

Noesis

The Journal of the Noetic Society

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Editorial

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In response to the article on the mathematician Ramanujan in the last issue of Noesis Professor Cedric Stratton sent me an interesting four page letter, which I shall reproduce in the next issue of this journal unless Professor Stratton objects.

Two people sent me definitions of the subscript n's in Ramanujan's formula for $1/\pi$, which had puzzled me. I covered a lot of math in college but this symbolism was completely new to me. Professor H. W. Corley sent me a recent paper of his (still under review) titled "A Class of Power Series Distributions" in which on page 2 it states that $(c)_0 = 1$ and $(c)_n = c(c+1)\dots(c+n-1)$, where $n = 1, 2, 3\dots$ and where c need not be an integer.

I also received the following information from Daniel L. Pratt, one of those invited to join our group in the last issue: "In Ramanujan's formula, the subscripts are part of Pockhammer symbols: $(a)_n$ means $a(a+1)\dots(a+n-1)$, with $(a)_0$ therefore equal to 1. Hence, $(1)_n$ equals $n!$; I surmise that Ramanujan's use of different notations for the same quantity somehow reflects the formula's derivation. The quotient can be simplified to the form:

$$\frac{(4n)!}{(256)^n (n!)^4}$$

Without undue effort, I cannot verify this beyond $n = 1$ since on my computer when $n = 2$ the summand is indistinguishable from 0." Mr. Pratt did not offer to join our group, but seemed open to argument, so I sent him a letter answering some of his questions. None of the other recent invitees has contacted me as yet, so we may not be expanding beyond our current membership of 13 very soon.

Issue 24 of this journal will probably be my last one. After that the members will have to find a new editor. I hope to start a new journal called In-Genius at about that time, and you are welcome to keep in contact with me by subscribing to that, if you wish. Richard May has expressed tentative interest in serving as your new editor, but this is only a tentative offer, and other potential editors are encouraged to express their interest.

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IS THIS THE SMARTEST MAN IN AMERICA

Meet Rick Rosner, genius.

BY ROBIN CHOTZINOFF

When you're walking down the street with a man dressed in nothing but a leather loincloth, fur leggings, a sword and roller skates, people don't stare at you as much as you might think. You're walking, he's gliding, and they're pretending not to see anything unusual. They pretend even harder in an elevator. Up close here, anyone can see the scars — crusted for this occasion with fake blood — that run up and down his legs and across his chest. He smells faintly like the baby oil he has used to coat his muscles. Our fellow elevator passengers all stare at the floor, where they see the tips of his roller skates peeking from beneath his leggings.

In short, what we have here is your basic metro Denver whacko. Guys with Rambo complexes are a dime a dozen in this town — though admittedly rollerskates are not an integral part of their look — and so are people who dress bizarrely and don't appear to notice the effect their garb has on passers-by. Most guys who look this extreme have serious mental problems — or are trying to give someone that impression.

This observation certainly applies to Rick Rosner, my pal in the loincloth, but with one significant difference. In January, *Omni* magazine will release findings to the

effect that he has one of the four highest I.Q.s in the United States. (The other brains belong to the Governor of New Hampshire and two famous California mathematicians.) I can't wait until *Omni* learns even the most basic facts about Rosner. He's going to blow the roof off their basic concept of a genius.

Rosner, who has thought of himself as a geek or nerd for most of his life, has always played around with I.Q. testing procedures, although, he says, "I.Q. is basically bullshit." He can tell you the most particular details of how and why the tests are biased, and why they reveal very little about the people who take them. Nevertheless, intelligence testing has been his obsession since grade school.

"When I was going to Uni Hill [grade school] they'd pull some of us out of class to play with C.U. students. I seemed to be picked more than others, although it was supposed to be random. It was the end of psychiatry's golden era . . . When I was 14 I got a book called *Know Your Own I.Q.*, and I spent the whole summer doing all those tests. I liked it." What's more, he felt compelled to make sure his I.Q. tested out at the level where everyone thought it should be.

"I learned it from my parents, in a backhanded way. My mother remembers me reading *Esquire* in a barbershop when I was four. I asked her what premature ejaculation meant, and she was already worried about me. My parents . . .

