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[Jau Tang](#)*

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Article

A Unified First-Order Spacetime Derivative Framework for Quantum Fields of All Spins: Emergent Spin-2 Dynamics and Gravitational Structure

Jau Tang

Wuhan University, Wuhan 430074, China; wuhantang72@gmail.com

Abstract

We develop a unified first-order framework for relativistic fields of different spin, in which the dynamics are governed by a common operator-based equation. This formulation provides a coherent description of scalar, spinor, vector, and tensor fields within a single structure and reproduces the corresponding second-order wave equations in appropriate limits. A central result is the emergence of a consistent spin-2 sector from the same underlying dynamics. By constructing the tensor field as a bilinear combination of internal spacetime degrees of freedom, we obtain a symmetric rank-2 field with the correct number of independent components. In the massless limit, the resulting equation matches the structure of linearized gravity, while source-like terms arise naturally from quadratic combinations of field derivatives, providing an intrinsic origin for an effective energy–momentum tensor. The Lagrangian formulation yields conserved quantities via Noether's theorem and reproduces derivative structures consistent with the weak-field Einstein–Hilbert action. These results suggest that gravitational dynamics may emerge from a more fundamental first-order field theory.

Keywords: first-order relativistic field equations; spin-2 field; emergent gravity; linearized Einstein equation; energy–momentum tensor; gauge invariance; composite tensor fields; quantum field theory

1. Introduction

The origin of mass and the fundamental structure of relativistic field equations remain central issues in modern theoretical physics. In the Standard Model [1], particle masses arise through the Higgs mechanism [2], which relies on spontaneous symmetry breaking [3] and coupling to a scalar field. While highly successful experimentally, this framework does not provide a predictive theory of particle masses. In particular, the masses of quarks [4] and leptons [5] depend on Yukawa coupling constants [5] that must be fixed empirically rather than derived from first principles.

Moreover, the masses of composite particles, such as nucleons, are dominated by internal dynamical effects associated with strong interactions [6], rather than by the sum of constituent quark masses alone [7]. This highlights the role of internal energy contributions—including kinetic and interaction energy—in determining observable mass. These observations suggest that mass may be more naturally understood as an emergent property of internal dynamics rather than as a parameter introduced through external couplings.

At the same time, conventional relativistic quantum theory [8] distinguishes between first-order equations, such as the Dirac equation [9] for spin-1/2 particles, and second-order equations, such as the Klein–Gordon equation [10] for scalar fields. This separation indicates a lack of structural unity across different spin representations. In addition, second-order time evolution equations present interpretational challenges [11], particularly in relation to probability density and causality, whereas first-order formulations provide a more direct description of temporal evolution.

These considerations motivate the search for a unified framework in which both the origin of mass and the structure of relativistic field equations follow from a common principle. In particular, one may ask whether mass can emerge from intrinsic dynamics and whether a first-order formulation can be extended consistently to fields of all spins.

In this work, we propose such a framework based on internal spacetime dynamics. The starting point is the assumption that a massive particle at rest possesses an intrinsic temporal oscillation with frequency proportional to its mass. This internal structure implies that the associated field must contain coupled components encoding its dynamical evolution. From this perspective, mass arises naturally from internal temporal dynamics.

Building on this idea, we construct a first-order evolution equation that is linear in both time and spatial derivatives and applies to fields of arbitrary spin. The resulting formulation provides a unified description of spin-0, spin-1/2, spin-1, and spin-2 fields. Established equations emerge as limiting cases: the Schrödinger equation in the non-relativistic limit [12], Maxwell's equations for massless spin-1 fields [13,14], and wave equations for gravitational perturbations in the spin-2 case [15]. For massive vector and tensor fields, generalized Proca-type dynamics [16] are recovered without being imposed as fundamental inputs.

The framework developed here thus offers a unified approach to relativistic field theory, in which both the form of the dynamical equations and the origin of mass arise from a common underlying principle. By emphasizing first-order dynamics and internal spacetime structure, this work aims to provide an alternative foundation for relativistic quantum fields and to open new directions for understanding the relationship between mass, spin, and spacetime dynamics.

2. Rest-Frame Construction and Internal Spacetime Dynamics

We begin with the description of a massive particle in its rest frame, where its spatial momentum vanishes, and its dynamical behavior is governed entirely by its internal temporal structure. The central physical assumption of the present framework is that a massive particle possesses an intrinsic time oscillation with a characteristic frequency determined by its rest energy. This relation is given by

$$\omega_0 = \frac{mc^2}{\hbar}. \quad (1)$$

This expression establishes a direct connection between mass and internal temporal dynamics. In this view, mass is not introduced as an external parameter but arises from an underlying oscillatory structure in time.

A central feature of the present framework is that spin is not introduced as an independent or abstract quantum number, but emerges from the internal spatial structure of the field. By extending the description of internal spacetime beyond purely temporal dynamics, different configurations of internal spatial organization naturally give rise to distinct spin representations. In this view, scalar, spinor, vector, and tensor fields correspond to progressively richer internal spatial structures of a common underlying field. This provides a unified and geometrically transparent interpretation of spin, linking it directly to internal spacetime dynamics rather than treating it as a separate postulate.

