

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.logic/2006-06/msg00341.html>

- *From:* "MoeBlee" <jazzmobe@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 14 Jun 2006 10:27:00 -0700
-

George Dance wrote:

But you haven't given any reason to think that Franzen considered a lack of a PhD or any degree whatsoever to exclude anyone from understanding logic or discussing it intelligently.

It's a matter of record that Torkel believed some people lacked the ability to understand even propositional logic, and trying to do so would only confuse them. AFAIK, he never spelled out who those people were when he was alive. It's also a matter of record, though, that (according to his correspondents) he would discuss the subject with some, and refuse to do that with others – and that the difference seems to correlate with the PhD/non-PhD distinction.

Again, you have not shown any reasonable grounds to infer that Franzen disqualified posters on the basis of a lack of a PhD. "A matter of record according to some correspondents" is NOT a matter of record. And "seems to correlate" is as flimsy as it gets. And again you opt for the most unfavorable explanation when a just as reasonable explanation is that he read the posts and decided on the basis of what was written in the posts.

You say that the difference in how Franzen treated posters is "explained" by Franzen's belief as to whether the poster had a PhD in mathematics, but that just ignores a more simple possible explanation, which is that Franzen treated people according to his evaluation of their posts, not of their academic credits.

There are lots of possible explanations – FAWK, he could have made assumptions about their race and treated them differently on that basis – none of which is more obviously 'simpler' than any other.

No, deciding on race is not simpler than just reading posts and

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

responding on the basis of what is in the posts. I would give ANY poster the default (innocent until shown not to be) that what they respond to is what is in the posts they read much more so than to what might be the race of the poster, UNLESS I had reason to think otherwise. IF I had some basis to infer that a poster was sorting based on race or holding of a PhD or some other consideration, then I would take that into account. But without and until such basis has been seen in action, I can't suppose that the poster is not just responding to what he or she finds in the posts. Of course, if one knows that a poster has a PhD in mathematics, then one might be more inclined to think a second time about the poster's words and formulas. But that is not at all tantamount to making a sweeping distinction between posts written by PhDs and posts written by non-PhDs. To IMPUTE that Franzen sorted by PhD that way is simply that: to impute.

One

couldn't get him to say when he was alive, as he didn't say, and one certainly get him to say now.

That insinuates essentially a "guilty unless denied" argument. Franzen didn't have to say a damn thing about the subject. All we have is the record of what he posted. Show me that he rejected someone's posts on the basis of the person lacking a PhD and we'll have something to talk about. Otherwise, you're just blowing smoke.

We have evidence for the lack of exposure to different posts; in this thread, for example, both you and Lester Zick have responded to his critics by stating that they haven't read the posts in question.

I don't know which particular remark of mine you have in mind and the context of it. I said that Franzen made plenty of helpful posts. I don't recall saying that people's negative assessments of him are due to their not having read those posts (though, of course, I can't rule out that they may not have read those posts).

OTOH,

the fact that the criticism is coming from more than one person is reason not to chalk it all up to a feeling.

The criticisms are coming from almost only those who were among his targets. And it's pretty clear that Franzen posted in a way not designed to make himself the Good Time Charlie of Usenet. The criticisms of him have not shown that he mis-targetted or that he resorted to sophistry or was unfair. If you have such a criticism to make, it can only be properly evaluated on the basis of your giving

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

examples of specific threads and posts.

And similarly, the claim that Torkel never treated anyone unfairly can be pinned on the claimant's feelings, as well – which makes all the testimony equally unreliable.

I don't speak for others, but I never said Franzen was never unfair. I said that I do not know of him being unfair. The burden is on whomever claims he was unfair to support that claim.

(Unless that, is you also believe in two types of people – those capable of reasoning logically, and those forced by lack of ability to 'think' with their feelings – and arbitrarily assign Torkel's admirers and detractors to the opposing camps on that basis; but that sounds completely arbitrary and ad hoc to me).

I've read enough of Franzen's posts to know that he was logically sharp and knowledgeable, and enough of the posts of some of the people who've posted appreciation of him to see that they too are logically sharp and knowledgeable. And I've read enough posts by certain of Franzen's detractors to see that they are, at best, confused about mathematical logic and, in at least a couple of cases, blatantly whacko when it comes to logic. However, I do not make a categorical generalization that all of his supporters are impeccable logicians and all of his detractors are logically looney.

But unless you point to specific posts, then other people cannot evaluate for themselves whether your appraisal is justified.

Anyone is welcome to search for, and read for himself, the exchanges between Torkel and those who have written about him in this thread.

I've read quite a bit by now. Unless you at least point to a specific thread and posts, I can only take your remarks as merely your own expression of your own evaluation without consideration to make your evaluation subject to the merest objective context of specific threads and posts. You don't have to substantiate your claim, fine. But if you won't at least point to a specific thread, then I have no reason to give any credit to your claim.

MoeBlee

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead