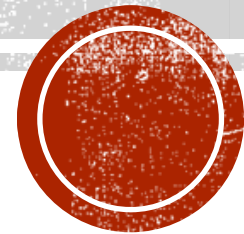


# WHAT IS “RELIGION?”

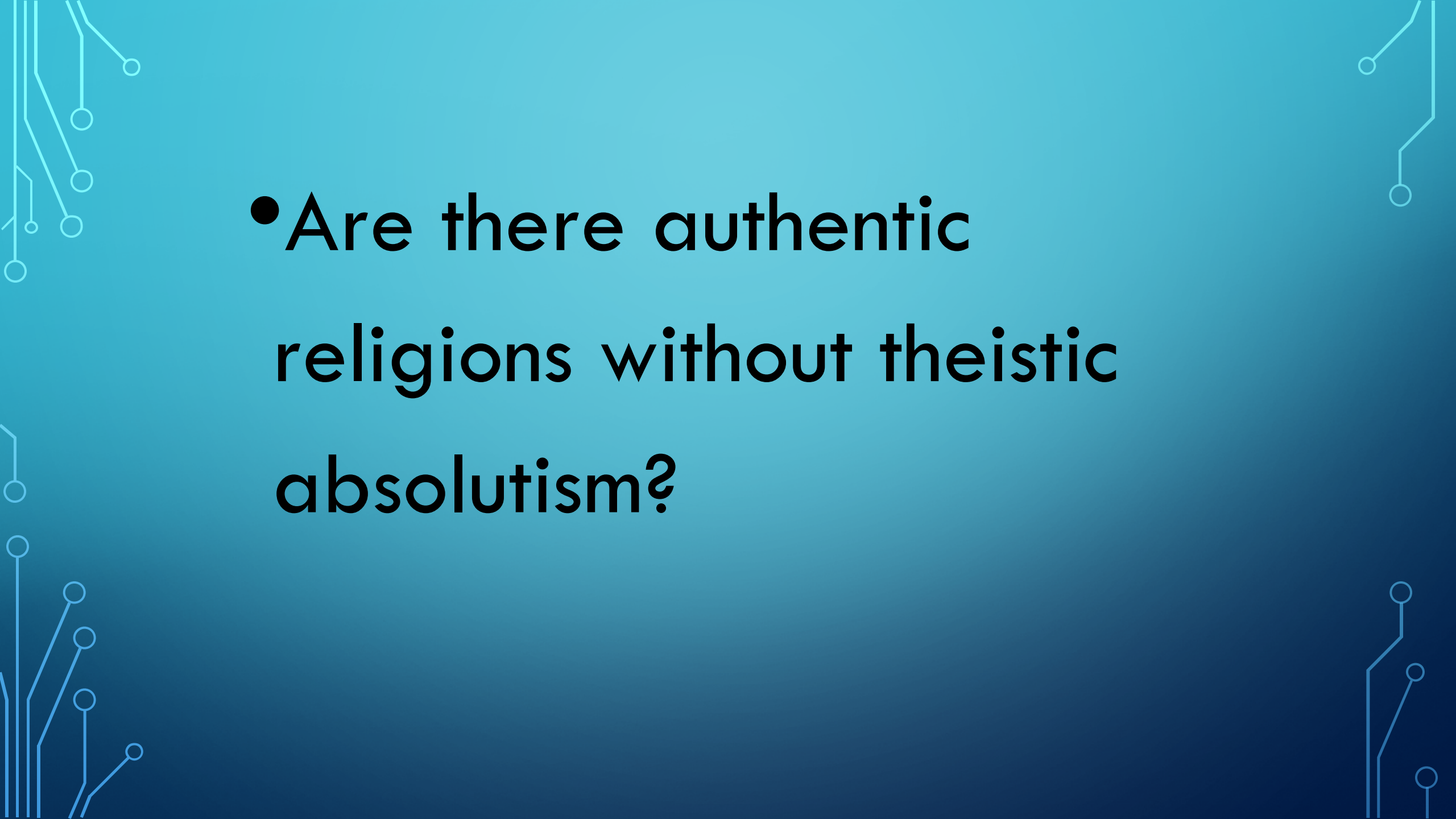
REV. DR. JARMO TARKKI  
SECOND SATURDAY CONVERSATIONS  
JANUARY 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