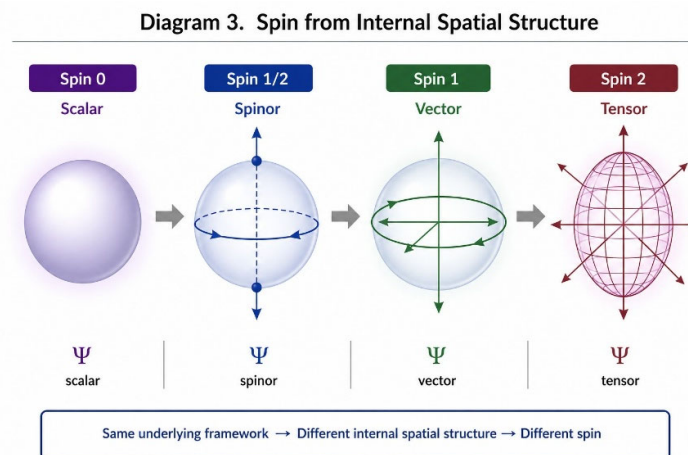


Figure 3. Emergence of spin from internal spatial structure. Different spin representations arise from distinct configurations of internal spatial organization within the same underlying field. A scalar field (spin 0) corresponds to a spherically symmetric structure with no preferred direction. A spinor field (spin 1/2) exhibits an intrinsic axial structure associated with a two-component internal configuration. A vector field (spin 1) corresponds to a dipolar or rotational structure with a preferred direction. A tensor field (spin 2) reflects a higher-order spatial organization with multiple directional components. Despite these differences, all cases are governed by the same first-order dynamical framework, indicating that spin is an emergent property of internal spatial geometry.

The existence of such an intrinsic oscillation implies that the field describing the particle must exhibit time-dependent behavior even in the absence of spatial motion. A natural representation of the rest-frame field is therefore

$$\phi(t) = \phi_0 \exp(-i\omega_0 t). \quad (2)$$

This form immediately leads to a first-order evolution equation in time,

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial t} = mc^2 \phi. \quad (3)$$

Equation (2.3) represents the simplest dynamical expression of internal temporal evolution. It shows that the rest energy mc^2 plays the role of a generator of time translations for the field. Importantly, this equation is first-order in time, in contrast to the second-order structure of the Klein–Gordon equation and therefore provides a more direct and physically transparent description of time evolution.

A key consequence of the oscillatory structure is that the field must possess at least two independent components. This can be understood by noting that any oscillatory solution can be decomposed into two real degrees of freedom, corresponding to sine and cosine components. Equivalently, the field may be represented as a complex quantity, whose real and imaginary parts encode the internal dynamics. Thus, even for spin-0 particles, the field carries an intrinsic two-component structure arising from its temporal behavior.

To incorporate spatial dependence, we extend the rest-frame equation by introducing spatial variations of the field. The simplest first-order generalization consistent with relativistic propagation takes the form

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial t} = mc^2 \phi - i\hbar c \nabla \phi. \quad (4)$$

Here, the spatial derivative term generates propagation with a characteristic speed c , while preserving the first-order nature of the equation. Equation (4) serves as a prototype for the more general relativistic formulation developed in the next section.

For higher-spin fields, the spatial structure becomes more intricate, but the temporal behavior remains governed by the same fundamental frequency ω_0 . In particular, spin is associated with the internal spatial organization of the field. Scalar fields exhibit spherical symmetry, spin-1/2 fields require spinor components, spin-1 fields carry vector degrees of freedom, and spin-2 fields are represented by tensor structures. In all cases, however, the rest-frame dynamics retain the same first-order temporal evolution governed by Eq. (3).

The rest-frame construction, therefore, provides a unified starting point for fields of all spins. It identifies mass with internal temporal oscillation and establishes a first-order dynamical principle that will be extended to a fully relativistic and Lorentz-covariant framework [17] in the following section.

3. First-Order Relativistic Field Equation

Having established the rest-frame description, we now construct a fully relativistic formulation that preserves the first-order dynamical structure while ensuring consistency with Lorentz invariance. The key requirement is that the evolution equation must remain linear in both time and spatial derivatives and reduce to the rest-frame relation obtained in Section 2 when spatial variations vanish.

We introduce a field $\Psi(x, t)$ whose dynamics are governed by a first-order relativistic equation of the form

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = (mc^2 \beta - i\hbar c O) \Psi. \quad (5)$$

Here, β is an operator associated with the internal temporal structure, and O is a spatial differential operator that encodes the propagation and spin properties of the field. The structure of Eq. (5) generalizes the rest-frame equation (3) by incorporating spatial dynamics through the operator O , while preserving linearity in derivatives.

To ensure relativistic consistency, the operators β and O must satisfy algebraic relations that guarantee Lorentz covariance of the resulting dynamics. In particular, the combined operator structure must allow the elimination of first-order terms upon iteration of the equation, leading to a second-order relativistic relation. Acting with the operator $(i\hbar \partial/\partial t + (mc^2 \beta - i\hbar c O))$ on both sides of Eq. (5), and using the required algebraic properties of β and O , one obtains

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 \Psi + \frac{m^2 c^2}{\hbar^2} \Psi = 0. \quad (6)$$

Equation (6) is the standard Klein-Gordon relativistic wave equation [18], demonstrating that the familiar second-order structure arises as a derived consequence of the first-order formulation. This establishes that the present approach is fully compatible with relativistic kinematics, while identifying the first-order equation as the more fundamental dynamical law.

An important feature of Eq. (5) is that it provides a unified description of fields with different spins through the choice of the operator O . For scalar fields, O reduces to a gradient-type operator; for spin-1/2 fields, it involves directional coupling through spin matrices; for vector and tensor fields, it encodes rotational and higher-order spatial structures. Despite these differences, the overall form of the equation remains unchanged, reflecting the universality of the first-order principle.

