

# Youth Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Sahaya G. Selvam, sdb  
selvamsdb@gmail.com



# Where do you come from?





Home is where I am.

REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN  
 VISA  
 No 105562  
 Place Of Issue  
 Name ANTONY S. GNANASELVAM  
 Visa No. SET  
 Date 12  
 Validity 12  
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 Purpose of  
 Rect.No.  
 Signature

ANTONY SAHAYA  
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 30-10-2009  
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 IN TERM-TIME  
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 26 SEP 2005

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 19 SEP 2005  
 09 SEP 2006  
 NAIROBI

VCD<<ANTONY<SAHAYA<<<<  
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 GNANASELVAM, ANTONY SAHAYA  
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# Outline of the Presentation

## Youth Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**1**

What is  
special about  
the youth in  
21<sup>st</sup> Century

**2**

What is  
Spirituality?

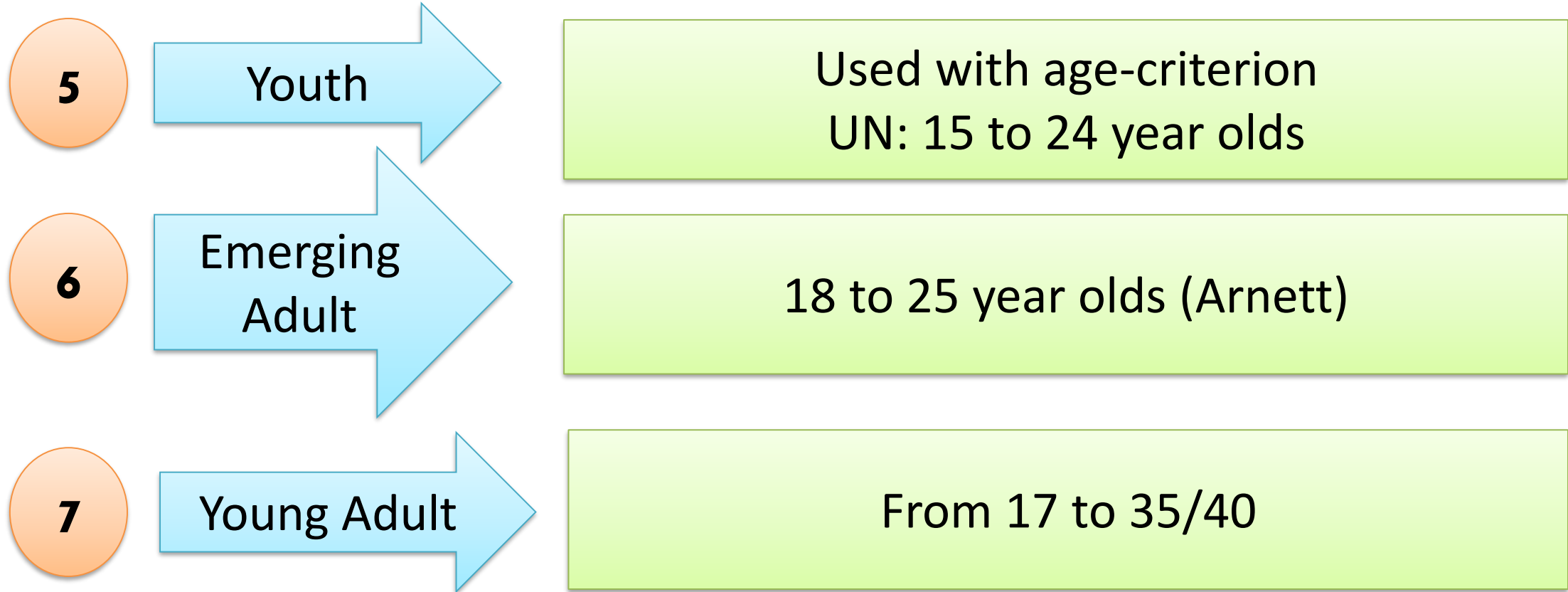
**3**

Dimensions  
of youth  
spirituality

# How would you define?

1	Child	Legally - up to the age of 18 (minor) Psychologically – up to puberty
2	Youngster	Someone who is still young
3	Teenager	13 to 19-year old Used in English since 1911 (teenage)
4	Adolescent	Very relative – related to puberty

# How would you define?



# Access to the slides

Go to >> [www.sahayaselvam.org](http://www.sahayaselvam.org)

Scroll down to the third entry

**Myth**

vs

**Truth**

- Young people are not serious about life.
- Youth, these days, have lost their moral stand.
- They are not interested in spiritual matters.
- Youth like reading only matters of entertainment.
- They like to be challenged to something big.



## Grumbling about young people...

Young people: their faults are nearly all errors of exaggeration. They overdo in cases of love and in all other things. They imagine that they know everything, and stubbornly stand on their point. They like to crack jokes for joking is the bad mannered-ness of the well mannered.

Aristotle, 300BC

A magnifying glass is positioned over the words "Truth" and "Myth" written in a large, bold, black font. The magnifying glass is tilted, and its lens is focused on the word "Truth". The word "Myth" is partially visible to the right. The background is a dark, textured grey.

# The Truth...

“Teenagers are a by-product of contemporary society, a society so determined to get the most out of life ...

We don't quite know what to do with teenagers anymore; their energy so often goes to waste.

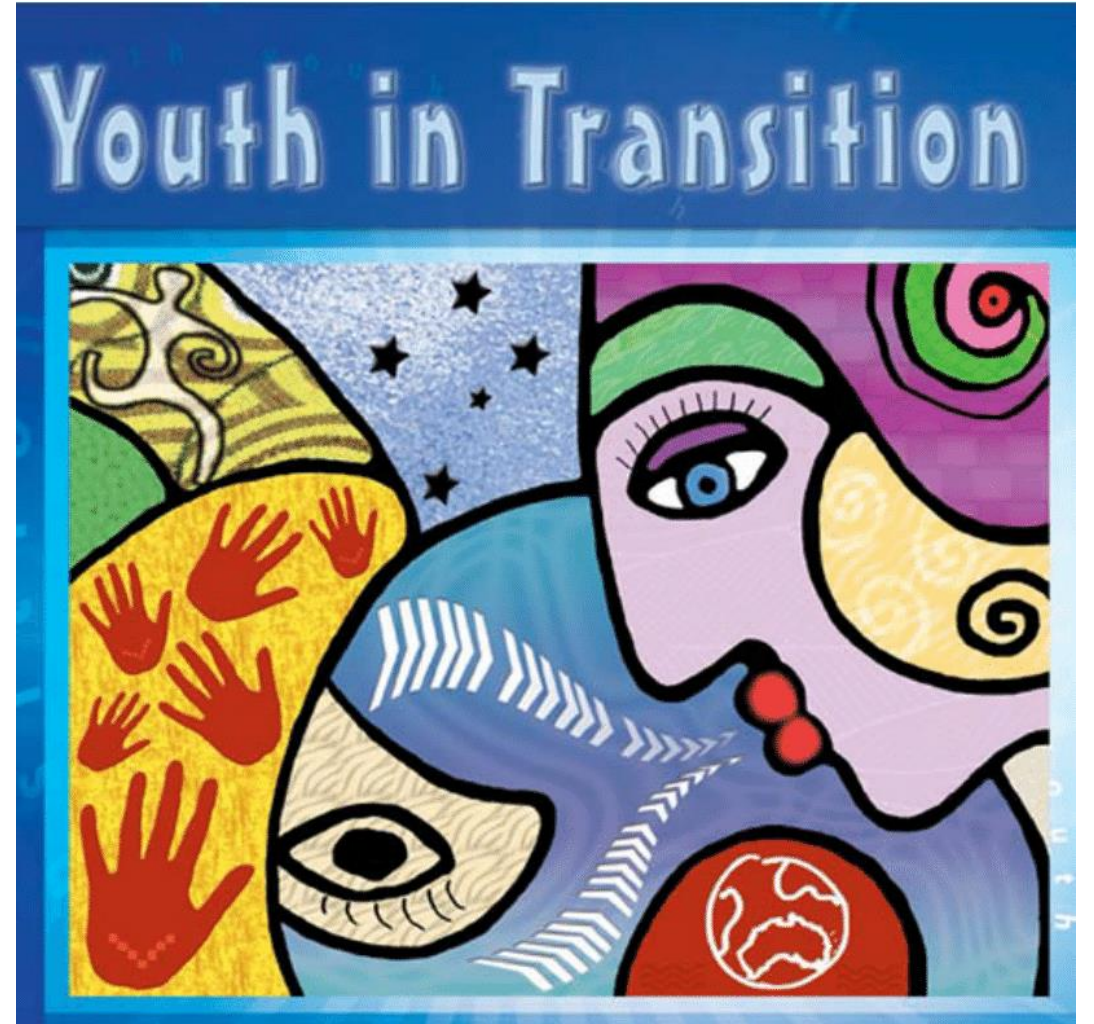
They really do feel incomplete. And so do we, as we realize that we are no longer part of that interconnected world that was our ancestors' way of transmitting the wisdom of the ages.”

John Abbott, 2001

1

What is  
special about  
the youth in  
21<sup>st</sup> Century

1.  
21<sup>st</sup> Century is  
marked by  
**FLUIDITY**



What will be  
2050  
or  
2100  
like?



Education



Media



Job-Market



Science & Technology



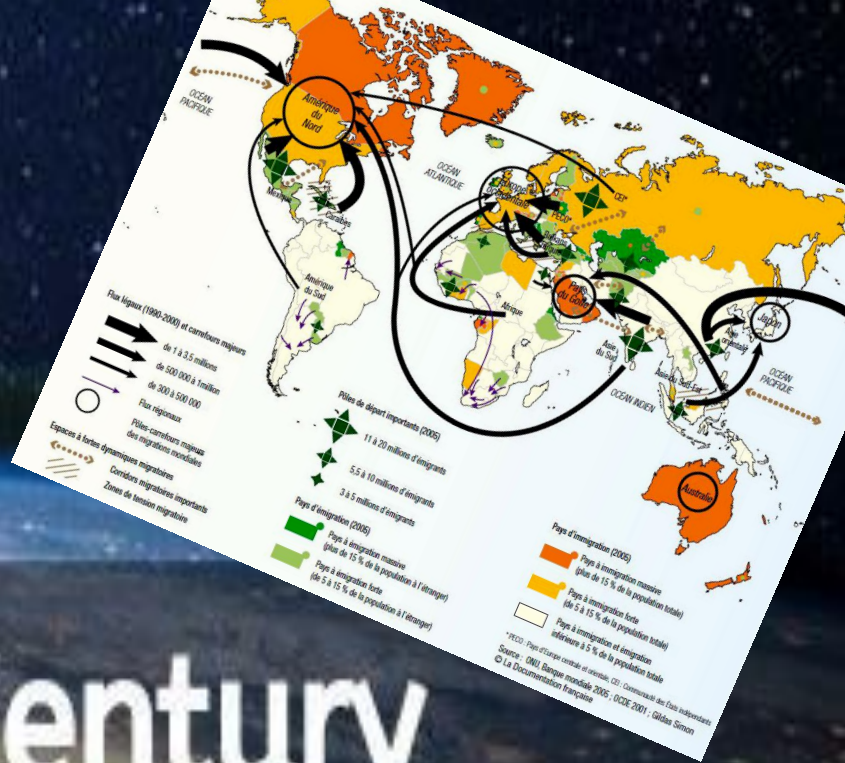
Politics



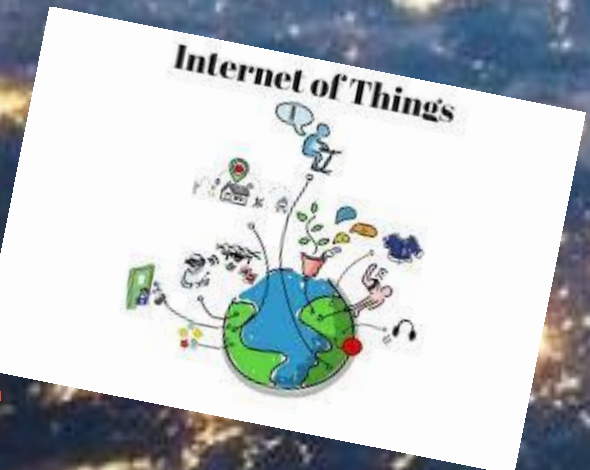
Social Structures



**Paul Ryan: "Identity politics has gotten out of control in our country"**



# World of the 21st Century



# 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

HOW TODAY'S STUDENTS  
CAN STAY COMPETITIVE  
IN A CHANGING JOB MARKET

## Learning Skills

Critical Thinking



Creativity



Collaboration



Communication



## Literacy Skills

Information



Media



Technology



## Life Skills

Flexibility



Leadership



Initiative

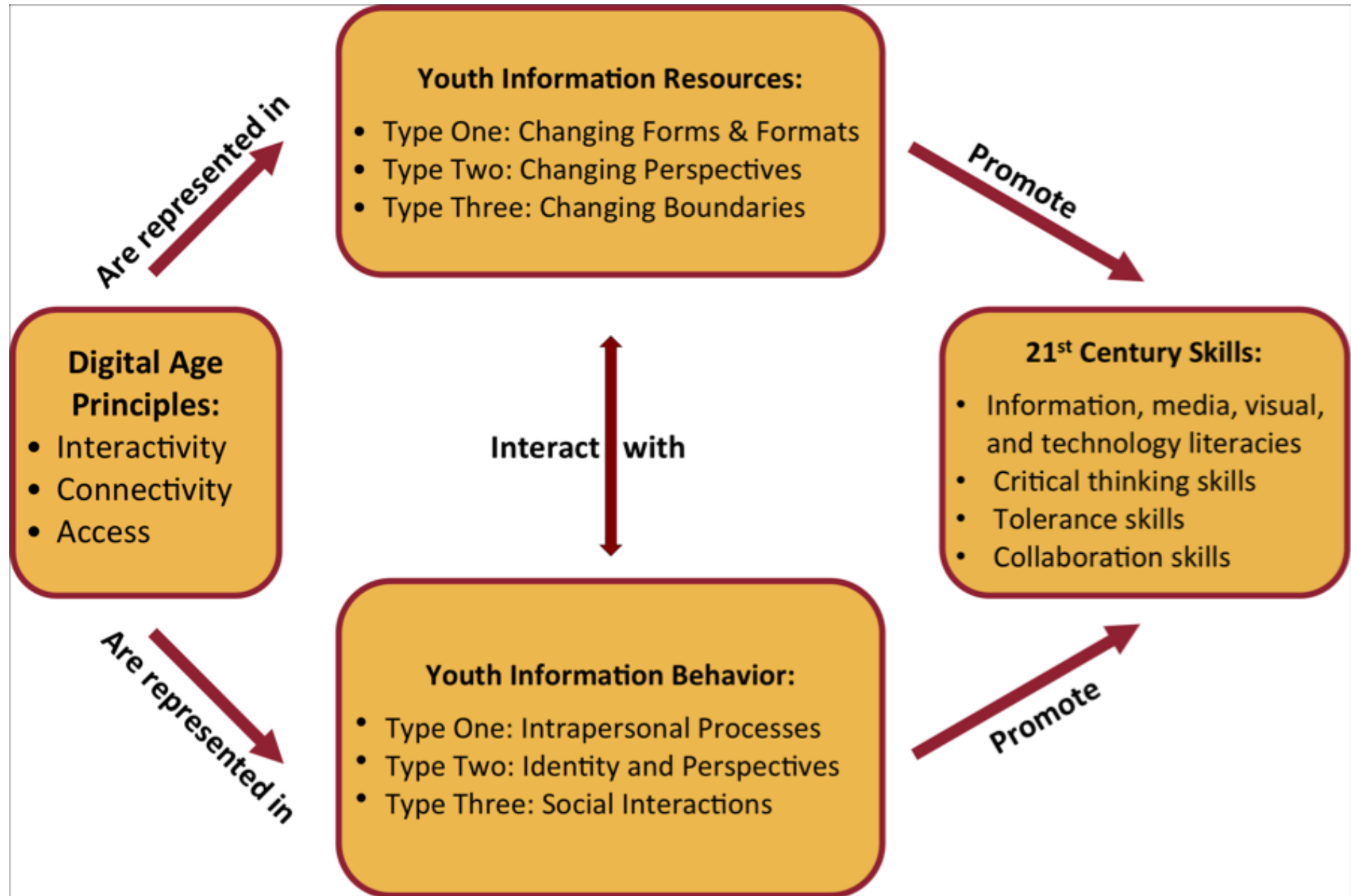


Productivity



Social





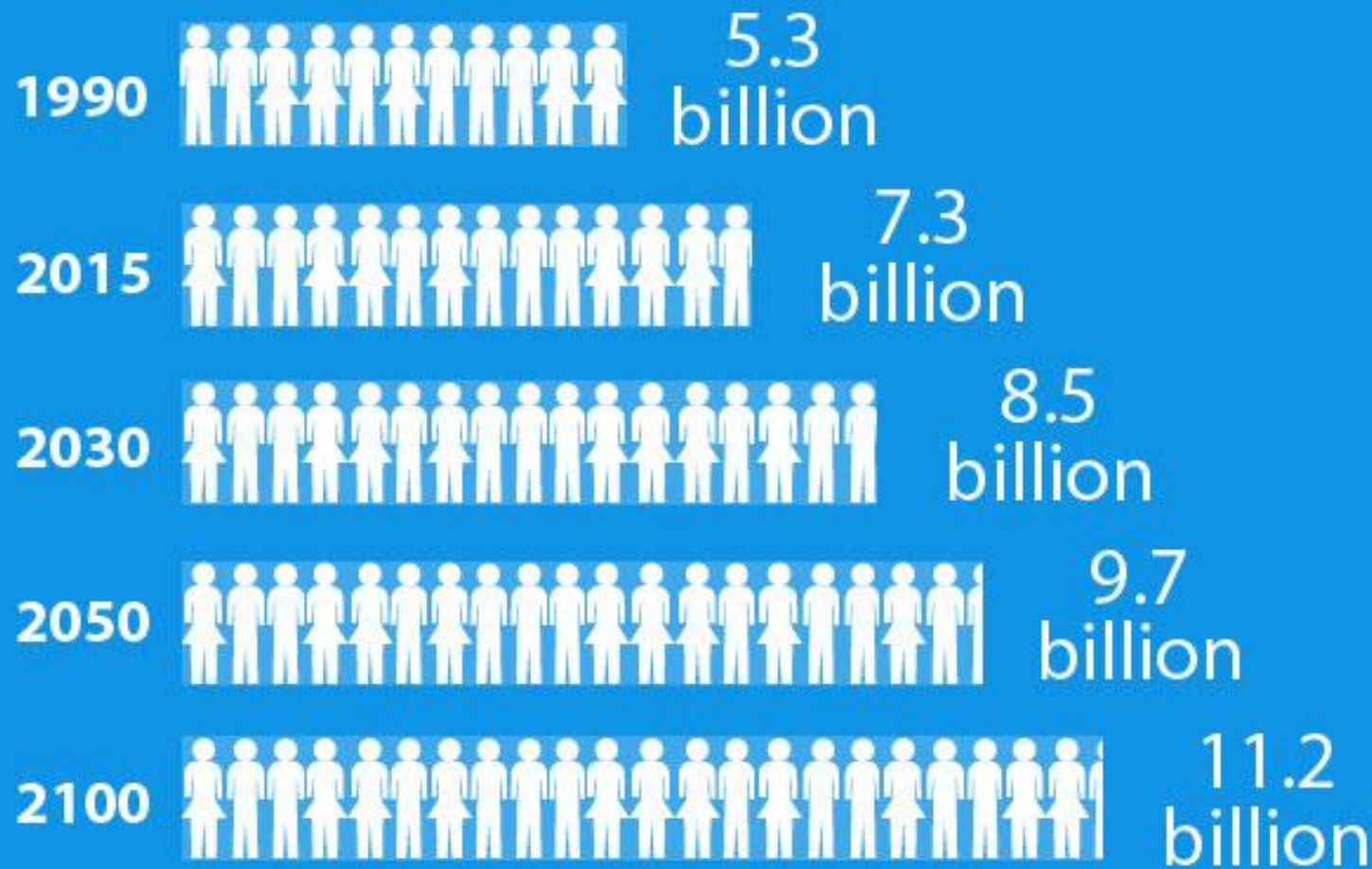


## 2. Youth Demography in Africa



# World Population

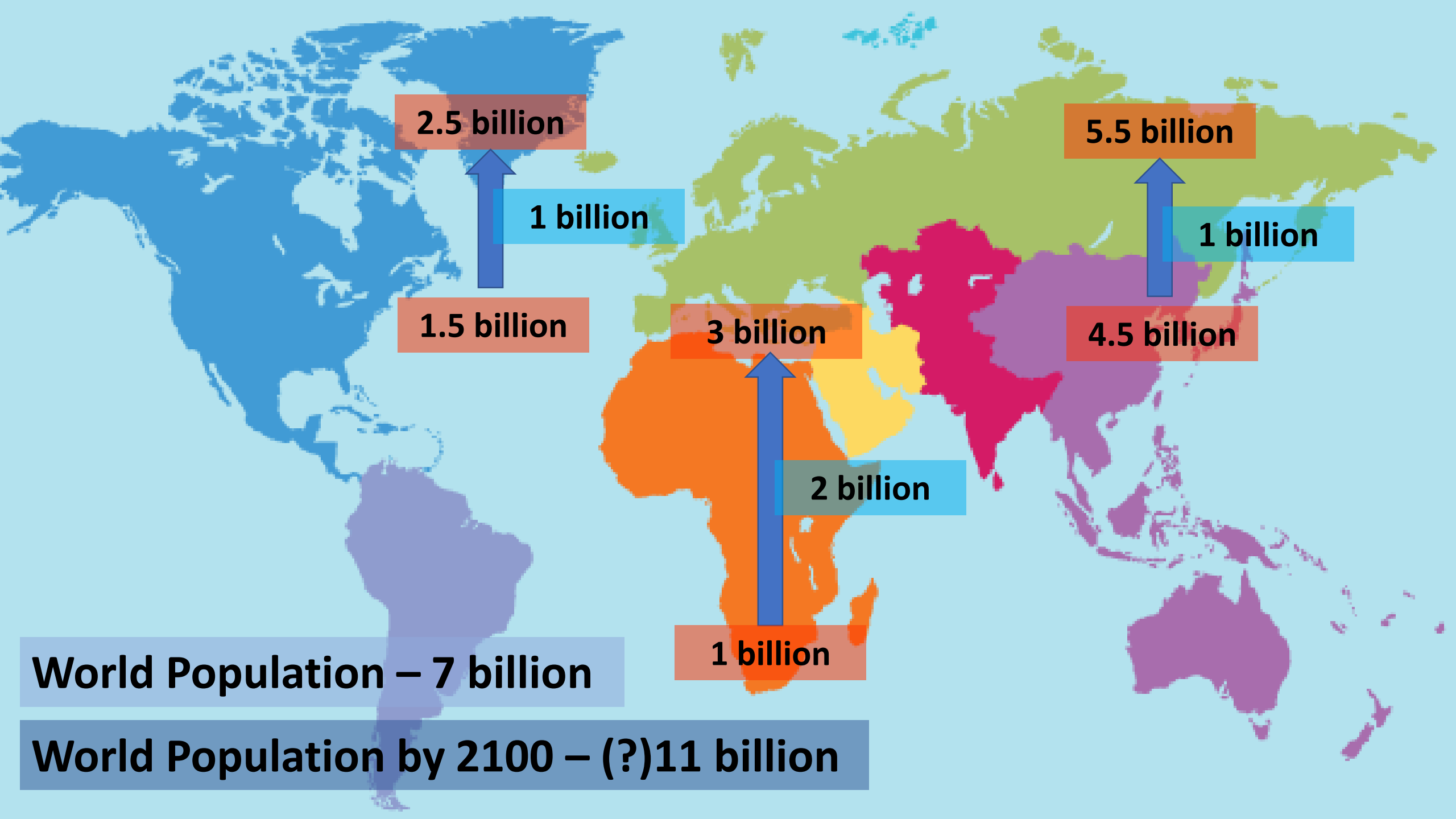
*Projected world population until 2100*



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs,  
Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*  
Produced by: United Nations Department of Public Information



2015  
TIME FOR  
GLOBAL ACTION  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



2.5 billion

5.5 billion

1 billion

1 billion

1.5 billion

3 billion

4.5 billion

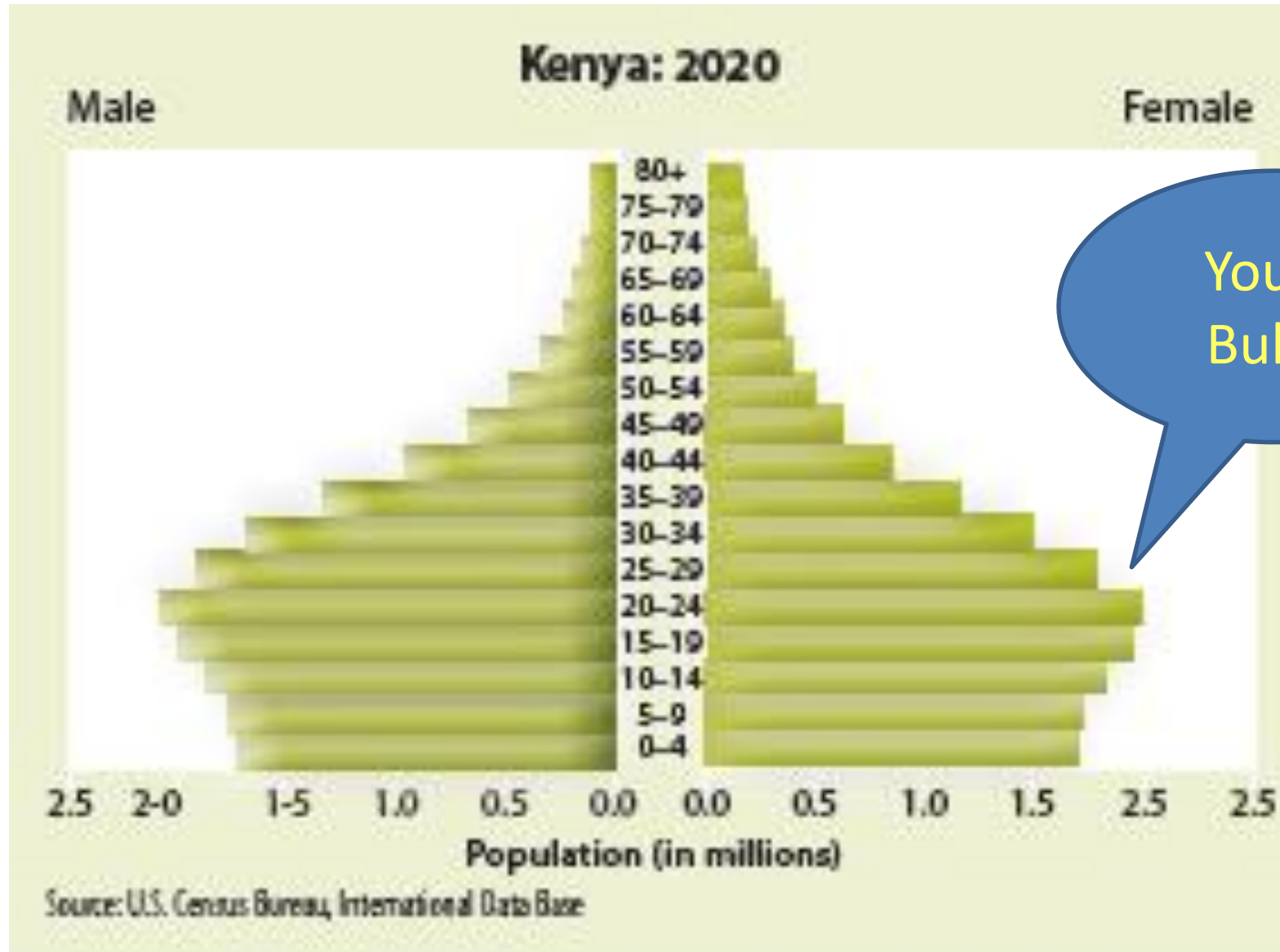
2 billion

World Population – 7 billion

1 billion

World Population by 2100 – (?)11 billion

# Age distribution – Kenyan Population



# 3. Change in Maturity Pattern

Age of sexual maturity  
has been anticipated



Age of taking up responsibility  
in society has been delayed

*In 1900 the average girl started to menstruate at about the age of 19. Now, with better food and health care, menstruation frequently starts shortly after a girl's 10th birthday. In 1900, most boys were sufficiently well established in a job by the age of 20 that they could afford to marry and start a family. The gap between childhood and becoming a fully responsible adult was measured in months rather than years. But not now, not in the year 2001*

• *John Abbott*



Akai...

