

NONLINEAR ELLIPTIC EQUATIONS WITH  
RIGHT HAND SIDE MEASURES

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§ 1 - INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF RESULTS

Let  $\Omega$  be an open bounded set of  $\mathbb{R}^N$  ( $N \geq 1$ ),  $p \in (2 - \frac{1}{N}, N]$  and  $a : \Omega \times \mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}^N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^N$  be a Caratheodory function. We assume that there exist two positive real constants  $\alpha, \beta$  and a function  $h(x) \in L^p(\Omega)$  such that for any  $s \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $\xi \in \mathbb{R}^N, \eta \in \mathbb{R}^N$  and for almost every  $x \in \Omega$

$$(1) \quad a(x, s, \xi) \xi \geq \alpha |\xi|^p$$

$$(2) \quad |a(x, s, \xi)| \leq \beta(h(x) + |s|^{p-1} + |\xi|^{p-1})$$

$$(3) \quad [a(x, s, \xi) - a(x, s, \eta)] [\xi - \eta] > 0, \quad \xi \neq \eta$$

The first aim of this paper (Theorem 1) is to obtain a solution of the equation

$$\begin{aligned} A(u) = -\operatorname{div}(a(x,u,Du)) &= f \quad \text{in } \Omega \\ u &= 0 \quad \text{on } \partial\Omega \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

in the sense of the distributions, when  $f$  is a bounded Radon measure on  $\Omega$  (i.e.  $f \in M_b(\Omega)$ ). To be more precise, we will say that  $u$  is a weak solution of (4) if  $u$  satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} u \in W_0^{1,q}(\Omega), \quad a(x,u,Du) \in L^1(\Omega) \\ \int_{\Omega} a(x,u,Du) Dv = \langle f, v \rangle \quad \text{for any } v \in \mathcal{D}(\Omega) \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

We will prove the following existence theorem.

**THEOREM 1** - Let  $f \in M_b(\Omega)$ , then there exists a solution  $u$  of (5). Furthermore one has  $u \in W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$  for any  $q < \bar{q} = \frac{N(p-1)}{N-1}$ .

The theorem above is already known ([BG1]) if  $a$  does not depend on  $u$  and under a more technical assumption than (3). It is also well known ([LL]) if  $p > N$ , since in this case  $M_b(\Omega) \subset W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  and therefore one can use the theory of operators acting between Sobolev spaces in duality.

In (4), we can also consider a lower order term  $g(x,u)$  or  $g(x,u,Du)$  with a sign condition  $g(\cdot, s, \cdot) \geq 0$ , as it is done in [BS], [GM1], [GM2], [BG1], [BG2].

We assume  $p \in (2 - \frac{1}{N}, N]$  which is equivalent to  $\bar{q} > 1$ . Thus, if  $1 < p \leq 2 - \frac{1}{N}$   $Du$  does not belong to  $L^1(\Omega)$  (to overcome this difficulty see the forthcoming paper [X]).

The existence result stated in Theorem 1 is optimal: it is possible to find some  $f \in M_b(\Omega)$  (for instance  $f = \delta_a$ ,  $a \in \Omega$ ) or  $f \in L^1(\Omega)$  such that the corresponding solution  $u$  of (4) does not belong to  $W_0^{1,\bar{q}}(\Omega)$ .

The existence result in this limiting case is obtained in the following theorem when  $|f| \log |f| \in L^1(\Omega)$ .

**THEOREM 2** - Let  $2 - \frac{1}{N} < p < N$ . Assume that  $|f| \log |f| \in L^1(\Omega)$ . Then there exists  $u \in W_0^{1,\bar{q}}(\Omega)$ ,  $\bar{q} = \frac{(p-1)N}{N-1}$ , solution of (5).

A classical method due to G. Stampacchia [S] yields a solution of (4) when  $A$  is linear (and  $p=2$ ), through a duality and a regularity argument in the cases  $f \in M_b(\Omega)$  or  $|f| \log |f| \in L^1(\Omega)$ .

When  $p=N$  the weaker assumption  $|f|(\log |f|)^{\frac{N-1}{N}} \in L^1(\Omega)$  implies  $f \in W^{-1,N'}(\Omega)$  (see [G]) and therefore the existence of a solution  $u \in W_0^{1,N}(\Omega)$  follows from [LL].

Finally let  $\bar{m} = \frac{Np}{Np-N+p}$  (remark that  $p=N$  implies  $\bar{m}=1$ ). If  $f \in L^{\bar{m}}(\Omega)$ , by Sobolev Imbedding Theorem,  $f$  lies in  $W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  and again the existence of a solution  $u$  follows from [LL]. But if  $m \in (1, \bar{m})$  and  $f \in L^m(\Omega)$ , the following theorem can be seen as a regularity theorem regarding the solution  $u$  obtained in Theorem 1.

