

# 1 Real Numbers

## 1.1 $\sqrt{2}$

Until now, we have looked at *discrete* numbers, that is numbers that are nicely separated from each other so that we can write them down unmistakably and always know of which number we are currently talking. Now we enter a completely different universe. The universe of continuous numbers that cannot be written down in a finite number of steps. The representation of these numbers consists of infinitely many elements and, therefore, we will never be able to write the number down completely with all its elements. We may give a finite formula that describes how to compute the specific number, but we will never see the whole number written down. Those numbers are known since antiquity and, apparently, their existence came as a great surprise to Greek mathematicians.

The first step of our investigations into this kind of numbers, is to show that they *exist*, *i.e.*, there are contexts where they arise naturally. To start, we will assume that they are not necessary. We assume that all numbers are either natural, integral or fractional. Indeed, any of the fundamental arithmetic operations,  $+$ ,  $-$ ,  $\times$  and  $/$ , applied on two rational numbers results always in a rational number, *i.e.* an integer or a fraction. We could therefore suspect that the result of any operation is a rational number, *i.e.* an integer or a fraction.

What about  $\sqrt{2}$ , the square root of 2? Let us assume that  $\sqrt{2}$  is as well a fraction. Then we have two integers  $n$  and  $d$ , coprime to each other, such that

$$\sqrt{2} = \frac{n}{d} \tag{1.1}$$

and

$$2 = \left(\frac{n}{d}\right)^2 = \frac{n^2}{d^2}. \tag{1.2}$$

Any number can be represented as a product of primes. If  $p_1 p_2 \dots p_n$  is the prime factorisation of  $n$  and  $q_1 q_2 \dots q_d$  is that of  $d$ , we can write:

$$\sqrt{2} = \frac{p_1 p_2 \dots p_n}{q_1 q_2 \dots q_d}. \tag{1.3}$$

It follows that

$$2 = \frac{p_1^2 p_2^2 \dots p_n^2}{q_1^2 q_2^2 \dots q_d^2}. \quad (1.4)$$

As we know from the previous chapter, two different prime numbers  $p$  and  $q$  squared (or raised to any integer) do not result in two numbers that share factors. The factorisation of  $p^n$  is just  $p^n$  and that of  $q^n$  is just  $q^n$ . They are coprime to each other. The fraction in equation 1.4, thus, cannot represent an integer, such as 2. There is only one way for such a fraction to result in an integer, *viz.*, when the numerator is an integer and the denominator is 1, which is obviously not the case for  $\sqrt{2}$ . It follows that, if the root of an integer is not an integer itself, it is not a rational number either.

But, if  $\sqrt{2}$  is not a rational number, a number that can be represented as the fraction of two integers, what the heck is it then?

There are several methods to approximate the number  $\sqrt{n}$ . The simplest and oldest is the *Babylonian* method, also called *Heron's* method for Heron of Alexandria, a Greek mathematician of the first century who lived in Alexandria.

The idea of Heron's method, basically, is to iteratively approximate the real value starting with a guess. We can start with some arbitrary value. If the first guess, say  $g$ , does not equal  $\sqrt{n}$ , *i.e.*  $gg \neq n$ , then  $g$  is either slightly too big or too small. We either have  $gg > n$  or  $gg < n$ . So, on each step, we improve a bit on the value by taking the average of  $g$  and its counterpart  $n/g$ . If  $gg > n$ , then clearly  $n/g < g$  and, if  $gg < n$ , then  $n/g > g$ . The average of  $g$  and  $a/g$  is calculated as  $(g + a/g)/2$ . The result is used as input for the next round. The more iterations of this kind we do, the better is the approximation. In Haskell:

```
heron :: Natural → Natural → Double
heron n s = let a = fromIntegral n in go s a (a / 2)
  where go 0 _ x = x
        go i a x | xx = a      = x
                  | otherwise = go (i - 1) a ((x + a / x) / 2)
```

The function takes two arguments. The first is the number whose square root we want to calculate and the second is the number of iterations we want to do. We then call *go* with  $s$ , the number of iterations,  $a$ , the *Double* representation of  $n$ , and our first guess  $a/2$ .

In *go*, if we have reached  $i = 0$ , we yield the result  $x$ . Otherwise, we call *go* again with  $i - 1$ ,  $a$  and the average of  $x$  and  $a/x$ .

Let us compute  $\sqrt{2}$  following this approach for, say, five iterations. We first have

$go\ 5\ 2\ 1 = go\ 4\ 2\ ((1 + 2) / 2)$   
 $go\ 4\ 2\ 1.5 = go\ 3\ 2\ ((1.5 + 2 / 1.5) / 2)$   
 $go\ 3\ 2\ 1.416666 = go\ 2\ 2\ ((1.416666 + 2 / 1.416666) / 2)$   
 $go\ 2\ 2\ 1.414215 = go\ 1\ 2\ ((1.414215 + 2 / 1.414215) / 2)$   
 $go\ 1\ 2\ 1.414213 = go\ 0\ 2\ ((1.414213 + 2 / 1.414213) / 2)$   
 $go\ 1\ 2\ 1.414213 = 1.414213.$

Note that we do not show the complete *Double* value, but only the first six digits. The results of the last two steps, therefore, are identical. They differ, in fact, at the twelfth digit: 1.4142135623746899 (*heron 2 4*) versus 1.414213562373095 (*heron 2 5*). Note that the result of five iterations has one digit less than that of four iterations. This is because that after the last digit, 5, the digit 0 follows and then the *precision* of the *Double* number type is exhausted. *Irrational* numbers, this is the designation of the type of numbers we are talking about, consist of infinitely many digits. Therefore, the last digit in the number presented above is in fact not the last digit of the number. With slightly higher precision, we would see that the number continues like 03...

The result of (*heron 2 5*)  $\uparrow 2$  is fairly close to 2: 1.9999999999999996. It will not get any closer using *Double* representation.

## 1.2 $\Phi$

Another interesting irrational number is  $\tau$  or  $\Phi$ , known as the *divine proportion* or *golden ratio*. The golden ratio is the relation of two quantities, such that the greater relates to the lesser as the sum of both to the greater. This may sound confusing, so here are two symbolic representations:

$$\frac{a}{b} = \frac{a+b}{a}. \quad (1.5)$$

In this equation,  $a$  is the greater number and  $b$  the lesser. The equation states that the relation of  $a$  to  $b$  equals the relation of  $a+b$  to  $a$ . Alternatively we can say

$$\frac{b}{a} = \frac{a}{b-a}. \quad (1.6)$$

Here  $b$  is the sum of the two quantities and  $a$  is the greater one. The equation states that the relation of  $b$  to  $a$  is the same as the relation of  $a$  to  $b-a$ , which, of course, is then the smaller quantity.

The golden ratio is known since antiquity. The symbol  $\Phi$  is an homage to ancient Greek sculptor and painter Phidias (480 – 430 BC). Its first heyday after antiquity was during Renaissance and then it was again extremely popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Up

to our times, artists, writers and mathematicians have repeatedly called the golden ratio especially pleasing.

