

Best L_1 -Approximation of Quasi Continuous Functions on $[0, 1]$ by Nondecreasing Functions

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Let Q denote the Banach space (sup norm) of quasi continuous functions defined on the interval $[0, 1]$. Let M denote the closed convex cone in Q comprised of nondecreasing functions. For f in Q and $1 < p < \infty$, let f_p denote the best L_p -approximation to f by elements of M . It is shown that f_p converges uniformly as $p \rightarrow 1$ to a best L_1 -approximation to f by elements of M . An example is given to show that this result is not true for all bounded measurable functions on $[0, 1]$.

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If f is a bounded Lebesgue measurable function defined on $[0, 1]$ and A is a subset of $L_\infty[0, 1]$ such that, for each p , $1 < p < \infty$, there exists a unique best L_p -approximation f_p to f by elements of A , then f is said to have the Polya property if $f_\infty = \lim_{p \rightarrow \infty} f_p$ is well defined as a bounded measurable function: if $p_n \rightarrow \infty$, then $\lim_n f_{p_n}$ exists a.e. on $[0, 1]$. This limit is known to exist in a number of situations, and in each case the limit function is a best L_∞ -approximation which is better in some way than all other best L_∞ -approximations. Some of the investigations into the existence and the nature of this limit may be seen in [1-8]. A related question concerns the limit as $p \rightarrow 1$. f is said to have the Polya-one property if $f_1 = \lim_{p \downarrow 1} f_p$ is well defined as a bounded measurable function. In [6] it was shown that the Polya-one property obtains in the case where f is bounded and approximately continuous and A is the set of nondecreasing functions. In the present paper we establish the same result in the case where f is any quasi continuous function. We begin by showing that the Polya-one property holds if f is a real valued function with finite domain.

Let $X = \{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$ be a finite subset of \mathbb{R} with $x_1 < x_2 < \dots < x_n$. Let $V = V(x)$ be the linear space of bounded real functions on X and $M_n = M(X) \subset V$ the convex cone of nondecreasing functions in V , i.e., functions h

satisfying $h(x) \leq h(y)$ whenever $x, y \in X$ and $x \leq y$. For each $p, 1 \leq p < \infty$, define a weighted l_p -norm $\|\cdot\|_w^p$ by

$$\|f\|_w^p = \left(\sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i|^p \right)^{1/p}$$

where $f \in V$ is identified with its set of values $\{f(x_i): i = 1, \dots, n\}$, denoted by $\{f_i\}$, and $w = \{w_i: i = 1, \dots, n\} > 0$ is a given weight function satisfying $\sum_{i=1}^n w_i = 1$.

Let $f = \{f_i\}$ in V be fixed. For each $p, 1 \leq p < \infty$, denote by P_p the following optimization problem: find $g_p = \{g_{p,i}: i = 1, \dots, n\}$ in M_n , if one exists, such that

$$\|f - g_p\|_w^p = \inf\{\|f - h\|_w^p: h \in M_n\}.$$

To describe the known solutions to these problems, we first define $L \subset X$ to be a lower set if $x_i \in L$ and $x_j \in X, x_j \leq x_i$, implies that $x_j \in L$. Similarly, we call $U \subset X$ an upper set if $x_i \in U$ and $x_j \in X, x_j \geq x_i$ implies that $x_j \in U$. To simplify the notation we will write $i \in Y \subset X$ to indicate that $x_i \in Y$. Let p in $(1, \infty)$ be fixed. Let L and U be lower and upper sets, respectively, such that $L \cap U$ is not empty. Define $u_p(L \cap U)$ to be the unique real number minimizing $\sum \{w_j |f_j - u|^p: j \in L \cap U\}$. Let $g_p = \{g_{p,i}: i = 1, \dots, n\}$ be the function defined on X by

$$g_{p,i} = \max_{\{U: i \in U\}} \min_{\{L: i \in L\}} u_p(L \cap U). \tag{1}$$

The solution of the problem P_p for $1 < p < \infty$ is known to be given by (1) (see [11]). Ubhaya [10] studied the convergence of g_p as $p \rightarrow \infty$. Our first objective in this paper is to show that convergence also results if p is allowed to decrease to one.

