

# A snippet about the proof of the Archimedean property

Randall Holmes

August 28, 2023

This is a snippet about the fact that I proved the Archimedean property in a way complementary to the way it is proved in the book.

We prove this: “Suppose that  $\mathbb{F}$  is a complete ordered field. Then for every  $t \in \mathbb{F}$ , there is a positive integer  $n$  such that  $t < n$ ”.

The proof in the book: suppose otherwise. Then there is a  $t$  which is larger than every positive integer, and so is an upper bound for the set  $\mathbb{Z}^+$ .

Thus by the Completeness Axiom there is a least upper bound  $M$  for  $\mathbb{Z}^+$ .

Since  $M$  is the least upper bound for  $\mathbb{Z}^+$ , it follows that  $M - 1$  is not an upper bound for  $\mathbb{Z}^+$ , so there is a positive integer  $N > M - 1$ .

But then  $N + 1$  is a positive integer, and  $N + 1 > M$ , which contradicts the claim that  $M$  is the least upper bound of  $\mathbb{Z}^+$ , because it shows that  $M$  is not an upper bound for  $\mathbb{Z}^+$  at all.

The alternative proof I came up with on my feet: consider the set  $S = \{t \in \mathbb{F} : (\forall n \in \mathbb{Z}^+ : t > n)\}$ . This could be described as the set of strict upper bounds for  $\mathbb{Z}^+$ .

Suppose the statement “for every  $t \in \mathbb{F}$ , there is a positive integer  $n$  such that  $t < n$ ” is false. Then  $S$  is nonempty.  $S$  is certainly bounded below (by any positive integer you like, such as 1) so it has a greatest lower bound (a corollary of the completeness property).

Let  $M$  be the greatest lower bound of  $S$ . Then  $M + 1$  is not a lower bound of  $S$ , so there is  $t \in S$  which is less than  $M + 1$ . This implies that  $t - 1 < M \notin S$ , from which it follows that there is an integer  $n$  such that  $t - 1 < n$ . But then  $n + 1$  is an integer and  $t < n + 1$ , contradicting the assertion that  $t \in S$ .

If you look at it sideways, it is basically the same argument.

I hint that this is seriously relevant to problem 14b. Explain.