

# Pacific Journal of Mathematics

**ON PTAK'S COMBINATORIAL LEMMA**

STEPHEN SIMONS

## ON PTAK'S COMBINATORIAL LEMMA

S. SIMONS

**A new proof of Ptak's combinatorial lemma on the existence of convex means, is given.**

The purpose of this note is to show how the "getting near the inf of  $S$ " technique used in [3], Lemma 2 can be used to prove, and indeed generalize, Ptak's combinatorial lemma ([1], (1.3)). (We note, in passing, that [1], (2.1) is an easy consequence of [3], Lemma 2 and that [1], (3.3), Krein's theorem, is proved in [4], Theorem 16). We have already given a proof of Ptak's lemma in [2] using lattice theory and the Hahn-Banach theorem. The proof given here is elementary — as was Ptak's original proof.

1. NOTATION. If  $X \neq \emptyset$  we write  $l_u(X)$  for the set of all functions from  $X$  into  $[-\infty, \infty)$ . Even though  $l_u(X)$  is not a vector space, any *convex* combination of elements of  $l_u(X)$  is well defined. We write "conv" for "convex hull of". We write " $S_X$ " for "supremum on  $X$ ".

2. LEMMA. *We suppose  $X \neq \emptyset$ . If  $G$  is a nonempty convex subset of  $l_u(X)$ ,  $A, B, C \in \mathbb{R}$  and, for all  $g \in G$ ,  $A < B \leq S_X(g) \leq C$  then there exists  $h \in G$  such that, if  $X' = \{x: x \in X, h(x) > A\}$  then  $\inf S_{X'}(G) \geq A$ .*

*Proof.* We choose  $\lambda > 0$  so that  $\lambda(C - A) < B - A$  and then  $h \in G$  so that  $S_X(h) < \inf S_X(G) + (B - A)\lambda/(1 + \lambda)$ . If  $g \in G$  then, since  $(h + \lambda g)/(1 + \lambda) \in G$ ,  $(1 + \lambda)S_X(h) < S_X(h + \lambda g) + (B - A)\lambda$  hence there exists  $x \in X$  (depending on  $g$ ) such that

$$(1) \quad h(x) + \lambda g(x) > (1 + \lambda)S_X(h) - (B - A)\lambda.$$

We first deduce from (1) that  $h(x) > (1 + \lambda)S_X(h) - \lambda C - (B - A)\lambda \geq (1 + \lambda)B - \lambda C - (B - A)\lambda > A$ , from the choice of  $\lambda$ ; hence  $x \in X'$ . Again from (1),  $\lambda g(x) > \lambda S_X(h) - (B - A)\lambda \geq \lambda A$  from which  $g(x) > A$ . We have proved that  $\inf S_{X'}(G) \geq A$ , as required.

3. THEOREM. *We suppose  $X \neq \emptyset$ ,  $Y$  is infinite,*

$$f: X \times Y \rightarrow [-\infty, \infty),$$

*$B, C \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $\delta > 0$  and, for all  $g \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, Y)$ ,  $B \leq S_X(g) \leq C$ . Then there exist  $x_1, x_2, \dots \in X$  and distinct  $y_1, y_2, \dots \in Y$  such that  $f(x_p, y_m) \geq$*

$B - S$  whenever  $1 \leq m \leq p$ .

*Proof.* From Lemma 2, there exists  $g_1 \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, Y)$  such that if  $X_1 = \{x: x \in X, g_1(x) > B - \delta/2\}$  then  $\inf S_{X_1}(\text{conv } f(\cdot, Y)) \geq B - \delta/2$ . There exists finite  $F_1 \subset Y$  such that  $g_1 \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, F_1)$ . Clearly  $\inf S_{X_1}(\text{conv } f(\cdot, Y \setminus F_1)) \geq B - \delta/2$ . Proceeding inductively we find  $g_n \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, Y \setminus F_1 \setminus \dots \setminus F_{n-1})$  such that, if