NEWTON'S
 $V' \equiv V_0$ Appearance of V_0 - Appearance of V_0 - $(T -$
of Universe
NO BIG BANG
Hubble Shift is largely
velocity - rather is mani-
festation of inertial field
 $a, b, a^*, c, ab, d, a^*, b^*$
 $ad, e, a^*b \dots$

**IS
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CHOTZINOFF
PAGE 18**



divorced in the heyday of everyone going through analysis. One psychiatrist drew up a profile of what would happen to me if my dad got visitation rights. So my mother was set up to think awful things, because he *did* get visitation rights." The divorce occurred before Rosner was a year old, and in the years that followed he was, by his own admission, a decidedly weird little kid growing up in Boulder.

"In kindergarten we were given these big letters of the alphabet . . . I got an S and the kid next to me got a Q and we were supposed to make pictures out of them. I was bummed because I knew what you were supposed to do with the Q — make it into a daddy smoking a pipe . . . finally I drew an outline around the S and made it into a snake, and the kid next to me watched and drew an outline around the Q and made it into something. I remember thinking that he was dumb. That indicates to me that I must have been pretty snotty even then . . . the neighbors thought my mother was keeping me prisoner, which is just what she was afraid of doing. I stayed inside all day, but that was my own doing. The first time she found out my I.Q. she shit a major brick because she knew that geniuses have major problems just living their lives."

Rosner lived to substantiate his mother's worst fears. "In second grade they [his mother and stepfather] left me with a babysitter for two weeks. She scared me. She was old and skinny and I was afraid that maybe she was going to die. By the time my parents came home I was chanting and walking in clockwise circles. I wouldn't turn left for any reason. I'd rather walk around the whole block clockwise. I wanted to go forward in time, not backward. They could see I wasn't doing well and they sent me to a child psychologist who put me through a whole battery of tests." Once again, they told his mother he was a genius.

Unlike other brilliant people I have met, Rosner is neither insecure nor pompous. He talks in a clearcut way, stopping between sentences as if to organize his thoughts before continuing. Unlike most

whackos, Rosner is believable, even as he tells stories that become more and more improbable. Just the facts, ma'am.

Rosner knows he was a misfit: "I was a geek all the way growing up," he says. "They had a spread of the ideal geek in *National Lampoon* a few years back and I hit all those points — awkward dress and funky clothes." Rosner later mentions *National Lampoon* several more times, as well as *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Playgirl*, and *allure*, a new porn publication for women. During a break in the interview he scans the books on my shelf. Over the next few hours I find out he has read practically all of them — they're not exactly scientific tomes, either.

During high school, Rosner developed an overwhelming fear of geekiness (at first this sounded like no more than the fanatic desire of most high-school students to be cool). Unfortunately for Rosner, he had a longer way to go than most high-school students. In typical Rosner behaviour, he went overboard in his efforts to be as normal as possible.

"At the end of high school I ran successfully to be Head Boy [something like president of Student Council.] I thought that would make me cool."

"But what was that supposed to accomplish?" I ask.

