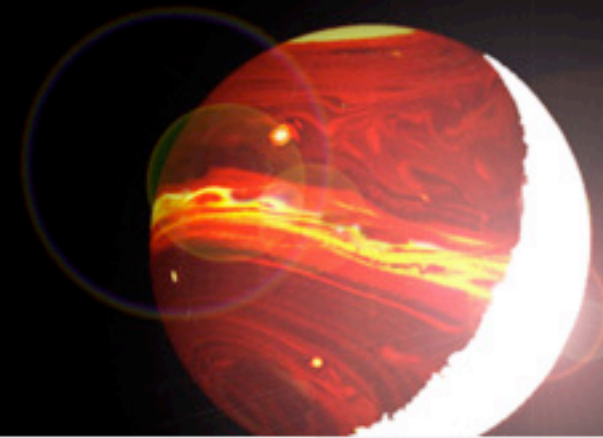


systemic

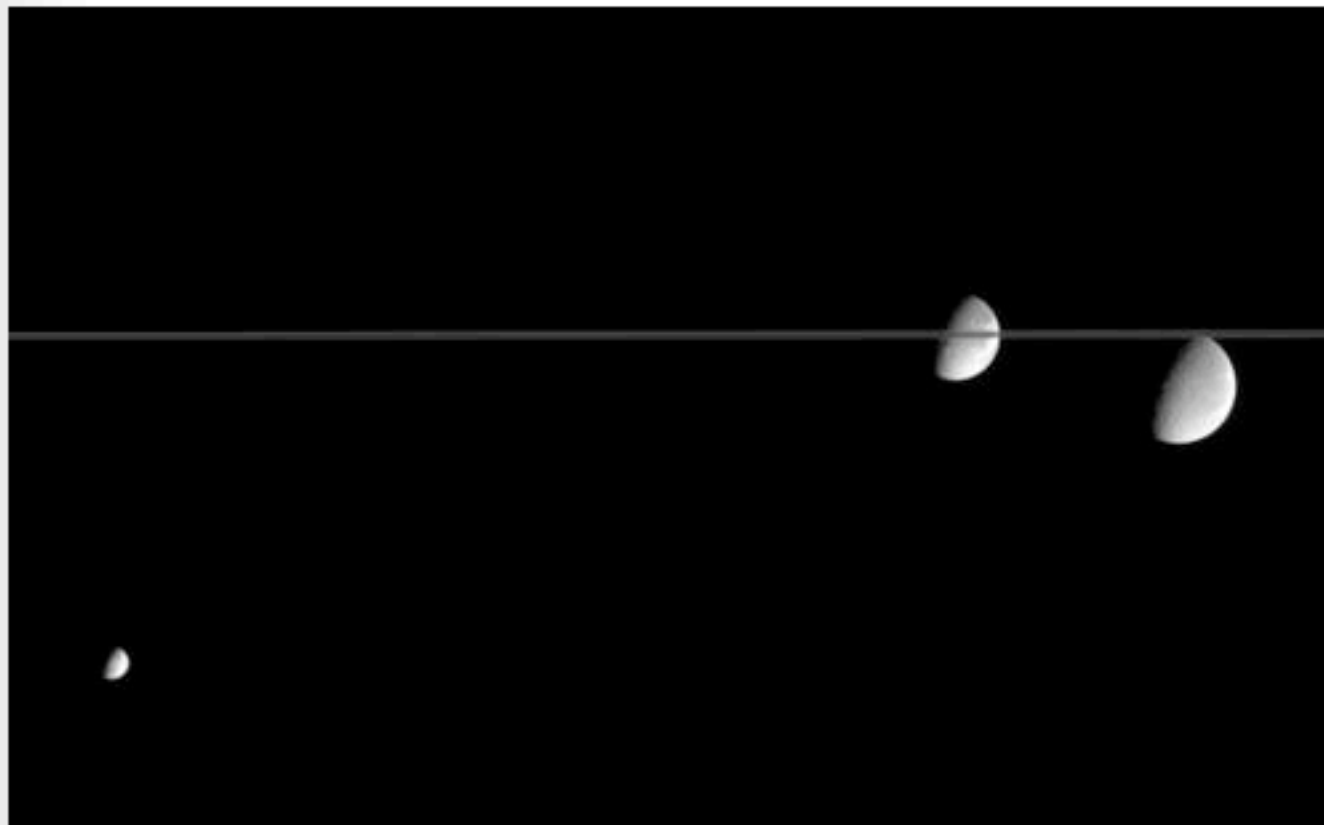
characterizing extrasolar planetary systems

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orbital 0

greg posted in [worlds](#) on january 2nd, 2006

Let a pebble slip from your hand and it falls straight to the ground. Toss the pebble sideways, and it traces a parabolic arc through the air. Imagine throwing the pebble sideways with even more speed. It lands further away. Imagine throwing the pebble with such great velocity that the surface of the Earth begins to curve away beneath it as it falls. In the absence of air friction, a pebble thrown sideways with sufficient velocity will fall in such a way that the Earth curves continuously out from underneath. The pebble falls endlessly without ever touching the ground. It is in orbit.



The idea that an orbit is the state of a body in continual free-fall can be traced to the 1600s, and was first stated in print by Robert Hooke, whose paper entitled, "The Inflection of a Direct Motion into a Curve by a Supervening Attractive Principle" was read to the Royal Society on May 23rd 1666. Robert Hooke's fame and reputation have spent the last three hundred and twenty years in Newton's

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