

1. We recall the definitions for the notions of *boundedness* and *monotonicity* from your *calculus of one variable* course.

Definition. (Boundedness for infinite sequences of real numbers.)

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence in \mathbb{R} .

(a) Let $\kappa \in \mathbb{R}$.

We say that κ is a $\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{upper bound} \\ \text{lower bound} \end{array} \right)$ of $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ in \mathbb{R} if,

for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} a_n \leq \kappa \\ a_n \geq \kappa \end{array} \right\}$.

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is said to be $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{bounded above} \\ \text{bounded below} \end{array} \right\}$ in \mathbb{R} if

there exists some $\kappa \in \mathbb{R}$ such that for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} a_n \leq \kappa \\ a_n \geq \kappa \end{array} \right\}$.

Definition. (Monotonicity and strict monotonicity for infinite sequences of real numbers.)

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence in \mathbb{R} .

(a) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is said to be $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{increasing} \\ \text{decreasing} \end{array} \right\}$ if, for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} a_n \leq a_{n+1} \\ a_n \geq a_{n+1} \end{array} \right\}$.

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is said to be $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{strictly increasing} \\ \text{strictly decreasing} \end{array} \right\}$ if, for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} a_n < a_{n+1} \\ a_n > a_{n+1} \end{array} \right\}$.

Remarks on terminology.

(a) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is said to be **monotonic** if $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is increasing or decreasing.

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is said to be **strictly monotonic** if $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing or strictly decreasing.

2. We now recall the key result about infinite sequences below from your *calculus of one variable* course:

Bounded-Monotone Theorem for infinite sequences of real numbers.

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence of real numbers.

Suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{increasing} \\ \text{decreasing} \end{array} \right\}$.

Further suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bounded above} \\ \text{bounded below} \end{array} \right\}$ in \mathbb{R} .

Then $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges in \mathbb{R} .

Denote the limit of $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ by σ . For any $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{upper bound} \\ \text{lower bound} \end{array} \right\} \beta$ of the infinite sequence

$\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$, the inequality $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \sigma \leq \beta \\ \sigma \geq \beta \end{array} \right\}$ holds.

3. Example (1).

For any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, define $a_n = \frac{(n+1)(n+4)}{(n+2)(n+3)}$.

(a) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded above in \mathbb{R} by 1.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

$$a_n = \frac{(n+1)(n+4)}{(n+2)(n+3)} = \frac{n^2+5n+4}{n^2+5n+6} = 1 - \frac{2}{n^2+5n+6} \leq 1 - 0 = 1.$$

Hence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded above in \mathbb{R} by 1. \square

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. [Hope to deduce: $a_{n+1} > a_n$.]

$$a_{n+1} - a_n = \dots = \frac{4}{(n+2)(n+3)(n+4)} > 0$$

Then $a_{n+1} > a_n$. \square

By the Bounded-Monotone Theorem, $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges in \mathbb{R} . Moreover, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n \leq 1$.

Remark. In fact, we know from 'direct calculation' that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n = 1$.

4. Example (2).

For any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, define $a_n = \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{9}{10^{k+1}}$.

(a) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded above in \mathbb{R} by 1.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. We have $a_n = \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{9}{10^{k+1}} = \frac{9}{10} \cdot \frac{1 - 1/10^{n+1}}{1 - 1/10} = 1 - \frac{1}{10^{n+1}} \leq 1 - 0 = 1$.

Hence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded above by 1.

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. We have $a_{n+1} - a_n = \sum_{k=0}^{n+1} \frac{9}{10^{k+1}} - \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{9}{10^{k+1}} = \frac{9}{10^{n+2}} > 0$. Then

$a_{n+1} > a_n$.

Hence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing.

By the Bounded-Monotone Theorem, $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges in \mathbb{R} . Moreover, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n \leq 1$.

Remark. In fact, we know from ‘direct calculation’ that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n = 1$. This equality is what what ‘ $0.\dot{9} = 1$ ’ really means.

