

## Re: JSH: What if no one believes you?

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- *From:* mike3 <mike4ty4@xxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Sun, 17 Feb 2008 22:04:01 -0800 (PST)
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On Feb 17, 8:09 pm, marcus\_b <marcus\_bruck...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Feb 17, 6:18 pm, mike3 <mike4...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

<snip>

Hmm.

Well, some things are. Wiles' proof is very long and very, very deep and complicated. It is hard to even outline the main ideas. Some of the sieve ideas for factoring are not that bad, but they do require some subtlety and ingenuity.

Yes.

<snip>

There are lots of nice proofs that are 'simple' but ingenious. There is a book called something like "Theorems from the Book", inspired by Erdos, who loved an elegant argument. No, Harris's "proofs" are not elegant. They are just plain wrong. You wouldn't think that by chance alone he would be so consistently wrong. It's to the point that if he asserts something, the negation of it might well be a true theorem.

They are wrong, yes, I agreed. Now, you then say that "you wouldn't think that by chance alone he would be so consistently wrong.". Does this mean you think he is deliberately coming up with "results" he knows to be false?

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Furthermore, if some of those negations were actually true theorems, would they be interesting at all? And what about proofs of them?

You need depth and insight and hard thinking to be on a math cutting edge, and at this point you must learn what others have done.

And can one do that (learn what others have done) without a great deal of money, or earn the necessary money even while one was not born into wealth?

Mathematicians with a PhD earned it in grad school, where they were likely supported as teaching assistants or research assistants. If you can do that the expense is not that bad. You won't get rich, but you won't starve either.

So then one's parents do not need to be wealthy (to me, "wealthy" is \$25,000 per year income or more.) in order for one to go and study this stuff, right?

This  
is my situation, not necessarily that of James.

I suspect he would have trouble getting into grad school. If he managed to get in, he would definitely have trouble passing the courses. He's not totally stupid, but he wastes his time in a field where he doesn't actually have unusual talent, and his thinking is completely undisciplined and he is extremely pigheaded. He would immediately get into stupid losing arguments with the profs and would blame them for being unwilling to consider his great insights.

But what if, say, he were to give up the pigheadedness and do whatever is needed to discipline his thinking?

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Unlike

James, I \_do\_ want to learn what others have done.

It's hard to do that entirely self-taught.  
Grad school is the place to start.

But how do you do that without a lot of money on hand to  
pay the tuition and the books?

<snip>

He's 350 years behind the cutting edge. He  
has no concept of what others have done.

And can one learn what others have done without being rich to  
start off with? That was my question. Do I need to get rich  
first to study the math?

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