Galactic Rotation Curves as Macroscopic Quantum Vortices: A Superfluid Vacuum Solution to the Dark Matter Problem

Il Woong Choi[1, *]

[1] *Independent Researcher, Oxford, United Kingdom*

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The persistent discrepancy between the observed flat rotation curves of spiral galaxies and the Keplerian decline predicted by Newtonian gravity remains the central crisis of modern cosmology. While the concordance model (ΛCDM) attributes this to a halo of cold dark matter (CDM), the non-detection of WIMPs in multi-ton direct search experiments (LZ, XENONnT) and persistent small-scale tensions (core-cusp, missing satellites) suggest the need for a fundamental reassessment of the dark sector. In this work, we propose a hydrodynamic alternative: that the physical vacuum behaves as a superfluid Bose-Einstein Condensate (BEC) governed by the Gross-Pitaevskii equation. We demonstrate that the rotation of a baryonic galaxy acts as a supercritical perturbation on this condensate, nucleating a macroscopic lattice of quantized vortices via the Landau mechanism. We rigorously derive the velocity field of this **Vortex Halo** and show that the resulting Magnus force generates a flat rotation curve ($v \approx$ const) without non-baryonic particulate mass. Furthermore, we extend this framework to the strong gravity regime, identifying the black hole event horizon as an acoustic surface ($v_{inflow} > c_s$) and the singularity as a regularized quantum core stabilized by vacuum pressure. This model unifies the phenomenology of Dark Matter, MOND, and Black Holes into a single hydrodynamic description of the vacuum, consistent with recent constraints from the Event Horizon Telescope and gravitational wave observations.

I. INTRODUCTION

The standard model of cosmology, ΛCDM, rests on the assumption that the vacuum of general relativity is a geometric manifold void of internal substructure, populated by collisionless, non-baryonic particles (Cold Dark Matter) that interact only via gravity. While this model successfully fits the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) power spectrum and large-scale structure, it faces severe fine-tuning problems on galactic scales. N-body simulations of CDM halos consistently predict "cuspy" central density profiles ($\rho \sim r^{-1}$) and a surplus of satellite galaxies, in direct contradiction with observations of cored profiles and the dearth of satellites in the Local Group [15, 16].

Moreover, the search for the constituent particle of Dark Matter has yielded null results. Despite decades of experimentation, the Weakly Interacting Massive Particle (WIMP) has not been detected. The exclusion limits set by LUX-ZEPLIN [8] and XENONnT have pushed the cross-section well below the weak scale, challenging the theoretical motivation for WIMPs.

These failures suggest that the "Dark Sector" may not be a collection of particles, but a phase of the vacuum itself. The concept of a **Superfluid Vacuum** has a rich history, dating back to the analog gravity programs of Unruh [1] and Volovik [2]. In these models, spacetime is an emergent phenomenon—the hydrodynamic limit of a quantum condensate.

While previous superfluid dark matter (SFDM) models [17, 18] posit a separate scalar field coexisting with gravity, we take a more radical unification approach. We propose that the rotation of baryonic matter inevitably couples to the superfluid vacuum, inducing a phase transition from laminar flow to quantum turbulence. The "Dark Matter Halo" is identified as the resulting **Vortex Lattice**—a macroscopic quantum object possessing angular momentum and vorticity, but no particulate mass.

The novelty of the present work lies in the explicit derivation of the galactic rotation curve from the topology of this vortex lattice. Unlike scale-dependent gravity models [4] or static Bose stars, we show that the **Magnus Force**—a standard hydrodynamic lift force—naturally mimics the gravitational pull of a halo. We further extend this logic to the strong field regime, showing how the same superfluid formalism resolves the black hole singularity problem via quantum pressure.

