

MOND: An alternative to particle dark matter

Federico Lelli
INAF – Arcetri

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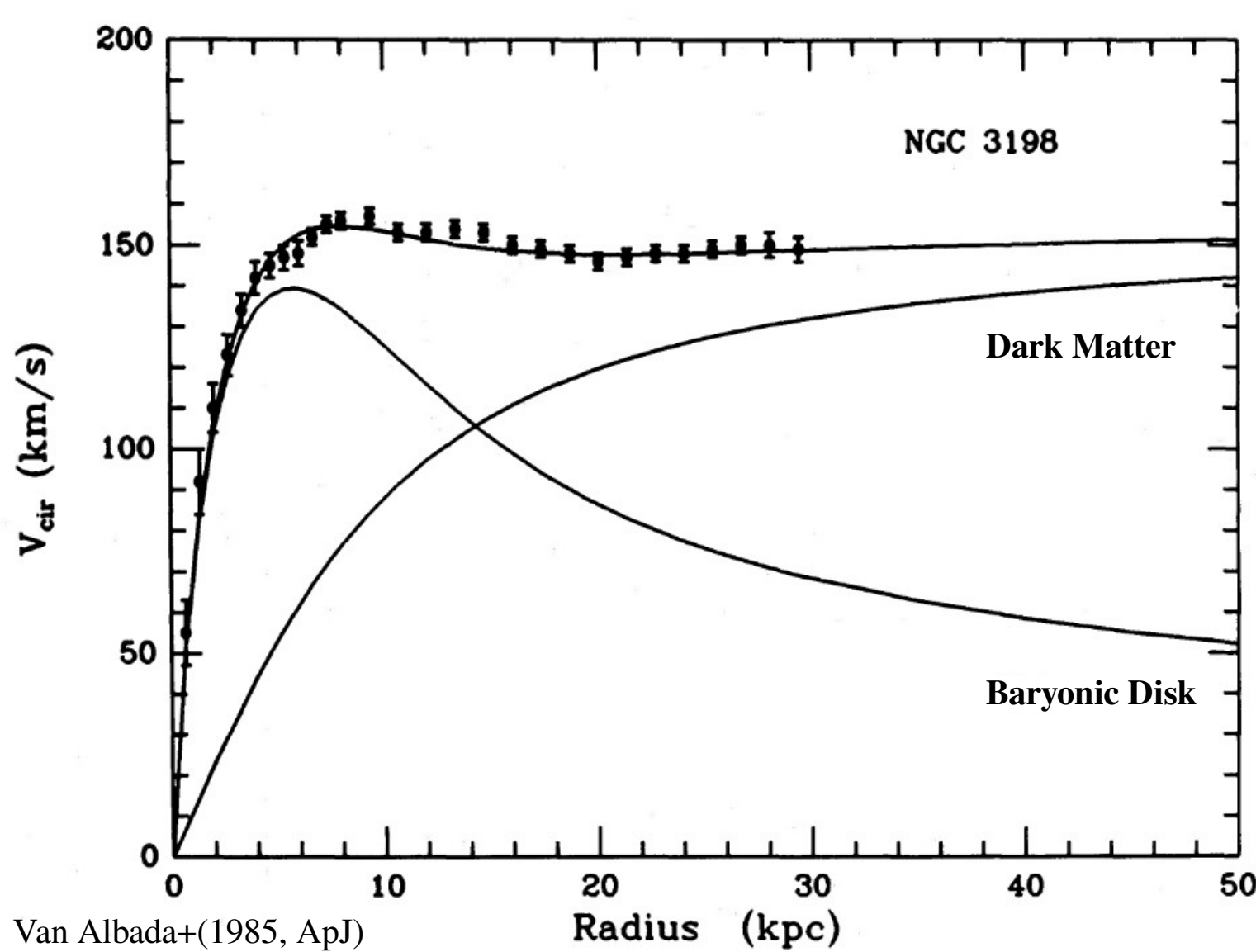
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University of
Cagliari (Sardinia)

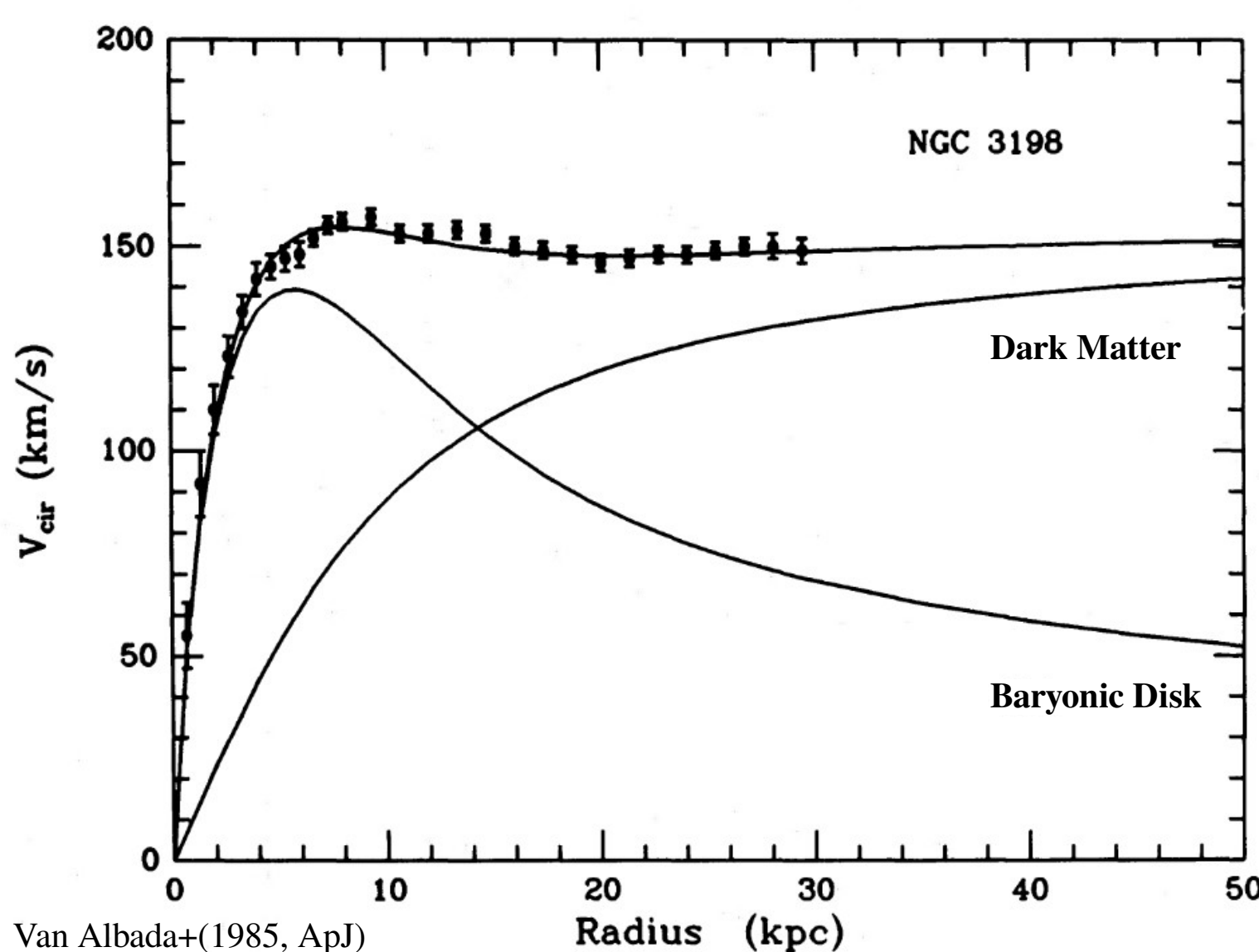


Rotation curves of disk galaxies: baryon-halo conspiracy



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“Luminous and dark matter seem to conspire to produce the flat observed rotation curves in the outer regions. It seems unlikely that this coupling [...] results from the large-scale gravitational interaction between the two components.”

Van Albada & Sancisi (1986, RSPTA)

It's still a problem for Λ CDM!

See Desmond (2017, MNRAS)

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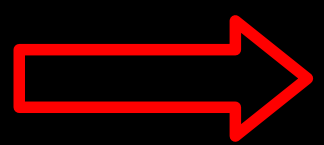
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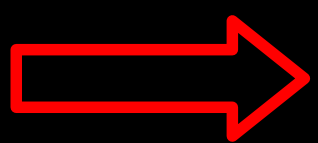
$$a = \sqrt{a_0 g_N}$$

a_0 constant with dimensions of acceleration

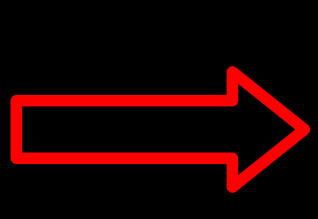
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$$\frac{V_c^2}{\cancel{R}} = \sqrt{\frac{a_0 G M_b}{\cancel{R^2}}}$$

Flat rotation curve at large radii

→ Main empirical motivation of MOND

MOND = MOdified Newtonian Dynamics

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MOND = NO DM

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MOND = MilgrOmiaN Dynamics



Proposed by Moti Milgrom (1983a, b, c)

MOND is not a new idea. Over the past 40+ years, it has evolved into a general paradigm that includes different relativistic & non-relativistic theories.

MOND postulates at the non-relativistic level (Milgrom 2009, ApJ)

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3) **For $a \ll a_0 \rightarrow$ Scale Invariance**

Equations of motion do not change under $(\vec{x}, t) \rightarrow (\lambda \vec{x}, \lambda t)$

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$$a = \sqrt{a_0 g_N} \quad V_c = \text{invariant}$$

The MOND white paper

(50+ authors, 300+ pages)

Leiden (Netherlands), September 2025



Lorentz
center

MOND: Alternative Paths in the Dark Matter Problem

1 - 5 September 2025, Leiden, the Netherlands @omega



Topics

- MOND theories and cosmology
- Tests in rotation-supported galaxies
- Tests in pressure-supported galaxies
- Tests in galaxy groups & galaxy clusters
- Tests on small scales: Solar System, binary stars, star clusters
- Numerical simulations of galaxy formation

Scientific Organizers

- Federico Lelli, INAF – Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory
- Luc Blanchet, Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris
- Erwin de Blok, ASTRON
- Francoise Combes, Observatoire de Paris
- Xavier Hernandez, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico

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LORENTZCENTER.NL

The MOND research program: A white paper on status and prospects

General coordinator: Federico Lelli

Section coordinators: Luc Blanchet, Françoise Combes, Erwin De Blok, Harry Desmond, Antonaldo Diaferio, Benoit Famaey, Jonathan Freundlich, Stacy S. McGaugh, Mordehai Milgrom, Tobias Mistele, Marcel Pawlowski

Contributors: Elena Asencio, Will Barker, Michal Bílek, Anthony Brown, Graeme Candlish, Kyu-Hyun Chae, Øyvind Christiansen, Pierfrancesco Di Cintio, Francis Duey, Amel Durakovic, Stephan Eijt, Stefano Ettori, Eanna Flanagan, Hosein Haghi, Christopher Harwey-Hawes, Akram Hasani Zoonozi, Konstantin Haubner, Aurelien Hees, Xavier Hernandez, Michael Hilker, Zichen Hua, Mark Huisjes, Mariana Júlio, Tahere Kashfi, Anastasiia Lazutkina, Steffen Mieske, Cezary Migaszewski, Giacomo Monari, Oliver Müller, Srikanth Nagesh, Roman Nagy, Luisa Ostorero, Jan Pflamm-Altenburg, Tom Richtler, Nick Samaras, Emeric Seraille, Sofia Splawska, Will Sutherland, Yong Tian, Andreea Varasteanu, Paul Visser, David M. J. Vokrouhlický, Richard Woodard

Endorsers: TBD

Content of the MOND white paper:

1. Introduction / Non-relativistic Theories
2. Tests in Galaxies
3. Tests in Galaxy Groups & Clusters
4. Tests on Small Scales
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Tests in Galaxies

A MODIFICATION OF THE NEWTONIAN DYNAMICS: IMPLICATIONS FOR GALAXIES¹

M. MILGROM

Department of Physics, Weizmann Institute, Rehovot, Israel; and The Institute for Advanced Study

Received 1982 February 4; accepted 1982 December 28

ABSTRACT

I use a modified form of the Newtonian dynamics (inertia and/or gravity) to describe the motion of bodies in the gravitational fields of galaxies, *assuming that galaxies contain no hidden mass*, with the following main results.

- ① The Keplerian, circular velocity around a finite galaxy becomes independent of r at large radii, thus resulting in asymptotically flat velocity curves.
- ② The asymptotic circular velocity (V_∞) is determined only by the total mass of the galaxy (M): $V_\infty^4 = a_0 GM$, where a_0 is an acceleration constant appearing in the modified dynamics. This relation is consistent with the observed Tully-Fisher relation if one uses a luminosity parameter which is proportional to the observable mass.
- ③ The discrepancy between the dynamically determined Oort density in the solar neighborhood and the density of observed matter disappears.
- ④ The rotation curve of a galaxy can remain flat down to very small radii, as observed, only if the galaxy's average surface density Σ falls in some narrow range of values which agrees with the Fish and Freeman laws. For smaller values of Σ , the velocity rises more slowly to the asymptotic value.
- ⑤ The value of the acceleration constant, a_0 , determined in a few independent ways is approximately $2 \times 10^{-8} (H_0/50 \text{ km s}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-1})^2 \text{ cm s}^{-2}$, which is of the order of $CH_0 = 5 \times 10^{-8} (H_0/50 \text{ km s}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-1}) \text{ cm s}^{-2}$.

The main predictions are:

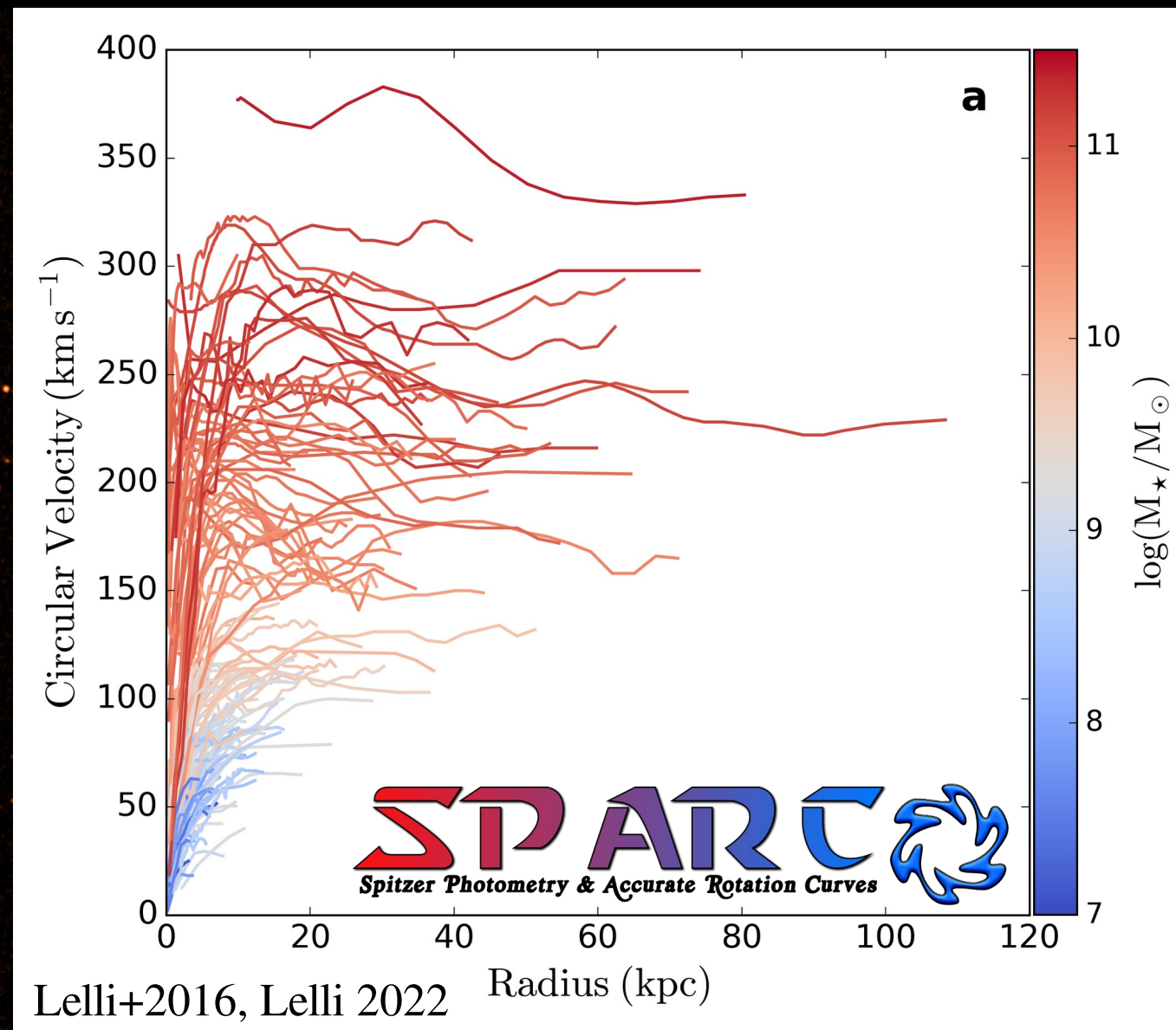
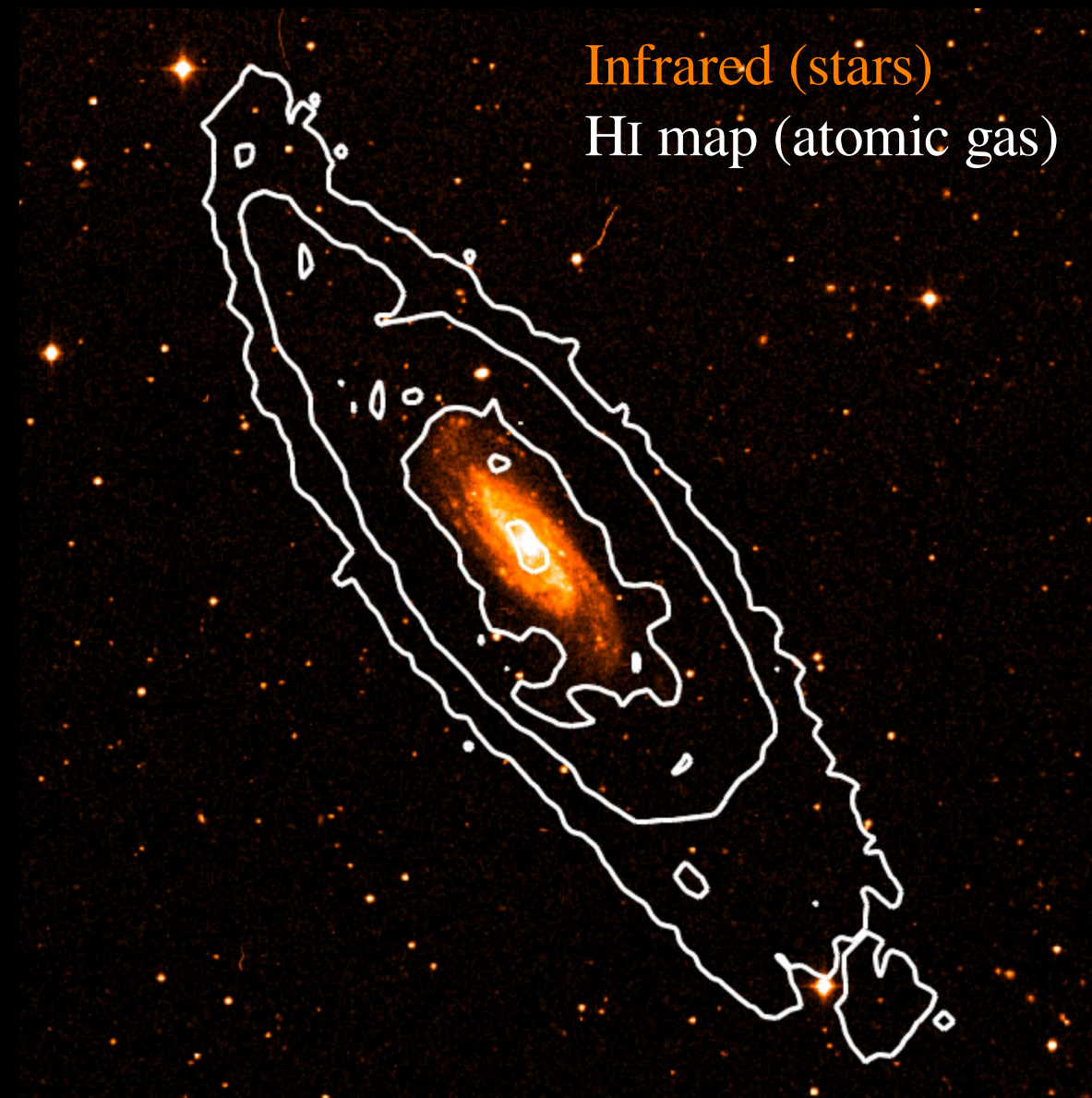
- ① Rotation curves calculated on the basis of the *observed* mass distribution and the modified dynamics should agree with the observed velocity curves.
- ② The $V_\infty^4 = a_0 GM$ relation should hold exactly.
- ③ An analog of the Oort discrepancy should exist in all galaxies and become more severe with increasing r in a predictable way.

A-priori
predictions
from 1983!



(1) $V_c(R) = \text{const}$ at large R for isolated objects

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(1) $V_c(R) = \text{const}$ at large R for isolated objects $\rightarrow$ Weak Lensing

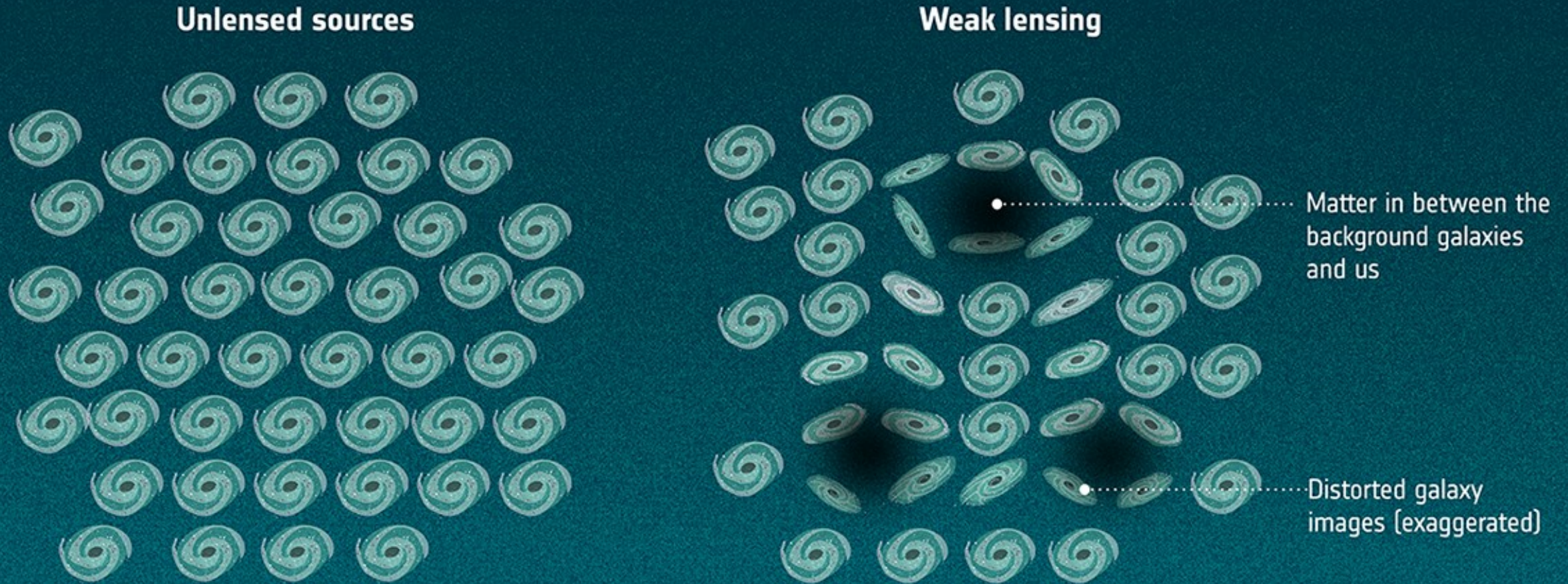


Image Credits: ESA

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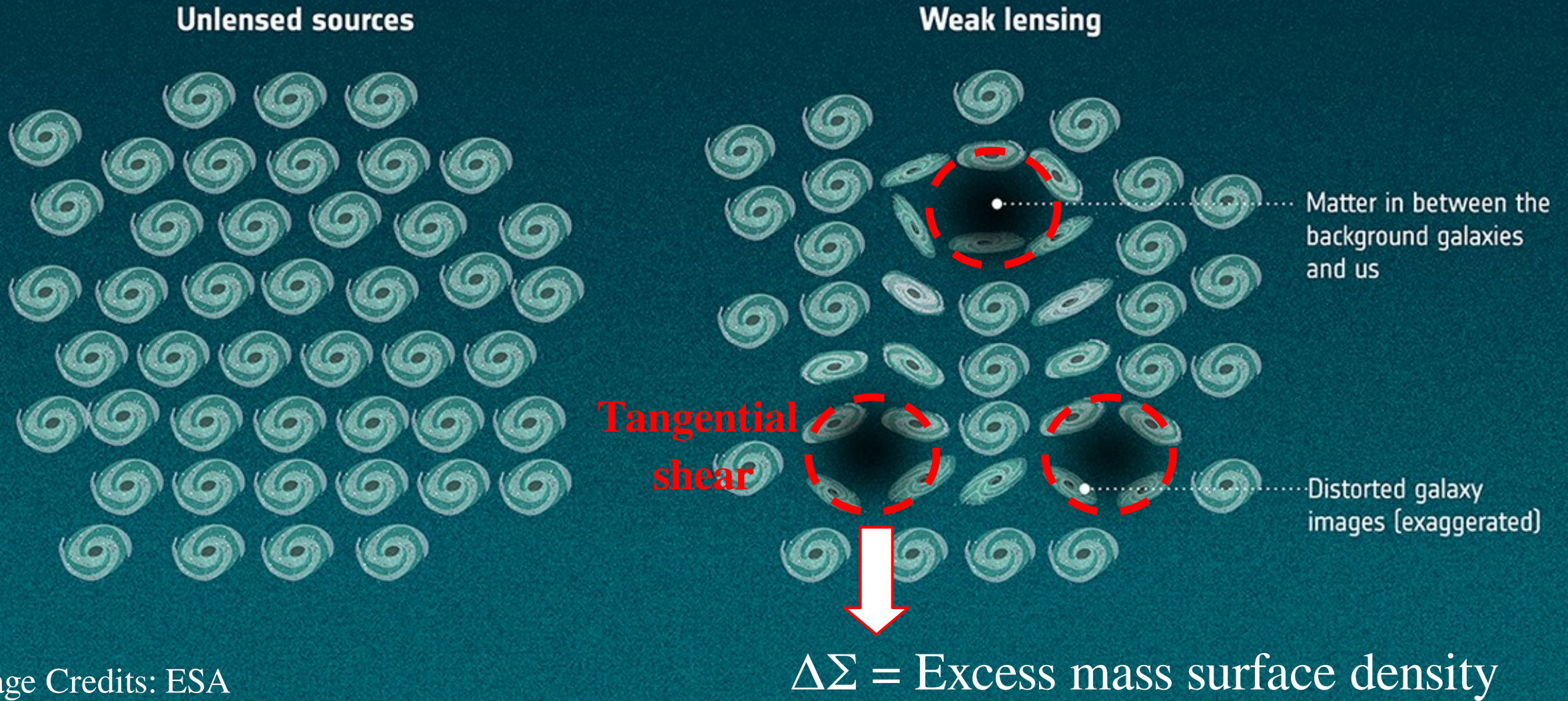


