

# Testing the laws of gravity and dark matter properties with cosmological observations

Camille Bonvin

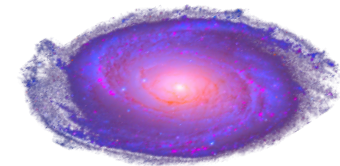
University of Geneva, Switzerland



Queen Mary University  
January 2026

# Our Universe: two mysteries

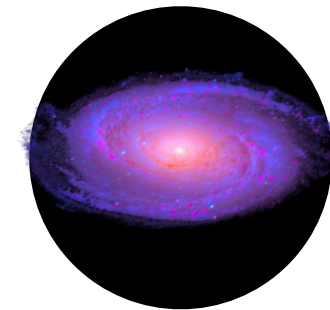
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- ◆ **Evidence** at all scales and with different observations
  - **Rotation** of stars around galactic center
  - Motion of galaxies inside **clusters**
  - Deviation of light by matter: **gravitational lensing**
  - Temperature fluctuations in **Cosmic Microwave Background**



**80% of dark matter** versus 20% of normal matter

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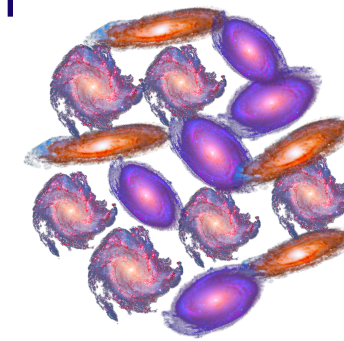
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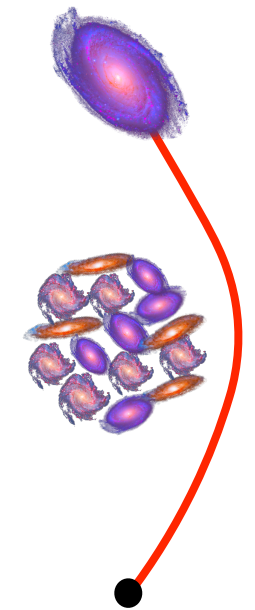
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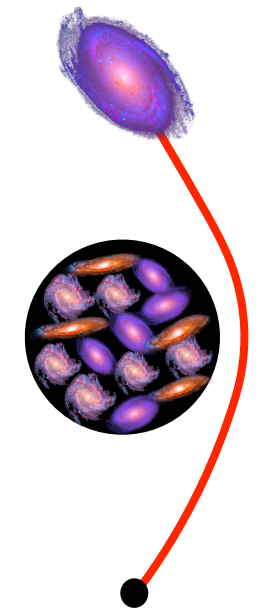
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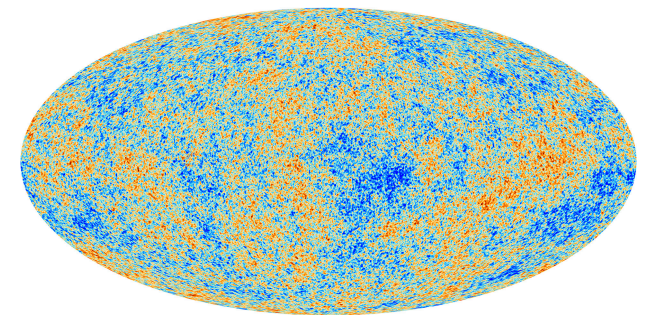


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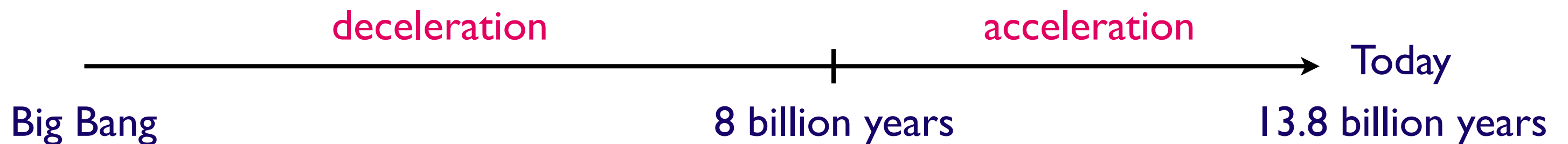


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# Our Universe: two mysteries

- ◆ The expansion of the Universe **accelerates**
- ◆ We know since 1930 that the Universe is **expanding**
- ◆ **Prediction** from General Relativity: the expansion should **decelerate**



- Cosmological constant
- ◆ **Solutions**
  - Dark energy
  - Modification of gravity at large scale

# Standard LCDM model

- ◆ Dark matter is a **cold non-interacting** particle
- ◆ The acceleration is due to a **cosmological constant**  $\Lambda$
- ◆ **Our goal**: use cosmological data to test this model and search for deviations
- ◆ **Current status**: compatible with most observations, but some tensions have appeared in the past years

# How can we test the LCDM model?

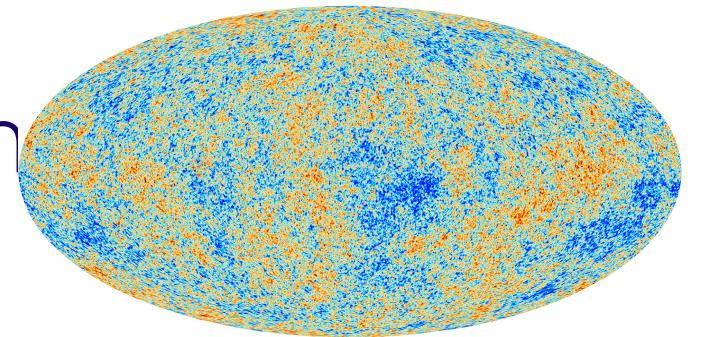
- ◆ It is not sufficient to measure the expansion rate
  - We need to look at **structures** in our Universe
- ◆ **CMB**: fluctuations of the order of  $10^{-5}$  around 2.73 K
- ◆ **Galaxies**: patterns in the distribution up to very large scales

These inhomogeneities are sensitive to the **dark matter properties** and to the theory of **gravity**

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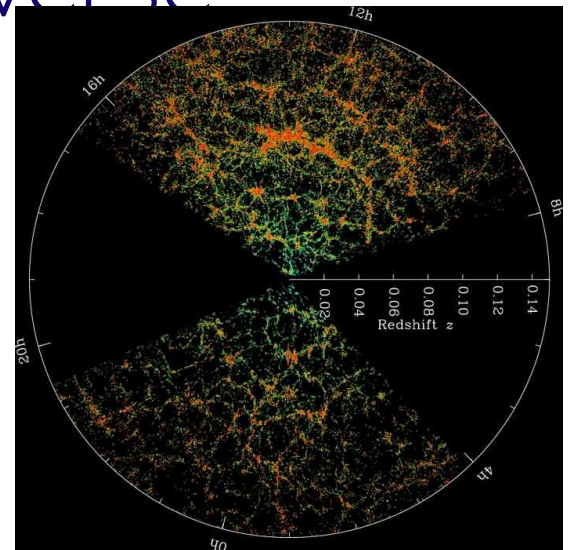
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# Accounting for inhomogeneities

- ◆ Our Universe is split into:

**Homogeneous** and **isotropic** background + **fluctuations**

## Fluctuations encoded into four fields

- ◆ Perturbations in the **geometry**

scale factor                      gravitational potentials

↓                      ↙                      ↘

$$ds^2 = -a^2 \left[ (1 + 2\Psi) d\eta^2 + (1 - 2\Phi) \delta_{ij} dx^i dx^j \right]$$

- ◆ Perturbations in the universe's **content**:
  - ↗ density fluctuations  $\delta = \frac{\delta\rho}{\rho}$
  - ↘ peculiar velocity  $V$

# Relations

- ◆ General Relativity and conservation equations provide **relations** between the **fields**

$\Lambda$ CDM model

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \delta & & \text{Continuity} & & V \\ & \text{Poisson} & & & \text{Euler} \\ \Phi & & = & & \Psi \end{array}$$

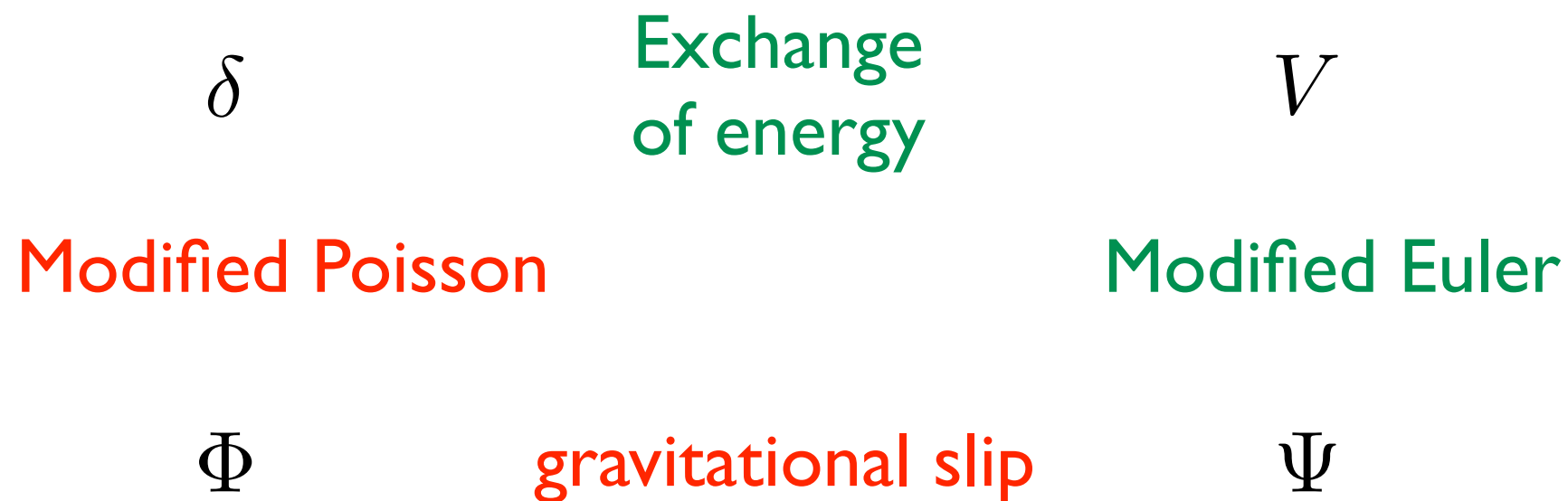
- ◆ By **measuring** the 4 fields and **comparing** them we can test the validity of the  $\Lambda$ CDM model



