

Title: Poincaré, Hertz, and Hertzian Waves

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Abstract:

Poincaré was inspired, like most contemporary physicists, by the theoretical and experimental vistas opened up by Heinrich Hertz in the late 1880s, and also by the latter's novel epistemological outlook. Most of Poincaré's writings on questions of physics stem either directly or indirectly from Hertz's work on electromagnetic waves, and this work is shown to track Poincaré's epistemic trajectory in theoretical physics. Drawing on the Hertz-Poincaré correspondence, characterize the personal relation between Poincaré and Hertz, and recall the major episodes of Poincaré's intellectual engagement with Hertzian waves.