$$X_n = \{x: x \in X_{n-1}, g_n(x) > B - \delta/2 - \dots - \delta/2^n\}$$

then  $\inf S_{X_n}(\text{conv } f(\cdot, Y \setminus F_1 \setminus \dots \setminus F_{n-1})) \geq B - \delta/2 - \dots - \delta/2^n$  and finite  $F_n \subset Y \setminus F_1 \setminus \dots \setminus F_{n-1}$  such that  $g_n \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, F_n)$ . In this way we obtain a family  $\{F_n: n \geq 1\}$  of disjoint finite subsets of  $Y$ ,  $g_n \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, F_n)$  such that, for all  $n \geq 1$ ,

$$\bigcap_{m \leq n} \{x: x \in X, g_m(x) \geq B - \delta\} \supset X_n \neq \emptyset.$$

Since  $g_1 \in \text{conv } f(\cdot, F_1)$ ,

$$\{x: x \in X, g_1(x) \geq B - \delta\} \subset \bigcup_{y \in F_1} \{x: x \in X, f(x, y) \geq B - \delta\}$$

hence there exists  $y_1 \in F_1$  such that, for arbitrarily large  $n \geq 2$ ,

$$\{x: x \in X, f(x, y_1) \geq B - \delta\} \cap \bigcap_{2 \leq m \leq n} \{x: x \in X, g_m(x) \geq B - \delta\} \neq \emptyset.$$

This relationship must clearly then hold for all  $n \geq 2$ . Proceeding inductively we find  $y_n \in F_n$  such that, for all  $1 \leq p < n$ ,

$$\bigcap_{m \leq p} \{x: x \in X, f(x, y_m) \geq B - \delta\} \cap \bigcap_{p+1 \leq m \leq n} \{x: x \in X, g_m(x) \geq B - \delta\} \neq \emptyset$$

and so, in particular,

$$\bigcap_{m \leq p} \{x: x \in X, f(x, y_m) \geq B - \delta\} \neq \emptyset$$

from which the required result follows ( $y_1, y_2, \dots$  are distinct because  $F_1, F_2, \dots$  disjoint).

*Ptak's Lemma.* We suppose that  $Y$  is an infinite set and that  $X$  is a nonvoid family of subsets of  $Y$ . We write  $P(Y)$  for the collection of all positive, real valued functions  $\lambda$  on  $Y$  such that  $\{y: y \in Y, \lambda(y) > 0\}$  is finite and  $\sum_{y \in Y} \lambda(y) = 1$ ; for  $x \subset Y$  we write  $\lambda(x) = \sum_{y \in x} \lambda(y)$ . If

$$B = \inf_{\lambda \in P(Y)} \sup_{x \in X} \lambda(x) > 0$$

then there exist  $x_1, x_2, \dots \in X$  and distinct  $y_1, y_2, \dots \in Y$  such that, for each  $p \geq 1$ ,  $\{y_1, \dots, y_p\} \subset x_p$ .

*Proof.* We define  $f: X \times Y \rightarrow \mathcal{R}$  by  $f(x, y) = 1$  if, and only if,  $y \in x$ . By hypothesis,  $\inf S_x(\text{conv } f(\cdot, Y)) = B$ . From Theorem 3 with  $\delta = B/2$ , there exist  $x_1, x_2, \dots \in X$  and distinct  $y_1, y_2, \dots \in Y$  such that  $f(x_p, y_m) \geq B/2$ , hence  $y_m \in x_p$ , whenever  $1 \leq m \leq p$ .

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Received January 28, 1971. This research was supported in part by NSF grant number 20632.

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The *Pacific Journal of Mathematics* is published monthly. Effective with Volume 16 the price per volume (3 numbers) is \$8.00; single issues, \$3.00. Special price for current issues to individual faculty members of supporting institutions and to individual members of the American Mathematical Society: \$4.00 per volume; single issues \$1.50. Back numbers are available.

Subscriptions, orders for back numbers, and changes of address should be sent to Pacific Journal of Mathematics, 103 Highland Boulevard, Berkeley, California, 94708.

PUBLISHED BY PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MATHEMATICS, A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

Printed at Kokusai Bunken Insatsusha (International Academic Printing Co., Ltd.), 270, 3-chome Totsuka-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan.

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