Closure-Norm Condensation and Electroweak Symmetry Breaking in VERSF

Radial Closure Modes, Vacuum Phase Selection, Gauge-Sector Splitting, and Mass Generation from Persistent Closure Geometry

Keith Taylor — VERSF Theoretical Physics Programme

General reader summary

The Standard Model of particle physics explains how elementary particles acquire mass through the Higgs mechanism — an invisible field, the Higgs field, that fills all of space and "stiffens" the vacuum in such a way that particles moving through it behave as though they have mass. The discovery of the Higgs boson at the LHC in 2012 confirmed the existence of this field. But the Higgs field itself remains the most puzzling object in the Standard Model. Why does it exist? Why does it have the specific potential it has? Why does the vacuum settle into the broken phase rather than the symmetric one? Why is the weak force short-ranged while electromagnetism extends to infinity? The Standard Model encodes the answers to these questions into the form of the Higgs potential by hand — it does not derive them.

This paper proposes a deeper explanation, working within the Void Energy-Regulated Space Framework (VERSF) programme.

The proposal is that the Higgs field is not a primitive ingredient of nature. It is the *radial vibration mode of the closure structure of the substrate itself*. Earlier papers in the VERSF programme established that matter is composed of Persistent Fold Defects (PFDs) — stable knots in the substrate of committed distinguishability from which space and matter emerge — and that these defects organize into the observed Standard Model representations under SU(3) × SU(2) × U(1). The present paper takes the next step: it asks what the substrate's vacuum looks like, and shows that the broken-electroweak phase observed in our universe arises automatically as the closure-stabilized vacuum phase of the committed distinguishability substrate.

The picture that emerges is this. The vacuum is not empty. It carries a definite *closure density* — a measure of how strongly the substrate has committed to definite distinguishability at every point. Fluctuations of this closure density behave like a scalar field, the *closure-norm field*. When the closure-stabilization energetics of the substrate favour a finite closure density over zero closure density, the closure-norm field condenses, much as superfluid helium below its transition temperature condenses into a coherent macroscopic state. The vacuum of our universe is the closure-condensed phase. The Higgs boson, when seen at the LHC, is the radial vibration of this condensate — the same kind of object as a phonon in a solid or a Higgs amplitude mode in a superconductor, but at the deepest available substrate level.

Once the substrate selects the closure-condensed phase, gauge transport modes that couple to the closure density acquire mass. The W and Z bosons are the modes that couple this way; they pick up a finite range, which we observe as the weak interaction being short-ranged. The photon is the unique linear combination of gauge transport modes that leaves the closure density invariant; it remains exactly massless, which we observe as electromagnetism being long-ranged. The colour gauge group SU(3) acts on a *different* internal sector of the substrate that doesn't couple to the closure-norm direction at all, so SU(3) is not broken — and confinement, the other phenomenon that makes the strong force qualitatively different, is enforced by an entirely separate substrate-level mechanism (the substrate $\mathbb{Z}_3$ closure-conservation law).

Particle masses arise from differential coupling of different PFD classes to the closure condensate. PFDs with deeper closure structure couple more strongly and become heavy; PFDs with shallow closure structure couple weakly and become light. The three generations of fermions correspond to three distinct refinement-stable closure-depth sectors, with progressively stronger condensate coupling. Neutrinos couple weakly because their PFD structure has minimal overlap with the closure-norm direction.

The result is a unified picture in which the Higgs mechanism is not an inserted device but an emergent phenomenon arising from the geometry of persistent closure itself. Particles, gauge structure, confinement, chirality, and mass generation all become different faces of one underlying process: the stabilization of committed distinguishability under closure transport.

The paper makes specific structural predictions, including a sharpened version of the Higgs mass relation already derived in the hexagonal companion paper, the prediction that no fundamental scalar exists at higher energy beyond the radial closure mode, and falsifiable criteria distinguishing this picture from the standard fundamental-Higgs scenario.

Contents

Abstract

We develop a substrate-level account of electroweak symmetry breaking within the Void Energy-Regulated Space Framework (VERSF), extending the Persistent Fold Defect (PFD) ontology and closure-field programme into the domain of vacuum condensation and particle mass generation. The central thesis is that the Higgs-like degree of freedom is *not* a fundamental scalar inserted axiomatically, but the *radial amplitude mode of the coarse-grained closure-norm field of the substrate*. Vacuum condensation arises when the closure-stabilized phase minimizes the total admissibility free energy of the committed distinguishability substrate under finite commitment capacity and stabilization-depth constraints.

The paper establishes seven principal structural results, in PFD/closure-norm vocabulary:

1. **The closure-norm field $\rho(x) = |\mathcal{C}(x)| - \mathcal{C}_0$ is a gauge singlet under SU(3)_C × SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y by construction** (§3.2). Closure magnitude is invariant under each gauge

factor — colour rotations act on the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block of $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$, phase rotations act on the phase of $\mathcal{C}$, orientation rotations act on the SU(2) doublet — none of which affect $|\mathcal{C}|$.

2. **The closure potential $V(\rho) = -(\alpha/2)\rho^2 + (\beta/4)\rho^4$ is structurally forced rather than postulated** (§5.2). The negative quadratic term arises because zero closure amplitude is unstable under finite substrate commitment capacity; the positive quartic term arises because excessive closure amplitude violates the $K = 7$ closure-channel saturation bound.
3. **The Higgs mass satisfies $M\_H^2 \geq N\_\text{scalar} \cdot (M\_W^2 + M\_Z^2)$ with leading-order saturation, where $N\_\text{scalar} = (2K+1)/(2K) = 15/14$** (§6.3). This is the PFD/closure-norm-vocabulary re-derivation of Theorem 6 of the hexagonal companion paper, via Schur complement on the stiffness matrix and channel-counting on the closure functional $\mathcal{C} = \prod_i u_i$. The leading-order value is $M\_H \approx 125.8$ GeV (§6.4).
4. **The asymmetry between SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y breaking and SU(3)_C protection is forced by the substrate Hilbert-space decomposition $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$** (§7). The closure-norm direction lies in the $\mathbb{C}^1$ block; SU(3)_C acts on the orthogonal $\mathbb{C}^3$ block. The electroweak sectors couple to the closure-norm field through interface-stiffness terms in the closure Hamiltonian; colour does not have an analogous coupling.
5. **The photon is the unique linear combination of B_μ and W^3_μ that leaves the closure-norm vacuum invariant** (§9). Specifically, $A\_\mu = B\_\mu \cos \theta\_W + W^3\_\mu \sin \theta\_W$ is the U(1)_EM direction along which the $Q = T_3 + Y/2$ transformation acts only on the phase of $\mathcal{C}$ (not on $|\mathcal{C}|$), so the condensate does not break U(1)_EM and the photon remains exactly massless.
6. **Fermion mass $m\_f = g\_f\, v$ arises from PFD-class-specific coupling g_f to the closure condensate** (§10), with g_f structurally determined by the PFD invariant tuple $\mathcal{I}(D) = (C\_D, \pi\_D, \chi\_D, \gamma\_D, \ell\_D, \ldots)$ and connected to the matter paper §6.5 four-contribution mass scaffold.
7. **Generation count, ordering, and the substrate stiffness factor S(D)** (§11). The flavour-mixing programme's stiffness operator $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$ delivers two structural results: exactly three generations ($\gamma\_D \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ with $\gamma\_D \leq 3$ from refinement persistence) and the generation ordering $m\_\{\text{gen } 1\} < m\_\{\text{gen } 2\} < m\_\{\text{gen } 3\}$. The empirical mass-ratio magnitudes ($m\_\mu/m\_e \approx 207$, $m\_\tau/m\_e \approx 3477$) are not delivered by $\mathcal{D}$ alone; they require the *substrate stiffness factor* S(D) assembled from the matter paper §6.5 contributions (closure-Hessian stiffness, confinement/localization cost, persistent distinguishability content). Computing S(D) from substrate primitives is the central open problem of the present paper (§17.2).

Epistemic status. Results 1, 5 are proven from inherited primitives. Result 3 is proven conditional on the hexagonal companion paper's Schur-complement + channel-counting argument re-expressed in PFD vocabulary, with the leading-order saturation depending on a new substrate-isotropy axiom (Axiom I, §6.3) introduced in this paper. Result 2 is structurally motivated but the quartic coefficient β remains schematic. Result 4 is conditional on the substrate Hilbert-space decomposition $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ inherited from upstream. Result 6 is the structural framework; exact g_D values are open. Result 7 splits into two parts: generation count and ordering are conditional theorems (on the flavour-mixing programme's $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$); the empirical mass-hierarchy *magnitudes* require the substrate stiffness factor S(D), which is the central open computation. The paper does *not* claim to derive: exact Yukawa coupling values, the full RG running of α and the electroweak couplings, the second-quantised reconstruction of the closure-condensate quantum field theory, the resolution of the ν_R PFD existence question, or the order of the cosmological closure-phase transition.

This paper is the substrate Higgs companion paper anticipated by §19.2 of the PFD–Standard Model Dictionary, developing the closure-norm condensation mechanism in the dictionary's own PFD/representation vocabulary while remaining consistent with the parallel derivation in the hexagonal companion paper.

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1. Introduction

The Standard Model successfully describes electroweak symmetry breaking through spontaneous condensation of a fundamental scalar field — the Higgs field — with a Mexican-hat potential $V(\phi) = -\mu^2|\phi|^2 + \lambda|\phi|^4$. The mechanism produces the observed gauge-boson mass spectrum ($m_W \approx 80$ GeV, $m_Z \approx 91$ GeV) and generates fermion masses through Yukawa couplings. The Higgs boson itself, discovered in 2012 at $m_H \approx 125$ GeV, completes the experimentally confirmed Standard Model spectrum.

But several foundational questions remain unresolved within the Standard Model itself:

Why should a fundamental scalar exist? Scalars are theoretically delicate — without protective symmetries, their masses are radiatively unstable. The Higgs is the only fundamental scalar in nature, and its presence is not explained.

Why does the vacuum select the broken phase? The Mexican-hat potential is *posited* with $\mu^2 < 0$; nothing in the Standard Model derives this sign or the value of μ.

Why is $SU(2)_L \times U(1)_Y$ broken while $SU(3)_C$ remains intact? The Standard Model treats these gauge groups as independent inputs; their qualitatively different dynamical fates are not explained.

Why do fermion masses span six orders of magnitude with the hierarchy structure observed? Yukawa couplings are inserted by hand, ranging from $y_e \approx 3 \times 10^{-6}$ for the electron to $y_t \approx 1$ for the top quark.

Why does the photon remain exactly massless? The Standard Model requires this to follow from the specific structure of the unbroken $U(1)_{EM}$ combination, but the *reason* this particular combination survives is not derived.

The VERSF programme approaches these questions from a fundamentally different direction. Rather than treating particles, fields, and gauge structure as primitive ontology, VERSF derives them from committed distinguishability, fold structure, admissibility dynamics, and irreversible informational stabilization. Previous papers in the programme established:

— gauge necessity from distinguishability conservation across the internal Fisher manifold; — the emergence of SU(3) × SU(2) × U(1) from per-fold $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ decomposition (the *One Fold* commutant theorem); — matter ontology via Persistent Fold Defects (PFDs) — stable closure-defect topologies in the committed distinguishability substrate; — confinement from substrate-level isolated triality obstruction (Theorem 8.2 of the dictionary); — spin-statistics from exchange holonomy on spinorial closure sectors (Theorems 7.1, 7.2 of the matter paper); — the *PFD–Standard Model Dictionary in VERSF* classifying PFD invariant tuples $\mathfrak{I}(D)$ onto Standard Model representation classes.

The present paper develops the natural continuation: a substrate-level account of vacuum condensation and the Higgs mechanism. The central thesis is captured in a single statement:

Electroweak symmetry breaking is the emergent condensation of the closure-norm field of the committed distinguishability substrate. The Higgs-like degree of freedom is not a fundamental scalar but the radial stabilization mode of persistent closure geometry.

The paper is companion to two previously established works. The *hexagonal-geometry companion paper* (*A Unified Derivation of Closure Geometry, Gauge Redundancy, and Mass Structure in the Hexagonal Framework*) derives a closely related result in hexagonal-tiling vocabulary, with its Theorem 6 establishing $M\_H^2 \geq N\_scalar \cdot (M\_W^2 + M\_Z^2)$. The *PFD–Standard Model Dictionary* §19.2 anticipates the present paper as the substrate Higgs derivation in PFD/representation-theoretic vocabulary. The present paper completes that anticipated derivation, re-establishes the Higgs mass result in PFD vocabulary, extends it to fermion mass generation and generation hierarchy (which the hexagonal paper does not address), and provides the substrate-level account of *why* SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y breaks while SU(3)_C does not.

The paper is organised as follows. §2 collects inherited substrate architecture. §3–§5 develop the closure-norm field, the free-energy functional governing its dynamics, and the effective potential producing vacuum condensation. §6 derives the Higgs mass theorem. §7 establishes the SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y / SU(3)_C asymmetry. §8–§9 work out the gauge sector consequences — W, Z masses and the unbroken photon direction. §10–§12 extend the mechanism to fermion mass generation, generation hierarchy, and the neutrino sector. §13–§14 address connections to other substrate structures (Bessel localization modes, the commitment-event bath). §15 provides the cross-programme synthesis. §16–§17 collect falsification criteria, epistemic status, and open problems. §18 concludes.

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2. Inherited substrate architecture

The closure-norm condensation mechanism developed here builds on a stack of inherited substrate results. This section summarises only what is needed; full derivations are in the upstream programme.

2.1 Persistent Fold Defects and the invariant tuple

Matter sectors are interpreted as stable closure-defect topologies in the committed distinguishability graph $\Sigma = (F, E)$, where F is the set of committed folds and E is the set of admissible committed relations among them. A Persistent Fold Defect (PFD) is a connected closure structure $D \subset \Sigma$ satisfying:

(P1) nontrivial closure topology, $\beta_1(D) \geq 1$, with at least one admissibility-fixed homology class; (P2) nontrivial closure holonomy on at least one non-contractible loop; (P3) refinement persistence; (P4) positive closure stability, $\delta^2 S_{\text{int}}[D] \succ 0$.

Its internal structure is encoded by the invariant tuple

$$\mathcal{I}(D) = (C_D, \beta_1(D), h_D, \pi_D, \chi_D, \gamma_D, \ell_D, \rho_D),$$

with C_D = closure completeness (complete or partial), $\beta_1(D)$ = first Betti number, h_D = holonomy class, π_D = orientation parity, χ_D = chirality (L, R, or none), γ_D = generation depth $\in \{1, 2, 3\}$, ℓ_D = ledger charge vector, ρ_D = confinement requirement (free or confined).

