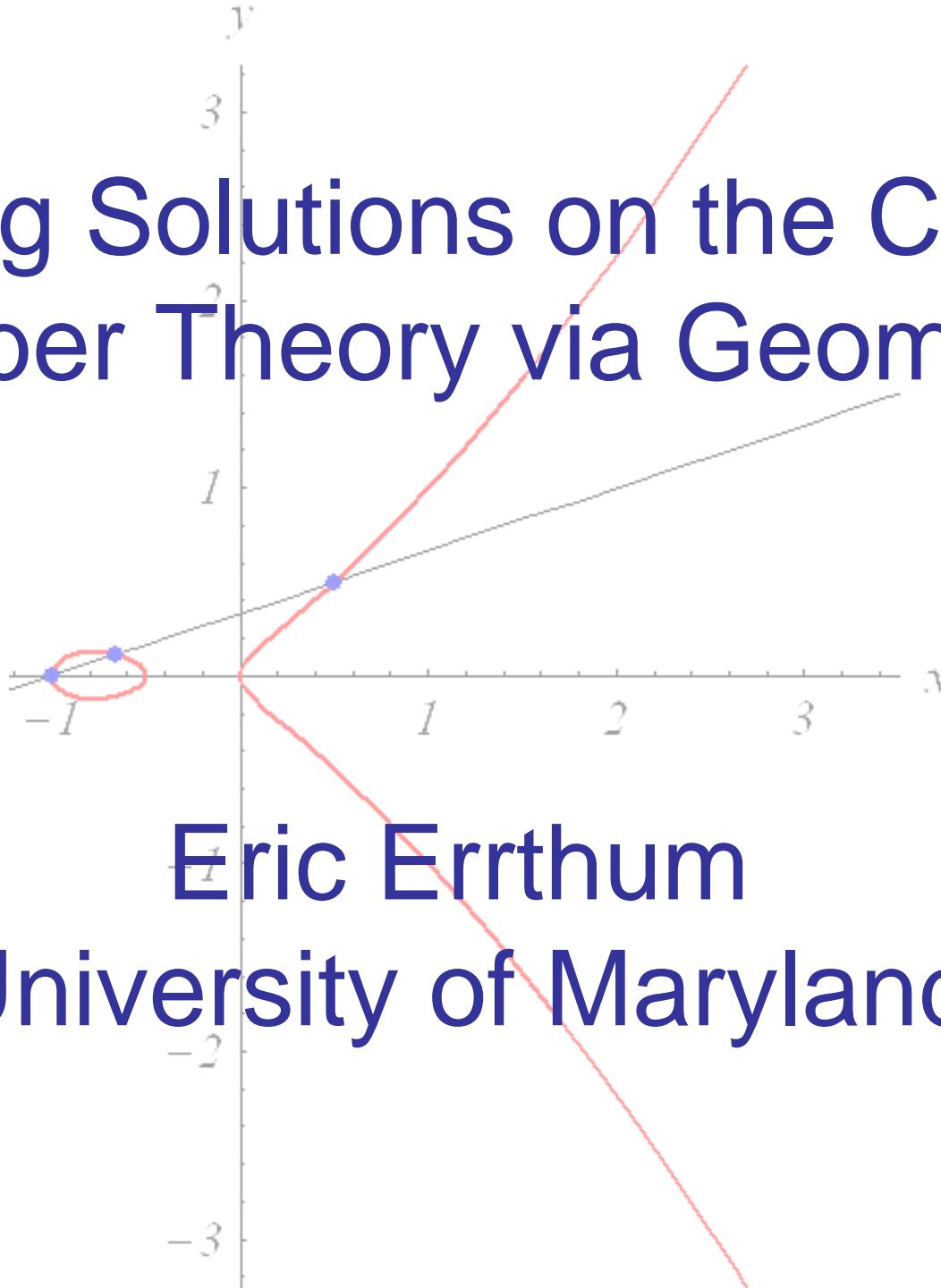


Finding Solutions on the Curve: Number Theory via Geometry



Eric Errthum
University of Maryland

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Gauss: “Mathematics is the queen of sciences and number theory is the queen of mathematics.”

The Most Famous Number Theory Problem

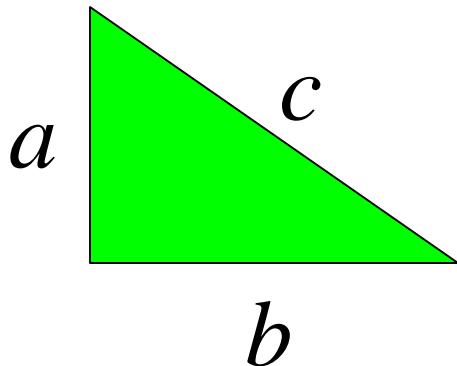
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$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

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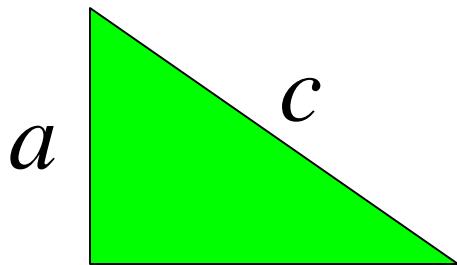
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$$3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$$

$$5^2 + 12^2 = 13^2$$

$$8^2 + 15^2 = 17^2$$

$$9^2 + 40^2 = 41^2$$

$$12^2 + 35^2 = 37^2$$

⋮

The Most Famous Number Theory Problem

- Recall Pythagorean Triples satisfy:

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

- **Question:** Are there positive integers satisfying

$$a^n + b^n = c^n$$

for $n \geq 3$? (Fermat, 1637).

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- A lot of math developed along the way.

Modern Number Theory

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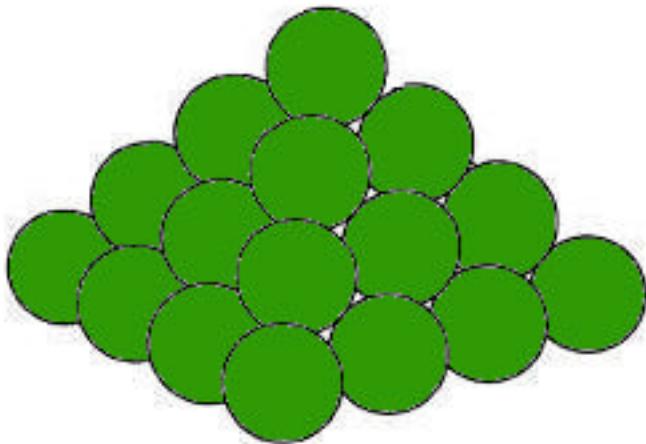
- Modern number theory comes in a variety of flavors: **Algebraic**, **Analytic**, **Combinatorial**, **Geometric**.
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- It's a really complicated proof.
- A crucial step involved a property of **Elliptic Curves**, fundamental objects in geometric number theory.

The Cannonball Problem

- Legend has it...

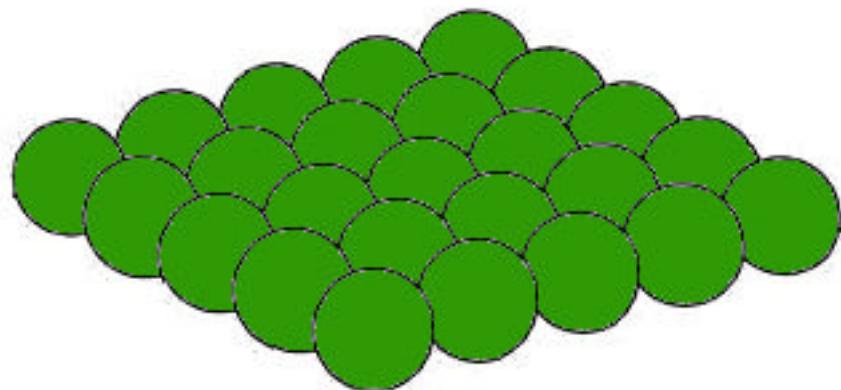
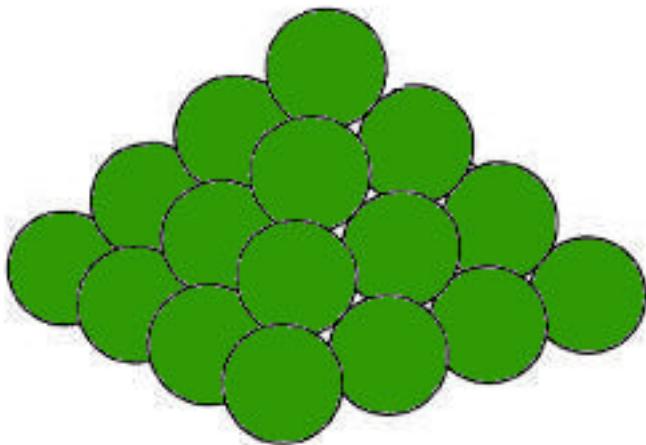
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- Two ways to arrange cannonballs:
- In a pyramid:



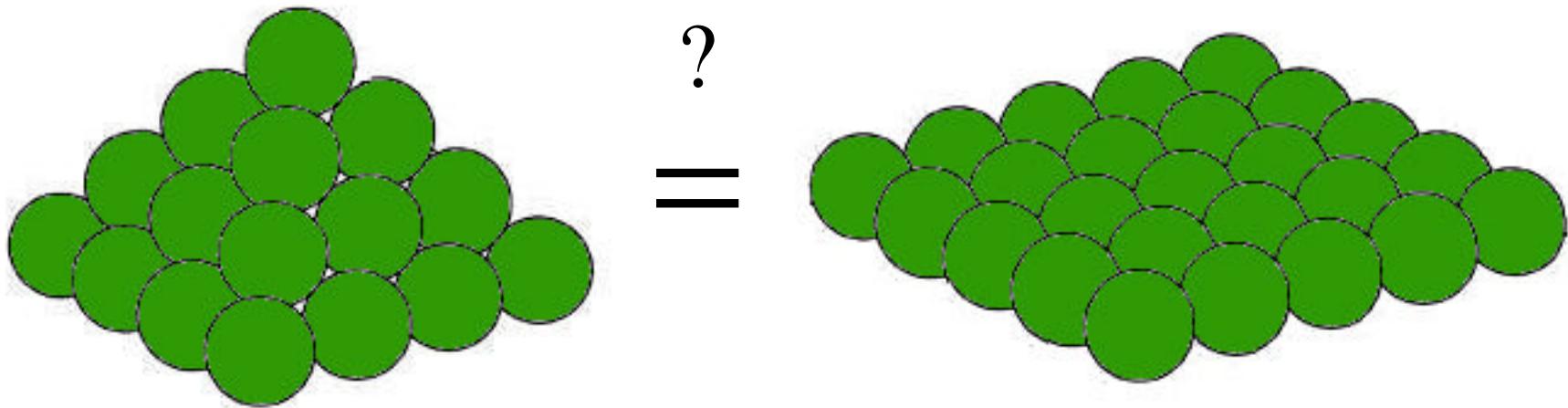
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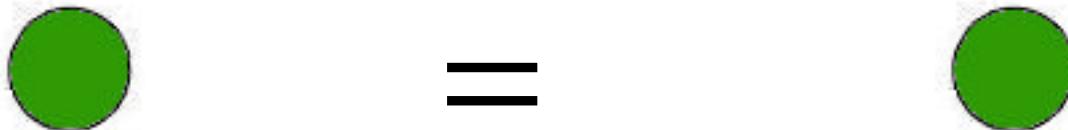
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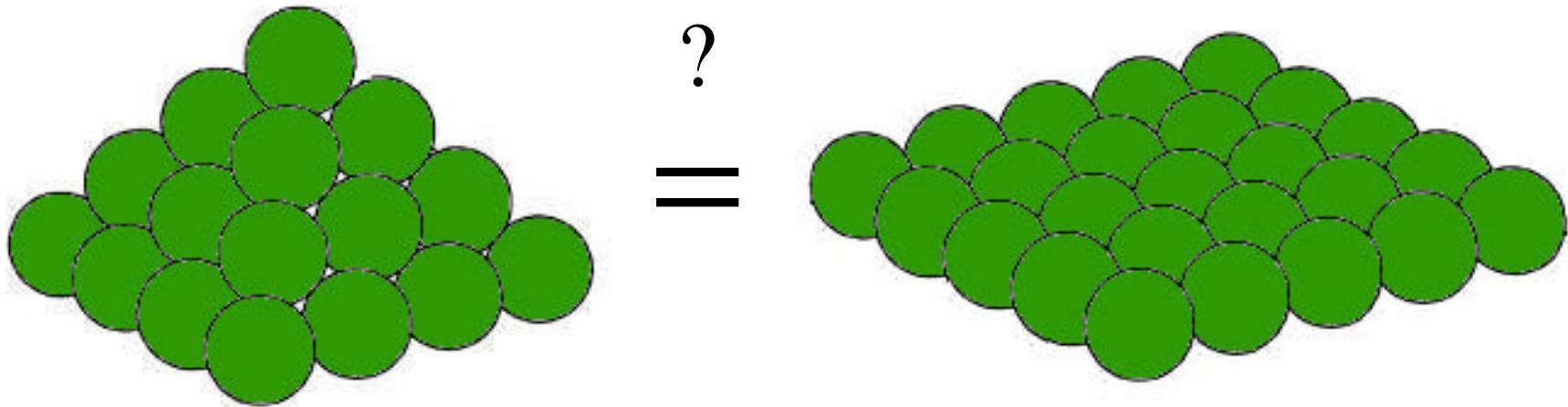
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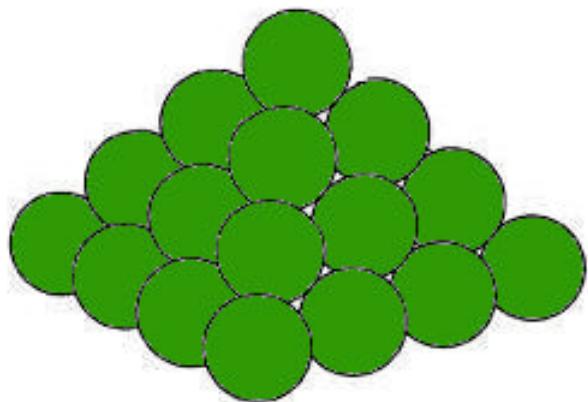
- **Question:** Is there a number of cannonballs which can be arranged in both ways?
- One cannonball can. **Other solutions?**

Convert to Math

- Formula for number of cannonballs in a pyramid of x levels:

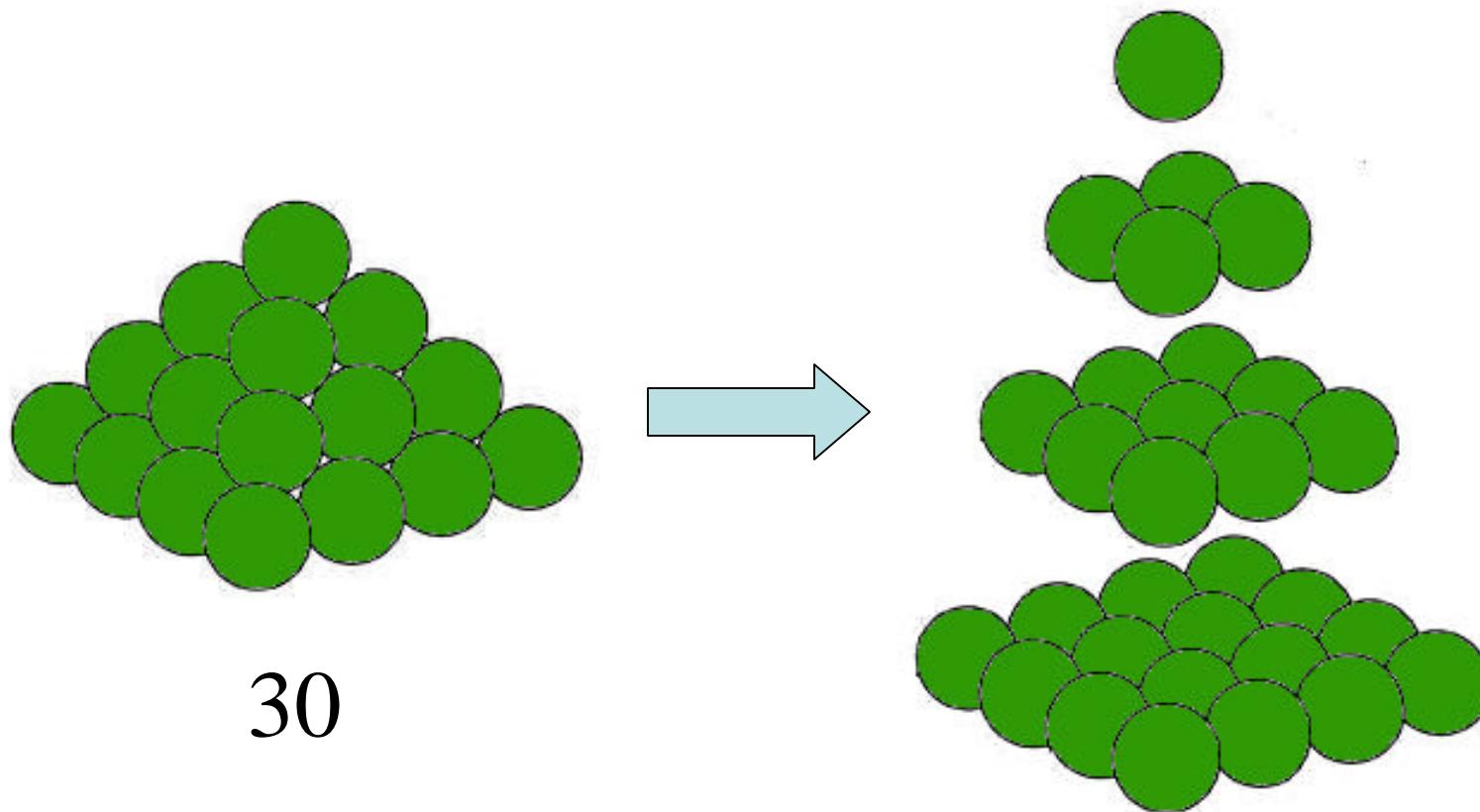
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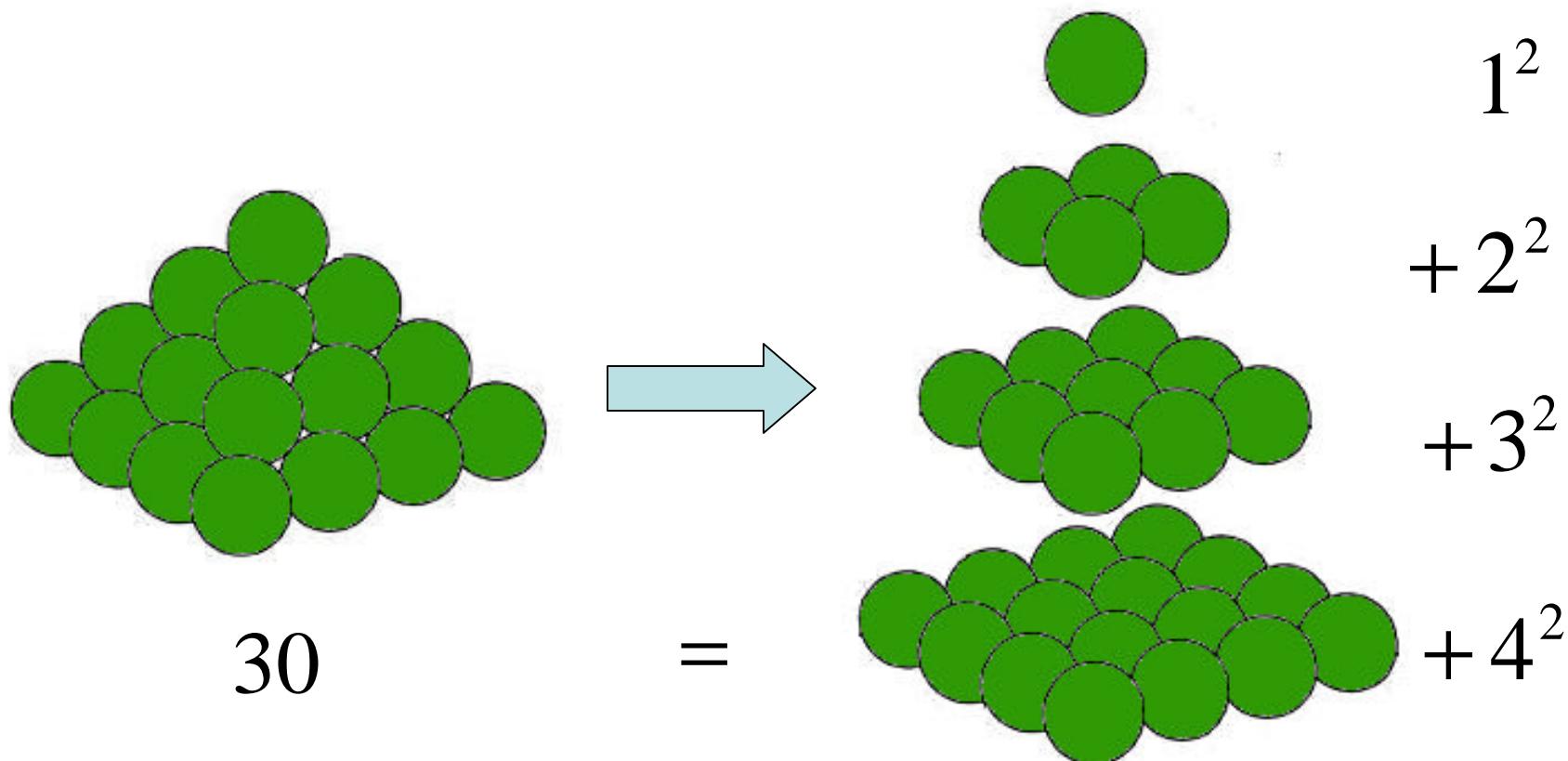
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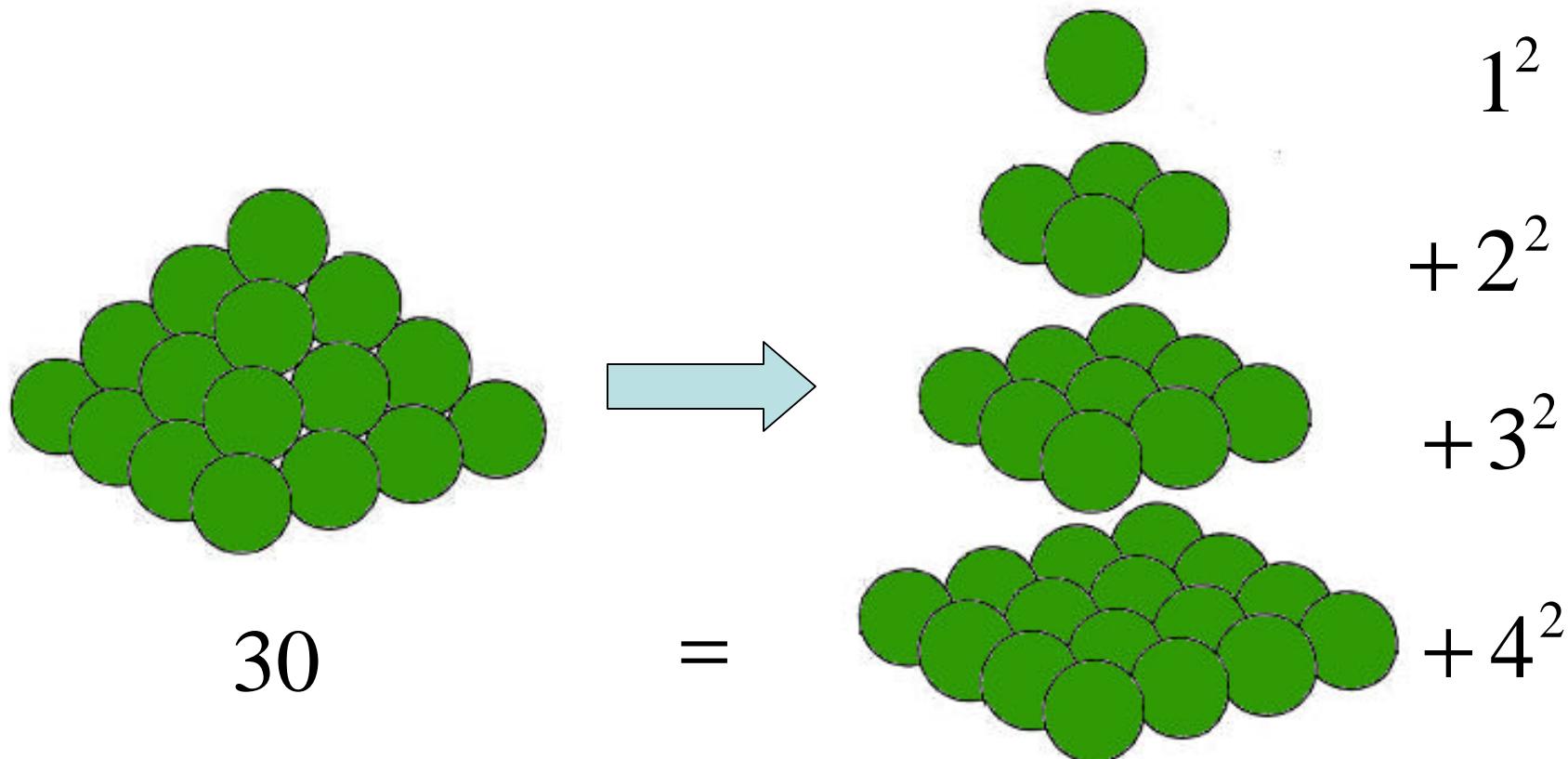
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Convert to Math

- Formula for number of cannonballs in a pyramid of x levels:

$$1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + \dots + x^2$$



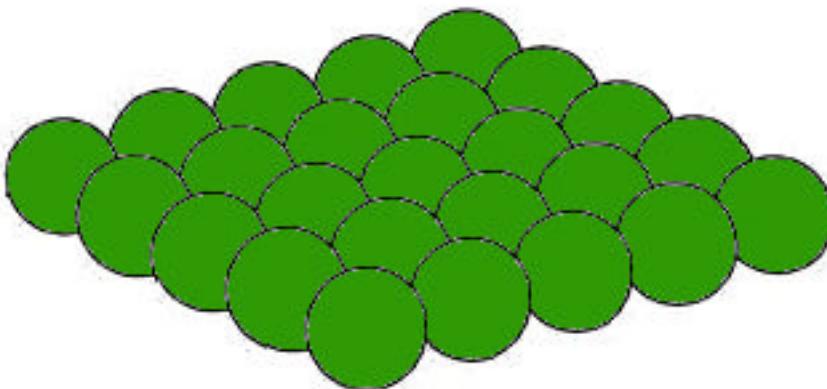
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- Formula for number of cannonballs in a pyramid of x levels:

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- Formula for a square with y cannonballs on one side:

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Convert to Math

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- Formula for a square with y cannonballs on one side:

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- Want two integers x and y so that:

$$y^2 = 1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + \dots + x^2$$

Sum of Squares

- Better formula for $1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + \dots + x^2$

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$$1^2 = 1$$

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$$1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + 4^2 = 30$$

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$$1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + x^2 = \frac{x(x+1)(2x+1)}{6}$$

Sum of Squares

- Better formula for $1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + \dots + x^2$

$$1^2 = 1 = \frac{1(2)(3)}{6} = \frac{6}{6} \quad \checkmark$$

$$1^2 + 2^2 = 5 = \frac{2(3)(5)}{6} = \frac{30}{6} \quad \checkmark$$

$$1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 = 14 = \frac{3(4)(7)}{6} = \frac{84}{6} \quad \checkmark$$

$$1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + 4^2 = 30 = \frac{4(5)(9)}{6} = \frac{180}{6} \quad \checkmark$$

⋮

$$1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + x^2 = \frac{x(x+1)(2x+1)}{6}$$

Question Restated

- Want two integers x and y so that:

$$y^2 = 1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + x^2$$

$$y^2 = \frac{x(x+1)(2x+1)}{6}$$

$$y^2 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 + \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

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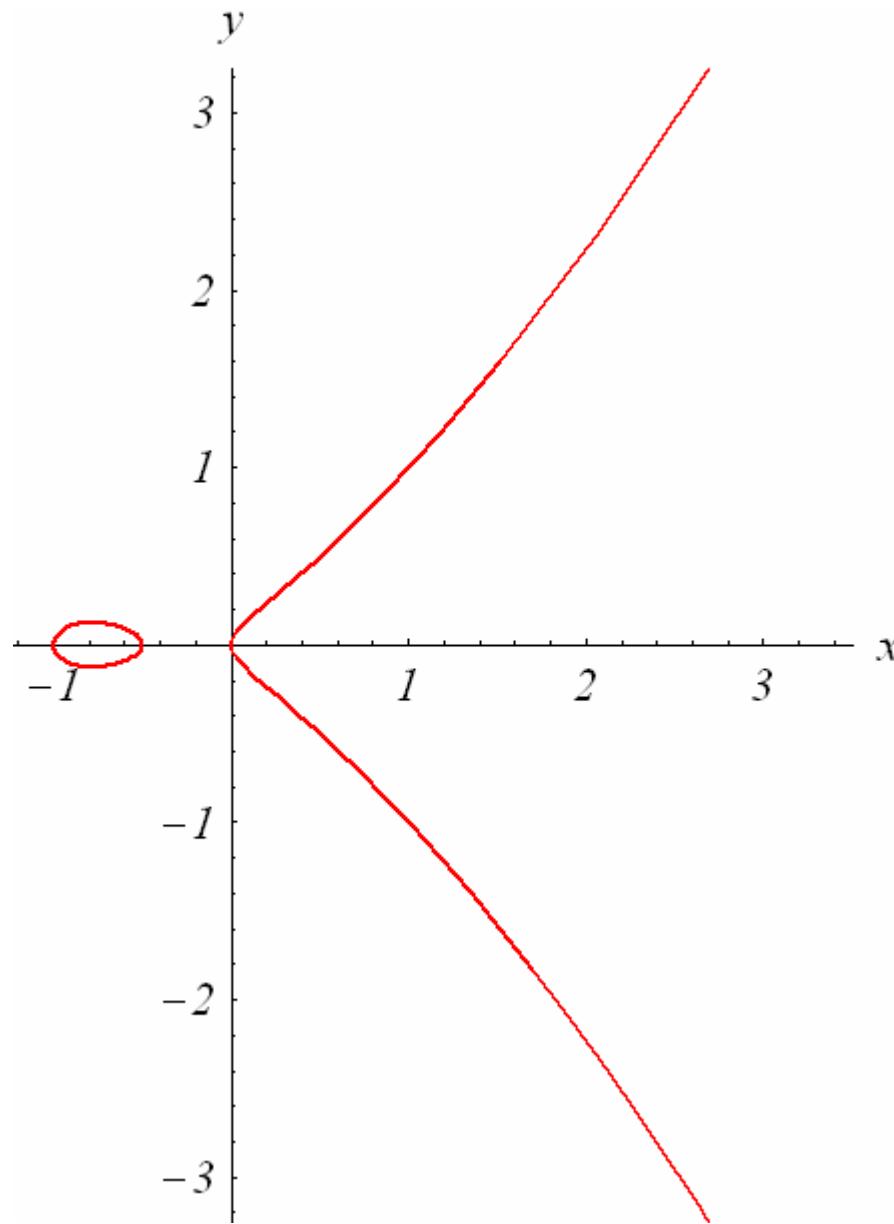
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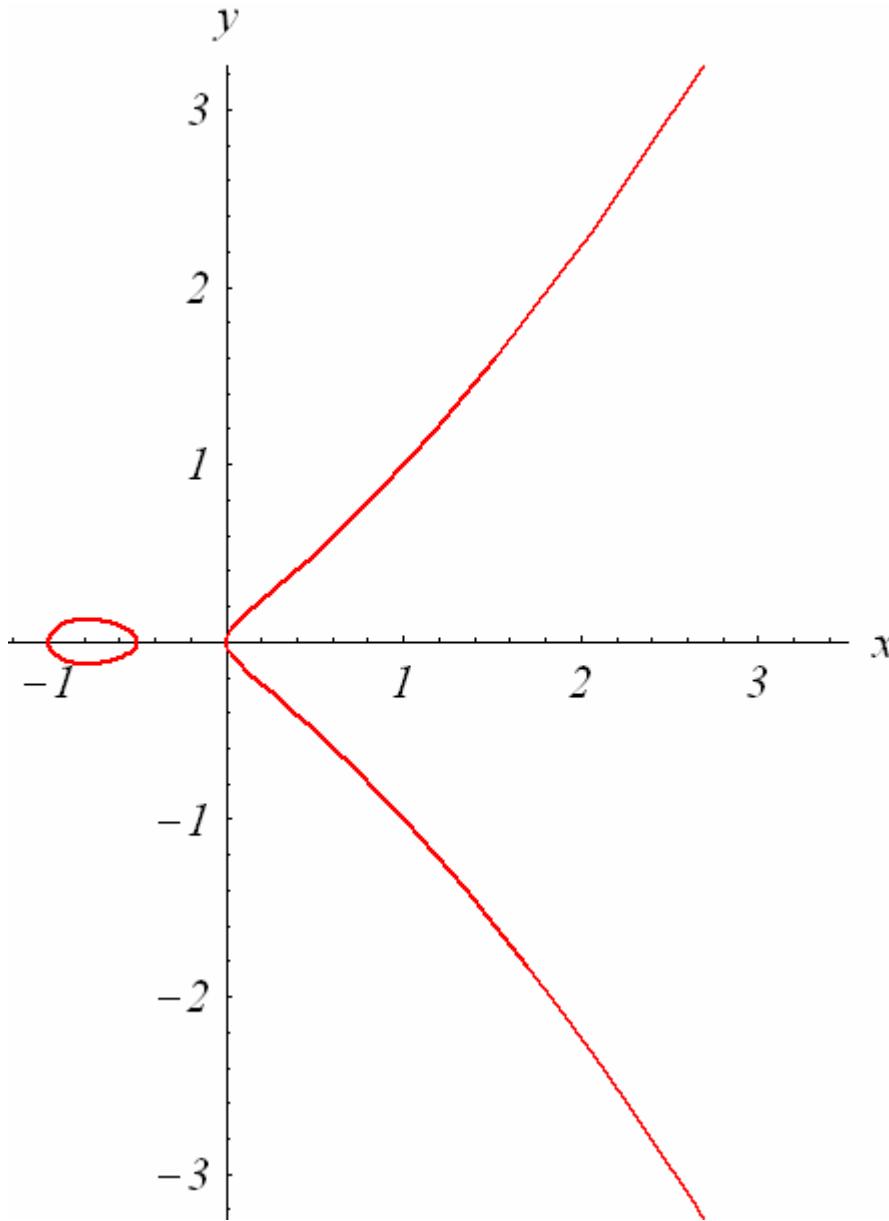
- Plan: consider the curve

$$y^2 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 + \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

