

Categorical Description of Gauge Theory

Christian Sämann



*School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences
Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh*

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Based on:

- [arXiv:1604.01639](https://arxiv.org/abs/1604.01639) with Brano Jurčo and Martin Wolf

Future progress in string theory seems to depend on more mathematical input.

String-/M-theory as it used to be

- Every 10 years a “string revolution”
- Every 2-3 years one new big fashionable topic to work on

This changed: No more revolutions or really big fashionable topics.

My explanation

We need more input from maths, in particular category theory:

- 2-form gauge potential B -field: Gerbes or principal 2-bundles
- String Field Theory: L_∞ -algebras or semistrict Lie ∞ -algebras
- Double Field Theory: Courant algebroids or symplectic Lie 2-algebroids
- (2,0)-theory: parallel transport of string-like objects
full non-abelian higher gauge theory

We will need to use some very simple notions of category theory, an esoteric subject noted for its difficulty and irrelevance.

G. Moore and N. Seiberg, 1989

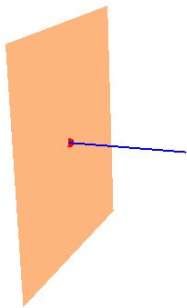
What does categorification mean?

One of Jeff Harvey's questions to identify the "generation PhD>1999" at Strings 2013.

Motivation: The Dynamics of Multiple M5-Branes

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To understand M-theory, an effective description of M5-branes would be very useful.

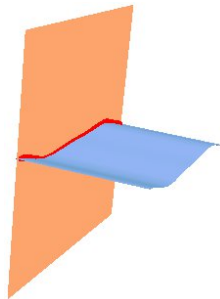


D-branes

- D-branes **interact** via strings.
- Effective description: theory of **endpoints**
- Parallel transport of these: **Gauge theory**
- Study string theory **via gauge theory**

M5-branes

- M5-branes **interact** via M2-branes.
- Eff. description: theory of **self-dual strings**
- Parallel transport: **Higher gauge theory**
- Holy grail: **(2,0)-theory** (conjectured 1995)



Lightning Review: Gauge Theory

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Gauge theory describes interactions in the presence of internal symmetries.

For a physicist

- Some particles/quantum fields: posses **local symmetries**
- problem: $\phi(x) \rightarrow g(x)\phi(x)$, but $\frac{\partial}{\partial x^\mu}\phi(x) \nrightarrow g(x)\frac{\partial}{\partial x^\mu}\phi(x)$
- solution: **gauge field** $\frac{\partial}{\partial x^\mu}\phi(x) \rightarrow (\frac{\partial}{\partial x^\mu} + A_\mu(x))\phi(x)$

For a mathematician

- local symmetry: **principal fibre bundle, representation**
- fields are sections of **associated vector bundle**
- derivative becomes **connection** on the vector bundle

For calculations in physics: **cocycles**

- open cover of manifold $\sqcup_a U_a \rightarrow M$
- principal **G**-bundle: $g_{ab} : C^\infty(U_a \cap U_b, \mathbf{G})$ with $g_{ab}g_{bc} = g_{ac}$
- connection: $A_a : \Omega^1(U_a, \text{Lie}(\mathbf{G}))$ with $A_a = g_{ab}^{-1}(d + A_b)g_{ab}$

Parallel Transport of Strings is Problematic

The lack of surface ordering renders a parallel transport of strings problematic.

Parallel transport of particles in representation of gauge group G :

- holonomy functor $\text{hol} : \text{path } \gamma \mapsto \text{hol}(\gamma) \in G$
- $\text{hol}(\gamma) = P \exp(\int_{\gamma} A)$, P : path ordering, trivial for $U(1)$.

Parallel transport of strings with gauge group $U(1)$:

- map $\text{hol} : \text{surface } \sigma \mapsto \text{hol}(\sigma) \in U(1)$
- $\text{hol}(\sigma) = \exp(\int_{\sigma} B)$, B : connective structure on gerbe.

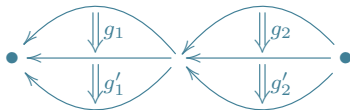
Nonabelian case:

- much more involved!
- no straightforward definition of surface ordering

Naïve No-Go Theorem

Naively, there is no non-abelian parallel transport of strings.