2.2 Inherited gauge structure

The Standard Model gauge group emerges as the commutant of the $3\oplus1$-block hopping matrix K on the per-fold Hilbert space $\mathcal{H}_{\text{fold}} \cong \mathbb{C}^4$:

$$G_{SM} = SU(3) \times SU(2) \times U(1) = \{ U \in U(\mathbb{C}^4) : [U, K] = 0 \} / (\text{overall phase}),$$

established in *One Fold* (Appendix D.5). The decomposition

$$\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$$

(Lemma GG2 of *One Fold*) splits $\mathcal{H}_{\text{fold}}$ into a colour-singlet sector ($\mathbb{C}^1$) and a colour-triplet sector ($\mathbb{C}^3$). $SU(3)_C$ acts on the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block. $SU(2)_L$ acts on the orientation-parity doublet within each colour sector. $U(1)_Y$ is the diagonal abelian factor surviving in the commutant after the SU(3) and SU(2) factors are accounted for. The present paper takes this gauge structure as fixed input.

2.3 The closure field and Bessel localization modes

Coarse-graining of fold dynamics produces an effective closure field $\mathcal{C}(x)$ — a complex-valued field on the emergent 4-manifold M whose phase carries $U(1)_Y$ transport content and whose magnitude carries closure density. The continuum dynamics in the wave regime satisfies a generalized Klein–Gordon equation

$$\partial^2_\tau \mathcal{C} - c^2_{\mathcal{C}} \nabla^2 \mathcal{C} + \mu^2 \mathcal{C} + \lambda|\mathcal{C}|^2 \mathcal{C} = 0,$$

(with τ the emergent local time parameter on M and $c_{\mathcal{C}}$ the closure-field propagation speed). Cylindrical localized solutions take modified Bessel structures

$f(r) = K_n(\kappa r)$

with winding number n. The connection between these Bessel modes and persistent PFD localization is discussed in §13.

2.4 Stabilization-depth dynamics

The proton/baryon paper establishes that composite-PFD stabilization proceeds via TPB-constrained admissibility contraction in the residual closure space, governed by the iteration

$R_{n+1} = \eta R_n, \eta = 3/5$

on a five-dimensional residual closure space. The contraction ratio η is derived from the $K = 7$ closure architecture; it is *not* an adjustable parameter. The stabilization-depth variable governs composite admissibility contraction; it is distinct from the generation-depth variable γ_D of §11.

2.5 The K = 7 closure architecture

The hexagonal-geometry programme establishes $K = 7$ as the substrate-fixed closure-channel count: $K = 7$ binary constraints per closure cell, comprising 6 boundary-channel constraints plus 1 central hub. The $K = 7$ architecture surfaces in the present paper in two places: the channel-counting Lemma 5 of §6.3 (with the universal correction factor $N_{scalar} = (2K+1)/(2K) = 15/14$), and the $\eta = 3/5$ stabilization-depth contraction of §2.4. The dictionary inherits $K = 7$ as a substrate-fixed value; whether $K = 7$ is *uniquely* selected (the hexagonal paper's stronger claim) or simply the *correct* value (the weaker claim used here) does not affect the present derivation.

2.6 Position relative to the hexagonal companion paper

The hexagonal companion paper (*A Unified Derivation of Closure Geometry, Gauge Redundancy, and Mass Structure in the Hexagonal Framework*) derives in §5 / Theorem 6 the closure-norm condensation mechanism in *hexagonal-tiling vocabulary*: the closure-norm scalar is identified as $\rho(x) = |\mathcal{C}(x)| - 1$, the Higgs bound $M_H^2 \geq N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ is established via Schur complement of the stiffness matrix combined with channel-counting (its Lemmas 4, 5), and leading-order saturation gives $M_H \approx 125.8$ GeV.

The present paper develops the same mechanism in *PFD/representation-theoretic vocabulary*. The arguments are structurally parallel — the hexagonal paper's Lemma 5 channel-counting normalisation translates directly into the present paper's §6.3 — but the present paper additionally treats fermion masses (§10), generation hierarchy (§11), and the neutrino sector (§12), which the hexagonal paper does not.

2.7 Position relative to the PFD–Standard Model Dictionary

The PFD–Standard Model Dictionary's §19.2 ("Closure norm and representation stability") explicitly anticipates a substrate Higgs companion paper providing the energetic stiffness classification corresponding to the dictionary's representation classification:

"The dictionary classifies which PFD classes are *admissible*. The substrate Higgs derivation ... classifies the *energetic stiffness* of those classes under closure-norm perturbation."

The present paper is that anticipated derivation. The dictionary's §19.3 mass-as-closure-cost scaffold (with four contributions: commitment-density loading, closure-Hessian stiffness, confinement/localization cost, persistent distinguishability content) is recovered as the structural backbone of the fermion mass formula developed here in §10.

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3. The closure-norm field

3.1 Definition

Let $\mathcal{C}(x)$ denote the coarse-grained local closure amplitude — the continuum descendant of the per-cell closure functional $\mathcal{C} = \prod_i u_i$ on the committed distinguishability substrate. Let $\mathcal{C}_0 > 0$ denote a *reference value* of $|\mathcal{C}|$: specifically, the value at which the closure potential $V(\rho)$ (developed in §5) attains its unstable extremum, identified physically with the *symmetric-phase reference value*. (The committed-phase equilibrium amplitude is *not* $\mathcal{C}_0$ but $\mathcal{C}_0 + v$, where v is the vacuum expectation value of the condensate developed in §5.3.)

Define the **closure-norm field** as the local deviation from this reference:

$\rho(x) \equiv |\mathcal{C}(x)| - \mathcal{C}_0.$

The field $\rho(x)$ measures local departure from the symmetric-phase reference. Concretely:

— $\rho(x) = 0$ corresponds to the *symmetric-phase reference* ($|\mathcal{C}(x)| = \mathcal{C}_0$), the unstable extremum of V; — $\rho(x) = +v$ corresponds to the *condensed-phase equilibrium* ($|\mathcal{C}(x)| = \mathcal{C}_0 + v$), the stable minimum of V in the broken phase; — $\rho(x) > 0$ generally corresponds to a region of enhanced closure beyond the reference; — $\rho(x) < 0$ corresponds to a region of suppressed closure relative to the reference.

Two distinct limits of $\rho(x)$ deserve separate mention:

— *Symmetric phase* ($\rho(x) = 0$ uniformly): the substrate sits at the unstable extremum of the closure potential, with $|\mathcal{C}(x)| = \mathcal{C}_0$ everywhere. This is the *symmetric-phase vacuum* discussed in §5.4 — a configuration that is mathematically extremal but energetically disfavoured.

— *Local closure breakdown* ($\rho(x) \to -\mathcal{C}_0$, i.e., $|\mathcal{C}(x)| \to 0$): the substrate has locally lost all closure amplitude. This is a strictly stronger condition than the symmetric phase: it corresponds to no committed distinguishability at all in the local region. This limit is energetically forbidden in the committed phase (§5.1) and lies outside the regime of the leading-order analysis. It is not the symmetric-phase vacuum.

The distinction matters because the present paper's primary contrast is between the *condensed phase* ($\rho = +v$) and the *symmetric phase* ($\rho = 0$), not between the condensed phase and the closure-breakdown limit ($\rho = -\mathcal{C}_0$). The closure-breakdown limit is a hypothetical scenario in which substrate commitment fails altogether; the symmetric phase is the substrate's unstable extremum in the absence of vacuum condensation.

Identification with the PFD internal image. The closure-norm field $\rho(x)$ is not a new field living parallel to the substrate ontology. It is the *coarse-grained radial mode of the closure-norm sector of the PFD internal image* $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{I}}^{\mathrm{int}}(D)$. The PFD–Standard Model Dictionary identifies $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{I}}^{\mathrm{int}}(D)$ as the natural carrier of substrate state at the cell level, with the closure functional $\mathcal{C} = \prod_i u_i$ as one of its components. Coarse-graining over a spatial region containing many committed cells produces a smooth field $\mathcal{C}(x)$; its magnitude $|\mathcal{C}(x)|$ is the local closure-norm, and $\rho(x) = |\mathcal{C}(x)| - \mathcal{C}_0$ is its deviation from vacuum equilibrium. The radial closure-norm mode is therefore a continuum descendant of substrate-level closure structure, not an independent ingredient added to the framework. This identification makes the closure-norm field explicitly part of the PFD ontology rather than a separate field-theoretic insertion.

3.2 Gauge transformation properties

A central structural property of $\rho(x)$ is that it is *invariant under all three Standard Model gauge factors*. This is the result that drives the SU(3) protection mechanism of §7.

Under U(1)_Y, the closure functional transforms as $\mathcal{C} \to \exp(i\alpha(x))\,\mathcal{C}$ — a phase rotation. The closure-norm $|\mathcal{C}|$ is invariant. Therefore $\rho(x)$ is U(1)_Y invariant.

Under SU(2)_L, the orientation-doublet structure of the closure functional is rotated. The closure-norm $|\mathcal{C}|$ is invariant under this rotation (the magnitude of a vector is invariant under orthogonal rotation; equivalently, the SU(2) action preserves the doublet norm). Therefore $\rho(x)$ is SU(2)_L invariant.

Under SU(3)_C, the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block of $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ is rotated, while the $\mathbb{C}^1$ block is unchanged. The closure functional $|\mathcal{C}|$ receives contributions from both blocks and is unchanged when only the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block is rotated (the squared norm of a vector splits as the sum of squared norms of its block components). Therefore $\rho(x)$ is SU(3)_C invariant.

The closure-norm field $\rho(x)$ is therefore a gauge singlet under SU(3)_C × SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y by construction. This is a substrate-level statement, not an empirical fit. The key consequence: any condensate $\langle\rho\rangle = v$ cannot directly carry quantum numbers under any of these gauge factors. Symmetry breaking, when it occurs, must proceed *indirectly* — through the coupling of the condensate to gauge transport modes — rather than through the condensate carrying gauge charge.

3.3 Distinction from a fundamental Higgs field

In the Standard Model, the Higgs field Φ is a fundamental complex doublet of $SU(2)_L$ with hypercharge $Y = 1/2$ — it *does* carry gauge quantum numbers under $SU(2)_L \times U(1)_Y$. The vacuum expectation value $\langle \Phi \rangle \neq 0$ then breaks these symmetries directly.

In the present framework, the closure-norm field $\rho(x)$ is a *gauge singlet*. The Standard Model doublet Φ is recovered in the long-wavelength effective theory as a composite of the radial closure mode ρ and the angular (phase + orientation) modes that become Goldstone bosons absorbed by the $W^\pm$ and Z. The radial mode is what we identify with the physical Higgs boson; the doublet structure is emergent rather than primitive.

This distinction matters because it explains *why* the closure-norm direction is gauge-singlet (it is by construction; closure magnitude is invariant under all internal rotations) and *why* symmetry breaking nonetheless occurs (the condensate couples to gauge transport via interface stiffness, as we develop in §7).

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4. The vacuum closure free-energy functional

The dynamics of $\rho(x)$ are governed by a coarse-grained free-energy functional. The present section develops its structural form; the next two sections derive the specific potential and condensation behaviour.

The proposed functional is

$$F[\rho] = \int d^3x \left[(1/2)(\nabla\rho)^2 + V(\rho) + E_{R4}(\rho) + E_{bath}(\rho) \right].$$

Each term has a specific substrate-level origin.

Kinetic term $(1/2)(\nabla\rho)^2$. This is the standard gradient term required by translational invariance and isotropy of the committed substrate (Axioms A1–A2 of the hexagonal programme). Spatial variations of the closure-norm field cost free energy proportional to the gradient squared. The coefficient 1/2 fixes the normalization of ρ. This term is universal — it would appear for any field-theoretic description of a substrate scalar.

Closure potential $V(\rho)$. This term encodes the intrinsic energy cost of departing from vacuum equilibrium. Its specific form $V(\rho) = -(\alpha/2)\rho^2 + (\beta/4)\rho^4$ is derived in §5.

Stabilization-depth contribution $E_{R4}(\rho)$. This term encodes the additional free-energy cost from stabilization-depth dynamics (§2.4). Maintaining a uniform closure-norm field requires sustained admissibility contraction, with stabilization-depth scaling. At leading order this contributes a positive term proportional to ρ^2; at higher order it generates the $O(\rho^4)$ corrections that combine with the closure potential to produce the full quartic term. Schematic form:

$$E_{R4}(\rho) \approx (1/2)\, \eta_{R4}\, \rho^2 + O(\rho^4),$$

with η_{R4} a substrate-level stabilization constant of order unity in natural units.

Commitment-event bath coupling $E_{bath}(\rho)$. The substrate is coupled to a bath of commitment events — the irreversible distinguishability commitments that populate Σ. This coupling enters the free-energy functional in two structurally distinct ways:

Static role (in F[ρ] above): the bath produces a sub-leading positive contribution

$$E_{bath}^{(static)}(\rho) \approx (\gamma_{bath}/2)\, \rho^2,$$

with $\gamma_{bath} \ll \alpha$ a substrate-level coupling constant. At leading order this renormalizes α slightly downward ($\alpha_{eff} = \alpha - \gamma_{bath}$) but does not change the qualitative condensation analysis of §5.

Dynamical role (developed in §14): the bath also provides fluctuation-dissipation dynamics on the closure-norm condensate — damping large-amplitude excursions back to equilibrium and driving small-amplitude fluctuations through the stochasticity of individual commitment events. This dynamical role does *not* appear in F[ρ] (which is the static free-energy functional) but enters through additional Langevin-type terms in the equations of motion.

The bath therefore enters the leading-order analysis only through the small static renormalization of α; its substantive role is the dynamical fluctuation-dissipation mechanism developed in §14.

For the leading-order analysis developed in §5–§6, the closure potential V(ρ) dominates and E_{R4} and $E_{bath}^{(static)}$ enter only through small renormalizations of the effective parameters α and β. The Hamiltonian formulation at this leading order is

$$F[\rho] \approx \int d^3x \, [\, (1/2)(\nabla\rho)^2 + V_{eff}(\rho)\,],$$

with $V_{eff}(\rho)$ absorbing the leading-order contributions of E_{R4} and $E_{bath}^{(static)}$ into the effective coefficients of the ρ^2 and ρ^4 terms.

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5. The effective closure potential and vacuum condensation

5.1 The closure potential V(ρ)

The closure potential takes the form

$$V(\rho) = -(\alpha/2)\, \rho^2 + (\beta/4)\, \rho^4,$$

with $\alpha > 0$ and $\beta > 0$. This is structurally similar to the Standard Model Higgs Mexican-hat potential but is *not postulated* — it is structurally forced by substrate-level constraints, developed in §5.2.

5.2 Why this form is structurally forced

In the Standard Model, the sign and magnitude of μ^2 and λ in $V(\Phi) = -\mu^2|\Phi|^2 + \lambda|\Phi|^4$ are inserted by hand to match observation. In the present framework, both signs are determined by substrate-level energetics, and the magnitudes are structurally connected to substrate primitives (though not yet uniquely computed from them).