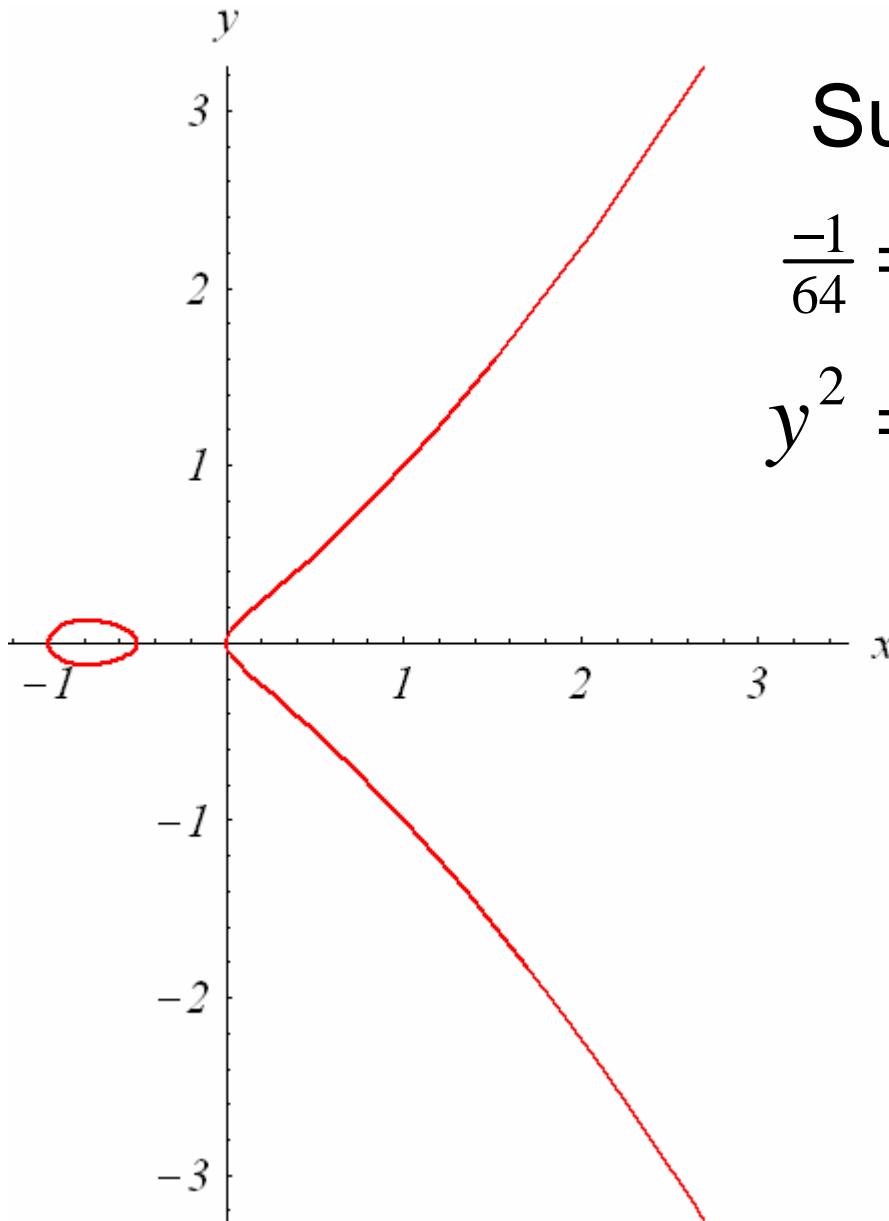
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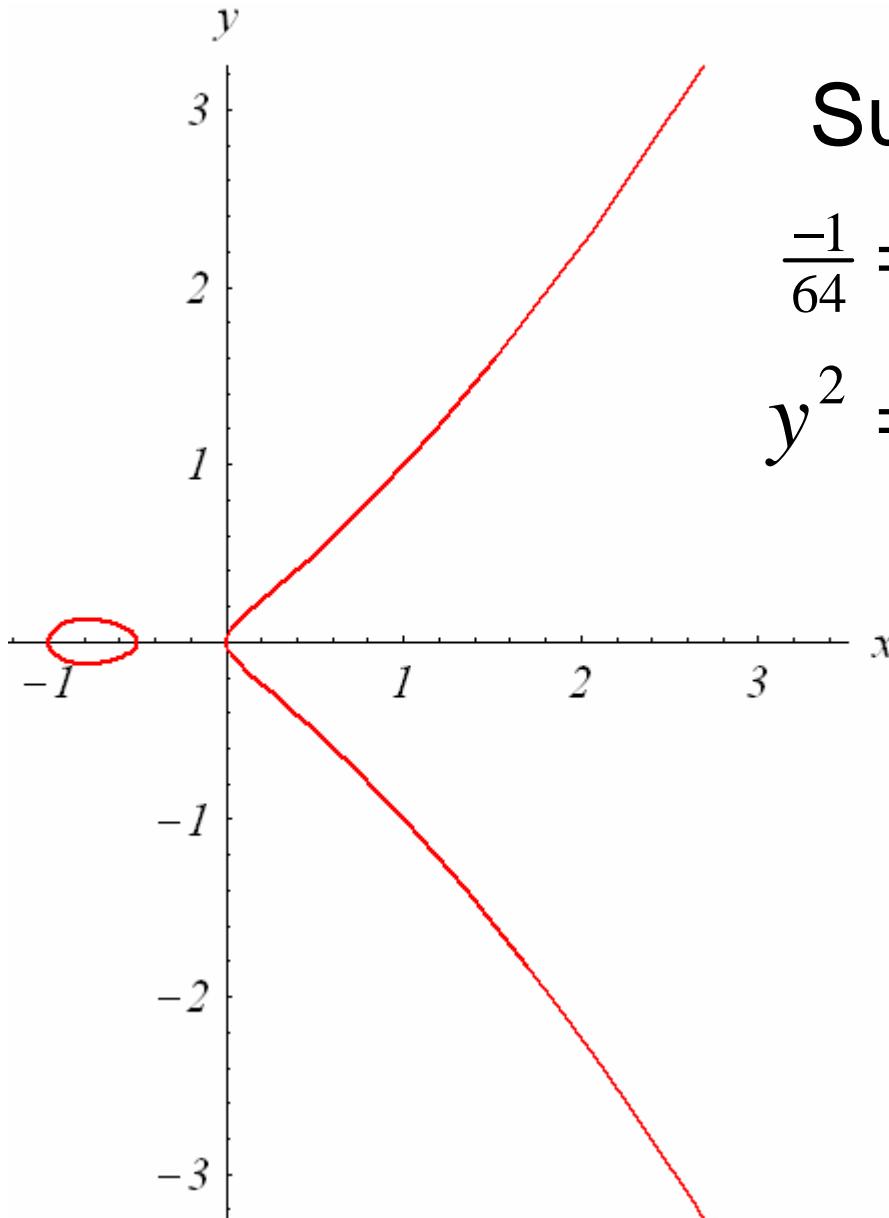


Suppose: $x = \frac{-1}{4}$

$$\frac{-1}{64} = \frac{1}{3}\left(\frac{-1}{4}\right)^3 + \frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{-1}{4}\right)^2 + \frac{1}{6}\left(\frac{-1}{4}\right)$$

$$y^2 = \frac{-1}{64} \quad \text{No Solution.}$$

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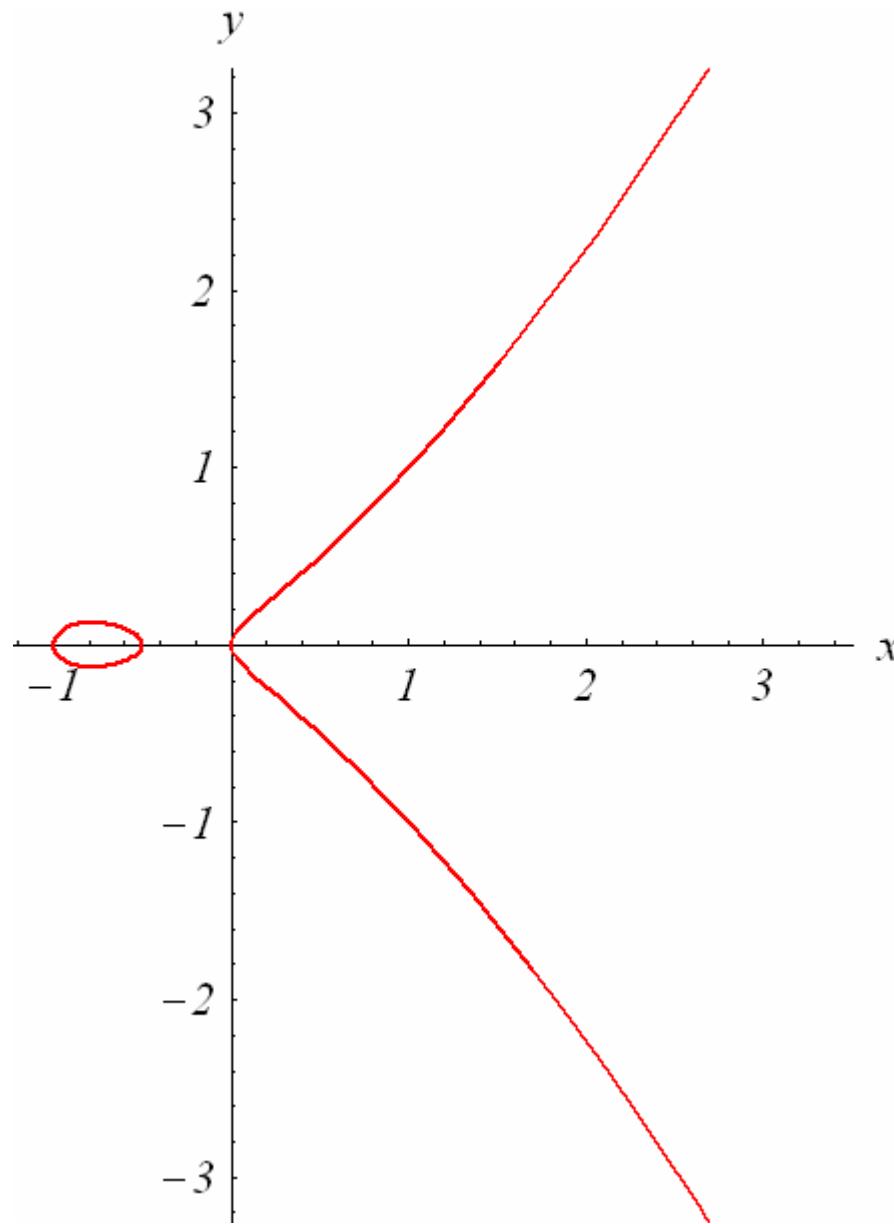
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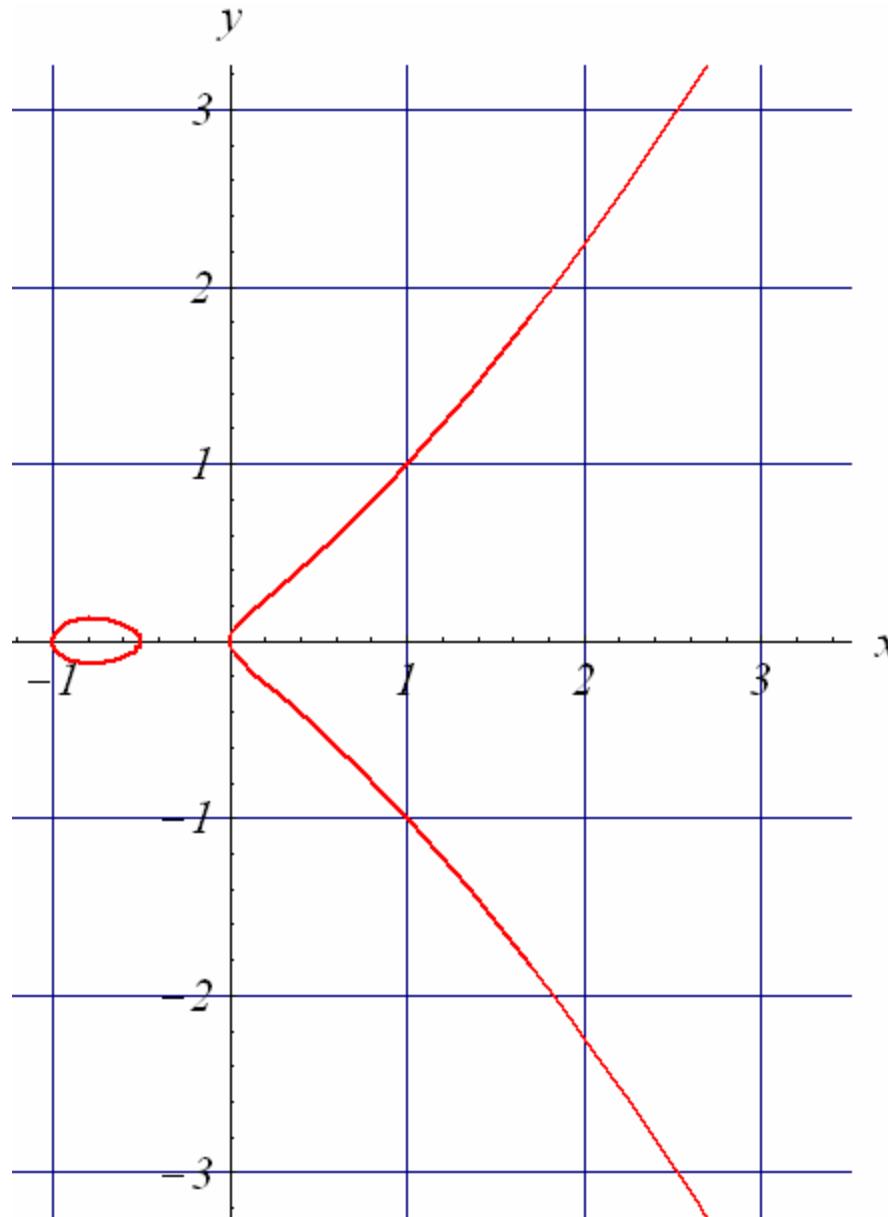
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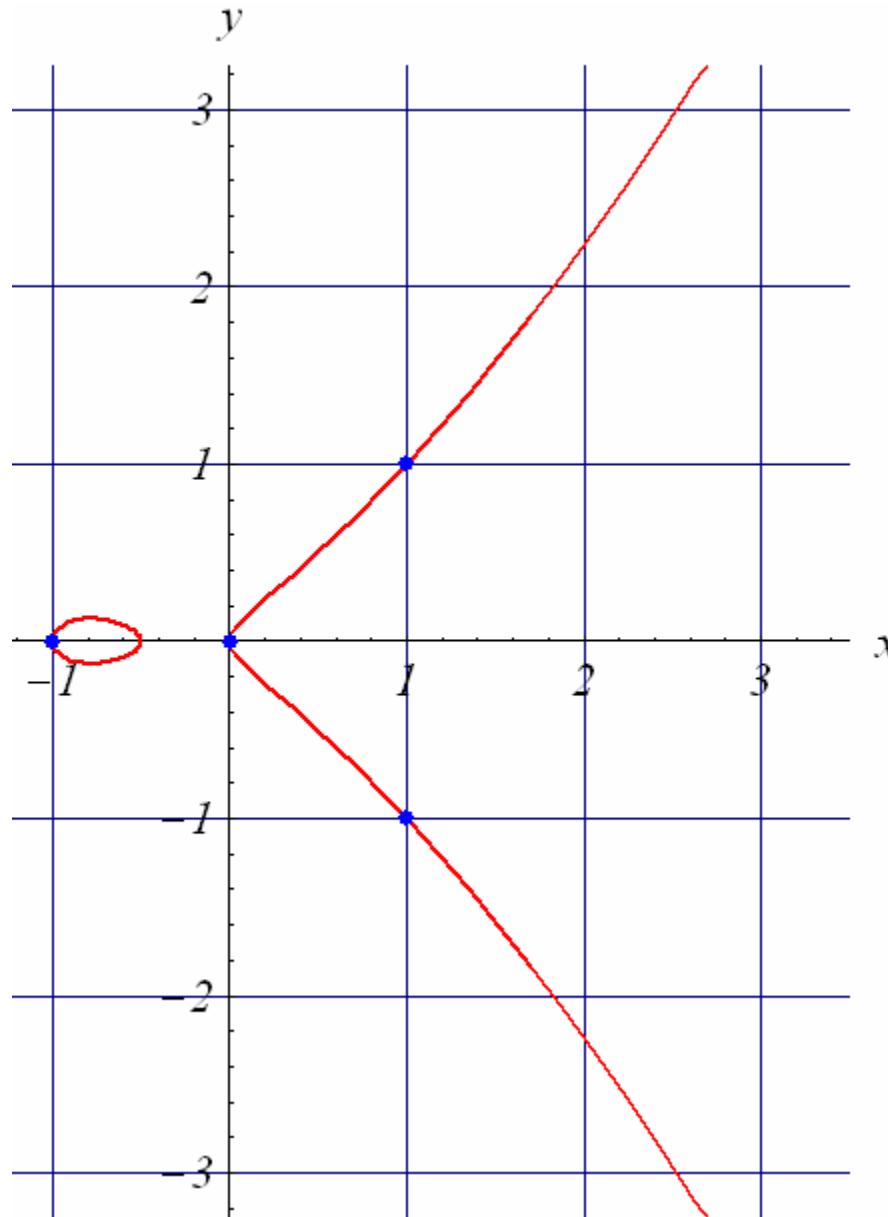
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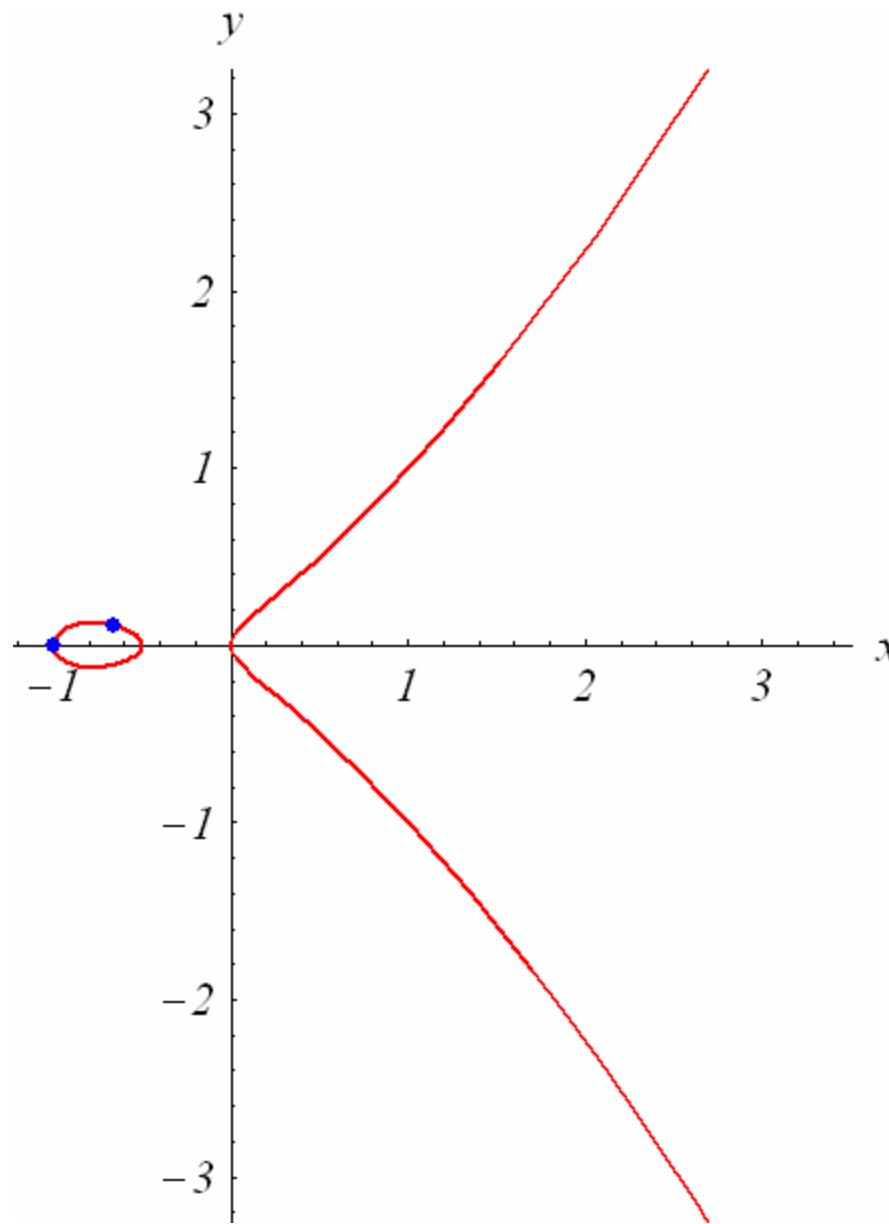