From equation 1.6 we can derive the numerical value of  $\Phi$  in the form  $\frac{\Phi}{1}$ . We can then calculate  $b$ , for any value  $a$ , as  $a\Phi$ . The derivation uses some algebraic methods, which we will study more closely in the next part, especially *completing the square*. As such this section is also an algebra teaser.

We start by setting  $\Phi = \frac{b}{a}$  with  $a = 1$ . We then have on the left side of the equation  $\Phi = \frac{b}{1} = b$ . On the right-hand side, we have  $\frac{a-1}{\Phi-1}$ :

$$\Phi = \frac{1}{\Phi - 1}. \quad (1.7)$$

Multiplying both sides by  $\Phi - 1$ , we get

$$\Phi^2 - \Phi = 1. \quad (1.8)$$

This is a quadratic equation and, with some phantasy, we even recognise the fragment of a binomial formula on the left side. A complete binomial formula would be

$$(a - b)^2 = a^2 - 2ab + b^2. \quad (1.9)$$

We try to pattern match the fragment above such that  $\Phi^2$  is  $a^2$  and  $-\Phi$  is  $-2ab$ . That would mean that the last term,  $b^2$  would correspond to the square half of the number that is multiplied by  $\Phi$  to yield  $-\Phi$ .  $-\Phi$  can be seen as  $-1 \times \Phi$ . Half of that number is  $-\frac{1}{2}$ . That squared is  $\frac{1}{4}$ . So, if we add  $\frac{1}{4}$  to both sides of the equation, we would end up with a complete binomial formula on the left side:

$$\Phi^2 - \Phi + \frac{1}{4} = 1 + \frac{1}{4} = \frac{5}{4}. \quad (1.10)$$

We can apply the binomial theorem on the left side and get

$$\left(\Phi - \frac{1}{2}\right)^2 = \frac{5}{4}. \quad (1.11)$$

Now we take the square root:

$$\Phi - \frac{1}{2} = \frac{\pm\sqrt{5}}{2}. \quad (1.12)$$

Note that the  $\pm$  in front of  $\sqrt{5}$  reflects the fact that the square root of 5 (or any other number) may be positive or negative. Both solutions are possible. However, since we are looking for a positive relation, we only consider the positive solution and ignore the other one. We can therefore simplify to

$$\Phi - \frac{1}{2} = \frac{\sqrt{5}}{2}. \quad (1.13)$$

Finally, we add  $\frac{1}{2}$  to both sides:

$$\Phi = \frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} \quad (1.14)$$

and voilà that is  $\Phi$ . The numerical value is approximately 1.618 033 988 749 895. We can define it as a constant in Haskell as

```
phi :: Double
phi = 0.5 * (1 + sqrt 5)
```

We can now define a function that, for any given  $a$ , yields  $b$ :

```
golden :: Double → Double
golden a = a * phi
```

*golden* 1, of course, is just  $\Phi$ , *i.e.* 1.618 033 988 749 895. *golden* 2 is twice that value, namely 3.236 067 977 499 79. Furthermore, we can state that  $2 / (\text{golden } 2 - 2)$ , which is  $\frac{a}{b-a}$ , is again an approximation of  $\Phi$ .

That is very nice. But there is more to come.  $\Phi$ , in fact, is intimately connected to the Fibonacci sequence, as we will see in the next chapter.

### 1.3 $\pi$

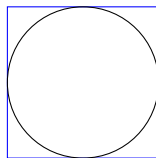
$\pi$  is probably the most famous irrational number. It emerged in antique mathematics in studying the circle where it expresses the relation between the diameter (depicted in red in the image below) and the circumference (depicted in black):



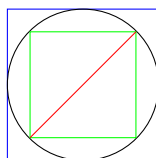
Since, often, the radius, which is half the diameter, is much more important in mathematics, it has been proposed to use  $\tau = 2\pi$  where  $\pi$  is used today. But  $\pi$  has survived

through history and, even though slightly suboptimal in some situations, it is still in use today.

The reason why the perimeter instead of the radius was used to define the circle constant is probably because classic approaches to approximate  $\pi$  take the perimeter as basis. They start by drawing a square with side length 1 and inscribe a circle into the square with perimeter 1:



Since the square has side length 1, its perimeter, the sum of all its sides is  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 4$  and, as we can see clearly in the picture above, this perimeter is greater than that of the circle. 4, hence, is an upper bound for the circumference of the circle with perimeter 1. A lower bound would then be given by a square inscribed in the circle, such that the distance between its opposing corners (red) is 1, the perimeter of the circle:



We see two right triangles with two green sides on a red basis. The basis is the perimeter of the circle, of which we know that its length is 1. You certainly know the Pythagorean theorem, probably the most famous or notorious theorem of all mathematics, which states that, in a right triangle, one with a right angle, an angle of  $90^\circ$ , the sum of the squares of the sides to the left and right of that angle (the green sides) equals the square of the hypotenuse, the red side, which is opposite to the right angle. This can be stated as:

$$a^2 = b^2 + c^2, \tag{1.15}$$

where  $a$  is the red side, whose length we know, namely 1. We further know that the green sides are equal. We hence have:

$$1^2 = 2b^2. \tag{1.16}$$

and further derive

$$1 = \sqrt{2b^2}, \quad (1.17)$$

which is

$$1 = \sqrt{2}b. \quad (1.18)$$

Dividing both sides by  $\sqrt{2}$ , we get

$$b = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}, \quad (1.19)$$

the side length of the green square, which is approximately 0.707. The perimeter of the inner square is thus  $4 \times 0.707$ , which is approximately 2.828. Thus  $\pi$  is some value between 2.828 and 4.

That result is not very satisfactory, of course. There is room for a lot of numbers between 2.828 and 4. The method was therefore extended by choosing polygons with more than four sides to come closer to the real value of  $\pi$ . The ancient record holder for approximating  $\pi$  is Archimedes who started off with a hexagon, which is easy to construct with compass and ruler:



Then he subsequently doubled the number of sides of the polygon, so that he obtained polygons with 12, 24, 48 and, finally, 96 sides. With this approach he concluded that  $\frac{223}{71} < \pi < \frac{22}{7}$ , which translates to a number between 3.1408 and 3.1428 and is pretty close to the approximated value 3.14159.

In modern times, mathematicians started to search for approximations by other means than geometry, in particular by infinite series. One of the first series was discovered by Indian mathematician Nilakantha Somayaji (1444 – 1544). It goes like

$$\pi = 3 + \frac{4}{2 \times 3 \times 4} - \frac{4}{4 \times 5 \times 6} + \frac{4}{6 \times 7 \times 8} - \dots \quad (1.20)$$

We can implement this in Haskell as

```

nilak :: Int → Double
nilak i | even i = nilak (i + 1)
        | otherwise = go i 2 3 4
  where go 0 _ _ _ = 3
        go n a b c = let k | even n = -4
                           | otherwise = 4
                       in (k / (a * b * c)) + go (n - 1) c (c + 1) (c + 2)

```

Here we use a negative term, whenever  $n$ , the counter for the step we are performing, is even. Since, with this approach, an even number of steps would produce a bad approximation, we perform, for  $i$  even,  $i + 1$  and hence an odd number of steps. This way, the series converges to 3.14159 after about 35 steps, *i.e.*  $nilak\ 35$  is some number that starts with 3.14159.

