

Understanding neutrino-nucleus interactions

From revealing nuclear structure to early applications of
quantum computing

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A person is silhouetted against a night sky filled with stars and the Milky Way galaxy. The person stands on the peak of a mountain, looking up at the vastness of the universe. The text 'We exist!' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

We exist!

**We Shouldn't
Why?**



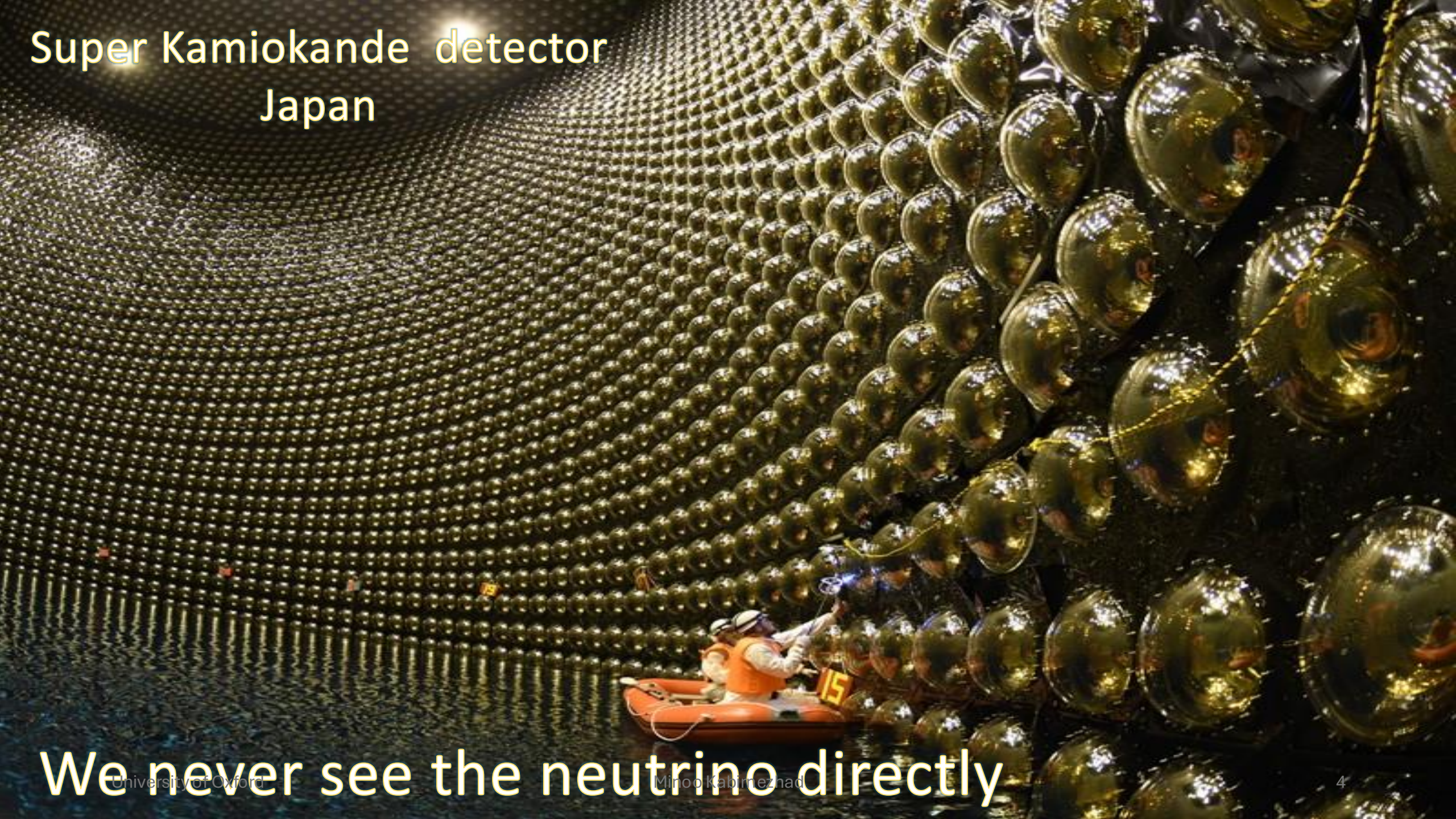
**Tiny
Particles**

**Huge
Mystery**

**Neutrinos
hold a clue**

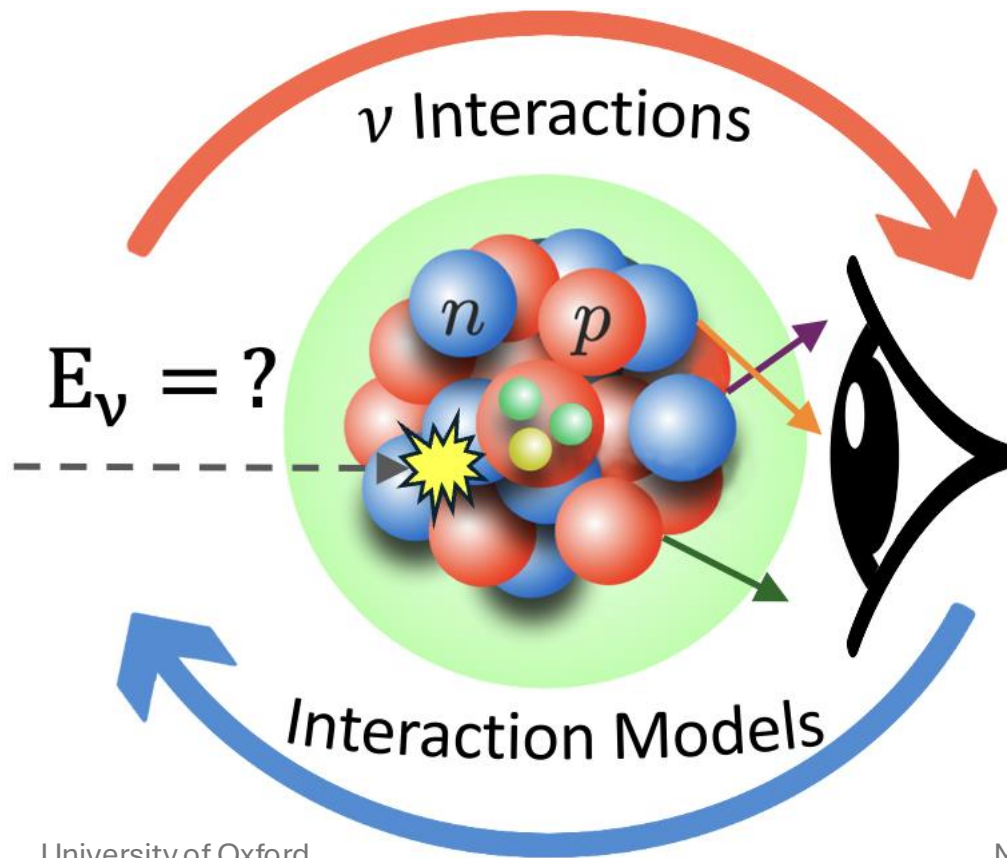
**Invisible
everywhere
pass through you
right now**

Super Kamiokande detector Japan

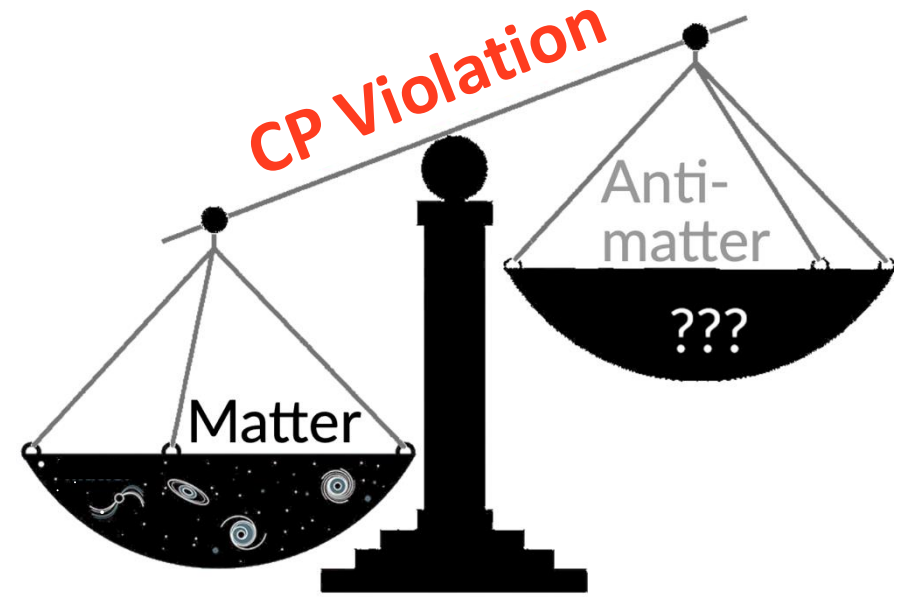


We never see the neutrino directly

The challenge: Seeing the invisible



DUNE
Hyper-K

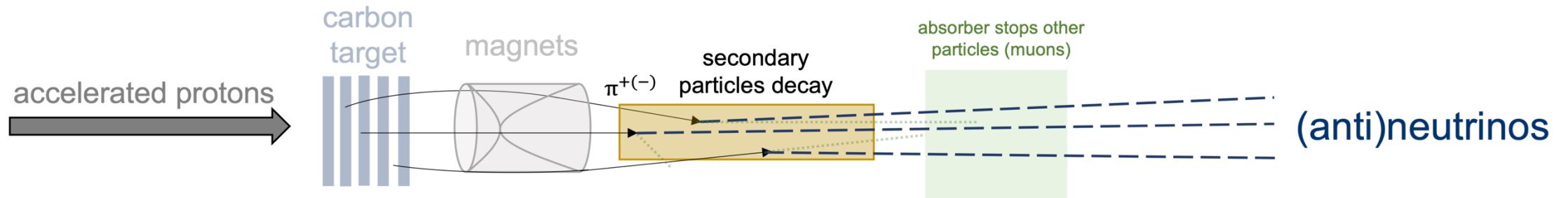


Precision
Measurements

Accurate Prediction

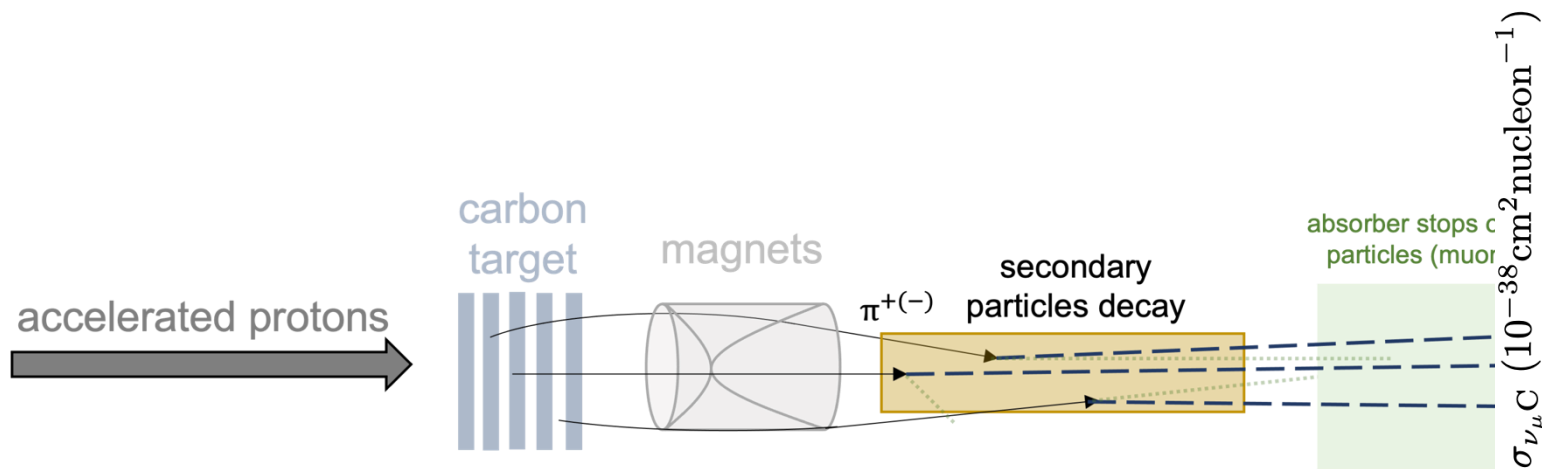
Accelerator-based neutrino experiments

- ν_μ **Beam Source:** Produced from accelerated protons

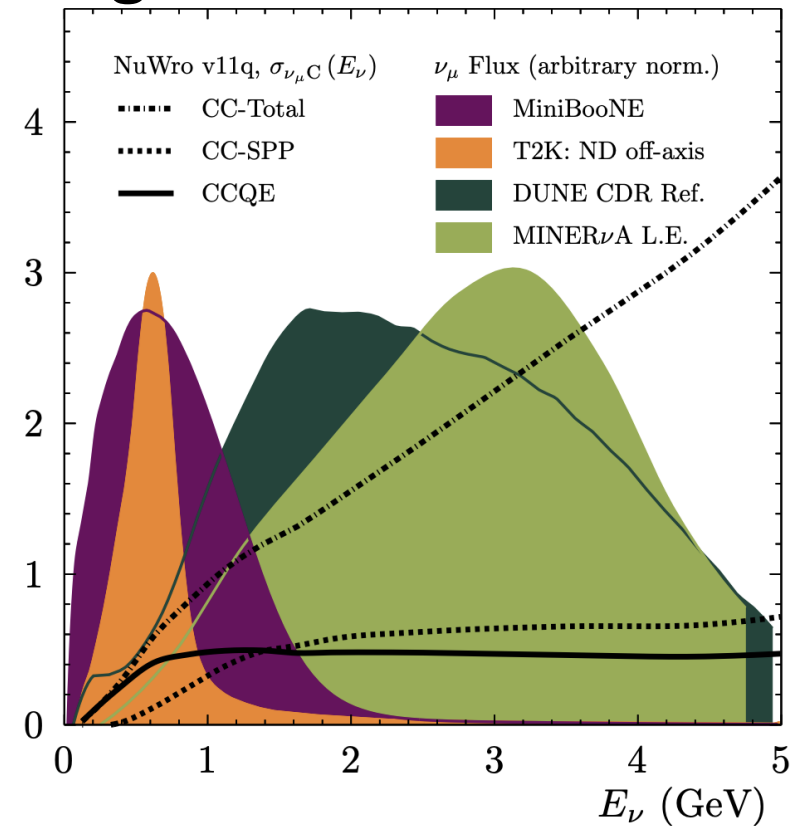


Accelerator-based neutrino experiments

- **ν_μ Beam Source:** Produced from accelerated protons
- **Energy Requirement:** Must be in the few GeV range

