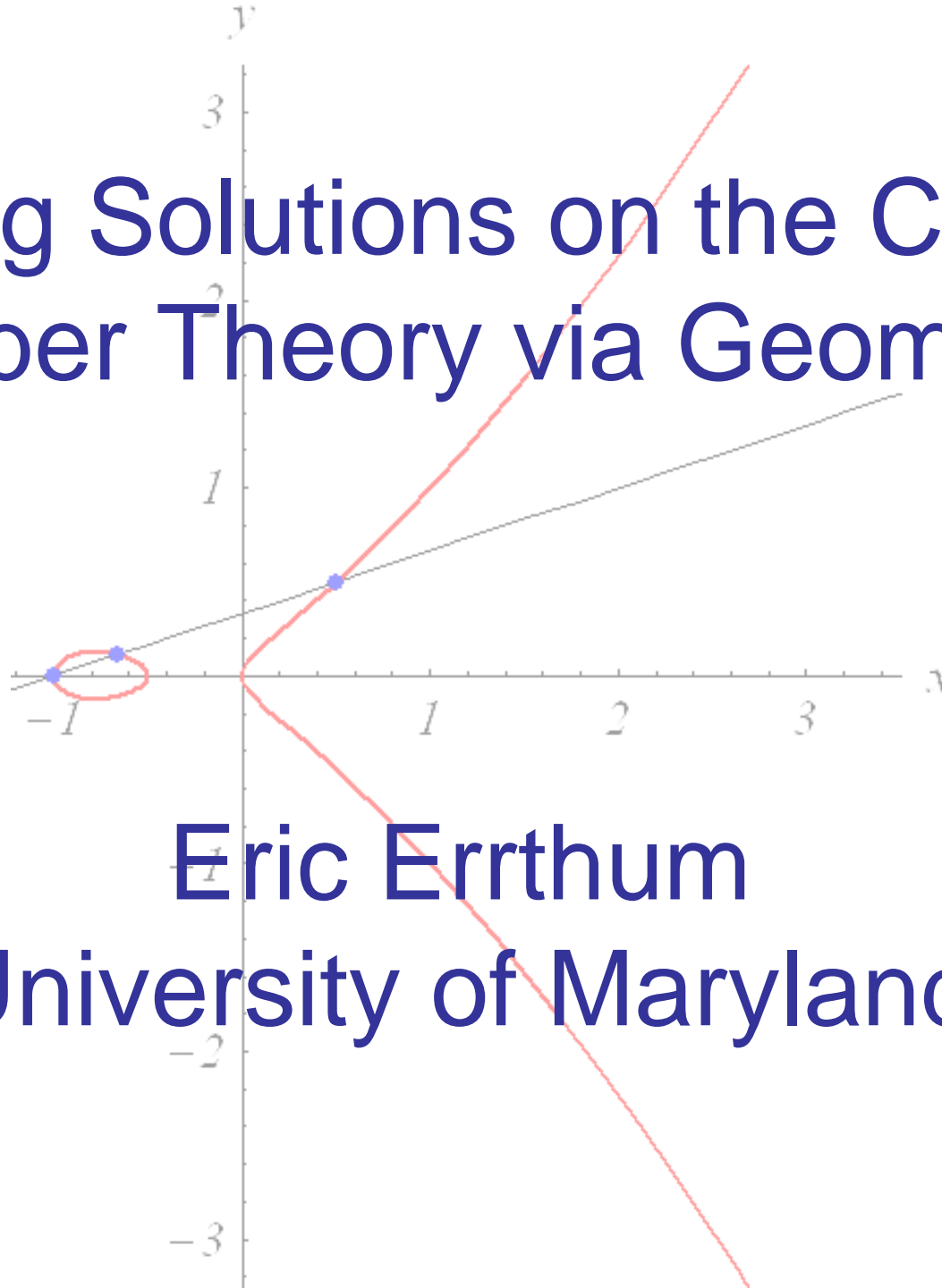


# Finding Solutions on the Curve: Number Theory via Geometry



**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

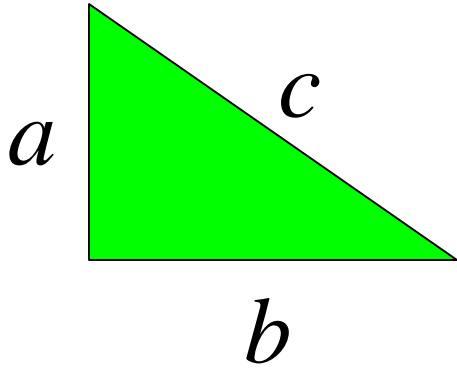
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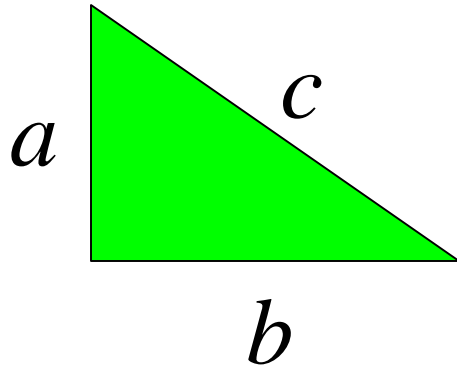




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$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$



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

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

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

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

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

⋮

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- Recall Pythagorean Triples satisfy:

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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.

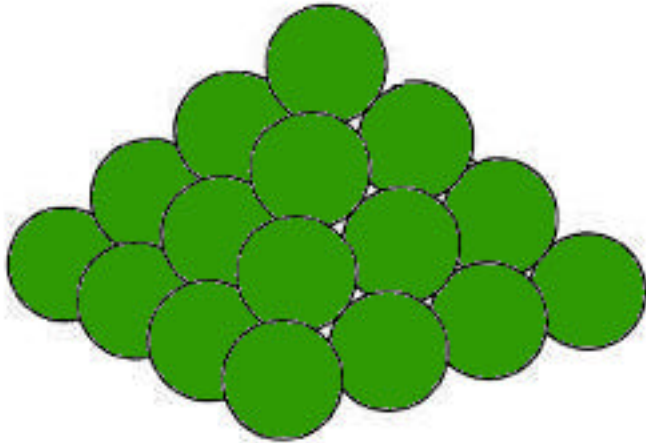
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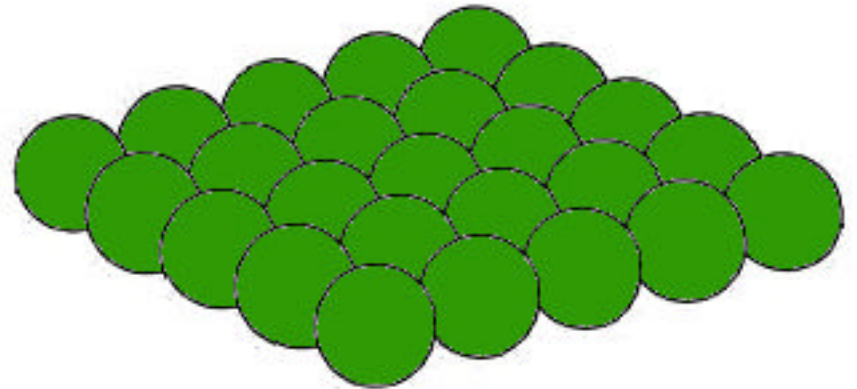
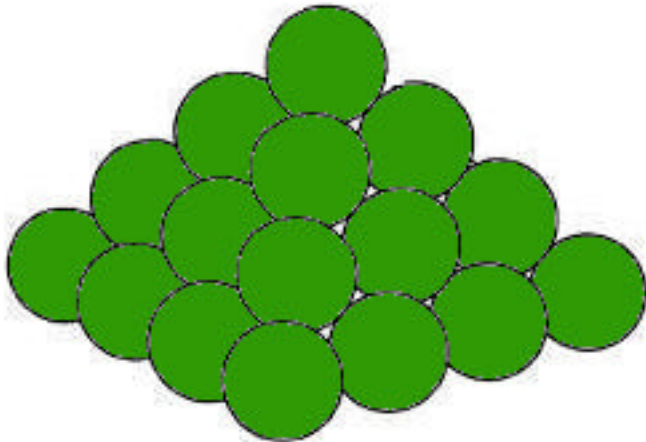
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- Two ways to arrange cannonballs:
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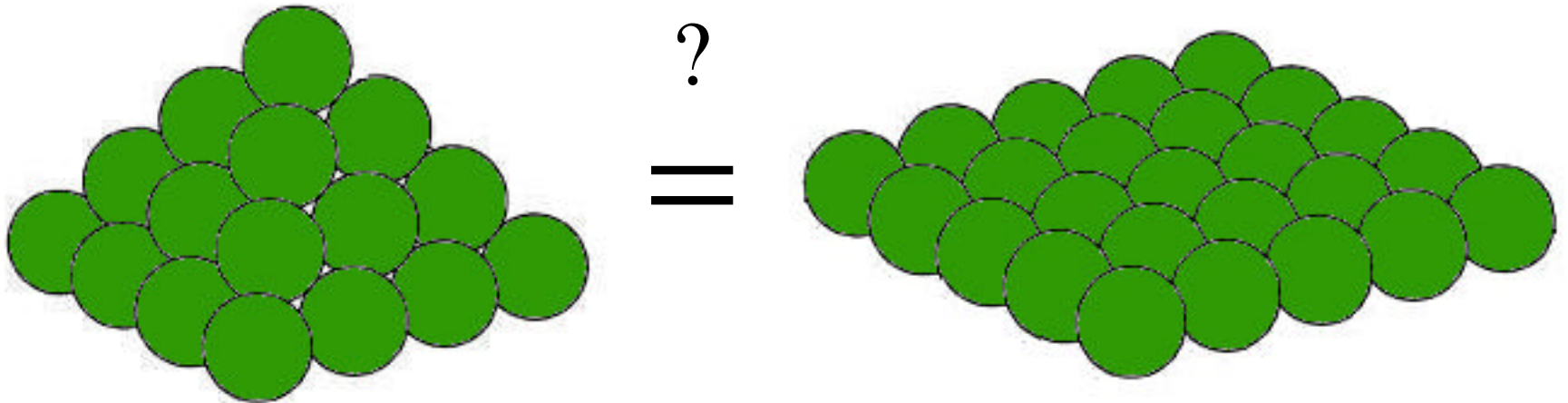
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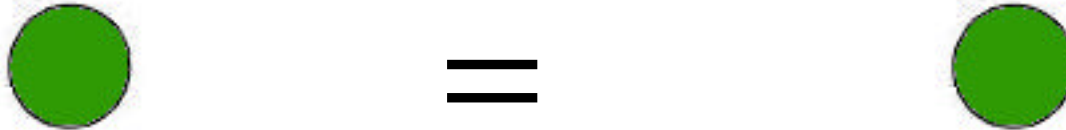
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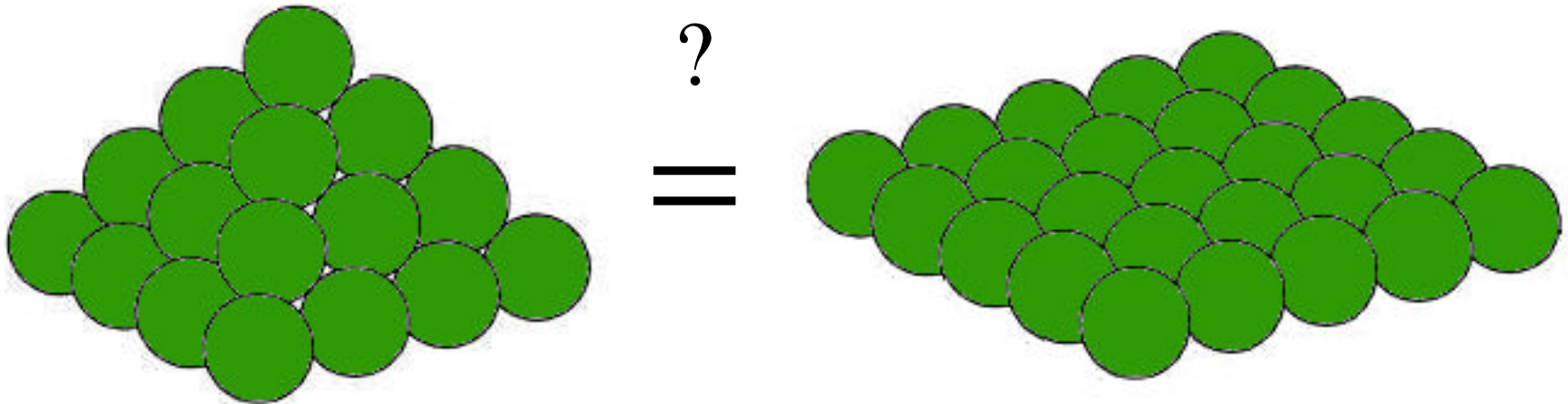
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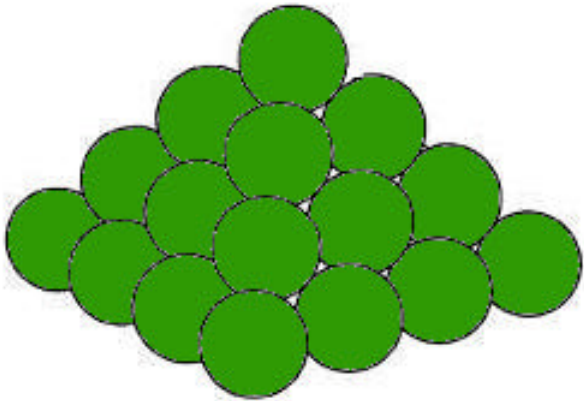
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- **One** cannonball can. **Other solutions?**

# Convert to Math

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

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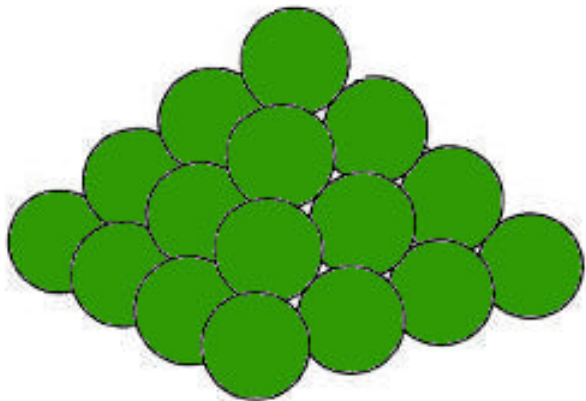
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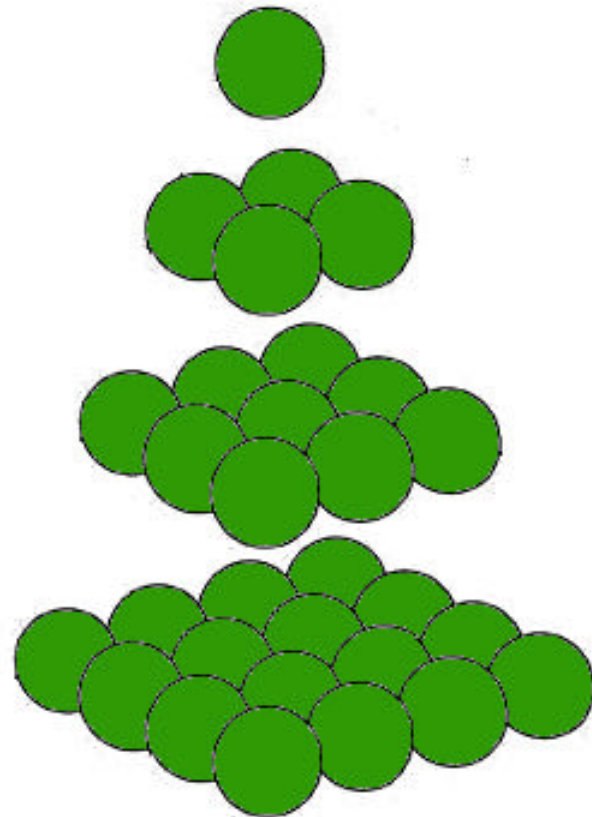
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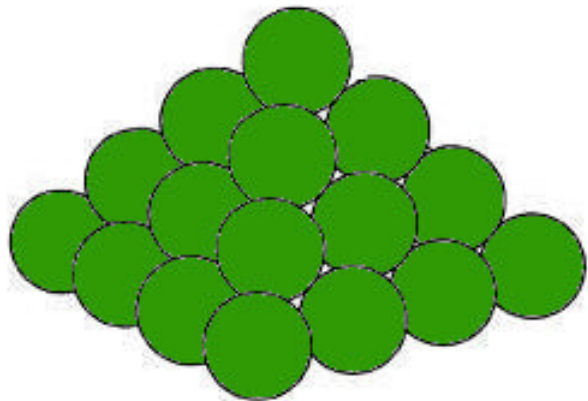
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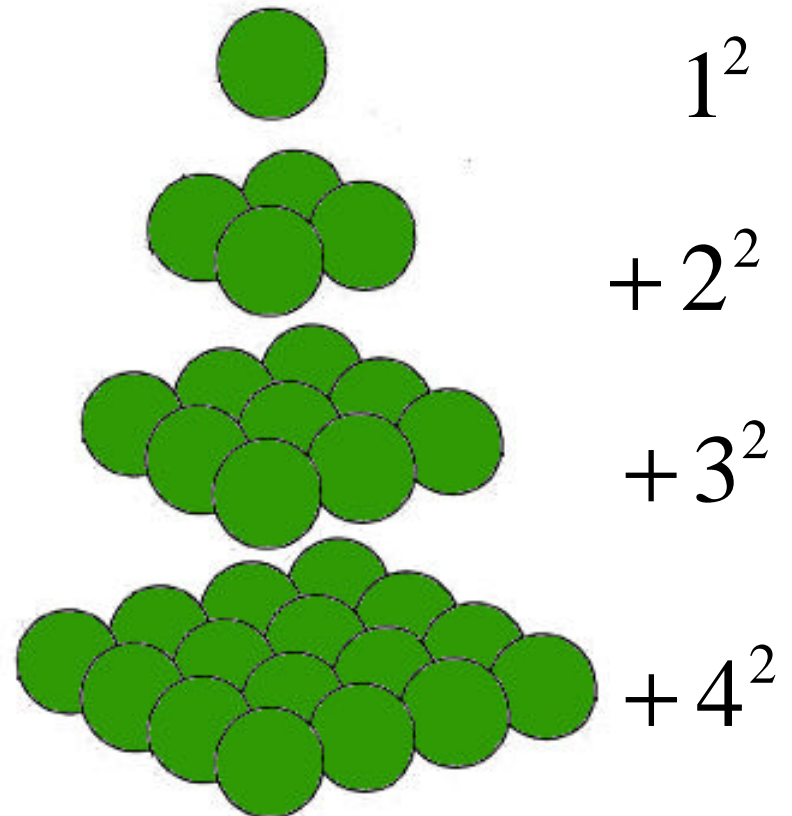
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30



