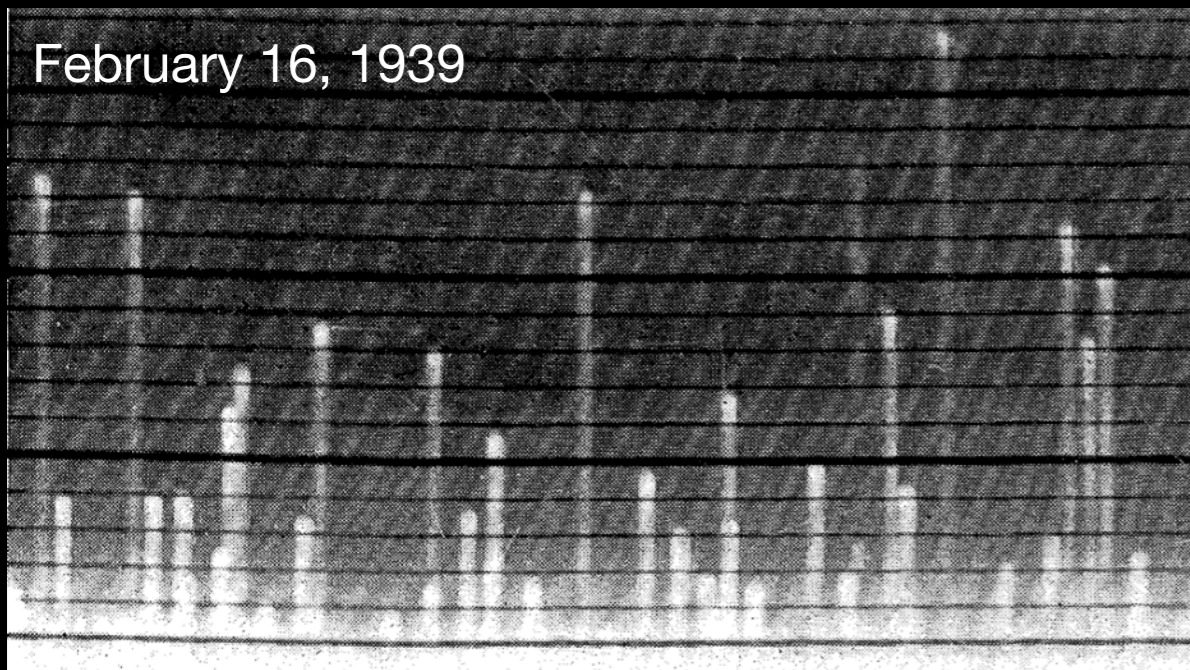
Fermi's reaction

"I want to see this for myself!"



Herbert Anderson

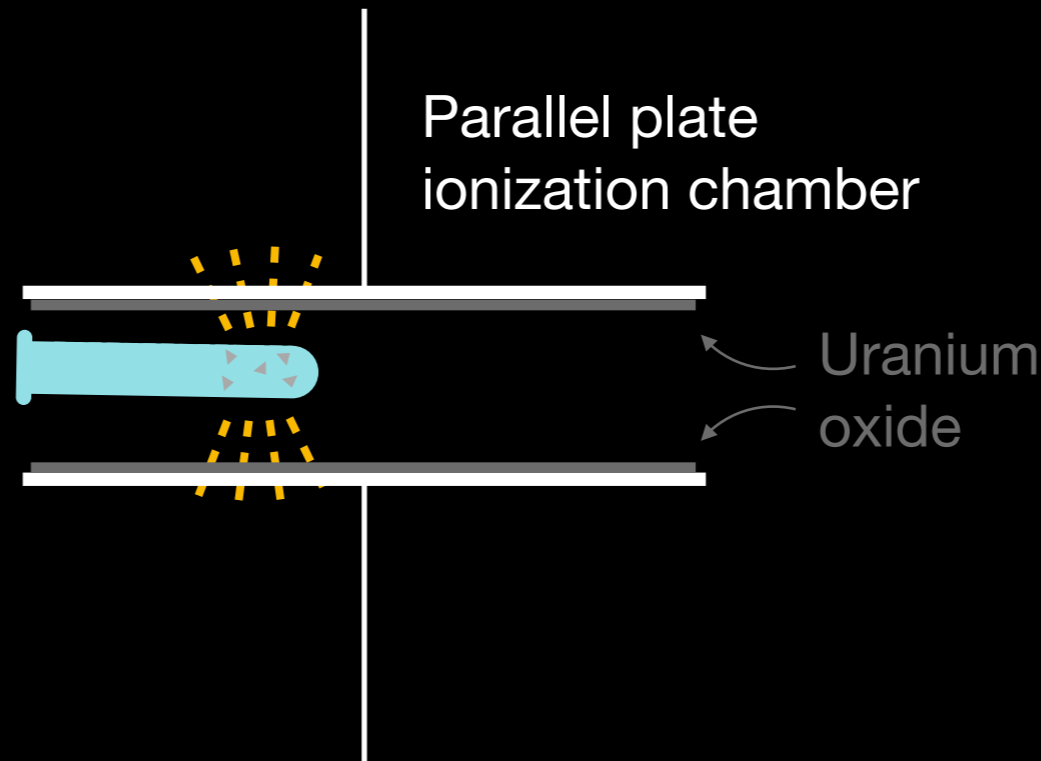
February 16, 1939



"A large number of small pulses from the α -particles of uranium were observed."

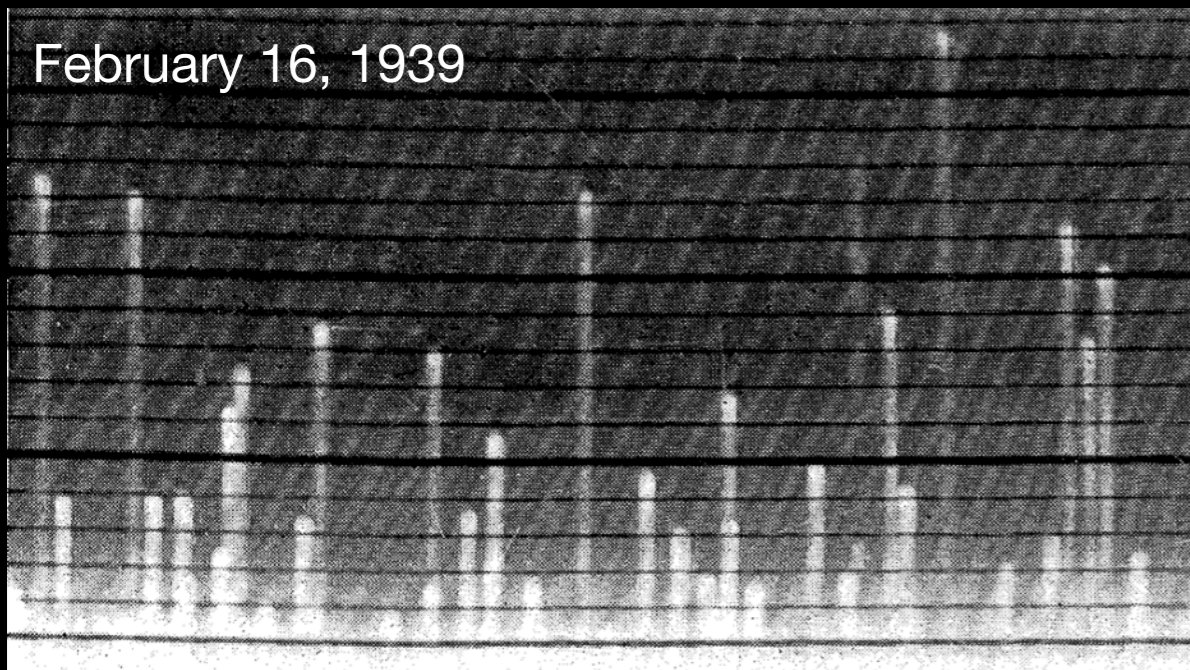
Fermi's reaction

"I want to see this for myself!"



Herbert Anderson

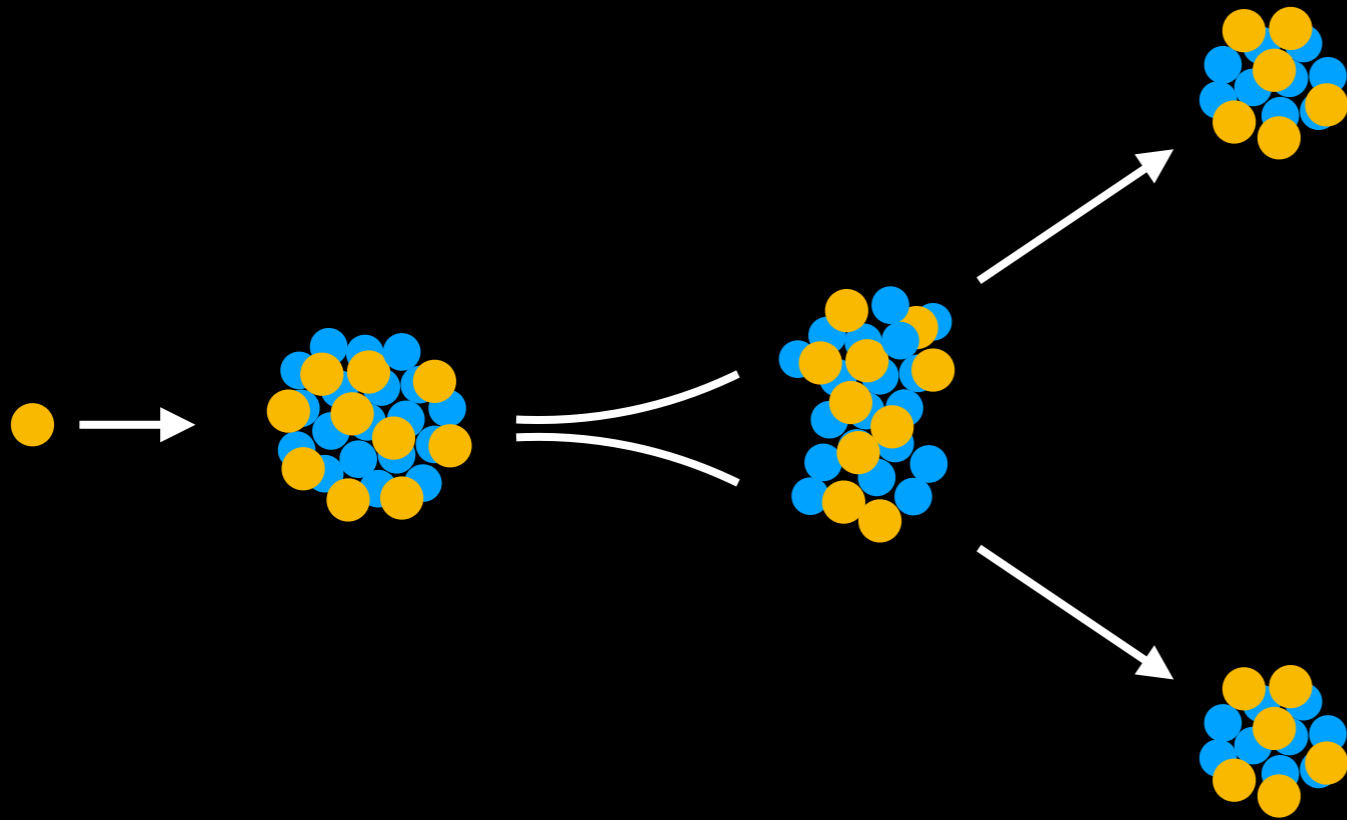
February 16, 1939



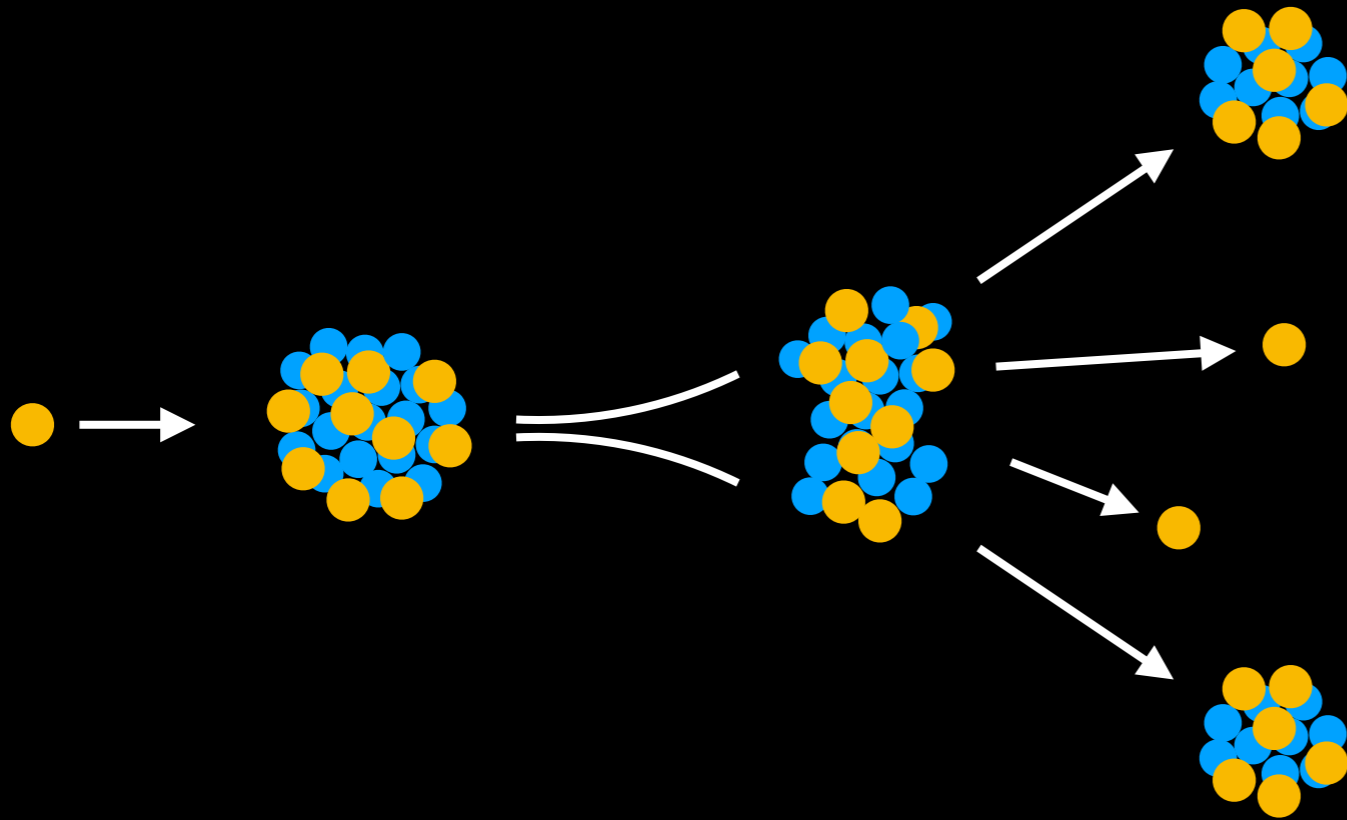
"A large number of small pulses from the α -particles of uranium were observed."

"When exposed to the bombardment of neutrons very large pulses occurred in addition."

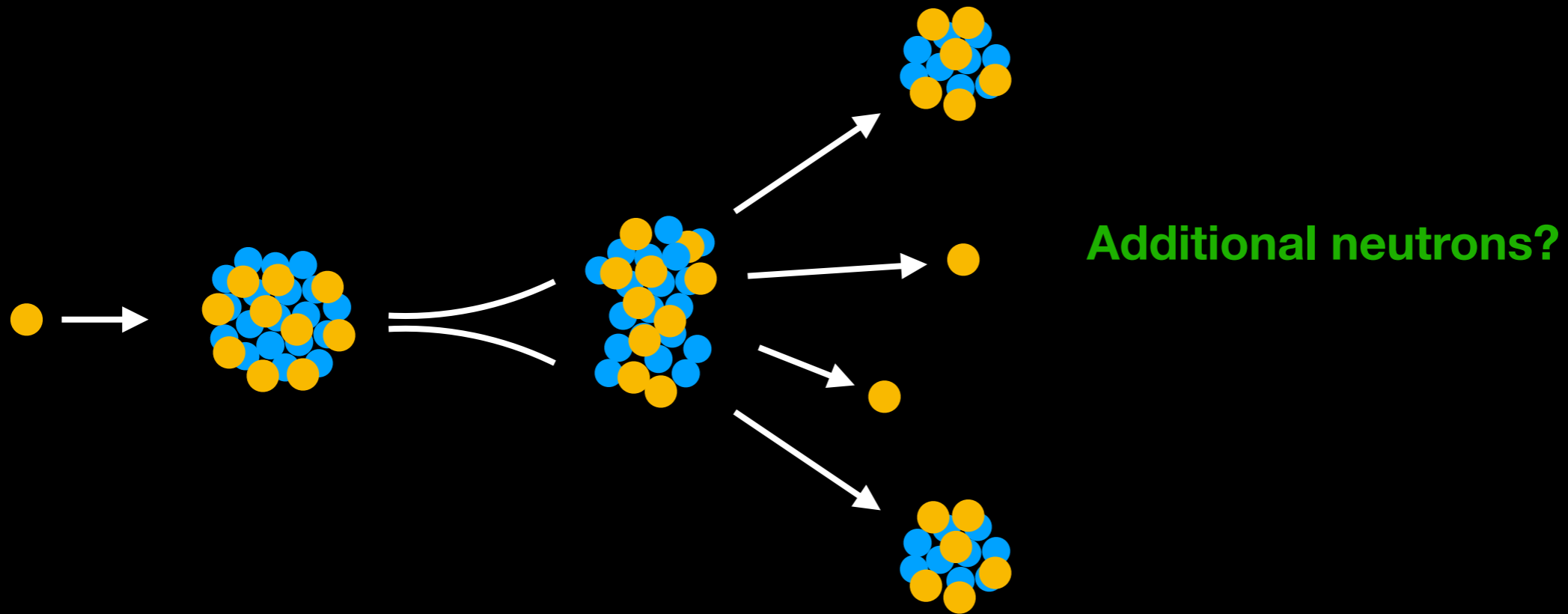
A chain reaction?



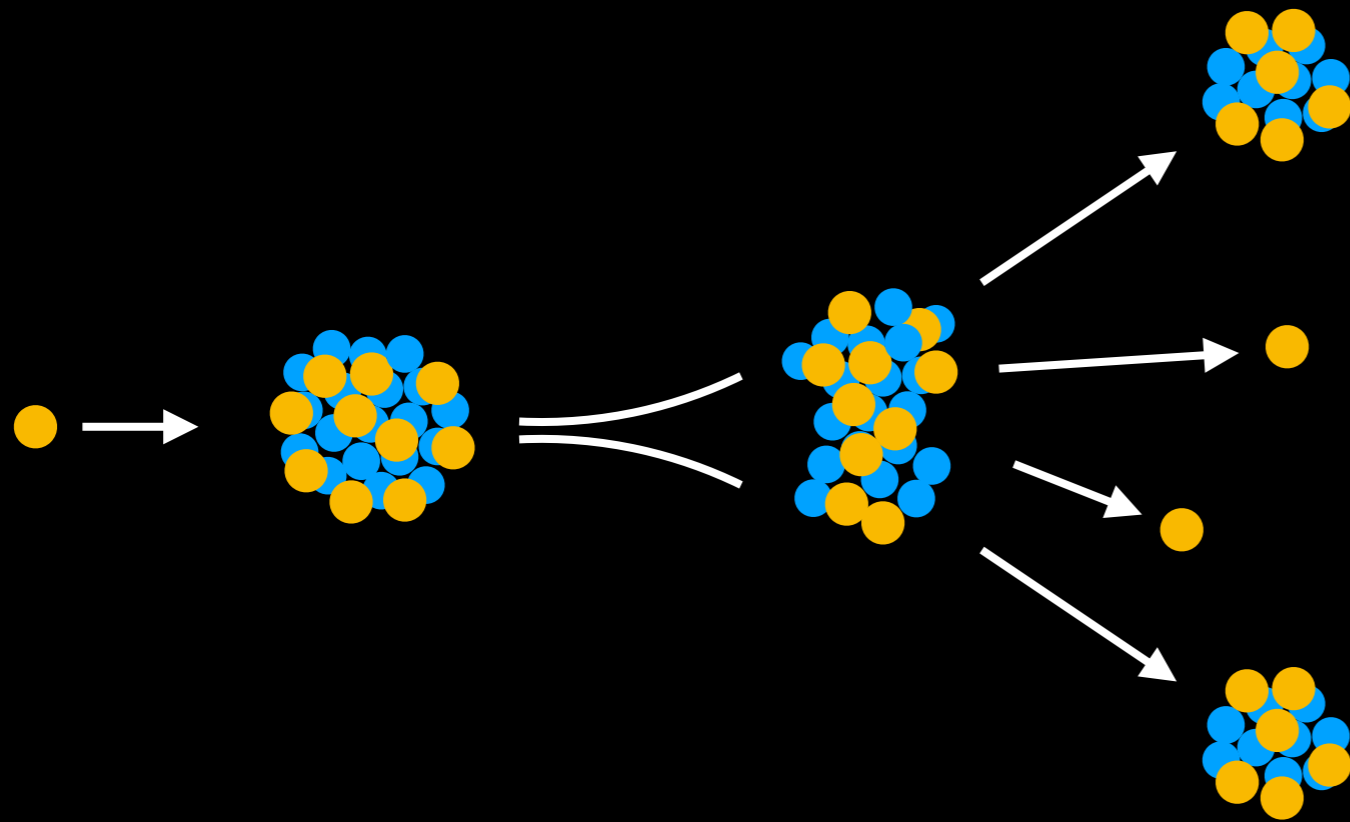
A chain reaction?



A chain reaction?



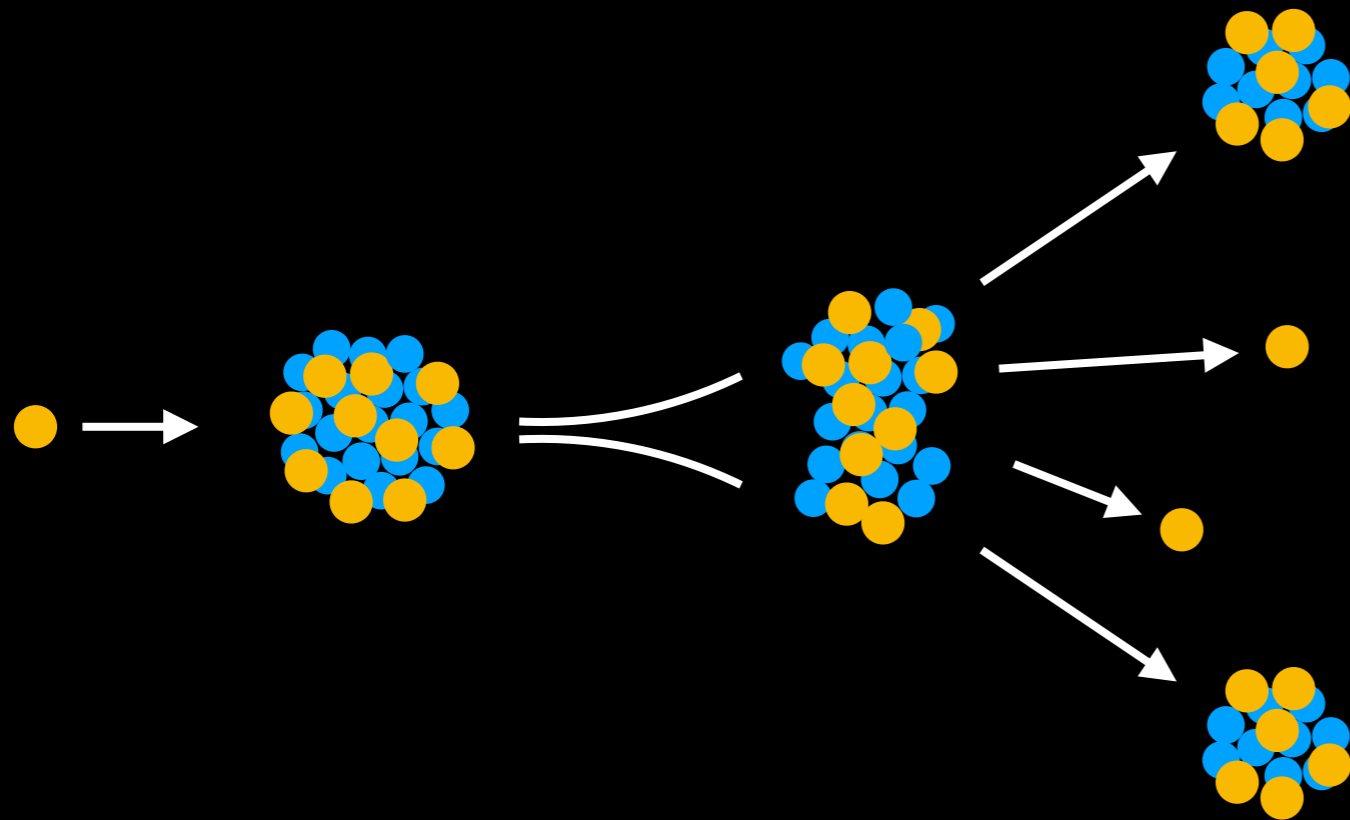
A chain reaction?



Additional neutrons?

If so, *how many?*

A chain reaction?



Additional neutrons?

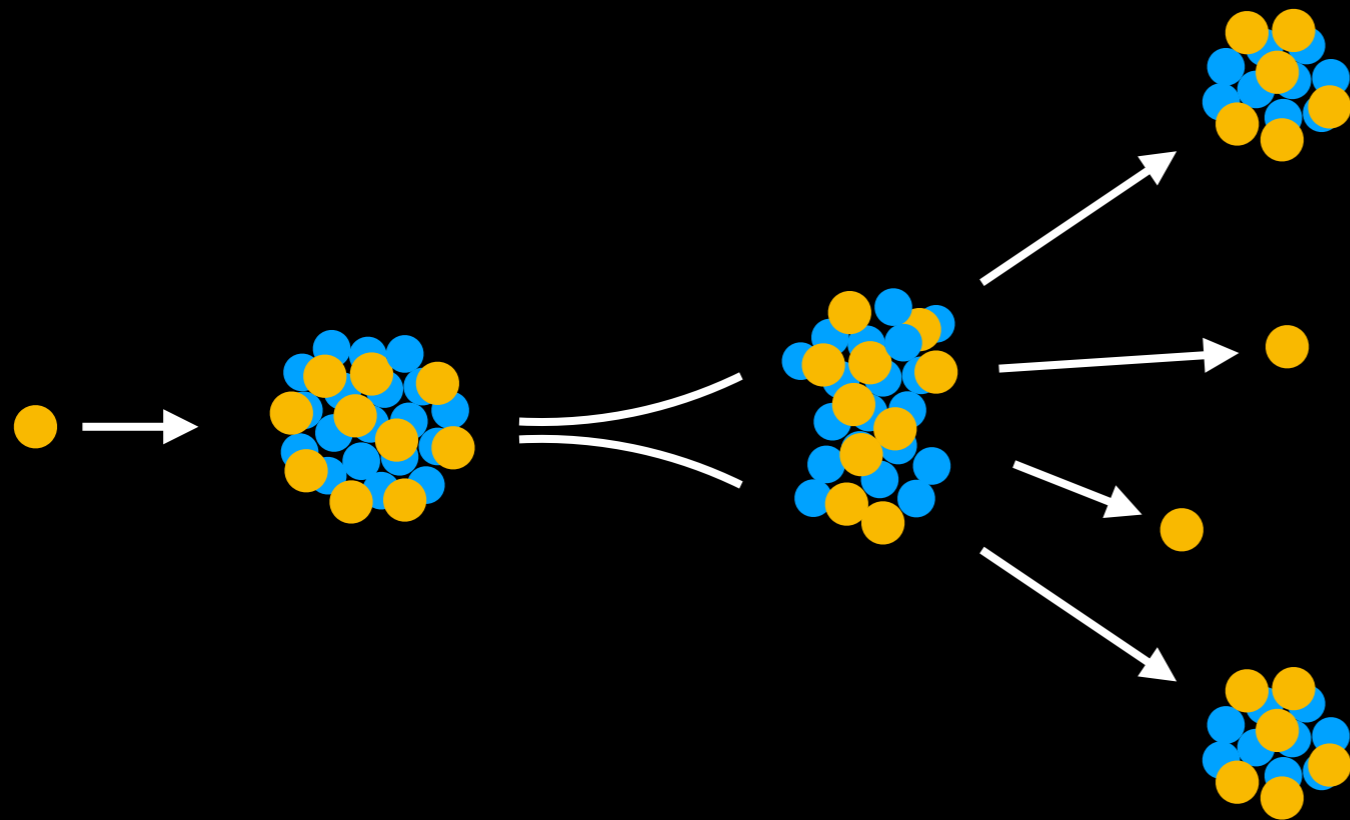
If so, *how many?*

Less than one

(on average)

Reaction will eventually stop

A chain reaction?



Additional neutrons?

If so, *how many?*

Less than one

(on average)

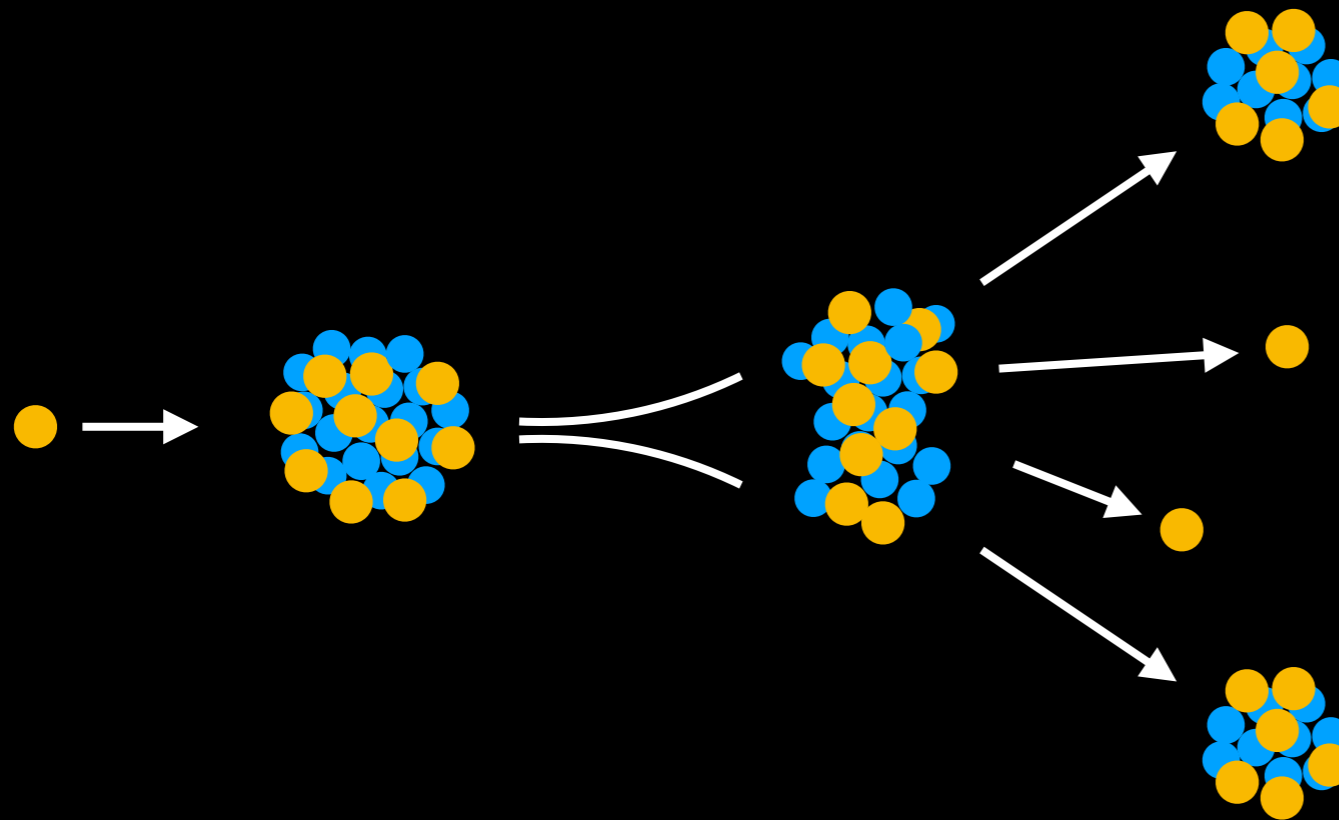
More than one

(on average)

Reaction will eventually stop

Reaction will continue indefinitely

A chain reaction?



Additional neutrons?

If so, *how many?*

Less than one

(on average)

More than one

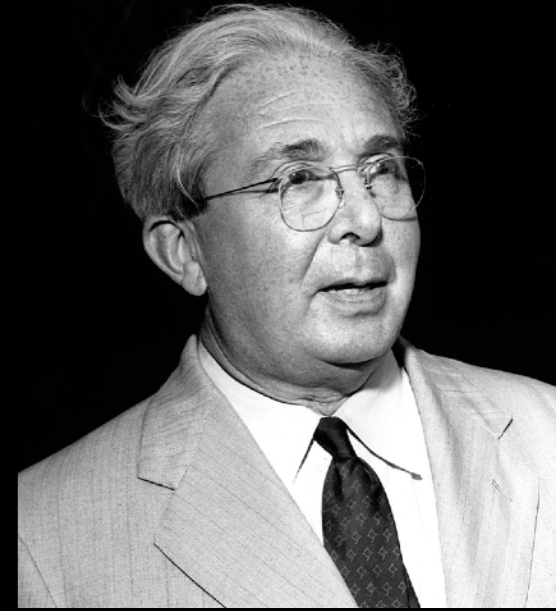
(on average)

Reaction will eventually stop

Reaction will continue indefinitely

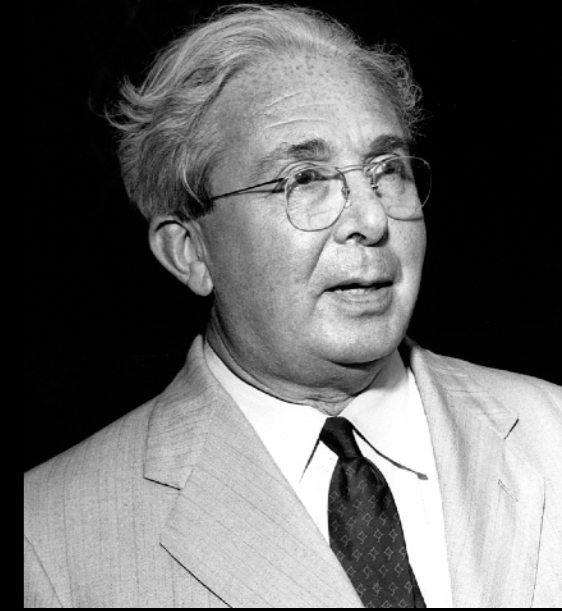
How many neutrons?

How many neutrons?

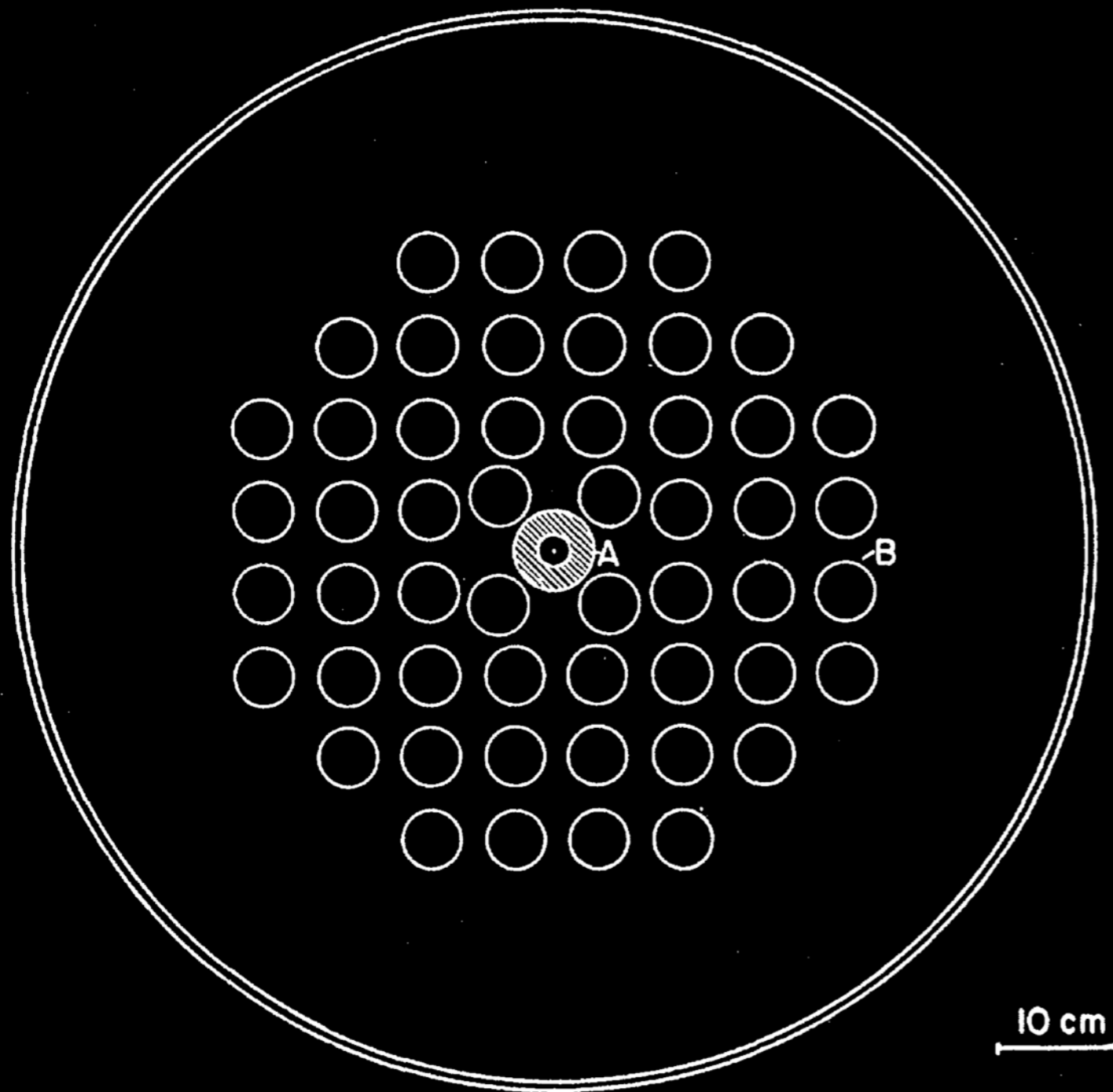


Leo Szilard

How many neutrons?



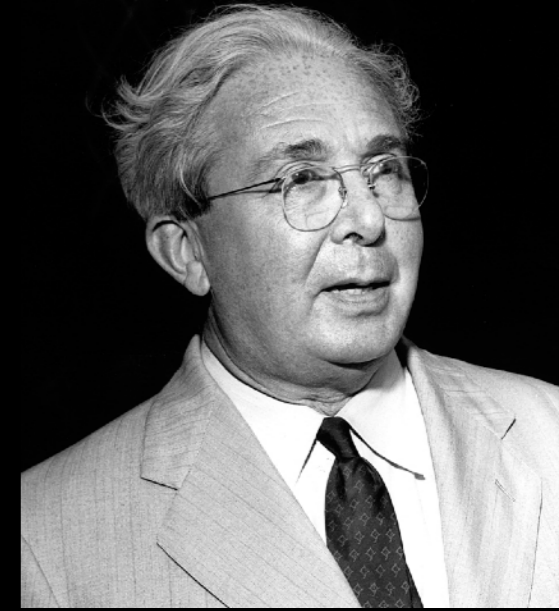
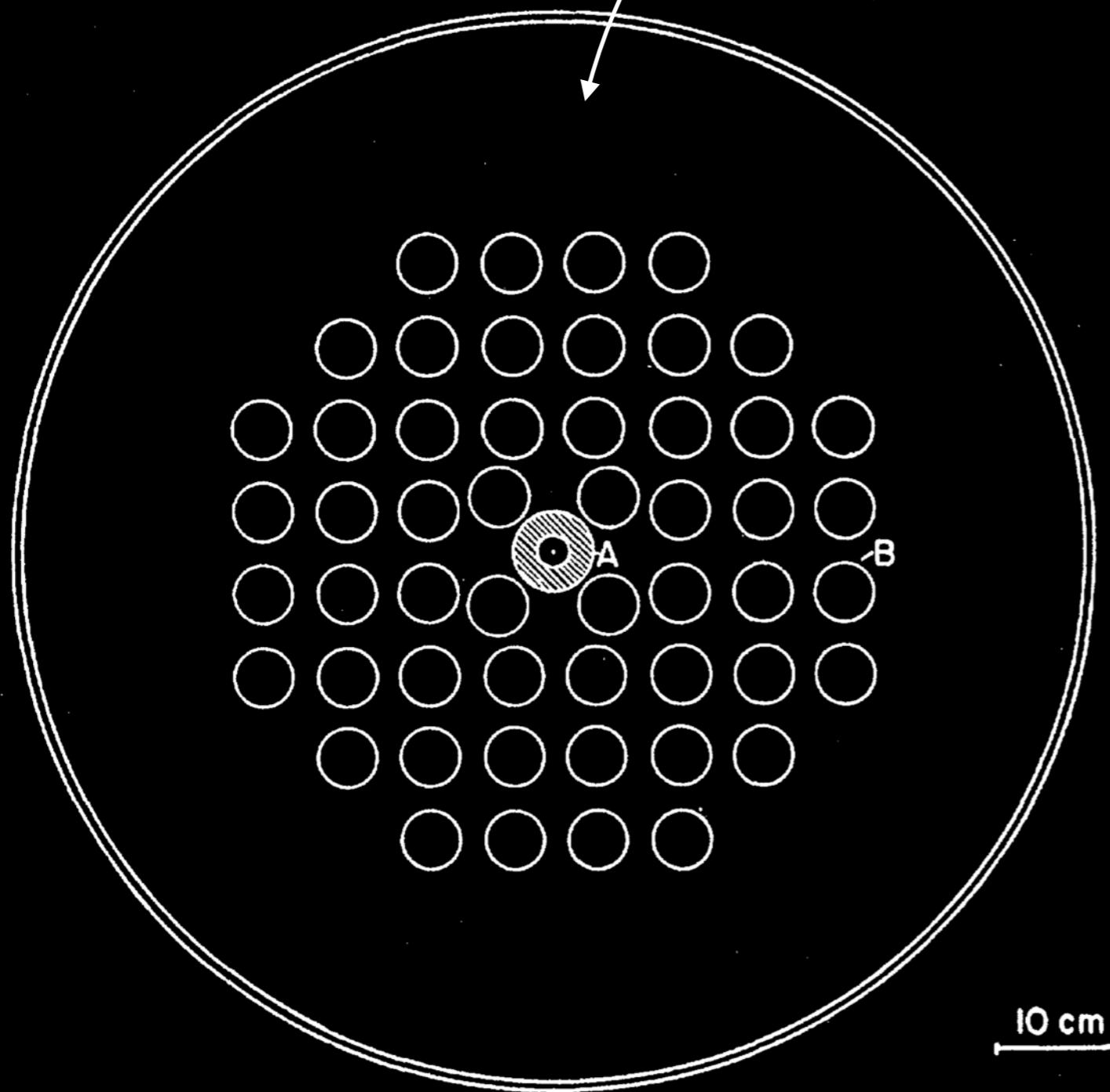
Leo Szilard



How many neutrons?

Water + Manganese salt

(Activated by neutrons)



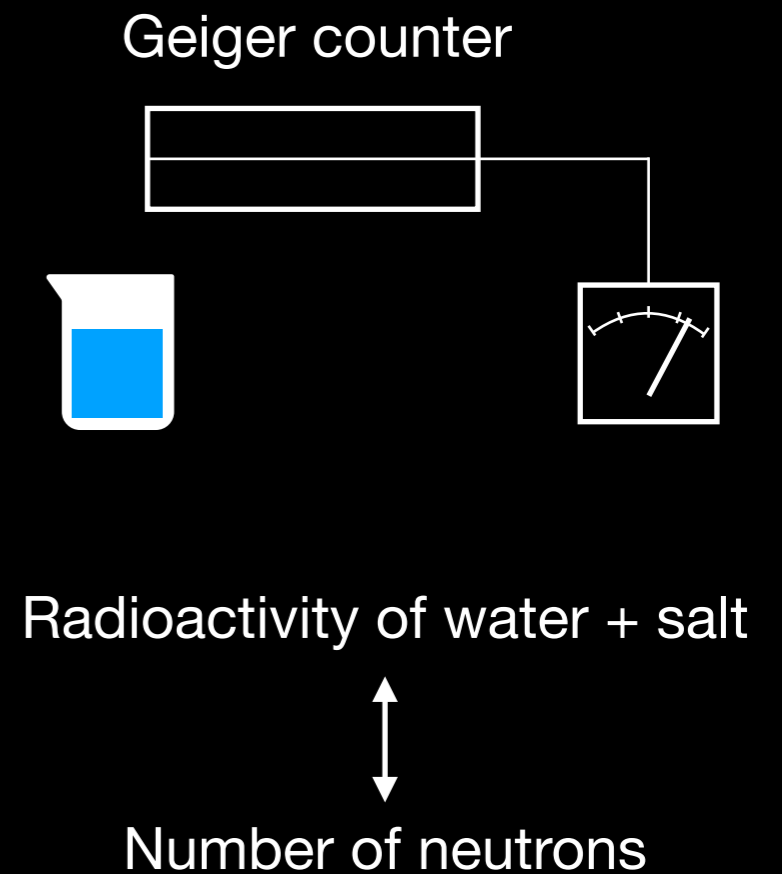
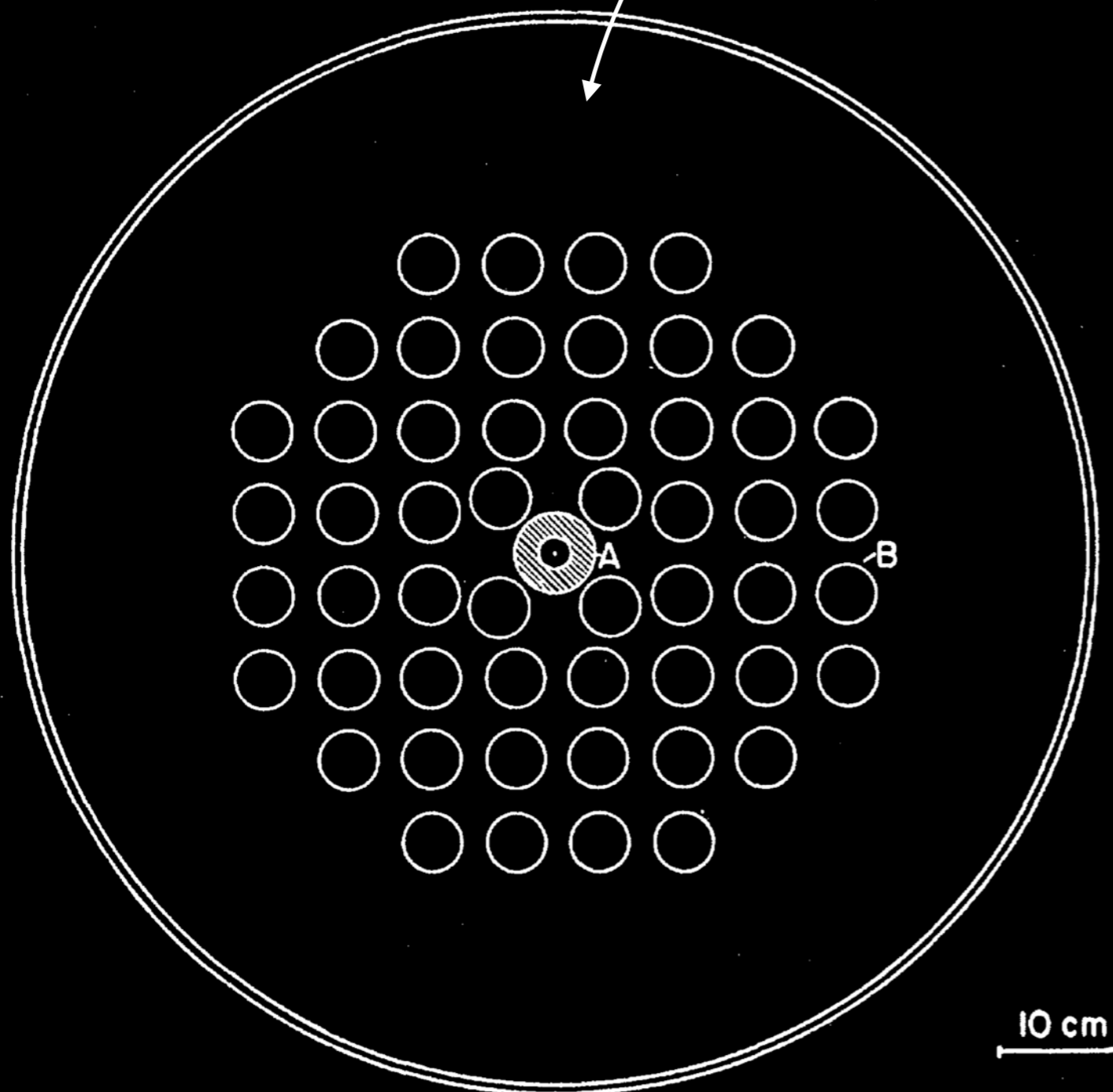
Leo Szilard

How many neutrons?



Leo Szilard

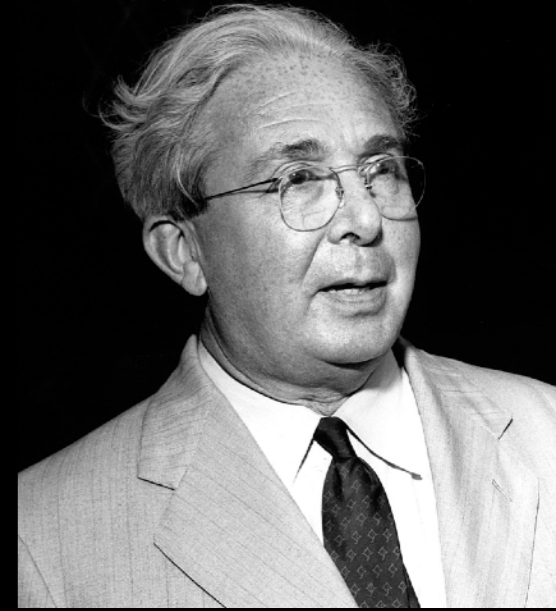
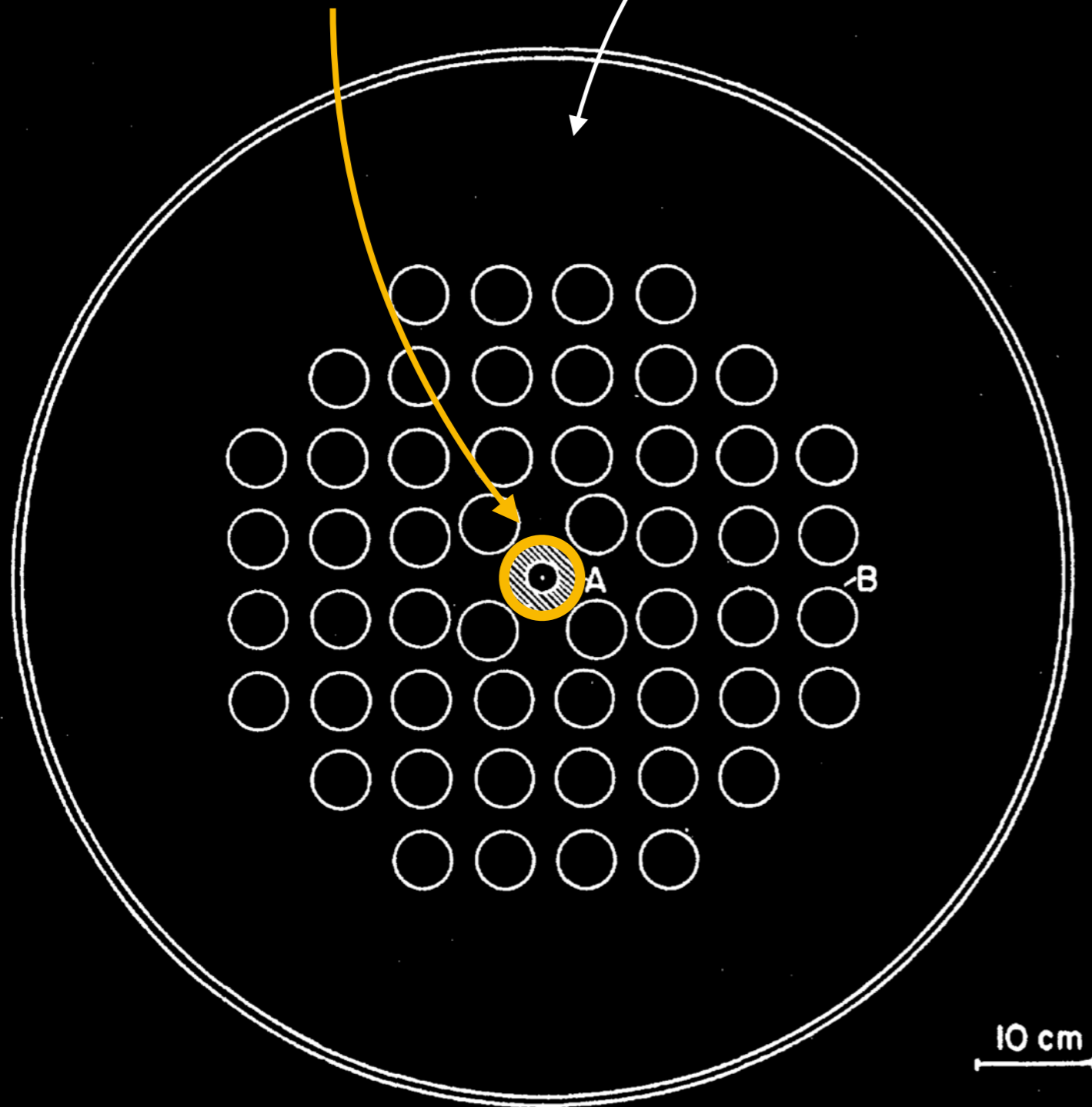
Water + Manganese salt
(Activated by neutrons)



How many neutrons?

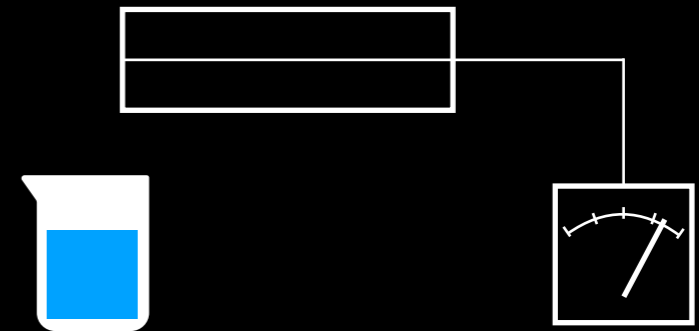
Radium-Beryllium
neutron source

Water + Manganese salt
(Activated by neutrons)



Leo Szilard

Geiger counter



Radioactivity of water + salt

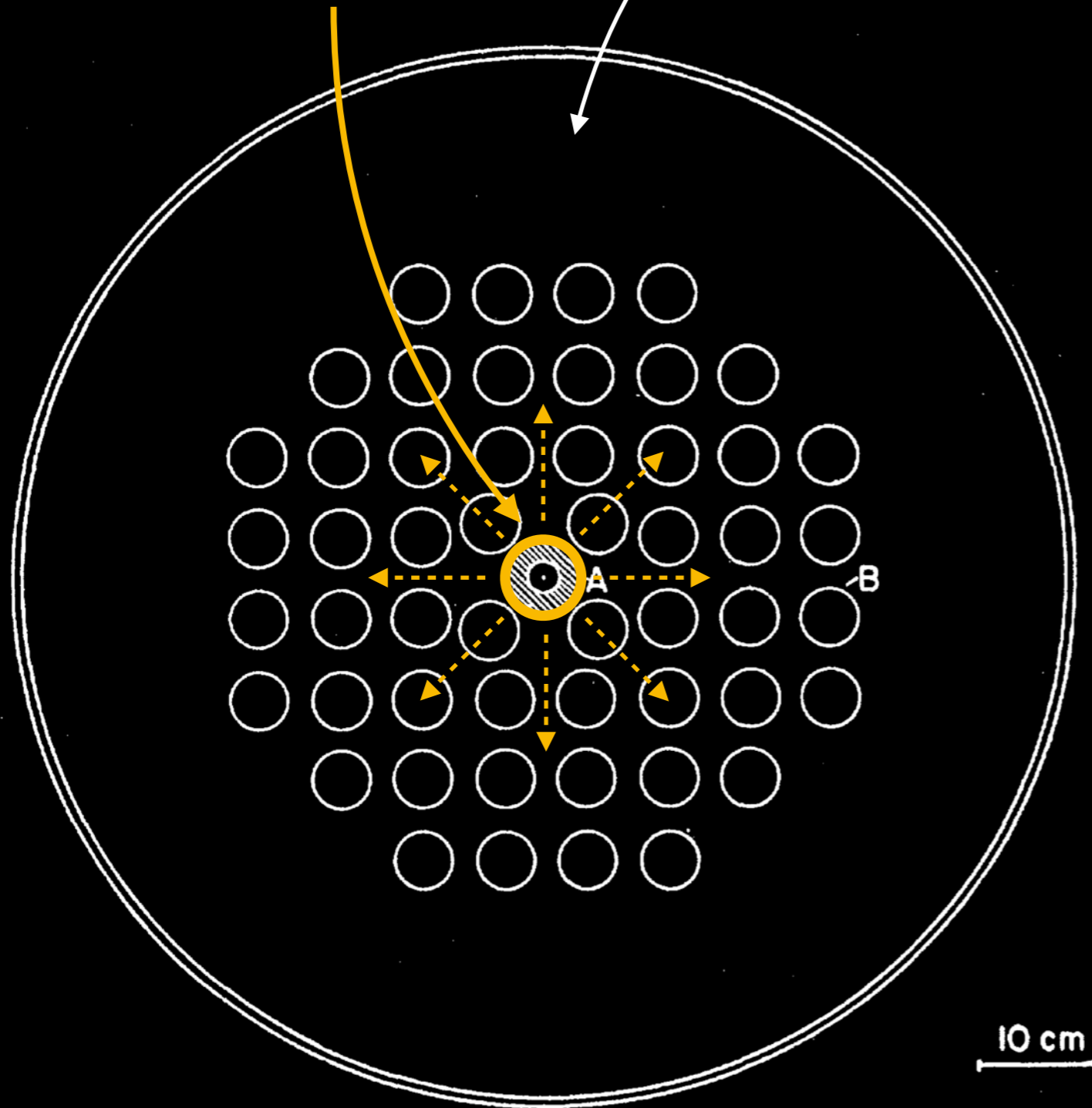


Number of neutrons

How many neutrons?

