UNIVERSITÄT BONN bctp CENTER FOR SCIENCE & THOUGHT JÜLICH FORSCHUNGSZENTRUM

# LIFE ON EARTH: AN ACCIDENT?

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CHINESE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES VolkswagenStiftung

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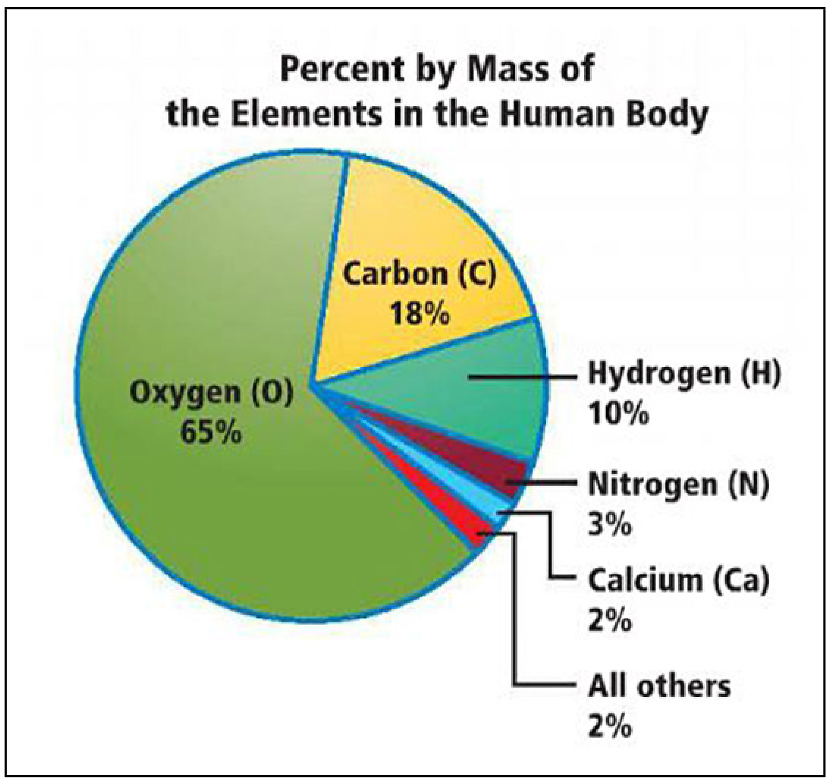
- Introduction: Elements of life
- How is carbon generated?
- Numerical simulations of carbon
- Digression: The anthropic principle
- How accidental is life on Earth?
- Discussion & outlook

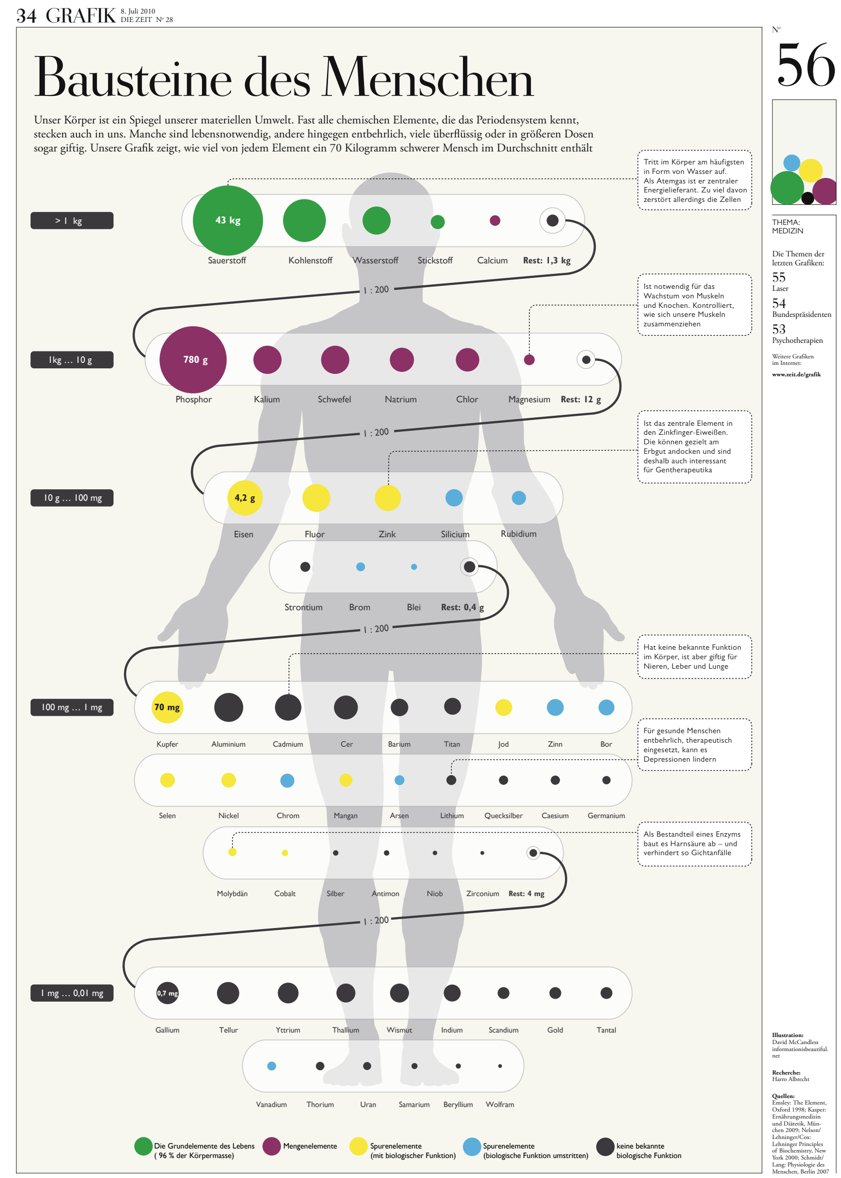
# Introduction: Elements of life

# HUMAN CHEMISTRY



- the human body consists mostly of water ($H_2O$)
- all organic substances are based on **carbon (C)**



34 GRAFIK 8. Juli 2010 DIE ZEIT Nº 28

Nº 56

# Bausteine des Menschen

Unser Körper ist ein Spiegel unserer materiellen Umwelt. Fast alle chemischen Elemente, die das Periodensystem kennt, stecken auch in uns. Manche sind lebensnotwendig, andere hingegen entbehrlich, viele überflüssig oder in größeren Dosen sogar giftig. Unsere Grafik zeigt, wie viel von jedem Element ein 70 Kilogramm schwerer Mensch im Durchschnitt enthält

> 1 kg
43 kg
Sauerstoff, Kohlenstoff, Wasserstoff, Stickstoff, Calcium, **Rest: 1,3 kg**

1 : 200

1kg … 10 g
780 g
Phosphor, Kalium, Schwefel, Natrium, Chlor, Magnesium, **Rest: 12 g**

1 : 200

10 g … 100 mg
4,2 g
Eisen, Fluor, Zink, Silicium, Rubidium
Strontium, Brom, Blei, **Rest: 0,4 g**

1 : 200

100 mg … 1 mg
70 mg
Kupfer, Aluminium, Cadmium, Cer, Barium, Titan, Jod, Zinn, Bor
Selen, Nickel, Chrom, Mangan, Arsen, Lithium, Quecksilber, Caesium, Germanium
Molybdän, Cobalt, Silber, Antimon, Niob, Zirconium, **Rest: 4 mg**

1 : 200

1 mg … 0,01 mg
0,7 mg
Gallium, Tellur, Yttrium, Thallium, Wismut, Indium, Scandium, Gold, Tantal
Vanadium, Thorium, Uran, Samarium, Beryllium, Wolfram

Tritt im Körper am häufigsten in Form von Wasser auf. Als Atemgas ist er zentraler Energielieferant. Zu viel davon zerstört allerdings die Zellen

Ist notwendig für das Wachstum von Muskeln und Knochen. Kontrolliert, wie sich unsere Muskeln zusammenziehen

Ist das zentrale Element in den Zinkfinger-Eiweißen. Die können gezielt am Erbgut andocken und sind deshalb auch interessant für Gentherapeutika

Hat keine bekannte Funktion im Körper, ist aber giftig für Nieren, Leber und Lunge

Für gesunde Menschen entbehrlich, therapeutisch eingesetzt, kann es Depressionen lindern

Als Bestandteil eines Enzyms baut es Harnsäure ab – und verhindert so Gichtanfälle

Die Grundelemente des Lebens (96 % der Körpermasse) · Mengenelemente · Spurenelemente (mit biologischer Funktion) · Spurenelemente (biologische Funktion umstritten) · keine bekannte biologische Funktion

THEMA: MEDIZIN

Die Themen der letzten Grafiken:
55 Laser
54 Bundespräsidenten
53 Psychotherapien

Weitere Grafiken im Internet:
**www.zeit.de/grafik**

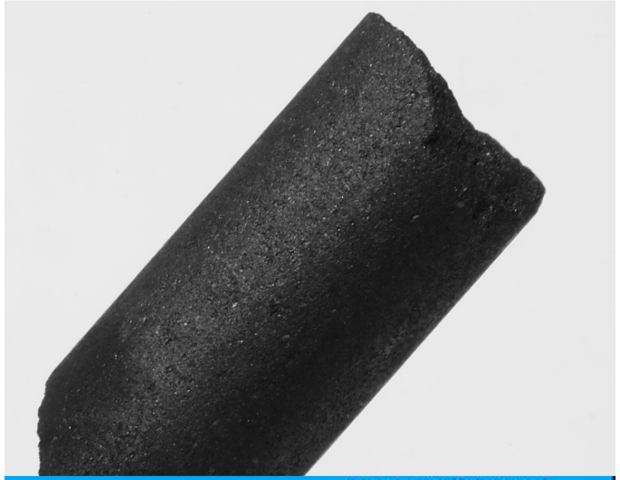
**Illustration:** David McCandless informationisbeautiful.net

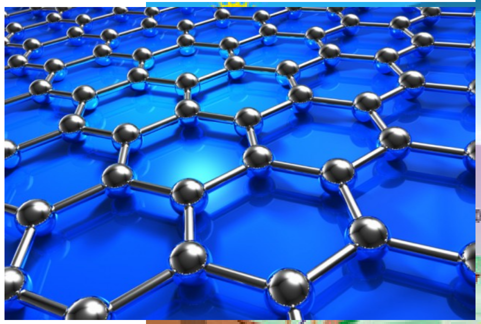
**Recherche:** Harro Albrecht

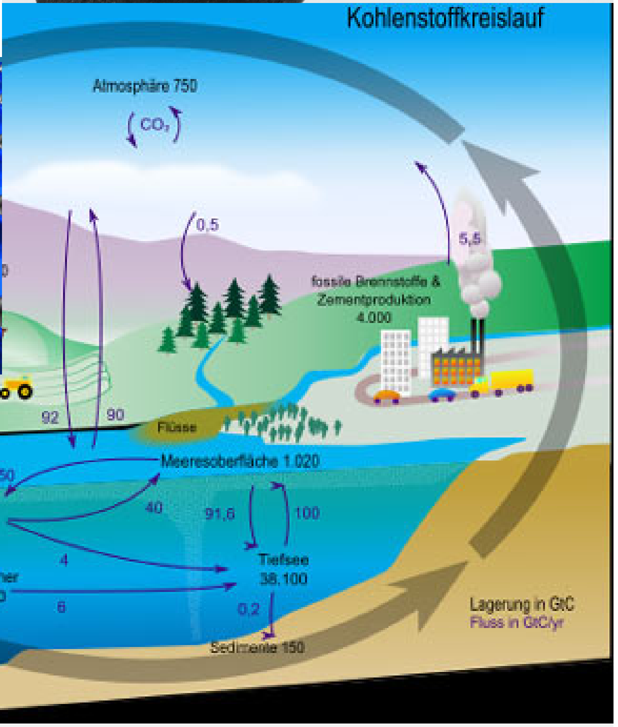
**Quellen:** Emsley: The Element, Oxford 1998; Kasper: Ernährungsmedizin und Diätetik, München 2009; Nelson/Lehninger/Cox: Lehninger Principles of Biochemistry, New York 2000; Schmidt/Lang: Physiologie des Menschen, Berlin 2007