The negative quadratic coefficient ($\alpha > 0$) arises because the symmetric phase $\rho = 0$ (i.e., $|\mathcal{C}| = \mathcal{C}_0$, the unstable extremum of V) is unstable in the substrate. The committed distinguishability substrate carries a *positive commitment density* by construction: there are committed folds, and they have been committed irreversibly. The substrate therefore prefers an enhanced closure amplitude over the symmetric reference value $\mathcal{C}_0$, manifesting as a negative quadratic curvature around $\rho = 0$ in $V(\rho)$ — the field rolls away from $\rho = 0$ toward the condensed phase at $\rho = v$. (The hypothetical limit $|\mathcal{C}| \to 0$, i.e., $\rho \to -\mathcal{C}_0$, corresponds to *complete closure breakdown* and is even more strongly disfavoured — but the symmetric phase $\rho = 0$ is the relevant unstable reference for the Mexican-hat structure, not the breakdown limit.)

The structural connection to substrate primitives is

$\alpha \sim n\_commit \cdot \sigma\_substrate$,

where *n_commit* is the substrate commitment density (committed folds per coarse-graining volume) and *σ_substrate* is the substrate-level closure stiffness scale (the energy cost of departing from equilibrium per unit ρ^2 per cell). Both quantities are substrate-level inputs; the present paper does not compute either from first principles, but both are well-defined in the underlying programme. The vacuum expectation value $v = \sqrt{(\alpha/\beta)}$ is then structurally tied to commitment density rather than being a free parameter — the empirical scale $v\_SM \approx 246$ GeV provides an empirical anchor for substrate commitment density via this relation.

The positive quartic coefficient ($\beta > 0$) arises because the substrate has *finite commitment capacity*. Each closure cell can support at most $K = 7$ binary closure constraints; the substrate cannot accommodate arbitrarily large closure amplitudes $\rho \to \infty$. As ρ grows, additional closure-channel saturation costs are incurred, manifesting as a positive quartic correction.

The structural connection to substrate primitives is

$\beta \sim \alpha / (\mathcal{C}_0^2 \cdot K)$,

with the K-dependence reflecting that more closure channels per cell allow larger closure amplitudes before saturation kicks in — for K-channel closure, the saturation scale is set by $\mathcal{C}_0^2 \cdot K$. The precise functional form of β as a function of K and the substrate stiffness — including possible logarithmic corrections from closure-channel interference — is open. The hexagonal companion paper's Lemma 5 channel-counting argument (§6.3 here) constrains the *combination* α/β (which controls v) via the gauge boson masses; β alone in absolute units remains schematic.

Programme-level position. This is a substantively different epistemic position from the Standard Model. There, the sign and value of μ^2 are unexplained inputs. Here:

— *Both signs are forced* by substrate properties (existence of committed distinguishability forces $\alpha > 0$; finite closure-channel capacity $K = 7$ forces $\beta > 0$);

— *The combination α/β is constrained* by the Higgs mass theorem (§6.3) tying M_H to $(M\_W^2 + M\_Z^2)$ through $N\_scalar = (2K+1)/(2K) = 15/14$;

— *The absolute magnitudes of α and β individually* are structurally connected to substrate commitment density and stiffness through the schematic relations above, but their explicit computation from first principles is open. This open computation is qualitatively different from the Standard Model's by-hand insertion of μ^2 and λ — there is a specific substrate calculation that, when completed, would tie α and β to inherited substrate primitives without free parameters.

(Conditional / schematic: the structural relations $\alpha \sim n\_commit \cdot \sigma\_substrate$ and $\beta \sim \alpha/(\mathcal{C}_0^2 \cdot K)$ are forced by substrate properties but neither is computed explicitly in the present paper. The combination α/β giving v^2 is constrained by Higgs mass observation, providing an empirical anchor.)

5.3 Vacuum expectation value

Minimising $V(\rho)$:

$dV/d\rho = -\alpha \rho + \beta \rho^3 = \rho(\beta\rho^2 - \alpha) = 0.$

The non-trivial solution gives

$\langle\rho\rangle = v = \sqrt{(\alpha/\beta)}.$

This is the *closure-condensed* vacuum. The condensate amplitude v depends on the ratio α/β. In the Standard Model identification of v with the electroweak scale $v\_SM \approx 246$ GeV (Section 8.2), this fixes one parameter of the present framework against the empirical electroweak scale.

5.4 Two phases of the substrate

The closure potential $V(\rho)$ admits two phases:

Symmetric phase ($\rho = 0$, equivalently $|\mathcal{C}| = \mathcal{C}_0$): This is the *unstable* extremum of $V(\rho)$. It corresponds to a substrate in which the vacuum has not committed to a non-zero closure amplitude. Mathematically extremal but energetically disfavoured by $V(\rho) < V(0)$ for $\rho = v$.

Condensed phase ($\rho = +v$): This is the *stable* extremum of $V(\rho)$. It corresponds to the closure-condensed vacuum in which substrate commitment has occurred and $\langle|\mathcal{C}|\rangle = \mathcal{C}_0 + v$. This is the phase observed in our universe.

The structural prediction is that *only the condensed phase is physically realised*. The symmetric phase, if it existed, would not support PFDs as stable matter (Theorem 4.1 of the matter paper requires non-zero closure amplitude for the topological-persistence argument to go through). The fact that we observe persistent matter is direct evidence that the universe sits in the condensed phase.

The transition between the two phases would correspond to a *closure-phase transition* in the early universe. We do not develop the cosmology in this paper, but note that this would naturally correspond to a vacuum phase transition at temperatures comparable to v — i.e., at the electroweak scale.

The order of the transition is a substantive open question. In the standard Standard Model picture, lattice calculations show that the electroweak phase transition was a *crossover* (not a first-order transition) for the observed Higgs mass at zero baryon chemical potential. A first-order substrate closure-phase transition would have observable cosmological consequences — primordial gravitational-wave signatures, possible electroweak baryogenesis, and topological defects (closure-phase walls or strings) — whose absence in the cosmological record provides a constraint. A crossover scenario would match the standard expectation but would not provide a distinctive substrate prediction.

The present paper does not resolve the order of the transition. Whether the closure-norm condensation is first-order, second-order, or crossover depends on substrate-level details of $V(\rho)$ beyond the leading-order Mexican-hat form developed here, including the coupling β between closure-norm and other substrate sectors, and finite-temperature corrections to the closure potential. *(The order of the substrate closure-phase transition (first-order, second-order, or crossover) and its observable cosmological signatures are open — see §17.2.)*

6. The Higgs mode as radial closure excitation

6.1 Definition of the Higgs mode

Expand around the condensed vacuum:

$$\rho(x) = v + h(x).$$

The field $h(x)$ is the *radial closure fluctuation* — the small-amplitude deviation of the closure-norm field from its equilibrium expectation value. This is what we identify with the physical Higgs boson.

Substituting into $V(\rho)$ and expanding:

$$V(v + h) = V(v) + (1/2)(2\alpha)\, h^2 + (\text{cubic and higher in } h),$$

so the *tree-level* mass of the radial mode is

$$m_h^2 = 2\alpha = 2\beta v^2.$$

The Higgs boson is therefore the radial vibration of the closure condensate.

6.2 Physical interpretation

This identification has direct condensed-matter parallels, but the parallels are not all equally close. The structurally closest analogue is the *Anderson-Higgs amplitude mode in superconductors*.

Anderson-Higgs amplitude modes in superconductors (structurally closest). In a superconductor below T_c, the Cooper-pair condensate is a complex order parameter $\Delta(x) = |\Delta| \exp(i\varphi)$, with $|\Delta|$ the amplitude (closure-norm analogue) and φ the phase. The $U(1)$ electromagnetic gauge field A_μ acquires mass from coupling to the condensate through the gauge-covariant kinetic term $|D_\mu \Delta|^2$ — exactly the mechanism developed in §7.2 and §8.1 of the present paper. The radial amplitude mode of $|\Delta|$ is the Anderson-Higgs mode: a massive collective excitation observable through pump-probe spectroscopy. Three structural features match the present framework:

(a) the gauge field acquires mass through a gauge-covariant kinetic term coupling to a gauge-singlet amplitude, not through direct condensate-gauge-charge coupling;

(b) the orthogonal (Goldstone) phase mode is absorbed into the longitudinal component of the gauge field;

(c) the radial amplitude mode is the experimentally observable "Higgs" of the system, with mass set by the curvature of the effective potential at the broken-phase minimum.

The closure condensate's relationship to the electroweak gauge sector is structurally identical: $\rho(x)$ is the radial amplitude (closure-norm) mode, gauge bosons acquire mass through $|D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2$, and the Higgs boson is the radial closure-mode fluctuation $h(x)$. The Standard Model is, in this view, *the Anderson-Higgs mechanism applied to the closure-norm condensate of the substrate*.

Phonons in solids (analogous but weaker). Phonons are collective excitations of lattice displacement and reflect the collective behaviour of many atoms rather than fundamental fields. They share the *emergence-from-substrate* feature with the closure-mode Higgs but lack the gauge-coupling structure that makes Anderson-Higgs the closest analogue.

Landau order parameter fluctuations (general framework, less specific). Any continuous phase transition admits an order parameter whose amplitude mode is massive in the broken phase. The present framework fits this general schema, but Anderson-Higgs is the specific instance that matches both the order-parameter structure and the gauge-coupling structure.

In all three cases, the "Higgs-like" object is *emergent* — a collective mode of a more primitive substrate, not a fundamental field. The present framework places the electroweak Higgs in the same category, with the substrate being the committed distinguishability substrate and the order parameter being the closure-norm field. The crucial point — supported by the Anderson-Higgs parallel — is that *the Higgs being collective rather than fundamental is consistent with everything we observe about it*, including its mass generation mechanism, its couplings to gauge bosons, and its mass scaling.

6.3 The closure-norm theorem (PFD-vocabulary re-derivation)

We now derive the central quantitative result: a lower bound on the Higgs mass tied to the W and Z masses through the substrate channel-counting factor $N_{scalar} = (2K+1)/(2K)$.

Theorem 6.1 (Closure-Norm Higgs Mass Bound). *Let K denote the positive-definite stiffness matrix of the closure-norm vacuum on its active response space, with decomposition into a one-dimensional radial subspace (the ρ direction) and the angular subspace (gauge transport directions). Then the physical Higgs mass satisfies*

$$M_H^2 \geq N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2),$$

where $N_{scalar} = (2K+1)/(2K) = 15/14$ is the universal channel-counting factor, and the bound is saturated when the radial and angular sectors decouple at leading order.

(Proven, conditional on the hexagonal companion paper's Lemma 4 + Lemma 5 + Schur complement argument re-expressed in PFD vocabulary.)

Proof sketch (PFD vocabulary).

Step 1: Stiffness matrix on closure response space.

The committed substrate supports small fluctuations in 2K + 1 directions: 2K paired interface channels (the angular modes that couple to gauge transport, becoming the W, Z, and unbroken $U(1)_{EM}$ modes after symmetry breaking) plus 1 radial closure-norm direction (the ρ mode that becomes the Higgs).

The Hessian of the effective free energy $F[\rho] + \int|D_\mu \rho|^2$ + (gauge field kinetic terms), evaluated at the condensed vacuum $\langle\rho\rangle = v$, defines the stiffness matrix K on this (2K + 1)-dimensional response space. Closure enforcement ensures K is positive-definite: all eigenvalues are strictly positive.

Write K in block form, with R denoting the radial subspace and A denoting the angular subspace:

$$K = [\, K_{AA}\ K_{AR} \,]\ [\, K_{RA}\ K_{RR} \,]$$

with $K_{RA} = K_{AR}^T$.

Step 2: Schur complement bound.

Positive-definiteness of K requires the Schur complement of K_{AA} to be positive:

$$K_{RR} - K_{RA} K_{AA}^{-1} K_{AR} > 0,$$

which gives

$$M_H^2 = K_{RR} > K_{RA} K_{AA}^{-1} K_{AR} \geq 0.$$

This is an abstract lower bound but does not yet produce the specific factor N_{scalar}.

Step 3: Channel-counting normalisation.

The closure functional is $\mathcal{C} = \prod_i u_i$, a product over $2K + 1$ channels: the $2K$ paired interface channels plus 1 closure mode. We need to exhibit, rather than assert, how a uniform radial dilation distributes across the channels and how this drives the $(2K+1)/(2K)$ factor.

Sub-step 3(a): radial dilation distributes across all 2K+1 channels. Under a uniform scaling $\mathcal{C} \to (1 + \varepsilon)\mathcal{C}$ of the closure-norm with parameter $\varepsilon \ll 1$, the product structure forces each channel to scale identically:

$$u_i \to (1 + \varepsilon)^{1/(2K+1)} u_i \approx u_i \cdot (1 + \varepsilon/(2K+1)), \quad i = 1, \ldots, 2K + 1.$$

The key structural fact is that *every channel acquires a non-zero contribution* from the radial perturbation — none is left invariant. This is forced by the product structure $\mathcal{C} = \prod_i u_i$: a change in the magnitude of a product is necessarily distributed across all factors.

Working in the channel-stiffness basis where the free-energy quadratic form is $F = (1/2) \sum_i \kappa_i \xi_i^2$ with ξ_i the i-th channel-mode amplitude and κ_i the i-th channel stiffness, the radial mode therefore picks up a stiffness contribution from every channel:

$$K_{RR} = \sum_{i=1}^{2K+1} \kappa_i$$ (sum over *all* channels, including the closure mode).

Sub-step 3(b): angular modes perturb only the 2K paired channels. Angular perturbations are by definition variations of $\mathcal{C}$ that preserve $|\mathcal{C}|$. Such variations rotate the phase + orientation structure of the closure functional but leave its magnitude unchanged. The closure mode (the (2K+1)-th channel — the one that sets the closure magnitude itself) is *unchanged* by angular perturbations, by the very definition of "angular." So angular modes perturb only the 2K paired interface channels:

$$\mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA}) = \sum_{a=1}^{2K} \kappa_a$$ (sum over only the 2K paired channels; closure mode excluded).

Sub-step 3(c): substrate-level isotropy axiom. To translate channel sums into a clean relation, we invoke

Axiom I (substrate-level isotropy): all 2K + 1 channels of the closure functional contribute equally to the substrate free-energy curvature, $\kappa_i = \kappa$ for all i = 1, ..., 2K + 1, at leading order in the committed-phase expansion.

This is *not derived* from upstream substrate properties in the present paper; it is an *additional substrate axiom* introduced here. It corresponds to the hexagonal-programme Axiom A2 (substrate isotropy) and is the analogue at the closure-channel level. Without this axiom, the channel-counting argument produces only the abstract Schur-complement bound, not the specific factor N_scalar = (2K+1)/(2K). The value 15/14 — and the empirical prediction M_H ≈ 125.8 GeV — depend on Axiom I being satisfied at leading order. Its epistemic status is "new substrate axiom introduced in this paper" (see §17.1).

Combining sub-steps 3(a)–(c). With $\kappa_i = \kappa$ from Axiom I:

K_RR = (2K + 1) · κ (Sub-step 3(a): radial draws stiffness from all 2K + 1 channels) Tr(K_AA) = 2K · κ (Sub-step 3(b): angular trace draws stiffness from only the 2K paired channels)

Therefore

K_RR / Tr(K_AA) = (2K + 1) / (2K) = N_scalar = 15/14 (with K = 7),

i.e.,

K_RR = N_scalar · Tr(K_AA).

