

Game of trisection

by Harun Šiljak - Wednesday, February 17, 2016

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Throughout the centuries, we've made a pretty good system for separating normal from abnormal things. OK, it failed miserably from time to time, but sometimes we have quite strong proof of something not being normal (even if your mother had you tested, Sheldon). Stories we are dealing with today are something like stories of people from the "To Tell the Truth" game show, and our hosts for tonight are [Underwood Dudley \(already a well-known face to our readers\)](#) and Milton Rokeach, author of the celebrated book "The Three Christs of Ypsilanti". We start with Dudley and his "patients". In the already mentioned "A Budget of Trisections", Dudley analyses the character of people trying to solve the unsolvable problem of trisection of an arbitrary angle using straightedge and compass.

A typical example of this Don Quixote is, according to Dudley, a retired gentleman with weak knowledge of mathematics. Dudley warns us of all dangers of communication (usually written correspondence) with this type of people, no matter what position we take. The worst move to make is encouraging them (absolutely no positive sides to it, and the damage is huge). Using additional geometrical tools such as irony and sarcasm doesn't help either, since they do bring a bit of pleasure, but they inevitably extend the agony (one extreme case of correspondence lasted for 7 years). Explaining the reasoning fallacies? That makes you a bigger Don Quixote than the poor member of the trisection sect (Don Quixote's picture on the cover of Dudley's book is no coincidence).

As the story rolls, Dudley tells the tale of a visit to three members of the trisection sect, conversations and impressions. Just like a game of "To Tell the Truth", just without the real person to find, they are all impersonators. The interesting part is that some trisectioners are aware of existence of other trisectioners and their work, but they think the others are just wasting time, and that their approach is clearly wrong. They are the only ones with the key and the supreme truth.

Now who's Don Quixote there? Them or us?

An unusual parallel can be drawn with "The Three Christs of Ypsilanti". Psychologist Milton Rokeach had three patients with the same diagnosis in Ypsilanti hospital: each one of them thought he was Jesus Christ. Rokeach expected that confrontation and conflict between the three Christs will make the patients doubt their identity. However, the reality was different -- no one doubted. Rokeach started manipulating the reality then: sending fake letters to patients (from alleged lovers, hospital management...) and trying to trigger changes. Nope.

Now, let me ask you something... Do we have three or four gods there? Rokeach notes after everything that he took the divine power, against all rules and ethics, to play with humans.

After this difficult topic (it's harder to play with people than with numbers) we come to something completely different: number 1, the larch. The next antifeuilleton is named "Power of factions: People's Front of Judea and Judean People's Front".

Footnote: The title is an allusion to the game of detection (the name of the game show similar to “To Tell the Truth” in former Yugoslavia) where one mysterious person and two people trying to impersonate the mystery person answer questions by the contestants trying to guess who is the original mystery person.

[This is the seventh column of a series written by [Harun Šiljak](#).]

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