

The Relativistic Kepler Problem

A relativistic particle with mass $m = 1$ has a Lagrangian given by, in units where $c = 1$:

$$L = -\sqrt{1 - \dot{r}^2 - r^2\dot{\theta}^2} + \frac{k}{r}.$$

- (a) This may be a relativistic problem, but the tricks for solving central force problems will still apply. Discuss why both energy E and angular momentum l are still conserved, and find expressions for these quantities.
- (b) Obtain the equivalent of Kepler's Third Law for relativistic particles, assuming that the orbit is circular.
- (c) Show that there is a critical angular momentum l_c such that if $l < l_c$, the particle will spiral in towards $r = 0$.¹
- (d) Show that for a particle in an elliptical orbit, the ellipse will precess about the origin with some angular velocity Ω . Evaluate Ω in the non-relativistic limit.

¹To do this, I would find a first order ODE for $r(\theta)$.