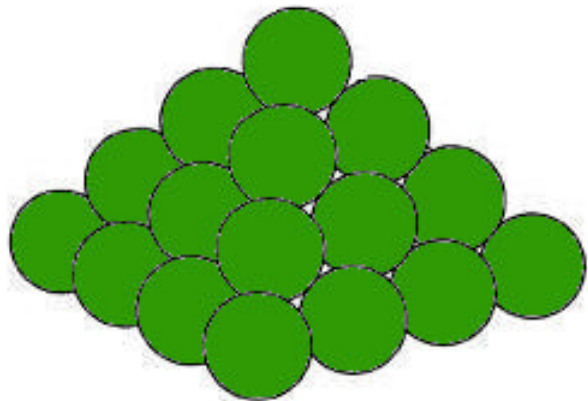
=



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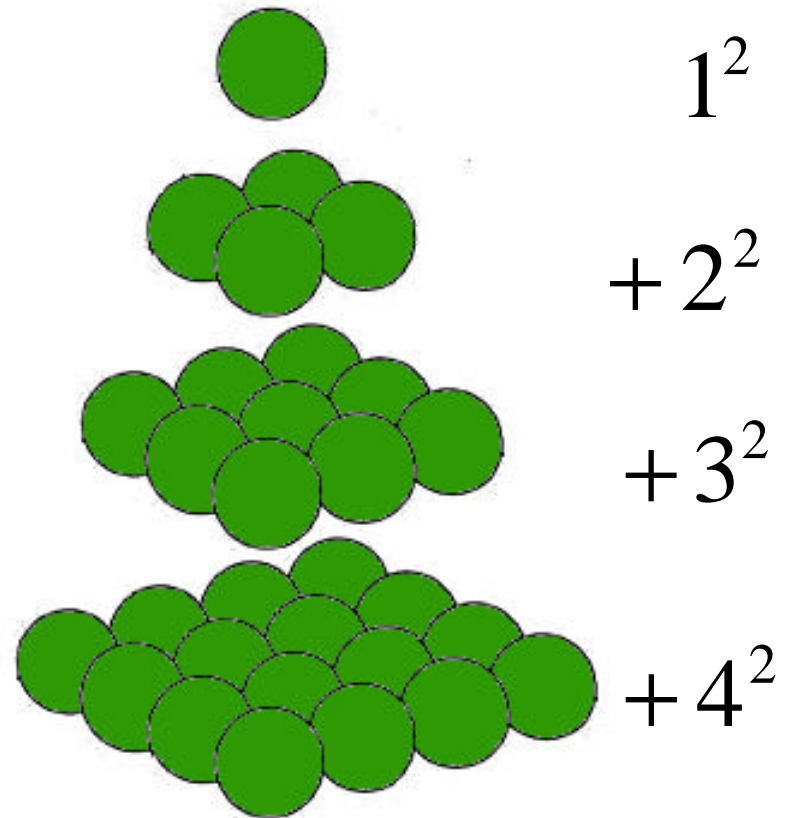
$$1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + \dots + x^2$$



30



=



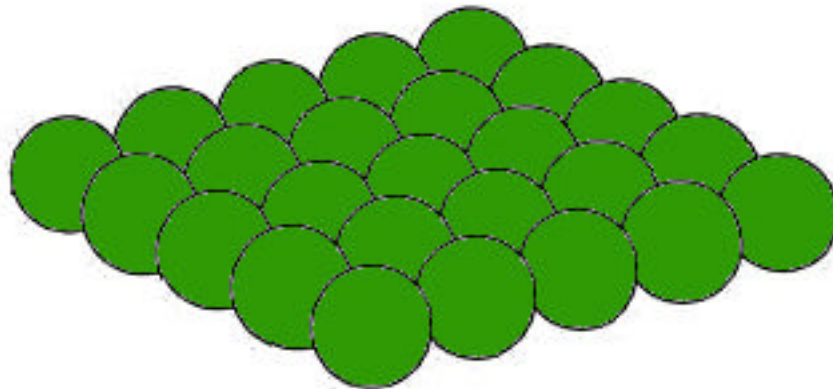
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- Want two integers  $x$  and  $y$  so that:

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

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

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

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

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# Question Restated

- Want two integers  $x$  and  $y$  so that:

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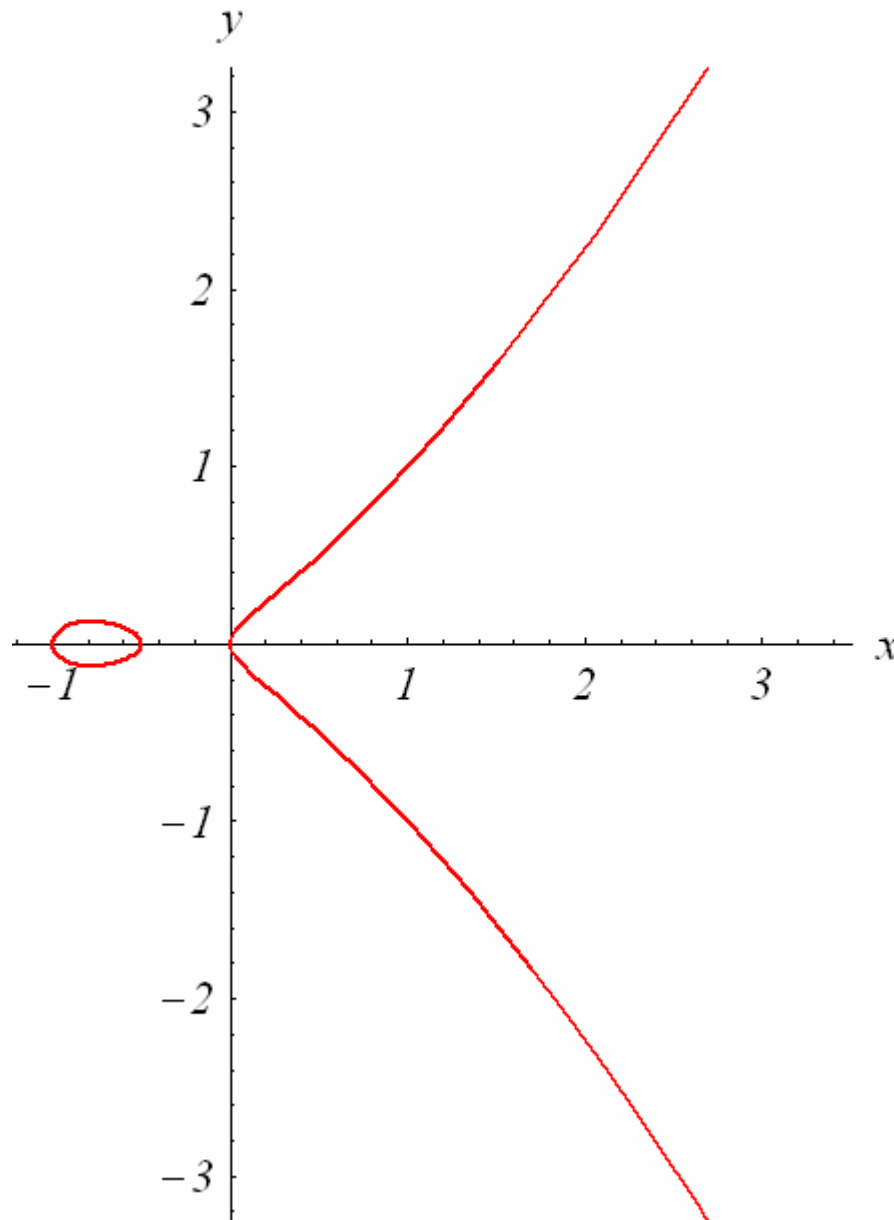
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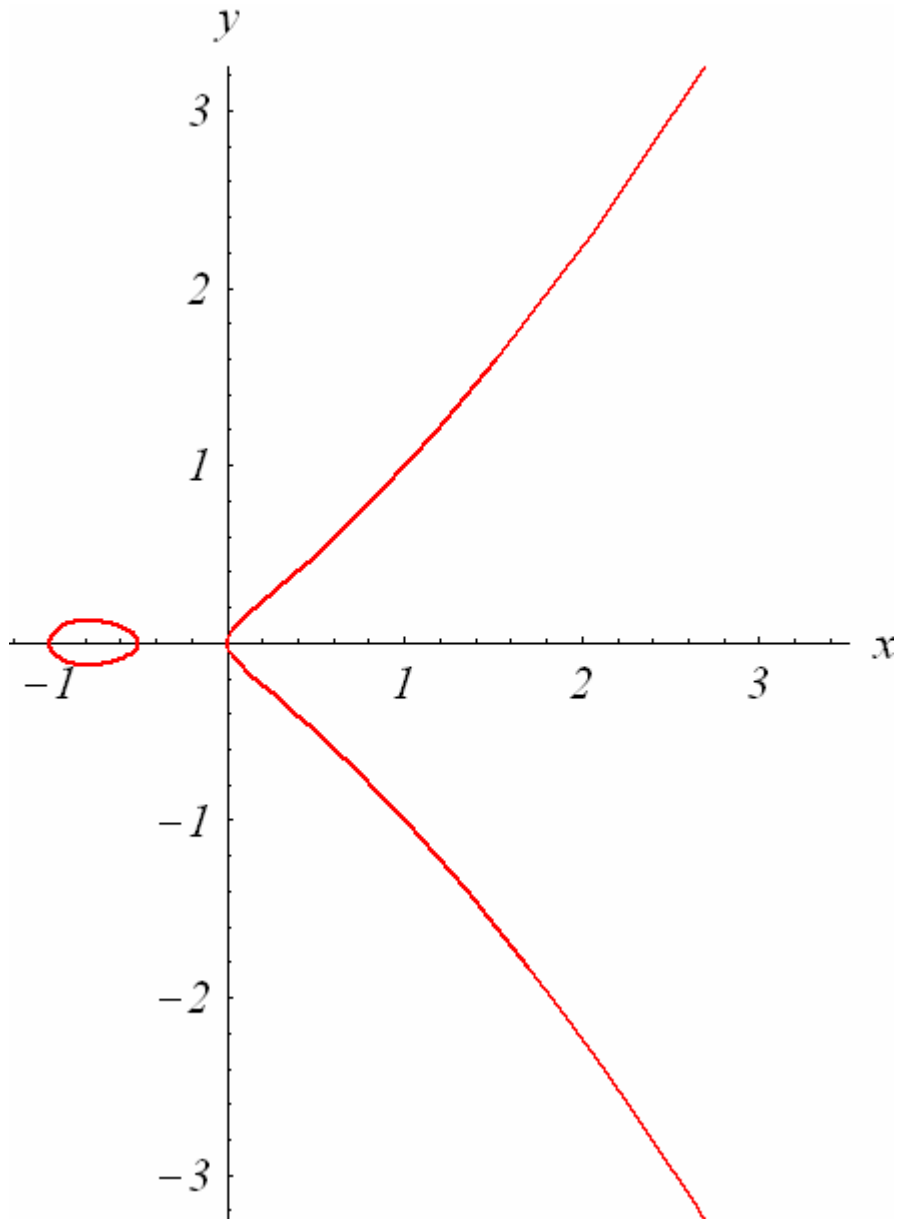
- Plan: consider the curve