# THE MANY FACETS of CARBON



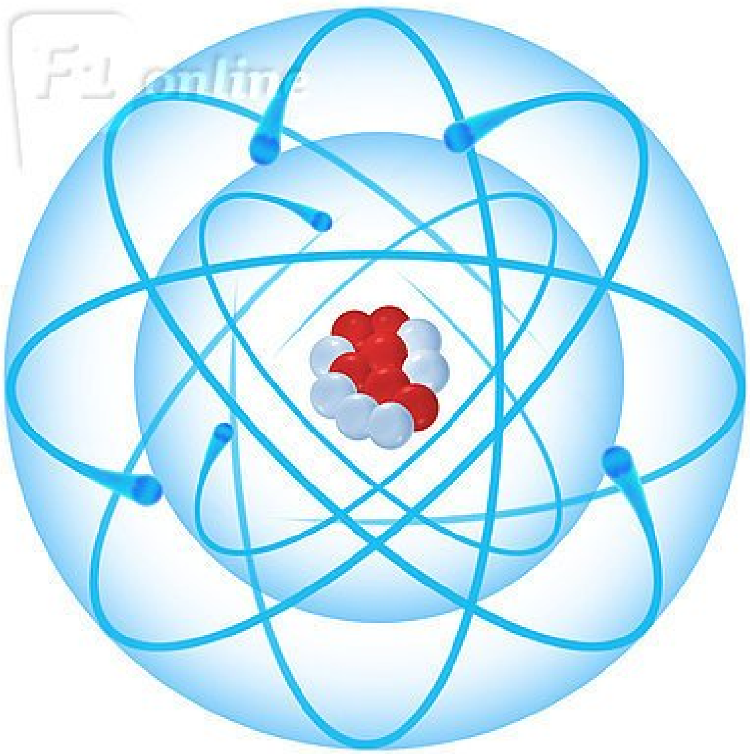





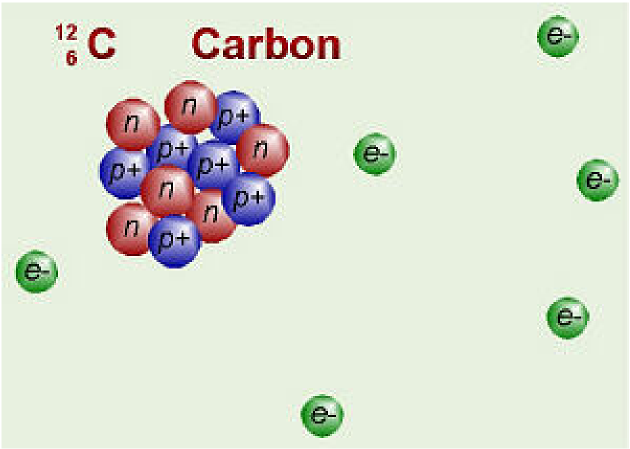
# STRUCTURE of the CARBON ATOM

- carbon atom






- carbon nucleus




**6 protons (positively charged)**

**6 neutrons (no charge)**

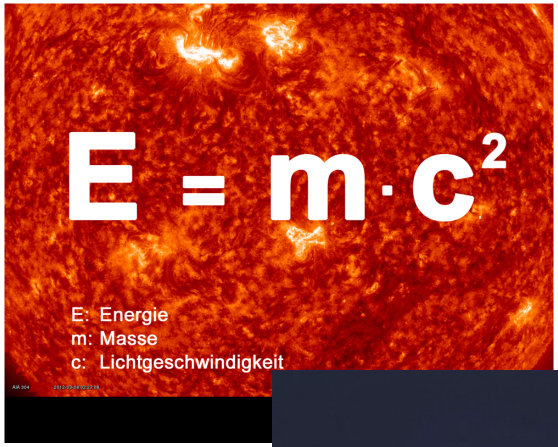
$\Rightarrow$ **atomic weight: 12 a.u.** $\simeq 2 \cdot 10^{-26}$ **kg**

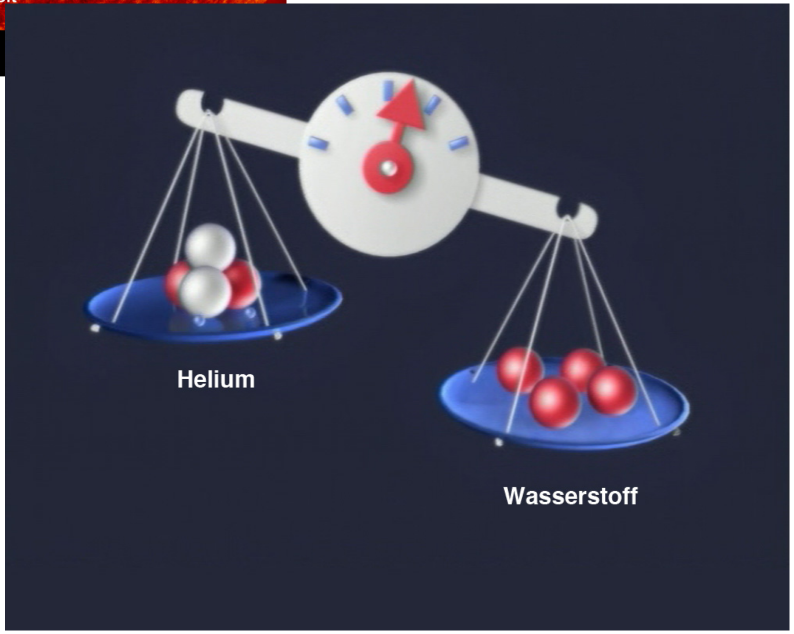
# How is carbon generated?

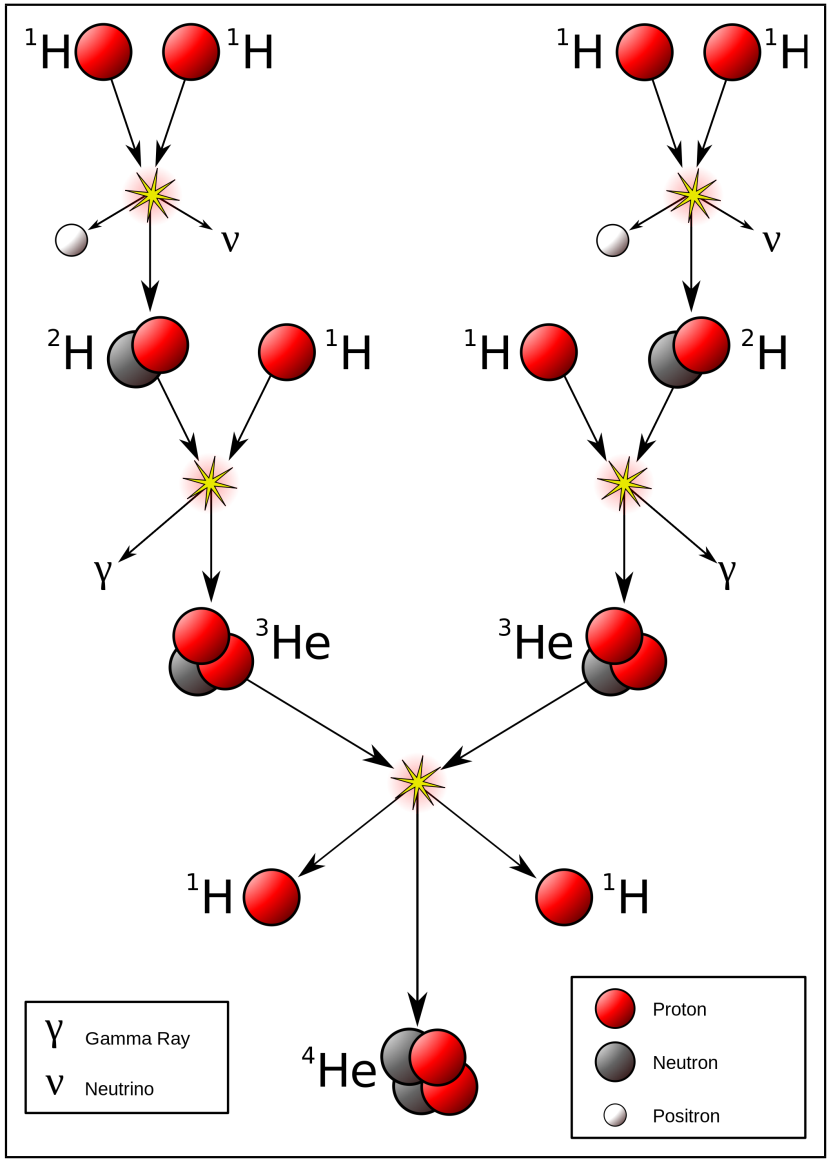
# NUCLEAR FUSION



- The elements are generated in the Big Bang
  & in stars through nuclear **fusion** processes



