

(An introduction to)  
**Astroparticle Physics**  
Lecture 1/2

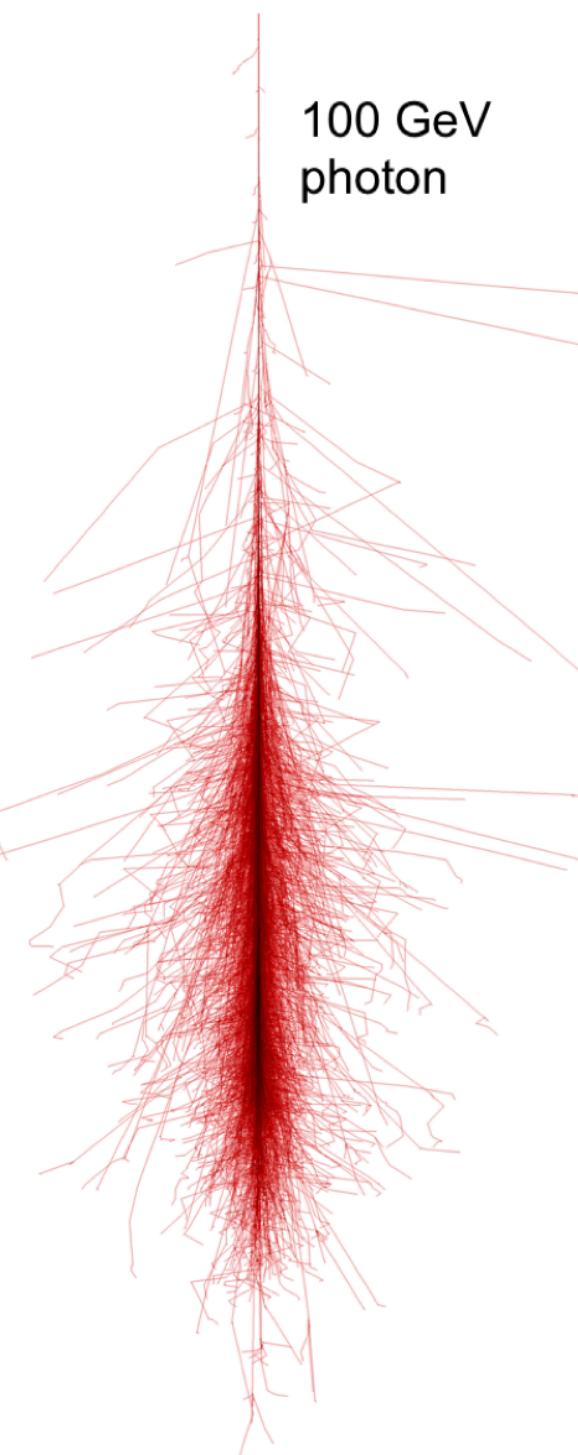
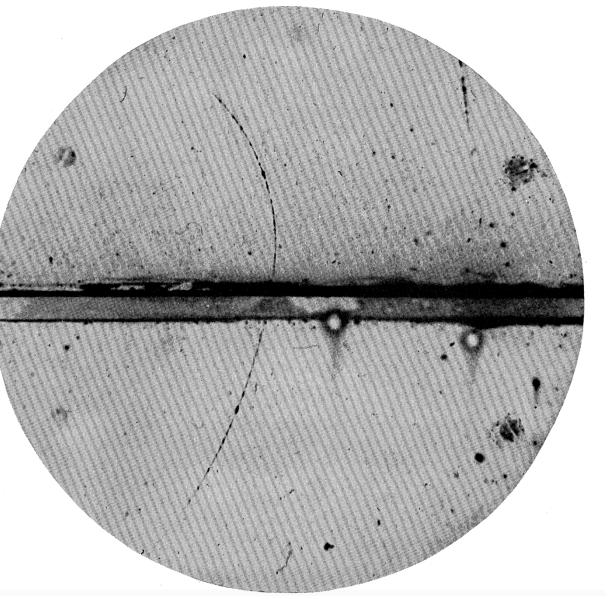
Bradley J Kavanagh [he/him]  
Instituto de Fisica de Cantabria (CSIC-UC)  
[kavanagh@ifca.unican.es](mailto:kavanagh@ifca.unican.es)

CERN Summer Student Lecture Programme:  
Wednesday 16th July 2025

Slides here: [bradkav.net/talks](http://bradkav.net/talks)

# Timeline

**1912:** Hess discovers cosmic rays



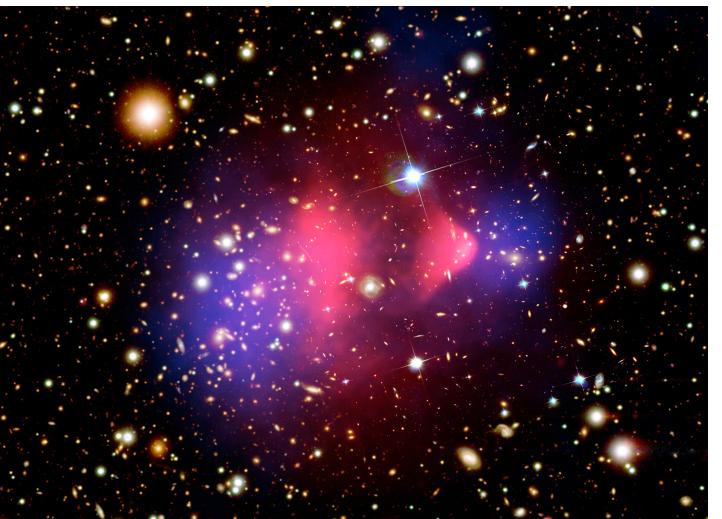
**1933:** Anderson discovers the positron in Cosmic Ray tracks

**1939:** Auger and collaborators demonstrate the existence of Cosmic Ray *air showers*

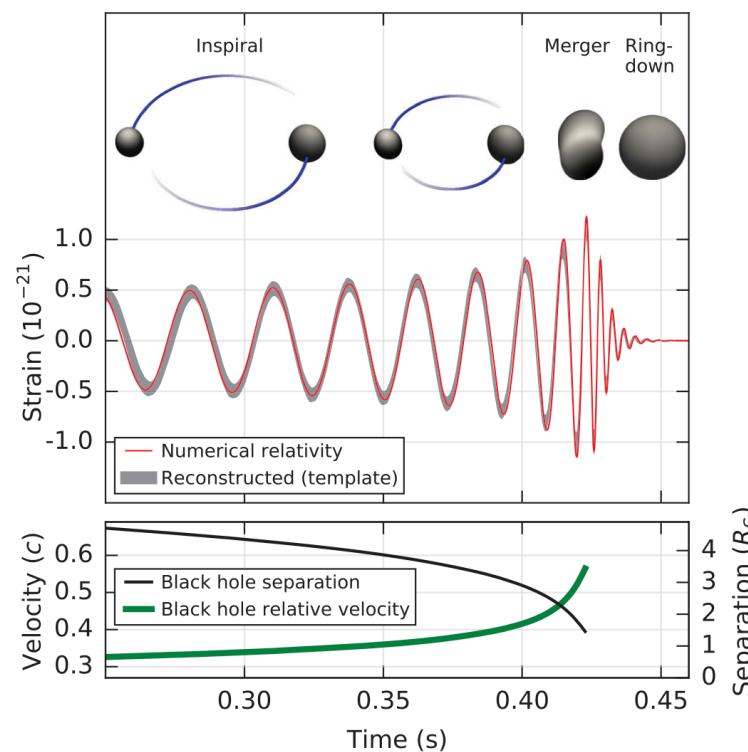
**1960s:** Homestake Experiment detects Solar Neutrinos (and the Solar Neutrino Problem)

**1970s:** The “Dark Matter” paradigm coalesces

**2010:** Discovery of the Fermi gamma-ray bubbles and Galactic centre excess



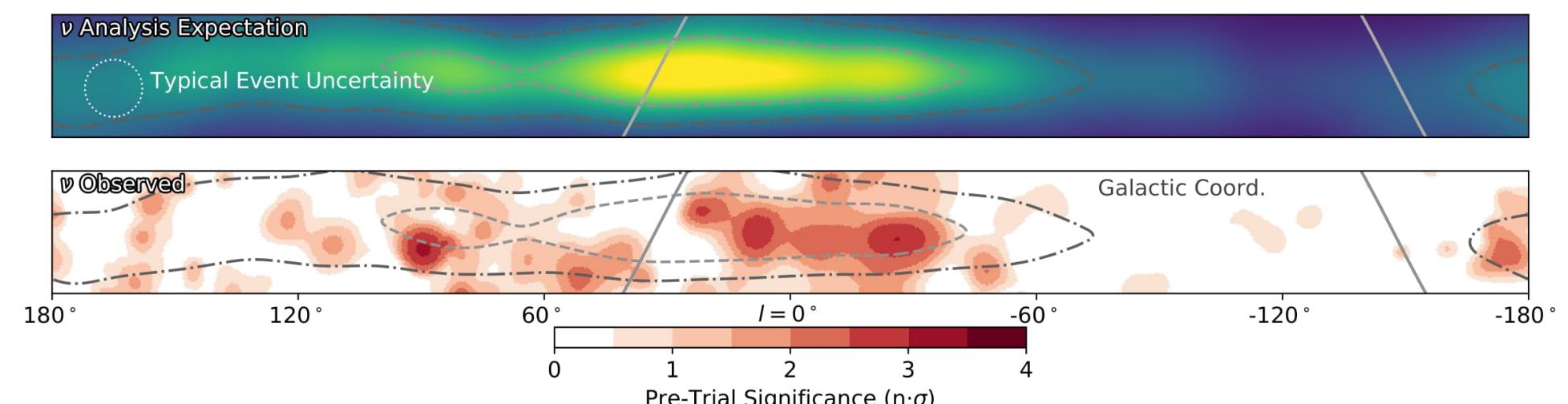
**2015:** GW150914 - First direct observation of GWs from Black Hole Binary Mergers



**2017:** TXS 0506+056 - First multimessenger detection of a blazar (neutrinos + gamma rays)

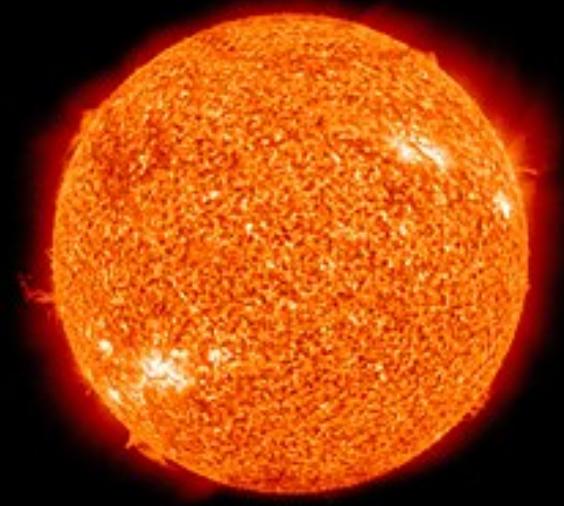
**2017:** GW170817 - First direct observation of GWs from Neutron Star Mergers by LVK

**2023:** Detection of Milky Way in Neutrinos by IceCube



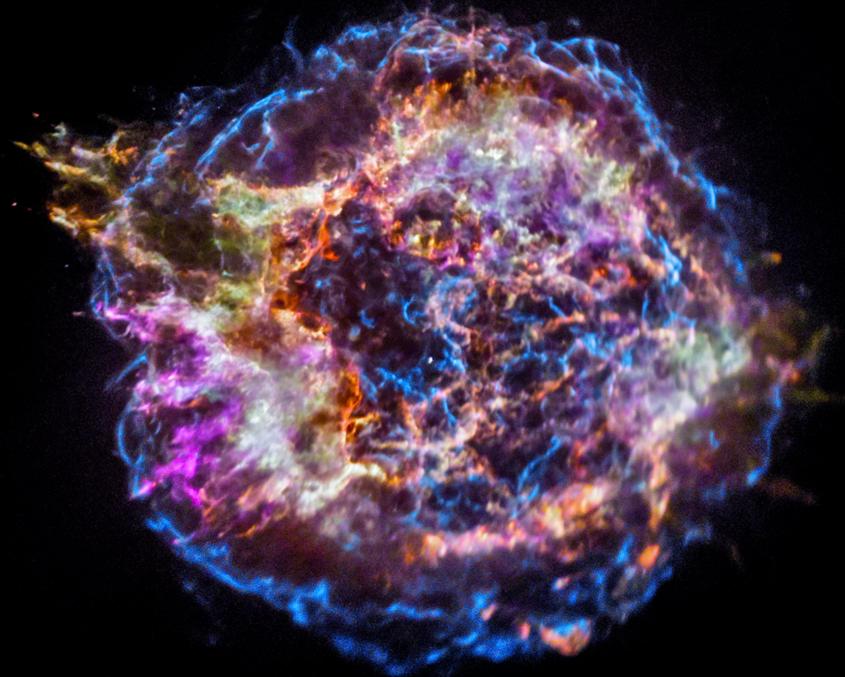
**2023:** NANOgrav & IPTA detect nHz Gravitational Waves

The Sun



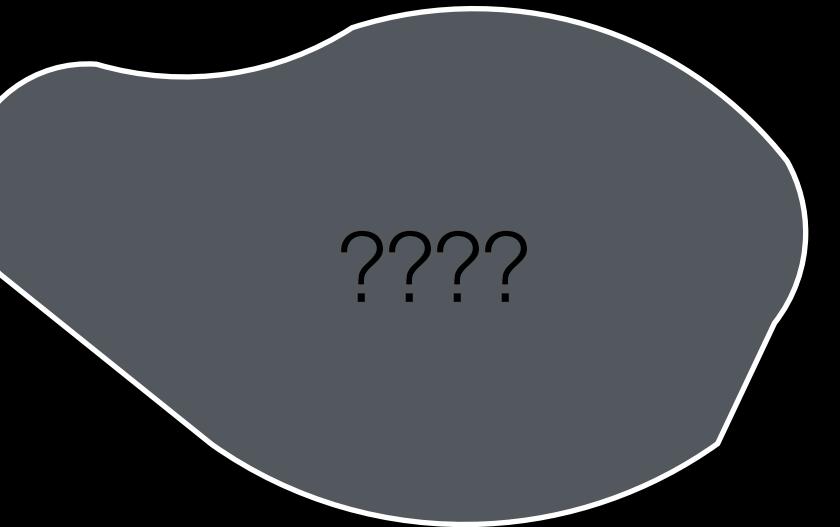
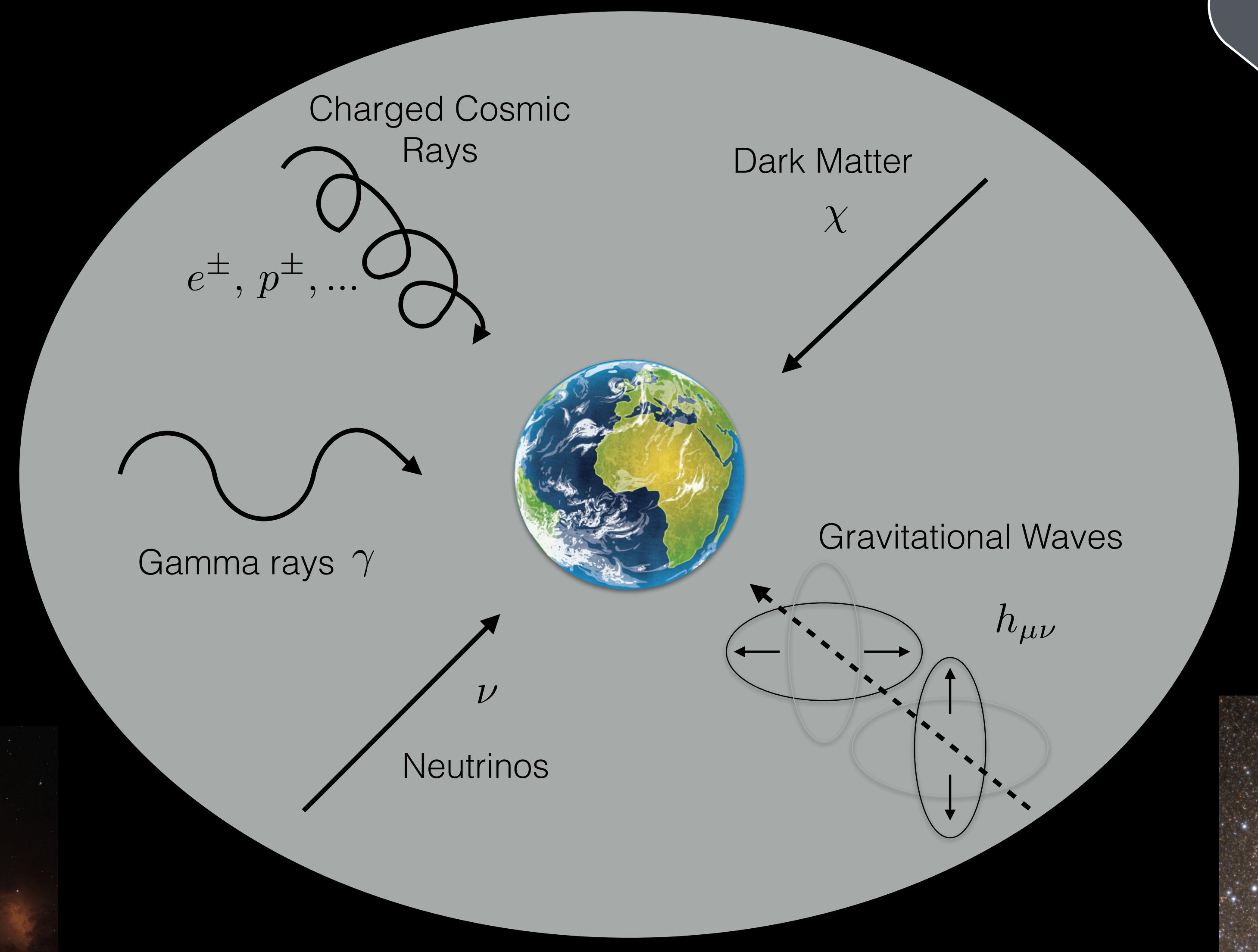
Credit: NASA/CXC/SAO

Supernovae



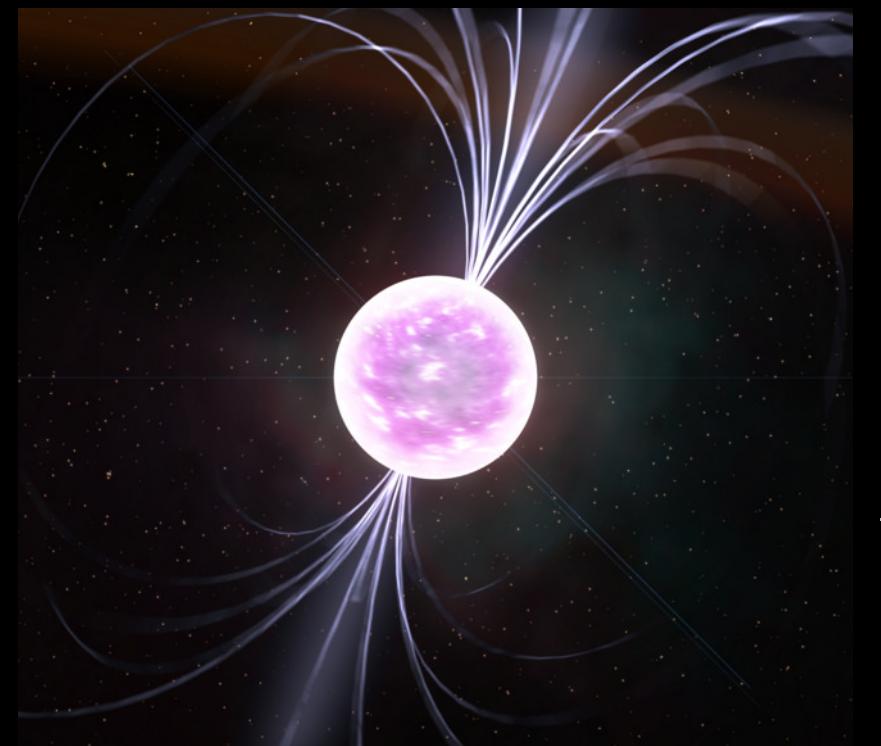
Credit: ESO/M. Kornmesser

Quasars/AGN

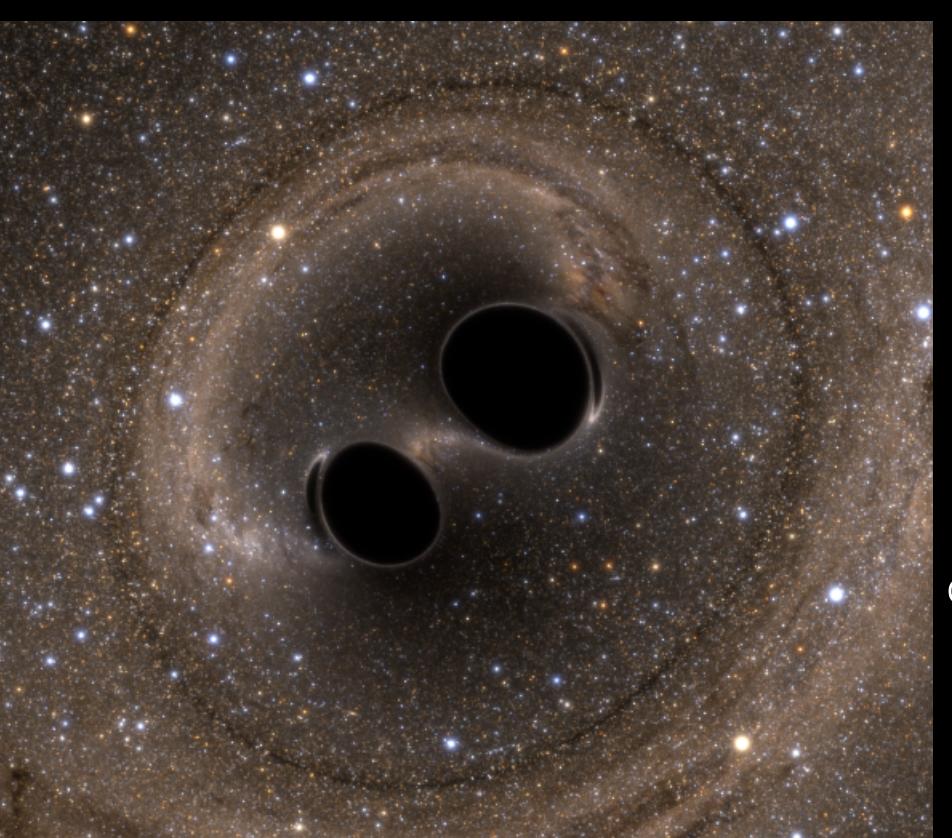


????

Pulsars

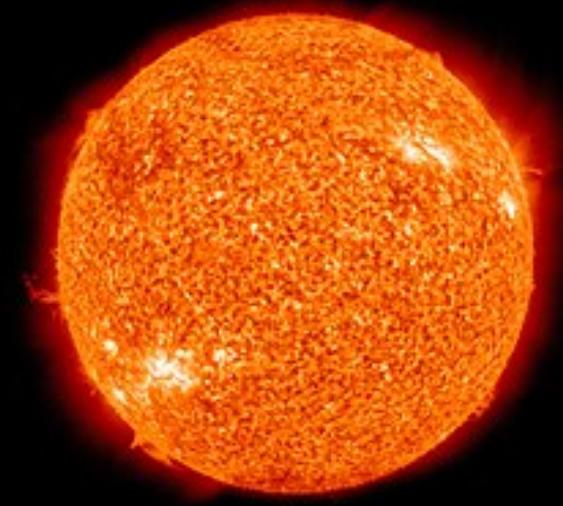


Credit: Kevin Gill / Flickr



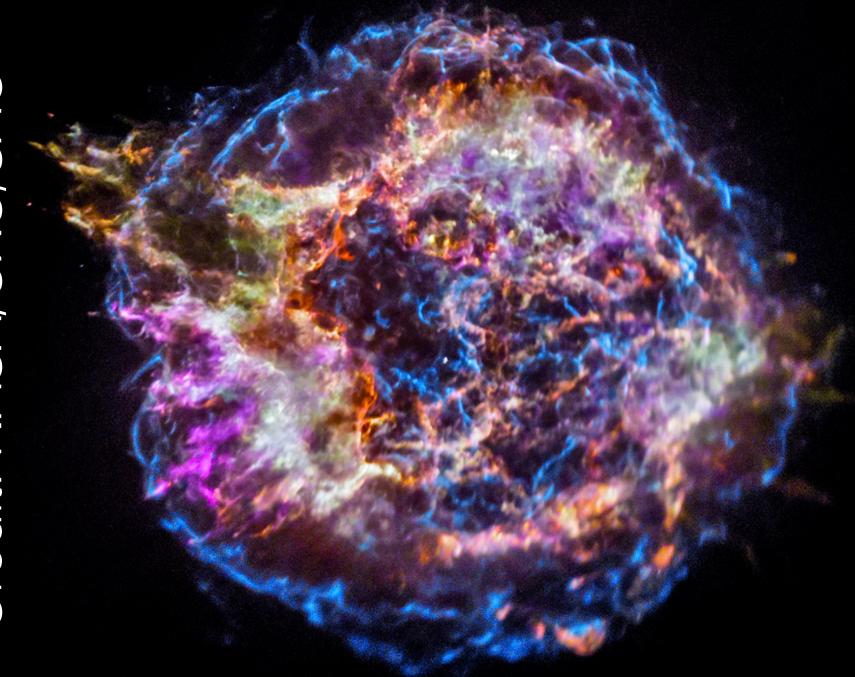
Credit: SXS Lensing

The Sun



Credit: NASA/CXC/SAO

Supernovae

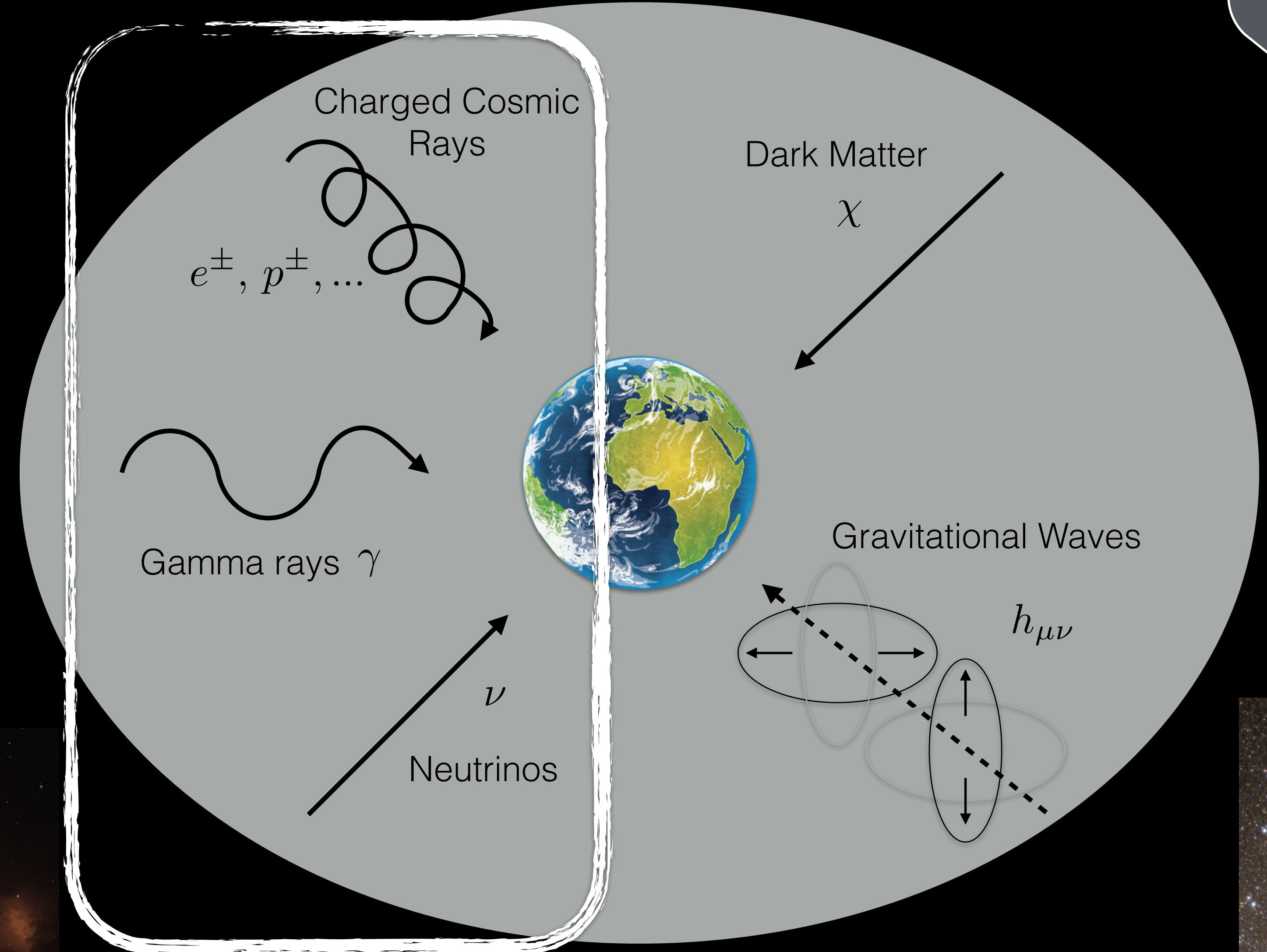


Credit: ESO/M. Kornmesser

Quasars/AGN

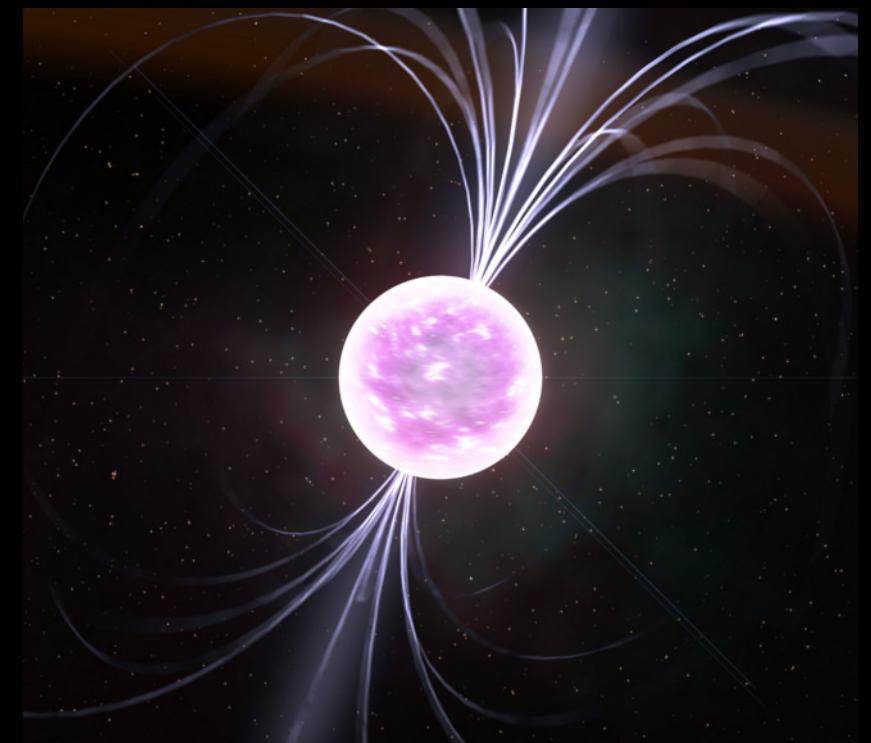


## Lecture 1



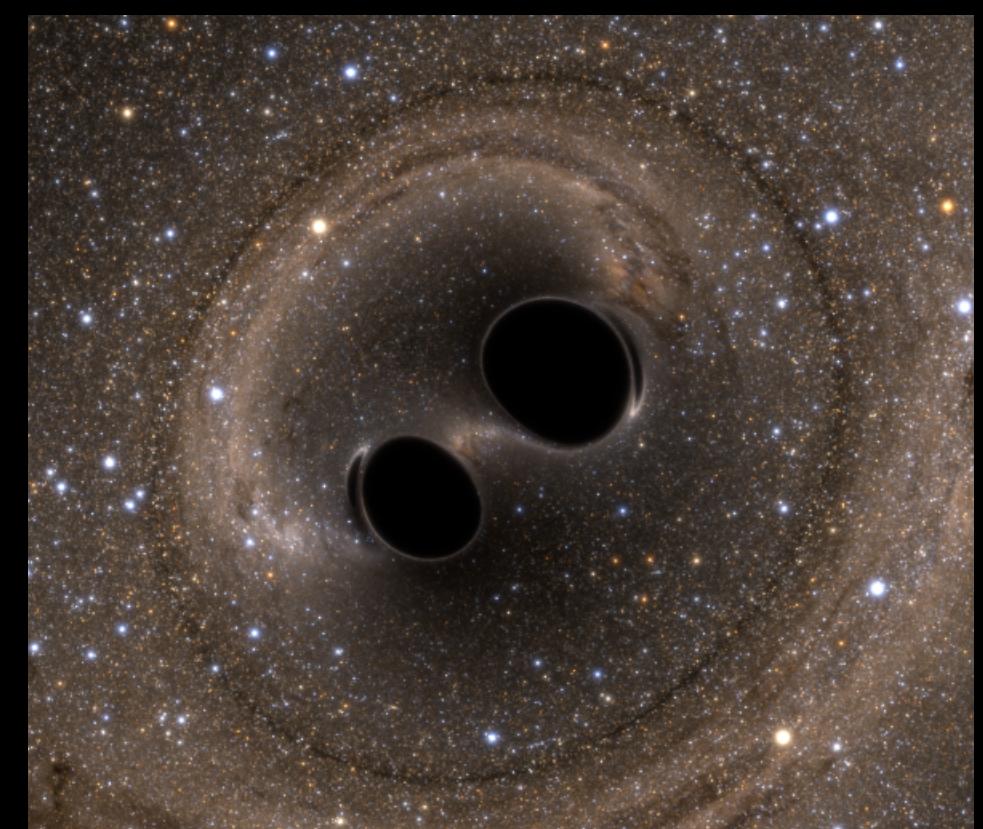
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Pulsars