LEMMA 1. Suppose $[a, b] \subset \mathbb{R}$ and $F = \{f_\lambda: \lambda \in \Lambda\}$ is a family of strictly convex functions on \mathbb{R} such that, for all λ in Λ , the minimizer, x_λ , of f_λ is contained in (a, b) . Define $\psi: (F, \|\cdot\|_\infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ by $\psi(f_\lambda) = x_\lambda$. Then ψ is continuous.

Proof. Let f_1 in F and $\alpha < \max\{x_1 - a, b - x_1\}$ be given. Let $2\beta = \min\{f_1(x_1 - \alpha) - f_1(x_1), f_1(x_1 + \alpha) - f_1(x_1)\}$. Then $|x - x_1| \geq \alpha$ implies that $f_1(x) \geq f_1(x_1) + 2\beta$. Suppose that $\max\{|f_1(x) - f_2(x)|: x \in (a, b)\} < \beta$. If $|x_2 - x_1| \geq \alpha$, then

$$f_2(x_1) > f_2(x_2) > f_1(x_2) - \beta > f_1(x_1) + \beta,$$

a contradiction. Thus $|x_2 - x_1| < \alpha$.

DEFINITION. Let $a = -\|f\|_\infty$, $b = \|f\|_\infty$ and define functions $\tau_p: [a, b]^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ and $\kappa_p: [a, b] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ for $1 \leq p < \infty$ by

$$\tau_p(\mathbf{u}) = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_i|^p,$$

$$\kappa_p(u) = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u|^p,$$

where $\mathbf{u} = (u_1, \dots, u_n) \in [a, b]^n$ and $u \in [a, b]$.

LEMMA 2. For each p , $1 < p < \infty$, κ_p is strictly convex and has a unique minimizer u_p , with u_p in $[a, b]$.

Proof. Whenever $1 < p < \infty$ and $1 \leq i \leq n$, $|f_i - u|^p$ is a strictly convex function of u . Since $w > 0$, κ_p is also strictly convex, which entails the existence and uniqueness of u_p . It is clear that $a \leq u_p \leq b$.

LEMMA 3. In the present context,

$$\lim_{p \downarrow 1} (\tau_p(\mathbf{u}))^{1/p} = \tau_1(\mathbf{u})$$

and

$$\lim_{p \downarrow 1} (\kappa_p(u))^{1/p} = \kappa_1(u),$$

the convergence being uniform on the compact sets $[a, b]^n$ and $[a, b]$ respectively.

Proof. Whenever $u \in [a, b]^n$, $1 \leq i \leq n$ and $p < 2$,

$$|f_i - u_i|^p \leq 2^p \{|f_i|^p + |u_i|^p\} \leq 2^{p+1} \|f\|_\infty^p \leq m(f),$$

where $m(f) = 2^3 \max\{\|f\|_\infty^2, 1\}$. Let $\varepsilon > 0$ be given. For any \mathbf{u} in $[a, b]^n$ and $0 < \alpha < 1$,

$$\begin{aligned} & |\tau_{1+\alpha}(\mathbf{u})^{1/(1+\alpha)} - \tau_1(\mathbf{u})| \\ & \leq \left| \left\{ \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_i|^{1+\alpha} \right\}^{1/(1+\alpha)} - \left\{ \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_i| \right\}^{1/(1+\alpha)} \right| \quad (2) \\ & \quad + \left| \left\{ \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_i| \right\}^{1/(1+\alpha)} - \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_i| \right|. \end{aligned}$$