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(1) $V_c(R) = \text{const}$ at large R for isolated objects $\rightarrow$ Weak Lensing

$$\frac{V_c^2}{r} = 4G \int_0^{\pi/2} \Delta \Sigma \left| \frac{r}{\sin(\theta)} \right| d\theta$$

From $\Delta \Sigma$ to $g=V_c^2/r$ in spherical symmetry
Application to **isolated galaxies** from KiDS
(Mistele+2024a, JCAP; Mistele+2024b, ApJ)



Tobias Mistele

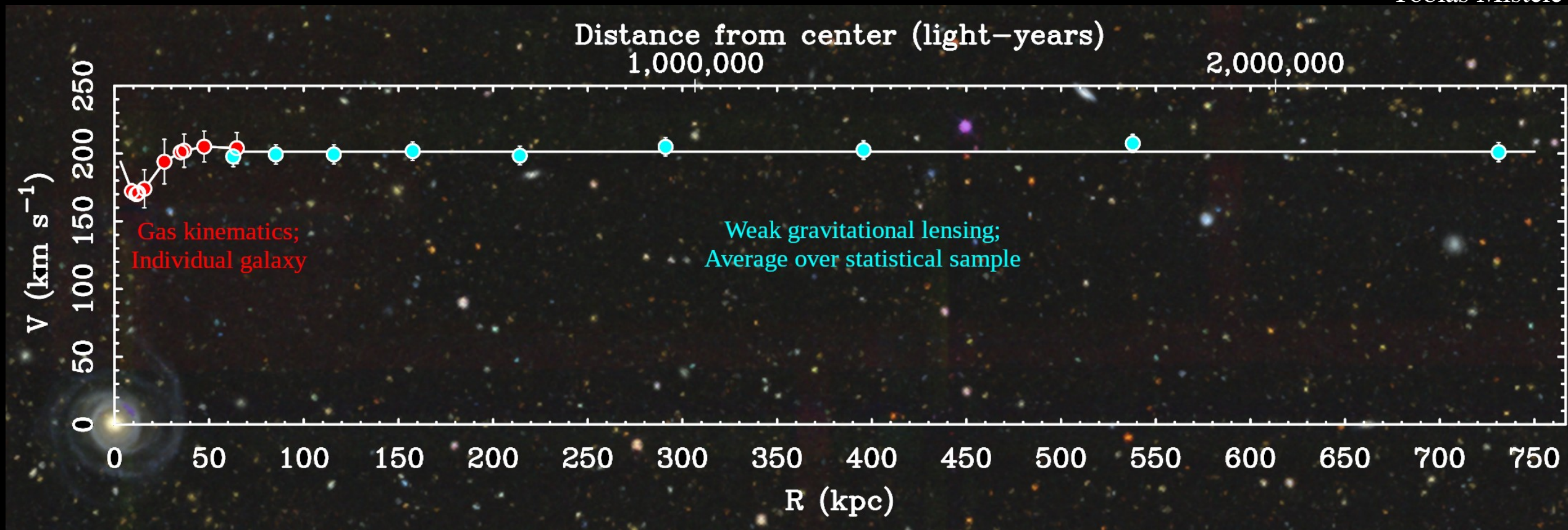
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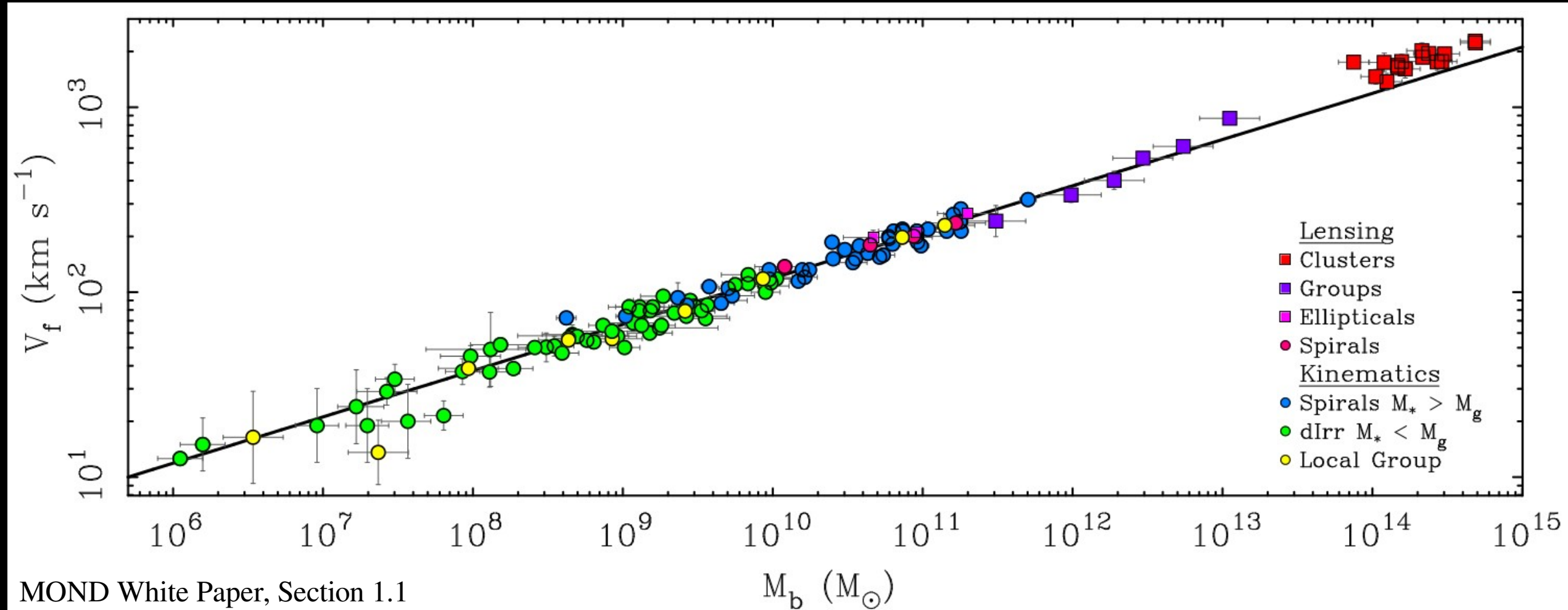


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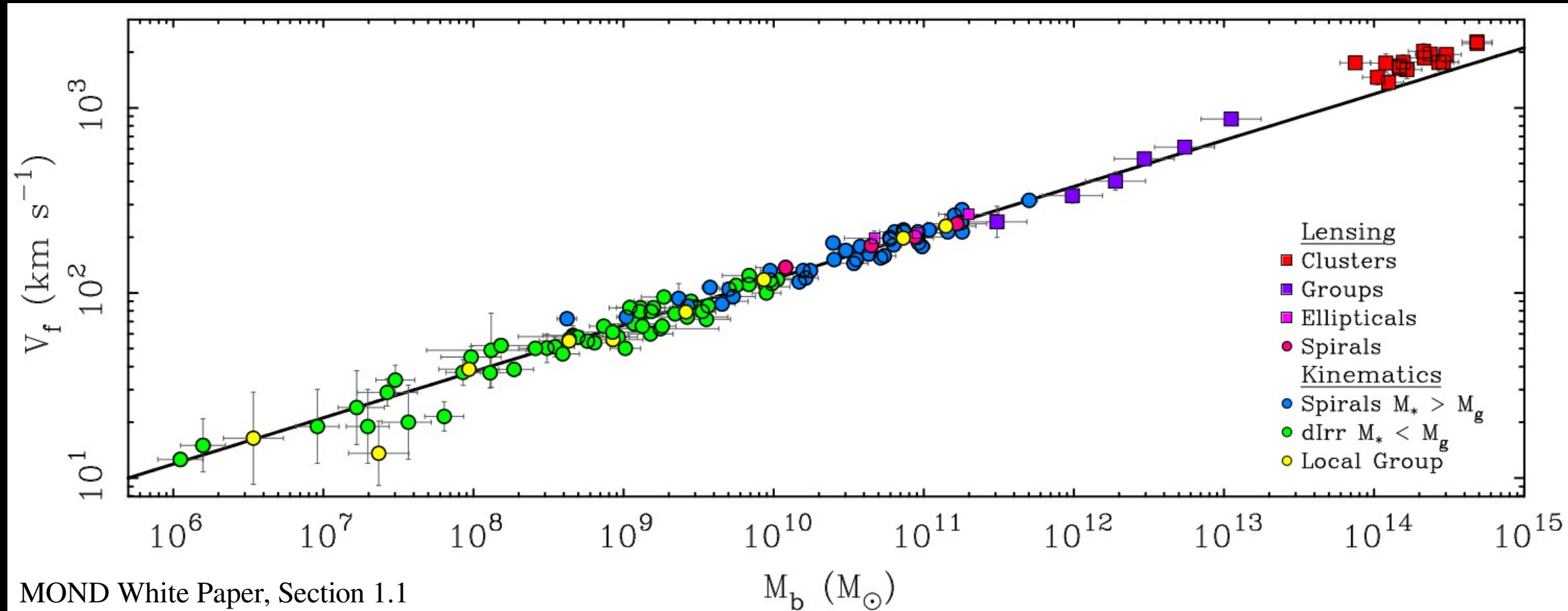


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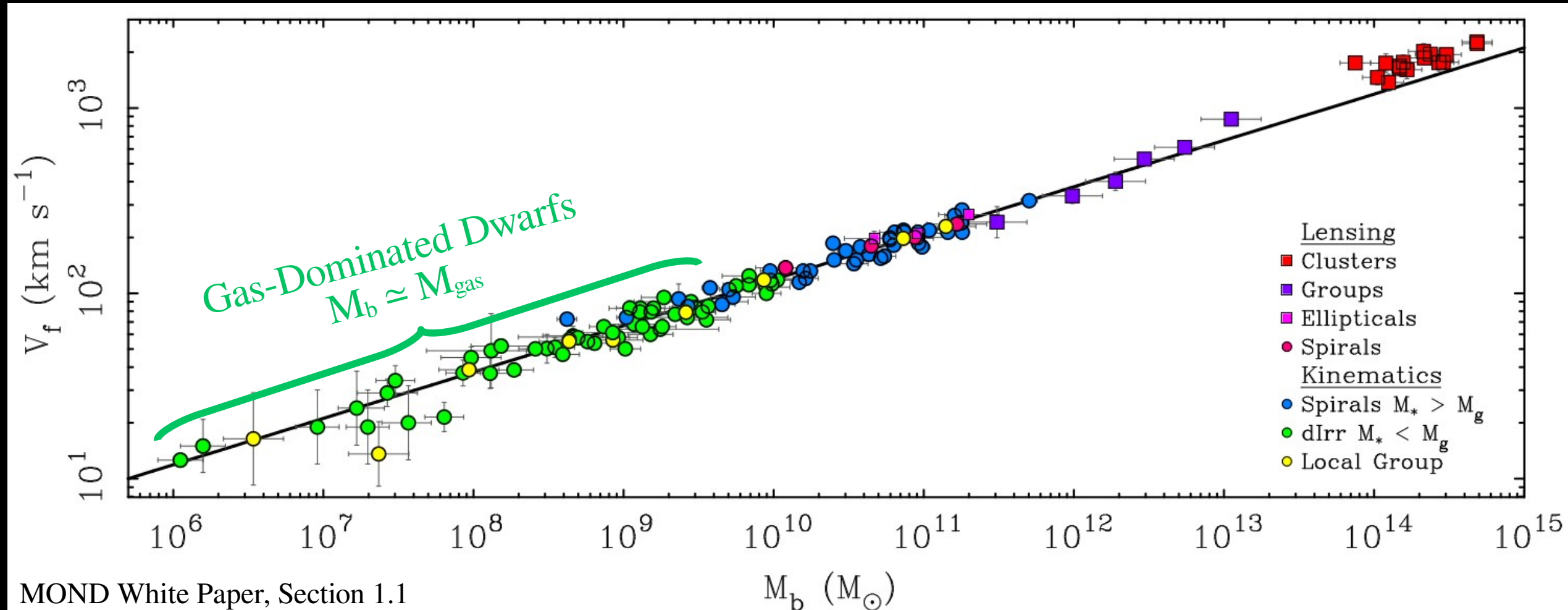
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NOT A FIT TO THE DATA!

Predictions: slope = $\frac{1}{4}$; intercept = $a_0 G$; no intrinsic scatter; no residual dependencies

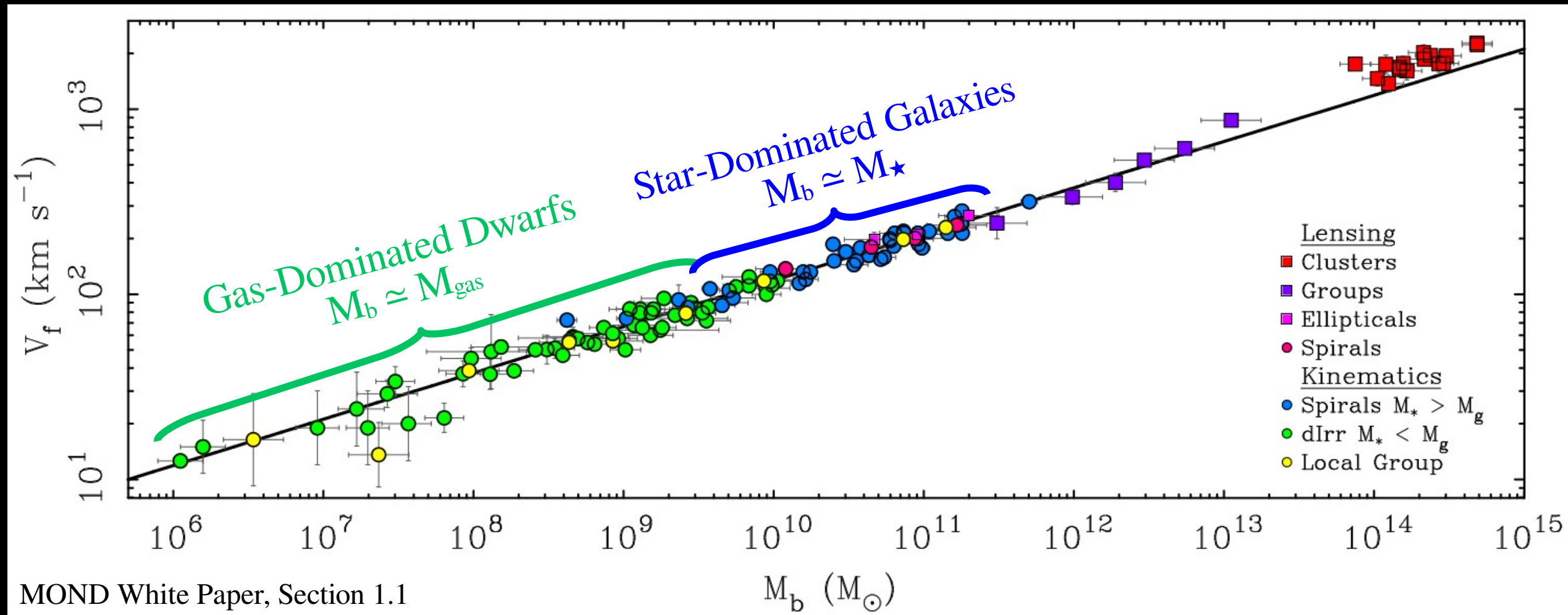
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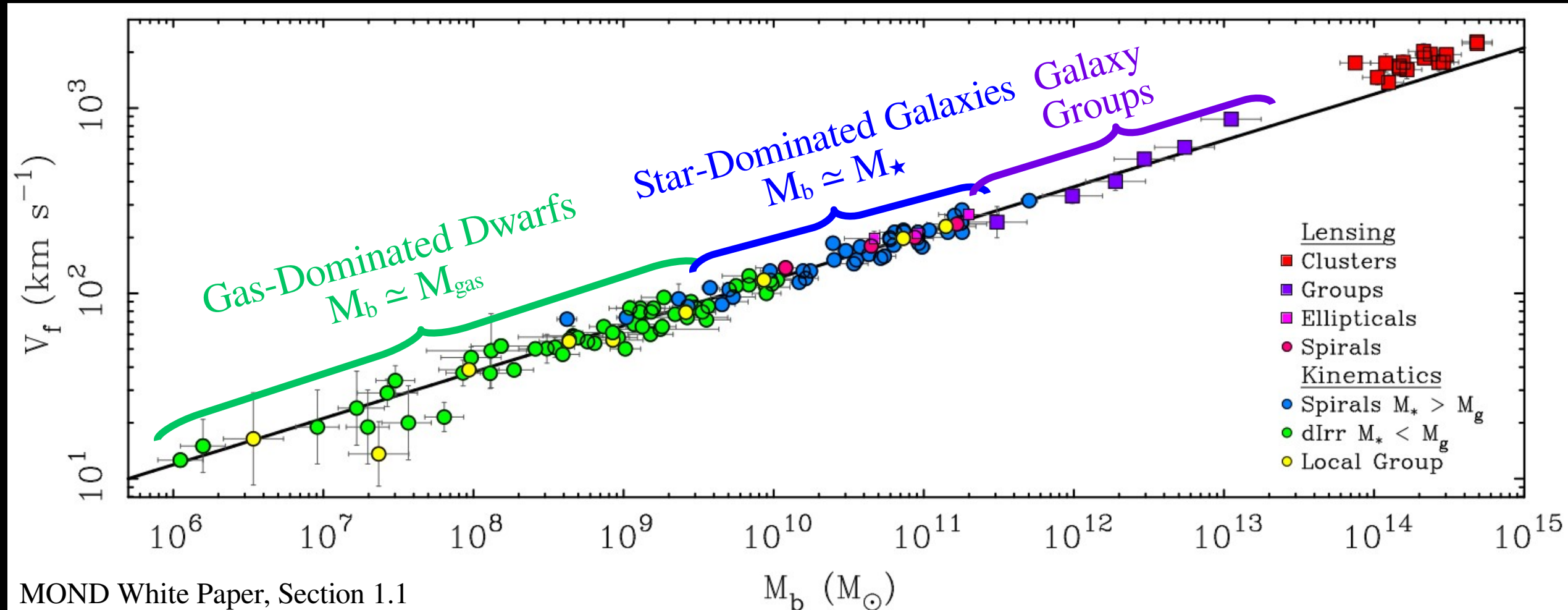
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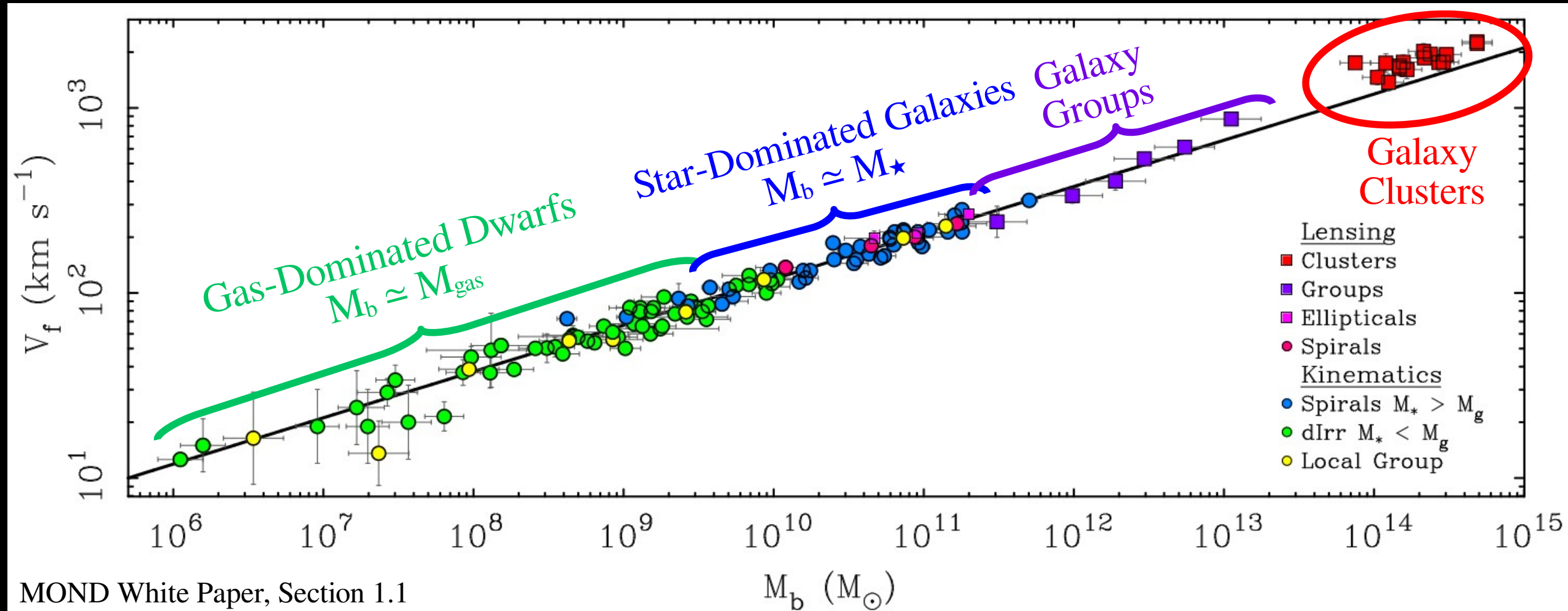
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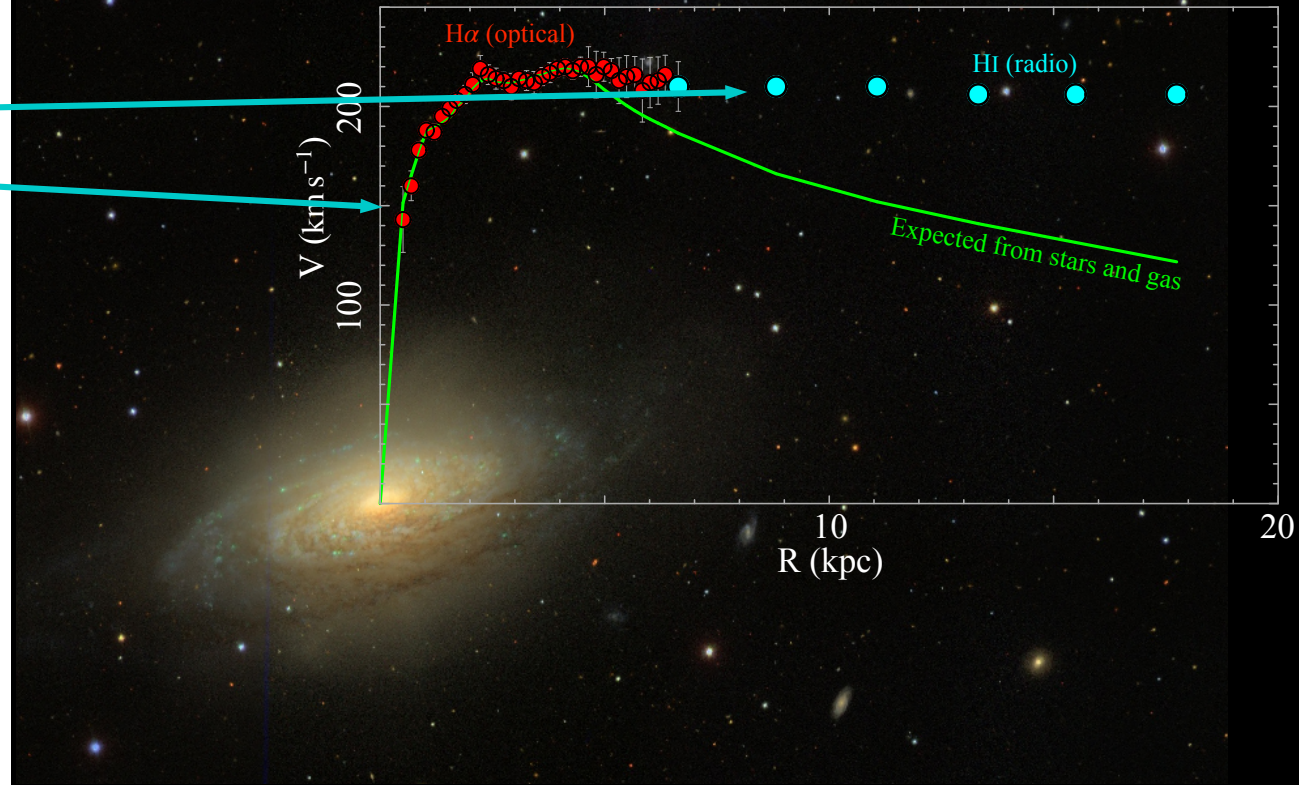
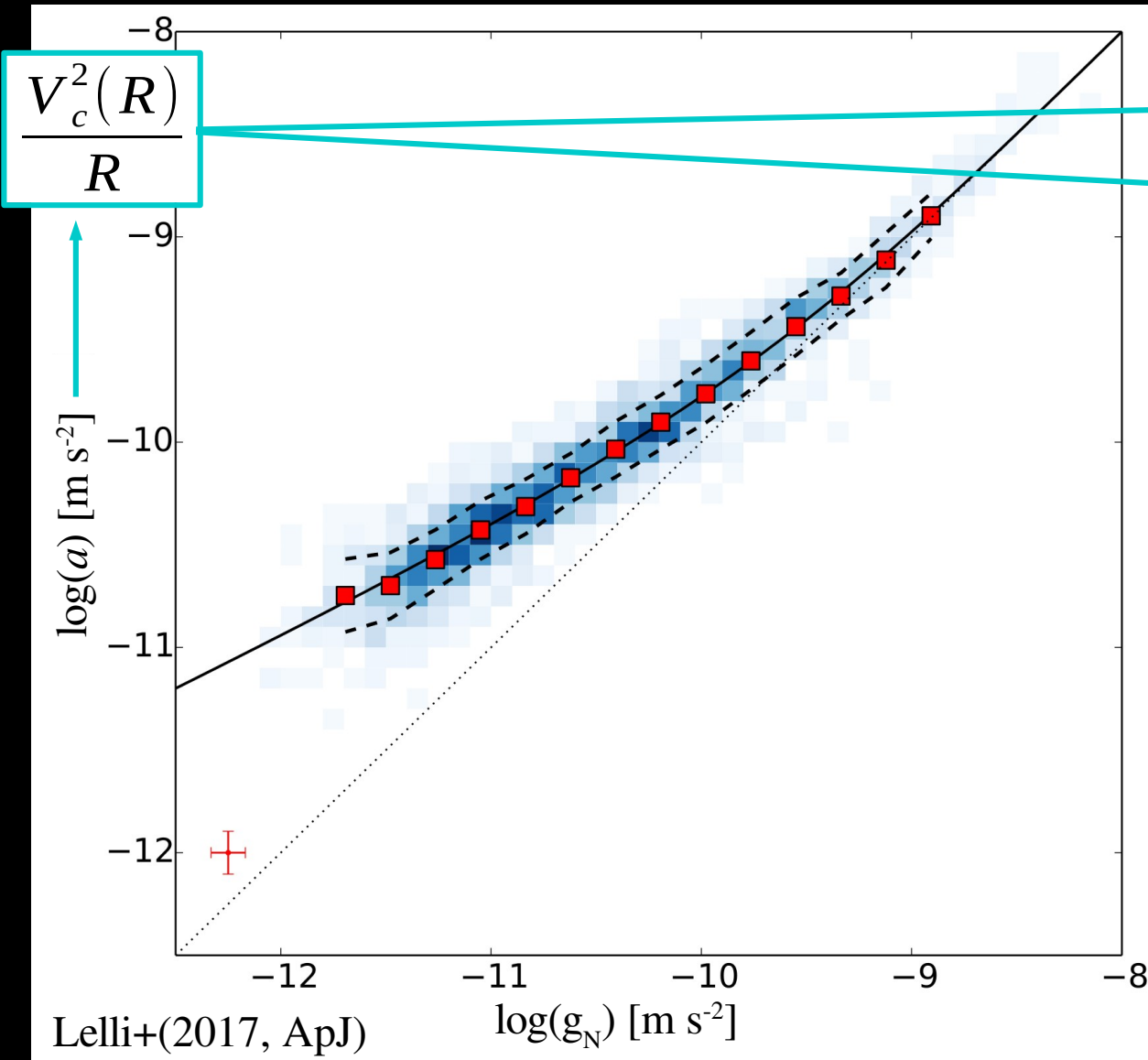