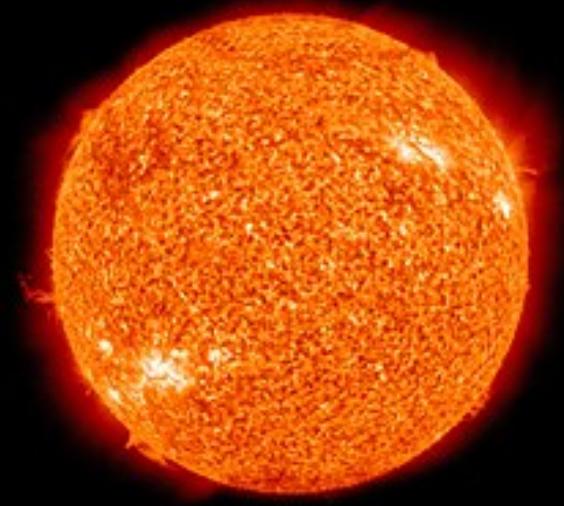
Credit: Kevin Gill / Flickr

BH/NS Mergers



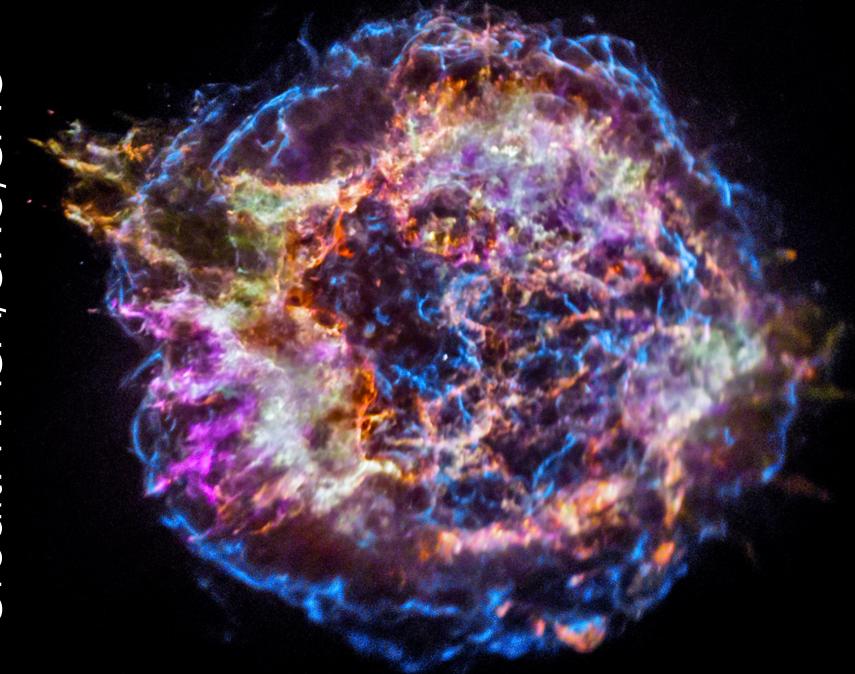
Credit: SXS Lensing

The Sun



Credit: NASA/CXC/SAO

Supernovae

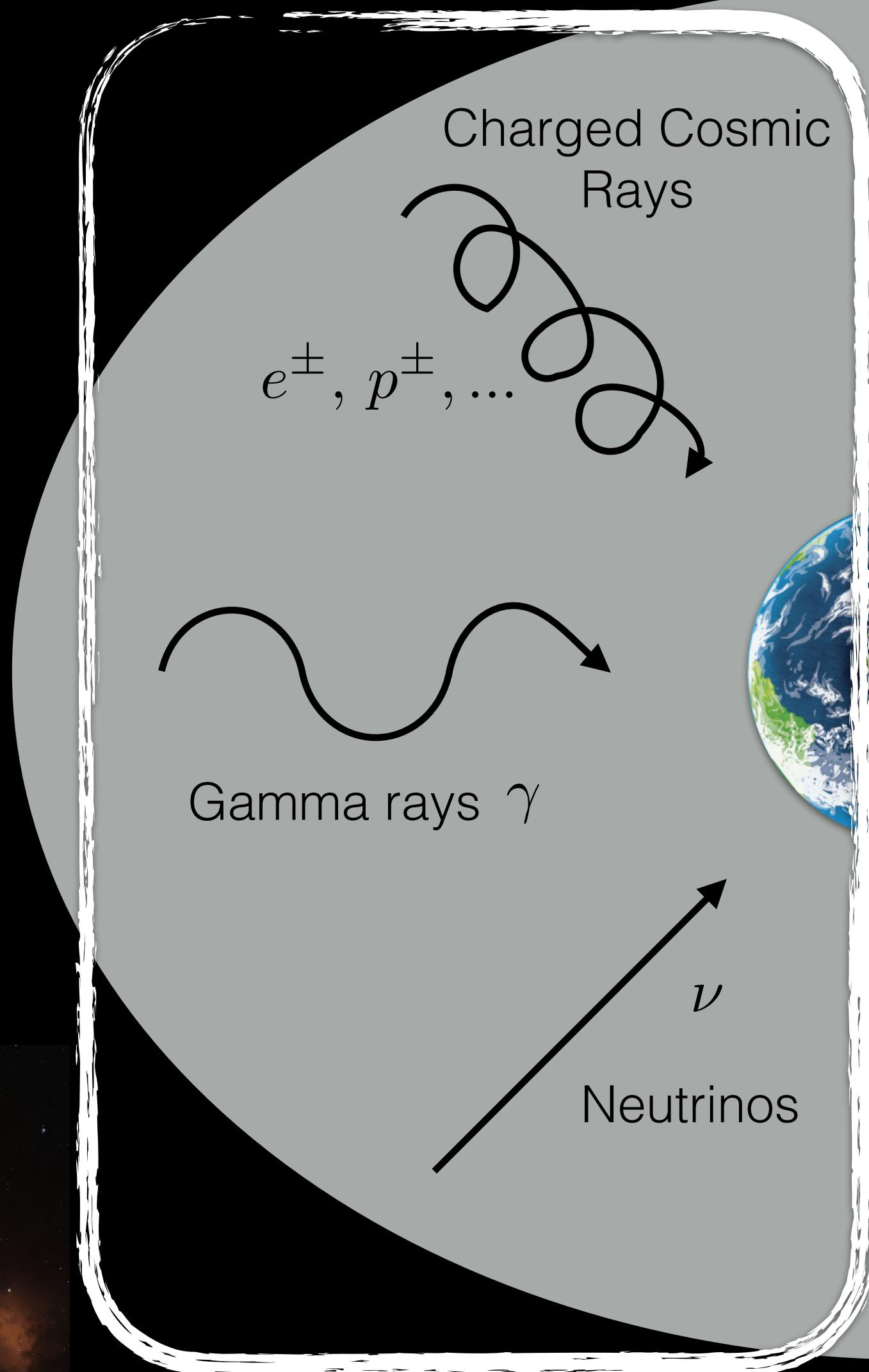


Credit: ESO/M. Kornmesser

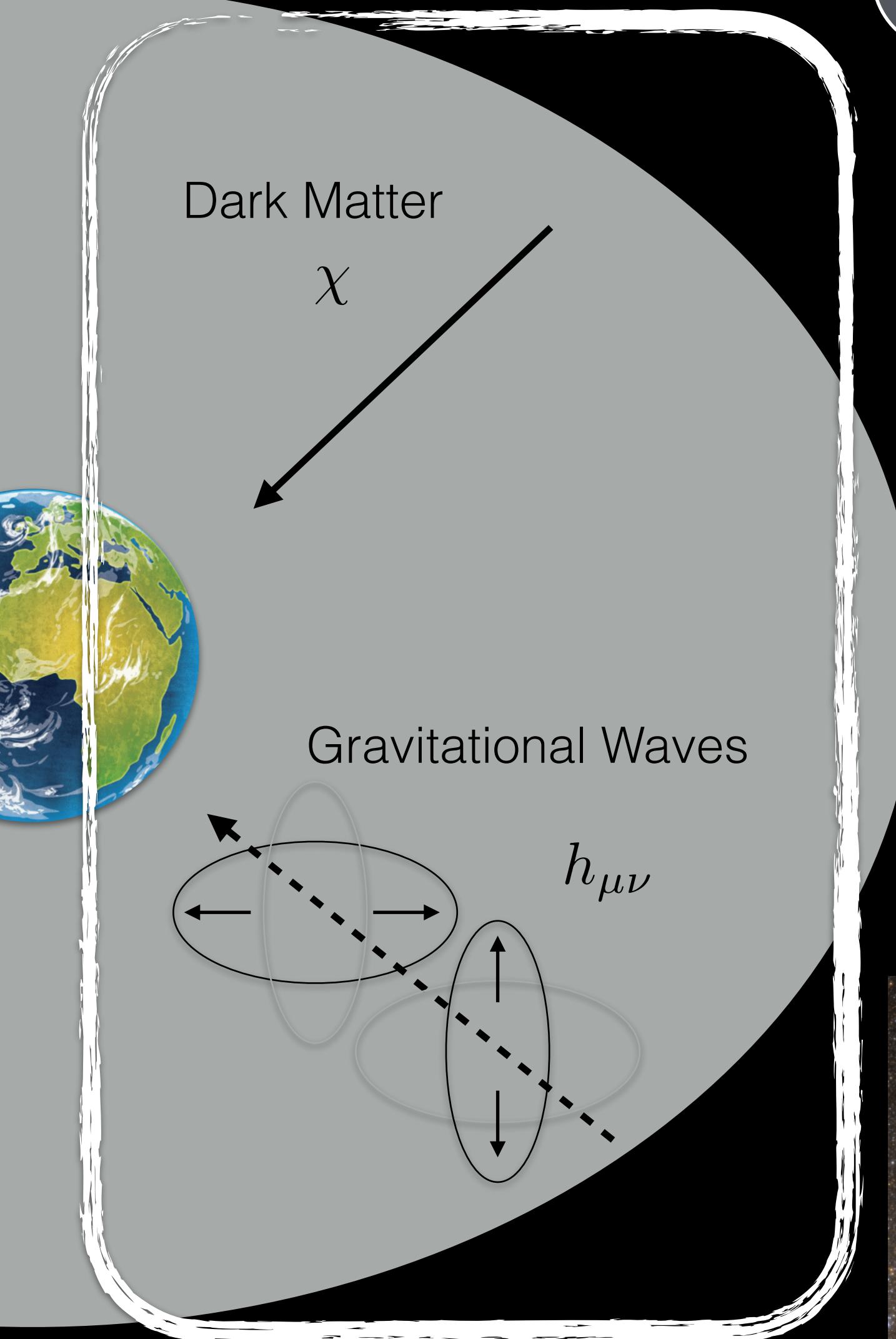
Quasars/AGN



Lecture 1

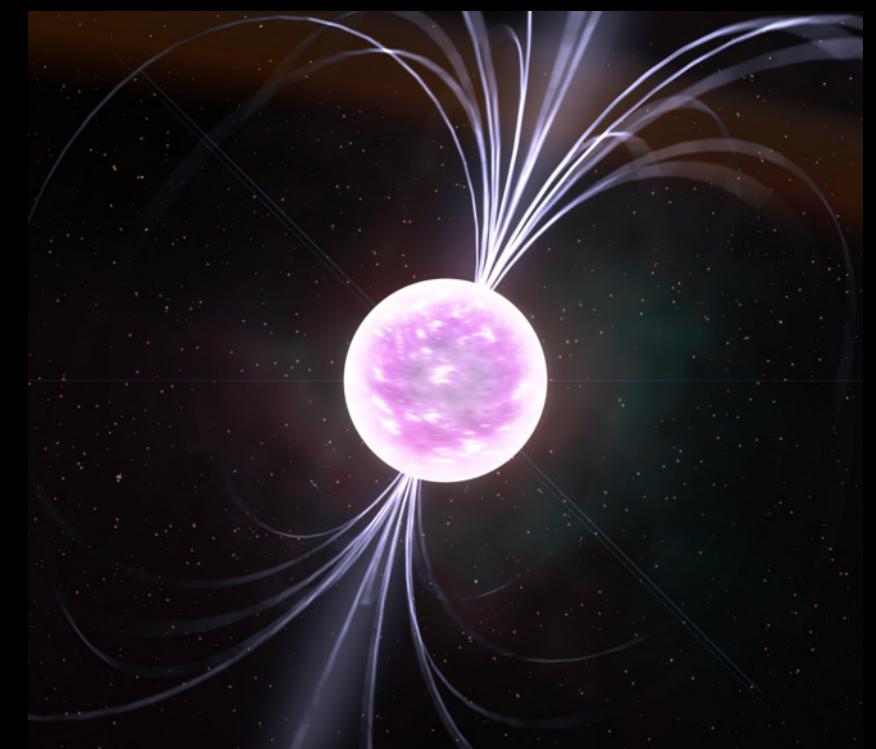


Lecture 2



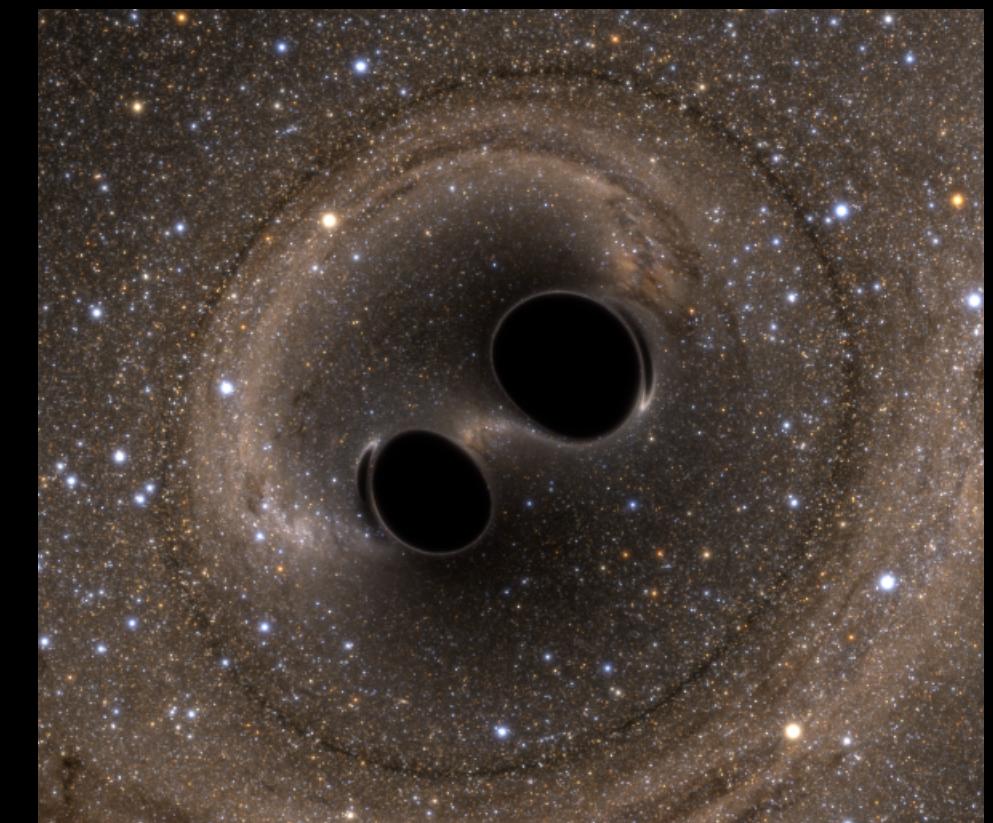
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Pulsars



Credit: Kevin Gill / Flickr

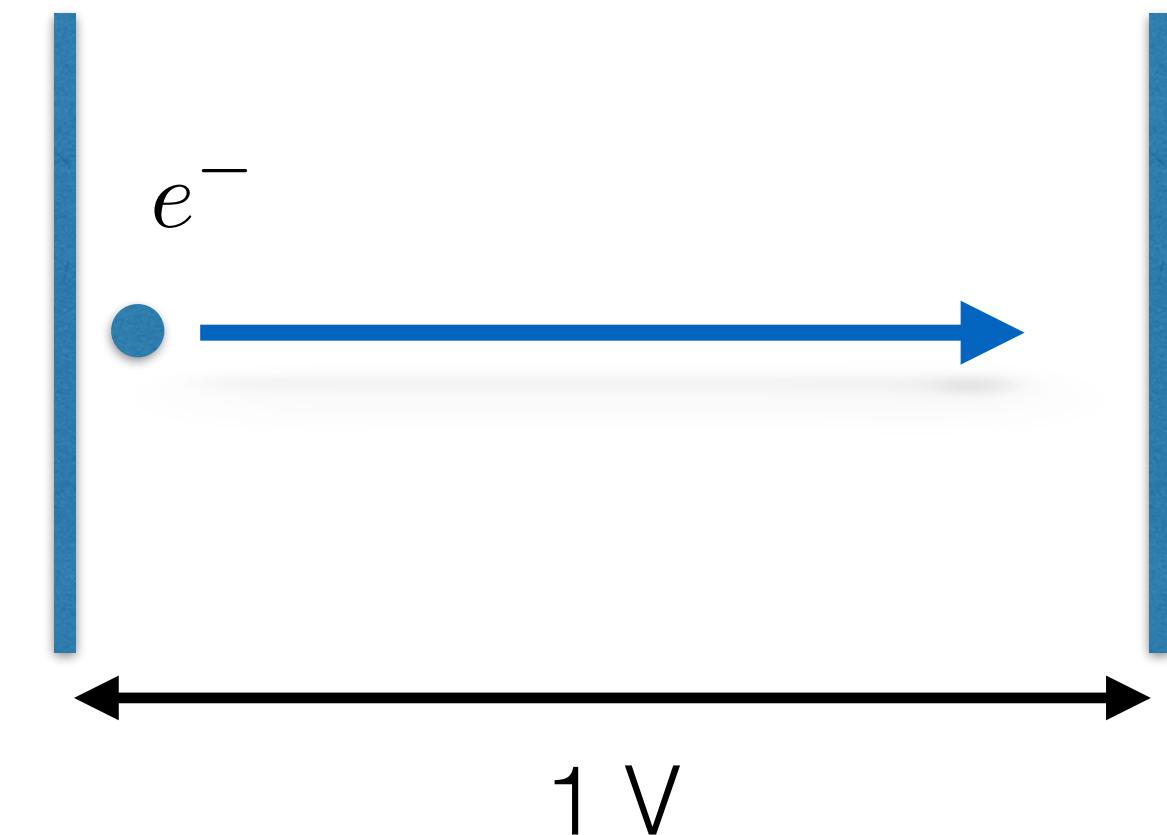
BH/NS Mergers



Credit: SXS Lensing

# A huge range of energy scales...

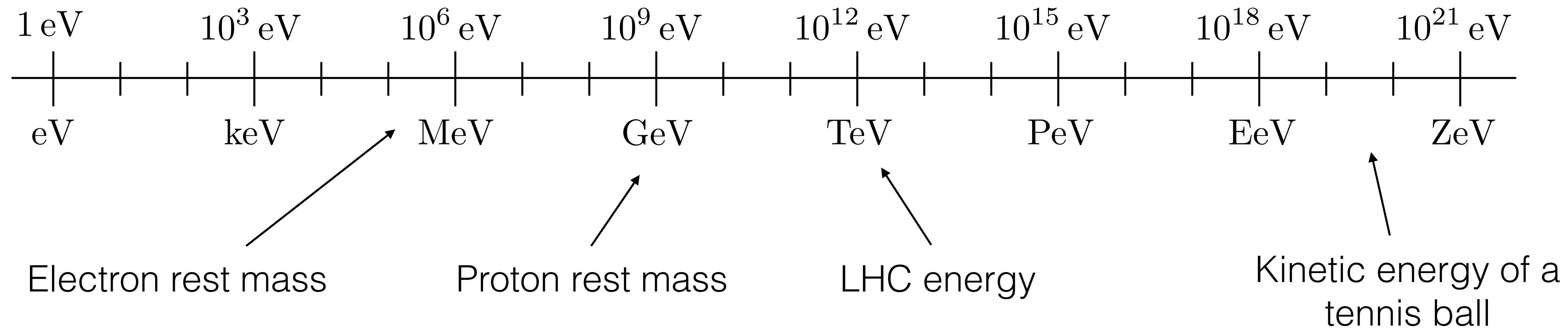
1 eV is the kinetic energy an electron gains from being accelerated across a potential of 1 V



$$1 \text{ eV} \approx 1.6 \times 10^{-19} \text{ J}$$

$$\approx 1.8 \times 10^{-36} \text{ kg}$$

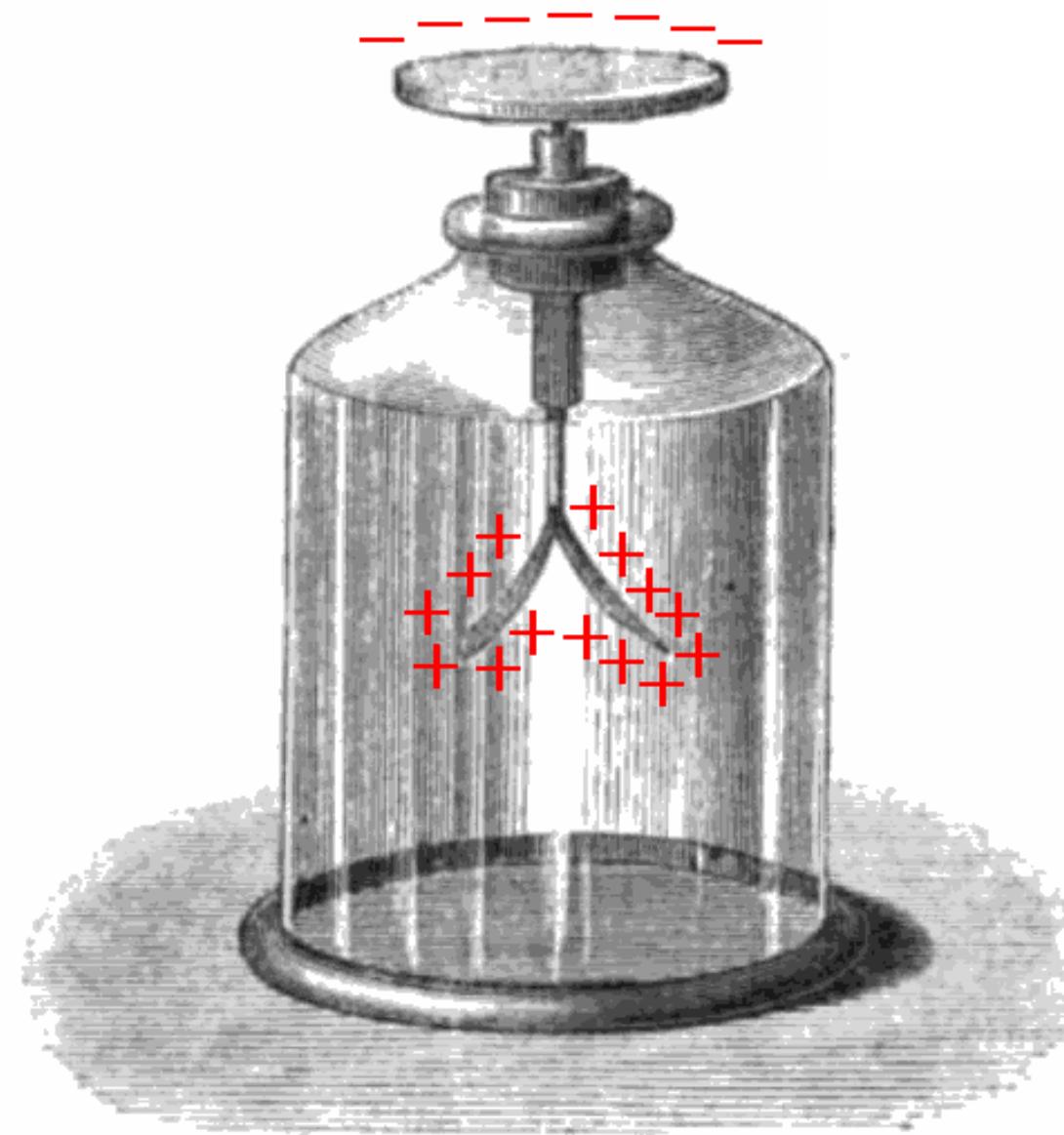
$$\approx 1.2 \times 10^4 \text{ K}$$



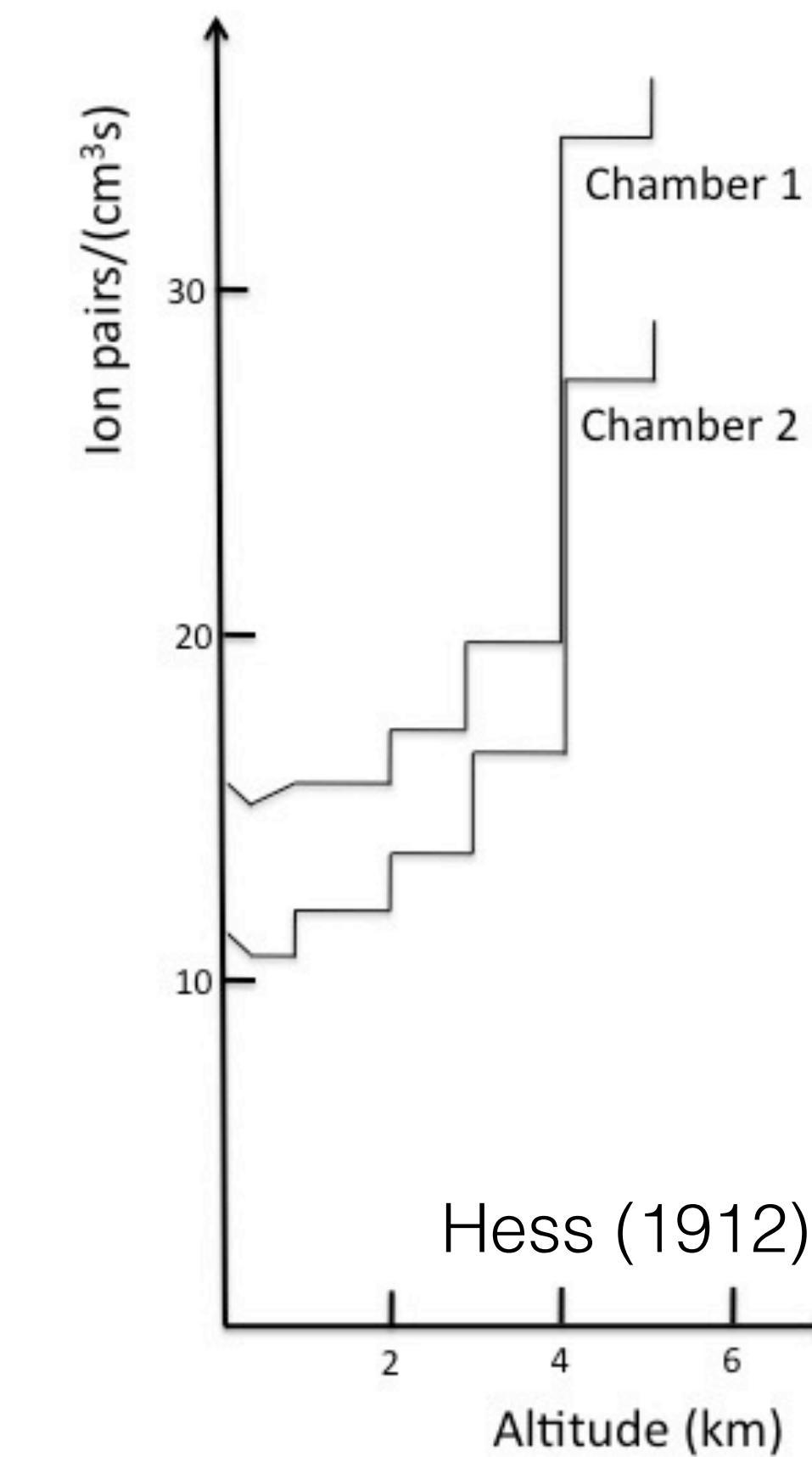
# History of astroparticles



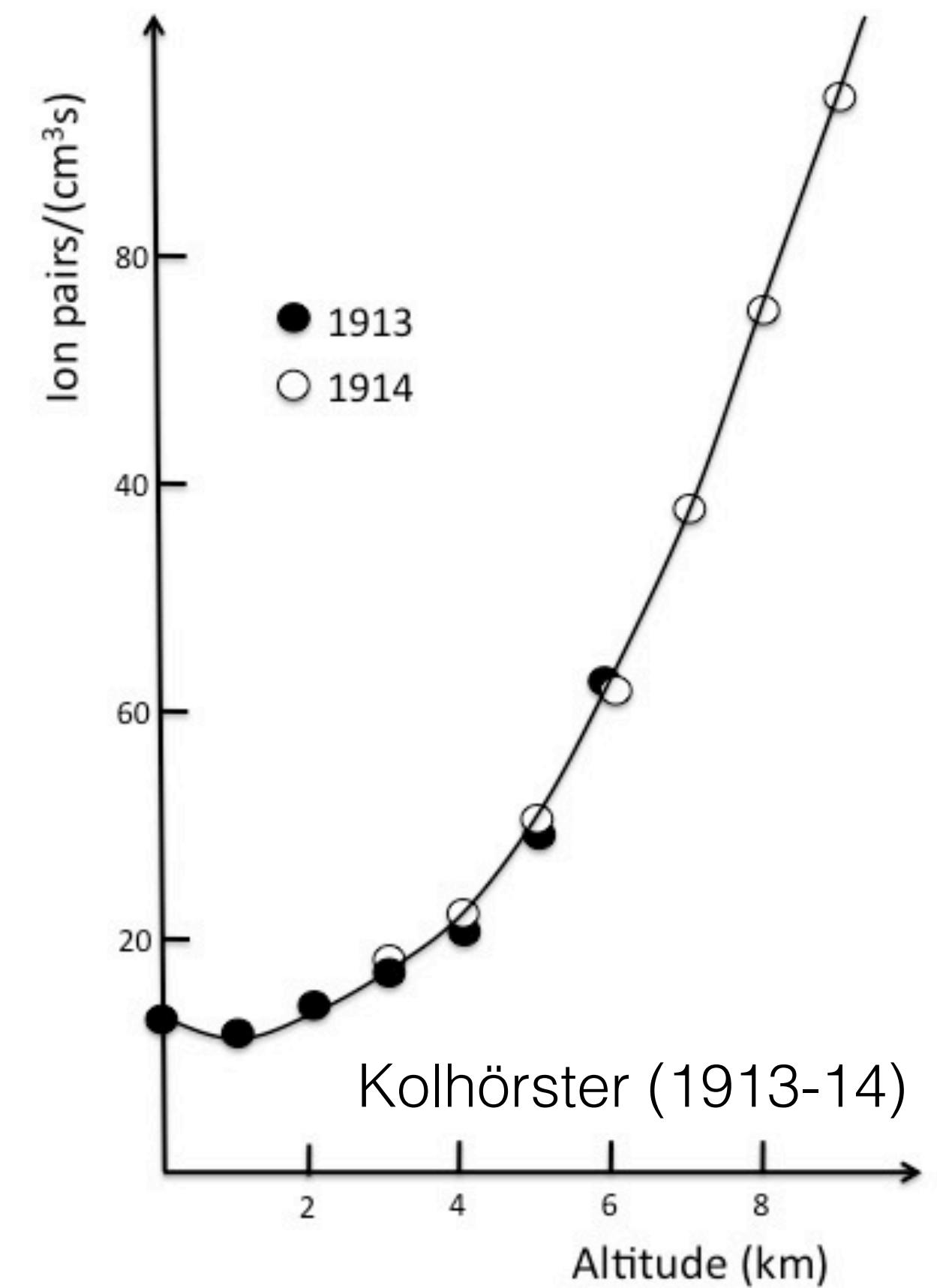
Victor Hess  
(1883 - 1964)



Credit: Sylvanus P. Thompson (1881),  
Chetvorno (2008)



Hess (1912)

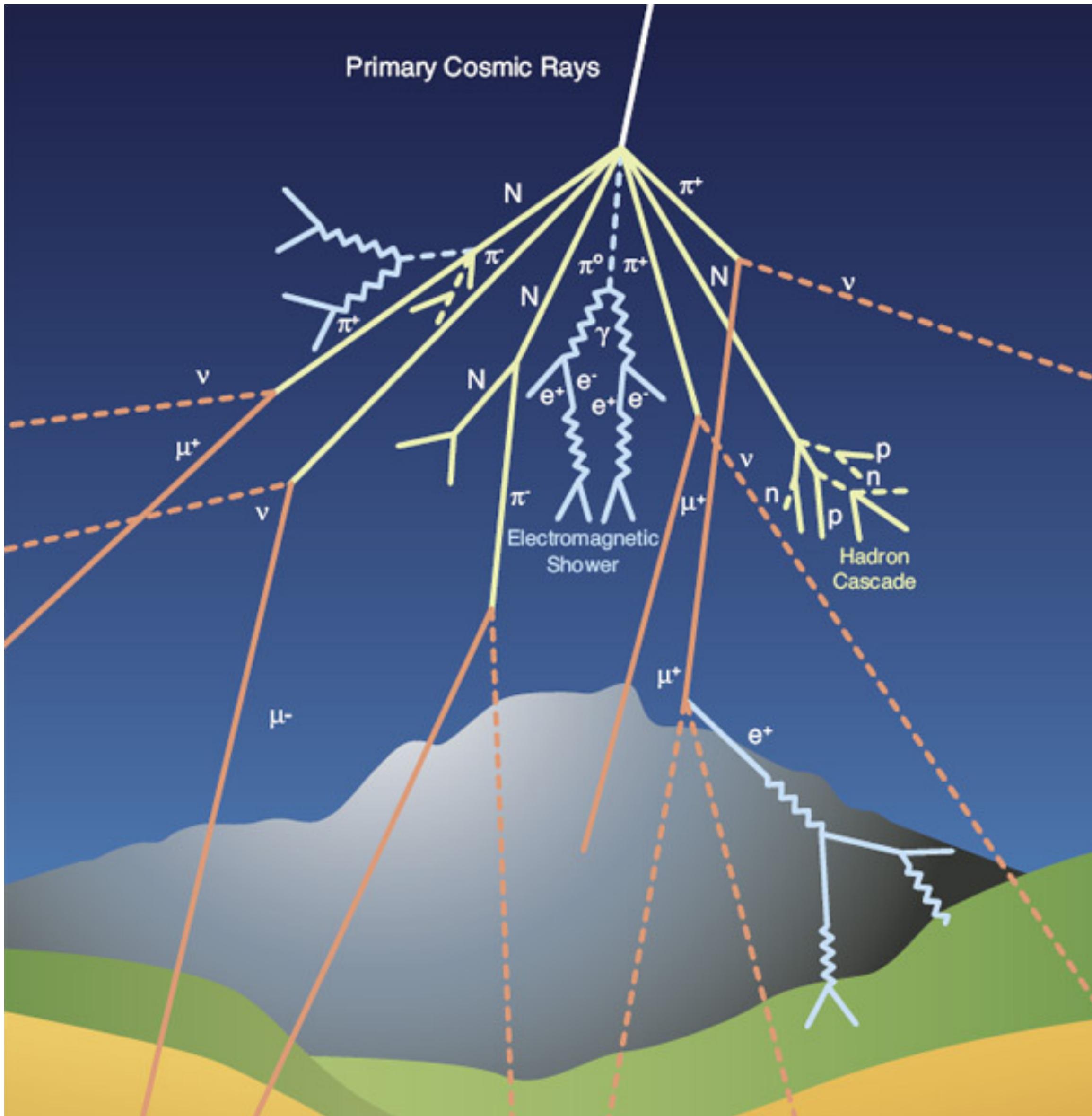


Kolhörster (1913-14)

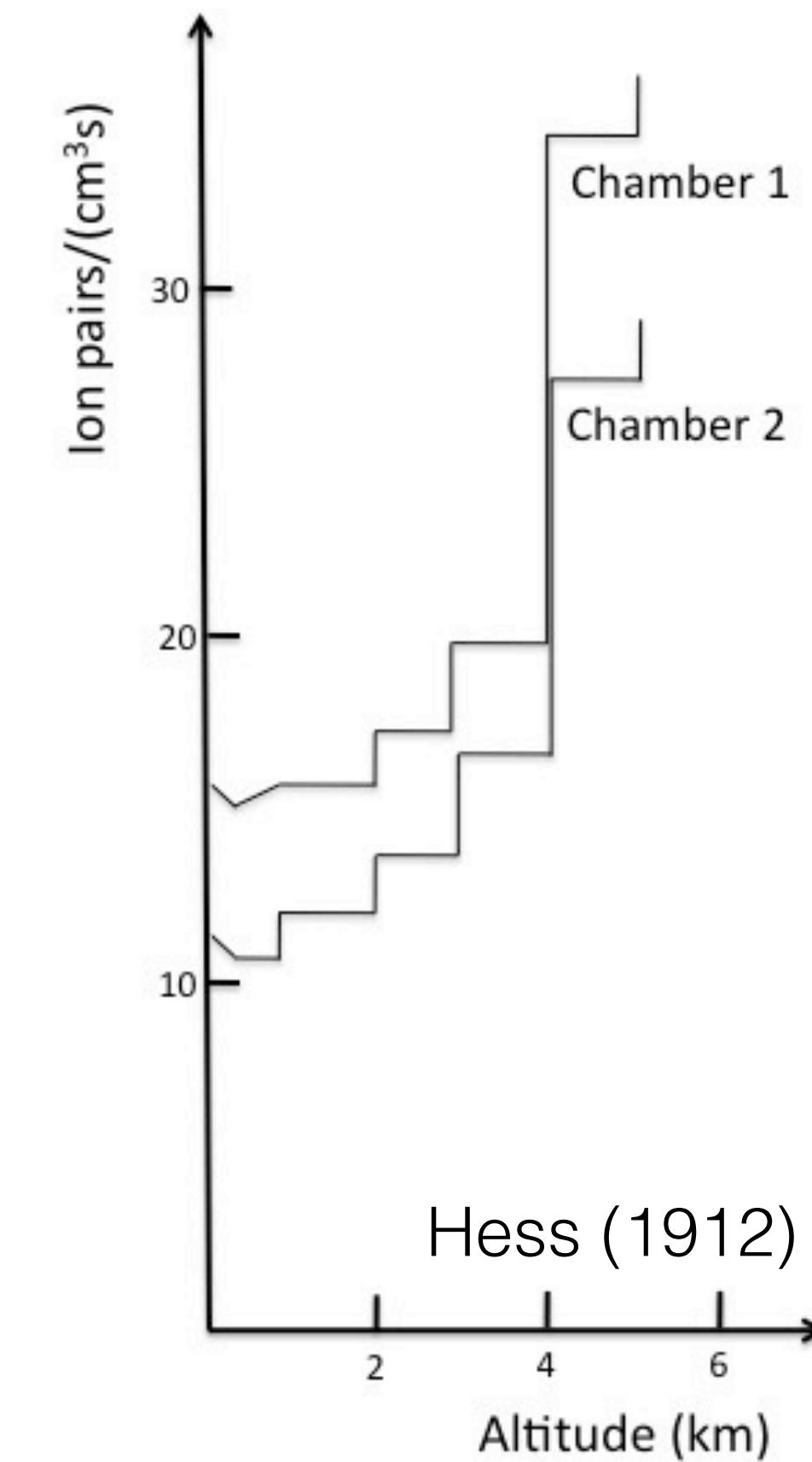
Credit: Alessandro De Angelis

# History of astroparticles

Cosmic Ray “Showers” first understood by Auger at al. (1939)

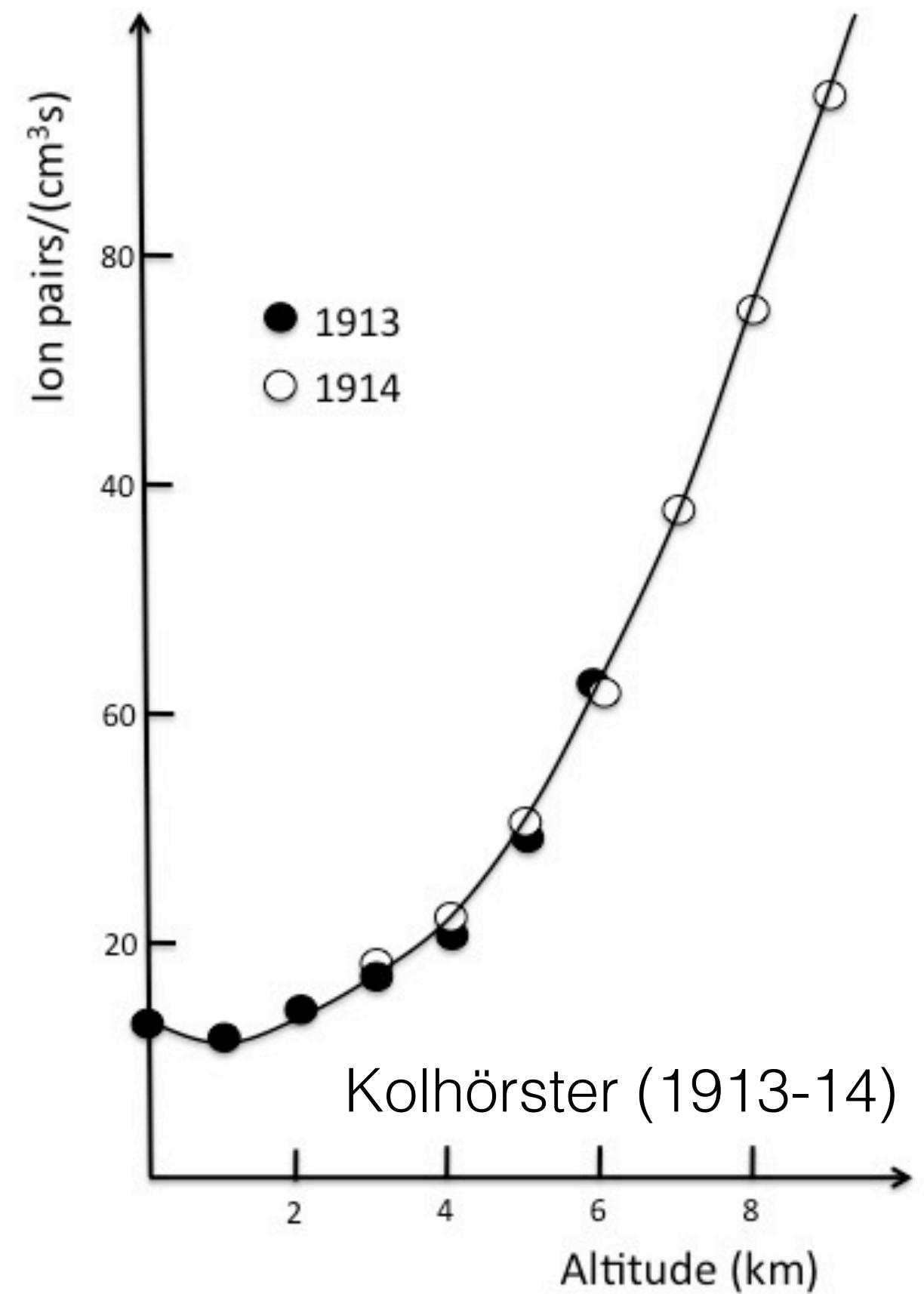


Credit: CERN



Hess (1912)

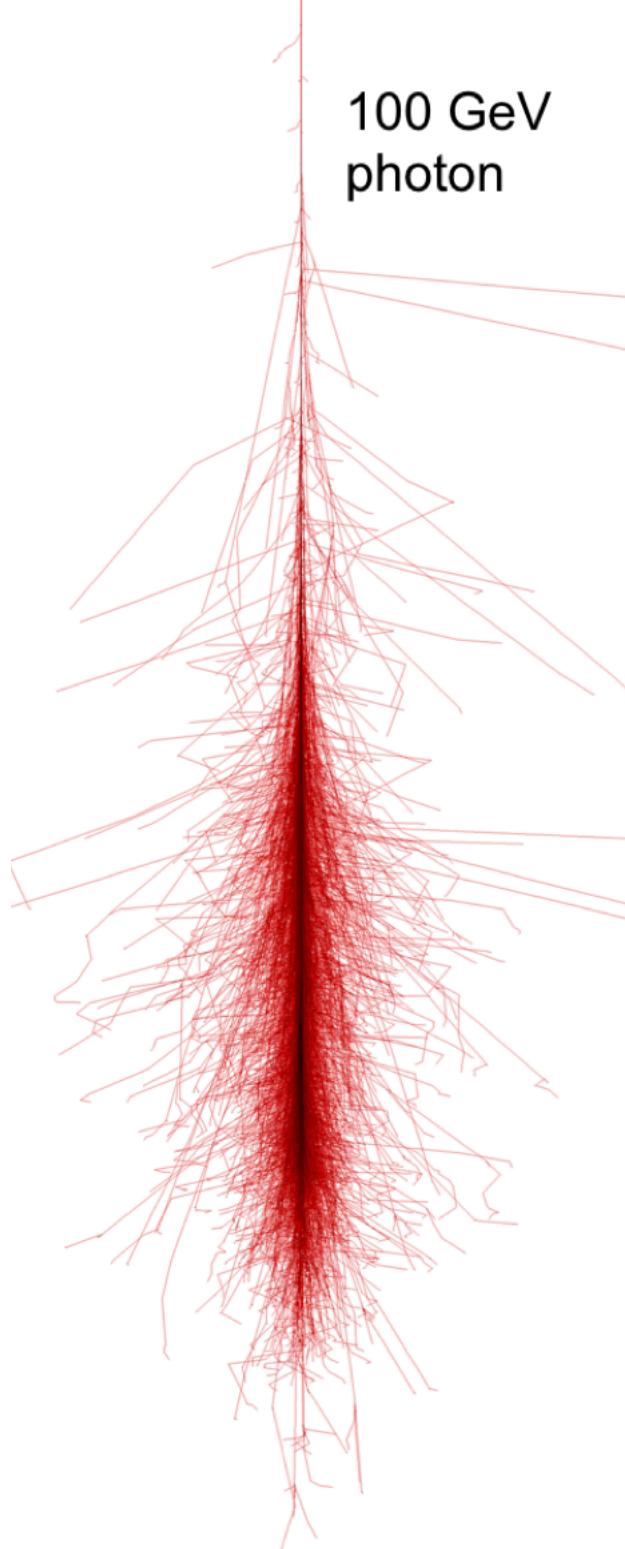
Credit: Alessandro De Angelis



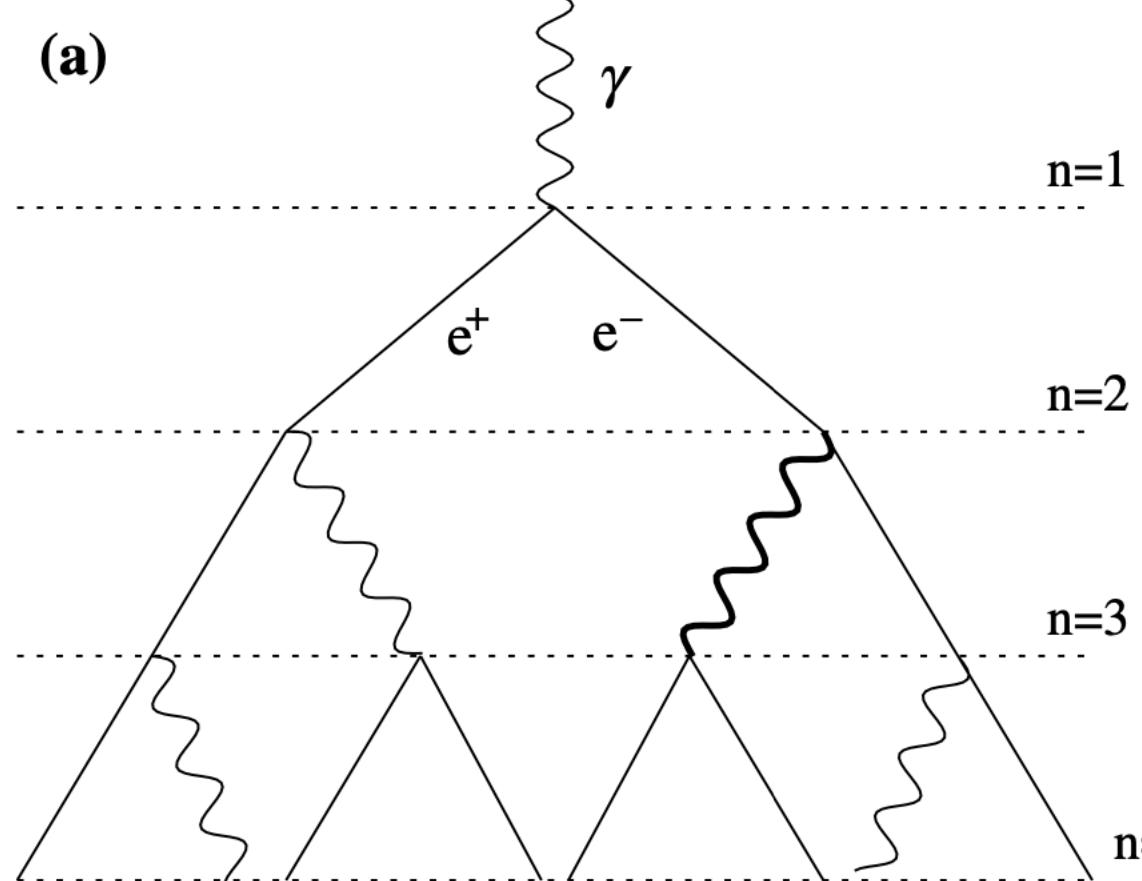
Kolhörster (1913-14)

