Quantum Phenomena as Emergent Dynamics of the Emergent Condensate Superfluid Medium

Adam Sheldrick[1]

[1]Independent Researcher

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Abstract

We develop a physical interpretation of quantum phenomena as emergent dynamics of a continuous superfluid medium. In this framework, quantum states are identified with coherent excitation modes of an underlying medium, while measurement, superposition, and entanglement arise from deterministic but nonlocal medium responses rather than fundamental probabilistic axioms. Spacetime geometry is not assumed as a primitive structure but emerges as an effective description of collective ECSM dynamics, consistent with the macroscopic behaviour explored in earlier cosmological and numerical studies. We show that key quantum phenomena—including wave–particle duality, state reduction, and nonlocal correlations—can be reinterpreted as phase-structured interactions within a globally connected medium. This approach provides a unified physical substrate linking quantum mechanics and cosmology, eliminating the need for fundamentally stochastic postulates while remaining compatible with observed quantum statistics.

1 Introduction

ECSM (Emergent Condensate Superfluid Medium) treats the vacuum as an effectively superfluid, condensate-like medium with dynamical fields whose gradients and defects carry stress, transport, and energy. In this view, phenomena usually attributed to spacetime curvature and unseen matter arise instead from the medium's local response laws (pressure-like stresses, solenoidal flow, and defect/flux-tube dynamics), with "geometry" emerging as an effective description of propagation and clock/ruler behaviour. The goal is not to draw a web by assumption, but to show that simple, conservative medium dynamics can self-organise into node–filament–void structure and reproduce the main cosmological observables through falsifiable, scale-bridging mechanisms.

Quantum mechanics has proven to be one of the most successful predictive frameworks in the history of physics, yet its conceptual foundations remain unsettled. While the mathematical formalism yields extraordinarily precise experimental agreement, the physical meaning of the quantum state, the nature of measurement, and the origin of nonlocal correlations continue to resist consensus. Standard interpretations either elevate probability and observer-dependence to fundamental status or invoke abstract mathematical structures disconnected from an underlying physical substrate.

In parallel, recent developments in cosmology and gravitational physics have increasingly suggested that spacetime geometry itself may be emergent rather than fundamental. Motivated by these trends, and by long-standing analogies between condensed matter systems and relativistic phenomena, we explore the possibility that quantum mechanics arises as an effective description of a deeper physical medium.

In preceding work, we introduced a superfluid ECSM framework capable of reproducing cosmological observables traditionally attributed to dark matter and cosmic expansion, without invoking new particle species or metric expansion of space. In that framework, gravitational phenomena arise from collective excitations and flow patterns within a continuous medium, while spacetime geometry appears as an effective macroscopic description rather than a fundamental entity. Emergent spacetime and collective excitations have been widely explored in analogue gravity and condensed-matter inspired models [1, 2, 3].

The present work extends this framework into the quantum domain. We propose that quantum states correspond to coherent excitation modes of the ECSM, and that quantum phenomena emerge from the dynamical behaviour of this medium under interaction. Superposition reflects the coexistence of multiple phase-coherent excitation pathways, measurement corresponds to irreversible mode selection induced by coupling to macroscopic degrees of freedom, and entanglement arises from the global connectivity of the medium rather than from superluminal signalling or abstract configuration space structures.

Crucially, this approach does not modify the empirical predictions of quantum mechanics. Instead, it seeks to reinterpret the formalism in physical terms, replacing axiomatic probabilistic postulates with deterministic

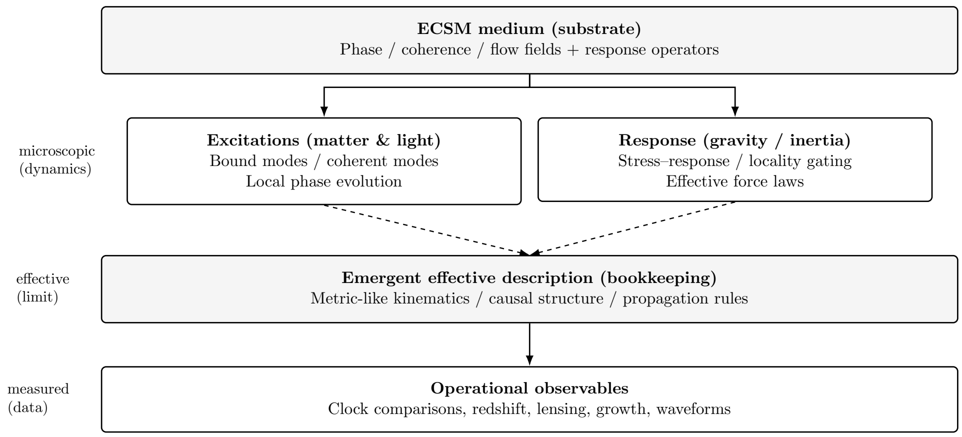

Figure 1: Schematic illustration of emergent spacetime in the ECSM framework. A single physical medium supports collective excitation modes whose long-wavelength dynamics admit an effective geometric description. Spacetime and metric structure arise as bookkeeping constructs governing propagation and causality, rather than as fundamental entities.

but nonlocally constrained dynamics. Apparent randomness emerges from sensitivity to initial conditions and environmental coupling, while quantum statistics arise from ensemble behaviour of the medium rather than intrinsic indeterminism.

This paper is organised as follows. In Section 2, we outline the physical ontology of the superfluid ECSM and clarify its distinction from historical ether concepts. Section 3 reformulates quantum states as medium excitations and discusses the emergence of wave–particle duality. Section 4 addresses measurement and state reduction as dynamical processes within the ECSM. Section 5 examines entanglement and nonlocal correlations as consequences of global medium coherence. Section 6 discusses consistency with relativistic causality and observed quantum statistics. We conclude in Section 7 with implications for unification and directions for future work.

2 Conceptual Framework: Emergence from a Superfluid Medium

In Papers I and II, we introduced a cosmological framework in which gravity, redshift, and large–scale structure arise from the dynamics of a continuous, superfluid–like ECSM medium rather than from spacetime curvature or universal metric expansion. In this work, we extend that framework to the interpretation of quantum phenomena, asking whether familiar features of quantum mechanics can be consistently understood as emergent manifestations of microscopic dynamics within the same underlying medium.

The approach adopted here is deliberately conservative. We do not propose any modification of the standard formalism of quantum mechanics, nor do we alter its empirically verified predictions. Instead, we explore whether the mathematical structures of quantum theory admit a physically transparent realisation when interpreted as effective descriptions of excitations, correlations, and coarse–grained observables within a superfluid medium.

2.1 Medium Ontology and Effective Description

The ECSM is assumed to be a continuous, Lorentz–symmetric medium in a ground-state configuration that is dynamically stable, homogeneous on large scales, and capable of supporting collective excitations. At sufficiently low energies, these excitations propagate linearly and exhibit relativistic dispersion relations, ensuring consistency with observed Lorentz invariance. This construction closely parallels well–studied analogue systems in condensed matter physics, such as superfluid helium and Bose–Einstein condensates, where relativistic effective field theories emerge from nonrelativistic microphysics.

In this view, quantum states do not represent fundamental indeterminacy of physical reality, but rather encode statistical and dynamical information about the configuration of the underlying medium at scales below observational resolution. The wavefunction is treated as an effective descriptor of a medium-supported excitation, not as a literal physical field existing in an abstract configuration space.

2.2 Emergence Rather Than Replacement

Crucially, this framework is not intended to replace quantum mechanics or to revise its axioms. All standard quantum phenomena — including interference, superposition, entanglement, and measurement statistics — are retained exactly as observed. The contribution of the ECSM model is interpretational: it provides a candidate physical substrate capable of supporting the mathematical structures of quantum theory without invoking fundamental nonlocality, ontological indeterminacy, or observer–dependent collapse as primitive features.

From this perspective, the apparent nonclassical features of quantum mechanics arise from:

- The collective behaviour of the medium's degrees of freedom,
- The limited accessibility of microphysical information,
- The projection of high–dimensional dynamical states onto reduced observational variables.

These features are familiar in many-body physics, where emergent descriptions exhibit probabilistic behaviour despite fully deterministic underlying dynamics.

2.3 Relation to Existing Emergent and Hydrodynamic Approaches

The present framework is conceptually aligned with several existing approaches, including hydrodynamic interpretations of quantum mechanics, analogue gravity models, and emergent spacetime scenarios. However, it differs in an important respect: the same medium invoked here underlies both cosmological and quantum phenomena. No separate ontological layers are introduced for gravity, quantum fields, or spacetime geometry.

Early hydrodynamic formulations of quantum mechanics date back to Madelung and de Broglie [4, 5].

This unification constrains the model and enhances its falsifiability. Any interpretation of quantum phenomena must remain consistent with the cosmological and dynamical results established in Papers I and II, including observational tests involving supernovae, baryon acoustic oscillations, the cosmic microwave background, and structure growth.

2.4 Scope and Limitations

This paper does not attempt to derive quantum mechanics from first principles, nor does it claim a complete microphysical model of the ECSM. Instead, we aim to demonstrate internal consistency: that a superfluid ECSM cosmology can support a coherent and physically grounded interpretation of quantum phenomena without conflict with established experimental results.

More speculative ontological claims are intentionally deferred. The focus here is on interpretation, not revision, and on physical clarity rather than metaphysical completeness.

Measurement in this framework is understood as a local interaction between an excitation of the ECSM and a macroscopic apparatus that is itself composed of many coupled degrees of freedom. The interaction selects a single dynamically compatible excitation mode while leaving other, non-interacting degrees of freedom unaffected.

This selection process is irreversible at the macroscopic level due to environmental coupling and information dispersion within the medium. As a result, global phase coherence across the full excitation manifold is no longer accessible, even though the underlying dynamics remain continuous and deterministic.

Wavefunction collapse is therefore not interpreted as a physical signal propagating through space, nor as a fundamental discontinuity in the dynamics. Instead, it is an effective description of local, irreversible mode selection within a coherent medium, arising from interaction-induced decoherence rather than from intrinsic randomness.

Experimental analogues such as walking droplets demonstrate emergent wave–particle duality from classical fluids [6, 7].

3 Entanglement as Non-Separable Medium Excitation

3.1 Non-separable ontology

In the present framework, quantum entanglement is interpreted not as a correlation between independent subsystems, but as a single, non-separable excitation of the underlying ECSM. What are conventionally described as multiple particles correspond instead to spatially distributed manifestations of one coherent excitation state.

This interpretation departs from classical intuitions based on separability, in which physical systems possess independently well-defined states prior to interaction. In contrast, the ECSM medium supports collective modes whose dynamical description cannot be factorized into subsystem components without loss of physical content.

The entangled state therefore represents a unified physical configuration of the medium, rather than a statistical relationship between distinct objects. Correlations observed in measurement arise from probing different projections of the same global excitation.

3.2 Correlation without superluminal influence

Because entangled systems correspond to a single excitation state, no signal propagation or causal influence is required to account for observed correlations between spatially separated measurements. Measurement at one location does not transmit information to another, but instead locally selects a projection of the shared excitation.

The appearance of nonlocality arises from imposing a classical decomposition onto a fundamentally non-separable state. When measurements are interpreted as local mode selection events acting on a shared medium excitation, correlations emerge without violating relativistic causality.

This perspective reproduces the statistical predictions of standard quantum mechanics, including violations of Bell inequalities, while avoiding the need for superluminal communication or hidden-variable signaling mechanisms.

3.3 Compatibility with Bell-type constraints

Bell-type theorems constrain theories that assume both locality and separability. The present framework explicitly abandons separability at the ontological level while maintaining local dynamics of interaction. As a result, Bell inequality violations do not imply nonlocal causation, but rather reflect the inapplicability of classical separable descriptions.

The ECSM-based interpretation is therefore compatible with experimental tests of entanglement, not by modifying quantum predictions, but by reinterpreting their physical meaning. The correlations are encoded in the shared excitation structure of the medium from the outset, rather than being generated dynamically at the time of measurement.

Entanglement and Bell-type correlations (scope note). ECSM provides an ontological picture in which correlated quantum states correspond to non-separable phase relationships of jointly prepared medium excitations, while measurement corresponds to local decoherence and energy absorption that terminates coherence in the detector. This work does not introduce a local hidden-variable completion of quantum theory; rather, it is compatible with standard quantum-optical statistics, including Bell-type correlations, while offering a medium-based interpretation of why coherent non-separability can persist prior to detection.

Photons as coherent medium excitations (interpretive note). In the ECSM picture, electromagnetic radiation is treated as a coherent propagating excitation of the underlying medium, while discrete "photon" detection events correspond to localized energy absorption that destroys phase coherence in the detector degrees of freedom. In this view, interference reflects the evolution of a coherent mode prior to detection, whereas quantization reflects the discreteness of matter absorption channels. This reframing does not modify standard quantum-optical predictions; it provides a single-medium ontology for why wave-like propagation and particle-like detection coexist operationally.

3.4 Relation to quantum information descriptions

Within quantum information theory, entanglement is treated as a resource enabling correlations that cannot be simulated classically. In the present view, this resource corresponds physically to the coherence of extended medium excitations that remain globally structured despite spatial separation.

Operations such as entanglement swapping or teleportation are interpreted as controlled manipulations of excitation structure within the medium, rather than literal transmission of quantum states. No information is conveyed faster than light; instead, classical communication is required to compare locally selected outcomes.

This interpretation preserves the operational formalism of quantum information while providing a concrete physical picture for the origin of non-classical correlations.

4 Classicality and Emergent Spacetime

4.1 Decoherence as phase delocalization in the medium

Within the ECSM framework, decoherence is understood as the progressive delocalization of phase coherence across inaccessible degrees of freedom of the medium. Rather than representing a fundamental loss of quantum information, decoherence corresponds to the redistribution of phase structure into modes that are no longer experimentally resolvable.

As a system interacts with its environment, the initially coherent excitation becomes entangled with a growing number of local medium modes. This process suppresses observable interference between distinct projections, yielding an effectively classical mixture when restricted to the accessible subsystem.

Crucially, this transition does not require the introduction of stochastic collapse dynamics. The underlying excitation of the medium remains unitary and globally coherent, while local observables exhibit classical statistics due to phase inaccessibility.

This process aligns with decoherence-based accounts of classicality [8, 9].

4.2 Emergence of classical trajectories

The appearance of classical trajectories arises when medium excitations become sufficiently localized in both configuration and phase space that interference between neighbouring paths is dynamically suppressed. In this regime, the excitation follows a stable propagation channel through the medium, approximating a classical worldline.

These trajectories are not fundamental entities, but effective descriptions of robust excitation modes that persist under environmental coupling. Their apparent determinism reflects the stability of these modes rather than the absence of underlying quantum structure.

Classical mechanics thus emerges as a coarse-grained description of excitation dynamics in a regime where decoherence timescales are short compared to observational resolution.