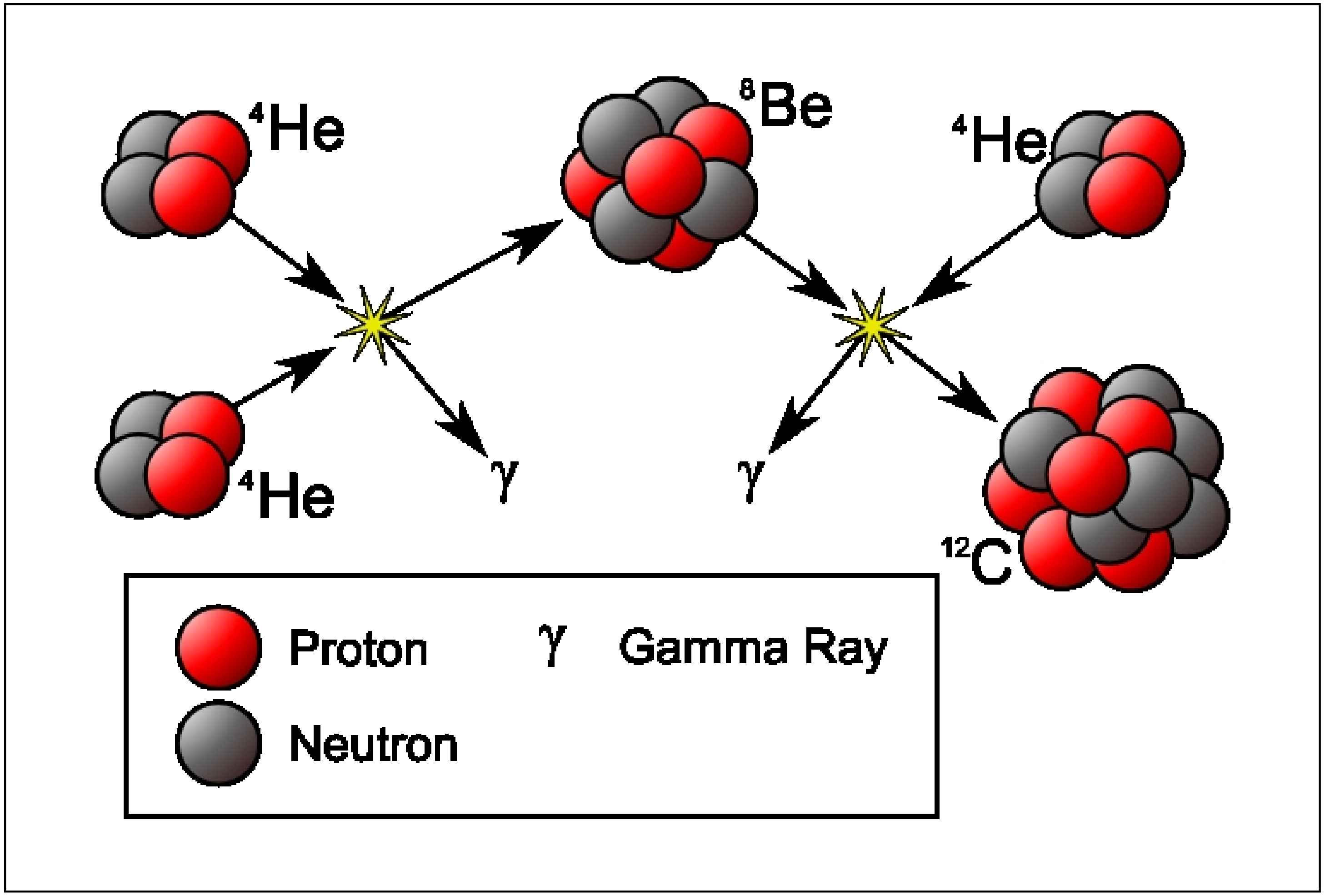



# CARBON NUCLEOSYNTHESIS



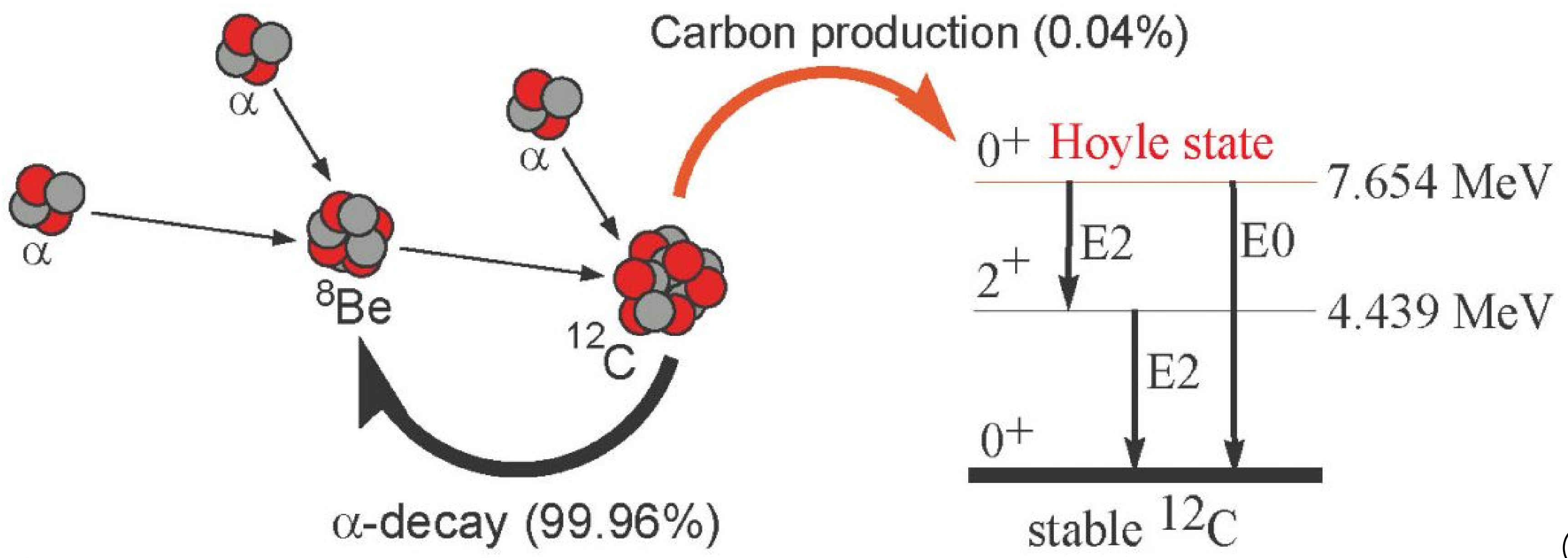
- Carbon is generated through the fusion of 3 helium nuclei (alpha-particles)

$\longrightarrow$ a short movie




@ Wikipedia

# The TRIPLE-ALPHA PROCESS




©ANU

- the $^{8}$Be nucleus is instable, long lifetime ($10^{-16}$ s) → 3 alpha-particles must meet
- the Hoyle state is located just above the continuum threshold → the excited carbon nuclei decay in various ways

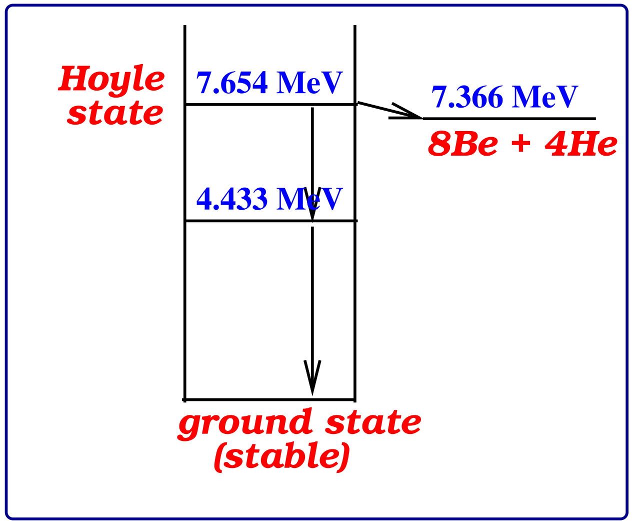
**about 4 of 10000 decays produce stable carbon**

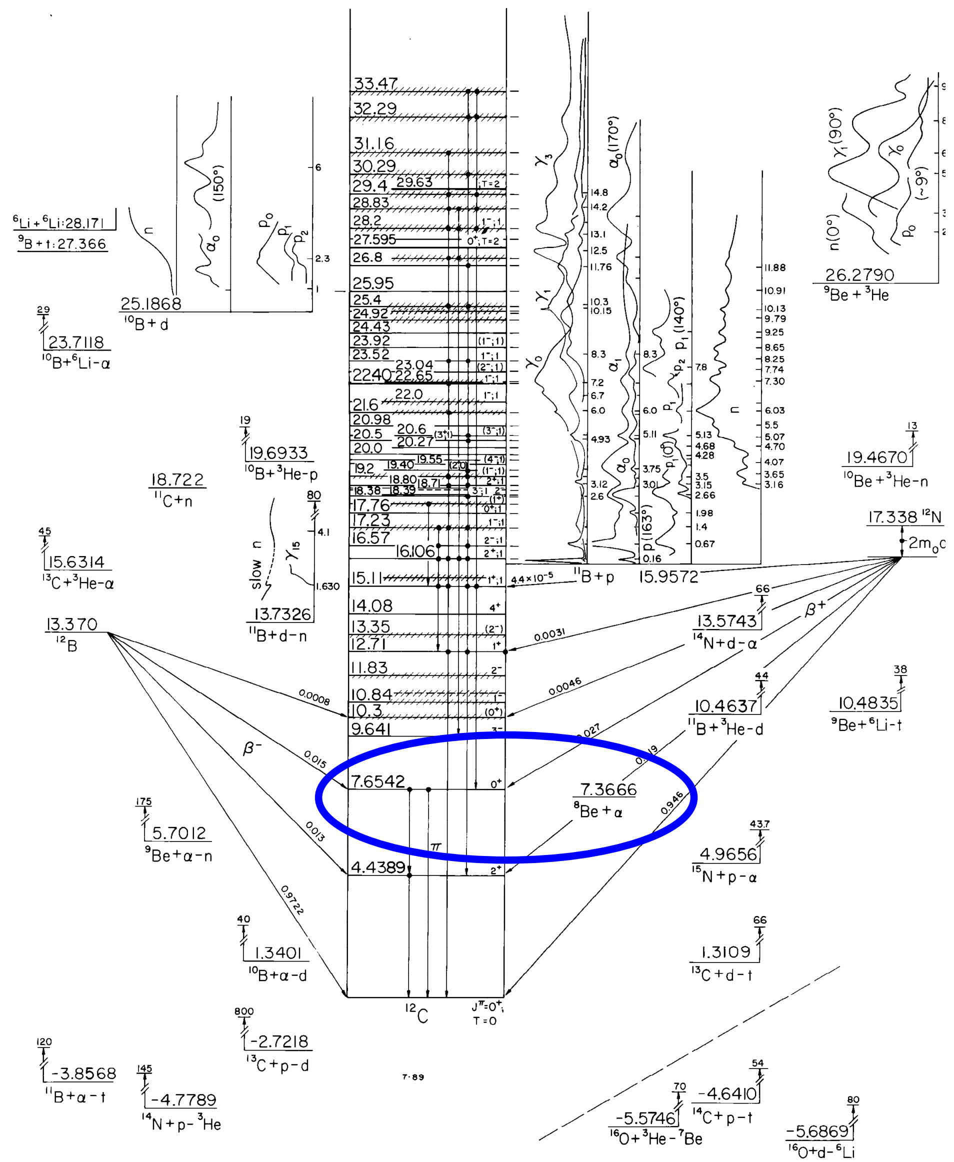
# The HOLYE STATE



- The rate for the generation of carbon in its ground state is orders of magnitude too small
- Fred Hoyle (1954): To generate a sufficient amount of carbon and oxygen, there must exist a **resonant** state in the carbon spectrum
  Hoyle, Astrophys. J. Suppl. Ser. 1 (1954) 121
- Resonance: Swing, bridge, . . .
  $\hookrightarrow$ tremendous enhancement
- The Hoyle state was experimentally confirmed already in 1957 at Caltech
  Cook et al., Phys. Rev. 107 (1957) 508
- Without this state, there is no life on Earth
- But are we able to understand this state from theory?