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

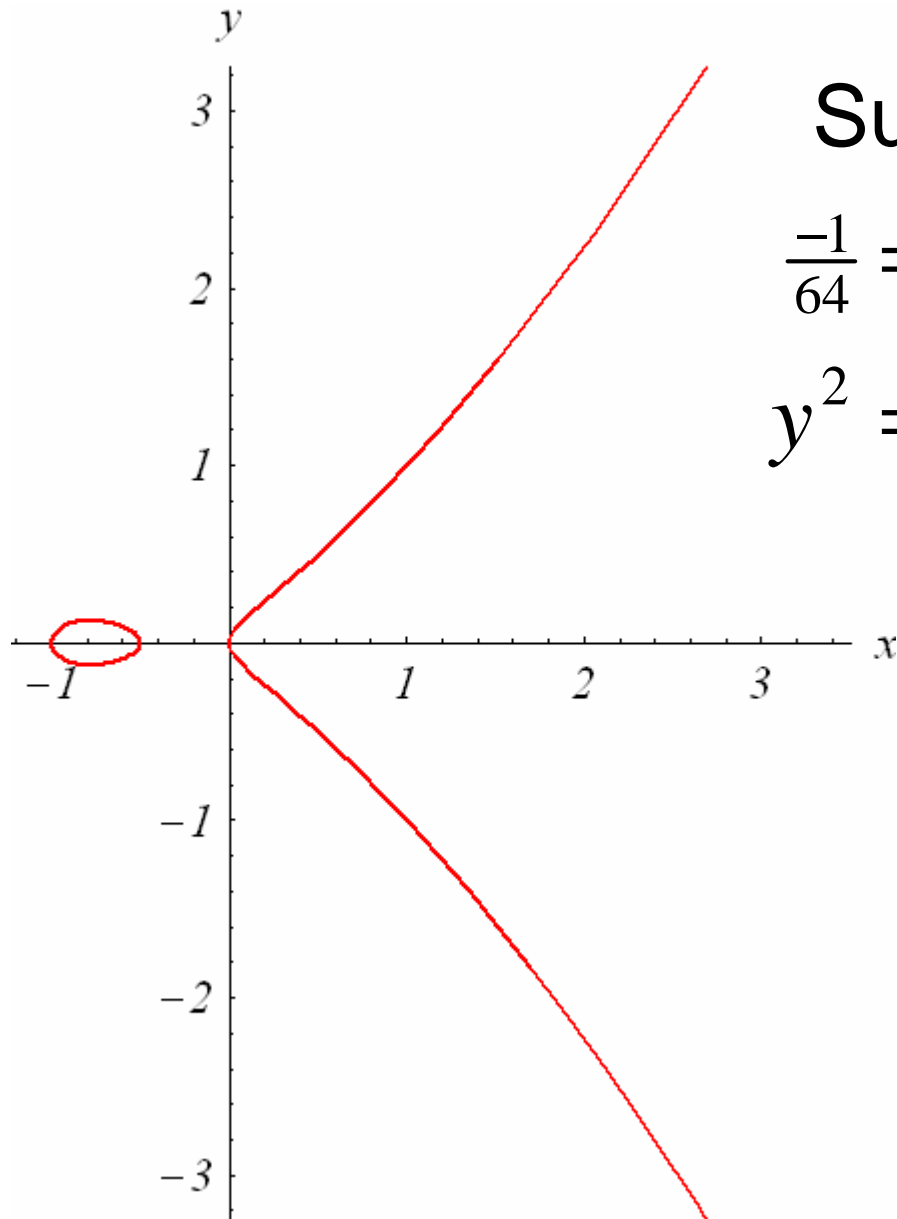
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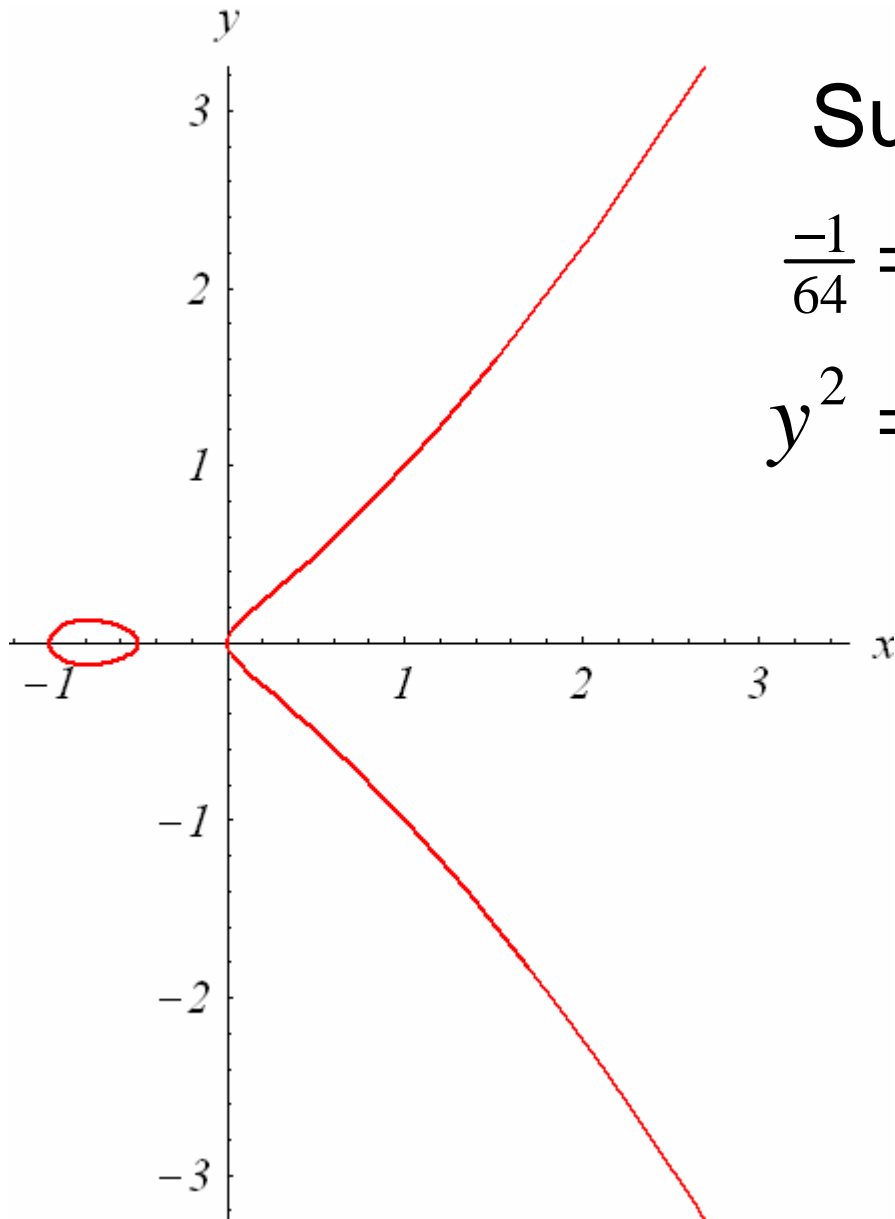


Suppose:  $x = \frac{-1}{4}$

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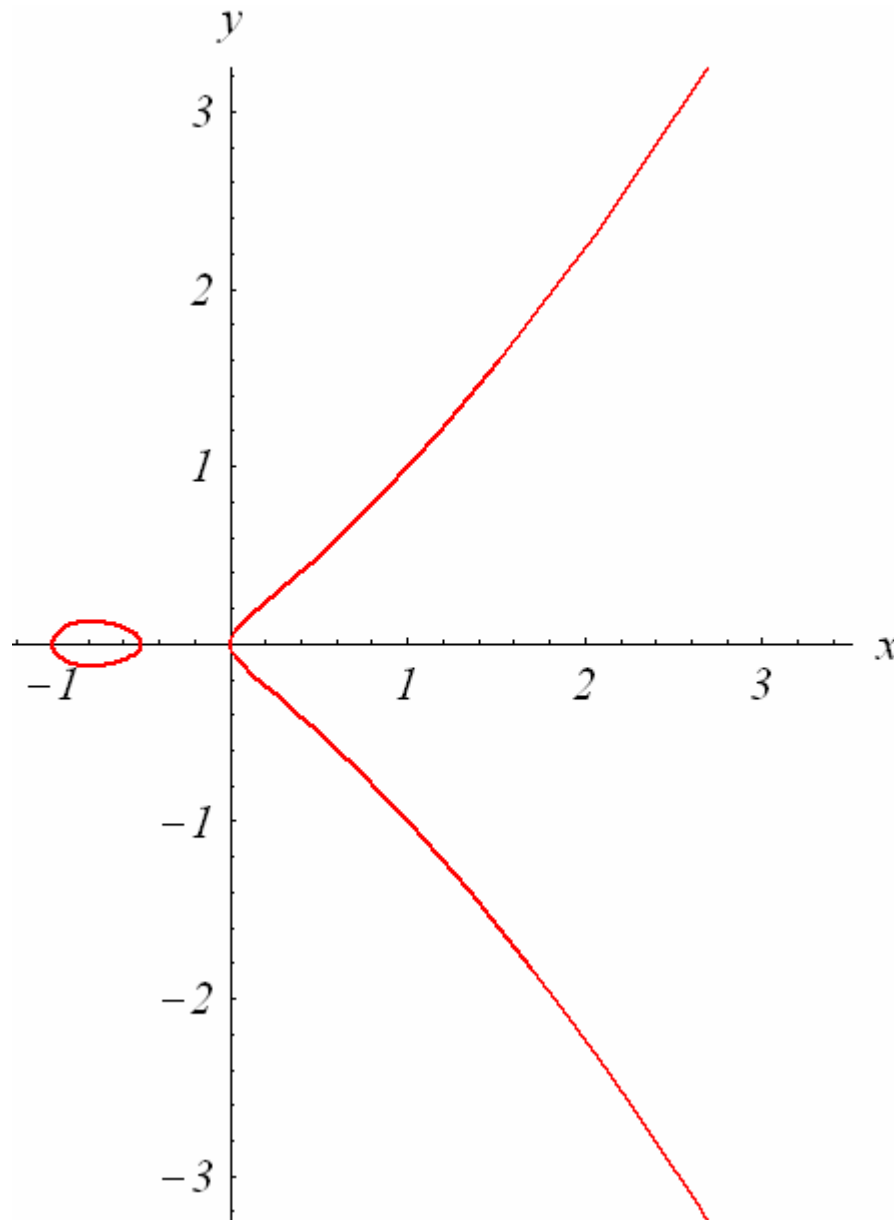
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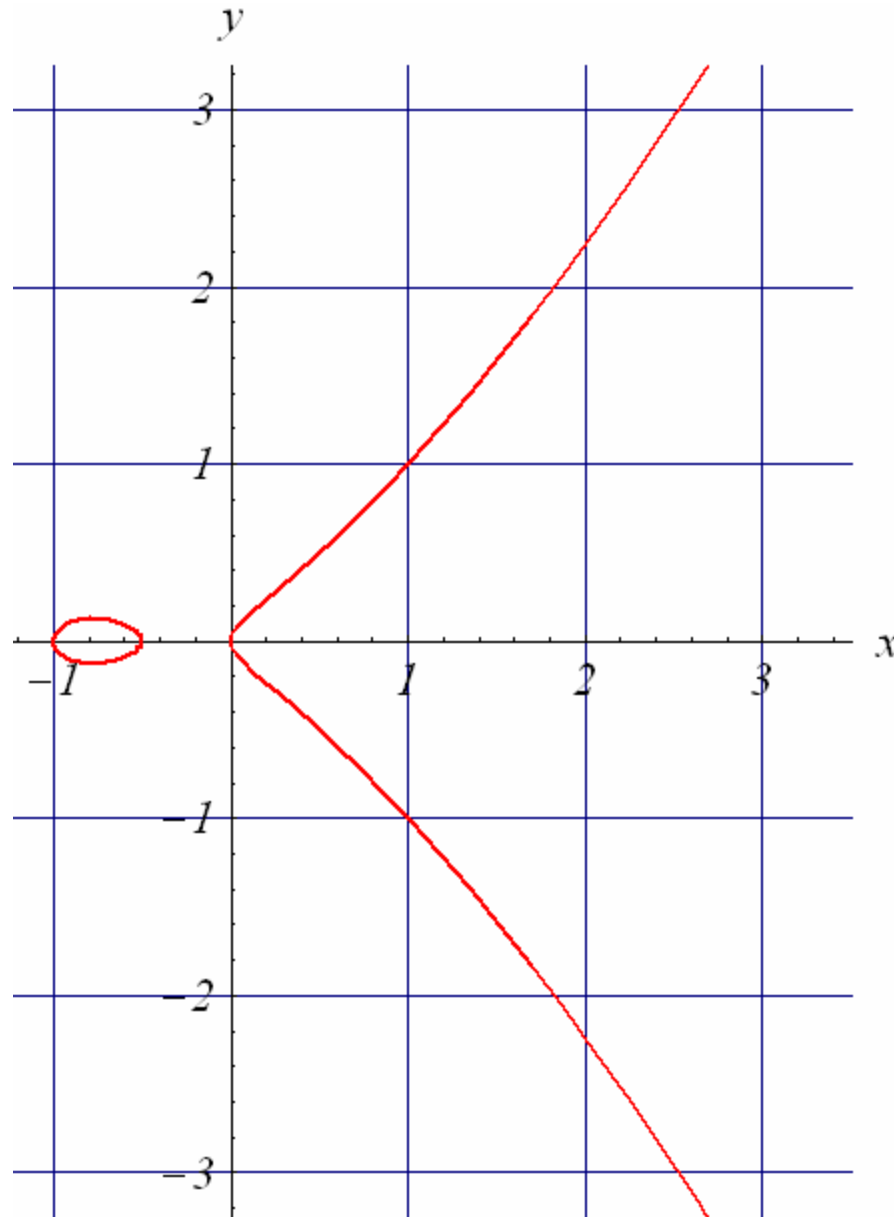
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Symmetry  
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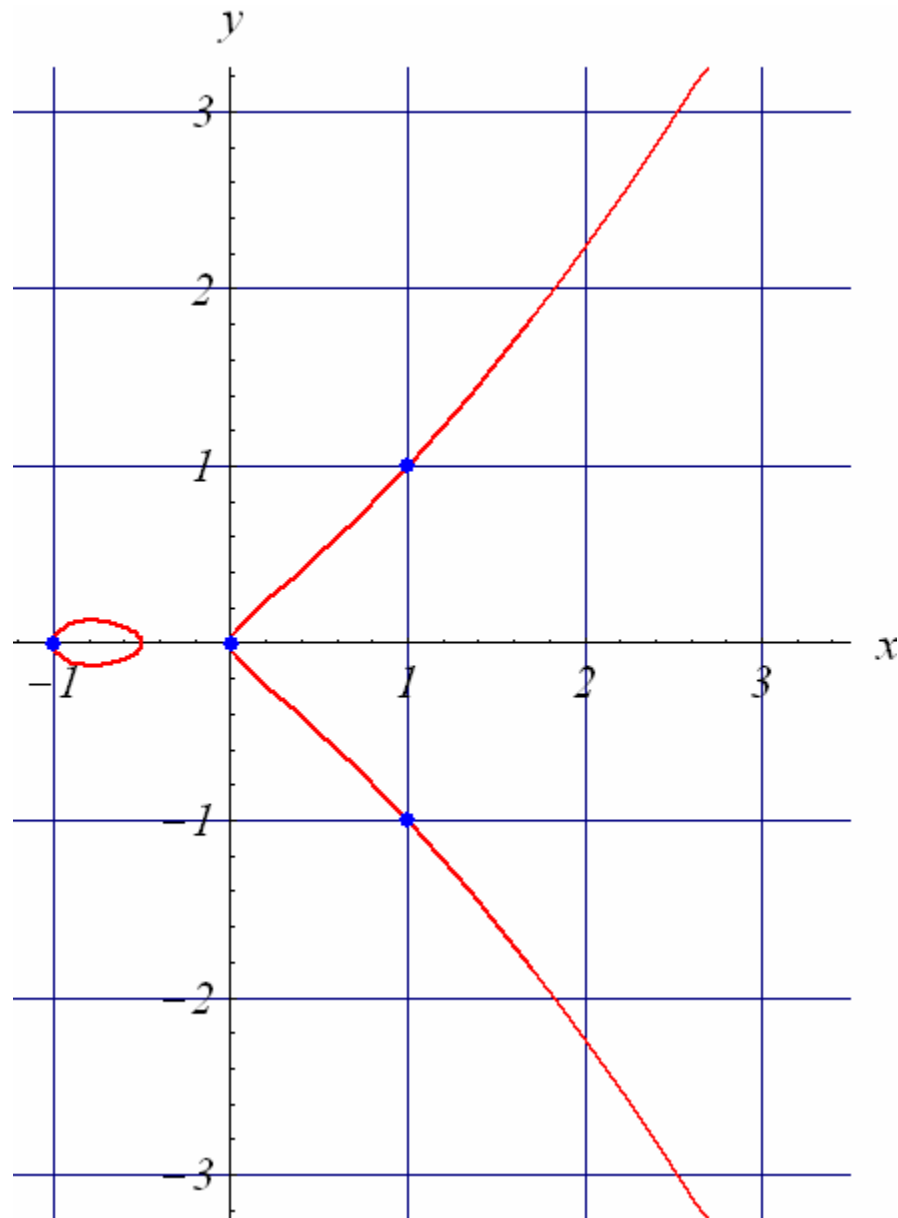


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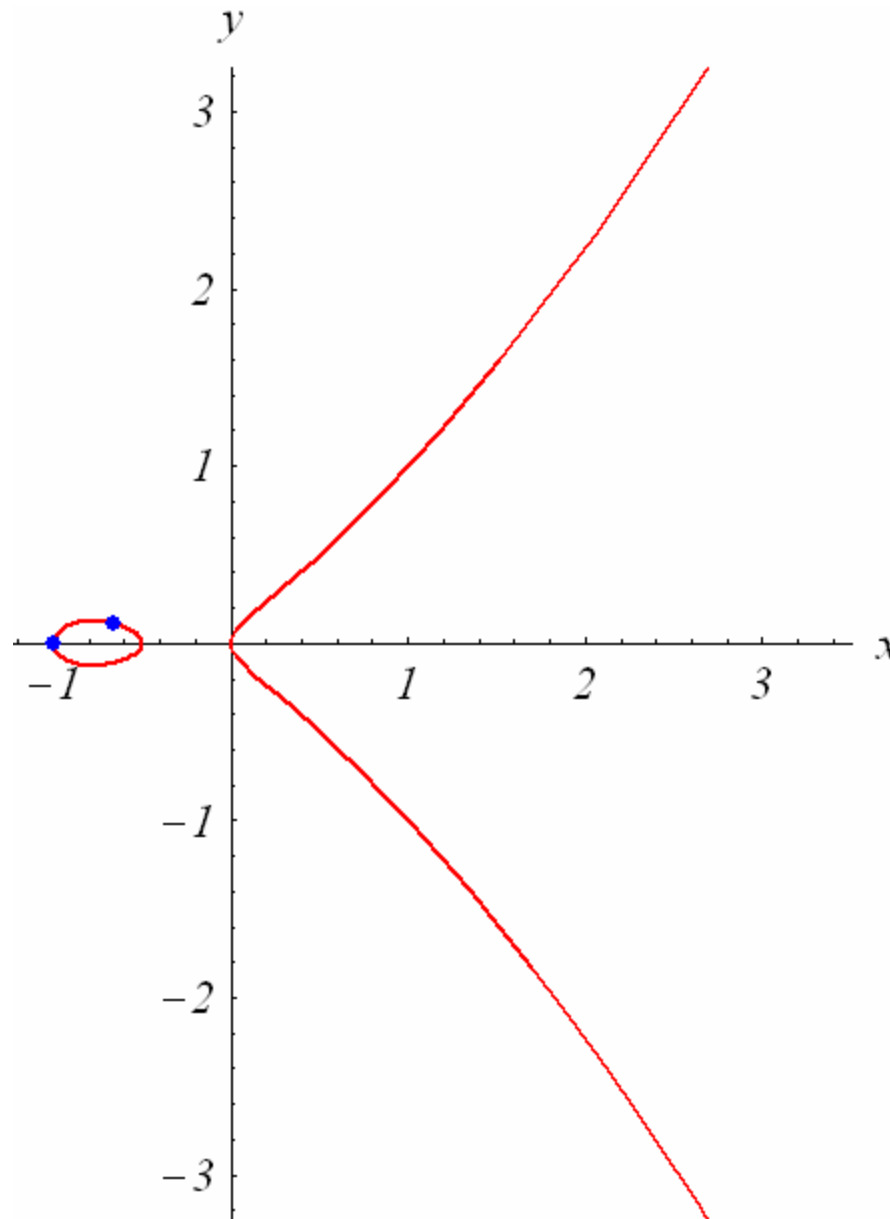