4.3 Spacetime as an effective bookkeeping structure

In the present framework, spacetime is not assumed as a fundamental background. Instead, it arises as an effective bookkeeping structure that organizes the propagation of excitations through the ECSM.

At long wavelengths and low energies, collective excitation modes admit a geometric description in which distances, durations, and causal relations can be consistently defined. The metric structure commonly attributed to spacetime reflects the response of the medium to excitation propagation rather than an independent ontological entity.

This viewpoint aligns with analogue gravity models, in which effective metrics emerge from underlying condensed-matter systems. Spacetime curvature and causal structure are therefore interpreted as emergent descriptors of medium dynamics, valid only within a limited regime of scale and excitation.

4.4 Locality and causality in the emergent description

Although the underlying medium supports globally coherent excitations, interactions with measuring apparatuses remain local. Causality is preserved at the level of observable interactions, as local coupling governs mode selection and information exchange.

The emergent spacetime description inherits this locality, even though the ontological description in terms of medium excitations is non-separable. Apparent nonlocal correlations arise from shared excitation structure, not from violations of causal propagation.

Thus, relativistic causality is respected within the emergent spacetime framework, while the deeper ECSM description provides a unified account of quantum coherence, entanglement, and classical emergence.

5 Relation to Existing Interpretations of Quantum Mechanics

The present framework is not proposed as a competing interpretation in the traditional sense, but rather as an ontological substrate from which several existing interpretations can be understood as effective or partial descriptions. In this section, we briefly clarify the relationship between the superfluid ECSM picture and commonly discussed interpretive frameworks.

5.1 Copenhagen-type interpretations

In Copenhagen-style interpretations, the wavefunction is treated as a tool for computing probabilities, with measurement postulates introduced to connect theory to observation. Within the ECSM framework, the operational success of this approach is recovered: the wavefunction corresponds to an effective description of excitation amplitudes, and measurement outcomes follow standard quantum statistics.

However, the present model removes the need for a fundamental measurement postulate. Collapse is interpreted as local mode selection arising from medium–apparatus coupling, rather than as a discontinuous physical process. The Copenhagen formalism thus appears as a pragmatic effective theory applicable when deeper ontological structure is not explicitly modeled.

5.2 Many-Worlds and branching descriptions

The Many-Worlds interpretation maintains unitary evolution by positing branching into non-interacting sectors corresponding to different measurement outcomes. In the ECSM framework, global coherence of the excitation is preserved, but no literal branching of worlds is required.

Instead, different outcomes correspond to locally accessible projections of a single, globally coherent excitation. Apparent branching reflects the dynamical inaccessibility of alternative phase sectors following decoherence, rather than the ontological proliferation of universes. The ECSM description reproduces the empirical content of Many-Worlds while avoiding explicit commitment to multiple realized worlds.

5.3 de Broglie–Bohm theory

Pilot-wave formulations introduce additional variables to restore determinism, with particle trajectories guided by a nonlocal wavefunction. The ECSM framework shares with Bohmian mechanics the view that quantum phenomena arise from an underlying physical substrate.

However, no additional point-particle ontology or guiding equation is required. Instead, apparent particle-like behavior emerges from stable excitation modes of the medium. Nonlocal correlations arise from shared excitation structure rather than explicit nonlocal forces, offering a conceptually distinct route to similar phenomenology.

The framework differs fundamentally from Many-Worlds [10], pilot-wave theories [11], and epistemic interpretations such as QBism [12].

5.4 Information-theoretic and epistemic approaches

Information-theoretic interpretations treat the quantum state as encoding knowledge, belief, or informational constraints rather than physical reality. While such approaches capture important operational features, they remain agnostic about underlying ontology.

The present framework complements these views by providing a concrete physical picture that reproduces quantum information behavior without reducing the theory to epistemic statements alone. Information emerges as a derived concept associated with excitation structure and phase accessibility in the medium.

5.5 Summary of interpretive position

Overall, the superfluid ECSM framework does not invalidate existing interpretations, but rather contextualizes them. Each interpretation captures a subset of the behavior arising from excitation dynamics in the medium, often emphasizing operational consistency over ontological completeness.

By treating quantum phenomena as emergent features of a coherent physical substrate, the present model aims to unify superposition, entanglement, measurement, and classical emergence within a single, minimally extended physical picture.

6 Limits, Scope, and Experimental Signatures

The framework developed in this work is intended as a microscopic, dynamical account of quantum phenomena emerging from a superfluid ECSM substrate. As such, it possesses a well-defined domain of applicability, clear theoretical limits, and a set of potential experimental signatures that distinguish it from standard quantum mechanics without contradicting its established successes.

6.1 Domain of Validity

The superfluid ECSM description is formulated as an effective theory operating below a characteristic cutoff scale associated with the coherence length and excitation spectrum of the underlying medium. At length scales much larger than this coherence scale, the dynamics reduce to conventional quantum mechanics, reproducing standard wave evolution, interference, entanglement correlations, and Born-rule statistics to high precision.

At scales approaching the microphysical structure of the ECSM, deviations from ideal quantum behaviour may arise. These deviations are expected to be suppressed in typical laboratory settings but could become relevant in carefully engineered mesoscopic systems operating near coherence thresholds.

6.2 Relation to Standard Quantum Mechanics

Within its domain of validity, the theory is constructed to be operationally indistinguishable from standard non-relativistic quantum mechanics in all experiments performed to date. The wavefunction retains its role as an effective description of system dynamics, while probabilistic outcomes emerge from uncontrolled environmental coupling and phase decoherence within the ECSM.

Importantly, the framework does not modify the formal structure of quantum mechanics at the level of Hilbert space, operators, or measurement statistics. Instead, it supplies a physical mechanism underlying these structures, analogous to how fluid mechanics underlies continuum hydrodynamics without altering its macroscopic equations.

6.3 Limits and Breakdown Scenarios

The theory predicts that ideal quantum coherence is not fundamental but contingent upon sustained phase stability within the ECSM medium. In extreme regimes—such as high-energy density environments, strong external perturbations, or systems with engineered isolation beyond standard decoherence control—small departures from unitary evolution may arise.

Such departures are not expected to violate causality or no-signalling constraints and do not permit superluminal communication. Instead, they would manifest as anomalous decoherence rates, subtle phase diffusion, or departures from perfect interference visibility.

6.4 Ultraviolet thresholds and effective-medium breakdown

In the ECSM framework, electromagnetic radiation is described as a coherent excitation of a condensed superfluid medium during propagation, while discrete detection events correspond to localized, irreversible energy transfer through medium–matter coupling channels. This viewpoint naturally recasts ultraviolet (UV) "threshold" phenomena as channel-opening conditions rather than as evidence for intrinsically particulate propagation.

For a material with work function Φ, photoemission occurs only when the incident excitation admits a coupling pathway capable of destabilizing a bound electronic mode. Operationally this appears as a threshold frequency ν_0 and the familiar linear relation

$$K_{\mathrm{max}} = h\nu - \Phi, \tag{1}$$

where K_{max} is the maximum electron kinetic energy. In ECSM, the linear scaling reflects the structure of the activated absorption channel and the characteristic action scale governing medium–matter coupling, not a requirement that the propagating excitation itself be quantized into particles.

This also clarifies why intensity does not compensate for sub-threshold frequency. Increasing intensity increases the total excitation power transported by the medium but does not necessarily increase the local phase-gradient structure required to access a discrete coupling channel. Below ν_0, the excitation energy can be redistributed within the medium and dissipated without producing electron emission; above ν_0, intensity predominantly controls the event rate rather than the activation condition.