An even faster convergence is obtained by the beautiful series discovered by French mathematician François Viète (1540 – 1603) in 1593:

$$\frac{2}{\pi} = \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2} \times \frac{\sqrt{2 + \sqrt{2}}}{2} \times \frac{\sqrt{2 + \sqrt{2 + \sqrt{2}}}}{2} \times \dots \quad (1.21)$$

In Haskell this gives rise to a very nice recursive function:

```

vietep :: Int → Double
vietep i = 2 / (go 0 (sqrt 2))
  where go n t | n ≡ i = 1
              | otherwise = (t / 2) * go (n + 1) (sqrt (2 + t))

```

The approximation 3.14159 is reached with  $vietep\ 10$ .

There are many other series, some focusing on early convergence, others on beauty. An exceptionally beautiful series is that of German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 – 1716), who we will get to know more closely later on:

$$\frac{\pi}{4} = \frac{1}{1} - \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5} - \frac{1}{7} + \frac{1}{9} - \dots \quad (1.22)$$

In Haskell this is, for instance:

```

leipi :: Int → Double
leipi i = 4 * go 0 1
  where go n d | n ≡ i = 0
              | otherwise = let x | even n = 1
                                   | otherwise = -1
                              in x / d + go (n + 1) (d + 2)

```

This series converges really slowly. We reach 3.14159 only after about 400 000 steps.



$\pi$  appears quite often in mathematics, particularly in geometry. But there are also some unexpected entries of this number. The inevitable Leonhard Euler solved a function, which today is called *Riemann zeta function*, for the special case  $s = 2$ :

$$\zeta(s) = \frac{1}{1^s} + \frac{1}{2^s} + \frac{1}{3^s} + \cdots = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^s}. \quad (1.23)$$

Euler showed that, for the special case  $s = 2$ ,  $\zeta(s)$  converges to  $\frac{\pi^2}{6}$ ; in fact, for any  $n$ ,  $n$  a multiple of 2,  $\zeta(n)$  converges to some fraction of a power of  $\pi$ , *e.g.*  $\zeta(4)$  approaches  $\frac{\pi^4}{90}$ ,  $\zeta(6)$  approaches  $\frac{\pi^6}{945}$  and so on.

This is surprising, because the zeta function is not related to circles, but to number theory. It appears for example, when calculating the probability of two numbers being coprime to each other. Two numbers are coprime if they do not share prime factors. The probability of a number being divisible by a given prime  $p$  is  $\frac{1}{p}$ , since every  $p^{th}$  number is divisible by  $p$ . For two independently chosen numbers, the probability that both are divisible by prime  $p$  is therefore  $\frac{1}{p} \times \frac{1}{p} = \frac{1}{p^2}$ . The reverse probability that both are not divisible by that prime, hence, is  $1 - \frac{1}{p^2}$ . The probability that there is no prime at all that divides both is then

$$\prod_p \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^2}\right). \quad (1.24)$$

To cut a long story short, this equation can be transformed into the equation

$$\frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{2^2} + \frac{1}{3^2} + \cdots} = \frac{1}{\zeta(2)} = \frac{1}{\frac{\pi^2}{6}} = \frac{6}{\pi^2} = 0.607 \approx 61\% \quad (1.25)$$

and with this  $\pi$  appears as a constant in number theory expressing the probability of two randomly chosen numbers being coprime to each other.

## 1.4 $e$

The Bernoullis were a family of Huguenots from Antwerp in the Spanish Netherlands from where they fled the repression by the Catholic Spanish authorities, first to Frankfurt am Main, later to Basel in Switzerland. Among the Bernoullis, there is a remarkable number of famous mathematicians who worked in calculus, probability theory, number theory and many areas of applied mathematics. One of the Basel Bernoullis was Johann Bernoulli (1667 – 1748) who worked mainly in calculus and tutored famous mathematicians like Guillaume L'Hôpital, but whose greatest contribution to the history of math

was perhaps to recognise the enormous talent of another of his pupils whose name was Leonhard Euler.

His brother Jacob Bernoulli (1655 – 1705), who worked, as his brother, in calculus, but most prominently in probability theory, is much better known today, partly perhaps because many of Johann's achievements were published under the name of L'Hôpital. Unfortunately, early modern mathematics and science in general was plagued with disputes over priorities in the authorship of contributions, a calamity that authors and authorities later tried to solve by introducing the *droite d'auteur*, better known in the English speaking world as *copyright*.

Among the many problems Jacob studied was the calculation of interests. He started off with a very simple problem. Suppose we have a certain amount of money and a certain interest credited after a given amount of time. To keep it simple, let the amount equal 1 (of any currency of your liking – currencies in Jacob's lifetime were extremely complicated, so we better ignore that detail). After one year 100% interest is paid. After that year, we hence have  $1 + \frac{1*100}{100} = 2$  in our account. That is trivial. But what, if the interest is paid in shorter periods during the year? For instance, if the interest is paid twice a year, then the interest for that period would be 50%. After six months we would have  $1 + \frac{1*50}{100} = 1.5$  in our account. After one year, the account would then be  $1.5 + \frac{1.5*50}{100} = 1.5 + \frac{75}{100} = 1.5 + 0.75 = 2.25$ .

Another way to see this is that the initial value is multiplied by 1.5 (the initial value plus the interest) twice:  $1 \times 1.5 \times 1.5 = 1 \times 1.5^2 = 2.25$ . When we reduce the period even further, say, to three months, then we had  $1.25^4 \approx 2.4414$ . On a monthly base, we would get  $(1 + \frac{1}{12})^{12} \approx 2.613$ . On a daily basis, we would have  $(1 + \frac{1}{365})^{365} \approx 2.7145$ . With hourly interests and the assumption that one year has  $24 \times 365 = 8760$  hours, we would get  $(1 + \frac{1}{8760})^{8760} \approx 2.71812$ . With interest paid per minute we would get  $(1 + \frac{1}{525600})^{525600} \approx 2.71827$  and on interest paid per second, we would get  $(1 + \frac{1}{3156000})^{3156000} \approx 2.71828$ . In general, for interest on period  $n$ , we get:

$$\left(1 + \frac{1}{n}\right)^n.$$

You may have noticed in the examples above that this formula converges with greater and greater  $ns$ . For  $n$  approaching  $\infty$ , it converges to 2.71828, a number that is so beautiful that we should look at more than just the first 5 digits:

2.7 1828 1828 4590 4523...

This is  $e$ . It is called Euler's number or, for the first written appearance of concepts related to it in 1618, Napier's number. It is a pity that its first mentioning was not in the year 1828. But who knows – perhaps in some rare Maya calendar the year 1618 actually is the year 1828.

