

# The Lives and Deaths of Stars and the Stellar Explosions That Made Us

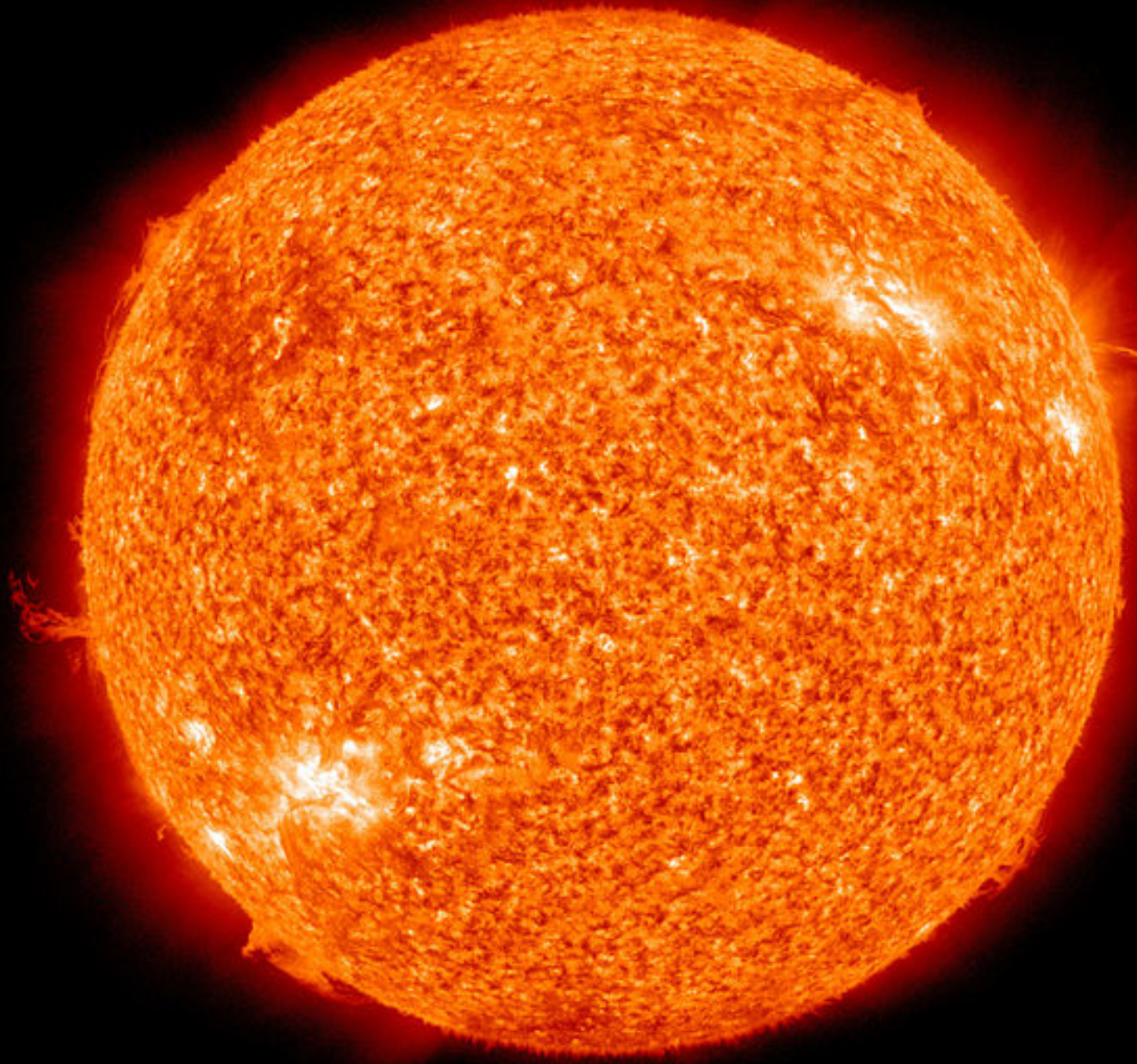
Sean M. Couch  
Hubble Fellow, University of Chicago  
[smc@flash.uchicago.edu](mailto:smc@flash.uchicago.edu)

Renaissance Court Seminar  
Chicago, IL, 20 March 2014



# Stars: Big Nuclear Furnaces

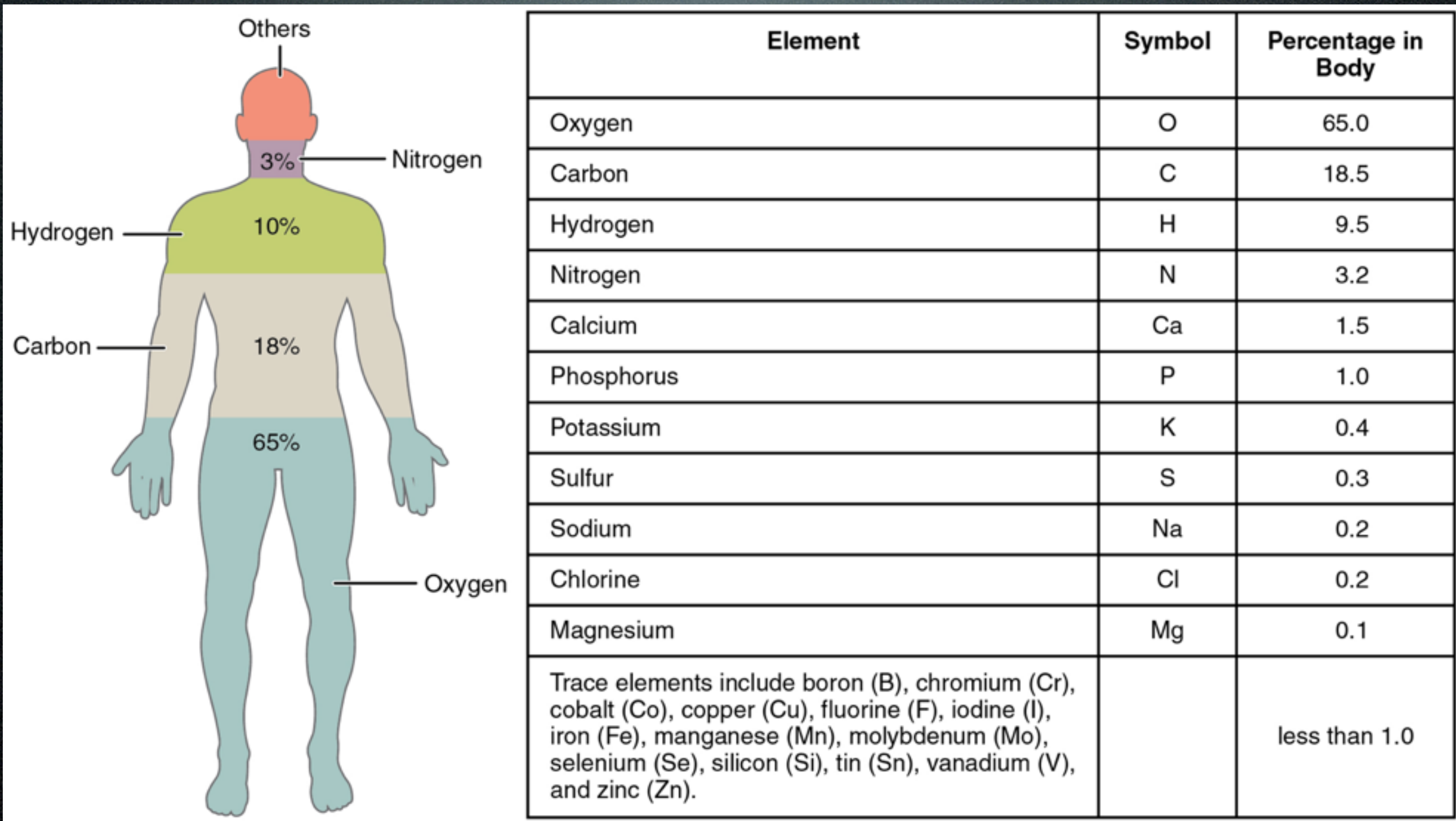
The Sun: A pretty typical star



1,400,000 km



# You Are Star Stuff!



A Supernova (i.e., Massive Star) is one of your ancestors!

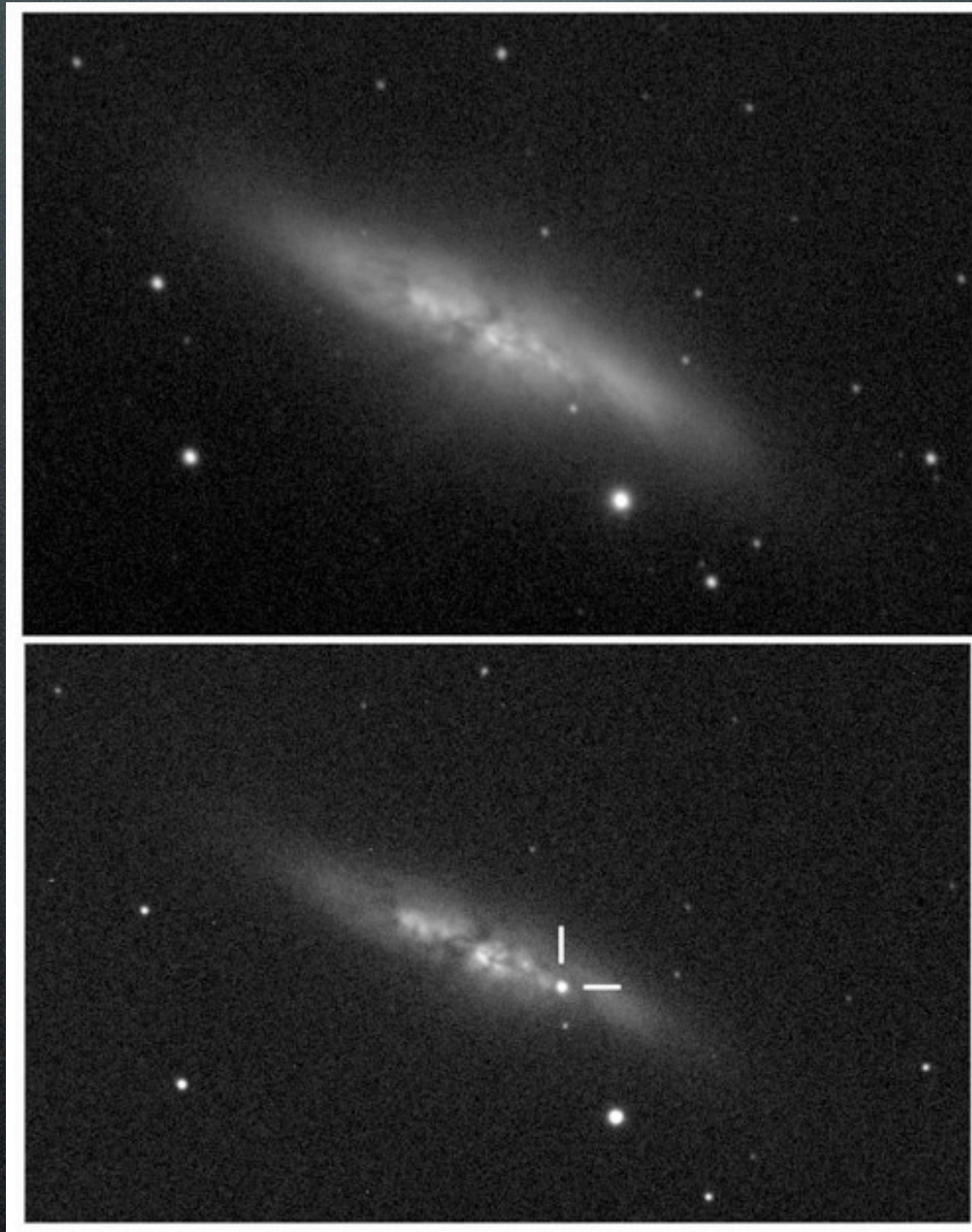


# Stars and Supernovae

- The life of “normal” stars, like the sun.
- The fast and furious lives and big stars.
- The fates of the stars and supernovae.



# Bright Transients in the Sky



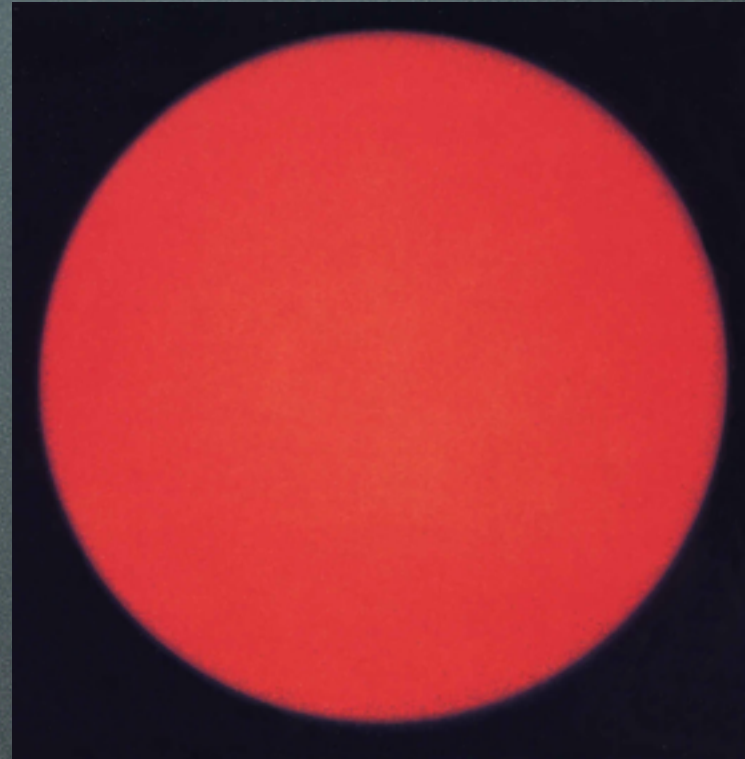


# Astronomical Scales

Earth,  
 $1 R_E$



Sun,  
 $110 R_E$



Red Giant,  
 $5000 R_E$

Molecular Cloud,  
 $100 \text{ Billion } R_E$



Galaxy,  
 $100 \text{ Trillion } R_E$





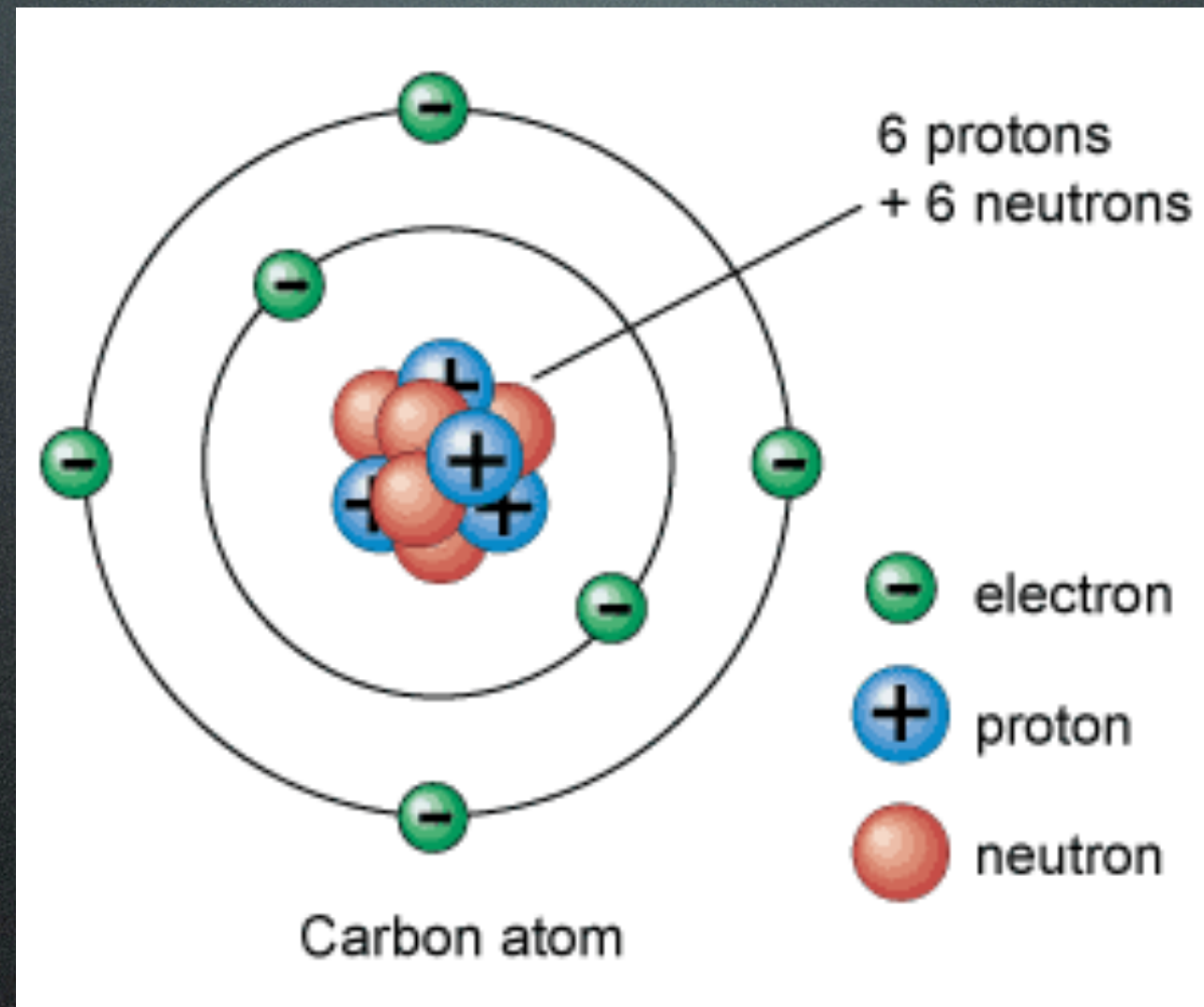
# Stars: Basic Unit of Astronomy



1 Million Trillion km



# Nuclei: Basic Unit of Matter



←————→  
1 Hundred-Trillionth km



# Nucleosynthesis

hydrogen 1 H 1.0079																	helium 2 He 4.0026	
lithium 3 Li 6.941	beryllium 4 Be 9.0122											boron 5 B 10.811	carbon 6 C 12.011	nitrogen 7 N 14.007	oxygen 8 O 15.999	fluorine 9 F 18.998	neon 10 Ne 20.180	
sodium 11 Na 22.990	magnesium 12 Mg 24.305											aluminium 13 Al 26.982	silicon 14 Si 28.086	phosphorus 15 P 30.974	sulfur 16 S 32.065	chlorine 17 Cl 35.453	argon 18 Ar 39.948	
potassium 19 K 39.098	calcium 20 Ca 40.078	scandium 21 Sc 44.956	titanium 22 Ti 47.867	vanadium 23 V 50.942	chromium 24 Cr 51.996	manganese 25 Mn 54.938	iron 26 Fe 55.845	cobalt 27 Co 58.933	nickel 28 Ni 58.693	copper 29 Cu 63.546	zinc 30 Zn 65.39	gallium 31 Ga 69.723	germanium 32 Ge 72.61	arsenic 33 As 74.922	selenium 34 Se 78.96	bromine 35 Br 79.904	krypton 36 Kr 83.80	
rubidium 37 Rb 85.468	strontium 38 Sr 87.62	yttrium 39 Y 88.906	zirconium 40 Zr 91.224	niobium 41 Nb 92.906	molybdenum 42 Mo 95.94	technetium 43 Tc [98]	ruthenium 44 Ru 101.07	rhodium 45 Rh 102.91	palladium 46 Pd 106.42	silver 47 Ag 107.87	cadmium 48 Cd 112.41	indium 49 In 114.82	tin 50 Sn 118.71	antimony 51 Sb 121.76	tellurium 52 Te 127.60	iodine 53 I 126.90	xenon 54 Xe 131.29	
caesium 55 Cs 132.91	barium 56 Ba 137.33	57-70 ★	lutetium 71 Lu 174.97	hafnium 72 Hf 178.49	tantalum 73 Ta 180.95	tungsten 74 W 183.84	rhenium 75 Re 186.21	osmium 76 Os 190.23	iridium 77 Ir 192.22	platinum 78 Pt 195.08	gold 79 Au 196.97	mercury 80 Hg 200.59	thallium 81 Tl 204.38	lead 82 Pb 207.2	bismuth 83 Bi 208.98	polonium 84 Po [209]	astatine 85 At [210]	radon 86 Rn [222]
francium 87 Fr [223]	radium 88 Ra [226]	89-102 ★ ★	lawrencium 103 Lr [262]	rutherfordium 104 Rf [261]	dubnium 105 Db [262]	seaborgium 106 Sg [266]	bohrium 107 Bh [264]	hassium 108 Hs [269]	meitnerium 109 Mt [268]	ununnitium 110 Uun [271]	ununium 111 Uuu [272]	unubium 112 Uub [277]		ununquadium 114 Uuq [289]				