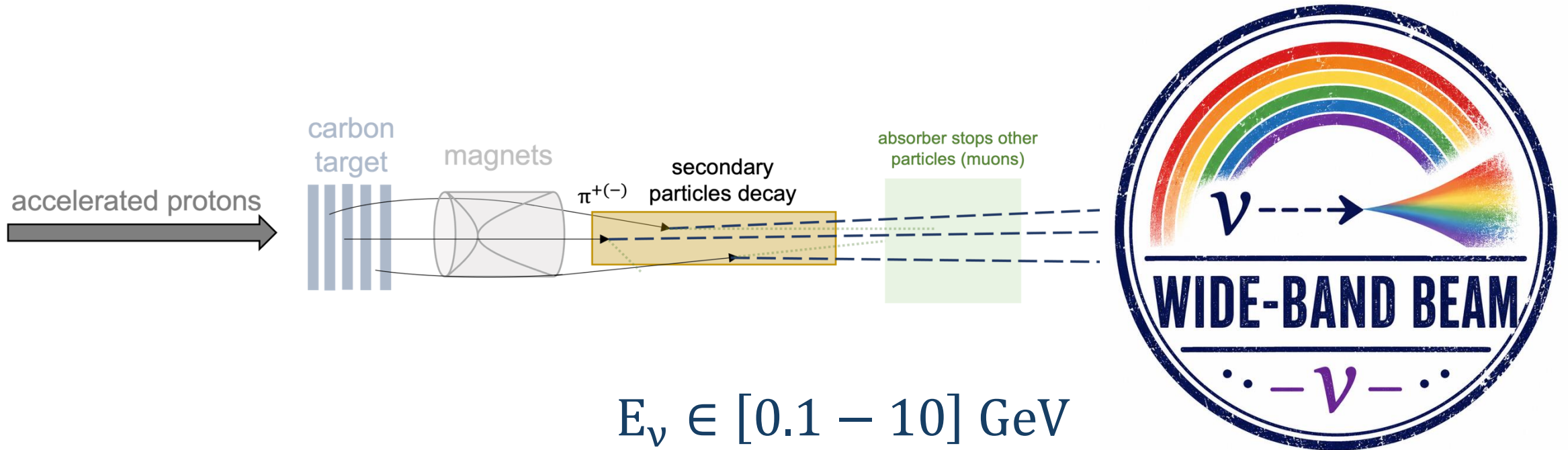


Wide energy
neutrino beam

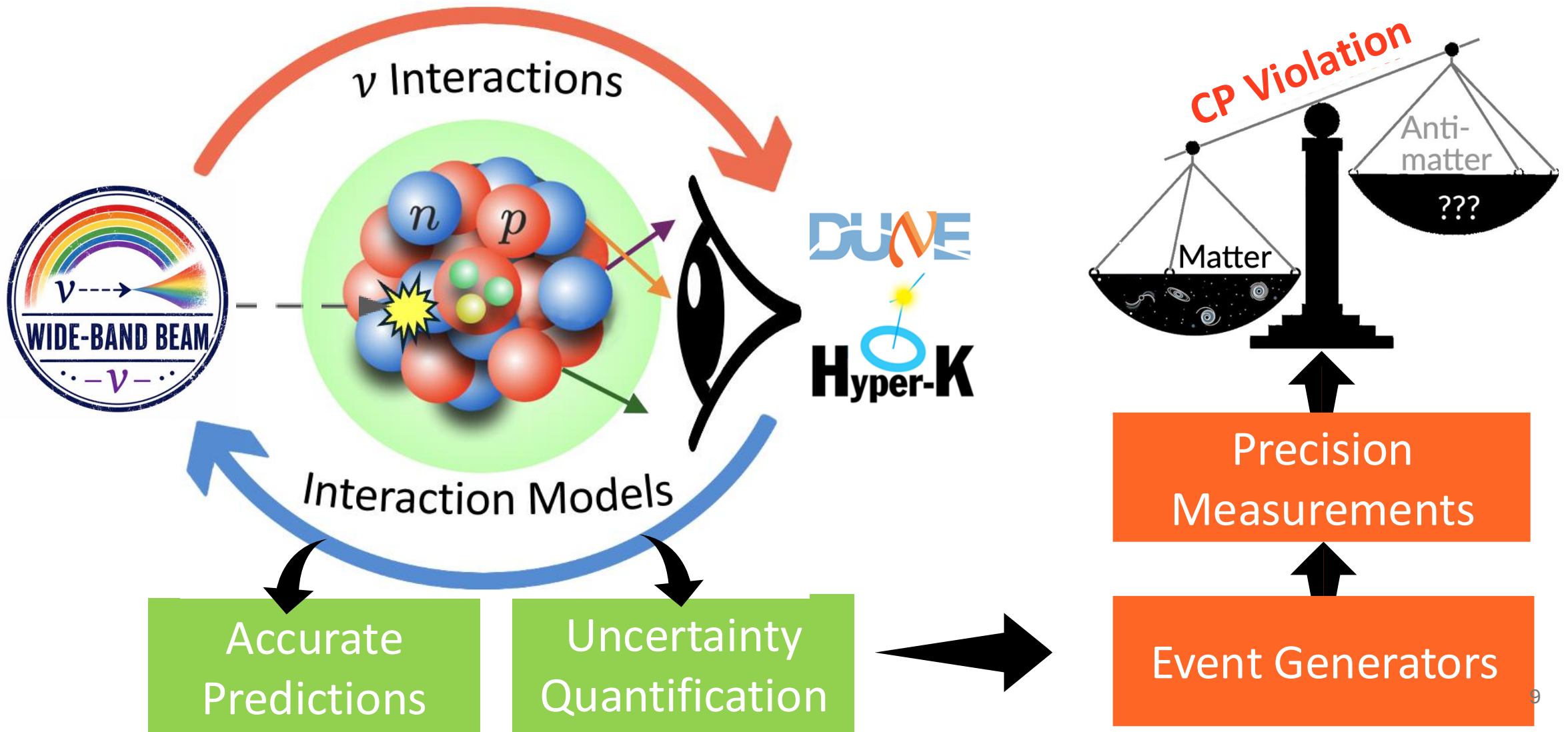


Accelerator-based neutrino experiments

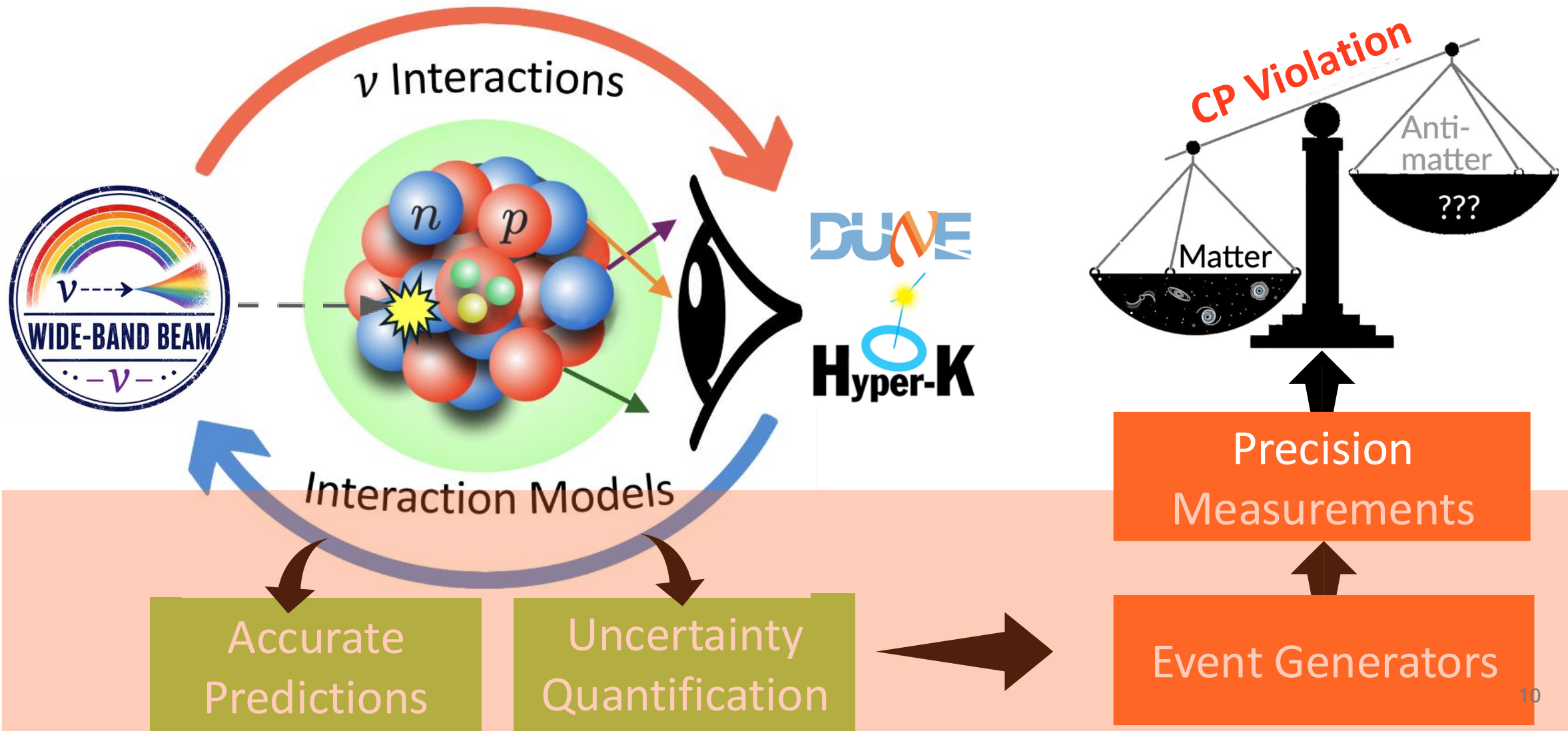
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Unveiling the Neutrino

