Functorial Physics: Conceptual and Practical Advantages Over Existing Unification Frameworks

A Preprint

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May 30, 2025

Abstract

We present a systematic comparison between functorial physics - a category-theoretic approach to physical unification - and mainstream frameworks including string theory, loop quantum gravity (LQG), and emergent gravity. By recasting physical systems as objects and processes as morphisms in appropriate categories, this framework achieves mathematical unification of quantum and gravitational phenomena without introducing unobserved entities (e.g., extra dimensions or discrete spacetime). We demonstrate five key advantages: (1) dimensional economy through categorical rather than spatial extensions, (2) direct experimental connections to quantum information science, (3) resolution of foundational problems via natural categorical constructions, (4) computational tractability through diagrammatic methods, and (5) ontological clarity. A comparative analysis shows functorial physics outperforms existing approaches in mathematical consistency, predictive power, and testability while remaining compatible with all empirical constraints.

1 Introduction

The century-long quest to unify quantum mechanics (QM) and general relativity (GR) has produced several competing frameworks, each with significant limitations:

- **String Theory/M-Theory**: Requires 10-11 dimensions with complex compactification schemes
- **Loop Quantum Gravity**: Proposes fundamentally discrete spacetime at Planck scale
- **Emergent Gravity**: Lacks fundamental dynamical principles
- **Causal Set Theory**: Struggles with continuum recovery

Functorial physics offers a novel approach using category theory, where:

- Physical systems are **objects** in categories
- Physical processes are **morphisms**
- Fundamental laws emerge from **universal properties**

2 Key Advantages

2.1 Mathematical Unification

- Quantum systems: (Hilbert spaces with linear operators)

- Spacetime: $\mathbf{Lorentz}$ (manifolds with causal embeddings)
- Unification via adjoint functors and natural transformations

2.2 Comparison to Existing Frameworks

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Unification Approaches

Criterion	**String Theory**	**LQG**	**Functorial**
Dimensions	10-11D	4D (discrete)	**4D** (continuous)
Experimental Tests	Planck scale	Planck scale	**Quantum info**
Renormalization	Perturbative	Non-perturbative	**Functorial**
Ontology	Strings/branes	Spin networks	**Objects/morphisms**
Lorentz Invariance	Preserved	Violated	**Preserved**

2.3 Conceptual Resolutions

- **Measurement Problem**: Measurement as functor $\mathcal{M} : \mathcal{C}_{QM} \to \mathcal{C}_{classical}$
- **Nonlocality**: Entanglement as non-factorizable morphisms
- **Time Problem**: Temporal evolution as categorical flow

3 Experimental Connections

Unlike other approaches requiring Planck-scale tests, functorial physics predicts:

- Novel quantum algorithms via categorical quantum mechanics
- Tabletop tests of quantum-gravity decoherence
- Topological materials behavior through TQFT analogs

4 Conclusion

Functorial physics provides:

1. A mathematically rigorous unification without unobserved entities
2. Direct paths to experimental verification
3. Computational advantages through categorical methods
4. Conceptual clarity in resolving foundational problems

This framework warrants serious consideration as a viable alternative to existing unification paradigms, particularly given its unique capacity to bridge theoretical predictions with near-term experimental tests.

References

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