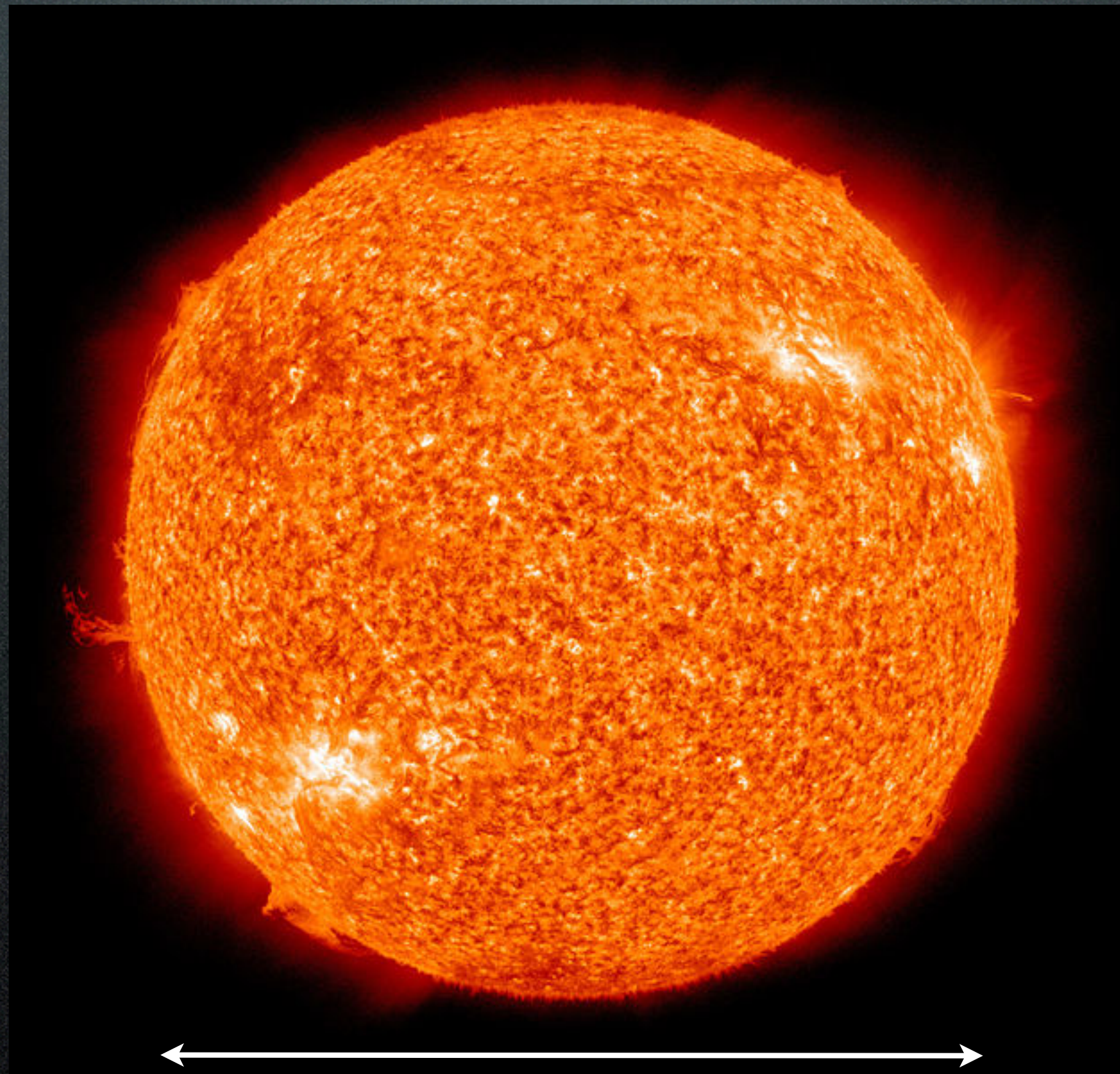
\*Lanthanide series

\* \* Actinide series

lanthanum 57 La 138.91	cerium 58 Ce 140.12	praseodymium 59 Pr 140.91	neodymium 60 Nd 144.24	promethium 61 Pm [145]	samarium 62 Sm 150.36	europium 63 Eu 151.96	gadolinium 64 Gd 157.25	terbium 65 Tb 158.93	dysprosium 66 Dy 162.50	holmium 67 Ho 164.93	erbium 68 Er 167.26	thulium 69 Tm 168.93	ytterbium 70 Yb 173.04
actinium 89 Ac [227]	thorium 90 Th 232.04	protactinium 91 Pa 231.04	uranium 92 U 238.03	neptunium 93 Np [237]	plutonium 94 Pu [244]	americium 95 Am [243]	curium 96 Cm [247]	berkelium 97 Bk [247]	californium 98 Cf [251]	einsteinium 99 Es [252]	fermium 100 Fm [257]	mendelevium 101 Md [258]	nobelium 102 No [259]



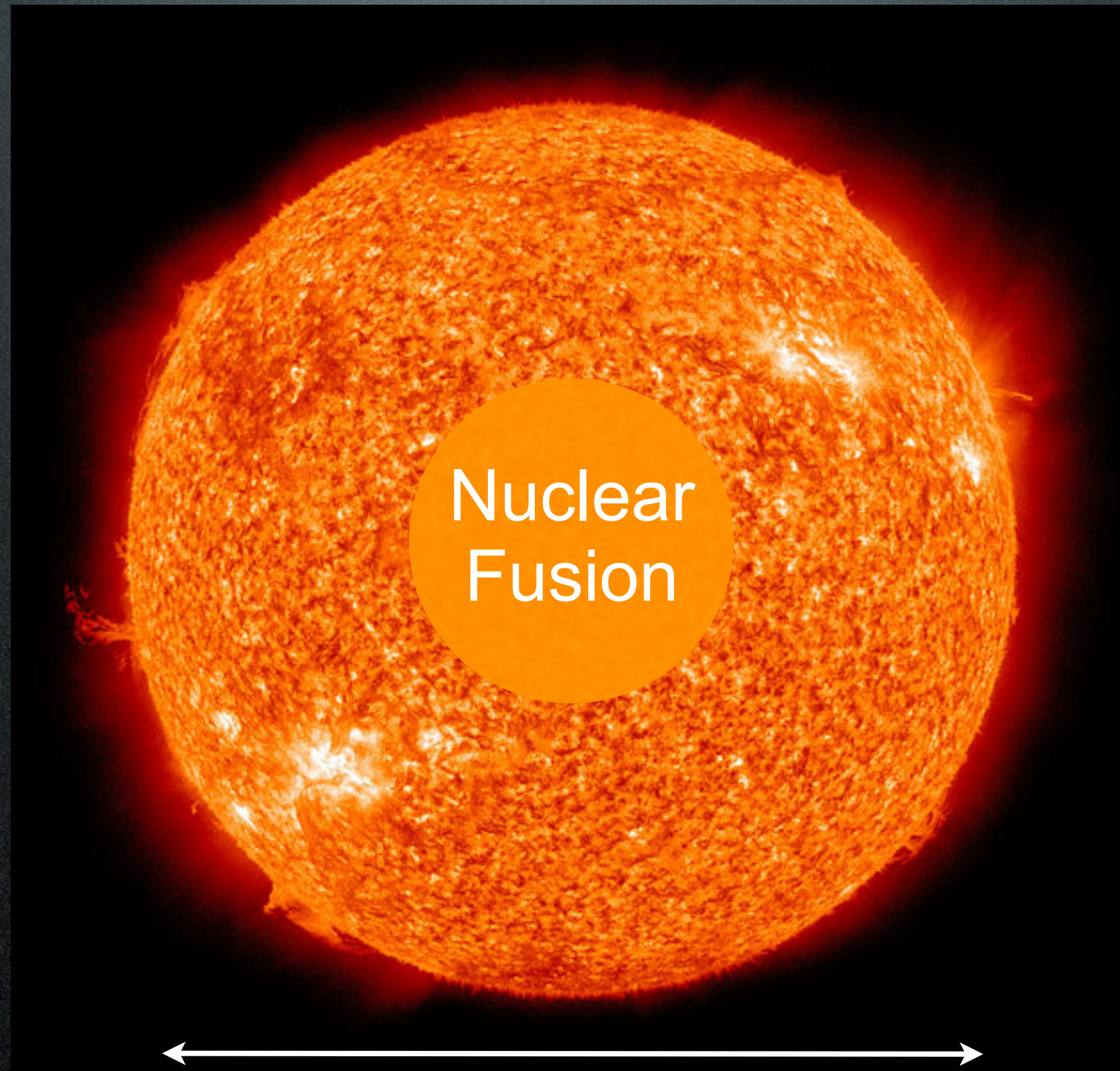
# Stars: Big Nuclear Furnaces



1,400,000 km



# Stars: Big Nuclear Furnaces



1,400,000 km



# Nuclear Fusion

Light Nuclei

Heavy Nucleus



Very sensitive to temperature!

Fusion of heavier and heavier elements requires higher and higher *threshold* temperatures.