Engaged before menstruation

Menstruates at age 16

Caro...

Menstruates at age 12

Likely to be married when 27

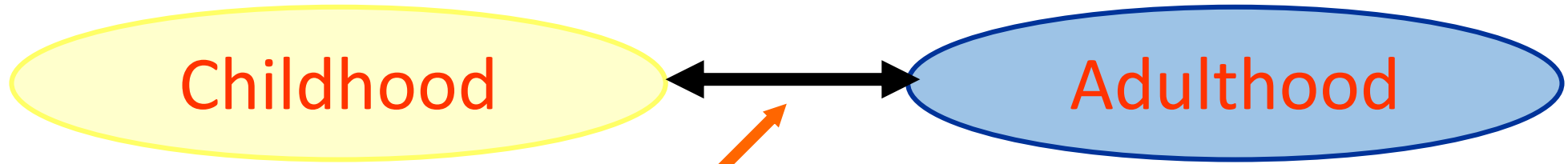




Childhood

Adulthood





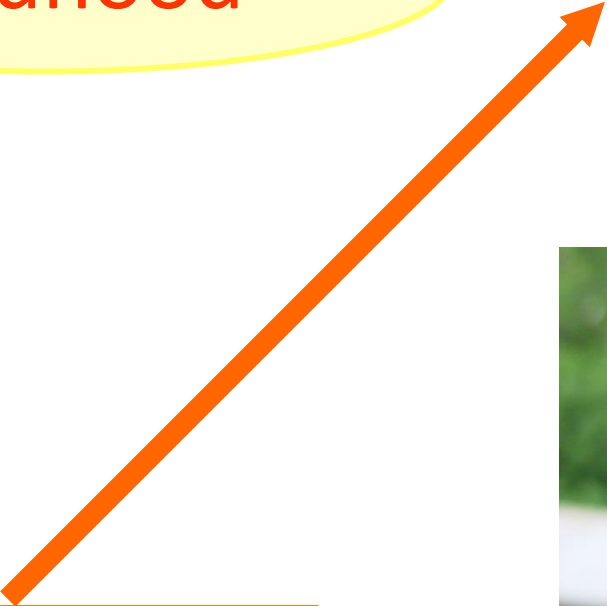
**Youthhood**  
**15 years**



Childhood



Adulthood



?



# Situation in Kenya

## Age of Puberty & Marriage

- Average age of menarche for girls = 14.4 yrs in 1987; 12.5 yrs in 2011.
- Average age at marriage for girls (in 2008) = 22 yrs (This is going up)

Ogeng'o, D. N., Obimbo, M. M., & Ogeng'o, J. A. (2011). Menarcheal age among urban Kenyan primary school girls. *Acta Paediatrica*, 100(5), 758-761.

Rogo, K. O., Oniango, R. K., & Muruli, L. A. (1987). Menarche in African girls in some post-secondary institutions in Kenya. *East African medical journal*, 64(11), 745-50.

# Age of Sexual Debut - Kenya

	Female	Male
Slums	15 yrs	15 yrs
Non-Slum	15 yrs	17 yrs
N = 2,134		

The authors observe that transition to first sex is influenced by age, slum residence, perceived parental monitoring, and peer behaviour.

Kabiru, C. W., Beguy, D., Undie, C. C., Zulu, E. M., & Ezeh, A. C. (2010). Transition into first sex among adolescents in slum and non-slum communities in Nairobi, Kenya. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13(4), 453-471.

# Outcome of “Development”

"Urban societies structure adolescence in ironic ways. On the one hand, they have greatly prolonged the adolescent experience, kept it age-segregated, promised young people too much, and given them too little significant responsibility. On the other hand, with less support from extended or nuclear families, children are rushed into quasi-adulthood, a pseudomaturity."

Dean Borgman in *When Kumbaya Is not Enough*.

still

Are Africans notorious religious?



## 4. Changing Value System



## Ecclesia in Africa, 1995, no. 76

"... the rapid evolution of society has given rise to new challenges linked to the phenomena notably of family uprooting, urbanisation, unemployment, materialistic seductions of all kinds, a certain secularisation and an intellectual upheaval caused by the avalanche of insufficiently critical ideas spread by the media."



# Atheists In Kenya (AIK)

Stop believing in myths ...

Home

About Us

Our Leadership

Events

Audio

Our Constitution

Our Initiatives

Become a member!

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WhatsApp

## Home

*Atheism*

is simply the absence of theistic belief. That's it. It doesn't mean anything else.

**Register Now**

Atheism is not a religion, a philosophy, a worldview, or anything similar. It is not the conviction that there are no gods, ghosts, angels, etc. Rather, it is the absence of a belief that these things are real.

**Atheism** does **NOT** require absolute certainty that god(s) do not or cannot exist. Some atheists may indeed claim such certainty. These individuals are sometimes described as **"strong atheists."** Nobody disputes the existence of such atheists. The point is that certainty is not a necessary condition of atheism. **One who asserts that there "probably" is no god is still an atheist.** In fact, one need not assert anything to be an atheist. One need only refuse to accept the theistic belief claim.

You could still believe in the existence of such things as **souls, life after**

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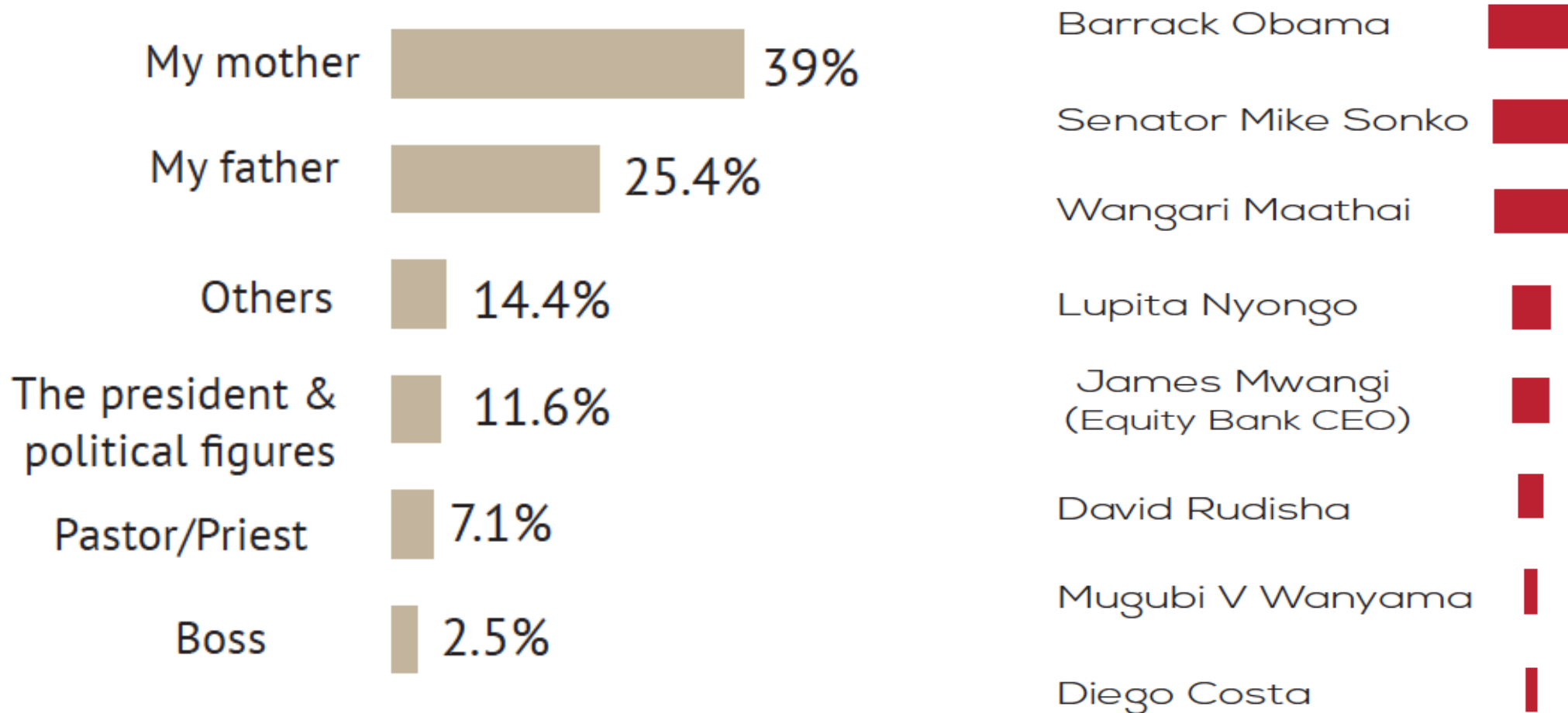


