

The cosmological potential of gravitational wave memory with future detectors

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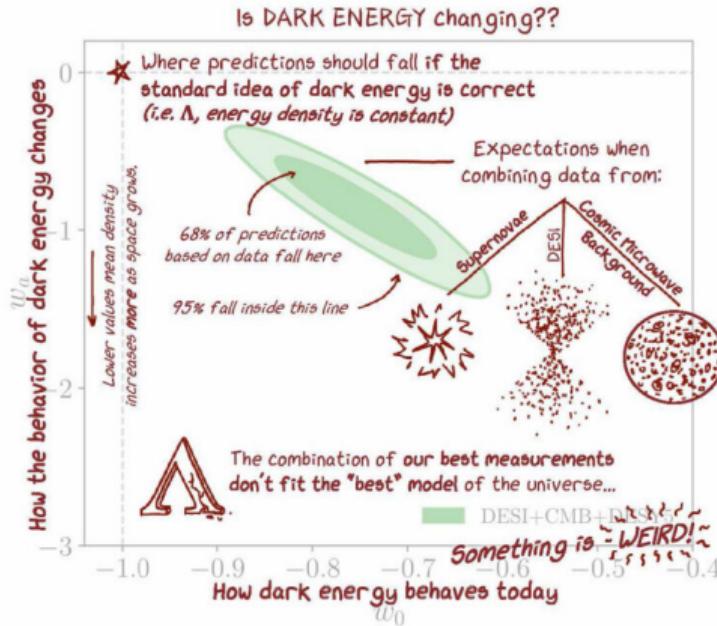
In collaboration with Indranil Chakraborty & Shankaranarayanan S

[Phys.Rev.D 111\(2025\)8](#), [Phys.Rev.D 112\(2025\)2](#)

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Background



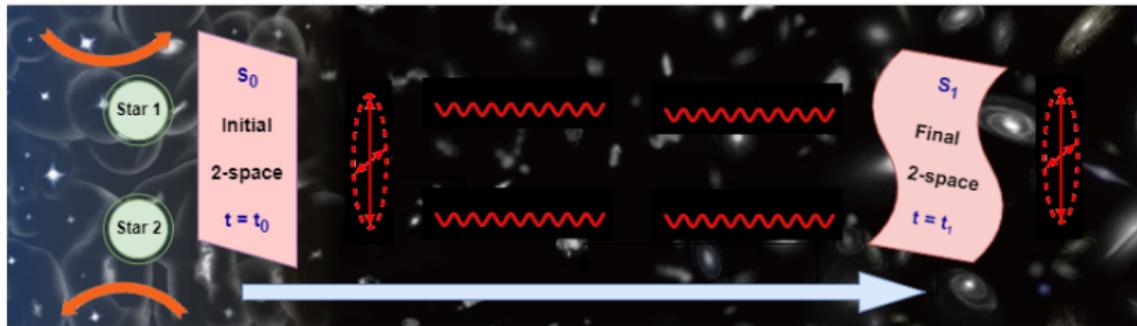
Credit: Claire Lamman/DESI collaboration

- The Λ cold dark matter(Λ CDM) model successfully explains accelerated expansion and flatness of the Universe, uniformity of CMBR etc.
- Recent DESI results reveal significant deviation from Λ CDM model in cosmic expansion.
- Correct cosmological model still remains an illusion!
- The suitable theory describing gravity in cosmological length scale is another mystery.

Can gravitational wave(GW) solve these riddles?

- Detection of GW by LIGO-VIRGO-KAGRA has opened a new window to probe various aspects of gravity and cosmology. [2009 Satya & Schutz]
- GW observations, originated from binary black hole(BBH) merger encodes luminosity distance(D_L) of the source absolutely [1986 Schutz]
- Redshift(z), extracted from the electromagnetic (EM) counter part, originated from binary neutron stars (BNS) determines $(D_L - z)$ relation necessary to decode cosmic expansion.
- Does GW originated at higher redshifts, pick up an integrated effect of cosmological background to determine $(D_L - z)$ relation? — akin to Integrated Sachs-Wolfe effect on CMB photons.

Our aim

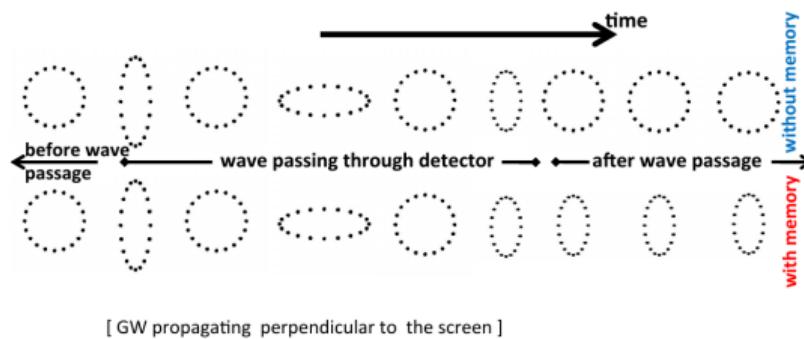


GWs propagating through cosmological distances, induce subsequent GWs, creating successive waves — *GW memory*.

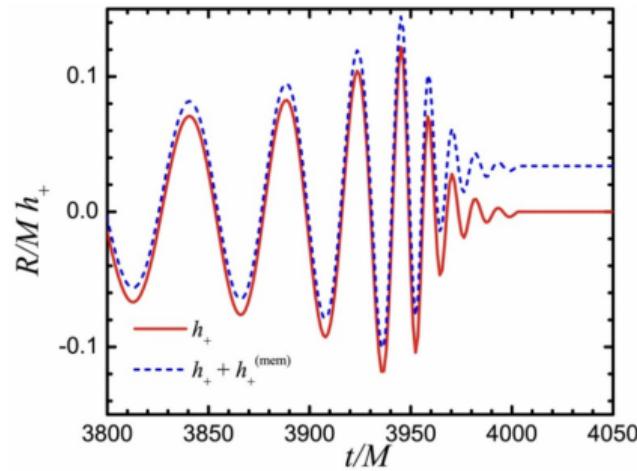
- ① Part I - The GW memory in cosmological background can distinguish between cosmological models— constrain cosmological parameters.
- ② Part II - Parity violating gravity theory— amplitude difference between h_+ & h_\times gets amplified in their memory in cosmic environment.

