

PROBLEM OF THE MONTH
SEPTEMBER 2014

Simplify:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{1} + \sqrt[3]{2} + \sqrt[3]{4}} + \frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{4} + \sqrt[3]{6} + \sqrt[3]{9}} + \frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{9} + \sqrt[3]{12} + \sqrt[3]{16}}.$$

Solution:

The answer is:

$$\sqrt[3]{4} - 1.$$

Here it is helpful to remember the fact that $x^3 - y^3 = (x - y)(x^2 + xy + y^2)$. Letting $x = \sqrt[3]{2}$ and $y = 1$ gives:

$$1 = 2 - 1 = (\sqrt[3]{2})^3 - 1 = (\sqrt[3]{2} - 1)(\sqrt[3]{4} + \sqrt[3]{2} + 1).$$

Therefore:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{1} + \sqrt[3]{2} + \sqrt[3]{4}} = \sqrt[3]{2} - 1. \quad (1)$$

Next we let $x = \sqrt[3]{3}$ and $y = \sqrt[3]{2}$ and we get

$$1 = 3 - 2 = (\sqrt[3]{3})^3 - (\sqrt[3]{2})^3 = (\sqrt[3]{3} - \sqrt[3]{2})(\sqrt[3]{9} + \sqrt[3]{6} + \sqrt[3]{4}).$$

Therefore:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{4} + \sqrt[3]{6} + \sqrt[3]{9}} = \sqrt[3]{3} - \sqrt[3]{2}. \quad (2)$$

Finally we let $x = \sqrt[3]{4}$ and $y = \sqrt[3]{3}$ and we get

$$1 = 4 - 3 = (\sqrt[3]{4})^3 - (\sqrt[3]{3})^3 = (\sqrt[3]{4} - \sqrt[3]{3})(\sqrt[3]{16} + \sqrt[3]{12} + \sqrt[3]{9}).$$

Therefore:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{9} + \sqrt[3]{12} + \sqrt[3]{16}} = \sqrt[3]{4} - \sqrt[3]{3}. \quad (3)$$

Finally adding (1)-(3) we see that:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{1} + \sqrt[3]{2} + \sqrt[3]{4}} + \frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{4} + \sqrt[3]{6} + \sqrt[3]{9}} + \frac{1}{\sqrt[3]{9} + \sqrt[3]{12} + \sqrt[3]{16}} = \sqrt[3]{4} - 1.$$