

ROMANIAN MATHEMATICAL MAGAZINE

If $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ and $a^2 + b^2 + ab = 3(a + b)$, then prove that :
 $a^3 + b^3 \leq 27$

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If $a = 0$, then : $b^2 = 3b \Rightarrow b = 0$ or $b = 3$; similarly, if $b = 0$, then :
 $a^2 = 3a \Rightarrow a = 0$ or $a = 3$. So, if $(a, b) = (0, 0)$ or $(0, 3)$ or $(3, 0)$, we see that :
 $a^3 + b^3 \leq 27$ is true, " = " iff $(a = 3, b = 0)$ or $(a = 0, b = 3)$ and we

now shift our attention to : $a \neq 0, b \neq 0$... then : $a^2 + b^2 + ab =$

$$b^2(t^2 + t + 1) \left(t = \frac{a}{b} \right) = b^2 \left(\left(t + \frac{1}{2} \right)^2 + \frac{3}{4} \right) \geq \frac{3b^2}{4} > 0 \quad (\because b \neq 0)$$

$$\Rightarrow 3(a + b) = a^2 + b^2 + ab > 0 \therefore a^3 + b^3 \leq 27 \quad \begin{matrix} \because a^2 + b^2 + ab = 3(a + b) \\ \Leftrightarrow \end{matrix}$$

$$a^3 + b^3 \leq \left(\frac{a^2 + b^2 + ab}{a + b} \right)^3 \Leftrightarrow (a^2 + b^2 + ab)^3 \geq (a^3 + b^3)(a + b)^3$$

$$\left(\because a^2 + b^2 + ab > 0 \text{ and } a + b > 0 \right)$$

$$\Leftrightarrow (a^2 + b^2 + ab)^3 \geq (a^2 + b^2 - ab)(a + b)^4 = (a^2 + b^2 - ab)(a^2 + b^2 + 2ab)^2$$

$$\Leftrightarrow (x + y)^3 \geq (x - y)(x + 2y)^2 \Leftrightarrow y^2(3x + 5y) \geq 0$$

$$\Leftrightarrow a^2b^2(3a^2 + 3b^2 + 5ab) \geq 0 \Leftrightarrow a^2b^4(3t^2 + 5t + 3) \geq 0 \quad \begin{matrix} (x = a^2 + b^2 \text{ and} \\ y = ab) \end{matrix}$$

\rightarrow true (strict inequality) $\because a^2b^4 > 0$ ($\because a, b \neq 0$) and discriminant of
 $3t^2 + 5t + 3 - 25 - 36 < 0 \Rightarrow 3t^2 + 5t + 3 > 0 \therefore a^3 + b^3 < 27$ for $a \neq 0, b \neq 0$
 and combining all cases, $a^3 + b^3 \leq 27 \forall a, b \in \mathbb{R} \mid a^2 + b^2 + ab = 3(a + b)$,
 " = " iff $(a = 3, b = 0)$ or $(a = 0, b = 3)$ (QED)