What is GW memory?

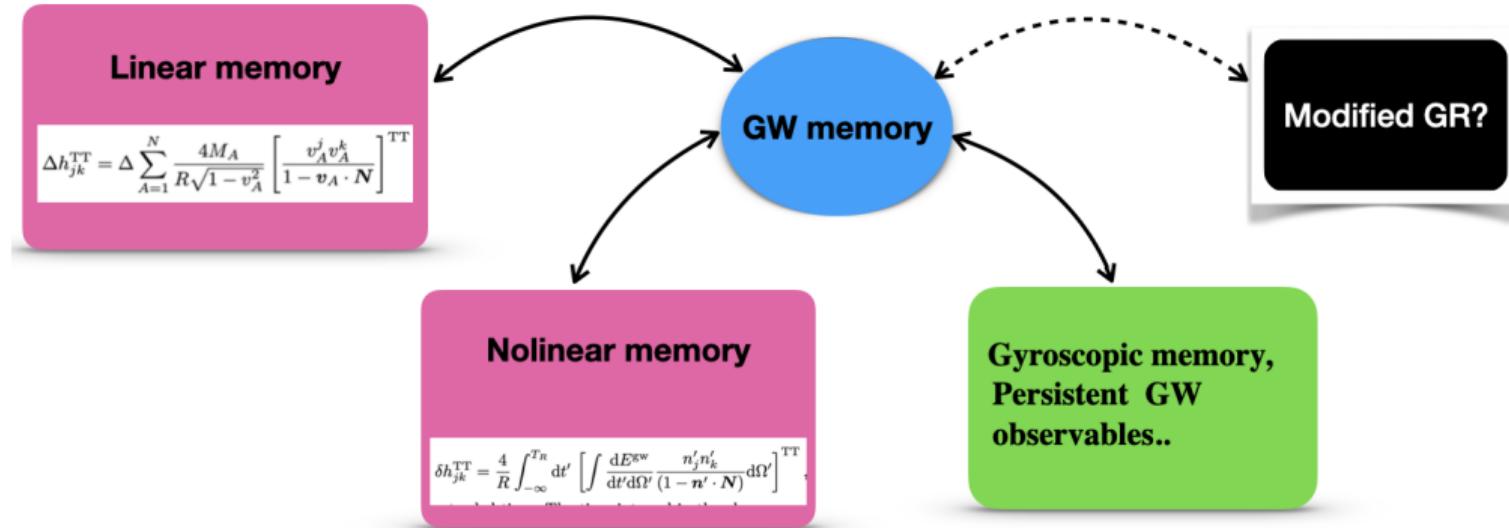
- Permanent distortion in the space-time(state of the detector), retains after passing of GW. (Favata, ICTS Talk)



- $$\Delta h_{+,x}^{\text{mem}} = \lim_{t \rightarrow +\infty} h_{+,x}(t) - \lim_{t \rightarrow -\infty} h_{+,x}(t)$$



Types of GW memory



Limitations in current approach

- GW memory, $\Delta h_{+, \times}^{\text{mem}} \propto 1/r$ in asymptotically flat (AF) spacetime.
- It is well studied in AF spacetimes → Bondi Metzner Sachs (BMS) symmetries and charges.
- The analysis is not well established for asymptotically non-flat spacetimes.
- Complete understanding of GW memory requires formulation of GW memory master equation in generic spacetime.

Q. Can we build a formalism to obtain a master equation for GW for a larger class of spacetimes??

A. Using $1 + 1 + 2$ covariant formalism we develop an analytical technique to develop GW memory.

Understanding properties of gravity, Eulerian(static) to Lagrangian (comoving) observer might be insightful.

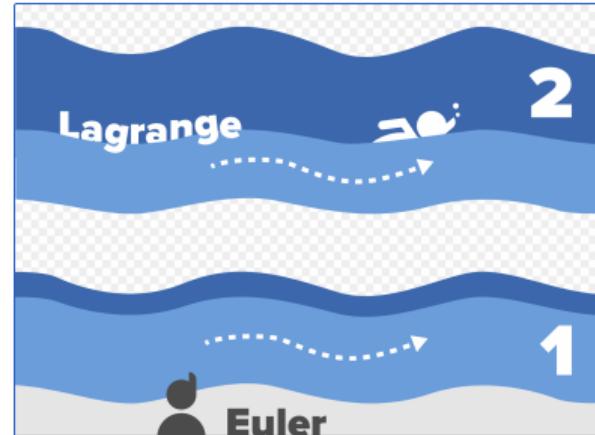
Fluid mechanics: detour

- In fluid mechanics, we can describe the same phenomena using two descriptions — **Eulerian** or **Lagrangian**.
- **Eulerian:** Variations are described at all fixed position:

$$\frac{\partial \vec{V}(\vec{x}, t)}{\partial t} + [\vec{V}(\vec{x}, t) \cdot \vec{\nabla}] \vec{V}(\vec{x}, t) = -\frac{1}{\rho} \vec{\nabla} p(\vec{x}, t)$$

- **Lagrangian:** Observer follows fluid particles and describes the variations around each fluid particle along its trajectory

$$\frac{\partial \vec{V}(\vec{x}_0, t)}{\partial t} = -\frac{1}{\rho} \vec{\nabla} p(\vec{x}_0, t)$$



Covariant 1 + 3 formalism

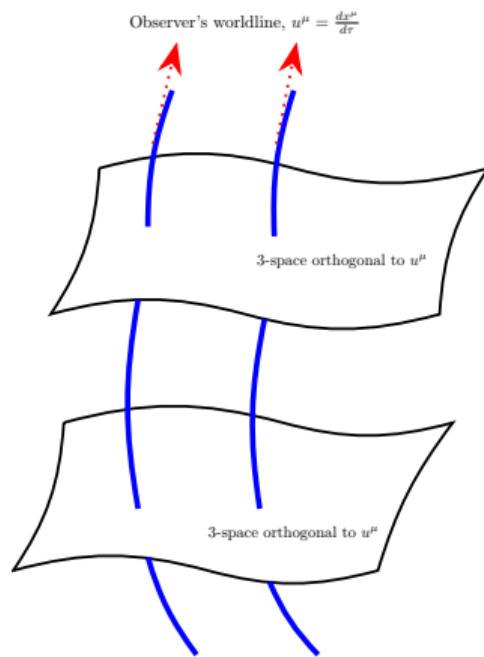


Figure: Visualisation of 1 + 3 formalism.

