

Math Diversion Problem 256

P. Reany

January 26, 2025

If others would think about mathematical truths as deeply
and as continuously as I have, they
would make my discoveries.
— Carl Friedrich Gauss

The YouTube video is found at:

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inT0dWE1DLQ>
Title: A Nice Exponential Equation
| Problem 358
Presenter: aplusbi

1 The Problem

Given the relation

$$z^{-z} = e^{\pi/2}, \quad (1)$$

find the values of z .

2 The Preparation

I intend to use the Lambert W function, which goes as follows: If

$$ze^z = B, \quad (2)$$

then

$$z = W(B), \quad (3)$$

where there are domain constraints on B that we won't go into here. Warning: This can be a complicated (multi-valued) function to deal with.

A lemma I'll need is the following: If

$$y \ln y = B, \quad (4)$$

then

$$\ln y = W(y \ln y) = W(B). \quad (5)$$

3 The Solution

Now, I think it best if we start by taking the logarithm

$$-z \ln z = \pi/2 + 2\pi in \quad \text{where } n \in \mathbb{Z}. \quad (6)$$

See the footnote to explain this result.¹ Next, we multiply through by minus 1.

$$z \ln(z) = -\pi/2 + 2\pi in \quad \text{where } n \in \mathbb{Z}. \quad (7)$$

Using the above lemma, we get

$$\ln z = W(-\pi/2 + 2\pi in) \quad \text{where } n \in \mathbb{Z}. \quad (8)$$

Hence,

$$z = e^{W(-\pi/2+2\pi in)} \quad \text{where } n \in \mathbb{Z}. \quad (9)$$

¹The reason we need to include the term $2\pi in$ on the RHS is seen by taking the RHS as the exponent of e . Doing so, we see that $e^{\pi/2+2\pi in} = e^{\pi/2}e^{2\pi in} = e^{\pi/2}$, thus recovering the RHS of the Given relation.