More broadly, UV behaviour delineates the regime in which a smooth effective-medium description remains adequate. Let $k_\star$ denote the characteristic inverse length scale at which condensate microstructure and additional degrees of freedom become dynamically relevant. For $k \ll k_\star$ the excitation is well-described by coherent propagation in a continuum medium. As $k \gtrsim k_\star$, additional absorption, scattering, and conversion channels may open, signalling a breakdown of the lowest-order effective description and motivating the need for an explicit microphysical (UV-complete) specification of the condensate dynamics.

6.5 Potential Experimental Signatures

Although challenging, several classes of experiments may offer indirect probes of the underlying dynamics proposed here:

- **Mesoscopic Interferometry**: Interference experiments involving increasingly massive or extended systems may exhibit deviations from standard decoherence models if phase coherence becomes limited by ECSM dynamics rather than environmental coupling alone.

- **Decoherence Time Scaling**: Precision measurements of decoherence rates as functions of system size, geometry, or excitation density could reveal non-standard scaling behaviours inconsistent with purely environmental models.

- **Phase Noise in Isolated Systems**: Ultra-isolated quantum systems may display residual phase noise not attributable to known sources, reflecting intrinsic fluctuations of the underlying medium.

- **Entanglement Persistence**: Long-baseline or long-duration entanglement experiments could test whether correlation decay exhibits signatures beyond conventional decoherence.

These effects are expected to be subtle and may lie near the limits of current experimental sensitivity. The absence of observed deviations to date therefore places only weak constraints on the framework and is fully consistent with existing data.

6.6 Scope and Non-Claims

This work does not claim to provide a complete theory of quantum gravity, nor does it propose violations of relativistic causality, the no-signalling principle, or established quantum field theory results. The superfluid ECSM is treated as a pre-geometric substrate whose detailed microphysics remains to be specified in future work.

The primary aim of the present framework is explanatory rather than predictive: to supply a coherent physical ontology underlying quantum phenomena while remaining empirically conservative.

6.7 Outlook

Future work may extend this framework to relativistic quantum fields, explore connections to emergent spacetime dynamics, and investigate whether analogous ECSM structures could underlie gravitational phenomena. Advances in quantum control and precision measurement may also enable increasingly stringent tests of the ideas outlined here.

Regardless of its ultimate empirical fate, the framework demonstrates that quantum mechanics admits a consistent, realist, and dynamical interpretation grounded in physical processes rather than abstract postulates.

7 Quantum Interference and Decoherence

7.1 Interference as phase-coherent excitation pathways

Quantum interference phenomena, such as the double-slit and Mach–Zehnder interferometer experiments, arise naturally in the ECSM framework as consequences of phase-coherent excitation pathways within the medium. A single excitation propagates through multiple spatially distinct routes while maintaining a shared phase structure.

Interference patterns emerge from the constructive and destructive superposition of these phase contributions at detection. No assumption is made that a particle traverses multiple classical trajectories simultaneously; rather, the medium supports a single extended excitation whose accessible projections depend on boundary conditions and geometry.

Photons as coherent medium excitations (interpretive note). In the ECSM picture, electromagnetic radiation is treated as a coherent propagating excitation of the underlying medium, while discrete "photon" detection events correspond to localized energy absorption that destroys phase coherence in the detector degrees of freedom. In this view, interference reflects the evolution of a coherent mode prior to detection, whereas quantization reflects the discreteness of matter absorption channels. This reframing does not modify standard quantum-optical predictions; it provides a single-medium ontology for why wave-like propagation and particle-like detection coexist operationally.

7.2 Decoherence and the emergence of classical behavior

Decoherence corresponds to the progressive loss of phase accessibility between excitation modes due to uncontrolled coupling with environmental degrees of freedom in the medium. As phase correlations become irretrievable, interference effects are suppressed and classical behavior emerges.

In this framework, decoherence is a dynamical, physical process rather than a postulate. Classicality arises when the effective excitation structure becomes locally well-defined and insensitive to global phase relations.

8 Photoelectric Effect and Polarisation in the ECSM Framework

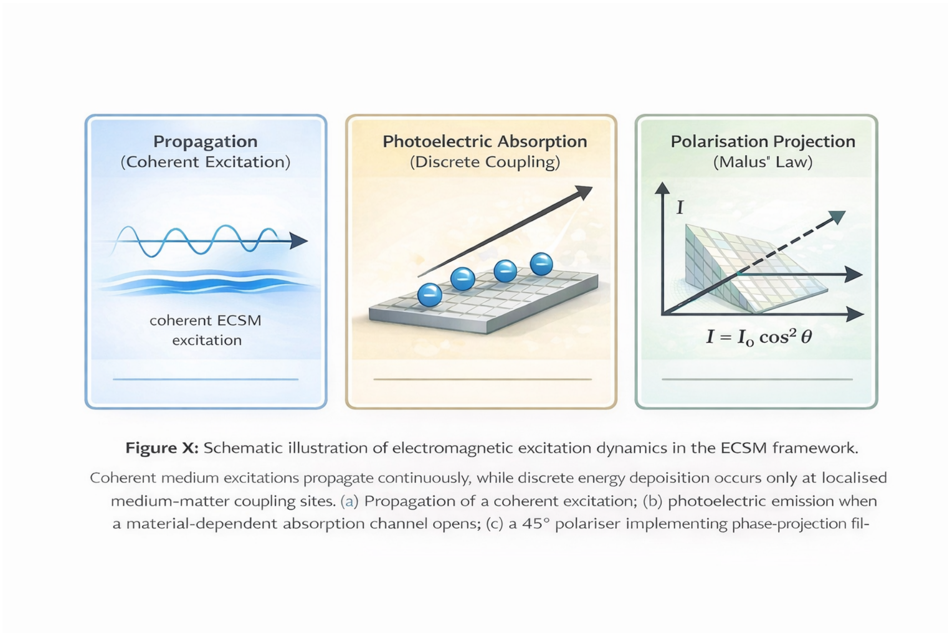

Figure X: Schematic illustration of electromagnetic excitation dynamics in the ECSM framework. Coherent medium excitations propagate continuously, while discrete energy depoisition occurs only at localised medium-matter coupling sites. (a) Propagation of a coherent excitation; (b) photoelectric emission when a material-dependent absorption channel opens; (c) a 45° polariser implementing phase-projection fil-

Figure 2: Schematic illustration of electromagnetic excitation dynamics in the ECSM framework. Coherent medium excitations propagate continuously through space, while discrete energy deposition occurs only at localized medium–matter coupling sites. (a) Propagation of a coherent ECSM excitation. (b) Photoelectric emission arising when a material-dependent absorption channel opens. (c) A 45° polariser implementing phase projection, reproducing Malus' law through deterministic coherence filtering.

8.1 Photoelectric Effect

In the ECSM framework, electromagnetic radiation is interpreted as a coherent propagating excitation of the underlying condensate medium, while discrete "photon" detection events correspond to localized, irreversible energy absorption by matter degrees of freedom. The photoelectric effect arises naturally within this picture without requiring fundamentally particulate light quanta.

A coherent electromagnetic excitation incident on a material surface couples to bound electronic modes of the medium–matter system. Energy transfer occurs only when the excitation frequency exceeds a material-dependent threshold, corresponding to the minimum energy required to destabilize and liberate an electronic bound mode. Below this threshold, coherent excitation energy is redistributed within the medium but cannot produce electron emission.