UK astrophysicist, 1915-2001






http://www.tunl.duke.edu/nucldata/fas/12_1959.pdf

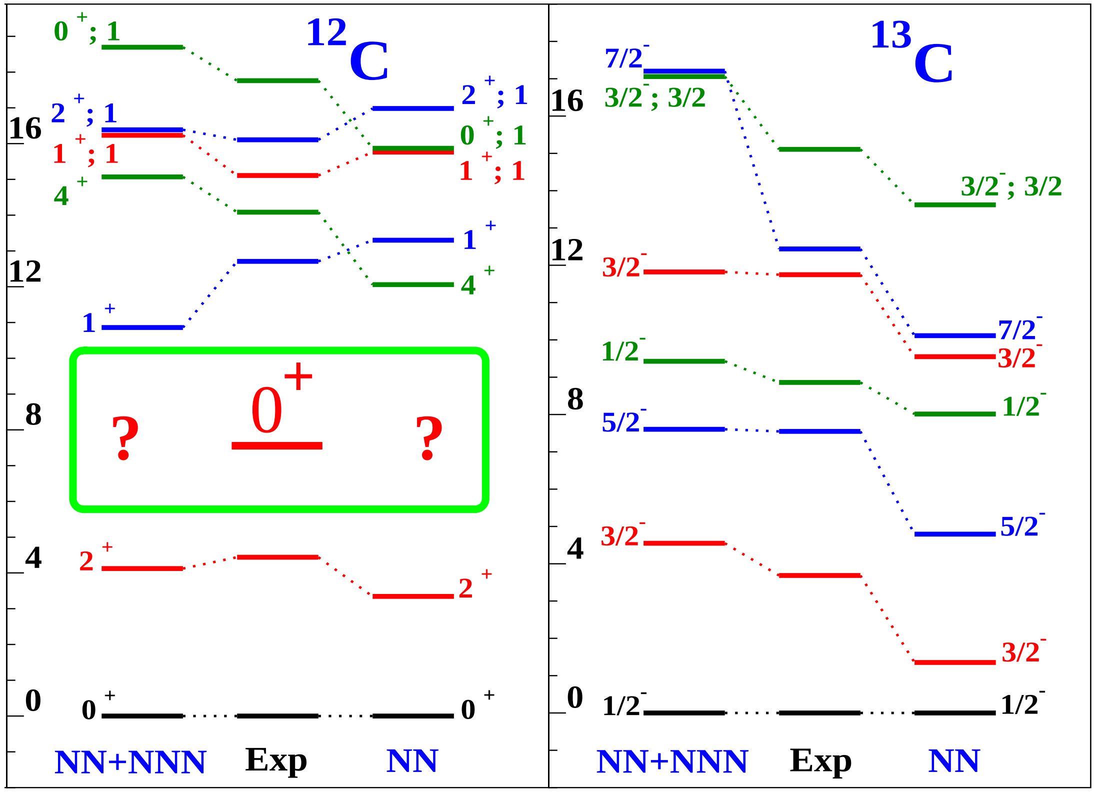
# Numerical simulations of carbon

# NUCLEAR THEORY and the HOYLE STATE



- Many-body theory (no-core-shell model) on a supercomputer:
  about $10^7$ CPU hrs on JAGUAR (fastest computer in 2009/2010, 1.75 Pflops)

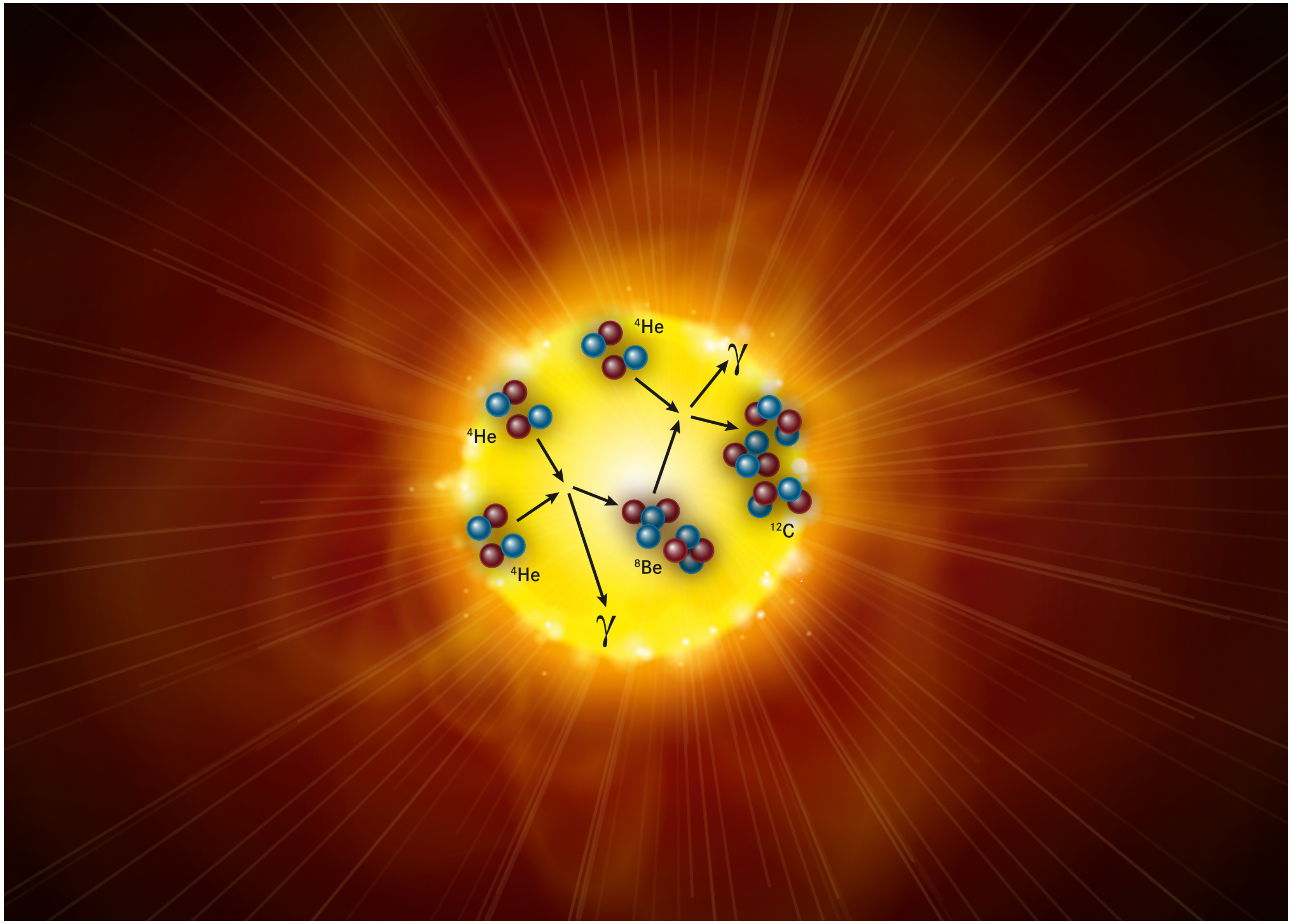
P. Navratil et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. **99** (2007) 042501; R. Roth et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. **107** (2011) 072501




⇒ Excellent description, but no indication for the Hoyle state

# AB INITIO CALCULATION of the HOYLE STATE

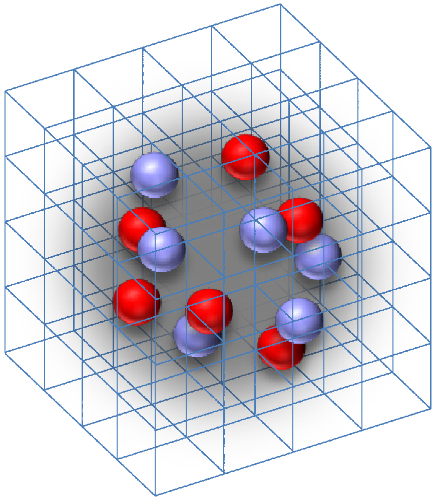
Epelbaum, Krebs, Lee, UGM, Phys. Rev. Lett. **106** (2011) 192501
Viewpoint: Hjorth-Jensen, Physics 4 (2011) 38



# TOOLS



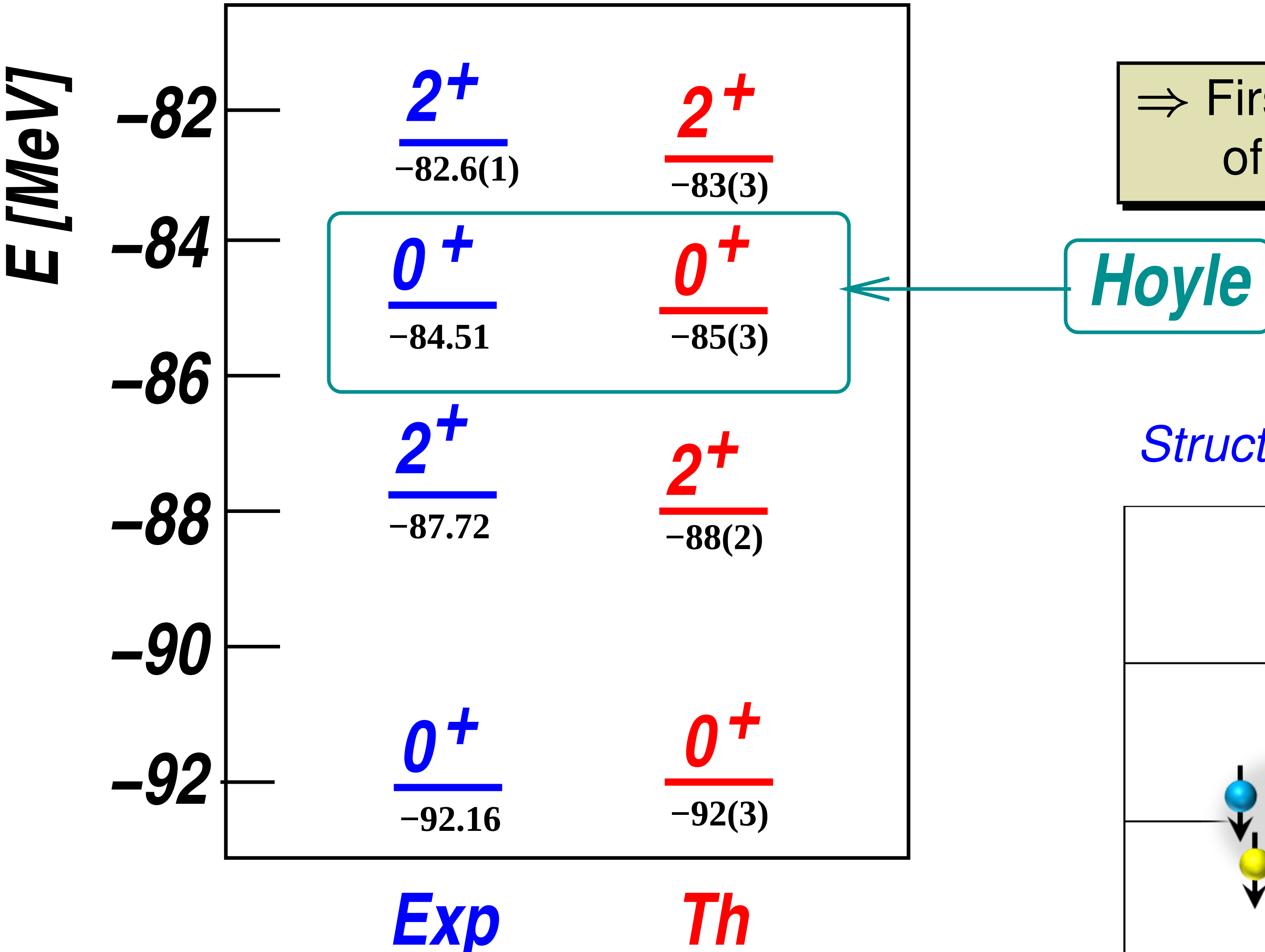
- improved theoretical *ansatz* (new many-body theory, novel nuclear forces)
- High Performance Computer = JUGENE (BlueGene/P/Q/...)