# **Identity, values and aspirations of East African Youth**

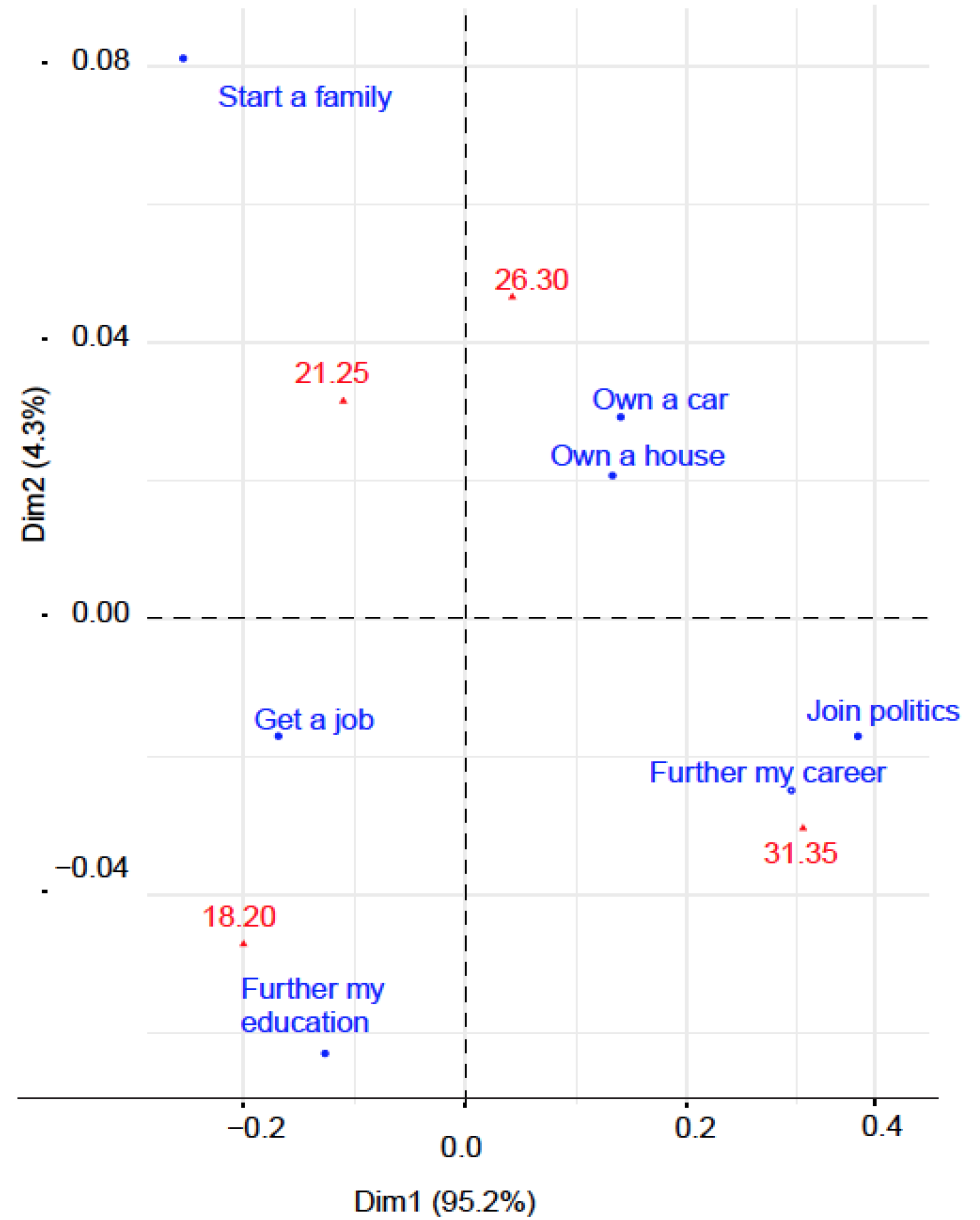
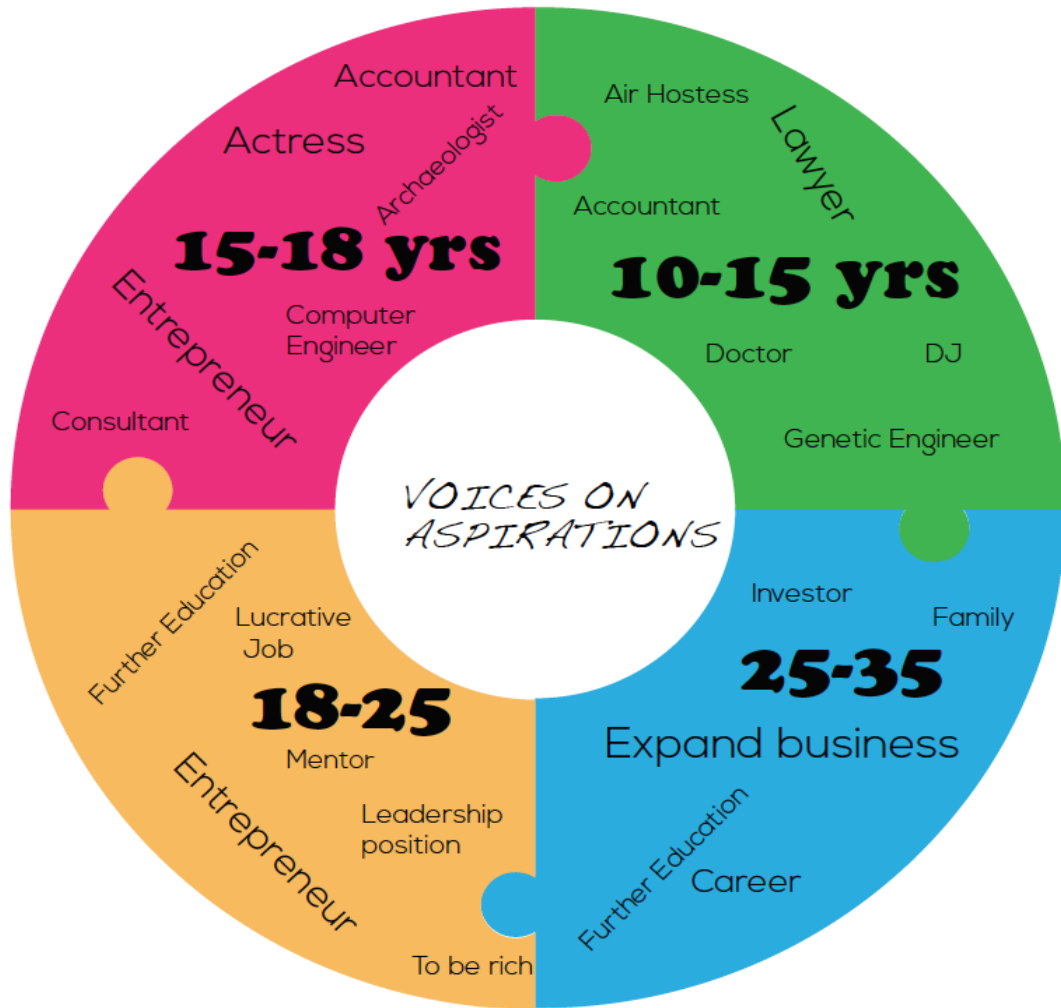
Research by Dr. Alex Awiti et al.

7,000 youth aged 18-35 interviewed in  
Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda

# Who influences them: Role Model



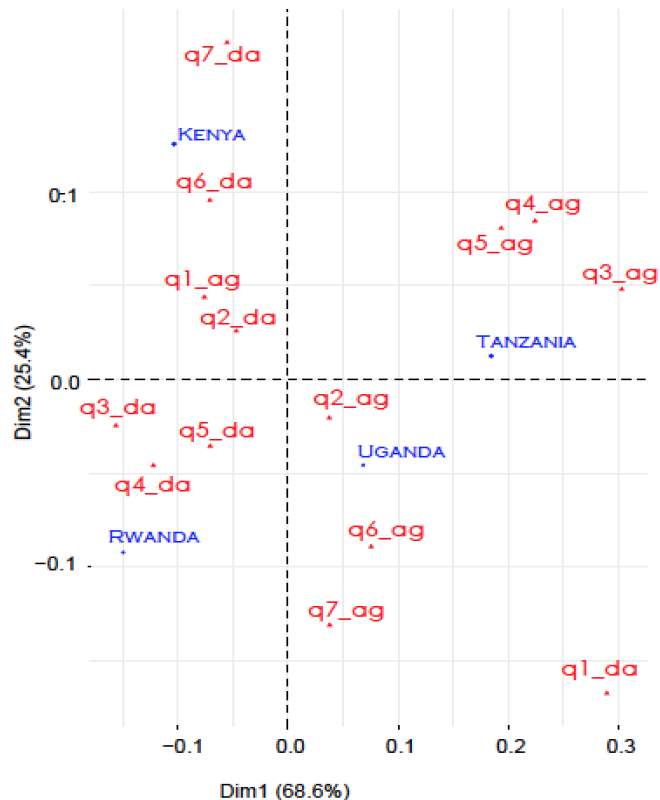
# Priorities



# Norms?

q1 - Education is better than money  
q2 - It does not matter how one gets money  
q3 - Nothing is wrong with corruption  
ag - agree with  
da - disagree with

q4 - I can easily take a bribe  
q5 - I would easily give a bribe  
q6 - I would do anything to get money  
q7 - I really admire people who use get rich quick schemes



- 60% of youth admired those who use get rich quick schemes;
- 55% believed it did not matter how one made money;
- 53% would do anything to get money;
- 37% would take or give a bribe;
- 35% believed there was nothing wrong with corruption.

## 5. Family Situation in Africa



# Family Situations

- **Six** out of 10 Kenyan women are likely to be **single mothers** by the time they reach 45, one of the highest rates for single-parent families in Africa.
- **Three** out of 10 Kenyan girls become **pregnant** before the age of 18.
- **30%** of women in Kenya are **giving birth** before they are married.
- Comparatively, only 18% give birth before marriage in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, 5% in Ethiopia, and than 10% in Malawi.

*Daily Nation, 17/08/2013*

Will the  
**Real Africa**



**Stand Up ?**

[www.sahayaselvam.org](http://www.sahayaselvam.org)

6.  
**Emerging  
Identities**



# LGBTQ

I AM ~~GAY~~.

I AM ~~STRAIGHT~~.

I AM ~~LESBIAN~~.

I AM ~~BISEXUAL~~.

AM ~~TRANSGENDERED~~.

**I AM HUMAN.**



# LGBTQ Support Groups in Kenya



**NGLHRC**

National Gay and Lesbian Human Right Commission

**ISHTAR**



MSM HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELLBEING



BMA

**Break**

Margins Africa



**GAY KENYA TRUST**

# Issues with LGBT People

- Identity question: I feel trapped in the wrong body!
- Spiritual question: Why did God create me this way?
- Social question: Being rejected by the family.
- Economic question: who will pay for my treatment...



2

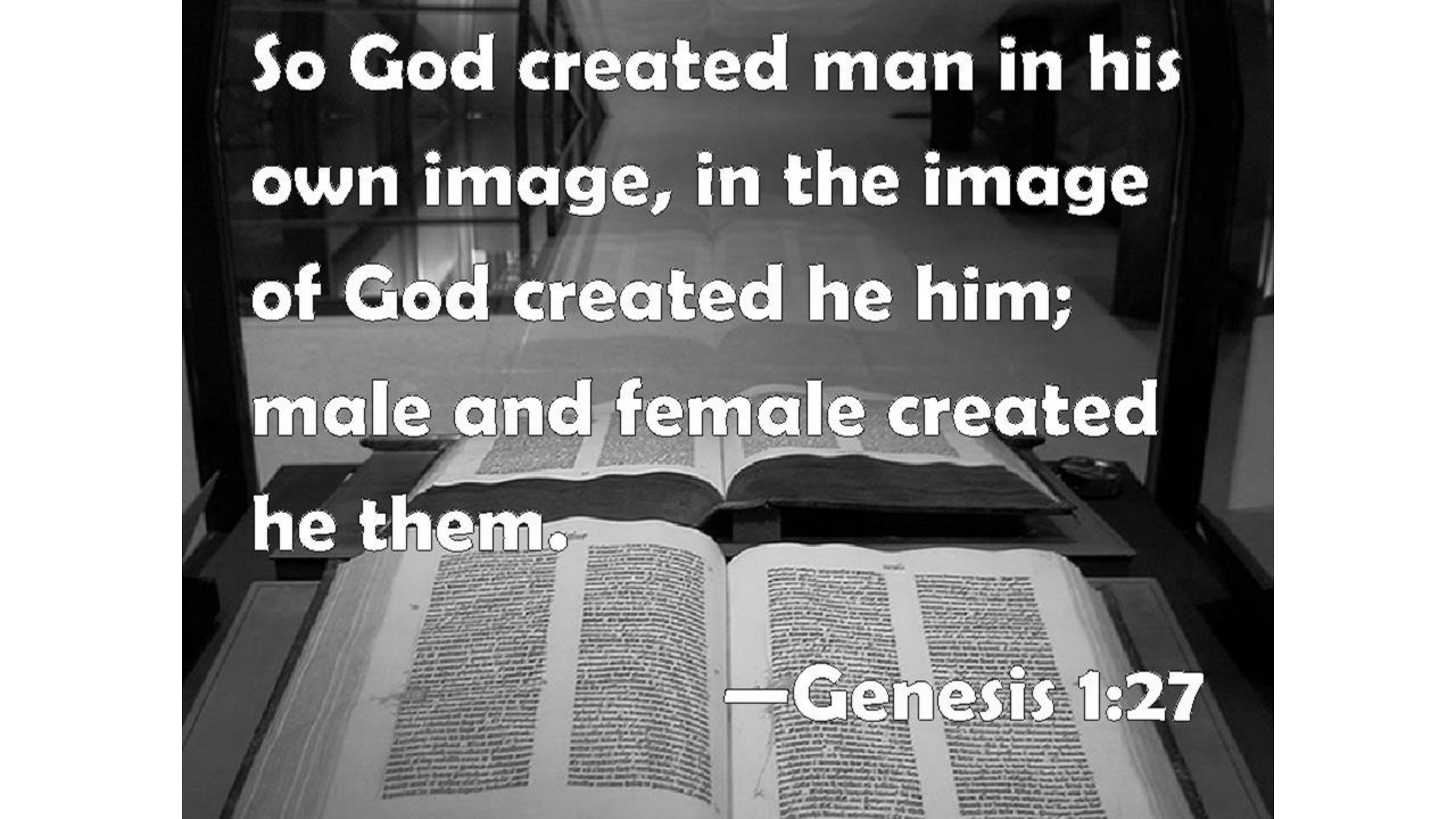
What is  
Spirituality?



I am in the...

# Image of God

- Starting point of any spirituality!



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

**—Genesis 1:27**



The blackhole!