The relativistic formulation also preserves the interpretation of mass introduced in Section 2. The term $mc^2 \beta$ continues to generate internal temporal evolution, while the spatial operator O governs propagation and interaction. In the limit of vanishing spatial variation, Eq. (5) reduces directly to the rest-frame equation (3), ensuring consistency between the two descriptions.

Furthermore, the massless limit of the theory is obtained by setting $m = 0$ in Eq. (5), yielding

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = -i\hbar c O \Psi. \quad (7)$$

In this limit, internal oscillation disappears, and dynamics are governed entirely by spatial propagation. As will be shown in the following section, this limit leads naturally to Maxwell's equations for spin-1 fields [19] and to the corresponding wave equations for spin-2 fields, indicating the emergence of gauge symmetry in the absence of mass.

The first-order relativistic field equation (5) therefore serves as the central dynamical principle of the theory. It unifies the description of relativistic fields across different spin representations, provides the origin of second-order wave equations, and establishes a direct connection between mass and internal spacetime dynamics.

4. Spin Structure and Explicit Field Representations

The first-order relativistic field equation introduced in Section 3 provides a universal dynamical framework. The differences between particles of various spins arise not from different equations, but from the specific form of the spatial operator O and the internal structure of the field Ψ . In this section, we present explicit realizations of the first-order equation for spin-0, spin-1/2, spin-1, and spin-2 fields, demonstrating how known physical equations emerge within a single unified formulation.

4.1. Spin-0 Field

For a spin-0 particle, the field is a scalar function $\phi(x, t)$. The simplest choice of spatial operator is the gradient operator. The first-order equation takes the form

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial t} = mc^2 \phi - i\hbar c \nabla \phi. \quad (8)$$

Applying a second time derivative and using the consistency conditions of the operator structure, one obtains

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \phi}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 \phi + \frac{m^2 c^2}{\hbar^2} \phi = 0. \quad (9)$$

This is the Klein–Gordon equation [18], which thus appears as a derived relation. In this framework, the scalar field is fundamentally governed by a first-order equation, while the second-order structure emerges from internal consistency.

4.2. Spin-1/2 Field

For spin-1/2 particles, the field must carry intrinsic angular momentum and is therefore represented by a two-component spinor. The spatial operator involves directional coupling through spin matrices, leading to

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = mc^2 \beta \Psi - i\hbar c (\boldsymbol{\sigma} \cdot \nabla) \Psi. \quad (10)$$

Here, σ denotes the Pauli matrices [19], and β distinguishes internal components. Writing the spinor as two coupled components, the equation becomes

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \chi}{\partial t} = mc^2 \chi - i\hbar c (\boldsymbol{\sigma} \cdot \nabla) \eta, \quad (11)$$

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \eta}{\partial t} = -mc^2 \eta - i\hbar c (\boldsymbol{\sigma} \cdot \nabla) \chi. \quad (12)$$

These equations are equivalent to the Dirac equation in its standard form [20]. Thus, the Dirac structure emerges naturally from the general first-order principle, rather than being introduced independently.

4.3. Spin-1 Field

For spin-1 particles, the field is represented by a vector $\mathbf{A}(x, t)$, reflecting one unit of angular momentum. The spatial operator is associated with rotational structure and is naturally expressed through the curl operator. The first-order equation becomes

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \mathbf{A}}{\partial t} = mc^2 \mathbf{A} - i\hbar c (\nabla \times \mathbf{A}). \quad (13)$$

To ensure consistency with physical degrees of freedom, the field satisfies the transversality condition

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A} = \mathbf{0}. \quad (14)$$

Taking a second time derivative yields

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \mathbf{A}}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 \mathbf{A} + \frac{m^2 c^2}{\hbar^2} \mathbf{A} = 0. \quad (15)$$

In the massless limit, Eq. (12) reduces to Maxwell's equations, while for nonzero mass it corresponds to Proca-type dynamics [21]. Both cases are unified within the same first-order framework.

4.4. Spin-2 Field

For spin-2 particles, the field is represented by a symmetric tensor $h_{ij}(x, t)$, describing more complex spatial correlations. The spatial operator generalizes the curl structure to tensor form. The first-order equation is written as

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial h_{ij}}{\partial t} = mc^2 h_{ij} - i\hbar c (Dh)_{ij}. \quad (16)$$

Here, the tensor operator D is defined by

$$(Dh)_{ij} = \frac{1}{2} (\epsilon_{ikl} \partial_k h_{lj} + \epsilon_{jkl} \partial_k h_{li}), \quad (17)$$

where ϵ_{ijk} is the Levi-Civita symbol.

The field is subject to constraints

$$\partial_i h_{ij} = 0, \quad (18)$$

$$h_{ii} = 0. \quad (19)$$

These conditions ensure that only the physical degrees of freedom are retained. The second-order equation derived from (4.8) takes the form:

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 h_{ij}}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 h_{ij} + \frac{m^2 c^2}{\hbar^2} h_{ij} = 0. \quad (20)$$

In the massless limit, this reduces to the wave equation for gravitational perturbations, corresponding to propagating gravitational waves.

Although a general rank-2 tensor field contains multiple components, the physical degrees of freedom are significantly reduced by symmetry and constraint conditions. In the present formulation, the spin-2 field h_{ij} is taken to be symmetric, $h_{ij} = h_{ji}$, which reduces the number of independent components. The transversality condition $\partial_i h_{ij} = 0$ and the traceless condition $h_{ii} = 0$ further eliminate redundant degrees of freedom associated with non-physical modes. As a result, the field describes the appropriate propagating degrees of freedom for a spin-2 system. A general rank-2 tensor contains 16 components, which can be decomposed into 10 symmetric and 6 antisymmetric components. In the present formulation, the spin-2 field is identified with the symmetric sector, while the antisymmetric part is not considered.