**THEOREM 3** - Let  $2 - \frac{1}{N} < p < N$ ,  $1 < m < \bar{m} = \frac{Np}{Np-N+p}$  and  $f \in L^m(\Omega)$ , then there exists a solution  $u$  of (5) which belongs to  $W^{1,(p-1)m^*}(\Omega)$ .

## § 2 - ESTIMATES.

In order to prove Theorems 1, 2, 3, in this section we will present estimates for  $u$  only depending on  $N, \Omega, p, \alpha, \|f\|_{L^1}$ , when  $f$  is smooth and  $u$  is a solution of (5), given by [LL]. We point out that through this section we will not use assumptions (2), (3).

**ESTIMATE 1** - Let  $f \in L^1(\Omega) \cap W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$ ,  $1 \leq q < \bar{q} = \frac{N(p-1)}{N-1}$  and  $2 - \frac{1}{N} < p \leq N$ . Then there exists a constant  $c_1$  (depending only on  $N, \alpha, \Omega, p, q, \|f\|_{L^1}$ ) such that

$$(6) \quad \int_{\Omega} |Du|^q \leq c_1.$$

**ESTIMATE 2** - Let  $2 - \frac{1}{N} < p < N$ ,  $f \in W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$  and  $f \log |f| \in L^1(\Omega)$ . Then there exists  $c_2$  (a constant depending only on  $N, \alpha, \Omega, p, \|f \log |f|\|_{L^1}$ ) such that

$$(7) \quad \int_{\Omega} |Du|^{\bar{q}} \leq c_2, \quad \bar{q} = \frac{N(p-1)}{N-1}.$$

**ESTIMATE 3** - Let  $2 - \frac{1}{N} < p < N$ ,  $\bar{m} = \frac{pN}{pN+p-N}$ ,  $1 < m < \bar{m}$ , and  $f \in L^m(\Omega) \cap W^{-1,p'}(\Omega)$ . Then there exists a constant  $c_3$  (depending only on  $N, \alpha, \Omega, p, m, \|f\|_{L^m}$ ) such that

$$(8) \quad \int_{\Omega} |Du|^{(p-1)m^*} \leq c_3$$

Estimate 3 stated above improves Proposition 1 of [BG1] where it was proved that  $Du \in L^q(\Omega)$ , for any  $q < (p-1)m^*$ .

**PROOF OF ESTIMATE 1** - The proof is given in (10) of [BG1] (see also Remark 4 of [BG]). In any case, a new proof can be given in the spirit of the following proofs.

In order to prove Estimates 2 and 3, we set (as in [BG1])

$$B_n = \{x \in \Omega : n \leq |u(x)| < n+1\}$$

$$A_n = \{x \in \Omega : n \leq |u(x)|\} = \bigcup_{k=n}^{\infty} B_k$$

and we define

$$(9) \quad \varphi(s) = \begin{cases} 0 & , & 0 \leq s \leq n \\ s-n & , & n < s < n+1 \\ 1 & , & s \geq n+1 \\ -\varphi(-s) & , & s < 0 \end{cases}$$

Taking  $v = \varphi(u)$  as test function in (4) we have

$$(10) \quad \alpha \int_{B_n} |Du|^p \leq \int_{A_n} |f|$$

Our proofs of Estimates 2 and 3 relies on a sharp use of the (right hand side of) inequality (10) because  $f$  is assumed to be more "regular" than  $L^1$ .

**PROOF OF ESTIMATE 2** - We use the inequality (10) and we put  $\gamma = \frac{\bar{q}}{p}$ . Recall that  $\bar{q} = \frac{N(p-1)}{N-1}$  and  $\bar{q}^* = \frac{\bar{q}}{\bar{q}-p}$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned}
 (11) \quad \int_{\Omega} |Du|^{\bar{q}} &= \int_{\Omega} \frac{|Du|^{\bar{q}}}{(1+|u|)^{\gamma}} (1+|u|)^{\gamma} \leq \\
 &\leq \left( \int_{\Omega} \frac{|Du|^p}{(1+|u|)} \right)^{\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{\frac{\bar{q}}{p-\bar{q}}} \right)^{1-\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} = \\
 &\leq \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{1+n} \sum_{k=n}^{\infty} \int_{B_k} |f| \right)^{\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{\bar{q}^*} \right)^{1-\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} \\
 &\leq \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \int_{B_k} |f| \sum_{n=0}^k \frac{1}{1+n} \right)^{\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{\bar{q}^*} \right)^{1-\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} \\
 &\leq \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} \int_{\Omega} |f| [1+\log(1+|u|)] \right)^{\frac{\bar{q}}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{\bar{q}^*} \right)^{1-\frac{\bar{q}}{p}}
 \end{aligned}$$

