

Problem 11833

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Let f be a real-valued function on an open interval (a, b) such that the one-sided limits $\lim_{t \rightarrow x^-} f(t)$ and $\lim_{t \rightarrow x^+} f(t)$ exist and are finite for all x in (a, b) . Can the set of discontinuities of f be uncountable?

Solution proposed by Roberto Tauraso, Dipartimento di Matematica, Università di Roma "Tor Vergata", via della Ricerca Scientifica, 00133 Roma, Italy.

The answer is no. For all $n \in \mathbb{N}^+$, let

$$D_n = \{x \in (a, b) : \forall r > 0, \exists y \in (x - r, x + r) \cap (a, b) : |f(x) - f(y)| > 1/n\}.$$

Hence the set of all discontinuities of f is $\bigcup_{n > 0} D_n$.

Assume by contradiction that it is uncountable, then there is a positive integer n such that D_n is uncountable. Therefore D_n has at least an accumulation point z , which means that

$$\forall k \in \mathbb{N}^+, ((z - 1/k, z) \cup (z, z + 1/k)) \cap D_n \neq \emptyset.$$

Therefore

$$\text{i) } \forall k \in \mathbb{N}^+, (z - 1/k, z) \cap D_n \neq \emptyset \quad \text{or} \quad \text{ii) } \forall k \in \mathbb{N}^+, (z, z + 1/k) \cap D_n \neq \emptyset.$$

Suppose that i) holds (the other case is similar). For $k \in \mathbb{N}^+$, let $x_k \in (z - 1/k, z) \cap D_n$ and let $0 < r < 1/k$ such that $(x_k - r, x_k + r) \subset (z - 1/k, z)$.

Then, by the definition of D_n , there is $y_k \in (x_k - r, x_k + r) \cap (a, b)$ such that

$$|f(x_k) - f(y_k)| > 1/n. \tag{1}$$

On the other hand, $x_k \rightarrow z^-$, $y_k \rightarrow z^-$ and therefore, by hypothesis,

$$\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} f(x_k) = \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} f(y_k)$$

which is in contradiction with (1). □