The (2K+1)/(2K) factor arises from the *mode-counting asymmetry* between radial perturbations (which excite all 2K+1 channels by the product structure of $\mathcal{C}$) and angular perturbations (which excite only the 2K paired channels by the definition of "angular"). The (1 + ε)^{1/(2K+1)} dilation formula in Sub-step 3(a) is a check that the radial mode does in fact distribute across all channels; the (2K+1)/(2K) factor itself is forced by mode counting plus Axiom I.

Step 4: Identification with gauge boson masses.

The angular subspace K_AA has 2K eigenvalues. After electroweak symmetry breaking, three of these correspond to specific gauge sectors:

λ_W^2 = M_W^2 (the W-mode eigenvalue); *λ_Z^2 = M_Z^2* (the Z-mode eigenvalue); *λ_γ^2 = 0* (the photon, U(1)_EM, which remains massless by §9).

The remaining 2K − 3 = 11 eigenvalues correspond to *additional angular sectors* of the closure functional that do not directly map onto Standard Model gauge transport modes. At leading order — i.e., with no fine-tuning between sectors — substrate isotropy (Axiom I) implies these remaining eigenvalues are small relative to M_W^2, M_Z^2 because they correspond to substrate-internal stiffnesses without empirical gauge-boson backreaction. The trace is therefore

Tr(K_AA) = M_W^2 + M_Z^2 + 0 + ∑_{j=1}^{2K−3} λ_j^2 ≈ M_W^2 + M_Z^2 + (small), with the inequality $M_W^2 + M_Z^2 \leq \mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA})$ being *near-saturated* (not just satisfied) at leading order.

This near-saturation is crucial: the 0.4% empirical agreement of $M_H = 125.8$ GeV with the measured 125.25 GeV depends on $\mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA})$ being close to $M_W^2 + M_Z^2$, not just bounded above by it. A scenario in which the $2K - 3$ "other" eigenvalues carried order-unity weight relative to M_W^2 and M_Z^2 would predict M_H substantially larger than 125 GeV. The empirical near-saturation is consistent with — and provides indirect evidence for — substrate isotropy at the closure-channel level.

Step 5: Combining.

$M_H^2 = K_{RR} = N_{\mathrm{scalar}} \cdot \mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA}) \approx N_{\mathrm{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2 + \mathrm{small}) \geq N_{\mathrm{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$,

with near-saturation at leading order.

The bound is saturated when (a) $K_{RA} = 0$ — i.e., the radial and angular sectors decouple at leading order — and (b) the $2K - 3$ non-gauge eigenvalues are small. Both conditions hold in the leading-order closure Hamiltonian: the radial mode is a gauge singlet (§3.2) and does not source angular fluctuations at tree level; substrate isotropy ensures the closure-channel stiffnesses are uniform, including in the non-gauge sectors which then contribute only small eigenvalues. Mixing arises only through higher-order terms in the closure potential.

Result: At leading order,

$M_H^2 \approx N_{\mathrm{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2) = (15/14) \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$.

6.3a Why isotropy is structurally natural

Axiom I states that, at leading order in the committed-phase expansion, all $2K + 1$ closure channels contribute equally to the substrate free-energy curvature. This assumption is *not inserted ad hoc*. Three independent substrate principles motivate it as the natural infrared fixed point of admissibility-preserving closure dynamics, even though a full derivation from the microscopic closure transport operator remains open.

(i) Local admissibility symmetry. The $K = 7$ closure architecture contains no distinguished closure channel at the primitive substrate level. All channels correspond to equivalent admissibility constraints on the closure functional

$\mathcal{C} = \prod_i u_i$,

and no channel possesses privileged status prior to spontaneous vacuum selection. Therefore the leading-order substrate Hamiltonian must remain *permutation-symmetric* under channel exchange

$u_i \leftrightarrow u_j$ for all $i, j = 1, \ldots, 2K + 1$.

A non-permutation-symmetric Hamiltonian at leading order would require the substrate to *distinguish* between channels at the most primitive level — which contradicts the structural anonymity of the closure channels prior to symmetry breaking. Permutation symmetry, applied to a quadratic stiffness form, forces $\kappa_i = \kappa_j$ for all i, j at leading order. This is Axiom I.

(ii) Entropy minimization (BC2 inheritance). Non-isotropic stiffness assignments introduce additional internal distinguishability structure: with $\kappa_i \neq \kappa_j$, the substrate carries an additional bit of information distinguishing one channel from another. Under the BCB programme's BC2 axiom — *physically irrelevant distinguishability is excluded from the committed substrate* — this additional structure must correspond to observable substrate asymmetry, or it is entropically disfavoured. Since no observable asymmetry exists between closure channels at the primitive level (by (i) above), BC2 excludes the additional distinguishability load of an anisotropic stiffness assignment. The isotropic configuration is therefore the *minimal-information fixed point* under BC2-constrained substrate dynamics.

(iii) Refinement stability. Under admissible refinement (the substrate's natural coarse-graining flow), persistent anisotropic stiffness assignments would amplify directional closure bias — channels with larger κ would dominate the dynamics, suppressing channels with smaller κ. Such bias destabilizes refinement persistence (P3 of the PFD admissibility conditions) and generically drives closure flow toward singular concentration sectors that are inconsistent with the substrate's distributed closure architecture. Isotropic stiffness, by contrast, is *refinement-stable*: it is invariant under admissibility-preserving coarse-graining transformations. The isotropic fixed point is therefore the attractor of long-wavelength closure dynamics. (Numerical coarse-graining studies on symmetric closure graphs by the hexagonal-programme RG analysis support this expectation, though a full proof for the substrate-level closure transport operator remains open.)

Interpretation. Axiom I should therefore be understood not as a primitive postulate but as the *expected infrared fixed-point structure* of admissibility-preserving closure dynamics, motivated by three independent substrate principles. The remaining open problem is deriving this fixed point *rigorously* from the microscopic closure transport operator — a target for the substrate-isotropy companion paper or for the second-quantised closure-condensate QFT companion paper (§17.2).

6.3b Perturbative robustness of the channel-counting factor

A natural concern with Axiom I is whether the Higgs mass prediction depends on *exact* isotropy. Suppose the substrate deviates slightly from Axiom I, with per-channel stiffnesses

$\kappa_i = \kappa \cdot (1 + \varepsilon_i)$, $|\varepsilon_i| \ll 1$, $i = 1, \ldots, 2K + 1$.

The channel-counting factor becomes

$N_{\text{scalar}}(\varepsilon) = K_{RR} / \mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA}) = \sum_{i=1}^{2K+1} \kappa_i / \sum_{a=1}^{2K} \kappa_a = [\kappa(2K+1) + \kappa \sum_i \varepsilon_i] / [\kappa(2K) + \kappa \sum_a \varepsilon_a]$.

To first order in ε:

$$N_{scalar}(\varepsilon) \approx [(2K+1)/(2K)] \cdot [1 + \langle\varepsilon\rangle_{all} - \langle\varepsilon\rangle_{paired}] = (2K+1)/(2K) + O(\varepsilon),$$

where $\langle\varepsilon\rangle_{all} = (\sum_{i=1}^{2K+1} \varepsilon_i)/(2K+1)$ is the average departure across all channels and $\langle\varepsilon\rangle_{paired} = (\sum_{a=1}^{2K} \varepsilon_a)/(2K)$ is the average across the 2K paired channels. The difference $\langle\varepsilon\rangle_{all} - \langle\varepsilon\rangle_{paired}$ is itself a small quantity of order ε.

The Higgs mass prediction therefore takes the form

$$M_H^2 = N_{scalar}(\varepsilon) \cdot \mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA}) = [(2K+1)/(2K) + O(\varepsilon)] \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2 + \text{small}),$$

which is *perturbatively stable* under small departures from exact isotropy: an $O(\varepsilon)$ departure in per-channel stiffnesses produces only an $O(\varepsilon)$ correction to M_H^2. The empirical 0.4% deviation of $M_H \approx 125.8$ GeV from the measured 125.25 GeV is, on this picture, consistent with departures from exact isotropy at the few-percent level — well within the regime in which Axiom I provides a robust leading-order approximation.

The Higgs mass prediction is therefore *structurally robust* under small departures from exact isotropy; it does not depend on fine-tuned exactness of Axiom I, only on Axiom I holding at leading order. This substantially strengthens Theorem 6.1: the empirical agreement is not contingent on a delicate condition but on the natural infrared fixed point of substrate dynamics holding approximately.

Result: At leading order,

$$M_H^2 \approx N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2) = (15/14) \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2),$$

with $O(\varepsilon)$ corrections from departures from exact isotropy that are consistent with the empirical 0.4% deviation.

6.4 Numerical prediction

Using the measured electroweak gauge boson masses

$$M_W \approx 80.379 \text{ GeV}, \quad M_Z \approx 91.188 \text{ GeV},$$

we obtain

$$M_W^2 + M_Z^2 \approx (80.379)^2 + (91.188)^2 \approx 6461 + 8315 \approx 14776 \text{ GeV}^2, \quad N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2) \approx (15/14) \cdot 14776 \approx 15832 \text{ GeV}^2, \quad M_H \approx \sqrt{15832} \approx 125.8 \text{ GeV}.$$

Compared with the measured Higgs mass $M_H \approx 125.25$ GeV, the leading-order prediction agrees to about 0.4%. This is the same numerical result derived in the hexagonal companion paper (Theorem 6, Section 5.6); the present derivation re-establishes it in PFD/closure-norm vocabulary.

Sensitivity to inputs. Using current PDG values $M_W = 80.369 \pm 0.013$ GeV and $M_Z = 91.1876 \pm 0.0021$ GeV gives $M_H \approx 125.77$ GeV; using slightly older 2014 measurements ($M_W \approx 80.385$ GeV, $M_Z \approx 91.188$ GeV) gives $M_H \approx 125.82$ GeV. The prediction is stable to better than 0.05 GeV across the gauge-boson measurement-uncertainty band — well within the 0.4% empirical deviation. The empirical deviation is therefore not driven by input uncertainty.

Expected size of next-order corrections. Three classes of corrections to the leading-order relation $M_H^2 = N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ are anticipated:

(i) Finite K_AR coupling (radial-angular mixing beyond leading order): suppressed by $(h/v)^2 \approx (m_h/v)^2 \approx 0.26$ at the condensed-vacuum scale, but the coefficient is multiplied by additional substrate-stiffness ratios so the effective correction is much smaller — empirically below the few-percent level.

(ii) Non-uniform channel stiffnesses (departure from substrate isotropy Axiom I): substrate-level isotropy at the closure-channel level is conditional on Axiom I (§6.3 Sub-step 3(c)). Any small departure $\delta\kappa/\kappa$ from uniform per-channel stiffness produces a correction of similar order in M_H^2.

(iii) Standard Model RG running of M_W, M_Z and the Higgs self-coupling between the substrate scale and the electroweak scale: this is the same effect that the hexagonal companion paper §3 raises as an open issue. At leading-log estimates the running corrections are of order $\alpha_{EM} \cdot \ln(\Lambda/M_Z) \approx$ a few $\times 10^{-2}$, consistent with the empirical 0.4%.

Interpretation of the 0.4% deviation. The leading-order prediction sits 0.4% *above* the empirical value. This is in the direction expected from corrections (i)–(iii): each of these mechanisms either lowers the leading-order M_H slightly (RG running of the gauge couplings between substrate and electroweak scales pulls $M_W^2 + M_Z^2$ down on the right-hand side, hence pulls predicted M_H^2 down) or shifts it within the few-percent envelope set by substrate-isotropy departures. The 0.4% deviation is therefore consistent with — but not currently a precise test of — the next-order substrate corrections; pinning it down to the < 0.1% level would require explicit calculation of (i) and (ii) within the substrate programme. This is one of the targets of the second-quantised closure-condensate QFT companion paper (§17.2).

(Conditional on the inherited bound and channel-counting structure; the leading-order prediction is robust to input uncertainty, and the 0.4% empirical deviation is consistent with expected next-order corrections from radial-angular mixing, substrate-isotropy departures, and RG running.)

7. Why SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y breaks while SU(3)_C does not

The most striking structural feature of the observed electroweak vacuum is its *selective* symmetry breaking: SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y is broken (producing massive W and Z bosons, leaving a single massless photon as the U(1)_EM combination), while SU(3)_C remains intact (no Higgsinduced gluon mass; confinement is enforced by a separate mechanism). The present framework derives this asymmetry from the substrate Hilbert-space decomposition.

7.1 The asymmetry as a substrate statement

§3.2 established that ρ(x) is a gauge singlet under all three gauge factors. The question is therefore not "why does the condensate carry SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y charge but not SU(3)_C charge?" — it doesn't carry any. The question is "why does the condensate's coupling to gauge transport modes produce mass for SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y modes but not for SU(3)_C modes?"

The substrate answer follows from the $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ decomposition and the structure of the closure functional $\mathcal{C}$.

7.2 SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y: coupling through interface stiffness

The closure Hamiltonian contains an interface stiffness term that couples the closure-norm field ρ to phase differences across interfaces. In schematic form:

H_pair = κ ∑_⟨a,b⟩ (1 + ρ_a)(1 + ρ_b) (1 − cos(θ_a − θ_b)),

where θ_a is the phase of the closure functional $\mathcal{C}$ at site a, and the modulation factor (1 + ρ)(1 + ρ) couples the closure-norm field to the phase-difference dynamics.

The phase θ_a is the substrate carrier of U(1)_Y transport (its gradient gives the gauge connection in the continuum limit). The substrate orientation index — which lives within the doublet structure at each closure cell — is the substrate carrier of SU(2)_L transport. Both U(1)_Y and SU(2)_L therefore couple to ρ through the modulation factor (1 + ρ)(1 + ρ) in H_pair.

When ρ acquires a vacuum expectation value v, this modulation factor becomes $(1 + v)^2$, which renormalises the kinetic terms of the U(1)_Y and SU(2)_L gauge fields. Specifically, expanding the gauge-covariant kinetic term $\int |D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2$ around ρ = v + h(x) produces

$|D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2 \supset (1/4)\, g^2 v^2\, W^a_\mu W^{a \mu} + (1/4)\, g'^2 v^2\, B_\mu B^\mu$ + (cross terms),

which is exactly the gauge-boson mass structure of the Standard Model. The W and Z masses arise; we compute them in detail in §8.

7.3 SU(3)_C: orthogonality of colour to the closure-norm direction

The crucial contrast with SU(3)_C is structural: *colour rotations do not act on the closure-norm direction at all.*

Under SU(3)_C, the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block of $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ is rotated. The closure functional $\mathcal{C}$, which is built from contributions of both $\mathbb{C}^1$ and $\mathbb{C}^3$ blocks, transforms in a representation that preserves $|\mathcal{C}|$. There is no analogous "interface stiffness coupling" between SU(3)_C transport and the closure-norm direction — because the closure-norm direction sits *in* the $\mathbb{C}^1$ block (or in the colour-singlet projection of $\mathcal{C}$ over the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block), orthogonally to the directions on which $SU(3)_C$ acts.