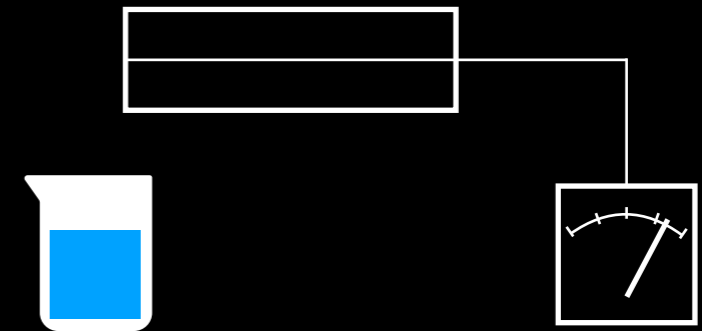
Radium-Beryllium
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Water + Manganese salt
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Leo Szilard

Geiger counter



Radioactivity of water + salt

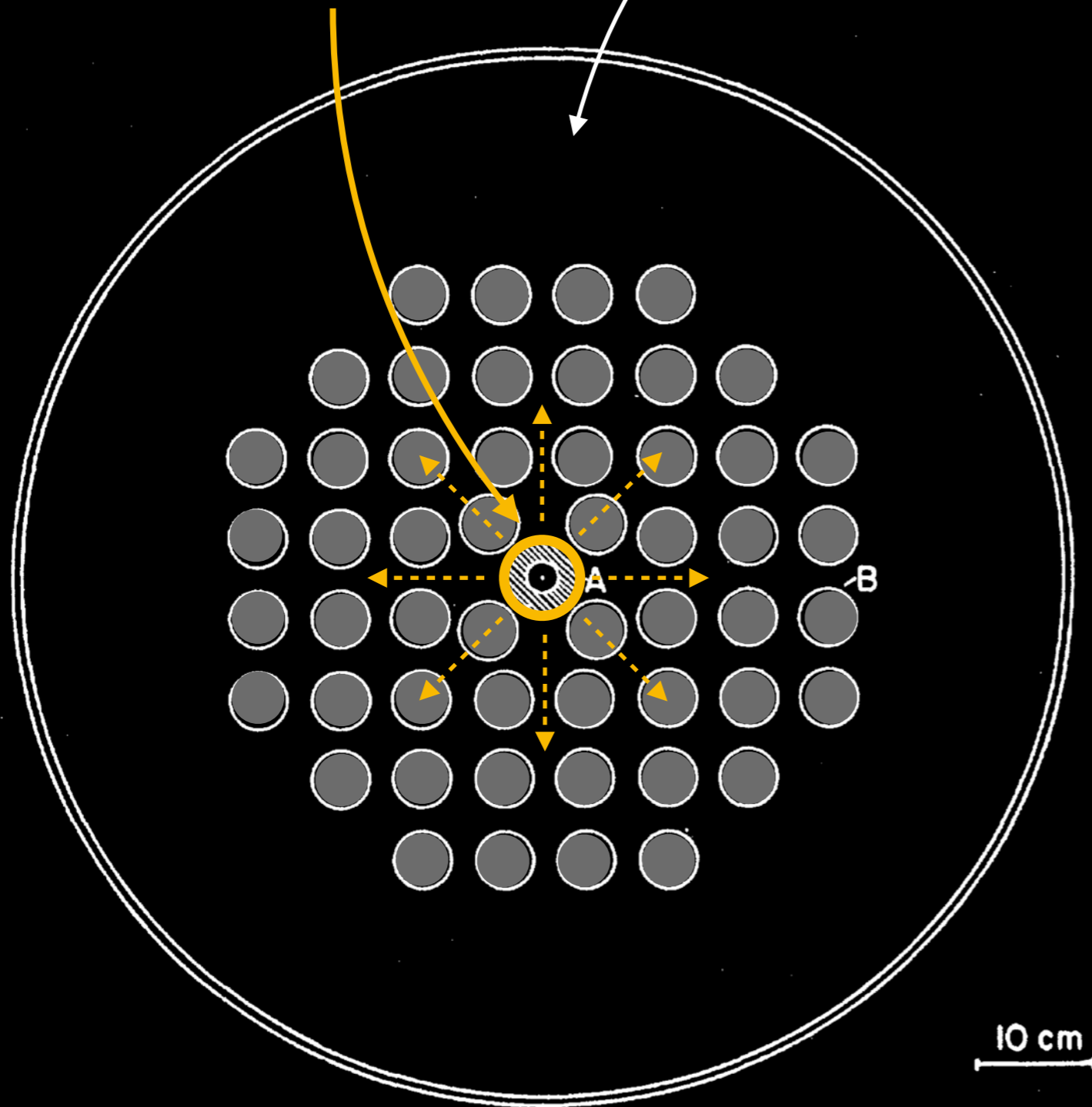
Number of neutrons



How many neutrons?

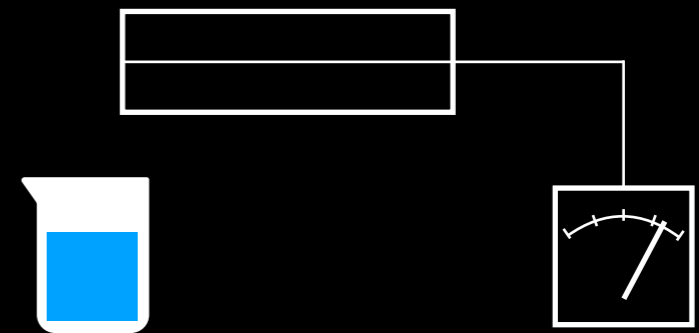
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Water + Manganese salt
(Activated by neutrons)



Leo Szilard

Geiger counter

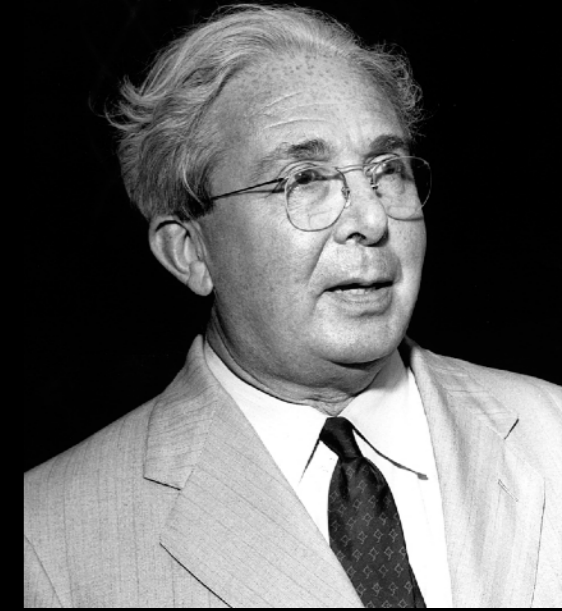


Radioactivity of water + salt

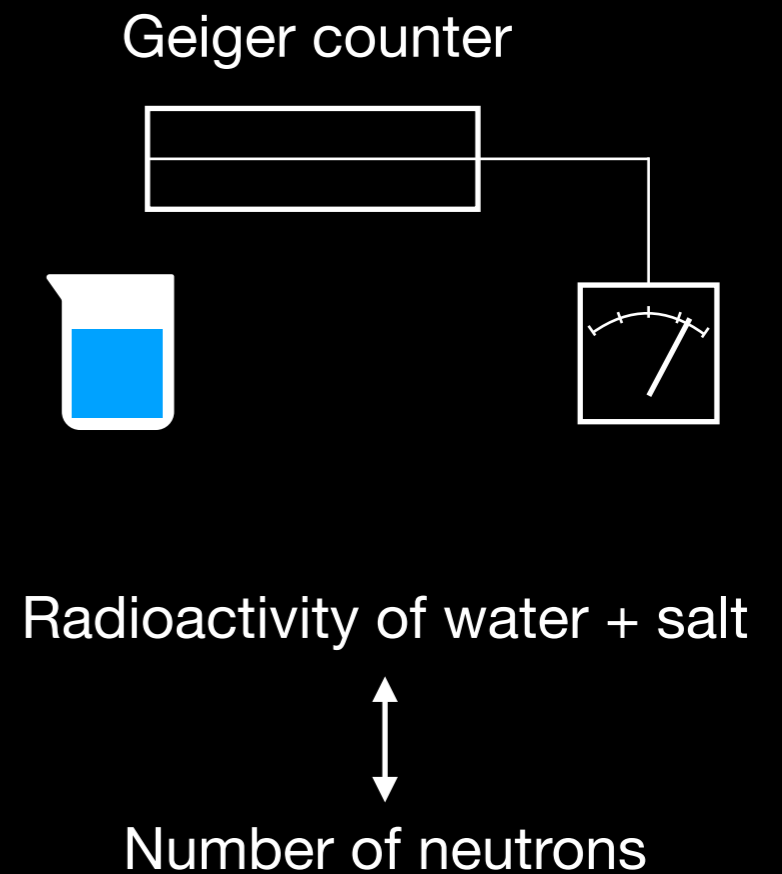
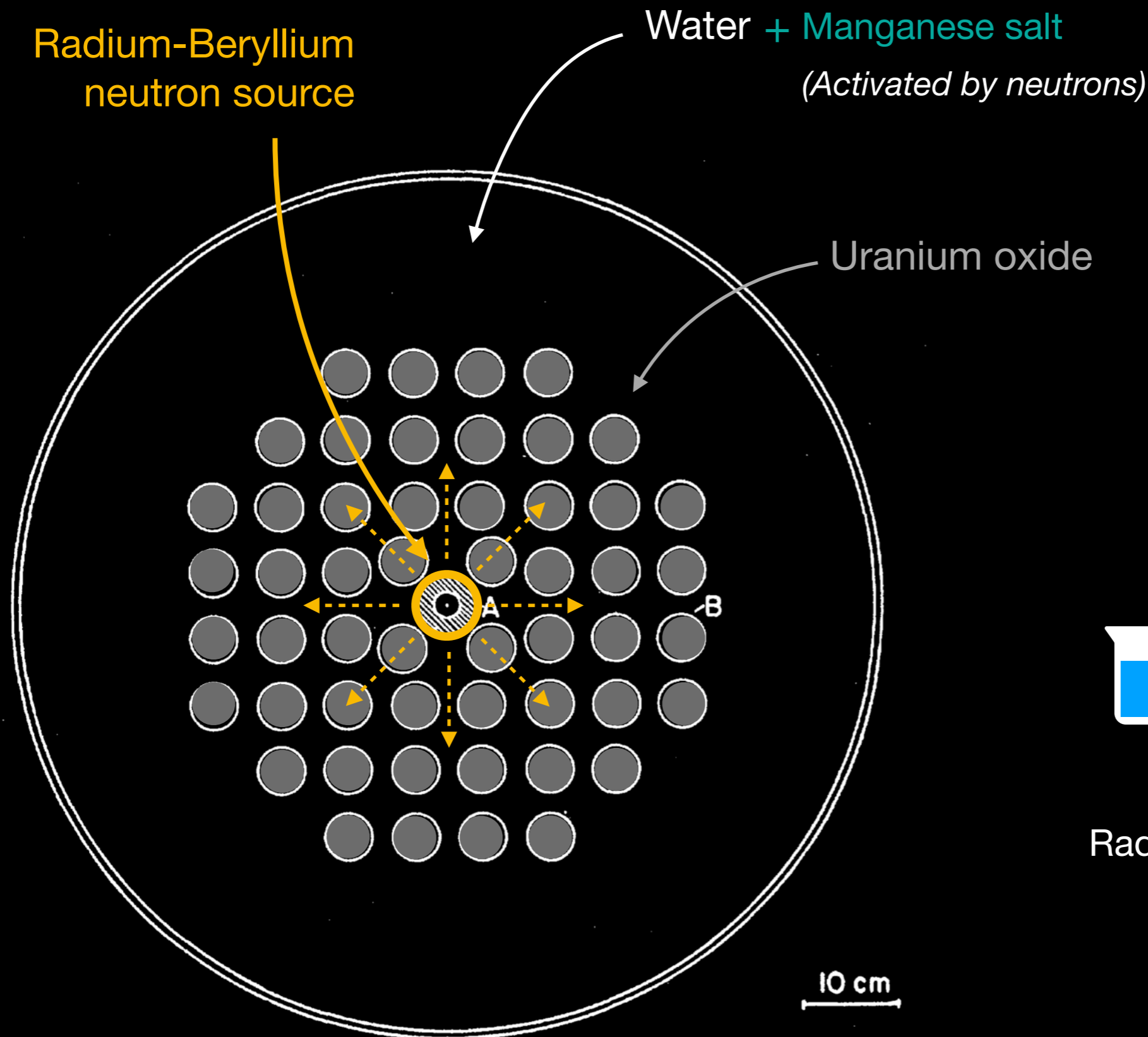


Number of neutrons

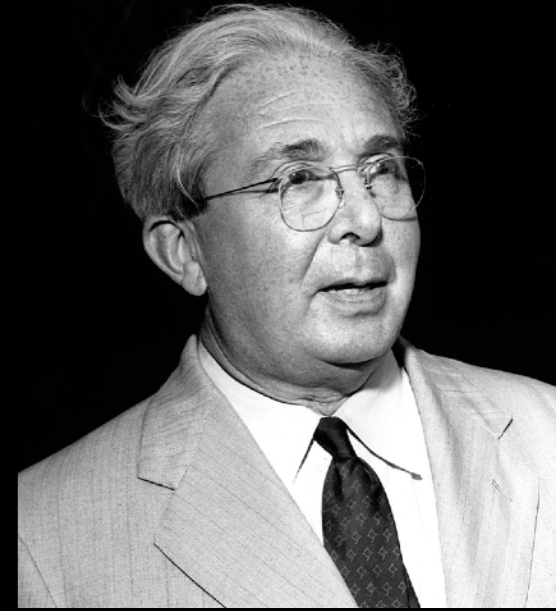
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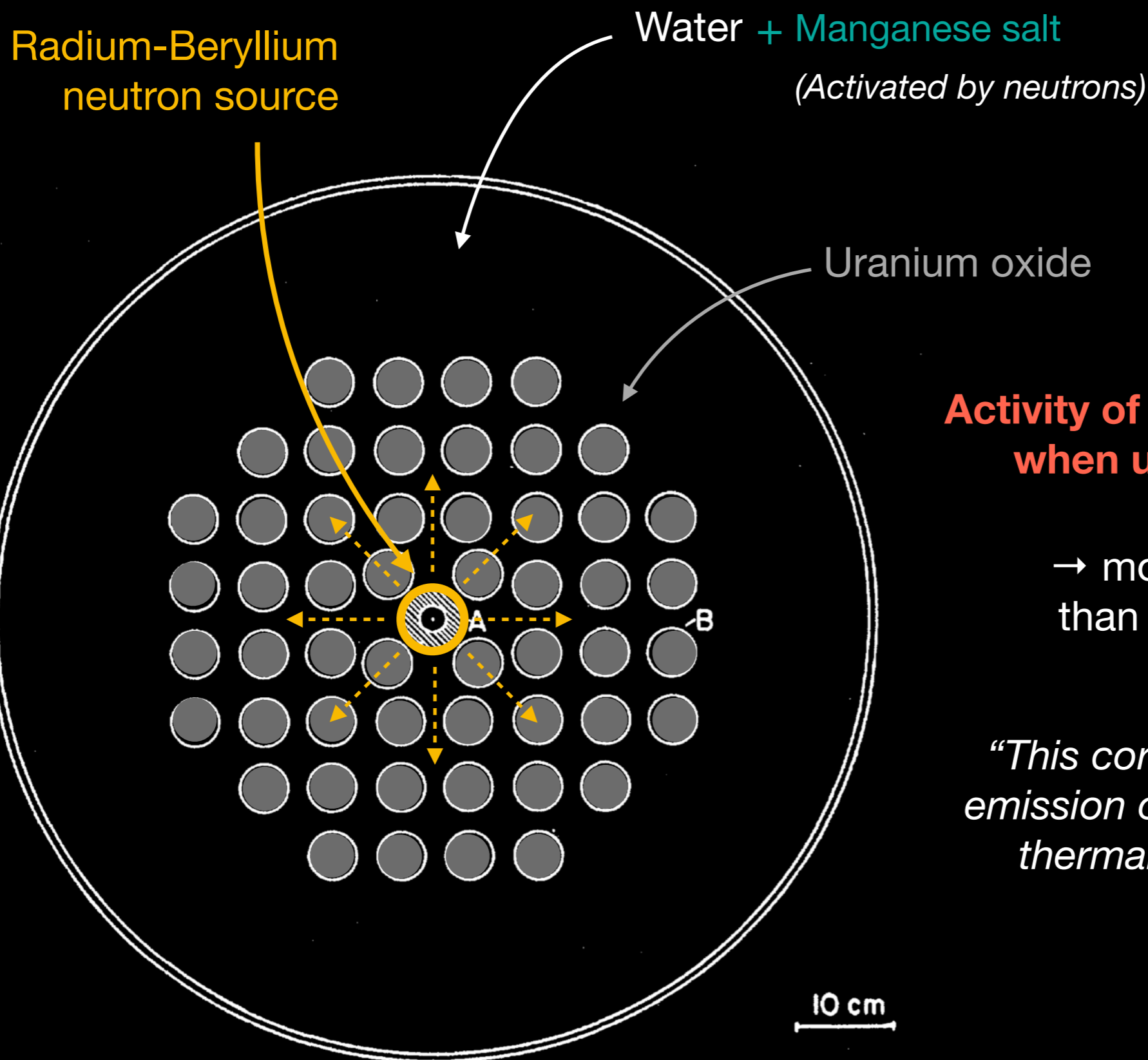
Leo Szilard



How many neutrons?



Leo Szilard



Activity of water increased by 10% when uranium was present!

→ more neutrons emitted than neutrons absorbed!

“This corresponds to an average emission of about 1.2 neutrons per thermal neutron absorbed by uranium.”

How many neutrons?

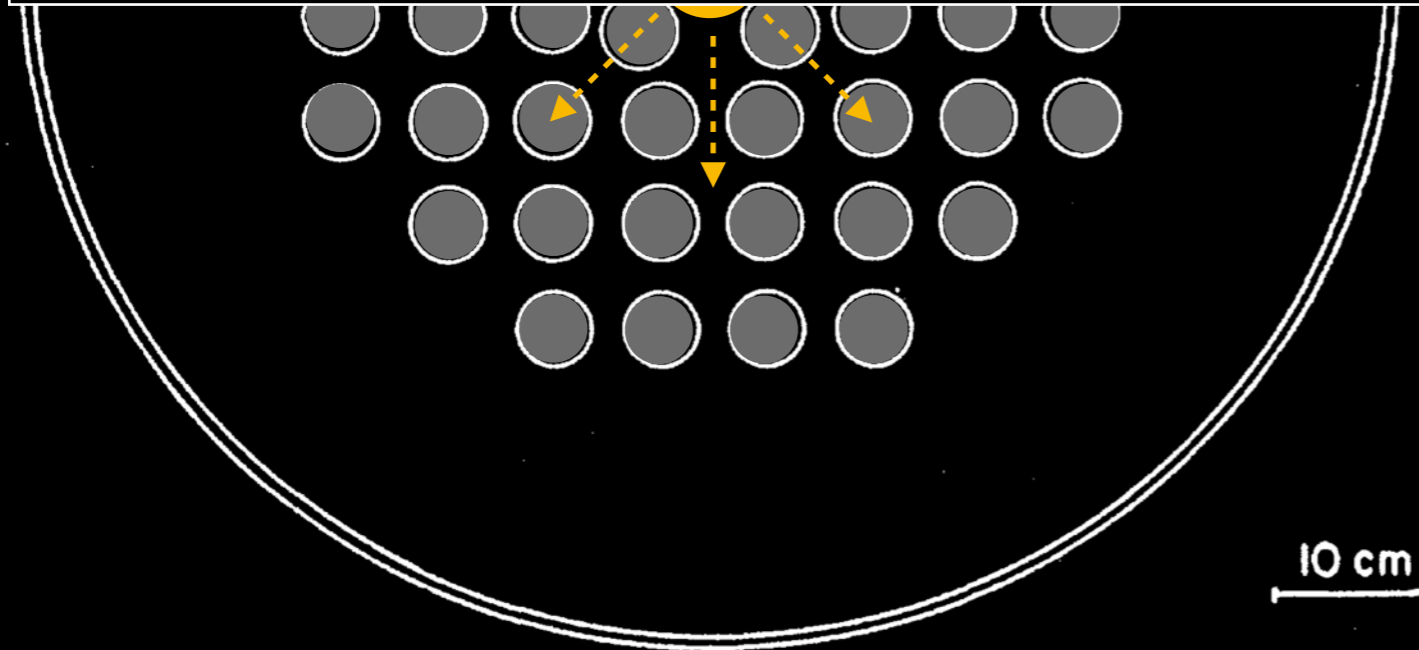
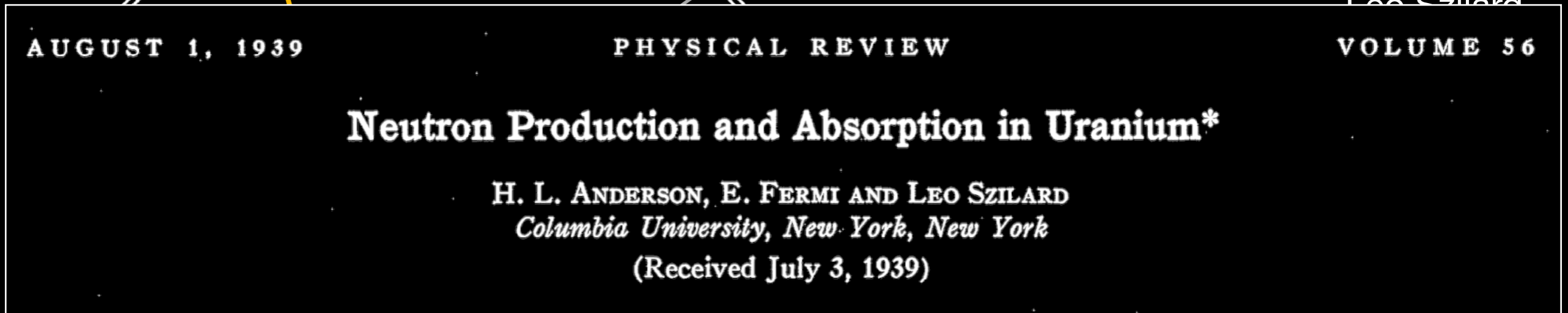
Radium-Beryllium
neutron source

Water + Manganese salt
(Activated by neutrons)

Uranium oxide



Leo Szilard



"This corresponds to an average emission of about 1.2 neutrons per thermal neutron absorbed by uranium."

A practical chain reaction?

A self-sustaining chain reaction is possible in principle ...

... how to make it work in practice?

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A self-sustaining chain reaction is possible in principle ...

... how to make it work in practice?

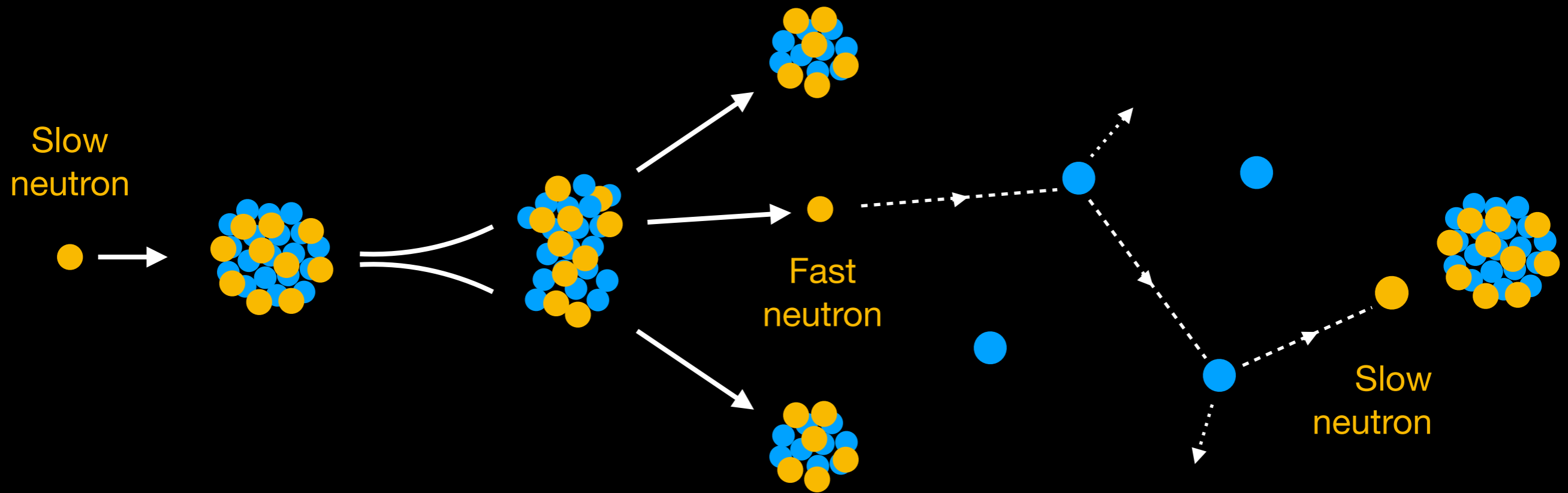
“1.5 neutrons per fission”

→ quite tight!

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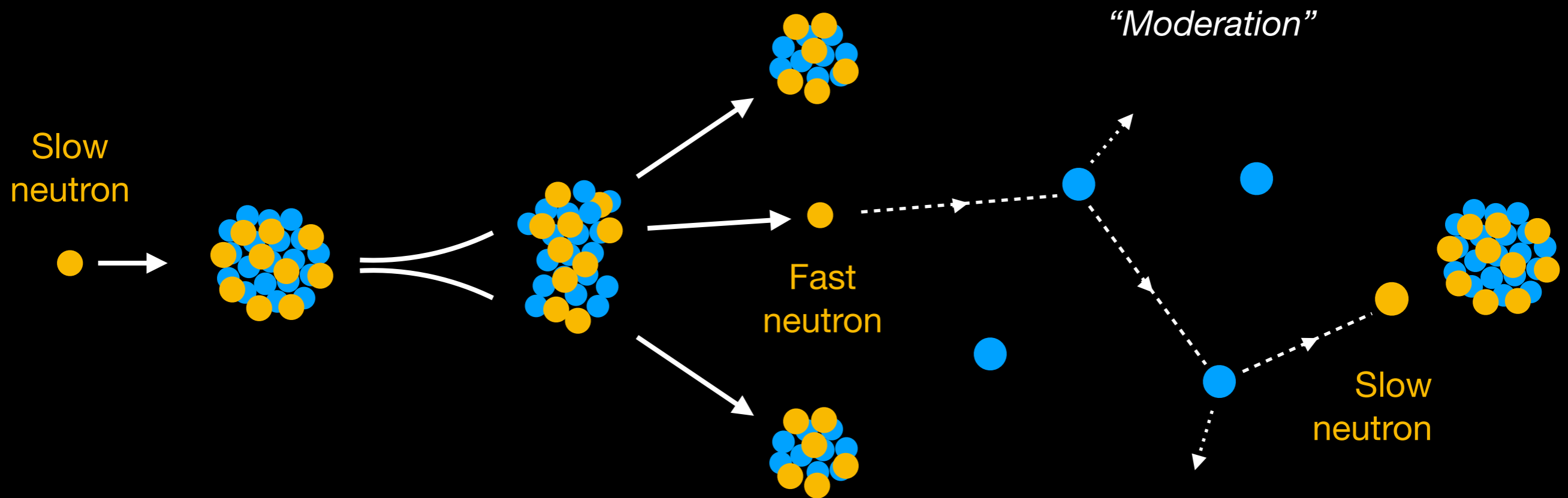
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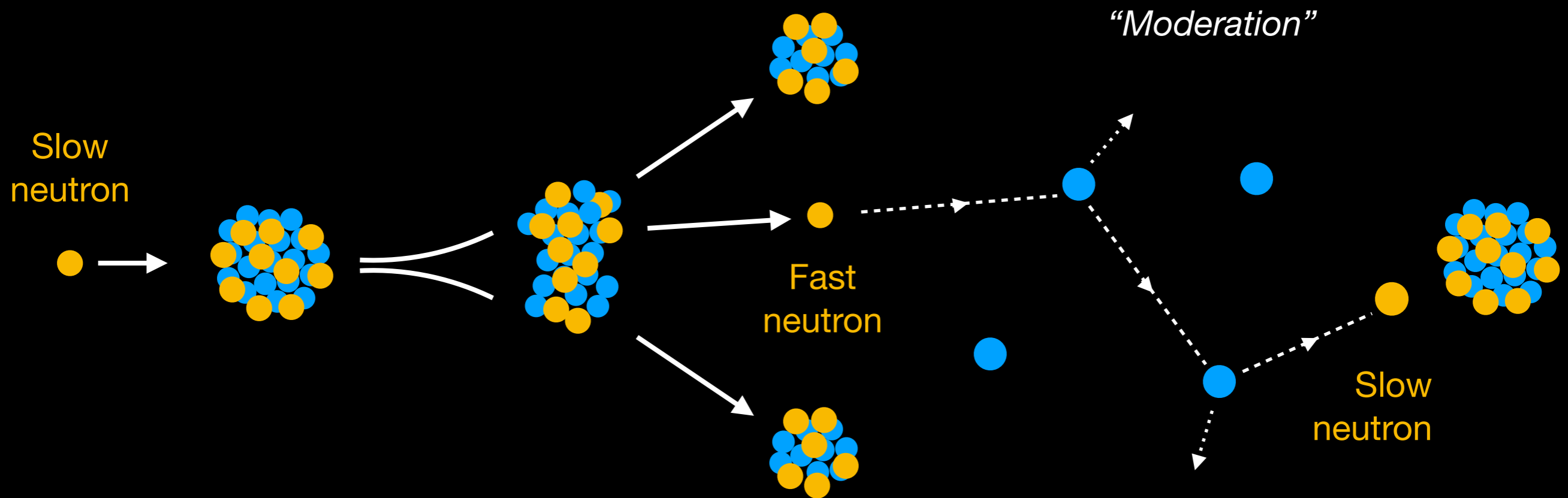
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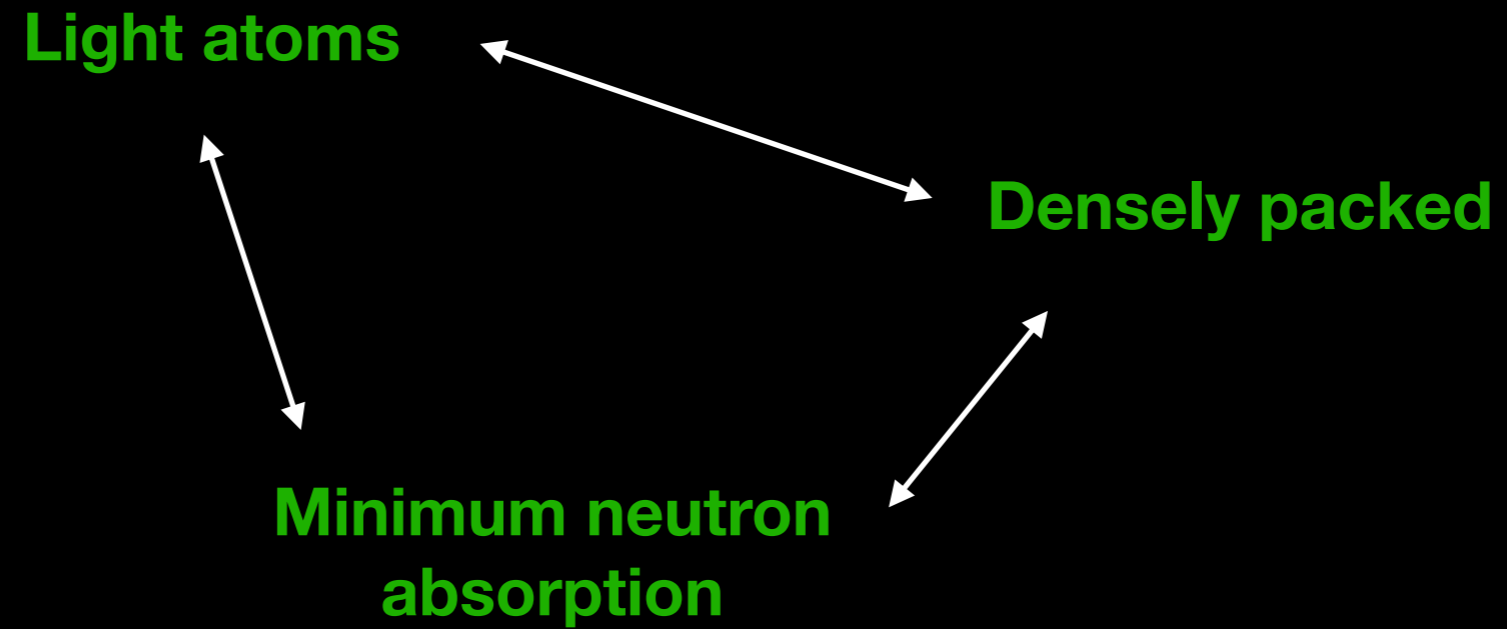


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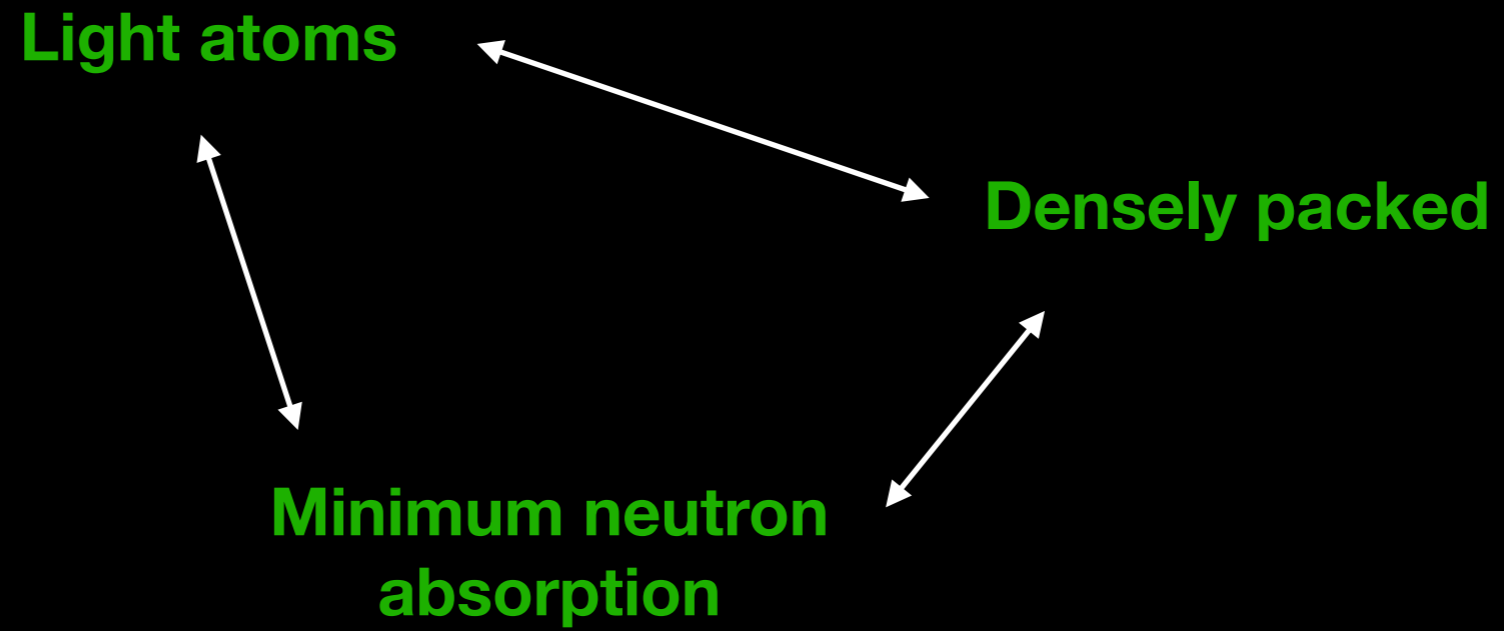
**Need to slow down neutrons
without losing them!**

Which moderator to use?

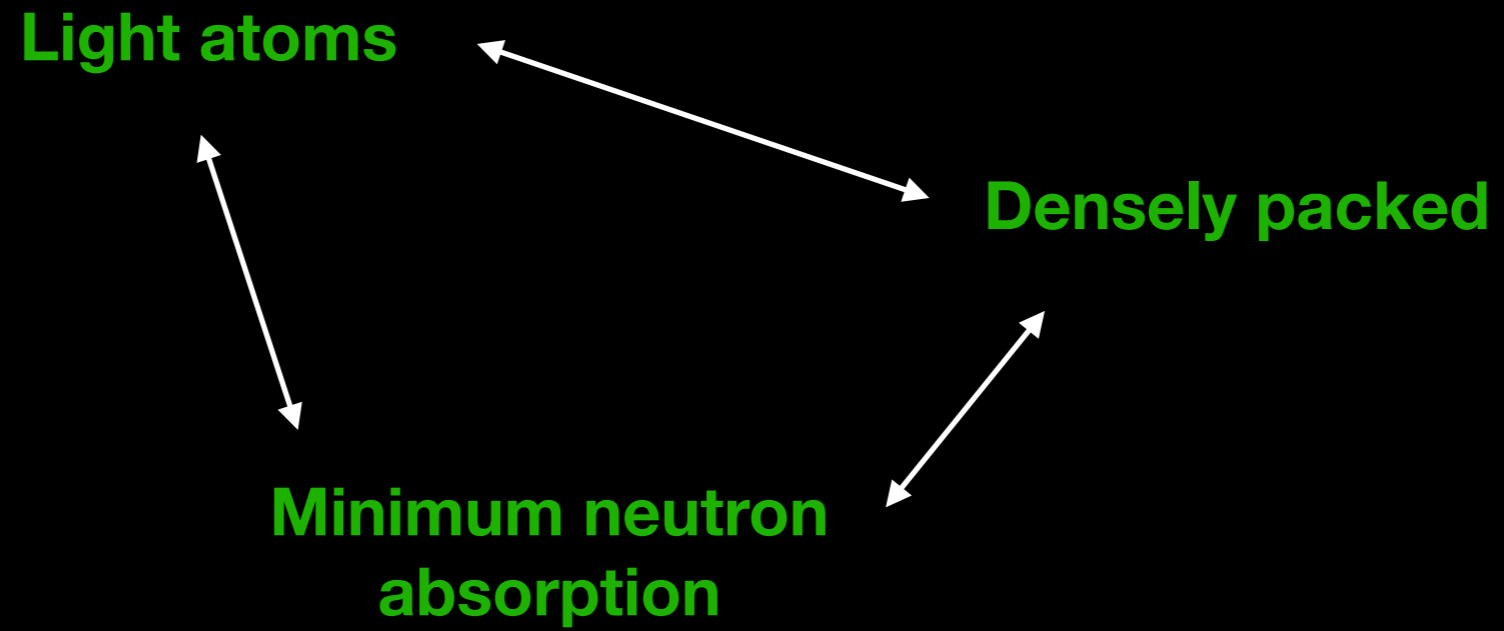
Which moderator to use?



Which moderator to use?



Which moderator to use?



Hydrogen

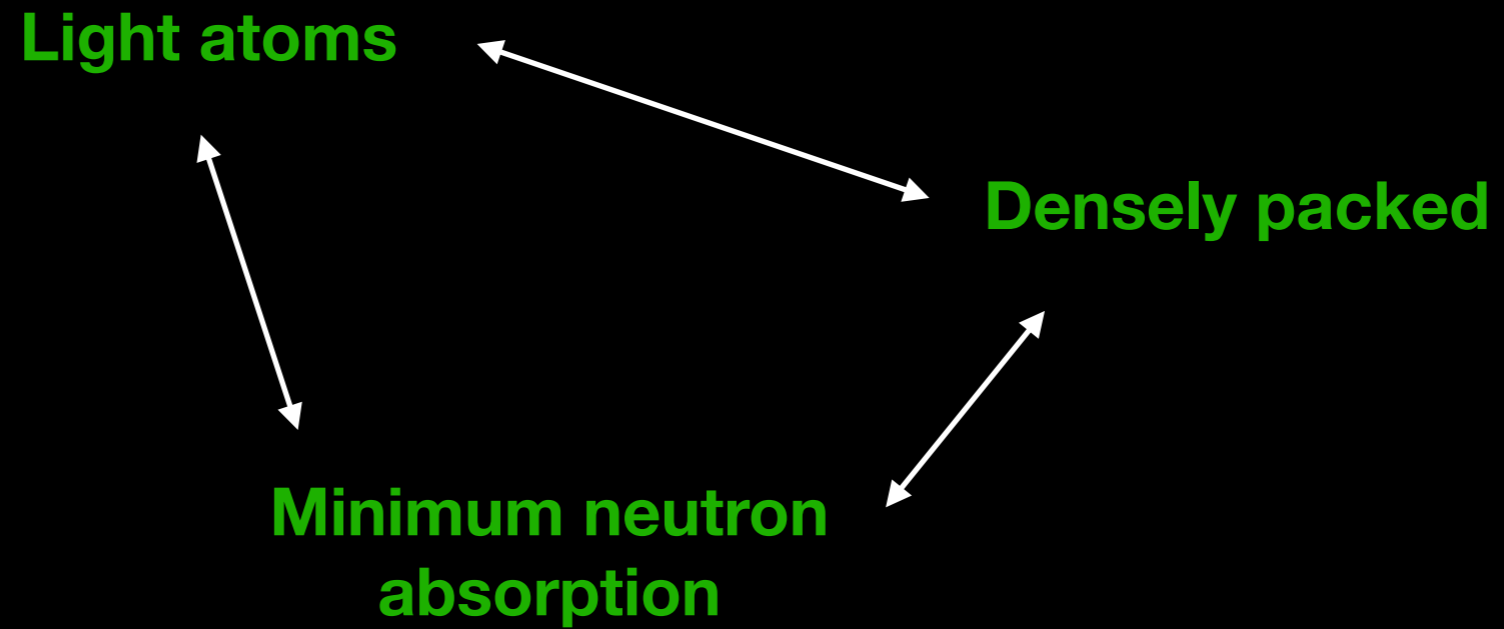
Helium



Light

Heavy

Which moderator to use?



Hydrogen

Lithium

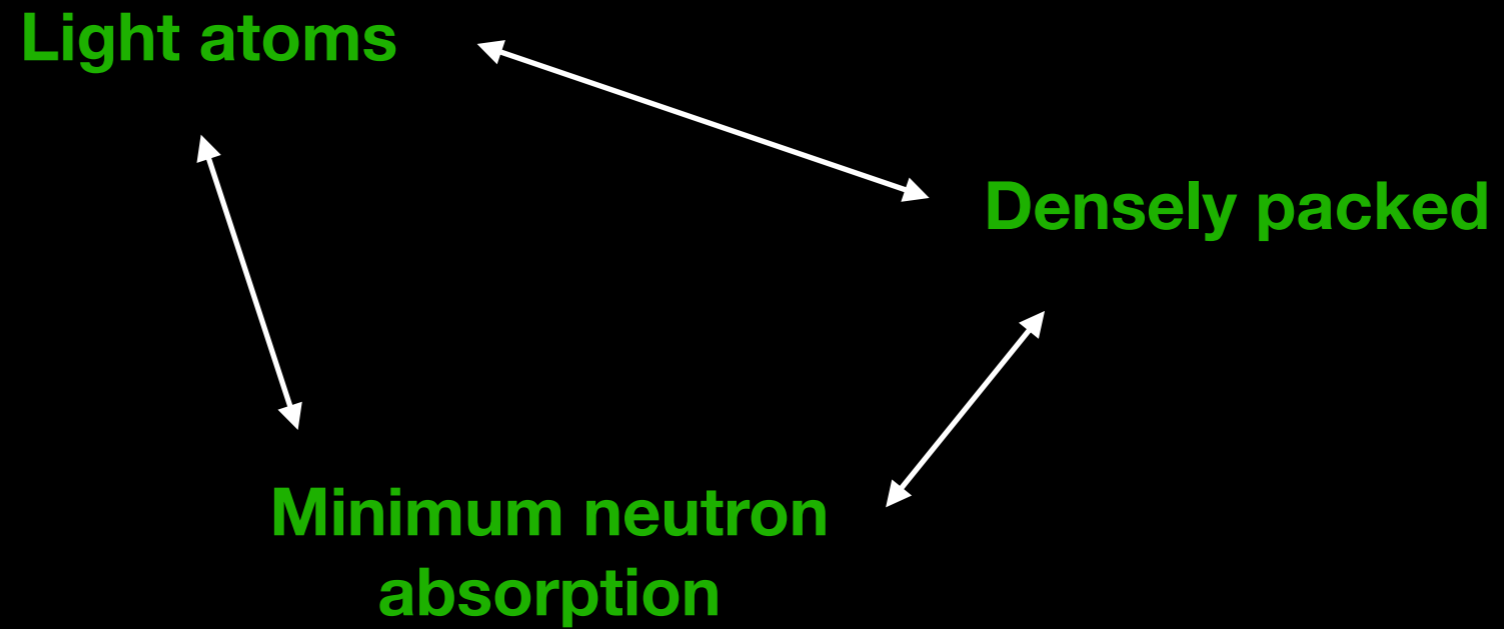
Helium

Beryllium

Light

Heavy

Which moderator to use?



Hydrogen

Lithium

Boron

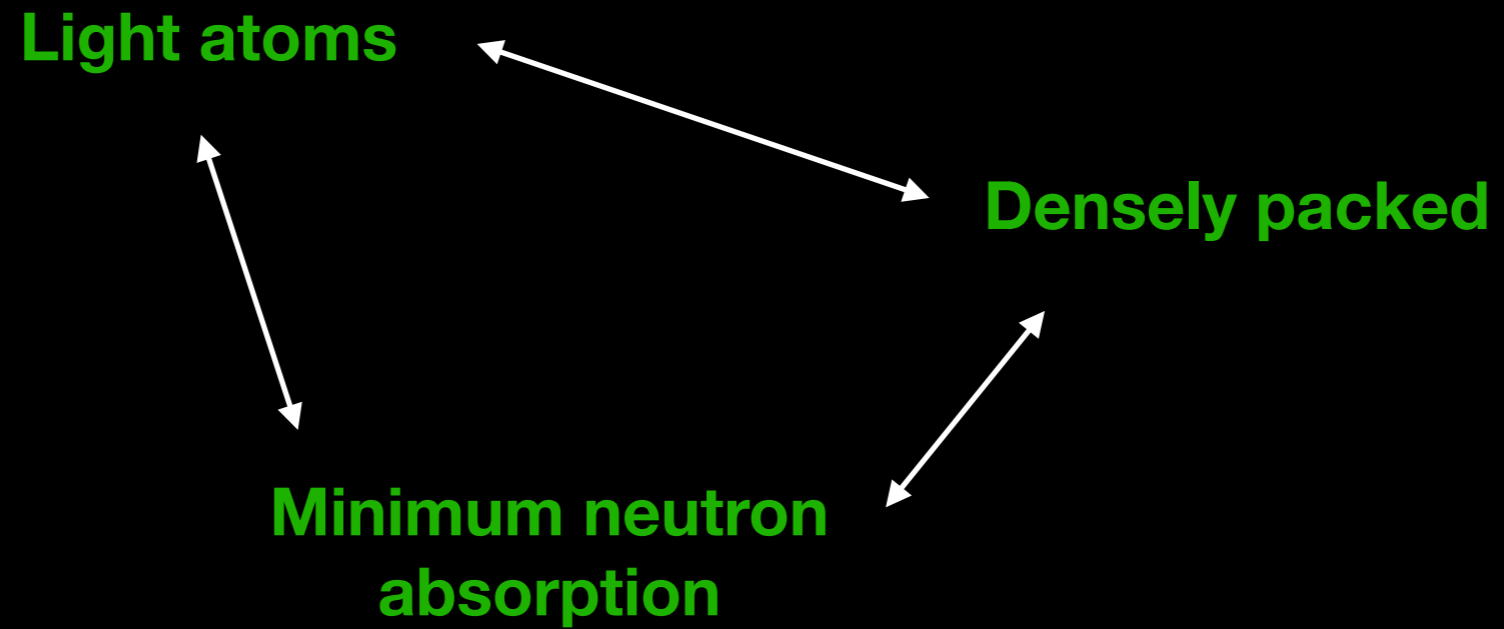
Helium

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Heavy

Which moderator to use?



Hydrogen

Lithium

Boron

Helium

Beryllium

Carbon

Light

Heavy

Which moderator to use?

Light atoms

Densely packed

Minimum neutron
absorption

Gaseous!

Hydrogen

Helium

Lithium

Beryllium

Boron

Carbon

Light

Heavy

Which moderator to use?

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Boron

Carbon

Beryllium

Light

Heavy

Which moderator to use?

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Hydrogen

Helium

Metallic,
but dangerous

Lithium

Beryllium

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~~Hydrogen~~

~~Helium~~

Metallic,
but dangerous

~~Lithium~~

~~Beryllium~~

Not easily
available

Boron

Carbon

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Hydrogen

Helium

Metallic,
but dangerous

Lithium

Beryllium

Not easily
available

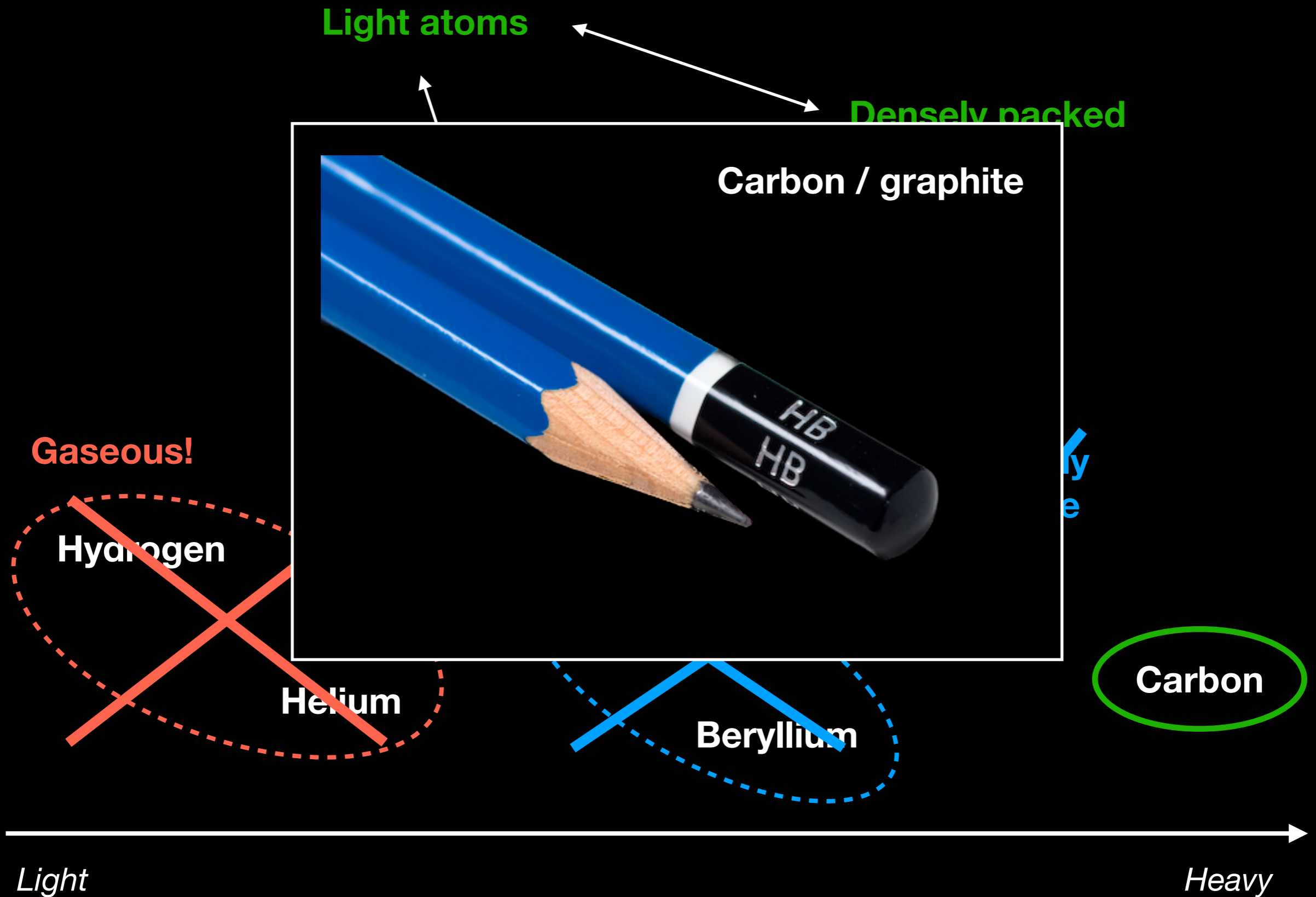
Boron

Carbon

Light

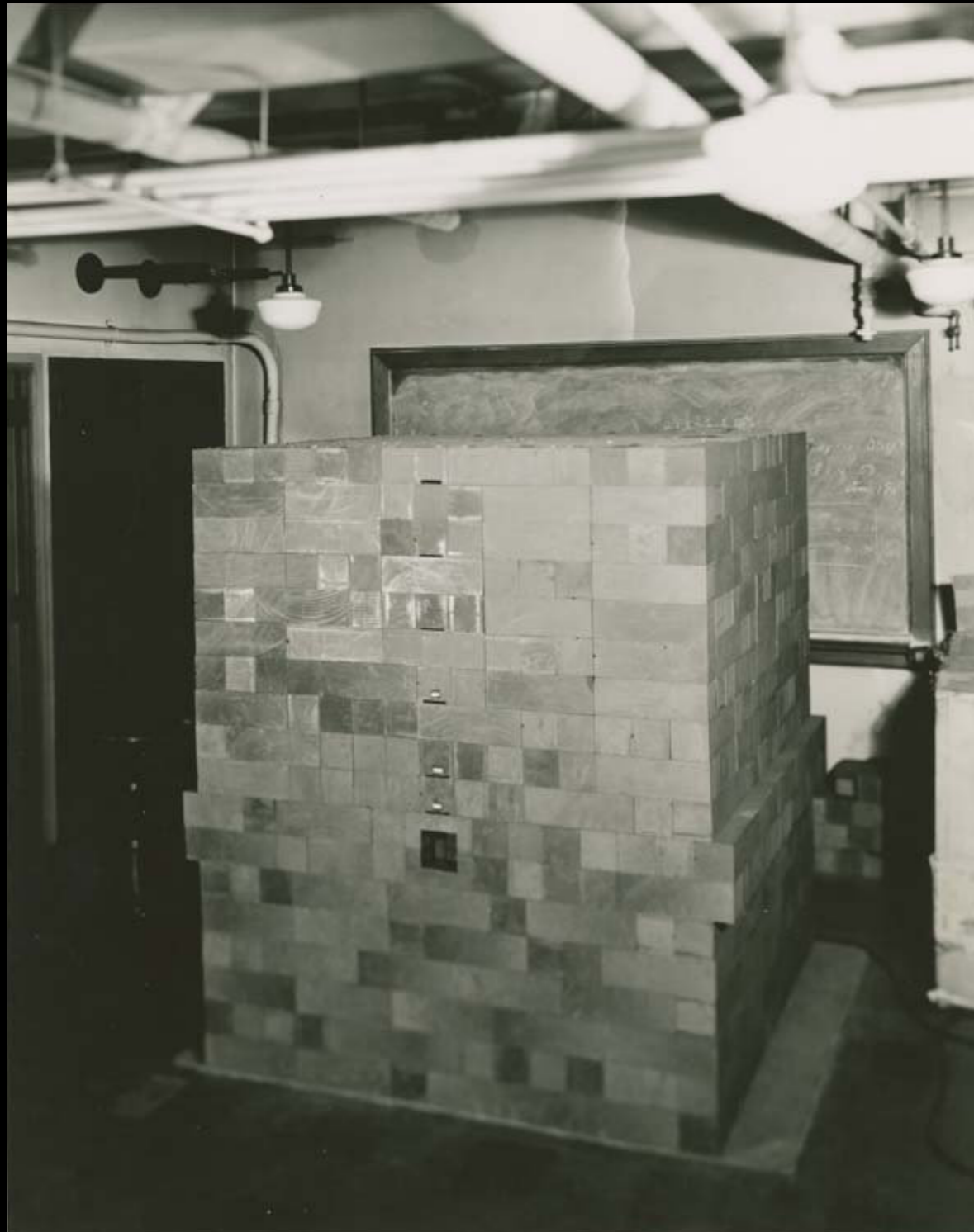
Heavy

Which moderator to use?