# Stellar Birth





# Star Formation

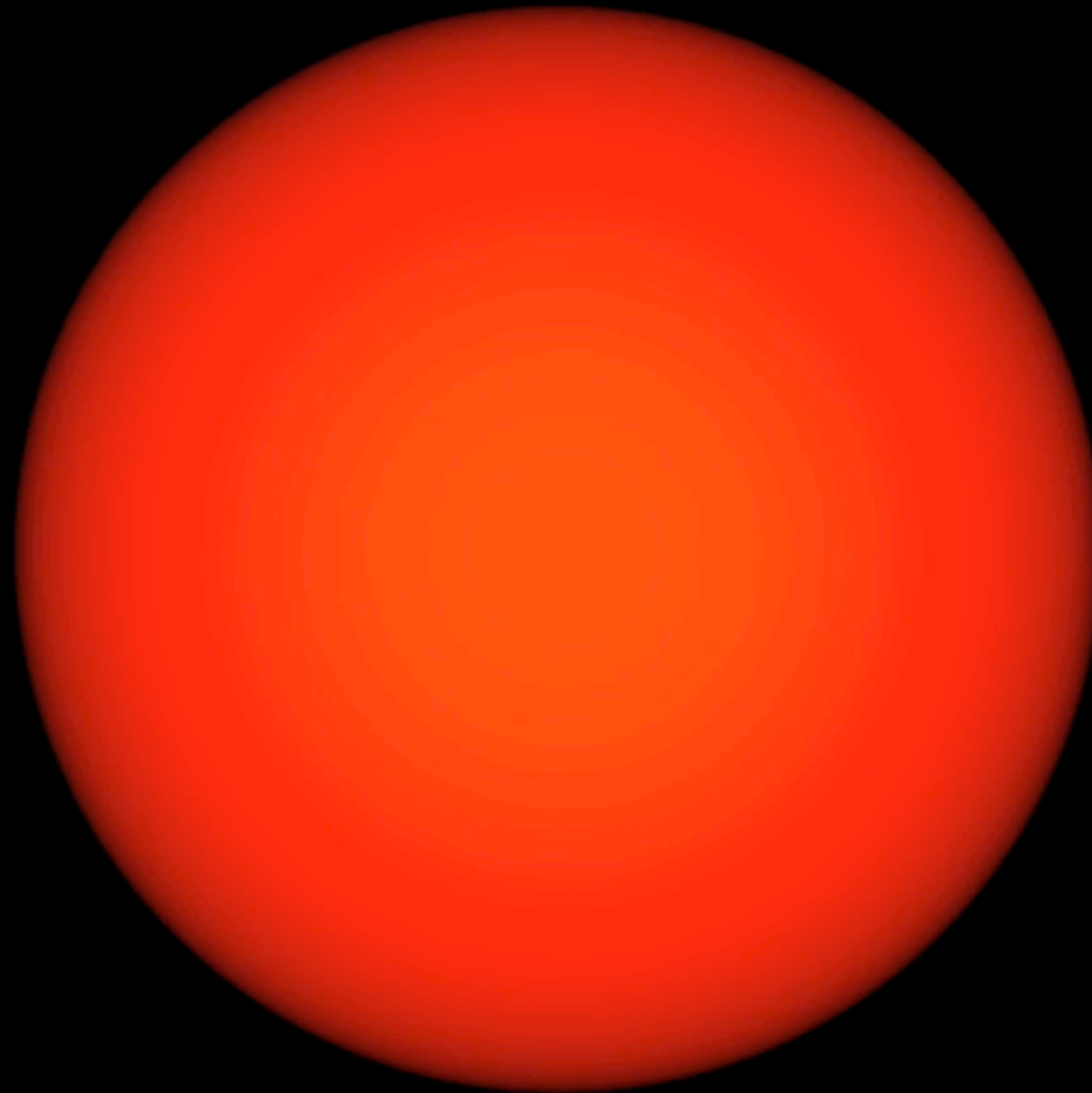


1000 Trillion km



# Star Formation

UK Astrophysical  
Fluids Facility



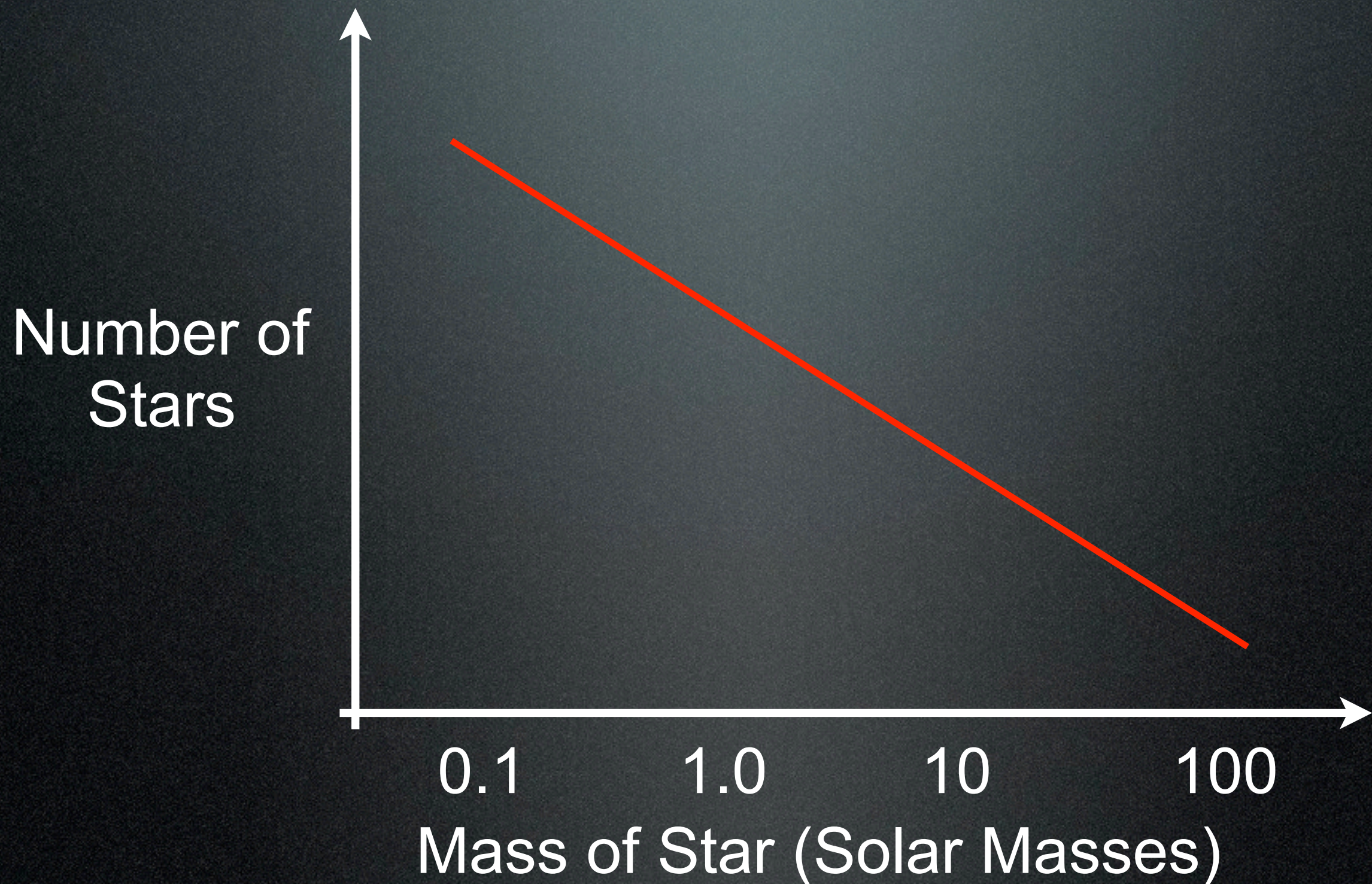
Matthew Bate UNIVERSITY OF  
EXETER



1000 Trillion km

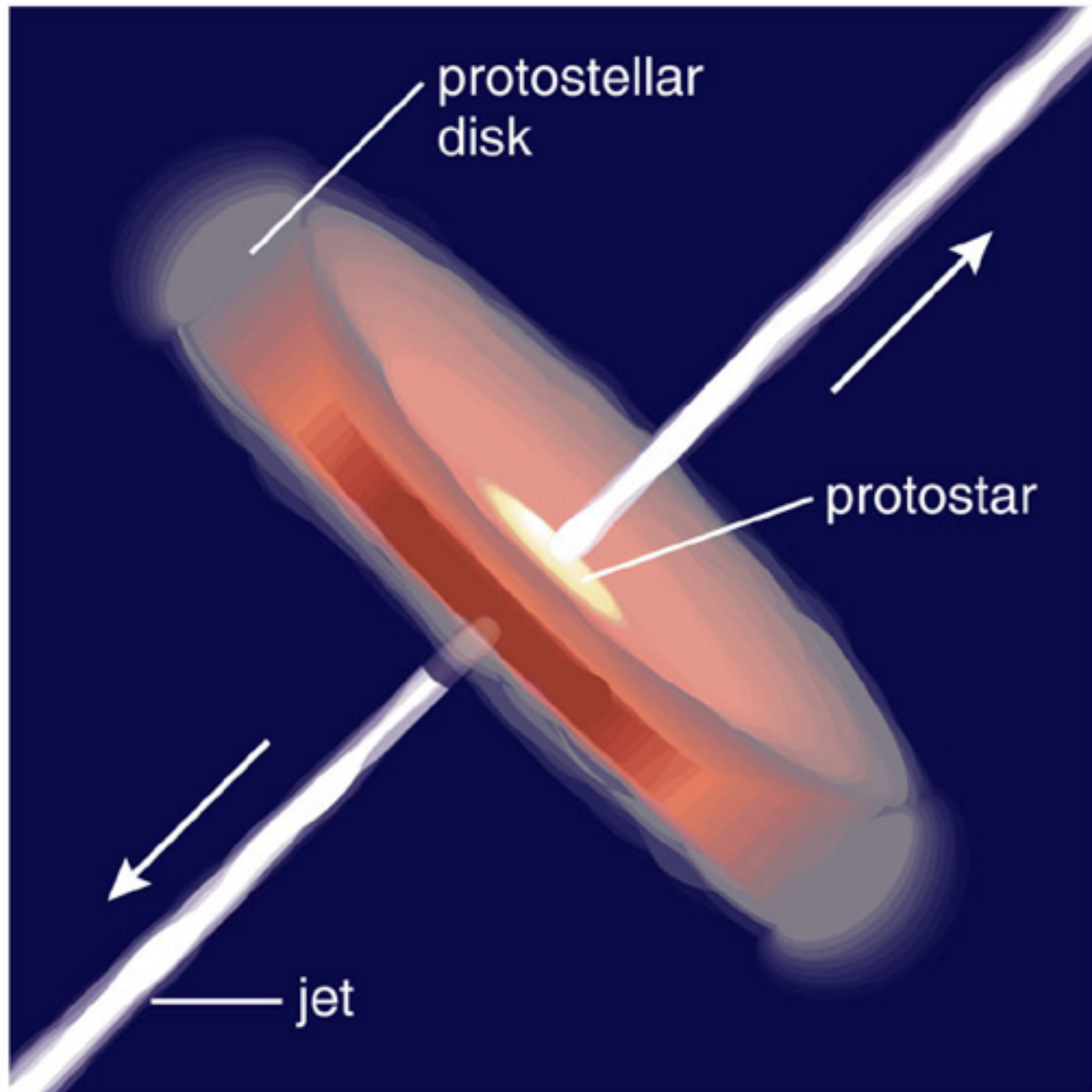


# More Small Stars than Big

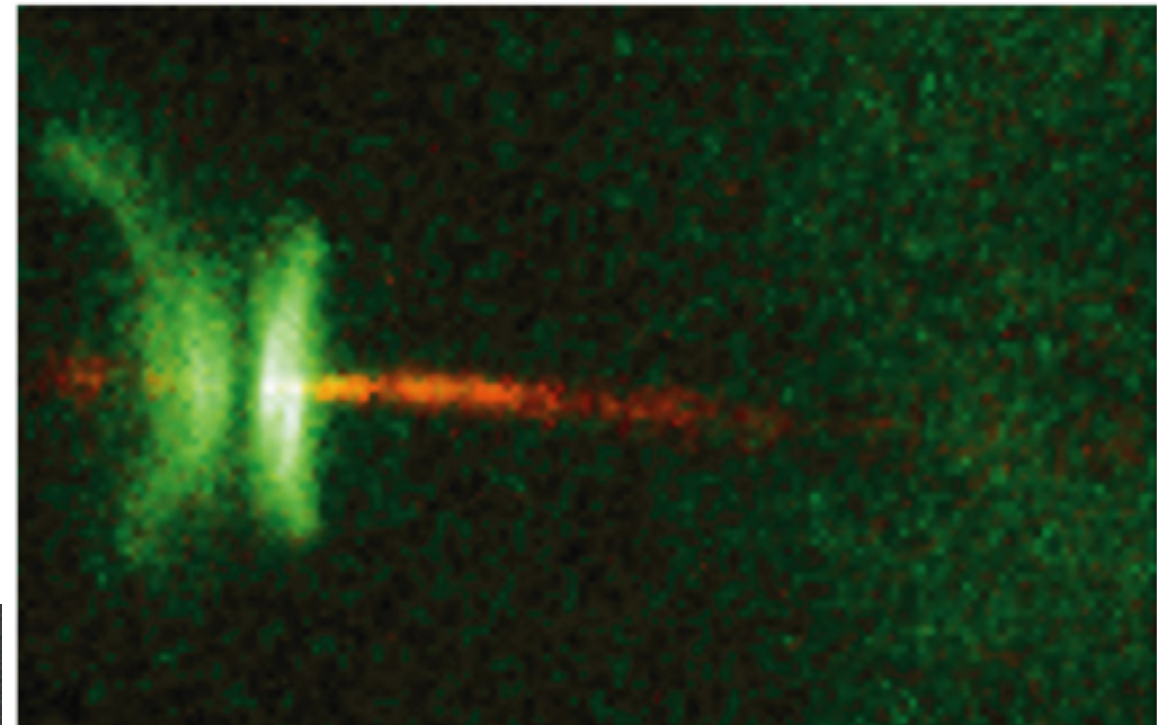
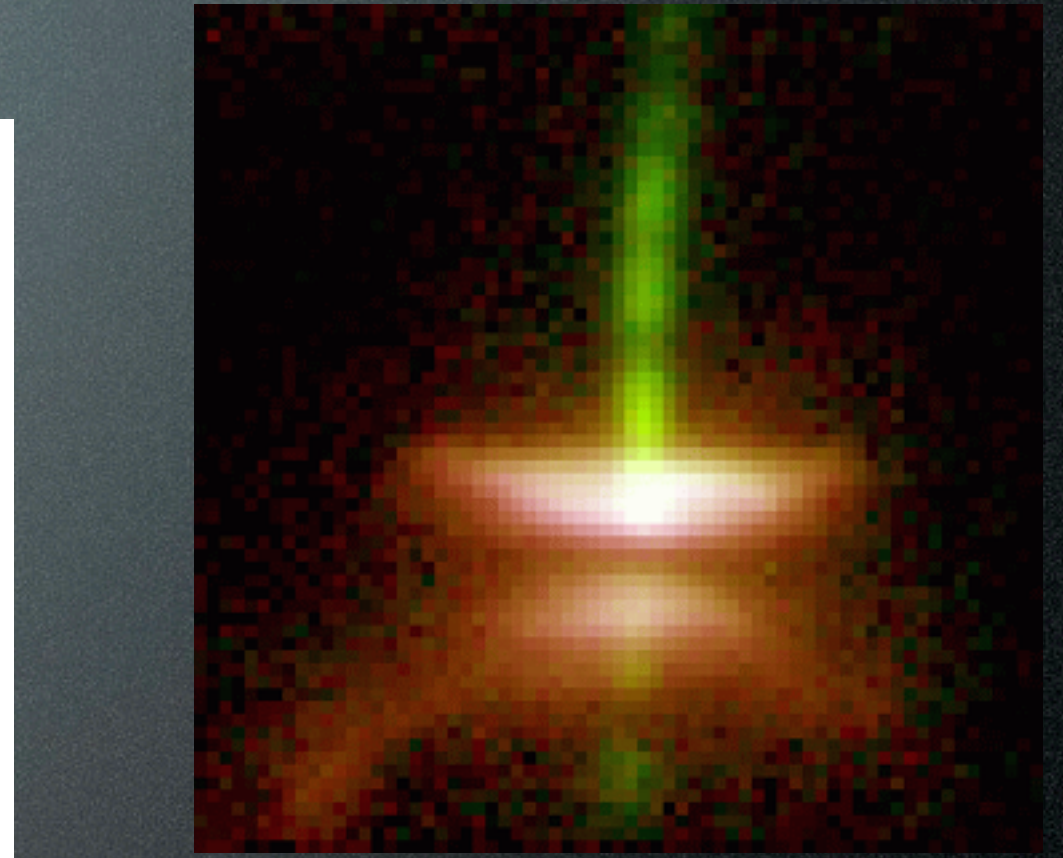




# Newborn Stars Have Disks



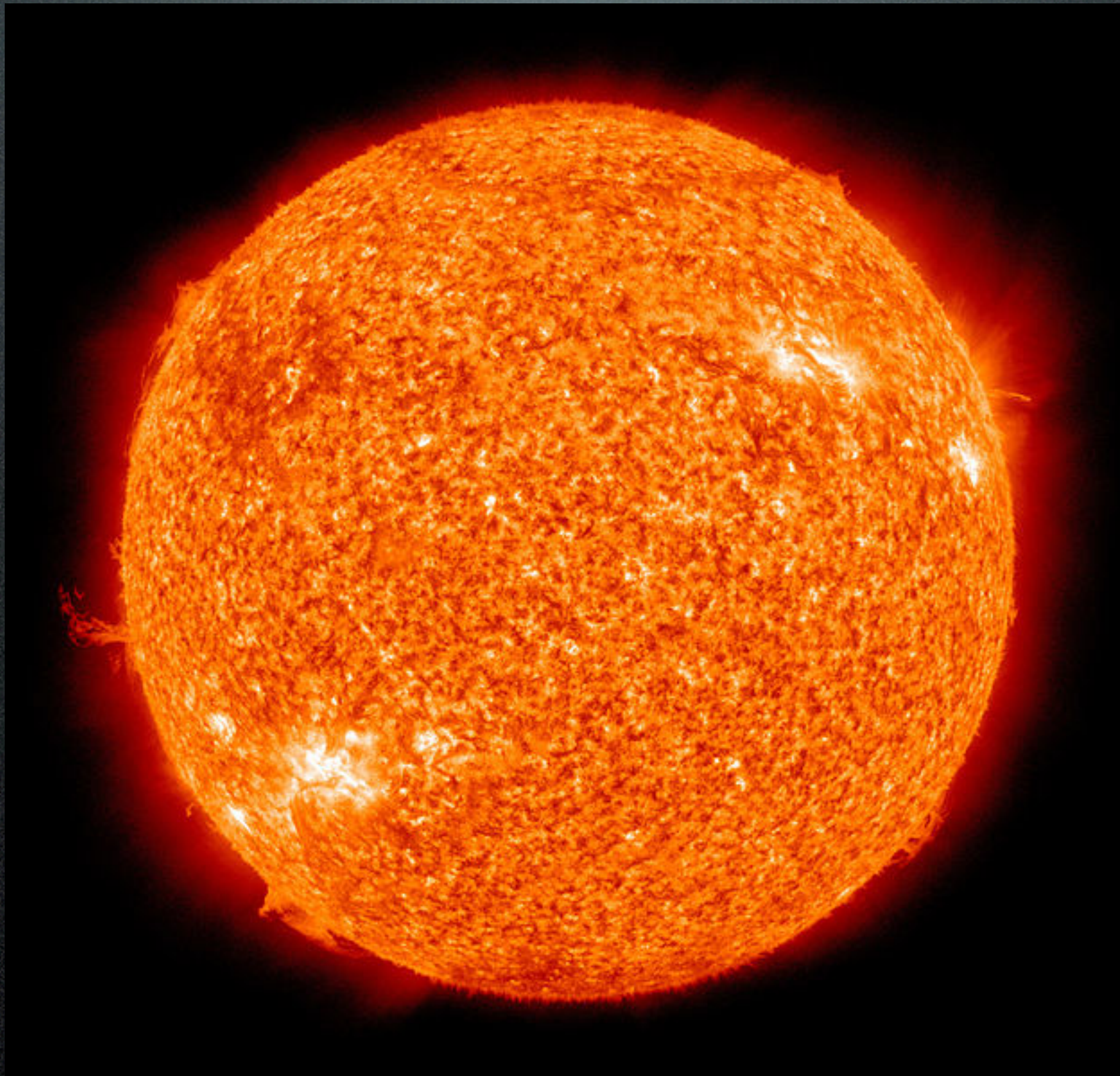
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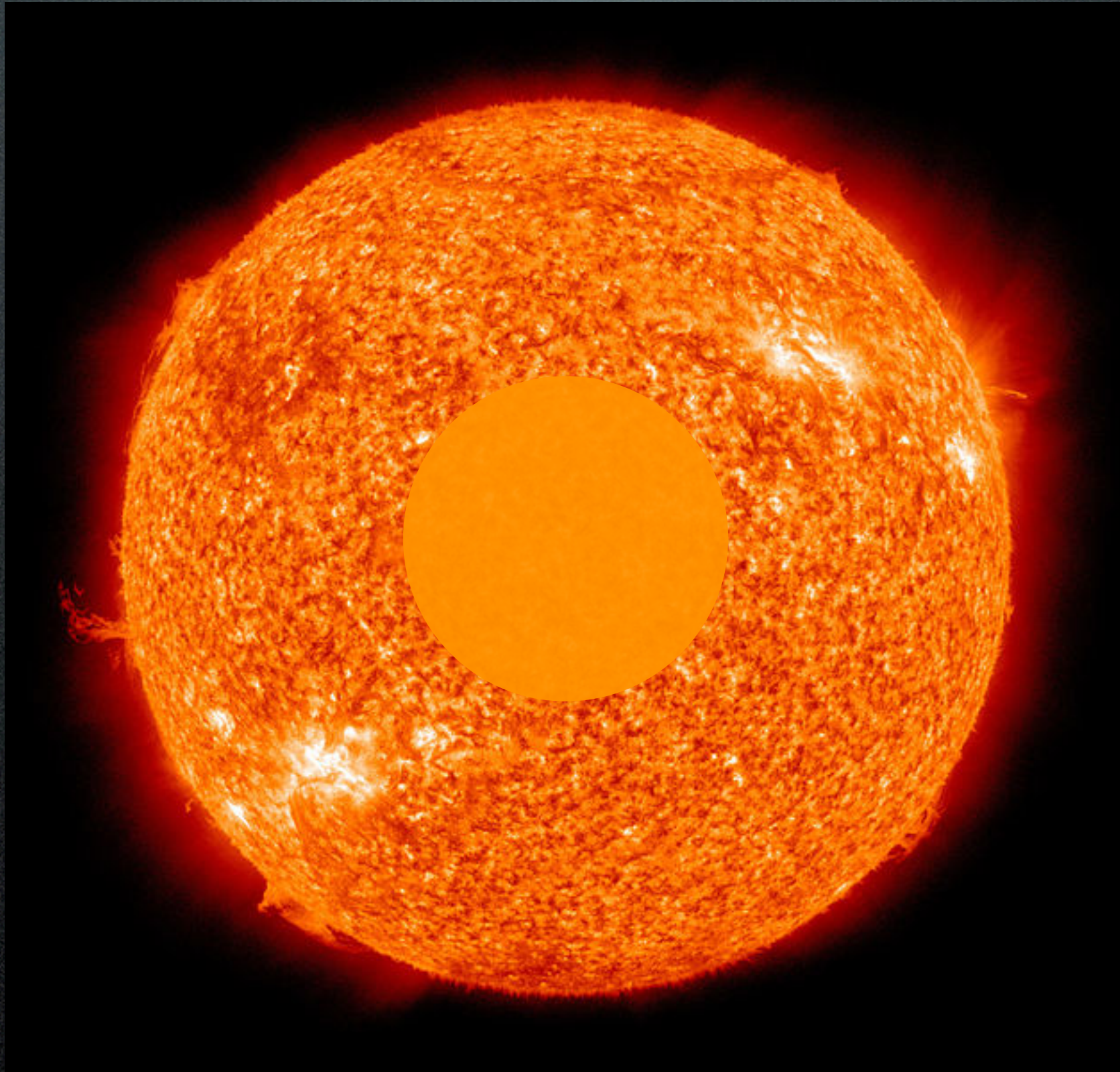


