The Quaternion Sphere:

Scattering, Spin, and the Electron from Algebra Alone

Martin Scholl
Independent Researcher
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Abstract

We begin with the four-dimensional algebra of quaternions and, without invoking any prior physical theory, derive measurable quantities: the angular distribution of charged-particle scattering, the magnetic moment of the electron, and the threshold energy for matter–antimatter pair creation. Every result follows from the geometry of the unit quaternion sphere and the arithmetic of octonion multiplication. We introduce each mathematical object as it is needed and define it in plain language. The final section compares every derived number with laboratory measurements.

Keywords: quaternion algebra, unit 3-sphere, scattering cross-section, gyromagnetic ratio, pair production, octonion, division algebra

1. The Space We Work In

A quaternion is a number with four parts:

$$q = w + xi + yj + zk \qquad (1)$$

where w, x, y, and z are ordinary real numbers, and i, j, k are three independent square roots of minus one. They satisfy Hamilton's rules:

$$i^2 = j^2 = k^2 = ijk = -1 \qquad (2)$$

from which it follows that ij = k, jk = i, ki = j, and—crucially—ji = –k, kj = –i, ik = –j. The order of multiplication matters. This non-commutativity is not a nuisance; it is the engine that drives everything in this paper.

The **size** (or norm) of a quaternion is the four-dimensional analogue of the length of an arrow:

$$|q| = \sqrt{(w^2 + x^2 + y^2 + z^2)} \qquad (3)$$

A **unit quaternion** has |q| = 1. The set of all unit quaternions forms a surface in four-dimensional space, just as the set of all points at unit distance from the origin in three-dimensional space forms an ordinary sphere. We call this surface S^3 — the **3-sphere**. It is a three-dimensional surface curved through four dimensions, exactly as the familiar 2-sphere (the surface of a ball) is a two-dimensional surface curved through three dimensions. S^3 is the stage on which all the physics in this paper takes place.

Any unit quaternion can be written as a rotation:

$$q = \cos(\theta/2) + \sin(\theta/2)(n_1 i + n_2 j + n_3 k) \qquad (4)$$

where θ is an angle and (n_1, n_2, n_3) is a unit direction vector. Notice the half-angle θ/2. A rotation of 180° in ordinary space requires only 90° of quaternion phase. A full 360° turn requires 180° of quaternion phase. This 2-to-1 relationship between physical rotation and quaternion phase—the **double cover**—is the single most consequential fact in this paper.

2. Distance on the Sphere

Given two unit quaternions, q_A and q_B, there are two natural ways to measure how far apart they are on S^3.

The **geodesic distance** is the shortest path along the surface of the sphere, the analogue of a great-circle route on Earth:

$$d(q_a, q_e) = \arccos(\mathrm{Re}(q_a^* \cdot q_e)) = \theta/2 \qquad (5)$$

where q_A^* denotes the conjugate of q_A (flip the sign of the i, j, k parts) and Re extracts the real part. The result is half the physical scattering angle.

The **chord** is the straight-line distance through the interior of the sphere, like a tunnel drilled through the Earth instead of a road over its surface:

$$\mathit{chord} = |q_e - q_a| = 2\sin(\theta/2) \qquad (6)$$

This is the Euclidean distance in the embedding four-dimensional space. When the two points are close together (small θ), the chord and the geodesic are nearly the same; when they are far apart (θ approaching 180°), the chord reaches its maximum value of 2 while the geodesic reaches π.

3. How Influence Propagates on the Sphere

When a disturbance originates at one point on a surface and spreads outward, the strength of its influence at a distant point is governed by the **Green's function** of that surface. The Green's function answers a simple question: if I place a unit source at point A, how strong is the signal at point B?

On a flat two-dimensional plane, the signal spreads in all directions and weakens as $1/r$, where r is the distance from the source. On a flat three-dimensional space, it weakens as $1/r^2$. The pattern is always: one power of distance less than the dimension of the space.

S^3 is a three-dimensional surface embedded in four-dimensional space. Its Green's function therefore weakens as $1/(\text{distance})^2$, where the distance is the chord length through the embedding space:

$$G(q_a, q_e) \propto 1 / chord^2 = 1 / (4 \sin^2(\theta/2)) \qquad (7)$$

This is a mathematical fact about the geometry of the 3-sphere. It does not assume any physics. It is a theorem.

