

Observational prospects of axion inflation: with Abelian and non-Abelian gauge fields

Oksana Iarygina

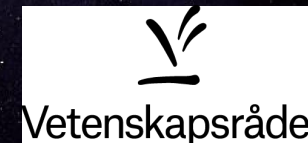
PASCOS 2026, Sheffield



NORDITA
The Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics



**Stockholm
University**



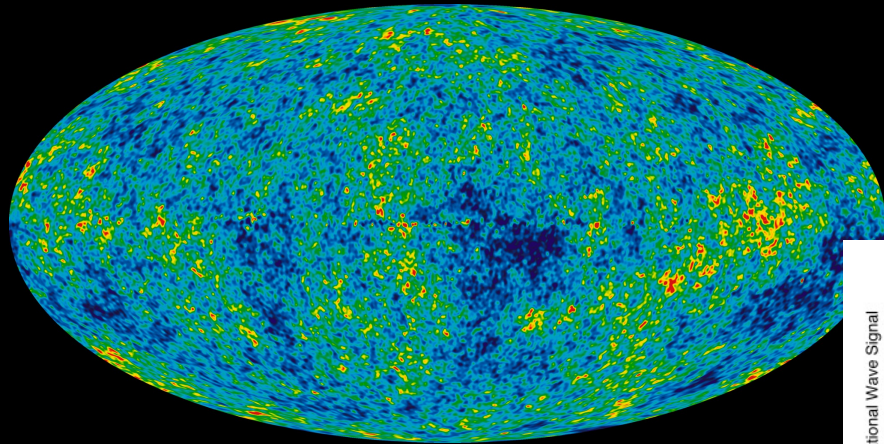
Vetenskapsrådet



Funded by
the European Union

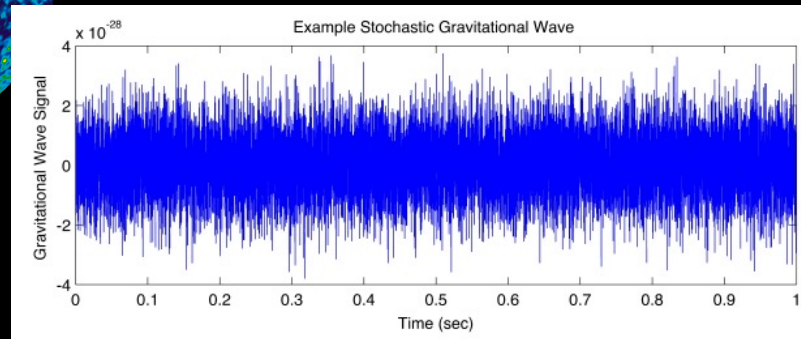
Multi-messenger cosmology from gauge fields

Scalar perturbations



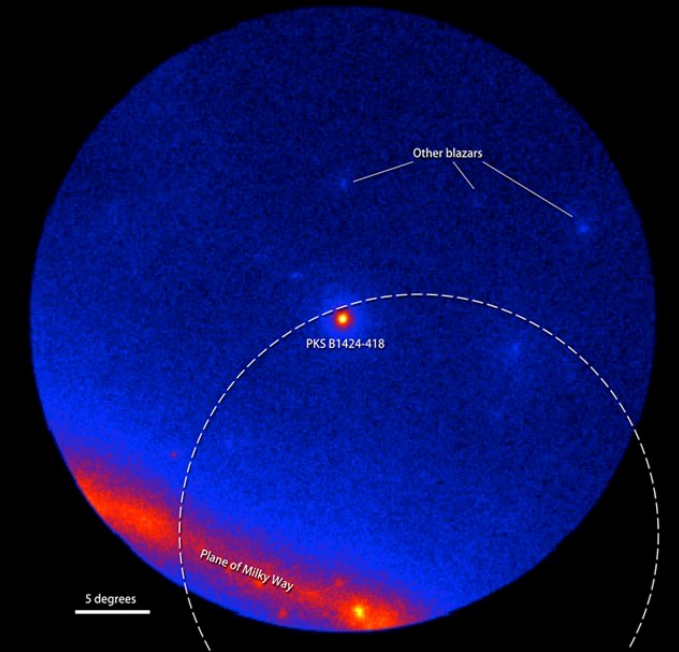
[Planck]

Gravitational waves



[LIGO/VIRGO]

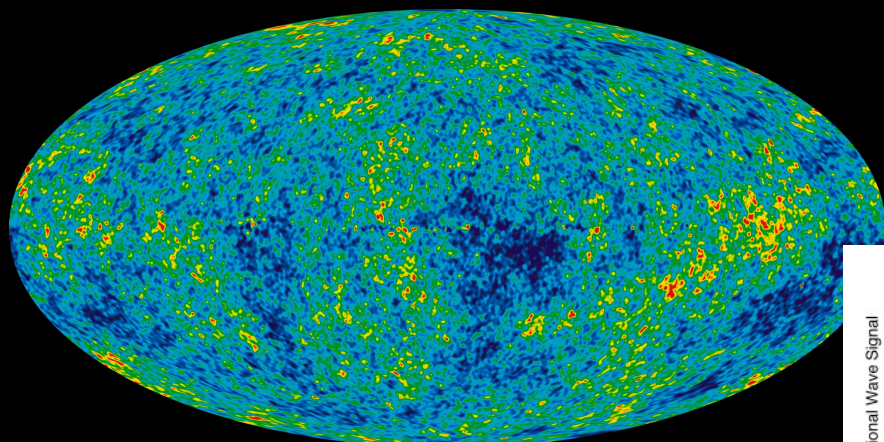
Primordial magnetic fields



[NASA/DOE/LAT Collaboration]

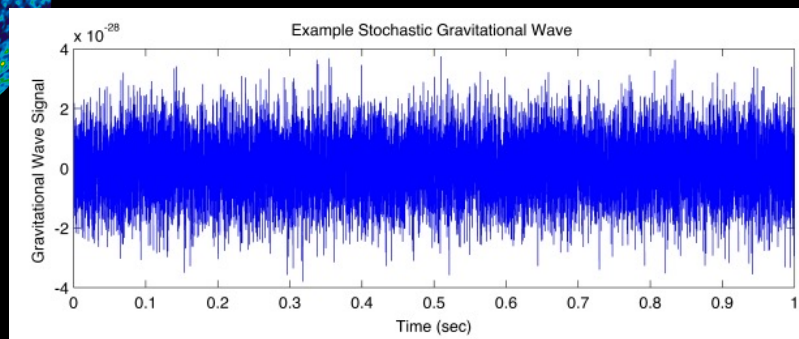
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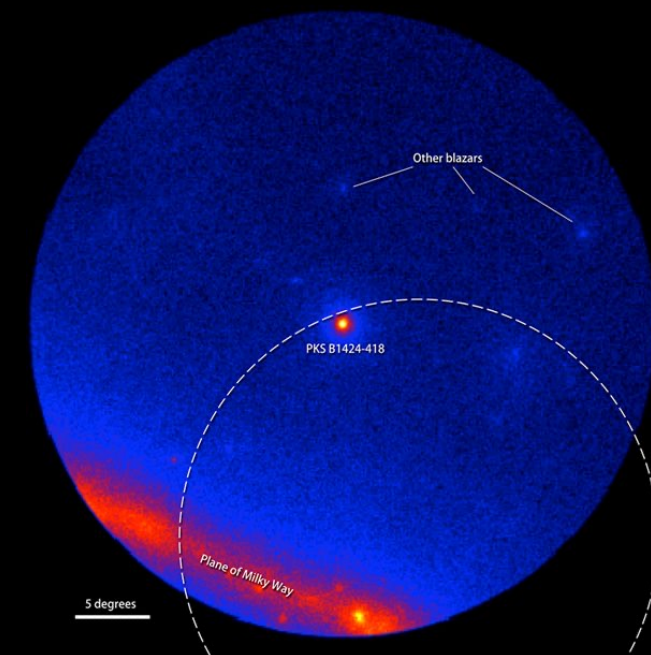
[Planck]

Gravitational waves



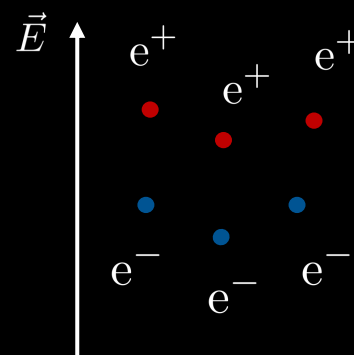
[LIGO/VIRGO]


Primordial magnetic fields




[NASA/DOE/LAT Collaboration]

+ Schwinger effect



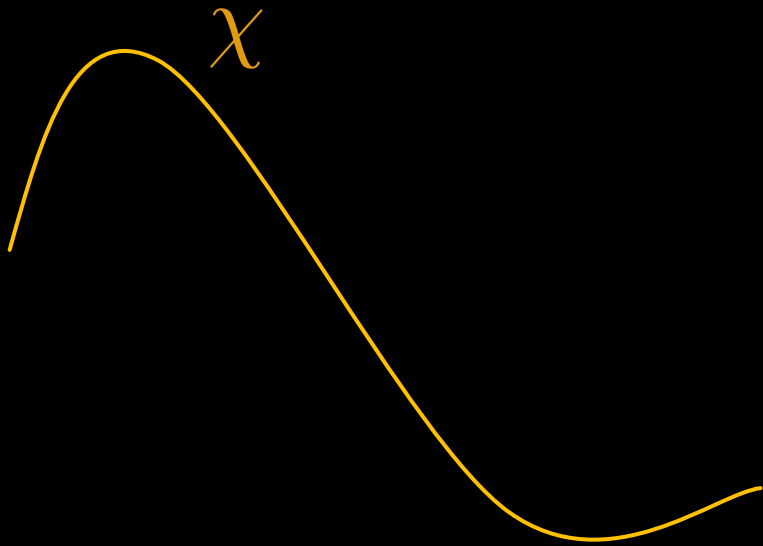


axion $\longrightarrow \frac{\chi}{4f} \lambda F_{\mu\nu}^a \tilde{F}^{a\mu\nu}$

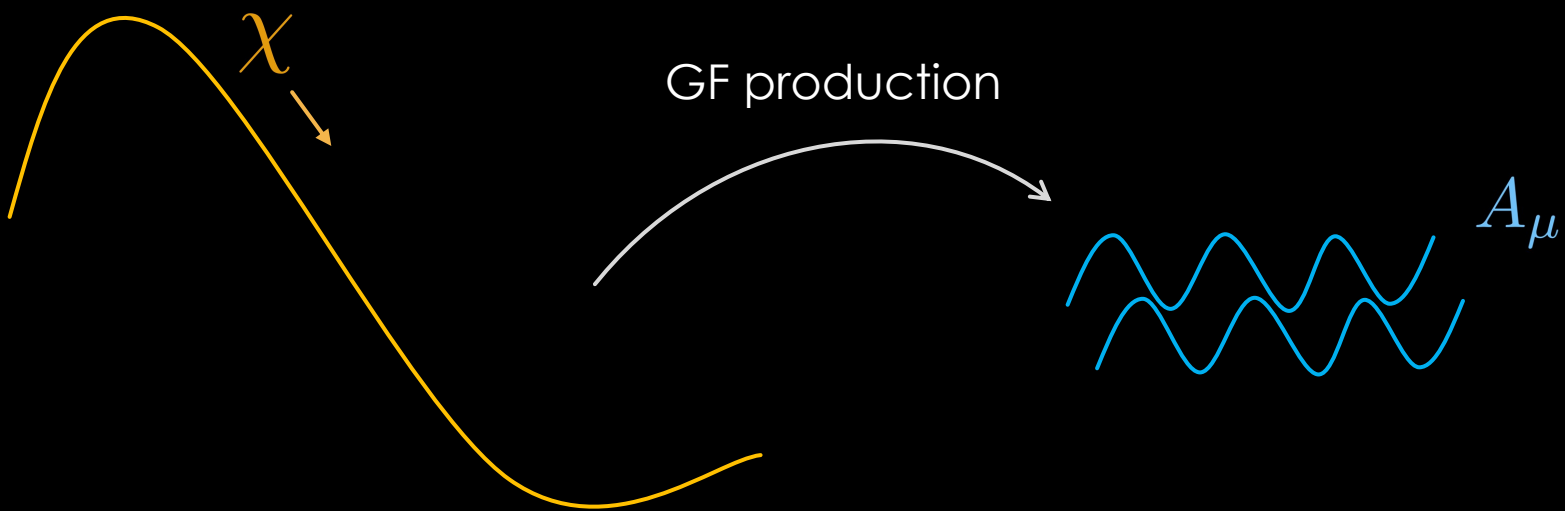


axion \longrightarrow $\frac{\chi}{4f} \lambda F_{\mu\nu}^a \tilde{F}^{a\mu\nu}$ \longleftarrow gauge field

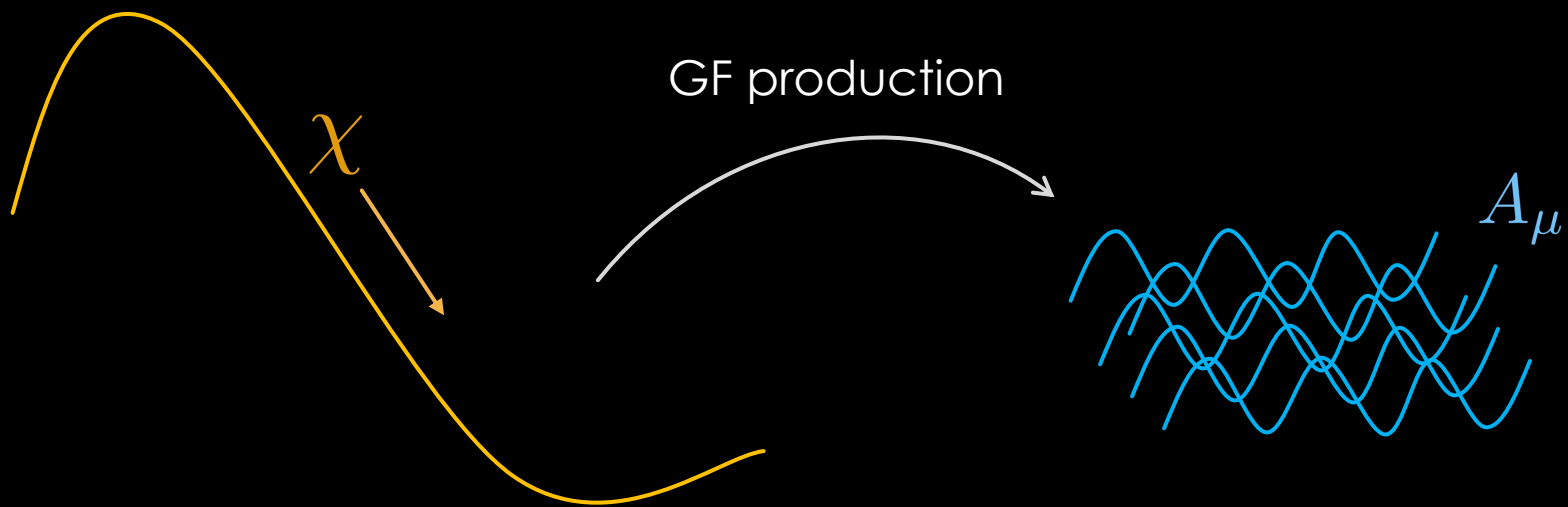
$$\frac{\chi}{4f} \lambda F_{\mu\nu}^a \tilde{F}^{a\mu\nu}$$



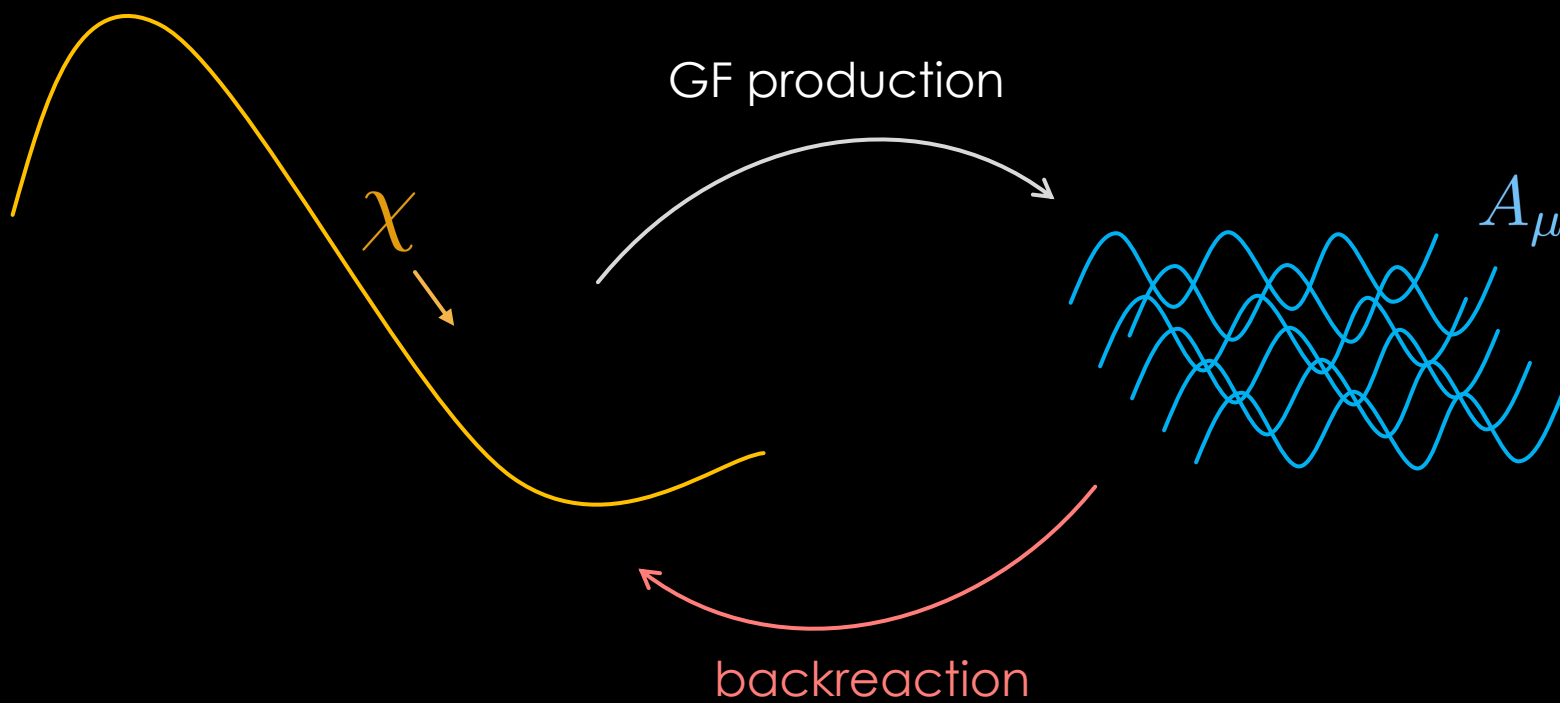
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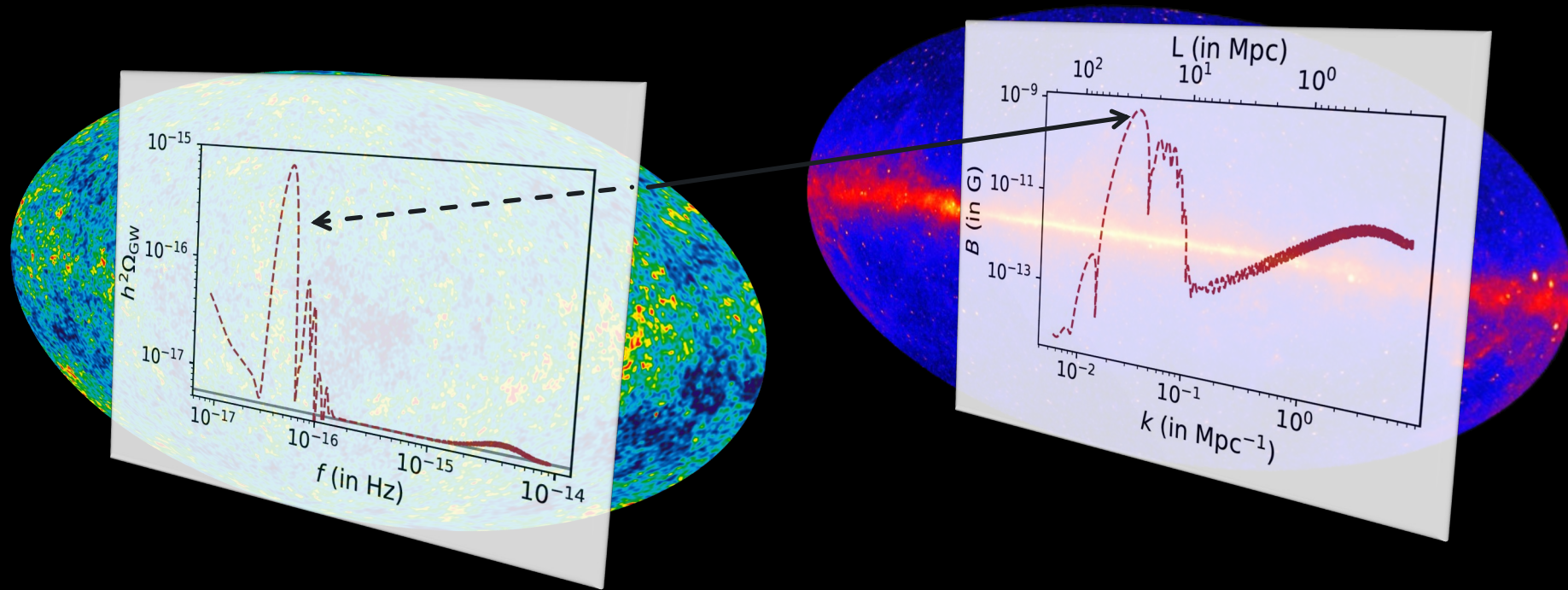
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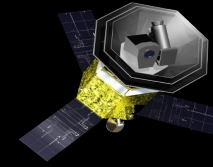
Backreaction effects lead to correlated signal in
gravitational waves & primordial magnetic fields