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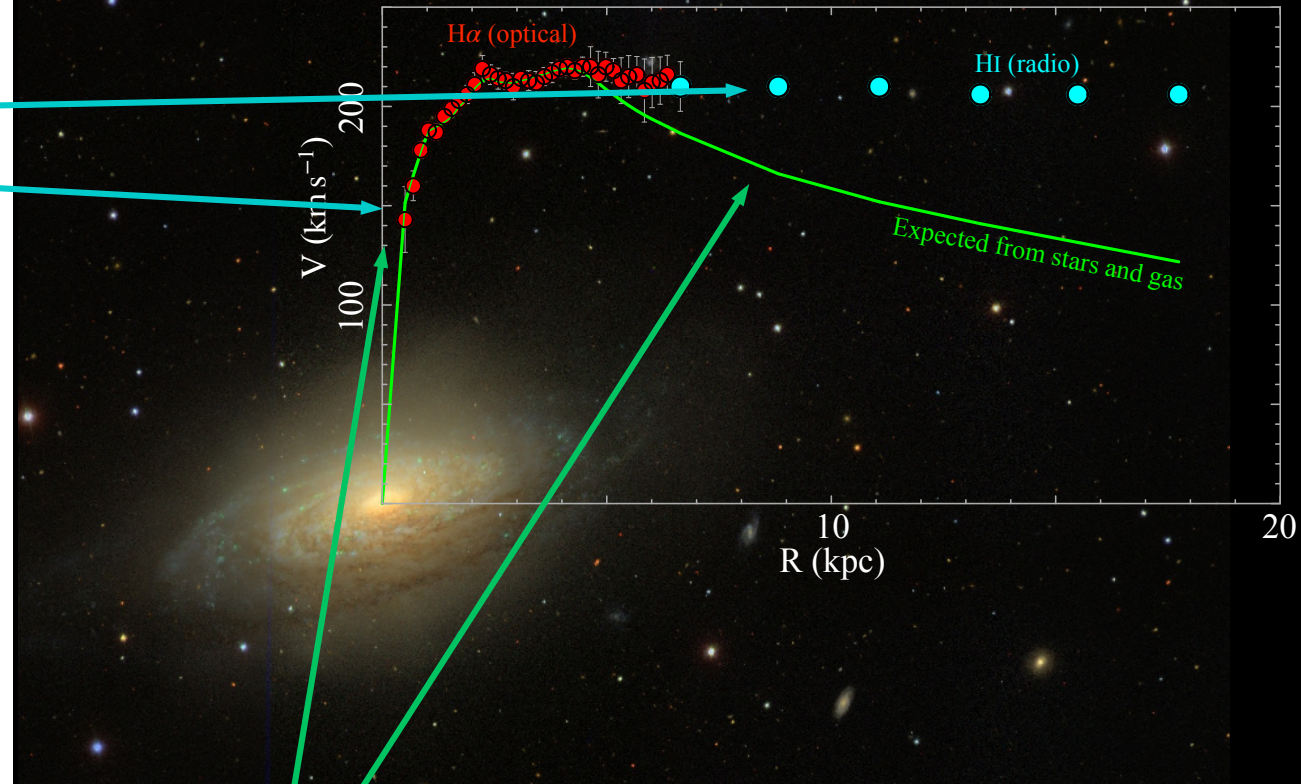
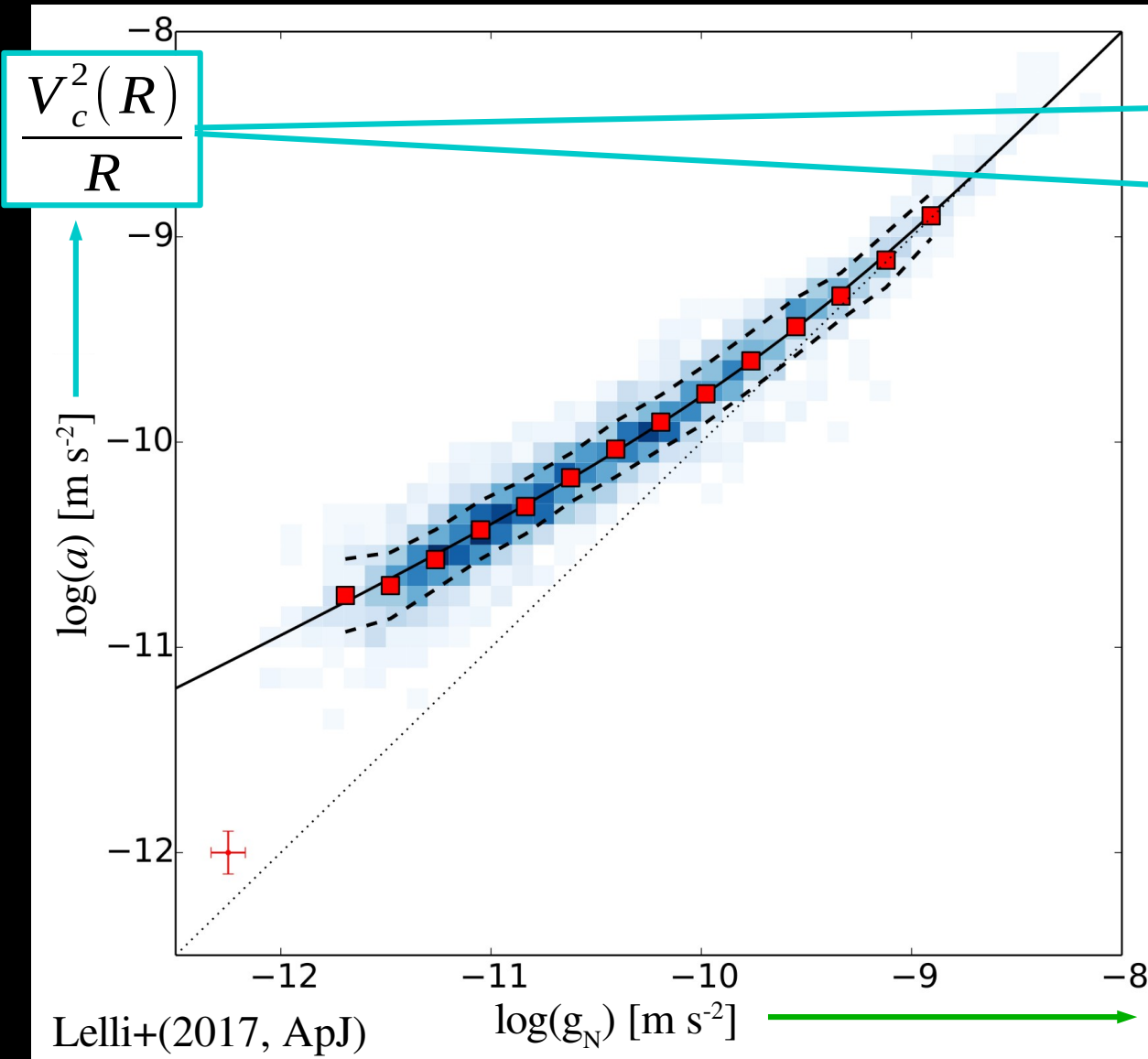
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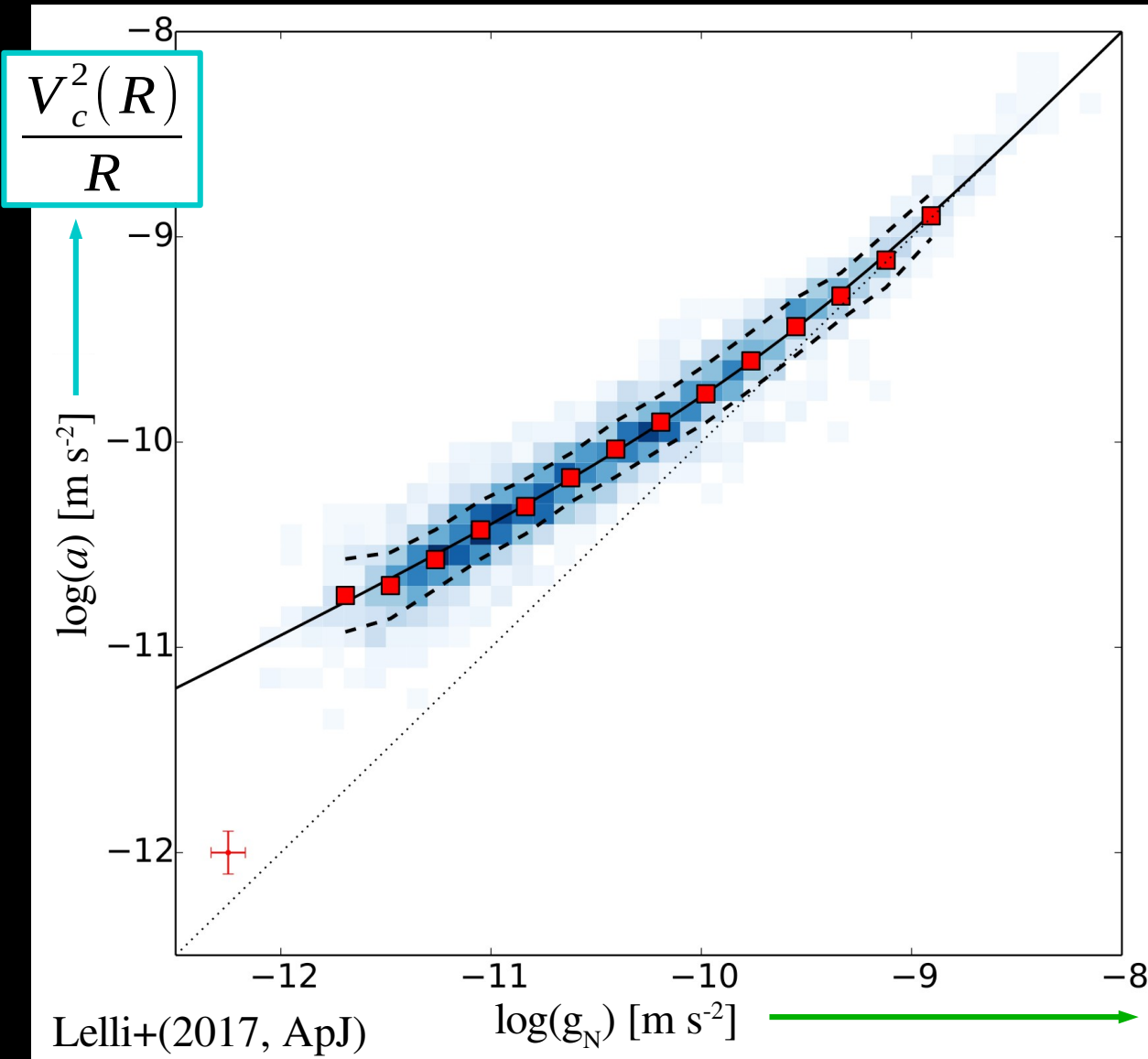
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$$\nabla^2 \Phi_N = 4\pi G \rho_b$$

$$g_N = -\nabla_R \Phi_N$$

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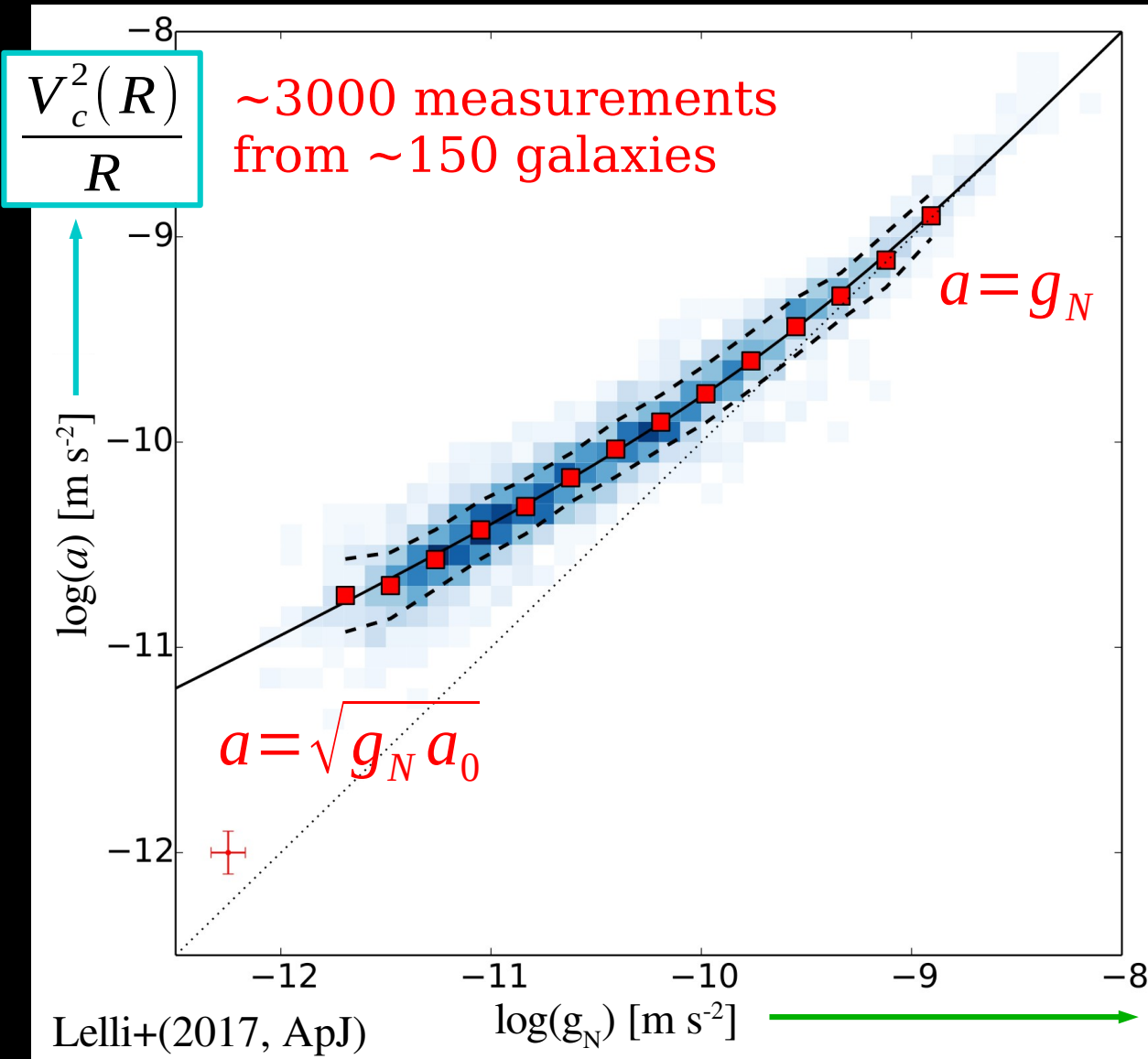


Radial Acceleration Relation (RAR)

✓ Acceleration scale $a_0 \simeq 10^{-10} \text{ m/s}^2$

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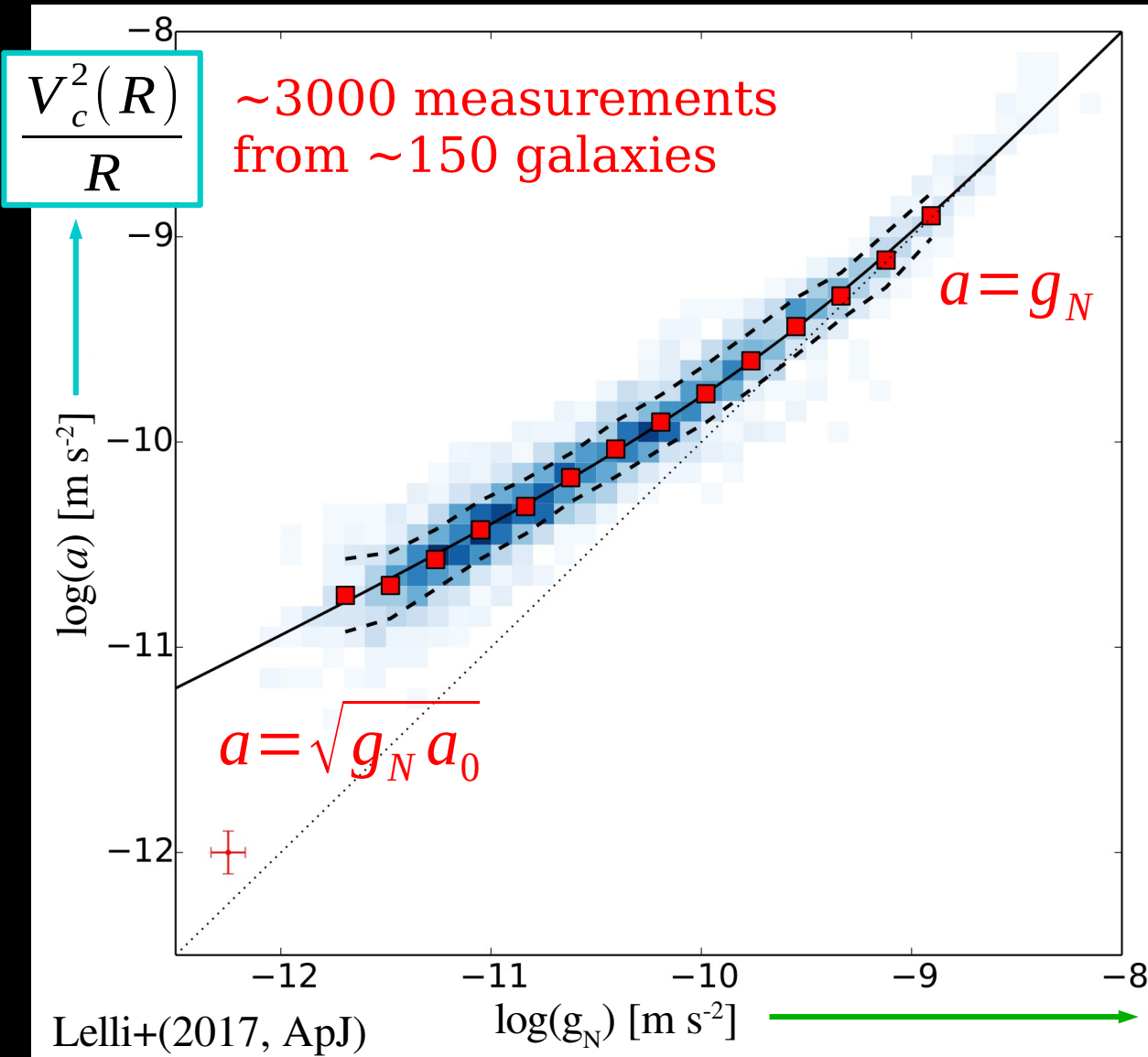
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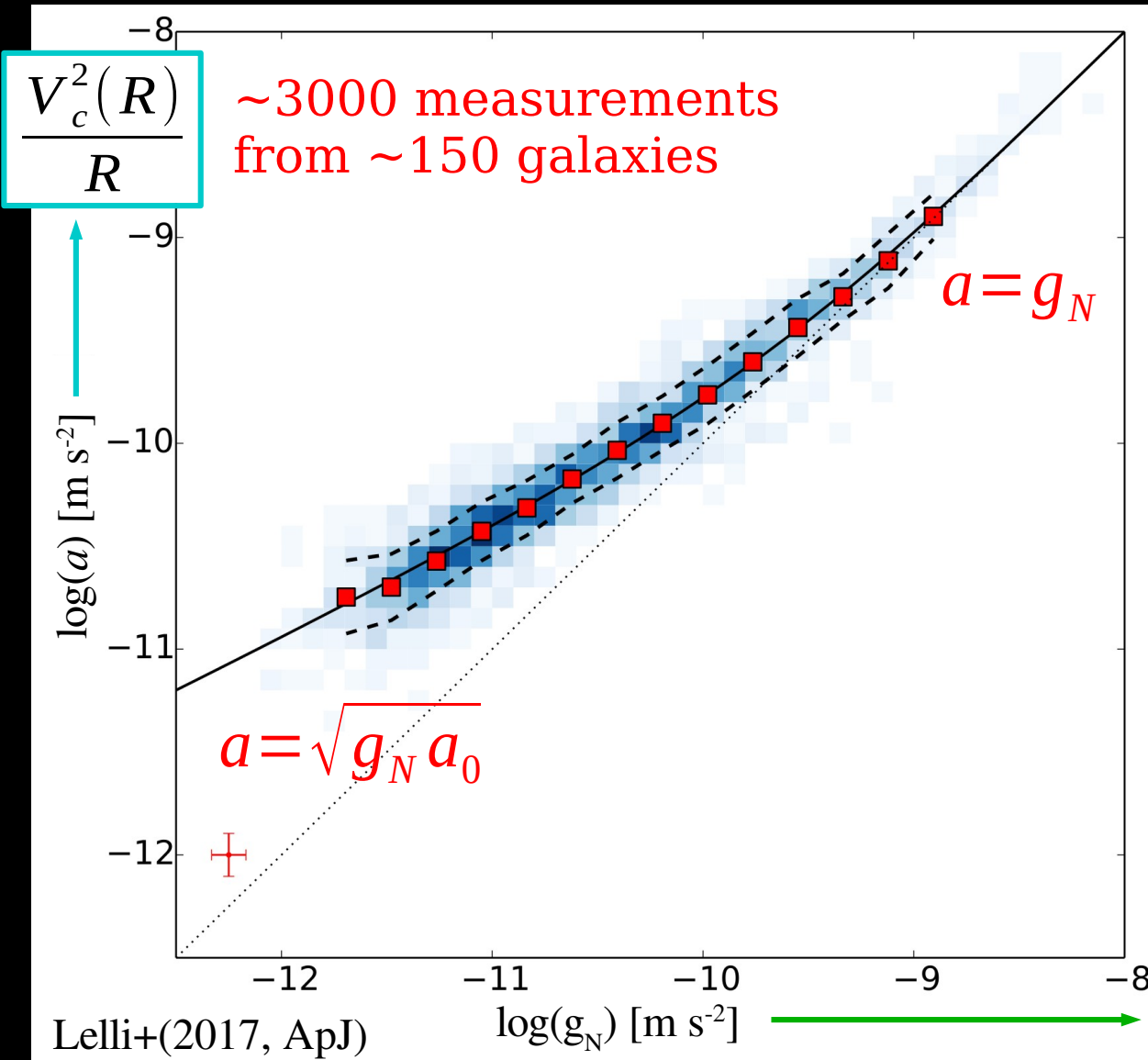


