

Euclid's Elements

Book III



A circle is a round straight line with a hole in the middle.

Mark Twain

quoting a schoolchild in "-English as She Is Taught-"

If people stand in a circle long enough, they'll eventually begin to dance.

George Carlin, Napalm and Silly Putty (2001)



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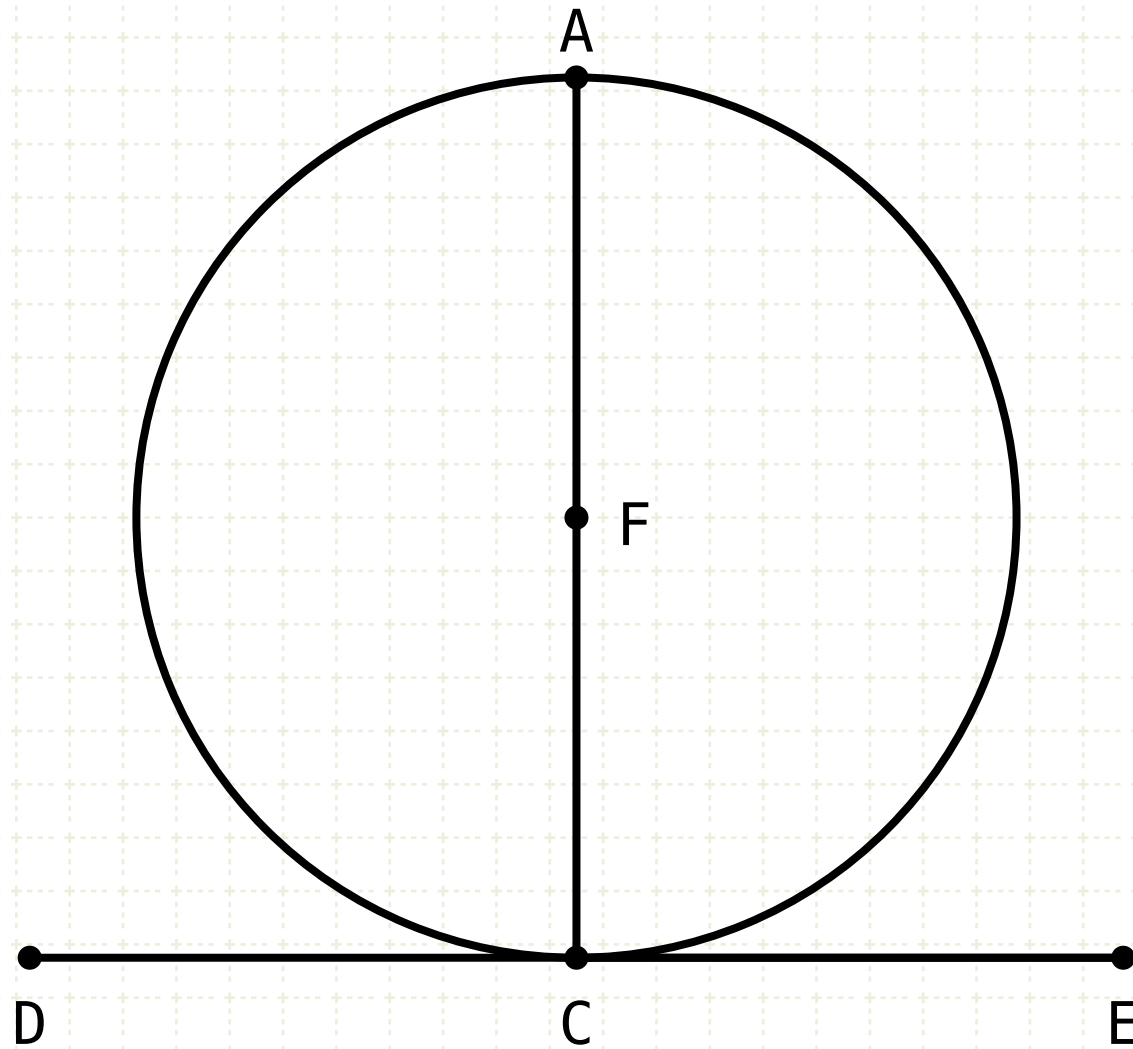
Proposition 19 of Book III

If a straight line touch a circle, and from the point of contact a straight line be drawn at right angles to the tangent, the centre of the circle will be on the straight line so drawn.