5. Example (3).

For any $n \in \mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\}$, define $a_n = \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{k^2}$.

(a) $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ is bounded above in \mathbb{R} by 2.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\}$. We have

$$a_n = \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{k^2} = 1 + \sum_{k=2}^n \frac{1}{k^2} \leq 1 + \sum_{k=2}^n \frac{1}{k(k-1)} = 1 + \sum_{k=2}^n \left(\frac{1}{k-1} - \frac{1}{k} \right) = 1 + \left(\frac{1}{1} - \frac{1}{n} \right) \leq 2.$$

Hence $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ is bounded above by 2.

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\}$. We have $a_{n+1} - a_n = \frac{1}{(n+1)^2} > 0$. Then $a_{n+1} > a_n$.

Hence $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing.

By the Bounded-Monotone Theorem, $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ converges in \mathbb{R} . Moreover, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n \leq 2$.

Remark. After some hard work (beyond the scope of this course), we can show that the $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ converges to $\pi^2/6$.

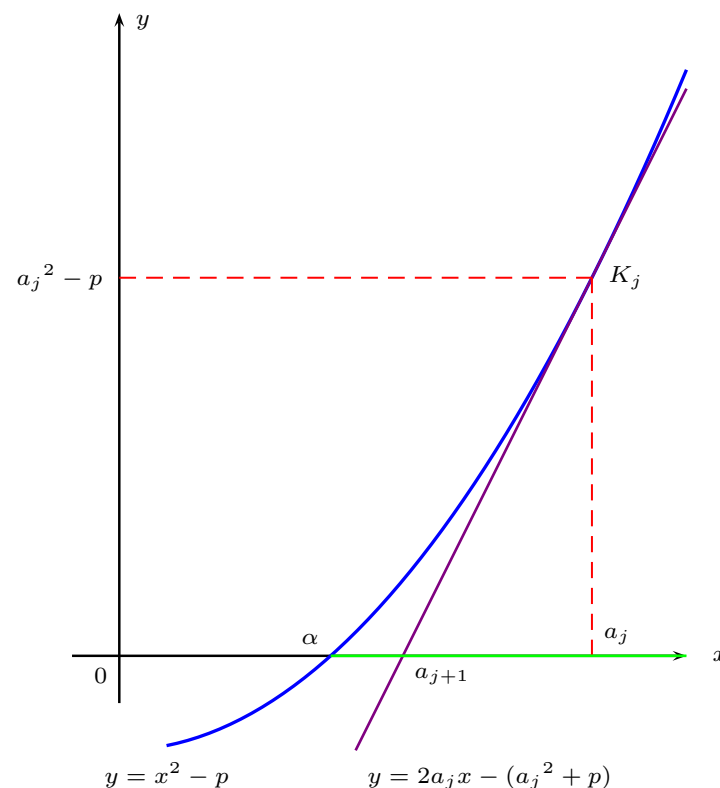
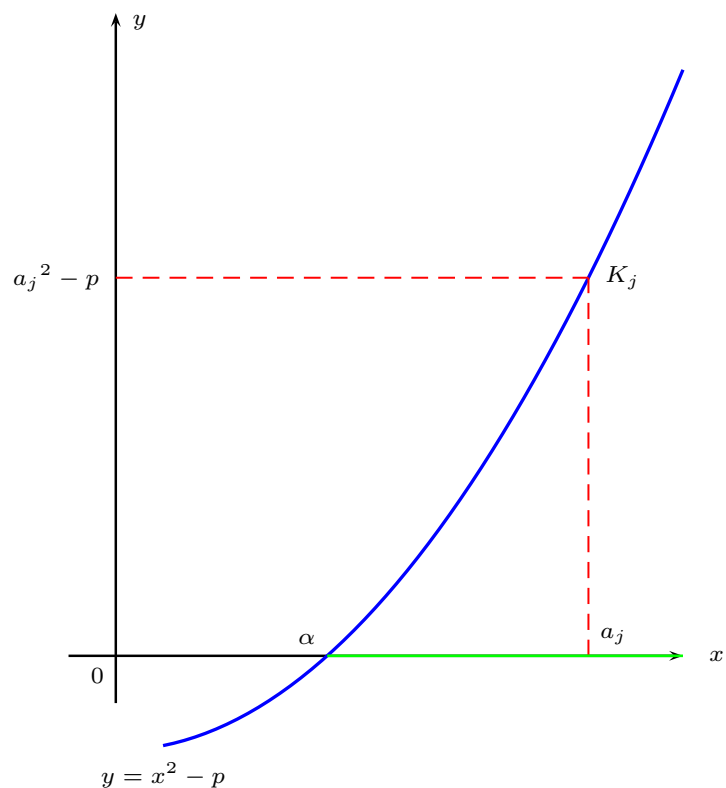
6. Example (4).