The symmetric rank-2 tensor structure appearing in the spin-2 sector can be interpreted as arising from a tensor product of more fundamental internal spinor-like degrees of freedom. In this picture, the ten independent components of the symmetric tensor correspond to the symmetrized bilinear combinations of the underlying internal fields. This structure is reminiscent of the metric tensor in general relativity, which is also a symmetric rank-2 object.

This observation suggests a possible correspondence between the present first-order field framework and the geometric structure of Einstein's theory. In particular, it raises the possibility that gravitational dynamics may emerge from an underlying algebraic formulation in which the spacetime metric is constructed from more fundamental internal degrees of freedom. The development of a fully consistent dynamical formulation along these lines, potentially leading to a quantum generalization of Einstein's field equations, remains an important direction for future investigation.

4.5. Emergent Tensor Structure from Internal Spinor Fields

The symmetric rank-2 tensor field associated with the spin-2 sector can be constructed from more fundamental internal degrees of freedom. Let $\Phi_\mu(x)$ denote a set of internal spacetime fields corresponding to the components $\{\Theta, U, V, W\}$. A natural symmetric tensor can then be defined as

$$h_{\mu\nu}(x) = \frac{1}{2} (\Phi_\mu \Phi_\nu + \Phi_\nu \Phi_\mu), \quad (\text{f21})$$

which contains ten independent components. This construction parallels the structure of the metric tensor in general relativity, suggesting that the spin-2 field may be interpreted as arising from an underlying internal algebraic structure.

Furthermore, derivative couplings of the internal fields give rise to connection-like objects, from which curvature tensors can be constructed. This provides a pathway toward interpreting gravitational dynamics as emerging from the underlying internal spacetime degrees of freedom. While a complete formulation of the resulting field equations remains to be developed, the present framework suggests a possible route toward a quantum generalization of Einstein's theory based on first-order dynamics.

4.6. Unified Structure Across All Spins

A central result of the present framework is that all fields, regardless of spin, obey the same first-order dynamical principle,

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = mc^2 \Psi - i\hbar O \Psi. \quad (22)$$

The differences between spin-0, spin-1/2, spin-1, and spin-2 fields are entirely encoded in the form of the spatial operator O and the internal structure of the field Ψ . The corresponding second-order equations arise universally as derived relations, confirming compatibility with established relativistic dynamics.

This unified formulation demonstrates that the diversity of known field equations can be traced back to a single first-order structure. Spin emerges as a manifestation of internal spatial organization, while mass originates from internal temporal dynamics.

5. Emergence of Standard Physical Equations

One of the key requirements of any new theoretical framework is that it must reproduce well-established physical laws in appropriate limits. In this section, we demonstrate that the first-order relativistic field equation developed in the previous sections naturally leads to the standard equations of quantum mechanics, electromagnetism, and gravitational wave dynamics. These equations emerge not as fundamental postulates, but as limiting cases of a single unified first-order structure.

5.1. Non-Relativistic Limit: Schrödinger Equation

We begin by considering the non-relativistic limit, where particle velocities are much smaller than the speed of light. In this regime, the field can be written in the form::

$$\Psi(x, t) = \exp \left(-\frac{imc^2 t}{\hbar} \right) \psi(x, t). \quad (23)$$

where the rapidly oscillating phase associated with the rest energy is factored out. Substituting this expression into the first-order equation (3.1) and neglecting higher-order relativistic corrections, one obtains

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \nabla^2 \psi. \quad (24)$$

This is precisely the Schrödinger equation [21]. Thus, the non-relativistic quantum dynamics emerge directly from the first-order relativistic framework, without the need to introduce the Schrödinger equation as an independent postulate.

5.2. Massless Limit: Maxwell Equations

Next, we consider the massless limit of the spin-1 field by setting $m = 0$ in Eq. (13). The first-order equation reduces to

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{A}}{\partial t} = -c (\nabla \times \mathbf{A}). \quad (25)$$

Together with the transversality condition

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A} = 0, \quad (26)$$

this equation implies the standard wave equation

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \mathbf{A}}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 \mathbf{A} = 0. \quad (27)$$

From this, the electric and magnetic fields can be defined in the usual way, leading to the full set of Maxwell's equations [22]. This demonstrates that classical electromagnetism emerges naturally as the massless limit of the first-order vector field dynamics.

5.3. Massive Vector Field: Proca Equation

For a nonzero mass, the same spin-1 field satisfies the first-order equation (4.5), which leads to the second-order relation

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \mathbf{A}}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 \mathbf{A} + \frac{m^2 c^2}{\hbar^2} \mathbf{A} = 0. \quad (28)$$

This is the Proca equation describing a massive vector boson [223]. The important point is that this equation is not introduced separately but arises as a direct consequence of the unified first-order formulation.

5.4. Spin-2 Field and Gravitational Waves

For the spin-2 field, the massless limit of Eq. (15) yields

$$\frac{\partial h_{ij}}{\partial t} = -c (Dh)_{ij}. \quad (29)$$

Together with the constraints

$$\partial_i h_{ij} = 0, \quad (30)$$

$$h_{ii} = 0, \quad (31)$$

this leads to the wave equation

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 h_{ij}}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 h_{ij} = 0. \quad (32)$$

This equation describes propagating gravitational waves in the linearized regime. Thus, the fundamental structure of gravitational wave dynamics [24] emerges naturally from the first-order tensor equation.