An alternative way to approach  $e$  that converges much faster than the closed form above is the following:

$$1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{120} + \dots$$

or, in other words:

$$e = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n!}. \quad (1.26)$$

We can implement this equation in Haskell as

```
e :: Integer → Double
e p = 1 + sum [1 / (dfac n) | n <- [1..p]]
  where dfac = fromInteger ∘ fac
```

After some experiments with this function, we see that it converges already after 17 recursions to a value that does not change with greater arguments at *Double* precision, such that  $e_{-17} \equiv e_{-18} \equiv e_{-19} \equiv \dots$ . We could then implement  $e$  as

```
e :: Double
e = e_{-17}
```

The fact that  $e$  is related to the factorial may lead to the suspicion that it also appears directly in a formula dealing with factorials. There, indeed, is a formula derived by James Stirling who we already know for the Stirling numbers. This formula approximates the value of  $n!$  without the need to go through all the steps of its recursive definition. Stirling's formula is as follows:

$$n! \approx \sqrt{2\pi n} \left(\frac{n}{e}\right)^n. \quad (1.27)$$

This equation is nice already because of the fact that  $e$  and  $\pi$  appear together to compute the result of an important function. But how precise is the approximation? To answer this question, we first implement Stirling's formula:

```
stirfac :: Integer → Integer
stirfac i = ceiling $ (sqrt (2 * pi * n)) * (n / e) ↑ i
  where n = fromIntegral i
```

Note that we *ceil* the value, instead of rounding it just to the next integer value.

Then we define a function to compute the difference  $difac\ n = fac\ n - stirfac\ n$ . The result for the first 15 numbers is

0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 9, 59, 417, 3343, 30104, 301174, 3314113, 39781324, 517289459, 7243645800.

For the first numbers, the difference is 0. Indeed:

$$\begin{array}{rclcl}
 1! & = & stirfac(1) & = & 1 \\
 2! & = & stirfac(2) & = & 2 \\
 3! & = & stirfac(3) & = & 6 \\
 4! & = & stirfac(4) & = & 24
 \end{array}$$

Then, the functions start to disagree, for instance  $5! = 120 \neq stirfac(5) = 119$ . The difference grows rapidly and reaches more than 3 million with  $12!$ . But what is the deviation in relation to the real value? We define the function  $100 * (fromIntegral \$ difac n) / (fromIntegral \$ fac n)$  to obtain the difference in terms of a percentage of the real value. We see starting from 5 (where the first difference occurs):

0.8333, 1.25, 1.1706, 1.0342, 0.9212, 0.8295, 0.7545, 0.6918, 0.6388, 0.5933, 0.5539, ...

For 5, the value jumps up from 0 to 0.8333%, climbs even higher to 1.25% and then starts to decrease slowly. At 42 the deviation falls below 0.2%. At 84, it falls below 0.1% and keeps falling. Even though the difference appears big in terms of absolute numbers, the percentage quickly shrinks and, for some problems, may even be negligible.

A completely different way to approximate  $e$  is by *continued fractions*. Continued fractions are infinite fractions, where each denominator is again a fraction. For instance:

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{2 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{4 + \dots}}}}} \quad (1.28)$$

A more readable representation of continued fractions is by sequences of the denominator like:

$$e = [2; 1, 2, 1, 1, 4, 1, 1, 6, 1, 1, 8, 1, 1, \dots] \quad (1.29)$$

where the first number is separated by a semicolon to highlight the fact that it is not a denominator, but an integral number added to the fraction that follows. We can capture this very nicely in Haskell, using just a list of integers. However, in some cases we might

have a fraction with numerators other than 1. An elegant way to represent this case is by using fractions instead of integers. We would then represent  $\frac{2}{a+\dots}$  as  $\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}a+\dots}$ . Here is an implementation:

```

contfrac :: [Quoz] → Double
contfrac [] = 1
contfrac [i] = fromQuoz i
contfrac (i : is) = n + 1 / (contfrac is)
  where n = fromQuoz i
fromQuoz :: Quoz → Double
fromQuoz i = case i of
  (Pos (Q nu d)) → fromIntegral nu / fromIntegral d
  (Neg (Q nu d)) → negate (fromIntegral nu / fromIntegral d)

```

For `contfrac [2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 4, 1, 1, 6]` we get 2.7183, which is not bad, but not yet too close to  $e$ . With `[2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 4, 1, 1, 6, 1, 1, 8, 1, 1, 10]` we get 2.718 281 828, which is pretty close.

Examining the sequence a bit further, we see that it has a regular structure. We can generate it by means of the *Engel expansion* named for Friedrich Engel (1861 – 1941), a German mathematician who worked close with the great Norwegian algebraist Sophus Lie (1842 – 1899). The Engel expansion can be implemented as follows:

```

engelexp :: [Integer]
engelexp = 2 : 1 : go 1
  where go n = (2 * n) : 1 : 1 : go (n + 1)

```

The following fraction, however, converges much faster than the Engel expansion: `[1, 1/2, 12, 5, 28, 9, 44, 13]`. Note that we take advantage of the datatype `Quoz` to represent a numerator that is not 1. This sequence can be generated by means of

```

fastexp :: [Quoz]
fastexp = 1 : (Pos (1 % 2)) : go 1
  where go n = (16 * n - 4) : (4 * n + 1) : go (n + 1)

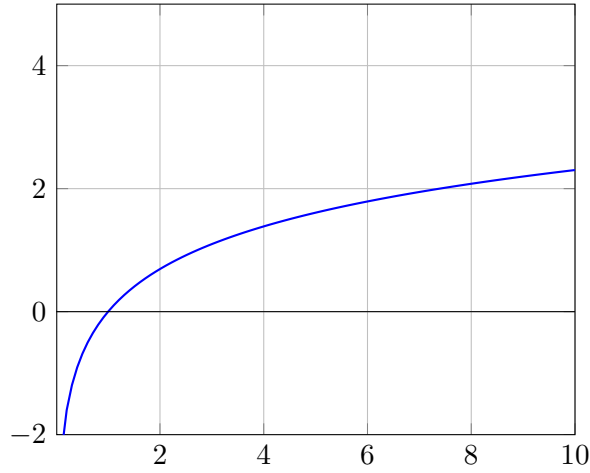
```

This fraction converges already after 7 steps to the value 2.718 281 828:

`contfrac (take 7 fastexp)`.

The area of mathematics where  $e$  is really at home is analysis and its vast areas of application, which we will study in the third part of this series. The reason for the prominence of  $e$  in analysis stems from the *natural logarithm*, which we already introduced in the first chapter. The natural logarithm of a number  $n$ , usually denoted  $\ln(n)$ , is the exponent  $x$ , such that  $e^x = n$ .

The natural logarithm can be graphed as follows:



The curious fact that earned the natural logarithm its name is that, at  $x = 1$ , the curve has the slope 1. This might sound strange for the moment. We will investigate that later.