Let p be a positive prime number. Define $\alpha = \sqrt{p}$. Let $b \in (\alpha, +\infty)$.

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be the infinite sequence defined recursively by

$$\begin{cases} a_0 &= b \\ a_{n+1} &= \frac{1}{2} \left(a_n + \frac{\alpha^2}{a_n} \right) \text{ for any } n \in \mathbb{N} \end{cases}$$

$\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ provides ‘better and better’ approximations for $\alpha = \sqrt{p}$:



(a) ('Preparatory Lemma'.) For any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $a_n > \alpha$.

Proof.

Note that $a_0 = b > \alpha > 0$.

Suppose it were true that there existed some $n \in \mathbb{N}$ so that $a_n \leq \alpha$.

Then there would be a smallest $N \in \mathbb{N}$ so that $a_N > \alpha$ and $a_{N+1} \leq \alpha$. (Why? Apply the Well-ordering Principle for Integers.)

We would have

$$\alpha \geq a_{N+1} = \frac{1}{2} \left(a_N + \frac{\alpha^2}{a_N} \right) = \frac{a_N^2 + \alpha^2}{2a_N}.$$

Since $a_N > 0$, we would have

$$2\alpha a_N \geq a_N^2 + \alpha^2.$$

Then

$$(a_N - \alpha)^2 = a_N^2 - 2\alpha a_N + \alpha^2 \leq 0.$$

Therefore $a_N = \alpha$. But $a_N > \alpha$.

Contradiction arises.

Hence, in the first place, we have $a_n > \alpha$ for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

(b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded below by α by \mathbb{R} .

Proof.

This is an immediate consequence of the ‘Preparatory Lemma’.

(c) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly decreasing.

Proof.

Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. We have $a_n > \alpha > 0$ by the ‘Preparatory Lemma’.

Then $a_n^2 - \alpha^2 > 0$ also.

Therefore

$$a_{n+1} - a_n = \frac{1}{2} \left(a_n + \frac{\alpha^2}{a_n} \right) - a_n = \frac{1}{2} \left(-a_n + \frac{\alpha^2}{a_n} \right) = -\frac{a_n^2 - \alpha^2}{2a_n} < 0.$$

Then $a_{n+1} > a_n$.

Hence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly decreasing.

By the Bounded-Monotone Theorem, $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges in \mathbb{R} . Moreover, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n \geq \alpha$.

Since $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n$ is now known to exist, we can apply the basic rules of arithmetic for limits of sequences to determine the value of $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n$:

For convenience, write $\ell = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n$. Then $\ell = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_{n+1}$ also.

Since $\alpha > 0$, we have $\ell \geq \alpha > 0$. (So $1/\ell$ is well-defined.)

Recall that for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $a_{n+1} = \frac{1}{2} \left(a_n + \frac{\alpha^2}{a_n} \right)$. Then

$$\ell = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_{n+1} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{2} \left(a_n + \frac{\alpha^2}{a_n} \right) = \frac{1}{2} \left(\ell + \frac{\alpha^2}{\ell} \right).$$

Now we have $\ell^2 = \alpha^2$. Then $\ell = \alpha$ (because $\ell > 0$ and $\alpha > 0$.)