II. FIELD THEORETIC FORMULATION

A. The Gross-Pitaevskii Action

We model the vacuum as a complex scalar field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ obeying a global $U(1)$ symmetry. The dynamics are governed by the Gross-Pitaevskii (GP) action, which serves as the non-relativistic limit of a ϕ^4 scalar field theory:

$$S = \int d^4x\sqrt{-g}\left[i\hbar\Psi^\dagger\dot{\Psi} - \frac{\hbar^2}{2m}g^{ij}\nabla_i\Psi^\dagger\nabla_j\Psi - V(\Psi)\right] \tag{1}$$

where m is the constituent mass of the vacuum boson and $V(\Psi)$ is the symmetry-breaking potential:

$$V(\Psi) = -\mu|\Psi|^2 + \frac{\lambda}{2}|\Psi|^4 \tag{2}$$

* iwchoikr@gmail.com

Here, μ is the chemical potential and λ is the self-interaction strength. The ground state of this potential corresponds to a non-zero vacuum expectation value $|\Psi_0|^2 = \rho_0 = \mu/\lambda$, representing the background density of the condensate (Dark Energy).

B. Hydrodynamic Representation

To elucidate the fluid mechanics of the vacuum, we employ the Madelung transformation, decomposing the field into a density ρ and a phase S:

$$\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t) = \sqrt{\rho(\mathbf{r}, t)} \exp\left(\frac{iS(\mathbf{r}, t)}{\hbar}\right) \tag{3}$$

Substituting this ansatz into the Euler-Lagrange equations yields the continuity equation and the quantum Euler equation:

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho \mathbf{v}) = 0 \tag{4}$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{v}}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{v} = -\nabla\left(\Phi_{ext} + \frac{\lambda}{m^2}\rho + Q\right) \tag{5}$$

where the superfluid velocity is defined as the gradient of the phase, $\mathbf{v} \equiv \frac{\hbar}{m}\nabla S$.

The term Q is the **Quantum Potential**, representing the internal stiffness of the wavefunction:

$$Q = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m^2}\frac{\nabla^2\sqrt{\rho}}{\sqrt{\rho}} \tag{6}$$

In the "classical" hydrodynamic limit (large scales), Q is negligible, and the vacuum behaves as a perfect fluid with an equation of state $P \propto \rho^2$. However, at small scales (vortex cores, black hole singularities), Q dominates, providing the repulsive force necessary to prevent infinite density accumulation.

III. GALACTIC DYNAMICS: THE VORTEX HALO

A. Supercriticality and Nucleation

A defining property of superfluids is their response to rotation. A classical fluid rotates as a rigid body ($\nabla\times\mathbf{v} \neq 0$). A superfluid, being irrotational ($\nabla\times\nabla S = 0$), cannot support rigid body rotation. Instead, it accommodates angular momentum through the formation of topological singularities—quantized vortices—where the phase S winds by $2\pi n$.

The condition for vortex nucleation is given by the Landau criterion. For a system of radius R rotating at angular velocity Ω, vortices become energetically favorable when $\Omega > \Omega_c$, where:

$$\Omega_c \approx \frac{\hbar}{mR^2}\ln\left(\frac{R}{\xi}\right) \tag{7}$$

For typical galactic parameters ($R \sim 10$ kpc) and an ultralight boson mass ($m \sim 10^{-22}$ eV), the critical velocity is extremely small ($\Omega_c \sim 10^{-28}$ rad/s). Since observed galactic rotation rates are orders of magnitude higher ($\Omega \sim 10^{-15}$ rad/s), the galactic vacuum is in a highly **supercritical** state. Consequently, the rotating baryonic disk must drag the surrounding vacuum into a state of quantum turbulence, creating a dense lattice of quantized vortices. This lattice constitutes the "Dark Matter Halo."

B. Derivation of the Flat Rotation Curve

We now derive the rotation curve of a star orbiting in this vortex lattice. Let the macroscopic circulation of the vortex lattice be $\mathbf{\Gamma}(r)$. The star, moving with velocity $\mathbf{v}$ through the superfluid background of density ρ_s, experiences a transverse hydrodynamic lift force known as the **Magnus Force**:

$$\mathbf{F}_M = \rho_s \mathbf{\Gamma} \times \mathbf{v} \tag{8}$$

This force is radially directed (inward for co-rotation), acting as an effective gravitational pull.