Since the map $x \mapsto x^{1/(1+\alpha)}$ is continuous for $x \geq 0$, there exists $\delta > 0$ such that the first summand of (2) is less than $\varepsilon/2$ whenever

$$|\tau_{1+\alpha}(\mathbf{u}) - \tau_1(\mathbf{u})| < \delta. \tag{3}$$

To see that there is an α small enough to satisfy (3), consider the function $F(x, \alpha) = x^{1+\alpha} - x$. Then $\partial F/\partial x = (1+\alpha)x^\alpha - 1$, $\partial F/\partial \alpha = 0$ only when $x = x_0 = (1+\alpha)^{-1/\alpha}$ and $F(x_0) = (1+\alpha)^{-(1+1/\alpha)} - (1+\alpha)^{-1/\alpha}$. Let

$$B(\alpha) = 2 \max\{|F(x_0, \alpha)|, |[m(f)]^{1+\alpha} - m(f)|\}.$$

Then $\sup\{|F(x, \alpha)| : 0 < x < m(f)\} < B(\alpha)$, so for \mathbf{u} in $[a, b]^n$ and $1 \leq i \leq n$,

$$|f_1 - u_i|^{1+\alpha} - |f_i - u_i| < B(\alpha).$$

Thus

$$\begin{aligned} |\tau_{1+\alpha}(\mathbf{u}) - \tau_1(\mathbf{u})| &\leq \sum_{i=1}^n w_i | |f_i - u_i|^{1+\alpha} - |f_i - u_i| | \\ &\leq B(\alpha) \sum_{i=1}^n w_i = B(\alpha). \end{aligned}$$

Since $\lim_{\alpha \downarrow 0} F(x_0, \alpha) = 0$, it is clear that there exists $\alpha_0 > 0$ such that, for $0 < \alpha < \alpha_0$, $B(\alpha) < \delta$. This establishes (3).

To treat the second summand of (2), let $x = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_i|$. Then $0 < x < \sum w_i 2 \|f\|_\infty - 2 \|f\|_\infty$. Define G by

$$G(x, \beta) = x^{1/(1+\beta)} - x.$$

Then $\partial G/\partial x = (1+\beta)^{-1} x^{-\beta/(1+\beta)} - 1$, $\partial G/\partial \beta = 0$ only when $x = x_0 = (1+\beta)^{-(1+1/\beta)}$ and $G(x_0, \beta) = (1+\beta)^{-1/\beta} - (1+\beta)^{-(1+1/\beta)}$. Since $G(x_0, \alpha) = -F(x_0, \alpha)$, the device of the previous paragraph shows that there exists $\beta_0 > 0$ such that, for $0 < \beta < \beta_0$,

$$|x^{1/(1+\beta)} - x| < \varepsilon/2.$$

Let $\gamma_0 = \min\{\alpha_0, \beta_0\}$. Then, for $0 < \gamma < \gamma_0$, and for any \mathbf{u} in $[a, b]^n$,

$$|\tau_{1+\gamma}(\mathbf{u})^{1/(1+\gamma)} - \tau_1(\mathbf{u})| < \varepsilon. \tag{4}$$

The second limit follows from the first if we let $\mathbf{u} = (u, u, \dots, u)$. This concludes the proof of Lemma 3.

A consequence of the proof of Lemma 3 may be noted at this time: For $1 \leq p < \infty$, let

$$d_n(p) = \inf\{\|f - \mathbf{u}\|_p^p : \mathbf{u} \in M_n\} = \inf\{\|f - \mathbf{u}\|_p^p : u \in M_n \cap [a, b]^n\}.$$

Then

$$\lim_{p \downarrow 1} d_n(p) = d_n(1). \tag{5}$$

Indeed, from (4), we see that, for all $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists $\gamma_0 > 0$ such that, for $0 < \gamma < \gamma_0$,

$$| \|f - \mathbf{u}\|_w^{1+\gamma} - \|f - \mathbf{u}\|_w^1 | < \varepsilon.$$

Then

$$\begin{aligned} & \inf\{ \|f - \mathbf{u}\|_w^1 - \varepsilon : \mathbf{u} \in M_n \cap [a, b]^n \} \\ & < \inf\{ \|f - \mathbf{u}\|_w^{1+\gamma} : \mathbf{u} \in M_n \cap [a, b]^n \} \\ & < \inf\{ \|f - \mathbf{u}\|_w^1 + \varepsilon : \mathbf{u} \in M_n \cap [a, b]^n \}; \end{aligned}$$

so $|d_n(1 + \gamma) - d_n(1)| < \varepsilon$. That a similar statement holds for $d(p) = \inf\{ \|f - \mathbf{u}\|_w^p : \mathbf{u} \in R \}$ can be seen by letting $\mathbf{u} = (u, u, \dots, u)$ in (5).