# Hydrogen Ignition: Main Sequence



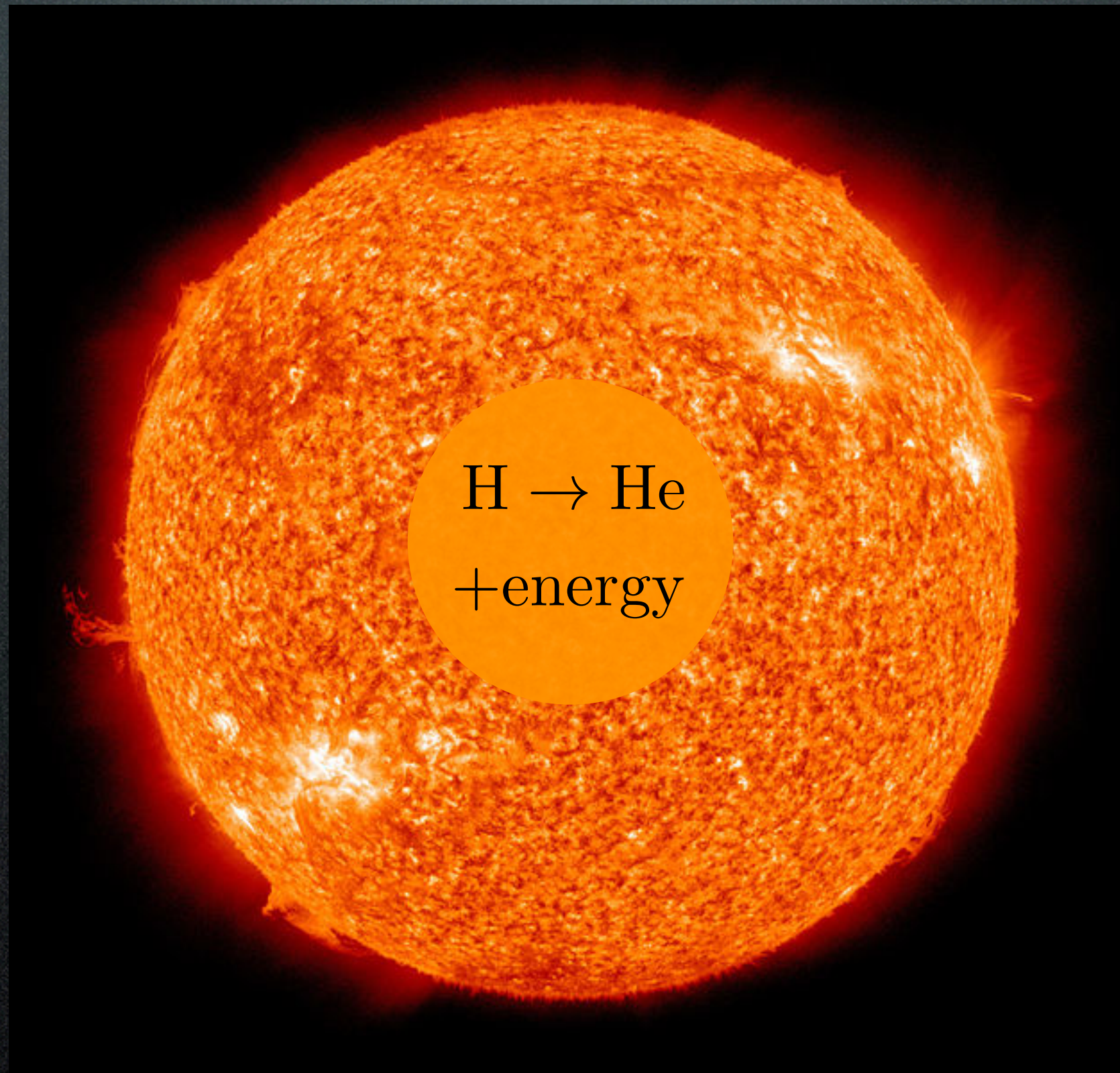


# Hydrogen Ignition: Main Sequence





# Hydrogen Ignition: Main Sequence





# Struggle Against Gravity



Gravitational  
Force

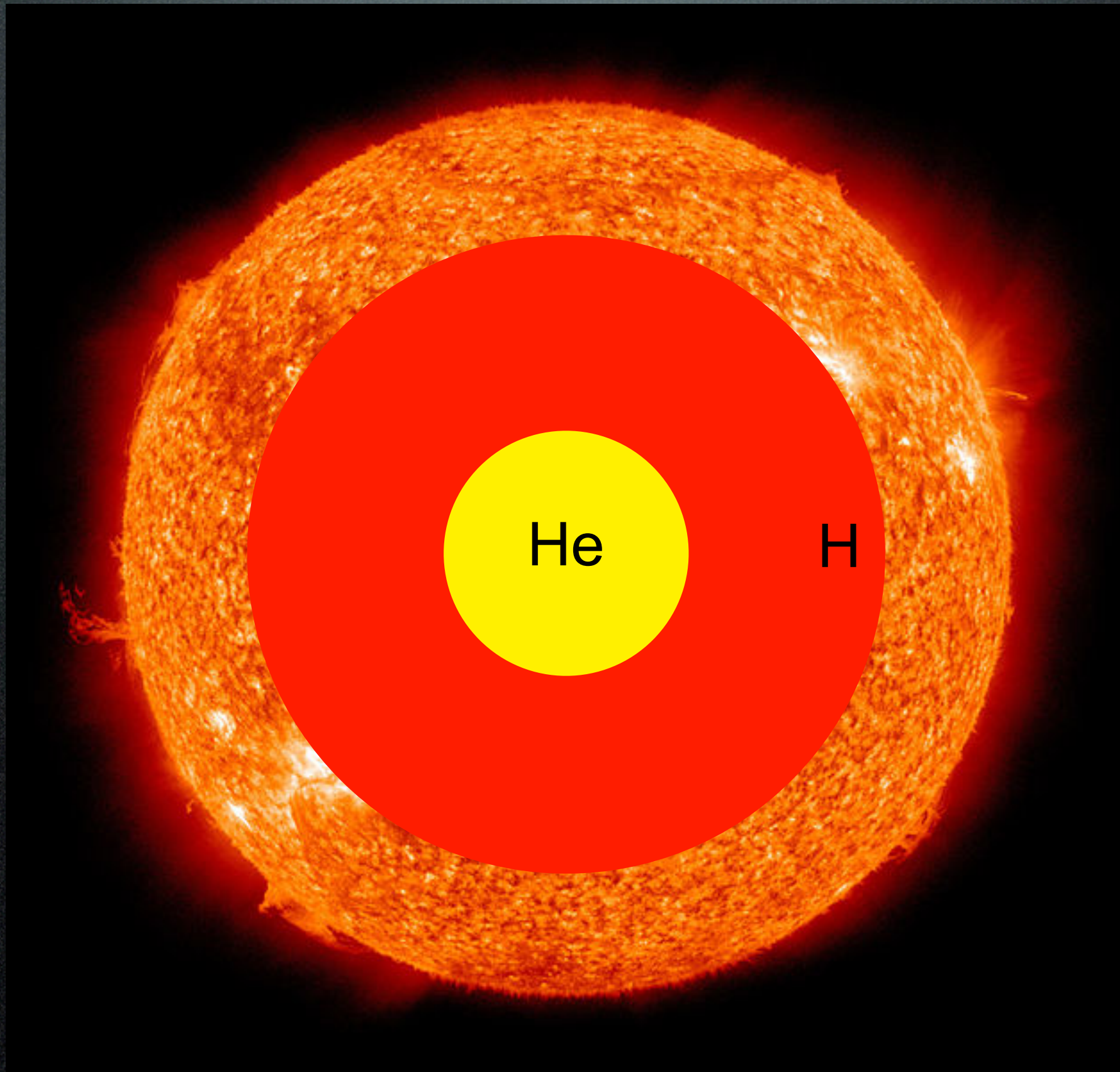
Nuclear  
Burning  
Pressure



# What is Pressure?

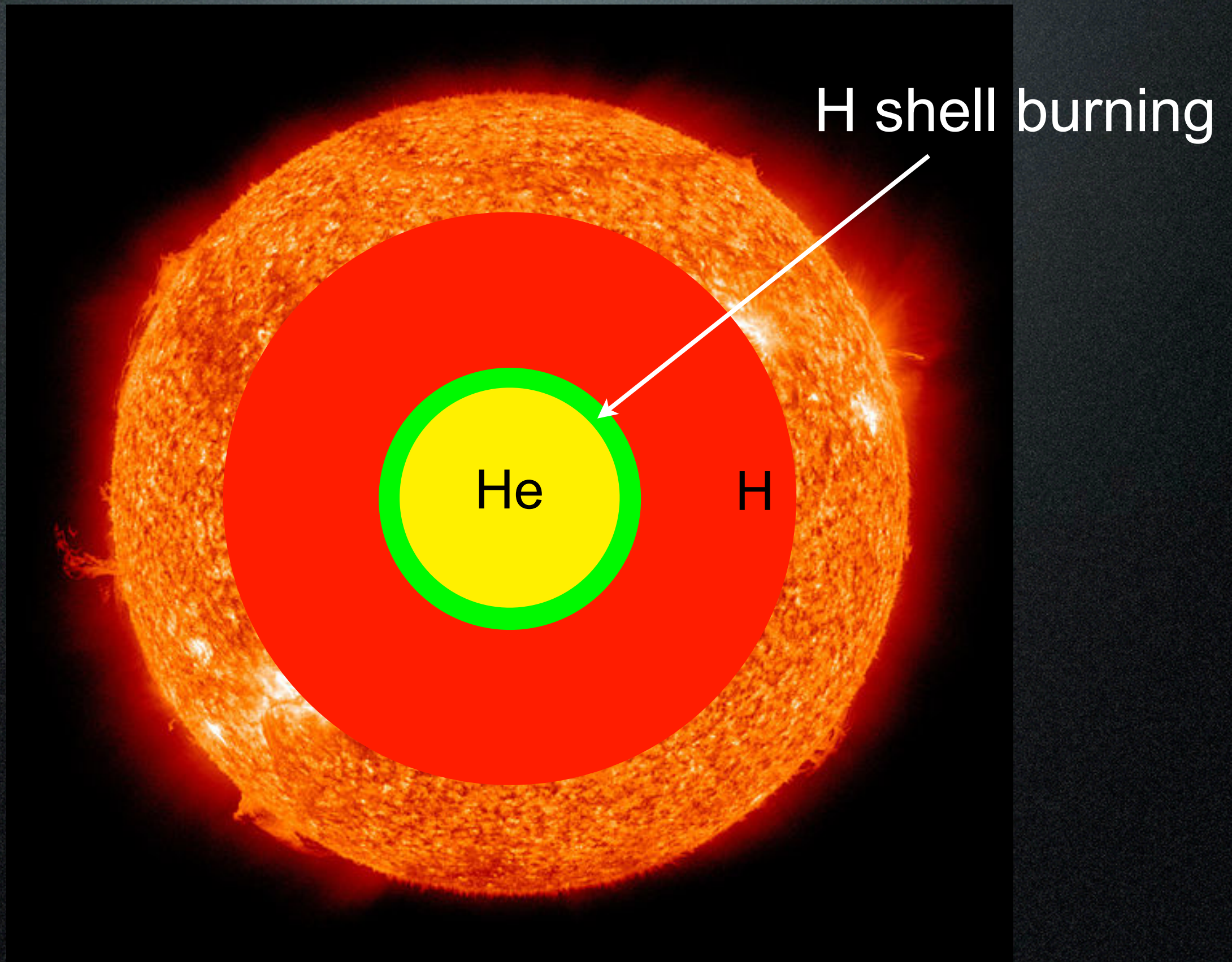


# Core Hydrogen Exhaustion





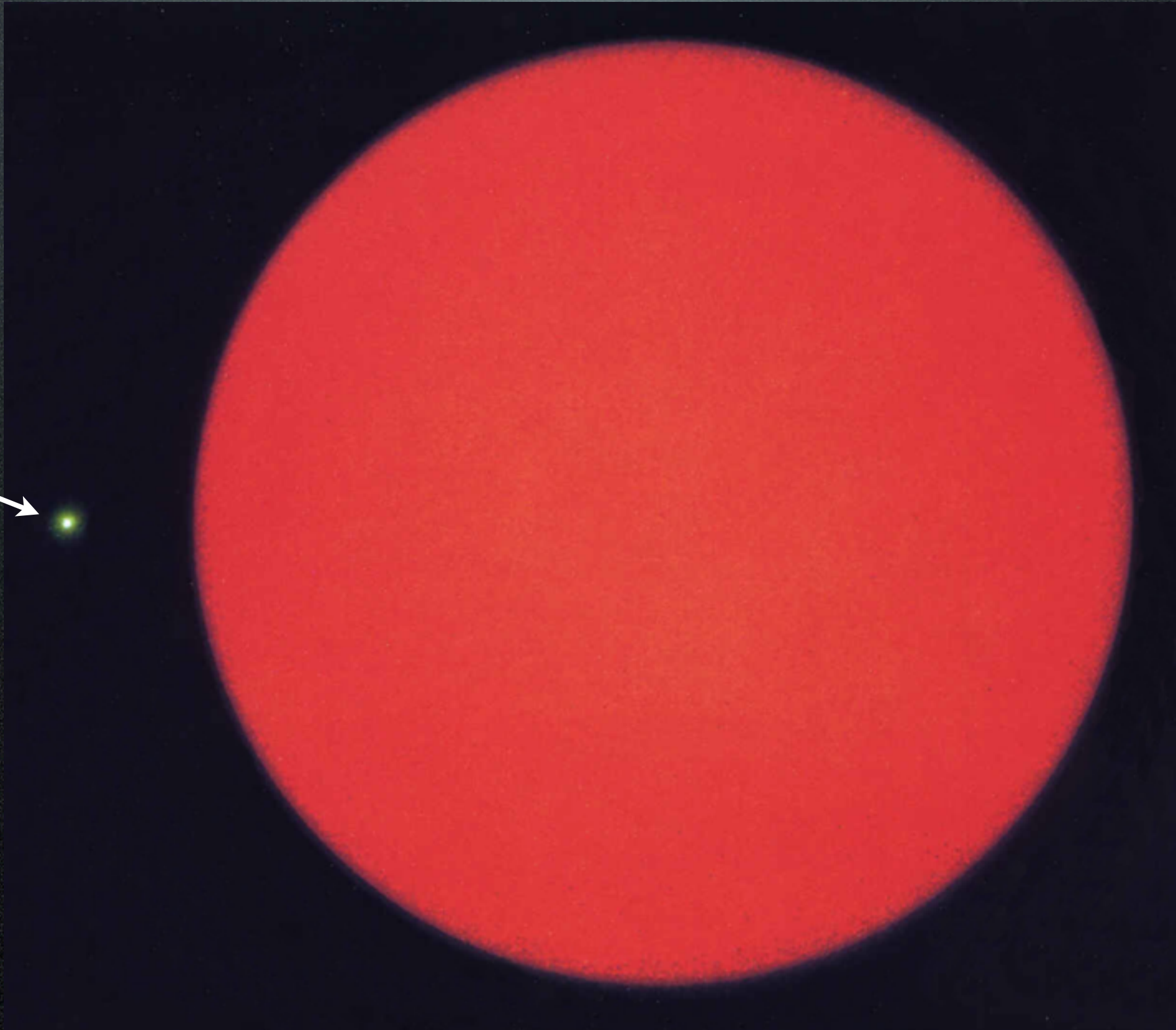
# Core Hydrogen Exhaustion





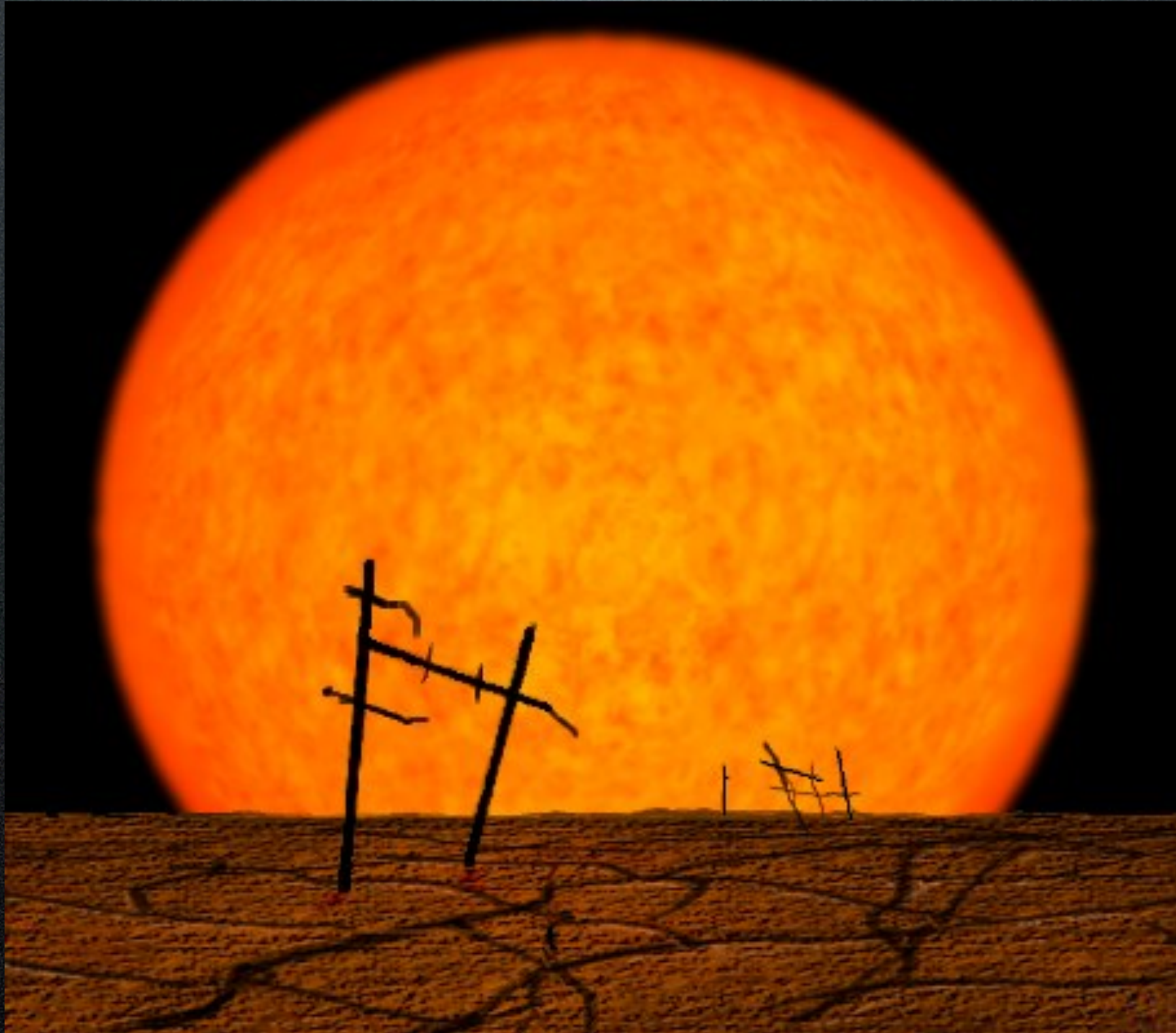
# Red Giant Phase

Sun now



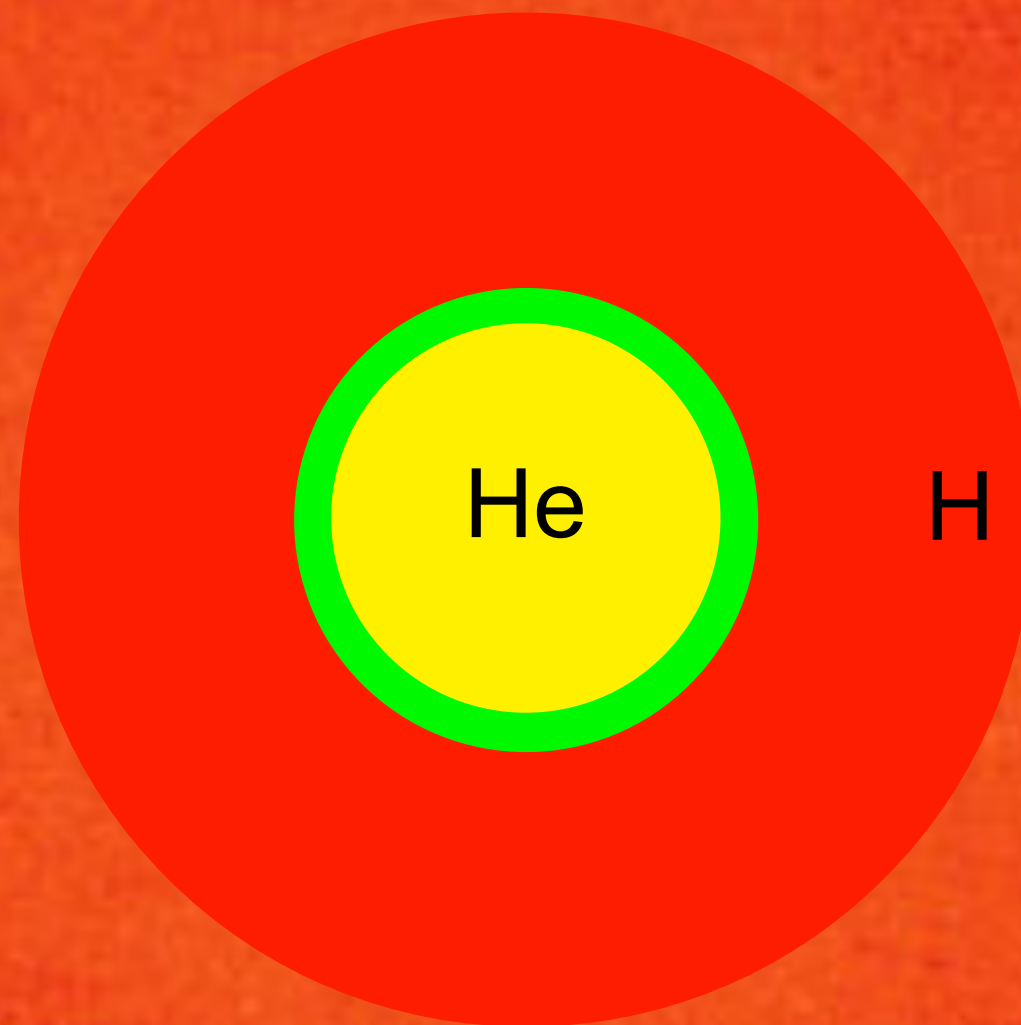


# Red Giant Phase



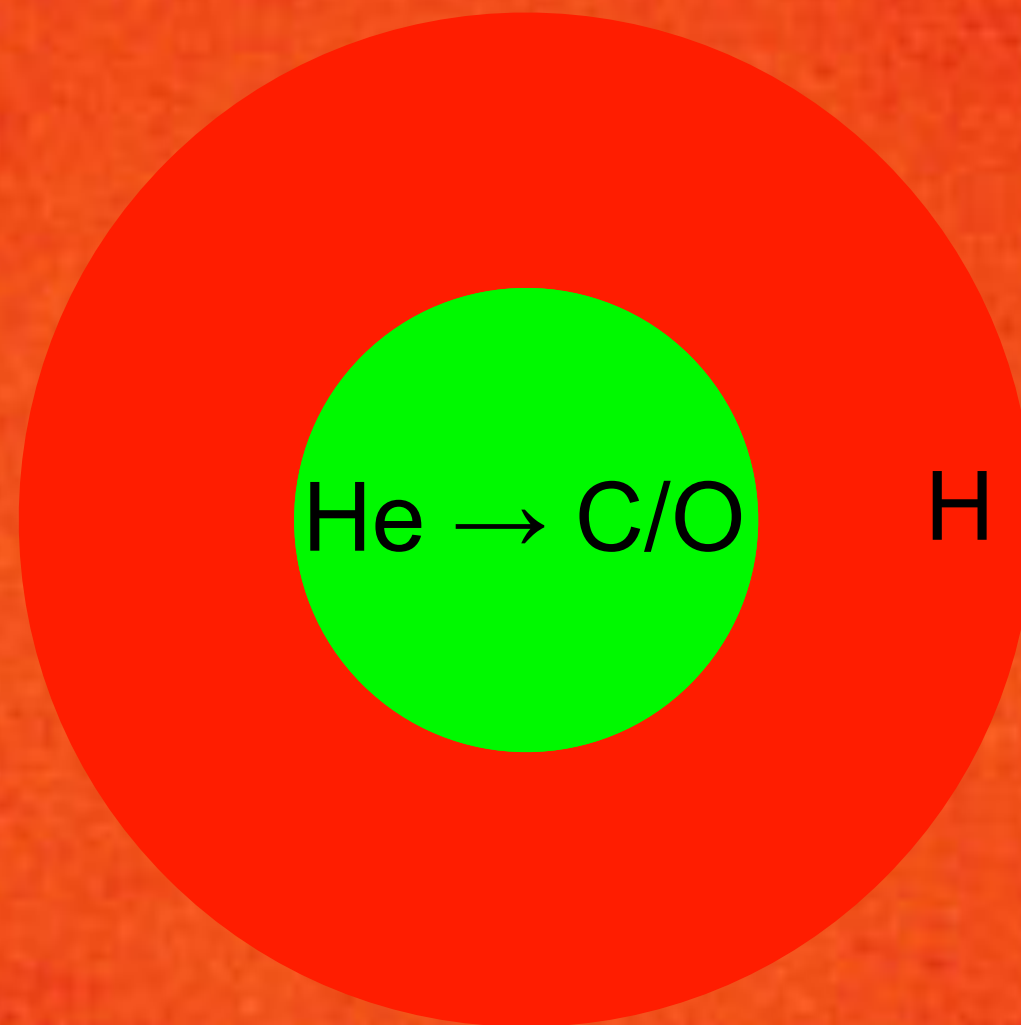


# Core Helium Ignition





# Core Helium Ignition





# White Dwarfs and Nebulae

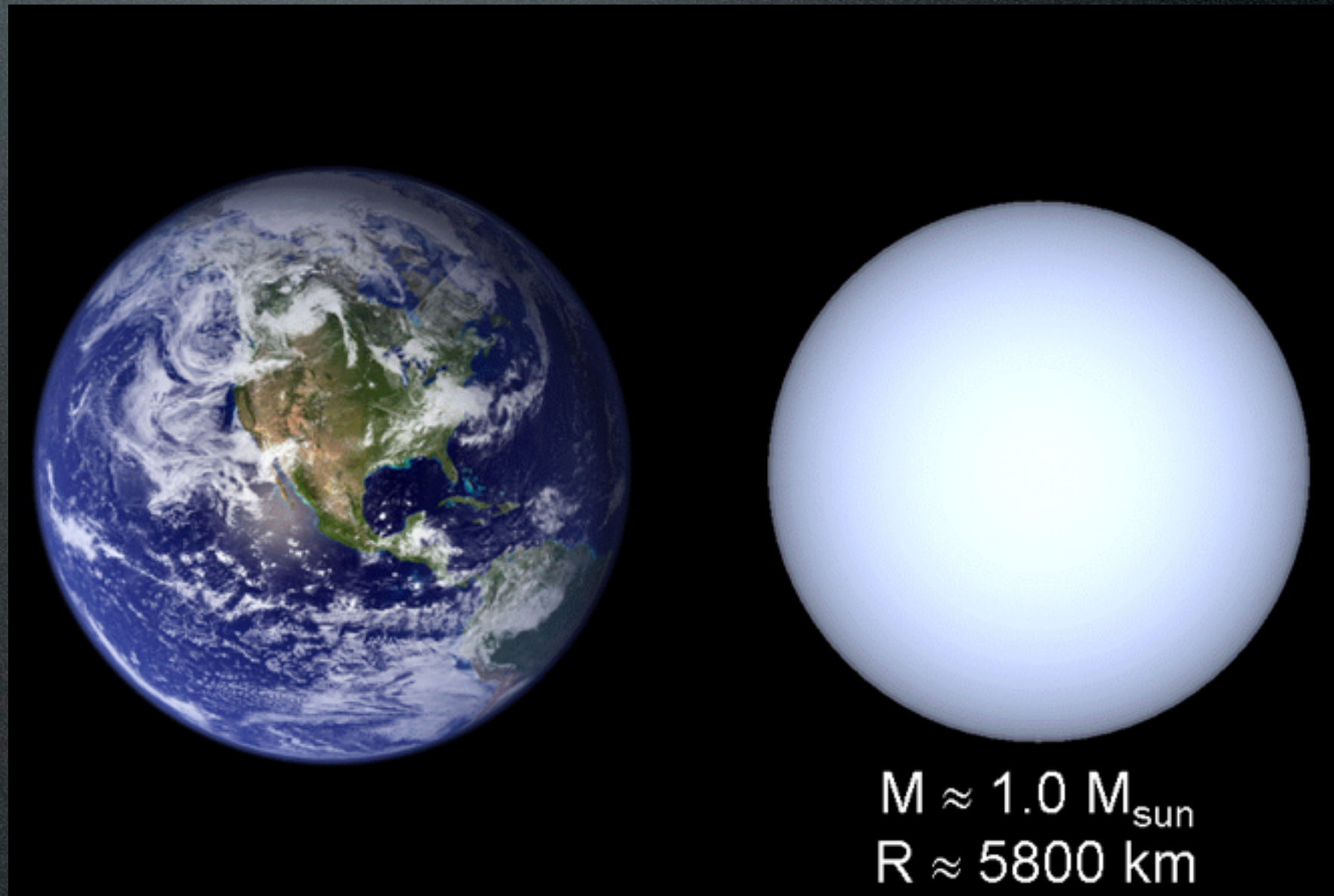




# The Fate of the Sun

- After running out of Hydrogen fuel, the sun will burn Helium into Carbon and Oxygen.

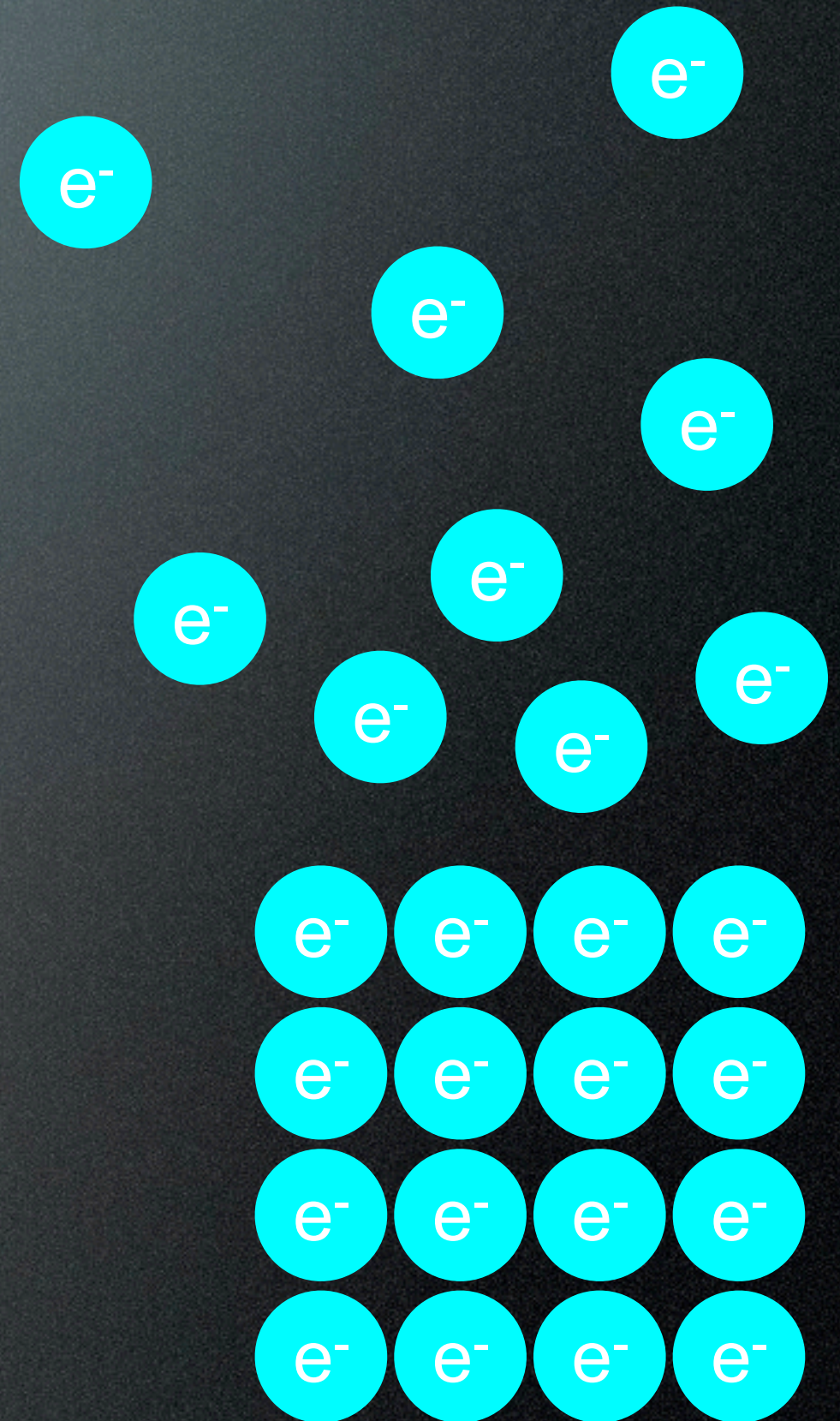