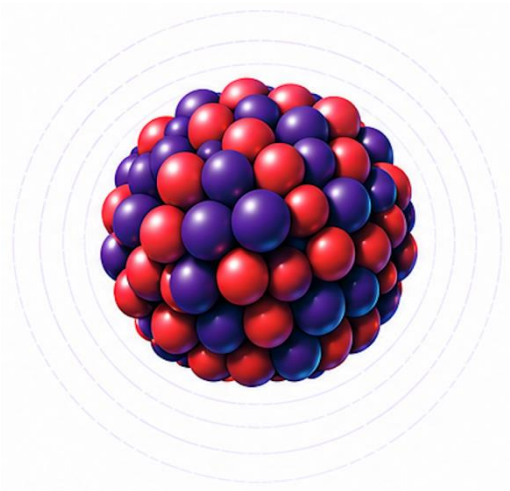


Customised Modelling for Future Discoveries



ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment

1. Ground state



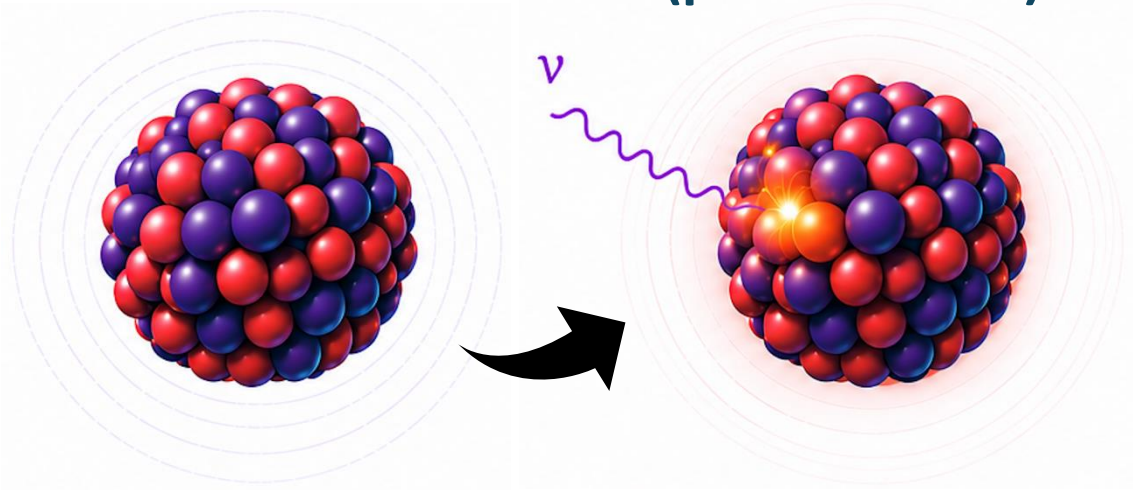
$|\Psi_0\rangle$

- Strongly correlated many-body quantum system
- $H|\Psi_0\rangle = E_0|\Psi_0\rangle$

ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment

1. Ground state

2. Weak interaction
(perturbation)



$$|\Psi_0\rangle$$

$$|\Psi_f(0)\rangle = \hat{O}|\Psi_0\rangle$$

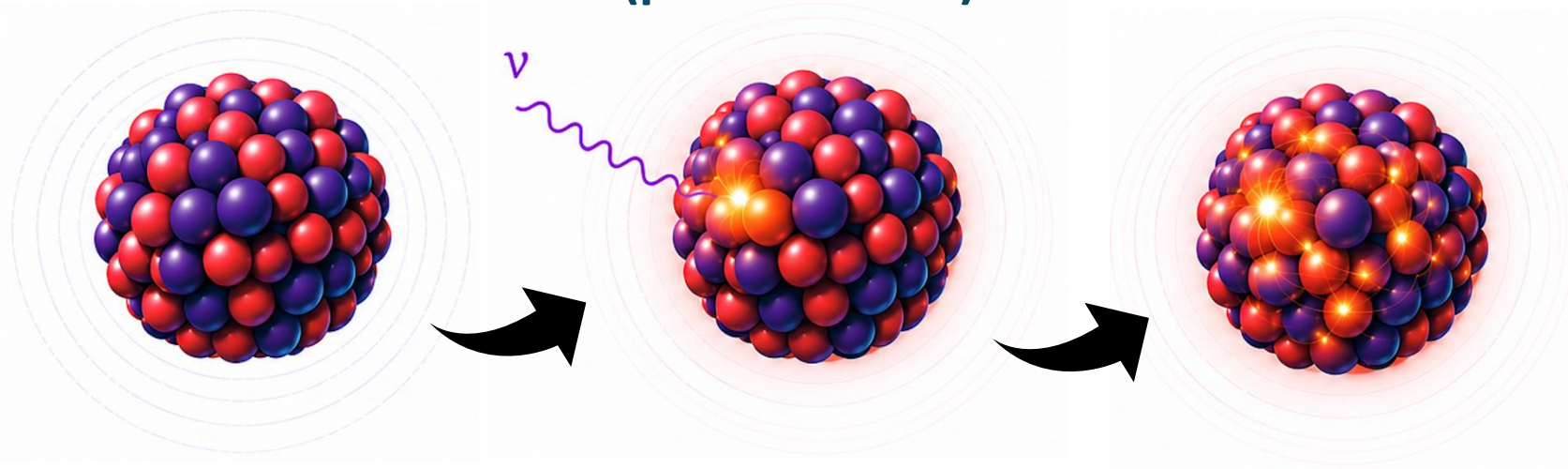
- A neutrino interacts via the weak force and excite nucleus locally

ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment

1. Ground state

2. Weak interaction
(perturbation)

3. Propagation



- The excitation propagates through the many-body system

$$|\Psi_0\rangle$$

$$|\Psi_f(0)\rangle = \hat{O}|\Psi_0\rangle$$

$$|\Psi_f(t)\rangle = e^{-iHt} \hat{O}|\Psi_0\rangle$$

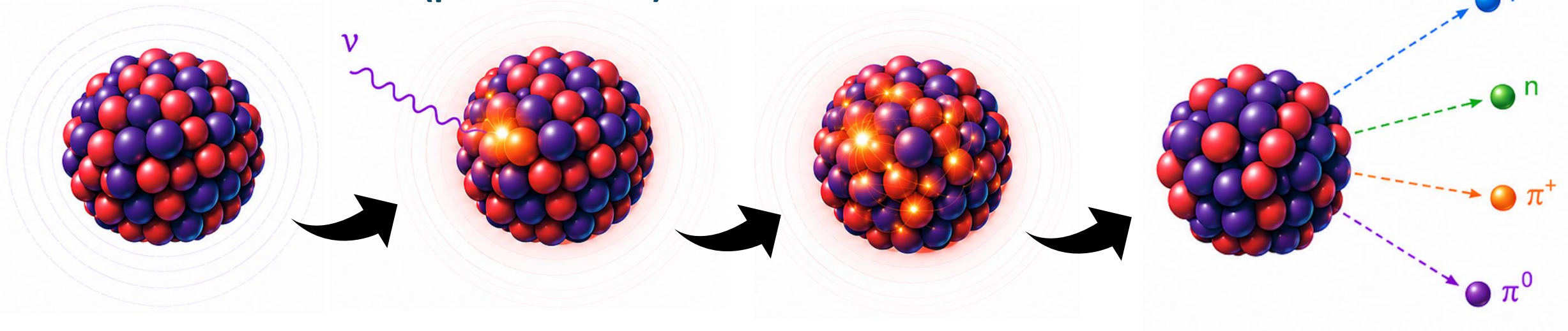
ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment

1. Ground state

2. Weak interaction
(perturbation)

3. Propagation

4. Particle emission
and detection



$$|\Psi_0\rangle$$

$$|\Psi_f(0)\rangle = \hat{O}|\Psi_0\rangle$$

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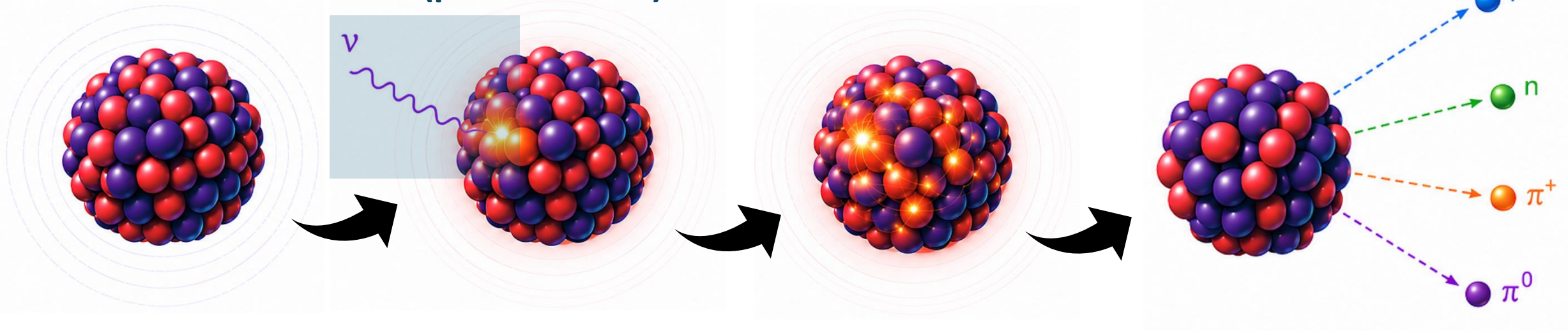
ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment

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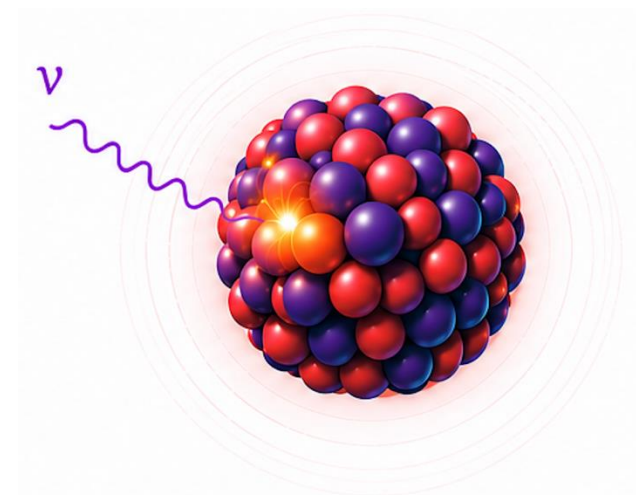
$$|\Psi_0\rangle$$

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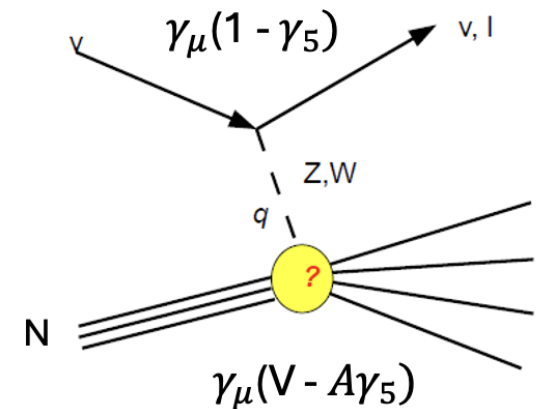
Initial weak interaction

Neutrino initially excite the nucleus



ν -nucleon interaction in the GeV regime

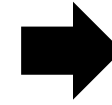
- The nucleon's internal structure modifies the weak interaction.
- The weak current couples through vector and axial-vector currents.
- Form factors determine how the scattering differs from that of a point-like particle.
- Lattice QCD provides first-principles calculations of these form factors, but is currently limited by computational cost and accessible kinematics.
- Experimental data remain essential to determine, constrain, and validate the form factors across the relevant kinematic region.



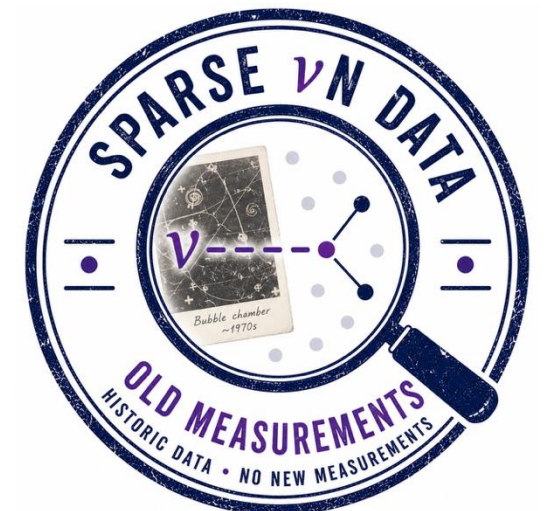
Bubble Chambers

- **Targets:** Hydrogen & deuterium
- **Role:** Pioneered neutrino interaction studies (1960s–1980s)
- **Key Contribution:** Early cross-section measurements
- Now retired, often found in national lab car parks