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→ MOND interpolation function ν

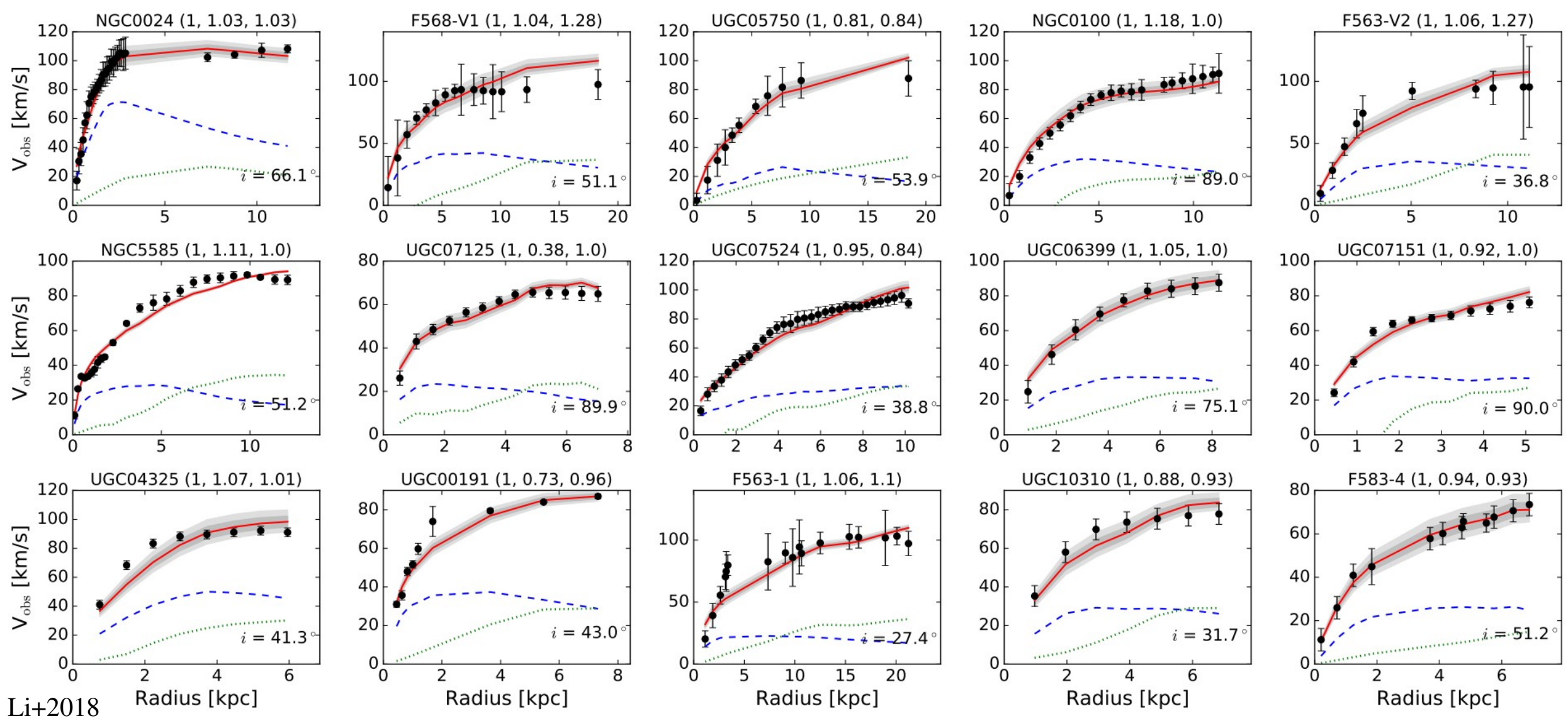
$$a = \nu(g_N/a_0) g_N = (1 - e^{-\sqrt{g_N/a_0}})^{-1} g_N$$

We can now assume $\nu(g_N/a_0)$ and predict rotation curves given ρ_b (within the errors)

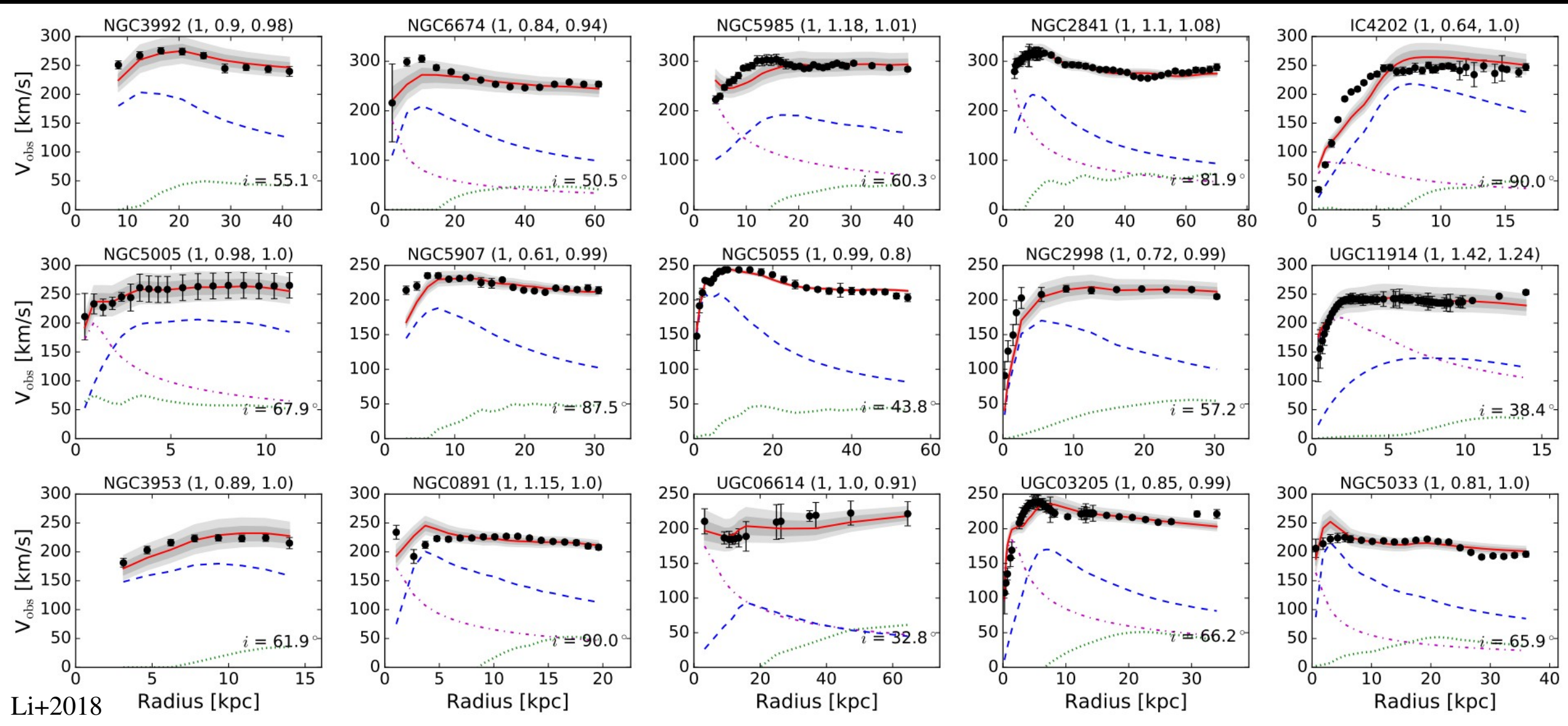
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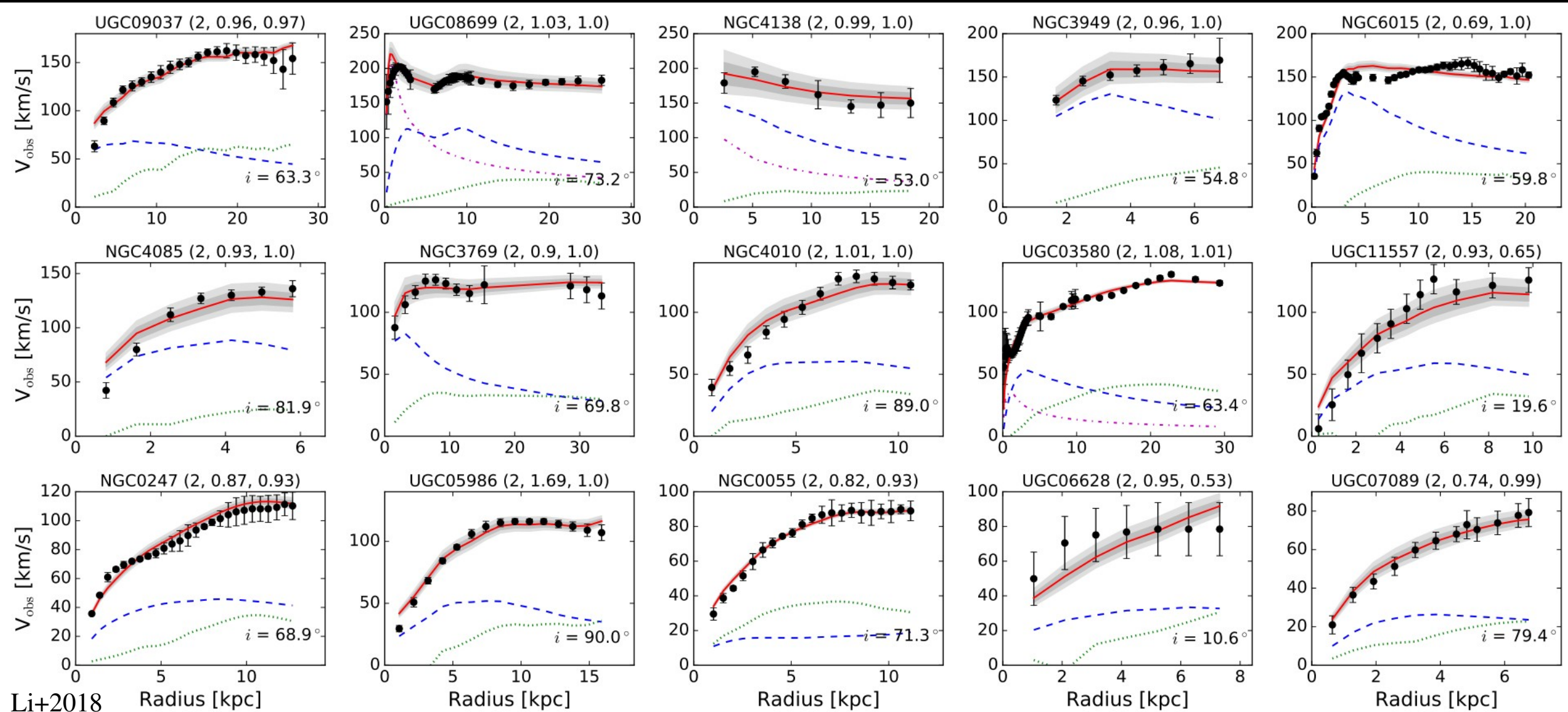
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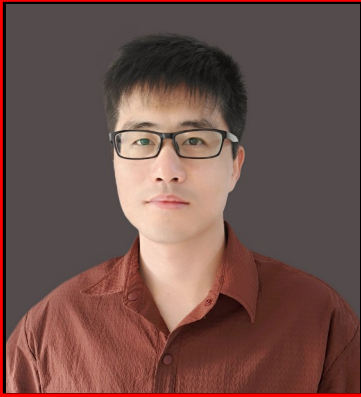
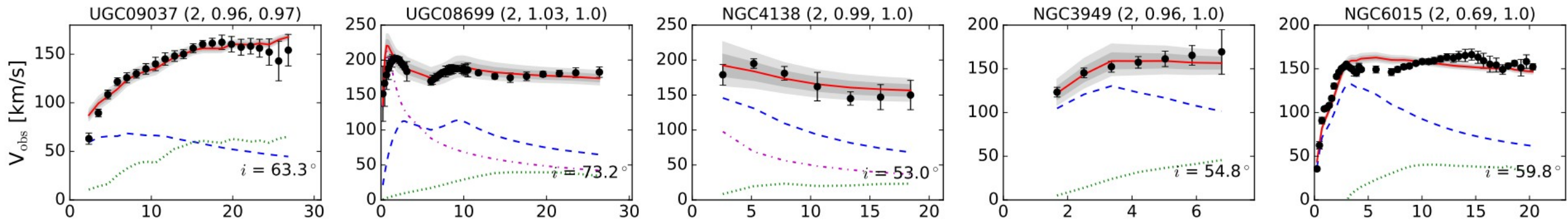
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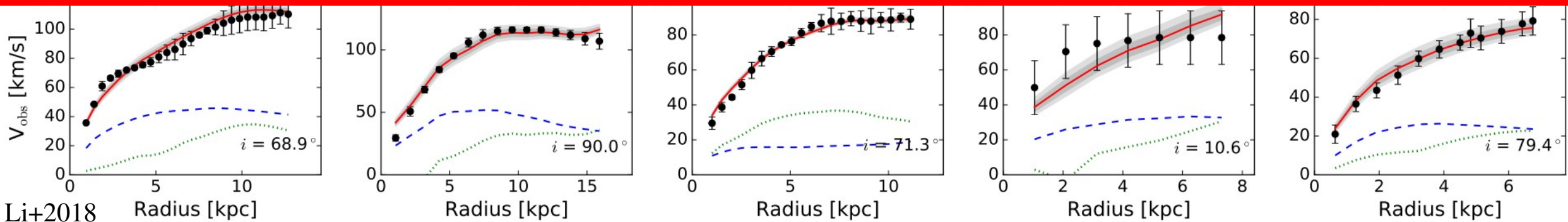
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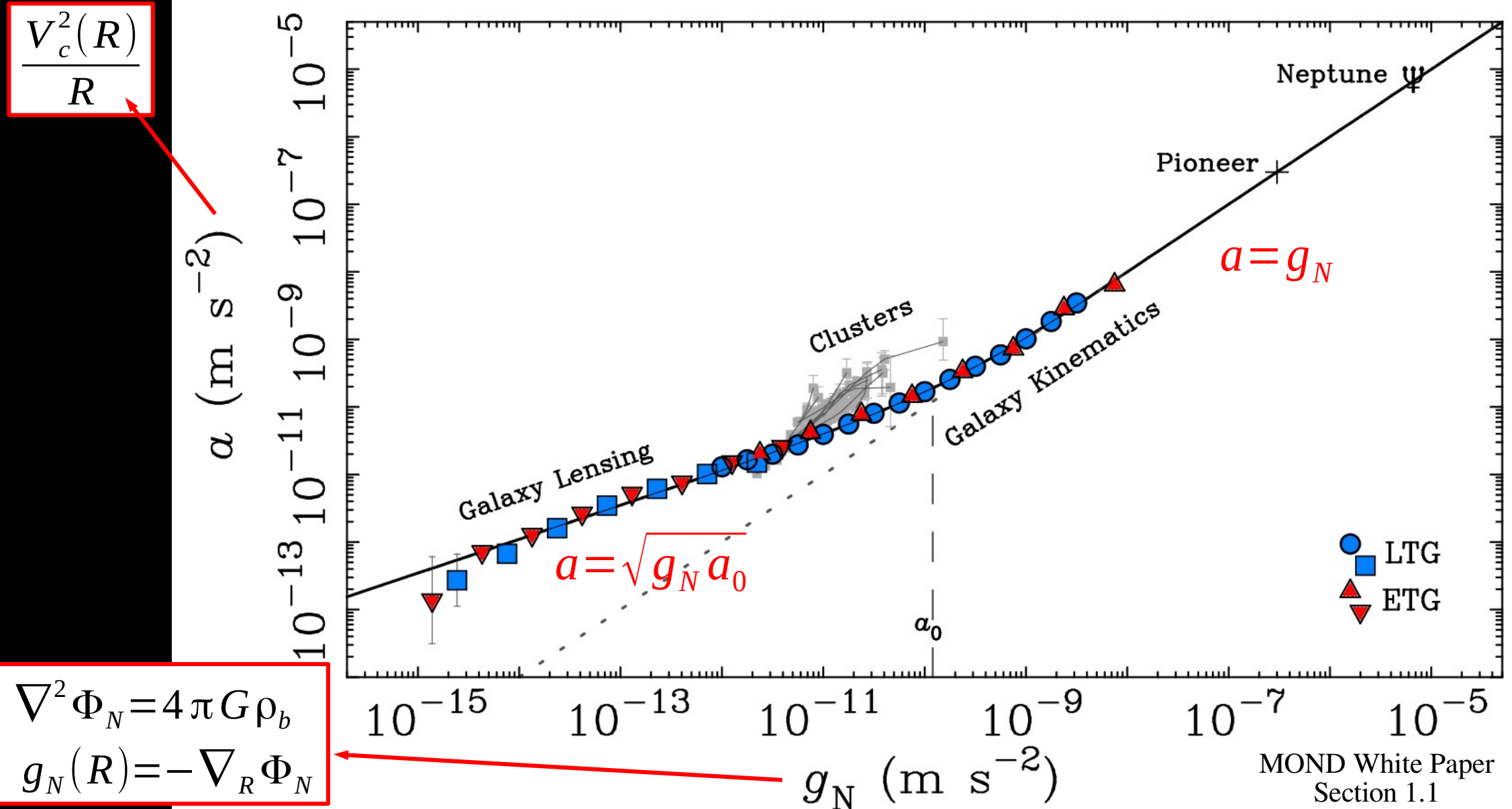
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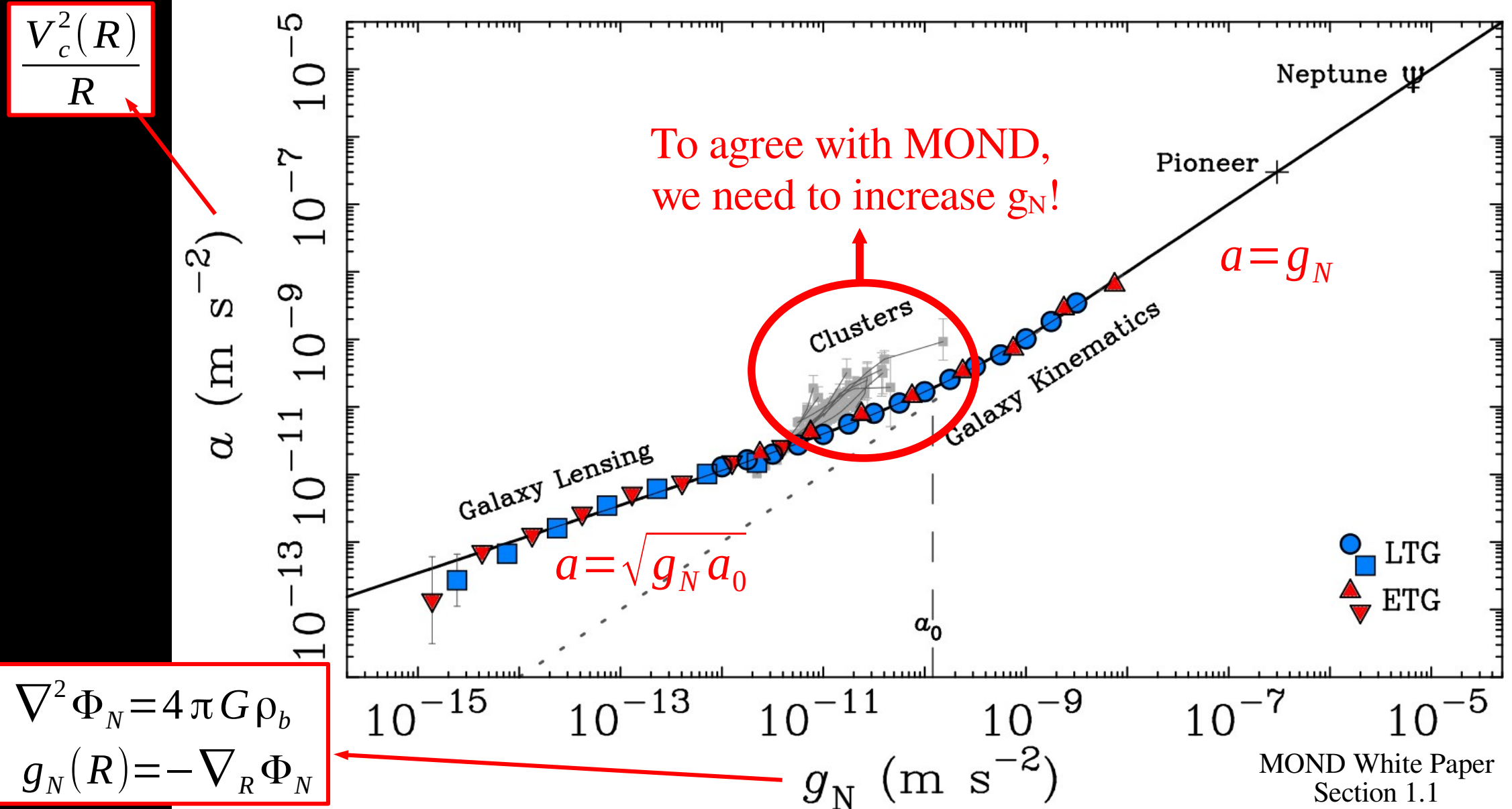
Former PhD student Pengfei Li → now Prof. at Nanjing University!
For the full sample of 175 galaxies, see Li, Lelli+(2018, A&A)
or the SPARC database (<http://astroweb.cwru.edu/SPARC/>)



Radial Acceleration Relation extended by Weak Lensing



Radial Acceleration Relation extended by Weak Lensing

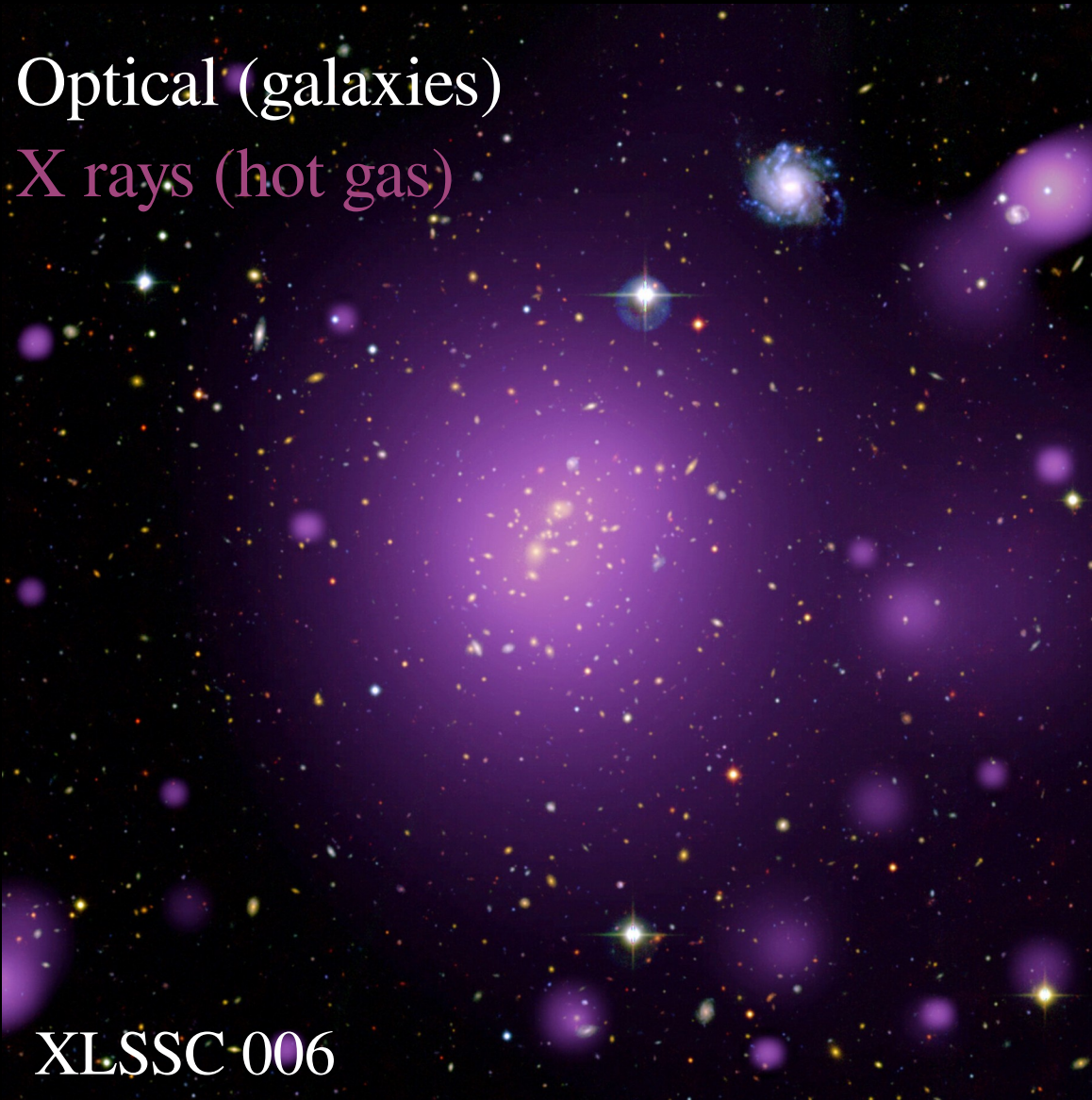


Tests in Galaxy Clusters

Galaxy Clusters: hot gas ($\sim 0.9 M_b$) plus some galaxies ($\sim 0.1 M_b$)

Optical (galaxies)

X rays (hot gas)