Above threshold, absorption is localized and quantized because electronic degrees of freedom admit only discrete absorption channels. The observed linear relation

$$E_{\mathrm{e}} = h\nu - \Phi$$

is recovered as an effective bookkeeping relation, where $h\nu$ represents the energy density carried by the coherent excitation and Φ is the work function associated with medium–matter coupling. The apparent "particle-like" nature of light in the photoelectric effect thus reflects quantized absorption by matter, not quantized propagation of the excitation itself.

8.2 Polarisation and Projection Effects

Polarisation in the ECSM framework corresponds to the orientation of phase-coherent excitation modes within the medium. A linear polariser acts as a projection operator that selectively couples to one component of the excitation's phase structure while inhibiting orthogonal components through destructive interference and medium response.

For an incident excitation with polarisation angle θ relative to the transmission axis of a polarising filter, the transmitted intensity follows Malus' law,

$$I = I_0 \cos^2\theta,$$

which arises from the squared projection of the excitation's coherent phase component onto the allowed transmission mode.

In particular, a 45°-oriented polariser reduces the transmitted intensity by a factor of $1/2$, not because individual photons are randomly absorbed, but because only half of the excitation's coherent phase structure remains dynamically compatible with the filter. The remaining phase component is redirected into inaccessible medium degrees of freedom, resulting in effective attenuation.

8.3 Discrete Detection and Classical Limits

When polarised or unpolarised electromagnetic excitations interact with detectors, absorption occurs via localized medium–matter coupling events. These events destroy phase coherence locally, producing discrete energy deposition consistent with photon-counting statistics. The coexistence of continuous propagation and discrete detection is therefore a natural outcome of coherent medium dynamics combined with quantized matter response.

This interpretation preserves all standard quantum-optical predictions while providing a unified physical explanation for wave-like propagation, polarisation effects, and particle-like detection within a single emergent-medium ontology.

Relation to the Standard Quantum Interpretation

The ECSM interpretation preserves all experimentally verified predictions of quantum electrodynamics, including threshold frequencies, instantaneous emission, polarisation statistics, and photon-counting behaviour. The distinction lies not in observable outcomes but in ontology: light propagation is treated as a coherent medium excitation, while discreteness arises from quantized matter absorption. This separation resolves the apparent wave–particle duality as a dynamical interplay between continuous propagation and localized decoherence, rather than a fundamental ambiguity of the radiation field itself.

9 Strong Interaction as Phase-Constrained Coupling in the ECSM

In the ECSM framework, elementary particles are not treated as point-like objects, but as stable, localized excitation structures of an underlying coherent condensate medium. Interactions traditionally described as forces instead arise from energetic and phase-continuity constraints imposed on the medium.

9.1 Emergent Internal Phase Sectors

Composite excitations such as protons and neutrons consist of multiple internal excitation modes that must remain phase-locked to preserve stability. In three spatial dimensions, a localized, divergence-free excitation requires a minimum of three independent internal phase components corresponding to longitudinal and transverse modes of the condensate. These components cannot be independently isolated without violating phase continuity, leading to an effective three-sector internal structure. This naturally reproduces an SU(3)-like symmetry without postulating a fundamental gauge group, with the triplication arising as a geometric and coherence requirement of the medium itself.

9.2 Confinement and Linear Effective Potential

Attempts to separate the internal excitation modes of a composite particle disrupt phase coherence and force the condensate to continuously sustain new deformation structure. The energetic cost of maintaining this stretched excitation increases proportionally with separation, yielding an effective linear potential,

$$V(r) \sim \sigma r, \tag{2}$$

where σ represents the condensate strain energy per unit length. Confinement thus emerges dynamically as an energy-minimization constraint rather than from a fundamental force mediator.

9.3 Saturation of Nuclear Binding

Phase-locking between composite excitations is inherently local. Once neighbouring nucleons have achieved compatible boundary conditions, additional nucleons cannot significantly reduce the total condensate deformation energy. As a result, nuclear binding saturates naturally, explaining the observed plateau in binding energy per nucleon and the finite size of atomic nuclei without invoking short-range force carriers.

9.4 Stability of Nuclear Matter

Unlike gravitational interactions, which arise from large-scale coherent deformation of the medium and accumulate without bound, phase-constrained coupling saturates and eventually breaks down under compression. At high densities, internal phase coherence within nucleons becomes increasingly difficult to maintain, generating an effective resistance to further compression. This provides a natural explanation for nuclear incompressibility and the stability of dense nuclear matter against gravitational collapse.

In this view, the strong interaction, confinement, and nuclear stability emerge as manifestations of condensate coherence constraints rather than as independent fundamental forces.

9.5 Relation to Quantum Chromodynamics and the Standard Model

The ECSM framework does not seek to replace the Standard Model at the level of phenomenological prediction. Instead, it provides a physical ontology underlying the effective field-theoretic descriptions employed by quantum chromodynamics (QCD) and related gauge theories. In this interpretation, quark and gluon degrees of freedom correspond to internal phase-resolved excitation modes and condensate strain redistribution, respectively.

At short length scales and high energies, coherence constraints weaken and the condensate responds approximately linearly, giving rise to effective asymptotic freedom. In this regime, perturbative QCD accurately describes scattering processes. At larger scales, phase coherence enforces confinement, and energy injected into the medium reorganizes into stable composite excitations, producing hadronization and jet fragmentation without requiring fundamental force mediators.

Gauge symmetries thus arise as effective bookkeeping structures encoding condensate response rather than as fundamental dynamical principles.

9.6 Falsifiability and Experimental Signatures

Because the strong interaction emerges from condensate coherence constraints rather than fundamental forces, the ECSM framework predicts deviations from conventional expectations in extreme regimes. Confinement is expected to fail abruptly when phase coherence cannot be maintained, rather than weakening smoothly via a running coupling. Additionally, effective nuclear binding properties may exhibit subtle dependence on background excitation states, density, or electromagnetic environment.

The framework further predicts the absence of independently propagating gluonic quasiparticles, consistent with the empirical absence of free gluon detection. These features provide avenues for experimental discrimination between fundamental-force and emergent-medium interpretations of the strong interaction.

9.7 Medium Strain Matching and Excitation Coupling

In the ECSM framework, particle-like excitations correspond to localized deformations of a continuous condensate medium. Each excitation imposes boundary conditions on the condensate phase, density, and flow, incurring an energetic cost associated with medium distortion.

When two compatible excitations approach, the condensate can reduce its total energy by merging their deformation fields, smoothing gradients and minimizing strain. The resulting coupling is not a force in the Newtonian sense, but an emergent consequence of energy minimization within a shared deformation configuration.

This mechanism underlies effective attraction across multiple physical scales and provides a unified origin for binding phenomena without invoking fundamental interaction mediators.

9.8 Phase Locking and Emergent Confinement

Composite excitations such as protons and neutrons consist of multiple internal excitation modes that must remain phase-locked in order to exist stably. Separation of these modes disrupts phase coherence and requires the condensate to continuously reconstruct excitation structure, incurring an energy cost proportional to separation.

As a result, the effective interaction potential increases linearly with distance,

$$V(r) \sim \sigma r, \tag{3}$$

producing confinement without invoking fundamental force carriers. This behavior reflects the energetic cost of maintaining coherence in the condensate rather than the exchange of mediating particles.

9.9 Why the Gluon Description is Effective

Quantum chromodynamics successfully models high-energy strong interactions by encoding condensate response through effective gauge fields and exchange diagrams. Within the ECSM framework, gluons correspond to collective redistribution of condensate strain and phase rather than independently propagating particles.

