6.042J/18.062J, Spring '15: Mathematics for Computer Science

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2.1 Week 1, Fri

2.1.1 Problem 1.

$P :=$ **Prove that if $a \cdot b = n$, then either a or b must be $\leq \sqrt{n}$, where a, b and n are nonnegative real numbers. *Hint:* by contradiction Section 1.8 in the course textbook.**

Solution: We use proof by contradiction. Suppose P is false. Therefore a and b are $> n$.

$$a \cdot b > \sqrt{n} \cdot \sqrt{n} = n$$

This is a contradiction. Therefore P must be true. ■

2.1.2 Problem 2.

Generalise the proof of Theorem 1.8.1 repeated below that $\sqrt{2}$ is irrational in the course textbook. For example, how about $\sqrt{3}$?.

Solution: We use proof by contradiction. Suppose $\sqrt{3}$ is rational.

$$\Rightarrow \sqrt{3} = \frac{n}{d}$$

Where n and d are the lowest terms.

$$\Rightarrow 3 = \frac{n^2}{d^2}$$

$$\Rightarrow 3d^2 = n^2$$

n^2 is a factor of 3 which is only possible if n is also a factor of 3 as shown below:

$$\Rightarrow n = 3k$$

Where $k \in \mathbb{N}$.

$$\Rightarrow n^2 = (3k)^2 = 9k^2$$
$$\Rightarrow 3d^2 = 9k^2$$
$$\Rightarrow d^2 = 3k^2$$

Therefore d^2 is a factor of 3 which is only possible if d is a factor of 3 as well.

Above we prove n and d have a common factor of 3, therefore n and d are not the lowest terms. This a contradiction. Therefore $\sqrt{3}$ is an irrational number. ■

2.1.3 Problem 3.

If we raise an irrational number to an irrational power, can the result be rational? Show that it can by considering $\sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{2}}$ and arguing by cases.

Solution: We argue by cases. Where $a = \sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{2}}, b = \sqrt{2}$.

Case 1: *We assume a is irrational.* b is known to be irrational - **Theorem.** *$\sqrt{2}$ is irrational.*

$$\Rightarrow a^b = \left(\sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{2}}\right)^{\sqrt{2}}$$

$$\Rightarrow \left(\sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{2}}\right)^{\sqrt{2}} = \sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{2}\times\sqrt{2}} = \sqrt{2}^{2} = 2.$$

2 can be written in the form $\frac{n}{d}$ where its lowest terms are $n = 2$ and $d = 1$. Therefore by definition, 2 is a rational number. *Case 1* thus shows a irrational number raised to the power of irrational number can produce a rational number.

Case 2: *We assume a is rational.* We introduce a third term c where $c = \sqrt{2}$ - an irrational number.

$$\Rightarrow b^c = \sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{2}}$$

Therefore b, an irrational number, raised to the power of c also an irrational number produces a rational number, a.

Extra: Chris Reineke - He came up with a constructive proof i.e., a specific pair of irrational numbers with this property.

Let $a = \sqrt{10}$, $b = \log_{10} 4$.

$$\Rightarrow a^b = \sqrt{10}^{\log_{10} 4}$$

$$\Rightarrow \sqrt{10}^{\log_{10} 4} = 10^{\log_{10} 4^{1/2}} = 10^{\log_{10} 2} = 2$$