# Relations

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Beyond  $\Lambda$ CDM

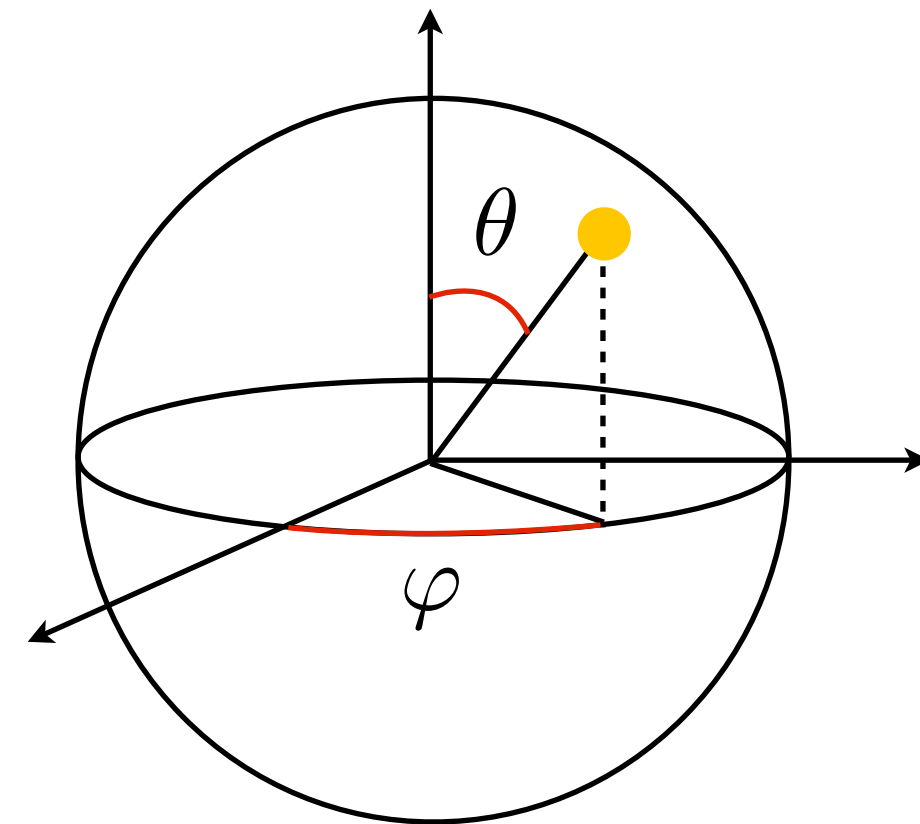


- ◆ By **measuring** the 4 fields and **comparing** them we can test the validity of the  $\Lambda$ CDM model

# Cosmological observations

Surveys detect galaxies and measure

- ◆ the **angular position**



Some surveys are dedicated to redshift measurements, whereas other are specialised in imaging.

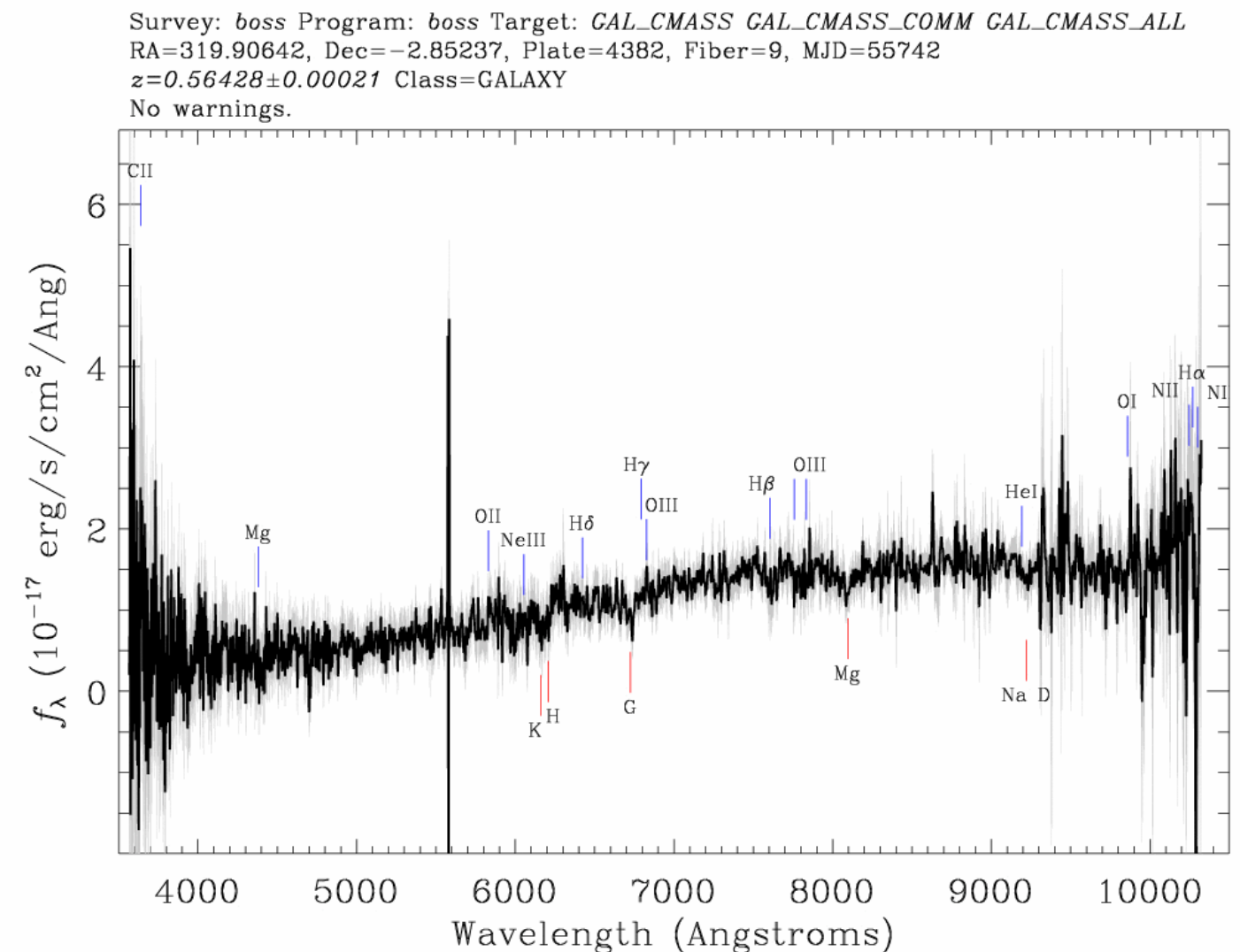
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◆ the redshift



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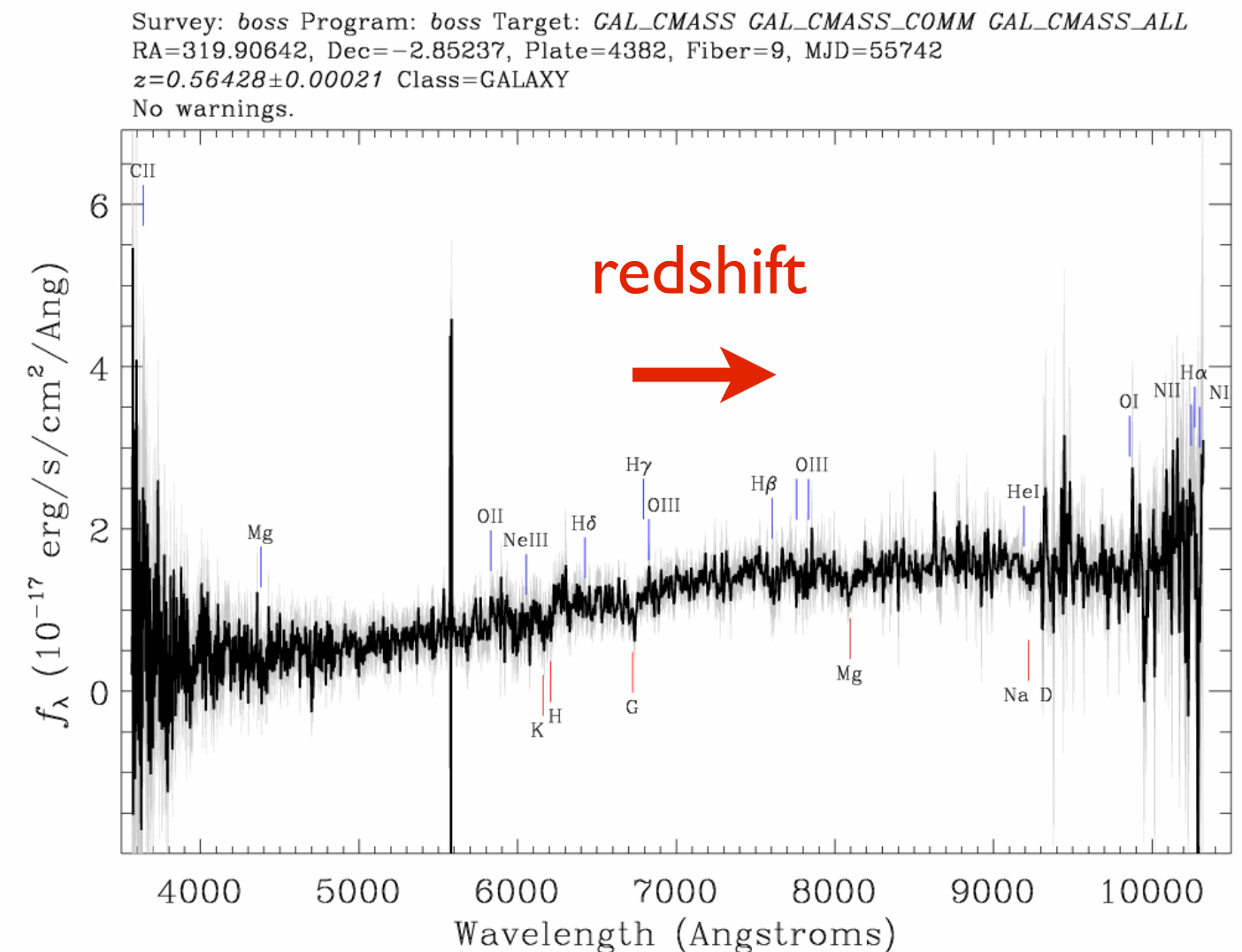
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◆ the **redshift** → distance



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# Cosmological observations

Surveys detect galaxies and measure



◆ the **shape** and **luminosity**



Credit: ESO/INAF-VST

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# Cosmological observations

Surveys detect galaxies and measure



◆ the **shape** and **luminosity**



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size



ellipticity

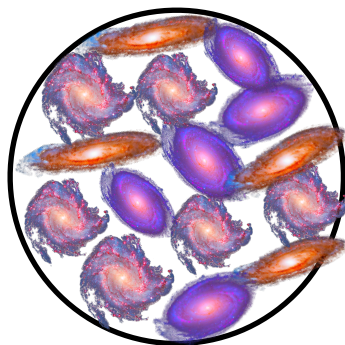
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# Which field can we measure?

