

Re: Torkel Franzén is dead

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- *From:* "George Dance" <georgedance04@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 23 Jun 2006 15:30:49 -0700
-

MoeBlee wrote:

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.

Well, let's see how you support that opinion.

[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."

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

Not 'a talent' – the word he used was 'aptitude.'

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 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'.

Obviously; Torkel Franzen gave no sign that he thought his knowledge of logic was causing him to utter absurdities, for example.

Sometimes people make mistakes in informal logic and sometimes people don't.

So? What is that relevant to?

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.

From which you infer that he believed that SP's (those who lack the

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aptitude) could learn formal logic if they made special efforts to?
I'm afraid you're going to have to come up with something better than that.

(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.

Oh, I 'left out the OTHER senses,' did I? Can you post the full definition, and show the world what I left out? Or do you just expect them to take your word that I left part of it out?

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.

'Talent' does have two senses: basic ability to learn, or a special gift. It looks like you're just trying to equivocate on those two senses.

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If you want to convince anyone that Torkel meant anything other than the above definition by aptitude, show some evidence. Start by posting a definition that includes your purported 'sense'.

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.

Perhaps you mean 'charitable' rather than 'reasonable'.

It is not reasonable to think that there are many people who can reason informally but who cannot learn formal logic even if they devote enough concentration upon it

Depends what is meant by 'reasoning informally'; that could mean a lot of things. One thing Torkel cannot mean by it, though (logic being 'essentially mathematical', and these people having no mathematical 'aptitude') is learning the rules of formal validity. Beyond that, your guess is as good as mine.

; 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.

Oh? Who, for instance?

If one were SINCERELY interested in what Franzén meant, then one would opt for the reasonable sense as opposed to trying to convict him for an unreasonable sense.

Oh, all right: Let's look at the reasonableness. Assume that you're right on both points: Assume that there are such people as you've said with no aptitude for formal logic, some of whom can even 'reason well informally' (whatever that means); and further assume that you're right about what Franzén thought such people could learn logic if they tried really, really hard. How do those facts reasonably support his stated position, against their knowing (or even being exposed to) formal logic? Let's see the argument you think he was making: don't just tell us how 'reasonable' it is.

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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.

Which you can prove by posting the definition in full, and/or some other definitions, containing that 'usual sense'.

And you did that to saddle Franzen with an UNreasonable sense

Meaning that I consider it unreasonable as well? That is completely false: I think that it's quite reasonable to believe that Torkel considered those lacking mathematical aptitude to be not as good as he was. That explains both how he treated them, and why he did not pull those kinds of stunts with any math PhDs. I've explained all that to you; do not try to tell me that I really believed something else.

so that you could go on to make a caricature of his views with highly provocative rubric such as "sub-mathematical human".

You're still going on about the 'rubric,' even after I changed it to the neutral Some People (SP) at your request? What's your problem here? My views are on record: Torkel treated what he saw as my kind with total contempt, because he thought that was what my kind deserved. If that sounds like he considered us subhuman, so be it; that's how it looks to me like he did consider us. That explains why he trolled us, some (like me) for years. I'm not going to hide any of that, just because you call it a 'caricature.'

IF you are

SINCERE about discussing Franzen's views, then you wouldn't be trying to knock them down with such cheap strawman tactic.

Well, here's your chance to prove your straw man. Post your different definition of 'aptitude' (as well as the full definition from my source, part of which you claimed I left out). Introduce your own evidence that Franzen thought that at least one SP – one person who clearly lacked mathematical 'aptitude' in his eyes – could learn the subject given the right education or training. Explain why he then

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argued against giving such people that education or training. Then you have some reasonable grounds on which to cry 'straw man'.

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.

All right; when you tell me that by 'aptitude' you mean 'ability to learn without concentrating', I'll believe you. When you tell me that Torkel meant the same thing by 'aptitude', OTOH, I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to back that up.

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.

But that's the "reasonable interpretation" that you're asking me to buy into here: that Franzen was opposed to my kind learning formal logic, even though he believed that we could learn it if we chose to. That's not my interpretation at all: My interpretation, as I told you, is that Franzen was opposed to my kind's learning logic because he considered us incapable of understanding the subject.

I don't think so; so I don't think it was reasonable to take the people Franzen was talking about, for whom it would not be good to know logic, as being those who don't choose to concentrate upon logic.

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'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.

No, he did not. What he said was: "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"

IOW, he's saying only that there is no evidence against him. He is not saying that there are people who both reason well and have an aptitude for formal logic; just that there is no evidence that there aren't any.

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.

Which is an argument against your being 'exposed' to auto mechanics? Remember that that is Torkel's conclusion: exposing Such People to formal logic causes them to assert absurdities.

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

The B.10 quote does not support the idea that Franzen claimed there were such people. If you have a quote where he suggested that there were, please post it.

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.

The position he was taking in the argument was that Some People should not learn logic. How do you get from your

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they–could–learn–with–special–effort to his no–effort–
should–be–made–to–teach–them"?

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.

Sorry, B.1 was a typo; I meant B.10, which is in the backthread – but
I'll save you some scrolling to repost it:

[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."

IOW, even Some People who know the subject can be caused to make 'all
sorts of absurd assertions.'

" 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."

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

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[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."

He is challenging the idea of Some People "know[ing] logic, not just
learning a bit of it.

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.

For someone who doesn't want to speculate about my motives, you're
certainly doing a lot of expounding on my state of mind.

That you want to provide a noun for people who usually
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.

As you know, I do not want to 'provide a noun for people who usually
reason well informally but who don't have an aptitude for formal
logic.' I want to provide a noun for the people Torkel identified as
my kind, who lack the aptitude for formal logic, period, and therefore
should not be exposed to it, period.

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.

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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.

I'm convinced that Franzen did consider my kind (SP's) to be inferior; and (in keeping with his use of 'aptitude') that our inferiority could not be addressed by education or training. Just because you call it a 'caricature' is no reason for me to pretend otherwise.

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

It has to be borne in mind that Franzen is referring to an identifiable subclass (sorry for the 'sub', but that's the term) of humanity, which he believed did exist and he could identify. It's urgent to give them a name, so that we keep in mind which subclass that is – not the (possibly empty) subclass of SP's who reason well informally, for instance.

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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.

So what's your term? None? Then it's Some People or (SPs).