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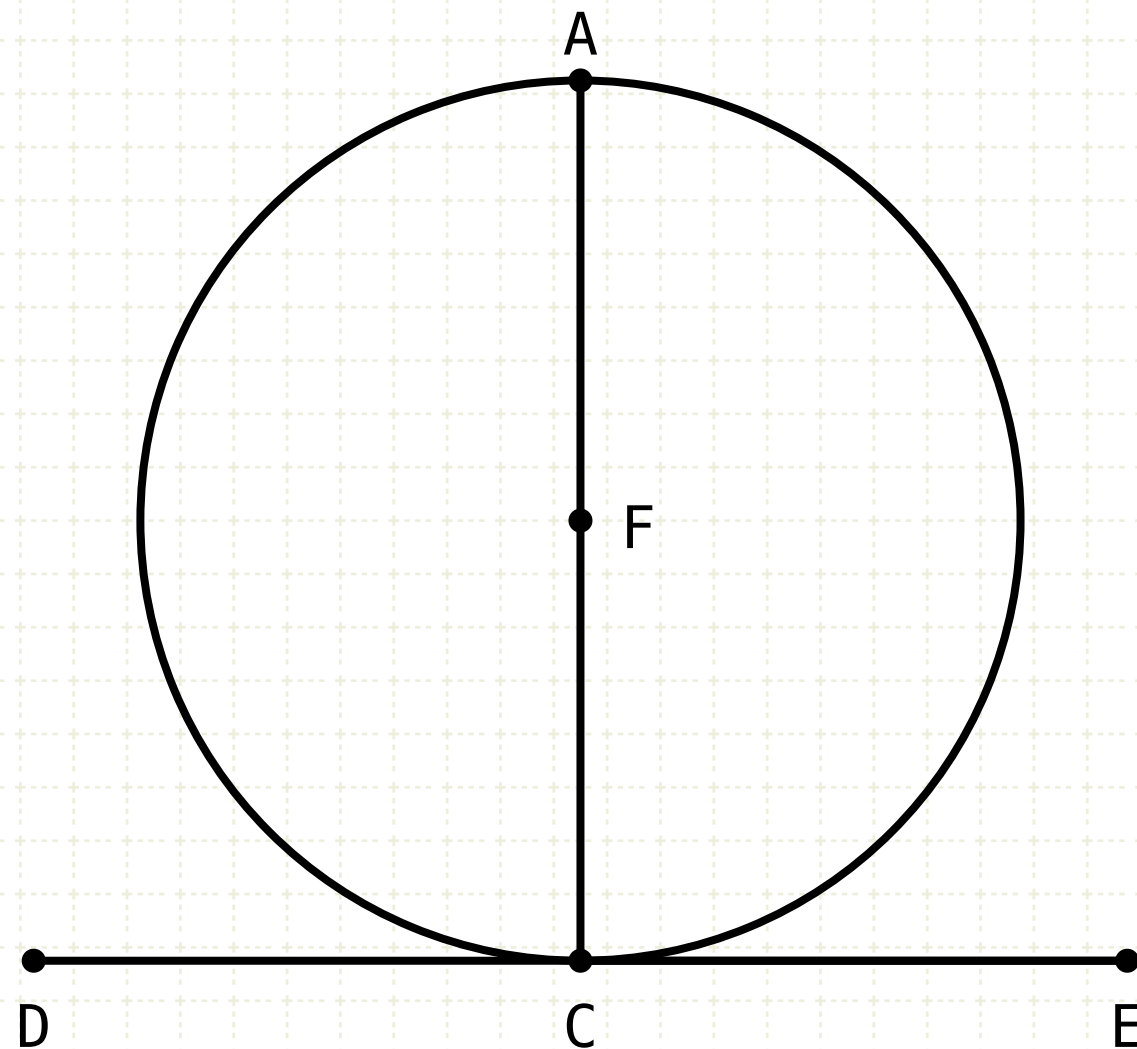


In other words

If line ED touches a circle, and a line AC is drawn perpendicular to ED at the point where it touches the circle, then AC will pass through the centre of the circle F