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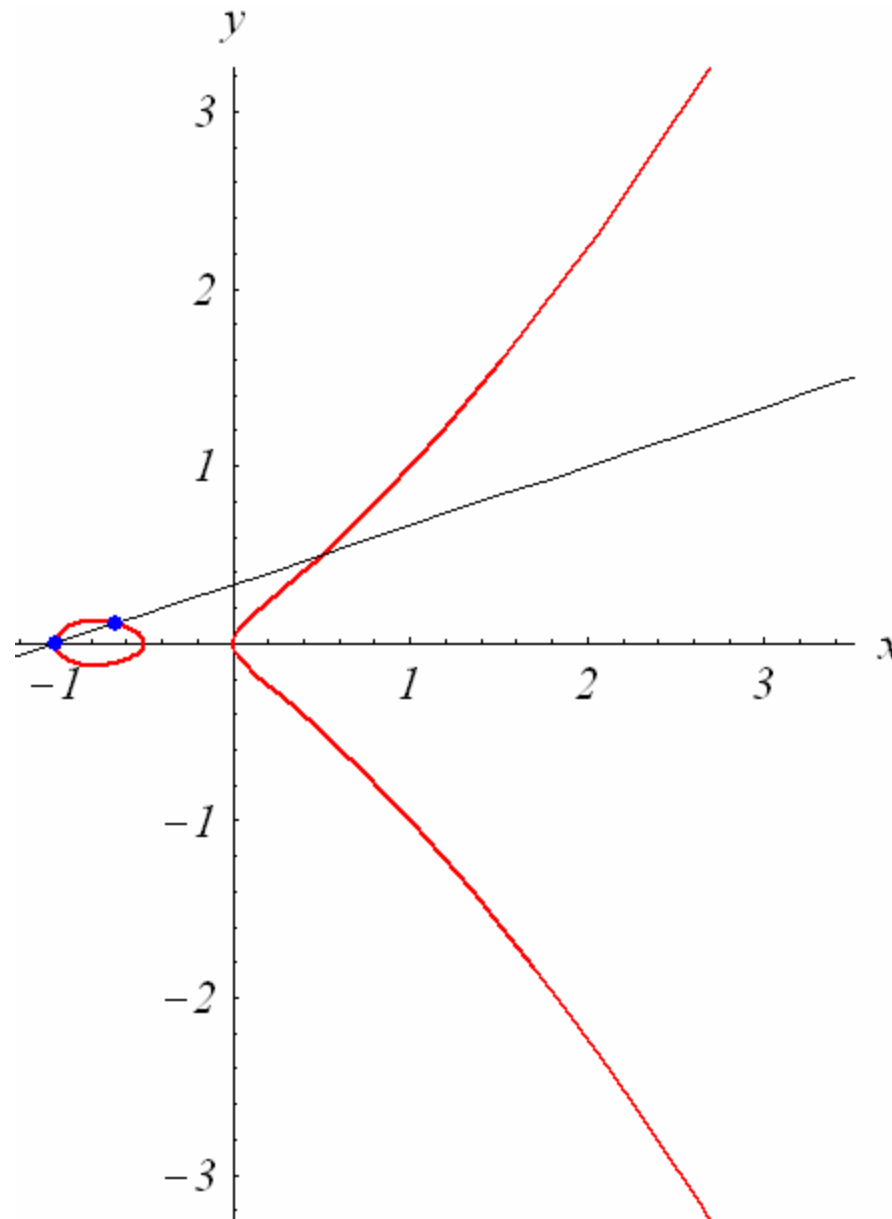
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1. A line through any two points on the curve hits the curve in a third point.

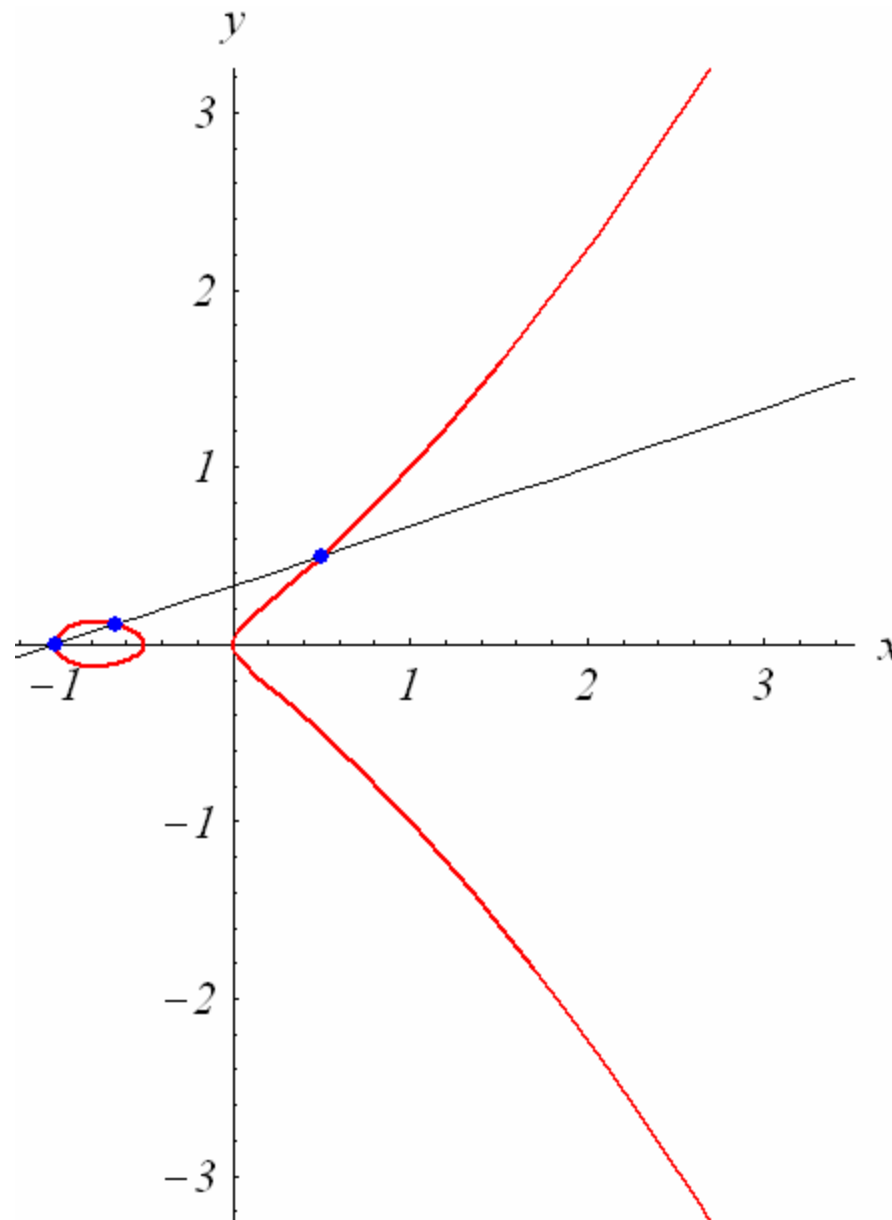
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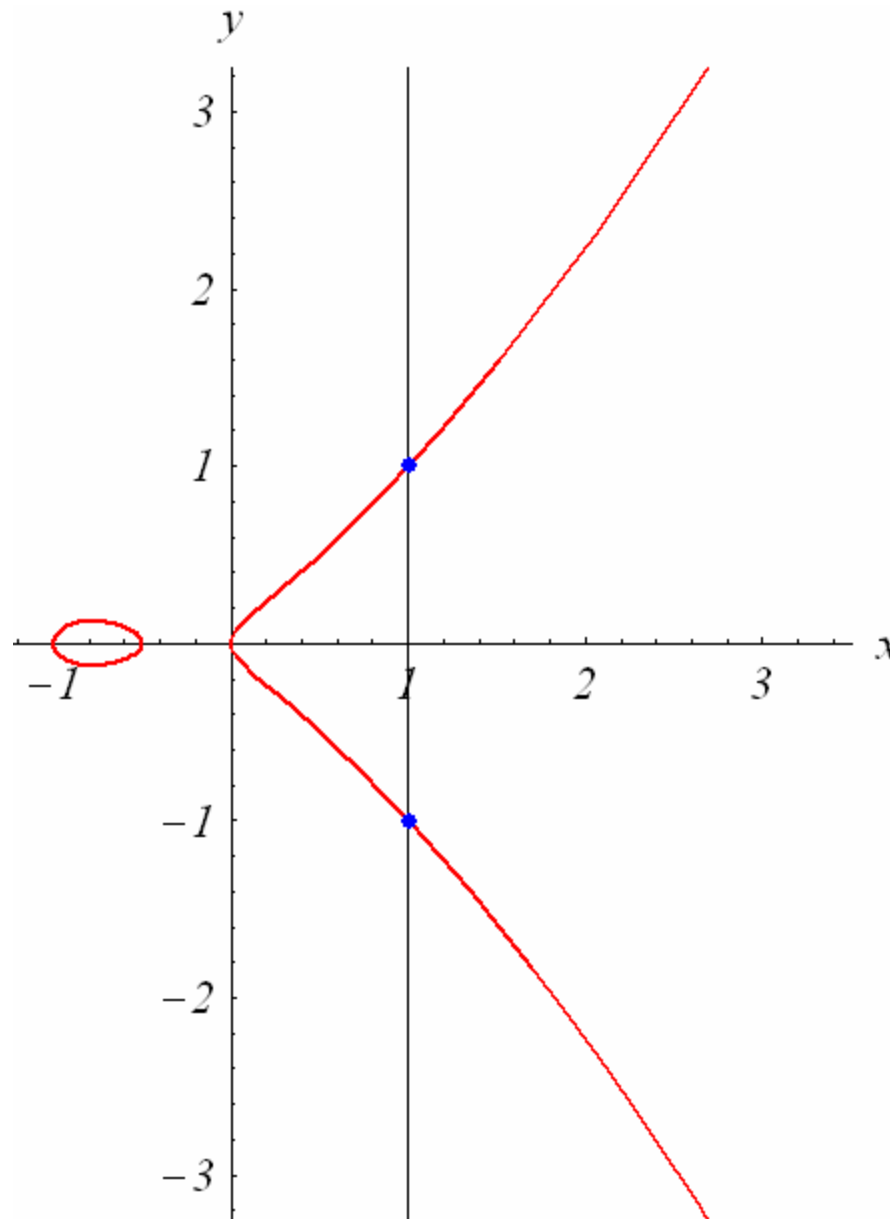
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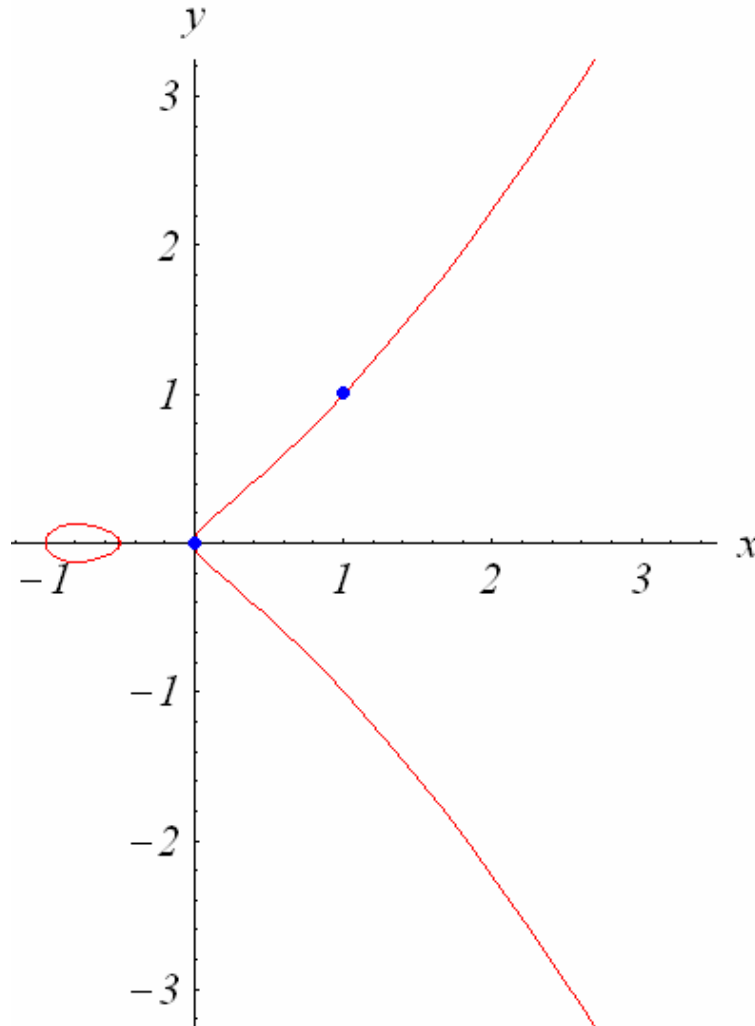
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- **Method:** Use these properties to find more rational points on the curve. Hopefully we'll find an integral point.

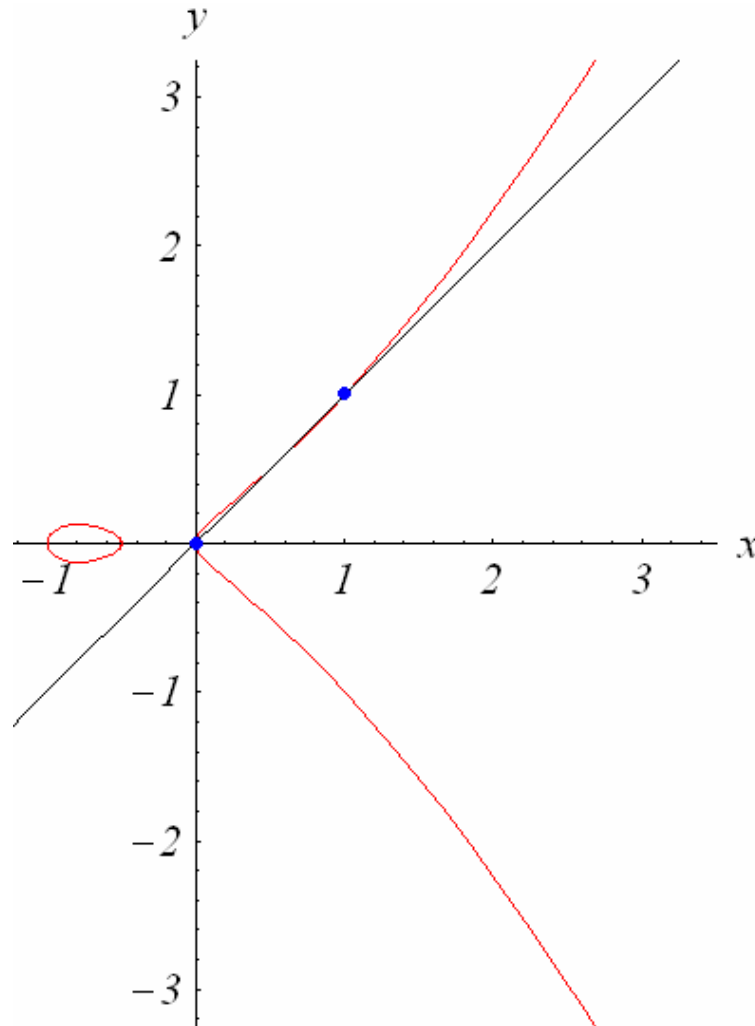
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- Consider the line through  $(0,0)$  and  $(1,1)$ .