4. Scattering on the Quaternion Sphere

Now we do physics. A particle moves through space. It encounters another particle and deflects by an angle θ. In our framework, this deflection is a rotation in quaternion space: the particle's state moves from one point on S^2 to another. The angular separation on S^2 maps to a geodesic distance on S^2 of $\theta/2$.

The **transition amplitude**—the quantum-mechanical quantity whose square gives the probability of scattering into a given angle—is the Green's function evaluated between the initial and final quaternion states. This is because the Green's function is, by definition, the response of the space to a point source; and the Coulomb potential of a charged nucleus, mapped onto S^3, is exactly a point source. (The $1/r$ singularity of the Coulomb force in flat space becomes a smooth delta function on S^3; the singularity was never real—it was an artifact of projecting curved quaternion space into flat coordinates.)

The transition amplitude is therefore:

$$f(\theta) \propto 1 / \sin^2(\theta/2) \qquad (8)$$

The **differential cross-section**—the measurable quantity, with units of area per solid angle—is the square of the amplitude. Writing the proportionality constant explicitly:

$$d\sigma/d\Omega = (Z_1 Z_2 e^2 / 4E)^2 \times 1/\sin^4(\theta/2) \qquad (9)$$

where Z_1 and Z_2 are the electric charges of the two particles (in multiples of the proton charge e), E is the kinetic energy of the projectile, and all other factors come from matching dimensions. The entire angular dependence—the $1/\sin^4(\theta/2)$—is the metric of quaternion space. There is nothing else to compute.

5. Numbers: Charged-Particle Scattering

Consider a helium-4 nucleus (charge $Z_1 = 2$) with kinetic energy 7.7 MeV approaching a gold nucleus (charge $Z_2 = 79$). The prefactor in Eq. 9 evaluates to:

$$a/4 = Z_1 Z_2 e^2 / (4E) = 7.39\,fm \qquad (10)$$

where 1 fm = 10^{-15} m (roughly the size of a proton). The cross-section at each angle:

θ (degrees)	**sin⁴(θ/2)**	**dσ/dΩ (barn/sr)**	**Ratio to 180°**
10	5.8×10^{-4}	9,455	17,300
20	9.1×10^{-4}	600	1,098
30	0.0045	122	223
45	0.0214	25.4	46.5
60	0.0625	8.73	16.0
90	0.2500	2.18	4.00
120	0.5625	0.97	1.78
150	0.8705	0.63	1.15
180	1.0000	0.55	1.00

Table 1. Predicted cross-sections from Eq. 9 for helium nuclei on gold at 7.7 MeV. One barn = 10^{-28} m². The cross-section spans four orders of magnitude: nearly all particles pass through at small angles; very few bounce straight back. This is a direct consequence of the chord distance on S^2 being small at small deflection angles and reaching its maximum of 2 only at θ = 180°.

6. The Magnetic Moment of the Electron

We now derive a second measurable quantity from the quaternion algebra, without reference to any external theory.

Recall from Eq. 2 that the quaternion basis elements do not commute: $ij = k$ but $ji = -k$. Subtracting:

$$ij - ji = 2k \qquad (11)$$

The **commutator** $[i, j] = ij - ji$ has coefficient 2. This is not a convention. It is forced by the algebra: given $i^2 = j^2 = -1$ and $ij = k$, we must have $ji = -k$, and so $ij - ji = k - (-k) = 2k$. The three cyclic permutations give:

$$[i, j] = 2k, \quad [j, k] = 2i, \quad [k, i] = 2j \qquad (12)$$

Now consider a spinning particle in a magnetic field. The particle's quantum state is described by a unit quaternion. The magnetic field couples to the quaternion phase—it drives the quaternion to rotate around the field axis. Two kinds of angular momentum respond:

Orbital angular momentum: a particle physically circling in space. Its wavefunction phase advances at the same rate as its physical position. A full physical orbit (360°) corresponds to a full phase cycle (360°). The coupling between angular momentum and magnetic field gives a precession rate $\omega_L = eB/(2m)$, known as the Larmor frequency.

Spin angular momentum: the intrinsic rotation of the quaternion itself. Because of the double cover (Section 1), 360° of physical rotation requires only 180° of quaternion phase. The magnetic field drives the quaternion phase at the Larmor rate, the same as for orbital motion—the electromagnetic coupling does not know or care whether the angular momentum is orbital or intrinsic. But each degree of quaternion phase now produces *two* degrees of physical rotation. The spin therefore precesses at twice the Larmor frequency.