[LISA, LiteBIRD, SO]

[Fermi telescope, CTA, SKA]

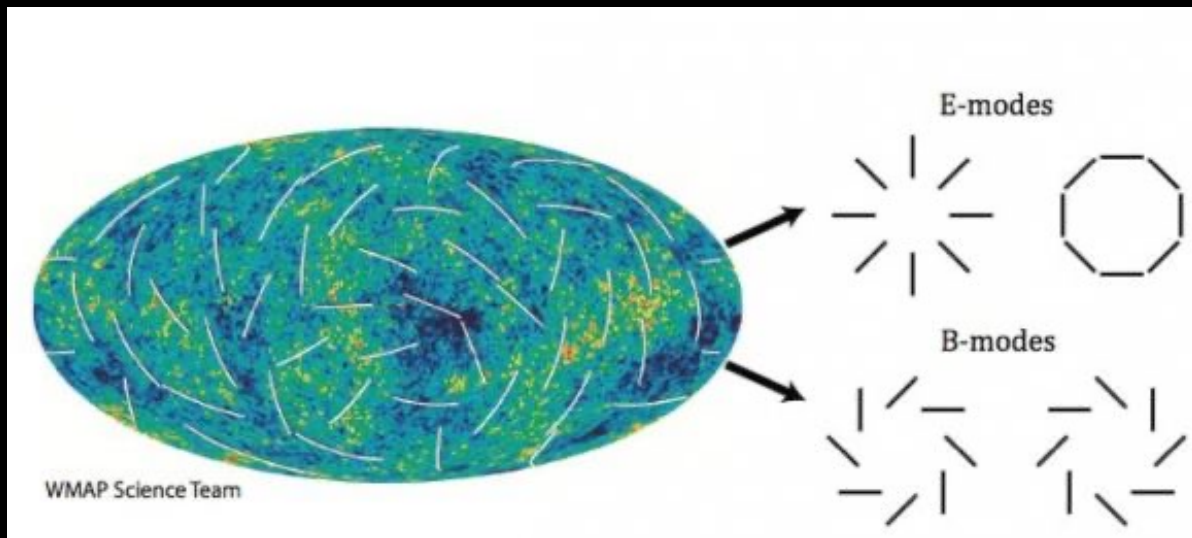
Characteristic signatures from gauge fields



[Litebird]

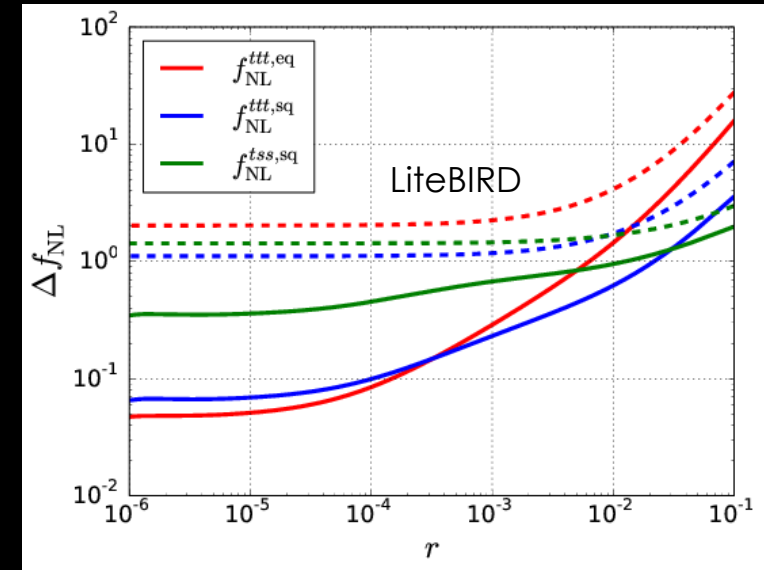
- Polarization: B-modes
+ parity odd CMB correlations

$$TB \neq 0, EB \neq 0$$



[WMAP]

- Chiral gravitational waves
- Non-zero tensor non-Gaussianity



[M. Shiraishi, 2019]

Dilution during inflation due to conformal invariance

$$A_\mu \sim 1/a(t)$$

$$f^2(\phi) F_{\mu\nu}^a F^{a\mu\nu}, \quad \chi F\tilde{F}, \quad (F\tilde{F})^2$$

To avoid dilution, new terms in the gauge theory are required or a coupling with inflaton!

Spectator Chromo-natural inflation

$$-\frac{1}{2}(\partial\chi)^2 - \mu^4 \left(1 + \cos\left(\frac{\chi}{f}\right) \right)$$

Natural inflation

[K. Freese, J. A. Frieman and A. V. Olinto, 1990]

Spectator Chromo-natural inflation

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Chromo-natural inflation

additional friction

[P. Adshead , M. Wyman, 2012]

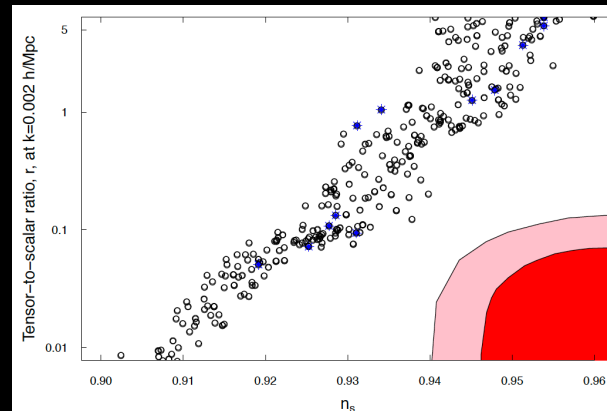
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Chromo-natural inflation

additional friction

[P. Adshead , M. Wyman, 2012]



Ruled out by observations!

[P. Adshead, E. Martinec, and M. Wyman, 2013]

Spectator Chromo-natural inflation

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-\det(g_{\mu\nu})} \left[\frac{M_{\text{Pl}}^2}{2} R - \frac{1}{2} (\partial\phi)^2 - V(\phi) \right. \\ \left. - \frac{1}{2} (\partial\chi)^2 - \mu^4 \left(1 + \cos\left(\frac{\chi}{f}\right) \right) - \frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu}^a F^{a\mu\nu} + \frac{\chi}{4f} \lambda F_{\mu\nu}^a \tilde{F}^{a\mu\nu} \right]$$

$$F_{\mu\nu}^a = \partial_\mu A_\nu^a - \partial_\nu A_\mu^a - g\epsilon^{abc} A_\mu^b A_\nu^c$$

[E. Dimastrogiovanni, M. Fasiello, T. Fujita, 2017]

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[E. Dimastrogiovanni, M. Fasiello, T. Fujita, 2017]

Isotropic (attractor) solution for the background:

[A. Maleknejad and M.M. Sheikh-Jabbari, 2011]

$$A_0^a = 0,$$

$$A_i^a = \delta_i^a a(t) Q(t)$$



“hedgehog ansatz”

Dictionary of perturbations

Scalar perturbations:

- inflaton $\delta\phi$
- axion $\delta\chi$
- gauge field δQ
- metric φ

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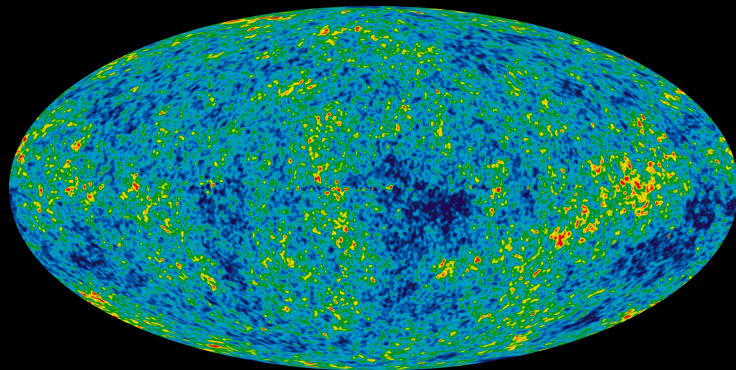
[A. Papageorgiou, M. Peloso, C. Unal, 2019]

[T. Fujita, T. Murata, I. Obata, M. Shiraishie, 2023]

...

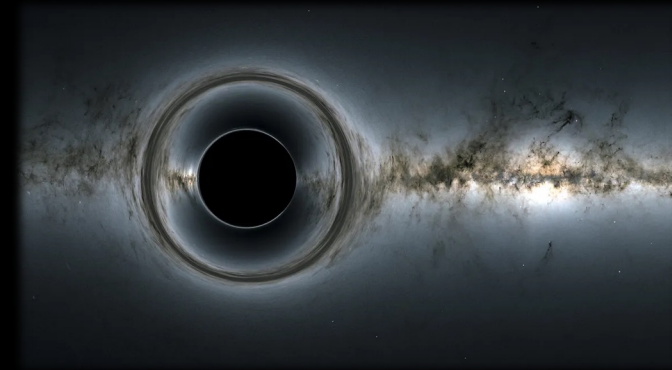
[E. Dimastrogiovanni, M. Fasiello,
A. Papageorgiou, 2024]

CMB



[Planck]

Primordial black holes



[NASA/ESA/Gaia/DPAC]

Dictionary of perturbations

Tensor perturbations:

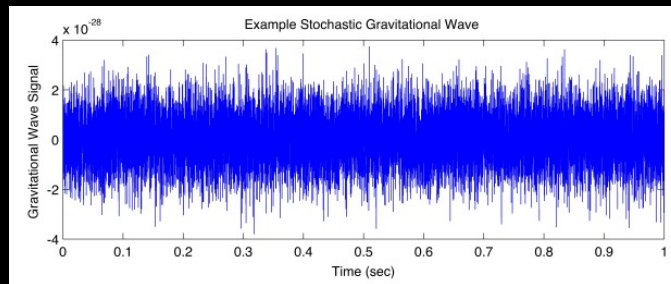
- metric $\delta g_{ij} \supset h_{ij} \supset \psi_{R,L}$
- gauge field $\delta A_i^a \supset T_{ia} \supset T_{R,L}$

Dictionary of perturbations

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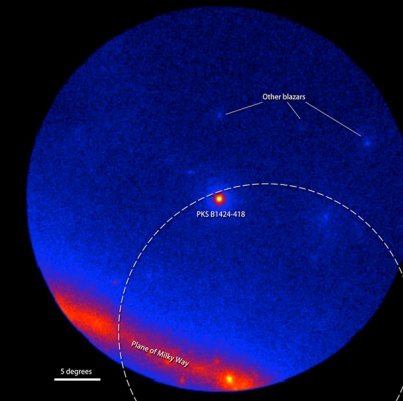
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Primordial gravitational waves



[LIGO/VIRGO]

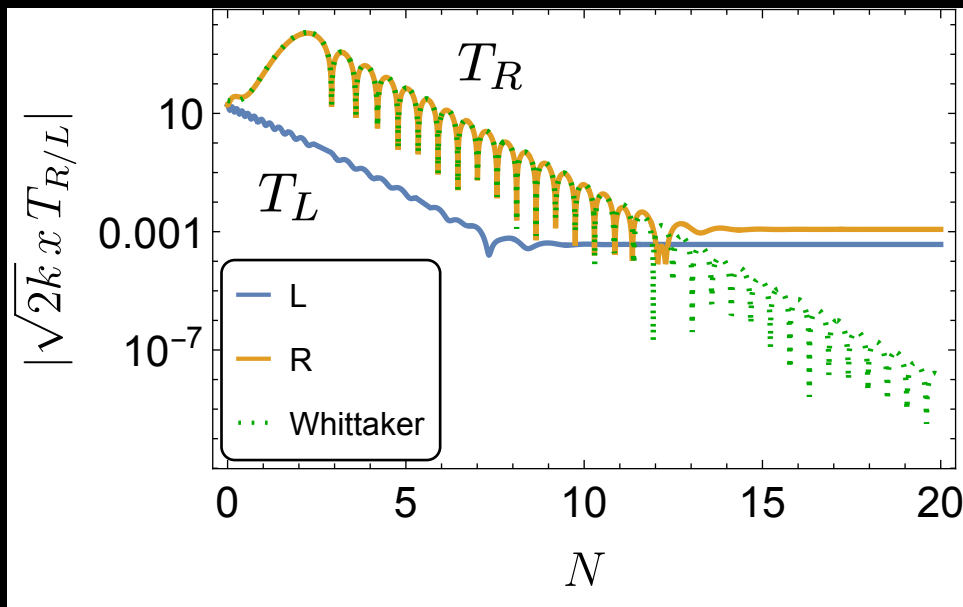
Primordial magnetic fields



[NASA/DOE/LAT Collaboration]

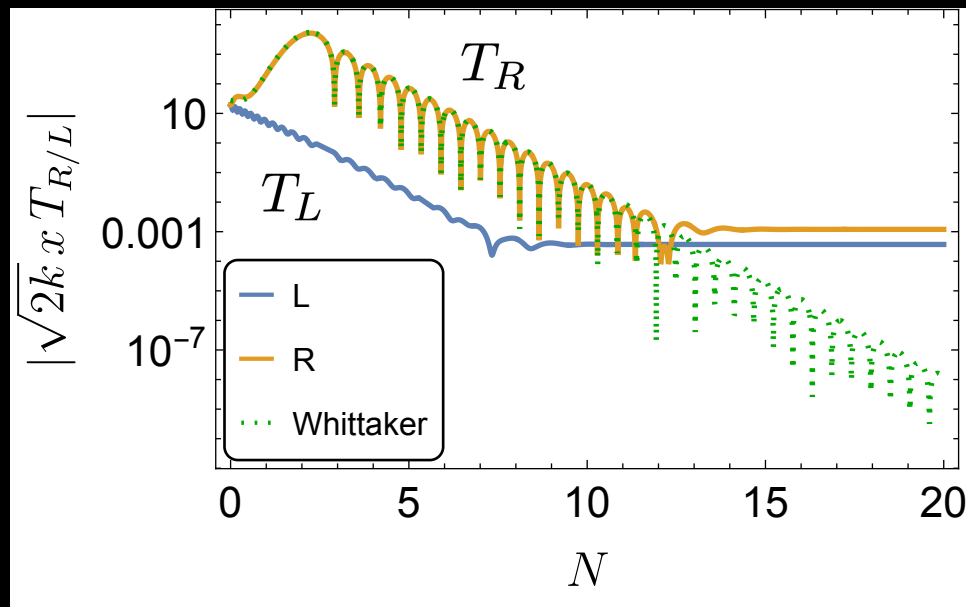
Chiral GW production from tensor perturbations

$$\partial_x^2 T_{R,L} + \left[1 + \frac{2}{x^2} (m_Q \xi \mp x(m_Q + \xi)) \right] T_{R,L} = \tilde{f}(\psi_{R,L})$$



Chiral GW production from tensor perturbations

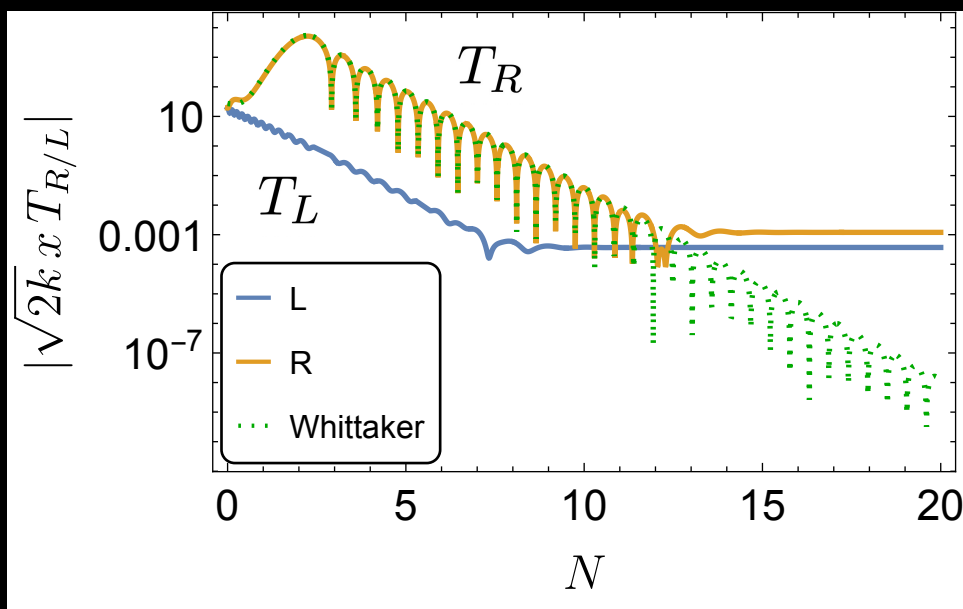
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Transient tachyonic instability
only in one of polarizations