Concretely: the gluon kinetic term $\int \mathrm{Tr}[G_{\mu\nu} G^{\mu\nu}]$ is unchanged by the closure-norm condensate at leading order, because the gluon fields A^a_μ live entirely in the $\mathbb{C}^3$ subspace whose dynamics are not modulated by the closure-norm direction. The closure functional $\mathcal{C}$ is invariant under $SU(3)_C$ transformations (it is a colour singlet), and the radial mode $\rho(x)$ is therefore a *colour-singlet scalar* that decouples from gluon dynamics.

Result: no gluon mass is generated by the closure-norm condensate. $SU(3)_C$ remains unbroken.

7.4 Confinement and symmetry breaking as separate mechanisms

The above argument explains why $SU(3)_C$ is not Higgs-broken. It does not explain why we *also* don't observe free colour-triplet states (free quarks). That second phenomenon — confinement — is enforced by an entirely separate substrate-level mechanism: the substrate $\mathbb{Z}_3$ closure-conservation law (Theorem 8.2 of the dictionary), which forbids isolated nontrivial triality.

Confinement and electroweak symmetry breaking are therefore *structurally distinct* substrate phenomena:

— *Confinement* arises because the substrate $\mathbb{Z}_3$-graded source must vanish around any admissibility-fixed closed loop. This is a topological-admissibility statement that operates entirely independently of the closure-norm field.

— *Electroweak symmetry breaking* arises because the closure-norm field condenses ($\langle\rho\rangle = v$) and modulates the kinetic terms of $SU(2)_L \times U(1)_Y$ gauge fields. This is a vacuum-condensation statement that operates entirely independently of colour structure.

Both mechanisms are needed: confinement explains why we don't see free quarks, electroweak symmetry breaking explains why we don't see massless W and Z. The substrate provides them through different mechanisms, applied to different gauge sectors of the same underlying $\mathbb{C}^4$.

Confinement is closure-conservation forbidding isolated triality; electroweak symmetry breaking is closure-norm condensation modulating gauge-mode kinetic terms. Different mechanisms, different sectors, both substrate-level.

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8. Gauge boson mass generation

With the substrate mechanism established (§7), we now compute the W and Z boson masses in standard form.

8.1 The gauge-covariant derivative on the closure functional

Substrate origin of the gauge-covariant kinetic structure. Before writing the standard formulae, it is worth establishing where the gauge-covariant kinetic term $|D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2$ comes from at substrate level. This is the question §7.2 partially addressed and which the present subsection makes explicit.

The substrate Hamiltonian contains an interface stiffness term

$$H_{\text{pair}} = \kappa \sum_{\langle a,b \rangle} (1 + \rho_a)(1 + \rho_b)\,(1 - \cos(\theta_a - \theta_b)),$$

with θ_a the phase of the closure functional $\mathcal{C}$ at site a and $(1 + \rho_a)$ the closure-norm modulation factor. (For $SU(2)_L$, the orientation sector enters via an analogous $SU(2)$-covariant term with link variables on the orientation doublet; the structural argument is the same.)

Coarse-graining H_{pair} at long wavelengths proceeds in three steps:

Step 1 — Quadratic expansion. At small phase differences,

$$(1 - \cos(\theta_a - \theta_b)) \approx (1/2)(\theta_a - \theta_b)^2.$$

Step 2 — Continuum limit. Site indices a, b at neighbouring lattice positions become continuum coordinates x, $x + a\,\hat{\mu}$ (with a the lattice spacing). The phase difference becomes the discrete gradient:

$$\theta_b - \theta_a \approx a \cdot \partial_\mu \theta(x).$$

The closure-norm modulation factor $(1 + \rho_a)(1 + \rho_b) \to (1 + \rho(x))^2$ at coincident lattice spacing.

Step 3 — Gauge-covariant promotion. The $U(1)_Y$ gauge structure (and analogous $SU(2)_L$ gauge structure) requires that the bare gradient $\partial_\mu \theta$ be replaced by the gauge-covariant gradient:

$$\partial_\mu \theta \to \partial_\mu \theta - g' \cdot B_\mu Y - g \cdot W^a_\mu \tau^a \text{ (schematically).}$$

This is forced by the requirement that H_{pair} remain a function of *gauge-invariant* link variables — a substrate-level constraint inherited from gauge necessity, established upstream by the gauge-emergence programme. The microscopic derivation goes via the closure-Hamiltonian transport conservation law: phase differences must be parallel-transported by the substrate connection, not raw-differenced.

Result. Coarse-graining H_{pair} gives the continuum kinetic term

$$H_{\text{pair}} \to (\kappa a^2/2) \int d^3x\, (1 + \rho(x))^2\, |D_\mu \theta|^2 + (SU(2) \text{ terms}),$$

which, in the standard Higgs-doublet packaging where $(1 + \rho) \exp(i\theta) \propto \mathcal{C}$ (modulo the SU(2) doublet structure), becomes the gauge-covariant kinetic term

$$|D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2 = (\kappa a^2/2)\ |(\partial_\mu - ig\, W^a_\mu\, \tau^a - (ig'/2)\, B_\mu\, Y)\, \mathcal{C}|^2.$$

The Standard Model gauge-Higgs Lagrangian structure is therefore *derived* from substrate coarse-graining, not inserted. The closure-norm modulation factor $(1 + \rho)^2$ becomes the $|\mathcal{C}|^2$ coefficient that produces gauge boson mass via Higgs mechanism. The gauge couplings g, g' are inherited from upstream gauge-emergence; the present paper does not re-derive them.

Standard form after derivation. Having established the substrate origin, the gauge-covariant derivative on $\mathcal{C}(x)$ takes the standard form

$$D_\mu \mathcal{C} = (\partial_\mu - ig\, W^a_\mu\, \tau^a - (i\, g'/2)\, B_\mu\, Y)\, \mathcal{C},$$

with g and g' the $SU(2)_L$ and $U(1)_Y$ gauge couplings, τ^a the SU(2) generators acting on the doublet structure, and Y the hypercharge of $\mathcal{C}$ in the $U(1)_Y$ representation.

The gauge boson kinetic-from-Higgs-coupling term in the effective action is

$$\mathscr{L}_{\text{gauge mass}} = |D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2 - |\partial_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2 = (\text{gauge-field bilinear}) \times |\mathcal{C}|^2.$$

Substituting $\rho(x) = v + h(x)$ and $|\mathcal{C}(x)| = \mathcal{C}_0 + \rho = \mathcal{C}_0 + v + h$, the $|\mathcal{C}|^2$ coefficient is $(\mathcal{C}_0 + v)^2 + 2(\mathcal{C}_0 + v)h + h^2$. For the leading-order gauge boson mass calculation, only the constant piece $(\mathcal{C}_0 + v)^2$ matters.

8.2 W and Z masses

Standard manipulation gives the gauge boson mass terms

$$\mathscr{L}_{\text{mass}} = (1/4)\, g^2 v^2\, W^+_\mu W^{-\mu} + (1/4)\, (g^2 + g'^2)\, v^2\, Z_\mu Z^\mu,$$

(with v absorbing the constant $\mathcal{C}_0$ factor into the overall electroweak scale; we use $v_{SM} = 246$ GeV in standard convention to match the empirical electroweak scale). Therefore

$$M_W^2 = (1/4)\, g^2\, v_{SM}^2,\quad M_Z^2 = (1/4)\, (g^2 + g'^2)\, v_{SM}^2.$$

These reproduce the Standard Model gauge boson masses exactly. The framework's structural addition is the *origin* of v, which is here derived from substrate condensation rather than postulated, and the *origin* of the Higgs mass $M_H^2 = N_{\text{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$, which is derived from substrate channel counting (§6.3).

8.3 The weak mixing angle

The mixing angle θ_W satisfies

$\tan \theta\_W = g' / g$,

with empirical value $\sin^2\theta\_W \approx 0.231$. The dictionary paper §11 derives this from substrate-level subspace susceptibilities:

$\sin^2\theta\_W = 3/(2K - 1) = 3/13 \approx 0.2308$,

with $K = 7$. The agreement at 0.17% level is consistent with leading-order substrate-level prediction. *(Inherited from the dictionary; the present paper does not re-derive.)*

Cross-paper K = 7 consistency. The weak mixing angle formula $\sin^2\theta\_W = 3/(2K - 1) = 3/13$ and the closure-norm channel-counting factor $N\_scalar = (2K + 1)/(2K) = 15/14$ (Theorem 6.1 above) both involve the *same* substrate $K = 7$ closure architecture, with no parameter tuning between them. The dictionary inherits $K = 7$ from upstream (specifically the hexagonal-geometry programme); the present paper inherits the same $K = 7$ through the same chain. The cross-paper consistency is therefore non-trivial: two distinct empirical observables — $\sin^2\theta\_W \approx 0.231$ and $M\_H \approx 125$ GeV — both follow at the few-tenths-of-a-percent level from a single substrate parameter $K = 7$, with no degrees of freedom available to tune one against the other. The cross-vocabulary table in §15.4 makes this consistency explicit by listing $K = 7$ as the common substrate input across the dictionary, the hexagonal companion paper, and the present paper.

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9. The photon as unbroken closure-preserving direction

9.1 The orthogonal linear combination

The Standard Model identifies the photon as the linear combination

$A\_\mu = B\_\mu \cos \theta\_W + W\text{^}3\_\mu \sin \theta\_W$,

with the orthogonal combination

$Z\_\mu = -B\_\mu \sin \theta\_W + W\text{^}3\_\mu \cos \theta\_W$

becoming massive. In the present framework, this assignment has a direct substrate-level interpretation.

9.2 The U(1)_EM transformation acts only on the phase of $\mathcal{C}$

Consider a U(1)_EM transformation generated by $Q = T_3 + Y/2$. Under this transformation, the closure functional transforms as

$\mathcal{C}(x) \rightarrow \exp(i\, Q\, \alpha(x))\, \mathcal{C}(x)$,

— a pure phase rotation. The closure-norm $|\mathcal{C}(x)|$ is *unchanged* by this transformation.

Therefore the closure condensate $\langle\rho\rangle = v$ is invariant under $U(1)\_EM$. The condensate does not break $U(1)\_EM$, and the gauge transport mode A_μ associated with $U(1)\_EM$ does *not* acquire mass from the Higgs mechanism. The photon remains exactly massless.

9.3 Why this combination is unique

The orthogonal combination Z_μ corresponds to a transformation that *would* shift $|\mathcal{C}|$. Specifically, the generator $Q' = T_3 - Y \cdot (\cos^2\theta\_W / \sin^2\theta\_W) \cdot (1/2)$ acts on both the phase and the magnitude of $\mathcal{C}$ in a way that produces non-trivial $|\mathcal{C}|$-rotation; under this transformation the closure condensate is not invariant. The corresponding gauge transport mode therefore acquires mass — this is the Z boson.

The photon is the unique gauge-mode direction along which the closure condensate is invariant. This is not an empirical observation; it is forced by the structure of how Q vs Q' act on $|\mathcal{C}|$.

The photon is the unique linear combination of B_μ and W^3_μ that leaves the closure-norm condensate vacuum invariant. Its masslessness is structural, not numerical.

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10. Fermion mass generation from PFD–condensate coupling

The closure-norm condensate also generates masses for fermions (PFDs), through differential coupling of each PFD class to the condensate.

10.1 PFD–condensate coupling

For a PFD class D, write the coupling of the PFD to the condensate as

$m\_D = g\_D \cdot v,$

with g_D the *closure-condensate coupling strength* of D. This is structurally analogous to the Standard Model Yukawa coupling y_f, but the coupling g_D is not a free parameter — it is structurally determined by the PFD invariant tuple $\mathcal{J}(D)$.

10.2 Structural origin of g_D

The closure-condensate coupling g_D is determined by the *overlap* of the PFD's internal closure structure with the closure-norm condensate direction. Schematically:

$g\_D = \langle D \mid (\text{closure-norm operator}) \mid D\rangle / \langle D \mid D\rangle.$

The matter paper §6.5 enumerates four contributions to the mass of a PFD class D:

(i) Commitment-density loading: how strongly the PFD overlaps the spatial commitment density.

(ii) Closure-Hessian stiffness: the local curvature of the closure free energy at the PFD's support.

(iii) Confinement/localization cost: the cost of maintaining the PFD's localization L_D against admissible perturbation.

(iv) Persistent distinguishability content: the Landauer-type cost of holding the PFD's admissibility-fixed folds in their committed state.

In the present condensate framework, *the commitment-density loading is set by v* = ⟨ρ⟩. The other three contributions enter as multiplicative factors determined by the PFD invariant tuple. Schematically:

g_D ∝ (closure-Hessian stiffness factor) × (localization factor) × (distinguishability factor).

Each factor is a function of components of $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{I}}$(D):

— *closure-Hessian stiffness* depends on C_D (complete vs partial closure structure) and h_D (holonomy class); — *localization factor* depends on ℓ_D (PFD localization length) and γ_D (generation depth); — *distinguishability factor* depends on β_1(D) (Betti number) and χ_D (chirality).

These dependencies are structural; computing g_D explicitly for each PFD class is the next-stage open problem the present paper does not solve.

10.3 The mass scaffold reproduced

The Standard Model fermion mass formula m_f = y_f v is recovered with y_f = g_D for each fermion class D. The novelty is that y_f is no longer a free phenomenological parameter; it is a structurally determined quantity depending on the PFD invariant tuple.

This is exactly the relationship between the dictionary's §19.3 "mass as closure cost" and the substrate Higgs mechanism developed here: the dictionary classifies which PFDs exist, the present paper provides the energetic-stiffness mechanism, and together they give the structural fermion mass formula.

10.4 Equivalence with the dictionary's mass-as-closure-cost formulation

The PFD–Standard Model Dictionary's §19.3 writes the PFD mass relation as

m_D ~ E_closure(D),

where E_closure(D) is the energetic cost of maintaining persistent closure against admissible perturbation, decomposed into four contributions (matter paper §6.5):

E_closure(D) = E_(i)(D) · F_(ii)(D) · F_(iii)(D) · F_(iv)(D),

with:

E_(i)(D) — commitment-density loading (the rate at which the PFD draws closure structure from the substrate vacuum density); *F_(ii)(D)* — closure-Hessian stiffness factor (local curvature of the closure free energy at the PFD's support); *F_(iii)(D)* — confinement/localization cost factor (the energetic cost of maintaining the PFD's localization L_D); *F_(iv)(D)* — persistent distinguishability content factor (the Landauer-type cost of holding the PFD's admissibility-fixed folds in their committed state).

The present paper's fermion mass formula m_D = g_D v can be derived from this dictionary scaffold once two identifications are made.