# Gamma rays vs Charged Cosmic rays

## Gamma Rays



$$E_n = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^n E_0^\gamma$$



## Protons/nuclei

$$E_{\text{had}} = \left(\frac{2}{3}\right)^n E_0^p$$

$$E_{\text{em}} = \left[1 - \left(\frac{2}{3}\right)^n\right] E_0^p$$

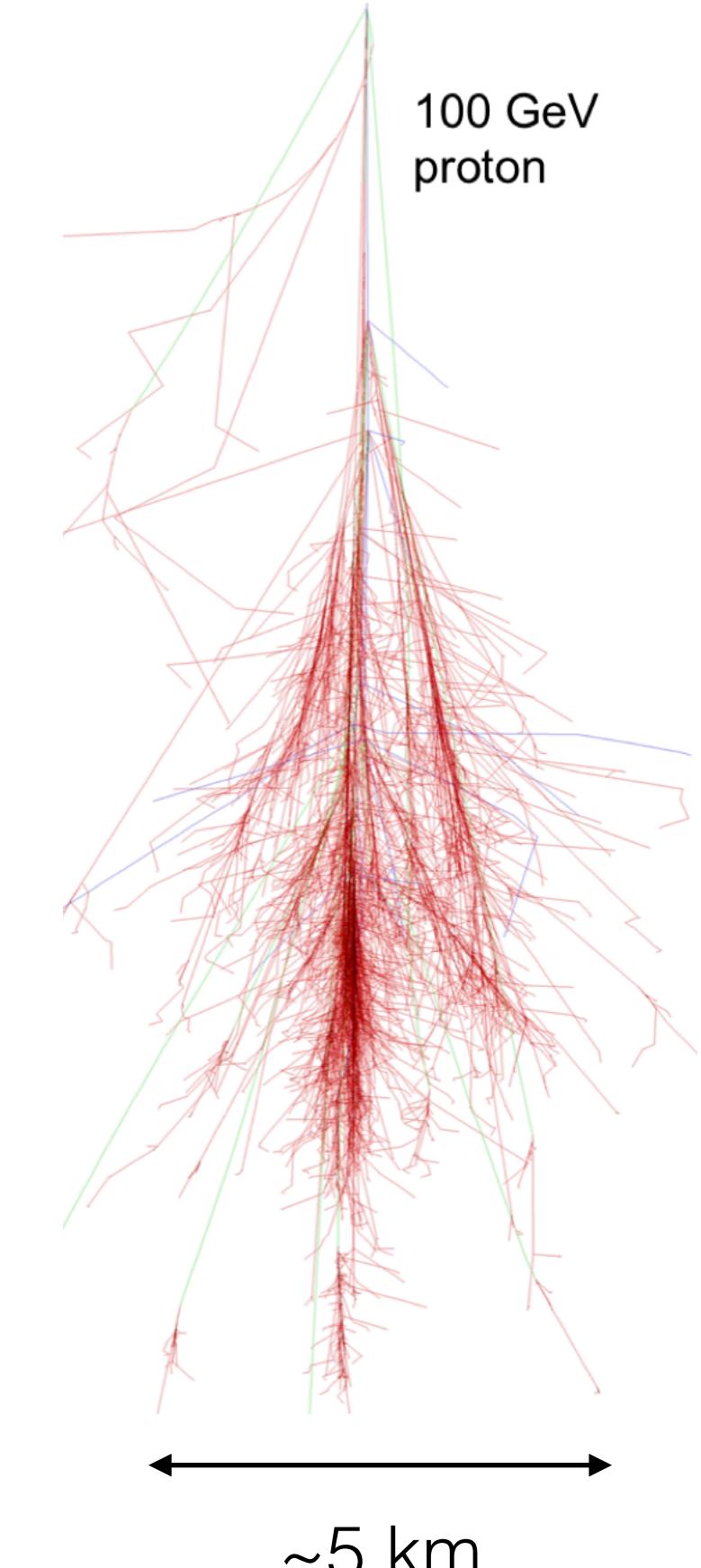
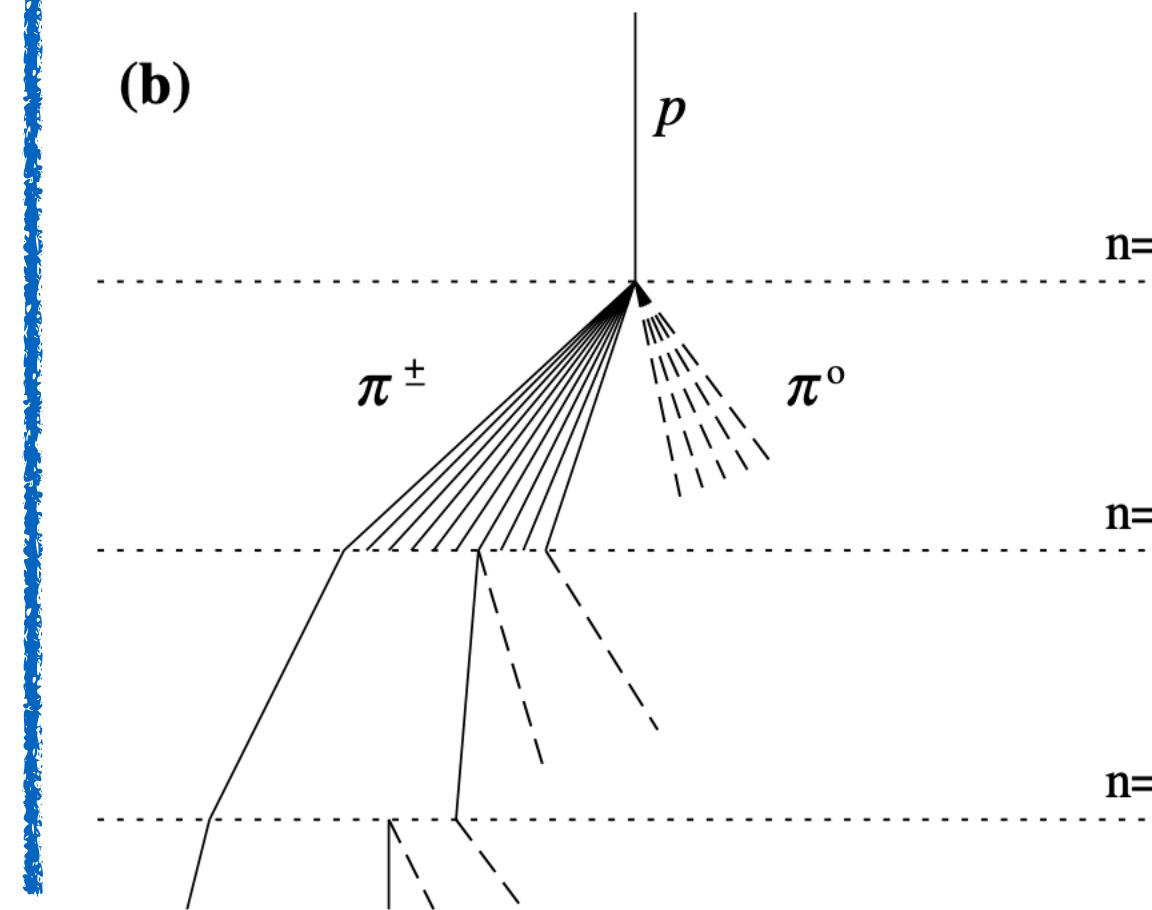
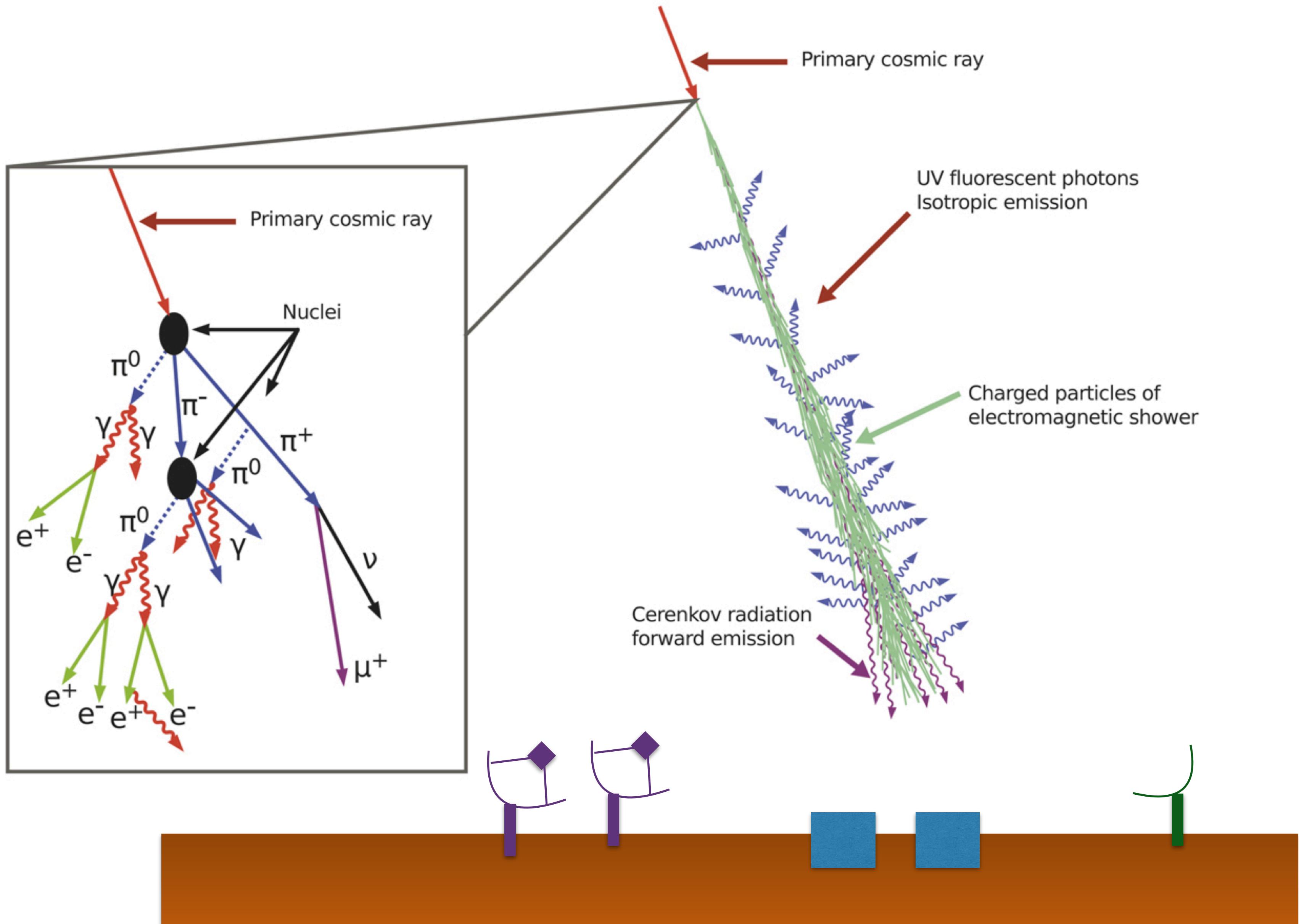


Fig. 1. Schematic views of (a) an electromagnetic cascade and (b) a hadronic shower. In the hadron shower, dashed lines indicate neutral pions which do not re-interact, but quickly decay, yielding electromagnetic subshowers (not shown). Not all pion lines are shown after the  $n = 2$  level. Neither diagram is to scale.

[1510.05675](#)

Credit: [Matthews \(2005\)](#)

# Detection of cosmic rays (Earth)



Fluorescence

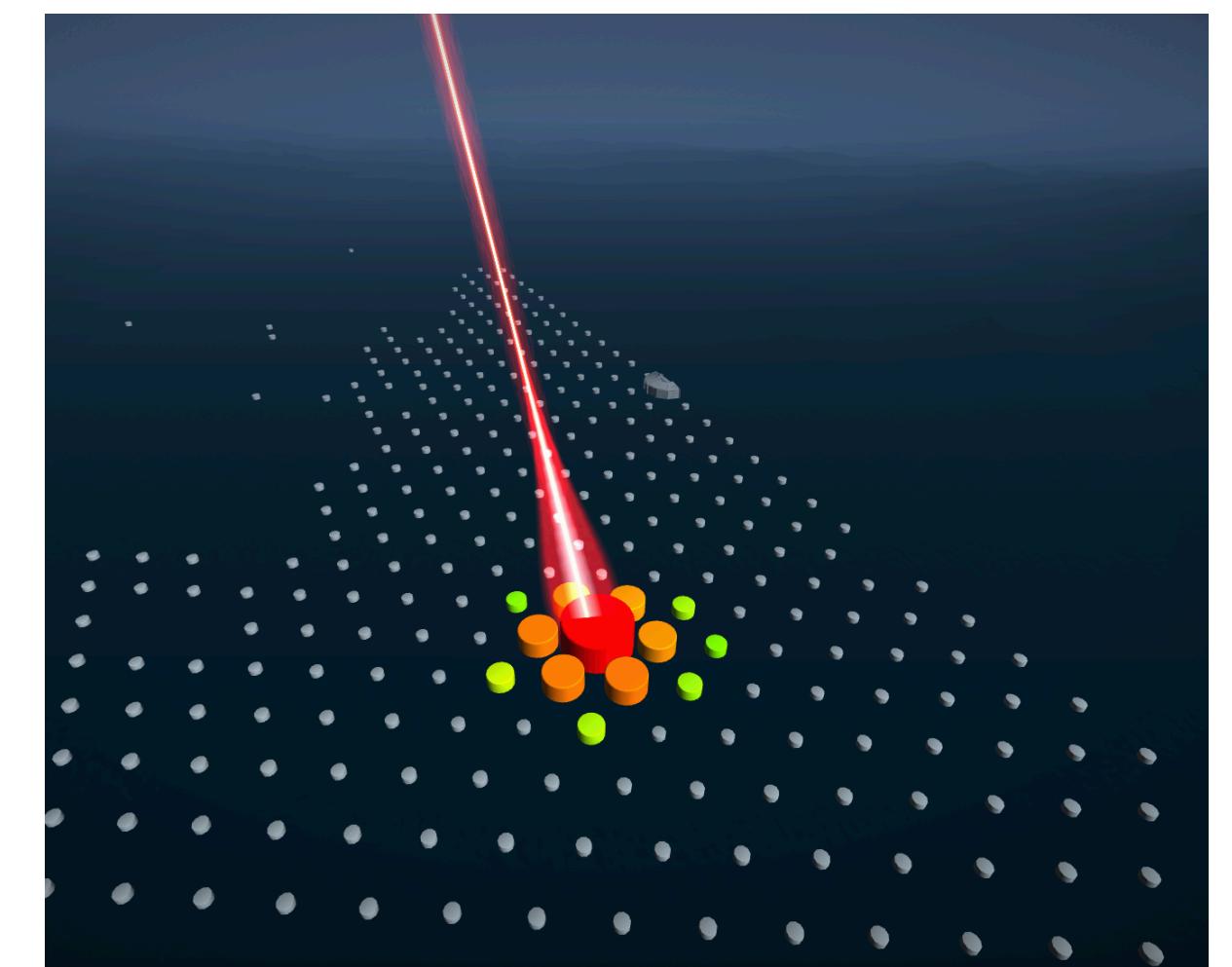
(e.g. Fly's Eye, Auger observatory)

Imaging Air Cherenkov Telescope (IACT)

(e.g. MAGIC, VERITAS, HESS, planned CTA)

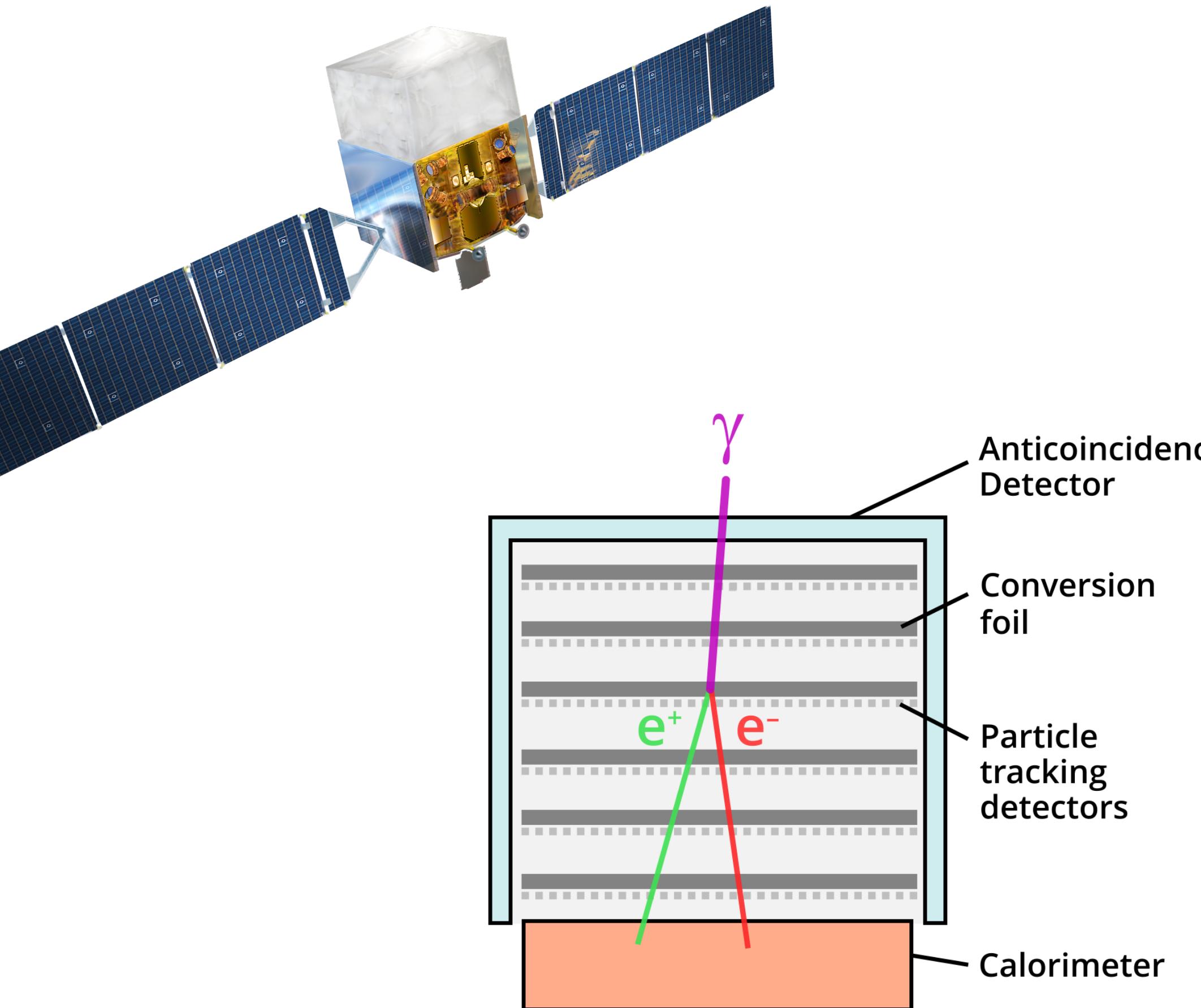
Ground array and Water Cherenkov detectors

(e.g. KASCADE-GRANDE, MILAGRO, HAWC)



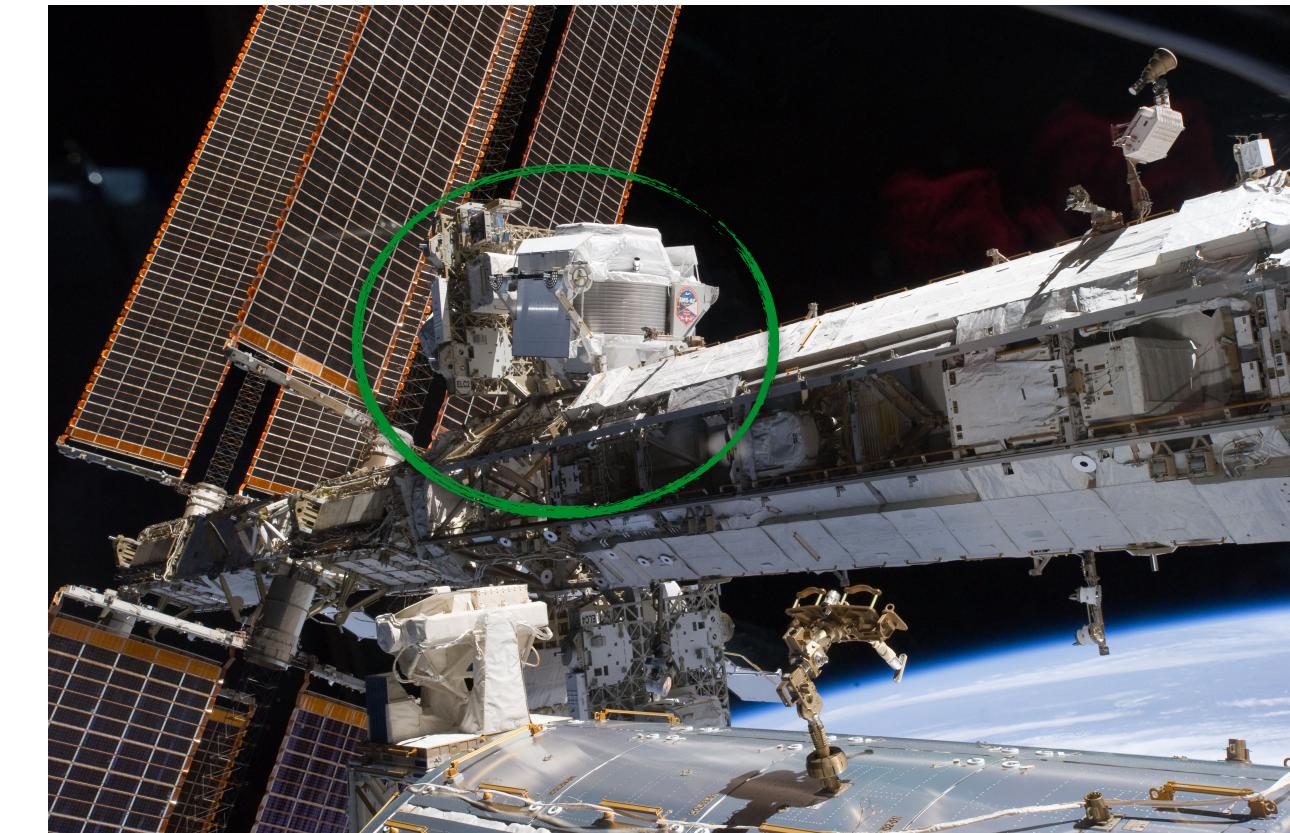
# Detection of cosmic rays (Space)

Fermi-LAT (2008-)

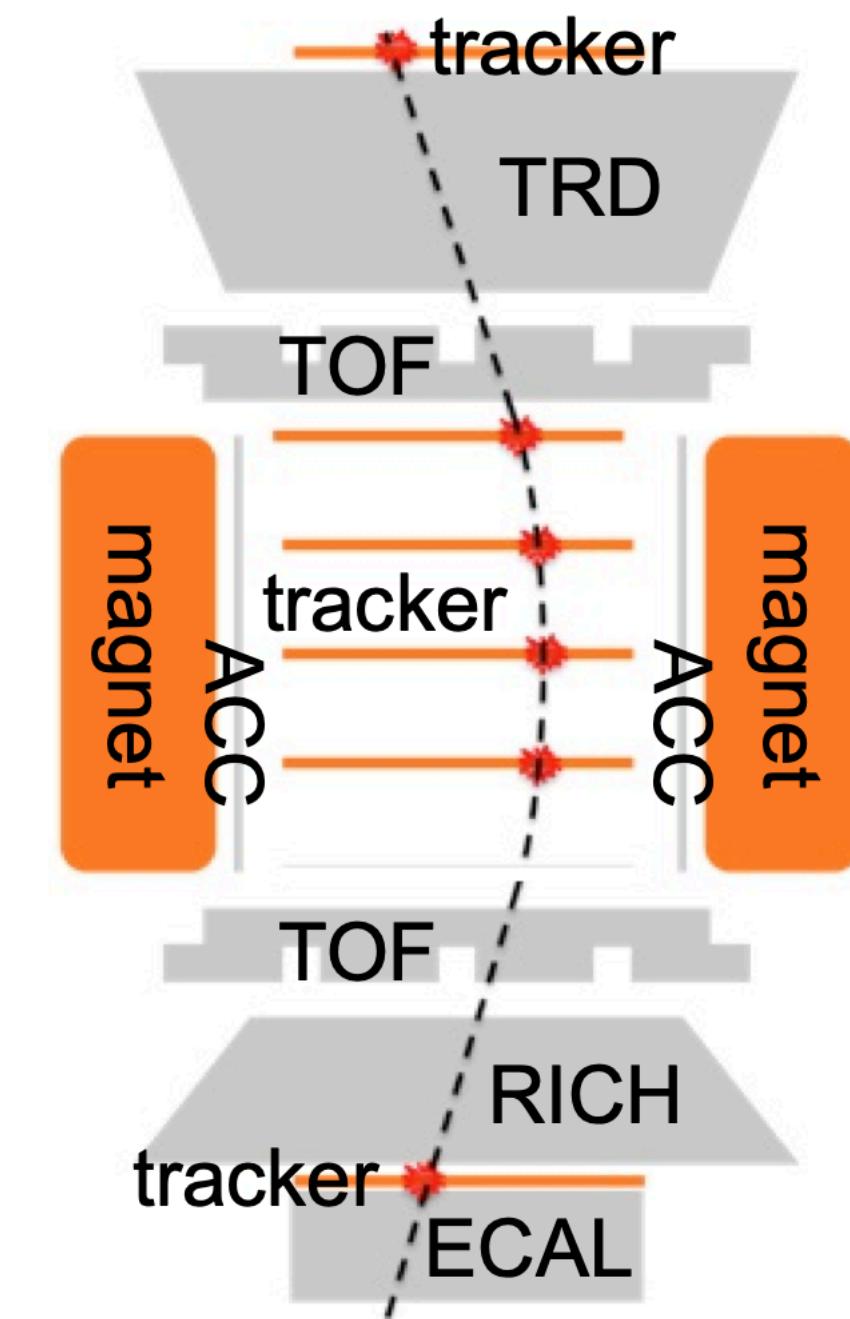


Credit: NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

Detection of gamma-rays  
in the range 20 MeV - 300 GeV



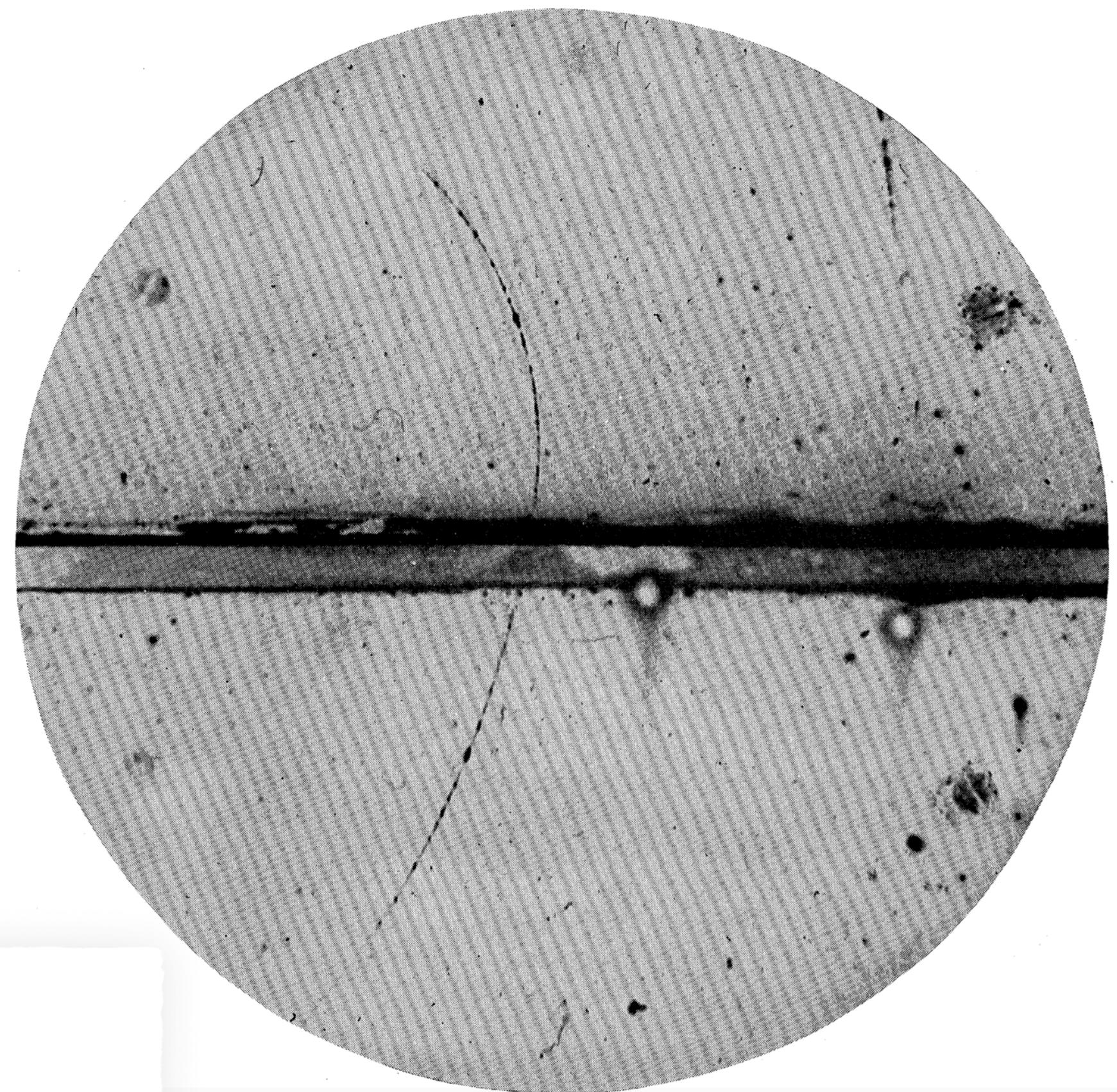
AMS (2011-)



[1507.02712](#)

Detection of  $e^\pm$ ,  $p^\pm$  and heavier nuclei  
in the range 1 GeV - 2 TeV

# The Positive Electron



## The Positive Electron

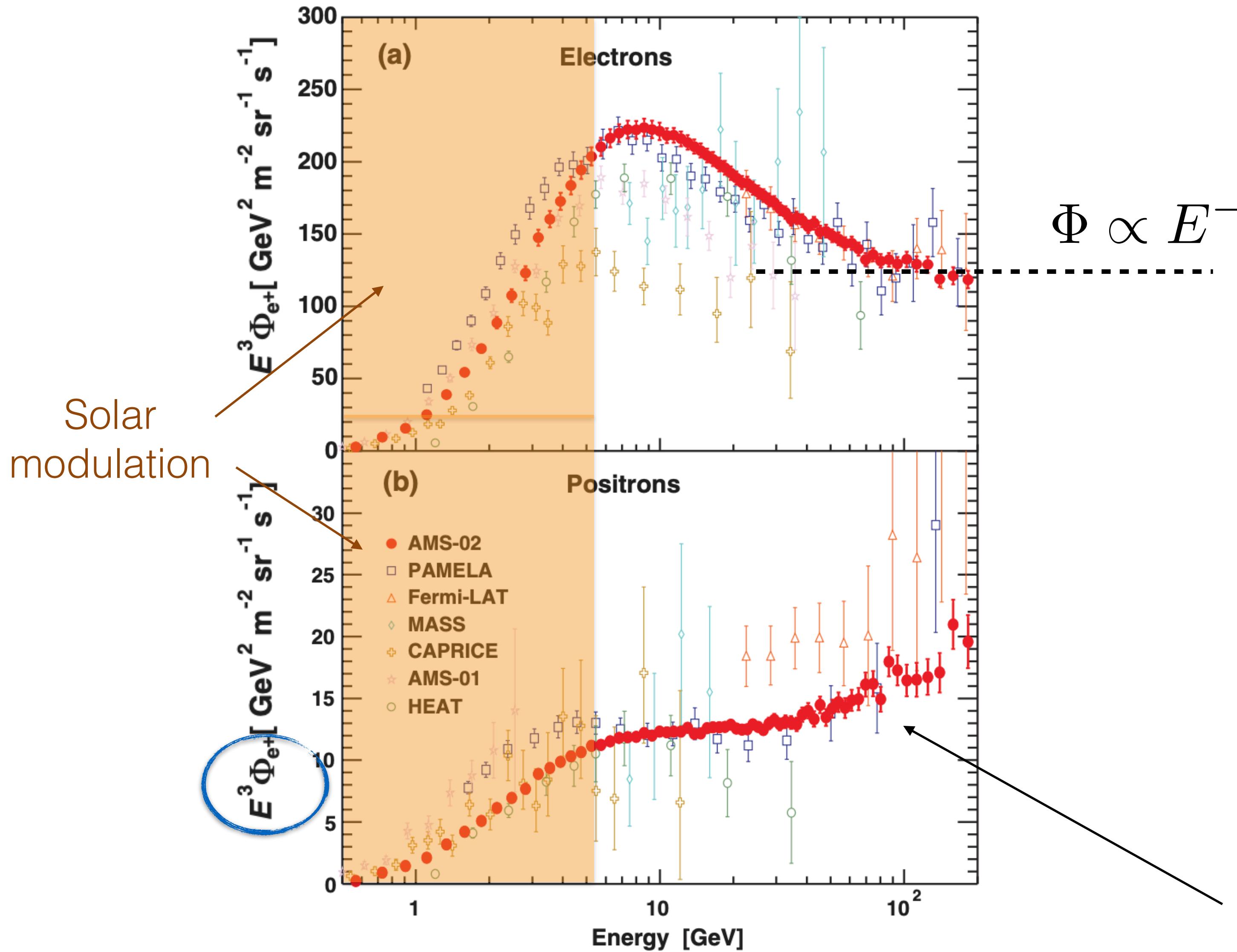
CARL D. ANDERSON, *California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California*  
(Received February 28, 1933)

Out of a group of 1300 photographs of cosmic-ray tracks in a vertical Wilson chamber 15 tracks were of positive particles which could not have a mass as great as that of the proton. From an examination of the energy-loss and ionization produced it is concluded that the charge is less than twice, and is probably exactly equal to, that of the proton. If these particles carry unit positive charge the

curvatures and ionizations produced require the mass to be less than twenty times the electron mass. These particles will be called positrons. Because they occur in groups associated with other tracks it is concluded that they must be secondary particles ejected from atomic nuclei.

*Editor*

# Electrons vs Positrons



Electrons can be directly accelerated  
(i.e. **primary cosmic rays**)

Positrons are only produced by the  
collisions of other cosmic rays  
(i.e. **secondary cosmic rays**)

Expect different spectra. But, rise in  
positron flux at high energy is still not yet  
understood (“positron excess”)!  
E.g. [1303.0530](#)

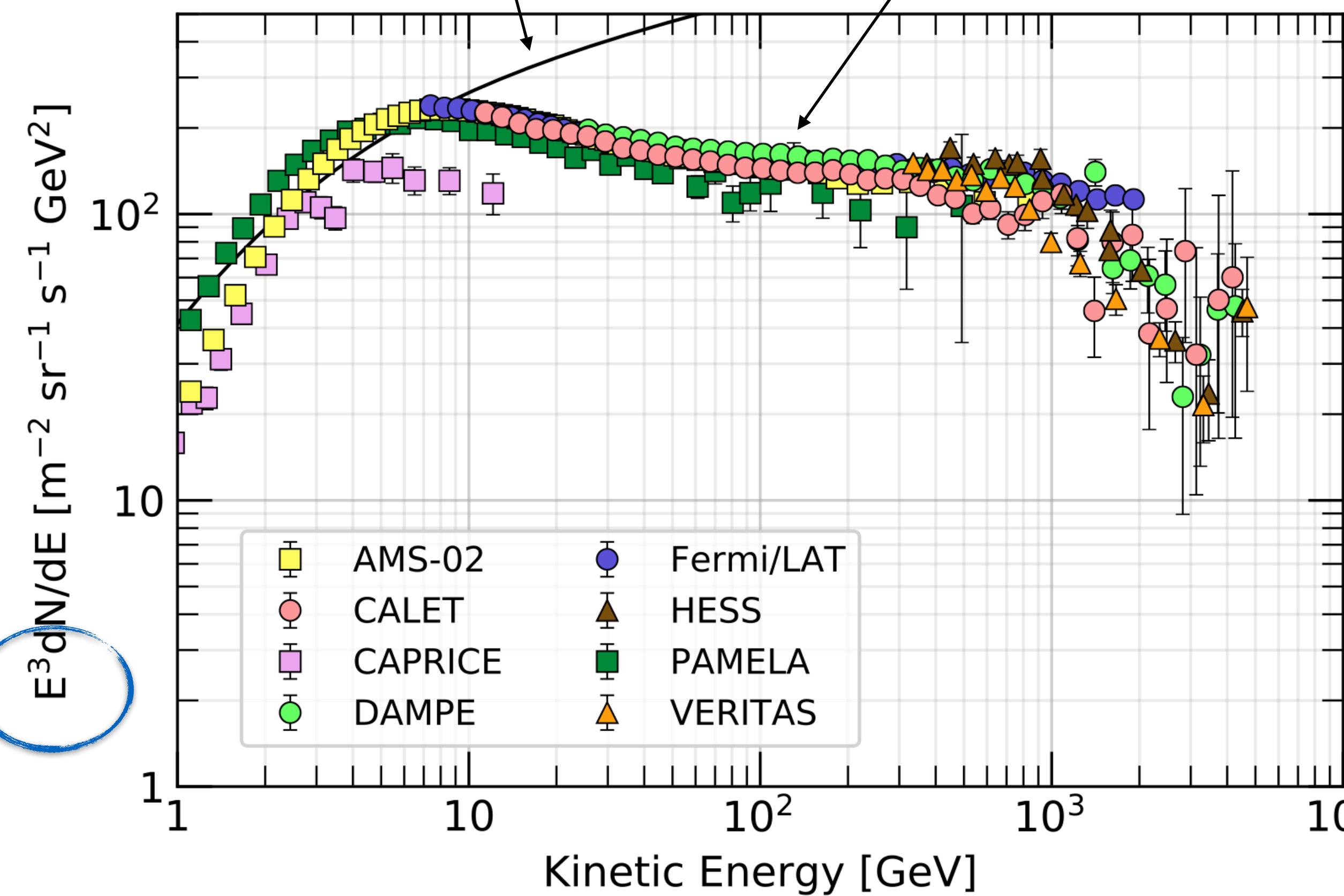
Credit: M. Aguilar et al. (AMS Collaboration), 2014

# Electrons vs Protons

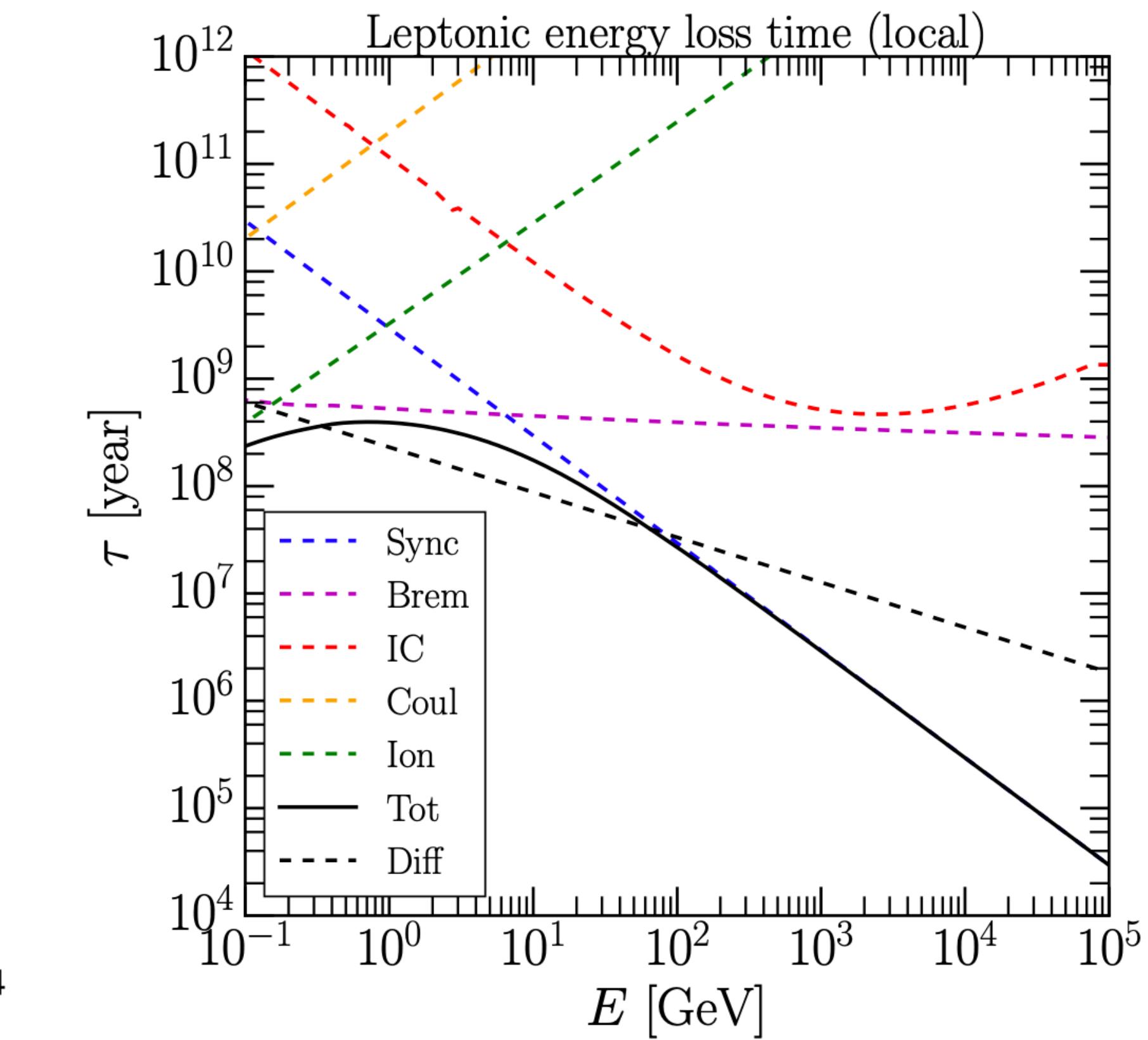
Proton Spectrum (x0.01)

Electron + Positron Spectrum

Electrons and positrons lose energy much more rapidly (than nuclei) as they move through the Galaxy