**Super-massive Black Hole at  
Centre of Milky Way Galaxy**

**Our Solar System**

*Norma*

*Scutum-Crux*

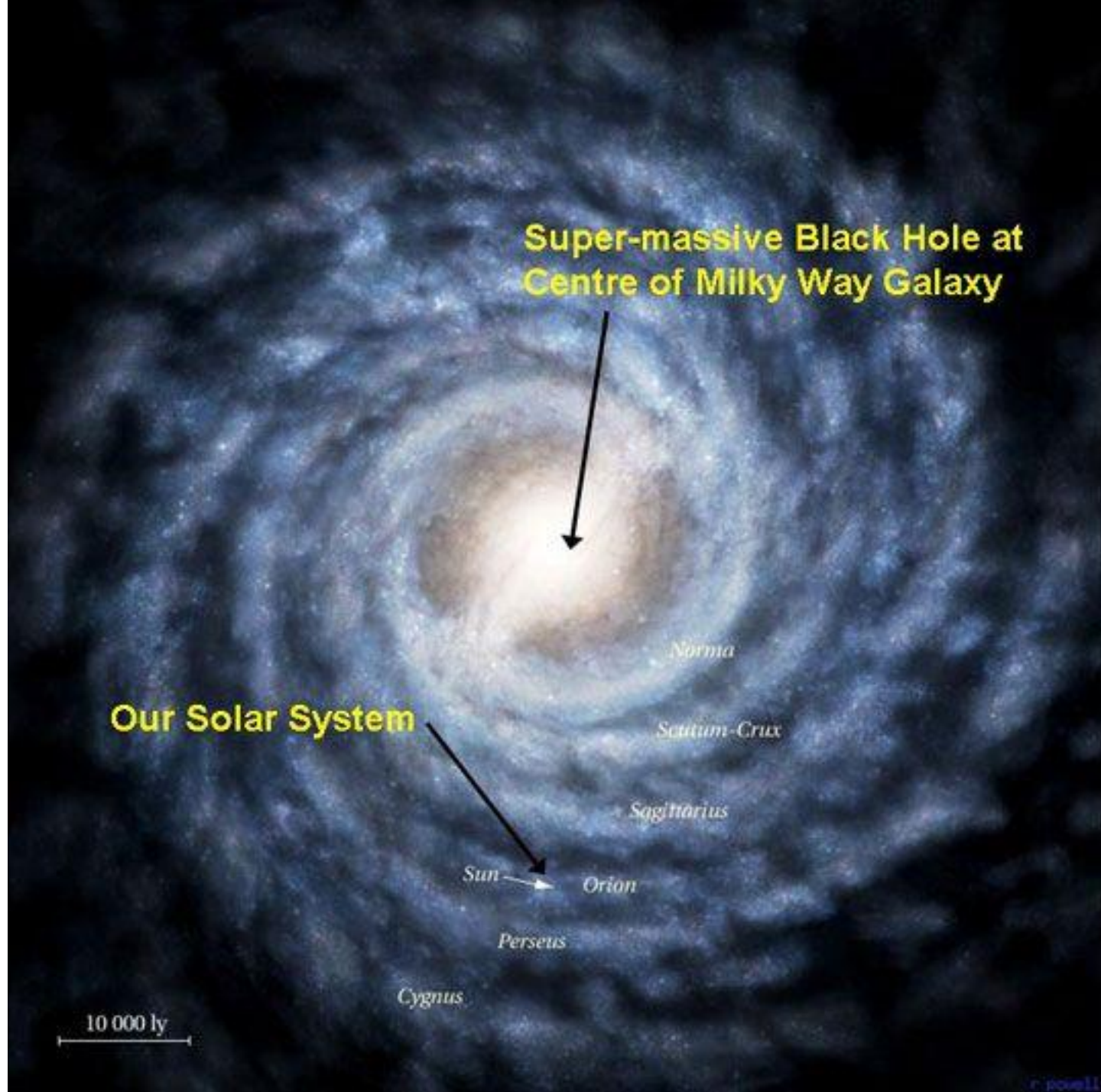
*Sagittarius*

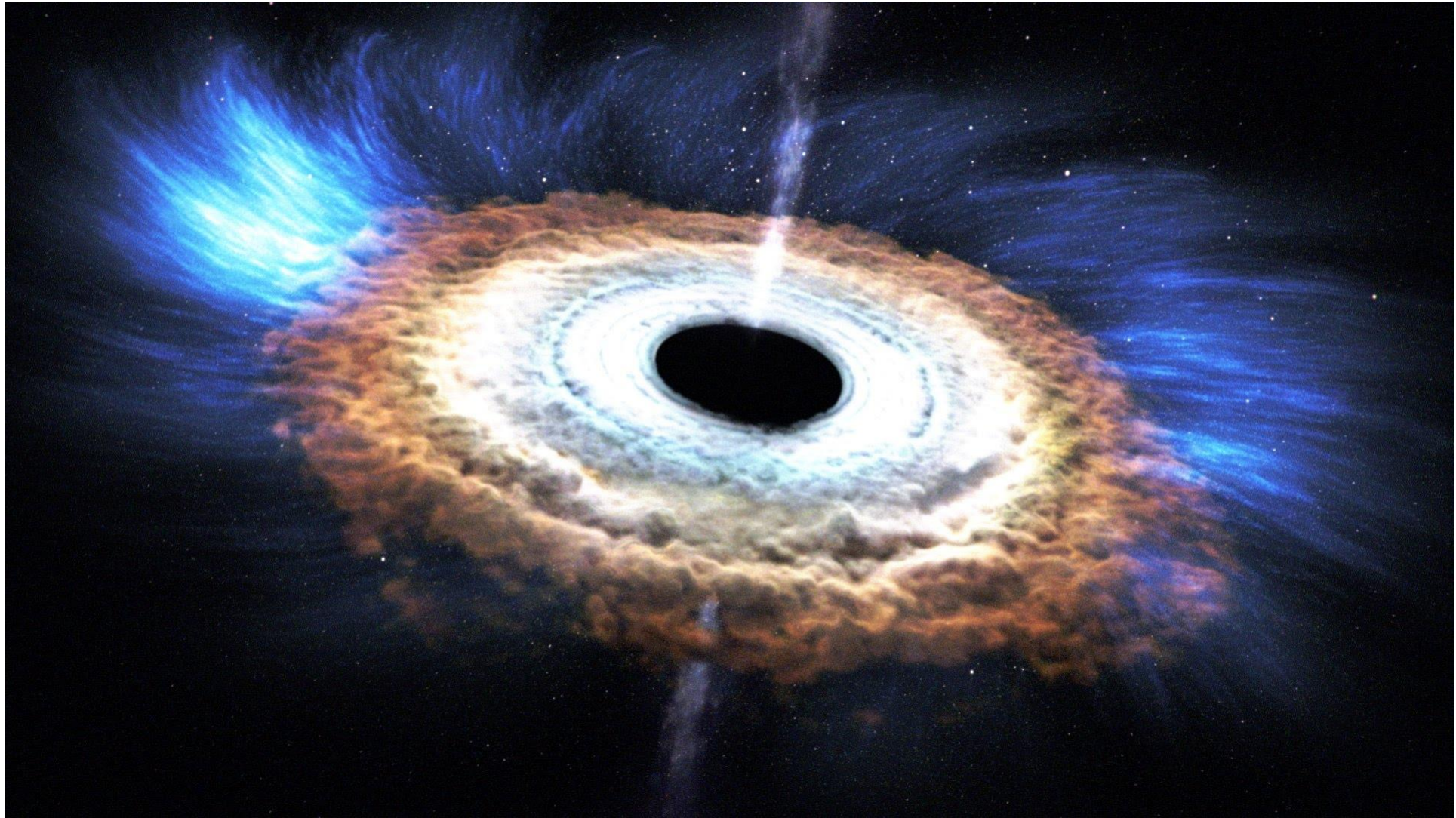
*Sun* → *Orion*

*Perseus*

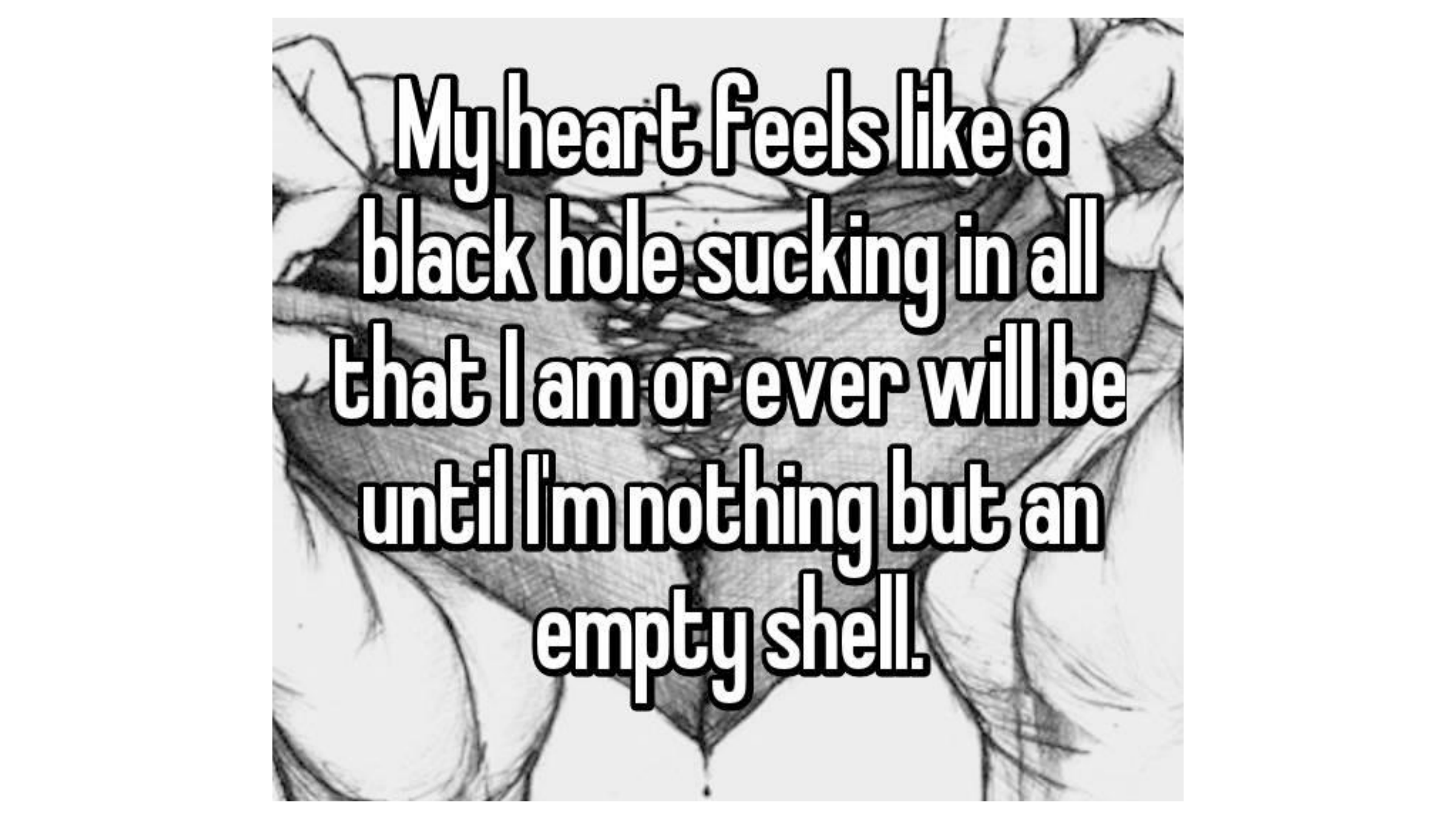
*Cygnus*

10 000 ly









**My heart feels like a  
black hole sucking in all  
that I am or ever will be  
until I'm nothing but an  
empty shell.**

A photograph of a spiral galaxy, likely the Milky Way, viewed from an edge-on perspective. The galaxy's core is a bright, glowing yellowish-white ring. The spiral arms are composed of numerous stars and interstellar dust, appearing in shades of blue, purple, and white. The background is a deep black space filled with distant stars.