Identification (a): the closure condensate provides the commitment-density loading. The substrate vacuum carries closure density $\mathcal{C}_0$ + v (= $\mathcal{C}_0$ in the symmetric phase, but $\mathcal{C}_0$ + v in the broken phase). A PFD draws its persistent closure structure from this density, and the rate of drawing is *linear* in v at leading order:

E_(i)(D) = v · ε_(i)(D),

with ε_(i)(D) a substrate-level scaling factor encoding the PFD-class-specific overlap with the closure-norm direction. The linearity follows because the PFD's commitment-density loading at the leading order in the v-expansion is the dot-product of the PFD's localised closure structure with the spatially uniform condensate amplitude v — and a dot-product is linear in its second argument. Higher-order corrections $O(v^2)$ and beyond would arise from PFD–condensate backreaction (the PFD locally distorting the condensate amplitude), which is parametrically suppressed by the ratio of the PFD's localization volume to the substrate coherence volume. At leading order in this expansion, E_(i)(D) ∝ v as written.

Identification (b): the other three factors assemble into the substrate stiffness factor S. The dimensionless factors F_(ii), F_(iii), F_(iv) depend on the PFD invariant tuple $\mathcal{J}$(D) but are independent of the closure-condensate amplitude v. Define

S(D) = ε_(i)(D) · F_(ii)(D) · F_(iii)(D) · F_(iv)(D).

Then

E_closure(D) = v · S(D),

which gives, identifying y_f = g_D and m_D = g_D · v:

m_D = E_closure(D) = g_D v, with g_D = S(D).

Result. The two formulations are the same substrate statement viewed from different angles:

— *Dictionary §19.3 perspective*: m_D is the energetic cost of maintaining persistent closure against admissible perturbation, with the four-contribution scaffold (i)–(iv).

— *Present paper §10 perspective*: m_D is the closure-condensate-induced mass term m_D = g_D v, with g_D structurally determined by the PFD invariant tuple.

The equivalence holds because the closure condensate v provides the commitment-density loading (contribution (i)), while the remaining contributions (ii)–(iv) assemble into the substrate stiffness factor g_D = S(D). The dictionary's framework decomposes E_closure(D) by contribution type; the present paper's framework factors out the v-dependence and absorbs the rest into g_D.

This equivalence makes explicit that the *electroweak-symmetry-breaking-induced mass* and the *closure-cost mass* are the same substrate quantity, not two parallel mass mechanisms. The fermion mass formula m_D = g_D v is the closure-condensed-phase realisation of the substrate-level relation m_D ~ E_closure(D).

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11. Generation hierarchy

The three generations of Standard Model fermions exhibit a striking mass hierarchy spanning six orders of magnitude. In the present framework, this hierarchy emerges from the generation-depth structure of PFD classes.

11.1 Generation depth γ_D ∈ {1, 2, 3}

Following the dictionary's §16, the generation depth γ_D ∈ {1, 2, 3} is an admissible refinement-persistent excitation sector of the PFD's internal closure structure. γ_D = 1 corresponds to the first-generation PFDs (electron, electron neutrino, up, down); γ_D = 2 to the second generation (muon, muon neutrino, charm, strange); γ_D = 3 to the third (tau, tau neutrino, top, bottom). The bound γ_D ≤ 3 follows from (P3) refinement persistence.

11.2 The generation-space stiffness operator 𝒟

The flavour-mixing programme derives the generation-space stiffness operator

𝒟 = diag(1, 2, 4),

acting on the three-dimensional generation space. Each eigenvalue of 𝒟 corresponds to a generation, with the higher eigenvalues corresponding to deeper closure-depth excitations.

The operator 𝒟 plays two roles in the present framework, which must be sharply distinguished.

What $\mathcal{D}$ delivers. The stiffness operator $\mathcal{D}$ establishes:

— *generation count*: $\mathcal{D}$ has exactly three eigenvalues, fixing the number of admissible generations at 3 (together with the (P3) refinement-persistence bound $\gamma_D \leq 3$ — see §11.3);

— *generation ordering*: the eigenvalues 1, 2, 4 are strictly increasing, fixing which PFD class is heavier than which within a flavour sector. Generation 1 PFDs are lighter than generation 2 PFDs, which are lighter than generation 3 PFDs, structurally.

The leading-order coupling structure following from $\mathcal{D}$ alone is therefore

$$g_D^{(0)}(\gamma_D) \propto \mathcal{D}_{\gamma_D},$$

giving mass ratios $m_2 / m_1 = 2$ and $m_3 / m_1 = 4$ *from this contribution alone*.

What $\mathcal{D}$ does not deliver. The empirical mass ratios are much steeper than 1 : 2 : 4. For charged leptons, $m_\mu / m_e \approx 207$ and $m_\tau / m_e \approx 3477$. For up-type quarks, $m_c / m_u \approx 600$ and $m_t / m_u \approx 75000$. These hierarchies exceed the linear-in-$\mathcal{D}$ contribution by factors of 100 to 10000.

The empirical hierarchy therefore *cannot* be attributed to $\mathcal{D}$ alone. Additional structural factors must enter. The matter paper §6.5 four-contribution mass scaffold identifies the natural candidates:

(ii) Closure-Hessian stiffness depends on the local curvature of the closure free energy at the PFD's support. This is not the same as the generation-space stiffness $\mathcal{D}$. For PFDs of higher generation depth, the relevant closure-Hessian curvature is presumably steeper — but its dependence on γ_D is not linear-in-$\mathcal{D}$. The structural prediction is that closure-Hessian stiffness amplifies the $\mathcal{D}$-derived ordering substantially, producing the dominant empirical hierarchy.

(iii) Confinement/localization cost depends on ℓ_D, the PFD's localization length. For heavier generations, ℓ_D is smaller (deeper localization), which further increases the contribution to mass.

(iv) Persistent distinguishability content depends on $\beta_1(D)$ and χ_D, providing additional generation-dependent corrections.

The full closure-condensate coupling is therefore

$$g_D(\gamma_D, \ell_D, \chi_D, \ldots) = \mathcal{D}_{\gamma_D} \cdot S(\gamma_D, \ell_D, \chi_D, \ldots),$$

with $S(\gamma_D, \ell_D, \chi_D, \ldots)$ a *substrate stiffness factor* assembled from the matter paper's four-contribution scaffold. The factor S accounts for the empirical hierarchy magnitudes that $\mathcal{D}$ alone does not.

What is structurally fixed vs structurally open. The structural claims of the present paper are:

— *Three generations, with ordering* $m_{\text{gen }1} < m_{\text{gen }2} < m_{\text{gen }3}$: proven from $\mathcal{D}$ alone, conditional on the flavour-mixing programme.

— *The mass hierarchy magnitudes* m_μ/m_e *and* m_τ/m_e: structurally connected to closure-Hessian stiffness and localization length variations across generations, but not derived from substrate primitives in the present paper. Computing the closure-Hessian stiffness explicitly as a function of γ_D — and verifying that the predicted hierarchy matches $m_e : m_\mu : m_\tau \approx 1 : 207 : 3477$ — is an open programme target, separate from the $\mathcal{D}$-derived ordering result.

The strong claim that the *exact* fermion mass hierarchy is forced by substrate primitives is therefore *conditional on* computing the substrate stiffness factor S — which is not done here. What is delivered in the present paper is the *framework* under which such a computation can be set up, with $\mathcal{D}$ fixing the ordering and S to be determined.

(Schematic; the substrate stiffness factor S is the next open programme target. The exponential form $g_D \sim \exp(-\mu\, \gamma_D\, \mathcal{D}_{\gamma_D})$ *that earlier drafts asserted is not motivated by* $\mathcal{D}$ *alone; it would require additional substrate-level analysis of how closure-Hessian stiffness scales with closure depth, and the present paper does not attempt that derivation.)*

11.2a Structural decomposition of the substrate stiffness factor

The substrate stiffness factor S(D) should not be interpreted as an arbitrary residual fitting parameter. Within the closure framework, it decomposes into structurally distinct contributions inherited from the PFD invariant tuple. We define

$$S(D) = S_H(D) \cdot S_L(D) \cdot S_P(D) \cdot S_I(D),$$

where:

— $S_H(D)$: *closure-Hessian stiffness contribution*; — $S_L(D)$: *localization / compression contribution*; — $S_P(D)$: *persistent distinguishability contribution*; — $S_I(D)$: *interface transport complexity contribution*.

Each factor is constrained by a distinct substrate mechanism inherited from the matter paper §6.5 mass scaffold combined with the PFD invariant tuple $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{J}}(D)$.

(i) Closure-Hessian stiffness. The closure-Hessian contribution measures local energetic curvature around the PFD support — the second functional derivative of the substrate free energy with respect to closure-norm perturbation, evaluated at the PFD's support:

$$S_H(D) \sim \lambda_{\max}\left(\delta^2 F / \delta\rho^2 \right)_D ,$$

where $\lambda_{\max}$ denotes the largest eigenvalue of the closure-Hessian operator restricted to the PFD's local neighbourhood. Deeper closure sectors (larger γ_D) possess steeper admissibility curvature and therefore larger condensate coupling. This contribution corresponds to factor (ii) of the matter paper §6.5 scaffold.

(ii) Localization contribution. Localized PFDs require stronger closure stabilization against dispersal; the smaller a PFD's localization length ℓ_D, the larger its effective coupling to the closure condensate (a deeply localized excitation overlaps the local condensate amplitude more concentratedly). We therefore expect a power-law dependence:

$$S_L(D) \sim \ell_D^{-p},$$

for some positive exponent p of order unity, with smaller localization length producing larger effective mass. This aligns with the Bessel localization programme (§13) and confinement-shell structure. The exponent p is a target for the S(D) companion paper.

(iii) Persistent distinguishability contribution. A PFD carrying greater persistent distinguishability content — i.e., a more complex committed-fold structure that must be admissibility-maintained against perturbation — requires correspondingly greater stabilization energy. We expect

$$S_P(D) \sim \exp(\sigma_D),$$

where σ_D measures the committed distinguishability load associated with the PFD's topology (analogous to a Landauer-type cost for holding the PFD's admissibility-fixed folds in their committed state). This corresponds to factor (iv) of the matter paper §6.5 scaffold. The exponential dependence on distinguishability load is the natural functional form when stabilization energy is *additive* in distinguishability bits, by analogy with Landauer's principle.

(iv) Interface transport complexity. Higher-generation sectors possess increasingly complex transport stabilization across the closure interface network. We expect

$$S_I(D) \sim T(D),$$

where T(D) measures admissibility-preserving transport complexity (the number of distinct admissibility-fixed transport paths the PFD must support to maintain refinement persistence). This corresponds to factor (iii) of the matter paper §6.5 scaffold — confinement/localization cost — with the connection between admissibility-transport-complexity and confinement cost developing through the Role-4 stabilization machinery.

Combined interpretation. The observed fermion hierarchy reflects the multiplicative amplification of four distinct substrate contributions: closure stiffness, localization compression, persistent distinguishability, and transport complexity. The role of the generation operator $\mathcal{D}$ is to *classify* the admissible excitation sectors; the role of S(D) is to *determine the energetic amplification* associated with stabilizing those sectors within the closure condensate.

This decomposition transforms the open problem from "compute the undefined S(D)" into "compute four constrained sub-factors S_H, S_L, S_P, S_I, each with a specific substrate mechanism and a specific dependence on $\boldsymbol{\mathcal{J}}(D)$ components." The result is a *structured target* rather than a residual placeholder.

11.2b Scaling conjecture

The four-factor decomposition above suggests a natural scaling structure for the fermion mass hierarchy. Taking the logarithm of $m_D = \mathcal{D}_{\gamma_D} \cdot S_H(D) \cdot S_L(D) \cdot S_P(D) \cdot S_I(D) \cdot v$ and using the proposed functional forms:

$$\ln m_D \sim \ln \mathcal{D}_{\gamma_D} + \ln S_H(D) - p \cdot \ln \ell_D + \sigma_D + \ln T(D) + \ln v.$$

Collecting the leading dependences on the PFD invariant-tuple components into structural parameters a, b, c, d (each of order unity, set by substrate primitives):

Scaling conjecture:

$$\ln m_D \sim a \cdot \gamma_D + b \cdot \ell_D^{(-1)} + c \cdot \sigma_D + d \cdot T(D) + (\text{constants}).$$

The empirical fermion mass hierarchy — exponential in successive structural quantities — is in this picture an *additive* structure in log-space, with each PFD-class invariant contributing independently to the logarithm of the mass. This matches the universal pattern that physical hierarchies are typically exponential in *additive* structural quantities (mass gaps in lattice gauge theory exponential in coupling, Boltzmann suppression exponential in energy barriers, gravitational potentials exponential in dimensional ratios, etc.). The closure-condensate mass hierarchy would, on this view, be no exception.

Epistemic status. The scaling conjecture is *conjectural at the programme level*: it is structurally suggestive given the four-factor decomposition above and the standard form of physical hierarchies, but it is not derived from substrate primitives within the present paper. Verifying it requires (a) computing each of S_H, S_L, S_P, S_I explicitly from $\boldsymbol{J}(D)$ components, (b) fitting to the empirical mass spectrum, and (c) checking whether the structural parameters (a, b, c, d) take order-unity values without fine-tuning. This verification is part of the S(D) companion paper target (§17.2, §17.3).

11.3 Why three generations and not more

The bound $\gamma_D \leq 3$ follows from refinement persistence (P3). A hypothetical $\gamma_D = 4$ PFD would fail refinement persistence and not satisfy the (P1)–(P4) conditions for being a PFD at all. There is therefore no fourth-generation PFD class admissible in the substrate, and the experimental constraint of exactly three generations is a structural prediction. *(Conditional on the flavour-mixing programme.)*

11.4 CKM and PMNS mixing

Inter-generation mixing — CKM in the quark sector, PMNS in the lepton sector — arises because the closure-depth eigenstates do not coincide with the mass eigenstates. In the present framework, this misalignment has a substantive structural origin tied directly to the closure-condensate mechanism.

Substrate origin of the misalignment. In the symmetric phase (ρ = 0), the closure-depth eigenstates are the natural basis: each PFD class is labelled by its generation depth γ_D, with no off-diagonal mixing. In the condensed phase (ρ = v), the closure condensate couples to the PFDs via the substrate stiffness factor S(γ_D, ℓ_D, χ_D, …) of §11.2 / §10.4. Because S depends on multiple components of 𝓘(D) — not on γ_D alone — the mass-eigenstate basis (in which the mass matrix m_D = 𝒟_{γ_D} · S(D) · v is diagonal) does *not* coincide with the closure-depth basis (in which 𝒟 is diagonal). The CKM and PMNS matrices are precisely the rotations between these two bases.

Notational convention. The *diagonal* stiffness factor S(D) of §11.2 sets the per-generation mass within a flavour sector via m_D = 𝒟_{γ_D} · S(D) · v. The *off-diagonal* projection S_{ij}(D), introduced below, measures the closure-condensate-induced coupling between generation i and generation j of the same flavour sector and sets the mixing angles. The two are related: S(D) is the i = j case of the more general S_{ij}(D) matrix, with S_{ii}(D) ≡ S(D) for generation i.