Remark. Although the Bounded-Monotone Theorem does not tell us the value of $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n$, it ensures that it makes sense for us to compute it through other means. This is why this theoretical result is useful.

7. Further digressions on Example (4).

- (1) The idea and the calculation will still work even when we do not require p to be a positive prime number; we may allow p to be any positive real number that we like. The infinite sequence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ will provide approximations which descends to $\alpha = \sqrt{p}$ as close as we like, but never reaches α .
- (2) How about finding cubic roots of positive real numbers?

Suppose p is a positive real number and $\alpha = \sqrt[3]{p}$. Suppose $b \in (\alpha, +\infty)$. Define infinite sequence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ recursively by

$$\begin{cases} a_0 &= b \\ a_{n+1} &= \frac{1}{3}(2a_n + \frac{\alpha^3}{a_n^2}) \end{cases} \quad \text{for any } n \in \mathbb{N}$$

This infinite sequence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ will provide approximations which descends to $\alpha = \sqrt[3]{p}$ as close as we like, but never reaches α .

(First draw the picture and formulate the algorithm which are analogous to the ones for the original example on square roots. This will give you a feeling on what this infinite sequence is ‘doing’. Then try to formulate and prove some statements which are analogous to the ones that we have proved for the original example.)

- (3) Can you generalize the idea to finding quartic roots of positive real numbers? Quintic roots? n -th roots?
- (4) The idea and method described here is a ‘concrete’ example of the application of **Newton’s Method** (for finding approximate solutions of equations).

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8. With the help of the notion of supremum and infimum, the value of the limit guaranteed to exist in the conclusion part of the version of the *Bounded-Monotone Theorem* that you learnt in your *calculus of one variable* course can be made explicit in terms of the information provided by its assumption part.

We start by re-formulating the notion of bounded-ness for infinite sequences of real numbers in terms of bounded-ness for their corresponding ‘sets of all terms’.

Lemma (1). **(Boundedness for infinite sequences and boundedness for sets of all terms.)**

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence in \mathbb{R} .

Define $T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}) = \{x \in \mathbb{R} : x = a_n \text{ for some } n \in \mathbb{N}\}$. ($T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty})$ is the set of all terms of $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$.)

The statements below hold:

- (a) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded above in \mathbb{R} by β iff $T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty})$ is bounded above in \mathbb{R} by β .
- (b) $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is bounded below in \mathbb{R} by β iff $T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty})$ is bounded below in \mathbb{R} by β .

Proof. Exercise. (Word game.)

9. Bounded-Monotone Theorem for infinite sequences of real numbers, further elaborated.

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence of real numbers. Denote the set of all terms of $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ by T .

Suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{increasing} \\ \text{decreasing} \end{array} \right\}$.

Further suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{bounded above} \\ \text{bounded below} \end{array} \right\}$ in \mathbb{R} . Denote the $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{supremum} \\ \text{infimum} \end{array} \right\}$ of T in \mathbb{R} by σ , if it exists.

Then $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \sup(T) \\ \inf(T) \end{array} \right\}$ exists in \mathbb{R} , $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges in \mathbb{R} , and $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n = \sigma$.

Furthermore, for any $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{upper bound} \\ \text{lower bound} \end{array} \right\}$ β of the infinite sequence $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$, the inequality $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \sigma \leq \beta \\ \sigma \geq \beta \end{array} \right\}$ holds. Also, for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$, the inequality $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} a_k \leq \sigma \\ a_k \geq \sigma \end{array} \right\}$ holds.