Sun will stop nuclear burning, expel it's outer envelope and become a White Dwarf Star.





# White Dwarfs & Pressure

- No nuclear burning a WD.
- Held up against gravity by *electron degeneracy* pressure.
- Pressure demo:





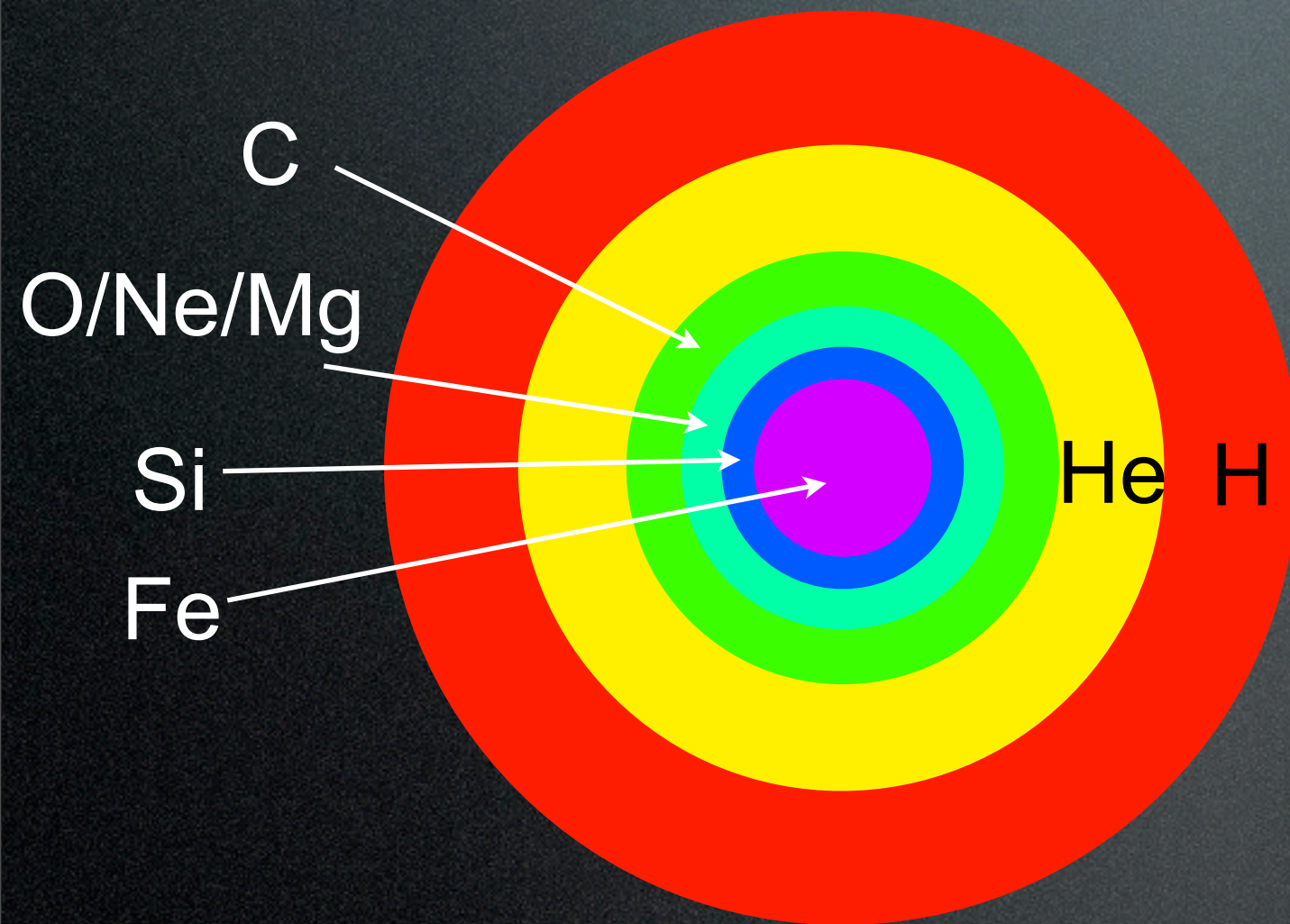
# What about Bigger Stars?

- More massive stars than the sun can burn elements beyond Helium (Carbon, Oxygen, etc.).
- Stars more than about 10 times the sun's mass can burn nuclear fuel all the way to iron.
- Iron won't burn!

hydrogen 1 H 1.0079																		helium 2 He 4.0026																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																			
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# Burning in Big Stars



Iron is most tightly-bound nucleus.

Nuclear reactions with iron *absorb* energy.



# Nuclear Burning is Violent!

Nuclear Burning  
Convection: Like  
boiling a pot of  
water!

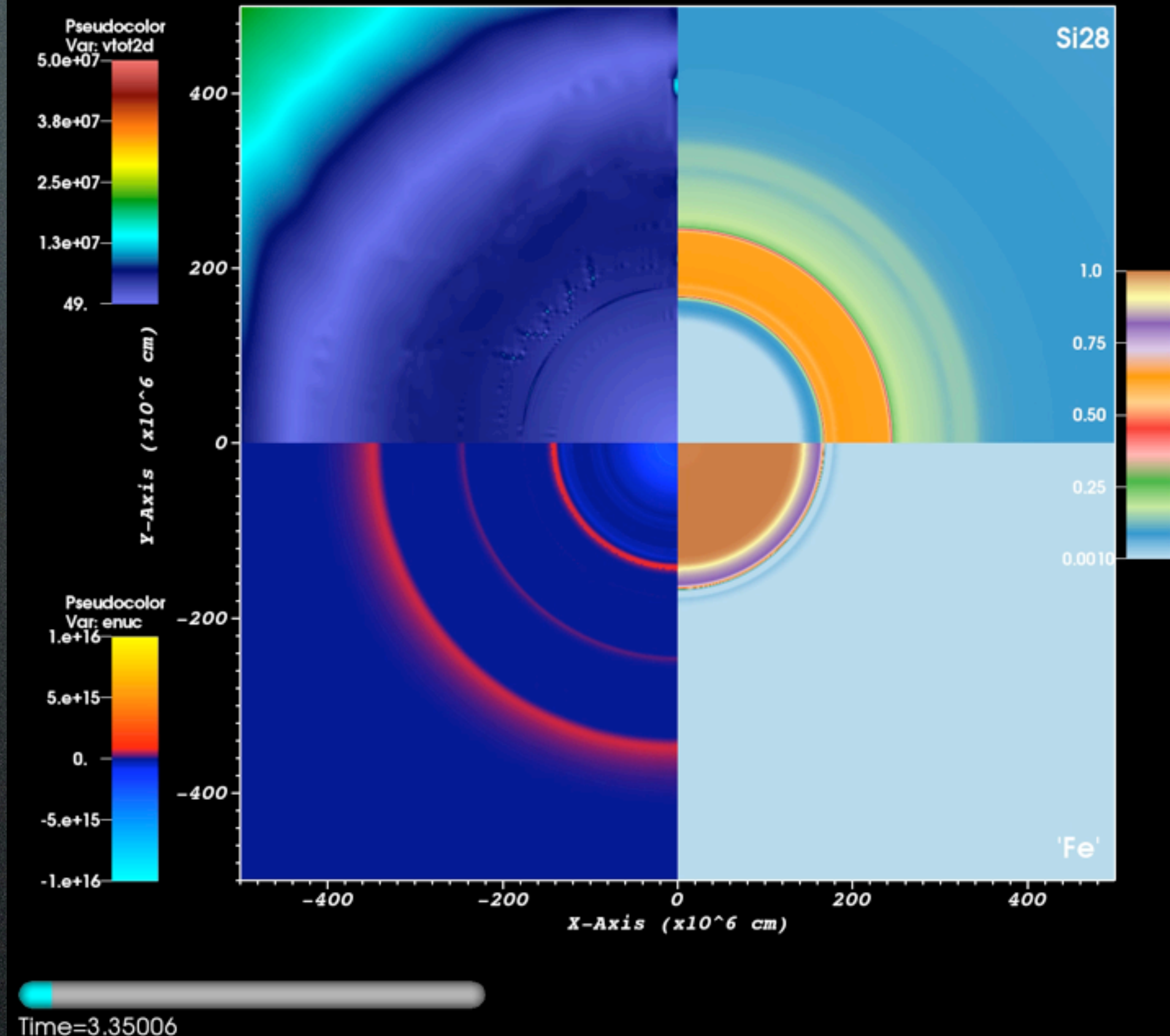
Stars are not  
(perfectly)  
spherical!