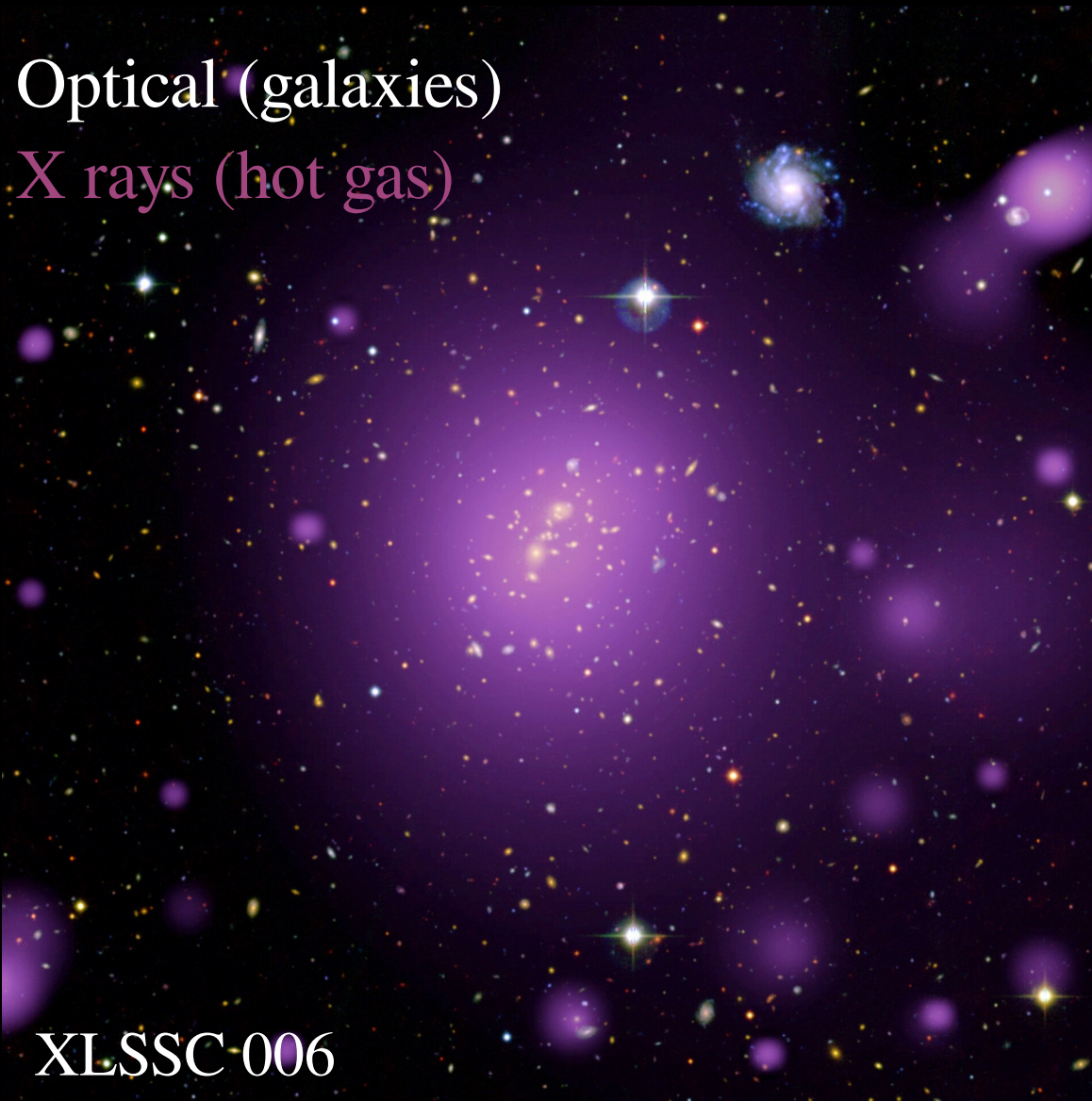


XLSSC 006

Galaxy Clusters: hot gas ($\sim 0.9 M_b$) plus some galaxies ($\sim 0.1 M_b$)

Optical (galaxies)

X rays (hot gas)



Sphere in Hydrostatic Equilibrium

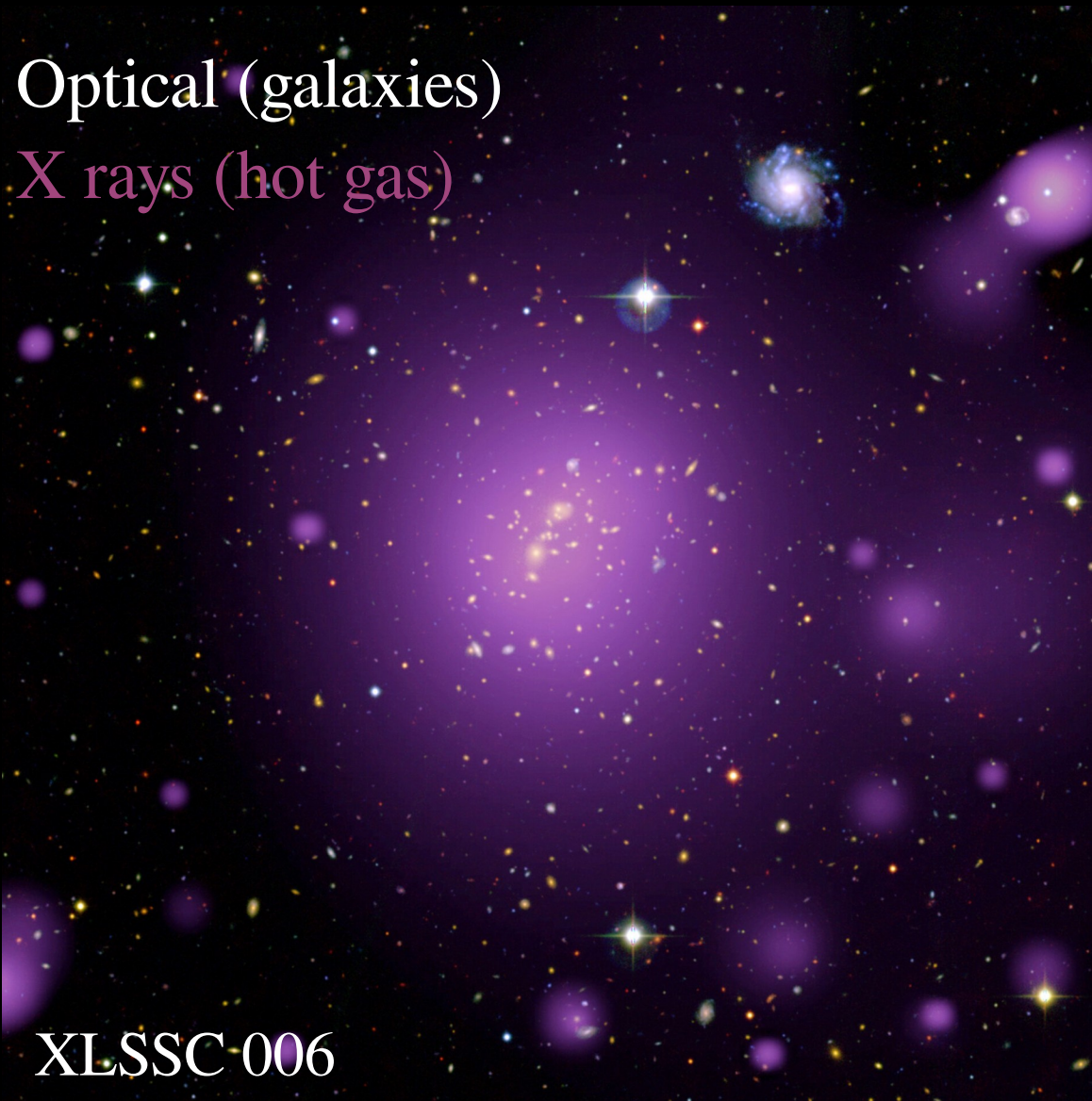
$$g(r) = -\frac{1}{\rho_{gas}(r)} \frac{\partial P_{gas}(r)}{\partial r}$$

XLSSC 006

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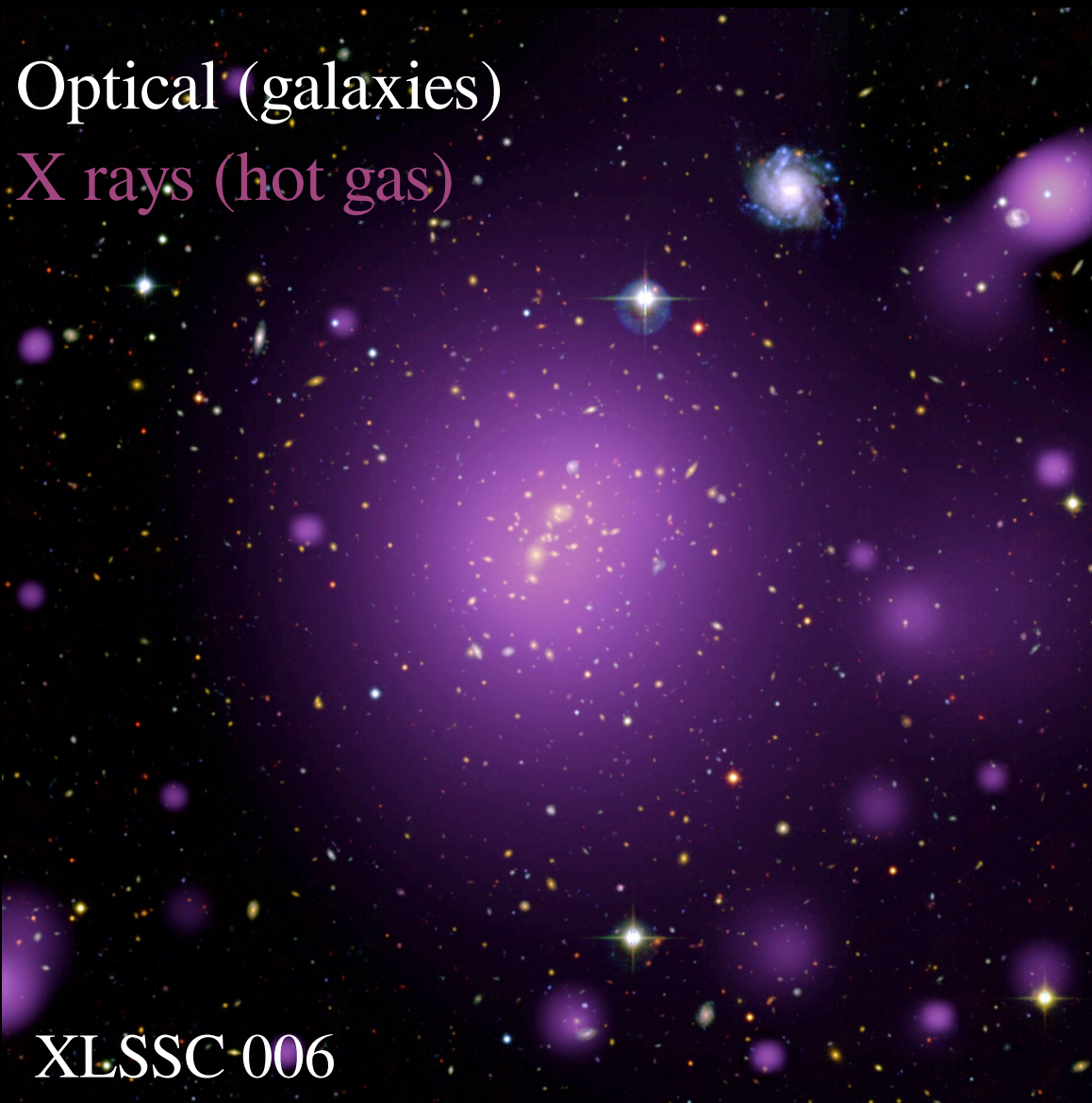
$$g(r) = -\frac{1}{\rho_{gas}(r)} \frac{\partial P_{gas}(r)}{\partial r}$$

$$P_{gas} = \frac{k_B}{w m_p} \rho_{gas} T_{gas} \Rightarrow \text{From X-ray observations}$$

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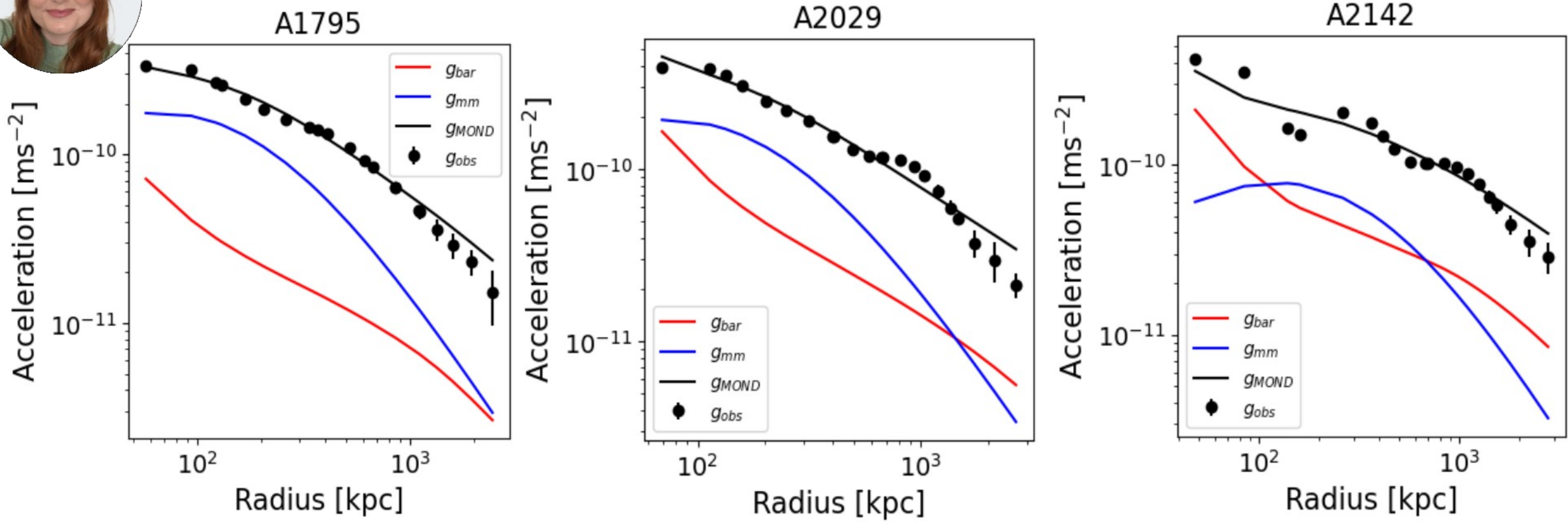
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$$y = \frac{\sigma_T}{m_e c^2} \int_z P_{gas} dz \Rightarrow \text{S-Z effect (Planck data)}$$

S-Z effect gives g at large $r \simeq 1-3$ Mpc!

MOND fits with an extra component (Kelleher & Lelli 2024, A&A)



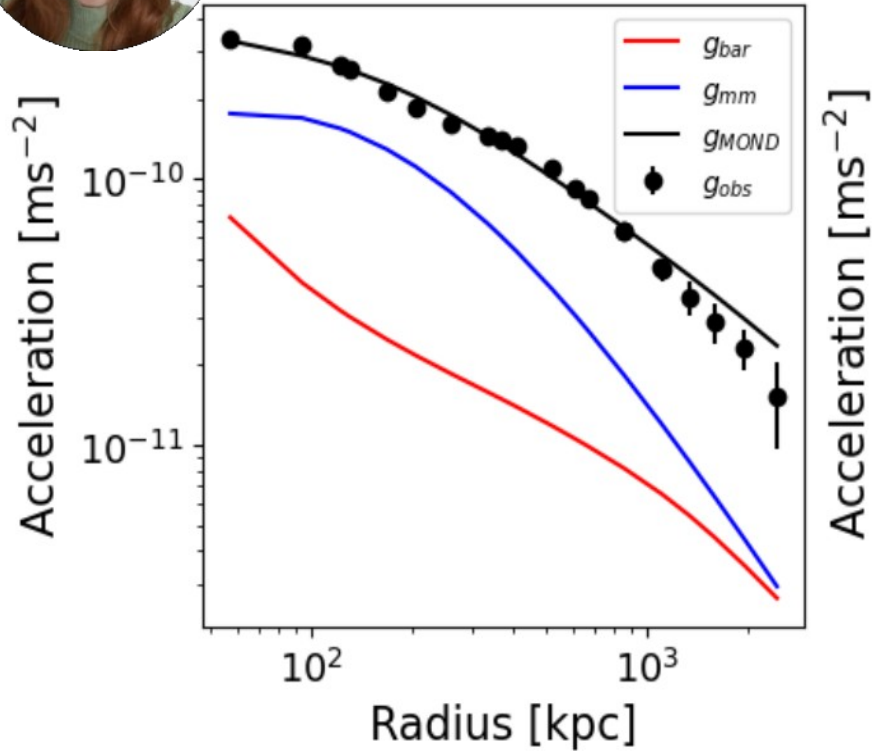
Density profile of missing mass:

$$\rho_{\text{mm}}(r) = \frac{\rho_0}{(1 + r/r_s)^4}$$

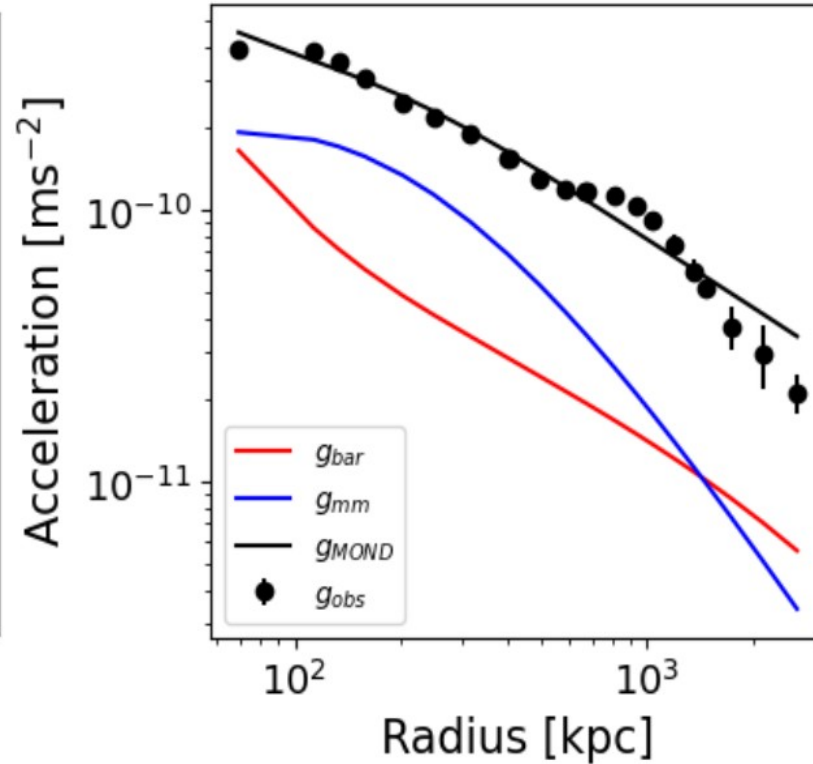
MOND fits with an extra component (Kelleher & Lelli 2024, A&A)



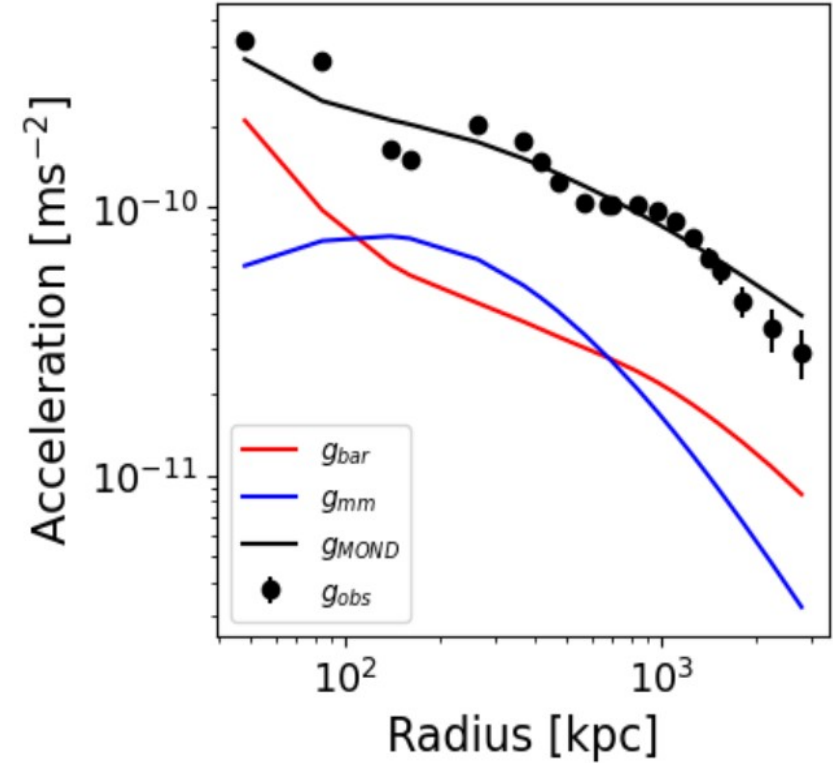
A1795



A2029



A2142



Density profile of missing mass:

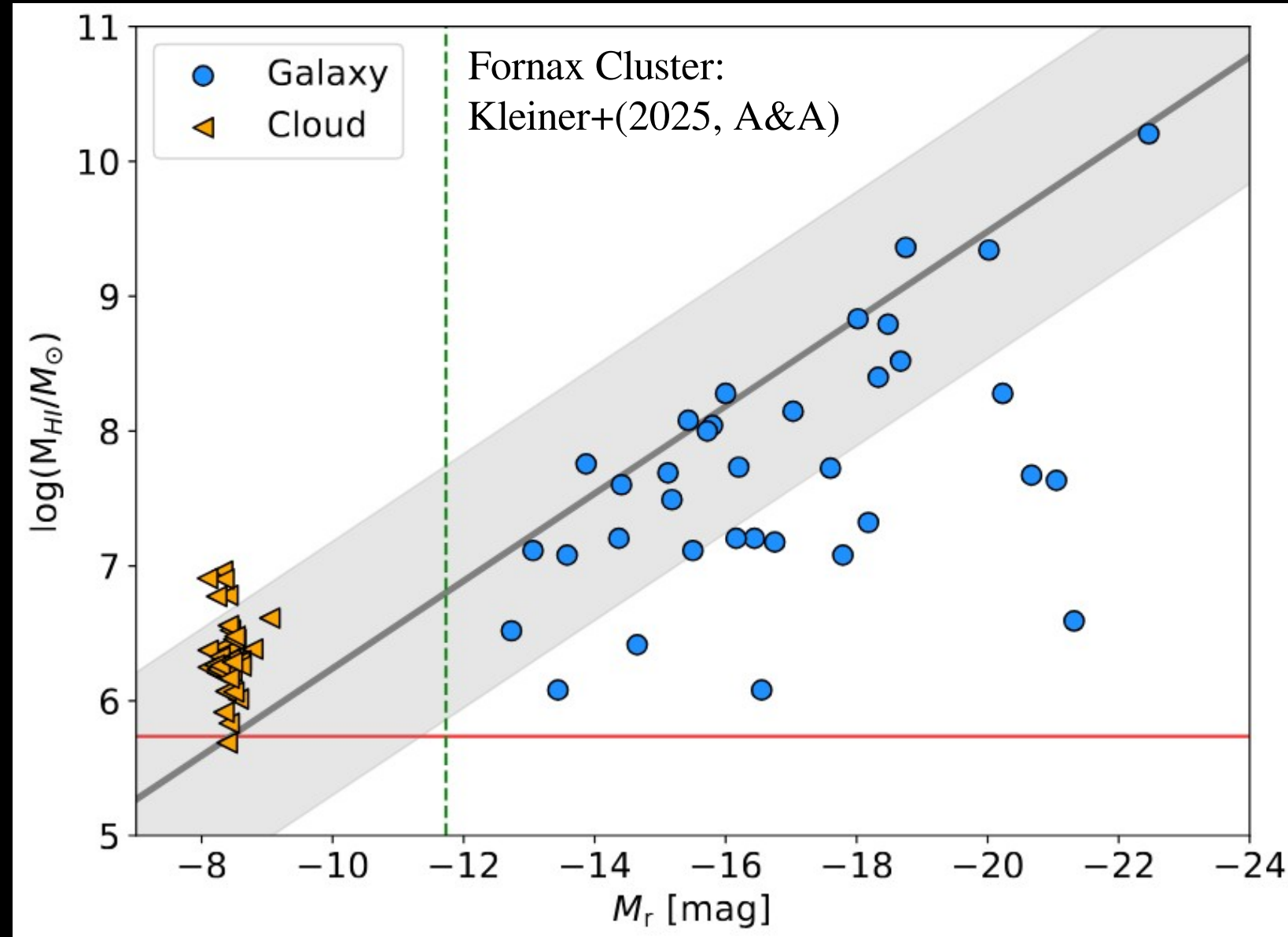
$$\rho_{mm}(r) = \frac{\rho_0}{(1+r/r_s)^4}$$

Converged (physical) total mass:

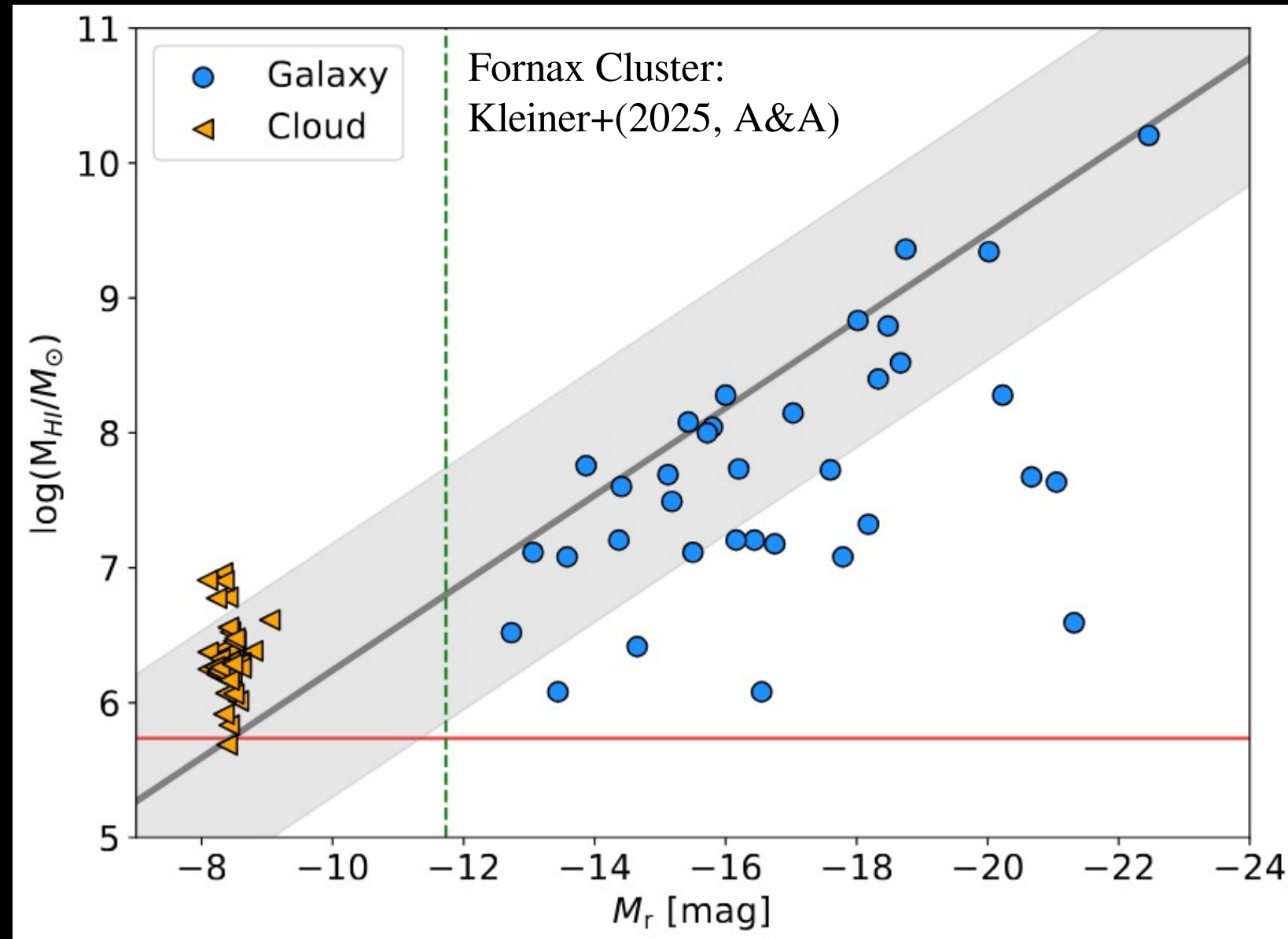
$$\Rightarrow M_{mm} = \int_0^\infty \rho_{mm}(r) 4\pi r^2 dr = \frac{4\pi}{3} \rho_0 r_s^3$$

Missing mass in clusters: compact clouds of cold gas?