1 Petaflop = 1.000.000.000.000.000 floating point operations per second

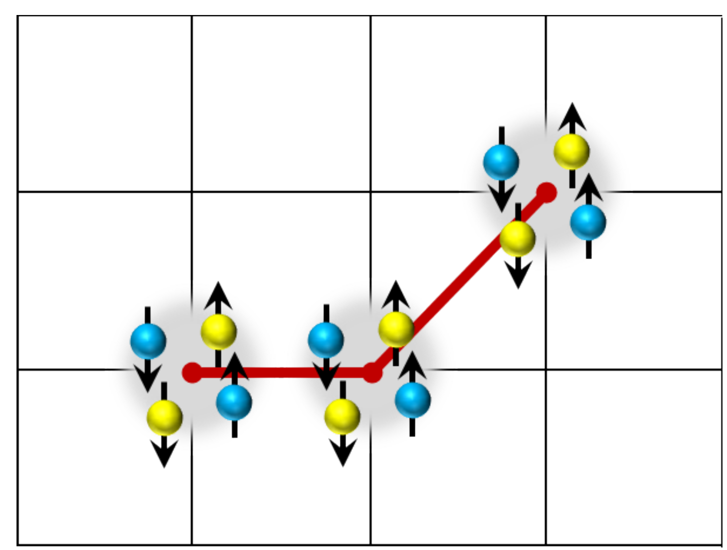
# The CARBON-12 SPECTRUM

- After $4 \cdot 10^6$ CPU hours on JUGENE (and "a bit" of human work)



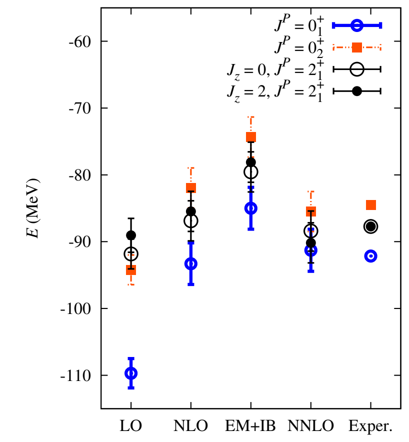

⇒ First ab initio calculation of the Hoyle state √

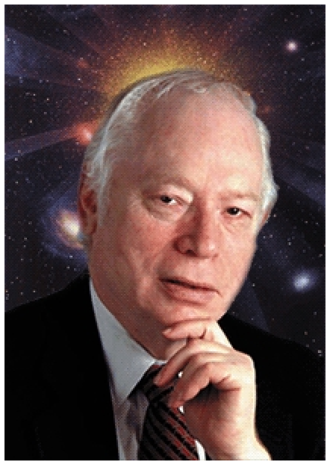
*Structure of the Hoyle state:*



# The RELEVANT QUESTION

Date: Sat, 25 Dec 2010 20:03:42 -0600
From: Steven Weinberg ⟨weinberg@zippy.ph.utexas.edu⟩
To: Ulf-G. Meissner ⟨meissner@hiskp.uni-bonn.de⟩
Subject: Re: Hoyle state in 12C



Dear Professor Meissner,

Thanks for the colorful graph. It makes a nice Christmas card. But I have a detailed question. Suppose you calculate not only the energy of the Hoyle state in C12, but also of the ground states of He4 and Be8. How sensitive is the result that the energy of the Hoyle state is near the sum of the rest energies of He4 and Be8 to the parameters of the theory? I ask because I suspect that for a pretty broad range of parameters, the Hoyle state can be well represented as a nearly bound state of Be8 and He4.

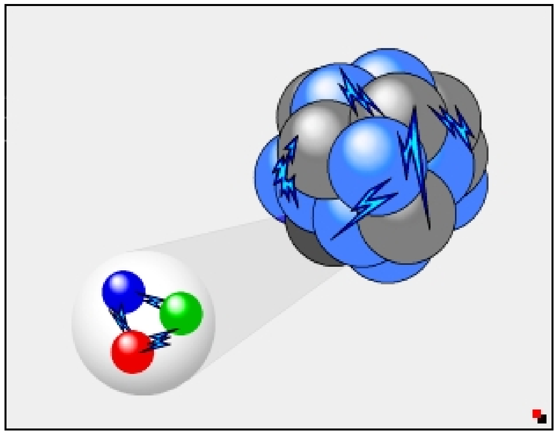
All best,
Steve Weinberg

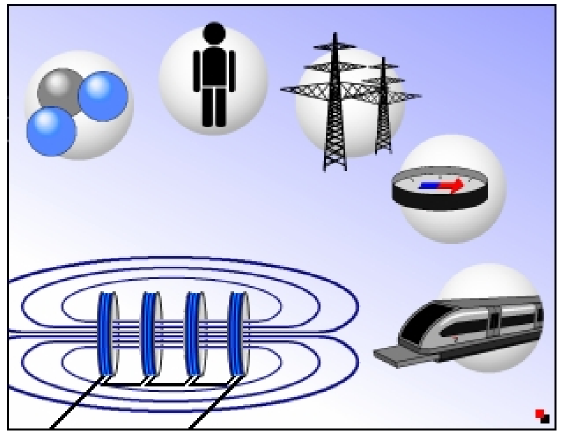
- How does the Hoyle state move w.r.t. the 4He+8Be threshold, when the parameters of the fundamental interactions are changed?
- In Nature, this is impossible to do, **but can be answered on a computer!**

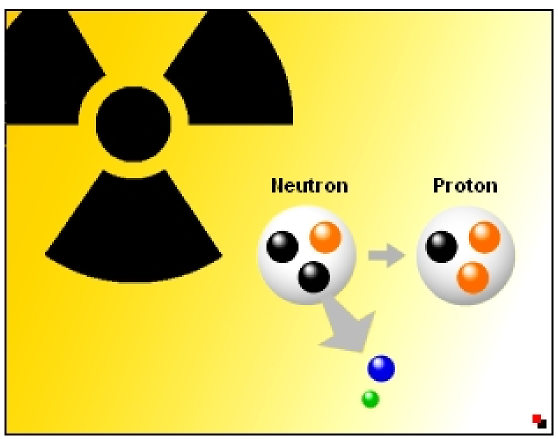
# A dose of philosophy: The anthropic principle

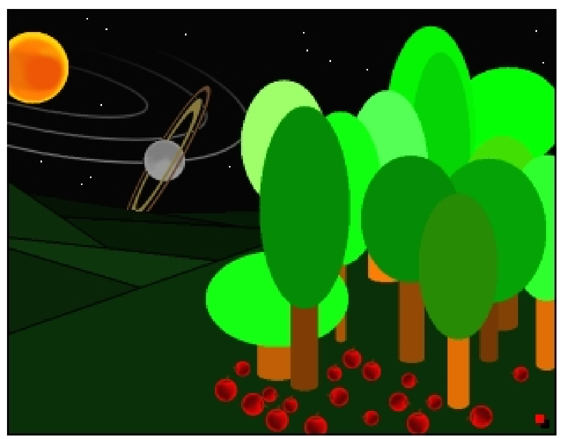
# FORCES in NATURE

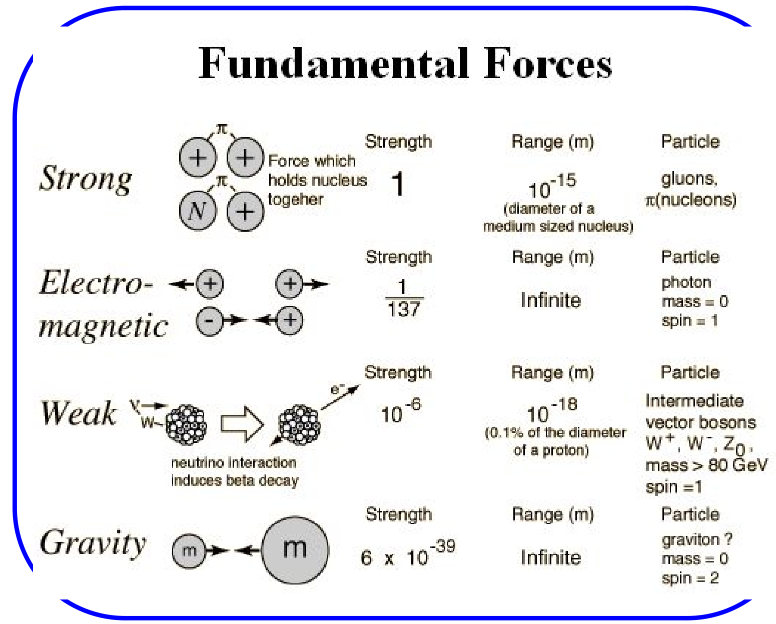
- 4 different forces: strong, electromagnetic, weak & gravitation










why these strengths?

why these masses?

why these parameters?

# ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

- The anthropic principle:

"The observed values of all physical and cosmological quantities are not equally probable but they take on values restricted by the requirement that there exist sites where carbon-based life can evolve and by the requirements that the universe be old enough for it to have already done so."

Carter 1974, Barrow & Tippler 1988, . . .

$\Rightarrow$ does this lead to physical/testable consequences?

# ANTHROPIC REASONING: SOME EXAMPLES

VOLUME 59, NUMBER 22 PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS 30 NOVEMBER 1

**Anthropic Bound on the Cosmological Constant**

Steven Weinberg
*Theory Group, Department of Physics, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712*
(Received 5 August 1987)

In recent cosmological models, there is an "anthropic" upper bound on the cosmological constant Λ. It is argued here that in universes that do not recollapse, the only such bound on Λ is that it should not be so large as to prevent the formation of gravitationally bound states. It turns out that the bound is quite large. A cosmological constant that is within 1 or 2 orders of magnitude of its upper bound would help with the missing-mass and age problems, but may be ruled out by galaxy number counts. If so, we may conclude that anthropic considerations do not explain the smallness of the cosmological constant.

801 citations



**The Anthropic Landscape of String Theory**

*L. Susskind*
Department of Physics
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305-4060

**Abstract**

In this lecture I make some educated guesses, about the landscape of string theory vacua. Based on the recent work of a number of authors, it seems plausible that the lanscape is unimaginably large and diverse. Whether we like it or not, this is the kind of behavior that gives credence to the Anthropic Principle. I discuss the theoretical and conceptual issues that arise in developing a cosmology based on the diversity of environments implicit in string theory.