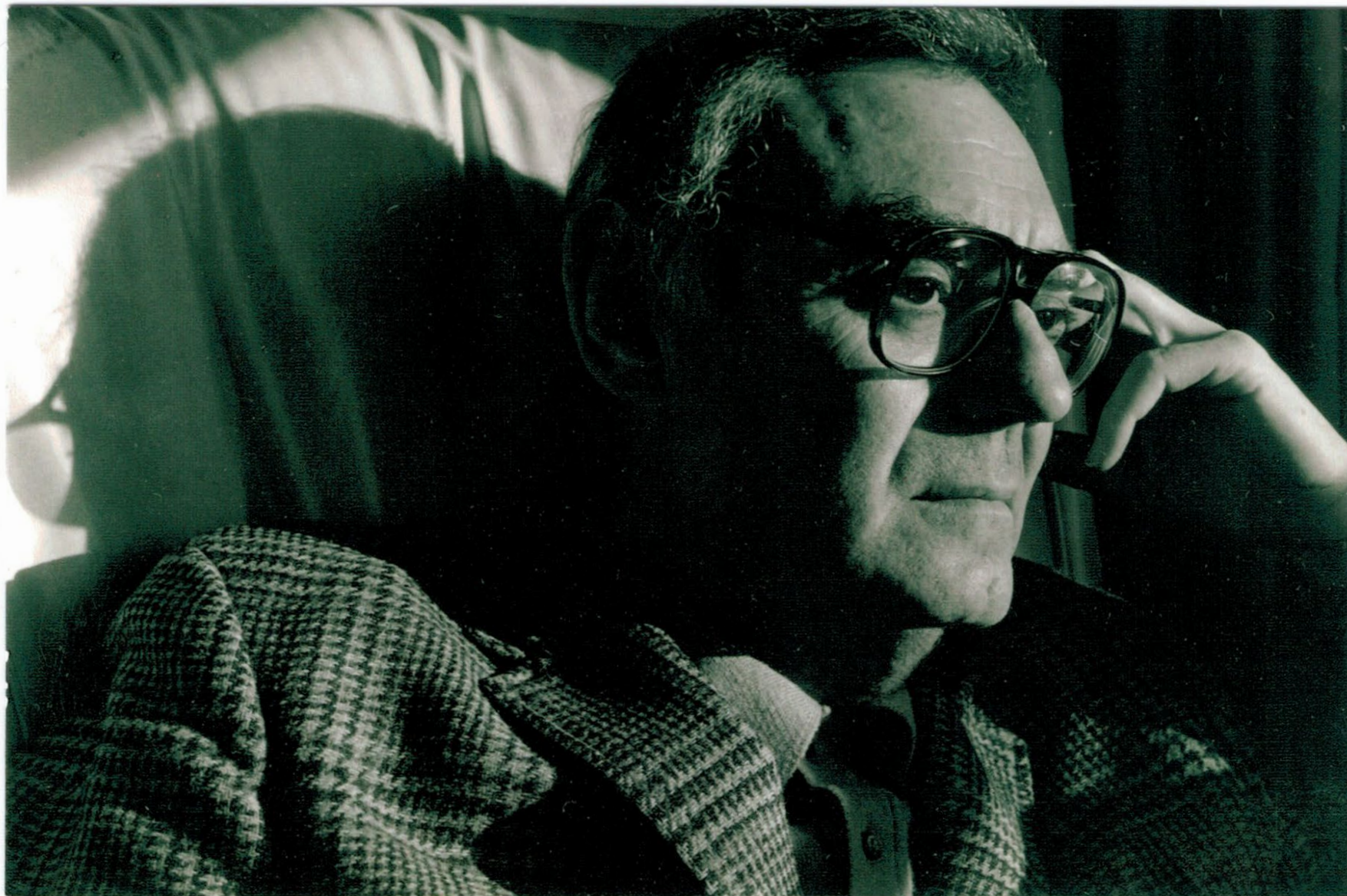


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- The background is a gradient of blue, transitioning from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. In the four corners, there are decorative white line-art elements resembling circuit traces or neural network connections, with small circles at the end of the lines.
- **Spiritual**
  - **Not religious.**