- Timelike 4-velocity vector $u^a = \frac{dx^a}{d\tau}$, satisfying $u^a u_a = -1$.
- Define the following projection tensors:

$$U^a{}_b \equiv -u^a u_b, \text{ projects } \rightarrow u^a.$$

$$h_{ab} \equiv g_{ab} + u_a u_b; \quad h_{ab} u^b = 0$$

In 3-space:

$$\nabla_a \rightarrow D_a + u_a u^b \nabla_b$$

$$\nabla_b u_a = \frac{\Theta}{3} h_{ab} + \sigma_{ab} + \omega_{ab} - \dot{u}_a u_b.$$

- Kinematic properties of space-time are determined by the covariant derivative of the observer's velocity \rightarrow 1) Expansion + 2) Shear + 3) Vorticity.

$$\nabla_b u_a = \frac{\Theta}{3} h_{ab} + \sigma_{ab} + \omega_{ab} - \dot{u}_a u_b, \quad \dot{u}^a = u^b \nabla_b u^a.$$

- Raychaudhuri's equation for Θ ,

$$\dot{\Theta} = -\frac{\Theta^2}{3} + D_a \dot{u}^a + \dot{u}^a \dot{u}_a + \frac{1}{2}(a + 3p) - 2(\sigma^2 - \omega^2)$$

$\frac{1}{3}\dot{\Theta} = \frac{\dot{S}}{S}$, where S is average length scale.

$$3\frac{\ddot{S}}{S} = D_a \dot{u}^a + \dot{u}^a \dot{u}_a + \frac{1}{2}(a + 3p) - 2(\sigma^2 - \omega^2)$$

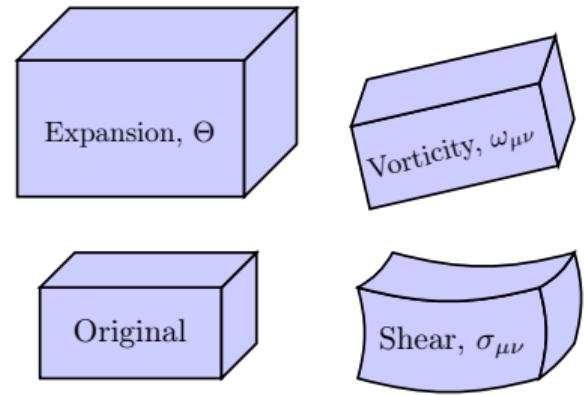


Figure: Kinematic quantities.

$1 + 1 + 2$ formalism

- Existence of a symmetric space-like direction, $1 + 3 \rightarrow 1 + 1 + 2$ form.
- Considering a spacelike vector n^a , 3-space can be split into $1 + 2$ form:

$$h_{ab}(3) = n_a n_b (1) + N_{ab} (2); \quad N_{ab} n^b = 0$$

- In 2-space:

$$D_a \rightarrow \delta_a + n_a (n^b D_b)$$

$$D_b n_a = \zeta_{ab} + \xi \epsilon_{ab} + \frac{1}{2} \phi N_{ab} + n_a a_b, \quad a_b = \hat{n}_b = n^a D_a n_b$$

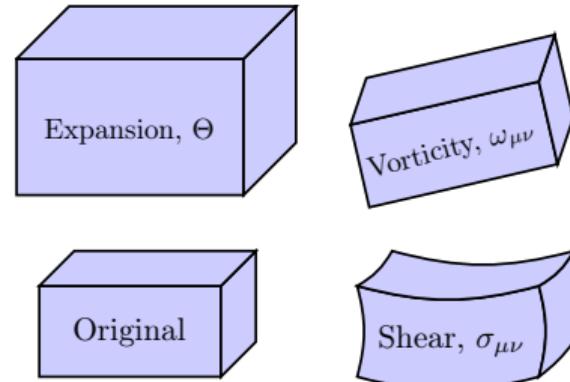


Figure: Kinematic quantities.

- Acceleration of u^a : $\dot{u}^a = \mathcal{A} n^a + \mathcal{A}^a$
- Shear: $\sigma_{ab} = \Sigma \left(n_a n_b - \frac{1}{2} N_{ab} \right) + 2 \Sigma_{(a} n_{b)} + \Sigma_{ab}$,
- Vorticity: $\omega^a = \Omega n^a + \Omega^a$
- Electric part of Weyl: $E_{ab} = \mathcal{E} \left(n_a n_b - \frac{1}{2} N_{ab} \right) + 2 \mathcal{E}_{(a} n_{b)} + \mathcal{E}_{ab}$
- Magnetic part of Weyl: $B_{ab} = \mathcal{B} \left(n_a n_b - \frac{1}{2} N_{ab} \right) + 2 \mathcal{B}_{(a} n_{b)} + \mathcal{B}_{ab}$
- The shear corresponding to the spacelike vector n^a , ζ_{ab} , the vorticity ξ and acceleration $\dot{n}^a = \mathcal{A} u^a + \alpha^a$.

LRS or *locally rotationally symmetric* space-time:

- One chooses a spatial direction r or x .
- The Weyl tensor is of type D (or zero)
- All kinematic and observable quantities are rotationally symmetric about x .

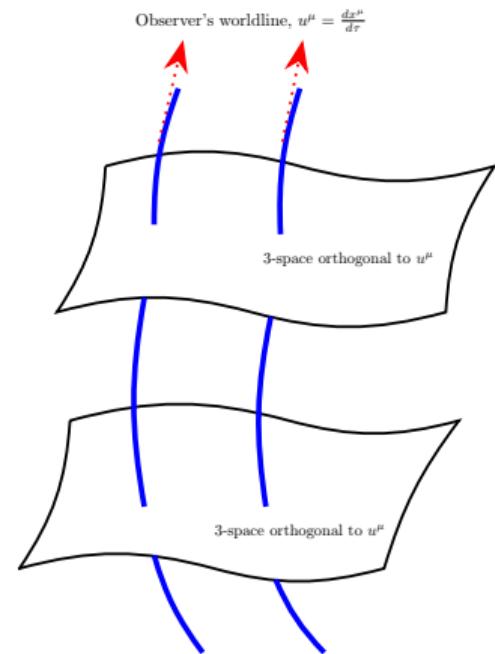
The *kinematic* variables related to timelike congruence u^a and the spacelike direction n^a and *geometric* quantities:

- Type I:

$$\mathcal{D}_0 = \{\Theta, \Omega, \Sigma, \xi, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{B}, \phi, \mathcal{E}\}$$

- Type II:

$$\mathcal{D}_0 = \{\Theta, \phi, \mathcal{A}, \Sigma, \mathcal{E}\}$$



Set up

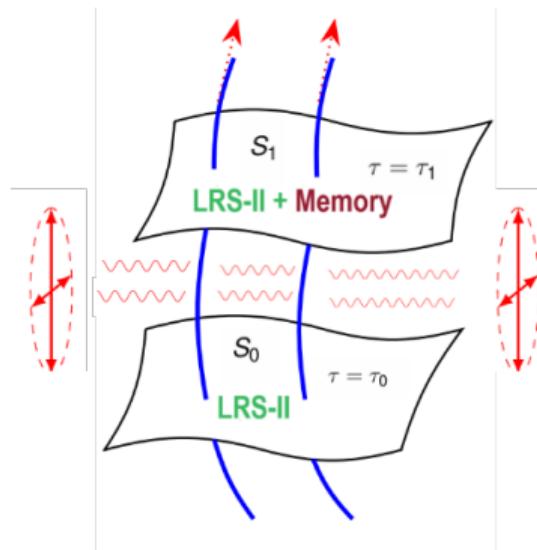


Figure: The presence of GW alters the background LRS type II spacetime.

Gravitational wave: LRS-II \rightarrow non-LRS-II

Let's consider a scenario: $g_{ab} = g_{ab}^{\text{LRS}} + \epsilon g_{ab}^{\text{GW}}$ (very small)

$$\mathcal{D}_0 \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_1 = \underbrace{\{\Theta, \mathcal{A}, \phi, \Sigma, \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{B}, \Omega, \xi, \mathcal{A}_a, \Omega_a, \Sigma_a, \alpha_a, a_a, \mathcal{E}_a, \mathcal{B}_a, \Sigma_{ab}, \zeta_{ab}, \mathcal{E}_{ab}, \mathcal{B}_{ab}\}}_{\text{LRS}} \underbrace{\{\mathcal{A}, \phi, \Sigma, \mathcal{E}, \mathcal{B}, \Omega, \xi, \mathcal{A}_a, \Omega_a, \Sigma_a, \alpha_a, a_a, \mathcal{E}_a, \mathcal{B}_a, \Sigma_{ab}, \zeta_{ab}, \mathcal{E}_{ab}, \mathcal{B}_{ab}\}}_{\text{Non-LRS}}$$

As the ground-based GW detector observes GWs in the 2-d plane, our focus $g_{ab} \rightarrow N_{ab}$.

Evolution of N_{ab} : change wrt observer u^a encoded in Lie drag, $\mathcal{L}_u N_{ab}$.

$$\mathcal{X}_{ab} \equiv \mathcal{L}_u N_{ab} = u^c \nabla_c N_{ab} + N_{cb} \nabla_a u^c + N_{ca} \nabla_b u^c$$

In terms of perturbed quantities in \mathcal{D}_1 :

$$\mathcal{X}_{ab} = 2n_{(a} (-\alpha_{b)} + \Sigma_{b)} - \epsilon_{b)}{}^c \Omega^c) + 2\Sigma_{ab} + N_{ab} \left(\frac{2\Theta}{3} - \Sigma \right)$$

Gravitational wave memory tensor

Demanding the projection tensor N_{ab} to be metric, the Greenberg vector: $\Sigma^a + \epsilon^{ab}\Omega_b - \alpha^a = 0$.

The traceless symmetric part of \mathcal{X}_{ab} is:

$$\mathcal{X}_{\{ab\}} = 2\Sigma_{ab} \text{ (transverse \& trace-less, 2 DoF)}$$

We claim $\int dt \Sigma_{ab}$ contain information about the change in the spacetime or arm length of the detector:

$$\Delta h^{\text{mem}} = \int_{t1}^{t2} dt \Sigma_{ab}$$

Next step: Relate Σ_{ab} with the passing GW through LRS spacetime.

Incoming GW we represent by:

- Electric part of Weyl: $E_{ab} = \mathcal{E} (n_a n_b - \frac{1}{2} N_{ab}) + 2 \mathcal{E}_{(a} n_{b)} + \mathcal{E}_{ab}$
- Magnetic part of Weyl: $B_{ab} = \mathcal{B} (n_a n_b - \frac{1}{2} N_{ab}) + 2 \mathcal{B}_{(a} n_{b)} + \mathcal{B}_{ab}$

Considering 1st order perturbation to the LRS-II spacetime, evolution and propagation equations of GW components:

$$\mathcal{E}_a = \varepsilon_{ab} \mathcal{B}^b ; \quad \mathcal{E}_{ab} = \varepsilon_{ad} \mathcal{B}^d {}_b \quad (\text{Total DoF 2})$$

Constraints equations,

$$\hat{\mathcal{E}} = -\delta_a \mathcal{E}^a - 3\phi \mathcal{E}/2; \quad \hat{\mathcal{B}} = -\delta_a \mathcal{B}^a - 3\phi \mathcal{B}/2.$$

Part I: GW memory Master equation in LRS type II, consistent with GR.

Arrival to master equation

The evolution equation of \mathcal{E}_{ab} :

$$\begin{aligned}\partial_u \mathcal{E}_{\{ab\}} + \partial_u (\varepsilon_{c\{a} \mathcal{B}_{b\}}^c) &= -\varepsilon_{c\{a} \delta^c \mathcal{B}_{b\}} - \frac{3\mathcal{E}}{2} \Sigma_{ab} - \frac{3\mathcal{B}}{2} \varepsilon_{c\{a} \zeta_{b\}}^c - \left(\Theta + \frac{3\Sigma}{2}\right) \mathcal{E}_{ab} \\ &\quad + \left(\frac{\phi}{2} + 2\mathcal{A}\right) \varepsilon_{c\{a} \mathcal{B}_{b\}}^c - \frac{1}{2}(a + p) \Sigma_{ab}\end{aligned}$$