Big European Bubble Chamber (BEBC)
CERN

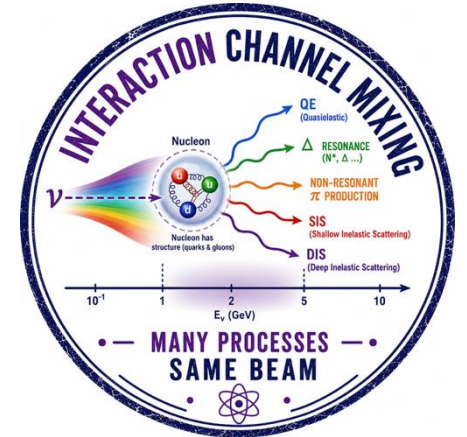


The 15-foot Bubble Chamber
FNAL

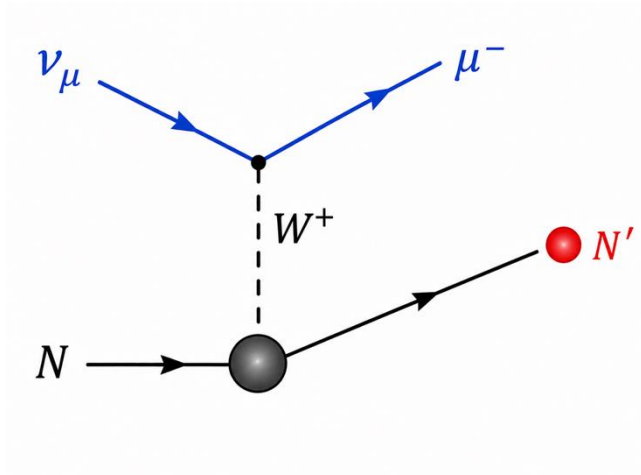


ν -nucleon interactions in the GeV regime

- Wide-Band Beam Drives Many processes

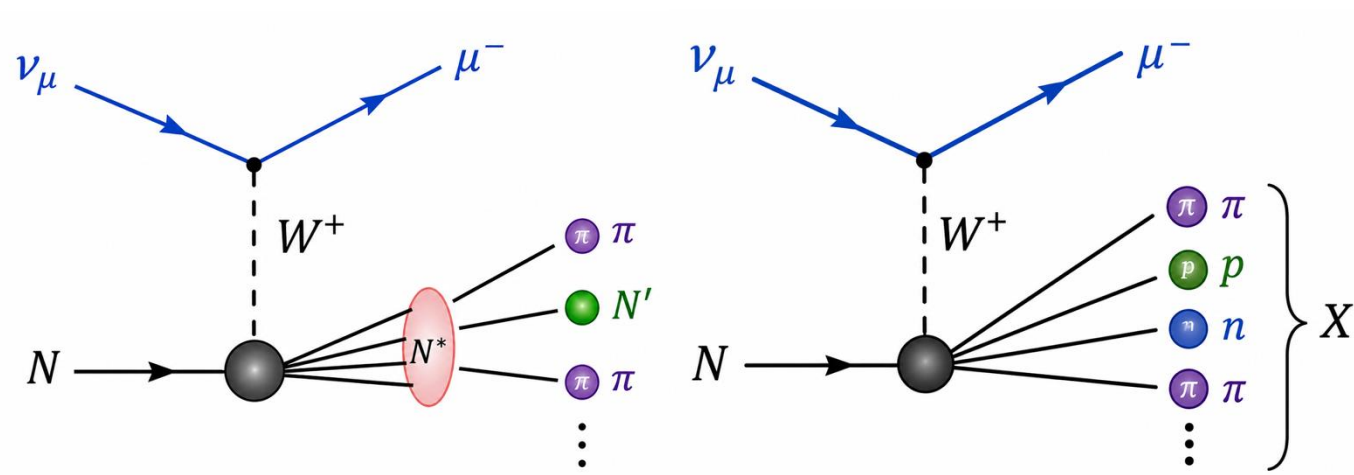


(Quasi-) Elastic scattering



Nucleon remains intact

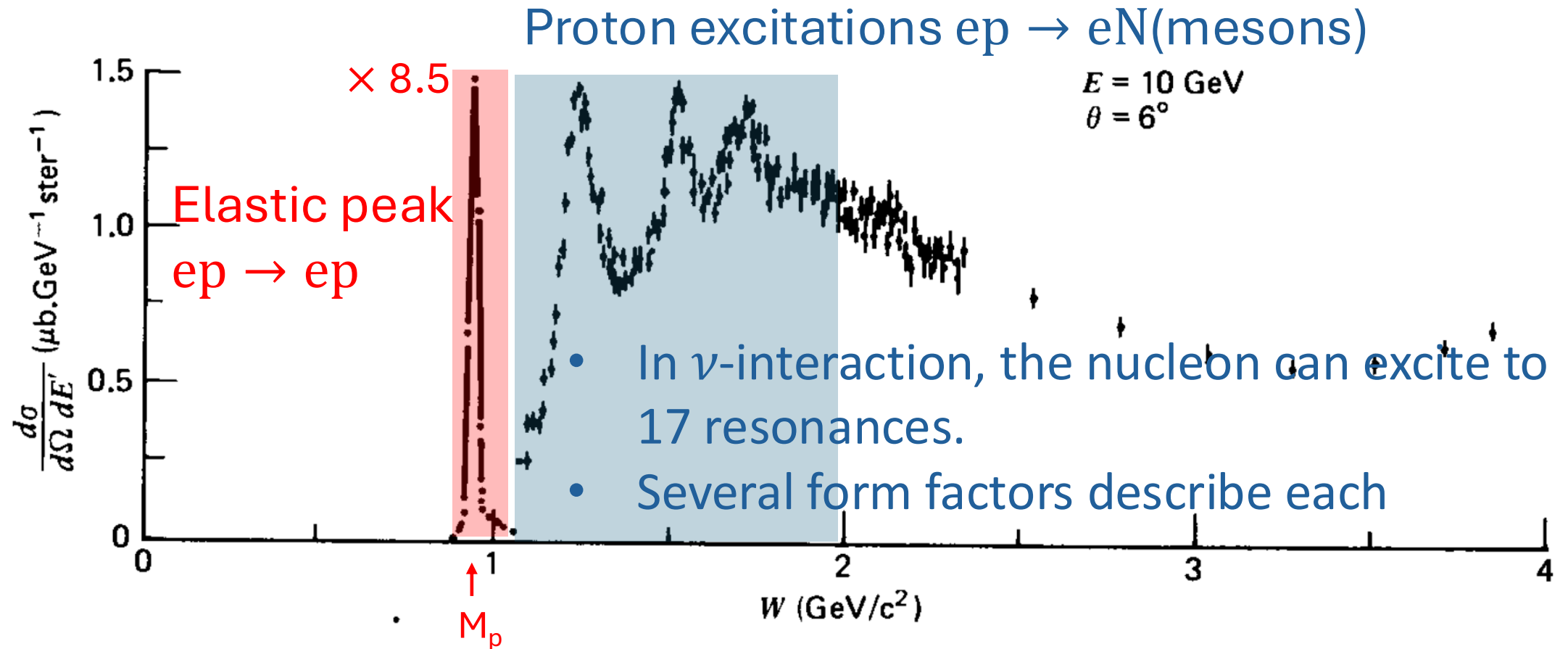
Inelastic scattering



Nucleon excitation

Shallow or deep Inelastic scattering

$ep \rightarrow eX$ cross-section



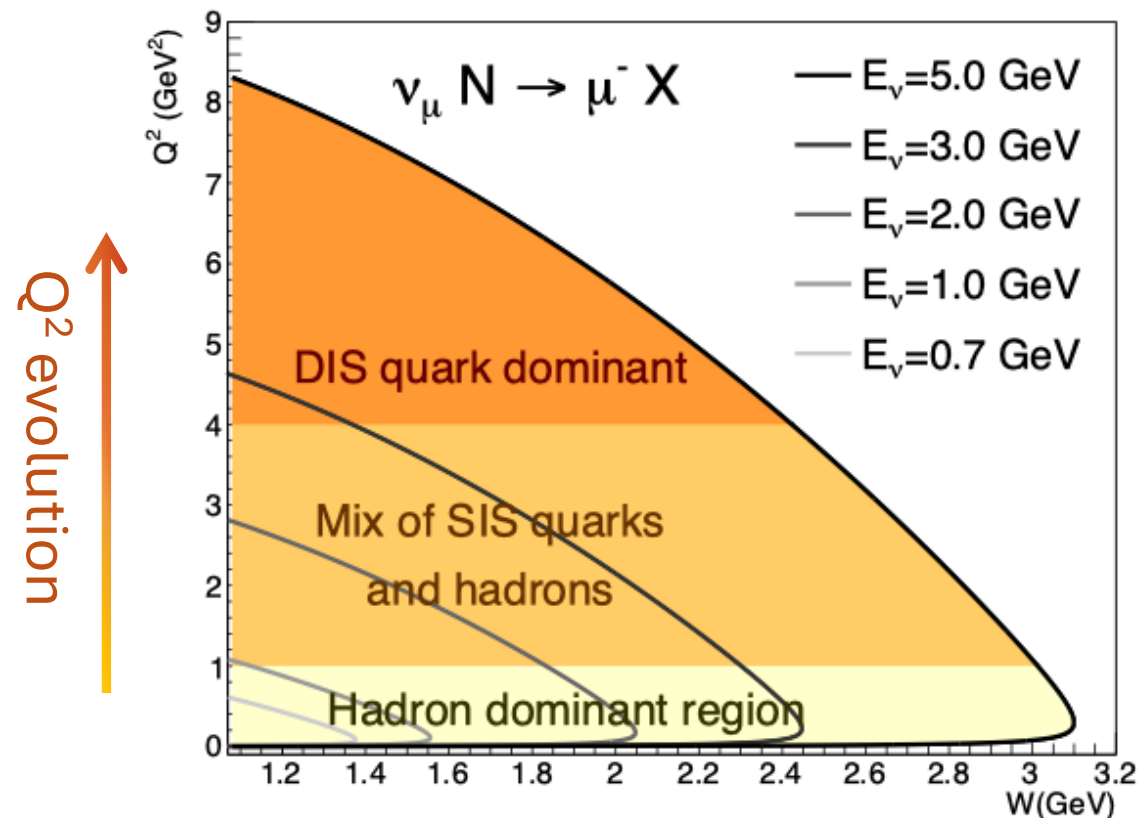
Broad neutrino energy spectrum



wide kinematic coverage



multiple interaction mechanisms contribute

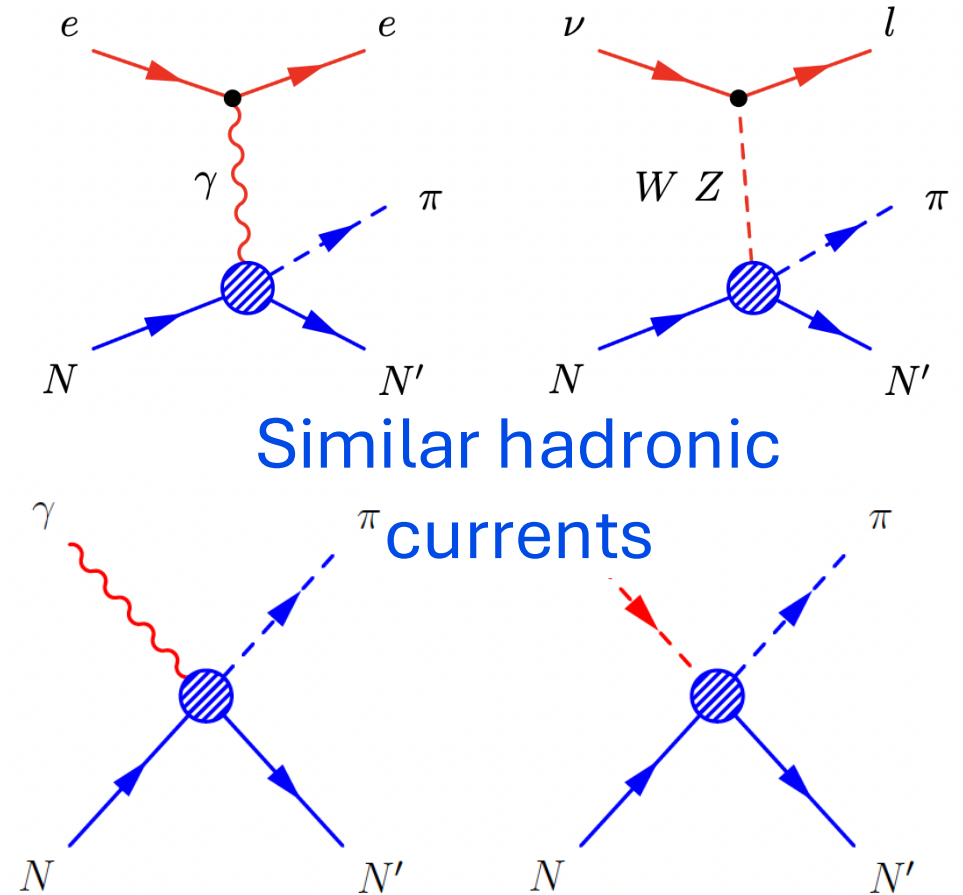


Challenges and Uncertainties in the complex GeV Region

- **Multiple Processes:** The GeV energy range involves a complex interplay of interaction mechanisms on the nucleon, requiring precise knowledge of form factors for each process.
- **Quark-Hadron Transition:** Begins as early as Q^2 , requiring careful treatment.
- **Parametrisation:** Essential for incorporating unknown physics and handling interfering processes.
- **Uncertainty Estimation:** Accurate assessment of theoretical uncertainties is a crucial input for neutrino measurements.
- **Limited data**

Solution for single pion production: MK model

- The MK model comprehensively describes single-pion production in interactions involving **photons, electrons, and neutrinos** with nucleons.
- Phenomenological models in this region must account for numerous processes and parameters.
- A unified model is essential for interpreting all interactions and **maximising data utilisation**.