961 citations

*Nature* Vol. 278 12 April 1979 605

**review article**

**The anthropic principle and the structure of the physical world**

**B. J. Carr* & M. J. Rees**
Institute of Astronomy, Madingley Road, Cambridge, UK

*The basic features of galaxies, stars, planets and the everyday world are essentially determined by a few microphysical constants and by the effects of gravitation. Many interrelations between different scales that at first sight seem surprising are straightforward consequences of simple physical arguments. But several aspects of our Universe—some of which seem to be prerequisites for the evolution of any form of life—depend rather delicately on apparent 'coincidences' among the physical constants.*

PHYSICAL REVIEW D VOLUME 57, NUMBER 9 1 MAY 1998

**Viable range of the mass scale of the standard model**

V. Agrawal,[1] S. M. Barr,[1] John F. Donoghue,[2] and D. Seckel[1]
[1]*Bartol Research Institute, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19716*
[2]*Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts 01003*
(Received 30 July 1997; published 1 April 1998)

In theories in which different regions of the universe can have different values of certain physical parameters, we would naturally find ourselves in a region where they take values favorable for life. We explore the range of such viable values of the mass parameter in the Higgs potential, $\mu^2$. For $\mu^2<0$, the requirement that complex elements be formed suggests that the Higgs vacuum expectation value $v$ must have a magnitude less than 5 times its observed value. For $\mu^2>0$, baryon stability requires that $|\mu| \ll M_P$, the Planck mass. Smaller values of $|\mu^2|$ may or may not be allowed depending on issues of element synthesis and stellar evolution. We conclude that the observed value of $\mu^2$ appears reasonably typical of the viable range, and a multiple-domain scenario may provide a plausible explanation for the closeness of the QCD scale and the weak scale.
[S0556-2821(98)05509-X]

# ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE: A PRIME EXAMPLE

- Hoyle (1953):

Prediction of an excited state in the carbon spectrum neccessary to generate a sufficient amount of heavy elements ($^{12}$C, $^{16}$O,...) in stars

- was later heralded as the prime example for the AP:

"As far as we know, this is the only genuine anthropic principle prediction"
Carr & Rees 1989

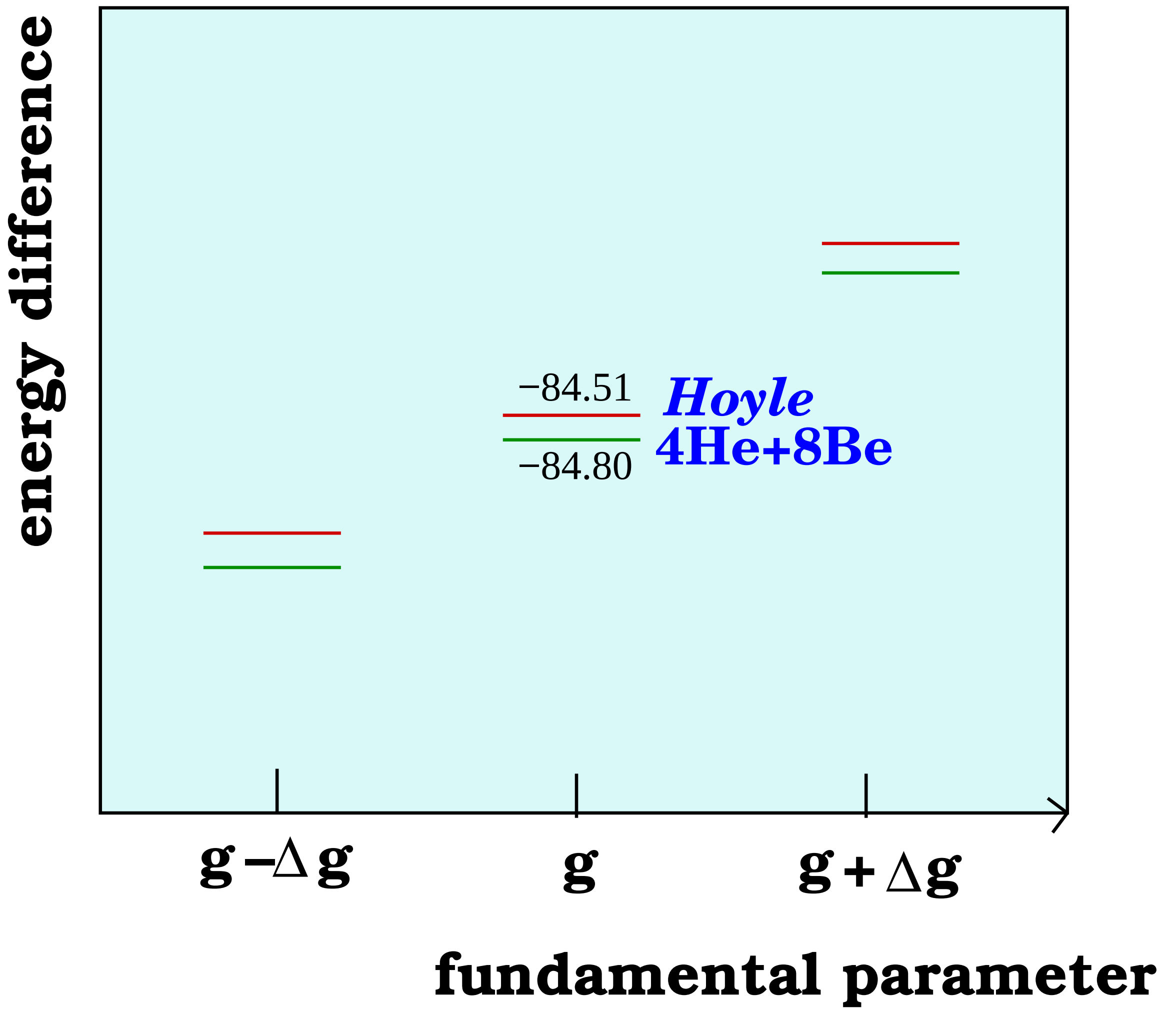
"In 1953 Hoyle made an anthropic prediction on an excited state – 'level of life' – for carbon production in stars"
Linde 2007

"A prototype example of this kind of anthropic reasoning was provided by Fred Hoyle's observation of the triple alpha process..."
Carter 2006

$\Rightarrow$ can we find out / test whether this is true?

# The NON-ANTHROPIC SCENARIO

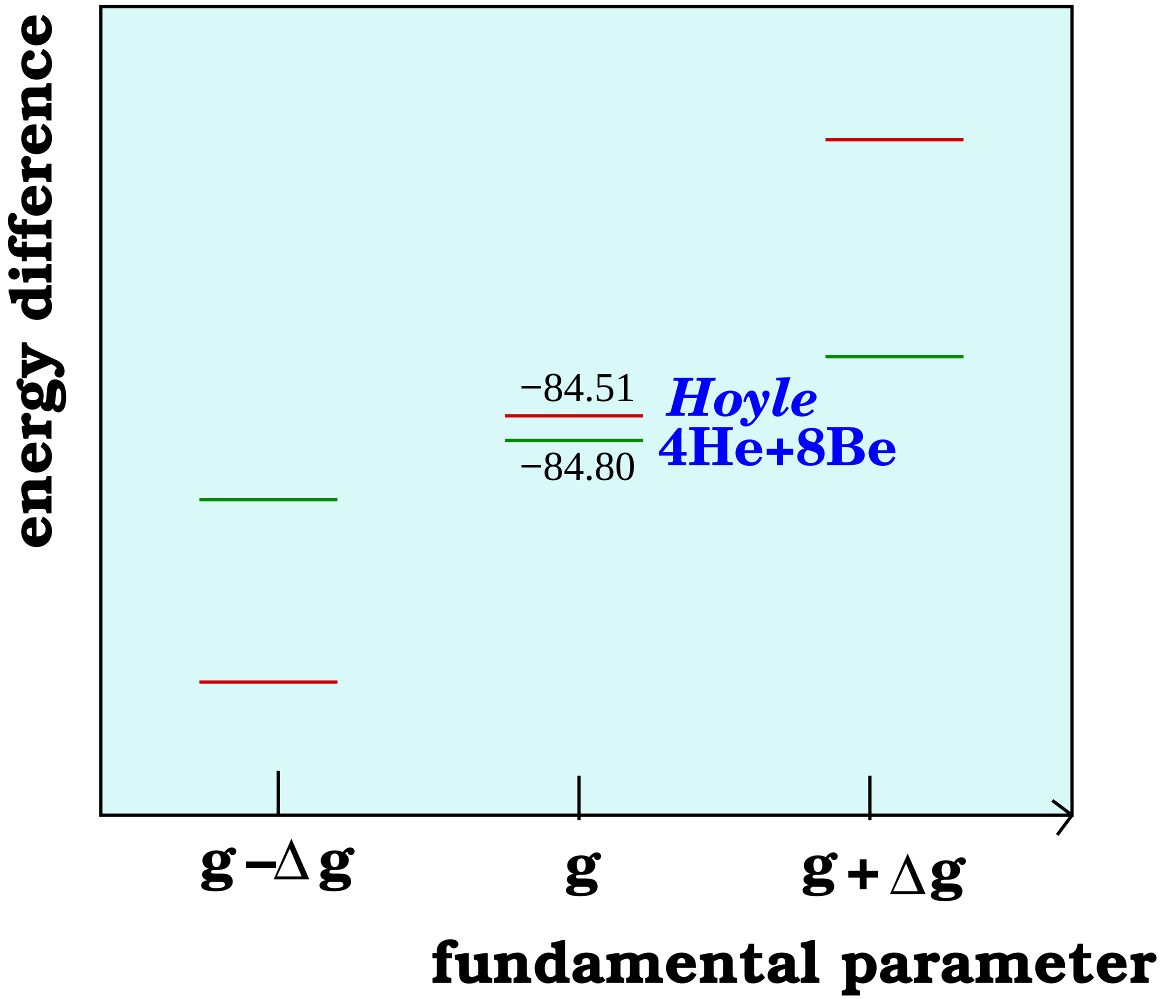
- Weinberg's assumption: The Hoyle state stays close to the 4He+8Be threshold



# The ANTHROPIC SCENARIO



- The AP strikes back: The Hoyle state quickly moves away from the 4He+8Be threshold