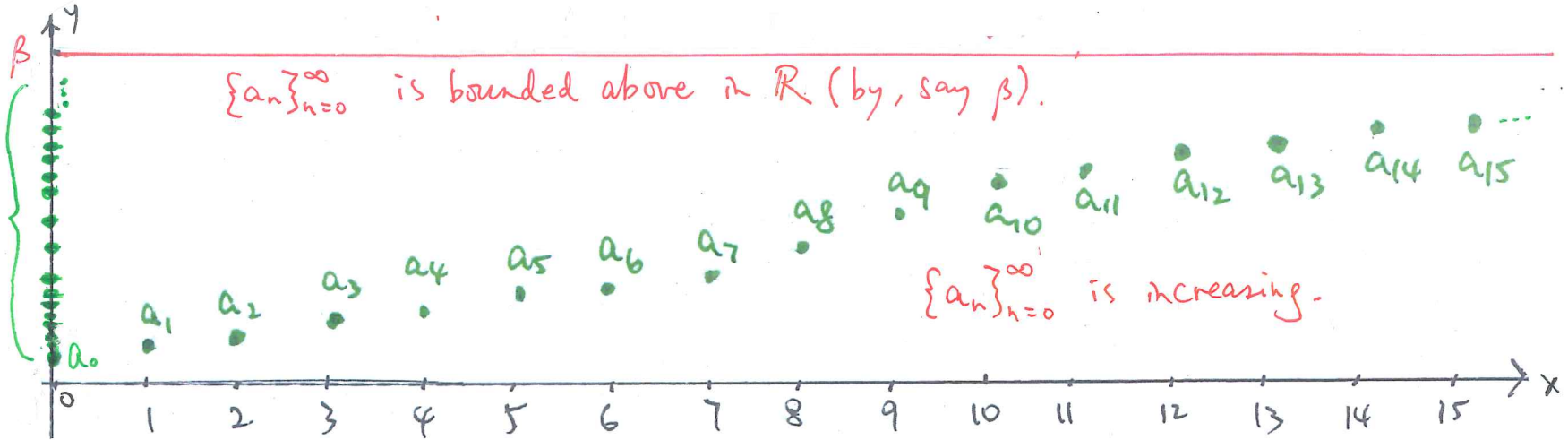
Remark. The proof of the Bounded-Monotone Theorem relies on the **Least-upper-bound Axiom**:

Let A be a non-empty subset of \mathbb{R} . Suppose A is bounded above in \mathbb{R} . Then A has a supremum in \mathbb{R} .

Bounded - Monotone Theorem (for increasing sequences which are bounded above)

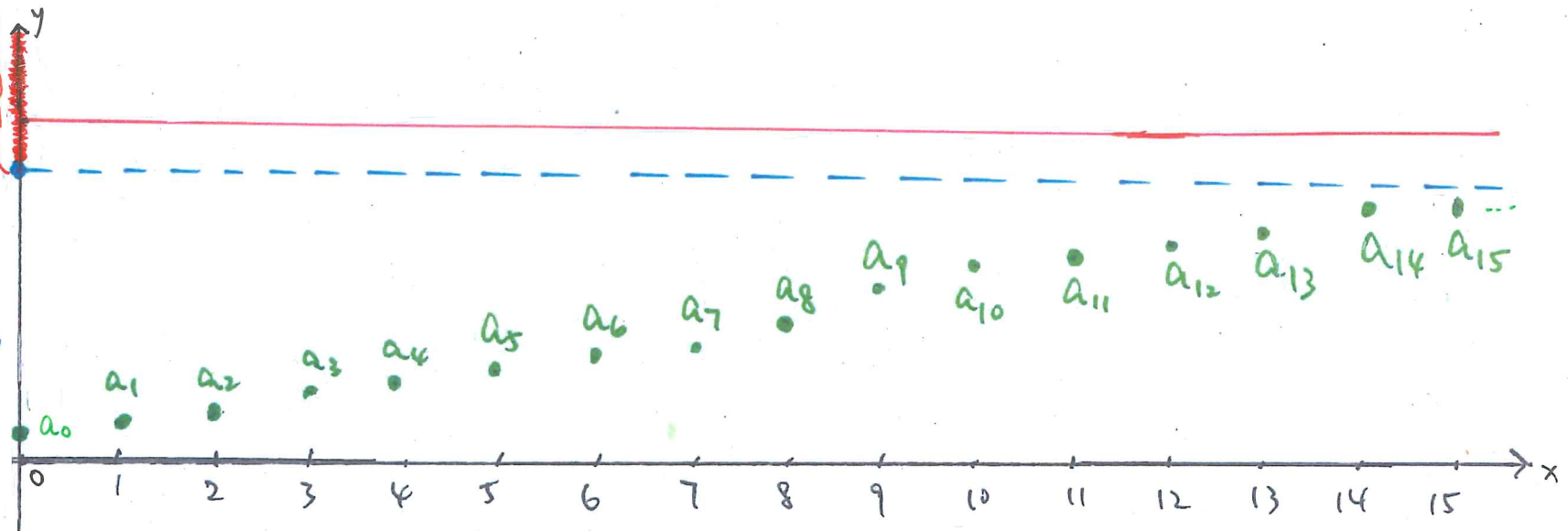
Assumption:

$T = \{a_n \mid n \in \mathbb{N}\}$,
whose elements
correspond to
the 'green dots'
on the y-axis.



The set of all
upper bounds
of T in \mathbb{R} \rightarrow

$\sup(T) = \sigma$
The least amongst
all upper bounds
of T in \mathbb{R} 'exists',
and $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n = \sigma$.



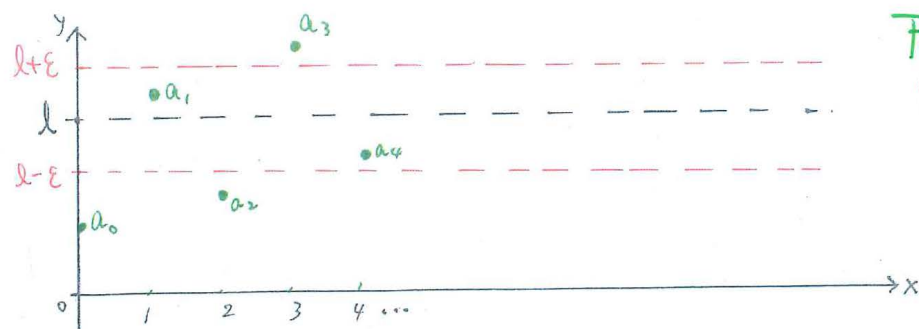
Conclusion:

10. An appropriate argument for the Bounded-Monotone Theorem also presumes a satisfactory definition for the notion of limit of infinite sequence of real numbers:

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence of real numbers, and ℓ be a real number.

We say that $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges to ℓ , and write $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n = \ell$ if the condition (\star) is satisfied:

(\star) For any $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists some $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$, if $k > N$ then $|a_k - \ell| < \varepsilon$.