## 1.5 $\gamma$

The *harmonic series* is defined as

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{4} + \dots \quad (1.30)$$

A harmonic series with respect to a given number  $k$ , called the *harmonic number*  $H_k$ , then is

$$\sum_{n=1}^k \frac{1}{n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \dots + \frac{1}{k} \quad (1.31)$$

This is easily implemented in Haskell as

```
harmonic :: Natural -> Double
harmonic n = sum [1 / d | d <- map fromIntegral [1..n]]
```

Some harmonic numbers are (`map harmonic [1..10]`):

1, 1.5, 1.83, 2.083, 2.283, 2.449, 2.5928, 2.7178, 2.8289, 2.9289.

The harmonic series is an interesting object of study in its own right. Here, however, we are interested in something else. Namely, the difference of the harmonic series and the

natural logarithm:

$$\gamma = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} H_n - \ln(n). \quad (1.32)$$

We can implement this equation as

```

harmonatural :: Natural → Double
harmonatural n = harmonic n - ln n
  where ln = log ∘ fromIntegral

```

Applied on the first numbers with `map harmonatural [1..10]`, the function does not show interesting results:

1.0, 0.8068, 0.7347, 0.697, 0.6738, 0.6582, 0.6469, 0.6384, 0.6317, 0.6263, ...

Applied to greater numbers, however, the results approach a constant value:

```

harmonatural 100 = 0.58220
harmonatural 1000 = 0.57771
harmonatural 10000 = 0.57726
harmonatural 100000 = 0.57722

```

With even greater numbers, the difference converges to 0.57721. This number,  $\gamma$ , was first mentioned by – surprise – Leonhard Euler and some years later by Italian mathematician Lorenzo Mascheroni (1750 – 1800) and is therefore called the Euler-Mascheroni constant.

This mysterious number appears in different contexts and, apparently, quite often as a difference or average. An ingenious investigation was carried out by Belgian mathematician Charles Jean de la Vallée-Poussin (1866 – 1962) who is famous for his proof of the Prime number theorem. Vallée-Poussin studied the quotients of a number  $n$  and the primes up to that number. If  $n$  is not prime itself, then there are some prime numbers  $p$ , namely those of the prime factorisation of  $n$ , such that  $\frac{n}{p}$  is an integer. For others, this quotient is a rational number, which falls short of the next natural number. For instance, there are four prime numbers less than 10: 2, 3, 5 and 7. The quotients are

5,  $3.\bar{3}$ , 2,  $1.\overline{428571}$ .

5 and 2, the quotients of 2 and 5, respectively, are integers and there, hence, is no difference. The quotient  $\frac{10}{3} = 3.\bar{3}$ , however, falls short of 4 by 0.6 and  $\frac{10}{7} = 1.\overline{428571}$  falls short of 2 by  $0.\overline{57142828}$ .

Vallée-Poussin asked what the average of this difference is. For the example 10, the average is about  $0.3095238$ . One might think that this average, computed for many numbers or for very big numbers, is about 0.5, so that the probability for the quotient of  $n$  and a random prime number to fall into the first or the second half of the rational numbers between two integers is equal, *i.e.* 50% for both cases. It turns out it is not. For

huge numbers, de la Vallée-Poussin's average converges to 0.577 21, the Euler-Mascheroni constant.

It converges quite slow, however. If we implement the prime quotient as

```
pquoz :: Natural → [Double]
pquoz n = [d / p | p ← ps]
  where ps = map fromIntegral (takeWhile (<n) allprimes)
        d = fromIntegral n
```

and its average as

```
pquozavg :: Integer → Double
pquozavg n = (sum ds) / (fromIntegral $ length ds)
  where qs = pquoz n
        ns = map (fromIntegral ∘ ceiling) qs
        ds = [n - q | (n, q) ← zip ns qs]
```

we can experiment with some numbers like

```
pquozavg 10 = 0.3095238
pquozavg 100 = 0.548731
pquozavg 1000 = 0.5590468
pquozavg 10000 = 0.5666399
pquozavg 100000 = 0.5695143
...
```

With greater and greater numbers, this value approaches  $\gamma$ . Restricting  $n$  to prime numbers produces good approximations of  $\gamma$  much earlier. From 7 on, *pquozavg* with primes results in numbers of the form 0.5... *pquozavg* 43 = 0.57416 is already very close to  $\gamma$ . It may be mentioned that 43 is suspiciously close to 42.

With de la Vallée-Poussin's result in mind, it is not too surprising that  $\gamma$  is related to divisors and Euler's totient number. A result of Gauss' immediate successor in Göttingen, Peter Gustav Lejeune-Dirichlet (1805 – 1859), is related to the average number of divisors of the numbers  $1 \dots n$ . We have already defined a function to generate the divisors of a number  $n$ , namely *divs*. Now we map this function on all numbers up to  $n$ :

```
divsupn :: Natural → [[Natural]]
divsupn n = map divs [1..n]
```

Applied to 10, this function yields:

```
[[1], [1, 2], [1, 3], [1, 2, 4], [1, 5], [1, 2, 3, 6], [1, 7], [1, 2, 4, 8], [1, 3, 9], [1, 2, 5, 10]]
```

For modelling Lejeune-Dirichlet's result, we further need to count the numbers of divisors of each number:

```
ndivs :: Integer → [Int]
ndivs = map length ∘ divsupn
```



Applied again to 10, *ndivs* produces:

[1, 2, 2, 3, 2, 4, 2, 4, 3, 4]

Now we compute the average of this list using

```

dirichlet :: Integer → Double
dirichlet n  = s / l
    where ds = ndivs n
          l  = fromIntegral $ length ds
          s  = fromIntegral $ sum ds

```

For *dirichlet* 10 we see 2.7. This does not appear too spectacular. Greater numbers show:

```

dirichlet 100 = 4.759
dirichlet 250 = 5.684
dirichlet 500 = 6.38
dirichlet 1000 = 7.069

```

As we can see, the number is slowly increasing resembling a log function or, more specifically, the natural log. When we compare the natural log, we indeed see that the results are close:

```

ln 100 = 4.605
ln 250 = 5.521
ln 500 = 6.214
ln 1000 = 6.907

```

For greater and greater numbers, the difference of the *dirichlet* function and the natural logarithm approaches

$$0.154435 \approx 2\gamma - 1. \quad (1.33)$$

For the five examples above, the difference is still significantly away from that number:

```

Δ100 = 0.2148
Δ250 = 0.1625
Δ500 = 0.1635
Δ1000 = 0.1612,

```

but already  $\Delta 2000 = 0.158$  comes close and  $\Delta 4000 = 0.1572$  approaches the value even further.

