

Orbital eccentricity in general relativity from catastrophe theory

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Eccentricity is one of the key parameters to describe a binary system, however, defining it in General Relativity is a highly nontrivial problem. Nevertheless, achieving a consistent definition of orbital eccentricity is a pressing issue for both current and future gravitational wave observations. We present a new approach to consistently define the binary eccentricity in General Relativity which has a solid foundation in the branch of mathematics called “catastrophe theory”. In particular, we discover the existence of catastrophes in numerical relativity waveforms and exploit them to derive a robust and gauge invariant estimator of the orbital eccentricity.

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