Substituting magnetic & electric Weyl relations,

$$3\mathcal{E} \Sigma_{ab} + [2\Theta + 3\Sigma + \phi] \mathcal{E}_{ab} + [a + p] \Sigma_{ab} = -\mathcal{G}_{ab}; \text{ where, } \mathcal{G}_{ab} \equiv 2 \varepsilon_{c\{a} \delta^c \mathcal{B}_{b\}}$$

The Σ_{ab} evolution:

$$\dot{\Sigma}_{\{ab\}} = - (2\Theta/3 + \Sigma/2) \Sigma_{ab} - \mathcal{E}_{ab}.$$

Master equation combining the above two equations:

$$(2\Theta + 3\Sigma + \phi) \left[\dot{\Sigma}_{\{ab\}} + \left(\frac{2}{3}\Theta + \frac{1}{2}\Sigma\right) \Sigma_{ab} \right] - [3\mathcal{E} + a + p] \Sigma_{ab} = \mathcal{G}_{ab}$$

Consistency check in Minkowski

The master equation in Minkowski background (non-zero $\phi = 2/r$):

$$2 \dot{\Sigma}_{ab} = r \mathcal{G}_{ab} \rightarrow \ddot{N}_{ab} = r \mathcal{G}_{ab}.$$

Assuming incoming GW profile for the $h_+ \sim h_x$ [1978 Kovacs & Thorne]:

$$h_+ = \frac{4m_A m_B}{b r} \left[\frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{l^2 + 1}} + \frac{1}{(l^2 + 1)^{3/2}} \right) + \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{l}{\sqrt{l^2 + 1}} + \frac{l}{(l^2 + 1)^{3/2}} + 1 \right) - \frac{1}{4(l^2 + 1)^{3/2}} \right]$$

where $l = \sqrt{1 + u^2}$, b is the impact parameter, and r is the distance between the source and the detector.

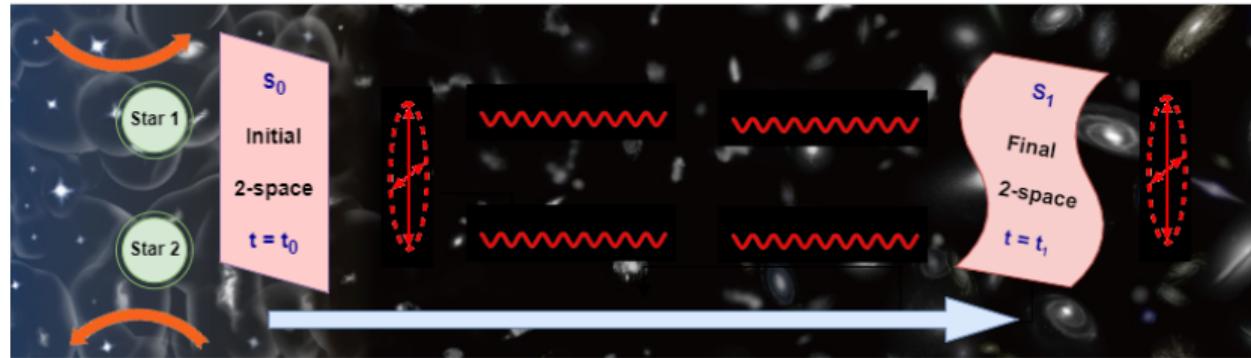
Evaluating \mathcal{B}_a in terms of h_+ GW, [2011 Nichols. et al]:

$$\ddot{N}_{\vartheta\vartheta}(u) = r^2 \cos \vartheta \cos(2\varphi) \ddot{h}_{\vartheta\vartheta}(u) \rightarrow \Delta N_{\vartheta\vartheta} \sim r^2 \Delta h_{\vartheta\vartheta} \quad (1)$$

h_+ falls as $\mathcal{O}(1/r)$, we find $\Delta N_{\vartheta\vartheta} \sim \mathcal{O}(r)$ & $\Delta N_{\hat{\vartheta}\hat{\vartheta}} \sim \mathcal{O}(1/r)$ [2017-Flanagan & Nichols]

Key application: Cosmological memory

GW memory in cosmological settings enables us to obtain the correct cosmological model describing the exact expansion rate.



FLRW spacetime

Consider conformally flat FLRW line-element $ds^2 = a^2(\eta)[-d\eta^2 + dx^2]$.

We obtain, $\Theta = 3\mathcal{H}_0/a$, $\mathcal{H}_0 = a'/a \equiv d(\ln a)/d\eta$ and $\Sigma = -\Theta/3$, does not $\sim \mathcal{O}(1/r)$.

The master equation in FLRW:

$$2\Theta \dot{\Sigma}_{ab} + \Theta^2 \Sigma_{ab} - 2(\mu + p) \Sigma_{ab} = 2\mathcal{G}_{ab},$$

(.) $\rightarrow \tilde{u} = \eta - r$ and μ, p refers to the energy density and pressure of the cosmological fluid.

$$\Sigma'_{\vartheta\vartheta} + \Gamma(\eta) \Sigma_{\vartheta\vartheta} = \frac{a(\eta)}{3\mathcal{H}_0} r \cos\vartheta \cos(2\varphi) h''_{\vartheta\vartheta}(\eta),$$

where, (1) $\sim \partial_\eta$. In terms of $N_{\vartheta\vartheta}$ (memory) above, Eq. reads as:

$$\left[\frac{N_{\vartheta\vartheta}}{a^2} \right]'' + (\mathcal{H}_0 + \Gamma(\eta)) \left[\frac{N_{\vartheta\vartheta}}{a^2} \right]' = \frac{2r}{3\mathcal{H}_0} \cos\vartheta \cos(2\varphi) h''_{\vartheta\vartheta}$$

Final results

Dimensionless Hubble parameter: $E(z) = \Omega_m(1+z)^3 + (1-\Omega_m)f(z)$, & $f(z) = \exp\left[\int_0^z dz' \frac{1+w(z')}{(1+z')}\right]$.

$$N_+ = h_\oplus \frac{(1+z_0)^{1/2}}{E(z_0)^{1/3}} \int_0^{z_0} dz' \frac{(1+z')^{1/2}}{E(z')^{5/3}}; \quad h_\oplus = \mathcal{A} f(\vartheta, \varphi)(1+z)/D_L$$