THEOREM 4. For $1 < p < \infty$, let u_p be the unique minimizer of κ_p . Then $\lim_{p \downarrow 1} u_p$ exists. If $u_1 = \lim_{p \downarrow 1} u_p$, then u_1 is a minimizer of κ_1 .

Proof. By Lemma 2, $\{\kappa_p : 1 < p < \infty\}$ is a family of strictly convex functions on R with each u_p in $[a, b]$. Thus, by Lemma 1, $\alpha > 0$ and $1 < q < \infty$ implies that there exists $\beta(\kappa_q, \alpha) > 0$ such that, for $1 < r < \infty$ and $\max\{|\kappa_q(u) - \kappa_r(u)| : u \in [a, b]\} < \beta(\kappa_q, \alpha)$ we have $|u_q - u_r| < \alpha$. By reasoning similar to that establishing (3), $\kappa_p \rightarrow \kappa_q$ uniformly on $[a, b]$ as $p \rightarrow q$ so there exists $\delta > 0$ such that, for $|q - r| < \delta$,

$$\max\{|\kappa_q(u) - \kappa_r(u)| : u \in [a, b]\} < B(\kappa_q, \alpha).$$

Thus, the map $p \mapsto u_p$ is right continuous on $(1, \infty)$. Similarly, $p \mapsto u_p$ is left continuous. Suppose $\lim_{p \downarrow 1} u_p$ does not exist. Let $v' = \underline{\lim}_{p \downarrow 1} u_p$ and $v'' = \overline{\lim}_{p \downarrow 1} u_p$. Choose u_0 so that $v' < u_0 < v''$ and, for $1 \leq i \leq n$, $f_i - u_0 \neq 0$. Since $p \mapsto u_p$ is continuous, there exists an infinite sequence $\{p_k\}$ such that $p_k \downarrow 1$ and, for all $k \geq 1$, $u_{p_k} = u_0$. Consider the function

$$F(p) = \kappa'_p(u_0) = p \sum_{i=1}^n w_i |f_i - u_0|^{p-1} \operatorname{sgn}(f_i - u_0).$$

For all $k \geq 1$, $F(p_k) = 0$ so 1 is a limit point of the set of zeros of F . Since $F(z)$ is entire, it is identically zero, whence $u_p = u_0$ for all $p > 1$, a contradiction. Thus $\lim_{p \downarrow 1} u_p$ exists.

Since $\sum w_i = 1$, we can apply inequality (2.10.4) in [9]: for any $p > 1$,

$$d(1) \leq \|f - u_p\|_w^1 \leq \|f - u_p\|_w^p.$$

Since $d(p) \rightarrow d(1)$, by (5), and $u_p \rightarrow u_1$, by the previous paragraph, $\|f - u_1\|_w^1 = d(1)$, whence u_1 is a minimizer of κ_1 .

THEOREM 5. *The solution $g_p = \{g_{p,i}; i = 1, \dots, n\}$ of the problem P_p converges as $p \downarrow 1$ to a solution*

$$g_1 = \{g_{1,i}; i = 1, \dots, n\} \quad (6)$$

of the problem P_1 .

Proof. The solution, g_p , of the problem P_p , $1 < p < \infty$, is given by (1). Considering $L \cap U$ instead of X in Theorem 4, we conclude that $\lim_{p \downarrow 1} u_p(L \cap U)$ exists. Let $u_1(L \cap U)$ denote this limit. Since the number of lower and upper sets is finite, from (1) it follows that the limit of $g_{p,i}$ exists as $p \downarrow 1$ for all i . It remains to be shown that g_1 is a solution of the problem P_1 . Since g_p is nondecreasing for each $p > 1$, g_1 also has this property.