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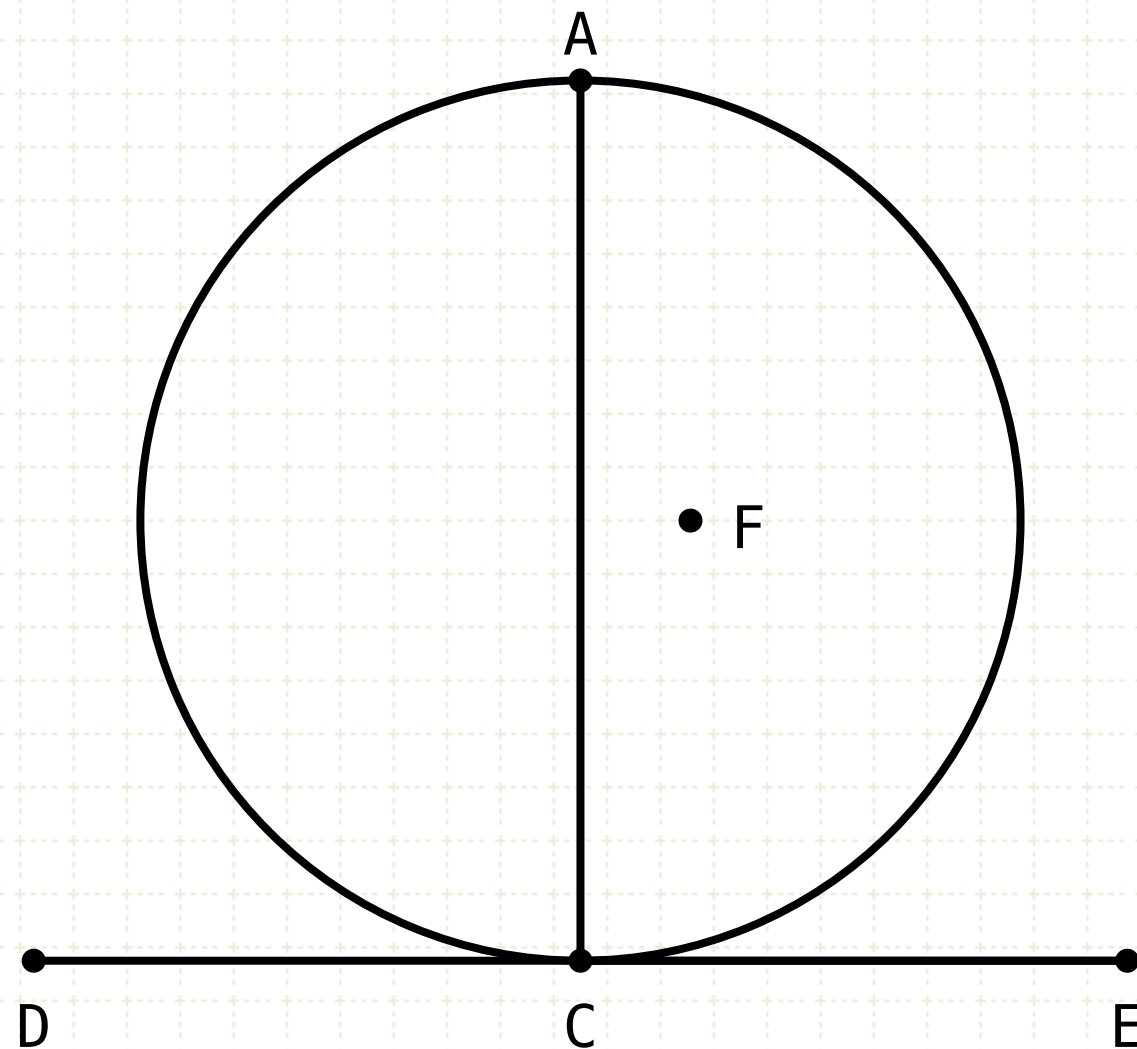
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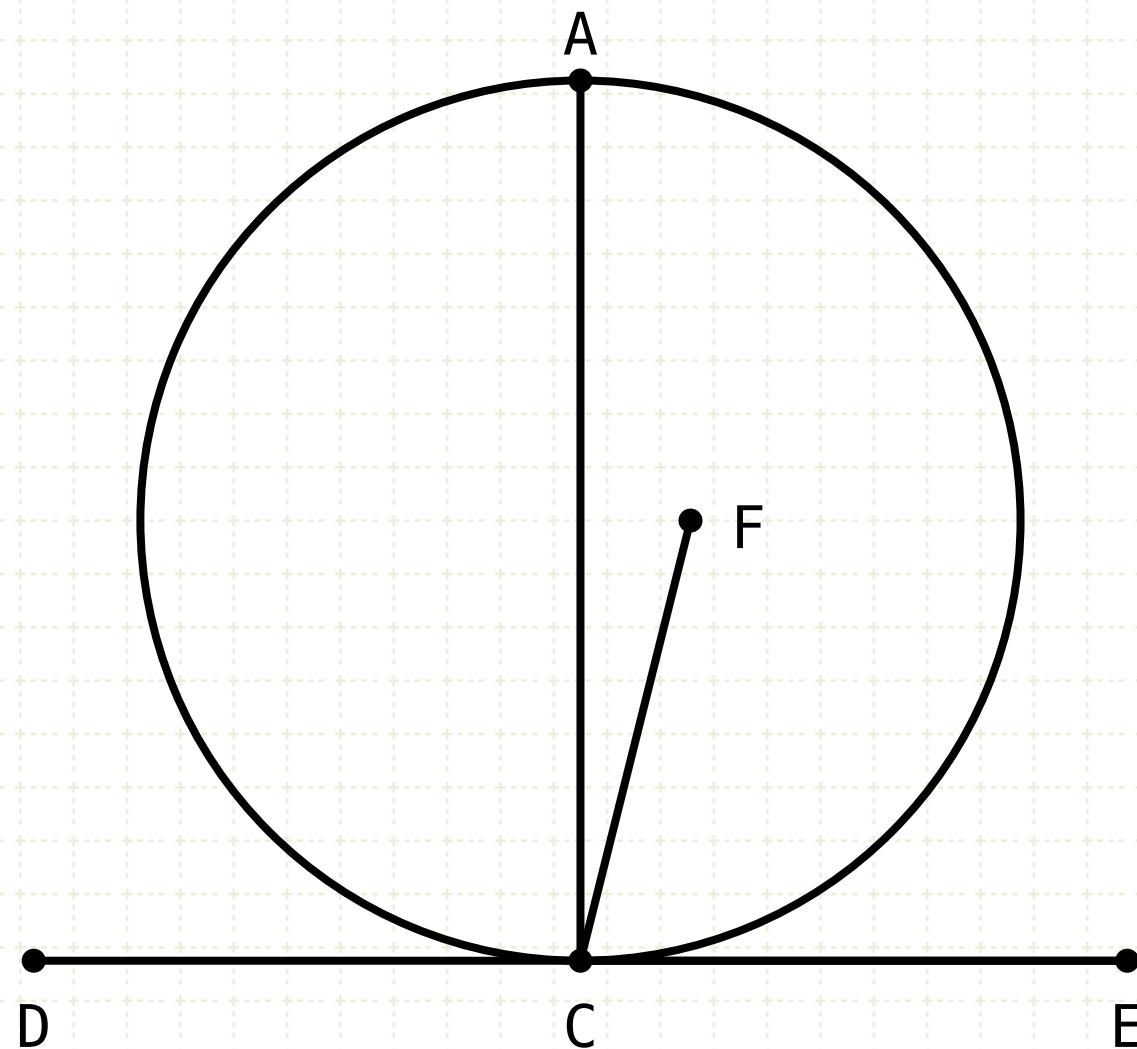
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Proof by Contradiction