Imagine **parallel transport** of string with gauge degrees in $\text{Lie}(\mathbf{G})$:



Consistency of parallel transport requires:

$$(g'_1 g'_2)(g_1 g_2) = (g'_1 g_1)(g'_2 g_2)$$

This renders group \mathbf{G} **abelian**.

Eckmann and Hilton, 1962
Physicists 80'ies and 90'ies

Way out: **2-categories**, **Higher Gauge Theory**.

Two operations \circ and \otimes satisfying **Interchange Law**:

$$(g'_1 \otimes g'_2) \circ (g_1 \otimes g_2) = (g'_1 \circ g_1) \otimes (g'_2 \circ g_2) .$$

We want to categorify gauge theory

Need: suitable descriptions/definitions

A straightforward way to describe gauge theory is in terms of parallel transport functors.

Encode gauge theory in **parallel transport functor**

Mackaay, Picken, 2000

- Every manifold comes with **path groupoid** $\mathcal{P}M = (PM \rightrightarrows M)$

$$x \xrightarrow{\gamma} y$$

- Gauge group gives rise to delooping groupoid $BG = (G \rightrightarrows *)$
- **parallel transport functor** $\text{hol} : \mathcal{P}M \rightarrow BG$:
 - assigns to each **path** a **group element**
 - **composition** of paths: **multiplication** of group elements
- Readily categorifies:
 - use **path 2-groupoid** with homotopies between paths
 - use delooping of **categorified group**
- Problem: **Need to differentiate to get to cocycles**

Semistrict Lie n -algebras are readily constructed as NQ -manifolds.

N -manifolds, NQ -manifold

- **N -graded manifold** with coordinates of degree $0, 1, 2, \dots$

$$\begin{array}{c} M_0 \leftarrow M_1 \leftarrow M_2 \leftarrow \dots \\ \uparrow \qquad \qquad \qquad \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{manifold} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{linear spaces} \end{array}$$

- **Morphisms** $\phi : M \rightarrow N$ are maps $\phi^* : C^\infty(N) \rightarrow C^\infty(M)$
- **NQ -manifold**: vector field Q of degree 1, $Q^2 = 0$
- **Physicists**: think ghost numbers, BRST charge, SFT

Examples:

- **Tangent algebroid** $T[1]M$, $C^\infty(T[1]M) \cong \Omega^\bullet(M)$, $Q = d$
- **Lie algebra** $\mathfrak{g}[1]$, coordinates ξ^a of degree 1:

$$Q = -\frac{1}{2} f_{ab}^c \xi^a \xi^b \frac{\partial}{\partial \xi^c}$$

Condition $Q^2 = 0$ is equivalent to **Jacobi identity** for f_{ab}^c

NQ -manifolds provide an easy definition of L_∞ -algebras.

Lie n -algebroid or n -term L_∞ -algebroid:

$$M_0 \leftarrow M_1 \leftarrow M_2 \leftarrow \dots \leftarrow M_n \leftarrow * \leftarrow * \leftarrow \dots$$

Lie n -algebra, n -term L_∞ -algebra or Lie n -algebra:

$$* \leftarrow M_1 \leftarrow M_2 \leftarrow \dots \leftarrow M_n \leftarrow * \leftarrow * \leftarrow \dots$$

Example: Lie 2-algebra as 2-term L_∞ -algebra

- NQ -manifold: $* \leftarrow W[1] \leftarrow V[2] \leftarrow * \leftarrow \dots$, coords. w^a, v^i
- Homological vector field:

$$Q = -m_i^a v^i \frac{\partial}{\partial w^a} - \frac{1}{2} m_{ab}^c w^a w^b \frac{\partial}{\partial w^c} - m_{ai}^j w^a v^i \frac{\partial}{\partial v^j} - \frac{1}{3!} m_{abc}^i w^a w^b w^c \frac{\partial}{\partial v^i}$$

- Structure constants: higher products μ_i on $W \leftarrow V[1]$

$$\mu_1(\tau_i) = m_i^a \tau_a, \quad \mu_2(\tau_a, \tau_b) = m_{ab}^c \tau_c, \quad \dots, \quad \mu_3(\tau_a, \tau_b, \tau_c) = m_{abc}^i \tau_i$$

- $Q^2 = 0$: Higher or homotopy Jacobi identity, e.g.

$$\mu_2(w_1, \mu_2(w_2, w_3)) + \text{cycl.} = \mu_1(\mu_3(w_1, w_2, w_3))$$

A straightforward way to describe gauge theory is in terms of parallel transport functors.