- ◆ 3D **maps**: distance measured through the redshift ↗ expansion  
↘ Doppler
- ◆ The Doppler effect **distorts** the structures in the maps

Without Doppler effect  
**isotropic** structures

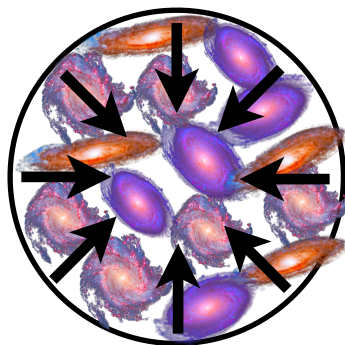


● Observer

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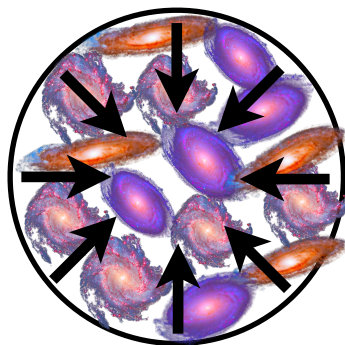


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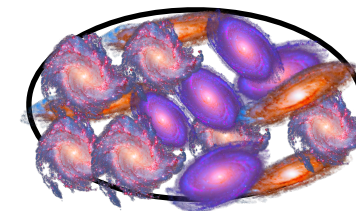
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Without Doppler effect  
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● Observer

With Doppler effect  
**squashed** structures



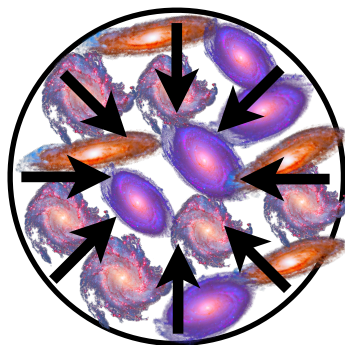
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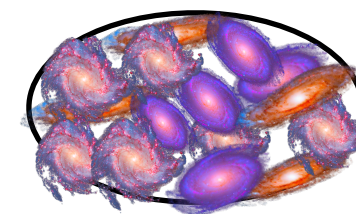
- ◆ 3D **maps**: distance measured through the redshift ↗ expansion  
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Measurable by looking at **probability** of finding a **pair** of galaxies at a given separation



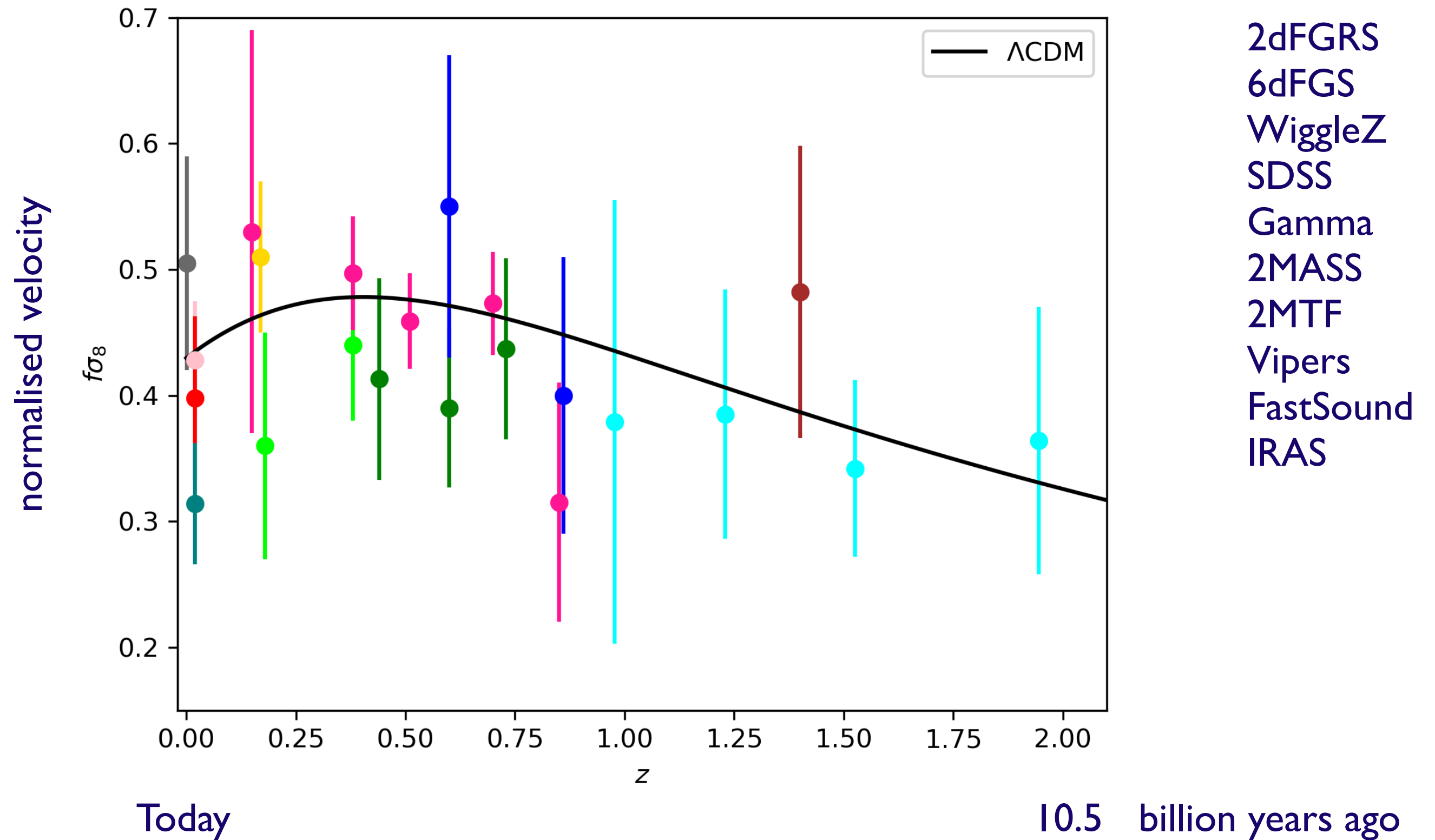
Observer



Observer

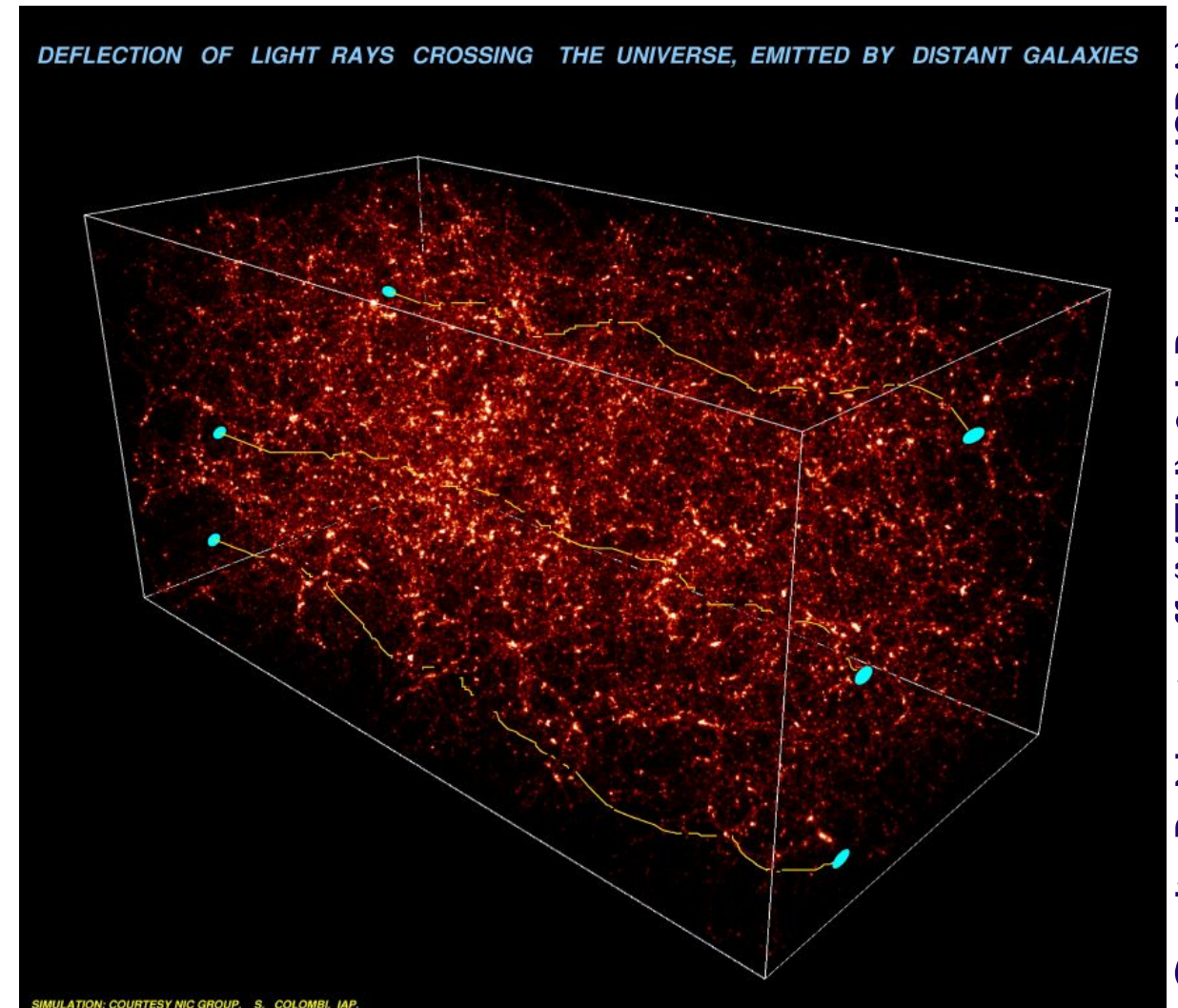


# Measuring the evolution of velocities



# Which field can we measure?

- ◆ The **shape** of galaxies is **distorted** by gravitational lensing
- ◆ It generates **correlations** between shapes affected by the same structures
- ◆ **Detected** by various surveys: CFHT, KiDS, DES



Credit: R. Nemiroff (MTU) & J. Bonnell (USRA)

$$\int_{\text{obs}}^{\text{source}} dr \frac{r_s - r}{2rr_s} \Delta_{\Omega}(\Phi + \Psi) \quad \Phi = \Psi + \text{Poisson equation} \quad \rightarrow \quad \delta \text{ **total matter**}$$

Heymans et al. (2020)  
Abbott et al. (2022)&(2023)