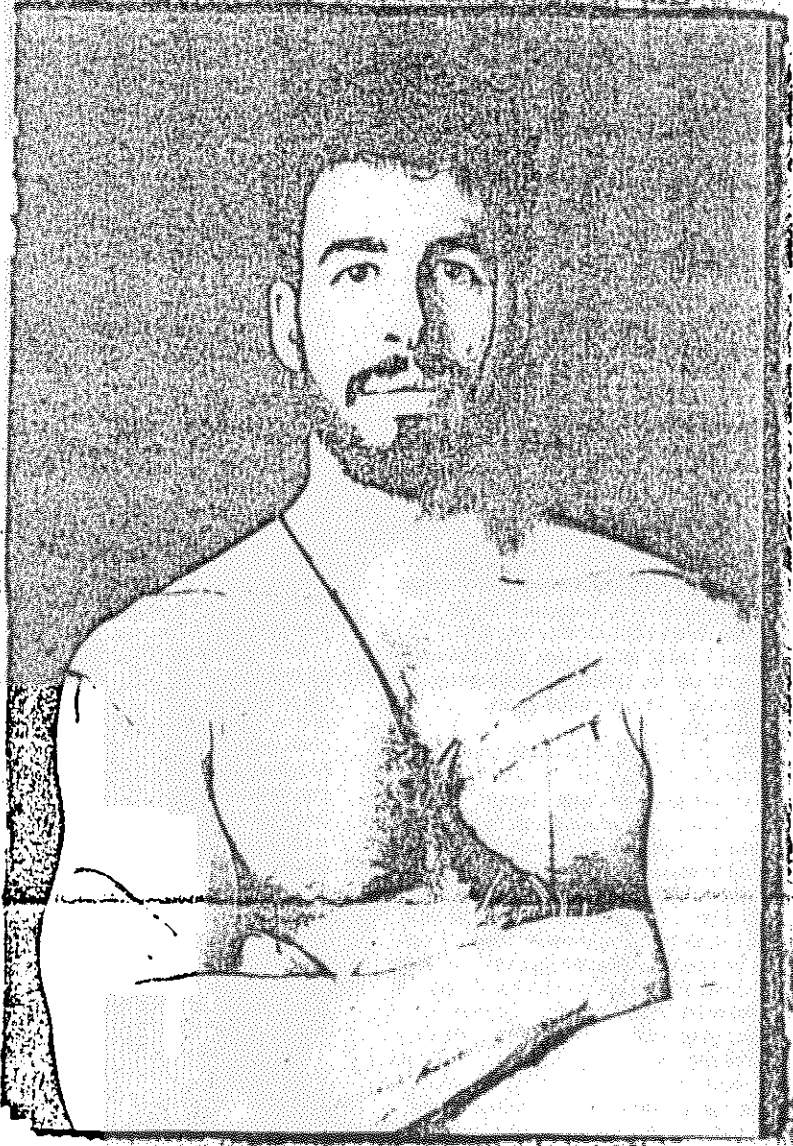
"My goal," he answers, "was not to remain a virgin too much longer. Girls liked

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the guys who were cool. You know, I wish I could go back there now that I'm bigger than all the guys I was afraid of."

"What were you afraid of? What did you think they would do to you?"

"Nothing, but I thought things up. I had this three-ring notebook that was bursting with paper and I thought they'd try to set it on fire. I guess," he says, "I was socially inept."



He mentions he frequently committed "clothing errors." This is not the only time Rosner refers to a standard of coolness at least seven years old. (He is now 26.) When not wearing his barbarian garb he is indeed well-dressed, in a low-key manner. His clothes are too big, to camouflage the enormous muscles he has developed since high school. He wears a close-trimmed beard, "to hide his weak chin," he says. He also points out his "huge nose and big, enormous lips." Before he mentions these deformities, I think of him as a better than average-looking man. But what I or anyone else thinks about Rosner clearly makes no difference. In high school he separated his mind from his body, and found his body to be far inferior. He wanted to be a jock. He went to his usual extremes to get there.

"I went out for wrestling, so I went on a diet. I looked for a food that was high in protein and fiber, and I found it: people biscuits for dogs. I ended up with hemorrhoids and had to go into the hospital . . . they gave me a prescription for Percodan and there I was back in school trying to be a cool jock with all these drugs in my system and no sphincter control. . . . Later on, I went out for swimming, because I had to get a letter, and everyone who went out for swimming got a letter . . . and then I began to fall apart academically."

"But why?" I ask. "I thought you were so smart."

"I wasn't smart enough, though," he says. "I got copies of my transcript, and my I.Q. wasn't high enough. It was 150 and I wanted to make the cut-off of 160 . . . and in October of my senior year I read a book called *Type A Behaviour and Your Heart*, and I had all the symptoms but one." Even now, he seems perversely pleased to have met the characteristics that classify him as a shoo-in for heart disease. "Type As are supposed to want to change whatever they do until they get it right. I thought how cool that would be. I started writing a book about a geek who alters himself and goes back to high school again to do it over the right way."

"It sounds to me like you were worried about all the same things every other high-school kid worries about," I say. "Getting laid, being a jock, not being a geek. Why was it so desperate for you?"