# Nuclear Burning is Violent!

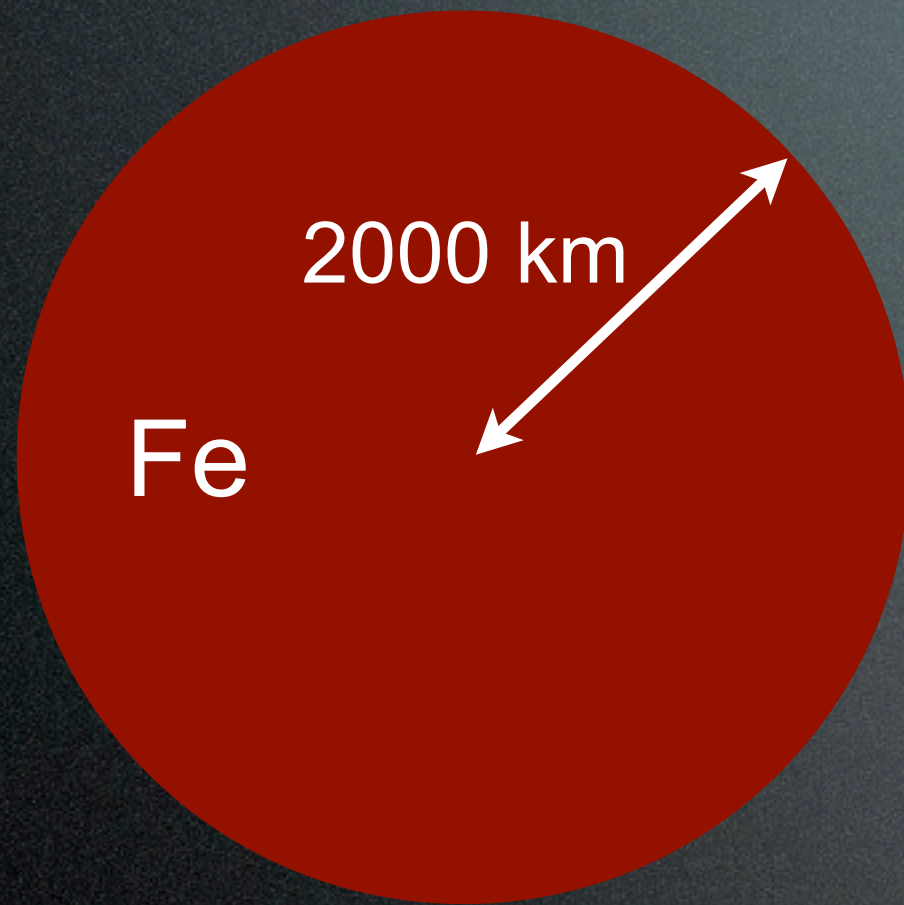
Nuclear Burning  
Convection: Like  
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Stars are not  
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# Stellar Core Collapse

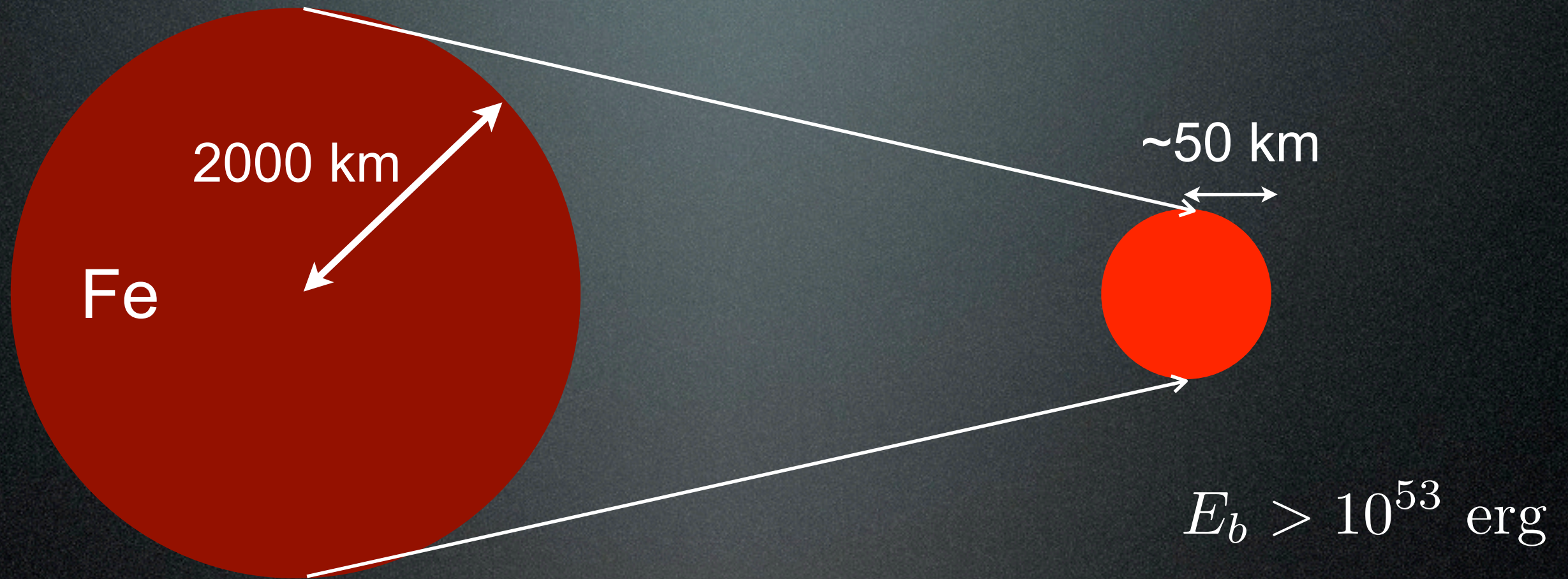


$$M_{Fe} \sim M_{Ch} \sim 1.4 M_{\odot}$$

$$\rho_c \sim 10^{10} \text{ g cm}^{-3}$$



# Stellar Core Collapse



$$M_{Fe} \sim M_{Ch} \sim 1.4 M_{\odot}$$

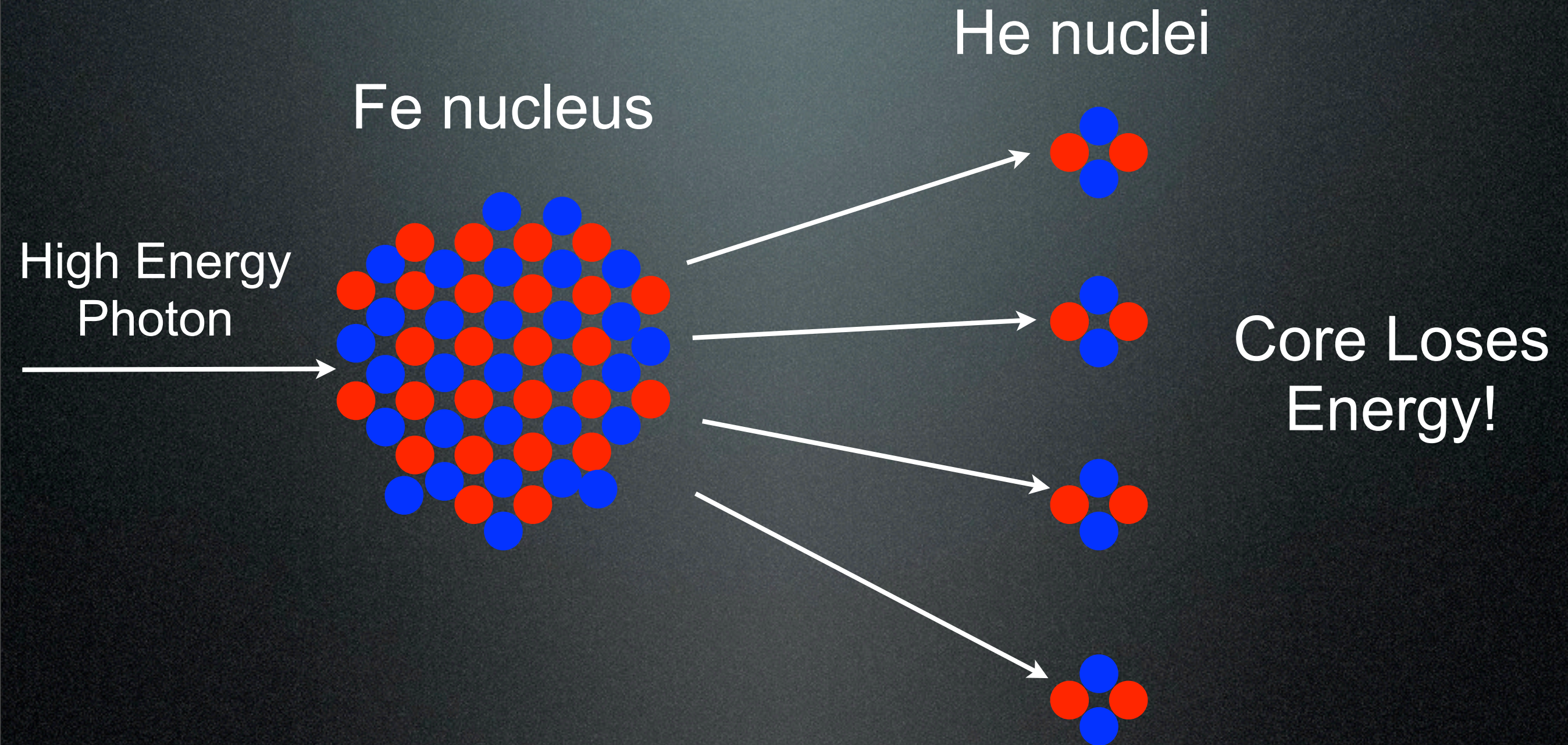
$$\rho_c \sim 10^{10} \text{ g cm}^{-3}$$

$$\rho_c > 10^{14} \text{ g cm}^{-3}$$

$10^{57}$  neutrinos released!!

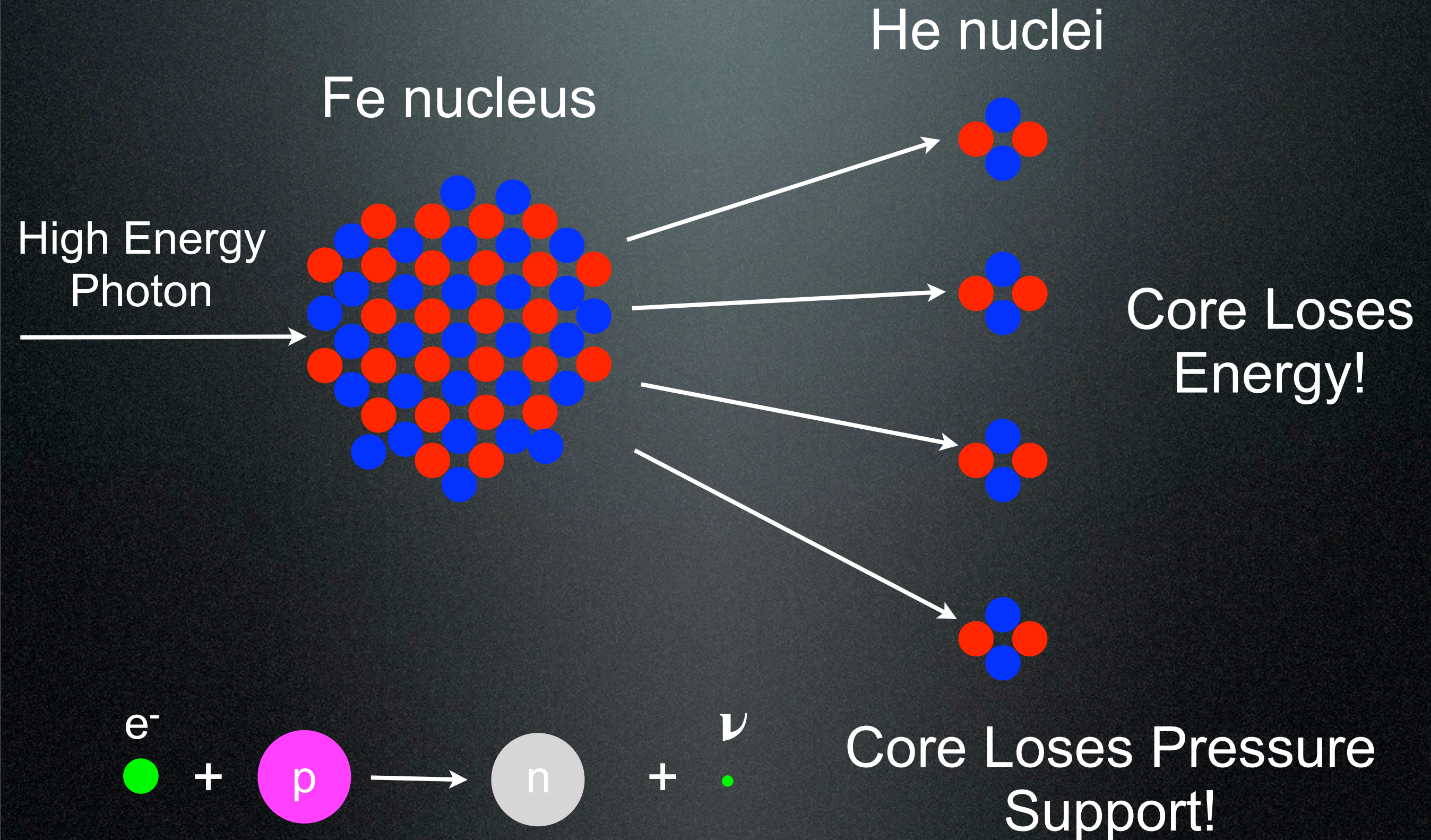


# Stellar Core Collapse





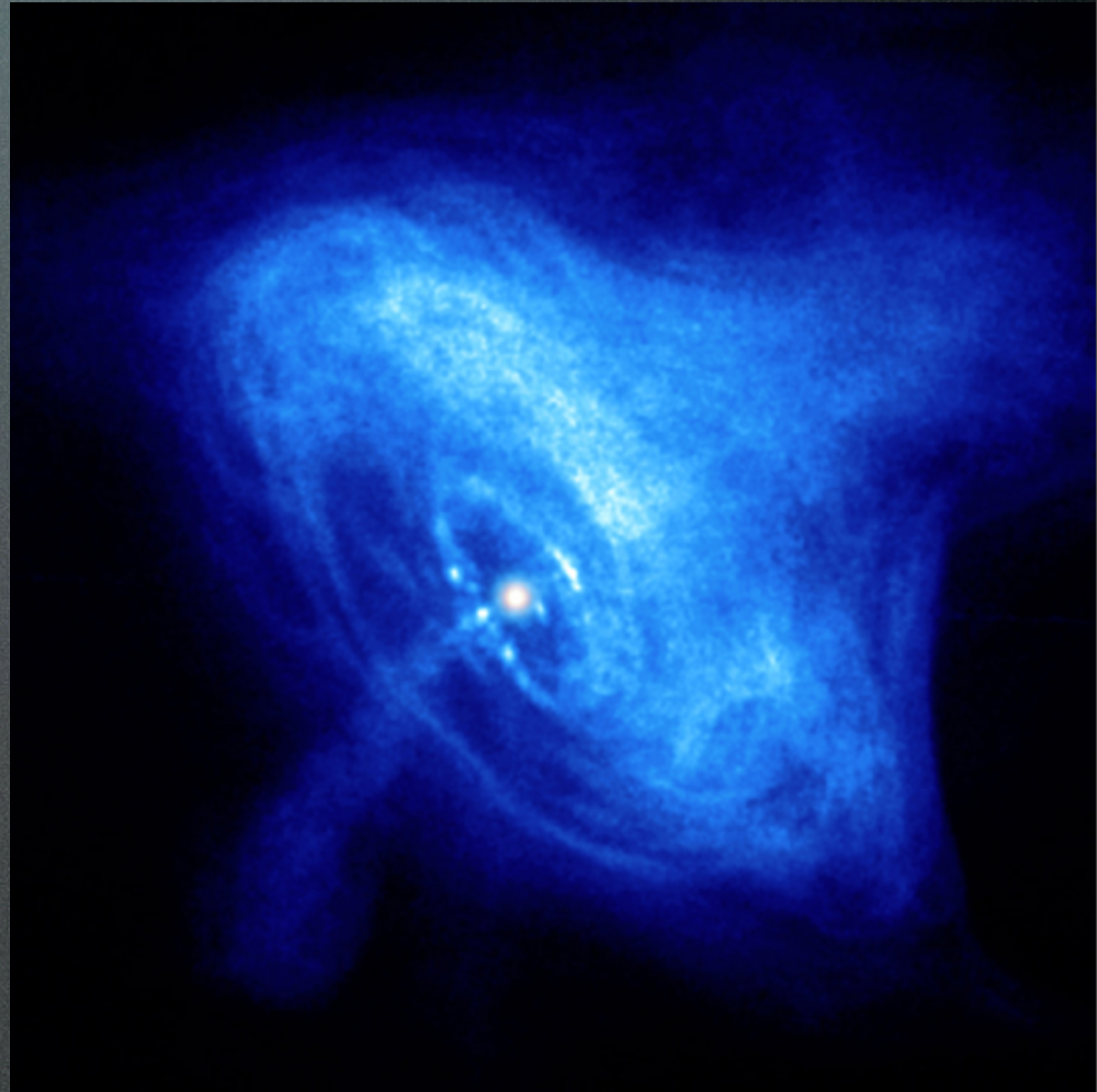
# Stellar Core Collapse





# Neutron Stars

- All neutrons! Nuclear densities! Giant atomic nuclei in space.
- Like White Dwarfs, only held up by *neutron* degeneracy pressure.
- Mass of sun, size of Chicago!