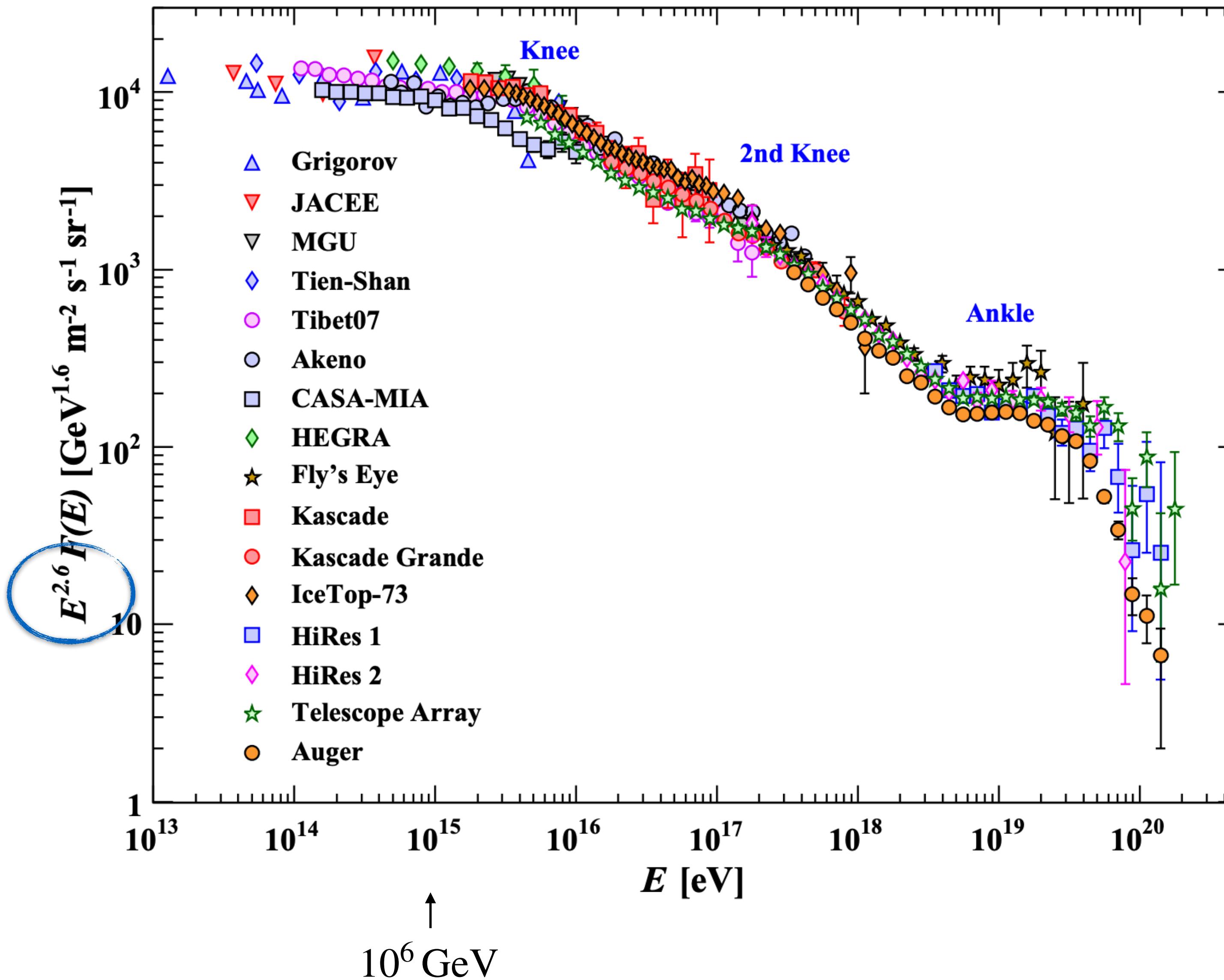
Credit: [Particle Data Group \(2020\)](#)



See e.g. Appendix C of [1607.07886](#)

# Ultra high-energy cosmic rays

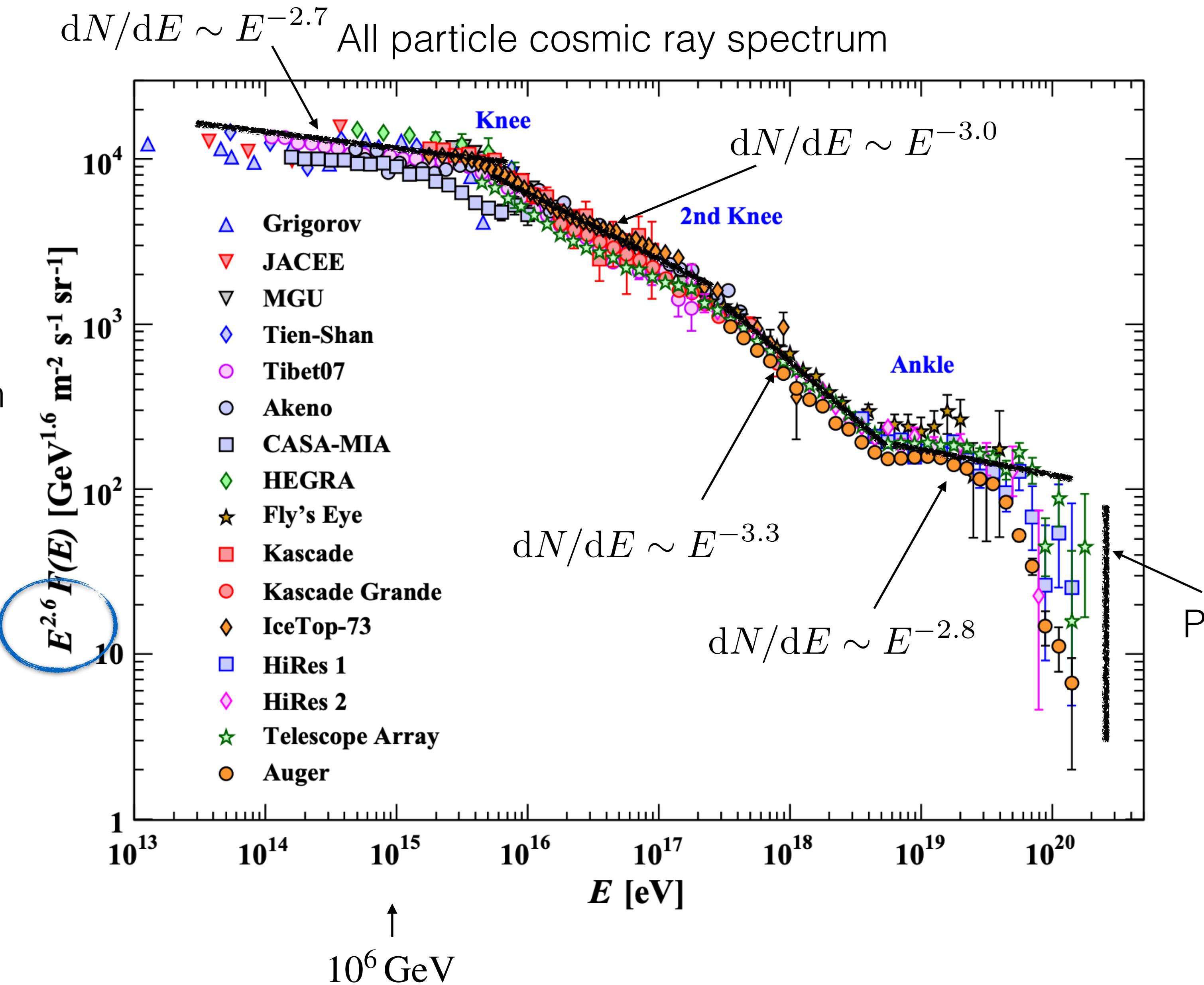
All particle cosmic ray spectrum



Credit: Particle Data Group (2020)

# Ultra high-energy cosmic rays

Heavier nuclei begin to dominate above the 2nd knee.

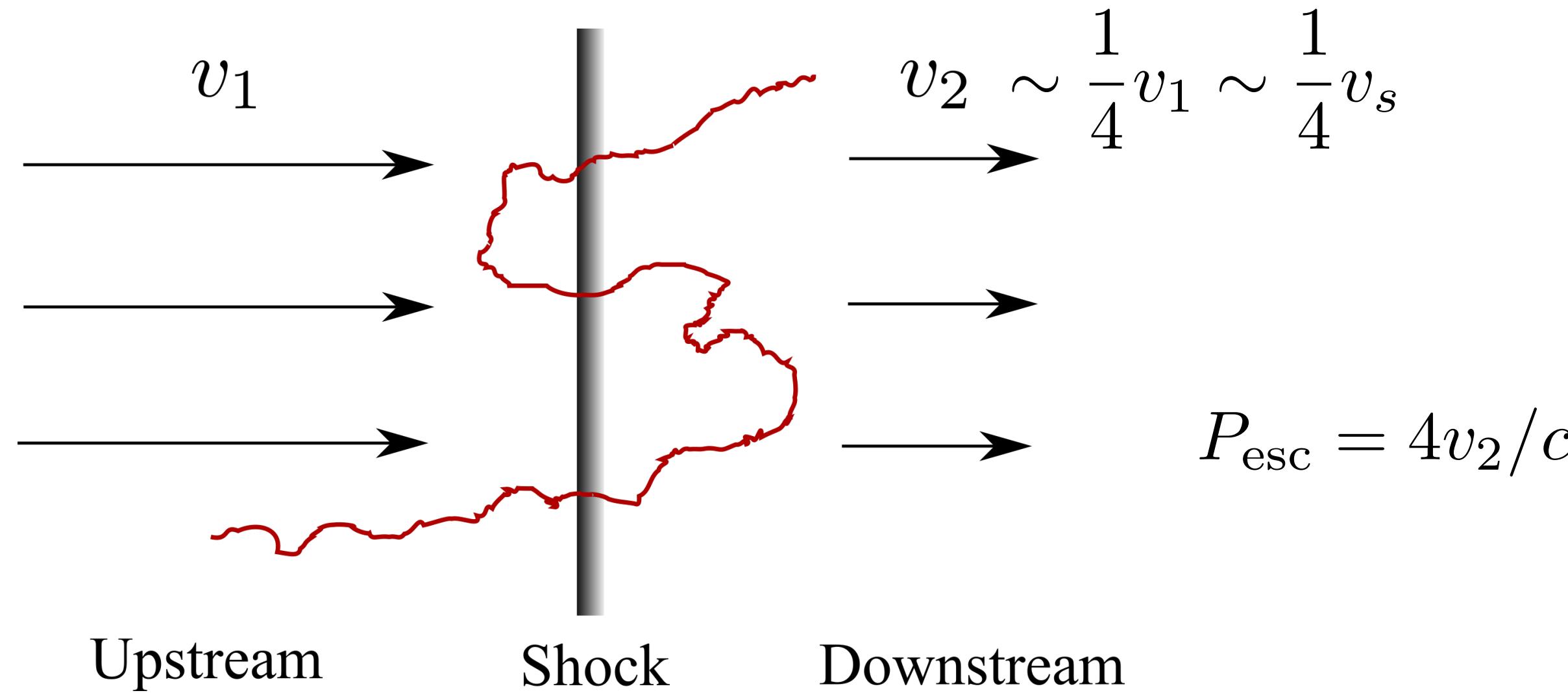


Extragalactic CRs begin to dominate above the ankle.

# Production of cosmic rays

Tycho Supernova remnant

Diffusive shock acceleration (or **Fermi Acceleration**)



$$P_{\text{esc}} = 4v_2/c$$

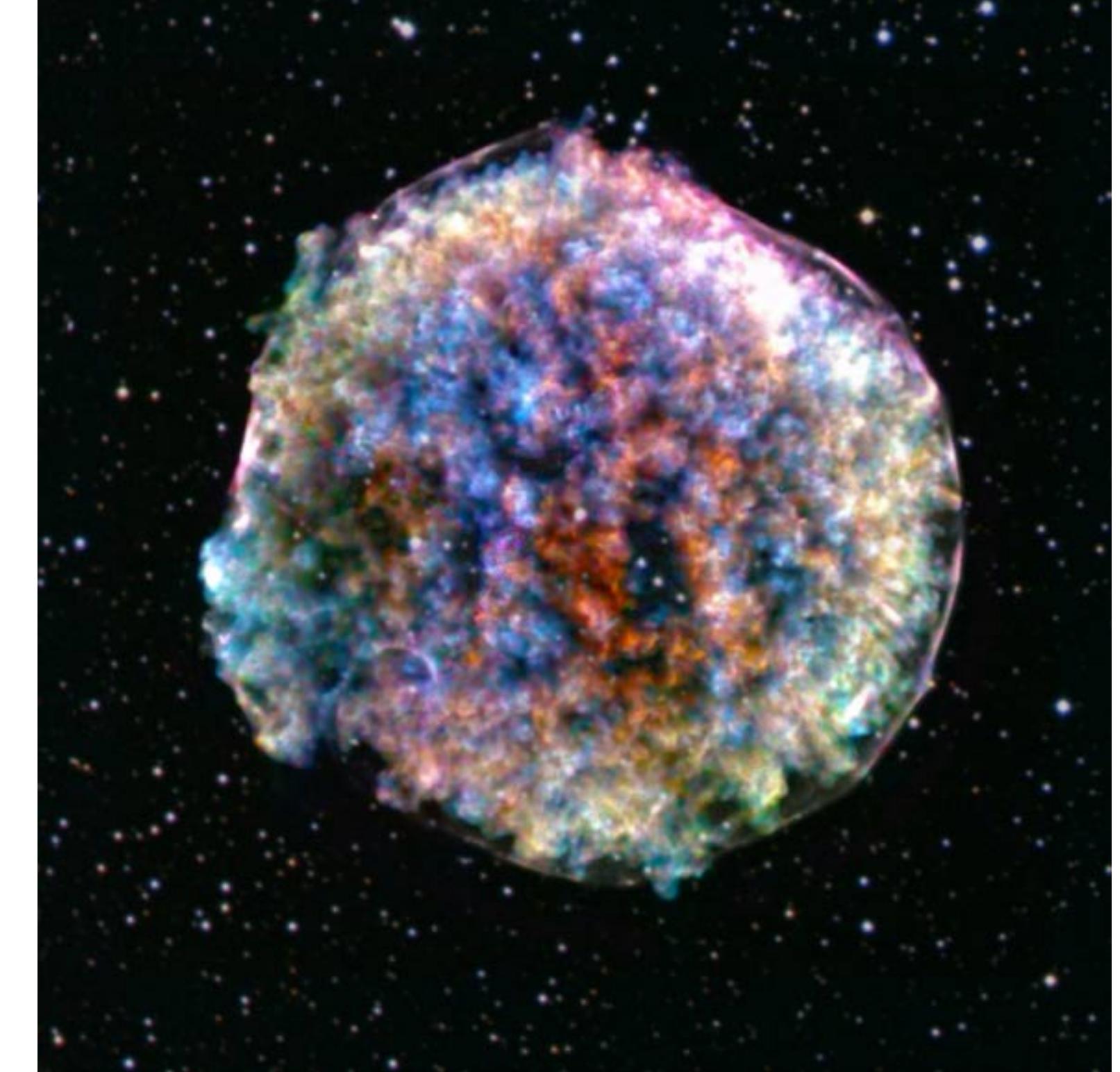
With each crossing:  $\xi = \left\langle \frac{\Delta E}{E} \right\rangle = \frac{4}{3} \frac{v_1 - v_2}{c}$

After  $n$  crossings:  $E_n = (1 + \xi)^n E_0$

Fraction of particles above a given energy:  $f(E > E_n) = \sum_{m=n}^{\infty} (1 - P_{\text{esc}})^m = \left( \frac{E_n}{E_0} \right)^{P_{\text{esc}}/\xi}$

→ Injected flux of particles:  $\frac{dN_{\text{inj}}}{dE} \propto \frac{df}{dE} = \left( \frac{E}{E_0} \right)^{-2}$

E.g. [1910.06006](#)

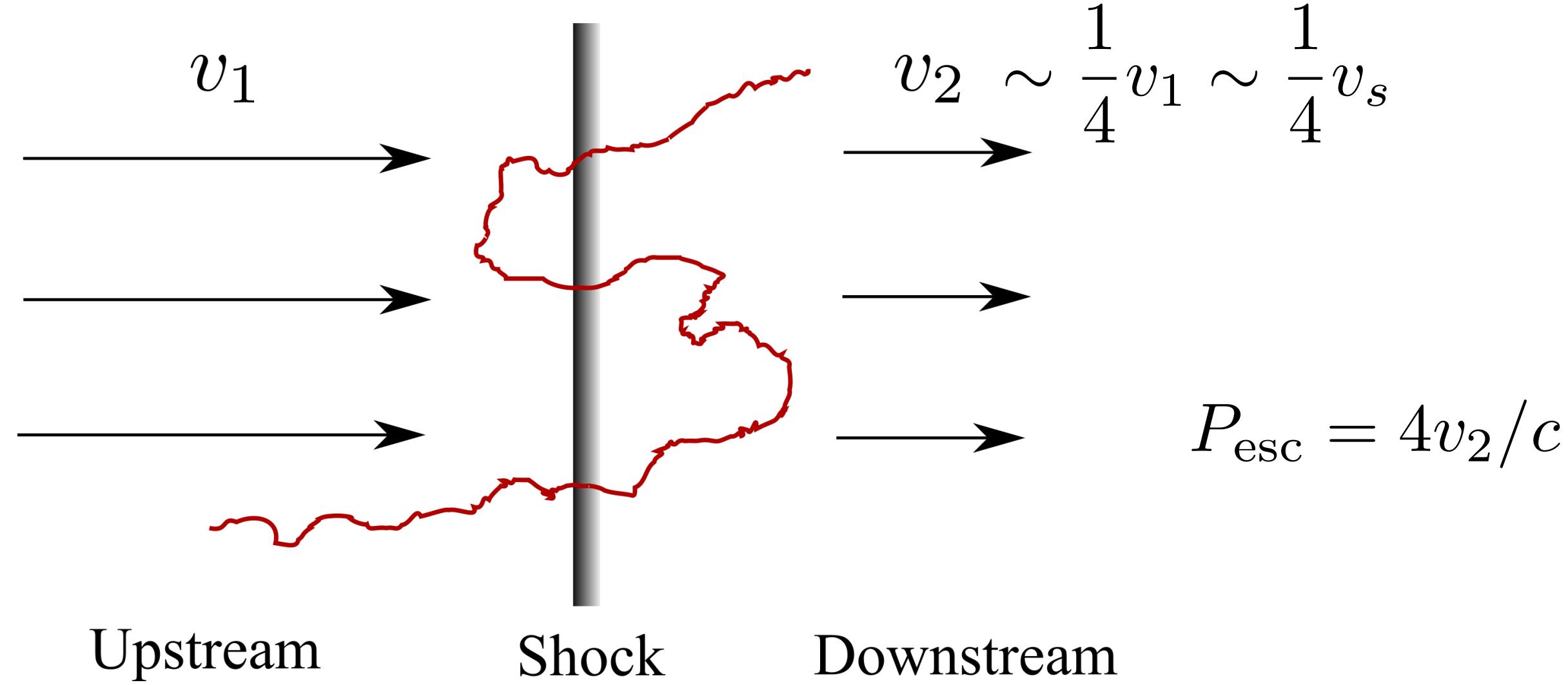


Credit: NASA / CXC / RIKEN / NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center / T. Sato et al / DSS

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Tycho Supernova remnant

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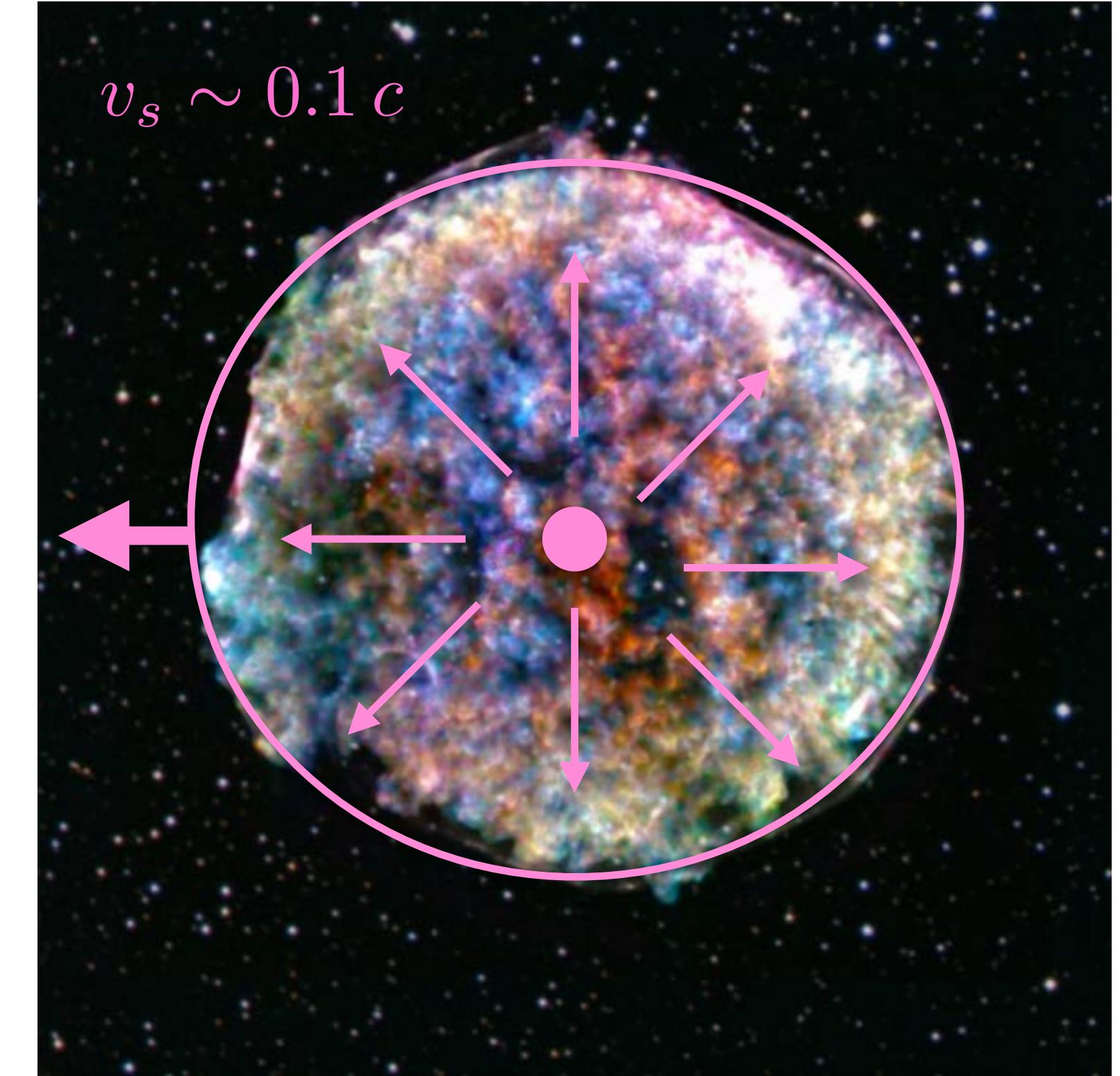
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E.g. [1910.06006](#)

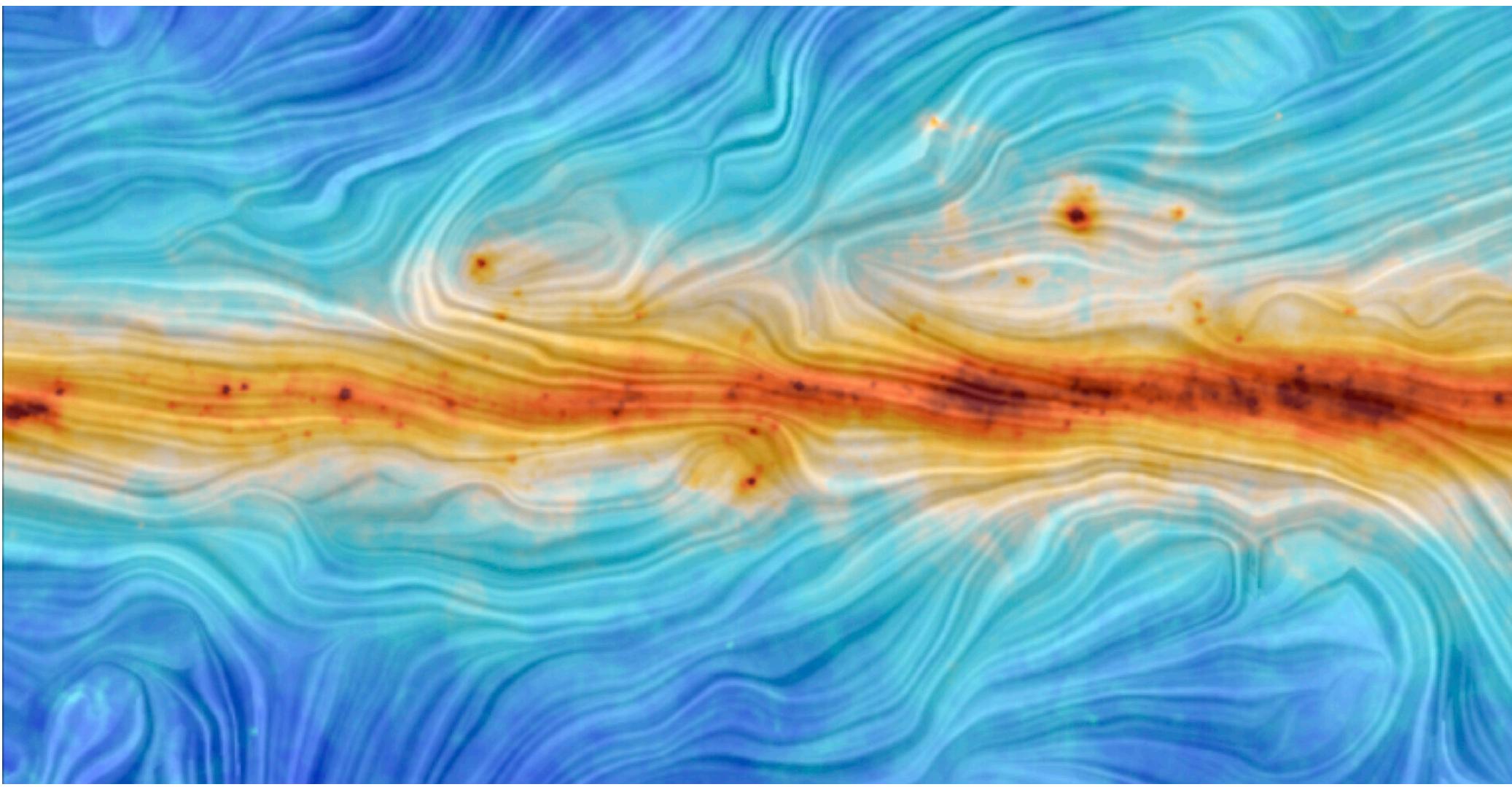
→ Injected flux of particles:  $\frac{dN_{\text{inj}}}{dE} \propto \frac{df}{dE} = \left( \frac{E}{E_0} \right)^{-2}$



Credit: NASA / CXC / RIKEN / NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center / T. Sato et al / DSS

# Propagation of CCRs

Credit: ESA/Planck Collaboration



Diffusion

$$\frac{\partial N_i}{\partial t} = D(E) \nabla^2 N_i + \frac{\partial}{\partial E} [b(E) N_i] - \frac{N_i}{\tau_i} + \sum_{j>i} \frac{P_{ji}}{\tau_j} N_j + Q$$

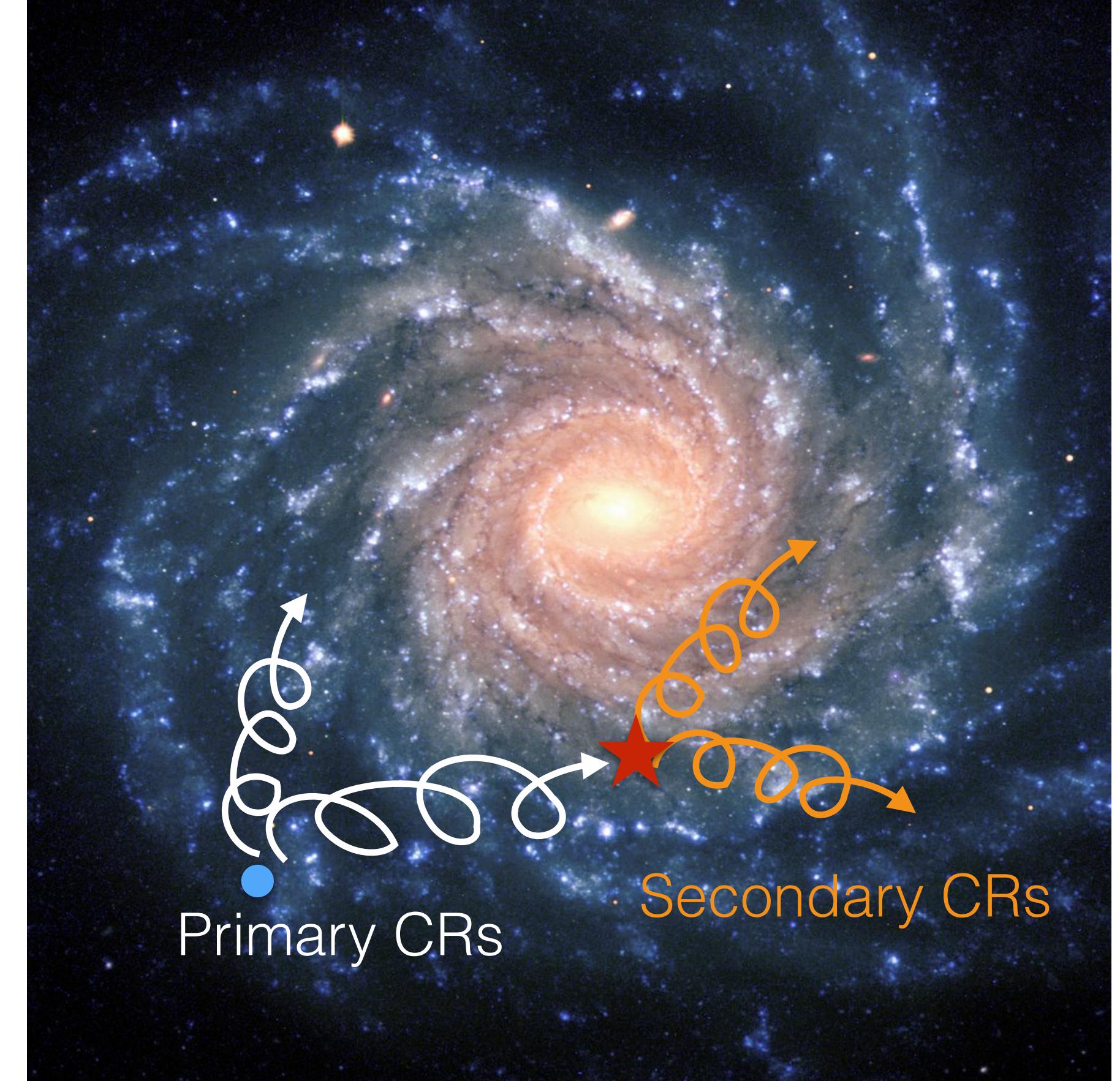
Energy losses

Escape and attenuation

Production  
(by spallation)

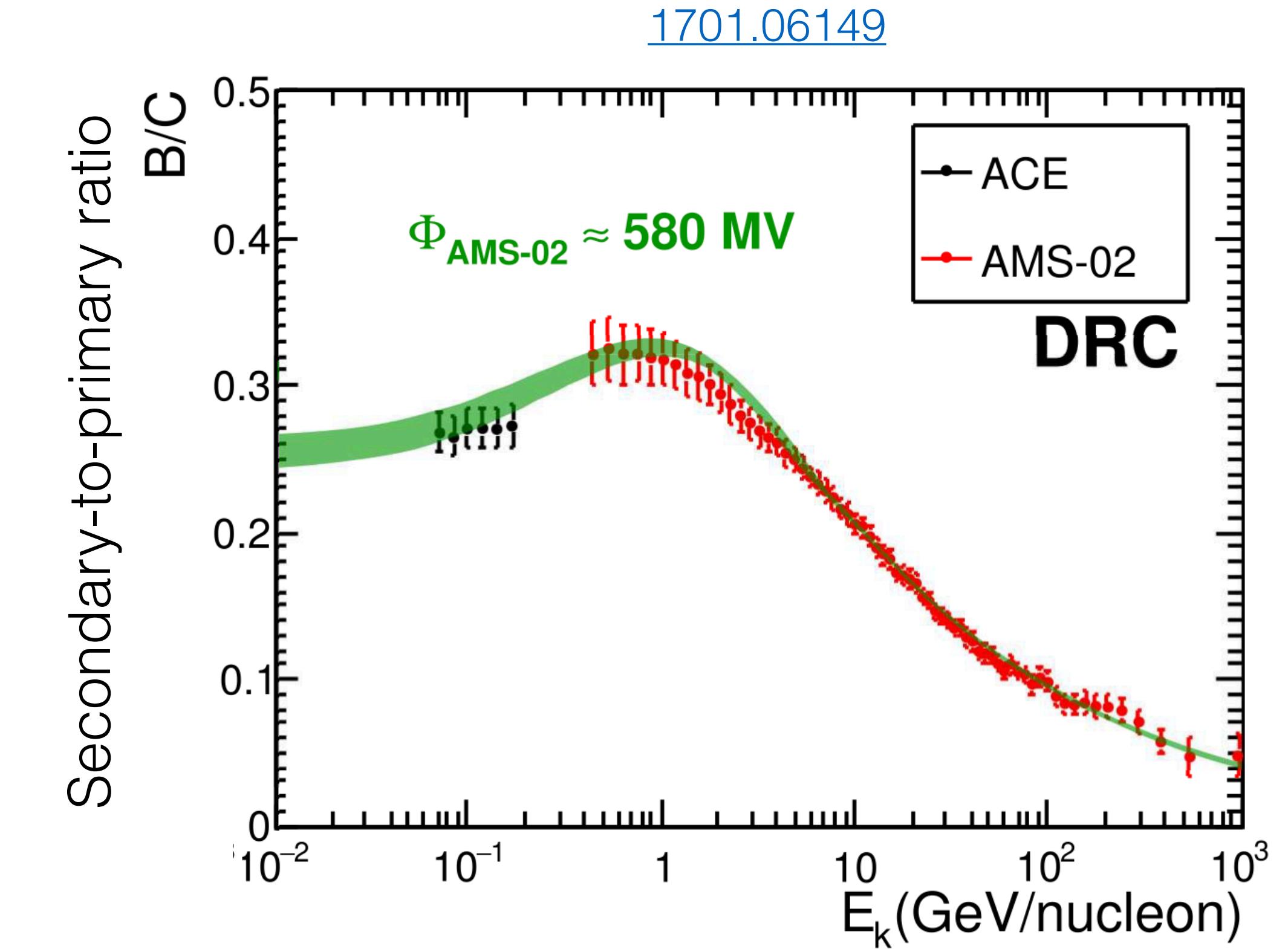
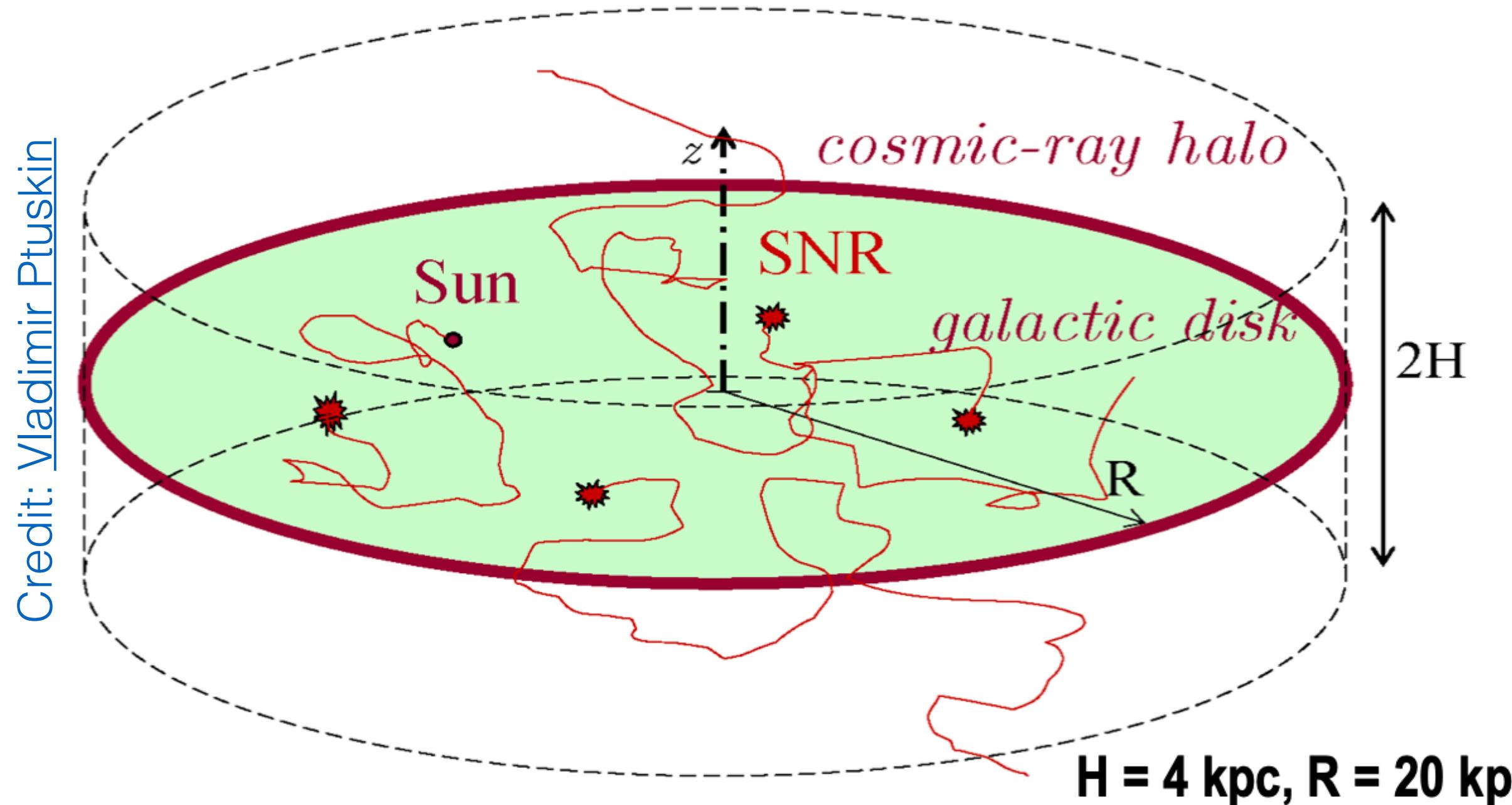
Sources

$$N_i = N_i(\vec{r}, E)$$



# Modelling CR propagation

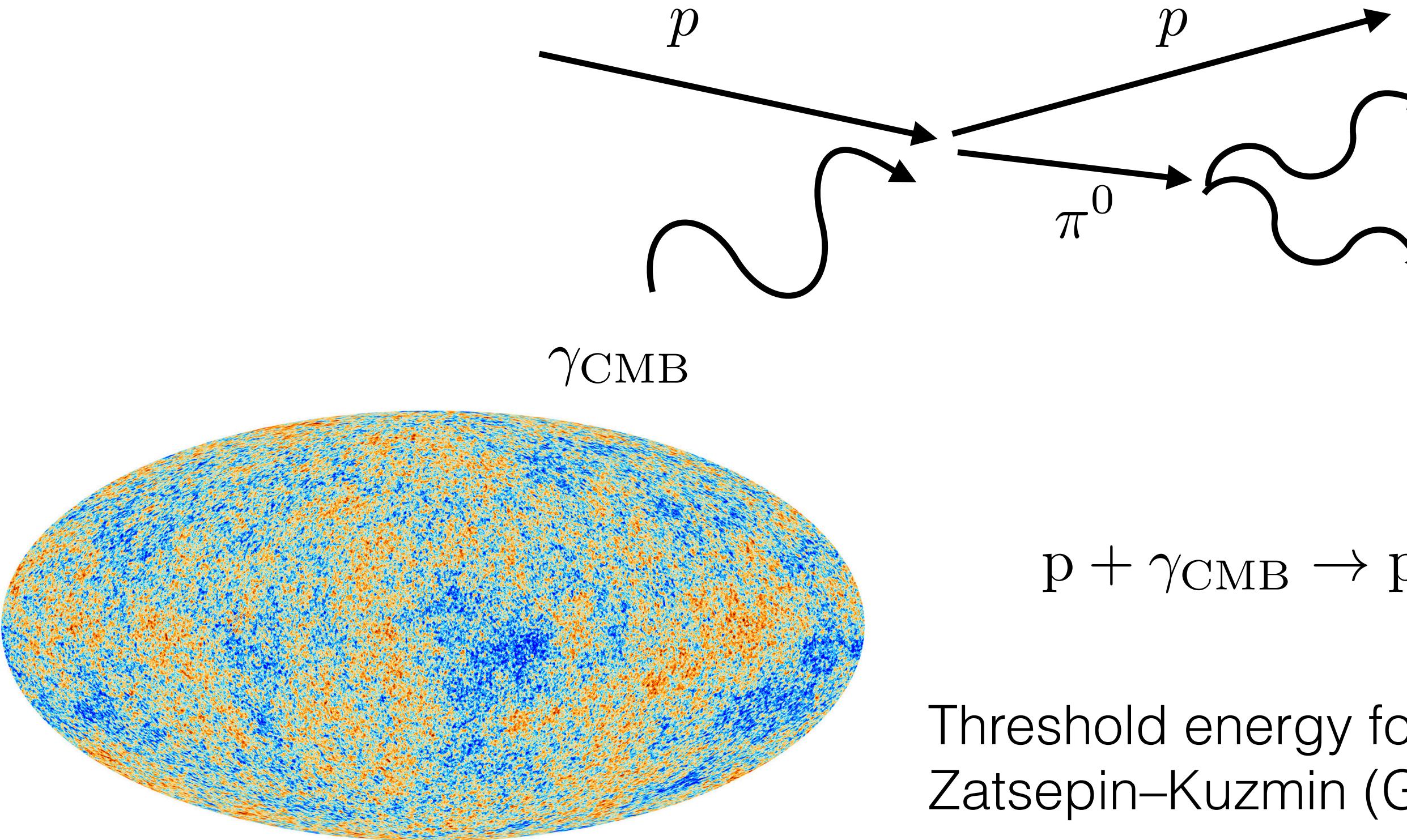
Parametrize properties of the diffusive halo and solve for CR density  
(e.g. [GALPROP](#), [DRAGON](#), [USINE](#), ...)



