

Iași, January 19, 1983

Professor dr.E.Dijkstra
Plataanstraat 5
5671 AL NUENEN
The Netherlands

Dear Professor Dijkstra,

This letter has come to you after a long time (5-6 years) during which I was repeatedly tempted to write it.

The permanent attraction for writing a typical request-for-re/preprint-letter was systematically discouraged by my strong desire to write you when I really have something to say.

All the time I thought about what this "something" could be. And, until I finished the technical report (submitted to you under separate cover some weeks ago) I had no idea of that "something".

The report is entitled "Two programming problems with theoretical appeal". It partially resembles, in style but not in elegance, aesthetics and philosophy, to the treatment of your unique Computing-Science-Oriented-Mathematical-Gems.

The report contains two texts discussing two problems:

- The piling of counters (an olympic Chinese problem)
- Father-in-law vs. pyjamas (problem invented by myself, based on a real story).

The former investigates what I like to call the "algorithmic potential", while the latter is more properly developed in a way I want (so much!) to resemble yours. (About the first,

I am preparing now a paper on axiomatic synthesis", that is a way to derive what the "invention" of the algorithm really means; it is, however, a case study!).

I would be very much obliged if you could have a look at the problems in charge, and if they deserve such a favour, please give me a reply. My deep hope is that you like these problems, and maybe use them in your celebrated Conferences.

I enclose a comment on your "problem with the urn and the balls", from EWD720, entitled "The facets of a Jewel". My remarks point to some nice mathematical properties underlying the game and adding to its beauty. Shall I turn it into a publishable form?

Please forgive me for this somewhat sentimental letter, and do justify it by your strong influence over my patterns of thinking and, the heart-felt desire to have correspondence with you.

Did I have really something to say?

Yours Sincerely,

S. Istrail

Dr.Sorin Istrail