Hermann Günter Grassmann Encyclopedia Article

Hermann Günter Grassmann

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Hermann Günter Grassmann

1809-1877

German-Polish mathematician best known for his work on the calculus of vectors. Grassmann also developed a geometrical algebra in which symbols represented geometrical entities instead of numbers. In addition, his development of what he called "external algebra" was adapted by William Clifford to form what is now the mathematical basis for relativistic quantum mechanics. At 53, upset at the lack of recognition his mathematical research had generated, Grassmann left mathematics for work in Sanskrit studies, writing a Sanskrit dictionary that is still respected.