Assume that AC does not pass through the centre of the circle F

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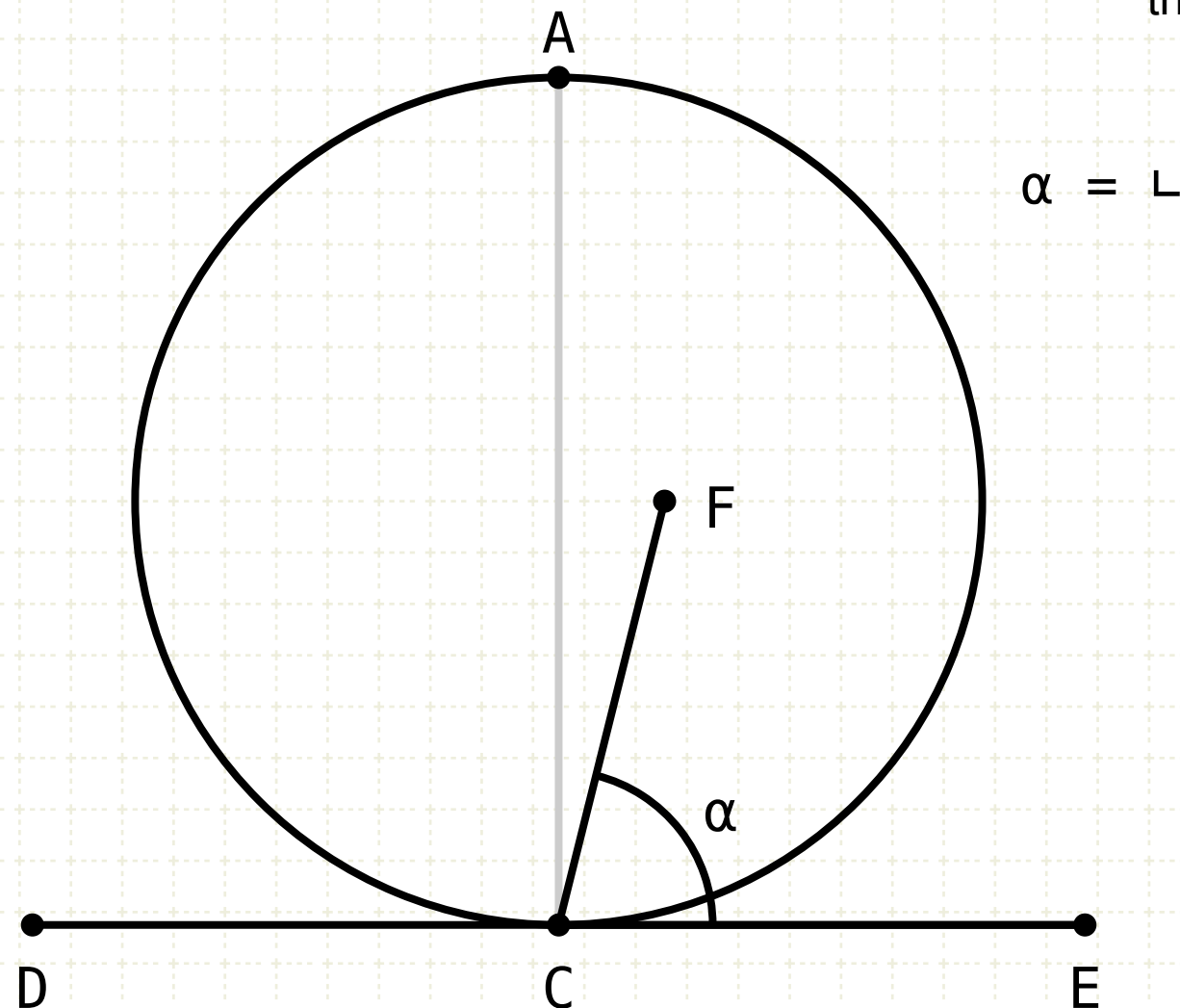
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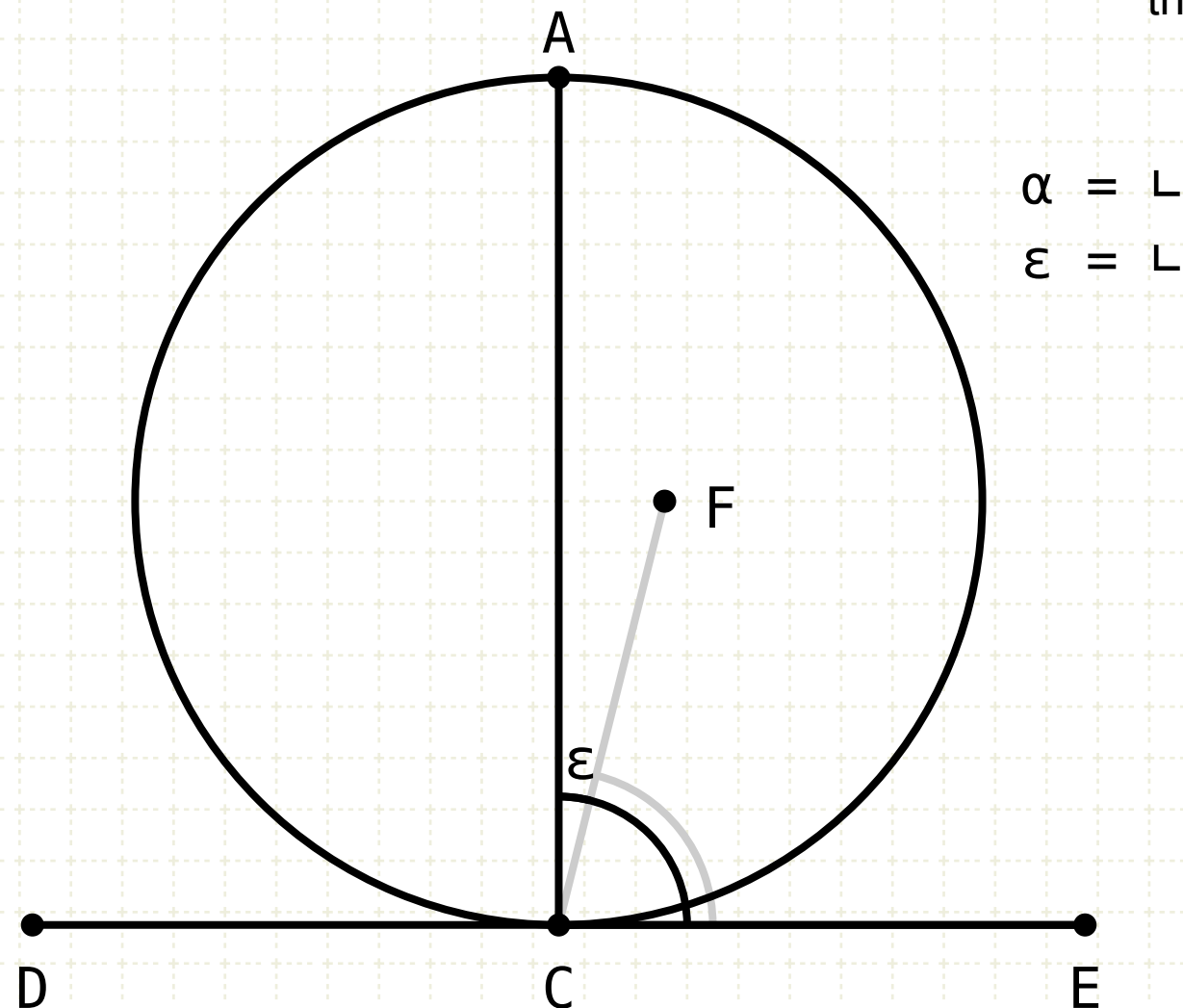
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Since line DE touches the circle, a line drawn from the centre of the circle to the line DE forms a right angle (III·18), so FCE (α) is a right angle