- It matters how we define "religion."
- "A medical institution that defines 'medicine' as 'supernatural faith healing' will employ practices which an institution that defines 'medicine' in scientific terms will reject."

- The dominant Western religions define “religion” as “belief in God,” in which “God” is understood as an all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good miracle working being (theistic absolutism).
- Marcus Borg uses the term “parent theism.”
- Religion is about being saved and going to heaven after we die.
- “Church alumni” - apatheism

- 
- The background is a gradient of blue, with decorative white circuit-like lines in the corners. These lines consist of straight segments connected by small circles, resembling a network or data flow diagram.
- Are there authentic religions without theistic absolutism?



■ **Alvin J. Reines (1926-2004)**

“Religion is the human person’s response to the conflict of finitude”

- Rabbi, Professor of Philosophy at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati
- Coined the term “Polydoxy”
- See “The Word Religion” by Alvin Reines here <https://polydoxy.org/the-word-religion/>
- Major work: *Polydoxy: Explorations in a Philosophy of Liberal Religion* (Prometheus, 1987)

# HUMAN CONDITION

• **PSYCHIC FINITY**



**INFINITE PSYCHIC DESIRE**

• **PHYSICAL FINITY**



**INFINITE PHYSICAL DESIRE**

• **TERRITORIAL FINITY**



**INFINITE TERRITORIAL  
DESIRE**

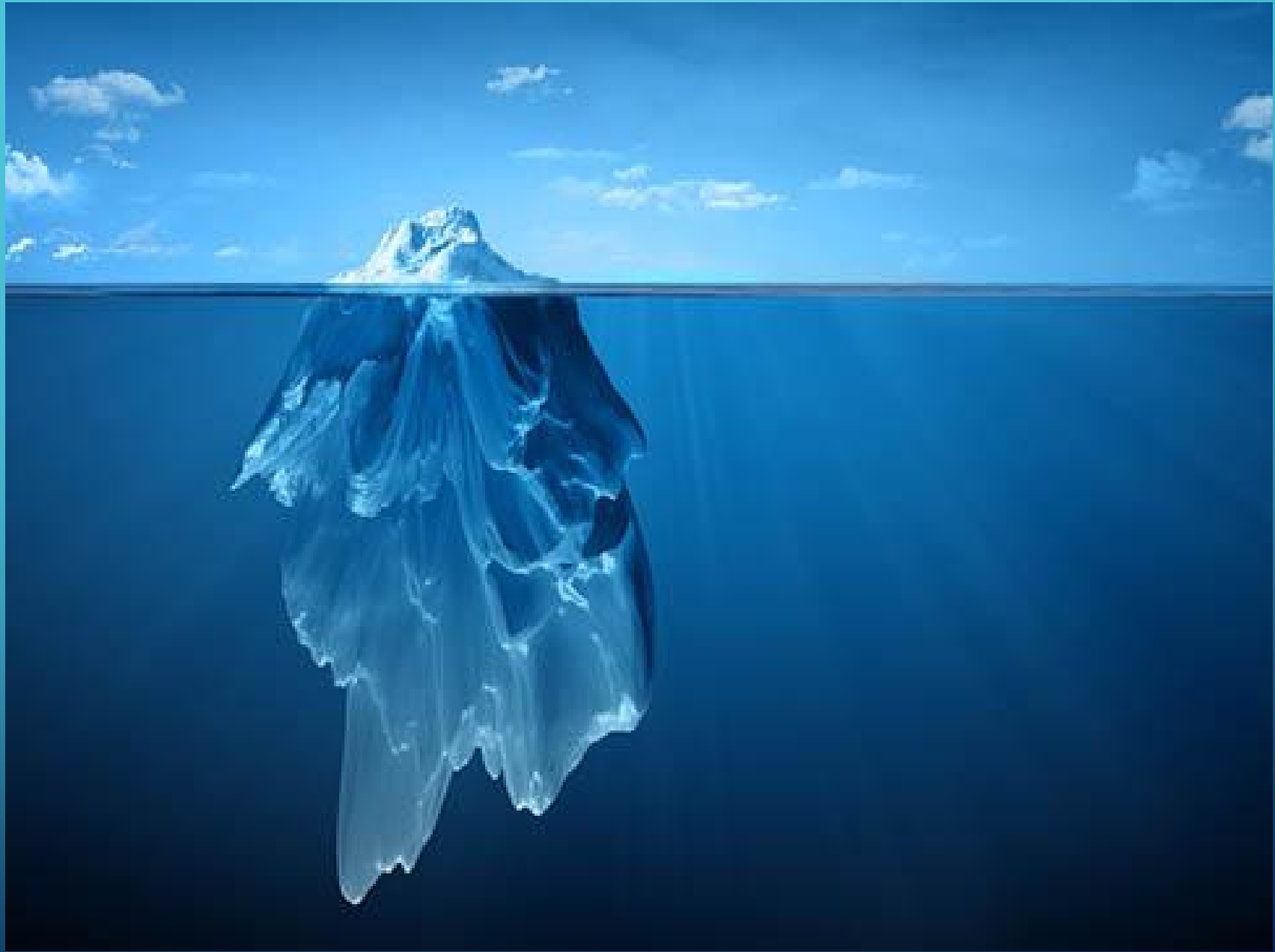
• **EXISTENTIAL FINITY**



**INFINITE EXISTENTIAL  
DESIRE**



- The conflict between finite reality and the intense desire to overcome those limitations produces negative moods, such as terror, despair, anxiety, and melancholy on both conscious and unconscious level. Unresolved these negative moods corrode life's value.



## SOTERIA (SALVATION)

- The purpose of religion is to produce “*soteria*,” ultimate meaningful existence.