(Flat) connection: splitting of **Atiyah algebroid sequence**

$$0 \longrightarrow P \times_G \text{Lie}(G) \longrightarrow TP/G \longrightarrow TM \longrightarrow 0$$

Atiyah, 1957

Related approach:

Kotov, Strobl, Schreiber, ...

- **Gauge potential** from morphism of N -manifolds:

$$a : T[1]M \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}[1] \longrightarrow A_\mu^a dx^\mu := a^*(\xi^a)$$

- **Curvature**: failure of a to be morphism of NQ -manifold:

$$F^a := (d \circ a^* - a^* \circ Q)(\xi^a) = dA^a + \frac{1}{2} f_{bc}^a A^b \wedge A^c$$

- **Infinitesimal gauge transformations**: flat homotopies
- Readily categorifies, but **integration an issue**

Descent data for principal bundles is encoded in a functor.

Čech groupoid of surjective submersion $Y \twoheadrightarrow M$, e.g. $Y = \sqcup_a U_a$:

$$\check{\mathcal{C}}(U) : \bigsqcup_{a,b} U_{ab} \rightrightarrows \bigsqcup_a U_a, \quad U_{ab} \circ U_{bc} = U_{ac}.$$

Principal G -bundle

Transition functions are nothing but a **functor** $g : \check{\mathcal{C}}(U) \rightarrow (G \rightrightarrows *)$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \bigsqcup U_{ab} & \xrightarrow{g_{ab}} & G \\ \Downarrow & & \Downarrow \\ \bigsqcup U_a & \xrightarrow{*} & * \end{array} \quad g_{ab}g_{bc} = g_{ac}$$

Equivalence relations: **natural isomorphisms**.

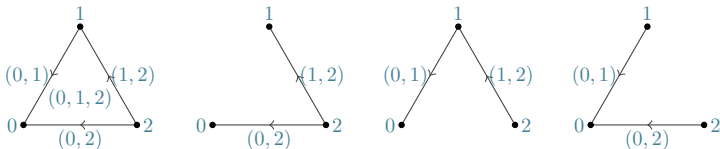
For categorification: want **generalized spaces, higher Lie groups**

Kan simplicial sets form a convenient model for $(\infty, 1)$ -categories.

Recall: **nerve** of category $\mathcal{C} = (\mathcal{C}_1 \rightrightarrows \mathcal{C}_0)$ is simplicial set

$$\{ \cdots \rightrightarrows \mathcal{C}_1 \times_{\mathcal{C}_0}^{s,t} \mathcal{C}_1 \rightrightarrows \mathcal{C}_1 \rightrightarrows \mathcal{C}_0 \}$$

- **faces**: source/target or compositions/dropping morphisms
- **degeneracies**: inject identity morphisms
- Any **inner horn** can be filled, outer horns for groupoids:



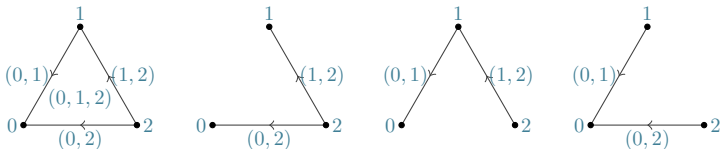
- Horn fillers are **unique**.
- **Functors**: simplicial maps
- **Natural transformations**: simplicial homotopies

Kan simplicial sets form a convenient model for $(\infty, 1)$ -categories.

Quasi-categories, ∞ -categories

Boardman, Vogt, Joyal, Lurie

- **Simplicial set**
- Any **inner horn** can be filled, not necessarily uniquely



- **Quasi-groupoid**: all horns can be filled
- **n -category/ n -groupoid**: k -horns with $k \geq n$ have unique fillers
- **transforms** much easier than in bi- or tricategories:
 - **Functors**: simplicial maps
 - **Natural transformations**: simplicial homotopies
- model for $(\infty, 1)$ -categories
- readily **internalize**: Lie quasi-groupoids via **simplicial manifolds**

Using Kan simplicial manifolds, we readily define higher principal bundles.