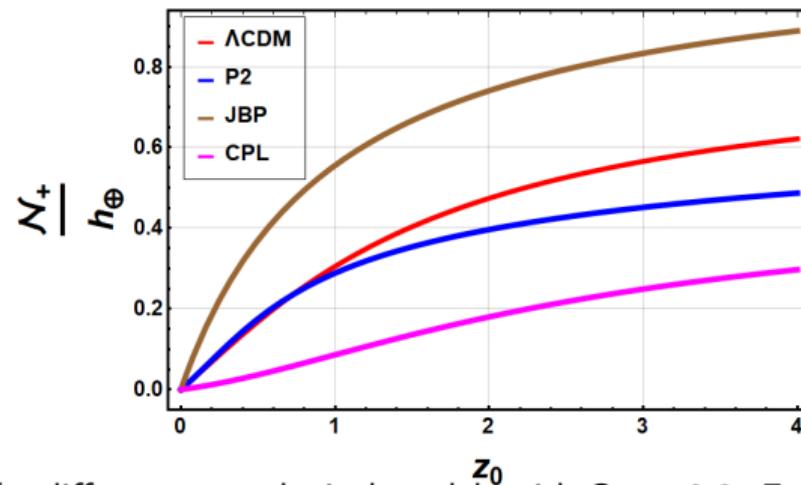
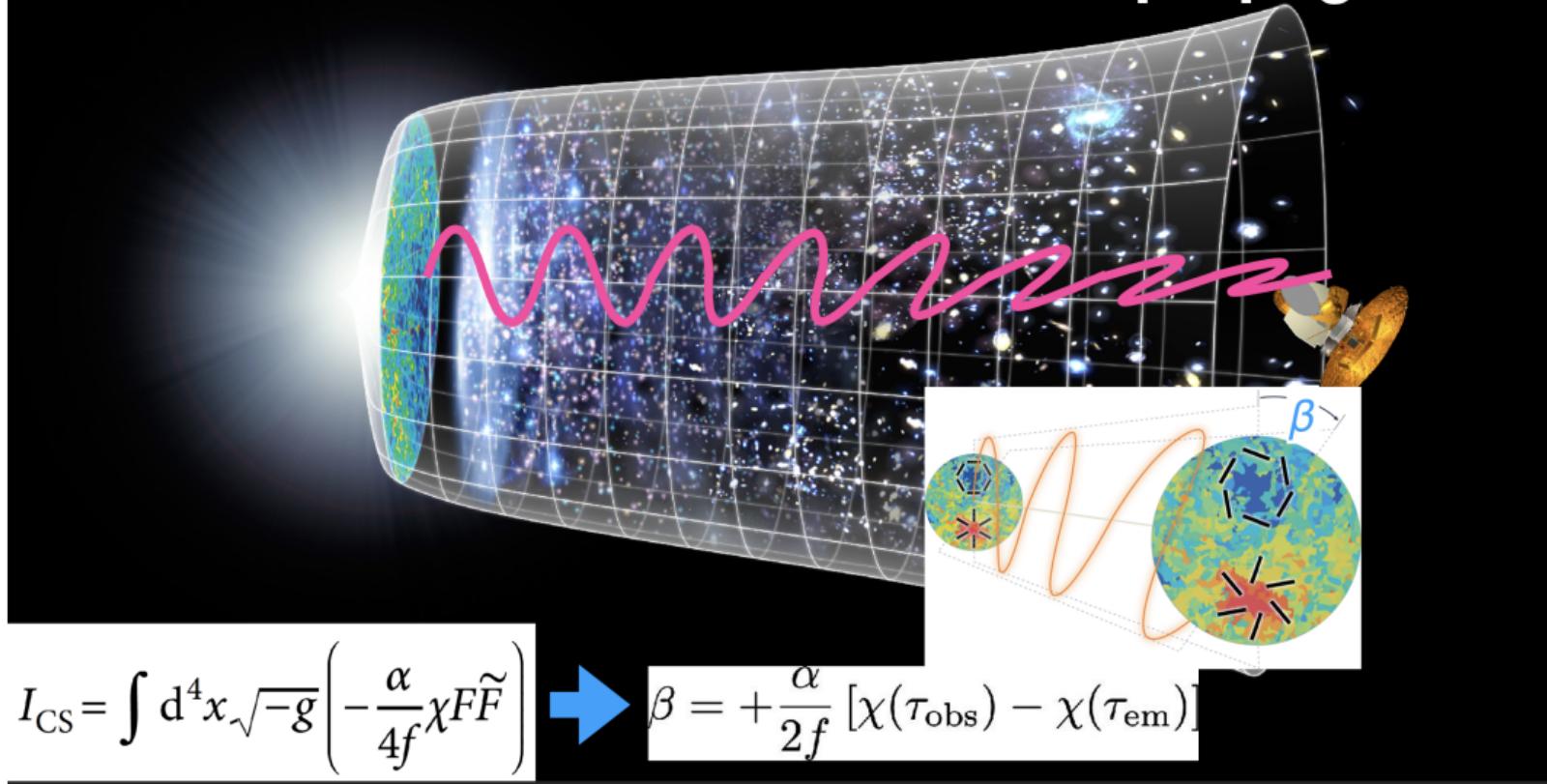


Figure: Integrated memory for different cosmological models with $\Omega_m = 0.3$. For ΛCDM , $N_+/h_\oplus \sim 180$ at $z = 4$ compared to $z = 0.01$. For CPL, JBP and P2 models, it is around 600, 80 and 145 respectively. [Chevallier et al. 2001, Linder 2003, Jassal et al. 2005, Sahni et al. 2003.]