"Well . . . you see . . . I guess I had always thought I was going to be the next Einstein or something." But it didn't look like things were going to work out that way. Rosner had been accepted into Harvard, but he began to dread actually going there. He saw himself as just another young whiz kid. So he decided to go back to high school, this time as a "big, dumb football player."

"I started not caring," he says, "lifting weights and going to the gym a lot. A month before graduation I broke into the school and stole a transcript form. I fabricated a new dossier and put on thirty pounds. I decided to go back to high school in Albuquerque [where his father lives], and no one knew how to stop me. My mother took me to a psychiatrist/lawyer who was supposed to advise me of the legal implications of going back to high school. He told my mother that anyone immature enough to want to go back would never be able to pull it off. My dad accepted me grudgingly."

As it turned out, Rosner's father ended up renting an apartment for him, because his stepmother didn't want him in the house. (She was having an affair and had confided in Rosner — when he moved to Albuquerque, she was afraid he would let it slip, Rosner says.) I assume it must have been great to have your own apartment while still in high school. Was Rosner finally cool because of it?

"No, it was a disaster," he says. "My siblings [a step-brother and sister] were cooler than I was. For a while I was scamming on a 14-year-old girl that my 12-year-old brother had already successfully scammed on . . . and Albuquerque was different than Boulder. They didn't have 3.2 beer so kids didn't even try to drink. Instead, they'd all go to McDonald's after the football game and it would get so crowded and rowdy that police helicopters would be sent to clear the place



PHOTO BY GUY W. W.

Who says geniuses don't have fun? Rosner tries his new stripper-on-fire act at the Boulder Express.

... I was going to a 3,000-person high school and it was controlled by less people socially than in Boulder. Behaving the same way I did in Boulder, where I was a nerd, I was thought of as a thug. So I started acting like one. I wore my collar turned up and talked sort of like Barbarino (John Travolta's character on "Welcome Back, Kotter"), and once when I didn't have time to cook breakfast I took these two steaks to class and ate them raw." He turns to me, looking for a reaction. It's hopeless. I knew guys in high school who could get somewhere eating raw steaks, but Rosner isn't one of them.

"Did you do any drugs in high school?" I ask, knowing he doesn't drink or get high now.

"My parents thought I did, but I didn't except for the four times I did acid. I was really into speed-reading, so much so that I would walk down rows of books in the library with my head to one side and try to absorb what the whole row was about. I did acid and got locked in the library overnight on purpose so that I could really increase my knowledge. But first I broke into a vending machine and got a burrito, which gave me gas. I walked around all night thinking I was having a heart attack." Later, Rosner took the S.A.T. while on two hits of acid. He scored in the 99.8th percentile. That pretty much ended his drug era. But not the obsession: hold on, here comes the next phase.

"After three months in Albuquerque, I came back to Boulder and went to C.U. and hung out with jocks who wondered why they weren't cool anymore. This was funny because I wasn't cool, ever. I worked up a comedy routine about a panicking kid who's not going to make it through college. I did it at amateur nights, where people get embarrassed because the talent is so bad. I took that energy from the audience and played with it. I read my routine off a piece of paper and talked in this dumb voice. The character I played gets kicked off the football team, and that same day, his dog, crazed with venereal disease . . ." here he stops to explain that all this is drawn from real experiences. I don't doubt it. . . .

runs out in the street and is run over by a Camaro. He goes to Denny's at three in the morning and in his grief he stabs himself in the chest with a fork. He asks the waitress for a new one and she looks at him and decides that he can be taken advantage of It was all very realistic.

I taped some lunch meat under my shirt and stabbed the fork in. I don't know what I thought I was doing."

"Neither do I," I say, "neither do I." This is getting very depressing, especially since I still like Rosner. "Well," I say brightly, "Did you finally lose your virginity?"

"Yeah, I did. I met this girl at a frat party. Later I joined the frat because I was so grateful."

"Was it worth waiting for?"

"No, . . . it didn't feel right. Also, her roommate had asthma and woke up in the middle of the night, even though her medication was supposed to knock her out."

I decide I don't want to hear any more about college. "So, when did you graduate?" I ask.

"I didn't," he says, "I'm still going to school."

"You've been there seven years?"

"All this time," he says. "I'm a loser."

