

Math Diversion Problem 768

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Dear Algebra, stop asking us to find your X,
she's not coming back.
— Woody Paige

Source: The Ether of Great Mathematical Ideas

Title: An Integration Problem

Presenter: Patrick

Find the integral

$$I = \int \frac{\tan x}{1 + \tan^2 x} dx. \quad (1)$$

But, $1 + \tan^2 x = \sec^2 x = \frac{1}{\cos^2 x}$ and $\tan x = \frac{\sin x}{\cos x}$, so that

$$I = \int \sin x \cos x dx. \quad (2)$$

At this point, I could resort to using another trig identity, but I'd prefer to do this more simply. Given that $\cos x dx = d(\sin x)$, then

$$I = \int \sin x d(\sin x), \quad (3)$$

which has the form of

$$\int u du = \frac{1}{2}u^2 + C. \quad (4)$$

Thus,

$$I = \int \sin x d(\sin x) = \frac{1}{2} \sin^2 x + C. \quad (5)$$

However, WolframAlpha claims that the correct answer is

$$I = \int \sin x d(\sin x) = -\frac{1}{2} \cos^2 x + C', \quad (6)$$

but these are equivalent because of

$$\cos^2 x + \sin^2 x = 1. \quad (7)$$