Deepest HI surveys of the
nearest galaxy clusters
(Virgo, Fornax): $M_{\text{HI}} \gtrsim 10^6 M_{\odot}$



Missing mass in clusters: compact clouds of cold gas?



Deepest HI surveys of the nearest galaxy clusters
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To solve the problem:

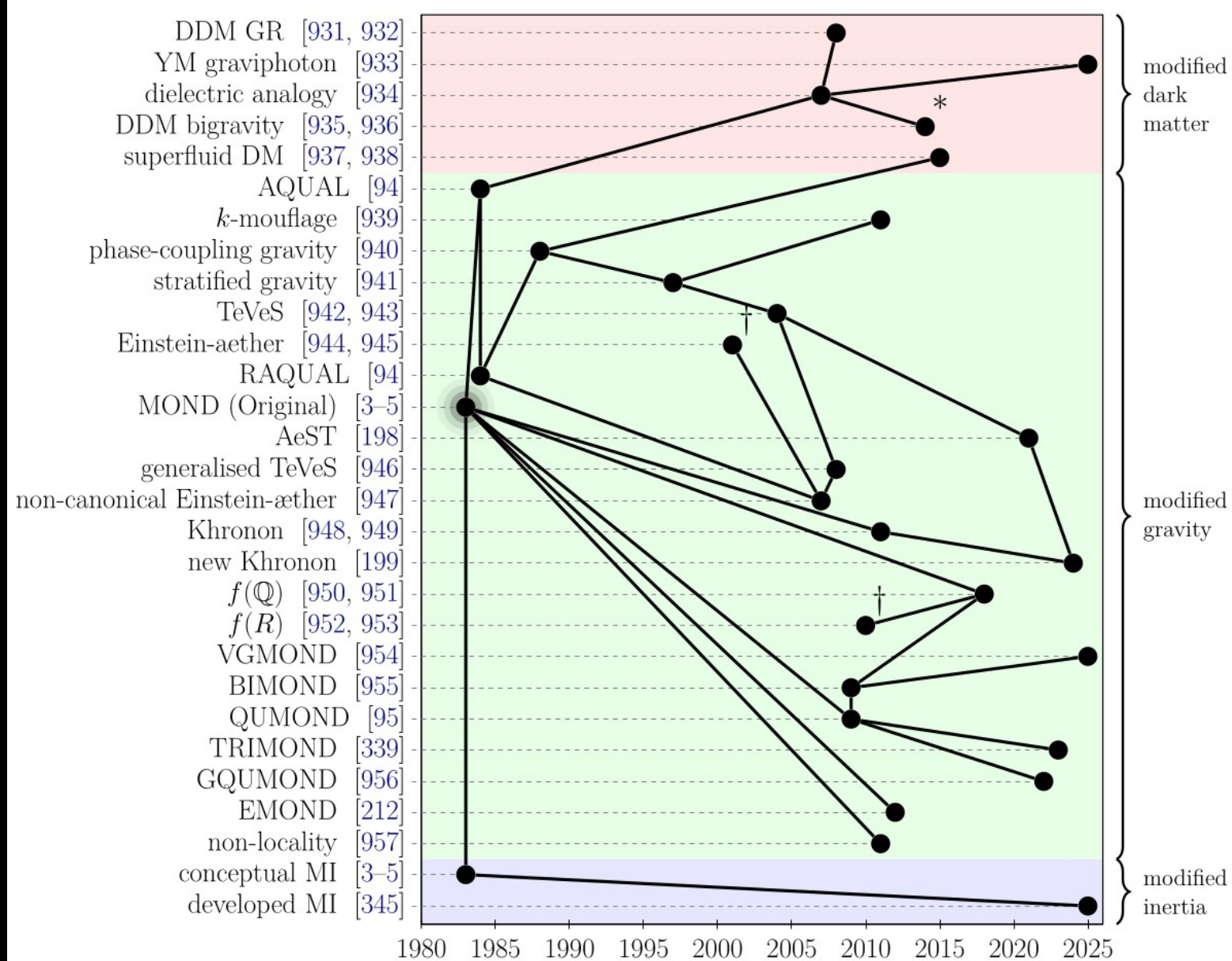
$$M_{\text{mm}} \simeq M_{\text{ICM}} \simeq 10^{13-14} M_{\odot}$$

Many ($\sim 10^{10}$) tiny clouds
with $M_{\text{cloud}} \simeq 10^3\text{-}10^4$?

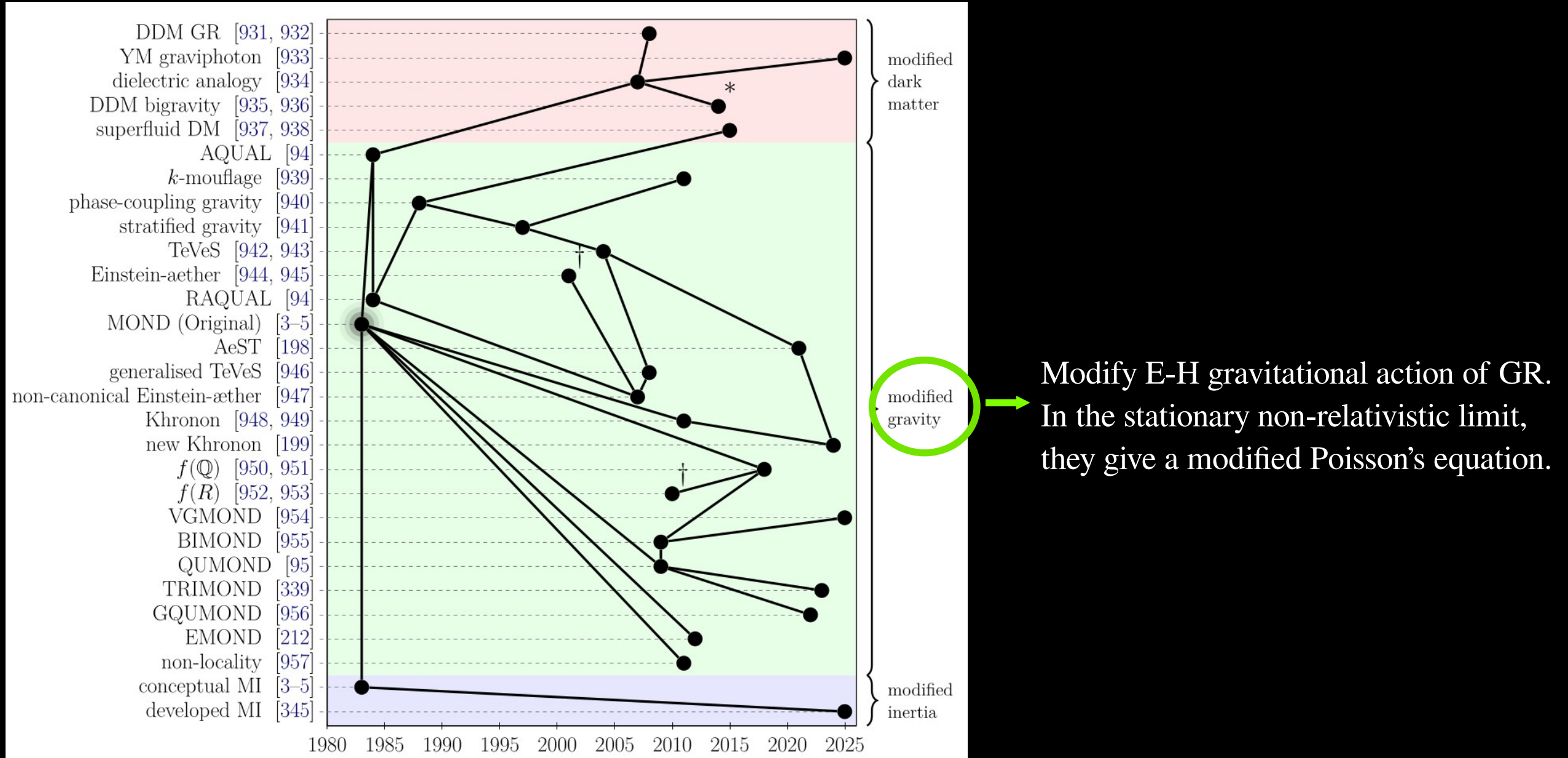
Or even more clouds with
smaller masses...

Relativistic Theories & Cosmology

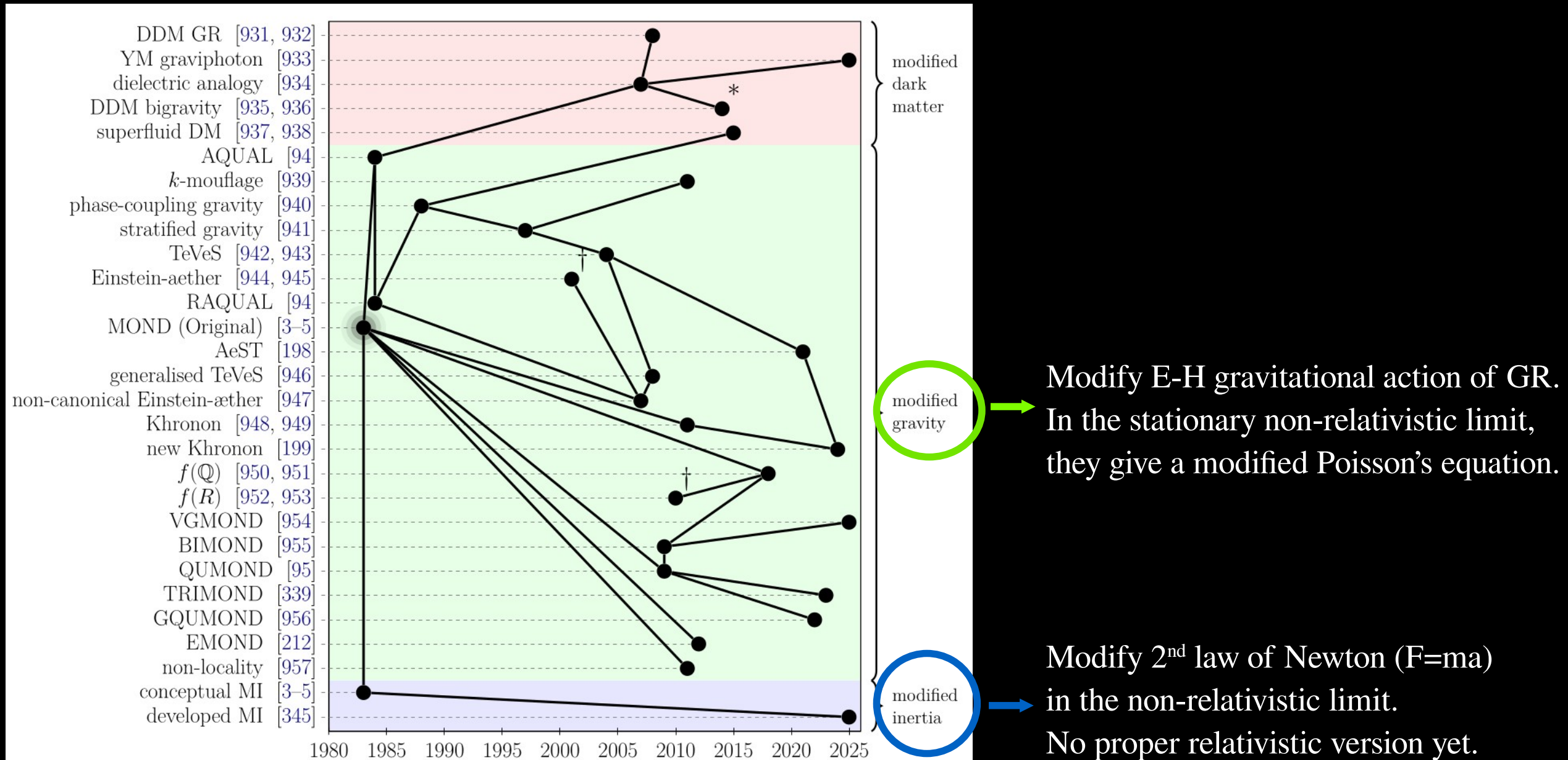
Taxonomy of MOND theories



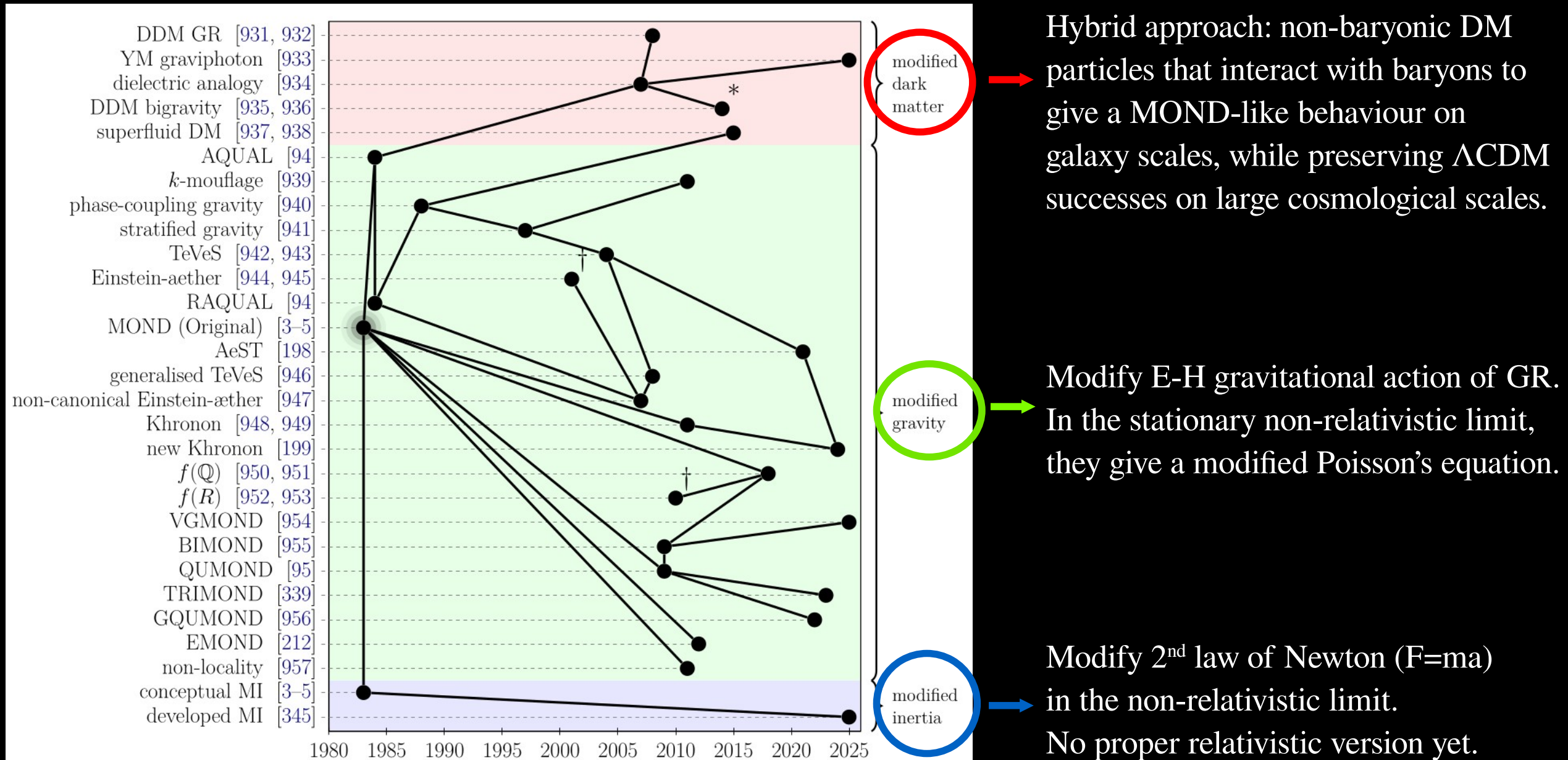
Taxonomy of MOND theories



Taxonomy of MOND theories



Taxonomy of MOND theories



Lovelock-Grigore Theorem

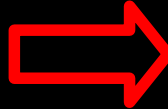
GR (+ Λ) is the only theory that satisfy these assumptions:

- 1) Geometry is Riemannian
- 2) Action depends only on $g_{\mu\nu}$
- 3) It is diffeomorphism invariant
- 4) It is local
- 5) It leads to 2nd order field equations

Lovelock-Grigore Theorem

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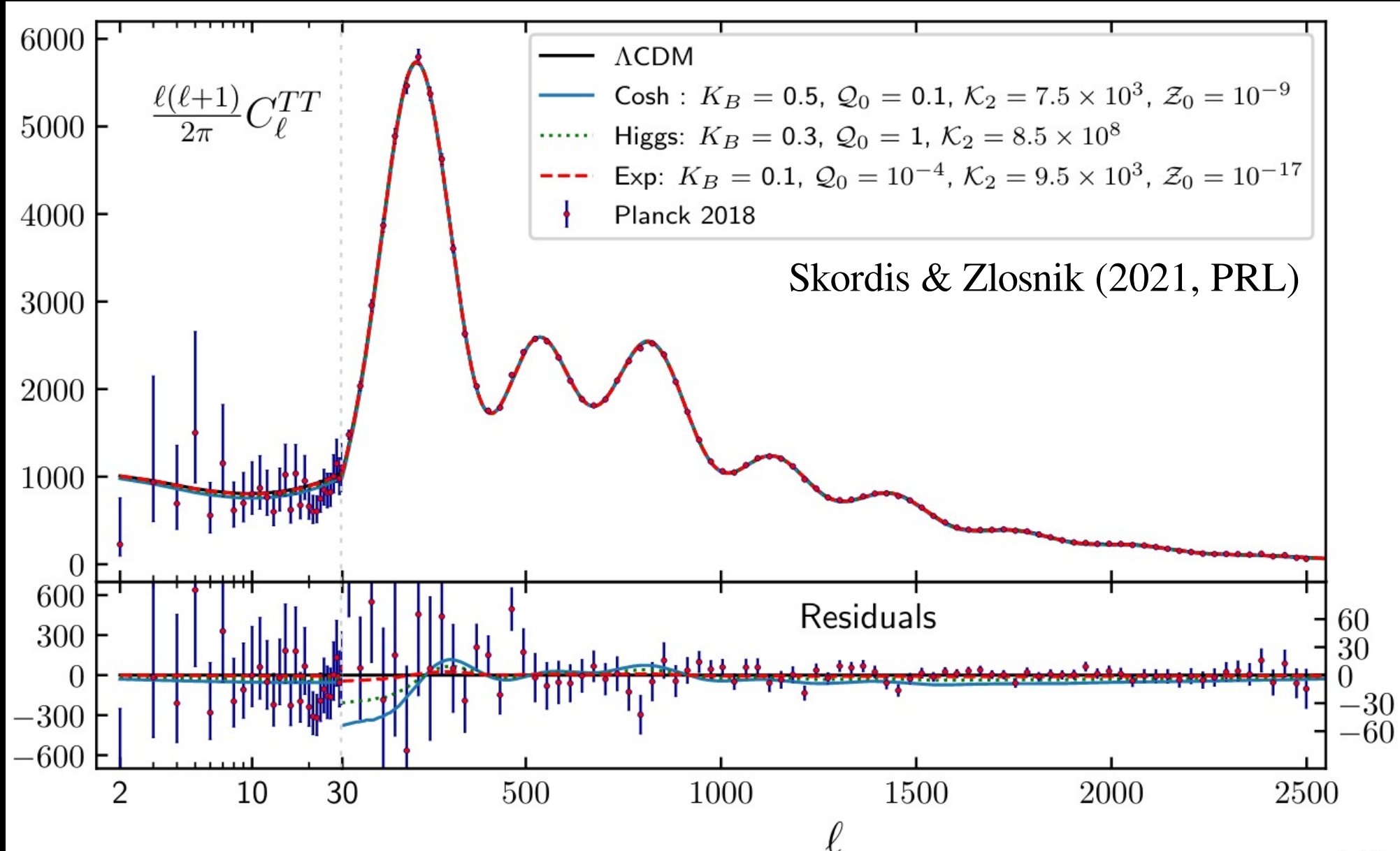
Add gravitational DoFs:

Scalar field or vector field or both

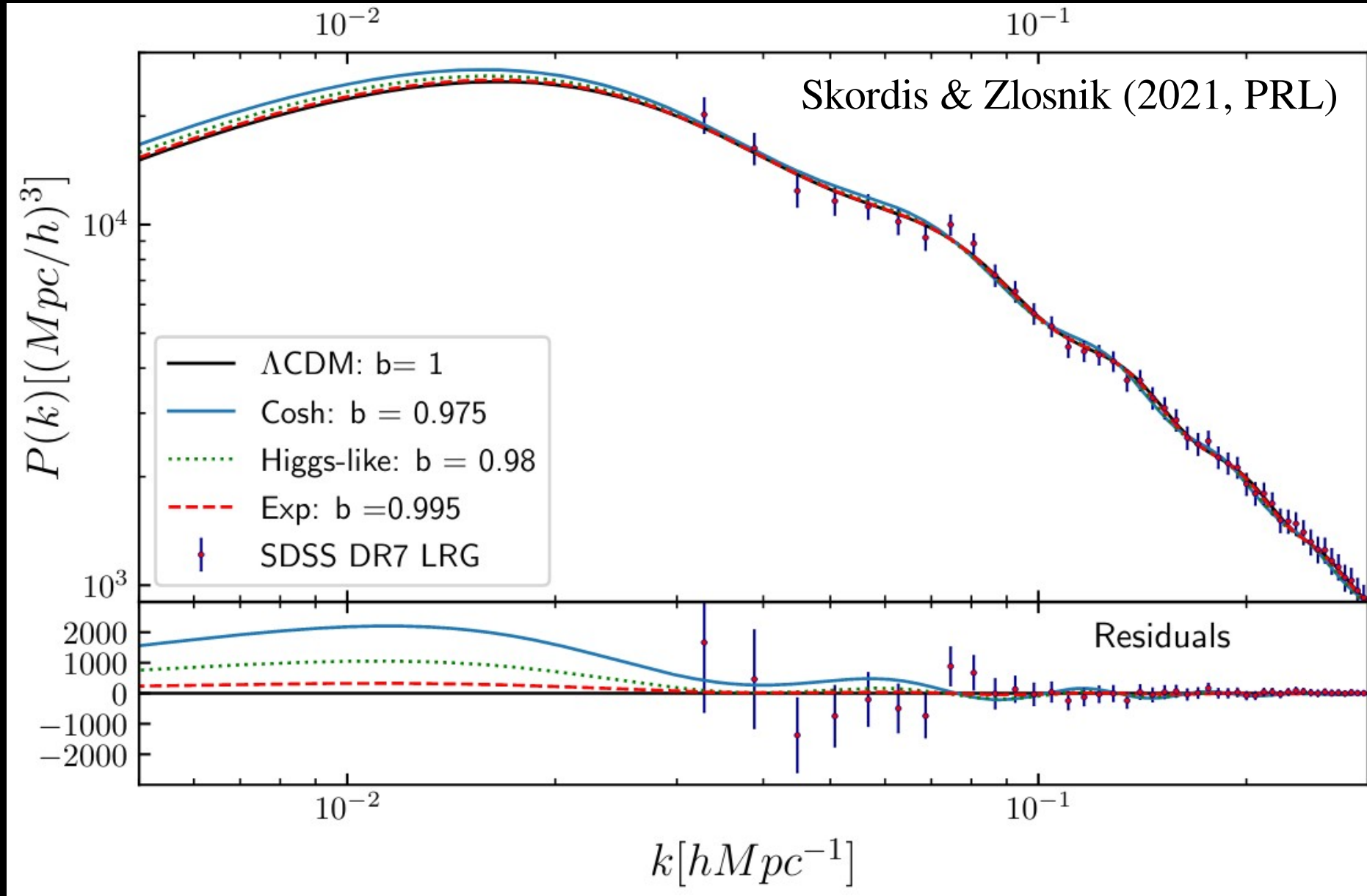
AeST (Skordis & Zlosnik 2021)