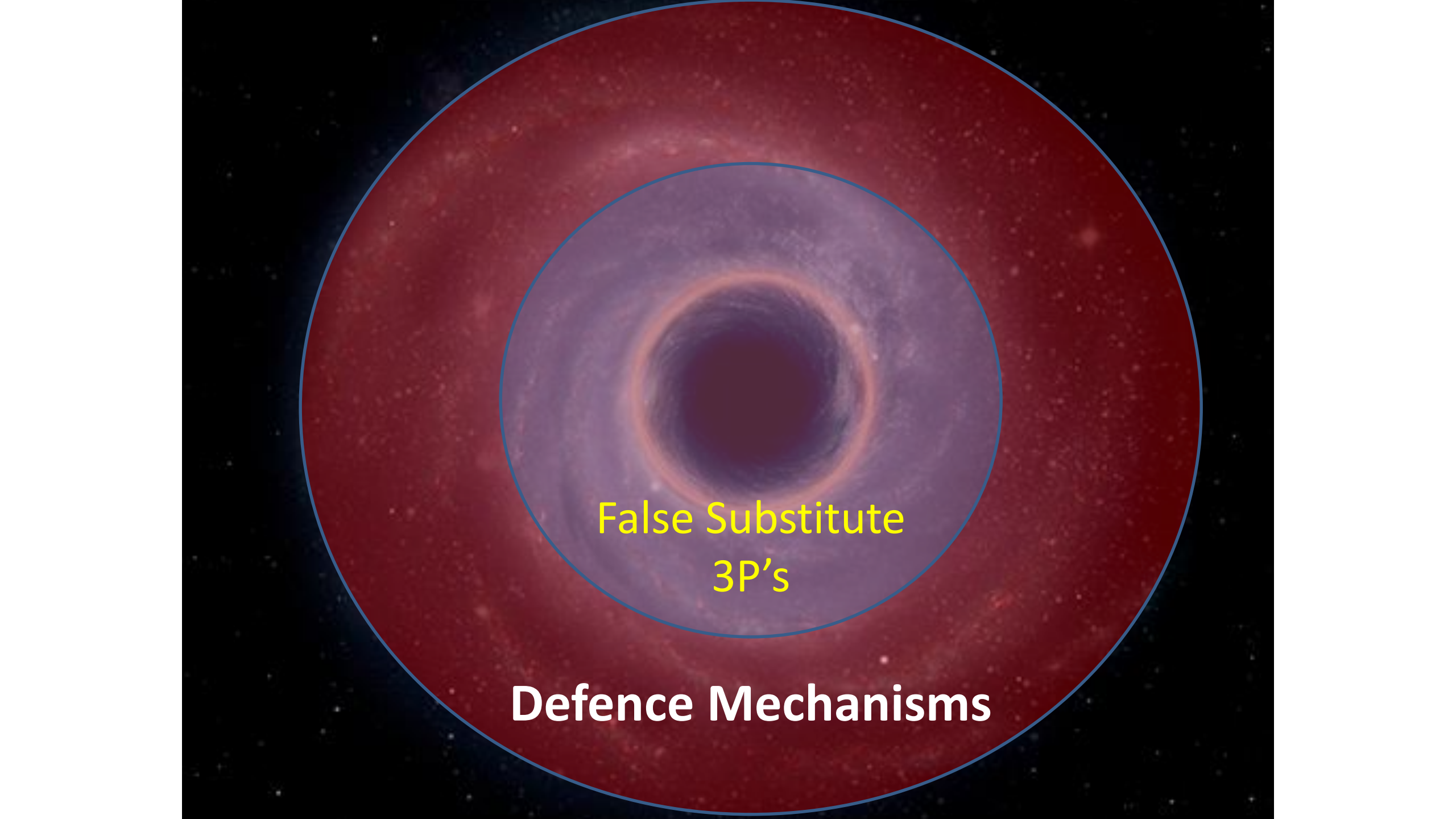
Imago  
Dei

# 3-Ps of Human Sinfulness

Power

Pleasure

Possessions



False Substitute  
3P's

**Defence Mechanisms**

Imago  
Dei

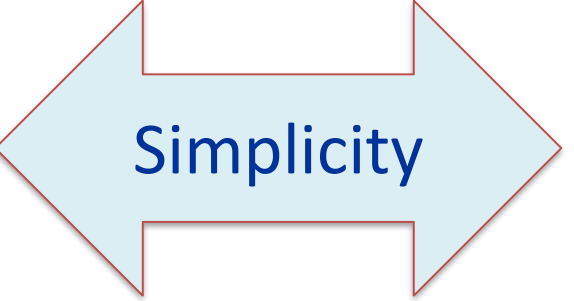
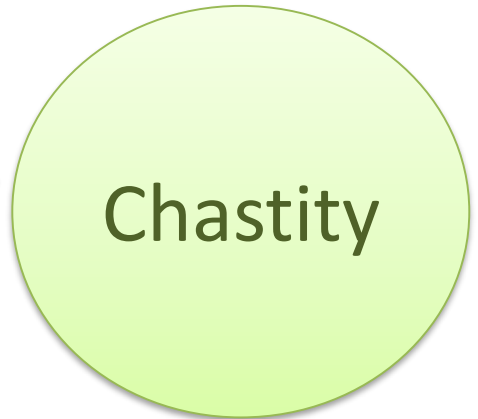
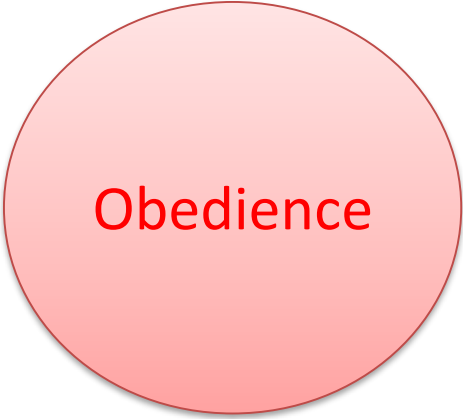
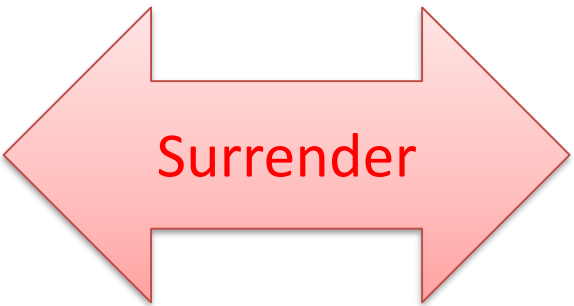
Power

Anger

Imago  
Dei

Pleasure

**Too much TV**



# What is Spirituality?

- Spirituality is how you foster your spirit.
- Spirit:
  - Imago Dei (Image of God)
  - A principle of energy (vitality, creativity, transcendence, passion)
  - A principle of harmony (unity, integration, balance)

(See, Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 1999.)



# What is Spirituality?

- Spirituality is about how we foster the image of God within us.
- Spirituality is recognising the movement of God within us and responding to it every moment.
- But the image of God is embodied – it is part of the human person.
- Therefore, true spirituality entails the integration of the different dimensions of the human person.
- That is WHOLENESS!

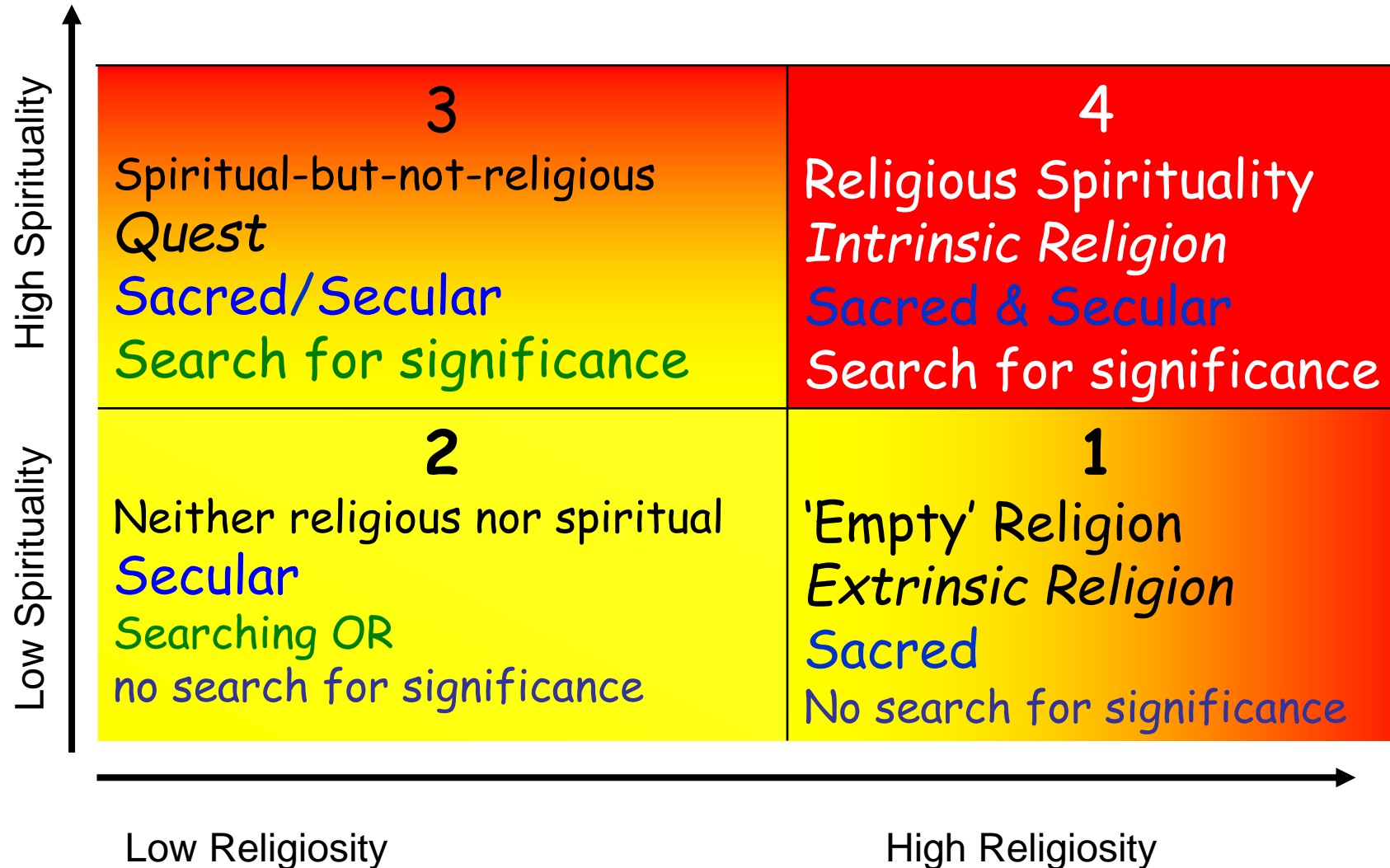
# Spiritual-but-not-religious

- “People in Western society are developing a well-documented tendency to describe themselves as ‘spiritual-but-not-religious.’ Results of a recent cross-cultural study indicate that 40 per cent of American respondents and 20 per cent of German respondents fall into this group, which includes atheists.”

Collicutt, *Psychologist*, 2011

Csof, R-M., Hood, R., Keller, B. et al.(2009). *Deconversion*. Goettingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht.

# Religion & Spirituality



“Undeniably, those who willfully shut out God from their hearts and try to dodge religious questions are not following the dictates of their consciences, and hence are not free of blame; **yet believers themselves frequently bear some responsibility for this situation.** For, taken as a whole, atheism is not a spontaneous development but stems from a variety of causes, including a critical reaction against religious beliefs, and in some places against the Christian religion in particular. Hence believers can have more than a little to do with the birth of atheism.”

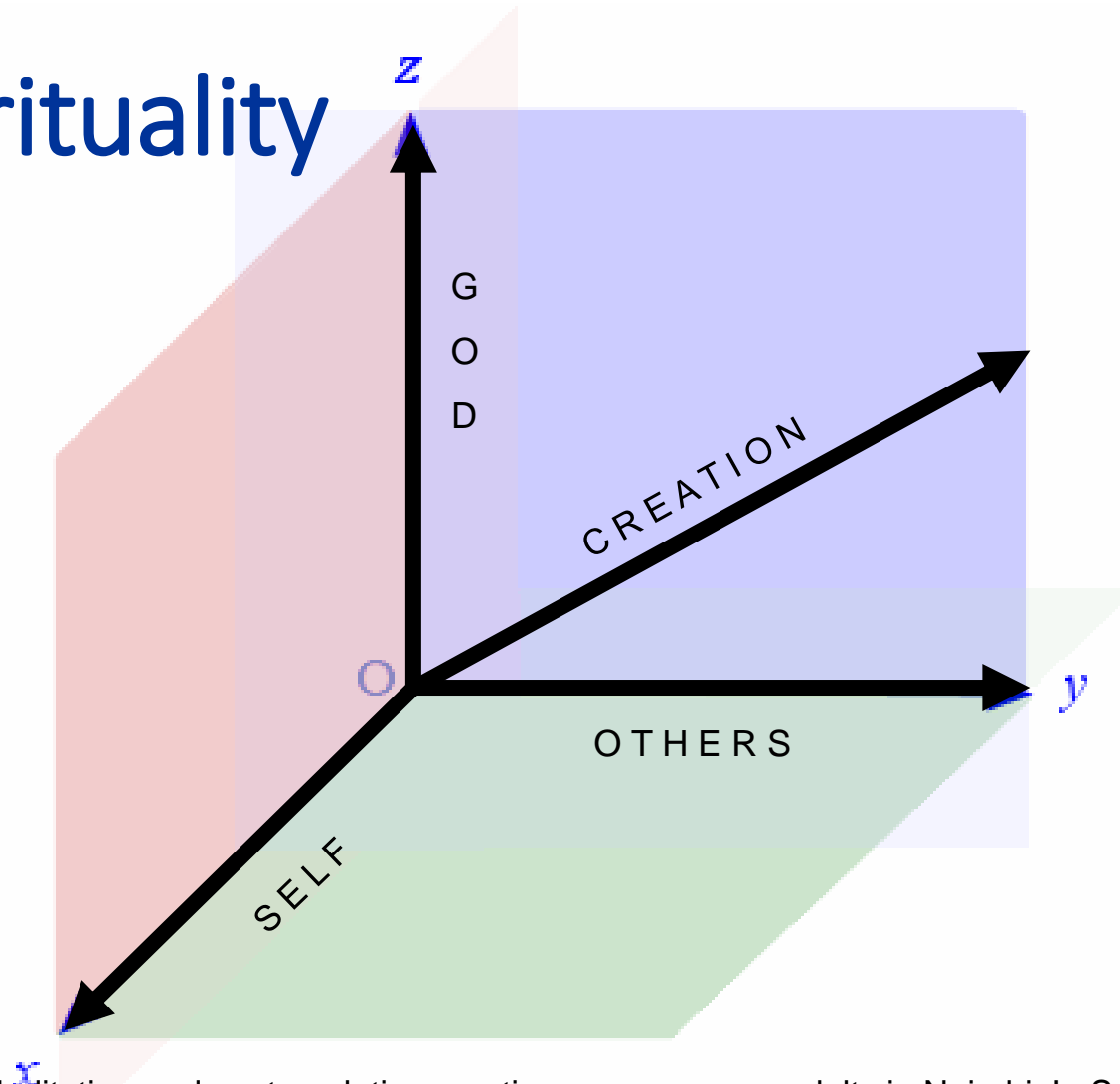
*Gaudium et Spes, 1965, no.19c*

# Characteristics of Religious Spirituality

- **Integrated and holistic worldview:** marked by harmony and balance;
- **Provisional and heuristic belief system:** marked by openness and a sense of mystery of God;
- **Un-legalistic morality:** focussed on character and marked by a deep compassion for all;
- Focussed on **meaning and sense of purpose** about life: search for meaning rather than dogma.

See Allport, *The individual and his religion*.

# A 4-D Religious Spirituality



**Selvam, S.G., & Mwangi, D. (2014).** Meditation and contemplative practice among young adults in Nairobi. In S.G. Selvam, & D. Watt (eds.), *African youth today: Challenges and prospects* (pp.67-85). Nairobi: Acton Press.

