

The Polygon and the Circle Structural Consequences of the Metric Gap

Erez Ashkenazi*

Independent Researcher, Upper Galilee, Israel.

Corresponding Author: Erez Ashkenazi, Independent Researcher, Upper Galilee, Israel.

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Abstract

A companion paper, *The Irrational Ground*, established the metric gap: the provably nonzero difference between any finite-resolution geometry (a rational polygon) and the transcendental ideal (π) it approximates. This paper explores what follows structurally from that gap. It proposes—as a mapping to be evaluated, not a derivation—that a system's polygonal order may correspond to its frequency, and traces five structural consonances between the metric gap and known features of physical reality: the discreteness of energy levels, the phenomenology of quantum measurement, the formal parallel between quantum mechanics and gravity, the structure of biological order-maintenance, and the self-referential structure of consciousness. These consonances are offered as analogies and structural hypotheses within the philosophy of physics, not as competing explanations within dynamical physics. They identify formal resonances between the metric gap and physical phenomena, suggest directions for formalization, and are explicit about what would be required to elevate each consonance from analogy to derivation.

Keywords: Metric Gap, Polygonal Order, Quantization, Measurement Problem, Quantum Gravity, Structural Ontology, Philosophy of Physics, π

1. The Metric Gap: Summary

The metric gap, established in the companion paper [1] is the provably nonzero difference $\varepsilon(n) = |\pi - n \cdot \sin(\pi/n)|$ between an n -sided polygon's perimeter-to-diameter ratio and the transcendental ideal π . For large n , $\varepsilon(n) \approx \pi^3/6n^2$. The gap is nonzero for all finite n (by π 's irrationality) and bounded below (by the Hurwitz theorem) [2]. The choice of polygonal approximation is not arbitrary. When a circle is discretized—when continuous circular geometry is instantiated on a lattice or at finite resolution—the result is a polygon. This is the canonical and indeed the only discrete approximation to circular geometry, used since Archimedes [3]. The metric gap is not one error measure among many. It is the specific formal incompleteness that arises when a transcendental ratio is approximated by a rational structure.

2. A Proposed Mapping: Order and Frequency

This section proposes—and explicitly does not derive—a structural mapping between polygonal order and physical frequency. A system oscillating at frequency ν completes ν cycles per second. Each cycle is a traversal of periodic structure. If the periodicity is governed by rotational symmetry (as in orbits, waves, and oscillators), then the geometry of each cycle is circular—and in finite-resolution instantiation, polygonal. The order of the polygon (how many discrete steps per cycle) and the frequency (how many cycles per unit time) are then two descriptions of the same system: order describes the spatial resolution of each cycle;

frequency describes the temporal rate of cycling. Planck's relation, $E = h\nu = \hbar\omega$, connects energy to frequency through $\hbar = h/2\pi$ —the quantum of action per radian of the ideal circle [4]. The 2π in the denominator converts between cycles and radians—between polygonal traversals and the transcendental ideal they approximate. This is suggestive of a structural link between the discrete (polygonal order) and the continuous (circular frequency). Three issues must be acknowledged. First, *dimensional inconsistency*: order n is a dimensionless integer; frequency ν has dimensions of inverse time. The mapping implicitly requires a characteristic timescale—the period of one cycle—to mediate between them. Second, *non-uniqueness*: one could equally propose mapping n to quantum number, energy level index, or information content. The consequences differ for each choice, and the paper does not demonstrate why frequency is the correct identification. Third, *empirical gap*: the mapping does not yet produce specific spectral predictions (e.g., atomic energy levels) from polygonal geometry. These limitations are genuine. The mapping is proposed because it produces a coherent set of structural consonances (detailed in Sections III–VII) that align with known physics in ways that may reward formalization. The consonances do not validate the mapping. They motivate its further investigation.

3. Consonance 1: Discreteness

The central puzzle of quantum mechanics is why energy levels are discrete. The Schrödinger equation yields discrete

eigenvalues for bound systems through boundary conditions and operator spectra in Hilbert space [5]. This is the dynamical explanation. It tells us how quantization arises mathematically. It does not address the structural question: *why should nature be the kind of thing that admits discrete eigenvalues at all?*

The metric gap offers a structural consonance, not a competing derivation. If physical systems approximate transcendental ideals through discrete (polygonal) steps, then integer-valued modes are a structural feature of the approximation scheme itself. A polygon cannot have 7.3 sides. If the physical realization of circular symmetry is polygonal, then the modes of that realization are constrained to integer order. Discreteness would then not require a special postulate; it would follow from the formal structure of finite-resolution geometry. *What this does not do:* derive the Schrödinger equation, reproduce observed spectra, or explain why specific eigenvalues take the values they do. The consonance is at the level of form (why discreteness at all), not *content* (why these particular discrete values). A formalization would need to show how the metric gap at a given order produces specific energy eigenvalues—and that step has not been taken.