# How accidental is life on Earth?

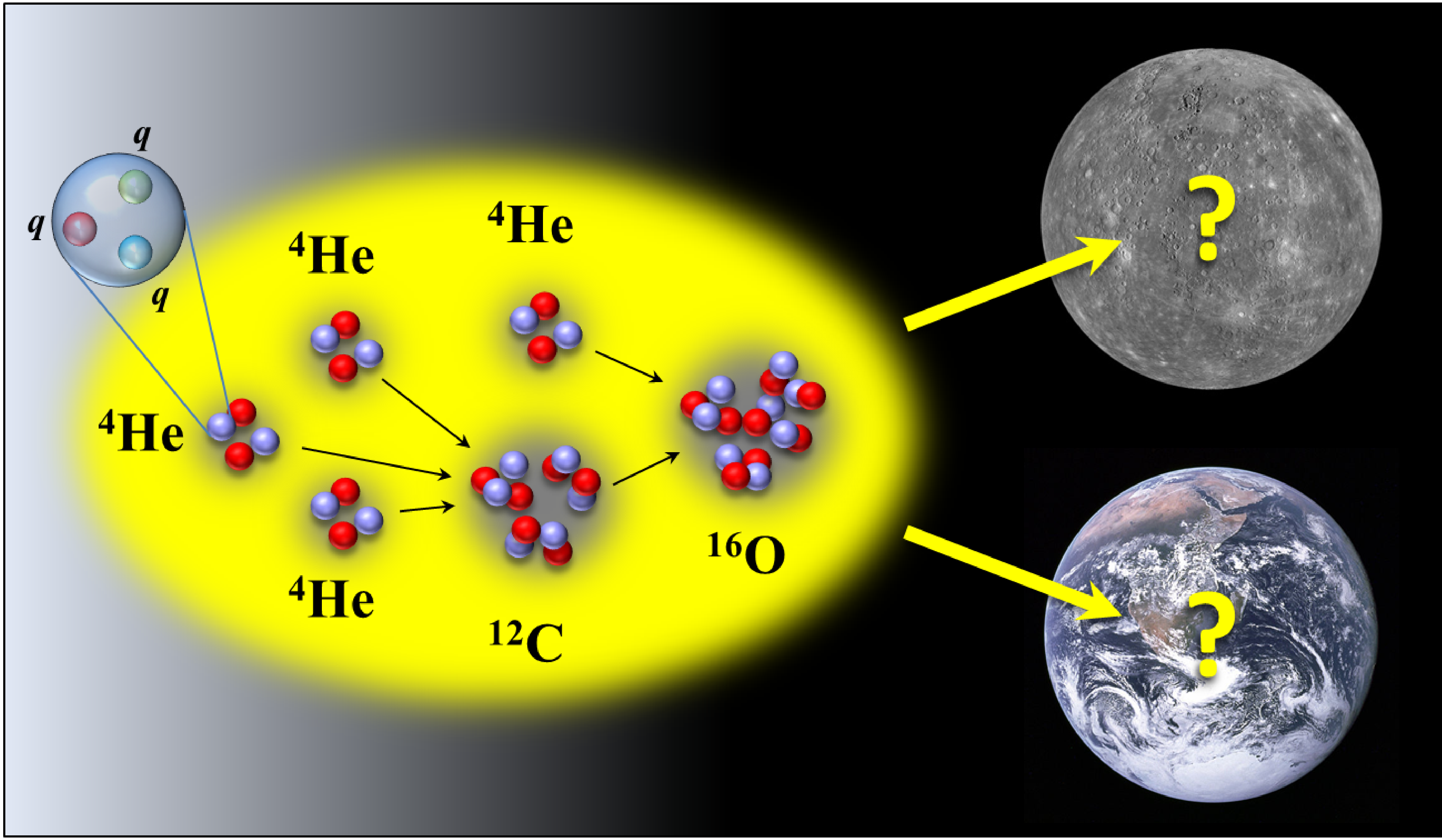
E. Epelbaum, H. Krebs, T. A. Lähde, D. Lee and UGM, “Viability of Carbon-Based Life as a Function of the Light Quark Mass,” Phys. Rev. Lett. **110** (2013) 112502

E. Epelbaum, H. Krebs, T. A. Lähde, D. Lee and UGM, “Dependence of the triple-alpha process on the fundamental constants of nature,” Eur. Phys. J. A **49** (2013) 82

UGM, “Anthropic considerations in nuclear physics,” Sci. Bull. **60** (2015) 43

# TWO VERY DIFFERENT SCENARIOS





# EARLIER STUDIES of the ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

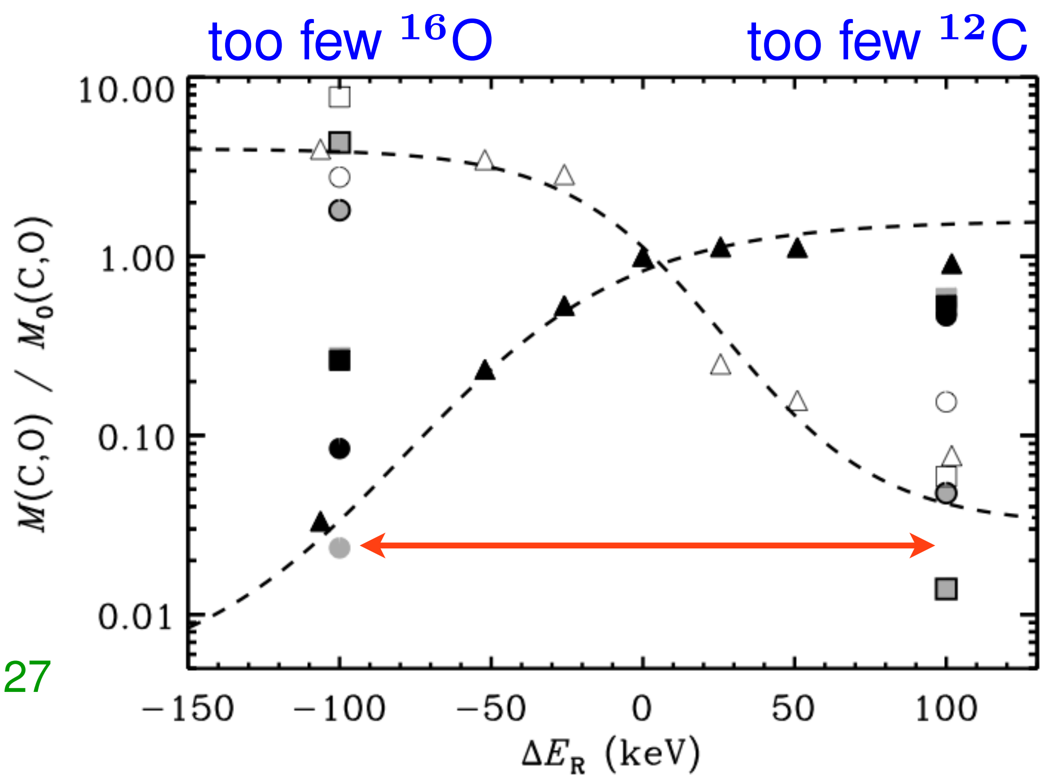
- rate of the 3$\alpha$-process: $r_{3\alpha} \sim \Gamma_\gamma \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta E_{h+b}}{kT}\right)$

$$\Delta E_{h+b} = E^\star_{12} - 3E_\alpha = 379.47(18)\ \text{keV}$$

- how much can $\Delta E_{h+b}$ be changed so that there is still enough $^{12}$C and $^{16}$O?

$\Rightarrow$ $\boxed{\delta|\Delta E_{h+b}| \lesssim 100\ \text{keV}}$

$\Rightarrow$ not very fine-tuned!




Oberhummer et al., Science **289** (2000) 88

Csoto et al., Nucl. Phys. A **688** (2001) 560

Schlattl et al., Astrophys. Space Sci. **291** (2004) 27

[Livio et al., Nature **340** (1989) 281]

# RELEVANT PARAMETERS

- Which fundamental parameters play a role?

- Strong force: Protons and neutrons are made of light quarks

⇒ the quark masses play no role for the total mass of the nucleon

$$\boldsymbol{m_{\rm proton} = m_{\rm neutron} = 939\ {\rm MeV}\ ,\quad m_{\rm quark} = 3\ {\rm MeV}}$$

⇒ but are of the same magnitude as the binding energies

$$\textbf{energy gain per nucleon} \lesssim \textbf{8 MeV}$$

- Electromagnetic force: Strength of the repulsion of the protons

$$\boldsymbol{e^2 = 4\pi/137 \simeq 0.09}$$

⇒ which variations of $m_{\rm quark}$ and $e^2$ are compatible with life on Earth?

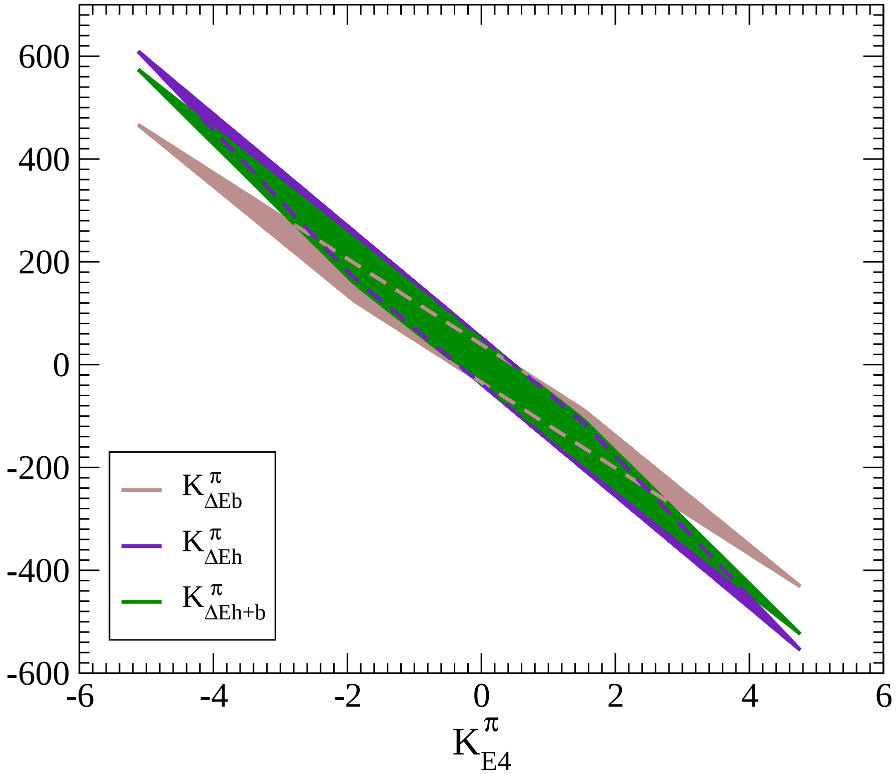
# CORRELATIONS



- two parameters that can not (yet) be determined from Lattice QCD:

  $\bar{A}_{s,t} \equiv \partial a_{s,t}^{-1}/\partial M_\pi\big|_{M_\pi^{\rm phys}}$ [singlet/triplet scattering length]

