

Math Diversion Problem 386

P. Reany

February 5, 2025

I feel that a visual representation of the Dirac algebra is of great benefit, because it can provide an additional insight that is not easily expressed with words or equations.

— David M. Goodmanson

[‘A graphical representation of the Dirac algebra’,
American J. Phys., Vol. 64, No. 7,
July 1996, p. 870.]

The YouTube video is found at:

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmAYuYDFjEO>

Title: You Should Learn This Trick

Presenter: BriTheMathGuy

1 The Problem

Given the relation

$$x^{x^3} = 36, \tag{1}$$

find the real values of x .

(Skip down to the solution, if you like.)

2 The Preparation

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

$$ze^z = B, \tag{2}$$

then

$$z = W(B), \tag{3}$$

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.

Lemma 1: I'll need the following lemma:

$$W(y \ln y) = \ln y, \tag{4}$$

for the principal value of W and $y \ln y \geq -1/e$.

3 The Solution

Let's begin by cubing both sides of the Given relation:

$$(x^3)^{x^3} = 36^3. \tag{5}$$

Next, we take the natural logarithm.

$$(x^3) \ln(x^3) = 3 \ln 36. \tag{6}$$

Now we take the Lambert W function across this last equation, to get

$$\ln(x^3) = W(3 \ln 36) = W(6 \ln 6) = \ln 6. \tag{7}$$

Next, we raise e to this equation, to get¹

$$x^3 = 6, \tag{8}$$

of which the real root is

$$x = 6^{1/3}. \tag{9}$$

¹To raise a number b to the 'power of an equation' simply means this: If the equation is 'LHS = RHS', then $b^{\text{LHS=RHS}}$ means $b^{\text{LHS}} = b^{\text{RHS}}$.