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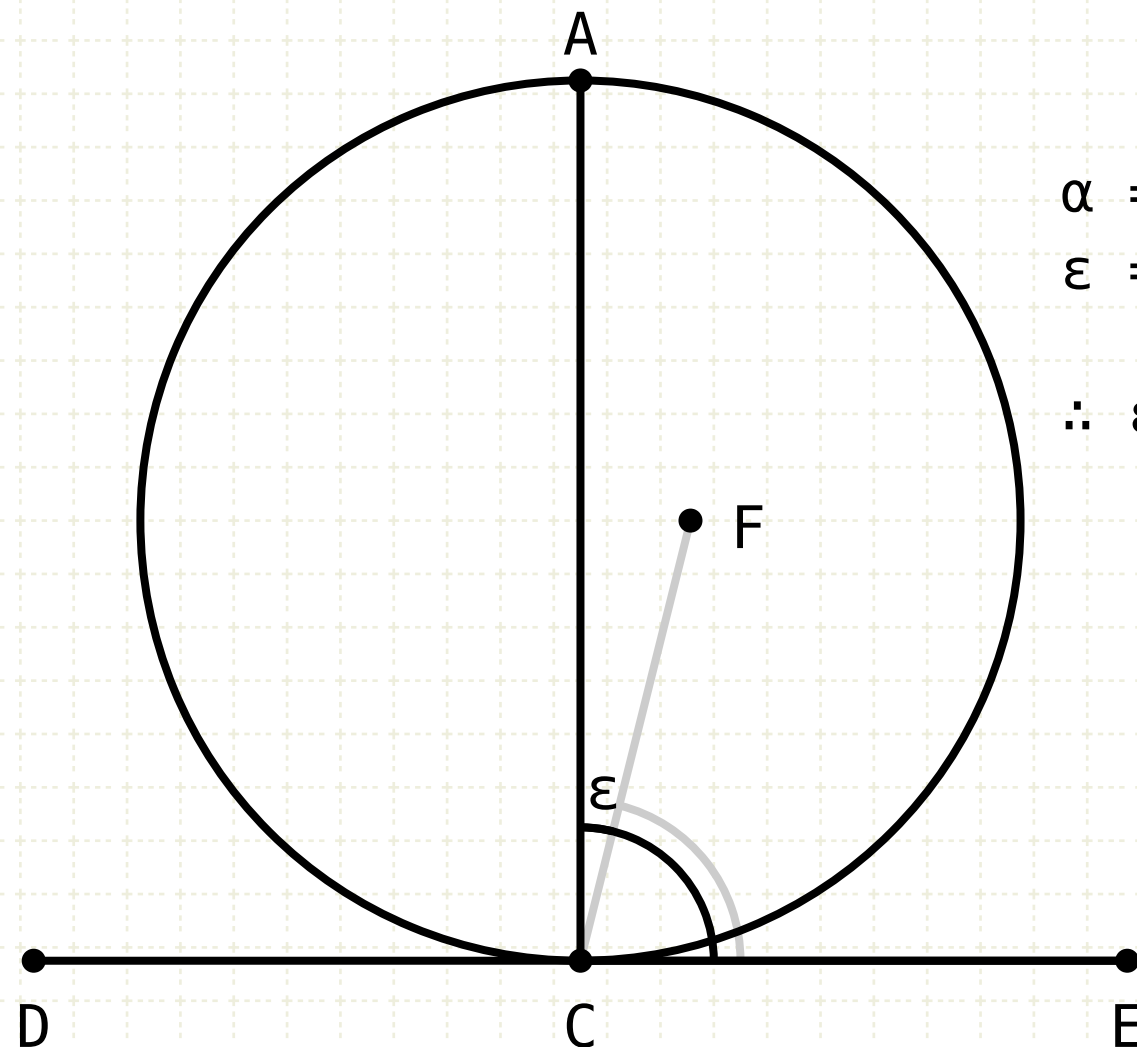
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ACE (ϵ) is also a right angle (by construction)