An important constant derived from  $\gamma$  is  $e^\gamma$ , which is a limit often seen in number theory. One instance is the lower bound of the totient function. There is a clear upper bound, namely  $n - 1$ . Indeed,  $\varphi(n)$  can never yield a value greater  $n - 1$  and this upper bound is reached exclusively by prime numbers. There is no such linear lower bound. That is,

$\varphi(n)$  can assume values that are much smaller than the value seen for  $n - 1$  or other numbers less than  $n$ . But there is a lower bound that slowly grows with  $n$ . This lower bound is often given as  $\frac{n}{\ln \ln n}$ . This lower bound, however, is too big. There are some values that are still below that border.  $\varphi(40)$ , for instance, is 16.  $\frac{40}{\ln \ln 40}$ , however, is around 30. A better, even still not perfect approximation, is

$$\frac{n}{e^\gamma \ln \ln n}.$$

For the  $n = 40$  again,  $\frac{40}{e^\gamma \ln \ln 40}$  is around 17 and, hence, very close to the real value.

We see that  $\gamma$  is really a quite mysterious number that appears in different contexts, sometimes in quite a subtle manner. The greatest mystery, however, is that it is not so clear that this number belongs here in the first place. Indeed, it has not yet been shown that  $\gamma$  is irrational. In the approximations, we have studied in this section, we actually have not seen the typical techniques to create irrational numbers like roots, continuous fractions and infinite series. If  $\gamma$  is indeed rational, then it must be the fraction of two really large numbers. In 2003, it has been shown that the denominator of such a fraction must be greater than  $10^{242080}$ . A number big enough, for my taste, to speak of *irrational*.

## 1.6 Representation of Real Numbers

The set of real numbers  $\mathbb{R}$  is the union of the rational and the irrational numbers. When we write real numbers on paper, we use the decimal notation. A number in decimal notation corresponds to an ordinary integer terminated by a dot called the decimal point; this integer corresponds to the part of the real number greater 1 or 0 of course. After the dot a stream of digits follows, which is not necessarily a number in the common sense, since it may start with zeros, *e.g.* 0.0001. In fact, one could say that the part after the dot corresponds to a reversed integer, since the zero following this number have no impact on the value of the whole expression, *i.e.*  $0.10 = 0.1$ .

Any rational number can be expressed in this system. An integer corresponds just to the part before the dot:  $1.0 = 1$ . A fraction like  $\frac{1}{2}$  is written as 0.5. We will later look at how this is computed concretely. Rationals in decimal notation can be easily identified: all numbers in decimal notation with a finite part after the dot are rational: 0.25 is  $\frac{1}{4}$ , 0.75 is  $\frac{3}{4}$ , 0.2 is  $\frac{1}{5}$  and so on.

There are some rational numbers that are infinite. For example,  $\frac{1}{3}$  is  $0.333333\dots$ , which we encode as  $0.\overline{3}$ . Such periodic decimals are easy to convert to fractions. We just have to multiply them by a power of 10, such that there is a part greater 0 before the decimal point and that the first number of the the repeating period is aligned to it. For  $0.\overline{3}$ , this is just  $10 \times 0.\overline{3} = 3.\overline{3}$ . For  $0.1\overline{6}$ , it would be  $10 \times 0.1\overline{6} = 1.\overline{6}$ . For  $0.0\overline{9}$ , it would be  $10^2 \times 0.0\overline{9} = 9.0\overline{9}$ . We then subtract the original number from the result. If the original

number is  $x$ , we now have  $10^n x - x = (10^n - 1)x$ . For  $x = 0.\overline{3}$  this is  $9x$ ; for  $x = 0.1\overline{6}$  this, too, is  $9x$  and for  $x = 0.0\overline{9}$  this is  $99x$ . The results are 3, 1.5 and 9 respectively. We now build a fraction of this result as numerator and the factor (9 or 99) in the denominator. Hence,  $0.\overline{3} = \frac{3}{9} = \frac{1}{3}$ ,  $0.1\overline{6} = \frac{1.5}{9} = \frac{3}{18} = \frac{1}{6}$  and  $0.0\overline{9} = \frac{9}{99} = \frac{1}{11}$ .

A curiosity resulting from this calculations is that  $9 \times 1/3 = 3$  and  $9 \times 0.\overline{3} = 2.\overline{9}$  are actually the same! A correct implementation must take this into account. Try it with Haskell, you will see that  $9 * 0.3333333333333333$  is indeed 3. It will not work if you forget a three. The precision of the *Double* number type is 16 digits after the decimal point. With only 15 threes, the result will be 2.999999999999997.

Irrational numbers in the decimal notation have infinite many digits after the decimal point. With this said, it is obvious that we cannot represent irrational numbers in this system. We can of course represent any number by some kind of formula like  $\sqrt{5}$  and do some math in this way such as  $\frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ , etc. But often, when we are dealing with applied mathematics, such formulas are not very useful. We need an explicit number. But, unfortunately or not, we have only limited resources in paper, brainpower and time. That is, at some point we have to abandon the calculations and work with what can be achieved with the limited resources we have at our disposal.

The point in time at which we take the decision that we now have calculated enough is the measure for the precision of the real number type in question. On paper, we would hence say that we write only a limited number of digits after the decimal point. In most day-to-day situations where real numbers play a role, like in dealing with money, cooking, medication or travelling distances, we calculate up to one or two decimal places. Prices, for instances are often given as 4.99 or something, but hardly 4.998. Recipes would tell that we need 2.5 pounds or whatever of something, using one decimal place. One would say that it is about 1.5km to somewhere, but hardly that it is 1.49km. In other areas, especially in science much more precision is needed. We therefore need a flexible datatype.

A nice and clean format to represent real numbers uses two integers or, as the following definition, two natural numbers:

**data** *RealN* = *R Natural Natural*

The first number represents the integral part. You will remember that a number is a list of digits where every digit is multiplied by a power of ten according to the place of the digit. The digit, counted from the right, is multiplied by  $10^0 = 1$ . The second is multiplied by  $10^1$ , the third by  $10^2$  and so on. The digit multiplied by  $10^0$ , is the last digit before the decimal point. If we wanted to push it to the right of the decimal point, we would need to reduce the exponent. So, we multiplied it not by  $10^0$ , but by  $10^{-1}$  to push it to the first decimal place. This is the function of the second number in the datatype above. It represents the value of the least significant bit in terms of the exponent to which we have to raise 10 to obtain the number represented by this datatype. Since our datatype uses a natural number, we have to negate it to find the

exponent we need.