Wait till *Omni* hears about this, I think. "How did you get into this whole louncloth trip?" I ask.

"Well, my character, the one I played in the stand-up thing, realizes that his greatest value is as a piece of meat. In order to get material for this, I went to all kinds of places. I went to Gay Lib and said 'Oh come on, you guys don't really do that,' in my really dumb voice. A very sensitive man explained it all to me. I went to a *Mensa* meeting chewing five sticks of gum and wearing a football jersey. No one noticed. They were all too busy talking about how nice it would be if the people who couldn't pass their requirements would just disappear off the face of the earth . . . then I became a bouncer. I became the biggest I.D. asshole in Boulder. That led to becoming a stripper.

I thought that if I became a stripper, debauched women would throw themselves at me and teach me arcane sex tricks. Instead, they got embarrassed. They mostly seemed to be thinking 'Get your slime self away from me.' "

I wonder how he and the entity I have come to think of as The Character have gotten along all this time. It seems clear that they are not the same person. Rosner has a sense of humor. The Character is a

"I was really into speed-reading, so much so that I would walk down rows of books in the library with my head to one side and try to absorb what the whole row was about."

big, dumb thug. They unite only in the quest for sex, at which neither has been very successful. I can't imagine it's the most comfortable way to live.

"And then I began having visions," Rosner says, as if reading my mind. "I was sitting in the cafeteria with a big tray of food, which puts you in a stupor anyway since it's so starchy. I was thinking about short-term as opposed to long-term memory. I realized that a good model would be the layout of the universe . . . it made me do a lot of thinking even when I didn't want to. I realized that the universe isn't 2D, or a 4D continuum, but that it only appears to be. It's actually non-dimensional. It's an arbitrary number of constructs that act like dimension . . ."

Stunned, I try to figure out what in hell he's talking about. "I'm sorry about all this," he says, realizing that it sounds like gibberish to me. Then he continues doggedly: "The same kind of geometry can be applied to modeling an individual consciousness . . . there's a possibility that the arrangement of the universe can be seen as the arrangement of a vast awareness. I realized that there was no Big Bang. Einstein generated lots of elegant math, but he was a spiritual man and a lot

of the implications of his equations disquieted him . . ." Then he explains the term "red-shifted" as it applies to galaxies — at least I think that's what he's talking about — "Red-shift is caused by velocity between emitter and receiver."

"How do you say that in English?" I ask desperately.

"It's like if a bunch of drunk assholes pass your car and start throwing beer bottles at you. They're going to hit you harder when you're coming toward them than when you're driving away." I give up. ". . . an object set in motion will lose velocity on a scale proportionate to the age of the universe, but it will retain its red shift. I don't believe in inertia. Objects are hanging in space and it's not the kind of space we think it is. That's about all there is of this part," he says abruptly.

"So, I started going out with this woman who was a bouncer. I introduced her to feminism and she became angrier and angrier. She would occasionally strike me. The whole thing was sort of a relief because it kept me from thinking about the other stuff. About fifteen months ago, she blew me off for another bouncer . . . My self-esteem was pretty low, so I went out and got a job. I now have seven jobs." They include bouncing at the Hilton Harvest House, the Blue Note and the Boulder Express, stripping at the Boulder Express, working as a roller-skating bartender/ cocktail waiter at the L.A. Diner and nude modeling for the graduate school of art at C.U.

"If my test scores are good," he says, "I might get a job with Stanley Kaplan tutoring people to take standardized tests." Test scores are about the only thing he doesn't have to worry about, I think. "Oh yeah," he says, "And I also volunteer walking people home from Norlin Library at night."

"All that and school too?"
"The way I go to school it doesn't matter," he says.

And I know why. Because the Character has all the jobs, and Rosner is the only one going to school.

After his bouncer girlfriend left, Rosner took up stripping again, to boost his self esteem, he says. He also sent nude photos to *Playgirl*, and was told to come out to L.A. They rejected him in the end because they didn't have "Playboy's airbrush budget," and his body is covered with seven feet of scars, some from varicose vein operations, and some self-inflicted. "I went to all this trouble to look macho, and I discovered that girls were going for more effeminate guys, so I decided to take it to an extreme and cut myself with a razor blade."