**less clustered** than predicted in  $\Lambda$ CDM (2-3 sigma tension)

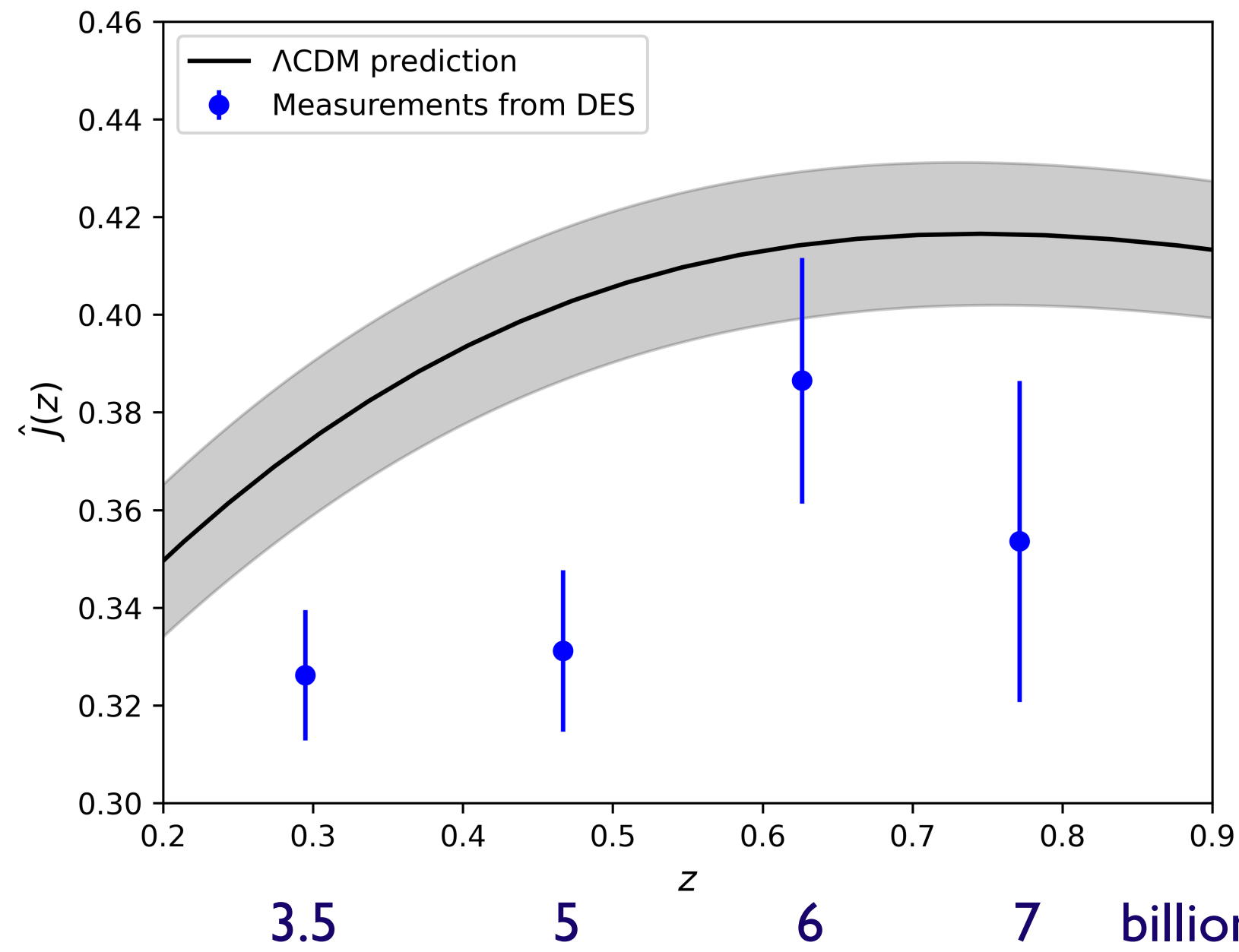


# Can we improve on current techniques?

- ◆ Use gravitational lensing to measure the **evolution** of  $\Phi + \Psi$
- ◆ Use 3D maps of galaxies to measure the **evolution** of  $\Psi$
- ◆ Test the relation between  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$  : test of **General Relativity**
- ◆ Test the relation between  $V$  and  $\Psi$  : test of **Euler equation** for dark matter

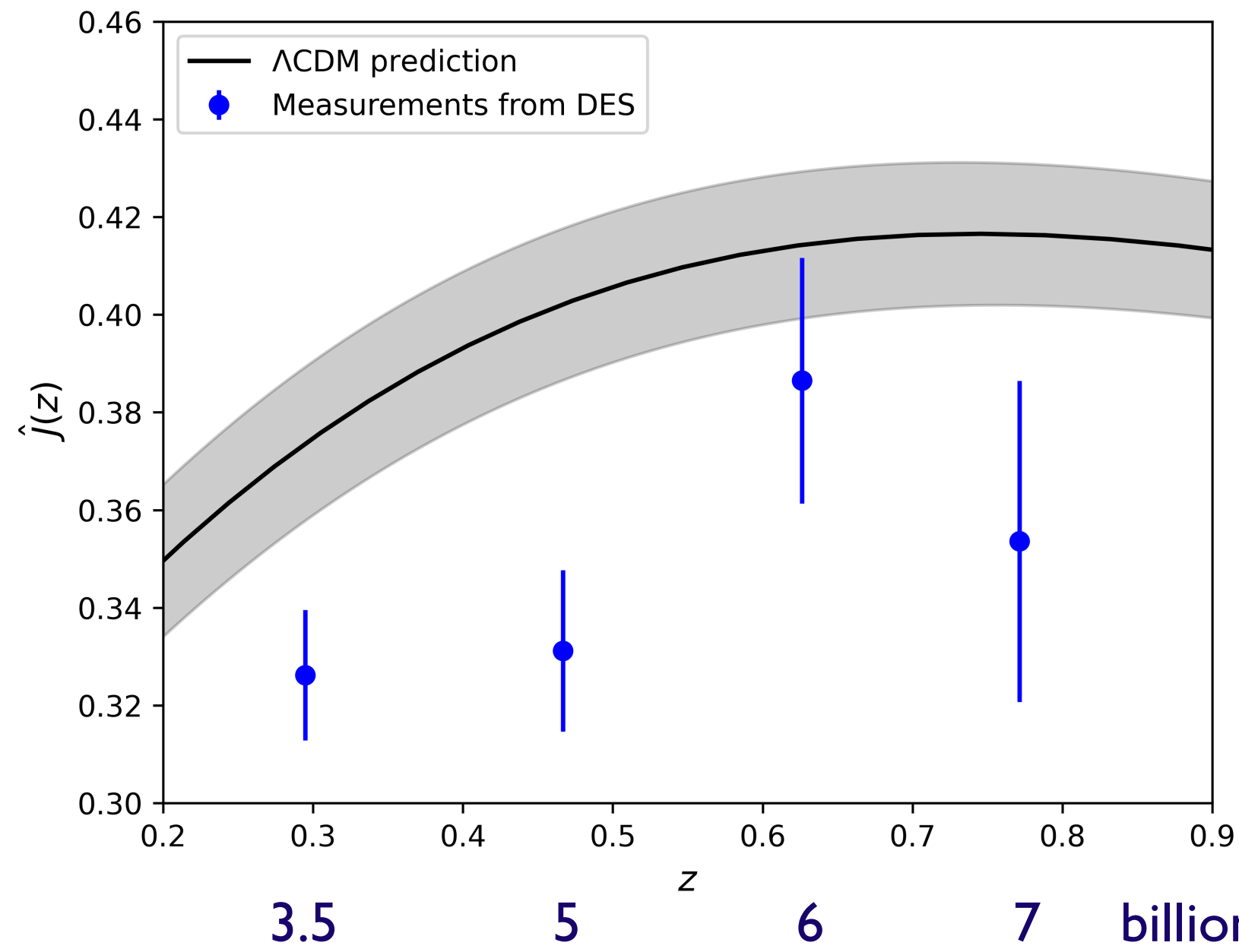


# Measuring the sum of potentials



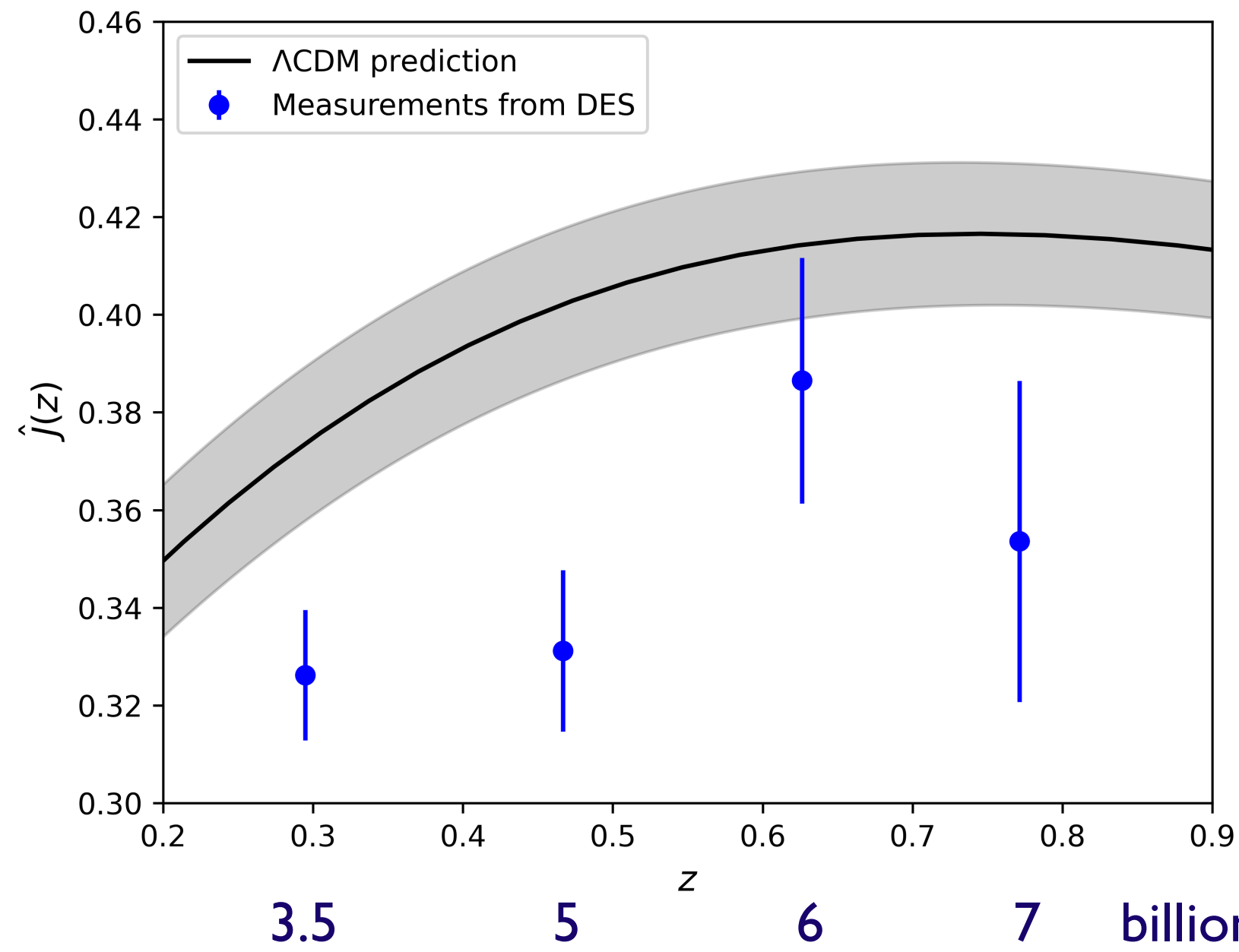
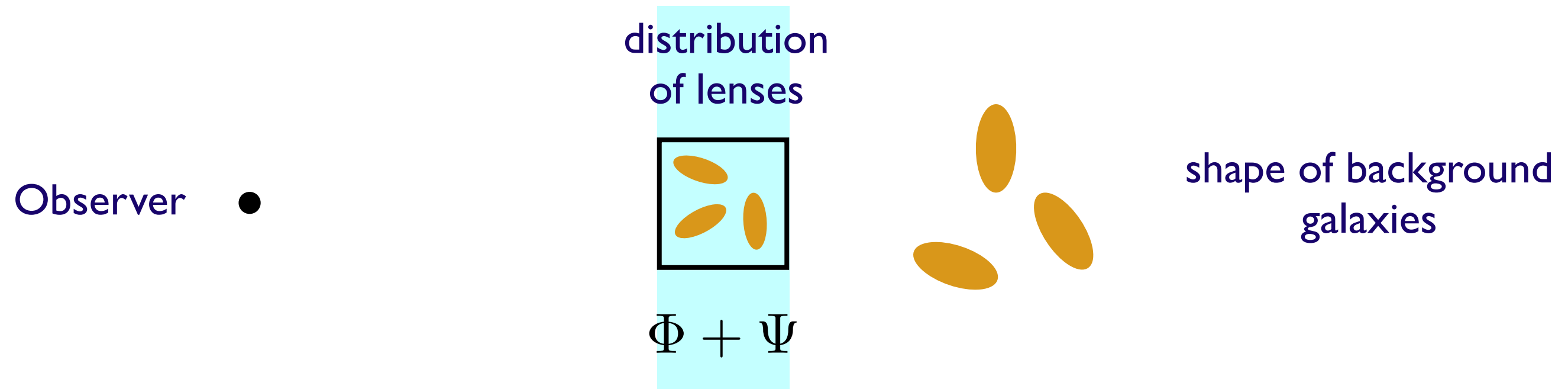
**slower** growth  
of potentials at  
late time