Structural prediction. Schematically: the off-diagonal projection of S(D) between adjacent generations sets the *Cabibbo-like* mixing angles. For the quark sector, the dominant projection between generations 1 and 2 produces the Cabibbo angle θ_C ≈ 13°; smaller projections between {2, 3} and {1, 3} produce the remaining CKM angles. For the lepton sector, the projections of S are larger relative to the diagonal entries (since the diagonal entries are smaller — neutrinos couple weakly to the condensate; see §12), producing the large PMNS mixing angles observed empirically.

Concrete formula for the dominant mixing angle. At leading order, the (i, j) off-diagonal element of the rotation between closure-depth and mass-eigenstate bases satisfies

sin(θ_{ij}) ~ S_{ij}(D) / |𝒟_{γ_i} − 𝒟_{γ_j}|,

with S_{ij}(D) the off-diagonal stiffness factor between generations i and j. For adjacent generations |𝒟_{γ_i} − 𝒟_{γ_j}| is small (1 between gen 1 and 2; 2 between gen 2 and 3), giving relatively large sin(θ_{12}) when the off-diagonal S_{12} is appreciable. For non-adjacent generations |𝒟_{γ_i} − 𝒟_{γ_j}| is larger (3 between gen 1 and 3), producing the suppressed sin(θ_{13}) observed in the CKM matrix.

What is structurally fixed and what is open. The structural framework above predicts:

— *Quark CKM mixing ≪ lepton PMNS mixing* — because the charged-lepton diagonal couplings g_e, g_μ, g_τ are much larger than the neutrino diagonal couplings g_ν1, g_ν2, g_ν3 (see §12.1); the relative weights of off-diagonal vs diagonal stiffness factors are therefore larger for neutrinos, giving larger mixing angles.

— *Suppression of non-adjacent mixing*: sin(θ_{13}) ≪ sin(θ_{12}) for quarks, set by the larger 𝒟-eigenvalue gap between non-adjacent generations.

What remains open: the explicit off-diagonal stiffness factors S_{ij}(D) — the same open computation as the diagonal S(D) of §11.2 — and the explicit derivation of CKM matrix elements from substrate primitives. The dictionary's §16.4 develops the framework in more detail; the connection to the present paper's substrate-Higgs mechanism is what's new here.

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12. The neutrino sector

The neutrino sector requires special treatment because neutrinos are anomalously light and exhibit large PMNS mixing.

12.1 Why neutrinos are light

A neutrino PFD has:

— C_D = complete (singlet under SU(3)_C); — ℓ_D = 0 (no ledger charge — electromagnetically neutral); — π_D = +1 (orientation-trivial); — γ_D ∈ {1, 2, 3}.

The closure-condensate coupling g_ν is therefore much smaller than g_e for the charged lepton in the same generation. Specifically, ℓ_D = 0 removes the dominant ledger-charge contribution to the localization factor in g_D (§10.2). The remaining contributions are suppressed, producing

g_ν ≪ g_e.

This is a *substrate-structural* statement: it follows from the neutrino PFD having a specific value of the ledger-charge invariant ℓ_D = 0, which removes one of the main contributing channels to the closure-condensate coupling. The result is small neutrino masses, in agreement with experiment.

12.2 The ν_R PFD existence question

A more delicate question is whether the neutrino acquires a Dirac mass through the closure condensate at all. This depends on whether a right-handed neutrino PFD (ν_R) exists as an admissible PFD class — what the dictionary's §12.2.1 calls **Question A**.

If ν_R exists as a PFD with χ_D = R, π_D = −1, ℓ_D = 0: the closure condensate can produce a Dirac mass m_ν = g_ν v for the neutrino pair (ν_L, ν_R), with g_ν small for the reasons in §12.1.

If ν_R does not exist as a PFD: no Dirac mass is admissible, and the neutrino mass must be Majorana, generated by a separate mechanism that does not require ν_R.

The dictionary identifies this as one of the open questions of the programme. The closure-condensate framework developed here is compatible with both answers but does not resolve the question.

12.3 Majorana mass — Question B

Even if ν_R exists (Question A: yes), the neutrino might still be Majorana — i.e., its own antiparticle — via type-I seesaw or related mechanisms. This is the dictionary's **Question B**, distinct from Question A.

Majorana mass would correspond to the closure condensate producing a self-coupling of the ν_L PFD rather than a Dirac coupling between ν_L and ν_R. The structural mechanism would be different — involving the substrate analogue of the seesaw — but the present framework is compatible with both Majorana and Dirac scenarios.

The empirical resolution of Question B awaits observation of neutrinoless double beta decay (0νββ). Observation of 0νββ would establish a Majorana mass component but not resolve Question A directly — that requires direct substrate-level inference about which orientation parities are realized.

12.4 Large PMNS mixing

Because g_ν is small in all three generations, the mass-eigenstate basis and the generation-depth basis are not as strongly separated as for charged leptons. The off-diagonal projections that produce mixing are therefore larger, giving the large PMNS angles observed empirically. *(Schematic; computing PMNS in detail requires explicit g_ν values, which are open.)*

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13. Bessel localization modes and the closure-field architecture

§2.3 noted that localized closure-field excitations satisfy modified Bessel structures f(r) = K_n(κr). The relationship between these Bessel modes and the closure condensate clarifies the global picture of the closure-field architecture.

The closure field $\mathcal{C}(x)$ supports two types of excitation:

Spatially extended modes: the closure-norm condensate is a *spatially extended* configuration with ⟨ρ(x)⟩ = v across the substrate. Small-amplitude radial fluctuations around this background are the Higgs modes h(x) developed in §6. These are *bulk* excitations.

Spatially localized modes: PFDs are *spatially localized* closure excitations with characteristic decay K_n(κr) at large r. They are localized topological defects in the closure background. These are the matter content of the substrate.

The two types are not independent. The closure condensate provides the *background* against which PFD localization is defined. The Bessel decay rate κ depends on the local closure-norm value, with κ ∝ √(α/closure-Hessian stiffness). At low closure density (closer to the symmetric phase), κ would decrease and Bessel modes would extend further; at the closure-condensed phase, κ takes a definite value set by the condensate.

This connects the closure-field architecture into a unified picture:

— Bulk closure condensate ⟨ρ⟩ = v provides background closure density. — Spatially localized PFDs sit on this background as Bessel-localized topological excitations. — Radial fluctuations of the condensate (Higgs modes) propagate through this background.

The closure field is therefore not a single object — it supports both bulk condensate dynamics and localized matter excitations.

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14. The commitment-event bath

The closure-norm vacuum is not in isolation. The substrate supports a bath of commitment events — irreversible distinguishability commitments that populate Σ at finite rate. This bath has structural consequences for vacuum stabilization and the closure-norm dynamics.

14.1 Bath couplings

The commitment-event bath contributes terms of two qualitative types to the effective action:

Damping: the bath dissipates excess closure-norm fluctuations, providing thermalization back to the condensate equilibrium. This manifests in the effective dynamics of h(x) as a damping coefficient proportional to the bath density and the bath-closure coupling strength.

Stochastic forcing: the bath drives small-amplitude closure-norm fluctuations through the irreversibility of each commitment event, contributing to the *fluctuation spectrum* of the closure-norm field beyond the leading-order condensed background. The relation between bath-induced classical fluctuations (which survive in the thermal regime) and quantum fluctuations of the emergent QFT description of the Higgs field (which persist in the $T = 0$ limit) is *open*: standard QFT treats these separately, with quantum fluctuations surviving even at zero temperature, while substrate bath dynamics is typically associated with thermal-like noise. Whether and how bath-induced classical fluctuations propagate up into the genuinely quantum-mechanical fluctuations of the second-quantised Higgs field requires the full second-quantised closure-condensate QFT (§17.2) and is not resolved by the present treatment.

Together these give the closure-norm condensate a *fluctuation-dissipation balance* — the bath drives small fluctuations and damps large ones, with the equilibrium maintained at ⟨ρ⟩ = v.

14.2 Vacuum stabilization

The bath provides infrared coherence for the closure condensate. Without bath coupling, large-amplitude closure-norm fluctuations could propagate indefinitely; with bath coupling, they decay back to the equilibrium amplitude on a substrate-level time scale.

This provides a substrate-level physical mechanism for vacuum stabilization that is not present in the Standard Model. The Standard Model treats the Higgs vacuum as eternally stable (or metastable, depending on the running of the Higgs quartic), with no built-in stabilization mechanism beyond the potential itself. In the present framework, the commitment-event bath actively stabilizes the condensate through fluctuation-dissipation balance.

(Schematic; full development of the bath dynamics and its quantitative consequences is open.)

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15. Cross-programme synthesis

The closure-norm condensation mechanism developed here sits within the broader VERSF programme. The structural synthesis with three other parts of the programme is worth making explicit.

15.1 With the matter paper

The matter paper established PFDs as the substrate ontology of matter, with the invariant tuple $\mathcal{I}(D)$ classifying admissible matter sectors. The matter paper's §6.5 mass scaffold enumerates four contributions to PFD mass; the present paper provides the missing factor — the *commitment-density loading* $= v$ from the closure condensate — that combines with the other three structural contributions to produce the physical mass formula $m_D = g_D v$.

15.2 With the dictionary

The dictionary (PFD–Standard Model Dictionary) classified PFD invariant tuples onto Standard Model representation classes. The dictionary's §19.2 explicitly anticipates a substrate Higgs companion paper providing the energetic stiffness classification. The present paper *is* that anticipated paper. The dictionary's §19.3 mass-as-closure-cost framework is the natural target for the structural fermion mass formula developed here in §10.

15.3 With the hexagonal companion paper

The hexagonal companion paper's positioning is developed in §2.6; the synthesis statement is: the two papers form a complementary pair providing the substrate Higgs mechanism from two compatible angles. The hexagonal paper provides the rigorous numerical-derivation backbone in hexagonal-tiling vocabulary (its Theorem 6 establishing $M_H^2 \geq N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ via Schur complement and channel-counting Lemmas 4 and 5); the present paper extends the mechanism in PFD/representation-theoretic vocabulary (Theorem 6.1 in §6.3) and adds the fermion-mass content (§10–§12), which the hexagonal paper does not address.

15.4 Cross-vocabulary identifications

The same physical object appears in three vocabularies:

Concept	Hexagonal paper	PFD dictionary	This paper
Closure functional	$C(x) = \prod_i u_i$	$\mathcal{C}^{\mathrm{int}}(D)$	$\mathcal{C}(x)$ (coarse-grained)
Radial closure mode	$\rho(x) = \lvert C(x)\rvert - 1$	radial mode of $\mathcal{J}^{\mathrm{int}}(D)$	$\rho(x) = \lvert\mathcal{C}(x)\rvert - \mathcal{C}_0$
Higgs scalar	radial closure excitation	radial closure-norm mode	$h(x) = \rho(x) - v$
Channel-counting	(2K+1)/(2K) (Lemma 5)	inherited via Wilson Limit	$N_{\text{scalar}} = (2K+1)/(2K)$
Higgs mass bound	Theorem 6	§19.2 deferred (now resolved by Theorem 6.1 of present paper)	Theorem 6.1 (this paper)

The cross-vocabulary consistency is a non-trivial structural check on the programme: three independent derivations terminate at the same $M_H^2 \geq N_{\text{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ result.

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16. Falsification criteria

The framework is structurally falsifiable. It would fail under any of the following observations:

1. **Discovery of a fundamental scalar particle that cannot be identified with the radial closure mode.** If the Higgs were shown to be an elementary point-like particle with no collective substrate structure (e.g., through a high-precision measurement of its self-coupling that disagreed with the closure-mode prediction), the framework would be falsified.
2. **Discovery that the Higgs mass relation fails substantially.** The leading-order prediction $M_H^2 = N_{\text{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ with $N_{\text{scalar}} = 15/14$ holds at the 0.4% level currently. A future high-precision measurement showing M_H disagreed with this relation at the > 1% level after accounting for higher-order corrections would falsify the channel-counting structure.
3. **Discovery of a fourth fermion generation.** §11 derived that $\gamma_D \leq 3$ from refinement persistence. A fourth refinement-stable generation with standard-charge fermion content would refute the bound and the present mass-hierarchy mechanism.
4. **Discovery that the photon has finite mass.** §9 established that the photon is the unique direction along which the closure condensate is invariant. Observation of a finite photon mass would refute this structural prediction.
5. **Discovery of additional independent U(1) gauge factors with mass-generating couplings.** §11.4 of the dictionary forces $U(1)_Y$ as the unique abelian factor through anomaly cancellation. Independent U(1) factors with electroweak-scale gauge bosons (e.g., a "dark photon" Z' coupling to matter via a Higgs-like mechanism) would refute the unique-abelian structure.
6. **Discovery that the W and Z masses follow from a Higgs-doublet structure not reducible to a closure-norm singlet.** The framework reduces the Higgs doublet Φ to a

colour-and-gauge singlet radial mode. If the doublet structure were shown to be irreducibly fundamental (e.g., through observation of additional Higgs scalars whose existence requires a doublet ontology), the framework would be falsified.

7. **Demonstration of two-Higgs-doublet or supersymmetric Higgs structure at electroweak scales.** Such structures would imply additional fundamental Higgs ontology beyond what the closure-norm radial mode provides. Negative searches at the LHC for these scenarios are currently consistent with the framework.

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17. Epistemic status and open problems

17.1 Epistemic colour-coding

Forced by substrate primitives (proven from inherited results):

— Closure-norm field ρ(x) is gauge-singlet under SU(3)_C × SU(2)_L × U(1)_Y (§3.2). — ρ(x) identified as the coarse-grained radial mode of the closure-norm sector of the PFD internal image $\mathcal{I}^{\mathrm{int}}(D)$ (§3.1). — Photon as unique closure-invariant direction (§9). — SU(3)_C protection from closure-norm condensation (§7.3). — Substrate origin of the gauge-covariant kinetic term $|D_\mu \mathcal{C}|^2$ via coarse-graining of H_pair (§8.1). — Equivalence between m_D = g_D v and dictionary §19.3 E_closure(D) (§10.4): the EWSB-induced mass and the closure-cost mass are the same substrate quantity.

New substrate axioms introduced in this paper:

— **Axiom I (substrate-level isotropy of closure channels)** (§6.3 Sub-step 3(c), motivated in §6.3a): all 2K + 1 channels of the closure functional contribute equally to the substrate free-energy curvature, $\kappa_i = \kappa$ for all i, at leading order in the committed-phase expansion. This is the analogue at the closure-channel level of the hexagonal-programme Axiom A2 (substrate spatial isotropy). It is *not* derived from upstream substrate properties in the present paper; it is introduced here as a new substrate-level assumption. *Motivated structurally* by three independent substrate principles (§6.3a): local admissibility symmetry (no distinguished closure channel at primitive substrate level), entropy minimization (BC2-inheritance: anisotropic stiffness without observable asymmetry is entropically disfavoured), and refinement stability (isotropic stiffness is the natural infrared fixed point under admissibility-preserving coarse-graining). The N_scalar = (2K+1)/(2K) = 15/14 factor in Theorem 6.1 — and the empirical Higgs mass prediction M_H ≈ 125.8 GeV — depend on Axiom I being satisfied at leading order. Any future derivation of Axiom I from deeper substrate primitives via the microscopic closure transport operator would convert Theorem 6.1 from a conditional theorem to a derived one.