- vary the derivatives $\bar{A}_{s,t} \equiv \partial a_{s,t}^{-1}/\partial M_\pi\big|_{M_\pi^{\rm phys}}$ within $-1, \ldots, +1$:




$$\Delta E_b = E(^8\mathrm{Be}) - 2E(^4\mathrm{He})$$

$$\Delta E_h = E(^{12}\mathrm{C}^*) - E(^8\mathrm{Be}) - E(^4\mathrm{He})$$

$$\Delta E_{h+b} = E(^{12}\mathrm{C}^*) - 3E(^4\mathrm{He})$$

$$\boxed{\frac{\partial O_H}{\partial M_\pi} = K_H^\pi \frac{O_H}{M_\pi}}$$

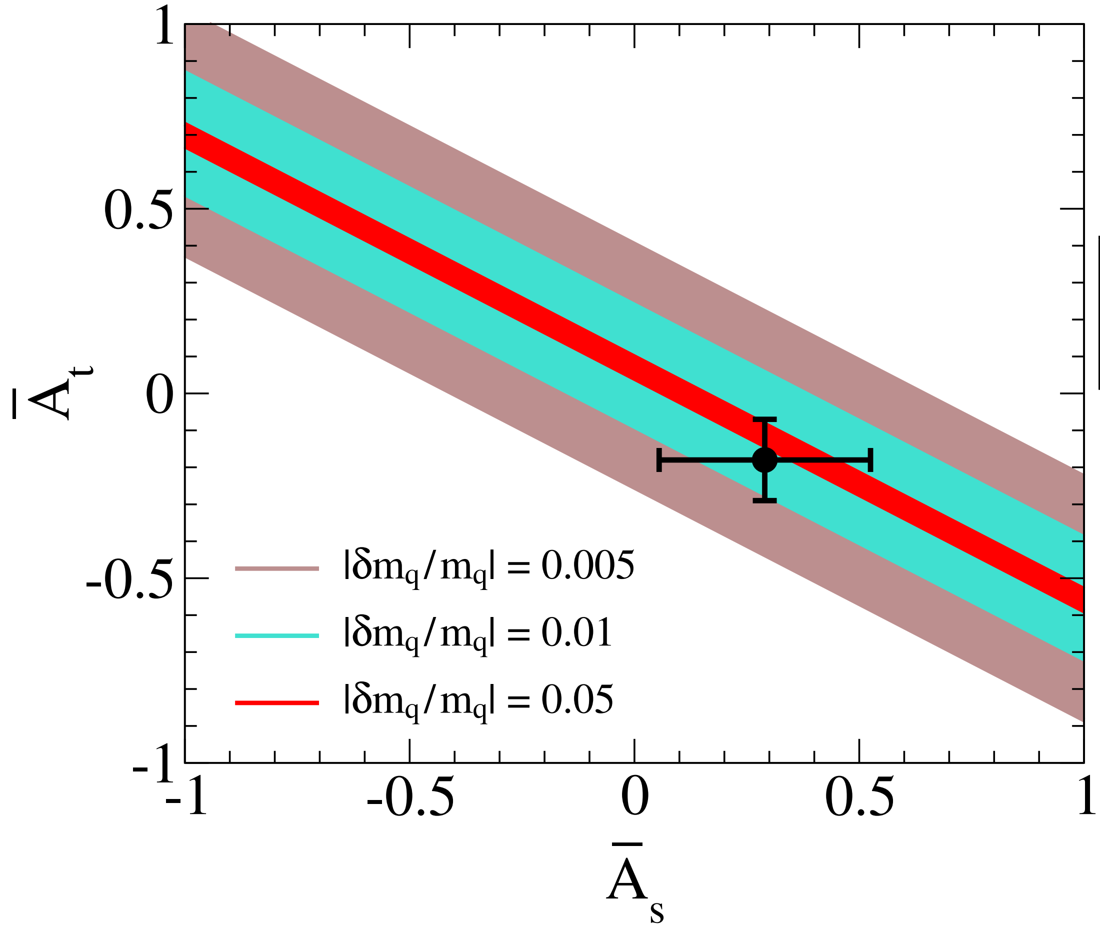
- all fine-tunings in the triple-alpha process are *correlated*, as speculated

  Weinberg (2000)

# THE END-OF-THE-WORLD PLOT

- $|\delta(\Delta E_{h+b})| < 100$ keV [exp: 387 keV] Oberhummer et al., Science (2000)

$$\to \left| \left( 0.571(14)\bar{A}_s + 0.934(11)\bar{A}_t - 0.069(6) \right) \frac{\delta m_q}{m_q} \right| < 0.0015$$




$$\bar{A}_{s,t} \equiv \left. \frac{\partial a_{s,t}^{-1}}{\partial M_\pi} \right|_{M_\pi^{\rm phys}}$$

The light quark mass is fine-tuned to $\simeq 2-3\,\%$

Similarly: $\alpha_{\rm EM}$ is fine-tuned to $\simeq 2.5\%$

Berengut et al., Phys. Rev. **D 87** (2013) 085018 (limit on the Higgs vev)

# DISCUSSION & OUTLOOK

- The various fine-tunings in the triple-alpha-process are all correlated
- A sufficient amount of carbon and oxygen ($\alpha+{}^{12}$C$\to{}^{16}$O$+\gamma$) is generated for variations in the quark masses and the electromagnetic force by about 2-3%

$\Rightarrow$ is this an **argument in favor of the anthropic principle**?

$\Rightarrow$ is a 2-3% variation very fine-tuned?

$\Rightarrow$ we can simulate different worlds $\to$ more input from lattice QCD needed

$\Rightarrow$ but not yet capable of predicting the emergence of life

- Computer simulations are a fascinating tool, that allows for **completely novel** insights!

$\Rightarrow$ we are on the way to answer the initial question – stay tuned

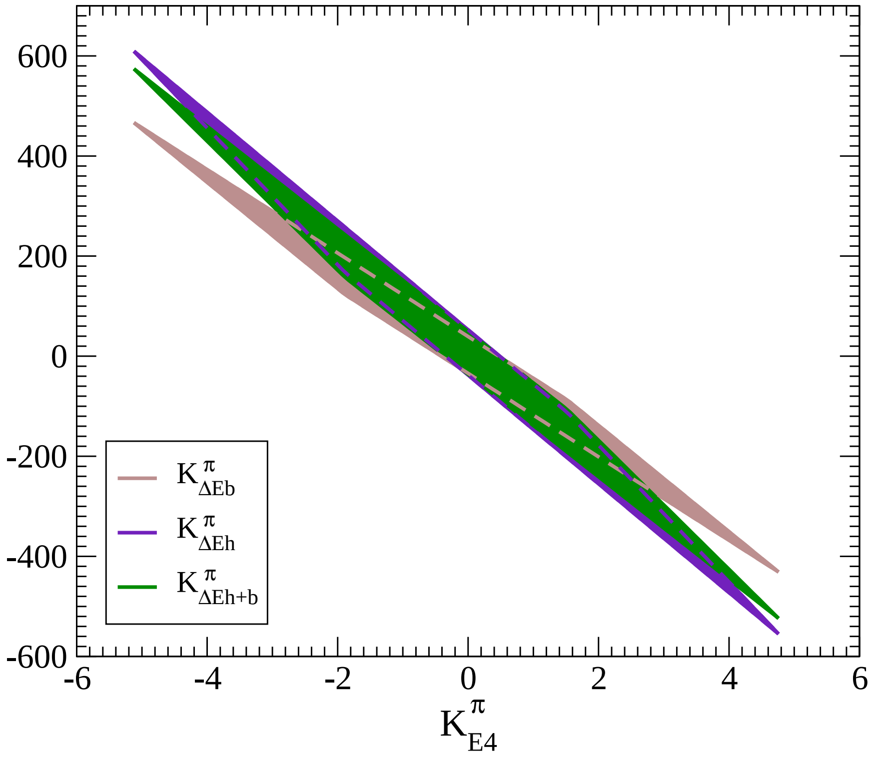
# SPARES

# RESULTS: CORRELATIONS

- vary the quark masses

⇒ strong correlations:

the fine-tuning of the energy differences
E(8Be) - 2E(alpha) and E(Hoyle) - 3E(alpha)
behaves *exactly* as the change
in the mass fo the alpha-particle E(alpha)
(this is called a *correlation*)




- Also: the production rate of $^{12}$C and $^{16}$O is sensitive to the difference E(Hoyle)-3E(alpha): maximal allowed change about 1/4 of the exp. value [based on nucleosynthesis calculations of Schlattl et al, 2004]

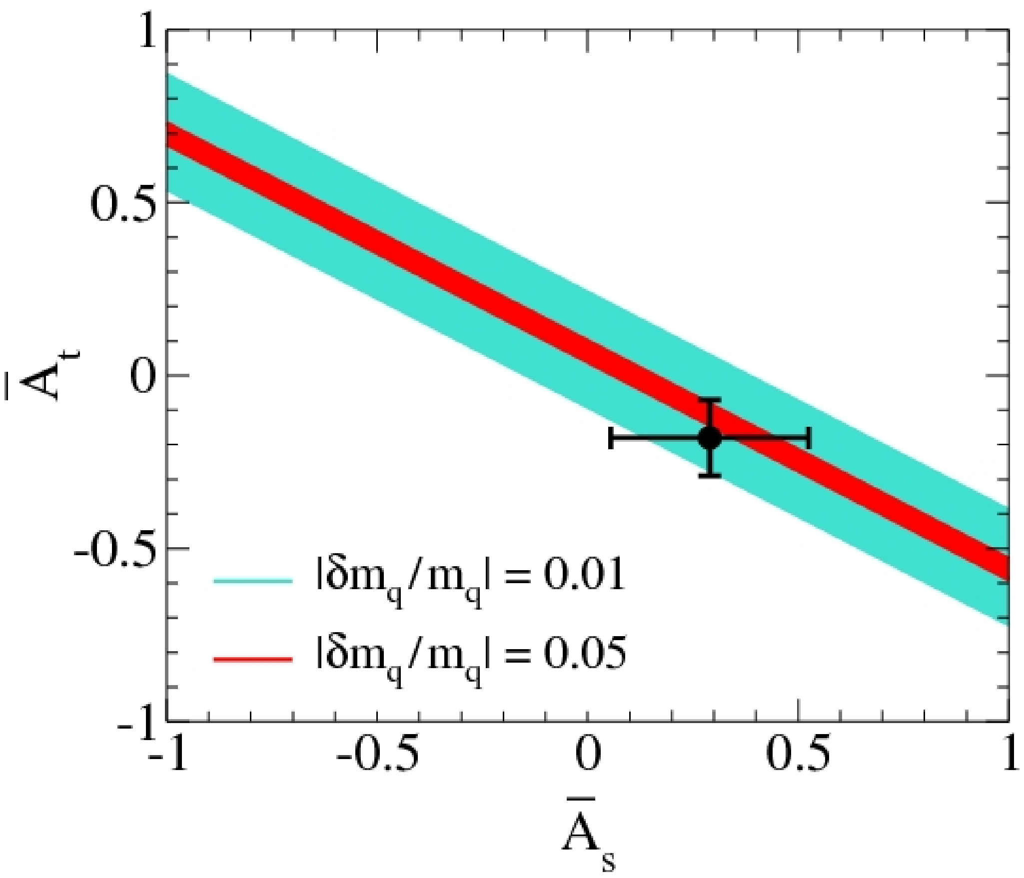
⇒ what can we deduce about the possible variations of the fundamental parameters?

# RESULTS: VARIATIONs of the FUNDAMENTAL PARAMETER

- The variation of E(alpha) depends on two parameters (Nucleon-nucleon interaction)

⇒ The variation of these parameters can be calculated (approximatively)

⇒ Survival bands: for which variations in the quark masses enough C and O is generated?




> ⇒ Only a variation of $m_{\rm quark}$ by about 2% and of $e^2$ by about 2% is compatible with life of Earth!