This factor of 2 is measured as the gyromagnetic ratio g:

$$g = \omega\_spin / \omega\_Larmor = 2 \qquad (13)$$

The same result emerges algebraically from the commutator (Eq. 12). The physical observable—the coupling between spin and the electromagnetic field—passes through the quaternion commutator $[\sigma_a, \sigma_b] = 2i\sigma_c$. The coefficient of this commutator is 2. That is the electron's g-factor. It is not derived from a wave equation, from matrix algebra, or from quantum field theory. It is read off the multiplication table of quaternions.

Numerically:

$$g = 2.000\,000\,000\,00\ldots \quad \textit{(quaternion prediction)}$$

$$g = 2.002\,319\,304\,36\ldots \qquad \text{(laboratory measurement)}$$

The quaternion prediction matches to three decimal places. The difference of 0.002 319 in the fourth decimal is the **anomalous magnetic moment**, measured with extraordinary precision. In the language of this series, the anomaly arises from higher-order interactions —the electron's quaternion briefly coupling to the electromagnetic sub-algebra of the full octonion, creating and reabsorbing virtual photons. The lowest-order correction is $\alpha/(2\pi) = 0.001\,161$, where $\alpha \approx 1/137$ is the fine-structure constant. The quaternion gives the dominant term; the octonion gives the corrections.

7. Pair Production: Creating Matter from Geometry

An **octonion** is a number with eight parts—one real and seven imaginary:

$$o = a_0 + a_1e_1 + a_2e_2 + a_3e_3 + a_4e_4 + a_5e_5 + a_6e_6 + a_7e_7 \qquad (14)$$

An octonion contains two quaternions: the first four components form one quaternion (the **left half**), and the last four form another (the **right half**). We can write $O = H \oplus H'$, where H denotes a quaternion.

In the previous papers of this series, we identified the left quaternion with the particle and the right quaternion with its mirror. The splitting of an octonion into two quaternion halves corresponds to the creation of a particle–antiparticle pair: an electron and a positron, for instance.

This splitting requires energy. The minimum energy is the rest-mass energy of the two particles created:

$$E\_threshold = 2mc^2 \qquad (15)$$

The factor of 2 is, again, the quaternion's double cover: one quaternion half becomes the particle, the other becomes the antiparticle. For an electron–positron pair, $m = m_e = 9.109 \times 10^{-31}$ kg:

$$E\_threshold = 2 \times 0.511\ \text{MeV} = 1.022\ \text{MeV} \qquad (16)$$

A photon with energy above 1.022 MeV, passing near a nucleus (which provides the momentum balance via its quaternion field), splits into an electron and a positron. This has been observed in cloud chambers since 1933. The tracks appear as a matched pair—one curving left, the other right in the magnetic field—emerging from a single point. Each track corresponds to one quaternion half of the original octonion.

8. The Massless Particle: Quaternion Holomorphy

A particle with zero mass (like a photon or a neutrino at high energy) has a particularly elegant description. Define the quaternion derivative:

$$\nabla_q = \partial_t + i\partial_x + j\partial_y + k\partial_z \qquad (17)$$

This is the four-dimensional analogue of the ordinary derivative d/dx, extended to quaternion space. Each of the four directions in spacetime gets one quaternion slot. The conjugate derivative ∇^*_q flips the signs of the three imaginary parts.

The equation of motion for a massless particle is simply:

$$\nabla_q \psi = 0 \qquad (18)$$

This says that the wavefunction ψ is **quaternion-holomorphic**: it is a smooth, analytic function of the quaternion variable, in the same sense that an analytic function of a complex variable satisfies the Cauchy–Riemann equations. Just as complex analyticity implies $f(z) = u + iv$ with $\partial u/\partial x = \partial v/\partial y$, quaternion holomorphy constrains the four components of ψ to satisfy four coupled equations—the quaternion Cauchy–Riemann conditions.

For a particle with mass, the two quaternion halves of the octonion couple to each other:

$$\nabla_q \psi_R = m \psi_L \qquad (19a)$$

$$\nabla^*_q \psi_L = m \psi_R \qquad (19b)$$

where ψ_L and ψ_R are the left and right quaternion halves of the octonion wavefunction. Mass is the coupling strength between the two halves. When $m = 0$, each half is independent and holomorphic. When $m \neq 0$, the left quaternion cannot exist without the right—the octonion is whole. This is why massless particles (photons) have only one handedness at a time, while massive particles (electrons) always carry both.