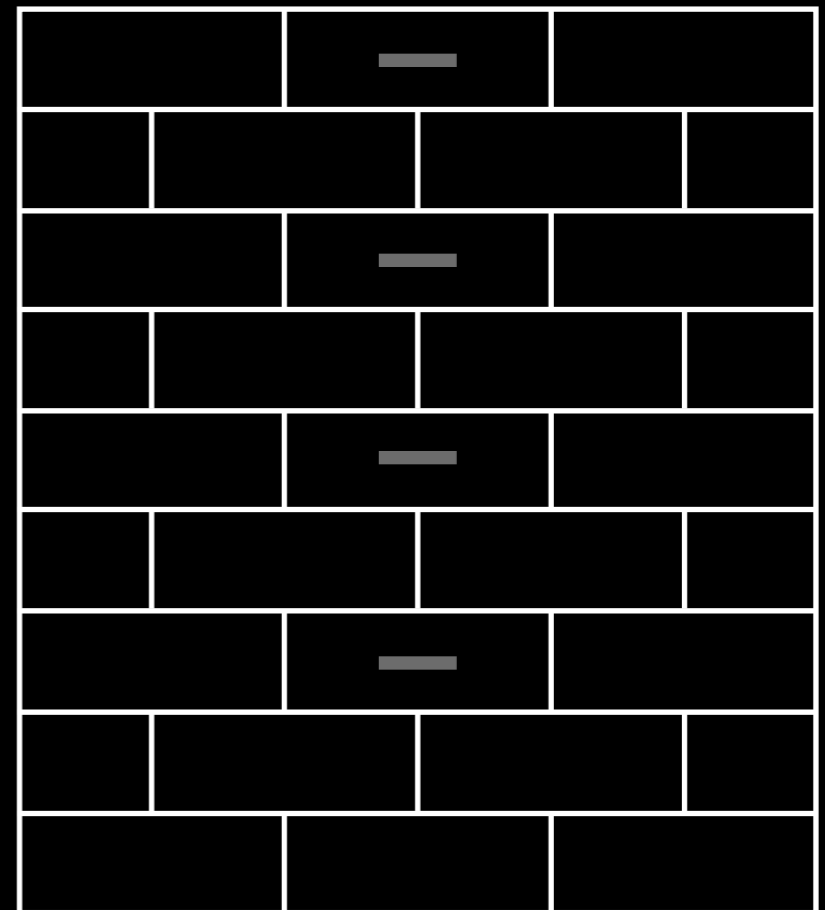
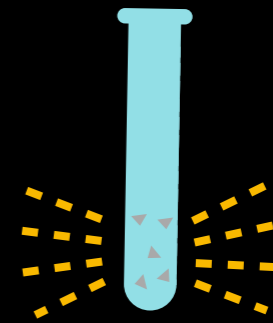


Measuring neutron diffusion

Spring 1940

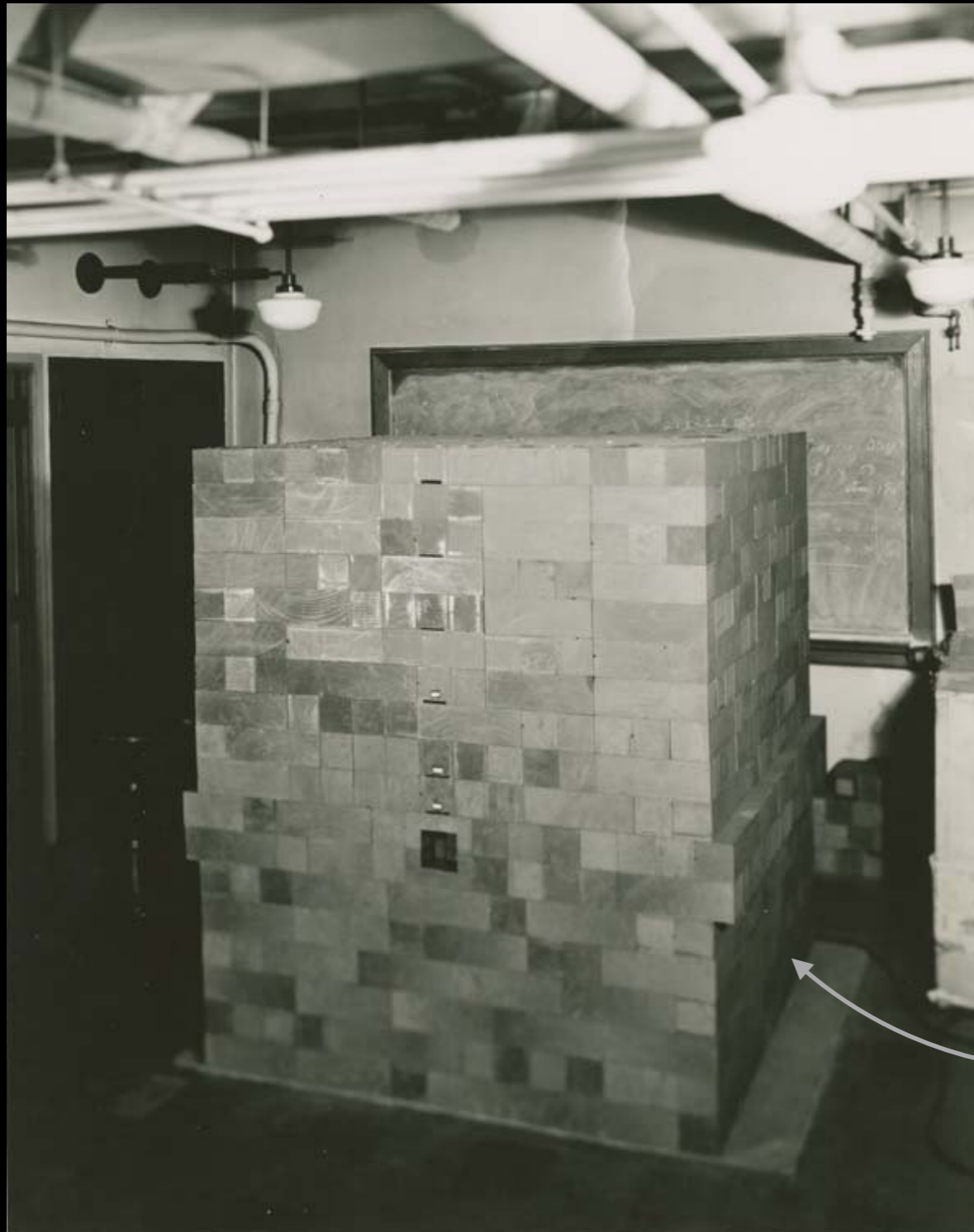


Test pile at Columbia

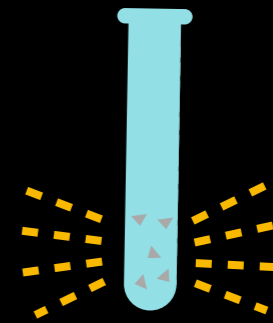


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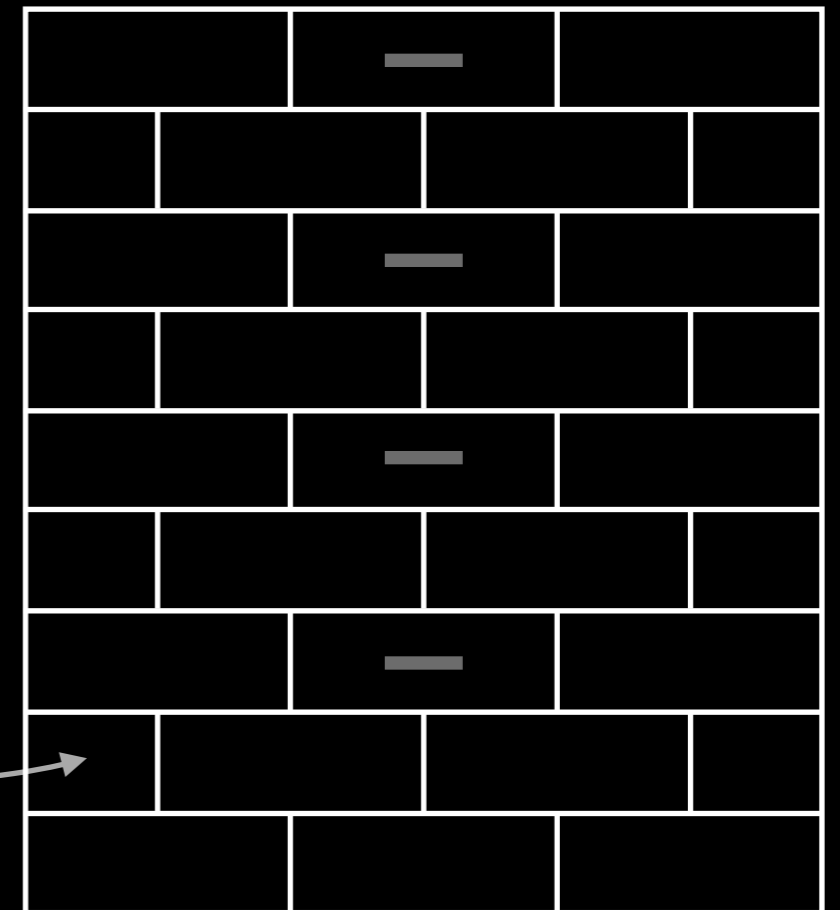
Spring 1940



Test pile at Columbia



Graphite bricks

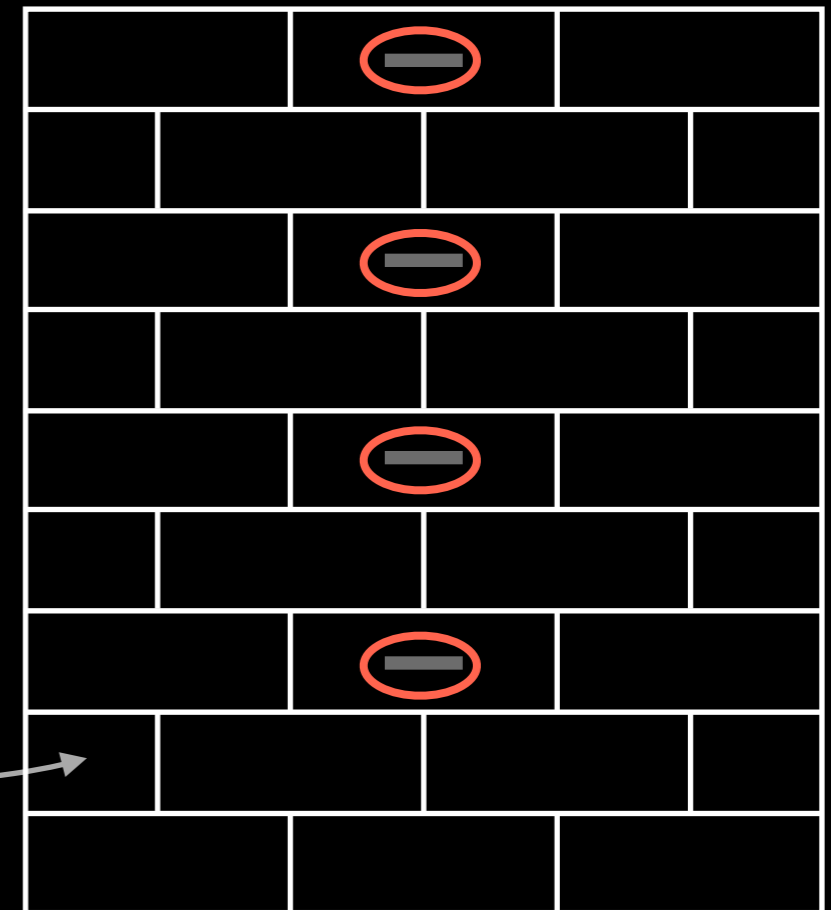
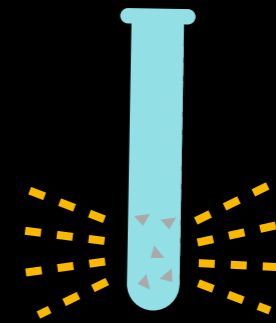


Measuring neutron diffusion

Spring 1940



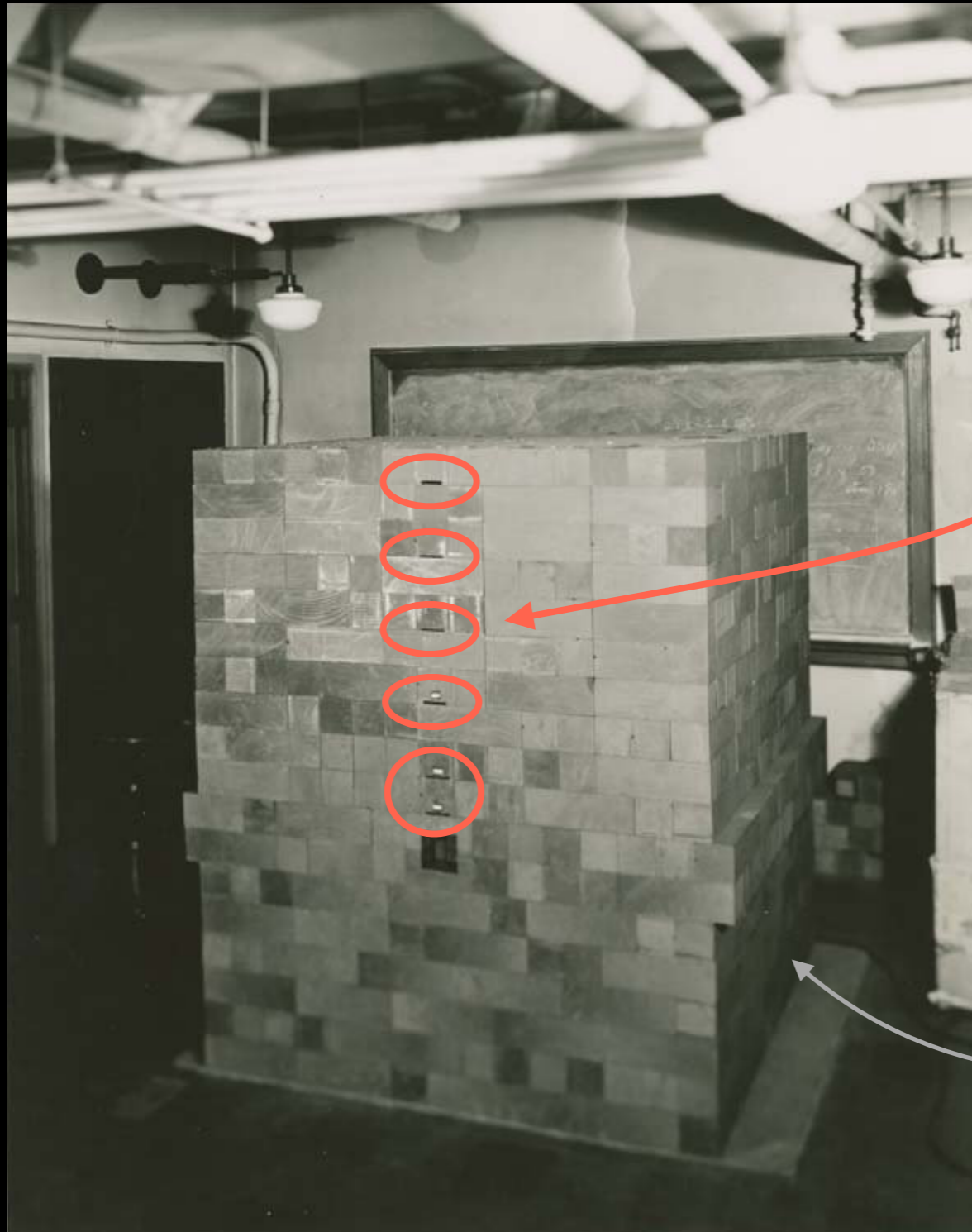
Test pile at Columbia



Graphite bricks

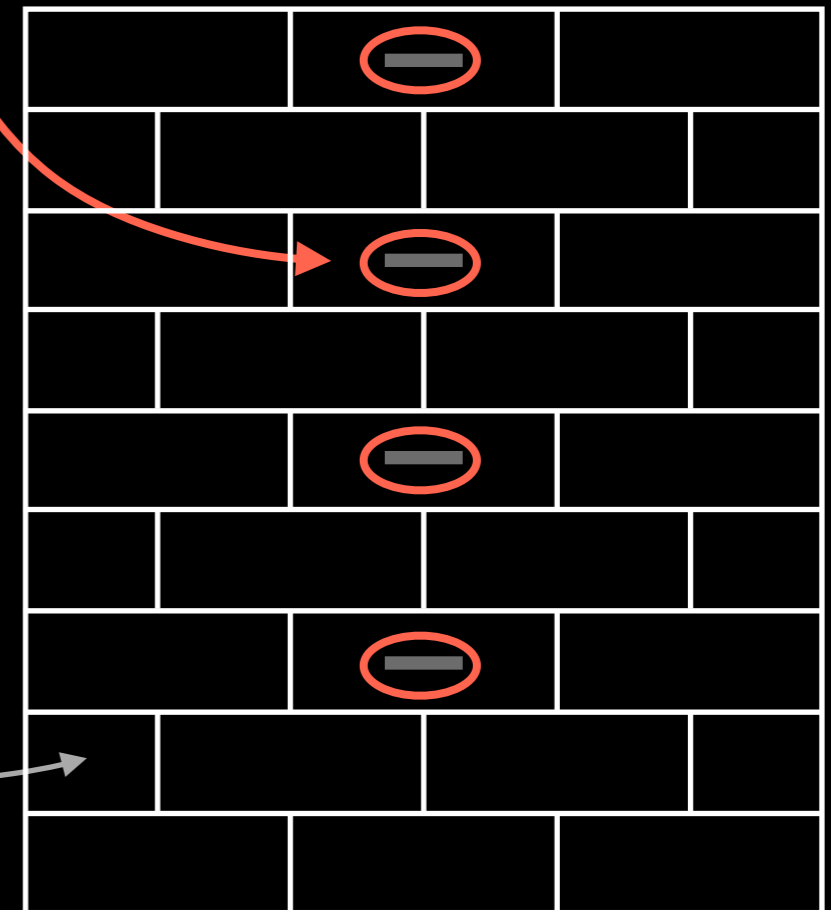
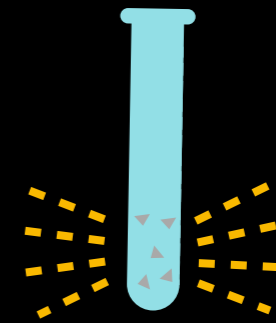
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Spring 1940



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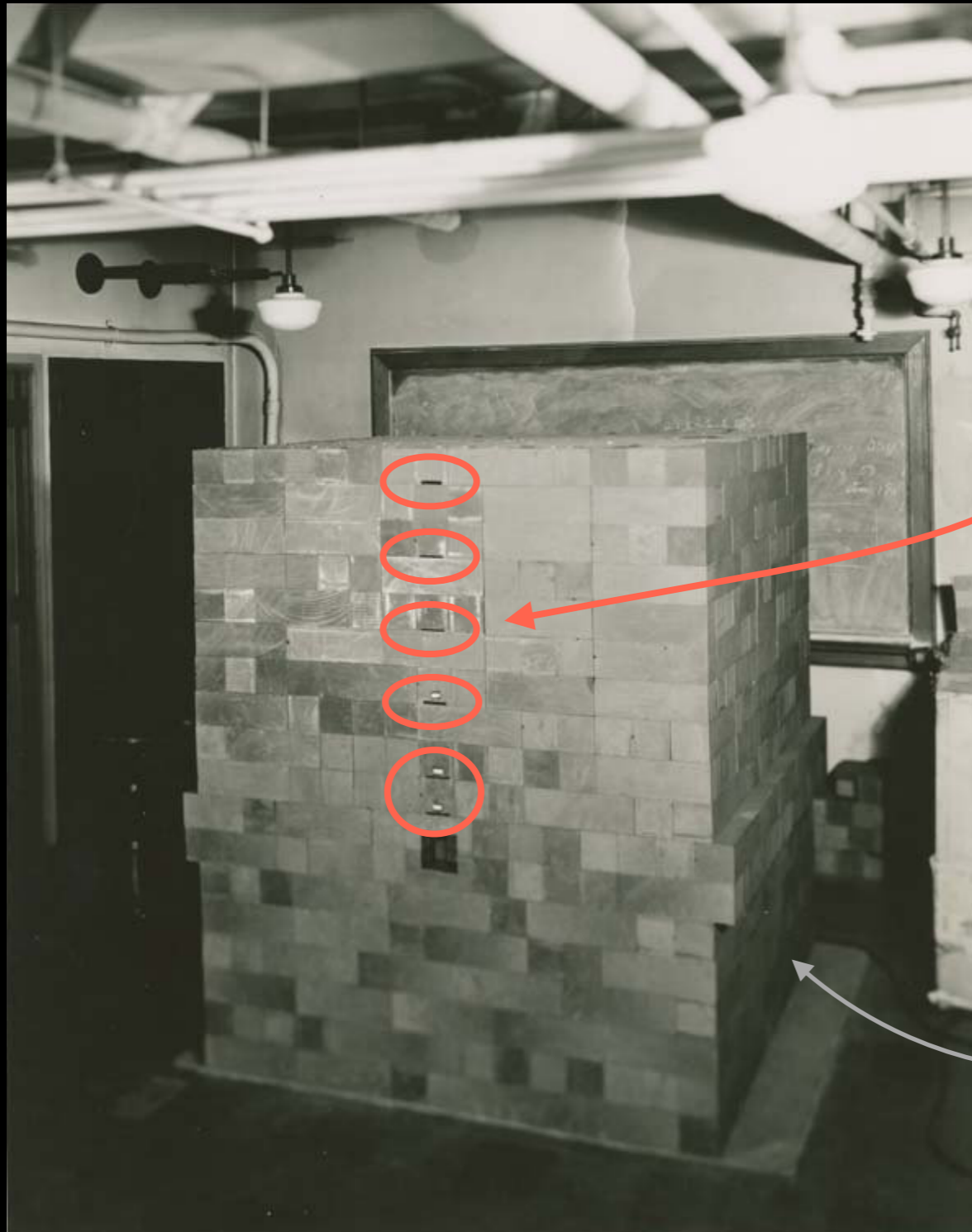
Slots to insert
rhodium foil
→ *measure local
neutron density*



Graphite
bricks

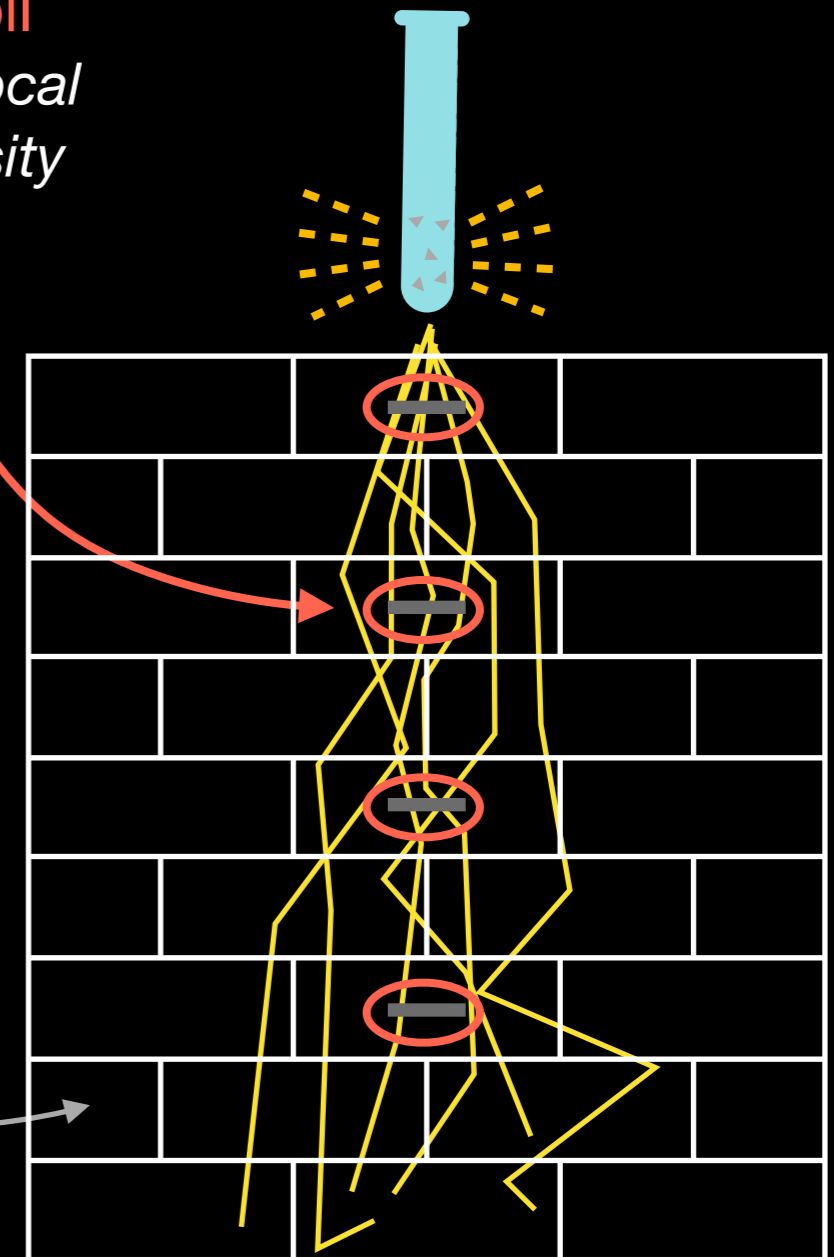
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Spring 1940



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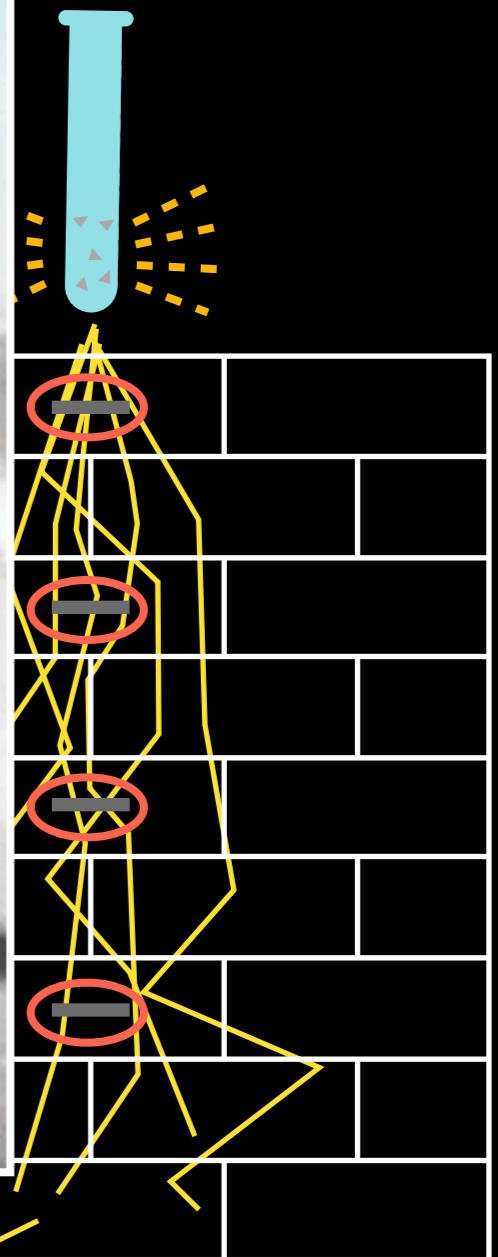
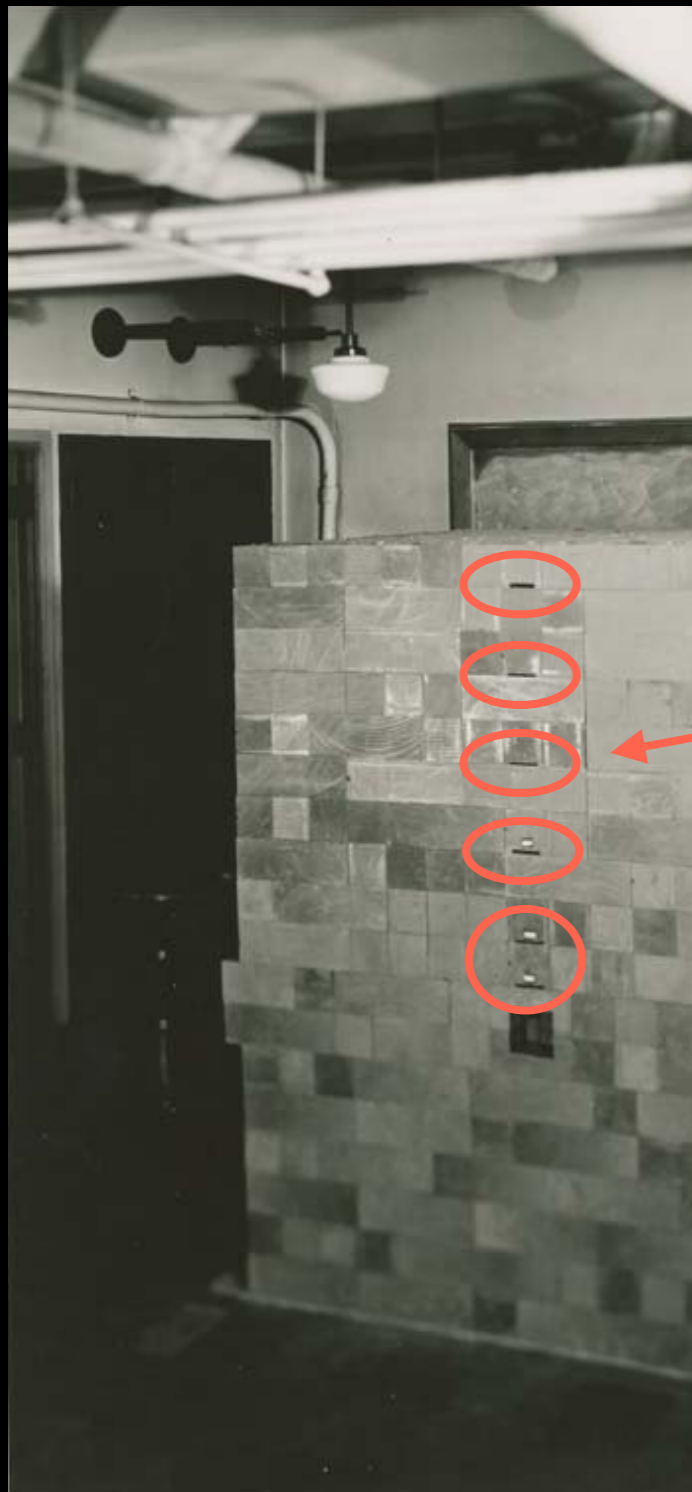
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Graphite
bricks

Measuring neutron diffusion

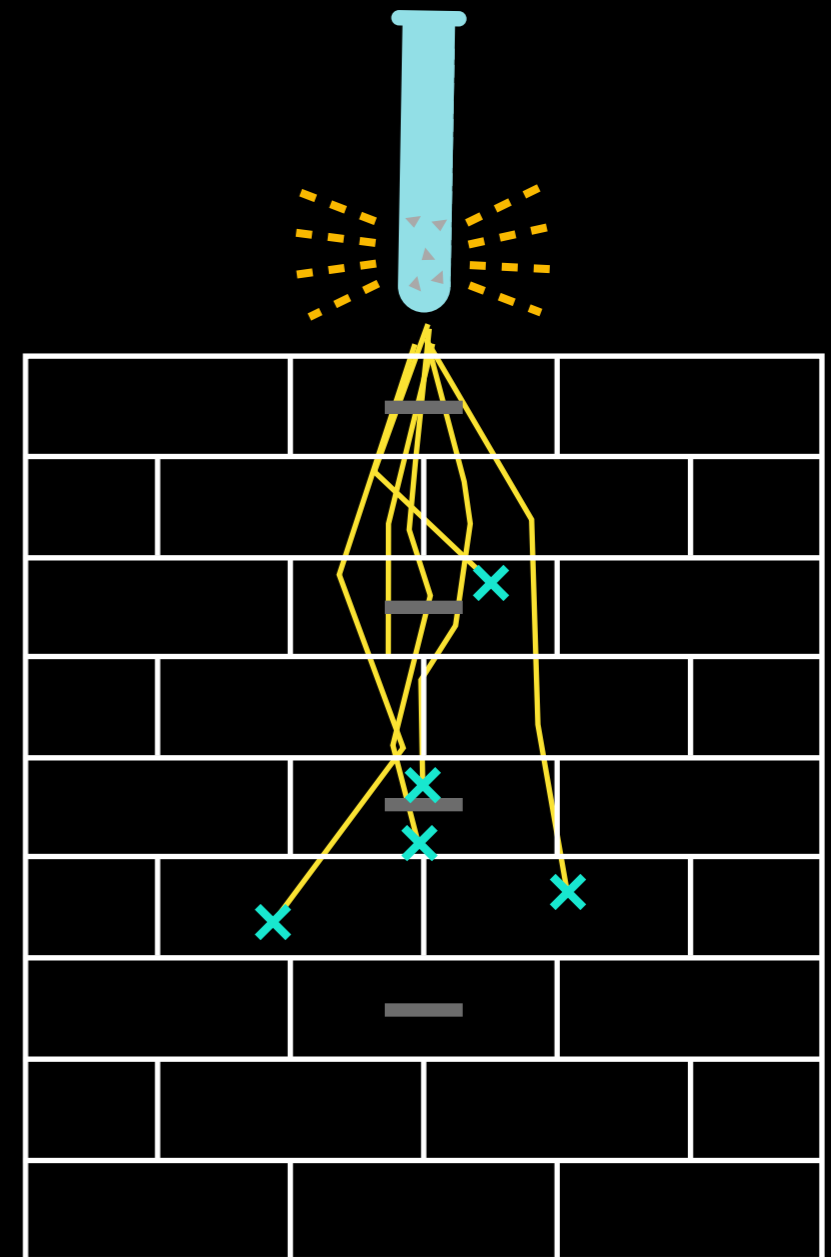
Spring 1940



Test pile at Columbia

Measuring neutron diffusion

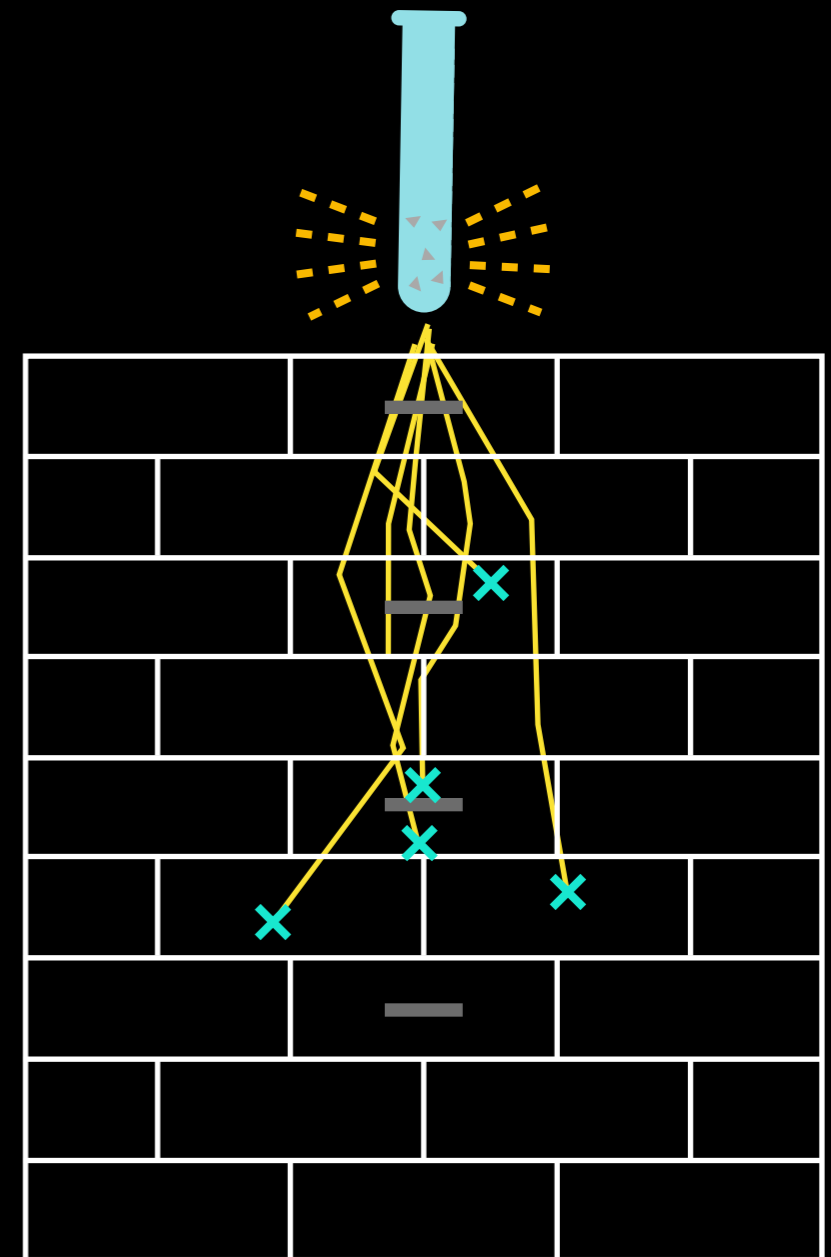
Spring 1940



Measuring neutron diffusion

Spring 1940

Too many neutrons are absorbed!

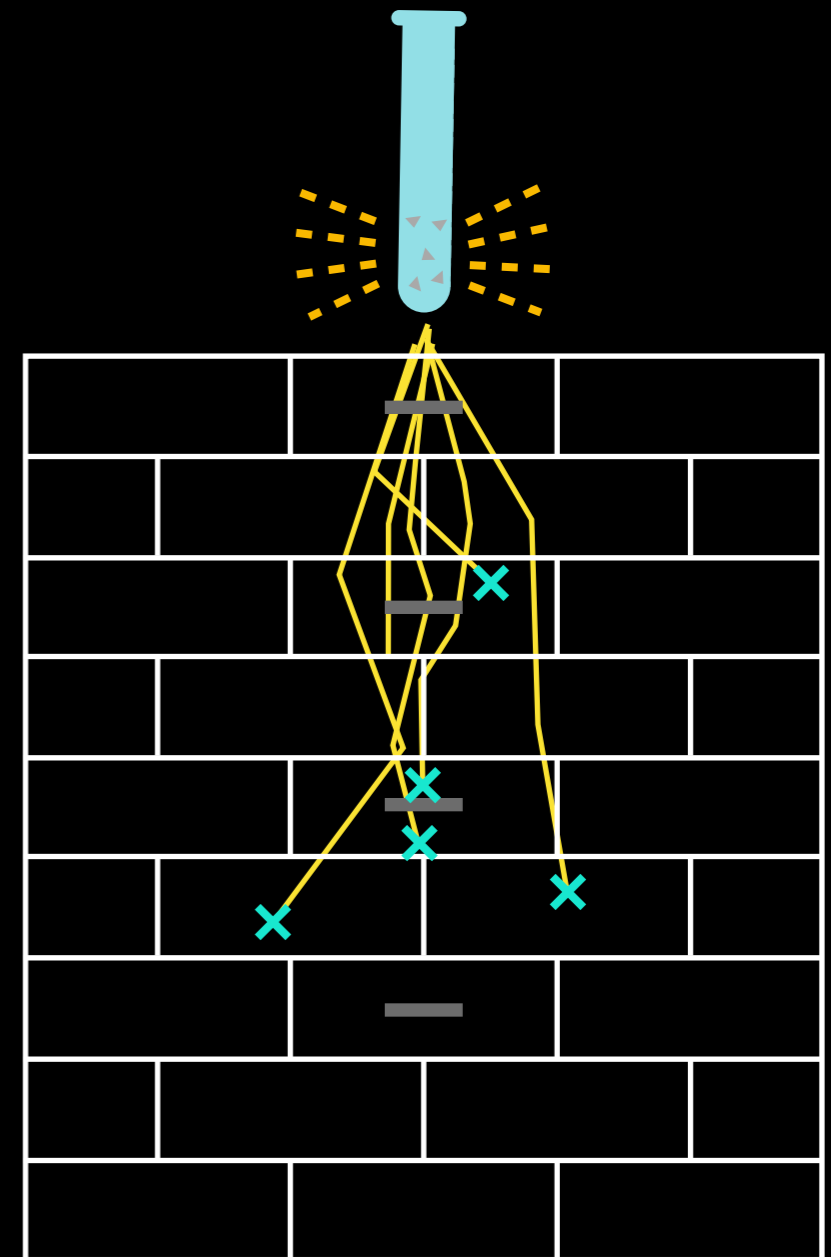


Measuring neutron diffusion

Spring 1940

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→ *Boron impurities in graphite!*

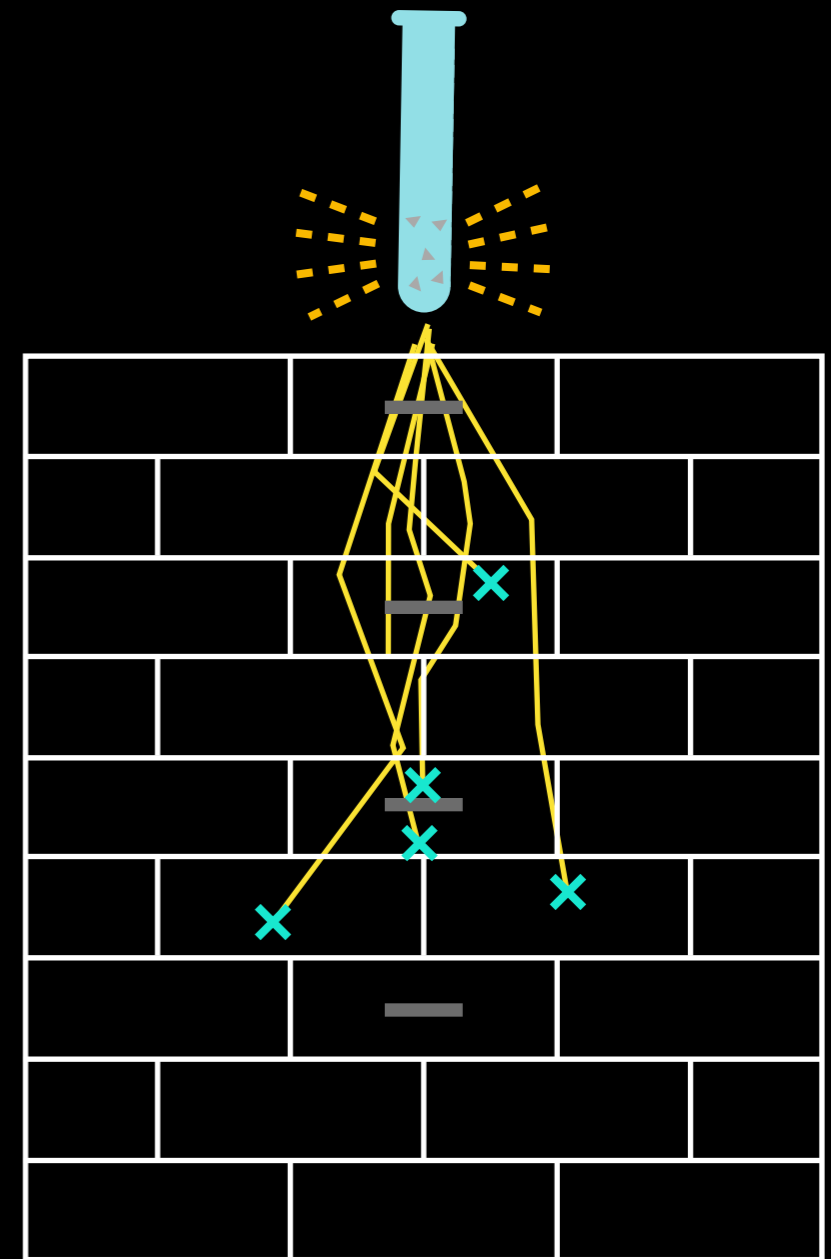
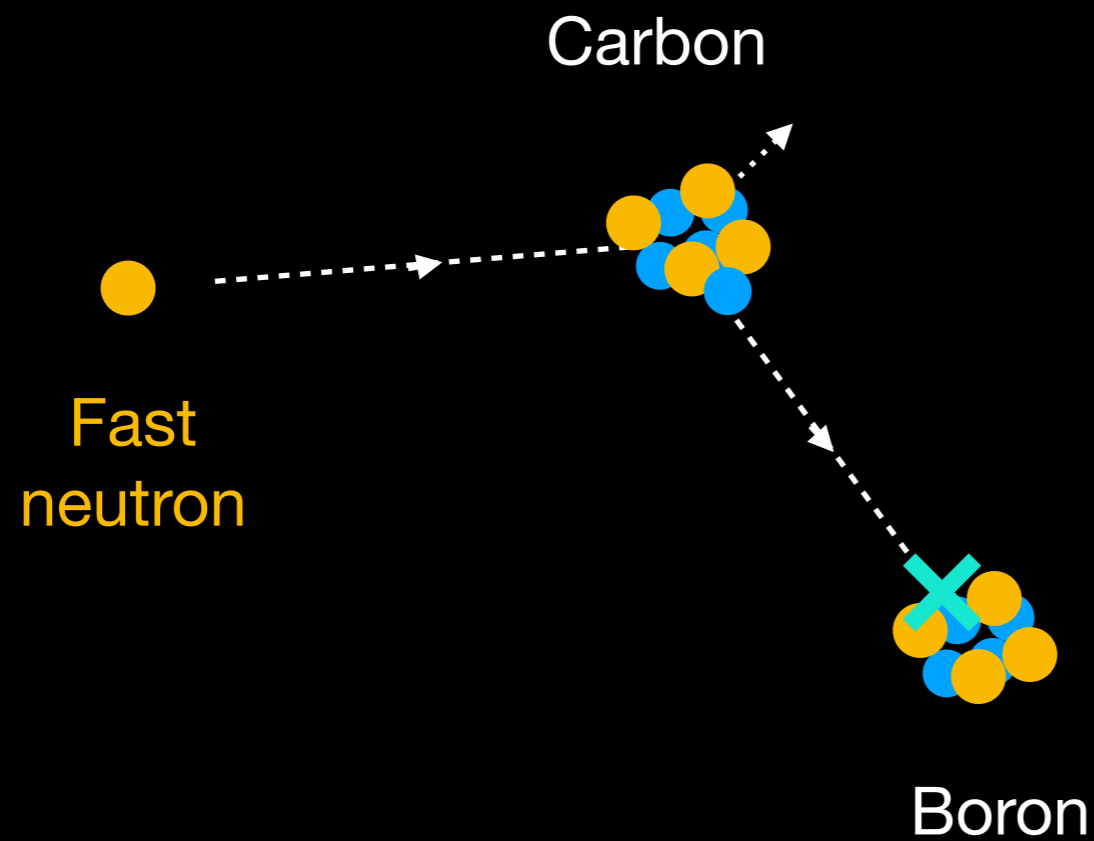


Measuring neutron diffusion

Spring 1940

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Szilard scrounges graphite



WE MANUFACTURE

CARBON

ELECTRODES, TUBES, BLOCKS,
PLATES, Etc.

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, CLEVELAND, O.

The advertisement features a central illustration of a man with a beard and a cap, wearing a dark suit and trousers, standing amidst a variety of carbon products. He is holding two long, thin rods. To his left are several thin, vertical rods of varying heights. To his right are several larger, thicker rods and blocks of varying sizes and shapes, including a large cylindrical rod, a smaller cylindrical rod, and several rectangular blocks. The background is a plain, light color, and the overall style is that of a vintage industrial advertisement.

Szilard scrounges graphite

Szilard scrounges graphite

February 7, 1941

Mr. H. D. Batchelor, Director of Research
National Carbon Company, Inc.
Edgewater Works
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Mr. Batchelor:

Many thanks for your kind letter of January 31. We appreciate very much the attention given to this matter by your Research Laboratory and investigations conducted by Messrs. Hamister and MacPherson, and regret to hear that you are not in a position to supply graphite bricks free of boron to meet certain specifications of ours.

We should be very much interested to learn though the boron content of the best graphite which you are able to supply. For certain uses of graphite, we would be able to tolerate more boron than for other uses, although we are interested in every case in keeping the boron content as low as possible. Perhaps your graphite could be used at least for some of our work.

Very truly yours



(L. Szilard)

LS/eh

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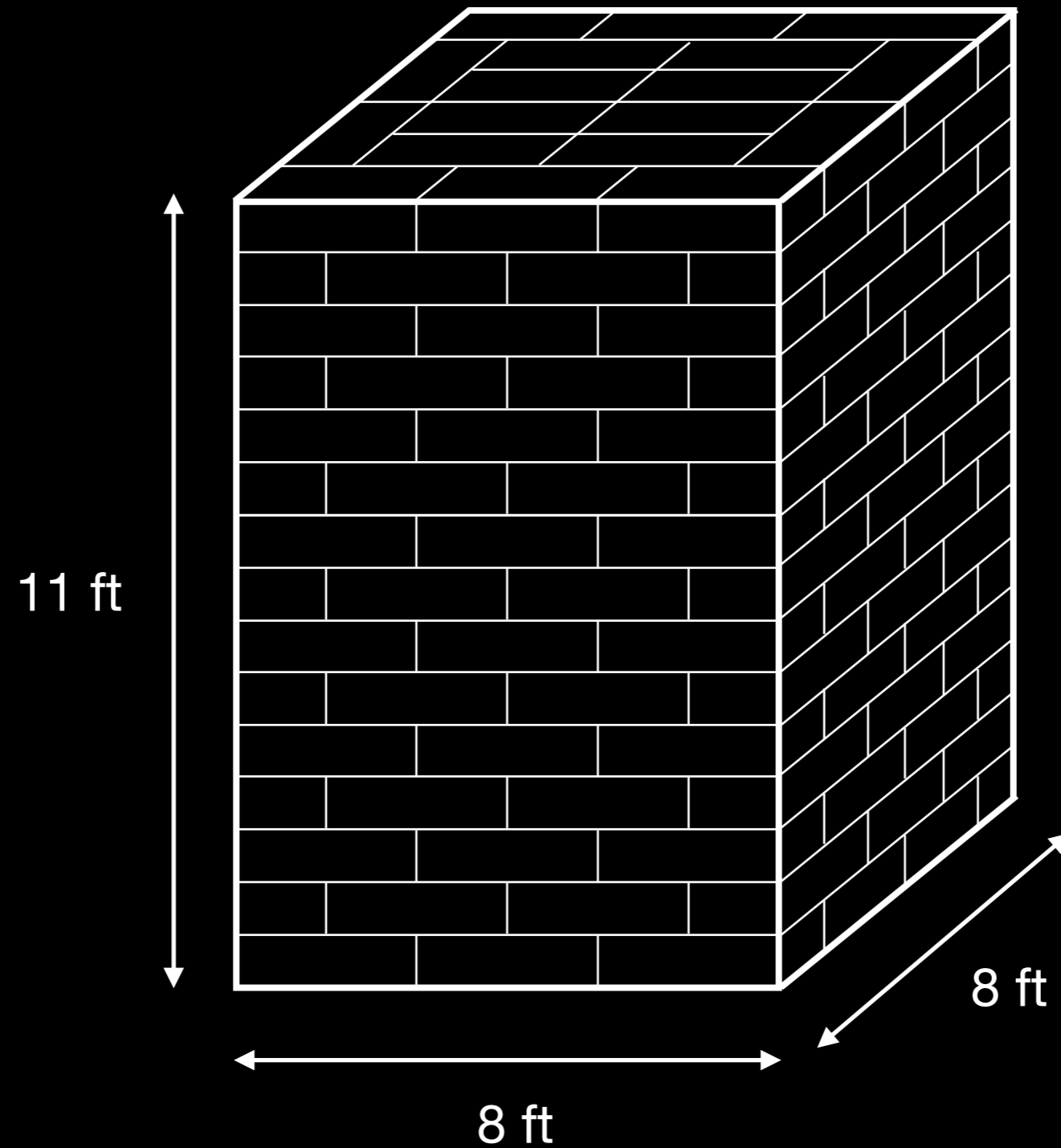
LS/eh

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“We should be very much interested to learn the boron content of the best graphite which you are able to supply ...”

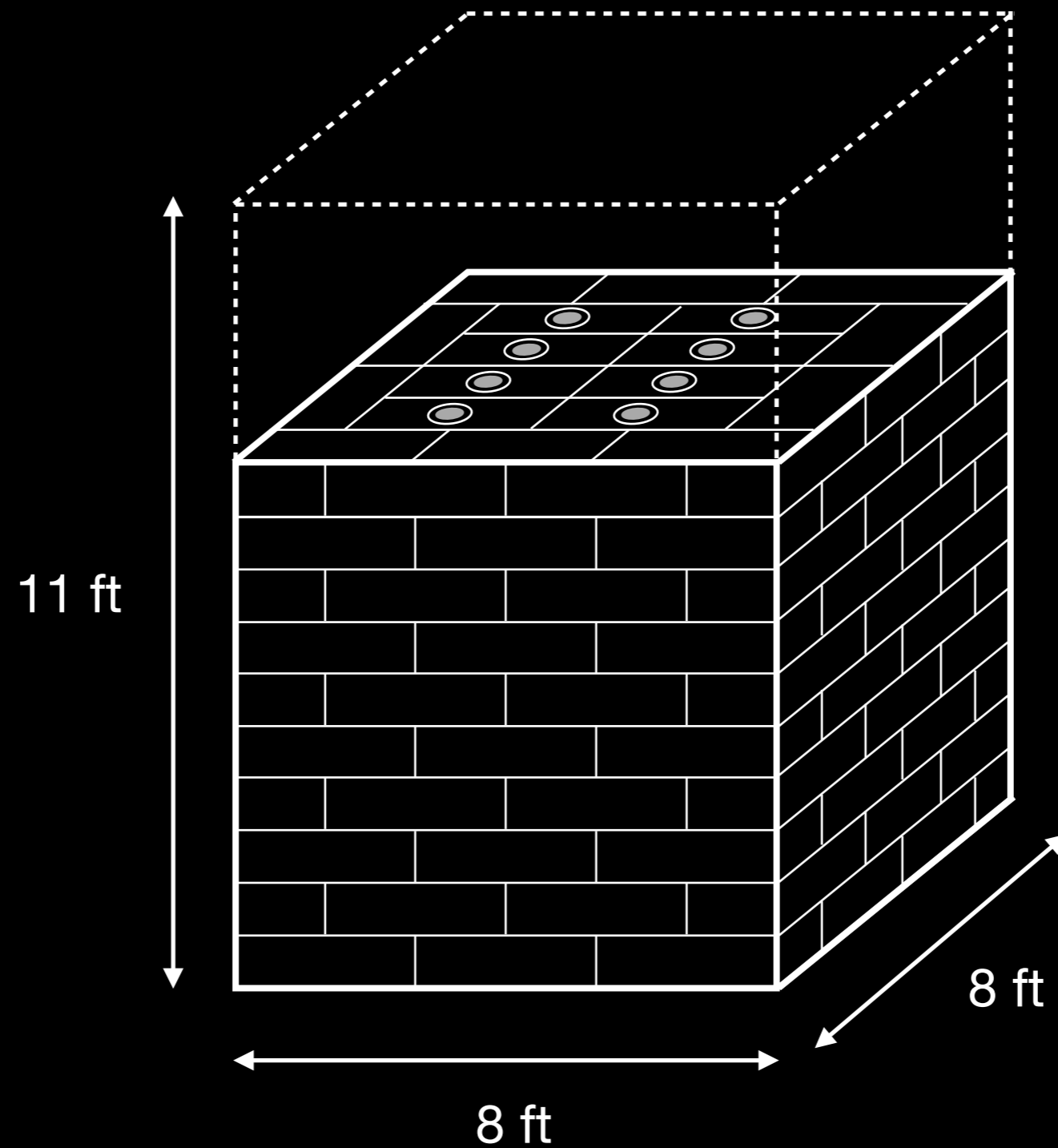
Test piles at Columbia

September 1941



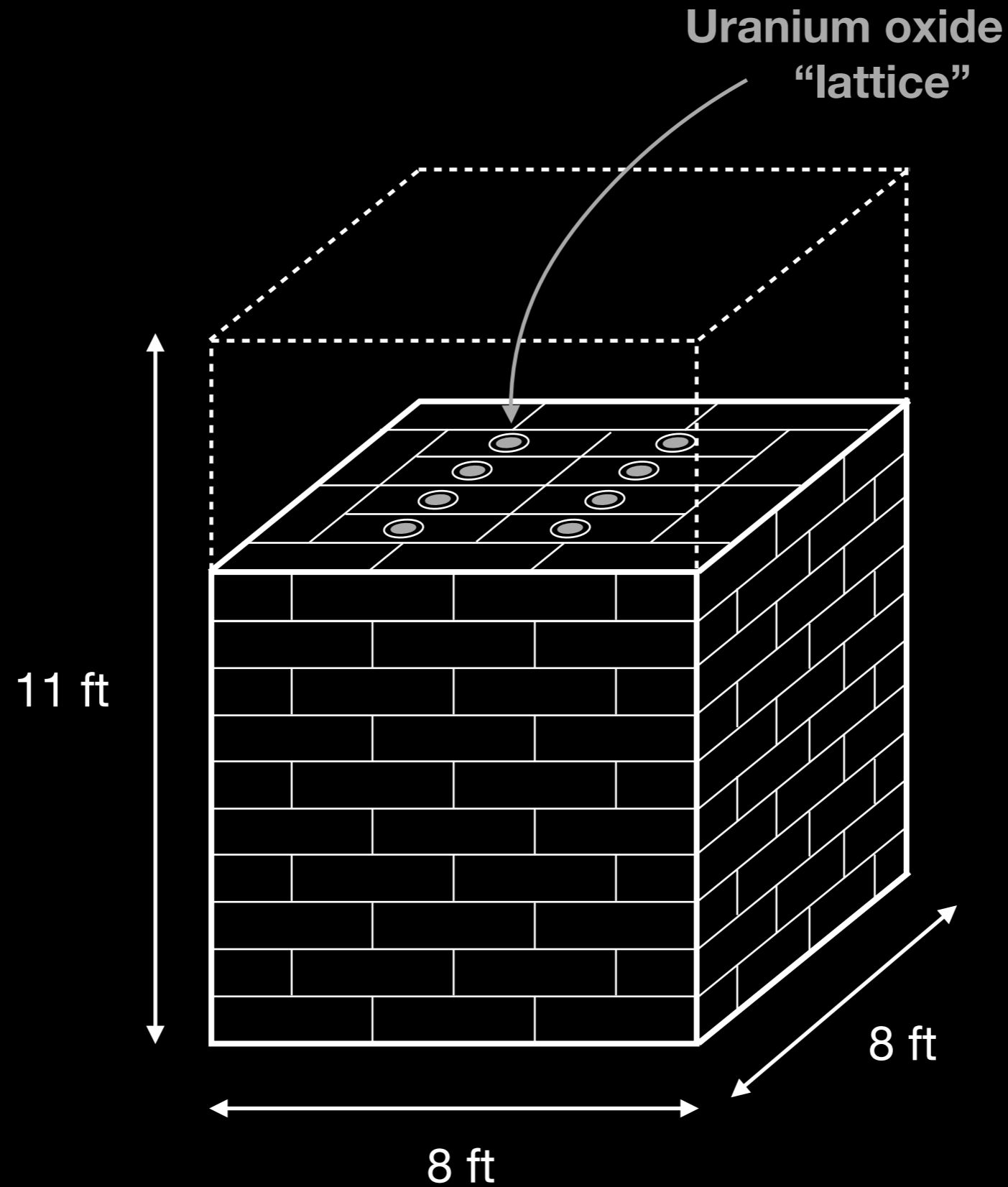
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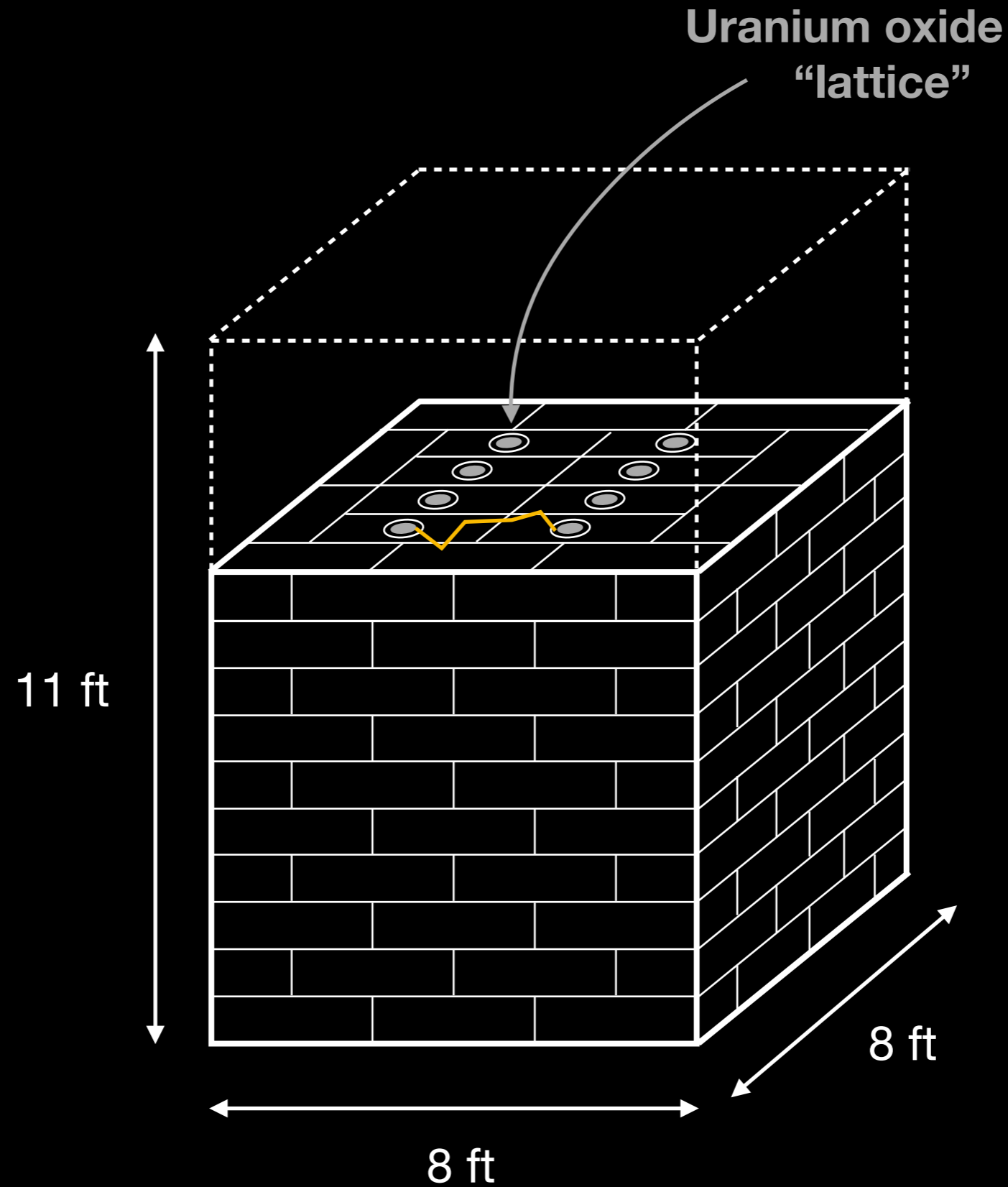
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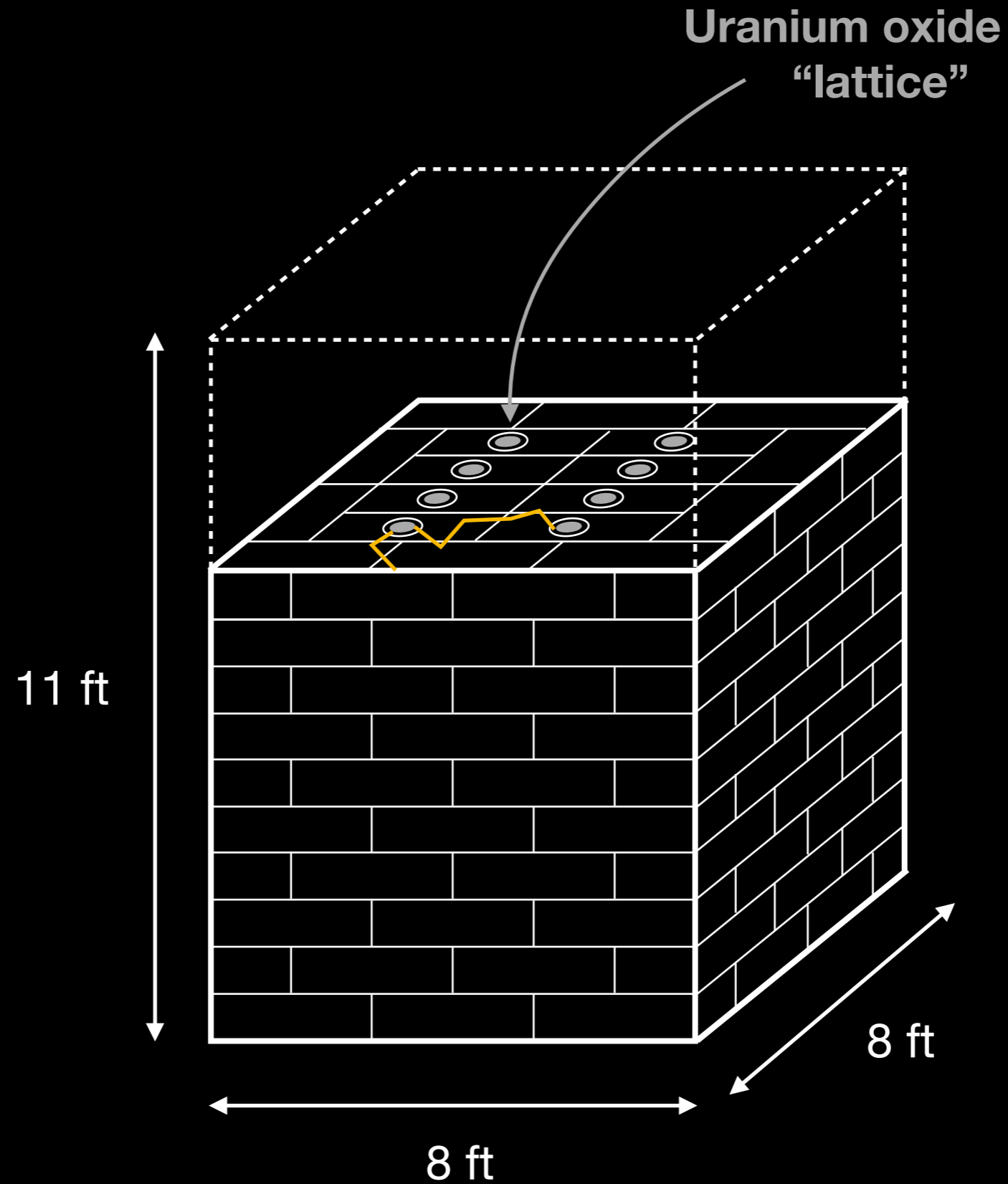
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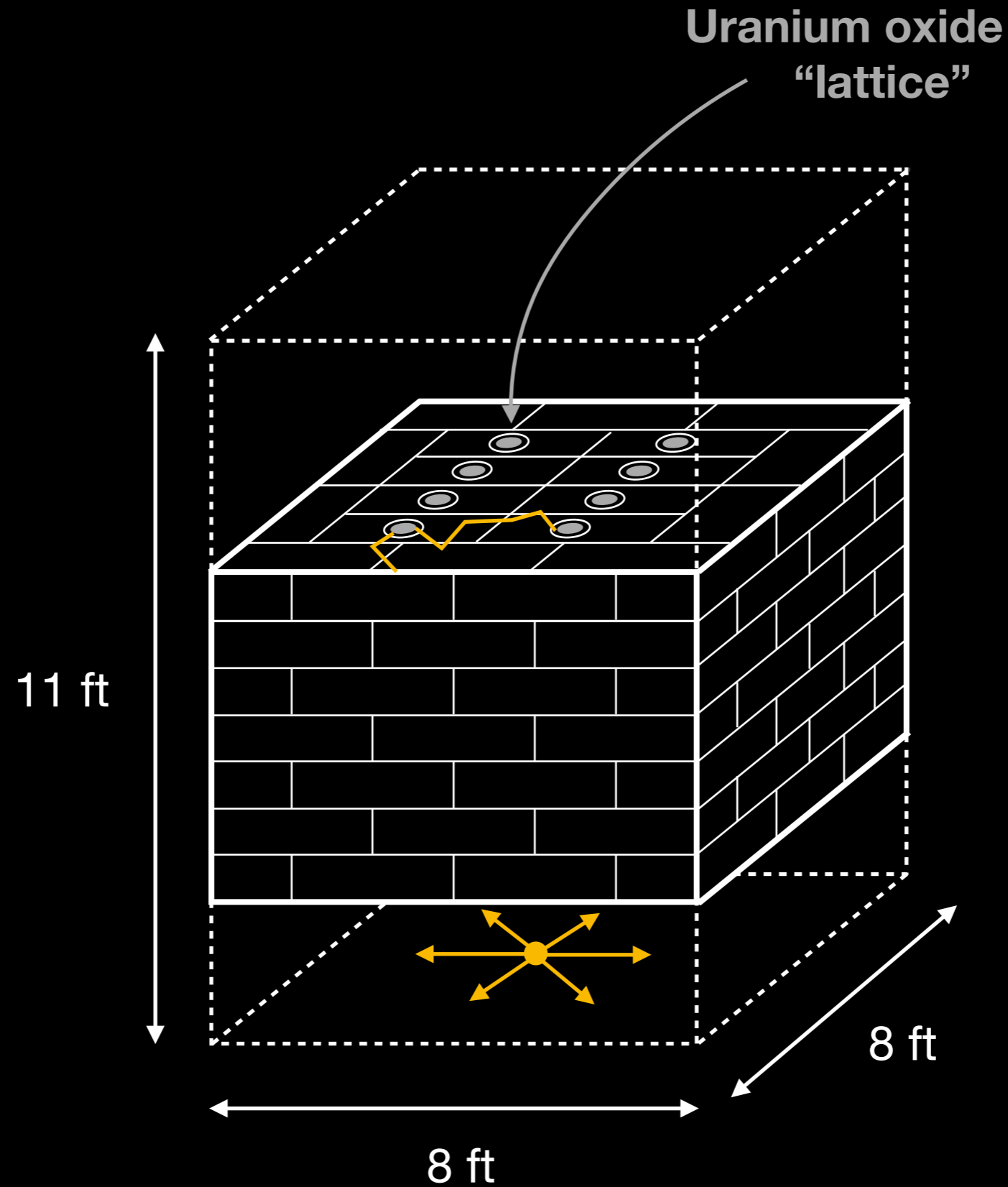
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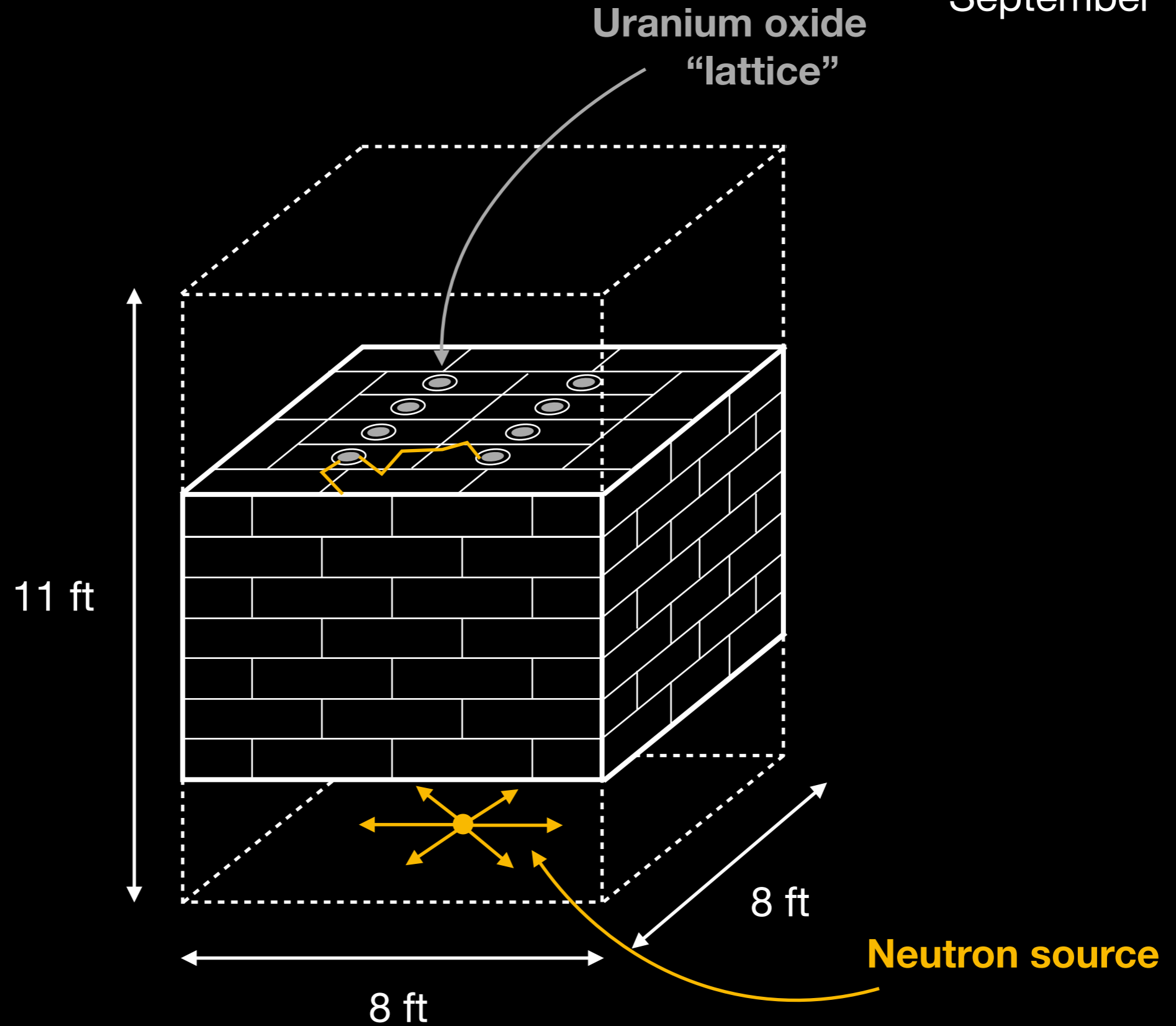
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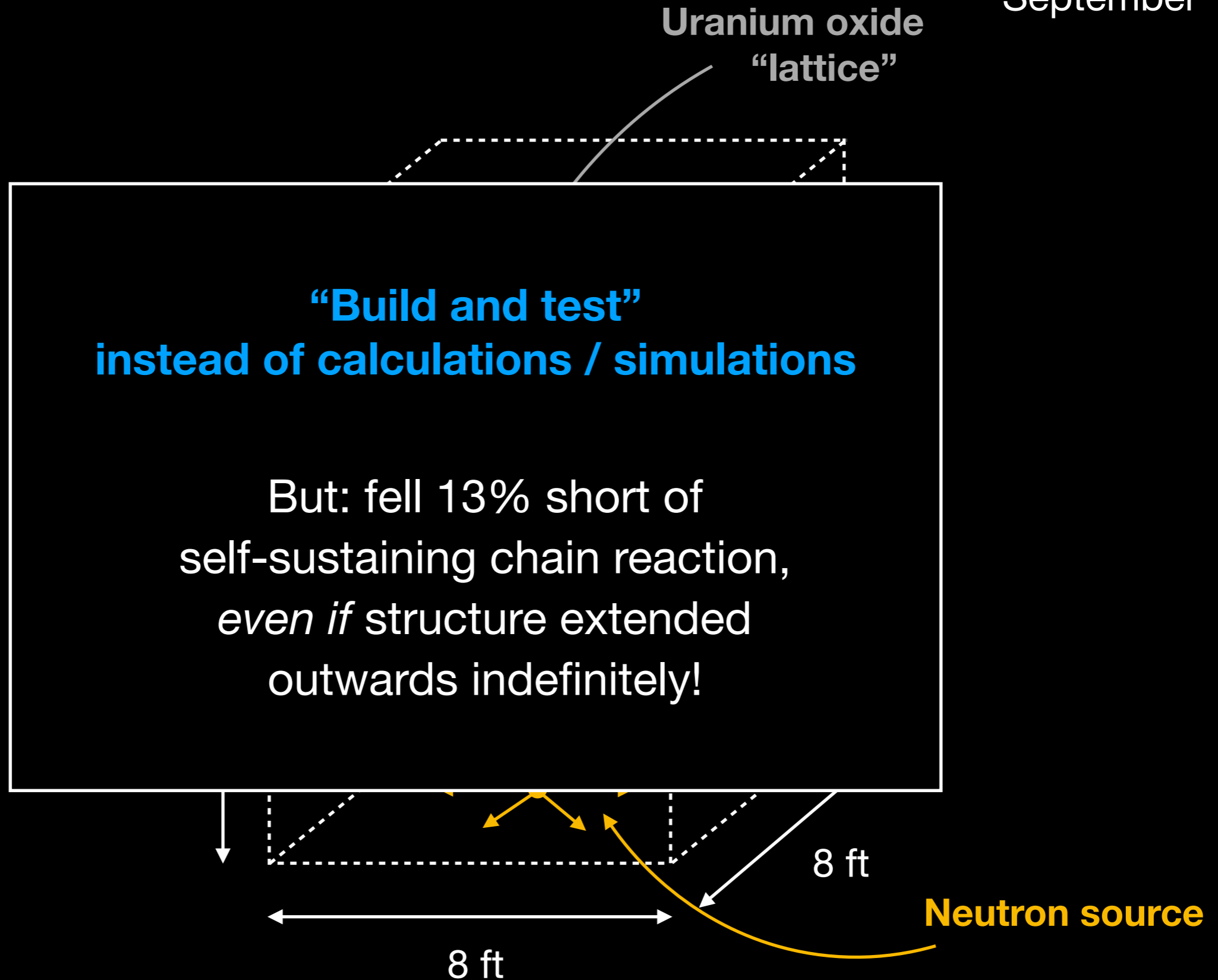
Test piles at Columbia

September 1941



Test piles at Columbia

September 1941



A sense of urgency ...

A sense of urgency ...



December 1941

A sense of urgency ...



December 1941



A sense of urgency ...



December 1941



... and a move to Chicago

The metallurgical laboratory

Eckhart Hall, University of Chicago
(Today housing the mathematics department)



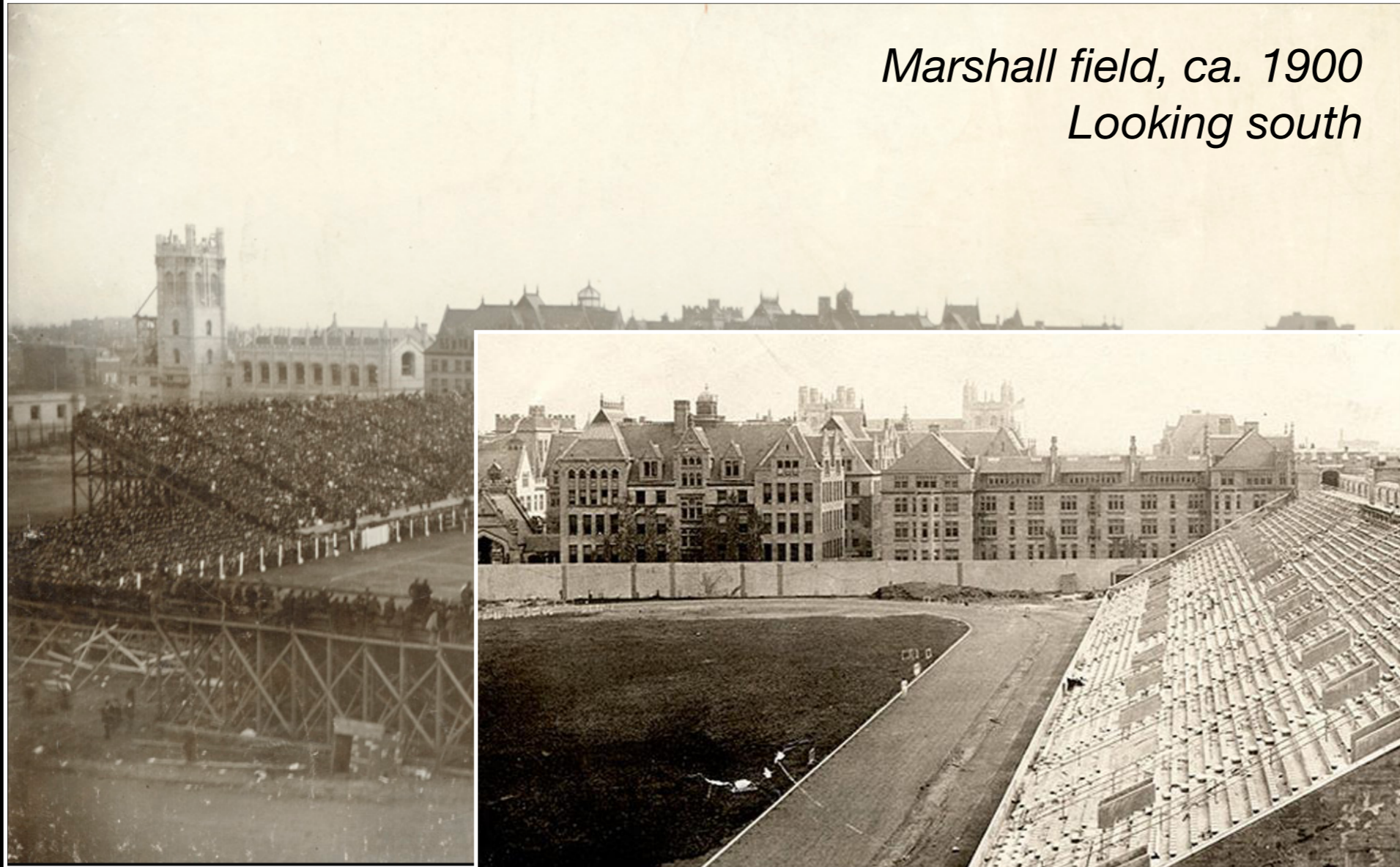
Stagg Field

Stagg Field

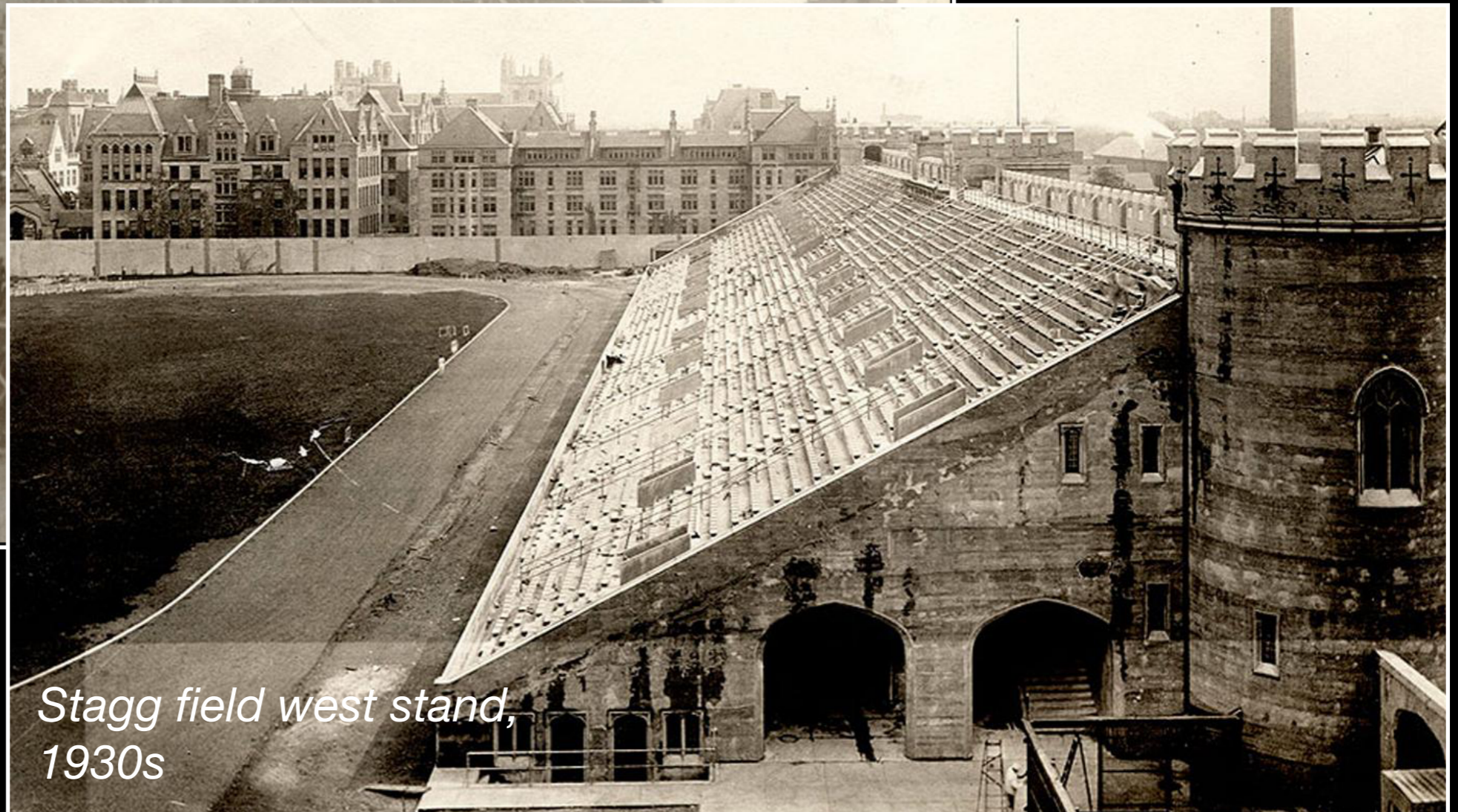


*Marshall field, ca. 1900
Looking south*

Stagg Field



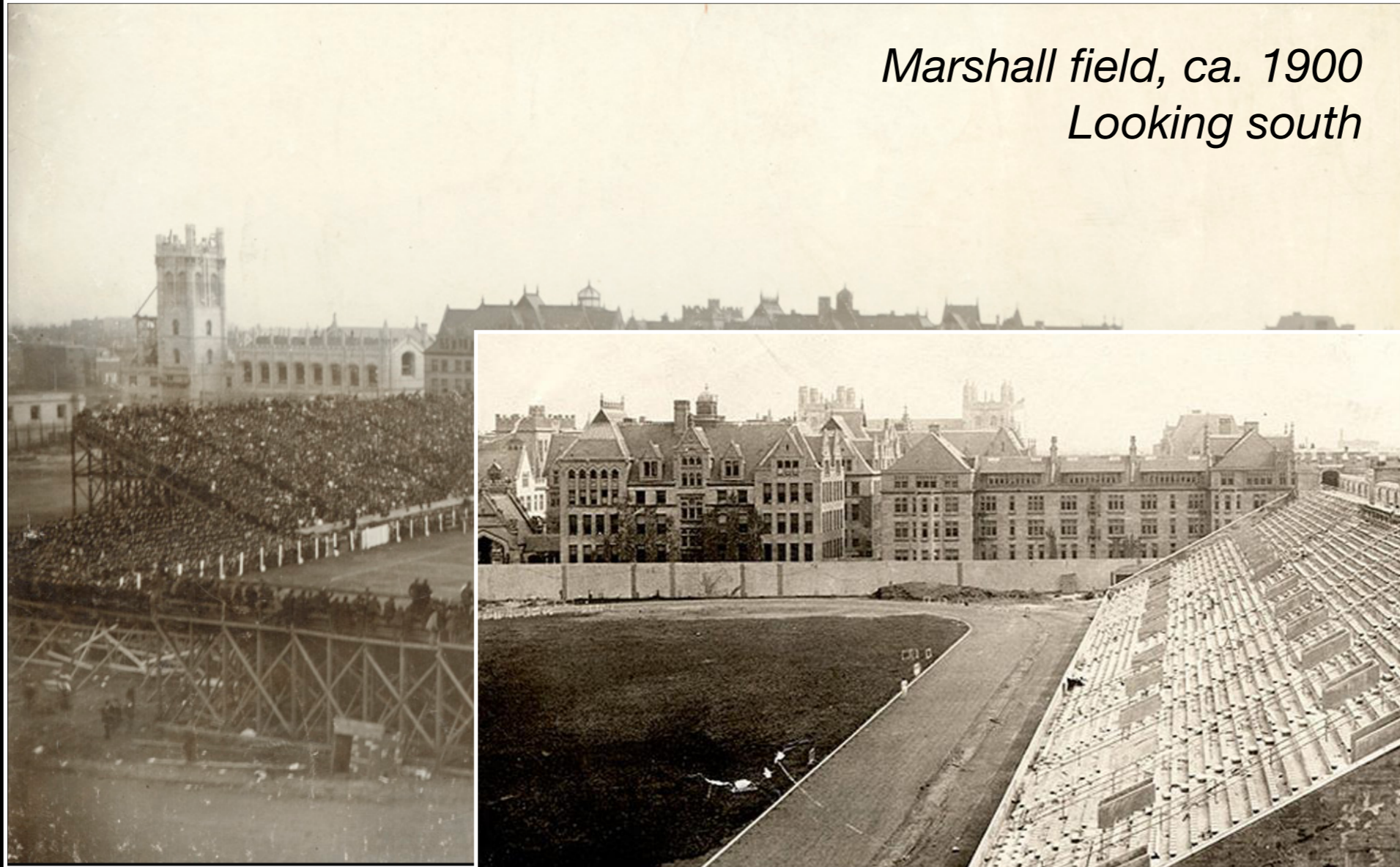
*Marshall field, ca. 1900
Looking south*



*Stagg field west stand,
1930s*

Stagg Field

President Robert Hutchins on football (1939):
an “infernal nuisance” distracting from academics



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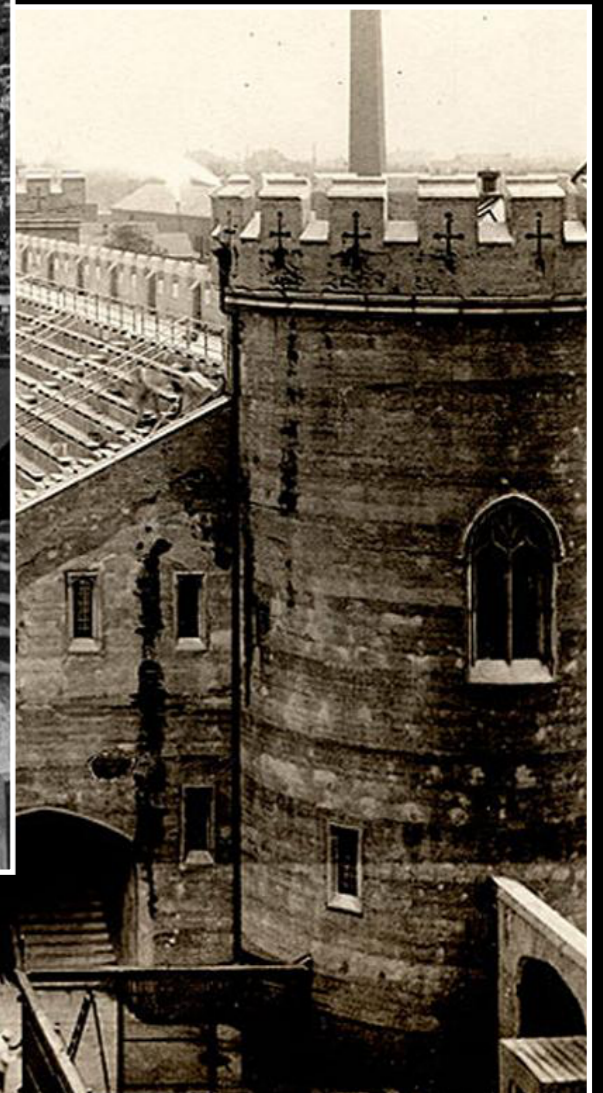
*Stagg field west stand,
1930s*

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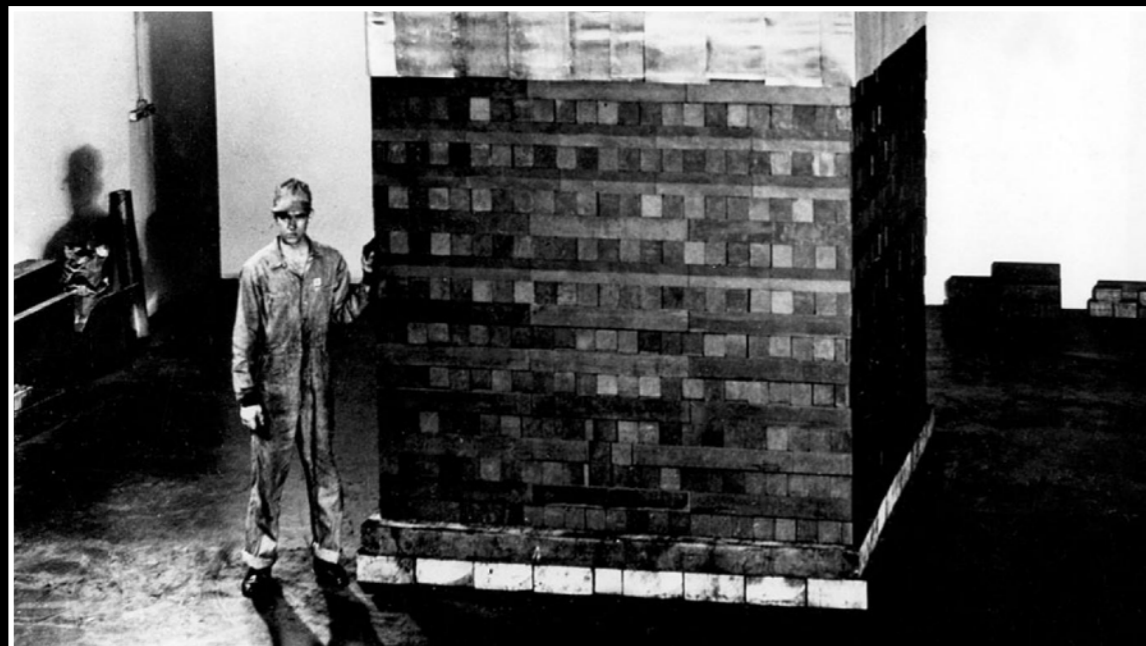
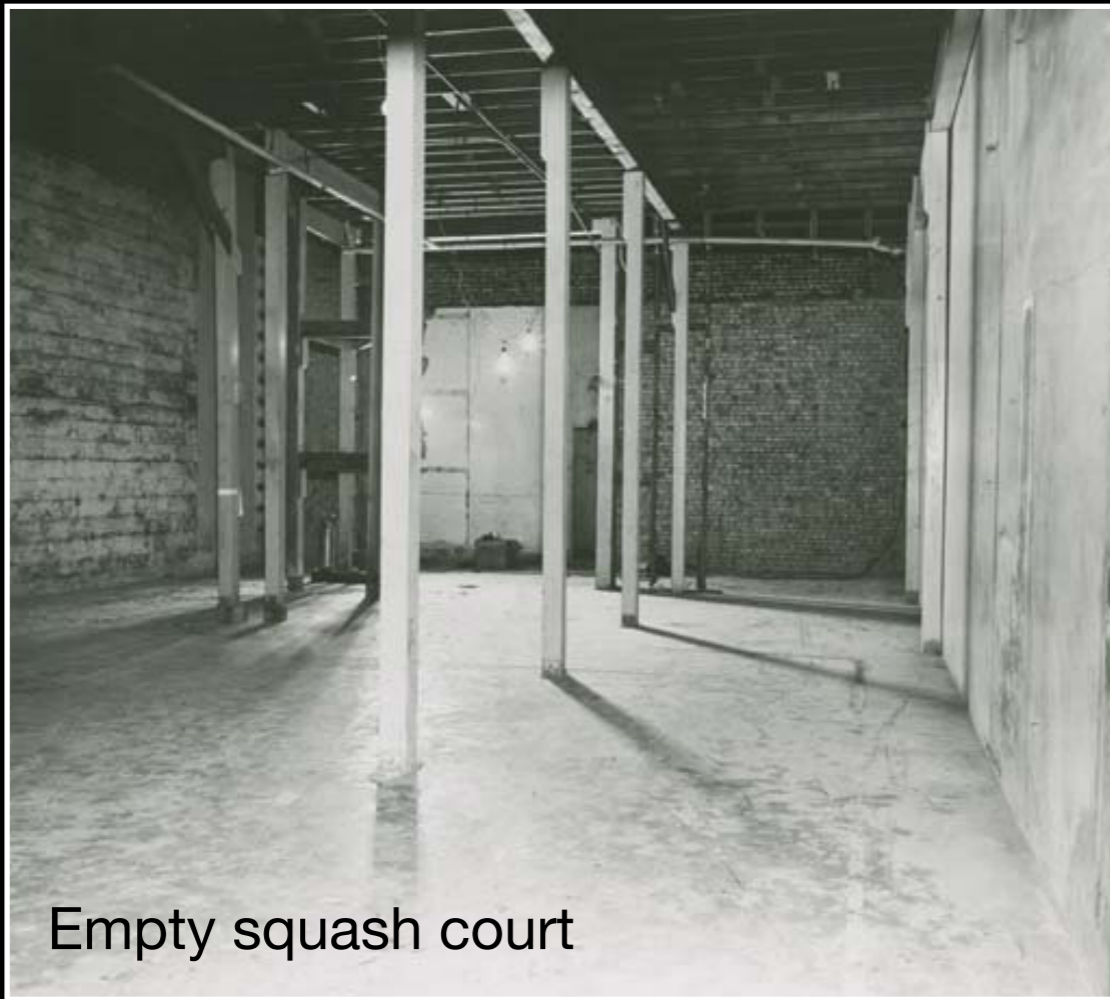
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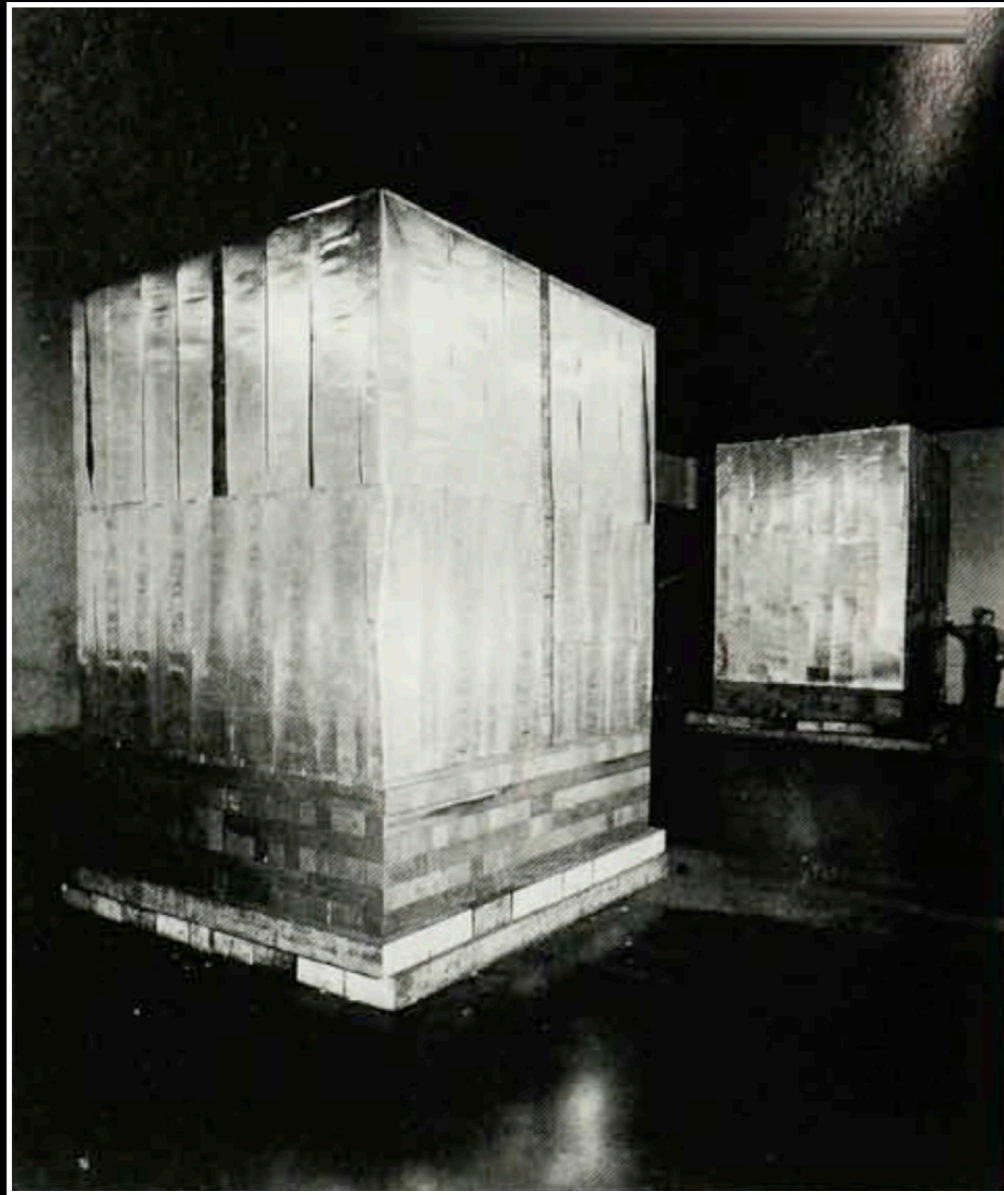


First test piles at Stagg Field



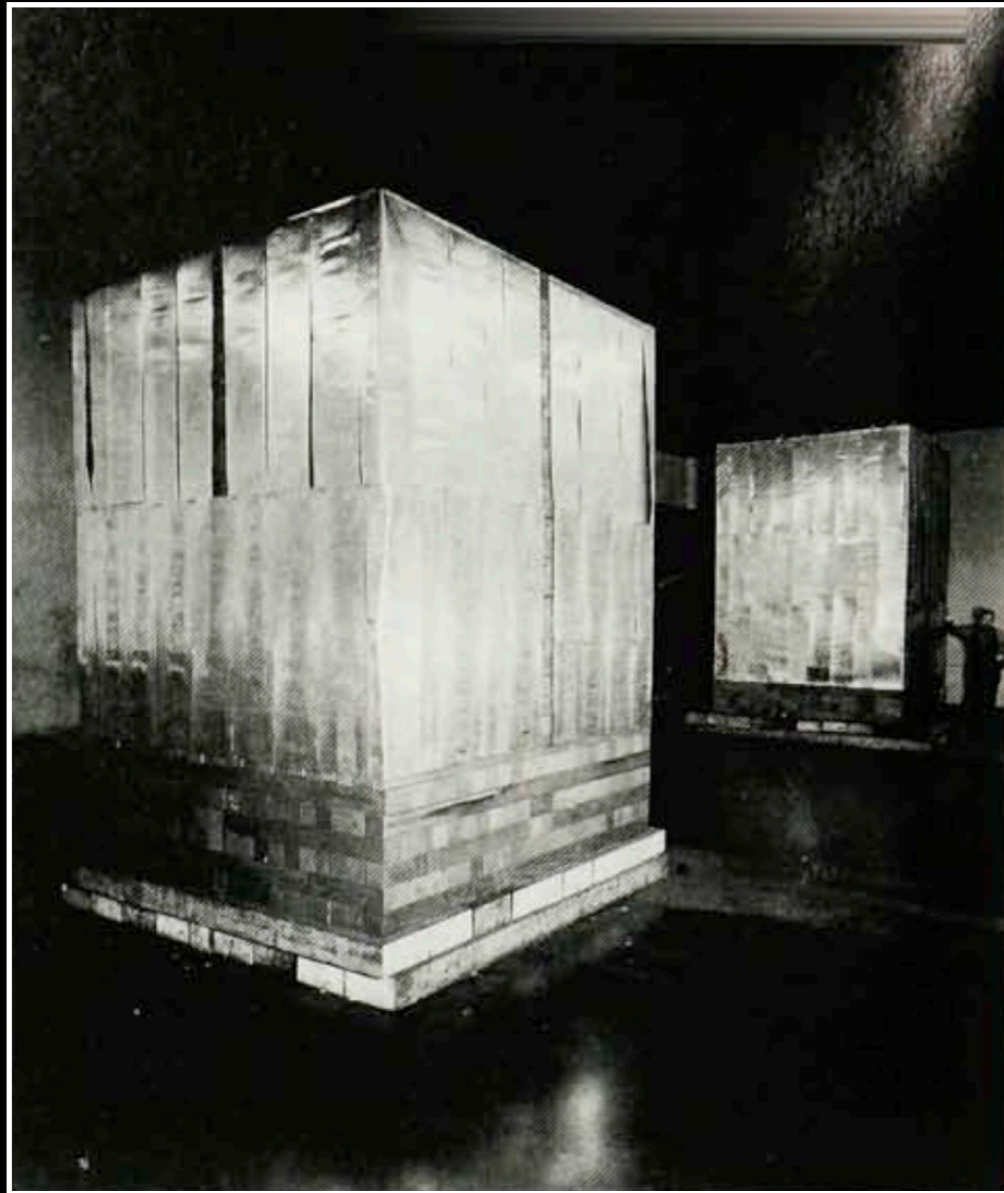
Improving the Pile

Improving the Pile



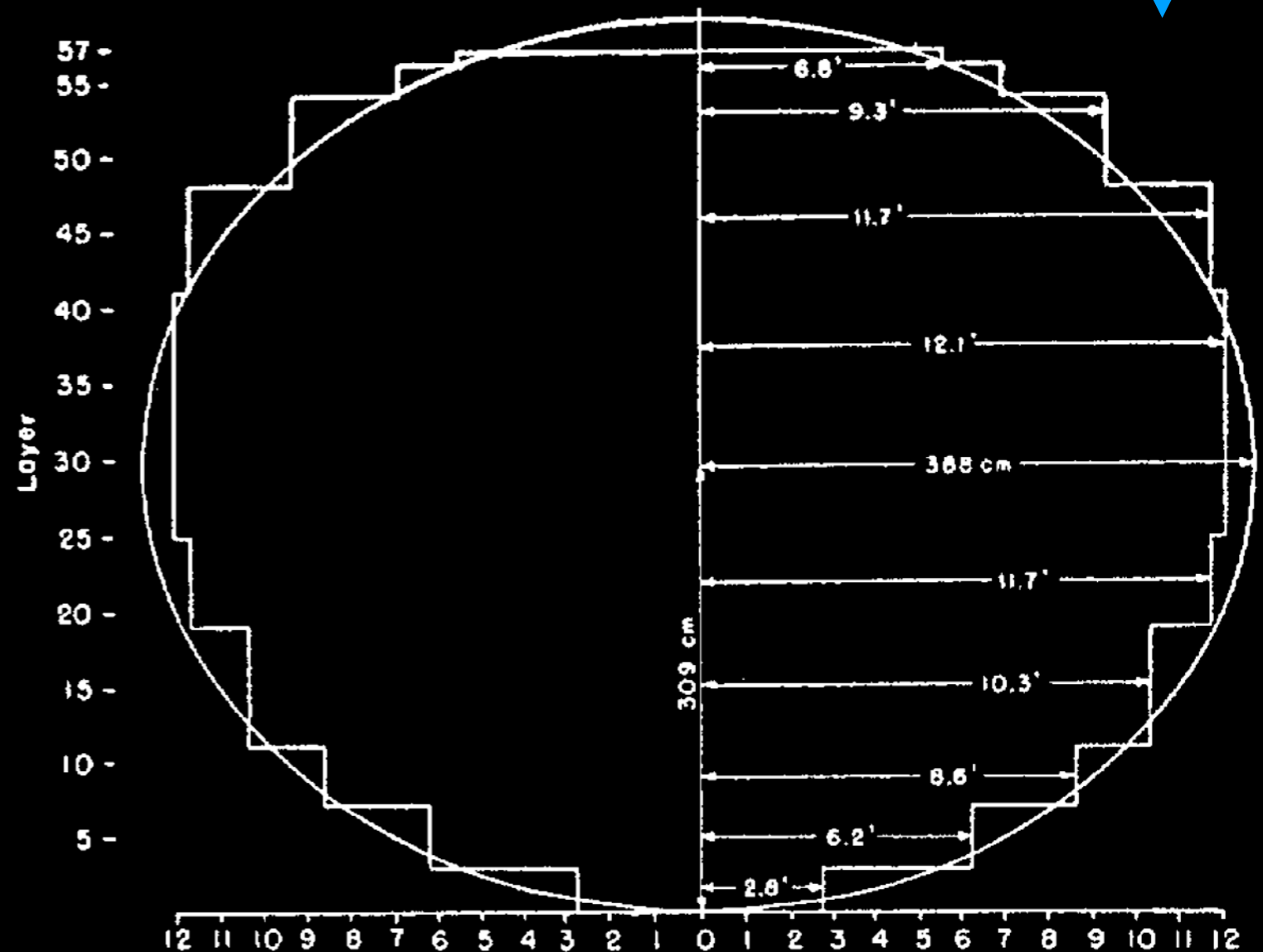
← **Columbia / early Chicago piles:**
Rectangular → easy to build, but large
neutron losses

Improving the Pile



← **Columbia / early Chicago piles:**
Rectangular → easy to build, but large neutron losses

Loss-minimizing shape:
As close to a sphere as possible



Improving the pile

Improving the pile



Leona Woods

Improving the pile

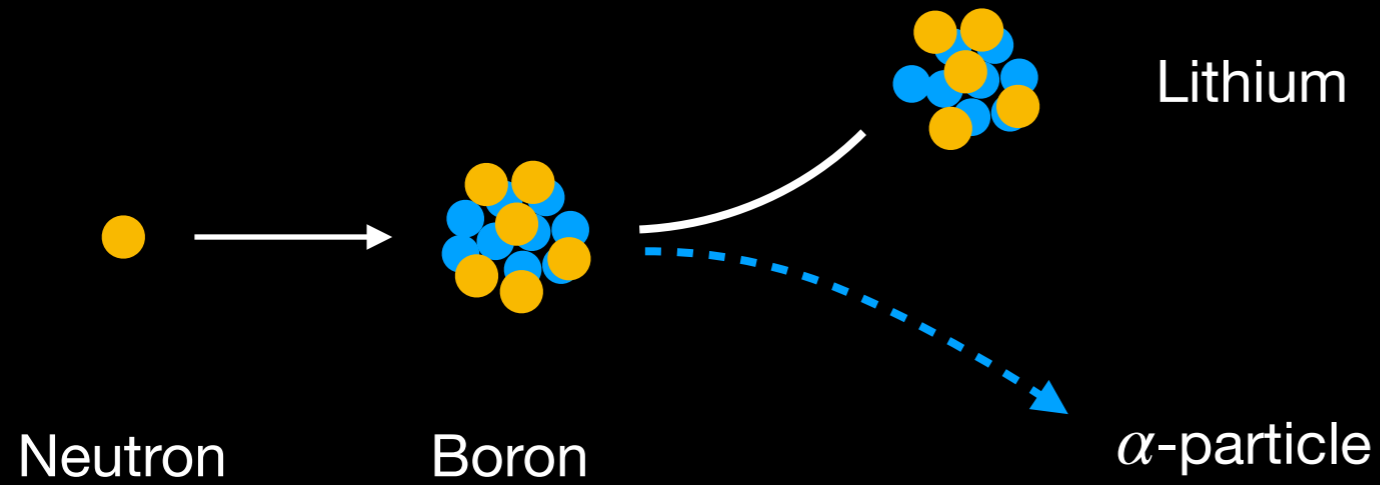
Boron-trifluoride (BF₃) counters ...



Leona Woods

Improving the pile

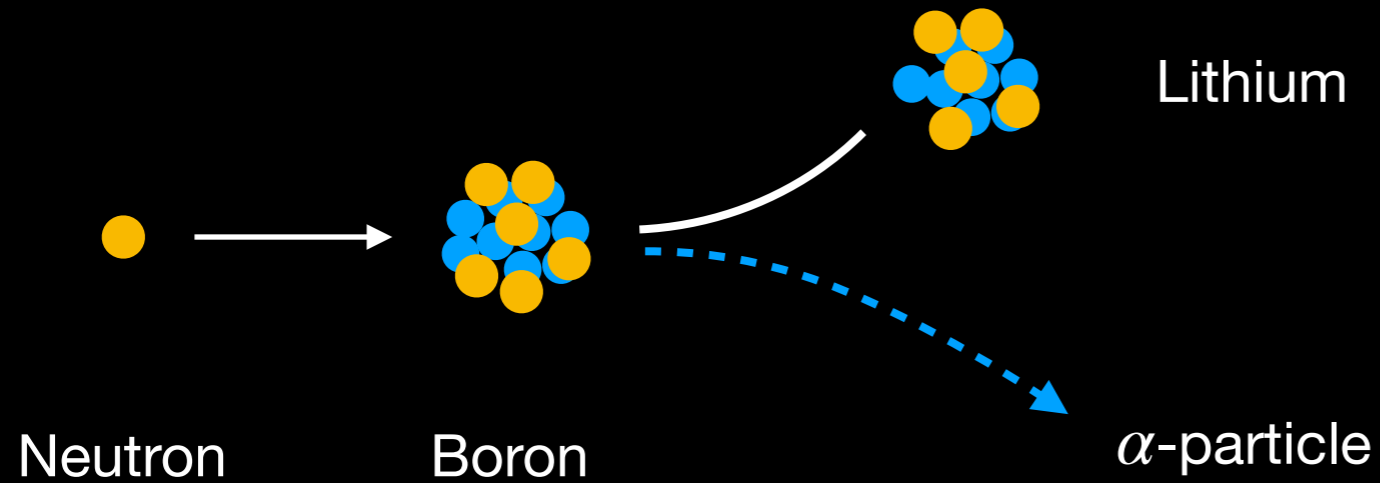
Boron-trifluoride (BF_3) counters ...



Leona Woods

Improving the pile

Boron-trifluoride (BF₃) counters ...



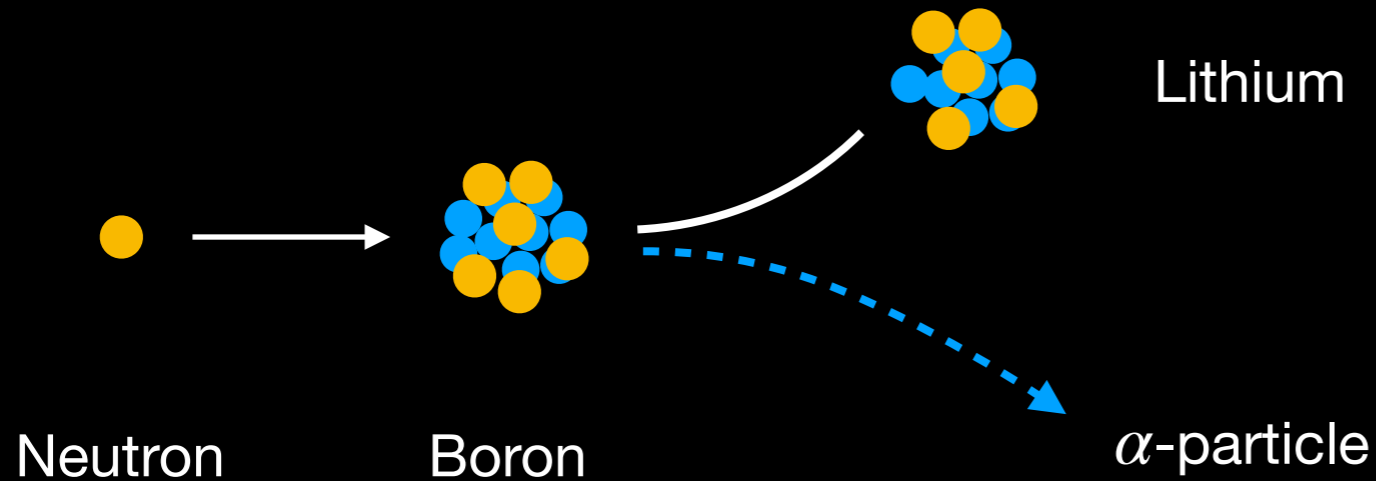
... turn a nuisance into a virtue



Leona Woods

Improving the pile

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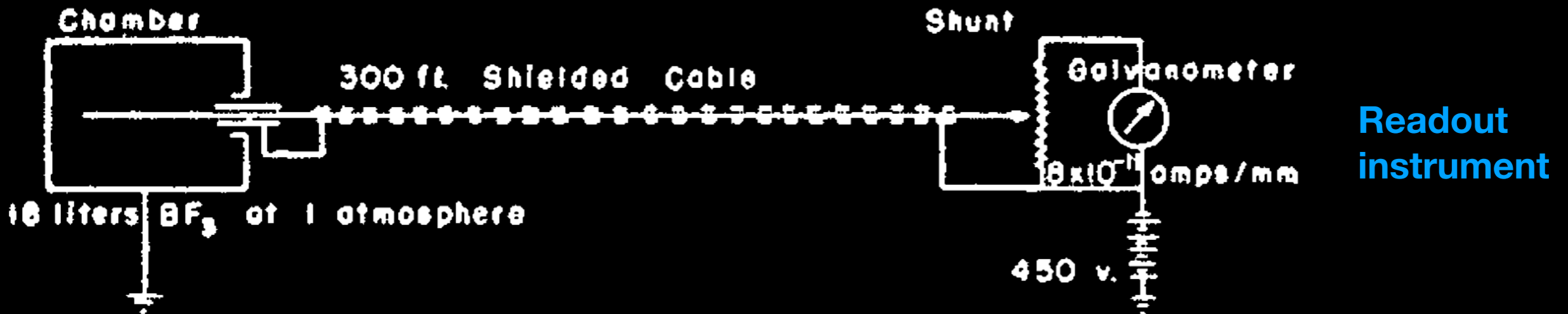


... turn a nuisance into a virtue



Leona Woods

Detection chamber
inside the pile



The site of the first pile

The site of the first pile



Argonne Forest
Preserve

The site of the first pile



Argonne Forest
Preserve

“Site A”
*(Today: Close to
Argonne National Lab)*



The site of the first pile

The workers at Argonne were on strike!

The site of the first pile

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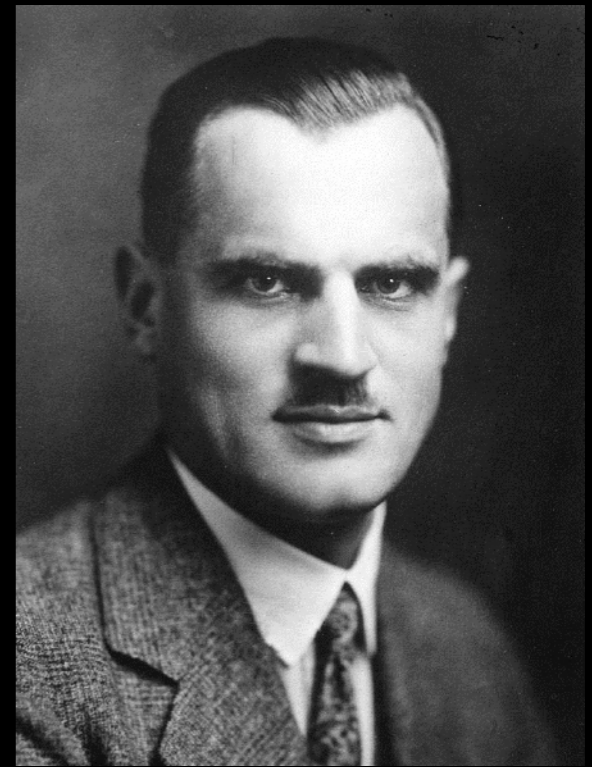
“Should we build the pile at Stagg Field?”

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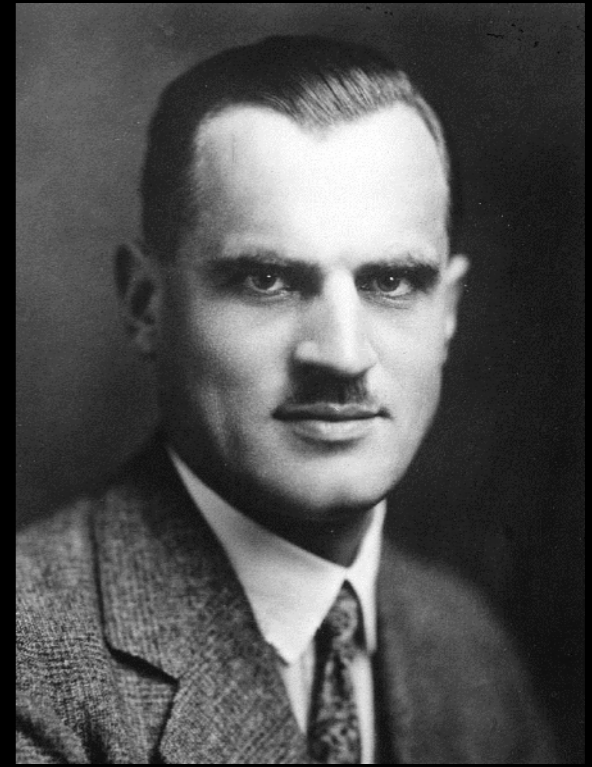
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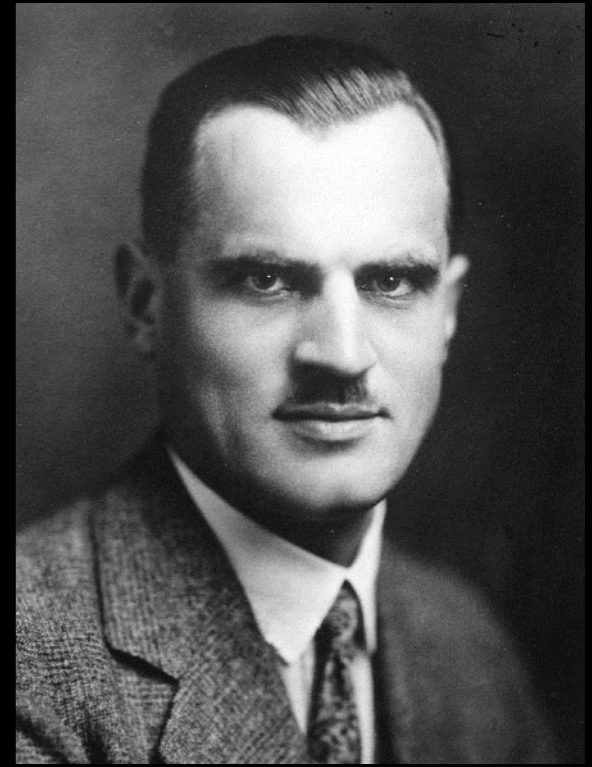
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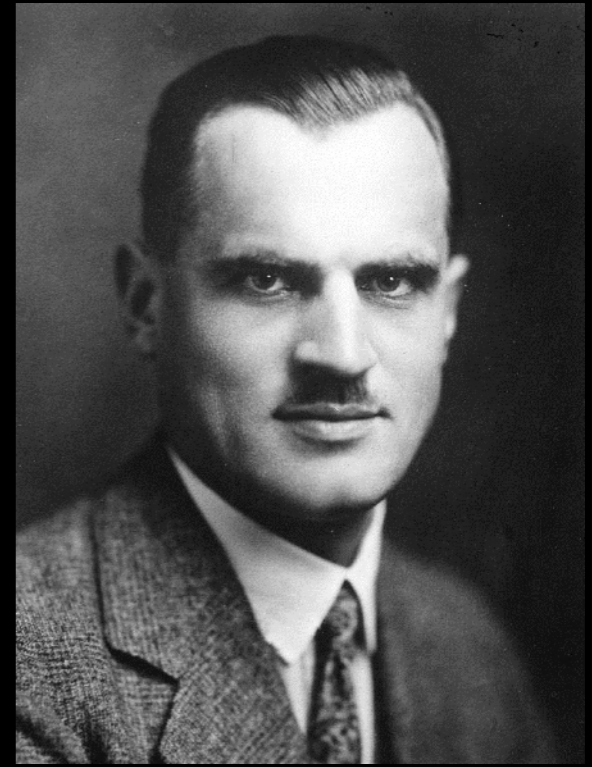
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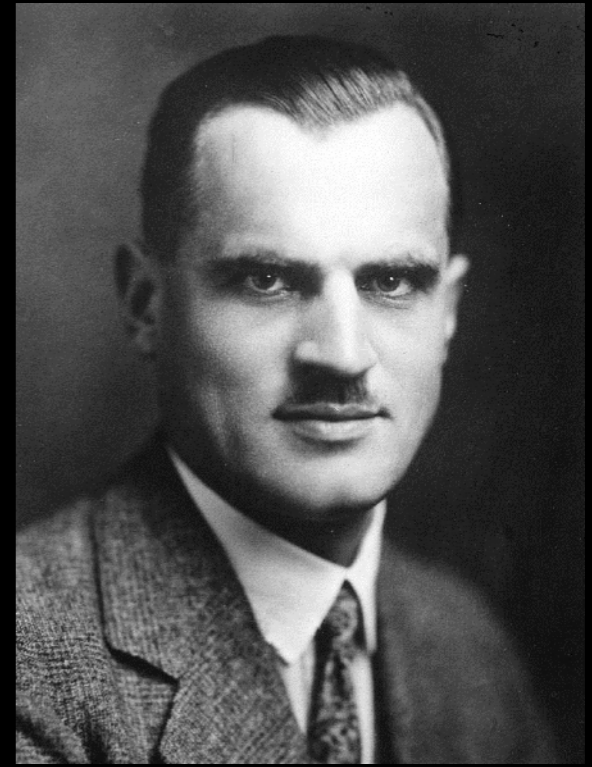
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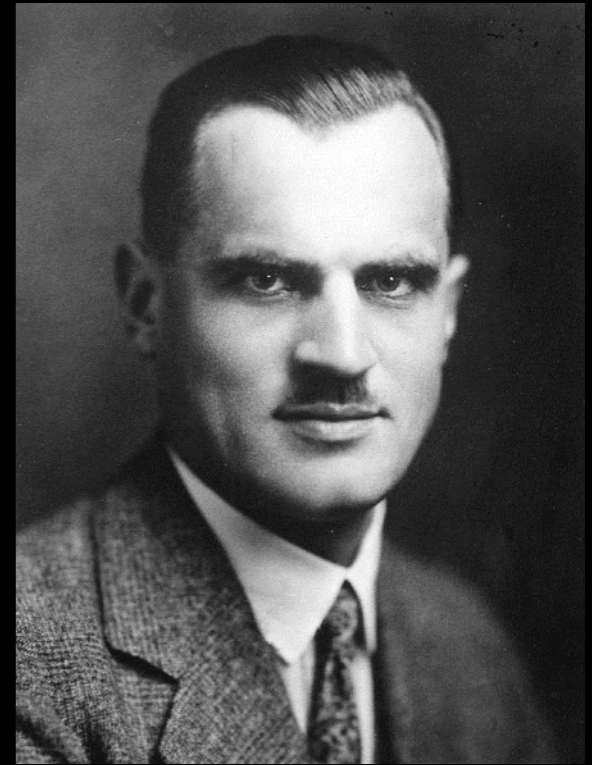
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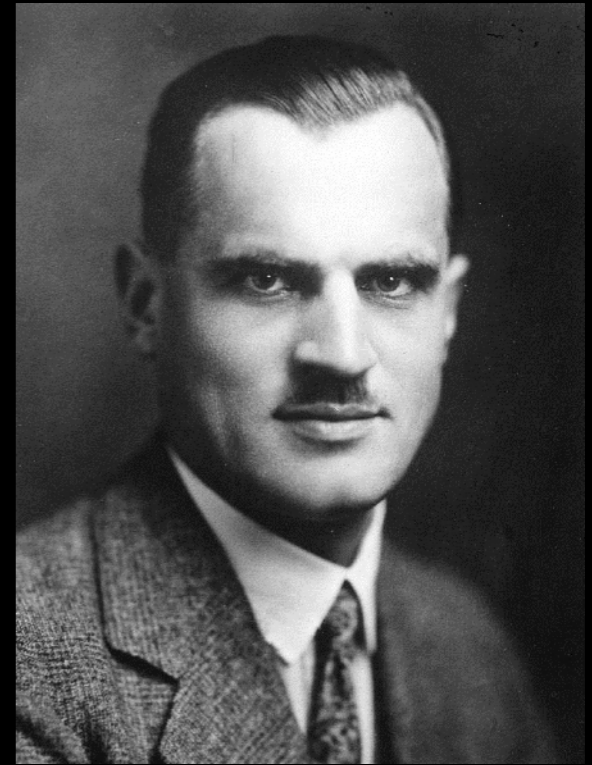
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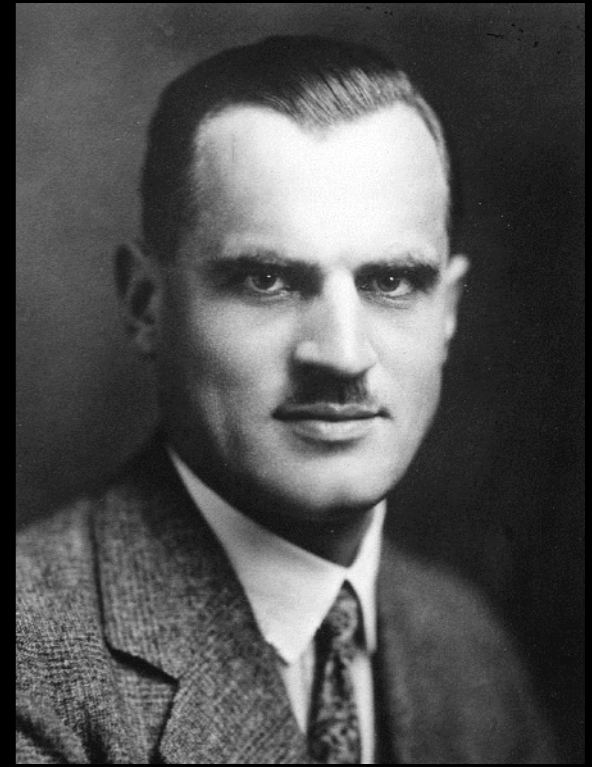
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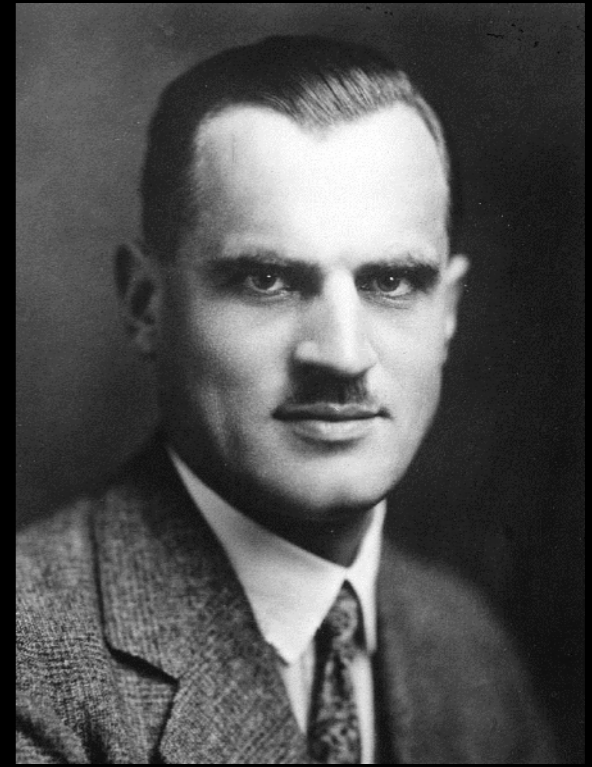
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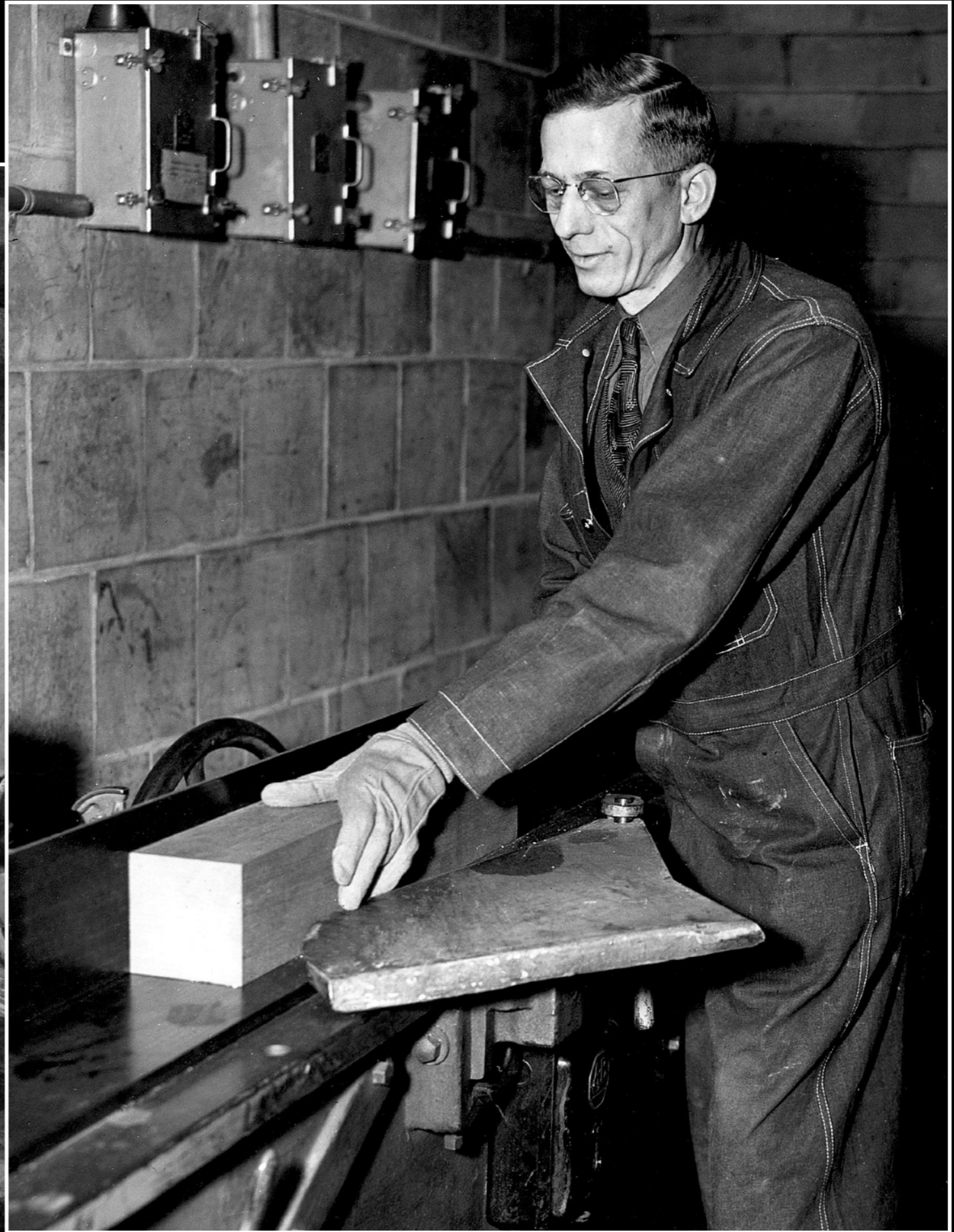
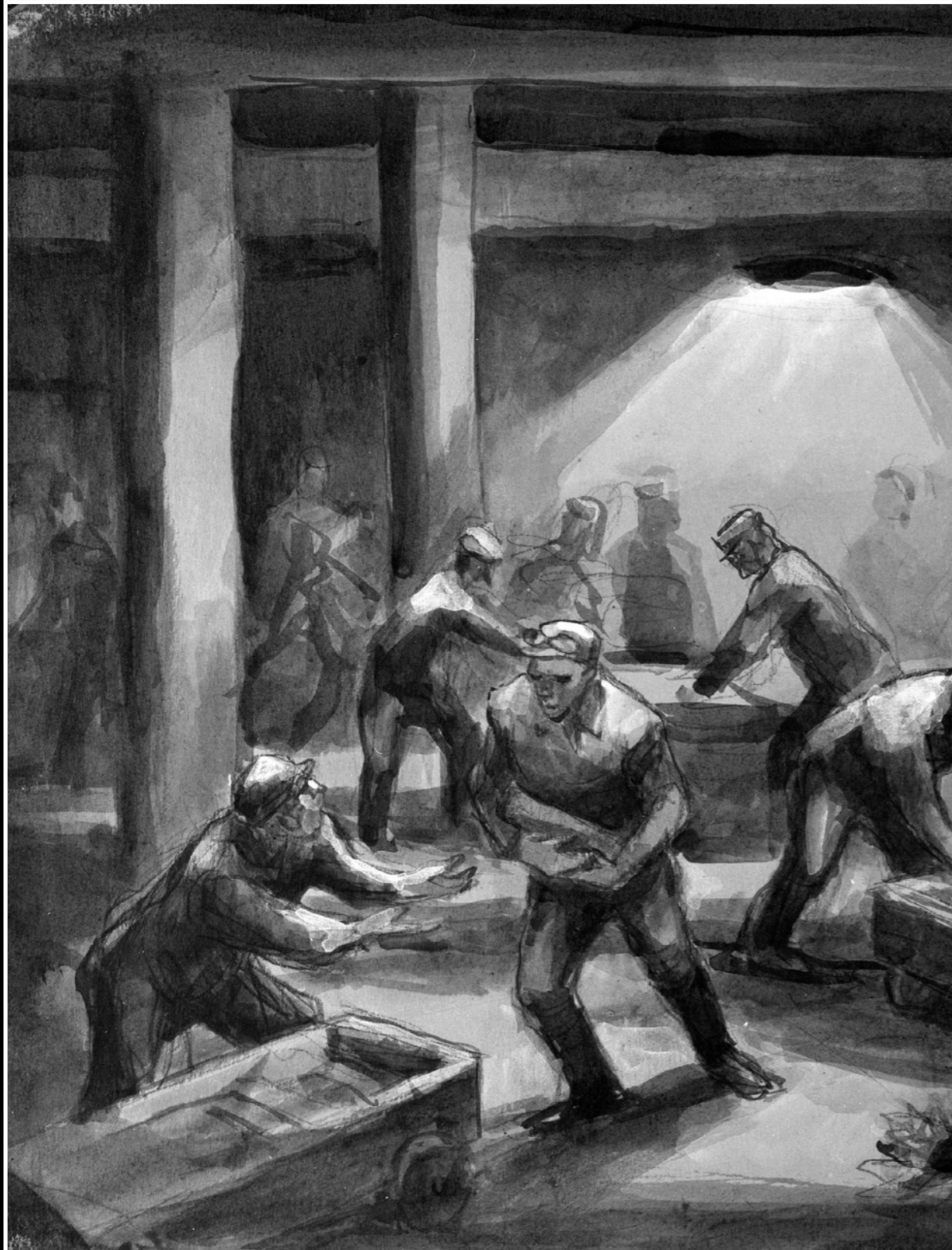
Based on considerations of the University’s welfare, the only answer he could have given would have been—no.

*And this answer would have been wrong.
So I assumed the responsibility myself.”*

Building CP-1

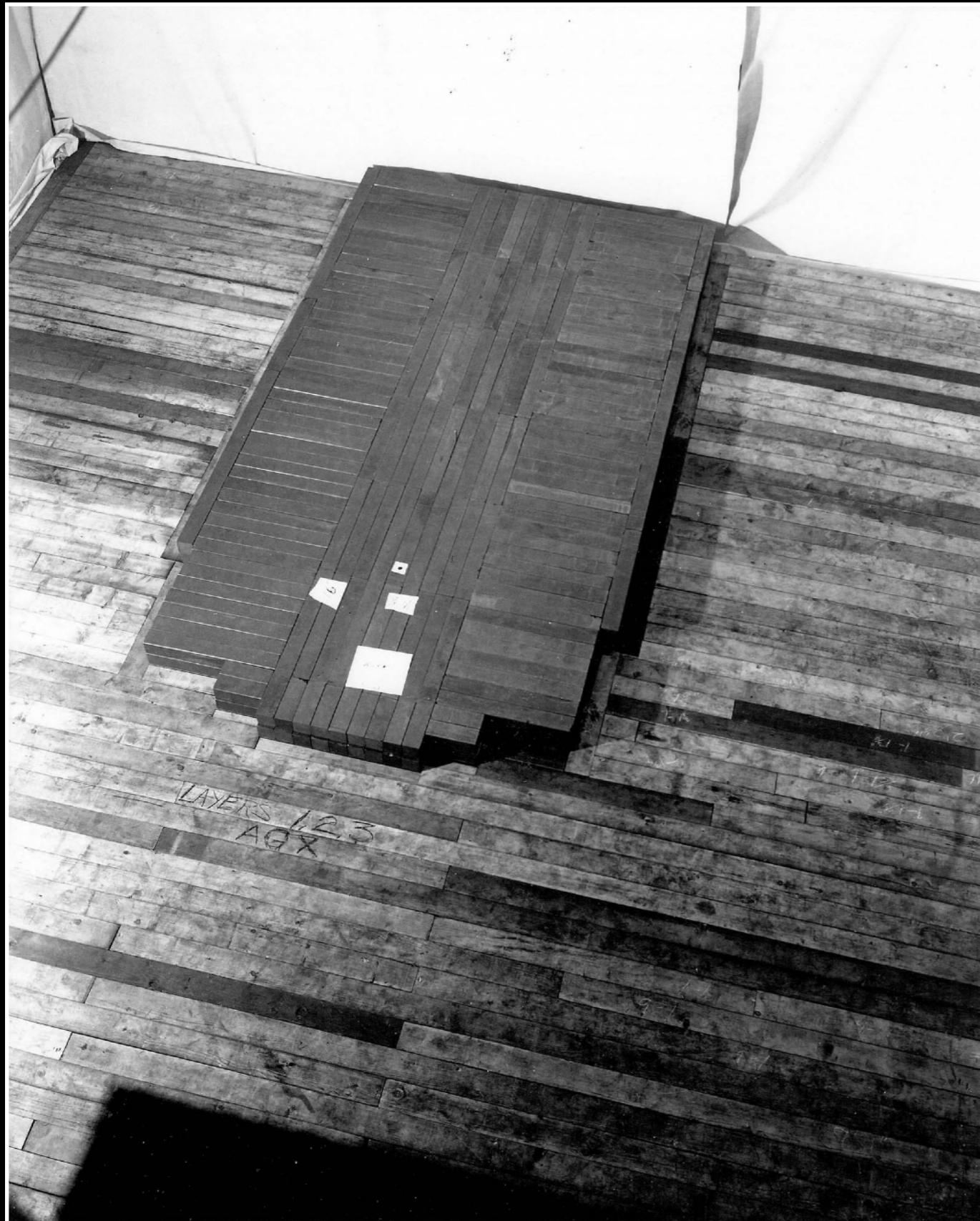


Building CP-1

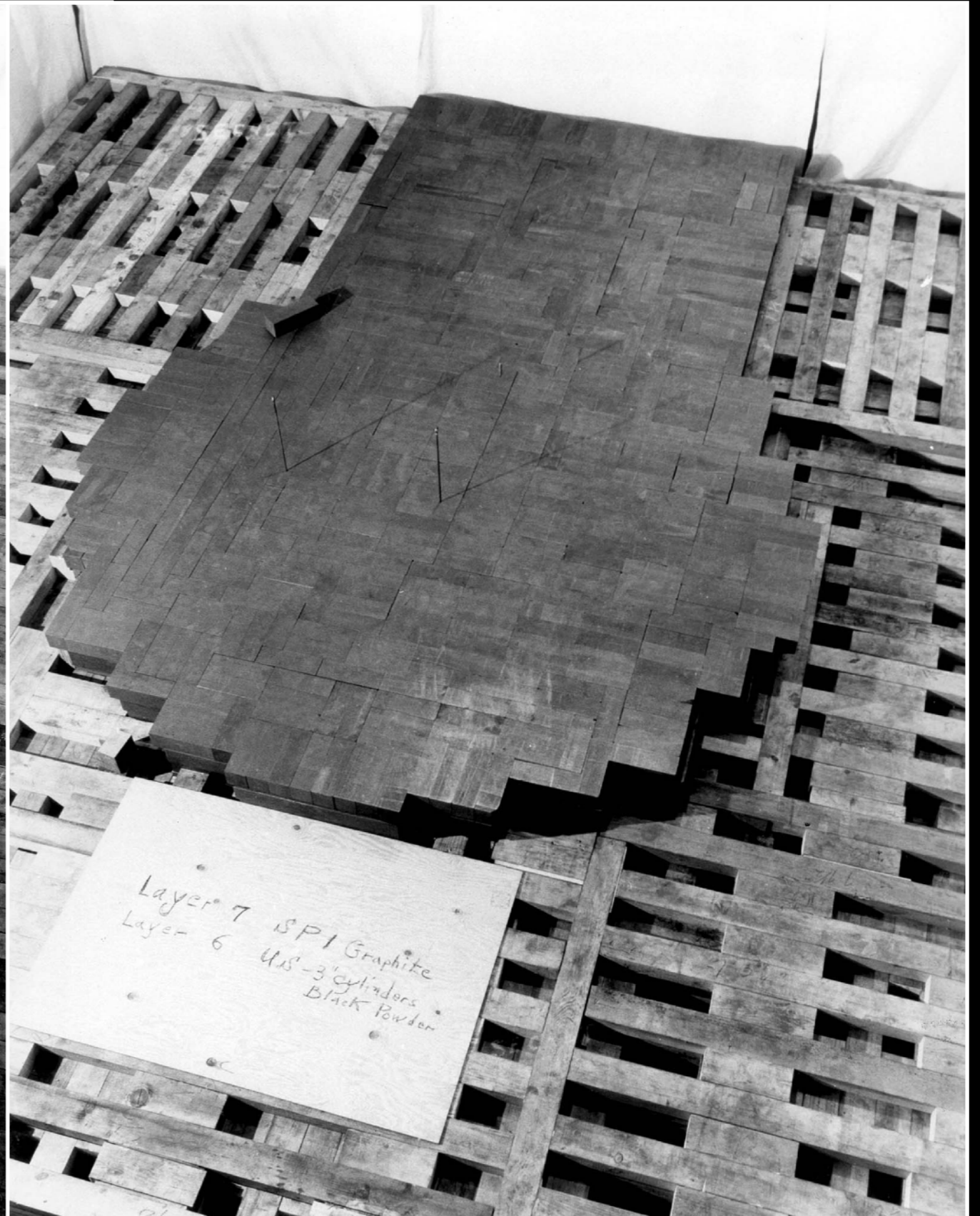
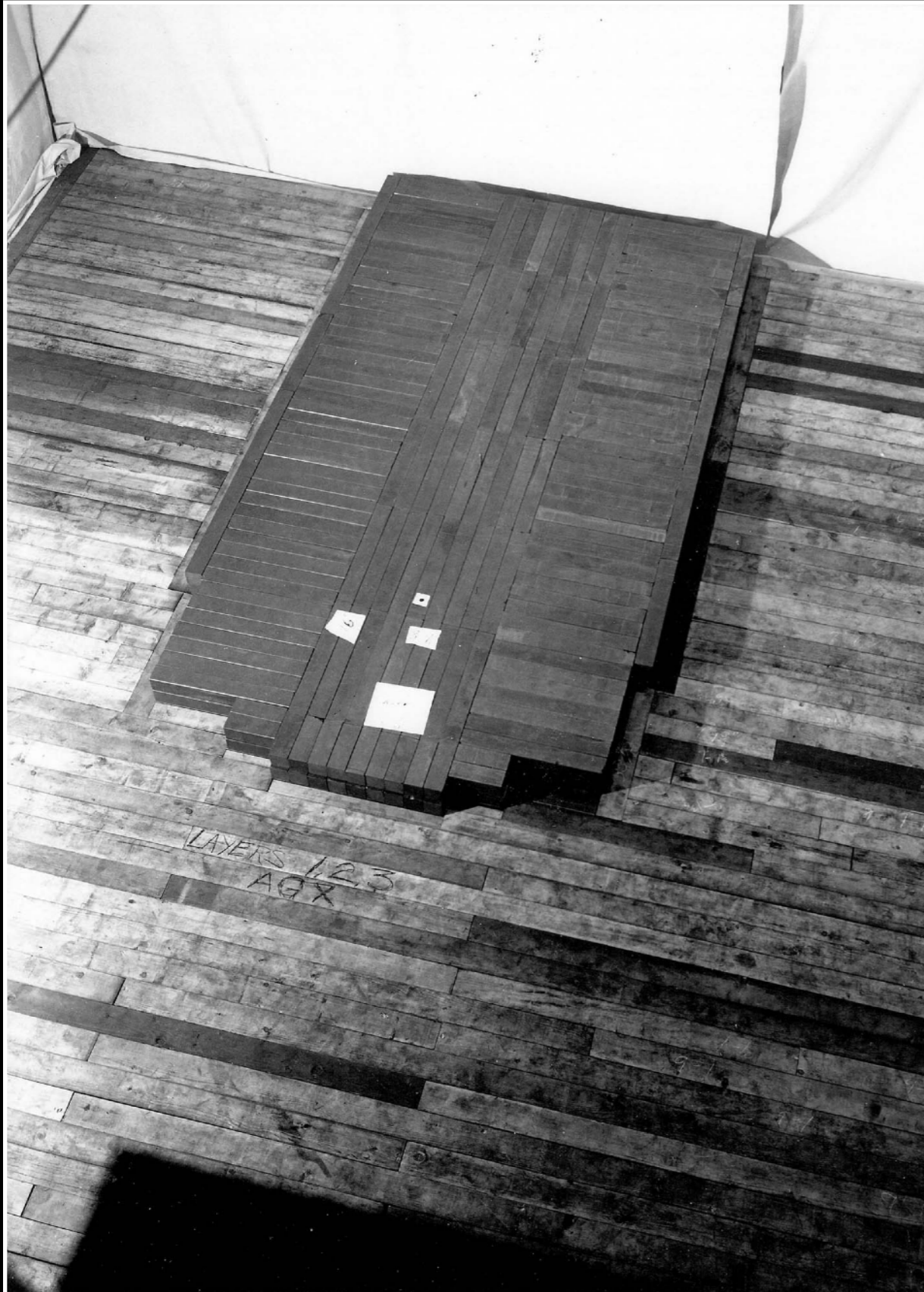


Building CP-1: layer by layer

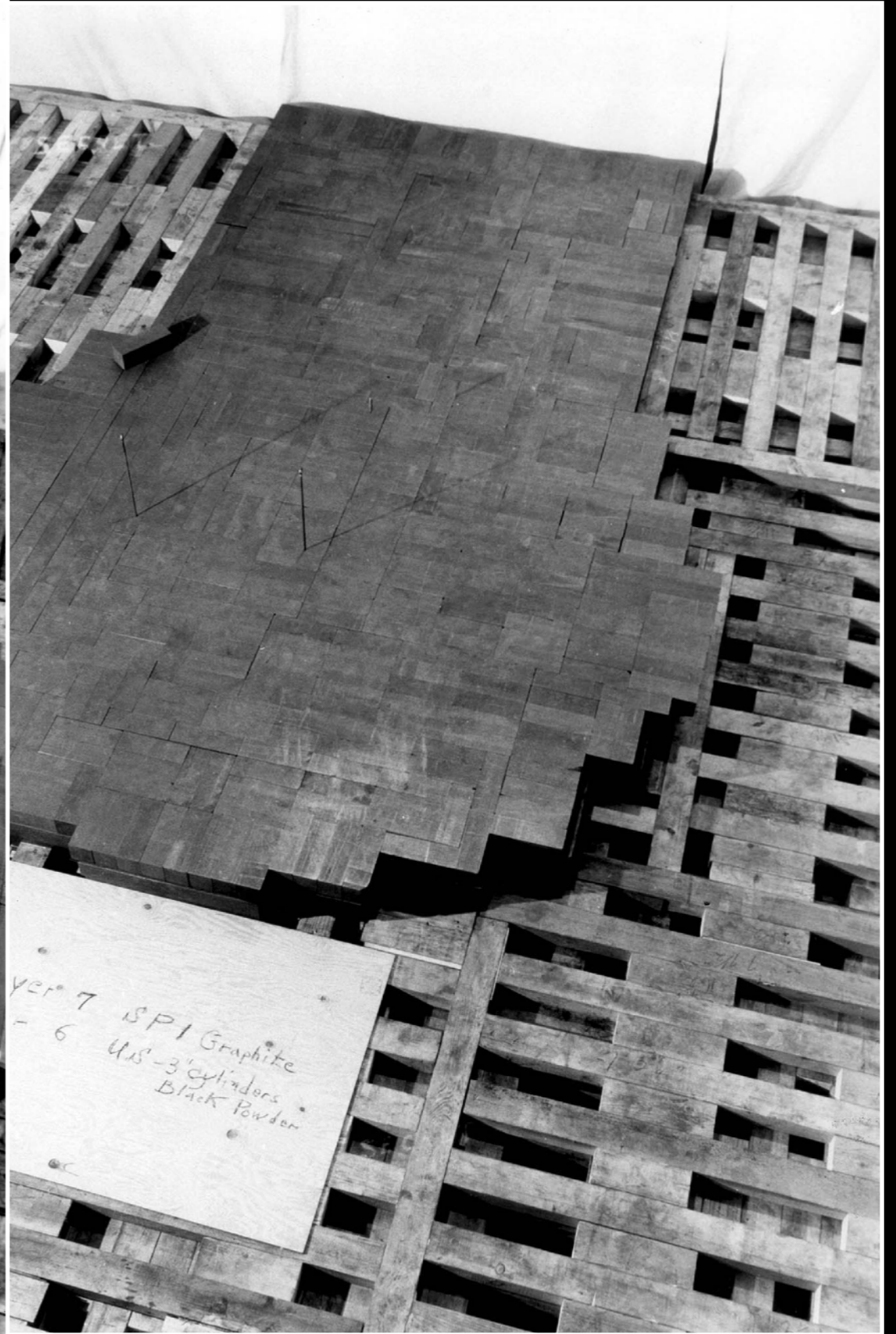
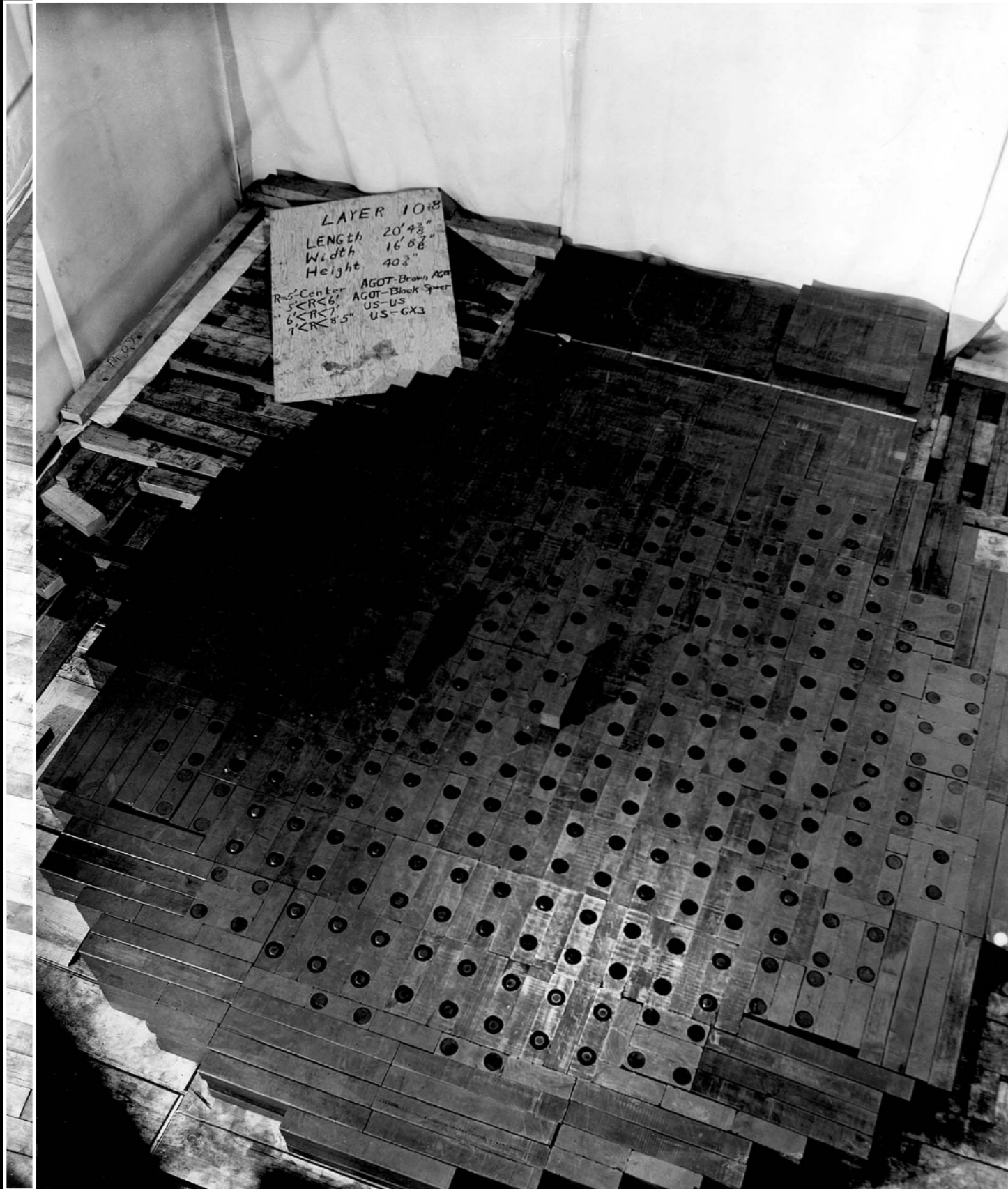
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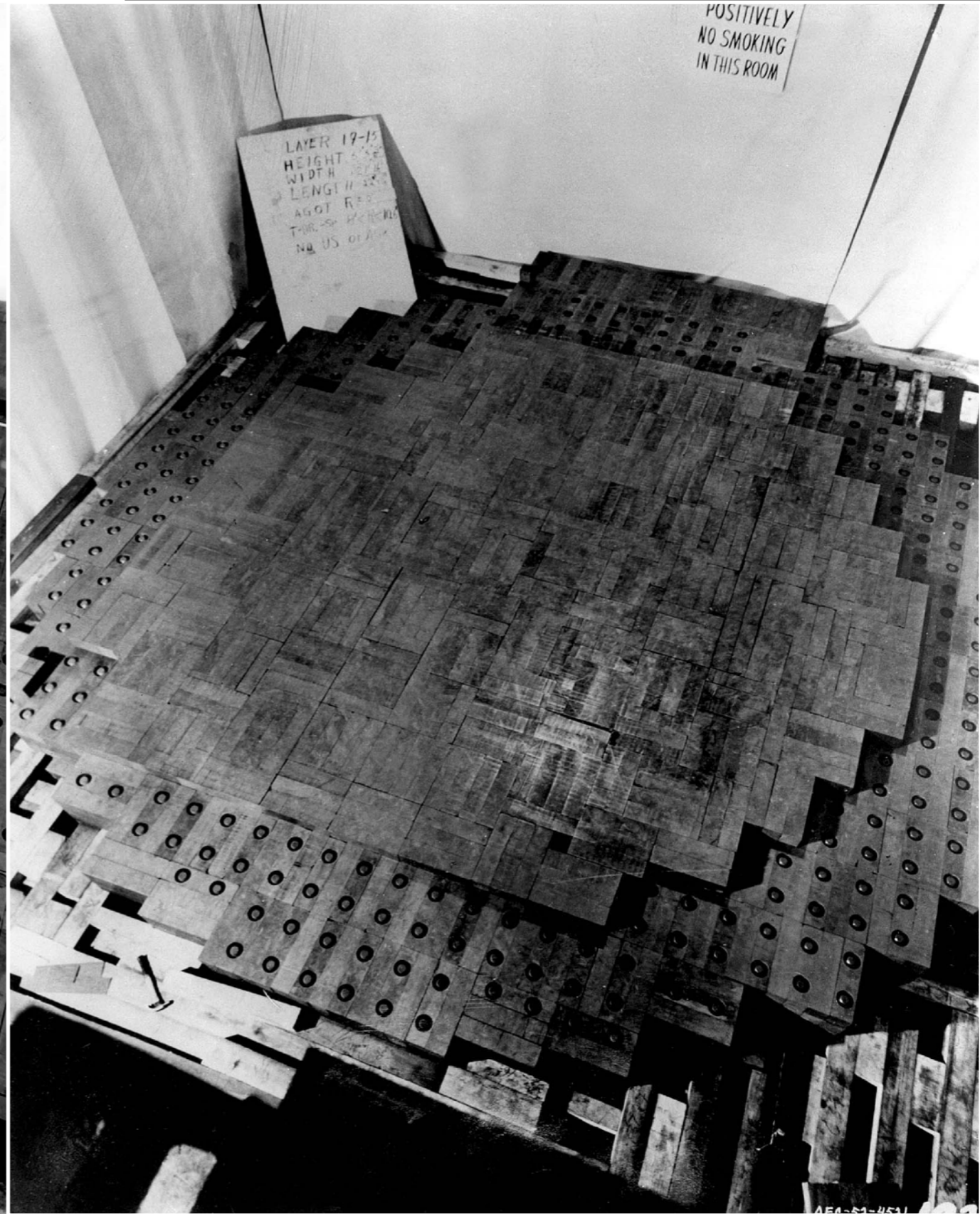
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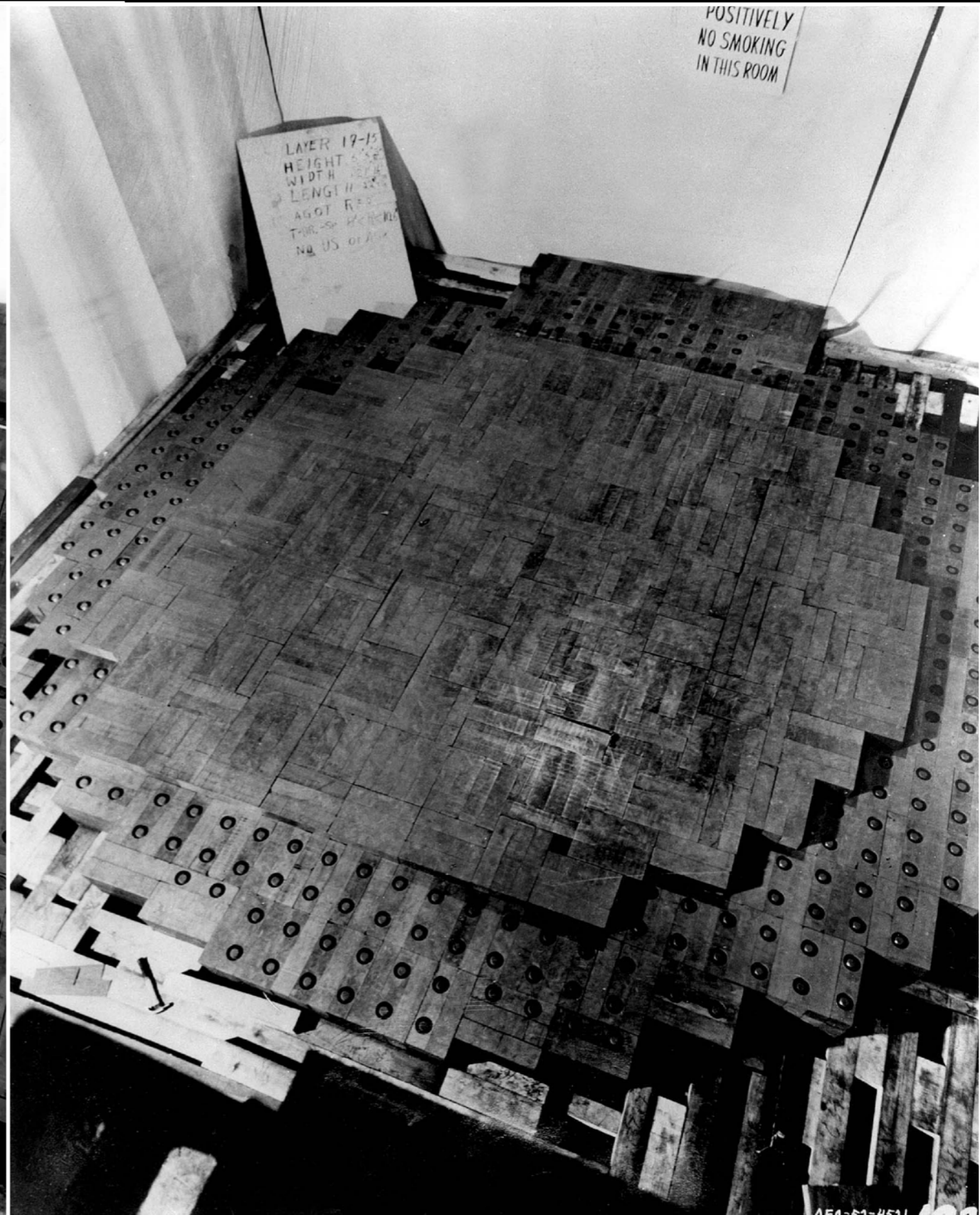
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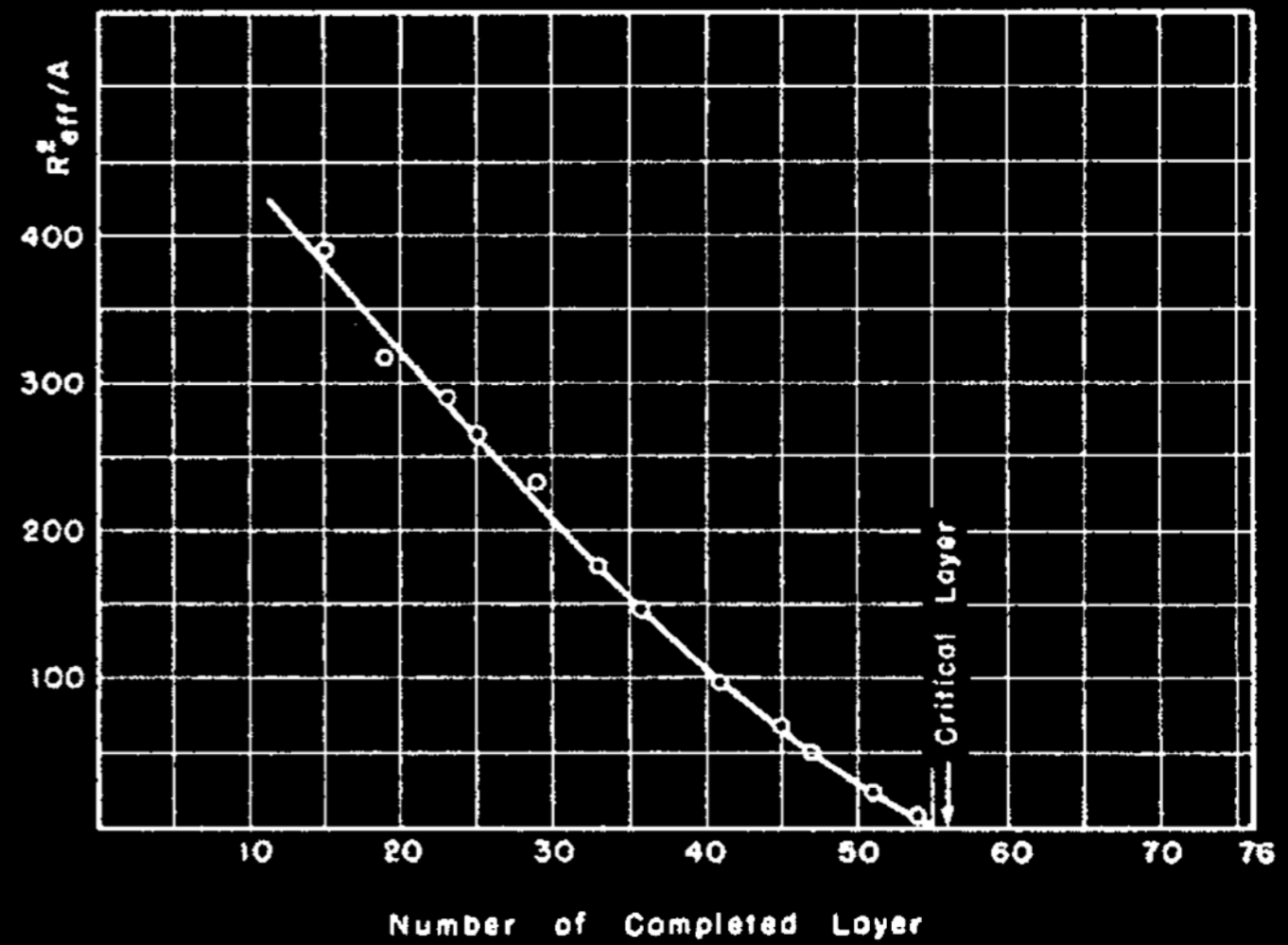


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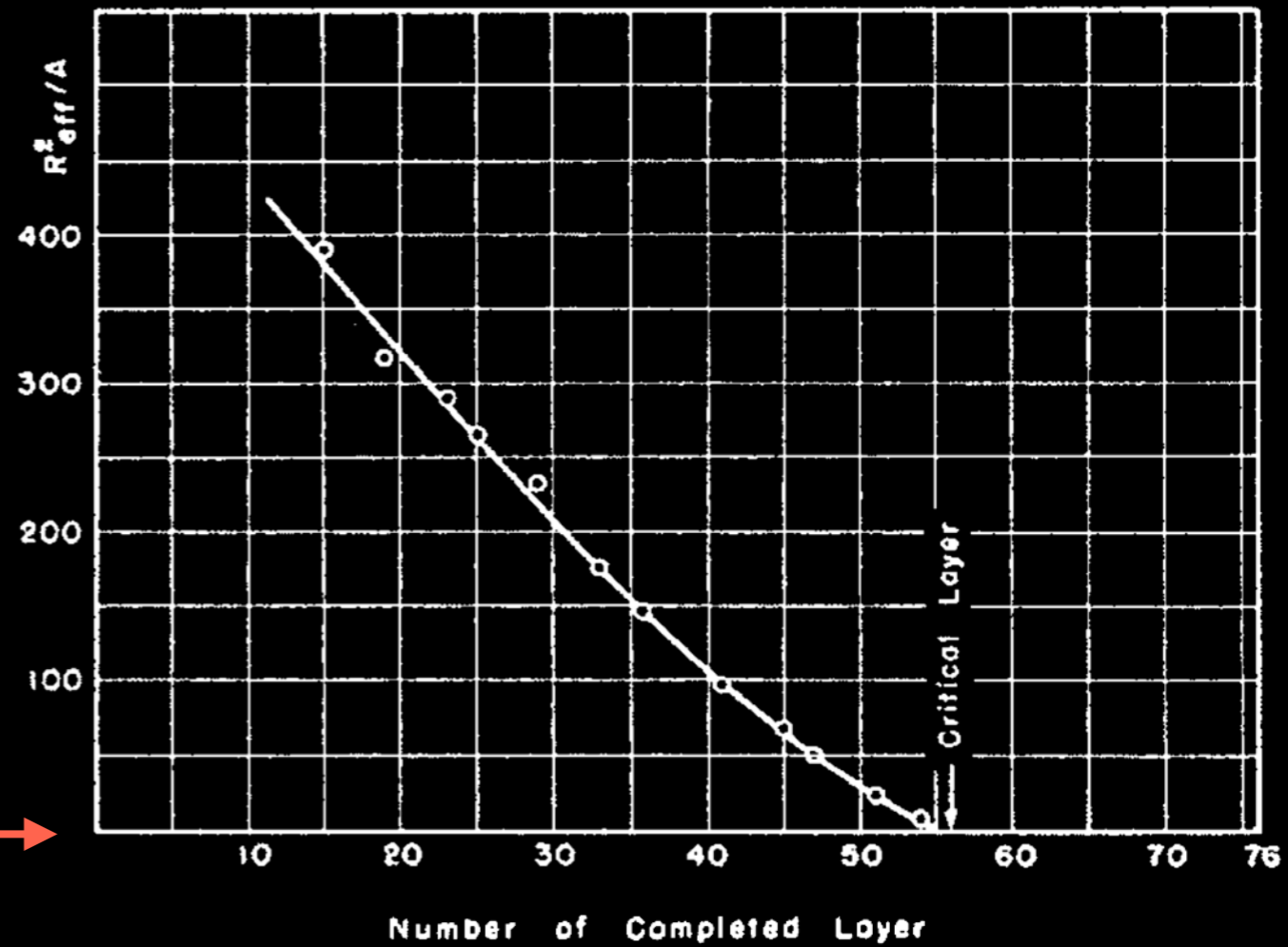
Approaching
criticality ... safely

Approaching criticality ... safely



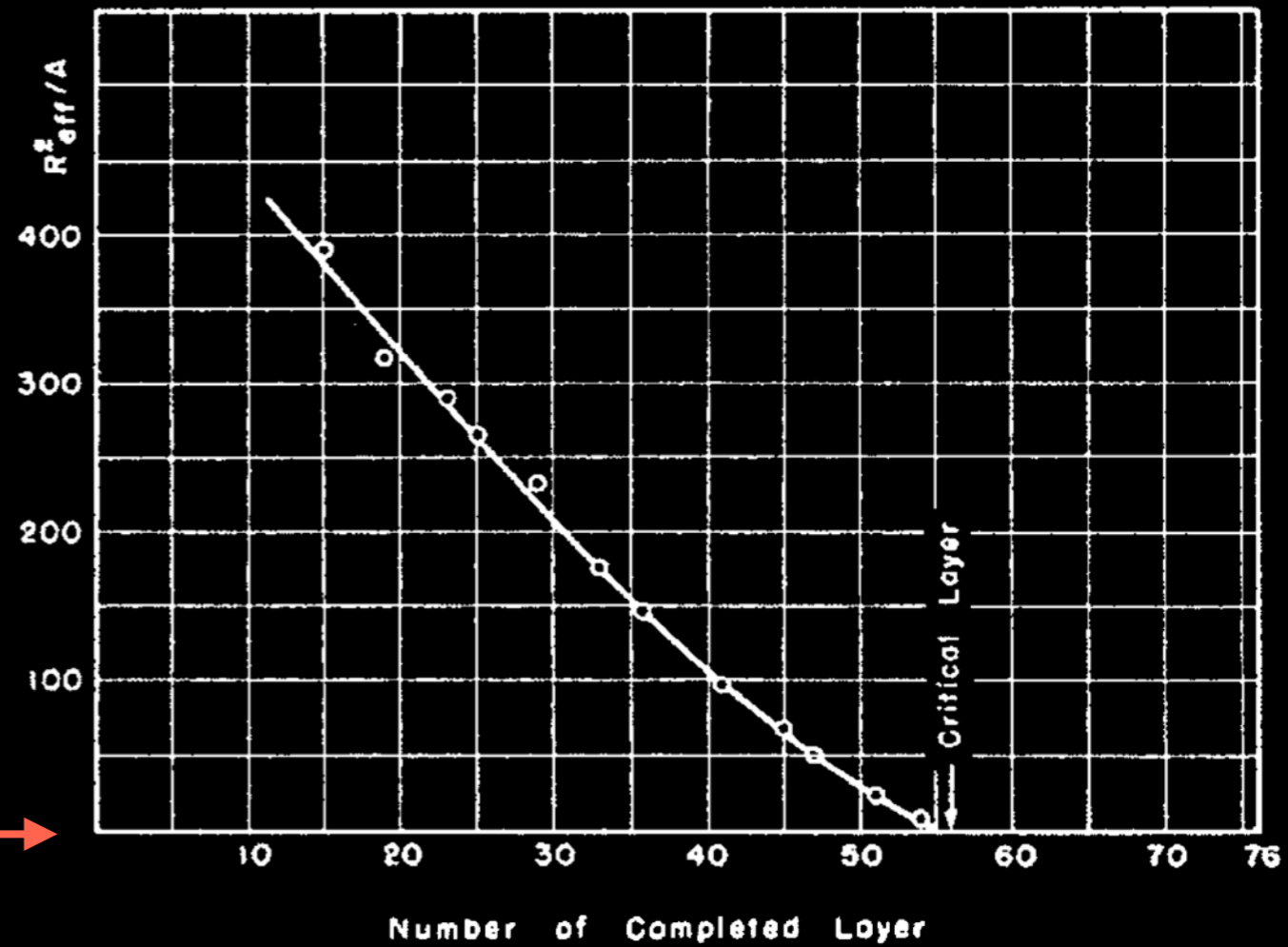
Approaching criticality ... safely

Reaction becomes self-sustaining
(*"Pile becomes critical"*)

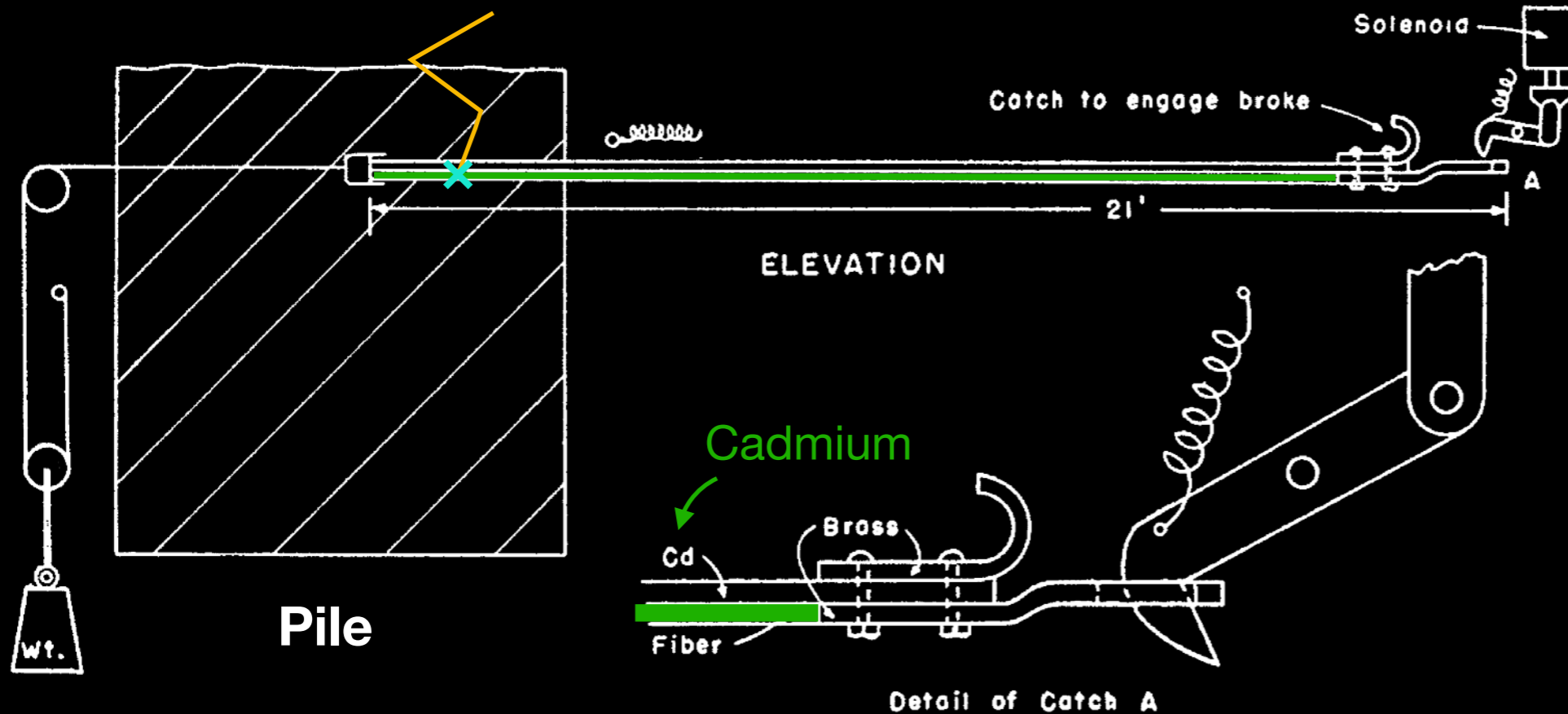


Approaching criticality ... safely

Reaction becomes self-sustaining
(“Pile becomes critical”)

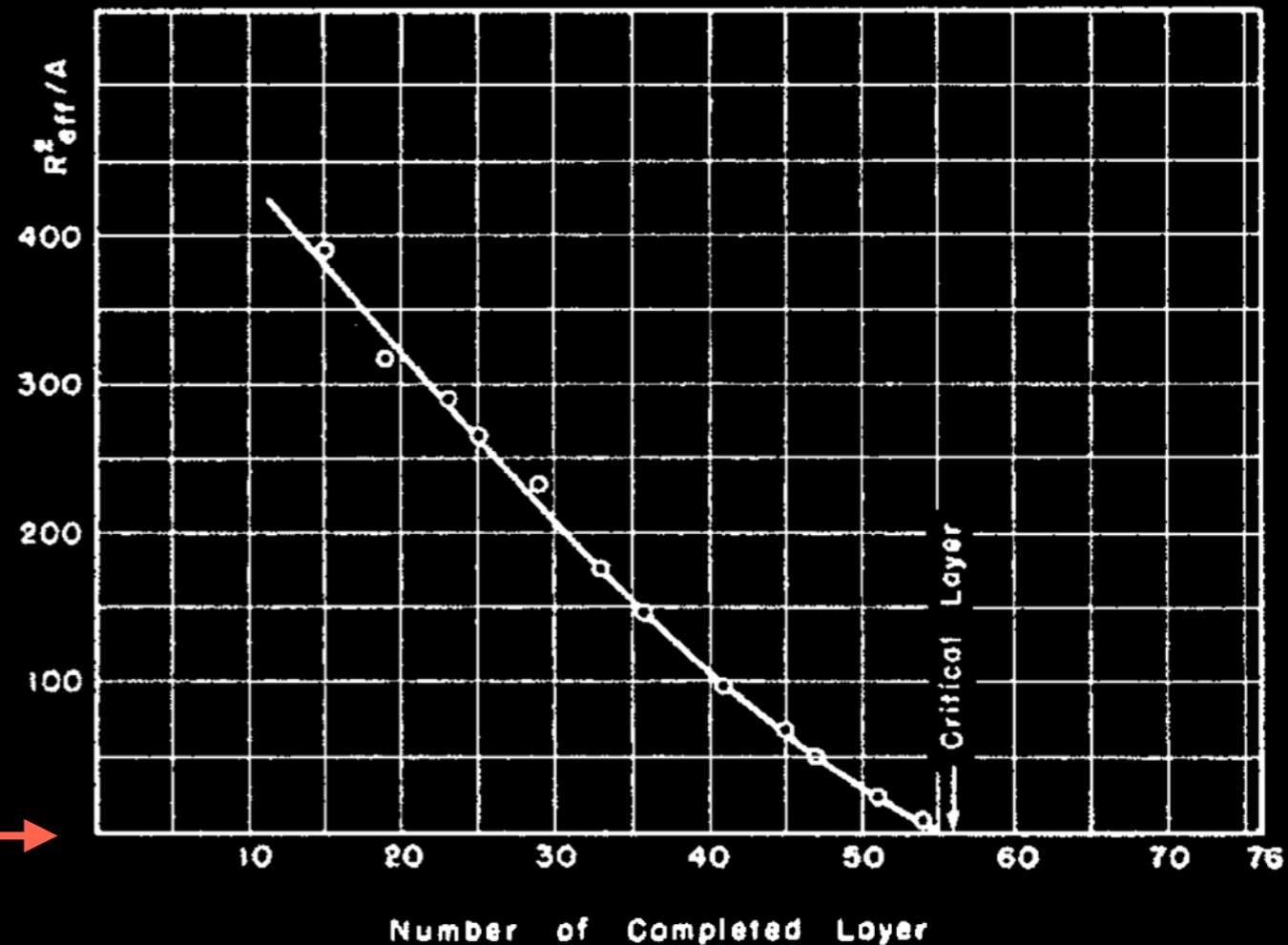


Neutron-absorbing “Zip” rod:

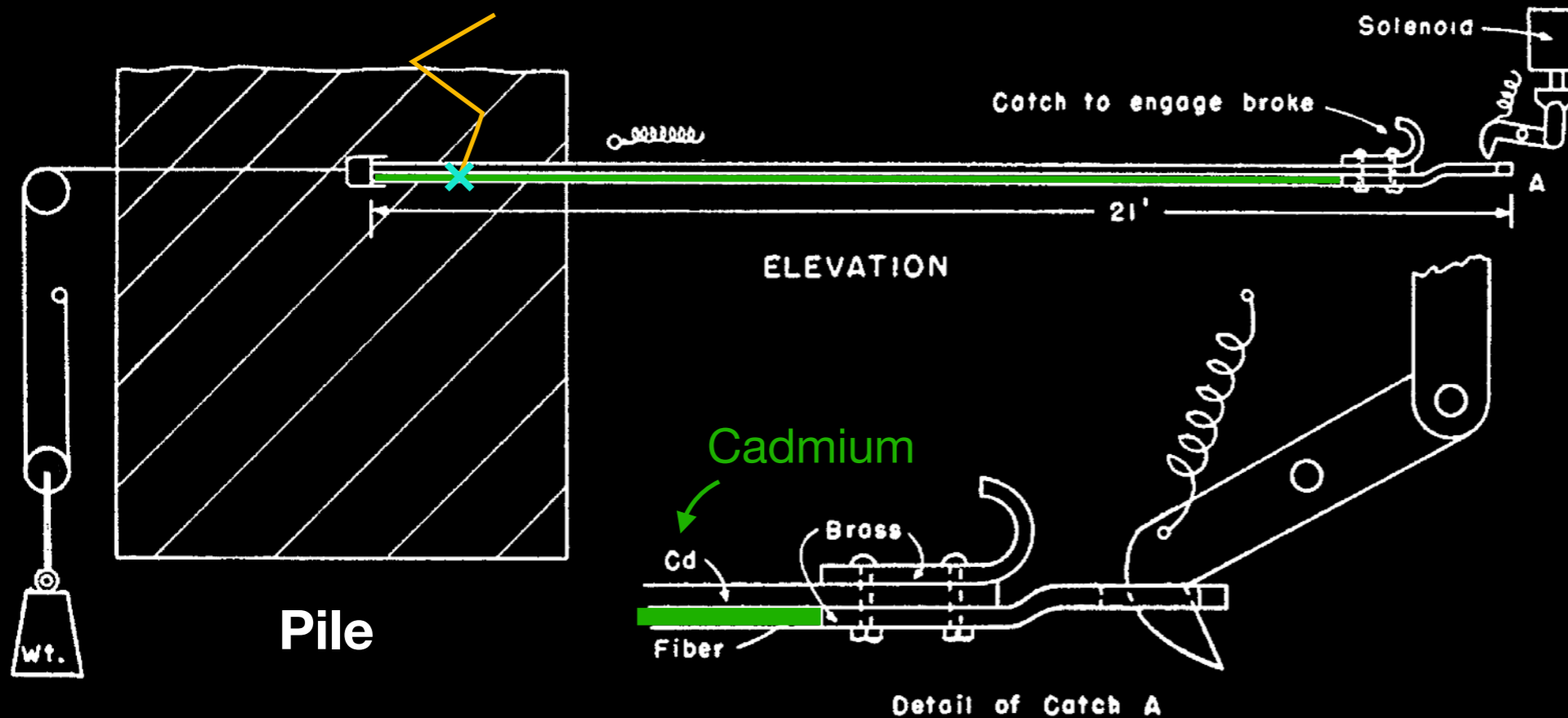


Approaching criticality ... safely

Reaction becomes self-sustaining
 ("Pile becomes critical")



Neutron-absorbing "Zip" rod:



Magnetic hook,
 automatically released

December 2, 1942

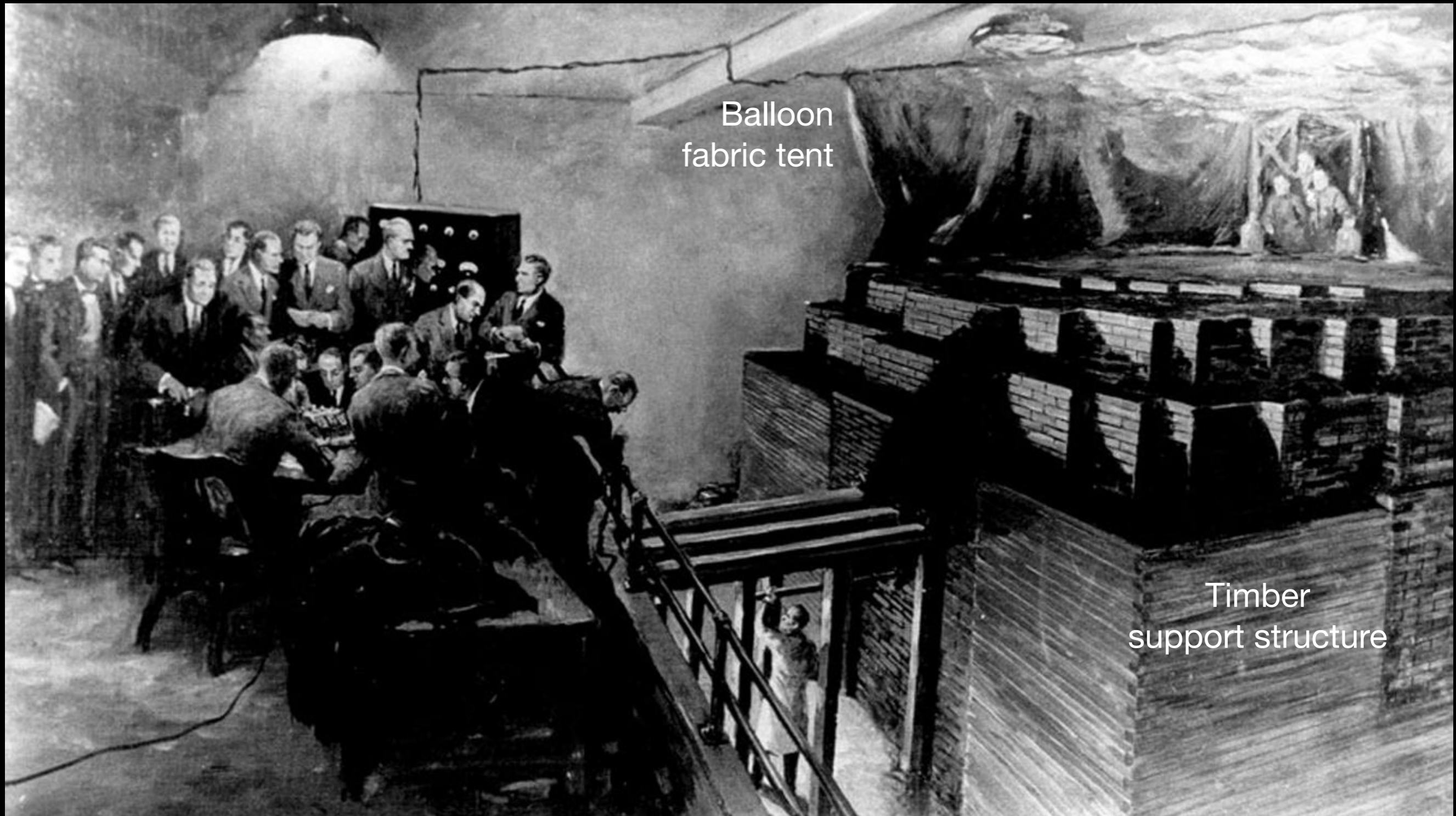


December 2, 1942



Timber
support structure

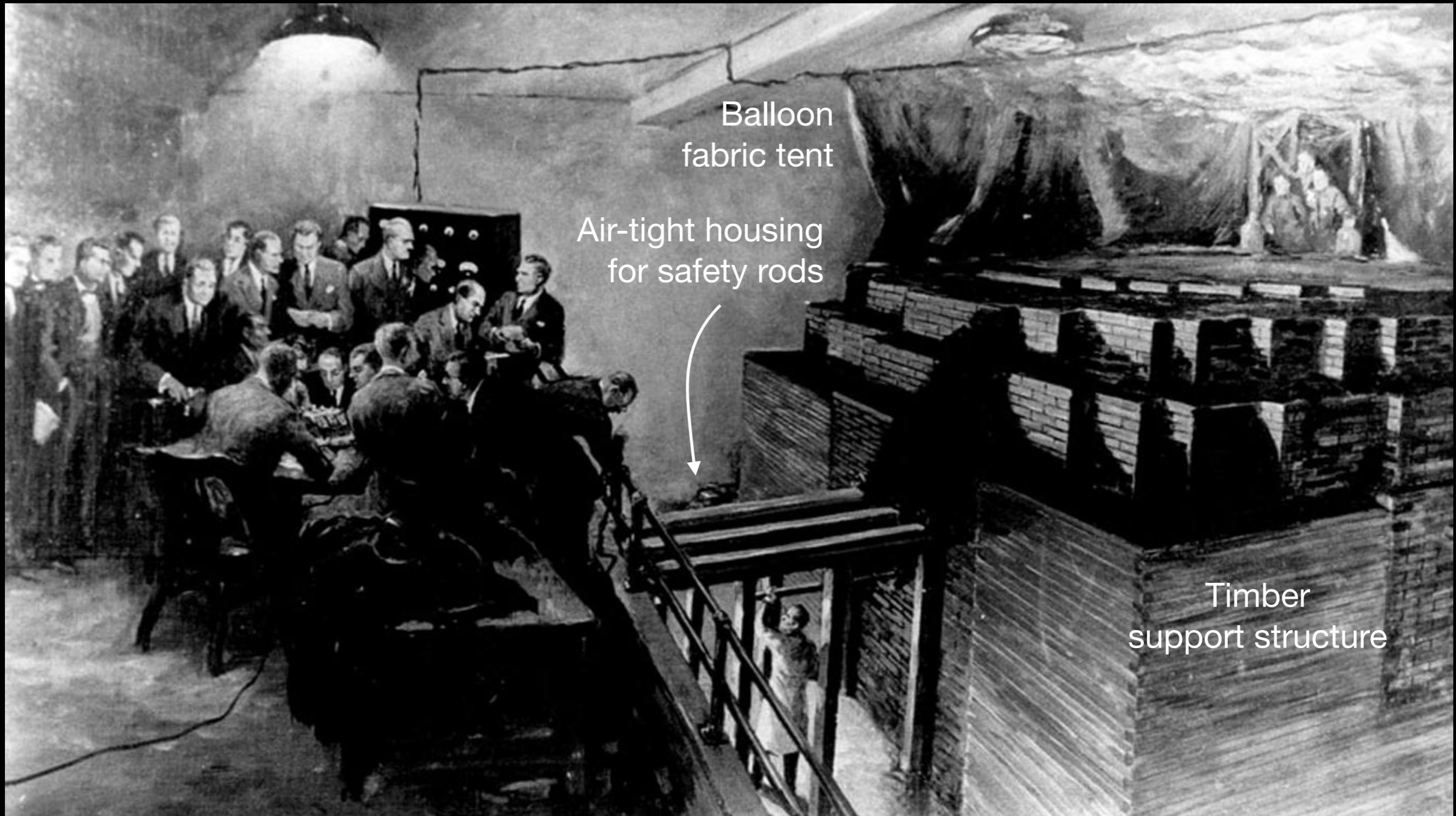
December 2, 1942



Balloon
fabric tent

Timber
support structure

December 2, 1942



Balloon
fabric tent

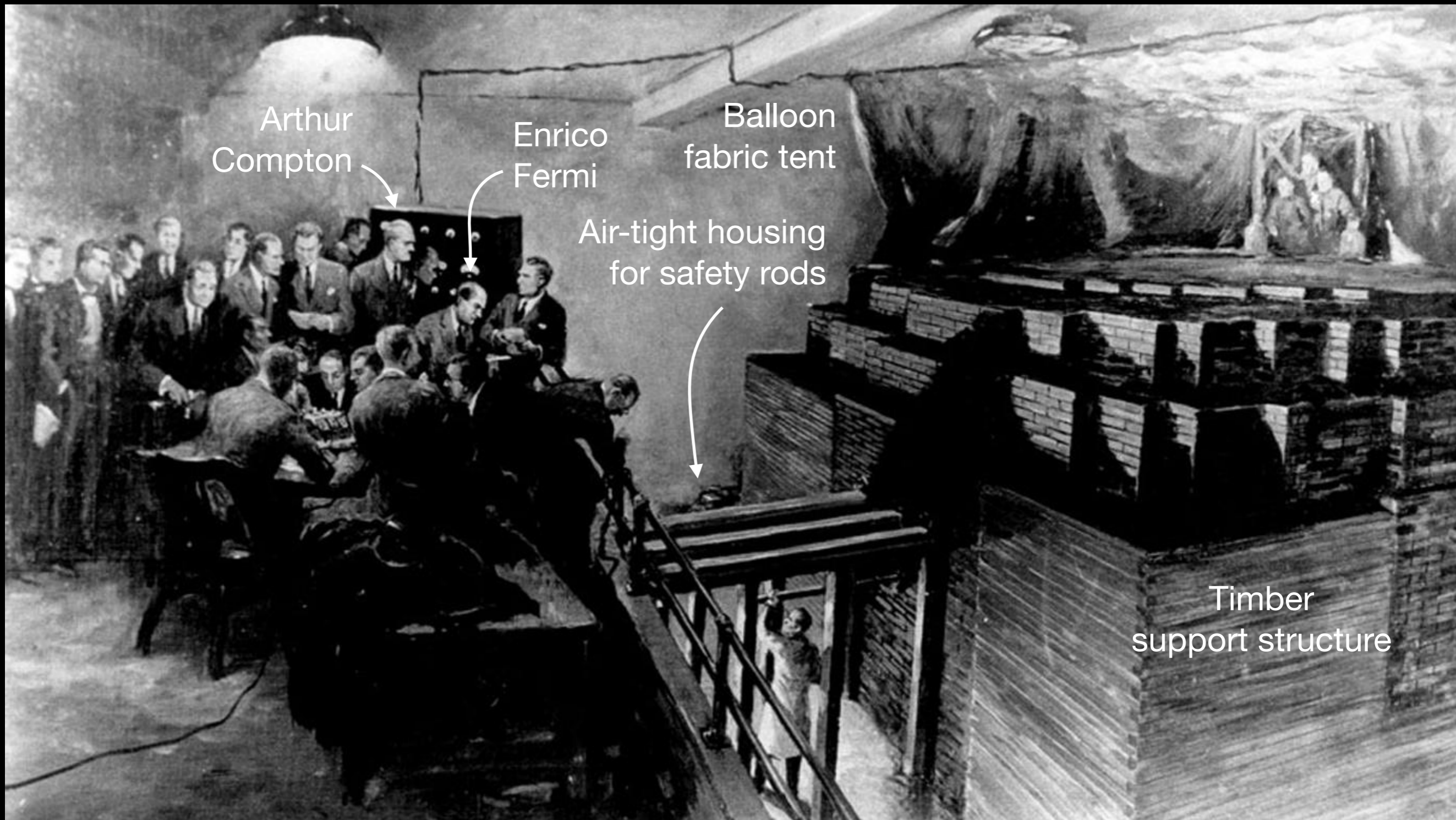
Air-tight housing
for safety rods

Timber
support structure

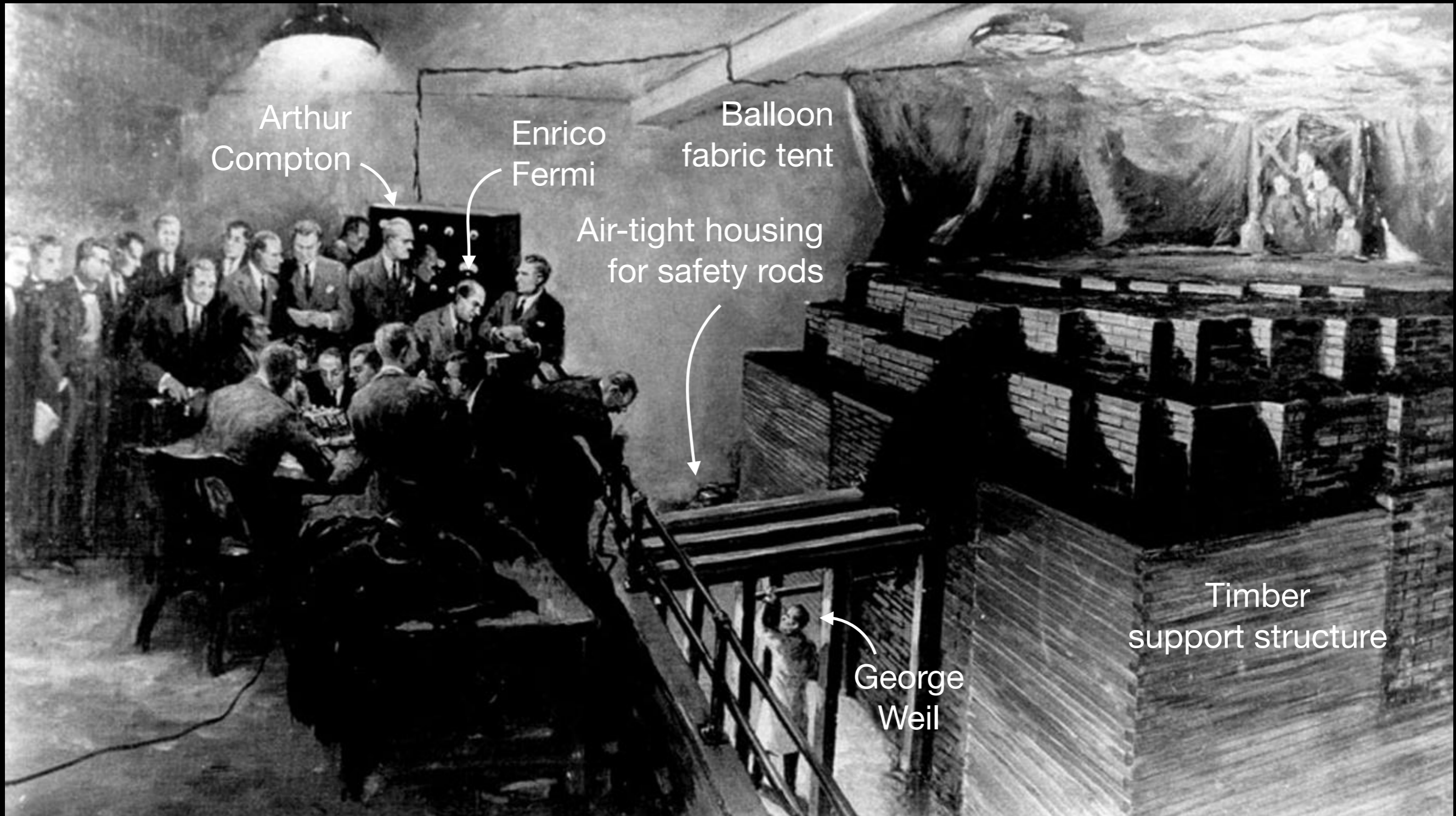
December 2, 1942



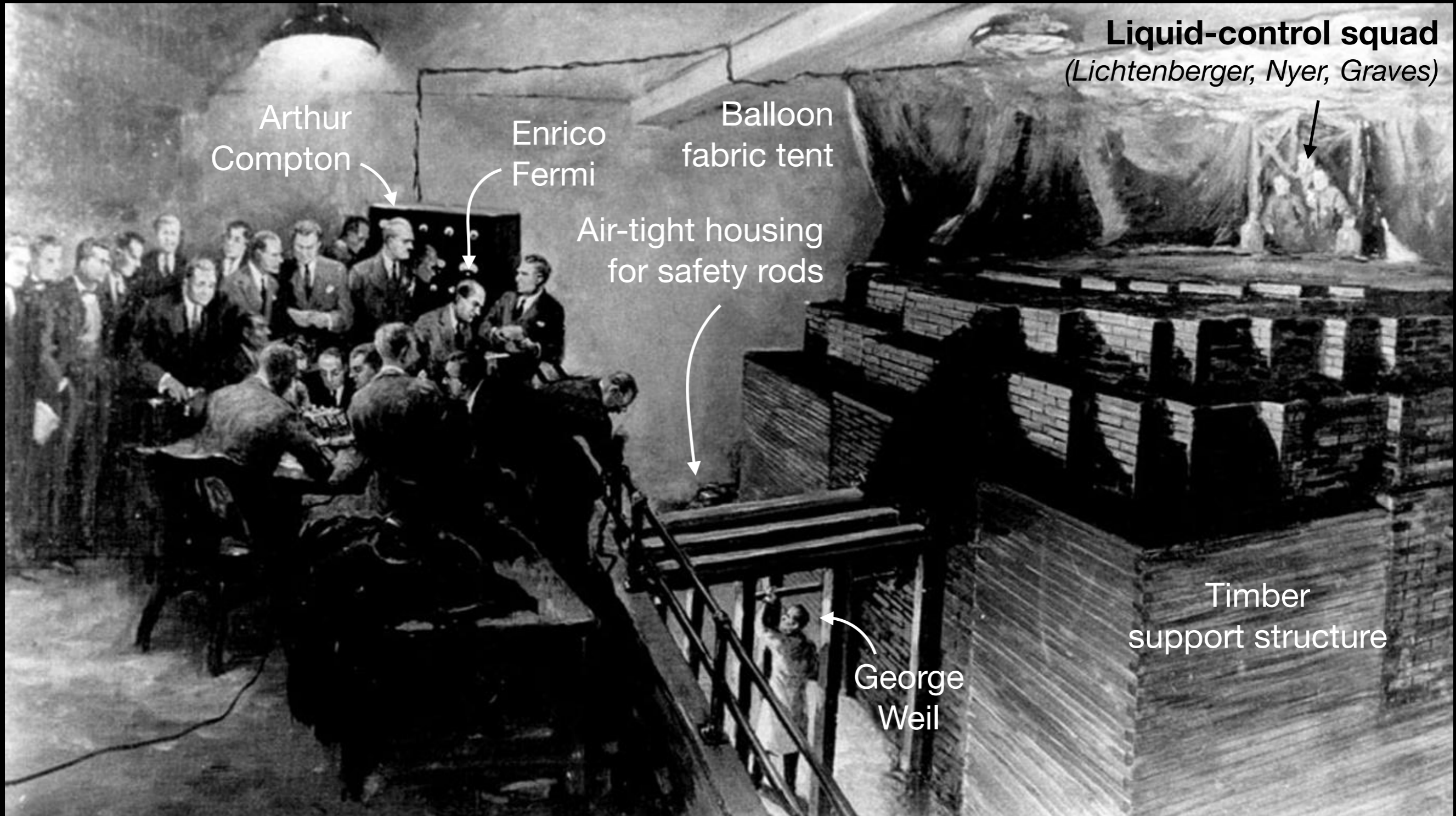
December 2, 1942



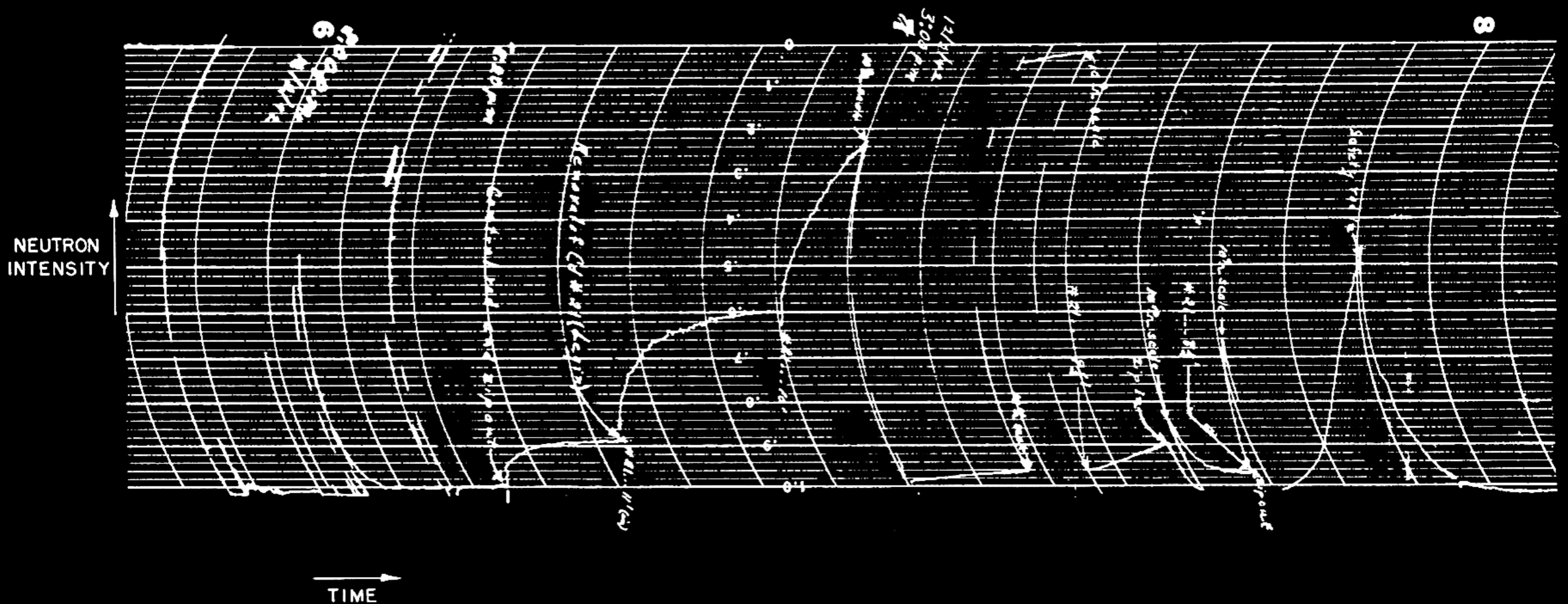
December 2, 1942



December 2, 1942



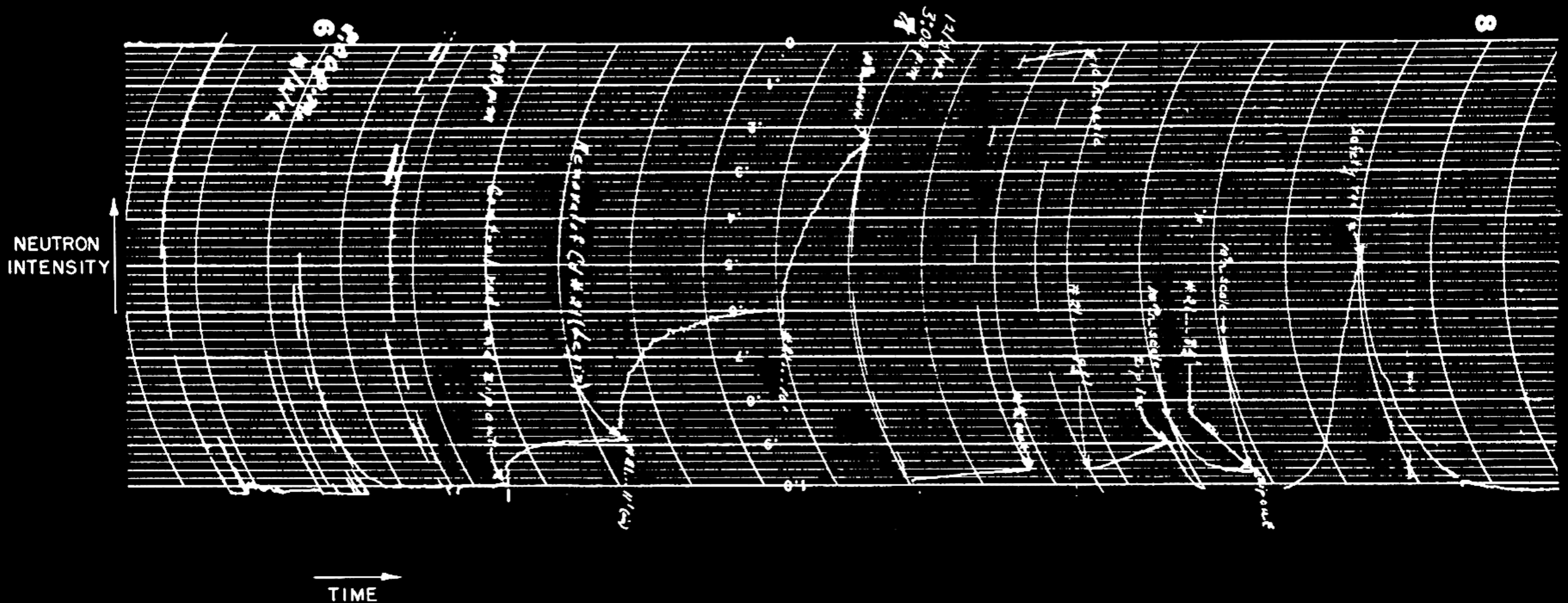
December 2, 1942



December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

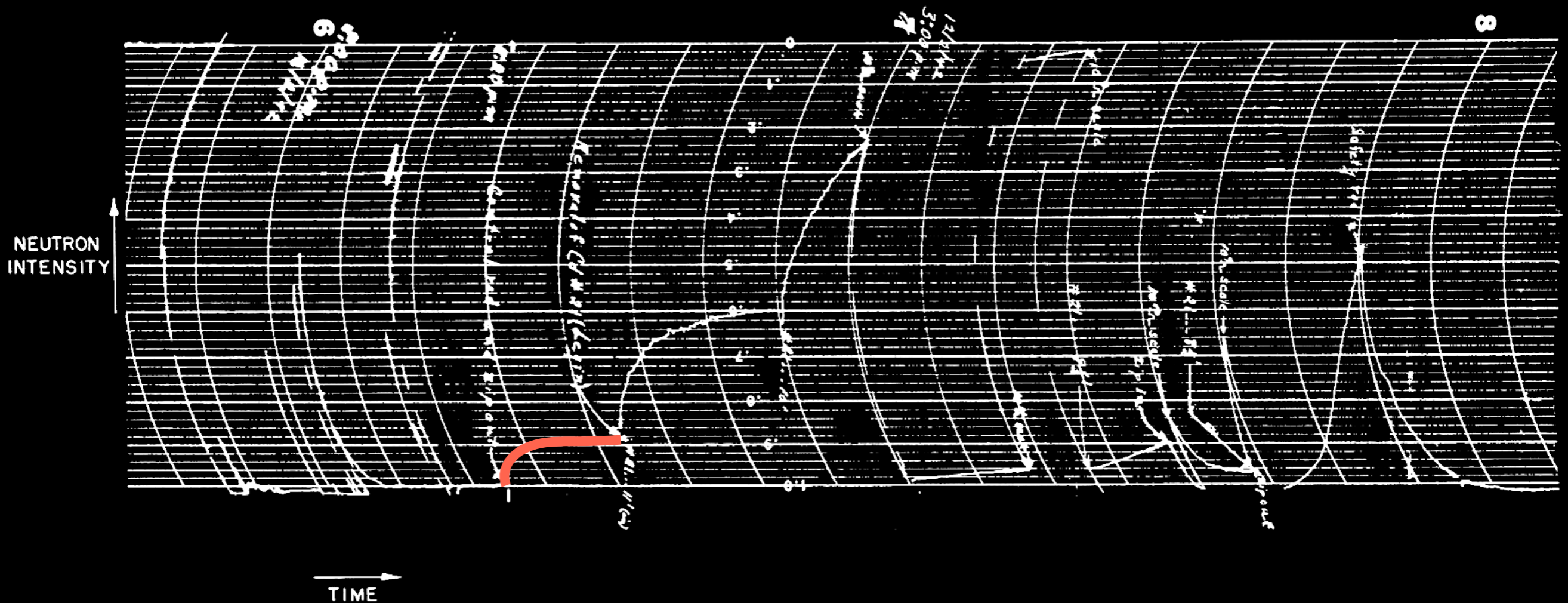
“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”



December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”



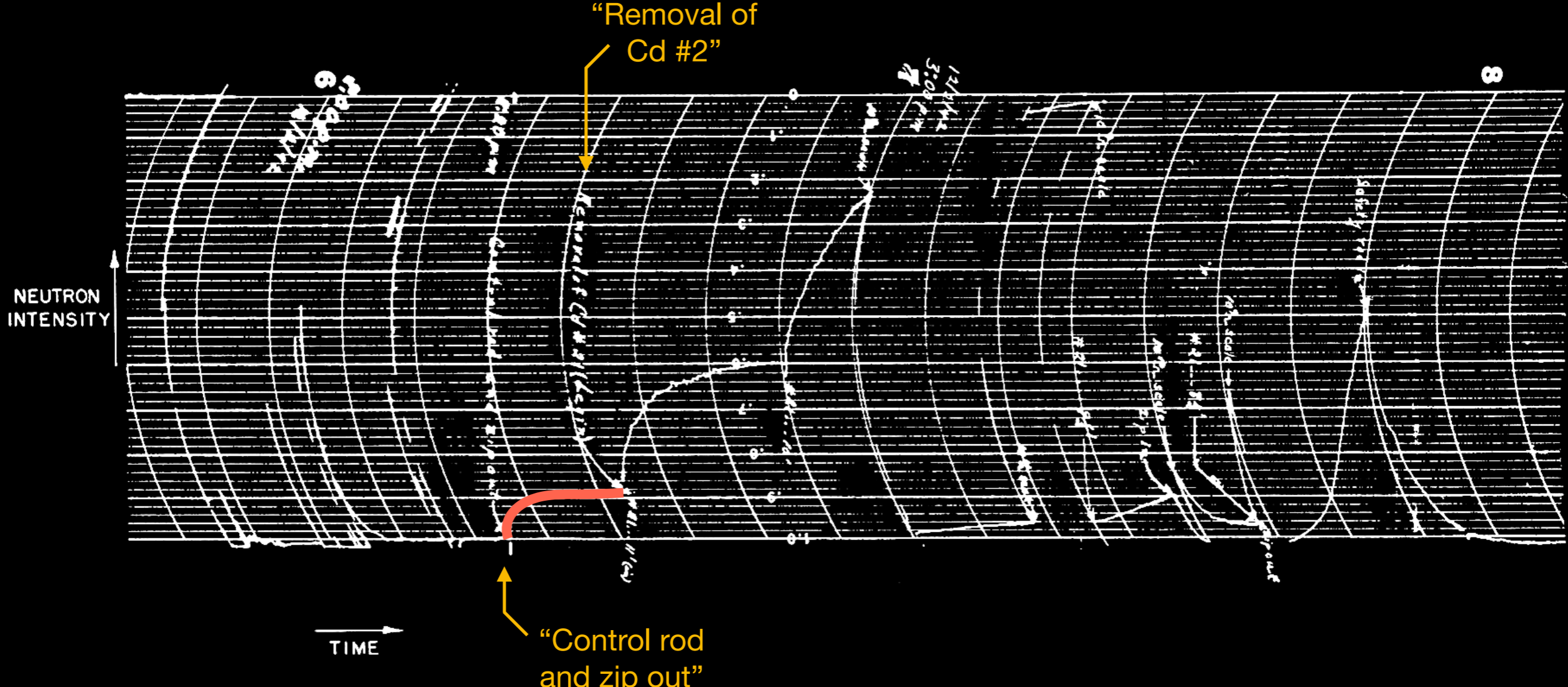
December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”

“Removal of Cd #2”

“Control rod and zip out”



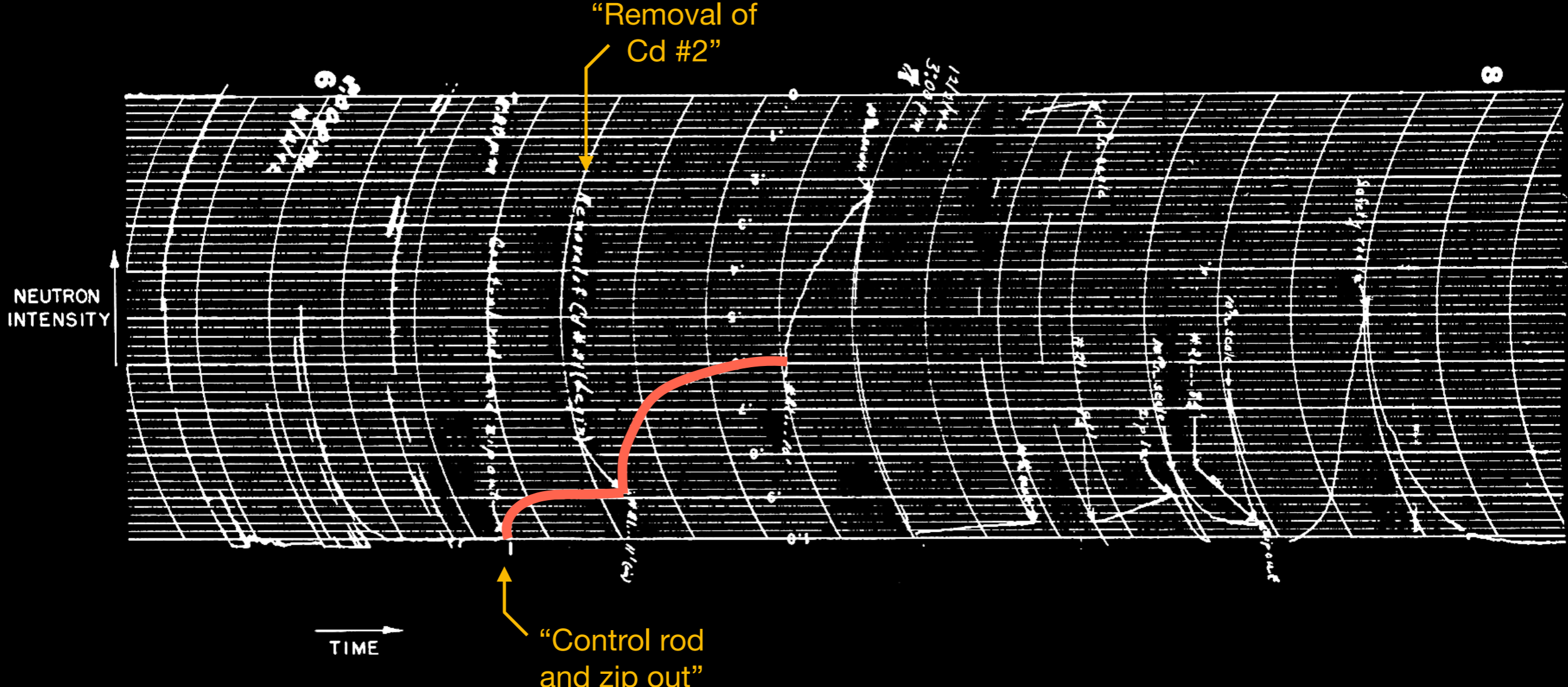
December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”

“Removal of Cd #2”

“Control rod and zip out”

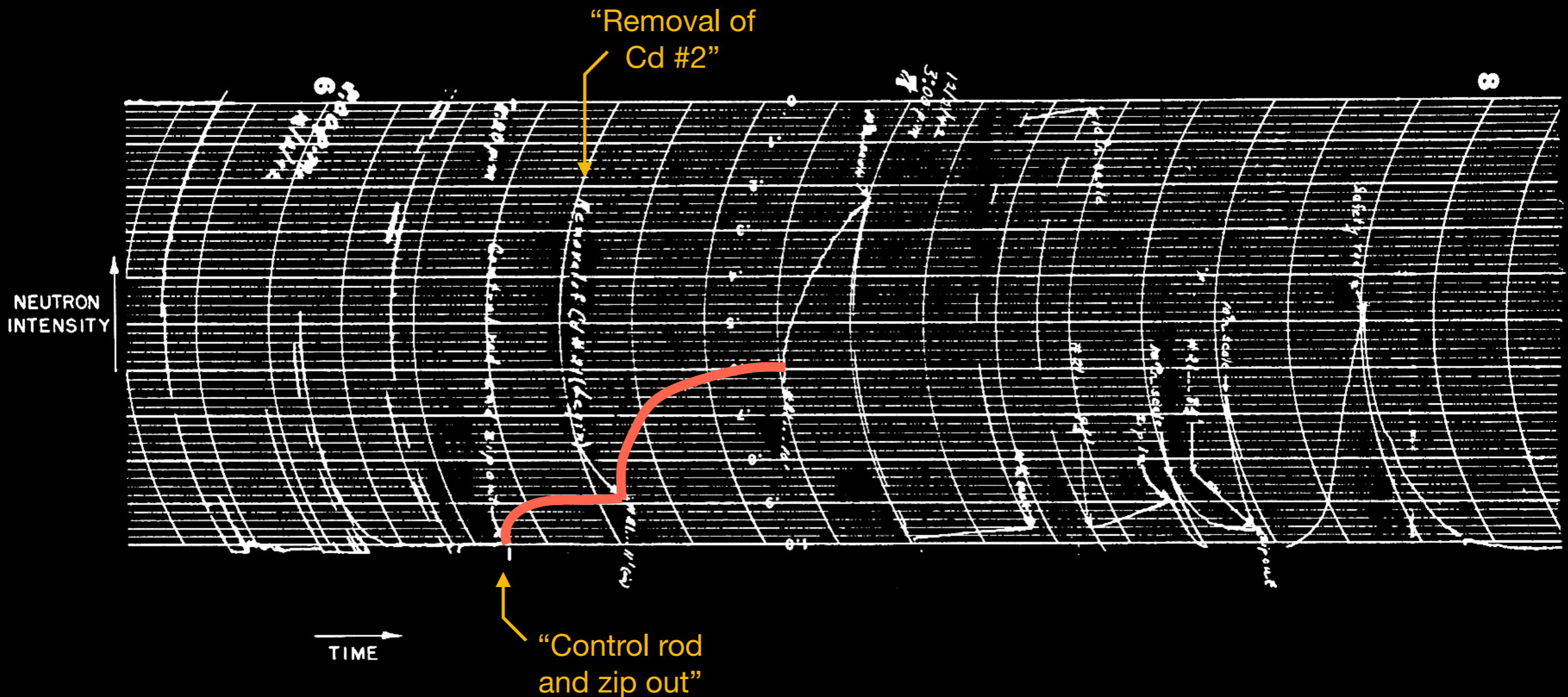


December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off.”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”

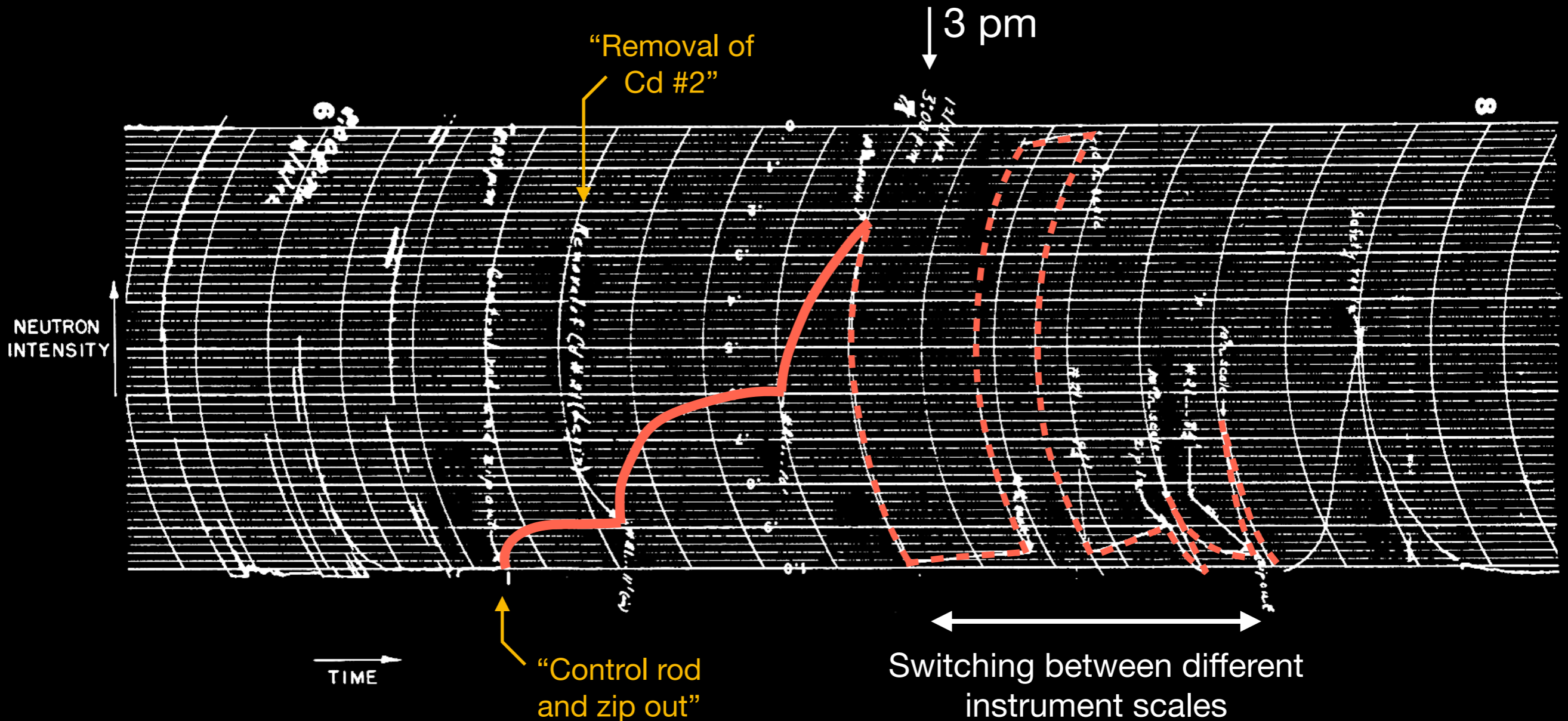


December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off.”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”



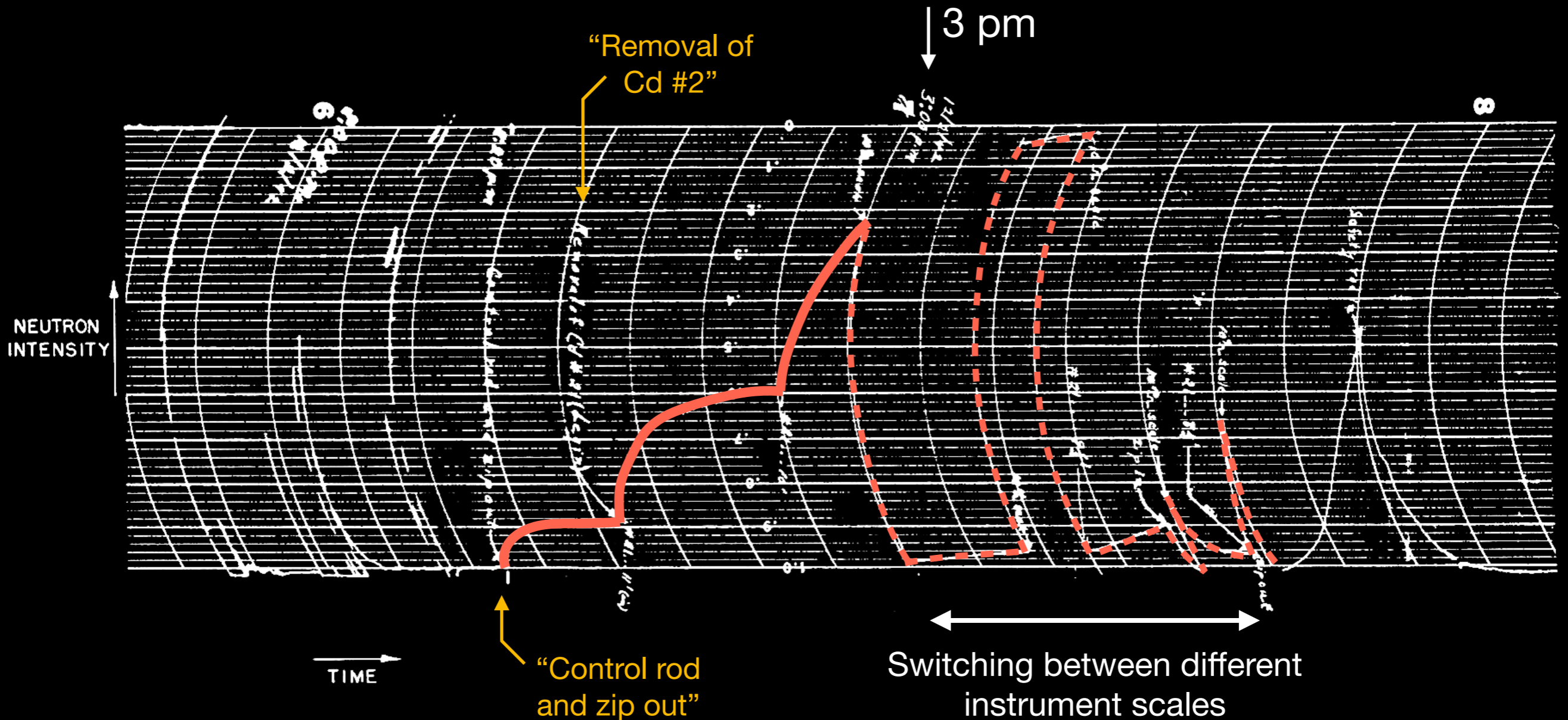
December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off.”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”

“Pull it out another foot.”



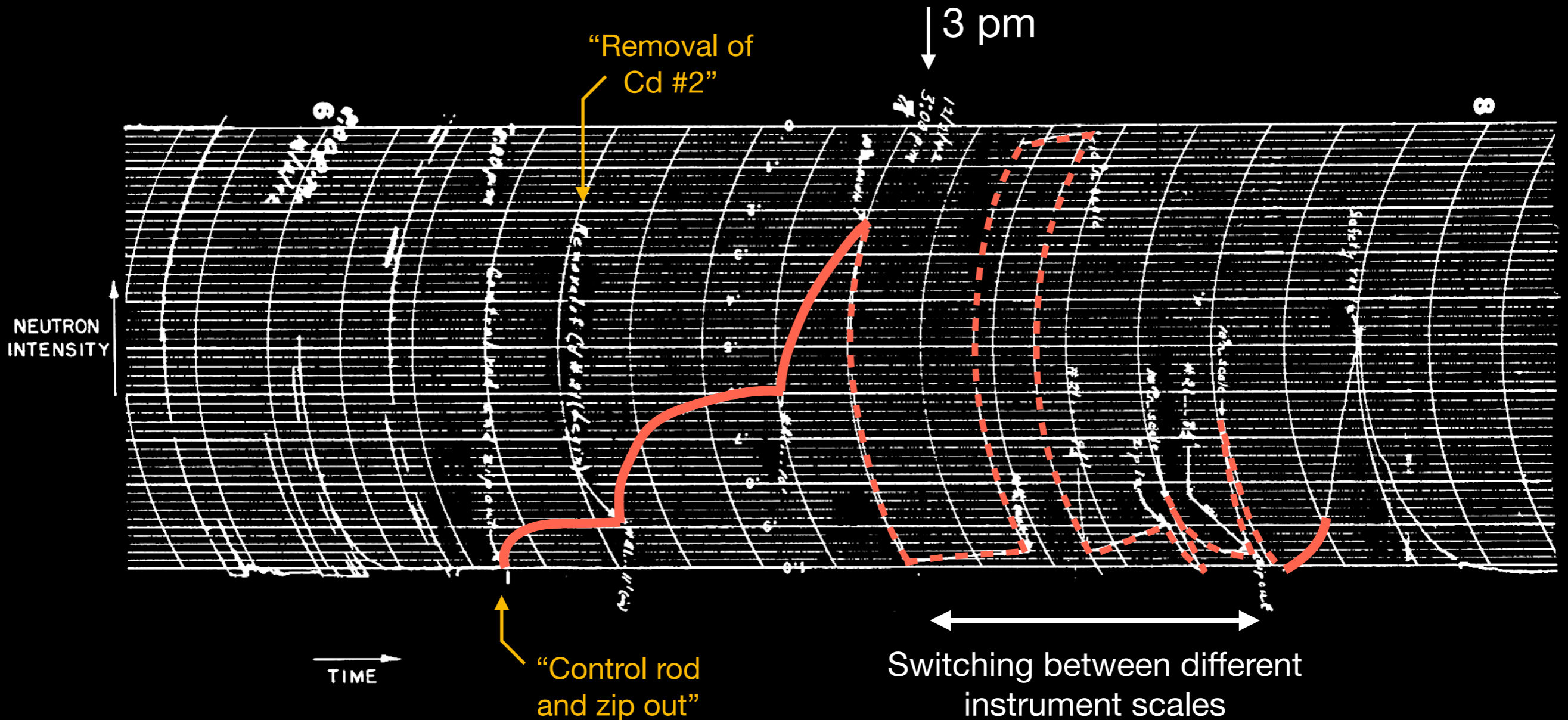
December 2, 1942

“Zip’ out”

“This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off.”

“Pull it to 13 feet, George.”

“Pull it out another foot.”



December 2, 1942

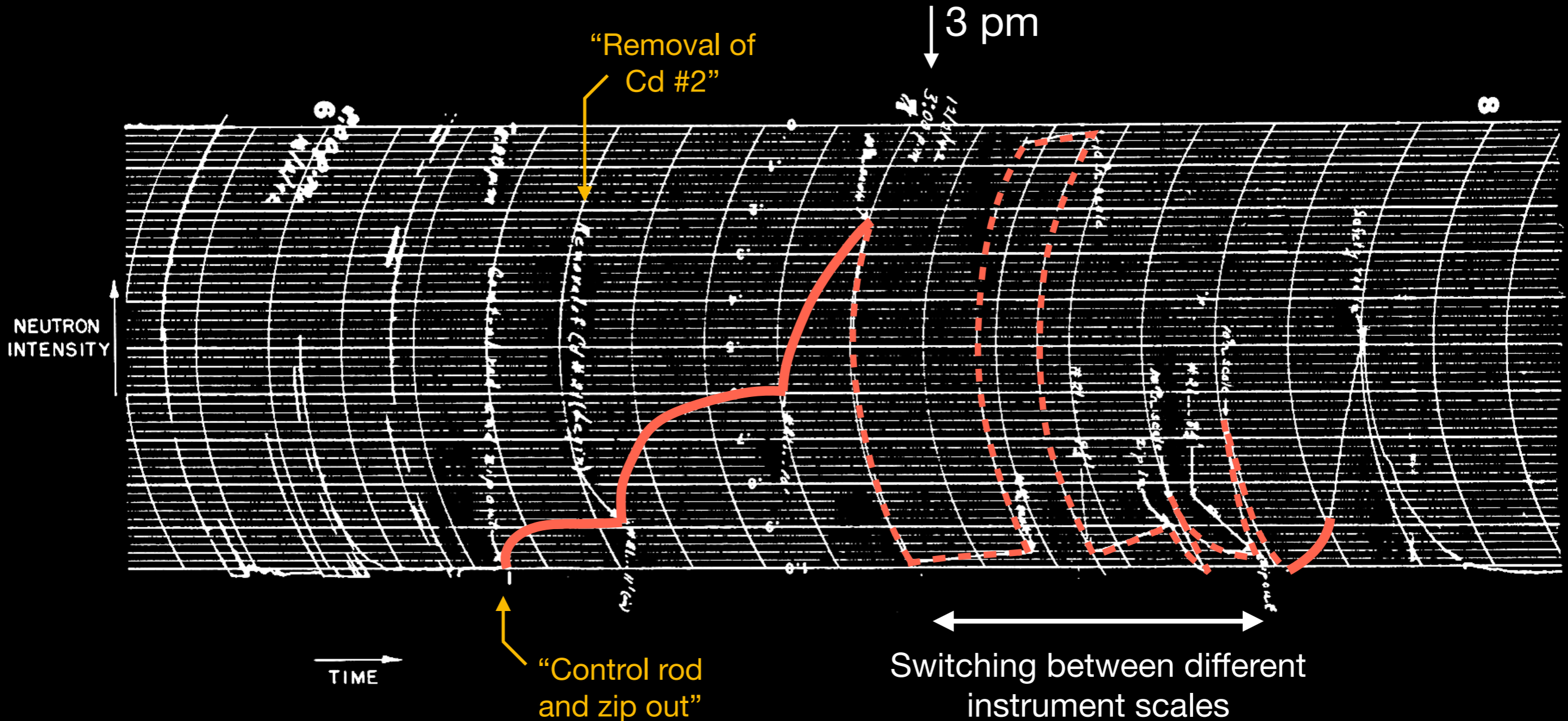
"This is going to do it."

"Zip' out"

"This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off."

"Pull it out another foot."

"Pull it to 13 feet, George."



December 2, 1942

"This is going to do it."

