

Real Functions

Based on lectures by Emanuel Milman

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These notes are not endorsed by the lecturers. I have revised them outside lectures to incorporate supplementary explanations, clarifications, and material for fun. While I have strived for accuracy, any errors or misinterpretations are most likely mine.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The Riemann integral we have known so far is fairly limited. For example it doesn't allow us to compute the Riemann integral of Dirichlet's function $f: [0, 1] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ defined as

$$f(x) = \mathbb{1}_{\mathbb{Q} \cap [0,1]} = \begin{cases} 1, & x \in \mathbb{Q} \cap [0, 1] \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}.$$

In his thesis Lebesgue introduced a new type of integral called a Lebesgue integral that allows us to compute integrals for functions like Dirichlet's function, and he continued to develop more concepts like measure, and almost everywhere.

1.2 Lebesgue integral

Let $f(x) = \mathbb{1}_A$ be the function that we want $\int \mathbb{1}_A$ to be the volume of the set A .

First we would like we define what is a volume of a set. We would want to require a couple of things

- (1) $\mu(A)$ is defined for all $A \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$;
- (2) $\mu([0, 1]^n) = 1^n = 1$;
- (3) μ to be invariant to congruations (isometries).
- (4) If $\{A_i\}_{i=1}^\infty$ is a countable sequence of pairwise disjoint sets then

$$\mu \left(\bigcup_{i=1}^\infty A_i \right) = \sum_{i=1}^\infty \mu(A_i).$$

Remark 1.1. Property (4) is called σ -additivity.

Theorem 1.1 (Hausdorff, 1914). *There is no function that satisfies (1) – (4) at the same time.*

We will prove this theorem later. For now we can only try to weaken the requirements. For example instead of σ -additivity we might require finite additivity.

Theorem 1.2. *There exists a function that satisfies the wanted requirements in dimensions 1 and 2 but not in dimension $n \geq 3$.*

For example in $n = 3$ we have the Banach-Tarski paradox

Paradox 1.1 (Banach–Tarski, 1924). For every $n \geq 1$ we can divide S^2 in \mathbb{R}^n to a finite amount of parts such that when they are rotated and rearranged, can form a new sphere of any desired size.

Remark 1.2. The bigger sphere we would want to form, the greater is the minimal pieces we need to divide the unit sphere in order to form it.

This paradox is based on the use of the axiom of choice, but since we assume the axiom of choice in this course we still need to modify the requirements.

Instead of (4) we require subadditivity:

$$\mu \left(\bigcup_{i=1}^\infty A_i \right) \leq \sum_{i=1}^\infty \mu(A_i).$$

This is possible but instead we would like to keep σ -additivity but instead give up on requirement (0). We will only define volume only for “nice” sets which include all of the sets we work with in analysis or geometry etc. these sets form a σ -algebra on \mathbb{R}^n .

Definition 1.1 (Algebra). An algebra on a nonempty set X is a collection \mathcal{A} of subsets of X such that

- (1) $\emptyset, X \in \mathcal{A}$;
- (2) \mathcal{A} is closed under complement;
- (3) \mathcal{A} is closed under finite unions and intersections.

Definition 1.2 (σ -algebra). A σ -algebra on a nonempty set X is an algebra \mathcal{A} on X that is also closed under countable unions and intersections.

Remark 1.3. A σ -algebra is sometimes called a σ -field. That is why it is sometimes denoted \mathcal{F} .

Remark 1.4. From De-Morgan laws we know that

$$\left(\bigcup_{i \in I} A_i \right)^c = \bigcap_{i \in I} A_i^c$$

so it is only necessary to require closure under countable unions or countable intersections.

Remark 1.5. It is also possible to require \mathcal{A} to be nonempty. Then for $A \in \mathcal{A}$ we have

$$A \in \mathcal{A} \implies A^c \in \mathcal{A} \implies A \cup A^c = X \in \mathcal{A} \text{ and } A \cap A^c = \emptyset \in \mathcal{A}.$$

Example 1.1. $\mathcal{A} = 2^X$ and $\{\emptyset, X\}$ are the smallest and biggest σ -algebras.

Example 1.2. If X is not countable. Then

$$\mathcal{A} = \{E \subseteq X : E \text{ or } E^c \text{ are countable}\} \neq 2^X$$

is a σ -algebra.

Definition 1.3 (Cocountability). Let X be a set. Then A is called cocountable if A^c is countable.

Example 1.3 (Borel σ -algebra). Let $F \subseteq 2^X$ be a family of subsets of X . The σ -algebra generated by F is defined as

$$\sigma(F) = \bigcap \left\{ \mathcal{A} \subseteq 2^X : \mathcal{A} \text{ is a } \sigma\text{-algebra and } F \subset \mathcal{A} \right\}$$