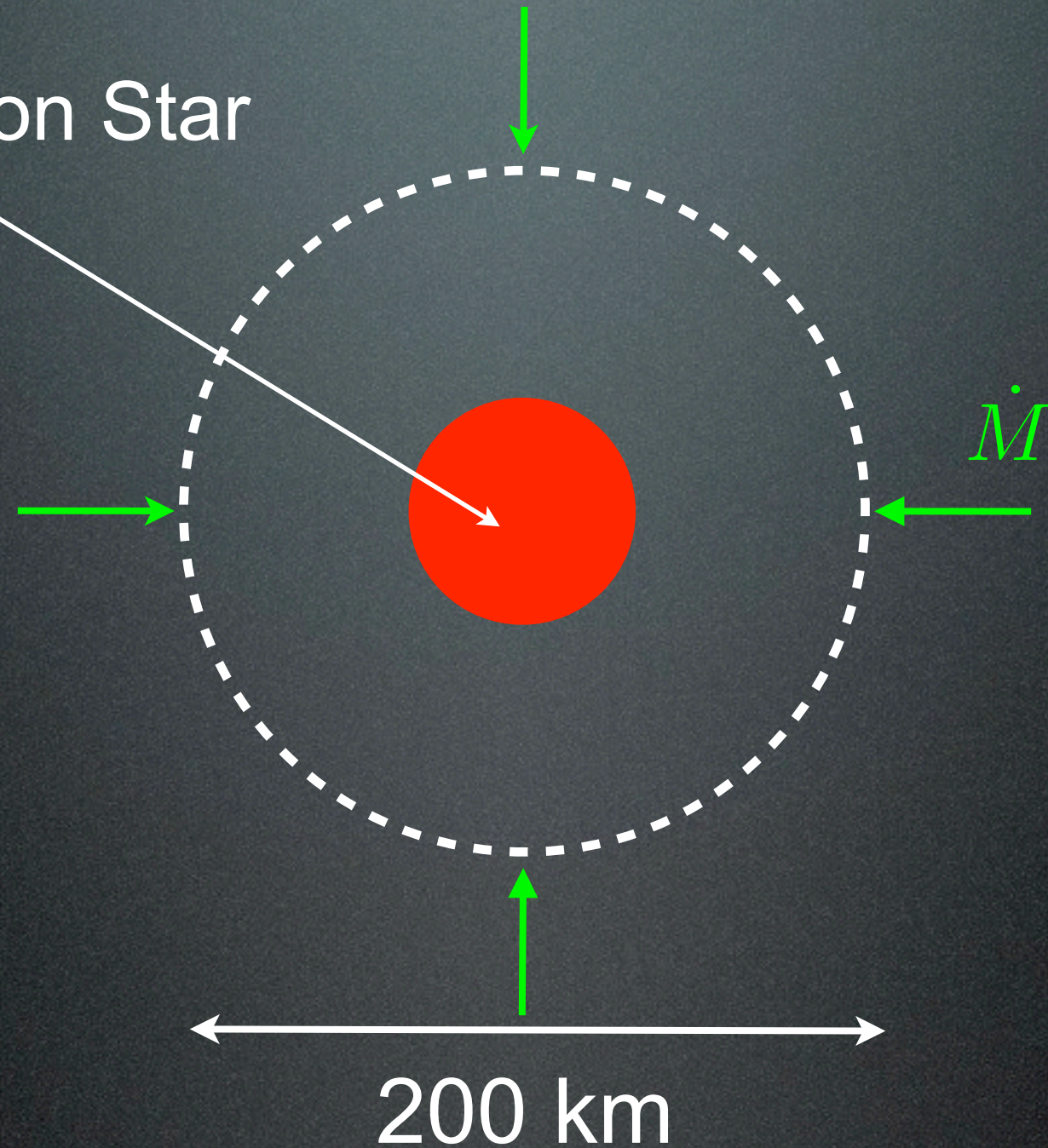


Crab Pulsar



# The Supernova Problem

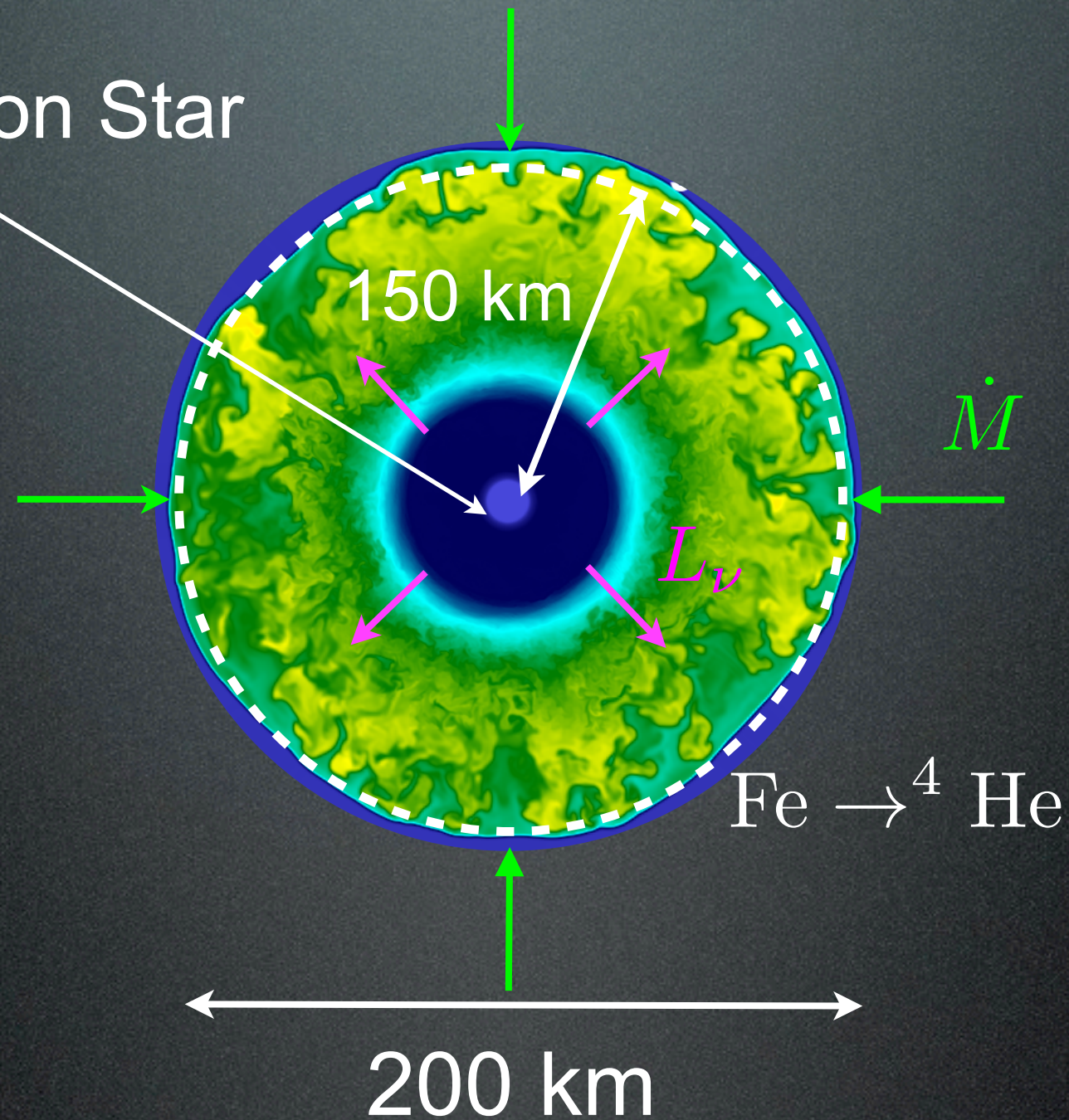
Newborn Neutron Star





# The Supernova Problem

Newborn Neutron Star



Shock stalls... What revives it??

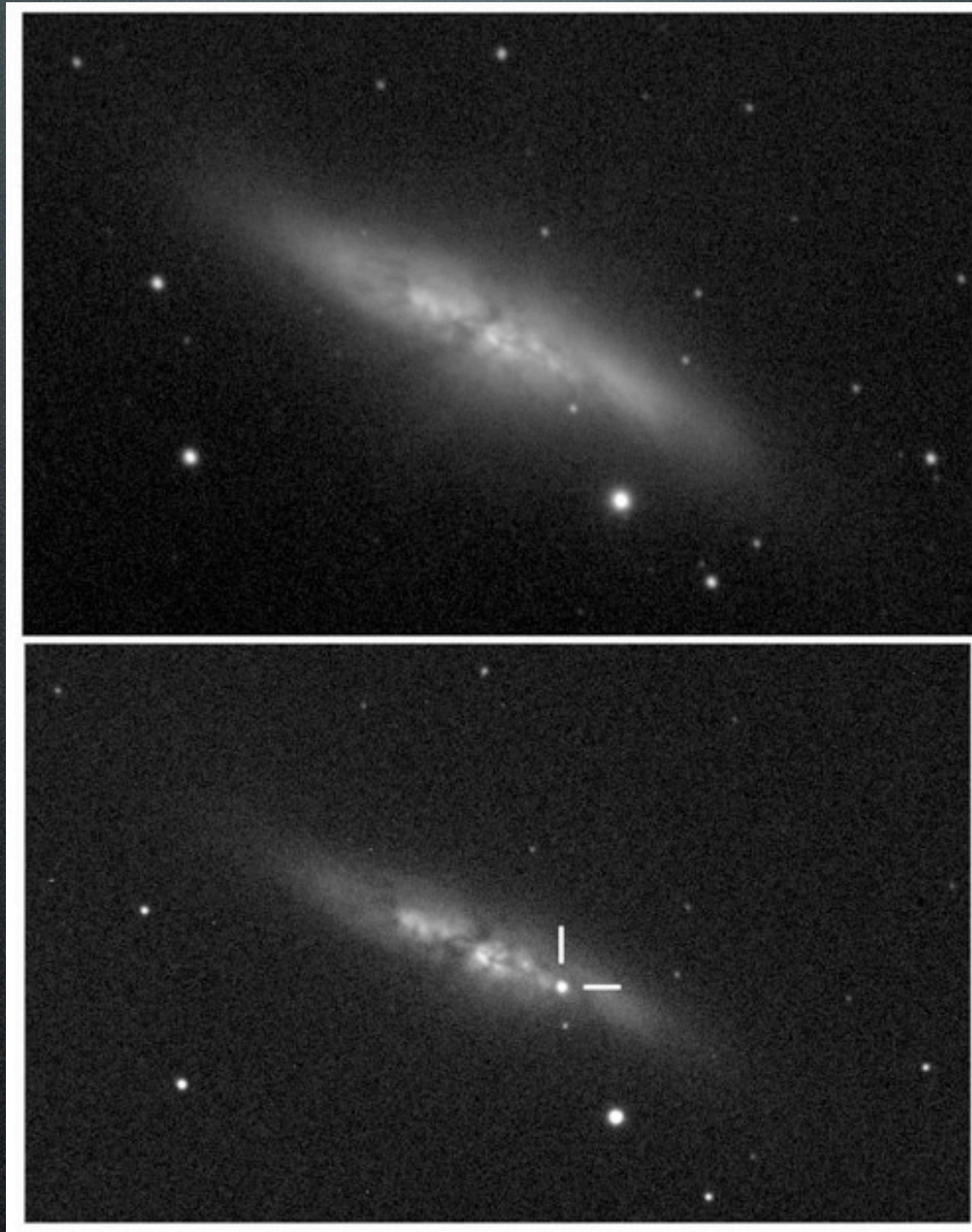


# Observational Facts

- Explode  $5 \text{ s}^{-1}$  in universe, about 1 per day observed; 4x the number of Ia's.
- Have large kinetic energies,  $\sim 10^{51} \text{ erg}$ .
- Have massive star progenitors: direct observation!
- Remnants have kicks  $\lesssim 1000 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ .
- Radiate neutrinos: create neutron stars.
- Are fundamentally 3D.



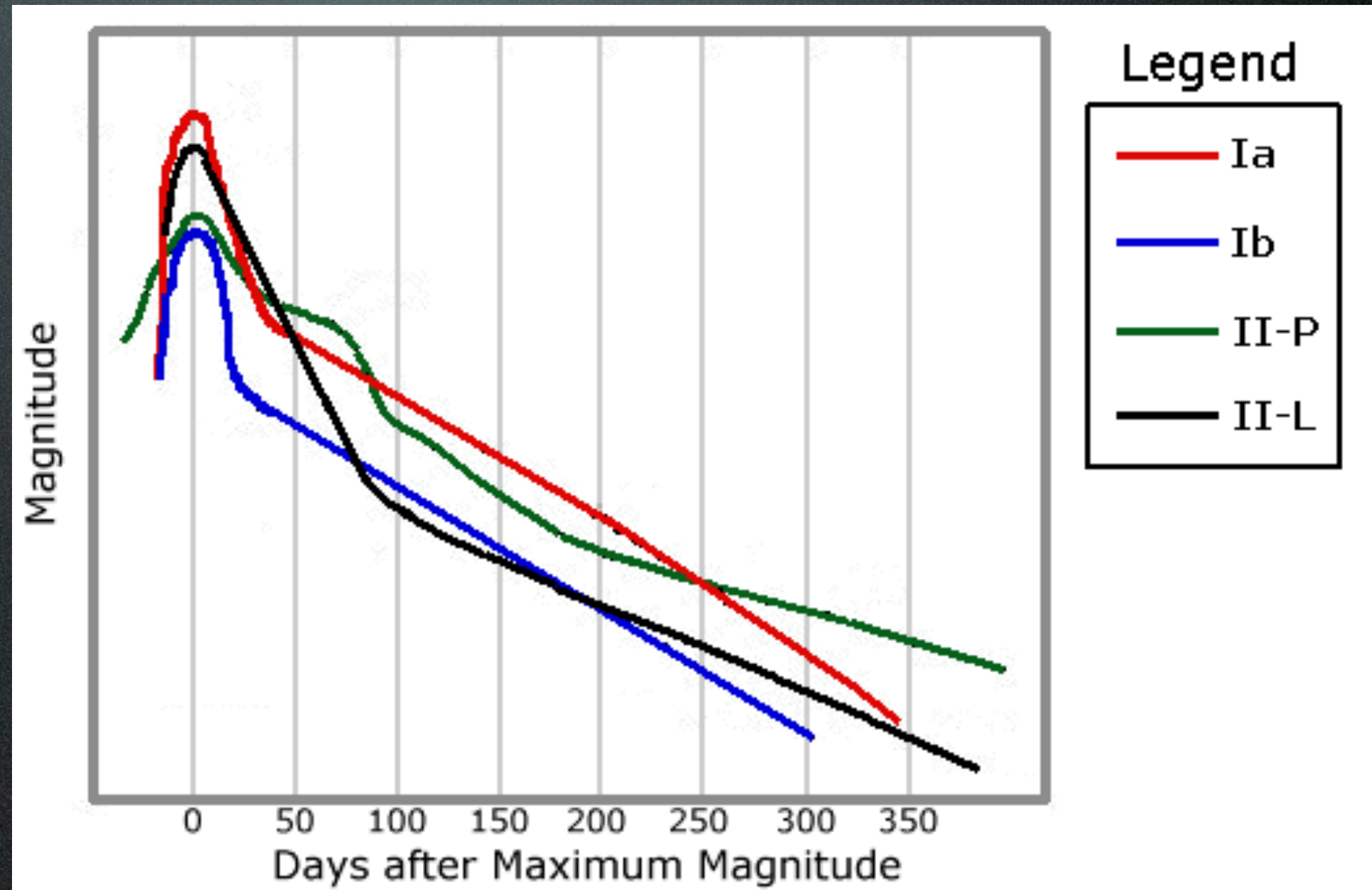
# Bright Transients in the Sky





# Bright Transients in the Sky

More than a billion times brighter than the sun!





