

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.logic/2006-06/msg00400.html>

- *From:* "George Dance" <georgedance04@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 16 Jun 2006 08:12:54 -0700
-

MoeBlee wrote:

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.

What everyone has said about Torkel is part of the record. That doesn't mean one should believe what everyone says; that would be absurd. But when Timothy Murphy, eg, calls Torkel's arguments cogent and thought-provoking, that is evidence that Torkel made cogent and thought-provoking arguments in some of his posts.

And
"seems to correlate" is as flimsy as it gets.

It just means that my evidence is purely anecdotal; I haven't tried to count or class the posts in this thread.

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

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.

I have to reject that explanation, because the evidence I've seen indicates that he responded to posters in the same way each time, no matter what they wrote. He never flamed a math PhD for making a typo, for example; he would shrug it off as a typo.

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 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.

The above is my reason for thinking otherwise; and I think the evidence will show it.

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

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

sorted by PhD that way is simply that: to impute.

Let's stay clear on what I actually suggested; that having a math PhD was sufficient to avoid being flamed by Torkel. I didn't suggest, and don't think, that having a math PhD was necessary; and I see it as obviously false that a non-math PhD was either necessary or sufficient. For example, Franzen had total contempt for philosophers who wrote in symbolic logic (which includes a good number of philosophy PhD's), considering them to have produced little more than "mumbo jumbo."

One
couldn't fget 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.

Not unless he raised it himself. Which is relevant to the evidence
below.

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).

You're misunderstanding me. You responded to galatea in the way Zink
responded to someone: by saying that you hadn't read the posts he was
talking about. It's likely that I will have to say the same thing when
you introduce specific posts.

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

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.

I'll cheerfully admit that I was one of 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
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 knowledgable, 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
knowledgable. 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.

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

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

All right; that's a good place to begin by introducing evidence. So
I'd like to introduce the following link, which I'll label Exhibit B
(Exhibit A was the quote from his exchange with xyz):

<http://tinyurl.com/lmyxl>

Read it and make your own judgement. I would make two claims about
that thread: :

1) In it, Torkel advances his thesis that there are some people who are
incapable of understanding symbolic logic; and that for them to try use
it would only muddle their thinking. (For convenience, I will call
those "Submathematical" humans, or SMs.)

2) Torkel does so only as a troll: to distract attention from the topic
under discussion(which he ignores completely) and try to provoke a
flame war by calling someone an SM.

.