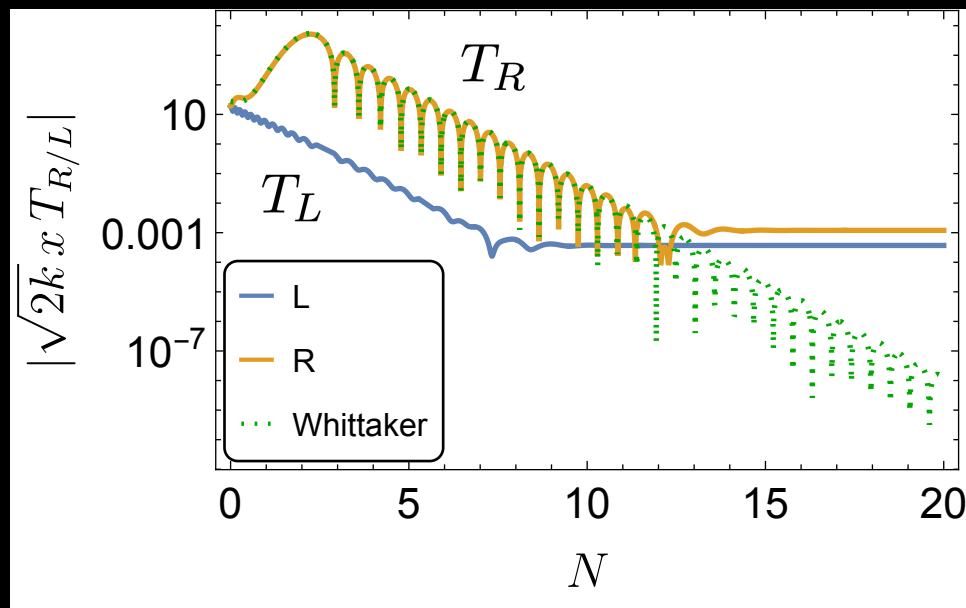
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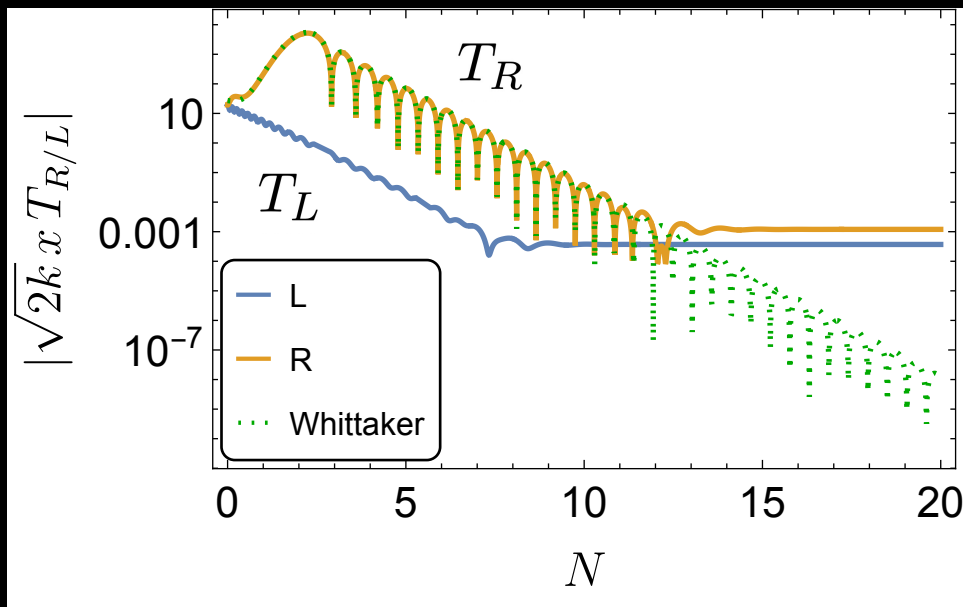
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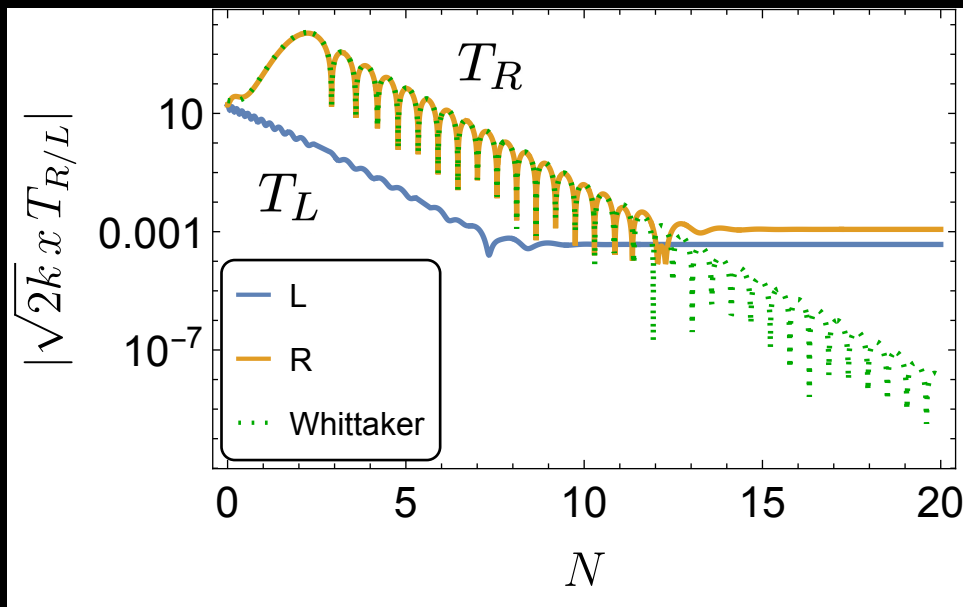
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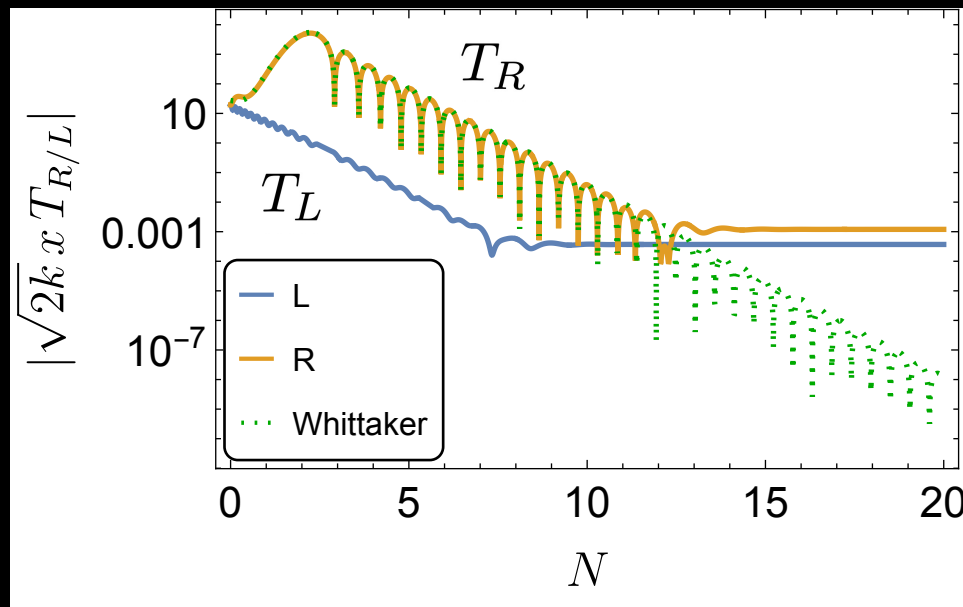
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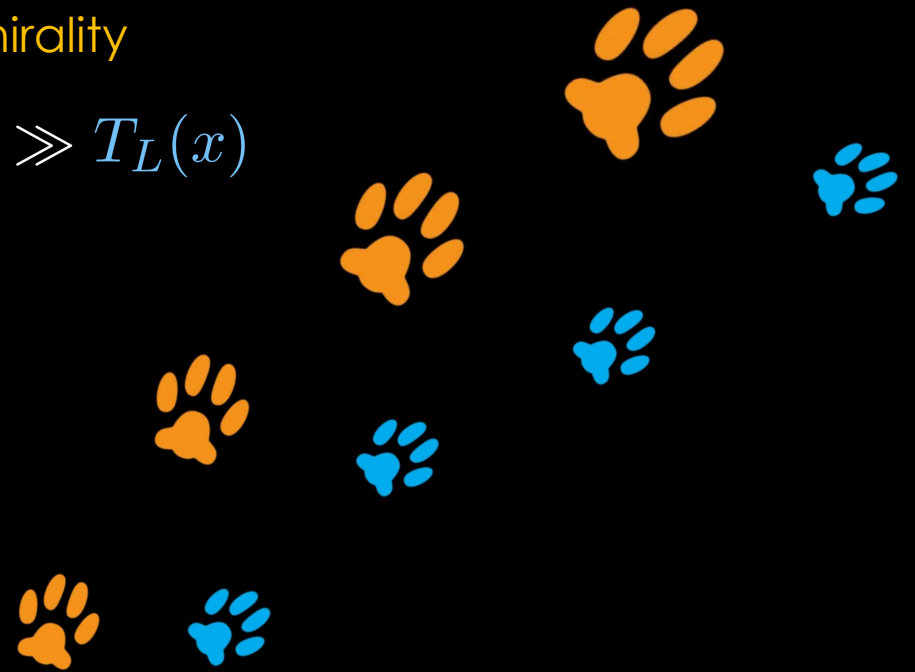
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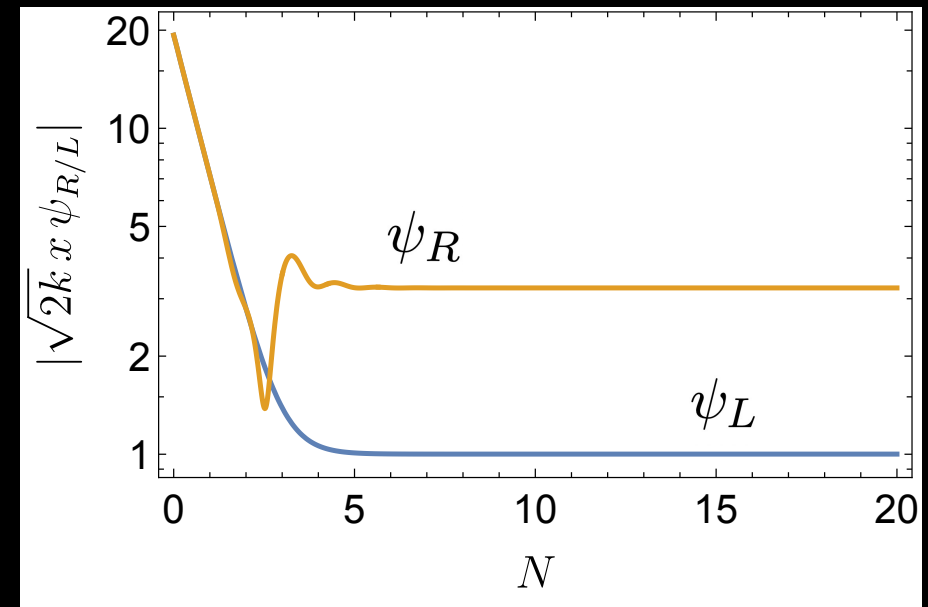
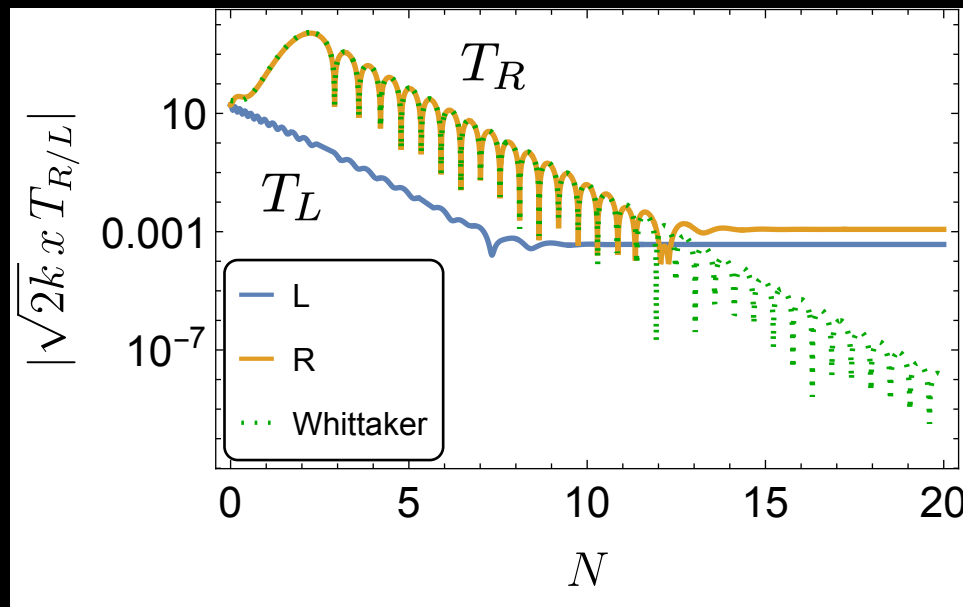
chirality

$$T_R(x) \gg T_L(x)$$



Chiral GW production from tensor perturbations

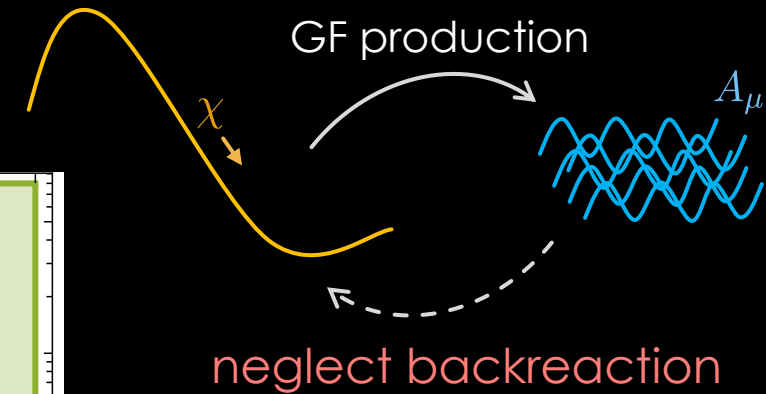
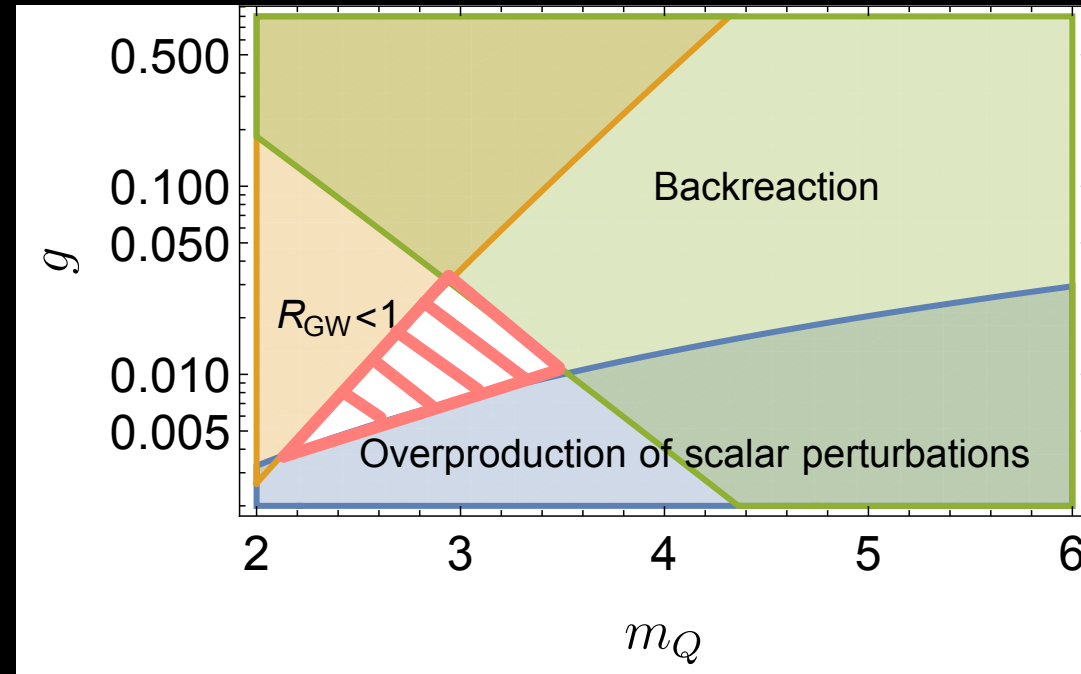
$$\partial_x^2 \psi_{R,L} + \left(1 - \frac{2}{x^2}\right) \psi_{R,L} = f(T_{R,L})$$



Chiral gravitational waves! $\psi_R(x) \gg \psi_L(x)$

Viable parameter space of spectator axion-SU(2) inflation

$$\mathcal{R}_{\text{GW}} = \frac{\mathcal{P}_h^{(s)}}{\mathcal{P}_h^{(v)}} \quad m_Q = \frac{gQ}{H}$$



[E. Dimastrogiovanni, M. Fasiello and T. Fujita, 2017]

[A. Papageorgiou, M. Peloso, C. Unal, 2019]

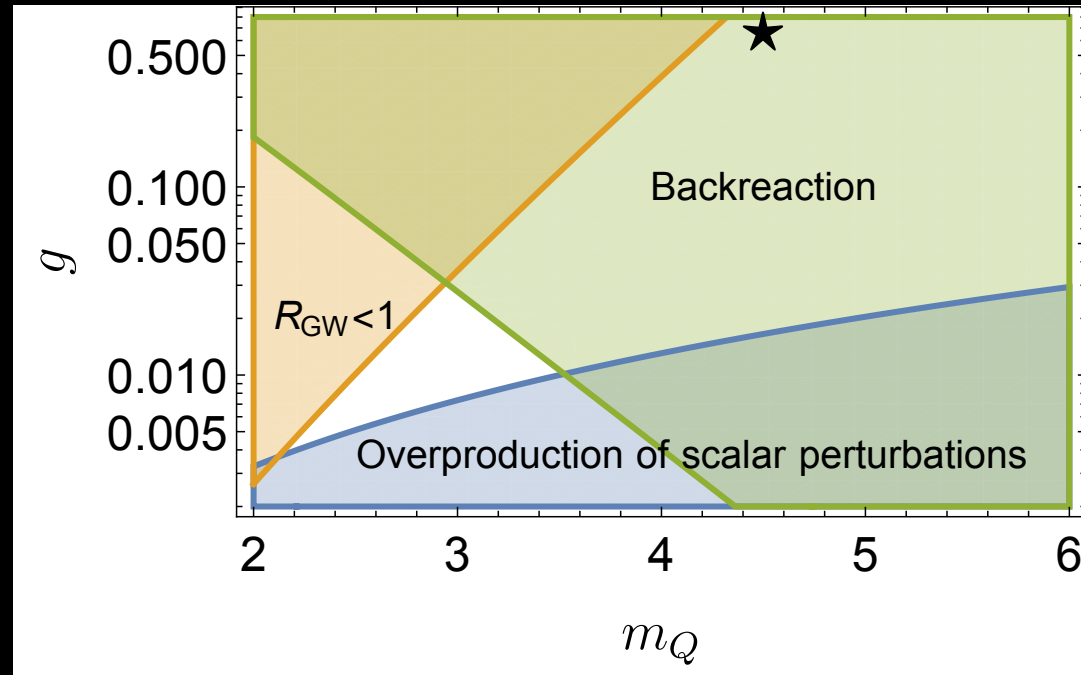
Identifying Standard Model weak bosons as the SU(2) sector

SU(2) \longleftrightarrow

91.2 GeV/c²
0
1
Z⁰
Z boson

80.4 GeV/c²
 ± 1
1
W[±]
W boson

$g \propto \mathcal{O}(0.1)$



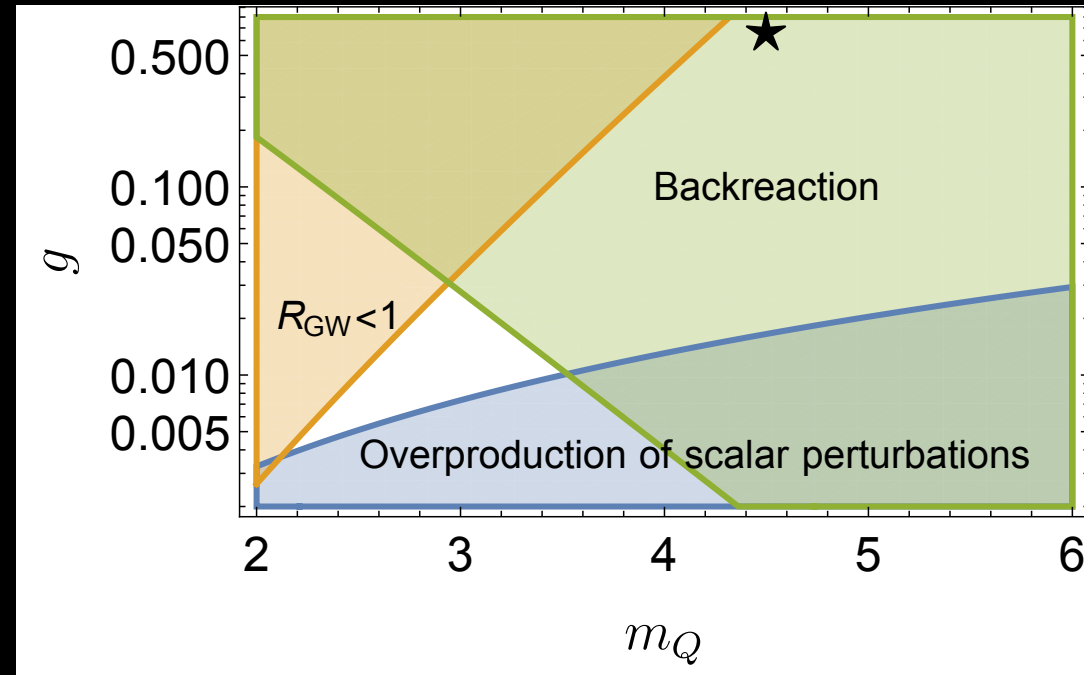
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We need to know the dynamics in

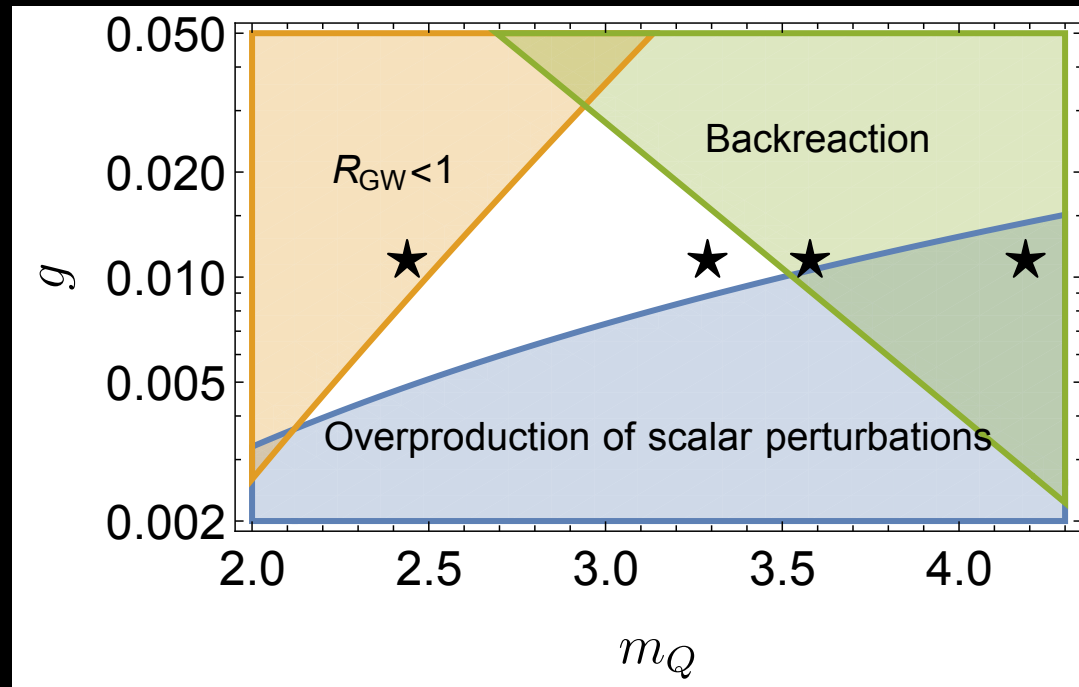
the backreaction regime!

Fiducial parameters for numerical simulations



[OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, 2023]

The Pencil Code

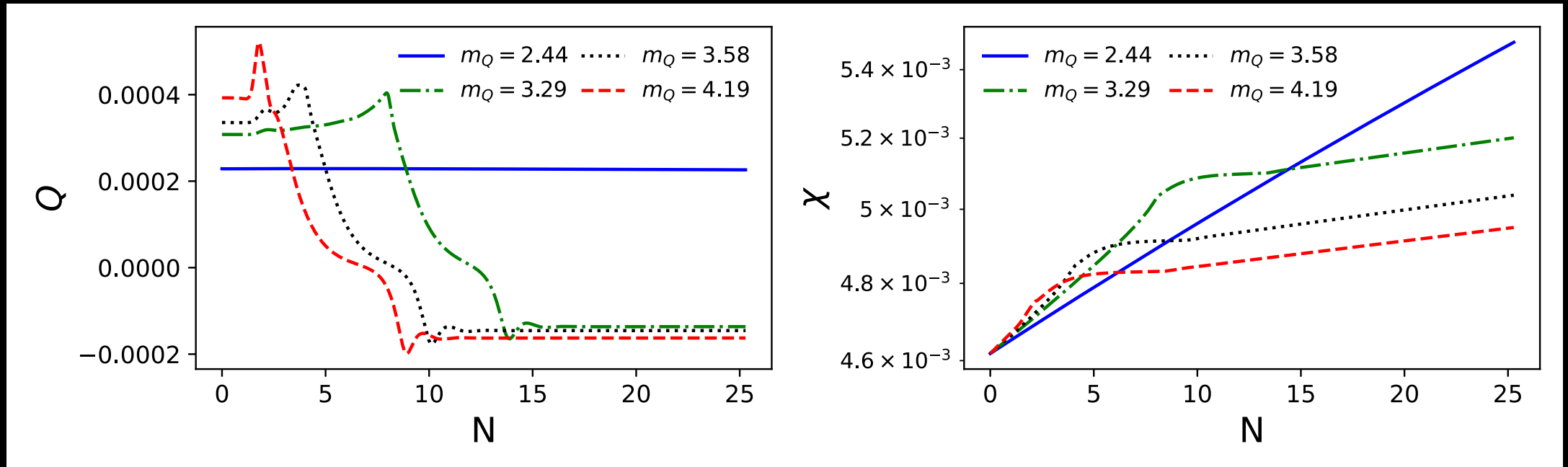


$$F_{\mu\nu}^a = \partial_\mu A_\nu^a - \partial_\nu A_\mu^a - g\epsilon^{abc} A_\mu^b A_\nu^c$$

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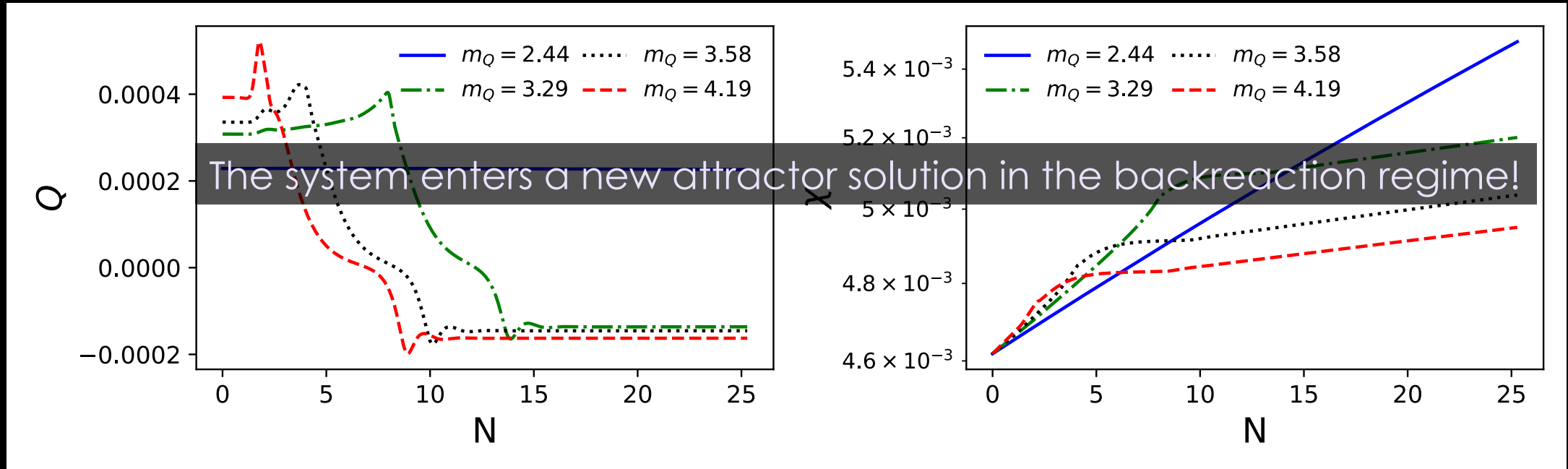
Novel backreaction-supported attractor

[OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, 2023]



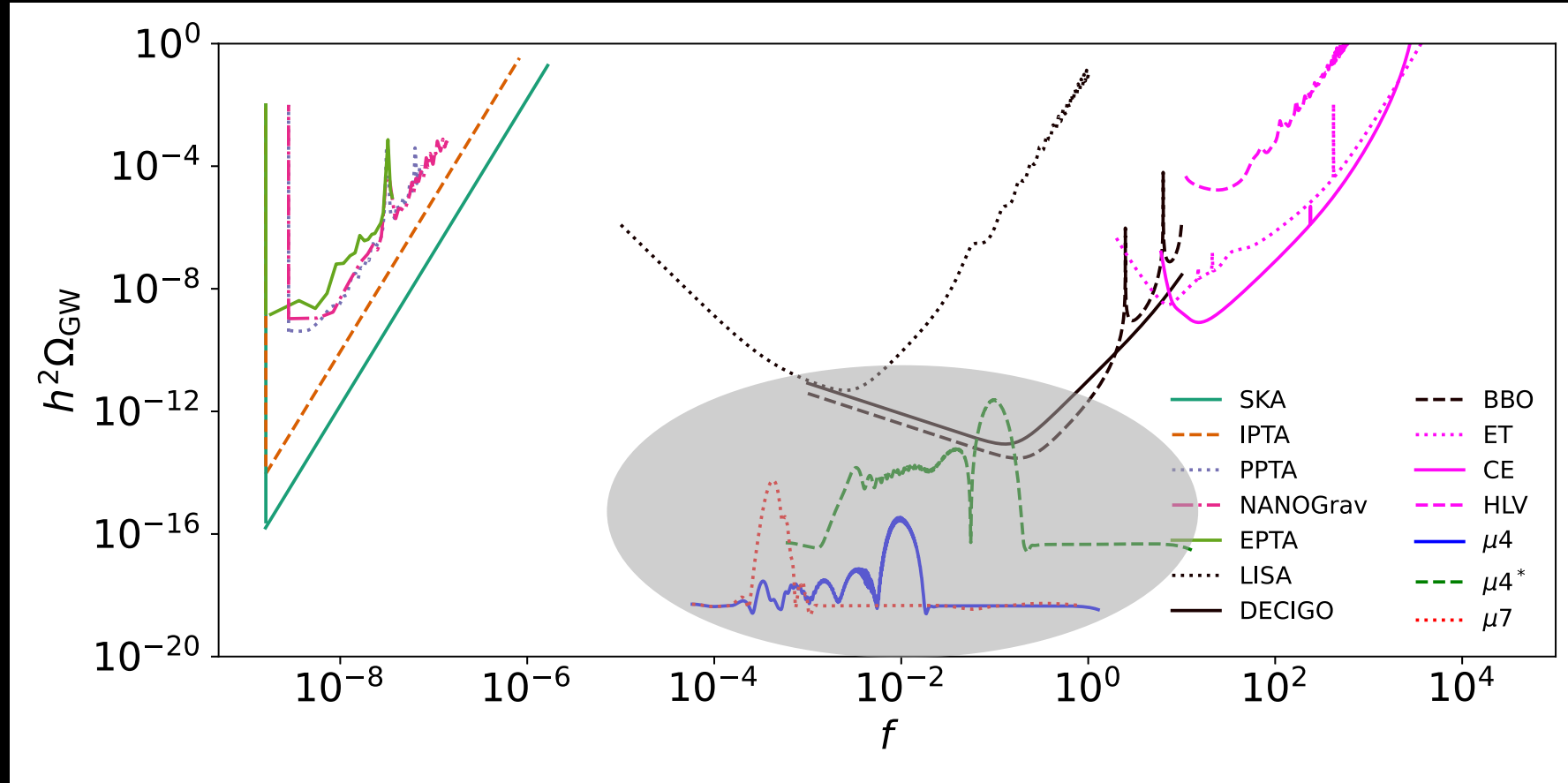
Novel backreaction-supported attractor

[OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, 2023]



$$\frac{\lambda}{af}\chi' \simeq -\frac{2H^2}{gQ}, \quad Q \simeq \text{const}$$

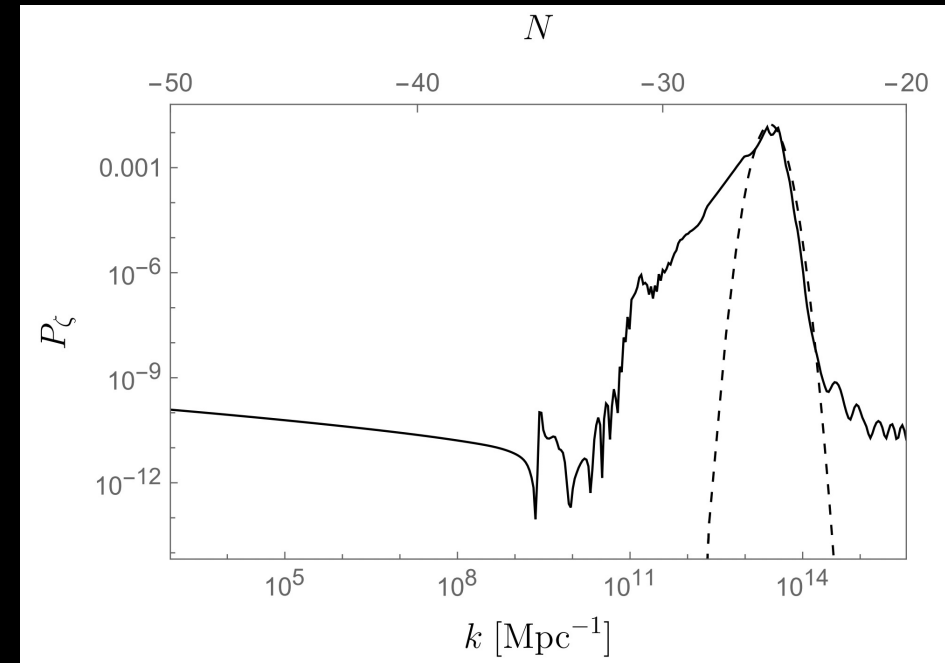
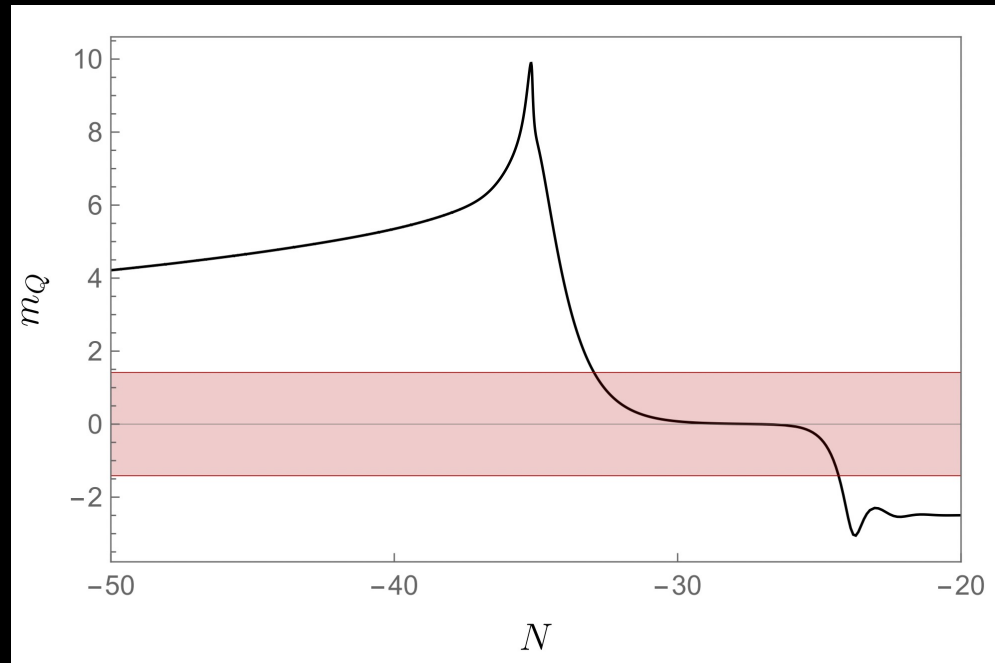
Oscillatory features in gravitational waves



[OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, 2023]

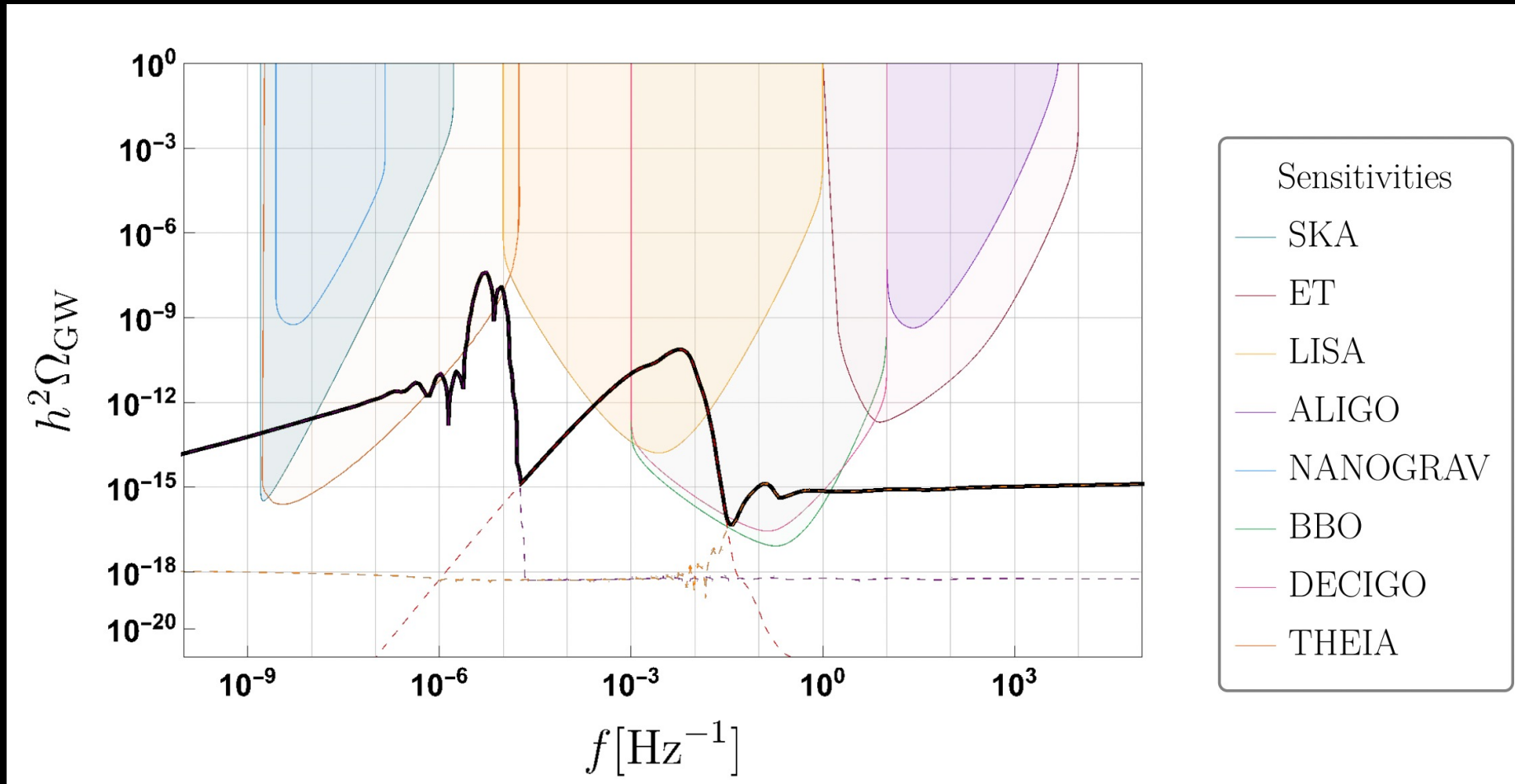
Primordial black holes in the backreaction regime

$|m_Q| < \sqrt{2}$ instability band leads to primordial black holes production



[E. Dimastrogiovanni, M. Fasiello, A. Papageorgiou, 2024]

Gravitational waves and scale-dependent chirality



[E. Dimastrogiovanni, M. Fasiello, A. Papageorgiou, and C. Zenteno Gatica, 2025]




Primordial magnetic fields: why care?

Primordial magnetic fields in intergalactic voids from blazar observations

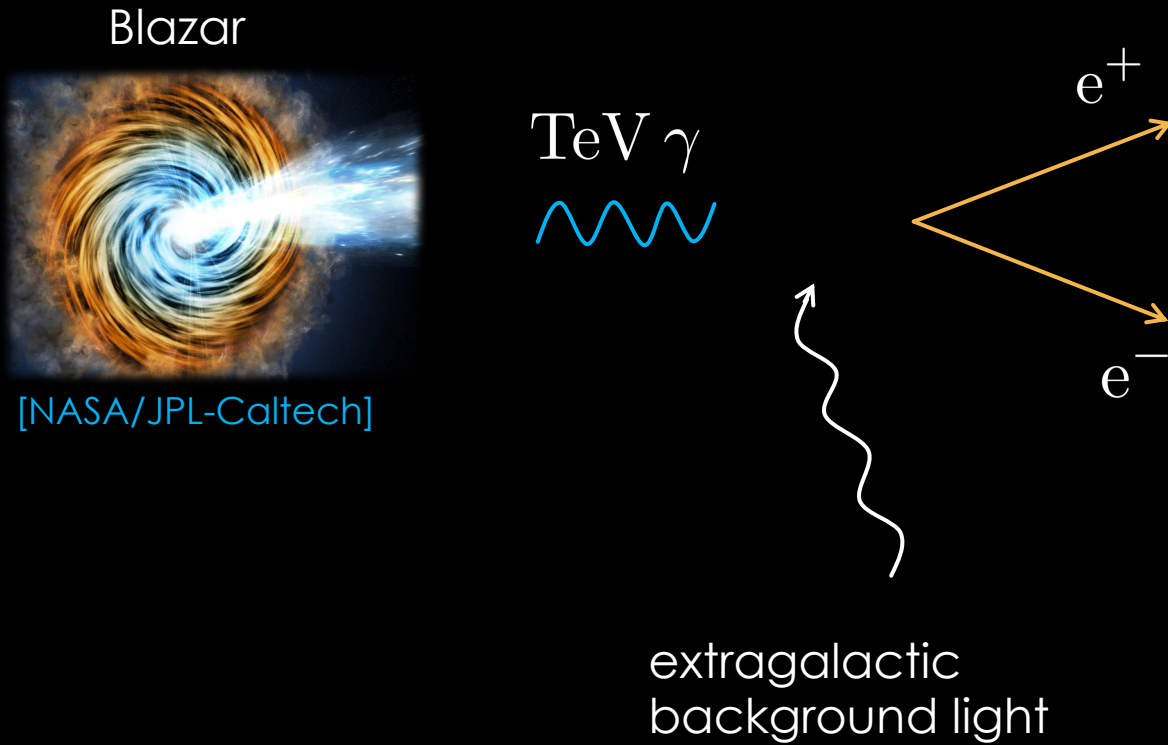
Blazar



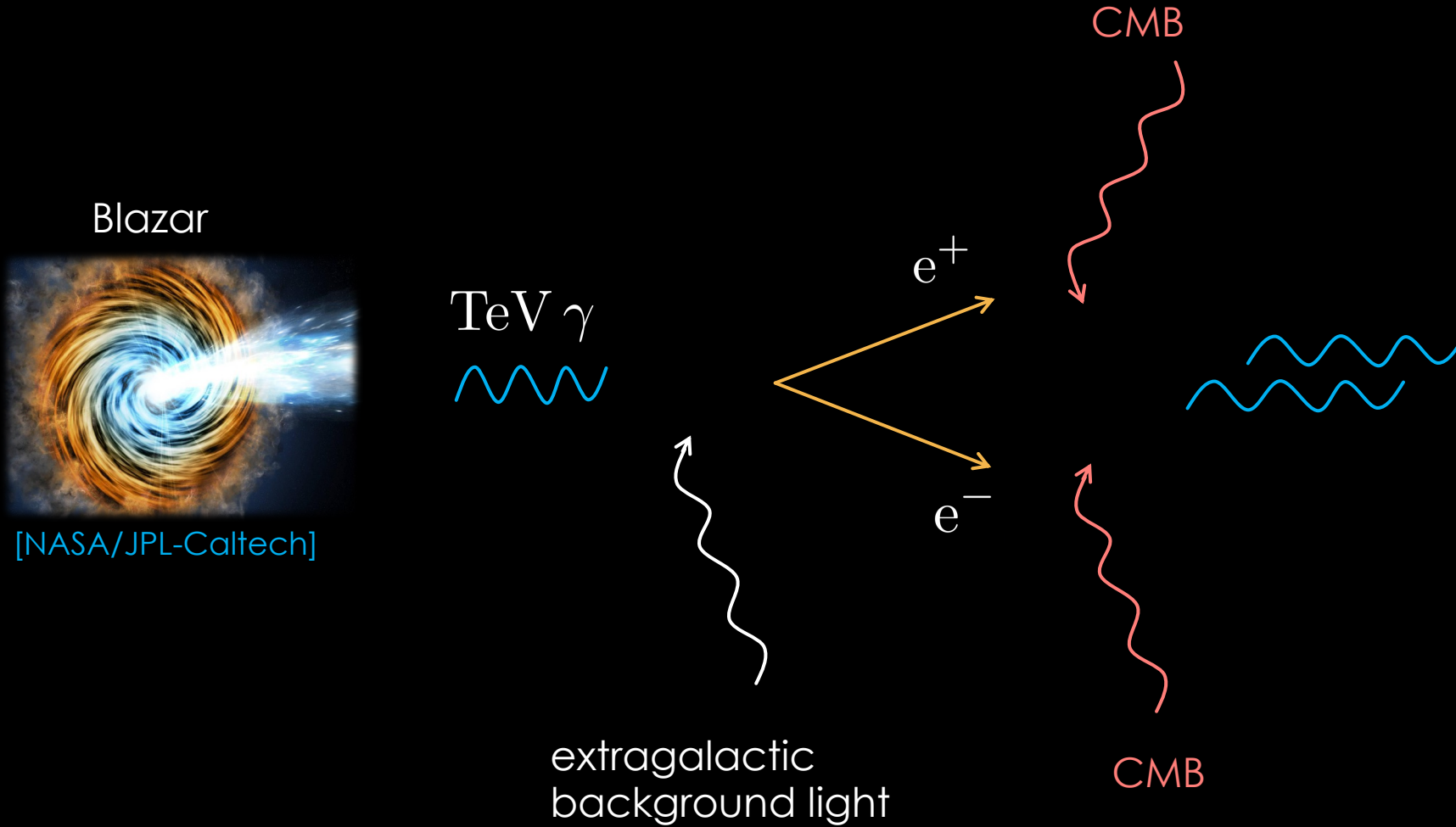
[NASA/JPL-Caltech]