Now we use the following inequality

$$r s \leq r \log(1+r) + e^s \quad \forall r, s \geq 0$$

in order to deduce

$$\begin{aligned}
 (12) \quad \int_{\Omega} |f| [1+\log(1+|u|)] &\leq \int_{\Omega} |f| + \int_{\Omega} |f| \log(1+|f|) + \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|) \leq \\
 &\leq \int_{\Omega} |f| \log(1+|f|) + c_4,
 \end{aligned}$$

because we have proved a bound on  $\int_{\Omega} |u|$  in Estimate 1.

Combining (11) and (12) we get

$$(13) \quad \int_{\Omega} |u|^{\bar{q}^*} \leq c_5 \left( \int_{\Omega} |Du|^{\bar{q}} \right)^{\frac{\bar{q}^*}{\bar{q}}} \leq c_6 + c_6 \left( \int_{\Omega} |u|^{\bar{q}^*} \right)^{\frac{p-\bar{q}}{p} \cdot \frac{\bar{q}^*}{\bar{q}}}$$

We remark that  $\frac{p-\bar{q}}{p} \cdot \frac{\bar{q}^*}{\bar{q}} < 1$  since  $p < N$ .

Thus we have proved the a priori estimate (7).

**PROOF OF ESTIMATE 3** - Let  $q = (p-1)m^*$  ( $q < p$ ) and  $s = q^* \cdot \frac{p-q}{q} (> 0)$ . Using the inequality (10) as before, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 (14) \quad \int_{\Omega} |Du|^q &\leq \left( \int_{\Omega} \frac{|Du|^p}{(1+|u|)^s} \right)^{\frac{q}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{\frac{sq}{p-q}} \right)^{1-\frac{q}{p}} \\
 &\leq \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(1+n)^s} \sum_{k=n}^{\infty} \int_{B_k} |f| \right)^{\frac{q}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{q^*} \right)^{1-\frac{q}{p}} \\
 &\leq \left( \frac{1}{\alpha} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \int_{B_k} |f| \sum_{n=0}^k \frac{1}{(1+n)^s} \right)^{\frac{q}{p}} \left( \int_{\Omega} (1+|u|)^{q^*} \right)^{1-\frac{q}{p}}
 \end{aligned}$$

We recall that  $s < 1$  and that

$$\sum_{n=0}^k \frac{1}{(1+n)^s} \leq c_7 (1+k^{1-s}).$$

Therefore

$$(15) \quad \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \int_{B_k} |f| \sum_{n=0}^k \frac{1}{(1+n)^s} \leq c_7 \int_{\Omega} |f| + c_7 \int_{\Omega} |f| |u|^{1-s}$$

$$\leq c_7 + c_7 \left( \int_{\Omega} |f|^m \right)^{\frac{1}{m}} \left( \int_{\Omega} |u|^{(1-s)m'} \right)^{\frac{1}{m'}}$$

Combining (14) and (15) we have  $(q^* = (1-s)m')$

$$\int_{\Omega} |Du|^q \leq c_8 + c_8 \left( \int_{\Omega} |u|^{q^*} \right)^{1-\frac{q}{p} + \frac{q}{pm'}}$$

Then Estimate 3 follows by the previous inequality because  $\frac{q}{q^*} > 1 - \frac{q}{p} + \frac{q}{pm'}$ . Indeed the choice of  $q$  is such that  $(N-q-Np+Nq)m' = Nq$ . That is  $[(N-1)m' \cdot N]q = N(p-1)m'$ , i.e.  $q = (p-1)m^*$ . Moreover  $q < p$  follows from the inequality  $m < \bar{m}$ .

**REMARK 1** - In order to prove the above estimates we have used the test function (9) as in [BG], but it is also possible to use  $v = \Phi(u)$ , as in [BGV], where

$$\Phi(s) = \int_0^s \frac{dt}{(1+|t|)^s}$$

Then Estimates 1, 2 and 3 can be proved with (respectively)  $s > 1$ ,  $s = 1$ ,  $s = 1 - \frac{q}{m^*}$  ( $q = (p-1)m^*$ ).