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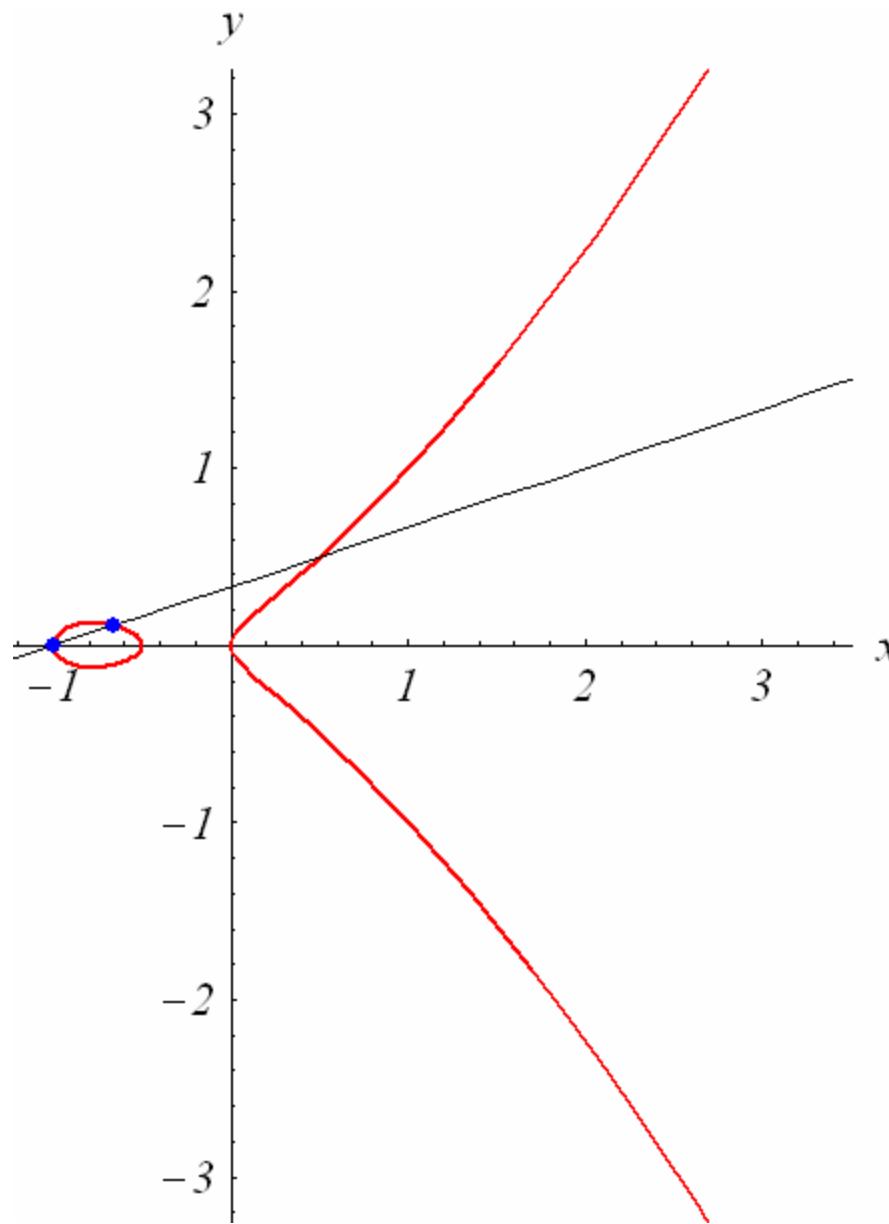
Properties of the Curve:

1. A line through any two points on the curve hits the curve in a third point.

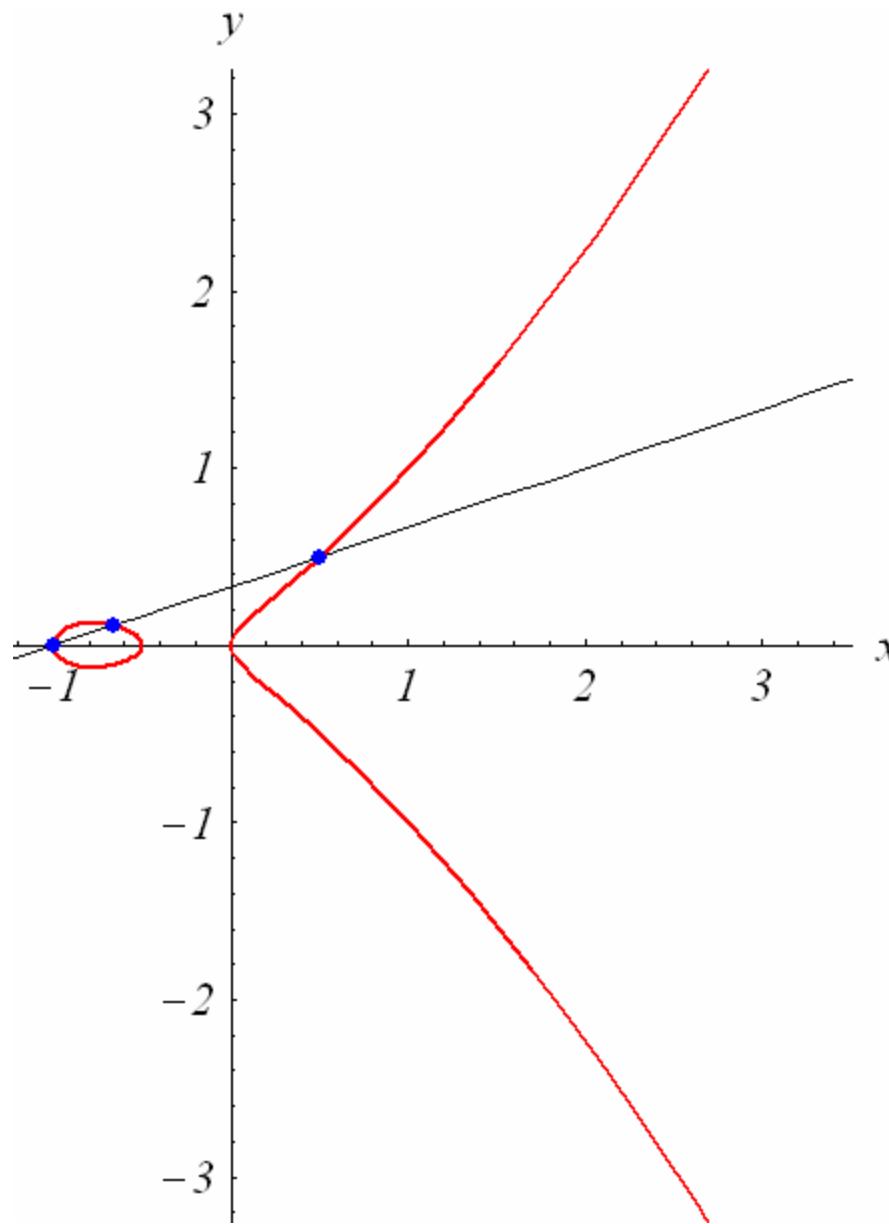
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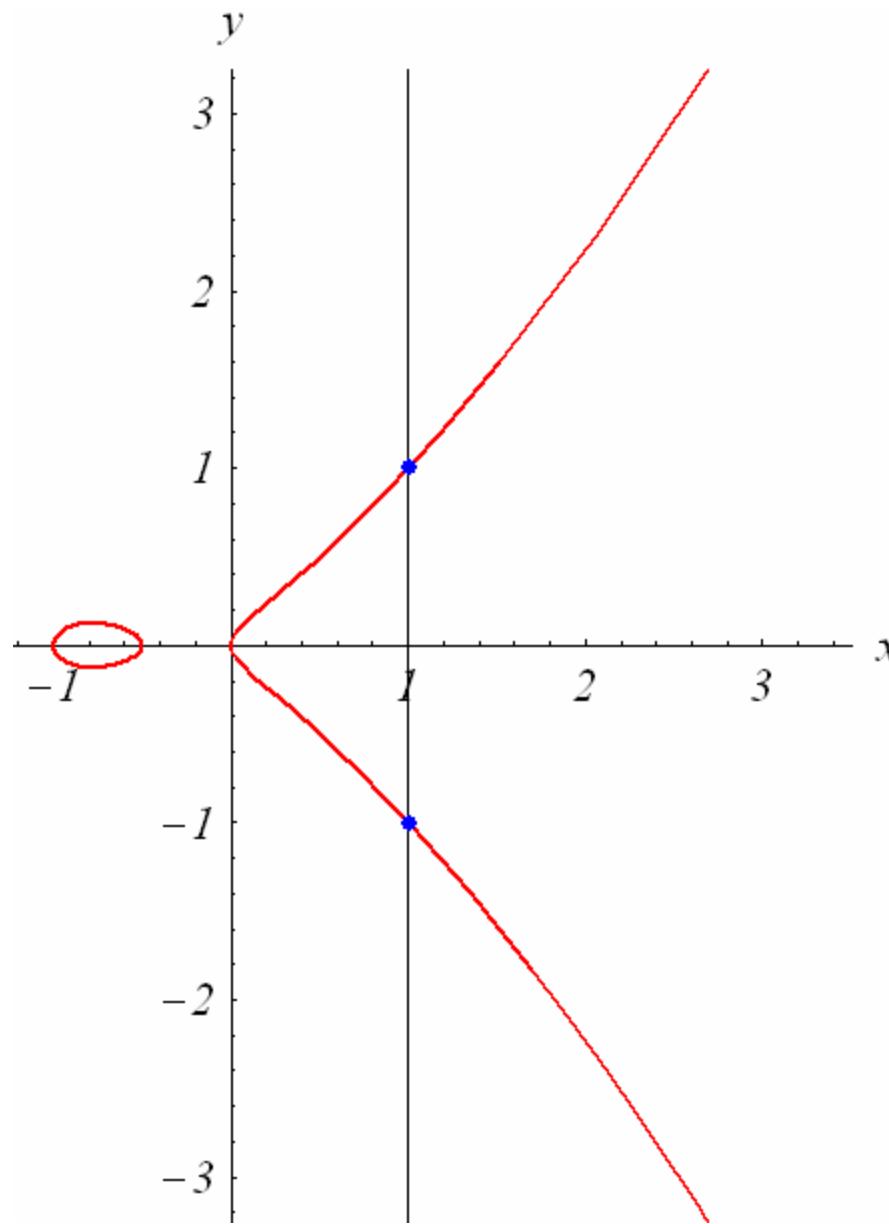
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Note: Two points with integral coordinates do not always give a third point with integral coordinates.

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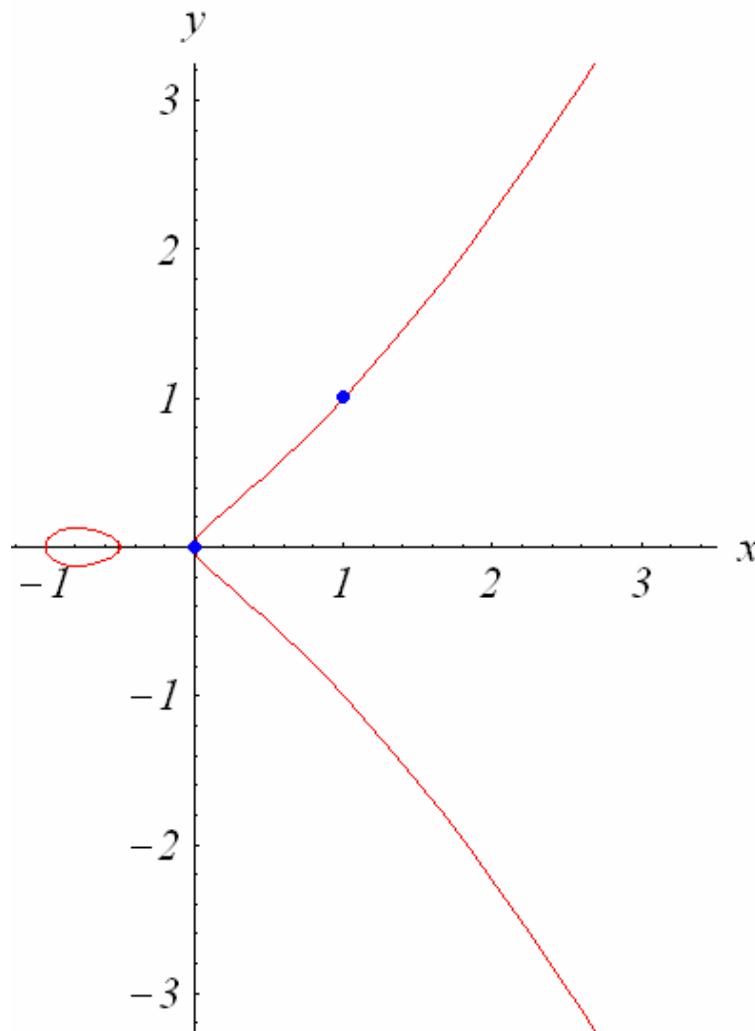
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- **Method:** Use these properties to find more rational points on the curve.
Hopefully we'll find an integral point.