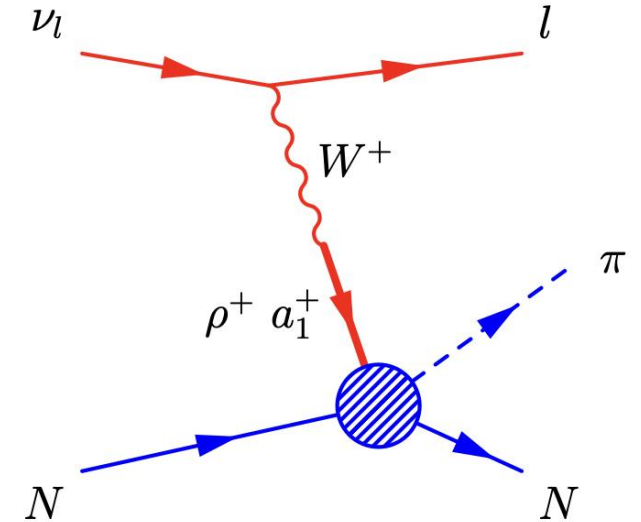


Form Factors in the model


- The Meson dominance model is rooted in the effective Lagrangian of quantum field theory.

1. J. J. Sakurai, Annals Phys.11, 1 (1960)
2. M. Gell-Mann and F. Zachariasen, Phys. Rev. 124, 953 (1961)

- This framework explains the interaction between neutrinos and nucleons through meson exchange.
- The number of parameters in several form factors is reduced by imposing all symmetries and unitarity.
- At large Q^2 , resonance form factors must align with the perturbative QCD constraints.



Data used in the Joint analysis

# data point	Photon, electron, pion, Neutrino Channels	Q ² Range (GeV/C) ²	W Range GeV	Form Factors		
≈ 9800	$\gamma p \rightarrow n + \pi^+$, $\gamma p \rightarrow p + \pi^0$	0	1.08 – 2.0	Proton	Vector	
≈ 31000	$ep \rightarrow en + \pi^+$, $ep \rightarrow ep + \pi^0$	0.16 – 6.0	1.08 – 2.0			
≈ 2500	$\gamma n \rightarrow p + \pi^-$	0	1.08 – 2.0	Neutron		
≈ 700	 $en \rightarrow ep + \pi^-$	0.4 – 1.0	1.08 – 1.8			
≈ 400	$\pi^+ p \rightarrow p + \pi^+$, $\pi^- p \rightarrow p + \pi^-$	0	1.08 – 2.0	Axial-Vector		
<100	$\nu N \rightarrow l^- N + \pi$, $\bar{\nu} N \rightarrow l^+ N + \pi$	Q ² >0 Integrated	1.08 – 2.0 Integrated			

Data used in the Joint analysis (Over 6 years!)

# data point	Form	Factors
≈ 9800	on	Vector
≈ 31000	on	
≈ 2500	on	-Vector
≈ 700		
≈ 400		
<100		

- These data sets are systematically incorporated into the analysis to parameterise the model.
- Through analysis, parameters are evaluated, and the inherent systematic uncertainties in the model are addressed.
- Reduced $\chi^2 \approx 1$

MK model

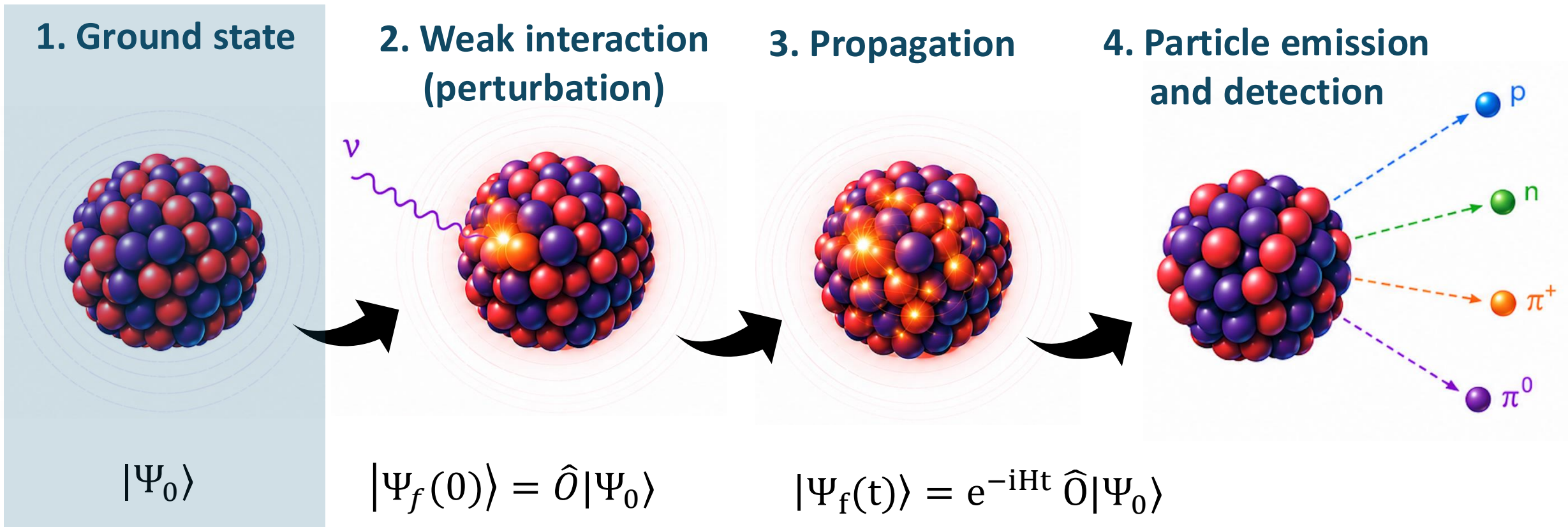
M. Kabirnezhad
[Phys. Rev. D **97** \(2018\)](#)
[Phys. Rev. D **102** \(2020\)](#)
[Phys.Rev.C **107** \(2023\)](#)
e-Print: [2409.02890\(2026\)](#)

The MK model comprehensively describes single-pion production in interactions involving **photons, electrons, and neutrinos** with nucleons.

- Meson Dominance (MD) form factor: Maintains **unitarity** and integrates **QCD principles** for both resonant and non-resonant interactions.
- **CVC and PCAC** fulfilment: Ensures model consistency at low Q^2 .
- Q^2 evolution: Utilises QCD calculations and **quark-hadron duality**.
- W evolution: Applies **Regge trajectory** and the Hybrid model.

R. González-Jiménez, *et al*
[Phys. Rev. D **95** \(2017\)](#)

ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment



Not the biggest challenge!

1. Preparing the Ground state

- A nucleus in its ground state is stationary: all measurable quantities remain constant because the state is an energy eigenstate.

$$H |\Psi_0\rangle = E_0 |\Psi_0\rangle$$

$$H = T + V_{NN} + V_{3N} + \dots$$

T: kinetic energy of the nucleons

V_{NN} : two-nucleon interactions

V_{3N} : three-nucleon interactions

1. Preparing the Ground state

- The interacting nuclear ground state is a quantum superposition of many-body configurations.
- The number of possible configurations grows exponentially with the size of the nucleus.
- Classical calculations explicitly represent the many-body wavefunction

$$|\Psi_0\rangle = \sum_i c_i |\Phi_i\rangle, \text{ solving for all the } c_i$$

- For ^{40}Ar , assuming 100 single-particle states, the Hilbert space contains

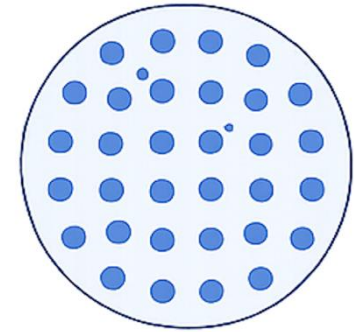
$$\binom{100}{40} \approx 10^{28} \text{ configurations.}$$

Simple case: Non-interacting nucleon

$$H = T$$

- There is only one configuration:

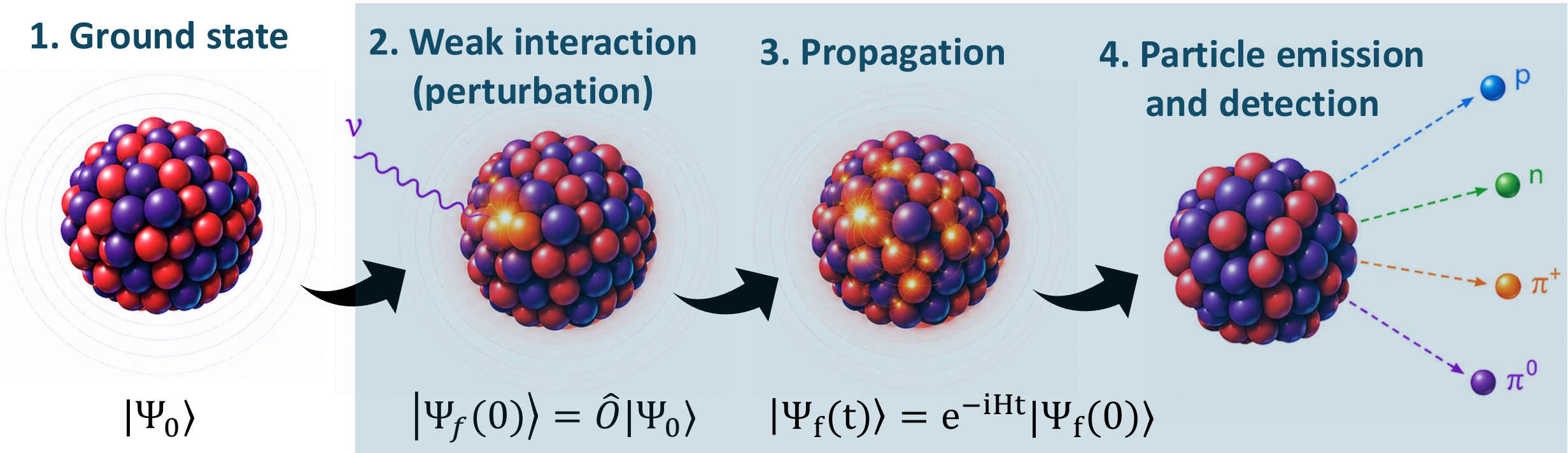
$$|\Psi_0\rangle = |\text{Fermi sea}\rangle$$



- Occupied ($|k| < k_F$)
- Unoccupied ($|k| > k_F$)

- To achieve the computational speed required for event generation, most neutrino interaction models rely on simplified descriptions of the nuclear dynamics.
- Additional mechanisms are then incorporated to account for missing many-body effects and improve agreement with experimental data.

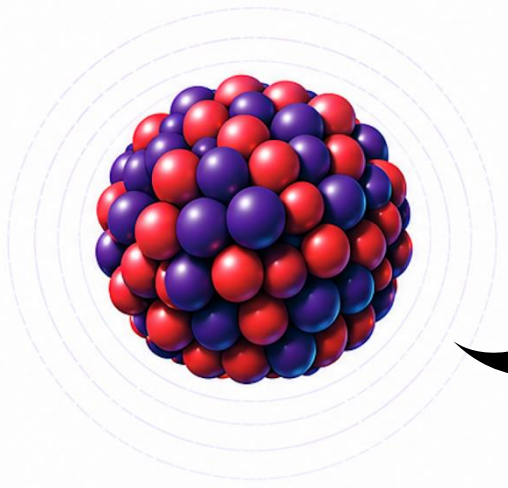
ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment



The central challenge is predicting how a local quantum excitation propagates through a strongly correlated finite nucleus and ultimately emerges as the particles observed in the detector.

