

Definition 1. Functor

A functor F between two categories C and D consists of two functions. One which maps objects from C to objects in D and one which maps morphisms from C to morphisms in D . Moreover, the following must hold:

- (1) for $f \in \text{Hom}(A, B)$, $F(f) \in \text{Hom}(F(A), F(B))$
- (2) $F(\text{id}_A) = \text{id}_{F(A)}$
- (3) $F(g \circ f) = F(g) \circ F(f)$

Functors defined this way are structure preserving mappings between categories. Let us consider an example for a functor.

Example 1. Remember the category N and Z as monoids of natural numbers and integers. Both categories consist of only one object. So we could let a functor map the object of N map to the object of Z . The morphisms in both categories are the elements and the composition, in case the monoids are written additive, is the $+$ -operator. By (3) we have the requirement

$$F(n + m) = F(n) + F(m)$$

And by (2)

$$F(0) = 0$$

Therefore the set of all possible functors between both categories are exactly the set of all linear mappings. For instance $F : n \mapsto 2n$.

For readers with knowledge in topology the following example will be a interest.

Example 2. Given a topological space X , we define a category C by taking as objects all its elements. The morphisms are defined as follows. For two objects $x, y \in X$, the morphism $x \rightarrow y$ is included in $\text{Hom}(C)$ if and only if

$$\forall U \ U \in \mathcal{B}(x) \rightarrow y \in U$$

That is, if for any open set U that contains x it also contains y .
The composition is defined by

$$(x \rightarrow y) \circ (y \rightarrow z) = x \rightarrow z$$

We still have to verify that all axioms for this set of morphisms are fulfilled.

Clearly we have $x \rightarrow x \in \text{Hom}(C)$. Hence for any object x , $\text{id}_x \in \text{Hom}(C)$. Moreover, if $x \rightarrow y$ and $y \rightarrow z$ are in $\text{Hom}(C)$, then each open set U containing x must contain y . But U is also an open set for y , so it must contain z as well. This shows, the composition is well-defined. Now, it is trivial to verify the composition is associative.

Let X, Y be topological spaces and C_X, C_Y the corresponding categories like above. If $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a continuous mapping, then f is a functor between these categories. We verify the axioms for a functor:

(1) requires that f must operate on morphisms like so:

$$f : (x \rightarrow y) = f(x) \rightarrow f(y)$$

Then trivially (2) is fulfilled, since $f(x \rightarrow x) = f(x) \rightarrow f(x)$. By the definition of the composition, (3) is seen immediately as well. It remains to show that from $(x \rightarrow y) \in \text{Hom}(C_X)$ it follows $(f(x) \rightarrow f(y)) \in \text{Hom}(C_Y)$.

Let V be an open set containing $f(x)$. Then by continuity $f^{-1}(V)$ is open as well. Moreover, $x \in f^{-1}(V)$ and thus $y \in f^{-1}(V)$. But this implies $f(y) \in V$ that shows $(f(x) \rightarrow f(y)) \in \text{Hom}(C_Y)$.

The question arises if a functor between these categories necessarily is a continuous function. The answer is no. Just consider $f : [0, 1] \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$, with $f|_{[0, 1/2[} = 0$ and $f|_{[1/2, 1]} = 1$. Let $\{0, 1\}$ carry the discrete topology and $[0, 1]$ having a topology generated by the following basis: all open sets for points $\xi \in]0, 1]$ and an open set for 0 which is $[0, 1/4]$. This implies $0 \rightarrow 1/4$ and trivially $f(0) \rightarrow f(1/4)$. By construction, f is not continuous at $1/2$.