He hasn't given up the idea of posing for a men's magazine and is trying to sell the idea of the Men of Mensa to *allure*. (He joined Mensa solely to promote the idea.) The Character's notion of being little more than a piece of meat is firmly cemented.

In keeping with this, Rosner has become obsessed with working out — "1673 times in the past 449 days," he says proudly. "It's sort of like male anorexia. It's addictive." With that, we close the interview.

He calls me the next morning.

"So what's up?" I ask, though I should know better.

"I've got this great idea," he says. "I'm going to wear paper clothes when I strip

"I went to all this trouble to look macho, and I discovered that girls were going for more effeminate guys, so I decided to take it to an extreme and cut myself with a razor blade."

tonight. Then I'm going to set them on fire. I'll have people stationed in the audience to throw water on me."

"Uh, wow . . . Isn't that going to hurt?"

"Oh, not much," he says. I get the impression that pain isn't a big consideration for Rosner.

The next time I see him, he drops by the office for a photo session. When I see him in his loincloth and bloody scar outfit I realize this is the Character, about whom I've heard so much. I reach out to touch one of the scars, and he flinches. Ah ha! The Character isn't as available as he thinks he is.

Later, in the studio, I watch as he goes through his paces — sword in the air, muscles pumped up, a Conan look on his face. The Character has all the moves of a professional model; even the photographer says so. Everything he does is suggestive. He adjusts his loincloth and grabs his crotch without a trace of embarrassment. In the middle of all this, I fall asleep. When I wake up, I can see Rosner is disappointed. He had hoped, it seems, to be sexy and appealing. I fell asleep. Why *wasn't* he sexy?

Finally, I decide it's because the Character is a shell. He's a big, hulking Rambo doll — and I thought this only happened to pretty females. Later on it's a relief to talk quietly to Rosner, who surfaces when the session is over.

At the end of the day, I spend a quiet evening at home watching middle-class T.V. with my average mind on hold. My husband and I have a normal dinner in our humdrum house. We talk a little, but it's mostly run-of-the-mill conversation. And that is just fine with me. Don't bring any *Omni* magazines over to my house. If I'm more intelligent than I think I am, I don't want to know. □

THE BRAINS OF THE OPERATION

Just what did Rick Rosner do to score big in *Omni's* one-in-a-million I.Q. test? Unfortunately, *Omni's* not as locquacious as Rosner — the magazine wouldn't discuss the test, the results, or Rosner.

No thanks to the *Omni* staff, we discovered the test is basically a shortened version of one designed by Ronald Hoeflin, the founder of the Mega Society, the most exclusive group in the world for people with high I.Q.s. Its membership is limited, in theory, to one in every million persons. The test has a cut-off I.Q. of 122 — if you get no questions right, your I.Q. is 122 or less. Eight correct answers out of 48 qualifies you for Mensa, and puts your I.Q. somewhere in the realm of 134. To qualify for the Mega Society, and presumably to win the contest, your I.Q. must be *at least* 176.

The *Omni* test questions include the following word associations, in which the contestant is asked to supply the fourth word:

UNCERTAINTY: HEISENBERG:

:UNDECIDABILITY: ?

FOUR-SIDED POLYHEDRON:

TETRAHEDRON::FOUR-DIMENSIONAL
HYPERCUBE: ?

This problem appears in the Spatial Problems section: "If 27 identical cubical chunks of cheese are piled together to form a cubical stack . . . what is the maximum number of these cheese chunks through which a mouse of negligible size could munch before exiting the stack, assuming that the mouse always travels along the grid of 27 straight lines that pass through the centers of the chunks parallel or perpendicular to their sides, always makes a 90-degree turn at the center of each chunk, and never enters any chunk more than once?"

The Numerical Problems section poses this fascinating question: "To the nearest percent, the probability that any one person selected at random was born on Monday is 14 percent. What is the probability, to the nearest percent, that of any seven persons chosen at random, exactly one was born on Monday?"

Other problems deal with terrorists commandeering a canal lock, the number of atoms in various crystals, and how to cut butter into the maximum number of slices using only perfectly straight knife strokes.

Get ready to blow your brains out.

Chotzinoff