5.5. Unified Interpretation

The results above demonstrate that a wide range of fundamental physical equations arise as limiting cases of a single first-order relativistic field equation. The Schrödinger equation appears in the non-relativistic limit, Maxwell's equations emerge in the massless limit of spin-1 fields, Proca dynamics arise for massive vector fields, and gravitational wave equations follow from the massless limit of spin-2 fields.

This unified emergence strongly supports the view that the first-order equation provides a more fundamental description of relativistic fields. In this framework, second-order equations are not primary, but instead reflect consistency conditions or limiting behaviors of a deeper first-order dynamical structure.

6. Physical Interpretation and Implications

The framework developed in the preceding sections provides a unified first-order description of relativistic fields across all spin representations. Beyond its formal structure, it offers a distinct physical interpretation of several foundational concepts, including the origin of mass, the role of spin, and the emergence of gauge symmetry. In this section, we summarize these interpretations and discuss their broader implications.

To further clarify the physical interpretation of mass–energy in the present framework, it is useful to contrast the conventional first-order description with an extended dynamical picture that incorporates internal spatial structure. In standard treatments, the energy of a particle at rest is associated solely with intrinsic temporal evolution, leading to a direct relation between energy and internal frequency. However, this description neglects the contribution of internal spatial degrees of freedom, such as spin and associated internal motion. By including both temporal and spatial components of internal spacetime dynamics, the total energy acquires a more complete structure, reflecting contributions from both intrinsic oscillation and internal spatial organization.

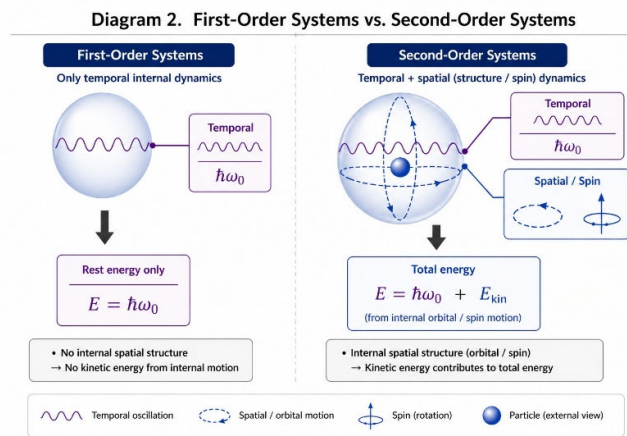


Figure 2. Comparison between conventional and extended internal dynamical descriptions of particle energy. In the first-order case (left), the energy is determined solely by intrinsic temporal dynamics, yielding $E = \hbar\omega_0$. In the extended framework (right), additional contributions arise from internal spatial structure, including spin and internal motion, leading to a total energy of the form $E = \hbar\omega_0 + E_{\text{kin}}$. This illustrates that mass–energy can be understood as the combined result of temporal and spatial internal spacetime dynamics.

6.1. Mass as Internal Spacetime Dynamics

A central result of the present theory is that mass arises from internal spacetime dynamics rather than being introduced through an external mechanism. In the rest frame, a massive particle is characterized by an intrinsic temporal oscillation with frequency

$$\omega_0 = \frac{mc^2}{\hbar}. \quad (33)$$

This relation implies that the rest energy is directly associated with an internal time evolution. The first-order equation shows that the mass term acts as a generator of these intrinsic dynamics. From this perspective, mass is not an independent parameter, but a manifestation of internal temporal structure.

This interpretation contrasts with the conventional Higgs mechanism, in which mass is generated through spontaneous symmetry breaking and coupling to a scalar field. In the present framework, no additional field is required; instead, mass emerges naturally from the fundamental dynamical equation.

6.2. Spin as Internal Spatial Structure

While mass is associated with internal temporal dynamics, spin arises from the internal spatial organization of the field. The different spin representations correspond to distinct forms of the spatial operator O and the associated field structure:

- Spin-0 fields exhibit scalar symmetry with no preferred spatial direction.
- Spin-1/2 fields involve spinor components encoding intrinsic angular momentum.
- Spin-1 fields are described by vector structures associated with rotational degrees of freedom.
- Spin-2 fields involve tensorial structures capturing higher-order spatial correlations.

In this view, spin is not an abstract quantum number but reflects the geometry of internal spatial degrees of freedom. The unified first-order equation accommodates all these cases through a common dynamical principle.

6.3. Emergence of Gauge Symmetry

An important feature of the theory is the behavior in the massless limit. When $m = 0$, the internal temporal oscillation vanishes, and the first-order equation reduces to

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = -i\hbar c O \Psi. \quad (34)$$

In this regime, dynamics are governed entirely by spatial propagation, and gauge symmetry emerges naturally. For spin-1 fields, this leads to Maxwell's equations and the associated U(1) gauge invariance. For spin-2 fields, it leads to the wave equations for gravitational perturbations, reflecting diffeomorphism invariance in the linearized limit.

This suggests that gauge symmetry is not fundamental, but rather an emergent property associated with the absence of mass and the resulting simplification of the internal dynamics.

6.4. First-Order Dynamics as a Fundamental Principle

The present framework places first-order dynamics at the foundation of relativistic field theory. In conventional formulations, first-order and second-order equations coexist without a clear hierarchy. Here, the first-order equation is primary, while second-order equations arise as derived relations ensuring relativistic consistency.

This shift in perspective has several advantages:

- It provides a direct and causal description of time evolution.
- It unifies fields of different spin within a single dynamical structure.
- It offers a natural interpretation of mass and internal degrees of freedom.

The emergence of standard equations as limiting cases further supports the fundamental role of first-order dynamics.