Color charge labels internal phase sectors of composite excitations, while gauge symmetries reflect redundancies in the effective description of medium dynamics. Asymptotic freedom arises naturally as coherence constraints weaken at short length scales, permitting approximately linear condensate response.

The empirical absence of free gluons is therefore expected, as gluonic behavior represents collective medium reconfiguration rather than fundamental excitations.

9.10 Weak Interaction as Phase Chirality

Within the ECSM framework, the weak interaction is interpreted as a manifestation of intrinsic phase chirality in coherent excitation modes of the condensate medium. Unlike electromagnetic interactions, which are symmetric under parity inversion, certain phase-structured excitations admit only one dynamically stable handedness.

These chiral modes arise when the condensate supports directional phase transport, such that left-handed and right-handed phase evolutions couple asymmetrically to the medium. As a result, only one handed class of fermionic excitation remains dynamically stable and capable of sustained propagation.

This provides a natural, non-postulated origin for parity violation and the observed $V - A$ structure of weak interactions. In this view, the weak interaction does not correspond to an exchange force but rather reflects the selective survival of chiral phase modes within the condensate.

9.11 Mass as Resistance to Phase Acceleration

In the ECSM framework, mass is not treated as an intrinsic property of a particle, but as an emergent measure of resistance to changes in phase-coherent excitation structure. An excitation corresponds to a stable configuration of phase, density, and flow within the condensate medium.

Acceleration of such an excitation requires reconfiguration of its internal phase relations and the surrounding medium response. This reconfiguration incurs an energetic cost proportional to the rate of phase acceleration, giving rise to inertial behavior.

Mass therefore emerges as a dynamical quantity associated with the medium's resistance to accelerated phase evolution. This interpretation naturally reproduces relativistic mass–energy relations without invoking a separate mass-generating field.

9.12 Unified Interaction Picture

Within ECSM, electromagnetic, weak, strong, and gravitational phenomena arise as distinct dynamical responses of a single underlying condensate medium operating in different excitation regimes. No fundamental force separation is assumed.

Electromagnetic phenomena correspond to linear phase-gradient propagation, while strong interactions reflect nonlinear phase locking and strain minimization between composite excitation structures. Weak interactions emerge from chiral phase instabilities, and gravitational effects arise from collective background deformation induced by large-scale excitation energy density.

In this view, conventional force-carrier descriptions function as effective languages appropriate to specific regimes, rather than indicating distinct fundamental interactions. ECSM therefore provides a unified substrate in which all observed interactions are emergent, scale-dependent expressions of condensate dynamics.

9.13 CP Violation and Time Asymmetry

In the ECSM framework, CP violation emerges naturally from the chiral nature of phase-coherent excitation modes underlying weak interactions. Once excitation dynamics admit only a single stable handedness, the combined charge–parity transformation no longer corresponds to an equivalent physical evolution.

Phase-coherent structures evolve through the condensate in a manner that depends on their winding history and medium coupling. The presence of dissipation and environmental phase leakage breaks time-reversal symmetry at the level of excitation dynamics, rendering CP-transformed processes physically inequivalent.

Time asymmetry therefore arises as a consequence of irreversible phase decoherence in chiral excitation modes. In this view, weak CP violation and the observed arrow of time share a common origin in the directional stability of phase evolution within the condensate medium.

9.14 Nuclear Binding and Saturation

In ECSM, nucleons are interpreted as composite, phase-locked excitation structures that impose localized strain and phase boundary conditions on the condensate medium. When two such excitations approach, binding occurs if their deformation fields are compatible and can merge into a lower-energy shared configuration.

This binding mechanism is intrinsically short-ranged, as effective energy reduction requires direct overlap of deformation fields. As additional nucleons are introduced, phase compatibility constraints and medium frustration limit further energy minimization, leading naturally to nuclear saturation.

The strong interaction therefore reflects nonlinear phase-locking and strain minimization dynamics of the condensate rather than a fundamental exchange force.

9.15 Emergent Metric and Equivalence

Within ECSM, gravitational phenomena arise from collective deformation of the condensate medium induced by large-scale excitation energy density. These deformations modify effective phase propagation speeds and flow structures, resulting in curved excitation trajectories.

All excitations couple identically to the condensate background, leading to universal response independent of internal structure. This universality gives rise to the equivalence principle, with inertial and gravitational behavior emerging from the same medium dynamics.

Spacetime geometry is therefore interpreted as an effective description of condensate state rather than a fundamental entity, with gravity representing the macroscopic limit of collective medium response.

10 Unified Interaction Regimes in the ECSM Framework

Within the ECSM framework, all observed interactions arise from a single underlying condensate medium, with distinct physical regimes emerging from different excitation structures and coupling behaviors.

10.1 Strong Interaction: Phase Locking and Saturation

Composite excitations such as protons and neutrons consist of multiple internal phase-coherent modes of the condensate. Stability requires mutual phase locking among these modes. When compatible excitations approach, their deformation fields overlap and phase-locked configurations reduce total condensate strain energy, producing bound states. Saturation arises naturally, as only a finite number of neighboring excitations can maintain compatible phase locking. The effective description in terms of gluon-mediated forces is thus interpreted as a bookkeeping representation of underlying phase-coherence constraints.

10.2 Weak Interaction: Chirality, CP Violation, and Time Asymmetry

Weak processes correspond to chiral excitation modes whose phase evolution depends on handedness within the condensate. Asymmetric phase relaxation rates for left- and right-handed modes lead naturally to CP violation. Since phase relaxation is dissipative, this asymmetry introduces an intrinsic time directionality, providing a physical origin for observed temporal asymmetry without invoking fundamental time-reversal violation.

10.3 Gravity: Collective Deformation and Emergent Metric

Gravitational phenomena arise from collective deformation of the condensate induced by excitation energy density. These deformations modify effective propagation paths, admitting a geometric description in terms of an emergent metric. Universality of gravitational coupling follows directly from the fact that all excitations interact identically with the condensate background, providing a natural explanation of the equivalence principle without requiring fundamental spacetime curvature.

10.4 Mass and Inertia from Phase Acceleration

In the ECSM framework, mass is interpreted as resistance to phase acceleration. Each excitation possesses an intrinsic phase evolution structure, and altering its phase velocity incurs an energetic cost associated with condensate reconfiguration. This resistance manifests as inertia, yielding the relation between force and acceleration. Since both inertial and gravitational effects arise from condensate response, their equivalence follows directly.

10.5 Summary

Strong, weak, and gravitational phenomena, as well as mass and inertia, are unified within a single condensate ontology. Distinct interaction regimes emerge from phase coherence, chirality, collective deformation, and phase acceleration resistance, respectively, eliminating the need for multiple fundamental interaction fields.

11 Emergent Cosmological Consequences of the ECSM

11.1 Baryogenesis from CP-Biased Phase Decay

In the early universe, the ECSM condensate existed in a highly excited, phase-coherent state far from equilibrium. As the condensate relaxed, unstable excitation modes decayed into lower-energy configurations. Due to chirality- dependent phase evolution, decay rates were asymmetric between conjugate excitation classes. This CP-biased phase relaxation led to preferential stabilization of matter-like excitations over their antimatter counterparts.

Baryon number in this framework is not fundamental but emerges as an effective bookkeeping parameter for stable excitation configurations. The observed baryon asymmetry is thus interpreted as a frozen-in phase imbalance resulting from irreversible condensate relaxation, naturally satisfying the conditions for baryogenesis without invoking additional symmetry-violating fields.

