A SIMPLE PROOF THAT π IS IRRATIONAL

IVAN NIVEN

Let $\pi = a/b$, the quotient of positive integers. We define the polynomials

$$f(x) = \frac{x^n(a - bx)^n}{n!},$$

$$F(x) = f(x) - f^{(2)}(x) + f^{(4)}(x) - \cdots + (-1)^n f^{(2n)}(x),$$

the positive integer n being specified later. Since $n!f(x)$ has integral coefficients and terms in x of degree not less than n, $f(x)$ and its derivatives $f^{(j)}(x)$ have integral values for $x=0$; also for $x=\pi=a/b$, since $f(x)=f(a/b-x)$. By elementary calculus we have

$$\frac{d}{dx}\{F'(x)\sin x - F(x)\cos x\} = F''(x)\sin x + F(x)\sin x = f(x)\sin x$$

and

$$(1) \qquad \int_0^\pi f(x)\sin x\,dx = [F'(x)\sin x - F(x)\cos x]_0^\pi = F(\pi) + F(0).$$

Now $F(\pi)+F(0)$ is an *integer*, since $f^{(j)}(\pi)$ and $f^{(j)}(0)$ are integers. But for $0<x<\pi$,

$$0 < f(x)\sin x < \frac{\pi^n a^n}{n!},$$

so that the integral in (1) is *positive, but arbitrarily small* for n sufficiently large. Thus (1) is false, and so is our assumption that π is rational.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

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