TeV γ


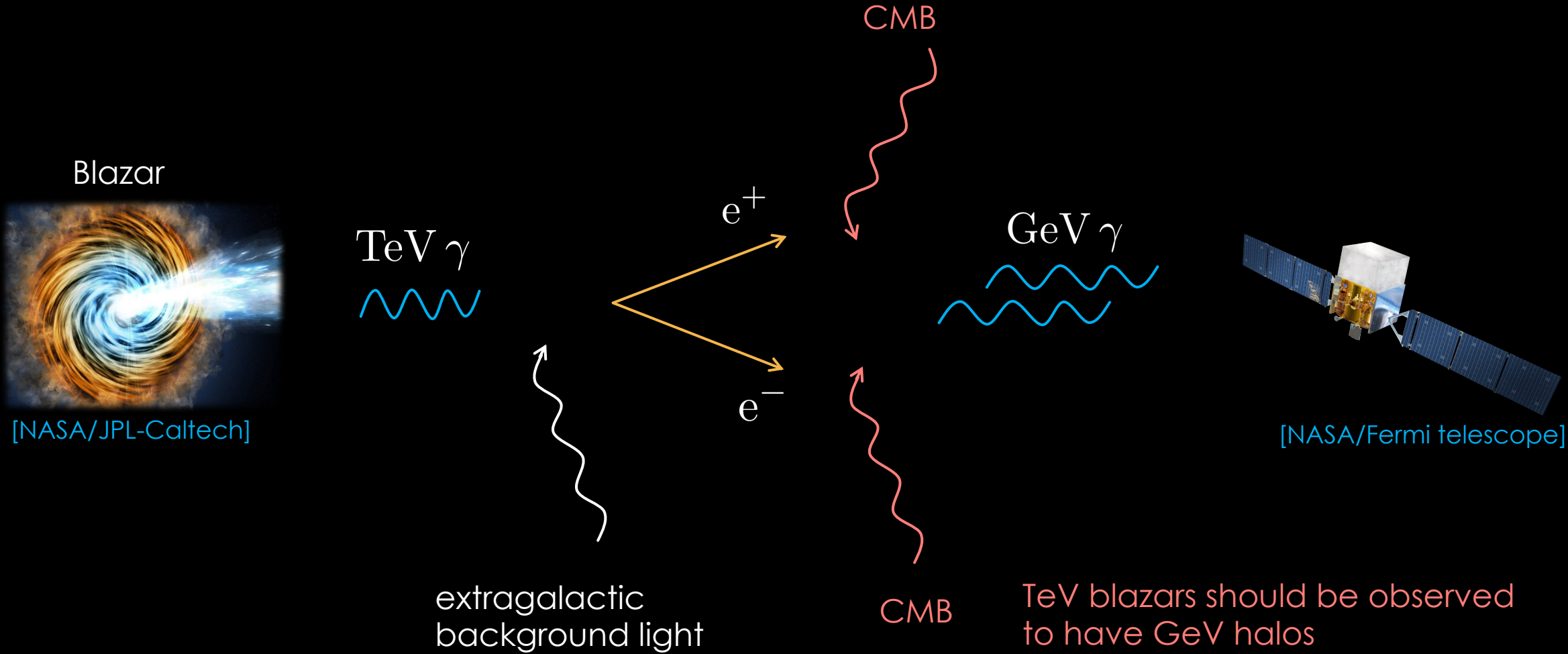
Primordial magnetic fields in intergalactic voids from blazar observations



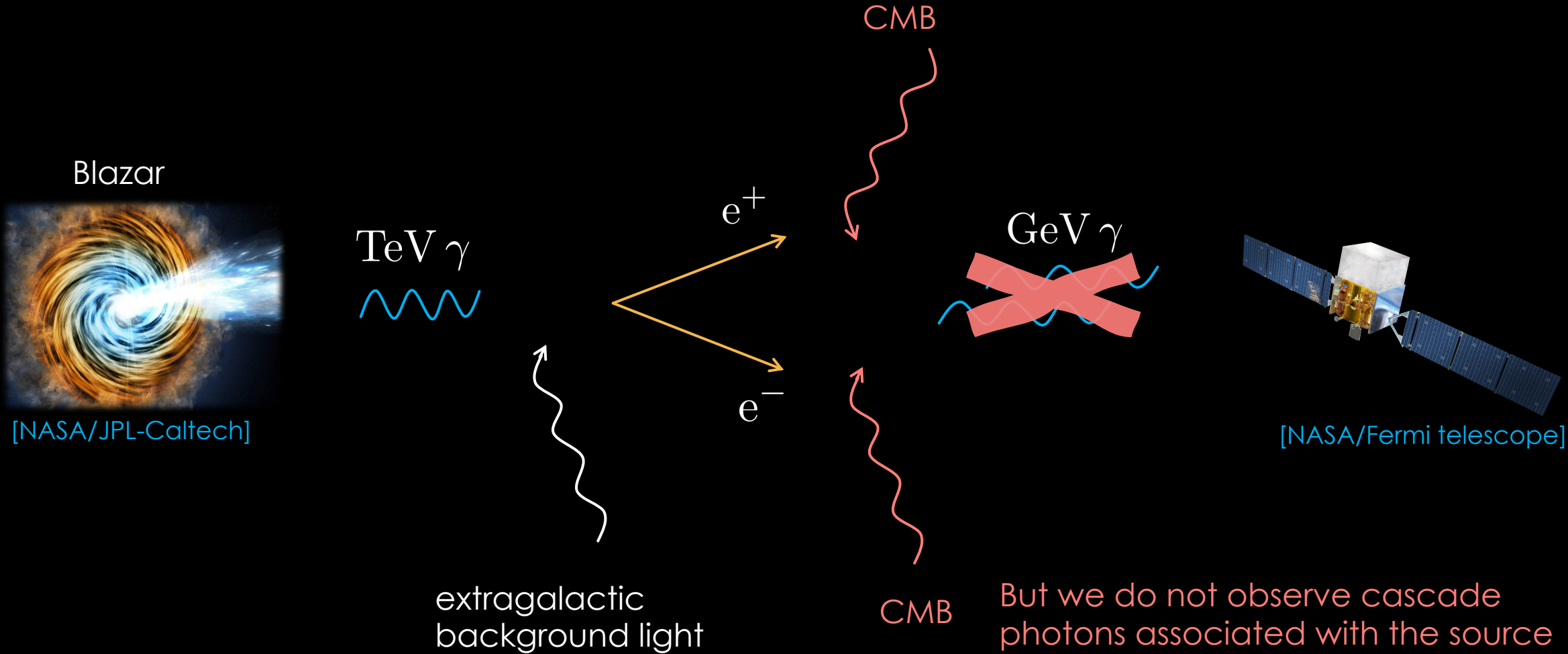
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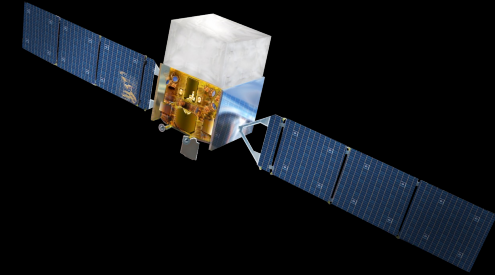
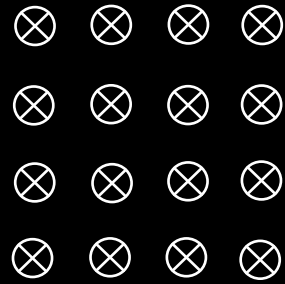
Blazar



[NASA/JPL-Caltech]

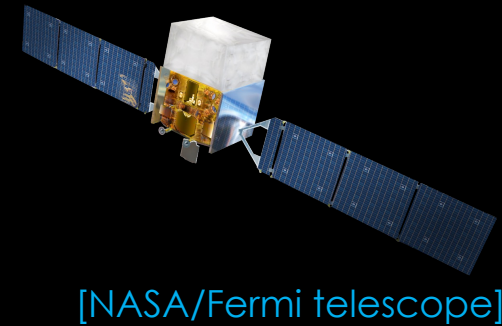
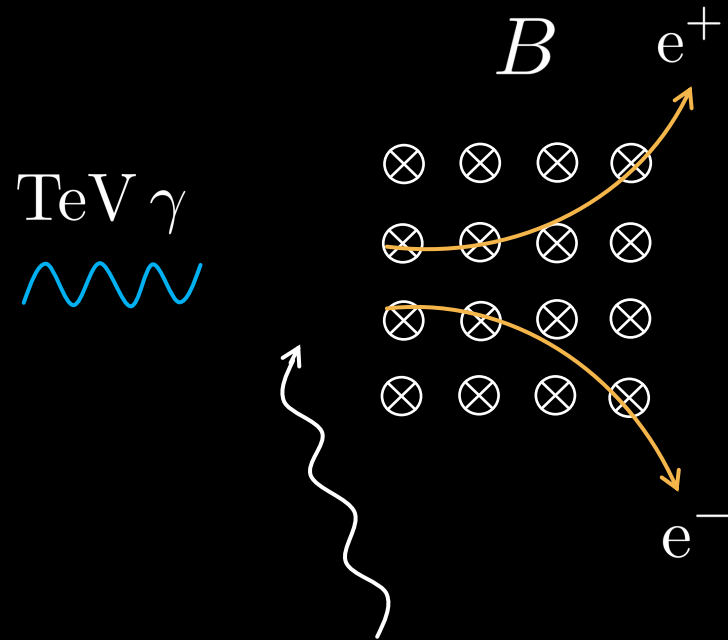
TeV γ


B

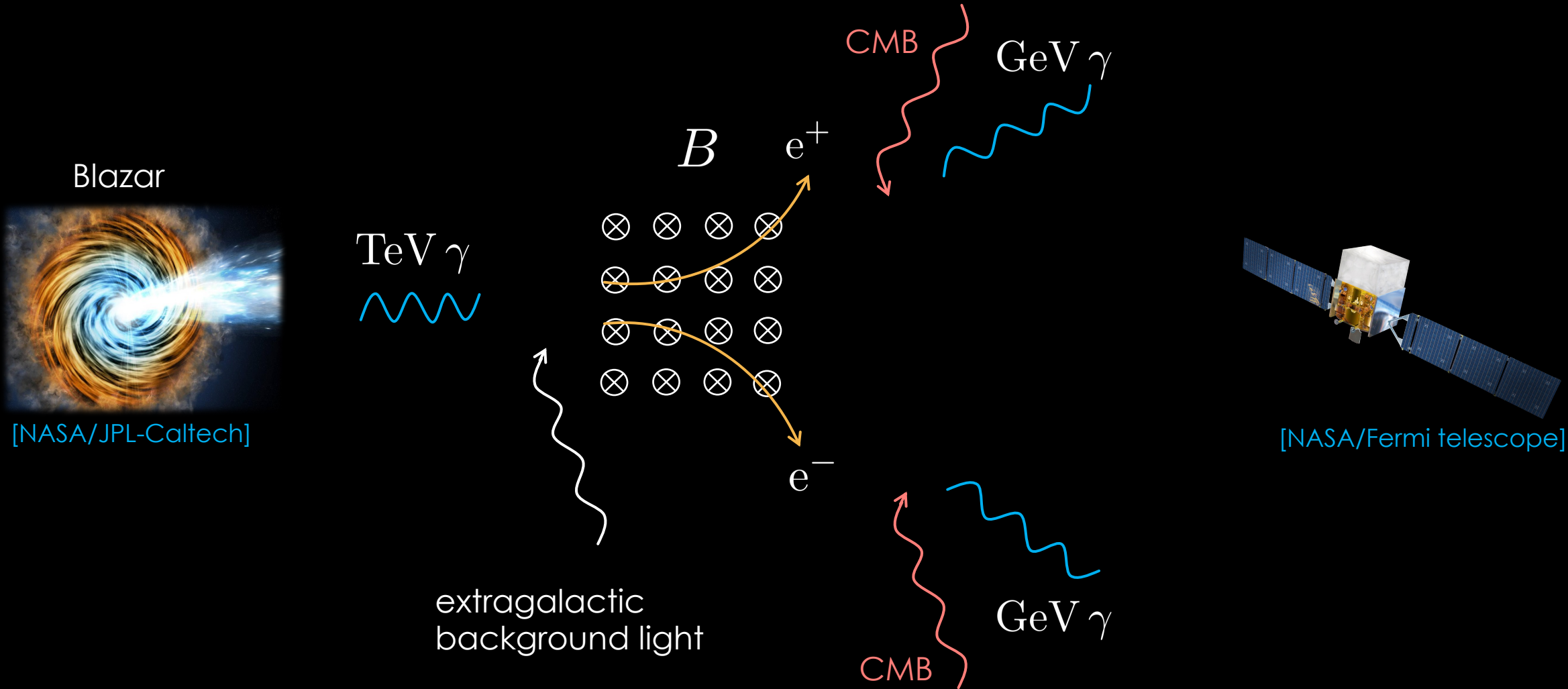


[NASA/Fermi telescope]

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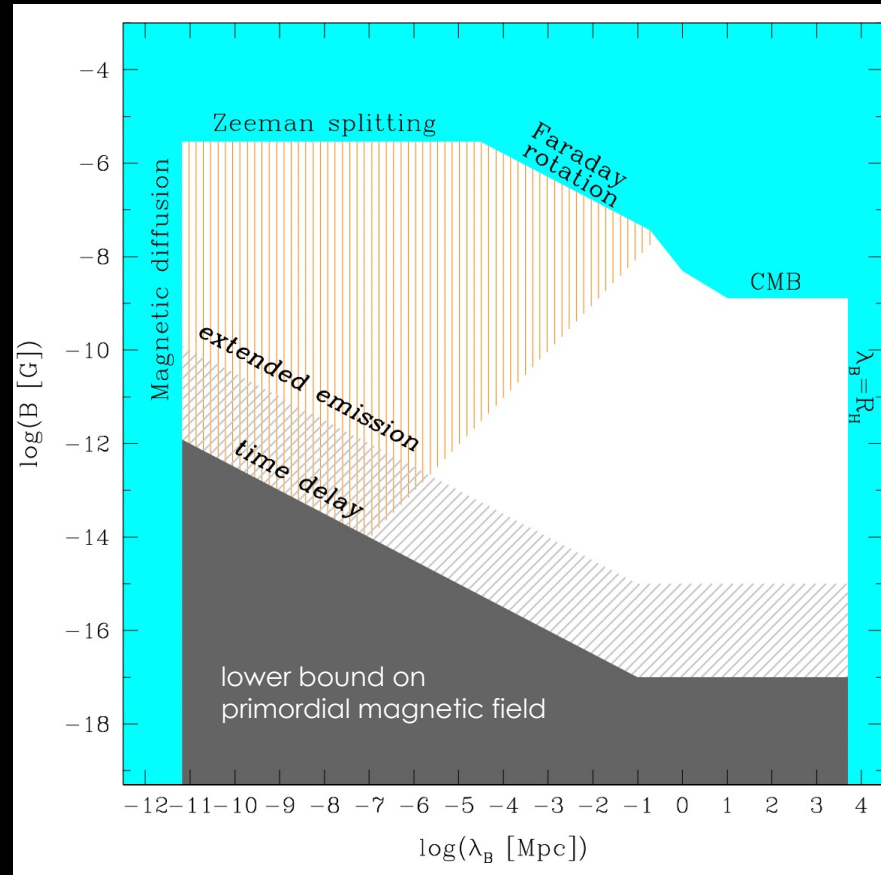
$$B \gtrsim 10^{-15} \text{G with correlation length } \gtrsim \text{Mpc}$$

Blazar



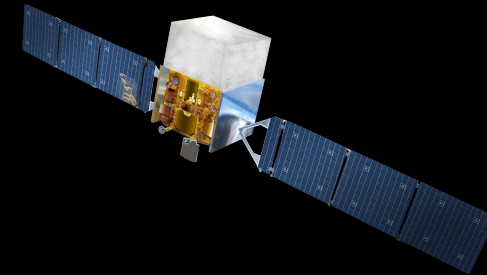
[NASA/JPL-Caltech]

TeV γ



[A. M. Taylor, I. Vovk and A. Neronov, 2013]

[Tavecchio et al, 2010; Neronov, Vovk, 2010;
Ando, Kusenko, 2010; Chen et al. 2014; Fermi-LAT 2018; ...]



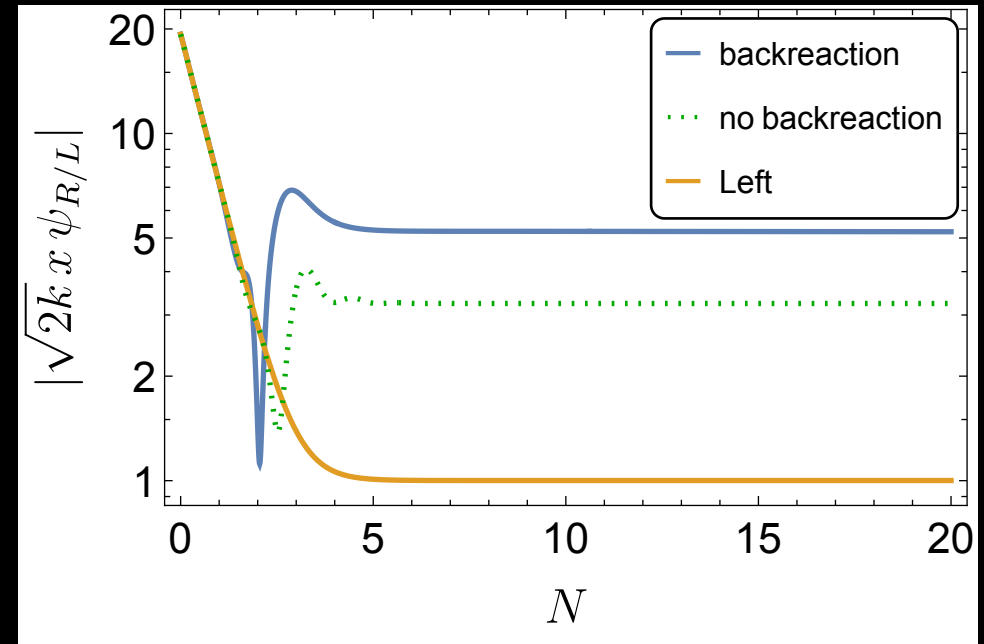
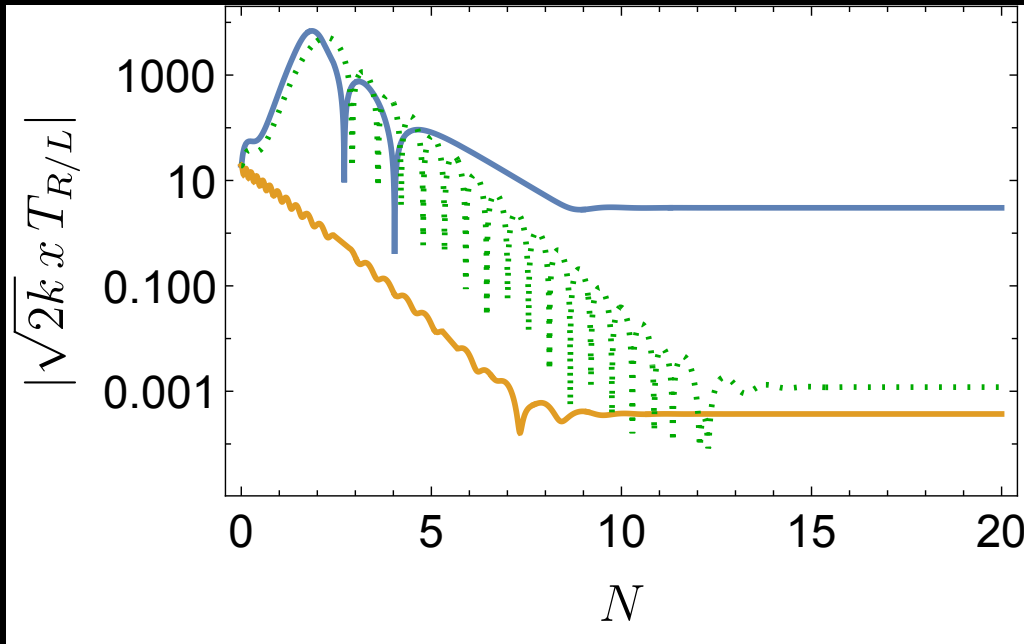
[NASA/Fermi telescope]

SU(2) \longleftrightarrow

91.2 GeV/c²
 0
 1 **Z⁰**
 Z boson

80.4 GeV/c²
 ± 1
 1 **W[±]**
 W boson

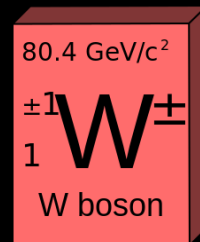
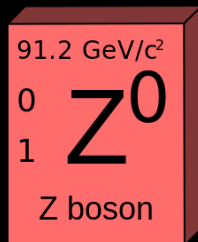
[OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, 2023]