- $\check{\mathcal{C}}(\mathcal{U} \rightarrow X)$ of open cover \mathcal{U} replaced by **nerve** $N(\check{\mathcal{C}}(\mathcal{U} \rightarrow X))$:

$$\left\{ \cdots \rightrightarrows \sqcup_{a,b,c \in A} U_a \cap U_b \cap U_c \rightrightarrows \sqcup_{a,b \in A} U_a \cap U_b \rightrightarrows \sqcup_{a \in A} U_a \right\}$$

- **Higher Lie group**: Kan simplicial manifold \mathcal{G} with 1 0-simplex
- **Principal bundle**: simplicial map $g : N(\check{\mathcal{C}}(\mathcal{U} \rightarrow X)) \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$
- **Isomorphisms**: simplicial homotopies
- Further generalization to **higher spaces**:
 - Motivation: **orbifolds**, regarded as Lie groupoids
 - Replace manifold with **quasi-groupoid**
 - Everything becomes **bisimplicial**, but works straightforwardly

Example: Ordinary Principal G-Bundle

Using Kan simplicial manifolds, we readily define higher principal bundles.

Simplicial map g from $N(\mathcal{C}(\mathcal{U} \rightarrow X))$ to $N(\mathbf{BG})$

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \cdots & \sqcup_{a,b,c \in A} U_a \cap U_b \cap U_c & \rightrightarrows & \sqcup_{a,b \in A} U_a \cap U_b & \rightrightarrows & \sqcup_{a \in A} U_a \\ & \downarrow g_{abc}^2(x) & & \downarrow g_{ab}^1(x) & & \downarrow g_a^0(x) \\ & \mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G} & \rightrightarrows & \mathbf{G} & \rightrightarrows & * \end{array}$$

Compatibility with face maps:

$$g_{abc,1}^2(x) = g_{ab}^1(x), \quad g_{abc,2}^2(x) = g_{bc}^1(x), \quad g_{abc,1}^2(x)g_{abc,2}^2(x) = g_{ac}^1(x)$$

Homotopy between g, \tilde{g} : $h : N(\mathcal{C}(\mathcal{U} \rightarrow X)) \times \Delta^1 \rightarrow N(\mathbf{BG})$

$$\begin{aligned} h^0((x, a), 0) &= * = h^0((x, a), 1), \\ g_{ab}(x) &= h^1((x, a, b), (0, 0)) \quad \text{and} \quad \tilde{g}_{ab}(x) = h^1((x, a, b), (1, 1)), \\ h_{ab,01}(x) &:= h^1((x, a, b), (0, 1)) \end{aligned}$$

Compatibility yields here $g_{ab}^1 h_{bb,01}^1 = h_{aa,01}^1 \tilde{g}_{ab}^1$

There is a differentiation procedure of quasi-groupoids due to Ševera.

Recall: Connection on principal G -bundle: $\text{Lie}(G)$ -valued 1-forms

Lie functor as suggested by Ševera, 2006

- Functors: supermanifolds to certain principal \mathcal{G} -bundles

$$X \mapsto (X \times \mathbb{R}^{0|1} \rightrightarrows X) \mapsto \text{descent data}$$

- Moduli: $\text{Lie}(\mathcal{G})$ as an n -term complex of vector spaces
- Carries $\text{Hom}(\mathbb{R}^{0|1}, \mathbb{R}^{0|1})$ -action $\rightarrow L_\infty$ -algebra structure

Example: Differentiation of Lie group G .

- $g : X \times \mathbb{R}^{0|2} \rightarrow G$, $g(\theta_0, \theta_1, x)g(\theta_1, \theta_2, x) = g(\theta_0, \theta_2, x)$
- implies $g(\theta_0, \theta_1, x) = g(\theta_0, 0, x)(g(\theta_1, 0, x))^{-1}$
- expand trivializ. cobdry: $g(\theta_0, 0, x) = \mathbb{1} + \alpha\theta_0$, $\alpha \in \text{Lie}(G)[1]$
- compute $g(\theta_0, \theta_1) = \mathbb{1} + \alpha(\theta_0 - \theta_1) + \frac{1}{2}[\alpha, \alpha]\theta_0\theta_1$
- $Qg(\theta_0, \theta_1, x) := \frac{d}{d\varepsilon}g(\theta_0 + \varepsilon, \theta_1 + \varepsilon, x)$ with $Q\alpha = -\frac{1}{2}[\alpha, \alpha]$

The differentiation method can be extended to read off finite gauge transformations.