6.5. Implications for Unified Field Theory

By linking mass, spin, and field dynamics to internal spacetime structure, the present framework suggests a new route toward unification. Rather than introducing separate mechanisms for different interactions, the theory indicates that a common underlying principle—internal spacetime dynamics—may govern all fields.

This perspective opens several directions for future investigation, including the extension to interacting fields, the incorporation of nontrivial internal algebraic structures, and the exploration of connections with gauge theories and gravity at a deeper level. While these developments lie beyond the scope of the present work, the results obtained here provide a foundation for pursuing such extensions.

7. Emergent Gravitational Structure from Internal Field Dynamics

7.1. Composite Construction of the Spin-2 Field

The spin-2 sector of the present framework admits a natural interpretation in terms of composite fields constructed from more fundamental internal degrees of freedom. Let $\Phi_\mu(x)$, with $\mu = 0,1,2,3$, denote a set of internal spacetime fields corresponding to the sedenion spensor structure [25] with components $\{\mathcal{O} \cdot U \cdot V \cdot W\}$. A symmetric rank-2 tensor field may then be defined as a bilinear combination of these fields:

$$h_{\mu\nu}(x) = \frac{1}{2} (\Phi_\mu \Phi_\nu + \Phi_\nu \Phi_\mu). \quad (35)$$

This construction automatically yields a symmetric tensor with ten independent components, consistent with the structure of a spin-2 field. The antisymmetric combinations, which would correspond to six additional components, are not included in the present construction and may be associated with distinct physical sectors.

7.2. Linearized Field Equation from First-Order Dynamics

The dynamics of the underlying fields Φ_μ are governed by the first-order master equation introduced earlier. In the massless limit, this equation leads to a second-order wave equation of the form

$$\square \Phi_\mu = 0, \quad (36)$$

where $\square = \partial^\lambda \partial_\lambda$ is the d'Alembert operator. Applying the same operator to the composite tensor field yields

$$\square h_{\mu\nu} = \square (\Phi_\mu \Phi_\nu) = (\square \Phi_\mu) \Phi_\nu + \Phi_\mu (\square \Phi_\nu) + 2 \partial^\lambda \Phi_\mu \partial_\lambda \Phi_\nu. \quad (37)$$

Using the equation of motion for Φ_μ , the first two terms vanish, leaving

$$\square h_{\mu\nu} = 2 \partial^\lambda \Phi_\mu \partial_\lambda \Phi_\nu. \quad (38)$$

This equation exhibits a source-like term quadratic in field derivatives, which closely resembles the structure of the linearized Einstein equation [26] in harmonic gauge.

7.3. Energy–Momentum Tensor from the Lagrangian

A Lagrangian formulation provides a systematic way to derive the conserved quantities associated with the theory. Consider the Lagrangian density [27]

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \partial_\lambda \Phi_\mu \partial^\lambda \Phi^\mu + \alpha (\partial_\lambda \Phi_\mu \partial^\lambda \Phi_\nu) \Phi^\mu \Phi^\nu, \quad (39)$$

where the second term introduces nonlinear interactions among the internal fields. The canonical energy–momentum tensor [28] is given by

$$T^{\rho\sigma} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\rho \Phi_\mu)} \partial^\sigma \Phi_\mu - \eta^{\rho\sigma} \mathcal{L}. \quad (40)$$

Substituting the explicit form of the Lagrangian yields contributions involving quadratic combinations of derivatives, including terms of the form

$$T^{\rho\sigma} \sim \partial^\rho \Phi^\mu \partial^\sigma \Phi_\mu + \dots. \quad (41)$$

These terms naturally reproduce the structure of the source term appearing in the tensor field equation, indicating that the effective energy–momentum tensor arises dynamically from the internal fields.

7.4. Emergence of Nonlinear Gravitational Structure

Beyond the linearized regime, the composite nature of the tensor field leads to intrinsic nonlinearities. Since $h_{\mu\nu} = \Phi_\mu \Phi_\nu$, derivatives of the tensor field generate terms involving both second derivatives and quadratic combinations of first derivatives of the underlying fields. Even when the fundamental fields satisfy linear wave equations, the resulting tensor dynamics contains nonlinear contributions of the form

$$(\partial\Phi)(\partial\Phi). \quad (42)$$

This structure closely parallels the nonlinear terms appearing in the Einstein field equations, where the gravitational field contributes to its own source. In the present framework, such contributions arise directly from the internal dynamics rather than from an externally imposed energy–momentum tensor, suggesting that gravitational self-interaction may emerge naturally from the underlying field structure.

7.5. Connection to the Einstein–Hilbert Action

The relation to general relativity may be further clarified by expressing the spacetime metric [29] as

$$g_{\mu\nu} = \eta_{\mu\nu} + h_{\mu\nu}. \quad (43)$$

Expanding the Einstein–Hilbert action [30] in the weak-field limit yields a Lagrangian containing quadratic and higher-order derivative terms of the tensor field. Substituting the composite form $h_{\mu\nu} = \Phi_\mu \Phi_\nu$ into this expansion produces terms involving combinations such as

$$(\partial\Phi)^2 \text{ and } (\partial\Phi)^2\Phi^2. \quad (44)$$

These structures are directly present in the Lagrangian of the underlying fields, indicating that the Einstein–Hilbert action may be interpreted as an effective description arising from the internal field dynamics. This correspondence suggests that spacetime curvature emerges from the collective behavior of more fundamental degrees of freedom.