11.2 Nuclear Shell Structure from Phase Compatibility

Nuclei in the ECSM framework are phase-locked composite excitations of the condensate. Each nucleon imposes boundary conditions on local phase, density, and flow fields. Stable nuclear configurations arise when nucleons occupy mutually compatible phase arrangements that minimize total condensate strain.

As additional nucleons are introduced, phase compatibility constraints admit only discrete sets of low-energy configurations. Once a compatibility class is filled, further nucleons require phase mismatches, leading to increased energy. This mechanism naturally produces shell structure, magic numbers, and nuclear saturation as emergent consequences of condensate phase topology rather than single-particle orbital dynamics.

11.3 Cosmological Time from Condensate Relaxation

Time in the ECSM framework is not a fundamental parameter but emerges from the irreversible relaxation dynamics of the condensate. In the early universe, large-scale phase gradients and excitation densities drove monotonic relaxation toward lower-energy configurations. This process defines a natural temporal ordering and establishes a physical arrow of time.

Cosmological expansion is interpreted as collective condensate strain relaxation, with the emergent spacetime metric providing an effective geometric description of excitation propagation. Proper time thus measures accumulated condensate relaxation rather than evolution with respect to an external time coordinate, unifying cosmological dynamics with microscopic irreversibility.

12 Contextuality and Quantum Randomness

12.1 Contextuality as an emergent property of medium interactions

One of the central lessons of quantum foundations is that measurement outcomes cannot, in general, be understood as revealing pre-existing, context-independent properties of a system. The Kochen–Specker theorem formalizes this result by demonstrating the impossibility of assigning non-contextual definite values to all observables while preserving the predictions of quantum mechanics.

Within the ECSM framework, contextuality arises naturally and inevitably from the interaction between excitation modes and measurement apparatus. Observables are not intrinsic attributes carried by isolated subsystems, but effective properties that emerge from the specific manner in which an excitation couples to a local measurement context. Different measurement configurations probe different projections of the same underlying medium excitation, and these projections need not be jointly realizable.

Because the excitation structure is fundamentally non-separable and phase-coherent at the global level, there is no requirement that locally accessible observables admit a consistent assignment independent of context. Contextuality is therefore not a mysterious or pathological feature of the theory, but a direct consequence of the relational nature of excitation–apparatus coupling in a physical medium.

12.2 Absence of hidden variables

Importantly, the present framework does not introduce hidden variables in the sense excluded by no-go theorems. There are no localized, pre-existing values carried by subsystems that determine outcomes in advance. Instead, outcome statistics reflect the structure of the excitation mode and the measurement context together.

The ECSM provides a physical ontology without reintroducing classical determinism at the microscopic level. The failure of non-contextual value assignment follows directly from the fact that local measurements access only partial information about a globally extended excitation.

12.3 Origin of quantum randomness

Quantum randomness is often interpreted as either fundamentally irreducible or as epistemic uncertainty about hidden variables. In the ECSM framework, randomness emerges as an effective phenomenon arising from the inaccessibility of global phase information during local measurement.

Although the excitation dynamics of the medium are deterministic at the microscopic level, measurement interactions are necessarily coarse- grained and local. The global phase configuration of the excitation, which encodes correlations across the medium, cannot be fully controlled or reconstructed by any finite apparatus. As a result, individual measurement outcomes appear intrinsically unpredictable.

Statistical regularities, such as the Born rule, arise from averaging over inaccessible phase degrees of freedom rather than from fundamental indeterminism. Quantum randomness is therefore emergent rather than ontological: it reflects practical and principled limits on local access to the full excitation structure.

12.4 Consistency with observed quantum statistics

The combination of contextual measurement interactions and inaccessible global phase information reproduces the characteristic probabilistic structure of quantum mechanics. Outcome frequencies obey the same statistical laws as standard quantum theory, while avoiding the need to postulate fundamental randomness or observer-dependent collapse.

In this sense, the ECSM framework occupies a middle ground between strict determinism and fundamental indeterminacy. The underlying medium evolves according to well-defined dynamics, but effective unpredictability is unavoidable for embedded observers interacting locally with extended excitations.

13 Relation to the Standard Quantum Formalism

13.1 Hilbert space as an effective description

The standard formalism of quantum mechanics represents physical states as vectors in a Hilbert space and observables as linear operators acting on those vectors. Within the ECSM framework, this mathematical structure is not taken to be fundamental. Instead, Hilbert space arises as an effective representation of the amplitude and phase structure of excitation modes supported by the medium.

In the long-wavelength regime where the dynamics of the ECSM admit a linearized description, excitation modes form a vector space equipped with a natural inner product determined by energy and norm conservation. The use of complex amplitudes reflects the underlying phase dynamics of the medium rather than an abstract probabilistic postulate. Superposition in Hilbert space corresponds directly to the coherent coexistence of compatible excitation pathways.

Thus, the Hilbert-space formalism is recovered as a compact and powerful tool for encoding excitation dynamics and their statistical behavior, without elevating the wavefunction itself to the status of a fundamental physical entity.

13.2 Operators and observables

In this framework, operators correspond to classes of measurement interactions rather than intrinsic properties of isolated systems. An observable is defined by the manner in which a macroscopic apparatus couples locally to an excitation of the ECSM, selecting a particular projection of its structure.

The non-commutativity of operators reflects the incompatibility of distinct measurement couplings acting on the same underlying excitation. Measurements associated with non-commuting operators probe mutually exclusive projections of the excitation structure and therefore cannot be jointly realized. This operational incompatibility has a direct physical origin in the medium, rather than arising from abstract algebraic constraints.

13.3 Origin of the Born rule

The Born rule assigns probabilities to measurement outcomes proportional to the squared modulus of quantum amplitudes. In the ECSM framework, this rule emerges from averaging over inaccessible global phase information during local measurement interactions.

Because detectors couple only to local degrees of freedom, they sample an ensemble of microstates consistent with the macroscopic preparation of the excitation. The squared amplitude corresponds to the fraction of the total excitation energy or intensity accessible to a given projection, naturally yielding probabilities proportional to $|\psi|^2$.

Importantly, this derivation does not require the introduction of fundamental stochastic dynamics. Probability arises from coarse-graining over phase configurations that are physically real but operationally inaccessible to embedded observers.

13.4 Unitary evolution and effective collapse

Between measurement interactions, excitation modes evolve coherently according to deterministic dynamics governed by the properties of the medium. This evolution is well approximated by unitary time evolution in the effective Hilbert-space description.

Apparent wavefunction collapse occurs when a measurement interaction irreversibly destroys phase accessibility with respect to the measured observable. From the perspective of the effective formalism, this process is represented as non-unitary state update. At the physical level, however, it corresponds to local mode selection and environmental entanglement within the medium rather than to a fundamental breakdown of unitarity.

13.5 Why the standard formalism works so well

The remarkable success of quantum mechanics follows from the robustness of the effective description in the regime where the medium behaves linearly and excitations remain weakly interacting. In this domain, details of the microphysical structure of the ECSM are irrelevant, and universal statistical behavior emerges.

Consequently, the standard quantum formalism remains an extraordinarily accurate and efficient predictive framework, even though it does not directly encode the underlying physical ontology. The ECSM framework does not seek to replace quantum mechanics as a calculational tool, but to explain why it works and what it represents physically.