Typical diffusion distance  $\langle R^2 \rangle \sim D(E)t$ . Coefficient  $D(E)$  grows with  $E$ , steepening the observed CR spectrum...

# GZK cut-off

Very high energy cosmic rays will be destroyed by interactions with background photons:

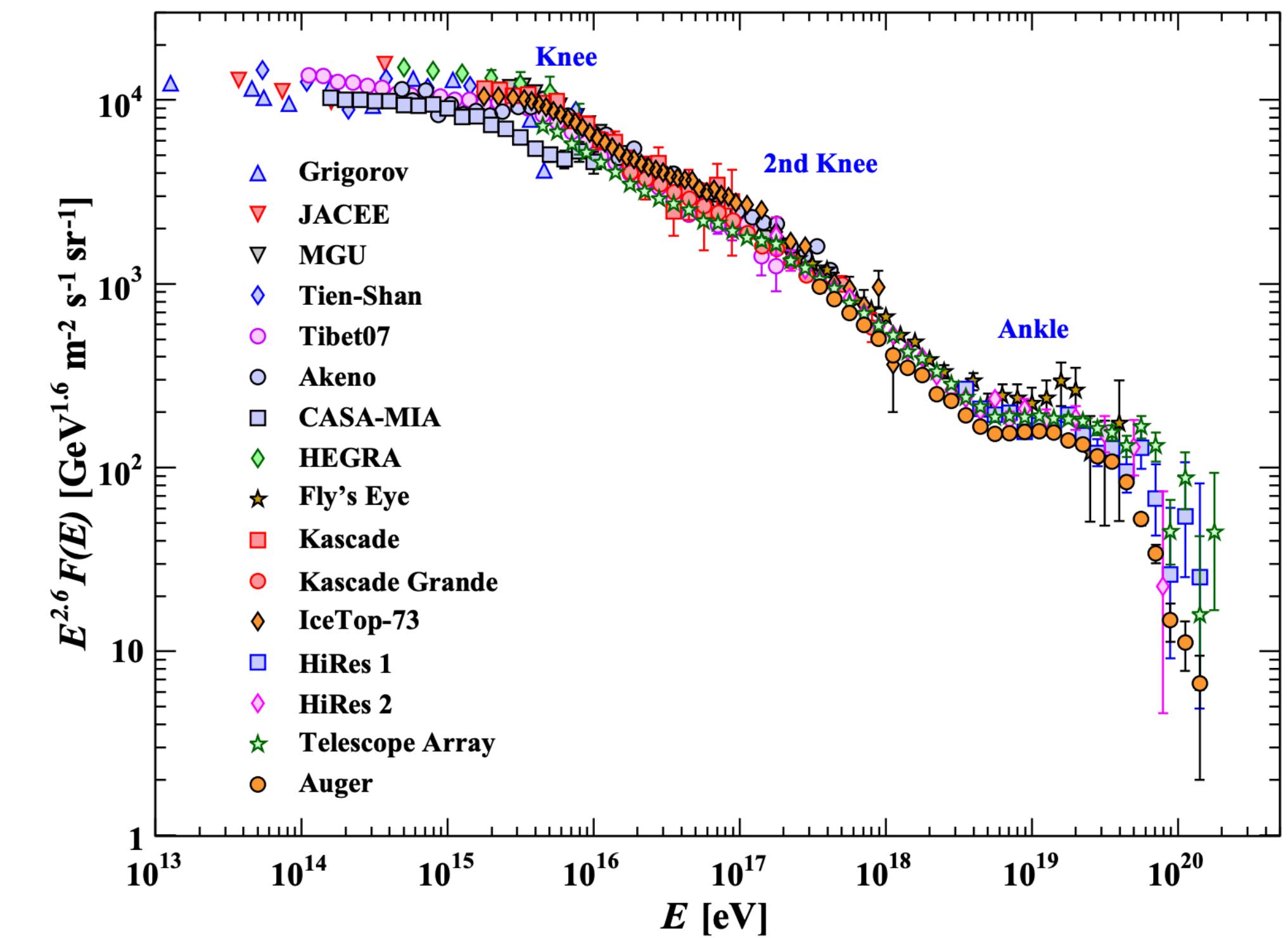


Threshold energy for this process gives rise to the Greisen–Zatsepin–Kuzmin (GZK) cut-off:

$$E_{p\gamma} \approx 3.4 \times 10^{19} \left( \frac{\epsilon}{10^{-3} \text{eV}} \right)^{-1} \text{eV}$$

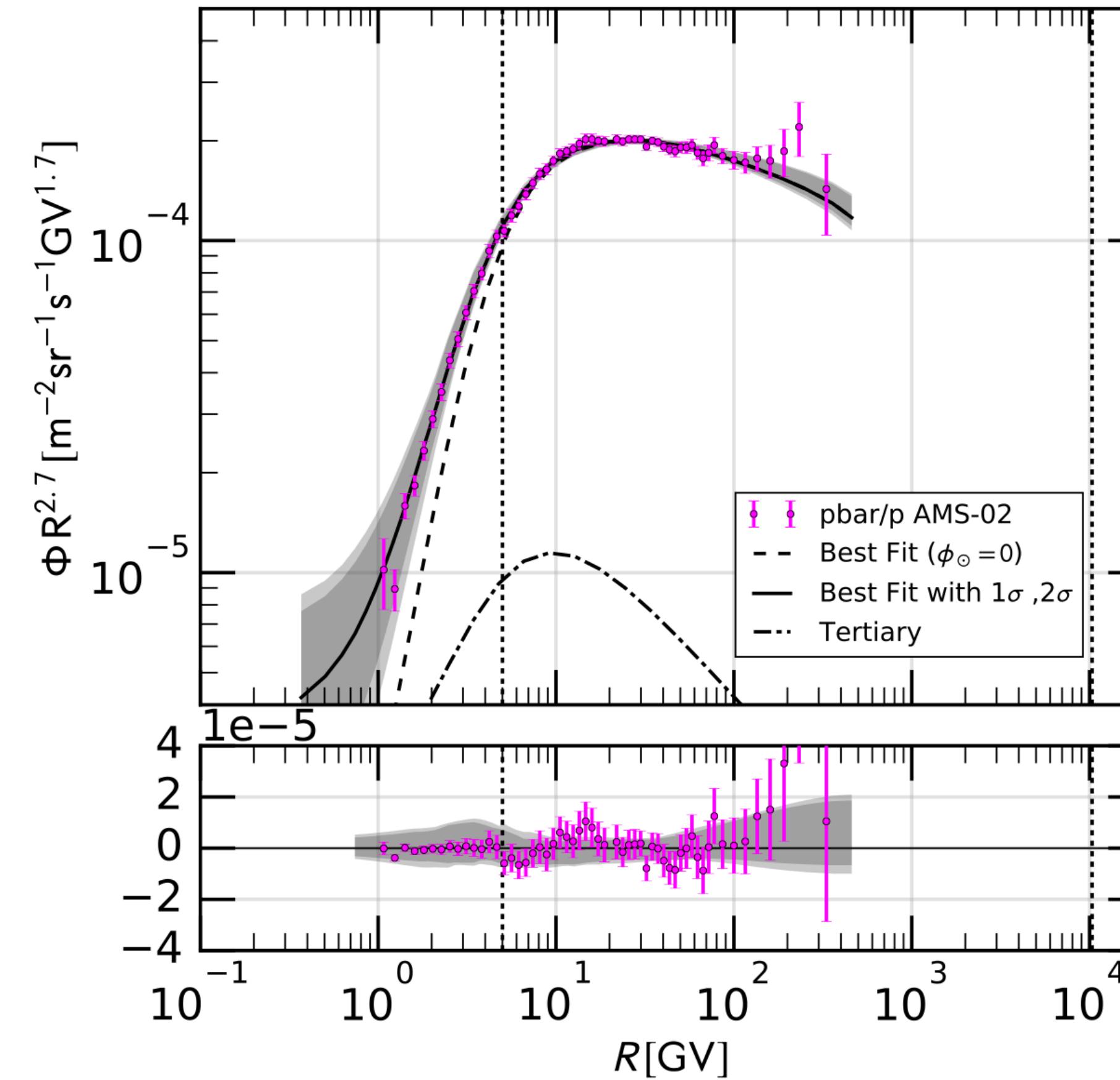
Ultra high energy CRs cannot propagate more than around  $\ell_{\text{GZK}} \sim 50 \text{ Mpc}$  before being destroyed.

Credit: ESA/Planck



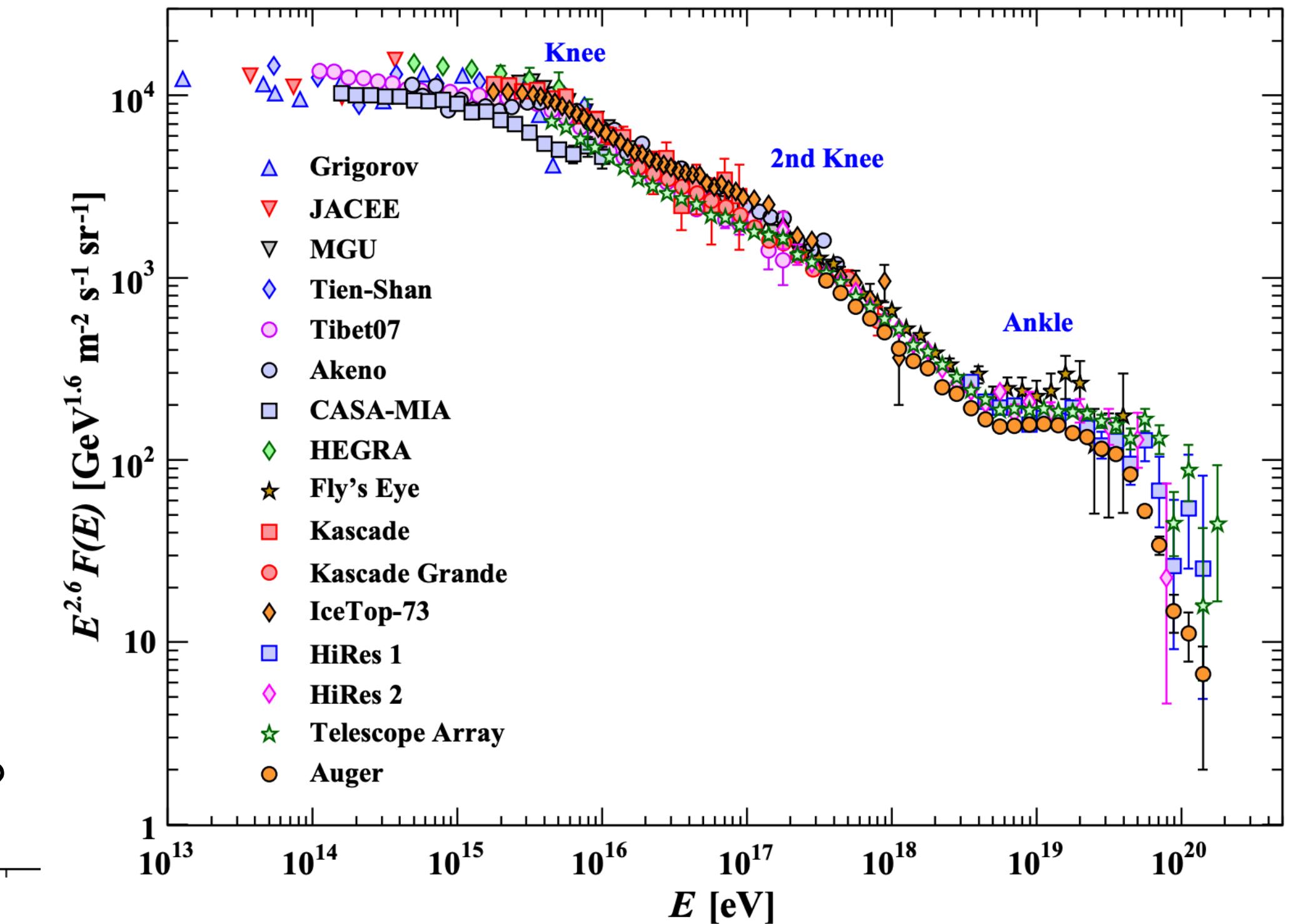
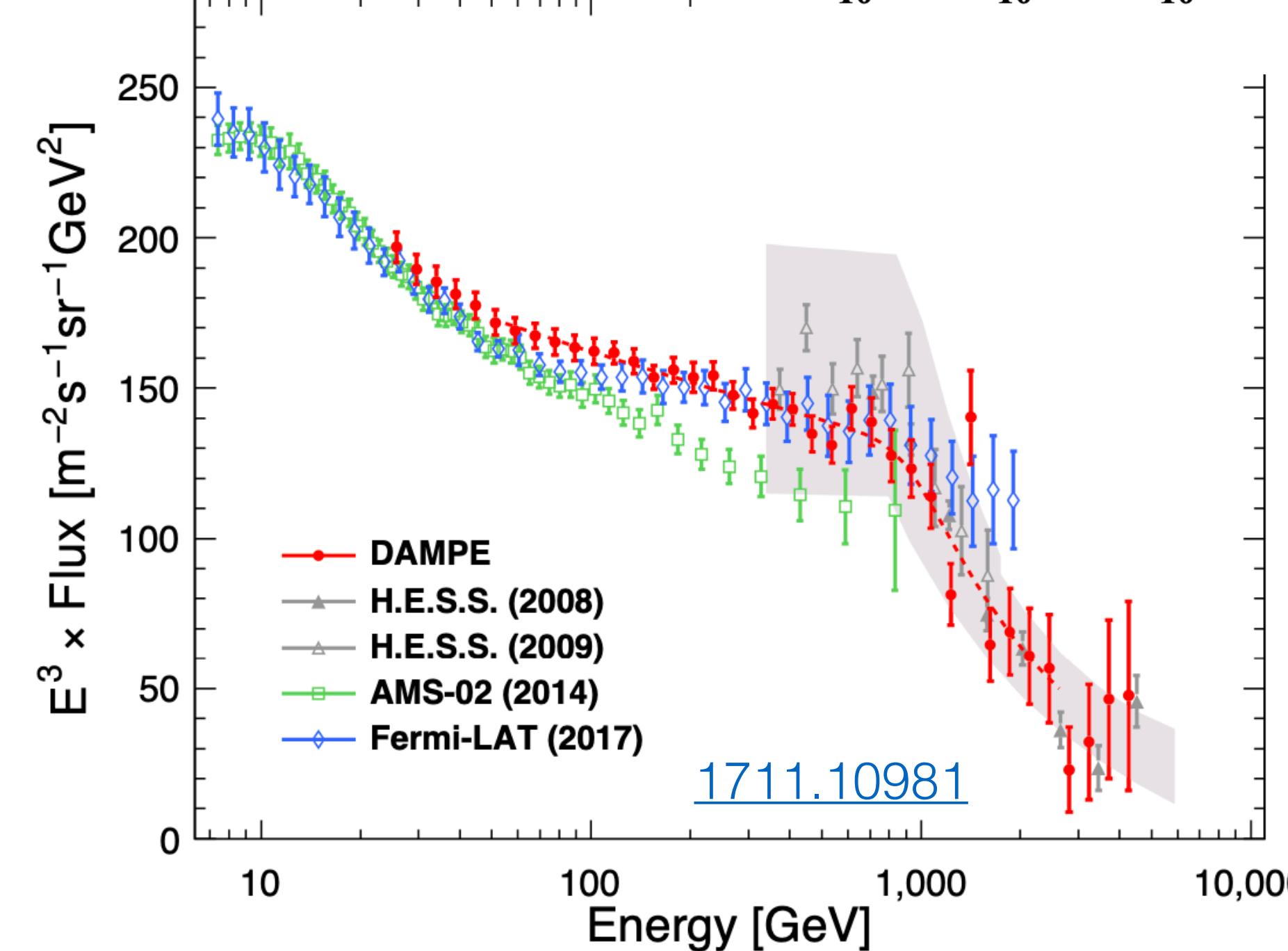
# CCR anomalies, questions, challenges

Excess in anti-protons?



[1610.03071](#)

Excess in electrons?



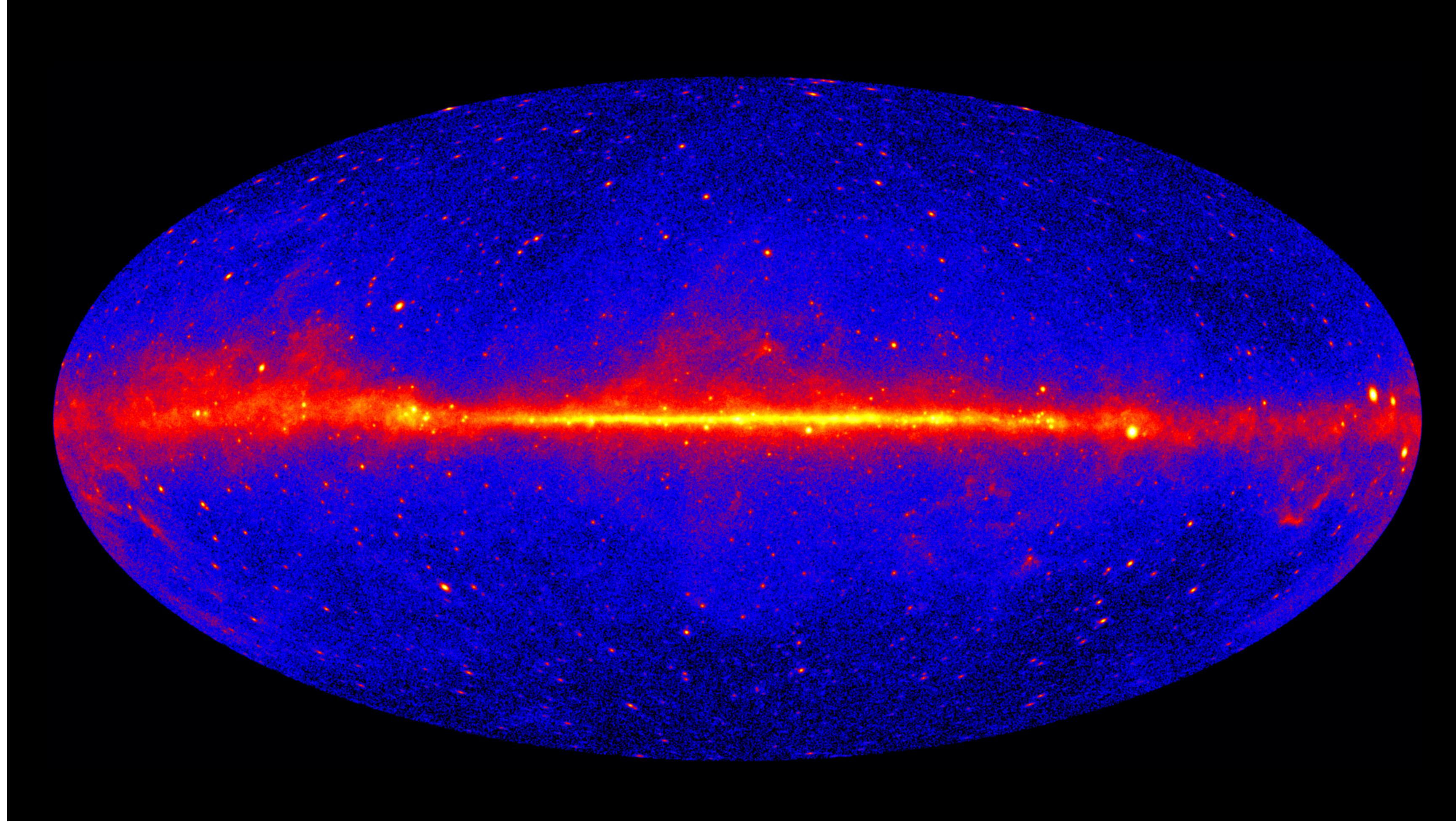
What are the sources?

Where do the CRs  
come from?

# The Gamma-ray Sky



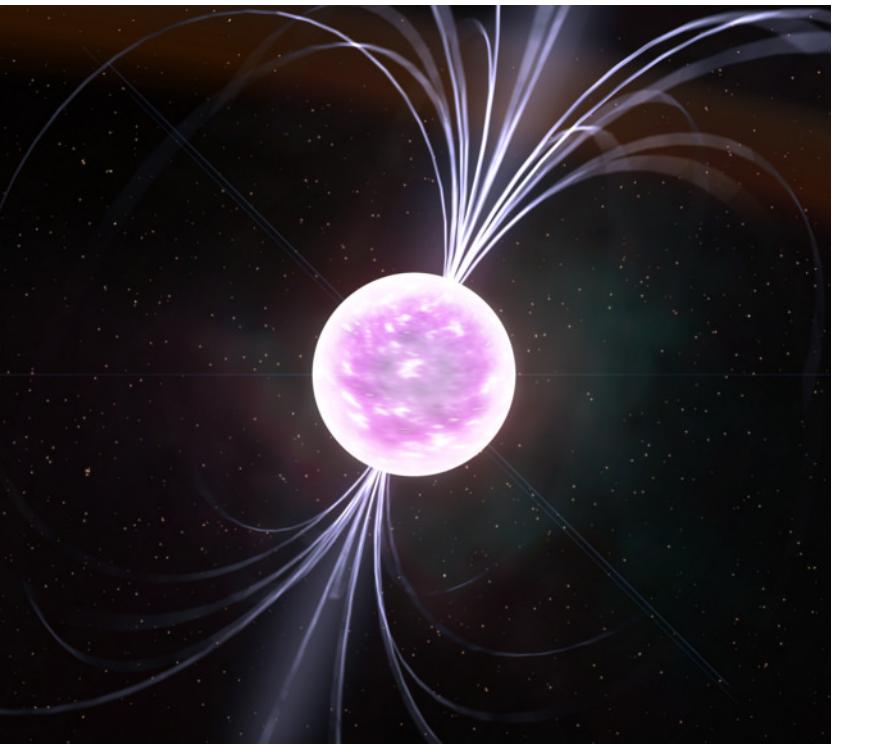
Gamma-ray Sky above 1 GeV, according to Fermi:



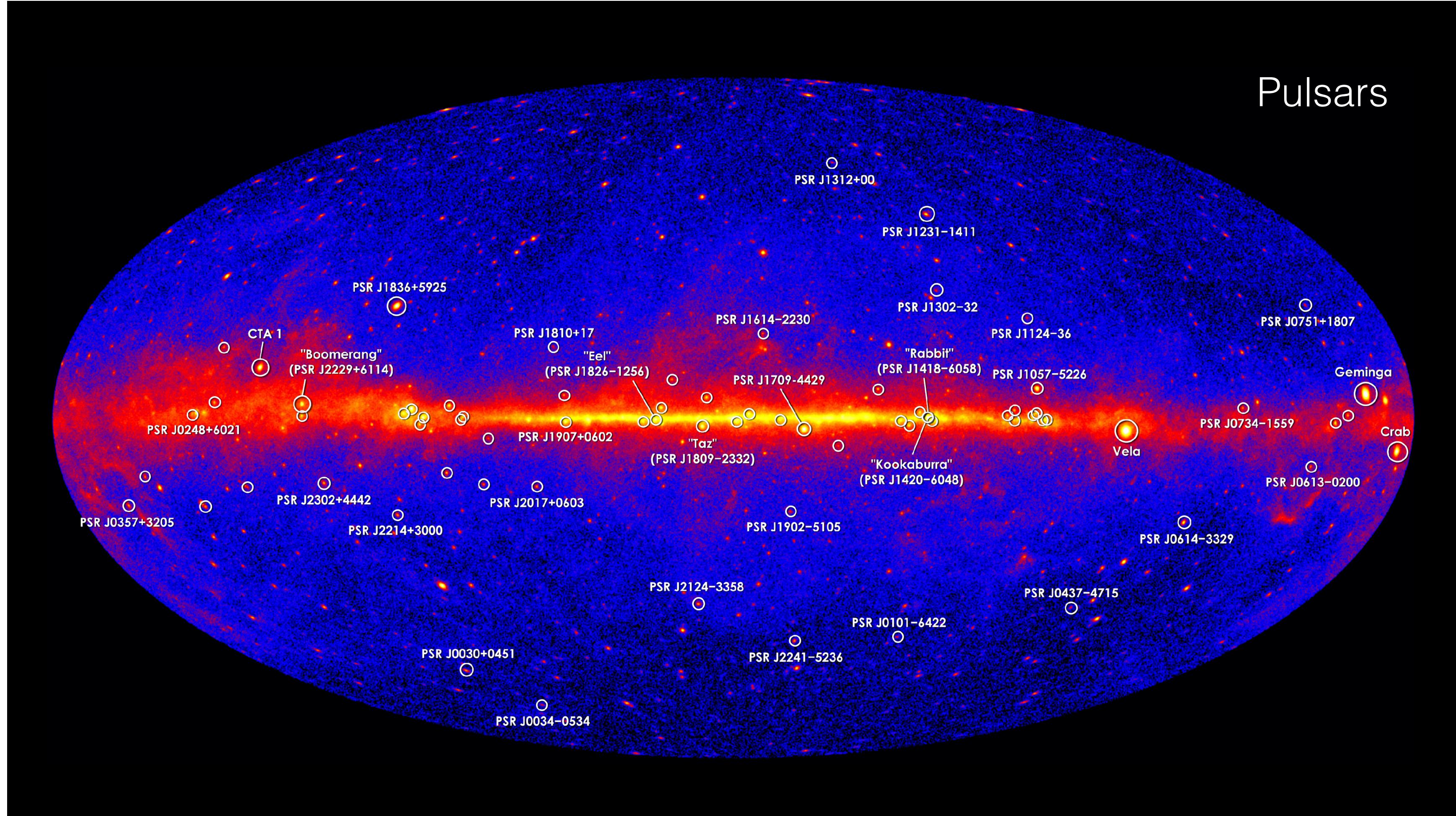
Credit: [NASA/DOE/Fermi LAT Collaboration](#)

# The Gamma-ray Sky

Gamma-ray Sky above 1 GeV, according to Fermi:



Credit: Kevin Gill / Flickr

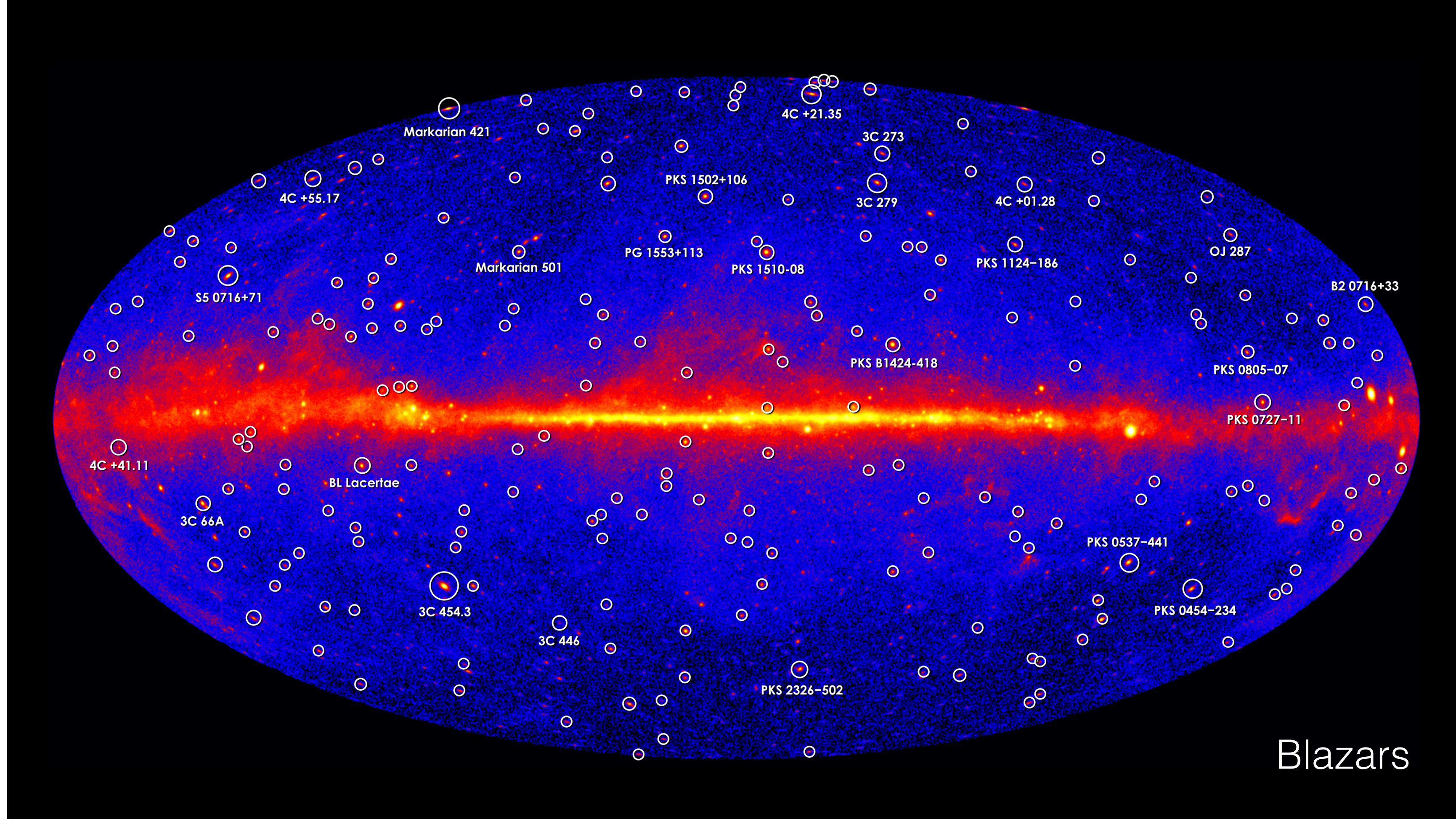


Credit: [NASA/DOE/Fermi LAT Collaboration](#)

# The Gamma-ray Sky



Gamma-ray Sky above 1 GeV, according to Fermi:

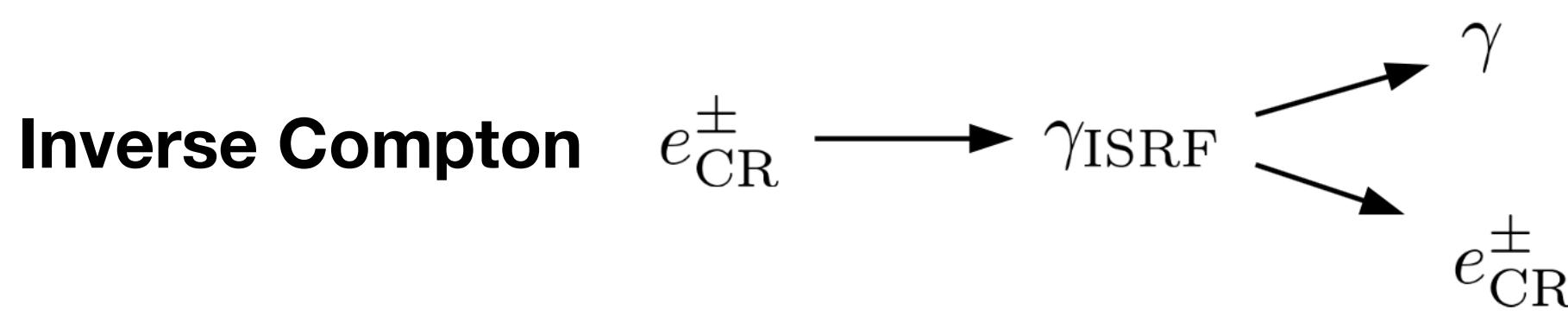
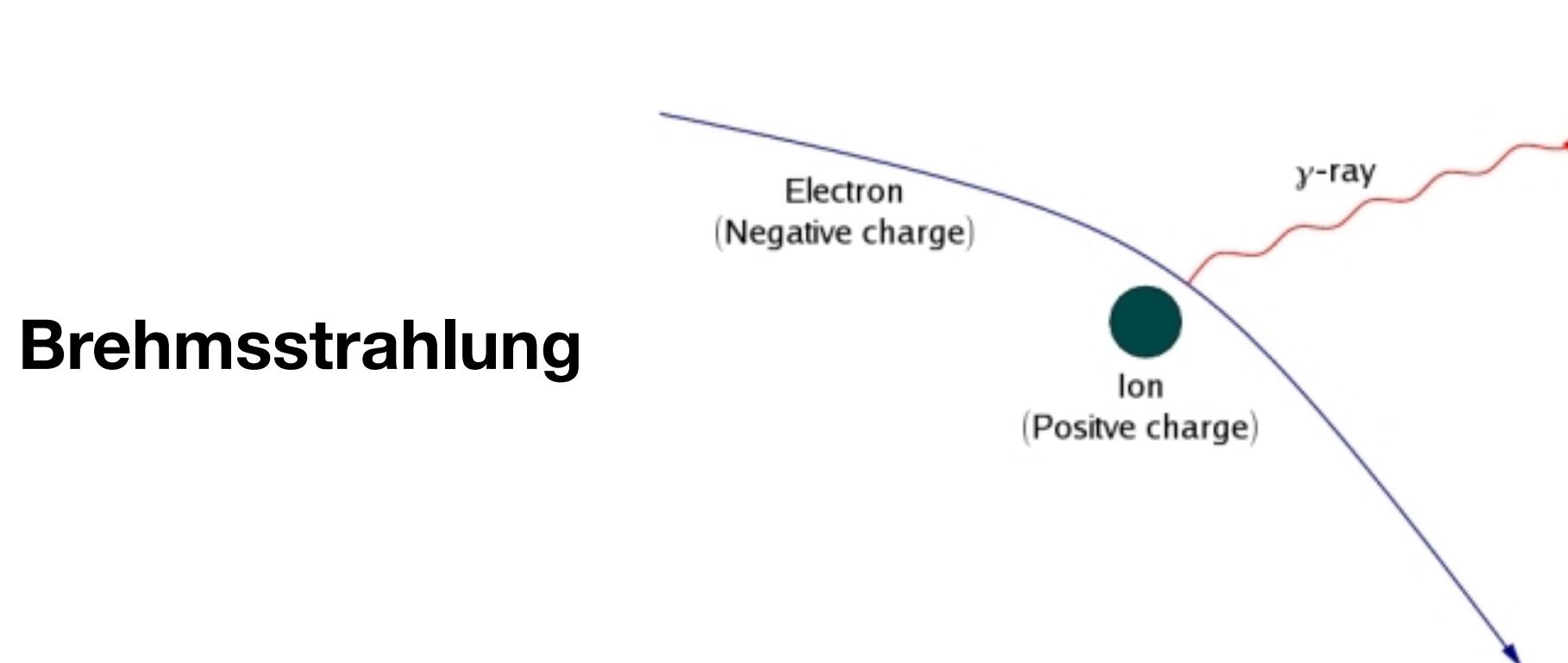
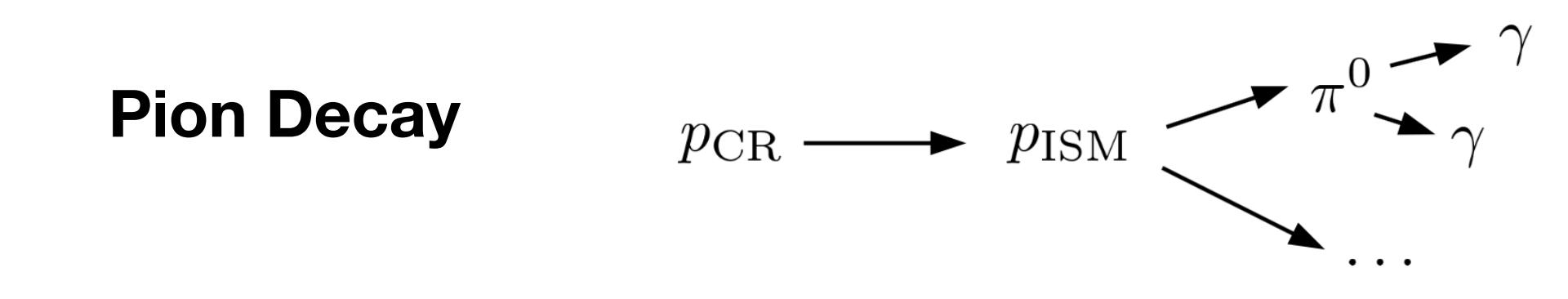


Credit: [NASA/DOE/Fermi LAT Collaboration](#)



Credit: ESO/M. Kornmesser

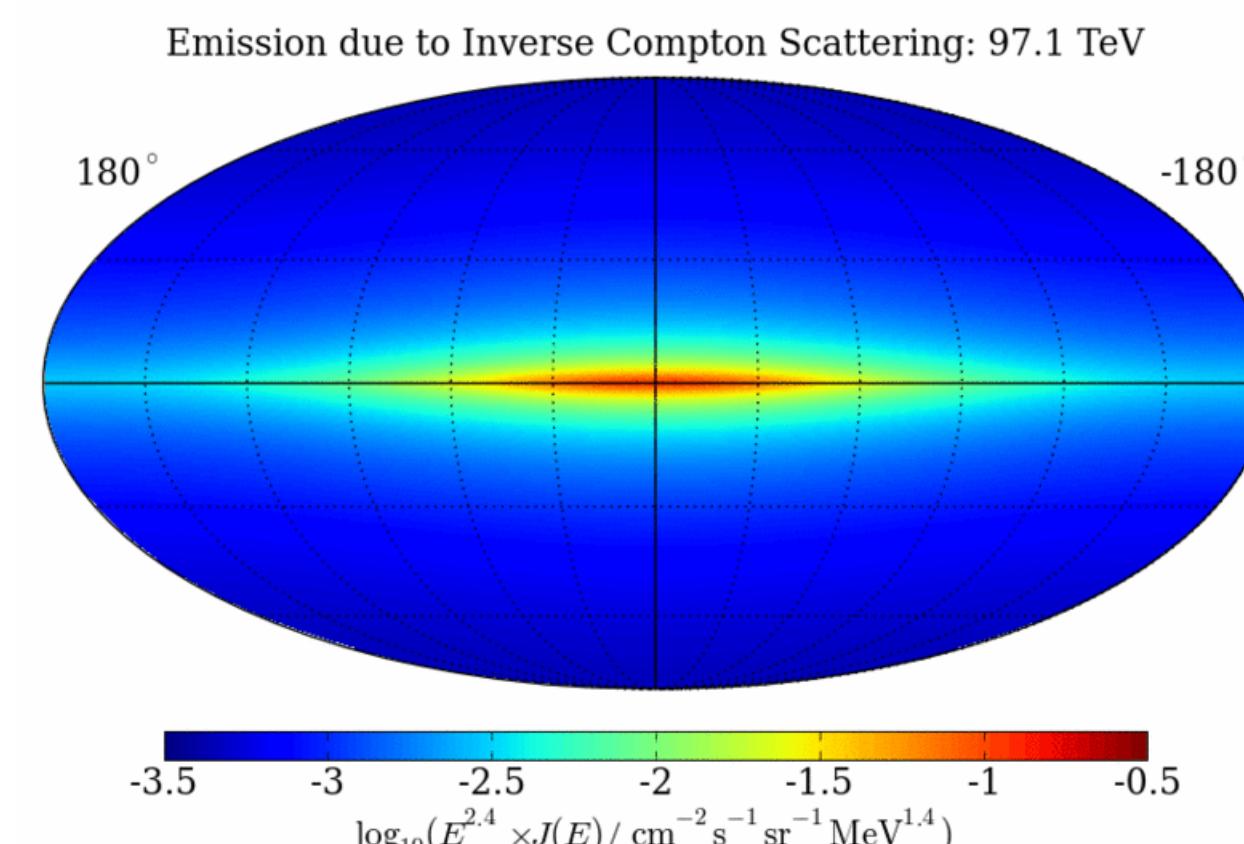
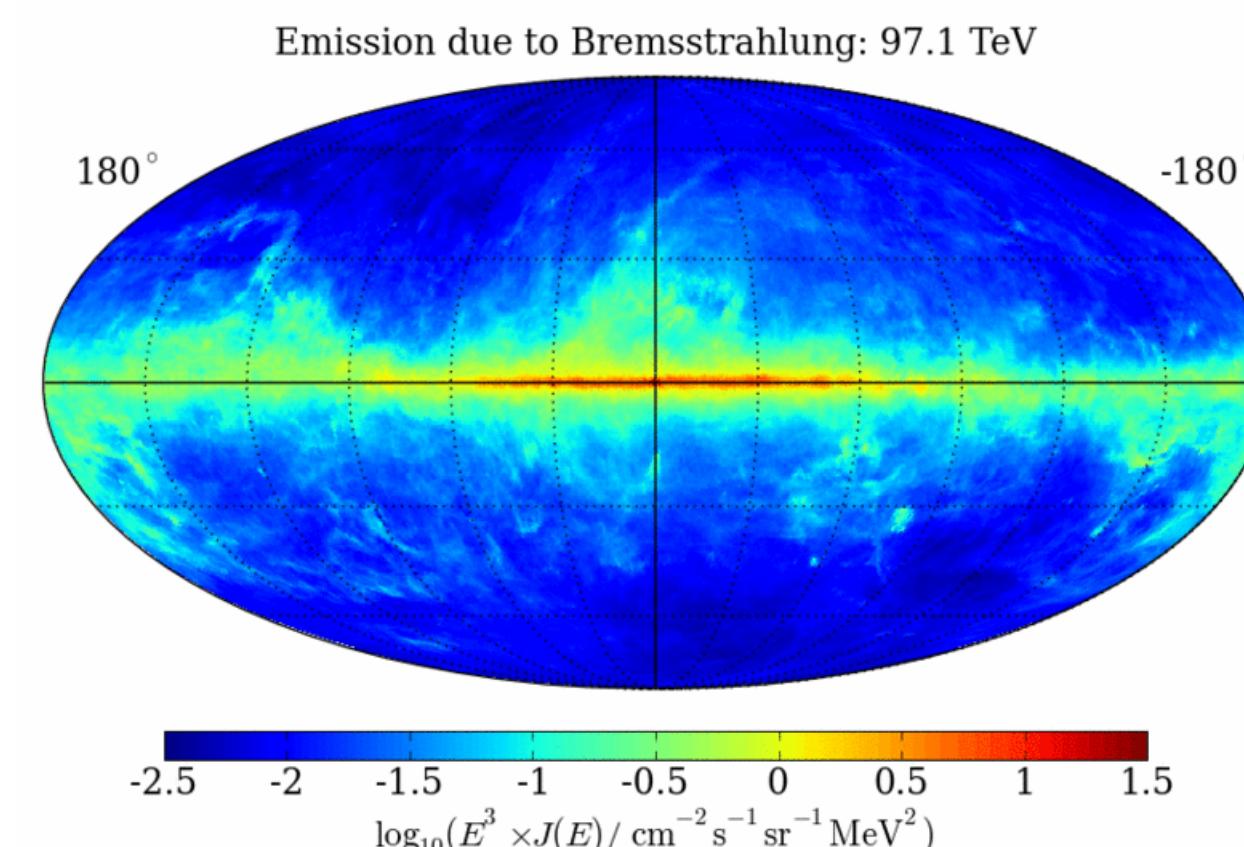
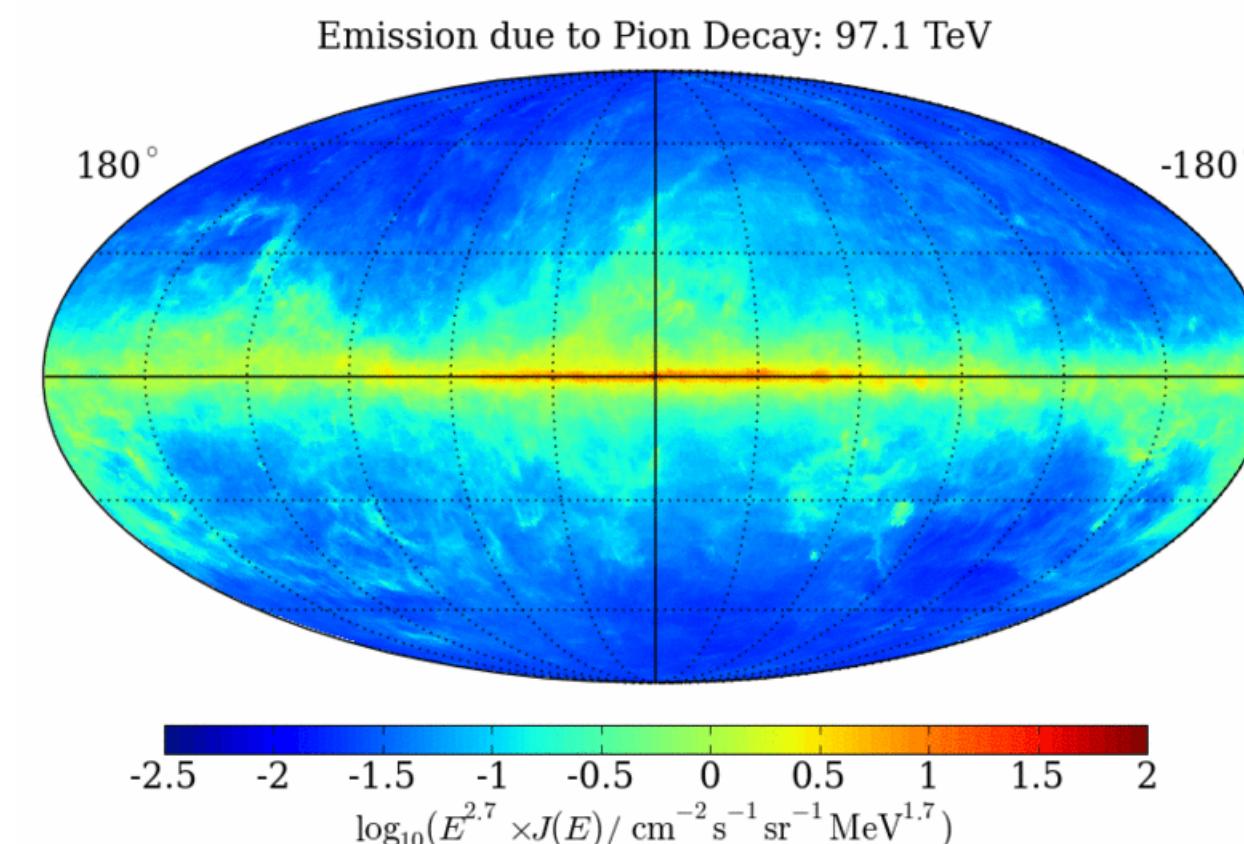
# Cosmic Ray Connection