7.6. Gauge Structure and Degrees of Freedom

A consistent description of a massless spin-2 field requires gauge invariance under transformations of the form

$$h_{\mu\nu} \rightarrow h_{\mu\nu} + \partial_\mu \xi_\nu + \partial_\nu \xi_\mu. \quad (45)$$

In the present formulation, such transformations can be realized effectively by considering transformations of the underlying fields of the form $\Phi_\mu \rightarrow \Phi_\mu + \partial_\mu \chi$. In the linearized limit, this induces the appropriate transformation behavior for the composite tensor field.

The resulting gauge symmetry reduces the number of independent components of $h_{\mu\nu}$ from ten to two physical degrees of freedom, consistent with the two polarization states of a massless spin-2 field. Furthermore, the two-point correlation functions of the composite field inherit the tensor structure expected for graviton propagation when the underlying fields satisfy relativistic wave equations.

7.7. Summary of Emergent Structure

The analysis presented in this section demonstrates that the first-order dynamical framework introduced in this work naturally gives rise to a spin-2 tensor field with properties closely aligned with those of linearized gravity. The tensor structure, field equations, source terms, and gauge behavior all emerge from the dynamics of the underlying internal fields. This suggests that gravitational phenomena may be interpreted as an effective manifestation of a more fundamental

first-order field theory, providing a possible pathway toward quantum gravity [31] for a unified description of spacetime and matter.

8. Conclusions and Outlook

In this work, we have developed a unified first-order framework for relativistic fields across different spin sectors, in which the dynamics are governed by a common operator-based equation. This formulation departs from conventional second-order approaches and provides a coherent description of spin-0, spin-1/2, spin-1, and spin-2 fields within a single structural scheme.

A central result of the present analysis is the emergence of a consistent spin-2 sector from the same underlying first-order dynamics. By constructing the tensor field as a bilinear combination of internal spacetime degrees of freedom, we obtain a symmetric rank-2 tensor with the correct number of independent components. The associated field equation reduces, in the appropriate limit, to a relativistic wave equation that matches the structure of linearized gravity. Moreover, the source-like terms that appear in the tensor equation arise naturally from quadratic combinations of derivatives of the underlying fields, providing an intrinsic origin for an effective energy–momentum tensor.

The Lagrangian formulation further strengthens this connection. It yields a conserved energy–momentum tensor via Noether’s theorem and reproduces the same derivative structures that appear in the weak-field expansion of the Einstein–Hilbert action. In this sense, the geometric description of gravity can be interpreted as an effective theory emerging from a more fundamental dynamical system. The nonlinear character of gravitational interactions is likewise reflected in the composite structure of the tensor field, where self-interaction arises from the underlying internal dynamics rather than being introduced as an external input.

The gauge structure of the spin-2 sector is also shown to be compatible with the requirements of a massless tensor field. Effective gauge transformations emerge from transformations of the underlying fields, and the resulting reduction to two physical degrees of freedom is consistent with the known properties of gravitational waves. In addition, the propagation behavior of the composite tensor field reproduces the expected tensor structure of the graviton in the linearized regime.

Taken together, these results suggest that gravitational dynamics may not need to be introduced as a primary geometric principle but can instead arise as an emergent phenomenon from a deeper first-order field theory. This perspective provides a new route toward unifying spacetime geometry with internal field dynamics and offers a potential bridge between classical gravity and quantum theory.

Several important directions remain for future investigation. First, a more complete treatment of the nonlinear regime is required to establish a precise correspondence with the full Einstein field equations beyond the weak-field limit. Second, the role of the underlying algebraic structure—particularly its relation to higher-dimensional or non-associative algebras—should be explored in greater detail, as it may provide a natural framework for organizing the internal degrees of freedom. Third, the quantization of the theory and the analysis of its quantum consistency, including issues of unitarity and renormalization, will be essential for assessing its viability as a candidate for a quantum theory of gravity.

Finally, it would be of significant interest to investigate whether observable signatures of this emergent framework can be identified, for example, in gravitational wave propagation, cosmological dynamics, or high-energy scattering processes. Such studies may help determine whether the present approach provides not only a conceptual unification but also a physically testable extension of existing theories.

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10. Appendices Overview and Supplementary Remarks

For completeness and clarity, additional technical details supporting the main results are provided in the Appendices. These materials are intended to complement the core derivations presented in Sections 2–5 without interrupting the conceptual flow of the main text.

10.1. Scope of the Appendices

The Appendices include:

- Detailed derivations of the second-order wave equations from the first-order formulation.
- Explicit algebraic properties required for the operators β and O to ensure relativistic consistency.
- Extended calculations for spin-dependent operators in the cases of spin-1 and spin-2 fields.
- Supplementary discussion of constraint conditions such as transversality and tracelessness.

These technical components provide the mathematical backbone of the theory and ensure that the first-order framework is fully consistent with known relativistic structures.

10.2. Reference to Appendix A

Appendix A presents the derivation of the second-order relativistic wave equation from the first-order equation. In particular, it shows explicitly how the application of the operator structure leads to

$$\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} - \nabla^2 \Psi + \frac{m^2 c^2}{\hbar^2} \Psi = 0. \quad (46)$$

thereby recovering the standard relativistic dispersion relation.

10.3. Reference to Appendix B

Appendix B focuses on the construction of the spatial operators associated with different spin representations. It provides explicit forms for:

- Gradient-type operators for scalar fields,
- Spin-coupled operators for spin-1/2 fields,
- Curl operators for vector fields,
- Tensorial generalizations for spin-2 fields.

These constructions demonstrate how the unified first-order equation accommodates all spin sectors within a single formalism.

