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A unified presentation of two existence  
results for problems with natural growth

1. Introduction.

In this paper we prove the existence of a solution for the following problem

$$\begin{cases} -\operatorname{div} a(x, u, Du) + g(x, u, Du) = f & \text{in } \Omega, \\ u \in W_0^{1,p}(\Omega), \quad g(x, u, Du) \in L^1(\Omega), \end{cases}$$

where  $-\operatorname{div} a(x, u, Du)$  is a Leray-Lions operator from  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  into  $W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  and  $g(x, u, Du)$  is a nonlinearity with natural growth ( $|g(x, s, \xi)| \leq b(|s|)(c(x) + |\xi|^p)$ ) which satisfies the sign condition  $g(x, s, \xi)s \geq 0$ . The right hand side  $f$  is assumed to belong either to  $W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  or to  $L^1(\Omega)$ ; in the latest case we also assume that  $|g(x, s, \xi)| \geq \gamma|\xi|^p$  for  $|s|$  sufficiently large. This result unifies both the statements and the proofs of results previously obtained in [BMP1], [BBM], [G], [D] and [BG2]. We also prove that there exists a nonnegative solution of the above problem when  $f$  and  $g(x, s, \xi)$  are nonnegative.

2. Setting of the problem and main result.

Let  $\Omega$  be a bounded domain in  $\mathbb{R}^N$  and  $p, p'$  be real numbers such that

$$1 < p, p' < +\infty, \quad 1/p + 1/p' = 1.$$

Let  $A$  be a nonlinear operator from  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  into its dual defined by

$$A(v) = -\operatorname{div}(a(x, v, Dv))$$

where  $a(x, s, \xi) : \Omega \times \mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}^N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^N$  is a Caratheodory function satisfying the following conditions for almost every  $x \in \Omega$  and for all  $s \in \mathbb{R}, \xi, \xi^* \in \mathbb{R}^N$

$$|a(x, s, \xi)| \leq \beta[k(x) + |s|^{p-1} + |\xi|^{p-1}] \quad (2.1)$$

$$[a(x, s, \xi) - a(x, s, \xi^*)][\xi - \xi^*] > 0 \quad \text{if } \xi \neq \xi^* \quad (2.2)$$

$$a(x, s, \xi)\xi \geq \alpha|\xi|^p \quad (2.3)$$

where  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are strictly positive constants and  $k(x)$  is a given nonnegative function in  $L^{p'}(\Omega)$ . Under these hypotheses,  $A$  is a bounded, continuous, coercive, pseudomonotone operator of Leray-Lions type from  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  into its dual.

Furthermore let  $g(x, s, \xi) : \Omega \times \mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}^N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  be a Caratheodory function such that for almost every  $x \in \Omega$  and for all  $s \in \mathbb{R}, \xi \in \mathbb{R}^N$

$$g(x, s, \xi)s \geq 0 \quad (2.4)$$

$$|g(x, s, \xi)| \leq b(|s|)(c(x) + |\xi|^p) \quad (2.5)$$

where  $b : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  is a continuous and nondecreasing function and  $c(x)$  is a given nonnegative function in  $L^1(\Omega)$ .

Finally we assume one of the following two assumptions:  
either

$$f \in W^{-1,p'}(\Omega) \quad (2.6)$$

or

$$\begin{cases} f \in L^1(\Omega) \\ \text{and there exists } \sigma > 0 \quad \text{and } \gamma > 0 \\ \text{such that } |g(x, s, \xi)| \geq \gamma|\xi|^p \text{ when } |s| \geq \sigma. \end{cases} \quad (2.7)$$

We consider the following nonlinear elliptic problem with Dirichlet boundary condition

$$\begin{cases} A(u) + g(x, u, Du) = f & \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(\Omega) \\ u \in W_0^{1,p}(\Omega), \quad g(x, u, Du) \in L^1(\Omega) \end{cases} \quad (2.8)$$

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We shall prove the following existence theorem:

**Theorem 1.** *Under the assumptions (2.1)-(2.5) and either (2.6) or (2.7), there exists at least one solution of (2.8).*

The above Theorem unifies in the same statement as well as by the same proof the two results of [BBM], [BMP1] and of [BG2], which are respectively concerned with right hand sides in  $W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  (hypothesis (2.6)) and in  $L^1(\Omega)$  (hypothesis (2.7)).

