

4.2 THE MEAN VALUE THEOREM

EXAMPLE A Prove the identity $\tan^{-1}x + \cot^{-1}x = \pi/2$.

SOLUTION Although calculus isn't needed to prove this identity, the proof using calculus is quite simple. If $f(x) = \tan^{-1}x + \cot^{-1}x$, then

$$f'(x) = \frac{1}{1+x^2} - \frac{1}{1+x^2} = 0$$

for all values of x . Therefore, $f(x) = C$, a constant. To determine the value of C , we put $x = 1$ [because we can evaluate $f(1)$ exactly]. Then

$$C = f(1) = \tan^{-1}1 + \cot^{-1}1 = \frac{\pi}{4} + \frac{\pi}{4} = \frac{\pi}{2}$$

Thus, $\tan^{-1}x + \cot^{-1}x = \pi/2$. ■