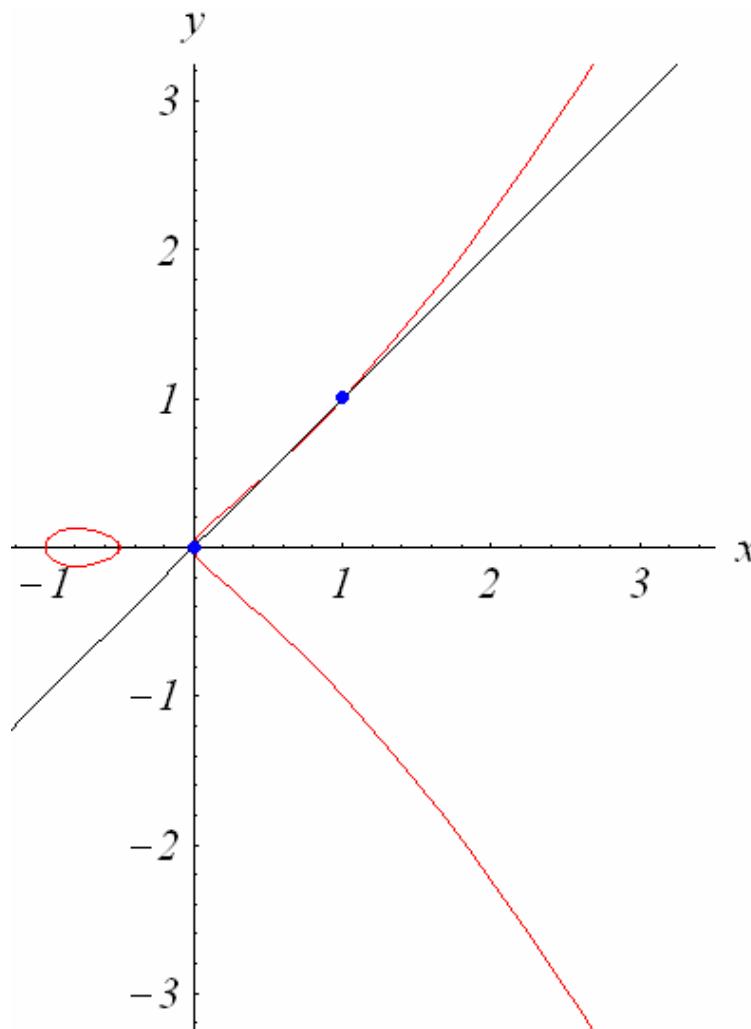
Finding New Points

- Consider the line through $(0,0)$ and $(1,1)$.



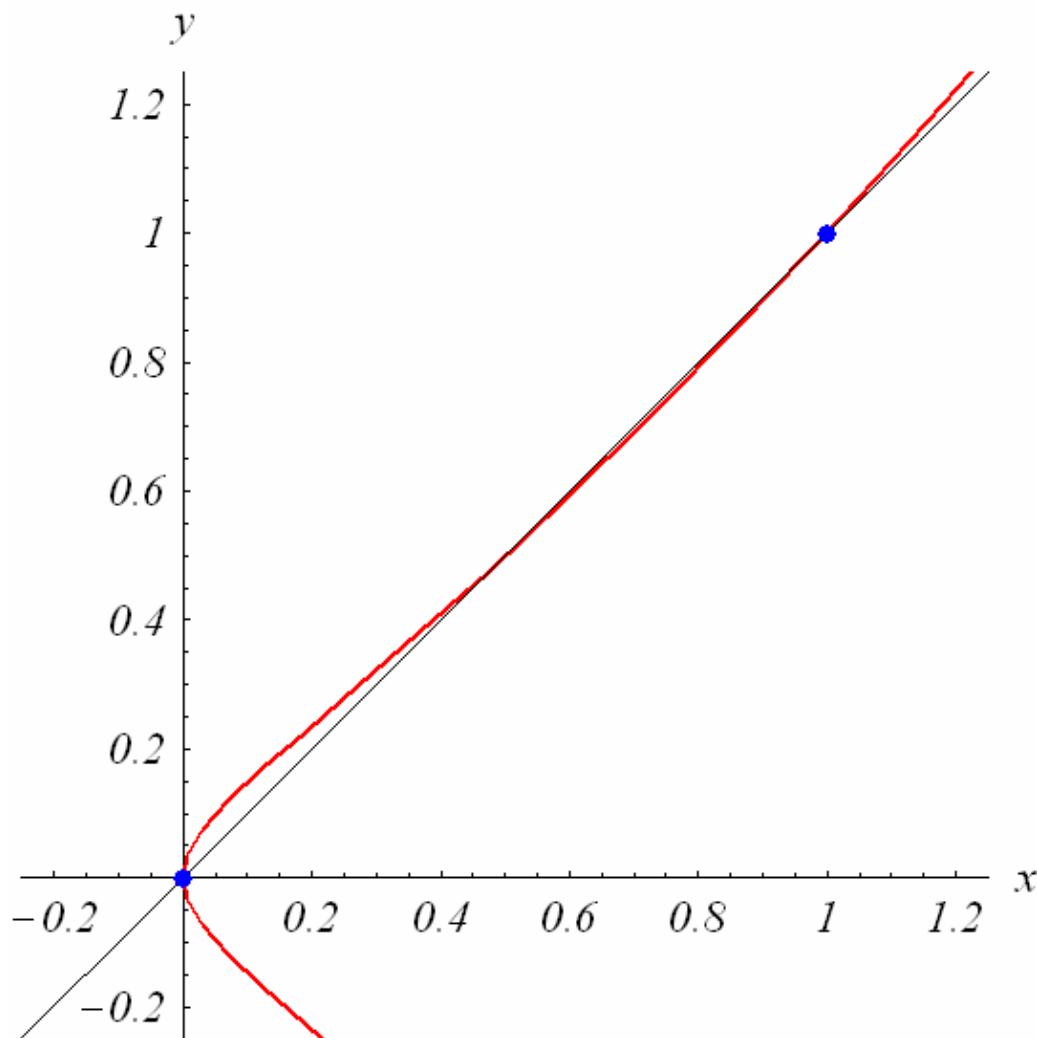
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- Put them together:

$$x^2 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 + \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

$$\Rightarrow 0 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 - \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

Finding New Points

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$$0 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 - \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

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- We already know two solutions, 0 and 1:

$$\frac{1}{3}x^3 - \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x = x(x-1)(x-?)$$

so it's easy to find the third.

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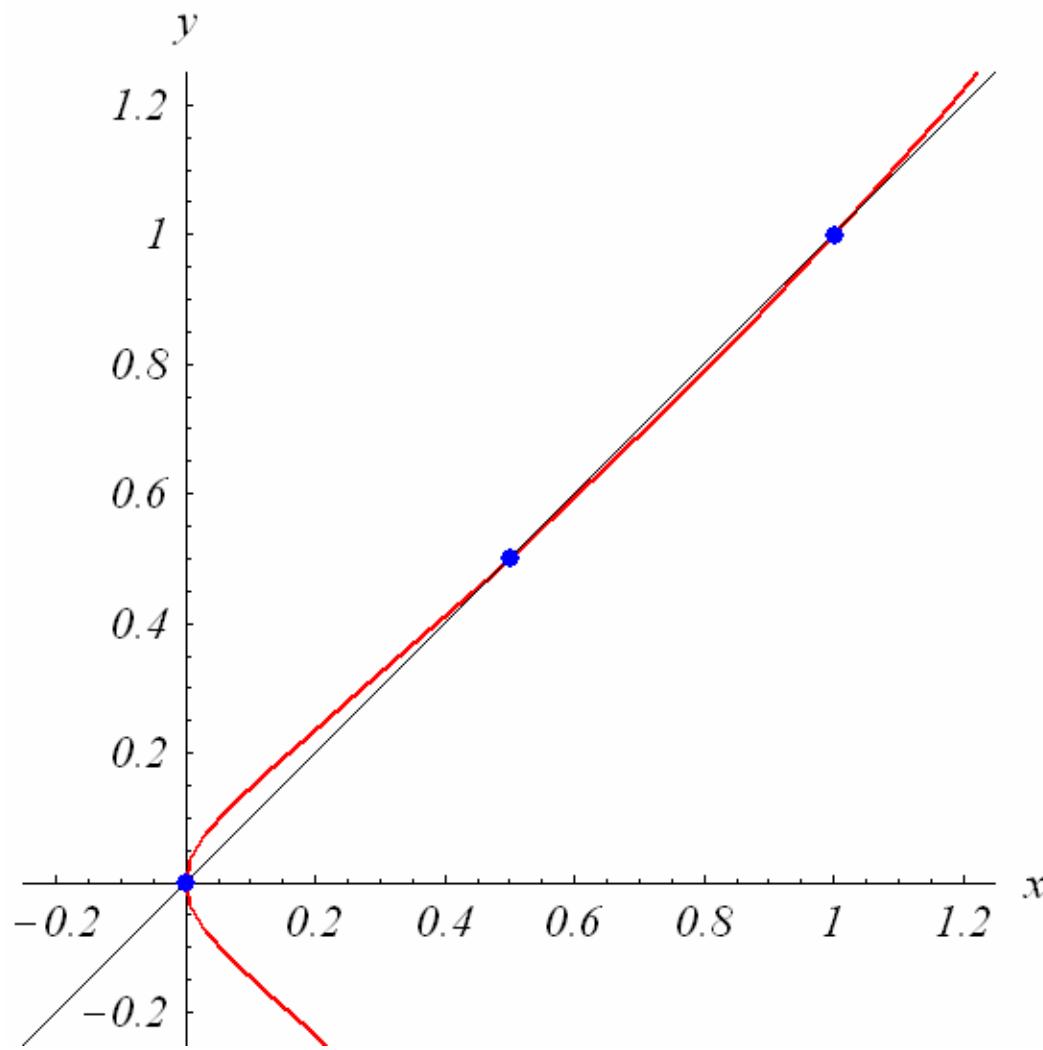
- We get a new point: $\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$.

$$y^2 = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 = \frac{1}{4}$$

$$\frac{1}{3}x^3 + \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x = \frac{1}{3}\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^3 + \frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 + \frac{1}{6}\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) = \frac{1}{4} \quad \checkmark$$

Finding New Points

- The new point on the line and curve: $\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$



Finding New Points

- Need to solve:

$$0 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 - \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

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- We get a new point: $\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$.
- It's not integral.

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)				
(0,0)				
(1,-1)				
(1,1)				

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)				
(0,0)				$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$
(1,-1)				
(1,1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$		

The point found in our example.

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)				
(0,0)			$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$
(1,-1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$		
(1,1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$		

Because of the symmetry about the x -axis.

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?			
(0,0)		?	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$
(1,-1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$?	
(1,1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$?

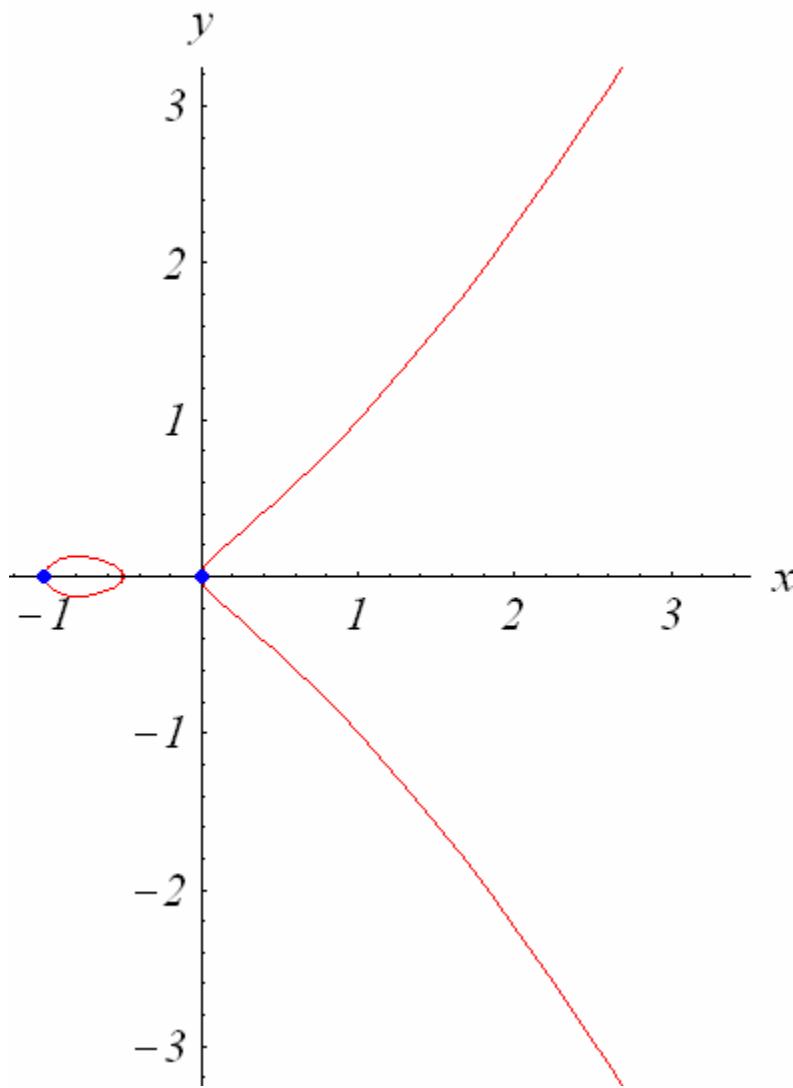
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(-1,0)	?			
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(1,-1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$?	vertical
(1,1)		$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$	vertical	?

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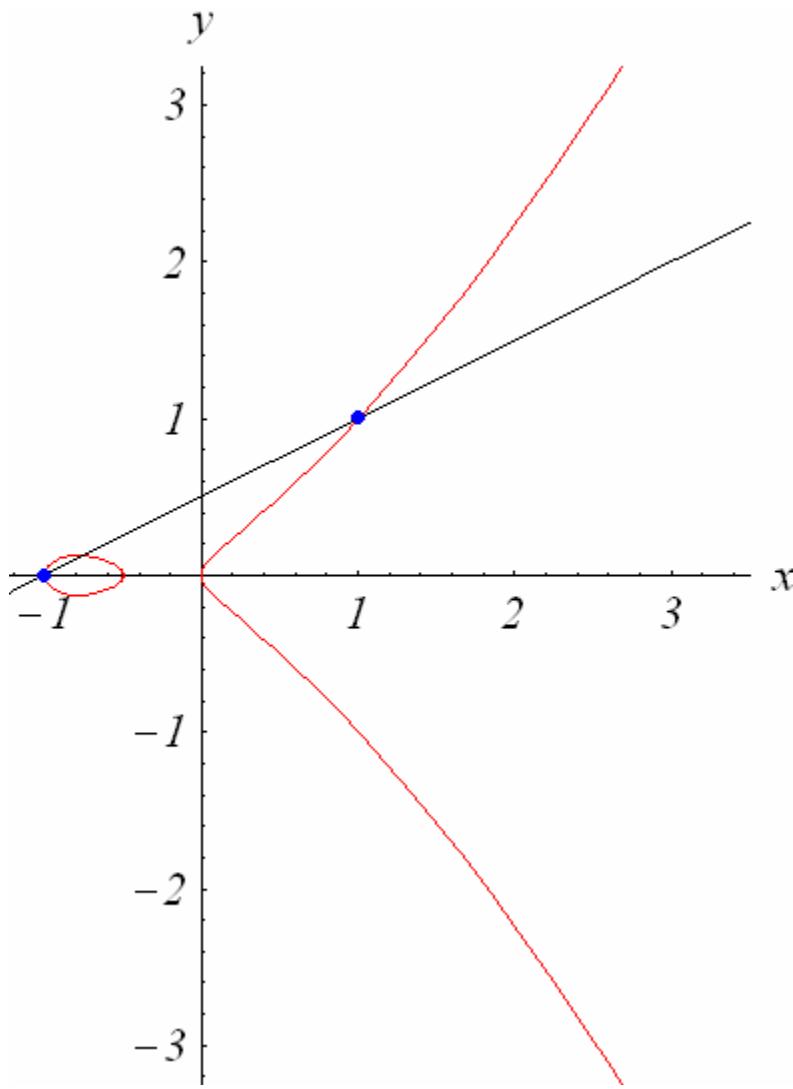
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	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$		
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)		$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	vertical
(1,1)		$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$		
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)		$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	vertical
(1,1)		$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

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	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$		$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
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(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	vertical
(1,1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

Because of the symmetry about the x -axis.

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	vertical
(1,1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

No new integral points.

Try Again...

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	vertical
(1,1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

Something old, something new...

...and Again!

- Take the line through $(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$ and $(1, 1)$.

$$y = 3x - 2$$

...and Again!