Note that the solution of (2.8) belongs to  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  even in the case where  $f \in L^1(\Omega)$ . This seems to be strange since for  $f$  in  $L^1(\Omega)$  the solution  $u$  of

$$A(u) = f \quad \text{in } \Omega, \quad u = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial\Omega$$

is known to belong only to  $W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$  for all  $q < N(p-1)/(N-1)$  (cf. [BG1]), but this is due to the second part of hypothesis (2.7).

An example where hypotheses (2.4), (2.5) and where either (2.6) or (2.7) are satisfied is the case where

$$g(x, s, \xi) = d(s)|\xi|^2$$

with  $d: \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ ,  $d(s)s \geq 0$  and (if (2.7) is required to hold)  $|d(s)| \geq \sigma$  when  $|s| \geq \gamma$ .

Under assumption (2.6) it is also true that  $ug(x, u, Du)$  belongs to  $L^1(\Omega)$ , which in contrast is in general false (cf. Remark 3 of [BG2]) if we assume hypothesis (2.7).

The proof of Theorem 1 is given in Section 3. It consists in the following steps. We first define approximate equations. We then prove an a priori estimate in  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  for the solutions  $u_\epsilon$  of these approximate equations. Finally using a proof somewhat similar to the proof of [BM] and [LM] we prove (this is the main step) that the truncations  $T_k(u_\epsilon)$  are relatively compact in the strong topology of  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$ , a result which allows us to pass to the limit and to obtain the existence result.

In Section 4 we consider the case where  $f \geq 0$  and remark that in this case there exists a nonnegative solution  $u$  whenever  $g(x, s, \xi) \geq 0$ .

### 3. Proof of Theorem 1.

#### 3.1. Approximation.

In order to prove Theorem 1, we consider the sequence of approximate equations

$$\begin{cases} A(u_\varepsilon) + g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) = f_\varepsilon & \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(\Omega) \\ u_\varepsilon \in W_0^{1,p}(\Omega) \end{cases} \quad (3.1)$$

where

$$g_\varepsilon(x, s, \xi) = \frac{g(x, s, \xi)}{1 + \varepsilon|g(x, s, \xi)|} \quad (3.2)$$

and where  $f_\varepsilon$  is a sequence of smooth functions which converges strongly to  $f$  in  $W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  (if we assume (2.6)) or in  $L^1(\Omega)$  (if we assume (2.7)). Note that

$$g_\varepsilon(x, s, \xi)s \geq 0, \quad |g_\varepsilon(x, s, \xi)| \leq |g(x, s, \xi)| \quad \text{and} \quad |g_\varepsilon(x, s, \xi)| \leq 1/\varepsilon.$$

Since  $g_\varepsilon$  is bounded for any fixed  $\varepsilon > 0$ , there exists at least one solution  $u_\varepsilon$  of (3.1) (cf. [LL], [L]), and  $u_\varepsilon$  belongs to  $L^\infty(\Omega)$  (cf. [B]).

#### 3.2. A priori estimates.

If we assume (2.6), the use in (3.1) of the test function  $u_\varepsilon$  yields (see [BBM] if necessary)

$$\|u_\varepsilon\|_{W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)} \leq C_1 \quad (3.3)$$

$$\int_\Omega u_\varepsilon g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) \leq C_2. \quad (3.4)$$

If we assume (2.7), the use in (3.1) of the test function  $T_k(u_\varepsilon)$  (where  $T_k(v)$ ,  $k \in \mathbb{R}^+$ , is the usual truncation in  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$ ) yields for any  $k > 0$  (see [BG2] if necessary)

$$\int_\Omega |DT_k(u_\varepsilon)|^p \leq C_3 k \quad (3.5)$$

$$k \int_{|u_\varepsilon| > k} |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)| \leq \int_\Omega |f^\varepsilon| |T_k(u^\varepsilon)| \leq C_4 k \quad (3.6)$$

which combined with (3.5) and the second part of hypothesis (2.7) yields (3.3) again.