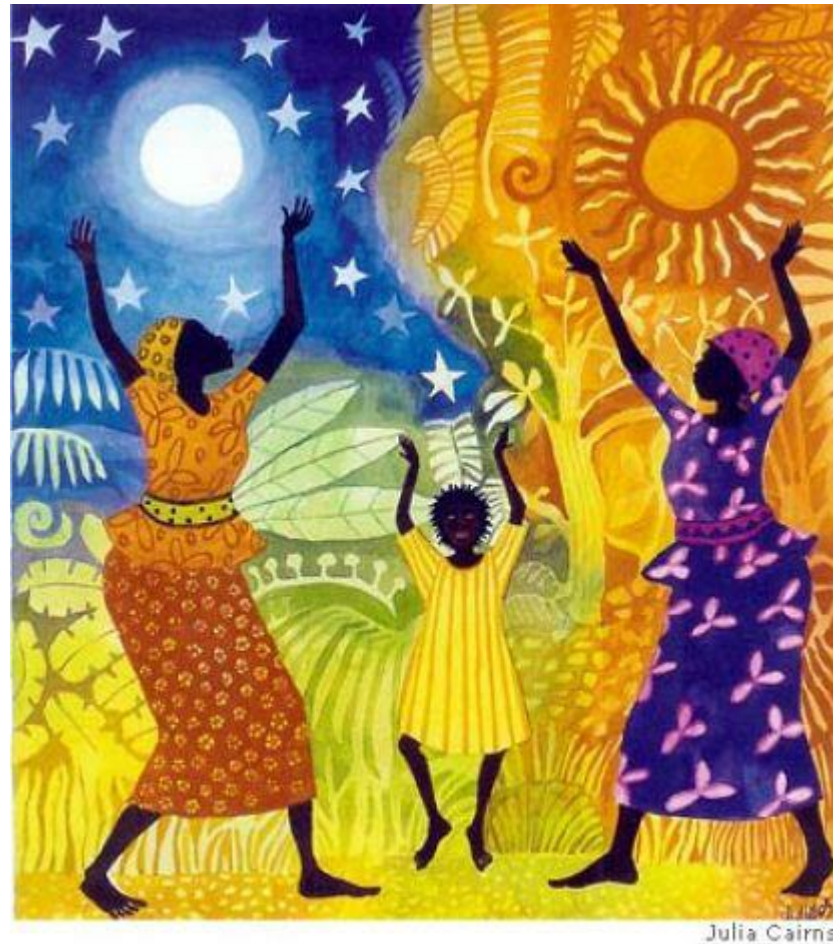
**Selvam, S.G. (2015).** Character strengths in the context of Christian contemplative practice facilitating recovery from alcohol misuse: Two case studies. *The Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 17(3),190-211.



3

Dimensions of  
youth spirituality

# 1. Youth Spirituality is Spontaneous







# Lord, We Pray!

Lord,  
you give some cows long horns.  
To others no horns at all.  
You have a plan for every cow.  
You have a plan for each one of  
us too.  
Help us to be open to your plan.  
That way we can truly be happy.

Lord,  
you have the yam and the knife.  
We have no yam.  
Nor the knife.  
We depend on you.  
Unless you give us the yam,  
we will have none.  
So we beg you  
provide us with what we need.

Lord,  
you give beard to goats.  
But to cows no beard.  
You know what everyone needs.  
You know what we need.  
We trust you will give us  
what we truly deserve.

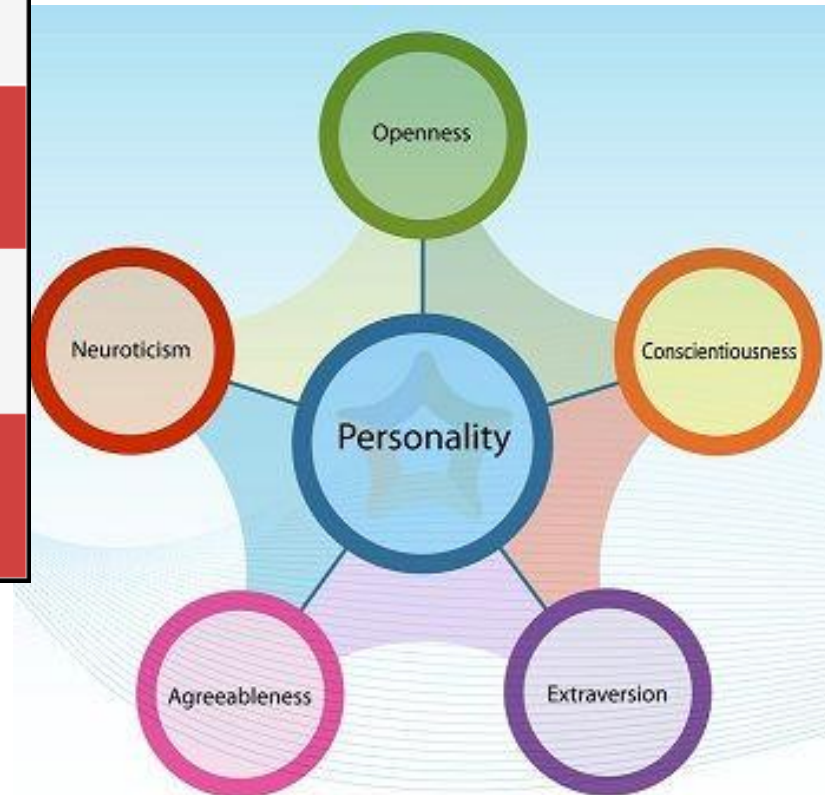
*Prayers by*

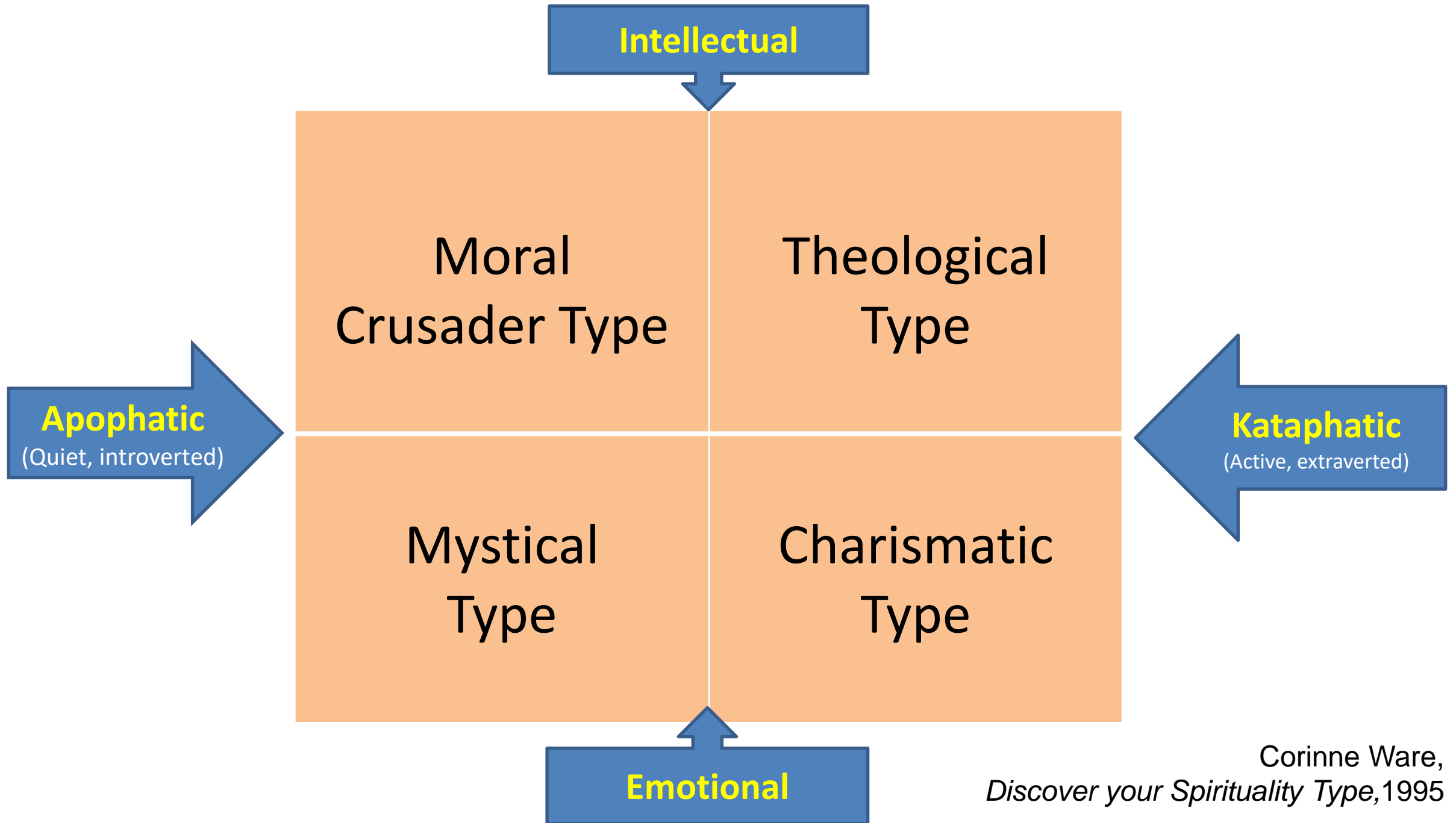
***Richard Kitimbo***, *Kamuli, Uganda*

*May 2005*

## 2. Youth Spirituality Respects Individual Differences

<b>ISTJ</b> Responsible Executors	<b>ISFJ</b> Dedicated Stewards	<b>INFJ</b> Insightful Motivators	<b>INTJ</b> Visionary Strategists
<b>ISTP</b> Nimble Pragmatics	<b>ISFP</b> Practical Custodians	<b>INFP</b> Inspired Crusaders	<b>INTP</b> Expansive Analizers
<b>ESTP</b> Dynamic Mavericks	<b>ESFP</b> Enthusiastic Improvisors	<b>ENFP</b> Impassioned Catalysts	<b>ENTP</b> Innovative Explorers
<b>ESTJ</b> Efficient Drivers	<b>ESFJ</b> Committed Builders	<b>ENFJ</b> Engaging Mobilizers	<b>ENTJ</b> Strategic Directors





Corinne Ware,  
*Discover your Spirituality Type*, 1995

# Respecting Varieties of Spirituality

Possible  
Combinations

- Way of action: Charity
- Way of the intellect: theology
- Way of the heart-expressive: devotion
- Way of the heart-quiet: mystical

Cultural  
preferences

Individual  
differences



### 3. Youth Spirituality is Holistic

## 3. African Spirituality is Holistic

- It integrates the different dimensions of human beings: physical, spiritual, intellectual, socio-emotional.
- A wise traditional medicine-man caters to all these dimensions when treating a client:
  - Socio-emotional: Drama-therapy through rituals;
  - Intellectual: a reason for the condition;
  - Spiritual: establishing the relationships with the God and ancestors;
  - Physical: Herbal Medicine.



# Four Dimension of a Holistic Youth Ministry

And Jesus increased  
in wisdom,  
in stature, and  
in favour with God &  
with people.

Head

Body

Soul

Heart



Lk 2:52

# Four Major Questions of Youth

# The identity question

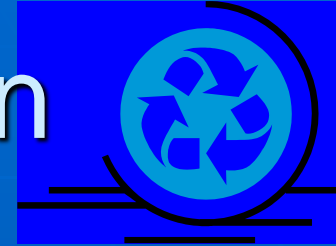


Who am I ?

spiritual



# The intimacy question



Whom shall I be with?

Emotional



# The life project question



What shall I do?

**Social**

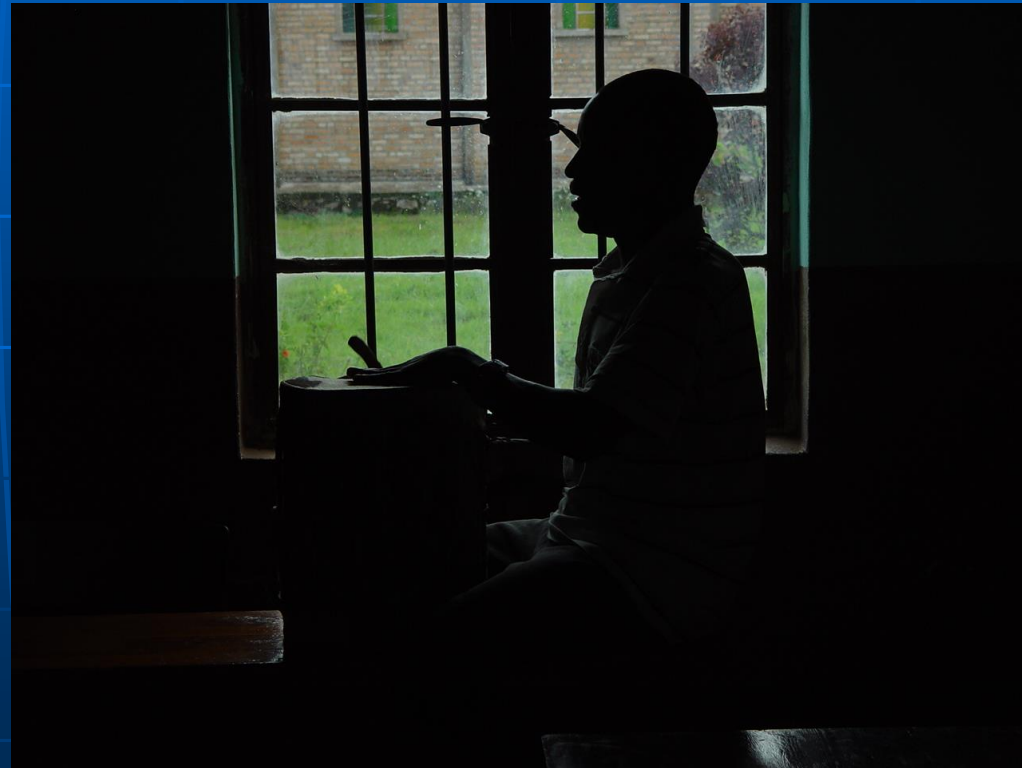


# The significance question



What does it all mean?