### § 3 - PROOFS OF THEOREMS 1, 2, 3.

In this section we take  $f \in M_b(\Omega)$  and a sequence  $(f_n) \subset W^{-1,p'} \cap L^1(\Omega)$  converging to  $f$  and such that  $\|f_n\|_{L^1} \leq \|f\|_{M_b}$ . We then pass to the limit in the equations

$$u_n \in W_0^{1,p}(\Omega) \quad (16)$$

$$A(u_n) = f_n,$$

The weak convergence obtained as a consequence of Estimate 1,2 and 3 does not permit to pass to the limit in (16) except when  $a$  is linear in  $Du$ . A pointwise convergence on  $Du_n$  is needed. This is the purpose of Lemma 1 which is also related to some recent result of [BM] and [LM].

**PROOF OF THEOREM 1** - By Estimate 1,  $(u_n)$  is bounded in  $W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$ , for any  $q < \bar{q}$ .

Then we can assume (for some  $u$  and for some subsequence still denoted  $u_n$ )

that

$$(17) \quad u_n \rightarrow u \quad \text{weakly in } W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$$

$$(18) \quad u_n \rightarrow u \quad \text{strongly in } L^q(\Omega)$$

$$(19) \quad u_n \rightarrow u \quad \text{a.e. in } \Omega.$$

This is not sufficient to pass to the limit in (16). We need, for instance  $Du_n \rightarrow Du$  a.e. This is the content of the following Lemma.

**LEMMA 1** - Assume (1), (2), (3) and

$$(20) \quad f_n \text{ bounded in } L^1(\Omega), \quad f_n \in L^1(\Omega) \cap W^{-1,p'}(\Omega).$$

Then the sequence  $u_n$  defined in (16) is compact in  $W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$ , for any  $q < \bar{q}$ .

END OF THE PROOF OF THEOREM 1 - Combining Lemma 1, (2) and (18) we deduce that

$$(21) \quad a(x, u_n, Du_n) \rightarrow a(x, u, Du) \quad \text{in } L^r, \quad \forall r \in s, \left[ \frac{N}{N-1} \right)$$

and therefore  $u$  is a solution of (4), in the weak sense (5).

PROOF OF THEOREMS 2 AND 3 - The existence results are a consequence of Theorem 1 and Estimate 2 or 3, since

$$a(x, u_n, Du_n) \rightarrow a(x, u, Du) \quad \text{weakly in } L^{\frac{N}{N-1}}(\Omega) \quad \text{or in } L^{m^*}(\Omega)$$

REMARK - With our proof of Theorem 3 the convergence of  $Du_n$  in  $L^{(p-1)m^*}$  is an open problem.

Before proving Lemma 1 we recall that  $L^1$ -compactness results for the gradients of a sequence of approximate solutions of nonlinear equations have been obtained in [BMP], [BM], [BG1], [LM], and we emphasize that the first result is contained in a pioneering work by Leray-Lions [LL].

In the proof we will need the following standard

LEMMA 2 - Let  $(X, T, m)$  a measurable space, such that  $m(X) < \infty$ . Let  $\gamma$  be a measurable function,  $\gamma : X \rightarrow [0, +\infty]$  such that  $m(\{x \in X, \gamma(x) = 0\}) = 0$ . Then for any  $\epsilon > 0$ , there exists  $\delta > 0$  such that

$$\int_A \gamma \, dm \leq \delta$$

implies  $m(A) \leq \epsilon$ .

PROOF OF LEMMA 1 - By Estimate 1,  $(u_n)$  is bounded in  $W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$ , for any  $q < \bar{q}$ . Then we can assume (for same  $u \in W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$  and for some subsequence still denoted  $u_n$ ) that

$$(22) \quad u_n \rightarrow u \quad \text{weakly in } W_0^{1,q}(\Omega)$$

$$(23) \quad u_n \rightarrow u \quad \text{in measure}$$

Our proof relies on the following claim

$$(24) \quad Du_n \rightarrow Du \quad \text{in measure.}$$

In order to prove (24), given  $\lambda > 0$  and  $\epsilon > 0$  we set for some  $B > 1, k > 0$  ( $n, m \in \mathbb{N}$ )

$$E_1 = \{x \in \Omega : |Du_n(x)| > B\} \cup \{x \in \Omega : |Du_m(x)| > B\} \cup \{x \in \Omega : |u_n(x)| > B\} \cup \{x \in \Omega : |u_m(x)| > B\},$$

$$E_2 = \{x \in \Omega : |u_n(x) - u_m(x)| > k\}$$

$$E_3 = \{x \in \Omega : |u_n(x) - u_m(x)| \leq k, |Du_n(x)| \leq B, |Du_m(x)| \leq B, |u_n(x)| \leq B, |u_m(x)| \leq B, |D(u_n - u_m)| \geq \lambda\}.$$