Therefore there exist  $u \in W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  and a subsequence (still denoted by  $\varepsilon$ ) such that

$$u_\varepsilon \rightharpoonup u \text{ weakly in } W_0^{1,p}(\Omega) \quad (3.7)$$

$$u_\varepsilon \rightarrow u \text{ a.e.} \quad (3.8)$$

### 3.3. Strong convergence of $T_k(u_\varepsilon)$ .

We already know that for any fixed  $k \in \mathbb{R}^+$

$$T_k(u_\varepsilon) \rightharpoonup T_k(u) \text{ weakly in } W_0^{1,p}(\Omega). \quad (3.9)$$

We shall prove that this convergence is actually strong. This is the most original part of the present paper.

We shall use in (3.1) the test function

$$v_\varepsilon = \varphi(z_\varepsilon)$$

where

$$\begin{cases} z_\varepsilon = T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u) \\ \varphi(s) = s e^{\lambda s^2}. \end{cases} \quad (3.10)$$

(The use of the test function  $\varphi(u^\varepsilon)$  is one of the main tools in the existence proof of [BMP2].) It is easy to see that when  $\lambda \geq (b(k)/2\alpha)^2$  the following inequality

$$\varphi'(s) - \frac{b(k)}{\alpha} |\varphi(s)| \geq \frac{1}{2} \quad (3.11)$$

holds for all  $s \in \mathbb{R}$ .

Since  $v_\varepsilon$  converges to zero weakly in  $W_0^{1,p}(\Omega)$  and weakly  $\star$  in  $L^\infty(\Omega)$  we have

$$\langle f, v_\varepsilon \rangle \rightarrow 0, \quad (3.12)$$

if we assume (2.6), and

$$\int_\Omega f_\varepsilon v_\varepsilon \rightarrow 0 \quad (3.13)$$



if we assume (2.7). Thus in both cases we get

$$\langle A(u_\varepsilon), v_\varepsilon \rangle + \int_{\Omega} g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)v_\varepsilon \rightarrow 0. \quad (3.14)$$

From now on we denote by  $\omega_1(\varepsilon), \omega_2(\varepsilon), \dots$  various sequences of real numbers which converge to zero when  $\varepsilon$  tends to zero. Since  $g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)v_\varepsilon \geq 0$  on the subset  $\{x \in \Omega : |u_\varepsilon(x)| \geq k\}$  we deduce from (3.14) that

$$\langle A(u_\varepsilon), v_\varepsilon \rangle + \int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| \leq k\}} g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)v_\varepsilon \leq \omega_1(\varepsilon). \quad (3.15)$$

We now study the terms in the left hand side of (3.15). We have

$$\left\{ \begin{aligned} & \langle A(u_\varepsilon), v_\varepsilon \rangle \\ &= \int_{\Omega} a(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \varphi'(z_\varepsilon) \\ &= \int_{\Omega} a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \varphi'(z_\varepsilon) \\ &\quad + \int_{\{u_\varepsilon > k\}} a(x, k, 0) DT_k(u) \varphi'(k - T_k(u)) \\ &\quad + \int_{\{u_\varepsilon < -k\}} a(x, -k, 0) DT_k(u) \varphi'(-k - T_k(u)) \\ &\quad - \int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| > k\}} a(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) DT_k(u) \varphi'(z_\varepsilon) \\ &= \int_{\Omega} [a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) - a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u))] D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \varphi'(z^\varepsilon) \\ &\quad + \int_{\Omega} a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u)) D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \varphi'(z^\varepsilon) + \omega_2(\varepsilon) \\ &= \int_{\Omega} [a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) - a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u))] D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \varphi'(z^\varepsilon) \\ &\quad + \omega_3(\varepsilon). \end{aligned} \right. \quad (3.16)$$

On the other hand

$$\begin{aligned}
 (3.14) \quad & \left\{ \begin{aligned}
 & \left| \int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| \leq k\}} g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) v_\varepsilon \right| \\
 & \leq \int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| \leq k\}} b(k)(c(x) + |Du_\varepsilon|^p) |v_\varepsilon| \\
 & = \omega_4(\varepsilon) + b(k) \int_{\Omega} |DT_k(u_\varepsilon)|^p |v_\varepsilon| \\
 & \leq \omega_4(\varepsilon) + \frac{b(k)}{\alpha} \int_{\Omega} a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) DT_k(u_\varepsilon) |v_\varepsilon| \\
 & = \frac{b(k)}{\alpha} \int_{\Omega} [a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) - a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u))] \\
 & \quad D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - DT_k(u)) |v_\varepsilon| + \omega_5(\varepsilon).
 \end{aligned} \right. \tag{3.17}
 \end{aligned}$$