- First approach:

- We have: Lie algebra element in terms of **descent data** g
- Perform a **coboundary transformation** to \tilde{g}
- Trivialize \tilde{g} , establish relation between moduli of g, \tilde{g} , e.g.

$$\tilde{\alpha} = p^{-1}\alpha p + p^{-1}Qp, \quad p \in C^\infty(X, G)$$

- Replace Q by **de Rham differential** on patches.

B Jurco, CS, M Wolf, 1403.7185

- Better approach:

- Recall: functions on $T[1]X$ yield de Rham complex
- Replace $X \times \mathbb{R}^{0|1} \rightarrow X$ by $T[1]X \times \mathbb{R}^{0|1} \rightarrow T[1]X$
- Replace Q by $Q + d_X$
- Yields **higher connections** and their **finite gauge trafo**s

B Jurco, CS, M Wolf, 1604.01639

All this is quite powerful...

We readily define Deligne cohomology for semistrict Lie 2-group bundles.

Example: **principal \mathcal{G} -bundle** with \mathcal{G} **semistrict Lie 2-group**:

Cocycle data: $(m_{ab}, n_{abc}, A_a, \Lambda_{ab}, B_a)$. Cocycle relations:

$$n_{abc} : m_{ab} \otimes m_{bc} \Rightarrow m_{ac}$$

$$n_{acd} \circ (n_{abc} \otimes \text{id}_{m_{cd}}) \circ \mathbf{a}_{m_{ab}, m_{bc}, m_{cd}}^{-1} = n_{abd} \circ (\text{id}_{m_{ab}} \otimes n_{bcd})$$

$$dA_a + A_a \otimes A_a + \mathbf{s}(B_a) = 0$$

$$\Lambda_{ab} : A_b \otimes m_{ab} \Rightarrow m_{ab} \otimes A_a - dm_{ab}$$

$$\Lambda_{cb} \circ (\text{id}_{A_b} \otimes n_{bac}) \circ \mathbf{a}_{A_b, m_{ba}, m_{ac}} =$$

$$= (n_{bac} \otimes \text{id}_{A_c} - dn_{bac}) \circ [\mathbf{a}_{m_{ba}, m_{ac}, A_c}^{-1} - \text{id}_{d(m_{ba} \otimes m_{ac})}] \circ$$

$$\circ (\text{id}_{m_{ba}} \otimes \Lambda_{ca} - \text{id}_{d(m_{ba} \otimes m_{ac})}) \circ (\mathbf{a}_{m_{ba}, A_c, m_{ac}} - \text{id}_{d(m_{ba} \otimes m_{ac})}) \circ (\Lambda_{ab} \otimes \text{id}_{m_{ac}})$$

$$B_b \otimes \text{id}_{m_{ab}} = \mu(A_b, A_b, m_{ab}) + [\text{id}_{m_{ab}} \otimes B_a + \mu(m_{ab}, A_a, A_a)] \circ$$

$$\circ [-d\Lambda_{ab} - \Lambda_{ab} \otimes \text{id}_{A_a} - \mu(A_b, m_{ab}, A_a)] \circ$$

$$\circ [-\text{id}_{\mathbf{s}(d\Lambda_{ab})} - \text{id}_{A_b} \otimes (\Lambda_{ab} + \text{id}_{dm_{ab}})]$$

We can now start to calculate and look for applications.

One additional equation of motion causes various problems.

- In gauge transformations, one encounters **fake curvatures**:

$$\mathcal{F} := dA + \frac{1}{2}[A, A] - \mathfrak{t}(B) = 0$$

“Lower curvatures determined by higher potentials”

- ✓ Renders parallel transport **reparameterization-invariant**
- ✓ In (2,0)-theory: eliminates **unwanted** freedom in fields
- ✗ **Obstacle** to non-trivial examples of higher bundles:
 - E.g. String 2-group, model by **Schommer-Pries, 2009**:
Roughly: $U(1) \times G \rightrightarrows G$, fallback to **abelian case**
 - The same for all **obvious examples** of Lie 2-groups
 - Obvious lift of 't Hooft-Polyakov monopoles: $\mathcal{F} \neq 0$

Any ideas?

