

Question

Show that $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (1+x)dx/(1+x^2)$ diverges, but that $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \int_{-t}^t (1+x)dx/(1+x^2) = \pi$.

Answer

We first need to write $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (1+x)dx/(1+x^2)$ as the sum of two improper integrals, for instance

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \frac{1+x}{1+x^2} dx = \int_{-\infty}^0 \frac{1+x}{1+x^2} dx + \int_0^{\infty} \frac{1+x}{1+x^2} dx,$$

and then evaluate the two resulting improper integrals separately. So,

$$\begin{aligned} \int_0^{\infty} \frac{1+x}{1+x^2} dx &= \lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \int_0^M \frac{1+x}{1+x^2} dx \\ &= \lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \left[\int_0^M \frac{1}{1+x^2} dx + \int_0^M \frac{x}{1+x^2} dx \right] \\ &= \lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \left[(\arctan(M) - \arctan(0)) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \ln(1+M^2) - \frac{1}{2} \right) \right] = \infty, \end{aligned}$$

since $\lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \ln(1+M^2) = \infty$, and so the original improper integral $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (1+x)dx/(1+x^2)$ diverges.

However, when we evaluate $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \int_{-t}^t (1+x)dx/(1+x^2)$, we get

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \int_{-t}^t \frac{1+x}{1+x^2} dx &= \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \left[\int_{-t}^t \frac{1}{1+x^2} dx + \int_{-t}^t \frac{x}{1+x^2} dx \right] \\ &= \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \left[(\arctan(t) - \arctan(-t)) + \frac{1}{2} (\ln(1+t^2) - \ln(1+(-t)^2)) \right] \\ &= \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} 2 \arctan(t) = 2 \frac{\pi}{2} = \pi, \end{aligned}$$

and so $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \int_{-t}^t (1+x)dx/(1+x^2)$ converges. (Here, we use that $\arctan(-t) = -\arctan(t)$.)