4. Consonance 2: Measurement

The measurement problem asks why a quantum system appears to exist in superposition until observed, then “collapse” to a definite state [6]. The metric gap framework suggests a philosophical reframing—not a solution. A system at high polygonal order (fine resolution, small metric gap) has geometric structure invisible to a system at lower order (coarser resolution, larger gap). When the two interact, the lower-order system registers only those distinctions compatible with its own resolution. The fine structure of the high-order state falls below the detector’s metric gap. The result looks like “collapse”: a sudden transition from a richly structured state to a coarse one. But nothing physical collapses. The information is simply below the detector’s resolution threshold. This reframing aligns with decoherence theory and coarse-graining approaches to quantum mechanics [7]. It does not explain the Born rule (why outcomes follow specific probability distributions), does not account for interference structure, and does not address the constraints imposed by Bell inequality violations [8]. It is a philosophical reinterpretation of the measurement process in terms of resolution mismatch—suggestive, consonant with existing approaches, but not a solution to the measurement problem as physicists define it.

5. Consonance 3: The Inner and Outer Gap

The unification of quantum mechanics and general relativity has resisted solution for nearly a century [9]. The metric gap framework suggests a structural parallel—a conjecture, not a unification. Quantum mechanics involves the internal structure of modes: discrete energy levels, quantized transitions, zero-point energy. These are features of a system’s own polygonal order—how many sides its cycle has, how fine its internal resolution. The metric gap, viewed from

inside the polygon, constrains what states the system can occupy. Gravity involves the external geometry of spacetime: curvature, geodesic structure, the deviation from flatness. These are features of how the geometric ground deviates from the π -defined ideal. The metric gap, viewed from outside the polygon, constrains the form of the ambient geometry. The structural conjecture is that these are two aspects of a single formal principle: informational incompleteness relative to the transcendental ideal, manifesting as discreteness when viewed from within and as curvature when viewed from without.

What would be required to formalize this: a precise mathematical definition of “inner ϵ ” and “outer ϵ ”; a demonstration that the inner gap produces operator spectra consistent with quantum mechanics; a demonstration that the outer gap produces metric deviations consistent with the Einstein equation; and a scaling relation connecting the two at different orders. None of these steps have been taken. The conjecture is offered because the structural parallel is striking, because both phenomena involve π at their mathematical foundations ($\hbar = h/2\pi$ for quantum mechanics; $8\pi G/c^4$ for gravity), and because identifying a common formal root might suggest directions for formalization that differ from existing approaches (quantizing gravity or gravitizing quantum mechanics). It is not offered as a result.

6. Consonance 4: Biological Order

The second law of thermodynamics drives systems toward higher entropy [10]. In the metric gap framework, this corresponds to a tendency toward lower polygonal order—coarser resolution, larger gap, less informational structure. A living organism, viewed through this lens, is a system that actively maintains a specific polygonal order against entropic degradation. This is a metaphorical extension, not a thermodynamic derivation. Entropy is rigorously defined in terms of phase-space volume and microstate counting; “polygonal order” has no established mapping to these quantities. The extension is offered because it produces an interesting structural prediction: that a system’s health correlates with the stability of its effective order over time, and that pathology corresponds to either uncontrolled increase (rigidity) or uncontrolled decrease (degradation) of that order.

There is empirical resonance, though not confirmation. Heart rate variability (HRV) research has established that healthy hearts exhibit higher variability—more irregularity, more distance from perfect periodicity—than failing hearts [11]. In the metric gap framework, this corresponds to healthy systems maintaining a larger gap (lower effective order, more room for adaptive response) while pathological systems lose the gap (approaching the ideal too closely, becoming too “circular,” losing flexibility). The gap is not a defect. It is the formal condition of adaptability.

What would be required to formalize this: a rigorous mapping between polygonal order and thermodynamic entropy; a demonstration that HRV statistics can be derived from the

metric gap at a specific order; and a quantitative prediction (e.g., critical order thresholds for specific pathologies). These steps have not been taken. The consonance is offered as a structural hypothesis with suggestive empirical resonance.