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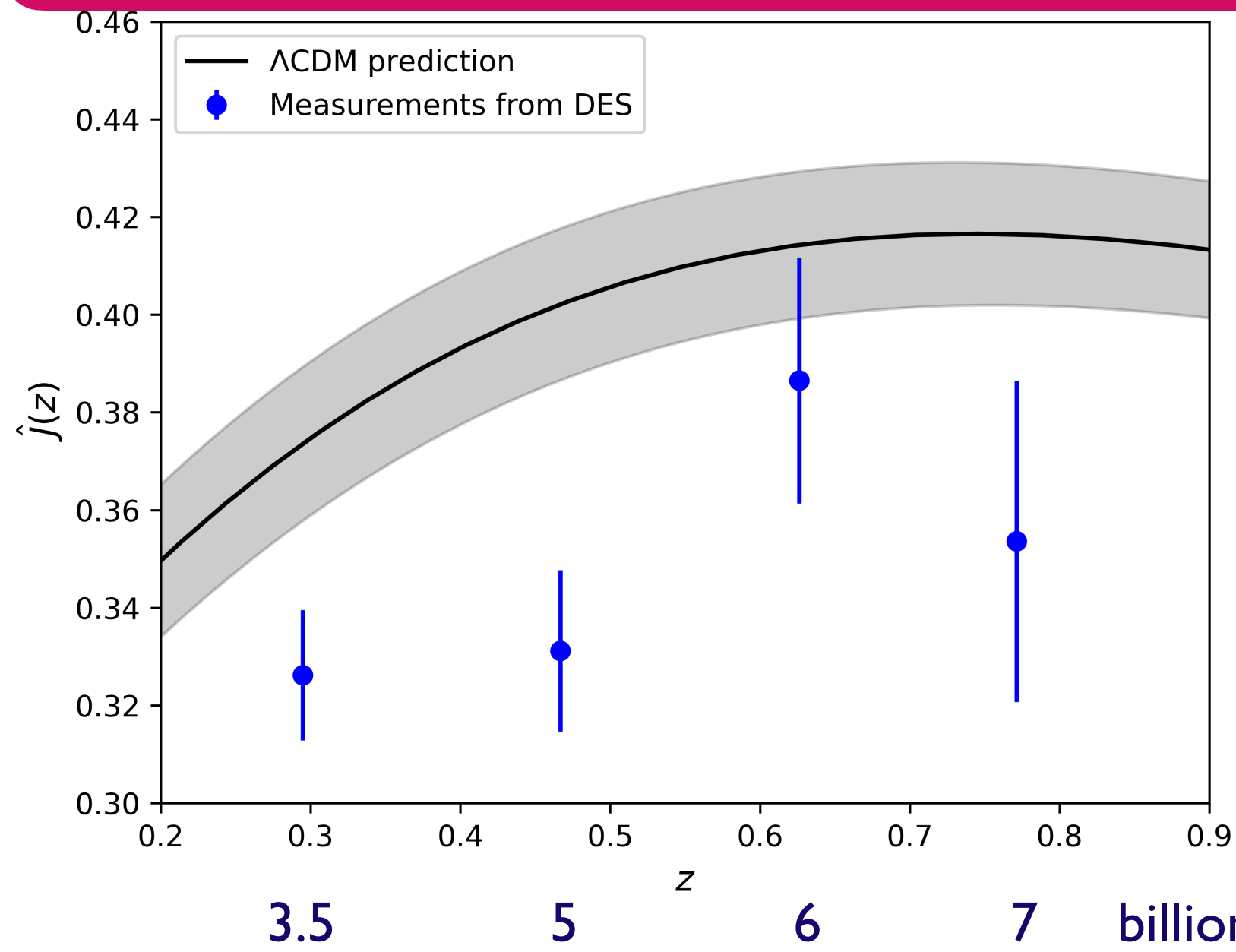
# Measuring the sum of potentials

Observer

distribution  
of lenses

of background  
galaxies

If the deviations persist: are they due to modified gravity, dark matter interactions or evolving dark energy?



**slower** growth  
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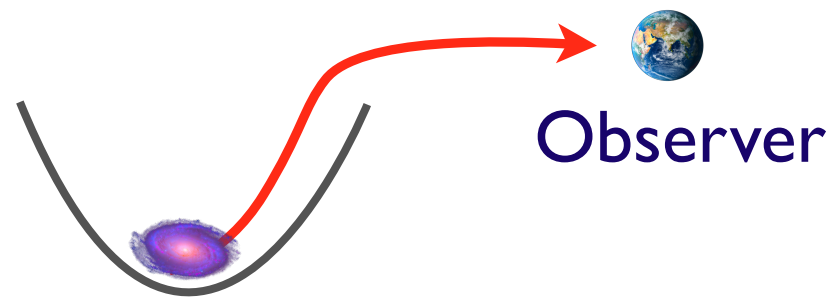
# Measuring the distortion of time

- ◆ 3D **maps**: distance measured through the redshift 

↗  
↘

**expansion**  
**Doppler**

Another effect: **gravitational redshift**



**Change in photon frequency**

Sensitive to time distortion  $\Psi$

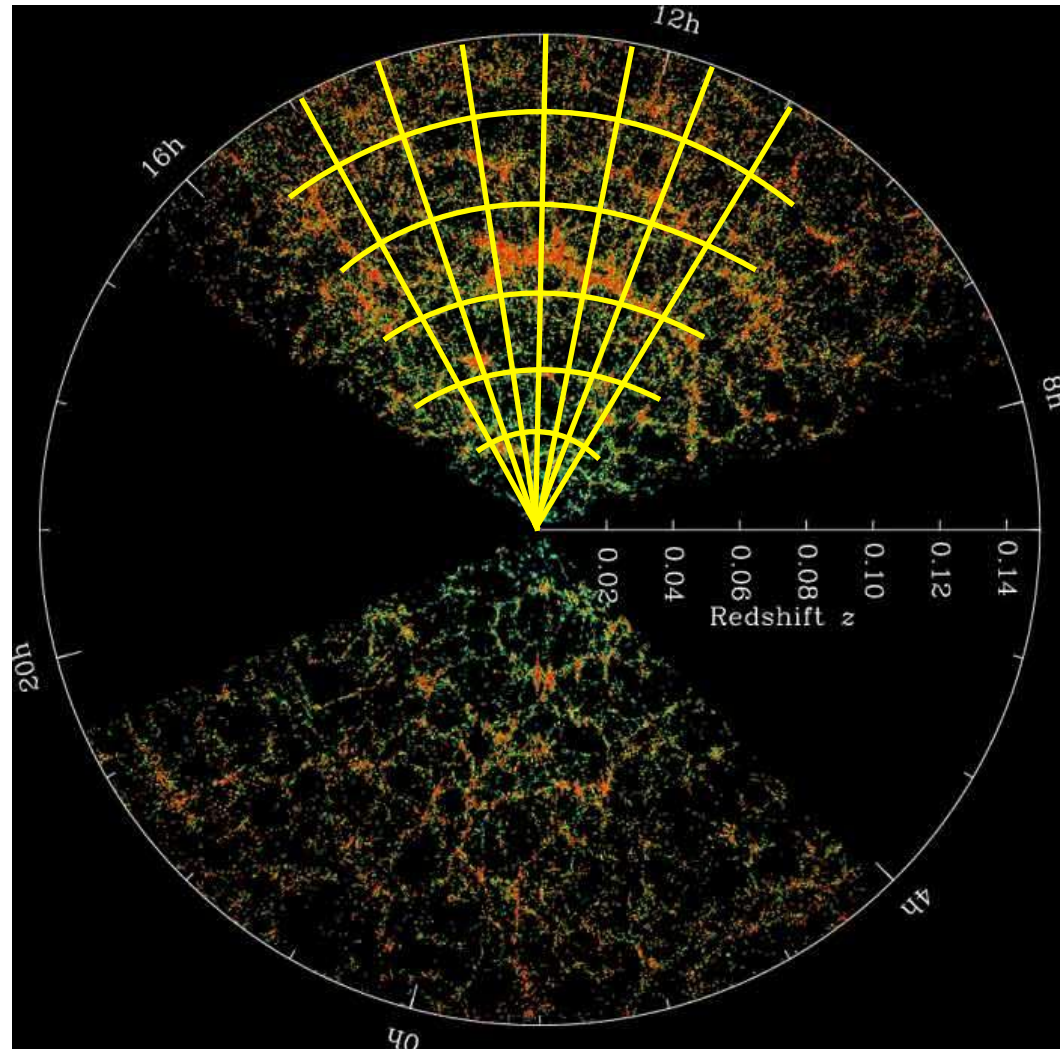
- ◆ The effect is typically **100 times smaller** than Doppler effect
- ◆ Can we use 3D maps to **isolate** it?

# What do we measure?

CB and Durrer (2011)

We count the number of **galaxies** per **pixel**:  $\Delta = \frac{N - \bar{N}}{\bar{N}}$

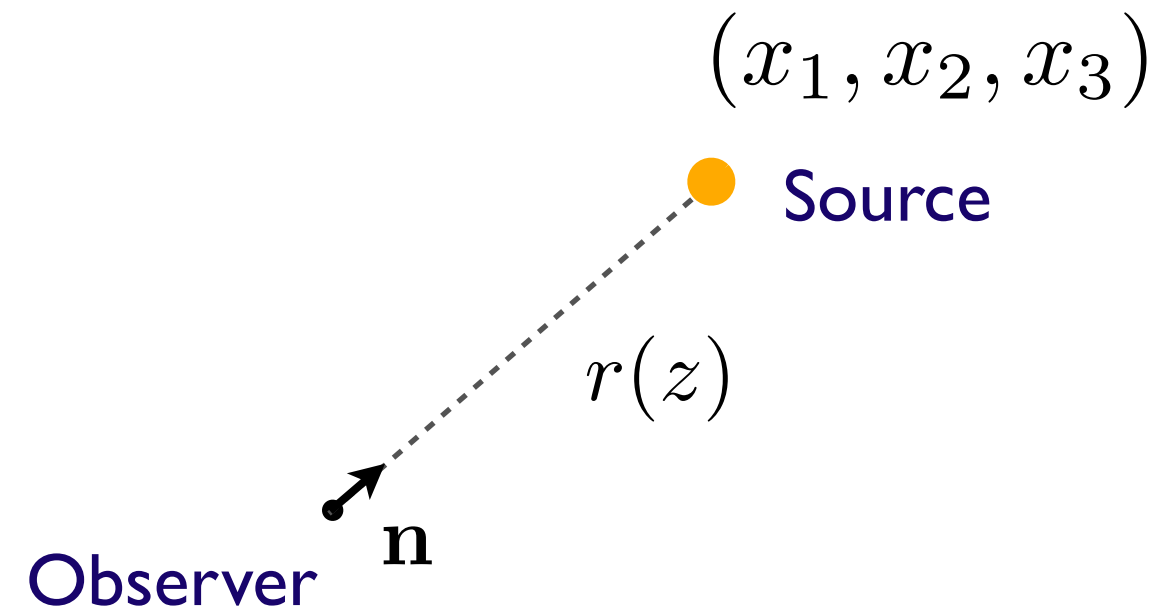
Credit: M. Blanton, SDSS



- ◆ Galaxies follow the distribution of matter  $\Delta = b \cdot \delta$
- ◆ We never observe directly the position of galaxies, we observe the **redshift**  $z$  and the **direction** of incoming photons  $\mathbf{n}$

In a **homogeneous** universe:

- we calculate the distance  $r(z)$
- light propagates on straight lines



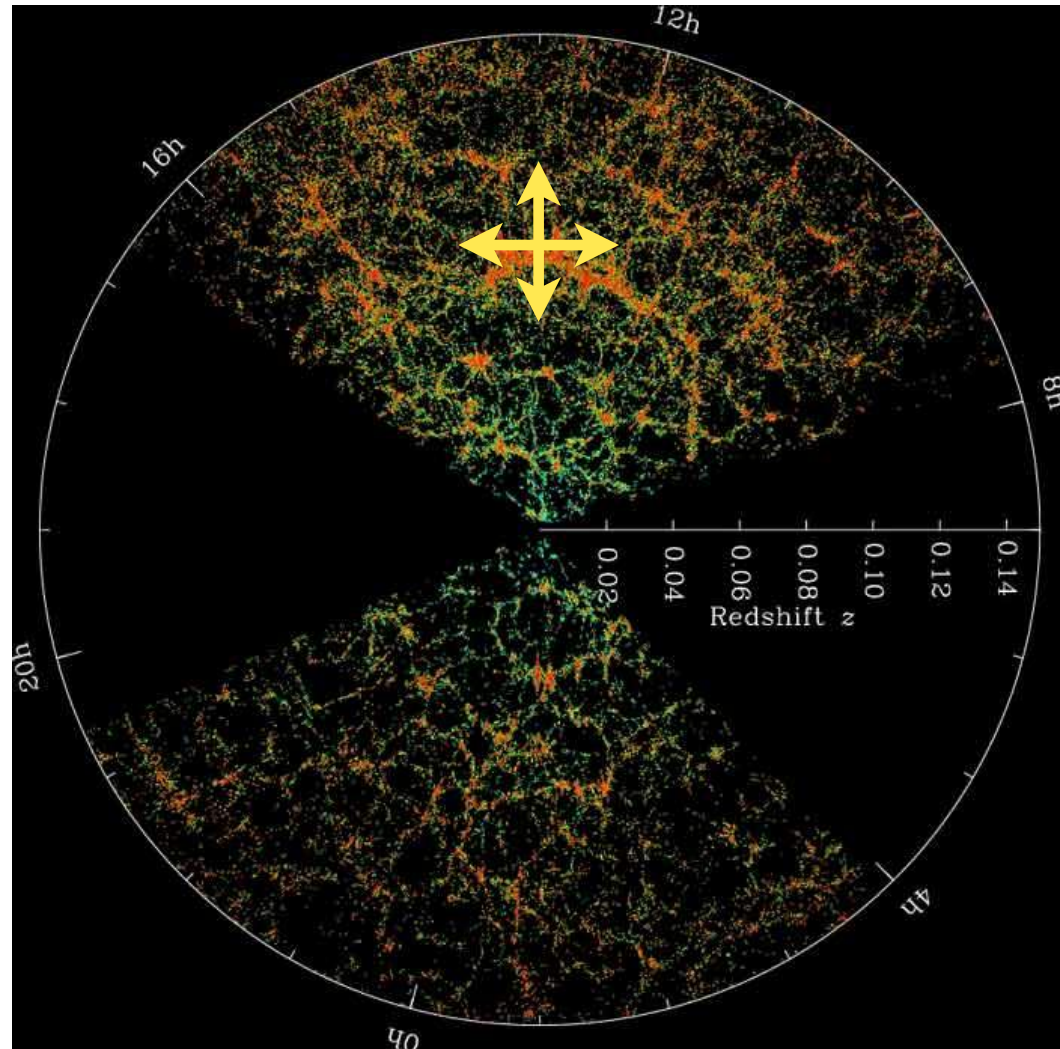


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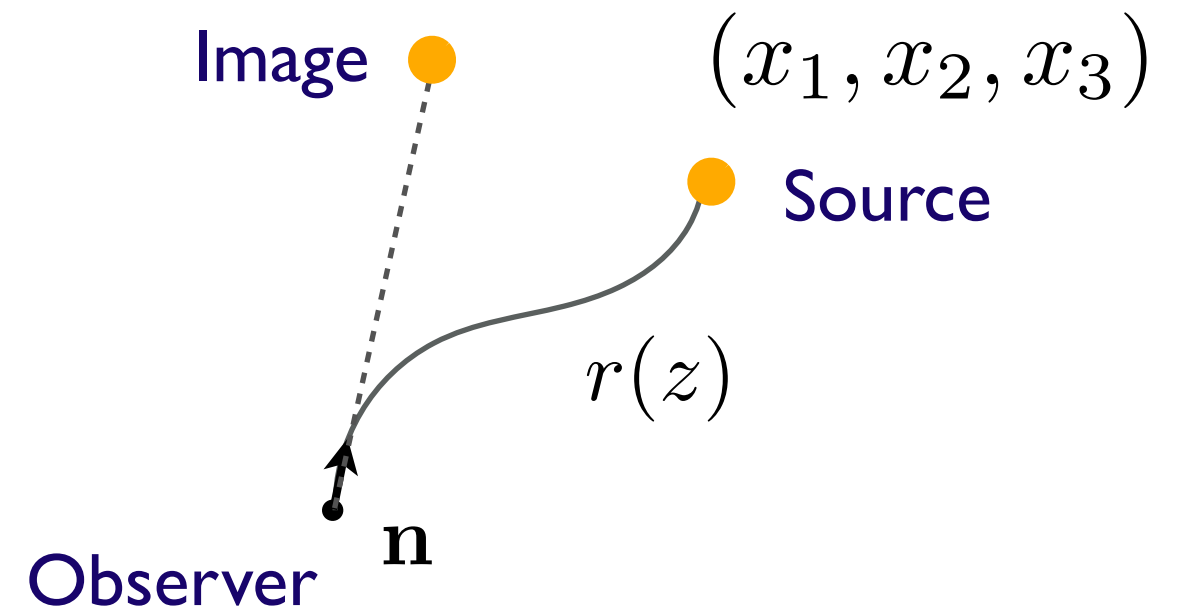
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**Inhomogeneities** modify:

- distance-redshift relation
- angular position of the image



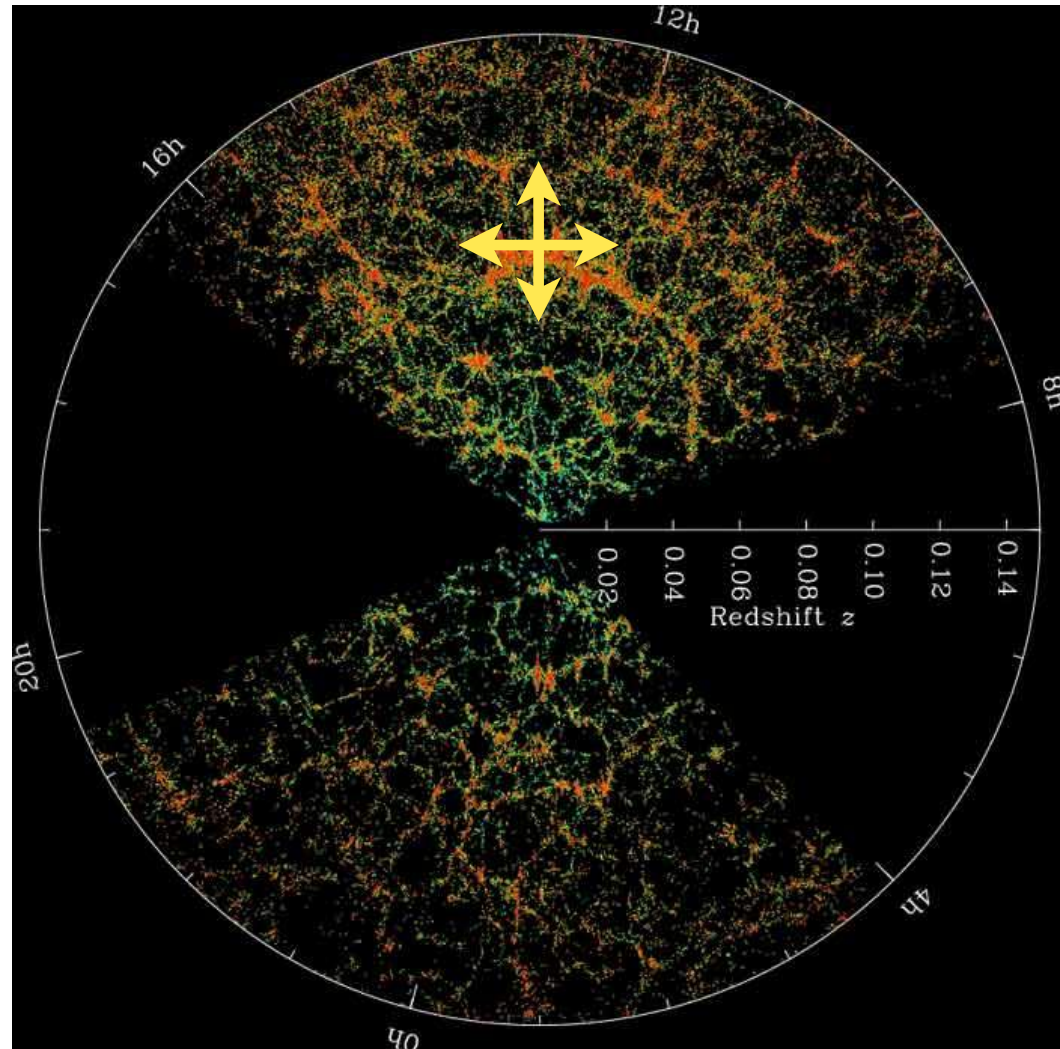


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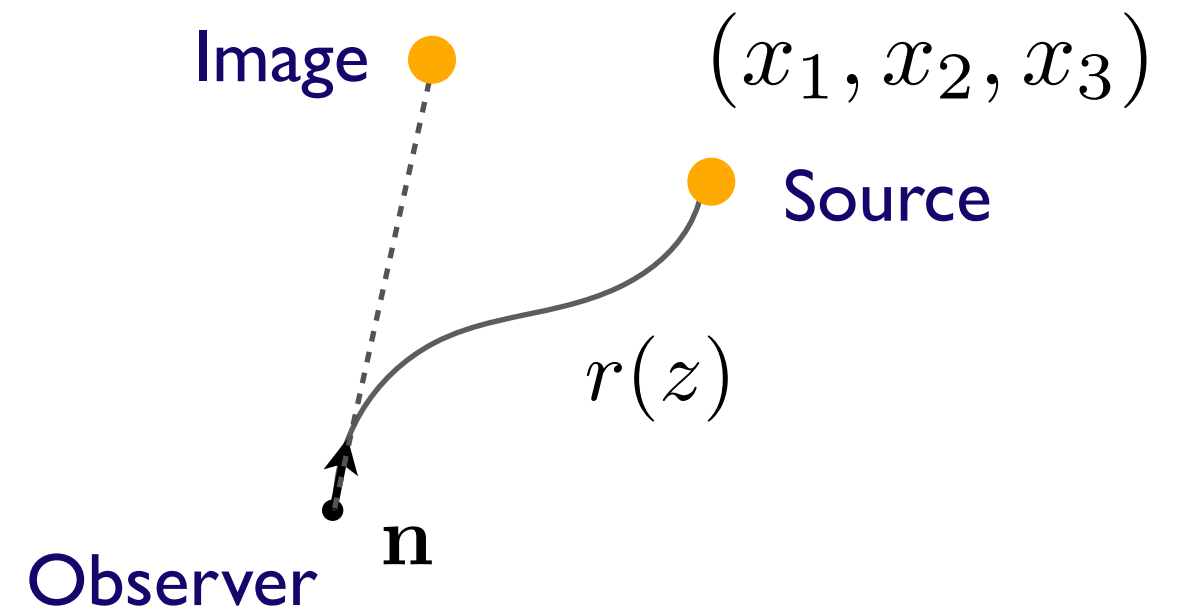
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## Light propagation

$$ds^2 = -a^2(1 + 2\Psi)d\eta^2 + a^2(1 - 2\Phi)d\mathbf{x}^2$$



# What do we measure?

$$\begin{aligned}
 \Delta(z, \mathbf{n}) = & b \cdot \delta - \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \partial_r (\mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n}) \\
 & + (5s - 2) \int_0^r dr' \frac{r - r'}{2rr'} \Delta_\Omega (\Phi + \Psi) \\
 & + \left( 1 - \frac{\dot{\mathcal{H}}}{\mathcal{H}^2} + \frac{5s - 2}{r\mathcal{H}} - 5s + f^{\text{evol}} \right) \mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \dot{\mathbf{V}} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \partial_r \Psi \\
 & + \frac{2 - 5s}{r} \int_0^r dr' (\Phi + \Psi) + 3\mathcal{H} \nabla^{-2} (\nabla \mathbf{V}) + \Psi + (5s - 2) \Phi \\
 & + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \dot{\Phi} + \left( \frac{\dot{\mathcal{H}}}{\mathcal{H}^2} + \frac{2 - 5s}{r\mathcal{H}} + 5s - f^{\text{evol}} \right) \left[ \Psi + \int_0^r dr' (\dot{\Phi} + \dot{\Psi}) \right]
 \end{aligned}$$