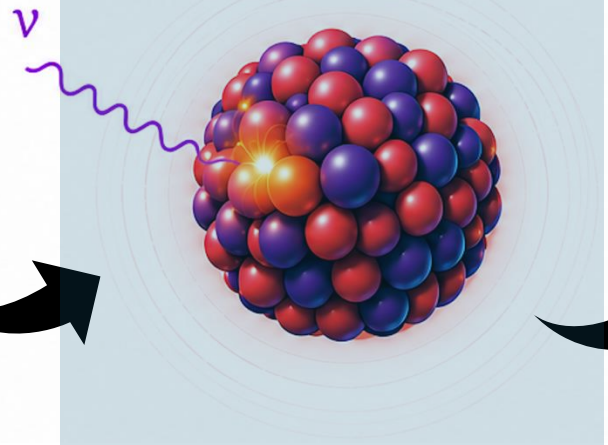
2. Excited state

1. Ground state



$$|\Psi_0\rangle$$

2. Weak interaction (perturbation)

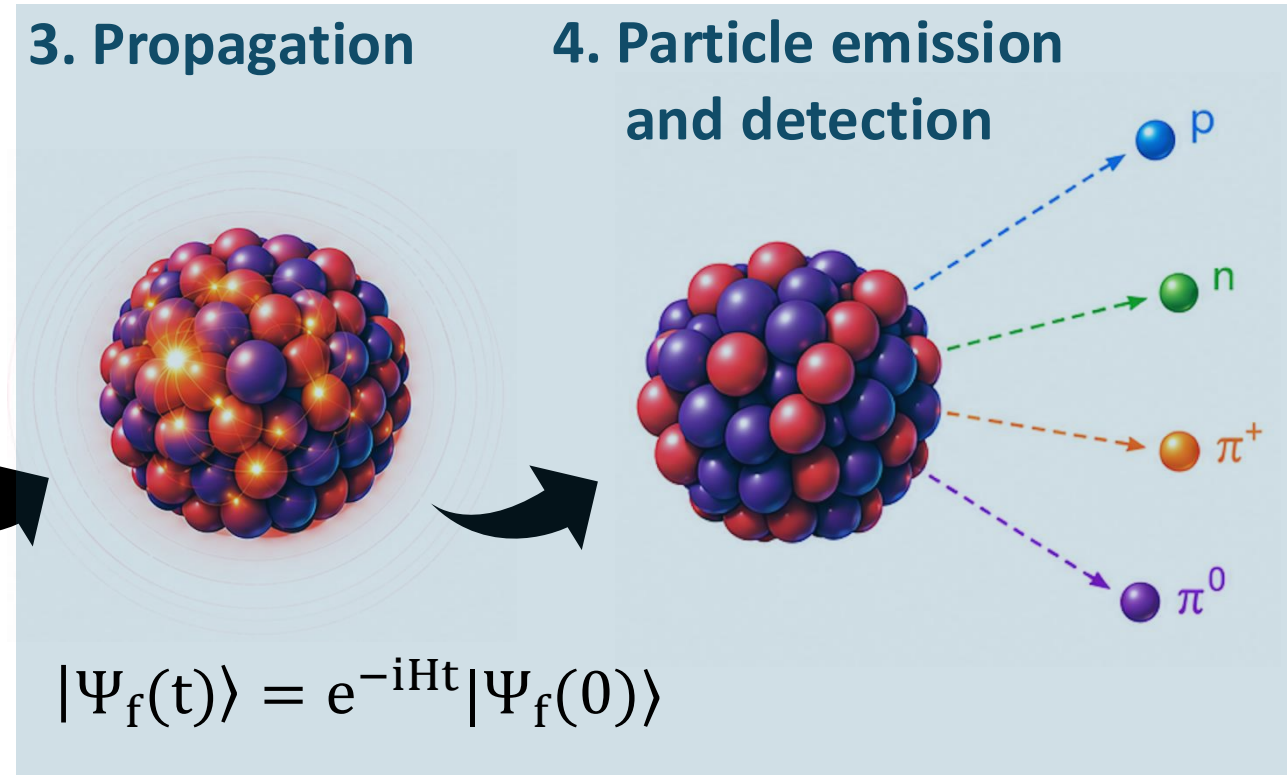


$$|\Psi_f(0)\rangle = \hat{O}|\Psi_0\rangle$$

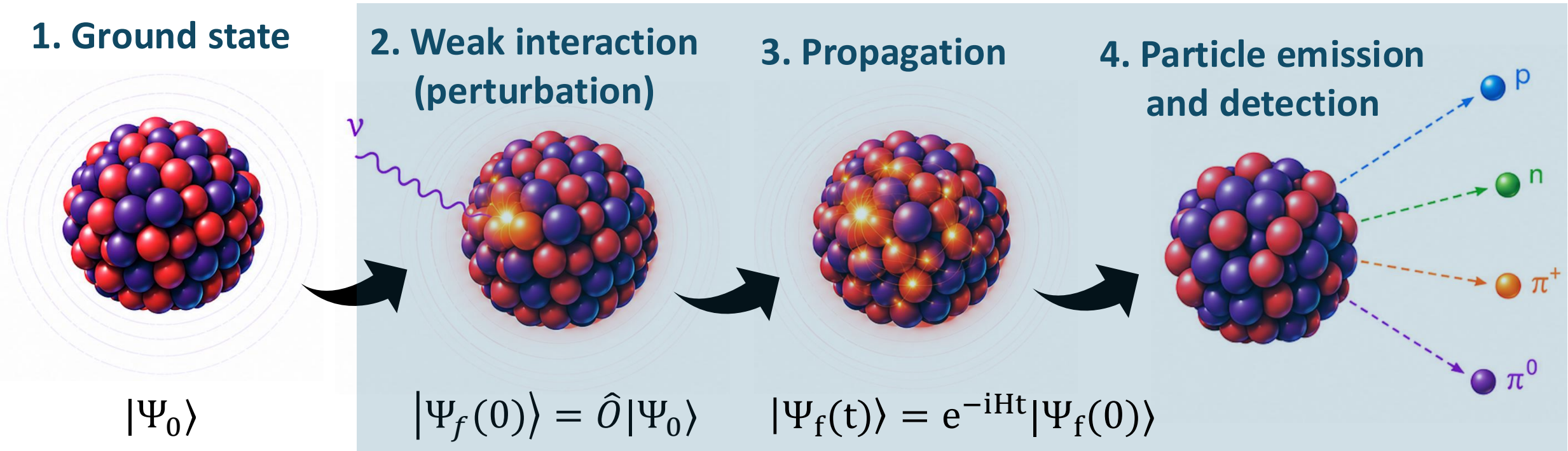
- A neutrino interaction drives the nucleus out of equilibrium by creating a superposition of many excited states.
- The resulting state, $|\Psi_f(0)\rangle$, is **not** an eigenstate of the nuclear Hamiltonian and therefore evolves in time.

3. Time evolution and particle emission

- What is the time-evolved many-body state, $|\Psi_f(t)\rangle$?
- How does its quantum evolution give rise to the final-state particles observed in the detector?



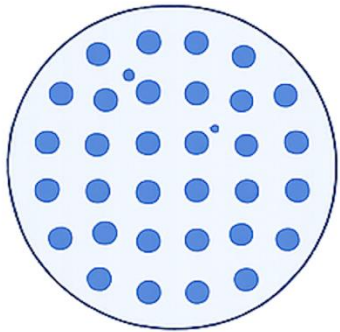
ν -Nucleus Interaction in Neutrino Experiment



No existing method can exactly predict the quantum real-time evolution of medium- and heavy-mass nuclei from the initial weak interaction to the observed final-state particles.

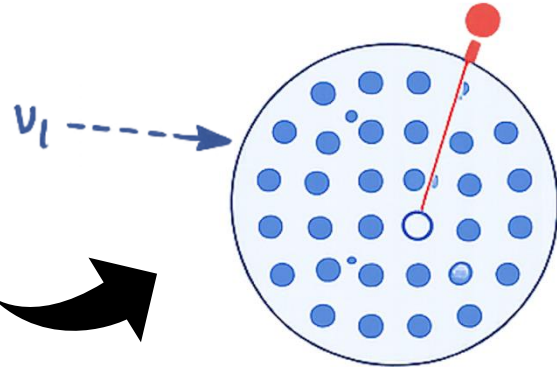
The most simplest case

1. Ground state
Fermi sea



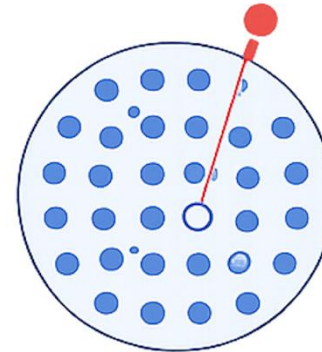
Fermi sea

2. Weak interaction
One nucleon is excited



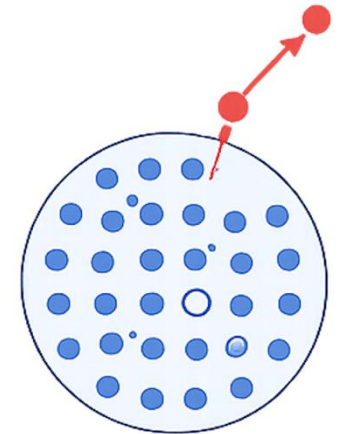
A 1p1h configuration
One particle above k_F
and one hole below k_F

3. Time evolution
Under $H=T$



No interaction ->
no scattering,
no Mixing

4. Particle emission and detection



One nucleon leaves

- Occupied ($|k| < k_F$)
- Unoccupied ($|k| > k_F$)

Quantum Advantage for Nuclear Physics

- Quantum technologies offer a fundamentally new way to simulate strongly correlated many-body systems.
- Universal fault-tolerant quantum computers could, in principle, perform exact simulations of nuclear dynamics.
- However, realistic nuclei such as ^{40}Ar require a very large number of logical qubits and deep quantum circuits.

J. D. Watson et al., arXiv:2312.05344 (2023).

- Large-scale fault-tolerant quantum computers are unlikely to be available in the near future.
- This motivates exploring analogue quantum simulation as a near-term alternative.

Why Analogue Quantum Simulation?

- No exponentially large many-body wavefunction needs to be stored.

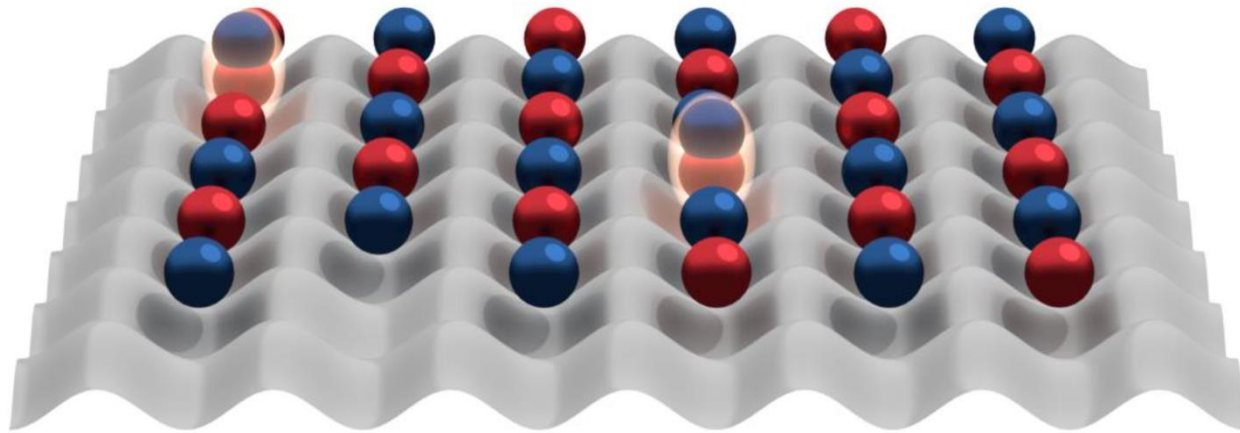
$$|\Psi_0\rangle = \sum_i c_i |i\rangle \quad \text{Classical representation}$$

- Instead, the atoms themselves realize the quantum state.
- The many-body dynamics are realized physically, rather than computed numerically.

Why Ultracold Atoms?

- Largest controllable quantum many-body systems available today ($10^3 - 10^6$ atoms).
- Highly tunable interactions, trapping geometries, and internal degrees of freedom.
- Natural implementation of Hamiltonian time evolution. Direct access to real-time many-body dynamics.
- An ideal platform for exploring nuclear many-body dynamics beyond current classical capabilities.

Can Nature Simulate Itself?



Analogue quantum simulation
with ultracold atoms

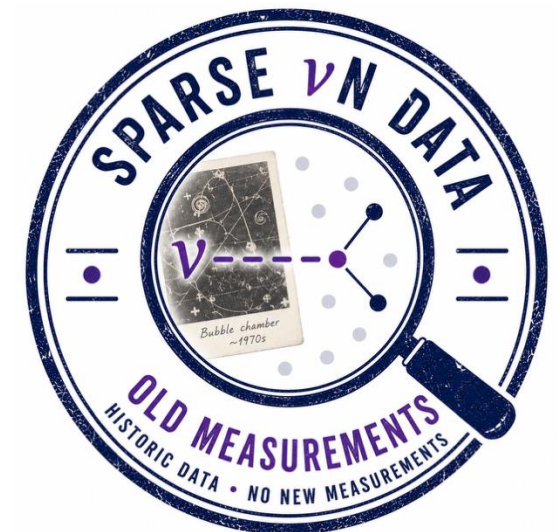
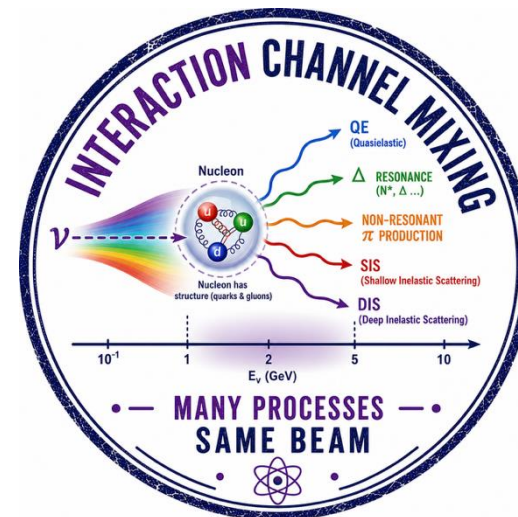
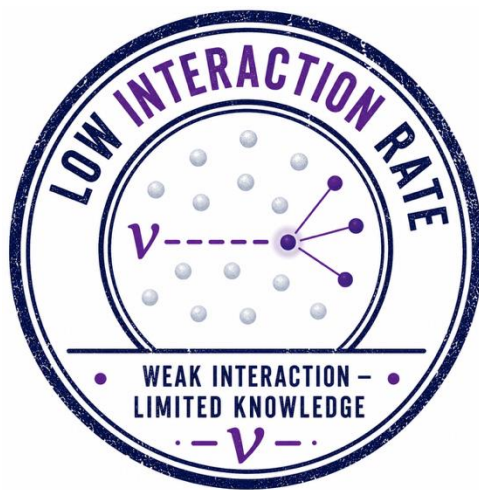
Map a complex nuclear system onto a highly controllable quantum platform that obeys the same many-body physics.