For instance, the number  $R\ 25\ 2$  corresponds to  $25 \times 10^{-2}$ , which we can reduce stepwise to  $2.5 \times 10^{-1}$  and  $0.25 \times 10^0$ . A meaningful way to show this datatype would therefore be:

```
instance Show RealN where
  show (R a e) = show a ++ "*10^(" ++ show e ++ ")"
```

There are obviously many ways to represent the same number with this number type. 1, for instance, can be represented as

```
one = R 1 0
one = R 10 1
one = R 100 2
one = R 1000 3
...
```

To keep numbers as concise as possible, we define a function to simplify numbers with redundant zeros:

```
simplify :: RealN → RealN
simplify (R 0 _) = R 0 0
simplify (R a e) | e > 0 ∧
  a `rem` 10 ≡ 0 = simplify (R (a `div` 10) (e - 1))
  | otherwise = R a e
```

As long as the exponent is greater 0 and the base  $a$  is divisible by 10, we reduce the exponent by one and divide  $a$  by 10. In other words, we remove unnecessary zeros. The following constructor uses *simplify* to create clean real numbers:

```
real :: Natural → Natural → RealN
real i e = simplify (R i e)
```

## 1.7 $\mathbb{R}$

We now define how to check two real numbers for equality:

```
instance Eq RealN where
  r1@(R a e1) ≡ r2@(R b e2) | e1 ≡ e2 = a ≡ b
  | e1 > e2 = r1 ≡ blowup e1 r2
  | e1 < e2 = blowup e2 r1 ≡ r2
```

If the exponents are equal, then we trivially compare the coefficients. Otherwise, we first expand the number with the smaller exponent using *blowup*:

```

blowup :: Natural → RealN → RealN
blowup i (R r e) | i ≤ e      = R r e
                  | otherwise = R (r * 10 ↑ (i - e)) i

```

That is simple! If the target  $i$  is greater than the current exponent of the number, we just multiply the coefficient by 10 raised to the difference of the target exponent and the current exponent and make the target the new exponent. Otherwise, nothing changes.

We continue with comparison, which follows exactly the same logic:

```

instance Ord RealN where
  compare r1@(R a e1) r2@(R b e2) | e1 == e2 = compare a b
                                   | e1 > e2  = compare r1 (blowup e1 r2)
                                   | e1 < e2  = compare (blowup e2 r1) r2

```

Now we make *RealN* instance of *Num*:

```

instance Num RealN where
  (R a e1) + (R b e2) | e1 == e2  = simplify $ R (a + b) e1
                       | e1 > e2    = simplify $ R (a + b * 10 ↑ (e1 - e2)) e1
                       | otherwise = simplify $ R (a * 10 ↑ (e2 - e1) + b) e2
  (R a e1) - (R b e2) | e1 == e2 ∧
                       a ≥ b      = simplify $ R (a - b) e1
                       | e1 == e2 = error "subtraction beyond zero!"
                       | e1 > e2  = simplify $ (R a e1) - (R (b * 10 ↑ (e1 - e2)) e1)
                       | otherwise = simplify $ (R (a * 10 ↑ (e2 - e1)) e2) - (R b e2)
  (R a e1) * (R b e2) = real (a * b) (e1 + e2)
  negate r           = r  -- we cannot negate natural numbers
  abs r              = r
  signum r           = r
  fromInteger i      = R (fromIntegral i) 0

```

Addition is again the same logic. For two numbers with equal exponents, we just add the coefficients. If the exponents differ, we first convert the smaller number to the greater exponent.

For subtraction, note that we define *RealN* like numbers before without negatives. To consider signedness, we still have to use the datatype *Signed RealN*. Consequently, we have to rule out the case where the first number is smaller than the second one.

Multiplication is interesting. We multiply two real numbers by multiplying the coefficients and adding the exponents. We have already seen this logic, when defining the natural number type. Some simple examples may convince you that this is the right way to go.  $1 \times 0.1$ , for instance, is 0.1. In terms of our *RealN* type, this corresponds to  $(R\ 1\ 0) * (R\ 1\ 1) \equiv (R\ (1 * 1)\ (0 + 1))$ .

The next task is to make *RealN* instance of *Fractional*:

**instance** *Fractional RealN* **where**

$(/) = \text{rdiv } 17$

$\text{fromRational } r = (R (\text{fromIntegral } \$ \text{ numerator } r) 0) /$   
 $(R (\text{fromIntegral } \$ \text{ denominator } r) 0)$

The method *fromRational* is quite simple. We just create two real numbers, the numerator of the original fraction and its denominator, and then we divide them. What we need to do this, of course, is division. Division, as usual, is a bit more complicated than the other arithmetic operations. We define it as follows:

```
rdiv :: Natural → RealN → RealN → RealN
rdiv n r1@(R a e1) r2@(R b e2) | e1 < e2 =
    rdiv n (blowup e2 r1) r2
    | a < b ∧ e1 ≡ e2 =
    rdiv n (blowup (e2 + 1) r1) r2
    | otherwise =
    simplify (R (go n a b) (e1 - e2 + n))

where go i x y | i ≤ 0 = 0
    | otherwise =
    case x `quotRem` y of
    (q, 0) → 10 ↑ i * q
    (q, r) → let (r', e) = borrow r y
    q' = 10 ↑ i * q
    in if e > i then q'
    else q' + go (i - e) r' y
```

*rdiv* has one more argument than the arithmetic operations seen before. This additional argument, *n*, defines the precision of the result. This is necessary, because, as we will see, the number of iterations the function has to perform depends on the precision the result is expected to have.

If the first number is smaller than the second, either because its exponent or its coefficient is smaller, we blow it up so that it is at least the same size. Then we calculate the new coefficient by means of *go* and the new exponent as the difference of the first and the second exponent plus the expected precision. Note that division has the inverse effect on the size of the exponents as multiplication. When we look again at the example 1 and 0.1, we have  $1/0.1 = 10$ , which translates to  $(R\ 1\ 0) / (R\ 1\ 1) = R\ (1 / 1)\ (0 - 1)$ , which of course is the same as  $R\ 10\ 0$ .

The inner function *go* proceeds until *i*, which initially is *n*, becomes 0 or smaller. In each step, we divide *x*, initially the coefficient of the first number, and *y*, the coefficient of the second number. If the result leaves no remainder, we are done. We just raise *q* to the power of the step in question. Otherwise, we continue dividing the remainder *r* by *y*. But before we continue, we borrow from *y*, that is, we increase *r* until it is at least *y*. *i* is then decremented by the number of zeros we borrowed this way. If we run out of *i*, so to speak, that is if  $e > i$ , then we terminate with *q* raised to the current step.

*borrow* is just the same as *blowup* applied to two natural numbers:

```

borrow :: Natural → Natural → (Natural, Natural)
borrow a b | a ≥ b      = (a, 0)
              | otherwise = let (x, e) = borrow (10 * a) b in (x, e + 1)

```

We now make *RealN* instance of *Real*. We need to define just one method, namely how to convert *RealN* to *Rational*, which we do just by creating a fraction with the coefficient of the real number in the numerator and 10 raised to the exponent in the denominator. The rest is done by the *Rational* number type:

```

instance Real RealN where
  toRational (R r e) = i % (10 ↑ x)
    where i = fromIntegral r :: Integer
          x = fromIntegral e :: Integer

```

We further add a function to convert real numbers to our *Ratio* type:

```

r2R :: RealN → Ratio
r2R (R a e) = ratio a (10 ↑ e)

```

We also add a function to convert our real number type to the standard *Double* type:

```

r2d :: RealN → Double
r2d r@(R a e) | e > 16      = r2d (roundr 16 r)
              | otherwise = (fromIntegral a) / 10 ↑ e

```

An inconvenience is that we have to round a number given in our number type so it fits into a *Double*. For this, we assume that the *Double* has a precision of 16 decimal digits. This is not quite true. The *Double* type has room for 16 digits. But if the first digits after the decimal point are zeros, the *Double* type will present this as a number raised to a negative exponent, just as we do with our real type. In this case, the *Double* type may have a much higher precision than 16. For our purpose, however, this is not too relevant.

