

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

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- *From:* "MoeBlee" <jazzmobe@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 22 Jun 2006 10:21:35 -0700
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George Dance wrote:

MoeBlee wrote:

What Franzen actually wrote in that thread is:

[B.86]

"Formal logic is essentially a mathematical subject, and experience supports neither the idea that people who reason well in non-mathematical contexts should have an aptitude for formal logic, nor the idea that a study of formal logic will help people reason well in non-mathematical contexts."

What Torkel actually wrote in that thread was more than one paragraph. While each paragraph has to be looked at individually, that is no excuse for forgetting its context – in particular, the disagreement the argument concerns:

I took into account the context, and none of your discussion of the context mitigates that your paraphrase of Franzen is inaccurate.

[B.10]

"> It would be a good thing for people in general to know logic,
" Why? As you yourself have demonstrated, an exposure to formal logic can cause people to make all sorts of absurd assertions that they wouldn't otherwise make."

Torkel is arguing against the proposition that it would be good for people in general to know logic, and for the proposition that it would not be good for some people to know logic. B.86 has to be read in context of, as support for, B.10.

So? Franzen did not say that there are people who are usually logical

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in informal contexts but who are incapable of learning formal logic, rather only that they do not have a talent for formal logic.

Maybe elsewhere Franzen claimed that there are people incapable of understanding symbolic logic

He says [B.10] that even exposure to formal logic 'can cause' some people to make 'absurd assertions' – presumably even after they know the subject, as he is denying that it would be good for those people not know it, and if their knowing it prevented those absurd assertions it would not be a reason.

Yes 'can cause'. Not 'will cause'. Sometimes people make mistakes in informal logic and sometimes people don't. And Franzen did not say that such mistakes are irremediable so as to deny that certain people competent in informal logic, but without talent for formal logic, can learn formal logic if they make special efforts to do so.

(well, there are people who are incapable, so what is at stake is a claim that some people who are otherwise fairly intelligent are incapable of understanding symbolic logic). But in the very thread that George Dance cites, Franzen did NOT mention incapability but rather that certain people who are otherwise logical don't have an APTITUDE for symbolic logic. To say that someone does not have an aptitude (in the sense of a talent or special inclination) for something isn't a claim that he or she is incapable of understanding it.

Aptitude. "An individual's ability to learn or to develop proficiency in an area if provided with appropriate education or training. Aptitude tests include tests of general academic (scholastic) ability; tests of special abilities (ie, verbal, numerical, mechanical); tests that assess "readiness" for learning; and tests that measure ability and previous learning that are used to predict future performance."
www.wrightslaw.com/links/glossary.assessment.htm

And you left out the OTHER senses of the word that MORE fit what Franzen was saying. Those senses include such things as 'talent' or 'proclivity', etc. YOU choose to take Franzen to mean 'aptitude' in the sense of mere 'ability', but (speaking of context), the context of his remarks much more suggests that he is speaking of talent rather than mere ability. That is, when you are faced with understanding what the man wrote, you choose to take him in the LEAST reasonable sense, which is a sense that he could hardly support, rather than take him in a reasonable sense. It is not reasonable to think that there are many

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people who can reason informally but who cannot learn formal logic even if they devote enough concentration upon it; but it is reasonable to observe that there are people who reason quite well informally but who do not have a talent for formal logic. If one were SINCERELY interested in what Franzen meant, then one would opt for the reasonable sense as opposed to trying to convict him for an unreasonable sense.

Though English was not Franzen's first language, he used it better than many native English-speakers. There is no reason to think that he was unaware of the definition, or that he was using the word in a special sense.

"THE definition"? You just LEFT OUT some usual (NOT special) senses in the definition. And you did that to saddle Franzen with an UNreasonable sense so that you could go on to make a caricature of his views with highly provocative rubric such as "sub-mathematical human". IF you are SINCERE about discussing Franzen's views, then you wouldn't be trying to knock them down with such cheap strawman tactic.

I don't have an aptitude for car mechanics, but I am capable of understanding it if I choose to concentrate upon it.