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If a straight line touch a circle, and from the point of contact a straight line be drawn at right angles to the tangent, the centre of the circle will be on the straight line so drawn.



$$\alpha = \angle$$

$$\varepsilon = \angle$$

$$\therefore \varepsilon = \alpha$$

In other words

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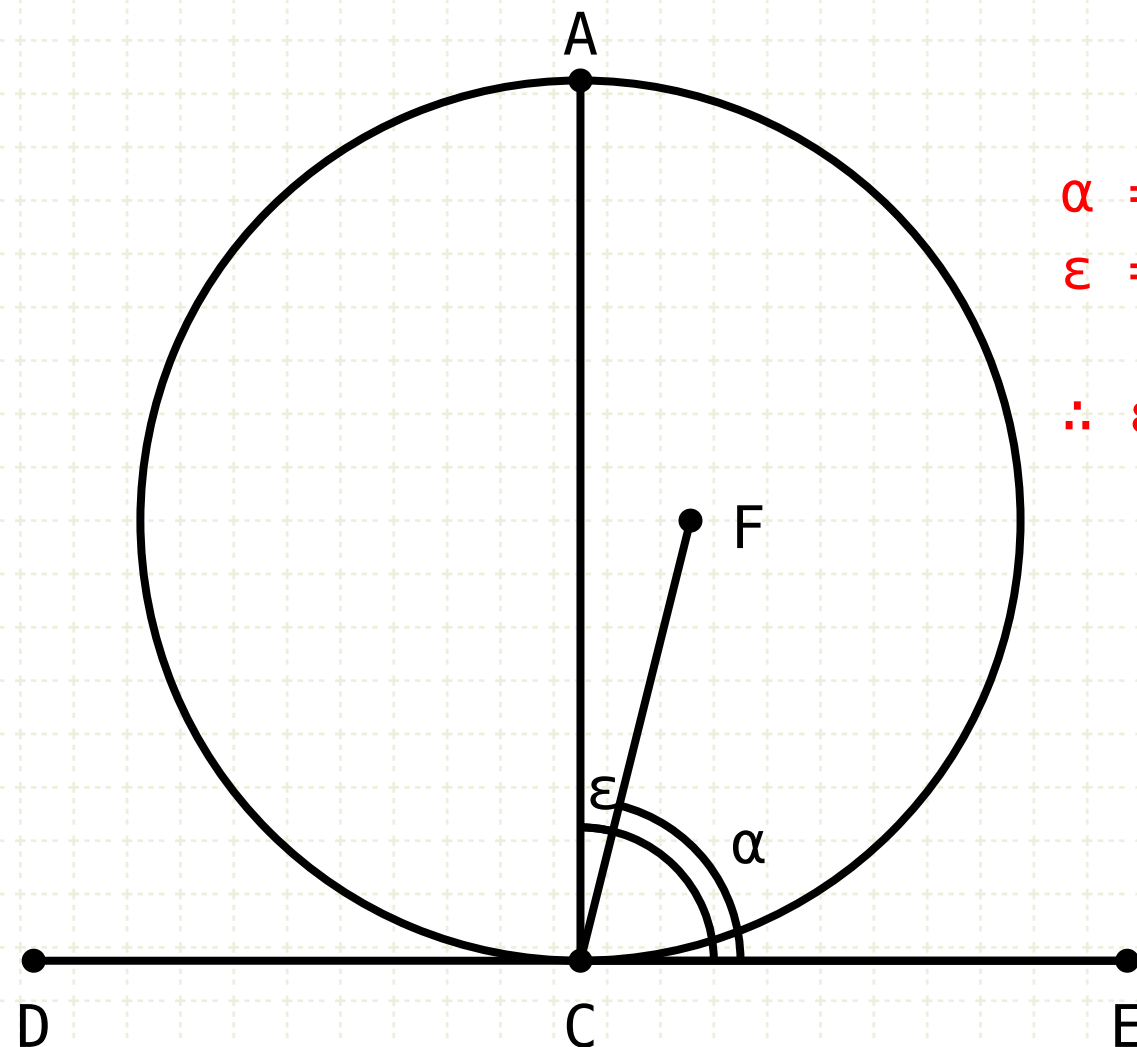
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If line ED touches a circle, and a line AC is drawn perpendicular to ED at the point where it touches the circle, then AC will pass through the centre of the circle F

Proof by Contradiction

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Since line DE touches the circle, a line drawn from the centre of the circle to the line DE forms a right angle (III·18), so FCE (α) is a right angle

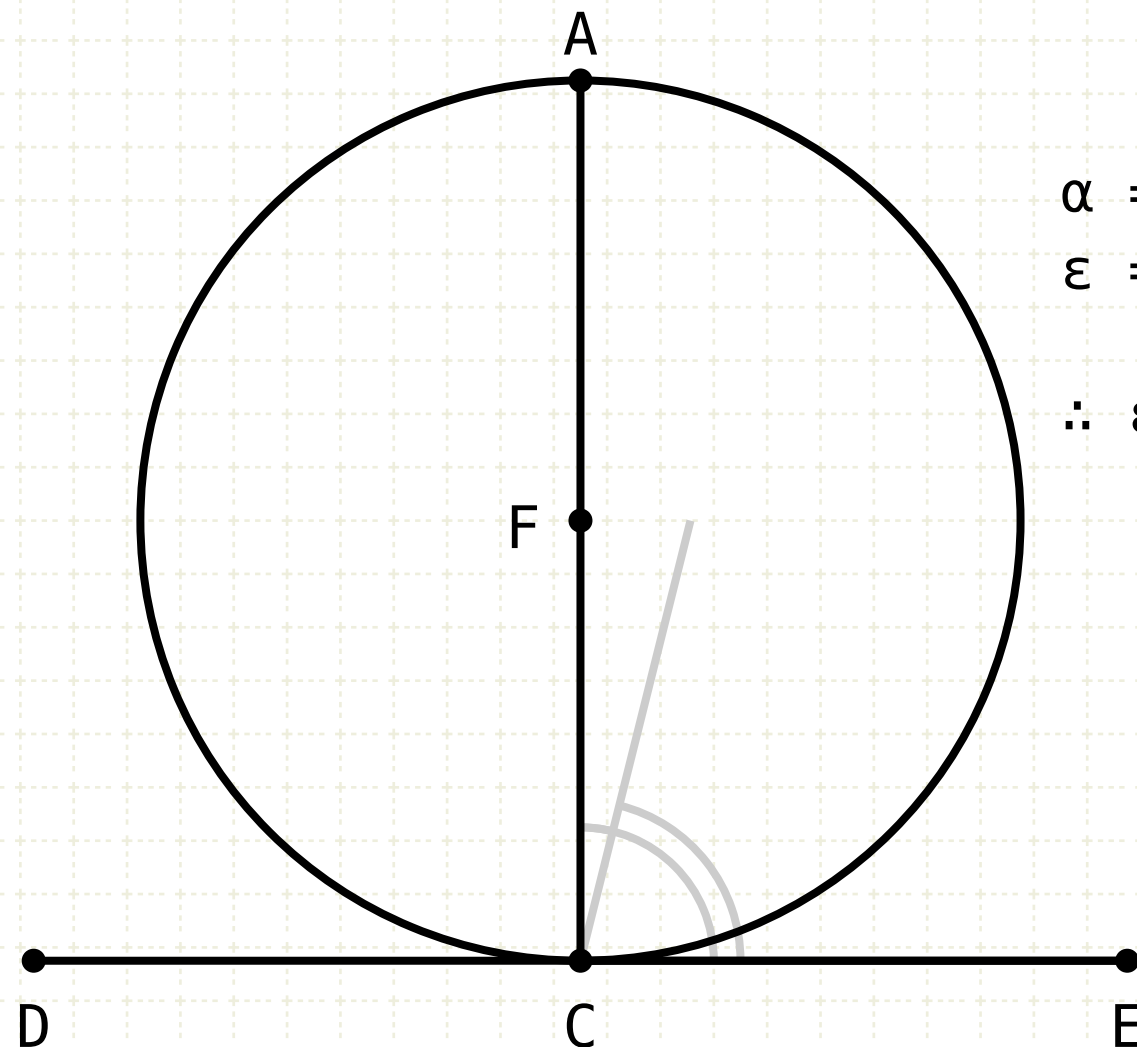
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This is impossible...

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If line ED touches a circle, and a line AC is drawn perpendicular to ED at the point where it touches the circle, then AC will pass through the centre of the circle F

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Assume that AC does not pass through the centre of the circle F

Draw the line CF

Since line DE touches the circle, a line drawn from the centre of the circle to the line DE forms a right angle (III·18), so FCE (α) is a right angle

ACE (ε) is also a right angle (by construction)

So FCE equals ACE

This is impossible...

... unless the line AC passes through the centre F

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