As in the proof of Theorem 4, we have

$$d_n(1) \leq \|f - g_p\|_w^1 \leq \|f - g_p\|_w^p.$$

Since $d_n(p) \rightarrow d_n(1)$ by (5), and $g_p \rightarrow g_1$ by the previous paragraph,

$$\|f - g_1\|_w^1 = d_n(1),$$

whence g_1 is a solution to the problem P_1 . This concludes the proof of Theorem 5, and accomplishes our first objective.

A function $f: [0, 1] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is said to be *quasi continuous* if it has discontinuities of the first kind only. Let Q denote the set of all quasi continuous functions. Our goal in the remainder of this paper is to generalize Theorem 5 to the case where $f \in Q$.

Let P denote the set of partitions $\pi = \{t_i; i = 0, 1, \dots, n\}$ of $[0, 1]$ (i.e., $0 = t_0 < t_1 < \dots < t_n = 1$), let I_E denote the indicator function of a subset E of $[0, 1]$ (i.e., $I_E(x) = 1$ if x is in E and $I_E(x) = 0$ otherwise), and let S denote the dense linear subspace of Q comprised of simple step functions of the form

$$f = \sum_{i=0}^n a_i I_{[t_i]} + \sum_{i=1}^n b_i I_{(t_{i-1}, t_i)}.$$

For a subset A of Q , let A^* denote the set of left continuous elements of A . Then f is in S^* if there exists π in P such that

$$f = a_1 I_{[t_0, t_1]} + \sum_{i>1} a_i I_{(t_{i-1}, t_i]}.$$

For a bounded function f and π in P , f_π in S^* is defined by

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{f}_\pi(x) &= \sup\{f(y): y \in [t_0, t_1]\}, & x \in [t_0, t_1] \\ &= \sup\{f(y): y \in (t_{i-1}, t_i]\}, & x \in (t_{i-1}, t_i], i > 1, \end{aligned}$$

f_π is defined by replacing sup with inf.

A bounded function f is in Q^* if and only if, for any $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists π in P such that $0 \leq \tilde{f}_\pi - f_\pi < \varepsilon$. This allows the use of Theorem 5.

Because L_p is a uniformly convex Banach space, $1 < p < \infty$, for each f in Q^* there exists a unique nearest point f_p in M^* . We recall the following result of [8].

THEOREM 6. *Let f in S_π^* be given by*

$$f = f_1 I_{[0, t_1]} + \sum_{i=2}^n f_i I_{(t_{i-1}, t_i]}.$$

Let $w = \{w_i: i = 1, \dots, n\}$ be defined by $w_i = t_i - t_{i-1}$ for all i . For $1 < p < \infty$, let g_p be as defined by (1). Then f_p is given by

$$f_p = g_{p,1} I_{[0, t_1]} + \sum_{i=2}^n g_{p,i} I_{(t_{i-1}, t_i]}.$$

The next theorem is a slightly altered form of Theorem 3 in [8].

THEOREM 7. *Let f in S_π^* and f_p be as given in Theorem 6. Then f_p converges as $p \downarrow 1$ to the monotone increasing function f_1 in S_π^* given by*

$$f_1 = g_{1,1} I_{[0, t_1]} + \sum_{i=2}^n g_{1,i} I_{(t_{i-1}, t_i]}, \tag{7}$$

where $g_{1,i} = \lim_{p \downarrow 1} g_{p,i}$ is given by (6). Moreover, f_1 is a best L_1 -approximation to f by nondecreasing functions.

Proof. For each i , $1 \leq i \leq n$, let $x_i = (t_i + t_{i-1})/2$ and let $X = \{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$. Consider $\{f_i = f(x_i): i = 1, \dots, n\}$ as a finite real valued function on X . Let w be defined as above. Then Theorem 5 implies that g_p converges to g_1 . Therefore $\lim_{p \downarrow 1} f_p$ exists and is given by (7).