14 Experimental Distinguishability and Falsifiability

A central requirement of any physically meaningful framework is that it admits clear criteria for empirical validation or falsification. Although the ECSM framework reproduces the standard predictions of quantum mechanics in the regimes tested to date, it does not claim universal validity at arbitrarily small scales or extreme conditions. Instead, it predicts that standard quantum behavior emerges only within the domain where the hydrodynamic description of the medium remains applicable.

14.1 Cutoff scale and breakdown of the effective description

The effective quantum formalism is expected to break down at energy or momentum scales approaching a characteristic cutoff Λ associated with the microphysical structure of the ECSM. Beyond this scale, collective excitation modes may no longer admit a linearized description, leading to departures from standard unitary evolution, modified dispersion relations, or loss of perfect coherence.

The precise value of Λ is not fixed a priori but may be constrained experimentally by high-energy probes, precision interferometry, or astrophysical observations sensitive to extreme environments.

14.2 Deviations from ideal quantum coherence

Because coherence relies on global phase accessibility across extended excitation structures, extreme conditions may induce observable departures from ideal quantum behavior. Possible signatures include reduced interference visibility, anomalous decoherence rates, or environment- dependent suppression of entanglement correlations.

Such effects would not appear as violations of causality or no-signalling, but as systematic deviations from the predictions of standard quantum mechanics under controlled conditions.

14.3 Entanglement degradation in extreme regimes

The ECSM framework predicts that entanglement correlations should be robust in ordinary laboratory settings, but may degrade in regimes where the medium becomes strongly perturbed or nonlinear. This includes regions of extreme acceleration, strong effective gravitational fields, or high excitation density.

Measurements of entanglement visibility in such environments provide a direct avenue for testing the framework. Any observed scale-dependent or environment-dependent modification of correlation strength would offer evidence for an underlying physical substrate beyond abstract quantum formalism.

14.4 Distinguishing interpretation from ontology

Importantly, the framework makes clear distinctions between interpretive equivalence and ontological commitment. While many interpretations of quantum mechanics reproduce the same experimental predictions, they differ in what they assert to be physically real.

The ECSM framework advances falsifiable ontological claims: that quantum states correspond to physical excitation modes of a medium, and that standard quantum mechanics is an emergent, effective theory. Evidence of systematic breakdowns of coherence, dispersion anomalies, or departures from ideal entanglement behavior would support this ontology, while their absence at all accessible scales would constrain or rule it out.

15 Discussion

The ECSM framework developed in this paper offers a unified and physically grounded interpretation of quantum phenomena that complements the emergent-gravity and cosmological picture introduced in Paper I and extended through simulations in Paper 1.5. Rather than modifying the formal structure of quantum mechanics, the framework reinterprets its mathematical objects as effective descriptions of excitation dynamics in a single physical medium.

A central advantage of this approach is the elimination of dual ontologies. Quantum states, measurement outcomes, and spacetime geometry are not treated as fundamentally distinct entities, but as emergent features arising from different regimes of the same underlying substrate. This coherence across scales provides a natural bridge between quantum mechanics, gravity, and cosmology without requiring ad hoc quantization procedures or additional degrees of freedom.

15.1 Comparison with major interpretations

To clarify the conceptual position of the ECSM framework, it is useful to contrast it with several widely discussed interpretations of quantum mechanics. Table 1 summarizes the key distinctions.

Unlike Copenhagen-type interpretations, the ECSM framework does not require fundamentally observer-dependent postulates or axiomatic collapse. In contrast to Many-Worlds approaches, it avoids the ontological proliferation of branching universes. While sharing Bohmian mechanics' commitment to physical realism, it does so without introducing hidden variables, preferred trajectories, or explicit nonlocal dynamics.

15.2 Relation to gravity and cosmology

An important strength of the framework is its compatibility with the emergent description of gravity and cosmology developed in Paper I. Quantum excitations, gravitational phenomena, and cosmological redshift are all understood as manifestations of the same medium operating in different regimes. This unification is achieved without invoking dark matter, dark energy, or fundamental spacetime expansion.

The interpretation presented here also clarifies why attempts to directly quantize gravity may be misguided: if gravity is an emergent, collective phenomenon of the medium, then quantization should apply to the underlying substrate rather than to the effective geometric description itself.

Feature	Copenhagen	Many-Worlds	Bohmian	ECSM Framework
Ontology	Abstract state / operational	Universal wavefunction	Particles + pilot wave	Physical medium (substrate)
Collapse	Fundamental (postulate)	None (branching)	None (effective)	Emergent (decoherence / coupling)
Nonlocality	Axiomatic / non-signalling	Global via universal state	Explicit (guidance)	Emergent from global coherence (non-signalling)
Hidden variables	No	No	Yes	No (coarse-grained effective variables only)
Spacetime	Fundamental	Fundamental	Fundamental	Emergent (effective bookkeeping)
Bell violations	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted
Physical intuition	Low	Low–medium	Medium	High (single ontology)

Table 1: Comparison of major quantum interpretations. The ECSM framework preserves the empirical success of quantum mechanics while providing a single physical ontology and an emergent (effective) spacetime description.

15.3 Conceptual economy and explanatory power

By grounding quantum behavior in a physical medium, the ECSM framework restores intuitive explanations for phenomena often regarded as irreducibly mysterious. Superposition becomes coherent excitation structure, entanglement reflects non-separability rather than action at a distance, and randomness arises from inaccessible global phase information rather than from fundamental indeterminism.

This conceptual economy does not reduce predictive power. On the contrary, it strengthens the explanatory scope of quantum mechanics while retaining its extraordinary empirical accuracy.

15.4 Limitations and open questions

The framework deliberately refrains from specifying the detailed microphysics of the ECSM at scales approaching the cutoff Λ. While this preserves generality and avoids premature assumptions, it also highlights open questions concerning the ultimate structure of the medium, its excitation spectrum, and its relation to known particle physics.

Addressing these issues will require further theoretical development and targeted experimental investigation. Nonetheless, the absence of a complete microphysical model does not undermine the internal consistency or empirical viability of the emergent description at accessible scales.

16 Conclusion

In this work we have developed a physically grounded interpretation of quantum mechanics within the superfluid ECSM framework introduced in Paper I. Quantum phenomena are understood not as fundamental departures from classical reasoning, but as emergent features of coherent, non-separable excitation dynamics in a single underlying physical medium.

Superposition, interference, entanglement, contextuality, and quantum randomness arise naturally from the phase structure and interaction properties of these excitations, while measurement corresponds to a local, irreversible coupling between the medium and macroscopic apparatus. Nonlocal correlations are structural rather than dynamical, preserving operational locality and relativistic causality without invoking hidden variables or observer-dependent postulates.

The standard quantum formalism is recovered as an effective and highly accurate description of excitation dynamics in the regime where the medium behaves linearly and coherence is preserved. Its success is explained by the robustness of this emergent description rather than by the fundamental status of abstract mathematical objects. Apparent indeterminism reflects unavoidable limits on local access to global phase information rather than intrinsic randomness at the deepest level.

By unifying quantum mechanics, gravity, and cosmology within a single ontological framework, the ECSM approach offers a coherent alternative to interpretations that rely on fundamentally abstract or proliferating ontologies. While many open questions remain regarding the microphysical structure of the medium and its high-energy behavior, the framework makes clear, falsifiable predictions that distinguish it from interpretation-only models.

Taken together with the results of Papers I and 1.5, this work suggests that both spacetime geometry and quantum behavior may be emergent aspects of a deeper physical substrate. Further theoretical development and experimental investigation will determine whether this perspective provides a viable foundation for a unified description of nature.

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