Khronon (Blanchet & Skordis 2024)

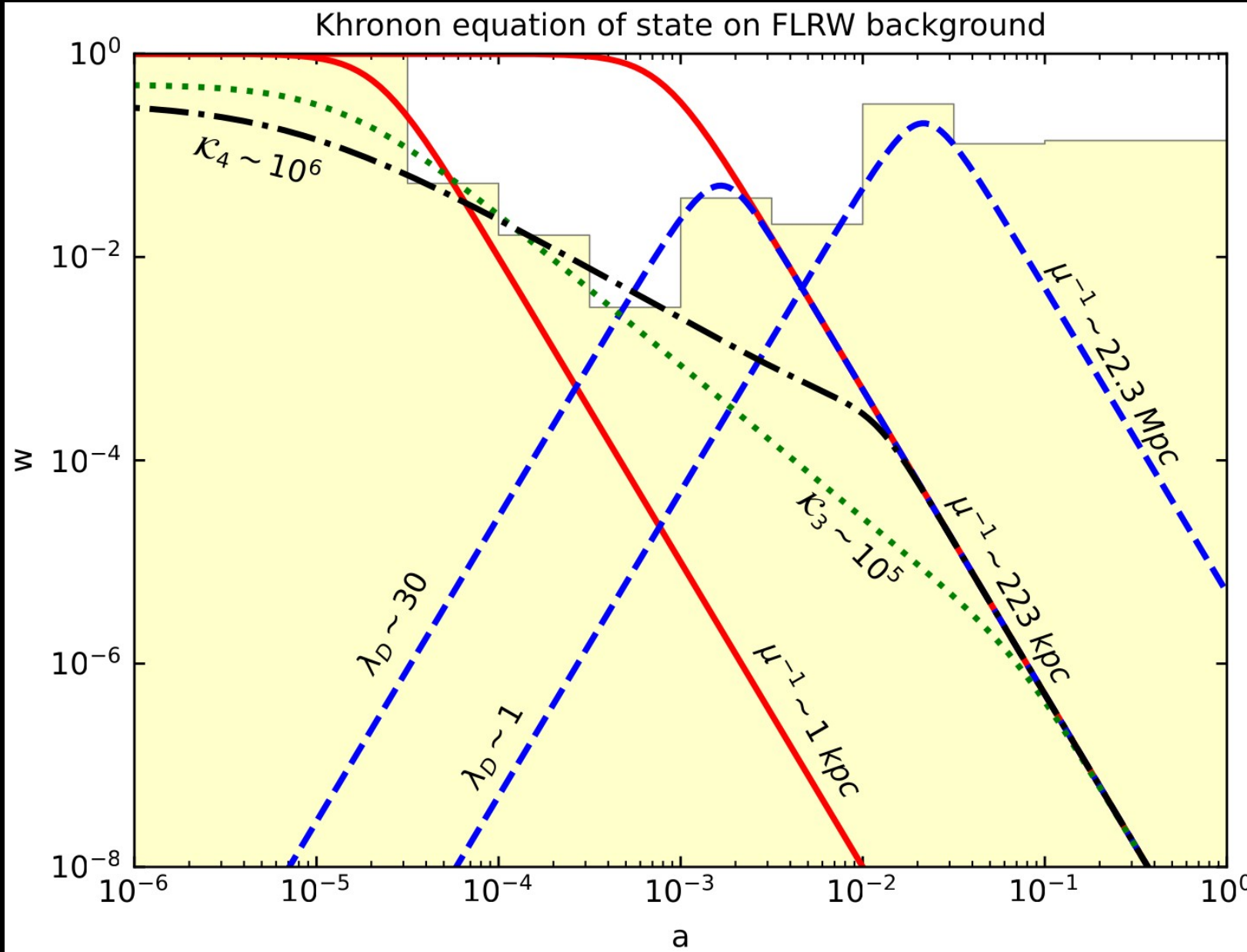
CMB Power Spectrum (from AeST or Khronon)



Linear Matter Power Spectrum (from AeST or Khronon)



CMB constraints on the cosmic evolution of $P_K = \omega_K \rho_K$



Dust-like
solutions from
shift-symmetric
k-essence
(like a ghost
condensate)

MOND White Paper

Section 5

Summary: Status of MOND at Various Scales

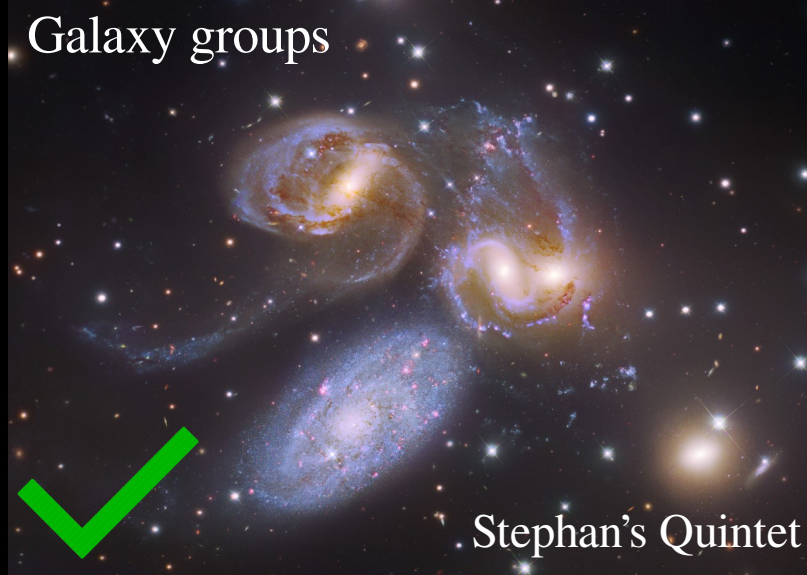
Galaxy Scales (~1-100 kpc)

Rotation-supported galaxies



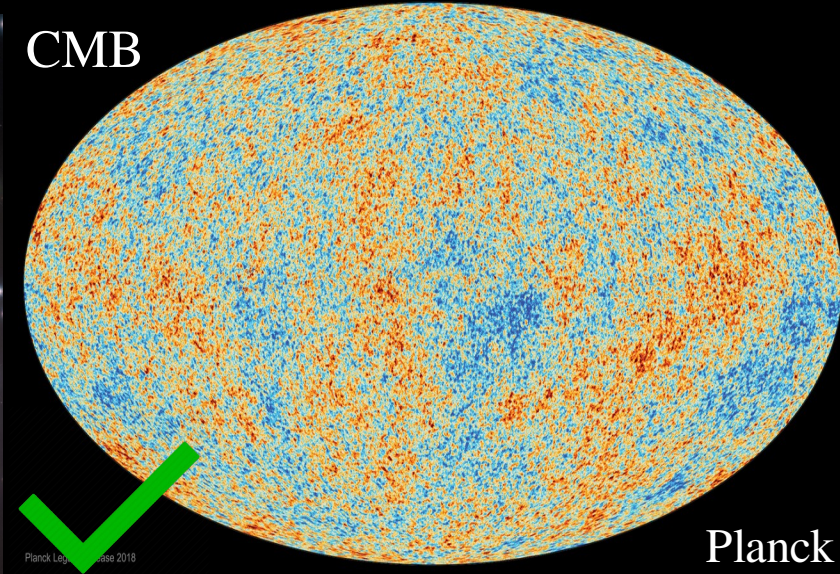
Groups/Clusters Scales (~1-3 Mpc)

Galaxy groups

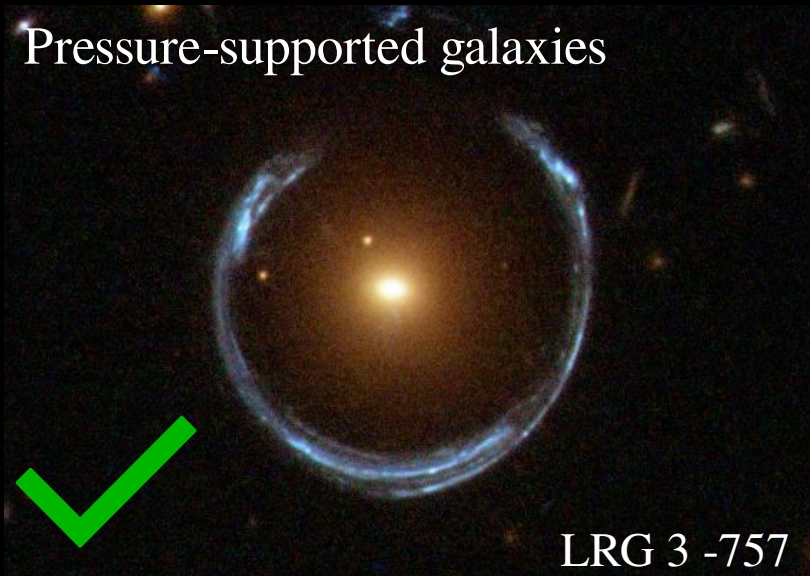


Cosmological Scales (>100 Mpc)

CMB



Pressure-supported galaxies

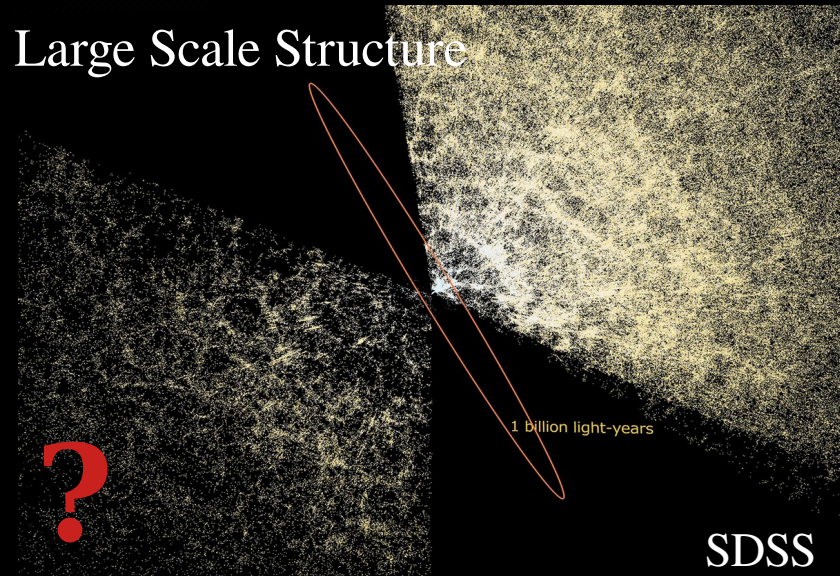


Galaxy clusters



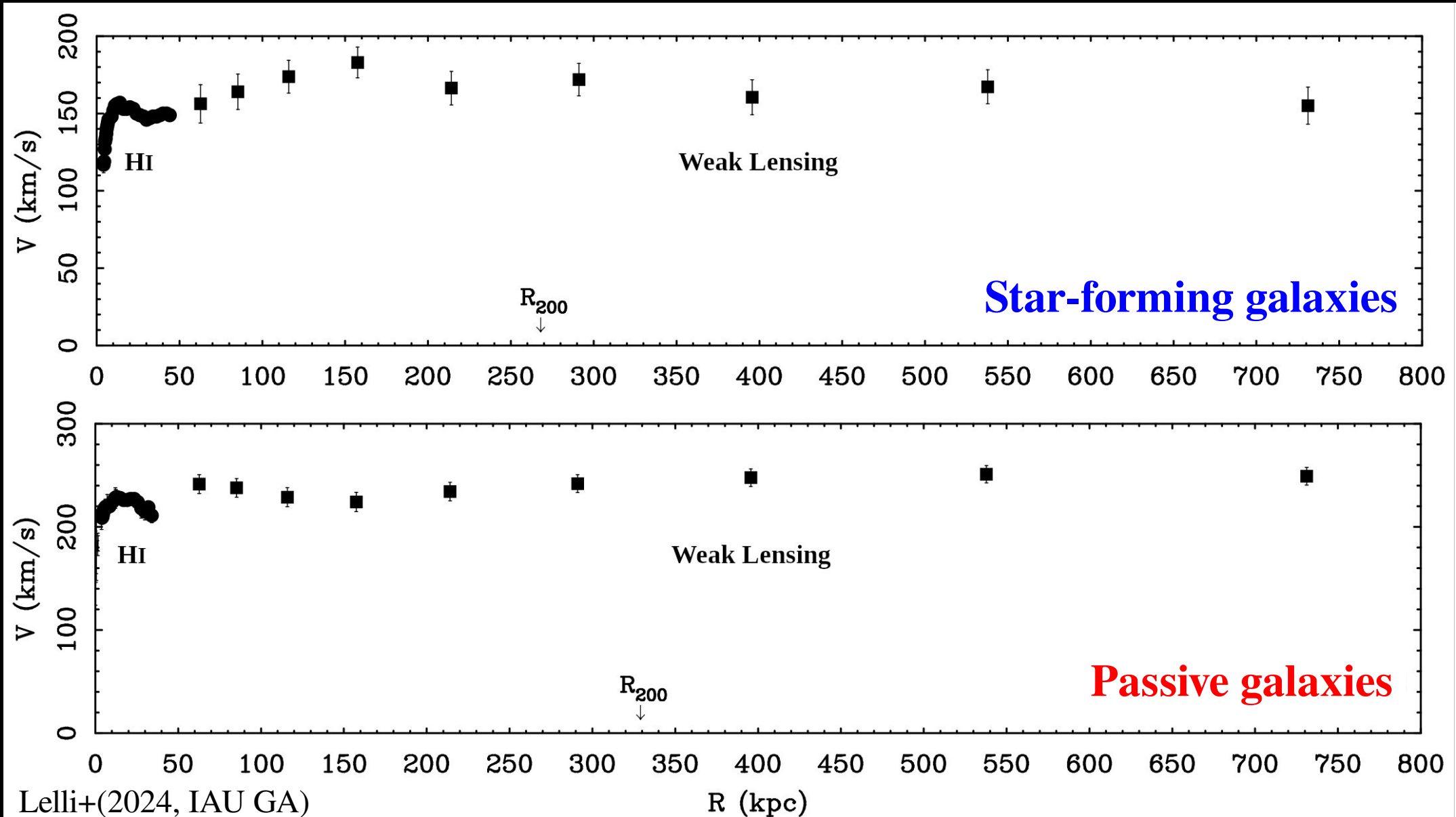
Missing Baryons?
Extra gravit. DoF?

Large Scale Structure



More Slides

(1) $V_c(R) = \text{const}$ at large R for isolated objects $\rightarrow$ Weak Lensing



Tobias Mistele

Circular-velocity curves from Weak Lensing vs Λ CDM predictions



Tobias Mistele

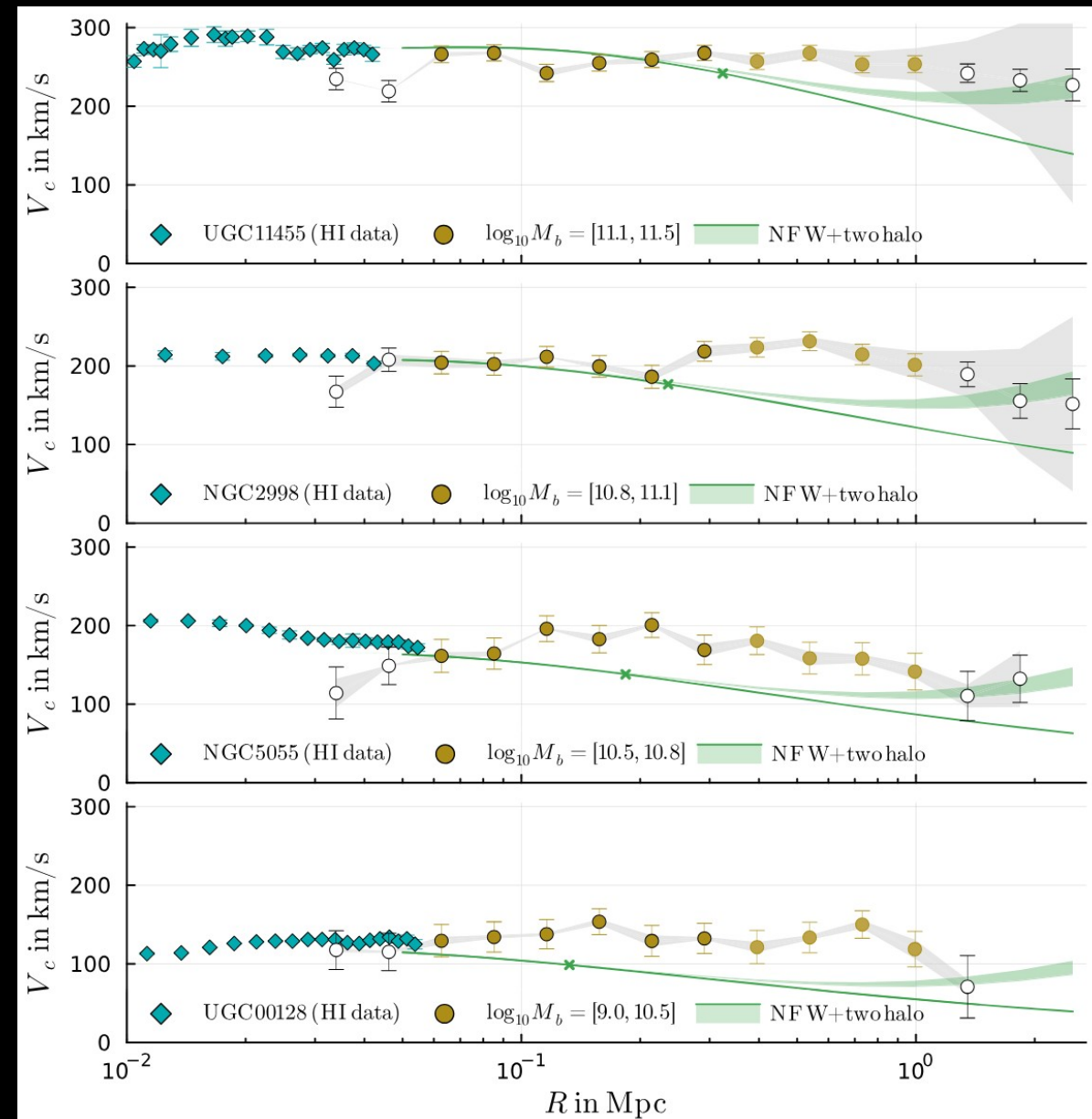
Binning by baryonic mass:

Circular-velocity curve stays flat beyond the “virial radius” of the DM halo:

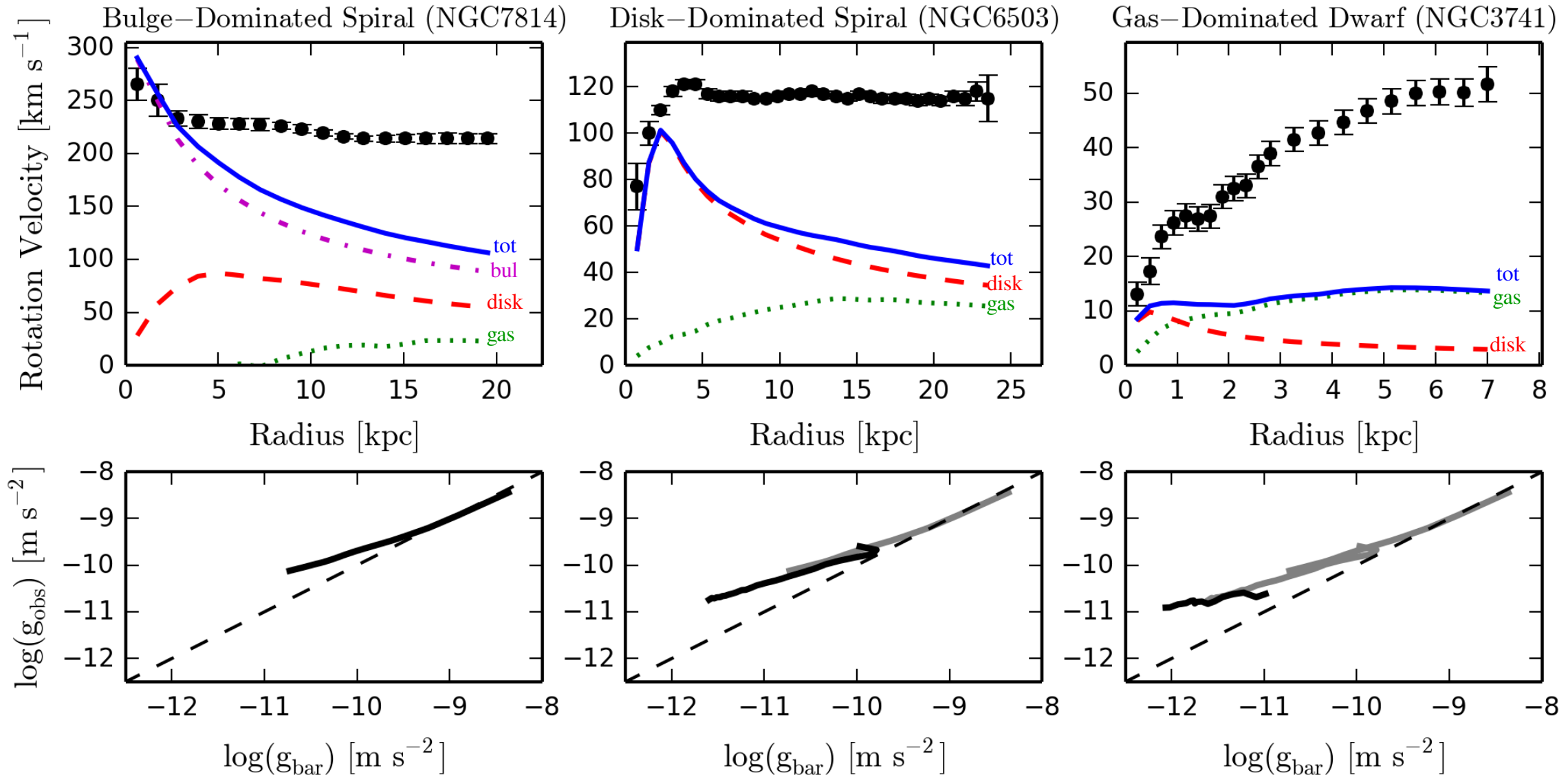
→ In contradiction with Λ CDM predictions

→ In agreement with MOND predictions

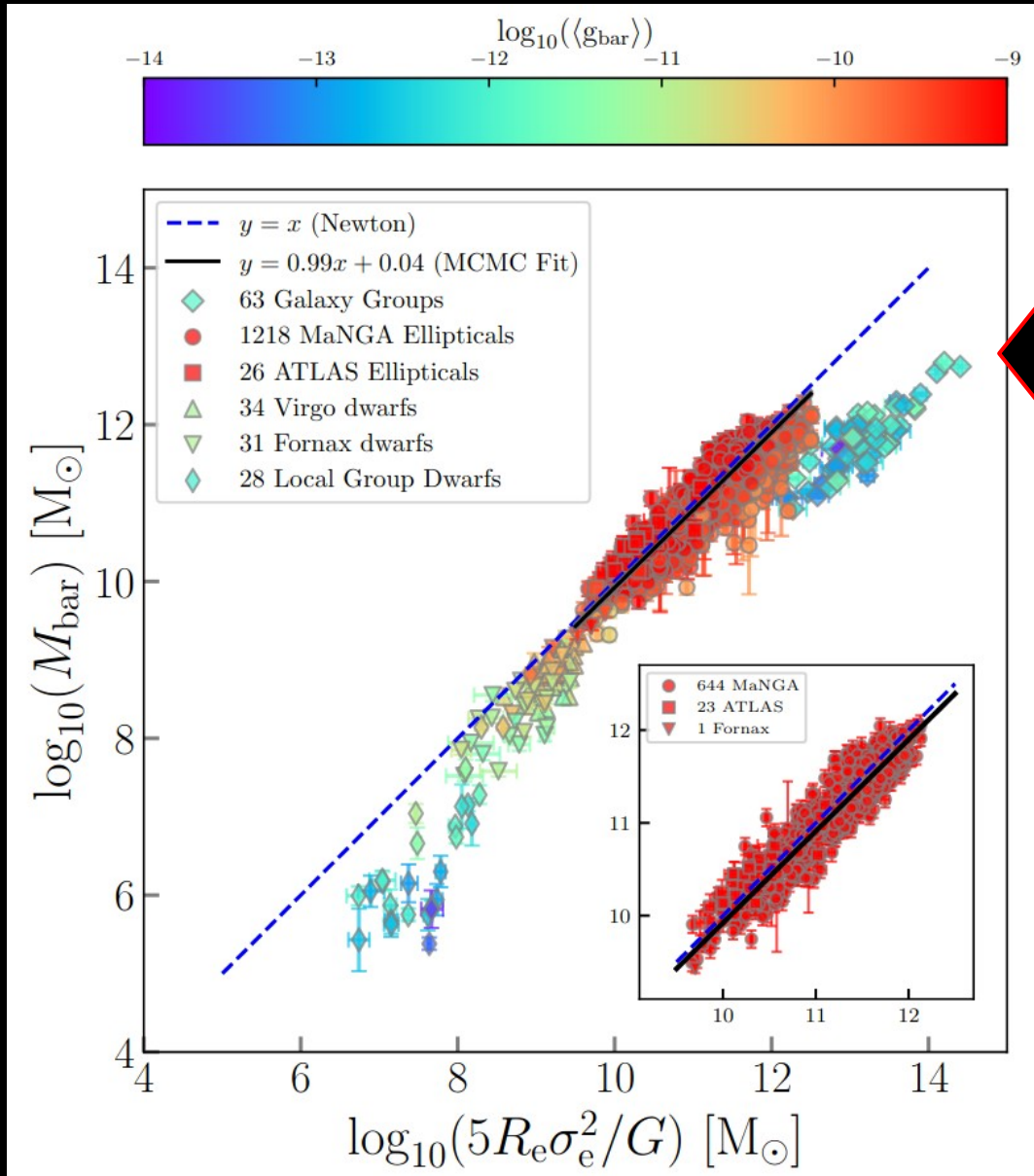
Mistele+(2024b, ApJ)