- “*Asoteria*” is the name of meaningless existence that arises from a failure to resolve authentically the conflict of finitude.

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# Responses to the conflict of finitude

## Infinite Relational Response

- Pharisaic Judaism
- Roman Catholicism
  - Islam
- Fundamentalist Protestantism

# Infinite Personal Response

- Hinduism
- Pantheistic traditions

## Finite Response

- No institutional support
- Requires knowledge, training, and social acceptance

## Discognitive Response

- Psychosis and neurosis
  - Alcoholism
  - Drug addiction
    - Suicide



- In an **orthodox** religion, the hierarchy (priests, popes, councils) decide for the individual what beliefs are wrong and which ones are correct. The one who believes “correctly” is a good member, but the one who deviates from “correctness” is in need of guidance and/or punishment.
- In a **polydox** religion, an individual has, not only a *de facto* but also *de iure* religious autonomy, in other words, the right to determine freely the content of his or her religious beliefs within the religious community – freedom of religion inside a religion.
- A person’s religious freedom ends where another person’s religious freedom begins.

- "The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects as false."  
(C.S. Lewis)

- “I am convinced that there are no intrinsic conflicts between the intellect and Christianity, reason and religion. When there are, they are the unnecessary product either of a misunderstanding of religion and its absolutization or of the absolutization of a nonreligious worldview.”  
(Marcus Borg, *Convictions*, 48-49, 2014)

- “Credo” from “Cor” and “Do”, “I give my heart.”
- An authentic religion, the one that successfully responds to the conflict of finitude, both heart and mind are present. For Nietzsche this meant harmony between the Apollonian (mind) and the Dionysian (heart) sides.





Amen