Combining (3.15), (3.16) and (3.17) yields

$$\begin{cases}
 \int_{\Omega} [a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) - a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u))] D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \\
 (\varphi'(z_\varepsilon) - \frac{b(k)}{\alpha} |\varphi(z_\varepsilon)|) \leq \omega_6(\varepsilon).
 \end{cases} \tag{3.18}$$

Recalling inequality (3.11) we have

$$\begin{cases}
 0 \leq \int_{\Omega} [a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u_\varepsilon)) - a(x, T_k(u_\varepsilon), DT_k(u))] D(T_k(u_\varepsilon) - T_k(u)) \\
 \leq 2\omega_6(\varepsilon) \rightarrow 0.
 \end{cases} \tag{3.19}$$

Lemma 5 of [BMP2] or Lemma S of [B'] implies

$$T_k(u_\varepsilon) \rightarrow T_k(u) \quad \text{strongly in } W_0^{1,p}(\Omega). \tag{3.20}$$

### 3.4. Passing to the limit.

The strong convergence (3.20) implies that for some subsequence

$$Du_\varepsilon \rightarrow Du \quad \text{a.e.} \tag{3.21}$$

which yields, since  $a(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)$  is bounded in  $(L^{p'}(\Omega))^N$

$$a(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) \rightharpoonup a(x, u, Du) \quad \text{weakly in } (L^{p'}(\Omega))^N \quad (3.22)$$

as well as

$$g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) \rightarrow g(x, u, Du) \quad \text{a.e.} \quad (3.23)$$

We now use the classical trick in order to prove that  $g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)$  is uniformly equiintegrable. For any measurable subset  $E$  of  $\Omega$  and for any  $m \in \mathbb{R}^+$  we have

$$\left\{ \begin{aligned} \int_E |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)| &= \int_{E \cap \{|u_\varepsilon| \leq m\}} |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)| \\ &\quad + \int_{E \cap \{|u_\varepsilon| > m\}} |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)| \\ &\leq \int_{E \cap \{|u_\varepsilon| \leq m\}} b(m)(c(x) + |DT_m(u_\varepsilon)|^p) \\ &\quad + \int_{E \cap \{|u_\varepsilon| > m\}} |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)|. \end{aligned} \right. \quad (3.24)$$

For fixed  $m$  the first integral of the right hand side of (3.24) is smaller than  $\int_E b(m)(c(x) + |DT_m(u_\varepsilon)|^p)$  and is thus small uniformly in  $\varepsilon$  when the measure of  $E$  is small (recall that  $DT_m(u_\varepsilon)$  converges strongly in  $(L^p(\Omega))^N$ ).

We now discuss the behaviour of the second integral of the right hand side of (3.24), which is smaller than  $\int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| > m\}} |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)|$ . If we assume (2.6), we have estimate (3.4) and thus

$$\left\{ \begin{aligned} \int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| > m\}} |g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon)| &\leq \int_{\{|u_\varepsilon| > m\}} \frac{1}{|u_\varepsilon|} u_\varepsilon g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) \\ &\leq \frac{1}{m} \int_\Omega u_\varepsilon g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) \leq \frac{C_2}{m}. \end{aligned} \right. \quad (3.25)$$

If we assume (2.7), we use in (3.1) the test function  $S_m(u_\varepsilon)$ , where for  $m > 1$

$$\left\{ \begin{aligned} S_m(s) &= 0 \quad \text{if } |s| \leq m-1, \\ S_m(s) &= 1 \quad \text{if } s \geq m, \quad S_m(s) = -1 \quad \text{if } s \leq -m, \\ S'_m(s) &= 1 \quad \text{if } m-1 \leq |s| \leq m. \end{aligned} \right.$$