# Supernova 1987A

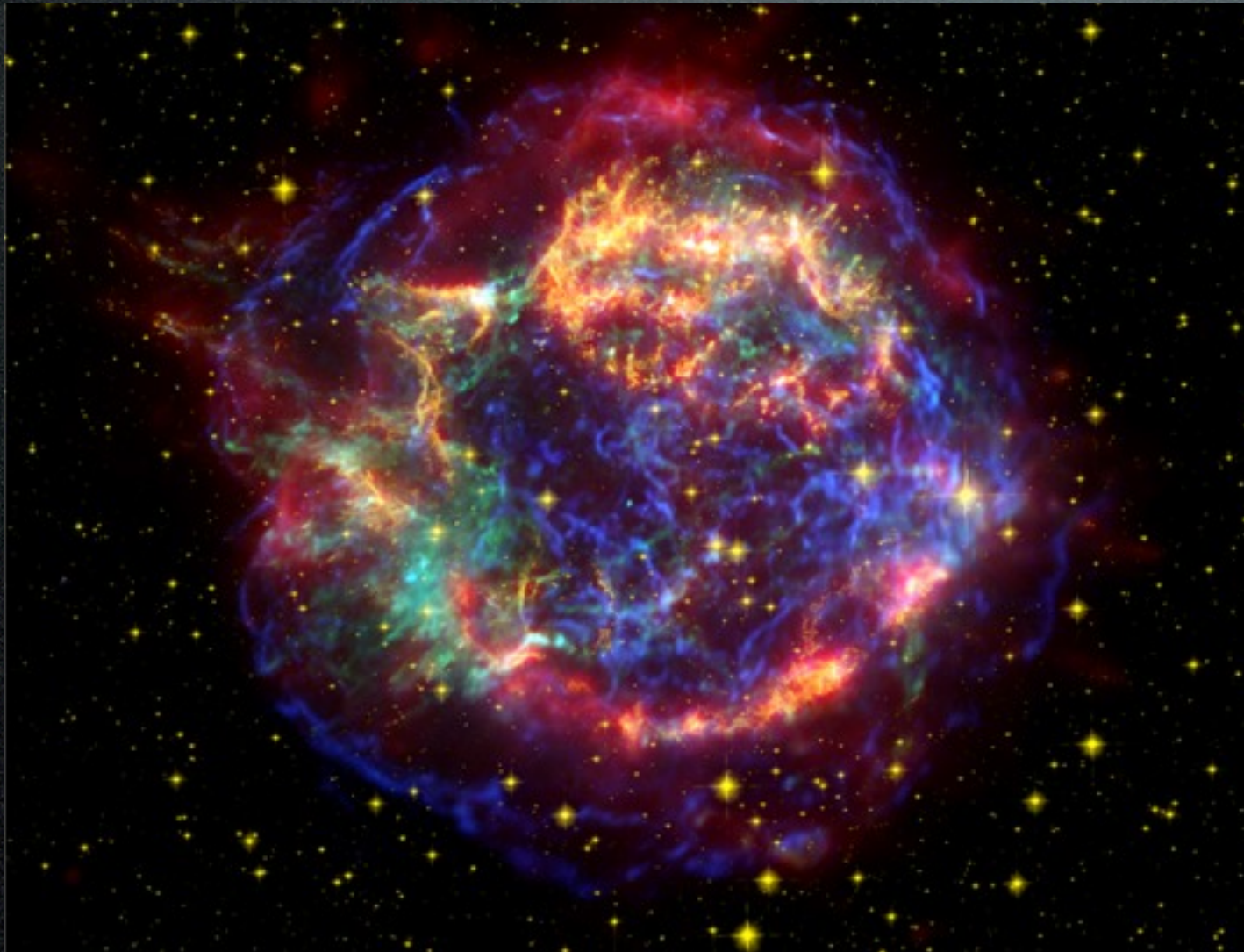


1.5 Million Trillion km away!  
Closest SN in >300 years!



# Cas A

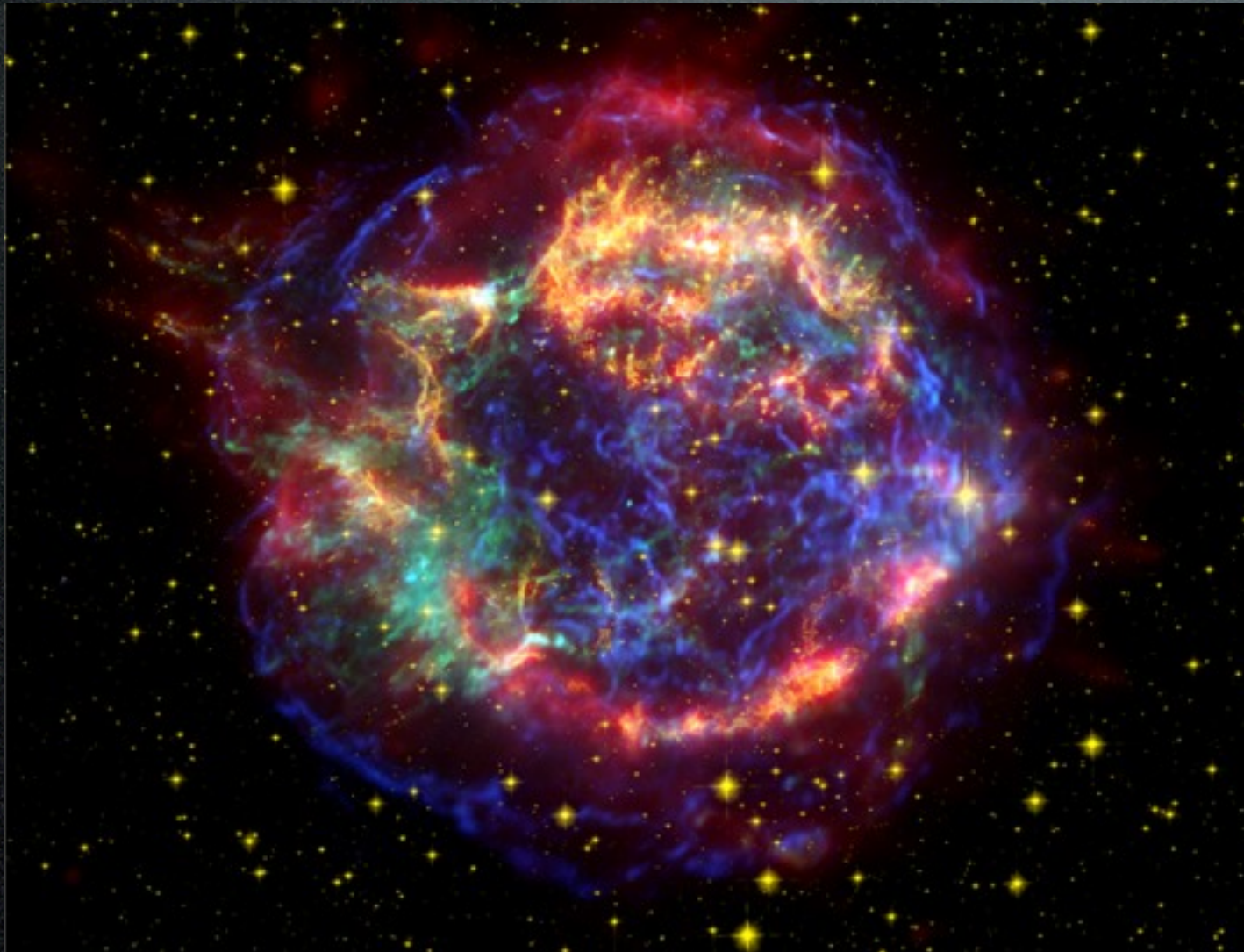
Hubble, Chandra, Spitzer



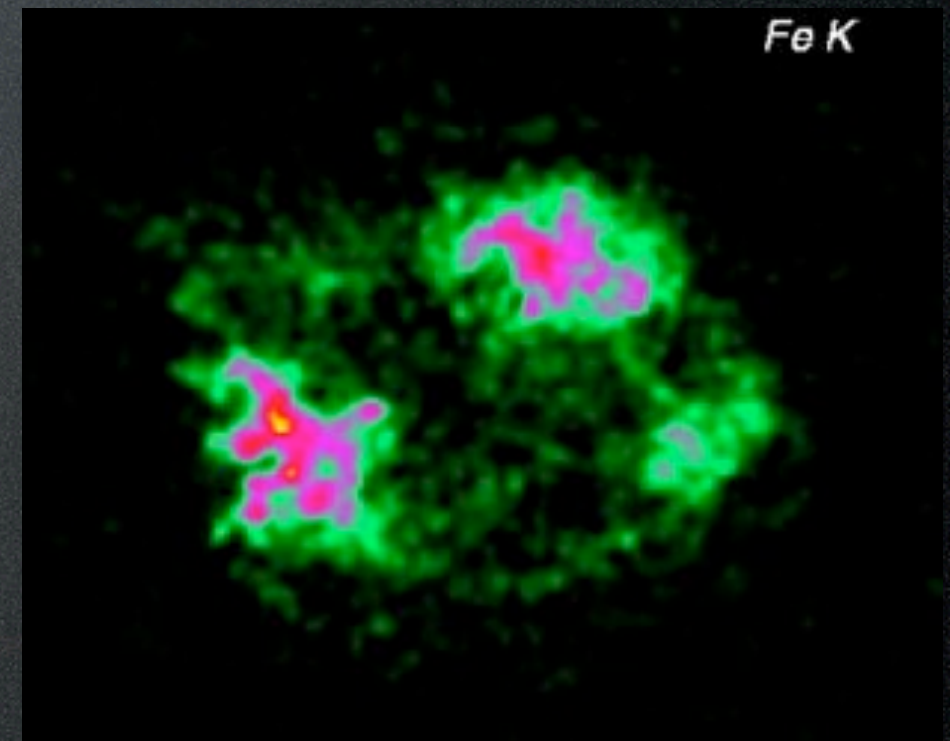


# Cas A

Hubble, Chandra, Spitzer



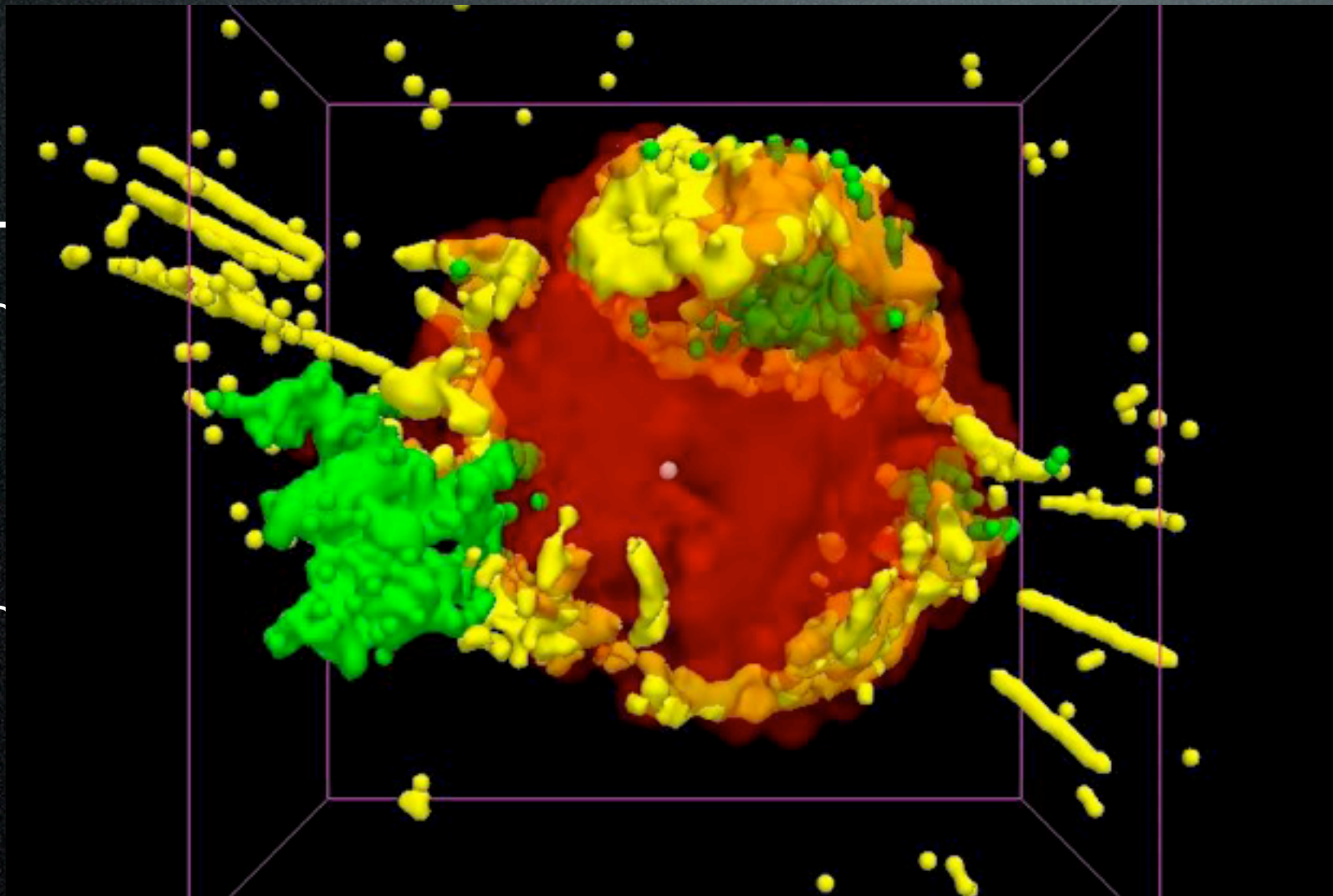
Chandra





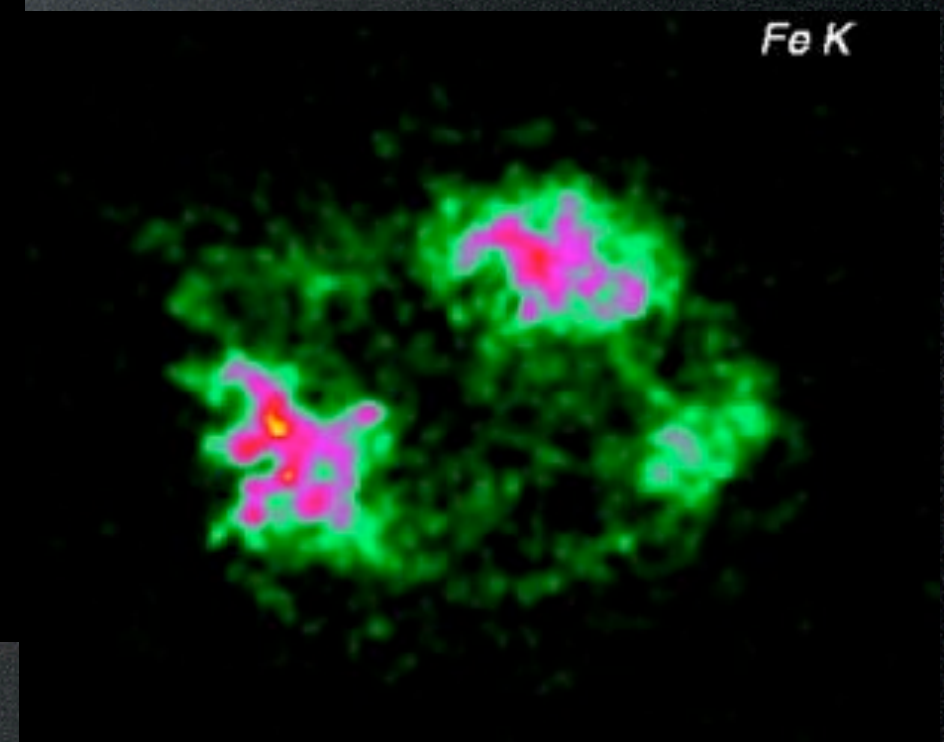
# Cas A

Hubble, Chandra, Spitzer



T. Delaney et al.

Chandra





# Why Do Stars Explode?

- Investigate using sophisticated computer simulations.





# What is Scientific Simulation?

- Many physical problems are too complex to find simple solutions or equations that describe the system.
- Simulation: Solve the basic physical equations (there's lots of them!) to evolve the system in time.



# Multiphysics Challenges

3D Magnetohydrodynamics

General Relativity

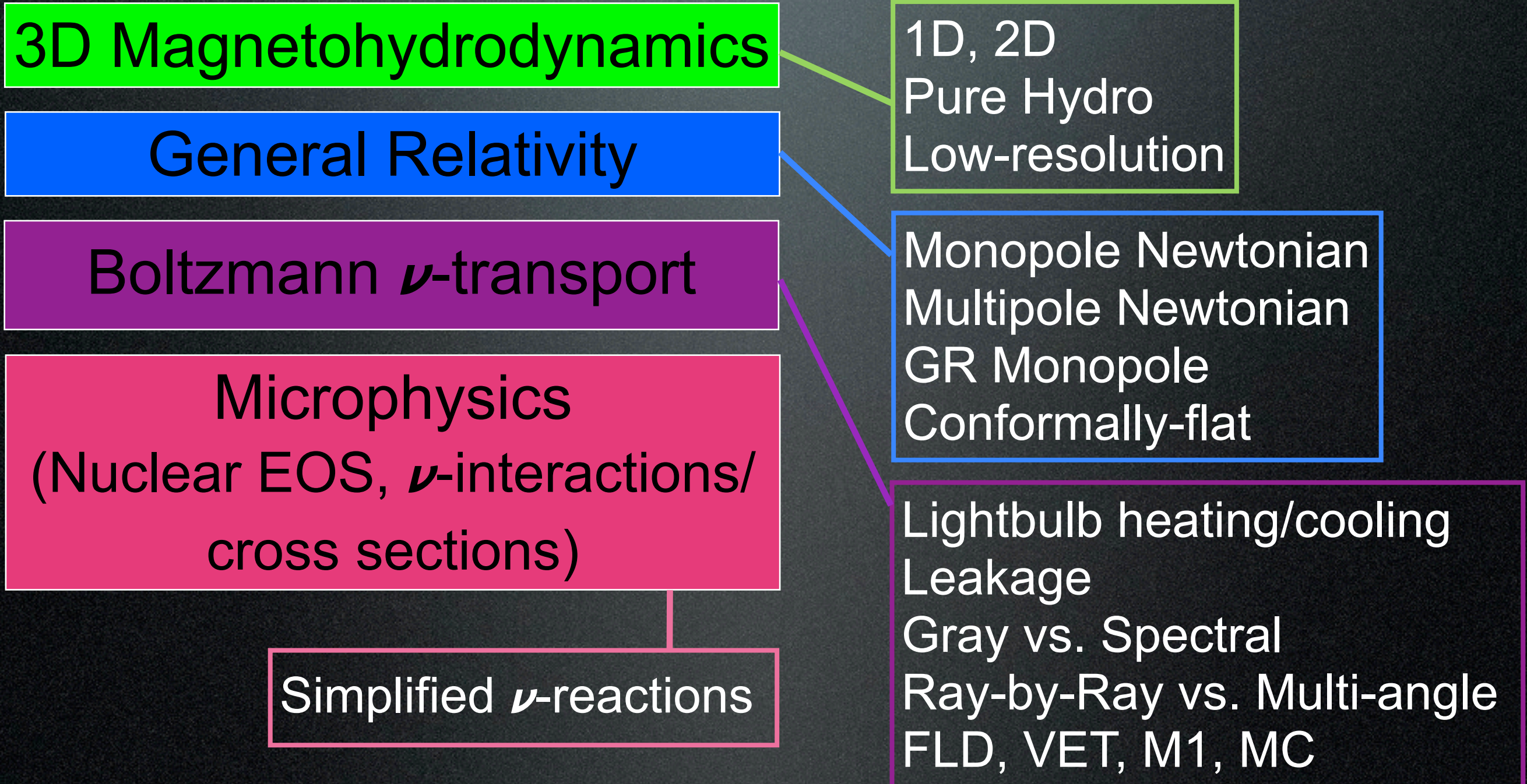
Boltzmann  $\nu$ -transport

Microphysics  
(Nuclear EOS,  $\nu$ -interactions/  
cross sections)

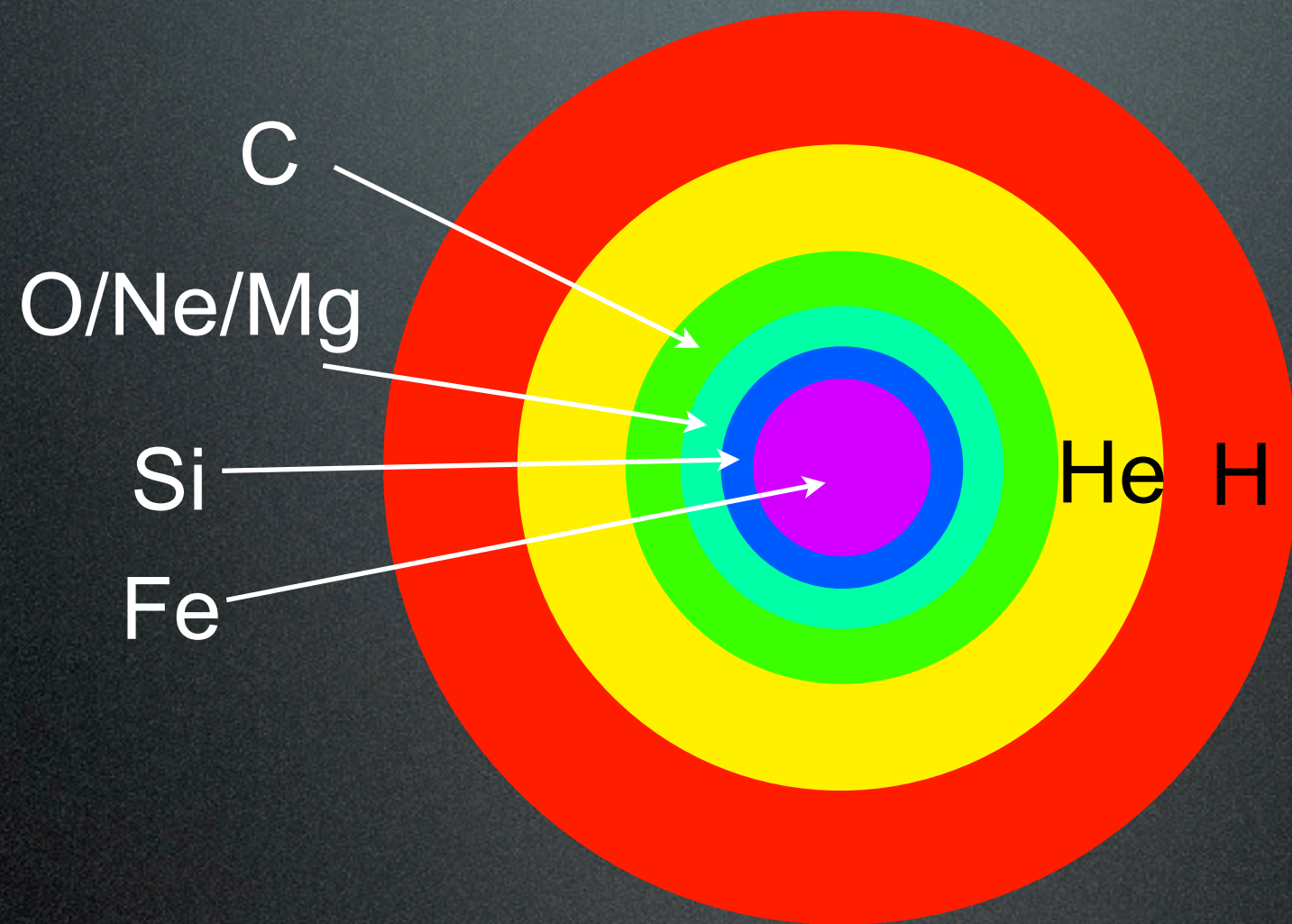


# Multiphysics Challenges

Require Approximations







Whole star: 100 Million km

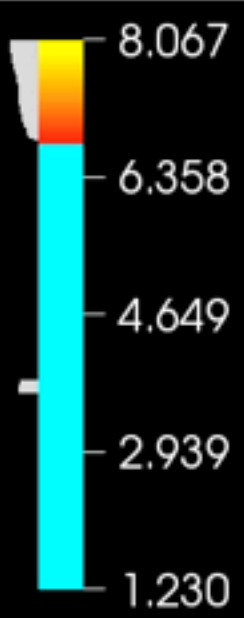
I simulation only the inner 10,000 km!



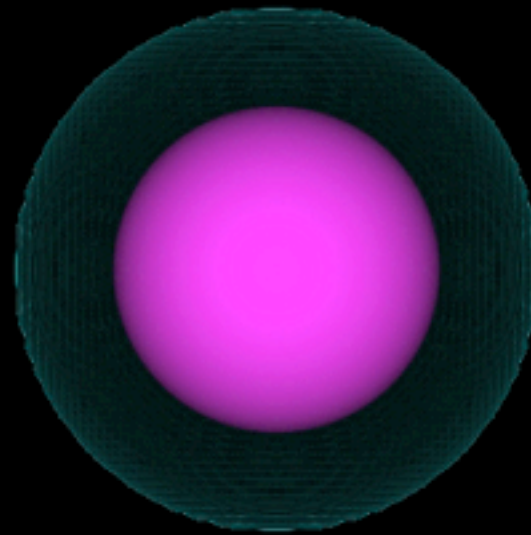
entropy ( $k_B$  baryon $^{-1}$ )



entropy ( $k_B$  baryon $^{-1}$ )



Time = 2 ms



200 km



# Stars and Supernovae

- All the elements that made the planets and us came from stars.
- Supernovae spread these elements throughout the universe.
- Massive stars die as bright explosions, but we don't yet fully understand the physics of this process.
- Computer simulation is an important approach for solving this problem.