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- Put this into the curve:

$$(3x - 2)^2 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 + \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

$$0 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 - \frac{17}{2}x^2 + \frac{73}{6}x - 4$$

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$$0 = \left(x - \frac{1}{2}\right)(x - 1)(x - 24)$$

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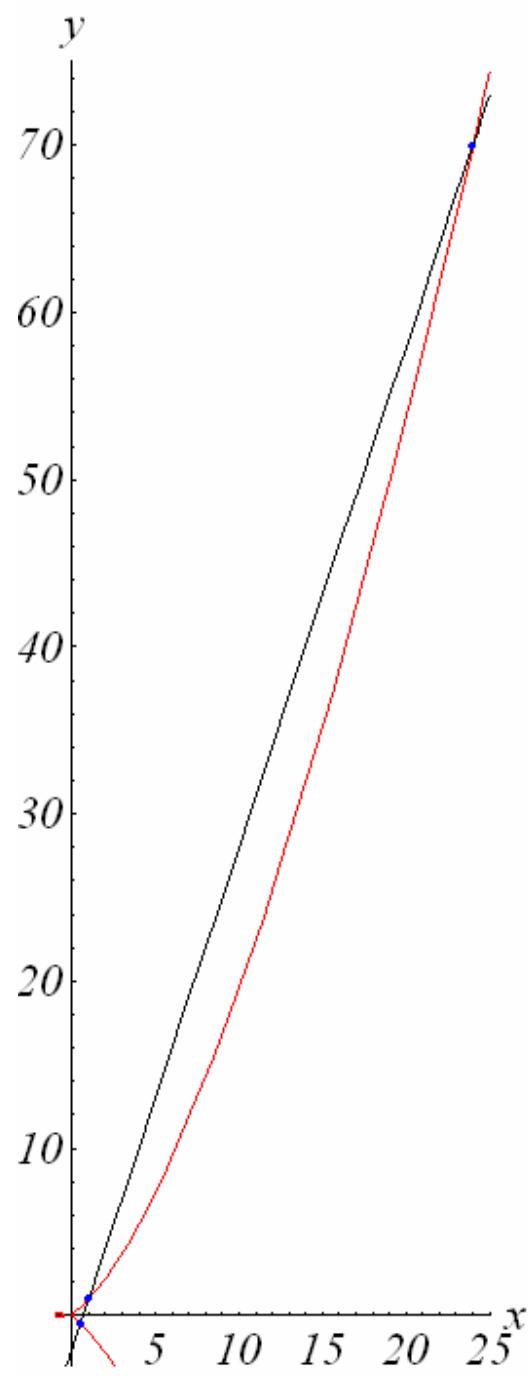
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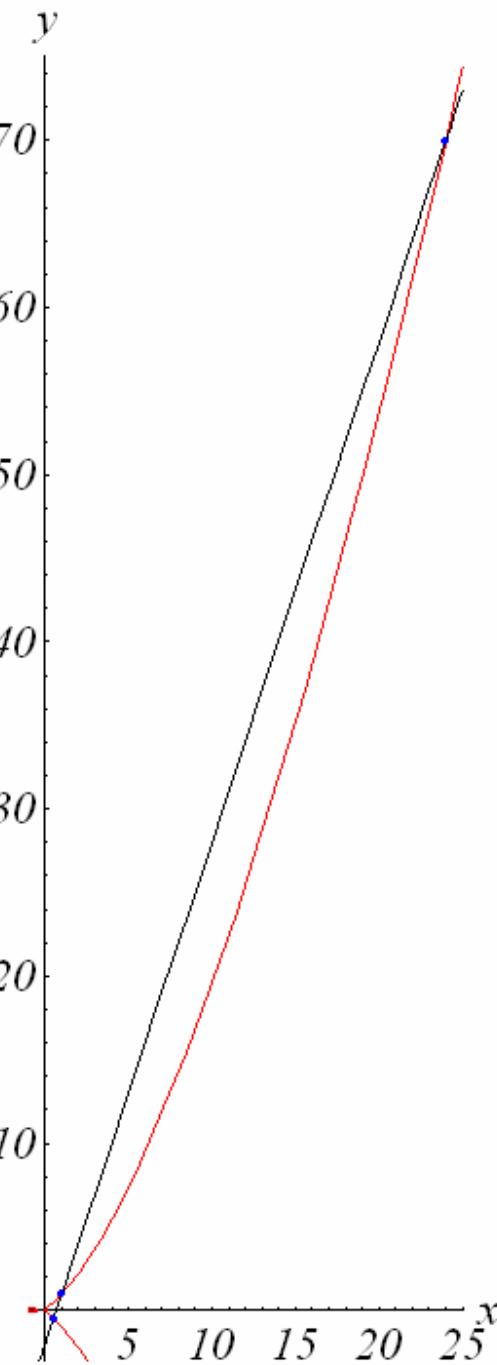
$$0 = (x - \frac{1}{2})(x - 1)(x - 24)$$

- This gives the point $(24, 70)$.



Cannonballs Solution

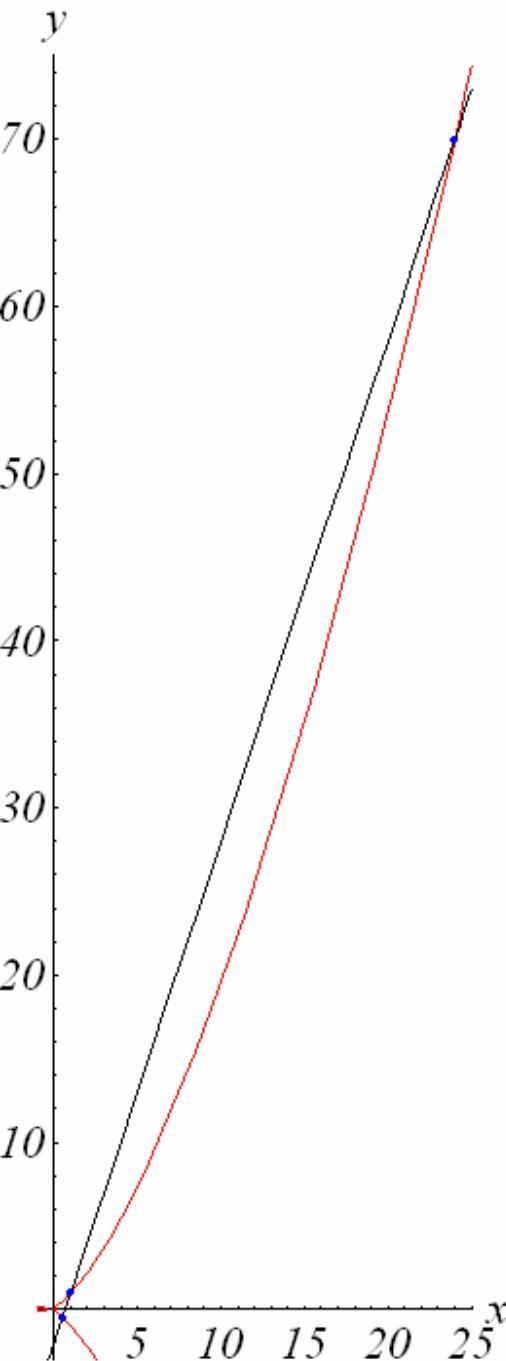
$$70^2 = 1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + 24^2$$



Cannonballs Solution

$$70^2 = 1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + 24^2$$

- A 70x70 square of cannonballs contains **4900** cannonballs.
- A pyramid of height 24 also contains **4900** cannonballs.

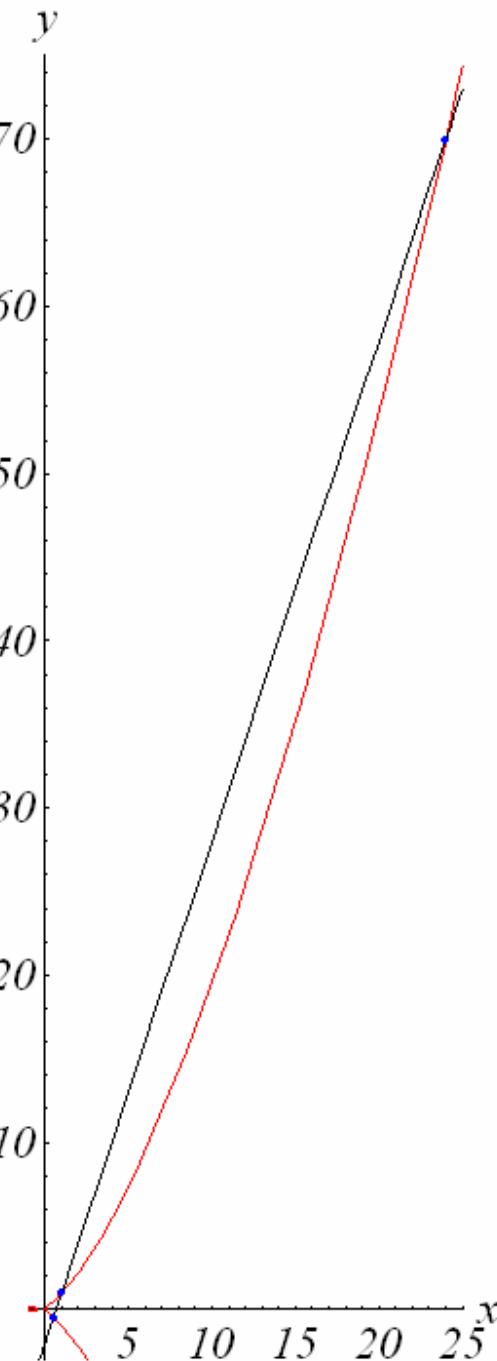


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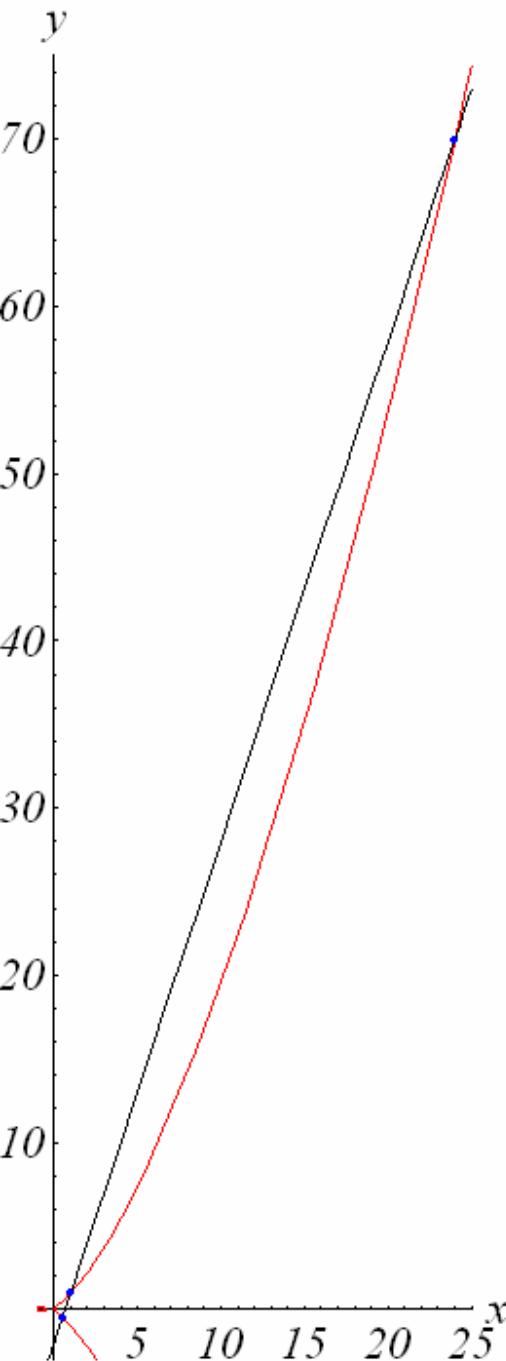
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Are there any more solutions?

Watson (1918): **No.**



Beyond Cannonballs

- The curve

$$y^2 = \frac{1}{3}x^3 + \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{1}{6}x$$

is an example of an **Elliptic Curve**.

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Beyond Cannonballs

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is an example of an **Elliptic Curve**.

- Elliptic curves are special because you can “add” two points to get a third.
 - When adding a point to itself, use the tangent line.
 - Need to include one more special point, \mathbb{Y} , that lies at the top and bottom of every vertical line.

Addition Table

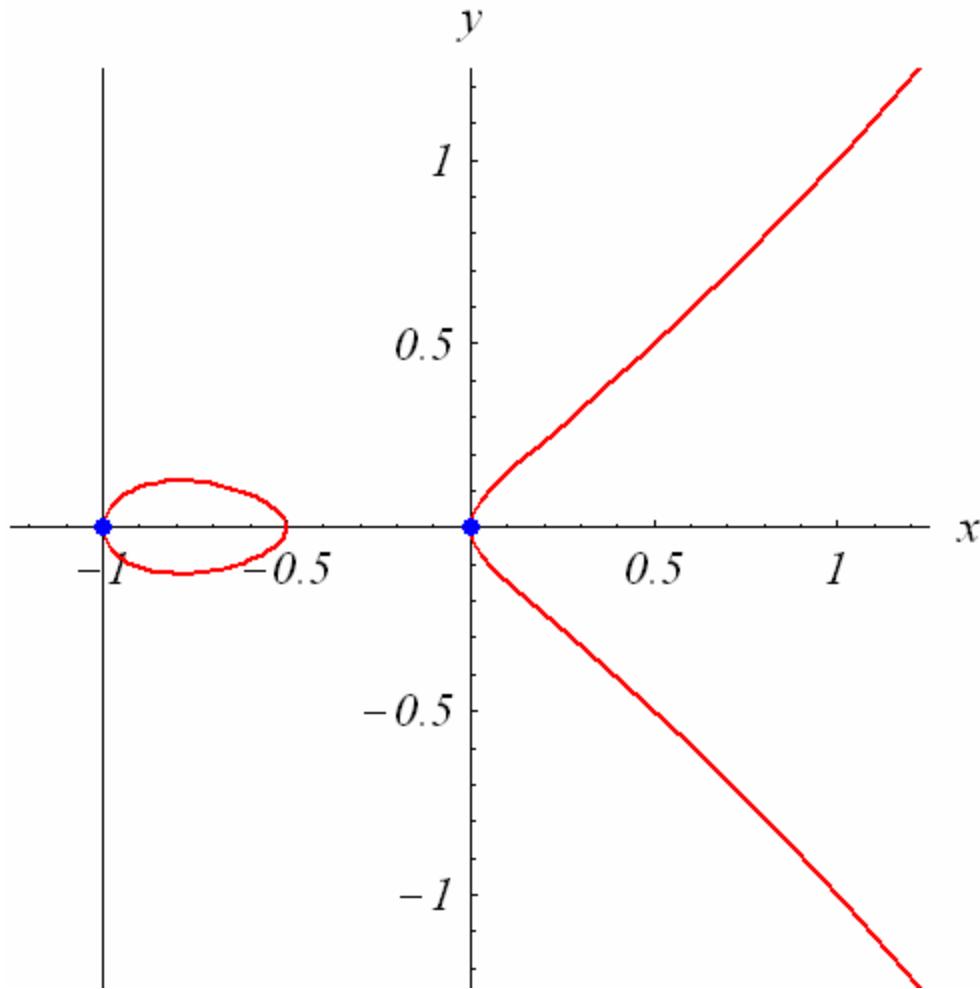
	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$\left(-\frac{1}{2}, 0\right)$	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$
(0,0)	$\left(-\frac{1}{2}, 0\right)$?	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$
(1,-1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$?	vertical
(1,1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$	vertical	?

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	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	?	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	¥
(1,1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	¥	?

Vertical lines include the point ¥

Tangent Lines Through $(-1,0)$ and $(0,0)$

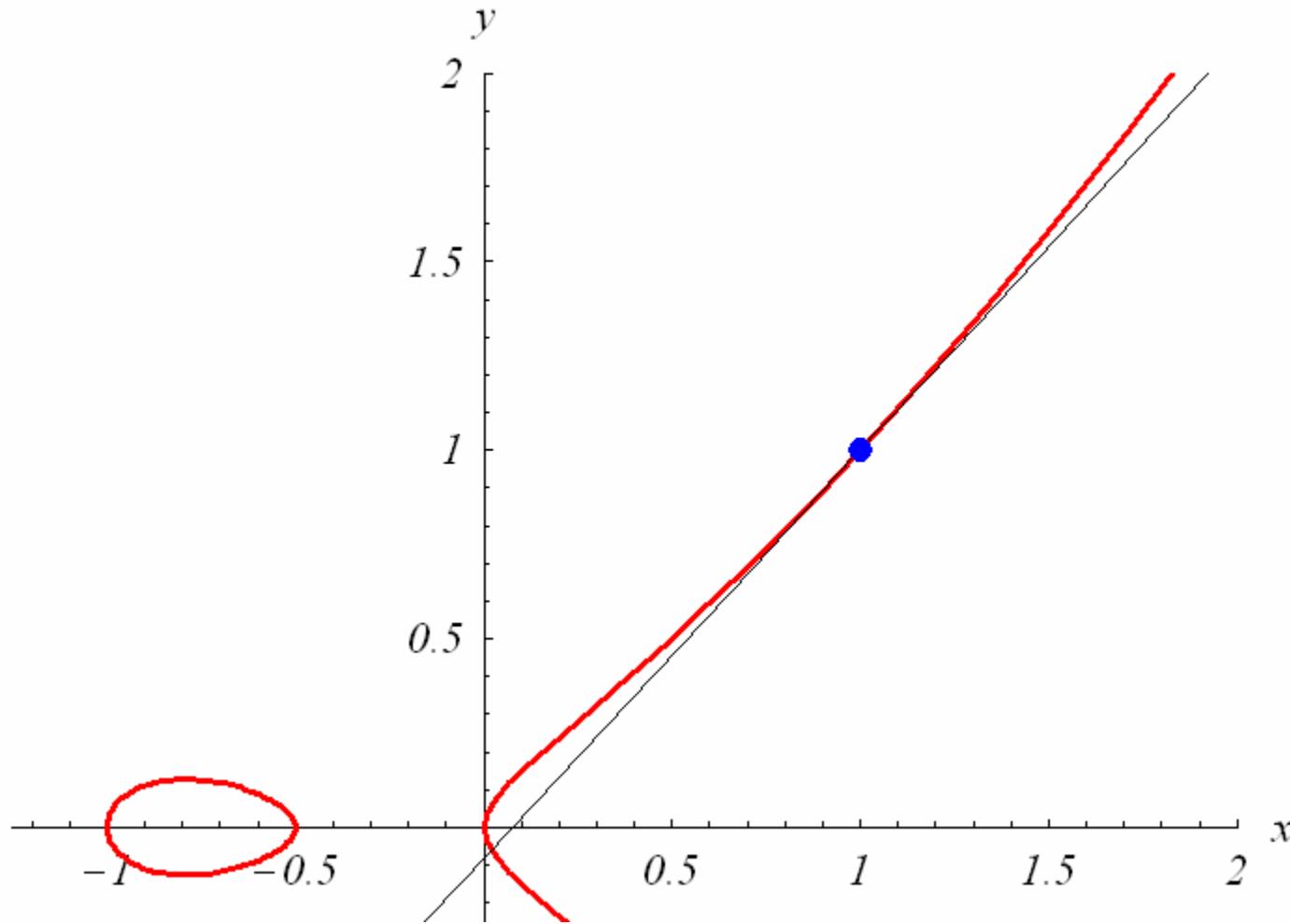


Addition Table

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	¥	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$
(0,0)	$(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$	¥	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
(1,-1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$?	¥
(1,1)	$(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	¥	?