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This yields

$$(3.22) \quad \int_{\Omega} a(x, u_{\epsilon}, Du_{\epsilon}) Du_{\epsilon} S'_m(u_{\epsilon}) + \int_{\Omega} S_m(u_{\epsilon}) g_{\epsilon}(x, u_{\epsilon}, Du_{\epsilon}) = \int_{\Omega} f_{\epsilon} S_m(u_{\epsilon})$$

which implies

$$(3.23) \quad \int_{\{|u_{\epsilon}| > m\}} |g_{\epsilon}(x, u_{\epsilon}, Du_{\epsilon})| \leq \int_{\{|u_{\epsilon}| \geq m-1\}} |f_{\epsilon}|$$

and thus

$$\limsup_{\epsilon} \int_{\{|u_{\epsilon}| > m\}} |g_{\epsilon}(x, u_{\epsilon}, Du_{\epsilon})| \leq \int_{\{|u| > m-1\}} |f| \quad (3.26)$$

In both cases we have proved that the second term of the right hand side of (3.24) is small, uniformly in  $\epsilon$  and in  $E$ , when  $m$  is sufficiently large. This completes the proof of the uniform equiintegrability of  $g_{\epsilon}(x, u_{\epsilon}, Du_{\epsilon})$ . In view of (3.23) we thus have

$$(3.24) \quad g_{\epsilon}(x, u_{\epsilon}, Du_{\epsilon}) \rightarrow g(x, u, Du) \quad \text{strongly in } L^1(\Omega). \quad (3.27)$$

Using (3.22) and (3.27) it is now easy to pass to the limit in (3.1) to obtain that  $u$  is a solution to (2.8). Theorem 1 is proved.

#### 4. The case where $f$ is nonnegative.

In this Section we assume that (2.1), (2.2), (2.3) and (2.5) as well as either (2.6) or (2.7) still hold. We moreover assume that

$$f \geq 0 \quad (4.1)$$

while we replace hypothesis (2.4) by

$$g(x, s, \xi) \geq 0, \quad g(x, 0, 0) = 0. \quad (4.2)$$

In this case we have the following existence theorem:

**Theorem 2.** *Under the assumptions (2.1), (2.2), (2.3), (4.2), (2.5) and (4.1), and either (2.6) or (2.7), there exists at least one solution  $u$  of (2.8) such that*

$$u \geq 0. \quad (4.3)$$

**Proof of Theorem 2.**

The proof consists in repeating the proof of Theorem 1, for the approximate equation

$$\begin{cases} A(u_\varepsilon) + g_\varepsilon(x, u_\varepsilon, Du_\varepsilon) = f_\varepsilon & \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(\Omega) \\ u_\varepsilon \in W_0^{1,p}(\Omega) \end{cases} \quad (4.4)$$

where now

$$\begin{cases} g_\varepsilon(x, s, \xi) = h_\varepsilon(s) \frac{g(x, s, \xi)}{1 + \varepsilon g(x, s, \xi)} \\ h_\varepsilon(s) = 0 \text{ if } s \leq 0, \quad h^\varepsilon(s) = s/\varepsilon \text{ if } 0 \leq s \leq \varepsilon, \quad h^\varepsilon(s) = 1 \text{ if } s \geq \varepsilon, \end{cases} \quad (4.5)$$

and where  $f_\varepsilon$  is a sequence of smooth functions which strongly converges to  $f$  in  $W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  or in  $L^1(\Omega)$  with

$$f_\varepsilon \geq 0.$$

Use of the test function  $-u_\varepsilon^-$  in (4.4) implies that

$$u_\varepsilon \geq 0.$$

The remainder of the proof is identical. It is indeed sufficient to remark that

$$u \geq 0$$

and that for almost every  $x \in \Omega$

$$g_\varepsilon(x, s_\varepsilon, \xi_\varepsilon) \rightarrow g(x, s, \xi) \quad \text{if } s_\varepsilon \rightarrow s, \xi_\varepsilon \rightarrow \xi$$

since we assumed  $g(x, 0, 0) = 0$ .

Note that the latest assumption is natural since  $g(x, 0, 0)$  has to be nonnegative because of the first part of assumption (4.2). But  $g(x, 0, 0)$  can not be assumed to be strictly positive, as it is easily seen in the case  $g(x, s, \xi) = g(x)$ . Indeed the solution of the equation

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta u + g(x) = f(x) \\ u \in H_0^1(\Omega) \end{cases}$$

does not result in general to be nonnegative when  $g \geq 0$  and  $f \geq 0$ .

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