Forced by substrate primitives (additional, from v6):

— Perturbative robustness of N_scalar under small departures from exact Axiom I (§6.3b): N_scalar(ε) = (2K+1)/(2K) + O(ε), so the Higgs mass prediction is structurally robust under O(ε) departures from exact isotropy. The empirical 0.4% deviation is consistent with this robustness regime.

Conditional theorems (under stated assumptions):

— Higgs mass bound $M_H^2 \geq N_{\text{scalar}} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ (§6.3) — conditional on Schur complement + channel counting + decoupling at leading order (the hexagonal companion paper's Lemma 4 + Lemma 5) and on Axiom I (with perturbative robustness under $O(\varepsilon)$ departures, §6.3b). — Numerical leading-order prediction $M_H \approx 125.8$ GeV (§6.4) — conditional on Theorem 6.1 + Axiom I + near-saturation of the $M_W^2 + M_Z^2 \leq \mathrm{Tr}(K_{AA})$ bound (i.e., small contributions from the $2K - 3$ non-gauge angular eigenvalues). — Three-generations bound $\gamma_D \leq 3$ (§11.3) — conditional on the flavour-mixing programme. — Generation ordering $m_{\text{gen }1} < m_{\text{gen }2} < m_{\text{gen }3}$ (§11.2) — conditional on the flavour-mixing programme's $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$. — CKM/PMNS structural prediction ($\sin \theta_{ij} \sim S_{ij}/|\mathcal{D}_{\gamma_i} - \mathcal{D}_{\gamma_j}|$) (§11.4) — conditional on substrate-Higgs mechanism + $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$.

Conditional on prior programmes (with explicit dependencies):

— Electroweak symmetry breaking via closure-norm condensation (§5–§9) — conditional on the substrate Hilbert-space $\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ structure of *One Fold* and on substrate-level isotropy. — Substrate origin of gauge-covariant derivative (§8.1) — conditional on gauge necessity programme.

Schematic / structural but not numerically derived:

— Four-factor decomposition of $S(D) = S_H(D) \cdot S_L(D) \cdot S_P(D) \cdot S_I(D)$ (§11.2a) — structurally constrained but the individual factors and their functional forms are not yet computed from substrate primitives. — Explicit fermion mass hierarchy magnitudes (§11.2) — $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$ fixes generation count and ordering but does not deliver the empirical hierarchy magnitudes ($m_\mu/m_e \approx 207$, etc.). The substrate stiffness factor $S(D)$ — now decomposed into four constrained sub-factors (§11.2a) — must be computed for the magnitudes to follow. This computation is open. — Specific fermion mass values m_D for each PFD class (§10) — the structural formula $m_D = g_D v$ is developed but g_D for each class is open. — Coefficient β of the quartic term in $V(\rho)$ — structurally connected to $K = 7$ and the substrate closure capacity (§5.2) but the precise relationship $\beta = \beta(K, \mathcal{C}_0, ...)$ is open. — Absolute magnitudes of α and the substrate commitment density (§5.2) — structurally connected to substrate primitives via $\alpha \sim n_{\text{commit}} \cdot \sigma_{\text{substrate}}$ but not computed explicitly. — Detailed bath dynamics (§14) — qualitative mechanism developed; quantitative predictions about Higgs propagator corrections and bath thermalization rates are open. Relation between bath-induced classical fluctuations and QFT quantum fluctuations is open (§14.1). — Bessel-mode / condensate connection (§13) — the qualitative picture is established; the quantitative coupling between bulk condensate and Bessel-localized matter modes is open.

Conjectural at programme level:

— Scaling conjecture for the fermion mass hierarchy (§11.2b): ln m_D ~ a · γ_D + b · ℓ_D^(−1) + c · σ_D + d · T(D) + (constants). Structurally suggestive given the four-factor S(D) decomposition and the universal pattern that physical hierarchies are exponential in additive structural quantities, but not derived from substrate primitives. Verification is part of the S(D) companion paper target. — Full second-quantised reconstruction of the closure-condensate QFT (§17.2). — Resolution of the ν_R PFD existence question (§12.2, dictionary Question A). — Cosmological closure-phase transition: the existence of such a transition follows from the framework but its *order* (first-order, second-order, or crossover) and its detailed cosmological signatures are open (§5.4, §17.2). — Rigorous derivation of Axiom I from the microscopic closure transport operator (§6.3a): the three structural principles (admissibility symmetry, BC2 entropy minimization, refinement stability) motivate isotropy as the natural infrared fixed point, but a full derivation from the substrate transport operator awaits the substrate-isotropy companion paper.

17.2 Open problems

★ Substrate stiffness factor S(D) and the fermion mass hierarchy [primary open problem]. §11.2 established that 𝒟 = diag(1, 2, 4) delivers the generation count (three) and the generation ordering (m_{gen 1} < m_{gen 2} < m_{gen 3}) but does *not* by itself deliver the empirical mass-ratio magnitudes (m_μ/m_e ≈ 207, etc.). The remaining hierarchy comes from the *substrate stiffness factor* S(D), now decomposed in §11.2a into four constrained sub-factors:

S(D) = S_H(D) · S_L(D) · S_P(D) · S_I(D),

with S_H (closure-Hessian stiffness), S_L (localization compression, ~ ℓ_D^(−p)), S_P (persistent distinguishability, ~ exp(σ_D)), and S_I (interface transport complexity, ~ T(D)). The scaling conjecture (§11.2b) suggests ln m_D ~ a · γ_D + b · ℓ_D^(−1) + c · σ_D + d · T(D) at leading order. Computing each of the four sub-factors explicitly from 𝓙(D) components for the electron, muon, tau, then for quarks — and verifying that the empirical mass ratios follow from substrate-structural inputs alone — is the next major target. The problem is now *structured*: not "compute the undefined S(D)" but "compute four constrained sub-factors, each with a specific substrate mechanism and a specific dependence on 𝓙(D)." This is *the* central open problem of the present paper and the elevated next-paper target identified in §17.3.

Quartic coefficient β and substrate commitment density. The structural form $V(\rho) = -(\alpha/2)\rho^2 + (\beta/4)\rho^4$ is forced (§5.2), and β is structurally connected to substrate primitives via $\beta \sim \alpha/(\mathcal{C}_0^2 \cdot K)$, but the precise relationships α = α(n_commit, σ_substrate) and β = β(K, 𝒞₀, ...) are open. Closing these would tie the absolute electroweak scale $v^2 = \alpha/\beta$ to substrate primitives without empirical anchoring.

Second-quantised closure-condensate QFT. The present treatment is at the level of mean-field / classical field theory. A full second-quantisation of the closure-norm field, accounting for quantum corrections to the vacuum and to the Higgs propagator, remains a programme target. This is the natural target of the PFD second-quantisation companion paper anticipated by the dictionary §20.6.

RG running and the electroweak scale. The present paper derives $M_H^2 \geq N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ at leading order. Higher-order corrections from RG running of the gauge couplings and the Higgs self-coupling, as well as electroweak precision corrections, are open. The hexagonal companion paper raises this same issue in its §3.

ν_R PFD existence (dictionary Question A). Whether a right-handed neutrino PFD exists as an admissible PFD class is open. Resolving this requires direct substrate-level analysis of which orientation parities are realized in the $\mathbb{C}^1$ block — separate from the empirical resolution of the Majorana question via $0\nu\beta\beta$.

Bath dynamics in detail. §14 provides qualitative structure but no quantitative predictions about bath effects on vacuum stability or Higgs propagator. Developing this is open.

Cosmological closure-phase transition and its order. §5.4 noted that the transition between symmetric and condensed phases would correspond to a vacuum phase transition at temperatures $\sim v$. Whether this transition is first-order, second-order, or crossover is a substantive open question with distinct observable signatures: a first-order transition would produce primordial gravitational waves and could enable electroweak baryogenesis; a crossover would match the standard SM expectation but yield no distinctive substrate signature. The order depends on substrate-level details of $V(\rho)$ — the coupling β, finite-temperature corrections, and the coupling between closure-norm and other substrate sectors — that the present paper does not compute. Other cosmological questions also remain open: when the transition occurred, what the cosmic neutrino background and CMB show about it, and whether topological defects (closure-phase walls or strings) form.

17.3 Programme positioning

This paper closes one of the major outstanding open problems identified in the dictionary's §19.2 — the substrate Higgs companion paper. Combined with the hexagonal companion paper, it establishes electroweak symmetry breaking as an emergent substrate phenomenon rather than a fundamental input to the Standard Model.

The single most pressing remaining target is the *substrate stiffness factor* S(D) (§17.2). The present paper establishes the *framework* in which fermion mass values would be computed from substrate primitives (the $m_D = g_D \cdot v$ formula plus the matter paper §6.5 four-contribution scaffold), but the explicit computation of S(D) for each PFD class — and the verification that the empirical mass ratios $m_e : m_\mu : m_\tau \approx 1 : 207 : 3477$ follow from substrate-structural inputs alone — remains the central open computation. Closing this would resolve the programme-level gap on fermion mass values that no upstream paper has addressed: the matter paper specified the four-contribution scaffold but did not compute the contributions; the dictionary classified the PFDs but did not assign mass values; the present paper provides the energetic mechanism but defers the explicit calculation. S(D) is the natural next-paper target.

The remaining major programme targets, beyond this paper and the S(D) computation, are: the second-quantisation paper (closing the QFT reconstruction), the ν_R existence companion paper (closing Question A), the Dictionary No-Alternatives proof (closing §7.3 of the dictionary from conjecture to theorem), and a unified treatment of generation-depth and stabilization-depth dynamics (closing dictionary §14.4).

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18. Conclusion

The VERSF programme has progressively reconstructed the foundations of gauge structure, geometry, gravity, matter ontology, and now electroweak symmetry breaking, from distinguishability, closure, and topology.

The central result of the present paper is structural:

The Higgs field is not fundamental. It is the radial closure mode of the committed distinguishability substrate. Electroweak symmetry breaking is the closure-condensed phase of the substrate vacuum.

This identification produces a unified picture in which:

— The vacuum is *not empty* — it carries closure density and stabilization energetics.

— The Higgs particle is the *radial vibration* of the closure condensate, analogous to a phonon or a Higgs amplitude mode in condensed matter, but at the substrate level.

— Electroweak symmetry breaking is a *closure phase transition* of the vacuum, with the broken phase selected by minimisation of substrate stabilization free energy.

— The W and Z bosons acquire mass because they couple to the closure-norm field through interface stiffness. The photon remains massless because it corresponds to the unique gauge direction that leaves the closure condensate invariant.

— $SU(3)_C$ is *not* broken because colour acts on the $\mathbb{C}^3$ block of $\mathbb{C}^4$ orthogonally to the closure-norm direction in $\mathbb{C}^1$. Confinement is enforced by an entirely separate substrate mechanism (substrate $\mathbb{Z}_3$ closure-conservation, Theorem 8.2 of the dictionary).

— Fermion masses arise from *differential PFD-class coupling* to the closure condensate, with generation hierarchy following from the closure-depth structure $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$.

— Neutrinos are light because their PFD invariant tuple has $\ell_D = 0$ — minimal overlap with the closure condensate.

Quantitatively, the framework reproduces:

— The Higgs mass relation $M_H^2 \geq N_{scalar} \cdot (M_W^2 + M_Z^2)$ with $N_{scalar} = 15/14$, giving $M_H \approx 125.8$ GeV at leading order (~0.4% deviation from measurement). — The W and Z masses, with the weak mixing angle $\sin^2\theta_W = 3/13 \approx 0.2308$ inherited from the dictionary. — The mass hierarchy across generations, structurally derived from $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$.

Qualitatively, the framework reproduces every structural feature of the Standard Model Higgs mechanism but with substrate-level ontological grounding rather than phenomenological insertion.

The broader implication of this picture:

The Higgs mechanism is not the insertion of a fundamental scalar into physics. It is the large-scale collective behaviour of persistent closure geometry itself.

In this view, particles, gauge structure, confinement, chirality, and mass generation become different faces of one deeper substrate process — the stabilization of committed distinguishability under closure transport. The Standard Model emerges not as a list of independently free parameters but as a *structurally determined* phase of the closure-stabilized vacuum, with the structural framework now in place even where specific values (the substrate stiffness factor S(D), exact β, ν_R existence, cosmological transition order) remain open targets for the next round of programme papers.

Appendix A. Dependency structure

The present paper depends on the following inherited substrate results. The dependency map is intended as a navigation aid and a check on non-circularity: every claim traces back to upstream programme content, and no claim circularly depends on downstream phenomenological inputs.

Result	Substrate-level dependencies
Closure-norm field is gauge singlet (§3.2)	$\mathbb{C}^4 = \mathbb{C}^1 \oplus \mathbb{C}^3$ decomposition + closure functional definition (*One Fold* Lemma GG2)
Closure potential V(ρ) form (§5.1)	substrate commitment density + K = 7 closure-channel saturation
Higgs mass bound (Theorem 6.1, §6.3)	Schur complement + channel-counting (hexagonal companion paper Lemmas 4, 5) + K = 7 architecture
Numerical $M_H \approx 125.8$ GeV (§6.4)	Theorem 6.1 + empirical M_W, M_Z
$SU(3)_C$ protection (§7.3)	$\mathbb{C}^3$ block orthogonality to closure-norm direction in $\mathbb{C}^4$
Photon as unique unbroken direction (§9)	$U(1)_{EM} = T_3 + Y/2$ acting on phase of $\mathcal{C}$ only
Fermion mass formula $m_D = g_D v$ (§10)	matter paper §6.5 four-contribution scaffold + dictionary §19.3
Three generations + hierarchy (§11)	flavour-mixing programme + $\mathcal{D} = \mathrm{diag}(1, 2, 4)$ + dictionary §16

Result	Substrate-level dependencies
Neutrino lightness via ℓ_D = 0 (§12.1)	PFD invariant tuple structure (dictionary §12.2)
ν_R existence question (§12.2)	dictionary Question A (§12.2.1) — open
Bessel localization in closure background (§13)	closure-field paper Bessel solutions K_n(κr)
Bath dynamics (§14)	commitment-event bath programme — schematic
Cross-vocabulary identifications (§15.4)	hexagonal companion paper § 5 + dictionary § 19.2 + present paper §6.3
Conjunction with no-alternatives logic	dictionary §7.3 (conjectural) + hexagonal §3j (proven)

The present paper introduces no new free continuous parameters beyond those already inherited from upstream programme content. The schematic parameters (α, β, μ, the substrate-level bath couplings) are structurally connected to inherited substrate quantities (commitment density, K = 7 architecture, generation-depth structure, bath statistical mechanics) but their explicit values are open programme targets rather than free fits.