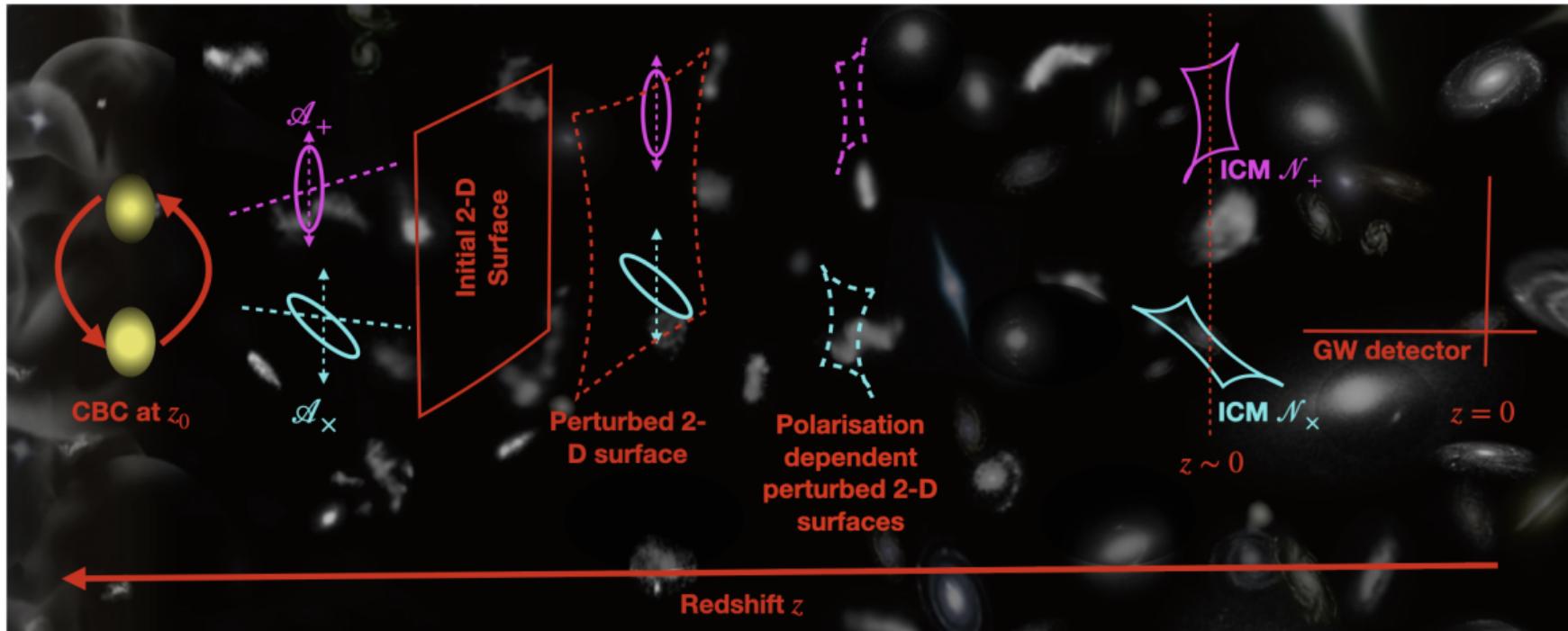
Part II - What happens if we consider a parity violating gravity theory?

How does the EM wave of the CMB propagate?



[Credit: WMAP Science Team & 2023 Eiichiro Komatsu XXV SIGRAV]

Does GW memory accumulates parity violation?



Parity violating gravity theory

We consider a 4-D dynamical Chern-Simons(dCS) gravity theory:

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left(\kappa R + \frac{\alpha \rho}{4} (*RR) - \frac{1}{2} \nabla_a \rho \nabla^a \rho + \mathcal{L}_m \right).$$

where, $\kappa = 1/(16\pi G)$, α is the coupling constant, $*RR$ represents the Pontryagin density, ρ is the scalar field, and \mathcal{L}_m perfect fluid Lagrangian present in background.

$$G_{ab} = \frac{1}{2\kappa} (T_{ab} - 2\alpha C_{ab}) := \tilde{T}_{ab},$$
$$\square \rho = -\frac{\alpha}{4} *RR.$$

The Cotton tensor as per [2014 Witek. et al]:

$$C_{ab} = 2v^c \nabla^d *W_{d(ab)c} + v^{dc} *W_{d(ab)c}.$$

$*W_{d(ab)c}$ is the dual of the Weyl tensor, $v^c := \nabla^c \rho$ is the velocity of the scalar fluid, and $v^{dc} := \nabla^{(d} v^{c)}$.

GW Master equation in dCS theory

Performing the analysis in FLRW background, similar to GR with modified \tilde{T}_{ab} leads to,

$$\frac{\dot{\Theta}}{2}\Sigma_{ab} + \frac{\Theta}{2}\dot{\Sigma}_{ab} - \frac{1}{2}(\mu + p)\Sigma_{ab} = \epsilon_{c\{a}\delta^c\mathcal{B}_{b\}} + \dot{\Pi}_{ab}$$

\mathcal{B}_b , containing the information of the primary GW, and $\Pi_{ab} \equiv -2\alpha\mathcal{C}_{ab}$ contribution from dCS gravity.

Defining $\Gamma_{ab} := \frac{\Theta}{2}\Sigma_{ab} - \Pi_{ab}$ and massaging the above equation:

$$\dot{\Gamma}_{ab} - \left(\frac{\mu + p}{\Theta}\right)\Gamma_{ab} = \epsilon_{c\{a}\delta^c\mathcal{B}_{b\}} + \left(\frac{\mu + p}{\Theta}\right)\Pi_{ab}.$$

Master equation for + and \times polarization

$$\frac{d\Gamma_+}{d\eta} + Q(\eta)\Gamma_+ = \frac{1}{r}[h''_+(\eta)F_1(\eta, \vartheta, \varphi) + h''_\times(\eta)F_2(\eta, \vartheta, \varphi)]$$

$$\frac{d\Gamma_\times}{d\eta} + Q(\eta)\Gamma_\times = \frac{1}{r}[h''_+(\eta)F_3(\eta, \vartheta, \varphi) - h''_\times(\eta)F_4(\eta, \vartheta, \varphi)].$$

where,

$$Q(\eta) = \left(\frac{2\mathcal{H}'}{3\mathcal{H}} - \frac{8\mathcal{H}}{3} \right), \quad F_1 = \cos(2\varphi)f_1 + \sin(2\varphi)f_2, \quad F_2 = \sin(2\varphi)f_1 - \cos(2\varphi)f_2,$$

$$\mathcal{H} = \frac{a'}{a}, \quad F_3 = \cos(2\varphi)f_3 - \sin(2\varphi)f_4, \quad F_4 = \sin(2\varphi)f_3 + \cos(2\varphi)f_4,$$

$$f_1 = 1/2(\cot\vartheta + \cos\vartheta/2), \quad f_2 = \frac{4\alpha H_0}{3a^4}(\cos\vartheta - \cot\vartheta/2) \left(\mathcal{H} - \frac{\mathcal{H}'}{\mathcal{H}} \right),$$

$$f_3 = \frac{1}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\sin^3\vartheta}{2} \right), \quad f_4 = \frac{4\alpha H_0}{3a^4} \left(1 - \frac{\sin^3\vartheta}{2} \right) \left(\mathcal{H} - \frac{\mathcal{H}'}{\mathcal{H}} \right).$$