Remark that

$$(25) \quad \{x \in \Omega : |D(u_n - u_m)(x)| \geq \lambda\} \subset E_1 \cup E_2 \cup E_3.$$

Since  $(u_n)$  and  $(Du_n)$  are bounded in  $L^1(\Omega)$ , one has  $\text{meas } E_1 \leq \epsilon$ , for  $B$  large enough, independently of  $n, m$ . Thus we fix  $B$  in order to have.

$$\text{meas } E_1 \leq \epsilon.$$

We now take into account  $\text{meas } E_3$ . Assumption (3) implies that there exists a real valued function  $\gamma(x)$  such that

$$(26) \quad \text{meas}(\{x \in \Omega : \gamma(x) = 0\}) = 0$$

and

$$(27) \quad [a(x,s,\xi) - a(x,s,\eta)] [\xi - \eta] \geq \gamma(x),$$

$$\forall s \in \mathbb{R}, \xi, \eta \in \mathbb{R}^N : |s|, |\xi|, |\eta| \leq B,$$

$$|\xi - \eta| \geq \lambda, \text{ a.e. } x \in \Omega.$$

Indeed there exists a subset  $C$  of  $\Omega$  such that  $\text{meas}(C)=0$  and the function  $a(x,s,\xi)$  is continuous with respect to  $(s,\xi)$  for any  $x \in \Omega \setminus C$ . Then assumption (3) implies that for  $x \in \Omega \setminus C$  and  $\xi \neq \eta$  one has

$$[a(x,s,\xi) - a(x,s,\eta)] [\xi - \eta] > 0.$$

Define

$$K = \{(s,\xi,\eta) \in \mathbb{R}^{2N+1} : |s| \leq B, |\xi| \leq B, |\eta| \leq B, |\xi - \eta| \geq \lambda\}$$

then

$$(28) \quad \inf\{[a(x,s,\xi) - a(x,s,\eta)] [\xi - \eta] : (s,\xi,\eta) \in K\} = \gamma(x) > 0,$$

since  $K$  is compact.

In view of (28)

$$(29) \quad \int_{E_3} \gamma(x) \leq \int_{E_3} [a(x,u_n, Du_n) - a(x,u_n, Du_m)] D(u_n - u_m) \leq \\ \leq \int_{E_3} [a(x,u_m, Du_m) - a(x,u_n, Du_m)] D(u_n - u_m) + \\ + \int_{E_3} [a(x,u_n, Du_n) - a(x,u_m, Du_m)] D(u_n - u_m).$$

If we use  $T_k(u_n - u_m)$  in (16) as a test function (where  $T_k$  is the usual truncation at levels  $\pm k$ ) we can say that the last integral is less than or equal to  $2kM$ , where  $M \geq \|f_n\|_{L^1}$ . Thus

$$(30) \quad \int_{E_3} \gamma(x) \leq \int_{E_3} [a(x,u_m, Du_m) - a(x,u_n, Du_m)] D(u_n - u_m) + 2kM$$

In view of the continuity of  $a(x,s,\xi)$  with respect to  $(s,\xi)$ , for a.e.  $x \in \Omega$  and  $\bar{\epsilon} > 0$  there exists  $\delta(x) \geq 0$  (with  $\text{meas}\{x \in \Omega : \delta(x)=0\}=0$ ) such that

$$|s-s'| \leq \delta(x), |s|, |s'|, |\xi| \leq B \text{ imply } |a(x,s,\xi) - a(x,s',\xi)| \leq \bar{\epsilon}.$$

Remark that  $\lim_{k \rightarrow 0} \text{meas}\{x \in \Omega : \delta(x) < k\} = 0$ . Let now  $\delta$  given from Lemma 2 ( $\delta$  depends on  $\epsilon$ ). We choose  $\bar{\epsilon}$  such that  $c_9 \bar{\epsilon} < \delta/3$  and  $k > 0$  such that

$$c_9 \int_{E_3 \cap \{x:k > \delta(x)\}} [1+h(x)] < \delta/3$$

and

$$2kM < \delta/3.$$

Then we have

$$\int_{E_3} \gamma(x) < \delta$$

and we can deduce that  $\text{meas}(E_3) < \epsilon$  independently of  $n$  and  $m$ .

Now we fix such a  $k$  and thanks to the fact that  $u_n$  is a Cauchy sequence in measure, we can choose  $n_0$  such that

$$\text{meas } E_2 \leq \epsilon \quad \text{for } n, m \geq n_0.$$

Then the convergence (24) and Estimate 1 yield the desired compactness result.

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