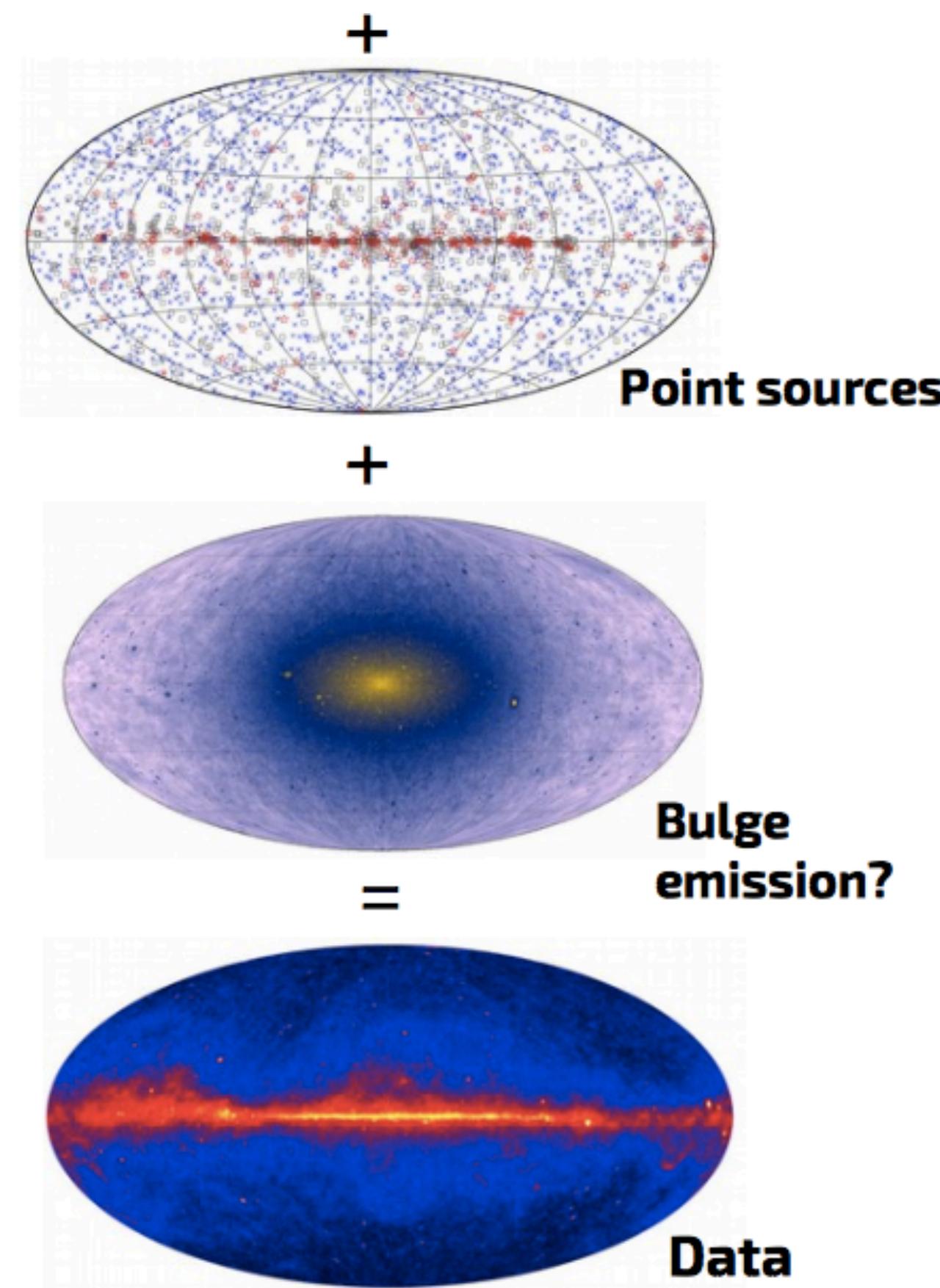
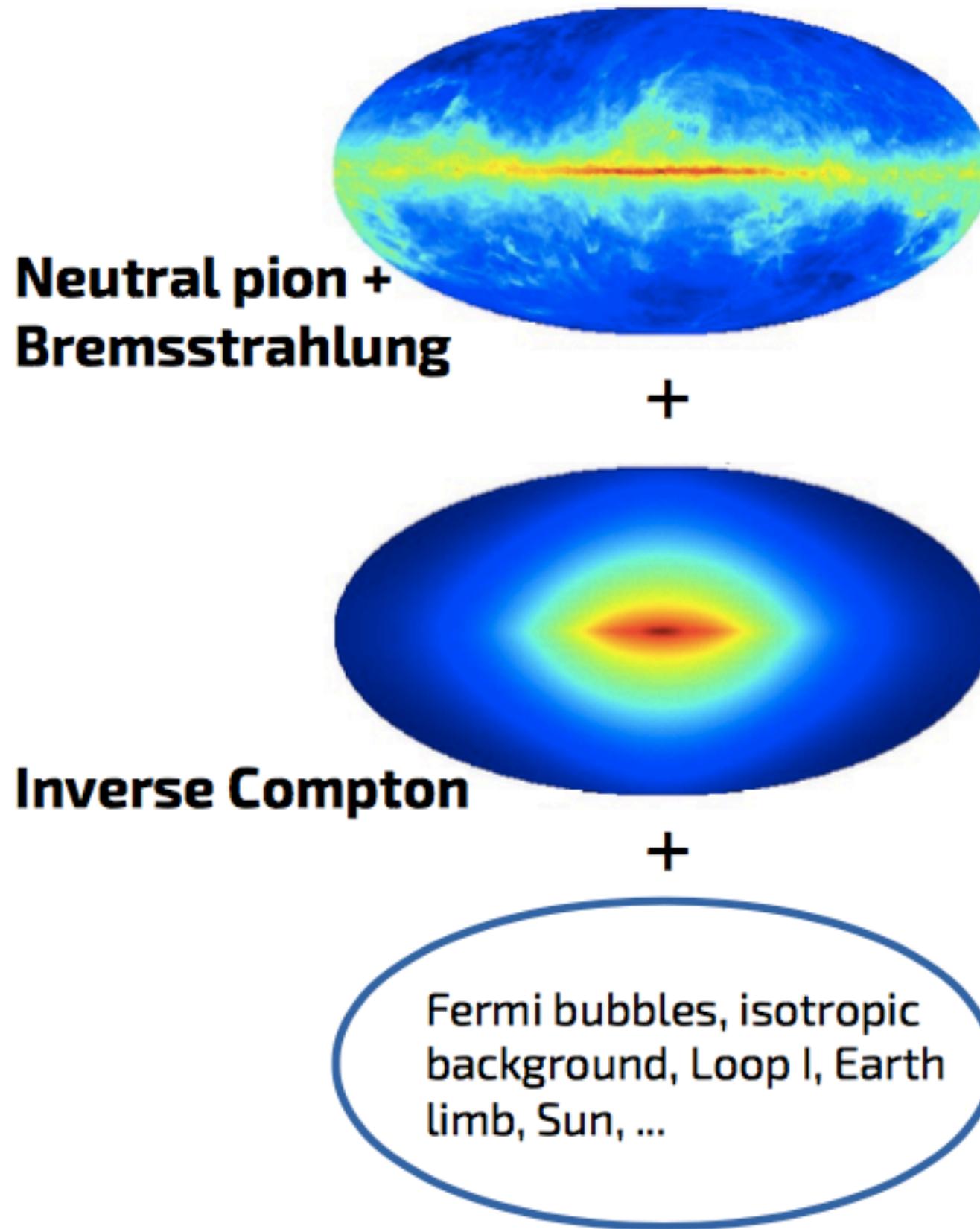
*CR protons + gas*

*CR electrons + gas*

*CR electrons + light*

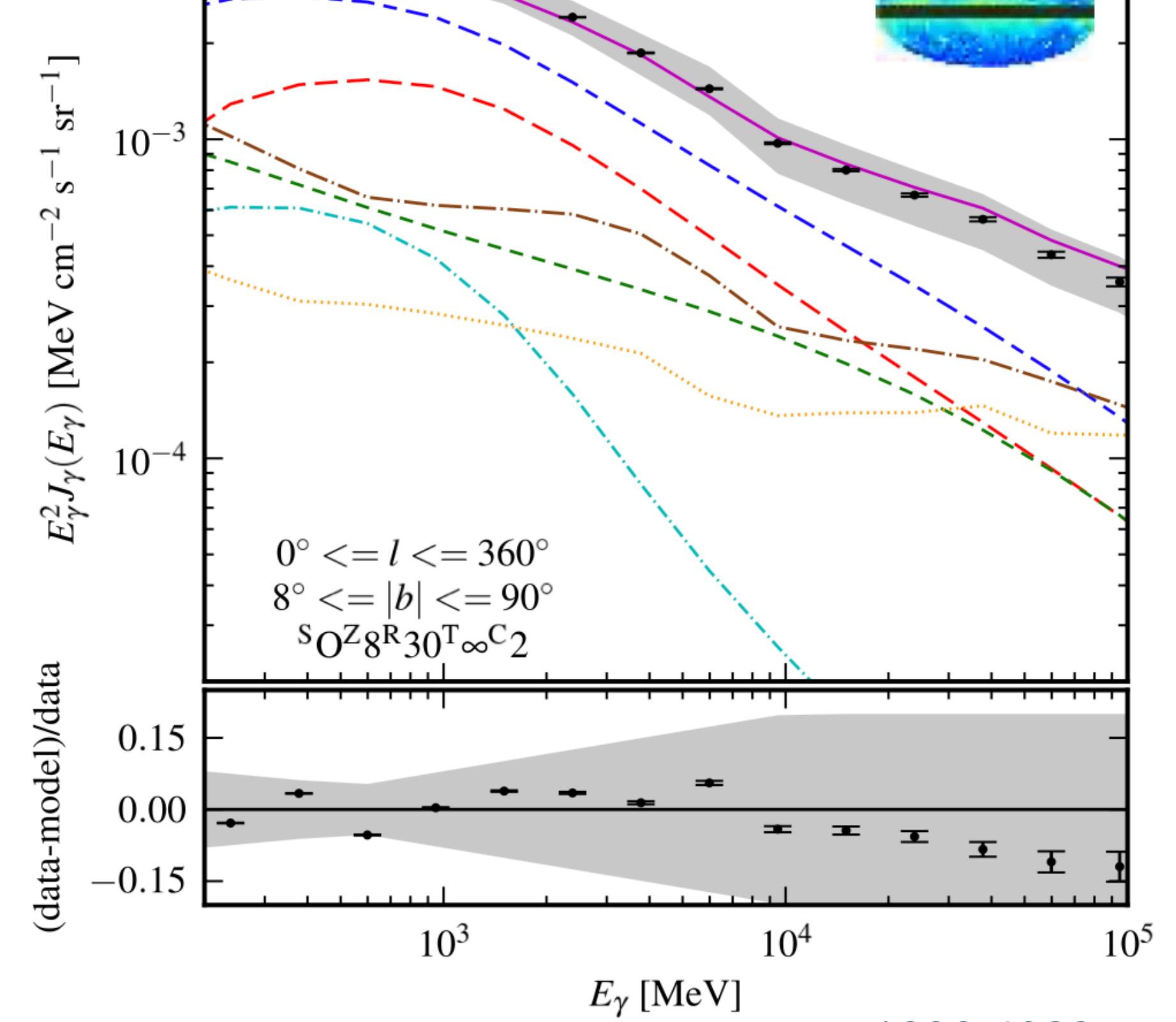


# Modelling Gamma-ray emission



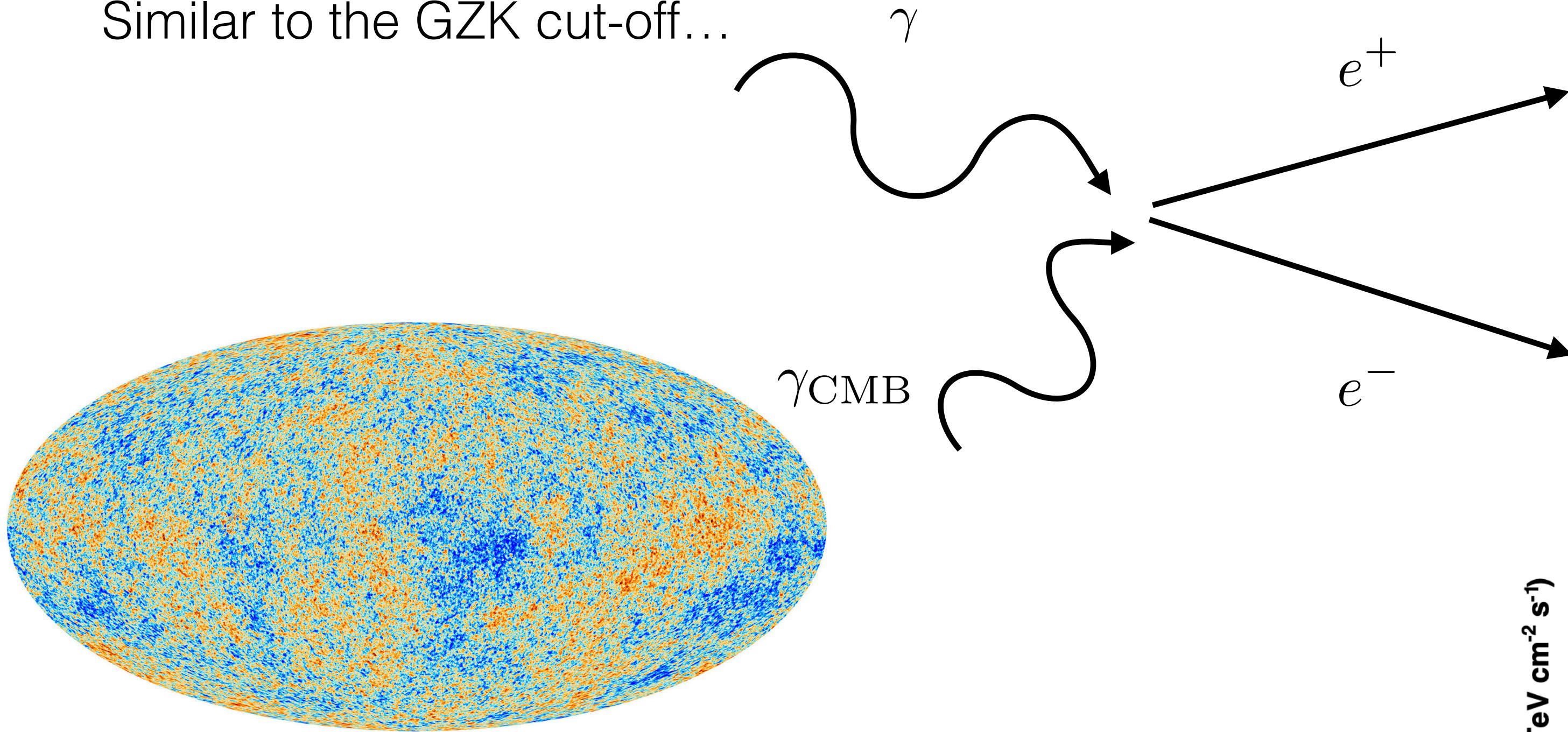
Isotropic Background  
Bremsstrahlung  
Inverse Compton  
Total Galactic  
Point sources

$\pi^0$  decay



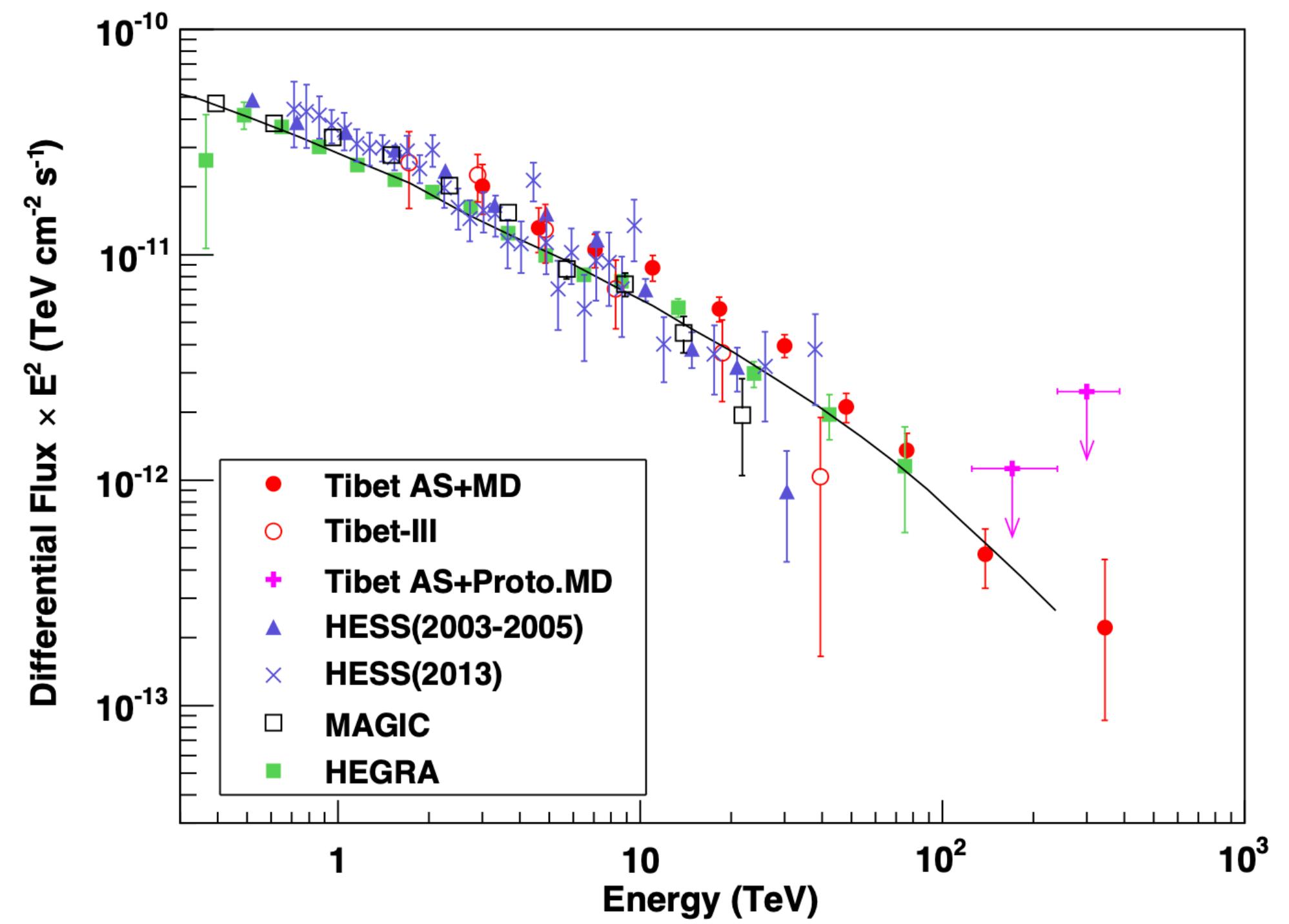
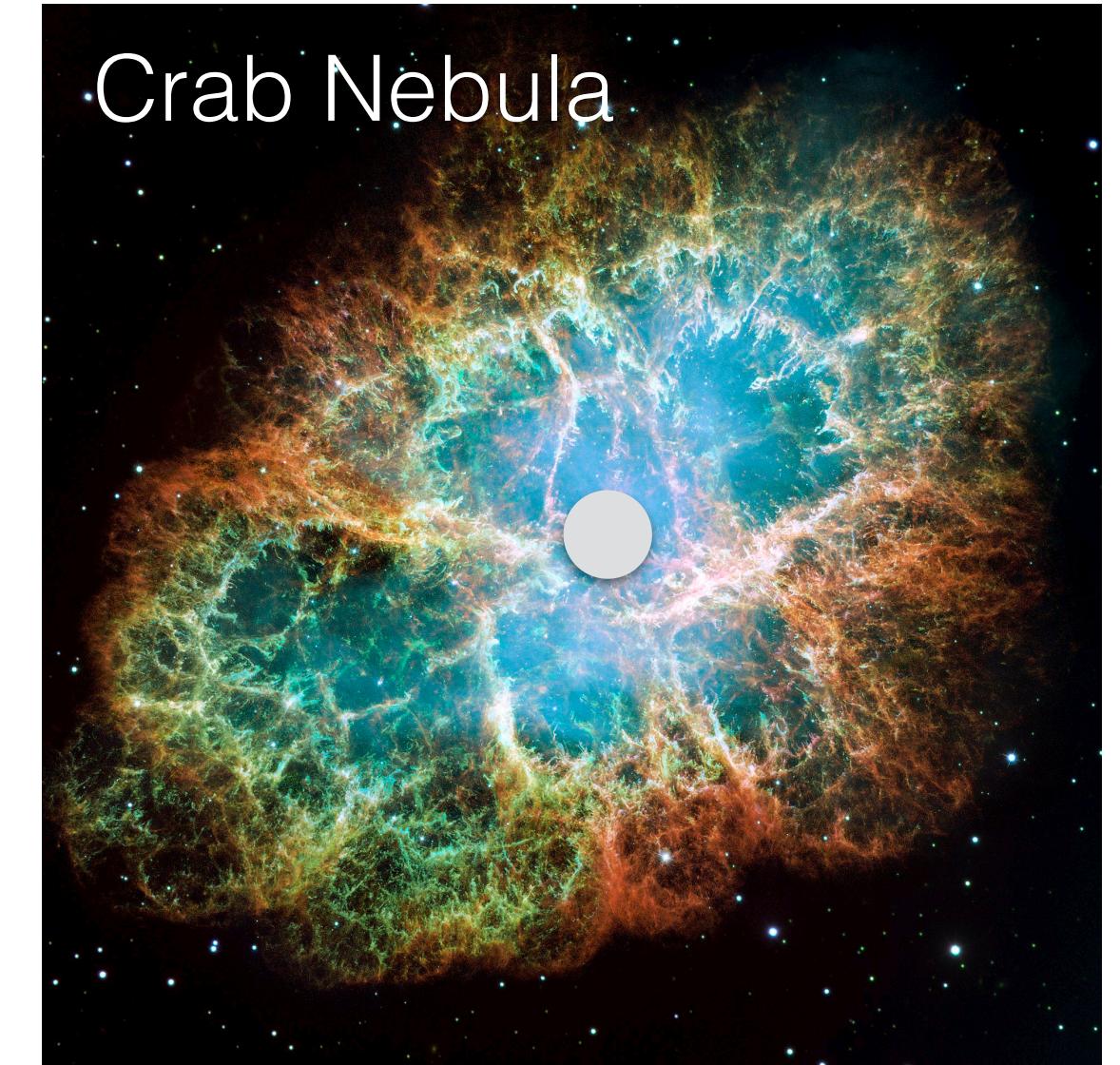
# Gamma-ray horizon

Similar to the GZK cut-off...



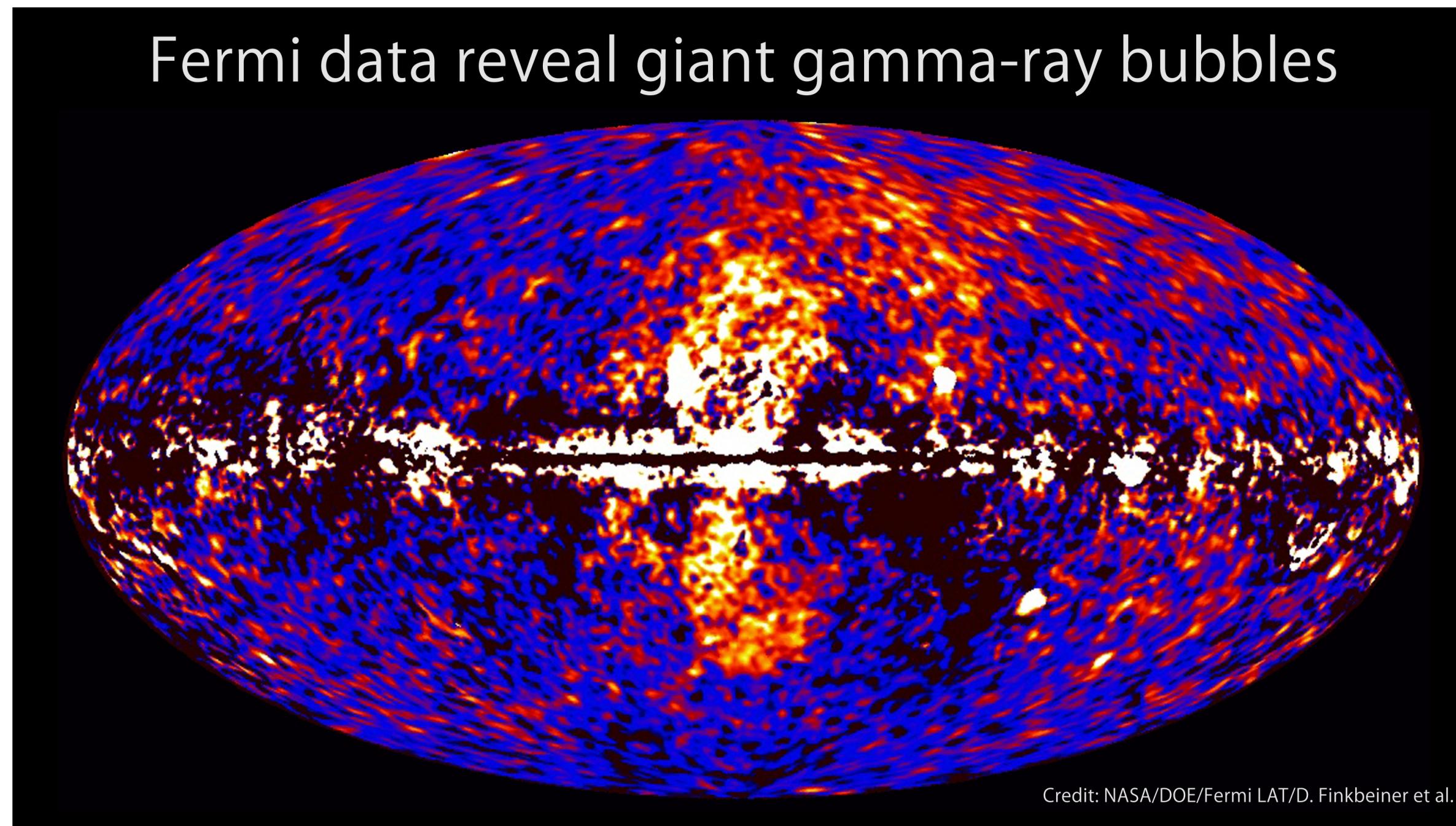
To produce an electron-positron pair, need a gamma-ray with energy greater than:

$$E_\gamma > \frac{2m_e^2}{E_{\text{bg}}} \sim \begin{cases} 1 \text{ TeV} & \text{for scattering of IR background} \\ 800 \text{ TeV} & \text{for scattering of CMB} \end{cases}$$

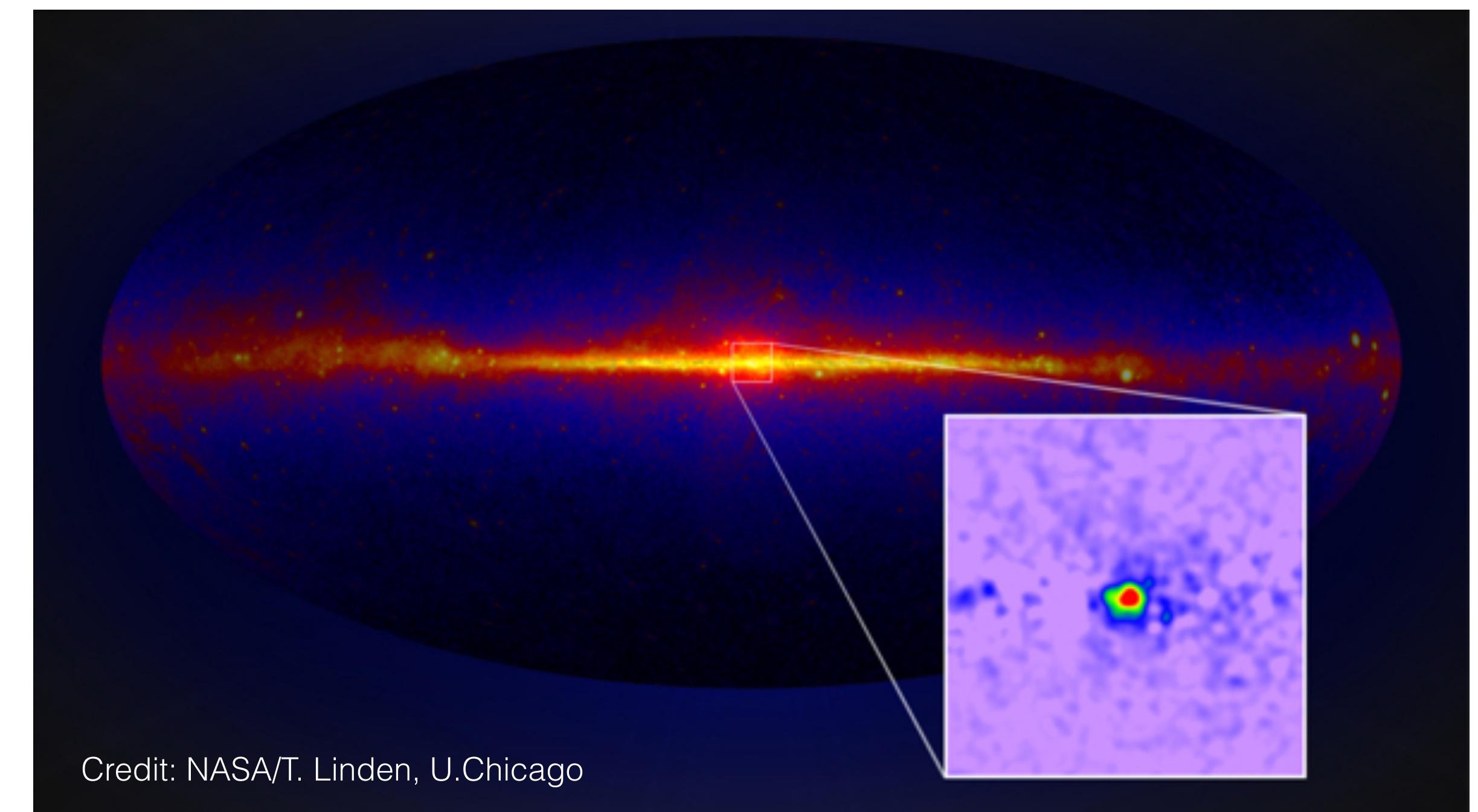


# Gamma-ray anomalies

Fermi Bubbles



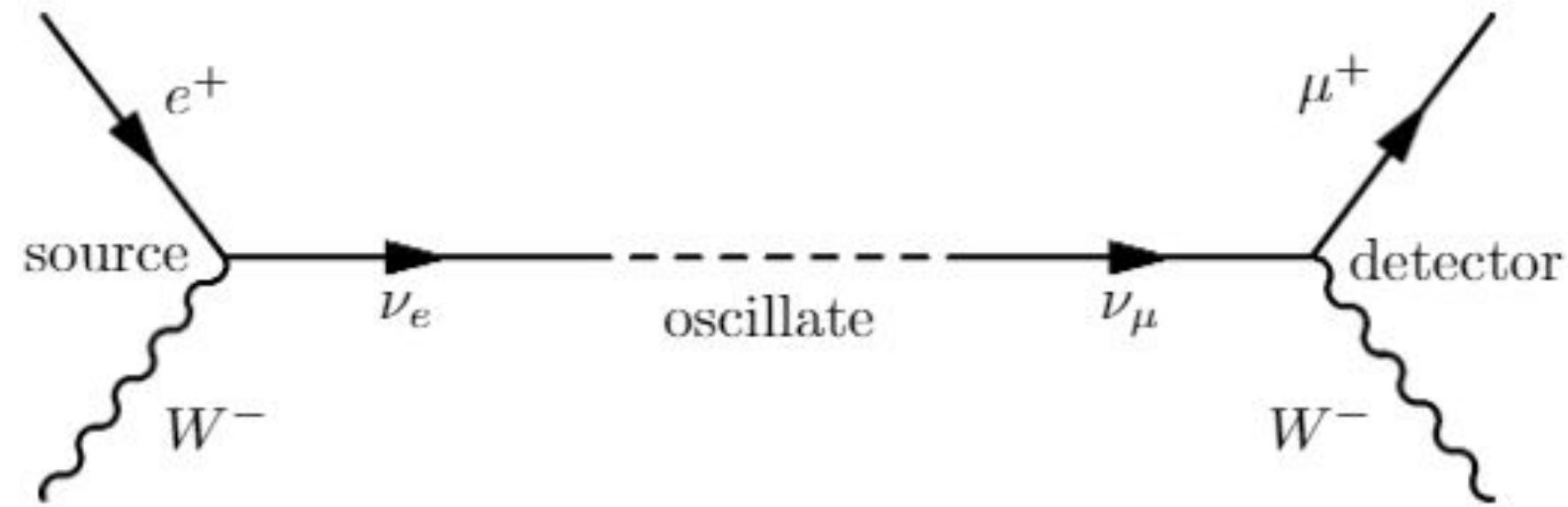
Galactic Centre Excess



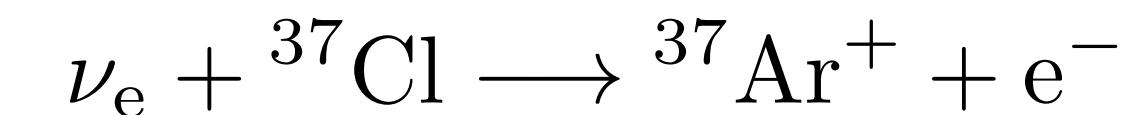
and others...

# Neutrinos

Our story begins with *solar* neutrinos...



Homestake experiment (1960s)  
~600 tons of  $\text{C}_2\text{Cl}_4$



Credit: Brookhaven National Laboratory

Detected rate of ~ MeV neutrinos was  
~1/3 of that expected from nuclear processes in the Sun

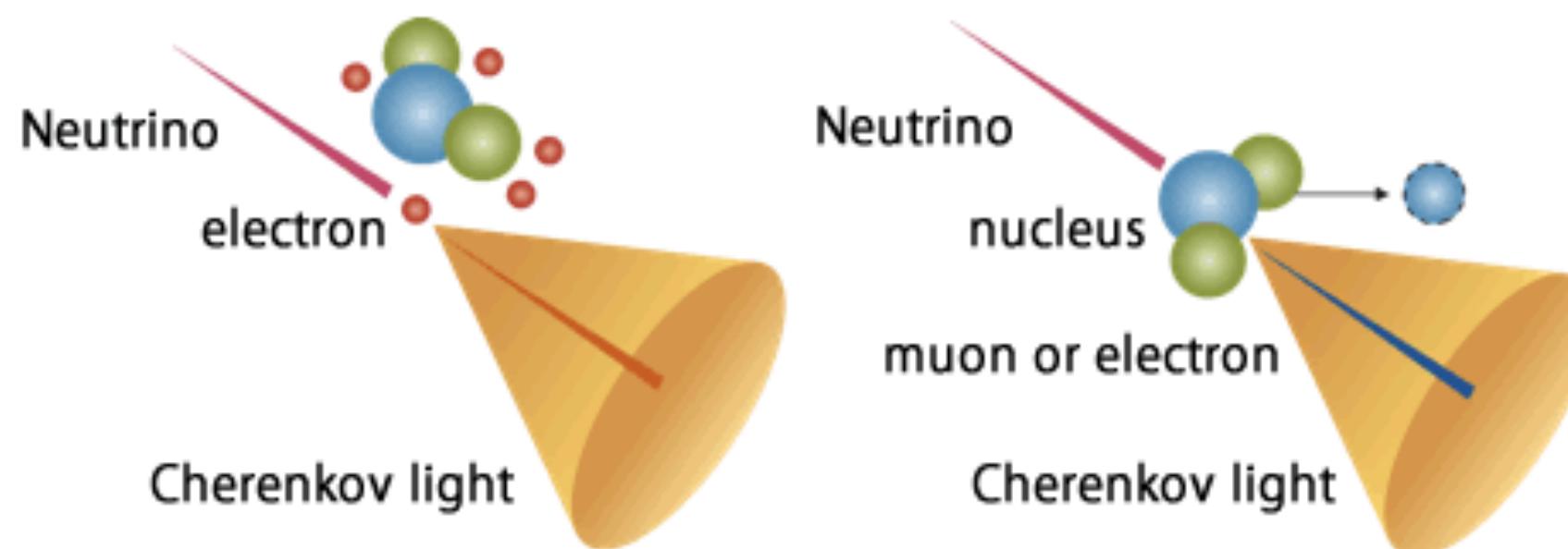
Neutrinos are produced with a definite flavor ( $e, \mu, \tau$ )  
but they **oscillate** between the different flavors as they propagate.

Need an even bigger detector if you want to search for rarer, high-energy neutrinos...