# What do we measure?

Matter fluctuations

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta(z, \mathbf{n}) = & \boxed{b \cdot \delta} - \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \partial_r (\mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n}) \\ & + (5s - 2) \int_0^r dr' \frac{r - r'}{2rr'} \Delta_\Omega(\Phi + \Psi) \\ & + \left( 1 - \frac{\dot{\mathcal{H}}}{\mathcal{H}^2} + \frac{5s - 2}{r\mathcal{H}} - 5s + f^{\text{evol}} \right) \mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \dot{\mathbf{V}} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \partial_r \Psi \\ & + \frac{2 - 5s}{r} \int_0^r dr' (\Phi + \Psi) + 3\mathcal{H} \nabla^{-2} (\nabla \mathbf{V}) + \Psi + (5s - 2) \Phi \\ & + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \dot{\Phi} + \left( \frac{\dot{\mathcal{H}}}{\mathcal{H}^2} + \frac{2 - 5s}{r\mathcal{H}} + 5s - f^{\text{evol}} \right) \left[ \Psi + \int_0^r dr' (\dot{\Phi} + \dot{\Psi}) \right] \end{aligned}$$

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$$\begin{aligned}
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Gravitational lensing

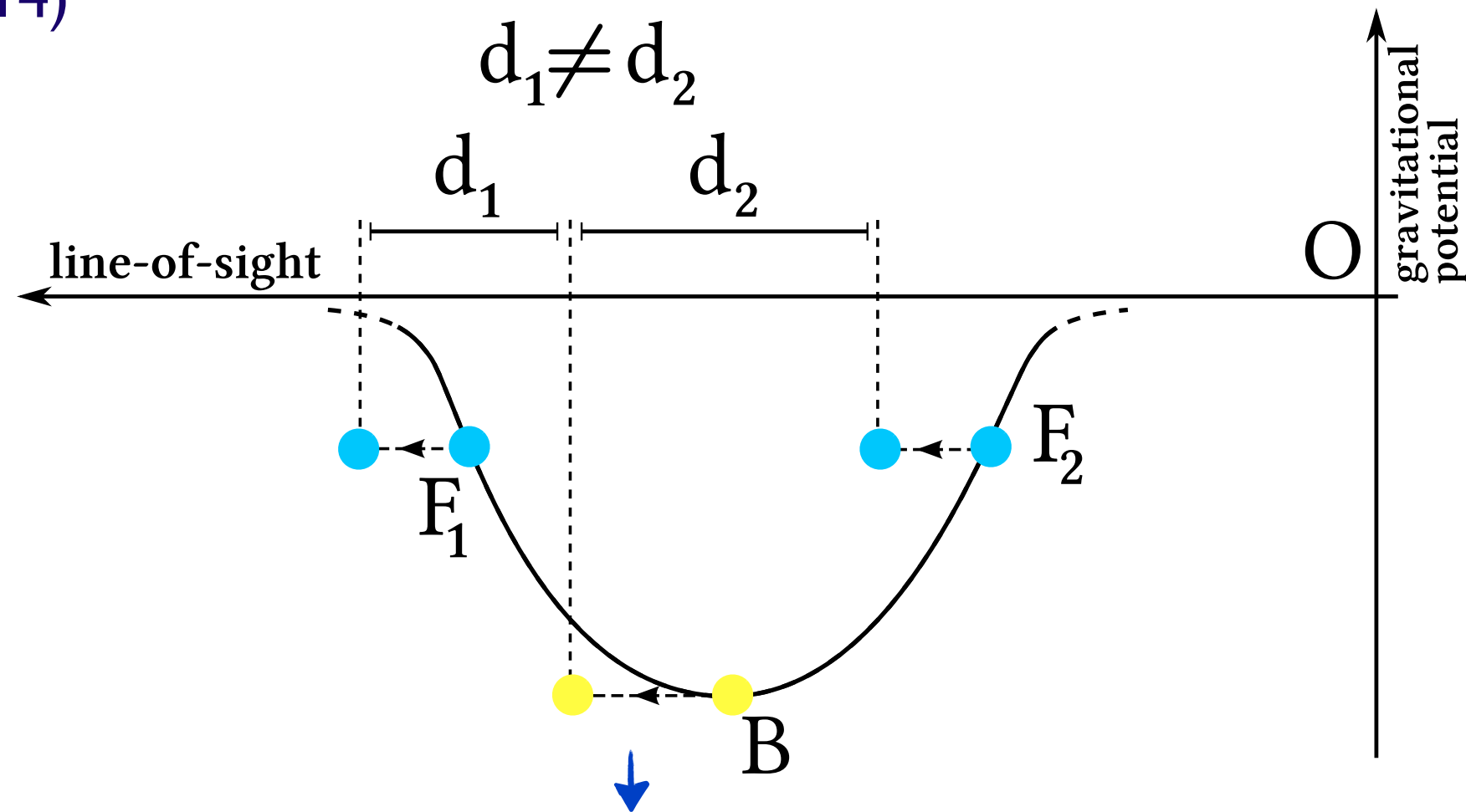
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Gravitational redshift

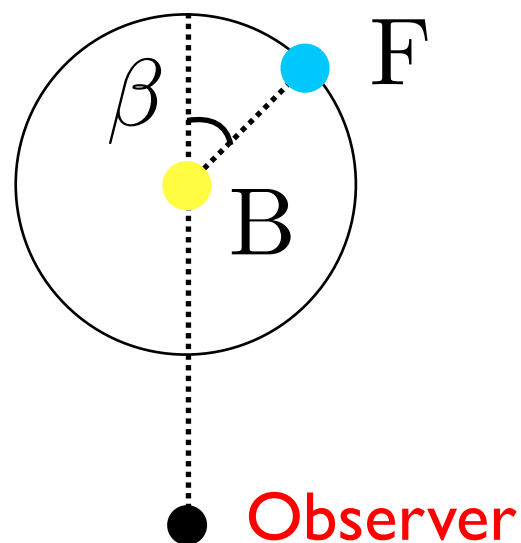
# Breaking of symmetry from gravitational redshift

CB, Hui & Gaztanaga (2014)



shift in position due to gravitational redshift

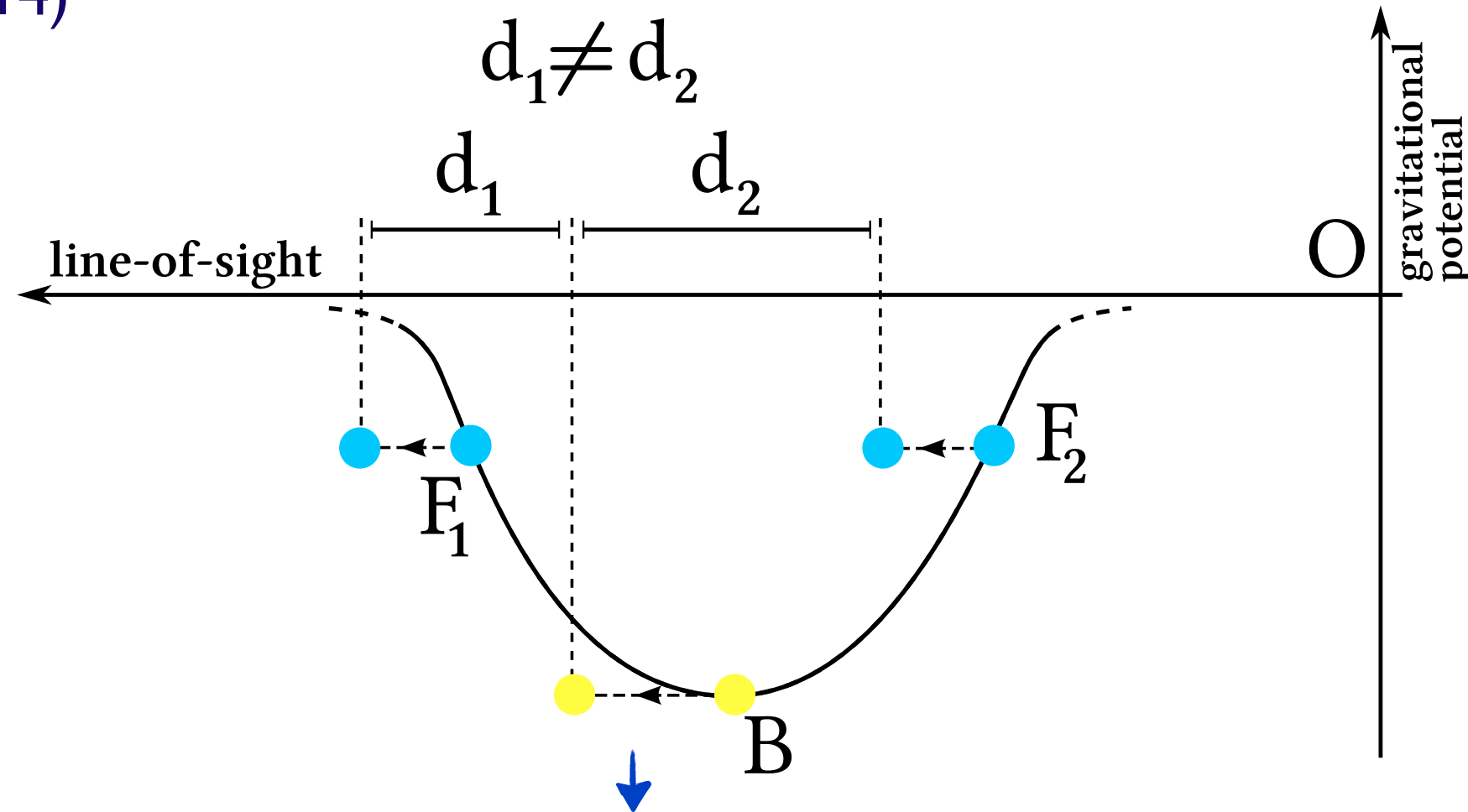
Taking all pairs of galaxies into account: **dipolar** modulation





