

Re: Riemann geometry, chicken or the egg?

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- *From:* bootlace <anonymous@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 27 Oct 2006 09:45:45 EDT
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On 26 Oct 2006 16:40:27 GMT, israel@xxxxxxxxxx (Robert Israel) wrote:

In article <7tj1k2h3iemc5m7iqnq8gn4lch1uft1gjk@xxxxxxx>, bootlace <anonymous@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Thu, 26 Oct 2006 03:30:00 GMT, Gerry Myerson <gerry@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

I believe that doing geometry without an eye to physics goes back to ancient Greece. Conic sections were studied pretty much for their own sake.

The motion of planets and asteroids were available to the greeks and it seems logical they might have wondered how you could describe an ellipse.

Asteroids???

Asteroids and meteors streaking across the heavens were noted by the Greeks and Chinese . An observation such as this might beg the question why does this thing appear to be racing toward the sun? Of course it would take a second sighting of an asteroid or meteor streaking away from the sun before anyone could conceive of an elliptical orbit.

The inspiration for experimenting with conical sections may have been something as simple as slicing a carrot who knows?

The Greeks knew seven planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars,

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Jupiter, Saturn), but not asteroids. Some Greeks did have a heliocentric system, but the idea that the orbits were ellipses seems not to have occurred to anybody before Kepler.

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