10.4. Role in the Overall Framework

The Appendices serve to separate conceptual development from technical detail. While the main text emphasizes the physical interpretation and unified structure, the Appendices ensure mathematical completeness and rigor. This division allows the theory to be presented in a clear and accessible manner while maintaining the level of detail required for verification and further development.

10.5. Final Remarks

The inclusion of these supplementary materials reinforces the internal consistency of the proposed framework and provides a foundation for future extensions. Readers interested in the detailed derivations and operator structures are encouraged to consult the Appendices, where the full mathematical formulation is presented.

11. Summary and Final Remarks

In this paper, we have developed a first-order relativistic field framework in which the dynamics of all spin fields are governed by a single unified principle. The central idea is that mass originates from internal spacetime dynamics, specifically from an intrinsic temporal oscillation associated with the rest energy of a particle. This perspective provides a direct physical interpretation of mass and leads naturally to a first-order evolution equation that is linear in both time and spatial derivatives.

A key result of the framework is that the standard equations of relativistic physics emerge as limiting cases rather than fundamental starting points. The Schrödinger equation arises in the non-relativistic limit, the Klein–Gordon equation is obtained as a derived second-order relation for scalar fields, Maxwell’s equations appear in the massless limit of spin-1 fields, and the wave equations for gravitational perturbations follow from the spin-2 sector. These results demonstrate that a wide range of known physical laws can be understood within a single, coherent structure.

The theory also provides a unified interpretation of spin and field representations. Spin is associated with the internal spatial structure of the field, while the temporal component governs mass

through its oscillatory behavior. In this way, both mass and spin are treated as manifestations of internal spacetime organization, rather than independent or externally imposed properties.

Another important feature of the framework is the role of gauge symmetry. In the present formulation, gauge invariance emerges naturally in the massless limit, indicating that it is not a fundamental assumption but a consequence of the underlying dynamics. This perspective offers a different viewpoint on the relationship between symmetry and physical laws.

The results presented here establish a consistent and conceptually transparent foundation for relativistic field theory. By identifying a single first-order equation as the fundamental dynamical law, the framework unifies fields of different spin and provides a new interpretation of mass, spin, and gauge structure. While the present work has focused on the foundational aspects, it opens the door to further developments, including the incorporation of interactions, deeper algebraic structures, and connections to broader theories of spacetime.

In conclusion, the proposed first-order relativistic field framework suggests that the diverse phenomena of relativistic quantum fields may be understood as different manifestations of a common internal spacetime dynamics. This unified viewpoint offers new possibilities for advancing our understanding of fundamental physics and for exploring the connections between spacetime structure and particle dynamics.

12. Future Directions and Testable Predictions

While the present work establishes a first-order relativistic field framework based on internal spacetime dynamics, its full significance lies in its potential for further development and experimental validation. In this section, we outline several concrete directions in which the theory can be extended and tested.

12.1. Extension to Interacting Fields

The current formulation has focused on free fields. A natural next step is to incorporate interactions through a generalized covariant derivative,

$$D_\mu = \partial_\mu + \text{interaction terms.}$$

This would allow the inclusion of gauge interactions within the same first-order structure, potentially leading to a unified description of fundamental forces based on internal spacetime dynamics. The role of internal algebraic structures, such as non-commutative or non-associative systems, may become essential in this extension.

12.2. Internal Algebra and Geometric Structure

The framework suggests that both mass and spin originate from internal spacetime organization. This motivates the exploration of deeper algebraic structures underlying the field Φ , including higher-dimensional or hypercomplex algebras. Such structures may provide a natural explanation for:

- the number of spin degrees of freedom,
- the organization of field components,
- and the emergence of symmetry groups.

Further investigation in this direction may reveal a direct connection between internal geometry and gauge symmetries.

12.3. Quantum Interpretation and Operator Structure

The first-order nature of the equation aligns naturally with an operator-based formulation of quantum theory. Unlike wavefunction-based approaches that rely on probabilistic interpretation and collapse, the present framework emphasizes deterministic evolution through linear operators.

This opens the possibility of re-examining foundational quantum phenomena—such as interference, tunneling, and entanglement—from the perspective of internal spacetime dynamics and field interactions.

12.4. Testable Physical Predictions

The framework leads to several experimentally testable implications:

1. **Massless limits and wave propagation**
The emergence of Maxwell and gravitational wave equations suggests that deviations from standard propagation could appear if small mass terms are present.
2. **First-order dynamics vs. second-order corrections**
Observable differences may arise in systems where second-order approximations break down, particularly at high energies or small scales.
3. **Unified scaling behavior**
If mass originates from internal oscillation, relations among particle masses may exhibit systematic patterns that differ from conventional parameter-based models.
4. **High-precision field behavior**
Deviations in polarization modes or propagation properties for higher-spin fields could provide signatures of the underlying first-order structure.

12.5. Toward a Unified Theory

The results of this work suggest that a single first-order equation, combined with internal spacetime structure, may provide the foundation for a unified description of relativistic fields. Future research may explore:

- the inclusion of nonlinear effects,
- coupling to full gravitational dynamics,
- and the unification of interactions within a single algebraic framework.

Such developments could lead to a deeper understanding of the relationship between spacetime, matter, and fundamental forces.

12.6. Final Perspective

The framework presented here is intended as a foundational step rather than a complete theory. Its strength lies in its simplicity and unifying character: a single first-order dynamical principle gives rise to a wide range of known physical phenomena.

Further exploration of this structure may reveal new connections between internal spacetime dynamics and the observable properties of the physical world, providing a promising direction for future theoretical and experimental investigation.

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