7. Consonance 5: Self-Referential Incompleteness

This section is offered as philosophical speculation—not as a scientific claim, not as a theory of consciousness, and not as a contribution to neuroscience or computation theory. Every system at polygonal order n has a resolution horizon: distinctions finer than order n are invisible. A special case arises when a system is complex enough that its own internal structure is at its resolution horizon—when modeling itself requires a resolution finer than it possesses. Such a system would encounter its own metric gap directly: it could detect that it is informationally incomplete (it is a polygon, not a circle) without being able to resolve the fine structure of the incompleteness. The speculation is that this self-referential encounter with one's own metric gap may be structurally related to conscious experience. Not as a mechanism (no causal claim is made) but as a formal condition: consciousness arises in systems whose complexity has reached their own resolution limit. This aligns with Gödel's incompleteness theorems—any formal system rich enough to model its own structure contains truths it cannot prove about itself—and with Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva*: the recognition that one is a finite mode of infinite substance, exactly correct as far as one reaches, and structurally incomplete beyond that point [12,13]. This is not testable, not formalizable in its current form, and not connected to neuroscience. It is offered solely as a philosophical observation: that the metric gap, applied reflexively, produces a formal structure that resembles the phenomenology of self-awareness. Whether this resemblance is deep or superficial is an open question.

8. The Structural Condition

Within this framework—and only within it—all five consonances depend on a single mathematical fact:

$$\varepsilon > 0$$

The metric gap is nonzero. This is not a hypothesis. It is a theorem, following from the irrationality of π [2]. If $\varepsilon = 0$ —if π were rational—then the polygon would be the circle, the finite would be the ideal, and the structural distinctions on which this framework depends—discreteness, resolution mismatch, inner/outer gap, order-maintenance, self-referential limit—would not arise. The framework would produce no consonances, because there would be no gap to produce them. This is a claim about the framework, not about reality as such. Whether physical reality depends on $\varepsilon > 0$ in the way the framework suggests is an open question—one that can only be answered by the kind of formalization outlined in each section above. What can be said without overreach is this: the metric gap is a proven mathematical fact; the structural consonances it produces, when applied to physical systems, align with known features of quantum mechanics, gravity, biology, and cognition; and the alignment is suggestive enough to warrant the formalization effort

required to determine whether it is deep or coincidental.

9. What Would Elevate This Framework

This paper is a work of structural philosophy, not physics. Elevating it to physics would require specific formalizations, each of which is identified here as an open problem.

The Mapping Problem. Establish a rigorous, dimensionally consistent mapping between polygonal order n and a physical observable (frequency, quantum number, or information content). This is the foundational step without which the framework remains metaphorical.

The Eigenvalue Problem. Show that the metric gap at order n produces specific energy eigenvalues consistent with the Schrödinger equation for at least one bound system (e.g., the harmonic oscillator or hydrogen atom).

The Inner/Outer Problem. Define “inner ε ” and “outer ε ” precisely, and show that the inner gap produces quantum operator spectra while the outer gap produces metric curvature consistent with the Einstein equation.

The Thermodynamic Problem. Map polygonal order to thermodynamic entropy and derive at least one quantitative prediction (e.g., a critical order threshold for a specific physical transition).

The Prediction Problem. Produce at least one novel, testable prediction that differs from existing theories. Without this, the framework remains a reinterpretation, however elegant, of known results.

Each of these problems is specific and well-defined. Their solution would transform the framework from philosophy into physics. Their non-solution leaves it as what it currently is: a structurally coherent, mathematically anchored, philosophically interesting set of analogies between a proven theorem ($\varepsilon > 0$) and the formal character of physical law.

10. Conclusion

Finite systems approximating a transcendental ideal inevitably produce structured discrepancies—and those discrepancies may manifest as physical phenomena. That is the core claim of this paper, stated as carefully as possible. The metric gap is a theorem. Its consonances with quantum discreteness, measurement phenomenology, the gravity-quantum parallel, biological order, and self-referential awareness are structural observations, not derivations. Each consonance identifies a formal resonance between the gap's mathematical structure and a known feature of physical reality. Each is accompanied by an explicit statement of what formalization would be required to determine whether the resonance is deep or superficial. The strongest version of the claim—that the metric gap is not merely consonant with physics but constitutive of it—remains unproven and may be unprovable without the formalizations identified in Section IX. The weakest version—that the gap provides a useful structural metaphor for thinking about discreteness,

resolution, and incompleteness across domains—is, we believe, already established by the consonances presented. The truth, if there is one, lies somewhere between these extremes. The metric gap is a fact. The consonances are real. What remains to be determined is their depth. π does not end. ε does not vanish. Whether these mathematical truths constrain physical reality, or merely illuminate it by analogy, is the question this framework leaves open—and the question that makes it worth pursuing [14].

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