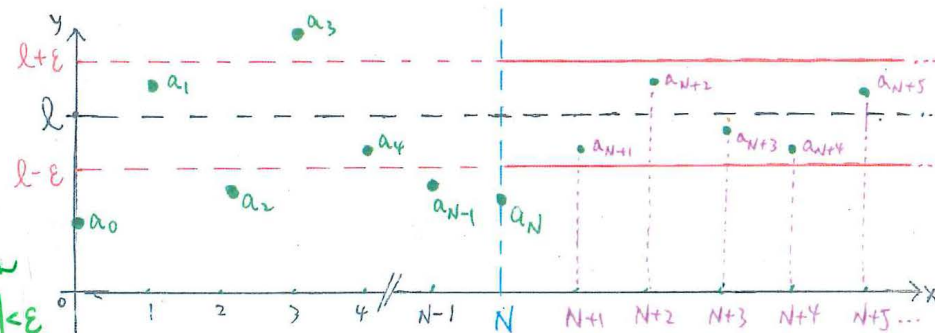
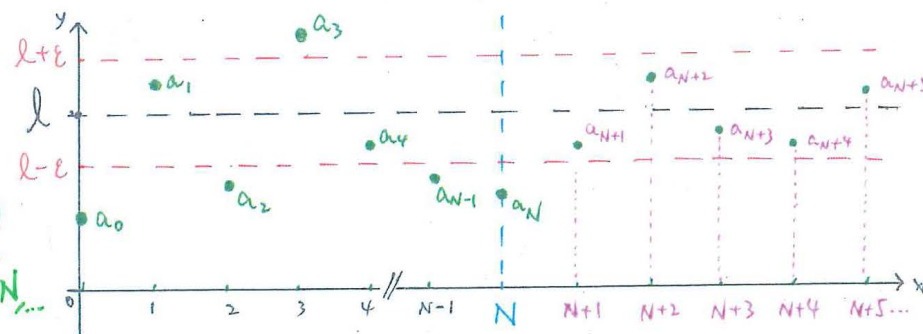


For any $\varepsilon > 0, \dots$

\dots for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$, if $k > N, \dots$

\dots there exists some $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that \dots

\dots then $|a_k - \ell| < \varepsilon$



11. Proof of the Bounded-Monotone Theorem.

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence of real numbers. Suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is increasing, and is bounded above in \mathbb{R} .

Define $T = \{x \in \mathbb{R} : x = a_n \text{ for some } n \in \mathbb{N}\}.$

Note that $a_0 \in T$. Then $T \neq \emptyset$.

By assumption, T is bounded above in \mathbb{R} . (Why? Apply Lemma(1).)

Then, by the Least-upper-bound Axiom, T has a supremum in \mathbb{R} .

Write $\sigma = \sup(T)$.

We verify that $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ converges to σ :

[What we want to verify is:
'For any $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists some $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$, if $k > N$ then $|a_k - \sigma| < \varepsilon$.'

- Pick any $\varepsilon > 0$. [Ask: Can we name an appropriate $N \in \mathbb{N}$ for which whenever $k > N$, $|a_k - \sigma| < \varepsilon$? How?]

Note that $\sigma - \varepsilon < \sigma$. Then, by definition, $\sigma - \varepsilon$ is not an upper bound of T in \mathbb{R} .

Therefore, there exists some $x \in T$ such that $x > \sigma - \varepsilon$.

For the same x , there exists some $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $x = a_N$.

Pick any $k \in \mathbb{N}$. Suppose $k > N$.

Then $a_k > a_N = x > \sigma - \varepsilon$ by assumption.

Therefore $|a_k - \sigma| = \sigma - a_k < \varepsilon$. \square

[Ask: Is it true that whenever $k > N$, $|a_k - \sigma| < \varepsilon$?]

12. Many infinite sequences which produce interesting limits are those which are strictly monotonic and bounded. Examples (2), (3), (4) are good illustrations. For such an infinite sequence, because of Lemma (2) (whose proof is left as an exercise), its limit is ‘better and better approximated’ by the terms of the sequence, but never ‘attained’ by any individual term.

Lemma (2).

Let $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ be an infinite sequence in \mathbb{R} . Define $T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}) = \{x \in \mathbb{R} : x = a_n \text{ for some } n \in \mathbb{N}\}$. The statements below hold:

- (a) Suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly increasing. Then $T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty})$ has no greatest element.
- (b) Suppose $\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is strictly decreasing. Then $T(\{a_n\}_{n=0}^{\infty})$ has no least element.

The conceptual role of supremum/infimum in the theoretical device *Bounded-Monotone Theorem* in pinpointing the limit for such an infinite sequence is indispensable.

It is in trying to make sense of the Bounded-Monotone Theorem and to give an ‘purely algebraic justification’ for this statement (in contrast to appealing to geometric intuition alone) that prompted Dedekind to inspect the real number system carefully in the first place. This is a key moment in the history of mathematics.