So you are unable to learn car mechanics, regardless of education or training, because you don't choose to concentrate upon it?

That is the exact OPPOSITE of what I just said. I don't have an aptitude, in the sense of a talent, but I could learn if I devoted sufficient concentration to the subject. Not only do you choose to take Franzen in the most unreasonable sense, but even here you choose not to even think about what I wrote but rather to take me to being saying ridiculous things that you would see I am not saying if you just read fairly what I actually wrote.

Does the fact that you don't choose to concentrate upon car mechanics falsify the idea that it would be good for you to know car mechanics?

Of course not. But it's a question premised in your choice to take both Franzen and my own comments in an unreasonable sense even though a quite reasonable sense is right in front of you.

I don't think so; so I don't think it was reasonable to take the people Franzen

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was talking about, for whom it would not be good to know logic, as being those who don't choose to concentrate upon logic.

'Concentrate' obviously means 'special concentration' when I mentioned it, not just some minimal amount of concentration. Franzen said that there are people who reason well informally but who do not have an aptitude for formal logic. In that context, a reasonable sense of 'aptitude' is 'talent' rather than 'ability that cannot be acquired even with sufficient effort to acquire it'. It's very simple: I don't have a talent for fixing cars, but if I made a special effort, I could learn to fix cars. And it is reasonable to think (at least based on any quotes you've given so far) that what Franzen was saying was that some people who reason well informally don't have a talent for formal logic but not to argue that there are not many of these people who could learn formal logic if they devoted special effort to do so.

Nor does Franzen argue that the fact that some people who lack aptitude get muddled with symbolic logic entails that they must always be muddled by it.

He says [B.1] that exposure to logic can cause those people to make 'absurd' or contradictory assertions, which knowing the subject will not prevent – as his worries about these absurdities are his reason for denying that it would be good for those people to know logic. (Which could only be if the absurdities persisted even in those who knew the subject.)

It would be better that you quote him in your post rather than our having to rely on following your post numbering system to go back and forth to check your paraphrase against what he actually said.

Please quote what you think includes him meaning, "knowing the subject will not prevent [...] **EVEN IN THOSE WHO KNEW THE SUBJECT**" [emphasis added]

But most important here is that Dance goes on to call such people "submathematical humans".

We have to call them something; it makes more sense than referring to them as 'some,' 'those,' or 'such' people.

Now you're either trying to be funny or you are succeeding at being disingenuous. That you want to provide a noun for people who usually

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reason well informally but who don't have an aptitude for formal logic does not require you to adopt about as inflammatory term as you can come up with.

But that is entirely unsuitable if we are discussing Franzen's, not Dance's, views on this matter, since Franzen never devised such a rubric, which as it is devised by Dance, carries truly terrible connotations such as 'sub-human' and other rubrics of horrible ideologies.

What term would suit you better? I don't mind being labelled a Submathematical, but I don't want to use a term if you're horrified by it.

I'm not horrified by the term. Words themselves don't horrify me. Rather, the term has horrible connotations. There are horrible things that are suggested by "sub ___ human" (fill in the blank at will). And all you do by devising such a term in connection with Franzen is evoke such things in association with him and thus also to greatly distract from a reasonable discussion of what he said.

There is nothing gained in evaluating Franzen's views by tainting them with such horrible connotations; I suggest that Dance let Franzen's remarks speak for themselves and that Dance not burden Franzen with rubrics that Franzen did not himself propose.

So find a rubric that Franzen used. The only one I could find was 'logic students', which I find unsuitable because it is misleading; it leads to the absurdity that Franzen didn't think it was good for students to know what they were learning.

Until you can suggest a more a suitable term, 'Submathematical' will have to do.

How disingenuous of you. As if there is such great URGENCY to devise a special term for a certain part of this conversation so that it is not YOUR place to at least devise a term that is reasonable and does not evoke horrible connotations in association with Franzen but rather that I must devise a term for you as you otherwise declare your full intention to saddle Franzen with an inflammatory word of your, not Franzen's, invention.

MoeBlee

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