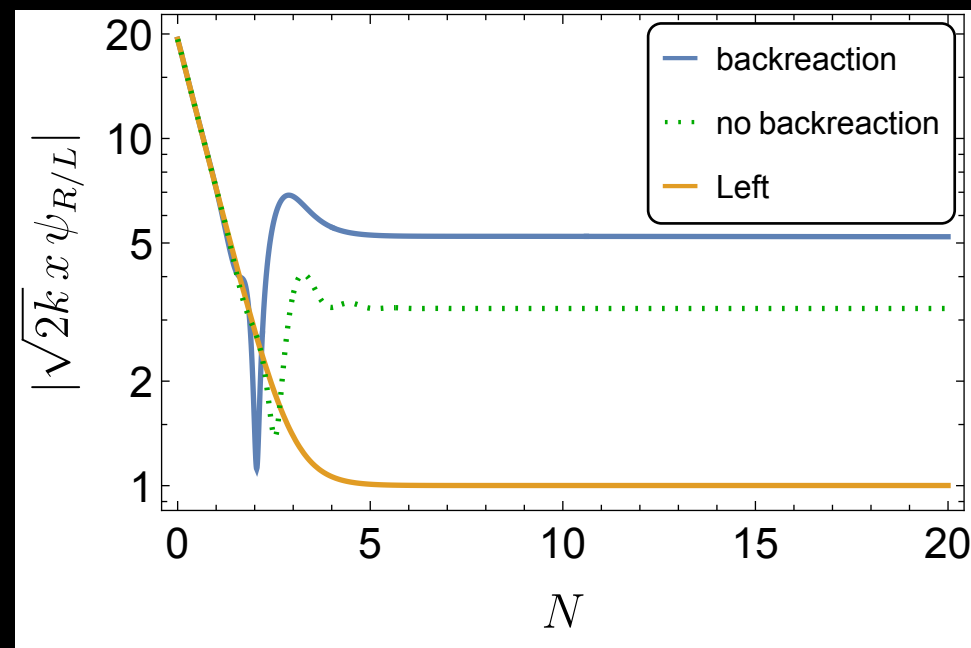
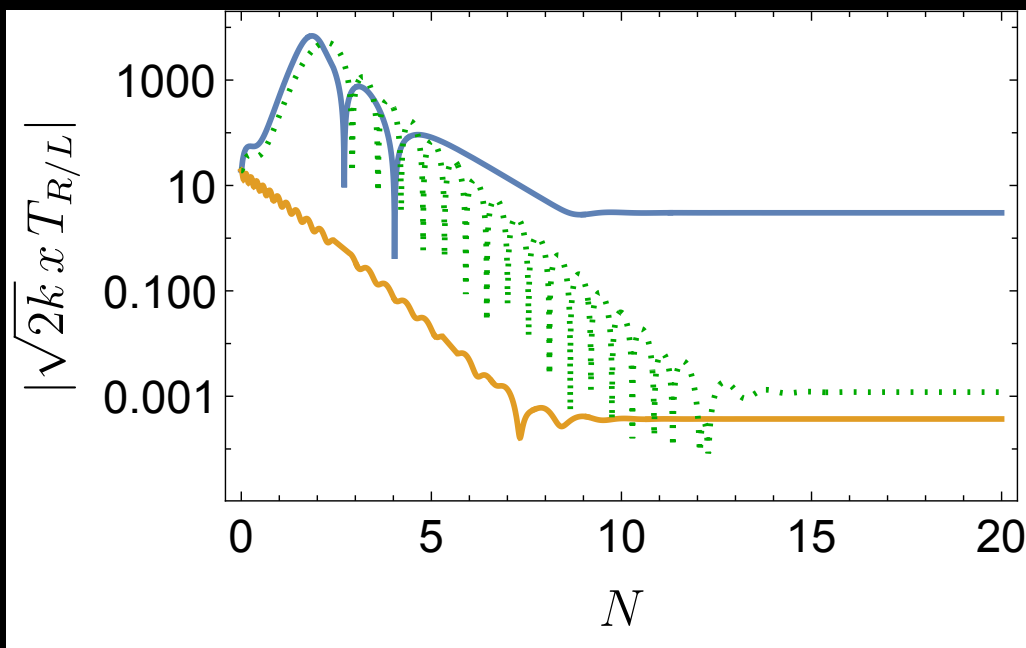
$$W_0^a = a(Y_a + \partial_a Y),$$

$$W_i^a = a[(Q + \delta Q) \delta_{ai} + \partial_i (M_a + \partial_a M) + \epsilon_{iac} (U_c + \partial_c U) + t_{ia}]$$

SU(2) \longleftrightarrow



[OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, 2023]



$$A_\mu = W_\mu^3 \sin \theta_W + B_\mu \cos \theta_W$$

$$Z_\mu = W_\mu^3 \cos \theta_W - B_\mu \sin \theta_W$$

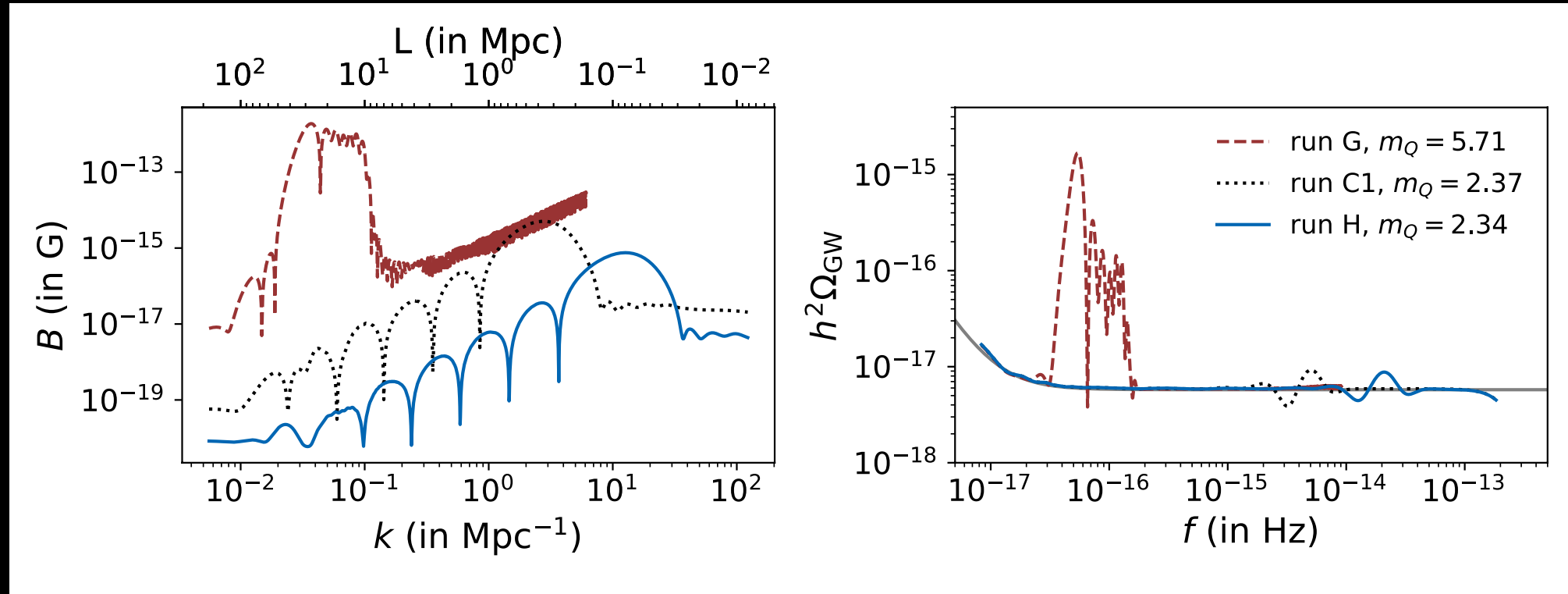
$$|A_i|^2 = \frac{1}{4} (|T_L|^2 + |T_R|^2)$$

Magnetic field energy spectrum

[A. Brandenburg, OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, 2024]

$$\Delta_B(k) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^2} \frac{k^5}{a^4} |A_i|^2$$

$$B \approx \sqrt{2\Delta_B(k)}|_0$$

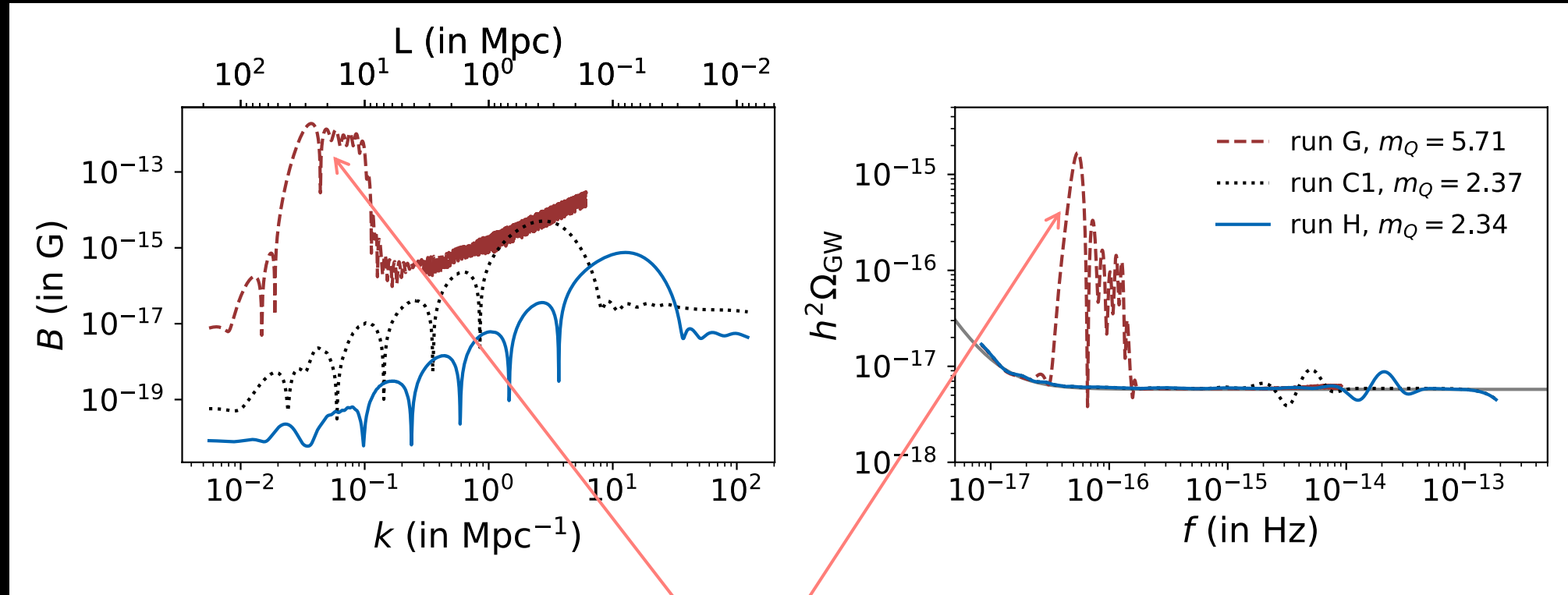


Magnetic field energy spectrum

[A. Brandenburg, OI, E. I. Sfakianakis, R. Sharma, 2024]

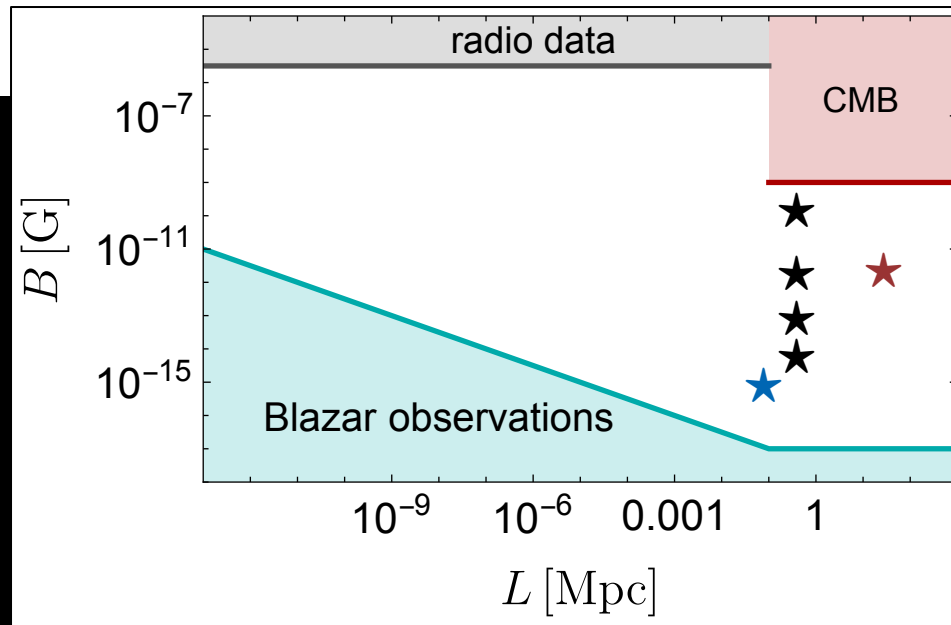
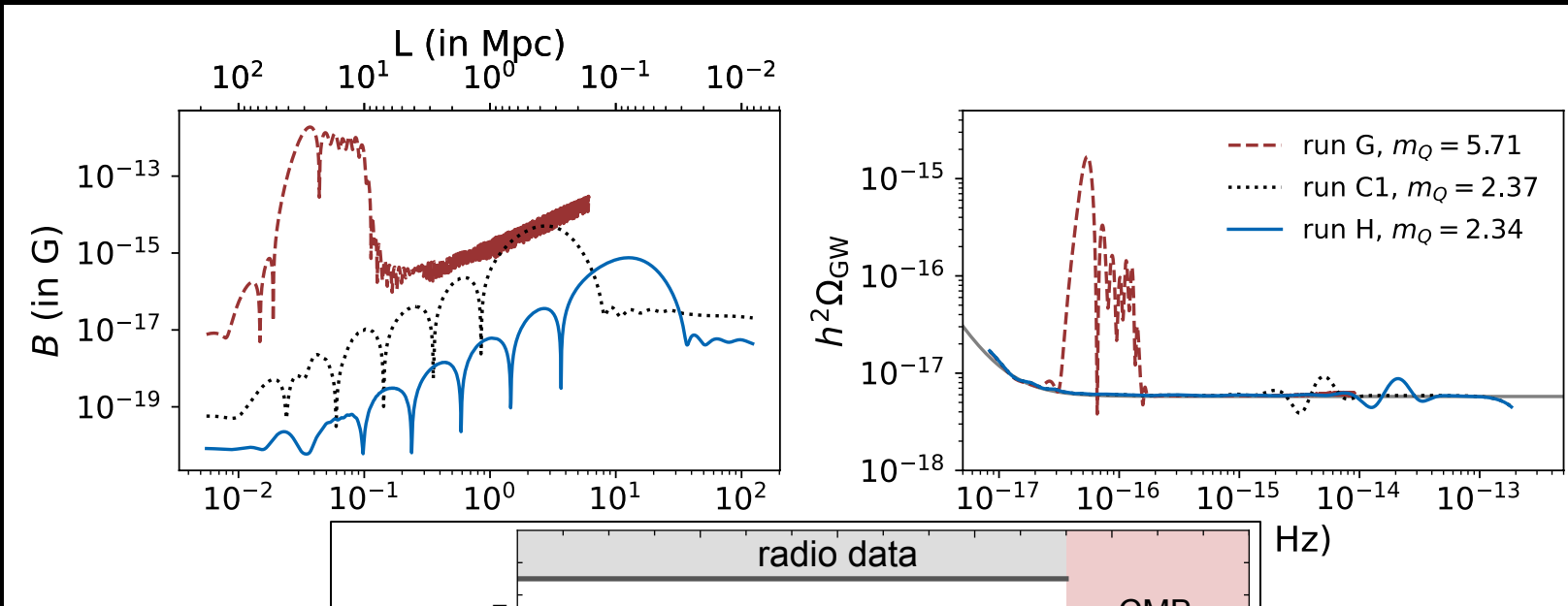
$$\Delta_B(k) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^2} \frac{k^5}{a^4} |A_i|^2$$

$$B \approx \sqrt{2\Delta_B(k)|_0}$$



Correlated signal from primordial magnetic fields and gravitational waves

Magnetic field energy spectrum

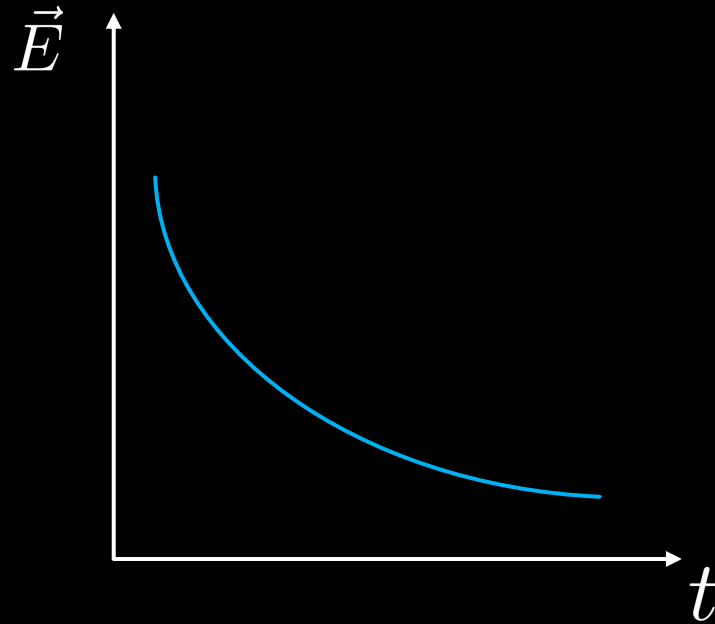
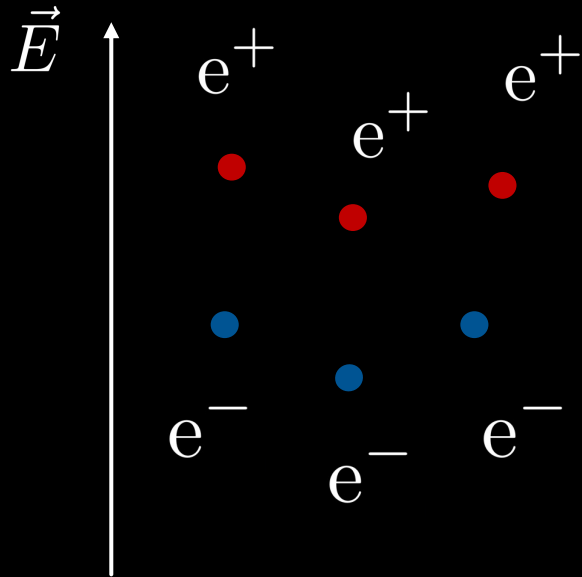


↑ gauge field vev reaches zero close to the end of inflation

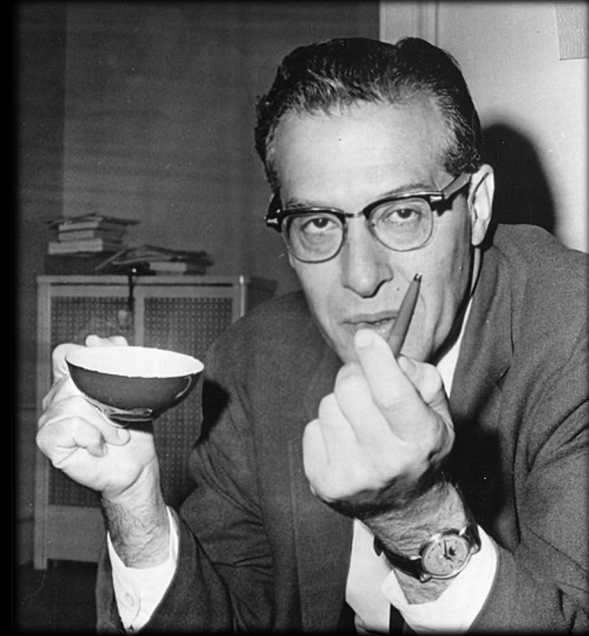


What about the backreaction from electric currents?

Schwinger effect



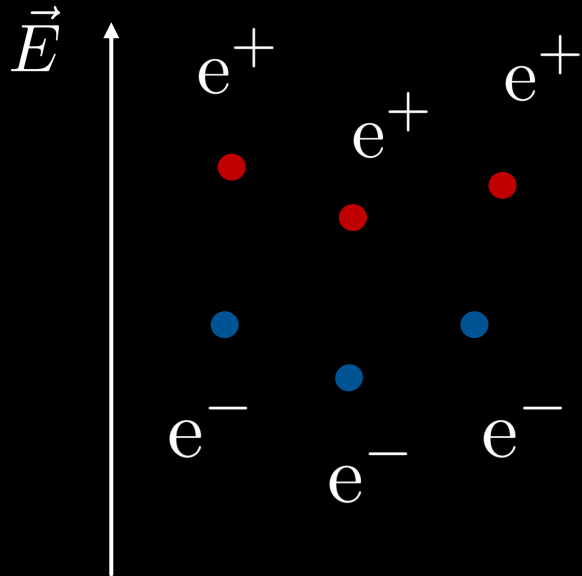
$$E_c \sim 10^{18} \text{ V/m}$$



[Sauter, 1931,
Heisenberg and Euler, 1936,
Schwinger, 1951]

Created particles generate the induced Schwinger current

In an expanding universe:



electric conductivity

$$\vec{J} = \sigma_E \vec{E}$$

$$\vec{J} = \sigma_E \vec{E} + \sigma_B \vec{B}$$

- [Kobayashi et al, 2014]
- [Bavarsad et al.'18]
- [Gorbar et al, 2021]
- [Domcke et al, 2018; 2020]
- [Fujita et al, 2022]
- [von Eckardstein et al, 2025]

Axion-U(1) inflation

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[-\frac{1}{2} \partial_\mu \phi \partial^\mu \phi - V(\phi) - \frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu} F^{\mu\nu} - \frac{\alpha}{4f} \phi F_{\mu\nu} \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} \right]$$



$$F_{\mu\nu} = \partial_\mu A_\nu - \partial_\nu A_\mu$$

Abelian gauge field

[K. Freese, J. A. Frieman, and A. V. Olinto, 1990]

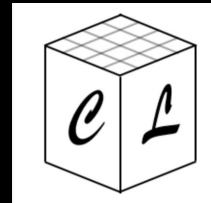
[M. M. Anber and L. Sorbo, 2009]

...

[A. Caravano, E. Komatsu, K.D. Lozanov and J. Weller, 2022]

[D.G. Figueroa, J. Lizarraga, A. Urío and J. Urrestilla, 2023]

[R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, K. Subramanian, A. Vikman, 2024]



CosmoLattice



The Pencil Code

a high-order finite-difference code for compressible MHD

Axion-U(1) inflation: Schwinger effect

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[-\frac{1}{2} \partial_\mu \phi \partial^\mu \phi - V(\phi) - \frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu} F^{\mu\nu} - \frac{\alpha}{4f} \phi F_{\mu\nu} \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} + \mathcal{L}_{\text{ch}} \right]$$

$$\partial_\tau^2 \phi + 2\mathcal{H} \partial_\tau \phi - \nabla^2 \phi + a^2 \frac{dV}{d\phi} = \frac{\alpha}{a^2 f} \mathbf{E} \cdot \mathbf{B},$$

$$\partial_\tau \mathbf{E} - \text{rot } \mathbf{B} + \frac{\alpha}{f} (\partial_\tau \phi \mathbf{B} + \nabla \phi \times \mathbf{E}) + \mathbf{J} = 0,$$

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = -\frac{\alpha}{f} \nabla \phi \cdot \mathbf{B}, \quad \nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0,$$

$$\partial_\tau \mathbf{B} + \text{rot } \mathbf{E} = 0,$$

$$\mathcal{H}^2 = \frac{8\pi}{3m_{\text{Pl}}^2} a^2 (\rho_\phi + \rho_E + \rho_B + \rho_\chi),$$



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Axion-U(1) inflation: Schwinger effect

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[-\frac{1}{2} \partial_\mu \phi \partial^\mu \phi - V(\phi) - \frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu} F^{\mu\nu} - \frac{\alpha}{4f} \phi F_{\mu\nu} \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} + \mathcal{L}_{\text{ch}} \right]$$

Effective current description of the Schwinger effect

$$J = \frac{(e|Q|)^3}{6\pi^2 \mathcal{H}} E|B| \coth\left(\frac{\pi|B|}{E}\right) e^{-\frac{\pi m^2 a^2}{e|Q|E}}$$

[Kobayashi et al, 2014]
[Bavarsad et al.'18]
[Gorbar et al, 2021]
[Domcke et al, 2018; 2020]
[Fujita et al, 2022]
[von Eckardstein et al, 2025]

Inhomogeneous 3D lattice simulations using



The Pencil Code

a high-order finite-difference code for compressible MHD

Axion-U(1) inflation: Schwinger effect

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[-\frac{1}{2} \partial_\mu \phi \partial^\mu \phi - V(\phi) - \frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu} F^{\mu\nu} - \frac{\alpha}{4f} \phi F_{\mu\nu} \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} + \mathcal{L}_{\text{ch}} \right]$$

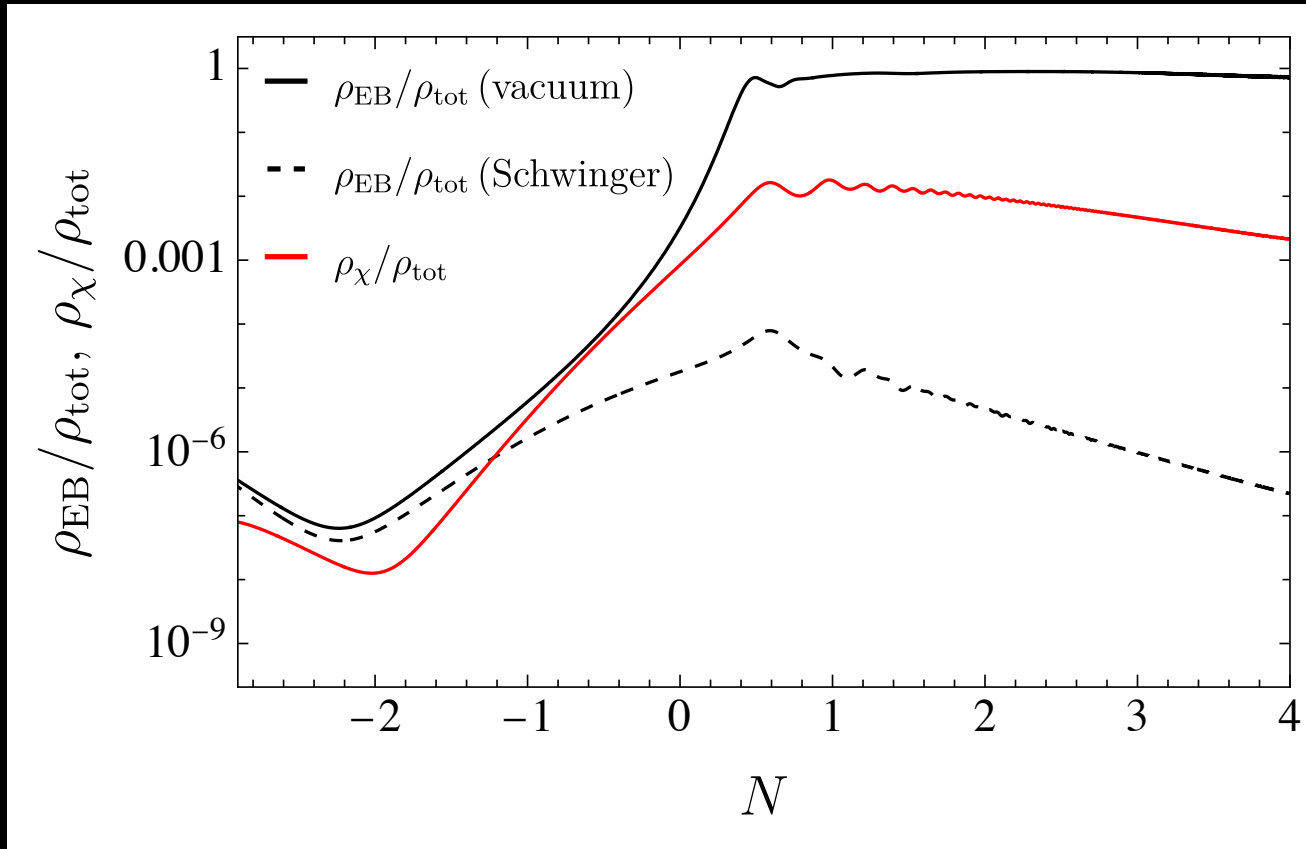
$$\dot{\mathbf{E}} + (2H + \sigma_E) \mathbf{E} - \frac{1}{a} \text{rot} \mathbf{B} + \left(\frac{\alpha}{f} \dot{\phi} + \sigma_B \right) \mathbf{B} = 0$$

↑
extra friction

↑
dampens the gauge
field production

[Kobayashi et al, 2014]
[Bavarsad et al.'18]
[Gorbar et al, 2021]
[Domcke et al, 2018; 2020]
[Fujita et al, 2022]
[von Eckardstein et al, 2025]

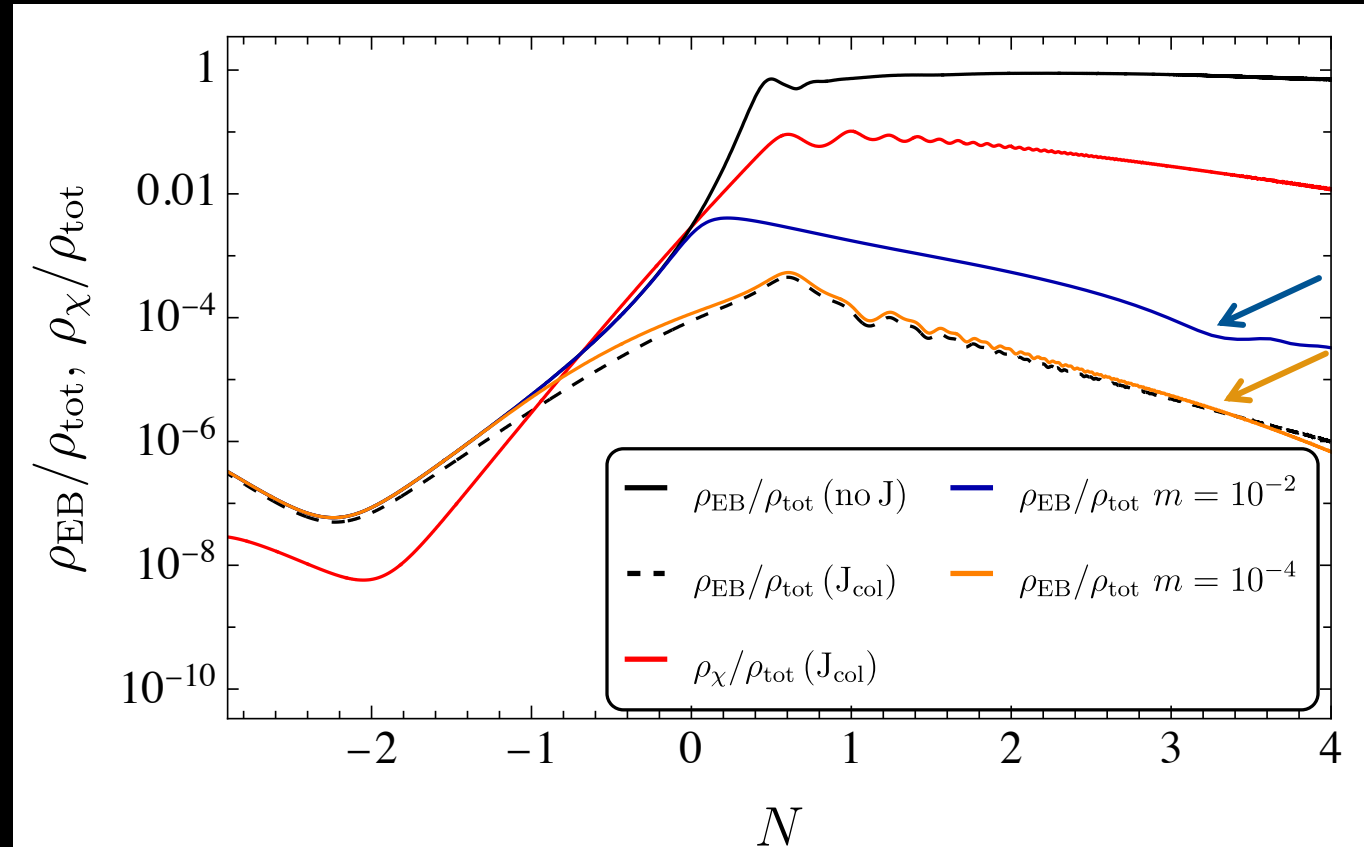
$$\partial_\tau \rho_\chi + 4\mathcal{H}\rho_\chi = \frac{1}{a^3} (\langle \sigma_E \rangle \langle \mathbf{E}^2 \rangle + \langle \sigma_B \rangle \langle \mathbf{E} \cdot \mathbf{B} \rangle)$$



Schwinger suppression challenges gauge preheating!

Heavy fermion effects

$$J = \frac{(e|Q|)^3}{6\pi^2\mathcal{H}} E|B| \coth\left(\frac{\pi|B|}{E}\right) e^{-\frac{\pi m^2 a^2}{e|Q|E}}$$



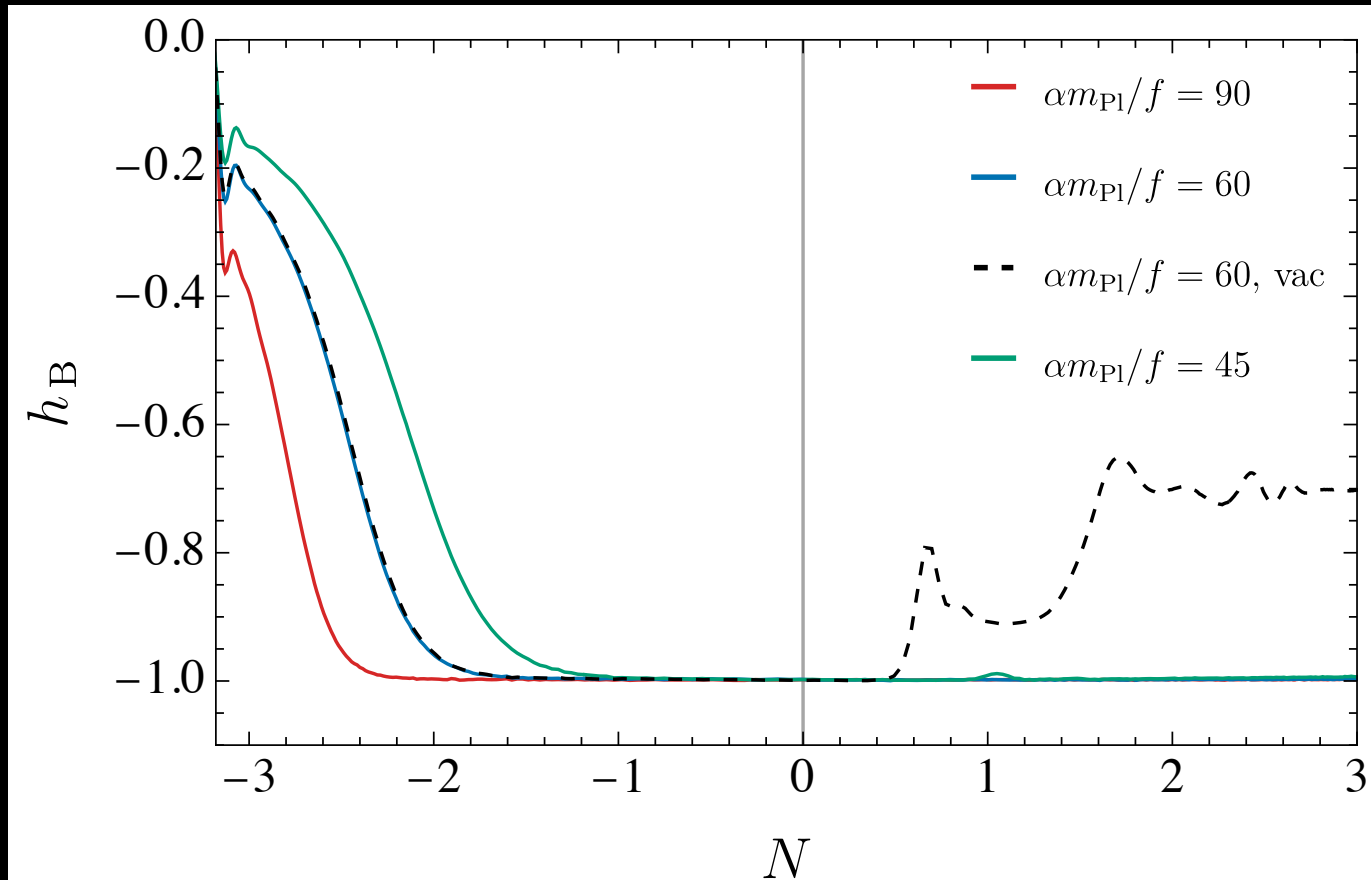
[OI, A. Brandenburg, E. Sfakianakis, 2025]

Consequences for magnetogenesis

The Schwinger effect maintains magnetic fields to remain fully helical

The magnetic helicity

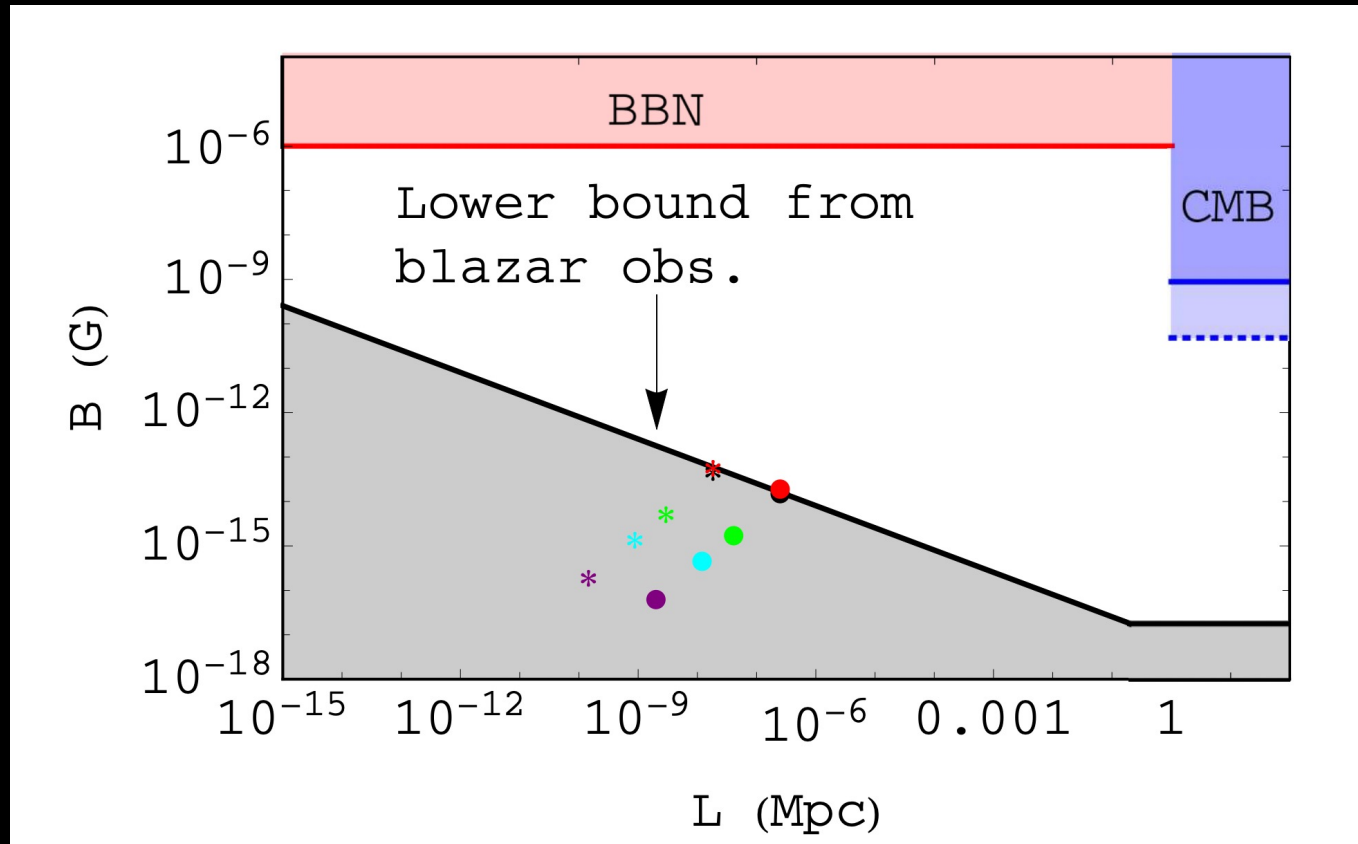
$$h_B = \frac{\langle A \cdot B \rangle}{(L_c \langle B^2 \rangle)}$$



Consequences for magnetogenesis

[R. Sharma, A. Brandenburg, K. Subramanian, A. Vikman, 2024]