Vertical lines include the point ¥

Tangent Line Through $(1,1)$



Addition Table

	(-1,0)	(0,0)	(1,-1)	(1,1)
(-1,0)	¥	$\left(-\frac{1}{2}, 0\right)$	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$
(0,0)	$\left(-\frac{1}{2}, 0\right)$	¥	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$
(1,-1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$?	¥
(1,1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$	¥	$\left(\frac{1}{48}, \frac{-35}{576}\right)$

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(-1,0)	¥	$\left(-\frac{1}{2}, 0\right)$	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$
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(1,-1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, -\frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{48}, \frac{35}{576}\right)$	¥
(1,1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$	¥	$\left(\frac{1}{48}, \frac{-35}{576}\right)$

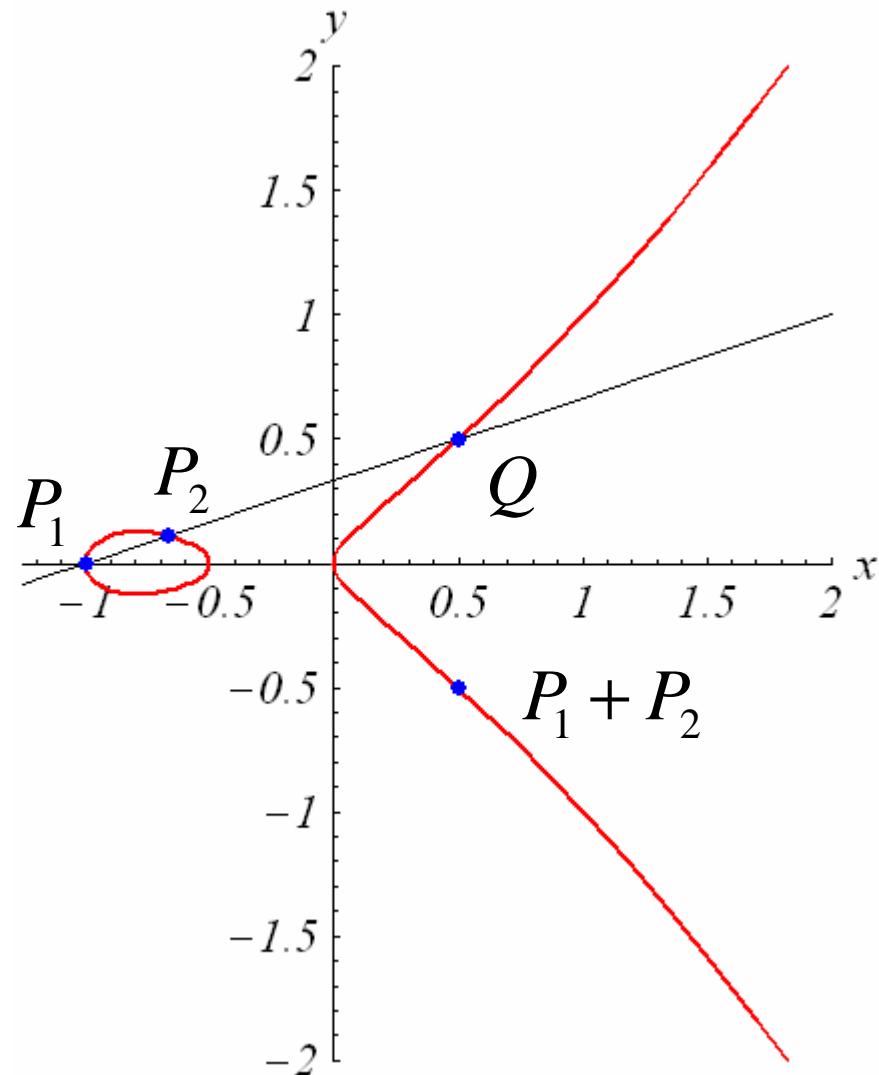
Because of the symmetry about the x -axis.

Addition Table

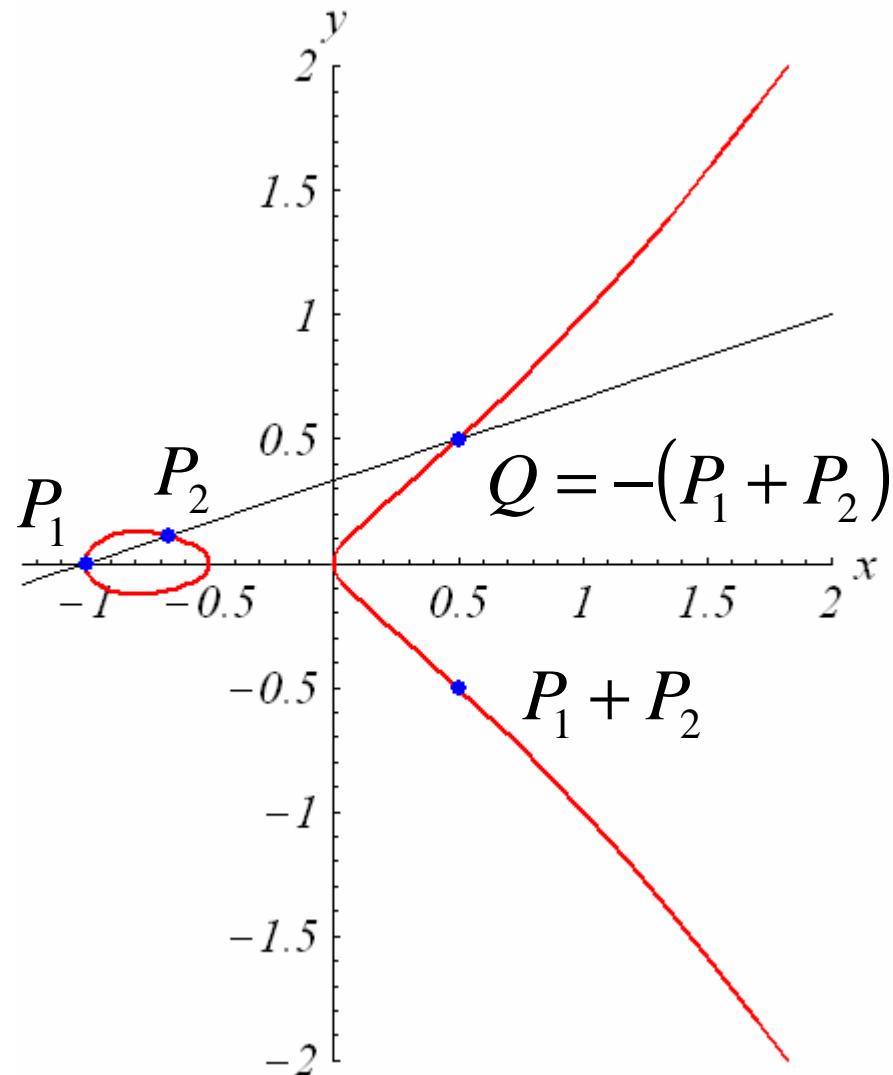
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Adding Points the Right Way

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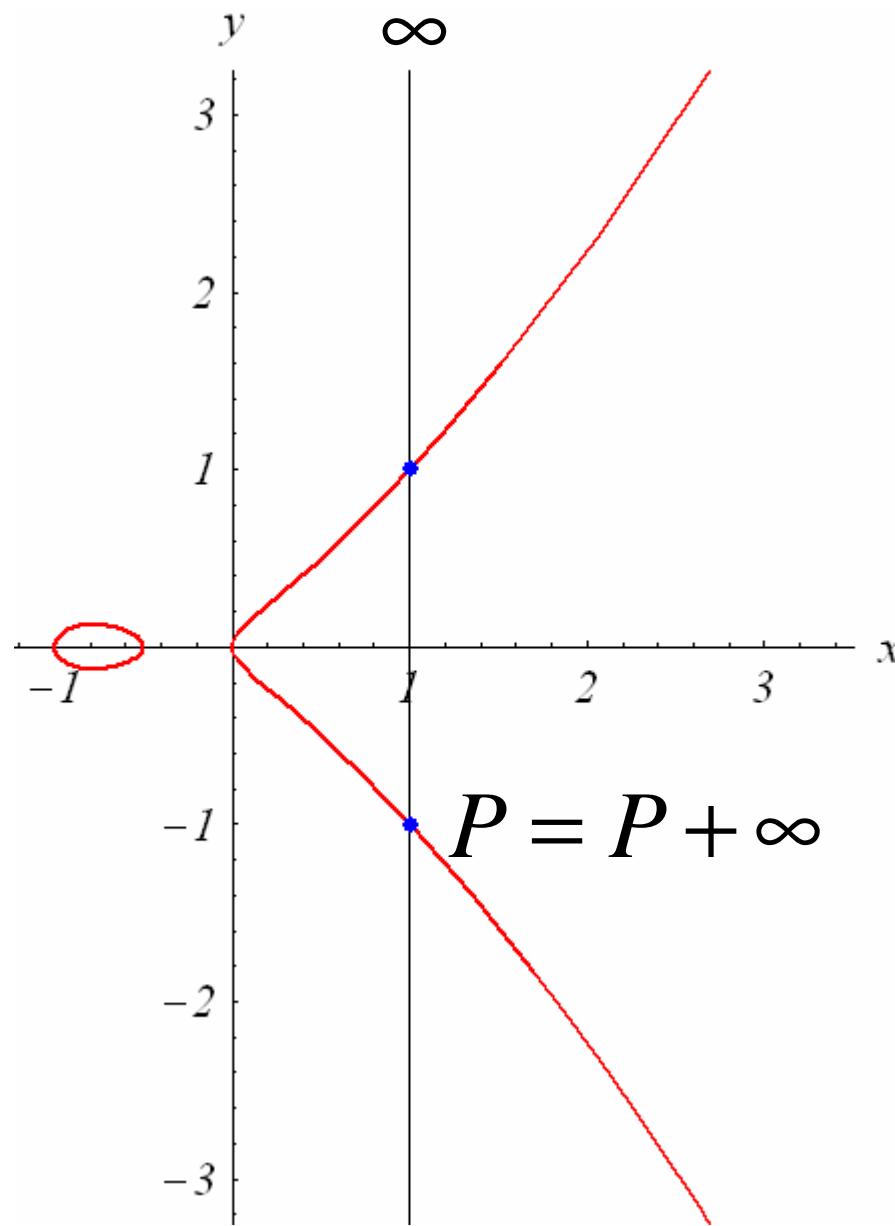
Reverses the sign on the y -coordinate.

Why Do We Add Points This Way?

- By defining addition of points using the reflected point, addition of points behaves like addition of numbers.

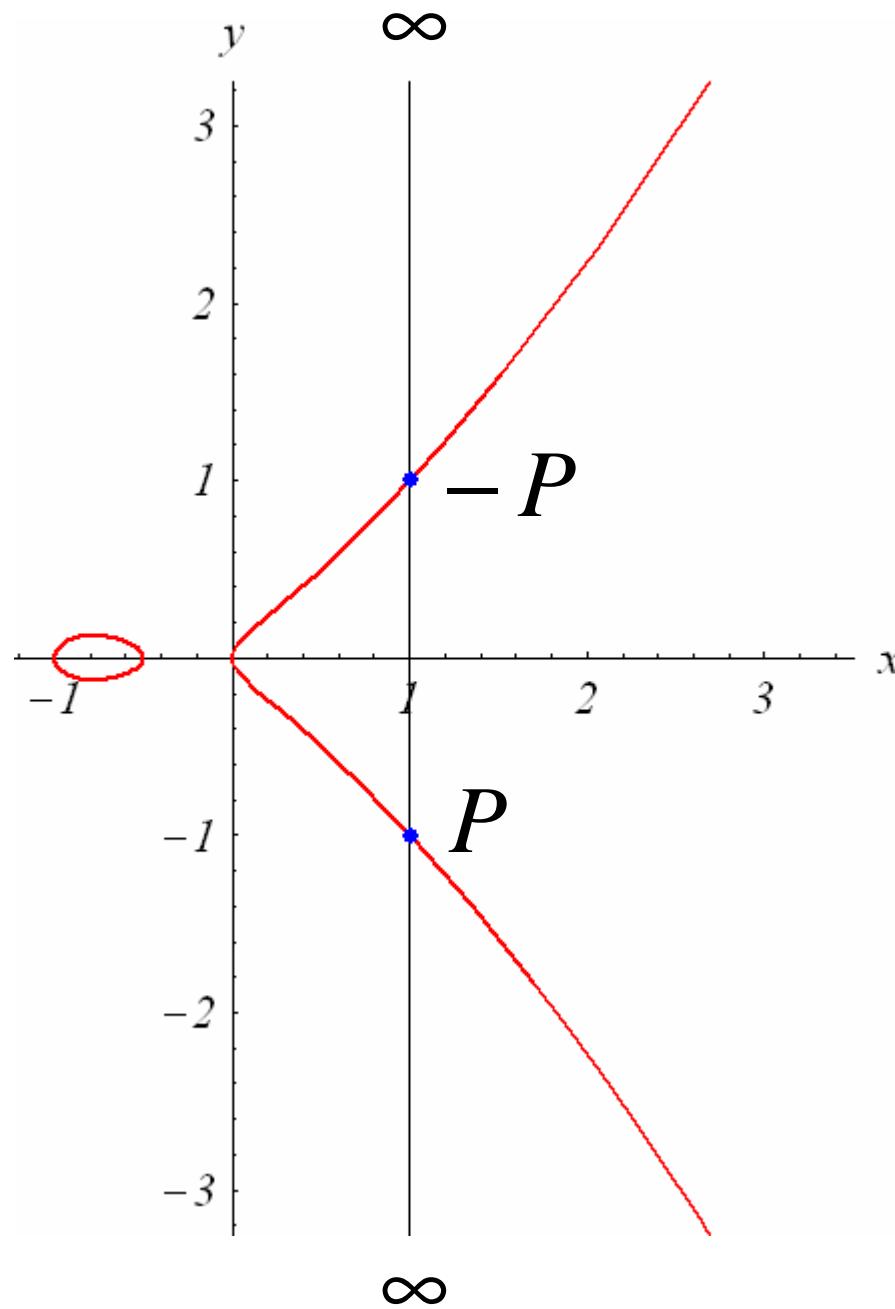
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- The rational points form an **abelian group**.

Real World Applications

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(1,-1)	$\left(-\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{48}, \frac{-35}{576}\right)$	¥
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For example: $2(1,-1) = \left(\frac{1}{48}, \frac{-35}{576}\right)$.

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Recall: Adding points means drawing lines and solving for intersections.

- To find $3(1, -1)$, use the line through $(\frac{1}{48}, \frac{-35}{576})$ and $(1, -1)$, determine the new intersection with the curve and reflect.

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- **Really Hard Problem:**

Given two points on the curve P and Q , find an integer n such that

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Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange

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- Alice and Bob want to establish a secret key.