Universality Beyond Energy Scales

- Nuclei and ultracold atoms differ by many orders of magnitude in energy, length, and time scales.
- Many-body behaviour is governed by dimensionless parameters rather than absolute energy scales.
- By matching the relevant dimensionless quantities, both systems can exhibit the same collective quantum dynamics.
- This universality enables ultracold atoms to simulate aspects of nuclear many-body physics.

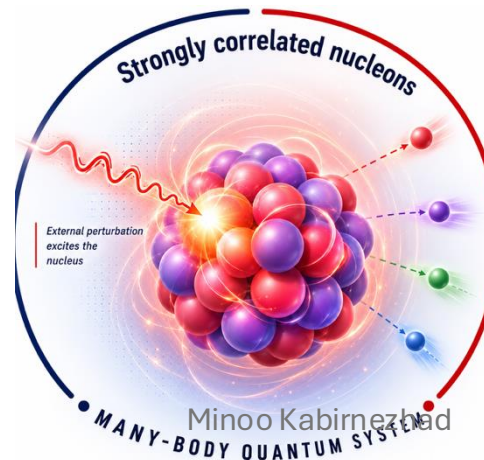
Conclusion & Outlook

- Understanding neutrino-nucleus interactions is essential for precision neutrino oscillation measurements and future discoveries.
- The weak interaction creates a local excitation in a strongly correlated quantum many-body nucleus.



Conclusion & Outlook

- Understanding neutrino-nucleus interactions is essential for precision neutrino oscillation measurements and future discoveries.
- The weak interaction creates a local excitation in a strongly correlated quantum many-body nucleus.
- Predicting the observed final-state particles requires understanding the real-time evolution of this many-body quantum system.

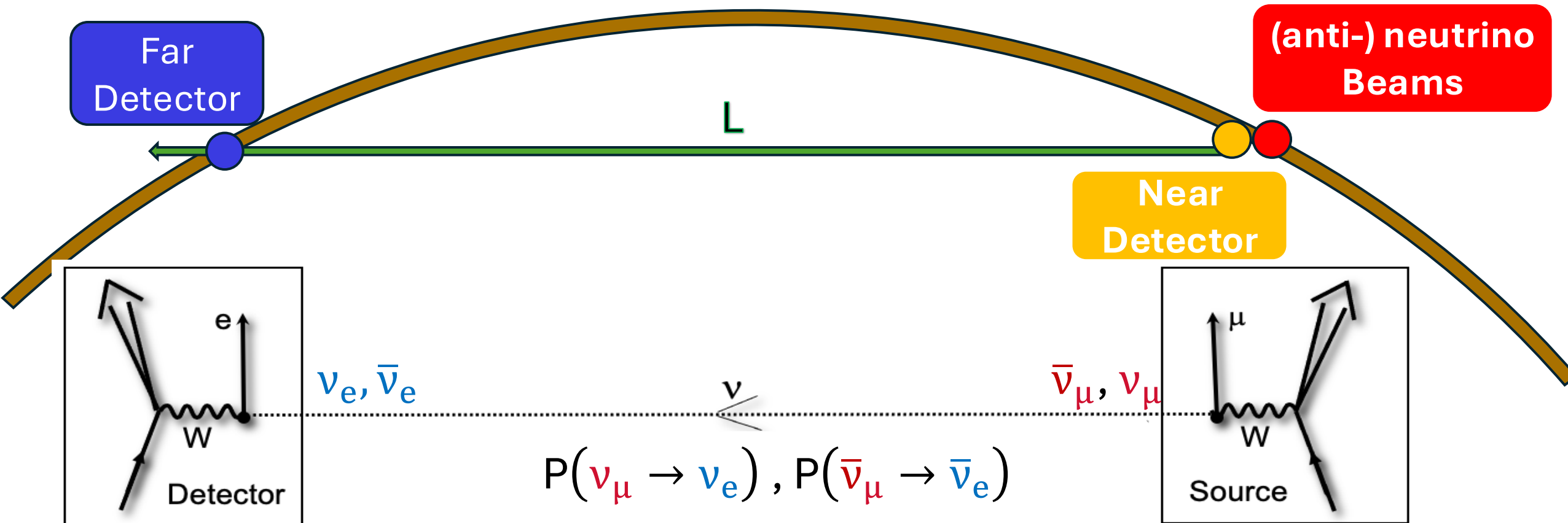


Conclusion & Outlook

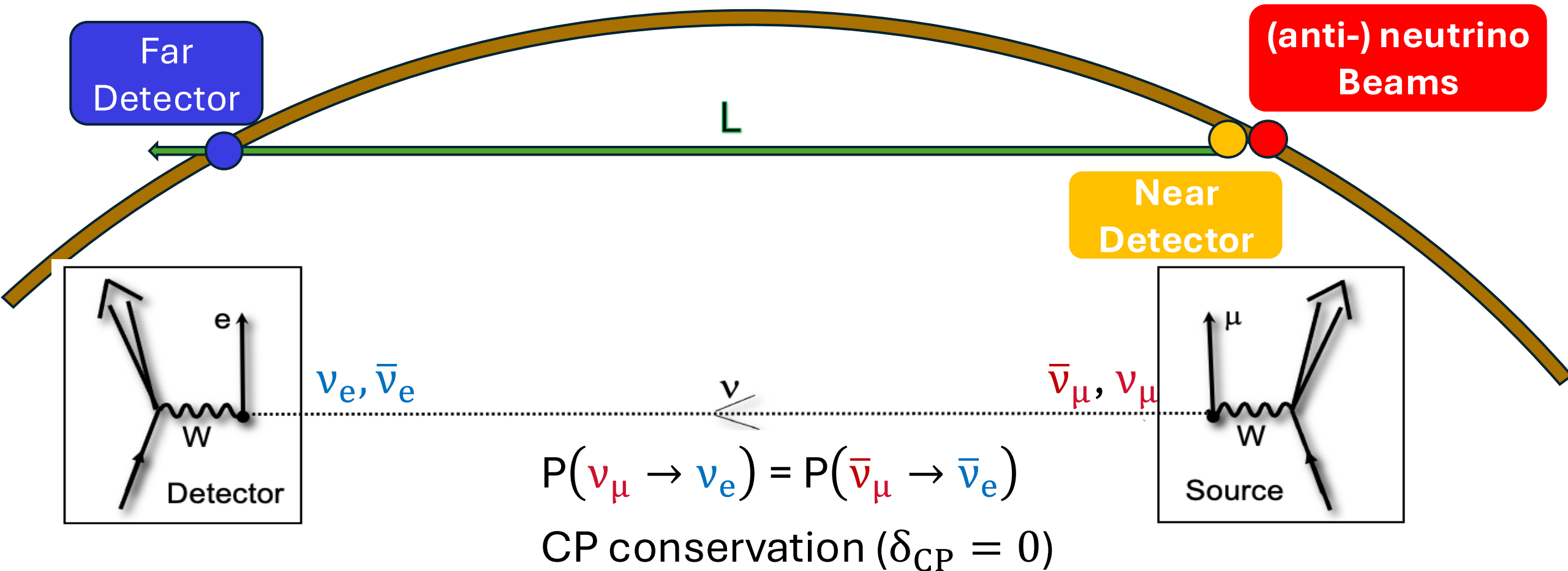
- Understanding neutrino-nucleus interactions is essential for precision neutrino oscillation measurements and future discoveries.
- The weak interaction creates a local excitation in a strongly correlated quantum many-body nucleus.
- Predicting the observed final-state particles requires understanding the real-time evolution of this many-body quantum system.
- Ultracold atoms provide a highly controllable platform to explore universal many-body dynamics beyond the reach of current classical methods.

Backup

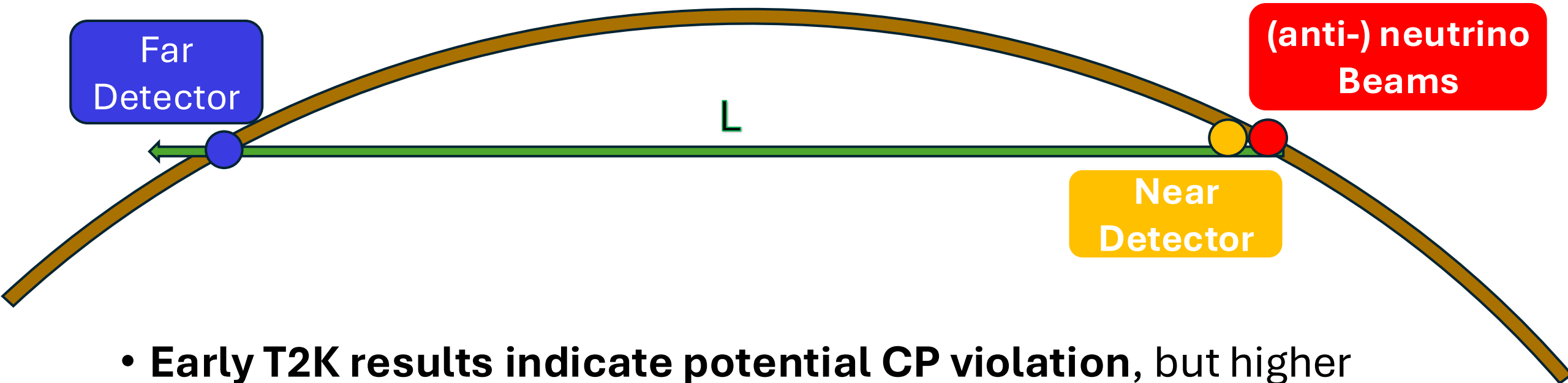
Neutrino Oscillation experiments



Neutrino Oscillation experiments



Neutrino Oscillation experiments



- **Early T2K results indicate potential CP violation**, but higher precision measurements are required to confirm this.
- **Cross-section uncertainties remain a major challenge**, impacting the precision of oscillation parameter measurements.

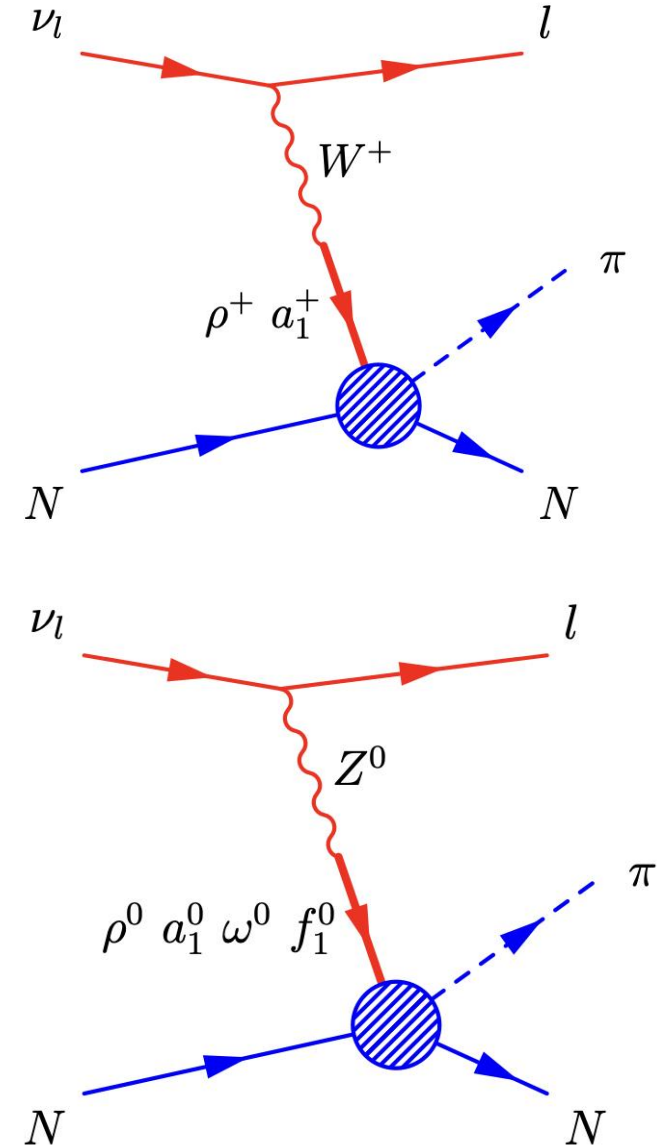
Meson Dominance (MD) model

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1. J. J. Sakurai, Annals Phys.11, 1 (1960)

2. M. Gell-Mann and F. Zachariasen, Phys. Rev. 124, 953 (1961)

- It establishes connections between vector and axial currents and corresponding meson fields with analogous quantum properties.
- This framework explains the interaction between neutrinos and nucleons through meson exchange.