Results

We introduce a parameter Δ , defined as:

$$\mathcal{A}_x = \mathcal{A}_+ (1 + \Delta).$$

$\mathcal{A}_{+,\times}$ are GW amplitude at source, and $\Delta \sim \alpha^2/L^4$. [2018 Bhattacharyya, Shankaranarayanan]

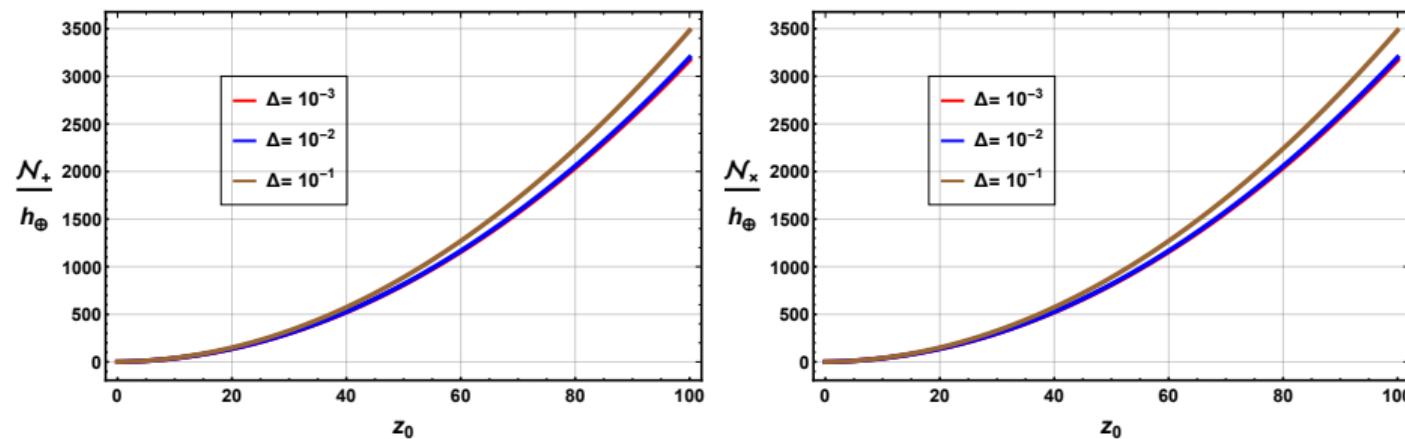


Figure: ICM for different values of Δ for $+$ (left) and \times (right) polarization modes in dCS gravity for Λ CDM cosmology. We have set $\Omega_m = 0.3$. In the left (right) plot, the value of $\varphi = \pi/4$ ($\pi/2$).

Results

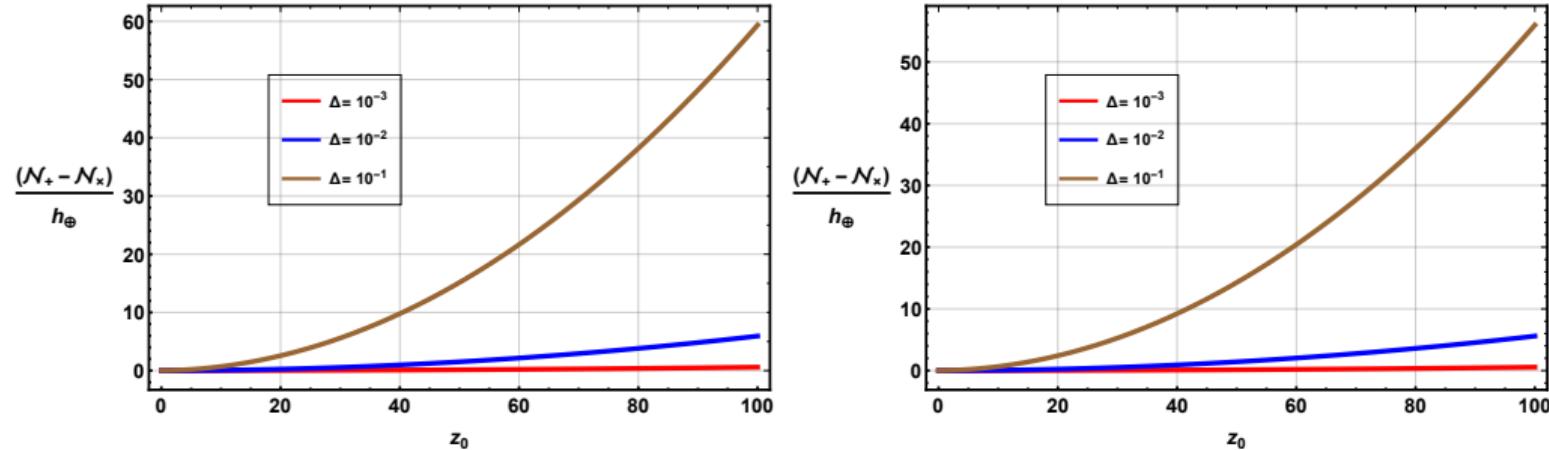


Figure: Difference between the ICM for the two polarizations in dCS gravity for Λ CDM cosmology. In the left (right) plot, the value of $\vartheta = \pi/4 (\pi/2)$, and $\varphi = \pi/8$, $\Omega_m = 0.3$ in both plots.

Key take away

- In the covariant formalism, the GW is described by electric and magnetic parts of Weyl tensor, projected onto 2–D surface.
- The GW memory $\Delta N_{ab} = \int dt \Sigma_{ab}$.
- We obtain master equation for GW memory in LRS type II background.
- Integrated GW memory ratio in cosmological background N_+/h_{\oplus} is more for higher redshift — $N_+/h_{\oplus} \sim 180$ at $z \sim 4$ compared to $z \sim 0.01$.
- For parity violating dCS theory the correction in GW memory appears through cotton tensor C_{ab} , projected onto 2–D surface.
- It lead to polarization dependent master equation for memory corresponding h_+ & h_x .
- The difference in memory ratio $(N_+ - N_x)/h_{\oplus}$ differs for separate $\Delta \sim \alpha^2/L^4$.

Thank you