# IceCube

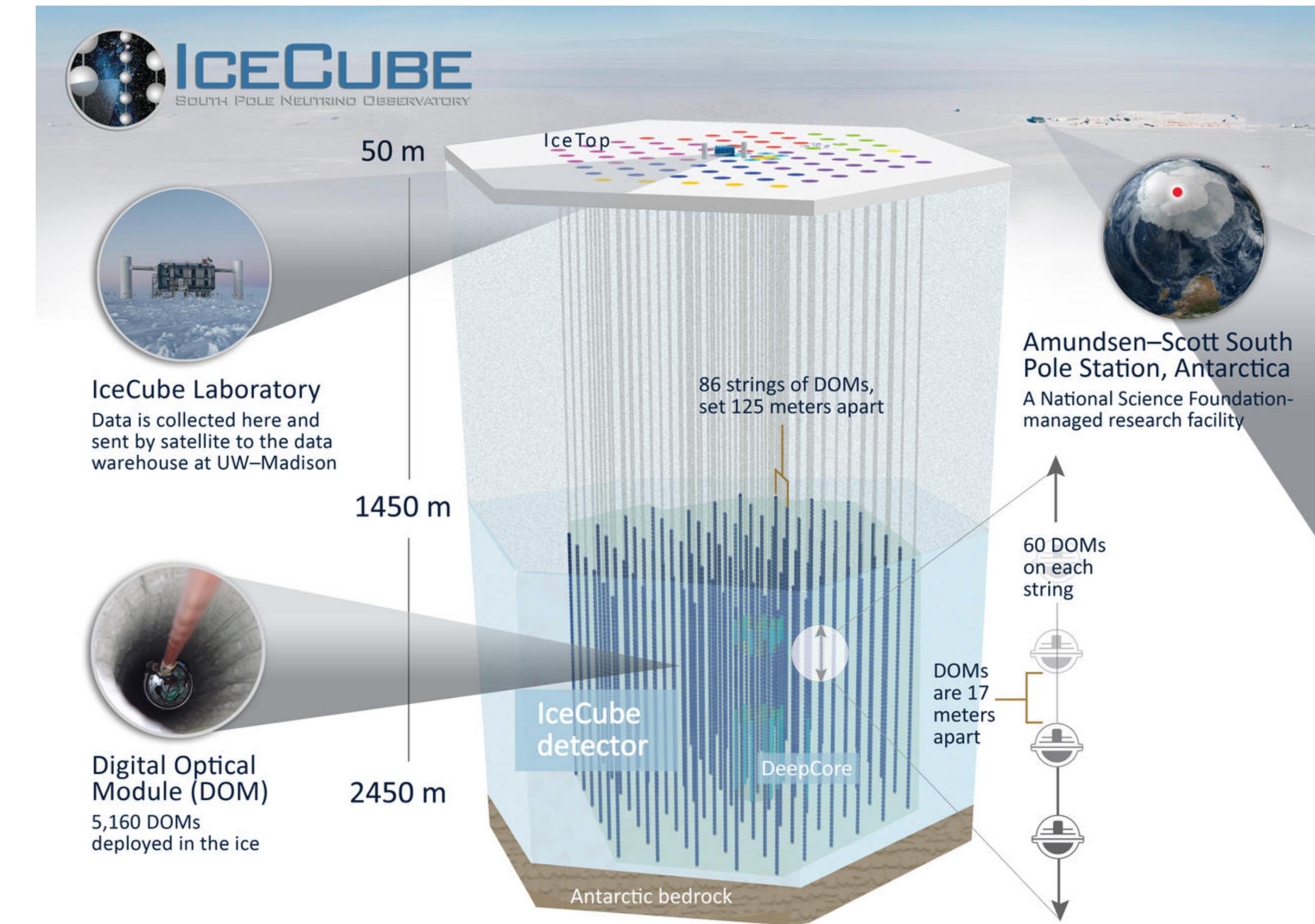
1701.03731

Look for the energetic particles produced by high-energy neutrino interactions over a huge volume:



Credit: Hyper-Kamiokande

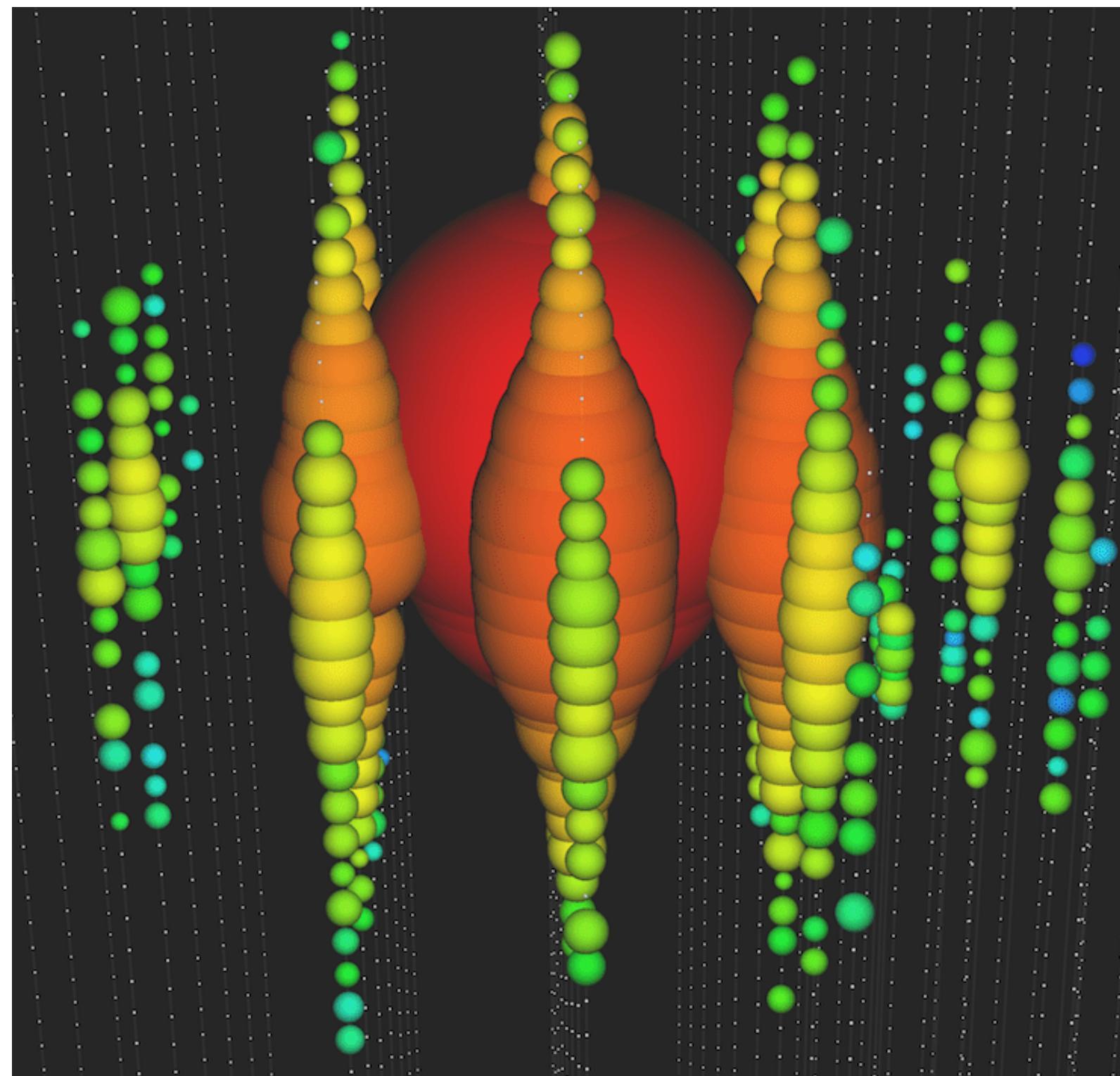
**IceCube:** a giant ice detector!  
~1 km<sup>3</sup> of instrumented volume



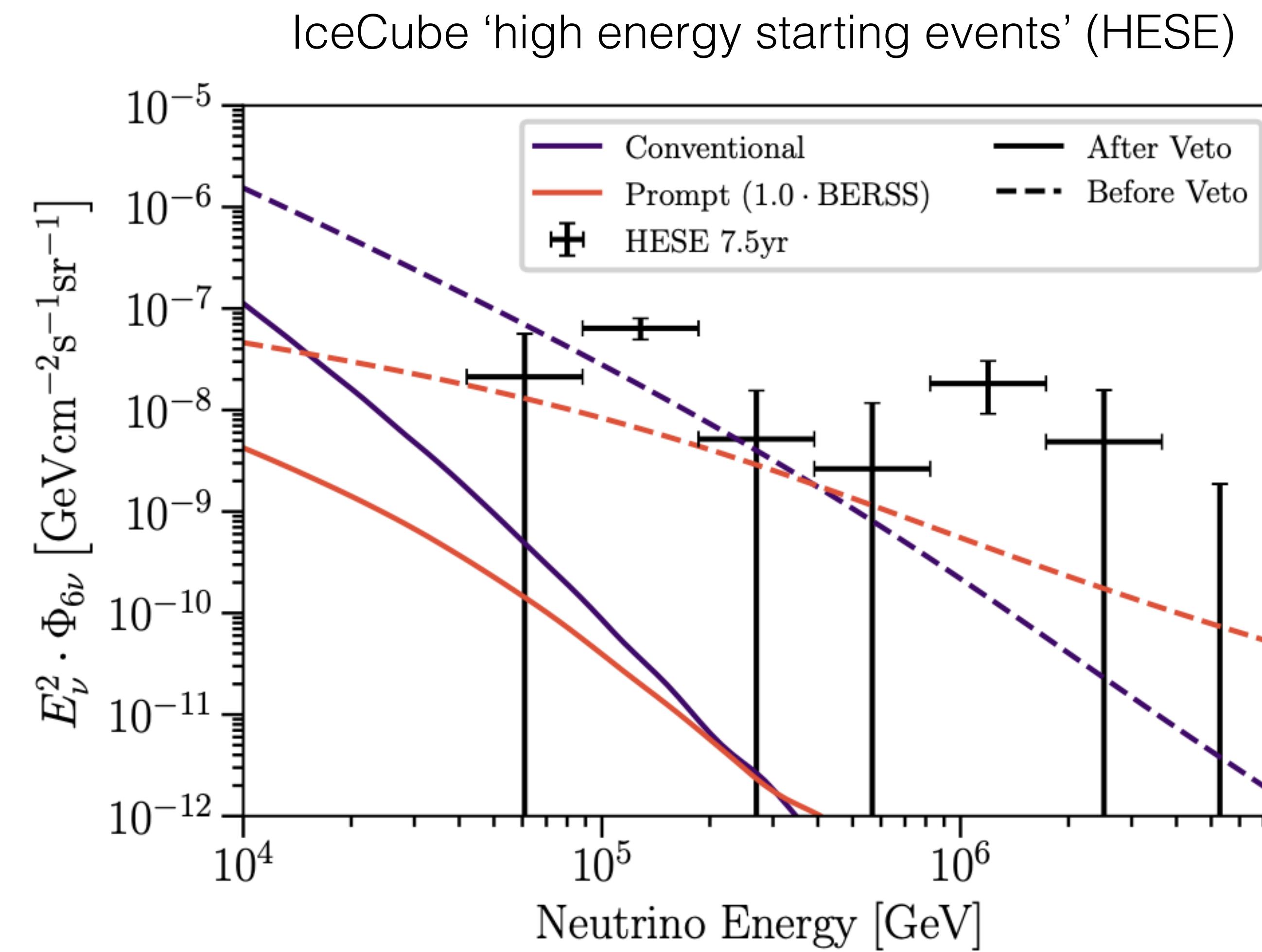
See also [SuperKamiokande](#), [ANTARES](#), [KM3NET](#)

# Ultra-high energy neutrinos

“Big Bird” - a 2 PeV neutrino, detected by IceCube on 4 December, 2012



Credit: IceCube Collaboration

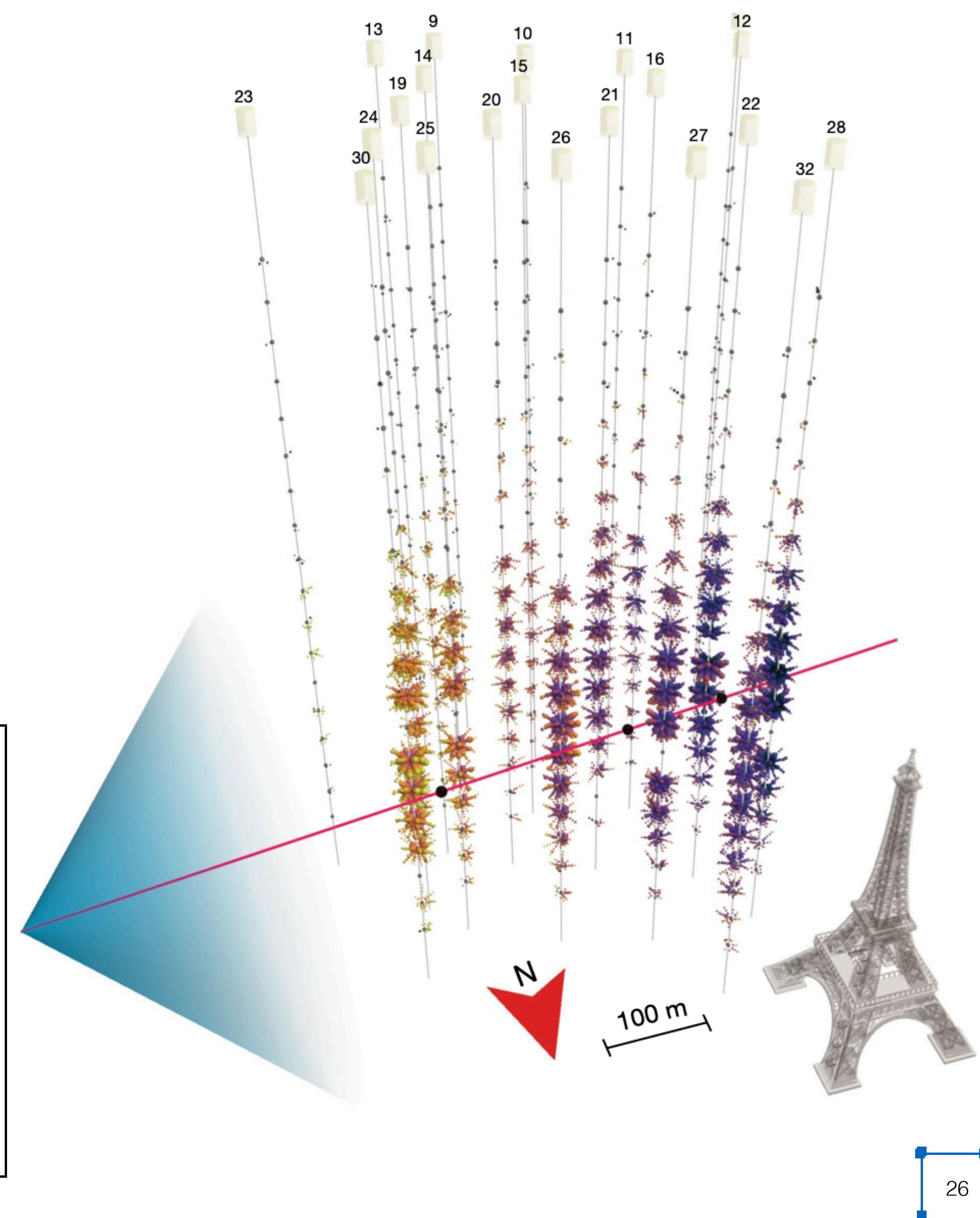
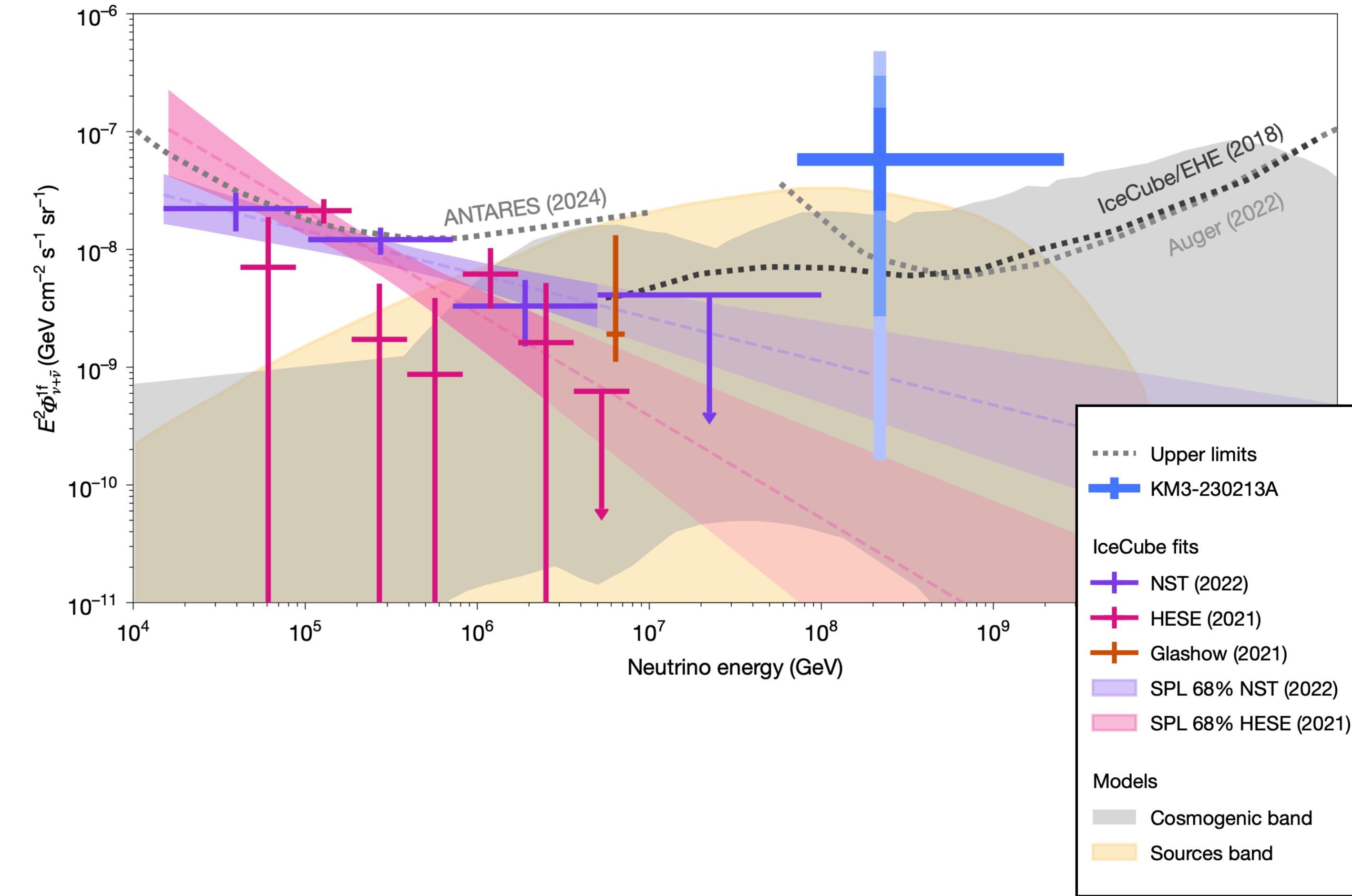


[2011.03545](#)

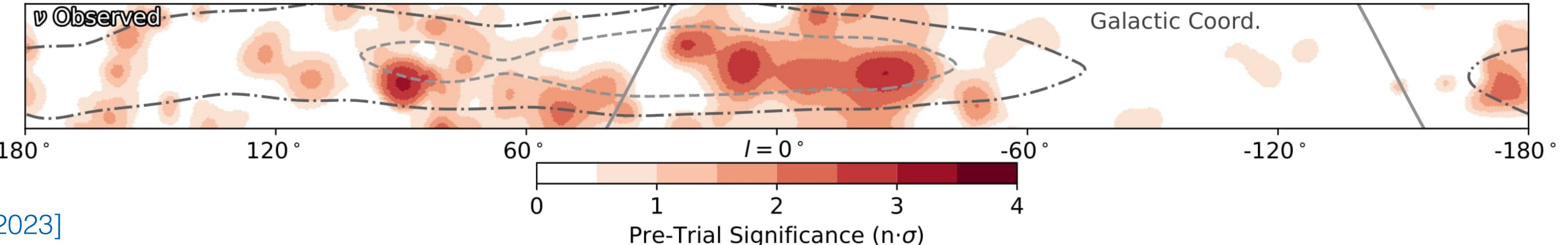
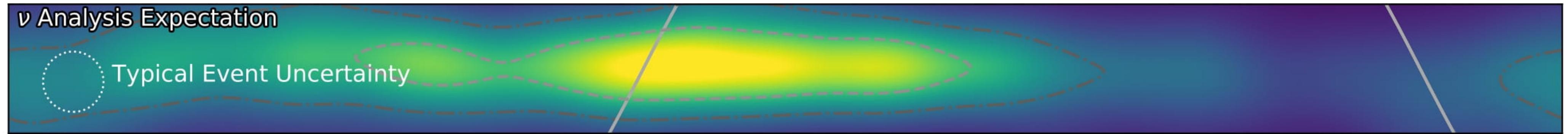
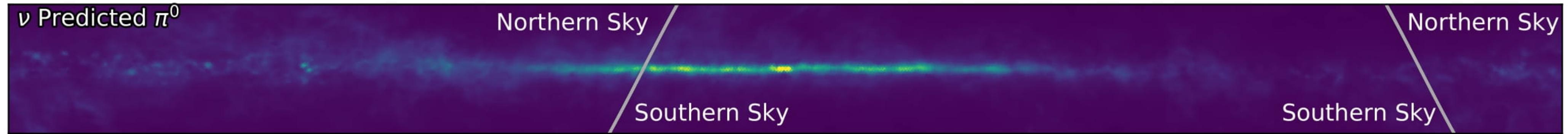
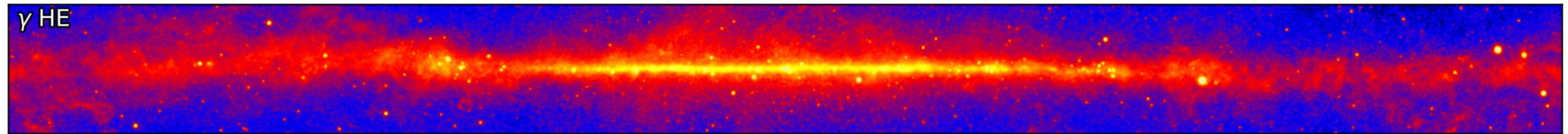
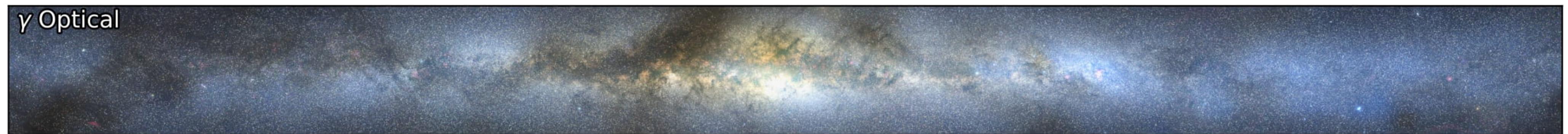
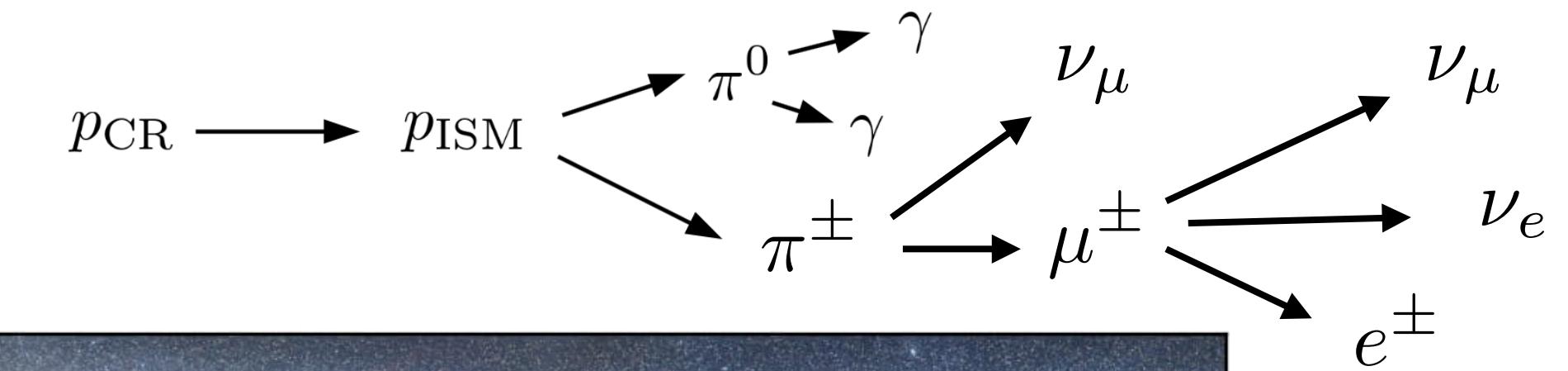
# Unknown Territory

**KM3NeT** - A neutrino detector under development in the Mediterranean Sea

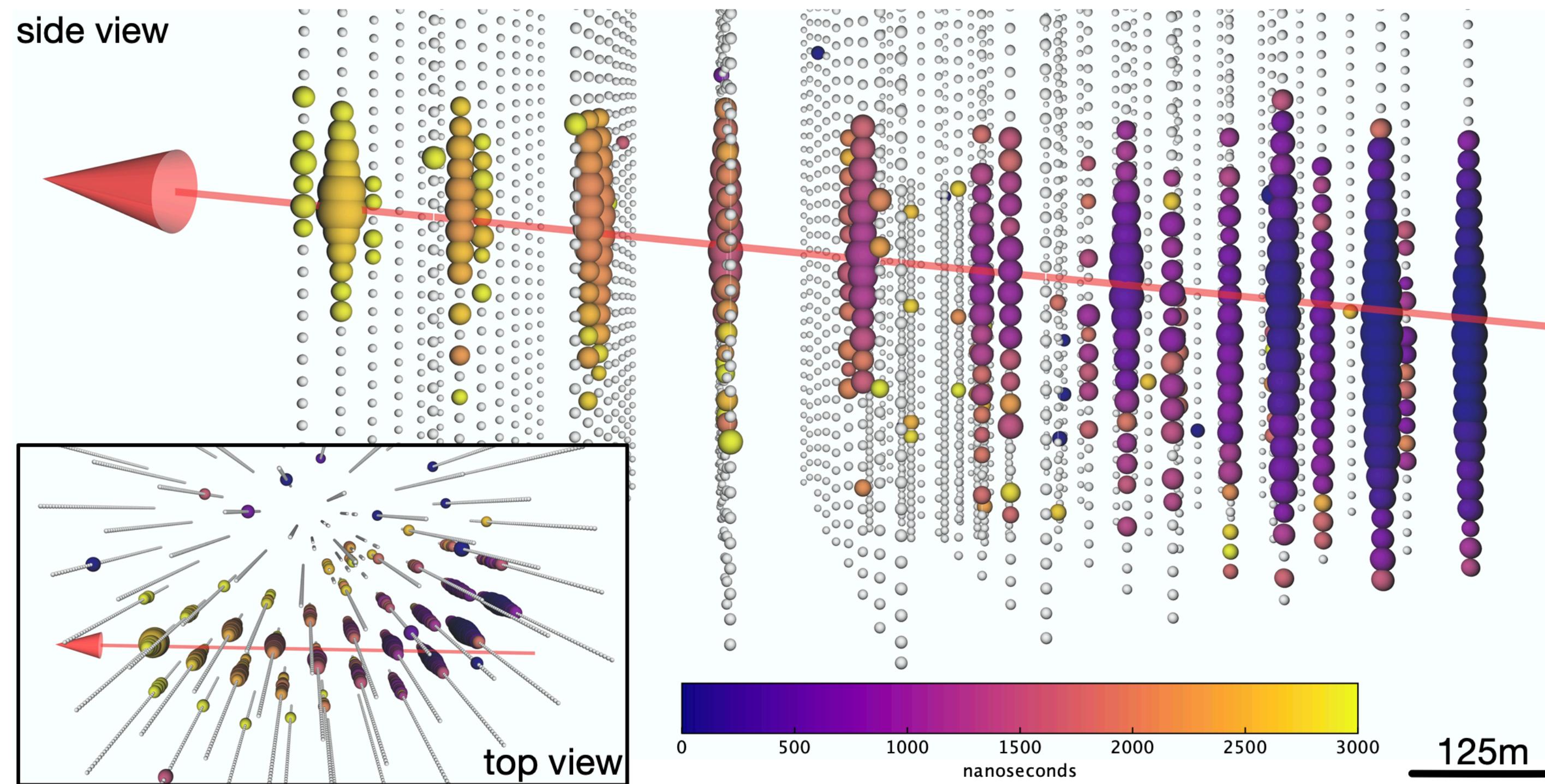
Recently reported a neutrino event with energy  $E_\nu \sim 120 \text{ PeV}$



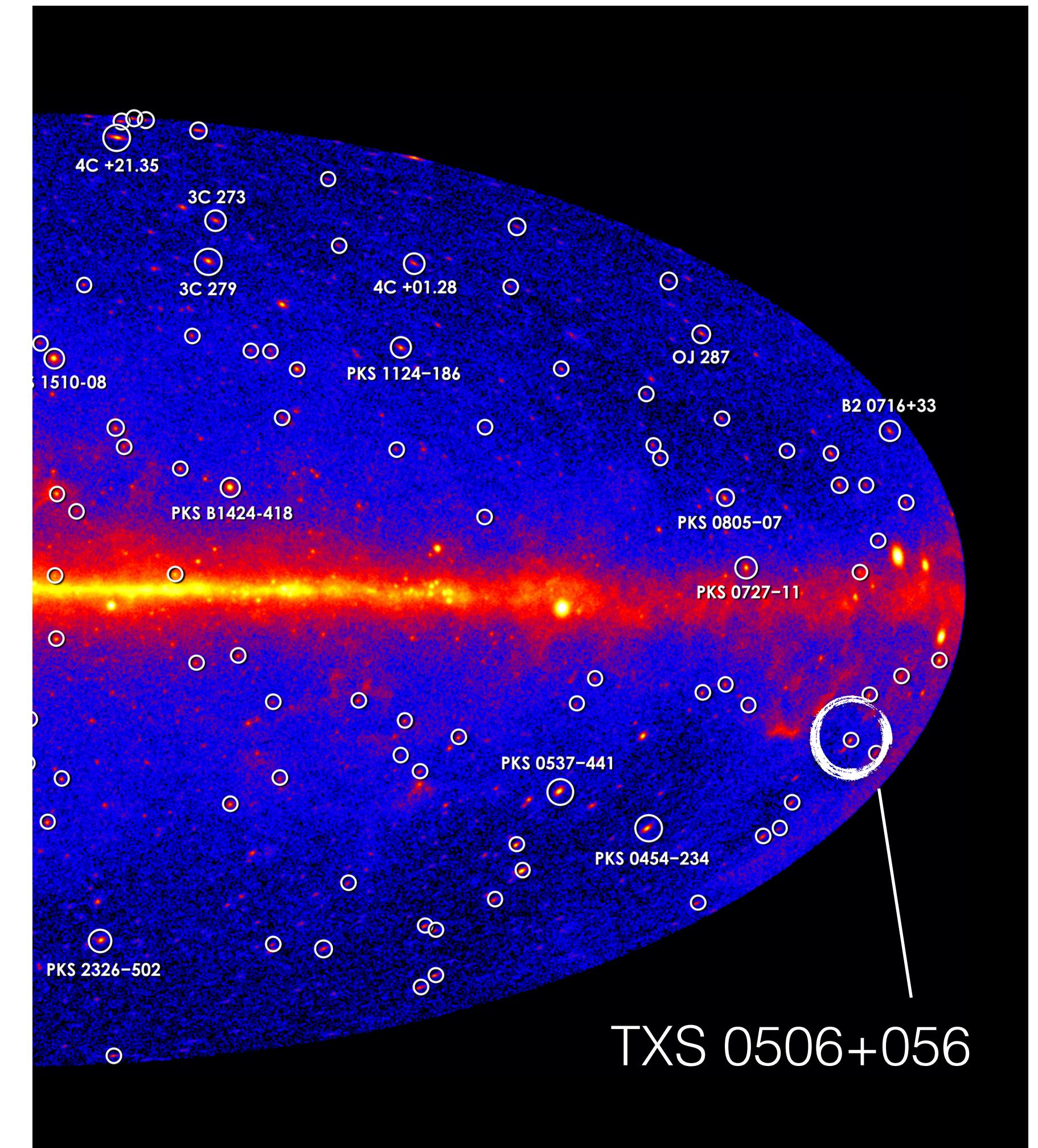
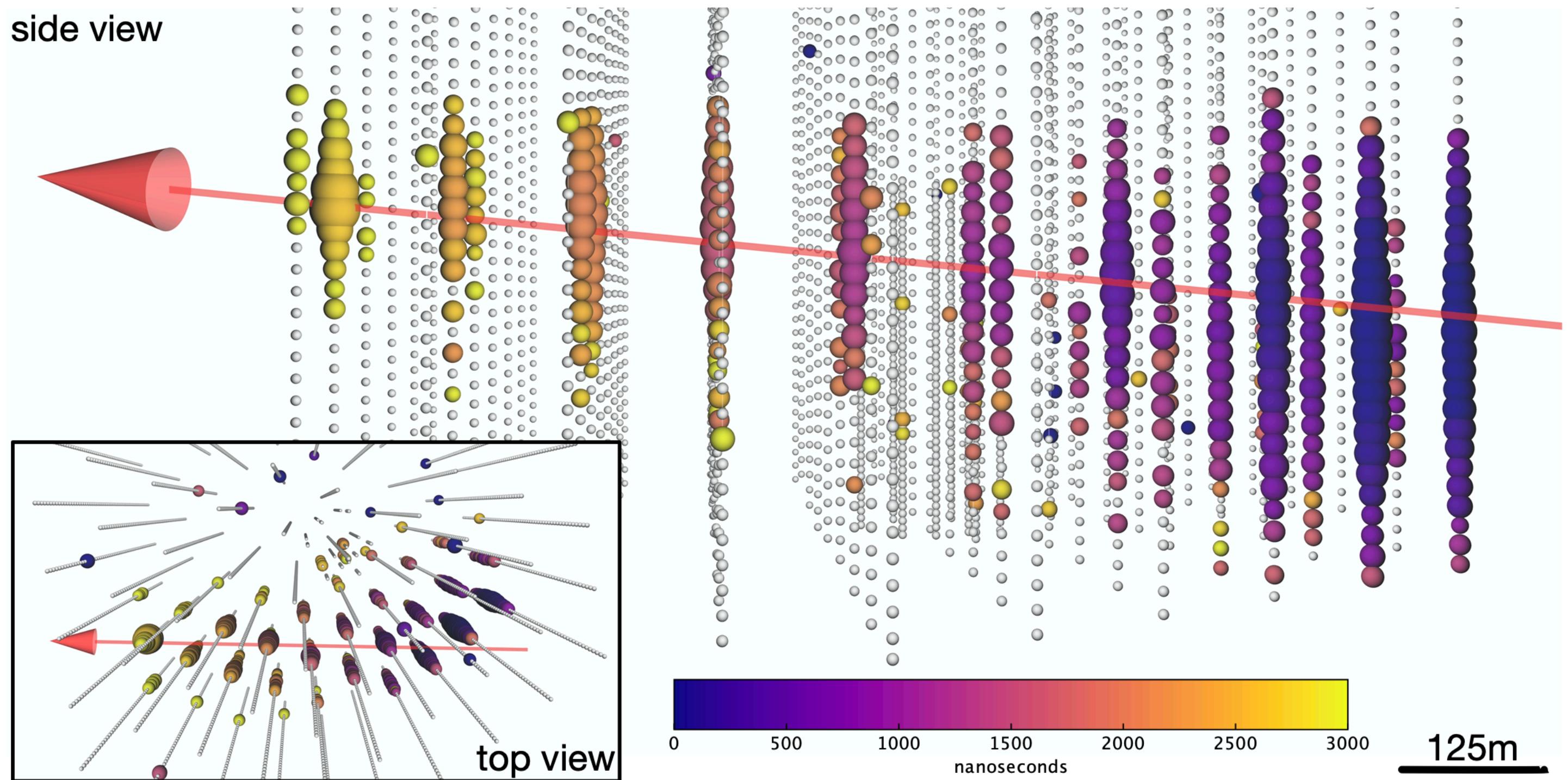
# Milky Way shines bright in Neutrinos!



22 September 2017



$$E_\nu \sim 290 \text{ TeV}$$

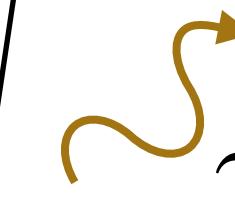
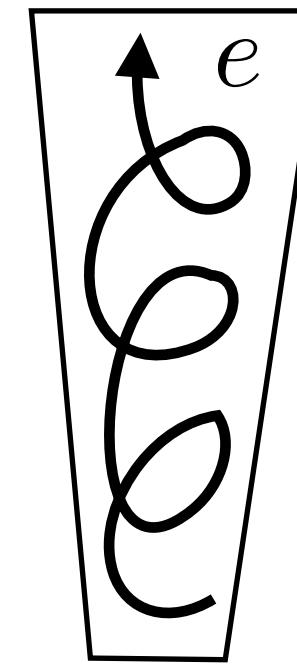


TXS 0506+056 is a known blazar!

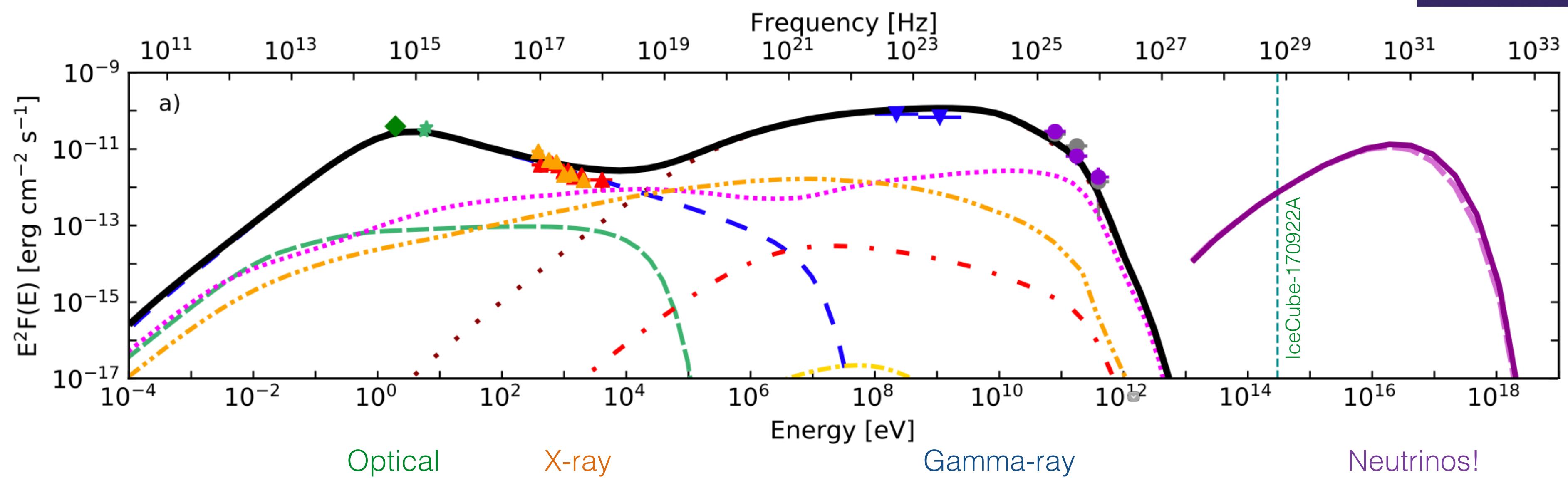
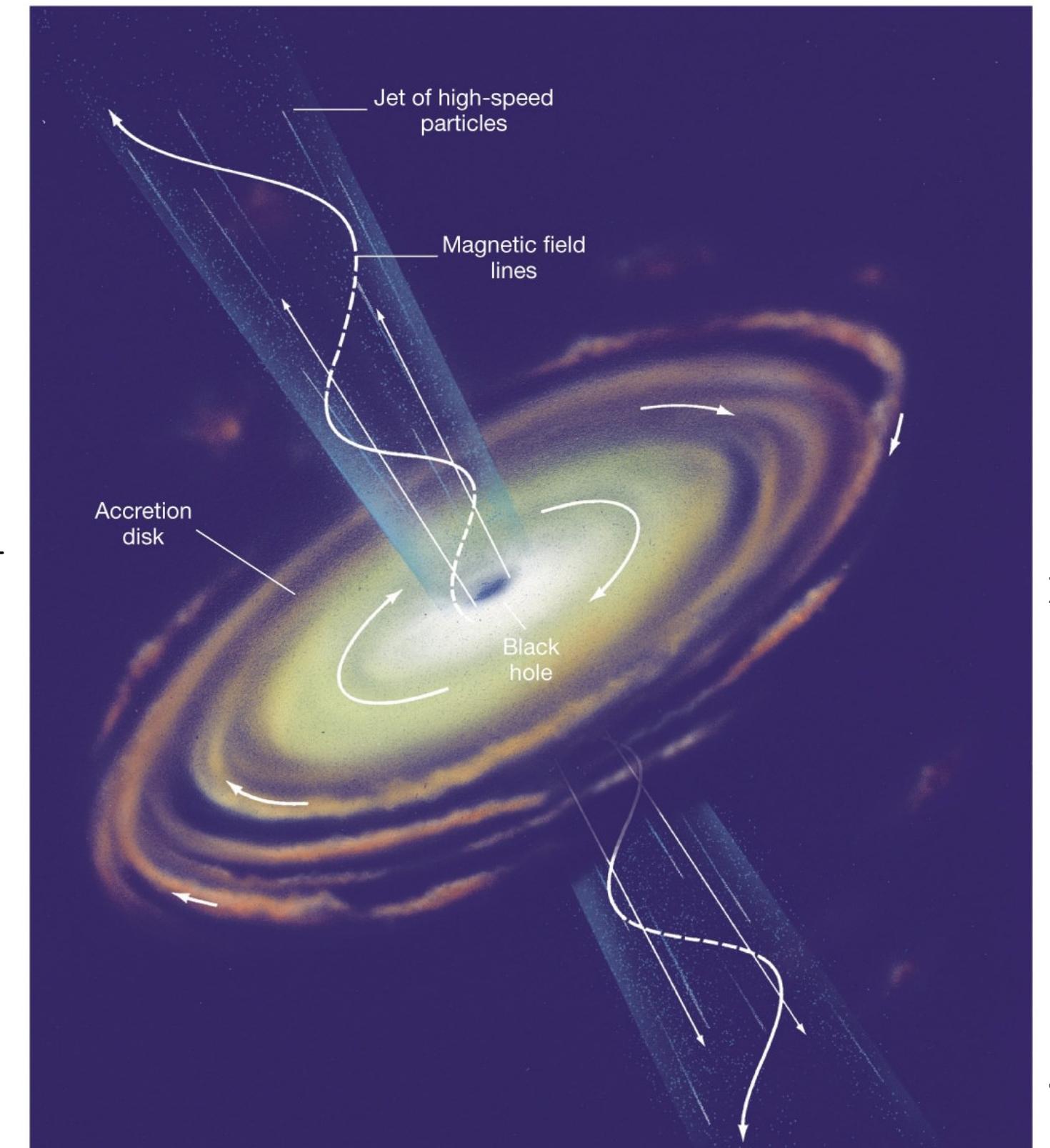
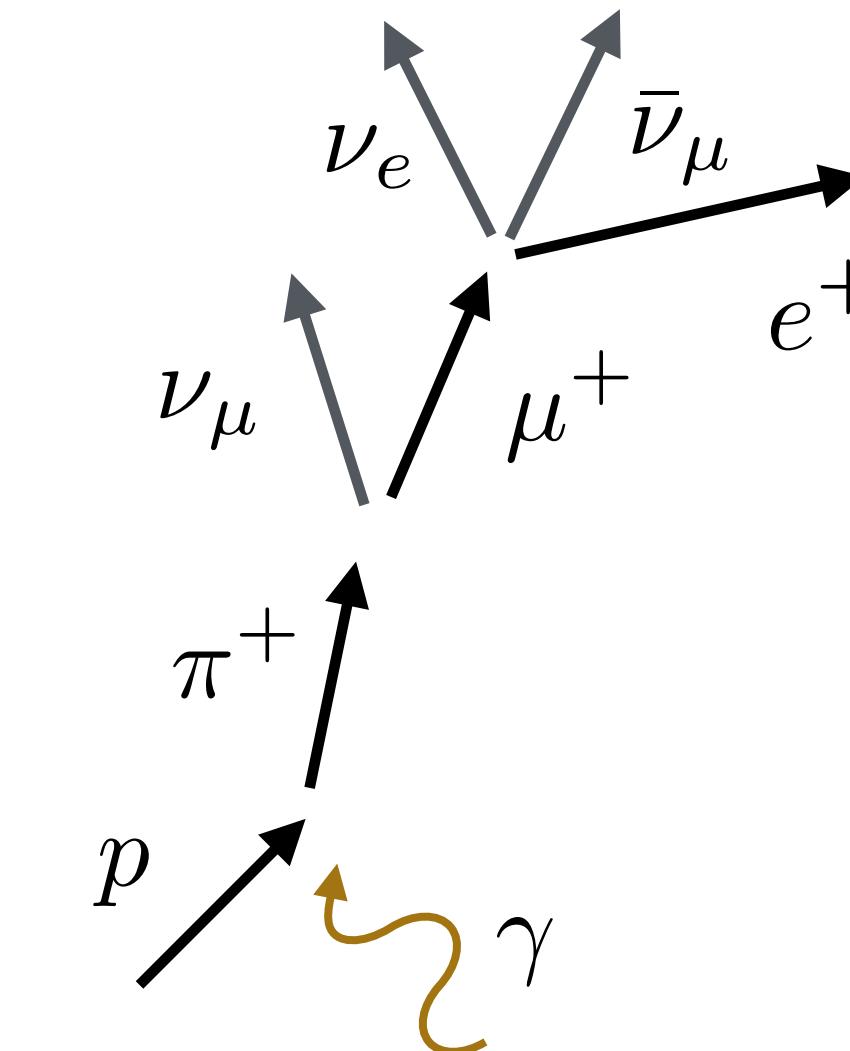
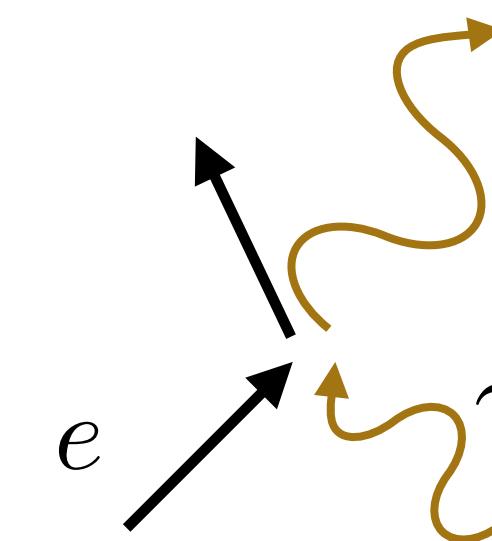
It was flaring in gamma rays  
at the time of IceCube-170922A!