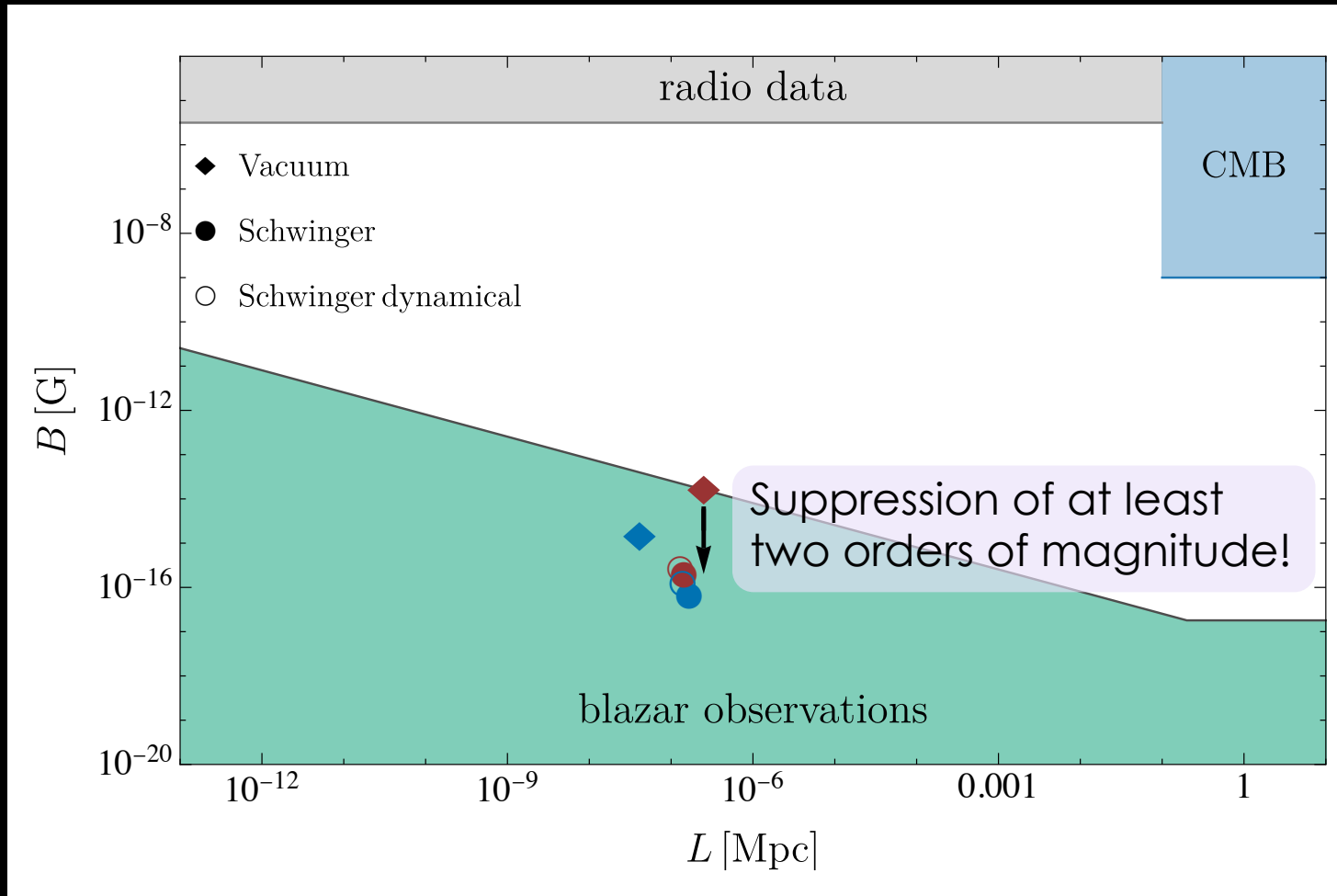
Without the Schwinger effect



$$\alpha m_{\text{Pl}}/f = 35, 50, 60, 75, 90$$

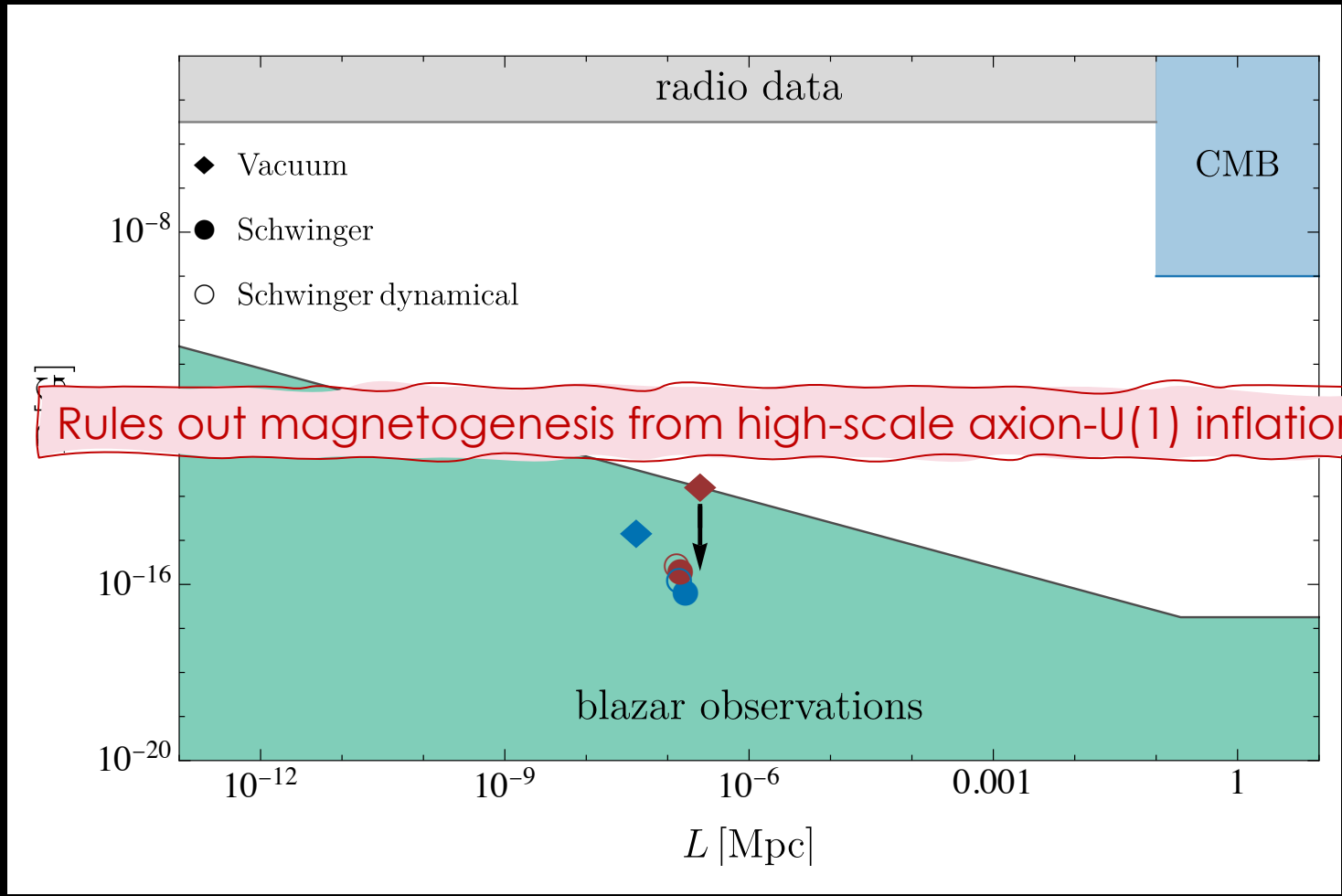
Consequences for magnetogenesis

With the Schwinger effect



Consequences for magnetogenesis

With the Schwinger effect



[OI, A. Brandenburg, E. Sfakianakis, 2025]



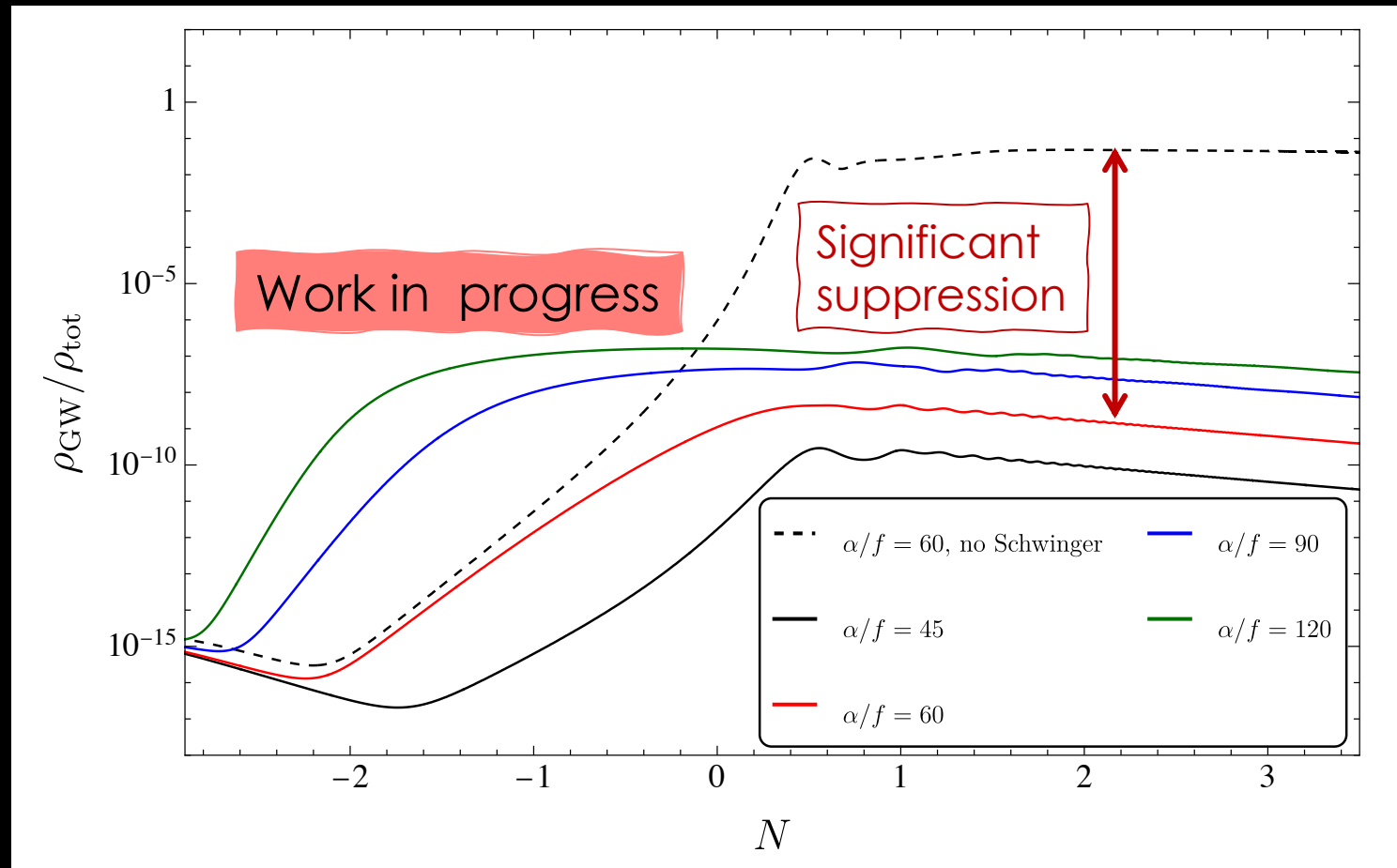
How does the Schwinger effect influence gravitational wave production?

Gravitational waves with the Schwinger effect



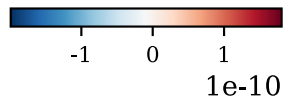
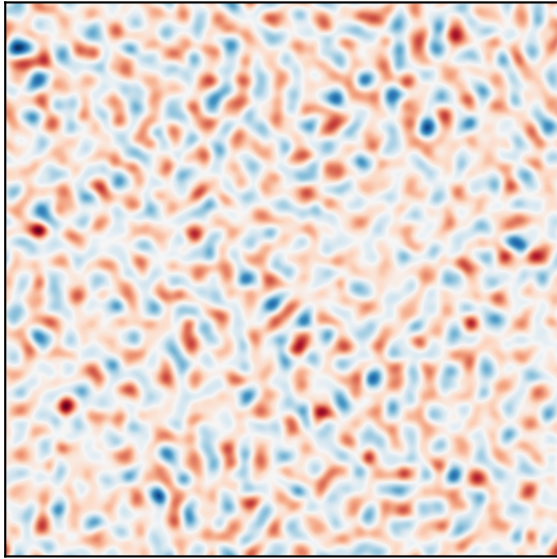
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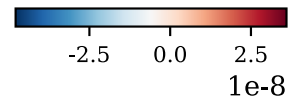
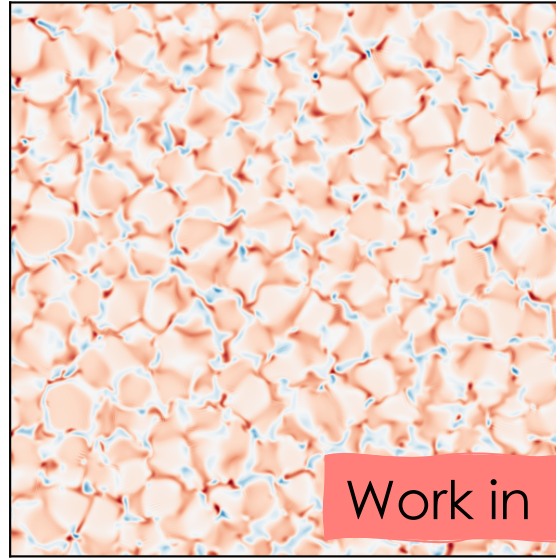


From inflation to MHD

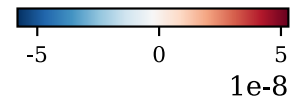
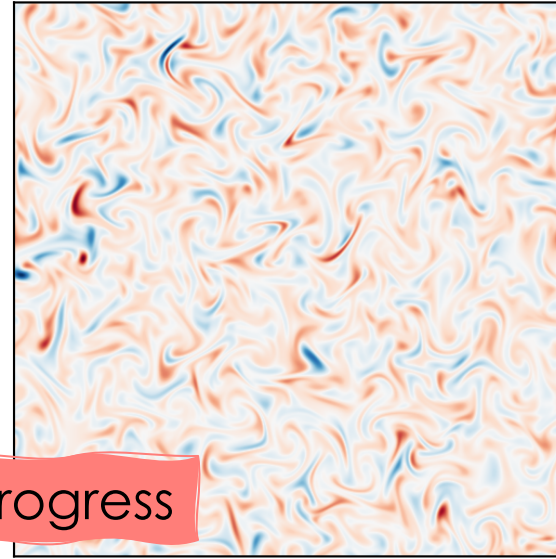
$N = -1$



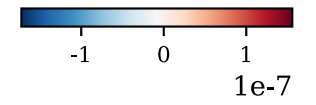
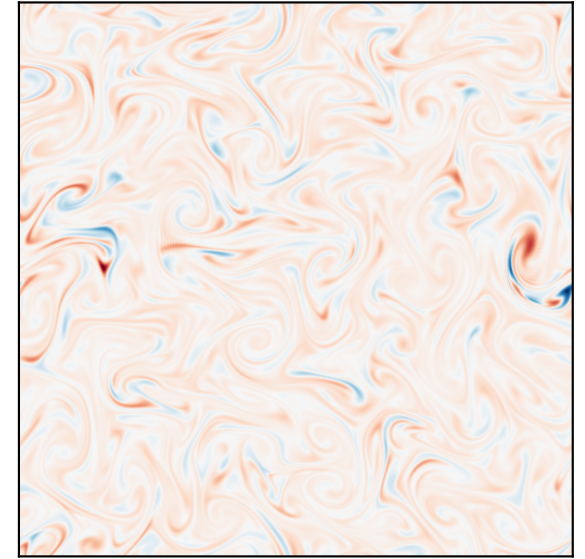
$N = 2$



$N = 5.6$

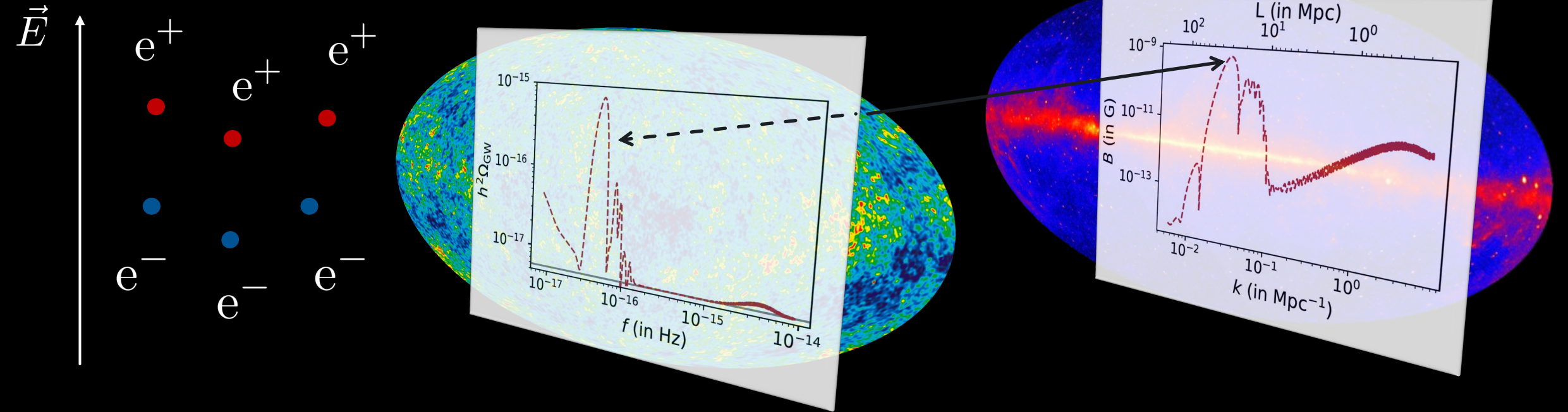


$N = 6.8$



Work in progress

Take-home message



- **SU(2)**: Backreaction effects during axion-SU(2) inflation lead to a novel attractor solution and produce correlated gravitational wave and primordial magnetic field signals.
- **U(1)**: Schwinger effect can strongly quench gauge-field growth, challenging axion-U(1) magnetogenesis, preheating and GW production.

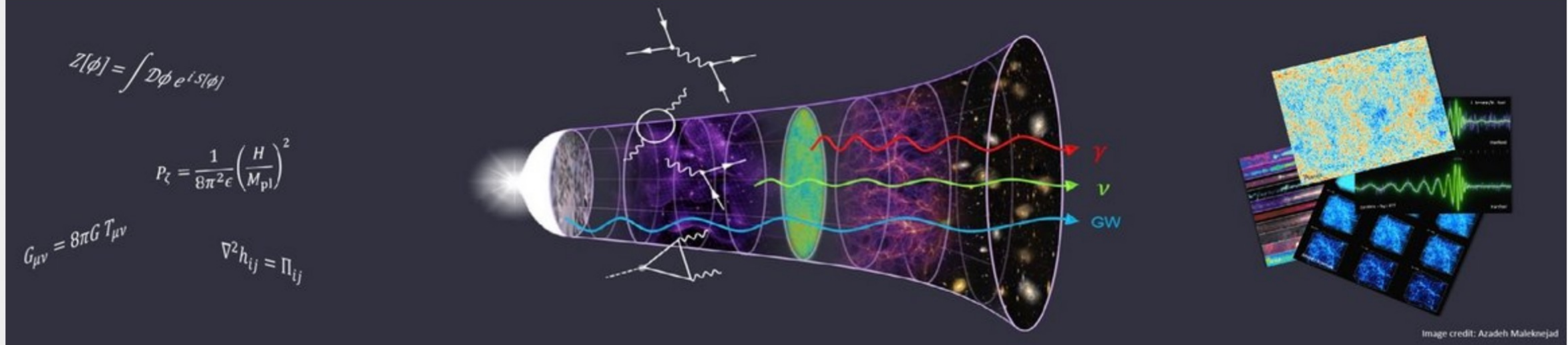


Image Credit: Azadeh Maleknejad

QUANTUM FIELDS TO COSMIC SIGNATURES: PROBING PARTICLE PRODUCTION IN THE EARLY UNIVERSE

05 - 30 April 2027

Angelo Caravano, Azadeh Maleknejad, Oksana Iarygina, Kaloian D. Lozanov, Eiichiro Komatsu

Registration deadline:
26 July 2026

Week 1 – Theory and Phenomenology

Inflation, Baryogenesis, Dark matter, Primordial black holes

Week 2 – Numerical Techniques and Simulations

Lattice methods, Non-perturbative dynamics, Computational frameworks

Week 3* – Topical Workshop and Focused Panels

Invited talks, Cross-disciplinary discussions, Emerging directions

Week 4 – Observational and Experimental Probes

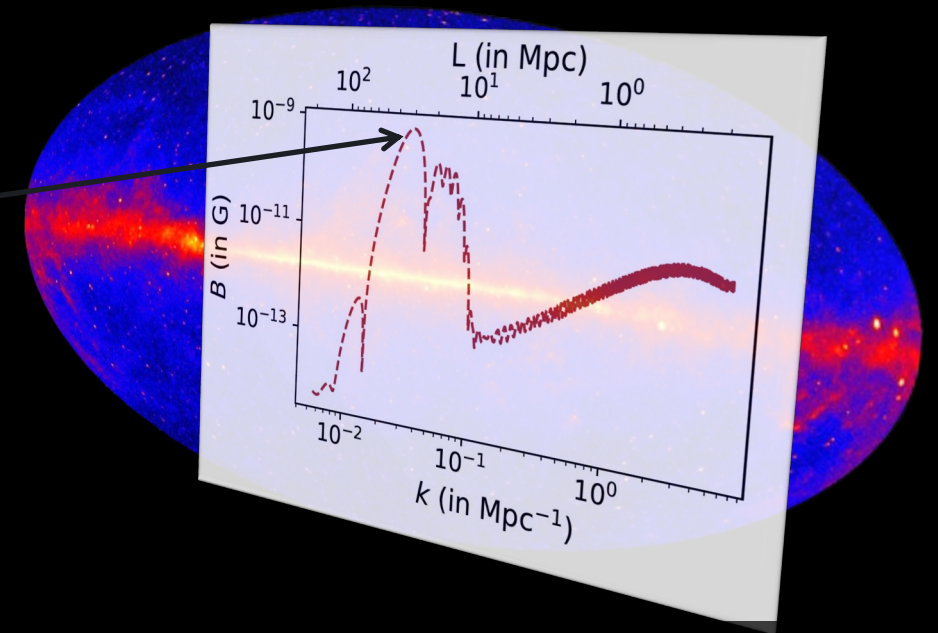
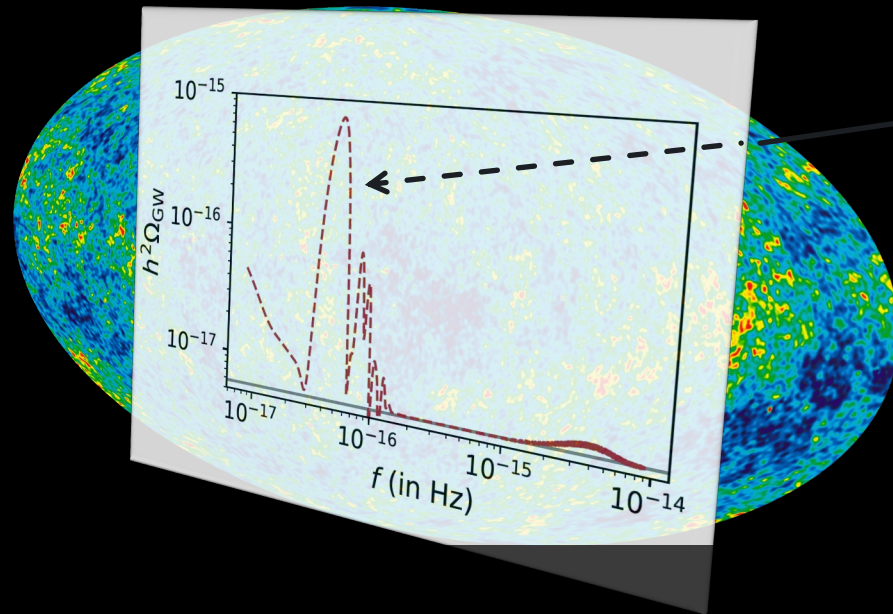
Gravitational waves, Neutrinos, Primordial magnetic fields, Multi-messengers



Thank you!

\vec{E}

e^+
 e^+
 e^+
 e^-
 e^-
 e^-



- **SU(2)**: Backreaction effects during axion-SU(2) inflation lead to a novel attractor solution and produce correlated gravitational wave and primordial magnetic field signals.
- **U(1)**: Schwinger effect can strongly quench gauge-field growth, challenging axion-U(1) magnetogenesis, preheating and GW production.