For the second part of the theorem, we note that the conclusion of Theorem 5 holds for any weight function $w = \{w_i: i = 1, \dots, n\}$ which satisfies the conditions $w > 0$ and $\sum w_i = 1$. For each i , $1 \leq i \leq n$, let $w_i = 1/n$; then Theorem 5 implies that

$$\sum_{i=1}^n n^{-1} |f_i - g_{1,i}| \leq \sum_{i=1}^n n^{-1} |f_i - h|, \quad h = \{h_i: i = 1, \dots, n\} \in M_n,$$

whence

$$\sum_{i=1}^n |f_i - g_{1,i}| \leq \sum_{i=1}^n |f_i - h|, \quad h \in M_n. \quad (8)$$

Thus, f_1 is a best L_1 -approximation to f by elements of S_π^* . Let h be a non-decreasing function defined on $[0, 1]$. We show that there is a nondecreasing function g in S_π^* such that

$$\|f - g\|_1 \leq \|f - h\|_1.$$

Indeed, for each i , $1 \leq i \leq n$, let g_i be the real number in the interval $[h(t_{i-1}), h(t_i)]$ nearest to f_i . Then, for each i ,

$$\int_{t_{i-1}}^{t_i} |f_i - g_i| \leq \int_{t_{i-1}}^{t_i} |f_i - h(x)|.$$

Now define g on $[0, 1]$ by

$$g = g_1 I_{[0, t_1]} + \sum_{i=2}^n g_i I_{(t_{i-1}, t_i]}.$$

Then g is in S_π^* and it follows from the last inequality together with (8) that

$$\|f - f_1\|_1 \leq \|f - g\|_1 \leq \|f - h\|_1.$$

This concludes the proof of Theorem 7.

The remainder of the proof in [8] is now easily adapted to yield our principal result.

THEOREM 8. *Let $f \in Q$. Then there exist nondecreasing functions f_p , $1 \leq p < \infty$, such that each f_p is (up to equivalence) a best L_p -approximation to f by nondecreasing functions and f_p converges uniformly to f_1 as p decreases to one.*

EXAMPLE 9. If g is bounded measurable function on an interval $[a, b]$, we say that g has the uniform Polya-one property if g_p converges uniformly as $p \rightarrow 1$ to a best L_1 -approximation to g by elements of M . An example of a bounded measurable function on a compact interval which does not have the uniform Polya-one property is constructed as follows: for $n > 1$, let

$$a_n = \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} (2^{1-i} + 4^{-i}),$$

$$b_n = 2^{-n} + \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} (2^{1-i} + 4^{-i}),$$

$$A = [0, 1/2] \cup \bigcup_{n=2}^{\infty} [a_n, b_n].$$

and $g = I_A | [0, \frac{7}{3}]$. Since $m[g=0] > \frac{7}{6}$, $g_1 \equiv 0$. If $t > 0$ and $n > 1$ are given, let

$$F(x) = 2^{-n}(1-x)^{1+t} + (2^{-n} + 4^{-n})x^{1+t}.$$

Then $F'(x) = 0$ implies that $x = x_0(t, n) = \{(1 + 2^{-n})^{1/t} + 1\}^{-1}$, which is the value of g_{1+t} on the interval $[a_n, a_{n+1}]$. Since $x_0(t, n)$ increases to $\frac{1}{2}$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$, there exists N such that, for $n \geq N$, $x_0(t, n) > \frac{1}{4}$. Thus $\|g_{1+t} - g_1\|_\infty > \frac{1}{4}$ so g_{1+t} does not converge in L_∞ to g_1 as $t \downarrow 0$. Let

$$B = [0, \frac{7}{3}] - (2^{-1} - 4^{-3}, 2^{-1} + 4^{-3}) \\ - \bigcup_{n=2}^{\infty} \{(a_n - 4^{-3n}, a_n + 4^{-3n}) \cup (b_n - 4^{-3n}, b_n + 4^{-3n})\}.$$

Then $g|_B$ may be extended to a function which is continuous on $[0, \frac{7}{3}]$ and does not have the uniform Polya-one property.

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