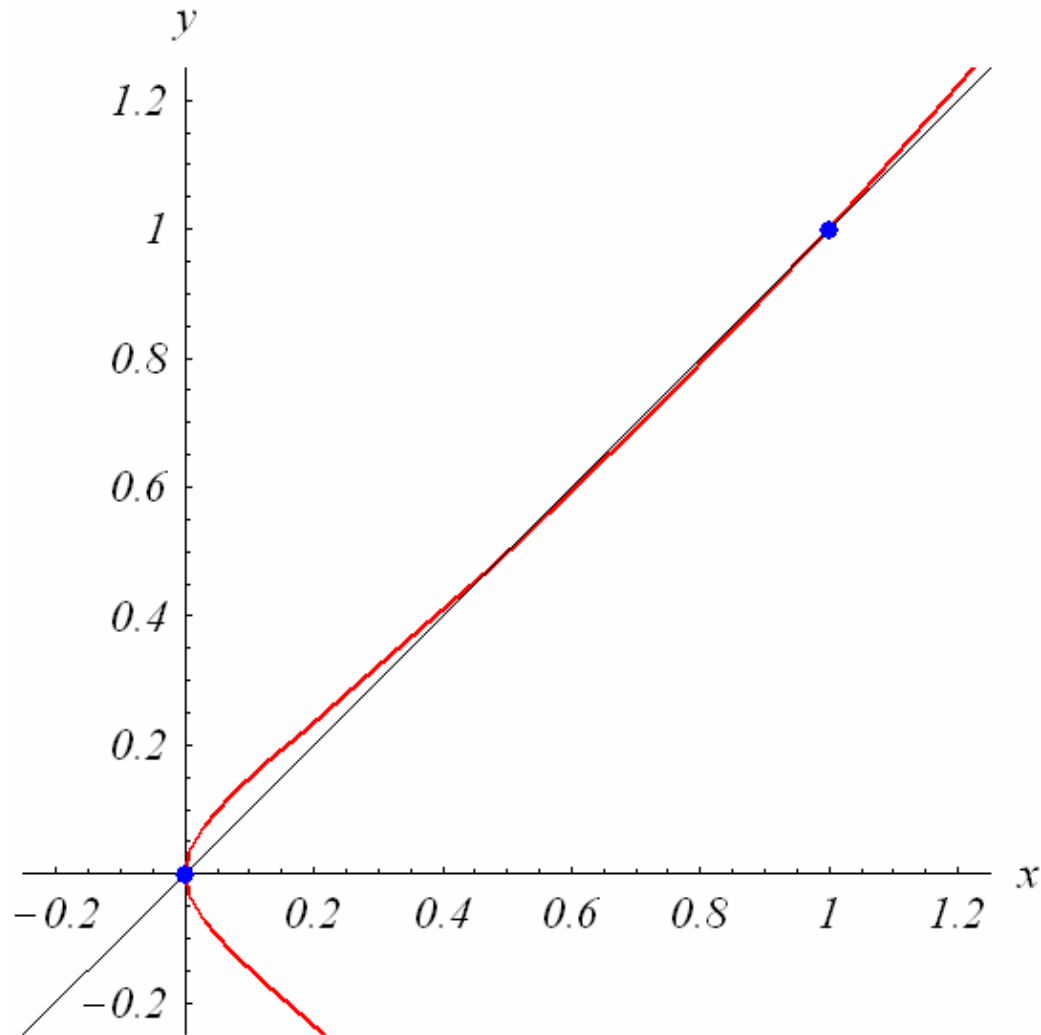
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- Put them together:

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

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



# Finding New Points

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so it's easy to find the third.

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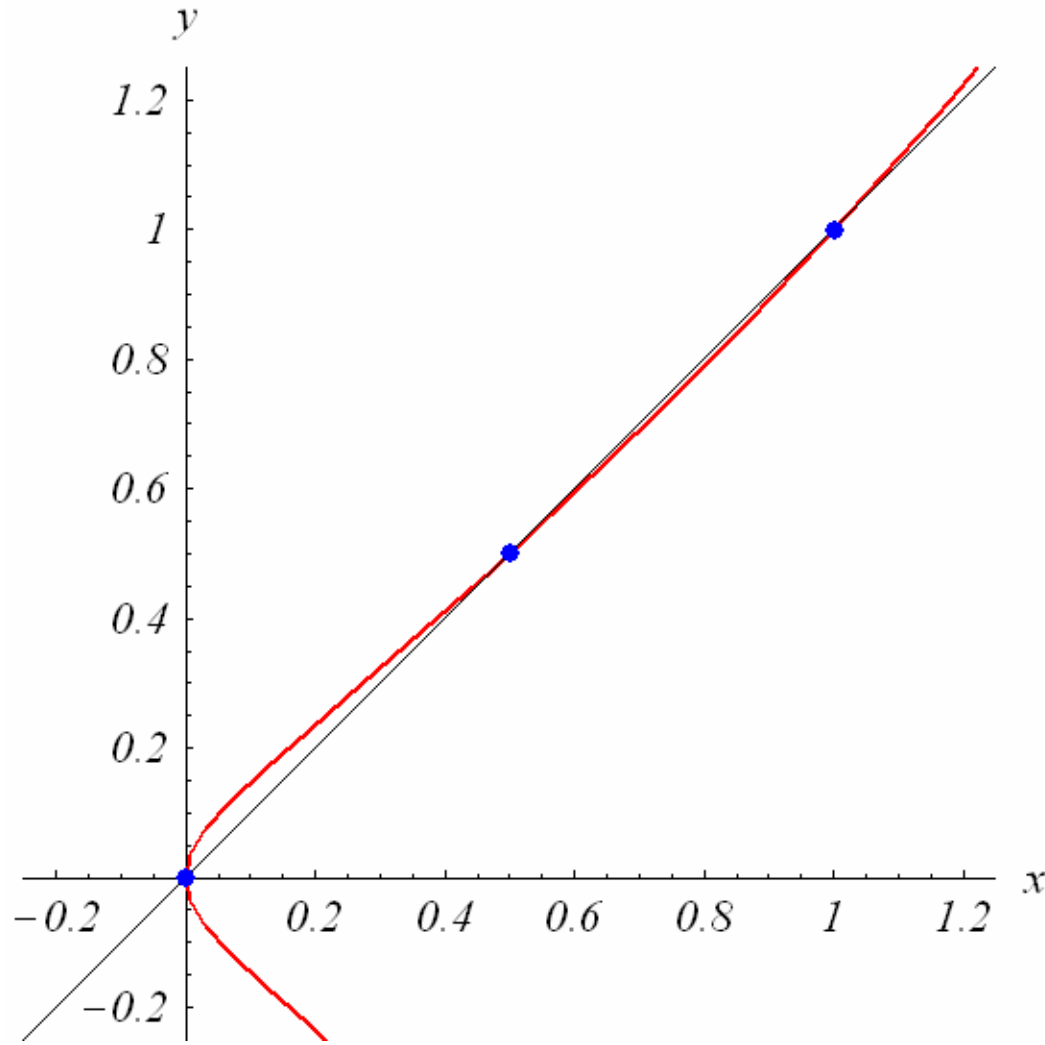
- We get a new point:  $\left(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$ .

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

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

# Finding New Points

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



# Finding New Points

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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...

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

The point found in our example.

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

Because of the symmetry about the  $x$ -axis.

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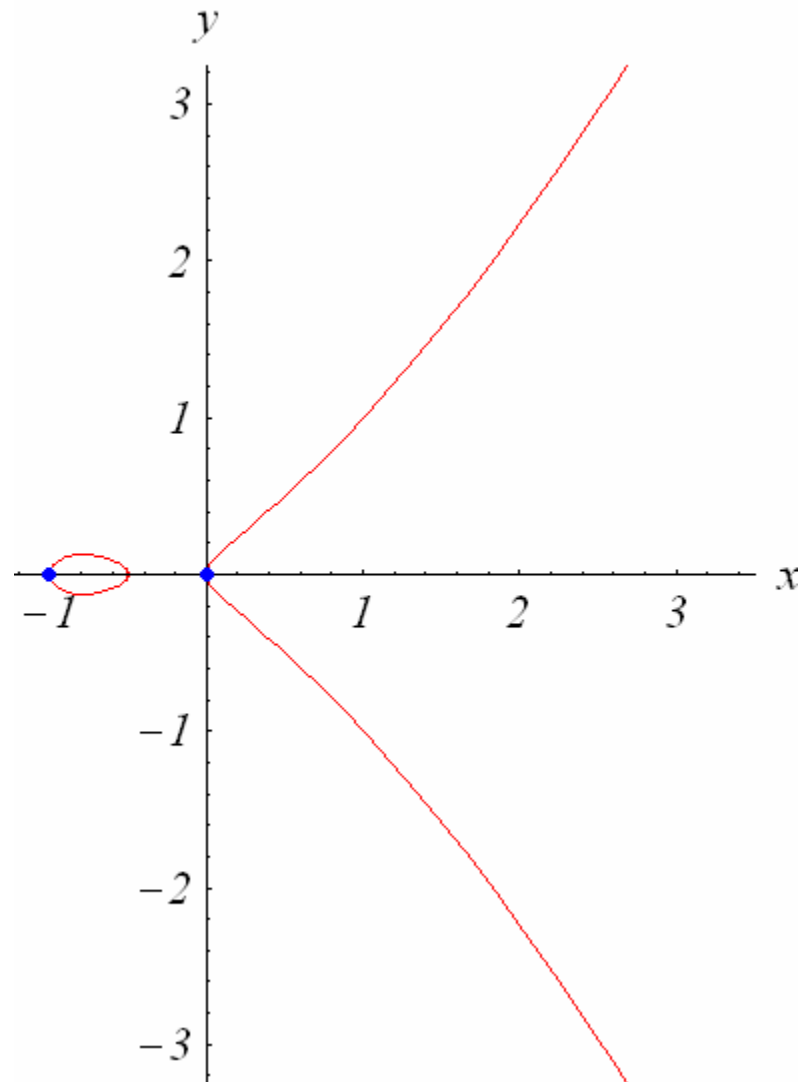
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$(-1,0)$	?			
$(0,0)$		?	$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$
$(1,-1)$		$(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$	?	vertical
$(1,1)$		$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

# Try Again...

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

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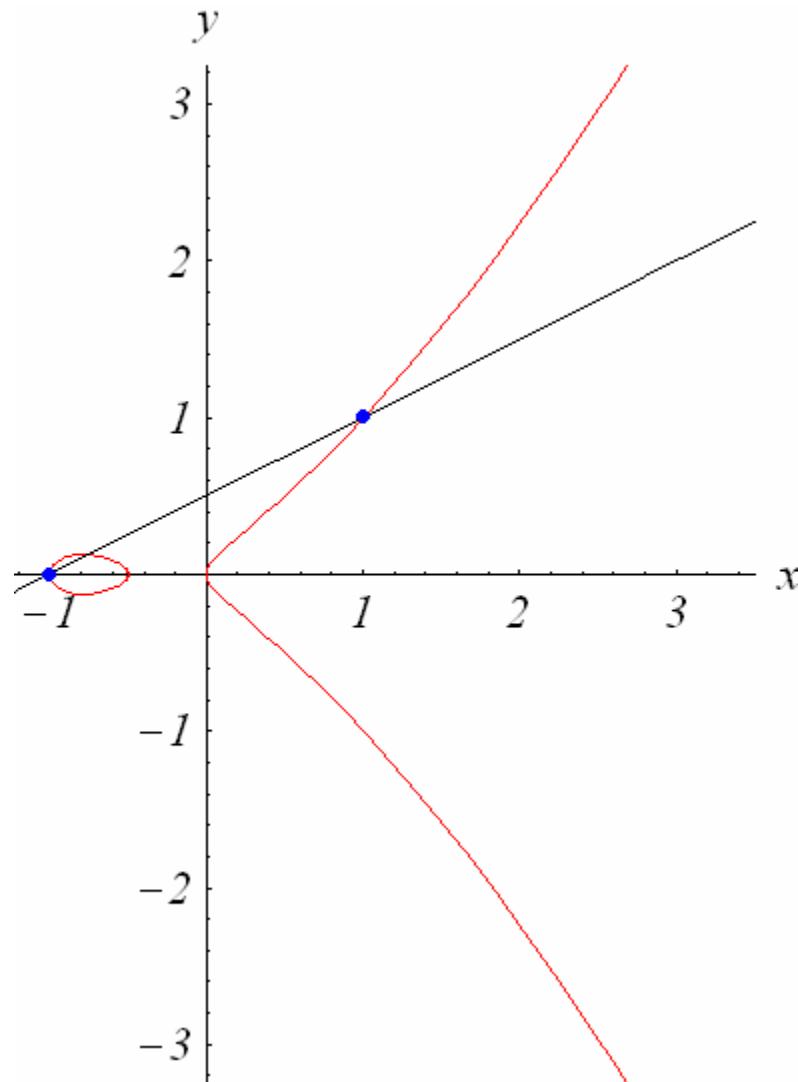
	$(-1,0)$	$(0,0)$	$(1,-1)$	$(1,1)$
$(-1,0)$	?	$(-\frac{1}{2},0)$		
$(0,0)$	$(-\frac{1}{2},0)$	?	$(\frac{1}{2},-\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2},\frac{1}{2})$
$(1,-1)$		$(\frac{1}{2},-\frac{1}{2})$	?	vertical
$(1,1)$		$(\frac{1}{2},\frac{1}{2})$	vertical	?

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

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  $(1, 1)$ .

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

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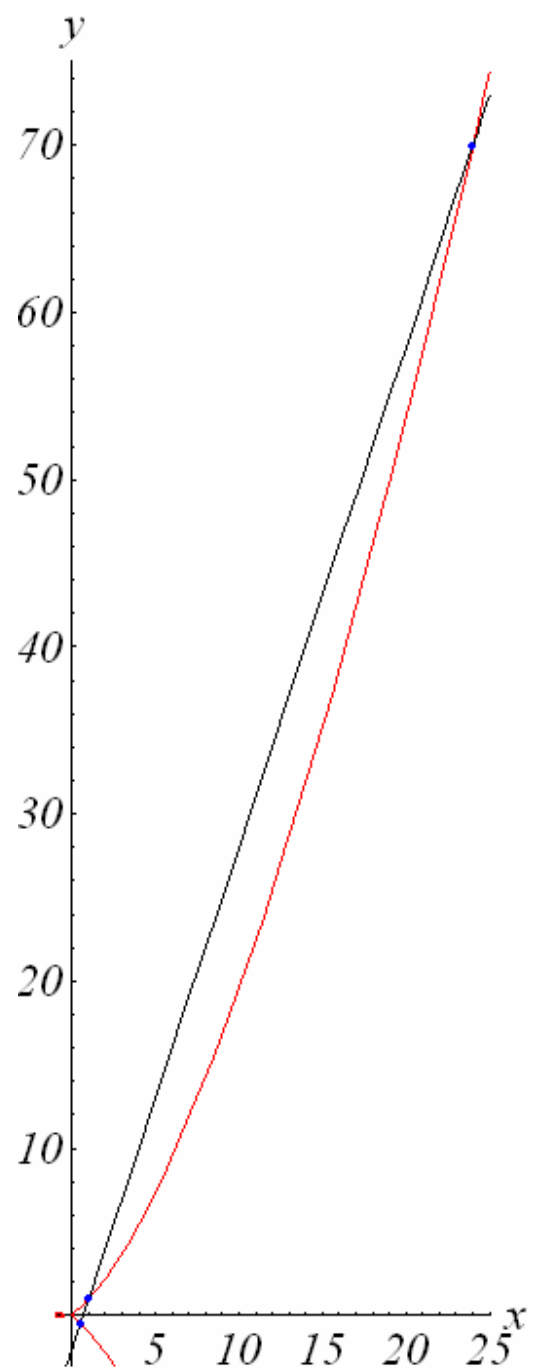
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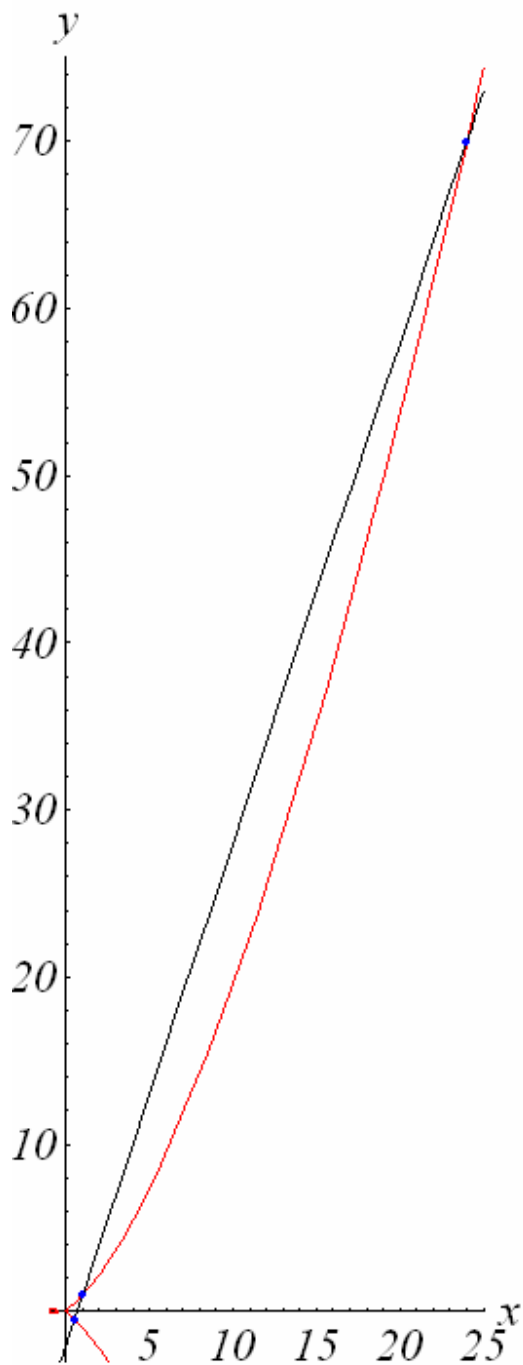
$$0 = (x - \frac{1}{2})(x - 1)(x - 24)$$