Intellectual



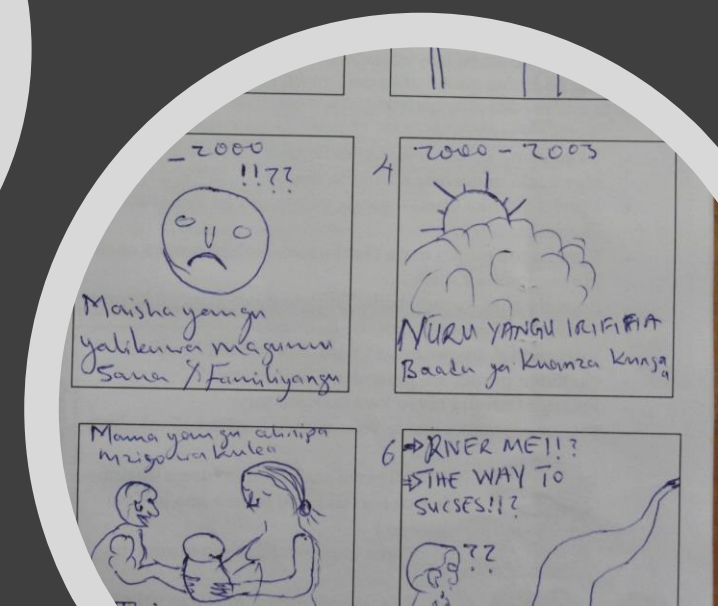
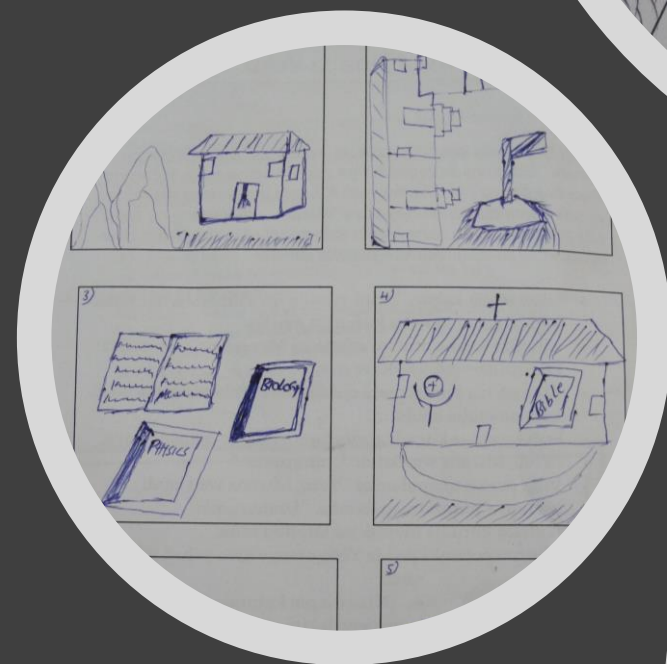


4. Youth Spirituality is  
marked by a desire for depth





# Opportunities to go deep!



# Three Components of Jesus Prayer

Breathing

Quiet Recitation:

In: Jesus, son the living God

Out: Have mercy on me!

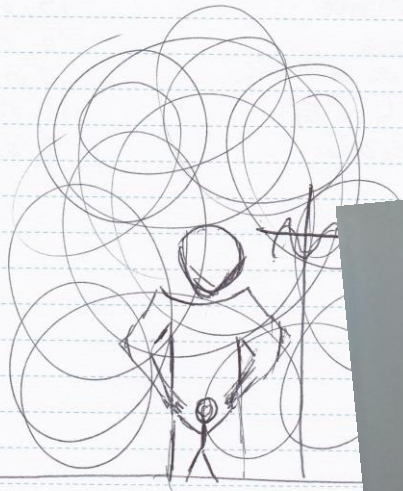


# Journaling



# Spiritual Doodling

I am with you!



14/6/14  
Bunyn - last day of retreat



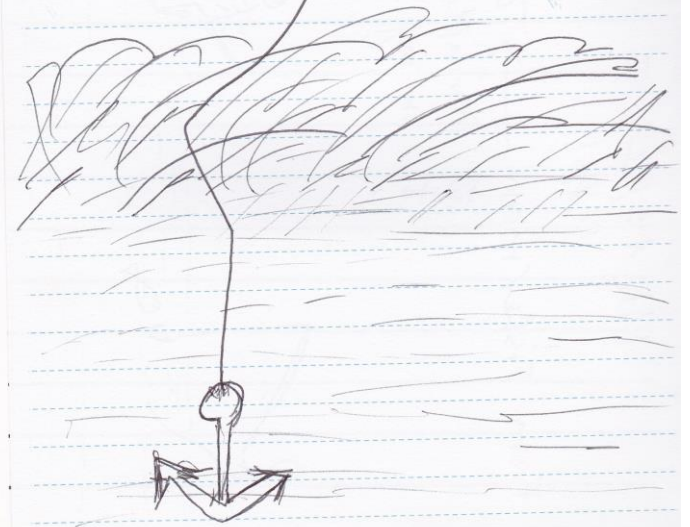
You are Life!  
08/07/2016



A house built  
on Rock  
Mt 7:24

13/1/15

Top and bottom:  
The secret of life  
Active top  
Calm bottom -



Spiritual Direction  
&  
Confession – not in a hurry!



# Eucharistic Celebration

Participatory, Well-Explained, Slow!!!!



# My Mission Statement

**H**e thought of me even before I came into this world. I am not here by chance. There is a purpose.

Deep down in me I feel the desire to care for the less-fortunate and help them realise their potentials in life.

Towards this, I acquire education, so as to share my love towards my family members, those near me, and those who need my concern. In this way, I strive for my own wellbeing.

Almighty God, fulfil my dream!

xxxx, 19 yr, 7/7/15

## TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading : Exodus 32: 7-11, 13-14

Psalms : Psalms 51: 3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

Second Reading : First Timothy 1: 12-17

Gospel : Luke 15: 1-32

16<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019  
Monday



I have a question about the readings on Sunday..I think Selvam you may have mentioned this in the positive psychology class..

20:01

In the reading God's depiction is like that of a small brat who wants to burn down the house just coz he won't get what he wants..He looks like a Donald Trump of sorts..Then it also says, he REPENTED of the evil he thought to do to his people..

20:04

In the gospel Jesus says even by thinking we sin..So did God sin?

20:05

Then 2nd question..This might be an answer to my question..Is the reading a portrayal of the Israelite's understanding of God at the time and an elaboration of how they interpreted the event or does God mature from an emotional unstable teenager to an unconditionally loving and emotionally mature God in the New Testament because truth be told this person talked about in the Old Testament is not the same person in the new..

20:09





5. Spirituality is expressed in a virtuous life

## 5. Spirituality is expressed in a virtuous life

- The Holy Person is looked up as the paragon of virtue and as the epitome of spirituality;
- Virtues that are particularly highlighted: integrity, loyalty, wisdom, prudence, 'silence', self-control...

# Spirituality is Integration

The healthy way to avoid chaos is not rigidity – but integration



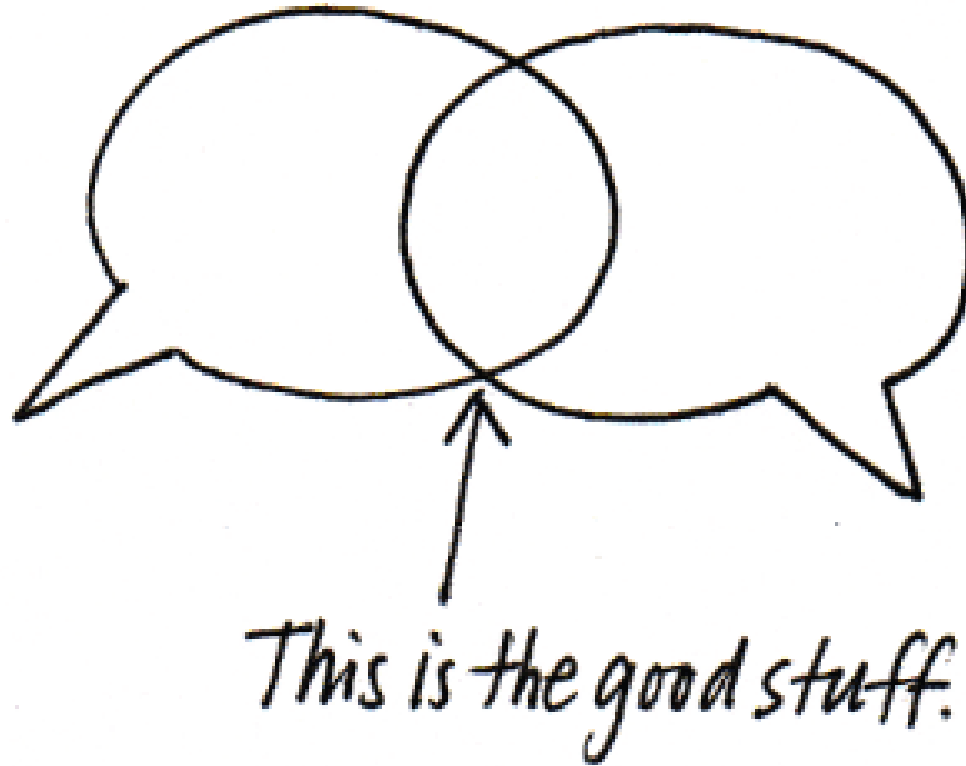
Chaos

Rigidity

**Closing Remark - 1**

# Truth and Meaning

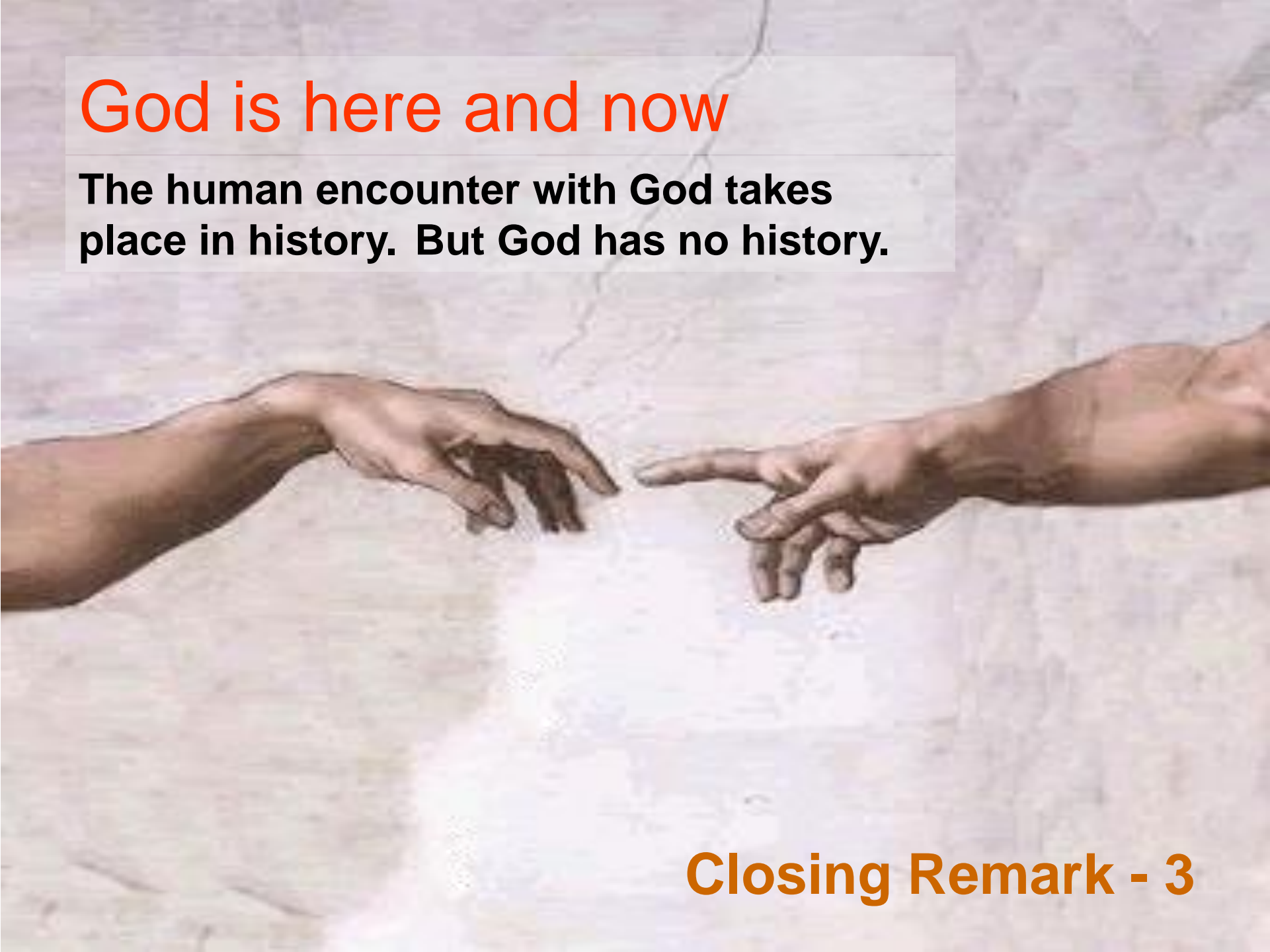
Religious truth-claims provide meaning to the mysteries of life.



**Closing Remark - 2**

# God is here and now

**The human encounter with God takes place in history. But God has no history.**



**Closing Remark - 3**

**Thank you**



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