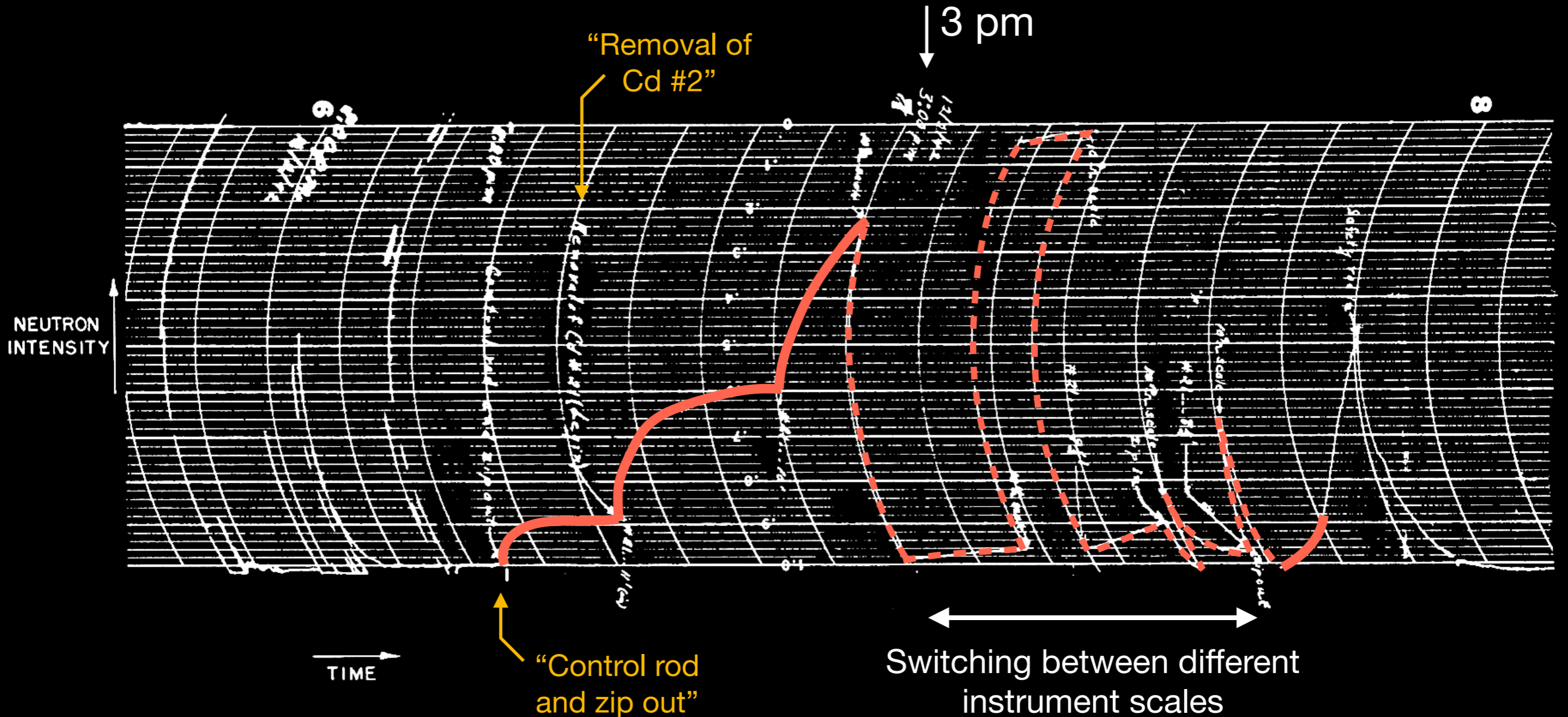
"Zip' out"

"This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off."

"Now it will become self-sustaining. The trace will climb and continue to climb. It will not level off."

"Pull it out another foot."

"Pull it to 13 feet, George."



December 2, 1942

"This is going to do it."

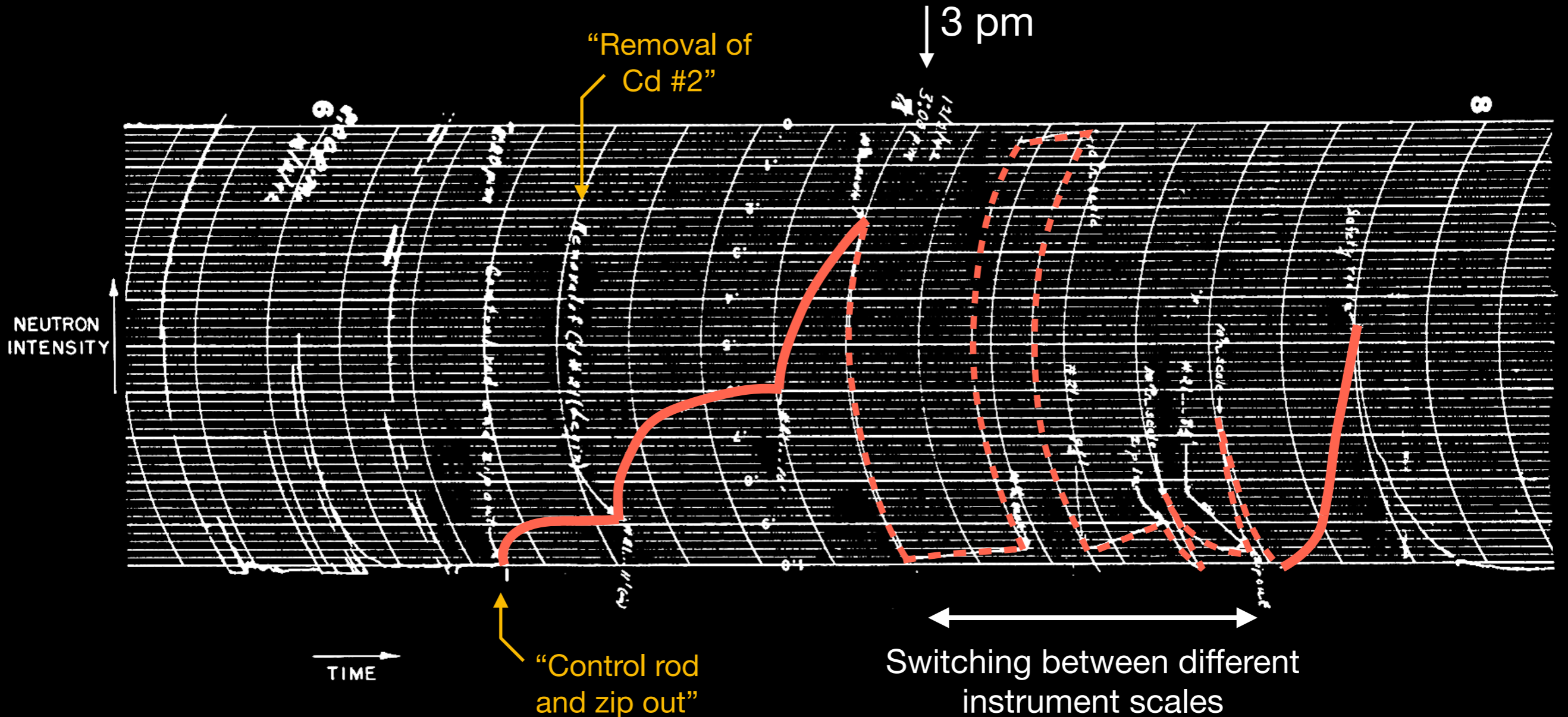
"Zip' out"

"This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off."

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December 2, 1942

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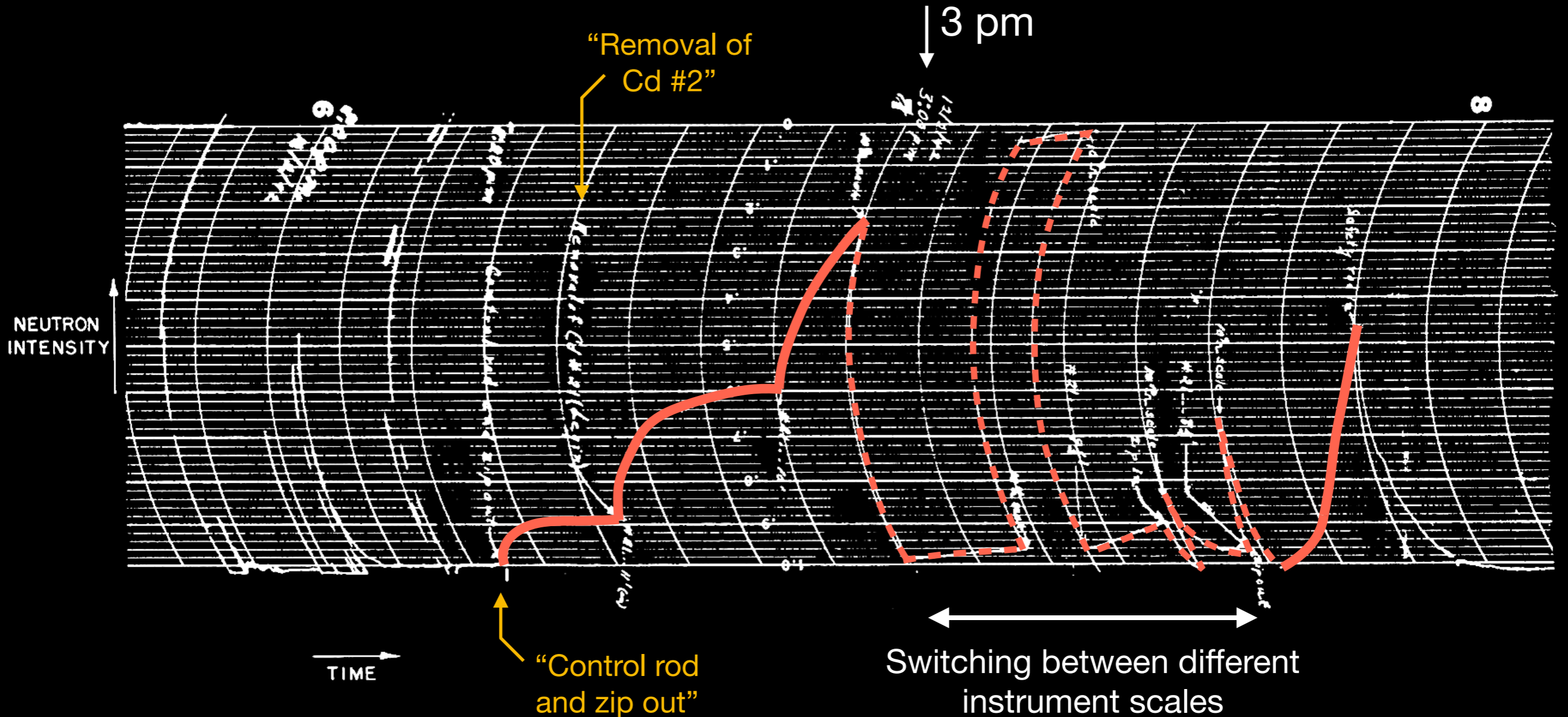
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"Pull it out another foot."

"O.K. 'Zip' in"



December 2, 1942

"This is going to do it."

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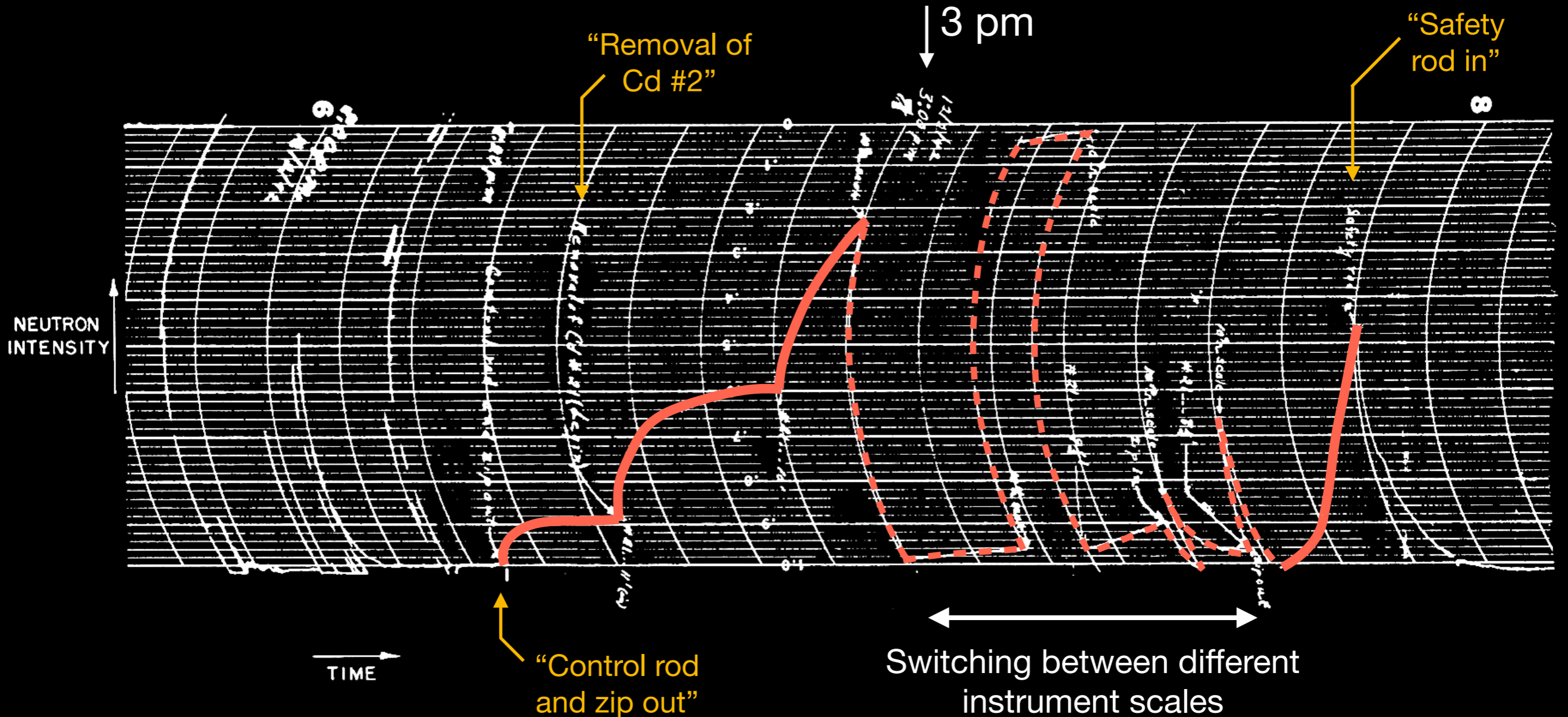
"This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off."

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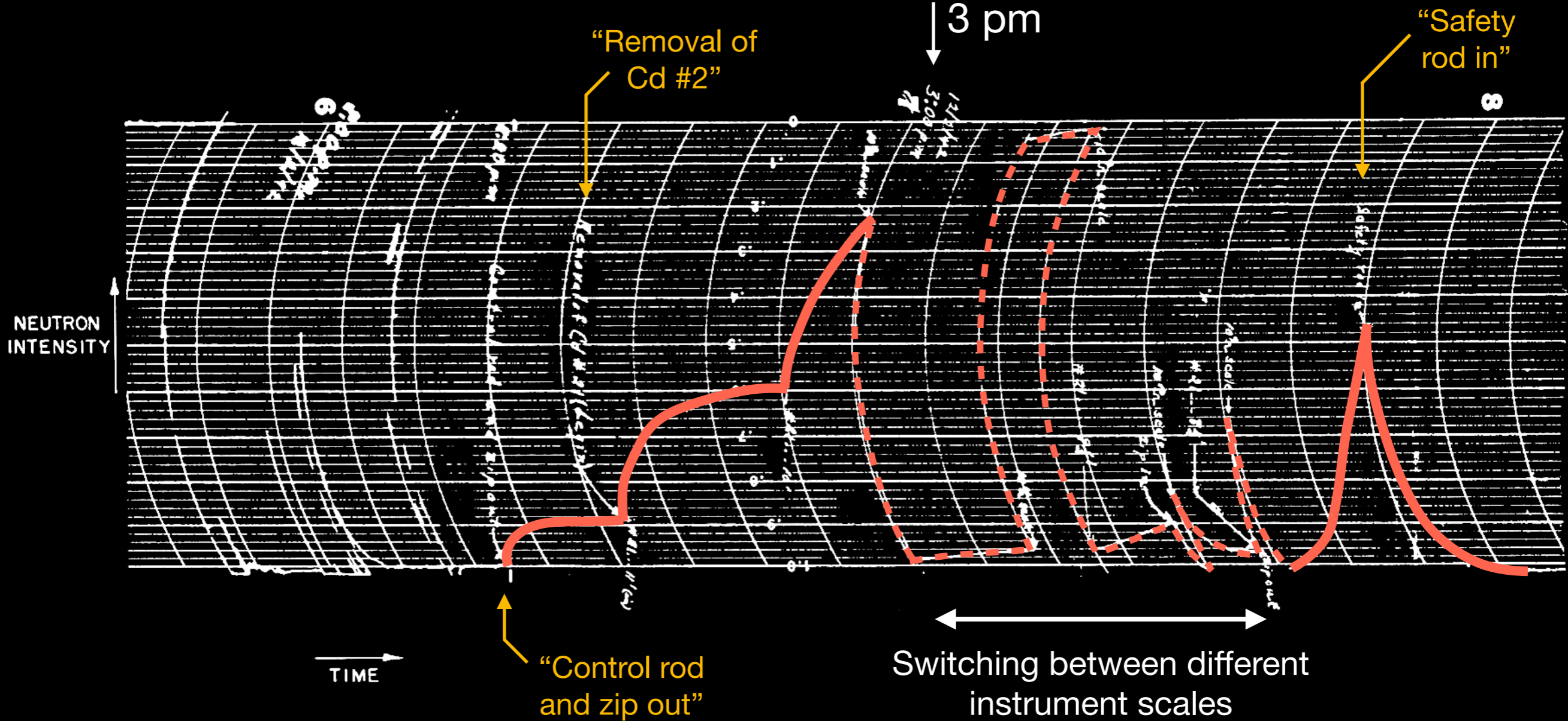
"This is not it. The trace will go to this point and level off."

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"Pull it to 13 feet, George."



December 2, 1942

3.25 pm

December 2, 1942

3.25 pm



December 2, 1942

3.25 pm



December 2, 1942

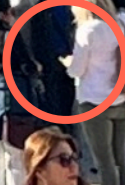
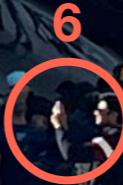
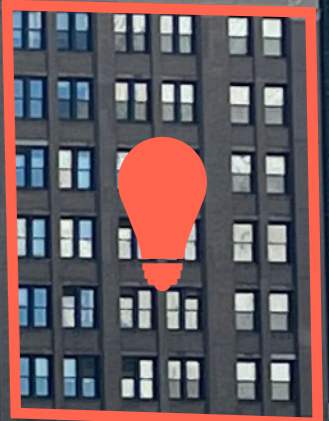
3.25 pm



An impromptu celebration with Italian red wine and paper cups ...

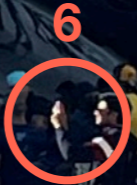
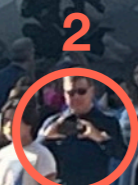
West Stand Stagg Field
The University of Chicago.







“How did we get here?”



West Stand Stagg Field
The University of Chicago.







We have arrived!

So, what did it take to get here?

So, what did it take to get here?

Curiosity

So, what did it take to get here?

Curiosity

Giovanni Sagredo
*“With these, I have found
various marvelous things ...”*

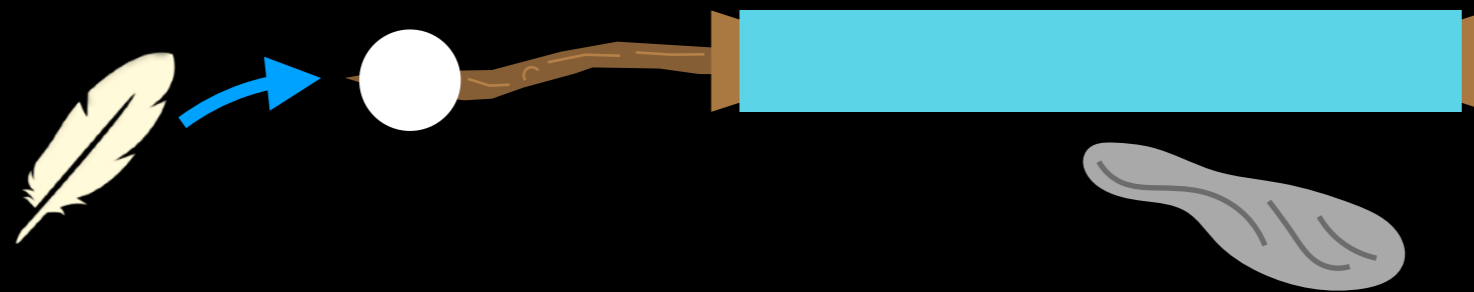


So, what did it take to get here?

Curiosity

Stephen Gray

“I then resolved to procure me a large flint-glass tube, to see if I could make any further discovery with it.”



Giovanni Sagredo

“With these, I have found various marvelous things ...”

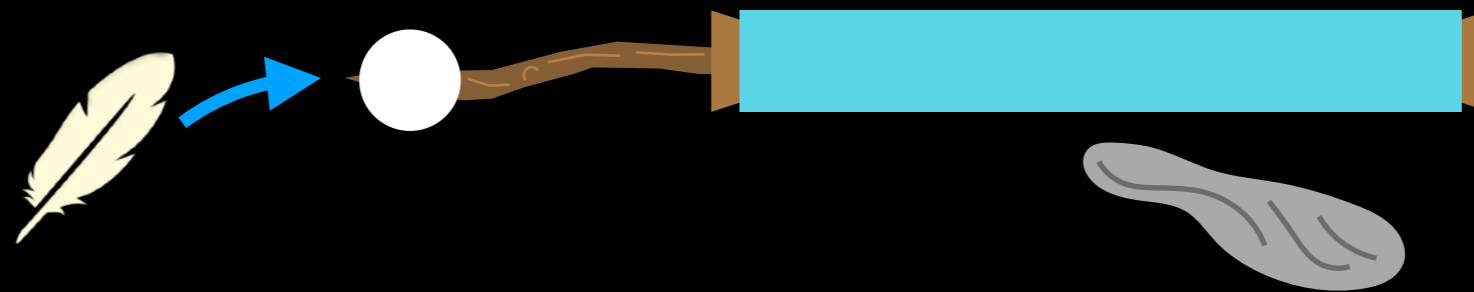


So, what did it take to get here?

Curiosity

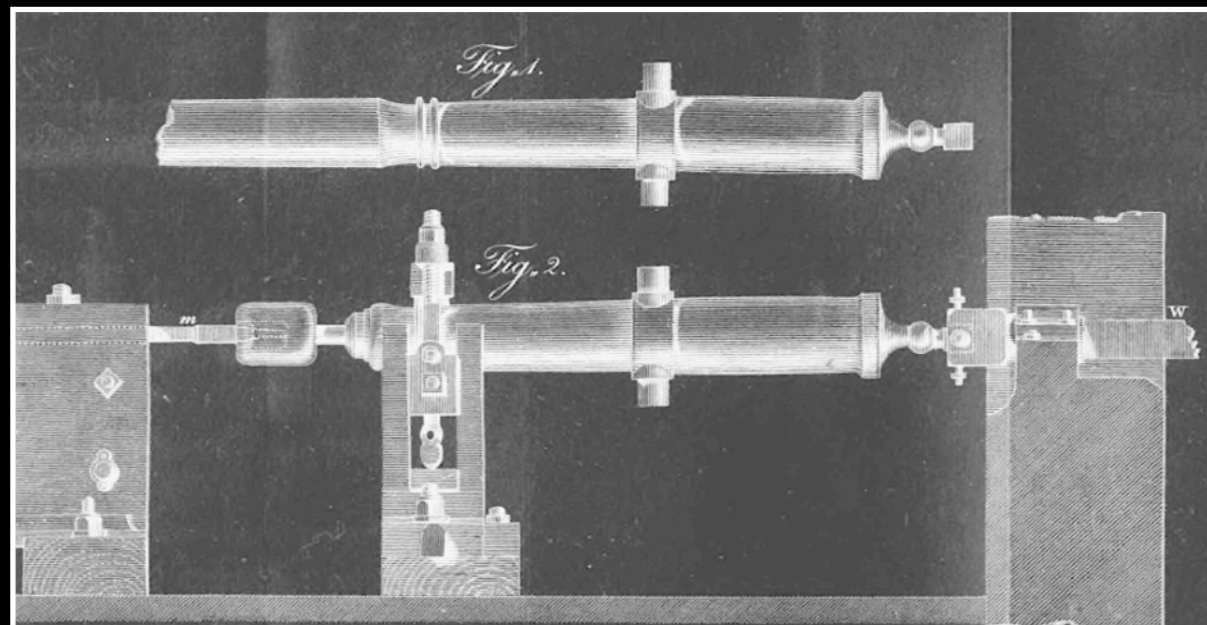
Stephen Gray

“I then resolved to procure me a large flint-glass tube, to see if I could make any further discovery with it.”



Count Rumford

“It was by accident that I was led to make the experiment ...”



Giovanni Sagredo

“With these, I have found various marvelous things ...”

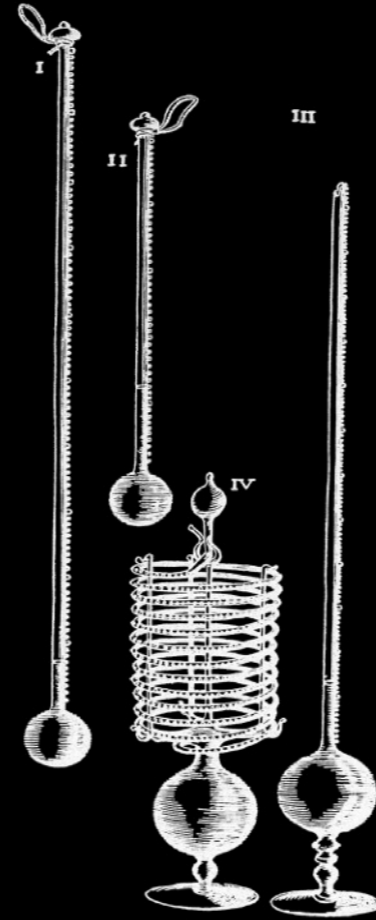
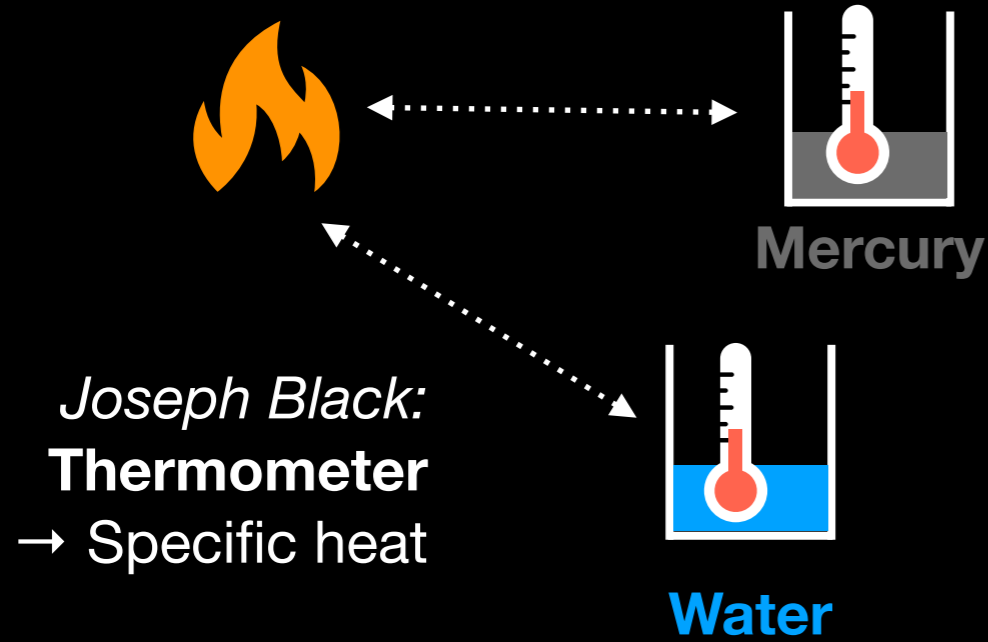


So, what did it take to get here?

Precise instruments

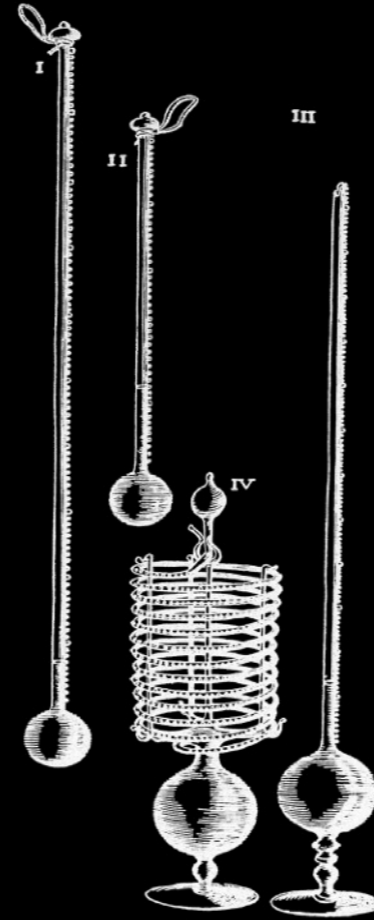
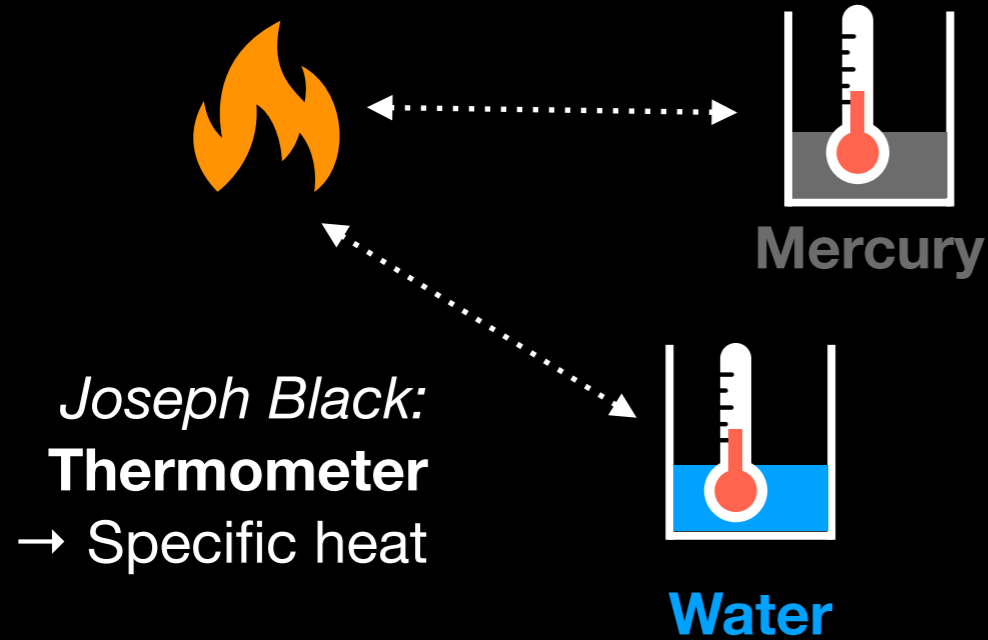
So, what did it take to get here?

Precise instruments

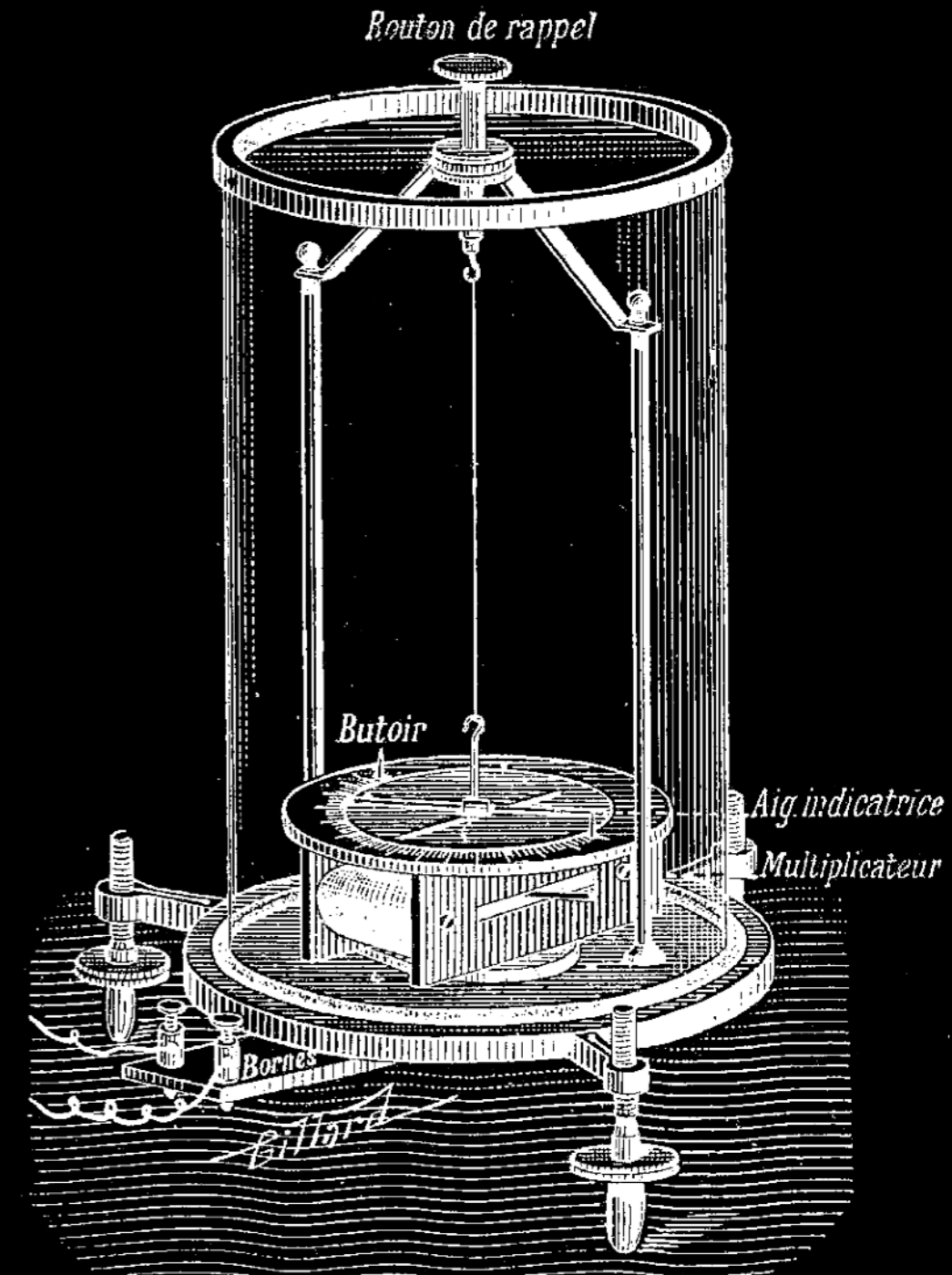


So, what did it take to get here?

Precise instruments

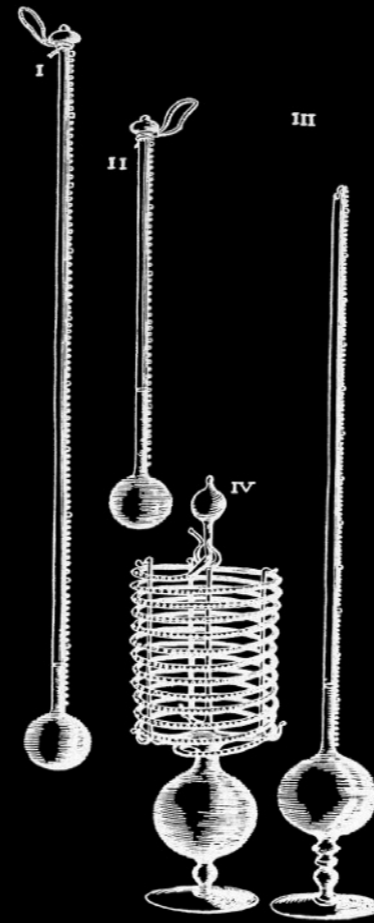
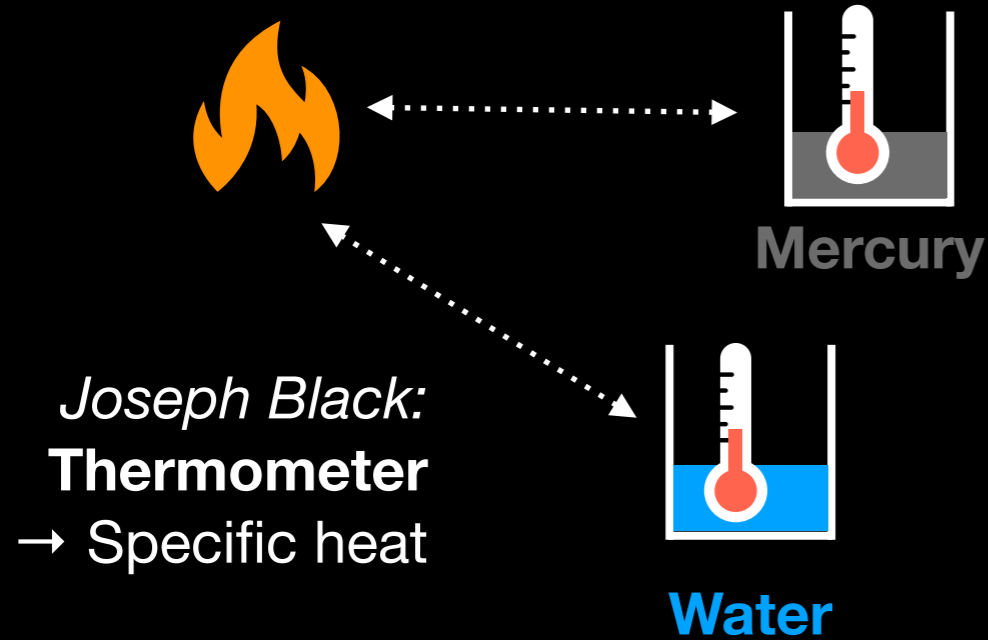


Michael Faraday:
Galvanometer → Induction

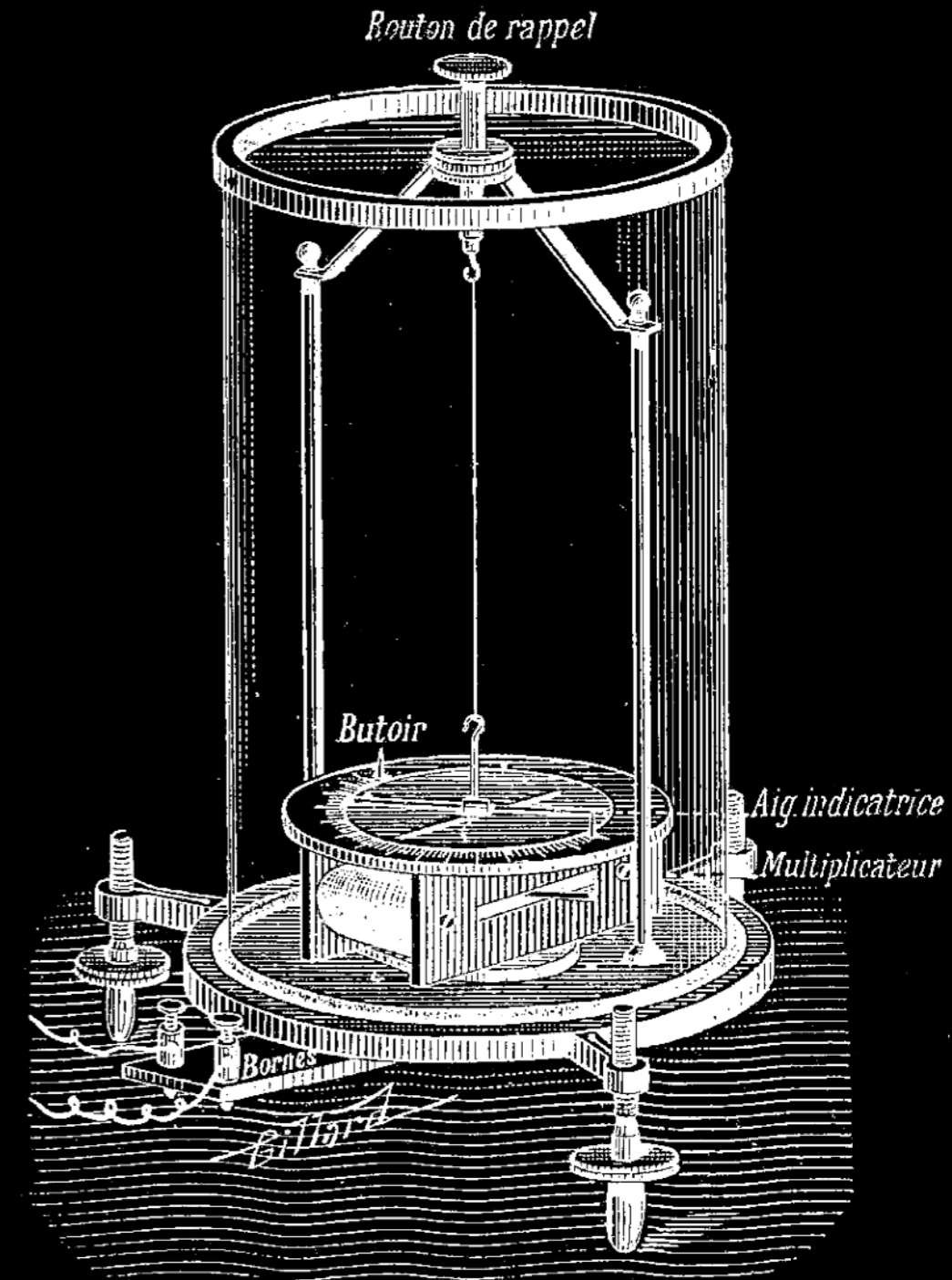


So, what did it take to get here?

Precise instruments



Michael Faraday:
Galvanometer → Induction



Marie & Pierre Curie
Electrometer
→ Polonium,
Radium



So, what did it take to get here?

Hard work

So, what did it take to get here?

Hard work



So, what did it take to get here?

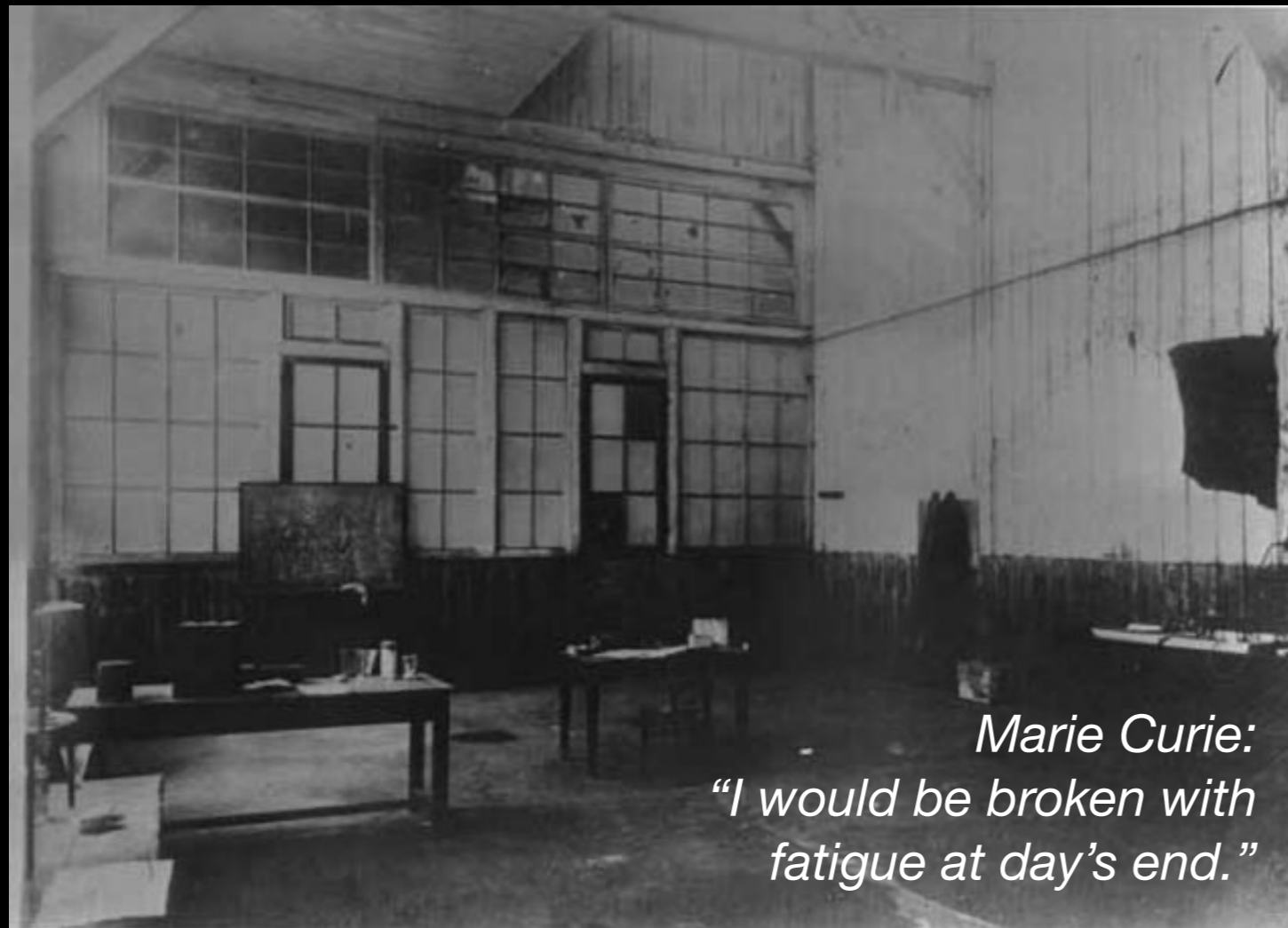
Hard work



*"For ten consecutive years
Mr. Newcomen worked at this
fire-machine ..."*

So, what did it take to get here?

Hard work



Marie Curie:
*"I would be broken with
fatigue at day's end."*



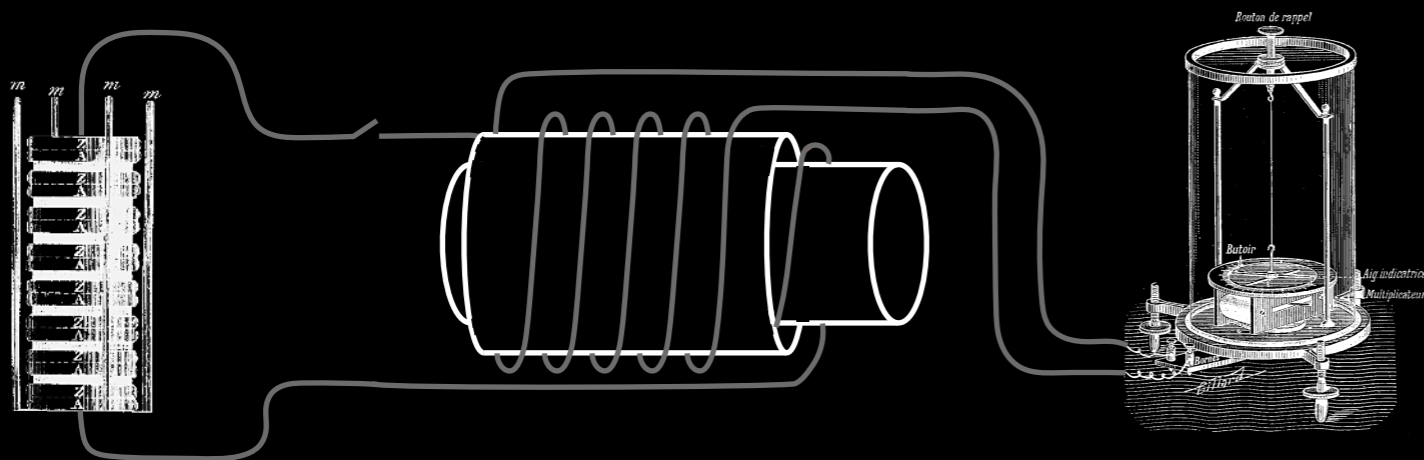
*"For ten consecutive years
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fire-machine ..."*

So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past

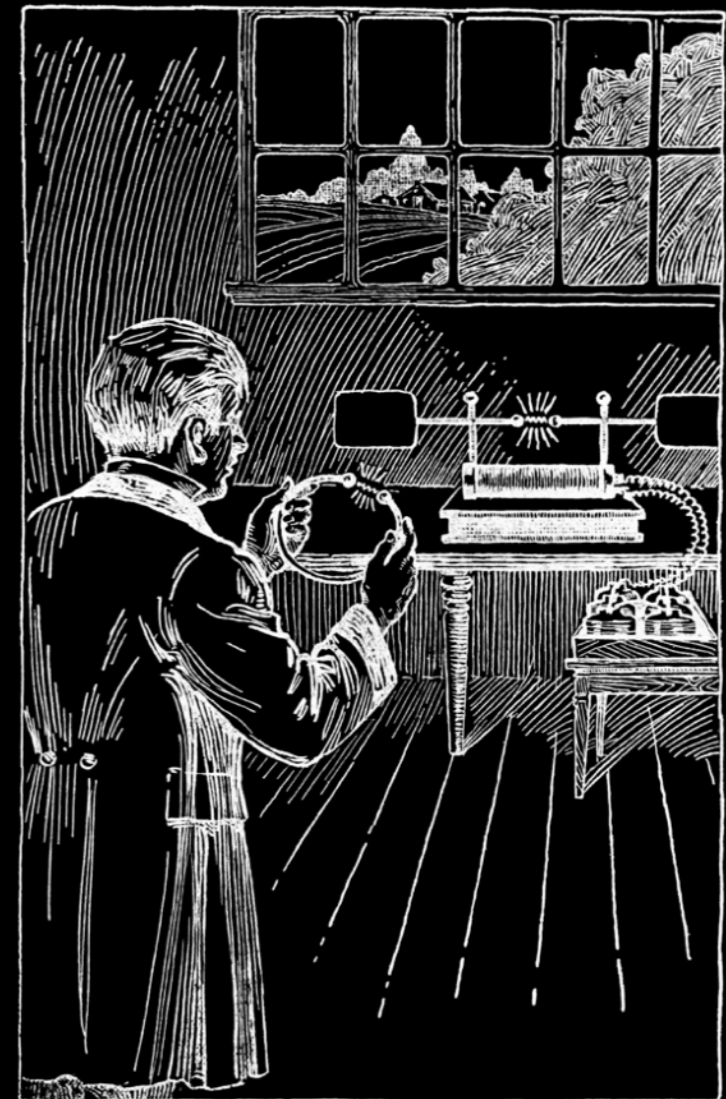
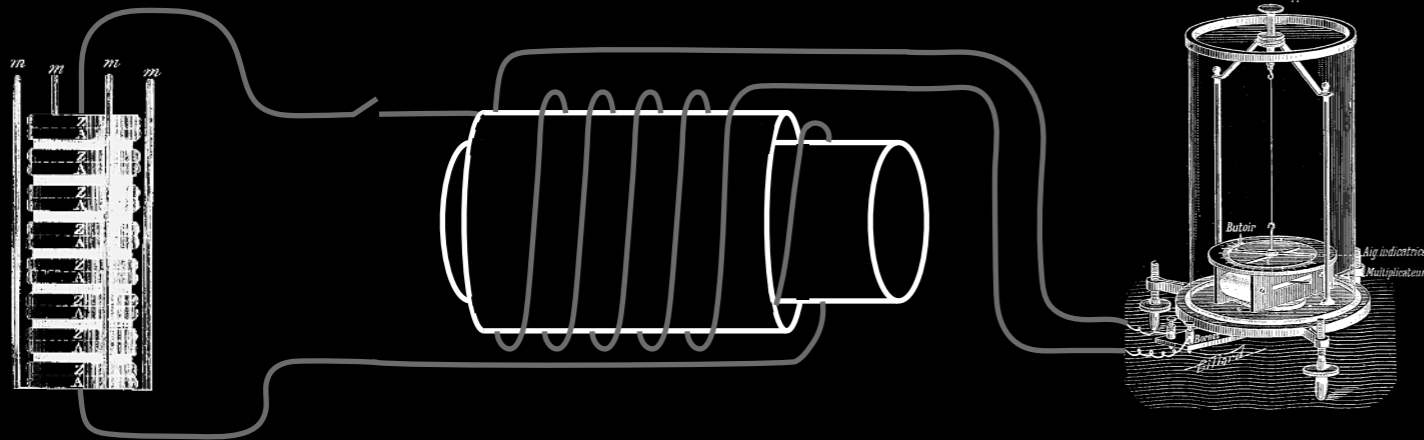
So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past



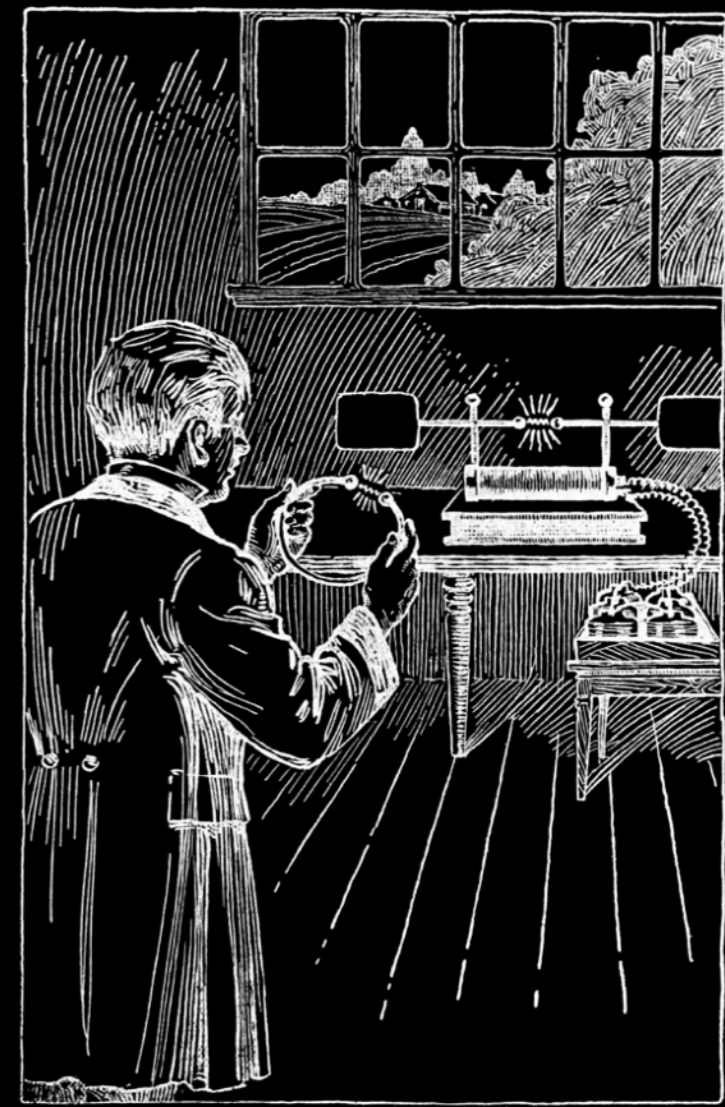
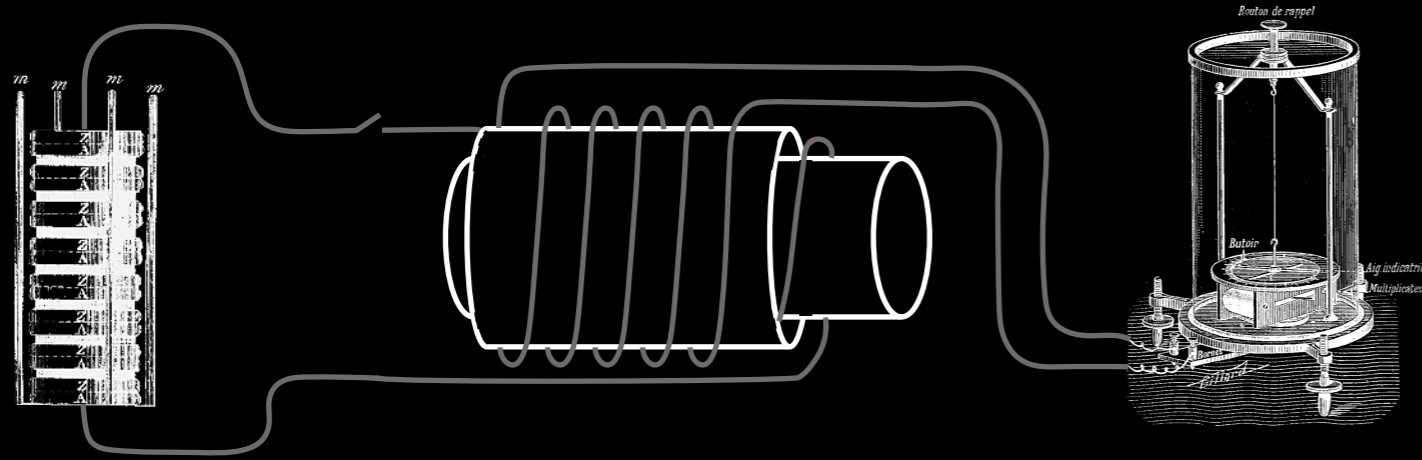
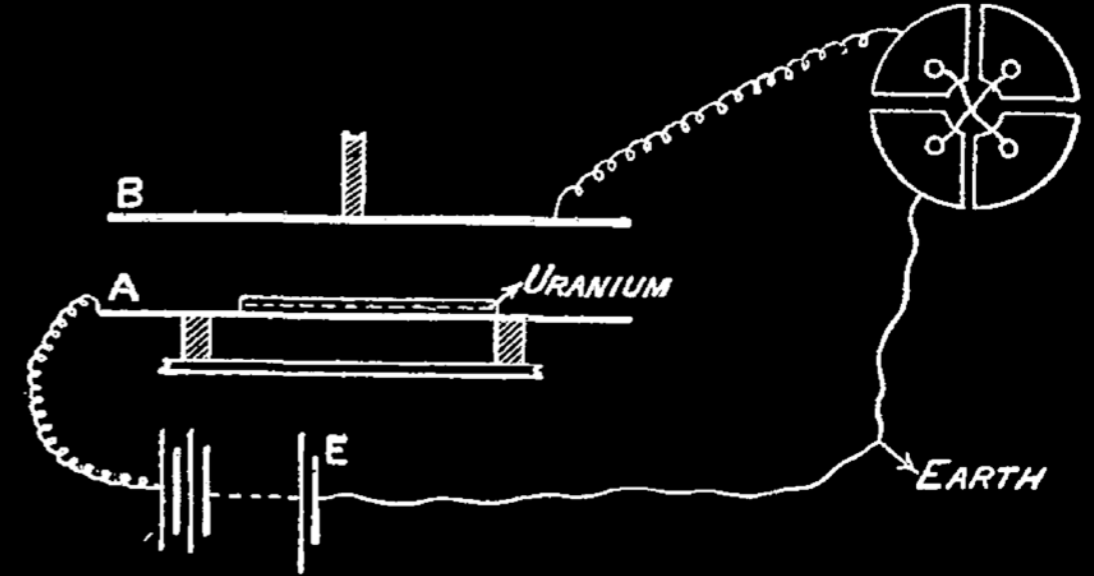
So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past