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



# Cannonballs Solution

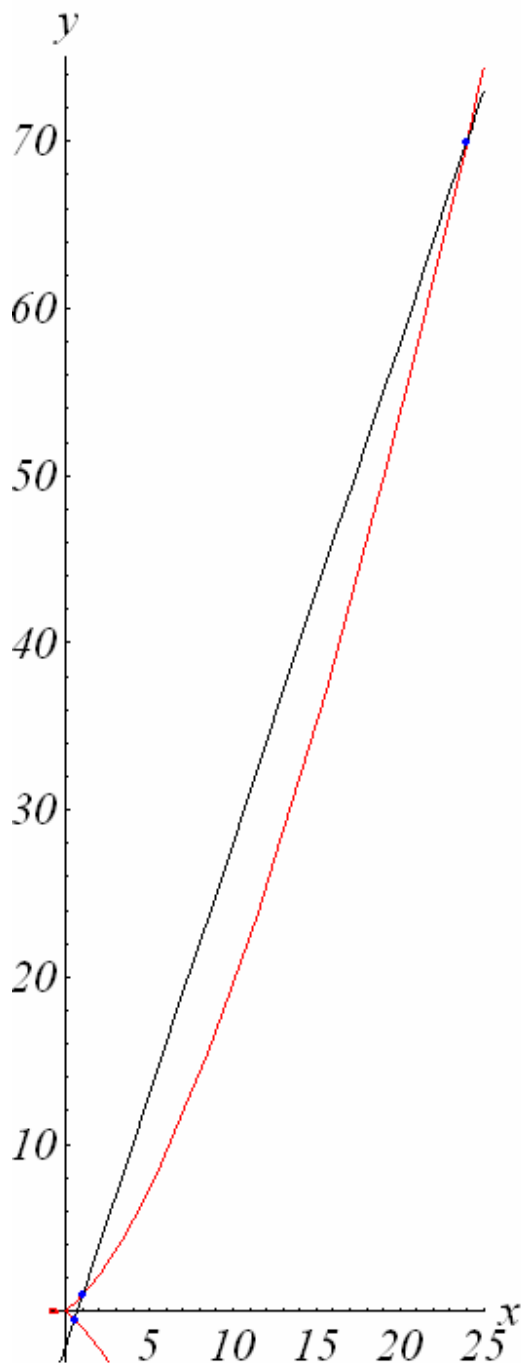
$$70^2 = 1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + 24^2$$



# 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.

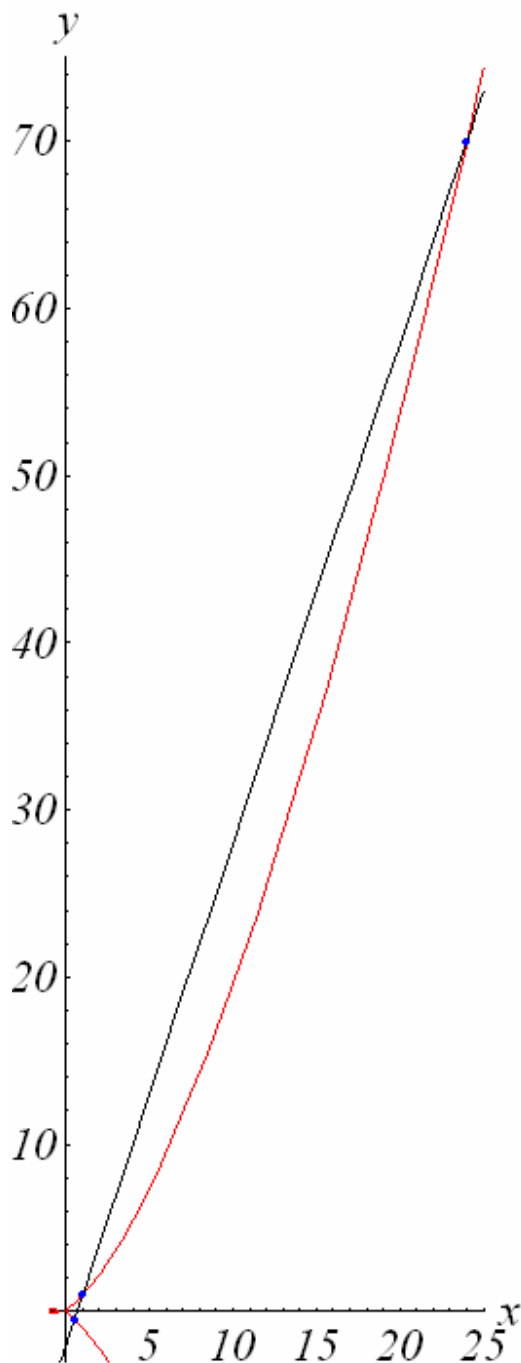


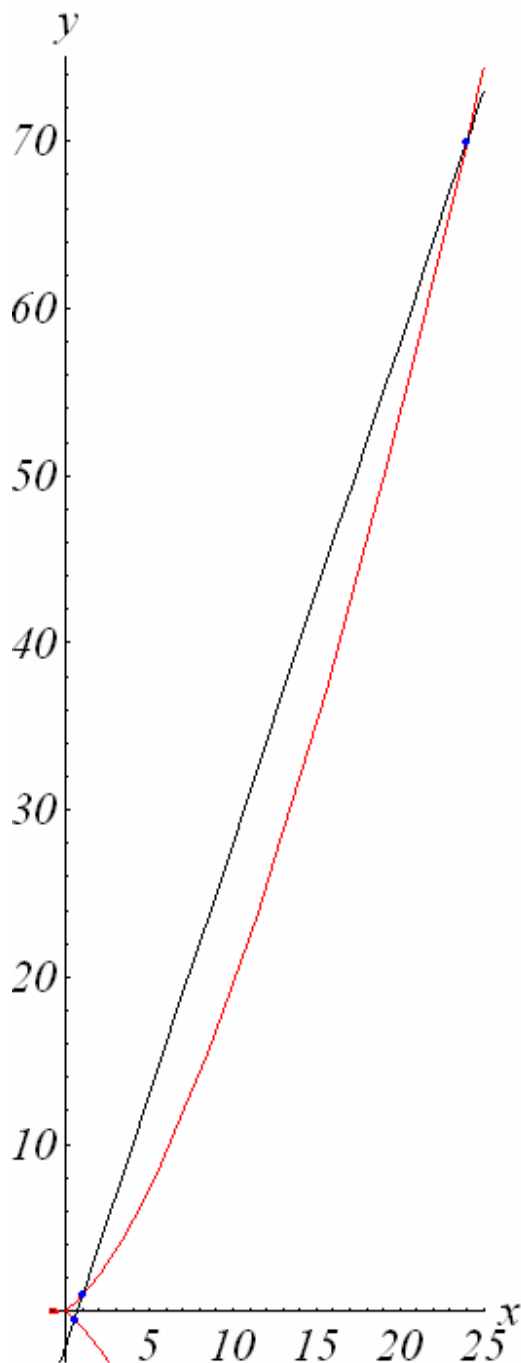
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Watson (1918): **No.**

# Beyond Cannonballs

- The curve

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- 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

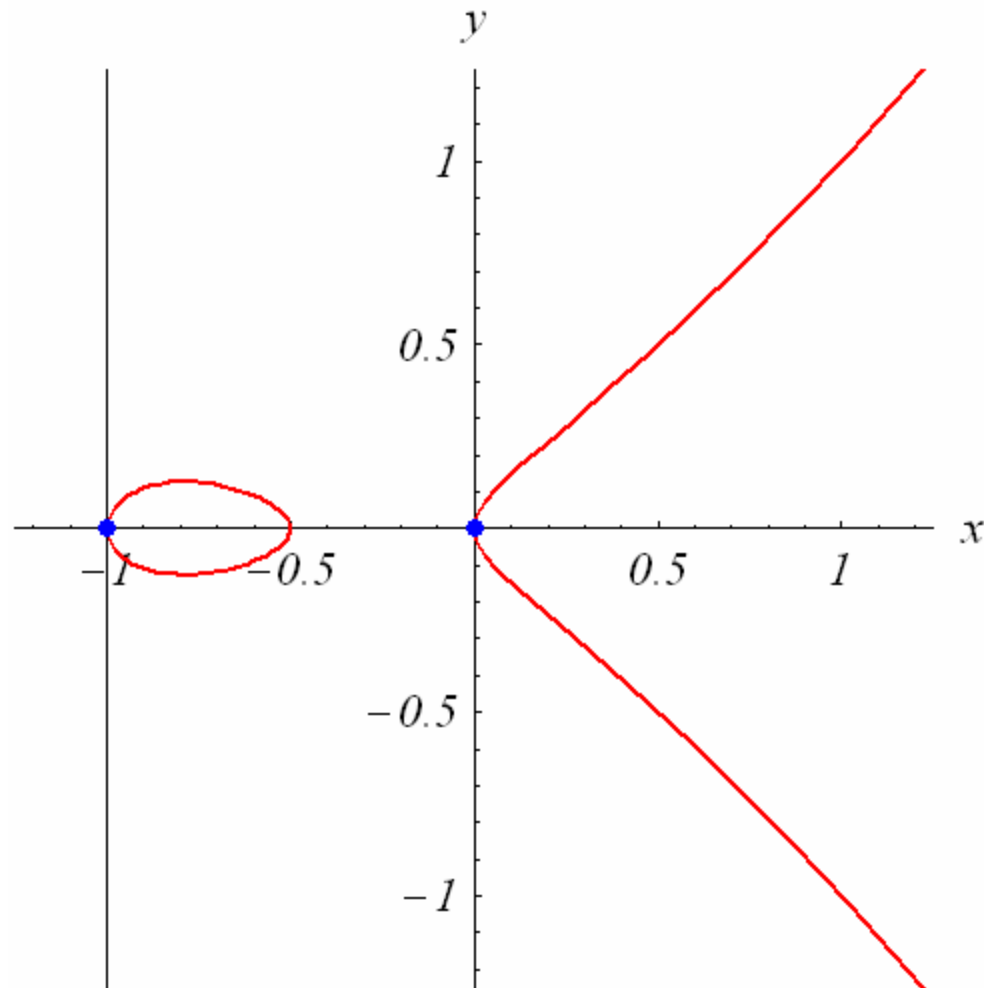
	$(-1,0)$	$(0,0)$	$(1,-1)$	$(1,1)$
$(-1,0)$	?	$(-\frac{1}{2},0)$	$(-\frac{3}{4},-\frac{1}{8})$	$(-\frac{3}{4},\frac{1}{8})$
$(0,0)$	$(-\frac{1}{2},0)$	?	$(\frac{1}{2},-\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2},\frac{1}{2})$
$(1,-1)$	$(-\frac{3}{4},-\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2},-\frac{1}{2})$	?	vertical
$(1,1)$	$(-\frac{3}{4},\frac{1}{8})$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