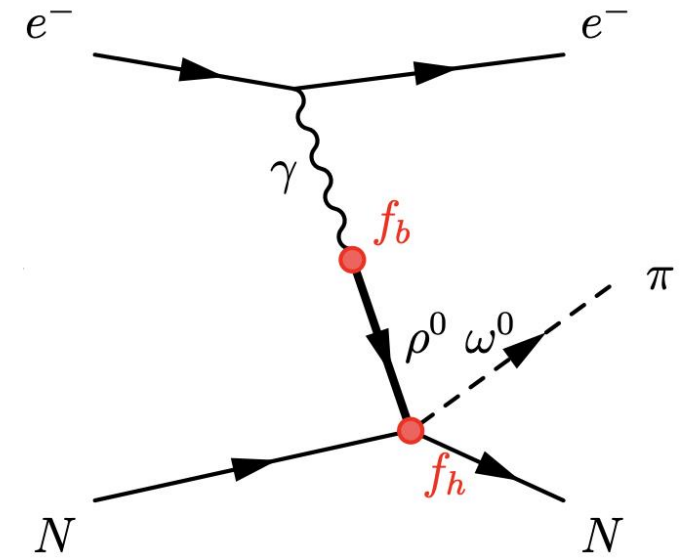
Meson Dominance (MD) model

- MD form factors can be expressed in terms of the meson masses and the coupling strengths, summing over all possible mesons:

$$F_N(Q^2) = \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{m_j^2}{m_j^2 + Q^2} \left(\frac{f_h}{f_b} \right)$$

- Although they do not inherently comply to the unitarity condition (analytic model) or accurately predict behaviour at high Q^2 , they can be **imposed!**

C. Adamuscin *et al.*
 Eur. Phys. J. C 28, 115
 (2003) Minoos Kabirmezahad



k	ρ -group	$m_{(\rho)k}$ [GeV]	ω -group	$m_{(\omega)k}$ [GeV]
1	$\rho(770)$	0.77526	$\omega(782)$	0.78265
2	$\rho(1450)$	1.465	$\omega(1420)$	1.410
3	$\rho(1700)$	1.720	$\omega(1650)$	1.670
4	$\rho(1900)$	1.885	$\omega(1960)$	1.960
5	$\rho(2150)$	2.150	$\omega(2205)$	2.205
k	a_1 -group	$m_{(a_1)k}$ [GeV]	f_1 -group	$m_{(f_1)k}$ [GeV]
1	$a_1(1260)$	1.230	$f_1(1285)$	1.2819
2	$a_1(1420)$	1.411	$f_1(1420)$	1.4263
3	$a_1(1640)$	1.655	$f_1(1510)$	1.518
4	$a_1(2095)$	2.096	$f_1(1970)$	1.1971

Asymptotic behaviour of form factor

- At large Q^2 , resonance form factors must align with the perturbative QCD constraints.

$L_\alpha(Q^2)$ incorporates QCD contributions in the asymptotic region

$$L_\alpha(Q^2) \rightarrow \begin{cases} 1, & Q^2 \rightarrow 0 \\ C_\alpha \ln^{n_\alpha} \frac{Q^2}{\Lambda_{QCD}}, & Q^2 \rightarrow \infty \end{cases}$$

G. Vereshkov and
N. Volchanskiy
([PRD 2007](#))

$$L_\alpha(Q^2) = 1 + g_\alpha \ln \left(1 + \frac{Q^2}{\Lambda_{QCD}^2} \right)^{n_\alpha}$$

g_α defined as a free parameter in the fit

$$\Lambda_{QCD} \in [0.19 - 0.24] \text{ GeV}$$

$$n_3 > n_1 > n_2$$

MD form factors used in the model

- For spin 3/2 resonance:

$$F_{\alpha}^{\{A,V\}}(Q^2) = \frac{f_{\alpha}^{\{A,V\}}}{L_{\alpha}(Q^2)} \sum_{k=1}^K \frac{a_{\alpha k}^{\{A,V\}} m_k^2}{m_k^2 + Q^2}, \quad (\alpha = 1 - 3)$$

$$L_{\alpha}(Q^2) = 1 + g_{\alpha} \ln \left(1 + \frac{Q^2}{\Lambda_{\text{QCD}}^2} \right)^{n_{\alpha}}$$

$$g_{\alpha} = g_{1\alpha} + \frac{g_{2\alpha}}{Q^2} + \frac{g_{3\alpha}}{Q^4} + \dots$$

Inspired by the twist expansion

- $a_{\alpha k}$ are constrained by unitarity conditions that also satisfy asymptotic QCD requirements.

New Features of the MK model

- **SIS region (effective treatment):** Previously included only leading (scaling) contributions; now incorporates nonleading (higher-twist) effects.
- **Resonance modelling:** All resonances are described consistently using MD form factors.
 - **Spin-3/2 resonances** are described by Rarita-Schwinger formalism.
 - **Higher-spin resonances:** States such as $F_{15}(1680)$ and $F_{37}(1950)$ are treated within the same framework as spin-3/2.
- **Non-resonant interaction:** Modelled consistently with the Hybrid approach.

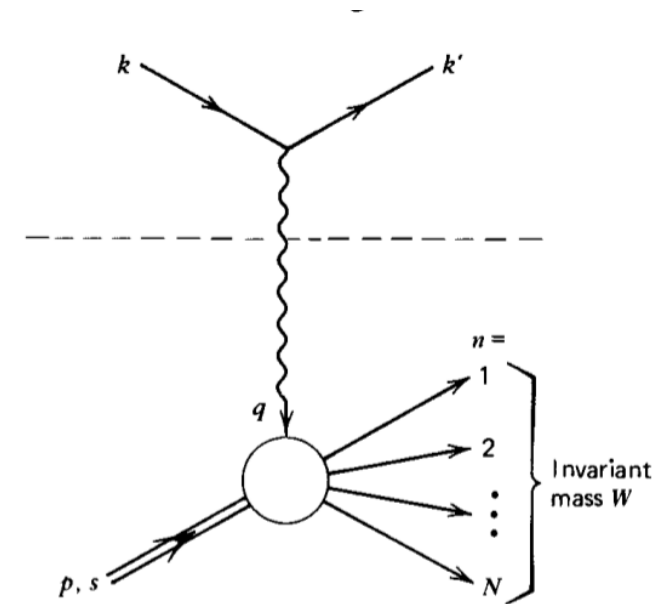
Isospin relation for vector form factor

- If we know proton and neutron form factors, we know vector CC and NC form factors.

reaction	replace \mathcal{F}_i in Eq. (4.7) with
$\ell^- p \rightarrow \ell^- p$	F_i^p
$\ell^- n \rightarrow \ell^- n$	F_i^n
$\nu n \rightarrow \ell^- p$	$F_i^V = F_i^p - F_i^n$
$\nu p \rightarrow \nu p$	$\tilde{F}_i^p = (\frac{1}{2} - 2 \sin^2 \theta_W) F_i^p - \frac{1}{2} F_i^n - \frac{1}{2} F_i^s$
$\nu n \rightarrow \nu n$	$\tilde{F}_i^n = (\frac{1}{2} - 2 \sin^2 \theta_W) F_i^n - \frac{1}{2} F_i^p - \frac{1}{2} F_i^s$

Inelastic scattering

- By Increasing the $Q^2 = -q^2$ we can take a detailed look at the structure of nucleon.
- This can be done by requiring a large energy loss of the bombarding lepton.
- At very large transfer of energy, proton with break up and loses its identity.
- At modest Q^2 proton get excited to baryon resonances such as Δ resonance. The excited state promptly decay to a nucleon and mesons.



Inelastic scattering

- The main challenge now is that we have more than one hadron in the final states and it is not straightforward to calculate the hadron current. Therefore, J^μ has a more complex structure than Elastic scattering

Elastic

$$d\sigma \propto L_{\mu\nu}^e H^{\mu\nu}$$

$$\text{Lepton tensor } L_{\mu\nu}^e = \sum \sum j_\mu^\dagger j_\nu$$

$$\text{Hadron tensor } H_{\mu\nu} = \sum \sum J_\mu^\dagger J_\nu$$

$$\text{Hadron current } J^\mu \propto \bar{u} \Gamma^\mu u \quad \longrightarrow$$

Inelastic

$$d\sigma \propto L_{\mu\nu}^e W^{\mu\nu}$$

$$\text{Hadron tensor } W_{\mu\nu} = \sum \sum J_\mu^\dagger J_\nu$$

There are more than single hadron in the final state and the current is complicated.

Inelastic scattering

- The hadronic tensor W serves to parametrise our total ignorance of the form of inelastic hadron current.
- The most general form of the tensor W must be constructed from $g^{\mu\nu}$ and independent momenta p and q .

$$\begin{aligned}
 W^{\mu\nu} &= \frac{1}{2m_N} \sum \langle p | J^\mu(0) | \Delta \rangle \langle \Delta | J^\nu(0) | p \rangle \delta(W^2 - M_R^2) \\
 &= -W_1 g^{\mu\nu} + \frac{W_2}{m_N^2} p^\mu p^\nu - i \varepsilon^{\mu\nu\sigma\lambda} p_\sigma q_\lambda \frac{W_3}{2m_N^2} \\
 &\quad + \frac{W_4}{m_N^2} q^\mu q^\nu + \frac{W_5}{m_N^2} (p^\mu q^\nu + q^\mu p^\nu) + i \frac{W_6}{m_N^2} (p^\mu q^\nu - q^\mu p^\nu)
 \end{aligned}$$

γ^μ is not included as we are parametrizing the cross section which is already summed and averaged over spins.

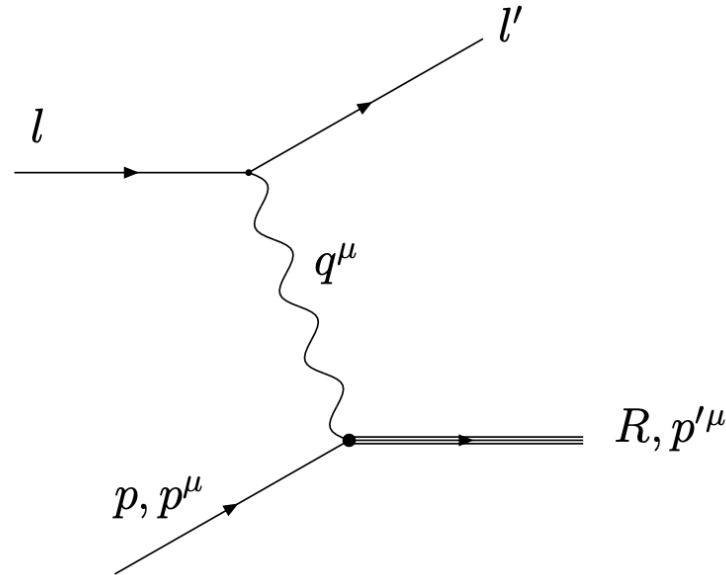
Inelastic scattering

- W_i s are function of the Lorentz scalar variables that can be constructed from four-momenta at the hadronic vertex.
- Unlike elastic scattering, there are two independent variables.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathcal{W}^{\mu\nu} &= \frac{1}{2m_N} \sum \langle p | J^\mu(0) | \Delta \rangle \langle \Delta | J^\nu(0) | p \rangle \delta(W^2 - M_R^2) \\
 &= -\mathcal{W}_1 g^{\mu\nu} + \frac{\mathcal{W}_2}{m_N^2} p^\mu p^\nu - i \varepsilon^{\mu\nu\sigma\lambda} p_\sigma q_\lambda \frac{\mathcal{W}_3}{2m_N^2} \\
 &\quad + \frac{\mathcal{W}_4}{m_N^2} q^\mu q^\nu + \frac{\mathcal{W}_5}{m_N^2} (p^\mu q^\nu + q^\mu p^\nu) + i \frac{\mathcal{W}_6}{m_N^2} (p^\mu q^\nu - q^\mu p^\nu)
 \end{aligned}$$

Resonance production

- $\nu_l N \rightarrow l R$
- Resonance mass: M_R
- Resonance width: Γ_0
- $R = l_{2I,2J}(M_R)$,
 - S: $l = 0$,
 - P: $l = 1$,
 - etc
- Parity: $P = -(-1)^l$



Resonance	M_R	Γ_0	χ_E
$P_{33}(1232)$	1232	117	1
$P_{11}(1440)$	1430	350	0.65
$D_{13}(1520)$	1515	115	0.60
$S_{11}(1535)$	1535	150	0.45
$P_{33}(1600)$	1600	320	0.18
$S_{31}(1620)$	1630	140	0.25
$S_{11}(1650)$	1655	140	0.70
$D_{15}(1675)$	1675	150	0.40
$F_{15}(1680)$	1685	130	0.67
$D_{13}(1700)$	1700	150	0.12
$D_{33}(1700)$	1700	300	0.15
$P_{11}(1710)$	1710	100	0.12
$P_{13}(1720)$	1720	250	0.11
$F_{35}(1905)$	1880	330	0.12
$P_{31}(1910)$	1890	280	0.22
$P_{33}(1920)$	1920	260	0.12
$F_{37}(1950)$	1930	285	0.40