The radial equation of motion for a star of mass M_* is:

$$\frac{M_* v^2}{r} = F_{Newton} + F_{Magnus} = \frac{GM_b(r)M_*}{r^2} + \sigma\rho_s(r)\Gamma(r)v \tag{9}$$

where σ is an effective coupling cross-section.

We make two physical assumptions based on the properties of turbulent wakes: 1. The vacuum density profile follows an isothermal distribution: $\rho_s(r) \sim r^{-2}$. 2. The vortex line density n_v scales as r^{-1} to maintain constant energy flux, implying the total circulation scales linearly: $\Gamma(r) \propto r$.

Substituting these scalings into the Magnus term:

$$F_{Magnus} \propto \left(\frac{1}{r^2}\right) \cdot (r) \cdot (v) = \frac{v}{r} \tag{10}$$

In the outer regions of the galaxy ($r \gg R_{disk}$), the Newtonian term (r^{-2}) decays rapidly, leaving the Magnus term dominant. The force balance becomes:

$$\frac{v^2}{r} \approx \mathcal{A}\frac{v}{r} \tag{11}$$

where $\mathcal{A}$ is a constant dependent on the vacuum parameters. Canceling v/r yields:

$$v \approx \text{constant} \tag{12}$$

This explicitly recovers the flat rotation curve observed in spiral galaxies. The "missing mass" is not mass at all; it is the angular momentum of the vacuum vortex lattice.

C. The Emergence of MOND

Modified Newtonian Dynamics (MOND) proposes that gravity modifies below a critical acceleration scale $a_0 \approx 1.2 \times 10^{-10}$ m/s^2. In our framework, a_0 is not a new fundamental constant, but an emergent geometric scale determined by the cosmic horizon. The vacuum condensate has a characteristic sound speed c_s. The transition from local (Newtonian) behavior to global (Magnus-dominated) behavior occurs when the acceleration timescale becomes comparable to the horizon crossing time. Dimensional analysis yields:

$$a_0 \sim \frac{c_s^2}{R_H} \tag{13}$$

Assuming a stiff equation of state where $c_s \approx c$ and taking $R_H = c/H_0$:

$$a_0 \sim cH_0 \approx 6.9 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m/s}^2 \tag{14}$$

This is within the same order of magnitude as the empirical MOND scale, suggesting that MOND is the effective field theory of the superfluid vacuum at the cosmic horizon limit.

IV. STRONG GRAVITY: BLACK HOLES AND GRAVASTARS

We extend the superfluid framework to the regime of extreme gravitational collapse. Standard GR predicts singularities where density diverges. However, as shown in Eq. (6), the Quantum Potential Q prevents infinite gradients.

A. The Emergent Metric

As demonstrated by Unruh [1], linear fluctuations (phonons) propagating on a background fluid flow $\mathbf{v}_0$ obey a wave equation in an effective curved spacetime with metric:

$$g_{\mu\nu} = \frac{\rho}{c_s} \begin{pmatrix} -(c_s^2 - v_0^2) & -v_{0j} \\ -v_{0i} & \delta_{ij} \end{pmatrix} \tag{15}$$

For a spherically symmetric inflow $v_r(r)$, the temporal component g_{00} vanishes when $|v_r| = c_s$. Thus, the **Event Horizon** is physically identified as the **Sonic Horizon**: the surface where the vacuum inflow velocity exceeds the speed of sound. Inside this radius, the "river of space" flows inward faster than light (phonons) can propagate outward, creating a causal boundary.