# Blazar emission

Electron synchrotron



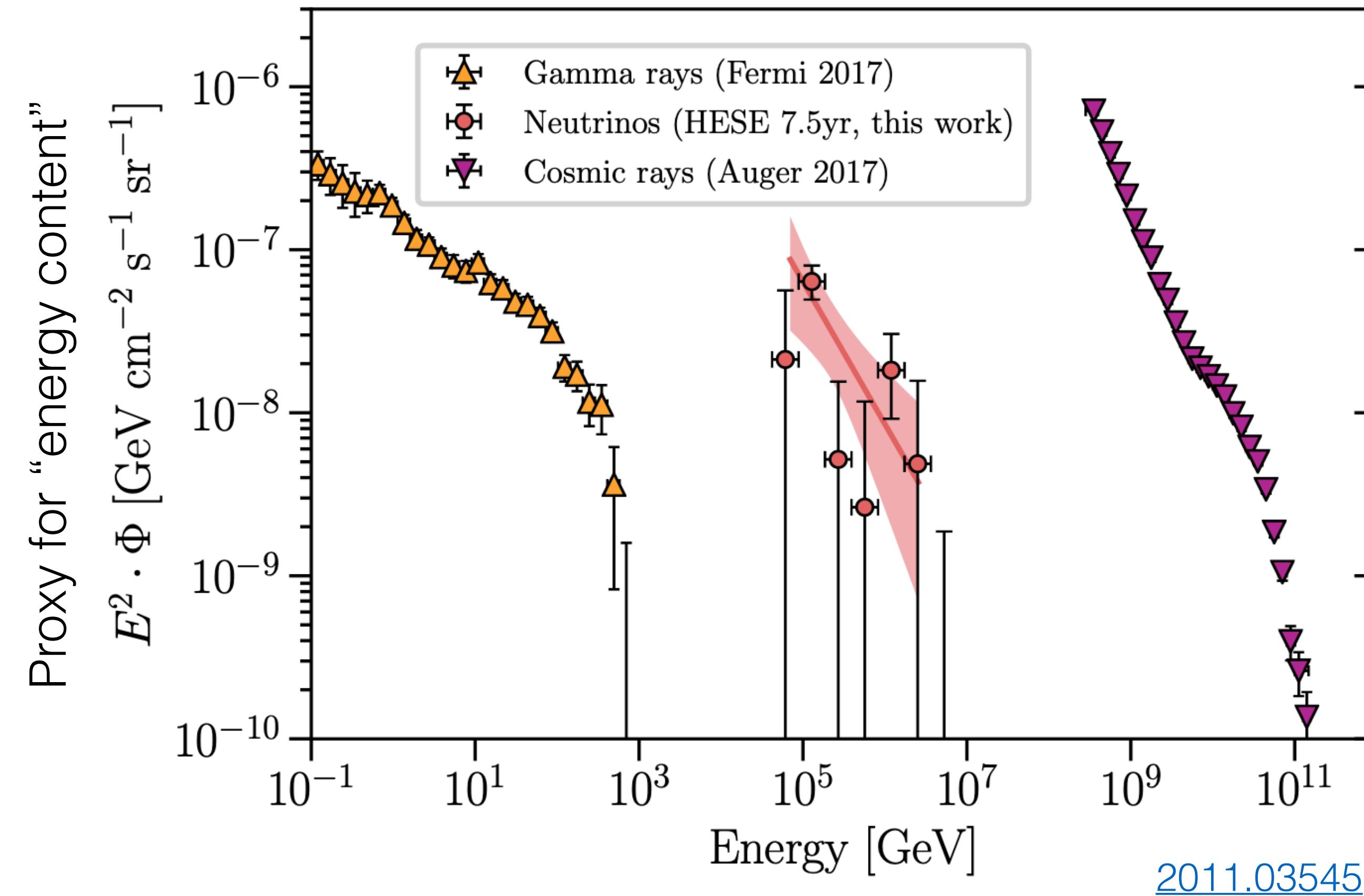
Inverse Compton



# Violent and Energetic Universe

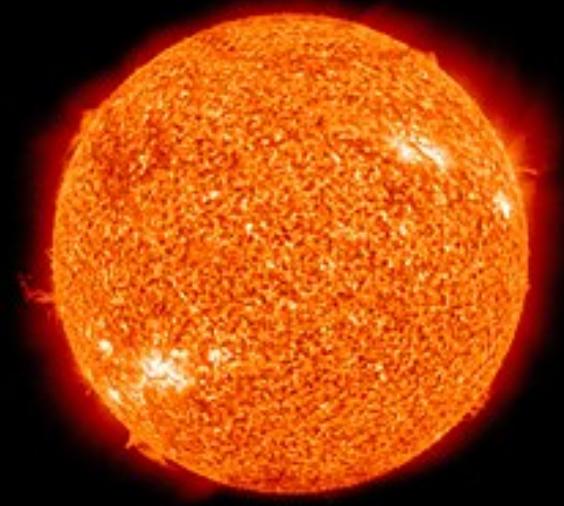
1

A complex and interconnected ecosystem:



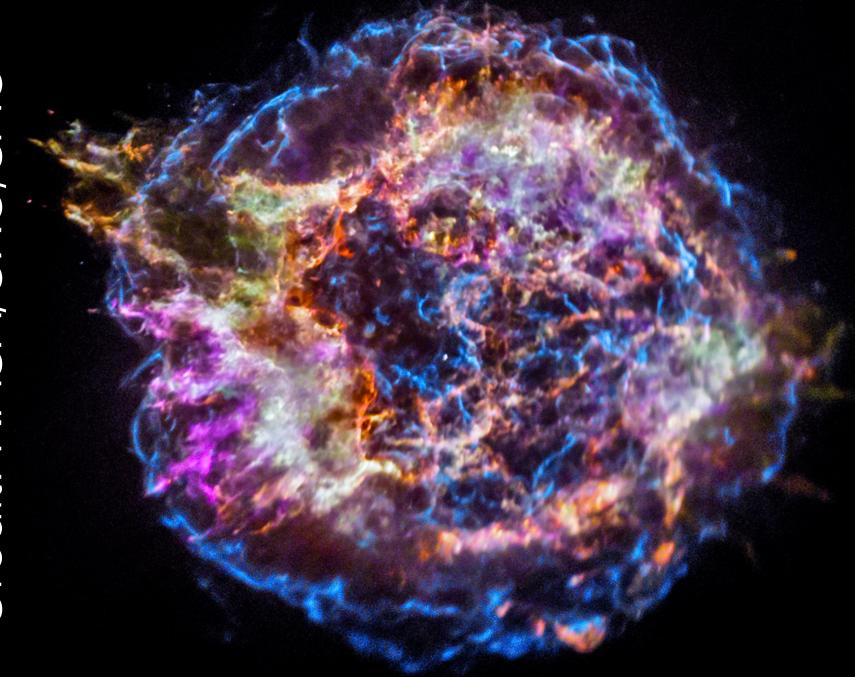
Understanding it could shed light on the most violent processes in the Universe,  
and on New Physics yet to be discovered...

The Sun



Credit: NASA/CXC/SAO

Supernovae

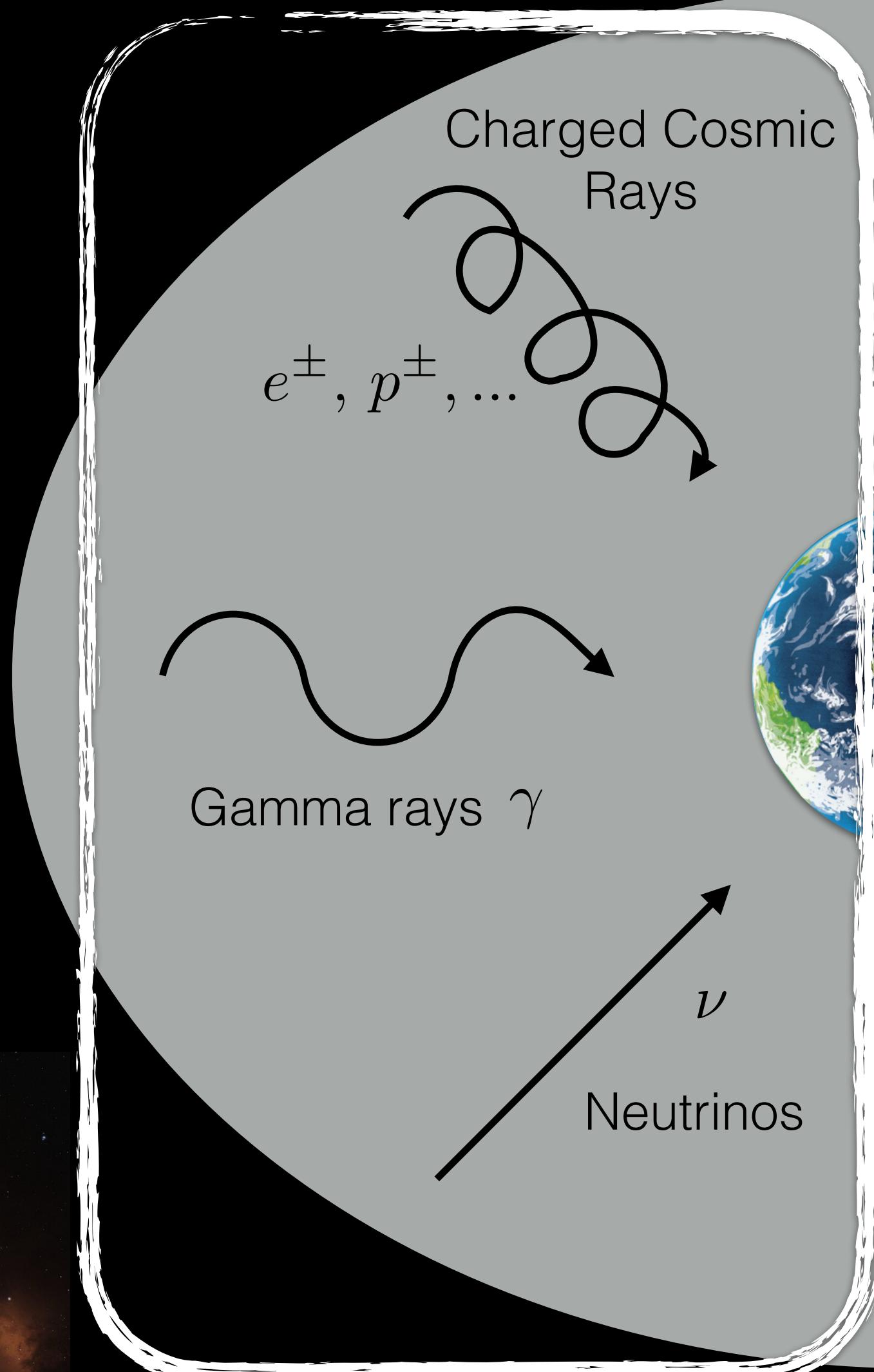


Credit: ESO/M. Kornmesser

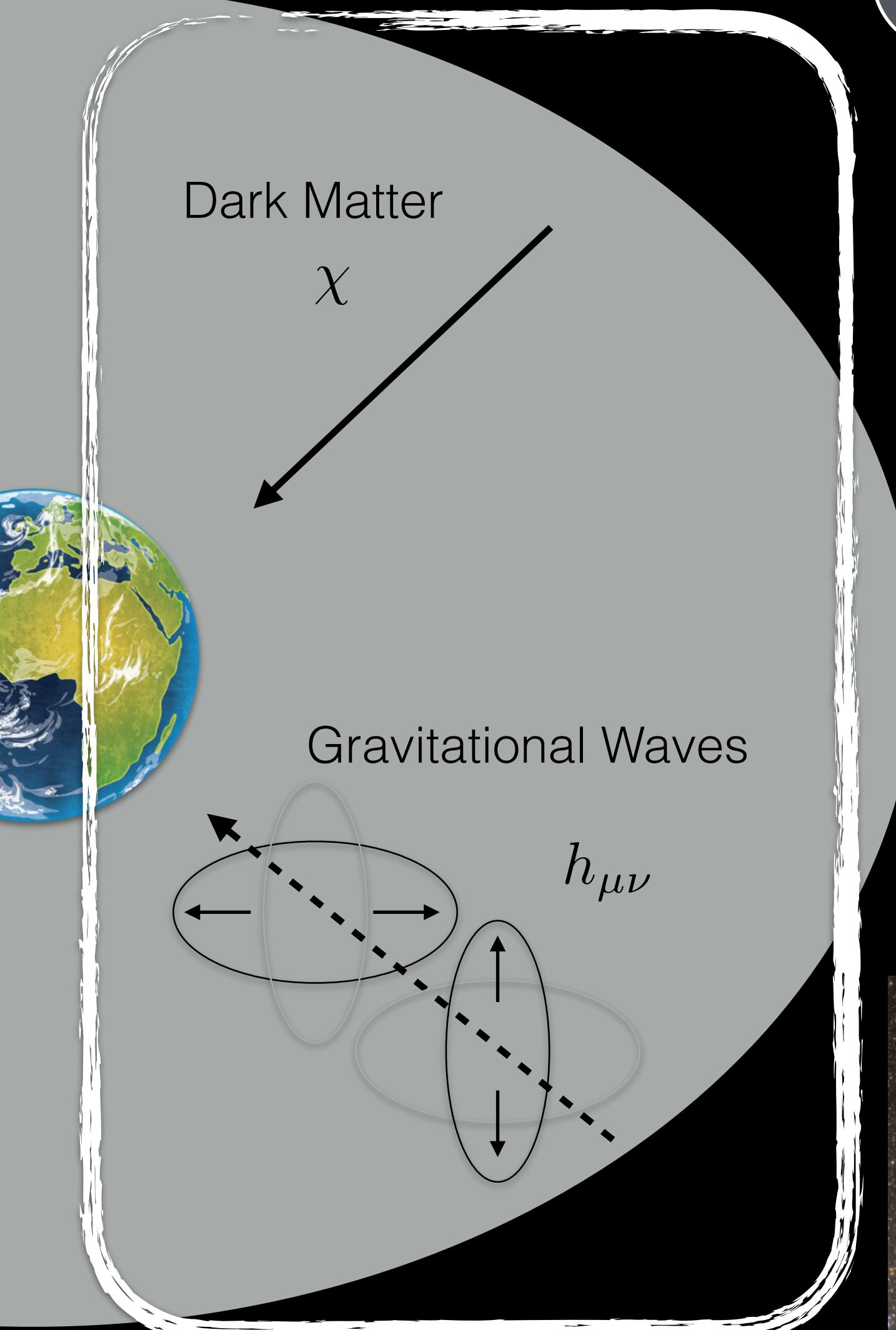
Quasars/AGN



Lecture 1

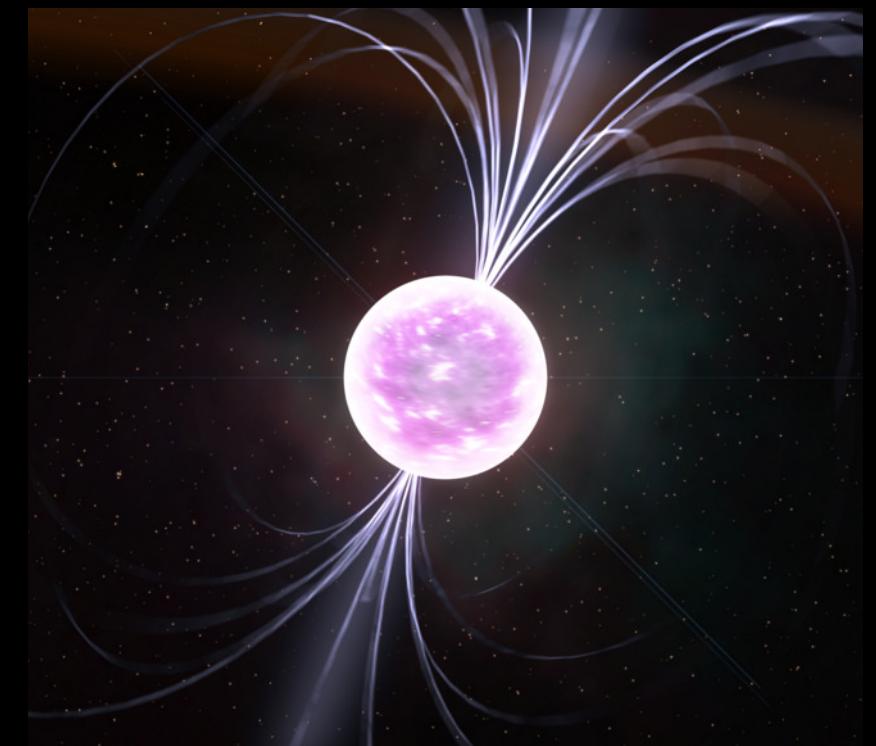


Lecture 2



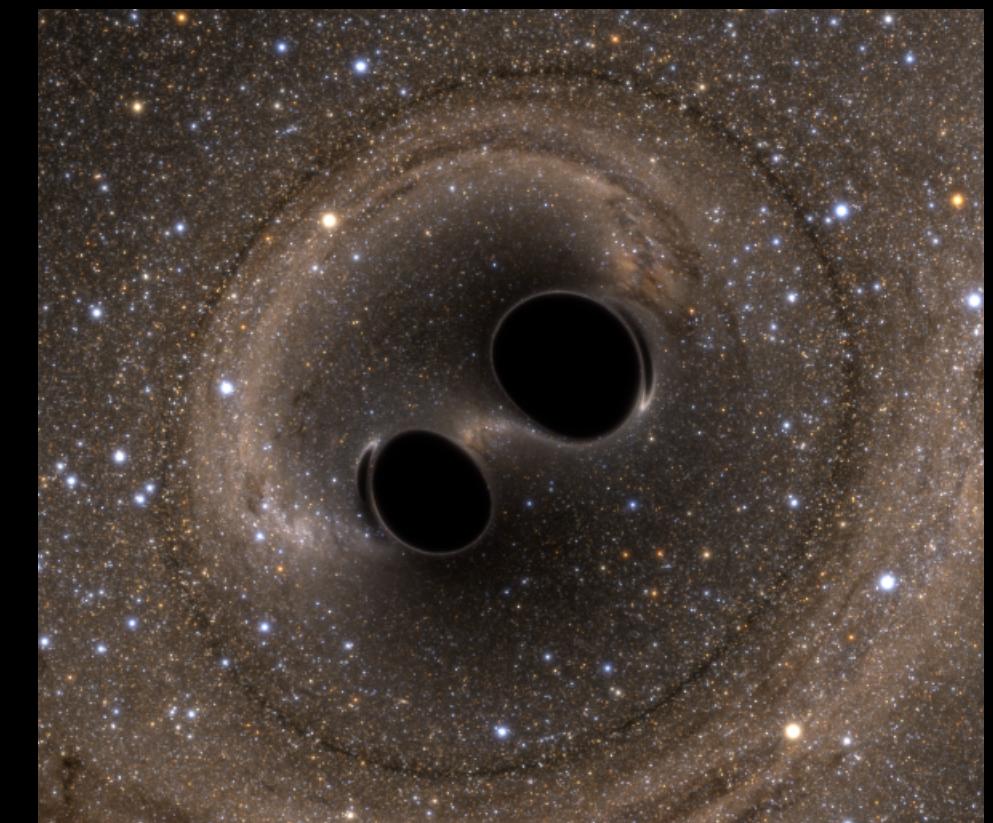
????

Pulsars



Credit: Kevin Gill / Flickr

BH/NS Mergers



Credit: SXS Lensing

# Reading Suggestions

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Slides here: [bradkav.net/talks](http://bradkav.net/talks)

*Astroparticle Physics: Theory and Phenomenology*, Günter Sigl, [Atlantis Press Paris](#) (2017)

*Lectures on Astroparticle Physics*, Günter Sigl, [hep-ph/0408165](#) (2004)

*Introduction to Cosmic Rays*, Peter Biermann & Günter Sigl, [astro-ph/0202425](#) (2002)

*An Introduction to Particle Dark Matter*, Stefano Profumo, Leonardo Giani & Oliver F. Piattella, [arXiv:1910.05610](#) (2019)

*The basic physics of the binary black hole merger GW150914*, LIGO & Virgo Collaborations, [arXiv:1608.01940](#) (2016)

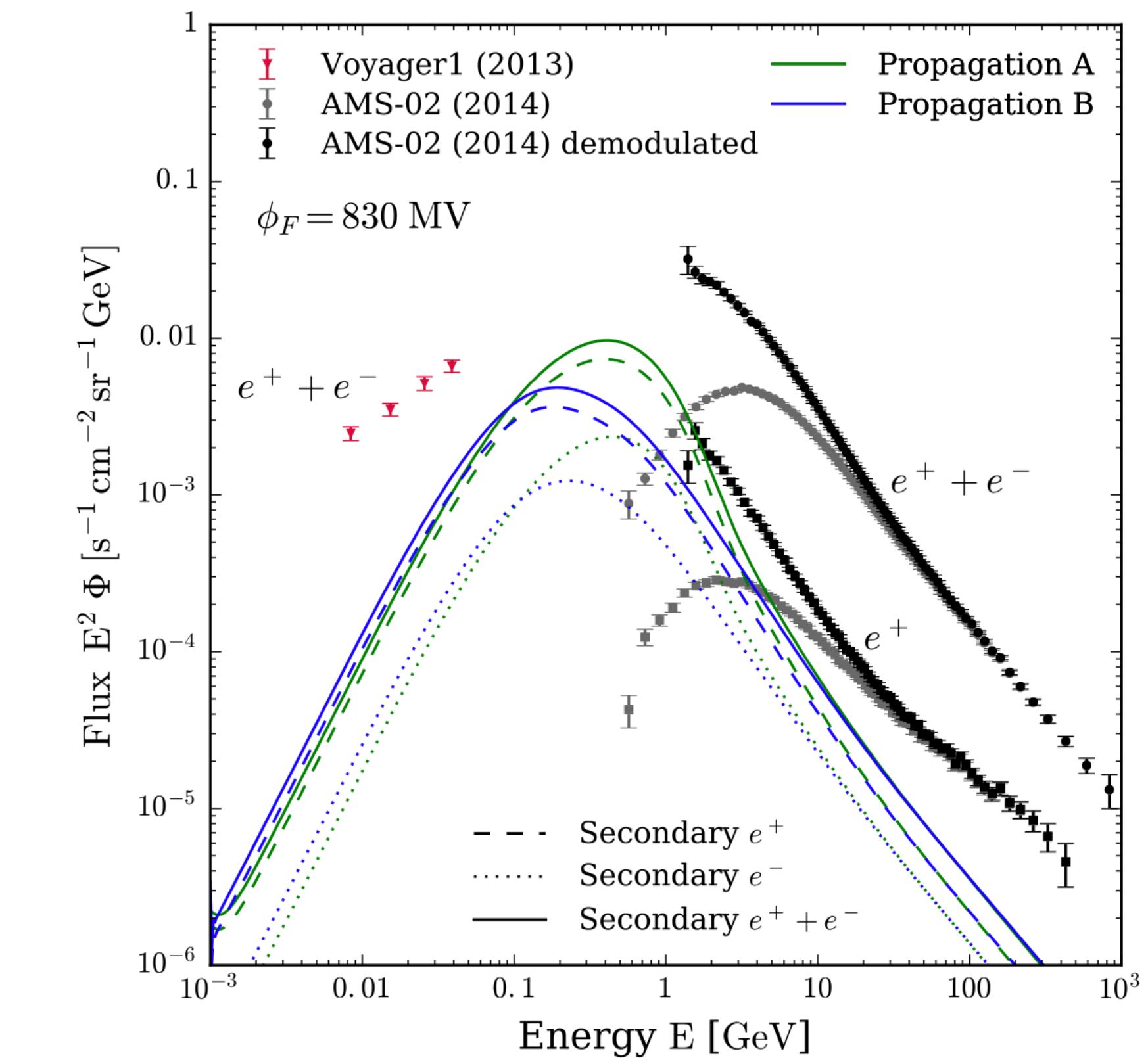
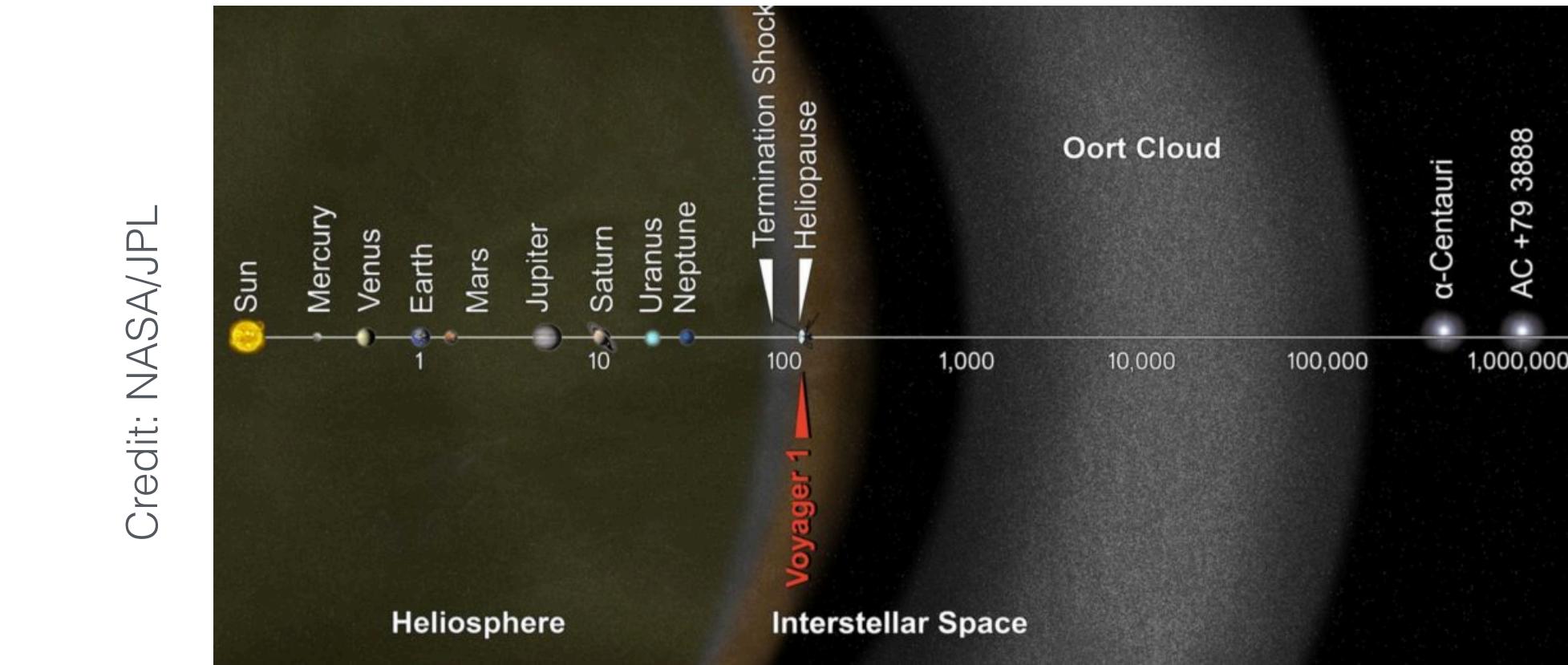
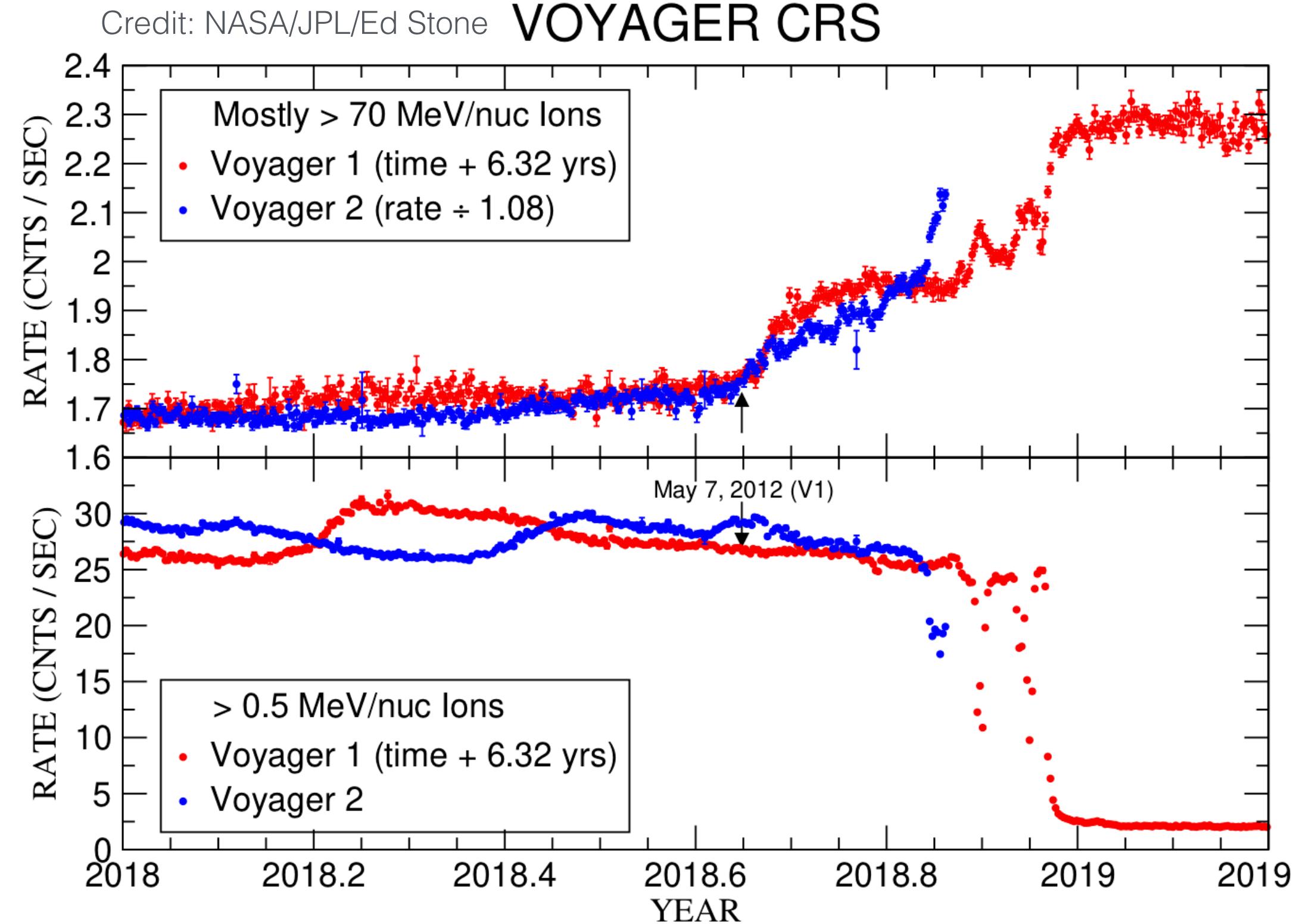
Check [arXiv](#), and summaries on popular blogs like Sunny Vagnozzi's [HisDarkCMB](#) or Mauricio Bustamante's [Daily arXiv Picks!](#)

**Feel free to email me** at [kavanagh@ifca.unican.es](mailto:kavanagh@ifca.unican.es)!

## Additional Slides

# Voyager (and solar modulation)

Voyager 1 - launched 1977,  
crossed heliopause 2012

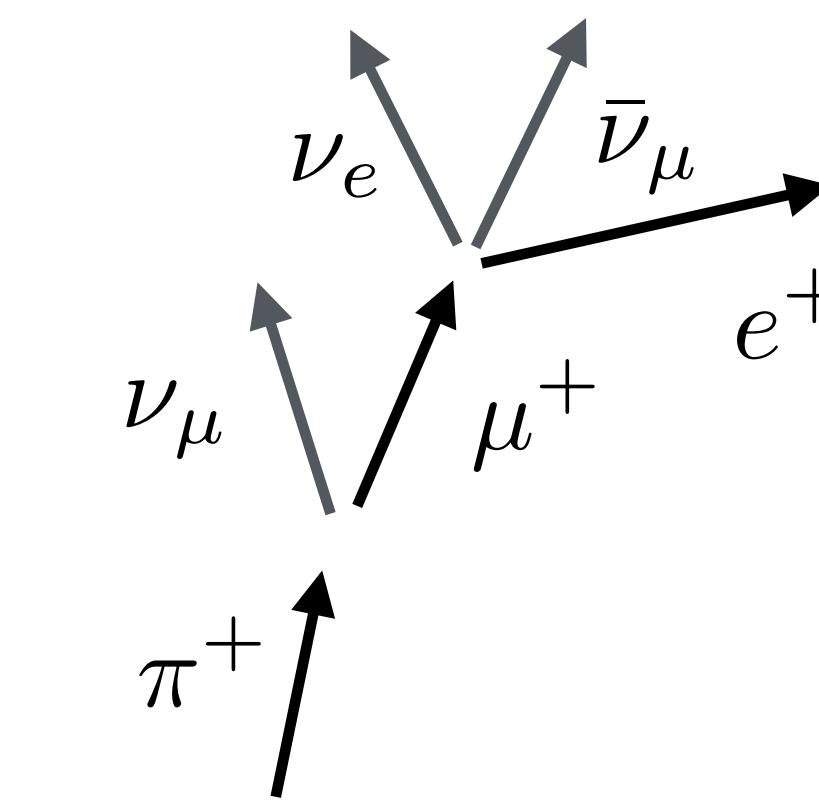


[arXiv:1612.07698](https://arxiv.org/abs/1612.07698)

# Origin of ultra high energy neutrinos?

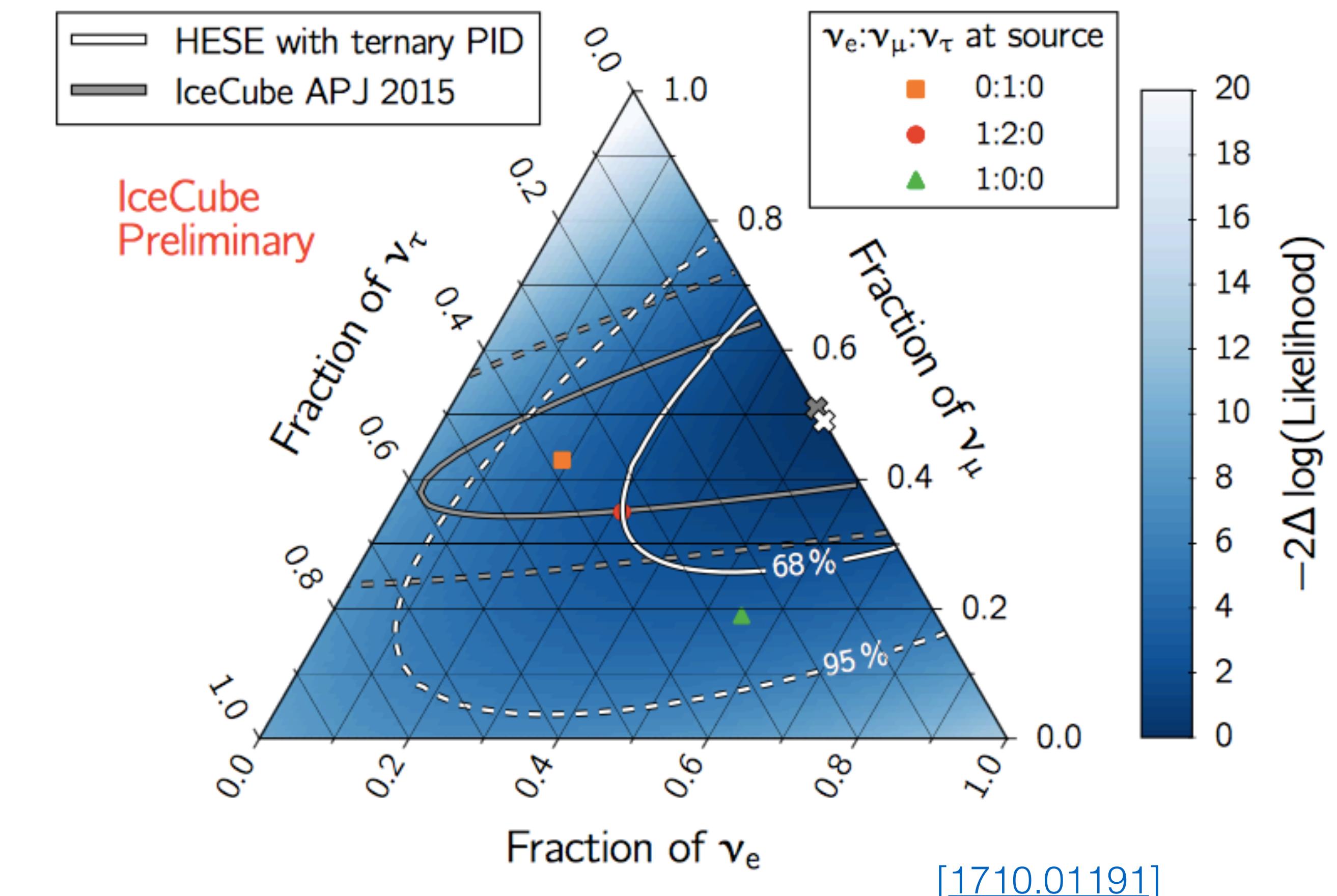
Flavour composition can hint at how astrophysical neutrinos are produced:

E.g. decay of energetic pions:



$$\Phi_e^0 : \Phi_\mu^0 : \Phi_\tau^0 = 1 : 2 : 0$$

Oscillation should lead to a 1:1:1 ratio  
at IceCube...



[1710.01191]