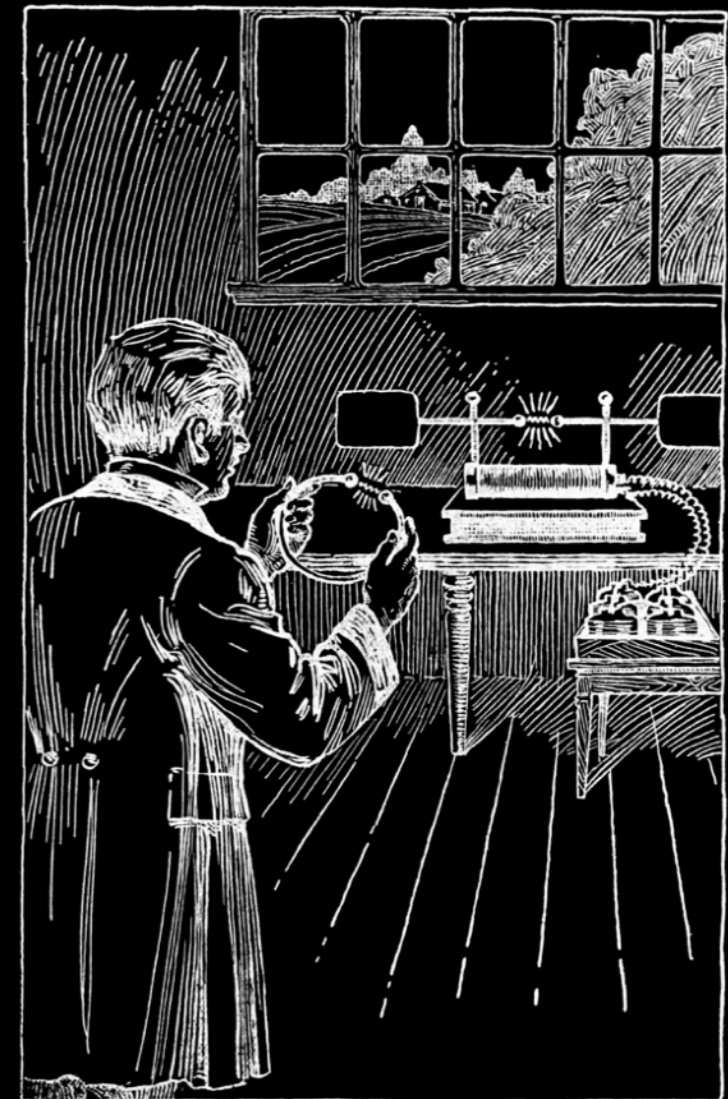
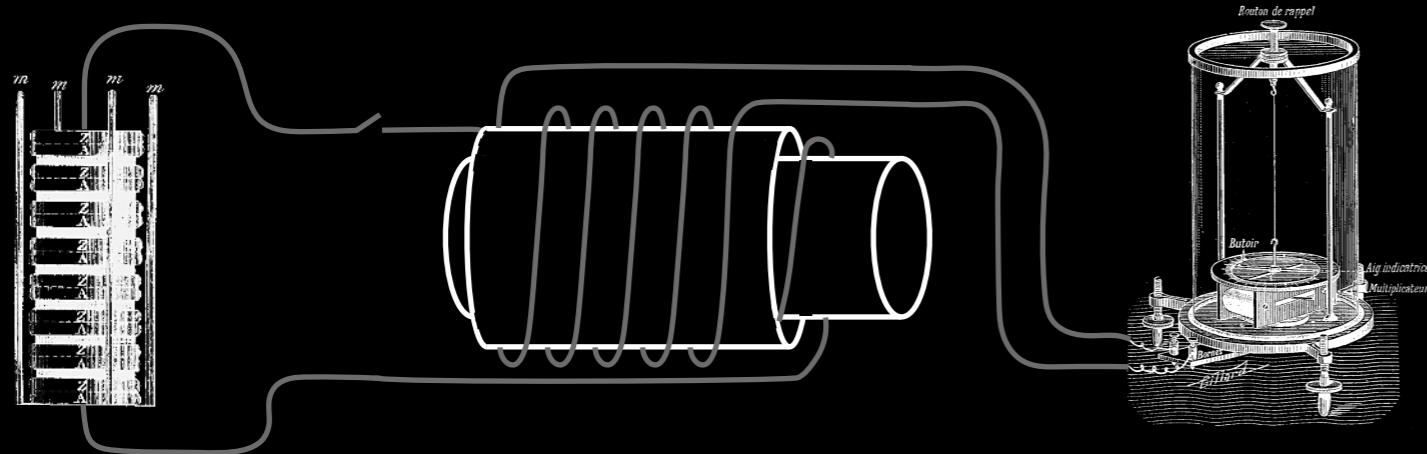
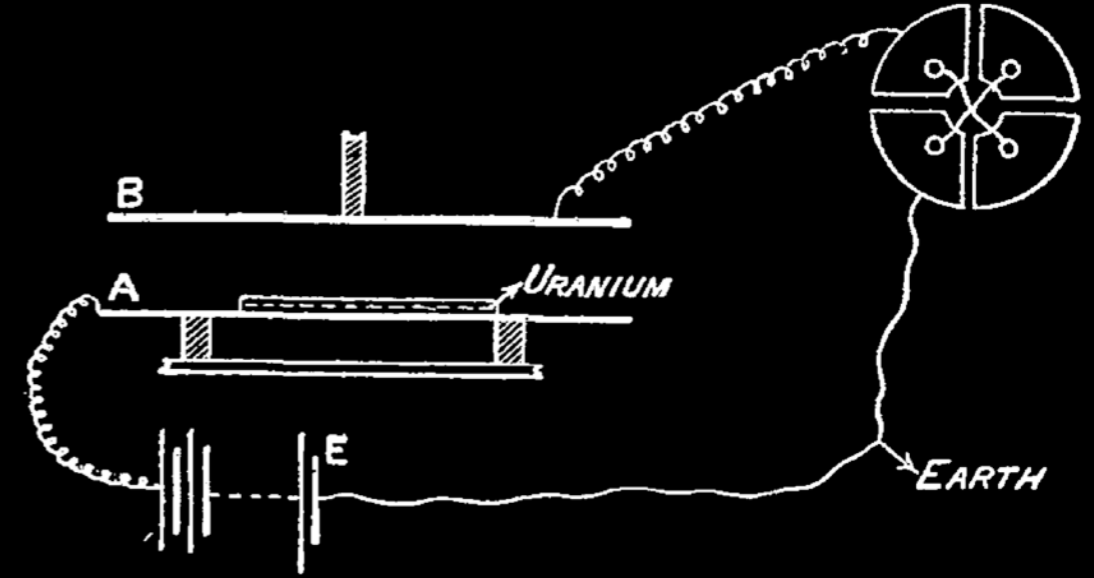
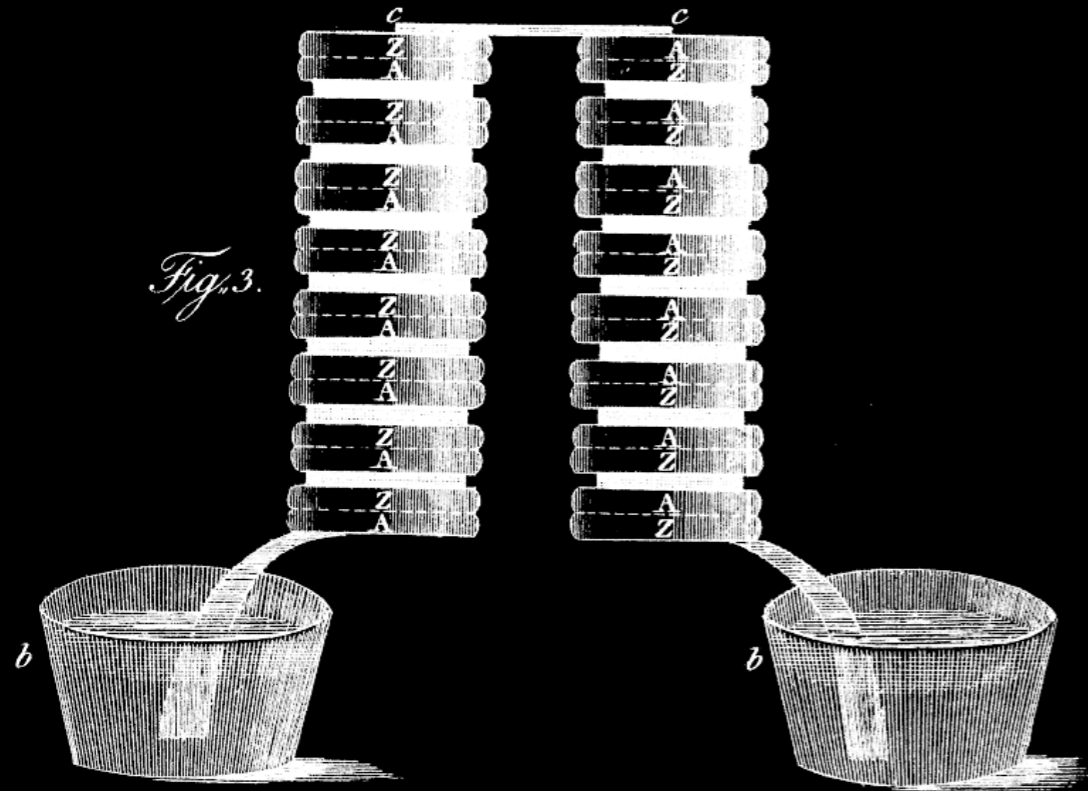
So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past



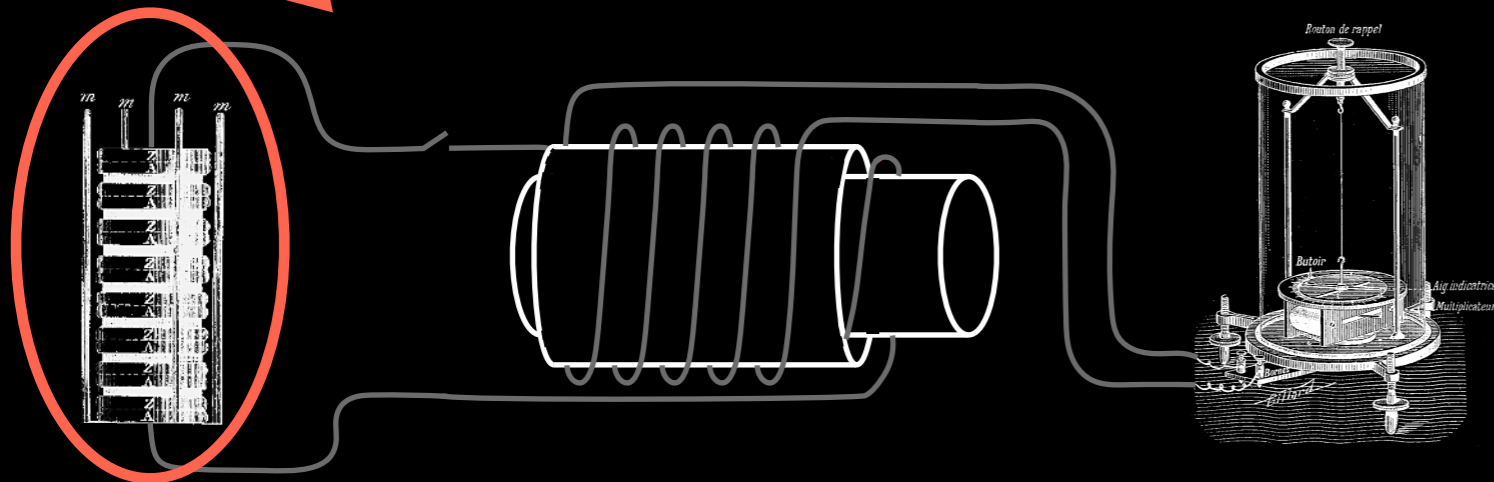
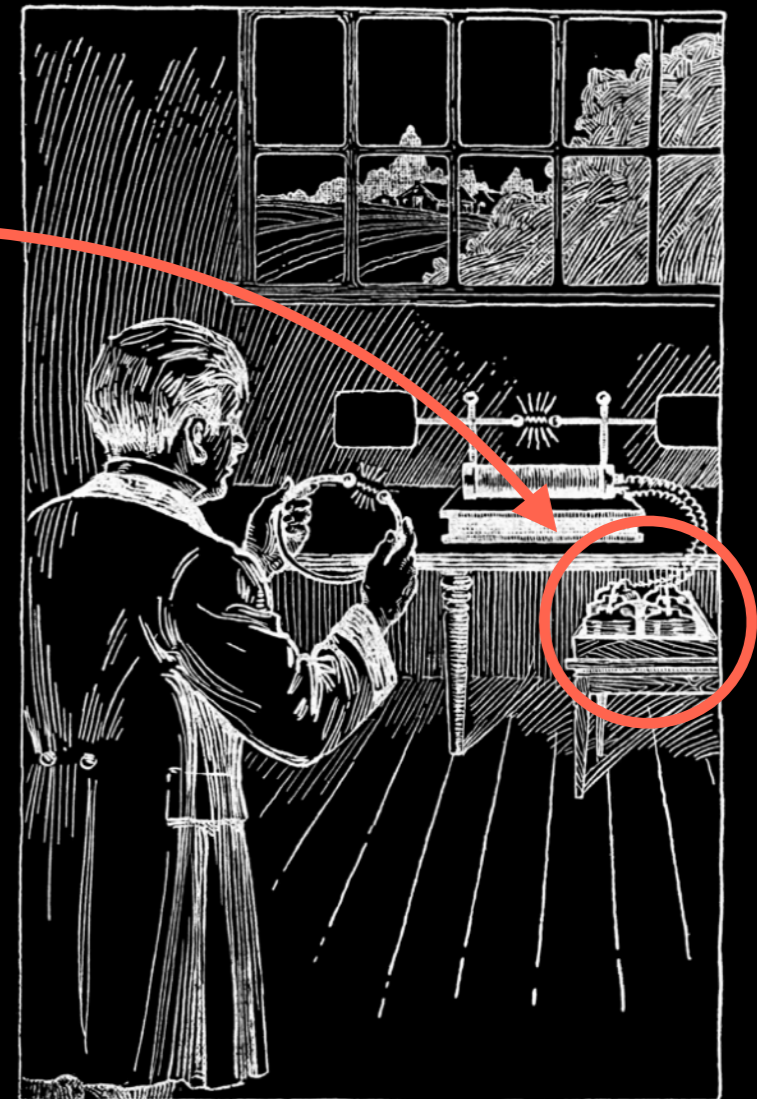
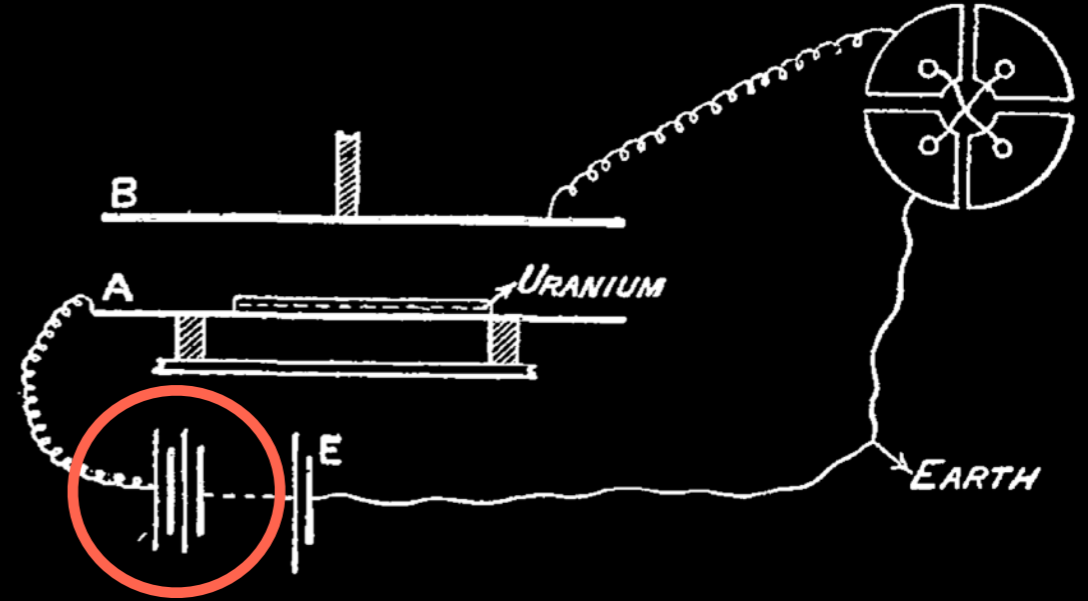
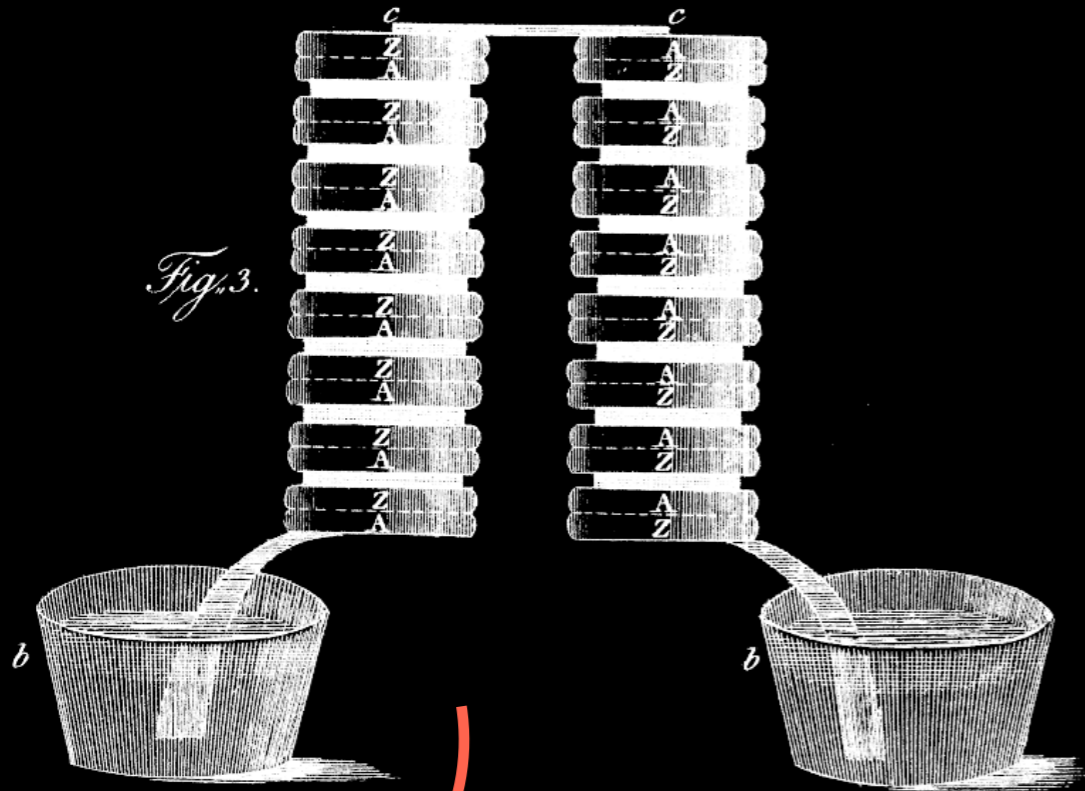
So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past



So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past

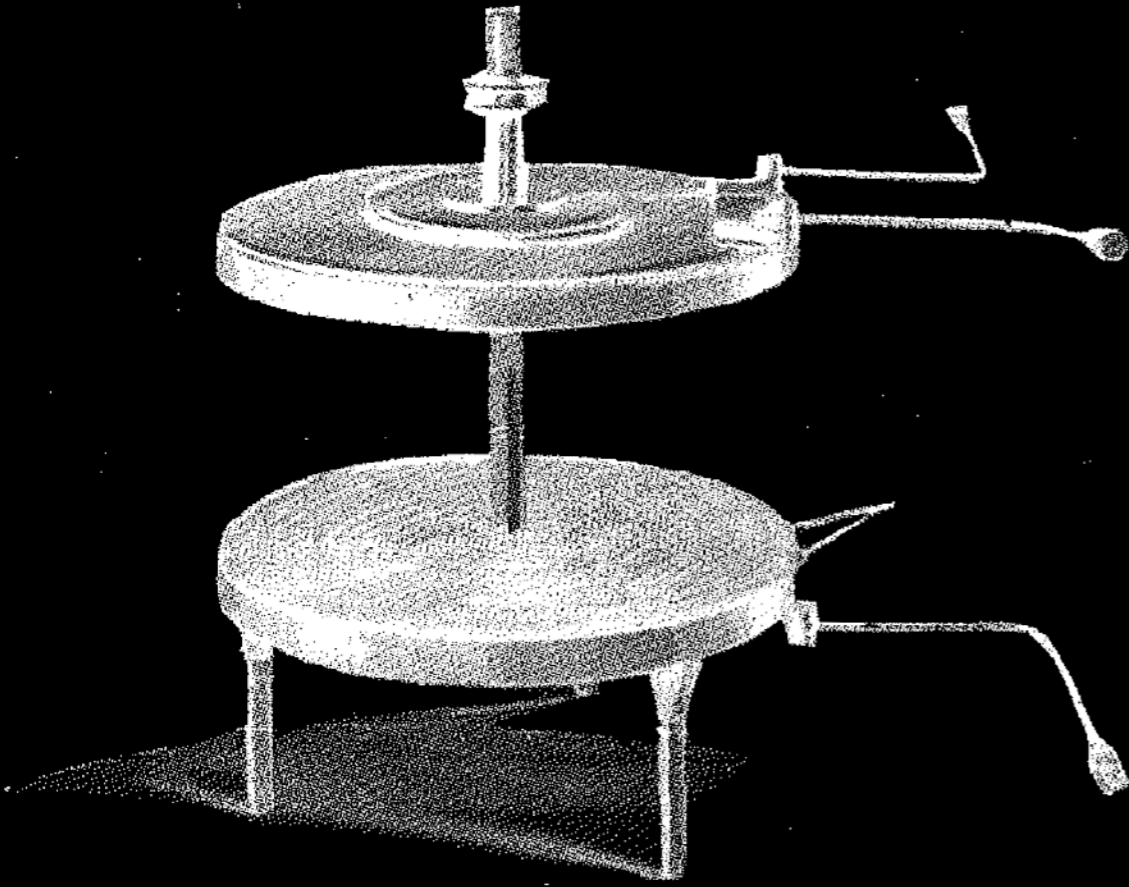


So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past

So, what did it take to get here?

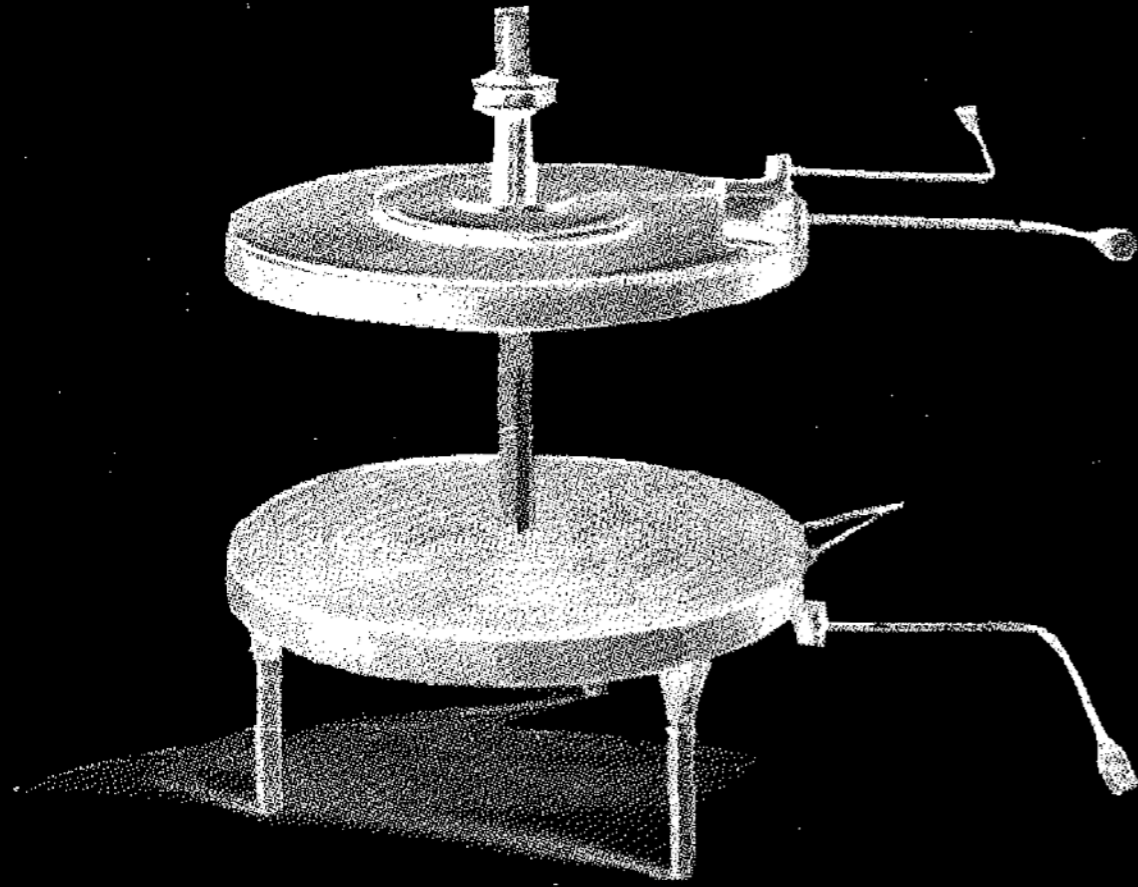
The helping hand of the past



Heinrich Hertz

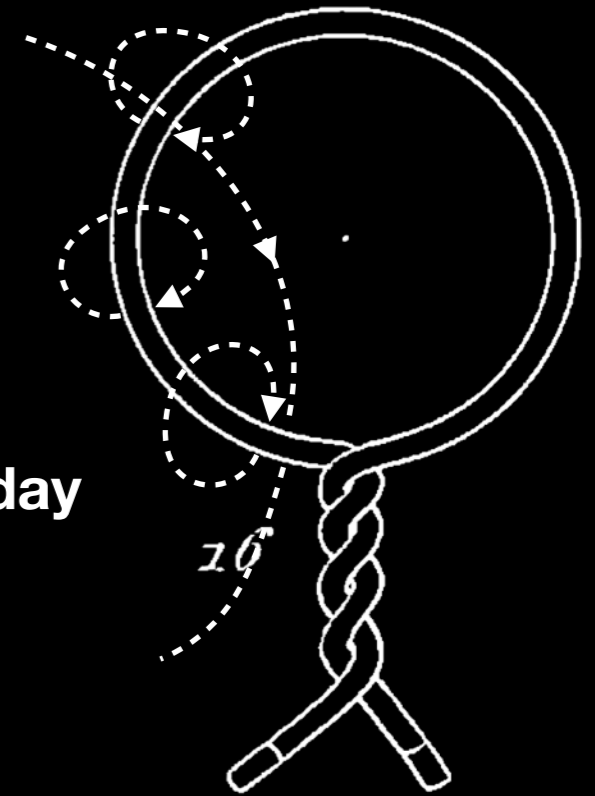
So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past



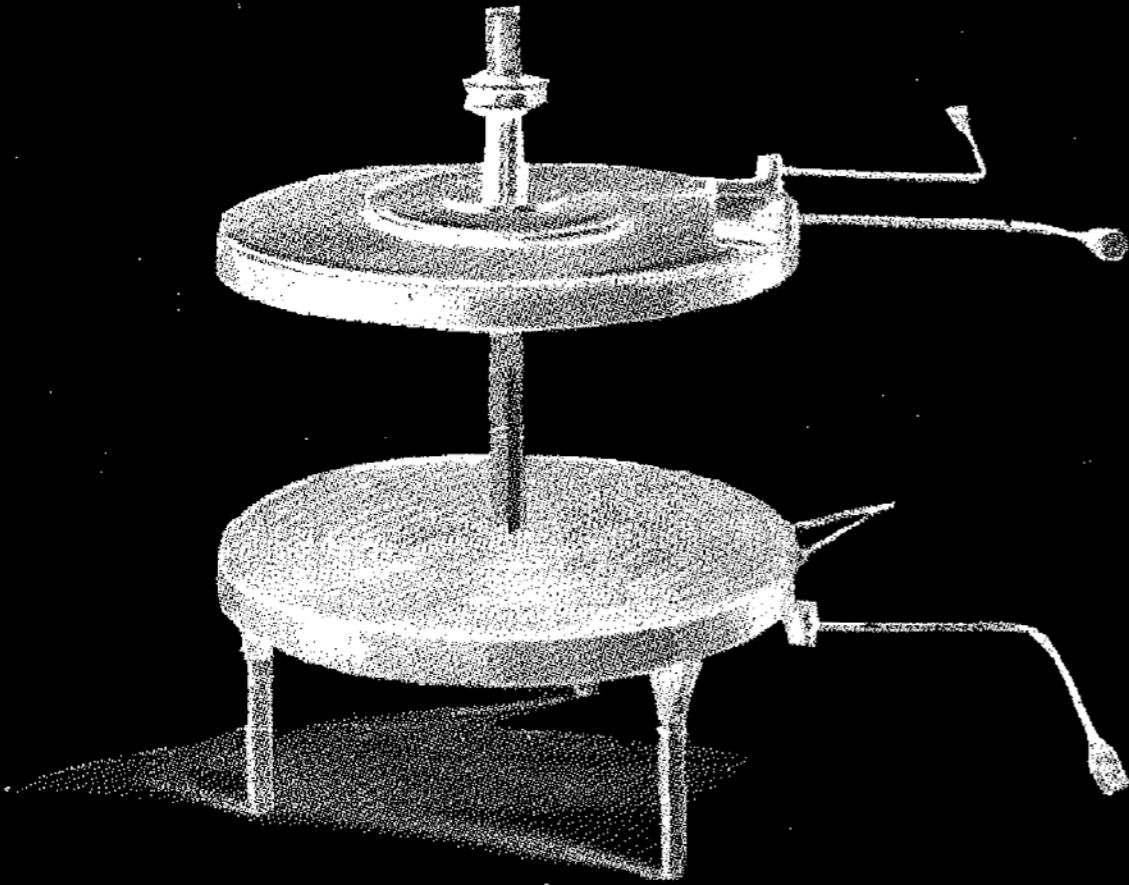
Heinrich Hertz

Michael Faraday



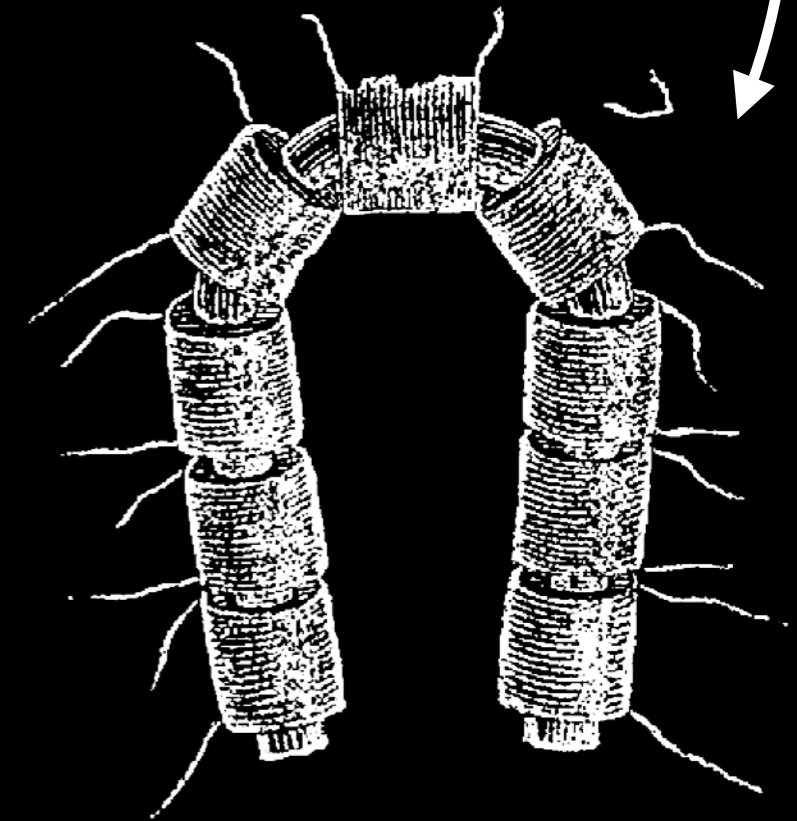
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The helping hand of the past



Heinrich Hertz

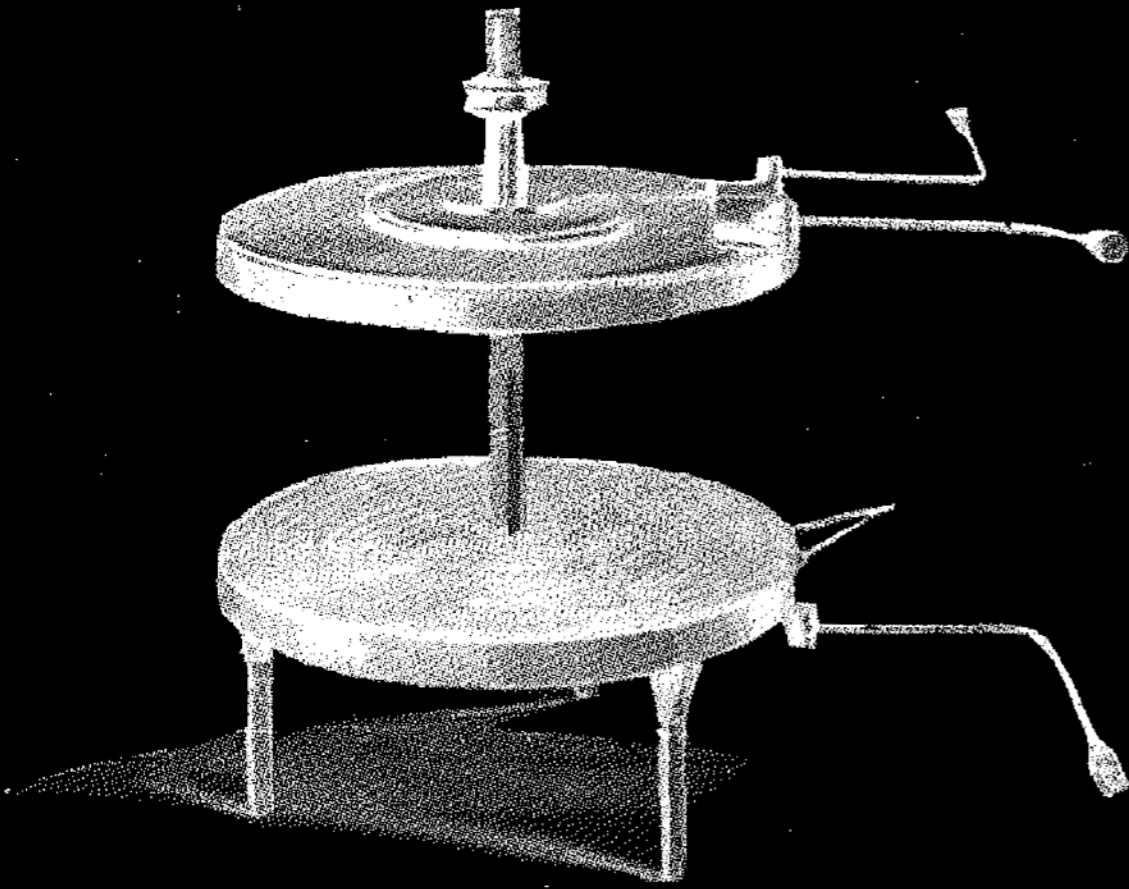
Michael Faraday



Joseph Henry

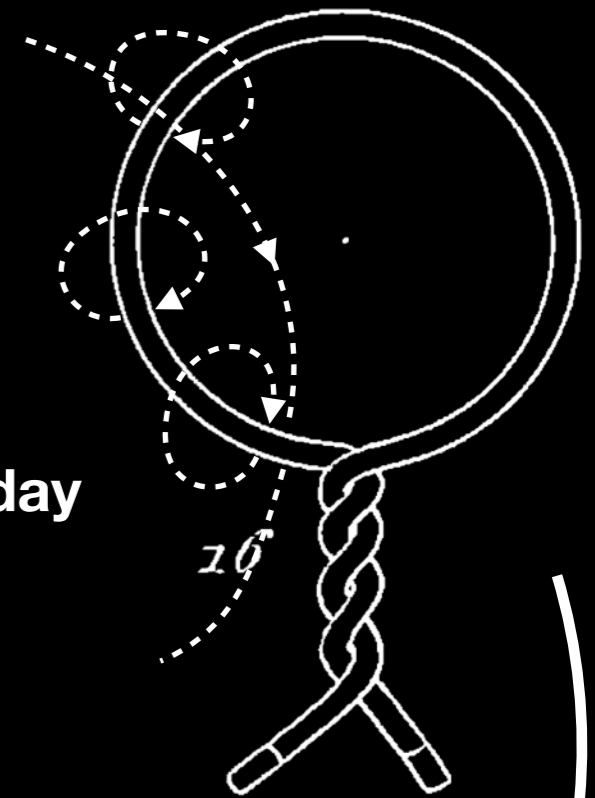
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The helping hand of the past

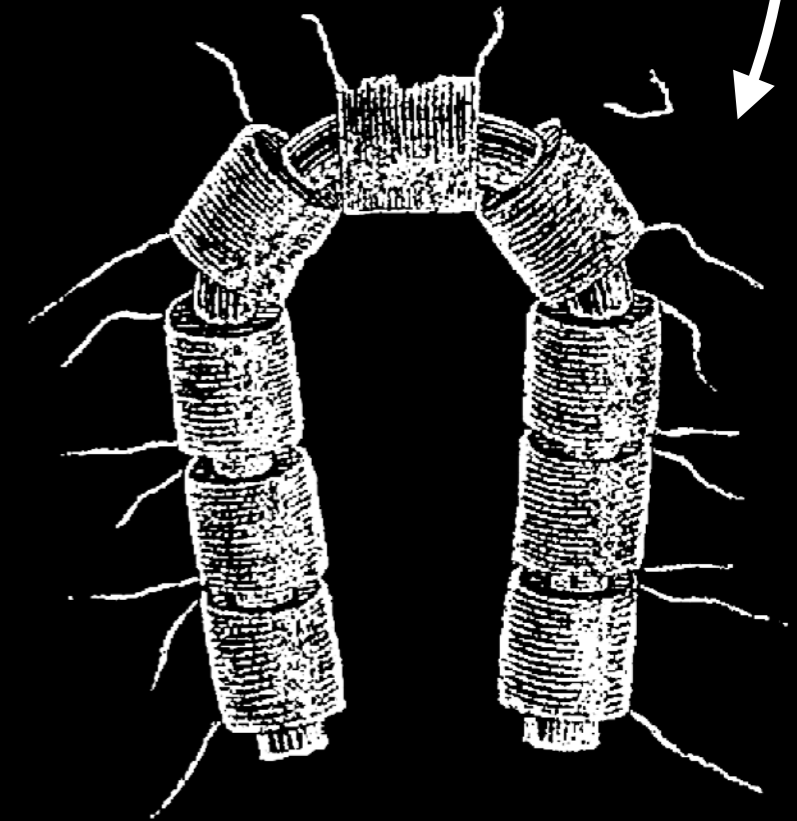
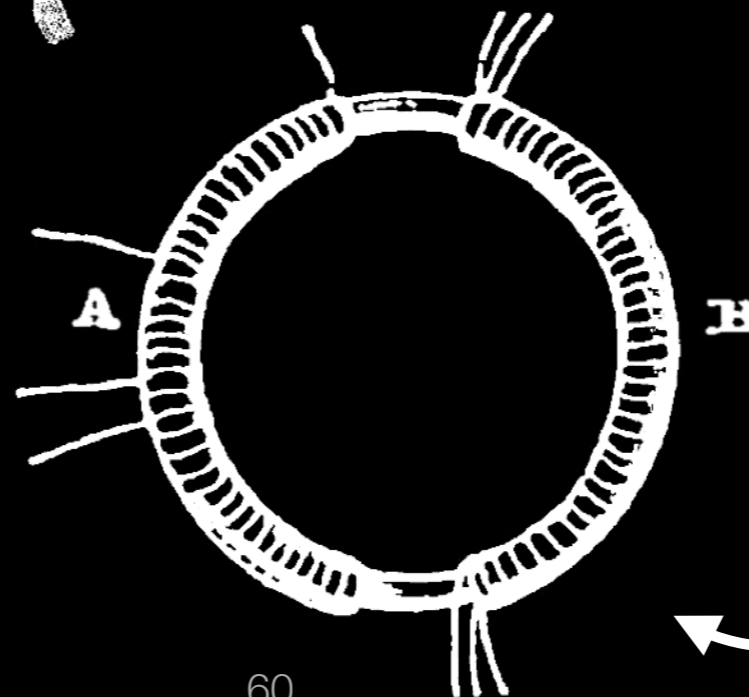


Heinrich Hertz

Michael Faraday



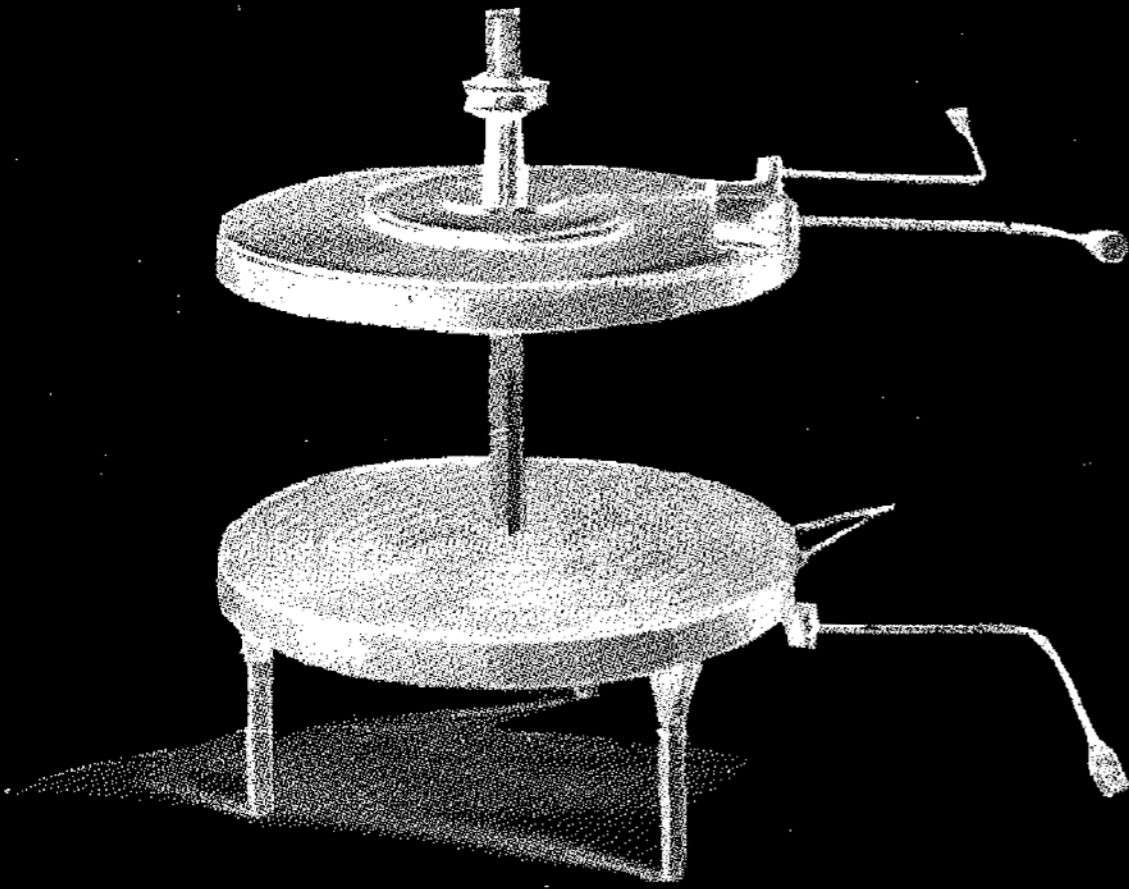
Michael Faraday



Joseph Henry

So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past

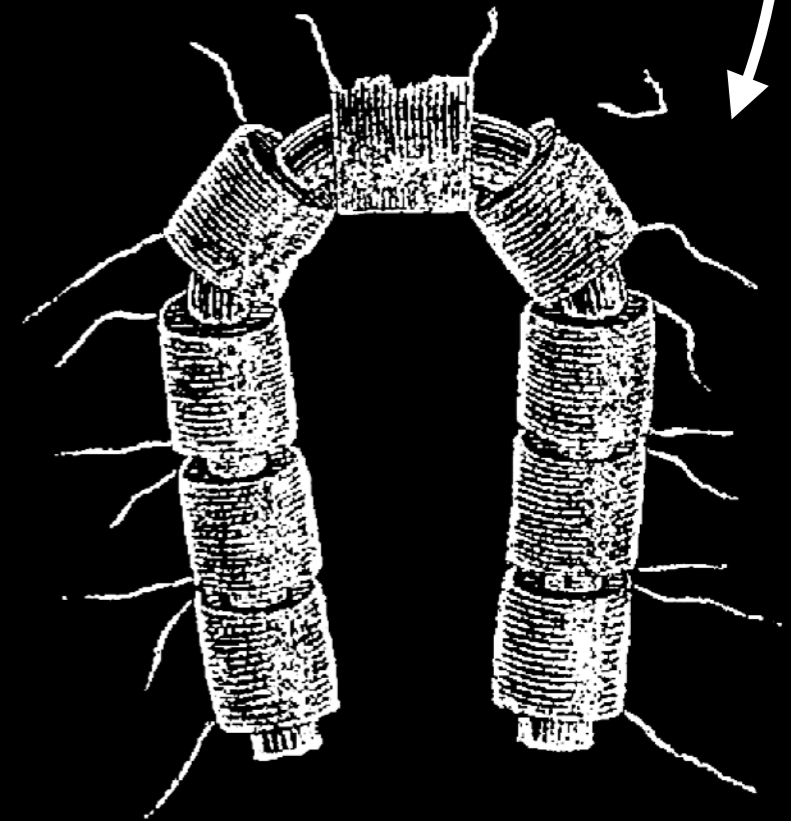
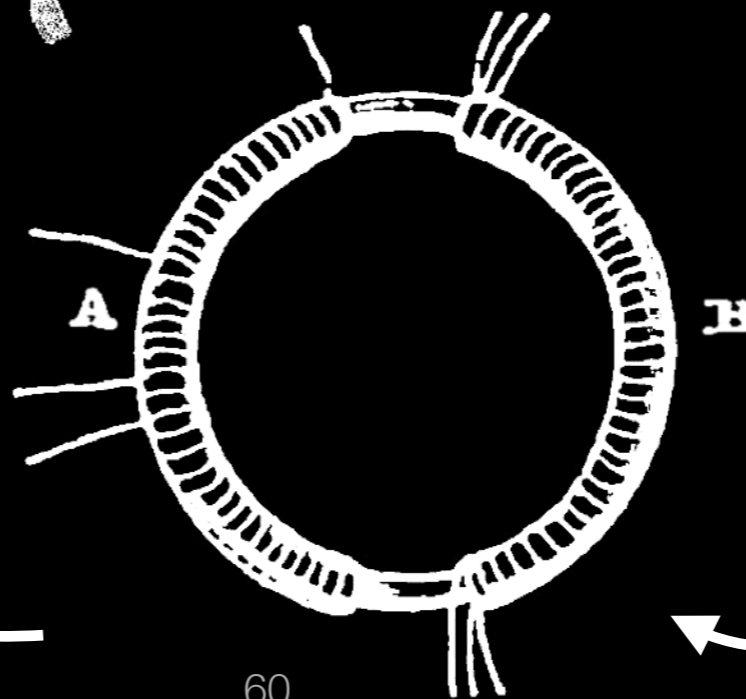


Heinrich Hertz



Michael Faraday

Michael Faraday



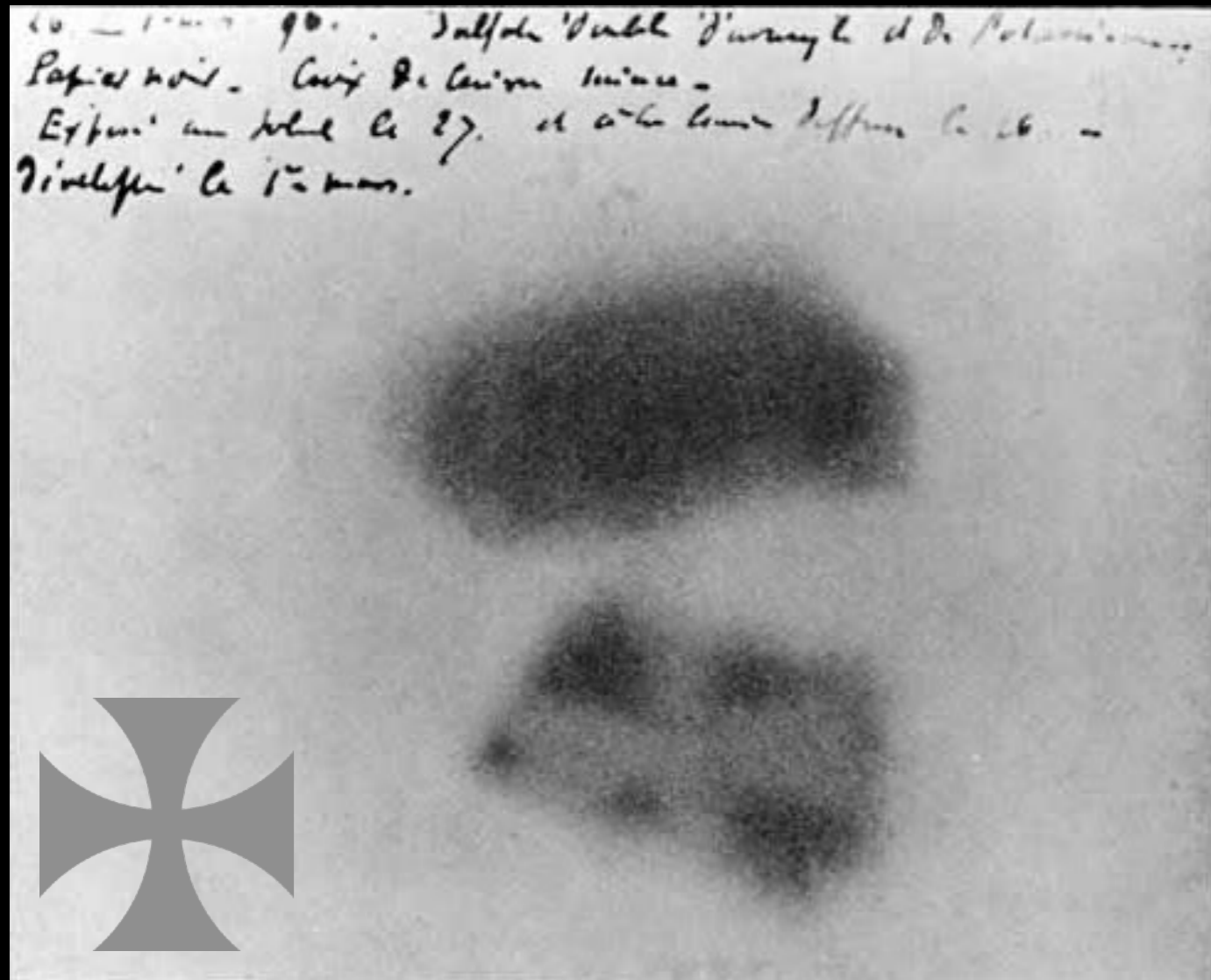
Joseph Henry

So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past

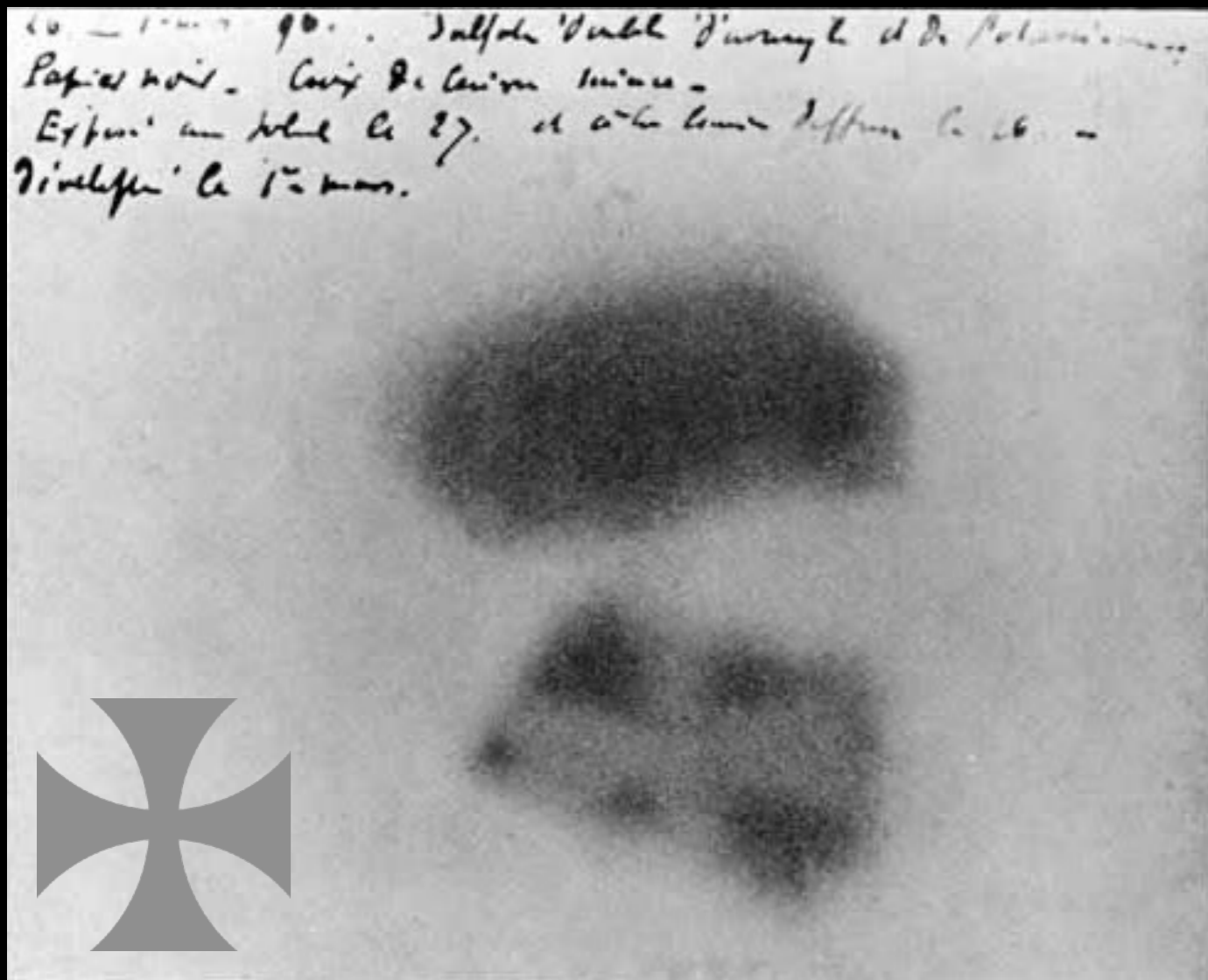
So, what did it take to get here?

The helping hand of the past



So, what did it take to get here?

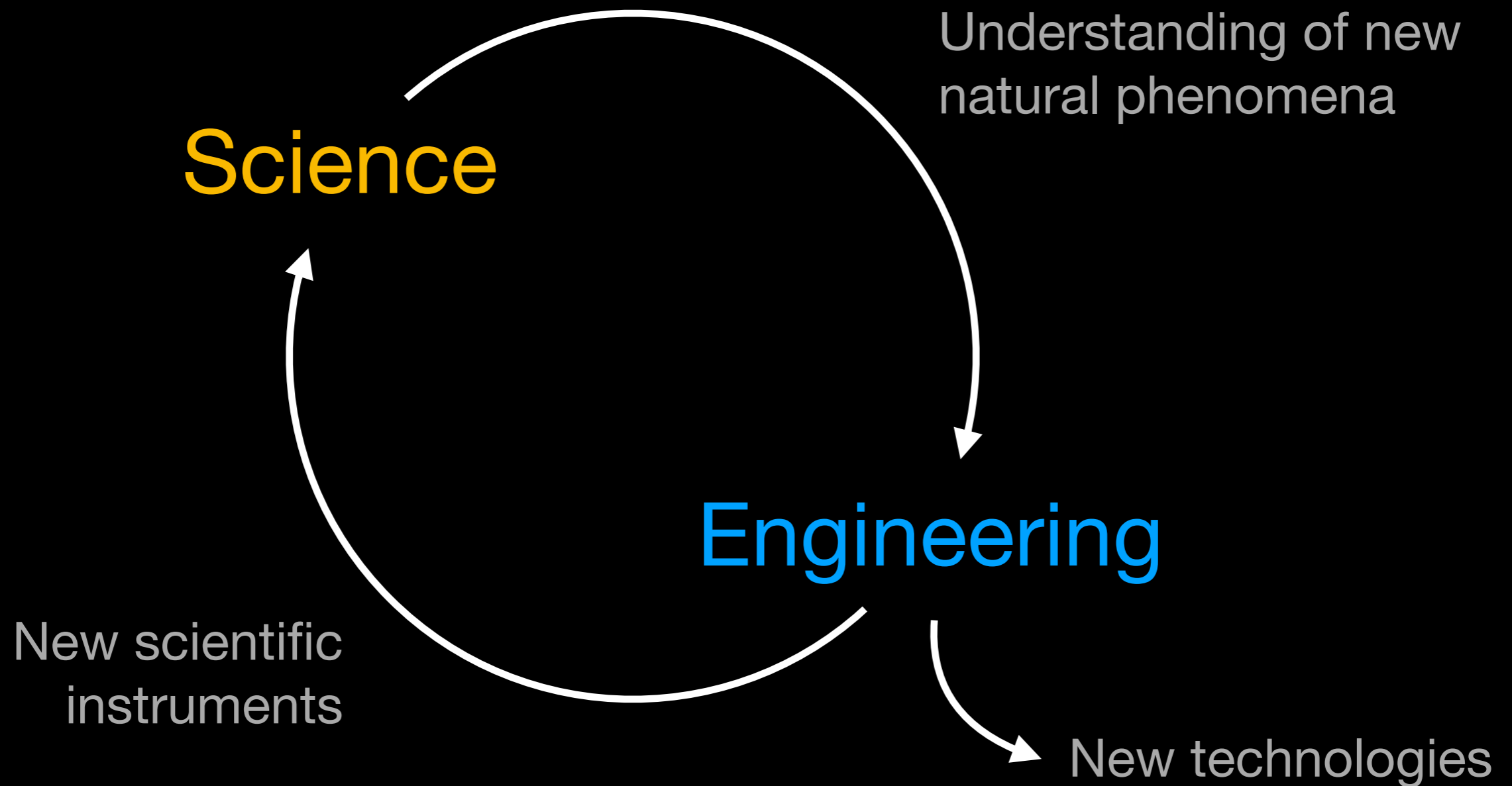
The helping hand of the past



[source]



So, what did it take to get here?





**HOW FUNDAMENTAL SCIENCE
HAS CHANGED THE WORLD**

A STORY OF INVENTION AND DISCOVERY

Thank you!