So, here is how we round:

```

roundr :: Natural → RealN → RealN
roundr n (R a e) | n ≥ e      = R a e
              | otherwise = let b = a `div` 10
                          l = a - 10 * b
                          d | l < 5 = 0
                          | otherwise = 1
                      in roundr n (R (b + d) (e - 1))

```

That is, we first get the least significant digit *l* as *l* = *a* - 10 \* (*div* *a* 10), where, if *div* is the Euclidian division, the last digit of *a* remains. If the last digit is less than 5, we just drop it off. Otherwise, we add 1 to the whole number. If we now define

```

one = R 1 0
three = R 3 0
third = one / three,

```

then `roundr 16 (three * third)` yields 1, as desired.

Finally, we define

```

type SReal = Signed RealN

```

and have a fullfledged real number datatype.

## 1.8 The Stern-Brocot Tree

Achille Brocot (1817 – 1878) was part of a clockmaker dynasty in Paris started by his father and continuing after his death. The Brocots had a strong emphasis on engineering and innovated clockmaking with the aim to reduce production cost without equivalent degradation in quality. The constant engineering work manifests in a considerable number of patents hold by family members. The most productive, in terms of engineering, however, was Achille, who improved many of his father's inventions and developed his own ones. He also introduced a novelty to mathematics, which, surprisingly, is of not only of practical use, but also of theoretical value.

In clockmaking, as in machine construction in general, determining the ratio of components to each other, for instance, gear ratios, is a very frequent task. As often in practice, those ratios are not nice and clean, but very odd numbers with many decimal digits. Brocot developed a way to easily approximate such numbers with arbitrary precision. In the process, he developed a method to approximate irrational numbers with arbitrary precision and – yet another way to list all rational numbers.

Brocot's method can be described in terms of finite continued fractions. Recall that we can represent continued fractions as lists of the form

$$[n; a, b, c, \dots]$$

to encode continued fractions of the form

$$n + \frac{1}{a + \frac{1}{b + \frac{1}{c + \dots}}}$$

In contrast to continued fractions we have seen so far, we now look at finite continued fractions that actually result in a rational number. The process to compute such a continued fraction can be captured in Haskell as:



```

contfracr :: [Ratio] → Ratio
contfracr []      = 1
contfracr [i]     = i
contfracr (i : is) = i + (invert $ contfracr is)

```

Here, *invert* is a function to create the multiplicative invert of a fraction, *i.e.*  $\text{invert}(\frac{n}{d} = \frac{d}{n}$  or in Haskell:

```

invert :: Ratio → Ratio
invert (Q n d) = Q d n

```

As you will see immediately, the expression  $(\text{invert} \$ \text{contfracr } is)$ , corresponds to

$$\frac{1}{\text{contfracr } is}.$$

The definition above, hence, creates a continued fraction that terminates with the last element in the list.

Now we introduce a simple rule to create from any continued fraction given in list notation two new continued fractions:

```

brocotkids :: [Ratio] → ([Ratio], [Ratio])
brocotkids r = let h  = init r
                l  = last r
                s  = length r
                k1 = h ++ [l + 1]
                k2 = h ++ [l - 1, 2]
                in if even s then (k1, k2) else (k2, k1)

```

This function yields two lists,  $k_1$  and  $k_2$ . The order in which these numbers are returned depends on the parity of the length of the list.

$k_1$  and  $k_2$  are computed as the initial part of the input list, to which, in the case of  $k_1$ , one number is added, namely the last element of the input list plus 1, or, in the case of  $k_2$ , two numbers are added, namely the last element minus 1 and 2. For the initial list  $[0, 1]$ , for instance, which is just 1,  $k_1$  is  $[0, 2]$ , which is  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and  $k_2$  is  $[0, 0, 2]$ , which is  $\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}} = 2$ .

When we look at the parity of the length of the input list, we see that  $k_1$  has the same parity as the input list and  $k_2$  has the opposite parity. In particular, if the input list is even, then  $k_1$  is even and  $k_2$  is odd; if it is odd, then  $k_1$  is odd and  $k_2$  is even.  $k_1$  simply substitutes the last element of the input list by this element incremented by 1, *i.e.* a greater element.

Now, we see for an even list like  $[a, b]$  that there is an integer,  $a$ , to which the inverse of the second number,  $b$  is added. If  $b$  grows, then the overall result shrinks. The structure

of an odd list is like  $[a, b, c]$ . Again, the integer  $a$  is added to the inverse of what follows in the list. But this time, if  $c$  grows, the inverse of  $c$ ,  $\frac{1}{c}$ , shrinks and, as such, the value of  $\frac{1}{b+1/c}$  grows. Therefore, if the number of elements is even, the value of  $k1$  is less than the value of the input list and, if it is odd, then the value is greater. You can easily convince yourself that, for  $k2$ , this is exactly the other way round. In consequence, the left list returned by *brocotkids* is always smaller than the input and the right one is greater.

Using this function, we can now approximate any real number. The idea is that, if the current continued fraction results in a number greater than the fraction, we continue with the left kid; if it is smaller, we continue with the right kid. Here is an implementation:

```

approx :: Natural → RealN → [Ratio]
approx i d = go i [0, 1]
  where go 0 _ = []
        go j r = let (R n d) = contfracr r
                      d' = (fromIntegral n) / (fromIntegral d)
                      (k1, k2) = brocotkids r
        in if d' ≡ d then [R n d]
          else if d' < d then r' : go (j - 1) k2
          else r' : go (j - 1) k1

```

This function takes two arguments. The first, a natural number, defines the number of steps we want to do. The second is the real number we want to approximate. We start the internal *go* with *i* and the list  $[0, 1]$ . In *go*, as long as  $j > 0$ , we compute the rational number that corresponds to the input list; then we compute the corresponding real number. If the found number equals the input (*i.e.* the input is rational), we are done. Otherwise, if it is less than the input, we continue with *k2*; if it is greater, we continue with *k1*.

The function yields the complete trajectory, not only the last rational, which is the best approximation found. The result of *approx* 10 *pi*, for instance is:

$$1, 2, 3, 4, \frac{7}{2}, \frac{10}{3}, \frac{13}{4}, \frac{16}{5}, \frac{19}{6}, \frac{22}{7}.$$

The last fraction  $\frac{22}{7}$  is approximately 3.142857, which is still a bit away from 3.141592. We reach 3.1415 with *approx* 25 *pi*, for which the last fraction is  $\frac{333}{106}$ , which is 3.141509. This way, we can approximate  $\pi$  as close as we wish.

## **1.9 Real Factorials**

## **1.10 Real Binomial Coefficients**

## **1.11 The Continuum**

## **1.12 Review of the Number Zoo**