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

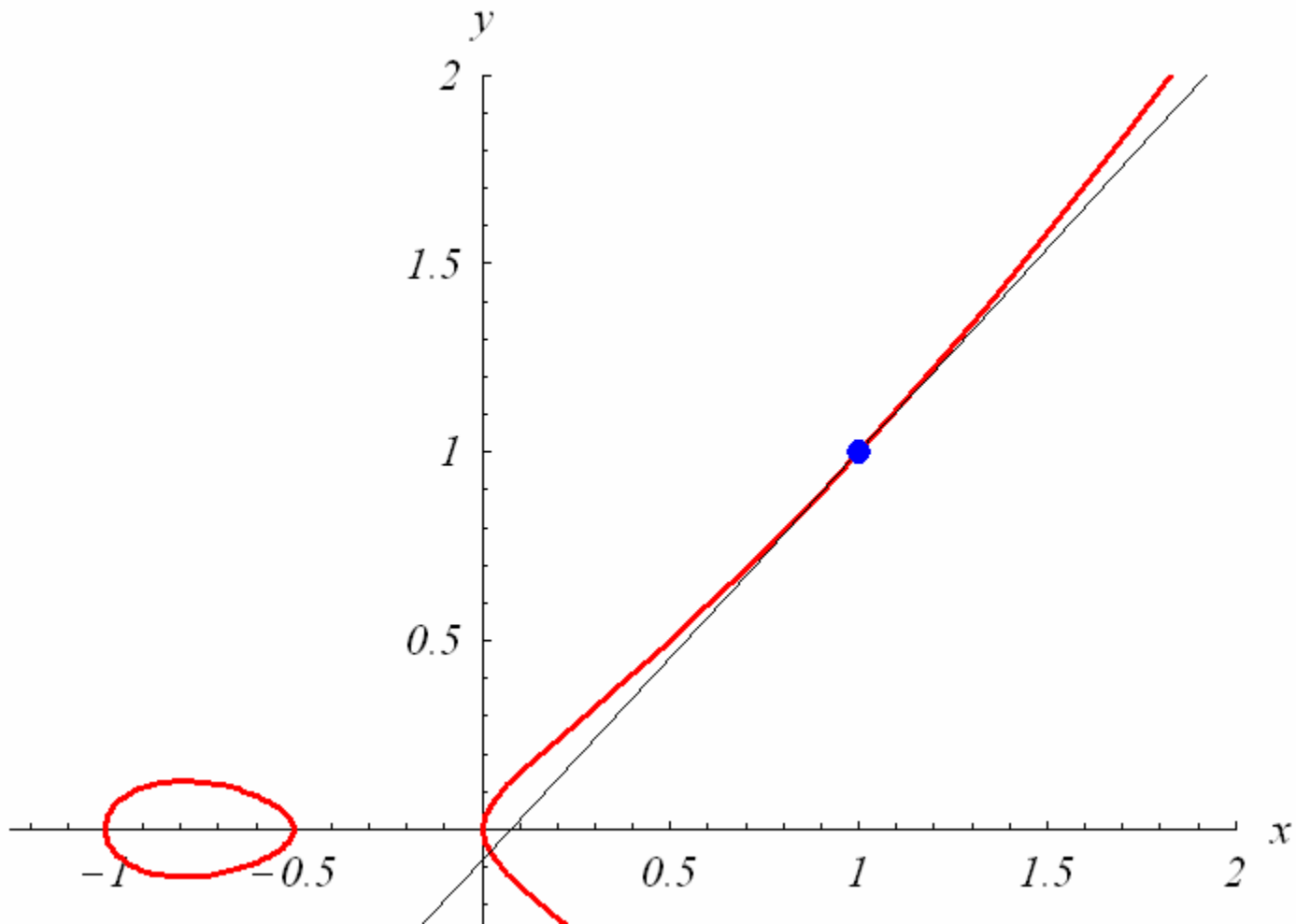


# Addition Table

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

Vertical lines include the point ⊘

# Tangent Line Through (1,1)





# Addition Table

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

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

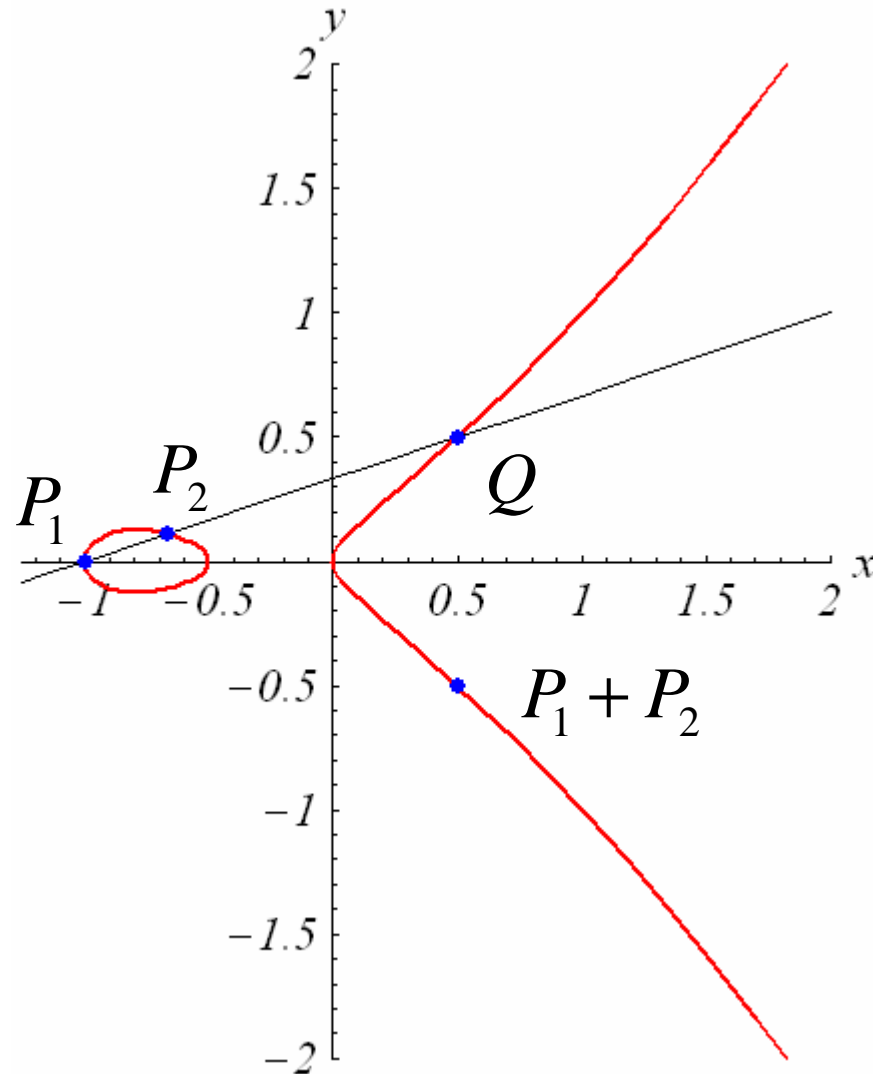
Because of the symmetry about the  $x$ -axis.

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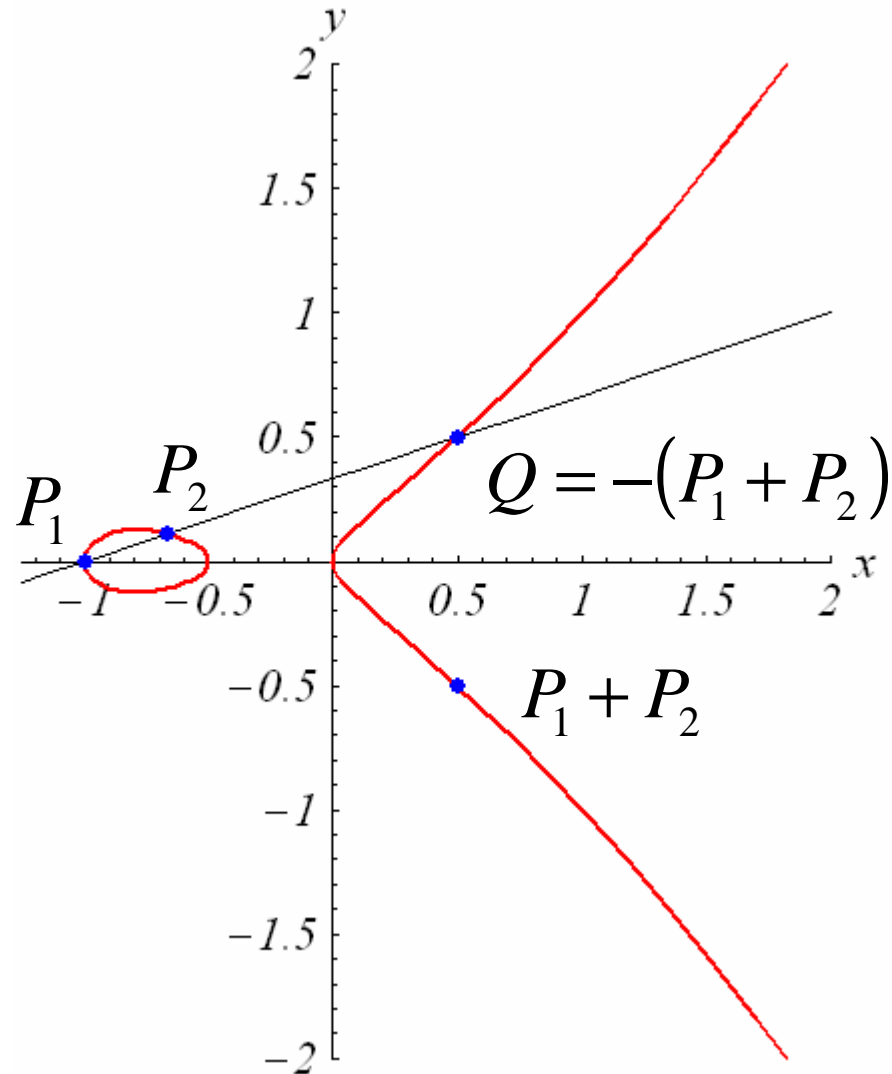
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$(-1,0)$	¥	$(-\frac{1}{2},0)$	$(-\frac{3}{4},-\frac{1}{8})$	$(-\frac{3}{4},\frac{1}{8})$
$(0,0)$	$(-\frac{1}{2},0)$	¥	$(\frac{1}{2},-\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{2},\frac{1}{2})$
$(1,-1)$	$(-\frac{3}{4},-\frac{1}{8})$	$(\frac{1}{2},-\frac{1}{2})$	$(\frac{1}{48},\frac{35}{576})$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

# Adding Points the Right Way

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# Addition Table

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

Reverses the sign on the  $y$ -coordinate.

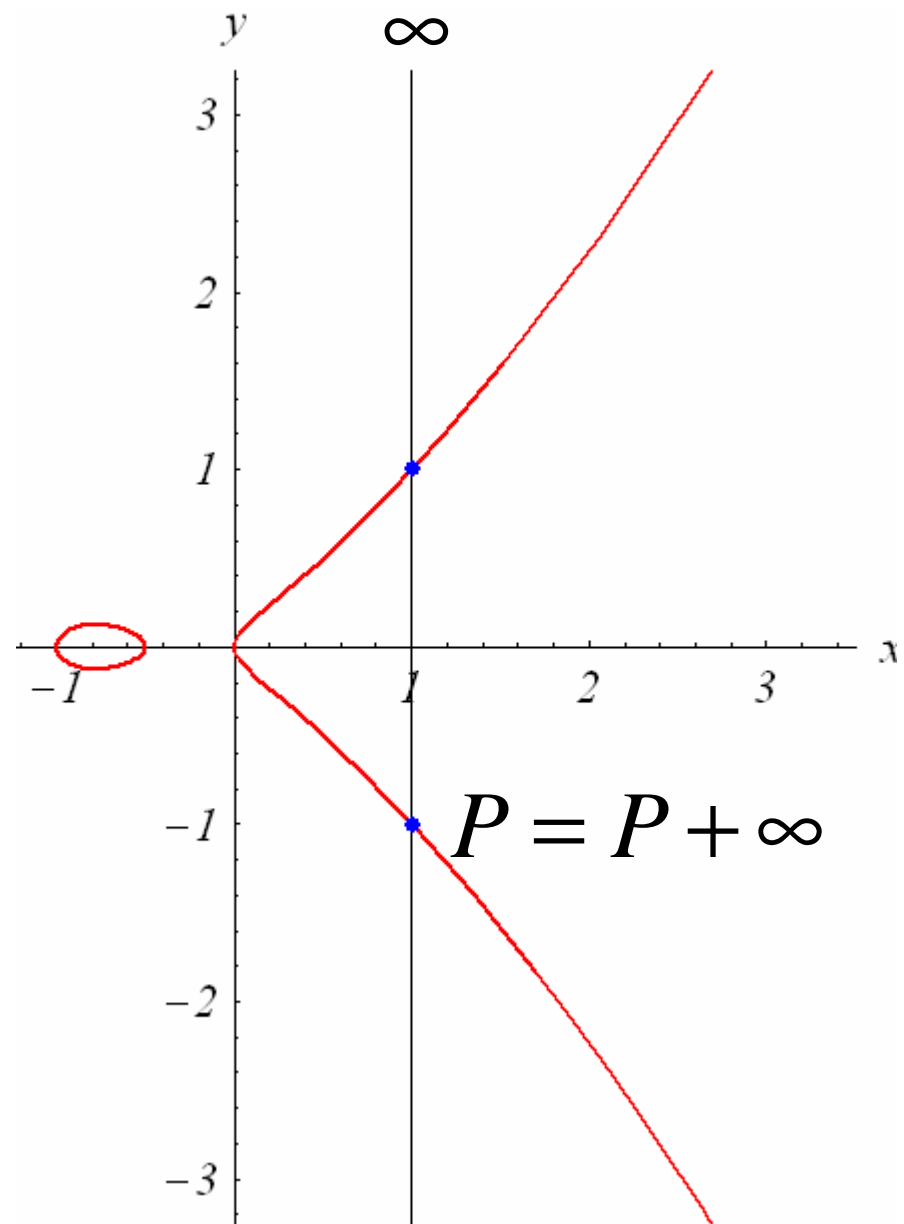
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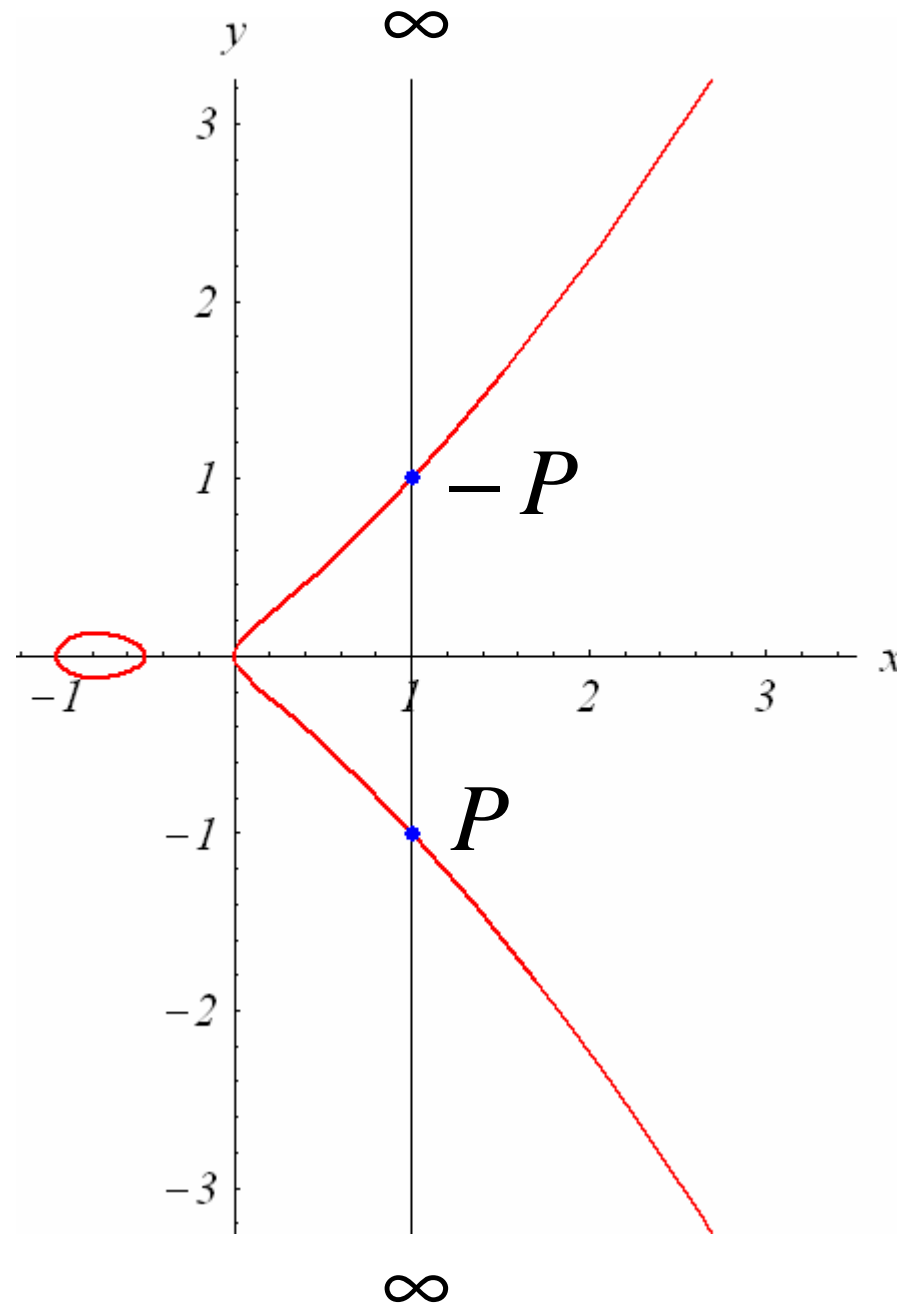


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- The rational points form an **abelian group**.

# Real World Applications



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

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

For example:  $2(1,-1) = (\frac{1}{48}, \frac{-35}{576})$ .

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

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

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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  $P$

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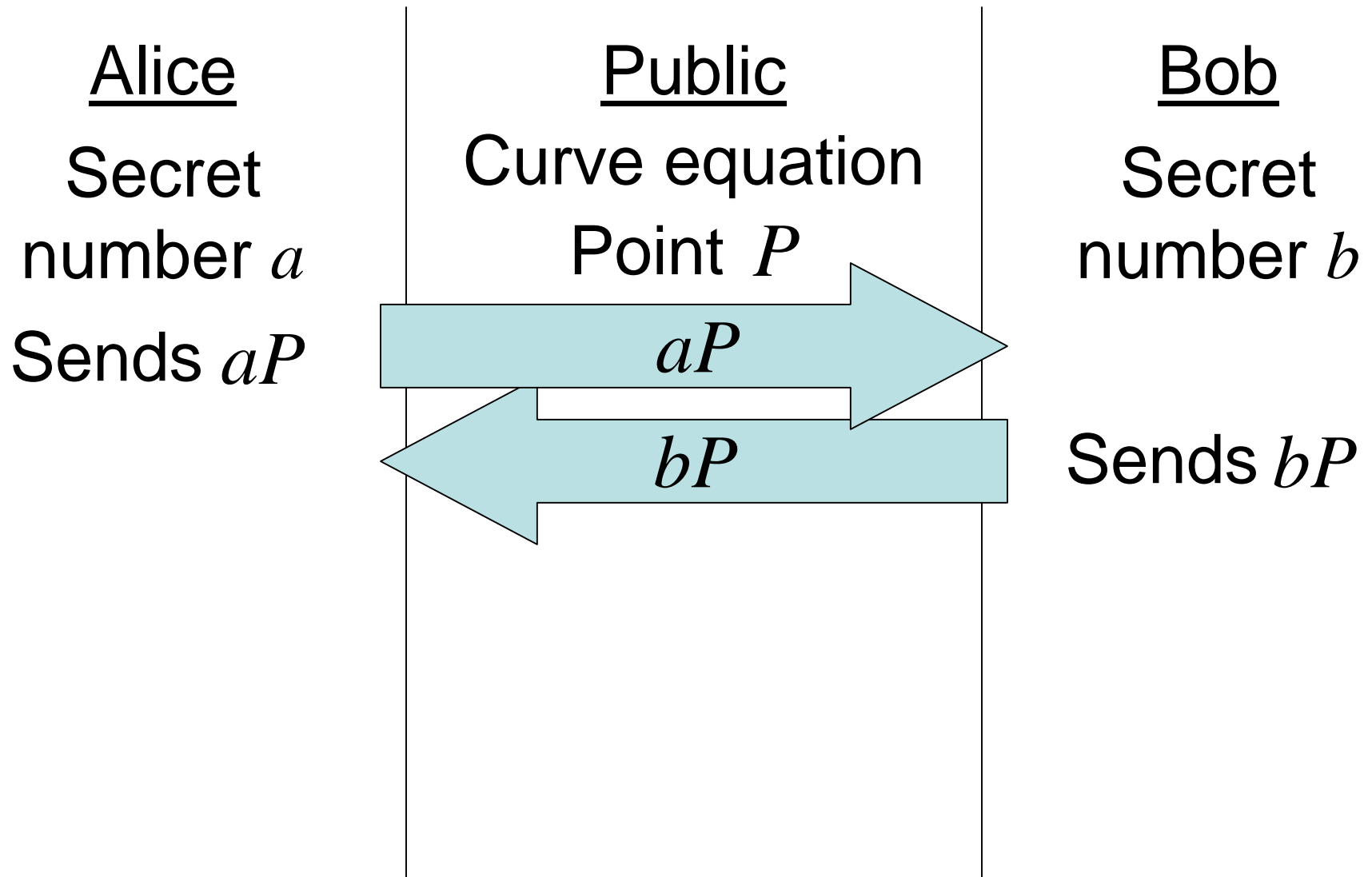
Alice  
Secret  
number  $a$