Alice

Public

Bob

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Curve equation

Point P

Bob

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Secret
number a

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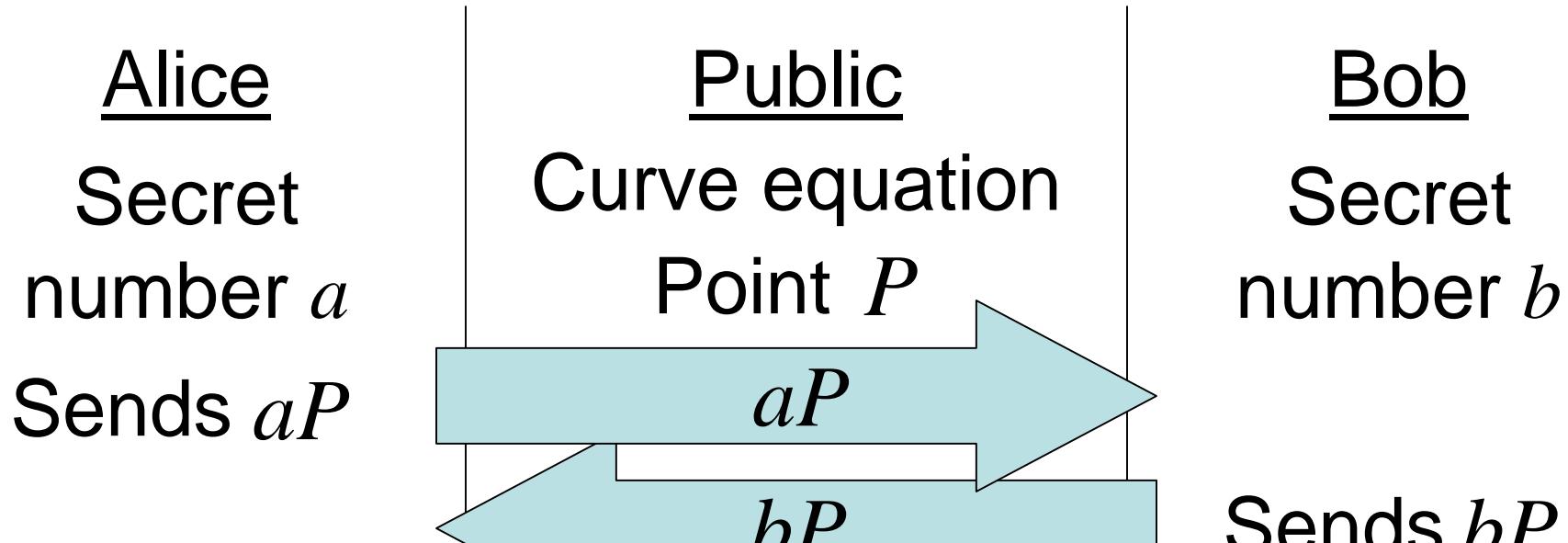
Curve equation
Point P

Bob

Secret
number b

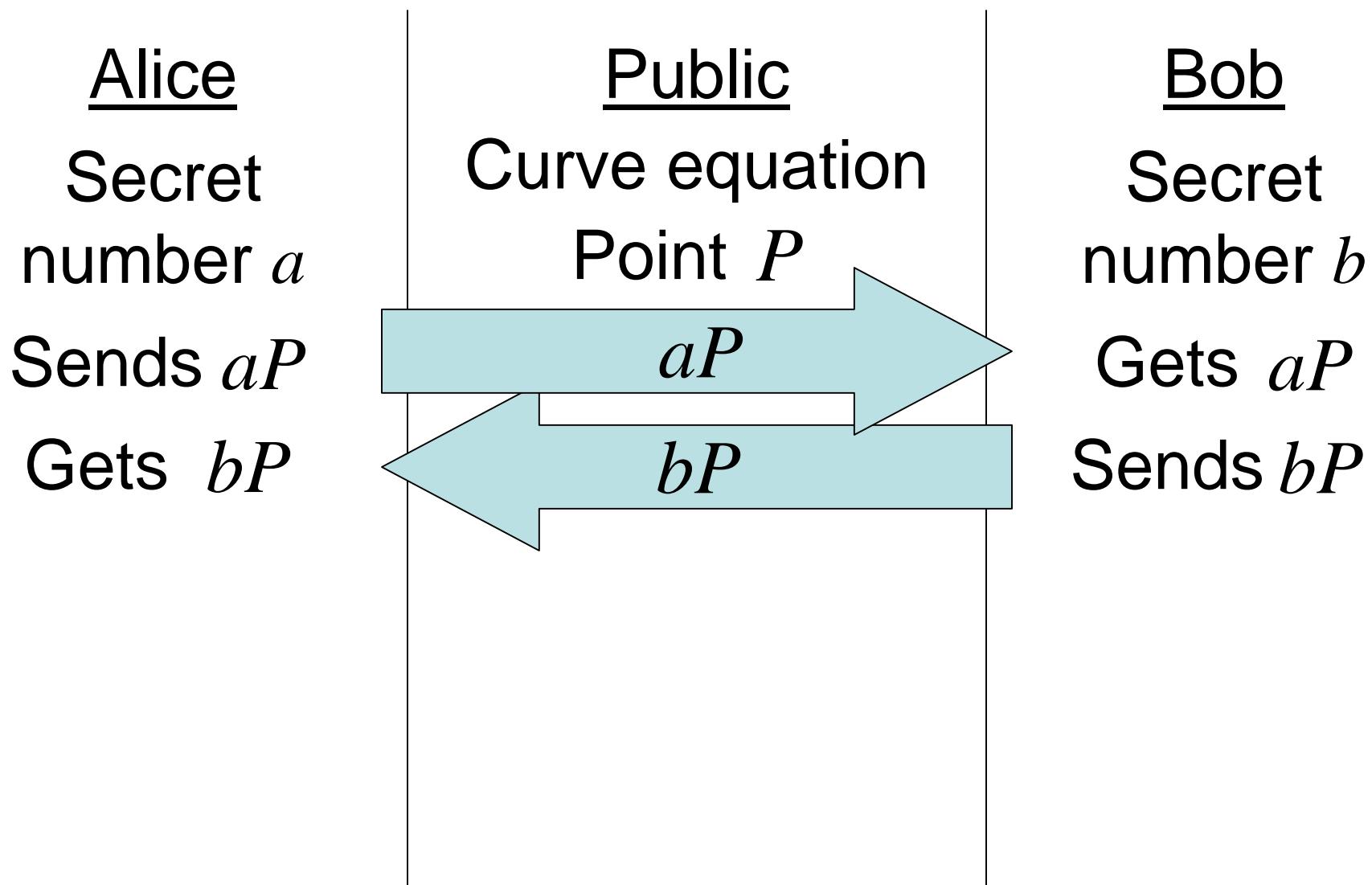
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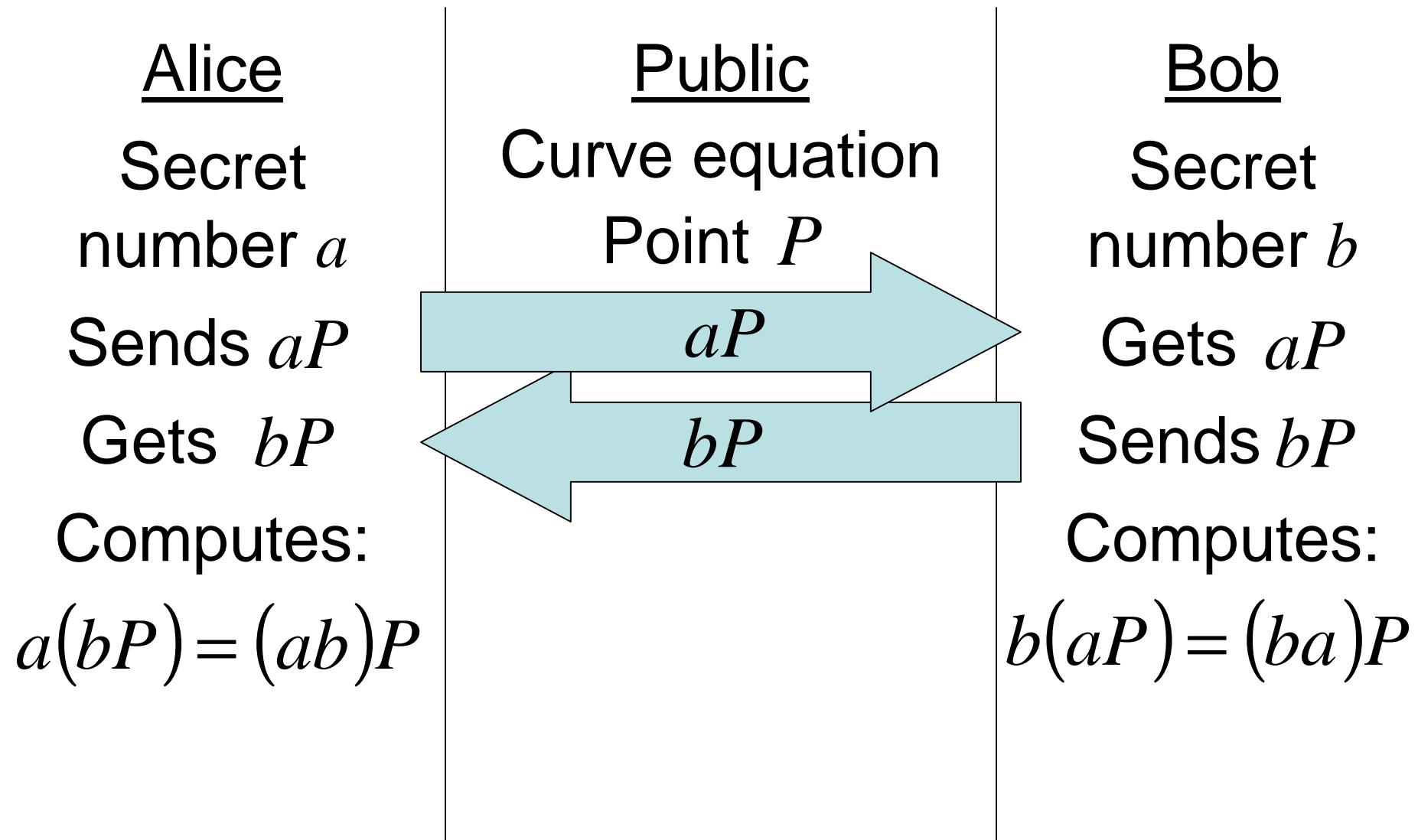
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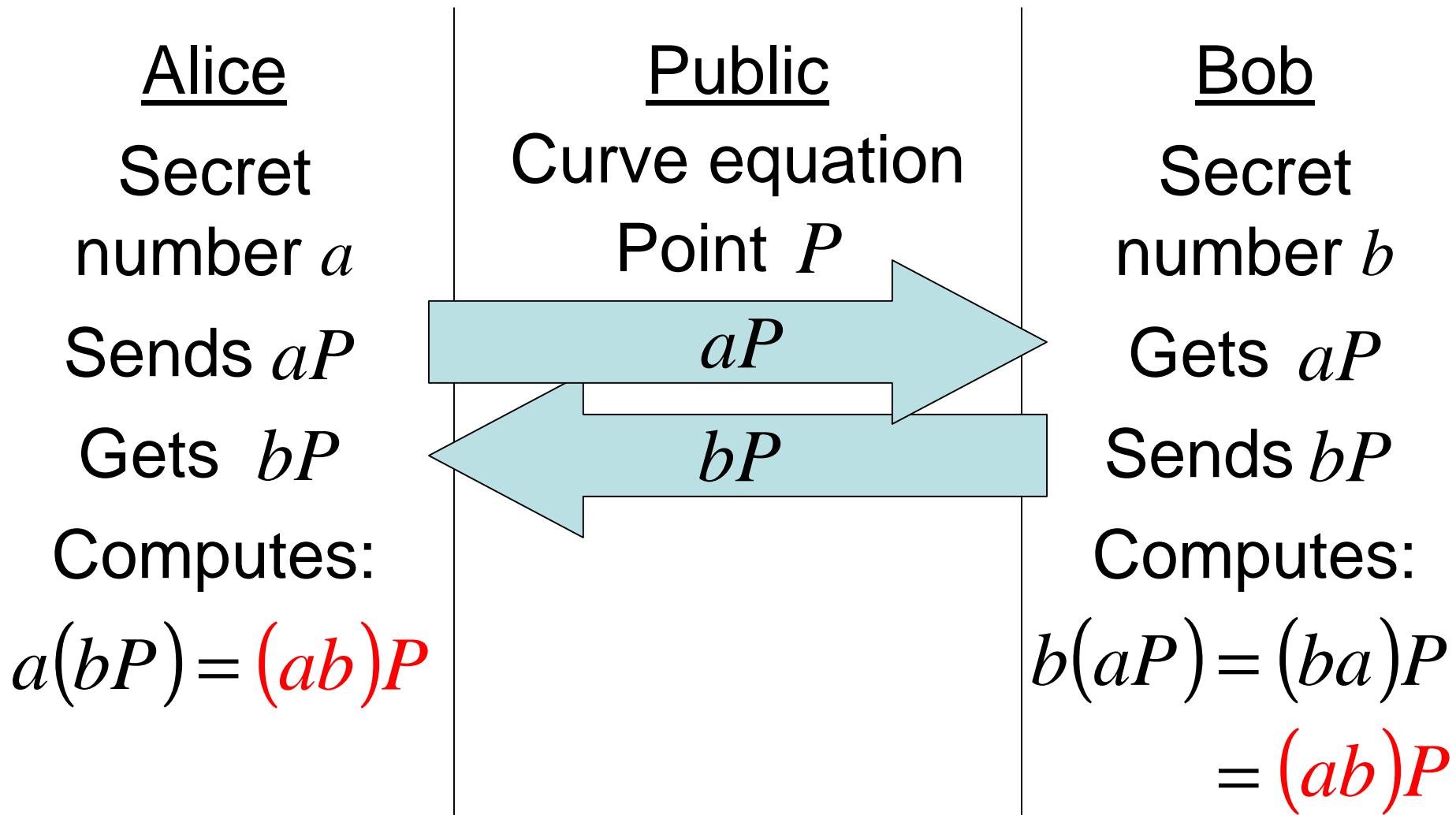
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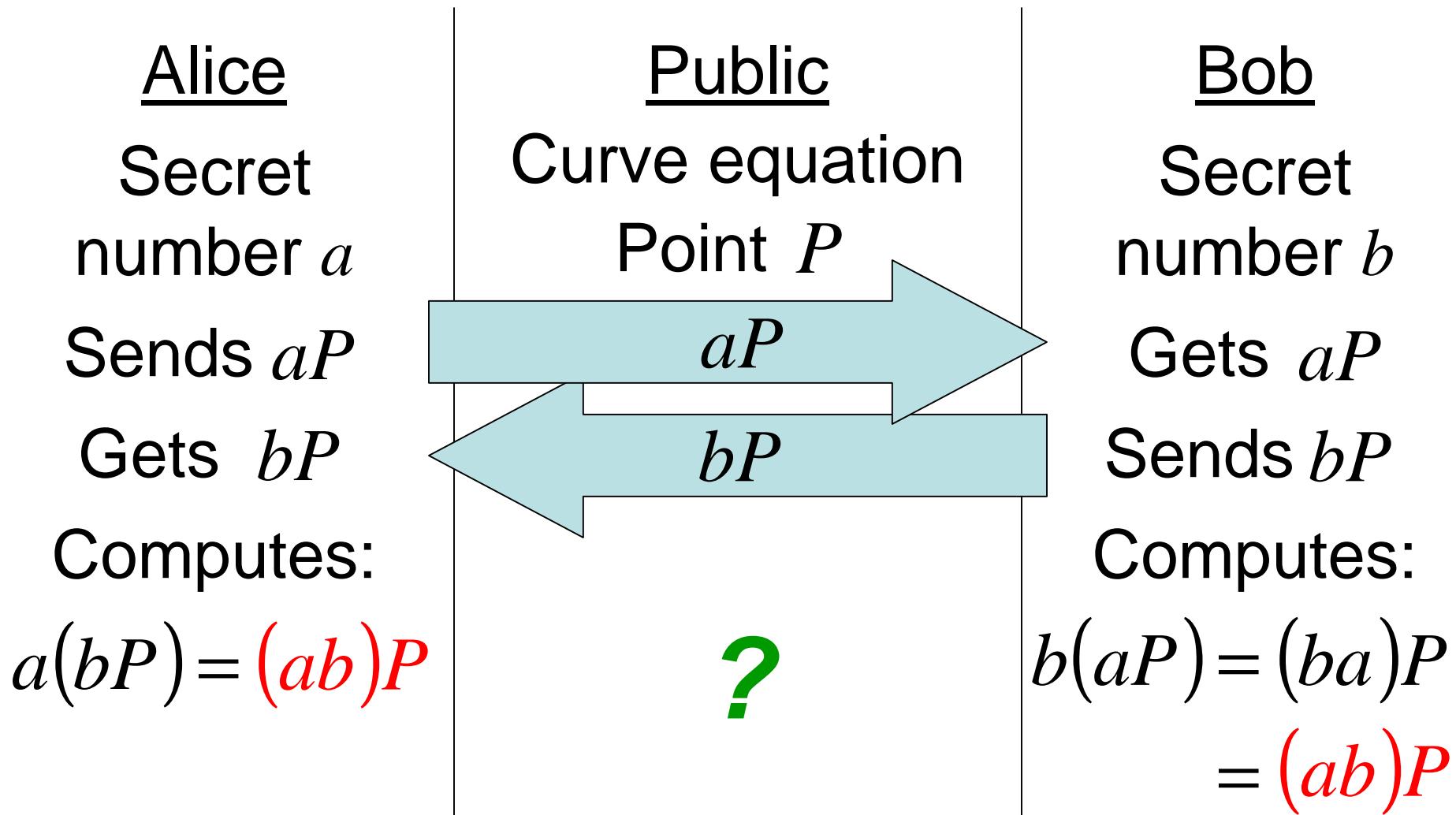
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Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange

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Thank you.

Questions?