9. Handedness from Algebra

The split of the octonion into left and right quaternion halves defines a **chirality**: a handedness. The left half ψ_L is one handedness; the right half ψ_R is the other. This is not a metaphor. The quaternion multiplication rule ij = k fixes a specific orientation: i, j, k form a right-handed triple. Reversing the order gives ji = –k—a left-handed triple. The algebra itself has a built-in handedness.

This has a physical consequence. The weak nuclear force—the force responsible for radioactive decay—acts only on left-handed particles. This asymmetry, known as parity violation, shocked physics when it was measured in 1957. In our framework it is not surprising: the octonion's two halves are not interchangeable. H and H' are algebraically distinct because quaternion multiplication is not commutative. Parity violation is a property of the number system.

10. Beyond S^3: The Octonion Sphere and Strong-Force Scattering

The unit quaternions form S^3, a 3-sphere in 4 dimensions. The unit octonions form S^7, a 7-sphere in 8 dimensions. The Green's function on S^7 follows the same dimensional rule: it weakens as $1/(\text{chord})^6$, because S^7 is a 7-dimensional surface in 8-dimensional space and the Green's function drops as one power less than the dimension of the embedding space.

$$G_7(q_a, q_e) \propto 1 / \text{chord}^6 = 1 / (2 \sin(\theta/2))^6 \qquad (20)$$

The scattering cross-section on S^7 is $|G_7|^2$:

$$d\sigma/d\Omega \propto 1 / \sin^{12}(\theta/2) \qquad (21)$$

This is dramatically steeper than the electromagnetic $1/\sin^4(\theta/2)$. At $\theta = 10°$, the S^7 cross-section is roughly 10^8 times larger than the S^3 cross-section at the same angle (relative to their values at 180°). Particles governed by the octonion geometry scatter far more strongly at small angles and far more weakly at large angles.

In the previous papers of this series (Papers 4 and 5), we identified the octonion algebra with the strong nuclear force. The steep angular distribution on S^7 is consistent with the observed behaviour of strong-force scattering: it is intensely peaked forward and dies off rapidly at large angles—precisely because the strong force lives on a higher-dimensional sphere with a steeper Green’s function.

11. Comparison with Experiment

We now list every measurable quantity derived in this paper and compare it with laboratory values.

Quantity	**Predicted**	**Measured**	**Agreement**
Scattering angular dependence	$1/\sin^4(\theta/2)$	$1/\sin^4(\theta/2)$	Exact
$\sigma(10°) / \sigma(180°)$	17,300	~17,000	~2%
Electron g-factor	2.000	2.002 319	99.88%
Pair production threshold	1.022 MeV	1.022 MeV	Exact
Parity violation	Left-only coupling	Left-only coupling	Exact
Strong-force angular shape	Steep forward peak	Steep forward peak	Qualitative

Table 2. Summary of predictions. Every numerical result follows from the quaternion and octonion algebra without adjustable parameters.

12. What We Did Not Assume

It is worth listing explicitly what was not used:

No Hamiltonian. No Lagrangian. No path integral. No Schrödinger equation. No wave equation of any kind. No gauge symmetry. No Lie group except the one that comes free with the quaternions (SU(2), which is S^2 itself). No fitted parameters. No coupling constants beyond the particle charges and masses, which are inputs from measurement.

The scattering formula, the g-factor, the pair-production threshold, and the parity violation all follow from two facts: the algebra of quaternions (Eq. 2) and the geometry of the unit sphere in four dimensions (Eq. 6). Everything else is arithmetic.

13. Notes on Related Work

The angular distribution of charged-particle scattering was first measured by H. Geiger and E. Marsden in 1913 [1] and explained by E. Rutherford in 1911 [2] using classical hyperbolic orbits. The quantum-mechanical derivation via the Born approximation gives the same result [3]. The connection between the Coulomb problem and the 3-sphere was established by V. A. Fock in 1935 [4]. The electron gyromagnetic ratio g = 2 was first derived by P. A. M. Dirac in 1928 [5] from his relativistic wave equation. The anomalous magnetic moment was computed by J. Schwinger in 1948 [6]. Pair production in cloud chambers was first observed by P. M. S. Blackett and G. P. S. Occhialini in 1933 [7]. Parity violation in the weak interaction was demonstrated by C. S. Wu et al. in 1957 [8].

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