There are many applications of our framework and important open problems.

Applications of very general description of higher gauge theory:

- Many existing models are **higher gauge theories** (HGTs)
 - **Tensor hierarchy models** are HGTs [S Palmer&CS, 1308.2622](#)
 - **M2-brane models** are HGTs [S Palmer&CS, 1311.1997](#)
- **Twistor constructions** of $(2,0)$ -theories/M5-brane models:
 - Input: (Higher) spacetime, twistor space, higher gauge group
 - Output: $(2,0)$ -model via **Penrose-Ward transform**
- Higher versions of monopole equations: **self-dual strings**

Open problems:

- Find “good” **higher gauge groups** (String groups?)
- Clarify meaning of **fake curvature conditions**
- Study **more general spaces**: orbifolds, ...
- Find **truly non-abelian** higher principal bundle + connection
- Construct a higher version of 't Hooft-Polyakov monopole
- Find **$(2,0)$ -theory**

Review: The 't Hooft-Polyakov Monopole

The 't Hooft-Polyakov Monopole is a non-singular solution with charge 1.

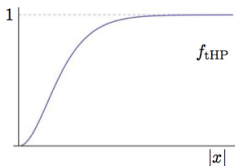
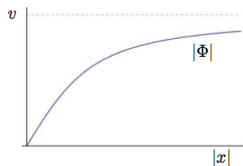
Recall 't Hooft-Polyakov monopole (e_i generate $\mathfrak{su}(2)$, $\xi = v|x|$):

$$\Phi = \frac{e_i x^i}{|x|^2} (\xi \coth(\xi) - 1), \quad A = \varepsilon_{ijk} \frac{e_i x^j}{|x|^2} \left(1 - \frac{\xi}{\sinh(\xi)}\right) dx^k$$

- At S_∞^2 : $\Phi \sim g(\theta)e_3g(\theta)^{-1}$.
 $g(\theta) : S_\infty^2 \rightarrow \text{SU}(2)/\text{U}(1)$: winding 1
- Charge $q = 1$ with

$$2\pi q = \frac{1}{2} \int_{S_\infty^2} \frac{\text{tr}(F^\dagger \Phi)}{\|\Phi\|} \quad \text{with} \quad \|\Phi\| := \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \text{tr}(\Phi^\dagger \Phi)}$$

- Higgs field non-singular:



We can write down a non-abelian self-dual string with winding number 1.

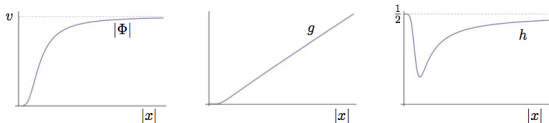
Self-Dual String (Lie 2-algebra $\mathfrak{su}(2) \times \mathfrak{su}(2) \xleftarrow{\mu_1} \mathbb{R}^4$, $\xi = v|x|^2$):

$$\Phi = \frac{e_\mu x^\mu}{|x|^3} f(\xi), \quad B_{\mu\nu} = \varepsilon_{\mu\nu\kappa\lambda} \frac{e_\kappa x^\lambda}{|x|^3} g(\xi), \quad A_\mu = \varepsilon_{\mu\nu\kappa\lambda} D(e_\nu, e_\kappa) \frac{x^\lambda}{|x|^2} h(\xi)$$

- Solves indeed $H = \star \nabla \Phi$ for right $f(\xi)$, $g(\xi)$, $h(\xi)$
- At S_3^∞ : $\Phi \sim g(\theta) \triangleright e_4$. $g(\theta) : S_\infty^3 \rightarrow \text{SU}(2)$ has winding 1.
- **Charge** $q = 1$:

$$(2\pi)^3 q = \frac{1}{2} \int_{S_3^\infty} \frac{(H, \Phi)}{\|\Phi\|} \quad \text{with} \quad \|\Phi\| := \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}(\Phi, \Phi)},$$

- Higgs field **non-singular**:



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*School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences
Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh*

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