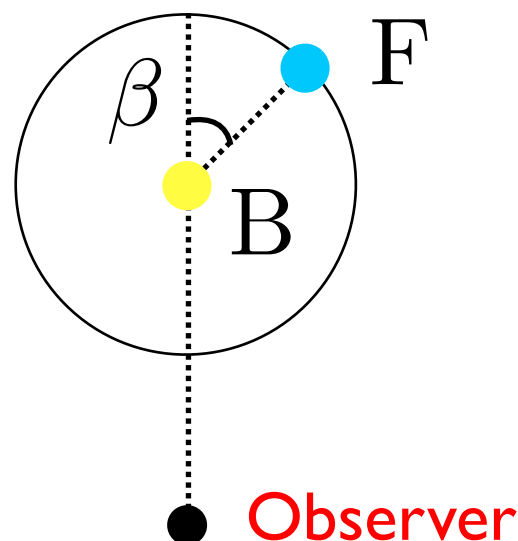
# Breaking of symmetry from gravitational redshift

CB, Hui & Gaztanaga (2014)



shift in position due to gravitational redshift

Taking all pairs of galaxies into account: **dipolar** modulation



We can **isolate** the effect by fitting for a dipole

# Extracting a dipole

$$\Delta(z, \mathbf{n}) = b \cdot \delta - \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \partial_r (\mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n})$$

$$+ (5s - 2) \int_0^r dr' \frac{r - r'}{2rr'} \Delta_\Omega (\Phi + \Psi)$$

Dipolar modulation

$$+ \left( 1 - \frac{\dot{\mathcal{H}}}{\mathcal{H}^2} + \frac{5s - 2}{r\mathcal{H}} - 5s + f^{\text{evol}} \right) \mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \dot{\mathbf{V}} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \partial_r \Psi$$

$$+ \frac{2 - 5s}{r} \int_0^r dr' (\Phi + \Psi) + 3\mathcal{H} \nabla^{-2} (\nabla \mathbf{V}) + \Psi + (5s - 2) \Phi$$

$$+ \frac{1}{\mathcal{H}} \dot{\Phi} + \left( \frac{\dot{\mathcal{H}}}{\mathcal{H}^2} + \frac{2 - 5s}{r\mathcal{H}} + 5s - f^{\text{evol}} \right) \left[ \Psi + \int_0^r dr' (\dot{\Phi} + \dot{\Psi}) \right]$$

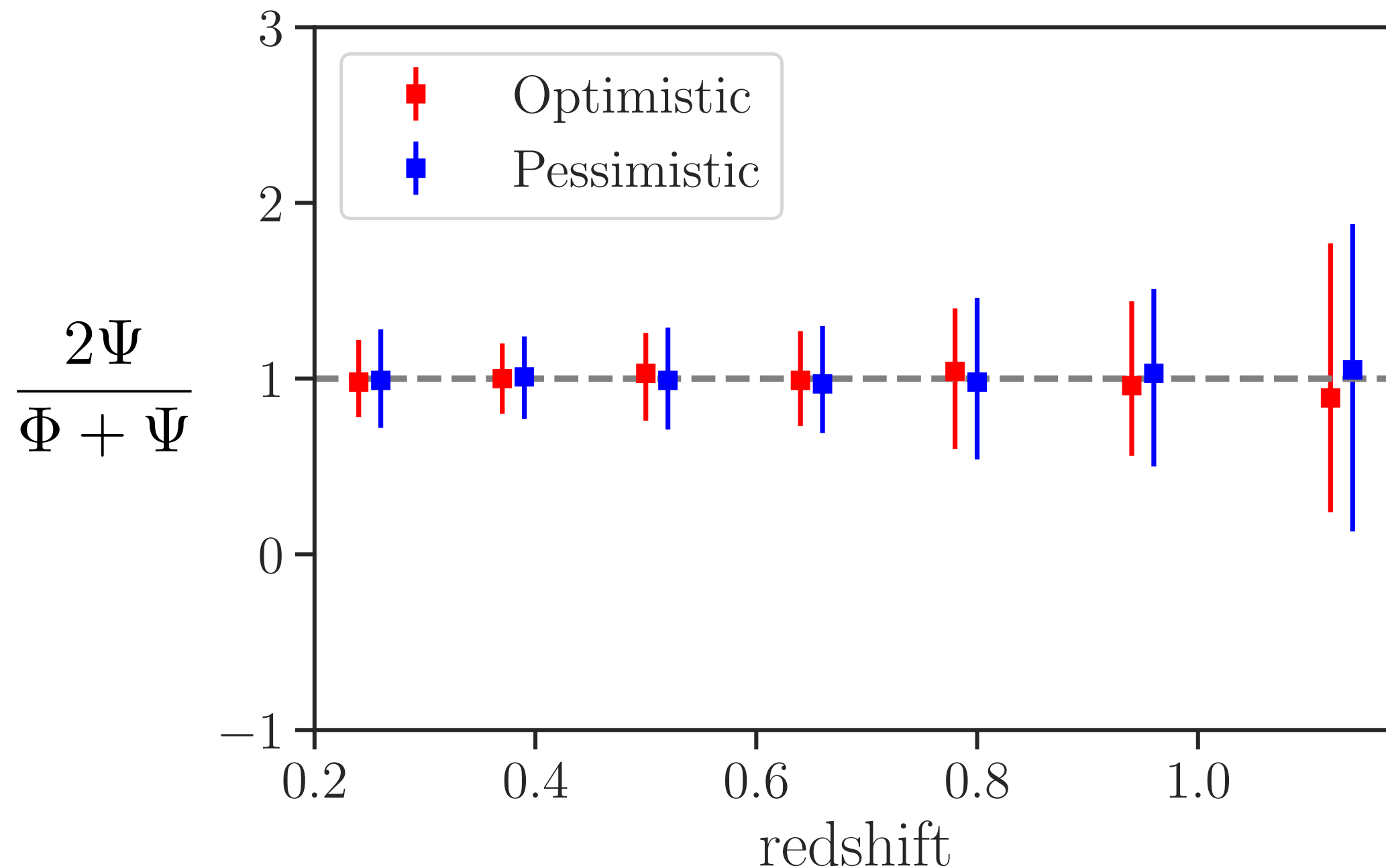
# Isolating gravitational redshift

- ◆ **First detection** expected with **DESI** (this year?), but low SNR  
10 millions galaxies, 14'000 square degrees
- ◆ **Square Kilometer Array** (2030)  
one billion galaxies, 30'000 square degrees

## Forecasts for SKA2

Redshift	0.35	0.45	0.55	0.65	0.75	0.85	0.95
Constraints	23%	24%	28%	33%	40%	48%	60%

# Testing for a gravitational slip



sensitive to  
20% difference

Detecting a gravitational slip would be  
a **smoking gun** for modified gravity

# Testing Euler equation

- ◆ **Euler equation** projected in the direction  $\mathbf{n}$

$$\dot{\mathbf{V}} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \mathcal{H}\mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \partial_r \Psi = 0$$

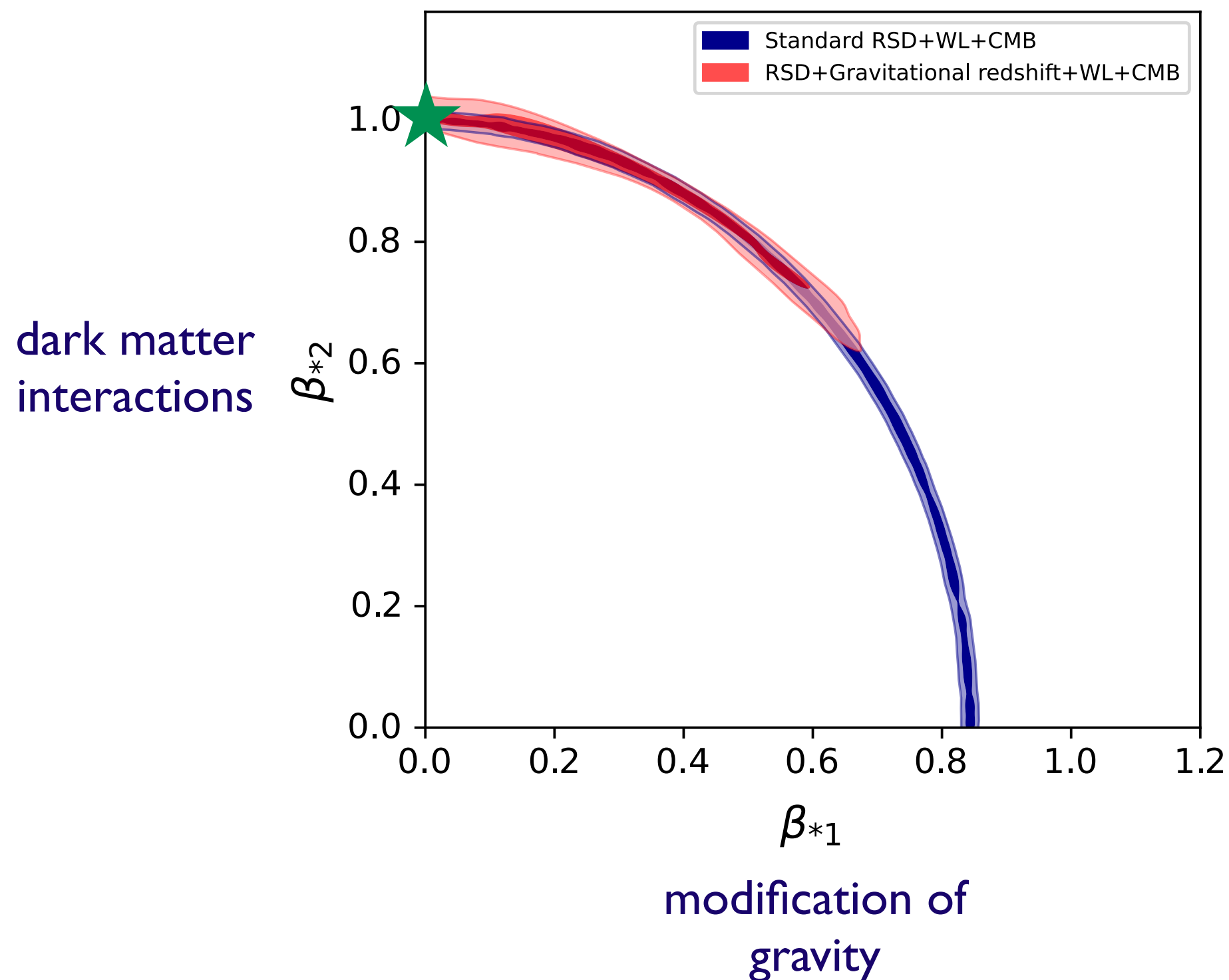
- ◆ We modify it with **two** scale-independent **parameters**

$$\dot{\mathbf{V}} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \mathcal{H} \left[ 1 + \underbrace{\Theta(z)}_{\text{friction}} \right] \mathbf{V} \cdot \mathbf{n} + \left[ 1 + \underbrace{\Gamma(z)}_{\text{additional force}} \right] \partial_r \Psi = 0$$

- ◆ With the **SKA** we can detect: change of 8% in friction and 16% in additional force

# Distinguish between Euler and modified gravity

We **simulate** data in a model where **dark matter interacts** with dark energy and gravity is given by General Relativity



# Conclusion

- ◆ **Current data** are mostly in agreement with  $\Lambda$ CDM
- ◆ **Future survey** will allow us to measure
  - Evolution of  $\Phi + \Psi$
  - Evolution of  $\Psi$
- ◆ We can test for
  - **gravitational slip** (modified gravity)
  - dark matter **interactions**
- ◆ We can **distinguish** the two scenarios