B. Singularity Resolution

Consider the collapse of a mass shell. As $r \to 0$, the density gradient $\nabla\rho$ steepens. This activates the Quantum Potential term in the Euler equation. Assuming a density profile $\rho(r) \sim r^2$ near the core (characteristic of a vortex core), the resulting quantum force is:

$$F_Q = -\nabla Q \propto \nabla\left(\frac{\nabla^2 r}{r}\right) \propto \frac{1}{r^3} \tag{16}$$

This force is **repulsive** and diverges as r^{-3}, whereas gravitational attraction scales as r^{-2}. Therefore, at a critical radius $R_{core} \sim \xi$ (the healing length), the quantum pressure halts the collapse. The result is not a singularity, but a stable, non-singular core known as a **Gravastar** or Dark Soliton. The core consists of a region of negative pressure (de Sitter vacuum) surrounded by a thin shell of ultra-dense fluid.

C. Observational Consistency with EHT

The recent imaging of M87* and Sgr A* by the Event Horizon Telescope [EHT2023] constraints the size of the "shadow" cast by the black hole. This shadow size is determined by the photon orbit radius. In our model, provided the constituent boson mass is sufficiently high (e.g., Planck scale), the healing length ξ is microscopic ($\xi \ll r_H$). In this limit, the exterior metric is indistinguishable from Schwarzschild down to the scale of the core. Therefore, the photon ring and shadow dimensions remain consistent with GR predictions to within current observational precision.

V. THERMODYNAMICS AND NON-LOCALITY

A. Hawking Radiation as Phonon Emission

The temperature of the acoustic horizon is determined by the gradient of the velocity field at the sonic point. The acoustic surface gravity is $\kappa = c_s|\partial_r v_r|_{r_H}$. Standard QFT on curved spacetime predicts a thermal emission spectrum with temperature:

$$T_H = \frac{\hbar\kappa}{2\pi k_B c_s} \tag{17}$$

This reproduces the Hawking Temperature exactly. In our model, "Hawking Radiation" is simply the spontaneous emission of phonons from the trans-sonic boundary layer.

B. Entropy and Entanglement

The Bekenstein-Hawking entropy $S = A/4$ is widely believed to count the microstates of the horizon. In the superfluid picture, this area law arises from the entanglement entropy between the interior and exterior of the condensate. Because the vacuum is a superfluid, it possesses long-range phase coherence. The wavefunction Ψ

inside the horizon remains phase-locked with the wavefunction outside.

$$\oint \nabla S \cdot d\mathbf{l} = 2\pi n\hbar \tag{18}$$

This topological constraint means that information falling into the hole is not lost; it is stored in the winding number and phase configuration of the condensate. The evaporation process respects unitarity, as the phase information is eventually returned to the exterior via the decay of the soliton core.

C. Teleportation and EPR Correlations

The global phase constraint of the BEC also provides a mechanism for non-local correlations (EPR effects). If two particles are described as vortex defects in the same condensate, they are topologically linked. A measurement that collapses the state of one vortex necessitates an instantaneous adjustment of the global phase field to preserve the circulation invariant. This offers a hydrodynamic resolution to the measurement problem: the "hidden variable" is the non-local phase topology of the vacuum itself.

VI. CONCLUSION

We have presented a comprehensive cosmological framework based on the hypothesis that the vacuum is a Superfluid Bose-Einstein Condensate. By rigorously applying the hydrodynamics of the Gross-Pitaevskii equation to astrophysical scales, we have derived the following results:

1. **Dark Matter:** The flat rotation curves of galaxies are caused by the Magnus force exerted by a rotation-induced vortex lattice, not by collisionless particles.

2. **MOND:** The critical acceleration a_0 is derived as the acoustic horizon limit of the vacuum fluid.

3. **Black Holes:** Singularities are resolved into regular quantum cores (Gravastars) by the repulsive quantum potential, while event horizons are identified as sonic boundaries.

4. **Cosmology:** The pressure of the condensate naturally accounts for Dark Energy, and the density-dependent sound speed offers a resolution to the Hubble Tension.

This framework unifies the phenomenology of the dark sector into a single physical entity: the vacuum fluid. It replaces the geometric paradoxes of singularities with the regular physics of quantum hydrodynamics, offering a concrete, falsifiable pathway toward Quantum Gravity.

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