Galaxies lie on the same RAR *despite* their diversity



Two Virial theorems for different acceleration regimes:

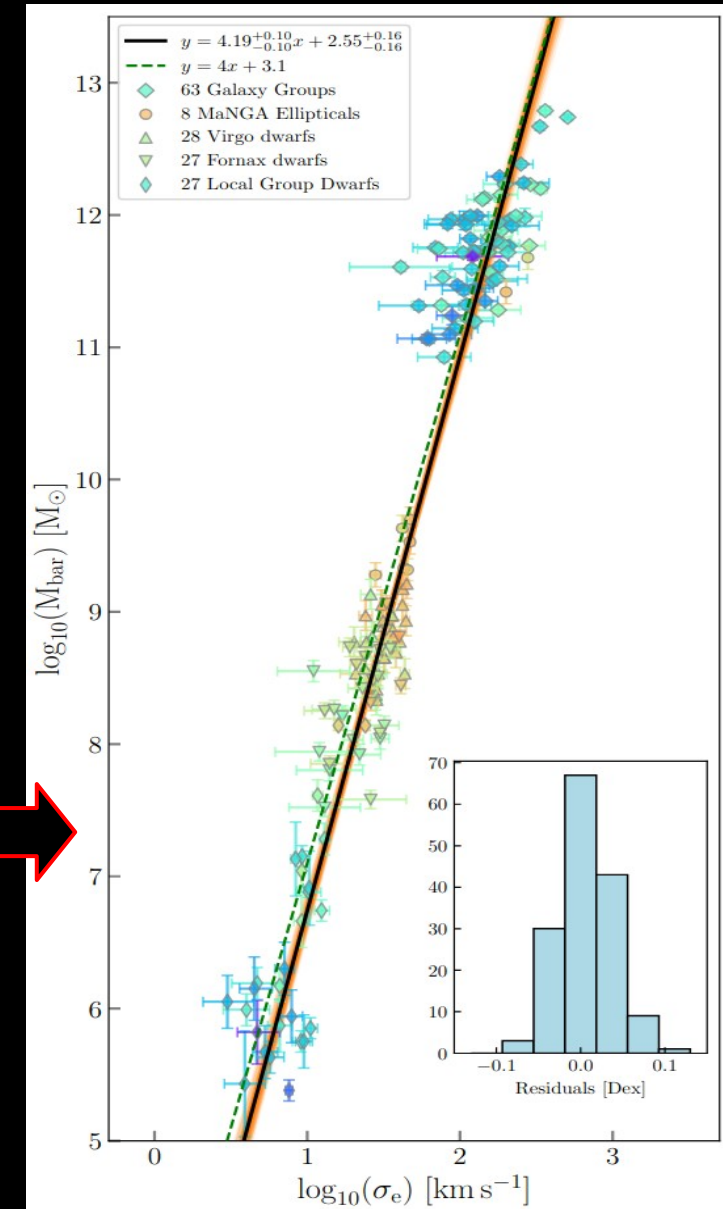


For $g_b \gg a_0$: Newton

$$\sigma_V^2 = \frac{G M_b}{5 R_e}$$

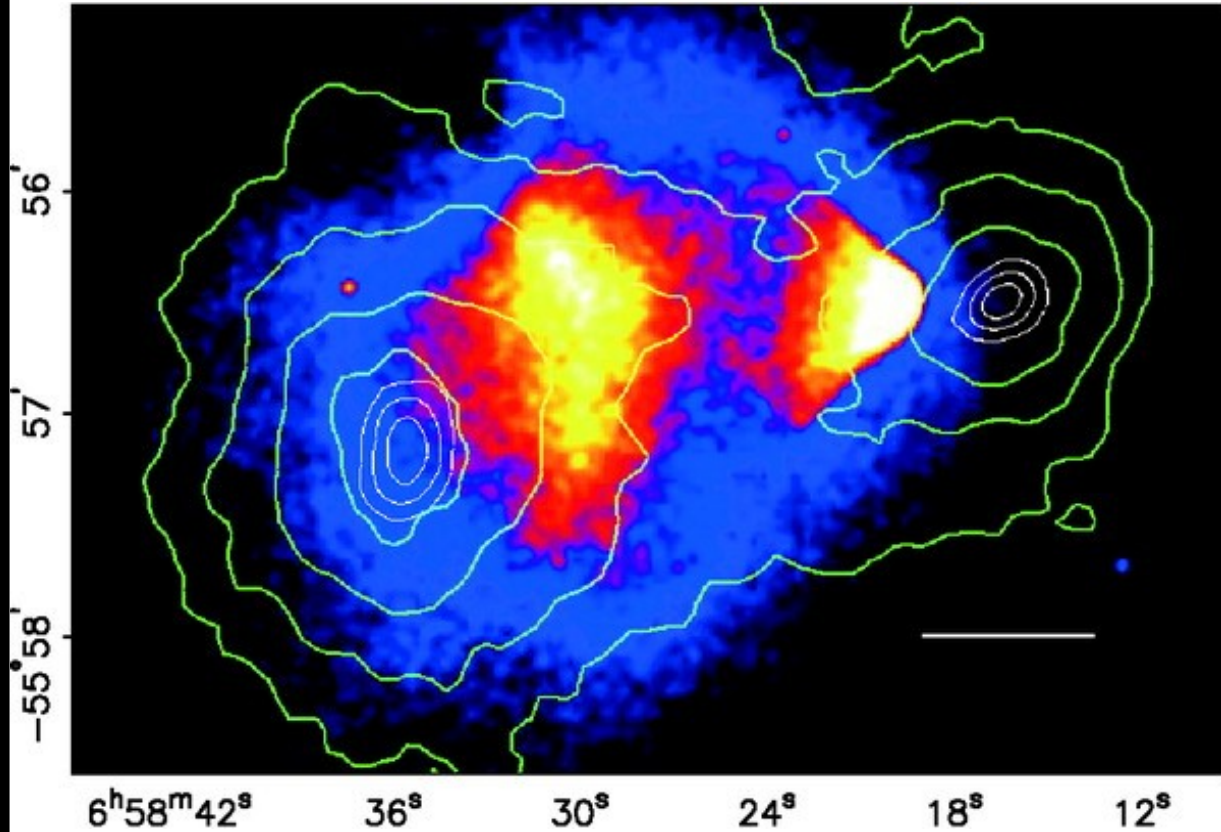
For $g_b \ll a_0$: MOND

$$\sigma_V^4 = \frac{a_0 G}{c} M_b$$



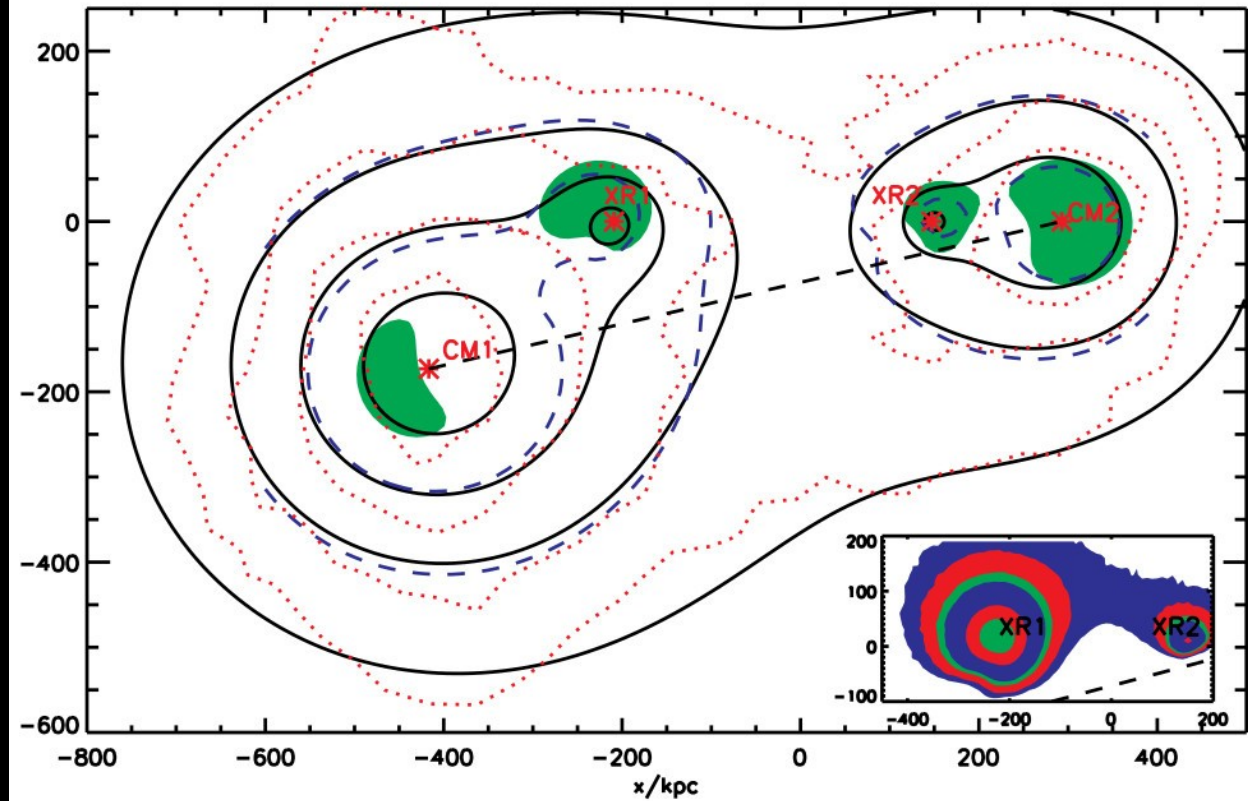
The bullet cluster in MOND: missing mass must be collisionless

OBSERVATIONS (Clowe+2004, ApJ)



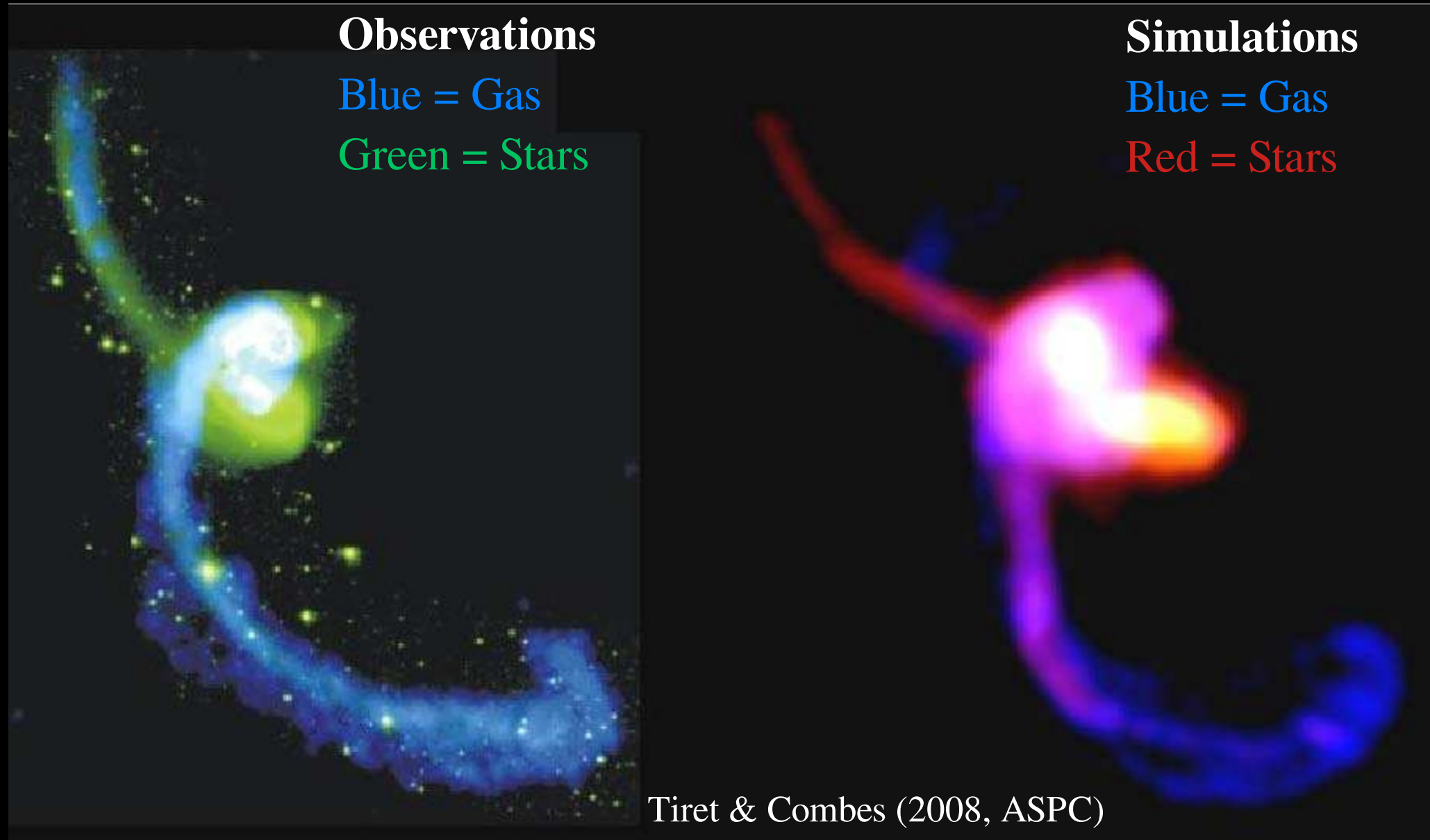
Green: Observed lensing map (total mass)
Blue/Red/Yellow: X-ray emission (hot gas)

MOND (Angus+2006, MNRAS; Angus+2007, ApJ)



Red: Observed lensing convergence map
Black: TeVeS model with 2eV neutrinos
Blue: total surface densities (baryons+ ν)

MOND modified gravity: simulations of interacting galaxies



Cosmology with modified Newtonian dynamics (MOND)

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Accepted 1998 January 13. Received 1997 December 22; in original form 1997 October 17

ABSTRACT

It is well known that the application of Newtonian dynamics to an expanding spherical region leads to the correct relativistic expression (the Friedmann equation) for the evolution of the cosmic scalefactor. Here, the cosmological implications of Milgrom's modified Newtonian dynamics (MOND) are considered by means of a similar procedure. Earlier work by Felten demonstrated that in a region dominated by modified dynamics the expansion cannot be uniform (separations cannot be expressed in terms of a scalefactor) and that any such region will eventually recollapse regardless of the initial expansion velocity and mean density. Here I show that, because of the acceleration threshold for the MOND phenomenology, a region dominated by MOND will have a finite size which, in the earlier Universe ($z > 3$), is smaller than the horizon scale. Therefore, uniform expansion and homogeneity on the horizon scale are consistent with MOND-dominated non-uniform expansion and the development of inhomogeneities on smaller scales. In the radiation-dominated era, the amplitude of MOND-induced inhomogeneities is much smaller than that implied by observations of the cosmic background radiation, and the thermal and dynamical history of the Universe is identical to that of the standard big bang model. In particular, the standard results for primordial nucleosynthesis are retained. When matter first dominates the energy density of the Universe, the cosmology diverges from that of the standard model. Objects of galaxy mass are the first virialized objects to form (by $z = 10$), and larger structure develops rapidly. At present, the Universe would be inhomogeneous out to a substantial fraction of the Hubble radius.



Sanders (1998,
MNRAS, 296)

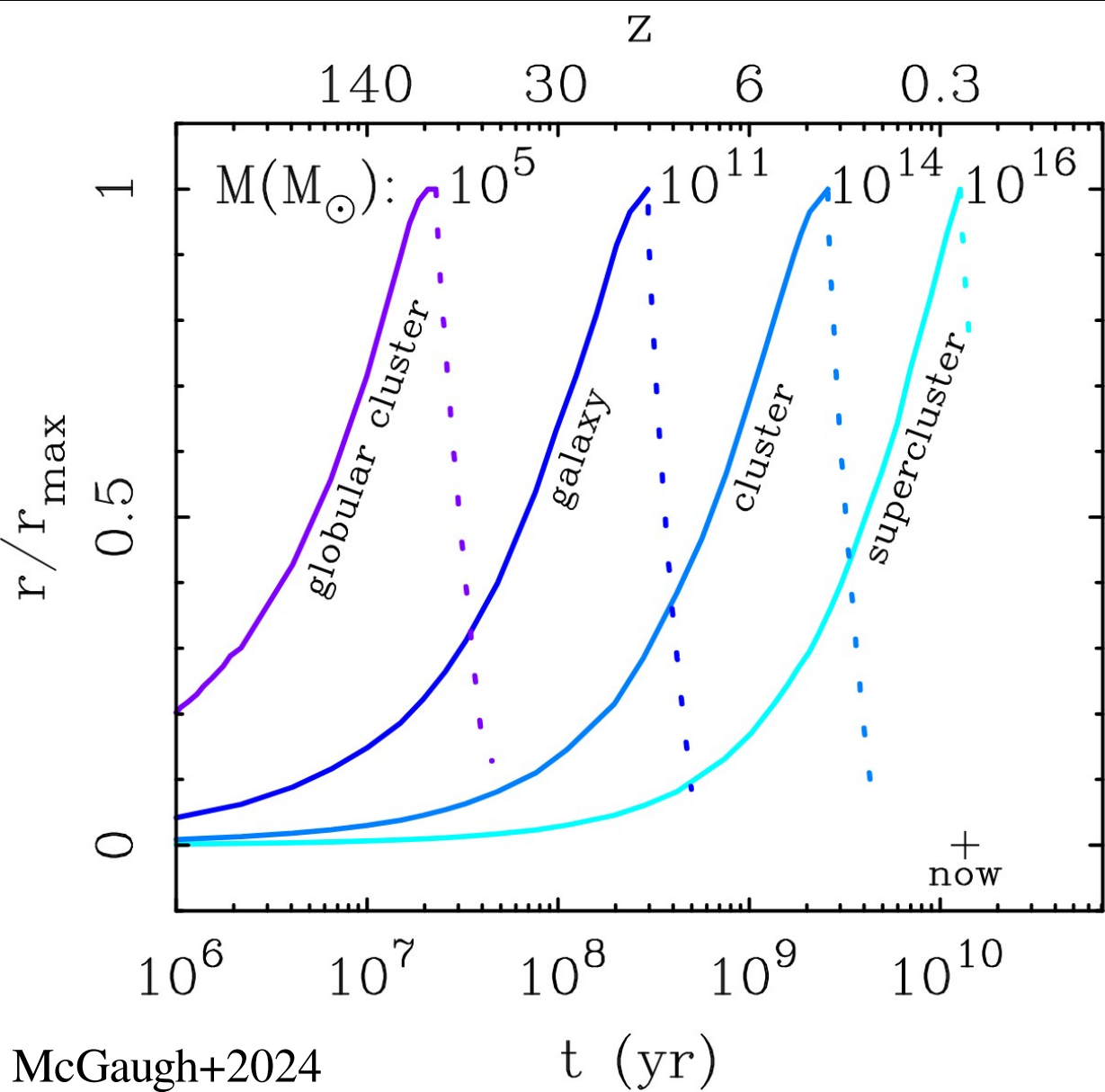
MOND prediction, following Sanders (1998)

Evolution of a MOND spherical region in an expanding Universe (Felten 1984):

$$V^2(t) = V_i^2 - \sqrt{\frac{16\pi}{3} a_0 G \rho_b r_0^3} \ln \left(\frac{r(t)}{r_i} \right)$$

Any spherical region will initially expand, then unavoidably recollapse due to gravity:

- Structures form faster than in Λ CDM
- Late-time Universe is anisotropic (or homogeneity scale is very large)



McGaugh+2024

MOND – Cosmology Connection?

Two numerical coincidences (Milgrom 1983a, ApJ; Milgrom 1999, PhLA):

$$a_0 \simeq \frac{H_0 \cdot c}{2\pi} \quad H_0 = \text{Hubble constant} \rightarrow \text{maybe } a_0(t) \sim H(t) ?$$

$$a_0 \simeq \frac{c^2 \sqrt{\Lambda/3}}{2\pi} \quad \Lambda = \text{Cosmological constant} \rightarrow \text{relation to Dark Energy?}$$

IF this numerology has some deeper, fundamental meaning:

Either the state of the Universe at large enters in local dynamics, or the same parameters enters both Cosmology (Λ) and local dynamics (a_0).

Let's start from the Newtonian non-relativistic Action

$$S = \int dt L = \int dt (L_{\text{matter}} + L_{\text{gravity}} + L_{\text{coupling}}) = \int dt d^3x \left(\rho \frac{V^2}{2} - \frac{|\vec{\nabla} \Phi|^2}{8\pi G} - \rho \Phi \right)$$

Principle of Least Action:

Change this for modified inertia Change this for modified gravity Changing this modify both

$$\frac{\delta S}{\delta \Phi} = 0 \quad \rightarrow \quad \nabla^2 \Phi = 4\pi G \rho \quad \text{Poisson's equation}$$

$$\frac{\delta S}{\delta \vec{x}} = 0 \quad \rightarrow \quad \vec{a} = -\vec{\nabla} \Phi \quad \text{Newton's 2nd Law}$$

MOND as Modified Inertia (Milgrom 1994, 1999, 2022)

$$\vec{A}[\vec{x}(t); a_0] = -\vec{\nabla} \Phi_N \quad \bar{A} \text{ is a functional of the full trajectory } \bar{x}(t)$$

For $a \gg a_0$, $A \rightarrow a = d^2x/dt^2$ (Newton's 2nd law)

No full theory yet, but two general results:

(1) Imposing Newtonian and MOND limits + Galilei Invariance $\vec{x}(t) \rightarrow \vec{x}(t) + \vec{v}_0 t$

Theory is **time non-local**: $\vec{A}[\vec{x}(t), a_0] \neq F\left(\frac{d^i \vec{x}}{dt^i}; i=1, 2, \dots, N\right)$

Accelerations at $(\bar{x}, t)$ depend on the **full orbital history**!

(2) For purely circular orbits: $\vec{a} \mu\left(\frac{a}{a_0}\right) = \vec{g}_N$ holds exactly (RAR for disk galaxies)

The **interpolation function** is a **derived concept** valid for circular orbits!

Khronon = Tensor – Scalar Theory (Blanchet & Skordis 2024)

Tensor $g_{\mu\nu} \rightarrow$ Einstein's metric (universally coupled to matter fields Ψ)

Scalar $\tau \rightarrow$ Khronon field (units of time; drive a foliation in 3D space-like hypersurfaces)

$$n_\mu = -\frac{c}{Q} \nabla_\mu \tau \quad Q = c \sqrt{-g^{\mu\nu} \nabla_\mu \tau \nabla_\nu \tau} \quad \text{Dimensionless unit timelike } (n^\mu n_\mu = -1) \text{ vector, pointing in the future } (n^0 > 0).$$

$$A_\mu = c^2 n^\nu \nabla_\nu n_\mu \quad \text{Covariant spacelike acceleration} \quad Y = \frac{A_\mu A^\mu}{c^4} \quad \text{Squared “acceleration” with units of } 1/L^2$$

$$S = \frac{c^3}{16\pi G} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} [R - 2I(Y) + 2K(Q)] + S_m[\Psi, g]$$

Ricci Scalar
(as in GR)

Free function
to get MOND

Free function
to get cosmology

Matter
Action

Khronon Field Equations (Blanchet & Skordis 2024)

$$G^{\mu\nu} + (I - K) g^{\mu\nu} - \frac{2}{c^4} \frac{dI}{dY} A^\mu A^\nu + \left[\frac{2}{c^4} \nabla_\rho \left(\frac{dI}{dY} A^\rho \right) - Q \frac{dK}{dQ} \right] n^\mu n^\nu = \frac{8\pi G}{c^4} T^{\mu\nu}$$

$$T_\tau^{\mu\nu} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \frac{c^4}{8\pi G} \left[- (I - K) g^{\mu\nu} + \frac{2}{c^4} \frac{dI}{dY} A^\mu A^\nu - \left[\frac{2}{c^4} \nabla_\rho \left(\frac{dI}{dY} A^\rho \right) - Q \frac{dK}{dQ} \right] n^\mu n^\nu \right]$$

The Khronon stress-energy tensor contains $g_{\mu\nu}$ explicitly and implicitly in Y and Q .

This is very different from adding DM to GR!

Khronon = Tensor – Scalar Theory (Blanchet & Skordis 2024)

$$S = \frac{c^3}{16\pi G} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} [R - 2I(Y) + 2K(Q)] + S_m[\Psi, g]$$

- Cosmology: 3D space is homogeneous & isotropic $\rightarrow Y = 0$ & $Q = d\tau/dt$

$$K(Q) = \mu_Q^2 (Q - 1)^2 + \dots \quad \Longrightarrow \quad \text{It gives dust-like behaviour: } \rho_K \propto a(t)^{-3} \text{ like CDM}$$

$\mu_Q = \text{constant with dimension of inverse length}$

- Weak-field stationary limit: no time dependence $\rightarrow A_0 \sim 0; A_i \sim \nabla_i \Phi$

$$\nabla \cdot \left[\underbrace{\left(1 + \frac{dI}{dY} \right)}_{\mu(y)} \vec{\nabla} \Phi \right] + \mu_Q^2 \Phi = 4\pi G \rho_m \quad \Longrightarrow \quad \text{AQUAL} + \mu_Q^2 \Phi \quad \mu_Q^{-1} \gg 1 \text{ Mpc}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mu(y) = \mu(|\nabla \Phi|/a_0) & \begin{cases} \text{for } y \ll 1 \quad \mu(y) = y \Rightarrow I(Y) = \Lambda - Y + \frac{2c^2}{3a_0} Y^{3/2} + O\left(\frac{Y^4}{a_0^2}\right) \\ \text{for } y \gg 1 \quad \mu(y) = 1 \Rightarrow I(Y) = \Lambda_\infty + O(a_0/y) \end{cases} \\ y = |\nabla \Phi|/a_0 & \end{aligned}$$

Oscillations in Khronon / AeST ?