Public  
Curve equation  
Point  $P$

Bob  
Secret  
number  $b$

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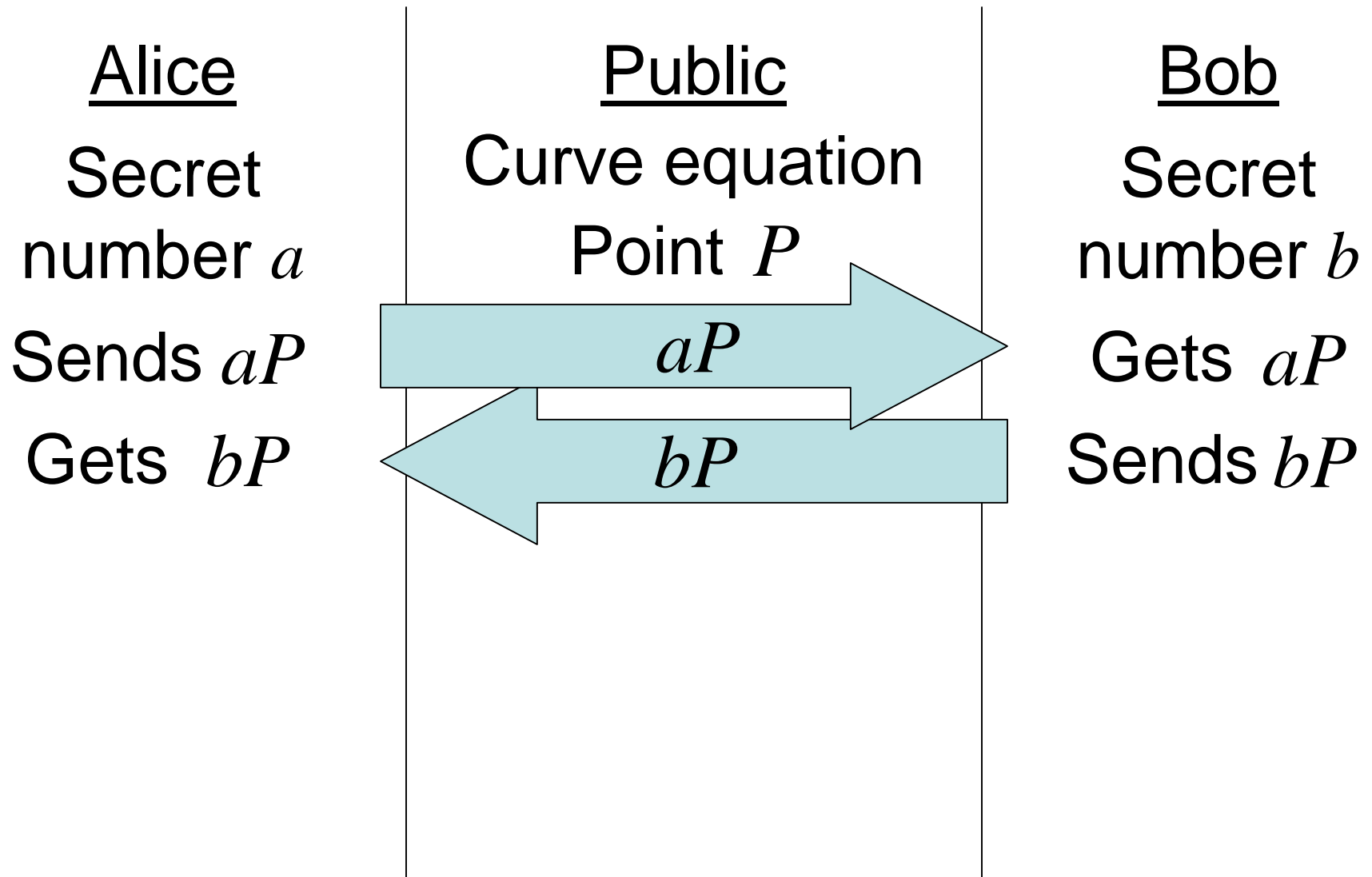
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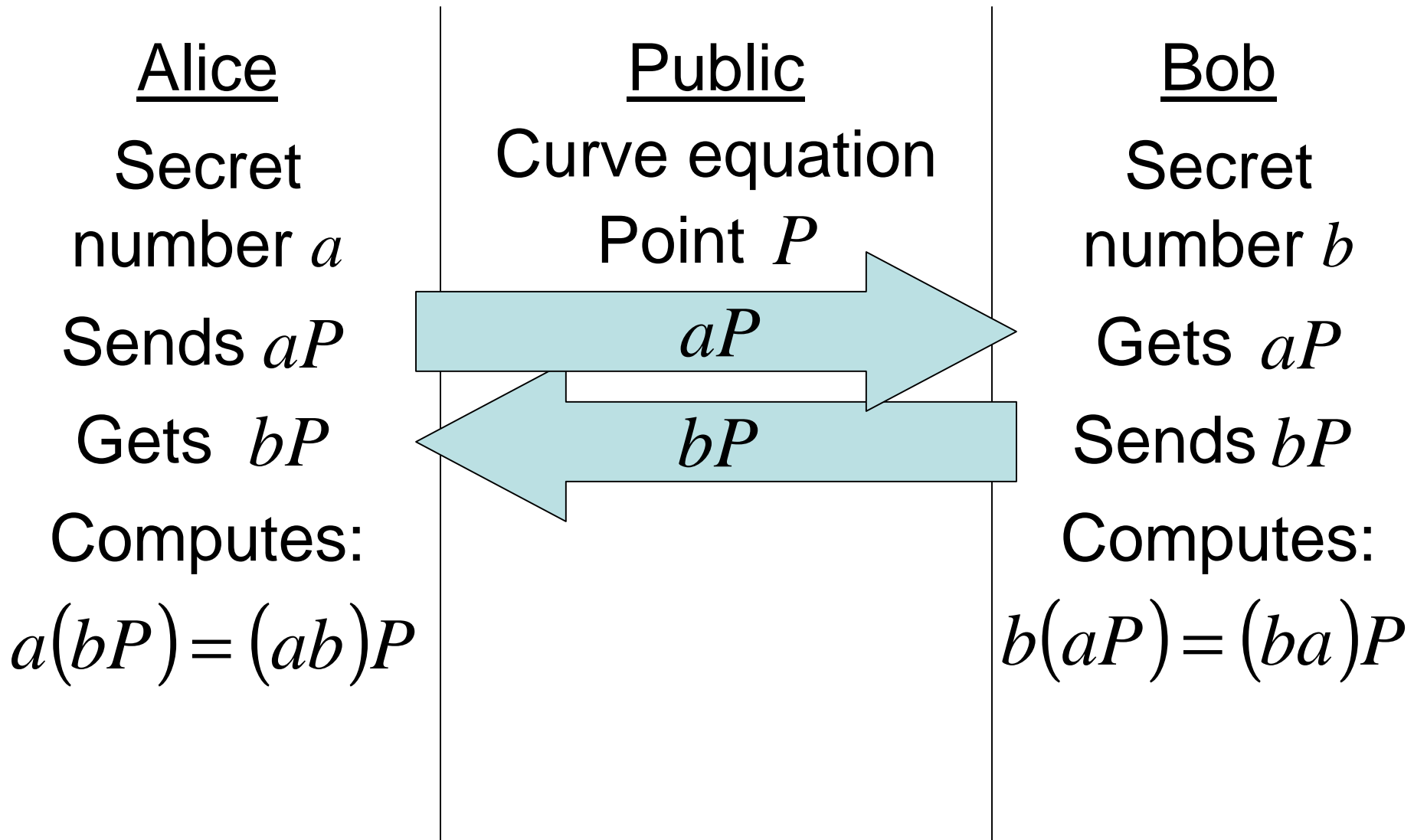
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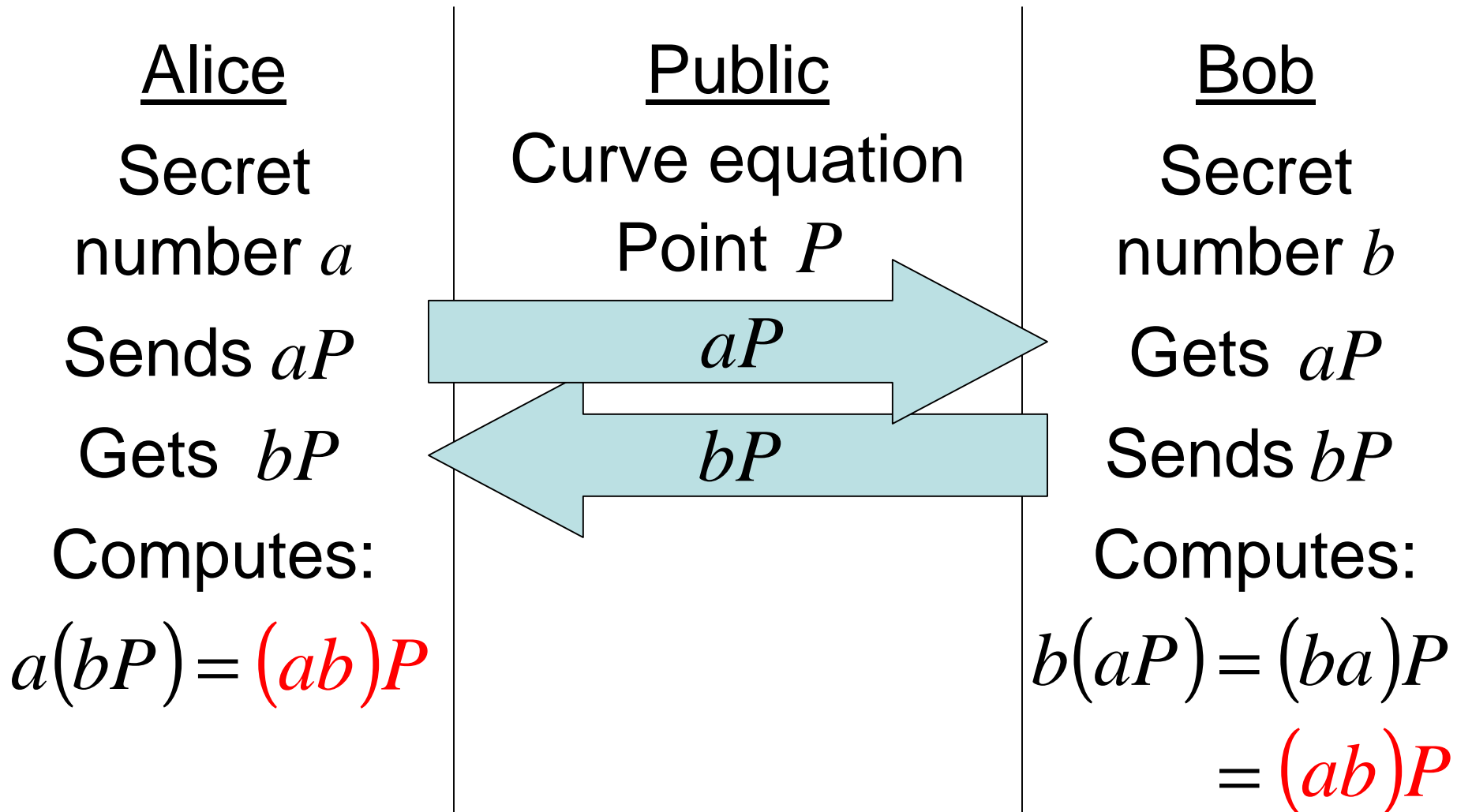
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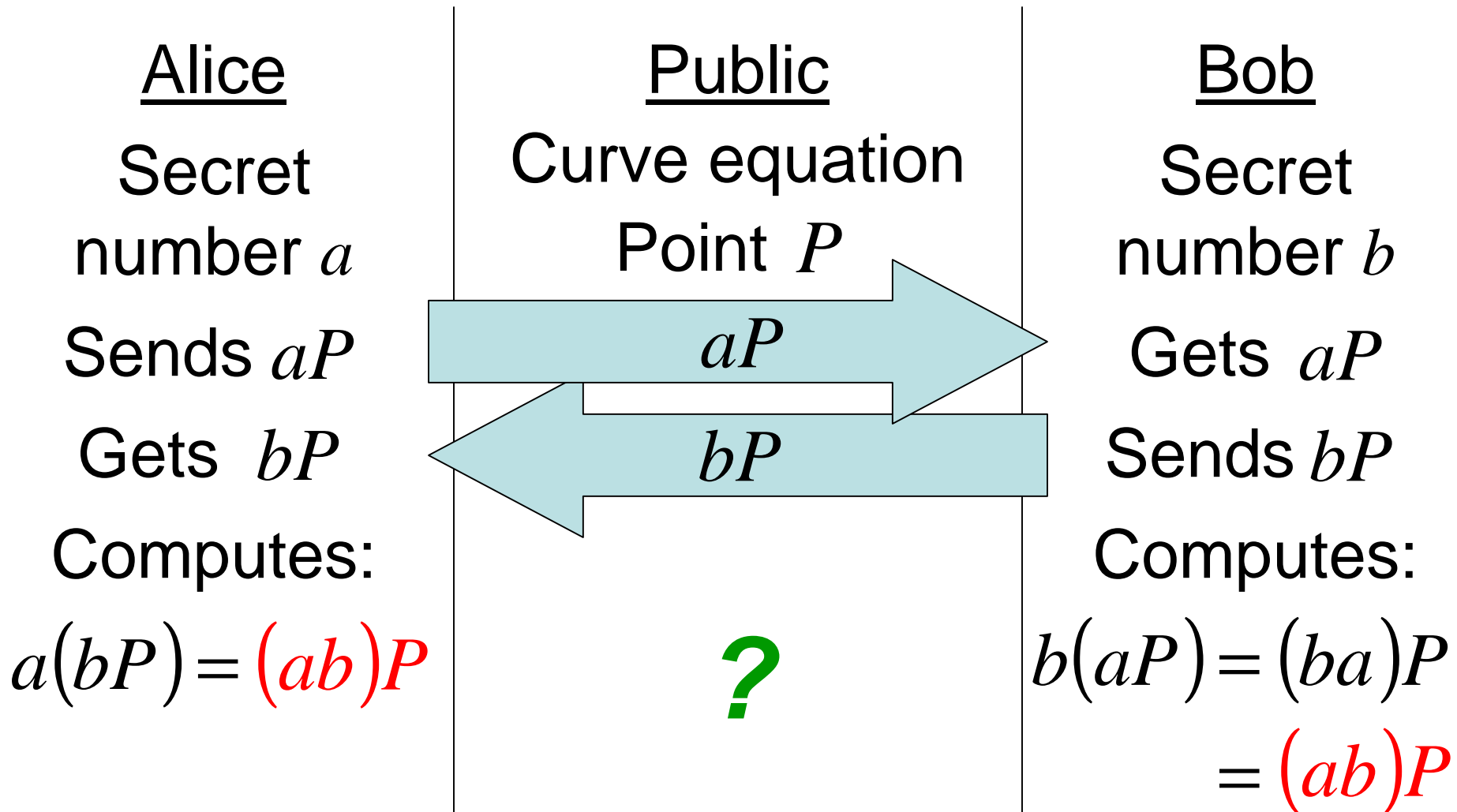
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Thank you.

Questions?